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ARTICLE

Green Consumption

Life-politics, risk and contradictions

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Abstract

In recent times, much has been written about consumers' co-responsibility for addressing environmental problems, with consumers expected to steer or regulate their consumption in an instrumental way. By drawing on data from in-depth interviews with green consumers in urban Ireland, this article examines how green consumers engage with environmental issues at an everyday level. The article considers green consumption through the theoretical lens of reflexive modernization, particularly its relevance to self-identity. We argue that although green consumption is important to the maintenance and constitution of a green subjectivity, it must be understood within the context of a process of increasing individualization, where individuals feel both responsible and empowered in dealing with environmental risks to both the wider global planet and themselves. However, such feelings are accompanied by doubts and insecurities about the choices to be made, creating a rather dichotomous situation. This challenges the idea that green consumption as some form of politics of choice can unambiguously form part of a strategy for environmental reform as it does not adequately address the fundamental dilemmas that people face.

Key words

consumer responsibility • individualization • self-identity • social relations

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THE RISE OF contemporary environmentalism in western Europe can be traced to the 1960s and early 1970s, as concern grew about the impact of both consumption and production patterns on the environment, which were often conceptualized within debates about the health effects caused by industrial pollutants or the impact of economic and population growth (Cohen, 2001). Forty years later, green consumption is now perceived as an element of environmental reform in many western societies and indeed within supra-national blocs such as the European Union (EU) (Buttel, 2003). Such an agenda involves ascribing consumers with responsibility or co-responsibility (with producers) for addressing environmental problems through the adoption of environmentally friendlier lifestyles (Halkier, 1999). This debate on whether or not consumers should be allocated co-responsibility for environmental reforms continues, with some environmentalists stressing the need for reduced consumption on the part of individual consumers, while others argue that encouraging individuals to consume less or buy green products, such as organic food or recycled paper, is an ineffective means of securing environmentally friendlier social changes (Buttel, 2003). With increasing focus on the normative aspect of this debate, it would appear imperative that such a debate takes place with an understanding of green consumption within the everyday life experience of people who consider themselves green consumers.

In recent decades, the concept of a consumer voluntarily engaging (as opposed to being regulated to do so as a result of government policy) in consumer practices that are viewed as 'environmentally friendly' has emerged, and is now generically labelled the 'green consumer', by marketing agencies (see Mintel, 1991), marketing academics (see Peattie, 2001), political scientists (see Micheletti, 2003), sociologists (see Gabriel and Lang, 1995) and environmentalists (see Elkington and Hailes, 1988). Indeed, the concept of a green consumer is often subsumed under such terms as political consumerism and ethical consumerism (Dolan, 2005).

Much of the focus on green consumers has centred on the subject of consumption. Since the 1970s, marketers have been interested in identifying and profiling environmentally conscious consumers, while at the same time a plethora of green consumer guides have emerged to aid green consumers in their decision making. Sociologists too have also sought to examine both the lifestyle and consumption of members of new social movements that are based around environmental activism (see Purdue et al., 1997; Shepherd, 2002; Horton, 2003).

The emergence of a 'green' consumer offers an opportunity to examine the everyday experience of green consumption so as to provide a better

platform for informed debates on the issue of consumer responsibility as a normative strategy for environmental reform. Thus, our study seeks to address the following questions: How do green consumers engage and identify on an everyday level with environmental issues? How can green consumption be understood as a strategy of environmental reform from a green consumer's perspective? In seeking to address these questions, our aim is to provide an understanding of green consumption in urban Ireland within the context of the wider theoretical scheme embodied in this article, which we discuss later. We begin from the position that everyday practices associated with the environmental issues in which people engage have meaning for them, and also involve material goods of some form or other, despite the fact that such practices are rarely labelled 'consumer practices'. This fits closely with Warde's (2005) idea that consumption itself is not a practice, rather, a moment in almost every practice – 'items consumed are put to use in the course of engaging in particular practices' (p. 145). In terms of environmental considerations, particular objects and ways of living with the material world are not just about the production and reproduction of the everyday lives of those involved or interested in environmentalism (Horton, 2003); they have become a question of life practices (Halkier, 1999).

Attempts to address environmental concerns through individuals' personal consumption can be traced to the various green movements that evolved in western Europe in the late 1960s and early 1970s[1] and a developing 'green' consciousness. Focusing on the material aspect of consumption, numerous environmentalists over the last 30 years have called on consumers to refrain from the consumption of specific commodities (e.g. aerosols containing chlorofluorocarbon gases), while undertaking practices such as recycling and using public transportation. Increasingly, the contemporary understanding of green consumption has become tied to the discourse of sustainability, that is, the concepts of sustainable consumption and sustainable development. The result is that the practices consumers engage in are now discussed in terms of the environmental sustainability of such practices (see Hobson, 2001). As such, green consumption is now associated with attempts to lower the level of material and energy consumption used.[2] By following the agenda of sustainability, environmental organizations have been forced to address the ambiguity surrounding the core concepts of sustainability (Murphy and Cohen, 2001) and whether in fact, as Dolan (2002: 17) has suggested, if it is 'empirically verifiable'. Various environmental organizations now draw on the scientific community as a means to overcome these critiques by

adopting scientific criteria (such as carbon footprints) for measuring the environmental impact of particular practices.

In Ireland, a number of small environmental organizations function, and as is the case in other EU countries there is also a political party, The Green Party, which has political representation in the national parliament. However, it is small and viewed by political commentators as mainly middle class and urban based. Indeed, a recent study pointed out that it has the highest proportion of high-income voters supporting it out of all the political parties in Ireland (Laver, 2005). For these environmental groups, and indeed, for the government, a pressing issue is the environmental effects of the country's economic turnaround over the last decade. Increased consumption has accompanied soaring economic productivity, rises in the country's population, working population and wages in many sectors, as well as increasing consumer debt (Environmental Protection Agency, 2004). A consequence of this is waste management problems, increased energy consumption and increased $C0_2$ emissions, which have led to a focus on recycling and energy conservation. The role of individuals and families in addressing these issues is seen as a crucial part in any attempt at finding a solution to environmental problems. Government initiatives include legislative changes regarding the disposal of refuse as part of its campaign 'Race Against Waste',[3] which was launched in 2003, and advertising communications campaigns to encourage people to 'reduce, reuse, and recycle'.[4] Halkier (2001) has noted a similar situation in Denmark, where such issues tend to be discussed in terms of instrumental rationality. The assumption is that if consumers obtain sufficient relevant information, they will handle the problem in an appropriate way and help implement solutions by changing their behaviour in accordance with the recommendations (Halkier, 2001). Indeed, Hobson (2001) suggests that both the political and epistemological assumptions around so-called environmental information campaigns have been called into question. Such critiques as offered by Hobson (2001) tend to be part of a range of literature that has attempted to address what can be termed environmental consumer practices in late modernity (see Hobson's (2001) and Macnaghten's (2003) studies in the UK; Shepherd's (2002) study in Australia; and Halkier's (1999) study in Denmark). While different, most or all of these studies appear to have two aspects in common. First, there is a desire to understand and explain specific 'green' consumer practices, and second, to examine this within the wider social and cultural conditions of contemporary society. Yet, as Macnaghten (2003) points out, a gap remains as to how environmental concerns are tied up with the emergence of an apparently more individualized and

