An Ethnographic Study of Internet Consumption in Ireland:

Between Domesticity and the Public Participation

Key Deliverable
The European Media and Technology in Everyday Life Network, 2000-2003

Dr Katie Ward,
COMTEC, Dublin City University

Table of Contents

General Preface	3
Centre Director's Preface	4
Executive Summary	5
1. Introduction and Context	9
2. Literature and Context	17
3. Methodology	27
4. Appropriation and Use	30
5. Working at Home and the Organisation of the Domestic Internet	39
6. Transforming the Family	49
7. Children and Internet Consumption	58
8. Locality Matters: An Ethnographic Study of 'Publicness' in an Irish Coastal Town	67
9. Concluding Notes	84
Notes	92
References and Appendices	93

EMTEL - General preface

The European Media Technology and Everyday Life Network (EMTEL) was funded by the European Commission (grant number HPRN ET 2000 00063) under the 5th Framework Programme. It was constituted as a research and training network within the programme, Improving Knowledge Potential and oriented towards "creating a user friendly information society".

EMTEL conducted interdisciplinary social scientific research and training between 2000 and 2003. This report is one of 12 submitted to the EU in September 2003 as final deliverables for the project. Copies are available on www.lse.ac.uk/collections/EMTEL and a full list of the publications can be found as an Appendix to this report. Contributing partners were as follows:

- ASCoR, The University of Amsterdam
- COMTEC, Dublin City University
- IPTS, Seville
- LENTIC, The University of Liège
- Media@lse, London School or Economics (co-ordinating centre)
- NTNU, University of Trondheim
- SMIT, Free University of Brussels
- TNO, Delft
- SINTEF, Trondheim.

EMTEL sought to bring together young and experienced researchers in a shared project to investigate the so-called information society from the perspective of everyday life. It undertook research under two broad headings: inclusion and exclusion, and living and working in the information society. It then sought to integrate empirical work and developing theory in such a way as to engage constructively with on-going policy debates on the present and future of information and communication technologies in Europe.

Roger Silverstone
EMTEL Co-ordinator

Centre Director's Preface

This EMTEL study addresses the relationship between domestic Internet use in the household and changing modes of participation in public life. Based on a detailed qualitative research, it examines changes in users' engagement with old/new media in the home and how these relate to participation in public affairs and forums.

The report is based on an ethnographic study of the role of the Internet in the everyday life of a particular localised setting, 'Coastal Town' in north Dublin. This study was conducted by Dr. Katie Ward, the 'young researcher' appointed to the post funded by the EMTEL project and she also authored the report that follows. Indeed, I must take this opportunity to express my admiration for the manner in which this particular 'young researcher' coped with the challenges and opportunities offered by the EU-funded EMTEL project. Dr. Ward was very capable, attentive and resourceful in adapting to a new culture, social and working environment—as is amply demonstrated in the report that follows.

This COMTEC study also benefited from exchanges with other members of the EMTEL team arising from the collaborative mode of working that characterised this project. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank my DCU colleague, Farrel Corcoran, for his helpful steers and inputs, especially during the early stages of this project.

Further information on the COMTEC and STeM research centres can be found at : www.Stem.dcu.ie/top2.htm

Prof. Paschal Preston
Director, COMTEC, Dublin City University

Executive Summary

Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

The aim of the Dublin-based project is to examine the relationship between domestic Internet use in the household and participation in public life. The project aims to explore a number of dichotomous relationships between the public and private spheres; the local and global contexts and "new" and "old" media. This ethnographic research has been carried out between February 2001 and April 2002 in a localised setting: "Coastal Town"[1], North County Dublin. The objectives and research questions are divided into the following two areas:

- Old/new media[2] consumption within the home
- The relationship between domestic Internet consumption in the home and participation within public forums.

The first area refers to the way in which the Internet is used in relation to existing media in the household and seeks:

- To examine how participants are using the Internet in the domestic setting along existing broadcast or 'old' media

The second area relates to the relationship between the Internet and the public sphere, and examines the dynamics of the public and private spheres. Thus, the purpose is:

- To investigate whether domestic Internet users are engaging with web based content as a means of generating new forms of content and/or connectivity within Coastal Town.

Following the objectives, the research questions are also divided into two sections:

Old/new media:

- How have participants integrated the Internet into the household or 'home' culture?
- How is the Internet, as 'new media' used with existing or 'old media' and communication technology in the household?
- Has the Internet replaced or transformed the use patterns, routines and rules of old/other media and communication technology?

Private/public:

- To what extent does the domestic use of the Internet allow the construction of new processes of public communication in Coastal Town?

Empirical Findings and Theoretical Implications

Ethnographic work was carried within the homes of participants and within local organisations. The empirical findings can be divided into the following themes:

Appropriation and Use

The majority of participants invested in an Internet enabled computer because they felt that it would be beneficial for work or education. Many, and particularly those with children, indicated that they had felt pressurised into having an Internet connection; participants thought that their children's education would suffer if they failed to provide a computer, Internet media and relevant software. Adult users also experienced this type of 'ideological pressure', and it was suggested that 'Internet illiteracy' excluded them from participating fully in cultural life.

Once appropriated use was structured, with users consuming content from specific sites, such as The Irish Times, which were on their favourites list. Participants avoided 'surfing' as they felt this activity to be time consuming and unproductive.

Domestication

Home-based Internet consumers all attempted to integrate the technology into the existing routines of the household. A variety of integration strategies were used such as the development of a set of rules surrounding use, the creation of spatial and temporal boundaries to control the intrusion of the technology, and the construction of meanings to define the function, use and status of the various media in the household. However, it was also apparent that some participants had to make changes to their existing domestic spatial organisation to accommodate the intrusion of the Internet, or manage its perceived threats. Those who worked at home or had children or young teenagers gave considerable attention to the spatial and temporal routines surrounding Internet media to ensure minimal disruption to domestic and family life.

Participation in public life

The domestic Internet users indicated that they rarely looked at 'local' web based content as they felt that traditional modes of communication for participation in local public life were favourable. Information was disseminated via the print media and public meetings operated

at a face-to-face level. Admittedly, some local organisations and campaigns had developed websites, but these were largely used to advertise their causes rather than as forums for interaction. Thus, rather than the Internet, at a local level, facilitating new forms of connectivity, it seemed that local websites were used to supplement existing and traditional methods of communication.

A case study focusing on one of the local primary schools indicated that teachers were making wide use of web-based content for teaching purposes. The school's website also provided information for parents, but, as with other local websites, did not facilitate new forms of connectivity and interaction. Rather, the website supplemented existing information resources and methods of communication, as parents continued to maintain face-to-face contact as the dominant form of communication.

Some participants did, however, use the Internet for communication about public issues, but these tended to be concerns, which extended beyond Coastal Town. Some participants indicated that they would use the Internet to participate in national or global political movements, suggesting that there is a move towards the creation of new forms of connectivity beyond the immediate locale[3].

Implications for Policy

(i) Parental fears and perceived threats to children:

There is a demand from parents, with children and young teenagers, for public information and coherent and accessible policy concerning:

- Potential dangers
- Methods to protect children
- Steps to be taken in creating a safe domestic environment on Internet safety; and could be embraced by government task forces at a national and European level as a means to communicate public information.

Parents indicate that they gain the relevant information from 'old' media resources. The broadcast media could play a significant role in providing information and advice. However, this is not to say that such public information is desirable or even necessary, but it seems that the parents in the case study wanted a resource that provided a safety mechanism that they perceived as dependable. This suggests that more research could be carried out relating to the provision of information.

(ii) It seems that locality continues to remain important to people suggesting that European and national policy must incorporate the significance of the local. The findings seems to suggest that:

- National and European policies on public communication and participation must be tailored to meet local needs
- The print and other older media must be acknowledged as continuing to play a key role facilitating public communication, implying that the role of all media must be considered when thinking about and formulating policy relating to public communication
- If it desirable to increase participation via the Internet and inclusion in the information society national and European policy needs to consider increasing access to terminals, subsidising costs of equipment and call charges and increasing connection speeds.

1. Introduction and Context

Much research on the consumption of Internet media has suggested that the Internet's potential to transcend boundaries of national and international; local and global; time and space; and the online and offline, or real and virtual realms facilitates a radical transformation in the way that everyday life is perceived, performed and lived (Dodge and Kitchen, 1999; Castells, 2001). Research has concentrated on what happens when the user goes online or enters the virtual realm (Baym, 1995, 1998; Plant, 1995, 1996, 1997; McRae, 1995; Watson, 1997; Jones, 1996, 1997). Many proponents of cyberculture have suggested that online forums, or indeed 'cyberspace', with its lack of visual cues, facilitates a new level of equality of participation (Plant 1997). Furthermore, questions have been asked about the nature and quality of online interactions and the ways in which they change and impact on perceptions of offline life (Miller and Slater, 2000; Slater 2002). Other aspects of research, however, have focused on the ways in which the Internet has been applied to issues in society such as social inclusion and exclusion (Loader, 1998), the delivery of education (Kellner, 2002) and the provision of health based material, goods and services (Campbell, 2001; Meier, 2002; Terry, 2002). Furthermore, work has been carried out with specific groups such as women (Wise, 1997; McRae, 1996, 1997), and within specific locales such as the home (Silverstone, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1999; Sorensen, 1994, Sorensen et. al 1996, 2001) Yoshimi, 1999; Bakardjieva, 2001).

1.1. Transforming Ireland: The "Celtic Tiger" Economy.

Furthermore, governments at national and European level have attempted to assess the impact of Internet media on their agendas and the ways in which they can shape and harness ICTs as a means to promote equal opportunities and enhanced life chances in areas such as health and education. There are numerous reports documenting the rapid changes undergone in Ireland in recent years. For example, the 'Living Report' (www.amarach.com - accessed 2002) suggests that Ireland has experienced more economic, social, cultural and environmental change than any other member of the European Union over the past 20 years. And the authors of the report give a breakdown of spending patterns as a means to indicate the way in which consumer culture is growing. Indeed, it is stated:

> "In 1990, Irish consumers spent just IR£15 billion. In 1998, they will spend some IR£28 billion; while by 2005, they will be spending nearly IR£40 billion per annum."

The report goes on to suggest that there have been other significant changes in Irish society and it is suggested that the church and marriage are declining in significance, having less impact on younger people. Such demographic changes are often linked to the proliferation of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy, which is perceived as having n impact on patterns of work and home life. Although it should be noted that the majority of married women remain 'home-makers', the number entering the labour market has increased over the past decade (from about one in four married women to nearly two in five, Amarach Consulting). Furthermore, although the participation rates of Irish women remain behind that of the UK and other European countries, changes in female work patterns are perceived, by the authors, as one of the most significant changes in the Celtic Tiger era.

However, academic discourse on the Celtic Tiger economy offers a critical and analytical approach to some of the changes that have occurred within Ireland in recent years. Preston (2002), for example observes that there have been a number of changes in Irish society. Notably, an increasing number of people migrating to Ireland to participate in the rapidly growing labour force, and inevitably the unemployment rate has decreased, affecting the percentage of long-term unemployed people. In analysing the changes in Irish society and economy, Preston suggests that favourable policy, relating to investment, combined with a number of factors, such as expansion of the labour force and membership of the EU, have allowed transformation in Irish society; the fruition of the so-called 'tiger economy'. An interesting point is made relating to the unique nature of the developments in Ireland; the implication being that such conditions would be difficult to reproduce in other countries. Preston suggests that the development of economic conditions in Ireland would not be replicable elsewhere and he cites Ireland's attraction of high level of US investment in the hardware and software sectors as important factors in development of the 'Tiger' economy.

1.1.1. The Discontented Majority – 'What's good for business is good for Ireland'[4]

While the Tiger economy is perceived by proponents of such development as successful and moving towards competition at a global level, Allen in his analysis of recent economic development in Ireland introduces Rostow's modernisation theory and suggests that Ireland failed to reach the 'take-off' stage and instead suggests,

> "Ireland has reached its own modernity at a pace that has left many with a sense of dizziness"(2001, p11).

Allan acknowledges that development has been rapid and argues that economic and social changes have emerged as uneven and unbalanced, with the gap widening between the rich and poor. It is argued that within the Celtic Tiger environment a 'discontented majority'

has emerged, where the majority of workers have been unable to gain from the economic climate. He provides the example of the East Wall area where people feel that they have missed on the Celtic Tiger phenomenon. Indeed, he quotes on resident as stating, "we have never seen it around here" (2001, p. 35).

Furthermore, Allan in his analysis of the emergence and manifestation of the Celtic Tiger, suggests that certain groups have prospered, while others have suffered. He provides the example of Ryanair as a symbol of both rapid development and increasing class polarisation. Similarly, he notes that the financial sector, property owners, builders and IT companies have made considerable gain in the Tiger Climate. Indeed, he notes that Ireland provides the US computer sector with, "a cheap platform to export goods to Europe" (2001, p.33).

Thus, it is suggested that although exploding levels of consumption and increasing ownership of technologies such as mobile phones represent symbols of a successful and booming economy. The majority of workers are taking a "small proportion of the national wealth". Indeed, "according to one community activist the working classes are being economically cleansed from the inner city" (2001, p. 33).

1.2. The Internet in the Irish Context

In his critical appraisal of the social change in Ireland, Allen implies that within certain normative discourse new technologies and ICTs are perceived as symbols of the emerging Tiger economy. Similarly, in terms of Ireland and the depiction of its relationship with the Internet, I recognise two dominant discourses. (i) The normative approach of the Irish government and the Information Society Commission (ISC), where adoption and use of the Internet is perceived as wholly beneficial to, and instrumental, in the development and progression of Irish society. (ii) The growing body of critical literature, examining new media production and consumption.

I locate the findings from this research in the latter discourse, since the findings of the research move against ISC information society discourse and reveal that users, through their domestic use of the Internet create a their own understandings of "publicness" and "privateness" within the context of the Irish Information Society.

1.3. 'Information Society' Discourse

The ISC is a body established in 1997 by the government as a means to create an inclusive information society. The ISC has a number of advisory groups, which examine issues of

social exclusion and access to the Internet; the benefits of the 'information society'; the attitudes and expectations of those who have access; and the way in which Ireland should progress in order to make the Internet available and beneficial for all the population. One of the policies to achieve such inclusion involves providing everyone with Internet access and an email address.

In carrying out its research into access, the ISC's results are predictable and focus on issues of access (www.isc.ie, 2000). It has concluded that 'early adopters', that is middle class male professionals, are the group that has the highest level of access to the Internet. Whereas those with a low level of education, the unemployed and those on a low income do not have access to the Internet and are excluded from the information society. The ISC does identify a category of 'late adopters', which includes manual workers, the elderly, housewives and farmers and it suggests that this group has most to gain from the information society. It is suggested that this group can begin to participate in government, the e-economy, learn new skills, produce content and overcome geographical isolation. In addition the ISC also make recommendations for the future and the suggestions include the raising of awareness of the benefits that the Internet can bring; hard and software companies liasing with disability groups; assistance and technical support at public points of access and the development of local content services.

In terms of the attitudes and expectations of those who already have access, or 'early adopters', it is suggested that there is a high level of interest and enthusiasm. It is indicated that there is a high demand for government services. However, the main interest in having the Internet at home is for educational purposes. This is related to the findings of some research carried out by Downes (1999) who looked at Australian homes. It was found that discourses surrounding computers have developed from the 70s, where a 'computing as hobby' discourse dominated the agenda towards a situation where families were adopting the technology for more pragmatic concerns. This discourse is also prevalent in Ireland and especially within the ISC, where the dominant perception is that computers in the home should be used for educational purposes with the view of achieving business success. Furthermore, the Netd@ys initiative, funded by the European Commission, aims to raise awareness about the use of computer technology in schools. Netd@ys has a comprehensive website and runs 'road-shows' to raise consciousness which reinforces the 'computing for learning' discourse and the prevalence of an ideology where the Internet is perceived as beneficial for education

Table 1: Number Of Internet Users – 1999/2000

COUNTRY	POP'N – 1999/2000 (in thousands)	NO. OF USERS 1999 (in thousands)	% OF POP'N.	NO. OF USERS 2000 (in thousands)	% OF POP' N.
BELGIUM	10 214	1400	16	2 000	19.6
GB	59 090	12 500	21.2	15 700	26.6
IRELAND	**3 694**	**380**	**10.5**	**592**	**16.3**
NETHERL ANDS	15 760	2 300	13.7	4 500	28.5
NORWAY	4 445	1 600	36.3	2 200	49.6
SPAIN	39 394	2 747	7.7	-	-

Source: European Observatory – Statistical Yearbook 2000

According to statistics from the European Observatory, people in Ireland are beginning to adopt the Internet in greater numbers, suggesting that ideas about access and use of the Internet are beginning to take hold in the public imagination (See Table 1).

These statistics provide an overall idea of the patterns of Internet usage, but there use is limited as it is not clear whether the users are accessing the Internet from home, work, friends' houses or elsewhere. However, Amarach Consulting provide the following results relating to access to the Internet in Ireland:

Table 2: Location of Internet Access in Ireland

LOCATION	% OF INTERNET USERS
Home	**11**
Work	32
School/college	22
Friends' houses	Remaining 35%
Cyber-cafes	
Public libraries	

Source: Amarach Consulting (03/2000), based on self selecting respondents who have a career or business interest in the Internet and answered the survey questionnaire on the website.

1.4. Profile of 'Irish Internet User

According to Amarach consulting the average Internet user is 32, male (65/35 in favour of males), single, childless, urban and employed usually in computer related, educational,

professional or managerial occupations. In Northern Ireland, the majority of users are in the high- income groups.

Majority are unwilling to pay for content. Users most frequently access electronic news, relating to commercial products and services, educational/research material and 11% access financial services information. However, according to Amarach (12/2000) most Internet users in Ireland access travel services. Indeed, those in the 25-34 age group, with home access were most interested in booking holidays over the Internet. In this survey it is also suggested that 60% would search for a job online, half read the electronic version of a newspaper and 40% handle personal finances online. Leisure patterns are perceived to have remained unchanged, but 43% stated they spent less time watching TV, 28% decreased their time spent watching videos, 11% decreased their radio listening.

1.5. E-commerce

It remains difficult to gain an accurate picture of Internet use in Ireland as survey material provides contradictory results. A report produced in June 1999 by The Irish Internet Association (IIA) suggests that there is an upward trend as people are becoming more confident and willing to carry out online transactions. Indeed, the IIA reports a 20% increase in those who have purchased online since June 1998.

1.6. Ireland's Online Consumer Market: Learning to Consume

However, other surveys by Amarach (04/2000) suggest that Irish Internet users have not adopted e-commerce and only 10% have bought online. This low percentage is attributed to low credit card ownership amongst Internet users and the fact that only 26% of Irish companies have a website with 9% selling on line. However, the survey does not state how many Irish Internet users buy from non-Irish companies. These results are supported by a survey carried out by the university of Ulster (06/2000, Irish Times), where it is stated that just 8% of businesses in the republic have an email address with 4% having a website. Yet in N. Ireland 30% of businesses have an email address and 25% have a website.

The debate surrounding e-commerce, and its success, continues, with numerous reports producing contradictory data. For example, in a recent report by Amarach consulting (2001) indicates that 15% of current Internet users are 'e-commerce active', where travel is the most popular online purchase. Further, although it is predicted that 43% of Irish adults will be using the Internet by 2003, it is also evident that 47% do not intend to use the Internet. Although, contradictory data is presented the majority of organisations such as Amarach, Nua, the Irish Internet Association and the information Society Commission

(ISC) all portray the notion that Ireland must strive towards becoming an 'information society' or 'knowledge based economy'. Thus, now, two points emerge. Firstly, those non-users are perceived as problematic in the quest towards becoming a 'true information' society and it is advocated that a greater number of access points should be provided. And secondly, it implicit within texts produced by consulting and research companies and the ISC that e-commerce is perceived as synonymous with the information society. In most reports relating to Internet access in Ireland, e-commerce is seldom overlooked, and reports produced by Amarach and Nua are no exception. For example, in most Nua related material, there is information relating to e-commerce and business. The reports tend to document the number of companies that have adopted e-commerce as a strategy and the ways in which patterns of consumption are effected by e-commerce. Similarly, a report published by the ISC entitled 'IT Access for All' (2000) makes the point that greater Internet access carries benefits for society in social and economic form. Furthermore, it is argued that consumers need to be educated to benefit e-commerce. Thus, the implication is that users need to learn how to consume not only to participate within, but also to construct the information society. In other words, Irish Internet users must become more accepting of the consumer-based ideology, which plays a role in the construction and perpetuation of the information society.

1.7. Critical Discourse

The research from the ISC reiterates the perceptions of government and businesses where the Internet is seen as having intrinsic benefits and it is believed that access inevitably improves quality of life. Much of the ISC's hope for the future focuses on the development of online government services and the improvement of access and training within schools. By way of contrast, this research adopts a critical stance, aiming to challenge 'Information Society' discourse, producing an alternative and critical perspective on domestic Internet consumption. The research can be located alongside the work by scholars, proposing similar critical perspectives towards the Internet and information society. Critical work has questioned the optimistic vision presented by the ISC and has centred on exclusion (O'Siochru, 1997), the position of Ireland in the information society (Preston, 1997; Wickham, 1997), Multi-media developments (Kerr, 1997) and democratic practices. One of the main themes to emerge from this work relating to Ireland refers to the idea that the discourse surrounding the Internet and multimedia is dominated by technical perceptions. According to both Preston (1997) and Kerr (2000) Ireland has focused on the supply side and is a significant producer in terms of multi-media developments. Indeed, Kerr suggests that in focusing on the economic or technical side of multi-media, there has been little attention given to the social and cultural implications of the new technology. This factor

could explain why, despite the high level of publicity from government departments, there is a low level of consumption both within schools and homes.

Consumption patterns in Ireland could also be related to content and its relationship with local culture. Kerr suggests that the Irish market is seen as too small to develop local content. However at the same time the government is developing an Irish information society. This would suggest that there is enormous tension between the local and the global as Ireland has to struggle to maintain its identity in an area where there are few cultural texts to mediate and define experience. Nevertheless, through looking at four case studies where both online and offline content is produced, Kerr examines whether cultural identities can be preserved in a global environment and argues that innovation is shaped local and the localisation of a product can make it more appealing. Kerr provides the example of the 'Colm Cille' project and RTE, who have developed Ireland centric online content and provide a direct link to Aertel, which allows the sharing of cultural texts.

1. 8. Ireland in Europe

These ideas provide support for those of Gitlin (1987) and Herman; McChesney (1999); and Corcoran (1999), in that the local is perceived as having equal importance to the global in marketing strategies and the commodification of culture. In terms of Ireland, then, a symbiotic relationship is identified between the local and the global and these ideas are related to those raised by Ryan (2000) in his discussion of the Irish identity in Europe. Ryan suggests that the European identity and the Irish identity are inextricably bound in the sense that the health and preservation of the Irish culture depends on it bringing its own identity to Europe and entering into relationships with other cultures. In other words, he is suggesting that in order to become and remain Irish Ireland must share its values to the European Union, this, he argues allows a communication of Irishness, enabling Ireland to remain Irish. Similarly, Europe is equally dependent on Ireland and the other members to contribute their own values and culture in order to create a Union that pertains towards a 'European' culture.

This localised ethnographic research has been carried out within a 'European context' and European policy surrounding the information society has framed the research questions and design. The following chapters report the findings and suggest that at the domestic level personal concerns shape use. Overall, participants in the domestic context focused on their own personal research concerning, for example, health and holidays. Participants engaged with wider national and European policy at a level of education, where parents experienced 'ideological pressure' to provide the Internet as a learning tool.

