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Fishing as a way of life:
A cultural geography of fishing communities in Castletownbere (Ireland) and Le Guilvinec (Brittany)

Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam, BA

Submitted for the qualification of
Doctor of Philosophy [PhD]

Department of Geography
National University of Ireland, Cork

Supervisors: **Mr Ray O'Connor**
Dr John Crowley

Head of Department: **Dr. Kieran Hickey**

September
2018



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Abstract

Using the lens of contemporary cultural geography, this research develops an understanding of fishing as a way of life in Castletownbere (County Cork) and Le Guilvinec (Brittany) through relational and reciprocal processes. Drawing on the hermeneutics of both Gadamer and Ricoeur, I argue that pre-understandings are essential to the awareness of 'Self' and 'Other'. This approach fuses different strands of cultural geography, including a focus on experiential enquiry, mobilities and motion arenas, religion and rituals, emotional and affective geographies. I explore how fishing families and their communities experience and give meaning to their being-in-their-world. Enhanced interpretations of the meanings that participants give to their maritime environment emerge through my encounters with three fishing realms − the home, the boat, and the pier. The immersive character of ethnographic methodology allows for a meaningful engagement with participants and their maritime environment. The insights generated from these encounters provide new and emerging narratives of the lifeworlds of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. By focusing my study on the experiences and practices of the different performances and activities of two fishing communities in Ireland and Brittany, this research produces rich and novel understandings of fishing as a way of life and contributes to the debates concerned with people-place relationships and how these people construct and maintain senses of identity and place.

Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

Signature:

.....

Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam

September 2018

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I dedicate this thesis to my father Michael Jo, my uncles Donal and Kieran and my cousins − those who have fished in the past and those still fishing. In loving memory of my uncles Billy, Denis and Patrick whose spiritual presence inspired me.

To all fishers and their families throughout the world engaged in the craft of fishing.

Chapter One
Introduction

1.1 Beginnings

Originally from Castletownbere, I was brought up within a fishing family and I lived in France for over a decade with three of those years spent in coastal Brittany. The research for this thesis developed from an appreciation of cultural geography, a passion for coastal life in addition to an inherent understanding of fishing as an important way of life. As a result of my background, access to both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec (Fig. 1.1) had been relatively straightforward; community members were forthcoming *vis-à-vis* my research. Additionally, having personal acquaintances in Le Guilvinec facilitated my fieldwork there. Fisheries policy and management was my focus at the outset of this project, however, having identified the gap in the literature, the potential for a deeper cultural engagement with these fishing communities became apparent and excited my interest. Policy will be, nonetheless, discussed through the voices of fishers.

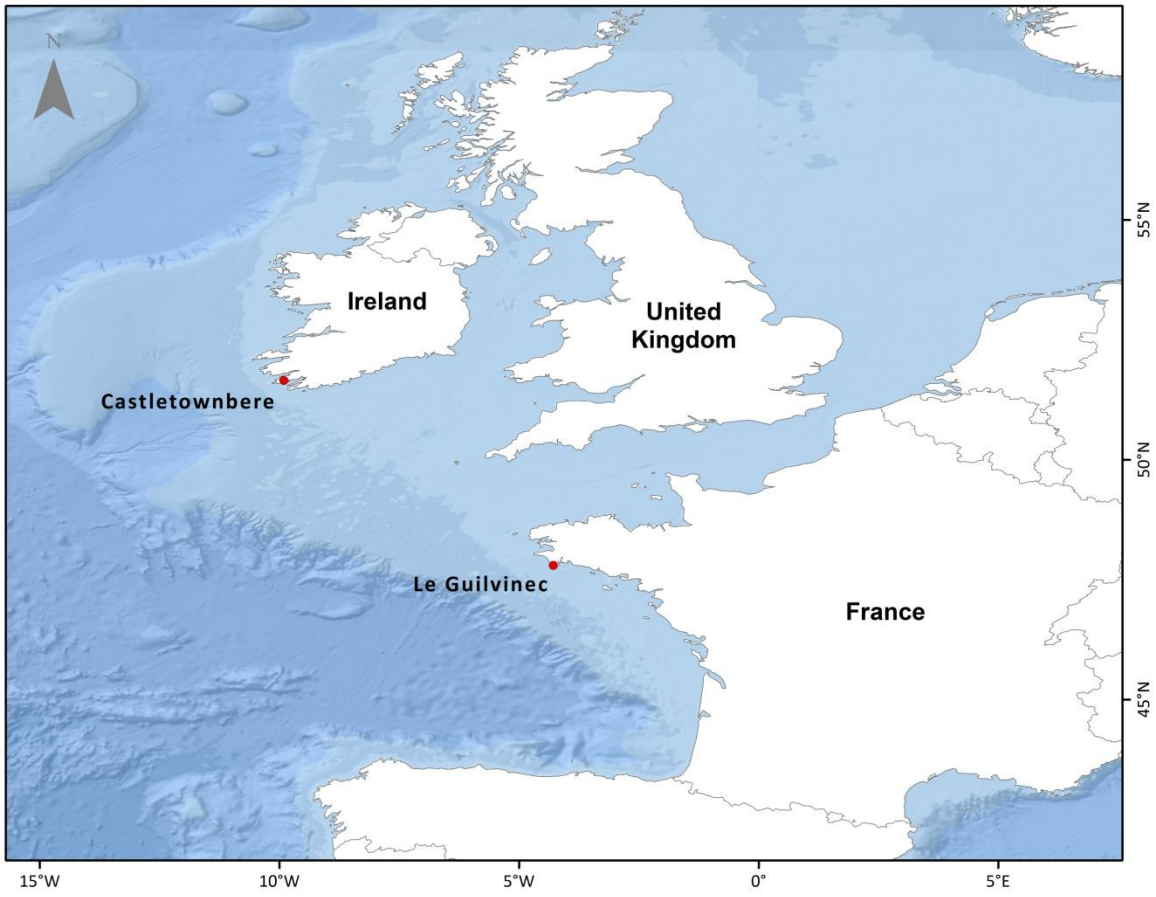


Figure 1.1 Location of research sites: Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec (Cartographer: Dr. Sarah Kandrot).

This thesis is focused primarily on the cultural geographies of fishing communities and explores the everyday practices and lived experiences of local fishers. Fishing is not just of economic importance but represents a significant cultural component of community life (McGoodwin 1990; Brookfield *et al.*, 2005). Fishing can be observed as a specific and coherent collective occupational identity (Davis, 2000; Macken-Walsh, 2009). This research explores how identities and senses of place are constructed in fishing communities. The home, the boat, and the pier, are three particular places that are significant in the lives of fishing families and as places of belonging, are "invested with meanings, emotions, experiences, and relationships that lie in the heart of human life" (Blunt and Varley, 2004, p. 3). This 'way of life', embedded within the wider environment, influences many aspects of individual and collective lives (Reed *et al.,* 2013) thereby providing the foundation for place attachment and identity construction (Acott and Urquhart, 2012). The experiential context of this study was carried out in two specific sites: Castletownbere (southwest Ireland) and Le Guilvinec (northwest France). Both places have been shaped by their relationships with the sea. Castletownbere is the leading whitefish port of Ireland (Bord Iascaigh Mhara, 2012) while Le Guilvinec is the third largest fishing port of France, however, it is the largest artisanal fishery harbour (in terms of fresh fish landings from local vessels) (Acott and Urquhart, 2012).

Cultural geography is concerned with the taken-for-granted everyday lived experiences of people in specific places (Geertz, 1983; Brewer, 2000; Blunt, 2005; Crang, 2003; Davies and Dwyer, 2007; Cresswell, 2010). It is rooted in a tradition of understanding and interpreting daily practices. Blunt (2005, p. 506) explains that "cultural geographers have begun to tell engaging and complex stories" and such stories constitute the essence of the geographer's craft. According to Dilthey, "a lived experience is a unit whose parts are connected by a common meaning" (quoted in Schmidt, 2006, p. 3). In order to gain in-depth insights into the lives of inhabitants in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec this research will be informed by hermeneutical theory. Immersion into both fishing communities provided a deeper appreciation of their lifeworlds facilitating a reflective interpretation of everyday practices. Hermeneutics is the process of understanding, therefore, through our awareness of the world around us we can begin to to understand others (Gadamer, 1976; Grondin, 1994).

1.2 Fishing

It was an instinctive yet informed choice to select the fishery harbours of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec as the experiential focus of this research. It is clear that

there is a gap in the literature *apropos* comparative research between Irish and Breton fishing communities. Having a shared Celtic heritage both communities are located on the Atlantic fringes of Europe. In addition, the American cultural geographer Carl Sauer (1968, p. 4) maintained that "to the natives of the Atlantic shores, such as the Celts, the sea was the frontier of opportunity to provide food, to build and man vessels in which to go out and to move to new homes". Strong historical trade links between Ireland and Brittany illustrate that the concept known today as the Atlantic Arc is not a new one (Merdrignac, 1994). Research conducted on various Celtic peoples has demonstrated that not only do they share a common heritage but also have related languages that descend from the 'Common Celtic' group (Sterckx, 1994). Since its creation in 1971, the annual *Festival Interceltique de Lorient* continues to attract both participants and spectators. This Celtic music festival is shared by the wider Celtic community – in addition to Brittany and Ireland, includes the Asturias, Cornwall, Galicia, Isle of Man, Scotland, Wales. Based on a similar agenda as the Irish *Gael Scoil*, the *Diwan* Schools, founded in 1977, were Breton language immersion schools both in public and Catholic school systems (Adkins, 2013). However, it was not until the turn of the twenty-first century that an increase in the number of students attending these schools was observed. There has been a keen revival of Celtic culture and Breton language amongst young Bretons than during the latter half of the twentieth century (Hornsby, 2008).

Research within the domain of fisheries has historically been dominated by studies focused on economic and biological issues (Symes & Hoefnagel 2010). Nevertheless, the presence of humanities and social science research in this area is increasing. Although little research has been conducted to date in Ireland pertaining to the cultural understanding of fishing communities apart from Mac Laughlin (1995; 2010), significant contributions in this area have been made in Newfoundland and Norway (see Jentoft, 2000; Munk-Madsen, 2000; Binkley, 2002; Gerrard, 2000, 2013). In the UK the focus has been mainly on management and policy (Symes & Phillipson, 2009; Phillipson & Symes, 2010; Symes & Hoefnagel, 2010; Phillipson & Symes, 2013) nonetheless some researchers (Stead, 2005; Urquhart *et al.*, 2011) have based their studies on socio-cultural dimensions. Nadel-Klein's (1984, 1988, 2000, 2003) research remains the most relevant to date because she focuses her research in Scotland on the lives of those linked to fishing. However a significant gap in the literature still remains that concerns the cultural components of fishing communities.

This study employs the concepts of identity and place attachment to explore fishing as a way of life. Using qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews conducted with both active and retired fishermen and focus-group interviews with women from fishing

families, I explored the construction of identity and place attachment within fishing communities. Immersion in both communities enabled observation, both active and passive.

It was decided that the concurrent use of an ethnographic and a hermeneutic methodology would provide me with the best opportunities to explore and interpret the way of life of both fishing communities. Ethnographic research focuses on the lifeworlds of peoples and cultures (Crang and Cook, 2007). Qualitative research aspires to understand and interpret the multi-layered meanings that people attach to their everyday lived experiences (Crang, 2005). The writing style presented here, which is central to this thesis, sets out to convey the richness and warmth of the field in an attempt to move away from traditional cold and sterile texts. There has been a continued call for change within ethnographic research (Crang, 2003; Davies and Dwyer, 2007); to quote DeLyser and Hawkins (2014, p. 131) "for most academic geographers *writing* remains the primary means through which we communicate our work [original emphasis]". It is important to seek ways of engaging with the world and consequently 'telling it as it is' rather than producing academic texts that do not express the reality of the field (Blunt *et al.,* 2003; DeLyser and Hawkins, 2014).

In the process of examining the interview transcripts and personal field-journal, a framework for interpretative enquiry emerged. Participants discussed their daily lives in relation to three main areas; the home, the sea/boat, and the pier. These emerged from the significance that each had on the lives of these men and women. These three *places* are central to the lives of these fishing families and their communities. They are places where identities and senses of place are (re)constructed. The home is predominantly a place wherein the role of women is central. These women provide a strong family structure that facilitates the spouses/partners going to sea and, consequently, a collaborative relationship unfolds. They control financial aspects of the household in addition to managing children's education and other daily routines. The sea, mainly associated with fishermen, is the domain in which the boat becomes a complex place where a group of men co-habit and it becomes their 'alternative abode'. This confined and ambivalent place acts as a shared area that is pivotal to the lives of fishermen. The meaning of community is explored through the pier as an important place. Fishing is at the heart of these communities and the pier is essential to the social and cultural events that take place in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. Chapter six will explore the centrality of the pier and how these components are linked to the physical *milieu* but also given meaning through fishing activity. Construction of identities is intrinsically shaped by the physical environment and a human need for place attachment (Tuan, 1977).

1.3 Castletownbere: Background and Context

Also known as Castletown-Bearhaven, Castletownbere is located in county Cork on the southwest coast of Ireland. It is the main town on the Beara Peninsula and is 122 kilometres from Cork city, the second largest city in Ireland. This picturesque fishing port is located on the edge of West Cork – "a land of mobile boundaries, a place whose location and character curves and shifts" (Smyth, 1989, p. 93) (Fig. 1.2). According to Smyth (1990, p. 31) "the sea and the coastline is the oldest heartland of the region". As a result it is not surprising that the town of Castletownbere is built on the seafront and continues to 'gaze' out to sea.

The settlement's connections to fishing, as far as can be ascertained with any degree of historical accuracy, date back to the Late Middle Ages. Then, the existence of Castletownbere's fishery was largely due to foreign fleets from France, Spain and the Netherlands (Mac Laughlin, 2010). The local fishing industry was predominantly for local sustenance and was made up of small open boats (Breen, 2005). The presence of abundant and varied species off the south-western seaboard and more precisely off the coast of Castletownbere led to the establishment of fish palaces[1] in the seventeenth century (Dickson, 2005; Breen, 2007). Proposals to improve harbour facilities had been repeatedly disregarded, nevertheless, the presence of large numbers of foreign vessels in the area throughout the 1800s ensured Castletownbere a reputation from its mackerel fishery (Mac Laughlin, 2010). The town's isolated location lacked the necessary infrastructure to ensure transport of fish to inland areas and, as a result, it did not realise its potential (Mac Laughlin, 2010).

O'Brien (1991) highlights this lack of infrastructure by pointing to a journey outlined in *A General and Statistical Survey of the County of Cork* that was undertaken by a Rev. Townsend in 1810:

> The usual mode of visiting Bearhaven, even now, is by water, the voyage from Bantry, with a tolerable fair wind, being made in four or five hours. The distance by land along old pass, which I have travelled, was thirty miles; but, expedition being impracticable from the ruggedness of the way, the time required to perform it, even for an active traveller, was from then to twelve hours (O'Brien, 1991, p. 65).

Castletownbere is not an old town by Irish standards (Twomey and McGettigan, 2007). With the exception of a few fishermen's cabins the town did not develop until the nineteenth

[1] Large stone-built structures in which barrels of fish were laid under press beams and weights to extract oil (O'Sullivan and Breen, 2007, p. 218).

century and its initial growth was triggered not by fishing but by with the establishment of copper mines in Allihies in 1812 (O'Brien, 1991). Allihies village is located thirteen kilometres west of Castletownbere. These mines gave employment to approximately six hundred people and remained in existence until the early 1930s (O'Brien, 1991). It was not until the 1950s that Castletownbere's fishing sector began to develop and became the basis for the town's economy.

The town is sheltered from the Atlantic Ocean by Bere Island − eleven kilometres in length and five kilometres wide − which is located two kilometres to the south and by the mountainous Beara Peninsula to the North. Castletownbere Fishery Harbour Centre (FHC) is one of Ireland's major fishing ports and is Ireland's largest whitefish port. Additionally, it is one of the largest natural harbours in the world and the second safest in Ireland (BIM, 2012).

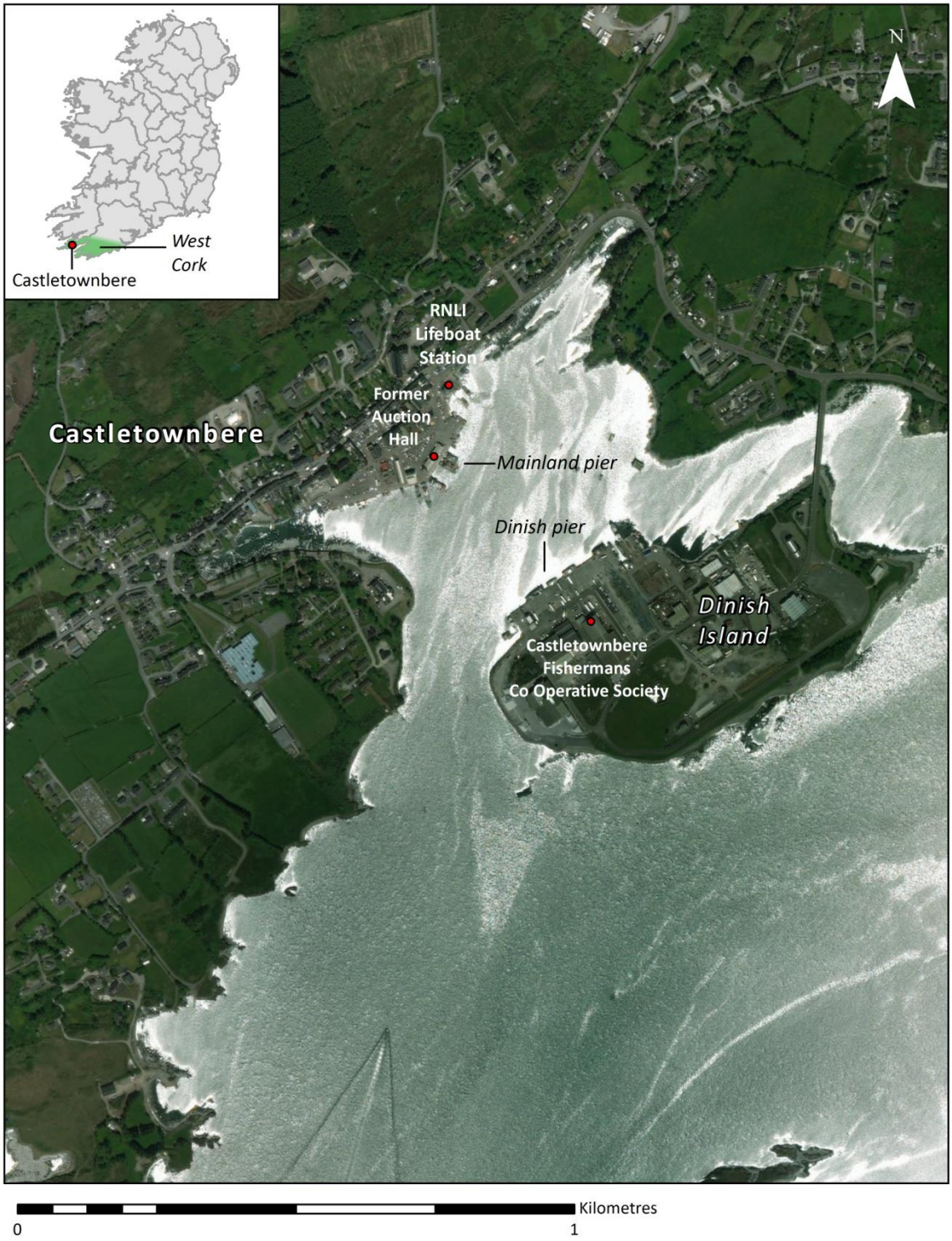


Figure 1.2 Location map of Castletownbere's mainland pier with former auction hall and lifeboat station and Dinish Island pier showing the local Fishermen's Cop-operative (Cartographer: Dr. Sarah Kandrot).

The harbour of Castletownbere is defined by the town pier and Dinish Island which connects to the mainland by a bridge. It is managed by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM), under the Fishery Harbour Centres Acts (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 2016). As visitors arrive to Castletownbere from the east – the main entrance − they pass the bridge to Dinish Island on the left bordered with signage

that indicates the presence of a fishing industry. Upon arrival to the town, at the eastern end of the pier, the lifeboat station is another sign that Castletownbere is an important fishing place. The gable end of a restaurant displays the art work of a local artist – a fresco of local fishing boats at the pier – revealing yet another indication of a port town (Fig. 1.3).



Figure 1.3 A local artist highlights and celebrates the fishing industry in Castletownbere (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

While Dinish Island now accommodates the majority of the fisheries infrastructure and processing activities (Bord Iascaigh Mhara, 2012), the fishing vessels continue to berth at the mainland pier. The mainland pier remains a significant place in the lives of fishers and non-fishers alike as both a work and meeting place. Its significance will be discussed in chapter six.

Commissioned by the Irish government in 1959 to compile a report on the improvement of fishing harbour facilities Swedish expert, Carl Bjuke reported the importance of developing eight major fishing ports around Ireland including Castletownbere (Bjuke, 1960). Work commenced in the early 1960s to replace the original small wooden structure that jutted out to sea. Its development was not without the commitment of local people at the time as fishermen and local business people were aware of the opportunities that the fishing sector would bring to the community.

The mainland pier and Dinish wharf are the two piers of the harbour. The mainland

pier is approximately 304 metres in length with a water depth of 4 metres MLWS[2]. The pier accommodates fish landing berths, the former auction hall, Harbour Offices, BIM Training College, net repair area, harbour roads, open spaces (parking) and services. It also comprises the lifeboat station on the eastern side of the mainland pier.

Dinish wharf, is located on Dinish Island, and is accessed by a road bridge, about 1.5 kilometres from the town. The quayside was recently expanded from ninety metres to 215 metres. The island comprises an industrial estate leased by the Department of Marine to private industry; Dinish pier, an ice plant, a synchro-lift boat lifting facility and repair yard and other fishery related services. Bord Iascaigh Mhara BIM (2012) estimate that eighty-two per cent of employment in Castletownbere is based directly and indirectly on Fishing[3].

1.4 Le Guilvinec: Background and Context

Le Guilvinec is located at the point of Brittany in south Finistère. The town is situated eleven kilometres from Pont-l'Abbé and in the borough of Quimper. It is 240 kilometres from Rennes, the capital city of the Breton region. The strict boundaries of France's regions imply that the town is part of a distinct area − Pays Bigouden (Fig. 1.4). As in the case of Castletownbere, fishing in Le Guilvinec also dates to the Late Medieval period when sheltered communities of fishermen began to develop throughout the south Breton coastline, including the Pay Bigouden area, where the sardine fishery was exploited and a number of fish-drying installations (*sècheries*) developed. Since fishing was seasonal, many inhabitants mixed fishing and farming (Galliou and Jones, 1991). At that time Le Guilvinec was merely a hamlet – seven inhabitants – attached to the commune of Plomeur which is situated six kilometres north of Le Guilvinec. As was the case in Castletownbere its isolated location meant that any fish caught was destined primarily for local consumption. However, the arrival of the railway line in 1863 which linked Paris to Quimper – the regional capital – facilitated the development of a commercial mackerel fishery. Le Guilvinec was no longer isolated and became part of the national fish market. The construction of a fish landing dock in 1869 facilitated the work of fishermen. In the early 1870s, fish processing plants were established, creating local employment for both men and women in oil extraction and curing. The Soymie fish company gave its name to the street *Rue la Vieille Usine* − 'Old Factory

[2] Mean Low Water Spring: The average height of low waters occurring at the time of spring tides.

[3] Data from 2012 are used as they correspond to when fieldwork was conducted. It was highlighted in the Irish Times (2017) by the Castletownbere Fishermen's Co-operative that Castletownbere is even more dependent on the fishing sector.

Street. In the following decade, a number of curing and canning factories were established and were located in the same quarter of the docks. In 1880, the commune of Le Guilvinec was established and in the space of twenty years the number of permanent inhabitants had reached 2,000.

Le Guilvinec developed at a faster rate than other fishing settlements in France. Fishermen from Douarnenez (Fig. 1.4) spent the mackerel season in Le Guilvinec, from February to June, with their families (Chatain, 1993). Due to the expansion of the mackerel fishery the population of Le Guilvinec increased to 4,000 inhabitants during this season; living conditions were unhygienic which led to the outbreak of many diseases such as cholera taking many victims during the latter part of the nineteenth century (Berrou, 2000). Gradually Le Guilvinec became a significant mackerel fishing port. The fishery generated important income source for the fishermen. The salting activities provided work throughout the day and night. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Le Guilvinec had become the first French port to transport fresh mackerel to the French capital (Berrou, 2000).

In 1883 the parish was founded but its chapel − Saint Tremeur − was in a state of disrepair and, therefore, a new church was built in 1887 in the town centre. At the turn of the twentieth century, Le Guilvinec rapidly expanded. In 1907, the railway line stretched as far as the town and although it mainly transported passengers, there were wagons that were reserved for fish produce (Berrou, 2000). In 1919, Le Guilvinec became the chief maritime quarter owing to the extension of the pier. Additionally, the advent of motorised boats in the early 1920s permitted fishermen to go further out to sea and to realise a faster turnaround time (Chatain, 1993; Berrou, 2000). Three decades later began the construction of the new pier and the auction hall. The 1980s witnessed the growth of deep-sea fishing (Berrou, 2000).

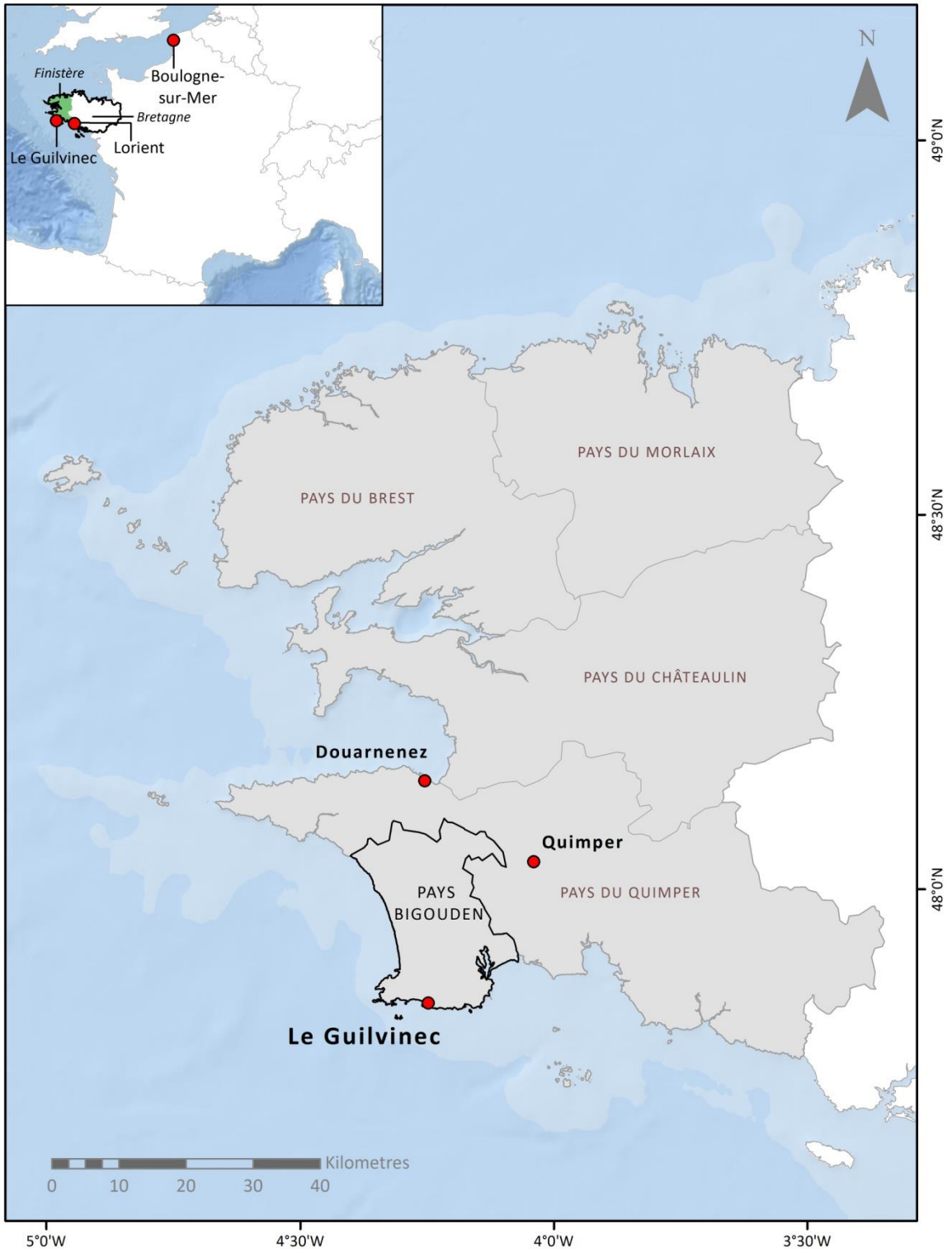


Figure 1.4 Location map of Le Guilvinec within the distinct area of the Pays Bigouden. Also showing regional capital Quimper and fishing port Douarnenez (Cartographer: Dr. Sarah Kandrot).