globalized society. This, and a further contention that recent theoretical debates on contemporary social and cultural transformations may provide fresh insight into the ways in which people are likely to engage and identify with environmental issues, is the justification for our theoretical approach to this study. Here we are referring to the discussions that have focused around the putative impact of individualization, expanding life choices and challenges to tradition that are associated with the work of Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992), and which are often referred to as reflexive modernity or late modernity (Williams and Williams, 2005).

We approach the issue of green consumption in urban Ireland through the theoretical lens of reflexive modernization and its relevance to issues of self-identity (Giddens, 1991). Indeed, the discussion of reflexive modernization within Giddens' (1991) work refers specifically to the ecological issues facing contemporary society and how individuals seek to address and cope with such dilemmas.

Both Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992), authors associated with theories of late modernity, suggest that the wider social processes of increasing globalization and individualization of contemporary life are interlinked. They argue that as a result of increasing globalization (where distant events become integrated into frameworks of personal experience, so people are feeling more interconnected with the world), there has been increasing awareness, in general, of global environmental problems within the populations of western industrial nations. It is not just a case of how the world of social relations external to the self reflexively impacts on self-identity, but also how personal decisions affect global considerations (Giddens, 1991). Central to this is the increasing process of individualization and the concept of a reflexive self (a building/rebuilding of a coherent and rewarding sense of identity). As such, 'the narrative of self-identity has to be shaped, altered and reflexively sustained in relation to rapidly changing circumstances of social life, on a local and global scale' (Giddens, 1991: 215). In discussing this complex process of individualization, Giddens (1991) identifies what he calls 'life politics' – 'life politics concerns political issues which flow from processes of self-actualization in a post-traditional context, where globalizing influences intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self, and conversely where processes of self-realization influence global strategies' (p. 214). This, as we will illustrate in our data, has particular resonance in attempting to understand specific practices that are now associated with green consumers.

A further aspect of the theories of reflexive modernization relevant to our study is the issue of risk. While Beck (1992) is generally credited with

discussing risk in terms of western industrial society, and indeed coining the term 'risk society', Giddens (1991) also engaged with risk at the level of the individual. For Giddens (1991), 'living in a "risk society" means living with a calculative attitude to the open possibilities of action, positive and negative, with which, as individuals and globally, we are confronted in a continuous way' (p. 28). So risk is embedded within the idea of choices, and the risk assessment and possibilities they involve. Indeed, according to Giddens (1991), within the conditions of late modernity, a significant part of expert thinking and public discourse is made up of risk profiling – analysing what, in the current state of knowledge and in current conditions, is the distribution of risks in a given milieu of action. Since what is current in each of these respects is constantly subject to change, such profiles have to be revised and updated. Contemporary evidence of this can be seen in recent calls on the public to be aware of the danger of dust particles in domestic households, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) (also commonly known as 'mad cow disease'), Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), dangers of vitamin supplements, fluoride in water, etc. It is important to point out here, as Giddens (1991) does, that it is not that progress has not been achieved or that present-day life is inherently more risky than was the case in previous eras. Rather, for lay individuals as well as experts in specific fields, thinking in terms of risk and risk assessment is a more or less ever-present exercise of a partly imponderable character. Utilizing these perspectives, we seek to understand green consumption in urban Ireland by drawing on data from in-depth interviews with 'green' consumers.

SETTING

The research was carried out between 2002 and 2004. We adopted a strategic sampling approach (Mason, 1996) involving a purposive sample of seven Irish people living in Dublin, the capital city of Ireland. A total of 14 qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted. Although the sample can be judged as small, the logic of our strategic sampling approach was to produce a relevant range of contexts/phenomena that would enable us, as Mason (1996) suggests, to produce strategic and cross-contextual comparisons from which a well-founded argument could be built. We believe we achieved this in relation to those purposively selected for the study. The participants' ages ranged from early 20s to late 40s. In terms of social class (as indicated by their family background, parents' occupations, education, etc.) four were middle class, while three others were from urban working-class backgrounds. All of the participants had high levels of education, although in the case of those from working-class backgrounds, they had returned to

education at a later stage in their lives. Of the seven, one had a PhD, one was studying for a PhD, two held master's degrees, while all of the others held primary degrees.

In terms of recruitment, contact was initially made with two Irish environmental organizations. The intention was to use membership lists as a basis to contact people who may consider themselves green consumers and who could be recruited for the study. A key element for the researchers was the participants' sense of subjectivity, that *green* is a fundamental part of who they are, how they think and feel, and ultimately affects how they consume. We were also hoping to include different social class backgrounds, if possible. Indeed, while the aim of participant selection was to select participants who have lived the social experience that is the focus of the study, and who would be willing to talk about their experience, they also needed to be diverse enough to enhance possibilities for a variety of divergent experiences. This was useful in terms of widening the possibility for including negative instances (Mason, 1996; Seale, 1999) to enhance both the reliability and validity of the findings.

Neither environmental organization was able to release its membership list. Indeed, the researchers were informed that membership was far from significant in either organization. However, they were willing to give details of the researchers' request to their members at one of their meetings. This resulted in three people agreeing to participate in the study and other contacts were then established via snowballing. It should be acknowledged that our sample was recruited from one city, Dublin,[5] and did not include other urban or rural-based 'green' consumers, both of which are limitations.