2. Literature and Context

Framing the Research

Research concerning the Internet, its culture and impact on the transformation of society has grown considerably over the last decade and has undergone a number of developments. Recent academic writing presents the Internet as embedded in the routine of everyday life, as affecting work and communication patterns, and other mass media. In approaching the study of the relationship between domestic Internet use and public communication in North County Dublin, I have adopted an approach similar to that of Slevin, where the Internet is understood as consumed and produced within localised online and offline contexts. Slevin suggests that in approaching an understanding of the Internet and its place in, relationship with, or impact on society, it is sagacious to examine the relationship between 'online mediated experiences' and 'the practical contexts of our day to day lives', allowing an emerging understanding of the mutuality of the relationship between online and offline behaviour interaction and discourse. Similarly, other scholars have researched the relationship between the online and offline spheres and new and old media through examining the construction of meaning at local levels and within specific contexts. For example, the impact of the Internet has been explored in relation to democracy public life and participation (Tsagarousianou, 1998; Schmidtke,1988; Brants, 1996, Dahlberg, 1998, 2001, O'Donell, 2000), e-business and globalisation (Castells, 2001; Slevin, 2000), other mass media (Roscoe, 1999, Rausmussen, 1999; Berdayes and Berdayes, 1998; Seiter, 1999) and in the domestic environment (Silverstone, 1992, 1994, 1999; Bakardjieva, 2001, Smith and Bakardjieva, 2001).

Since, the purpose of the Dublin project is to focus on the consumption of Internet media within the home and the ways, if at all, the home based Internet is used to participate in public forums, it is germane to review literature relating to both domestic use of the Internet and the way it has been adopted to communicate in public forums.

2.1. Domestication

As a tool of analysis for the chapters relating to home-workers and children's use I use the 'domestication'[5] concept (Silverstone 1992, 1994; Sorensen, 1994; Lie and Sorensen, 1996, Sorensen et. al. 2000). The concept of domestication and subsequent development and criticism (Ling and Thrane 2001), provides a framework for analysing the 'career' of media technologies in the home, and is presented as a struggle between the user and technology, where the user aims to tame, gain control, shape or ascribe meaning to the artefact. In

examining the question, "What is the role of technology in human action, and how does human action shape socio-technical relations?"(1994, p.3), Sorensen favours an approach to sensitive to the nuances of the consumer's relationship with the technology, where the focus rests with the agency of the user. In seeking an approach that, 'in principle empowers consumers/users,' (p.5), Sorensen turns to 'consumption studies' where the agency of the user is favoured, allowing 'tinkering' or the 'production acts of consumers' to shape the technology. Although, the user is perceived, through a web of negotiation, to give an artefact meaning, Sorensen maintains that 'tinkering' 'is a multi-dimensional process of negotiation, involving humans and non-humans, being conflict as well as collaboration,' (p.6) suggesting that the technology has the capacity, and potential, to direct human action. Thus, the central question concerning the relationship between humans and technology, asks whether artefacts are used in the prescribed or intended manner.

It is reiterated that 'there is no technology without action'; the premise being that users' actions matter, allowing a degree of 'interpretative flexibility' when they attempt to integrate a new technology into the domestic routine. Artefacts then are ascribed with meaning and functionality, which is bound with the reproduction and transformation of relationships. It is emphasised, however, that the domestication process is not necessarily harmonious, linear or complete. Rather, it is perceived as a process borne of, and producing, conflict, where the outcomes are heterogeneous and sometimes irresolvable. For example, it is noted that needs and households change, through break-up or children leaving. The implication being that the domestication process must continue, shaping the technology to new relationships and the emergence of new needs in the household.

Similarly, it is suggested, by Silverstone that technology[6] is consumed within specific and localised contexts, where it becomes inscribed with meaning, while reproducing values and transforming relations. The household is a space where technology is adopted, consumed, argued about and, with varying degrees of success integrated into domestic culture; the site where technology as an object and as mediator of public culture is shaped to meet the needs and reproduce the values of the home. In exploring the centrality of the media in everyday life and its integration into domestic patterns and routines, Silverstone provides a model through which the consumers' relationship with the television can be approached and analysed. It is noted that in bringing media technologies such as the television into the home, they must be managed, allowing them to find an appropriate place in the structure of the home. This process is referred to as domestication:

> "By domestication I mean something quite akin to the domestication of the wild animal…a process of taming or bringing under control. Technologies, television

> and television programmes must be domesticated if they are to find a space or place for themselves in the home" (Silverstone, 1994, p.83).

Domestication, then, refers to the movement of the artefact from the public realm to the private. The consumable, in the process of domestication, is transformed from an alienated and alienating product into a desirable artefact. In appropriating a good, consumers enter a struggle for control and the artefact becomes a site for the negotiation of meanings. For example, television as an object must be located in the home and subsequently rules and routines must be applied, to allow the household to re-articulate its values. The domestication of media technology requires active involvement, allowing the good to be integrated into the existing patterns in the household. It is at this level that families produce their media technology, creating them to reflect and articulate the habitus of the home.

The integration of media into the household follows a career, or process of 'domestication' and in identifying six[7] moments of consumption, which begins with production within the formal market economy and ends at the stage where the family is using the good to make a statement about the values of the home. Following the production stage in the process and before, the consumer reaches the purchasing stage, it is observed that s/he enters the phase of 'imagination', where the consumers imagination is fuelled by advertising and desire for the artefact is constructed. Subsequently, the good is purchased, or enters the stage of 'appropriation', and when the object is taken into the home the consumer plays an active role in shaping the object to merge with the physicality of the household, referred to as 'objectification', and its routines, and this process of ascribing meaning within household rituals and rules is 'incorporation'. Thus, throughout the process the object is given meaning until it not only reaches a 'taken-for-granted' status in the household, but also carries the required symbolic value to communicate information about the home to the outside world, and this final stage is referred to as 'conversion'.

Silverstone is careful to state that the stages of domestication, "can be considered as neither discrete, nor necessarily as evenly present, in all acts of consumption" (1994, pp. 123-4). Indeed, it is emphasised that this approach to consumption is a model or sketch; an ideal type. In building on this notion, I use examples of data to illustrate the often 'untidy' process of domestication. More specifically, I focus on the objectification and incorporation stages of the domestication process, and in doing so examine the tensions, changes, organisational processes and value judgements that emerge when the Internet is used in the domestic sphere for work purposes. I not only provide rich illustrations of the way in which home-workers arrange the household and change temporal routines to

accommodate the computer, while also shaping and integrating the computer into the existing habitus of the household. But this paper also stresses the ways in which such management strategies reinforce Silverstone (1992, 1994) and Sorensen's (1996) notion that the stages of domestication are not necessarily discreet or linear. Indeed, I suggest that participants blur the pre-defined stages of incorporation and objectification; not only rendering them indistinct, but also indicating that the process is far from smooth, frictionless and precise.

2.1.1. Where is Home? Towards a Definition

In exploring the consumption of media technologies, Silverstone establishes the household as a site for explicating the dynamics, conflicts and values surrounding both the performances of consumption and domesticity and their intrinsic character. Careful attention is given to the understanding of domesticity and it is explicated in three dimensions: home, family and household (for a comprehensive exploration of these terms see, Silverstone, 1994). In explicating the notion of 'home', Silverstone provides an understanding, which avoids imposing a normative conceptualisation onto this complex web of relations. Silverstone (1994) notes that the concept of 'home' has received criticism, suggesting that the idea of household is breaking down, is steeped in patriarchy and an outmoded concept for global/ 'home-less' individuals. Yet, despite the problematisation of 'home', he claims that notions of it have survived and conceives of it on a symbolic level, where its boundaries are 'under construction':

> "Home is a construct. It is a place not a space. It is the object of more or less intense emotion. It is where we belong…Home can be anything from a nation to a tent or a neighbourhood. Home, substantial or insubstantial, fixed or shifting, singular or plural, is what we can make of it" (1994, p.26).

Conceptions of home are also informed by the work of other scholars who have defined home with reference to its imagined and symbolic boundaries. For example, Morley (2000) notes that it is difficult to separate the idea of family from that of home, privatisation and domesticity. He argues that homes are created not only by networks of connections, but also through consumerism, where the consumption of television is often at the heart of home making and the privatisation process. Drawing on Douglas' work relating to the idea of the home as a 'gift economy', sustained by a system of exchanges, Morely suggests that viewing television has moved towards replacing food as one of the most significant keys in gift exchange and the ordering or time and space. Significantly, 'home-making' is frequently depicted on television as a desirable activity and demonstrates the way in which

television not only allows the emergence the private family, but also demonstrates how to perform 'private-ness', domesticity or home; indeed, 'successful' home and family life.

Thus, for Morley, the notion of home is a fluid and imagined construct, which emerges from webs of interaction and communication that identify those included and those excluded. Other scholars have also explored the symbolic value of the home. Similarly, Berg, in her study of the smart home, emphasises that house and home have different connotations. Using gender as a vehicle to distinguish house and home, she states:

> "There is a crucial difference between a house and a home. It is women, in the main, whose work and skills make the former into the latter" (1999, p.312).

Following Silverstone and others I present a version of home, which is defined as operating at both a material and symbolic level. 'Home', in this instance, refers to the domestic, private sphere, and is understood as a symbolic space, constructed by the family who live in a particular household. The family, then, is regarded as web of human relations, whose interactions within a household construct a home; a symbolic entity that articulates the values and habitus of the family, while also finding constitution within those values.

2.1.1. Moral Economy of the Household: From Formal to Personal Economy

The household is perceived as a site which enables the production of a home and within this process, the household has a complex double-edged role, where it is a site for consumption, allowing the creation of a symbolic reality representing 'home'; and the home, in turn, supports the values that allow its constitution and (re)construction. The construct of the home provides grounding for what Silverstone et al (1992) term the 'moral economy of the household'. This refers to the process by which alien and alienating commodities are appropriated from the 'formal' economy and brought into the domestic sphere, where they are inscribed with private meanings and transformed into acceptable symbolic objects, which construct and articulate the values of the home.

Thus, the moral economy of the household is conceived of as both an 'economy of meanings' and a 'meaningful economy' (Silverstone et. al., 1992, p.18). Firstly, the household is identified as a significant unit of consumption; the point at which goods are both consumed and appropriated into the private sphere of domesticity. Households, then, through their consumption of goods and services become actively engaged with the formal economy, allowing the appropriation of consumables into the domestic realm; or their appropriation into a 'personal economy of meaning.' Commodities, then, are given

meaning according to the values of the home and are re-defined, shaped and ascribed a function to adhere to the home's established routines, patterns and social hierarchy of gendered and aged roles. Through their introduction into the household, commodities become enmeshed within an economy of meanings, where they are moulded in accordance with the habitus of the home to produce a 'meaningful economy', which articulates of the values of the home. Thus, the home articulates the values that constitute it, which not only provides a knowledge base enabling 'meaningful' consumption and display of artefacts, but also allows the basis for the creation of ontological security.

2.2. The Media and the Public sphere

The research also aimed to examine the relationship between domestic Internet use and participation in public forums. As a starting point for analysis I have used research relating to the media and the public sphere and have focused on the way in which the Internet is perceived as offering opportunities to extend patterns of public communication.

The public sphere concept seems to have had a resounding influence on the way in which the media and public participation is framed, researched and analysed. The concept was adopted as a means to discuss Internet use in Coastal Town and the role it plays in contributing to and supplementing existing public spheres and forms of connectivity. The interviews and ethnographic research have produced data that makes an interesting contribution to debates surrounding the Internet and the public sphere. Although the data problematises the notion of a wholly web-based virtual sphere, examination of organisations such as the local swimming pool committee – campaigning to build a local community leisure centre – illustrates the ways in which the organisation had established a website, used email to disseminate information and held face-to-face meetings. Examination of the organisation suggests that localised websites and use of email take an information provision role - they provide the means to think about and imagine participation in local events; as opposed to facilitating interactive connectivity between citizens. Other research work examining the relationship between the Internet and participation within public forums has also drawn mixed conclusions about the status of Internet media in the formation of new public spheres and forms of connectivity. Indeed, the Internet is perceived as both having the potential to facilitate public communication, while shown as failing to perform as a 'true public sphere' (O'Donnell, 2001).

2.2.1. The Broadcast Media and The Public Sphere

Coleman (1998) addresses issues surrounding the media and the public sphere. In his article about Radio Ulster's 'Talk-Back' phone-in, Coleman is critical of phone-in programmes suggesting that members of the public are represented in 'radio talk' as The Public, united as an imagined community. With reference to the divided publics in Northern Ireland, Coleman the notion of Habermas's public sphere and argues that the idea of the public sphere, although an ideal-type is a useful tool at a theoretical level to examine participatory programmes such as phone-ins.

According to Habermas, the public sphere should be inclusive and allow citizens to participate in public discussion on a basis of equality and Coleman notes, with relation to the peace process in Northern Ireland, that talks at grass roots level are conducive to community building. In a society 'devoid of a shared identity of nationhood' (1998, p. 10), Coleman suggests that public talking on the radio between the two communities is unusual and suggests that this type of community building could be seen as the foundation for 'an authentic public sphere'. In his study, Coleman gathers data from two important events in the peace process and suggests that the phone-in programme represented a forum where the public could participate in an exclusive and democratic manner. Furthermore, Coleman refers to the presenter, David Dunseith, and notes that his role as a mediator moves towards public communication between divided communities. It is noted that politicians were invited onto the show which, Coleman argues, allowed the members of public to become The Public, or the 'Talk-back Public.' Thus, it is suggested that the radio show facilitated the emergence of a public sphere.

Like Coleman, O'Sullivan (1997) also explores the relationship between radio phone-ins and the public sphere. She examines the 'Gerry Ryan' show through an analysis of calls made to the show and follow-up interviews with callers. Using the concept of the public sphere, the purpose of the research is to examine whether the show can be understood as a part of the public sphere, or merely entertainment providing the illusion of public participation. O'Sullivan classifies the calls into four types, but she focuses on what she terms 'expressive calls', where the nature of the discussion allows debate and 'troubles telling calls', where the focus is on self-disclosure. Both these types of calls are perceived as crossing the boundaries between public and private in the sense that they foster debate and bring issues defined as private into the public forum.

O'Sullivan's findings are mixed as she discovers evidence to suggest that the Ryan show is both manipulative, manufacturing events for entertainment and a powerful platform for

public discussion. Like Livingtone and Lunt (1994), in their analysis of the chat show (see below), O'Sullivan discovered that the show's material was highly controlled; the producers censoring material and monitoring participation. From this perspective, it is argued that the public sphere concept is not wholly adequate to define the discourse surrounding the Ryan show. However, O'Sullivan maintains that although a focus on the individual can be perceived as creating a culture where the individual personalises problems, rather than looking at the wider social structure for explanation, there is value to be gained from publicises the personal. Indeed, it is suggested that, although the debate is not necessarily rational and critical, this type of participation may have implications for change in both the lives of individuals and wider Irish society.

Other scholars have demonstrated the democratic potential of public spheres created by the broadcast media. For example, Dahlgren (1995) has explored the relationship between television and the public sphere. Dahlgren follows the rise and decline of the ideal and public sphere and documents much of the critical literature, which focuses on the exclusive nature of the public sphere. Dahlgren notes that there is not a model of the public sphere that is applicable to all epochs and social contexts and argues that television has become a dominant institution of the public sphere. Dahlgren suggests while drawing on Habermas's notion of communicative rationality, that social interaction is imperative for the formation of the public sphere. He argues that although television viewing is largely a domestic activity, it can provide the impetus for social interaction outside the domestic sphere, which enables new ways of seeing the cultural and political environment. While it is recognised that television viewing does not always stimulate critical political debate, Dahlberg argues that it would be equally facile to dismiss television as an institution of the public sphere, and its potential to bridge the gap between the private and public sphere. Indeed, he states:

> "Thus, while most viewing still takes place in the home, which is traditionally seen as a private space, this domestic site of mediated publicness is where talk about public matters may begin – hence my assertion that reception is often the first step of interaction" (1995, p.18).

Similarly, Livingstone and Lunt (1994), in their comprehensive study incorporating audience research and the analysis of broadcast material, explore the changing institutions of the public sphere and the slippery relationship between the public and private sphere. It is suggested that the talk show genre can allow an alternative forum for discussion and the formation of opinion. An interesting point to emerge from the study relates to the playing out of power relations. For example, the authors argue that the TV discussion programme transforms the relationship between expert and lay person, or public. In this genre, the

producers of the programme become the facilitators of discussion and the 'audience' are in a position, albeit within an approved framework, the drive the process of debate and opinion formation. On the other hand, it is argued that while many groups are given a voice within the public forum, this genre does not always transform dominant power relations. Instead, it may simply provide an illusion of wider participation and the creation of an inclusive public sphere. Thus, they highlight the contradictory nature of this genre, but maintain that such programmes offer the possibility of participation.

In a similar vein, Stein (1998), using Barber's concepts relating to democratic talk argues that 'access television' is crucial in for the functioning of a successful democracy. Access television represents public forum for grassroots groups to discuss issues relating their context. Stein argues that the various functions of talk, such as agenda setting and community building, provide a suitable framework for understanding the democratic potential of access television. Using data from seven case studies, Stein suggests that access television represents more than a pressure group in the sense that it seeks to transform social relations. Indeed, she draws comparisons with the Habermasian public sphere and she notes that access television not allow only political discussion to flourish, but also the forum is free from economic and structural constraints relating to editorial issues. Thus, Stein is suggesting that access television moves towards to re-invention of the public sphere, yet she also notes that these projects face difficulties in terms of funding. This problem relating to funding seems to undermine the notion that access TV can function as a public sphere, as it suggests that this forum faces the strain of structural inequality, which closes down the potential rational discourse.

2.2.2. The Internet and The Public Sphere: Democratic Potential?

The notion of the public sphere is recognised as an ideal type and qualitative category of analysis; yet, the both old and new media's status as a public sphere is contested (O'Sullivan, 1997). On the one hand some writers suggest that interactive forums within the broadcast media begin to open space for discussion and debate about cultural, social and political issues (Coleman, 1998). Whereas, on the other hand, writers such as Livingstone and Lunt suggest that such forums can fail to challenge traditional unequal power relations and merely provide an illusion of democratic participation. However, in addition to this disparity, others have advocated the Internet as providing, at least, the opportunity for the formation of new public spheres. Writers such as Tsagarousianou (1998) and Schmidtke (1988) take an optimistic approach and it is argued that the Internet has enormous democratic potential.

Structural constraints can restrict the formation of new public spheres and scholars such as Dahlberg (1998) have explored the problems associated with 'new publics' and publicness in relation to the communication opportunities presented by the Internet. Dahlberg has appropriated the concept of the public sphere to examine the relationship between the Internet and new forms of democracy. In his exploration of the Internet's democratic potential, Dahlberg uses a political economy approach combined with the literature on 'cyberspace' from the communications and cultural studies cannons. Drawing on Habermas' concept of the public sphere, Dahlberg suggests there are two main approaches that have emerged relating to the emergence of 'new' public spheres. On the one hand, the interactive space created by the computer network is perceived as 'providing the means for a revival of the Greek Agora and Eighteenth century Parisian café culture' (1998: 71). Or as Rheingold suggests, the Internet allows the formation of Habermas' ideal public sphere, in the sense that people can enter the forum and debate issues on equal terms. Indeed, the Internet being more democratic than other forms of media as it not only allows interaction between citizens, but also the provision of national and local government information.

On the other hand, Dahlberg points out that the Internet is largely colonised by private enterprise. Privatising of the Internet has lead to the commercialisation and commodification of the network. It is suggested that a commercial Internet privileges information that has a greater market value, undermining the notion of democracy and giving power and control to an elite minority. Dahlberg's conclusions provide support for the second notion, concerning the commercialisation of the Internet, as he argues that 'the net's potential to enhance democracy is being eroded' (1988, p.79). Indeed, he suggests that for online democracy to emerge successfully, the technology associated with computer networks must be examined within a social context. That is, the network must be contextualised within political and economic forces and he suggests that providing the appropriate technology for all citizens is not adequate for creating the conditions for democratic participation. To enhance this argument, Dahlberg provides an example of an organisation for homeless people in Santa Monica using the Internet for petitioning. He notes that, in this instance, the provision of the technology was embedded into the social situation and wider political environment. Indeed, he states,

> "[There] was a political system where public opinion was already seen as a legitimate form of political expression. The outcome may have been quite different in a less democratic context" (1988, p.79).

Indeed, Dahlberg is suggesting that the Internet has a potential for democracy under social conditions that favour public participation and communication above the commercialisation

and commodification of the Internet (see Robins and Webster 1999 for a discussion of commodification, ICTs and the political process).

O'Donnell (2001) in developing a framework to analyse 'alternative' media on the Internet, draws on the Habermasian public sphere, and like Dahlberg points to some of the conditions that hinder the development of online public spheres. O'Donnell defines 'alternative' media on the Internet as media produced by social movements and grassroots groups and she suggests that this media can be placed along side other alternative media forms such as alternative newspapers and community radio. In her study of 'Womenlink': an e-mailing list for women's organisations, O'Donnell makes two main points. Firstly, that although the Internet was perceived as having democratic potential, the groups relied on traditional print methods of information dissemination and communication. Secondly, she argues that the Womenslink mailing list failed to act as a public sphere as it did not promote interaction on an equal and uninhibited basis between participants.

O'Donnell's work is interesting as she tests out the possibility of online public spheres via an empirical investigation, but overall, she discovered that women's groups fail to make vast use of the Internet in their campaigns, and instead rely on newsletters or postal mail-outs. Indeed, O'Donnell argues that the Internet, despite having the potential, was not used by the women to interact with the global women's movement. Indeed, O'Donnell suggests that there are not only difficulties in making links between the local and the global in terms of the connection between women's groups, but also that Womenslink did not perform as the ideal public sphere. It is argued that Womenslink failed as a successful public sphere as it did not permit rational discourse. This failure occurred on two levels. Firstly, the Internet was used as an information source, rather than a place to foster interaction between citizens and secondly, participants felt the environment was not conducive to rational debate and were unable to express their views. O'Donnell suggests that participants expressed fears concerning public discussions about political issues and this was perceived to develop from a 'culture of fear in Northern Ireland, which inhibited discussion of political issues' (2001, p.47).

3. Methodology

3.1. The Social Shaping of Technology: A Starting Point

Academic discourse surrounding the conceptualisation and exploration of the Internet has rapidly developed, paving the way for research to focus on the interplay between local and

global and public and private in understanding the shaping of Internet media (Castells 1996, 2001). And, significantly, the domestic environment, or household, has emerged as a fruitful area of study, in terms of the Internet's imposition and negotiated position in this private environment (Silverstone, 1994, 1996, 1999; Sorensen and Lie, 1996). This type of 'localised' study has developed from perspectives which emphasise the 'social shaping of technology (SSOT), where the user is perceived to take a dominant role in defining the nature, scope and functions of the technology. This approach aims to question discourses surrounding technological determinism, where technology is perceived to develop independently of society, having a subsequent impact on societal change. This perspective not only has resonance at an academic level, but also at a wider European and policy level. In prioritising the user, the perspective informs the perspective is informative at the level of the 'European information society' in the sense that s/he can be perceived as not only participating within the 'E-Europe' agenda, but also actively creating an environment of inclusion and access to the information society.

This research is about users and the way in which they shape their Internet media to have meaning in their everyday life. The research examines the way in which meaning is constructed within the domestic environment; how it is manipulated to complement existing patterns of behaviour and routine; and the way in which that construction of meaning can extend into public forums, rending the boundaries between public and private difficult to distinguish. Since, the purpose of this research of the research is to ask what domestic Internet users 'do' with their media and how they construct it as meaningful in the existing network of everyday life, a qualitative approach has been adopted, which prioritises the perception of the user. Similar approaches have been used by Smith and Bakardjieva, (200) in their examination of Internet consumption and the domestic environment and in which they sought to explore 'behaviour genres' that were established in relation to Internet media and their meaning within the domestic context.

Since the research sought to examine not only perceptions and constructions of meaning relating to Internet media within the home, but also the ways in which domestic Internet use facilitate participation in public forums, I adopted an ethnographic approach to the research. This allowed an in-depth and rich exploration of the way in which users in a specific locale use the Internet to facilitate communication with in public forums. The ethnographic approach provided a clear picture of the way in which domestic Internet users balanced the relationship between management of the Internet within the home with movement into the public sphere. It not only allowed thorough semi-structured interviews to be carried out, but also enabled participant observation within public forums and campaigns that could be

accessed both at a face-to-face and 'virtual' level. This approach follows that of Miller and Slater (2001), where their ethnographic study of the Trinidad and the Internet allowed the emergence of a fascinating, rich and highly analytical account of the way in which 'Trini' people had used the Internet. This included to supplement their existing behaviour patterns and routines, but also challenged the notion that the online and offline or real and virtual spheres can be separated and perceived ad independent entities.