Today Le Guilvinec is the premier French port for artisanal fishing – small-scale and coastal with boats between twelve and sixteen metres in length – and the third port − all fisheries combined (Le Guilvinec, 2015). The fishery harbour centre of Le Guilvinec is managed by the *Chambre de Commerce et de l'Industie* (CCI) of Quimper-Cornouaille.



Le Guilvinec is bordered by the *Steir* estuary to the east and by a small coastal river the *Dour Red* to the west. On the right bank of the *Steir* estuary lies Le Guilvinec and on the opposite bank is Léchiagat (Fig. 1.5); the fishing port is divided between both places (Coïc, 2012). Figure 1.5 Location map of Le Guilvinec with main pier showing auction hall, Haliotika Visitor centre and Maritime Training School and Lechiagat on the opposite bank (Cartographer: Dr. Sarah Kandrot).

Similar to Castletownbere the pier runs the length of the town, parallel to one of the main streets where the Town Hall is located. Connected by a bridge built in 1951, the

neighbour towns of Le Guilvinec and Léchiagat share the local fishery. The port area comprises two areas – the main pier accommodates fish landing berths, the auction hall, Harbour Offices, net repair area, harbour roads, open spaces (parking) and services such as refuelling, an ice plant facility and several companies providing mechanic and hydraulic repairs (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Brittany, 2017). On the opposite bank, the port of Léchiagat provides a synchro-lift − a boat lifting facility − and also comprises the lifeboat station. The local maritime vocational training school is located half way between both towns.

The port infrastructure has undergone multiple transformations. In order to protect the port from strong swells the construction of a breakwater in 1930 was undertaken thus making Le Guilvinec a sheltered harbour (Berrou, 2000). In the 1950s and 1960s the development of the fishing sector was observed through the establishment of *armements* – companies that commercially operate vessels and *mareyeurs* – fish wholesalers. The fishing sector in Le Guilvinec has been well-established for over a century.

In recent years challenges have emerged for both of these fishing settlements. The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has imposed a series of regulatory constraints. Both this policy and the evolution of the fishing industry itself as it moves from small-scale family-based enterprises to a larger-scale, industrialised and corporatised exploitation of the fishing resource, provide the backdrop for this study[4]. While in recent times exploitation of migratory labour in the fishing industry has come to the fore, it appears to be very well hidden[5]. However, my research will illustrate that, as in most occupations, the larger external processes that drive change are both acknowledged and ignored by fishers as they continue their daily lives and routines. Change is incorporated incrementally. There has been no single seismic shift but a process of slow evolutionary change. Nevertheless, based upon fieldwork in Castletownbere, Bresnihan (2013, p. 2) highlights that fishermen are "becoming visible as active and responsible 'stewards' of the marine environment". This finding shows that positive changes are gradually taking place, however, many fishers, in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec alike, highlighted that more needs to be done. The next sections explore

4 See O'Domhnaill, R. (2016) *Atlantic*, a documentary that explores the impacts of recent changes in the fishing industry on fishing communities in the EU and elsewhere.

5 When the field research for this study was conducted in 2013 these issues did not emerge. Gardaí, Revenue and Customs raided Castletownbere fishing boats, accompanied by officials from the Workplace Relations Commission, on October 5, 2016. The then Minister for Justice Frances Fitzgerald confirmed on December 17, 2016 the raids by gardaí and other agencies found no evidence of human trafficking or labour exploitation (*Irish Examiner*, 2016). If exploitation of migrant labourers is happening in Castletownbere it is very well hidden and neither my research nor key agencies of the State could bring it to light.

developments in recent years in the fishing industries of Ireland and France.

1.5 An Introduction into the Fishing Sectors of Ireland and France/Brittany

The fishing industry has been continuously faced with changes and has had various impacts on Breton and Irish coastal communities. While some changes are accepted and become embedded, others are rejected and, as a result, tensions arise between industry stakeholders (Acott and Urquhart, 2012). Over the past decade the marine industry has been experiencing major restructuring. According to Symes and Phillipson (2009) this transformation will no doubt have permanent impacts on the socio-cultural aspects of fishing communities. In addition, one of the failures of current policies is the neglect of fishers and their families (Symes and Phillipson, 2009). The challenge for contemporary policy-makers is to understand fishing as a 'way of life' and not regard it merely as a means of economic income (van Ginkel, 2001 in Acott and Urquhart, 2012; Britton and Coulthard 2013). The fleets in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec have been undergoing restructuring *via* decommissioning schemes, due to the vessel capacity exceeding available quotas and the aim of the European Union is to improve vessel efficiency (Le Floc'h *et al.,* 2015; personal communication). The increase in vessel efficiency means improved economic value in the European fleet. However, this is to the detriment of fishing communities where the industry is made up of family-owned businesses rather than corporate-owned companies (Marshall, 2001; Chaumette, 2008; Williams, 2008; McKinlay and McVittie, 2011; Acott and Urquhart, 2012).

1.5.1 Castletownbere within the wider Irish Context

Despite the continued pressure of fisheries policies, Ireland has a healthy fishing industry (Bord Iascaigh Mhara, 2017). Over 14,000 women and men are employed in coastal communities throughout Ireland. This includes full and part time employment in the fisheries, aquaculture, seafood processing and ancillary services sectors survey data available. Of the 9,270 direct jobs, 3,360 are in fisheries. Counties Donegal and Cork significantly provide employment opportunities within the wider fisheries sector with Castletownbere accounting for six percent of total coastal employment. (Bord Iascaigh Mhara, 2017). The downturn in the Irish economy in 2007 led construction workers, both national and non-national, to seek work in fisheries. However, in recent years, in Castletownbere, the majority of them have left the industry due to its precariousness (Personal communication with active fisher, 2017).

In 2017 the Irish commercial fishing fleet consisted of 2,059 boats 1,540 of these are less than 10 metres in length (DAFM, 2017). Since BIM's survey in 2012 there has been a decrease in the number of vessels in Castletownbere from 151 to 114 revealing an overall

decline of thirty-seven vessels (see table 2.1). Of these, seventy-eight are inshore vessels less than 12 metres in length. A further eleven are vessels between twelve and eighteen metres in length. Of the twenty-five larger vessels (over eighteen metres in length) only two target pelagic species while the other twenty-three vessels make up the Castletownbere demersal fleet that target Nephrops (crustacean) and the main whitefish species including monkfish, megrim, hake, cod, haddock, whiting (BIM, 2012).

Vessel size	2015	2017	Change
<12 metres	106	78	-28
12m – 18 metres	14	11	-3
> 18 metres	31	25	-6
Total	151	114	-37

Table 1.1: Vessel sizes in Castletownbere. Source: SFPA (2017)

The inshore fleet has been most impacted with a decrease of twenty-eight vessels. Vessels over eighteen metres in length fell from thirty-one to twenty-five; this decrease is observed in the number of pelagic boats from eight to two. However, staying unchanged is the number of demersal vessels that remain at twenty-three.

Fishing is an important employer in the area providing 660 jobs that represents eighty-one per cent of the employment in Castletownbere (Bord Iascaigh Mhara, 2012). The fish-catching sector is predominantly male and, as a result, its unemployment rate is lower than that of other coastal areas (Haase and Engling, 2013). The latest records show that in 2010 the fish catching and processing sectors account for over half – fifty-four per cent – of the town's economic activity. This figure rises to eighty-six per cent with the inclusion of aquaculture and ancillaries[6] (BIM, 2012).

1.5.2 Le Guilvinec within the wider French and Breton Contexts

In France, the fishing industry remains prosperous despite continuous pressures from EU policies and the reduction in the fishing fleet. There are 18,414 employed in the catch sector and aquaculture throughout France of which 13,314 are fishers with 4,823 in Brittany (*Direction des Pêches Maritimes et de l'Aquaculture* (DPMA)[7], 2016; FranceAgriMer, 2016).

In 2016, the French commercial fishing fleet (excluding overseas departments and territories) consisted of 4,370 boats 3,514 of these are less than 12 metres in length (Insee, 2017). The maritime quarter of Le Guilvinec regroups a total of seven fishing ports − Le

6 The ancillary sector includes vessel agents, fuel suppliers, chandlers, net repair, engineering (mechanical, electrical and refrigeration), fleet support (management and representation) and harbour services (ice, pilotage and synchro-lift).

7 Directorate of Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture

Guilvinec–Léchiagat, Loctudy, Lesconil, Saint-Guénolé, Kérity, Saint-Pierre, Sainte-Marine and Benodet. Le Guilvinec–Léchiagat is the main port. Altogether there are 216 vessels and 906 fishers. However, in Le Guilvinec alone, there are 95 vessels where there has been a slight decrease in the number of vessels in recent years from 101 to 95 (see table 2.2). Of these, forty are inshore vessels ranging between twelve and nineteen metres in length. A further twenty vessels are between four and seventeen metres in length. Of the thirty-five larger vessels (over eighteen metres in length) the majority target Nephrops (crustacean) and the main whitefish species including monkfish, cuttlefish (squid-like), john dory, haddock and whiting (Le Guilvinec, 2017).

Vessel type	**2011**	**2016**	**Change**
Offshore (> 18 metres)	47	35	-12
Inshore (12m – 19.50 metres)	23	40	+17
Small-scale (4m – 17 metres)	31	20	-11
Total	**101**	**95**	-6

Table 1.2: Vessel types in Le Guilvinec. Source: Bigouden.tv (2017)

The offshore and small-scale fleets have been affected with a decrease of twelve and eleven vessels respectively. However, the number of inshore vessels has increased by seventeen revealing the change in the local fishing sector. More fishers are switching to inshore fishing due to the increasing demands on the offshore sector. Furthermore, this type of fishery consists of one to four days at sea with fishers being able to spend more quality time ashore.

While the industry remains economically viable, fishers' lives are, nevertheless, increasingly strained due to effects of such policies (Briton and Coulthard, 2013; Phillipson and Symes, 2015). Strict regulations imposed from the EU, some of which are unwelcome but necessary, cheap imports that undermine both Irish and French fishers' ability to make a livelihood are just some of the frustrations underpinning today's fishing sector (see Bresnihan, 2013; Goti-Aralucea *et al.,* 2018). The voices of fishers and their families reveal that continued effort is required to close the gap between governance and the everyday lives of their communities. While changes have taken place within the fisheries of both fishing ports, they remain, nonetheless, the principal performers in relation to their national whitefish sector.

1.6 Thesis Structure and Core Themes

Chapter two reviews the existing literature that deals with the construction of

contemporary identities. It also examines the relationship between identity and place attachment and how the physical environment and history shape both elements. The chapter also explores the literature on fishing as a 'way of life' and the meanings that these people give to their everyday lived lives. Moreover, it investigates the domains of the boat, the home and the pier. The conceptual framework will establish the connection between all three themes with reference to current literature pertaining to fisheries, humanities and social science.

Chapter three presents the methodological approach employed in the research. Informed by hermeneutics, ethnographic techniques – interviews, focus groups, photographs – are used to capture the essence of fishing communities. Immersion into my own culture brings to the fore the blending of both ontology and epistemology through my *being-and-doing-in-the-fishing-world*. This chapter describes the approaches to fieldwork and will explain why the methods used were chosen. It will review the specific challenges of researching fishing communities. Making sense of fishers' lives is central to this thesis. Hermeneutics provides the theoretical underpinning to this interpretive approach and informs the way of seeing and understanding throughout.

The concepts of place and identity inform the discussion in each of the three interpretive chapters. Each chapter sets out to understand and discuss the findings of the fieldwork in relation to three main areas, that is, the home, the boat and the pier.

Chapter four explores the structure of the fishing home and the significance of the woman's role. It also discusses their sense of place and belonging within the home and the wider community. These women are decision-makers and play an important part in keeping the family unit intact. This role that many take on as novices enables the spouse/partner to go to sea. The changes taking place within the industry are also affecting the household which engender the renegotiation of identities. It has been observed in past and contemporary fishing societies that women have simultaneously organised family life within and outside the home (Davis, 2000; Zhao *et al*., 2013).

Chapter five examines the 'otherworldly' nature of the boat. The fishing vessel symbolises an 'alternative abode' that is parallel to life on shore. The importance of the crew as a team is explored. Notions of freedom and solitude intertwine revealing the complexity of fishing. Fishermen who are challenged by the natural *milieu* every time they go fishing acquire an intrinsic respect for the sea. It is within this environment that they gain a sense of who they are. This chapter also examines the changes that have taken place within the industry and how these have impacted livelihoods and also construction(s) of identity.

Chapter six explores the idea of community through the 'in-betweenness' of the pier and how this is expressed in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. Community is defined as a network of individuals sharing similarities and differences. The maritime environment provides the inhabitants with a sense of attachment that enables the construction of identity. This chapter focuses on the pier as a place in itself that is shared by all community members. People attach different meanings to different places as they structure their worlds differently (Tuan, 1974). Through the presence of festivals and the performance of rituals fishing communities reveal their ways of being-in-their-world.

Chapter seven concludes by bringing together the key elements from the research. It will summarise the key findings and suggests further areas of research into the cultural dimensions of fishing communities. The rich ethnographic perspective emerging from the fieldwork illustrates the complex lived lives of men and women within these fishing communities.

1.7 Research Contributions

This thesis presents three main research contributions, which have relevance to both cultural geography and fishing communities. Using the lens of contemporary cultural geography to develop understandings of fishing communities, I recognised that the relational and reciprocal nature of conducting research could transfer to the subject of fishing. Cultural geography is about people-place relationships. Drawing on hermeneutical perspectives, the relational processes observed and experienced throughout this study enhanced my understandings and interpretations of the lifeworlds of fishing communities.

Hermeneutics as an interpretative methodology shows how 'action can speak as loud as words'. I piece together the different parts − home, boat, and pier − in order to gain better understandings of the whole − fishing as a way of life. The reconceptualisation of fishing as a way of life is revealed through focus on the collaborative nature of the home and women. This supportive environment allows fishers to engage in the 'otherworldliness' of the boat where fishing practice occurs. I also show how the pier as a place in-between links not only home and boat but also past and present.

The use of an ethnographic approach to understanding fishing as a way of life facilitated my immersion in both fishing towns. Through an epistemology focused on immersion, I reveal how this immersive technique provided me with the foundation to develop and appreciate new ways of being-in-the-fishing-world. Through interview and focus group transcripts, fieldnotes and journals, and the performance of fishing activity and ritual, I

interpret these communities as lived from the inside out. By bringing to the fore the everyday lived experiences of these fishing families, this research study represents an important step towards bridging the gap between policy and fishing community stakeholders.

Chapter Two
Setting Sail

2.1 Introduction

Drawing on the work of humanistic geographers (Buttimer, 1976; Tuan, 1976; Seamon, 1979), I embarked on an exploration of the lifeworlds of fishing communities. I engaged with different ways of being-in-the-world through immersive and performance geographies. Ontological perspectives about my own being-in-the-world are encountered *via* the idea of sharing experiences and knowledge with participants (Heidegger, 1962). Fishing as a way of life is tied to beliefs and practices that are connected to the daily experiences of people in fishing communities. Such experiences are intrinsically connected to place and identity which in turn are central concepts in cultural geography. Consequently, cultural geographers seek to understand the meanings people give to their everyday lived lives. This chapter examines the literature in cultural geography and related disciplines that aims to interpret the concepts of place and identity and how they shape and give meaning to lives (Crang, 1998). As such, specific places provide a backdrop for the exploration of place, identity, and belonging which include both the natural and produced environments (Unwin, 1992; Acott and Urquhart, 2012). Additionally, this chapter explores the establishment of the European Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) and also historical accounts of Irish and Breton fishing communities in order to place Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec within a wider context.

Hermeneutics as a theory of interpretation is essential to understanding the world in which we live (Tuan, 1976; Cresswell, 2006) and provides the philosophical underpinning for this research that is focused on the everyday lived experiences of individuals and communities. The ontology of pre-understanding leads to the awareness of both ‘Self’ and ‘Other’.

2.2 Anchoring Fishing in History

The literature in relation to Ireland’s maritime history and culture is not particularly well developed but there are a small number of significant studies. De Courcy Ireland (1981) and more recently Mac Laughlin (2007, 2010, 2013) have provided insights into the development of fishing as a way of life and how the fishing industry has been marginalised by successive Irish governments. Their approach to the subject is broad and historically

focused; it lacks the cultural depth that my research will bring. While a number of historians and geographers have studied specific fishing communities these rely primarily on archival and secondary sources (Breen, 2004, 2005, 2007; Rees, 2008, 2013). They lack the qualitative and ethnographic approaches that are central to my study. Nolan (2003, 2008, 2010), however, conducts a series of interviews with fishermen around the Irish coast to explore their life-stories. While employing similar techniques to those I will use, Nolan's work does not have the depth and richness that my study of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec offers.

In France the literature is considerably well developed and publications covering Brittany's maritime past bring together local historians and geographers in addition to seafaring authors. Although more overtly political in nature as they discuss the effects of European fishing policy and fisheries crises experienced by Breton fishing ports, such texts are nonetheless insightful and of value to this study. Geographer, Fichou (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011) has written extensively on the sardine fishery of south Finistère. However, his work is predominantly archival. Local authors Tanneau (1999, 2003) and Coïc (2012, 2013) have taken a more qualitative approach to their studies; each of them having experienced a maritime way of life. Both provide valuable insights into the hardships of fishing and the struggles experienced by local fishing populations.

2.2.1 The Irish Context

A number of writers have contributed to our understanding of Irish maritime history including Mac Laughlin, Breen and Rees. Mac Laughlin's (2010) work in particular provides a useful context for understanding the significance of fishing as a resource for the Irish economy and particularly for coastal communities. The latter also notes the influence of the North Atlantic Drift[8].

Mac Laughlin's (2010) investigation into Irish coastal history provides valuable insights into life in coastal communities during the Middle Ages. He explains how the increase in foreign fleets in coastal waters around Ireland influenced the development of shipbuilding in a number of coastal towns and, consequently, fostered the expansion of commercial fishing at that time. Rees (2013) reveals that during that same period small fishing communities would have developed within many of the country's larger towns. Both

[8] North Atlantic Drift is an ocean current system in the North Atlantic Ocean. Characterised by warm temperature and high salinity, the North Atlantic Drift often mixes with northern cold water to produce excellent fishing grounds along the coast of north-western Europe (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2008).

Mac Laughlin (2010) and Rees (2013) explore and describe the way of life experienced in Irish coastal communities during the Middle Ages.

Authors such as Nairn (2005) and O'Sullivan and Breen (2007) reveal how these remote coastal localities were the last areas to come under colonial control and continued to work within a familial cooperative system. Their work is also significant in exploring how powerful Gaelic chieftains, namely, the O'Driscolls of Baltimore and O'Sullivan Beare of Castletownbere, benefited greatly from foreign fishing and trade. However, these activities caused some concern for local fishing populations who made a living from sea and shoreline resources. Mac Laughlin (2010) highlights that colonial fishermen and merchants dominated the maritime resources of Gaelic Ireland which in turn led to the decline of local fishing. Moreover, Irish boats were ill-equipped to compete with English and Scottish fleets.

Prior to the nineteenth century, fish was prominent in Irish diets of both rich and poor and coastal residents would have been aware of the abundance of coastal resources (Mac Laughlin, 2010; O'Sullivan and Breen, 2007; Cullen, 1981). Cullen (1981) further argues that shellfish was appreciated by coastal and inland dwellers alike and would have been a regular part of their varied diet. In addition, Sauer (1968) observed that the Irish had an intrinsic knowledge of maritime resources, yet, when the Great Famine (1845-1852) occurred Irish fishermen were unable to help combat food shortages along the poverty-stricken western seaboard of Ireland. Some authors (De Courcy Ireland, 1981; Mac Laughlin, 2010; Crowley, Smyth and Murphy, 2012) maintained that local fishing boats were too small to travel long distances out to sea and only in some coastal areas it was possible for the population to survive on shore resources such as seaweed. Breathnach (2005, p. 76), in her discussion of the Great Famine period, argues that "Fishing as an occupation could not earn parity with farming in Ireland despite the fact that with adequate, well-administered funding the fisheries had a better chance of solving the poverty problem than farming" (see also Hatton, 2012).

In his study of the Fishery of Arklow, County Wicklow during the nineteenth-century, Rees (2013, p. 31) maintains that this place known as the Fishery could be viewed "as a community with a distinct heritage and lifestyle" as it was "more than just an address, it was a way of life". Levis (2002) and O'Sullivan and Breen (2007) explained that fishermen at that time would have had an inherent knowledge of inlets and waterways in the area in which they fished and that their physical environment shaped their sense of belonging and identities as fishers. Additionally, Mac Laughlin (2010) and Rees (2013) maintained that fishing groups established their own communities and were often located in a separate part of the town as fishing families were recognised as being distinct from the other residents.

Both De Courcy Ireland (1981) and Mac Laughlin (2010) emphasise that two decades into the twentieth century the Irish Free State marginalised coastal communities as farming and rural industry were earmarked as being central to the state's future economic development; fishing communities became extremely isolated from mainstream Irish society. They further maintain that as a result fishing communities remained geographically and politically isolated from the building of the new nation-state. Moreover, Mac Laughlin (2010) highlights the failure to establish an organisation of their own left fishermen voiceless in political spheres and as such they were unable to articulate the economic viability of the Irish fishing industry and influence policy. Fishing industry policies will be discussed in section 2.2.3.

2.2.2 The Breton Context

The maritime history of Brittany has been well studied in the literature. Galliou and Jones (1991) provide a concise overview of how coastal populations coped better during famine times due to their diet of fish and seafood and also their use of seaweed as fertiliser. Additionally, they reveal that many inhabitants mixed fishing and farming as fishing was seasonal. These authors (Galliou & Jones, 1991) also discuss the sardine fishery that was exploited along the south Breton coast during the fourteenth century. Chatain (1993) and Davies, W. (2009) explain how this fishery was able to develop as a result of the salt trade which had become a vital commodity and its production played a key role in Brittany's international trade which was mined in the Vannes region (South Brittany).

Auffray (2010) recounts the history of Breton fishermen in the late fifteenth century. He provides a rich account of the part played by Bretons in the development of the cod fishery off the Newfoundland coast. Nevertheless, as Galliou & Jones (1991) reveal, this activity caused a decline in fishing as locally dried fish lost its place in the market to the cheaper imports from the North West Atlantic. Galliou & Jones (1991) and Chatain (1993) provide key insights into the sardine fishery which first developed in Douarnennez (west Finistère).

Confolent (2005) and Le Bouëdec (2010) emphasise how the internationalisation of the fish trade, from the seventeenth century, reveal a mobile coastal society as fish were transported from Brittany along the French shoreline to Spain and Portugal. Chatain (1993), Berrou (2000) explain that the arrival of railway lines to Quimper in 1863 generated the expansion of fishing in the Bigouden district (Fig. 1.4); fishing ports were no longer isolated from the markets of Paris and other inland towns. Fichou (2007) is particularly insightful in

his discussion of the development of canning factories that produced significant economic spin-off in Bigouden coastal areas. They produced canned sardines that became a luxury item for the elite especially those in foreign countries.

Local historian Berrou (2000) provides a detailed account of the expansion of the mackerel fishery in Le Guilvinec. He reveals that due to an influx of fishing families from elsewhere during the mackerel season living conditions were unhygienic. This led to the outbreak of many diseases such as cholera taking many victims during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Berrou (2000) also highlighted that Le Guilvinec gradually became a significant mackerel fishing port and the fishery provided important income source for the fishermen. Le Bouëdec (2010) examines the sardine crisis at the turn of the twentieth century that resulted in the closure of the canning factories. As a result, many fishermen and their families were left unemployed. Chatain (1993) and Berrou (2000) underline that Bretons have always experienced migration but that it was during the sardine crisis that significant population movement took place. Fichou (2009) provides detailed accounts of the sardine fishery and subsequent crises experienced by Breton fishermen. He further explains that due to various sardine crises fishermen had to adapt to a new way of life that brought them further out to sea (Fichou, 2009, 2011).

The review of the literature pertaining to the history of fishing in both Brittany and Ireland reveals the importance of the past in the construction of contemporary fishing society and practices. These people remain anchored in their cultural heritage and this permeates their current daily lives.

2.2.3 Industry Policy and its Effects on Contemporary Fishing Communities

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is an integral part of the European Union's fishing industry and frames all aspects of fishing activity, that is, social and economic. It sets the regulatory framework for managing European fishing fleets and for conserving fish stocks (European Commission, 2017). Written into the Treaty of Rome in 1957 the CFP was formally adopted in 1983. The first enlargement of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 stimulated a significant interest in the European fisheries policy (see de Courcy Ireland, 1981; Leigh, 1983; Wise, 1984; 1996; Holden, 1994). While these authors provided detailed accounts of fisheries management, they tended to neglect the social and cultural implications that the CFP would have on fishing communities. De Courcy Ireland (1981) presents a detailed account of the events leading up to and immediately following Ireland's accession to the EEC. This period is pivotal to the understanding of the current state

of the country's fishing industry. Other authors, such as, Leigh (1983), Wise (1984; 1996) and Holden (1994) provide clear and insightful discussions of the CFP and European institutions. These discussions primarily highlight the economic and biological aspects of the industry rather than focusing on the social or cultural dimension. In contrast, American anthropologist James R. McGoodwin (1990) examines the crisis in the world's fishing through a profound re-evaluation of fisheries management policies; he focuses on many aspects of fishing – cultural, economic, political and environmental. Although relying mostly on secondary sources, McGoodwin provides an informative account of how modernisation has impacted on the lives of fishermen due to long absences from home and irregular incomes.

While many sources provide valuable insights into the fishing industry, a certain number of contemporary key texts underpin this research. Over the past two decades some authors such as Symes, Urquhart and Acott have questioned the role of fisheries management and policy (see also Bresnihan, 2016) and have focused on the impact that such policies are having on contemporary fishing communities. Geographer, Symes (1996; 2001; 2005; 2006; 2009; 2010; 2015) has written extensively on fisheries policies and management. The majority of his work, however, involves an assessment of fisheries policies and more specifically the European CFP. He argues that "it is hard to deny that EU fisheries policy has failed communities socially" (Phillipson and Symes, 2015, p. 344). Symes and Phillipson (2009, p. 4) highlight a "lack of awareness among fisheries administrators of the social ethos, context and relationships of the fishing industry and of the fishing community" (see also Briton and Coulthard, 2013). This is a central focus for my research and my study will highlight the difficulties that the communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec are experiencing resulting from the impacts of such policies. Concurrently, rural geographer and social scientist Urquhart and environmental geographer Acott (2012) have explored social and cultural concerns in coastal communities in England and northern France. Their approach to research is primarily qualitative and focuses on the contribution of fishing to the construction of sense of place and identity. In a series of other publications Urquhart and Acott (2013a; 2013b; 2014) have continued to explore social and cultural aspects of fishing communities and such work underlines the importance of qualitative research in making sense of the multifaceted nature of sense of place and identity. While their work is predominantly focused on inshore fishing, their approach provides a research framework that can be utilised by cultural geographers.

Maritime and fishing heritage play an important part in much of Europe's coastal history; the construction of identity is shared among European coastal regions (Duran *et al.*,

2015). Yet social and cultural dimensions are absent from policy-making and the representations from fishermen tend to be ignored within the decision-making process (Urquhart *et al.,* 2011). It is vital to consider the social and cultural way of life of fishing communities in policy initiatives and to include fishermen's expertise in achieving a more effective fisheries management strategy (Yates, 2014). As the CFP is science-led, with its main focus on the conservation of stocks, much conflict stems from the economic and socio-cultural impacts of decisions on fishing communities (Symes & Hoefnagel 2010). Although fishermen and their families have a general understanding of their coastal environment, the protection of their way of life is not articulated in policy initiatives.