As well as attending to the literature on green consumption, the researchers also visited farmers' markets, co-op markets and fair-trade shops within the city, in addition to attending the annual sustainable living festival in Dublin known as 'Convergence'. The aim was to further the researchers' understanding of various practices associated with environmental living that appeared in the literature. The next stage was to interview the participants. Each initial interview lasted between one and a half and two hours. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Three of the interviews were conducted at the participants' homes, while the remainder were held at their places of work. In all of the interviews, only the participant and one researcher were present.[6] The questions guiding the interview agenda were: What is the experience of green consumption? What consumer practices are greened? Considerable scope was given to the participants to shape the flow of the interviews. Once the dialogue began, the participants were encouraged to describe their consumption involved

in a wide range of areas such as household, transport and holidays. The biographies of the participants were also documented, including details about childhood, their parents and siblings (if any), relationships, current family situation and work history. After the verbatim text of these interviews was re-read several times by the researchers, a list of issues was developed that the researchers felt needed further elaboration. A second series of interviews were then organized. The participants were also asked to keep a diary of their purchases during a three-month period leading up to Christmas. They were then to highlight which purchases would be considered as part of their normal purchases and which were Christmas purchases. At Christmas, the vast majority of people in western society engage in the practice of gift giving both to others and to themselves. These pressures allied with the general consumption ethos (Belk, 1993; Carrier, 1993) that has developed around this time of year might, we felt, place added pressure and complexity on being a green consumer. The volume of items to be purchased, the range of social relations that are taken into consideration and the intensity of those social relations are all greater than normal (Carrier, 1993).

Data analysis began by becoming as familiar as possible with the data. To paraphrase Mason (1996), it involved reading, studying, listening and thinking about the data and the process of their production. This necessitated a process of reading, coding and analysing the interview transcripts (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Coding began with a cross-sectional approach, but as qualitative data is rarely neatly bundled (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996), the coding process became more complex and detailed. Through the process of moving back and forth between the data, writing, reflecting and rewriting, themes were explored and refined to identify relationships among the data and theory. This also involved constant comparison and a testing of ideas against what were considered negative instances within the data. The extracts and interpretations presented in this article have been explicated from over 250 pages of interview transcripts and seven diaries.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Everyday life and the politics of consumption

Green consumption and social relations

Through analysis of both the interview data and the diaries, we found that there were two main areas where the participants appeared to exercise a considerable level of regulation. First, all of the participants engaged in the practice of recycling, although at different levels. Several of them, who also had gardens, used composting heaps for food waste. The second area was in food consumption, both in terms of what was purchased and where it

was purchased. Horton's (2003) study on environmental activists also found that in the area of food shopping, green processes were most advanced. Furthermore, the places where shopping occurs is important – green commercial enterprises, organic markets, natural ingredients from health food stores, small producers and local producers such as farmers' markets[7] were preferred. Some of the participants also grow their own organic produce while others are involved in permaculture. Some bought second-hand clothes and used charity shops. The diaries of the participants also provided detailed evidence of many other 'green commodities' aside from food. For instance, Anne, who has a one-year-old child, gets Ecobaby nappies, while Alice and Ciara buy cleansers, soaps and other cosmetics from specialist green commercial enterprises. Green catalogues were also used. What was also evident was purchases involving produce labelled as fair trade. However, it should be noted that all of the participants purchased goods from large grocery chains and other commercial enterprises. In respect to shopping in large grocery chains, the participants had a variety of responses, including complimenting the stores, criticizing them or remaining ambivalent on the range of green options available.

The view that consumption is fundamentally embedded in social relations has been well documented (see Miller, 1998; Douglas, 2001), and, as such, we were interested in how green consumption is addressed within different social relations. Green consumers have families, partners, children, fellow workers, neighbours, and they deal with family breakdowns, loss, etc. Also, being green is but one aspect of their sense of identity alongside being mothers, carers, etc. What we found was that compromise and negotiation, which are involved in maintaining social relationships, can place pressure on one's moral beliefs and on certain types of consumer practices, while at the same time, one's beliefs or moral stance on specific practices can also challenge and pressure one's personal relationships. Anne talks about dilemmas that arise in relation to her children.

> It's very difficult to actually get through to the younger generation because there's so many influences on them. There's always been peer pressure, but it's very hard now because everything is so material focused – it's what they have. It's what toys, clothes they wear, even at the age of six, seven, that's a big issue for kids. I would be very strongly against that, so I have to be quite careful how I tread that line in order to keep friends with my daughters and still try and get them to have slightly different values to other people.

The issue of going to McDonalds is currently causing a dilemma for Anne. Although contrary to what she believes in (she objects to McDonalds for environmental reasons), there are other concerns she must take into account. She has a very good relationship with her daughters. However, she feels that, as her eldest daughter (aged 10) approaches her teenage years, their relationship may become more strained as her daughter seeks more independence and closer ties with her peers. Hence, she does not want to put pressure on or upset the relationship by trying to stop her daughter going to McDonalds. A similar situation revolves around particular commodities such as toys or clothes that the children may want, and also in the foods they want to eat. Some commodities are of course central within the peer group of children. Miller (1998) refers to commodities as part of the technology of love within a family; this love is about obligation and duty. So what takes place is a kind of juggling, conceding on one aspect and holding fast on other issues. Indeed, to paraphrase Shove (2003), the question becomes: what practical concessions have to be made to one's cherished ideals, and how does all this play out in juggling one's lifestyle? Families, partners and friends may have limited interest in environmental issues and the related regulation of consumption that this often implies. Compromise is not always an easy decision. For instance, after finishing her degree in psychology, Alice worked as an English language teacher in Japan for two years and taught in schools while she was there. She describes how her own sense of ethics was under strain because of the cultural significance of consuming whale in Japan.

> I lived in Japan for a while and culturally – everyone was eating whale and I wouldn't have eaten that. That was quite a difficult thing, as people had gone very much out of their way to show me about Japanese culture and show me the whale, and to stress the point that I didn't want to eat the whale was very, you know . . . I know that the Japanese have some whaling rights, in that they're entitled to whale for scientific purposes and they're allowed to eat those whales, but I knew that the cost of the whales that were being sold in the local sushi bar meant that these were not whales that had been caught scientifically.