3.2. Research Location

Following the approach defined by Miller and Slater, I have carried out an ethnographic study which not only examines the construction of the public and private spheres, but also investigates the way in which users inhabit and traverse the real and virtual realms in an attempt to organise and manage domestic and public life. The research is based on ethnographic data and interviews with domestic Internet users[8]. The research was carried out between January 2001 and January 2002 in a small coastal town in North County Dublin.

The research was carried out in 'Coastal Town', which is located 20 miles north of Dublin City on the East coast of Ireland. Coastal Town was originally a fishing village, but has recently grown and now has a mixed population of older families and commuters; Coastal Town currently has a population of 11, 000. Recently, there has been a vast increase in building and construction work, creating new estates and apartments for both commuters and enabling some of the existing Coastal Town population to buy a second house for letting. Coastal Town also has a social housing scheme[9], indicating the mix in social class that currently populates the town. Despite the mixed population, the majority of families in the town consist of a married couple and three children, where the male works full time and the female works part time (Census data, 1998).

3.3. Methods[10]

An ethnographic approach has been adopted in conducting the research and this has involved:

- Participant observation in organisations and groups in Coastal Town, such as the anti-landfill campaign, the swimming pool committee and the local school.
- Twenty semi-structured interviews were carried out with households between March 2001 and December 2001. The sample was selected through a snowballing technique and the interviews were carried out in the home of the participant. The interview lasted between one and two hours and discussed:

    - The participants' adoption, use, incorporation and management of, and feelings towards, the Internet and PC.
    - Participants patterns of media consumption,
    - The type of web based content they consumed,
    - How this related to their consumption old media
    - What they felt to be the advantages and disadvantages associated with the access to the Internet in the home.
- A survey of 250 houses in Coastal Town, where participants were asked whether they had Internet access at home, how often and for what purpose they used the Internet (see appendix, for a sample questionnaire).
- Examination of local newspapers and community related information

3.4. Analysis

The following chapter provides details of participants use patterns and some of the ways they chose to appropriate the Internet in the home.

4. Appropriation and Use

The interviews and questionnaire revealed that participants engaged in certain use patterns and ways of using the Internet. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the reasons for appropriating the Internet; the strategies used to negotiate web-based content; and the main uses of the Internet for the participants in Coastal Town.

4.1. Appropriation of the Internet

When asked about why they had chosen to invest in an Internet enabled computer, participants indicated the following reasons:

- It had been perceived as essential for work purposes
- It was considered necessary for education
- They felt pressurised to be 'Internet literate'

4.1.1. Work Purposes

Some participants worked at home and were dependent on their Internet connections and others who worked outside the home also considered an Internet connection to be essential to complete work tasks and keep track of email. The following examples of data illustrate work associated reasons for appropriation (Working at home is discussed in a later major section):

> AP: I got the computer for business reasons in the first place because I run my own business from home
> GR: I've been into to computers since 1978, communications is important in any business.
> ON: I got the Internet because in my last job I was working from home a lot.

Other participants who ran businesses from home also perceived the Internet to be essential for advertising and communication purposes, illustrating the close relationship between work and the Internet:

> FA: I rely on it for my business, I don't advertise, I rely on web-based distribution or word of mouth.

4.1.2. Educational Purposes: Ideological Pressure: Perceived Educational Benefit

Many participants with children and those studying perceived Internet to bring educational benefits. It seems that the technology is perceived as beneficial to educational chances. The technology is inscribed with meaning, which has ramifications associated with life chances and quality of life. Significantly, Elaine's everyday use of the Internet centres around her daughter's education and she perceived the computer and Internet as tools to enact their values surrounding education and learning, rather than as possessions to display their material wealth. Other participants appropriated technology with a specific educational aim in mind:

> David: The children were getting to an age where they needed a basic understanding of computer skills. I'm involved in education and it was becoming more obvious that kids have keyboard and computer skills at a younger and younger age and its becoming increasingly typical in schools and education generally.

David was concerned for the education of his children and felt that an Internet connection would be beneficial keep up to date with government policy on the information society and education (see website: www.isc.ie). There is a close relationship between ideology and education and this was recognised by some of the participants. This symbiosis is also a significant factor in linking together the stages of appropriation and conversion for these households. Indeed, in the above example, David presents the following as the reason for appropriating a computer and modem: "The children were getting to an age where they needed a basic understanding of computer skills." Thus, in expressing the desire to

participate in new educational methods, the household is also making a public statement about their values and priorities.

Many participants cited ideological or educational reasons for investing in an Internet enabled computer. It is difficult to separate ideological reasons from educational reasons as participants often stated that inclusion and involvement in the information society were important for education. Thus, ideology surrounding education was frequently discussed in terms of the infiltration of the computer skills into schools. Furthermore, participants were eager to communicate that they had invested in the computer or an upgrade for educational purposes:

> Anne: We felt that we had to upgrade because they're using them in school so much now…well, its all the thing, isn't it?
>
> Joe: They use software at school…Webmonkey, I got this laptop and they use it.
>
> Kathrine and Brian: We got it for the children. Teaching through games. Skills they're learning now will be built upon and develop as communication technology develops….
> …. Even the youngest is learning how to use a mouse!
>
> Mary: They use it a lot for their home work … if they have a project.

Most participants who had children were keen to stress that they were aware of the emphasis in schools in computer skills and information society. Indeed, most participants stated that they had purchased the computer to enhance their children's education in terms of providing extra resource materials or as a means to participate in what is perceived as the information society, or current discourse surrounding education. Thus, as with the example from David, many participants were keen to present themselves as individuals who appropriated the technology for a substantial reason. Furthermore, the reason for appropriating (education) also became the key in making the Internet meaningful to the outside world. Indeed, education was attached to the Internet, converting it into meaningful currency to others in the outside world. (Education is discussed in more detail later in this report.)

4.1.3. Ideological Pressure

Most participants cited a specific reason for appropriating the Internet, but this was often driven by a need to become Internet literate. For example, the following Marie clearly

appropriated Internet media with this specific aim in mind. The situation in this family was interesting given that they owned three computers with Internet connections. The husband, Patrick and all the five children were computer and Internet literate:

> "In the house we have 3 computers, M has one upstairs – he spends a lot of time on the Internet. We have the family one and A bought this one for herself because the one in the other room was being used a lot... there was always someone on it."

In this situation, the 'family' computer was perceived as a valuable research tool and was used by the children of school age (11-17) for school home-work and projects. The computer upstairs was appropriated by the oldest son (21). He felt it necessary to have access to his own computer as he had an IT related job. Marie, the mother purchased the third computer, after completing a computing course at Coastal Town community centre. Marie decided to attend a course as she felt inadequate in comparison with the rest of the family. Furthermore, it was becoming increasingly apparent that she was unable to participate in certain aspects of the 'information society'. Indeed, she felt a pressure to conform; to learn the language and culture of the Internet to continue performing as a competent citizen:

> "I bought that for myself [points to computer on a desk], I saved up…. I did a course in the community centre and I did this last summer [beginners' course in computing at Coastal Town community centre]. We touched on everything and got very good notes.… I had everyone in this house, here was the mother – the only one…I didn't even know how to switch the computer on, so I said 'I'm going to have to do something about this.' I was beginning to hear web addresses and email on radio, I knew nothing only words, so I said, 'I'm going to try and see if I like it and if I do well and good and practice at home and then do an inter-mediate course.' That is how I felt, that everyone was computer literate, I felt that I didn't want to lose out. I was missing out."

The extracts from Patrick and Marie illustrate the close relationship between ideology and education. Marie describes how she had no experience of using the computer or Internet and was beginning to feel 'left behind' and wished to be as knowledgeable and articulate as the rest of the family. In this instance, Marie was keen to learn a new language and culture that would provide the means to engage with dominant discourse and public culture. She implies that her lack of knowledge was hindering her from participating in certain aspects of public culture. Indeed, she states, 'I was beginning to hear web addresses and email on radio, I knew nothing only words'. This case is interesting as her perceived lack of knowledge prompted her to, 'practice at home and then do an inter-mediate course,' and eventually Marie purchased her own computer. The participants desire to engage with the

information society led her to consume both courses and hardware, which in turn has allowed her to further participate in public culture.

4.2. Internet Consumption and Structured Use

Participants consumed in a specific and structured way. Use patterns are personalised and specific, relating to the privatised lifestyles of participants. The majority of the participants stated that they did not 'surf' the Internet. Using a search engine was perceived as too time consuming, as the majority of websites retrieved were considered irrelevant and unreliable. The time consuming nature of surfing was also considered problematic as the activity engaged the phone line for long periods of time and this was perceived as expensive, inconvenient and a disadvantage of having an Internet connection. Thus, participants tended to use sites they had an address for such as the BBC or the Irish Times or sites they already had on their favourites list such as 'pigsback.com' or Amazon.

4.3. Consumption of Personally Relevant Content

The majority of participants were concerned to engage with content that had a personal relevance. Their choice of web based content related to personal aspects of their every day lives. Other personally relevant tasks involved researching and organising travel, holidays and reading online newspapers and weather reports. Overall participants were less enthusiastic about online shopping and were reluctant to buy online using their credit cards. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of participants would buy from websites they perceived as 'genuine' and 'trust worthy.' Participants considered the Amazon site 'safe', and many people purchased books for themselves and as presents for others using this system.

Thus, the majority of Internet use centred around 'private' issues as opposed to perceiving the Internet as a tool for 'public' or political engagement. Participants, in their 'personal and private' use of the Internet, engaged with content in a specific and structured manner. For example, one family used the Internet for the purposes of moving house. They were moving from South Africa to Coastal Town and used the Coastal Town based websites to provide the children access to information about the Coastal Town environment:

> "We used it to move house and get more information on Ireland; looked at estate agents. We were aware of what Ireland was all about before we came over. We looked at Coastal Town websites and showed the children what Coastal Town was like."

4.4. 'Use Patterns' in Coastal Town

Work and education were important in the decision making process surrounding appropriation and subsequent use patterns. However, there were other patterns of use displayed by participants. It is relevant at this stage to provide a summary of the types of Internet consumption with which participant engaged. This summary is derived from the survey, interview and participant observation material.

The survey of the Coastal Town Rock housing estate revealed:

- Use was split evenly between males and females, suggesting that use patterns were not gendered
- The Majority of users were between 31 and 40
- Use centred around email and work, rather than leisure

Overall, most participants perceived the Internet as a means to use email and maintain contact with friends and family. The following provides further detail on the use patterns. The in-depth interviews confirmed and complemented the results of the survey and revealed a high proportion of people had adopted the Internet and adapted it to meet certain use patterns. The majority of use related to 'everyday use', where participants personalised the Internet, constructing it as a technology to supplement to enactment of existing habits and routines. Other types of use centred around consumption health and educational material. Few people used the Internet to look at Coastal Town based material.

4.4.1. 'Everyday' Use

Participants shaped the Internet to meet a set of specific needs and use patterns centred around the resolution of personal and privatised issues. The majority of participants stated that they used the Internet for making travel arrangements and researching their holiday destinations, buying books from Amazon.com and reading newspapers or checking the weather fore-cast. Use patterns were further personalised with many participants using both the email facility and web-based material to maintain contact with families living abroad. The majority of adult participants stated that they did not associate the Internet with leisure, preferring the television; whereas children often stated that looked at sites relating to television programmes or music, suggesting that their Internet use centred around leisure as opposed to functional use.

4.4.2. Health Related Material

Many participants were keen to use the Internet as a means to research health issues and learn more about their own conditions and those of family members. This involved the consumption of non-interactive material such as that found in medical journals or involvement in bulletin board forums or involvement in interactive sites relating to a condition

4.4.3. Educational Material

Education was often part of participant's use patterns and this type of use ranged from the education or young children, where parents assisted with home-work, to the education of older children, where they used the Internet to carry out independent additional research for a project to use in higher education, where again the Internet was used for individual research, staying in touch with tutors and other students and library research.

4.4.4. Maintaining Family Contact

Both websites and email were employed as a means to stay in touch with dispersed family members who lived either in other parts of the country or abroad. This type of contact has implications for the way in which participants perceived family relations, and such use patterns will be discussed in subsequent sections of the paper.

4.4.5. Content relating to 'older'/other media

The majority of participants were also keen to pursue websites that related to older or other media.

Integration

It would be facile to suggest that the Internet is consumed in isolation from other media, having little or no impact on existing patterns and habits if consumption. The data suggest, instead of engaging with the Internet in isolation, participants use the Internet along side other media in the household, and in doing so change their patterns of consumption to accommodate web-based content. Through the introduction of the Internet into the household, participants are consuming both old and new media, where Internet use is integrated into the existing pattern of media use. Thus, participants use 'old/other' and 'new' media simultaneously, where the Internet supplements existing media use.

My data suggest that participants perceive the Internet as a tool to be integrated into their existing pattern of media. This concept can be recognised when participants discuss their uses of the Internet within the domestic environment. When elaborating how their Internet

use relates to their engagement with established media, it is possible to observe that the Internet becomes embedded into an established web of meaning and media that has been created by the participant. For example, participants continued to read the print versions of the newspaper, while reading specific sections of the online newspaper, such as the weather and property sections:

> "I'd still buy a newspaper, I wouldn't just go to the Irish Times website. I go especially if I'm away. I look at I stuff when I'm away."

In a similar vein, the following extracts of data demonstrate how the Internet has been manipulated and personalised to complement and supplement the existing patterns of media consumption:

> "I went to Australia and searched for accommodation. I planned the trip; I would no longer buy 'rough guides."

The first extract demonstrates how the participant has used the Internet as a tool to enhance a situation in the physical world, more specifically a holiday. The latter three extracts make a similar point, but are more specific in the sense that they show how participants have shaped the Internet to complement their other media and communication use.

The introduction of the Internet fails to surpass offline media use, but instead supplements such engagement, allowing media use to cross the online and offline realms. There is leakage between the two spheres, making it difficult to determine where offline or 'old' media use ends and online or 'new' media use begins. Users, in their consumption, merge media, creating manifold consumption patterns, involving the consumption of both object and content. For example, participants both watched television while using the Internet and engaged with content relating to television programmes.

The merging of media consumption is multi-dimensional and occurs on three related levels:

(i) The consumption of online and offline material, where both types of content supplement and compliment each other.

(ii) In dialogue, where new media is used to interact with/comment on old media

(iii) The simultaneous consumption of new and old media as objects.

Merging Content

The Internet is used by participants to enhance and supplement television and film watching or radio listening and the participants would access the corresponding websites. For example, my data suggest that participants use the various on and offline media forms in

association with each other. For example, the online weather forecast is used to supplement the weather forecast provided in old media outlets:

> AP: When we are going out sailing, we listen to the whether forecast on RTE, but we get more details on the shipping forecast from the Internet.

Similarly, one participant stated after watching the film Erin Brochervich, he and his wife were encouraged to learn more about the history of the main character using the Internet:

> "You will look up things that you would never have bothered with before. For example watched Erin Brochervich and we were curious as it's based on a true story. She had given an interview to the telegraph and we were wondering what happened after the film ends. Only afterwards I realised I wouldn't have been able to do this 10 years ago – I wouldn't have bothered trying to find this interview. I logged on to the telegraph website."

Engaging in Dialogue

The above extract is revealing as not only does it illustrate the relationship between media, but it demonstrates some of the effects of allowing the Internet has infiltrated the media network in the household. Indeed, the participant acknowledges the way in which the Internet has changed his behaviour: "Only afterwards I realised I wouldn't have been able to do this 10 years ago – I wouldn't have bothered trying to find this interview". Similarly, other participants used email to make comments about programmes watched on television. For example, the following participant was keen to give feedback to an arts programme:

> "Newsnight on a Friday does a review of the arts. They were talking about Seamus Heany's new collection of poems and they came out with this theory that this is a new collection for him - it showed how much older he was as he was being much more reflective and he was doing these poems that were eulogies of dead poets. The main point was that he was getting much more obviously highbrow and this was because he had reached a certain stage in his life. I thought yeah, but no and I got down 'fieldwork' that had three eulogies in of poets, it had 2 adaptations of Dante's inferno, it had everything in that they said he was doing now. So, they said at the end, if you've got any comments here's the website, so I went on to the website. You had to send a review, so I sent in a review of their review and made my point, you'll find that he's been doing that all along and contributed that way."

The above extract not only demonstrates the relationship between television and the Internet, but also the way in which other media such as books also enter the equation. The

relationship between media is complex and intricate as not only are new and old media used in conjunction with each other, but the Internet is used to enhance engagement with old media, in terms of gaining a wealth of information and engaging in dialogue with content.

Merging Media: As Objects

At this third level, the emphasis shifts slightly to incorporate the notion that participants not only merge their consumption at a level of content, but also in the sense that the media as objects are consumed simultaneously. The extracts of data are revealing in that they demonstrate the way in which Internet use is not only integrated into existing patterns of consumption, but also displaces consumption habits, changing them to include the Internet.

> "I use my laptop from work and I plug it in upstairs. I've got 2 lines, but sometimes I watch TV at the same time."

> "I still buy books, books have websites and I look up the sites."

> "I use email to contact my friends who are writers and work at home. I email them first to see if its ok to ring and if they're not busy I phone them."

The first extract is interesting, the participant states "…sometimes I watch TV at the same time," and this clearly suggests that the Internet is used in conjunction with existing media. In this instance, the Internet appears to be accepted as another medium to be used along side the TV, rather than as an entity that exists apart and disembedded, from the wider routine of the domestic media network. Indeed, the latter and the other examples of data show the Internet to be a network created and manipulated by participants and used along side other mechanisms and media that give meaning to, and are given meaning through, the performance of everyday life in the household.

5. Working at Home and the Organisation of the Domestic Internet

5.1. Creating Home and Managing Work

Working at home requires a degree of skill in the management of physical and symbolic boundaries. This was a re-occurring theme throughout the majority of the 20 home-based interviews conducted for this study. The interviews involved assessing the shaping of the personal computer and Internet media[11] by families in the domestic environment. They were also used to ascertain how families thought, felt and discussed Internet media; whether it resolved problems; created arguments and the extent to which it both transformed and slotted into existing household and family routine. The purpose of this chapter, however, is

to focus on boundary management strategies employed by home-workers to define 'family' and 'work space'. In addition to discussing boundary management in the house, I was concerned to discover the role of the domestic environment in shaping and governing Internet use. The interview with John[12], a participant running a business from his home study, focused on how the Internet was used for work purposes in the home, the rules and patterns surrounding use, the way it was used alongside other media in the household and the physical location of the computer. Since John lived and worked in the same place, the conversation inevitably turned to boundary management and how John maintained clear distinctions between work and family life and leisure time. In explaining his feelings and strategies on working from home John related an anecdote about the hazards and joys of home working, where a vigilant family member had carefully inspected the contacts of his bin, which was kept just outside the study door and broadcast to other family members, "the bald gut just ate an orange". I felt that this scenario clearly illustrated the need for successful, and sometimes the failure of, boundary construction in the home as a means to organise, attempt to control or domesticate the Internet in the home environment.

The creation of a meaningful 'home' space was of paramount importance to participants who managed work at home. Most participants recognised that conscious attempts are required to manage boundaries and conversations with participants inevitably focused on management strategies and the ways in which the intrusion of the technology was balanced with its integration into the household routine. The Internet can disrupt the intricate dynamics and balance of household routine and value system, provoking a need to manage the intrusion; prompting users to re-affirm the family's sense of stability and coherence. The interviews and conversations with users are intriguing, providing insight into, and appreciation of, the manifold processes embarked on by home-workers in attempting to shape and organise the Internet. Most users, like John, carefully balanced the 'intrusion' of the technology and its ability to disrupt the household's value system, accepting the inevitability of some changes, with active attempts to 'domesticate' or 'organise' the new medium. Indeed, on the one hand, the Internet provokes purposeful changes in the household's arrangements, relating to issues such as, spatial and temporal arrangements, suggesting that technology determines use. Yet, on the other hand, the user gives thoughtful attention to the ways the Internet can be organised in terms of its function, location, spatial and temporal boundaries and the relationship with other media in the household to maintain and perpetuate the family's value system and sense of stability.

5.2. Domestication: A Conceptual Framework

As a further tool of analysis I use the 'domestication'[13] concept (Silverstone 1992, 1994; Sorensen, 1994; Lie and Sorensen, 1996) and it is applied to the data as a means to further analyse the struggle to manage the Internet and work in the home. The concept of domestication and subsequent development and criticism (Ling and Thrane 2001), provides a framework for analysing the 'career' of media technologies in the home, and is presented as a struggle between the user and technology, where the user aims to tame, gain control, shape or ascribe meaning to the artefact.

5.3. User Agency and Technological 'Intrusion'

Participants, such as Paul who worked outside the home[14], confidently asserted that the Internet represented nothing more than a 'tool', the implication being that the technology had caused minimal disruption to household routine and was firmly domesticated and relegated to the spare room. And, for some participants this certainly appeared to be the case, with Paul revealing that his modem was currently broken, it had been for two weeks, he had not missed it and was in no hurry to have it fixed. For those whose work was largely home based and were quite dependent on their modems, the situation was less clear-cut; with integration, of the technology presenting tensions which manifested as a struggle between the accommodation and management of the technology and its (re)-construction as an acceptable and useful artefact and symbol within the household.

Although the Internet presented challenges and creating tensions, it emerged that home-workers did attempt to exercise some control over the Internet. When discussing the techniques employed to manage and accommodate the technology and distinguish work from home, participants invariably referred to three factors:

- The careful organisation of space, furniture and ornamental and technological artefacts to distinguish work from leisure/home/family space;
- The division of time into 'work' and 'family/leisure';
- The attachment of specific meaning to all household media to distinguish work and leisure activities.

However, such careful attention to domestic arrangements not only points to a desire to shape the technology and curb the Internet's imposition. It also suggests the way in which the intrusion of the technology can incite certain behaviour patterns, as home-workers begin to accommodate the imposition of the technology in private space. The integration of the Internet into the domestic environment is double-edged in the sense that the arrangements

made to accommodate the technology also served as the means to integrate and domestic the technology. This highlights the close relationship between the management and accommodation of the technology and its reproduction as a meaningful, domesticated artefact. The Internet, as a focus for work in the home, becomes a site for transformation and I identify the emergence of a complex dynamic between management and accommodation, or organisation and acceptance of the Internet and its intrusion into the private sphere. For example, considerable attempts are made to 'tame' the technology in the sense that it is placed in a specific room and ascribed a routine that poses minimal disruption to family life. However, participants like John could be perceived as being 'determined' by the technology; the changes to temporal routines and spatial arrangements in the household merely harbouring the encroachment of web-based work into private space.

The Internet is ascribed status within an *economy of meaning*, where it articulates a symbolic reality and plays a role in producing new meanings, domestic arrangements and relationships. Not only do home-workers play an active role in shaping and constructing, domesticating and organising *their* Internet, but they and their domestic arrangements are to an extent reconstituted by the intrusion of the technology. Thus, when explicating the introduction and integration of the Internet into the household, attention must not only be given to the users' naturalisation or cultivation the technology, but the way in which the home Internet has the capacity to both reflect and reform and sustain domestic arrangements.

This tension is clearly articulated in the work of both Silverstone and Sorenson, where it is acknowledged that the domestication process is problematic, not always seamless and sometimes unsuccessful. Indeed, it is argued that in appropriating media technology families not only integrate the technology, but also to a certain extent change their behaviour because of the technology. This theme is implicit through Silverstone's body of work and in particular it is evident when he discusses the way in which television has "spawned supporting technologies and created new spaces: TV dinners, the TV lounge, the open plan itself…" (1992, p.100). The implication being that although families actively engage in the domestication process, the technology plays a role in changing some habits and behaviours. Although he recognises that media technologies represent a site of struggle and that artefacts can have an impact on human action, he states, "it is the computer which is, as often as not, transformed by…incorporation, much more than the routines of the household" (1992, p.20).