According to Chaumette (2008) while the CFP is concerned with the health of fish stocks, it tends to ignore the health and welfare issues of fishermen. The economics of the industry appear to be more important than the well-being of the individual. However, Bresnihan (2013) highlights that efforts are being made to bridge the gap between fishers and policy-makers as fishers are becoming responsible actors within thier industry. Despite the fact that fishermen are often frustrated by the imposition of regulations and quotas, they agree that species stocks need to be managed. Though quotas are necessary, fishermen believe that certain measures are not equitable nor do they achieve the stated objective of conserving fish stocks (Acott & Urquhart, 2012). Moreover, it is vital to differentiate between the various types of fisheries so that appropriate management is adapted (small-scale to large-scale fisheries) (McGoodwin, 1990; Garcia-Florez *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, definitions vary not only throughout the world but also within EU countries (Garcia-Florez *et al.,* 2014) and therefore the lack of conformity between EU member states hinders the development of a common approach to the various fisheries.

The modern fleet has a greater distance capacity and thus time at sea has increased whereas time spent ashore has lessened. This change in work practice is affecting fishermen and their families (Urquhart *et al.,* 2011). These longer periods at sea are no longer acceptable to the young generation (Couliou, 2010). Traditionally, crew members belonged to the same community where family ties were strong. In some communities crew dynamics have changed due to foreign labourers entering the industry and 'familial networks are being replaced by more formal relations' (Couliou, 2010; Urquhart *et al.,* 2011, p. 243). Yet, this is not the only issue facing fishermen and their communities. Fishermen in recent years have been struggling to deal with increasing regulations and restrictions. Largely focused on economic development and conservation of species the CFP has tended to ignore social and cultural aspects of the fisherman's way of life. The lack of homogeneity within the industry

regarding vessel capacity and size has further created issues within the EU; vessels range from factory trawlers, covering vast areas of the ocean, capable of processing and freezing up to 150 tonnes of fish per day, to small boats landing a few boxes of fish a day (O'Domhnaill, 2016). Environmental impacts differ greatly between the various fisheries (O'Domhnaill, 2016). According to Urquhart *et al.* (2011, p. 242) it is important that "more subjective elements of culture, heritage, sense of place and place identity" are explored in order to ensure long-term sustainability of fishing communities.

2.3 The Exploration of Lifeworlds through Cultural Geography

The work of Yi Fu Tuan (1974; 1977) was central to the early conceptualisation of place in Geography in the 1970s. Along with Buttimer (1976; 1993) and Seamon (1979), he was among the first geographers to rethink the notion of place by understanding and explaining the complexities that underpin it as a concept. Buttimer (1993) identified the emotional sense of place attachment and the importance of being attuned to one's own environment. The "complex intertwining of ontology and epistemology" reveals the significance of humanistic geography in shaping people's sensitivities and ways of life (Buttimer, 2006, p. 198).

The ways in which cultural geographers theorise place has evolved over time. Accelerating levels of globalisation was a key factor that brought about different ways of thinking about place (Cresswell, 2006). As people and places become more interdependent and interconnected due to increased mobility and advances in information and communications technologies distance between places appeared to shrink (Allen and Hamnett, 1995; Leyshon, 1995). Consequently, globalisation continues to challenge our traditional notions of place.

2.3.1 Fishing for Place, Belonging and Identity

> Identity, place and belonging are created, constructed, shaped and maintained through engaging in practices that connect individuals to particular landscapes (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009, p. 5).

This research explores the concepts of place, identity and belonging as they apply to two fishing communities located in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. These concepts provide a framework for understanding and interpreting the ways in which people make their lives meaningful. Moreover, Cresswell (2013) identifies the importance of recognising the different meanings that different people attach to them. Coastal residents engage collectively

in local community events, yet, as individuals they experience these events differently. Understanding the complex relationships that people establish with specific places is challenging (Acott and Urquhart, 2012) due to the intricate and myriad meanings that people give to place. While the concepts of place, identity and belonging have been subject to much research over the past decades, studies of these concepts have been limited in relation to fishing communities. In fishing communities places of belonging are symbolised by the boat as a 'liminal' place where fishing activities take place and states of uncertainty and risk are experienced, the home as a place of familial routine and a safe haven and the pier as an 'in-between' place where community members interact and predominantly *fishing* tales are shared. Locals and visitors alike are eager to listen to stories about life at sea. Place is constantly being (re)created by those who give it meaning through their relationships with others and with the physical environment (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001; Cresswell, 2013). Place is a dynamic concept; it *is* a process (Cresswell, 2006). This study examines the construction of identity and a sense of belonging through the interpretation of the everyday practices of people in fishing communities.

2.3.2 Evolving Senses of Place

Conceptualisations of place began to change in the 1990s when geographers such as Gillian Rose (1995) and Doreen Massey (1994; 1995) suggested place as 'fluid'; people were not necessarily *rooted* to one specific place. Cresswell (1996; 2004; 2006; 2011; 2013) also re-examined the concept of place incorporating the increasingly fluid and mobile nature of society. Human geographers recognise that place is more than just a location as it encompasses feelings of attachment and belonging (Tuan, 1974; Buttimer, 1976; Agnew, 1989; Crang, 1998; Cresswell, 2006). Research conducted on people-place relationships is rooted in phenomenology (Tuan, 1974; Buttimer, 1976; Relph, 1976; Seamon, 1979, 2000; Bennett, 2014). Some researchers have argued that globalisation has disrupted or even annihilated the traditional sense of place (Relph, 1976; Entrikin, 1991; Malpas, 2008), however, in an ever-evolving society humans have the potential to adapt to change. Globalisation does not damage 'sense of place' but rather provides us with possibilities for new meanings (Massey, 1994, 1995; McDowell, 1999; Cresswell, 2006).

More recently, Cresswell's (2004; 2006; 2010b; 2011) exploration of the geographies of mobilities has informed his conceptualisations of place and his work is highly relevant to understanding a fisher's sense of place and belonging. The act of movement has increasingly become part of our everyday lives and accordingly individuals adjust to new places more

easily. It has become easier to put down roots and to create new senses of place and belonging. Fishermen have an atypical relationship to place as they spend the majority of their time at sea – a vast and empty space that to the non-seafarer appears to be nowhere in particular. Yet, the sea is an environment where fishermen are in *their* world (Ingold, 2007).

Although increased levels of movement and interconnectivity in our daily lives have impacted our attachment to place (Tuan, 1977; Entrikin, 1991), people nevertheless continue to create and maintain meaningful relationships with place (Cresswell, 2006; Cresswell and Merriman, 2011). As geographers we are aware of the importance of people-place bonds so we do not lose sight of our place in the world (Giuliani, 2003; Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Cresswell (2006, p. 82) maintains that places "are never finished but produced through the reiteration of practices − the repetition of seemingly mundane activities on a daily basis".

2.3.3 Senses of Belonging

Feelings of well-being are sustained through our connections to family, to friends, or to the natural and built environment such as specific landmarks, sounds and smells (Buttimer, 1976; Seamon, 2000). People's attitude towards a place can change, through increased encounters with others and the environment. Such places become meaningful when an individual experiences a sense of belonging to that place. This supports Tuan's (1974) notion of topophilia (love of place). The importance of place in shaping human identity is revealed through an individual's meaningful experience of a specific place (Buttimer, 1993; Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). Belonging is experienced to varying degrees; not everyone shares the same sense of belonging (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). For example, in relation to fishing communities, some fishing families may experience a stronger bond than other members of that same community. A person's senses of belonging may depend upon her/his past lived histories. Tuan (1977) maintains that when a place becomes entirely familiar people feel they belong which in turn provides a framework for identity construction (Rose, 1995; Day, 2006).

Cresswell (1996) initially argued that people belong to a specific place; however, he later re-evaluated this interpretation of belonging due to increased levels of mobility and interconnectivity (Cresswell, 2006). Increasing mobility in a globalising world has challenged people's sense of belonging; constatnly 'on-the-go', some people strive to become attached to specific places for that very reason. (Altman and Low, 1992). We have become so mobile that our sense of place has become difficult to define; as such, we have become 'distracted' or what Casey (2001, p. 684) terms the "scattered self". It appears that humans have been adjusting themselves to new ways of experiencing place as they have become increasingly

mobile. The notion of place remains significant as individuals create and recreate new and different ways of 'being-in-place'. Despite fishermen's mobility and the bond they have with the sea, they equally have an inherent sense of belonging to their community. The built and natural environments play a significant role in our sense of belonging; people identify with their surroundings and give them meanings (Crang, 1998).

2.3.4 Forming Identities

French philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, (cited in Matoré, 1966, p. 6) put it succinctly, "an individual is not distinct from his place; he is that place". The significance of place in shaping people's lives is understandably linked to our quest for meaning and self-identity (Entrikin, 1991; Massey, 1994; Holloway and Hubbard, 2001; Cresswell, 2004). Interest in identity or perhaps more specifically in the 'self' dates back to the 1930s when American philosopher George Mead (1934) explored individual performance and how people relate to and interact with others. He suggested that an individual could maintain multiple memberships across different societal groups. Indeed, in contemporary society, local, regional, and national expressions of identity are encountered by individuals, creating a plurality of identity. For instance, I am an *Irish citizen* from a *fishing community* in *West Cork* and, as a result, I experience a sense of identity attached to all *three* layers. Concurrently, Goffman (1969) and Melucci (1996) followed on from Mead's (1934) notion of the 'self'. This notion infers that identity reflects *who we are* and *how* we construct and perform our everyday realities, therefore, identity can be understood as both relational and social. Nevertheless, the complex nature of identity can also be discerned by who we are *not*. According to Entrikin (1991) difference matters as it provides us with a unique sense of our own personal identity. When exploring identity both the similarities and differences must be considered in order to gain a better understanding of how people (re)construct their own senses of identity.

Identity among fishermen stems not only from belonging to their community but also in relation to their occupation as fishers. Fishing as an occupation could be defined as a way of life that is inherently linked to their everyday practice but also enabled by their daily engagement with the natural environment (Couliou, 2010; Acott and Urquhart, 2012). This way of life that not only defines fishermen's identities as individuals but creates links to the households and wider communities (Brookfield *et al.,* 2005). They relate to other fishermen who understand the dangers and constraints of a life at sea yet acknowledging the sense of freedom distinctive to this way of life. Fishing identity manifests across the boundaries of nation states. The majority of fishermen are defined by their occupation (Urquhart and Acott,

2012). The women in fishing families hold a multitude of identities. This complex mosaic of identities can best be encapsulated in McKinlay and McVittie's (2011, p. 175) term 'hybrid identities'.

Identity is negotiated and renegotiated, created and recreated by the recurrent flows of movement and information between people and places across the world. As individuals we produce our own unique experience of community events, yet, it is through individuals coming together that our engagement and involvement in such events forms a collective identity. Collective identity suggests that people are in some way similar to each other as they are shaped by the same community (Skaptadóttir, 2000; Jenkins, 2008). Furthermore, collective identity can incorporate both proximity and distance as groups do not always share the same location (Wenger, 1998). Fishermen transcend the concept of proximity due to their affiliation with fishers from other fishing communities both national and transnational.

2.3.5 Making Connections: Place, Belonging, and Identity

Crucially, a person's understanding of past local histories creates the basis on which to (re)construct identities that consequently provide senses of belongings. It is when people give meanings to a place that they construct a sense of belonging (Cresswell, 1996). The on-going process never ends and as long as humans continue to create, sustain, and recreate their relationships with place, people will (re)form new ways of belonging. Due to increasing mobility people's ways of life have become transnational and according to key researchers such as Massey (1994); Rose (1995); Cresswell (2004, 2013) and Blunt (2007) identity is no longer static but is fluid and shifting. Identity is defined by who we *are not* as much as by who we *are*.

Enacting fisher's activities is a consequence of the physical environment; a specific coastal place lends itself to the practice of fishing. That said, the importance of 'being-in-the-*fishing* world' must not be undervalued. The performance of fishing activities *is* through *being* a fisher. Their dependence on natural resources for their existence (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001) is the reason for their engagement with their everyday activities and as such creates meaning of what it is to be a fisher (Tuan, 1980; Holloway & Hubbard, 2001).

Shaft and Jackson (2010) examine identity, place and community in a globalising world and argue that local and rural identity is often ignored in policies. Fishing too is challenged by the implications and impacts of externally imposed policies. In her radio documentary, Helena Gallagher (2011) describes how the ban on drift netting in Arranmore Island, County Donegal (Ireland) adversely affected the island population. The fishermen she

interviewed explained how fishing was a way of life for islanders and part of who they were; the ban on salmon fishing signified the loss of a sense of community (Gallagher, 2011). This documentary confirms that the core of what it means to be a fisherman is the practice of going to sea. Marshall and Foster (2002, p. 71) observed through their study of the fishing community in Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick, that work related to fishing dictates social life and shapes 'the very identity of islanders'.

Acott and Urquhart (2012) have made significant contributions to the literature *apropos* notions of place, belonging and identity in fishing communities; they believe that the importance of understanding place, identity and belonging within fishing communities could result in policy-makers taking into consideration the socio-cultural elements of fishing places.

2.4 Hermeneutics as a Theory of Interpretation and how it informs my Research

While hermeneutics provided a strong theoretical framework for this thesis, this research also acknowledges the influence of other theorists especially in the area of non-representational theory, performance geographies and the affective turn in human geography which emphasises the importance of emotions in research. When geographers write about the world, they are trying to make sense of it. They are trying to interpret it and represent it in a manner which is faithful to the subjects of the research. This has been central to my own endeavors in the field. However, the work of Nigel Thrift challenged this fixation with representation, truth and meaning and called for a geography immersed in the performative spaces of the everyday. Thrift (1997, p. 142) contends that non-representational work is concerned with the performative 'presentations', 'showings' and 'manifestations' of everyday life. In highlighting the home, the boat and the pier as significant performative spaces, this research recognises the contribution of non-representational theorists to the field of cultural geography.

Drawing from Heidegger's (1993) notion of 'being', phenomenological approaches to nonrepresentational theory have focused on the affective and expressive nature of the human body-subject. Heidegger's phenomenological dwelling perspective provides a valuable basis to understanding nonrepresentational geographies. Heidegger (1962) proposes that we are always already 'thrown' into the world. Cadman (2009, p. 456) acknowledges that "our immersive practices of being-in-the-world are, in themselves, disclosive and we must avoid turning to subjective or objective reasoning (or representational thought) to account from them". With this in mind, I drew upon Heidegger's (1962) hermeneutical work in order to gain deeper understandings of the world around me and, therefore, leading me to explore the

texts of other hermeneutical theorists such as Gadamer and Ricoeur.

According to Geertz (1983, p. 5) hermeneutics was both a "theory and methodology of interpretation". This section deals with hermeneutics as the theoretical underpinning for this study. The subsequent chapter explores hermeneutics as a methodology for engaging in interpretive work. My research draws upon both the philosophical and methodological components of hermeneutics. Schmidt (2006) highlights that German philosophers Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) were among the earlier protagonists of contemporary hermeneutics to develop a distinctive methodology for the interpretation of texts and everyday life events. Both Schleiermacher and Dilthey would later inspire Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur.

2.4.1 Hermeneutics and its Phenomenological Foundation

As Ricoeur (1969) correctly points out modern hermeneutics has its roots within phenomenology, and therefore, any discussion of hermeneutics must first be placed within the wider context of phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology is the study of human experience and is frequently characterised as a way of seeing the world (Gallagher, 2012). Researchers engaged in phenomenology describe personal experiences from a first-person viewpoint. Recognised as the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) regarded consciousness as a way of understanding the world (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Laverty, 2003; Gallagher, 2012). Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a disciple and colleague of Husserl, went on to develop an interpretive phenomenology, in other words, hermeneutics (Connelly 2010; Sloan and Bowe, 2014). For Heidegger (1962), hermeneutics was a matter of being-in-the-world, and he argued that understanding is situated. He combined Husserl's method of descriptive phenomenological research with aspects of Dilthey's theory of understanding life (Schmidt, 2006). For Dilthey, lived experience was the starting point and focus of human science. Philosophical hermeneutics alludes principally to the theory of knowledge initiated by Heidegger and later developed by Gadamer. Hermeneutics is concerned with the lifeworld or human experience as it is lived (Buttimer, 1976; Tuan, 1976; Laverty, 2003).

2.4.2 An Ontological Perspective

Heidegger (1962) called for an ontological hermeneutics as he perceived understanding as being-in-the-world. To be-in-the-world is to seek to understand and to interpret it. His concept of *Dasein*, 'Being-there' or 'Becoming-in-the-world', offered a new way to study the meaning of self. Heidegger drew upon a concept of lived experience where

hermeneutic understanding is not aimed at *re*-experiencing someone else's experience but rather being aware of one's own possibilities for being in the world (van Manen, 1990). This research focuses on what it means to be a fisher and a member of a fishing family/community. It further questions the meaning of fishing as a way of life. Using personal experience as a starting point illustrates how pre-understandings helped me to relate to the experiences of others while being aware of my own (Heidegger, 1962; Gadamer, 1976). Pre-understandings became a positive part of this research as my own life experiences "are accessible to me in a way that no one else's are" (van Manen, 1990, p. 54).

Following on from Heidegger's notion of fore-understandings, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) pointed out that we cannot separate ourselves from the meaning of a text. Van Manen (1990, p. 180) agrees that "the reader belongs to the text that he/she is reading". Gadamer (1989) argues against a critical objectivist view of knowledge because both subject and object are situated in history, and therefore, there is no objective position. Although researcher and participant are situated within their own historicity, an awareness of positionality on the part of the researcher is important. Rather than having separate subjective and objective positions, it is preferably the blurring of a subjective and objective stance that is inevitable in hermeneutics as the researcher exists in the world. Howell (2013) argues that the worlds of participant and researcher are merged prior to any reflection or construction. Drawing upon Heidegger's work, Ricoeur (1969, p. 7) agreed that: "Understanding is thus no longer a mode of knowledge but a mode of being which exists though understanding". Furthermore, Ricoeur (1969) rejected the distinction between notions of objective and subjective positions as researchers need to question themselves about their own being. Our pre-understanding, or "prejudice" to use Gadamer's (1976) term, remains an important element of hermeneutic theory.

2.4.3 Hermeneutical Geographies

Human geography is concerned with the emotional bond that people create and maintain with specific places. Understanding the sets of relationships is underpinned by the role of hermeneutics as an interpretive process. Gadamer (1989, p. 295) viewed hermeneutics as a way to clarify the very conditions in which the act of understanding takes place: "Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditionary text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which it speaks". Following on from Heidegger and Gadamer, Ricoeur (1976) expands the notion of textuality to include a human

action or situation; the everyday practices carried out in fishing communities are interpreted in the same manner as reading a text. Hermeneutics involves understanding actual people in actual situations (Howell, 2013). Understanding is developed by interacting with others using a dialogical process. Meaning involves making sense of the situation, be it, text or social action, which is negotiated through interaction with others and not simply discovered (Howell, 2013, p. 158; Scott, 2009). In other words meaning is found through a bi-lateral direction of the world shaping human existence and humans shaping the world from their past and present experiences (Laverty, 2003).

There must be an engagement between the interpreter and the text (or event) in order for thorough understanding to take place. To use Gadamer's (1989) term, the 'fusion of horizons' enables the interpreter to see beyond what is near. The importance of questioning the written or verbal text, or the human action of an event, leads the interpreter to discover meanings hidden within; this requires an interaction between the interpreter (researcher) and the text or other (participant). In addition, "hermeneutics teaches us that there are no certainties, one cannot lie secure in the knowledge that one is right" (Crowley, 1993, p. 16). People acquire knowledge differently. Our interpretation of the world around us depends on how we understand and experience it. While we can share the same experiences, the meanings we give to them are personal and unique.

Humanistic geographers, such as Buttimer (1976, 2006) and Tuan (1976), turned towards phenomenology and hermeneutics as a way of challenging positivistic views. This interpretive approach enables researchers to gain profound understandings of people's lifeworlds. It provides a framework to interpret the meanings people give to their everyday lives. The complexity of human nature brings to the fore the importance of affective geographies. Being from a fishing family, my awareness of lived experiences within a fishing household helps me to empathise and understand the uncertainty of such a livelihood. Hermeneutics is not merely a question of understanding the other, that is, the text or the event, but also to be aware of one's self as an interpreting subject. I draw from Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy whereby both the familiar and unfamiliar should be questioned. This critical approach, Ricoeur (1988) suggests, creates space between the researcher and the object of interpretation which encourages "alternative interpretations to evolve and confront each other" (Schuster, 2013, p.202). Ricoeur (1990) points out the importance of interchange between human beings. This 'reciprocity' enables us to share experiences yet acknowledging our own individuality. The shared lives of fishermen aboard the vessel and their dependency on one another illustrates Ricoeur's notion of reciprocity (1990; 2000). Moreover, fishermen

are dependent on family for support and *vice versa* be it moral or financial. This notion connects to what Gadamer (1989) suggests as being dialectical; the back and forth movement of questions and answers between researcher and participant in an attempt to understand and hence interpret the different meanings participants give to their quotidian experiences and practices. Ricoeur (1990) further explores our capacity for discovery; a continual exchange between researcher and participant results in a blurring of 'Other' and 'Same'. Drawing on Heidegger's concept of conscience, Ricoeur (ibid) argues that the 'Same' becomes part of 'Other', and therefore, the 'Other' is no longer foreign. Hermeneutics enables the interpreter to unearth what is hidden. The power of history, that is, of the past, influences our present, therefore, ensures the transmission of knowledge to subsequent generations.

2.4.4 The Relevance of Pre-understandings

A text or a cultural event has multiple meanings as each researcher (interpreter) brings to the field her/his own pre-understandings and the contexts in which interpretation occurs can differ. The notion of "clarify[ing] the obscure by paralleling it to the clear" (Grondin, 1994, p. 34) suggests that the researcher studying one's own culture/community has the necessary insight to understand, and therefore, to interpret participants' lives and the events in which they participate. The lifeworlds of women and men in fishing communities are intricately interwoven; their everyday lived lives are undeniably charged with uncertainty and risk. Hermeneutics enables the researcher to comprehend the meanings of these lives. To reflect is to interpret; crucially the act of reflecting enables the researcher to uncover hidden meanings that lie within the text and/or the cultural event. Personal reflexivity has enabled me to probe participants' feelings; questioning my own prejudices provides a platform for questioning the everyday practices of fishermen and their families and, in turn, gives meaning to these practices.

The researcher's own historicity comes into play as a productive power of prejudice (Linge, 1976, p. xvii) or what Grondin (1994) terms as "inner" conversation as being the real foundation of hermeneutics. According to Gadamer (1976) the task of hermeneutical understanding includes a reflective dimension from the very beginning. Furthermore, he maintains that "understanding is being aware of the fact that it is indeed an act of repeating" Gadamer (1976, p. 45). The everyday routines performed by fishermen and their spouses/partners are indeed acts that are repeated; the repetitiveness of these acts can develop skills overtime (Lefevbre, 2004). Gadamer (1994; quoted in Grondin, p. 116) indicates that "to understand something means to have related it to ourselves in such a way that we discover

in it an answer to our own questions". For Ricoeur (1976, p. 73), interpretation is "understanding applied to the written expressions of life". Initially the researcher makes an attempt to grasp the meaning of the text as a whole. Subsequent attempts lead to a more advanced mode of understanding and thereby satisfy what Ricoeur (1976, p. 73) terms the "concept of appropriation". The act of appropriation provides us with the tools to understand what is foreign to us. The researcher must overcome the spatial and temporal gap between them and the object of interpretation.

Hermeneutics, as a theory of interpretation, acknowledges the existence of a surplus of meaning (Ricoeur, 1976), that is, the lifeworld remains open to several possibilities and provides a philosophical framework for researchers engaged with interpretive work. In addition, it is used to study the relations between people and place and human experiences in social and spatial environments. Hermeneutics includes both verbal (speech) and non verbal (action) communication. The interpreter must take into account the context in which something, that is, a text appears, or an event unfolds, within its own historical epoch. The same words may mean very different things in different epochs (Ormiston and Schrift, 1990). This thesis intends to examine and re-examine the taken-for-granted practices performed by women and men within the fishing communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec and further endeavour to uncover new and perhaps recurring meanings through the use of hermeneutic philosophy and methodology.

2.5 The Lived Lives of Fishing Families

> The complexities of this profession, which has been at the core of coastal fishing communities worldwide for centuries, make the consideration of these communities and the people who engage in fishing very important to any discussion of the practice itself (Wilson, 2014, p. 525).

Fishing as a way of life has long been neglected within research (Marshall, 2001; Acott and Urquhart, 2012; Britton and Coulthard, 2013). Most of the research relating to fishing as a way of life has been mainly concentrated in Canada (Davis, D.L., 1986, 1988; Marshall, 2001; Marshall and Foster, 2002; Keough, 2012), where it has essentially focused on gender with an emphasis on women and the constant (re)negotiation of place and identity. Recent studies in Europe have started to explore fishing communities in Scotland (Nadel-Klein, 1988, 2000, 2003; Munro, 2000; Abrams, 2012) England (Urquhart *et al.*, 2011; Acott and Urquhart, 2012) France (Chaumette, 2008; Grouzien, 2009; Couliou, 2010) and Iceland (Skaptadóttir, 2000; Wilson, 2014). A shared theme in these studies is the emphasis on fishing

as a way of life, fisher identity, fisher families and their integration and separation from the wider community. To date there has been a paucity of literature in relation to Irish fishing communities. Authors such as John de Courcy Ireland (1981), Jim Mac Laughlin (2010) and more recently Sylvester O'Muiri (2013) provide interesting insights for understanding the emergence of fishing communities along the Irish coast. While their approach is very much historical, Bresnihan (2013, 2016), on the other hand, presents material relevant to contemporary fishing communities. Also, O'Domhnaill's (2010) film documentary reveals the stresses and strains bestowed on contemporary fishers in Ireland and further afield. It is also important to cite non-academic authors such as Pat Nolan (2003, 2010) whose writings are very central to this study as they are sources of valuable material about the lives of Irish fishermen and their families. Georges Tanneau (1999, 2003) and Joseph Coic (2012) also provide invaluable information regarding fishing and fishing communities of Pays Bigouden, south Brittany. This research explores the everyday experiences of people in fishing communities along the western seaboard of Europe and by focusing on two case studies attempts to discover how they give meaning to their lives. The bulk of the literature pertaining to fisheries and fishing communities has been introduced in earlier sections; at this point I will focus on research that has been conducted specifically on the role of women in fishing households while also examining research carried out on fishers' everyday practices.

2.5.1 The Fishing Household

Although the role of women in fishing had been largely ignored to a great extent in the past, recent studies, in relation not only to women but also gender have been conducted principally by feminist geographers and anthropologists. While some authors Cole (1991); Abrams (2012); Abreu-Ferreira (2012) and Garnier (2012) discuss the historical role of women within the household and wider community, others including Nadel-Klein and Davis (1988); Davis (2000); Gerrard (2000); Nadel-Klein (2000); Skaptadóttir (2000); Yodanis (2000); Marshall (2001); Mc Kinlay and Mc Vittie (2011) and Wilson (2014) have explored women's changing role in fishing since the mid-twentieth century. In addition to bringing to the fore the gendered aspects within fishing, these authors have examined the negotiation and renegotiation of the woman's place within the fishing household and wider fishing community. Their research informs my study of the fishing communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. This research reveals the importance of women's roles and shows how fisher's spouses/partners in contemporary society (re)negotiate their place and identity.

Zvonkovic *et al.* (2005) produced a significant research paper with regard to families

whose occupations required the men to travel and this includes fishers. These authors discuss how the absences inform the ways in which roles within the home are negotiated. Fishing families continue to be challenged by the rhythm of periods of sustained absence and presence. However, contemporary couples are establishing new patterns to determine their roles within the fishing household (Zvonkovic *et al.*, 2005). Today, as more women work outside the home, fishers become increasingly involved in their roles as husbands/partners and fathers. Aware of their sustained absences from home, many fishers endeavour to 'get involved' in family life. Fishing families are embracing creative ways to adapt to their evolving needs (Gerrard, 2013).