Green beliefs and attempts at greening specific practices co-exist alongside a more ambivalent attitude towards consuming. Indeed, it may be the case, as Spaargaren (2003) puts it, that people deliberately insulate specific practices or lifestyle segments from the environmental considerations they accept and apply as legitimate rules most of the time and for most other

segments of their lifestyles. In this study, we found a range of inconsistencies, ambivalence and dilemmas in relation to a variety of consumer practices. Ciara consistently described avoiding what she termed 'junk food' such as McDonalds. She claims that food should not contain chemicals and additives and that organic produce was very important to her, yet, at the same time, her diaries show purchases of crisps, popcorn and chocolate on an almost daily basis. Alice, who boycotted several companies for their ethical practices, is a smoker and buys Marlboro cigarettes regularly. Yet Marlboro has been criticized for targeting its marketing communications to young people. In addition, all of the participants used air travel (which according to some scientific studies has an exceptionally poor impact on the environment).[8] Some, such as Andrew, flew quite regularly. However, Andrew classed himself as a radical environmentalist and spent a number of years in various parts of Europe living in environmentally low-impact communes. He was involved with radical environmental groups such as Direct Action[9] and often spoke from an anti-consumption and anti-capitalist perspective. These practices, which stand in contradiction to desires or normative understandings of living in an environmentally sustainable way, have been described by Horton (2003: 68) as a 'breach of green cultural codes' that depletes green capital and spoils green identity. The participants did feel guilty about some of their practices, specifically owing or using commodities such as a car. Invariably, though, there was an acceptance that compromise was inevitable:

> you compromise every day. You have to. I don't think anyone could live a completely green life. I suppose you could wear all natural fibres, but even natural fibres are not fully green. (Colin)

Ciara, who is a marine researcher, and who recently spent time on a boat monitoring fish stocks in the Celtic Sea,[10] describes owning a mobile phone while at the same time she refuses to have a television in her home. She feels uncomfortable about this and she highlights the issue of need, as does Anne, in terms of using a car.

> And for years I was not interested in having a mobile phone, but my friends bought it for me for my birthday, and I thought well this is handy, and then I ended up going to sea a few months ago. So I bought a second one and gave my old one to Matt so that we would be able to communicate. We would never have had a mobile phone each only that we needed it in that incidence. (Ciara)

> Well, we got a big car. We got a people carrier because of the fact that we have three kids, and we tend to have other people's kids as well, and with the roads these days for traffic and whatever and we travel a lot up to Donegal and down to Cork to visit family. So we needed something that had a bit of space to carry other people's kids and was going to be safe for our own kids and the two dogs, and all that kind of stuff. (Anne)

The justifying of specific commodities as necessary in relation to particular practices accompanied other stereotyping descriptions of their own consumption as 'basic'. Alternatively they stated, 'I'm not a big consumer' or, as Andrew described it, 'I didn't feel as though I belonged in a consumer culture, it wasn't something that I could identify with'. For some of the others contemporary consumer culture is 'materialistic'. While such views are part of the creation and maintenance of a green subjectivity (an outsider different from mainstream culture), it also illustrates a phenomenon often seen within environmental literature. This is the view that consumption (or at least a specific level of it, which is never actually quantified[11]) is something bad. Such a view has also pertained within academic literature on consumption, as Miller (1995: 28) notes. The moralizing tendency that is often articulated around the subject of consumption creates an 'other consumption', consumption that is apparently bad. So while people's own personal consumption, be it for environmental reasons or otherwise, is meaningful for them, there is a failure to view other people's consumption in this light.

Several of the participants sought to express their discomfort with contemporary consumption by contrasting this with what they felt consumption should involve, drawing on the idea of meeting people's basic needs. This was also accompanied by stories from their childhood – how their parents had limited financial resources, the level of material possessions was considered modest and thrift was a large part of everyday life. Here was a desire for a 'simpler life' involving less consumption.

One of the difficulties with this is that if people now believe they are central to environmental solutions through their own individual consumption, invariably particular practices and material goods will become identified as bad, yet these very same practices and material goods may be central (meaningfully) in social relations. Much environmental writing has not helped in this regard. Critical environmental writing reverberates with echoes of true and false needs (Smith, 1998). It remains devoid of any understanding of consumer practices as being embedded in social relations

(Miller, 2001) or the fact that all consumption is cultural, meaningful and historical (Slater, 1997). We suggest that the reason the participants seek to position their own consumption as 'basic' or less than those 'others' in mainstream society is partly a desire to maintain a particular sense of difference or distinction (maintaining their sense of green identity). It is, as Horton (2003) puts it, part of the green script. The ambivalence surrounding many of the practices in which the respondent engage stands in sharp contrast to other practices that they vehemently adhered to in terms of environmental practice, such as recycling and the purchase of organic produce. Parallels can be made with both Horton (2003) and Halkier's (1999) studies where environmentally concerned people do not prioritize environmental consideration in all areas of their life. We also realize that what we are suggesting here probably throws up as more questions than answers. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the implications for those proposing green consumption as a strategy of environmental reform, essentially a politics of consumption.

The politics of consumption

> Stuff like not flushing the toilet ten times a day and water – more or less everything I would have touched on it. I'd usually get them to turn off electrical appliances. We've insulated the house. What else? Waste management. I have this nasty habit of keeping every container that comes into the house! (Anne)

As Anne illustrates, some of the participants were involved in the monitoring of specific consumption levels in terms of usage of energy and water. This is tied into the environmental agenda of reducing ecological footprints, and is often positioned as a key element of the normative environmental reform agendas of many environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and state authorities.[12] While there were conscious attempts by some of the participants to engage in such practices as illustrated by Anne, these could not be considered to be monitored systematic practices. What we are suggesting here is that there was no clearly planned, measured and accountable system to monitor energy and water usage by the participants. While the intention was to reduce the levels of usage, this was ad hoc. We would suggest this contrasted to a certain degree with the participants' attempts at boycotting (or the strategic avoidance of) specific commodities or commercial organizations. They were more specific about detailing the organizations and commodities they avoided and the rationale for this:

> I don't use Nestlé products for instance. I don't eat McDonalds, and at the moment I don't buy Esso petrol . . . There's a Stop Esso campaign – they've pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol and are no longer investing any substantial amounts in renewable energy, and all the other oil companies are. They've pulled out of their commitments. (Colin)