Those working at home prioritised the negotiation of physical space and spatial and temporal boundaries and in Silverstone's frame of reference, this activity would be understood under the headings of 'objectification' and 'incorporation'. Objectification refers to the display of technology and incorporation refers to the integration of technology 'into the routines of daily life' (1992, p.24). Although Silverstone recognises that the boundary between objectification and incorporation is often indistinct, he makes the point that 'there is a difference between use and display…, which of course has a special relevance to technology' (1992: p.29, n, 14). For household users working at home in this study, the line between objectification and incorporation is ambiguous. Furthermore, the struggle to manage and accommodate the technology and the active creation of boundaries to distinguish work from home is shown to disrupt the stages of objectification and incorporation stages of domestication, blurring and rendering them indistinct.

For the remainder of the chapter, I will focus on the domestication concept and its application to those participants who worked from home, or experienced the infiltration of work into the home. Using the data I demonstrate the way in which participants engage in a struggle with the technology and try to achieve a balance between accommodating and managing its intrusion and integrating it into the home environment. Furthermore, in applying the domestication to the data, I will suggest that the struggle to control and manage the intrusion of the technology highlights the fluidity of the concept and the way in which the stages merge together, producing a non-linear process of integration.

5.4. Domesticating the Internet: Objectifying Incorporation

Of course, it could be argued that all the stages in the process of domestication merge together, and indeed, this implication could be drawn from Silverstone's body of work. However, for the remainder of the paper I focus on the stages of objectification and incorporation, illustrating the close relationship between the use and display of the technology and the way in which these stages of domestication merge alongside the struggles and tensions surrounding the integration, management and accommodation of the technology in the home. It will be shown how the two stages are often rendered indistinct in the sense that the organisation of routine and rules and the physical arrangement of the household are closely bound to the creation of a physical space to suit a set of specific needs.

Participants made conscientious attempts to create and manage boundaries and all of the participants, when working from home, were keen to separate their 'family' and 'leisure

time' from their 'work life' and this involved the creation of symbolic boundaries in the household. They created and attached specific meanings to the computer and Internet, confined its use to a particular room and defined times for use, allowing the creation symbolic boundaries in the home. For example, John divided the house so that the study represented work and the remainder of the house symbolised time spent with the family. Indeed, the house had been divided into 'zones', where the front room is used as an office, indicating that a careful decision making process had been applied to the locating and display of the computer and Internet.

> John: There's a room at the front, which is the office and when I'm in there I'm at work... I do shut off from 5.30-8.00, which is when everyone is fed and bathed, busy time for the kids, and then depending on what's going on in the evening I can get back to it.

John's decision making process and the effort made to contain the technology suggests that he has made specific arrangements to control the technology. The implication being that to some extent John's arrangements have been determined by the imposition of the technology. Yet, on the other hand, John's attempt to contain the technology could also be perceived as an attempt to tame and re-gain control over the technology. This suggest that domestication is a conflictual and dynamic process. Hence, although John had made special arrangements to accommodate the technology, he successfully imposed a temporal routine on his Internet use and work life. Through effective time management, the participant ensured the construction of a domestic 'home life', which involved time spent eating meals with the rest of the family and engaging in routines surrounding children's bath and bed time. To make the distinction more apparent, the participant had established a number of 'rules' surrounding the use of the computer to distinguish the PC and Internet as tools to be used for work purposes. The main use centred on the running of his business. His wife occasionally used the email facility to maintain contact with family and friends abroad; but the four children did not engage with the PC or Internet as the participant feared the system was fragile and did not want to risk losing valuable material. He said: "The children are not into it, but they know that that's work and I can't … the system is fragile."

The strategies employed by John to manage the technology demonstrate the close relationship between objectification and incorporation, illustrating the ways in which use and display are closely bound when attempting to contain work within the domestic environment. Similarly, the following participant, Michael, was concerned to make the distinction between home and work using temporal routine and the division of space as means for dividing home and work life:

> Michael: I rarely work downstairs...I do close the door at 6.00 and relax, because that's work. You do have to close the door at some stage (15/03/01).

Like John, Michael also observed that he managed his Internet use via the imposition of temporal routine and the division of the house into zones. The home office was located upstairs and the downstairs was perceived as the area for performing 'home life' as opposed to 'work life'. Again, a focus on the separation of home and work time and space demonstrates the close relationship between use and display and the way in which participants are often required to make changes to their spatial and temporal arrangements to accommodate and manage the technology.

5.5. The Domestic Organisation of Work and Leisure

As already indicated the close relationship between use and display and the dynamic process of domestication can also be identified in relation to the organisation of work and leisure. The following examples of data reinforce the notion that home-workers pay careful attention to the domestic organisation of work and leisure, suggesting that the definition of leisure time and space was paramount in maintaining control over work and the Internet in the home. In an attempt to preserve her home life as a space separate from work, Siobhan divided the house into 'work' and 'leisure' zones and devised a strategy relating to financial organisation and telephone bill payment. Siobhan accepted that email frequently infiltrated the domestic arena, but in attempt to maintain certain zones in the house as symbols of 'home' she had two phone lines installed. The upstairs one in the study room was used for work purposes and the downstairs connection in the living room for leisure and entertainment. Furthermore, the two phone lines allowed the participant to exercise control over the cost of the Internet, which further differentiated work from home. Having two phone lines ensured that she was in a position to monitor the payment situation; calls from the down stairs line were associated with leisure and therefore perceived as her responsibility:

> Siobhan: When I do that [use the Internet for leisure/entertainment/personal research],I pay for my own calls. I have an itemised bill, so any calls for work, I call from the upstairs line. Calls from down here I pay for myself….

As with John and Michael, Siobhan, in her endeavour to manage work and the Internet at home was keen to establish boundaries in relation to work and leisure and in doing so gave careful attention to the routines surrounding use of the technology and its display. On the one hand, it could be suggested that Siobhan has been determined by the influence of the technology, making complicated spatial and financial arrangements to accommodate the

infringement of the technology. On the other hand, it could be suggested that through the installation and use of two phone lines and the division of the house into zones, financial management and the creation of specific patterns relating to the consumption of content. Siobhan effectively created 'two versions' of the Internet, which had unique patterns and rules relating to use and display, allowing effective domestication and governing of the technology. Nevertheless, it seems that Siobhan has experienced the management and domestication of her technology as conflictual and dynamic; the manifold nature of the process exemplified by her use patterns. Siobhan discussed, with enthusiasm, her use of the Internet for leisure purposes and explained, with amusement, her self imposed rules of access. Indeed, when the Internet was accessed downstairs it was associated with home and leisure and she carried out activities such as personal travel related research and shopping. By way of contrast, when used upstairs it was strictly as a work tool:

> At home, it is associated with leisure...I have stopped buying magazines. I go to their website for make-up tips and fashion. I sit down with a cup of coffee and the Internet, but that's down here [in the living room] and not up there [in the upstairs study]!

Siobhan made an interesting point relating to the resonance of specific use and display and their intrinsic value in the maintenance of symbolic boundaries. When using the Internet for leisure she sits downstairs ('not up there!') and further defined this activity through sitting down with a cup of coffee and consuming magazine content from the Internet. In consuming the Internet in a specific manner, Siobhan effectively created her 'own' Internet that not only had meaning within her household, but also allowed the management of work in the domestic environment. Furthermore, her use of language is interesting and revealing. Although Siobhan had two phone lines in the home for work and leisure related use, she referred to 'home' use in the context of 'leisure' time, hence: "At *home*, it is associated with *leisure*." Siobhan unequivocally associates home with leisure, as opposed to work, which illustrates the importance of boundary creation and management and the ways in which use patterns and display of the technology are closely bound in the management and domestication of the Internet in the home.

Similarly, as indicated above John, attached specific meanings relating to use of the Internet in the sense that he divided to house into work and leisure zones. These divisions were further reinforced, however, through the meanings that were attached to other media in the household and the way in which other media were defined in relation to the Internet. For example, John strongly associated the television with leisure and relaxation, whereas the

Internet was used purely for work. Hence, John gave different meanings to the TV and Internet as a way of managing work and the Internet in the domestic environment:

> *Q: How do you relax?*
>
> John: I don't use it [the Internet] as leisure, the television is (01/05/01).

In this household, the television and Internet, both in terms of location in the household and use patterns, were set up in opposition to each other as means to protect the boundaries of home from those of work. For John, the symbolism of the television and Internet were central in helping to define the boundaries between work and home. The Internet was perceived as a work tool and not associated with leisure or relaxation, whereas, the television was given status as a medium of leisure. In defining the television's function as a tool of entertainment and the Internet as a medium of work, the participant has created a situation where the media conserve and separate 'home' from 'work' activity. Again, the attachment of specific meanings to different household media shows the way in which domestication is a dynamic process, in the sense that effort has to made to give symbolic meaning to all media outlets in the household. Yet, the process of ascribing meaning allows John to gain effective control over the Internet and his work.

5.6. Conclusion: A Domesticated Internet?

The home Internet has been constructed as a tool to be integrated into the fabric of everyday life, rather than an entity that is divorced from mundane domesticity. This paper has suggested that integration of the Internet into the household and home is a complex process, where participants must negotiate the intrusion of the technology and the activities involved in organising the technology in their home lives. The findings from interviews with domestic users have been framed in relation to literature relating to domestic media consumption; specifically, the domestication concept as developed by Sorensen (1994) and Silverstone et. al (1992, 1994). I have retained the terminology offered by Silverstone et. al., while illustrating that he integration of technology into the household is most accurately described as fluid and in a state of flux, where the stages of domestication begin to merge together. Indeed, I have argued that certain stages in the domestication process can be recognised in the data, but participants do not impose a linear career onto their technology. Rather than progressing through the stages of domestication, participants often blur and merge specific stages in the domestication process. Many home-workers prioritised a particular stage in the process and organising their Internet in a way appropriate to the household.

The concept has been valuable for the analysis of the data and aspects of the perspective can be identified within the data. Indeed, numerous examples of data have been provided to demonstrate the prevalence of concept for this study. In applying the concept of domestication to the data, I have not only raised further questions about the relationship of the concept to the Internet, but I have also demonstrated that the concept can be successfully applied to new media. Using the concept I have illustrated the ways in which specific rules and routines are established to govern patterns of use and display, but it has become apparent that integration of technology into the household is dynamic, failing to follow a pre-defined career or process.

Working at home is an interesting case as it provides evidence that home-workers, such as John make special arrangements to both accommodate the intrusion of ICT while also carefully negotiating spatial and temporal boundaries to organise and integrate the Internet into the existing household routine. In building a home office and working from home, participants not only make decisions about the purchasing and appropriation of technology, but also about specific spatial and temporal arrangements to segregate 'work' from 'family' activity. Home users, then, played an active role in organising and personalising 'their' Internet. However, the process can be ambiguous, implying that the technology has a degree of 'agency'. For example, home-workers, such as John, with young children often made special arrangements when positioning the technology in the household, suggesting a conflictual relationship between user and technology. On the one hand, John can be seen as making an active attempt to control and organise the technology to suit the needs of all the individuals in the household. But on the other, it could be suggested that the users are 'determined' to make these arrangements by the very intrusive nature of home-working.

Both Sorensen et. al. and Ling and Thrane make reference to the needs of individuals in their thesis and, likewise, the requirements of individuals in the household were also significant factors for the participants in this study when synthesising of the Internet into the domestic setting. Not only did families with children organise the PC in such a manner as to meet the needs of the different individuals in the household, but other home-workers without children organised the PC and Internet to allow efficient home-working. The main aim of home-workers was to create physical and symbolic boundaries between work and home and participants employed a number of strategies, such as the organisation of space, time and media consumption to achieve the management of boundaries. Home-workers make significant choices about the way in which they organise spatial and temporal routines and individuals' access to the Internet as a means of segregating work from home.

Integration of the Internet into the household reveals domestication to be both a relevant concept and dynamic process and home-workers were concerned with the domestication or organisation of the Internet. One of the most significant features in this organisational process was the Internet's relationship with other media in the household. Participants were eager to organise the Internet alongside their existing patterns of media consumption. Rather than engaging with the Internet in isolation, participants used it in relation to other media. For example, many both watched the television and listened to the radio while using the Internet, whereas others use the Internet to research or engage in dialogue with issues raised on the television. Engagement with, and meanings attached to other media was also important in terms of participants dividing their homes into zones. For many participants the television symbolised leisure, whereas the Internet was associated with work. Thus, like the organisation of time and space, the Internet's relationship with other media plays a significant role its personalisation and organisation in the home.

The significance of older media is central in the understanding of the Internet's role in the domestic context and the relationship between media have emerged as central in the process of domestication. The challenge offered by other media in the household coupled with the struggle to manage and accommodate the technology poses further research questions: can the Internet ever become a fully domesticated medium? Or does the status of the technology remain in a state of flux shaped by and determining dynamics in the household? Furthermore, the although the domestication concept has emerged from the 'social shaping' of technology perspective, where the user is prioritised as 'producer' of the technology, would it be appropriate for 'domestication' as a qualitative category and analytical tool to include ideas relating to the intrusion or, potential, 'agency' of the technology? Since, the Internet poses new challenges to the organisation of the household, to what extent should focus of research centre on the conflictual aspects of the concept, rather than on the notion that the technology can be 'tamed' like a 'wild animal'.

6. Transforming the Family?

6.1. Introduction

The previous discussion outlined the ways in which participants in Coastal Town are choosing to use the Internet. The purpose in this section is to elaborate the ways in which some of the participants used their Internet media to maintain family relations.

Internet related research in both the offline and online realms begins to re-conceptualise society in light of the social shaping of technological change. Central to discussions surrounding the re-conceptualisation of society, democracy, citizenship, the construction of everyday life and interactions with specific locales is the way in which families are shaping the Internet to meet their needs, the impact of the Internet on the family and the wider implications of family based consumption for society and processes of change. The Dublin based project with its focus on domestic consumption of the Internet has asked questions about the family's consumption of the Internet. And in asking: what is the relationship between the Internet and family life; how have the family appropriated the Internet and how has the Internet changed family relations interesting results relating the levels, degrees and processes of change have occurred. The research has suggested that the Internet has both facilitated and provoked change in the performance of family life and the organisation of the household. Participants used both web-based content and email in different ways to suit and meet a specific set of needs. I suggest that the shaping and creative use of the Internet and email by some participants indicates a degree of change in the way in which family life is conceived of, understood and lived. Families and individuals within families experience and provoke situations that are symbolic of shifting ideas about the performance and endurance of family relations.

Evidence of potential transformation in the context of the family can be recognised on different levels, opening the discussion of the Internet and family life to manifold complexities and nuances. Indeed, the processes of change can be recognised at a level of use and the ways in which families are choosing to conduct relations, and at a level of spatial and temporal organisation. The purpose of this major section and the following one is to further explore the way in which the family have domesticated and shaped the Internet. This section focuses on the way in which the Internet is used to facilitate relationships, whereas the following one focuses on two case studies which highlight the perceived threats associated with the Internet as they relate to children's use.

6.2. Towards 'E-Relationships'?

"I think the Internet has re-introduced our family", was the confident statement of Michael when asked whether he used the Internet to maintain family contact. Michael's statement is interesting as not only is it indicative of the type of use that was popular among participants, but also the ways in which Internet use can provoke changes in the way in which family membership is perceived and performed. Many participants perceived the Internet as a resource to maintain contact with family abroad and living in different parts of the country. Furthermore, some of the participants also produced websites as a means to share family

photographs and news. Some of the participants had family ties either in 'Coastal Town' or at least within the region and, thus, the family was maintained and performed via face-to-face visits and the telephone. However, many participants also had family members who lived abroad, in places such as Australia, South Africa, United States, Canada and Britain. When families were dispersed, with some members lived abroad, two situations tended to emerge. Firstly, contact with dispersed family members was maintained via long distance telephone calls and the Internet. Typically, when the Internet was introduced email made possible more frequent contact with the family. Additionally, participants, such as Siobhan created 'family websites' as a way to communicate family news, developments and share photographs. Secondly, some dispersed families had lost contact and the introduction of the Internet allowed families to re-unite. That is, for participants such as Michael and Colm, after having no or little relationship with family members living abroad, the Internet and email had facilitated contact with dispersed family and a 'new' relationship was formulated.

Using some of the data relating to family based Internet use I discuss the ways in which some participants in the study used the Internet for the maintenance of family ties. On the basis of the comments made by some participants about their Internet use in relation to the family, I suggest that Internet media has started to allow changes in the ways families think and feel about each other and communicate and interact. The active use and shaping of web-based content to produce a 'family magazine' type website, typically used to display photographs and news, and the enthusiasm displayed towards the use of email to stay in touch with family members indicates that the Internet and email has begun to facilitate a small shift in the ways in which families interact and think about the conduct of family relations. This shift in attitude towards the maintenance and performance of family relations is detectable in the ways that participants such as, Emer and Rebecca – sisters - discussed their email exchanges with their cousin in America. It transpired that email exchanges had become integral to their relationship, indicating that a 'virtual' component to the maintenance of family ties had become a 'normalised' and expected part of family life. I suggest that while the data does not indicate a radical transformation in family life, the creation of and engagement with family based websites and the use of email to maintain and regain contact with dispersed family members represents a change in the way that families communicate and think about each other. More specifically, new outlets for communication and the very process of enacting new communication patterns can begin to change what it means to be part of a family and form and maintain relationships.

The dispersed family situation, where participants such as Michael have re-gained contact with a family member, also provides interesting case study material. Michael and others, such as Colm, in similar situations were eager to talk about their use of email to regain contact with family members abroad. I found the construction of family websites fascinating and was intrigued by the ways in which some people had begun to change their family communication patterns to include a 'new' family member and an electronic component to their communication. I felt that the use of email and the participants' vehemence towards the medium's possibilities indicated a new dimension to family life and suggested ways in which the institution is both changing as a result of new Internet media and using that media to allow change. This change, which I feel is represented through the use of email is not so much about declaring that the institution of the family has radically transformed, with relationships and communication conducted on a new level. Rather, email has allowed relatives to regain contact and Colm's proudly and excitedly stated that this re-kindling of the relationship would not have happened without email. Indeed, in Colm's case he felt that email maintained a manageable distance between himself and the 'new' relative, he declared that email eliminated those awkward silences experienced on the phone. He felt that email had allowed the reunion and was beginning to use the email creatively to send photographs and 'virtual tours' of the house.

6.3. To what extent is the institution of the Family Transformed? A Note on Continuity

Certain types of Internet use, specifically email, but also web-site building symbolise a move towards a transformation in the way in which family life is performed and the way in which family members think about and communicate with each other. The production and consumption of family web-based material and the use of email to regain and maintain family ties is, to some extent indicative of the ways in which Internet media allows families to add an electronic component to their enacting of family life. It this additional form of communication that is closely tied to the ways in which participants think and interact with family members. Email and the Internet are used in addition to existing forms of communication, such as the telephone. And, although it could be seen as merely extending existing patterns of behaviour and communication, it is symbolic in that it represents a new way of enacting family relations. Thus, although the use of the Internet can be seen as just another way to perform the same family relations, its resonance is greater. The choice to use the Internet and email is partly about individuals using Internet media and beginning to change what it means to be part of a family; family relations, in part, are thought about as having a virtual component.

However, in proposing that the use of email and the production of family oriented web based material adds a new component to the enactment of family life, I wish to avoid the implications that the family is transformed into something wholly new and the influence of the locale and the telephone are redundant. Rather, the suggestion is that the engagement with abstract systems and the quest to build a coherent and convincing self narrative results in Internet media as not only adding a new element to the repertoire of family interaction, but beginning to transform what it means to be part of a family and the way in which participants feel and think about family relations.

6.4. Changing Communication Patterns

Two of the participants, Emer and Rebecca were sisters; students and living at home with their parents. They explained that most of their Internet use centred on research work for their courses, but they also used email to stay in touch with relatives both in Ireland and abroad. They became enthusiastic when they began to discuss their relationship with their cousin in America. It transpired that they enacted family relations using both the phone and email and they stressed that, although email had not surpassed telephone use for communication with this cousin, the different communication means were used to facilitate different types of communication. Emer stated that the phone was used every two weeks, for quick conversations, whereas email was perceived as a medium for 'catching up' or longer conversations:

> "I have a cousin in America and its (email) so much handier than writing letters…We phone every couple of weeks, but email is better for catching up. I don't think we would phone any more often, if we didn't have the Internet, it has not taken over the phone use. We have more contact."

It was fascinating to learn that the two sisters used different forms of communication outlet for the distinct conversation types, but it was also interesting to discover that the Internet had not radically changed the existing patterns of communication. In this instance the Internet has opened up new communication possibilities, it has supplemented other behaviour patterns, mainly phone use, and it is clear that the sisters use of the Internet is part of a network of communication and this addition is perceived to enhance the existing communication patterns. The use of the Internet is perceived as an additional dimension and this is indicated where Emer states that phone use would not increase if the Internet was not available. Indeed: "I don't think we would phone any more, if we didn't have the Internet, it has not taken over the phone use." Furthermore, the short sentence, "we have more contact", reinforces the idea that email, rather than surpassing phone use has added a

new communicative outlet for the performance of family relations. The important point here is that the email facility is used alongside the phone; suggesting that while certain patterns of communication remain, new ones are introduced as a means to enact family relations and facilitate further communication. Indeed, for Emer and Rebecca, the Internet has not radically transformed their behaviour patterns, but it has added a new dimension to family communication, which has provoked a new ways of thinking about communication with their cousin, in the sense that specific forms of communication are associated with specific types of communication. This behaviour provides support for the proposal that the Internet symbolises the a gradual change in the way in which family members communicate with each other. In Emer and Rebecca's scenario the Internet was perceived as an extension of existing patterns of behaviour and the structure and composition of the family was not radically altered. It is, however, clear that Internet use had changed ways of thinking about the family in the sense that meanings associated with family membership have shifted further towards incorporating an electronic, remote element.

This situation also emerged in conversation with Karen who told me that she and her family shifted between different communication modes, suggesting that while the Internet had been introduced as a means to further facilitate family relations it had failed to radically transform existing behaviour patterns. Indeed,

> "I phone my relatives, I prefer that. We go through phases, we through about 3 weeks of emailing and then back to phoning."

Karen's statement seems to suggest that the maintenance of contact with the dispersed family is the most important factor. Her switching between the communicative outlets seems to suggest that she has the option to perform different types of communication pattern and readily moves between the phone and email. Although Karen indicated that she prefers to phone her relatives, she also states that she goes 'through phases' of using email. I felt that her enactment of family relations, although largely carried out over the phone did suggest did suggest email provided the possibility for a change in communication pattern and ways of thinking about family relations. Again, as with Emer and Rebecca, the change is not radical and it suggests that the Internet is not wholly transforming behaviour, merely supplementing existing behaviour patterns and values. This reinforces the notion that the Internet symbolises the beginnings of changing attitudes towards the way in which family life and relations are performed.

For both Emer and Rebecca and Karen, there was little evidence to suggest that behaviour had radically changed, but it seemed that the use of email to maintain contact with dispersed

family represented a change in communicative pattern. In other words, this virtual element of family life had become normalised, suggesting that the influence and use of the Internet within the home had began to incite a gradual change in the way that family relations are thought about and performed.

In addition to the use of email to maintain contact with dispersed family members, other participants such as Siobhan had created a 'family magazine' type websites. Siobhan explained that her partner's relatives lived in Australia and that she and her partner had created a website as a means to introduce Coastal Town and display recent photographs. Other, participants also engaged in similar activities. Brian explained that his relatives in Australia had established a website for the purposes of maintaining family ties. Brian's case was interesting as the website functioned to maintain contact between family members and reunite those who had lost touch. Indeed, Brian proudly explained that their 'family magazine' type website had encouraged the formation of a connected global family:

> "There is part of the family in Australia who have a website. They put photos up. We keep up with family all around the world, which is rather nice. We didn't keep up by phone, we lost contact, so this has brought everybody back in line."