2.5.2 Wider Context of Women in the Twentieth Century

The more recent literature pertaining to women's changing roles in society, in both France and Ireland, illustrates the strong participation of women in political struggle. Whether the discourse is about Irish women's political involvement prior to the establishment of the new Irish Free State in 1922 or women's political activity in the French Resistance during World War Two, women were frequently pushed aside and remained silent until the emergence of the 1970s feminist movement. Diamond (2000) Heverin (2000) and Connolly (2003, 2015) have been key authors in providing rich information about women's struggle in patriarchal societies. Their work illustrates the unequal gender power relations in the domestic sphere that directly affected women's capacity to participate in the public sphere. While much of this research has been carried out by women, the work conducted by male authors such as Ferriter (2005) and Inglis (2015) has also been pivotal.

The creation of various women's organisations in late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Ireland such as the Society of United Irish Women (UIW), *Inighne na hEireann* (Daughters of Ireland), *Cumann na nBan* (The Irishwomen's Council) and Women's Graduate Association imbued women with self-confidence, power and provided education (Heverin, 2000; Connolly, 2003). Although sometimes criticised for its conservative values, the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) provided rural women with the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas (Heverin, 2000). However, fishermen's spouses gained a degree of personal independence far in excess of their contemporaries due to the nature of their spouses' sea-going activities. Many women came to terms with managing family life on their own as absences provided autonomy (Munro, 2000; Davies, S., 2010; Abrams, 2012).

2.5.2.1 Historical Roles of Women in Fishing

Few Irish and Breton studies have mapped out historical accounts of the role of women in fishing communities. Historically, women's roles in fisheries were often part of more generalised literature *vis-à-vis* fishing rather than explaining the distinctiveness of their roles in the fishing community in relation to women's roles in wider society (see Chatain, 1993; Berrou and Chatain, 1994; Berrou, 2000 regarding Breton context and O'Dowd, 1993; Mac Laughlin, 2010; Rees, 2013 regarding Irish context). French geographer, Jean Christophe Fichou (2010) identifies the importance of women workers in the Breton sardine fishery at the turn of the twentieth century. Women provided the majority of the labour force for these canning factories (ibid) and were seen as industrious labourers within both the household and fisheries. Frequently referred to by the derogatory term fishwives, these women were seen as disruptive to publice order by wider society (van den Heuvel, 2012). Yet, despite this depiction, these spouses were hardworking, selling fish to provide for their families. The majority of women often found themselves confined to ancillary activities of gutting, salting, smoking fish as well as net-mending which were recognised as low-status jobs by the wider society (Sheridan, 2009).

When fishermen were at sea, the women were left the responsibility to perform numerous daily tasks. Many women were independently minded and independent financially and kept a firm hold on the household earnings (Davies, S., 2010; Abrams, 2012; Wilson, 2014). Absent fishermen (husbands and partners) needed to be assured that they could rely on their wives/partners ashore to manage the household duties and finances. There was a sea/shore divide; men went to sea and the women remained ashore (Thompson, 1985; Burton, 2012). Fishermen's wives acquired a great deal of independence in comparison to many of their female counterparts; nevertheless, they worked relentlessly both within and outside the family home.

2.5.2.2 Women in Contemporary Roles

Crucially, the current situation among certain fishing families has not altered in the sense that women continue to manage the household. Fishing is regarded as a male-dominated occupation, yet, women continue to play a central part in this industry by taking responsibility for much of the land-based fishing administration and paperwork, for running the home and for involvement in the wider community (Yodanis, 2000; Wilson, 2014). Women from fishing families have always been regarded as those who maintain the household. Nevertheless, it is a role that requires adaptation due to the *impromptu* nature of

this way of life that is 'planned' around the fisherman's livelihood. Although the majority of women form social networks within the community, it proves to be a self-reliant way of life due to the husband's (varying-in-length) absences (Britton, 2012). Moreover, these women represent their household within the wider community as they very often attend local and family events on their own while their husbands are at sea.

It is difficult to generalise the role of women in fishing communities as it not only varies between countries but also within the same region (Porter, 1985; Nadel-Klein and Davis, D.L., 1988). Nonetheless, despite these differences the role of these women is significant in its own right. Seldom mentioned in texts (Munro, 2000), they not only manage the household but play a vital part in sustaining the industry through the administrative support of their husbands'/partners' work.

2.5.3 A Brief Introduction to Fishers Lives at Sea

Historically fishermen have always had a strong relationship with the sea. The sea not only acted as a connection with foreign shores (O'Sullivan and Breen, 2007) but also provided a natural resource from which fishermen could bring sustenance to their families. According to Roberts (2002) commercial fishing is the most dangerous occupation in Europe. Referencing Synge's (1981) play *Riders to the Sea* tragedy has been part of the everyday lives of coastal inhabitants. Synge depicts the sea as an incomprehensible force that takes human life whenever it desires. Yet, both the risk factors that exist in fishing and the constant exposure of fishers at sea to multiple dangers have not deterred them in adopting this way of life.

Traditionally, superstitions were embedded in the sealore of fishers. Spending long periods at sea, these men developed dinstinctive habits and rituals that continue to captivate non-fishing individuals. According to Mac Laughlin (2010) there was a blurring of superstition and religion (see also Durell, 1996). However, in contemporary fishing society, superstitions are being left witin the realm of mytology (Personal communication with fishing families).

Pugholm (2009) points out that fishing as a livelihood is about self-reliance, and fishermen appreciate the autonomy and freedom that the sea brings them. Fishing is not just of economic importance but "ways of life that have important social and cultural as well as economic implications" (Olwig, 2002, p. 86; see also Munro, 2000; Brookfield *et al.,* 2005; Couliou, 2010; Acott and Urquhart, 2012). Fishers do not consider fishing as a job; many would say that they are 'going to sea' or 'going fishing' rather than saying 'going to work'

(Acott and Urquhart, 2012). It is *who* they are as much as what they do.

2.5.3.1 Fishing Mobilities and Movement

> All forms of mobility have a physical reality, they are encoded culturally and socially, and they are experienced through practice (Cresswell, 2010b, p. 20).

While there is a wealth of research in relation to mobilities studies in cultural geography, the mobility character of fisheries is largely absent from the literature. Although Cresswell's (2006, 2010b, 2011, 2014) array of literature on mobilities practice is broad in scope, it is, nonetheless, informative and is a starting point for this study. Creswell (2010b, 2011) brings to the fore the importance of corporal movements to the concept of practice (see also Merriman, 2015). Mobilities studies further encompass the people moving from one place to another (Cresswell, 2010b; Merriman, 2015). The nature of fishing lends itself to a mobilities approach. Gerrard's (2013) article about Norwegian fishing mobilities is key to the ideas in this thesis. She provides a valuable insight into the embodied practices of fishing. She discusses the constant movement between home and pier, boat and sea. Moreover, as fish are mobile, fishing boats travel between fishing grounds. While fishers are at sea not only are they geographically mobile, but also 'in-motion'. Drawing upon Lefevbre's (2004) work on rhythmanalysis, I explore the 'body-subject' and how it moves to the rhythm of the sea (see also Cresswell, 2011; Gerrard, 2013; Merriman, 2015). "Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm" (Lefevbre, 2004, p. 15). Gerrard (2013, p. 315) suggests how the practice of fishing engenders other movements such as "moving feet in order to stay balanced when handling the fishing equipment on deck", however, this is not the focus of her paper. These 'routinised' movements are not consciously planned but happen unconsciously (Seamon, 1979). Fishers' mobilities and movements connect to the notion of freedom that this nomadic-like way of life brings and will be explored in chapter five.

2.5.3.2 The Ambivalence of Freedom

Finding themselves 'in-the-middle-of-nowhere' fishers are disconnected from landed society. Studies that have focused on fishing as a way of life have revealed that freedom combined with the physical challenge is what attracts fishers to do what they do (Acott and Urquhart, 2012; Reed *et al.,* 2013). According to Britton and Coulthard (2013) the notions of freedom that are attached to fishing remains a significant part of fishers' lives at sea. The freedom of being self-employed gives fishers a sense of independence (Pugholm, 2009; Santos, 2015), yet, due to increasing rules and regulations fishers struggle to maintain the

autonomy that has been linked historically to this way of life (Britton and Coulthard, 2013).

The nature of fishing means that fishermen have always been mobile and their lifeworld has evolved differently to those who remained ashore. This act of movement is interpreted by fishermen as freedom. According to Tuan (1977, p. 54) "to be free is to be exposed and vulnerable". This conception of freedom experienced by fishermen is indeed not without consequences; the price of freedom could be tragedy (Norberg-Schulz, 1993) as they *are* so exposed and vulnerable. The notion of vulnerability is not only observed in relation to dangers encountered at sea but also *vis-à-vis* the future of their livelihood due the the constant changes to fishing quotas (Symes, Phillipson and Salmi, 2015). The research conducted by Symes and Phillipson (2009, 2015) has been critical in revealing the challenges that fishers are facing due to the intensification of fisheries policies (see also Acott and Urquhart, 2012). The burden of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) deeply concerns fishermen. Consequently, the concept of freedom that was once synonymous with fishing appears to no longer have any significance. This will also be explored in chapter five.

2.5.4 The Place of Ritual and Religious Practice

Ritual practices differ depending on people's culture; however, they continue to form part of our daily lived experiences (Lukken, 2005). While ritual practices are ever evolving, they remain part of one's heritage. Bourdieu (1992) argued that rituals do not necessarily provide meanings for the outsider, but those who perform rituals have their own logical reasons for doing so. There are an increasing number of geographers researching religious and ritual practices and their importance in everyday lived lives (Holloway, 2003; Brace *et al.*, 2006; Buttimer, 2006; Kong, 2010; Scriven, 2014) and in shaping identity (Kong, 2010; Brace *et al*., 2006). Moreover, according to Holloway and Valins (2002, p. 6) "religious beliefs are central to the construction of identities and the practice of people's lives". According to Maddrell and della Dora (2013) rituals are a part of the Catholic tradition. As my research took place in Ireland and France the vast majority of participants freely identify themselves as Roman Catholics (84.2 per cent in Ireland and 64 per cent in France) even though not all were practicing. My thesis, therefore, explores rituals anchored in this religion (Census 2011; Ifop[9], 2010)[10].

While there are an increasing number of studies into the geographies of religion

9 Institut français d'opinion publique – French Institute of Public Opinion.

10 Statistics for 2010 and 2011 were used as these years were closest to my time conducting fieldwork.

(Lukken, 2005; Maddrell and della Dora, 2013), few authors (Levis, 2002; Mac Laughlin, 2010 and Rees, 2013) have explored the role of religion and ritual specifically in tems of fishing. Their accounts, both sacred and secular, are primarily of historical nature. Secular community events around fishing culture and heritage have been part of wider research into fishing communities (see Gerrard, 2000). However, Caroline Burchill (2008), in her doctoral thesis, presents an ethnographic study of religion in a North East Scottish fishing village. While she discusses the role of Evangelism, her study does not explore any specific connection between fishers' everyday practice and the role of the sacred rituals.

2.5.4.1 The Sacrality of Water

Holloway, (2003, p. 1961) acknowledges Kong's (2001) call to recognise the "'unofficially sacred' and thereby to include the everyday sacred in our spatial accounts of religion instead of predominantly focusing on the 'officially sacred' of temples, churches or shrines". Fishermen's use of the holy water in their daily lives illustrates Holloway's (2003) argument that there is no need to separate acts of the sacred and the secular in our everyday lived practices; the 'extraordinary' can be practiced in the everyday and every place. This notion is particularly embedded in "Celtic theology where the possibility of sacralising the quotidian, such as lighting the fire or setting sail, and encountering the divine in the surrounding natural environment" (Bradley, 2003 cited in Maddrell and della Dora, 2013, p. 1109) and reveals the presence of this ancient heritage in the lives of fishers and their families in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec.

While water can be recognised as harmeful (drowning), it can also be acknowledged as metaphor for life as it is linked to healing, protection, and meaning for life itself (Eiade, 1959; Foley, 2010). The use of holy water reveals the significance of symbols in religious life (Eliade, 1959). Most Irish fishermen have a steadfast faith in the power of holy water; a bottle of holy water was always stowed on board for protection (Lewis, 2002) a practice that continues today. The power of holy water can be further observed during the ceremony of the blessing of the boats or the blessing of the sea (Britton, 2012). Ceremonies differ between places; nonetheless, the religious beliefs embedded in fishing practices are there to protect crew members when at sea. New meanings are given to rituals but "they do not destroy the structure of the symbol" (Eliade, 1959, p. 137).

I will explore the nature of religious and non-religious rituals in the fishing communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. According to Inglis (2007, p. 209) these indicate "a sense of belonging to a cultural tradition and heritage, to a shared collective

memory and way of being in the world". I will reveal how ritual, both sacred and secular, plays an important role in the lives of individual fishers but also in the wider community through ceremonies such as the Fishermen's Mass and the Blessing of the Boats. My final research chapter (chapter six) reveals the centrality of the pier as a location for anchoring ritual and festivals associated with fishing as a way of life, fishing culture and fishing traditions.

2.6 Conclusion

Fishing as a way of life binds together the home, the boat, and the pier. The hermeneutic concept provides the foundation for my understanding of the relationships between the whole and its parts and *vice-versa*. The methodological considerations of hermeneutics facilitate both an interpretive and immersive approach to understanding fishing families and their communities.

In human geography, the hermeneutic methodology was central to the development of humanistic geography that encouraged affective geographies as being significant to the understanding of human existence (Buttimer, 1976; Tuan, 1976; Seamon, 1979). The interpretive philosophy of Gadamer and Ricoeur and the works of cultural geographers, such as, Blunt, Crang and Cresswell helped shape the way in which I interpret the lifeworlds of fishing communities. This thesis is further informed by Heidegger's ontological notion of *Dasein.* In adopting a hermeneutic approach, I draw on its philosophical and methodological strengths as a means through which my being *and* doing in the world facilitates the experiential perspectives that encourage my understanding of relations between people and the world around them. It also provides a coherent framework to enable me to look beyond my own 'horizon of meaning' in order to understand how people in fishing communities interpret their world.

While contemporary women increasingly work outside the home, they continue to support their husband's/partner's fishing practice. The collaborative nature of modern fishing families has tended to replace the matriarchal element once observed within fishing homes. Although modern technology has facilitated communication between boat and home, feelings of uncertainty remain ever-present with fishing families.

Cresswell's (2006, 2010b) work on mobilities shaped the way in which I explore the mobile character of fishing. He argues that mobility can be considered as an entanglement of movement, meanings and practice (Cresswell, 2010b). The encounter of 'real bodies moving' within their surroundings has encouraged me to deepen the 'narrative' of *fishers-in-motion*.

The embodied practice of fishing is experienced through relational ontologies. Interactions amongst crew members and with their environment define who fishers are *and* what they do.

Drawing on the literature of ritual (Eliade, 1957; Lukken, 2005; Foley, 2010), both sacred and secular, I examine how these practices play an important role in fishing families and their communities. The places in which rituals occur provide a basis in the construction of identity through the concepts of identity and belonging. Both identity and belonging situate us within a historical context as the past shapes the present and the future. We live out traditions that have been handed down to us by past generations, and although we may experience them differently, the meanings we give them shape who we are. I link the everyday lives enacted in fishing communities to cultural geographies by highlighting the importance of understanding the meanings people give to their daily routines that are performed in the fishing communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec.

Chapter Three
Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The concurrent use of hermeneutic and ethnographic methodologies enhances the understanding and interpretation of lifeworlds. My study is focused on exploring the everyday lived lives of fishing families and their communities. My main concern is to produce a series of rich materials in order to interpret the daily performances of fishing both ashore and at sea. The immersive approach of ethnographic research is informed by new ways of 'seeing' and 'doing' in cultural geography (Crang and Cook, 2007; Davies and Dwyer, 2007; DeLyser *et al*., 2010). A suite of qualitative methods enables me to consider the embodied practices that encompass fishing as a way of life, and to understand the meanings people give to their everyday lives. I wish to emphasise that this study does not purport to be an empirical analysis of the fishing industry in general.

3.2 Casting my Nets

My familiarity facilitated my immersion in the fishing communities of both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. I endeavoured to select participants who were willing to discuss their lived experiences, and who were sufficiently diverse – active and retired fishers and spouses/partners, young and old, inshore and offshore skippers and crew, local residents and business people – in order to enhance the prospect of rich and unique stories (van Manen, 2007). A pre-understanding of the 'unplanned' way of life of fishing families meant that I was aware of the importance of accommodating and adjusting to their schedules. My willingness as a researcher to regard flexibility as a necessary tool created an important dynamic with participants and facilitated the emergence of narratives and insights that otherwise may not have emerged (Billo and Hiemstra, 2013). My interest and pre-understandings of the topic and the people from both fishing communities encouraged participants to be open to discuss a wide variety of themes (see Herbert, 2010).

3.2.1 Castletownbere

Initially I spent a cumulative period of ten weeks embedded in Castletownbere during the summer of 2013, and thereafter, several weekends. I remained in contact with participants throughout the study in order to strengthen my understandings and interpretations of both my

observations and interview transcripts. Gaining access to the community was facilitated by my own background and family and also family connections with Castletownbere. I approached participants based on their willingness to engage in this research. I believe that participants were open and honest when answering questions and telling life experiences as I could empathise with and understand their way of life. One of the key aspects of the research was to gain acceptance in the community in my role as researcher. Although my time spent conducting fieldwork in Castletownbere was both positive and enriching, in the early stages there was a taken-for-granted attitude towards me as locals highlighted that I should be aware of life in a fishing community because I grew up in a fishing family. However, as my fieldwork progressed, participants became more engaged and shared both their knowledge and experiences. A local journalist wrote an article about my research in the *Southern Star* and *Marine Times* newspapers; however, this only marginally stimulated additional interest in my study. By the time the articles were published, I had already commenced my fieldwork as locals were more receptive to a personal approach.

3.2.2 Le Guilvinec

I made contact with the former French consul to Ireland (based in Cork) and we met in December 2013 prior to commencing fieldwork in Le Guilvinec in June 2014. She graciously offered me a place to stay while conducting my research there. At the time she was in the process of instigating the twinning between Le Guilvinec and Schull (West Cork). As a result, I met the Breton delegation one afternoon during their first visit to Schull in May 2014. Meeting members of the Le Guilvinec community eased my arrival into the fishing community where I conducted fieldwork over a ten-week period.

Having fluent French from residing in France for over ten years (1992-2005) conversations with participants in Le Guilvinec were easy as I was familiar with the nuances of the French language. During the months preceding my journey to Le Guilvinec I made telephone contact with several people engaged in the fishing industry, namely, a fish agent who provided me with contact details of three local fishermen each of whom I contacted, a retired dock worker, and a fisherman's wife who had been involved in a local fisherman's organisation. Again, due to the nature of fishing, fishers were not always available to speak. However, their wives/partners were willing to communicate the information to their husbands/partners. Those whom I managed to speak with confirmed their willingness to contribute in this study. Additionally, some participants were keen to suggest other experienced members of the fishing community who would be willing to participate. I spent

my first fortnight in Le Guilvinec with a couple from the twinning committee and whom I had met in Schull. These initial two weeks were spent visiting potential participants as well as observing the everyday activities within the community and noting my observations and reflections in my field journal. Through my hosts, I met with two local journalists both of whom wrote articles about my research for their respective regional newspapers, *Ouest France* published 7 July 2014 and *Le Télégramme* published 1 July 2013. The articles proved to be beneficial as they generated much interest from potential participants. They also acted as ice-breakers thereby making community members aware of the reason for my presence.

3.3 Hermeneutics: The Art of Interpretation

Hermeneutical theory has its origins in Biblical exegesis, that is, *critical* interpretation of a text especially of scripture. This process of gaining meaning from a text through systematic interpretation was developed when ancient Greek and Hebrew texts were first written (Janhke, 2012). From the eighteenth century, a more contemporary hermeneutics began to develop from the work of Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who argued that the use of a method to gain meaning of historical texts would produce objective knowledge (Janhke, 2012). Dilthey (1883-1911) followed on from Schleiermacher in his quest for an interpretive method in the human sciences that could challenge the positivist approach in the natural sciences. He was concerned with the interpretation of human existence through their actions and gestures as well as written and verbal expressions. Other philosophers such as Heidegger (1889-1976) and Gadamer (1900-2002) were more concerned with the ontological element of interpretation.

Following on from Schleiermacher, Dilthey (cited in Palmer, 1969, p. 120) highlighted the circular movement of hermeneutic understanding: "meaningfulness fundamentally grows out of a relation of part to whole that is grounded in the nature of living experience" that is, to understand the whole, one must understand the parts and *vice-versa* (Howell, 2013). Dilthey wanted to understand the 'other' via immersion into their everyday situations and his reflections on history and hermeneutics influenced thinkers in the twentieth century, especially Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur (Makkreel, 2012). Gadamer (1989) further developed the concept of the hermeneutic circle whereby understanding can only be attained by arriving at a harmony between the individual pieces and the whole. He believed that "the failure to achieve this harmony means that understanding has failed" (Gadamer, 1989, p.291). The sense of purpose that these contemporary philosophers shared with Dilthey was the importance of understanding human existence.

3.3.1 An Interpretive Methodology

Human geography is concerned with relations between people and place. The methodology used in this research underpins the entire study. Critically, qualitative research is interested in meaning (Silverman, 2005; 2010). Buttimer (1993, p. 15) argues that "one central theme in the interpretation of geographic thought and practice is *meaning*". The fundamental rationale for this study is to understand and interpret the meanings that the local people give to their daily routines and to their environment. Moreover, neither people nor the meanings they give to their lifeworlds can be quantified; in this type of study where meaning is significant numbers cannot replace the strength of words with which people use to articulate their everyday lived experiences.

A hermeneutic methodology provides participants with the opportunity to voice their experiences about their relationships to specific places but also to other people. Similarly, it is open to other viewpoints, other ways of seeing the world (Gadamer, 1989) and seeks to understand the different ways in which people give meaning to their everyday lives through the enactment of daily practices. It is by participating in addition to observing that not only helps me to interpret *their* lived lives but also to seek my own meanings and understanding. Although hermeneutics provides humanities and social sciences with methodological rigour (Madison, 1988), hermeneutic research does not seek the 'truth' but rather participants' personal perception of *their* truth in relation to their quotidian experiences (Duncan and Ley, 1993; Sloan and Bowe, 2014). The very notion of interpretation, be it a text or action, is in itself a methodology for understanding.

3.3.2 Being-in-the-world

This concept of 'being' is derived from Heidegger's interpretive phenomenological stance that humans are situated within the world hence the term 'Being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1962). Departing from an ontological framework, I engage with epistemologies that enable my exploration of the world by 'being' *and* 'doing'. It is through my own 'pre-understandings' that I am able to understand 'self' and 'other' and our respective 'being-in-the-fishing-world'. Knowledge is not a given but is something that is arrived at (Crang and Cook, 2007). It is about "*making* sense, not finding it out [original emphasis]" (Crang, 2010a, p. 337).

As both subject and object are situated in history, that is, both researcher and participant, they bring their own experiences into the realm of enquiry. Inspired by Heidegger's ontological philosophy and the concept of *Dasein,* (being there/existence)

Gadamer (1989) posits the view that to be in the world one inevitably must interpret and seek to understand. Interpretation comes from an understanding of the lived practices and the notion of being-in-the-world of both researcher and participants. Immersion is fundamental to this understanding; the concurrent use of an ethnographic and hermeneutic approach has proved to be of value with regards to probing people-place and people-people relationships within the practice of human geography. Building on Heidegger's interpretive philosophy, Gadamer, and Ricoeur, argue for our "embeddedness in the world of language and social relationships" in order to make the world around us more meaningful (Finlay, 2009, p.11). The application of qualitative methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, casual conversation and focus groups were used to understand and interpret the everyday lives of residents in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec.

3.3.2.1 People-Place Relationships

The interpretive perspective of hermeneutics facilitates ongoing encounters with meaning, experience and knowledge. These relational processes provide the basis for understanding people-place interactions. The study of place and people's relationships to specific places is complex and multidimensional. To understand and to interpret the nature of these relationships and their meanings I have drawn upon a hermeneutic perspective. This perspective is applied to the question of understanding and interpreting people-place relationships and how they (re)construct their senses of place within their community. Many humanistic geographers (Tuan, 1974; Relph, 1976; Buttimer, 1993; Cresswell, 2013) have adapted a phenomenological approach as the basis of their research into people-place relationships. According to Relph (1976, p. 1) "to be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places".

Fundamentally, the place of culture is central to understanding the lives of people throughout the world. Moreover, culture is what gives meaning to those lives (Crang, 1998; Crang and Cook, 2007). Culture is located in place; and reciprocally places gain meanings from the culture embedded there. Particular places and geographies are deeply influenced by the way in which people live their daily lives in these places. Although culture is embedded in place, it is nonetheless imbued with complexity. People may share the same culture but experience it differently; the individual and personal meanings yielded are recurrently created, reproduced and defended.

Place informs who we are. It is essential to the (re)construction of identities. As fishing communities are ever-evolving so too is the formation of identities and senses of

belonging. As a researcher, I try to make sense of the meanings that people in these fishing communities give to their everyday practices which can be challenging due to the 'messiness' of the field (Crang, 2010a; Mac Kian, 2010). This 'messiness' in the field unearths new epistemologies within cultural geography and related disciplines from which further research can develop.

3.3.3 Positionality and Reflexivity

Recognising my position within the research becomes a resource for deeper understanding (Crang and Cook, 2007) and, in so doing, I "embrace the chaos and complexities" of my encounters with participants (Aitken, 2010, p. 48). Human geography highlights the significance of the researcher's involvement not only in the field but throughout the process (Crang and Cook, 2007; Sharp, 2009). Moreover, Crang's (2003, p.497) concern is that "too often exhortations to reflexivity and disclosure tend to depend upon and reproduce problematic notions of a stable, tightly defined, unchanging research project conducted by a singular researcher, with one stable essential identity". However, this notion of a stable, singular identity has gradually changed due to researchers increased mobility. Fieldwork could be appreciated as "multiple worlds in motion" that are concerned with doings and feelings (DeLyser *et al.,* 2010, p. 13). It is important to recognise the ways in which personal identity can influence the research (Billo and Hiemstra, 2013). Critical reflection encourages a more balanced production of knowledge as I am open to and become aware of both my own position and that of participants (Dowling *et al.,* 2016). Hermeneutics requires a constant 'back-and-forth' movement between my pre-understandings and my understandings of participants everyday lived experiences (Herbert, 2010). This perspective challenges neutrality as I engaged with situations I observed. In a sense, the history of the researcher is not merely about the passing of time but, as Giddens (1984, p. 219) argues, "... as the capability of human beings to become aware of their own past and to incorporate that awareness as part of what their history is [...]". While it is not a prerequisite for any study, my background and preunderstandings facilitated communication with fishers and their families.

Being from a fishing family means that from the outset of this study my background would have an impact on my research approach. In Castletownbere, I am part of the community and blend in with the crowd. My position as an 'insider' facilitates my participant observation; however, I question the pre-understandings I bring with me. As Billo and Hiemstra (2013, p. 313) point out "the researcher's personal and field life bleed into each other to shape the conduct of research". My concurrent role as researcher and individual

produces a blurring of these positions. Documenting my observations, through the use of detailed field-diaries and journals, was another means of complementing my being-in-the-fishing-world. Attending the Fishermen's Mass and Blessing of the Boats is an inherent part of my life experiences. During the fieldwork I continued to participate in and dedicate myself to these ritual practices. Other times I allowed myself to observe and absorb the scenes of everyday life.

My interactions with others, in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec, were shaped by our shared experiences. These relational processes were essential to the co-construction of knowledge, and through which deeper understandings were unearthed (Crang and Cook 2007). By connecting and engaging with emotional geographies, I can empathise with participants' experiences, while also maintaining the ability for critical reflection (Bondi, 2005). Davies and Dwyer (2007, p. 258) emphasise the importance of being attuned to the "emotional and embodied practices" of my encounters with participants. Anderson (2006, p. 373) argues for a turn toward "a heightened self-reflexivity in ethnographic research" that focuses on emotion. Recognising my own place and pre-knowledge in relation to participants enabled me to understand some of the epistemological characteristics of the lifeworlds of these fishing communities (Butz, 2010).

3.4 Methods and Process

> There is no 'one-size-fits-all' policy for accessing embodied knowledge and emotional response (Lorimer, 2005, p. 86).