> So what I tend to do is, whatever campaign is going at the time, I will support that particular one because, if nothing else, even if that company is doing awful things in other areas, at least it puts pressure on them. And it makes them realize we can't just keep doing whatever we want to do. We are going to have to change our behaviour. So, even if you only hit them for a short period of time, you can make them pull their socks up. It does in the long term possibly make them change their behaviour. I mean Shell are beginning to do some research into renewable fuels, Esso are not. So, I mean I would tend to support whatever particular campaign is going around at any particular point in time, because I feel it's the only way of hitting back at multinationals; the only power that we have is to simply not buy their product. (Deirdre)

The issue of boycotts is tied to a broader perspective now being evinced in the literature. Recent academic studies have tended to focus on categorizing the greening of consumer practices as a form of political activity (see Nava, 1991; see Micheletti, 2003) or as a new form of political participation (Micheletti et al., 2004). While these authors have tried to provide a greater understanding of the concept of political consumerism, they also apply a pro-environmental normative subtext to the concept as a solution to environmental problems. Yet the paradox of such consumer activism as a solution, as noted by Dolan (2002), is that the richer the consumer the more powerful she or he becomes. Indeed, Dolan (2002) suggests that:

> [the] irony is that eco-politics through consumer boycotts strengthens the significance of consumption practices – not only does it become the symbolic mediator of social and cultural relationships, but also political ones. The commodity, whether consumed or not, would become the totem of the power ratio between consumer and producer, and the commodity would become the site of resolution of moral disputes and dilemmas. (p. 171)

This, one might assume, is unlikely to be the intention of the participants. Yet the implication of Micheletti's (2003) work is that green consumption by individuals has the power to potentially restructure society (see p. 30). Such an approach does not adequately provide a theoretical understanding of everyday practices in which green consumption happens, but instead seeks to focus on its potential. As the next section illustrates, attempts at using consumer practices as a medium to solve global problems is far more complex.

The attempts at the regulation of consumption within this study fit with Giddens's (1991) concept of life politics. Such regulation of behaviour relates to desires and feelings which, according to Giddens (1991), become articulated in the question of not only how to live but the right way to live. He argues the sustainability of the planet is one of the global concerns that now intrudes into individuals' lives and this is reflected in changing patterns of consuming. These concerns and questions are, for Giddens (1991), the emergence of life political issues, questions of a moral nature of how we should live our lives, and involve '[a]s with other substantive moral questions . . . lifestyle options' (p. 225). Giddens (1991) claims that one of the features of living in late-modernity is that each of us not only has, but also lives, a biography reflexively organized in terms of social and psychological information about possible ways of living. The question of, 'How shall I live?' has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat and numerous other things, as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity. In this idea of life politics, individual choices, actions and experiences in particular localities have increasing global relevance (Purdue et al., 1997). In the following extracts, we see how global concerns feed into consumer lives and consumer practices. Helen, who is from a relatively middle-class suburb of the city, became involved with a conservation movement over ten years ago after taking redundancy from her job. She argues with herself how her comfortable lifestyle fits in with the poverty across the globe:

> But I do think the biggest problem in the world is the imbalance between the vast numbers of poverty stricken people and the affluent West, and is our lifestyle moral? I don't know. I argue that in my head . . . I don't think mankind is necessarily more valid than any other species. I don't think mankind has the right to say 'we're important and the rest just happen to be here'. It is frightening the way man is dominating so much. But then the moral dilemma – money spent to save elephants in Africa while

> there might be a few million dying of starvation – which is ethical? (Helen)

Here the intrusion of distant events into local activities involves not only the sense of obligation to some far off places (distant environments) or peoples, but also doubts about the choices that are open to one, and even doubts about whether these choices are 'the right ones'. Shepherd (2002) maintains that some people respond to this awareness by developing a sense of extended solidarity and moral obligation to other peoples or species. The other side of this coin relates to how local events impact the global. Here we are not suggesting a direct cause–effect link between an individual's consumption and some specific global change that has occurred. Instead, one can see that the development of green commodities is bound up in a circular process, where individuals acting at a local level, in the belief of changing global warning for example, contribute to a process where specific organizations develop as a means of connecting local actions with distant events.

It is this very process that creates a different set of dilemmas where choices of what to do and which option to take confront people. The following extract further illustrates the internal debates and choices which the various participants deal with in their attempt to live 'the right way'. Deirdre, who works for an Irish environmental organization, recounts how her pet dog was sick and the vet recommended that the dog be fed chicken:

> I remember standing in the supermarket one day with the free-range chicken in the one hand and the other chicken in the other hand, and the price differential was in the order of three or four times the difference in price for the same piece of chicken, and I juggled with them and I thought I have to buy the free-range chicken. Then I thought I am not buying a free-range chicken – it made me think my reason for buying it – my reason for buying it wasn't for my benefit. My reason for buying it is because I don't like the idea of . . . I eat meat; the deal I make with myself for eating meat, because I don't feel comfortable about eating it, is that I'll eat it if I can rest in the knowledge that the animal's at least had a relatively comfortable lifestyle and was killed humanely – that is the deal I make with myself. And I realize that the reason why I was buying free-range chicken was because I wanted to know in my head that the animals concerned had a relatively comfortable lifestyle, you

> know pecking in the dirt or whatever. They weren't locked up in cages, they weren't pecking each other to bits because they were so overcrowded, that they had a reasonable lifestyle and were humanely killed and that was why I was buying it. And that held whether or not I was eating it or the dog was eating it – that still held. So I ended up buying it for the dog, and I felt really stupid buying free-range chicken for a dog who didn't know the difference, but I felt this is what I have to do because that is why I am buying it. I am not buying it for my own health; I am buying it because of the animal welfare aspects of it. (Deirdre)

The difficulty is that the feeling of individual power is accompanied by the added uncertainty of knowing what to do. So in a sense, individuals are left with a sense of *I know that I should and can do something, but I don't know which is the right thing to do*. It is unsurprising, then, that alongside these attempts at making the right decisions there are also feelings of guilt, ambivalence, compromise and inconsistencies in addressing environmental issues at the personal level. Other studies such as Horton (2003) and Macnaghten (2003) have noted similar dilemmas in people's everyday lives in relation to environmental issues. The real question for investigation is not which is the right decision, but why is it that people feel such pressure to make that decision. Our argument is that these individuals feel individual power that is expressed in a feeling of responsibility for both the problems and solutions for global environmental problems. Such feelings of power are thus leading to other feelings of indecision and confusion about what to do. This being the case, how can one suggest, as Micheletti (2003) and others do, that consumers can solve the problems of 'global injustices' through the medium of consumption? The next theme further expands this issue.