The stories of Siobhan and Brian were thought provoking, as on the one hand they indicated that the meaning of family membership had started to change. The way viewing of photographs and news on a website was perceived as 'keeping up with family all around the world', and suggested that this 'virtualisation' of family ties was considered an accepted part of family life. On the other hand, the change in patterns of communication and thinking about family ties was guided by an older set of principles and behaviour genres. These include the exchange of photographs; news; and excitement about new houses, that have previously structured and sustained family life, suggesting that while changes in behaviour can be recognised, the shift is not radical representing a fundamental break from all habits.

6.5. New Relationships

For participants such as Emer and Rebecca, the Internet has had a small impact on the performance of family relations and the meaning of family life. For them, the Internet has allowed a new outlet for communication and started to change the way they think about talking to their relation in America. The implication being that the Internet not only allows new outlets for communication, but that very process of enacting new communication patterns changes what it means to be part of a family. However, for others, such as Michael, use of the Internet has had enormous impact on the performance of family

relations, in the sense that email has facilitated a 'reunion' with a family member living abroad. It is at this point that a significant transformation in terms of what it means to be part of a family can be detected. Furthermore, Colm, began communicating with his niece, who lived in Canada, via email the Internet allows the emergence and perpetuation of a new and/or different family form, where certain family relationships are not performed within the immediate locale or via the telephone. Instead, they are both created and maintained but through remote electronic, web based communication. In this instance, it could be argued that participants are placing trust in the Internet as an abstract system and this 'leap of faith' enables a new form, or faction, of the family to emerge.

By way of contrast to those participants, such as Emer, who used the telephone and email to maintain long distance family ties, where the Internet was perceived as a supplement to existing behaviour patterns, Colm and Michael used the Internet to facilitate new relationships that were based solely around email. Email was key in allowing them to formulate new types of family contact and such participants experienced a change in what it meant to be part of a family not only changing their own perceptions, but playing a role in changing the meaning and symbolic reality of the family. For example, Michael began discussing a his network of family communication and, although he had many relatives both in Ireland and abroad that he had strong relationships with, he also noted that he had used email to re-gain contact with family members. Although Michael had at one time maintained contact with certain relations, he had lost contact and subsequently used the Internet to both reconstruct or maintain the family. After discussing all his mundane use of the Internet, Michael stated in a brightened tone that he had been successful in maintaining contact with some aunts and cousins that he had previously lost contact with:

> "I think the Internet has re-introduced our family. I have one uncle and two aunts and various cousins and I lost touch with my cousin … she came back for a visit and she got in touch with us by email. We began to exchange photographs. Another uncle has joined the circle."

Michael's 'reunion' typifies the type of scenario that leads to a re-building of a family; allowing family ties to be reconstructed in a new form. Other participants, such as Colm, in similar situations made contact through email, alone. Invariably, they indicated that the Internet had allowed the fostering of long-distance family connections, suggesting that while the Internet was used to re-gain contact with family members, its use also produced a set of unintended consequences relating to the meaning and performance of family life. Colm and his wife Rose explained how Colm had cousins in Canada, with whom they had

lost touch with, but subsequently recreated contacts using the Internet. Colm and Rose both became animated when telling the story of the re-union:

> "I've re-established contact with my cousin! …Colm's niece sent attachment on her email of photos of the inside of her new house. We are getting to know them and we get to see inside their house!"

Conversation with Colm and Rose revealed that before using the Internet to make contact with the relations in Canada, there had been no previous contact and communication between the relatives. In this instance the Internet had facilitated the formation of a new relationship that was constituted virtually, indicating that this new way of creating family ties was considered valid and reliable means to conduct familial relationships. In other words, this added virtual component had been normalised, indicating that Colm and Rose had incorporated some new ways of thinking about family ties into their mind-frames:

> Q: Did you have contact before the Internet?
>
> A: No we didn't actually, we didn't have much. She got a computer and then we started. It does increase your contact with people who before it was too expensive or too inconvenient to get in touch.

The desire to regain contact with a 'lost' family member is not a new phenomena and the story from Colm and Rose does not suggest a radical transformation in the structure of family life. It does, however, indicate that the couple had a adopted a new approach the performance of some family relationships. This new way of thinking about family relationships was reinforced by the creative approach Colm and Rose adopted when attempting to make contact with the relation in Canada. Indeed, when asked about the frequency of contact and the type of communication that they engaged in, it transpired that Colm and Rose had used the Internet media and related equipment in a thoughtful way, using chat-rooms as a means of real time communication:

> Q: Do you stay in regular contact with the family abroad?
>
> A: We were able to make contact with relations in Canada, but the quality of the signal is very bad on the microphone and you have to say over, two people can't talk together…that's annoying, so we use real time chat. Its so cheap compared to the phone. We're thinking of getting a camera as well.

Not only did Colm note the way in which the Internet allowed them to make contact with a distant family member, but it also transpired that other distinct patterns and habits of communication had emerged. For example, Rose stated that Colm preferred to use email as a means to communicate as he found the medium less pressurised than the phone and more conducive to the type of conversation he wished to foster:

> "It's a great way to communicate…very relaxed, if it was the phone. Say we had no computer Colm wouldn't keep ringing her up. I'd say that goes for a lot of people…it does re-establish family relations. Its very often, you can sit down here and its nice and quiet I'll send them something and you can type out a few words and then you send it. Making a phone call, you thinking, what will I say next, whereas you just send a few lines… So there's not that pressure of being on the phone, there's no long silences."

The above extract is interesting as it indicates the perceived advantages of email based communication. The participant notes that he finds the medium more relaxing and less pressurised than the phone. It was felt that the phone demanded a steady flow of conversation, which was sometimes difficult with relatives that were relative strangers, whereas email masked the tension and created a more comfortable environment for re-constructing the family. Furthermore, this preference for email also reinforces the notion that Colm had a adopted a new way of thinking about family communication. All his previous family communication had taken place at a face-face-level, and in this instance his desire to use email, suggests that the 'virtualisation' of the certain family relationship was rapidly becoming an accepted and integral part of family life.

This chapter, then, has focused on some of the ways in which the Internet facilitates and begins to allow the transformation of family relationships. The following chapter examines the role of the technology in a household with children. Thus, the emphasis is shifted away from the performance of long distance family relationships towards the way in which the family negotiates the role of the technology in the household.

7. Children and Internet Consumption

7.1. Controlling Internet Media: Children's Use and Perceived Threats

Following the previous chapter, which concerned the ways in which the Internet has been appropriated to create and maintain family relationships, the purpose of this chapter, is to provide some examples of the way in which Internet media are domesticated by families and household's involving children and young teenagers. This section, then continues to explore the ways in which family shape their Internet. But rather than focusing on the dynamics of relationships, it examines the relationship between the family and technology.

In response to questions relating to whether the Internet is treated differently in household's involving children and the ways in which children's use patterns are negotiated, I provide two case studies which begin to illustrate the ways in which the Internet's status is negotiated in household's with children. Parents with children under the age of fifteen perceived the Internet as both beneficial and threatening. Many informed me that they invested in an Internet enabled computer to help with their children's homework and meet educational needs. For example, Christine and John were keen to stress that they perceived the Internet as an essential educational resource and felt their investment to have positive benefits. On the other hand, however, the parents also perceived the Internet as a threat and saw it, sometimes, as a force that had the potential to disrupt the household and its values. Most parents were concerned about the type of information that their children could possibly access on the Internet. Most perceived the availability of pornographic material as a threat and wanted to take steps to prevent their children from accessing such material. Other parents were concerned about the threat of chatrooms and, in some cases, had experienced raised awareness of such threats, by stories in the broadcast media that warned about the dangers of paedophiles in chat-rooms.

Using two examples of data from households with children under fifteen, I illustrate the threats perceived by parents and discuss some of the ways parents attempt to control the invasive nature of the Internet. The examples illustrate the techniques used by parents to survey children's Internet consumption and demonstrate the perceived fears of parents in relation to the Internet. The first example, focuses on parents who were concerned about chat-rooms and brings to the fore the continued influence of older media and its role in teaching people how to consume and manage the Internet. The second example also focuses on management strategies employed by parents to control children's Internet use. This case focuses on the use of spatial arrangements as a means to facilitate surveillance of their children's Internet use.

In discussing children's access to the Internet, I (re)introduce the domestication concept as a framework for discussion. Using the concept, I suggest that the careful monitoring of content can be seen as part of the process of ascribing use, function and a set of values to Internet media. In both examples Internet media are perceived as and constructed as 'homework tools' as opposed to 'entertainment' and 'leisure tools'. This deliberate construction can be seen coupled with the desire to control and monitor children's Internet use and access to content can be part of the 'objectification', 'incorporation' and 'conversion' stages of the domestication process. The examples not only highlight the struggles and tensions involved in integrating Internet media into the household, but also

show that the boundaries separating the 'objectification' and the 'incorporation' stages of the domestication process are often rendered indistinct. Furthermore, their very construction of the Internet as an 'educational tool' as opposed to a 'leisure tool' articulates a message about the family's values and attitudes. It indicates that the family in the case study invest time and effort into constructing their Internet as media as having symbolic value; in other words they engage with the conversion stage of the domestication process.

7.2. Domestication and Children's Internet Use

Domestic use of the Internet brings to the fore a set of complex dynamics relating to the struggle between human agency and the influence of the technology on domestic relations. The working at home case study has already illustrated the ways in which the integration process represents a struggle to accommodate and manage the technology, while also blurring the stages of domestication, rendering them indistinguishable. A similar point can be made with reference to the domestication of Internet media in household's involving children. At this juncture, there are some overlaps between my work and that of Sorensen (2000) and Ling and Thrane (2001) on the integration and accommodation of the Internet. Those authors suggest that themes relating to display and rules are tailored to meet the changing needs of individuals in the household.

7.3. Between Accommodation and Management

Many parents, in my study, sought to exercise control over children's Internet use, suggesting that technology is manipulated according to the individual needs of those in the household. In this instance, the parental need to protect children and control engagement with content has defined the way in which the Internet has been organised and integrated into the household. Clearly, household users are displaying and using the technology in a specified way, catering for the perceived needs of young children. This behaviour not only points to a desire to shape the technology, but also illustrates the way in which the intrusion of the technology can incite certain behaviour patterns. Indeed, on the one hand, parents may be taking active steps to curb the Internet's imposition on the household's values, but they are also changing their behaviour to accommodate this encroachment, suggesting that certain types of behaviours are, to some extent, influenced by the intrusion of the technology.

Data from the parents used in the example provided, were concerned with the type of material that children and young teenagers, between the ages of eight and fifteen, could potentially access on the Internet. The majority of parents took action to prevent their children accessing and consuming what was perceived as unsuitable material. One the

hand, it could be suggested that parents are taking an active role in the taming or 'domestication' of the Internet, in taking steps to moderate the type of content consumed by children. But on the other hand, this type of preventative behaviour could be perceived as a set of actions that have been influenced by the encroachment of the technology and associated content into the domestic realm.

7.4. The Uneven Process of Domestication: Dynamics of Space, Time and Parental Control

Most participants expressed a desire to control children's engagement with content and this not only demonstrates the manifold dynamics of the domestication process, but also obscures the defined stages of domestication. As with the working-at-home case study, the examples of data relating to children's use of the Internet suggest a blurring of the stages of 'objectification' and 'incorporation'. Objectification refers to the display of technology and incorporation refers to the integration of technology 'into the routines of daily life' (Silverstone, 1992, p.24). As already noted Silverstone recognises that the boundary between objectification and incorporation is indistinct; and examination of some household's with children confirms this ambiguity. For some household users with children, the line between objectification and incorporation is ambiguous. For example, in some cases, issues surrounding location of the computer were bound heavily with the desire for 'safety' and the need to protect from perceived danger, allowing the parental control of children's engagement with content. Perceived dangers preoccupied some of the parents and decision-making processes surrounding the location of the computer were often based on opportunities for surveillance. Public display of the PC in the living room was about control of use and this supervision involved certain routines, which became incorporated into the household. In many cases, parents also stated that they regularly checked the 'history' of sites visited and the most recent sites visited, in order to ensure their children were not viewing material considered threatening and dangerous.

The examples relating to parental control of children's use show a similar tendency in that the struggle to integrate the technology often renders the stages of domestication indistinct. My findings suggest that in organising the Internet, participants move between the defined stages of domestication, indicating that the processes involved in organising the personalised Internet are non-linear and flexible. The examples of data provided relating to children's use of the Internet suggests that, for some parents, certain web-based content drives parents to organise or domestic Internet media in a specific manner. The examples of data provided reveal a tendency, which suggests that the domestication process in a

household including children and young teenagers involves deliberate attempts to control and survey children's use. This not only highlights the process as a struggle between the user and technology, but also, as with the home-workers case study and when careful attention was given to the relationship between the location and use of the computer, merges the stages of objectification and incorporation.

Spatial and temporal arrangements surrounding Internet media were central for most families – specifically parents, with children under the age of fifteen - as they played a key role in allowing parents to operate a system of surveillance; monitoring and controlling their child's Internet consumption. As already suggested, with reference to those working at home, Internet users, on introducing Internet media into the household, engage in an active process of domestication, where the status of the Internet must be negotiated via strategies of taming and organisation. Participants take an active role in negotiating the status of Internet media in the home and this involves integrating the technology into existing routines and patterns of behaviour and altering spatial and temporal arrangements to accommodate the intrusion of the Internet. Although participants make active attempts to shape their Internet, they also make changes to their domestic arrangements to accommodate the permeation of the Internet. For example, while participants exercise control to 'tame' or 'cultivate' the Internet, they also make distinctive and explicit spatial and temporal arrangements to harbour its infringement. Thus, the process of organisation is dynamic, involving the shaping and, subsequent, re-shaping of both the home and Internet. This struggle between the agency of the user and the intrusion of the technology as an agent or facilitator of change is also played out in the scenarios described by the participants with young children.

The concern for safety emerged from the data collected via postal questionnaire, which was implemented in Coastal Town. Participants were asked whether they allow their children to use the Internet. Interestingly all the participants answered 'yes they would', and the majority added a note saying they supervise the viewing of content. Of course, questionnaires, by nature, produce limited data and it was not revealed how respondents would control and supervise children's use. Nevertheless, the questionnaire data revealed a tendency, which suggested that the majority of participants were concerned about the type of web-based material that could be easily accessed by their offspring.

7.5. Ascribing Function and Location: 'Objectifying Incorporation'

However, some of the interviews with parents did provide greater insight into the strategies parents had adopted and devised as a means to control the type of material accessed by

children. A visit to the home of Anne and David, who had two children under the age of eight revealed not only a set of concerns about safety, but also the way in which the house had been deliberately organised to deal with the threats associated with the Internet. The interview focused on parental use and, Sean's use. He was the older of the two; the daughter being only two, and so the conversation focused on his use – I asked him about the type of material he looked at and his mother whether she perceived any danger associated with the Internet. It transpired that Anne had read in the newspaper about the 'Carol Vordermann campaign': the TV presenter's quest to raise awareness about the threats and dangers presented by the Internet. The purpose of the campaign was to crack down on Internet dangers, such as paedophiles lurking in interactive forums. The newspaper article in the Daily Mail and parallel TV campaign gave advice to parents on how to protect their children from the perceived 'threatts' associated with the Internet. Anne admitted that she had found the campaign influential and indicted that it had influenced the way she had chosen to organise the space in her household. In discussing the location of the computer, Anne revealed that it had previously been located upstairs, but had recently been relocated in the corner of the living room. Anne was clear about her concerns and indicated that she wished to monitor Sean's Internet use. She talked about the strategies she had adopted, such as the checking of the history and the creation of a password on the system in an attempt to ensure that Sean was using the Internet safely.

In an attempt to combat the problems associated with content, other parents located the computer in the living room where they could monitor the sites their children visited, but the strategy is fallible as Anne revealed. She was telling me about Sean's enthusiasm towards his pet rabbit and that Sean liked, along with looking at sites associated with cartoons, also liked to look at sites about rabbits. During the conversation Anne said, that even though she had deliberately located the computer in the living room, she had faced a problem relating to pornographic content. Sean had been browsing the Internet for information on rabbits, had typed 'bunnies' into the search engine and had inadvertently moved into websites containing unsuitable material. This situation concerned for Anne, but because the computer was located in the living room, she had been able to distract Sean from the material and move him back towards information about rabbits. In this instance, Anne felt that her strategies of control had proved effective as she had been able to successfully monitor the Sean's activities.

Decision-making on the location of the computer was clearly important to Anne and this was also evident in other households. Anne, like other parents perceived the Internet to bring a new set of challenges that were not associated with older or existing media and it

was perceived to require its own set of rules which governed use and display. Content seemed to be the main concern to most parents and the 'unlimited' nature of the Internet seemed to pose a greater threat than content in the broadcast or print media. Content, then, was key in the decision making process surrounding location of, use patterns and rules surrounding, the computer. The diverse nature of web-based content suggests that the Internet demands specific attention in the domestication process; attention that differs from that given to the integration of the television or radio. Television and radio seemed to occupy a position on the household, where they were taken for granted by the consumers; they were not considered to pose the same threat the safety as the Internet. Indeed, they were rarely mentioned in the context of safety by participants and on the whole were perceived as more benign media.

The domestication of the Internet differed to that of older media and although the already identified stages in the process can be recognised, the Internet seems to prompt an extremely close relationship between the use and the display of the technology. As already suggested with reference to those working at home, the objectification stage is not only about the location of the technology, but is also closely bound with the articulation of a household's values and structure. The example drawn from the interview with Anne and the surveillance of Sean's Internet use begins to indicate the way in which the monitoring of children and the preservation of safety are the main priorities in the household. The objectification of Internet media was closely tied to the desire to police children's Internet. It can be suggested that objectification was driven by the need to foster certain types of use patterns and functions. This implies that this stage in the domestication process has a close relationship with the incorporation stage, which refers to function and use patterns or the technologies' integration into the fabric of the household and the functions given to the object. Thus, for participants such as Anne, objectification rapidly spilled into the realms of incorporation, as the motivation behind a certain pattern of display was to control and monitor Sean's Internet use. Display and the enacting of temporal routines were inseparable as they related to children's use of the Internet. In this example, it is not appropriate to separate the process of objectification from incorporation as the two are bound by parents to create a 'safe environment' for their children.

7.6. Methods of Surveillance and the Process of Conversion

The display, use and function ascribed to the technology allow the articulation of the family's values and is referred to in Silverstone's frame of reference as the 'conversion' stage. Although conversion is defined as the final stand alone stage in the domestication process it is defined in relation to appropriation as a mechanism by which the household or

individual communicates not only his/her material and symbolic wealth, but competence and knowledge of culture. Indeed, it is stated, "the Appropriation of an object is of no public consequence unless it is displayed symbolically as well as materially…. Equally, the conversion of the experience of the appropriation of meanings derived from television, for example, is an indication of membership and competence in public culture" (Silverstone and Hirsch, 1992, p.26).

The dynamic process of accommodation and management of Internet – its domestication - can be observed in relation to the way in which parents attempt to control the type of web based content consumed by their children. Anne and David made active attempts to define their technology, fashioning the Internet to suit the needs of the home and family, while also accommodating the materiality of the technology and its, sometimes, intrusive content.

Anne and David and others involved in the study exercised further control and surveillance mechanisms such as checking the 'History' on the web-browser and forbidding the use of certain interactive forums such as web-chats. The control of access to the Internet takes on a symbolic resonance and communicates messages about the value system of the family. For Anne and David the technology was fashioned and they spoke about the technology to convey messages about their attitude towards education; and the feelings that the Internet could be beneficial and used for educational purposes.

7.7. Controlling access to Content

Mary and James both used the Internet frequently as they both ran their own businesses from home and so were familiar with the potential benefits of the Internet. However, they were concerned about the intrusion of web-based content and the potential danger it brought into the domestic environment and stressed their fears about the dangers of chat-rooms. Although Mary and James exercised strong parental control over the type of material and forums that they allowed their children to access, they were keen to encourage their children to become independent Internet users and learners in terms of carrying out homework. It transpired that the Internet was also used by the children for some leisure use and they viewed the web-pages of their favourite pop groups. However, it was apparent that Mary and James, in an attempt to maintain a safe environment, exercised control over the content accessed by their children and were eager to stress that they had established a set of rules surrounding the type of material their children could accessed. Both parents highlighted that the Internet was perceived and used as an educational tool and pointed to some of the problems that had recently occurred with their children wanting to contact friends in South Africa:

> "We were just reading the Carole Vordermann article about children in chat room. We limit our children, they're not allowed to go on. To a certain degree I try and get them to be independent and sort it out themselves and they use it for homework, but they go where they can go. It's put me off in that they now have friends from South Africa who are now saying to them, 'go on this MSN chat and we can chat ourselves,' and having read this article I'm loathed to let them."

Indeed, independence was encouraged within a set of pre-defined boundaries on sites that were considered appropriate by the parents and chat-rooms were perceived as the greatest threat. Most parents like Anne and David and Mary and James were eager to stress that they had established a set of rules surrounding use and access to content. It seemed that the Internet was constructed mainly as an educational tool, which on occasion, could be used for leisure purposes. The eagerness to convey and describe the rules surrounding use and to indicate that the Internet was used for educational purposes suggested that the participants were extremely aware of the symbolic nature of media use and display. The urgency to present the Internet as educationally useful was highly apparent and implied that the need to construct and communicate a specific symbolic meaning for Internet media was key in its domestication.

7.8. Learning to Consume: Policy Implications

Both Anne and David and Mary and James were aware of and had been following the campaign launched by the television presenter Carole Vordermann in The Daily Mail. The attention given to the campaign by Mary and James not only indicates the continued significance of 'old' media in the household, but also the way old media informs domestic users how to consume and 'tame' the Internet. Indeed, for this family, the information provided by the broadcast media seemed to play a role in the establishment of rules surrounding use of the technology.

The significance of the campaign in the mind of the participants suggests the broadcast media could play a role in providing information and advice on Internet safety; and could be embraced by government task forces at a national and European level as a means to communicate public information. Significantly, both families had grasped at the Carol Vodermann campaign, suggesting that there is a demand for public information and coherent and accessible policy concerning:

- Potential dangers
- Methods to protect children
- Steps to be taken in creating a safe domestic environment

However, this is not to say that such public information is desirable or even necessary, but it seems that the parents in the case study wanted a safety mechanism that they perceived to be dependable. This suggests that more research could be carried out relating to the provision of information.

8. Locality Matters: An Ethnographic Study of 'publicness' in an Irish Coastal Town

8.1. Introduction: 'Why? I live Here'

"'Cos I live here I wouldn't - I don't rely on it for Coastal Town stuff", Siobhan nonchalantly stated about when asked whether she used 'local' websites. Since she lived in the area she felt that she already had adequate local knowledge to survive, live and communicate in Coastal Town. She went on to say that, "if I were new to the area…if I'm gonna live here, I'd like to find more info on schools…*the stuff that you only finds out through talking to people*." Siobhan brought to the fore and articulated feelings towards local web-based content. Her perceptions reflected those of some of the other domestic Internet users, who participated in the study, and contrasted with other efforts to create and use locally produced web-based content. The research was carried out between November 2000 and May 2000, in Coastal Town, where I lived and worked for two years. It aimed to explore a number of relationships between the public and private spheres; the local and global contexts and 'new' and 'old' media, with the objective of examining patterns of domestic Internet consumption and its role in facilitating public communication in Coastal Town. The purpose of this section, however, is to focus on the use, or indeed non-use, of local web-based content produced for Coastal Town residents and visitors to the town. This stage of the research drew on the ethnographic material gathered from twenty-five home based interviews and participant observation in local groups and organisations. Here, I explored participants' thoughts and feelings towards local web-based content; their perceptions of local websites; the ways in which they have chosen to engage with such material; the meanings they have attached to Coastal Town sites and the extent to which they feel the Internet has facilitated new forums of publicised connectivity.