I employed a variety of ethnographic research methods, such as, participant observation, semi-structured individual interviews, group interviews and focus groups to gain an understanding of the lifeworlds of women and men from the fishing communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. "Ethnography is about [the] process of articulating differences and sameness, an act of bounding 'here' and 'there' (Watson and Till, 2010, p. 121).

3.4.1 Learning through Practice

In the initial stages of fieldwork the interview process was supported by a list of questions relating to various themes. While I soon became comfortable with the process, I no longer depended upon a specific schedule. I became increasingly aware of what was fundamental to this research study. The content of interviews was principally biographical, including family *milieu*, identity, belief systems, change within the industry and life-stories.

My background allowed me to understand many of the technical terms employed in fishing. Understanding a language remains an essential hermeneutic task. After each interview I recorded my thoughts and observations in my research journal (see van Manen, 1990). These included the context of the interview, the atmosphere as it developed, in addition to key or unusual points that had been discussed and where these ideas fitted into my research.

While studying within one's own setting is considered straightforward since one is familiar with it, nonetheless, there are concerns associated with such research (see Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Community members did not automatically associate me with my position as researcher. There was a taken-for-granted attitude (see Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) that I should know the answers to the questions I posed to participants. While researching one's own community or culture can be challenging, it can also be very rewarding. It is essential to be mindful of what is *really* going on within the myriad of everyday experiences. There is a potential to construct open relationships thereby developing inter-subjective understandings that increased the quality of gathered material. Being a native enabled me to go about my daily research routine; people did not change their behaviour towards me. I recognised sincerity on the part of participants when discussing their life experiences through the tone of their voices, gestures, and body language. These encounters revealed the importance of affective geographies when exploring lifeworlds.

3.4.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation is a long established method for engaging with familiar and unfamiliar lifeworlds in geography (Crang and Cook, 2007; Laurier, 2010). What we see and how we see it is significant to understanding and interpreting what goes on in the field. Participant observation may appear to be an effortless undertaking; however, engaging with the lifeworlds of participants presents particular challenges (Laurier, 2010). Participant observation goes beyond 'surface-watching' as it requires thorough *scrutiny*. As there is no set procedure to follow, it is important to develop appropriate skills and to be disciplined for observation to be effective. Blunt and Dowling (2006) encourage the use of memoirs or personal journals to record experiences of daily life and, as such, a way for the researcher to tell stories. My fieldnotes and a research journal provided a basis for reflexivity and were a significant part of my work as a researcher. My observations were enhanced through methodical journal-keeping. Essentially the notion of one's own pre-understandings and life experiences needs to be recognised as a key element in any field-based study (Moules, 2002). Through interpretive field-writing reflexivity emerges as a distinctive quality of hermeneutics

(McCaffrey *et al*., 2012).

Making fieldnotes and writing a research journal became a practice that I performed daily in a ritualistic manner. However, I did not rigorously maintain such a diary in Castletownbere as I could *be* in this place which recalls Heidegger's (1962) concept of *Dasein*. My memories and past experiences were *embodied* within me; they resurfaced from deep inside me as I relived childhood experiences as an adult. My sense of belonging and attachment to place deepened as I was living *new* experiences through my adult eyes. In contrast, in Le Guilvinec I meticulously maintained a field-diary. They provided a quick and concise way to document activities. The research journal, on the other hand, encouraged me not only to interpret and make sense of my fieldnotes, but also to self-reflect (Crang and Cook, 2007). It was in this notebook that I recorded all my thoughts and ideas that I gathered throughout the day in addition to carefully noting what I observed. These fieldnotes informed my research by refining the themes I wanted to discuss with participants. Every night I reflected on the events of that day and wrote detailed accounts about my encounters. The exercise of keeping fieldnotes and a research journal influenced my *being-in-these-fishing-worlds* recalling Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*. The act of writing enabled me to fully immerse myself in my research and to be able to communicate personal experiences; the practice of putting pen to paper encourages reflexivity. These primary sources acted as tools to enhance my understanding of daily phenomena occurring in fishing communities and as fieldwork unfolded I began to connect notes to theoretical readings. It became increasingly clear that hermeneutics informed my research as both a philosophy and a methodology. The diary, like the pier, symbolised an *in-between* place – in-between me and my research; a place where I could fully engage my reflexivity. This ethnographic immersion, according to Gurney (1997, p. 375), "has as its central endeavour writing about a way of life".

Observation is a "practice of discovery" (Watson and Till, 2010, p. 126). In the initial stages of my fieldwork, I engaged in pure observation. Observation is not merely the act of seeing, "it requires cognisance of the full sensory experience of *being in place* [emphasis added]" (Kearns, 2005, p. 205). It was vital to *place* myself both geographically and socially in order to observe and be part of each community. This presented a way in which to build a personal relationship with residents in Le Guilvinec, and a new way to renegotiate my relationship with Castletownbere. Complete observation encouraged me to situate my own sense of identity and belonging. Although a native of Castletownbere, I had not lived there permanently in over twenty years and, as a consequence, conducting research made me re-question *my* sense of identity and belonging at a much deeper level than previously. It was

essential to discard any taken-for-granted attitudes. Nevertheless, a taken-for-granted attitude must not be confused with my pre-understandings.

In addition to these writing tools, photography is another established method in geography. Photographs are useful to record and recall significant events where note taking is difficult (Crang and Cook, 2007). Photographs capture people and places for *who* they are and *what* they are and it is important not to 'stage' these events (Crang, 2010b). Principally, my fieldwork, in both sites, took place during the summer period. I was able to participate in and observe the various events and rituals during the festival season. Photographs revealed a sense of togetherness and a significant means of perceiving my own feelings of proximity during interpretation (Lorimer, 2005; Crang and Cook, 2007).

3.4.2.1 Castletownbere

Fieldwork 'at home' can raise specific issues in relation to being overly familiar with the prevailing way of life (Burchill, 2008). According to Laurier (2010, p. 118) however, "the best participant observation is generally done by those who have been involved in and tried to do and/or [are] part of the things they are observing". As such, conducting research within one's own community/culture provides the researcher with the pre-understandings to effectively interpret what is being observed. It is not so much a matter of providing the meanings that participants give to their everyday realities, but, how I, as a researcher, interpret those meanings. Our pre-understandings assist us in achieving a better understanding of others and deepen our own 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 1989).

3.4.2.2 Le Guilvinec

My dual role as researcher *and* as an individual differed slightly in Le Guilvinec where I was initially a complete stranger. I was neither an insider *nor* an outsider but "someone in-between" (Kearns 2005, p. 192) This 'in-between' place recalls the *betweenness* of the pier where fishers are neither at sea nor at home, yet, a place where they are at ease. I was comfortable with this 'someone in-between' place. Since my knowledge of and background in fishing became obvious, my role as both researcher and individual became indistinct. As my journey progressed in time I began to 'feel at home' (see Cloke *et al*., 2012). This notion of 'homeliness' came into play by the fact of it being a fishing community. I was made welcome by diverse groups within the community, be they part of the fishing network, part of the town twinning committee, from the maritime school, or local business people. As I adapted to my new surroundings, the conception of place took on new meanings.

Watching activities unfold through my immersion into the lifeworlds of both fishing communities encouraged reflexivity (Crang and Cook, 2007). In other words, I treated action as text; my understanding of action "in the sense of 'knowing how' as opposed to 'knowing that'" (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 203). My intuitive understanding of fishing households and fishing communities enhanced my interpretation of everyday practices and regular events and *vice-versa*. The hermeneutical circle facilitated a deeper understanding of what it means to be part of a fishing household and wider fishing community. It was important to enter into the circle in order to gain insightful understandings (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; see also van Manan, 1990).

3.4.3 Interviews and Conversations

The interview is a commonly used qualitative approach by human geographers (McDowell, 2010). They act as social encounters (McDowell, 2010; Watson and Till, 2010). In contrast to the unstructured interview process, the managed system of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to steer the conversation through the use of a thematic approach yet open enough to encourage participants to tell personal stories in their own words. The interview is as much led by the participant as it is by the researcher (Laverty, 2003) and therefore, knowledge is co-constructed (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Geertz (1973) described this 'openness' as reaching out to what participants really experienced from the inside out. The actual practice of interviewing in research can be linked to philosophical underpinnings in relation to dialogue (McCaffrey *et al.*, 2012, p. 218). In his discussion of dialogue as lived dialectic, Gadamer (1989, p. 367) dealt with this sense of practice:

> As the art of asking questions, dialectic proves its value because only the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning, which involves being able to preserve his orientation towards openness. The art of questioning is the art of questioning ever further – i.e., the art of thinking. It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue.

As a researcher, I had the responsibility to respect the integrity of the participant(s) during the course of the 'conversation', and therefore, had regard for the other person's opinions while remaining open to the possibilities that emerged in dialogue (Binding & Tapp, 2008). According to McDowell (2010, p. 158) "interviewing is an interpretive methodology" hence the vital role of the hermeneutic endeavour. Not only was each interview transcript significant to understanding and interpreting meaning but also the body language and silences observed during these interviews. Hermeneutics extends beyond the concept of text to

encompass discourse and action (Ricoeur, 1981; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

This method enabled me to gather in-depth information and life experiences about fishermen's past and present experiences. Time is of the essence for fishermen; due to the unconventional character of their livelihood it would have been near-impossible to arrange and conduct focus groups or group interviews in a timely manner. All twenty-six individual interviews were audio-recorded as this encouraged an uninterrupted flow of conversation and allowed for eye contact between both parties. Furthermore, it allowed me, the hermeneutic researcher, to interpret non-verbal gestures, for instance, facial expressions. Additionally, Lefevbre (2004) highlights the importance of 'listening to silences' because meaning is everywhere. Prior to each interview I discussed the general aims and outline of the research project and provided an information sheet to each participant (2010). Nobody objected to signing the informed consent nor to being recorded which enabled *conversation* to remain fluid.

With a few exceptions, the majority of interviews took place in the participants' homes. Being invited into their homes meant a sense of trust existed towards me not only as a researcher but also as an individual. By seeing their home I could empathise and understand more deeply their way of life. The private space of the home provided an open and relaxed atmosphere in which both researcher and participant were able to discuss personal matters. The home, according to van Manen (1990, p. 102) is where we experience "the fundamental sense of our being" and as a result, where "we can *be* what *we are* [original emphasis]". Moreover, this *place* provides an ideal *milieu* to discuss the displayed artefacts (photographs, marine lanterns and boat models) that reinforce notions of identity and belonging in the fishing world. Participants ensured a quiet setting with little or no distractions for interviews to run smoothly. The idea of capturing life experiences exactly from those who help us to understand the everyday taken-for-granted routines (van Manen, 1990) is what enriches research studies such as this.

Participants were selected based on their willingness to participate. They were recruited through a variety of methods including personal contacts, snowballing, newspaper articles, and by approaching people on the streets. Interviews are complex and can be a contested social encounter; however, there was a sense of ease due to similar backgrounds (see McDowell, 2010). While the majority of fishermen agreed to participate in this study, there was a reluctance of some fishers, notably Spanish in Castletownbere, to be interviewed. However, I want to highlight that according to Castletownbere fish co-operative manager (Southern Star, 2015) and many locals, fishers and non-fishers, the Spanish community living

in Castletownbere have come to work in the local fishing industry in order to build a better life for themselves in Ireland.

I worked hard at securing agreements due to the spatial and temporal uncertainty that revolves around fishermen's lives. Miller and Brewer (2003, p. 166) described the interview process as "a conversation with a purpose". While keeping this description in mind, I aimed to ensure that a relaxed and fluid exchange took place by sharing with them my own life experiences. There was an innate quality to these *intersubjective* conversations wherein the exchange engendered co-constructed knowledge (see Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; McDowell, 2010). This approach encouraged participants to openly discuss their experiences. Although I prepared a set of core questions that were linked to specific themes, nevertheless, I encouraged participants to tell stories they felt were important to *them*. The hermeneutic researcher does not look for 'truth' but for the participants' perceptions of 'their truth' – *their* own experiences as *they* perceive them (Sloan and Bowe, 2014, p. 1300; see also van Manen, 1990; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews lasted between fifteen and thirty minutes for the shorter types and between thirty minutes and one hour and forty minutes for the in-depth types. While the majority of my fieldwork was conducted during the summers of 2013 and 2014, I made further contact with a five participants in 2017 to deepen the quality of my interpretations and insights.

Location	Date	Active fishers interviewed	Retired fishers interviewed	Total interviewed	Type
Castletownbere	June to September 2013	Nine	Four	Thirteen	nine in-depth four shorter (at sea)
Le Guilvinec	June to September 2014	Eight	Five	Thirteen	All in-depth
Total Interviews		**Seventeen**	**Nine**	**Twenty-Six**	

Table 3.1 Schedule of fieldwork interviews.

3.4.3.1 Castletownbere

Interviews were conducted with both active and retired fishermen. Altogether I interviewed thirteen fishermen, nine active − four of whom I interviewed at sea − and four retired (Table 3.1). Of the active fishermen the age ranged between late thirties and early sixties and that of retired fishermen was between early-seventies and early-eighties. Half of them were contacted by phone while the other half was approached in the street. The importance of 'digging deep' is fundamental to my research and consequently it is essential to engage with participants who have experienced events and have stories to tell in relation to

fishing (see Creswell, 2007). Although some of the older generation of fishermen maintained that there was nothing else to do apart from fishing at the time, many pointed out that they do not regret their life at sea. Additionally, the majority of those interviewed confirmed that passion is required to withstand the hardships and struggles of this way of life. Besides my background, my communication skills eased the atmosphere as I instantly showed interest in various fishing artefacts, and consequently, the fishermen openly shared their life-stories. While the dynamics of each interview differed, these men discussed the everyday lived lives with sincerity. The few silences that did occur were more a reflection of a 'deep engagement' rather than disinterest as the fishermen grappled with finding a vocabulary to express their inner-most feelings (see McDowell, 2010).

3.4.3.2 Le Guilvinec

A staff member from the auction hall introduced me to several fishermen whereupon I briefly explained my research intentions. While many agreed to leave their contact details with the staff member, others declined mostly due to lack of time. This technique did not prove to be effective as ultimately only one fisherman responded to this approach. A couple of retired fishermen contacted me following newspaper articles that appeared in *Le Telegramme* and *Ouest France* explaining my research project. Nonetheless, the majority of participants were recruited by means of personal contact and through snowballing. In total I interviewed thirteen fishermen, eight active and five retired (Table. 3.1). Regarding the active fishermen the ages ranged from early-twenties to early-fifties and of those retired from mid-fifties to early-eighties. Interviews were performed on a one-to-one basis in participants' homes, however, a group of five retired fishermen who were actively involved with the local lifeboat station offered a group interview session. In addition, a member of staff from the maritime vocational school organised a group interview with six final year students. The individual interviews allowed me to concentrate on one person's perspective and stories. They ensured a quiet setting without any interruptions from other family members. While I was a complete stranger to these fishermen, they invited me into their homes and openly discussed their lived experiences.

3.4.4 Focus Groups

"Focus groups are an active practice of *doing* research and *being* in the research [original emphasis]" (Bosco and Herman, 2010, p. 195). In-depth groups facilitate reciprocities between researcher and participants and also allow for supportive and reflexive

encounters amongst participants (Bosco and Herman, 2010). Multilateral interactions are a key feature of this research method as they generate dynamic conversations (Bosco and Herman, 2010). It is an efficient tool to encourage the construction of collective knowledge and to explore the multiple meanings that participants attribute to their everyday realities (Cameron, 2005). Furthermore, this method has the "potential to bring more transparency" to the production of knowledge (Bosco and Herman, 2010).

As focus groups are more socially oriented, they were a productive method for interviewing women from fishing families and a useful way to create networks (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). I wanted to provide a space for these women to 'chat' candidly about their experiences. Due to the uncertain nature of fishing, individual interviews were more suited to fishermen. Also, interviewing women and men separately encouraged open conversation and exchanges without them having to worry about any anxiety they could cause one another. Prior to conducting the focus groups (Table 3.2), I identified specific themes and prepared a list of questions relative to fishing households. Having received a similar upbringing as a number of focus group participants I reflected on my own background and recognised my own positionality, yet, I remained open to the experiences of others. Focus groups consist of a number of individual participants, yet, a group is recognised as a whole. I began to make sense of what was being said by understanding and interpreting what each individual participant revealed and then by making connections between the individual parts and the whole group and *vice-versa*. My pre-understandings as a member of a fishing family facilitated the interpretation of the everyday practices that these women experience as they openly discussed their lived lives. I became increasingly aware of the extent to which hermeneutics was my guiding methodology. This research method is appropriate for exploring complex practices and for the construction of collective meaning (Cameron, 2005; Bosco and Herman, 2010). However, the time-factor and availability of all participants must be considered when organising focus groups and early coordination is vital.

Location	Date	No. of women	Duration
Castletownbere	Focus Group 1: July 8, 2013	Six: Two spouses; three daughters; one spouse & daughter	One hour twenty minutes
	Focus Group 2: August 28, 2013	Five: Two spouses; one daughter; two spouses & daughters	Forty-five minutes
Le Guilvinec	Focus Group 1: July 19, 2014	Five: Three spouse; two spouses & daughters	One hour fifteen minutes
	Focus Group 2: August 30, 2014	Two: Both spouses	One hour
Total	**Four Focus Groups**	**Eighteen women**	

Table 3.2 Schedule of focus groups

I decided that focus groups would concentrate specifically on the role of women within fishing households. It was intended that each focus group would be made up of six women including spouses and daughters of fishermen. My intention was to create a place where they could *truly* be 'themselves' and readily share *their* personal experiences. I wanted to give *these* women a voice, *their* own voice that would merge with my own personal narrative. These focus groups provided insights that I could carry forward (Bosco and Herman, 2010; Fernando and Thomas, 2010). Listening to the women discuss their daily lives brought the significance of the fishermen's life at sea to the fore and their reliance on the women's role within the home (see Bosco and Herman, 2010).

Prior to commencing every session I provided an information sheet outlining the purpose of the focus group and each participant then duly signed the informed consent form thus confirming their willingness to participate. Sessions were audio-recorded; eliminating the process of note-taking maintained an 'everyday' conversation flow. As a researcher, I needed to have the necessary skills to moderate the group session, and to have the ability to sustain conversation between all participants (Burrell, 2015). In order to diminish the possible issue of 'talkative' versus 'reserved' participants, I needed to be aware of the group dynamics (see Marshall and Rossman, 2011). I encouraged these women to share their experiences as lived within a fishing household and fishing community. Discussions comprised three principal themes which included family, fishing and community. In addition to the total of

four focus groups carried out in both communities, I conducted a group interview with members of *Mná na Mara* (The Women of the Sea) in Castletownbere. This organisation is the voice of both women and men in fishing families and their communities.

3.4.4.1 Castletownbere

Upon arrival in Castletownbere, I placed a notice in a health-food store outlining my research project and my request for female participants willing to partake in focus groups. This approach proved successful. I chose this location as I was aware of the potential to attract women of varying age groups. Moreover, the store manager and assistant brought my study to the attention of potential participants. The post-office does not tend to attract the younger generation and while supermarkets attract individuals of all age brackets, people are not inclined to delay reading notices. Moreover, as I shopped regularly in the supermarket I was able to make direct contact with other women whom I know personally. Having a familial connection with the proprietor of the health-food store I was provided with a room (a neutral setting) for free to conduct the focus groups with access to tea and coffee facilities which acted as an ice-breaker.

After several weeks of planning and organisation the first focus group took place on 8 July 2013 and lasted one hour and twenty minutes. It comprised six women of ages that ranged from late-twenties to early-seventies. These women were fishermen's daughters, spouses or both (Table 3.2). All six participants were acquainted with each other to varying degrees (see Cameron, 2005) and this created an interesting flow of invaluable conversation. Although there were altering levels of involvement, there was, nevertheless, a noteworthy exchange between the different generations.

The second focus group took place on 28 August 2013 and lasted forty-five minutes. It also comprised six women whose ages ranged from mid-twenties to early-forties (Table 3.2). The productive outcome of the first focus group revealed the merits of such an approach. The women felt confident in the all-female environment I had established. They appreciated the themes and questions discussed in this relatively open format. Discussions again revolved around the principal themes referred to previously. Although there was a smaller age gap between these participants, the group dynamic was excellent and there was an exceptional exchange between all participants.

In addition to the main themes, namely, sense of place and identity, and their 'single parent-like' role – these women managed home and family while spouses/partners are at sea – other topics included risk and uncertainty of this way of life and religious beliefs. This faith is

often part of the lives of fishing families due to the uncertain nature of fishing. While the atmosphere was relaxed and my role as moderator receded and became less obvious, the women conversed with each other, and as such, 'forget about' my role as researcher as they brought me into the 'conversation'.

3.4.4.1.1 Mná na Mara

Three members of *Mná na Mara* accepted an invitation to be interviewed on 9 September 2013. This gave me the opportunity to understand the importance of this organisation especially at its inception in the early-1960s when communication technology was not as widespread. *Mná na Mara* were part of a European-wide initiative intended to create social exchange between fishermen's spouses across the European Community encouraging them to share their personal experiences. An Irish branch was set-up in Castletownbere in 1965. The women kept each other informed about the whereabouts of local fishing vessels particularly during periods of bad weather. *Mná na Mara* was, and continues to be, actively involved in organising events such as the Fishermen's Mass every August. It is their way to pay tribute, along with the congregation, to the men, past and present, whose activities at sea are synonymous with uncertainty and risk.

3.4.4.2 Le Guilvinec

The organisation of focus groups in Castletownbere proved to be easier than in Le Guilvinec. Through direct contact with fishermen in Le Guilvinec I asked whether their wives/partners would be interested in participating in my focus groups; some of whom were willing while others were reticent. The majority of them maintained that their spouses were not remotely interested in fishing and consequently would not agree to be interviewed. It was difficult to decipher whether this was something these men decided for their wives. However, over time I recognised that most women I spoke to did not appreciate the value of partaking in my study either underestimating the significance of their role or failing to acknowledge the importance of fishing within the community. Despite the numerous fishermen with whom I made contact, only seven women accepted the invitation to be part of my study, of these, only five actually attended the first focus group. Participants form the second focus group were contacted by means of snowballing. Neither newspaper articles proved satisfactory for engaging female participants. The Deputy Mayor kindly provided a room in the town hall on Saturday mornings for these focus group sessions.

The first focus group in Le Guilvinec took place on 19 July 2014 and lasted one hour

and a quarter (Table 3.2). Not all of the five women who attended were known to each other. There were two distinct age groups - three women were in the mid-thirties to mid-forties bracket and the two other women were in their early-seventies and early-eighties. Both of these older women were widowed. At the outset the atmosphere was somewhat strained as the women were hesitant to spontaneously share their personal experiences. One younger woman was more reserved than the others. I 'brought' her into the conversation by directing my questions to her to encourage her participation which after a while succeeded. I also reiterated the importance of exchange by highlighting that there was no correct answer (see Cameron, 2005). For me, her hesitation was that she did not recognise the significance of her taken-for-granted world. Both of the older women spoke openly about their life-experiences and were interested in understanding the changes in the role of women in fishing households. One of the younger women – daughter and spouse − spoke openly about her youth and how her background helped her to accept the uncertainties attached to fishing. Midway into the session the group dynamic became more relaxed as the women became more receptive to sharing their experiences. This focus group enabled the women to explore the different viewpoints in relation to their role as matriarch and also (re)consider their own beliefs (Cameron, 2005).

A second focus group took place on 30 August 2014. Four women confirmed their willingness to participate, however, only two participants attended and were willing to proceed (Table 3.2). Whilst the two women were barely acquainted, the atmosphere was relaxed as the conversation was spontaneous. One of the women was in her early-forties while the other was older and her spouse was retired from fishing. Both women engaged with the themes effortlessly and exchanged interesting anecdotes concerning their daily lives. Their vibrant personalities engendered dynamic conversation. Short breaks in the conversation allowed me to introduce new topics accordingly. Focus groups generally require between four and ten participants for their viability. Nonetheless, despite having only two participants the session was no less rich and meaningful (see Schlosser, 2015).

3.4.5 A Suite of Techniques

This set of qualitative approaches complemented the hermeneutic endeavour. Participant observation provided me with a *real sense* of community life. The focus groups and interviews enabled me to probe deeper into the meanings that these women and men gave to their quotidian lives, and in doing so, presented me with the individual parts of the hermeneutical circle; the fishing community acted as the whole. In Castletownbere I

conducted the focus groups prior to commencing the individual interviews as the focus groups allowed me to get an overview of fishing as a way of life in addition to probing the fishing household. In Le Guilvinec the opportunities to interview fishermen arose quickly as I met many fishermen at auction or on the pier. The most significant aspect of the fieldwork was the shared sense of everyday practices whereby each individual strives to find meaning through the power of communication with others.

3.4.6 From Observation to Spoken Word to Written Texts

Writing is like a journey of discovery; it anchors oral traditions and consequently archives oral histories making them available for subsequent generations (see Ricoeur, 1981; DeLyser, 2010). "Writing is not an unproblematic reproduction of simple truths" (Mansvelt and Berg, 2005, p. 248); the decision to conduct interviews and focus groups was not to produce exact truth, rather, it represented the search for inter-subjective meanings. What is important to me is my understanding and interpretation of events and experiences and how participants render these 'true' in their own terms (Crang and Cook, 2007). Interviews and focus groups are a form of communication as there is an exchange between an interlocutor and a listener. The conversations held during this study were transcribed and, in so doing, became texts which were interpreted through the hermeneutic circle (Ricoeur, 1981).

This research study evolved from an interest in my own cultural background. It has been developed and shaped through establishing and developing networks with people involved in the fishing industry. My linguistic abilities (in relation to both French language and fishing terminology) provided me with the opportunity to explore fishing communities in Ireland and France (see Crang and Cook, 2007). My understanding of the subtleties of the French language gave me the competence to transcribe and translate interviews into English with ease (Crang and Cook, 2007). Language is linked to local realities and to changing identities (Crang and Cook, 2007).

The hermeneutic process focuses on the interpretation of a range of texts including, transcriptions of interviews, personal fieldnotes and diaries. It also focuses on cultural events as texts. Translations are rarely straightforward; language carries with it feelings and values that the researcher endeavours to interpret. However, as the researcher, I bring my own set of assumptions, feelings and values to the translation (Crang and Cook, 2007). My situatedness implies engagement but by no means diminishes the outcome of my research. I placed myself within my research in an effort to create new knowledge as I untangled the threads of my fieldwork (see Blunt, 2003). Haraway's (1988) epistemology reminds us that all knowledge

stems from a particular blending of researcher and place (see also Mansvelt and Berg, 2005; Jensen and Glasmeier, 2010). This notion requires a form of writing practice that accepts a personal narrative. My intention lies in giving participants a voice; yet, I do not exclude myself from my own research. My interest is situated within the understanding and interpretation of others but also of my*self*. I am not only making sense of the interview transcripts as they appear to me but also by *placing* myself within these transcripts. In other words, I explore my own pre-understandings which assist me in the hermeneutic practice of interpretation.

3.5 Ethics

Prior to commencing fieldwork I applied to the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) for ethical approval which was granted. The process encouraged me to think about ethical concerns that could arise not only during the interviews or *via* observation but also throughout my fieldwork. Not all individuals I approached were willing to participate in this study and rather than pressurise them I respected their choice (Watson and Till, 2010). Ethical issues that can surround the interview process promoted a briefing and debriefing of participants informing them about the purpose and the procedures of my research. All participants agreed to and accepted the confidential aspect of the research.

Interviewing does not merely involve ethical issues and the signing of an informed consent but also my *inherent integrity* as a researcher. Personal reasons for ethical research differ between researchers ranging from reputation within their field to respect for participants and for themselves. The ethics of the research involves formal guidelines whereas the moral behaviour of the researcher lies deeply embedded within one's character.

Prior to interviewing I considered the possible consequences for the participants particularly discussions surrounding tragedies at sea. Moreover, I was aware of the apprehension that certain participants could experience during the research process especially when focus groups were employed. However, according to Kneale (2001, cited in Bosco and Herman, 2010, p. 194) "in-depth [focus] groups have the potential to shift the balance of power away from the researcher towards the participants". There was a sense of support between participants as listening to each other's life experiences could enhance a participant's self-understanding, and question one's personal life. Focus groups took place in a neutral setting where everybody was on an equal footing. Moreover, I endeavoured to participate through the telling of my own stories. This exchange of stories and experiences blurred this notion of power relations (McDowell, 2010), and accordingly, my integrity, as both a

researcher and an individual, was maintained throughout the entire research process. The majority of individual interviews took place in participants' homes which provided a safe haven for them. The home was where they felt *in*-place *per se* and accordingly there was a shift in relations of power that created a sense of harmony between both parties. Awareness of my self-in-the-field reveals respect and responsibility to those with whom I worked.