Fear and risk in consumption

The concept of risk, particularly in relation to discussions of consumption and the environment, has received much attention in recent years (see Halkier, 2001, 2004; Tulloch and Lupton, 2002). Becks's (1992) original ideas concerning risk relate to the hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization, or to put it in a less reifying context, the processes associated with modernity. Indeed, much of his analysis focused on global ecological threats (nuclear power, the greenhouse effect, genetic engineering and the poisoning of food chains as a result of industrial pollutants). Central to

this is science and technology, two of the main tenets associated with modernity, which are now seen as contributing to the creation of risks and not just the elimination of problems that cause immense hardship (such as human diseases and the threat to food supplies from natural elements). Moreover, such threats and risks exist in an increasingly individualized society. It is not Beck's (1992) contention that individualization is a phenomenon or invention of the late twentieth century, rather that the processes of modernization have led to a particular situation where individualization has intensified. One outcome of this according to Tulloch and Lupton (2002) is that awareness of risks is heightened at the level of the everyday and 'nowhere has this been more evident than in relation to the consumption of food products' (p. 364). In conceptual terms, risk represents something threatening that individuals must handle (Halkier, 2004). As noted previously, neither Giddens (1991) nor Beck (1992) argue that life is more inherently risky now than in the distant past. Instead, the dynamism of modern institutions has contributed to a different perception of risk. In particular, the underlying elements, what Giddens (1990, 1991) refers to as disembedding mechanisms and institutional reflexivity, create new risks and dangers. Trust must be placed in experts (expert systems[13]) rather than in one's experience or knowledge. Furthermore, 'social practices are constantly examined and reexamined in the light of incoming information about these practices, thus constitutively altering their character' (Giddens, 1990: 38).

These ideas on risk and trust became of interest to the researchers as a result of the second series of interviews that took place during this study. Here, the participants began to elucidate why they avoid certain foods and other commodities. It became apparent that they were concerned about risks not only to the environment, but also to their own personal health and that of their families. Macnaghten (2003) suggests that the spectre of new and expanding arrays of invisible environmental risks impinge increasingly on the body, inducing additional forms of insecurity and anxiety. Indeed, in many instances, the participants indicated that while the worry or fear was an environment-related issue (e.g. poison in the food supply as a result of chemicals) the main concern was one's personal or familial health:

> I'd avoid processed foods, anything processed. I do buy the odd tin, peas or soup, but I'd try to avoid it. (Colin)

> Chemicals, too, in food in particular; there is a big debate going on about aspartame and how safe that is. I suppose that is kind of green, because it involves your health. (Ciara)

> You'd laugh if you saw me shopping – I read the ingredients of everything if it's something we've not had before – everything. (Ciara)

> I try. This is only more of a health issue than an environmental issue. I try to buy non-processed foods if I can. (Alice)

Organic consumption, which was a large part of the food shopping of the participants, may well be connected with this. Harper and Makatouni (2002) found in their study of organic food in the UK that although organic produce is valued because of its low impact on the environment and for enhancing animal welfare, it is the health factor that seems to be the most significant motive for choosing organic produce. Previously, Miller (1995) suggested that *green food* choices are actualized by fear of consequences for the consumer's body rather than abstract planetary health. Evidence from other studies (see Tulloch and Lupton, 2002; Halkier, 2004) not explicitly addressing 'green consumers' would suggest that this may not be confined to those who identify themselves as green consumers. Identification of risks either to the self and/or the environment often overlap. Much of what the participants discussed in terms of risks came about as a result of researchers' questions about the consumption/commodities they avoided. Clearly the respondents identify environmental issues as not solely about planetary health but also how industrial processes and their impact (e.g. the chemicals used in food, etc.) can affect the body. Risks to the body are now falling within the parameters of green consumption. This was evident not just in terms of the food consumption of the participants, but also in relation to other commodities, particularly those based on chemicals, usually in the form of household products. Ciara, for instance, is still unsure about the risks involved in using deodorant sprays.

> If you ever look at the ingredients in a deodorant, what is it? It's just a load of chemicals, and it's really dangerous putting that on your skin. There's been a strong link, especially in women, between breast cancer and deodorants. So, it's just a matter of finding alternatives. (Ciara)

Although experts argue over the possibility of underarm deodorants causing cancer or whether microwave radiation is linked to cancer, not all these risks are imagined and a myriad of food scares/health scares combined with media activity have led to concerns about various food products, chemicals and technology in recent years. In response to many of these

concerns, the participants in this study placed their trust in organic produce, vegetarian goods (and vegetarianism), green commodities and green businesses. According to Macnaghten (2003), as the process of globalization is intensified in late modernity, questions of personal agency and trust appear between individuals and a wide variety of institutions. Furthermore, he suggests that this dynamic is illustrated in the enhanced role played by both the mass media and expert systems in the perceptions of environmental risks. This may be the case here where many of the risks mentioned have appeared in public and mediated discourse. For Helen, who has two young children and is mainly responsible for the household shopping, the unknown and uncertain nature of the potential hazards of genetically modified (GM) produce both worries and frightens her:

> Certainly, the whole notion of GM – that worries me. I can see there's a scientific reason why they do it, but I heard on the news yesterday that some of the oldest strains of maize in the world, found high up in the mountains of Mexico, have been contaminated by GMO modified maize. No crops would have been planted near them, so it would have been a worrying finding. But, yet, I can understand why diseases in plants . . . What worries me more than the scientific tinkering with the genetic set-up of plants is this licensing of seeds, whereby companies like Monsanto own the copyright to seeds, and they sell seeds that are sterile. If they grow them they can't grow from the plant again or they will pursue farmers if they try . . . Some are sterile and they won't produce it, and others they're just not meant to. I find that whole licensing thing quite frightening. (Helen)

Despite the fact that Deirdre is a scientist by training (doctoral level), who specialized in genetics and microbiology, she is unsure of the risk of GM. Prediction and risk assessment become a contested territory as the participants strive to cope with the feared risks associated with many of the commodities in industrial society, and with what the right option might be.