The interviews and ethnographic work within Coastal Town has revealed three main themes, which are explored, using the public sphere concept as a vehicle and framework for

discussion. The data shows inconsistencies, demonstrating the way in which creative construction and appropriation of web-based material by different people and groups gives the content unique and varied meanings, which both fall within and beyond the scope of analysis offered by the public sphere content. The themes demonstrate the manifold complexities that have emerged from this case study of local Internet consumption. Firstly, the domestic interviews, with participants such as Andrea, suggested that while the Internet was perceived as a useful addition to their existing patterns of domestic media consumption, it was not seen as a tool for the creation of new public forums and forms of connectivity. Instead, Andrea used local websites for instrumental and personal reasons as opposed to civic or 'public' reasons. Andrea's use problematises the idea that all use and consumption of locally based content can be analysed under the rubric of the public sphere; as evidence that domestic Internet use can facilitate new forms of connectivity. Yet, the ethnographic work carried out with local groups and organisations, such as the swimming pool committee, suggested that Internet media – website and email - had been adopted as a means to provide information, further advertise their cause and arrange face-to-face meetings. Internet media were not, however, used to facilitate online or virtual interaction and public communication about the issues, suggesting that steps had been taken towards new forms of communication, but these did not represent a wholesale transformation for citizen connectivity. Interestingly, though, the majority of participants interviewed at home made similar observations to that of Siobhan, which implied that face-to-face communication remained highly valued as a means to participate in localised publicness.

8.2. A Wired Town? Perceptions of Coastal Town Websites

A number of websites have emerged relating to Coastal Town and these concern the town's history/culture, tourism, public institutions, local newspapers, hobby groups and businesses. For example, The Coastal Town news, Coastal Town Tourism, Coastal Town photography group, St. Patrick's National School and the Catholic Church all have websites. Examination of the town's websites suggest, at least on the surface that Coastal Town is a 'wired' town; a town that has embraced the Internet as a valuable tool in the construction of civic life. Indeed, an impression is created that suggests there is an 'online version' of Coastal Town, a virtual town, in which residents participate; thus creating 'new', or transforming existing public forums.

The presence of numerous Coastal Town based websites certainly gives the impression of a wired town; but to what extent did the sites foster new forms of connectivity and participatory publicness? It is at this juncture that the interview and participant observation data starts to depict an alternative version of publicness and perceptions of websites in

Coastal Town. The Coastal Town participants were asked about their perceptions of and feelings towards local websites and two patterns emerged. The first is defined by non-use and a lack of awareness of local sites. The second is defined by 'instrumental' or 'personalised' use, where participants were aware of local sites, but used them to meet specific or personal needs as opposed to perceiving them as a means to connect with other citizens and engage with local public affairs.

Participants such as David epitomised the culture of non-use and had little interest in the sites. The Interview with David revealed little interest in visiting websites dedicated to Coastal Town. He said: "I have never accessed them – I would if I had a reason to" (04/01).

David reveals his lack of interest in the 'online town' and shows a lack of enthusiasm towards Coastal Town based sites. His statement, 'I would if I had reason' to suggests that the information resources that he already uses and hi methods of communication and participation in local publicness are perceived as adequate. David feels that there is little need to change his habits and behaviour, suggesting a lack of demand for new forms of connectivity. Others such as Michael were unaware of the types of sites dedicated to Coastal Town and perceived local web based material as having little relevance to residents familiar with the dynamics of the 'physical' town. Incidentally, there is one comprehensive website dedicated to CT and it contains historical and cultural information, tourist guide and photographs. The majority of participants stated that they were unaware of this site, reinforcing the notion that residents place little value on the online town.

Other participants supported the perspective offered by David and indicated that existing methods of information seeking were adequate. For example, during the home based interview with Brian, he explained how the cycling club he belonged to had started to use Internet media as a means of communication, but he felt that existing modes of information retrieval were adequate:

> "I know that at a local level, I know that sporting organisations are using it more. Two cycling associations are using it more. … *There are other ways of getting information and they [magazines, newspapers, leaflets] are still efficient* [my emphasis]."

Similarly, the interview with Mary and John articulated the idea that the use of Internet media produced a set of problems associated with the marketing of websites. Indeed, the following conversation between the two participants mirrors the observations made by Brian in relation to the cycling club. John indicated that he was aware of Coastal Town

websites, and Mary added that many people were not aware of them and implied that print media is a more reliable method of reaching people:

> Periodically I do a search on Coastal Town to see what's new…one of the big difficulties most people have is marketing the web address…
> You can't just rely on people to fall upon it as they're doing a search for Coastal Town, you know, you'd have to actually, to make sure that everybody who needed to see it, saw it, you'd have to put a note in the door saying there's a website here….
> You would have to do a lot of marketing to let people know that the website exists…
> You couldn't do that through a website! You would have to do that through a newsletter or a newspaper or word of mouth" (02/01).

These participants suggest that public-ness, or at least learning about public events is associated with the print media. Participants implied that the Internet is not seen as a medium for political participation and communication. Internet use is not yet perceived as wide-spread and it is suggested that people have failed to, or have no desire to, incorporate it into their routines. Their humour, 'you couldn't [market a website] through a website!' suggests that they want to distance themselves from the Internet. Their humour undermines the Internet as a political tool and the implication is that they place greater value on traditional methods of marketing.

The majority of participants felt publicness to be symbolised by traditional modes of public communication, such as leaflets:

> "Can't be used to raise awareness, because access and low and those people don't look at it everyday…vLeaflets will do Coastal Town" (03/01).

> "If I felt that the whole thrust of information dissemination was moving away from the present ways, then I think I would be more inclined to make the effort, but at the moment, I don't think I'm missing out."

The latter extract suggests that the participant does not feel ideological pressure to acquire an Internet connection. In relation to political communication he suggests the Internet is not considered an essential mechanism to participate in, and contribute to public debate.

In addition, participants also felt the Internet had not become normalised. If the Internet were to be perceived as an effective tool in community action, it would have to become part of the domestic or work routine. That, is the technology would have to be become

integrated into the public imagination in the way that TV and books have achieved a taken-for-granted status:

> "It's not a huge part of our lives, Internet use is not a regular thing like the radio or TV or books. It hasn't replaced anything."

> "We are in the process of developing a school website, as far as I'm concerned it's a great idea, but I would never look at that site, so if I'm the typical Internet user then the website is a waste of time."

> "People who work with computers or use them, it becomes part of their day to access. A lot of those people would then access as part of routine and I think in those circumstances the whole Internet issue becomes more up front, its use in the household."

Pessimism was also expressed in practical terms relating to access, rather than in relation to ideological issues. As the following participant highlighted: full integration into the public imagination would require all the residents to have a point of access:

> "I think there's a lot of people left out of this, there's so many old people in Coastal Town, there's so many people who wouldn't have use of a computer. I don't see it as an altogether good thing. We've had this argument before and you say [directed at husband] everyone knows how to use the Internet, but you forget there who don't. A lot of people are not Internet literate. It excludes people" (02/01).

8.3. Instrumental Use of Local Sites

Overall, participants indicated little engagement with the online version of the town. When residents did engage with 'local' web based material, they were driven by 'personal' or 'private' reasons, rather than having an interest in public communication or civic issues. However, not only were CT based websites devalued as an outlet for civicness and publicness, participants relied on the print media followed by face to face action as a means to perform publicness and (re) construct the public sphere.

The majority of participants associated community action with face-to-face interaction and the print media. Indeed, as with the dissemination of public information, participants demonstrated reluctance in associating the Internet with political campaign. The following participant suggested that the Internet were used for instrumental reasons, rather than political campaign:

> "People use the web for a specific purpose - you get individuals using it, rather than a wider mass" (02/01).

This statement supports the argument made in the first section that Internet use is individualised and personalised. His statement implies that the Internet is perceived as a tool for individual engagement, rather than a vehicle for collective action and political campaign.

There were other participants, though, however, familiar with local sites and these participants encapsulated the idea of instrumental use of local websites. When participants did engage with local sites, however, their use was defined by a common agenda: consumption and use of the sites was deemed appropriate to fulfil a specific purpose, rather than facilitate new forms of publicness of connectivity. Indeed, the small number of participants interviewed that did access Coastal Town based websites did so for personal and instrumental reasons; they created a pattern of engagement that was specific and met their individual needs. For example, Claire was extremely familiar with the sites aimed at tourists, but she had instrumental reasons for accessing such sites. Her consumption and use of such sites were a result of a school project. She explained that, for her Irish class, she had been required to create a tourist guide of Coastal Town suitable for those who were unfamiliar with the area. This point is also reinforced by the following extract from the home based interview with Brian and Anne. They explained that the family had moved to Coastal Town from abroad. In order to make their transition smooth, they researched Coastal Town using the Internet:

> "We used it [the Internet] to move house and get more information on Ireland; looked at estate agents. We were aware of what Ireland was all about before we came over. We looked at Coastal Town websites and showed the children what Coastal Town was like" (02.01).

Brian and Anne's purposes for accessing the websites were personal and instrumental as they wanted to gain an idea of what to expect from the town before moving. Brian mentioned that he made an attempt to check the local websites for new content, but on the whole, the couple indicated that the process of moving country and house had given the only incentive to look at local sites. This type of consumption typified by Brian and Anne demonstrates the way in which engagement with the online town can be incredibly practical and specific, as opposed to public and fostering interaction between citizens.

8.4. Family Connections: Creative Appropriation

Similarly, participants such as Andrea were aware of Coastal Town's websites and she had visited them because she was building a family based website, which involved creating links to Coastal Town's existing sites and creating new Coastal Town centred content as a means to show the relations pictures of, and information about, the town. Andrea, in the process of creating a website dedicated to Coastal Town, maintained that her efforts to create the site were for personal reasons; that is a 'family album' for relatives abroad:

> "With my boyfriend's parents coming over [from Australia], I looked at Coastal Town websites, it was the first time I did a search, with living here I know what's going on."

This extract from the interview is revealing as Andrea reinforces the idea that residents of Coastal Town do not require local web-based information, unless for a specific, usually personalised purpose. She states that she had never performed a search using the term 'Coastal Town' until making the decision to build the website as she felt that web-based information about Coastal Town was superfluous to her needs, with living in the area.

Andrea admits that she had never had a reason to engage with local web-based content, which suggests that Coastal Town content, suggesting that the Coastal Town content was only perceived as useful when incorporated into a personalised situation, such as the building a family website. Andrea's experience suggests that local websites sites had are shaped and re-presented as highly personalised, as opposed to publicised phenomena. Rather than facilitating and creating new forms of connectivity, they are used as tools in family communication. Thus, the home based interview with Andrea suggested that the online town is a seen as a tool to be used when its resources are deemed appropriate to meet a specific need. Engagement with the online town did not amount to a civic interest or desire to use this electronic resource for public communication, but instead it was used instrumentally; indeed, for private rather than public reasons.

8.5. Performing Publicness: Uneven Incorporation of Internet Media

Using three case studies of local campaigns and initiatives, I make a similar observation to that presented by O'Donnell (2001a; 2001b), where she suggests that 'Womenslink' did not operate as a public sphere since, the Internet was used as an information source, rather than a place to foster interaction between citizens. Using the examples as vehicles for discussion I suggest that two perspectives emerge, which distinguish producers of web-based content from consumers. It seems that organisers of local campaigns have started to use Internet media as a means to advertise their cause and communicate with each other. Campaign

organisers had incorporated a website and the use of email into their networks of connectivity, suggesting that the Internet had allowed the emergence of some new forms of connectivity. Yet, on the other hand local residents, not involved in the organisation and running of the campaign, show less enthusiasm towards Internet media as a source of information and forum for communication. Most participants relied on local newspapers for information concerning local events, and communicated at a face-to-face level if a public meeting was required. Internet use between the two groups: organisers and residents suggested differing attitudes and feelings towards the benefits that Internet media could offer. The implication being that Internet media has started to allow different ways of thinking about public communication, but established methods continue to remain dominant and at the forefront of imagining publicness in Coastal Town. The following examples drawn from participation with local groups demonstrate the way in which some organisers have stated to produce web-based content and use email, or at least attempted to do so. In contrast, consumers continue to feel strongly towards local print media as a source of information about local events.

8.5.1. Case Study One - The Swimming Pool Committee

The swimming pool community action group is aiming to build a fitness centre in Coastal Town that will serve the local county council area. The committee has been campaigning since 1993 and has successfully secured a grant, but require further funds to meet the balance. The swimming pool committee has a website which details the plans for the finished centre, developments in fund raising and contact details for those wanting more. Furthermore, the committee members use email as a means of communication. Email is used by the committee member to exchange campaign news, information on possible openings for funding as well as to arrange face-to-face meetings. In addition to the use of Internet media, the committee holds regular meetings in the community centre, where developments and fund raising issues are discussed.

My observations from my participation with the swimming pool committee support the work of O'Donnell and produce two observations, which illustrate the differing values of Internet and print media for the swimming pool committee and those consuming their information. This demonstrates the complex dynamics that emerge between different groups and new and old media. Firstly, the group had adopted Internet media (a website and email) as a means to enhance their campaign and improve their methods of information dissemination rather facilitating online real-time and asynchronous between citizens. This suggested that the group had conceived of Internet media as having a role in the group's work and the very construction an perpetuation of the group. Secondly, those outside the swimming pool

group - those consuming the information provided by the group - continued to rely on the print media as a means to learn about the progress of the swimming pool. This suggests that consumers continued to be more reliant on the print media than those within the group who felt that Internet media was an adequate means to share information.

In terms of the dissemination of ideas, communication of information and the process of arranging meetings the swimming pool committee has made use is made of electronic media, suggesting that their ideas about communication and the dissemination of information include newer forms of Internet media. The implication that their ideas and ways of thinking about localised publicness are inclusive, perceiving the Internet as having a significant role in their communications network. However, it was significant that the group continued to value face-to-face meetings as a means to discuss developments and make future plans. There was no suggestion by the group that web based meetings could replace the physical interaction and there was no means to use the website in an interactive way. This suggests that in this instance web based material and email have been use to supplement, rather than replace, more traditional forms of public face-to-face meeting. The continued reliance on face-to-face meetings and the incorporation of Internet medias into the communication agenda suggests that local publicness and its construction and perpetuation remains fuelled by the need to hold physical public meetings. Despite the introduction and use of Internet media, the participants in the group found their face-to-face exchanges valuable in the planning of the campaign, suggesting that visible public behaviour is highly symbolic providing people with a way to think about, and consolidate the role of, the group within the community. This display of public behaviour in Coastal Town reiterates the notion that the scope of publicness and the means to imagine and think about it, is to some extent expanded by Internet, but existing methods of defining and performing publicness continues to centre on and re-produce existing patterns of behaviour.

Beyond the group, however, produced a different observation, which implied that different groups perceive media in manifold ways. Although the swimming pool committee used their website as a means to disseminate information about the progress of the project and to advertise for volunteers, they also published their developments and advertised their cause in the print media. For example, in a recent edition of a free local newspaper, an article detailed the funds already raised and some possible plans to raise the balance. Similarly, in the October 2001 issue of the Coastal Town News, the committee marketed their concerns and detailed of imminent Christmas fund-raising event. The Committee also use leaflets as a means of advertising their cause and leaflets, again, repeating the information published in the local newspapers.

During the home based interviews I asked participants about their feelings on local campaigns and events and asked them how they learned about them. Participants, such as John, indicated that while they were very aware of the swimming pool committee and its work and supported such a local campaign, rarely looked at local websites and preferred to gain updates from other people or through reading the local papers. The local newspapers were highly valued by most participants and all of them informed me that I should be reading Coastal Town News. The implication from my conversation with John was that the locality was valued and the idea of localised publicness remained important and was symbolised by the consumption of local newspapers.

Localised publicness and the local print media were perceived to have a close relationship, suggesting that participants such as John continued to value existing modes of communication and information consumption. The reliance on traditional methods of public communication suggest that publicness is imagined and thought about via established patterns of behaviour, leaving Internet media little room to radically transform perceptions and ways of enacting localised publicness in Coastal Town.

8.5.2. Case Study Two: The Marina

There are a number of community issues within Coastal Town, including the building of a new marina near the existing harbour. The home based interview with Colm involved a discussions concerning local issues and community action in Coastal Town. Colm was a key member of the sailing club and maintained the organisation's website. The following extracts from the interview with Colm concern the marina's website and its perceived role in communicating to the public about related development and progress:

> "We have made very little use of our website to promote the marina ... Its difficult to know its full use. People need to become accustomed to using it. It's interesting - you have this relatively powerful tool, but only as much as people allow it to be. Are they going to use the Internet?" (02/02)

During the interview, Colm implied that there is a strong interest from residents in local issues such as the Marina. He indicated that public meetings had generated considerable interest and local residents had been eager to discuss the business and environmental implications of the arena. Indeed, during the meetings conflicting views had been expressed. Local businesses welcomed the notion of the marina as it was perceived as potentially bringing visitors to Coastal Town. In contrast, environmentalists were

concerned about the damage to the coastline and habitat of the wildlife, such as the grey seal colony living off the coast.

Colm's comments about the website were interesting as in the one hand he maintained the website and published the latest developments and news concerning the marina, which included details of a feasibility study. Yett, on the other he felt that processes of learning about Marina related business and associated community action was not conducive to online information dissemination and discussion. Although he had created and maintained the website he did not equate public communication with Internet use. As with the swimming pool example, a similar schism emerged in that group members were, to a greater extent, engaged with Internet media as a means to disseminate information, than the consumer. Colm, in stating, "Its difficult to know its full use. People need to become accustomed to using it," seems to recognise some of the difficulties in using Internet media as a means of public communication. He acknowledges that as a 'producer' of content he remains unsure about how to embrace the potential of Internet media and goes on to question whether consumers would engage with web based content. It is interesting that Colm has recognised a set of problems and potential obstacles associated with the use of Internet media in a localised context. His thoughts surrounding the issues suggests that he is aware of new of connectivity, but is also critical in the sense that work and thought is needed so that they can be appropriated in an efficient way. Significantly, Colm's continued work on the Marina website suggests that thinking about new ways to connect with local residents has become significant in discussing the marina; implying that electronic connectivity has started to play an, albeit, minor role in the communication networks at a local level.

8.5.3. Case Study Three: Anti-Landfill Campaign

The examples of the swimming pool and Marina suggest that participants within the local group used and perceived Internet media in a different way to those who lived locally but were outside the group. The example of the swimming pool committee has demonstrated how the group have incorporated Internet media into their communicative schema, while the 'consumers' of the groups material continue to rely on the print media to learn about news and activities. This suggests that the print media is valued as a means of learning about public issues and, although new media has been introduced into the discourse surrounding publicness, the print media remain the dominant vehicle in the discourse surrounding publicness in Coastal Town.

Indeed, in the first case, the participant depends on the print media suggesting that the Internet is not perceived as an effective tool for the distribution of information or the

organisation of group activities. Indeed, both extracts of data suggest, in relation to local issues, the Internet is not perceived as an effective tool for political participation and community action at a local level:

> "As far as I'm concerned it's [community action website] a great idea, but I would never look at that site, so if I'm the typical Internet user then the website is a waste of time... It would need to be advertised in print, that might trigger something. Lets take the dump issue I would get information from the newspapers, it would never strike me to look at the Internet. I have an interest and I would rely on the print media and the radio and TV" (22/03/01).

Both the above extracts make strong points in relation to the Internet. They suggest that the Internet as a tool for community action has not been integrated into the mind-frame of the community. The implication being that publicness continues to be performed on a physical level, using the print media as a forum for communication.

As already suggested, there is a evidence of visible public behaviour in Coastal Town, which emerges through community action groups. One of the most prominent community groups in Coastal Town is the 'anti-landfill' campaign. Within the North County Dublin area there is a need to create a new landfill and five potential areas have been forwarded as sites for the dump. One of the areas is a small hamlet within the Coastal Town area. All the five areas have created community action groups to campaign against the location of the dump in their area. Incidentally, one of the groups has been successful in eliminating their area from the list. This group was able to eliminate themselves through a survey that suggested birds in the area would obstruct air traffic. This news was reported in both the local newspapers. After the news concerning the elimination of one site was circulated, the Coastal Town campaigners called a public meeting to discuss the other group's results and their plan's for future action.

Using my observations from the Coastal Town group, I will suggest that this group's performance of publicness and engagement with local public life centres around, mediated dissemination of information via the print media, public meetings and traditional methods of campaign. For example, the committee relies on the delivery of leaflets, display of banners, announcements in the Parish Bulletin and telephone calls to disseminate public information. Reliance on the print media as a means to disseminate information and developments and the use of leaflets to advertise the cause was far greater than that of the swimming pool committee as the group had not successfully incorporated Internet media into their patterns

of communication. Thus, for this group engagement with publicness relied on traditional methods rather than adopting Internet media as a means to communicate within and beyond the immediate committee.

A search of the Internet failed to reveal any links to a campaign website, instead the search produced links that lead to the County Council website. Indeed, it was possible to access minutes from meetings where a discussion of the landfill occurred. The availability of the minutes, rather than suggesting there had been an attempt made by the group to introduce into media into the performance of publicness, indicates that some county councils and local authorities are attempting to change the ways in which they engage with publicness and locality. This change in the method of information dissemination is significant as it indicates a move towards the use of existing and newer Internet media to foster public communication. However, it was not apparent that the increased use of media to disseminate information was changing the consumers' attitudes towards learning about events in the locality.

Internet media for both consumers and the anti-landfill campaigners did not emerge as a dominant or significant means of information dissemination or communication. One of the participants engaged in the anti-landfill campaign informed me that there was a website dedicated to the campaign, but it is not perceived as an effective means of public communication. Indeed, the participant indicated that updating the website was problematic and it was also suggested that few people were visiting the website. Furthermore, another participant involved in the campaign suggested that a website, for two reasons, was not necessarily the most appropriate means of public communication. Firstly, she suggested that there was a problem with marketing. This point mirrors observations made by other participants, interviewed in their homes, who suggested that it is difficult to effectively market websites to the public. Secondly, it was suggested that a website could be strategically problematic, as too much information placed on a website could give away valuable strategy and hinder the campaign. Incidentally, the informant from the anti-landfill group also suggested that County Council publish limited material on their website for the same reasons, suggesting that attempts to include newer media to facilitate public communication are ineffective when they relate to sensitive information.

The Internet was perceived as problematic from a marketing and strategic perspective. Instead, public meetings are perceived as effective in that they attract wide support from Coastal Town residents. Again, this emphasis on public meetings supports the argument made in relation to the swimming pool group that, even when Internet media has been

incorporated into the communicative agenda, face-to-face interaction continues to play a significant and visible role in the public imagination and ways of thinking about localised publicness. Furthermore, it was also suggested by one of the informants from the anti-landfill group that email was an ineffective way of communicating public information. The participant stated that an email group was established to inform committee members about developments and public meetings; but because individuals failed to check their email, the method was deemed inappropriate.

8.6. Residents as Consumers: The Dominance of Print Media

It seems that while some local action groups have made a successful attempt to incorporate Internet media into their patterns of communication and information dissemination, consumers of such information continue to rely on the print media as a means to learn about public events. Two perceptions emerge, with the members of the community action groups taking a different perspective to that of the consumers. Indeed, the dissemination of public information in Coastal Town and the wider county council area, relies on both new and old media, whereas 'consumers' appeared to place a greater value on print media as a means to learn about local public activity.

For local organisations publicness in Coastal Town is imagined and thought about via the print and web based material. However, for residents and some local groups such as the anti-landfill campaign, the 'imagination' of, or the way in which people think and learn about, publicness is Coastal Town largely takes place in the realms of the print media. Although, there are numerous websites dedicated to local concerns, such as local history and tourist attractions, with some web-based material duplicating the print version, the majority of participants favoured and placed greater trust in the print media. Significantly, most people in Coastal Town suggested I read the Parish Bulletin and the Coastal Town News as these were perceived as sources of reliable local information. The print media are pivotal in the imagination of Publicness in Coastal Town as they are perceived as reliable and valuable public information resources.