Ethical issues can also arise when transcribing interviews. These transcriptions provided a reflective space in which to interpret the participants' world. I recorded silences, pauses, facial expressions, bodily gestures and emotions. There are concerns about whether the interpretation of statements and stories should be discussed with participants, nevertheless, the hermeneutic project promotes personal interpretation of transcribed interviews. Hermeneutics is concerned with interpretation rather than description of participants' perspectives of their lifeworlds. I clarified any uncertainties and ambiguities that had arisen either at the end of the interviews or following transcriptions, but also over the course of writing process. I am deeply conscious of how I interpret and portray others.

3.6 Conclusion

The concepts that have been explored in this study are significant to the expansion of ontologies within human geography. Immersion in the fishing communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec afforded me the opportunity to observe the 'messiness' to which many cultural geographers allude to (see Davies and Dwyer, 2007; Crang, 2010a). My familial background helped me to further appreciate what was often taken for granted – the *banal* performances enacted in fishing communities. "The hermeneutical phenomenon encompasses both the world that we strive to understand and the familiar world that we already understand" (Linge, 1976, p.xii). My unique perspective of fishing communities makes a distinct contribution to both *Anglophone* and *Francophone* cultural geographies. Shifting paradigms in our globalising world must continue to guide researcher and research processes to adapt to new situations but never to lose sight of the meanings people give to their mundane practices. As cultural geographers we endeavour to create meaning through our understanding of the everyday lived lives of people all over the world. This understanding of the world is produced as we write, however, we must never lose sight of *why* and *how* we interpret the taken-for-granted lives of men and women. Interpretation is a constant and "an infinite process" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 298). There is no final truth.

After a year of preparation within an academic environment it is in the field where epistemologies begin to unfold. It is in the *doing* that I began to appreciate the theory; theory

begins to make sense in practice (see Burrell, 2015). My personal experience made me acutely aware of the complexity and the ever-changing aspect of the field. The relationship between theory, methodology, and methods became more apparent when the research study transitioned from desk to field. The way in which I initially set out to conduct the research project shifted as different events unfolded in the field. Castletownbere acted as a pilot study, so to speak, prior to my fieldwork in Le Guilvinec. Being only a car journey away issues encountered in Castletownbere could be easily remedied; it was essential to 'get it right' in Le Guilvinec.

In-depth interviews become "a construction site of knowledge" through discussing themes of mutual interest (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 142) where the participant and researcher collaborate through an interactive exchange (see McDowell, 2010). Although some interviews lasted only thirty minutes, they were nonetheless rich and significant. I was interested in the quality of the material and the stories and life experiences that participants recounted. For many participants, it was important that I was familiar with fishing as a way of life in the context of building up a rapport and discussing common experiences (see Dowling 2016). My own family background and familiarity with the language and practices of fishing was also beneficial in this regard, and therefore, through meaningful conversations a notion of shared experience was achieved.


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Chapter Four
The Home

4.1 Introduction: 'Being-in-the-same-Boat'

The home is a focal point for fishing families and helps maintain relationships on a steady course in times of uncertainty and absence. In both Le Guilvinec and Castletownbere the shore represents many things to fishermen[11] but this research indicates that in both communities foremost among them are the notions of home and family. Home and family are complex cultural constructions, but for fishers, given the nature of the work that they do, they are in some ways even more complex. The complexity of home and family life is driven by the unique nature of fishers' lives. This chapter explores how the home and family life of fishermen, in both fishing ports, is influenced and shaped by their occupations. It examines familial relationships, tensions, stresses and joys.

These tensions and stresses are often the result of two phenomena that are pervasive in the lives of fishers and their families: absence and uncertainty. Prolonged periods of absence while at sea puts pressure on family relationships. But this chapter will illustrate how these absences have become normalised and incorporated into the daily life of the family and the home (Meier, Frers and Sigvardsdotter, 2013). With regard to precarity, while fishermen have a [self-] employed status, these families live with a feeling of insecurity as weather conditions, market prices and quotas are variables that are *intricately* incorporated into daily life. As Bresnihan (2013, p. 7) highlights "this precarious existence is embodied everyday by the demands of the sea, ensuring that decisions are rarely made on the basis of clear, pre-determined strategies or plans". Uncertainty and absence can hinder the smooth-running of the fishing household and, in turn, strain familial relations between its members. However, my research will show that the material culture of the home itself can provide insights into how fishermen's families develop and adopt coping mechanisms and strategies as absent individuals are given presence by those who miss them through "relations, processes, and via objects" (Meyer, 2012, p. 103). People learn to overcome, or least come to terms with, uncertainty, isolation and absence through the material culture of the home. Tolia-Kelly (2009, p. 500) argues that "in contemporary research, material culture is positioned as a

11 The term fisherman is used to describe male participants in both sites as this is how they are defined by themselves and by others. Fisherwoman (*femme pêcheur* in French) is how women in fishing are defined by both women and men. There is nothing pejorative intended by the term. I will employ the term 'Fisher(s)' in a general sense.

‘gateway of knowing’, through its texture, its sensory presence, and as a textual record of what has gone before” or in this study ‘*who* is presently gone’. This research “seeks to unearth alternative narrations” through observation of material culture in the fishing home (Tolia-Kelly, 2009, p. 501). In turn, these artefacts symbolise relationships amongst family members and become meaningful in the absence of the fishermen (Tolia-Kelly, 2004a).

As individuals, our experiences of home are diverse; home can conjure up positive or negative feelings or a mix of both (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Notwithstanding, home as *place* is intended to nurture wellbeing (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977); it is also important in developing our sense of place attachment and in our construction of personal and familial identities (Blunt and Varley, 2004). Peil (2009, p. 180) recognises *home* as a “material and imagined space, shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories, and emotions ranging from the personal to domestic to global scales”. Gregory *et al.* (2009, p. 339) argue that home is “an emotive place and spatial imaginary that encompasses lived experiences of everyday domestic life alongside a wider sense of *being* and belonging in the world [emphasis added]”. Our sense of home is shaped by memories of childhood that change over time and over space and multiple senses of home are (re)constructed (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Inglis, 2015). The notion of home can transcend boundaries due to people’s increasing mobility and home becomes “a complex and multi-layered geographical concept” (Blunt and Dowling, 2006, p. 2). It is important to explore home in the context of everyday lived experiences rather than what home ‘should be’ (Ley-Cervantes and Duyvendak, 2015).

Connolly (2015, p. 5) argues that for Irish people the family remains the centre of personal relations “through which people create and sustain *meaning* on a daily basis [emphasis added]”. The study undertaken by Connolly (2015, p.4) discovered that the majority of individuals begin to socialise within the family circle and “develop their identities, sense of self and understanding of the meaning of life primarily in terms of what happened within their family” (see also Blunt and Dowling, 2006) To Heidegger (1993, p. 362) dwelling is “the basic character of Being”. Throughout this and subsequent research chapters, I will frequently refer to family and home and their relationship to identity (re)construction and attachment to place. It is important to acknowledge the complexity and interconnectedness of these concepts. The type of family encountered in this research is primarily of a traditional nature, that is, married women and men of which the majority have children.

This chapter is concerned with how fishing shapes identities and senses of place. It includes a particular focus on women as heads *and* ‘teammates’ of these families. As a

cultural geographer, I endeavour to gain in-depth understandings of the world around me and thoroughly explore the meanings participants give to their everyday lived lives. Drawing on understandings garnered from focus-groups and individual interviews, in addition to personal observations and research journals, my aim was to gain insights into the everyday performances and practices of fishing families in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec.

Interdependency is essential in fishing families and illustrates what Ricoeur (1990) called 'reciprocity'. Cox (2013, p. 828) points out that the "household is not a single unit of consumption but that multiple relationships are negotiated" through daily practices (see also Zvonkovic *et al.,* 2005). This chapter explores the production of the fishing household and how family members (re)negotiate *their* place within the home without compromising these relationships.

The voices heard in this chapter are the voices of the participants in this research. The issues they have deemed significant are outlined and examined. The ideas explored here were very much dictated by the research participants. My role was to marshal a series of seemingly unconnected stories, anecdotes and recurring themes into a coherent narrative to illuminate and better understand the lived lives of fishing families. This chapter explores both the causes of uncertainty and some of the consequences of living with uncertainty. It also focuses on the consequences of fishermen's prolonged absences and separation from the family and home, how these absences are routinised and normalised into daily life and explores whether this results in greater independence or greater isolation (or both) for partners and spouses. It examines the material culture of the home through the display of artefacts. It assesses relationships within the family and demonstrates that underpinning this way of life are the notions of negotiation, collaboration and partnership.

4.2 The Fishing Household: Expecting the Unexpected

Uncertainty both defines and shapes family members of fishing households as individuals *and* as a family unit. It is *this* specific word that participants frequently used to describe *their* everyday lived lives. According to Castree, Kitchin and Rogers (2013, p. 533) uncertainty is "a condition in which the possible consequences or effects of an action is known, but *not* the relative likelihood of their occurrence [emphasis added]". The particular nature of fishing as a way of life embodies the *very* meaning of the word 'uncertainty'. Fishing families are aware of the risks involved when fishers go to sea, yet, they never know if and when difficulties may arise. This recognition of precarity is equally common in both fishing communities in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec and experienced by participants of

all age groups.

4.2.1 Exploring Different Aspects of Uncertainty

4.2.1.1 The Weather

Day-to-day activity is shaped by the weather, and as a consequence, the weather forecast plays a significant part in the lives of fishing families on a daily basis. Both friend and foe the weather adds ambiguity to an *already* complex way of life. In a sense the uncertainty that is experienced by these families is constantly fed by meteorologists as they deliver good or bad conditions.

> I check the weather when the news is on, there's always silence when the weather comes on (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant C)[12].

Certain fisheries, such as tuna and mackerel, take fishermen away from home for sustained periods; while the forecast may be promising at departure, the weather can change rapidly causing difficulties at sea. Fishing families find themselves in a mental '*tourbillion'* – 'whirlpool' while they await communication from their beloved at sea.

> *A l'époque, ceux qui allaient à la pêche au thon, ils partaient pour un mois, il n'y avait aucune communication, des bateaux pourraient être perdus en mer et ceux qui rentraient au port ne savaient pas que des bateaux avaient disparus.* Back in the day when they went tuna fishing, they would be gone for a month, you had no communication, some boats would be lost at sea and those arriving home would not be aware (FG 2, LG, 2014, Participant B).

The notion of uncertainty was a significant theme for participants; they revealed how their daily lives revolve around this phenomenon. Together we recalled the storms that hit the French and Irish coastlines in the winter of 2012 to 2013, especially the western seaboards of Brittany and West Cork.

> Last year [husband] was tied up from October to January, there were only two or three trips during that whole time and then they get nothing [no income] for the rest of the time they're tied-up (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant C).

The winter of 2012-2013 presented a rather desolate scene in Castletownbere; my personal recollection is of a 'shoal' of fishing boats tied-up at the pier for weeks on end. Such a sight equates to a lack of income for fishermen and, in turn, creates a certain amount of stress within the fishing household. Extreme weather conditions produce complex conditions between all family members. This situation also generates a knock-on effect *vis-à-vis*

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12 FG = Focus Group; CTB = Castletownbere; Le G = Le Guilvinec; Use of capital 'P' for Participant is in place of a person's name (a small 'p' is general use).

expenditure in local businesses. Fishing *is* uncertain in many aspects; however, the one determining feature remains the weather. No matter how advanced modern technology is, the weather is the *one* factor that cannot be controlled. It is at once both a fisher's greatest ally and adversary.

4.2.1.2 Quotas and Income

Fish is a finite resource that must be managed. Although fishing families agree to the importance of sustainable fishing, increasing regulations within the fishing industry has led to stricter controls and a tightening of fishing quotas and, consequently, irregular wages for fishers. Every crew member has a self-employed status and, therefore, their income depends on the market value. Quotas are negotiated in Brussels by each member state in December for the following year and can differ from year to year (European Commission, 2017) hence the difficulty in planning too far ahead. Participants spoke with emotion when discussing quotas and policy. Two female participants, one who works within the industry and is a daughter of a fisherman, and another whose father and husband are both fishermen, highlighted the problems facing Irish fishermen:

> But I think why the fishermen are so maddened in Ireland is because Spanish boats and *I'm* Spanish, and French boats come in and they fish whenever they can because they have the quotas and Irish boats don't have the quotas to fish in their own waters, which doesn't really make much sense. If it was the same for everybody then you wouldn't be so maddened about it. But boats coming in and fishing their fish, Irish fish, and Irish boats can't fish their own fish (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant B).

> I would like to see the department [government] backing the fishermen more when they go to Brussels. The farmers are always backed and there's a push for farmers' rights, the fishing seems just to be given away. The Irish quotas are just appalling when you see what the French are able to bring in; even the Irish when their tuna quota was caught there were still a hundred and fifty to two hundred French *and* Spanish at the tuna. The Irish are not supported and they need a stronger person going over and standing up for the quotas and it's not happening (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant D).

A great deal of resentment is felt towards government officials regarding the state of the fishing industry in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. The quota system hinders these families from efficiently planning their daily lives and, consequently, due to this precarity, plans are *never* 'set in stone' as Participant B explained:

> It's really the uncertainty, because of the nature of the quotas and everything, you don't know for certain when they're going [fishing], this week or next week, this year the tuna season opened earlier and we had our holidays [already] booked and literally we were going on the Thursday and [her

husband] said “we’re going fishing tomorrow” (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant B).

Fish are migratory and their mobility is a further test for fishermen. In addition to the impacts that the weather has on a fisherman’s earnings, income also depends upon the availability of fish and species’ market value. The household income fluctuates as fishermen make a living based on a share-system rather than having a fixed wage.[13] The focus-group participants, both in Castletownbere *and* in Le Guilvinec recognised the fluctuating nature of their husband’s and/or father’s income.

> There are so many aspects to it ... so many new restrictions now coming into effect and if they’re long enough in it they know what it was like without so many restrictions and they find that frustrating (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

This participant continued to argue that:

> It is such an unpredictable job, there’s no security even if you’re in [ashore] for six weeks you don’t get paid because you’re self- employed. These are the things that should be tackled really from everybody’s point of view, from the fishermen themselves but also their families. Or even if they get injured they’re not entitled to any disability allowance or whatever it is, I know that there are insurances but for the immediate what do you do. If you have a crewman and he’s out of work for eight weeks in a row, there’s no income (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

While Irish fishermen have no earnings if they are not at sea, French fishermen are fortunate enough to receive an allowance in certain circumstances. The National Committee for Maritime Fisheries and Marine Fish Farming (*Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins − CNPMEM*) is made up of regional and local committees. These committees comprise professional representatives from every fishing sector that participate in the management of maritime resources. The National Establishment for Seamen’s Invalidity (*Etablissement National des Invalides de la Marine − ENIM*) manages the social security for *all* seafarers including fishermen. Altogether there are four locations: one in La Rochelle, Charente Maritime and the three others are in Brittany − Saint-Malo, Lorient and Paimpol. This special scheme deals with issues concerned with risks of unexpected retirement, death, work-related injuries, occupational illnesses, sickness, maternity and disability and is recognised as an inherent part of seafaring (Comité National des Pêches, 2015). Nevertheless, the condition of pay is also irregular in France.

Le plus difficile c’est le revenue, c’est pas un revenu fixe. Il faut savoir gérer

13 A Share System is payment by sharing the profits or gross earnings of the fishing boat and depends on the position held by fishermen, that is, deckhand, engineer or skipper/owner.

> *son budget. La paye n'est jamais la même.* The fact that earnings are not fixed so it's important to know how to manage the finances. The pay is never the same (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant E).

> *Ils [les maris d'autres professions] sont là tous les soirs et après, comme disait Participant E, c'est le revenu. Par rapport aux autres où ils ont un salaire fixe nous, on ne sait jamais. On ne sait pas quand est-ce qu'ils partent et quand ils reviennent.* Most professions the husband is at home every evening and then like Participant E said the pay. Most people have a fixed salary whereas we never know. We don't know when he's going to sea or when he's coming home (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant C).

> *S'ils ne sortent pas en mer ils n'ont pas de salaire.* If they do not go to sea they have no pay (FG 2, LG, 2014, Participant A).

Quotas are ever-changing and familial finances must be well-managed due to the inconsistency of fishermen's income. Strains are alleviated due to the wives'/partners' professional activities (Zvonkovic *et al.,* 2005). It is vital to achieve a balance between conservation and the needs of the industry so that the fishing sector continues to develop (O'Domhnaill, 2016).

4.2.1.3 Scheduling and Planning

Due to income insecurities and uncertainty, planning ahead is near-impossible (Binkley, 2000). The majority of participants, from both Castletownbere *and* Le Guilvinec, agreed that there is not much point in planning too far ahead. It is as if the word 'planning' does not exist in their vocabulary, or rather the term 'going to plan'. Plans can be unravelled too readily; an adjustment to quotas, or a simple change in the weather can disrupt a fishing family's schedule and, as a result, "*c'est très dur de se faire un planning*" − "it is very difficult to put together a schedule" (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant B). When the weather prevents vessels from going to sea, fishermen remain onshore for extended periods. Yet, the family are unable to organise anything as fishermen must be prepared to go to sea as soon as the weather improves. This could result in cancelling or postponing prearranged plans in order to make up for the lost 'fishing' time.

> There's no family life; you can't plan anything really. You don't know from A to B. You can't book a holiday or anything in advance. You can work around it but then you feel you're letting the lads [the crew members] down if anything went wrong. It's unfair to other fellas [other crew members] too. But it all depends on your employers too (Crew member F[14], CTB, 2013).

[14] Crew member denotes the fishermen interviewed during my fishing trip in contrast to those interviewed in their homes.

A participant from the first focus group in Castletownbere stated:

> When you marry you never think of it; you think that everything's going to be grand. You don't know what a fisherman's wife's life is like until you get into it (FG 1, CTB, Participant D).

> *Disons ils sont à la maison le vendredi, le bateau arrive jeudi soir/vendredi matin, mais ils débarquent la pêche puis ils doivent organiser du matériel [de pêche], samedi matin ils faisaient la paye, beaucoup de choses seraient arrivées en quinze jours et tu veux lui dire ce que c'était passé, mais il est si fatigué qu'il ne veut pas vraiment savoir et dimanche il y a un peu de tension car il retourne en mer lundi matin, donc tu finis par tout gérer.* Let's say they are home on a Friday, the boat arrives Thursday night/Friday morning, but they land the catch then they must organise [fishing] gear, Saturday morning they did the wages, a lot would have happened in fifteen days so you want to tell him what went on but he is so tired he doesn't really want to know and Sunday there is a bit of strain because he's going back out [to sea] Monday morning, so you ended up managing everything (FG 2, LG, Participant B).

From non-fishing backgrounds both of these participants found fishing as a way of life challenging. Finding themselves in a position of being both mother and father, it was essential for Participant D from Castletownbere to have family nearby to support and comfort her at the beginning. Due to the precarity, it is a way of life that cannot be imagined; it must be 'lived' in order to gain an understanding of it.

Additionally, during the second focus-group in Castletownbere a few participants acknowledged the difficulties of planning ahead as this excerpt from one of the exchanges illustrates:

> Participant B: It's the uncertainty of never knowing when or for how long. There are other professionals [truck drivers, sales representatives] and they would be away for a length of time but it's a case of... .

> Participant E: It's fixed [other professionals' schedule].

> Participants D: They know the dates [the other women agree].

> Participant C: They [skipper and crew] plan to take trips off and then... .

> Participant B: You or the family might be away to Cork or somewhere and they land in for a night ... so what do you do then ... .

In her early forties Participant E has lived most of her life in Castletownbere. Her father was a fisherman and, consequently, when she married a fisherman she was aware of the uncertain nature of fishing.

> Then I'm seeing the other side of it, from growing up in it, where I can ring him [her husband] up every night or most nights, we have access. My dad, and

> your dad [referencing me the researcher–the boats were partnered during herring season] would go out, my mother had five of us, and it was literally "I don't know when he's coming back, it could be Friday, Friday week, they could land into Howth or Dunmore East ...". They were back when they were back. From my point of view there's a huge progression, the knowing, while we still don't *really* know we *have* contact and might know a day in advance (Participant E).

When I mentioned that truck drivers are also absent from the home and family life, participants, both Breton and Irish, argued that they have a *fixed* schedule, a *fixed* wage and they are on 'dry land'. According to these participants even truck drivers and their families know exactly where they are and where they need to be – their departure and arrival times are definite. Fishing *is* different. Everything about fishing and the way of life that revolves around it *is* unpredictable. Participants discussed the nature of their everyday lives whereby they try to incorporate a sense of routine into this unpredictability.

> *Oui mais ils [routiers] peuvent prévoir les choses*. Yes but they [truck drivers] can plan ahead (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant D).

> Even if he [her husband] was a lorry driver for example he would be able to take some responsibility because they're physically in a country and they have access to internet and that, even the banking I have to do all that because they don't always have [internet] reception. But when somebody has a *land* job they *can* do other stuff (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant D).

It is evident that Participant E, from the second focus group in Castletownbere grew up in a fishing family. Although she is well aware of the uncertainty that surrounds her familial life, she is more prepared and accepts it. The very fact that Participant E knows one day in advance that her husband's boat is 'coming in' means a lot to her compared to her mother's generation. She realises that while her way of life might differ to that of many others, she remains philosophical about it. It is *her* way of life that is ingrained in the rhythm of familial and community life.

4.2.1.4 Adjusting to Tensions

When fishermen are unable to be ashore there is a sense of frustration, yet, after a sustained period ashore, fishermen feel the need to return to sea, while their wives/partners wish to return to the normal routine of running the family and home. This contradictory condition can engender tension within the home between spouses/partners and amongst family members. Participants admitted that despite fishermen's long absences they experience tension and strain when they are on shore after a sustained period.

> When I was married first and he [her husband] used to be away for long stints

> during the winter but in the summer he was home and sometimes it was like *'go back fishing please*' because you just weren't used to it. [...] It takes two days to get used to (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant B).

> When he [her husband] used to do ten days on/ten days off by day seven of out you're ready for them to come back but by day seven of in you're ready for them to go out [fishing] [...] Your routine goes out the window (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

Yet, despite such tensions it was also noted that these participants are aware that time spent together as a family is nonetheless welcomed and valued. Their discussion indicates the complexity of fishing as a way of life and reveals its paradoxical nature.

> But when they come home their time is so precious, like for me the washing would slow down, the take-aways would come in, the pace slows down when they're at home as you don't know how long they're going to be in (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant C).

Some wives/partners who participated in the study spoke of an 'adjustment period' while others said that the 'pace' of the family routine was slowed; yet, they must continue to go about their daily tasks – both within and outside the home. This (re)adjustment period occurs when spouses/partners collaborate with each other in order to find equilibrium and, thus, alleviating tension and strain within the home. Fishermen also feel the stress of being away from their families, yet, ambiguously they admit to the personal need to go to sea; the sea is 'calling' them so to speak.

> It's like when he gets a [phone] call, he's just up and gone (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant D).

> They look forward to going out [to sea] (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

> I suppose you think of being ashore especially when you run into bad weather but once you're out there … and when you come back to shore you're looking forward to going home. But when you're at home then you're kind of half anxious to go away [to sea] and do something you know (Crew member D, CTB, 2013).

> *Etre à terre pendant les vacances est différent car tu hâte d'être en vacances, on est bien en vacances on est en famille. Le mauvais temps c'est qu'on est venu le matin au port et on n'est pas sorti. On s'est levé quand même tôt, on rentre à la maison, on revient au port, on fait des bricoles [sur le bateau] mais la tête est en mer mais on est à terre. Quand on est en vacances, on est en vacances, c'est prévu, c'est comme ca. Le mauvais temps, il n'est jamais prévu.* To be ashore during the holidays is different because you long for holidays and you feel good because you're with your family. Whereas with bad weather, you go to the pier in the morning and you don't go out but it means that you got up early all the same so you go home for a while, you return to the pier later on and you do a few jobs [on the boat] but your mind is

> at sea even though you're ashore. When you're on holidays you're on holidays it is planned and that's it but bad weather is never planned (Active Fisherman J, LG, 2014).

Whether from Castletownbere or Le Guilvinec, fishermen struggle to achieve a sea/shore balance which reveals a commonality between Breton and Irish participants. There is an existential element to their way of life as they are defined by their activity. This situation has an impact on *their* daily activities when they [fishermen] should be at sea. It also affects the 'established' running of the home by wives/partners.

I discussed the situation with the majority of participants and the difficulty in understanding such a way of life, for many, stems from not having a family background in fishing. Becoming part of a fishing family, for these specific participants, has altered *their* way of *being-in-the-world*. Therefore, they have readapted to emerging situations and, in so doing, they constructed new meanings to *their* lives that have become part of fishing as an uncertain way of life. Many fishermen maintained that some relationships can end in divorce and/or separation because of the lack of understanding between *both* spouses.

> *Les changements ont eu lieu vers les années quatre-vingt-dix, même avant ça, quatre-vingt cinq / quatre-vingt dix. Les gens se mariaient beaucoup entre eux, entre Bigoudens ou entre gens du coin et les femmes étaient habituées à cette vie de marin. Quand on a commencé à se marier avec des filles d'ailleurs c'était évident que les choses allaient changer. Ils n'y avaient pas de couples qui tenaient, quand la femme découvrait les longues absences du mari et qu'elle avait seule la responsabilité du foyer, c'était pas évident. Les femmes qui ont eu l'habitude de voir leur père ou leur frère partir en mer, elles savaient comment ça tournait. C'était leur vie, c'était comme ça.* The changes took place during the nineties, even before that, eighty-five/ninety. Back then people married amongst themselves, amongst *Bigoudens* and so the women were used to this life. So when we began to marry girls from outside the area it was obvious that things would change. Some of those marriages didn't last, when the women discovered the sustained absences of the spouse and that she had sole responsibility of running the household, it wasn't evident. The women who were used to this, through their father or brother going to sea, they knew how things were; it was *their* life, that's the way it was (Retired fisherman, D1, LG, 2014).

The 'girls from outside the area' were those with no fishing background or coastal-life experience and, therefore, they did not realise what fishing as a way of life entailed.

> *Je ne sais pas, la mentalité a changée de façon générale ; mais ce n'est pas pour autant qu'on trouve pas des jeunes qui veulent pêcher. Vous n'avez pas la même vie à terre, ça il faut le dire. La société sans doute, mais ça n'explique pas tout, c'est beaucoup plus individuel.* Well, I don't know [what engendered the changes] the mindset has changed anyway; luckily we do find youngsters who want to fish. It must be said that you don't have the same life ashore.

> Society no doubt, but that doesn't explain everything either, it's a lot more individual (Retired fisherman, D, LG, 2014).

> Some of them [women] who ask what are you doing Wednesday? Will you be in Friday? I mean we don't know from one day to the next. The skippers don't know one day to the next with the weather. December 8th [2012] I'll never forget it, the weather was bad. I asked if I could go to Cork for the day and the boss told me to go on away. Then our partner [boat] decided we were going fishing; our boat was in Fenit [Co. Kerry] so I had to get a lift from Cork to Fenit and my wife and kids [already] in Cork. My wife didn't mind but there are other women … Most women now don't realise it's a seven-day week (Crew member, F, CTB, 2013).

Active and retired fishermen from both field sites were equally of the opinion that the role of their wives/partners played a vital part in maintaining a stable relationship between spouses *and* among all other family members. Women who did not come from a fishing background and managed, nevertheless, to cope with the uncertainties attached to this way of life found support in their own families or that of their in-laws. However, those who did not have a strong familial network of support close-by discovered the difficulties of managing family and home during the sustained periods of their husband's absence. A different type of relationship is needed to overcome uncertainty and this will be explored in the remainder of this chapter.