> I would avoid GM foods, because however it pans out in the long term, it might turn out to be entirely safe, but we just don't know as of yet, and I really don't feel like being a guinea pig so that some multinational can make a lot of money. I don't see any

> reason why I should be their testing ground – if they want a guinea pig, they can damn well pay for it. I object to being used as a guinea pig, and let's just feed everyone this stuff and see what happens in ten years time – I'm not interested in that. It's tied up again with what I know about bio-patenting. (Deirdre)

These extracts further emphasize the dilemmas alluded to in the previous theme, where 'decisions about how to live' are confronted within the context of addressing global environmental problems (or solutions). They are decisions of a political nature about self and body (Giddens, 1991). A further problem is that even the experts can get it wrong, and experts now come from various oppositional perspectives with divergent opinions on both the risks to one's health and the risks to the environment. This, for Giddens (1991), is a key facet of late modernity, where the *certainty of knowledge* is undermined, especially within science. As Macnaghten (2003) puts it, 'who to believe?' and 'how to decide who to believe?' become dominant questions. We might add a further question, that is, how are people attempting to address these concerns? They are, we suggest, being resolved at an individual level partly through attempts at steering their consumption in a specific way, essentially the individualization of risks.

Macnaghten (2003) contends that the experience of environmental risk may be becoming less about 'saving the planet' and the plight of distant others, and instead increasingly about concern for 'me'. However, this may be to misunderstand the connection between distant (global) events and an increasing concern for the self (due to environmental risks or other non-ecological based threats). We argue that they are both the result of the same process that Giddens (1991) refers to. The anxieties and insecurity felt by green consumers around food consumption and other commodities cannot or should not be isolated from their feelings of concern and personal responsibility towards the environment and ecological issues. Both are a reflection of a self-focus and a self-orientation. Indeed, uncertainty about what to consume or not consume in respect of making a green choice not only illustrates the intertwining of globalizing and localizing influences referred to by Giddens (1991), but is also crucial to understanding how people can feel central to the solution and the particular role that they feel their consumption can play. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that such a belief in the power of the individual self would not include an increasing concern for the self.

Activism and individualized responsibility

Of particular significance, within the context of this article, is the subject of individual responsibility. There is a view, put forward by some commentators (see Luke, 1997; Maniates, 2002) on environmental issues, that personal green consumption is in opposition to, or at least at the opposite end of the spectrum to, green collective political activism. For example, Maniates (2002) writes: 'the individualization of responsibility, because it characterizes environmental problems as the consequence of destructive consumer choice, asks that individuals imagine themselves as consumers first and citizens second' (p. 47). Furthermore, he goes on to argue that this has arisen as a result of the purposeful construction of an individualized politics. We argue that this belief is a misleading oversimplification and difficult to sustain. The data in this study suggest that such a clear demarcation may not exist. Clearly, as was illustrated previously in this study, the participants do attempt to address environmental concerns through a market-based mechanism, though not exclusively. These actions are the result of feeling a sense of moral responsibility to take individual action, often via the regulation of consuming, as the following examples further illustrate.

> I've stopped eating fish. Until our governments get to grips with the fact that fish inhabit the arena of global commons and start dealing with this, and stop grabbing all they can, and we find a way to fish without killing non-target species like dolphins and turtles, I'm not eating it. (Deirdre)

> You have got to take responsibility for the amount of waste you are taking out. You have got to take responsibility for the amount of waste you are taking in, in your food, in your lifestyle. If you buy a standard cleaning product, you are going to be flushing a load of chemicals down the drain. OK, it takes a lot of chemicals to cause damage to the environment, but say a freshwater river, if every person took responsibility for what they were getting rid of, the amount would be significantly reduced. I think it comes down to personal responsibility for the way you interact with your environment. Even if you are in a high-rise block or working in an office, you can still take responsibility for your impact on the environment. (Ciara)

Such expressions can be viewed as positioning environmental degradation as a result of individual shortcomings that can be rectified by individual

action. However, as we explained previously, the participants also experienced feelings of uncertainty and ambivalence in terms of what to do. For instance, Deirdre at one point actually gave up on attempting to live a green lifestyle.

> I just simply stopped thinking about environmental issues for quite a number of years, because it was too difficult to think about it; there was nothing that I could do, that I had no influences and nothing I could do, and it was too difficult to think about something like that without being able to do something about it. (Deirdre)

Attempts at regulating personal consumption within particular practices must also be assessed alongside other practices in which the participants were engaged. These ranged from working (some on a voluntary basis) for environmental organizations affiliated to global environmental organizations, working with local organizations concerned with planning and conservation in Ireland, and participating in anti-war protests[14] as well as other localized activities. For example, Anne started a kids' club in her local estate to introduce local children to environmental concepts and ideas. She is also involved in Global Action Plan (GAP)[15] and hopes to help others to integrate green consumption activities into their lifestyles.

While the environmental activism described in this study might be explained by our sample and the likelihood of very committed individuals taking part in the study, other studies have also found environmental activism interspersed with the regulation of personal consumption (see Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001; Shepherd, 2002; Horton, 2003). Green consumption is often criticized as a consumer activity detached from what are considered more politicized or citizen-based practices, essentially a substitute for action. Yet, as this study and others (see Shepherd, 2002; Horton, 2003) indicate, green consumption (a belief that green consumption is a means of addressing environmental concerns) takes place even amongst very committed environmental activists, who themselves are critical of aspects of green consumption as a strategy. Colin, for instance, who spent 20 years working in the motor industry and who now works for an environmental organization, feels that many in the green movement are middle class and there needs to be a concerted attempt to make it economically attractive to less well-off people. However, he was also keen to articulate his attempts to consume in a green manner and how the organization he worked for was encouraging the greening of specific practices. Of course, the desire to consume green within the context of the practices of

everyday life cannot be detached from the need to reflexively shape and develop a green subjectivity. As Horton (2003: 63) puts it:

> Material culture is a hugely significant constitutive component of this sphere of 'the everyday'. Particular objects, and particular ways of living with the material world, are vital to the production and reproduction of both the everyday lives of environmental activists and environmentalism as a whole.