8.7. Local News Publications and the Resonance of the Print Media

The Catholic Church has a website providing a history of Coastal Town, details of the services, an online version of the Parish Bulletin and profiles of the local priests; one priest giving an email address. The Parish Bulletin is issued every Sunday and can be collected from the Catholic Church. This publication contains details of the theme for the Sunday Gospel and announcements. Personal announcements relate to individuals reaching certain stages in the life course, and detail births, baptisms, deaths and marriages. Furthermore, the

Bulletin contains information on events in Coastal Town relating to both church and wider community activities. For example, a prayer group is advertised, along with a car boot sale, a book club, addiction awareness week, and computer classes.

The majority of participants stated that they would read the print version of the Parish Bulletin rather than going to the church website as a means of researching church related and wider community issues. Enthusiasm towards the Parish Bulletin suggests that this publication is perceived as a valuable forum for imagining public life in Coastal Town. The Parish Bulletin is reproduced online and can be accessed via the church website; yet all the participants familiar with the publication chose to direct me towards the print, as opposed to the online version. This not only suggests that the print media holds greater esteem for participants and is perceived as a reliable source of information. But it but also reinforces the point made in relation to the swimming pool committee that even when members of the group or institution adopt Internet media as a means of public communication, it is not necessarily accepted by the consumers or residents as an effective and trustworthy means of communication. This, again, suggests that there are at least two perspectives on the incorporation of Internet media into existing communicative methods, where the perspective of the group members seems to lie in contrast to that of the consumers. Interestingly, the print version of the Parish Bulletin does not state the website address of the parish or the email address of the Priest, suggesting that greater value is placed on print communication. Furthermore, as part of the online ethnography, I emailed the Priest, using the address that was provided on the church website, but gained no response, suggesting that email is not prioritised as a form of communication. Again, it seems that, in this case, the specialist institution has made the decision to embrace Internet media, with varying and consequences for different groups. It seems that the church in deciding to engage with Internet media projected varying perspectives on the value that they placed on Internet media: on the one hand considerable effort had been made to maintain a website and produce an online version of the Parish Bulletin, yet on the other, emails were not answered, suggesting a mixed view on the value of Internet media as a means of communicating with the public in Coastal Town. Nevertheless, the use of new and old media suggests that the publicness in Coastal Town includes both web based and existing media, which both perpetuate the idea of localised publicness.

In addition to the Parish Bulletin, the majority of participants suggested that I read the Coastal Town News publication as they felt it was a valuable source of local information and public communication. The majority of participants quoted this publication as a newspaper they read. The Coastal Town News is a monthly publication and along with

adverts for local businesses, it contains information relating to public events in Coastal Town, such as the town's participation in the annual 'Tidy Towns' competition, personal and business achievements. For example, in the October addition, there is news of the latest exhibition to be displayed in the local art gallery and a biography of the artist. In previous additions, there are reports relating to improvements in the library (September 2001), articles of cultural and historical interest relating to the castle in the area and the publication also documents the minutes from the meetings of the chamber of commerce.

As with the Pariah Bulletin, this publication is a significant forum for learning about and imagining of public life in Coastal Town. Incidentally, the Coastal Town News provides details of an email address and website, suggesting that a web based version of the newspaper compliments the print version. However, the website, although providing details about the publication, archives and a link to the current edition is not up to date. And, so people are must read the print version of this publication for relevant information and news. However, the lack of maintenance on the site was not a major concern for residents as the majority, interviewed, were unaware of the newspapers' website, suggesting that the print version was perceived as adequate. Their level of enthusiasm towards the print version of the publication suggests a favouring of traditional media outlets. Of course, if the online version of Coastal Town news was maintained and kept up-to-date, it is feasible that a different attitude could begin to prevail. But I felt the lack of attention given to the website compared with the careful production of the print version was symbolic of the value placed on local print media as a means to learn bout local events and imagine publicness. Thus, although public dissemination of information is moving towards a mix of old and new media, print media remains the dominant platform for the imagining publicness.

8.8. The (Re)-construction and Perpetuation of Localised Publicness in Coastal Town

Using previous work relating to the Internet and the public sphere as a starting point, I have suggested that the data from the ethnographic study provides support for previous work. This suggested that, although Internet media has the potential to become a democratic public sphere, it fails to operate as a fully inclusive, interactive forum. Local publicness in Coastal Town is imagined via the print media and, to some extent, web based information. The local print media, however, is highly valued by participants as a resource and the public meeting is perceived as an effective means of communication. Admittedly, web based material has made some impact on patterns of communication, but the perception of its role varies, with those who produce the material perceiving it as having greater value than those who consume. Nevertheless, the production of web-based material and the use of Internet

media within local groups and institutions, such as the church, suggests that there are some changes, at a local level, in the way in which public communication is perceived and enacted. Although, the change is not radical and has minimal impact on consumers, the incorporation of Internet media into the network of connectivity at a local level suggests that perceptions about methods of local communication patterns are beginning to change and develop new strands.

On the whole, for local residents, local information and news is consumed via the print media and issues are discussed at a face-to-face level. The local print media serves as a tool by which to think about and imagine the construction and perpetuation of local publicness, which is then subsequently enacted in face-to-face settings; thus sustaining and re-constructing localised publicness in Coastal Town. As already suggested participants, such as Siobhan, indicated a preference for face-to-face, rather than electronic interactive contact. Indeed, this attitude and similar feelings emerged when people were asked about Coastal Town based websites, local campaigns, public meetings and local institutions. For example, the participant suggests that the most appropriate way to learn about public institutions are through face-to-face contact as opposed to the Internet:

> "… but if I were new to the area,… if I'm gonna live here I'd like to find more info on schools - the stuff that you only finds out through talking to people" (03/01).

Indeed, she is suggesting that 'community' related information is most efficiently communicated through verbal face-to-face with other residents, rather than online communication with the institution. The implication being that while attempts are made by organisations to introduce new media into the network of connectivity, existing methods and means of communication remain significant in the imagination of local residents.

8.9. Policy Implications

In terms of the implications for policy it seems that locality continues to remain important to people suggesting that European and national policy must incorporate the significance of the local. The findings seems to suggest that:

- National and European policies on public communication and participation must be tailored to meet local needs
- The print and other older media must be acknowledged as continuing to play a key role facilitating public communication, implying that the role of all media must be considered when thinking about and formulating policy relating to public communication

- If it desirable to increase participation via the Internet and inclusion in the information society national and European policy needs to consider increasing access to terminals, subsidising costs of equipment and call charges and increasing connection speeds increase

9. Concluding Notes

9.1. Theoretical Implications: Towards the 'Second Generation Internet'

Following the SSOT perspective, and particularly the notion that media are negotiated within localised and specific settings, I develop a premise for data analysis which centres around what I refer to as the *'second generation Internet'*.

9.1.1. But, what is the 'First Generation Internet'?

Previous literature concerning the Internet and computer mediated communication (CMC) has addressed the nature of the 'reality' that is emerging online and has been largely optimistic or utopian in its interpretation. Much early theorising, in the early to mid 1990s, surrounding the Internet has often presented the online environment and offline life as having qualitatively different characteristics, which has contributed to, and perpetuated, the idea that the 'virtual' and 'physical' occupy opposite positions in a dichotomous relationship. Many first generation proponents of cyber-culture present the Internet as a 'cyberspace' and it is perceived as a Utopian environment and has been construed as a world that has, almost, superior qualities, with a status elevated above that of the physical world. For example, Heim, using the symbolic notion of the 'cybernaut', implies that the Internet user can become immersed in a virtual and liberating environment:

> "The cybernaut seated before us, strapped into sensory input devices, appears to be, and is indeed, lost to this world. Suspended in computer space, the cybernaut leaves the prison of the body and emerges in a world of digital sensation" (Heim, 1994, p.64).

Over the last decade debates surrounding the social impact of Internet media as facilitating a virtual environment have exploded (Baudrillard, 1983; Featherstone and Burrows, 1995; Shields, 1996; Rushkoff, 1994, 1997; Porter, 1997; Heim, 1998; Levy, 1998). he discussion over 'virtuality' and the Internet has been fuelled by many enthusiastic proponents of cyberculture who have suggested that virtuality has begun to supersede physicality. Indeed, as Rushkoff states:

> "This apparently boundless universe of data breaks all the rules of physical reality" (Rushkoff, 1994, p.17).

Furthermore, as Seidler (1998) writes, 'computers can help us imagine different forms of communication.' He regards the net as a 'space of freedom and autonomy where people can…choose the identities they want to live from moment to moment' (1998, p.20). For some scholars then, the Internet represents an environment of possibility, where It is argued that the Internet, with its lack of visual and audible cues, has the potential to be a post-gender/age/disability and ethnic environment and this view is supported by Plant, who writes:

> "The Net has been taken to epitomise the shape of this new distributed non-linear world. With no limit to the number of names, which can be used, one individual can become a population explosion on the Net: many sexes, many species. Back on paper there is no limit to the games that can be played in cyberspace" (1997, p. 46).

Internet forums such as bulletin board systems (BBS), e-mailing lists and Multi User Domains (MUDS) are spaces that consist entirely of text and many have formulated optimistic views about the transformational force of such outlets. For example, Young (1994) and Bechar-Israeli (1995) have examined MUDs and suggested that they 'offer new and highly compelling language experiences' (Young, 1994:1). In describing the virtual text world, Young takes a 'Utopian' view in the sense that he regards the users as having complete control over the presentation of self. He suggests that the user can exercise 'performative language' control which gives him/her detachment from the environment and the opportunity to create a new self within the virtual environment (also see, 1995, Danet *et. al*. 1997).

9.2. Critique: The Emergence of the Second Generation

A number of criticisms can be applied to the utopian approach, and under the generic heading of 'second generation Internet' I provide a criticism of the fist generation approach and establish a framework for the analysis of the results of this study. In terms of the second generation, writers such as Kitchen (1998, 2000) have suggested that the shaping of the Internet and its consequences for societal organisation are complex. It is perceived to change understandings of space and time, mass communication and the boundaries of the 'real' and 'virtual', where the environments overlap in complex and manifold ways. Similarly, Castells (1996, 1997) suggests that developments in new technology, particularly the Internet, fundamentally change the way in which our everyday lives and world are

shaped. The 'information technology revolution', as he refers to it, is seen as restructuring capitalism and inducing a new form of society: the *network society*. 'Network society' is defined by,

> "The globalisation of strategically decisive economic activities. By the networking form of organisation. By the flexibility and instability of work, and the individualisation of labour. By a culture of real virtuality constructed by a pervasive, interconnected and diversified media system. And by the transformation of material foundations of life…" (1996, p.1).

The increasing influence of network society is compounded by Castells' concept of the 'culture of real virtuality', which he defines as follows:

> "A system in which reality itself (that is people's material/symbolic existence) is entirely captured, fully immersed in a virtual image setting, in a world of make-believe, in which appearances are not just on the screen through which experience is communicated, they become the experience" (1996, p.373).

Using examples of second generation writing I capture the way in which the second generation Internet is constructed by, and instrumental in constructing, a set of blurred and indistinguishable boundaries within the realms of everyday life. I indicate that the introduction of new media forms such as the Internet, rather then emerging and existing in isolation, are constructed within an existing media context. The Internet is presented as a medium emerging from existing discourse, as opposed to a phenomenon that requires and creates a new language, discourse and set of rules (Winston, 1998; Hakken, 1999; Marvin, 1999; New Media and Society, 1999; Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002;). I define the second generation Internet as having the following characteristics:

- It blurs the distinction between online and offline life and the ways in which the 'real' and 'virtual' realms, rather than existing as separate dimensions become blurred and indistinct.
- Consumption of the SGI is defined and influence by that of existing media content. Websites are often dedicated to old or existing media content from television, radio or newspapers.
- The second generation Internet, when introduced into the household, is integrated into existing consumption habits and practices surrounding the existing media.

9.3. The Second Generation: Merging Online and Offline

The work of Hine (2000), who supports the notion that studying everyday uses of the Internet and impact on 'personal and collective lives' is more revealing than the 'mythologising' of virtual culture. Miller and Slater (2000) provide an example of second

generation work that has reacted to utopian discourses surrounding the Internet and as a means to demonstrate the difficulties in distinguishing the online and offline realms. In their study of Trinidad, Miller and Slater, espouse a comparative ethnographic approach to study the way in which the Trinidadian people have moulded the Internet to make it a meaningful in their environment. Based on the data the authors challenge much 'first generation' literature and suggest that the Internet does not exist as a placeless 'cyberspace'. It is argued that the Internet, rather than emerging as 'virtual' phenomenon, is embedded within specific social spaces such as the family, business and religion. Indeed, the authors suggest that, for 'Trini' people, the Internet is used for practical projects and is seen as supplementing existing forums. For example, this process can be observed in relation to the family. Here it is argued that because of the Diaspora, people use the Internet as a re-construct family living. The Internet becomes embedded within family life which is renewed by email and e-greetings. It is argued, then, that the Internet allows Trini people to realise their families in an ideal form. Moreover, the family is also used to show that the people ignore the real/virtual distinction and, instead, it is argued that the Internet is used to maintain conventional 'offline' social structures, such as marriage. Thus, little Internet use is perceived as occupying a 'virtual' status and the Internet is not rendered meaningful via the type of 'real/virtual' duality that writers such as Dery (1996) have advocated.

9.4. The Second Generation: Merging Consumption of New and Old Media Content

The term 'new media' suggests that the Internet is distinct from old media in its technical status, conceptualisation and consumption. The idea that new media is 'new' has been challenged by Roscoe (1999) in terms of consumption patterns. He suggests that there has been a shift in perception from the Internet as computer mediated communication to the Internet as mass media which has a viewing audience. Others have challenged the 'newness' and 'revolutionary' potential of new media and have focused on content and the way in which users are incorporating new media into their existing frameworks and routines. For example, in terms of content, Rasmussen (1999) suggests that it is difficult to define new and old media and, instead, suggests that it is more useful to frame the media in terms of a post-mass media age, where viewing is defined by choice rather than broadcasting.

Silverstone (1999) discusses the way in which television is embedded into the discourses of home and everyday life and he argues that television mediates experience, giving order and narrative, allowing us to make the world intelligible (see also Berdayes and Berdayes, 1998 for a discussion of narrative). Similarly, Seiter (1999) argues that while Internet use is

promoted on the television, some of the most popular web based material belongs to television. From this observation, she notes that television is a common currency (see also Coffey and Stripp, 1997). Thus, although her research is similar to Silverstone's in the sense that it focuses on the home setting, her ideas also overlap with Rasmussen in the sense that it is becoming difficult to distinguish the content of old and new media.

9.5. The Second Generation Internet and Domesticity

With reference to second generation writing, the second generation Internet, within the context of this research, is presented as a flexible phenomenon, incorporating a set of manifold dynamics, which both enable and are re-constructed by user interaction in the domestic environment. The user through consuming the Internet and creating a personalised set of use patterns is playing a key role in re-affirming the notion of the idea of the second generation Internet. This user driven vision of the Internet, rather than being presented as a 'cyberspace', or 'matrix', is depicted as embedded into the discourse of everyday life and integrated by the users into their existing social practices and communicative patterns. Furthermore, not only is the second generation Internet bound closely with the mundane routine of everyday life, it is depicted as crossing boundaries; spanning new and old media and offline and online, or the 'real' and 'virtual' realms.

The emergence of the second generation can be identified in the findings of this ethnographic research. They are summarised below and demonstrate the ways in which the Internet has become a component of mundane domesticity.

9.6. Summary of Findings

This ethnographic research has produced a number of findings on the way in which domestic Internet users and local organisations in Coastal Town have appropriated and shaped the Internet to meet specific needs. Throughout the report I have provided examples of the way in which the Internet has been appropriated. The findings have been framed in relation to the domestication and public sphere concept.

9.6.1. The Dominance of Personalised Use Patterns

Participants establish a set of individualised use patterns, which reflect their desire to use the Internet to complete personalised tasks. The majority of participants were keen to use their Internet connection in a way that allowed personalised research relating to travel and health.

9.6.2. Domestication

The concept of domestication, as developed by Silverstone and Sorensen et al, was applied to the data. It re-confirmed that participants, although carefully managing their technology often experience the influence of the technology's symbolic agency and make changes to their domestic circumstances to cater for the technology. Using case studies relating to children's use and home-workers, it is evident that the domestication remains a useful vehicle for discussion and is relevant for framing findings relating to Internet consumption. The concept allows an illustration of the dynamic relationship between user and technology and new and old media, which facilitates a discussion relating to the role of technology in the household and existing media consumption pattern.

9.6.3. Localised Publicness: Against Publicised Internet Use

The research seems to indicate that participants are choosing not to use the Internet for engagement with publicised concerns. When asked about their use patterns it seemed that participants valued the Internet as a resource for addressing privatised as opposed to publicised concerns. Participants were asked to discuss whether they chose to use the Internet for political purposes both within Coastal Town. Admittedly, some participants chose to use the Internet for political purposes and chose to engage with websites that allowed them to become, or further their involvement, with local groups. The majority of people, however, chose to use the Internet to address personal needs and its perceived value resided in its capacity to become a tool in the maintenance of certain domestic routines.

9.6.4. The Coastal Town Internet?

There are numerous websites dedicated to Coastal Town and these relate to local institutions, organisations, community groups and tourist sites. A superficial reading of the local websites would suggest a 'wired' and 'connected' town. The empirical data, however, depicts a more complex situation; with consumers showing different levels of engagement with the material.

a) Personalised Use of Coastal Town Sites

Participants were asked about Coastal Town based websites and the majority of participants maintained that they had no reason to engage with local sites. Admittedly some participants stated that they had used some local sites, but they also indicated that this use was not as a means to engage in local political campaign, but instead facilitate personalised use. For example, one participant had used the local sites in the creation of a family album type site. This type of use reinforces the notion previously highlighted that publicised material will

often be incorporated into personalised use patterns and used as a means to maintain domestic routine.

b) Local Campaigns and Uneven Use

Internet media had mixed meanings in the local context; with organisers of local campaigns using email to communicate with each other and residents choosing to rely on the print media as a source of information. It transpired that Internet media were valued by those involved in the organisation of local campaigns as a means of communication or advertising. Significantly, the Internet was used alongside existing communication forms. When domestic Internet users were asked about local campaigning and websites, the majority stated that they would not engage with such sites, preferring instead to gain information from the local press.

9.6.5. Symbolising Public and Private: The Family

A number of participants were eager to use the public electronic space created by the Internet as a site for re-creating and maintaining family relationships. Distinguishing public and private is inherently problematic, even so, it seems that engagement with family centred Internet use exacerbates the problem of defining public and private realms; at least what is symbolically public and private. Admittedly family relations, by nature, cross the boundaries and move between the public and private realms, in the sense that the family as a symbolically private entity not only enters the public sphere, but is also constructive within the public sphere. The construction of 'family album' type web material makes it difficult to begin the analysis of where the public and private spheres begin and end, in the sense a symbolically public space is used as a means to further develop and perpetuate personalised and privatised relations. Thus, personalised content, intended for extended family members abroad, is placed into a public realm, which is then re-privatised by the receiver into a set of meanings which give the web based material meaning within a specific domestic context.

9.7. Policy Implications

The research has produced a number of policy implications relating to children's consumption and localised publicness:

9.7.1.The Role of 'Old' Media in 'New' Media Consumption Patterns

The broadcast media could play a role in providing information and advice on Internet safety; and could be embraced by government task forces at a national and European level as a means to communicate public information concerning:

- Potential dangers
- Methods to protect children
- Steps to be taken in creating a safe domestic environment

9.7.2. Publicising Localness

Locality continues to remain important to people suggesting that European and national policy must incorporate the significance of the local:

- National and European policies on public communication and participation must be tailored to meet local needs
- The print and other older media must be acknowledged as continuing to play a key role facilitating public communication, implying that the role of all media must be considered when thinking about and formulating policy relating to public communication
- If it desirable to increase participation via the Internet and inclusion in the information society national and European policy needs to consider increasing access to terminals, subsidising costs of equipment and call charges and increasing connection speeds increase

The policy implications draw on the notion of the second generation of the Internet. That is, the policy implications include the idea that the Internet is integrated into the practices and routines of domesticity; as opposed to separate and fuelling the rhetoric of the 'information society'. The research has revealed that there is a large gap between the material produced by national and European governing bodies and the ways in which participants conceptualise the Internet. Most participants perceived the Internet as a medium to be integrated into their established patterns of domesticity, work and media consumption; this integration was personalised and varied across households. Thus, the policy implications reflect this 'individualisation' of the Internet.

Notes

[1] For the purposes of the report the location of the ethnographic research is referred to as 'Coastal Town' (CT).
[2] "Old" or "offline" media refers to traditional broadcast media such as the television or radio and the print media, whereas the Internet is referred to as 'new' or 'online' media. It is acknowledged that radio and television programmes can be received via the Internet and that the distinction between 'old' and 'new media is blurred.
[3] This issue is not explored in this report. However, it was evident that some participants used the Internet to participate in online forums beyond Costal Town.
[4] Allen, 2001**,** p.67
[5] The domestication concept has been developed in the UK and Norway and has been applied by others in Europe and Canada (see Ling and Thrane, 2001, Bakardjieva and Smith, 2000).
[6] In his body of early work, Silverstone develops the domestication concept largely in relation to television. In later work (1999) Silverstone makes reference to the Internet as a medium that is actively shaped and integrated into the everyday domestic environment.
[7] The process of domestication has been explored consistently in Silverstone's body of work relating to media consumption. However, there is some variation in the model between the different texts. For example, in earlier work (1992) four stages of domestication are recognised and in later work (1994) there is elaboration of the initial stages in the consumption process.
[8] All the participants interviewed had access to the Internet in their main 'family' home and accessed the Internet through a PC. Therefore, the report examines the user's relationship with an Internet enabled PC.
[9] This is a scheme run by the council, where houses are either part owned by the council and the buyer, making the housing more affordable. The new estates that have emerged in Coastal Town within the last five years, such as 'Coastal Town Rock' and 'Kelly's Bay', are a combination of privately owned houses and part ownership.
[10] See Appendices for further details on participating households, organisations and relevant publications.
[11] Internet media refers to electronic communication in the form of email, bulletin board forums, email listservs and interactive and non-interactive websites. All the participants in the study accessed web based content through an Internet enabled PC. A few participants had, in addition, a set top box, but preferred to use the PC. The PC was preferred as it allowed navigation using a mouse, whereas the set top box was perceived as limiting in its capacity for browsing. This observation in itself has implications for the ways in which a technology can impact on behaviour, use and consumption patterns, indicating that while the technology undergoes a shaping process, it also has an influence on users.
[12] All names have been changes
[13] The domestication concept has been developed in the UK and Norway and has been applied by others in Europe and Canada (see Ling and Thrane, 2001, Bakardjieva and Smith, 2000).
[14] Paul is a teacher and inevitably his work impinged on home, but the type of work that he bought home was not dependent on an Internet connection.