4.3 The *Re*-negotiated Family Structure: Partnership and Collaboration

Despite the shift in gender relations over the past century, traditional practices remain embedded in contemporary society (Scott, Crompton and Lyonette, 2010). Women continue to assume the majority of the household tasks as change appears to be slow (Kan and Gershuny, 2010; Windebank, 2012). Nevertheless, women challenge the *status quo* in a quest to reduce the gender gap, and consequently, transform relationships between women and men (Zvonkovic *et al*., 2005). Women's economic contribution has mostly been viewed as less significant than their male counterparts in addition to a taken-for-granted attitude towards their work within the home (Périvier, 2015). Financial freedom has brought about personal recognition of their own labour capabilities and with it, for many women, a growing sense of self-confidence. Despite the increasing number of women in the labour force, men are under no obligation to undertake domestic tasks (Windebank, 2012; Périvier, 2015). However, there are activities other than fishing where men are absent from the home as their employment requires them to travel. Fishermen *are at sea* and they and their families are continually challenged by the difficulties of 'absence and presence'. These families endeavour to create

"new patterns to establish connections with each other and maintain autonomy" (Zvonkovic *et al*., 2005, p. 412).

On the surface fishing homes resemble single-parent families, yet, they are *not*, and therefore, fit into a category of *their own*. All female participants, whether wives/partners or daughters, affirmed this 'single parent-like' status due to the fact that they−the wives/partners managed everything in *and* out of the home on their own: "You're like a single parent; you *do* everything" (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Parts. D, E, F). They are both 'mother *and* father'. During each of the four focus groups all participants − Breton and Irish − agreed that they, the wives/partners, were the ones who kept their families together, the backbone so to speak.

> You do and you feel you have to. (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant D).

> *On gère tout à la maison*. We manage everything in the home (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant D).

> You have to make all the decisions (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant F).

While women are the recognised backbone of fishing families; nevertheless, many are assisted by their children and by their husbands upon their return from sea.

> *Comme les femmes travaillent les enfants sont obligés de s'investir quand ils rentrent de l'école.* As the women work the children have to get more involved [in household tasks] when they come home from school (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant E).

Members of fishing households create and sustain *their* place within the home through interrelationships and cooperation (Foley and Leverett, 2011). This reveals a sense of partnership *and* collaboration between all family members rather than a matriarchal archetype (see King, 1992). Moreover, one of the fishermen whom I interviewed in Castletownbere recognised that his "own wife does the paper work for the vessel, pays all the bills ... There are some bills [concerning the fishing business] you mightn't agree with and I discuss that with her on the phone" (Active Fisherman D, CTB, 2013). This conveys the 'consultative' nature of fishing families especially those who own a fishing business. At the household level, husbands, both skippers and crews, tend to acknowledge this partnership. The majority of them share the workload when husbands/partners return from sea and, in so doing, the home becomes a shared space in the performance of household duties. That said, some fishermen continue to leave certain aspects of household responsibilities to their wives/partners whether they are present or absent.

4.3.1 Normalising Absence: Independence *and* Isolation

The relationships between members of fishing families tend to be shaped by the

wives/partners (Zvonkovic et *al*., 2005) as they ensure a "presence of absence" (see Frers, 2013). There are different emotions being lived out as absence is negotiated and contested every time the fisherman returns home from a fishing trip. When a relationship is strong amongst family members the "absence of presence and presence of absence" becomes accepted and, thus, normalised (Frers, 2013, p. 431).

4.3.1.1 Independence

It is not an easy task to define independence; the word is multi-faceted. In general it denotes 'being free from outside control' or 'not depending on another for subsistence' or in other words, 'separate'. It is important to place it in the context of fishing families. Independence is largely rooted in an individual's cultural *milieu* (Kitayama, 2009) and fishermen's wives/partners have always 'stepped-into' this role of *sole* responsibility for home and family (Abrams, 2012; Keough, 2012). In this section, independence relates to the wives/partners of fishermen who have complete control of and authority over the management of the home and family while their husbands are at sea. It is a necessary arrangement due to the sustained absences of fishermen. The lack of regular communication between wives/partners further highlights the wives'/partners' independent decision-making.

Fishing family members become so used to spending so little time together as a unit that when fishers are home from sea family members must renegotiate their place in the home. I have often heard the expression from fishermen's wives/partners "he's getting under my feet" (Christiansen-Ruffman, 2002); it is not that they do not want their husbands home but they have become so used to managing everything on their own. This situation illustrates the complex nature of fishing households. An active fisherman from Le Guilvinec explained:

> *C'est un apprentissage à faire au début, malheureusement pour ma femme c'est moi qui donne les ordres à bord donc à terre il faut que j'apprenne de ne pas en donner. Ma femme a quand même un caractère assez fort pour me dire "attends, ici t'es plus abord ton bateau, calmos [du calme]" [il rit] donc tout ça est un apprentissage, c'est pas évident de tout. Le grand point noir de tous les marins c'est le passage à la retraite, la majorité de divorces pour les marins se font lors de la retraite, car le marin est tout le temps là et la femme n'est pas du tout habituée d'avoir son homme à la maison, constamment dans ses pattes, c'est pas évident.* It's a learning curve at the beginning, unfortunately for my wife I'm the one giving the orders onboard [the boat] so when ashore I need to learn not to command, my wife has quite a strong character so she'll tell me "wait a minute, here you're not onboard your vessel so step down" [he laughs] so it's all a learning curve and not so evident at all. The most difficult stage in a fisherman's life is that of retirement, the majority of divorces occur upon retirement, because the fisherman is always there in the house, the spouse is *not at all* used to having her husband constantly at home,

under her feet, it's not evident (Active Fisherman F, LG, 2014).

It was clear from the research that the women interviewed adapted independent roles and were key decision makers in the running of fisher families when their husbands/partners were at sea.

There would have been a lack of suitable employment for the more mature participants especially in Castletownbere where the marriage bar in the Irish civil service existed until the 1970s. In Le Guilvinec a number of women sought work in the fish-processing plants.

> [Now] you can make your own choice whether you want to go out working or not. Whereas before we wouldn't; a fisherman's wife stayed at home. But there was nothing around either for us (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant D).

> *Avec tous les usines, tout le monde vivaient de cela avant, les hommes pêchaient et les femmes travaillent à l'usine, le coin vivait de la pêche.* With all the processing plants, everybody made a living from it [fishing industry] before, the men fished and the women worked in the processing plants, the area lived from fishing (FG 2, LG, 2014, Participant A).

While one of the more mature participants in Castletownbere stated that "there was nothing around" for them in terms of employment (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant D), another had sought employment when the children were older for her *own* personal value and esteem. Nevertheless, they accepted their role and appeared to have stayed at home by choice to educate their children as the nature of fishing implied that they had sole responsibility for the family and home. In contrast, a mature participant from Le Guilvinec admitted that she would have liked to have worked but her husband insisted that she stayed home:

> *Je n'ai jamais travaillé et je l'ai toujours regretté mais mon mari ne voulait pas que je travaille, il a perdu ses parents jeune et quand il rentrait de mer il était seul donc quand il s'est marié il voulait que je sois à la maison surtout qu'il gagnait suffisamment et puis on avait trios enfants.* I never worked and I've always regretted it but my husband didn't want me to, he lost his parents when he was young and when he used to come home from sea he was always alone so when he married he wanted me to be at home especially that he earned sufficiently and we had three children (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant B).

The younger participants, both in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec, aspired to work outside the home and, consequently, this strengthened their individual sense of freedom (Annes and Wright, 2015). In addition, there were more employment opportunities available to them. The younger participants and their fishermen husbands/partners have managed to overcome the challenges of a changing society – both within the realm of fishing and wider community – by accepting 'new ways' of living and as such 'new experiences' of this way of life. The discussion concerning women's professional activity revealed the shift that has

taken place in fishing families.

> Well yes it has evolved; before you would stay at home whereas now fishermen's wives are going working and the kids are going to the crèche or whatever. You don't have to stay at home, you can make your own choice (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant B).

In the decades spanning the 1960s to 1990s fishermen's wives were viewed by non-fishing families as 'having a good life' because of the perceived freedoms such a life engendered.

> *On était très envié, le marin avait de l'argent, et quand le marin gagnait de l'argent sa femme dépensait dans les commerces.* We were always envied, a fisherman had money and when a fisherman made money his wife spent in the local businesses (Retired fisherman, M, LG, 2014).

Although the majority of wives during this period did not financially need to work outside the home, it appears that they had more authority in the home as regards the household finances and, consequently, were out of step with women in mainstream society and were more liberated. The fishermen who participated in this study acknowledged the self-reliance of their wives:

> *Ma femme gère la maison au niveau financier et au niveau des enfants, et bon c'est déjà un gros boulot mais quand la petite avait six ans elle a retourné au travail ... c'était un besoin pour elle, pour son équilibre personnel, comme moi j'ai besoin de la mer elle a besoin de travailler.* My wife manages the finances of the house, and the children and that is already a big job but when the youngest was six years old she went back to work ... a need for her, for her personal equilibrium, like me I need the sea she needs to work [outside the home] (Active fisherman, Y, LG, 2014).

He represents a far more understanding view than that expressed by the late husband of Participant B (FG 1, LG, 2014).

> *Oui, surtout pour quinze jours de mer. La femme à la maison s'occupe des finances, des enfants, de tout, c'est un métier en soi et en plus de son métier [en dehors de la maison]*. Yes, especially for those [fishermen] who are on fortnightly trips. The women look after the household finances, the children, everything, that's a job in itself and often has her own job [outside the home] as well (Active fisherman, D2, LG, 2014).

In a recent article Chappe (2015) reviews Rachel Silvera's book on wage inequality in contemporary France where women's work has repeatedly been devalued. Furthermore, he reiterates that "in a patriarchal society men were, and still are in many cases, the breadwinners" (Chappe, 2015, pp. 80-81). This clearly contrasts the situation in fishing families today where women are increasingly becoming active 'breadwinners' as the occupations they choose have regular incomes; the younger women I interviewed were teachers, employees in the service industry or in local fishing organisations. This change reveals a shift in roles − women have regular incomes and, as a result, reduce the financial

burden for their husbands/partners. Although they may remain primary carers and household managers, a partnership has emerged within contemporary fishing households. This partnership has altered the nature of fishing families as fishers have acknowledged professional parity and, therefore, responsibilities within the home are divided more evenly when the fishermen are on shore. The situation in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec contrasts that of Lunenburg and Halifax, Canada where Binkley (2000) conducted research into Nova Scotian[15] coastal fishing dependent households. She revealed that "more women are going out to work or are increasing their work outside the home. They are now taking on the task as breadwinner; *a task that most do not strive for, and one associated with increased stress*. Many women still retain their traditional household duties... [emphasis added]" (Binkley, 2000, p. 332). Nova Scotian women preferred their traditional roles as mother and fisherman's spouse to the stress of working outside the home. A similar situation was not revealed during the focus groups either in Castletownbere or Le Guilvinec. The women in this study sought employment by choice − to improve the economic income entering the family home or for their own personal fulfilment − and did not describe working outside the home as stressful but welcomed it. This partnership dynamic is very real in contemporary fishing families. Nowadays mothers are more absent from the home; yet, for children this 'new routine' *is* and always has been part of *their* everyday lived lives.

> *Les choses ont évolué [les autres femmes sont d'accord]. Au début quand j'ai rencontré mon mari on travaillait tous les deux, j'étais quasiment tout le temps la seule femme à travailler [par rapport aux femmes des autres marins qui travaillaient sur le bateau avec son mari]. Maintenant plus de femmes travaillent donc les pêcheurs s'impliquent d'avantage à la maison. Mon mari fait le lessive, il va chercher les enfants à l'école ; le mode de vie à un peu changer.* Things have evolved [the other women agreed]. In the beginning when I met my husband we both worked, I was nearly always the only spouse who worked [out of the other fishermen's spouses who worked with her husband]. However, nowadays more women work so the fishermen are more involved at home. My husband [when ashore] does the laundry, brings the children to school collects them; the way of life has changed a little (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant D).

Similarly McKinlay's and McVittie's (2011, p. 176) research reveals how women in a Scottish fishing community developed "a positive sense of themselves as supportive wives and mothers, but also as independent women who can determine their own life courses". While the more mature participants in Castletownbere, who were home-makers, accepted the

15 The depletion of the cod stocks, due to overfishing, led to the banning of this fishery by the Canadian government in the 1990s (Binkley, 2000; Dolan *et al.*, 2005). In Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec the incorporation of women into the wider economic system has not been driven by necessity like in Nova Scotia.

responsibilities for managing home and family, their Breton counterparts, except for one participant, worked outside the home for their own personal reasons. Contemporary participants in both sites tend to work outside the home and family responsibilities are shared when their husbands return from sea. While separation acted as a catalyst for empowering women and enabling them to assert their independence, in some cases it also led to feelings of isolation. This will be discussed in the next section.

4.3.1.2 Separation and Isolation

Isolation was another theme that emerged during my focus-group discussions in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. The couple's separation resulted in isolation that generates feelings of loneliness, particularly for the women who find themselves on their own.

Closing curtains at night, especially in winter time, when daylight gave way to dark evenings the more mature participants frequently found themselves devoid of adult conversation. Although there are more opportunities nowadays for interaction, their husbands/partners are rarely home to share the events of the day or to discuss family matters. During the first focus-group interview in Castletownbere one of the wives said that:

> There are decisions you have to make alone whereas if your husband was at home you could share the load. Maybe it's a bit easier now as you can phone. When we got married it was very difficult to contact them, someone would have to be dead to get in contact with the boat. It would have to go through all the channels, Valentia station[16] [south-west coast of Ireland] and hear the whole conversation. Now there are mobiles. It makes it a bit easier. Like the saying 'behind every [great] man there's a [great] woman' (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant D).

A retired fisherman's wife from one of the focus groups in Le Guilvinec recalled the same experience:

> *Il fallait passer par Le Conquet*[17]*, c'est la station par laquelle il fallait passer, c'est-a-dire à la Pointe de Saint Mathieu près de Brest. Il fallait passer par la radio Conquet pour que Le Conquet radio passe au bateau. Tout le monde écoutait.* You had to pass by *Le Conquet* − the radio station at *la Pointe de Saint Mathieu* near Brest − then *Le Conquet* radioed the boat. Everybody could listen (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant B).

16 The primary function of a coast radio is safety of life at sea. It handles ship-to-shore radio traffic (Valentia Island Website: http://www.maritimeradio.pro/ireland/ejk.htm). Families contacted the radio station which in turn contacted the fishing vessel in question. As vessels and most families had VHF radios the conversation could be heard by anyone.

17 Le Conquet was the coast radio in Brest, Brittany and its main function was safety at sea. It also provided telephone communication between fishermen and their families (http://www.aspect-le-conquet.fr/le-conquet-en-savoir-plus/la-pointe-des-renards-historique).

It is true that modern mobile communication technology has made life easier for the fishing family. There is no longer the need to "*go through all the channels, Valentia station and hear the whole conversation"* (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant D).



Figure 4.1 Importance of communication: VHF (Very High Frequency) Radio that is present in the majority of fishing households. It would be switched-on first thing in the morning and switched-off last thing at night. Families heard conversations that would 'oscillate' over the course of the day. Prior to modern communication technology this radio was the link between sea and shore, and is still present in many homes in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

Nonetheless, the fishing vessel often finds itself out of the network coverage area. Most modern fishing boats are equipped with a satellite telephone; however, the cost of a phone call to shore is expensive which deters communication between family members. A participant from Le Guilvinec highlighted this detail:

> *Mon mari est en mer à la quinzaine ils n'ont pas d'internet, ils n'ont pas de télé, le téléphone est le seul moyen de communication mais c'est un téléphone par satellite à sept euros la minute, on reste pas des heures. On ne peut pas non plus appeler sans arrêt.* My husband is at sea for a fortnight at a time, they have no internet, they don't have any TV, the telephone is the only way of communicating but it's a telephone via satellite at seven euros the minute so we don't spend hours chatting. We cannot phone continuously either (FG 1, LG, 2013, Participant D).

Despite advances in communication technology, contact remains limited between shore and sea; there remains a sense of continued *dis*-connection. The banality with which fishing families engage with and accept their everyday lived experiences masks the complicated nature of their way of life. The absence of husbands/partners is the major difference that sets them apart from other women in their communities. One of the younger participants, a fisherman's daughter, commented on what the wives were saying in the first focus-group in Castletownbere:

> I find it interesting because when I look back I would say that my mother was the backbone of the family in the sense that my father was *hardly ever there* so to us she was the parent but I never saw my dad in a negative way, in the sense that he was never there (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant A).

And in Le Guilvinec a similar sense of disconnection and absence was observed.

> *On n'est pas beaucoup ensemble […] les weekends on est souvent toute seule. On n'a plus de vie de famille […] Normalement c'est à deux qu'on prend les décisions […]. Celle qui n'a pas de famille, ses parents [dans les environs] c'est plus compliqué. C'est un métier particulier. On a un peu de sentiments quand-même, c'est compliqué de tout porter …* You don't spend a lot of time together [...] very often you are on your own at weekends. There's no family life really [...]. Usually decision making is shared [...]. It's more complicated for the women who do not have their parents [nearby] to help. It's a peculiar livelihood. We do have feelings [laughter] we put up with a lot... (FG 2, LG, 2014, Participant B).

> *Ce qui m'a aidé au début de notre mariage, je me suis impliquée tout de suite dans les associations, parents d'élèves, la municipalité, organisations maritimes …* When I got married I occupied myself straight away with associations, parents' association, town council, maritime organisations ... (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant B).

As Participant B (FG 1) from Le Guilvinec had not engaged in a professional activity, because of her husband's insistence, it is not surprising that she got involved in various associations and replaced employment with voluntary and community activities.

These women have adapted to circumstances in which they very often find themselves representing the family on their own. On many occasions the participants were unaccompanied at various social events. However, some have become accustomed to these situations and a real sense of independence is experienced: *"C'est naturel; on est toujours toute seule",* "It's natural; we are *always* on our own" (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participants A and E). Others continue to find it difficult to be the sole family representative.

> *Combien de mariages, de baptêmes que mon mari était en mer et je devais aller toute seule, surtout quand tu es dans un milieu qui n'est pas marin, Ah ! t'es encore toute seule".* How many weddings, christenings that my husband was at sea and I had to go on my own, especially when you're not from a fishing *milieu,* "Oh! You're on your own again" (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant B).

In Le Guilvinec, participants who did not have a family background in fishing and especially those who came from inland areas frequently experienced a sense of exasperation when attending social events. Participants originally from fishing or coastal communities did not experience the same degree of frustration as they availed of wider networks of familial and community support. For instance, in Castletownbere one participant stated that being local

made a big difference:

> I think the fact that we're local makes a big difference. I think it was difficult for women who came in with no family back-up and had small children (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant F).

Most of the husbands leave the decision of attending social gatherings to their wives; the women can choose whether to go alone or not attend at all.

> [Discussing plans her spouse] "we can go away this day or I won't be at that so you can go by yourself or whatever" (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant B).

Although participants eventually become accustomed with these situations, there is a note of sadness evident in their responses. As I recall my childhood, my father always tried to be at home for special familial occasions. Although he was always present at First Holy Communions and Confirmations, it was my mother who made all preparatory decisions. The main difficulty was at Christmas time when all fishing boats returned to sea just after Saint Stephen's Day (December 26) and the majority of wives celebrated New Year's Eve in the company of other fishermen's spouses and wider community members.

> It's a very lonely life for them (fishermen) too. [All participants agree] When we got married it was hard during times of festivities; he was never around to celebrate New Year with us. They came home for Christmas Day and went away again St. Stephen's Day. (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

While there is no formal support system in place, members of fishing families and the wider community unite to provide assistance when needed. Each of them has their own way of dealing with separation. In Le Guilvinec, this excerpt from participants from the first focus group in conversation illustrates how women coped with absence:

> Participant C: *J'avais besoin de voir les autres femmes de pêcheurs, de voir comment elles vivaient elles aussi sinon j'aurais pas su comment faire et ça s'invente pas.* I needed to meet other fishermen's spouses, to see how they lived otherwise I wouldn't have known what to do and you cannot invent it [this way of life].
>
> Participant B: *Je contactais les femmes des autres de l'équipage.* I used to contact the wives of the other crew members.
>
> Participant E: *On n'en parle pas; on reste à la maison et on attend pour ça se passe*. We don't talk about it; we stay at home and wait for it to pass.
>
> Participant A: *C'est vrai …* That's true ... .
>
> Participant B: *Tu ne peux compter que sur soi-même* – You have to depend on yourself.

This reveals that differences occur among fishing families even from the same fishing community. Isolation is experienced by participants in different ways as each individual

learns to cope with periods of sustained separation from their husbands/partners, fathers and brothers. Although the wives/partners in this study acknowledged the difficulties and loneliness, they, nevertheless, enjoyed the independence this way of life presented. This was particularly evident amongst the more mature participants.

4.3.1.3 Coping with Absence

A fisherman's wife from Brittany emphasised the complex nature of fishing as a way of life and how she copes with her husband's absence:

> *Pour moi la plus grande difficulté c'était après la naissance des enfants. C'était plus compliqué parce que je travaillais, c'est vrai qu'au départ je passais beaucoup de temps au travail ; c'est vrai que je n'étais pas toujours disponible quand mon mari rentrait [de la pêche]. Après, la difficulté c'est de gérer les enfants, la maison ... c'est devenu vite compliqué et ça obligait aussi de changer de métier, parce que cinquante/soixante heures par semaine ça le fait pas quand on a des enfants et que le mari n'est jamais là non plus. […] J'ai l'aide parfois de ma belle-mère mais c'est une belle-mère très active et elle-même travaille donc elle n'est pas toujours disponible, me mère est âgée et puis mes amis autour ne sont pas forcement dans le milieu de la pêche mais qui dépannent parfois. Dans la mesure du possible … on est tout le temps comme ça c'est un rythme de vie et on ne peut pas sans arrêt solliciter les autres, il faut que la solution vient de nous*. For me the biggest difficulty was after the children were born, things were more complicated as I worked as well; it's true to begin with I worked a lot and I wasn't always there when my husband came home [from fishing]. Then the difficulties were managing the children, the home ... it became quickly complicated and this forced me to change my job because doing fifty/sixty hours a week when you have children and your husband is hardly ever present either. [...] I sometimes get support from my mother-in-law but she is active and she works as well so she isn't always available, my mother is elderly and my friends don't necessarily come from fishing backgrounds but help when they can. That's the way we live, it's a natural rhythm for us so we cannot incessantly ask others for help, *we* must find solutions ourselves (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant D).

This participant stated that her *friends don't come from fishing backgrounds;* this statement clearly indicates that they have little understanding of how she and her family live. Moreover, this participant accepts the *natural rhythm* of her everyday realities and the importance of being *self*-reliant.

Fishermen's wives organisations have been one way of assisting wives/partners and families to deal with periods of separation. These associations continue to play a prominent part in fishing communities as they advocate on behalf of the fishing community and its industry. Prior to new technologies these organisations acted as a conduit of communication among fishermen's wives/partners and families. Not only did this offer other fishermen's

wives/partners the possibility to network, it also presented this participant with the opportunity to meet women experiencing shared circumstances and situations.

> We were in a situation here that we needed to keep contact with each other; back then the communication wasn't good at all. The only communication we had with our husbands and families with their dads was whenever they came ashore they would ring home (MnM, 2013, Member 2).[18]

During my fieldwork in Castletownbere, I conducted an interview with three local members of *Mná na Mara* – Women of the Sea – an organisation established in the mid-1960s. With advances in communication technologies, this organisation changed from being the 'link' between boat and home and developed a new agenda focused on safety at sea. Currently, this organisation is more concerned with EU decision-making. It strives to improve fishers' livelihoods raising awareness amongst the wider public of this way of life. They are conscious of the dangers their husbands face at sea. They have been great campaign-initiators for improving working conditions at sea and safety on board fishing vessels (Frangoudes, 2008). The Castletownbere members of *Mná na Mara* continue to organise the annual Fishermen's Mass and Blessing of the Boats.

For some participants, religious faith not only plays an important part in their daily lives but also helps them cope with the absence of husbands/partners. It appears that "by our very nature and our upbringing we would turn to our religion" (MnM, 2013, Member 2). This participant grew up in a family where generations of fishermen turned to religion for protection from adversity at sea.

> Yeah, you just get used to it. Like I had no experience of fishing [no family background] and none of my family would, my mother would always light a candle for [my husband] every time he goes fishing (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant B).

> I think the negative thing though is fear that you didn't have contact. When you'd hear on the radio that someone is missing; we once heard someone missing out of Castletownbere and Mom telling us that we don't know who it is but telling us to say a prayer. It was a day or so before we knew who it was. It is that fear that I cannot live with; the uncertainty, the fear for me; my dad out fishing; the prospect of a husband out fishing; the danger and the unknown (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant A).

When someone is missing at sea, fishing communities are aware of how vulnerable they are. Members of fishing families experience strong feelings of fear and anxiety until such time as confirmation of their safety is delivered. Despite the changing face of Irish society and ever-

18 MnM = *Mná na Mara* – The Women of the Sea

increasing secularisation some fishers still turn to their faith to find solace.



Figure 4.2 Religious artefacts: The holy water font by the door is used to bless husband/partner prior to each fishing trip. Saying a prayer, or lighting a candle for those at sea in times of bad weather reveals that religious rituals continue to play a role in contemporary fishing homes (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

The presence of the lifeboat provides a sense of security. If it is missing from the pier not only are fishing families worried but the entire community; its absence becomes the main topic of conversation. While some people talk about it, others prefer to 'hold their breath'.

> If it had been a bad night I would always check the lifeboat in the morning to see if it's there. So it is part of you, there is wariness there (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

> And obviously when something happens at sea and when there is a headline you don't breathe until you know where it [lifeboat] is (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant A).

> *Je viens d'un milieu agricole et au débout je me rappelle quand mon mari partait les premières années il partait au thon trois semaines, quatre semaines,*

> *pour moi je croyais que je le voyais pour la dernière fois. C'était mon impression sur le quai quant il partait.* I came from a farming family and I remember the first few years when my husband was tuna fishing, he would be gone for three or four weeks and I would often think that it was going to be the last time I'd see him; it used to be my feeling on the pier when I would see him off (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant B).

Coping with absence differs among fishing families. Although these participants share the same way of life, their experiences and feelings are lived out differently.

> [We become] Resilient, not stronger but you know it can be any family. In some ways it has affected every family. Vulnerable in an emotional sense; fear; it's just something that's there. It can happen at any time; *prepare for the unexpected*. That one per cent readiness; it may happen. If I hear Castletownbere lifeboat on the radio straight away I turn it up. You become more alert to it (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant A).

The participant's emotions can be felt in the way she tells her story. Her mindset is revealed through the use of words such as, *vulnerable, fear, readiness,* and *alert*. Yet, mothers and children alike have an inherent way of coping with and accepting such a precarious way of life; they become resilient because otherwise they would worry continuously. One fisherman's wife stated that: *to a certain extent you just don't think about it* (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant B). Another participant – a fisherman's wife and daughter – felt the same way: *we don't talk about it; we stay at home and wait for it to pass* (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant E). While the above participants are from different fishing communities, once again these women experience similar feelings with regard to their husbands/partners absence.

The mother is very often the pivotal figure in coping with absence. I remembered as a child, at bedtime, my siblings and I used to *blow a goodnight kiss* to our father; our mother would say that he was picking them up out of the water. As a result, this daily practice reassured us; it was our way of holding our dad in our hearts. Our mother transmitted this tradition to her younger cousin who in turn found it beneficial for her own children. A participant in one of the focus groups in Le Guilvinec stated that:

> *Pendant toute sa carrière de marin j'étais, à chaque fois sur le quai même avec les enfants peu emportait l'heure.* During his [her husband's] whole life as a fisherman I would always see him off at the pier even when with the children no matter what time of the day it was (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant B).

The advent of new information technologies has altered the 'sea-shore' communication.

> The children love going on *vesselfinder* or *marinetraffic* and finding the boat and seeing what direction he [their father] is going. I think it gives them security that they can trace him while he is away and also the excitement when the boat is faced for home (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

These women established ‘connections’ between fathers and children in “creative ways” (Zvonkovic *et al.*, 2005, p. 417). However, over the course of a conversation in Le Guilvinec a fisherman's wife told me that her daughter, in recent years, recognised that due to her father’s long absences she did not *really* know who he was.

Sometimes absences become permanent when tragedy strikes a fishing community and fishermen die at sea. Families come closer together united in grief and the funeral ceremony is part of the healing process. An excerpt from participants from the first focus group in Castletownbere illustrates the significance of funerals to these fishing families.