Clearly, different levels of commitment exist amongst those who feel concern and responsibility for environmental issues. However, to view green consumption as an isolated activity detached from questions of distinction, subjectivity and indeed activism or citizenship is mistaken. While commercial organizations and market research enterprises are concerned with profiling those who purchase or may purchase green products and services, it should not be assumed that such acts of purchase are the only means by which green consumers engage and identify on an everyday level with environmental issues. Such a view also reduces consumption, as Miller (1995) puts it, to merely acts of purchase.

Finally, it must be understood that the development of a green consciousness by specific consumers is something that must have resulted, as Miller (1995) posits, in a major increase in people's self-conception as consumers. One can postulate then that consumption has become central to how many people identify with contemporary environmental problems. As such, it is highly likely that people would attempt to address their concerns about ecological damage through consumption, as the feeling of being a consumer and its perceived power developed. However, it appears that such a development has led to increasing attempts to also address risks from an individual perspective.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we sought to examine how green consumers engage and identify on an everyday level with environmental issues. More particularly, we have brought the subject of green consumption as a strategy into the equation. Previous research, such as Horton's (2003), has noted the significance of material culture to the maintenance and constitution of a green subjectivity and a similar conclusion can be garnered from this study. The role that consumption plays in this regard, as well as the steering of one's consumption so that it becomes a medium to effect environmental change, is, we suggest, driven by feelings of an empowered individual. Further to this, we found that because the participants also sought to address risk

concerns to the body through the greening of specific practices, essentially risk-handling too is being individualized.

Green consumption must be understood in terms of a process that has led to individuals feeling both responsible for and empowered in dealing with risks to both themselves and to the wider environment. As described in this article, the participants felt that they had an obligation to and could act to address global (and local/national) environmental issues. At the same time, they also felt uneasiness about how to act. The feelings of empowerment described are not in opposition to or detached from the accompanying feelings of confusion, ambivalence or uncertainty, but are in fact a result of a feeling of being individually responsible. Such a phenomenon is interesting because while it appears dichotomous, it is actually the case that both are interlinked and the outcome of processes of increasing individualization and globalization as described by Giddens (1991).

Our analysis in this article raises a number of issues, particularly within the context of green consumption as a strategy of environmental reform. The debate around whether green consumption is an appropriate medium to express political values or indeed could be applied so as to fashion some extraordinary transformation is constraining our understanding of the everyday context within which green consumption occurs. Even the participants in this study, who have a deep sense of a green subjectivity, find that making the right choice involves a questioning of what is the 'right choice'.

Giddens (1991) argues that lifestyle choices, within the settings of local–global interrelations, raise moral issues that cannot simply be pushed to one side. However, as we see from the data, attempts to deal with moral issues that arise within the context of attempting to live a green lifestyle are problematic. The idea that green consumption, as a politics of choice that can form part of a strategy for environmental reform as suggested by Micheletti (2003), does not adequately address the fundamental dilemmas that people face in attempting to make the 'right' choice.

Clearly, the sense of personal responsibility for ecological reform evident within our study appears to embody a normative political ideology, which positions each individual as responsible for ecological damage and reform. However, we are not suggesting that this has somehow been imposed on people by some superstructure that seeks to use the environment to drive people to purchase green goods, as is suggested by the different green variants of critical theory. For instance, Smith (1998: 107) writes: 'Consumers are lulled into complacency by the mistaken belief that they are actually doing something . . . people see the solution to the

environmental crisis as personal action, thus deflecting them from targeting large power elites and structural issues.' We would argue that these feelings and thoughts (of individual responsibility) are real for people, they are not, as is suggested either overtly or covertly by some pro-environmental writers, the result of some external force such as *the market* or the planned result of latter day *captains of consciousness* acting in their own interests. What is evident, and is demonstrated in this study, is how people now feel, think and, in a sense, act in a particular individualized way, and how as a result they have attempted to green particular practices within their own and often their families' lives. We would argue that theories of reflexive modernization provide a means to understand that green consumption is tied into broader social and cultural changes and that by understanding these processes we get a greater sense of the role that green consumption plays in people's lives and how they identify with environmental concerns.

Rather than focus only on the issue of whether green consumption can work as a strategy, we should perhaps try to gain a greater understanding of the process that has led people to believe that they, as individuals, can help solve global environmental problems. What is now required are studies that explain why this is happening, and in so doing, provide evidence and theoretical explanation. We acknowledge that the weakness of our study, and indeed many others, is that we do not address why this is happening at this particular juncture of human existence, and how and why it is different from the past. Future studies could and should attempt this.

Notes

1. Many of these movements were in reaction to industrial economic production and the ecological damage resulting from industrial processes (see Mol, 2001).
2. Halkier (1999) describes environmentally friendly (green) consumption practices in addition to including lower material consumption as using organic goods, locally produced goods, recycling, collective or low resource-intensive transport and saving resources. Others (see Harper and Makatouni, 2002; Raynolds, 2002) include fair-trade produce and ethical goods within the domain of green consumption.
3. See www.raceagainstwaste.com.
4. Other government initiatives include a consumer tax on the purchase of plastic bags.
5. Dublin is the largest conurbation in Ireland with almost one-third of the population in the Republic of Ireland living in the greater Dublin region.
6. The same researcher conducted all interviews.
7. They are considered to be involved in more environmentally sustainable practices by green consumers and indeed by environmental organizations.

8. According to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), a single transatlantic return flight emits almost half the CO_2 emissions (responsible for ozone depletion and global warming) produced by all other sources (lighting, heating, car use, etc.) consumed by an average person yearly.
9. See McKay (1998) and Doherty (1999) for accounts of these social movements.
10. Part of the Atlantic Ocean off the south coast of Ireland.
11. The idea of basic needs embodies a view that a specific level of need exists, and from an environmental perspective, any consumption beyond this is contradictory to the aims of environmental sustainability.
12. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Ireland in its *State of the Environment Report 2004* noted that the average Irish person uses 370 litres of water per day, almost twice the EU average, and as such should be reduced. The EPA is a government agency set up to monitor and implement Irish and EU environmental policies in Ireland.
13. Giddens (1990) defines expert systems as 'systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organize large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today' (p. 27).
14. Several groups opposed to the war in Iraq protest at various locations in Ireland.
15. GAP is an environmental organization that seeks to help people make changes in their lifestyles that are seen as pro-environmental. See www.globalactionplan.org.uk.

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