References

- Allen, K (2000) *The Celtic Tiger: The Myth of Social Partnership in Modern Ireland*, Manchester, Manchester University Press
- Amarach Consulting (2001) 'Eir-Commerce 2001 – Ireland's Consumer Internet Economy: Gloom or Boom? Available: www.amarach.com
- Bakardjieva, M (2001) 'Becoming a Domestic Internet User', paper presented at E-Usages Conference, Paris, 2001, pp. 28-38
- Baym, N.K (1995) 'The Emergence of Community in Computer Mediated Communication,' in Jones, S (ed.) op.cit, pp. 138-164
- (1998) 'The Emergence of On-Line Community,' in Jones, S (1998) Op. Cit, pp. 35-69
- Becher-Israeli, H (1995) 'From <Bonehead>TO<cLoNehEAd>: Nicknames, Play and identity on Internet Relay Chat,' in *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication,* 1(2), available: http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol1/issue2/becher
- Beck, U, Giddens, A, Lash, S (1994) Reflexive Modernisation: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in Modern Social Order, Ca: Stanford University Press
- Beck, U, (1994) 'The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernisation,' pp. 1-56
- Benedikt, M (ed.) (1994) *Cyberspace: First Steps,* Massachusetts: MIT Press
- Berg, A-J (1999) 'A Gendered Socio-Technical Construction: The Smart House,' pp. 301-314 in MacKenzie, D and Wajcman, J [eds] The Social Shaping of Technology, Second Edition, Buckingham: Open University Press
- Blumer, J and Kavanagh, D (1999) 'The Third Age of Political Communication: Influences and Features,' in Political Communication 16, pp.209-230
- Berdayes, L and Berdayes, V (1998) 'The Information Society in Contemporary Magazine Narrative,' in Journal of Communication, Spring 1998, pp. 109-123
- Boyd-Barrett, O and Newbold, C (1995) Approaches to Media: A Reader, London: Arnold
- Calhoun, C [ed] (1992) Habermas and the Public Sphere, Massachusetts, MIT Press
- Cassells, P (2000) 'Recasting The European Social Model', In Europe: The Irish Experience O'Donnell, R (Ed) 2000, Institute Of Euoropean Affairs: Dublin, Pp. 69-75
- Cassidy, M (2001) 'Cyberspace Meets Domestic Space: Personal Computers, Women's work, and gendered Territories of the Family Home, in Critical Studies in Media Communication, 18(1), pp. 44-65
- Castells, M (2001) The Internet Galaxy, Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Coleman, S (1998) 'BBC radio Ulter's Talkback Phone-in: Public Feedback in a Divided Public Space,' in Javnost: The Public, 5(2), pp. 7-19
- Corcoran, F (1999) 'Towards Digital Television In Europe,' Javnost: The Public, 6(3), pp. 67-86
- Dahlberg, L (1998) 'Cyberspace and the Public Sphere: Exploring the Democratic Potential of the Net,' in Convergence, 4(1), pp. 70-81
- Dahlberg, L (2001) 'The Habermasian Public Sphere Encounters Cyber-Reality,' in Javnost: The Public, 8(3), pp. 83-96
- Dahlgren, P (1995) *Television and the Public Sphere*, London, Sage
- Danet, J (1998) 'Text as Mask: Gender, Play and Performance on the Internet, in Jones (ed.) op. Cit. pp. 129-159
- Dery, M (ed.) (1995) *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture* Vol.92, no.4
- Dery, M (1996) *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century,* London: Hodder and Stoughton
- Dodge, M and Kitchin, R (2001) *Mapping Cyberspace*, London: Routledge
- Donath, J.S (1999) 'Identity and Deception in the Virtual Community,' in Smith and Kollock (eds.) op. Cit. pp.29-60
- Downes, T (1999) ' Children's and parents' Discourses about Computers in the Home and School,' in Convergence, 5(4), pp. 104-111
- Durkheim, E (1984) *The Division of Labour in Society*, London: Macmillan
- Du Val Smith, A (1999) 'Problems of Conflict Management in Virtual Communities,' in Smith and Kollock (eds.) op. Cit. pp. 134-167
- Eliasoph, N (1998) Avoiding Politics, London: Routledge
- Fernback, J and Thompson, B (1995) *Virtual Communities, Abort, Retry, Failure* Available: http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/csoc/
- Fernback, J (1997) 'The Individual Within the Collective,' in Jones [ed] Op.Cit. pp. 36-55
- (1999) 'There Is a There There: Notes Toward a Definition of Cybercommunity,' in Jones (ed.) Op. Cit. pp.203-221
- Fetveit, A (1999) 'Reality TV in the Digital Era: A paradox in Visual Culture? In Media, Culture and Society, 21 (6) London: Sage, pp. 787-804
- Foster, D (1997) 'Community and Identity in the Electronic Village' in Porter, D (ed.) Op. Cit. pp. 23-39
- Fraser, N (1992) 'Re-thinking the Public Sphere: A contribution to the Crituque of Actually Existing Democracy, in Calhoun, C [ed.], op. Cit. pp. 109- 143

- Frissen, V (2000) 'ICTs in the Rush Hour of Life,' in The Information Society, Taylor and Francis, pp. 65-75
- Frissen, V (2001) 'The Paradox of Individual Commitment: The Implications of the Internet for New Forms of Social Association and Participation,' paper presented at the CPR Conference, Venice, pp. 411-439
- Furht, B, Westwater, R And Ice, J (1999) 'A New Approach To Radio And TV Broadcasting Over The Internet', In Jensen, J And Toscan, C [Eds] 1999 Aolborg University Press: Denmark Pp.169-191
- Garnham, N (1995) 'The Media and the Public Sphere,' in Boyd-Barrett and Newbold, C [eds.], op.cit. pp. 245-252
- Giddens, A (1990) The Consequences of Modernity, California: Stanford University Press
- Giddens, A (1991) Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age, Cambridge: Polity
- Giddens, A (1999) Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping Our Lives, London: Profile Books
- Gillwald, A (1998) 'Convergence, Regulation and Public Interest,' in Intermedia 26 (3), pp. 32-37
- Gitlin, T (ed.) (1986) *Watching Television*, New York, Pantheon
- Grint, K and Woolgar, S (1997) *The Machine at Work: Technology, Work and Organisation,* Cambridge: Polity
- Grisold, A and Preston, P (1993) 'Unpacking The Concept Of Competition In Media Policy Making: The Case Of Austria And Ireland',
- Habermas, J (1995) 'Institutions of the Public Sphere,' in Boyd-Barrett and Newbold [eds], op.cit. pp. 235-245
- Haddon, L (1997) Empirical Research on the Domestic Phone: A Literature Review, CulCom working paper 2
- Hakken, (1999) Cyborgs@Cyberspace: *An Ethnographer Looks to the Future,* New York: Routledge
- Heim, M (1994) 'The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace' in Benedikt, M (ed.) op.cit. pp. 59-81
- (1995) 'The Design of Virtual Reality,' in Borrows and Featherstone (eds.) op.cit. pp. 65-79
- (1998) *Virtual Realism,* New York: Oxford University Press

- Herman, E and McChesney 'The Global Media In The Late 1990s', In The Media Reader: Continuity And Transformation, Mackay, H And O'sullivan, T [Eds.] 1999, London: Sage , pp.178-211
- Hetland, P (2001) 'Internet Narratives in Norwegian Newspapers', unpublished paper, Eastern Norway Research Institute
- Hine, C (2000) *Virtual Ethnography,* London: Sage
- Holderness, M (1998) 'Who are the World's Information Poor?' in Loader (ed.) pp.35-57
- Holmes, D (1997) *Virtual Politics: Identity and Community in Cyberspace,* London: Sage
- Hutchby, I (2001) 'Technologies, Texts and Affordances,' in New Media and Society, 3(1), London: Sage
- Jones, S (1995) *Cybersociety: Computer Mediated Communication and Community,* Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Jones, S (1997) *Virtual Culture: Identity and Communication in Cyberspace* Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Jones, S (1998) *Cybersociety 2.0, Revisiting Computer Mediated Communication and Community,* Thousand Oaks: Sage
- Kelly, M.J And O'conner, B [Eds] (1997) *Media Audiences In Ireland*, University College Dublin: Dublin
- Kerr, A (1997) 'Multi-Media as Content: Networks and the Shaping of Multi-media Developments in Ireland,' paper presented at the Ireland, Europe and Global Information Society Conference, available: http://www.dcu.ie/communications/iegis/Aphra.htm
- Kerr, A (2000) 'Media Diversity and Cultural Identities: The Development of Multimedia Content in Ireland, in New Media and Society, 2(3), pp. 286-312
- Kitchen, R (1998) *Cyberspace: The World in the Wires,* Chichester: Wiley
- Lash, S (1994) 'Reflexivity and its Doubles: Structure, Aesthetics, Community' pp. 110-174
- Lenert, E (1998) 'A Communication Theory Perspective on Telecommunications Policy,' in Journal of Communication, Autumn 1998, pp. 3-21
- Levy, P (1998) *Becoming Virtual*
- Lie, M and Sorensen, K (1996) 'Making Technology our Own? Domesticating Technology into Everyday Life, pp.1-30 in 'Making Technology out Own? Oslo: Scandinavian University Press

- Lievrouw, L. A and Livingstone, S [eds.] (2002) 'The Social Shaping and Consequences of ICTs,' in The Hand Book of New Media, Lievrouw, L and Livingstone, S, London: Sage
- Ling, R and Thrane, K (2001) 'It actually separates us a bit, but I think that is an advantage: The Management of Electronic Media in Norwegian Households,' paper presented at E-Usages Conference, Paris 2001, pp. 148-159
- Ling, R (1996) 'Cyber McCarthyism: Witch Hunts in the Living Room,' in Electronic Journal of Sociology, available: http://www.sociology.org/content/vol002.001/ling.html
- Ling, R, Haddon, L and Klamer, L 'The Understanding and Use of the Internet and the Mobile Telephone among Contemporary Europeans,' paper presented at E-Usages Conference, Paris, pp. 40-52
- Loader, B.D (ed.) (1998) *Cyberspace Divide,* London, Routledge
- Mackay, H And O'Sullivan, T [Eds.] (1999), *The Media Reader: Continuity And Transformation,* London: Sage
- Marvin, C (1999) 'When Old Technologies Were New: Implementing The Future', In Mackay, H And O'sullivan, T [Eds.] (1999), The Media Reader: Continuity And Transformation, London: Sage
- McLaughlin, L (1993) 'Feminism, the Public Sphere, Media and Democracy,' in Media, Culture and Society, 15, pp. 599-620
- McLaughlin, L (1995) 'From Excess to Access: Feminist Political Agency in the Public Sphere,' in Javnost: The Public, 4, pp. 37-50
- McOmber, J (1999) 'Technological Autonomy and Three Definitions of Technology,' in Journal of Communication, Summer, 1999, pp. 137-151
- McRae, S (1996) 'Coming Apart at the Scenes: Sex, Text and Virtual Body,' in Cerney and Weise op.cit. pp. 242-265
- McRae, S (1997) 'Sex Made Word: Sex, Text and the Virtual Body,' in Porter (ed.) op.cit. pp. 73-86
- Meijer, I, C (1998) *Advertising Citizenship: An Essay On The Performative Power Of Consumer Culture*, In Media, Culture And Society 20(2) 1998, London: Sage Pp. 237-247
- Miller, D and Slater, D (2000) *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach,* Oxford: Berg
- Mitchell, C (1998) 'Women's (Community) Radio as a Feminist Public Sphere,' in Javnost: The Public, 5(2), pp. 72-85
- Morley, D (2000) *Home Territories: Media, Mobility And Identity*, London: Routledge

- Nolan , P (1997) 'Screening The Message: A Study Of Community Relations Broadcasting In Northern Ireland', In Kelly And O'Connor, [Eds] Media Audiences In Ireland, pp. 107-126
- O'Donnell, R (Ed) (2000) *Europe: The Irish Experience,* Institute Of European Affairs: Dublin
- O'Donnell, S (2001) 'Analysing the Internet and the Public Sphere: The Case of Womenslink,' in Javnost: The Public, 8(1), pp. 39-58
- O'Neill, B (2000) 'Lifting the Veil: The Arts, Broadcasting and Irish Society,' in Media, Culture and Society, 22, pp. 763-785
- O'Siochru, S (1997) 'The Government's New Information Society Strategy: But is Inclusion Excluded?,' paper presented at Ireland, Europe and the Global Information Society
- O'Sullivan , S (1997) 'The Ryanline Is Now Open…Talk Radio And The Public Sphere,' In Kelly And O'Connor, B [Eds], Pp. 167-191
- Outhwaite, W (1994) *Habermas: A Critical Introduction,* Cambridge, Polity
- Preston, P (1994) 'The Concepts of Public Sphere in 'Political Economy of Communications'
- Plant, S (1995) 'The Future Looms: Weaving Women and Cybernetics' in Featherstone, M and Burrows, R (eds.) op. cit. pp. 45-65
- Plant, S (1996) *On the Matrix: Cyberfeminist Simulations* in Shields, R (ed) op.cit. pp.170-184
- Plant, S (1997) *Zeros and Ones: Digital Women and The New Technoculture* London: Fourth estate
- Porter, D (1997) *Internet Culture,* New York, Routledge
- Preston, P (1997) 'Beyond the Information Society: Selected Atoms and Bits of a National Strategy in Ireland,' paper presented at Ireland, Europe and the Global Information Society Conference, available – http://www.dcu.ie/communications/iegis/preston.htm
- Preston, P (2000) 'Content is King? Culture, Community and Commerce,' in New Media and Society, 2(3), pp. 259-267
- Rasmussen, T (1999) 'New Media Change: Sociological Approaches To The Study Of New Media' In Interactive Television: TV Of The Future Or The Future Of TV, Jensen, J And Toscan, C [Eds] Aolborg University Press: Denmark,, Pp. 149-169
- Reid, E (1995) 'Virtual Worlds: Culture and Imagination,' in Jones (ed.) op.cit. pp. 164-184

- (1999) ‘Hierarchy and Power: Social Control in Cyberspace,’ in Smith and Kollock (eds.) op. Cit. pp.107-134
- Rheingold, H (1994) *The Virtual Community* London: Minerva
- Robins, K and Webster, F (1999) Times and Technoculture,’ London: Routledge
- Roscoe, T (1999) ‘The Construction of the World Wide Web Audience,’ in Media Culture and Society, 21(5), London: Sage, pp. 637-684
- Ryan, L (2000) ‘Strengthening The Irish Identity Through Openness’, In Europe: The Irish Experience O’Donnell, R (Ed) 2000, Institute Of European Affairs: Dublin, pp 55-68
- Ryan, M (1992) ‘Gender and Public Access: Woman’s Politica in Nineteenth Century America,’ in Calhoun, C [ed], op. Cit. pp. 259-289
- Samarajiva, R (1997) ‘Living in the Information Society: The Public Network as a Public Space,’ paper presented at Ireland, Europe and the Global Information Society Conference,
- Roscoe, T (1999) ‘The Construction of the World Wide Web Audience,’in Media Culture and Society, 21(5), London: Sage
- Schmidtke, O (1998) ‘Berlin in the Net: Prospects for Cyber-democracy from Above and Below,’ in Tsagrousianou *et. al* (eds.) op. Cit. pp.60-84
- Schulz, W (1997) ‘Changes of Mass Media and the Public Sphere,’ in Javnost: The Public 4(2), pp. 57-67
- Seidler, V.J ‘Gender, Nature and History,’ in Wood, J (ed.) op. Cit.15-30
- Seiter, E (1999) Television And New Media Audiences, Oxford University Press
- Shah, D, Nojin, K and Holbert, R ‘Connecting and Disconnecting With Civic Life: patterns of Internet Use and the Production of Social Capital, 18, London: Taylor and Francis, pp. 141-161
- Silverstone, R and Hirsch, E [eds.](1992) *Consuming Technologies: Media and Information in Domestic Spaces,* London: Routledge
- Silverstone, R, Hirsch, E and Morely, D (1992) ‘Information and Communication Technologies and the Moral Economy of the Household,’ in Silverstone, R and Hirsch, E [eds.] pp. 15-32
- Silverstone, R (1994) *Television And Everyday Life*, London: Routledge,
- Silverstone, R (1999) *Why Study The Media*, London, Sage
- Slevin, (2000) *The Internet and Society,* Cambridge: Polity
- Sorensen, K (1994) ‘Technology in Use: Two Essays in the Domestication of Artefacts,’ Trondheim: senter for teknologi og Samfunn

- Sorensen, K, Aune, M and Hatling, M (2000) 'Against Linearity: On the Cultural Appropriation of Science and Technology,' pp. 237-257
- Smith, R and Bakardjieva, M (2001) 'The Internet in Everyday Life: Computer networking from the Standpoint of the Domestic User,' in New Media and Society, 3(1), London: Sage, pp. 67-83
- Somerville, R, Perry, E, Horvit, B, Wood-Turely, S and Sanders, K (1998) 'Spider in the Web: Free Speech Faith vs. parental Fears,' in Convergence 4(4), pp. 59-75
- Standage, T (1998) *The Victorian Internet, London: Phoenix*
- Stein, L (1998) 'Democratic Talk, Access Television and Participatory Political Communication, ' in Javnost: The Public 5(2), pp. 21-34
- Stewart, J (1999) 'Interactive TV At Home, in Interactive Television: TV Of The Future Or The Future Of TV, Jensen, J And Toscan, C [Eds] Aolborg University Press: Denmark, Pp.231-261
- Trench, B and O'Donnell, S (1997) 'The Internet and the Expansion of Democratic Practices in Ireland,' paper presented at Ireland, Europe and The Global Information Society Conference, available, http://www.dcu.ie/communications/iegis/Trench.htm
- Trench, B 'New Views of News,' paper presented at the Digital Landscapes Conference, DIT, Dublin
- Tsagarousianou, R, Tambini, D and Bryan, C (1998) (eds.) *Cyberdemoncracy: Technology, Cities and Civic Networks,* London, Routledge
- Turkle, S (1996) *Life on Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet,* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson
- Van Dijk, J (1999) *The Network Society*, London: Sage
- Watson, N (1997) 'Why We Argue About Virtual Community,' in Jones [ed] op.cit. pp. 102-133
- Webster, F (1999) 'What Information Society,' in The Media Reader: Continuity And Transformation, Mackay, H And O'sullivan, T [Eds.] 1999, London: Sage –Pp. 166-165
- Webster, F 'The Information Society Re-visited,' pp. 22-33, in Lievrouw, L and Livingstone, S [eds.]; The Handbook of new Media, London: Sage
- Wickham, J (1997) 'Where is Ireland in the Global Information Society?' paper presented at Ireland, Europe and the Global Information Society Conference, Dublin, available, http://www.dcu.ie/communications/iegis/Jw-pap.htm
- Williams, R (1999) 'Technology And Society', In The Media Reader: Continuity And Transformation, Mackay, H And O'Sullivan, T [Eds.] 1999, London: Sage
- Williams, R 'The Social Shaping of Information and Communication Technologies,'

- Winston, B (1998) *Media, Technology and Society: A History from the Telegraph to the Internet,* London: Routledge
- Wise, P (1997) 'Always Already Virtual: Feminist Politics in Cyberspace,' in Holmes op. Cit. pp. 179-197
- Wyatt, R, Katz, E and Joohan, K (2000) 'Bridging the Spheres: Political and personal Conversation in Public and Private Spaces,' in Journal of Communication, Winter 2000, pp.71-92
- Yoshimi, S (1999) 'Made in Japan: The Cultural Politics of Home Electrification in Postwar Japan,' in Media, Culture and Society, 21(2), pp. 149-171

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

The following interview schedule was used to carry out the home and 'community' based interviews:

The aim of the project is to create a picture of what internet use is like in Skerries. This will involve looking at **individuals** and finding out why people use the internet and how they feel about it; **Clubs/organisations and business** within the community and finding out why the clubs use the internet and what advantages/disadvantages it brings; and **community initiatives** and how the internet can be used for the public to communicate about their concerns and ideas about local issues (dump, transport).

1.1. Individuals in the home

Where is your computer located?

What inspired you to get internet access?

Do you use email? And Why?

What do you find to be the most useful websites? And why? (news, weather, e-commerce)

Do you look at Skerries/Irish websites?

How do you find out about public issues?

How do you find out about local issues in Skerries?

What would you go to the internet for?

Do you use the internet for education/find information on health/stay in touch with family?

Would you look up anything related to TV/radio?

What is the best and worst thing about the internet?

1.2. Clubs/Organisations and business (Questions specific to each organisation were asked)

How long has your club had a website?

What made you create a website?

What is it mainly used for?

Do you get feed back? (members and non-members)

Do you use the local press?

1.3. Community Initiatives (Specific questions were asked)

Is the internet used in Skerries for community work?

What progress has been made?

What benefits does it bring?

Do you use the local press?

Appendix 2: Table 3: Participating Households

INTERVIEW NO.	**NUMBER IN H/H**	**OCCUPATION**	**ETHNIC GROUP**
1	2 Adults; 2 children (under 5)	Accountant; Housewife and mature student	White - Irish
2	3 Adults (2 parents and 1 university student)	Housewife; Management in ICT sector	White - Irish
3.	2 Adults; 2 Children (9 and 7)	Clerical worker; Taxi Driver	White Irish
4.	2 Adults – children away at university	University lecturer; Airport worker and part time writer	White - Scottish
5.	2 Adults; 3 Children (4-11)	Both running own separate businesses	White - English
6.	2 Adults	Retired	White Irish/English
7.	2 Adults; 1 baby	Postgraduate Students	White Irish/Romanian
8.	2 Adults	Journalist; Housewife	White - Irish
9.	2 Adults; 2 children (4 and baby)	Own Business (local shop); wife	White – Irish
10.	2 Adults; 2 students (16 and 19)	Teacher; County Council - Admin	White - Irish
11.	2 Adults	Both employed in ICT sector	White Irish
12.	2 Adults; 3 Children (under 5)	Artist (own local gallery); Housewife	White - Irish
13.	2 Adults; 2 children (8 and 3)	Manager; Bank cashier	White - Irish
14.	2 adults, 2 children (11 and 13 + friends of thirteen yr. Old	Teacher; Citizen advisor	White – Irish

	of thirteen yr. Old boy		
15.	2 Adults; 1 'child' (stayed frequently at home, but lived in shared flat in Dublin)	Retired parents; Graduate trainee manager - marketing	White – Irish
16.	2 Adults; 4 children (under 5)	Own business; housewife	White Irish/English
17	2 Adults; 3 'children' – left home	Retired	White - Irish
18.	2 Adults; 2 children (13 and 11)	Teacher; housewife	White - Irish
19.	2 adults; 1 child (baby)	Clerical worker; management	White - Irish
20.	2 adults; (grown 'child')	Teacher; nurse; (artist)	White - Irish

Table 4: Local organisations and publications:

ORGANISATION/ PUBLICATION	**METHOD**
Swimming Pool Committee	Participation in public meetings; analysis of website; inclusion on email list; interview with organisers.
Anti-landfill campaign	Participation at public meetings; search for web-based content; interviews with organisers; analysis of relevant print material.
Marina development	Interview with organisers and website developer; analysis of print material
Coastal Town News	Content analysis: Monthly publication from a local premises
Parish Bulletin	Weekly; Catholic Church
Country council area newspapers	Weekly and monthly

Appendix: EMTEL Deliverables

Final Deliverables

- Brants, K. and Frissen, V. (2003) 'Inclusion and Exclusion in the Information Society', University of Amsterdam (ASCoR) and TNO Strategy, Technology and Policy.
- Pichault, F. and Durieux, D. (2003) 'The Information Society in Europe: Methods and Methodologies', LENTIC, University of Liege and ASCoR, University of Amsterdam.
- Preston, P. (2003) 'ICTs in Everyday Life: Public Policy Implications for Europe's Way to the Information Society.
- Punie, Y., Bogdanowicz, M., Berg, Anne-Jorunn., Pauwels C. and Burgelman, J-C. 'Living and Working in the Information Society: Quality of Life in a digital world', IPTS-JRC, European Commission, Sevilla; Centre for Technology & Society, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim; SMIT, Free University of Brussels.
- Silverstone, R. (2003) 'Media and Technology in the Everyday Life of European Societies', Media@lse, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Key Deliverables

- Berker, T. (2003) 'Boundaries in a space of flows: the case of migrant researchers' use of ICTs', NTNU, University of Trondheim.
- Cammaerts, B. and Van Audenhove, L. (2003) 'ICT usage among transnational social movements in the networked society', ASCoR/TNO, University of Amsterdam.
- Durieux, D. (2003) 'ICT and social inclusion in the everyday life of less abled people', LENTIC, University of Liege and ASCoR, University of Amsterdam.
- Georgiou, M. (2003) 'Mapping diasporic media across the EU; addressing cultural exclusion', Media@lse, London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Hartmann, M. (2003) 'The Web Generation: the (de)construction of users, morals and consumption', SMIT-VUB, Free University of Brussels.
- Punie, Y. (2003) 'A social and technological view of Ambient Intelligence in everyday life', IPTS (JCR-EC), Seville.
- Ward, K. (2003) 'An ethnographic study of internet consumption in Ireland: between domesticity and public participation', COMTEC, Dublin City University.