> Participant C: I don’t know what the others feel but I think they’re [fishermen’s wives] totally alone; it’s hard. When you hear of a tragedy and you have a connection to fishing I think your heart just goes out to them; you feel for the families; there’s a sort of unity [in tragedy or loss]. [...] The whole community feels the loss; it’s not the same as if it were a car crash.
>
> Participant E: Yes the sea could claim the body and you may not find it; not see it anymore.
>
> Participant A: I think it’s the funeral aspect.
>
> Participant C: The whole community goes to it.
>
> Participant A: If it’s fishing related it’s big.

The discussion between participants reveals that the funeral ritual provides a sense of finality and closure to the loss of a loved one. Recovering a body means that the family will have a *place* to mourn the deceased. However, a body lost at sea may never be recovered. The notion of death in fishing households extends to the wider hinterland. In both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec the majority of community inhabitants are connected either directly or indirectly to the local fishing industry and, consequently, death almost becomes part of their everyday lived realities that these participants learn to cope with.

Independence, separation and tragedy are undeniably interconnected terms within fishing families. Some women paid the price of independence due to the loneliness experienced and they felt compelled to engage in community activities. Nowadays, more women are working and fishers’ spouses/partners are no different. The women in this study embraced occupations outside the home which necessitated developing new ways of managing the family and home. They have always been accustomed to the difficulty in scheduling everyday life and, therefore, for them working outside the home is ‘just’ another one of life’s challenges of juggling shore and sea, family and career.

4.4 Material Culture: Making a House a Home

"The home is a material and an affective space, shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions" (Blunt, 2005, p. 506). Home also becomes an *effective space,* through the display of familial artefacts (Rose, 2003). Memories can be shared with other family members or with wider community members visiting the home, and thus establishes a sense of belonging to a [fishing] group (Prince, 2013, p. 706). Material culture manifests itself in various ways; so much about a fisherman's home is linked to fishing. A retired fisherman in Le Guilvinec discussed his pride in displaying fishing-related artefacts to visitors to their home (Fig. 4.3). The majority of objects were found off the French coast and, therefore, have a special significance for him as they are local.



Figure 4.3 Significance of material culture: Displaying fishing-related artefacts, such as, corals and shells within his home gave this retired fisherman a sense of pride and also evoked memories of when and where he was fishing (Photo: Retired fisherman JM).

> *Ce morceau de corail je sais où je l'ai pêché. D'autres objets je les ai reçus de la part des amis pêcheurs. Ils me rappellent les endroits où je les ai pêchés. Ça évoque des souvenirs; on [sa femme et lui] aime bien les montrer.* That piece of coral reminds me of where I was when I fished it. Other objects I got from friends who are fishermen. They recall where I was when I fished them [objects]. These are memories; we [he and his wife] enjoy showing them to visitors (Retired Fisherman JM, LG, 2014).

These artefacts are understood in relation to the wider fishing way of life (see Blunt and

Dowling, 2006). By displaying such items and sharing them with visitors to the household, fishers invite an engagement with their lifeworlds that both enhances and perpetuates their identities but also creates a feeling of *'togetherness'* that is experienced across spatial and temporal dimensions (Rose, 2004; Tolia-Kelly, 2004b).



Figure 4.4 Shore activity: Mending nets on the pier under a thundery sky one spring afternoon. This photo was taken by a Breton photographer in the 1980s. This photo conjures up memories of the past. It reminds a retired fisherman and his family of his distinctive heritage (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

While the husband/partner, father or brother are fishing, their absence is 'alleviated', so to speak, through the presence of artefacts, especially family photographs as they remind family members of those who are at sea and, in this sense, the absentees are present. Unlike most other families where photographs taken at family gatherings contain all members, it can happen that fishermen are absent from some of these.

> *C'est pas typique mais il y a quelques objets, c'est important pour eux [sa femme et ses enfants] pour moi un objet doit être utile. ... Pour eux, le fait de passer devant je pense qu'inconsciemment, ils pensent à moi.* It's not typical but there are a few things that are important, important for them [his wife and his children] to me an object must be useful. ... For them, passing in front of it, I think even unconsciously they think of me (Active Fisherman Y, LG, 2014).

This particular fisherman did not personally see the utility of visual and material culture in the home. However, he acknowledged that the presence of artefacts have meanings for his family and in turn helps them to overcome his frequent and long absences. His wife who participated in one of the focus groups admitted that *"il a moins d'objets que nous"* – "he has

less objects than we have" (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant C). Certain objects within their home were of more significance to her and the children than to him.

An elderly participant from that same focus group offered a different opinion explaining that to a certain extent couples come to understand the value of similar artefacts signifying a sense of reciprocity.

> *Je pense, pour ma part, que les femmes apprécient ces objets qui vous rappelle quelque chose.* I think, for my part, women appreciate these objects that remind you of something (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant A).

She further admitted that:

> *Je pense que pendant toute une vie ensemble on apprend à apprécier les mêmes choses ou à donner l'importance aux mêmes objets.* I think that during a life together we learn to appreciate the same things or to give importance to the same objects (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant A).

The above quotations reveal that artefacts have meaning and value beyond their documented content (Tolia-Kelly, 2004b). They are invested with memories as artefacts allow family members to recall specific moments. Additionally, objects in relation to fishing remind these participants of *their* way of life and in turn *their* sense of identity (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participants A, B and D). One participant stated that displaying these objects *"font parti de la vie de tous les jours"* − "are part of everyday life" (FG 2, LG, 2014, Participant A) and another recognised that *"il y a des objets auxquels il [son mari] tient"* − "her husband is attached to them" (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant D).



Figure 4.5 Model fishing boat: Fishermen communicate their identity though their creation of model fishing boats and other fishing scenes. Every detail is significant in presenting the 'perfect' model. This model was created and crafted by a retired fisherman from Le Guilvinec. This pastime is so important to him that his wife –

Participant B − deemed it essential to mention it during the focus group (see below) (Photo: Retired fisherman, JL).

It is true that the majority of fishermen that I interviewed were attached to these objects that, for the most part, found their way into the nets while at sea. Participant B acknowledged the intense interest with which her spouse remains faithful to his identity and past way of life as a fisherman.

> *Quand il fait ses objets [maquettes de bateaux] il est parti dans son monde, c'est sa passion et on a du mal à le faire sortir de là. C'est un attachement profond qu'il a avec ce milieu là.* When he makes his objects [model boats] he is in a world of his own, it's his passion and it's difficult to pull him away. It's a profound attachment that he has to this *milieu* (FG 2, LG, 2014, Participant B) (Fig. 4.5).

In other words, for these participants, the display of visual and material culture is an intrinsic part of *being* a particular sort of family and is strongly connected to their senses of identity and belonging (Rose, 2004). The advantage of interviewing the fishermen in their homes was that it allowed me the time to observe the material and visual culture within. The majority of them openly discussed the meanings and importance of these artefacts.

> *Ça c'était donc le bateau de mon père, c'est avec celui-là que j'avais commencé. Ça c'est une photo, enfin, c'est une peinture à l' origine, c'était quand j'ai commencé la pêche tout seul. C'est important d'avoir la photo car c'était mon premier bateau et c'était le bateau de mon père. J'ai aussi des photos dans l'entrée [il me les montre] c'est le port de Kerity [petit port chez lui] et ça c'est le Point de Raz. La c'est une scène d'ici de l'époque, [photo du petit port près de chez lui] des locaux qui ramassaient des algues et puis ils vendaient ça séché.* That painting is of my dad's fishing boat and it was with this [boat] that I started. That's a photo, well, originally a painting of when I started fishing on my own. It's important to have the photo because it was my first boat and my father's. There are photos in the hallway [he shows them to me], that's of Kerity pier [near where he lives – six kilometres from Le Guilvinec], and that's of the *Point du Raz* [near Brest]. That photo is of locals in the olden days collecting seaweed then they would sell it dried (Active Fisherman A, LG, 2014).

Fisherman A began fishing at the age of sixteen and has always wanted to be a fisher. He enjoys immensely what he does. He also told me that his wife's father was a fisherman and although she's not really interested in the fishing industry, she nonetheless framed and hung the photos. There was a note of nostalgia when fishermen, especially those who had retired, spoke about the various objects displayed in the home even though some did not openly admit it.

The artefacts in these homes become symbolic of fishing and trigger social histories of the life of fishing families; family narratives and recollections of the past are evoked (Tolia-Kelly, 2004b). Interpreting such material culture requires a deep understanding of

everyday realities of fishing households (Tolia-Kelly, 2004b). Material culture of the home is a way of situating these women and men in relation to others within that same community. The majority of the women in the study find solace in the fishing-related objects within the home as they are a constant reminder of their husbands/partners/fathers/brothers.

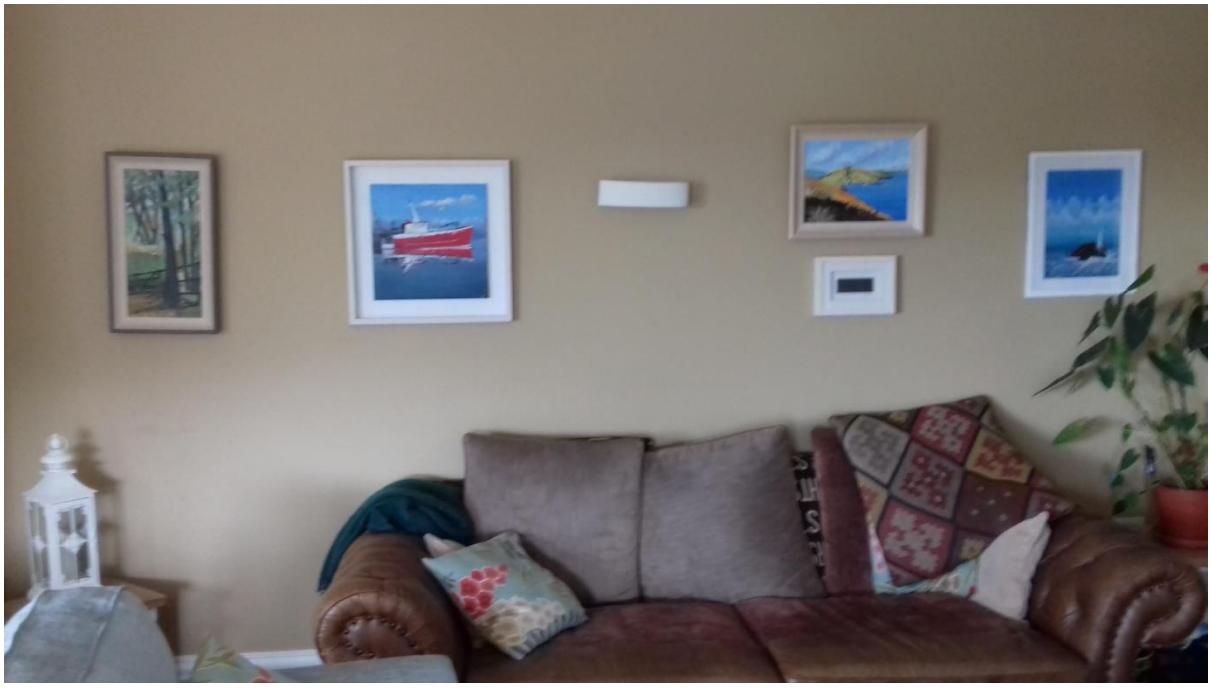


Figure 4.6 Bringing the outside in: Paintings or photographs of the 'coastal-scape' occupy the walls of many fishing households. Skippers/owners and their spouses/partners frequently decorate the home with a painting of the familial fishing boat revealing the identity of the family. These artefacts provide a privileged moment for the onlooker to 'escape' the quotidian and 'connect' with maritime environment (Photo: Participant E, FG 2, CTB).

Fishermen's frequent absences reveal that women in fishing households have acquired personal and professional independence. While for many people this separation could be regarded as isolation, the participants, both young and old, both male and female, in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec, embrace their autonomy. These families learn to cope with separation though family photographs, communication with other fishing families, partaking in local activities, or seeking solace in rituals such as lighting candles for the safe return of fishermen.

4.4.1 Anchoring Senses of Place and Identity

Fishing as a way of life involves complex identities based on past and present experiences and are deeply rooted. This section will explore place attachment and identity among all family members with a particular focus on women as they are the principal parent present within the home.

While men often take pride in their identity as fishermen, it is not always apparent

which identities are essential to women. Very little is known about the processes of identity construction among women in fishing families. Nevertheless, the women of these households, which include wives/partners, daughters, and mothers, are bound to the very nature of fishing as a way of life. *Being* in a fishing family implies an identity that is constructed in relation to fishing as a way of life and as an occupation with the innate practices that go with it (Acott and Urquhart, 2012).

4.4.1.1 Breton and Irish Perspectives

Fishers have an innate pride in *who* they are and *what* they do (Urquhart and Acott, 2013a). Their everyday practice is part of their being as many fishermen have been 'born into it'. The majority of the fishermen I interviewed, whether Breton or Irish, active or retired, highlighted the fact that they were proud *to be* fishers.

> *Je suis à la retraite mais je serai toujours marin-pêcheur. Même à la retraite on est toujours pêcheur. Qu'on est Bigouden ou Breton on est quand-même Français. Oui, je suis fier d'avoir été pêcheur, quand quelqu'un me le demande je suis fier de leur dire, j'ai travaillé presque vingt heures par jour, j'ai fais plus que les huit heures par semaine.* Although I'm retired I'll always be a fisherman. Once a fisherman, always a fisherman. Whether we are Bigouden or Breton we are French all the same [he laughs]. Yes, I am proud to have been a fisherman, when someone asks me I'm proud to tell them, I worked almost twenty hours in the day, I did more than the eight hours a day (Retired Fisherman M, LG, 2014).

> Well you were [proud to be a fisherman], you were following Saint Peter [he laughs yet he was serious about what he said] (Retired Fisherman M, CTB, 2013).

> *J'ai choisi de pêcher ; c'est une passion, c'est générationnel, de père en fils.* I chose to fish; it's a passion, it's generational, father to son (Active Fisherman P, LG, 2014).

> If we went away on holidays, we're only just back from Portugal the other day, we were down the [fish] market and had a look, the same if we were in Galway we'd have to go to Rosaveal for a look, you'd have that tie to fishing communities around you or even if it was a different country you'd still have to look at how they do things compared to the way we do things (Active Fisherman B, CTB, 2013).

Fishers are not just proud of *who* they are and *where* they come from but they also have a strong sense of collective identity which is revealed by their choice of holiday location where the *need* to connect to the coastal surroundings or to the local fishermen is apparent.

The women understood how the act of fishing is essential to their husbands'/partners', fathers' and/or brothers' construction of identities. Most of the women in the study, both

Breton and Irish, recognised the different meanings that they and fishermen give to this way of life (see Cresswell, 2013). The following quotations reveal the nature of fishing as an inherent practice and way of life very much linked to identity:

> I suppose it is a way of life really. (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant F).

> It's just in their blood, we were going across to [inaudible] Island on the ferry and a half an hour later I was "where's [her husband] gone" he was in the wheelhouse and he came back with a thing, um, a reading of the longitude and latitude ... (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant B).

> We were on holidays and [her husband] took off down the beach and started helping a fisherman who was mending a net neither of them able to speak the other one's language. It just becomes the way they are. That's the good side of it as well, it becomes an interest (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

> *C'est leur passion avant l'aspect financier. Ils ne supporteraient pas toutes ses contraintes s'ils n'étaient pas passionnés.* It's their passion before the financial aspect. They wouldn't cope with the constraints it they weren't passionate (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant D).

> *C'est quelque chose qu'il aime faire, il aime pêcher, la pêche est tellement de choses pour lui.* It's something that he enjoys, he likes fishing, it's his family, it's so many things to him (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant C).

During the discussion on identity one participant in Castletownbere argued that "you are somebody's [wife or] mother" and agreed that: "Yes I guess your own identity is gone out the window" (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant D). Another participant, who is a fisherman's daughter, illustrated this aspect rather well:

> Now they work but the role of being at home, waiting and the feelings they haven't changed; the husband is still at sea. The identity thing I think has changed but you're *still* a fisherman's spouse (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant A).

This reveals the complexity of identity construction. This is particularly observed among women, the majority of whom work outside the home and, consequently, do not have as fixed an identity as their husbands/partners (Crang, 1998; Jenkins, 2008; Madec, 2011; Badone, 2012). Participant A – a fisherman's daughter − is of the younger generation, yet, she maintains that "you're *still* a fisherman's spouse". It appears that she is seeing this identity construction through the eyes of her mother as she, herself, is not married to a fisherman. Although the participants across all focus groups tended to agree with the different degrees of identity construction, slight divergences occurred such as that with Participant A above and, thus, conveying the complex nature of the study.

> As I'm working outside the home, it [identity] wouldn't be as a fisherman's

> wife, you know what I mean, but I suppose if I wasn't [working] I'd be a mother first before a spouse of a fisherman (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

Participant E from Castletownbere emphasised the fact that her identity is first and foremost personal as it relates to who *she* is even though she acknowledges where she comes from – a fishing family and fishing community.

Most of the women in the study who work outside the home have predominantly entered occupations, such as, teaching, caring and social work while others also worked in the fisheries sector. As Dieu *et al.* (2010) maintain women identify with *who* they are through their professional activity. These women create their own identities through the choice of their own life-courses.

I came to understand that there was a strong sense of identity among Bigouden women and (fisher)men. *Being* Bigouden is to have determination and resolve. The majority of the women I interviewed in Le Guilvinec identified with *being* Bigouden first and then *being* Breton: *"C'est même pas bretonne, c'est bigodenne, c'est pas pareil"* − "It's not even Breton, it's *Bigoudenne*, it's not the same" (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant B). *"On est bigoudenne avant tout"* − "We are *bigoudenne* first and foremost" (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant E). Their sense of identity is very much linked to *who they are* which in turn is an essential component to place attachment which is deeply rooted as one participant observed (Kyle, Jun and Absher, 2014):

> *Ça situe quelqu'un dans l'espace, et puis avec son caractère, même en plaisantant, "les Bretons, les Bigoudens sont patriotes". Je suis intéressé par l'histoire de la Bretagne car j'aime ma région.* It places somebody within a space, and your character, even jokingly, "the Bretons, the Bigoudens are patriotic". I am interested in art history of Brittany because I appreciate my region (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant A).

Some of the participants who were new to the fishing community of Le Guilvinec acquired a sense of attachment to the place through the construction of new senses of identity that are *a priori* based on their husbands'/partners' lives as fishermen. A participant that originally came from Rennes – inland capital town of Brittany – explained that she had no problem in settling into life in the *Pays Bigouden* [Bigouden area] where her husband comes from. She maintained that this ease in adapting was due to "a very strong family foundation" which she experienced in her husband's family. She emphasised that living in the area gave her *"une sentiment de confort, un sentiment de connaître tout le monde"* − "a feeling of comfort, the feeling of knowing everybody" (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant C). This illustrates the adaptability of human nature, whereupon, new arrivals become attached to these places, and thus, develop their *new* senses of identities.

For the majority of fishers from Le Guilvinec, being a fisher defines who they are, however, they also expressed that being Breton is significant to their identity. Bretons are recognised for their *force de caractère*. In the words of Hélias (1975, p. 267), the constant wind is what gives the Bretons this force of character that is "physical and moral exuberance".

> *Les Bigoudens sont une race qui est très, très fier d'être Bigouden. Jakez [Helias] a écrit : 'Jupiter dans sa colère, pour se venger du genre humain fit venir sur la terre la race des Bigouden'.* The Bigouden people are a race that is very, very proud, proud to be Bigouden.– 'Jupiter in his fury, to avenge human kind brought the Bigouden race to earth' (Active Fisherman F, LG, 2014).

This fisherman told me about a book *Le Cheval d'Orgueil* written by a teacher Pierre-Jakez Hélias that retraces Bigouden identity. He further stated that the proverb is displayed on his boat. The proverb refers to the strong character of the Bigouden people and their pride in their identity as Bigouden.

> *Un pêcheur breton. Le fait d'être breton est ancré en nous, c'est régional. Je suis enraciné en Bretagne. Je me sens enraciné à l'héritage Celtique.* A Breton fisherman. The fact of being Breton is anchored within us, it's also very regional. I feel deeply rooted in Brittany. I feel rooted to the Celtic heritage (Active Fisherman S, LG, 2014).

> *Le fait qu'on est du Pays Bigouden on est différent. Pour nous, on n'est pas français mais breton and bigouden. Le Pays Bigouden est différent des autres endroits de Bretagne.* Even the fact that we are from the Pays Bigouden we are different. To us we are not French but Breton and Bigouden. The Pays Bigouden is different to other areas in Brittany (Active Fisherman D, LG, 2014).

According to Scannell and Gifford (2010, p. 3) "individuals may connect to a place in the sense that it comes to represent who they are". The Breton fishers considered themselves different to other French regions due to their Celtic origins and experience more affiliation with other Celtic regions, such as, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Cornwall.

Identity is forged by a specific connection to a physical place but can also be formed by livelihood. Although participants, both female and male in Castletownbere, are proud to be from this fishing community, their identity, nevertheless, appears to be forged by their occupation rather than being place-based. In contrast, participants in Le Guilvinec revealed a strong identity linked to place. While fishers identified with both their occupation as fishers and being Breton, the women too were more deeply rooted to their Breton identity compared to the women of Castletownbere who were anchored more in activity-based rather than place-based identity.

4.5 Conclusion

Fishing families create and maintain their own ways of 'being-in-the-world'. Although on land, their every day lived experiences are intricately linked to fishing. Their lives are shaped by the pace of this complex and uncertain sea-going activity.

Uncertainty comes in many forms; fishing families cope with it through various actions both within and outside the home. It conjures up feelings that, in some cases, take the form of fear and anxiety. They remain alert to weather conditions at sea and frequently verify that the lifeboat is 'anchored in place'. Due to the nature of fishing, scheduling and planning seemingly mundane activities is ever-challenging. Annually-negotiated quotas tend to restrict the idea of 'planning ahead' which adds to the complexity of this way of life. However, sharing experiences with other fishing families helps them deal with this multifaceted way of life owing to a reciprocal understanding of 'being-in-the-*fishing*-world'. Absences disrupt family events and disconnect fishers but coping strategies and mechanisms are 'reconfigured' to overcome this. Participants learn to manage the myriad of emotions that the precarity of fishing brings. While these women are highly independent, it is sometimes at the price of loneliness and isolation. Times have changed but the feelings experienced have not. Despite the advent of modern communication technology, rituals of 'saying a prayer' or 'lighting a candle', for those at sea, continue to have a critical place in fishing homes.

The fishing home is a place of culturally changed artefacts. Concepts of identity and place attachment reveal the intrinsic nature of fishing as a way of life that can be understood through 'being-in-the-*fishing*-world'. Interviews conducted with fishermen in their homes highlighted the importance of the different artefacts associated with fishing. This material culture presents itself not only to family members but to all visitors to the home. Artefacts are critically important in fishing families. Their meanings go beyond identity representation; for families they [artefacts] 'bring presence' to the absent and they 'anchor' memories for fishing families. They provide comfort in times of uncertainty and sustained absences reminding them of their beloved. It is *their* way of 'filling the void' that absent fishermen leave each time they go to sea. These objects provide a link between sea and shore; the 'absent' *are* 'present'. They also provide a link for retired and active fishers to events, people, and places in their past.

Initially, the home as place recalls the notion of the 'mother ship'. However, my own 'being-in-the-*fishing*-world' encouraged me to confront the traditional matriarchal portrayal of these households. My research reveals home arises as a myriad of complex relationships wherein both spouses/partners concurrently (re)negotiate and (re)adjust to their place –

fishermen *should be fishing* and at sea. Home emerges as a place of collaboration and partnership.

The home reveals itself as the 'buoy' on land; it is the *place* where family relationships are kept 'afloat'. It is a place where identity is (re)constructed. Women in these households draw upon different elements of their way of life within the changing environment of the wider fishing community, by developing *their own* senses of identity as professionals, wives/partners of fishermen, mothers and/or daughters. As a result of these changes within the home new identities are being forged. The home has become a place where different identities converge.

The senses of identity in the fishing communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec are (re)constructed through *being* and *doing*. Fishermen are defined by *who* they are through the practice of fishing. Nevertheless, identities are multiple, emerging from and intertwining past and present experiences; they are deeply rooted. This 'rootedness' can be observed among Bretons, both male and female participants. Their sense of identity is intrinsically linked to *where* they come from and *who* they are. In contrast, participants in Castletownbere constructed their identities on a more personal level, for instance, their professional activity was key to *who* they are. This could be discerned not only in relation to fishermen but also among the wives/partners who identified themselves as mothers or home-makers and *vis-à-vis* their professional activity.

By weaving together my fieldwork findings, patterns emerged which revealed strong similarities between the sites themselves and the different generations of fishers despite continual societal change. Transformations in fishing families from one generation to the next appear to have been imperceptible; adjustments did not occur in a disruptive manner but involved a series of small incremental adaptations. The notion of partnership rather than matriarchy is a major conceptual shift in our understanding of the workings of fishing families and is a key contribution to the literature from this research. The partnership and collaboration encountered throughout this study reveals itself as a symbiotic relationship. Spouses/partners establish a mutual understanding as a way of responding to each other's needs.





Chapter Five
The Boat

5.1 Introduction

The sea and the boat are at the centre of the fishers' world. The sea is the source of their livelihoods and the boat is the entity that facilitates access to exploit this resource. The life of a fisherman is very different to those whose livelihoods are based onshore. This chapter explores some of these differences by looking at issues that emerged from my field research as being significant; it examines what it *means* to be a fisherman. It investigates fishers' relationships with their boats and the sea. The understandings and insights were developed by listening to and observing fishermen and most critically by participating on a fishing expedition. This chapter explores how the sea shapes their identities and defines these men. What emerges from my research is that fishers' identities are very complex and nuanced. In many cases what appear on the surface to be contradictions when examined more deeply exhibit an inherent logic and cohesion.

The narratives in this chapter represent the experiences of the research participants. The issues that concern them are outlined and examined. Their stories have been coherently coalesced in order to gain meaningful insights into their way(s) of life. This chapter explores the sea as a parallel place − a place apart − and the boat as an 'alternative abode'. Issues raised by the fishermen included the notions of freedom and solitude. As a researcher, I noted and wanted to understand what appeared to me as the contradictions of firstly, experiencing strong feelings of freedom in the confined space of the boat; secondly, experiencing solitude when sharing that space with other members of the crew and finally, while being aware of the risks and the dangers of this way of life being totally relaxed and comfortable with uncertainty. Other key observations centred on the notions of mobility and motion − how constant movement is part of fishermen's lives. My research will show the *perpetual* movement and fluidity of the sea differs greatly from the static and solid nature of the land. This constant motion and 'fluidity' is a key factor that sets fishers apart from their 'terrestrial counterparts'. Moving beyond the concept of mobilites explored by Cresswell, (2006, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2014) I introduce and explore the concept of motion. I examine fishermen's constant corporal movements at sea and how the performance of mundane tasks become complex especially during periods of extreme weather conditions. I develop the idea that this physical movement reflects the psychological notion of 'flow' and for fishers both body *and*

mind ‘get into the flow’ of life at sea. While land appears (to the naked eye) solid and still (see Cresswell, 2011) the sea is very unpredictable capable of quickly changing from calm to calamitous (see Bresnihan, 2013). My research therefore indicated that underpinning life at sea are the notions of freedom and solitude, space and confinement, uncertainty and risk (as explored in chapter four) and in this and other chapters these are themes that will be examined, re-visited and explored.

Physical environments, where activities take place, are essential to developing one’s sense of self and one’s sense of identity (Prince, 2013). I sought a deeper understanding of the fishers’ ‘world’ and explored the meanings these fishermen give to their everyday lived lives. While the boat exists as a transcendental place in itself, the sea can also be similarly regarded due to its relatively unexplored nature (Peters, 2010). This chapter explores the nature of fishermen’s lives and how being at sea influences and shapes their identities and provides senses of place that differ from land-dwellers. For fishers, the sea *is* part of *who* they are and is intrinsic to their way of life. I draw upon what Tuan (1974) terms “Topophilia”. Fishers’ ‘love of place’ is revealed through their passion and dedication for a way of life that is both uncertain and risky. They create “vivid and concrete” (Tuan, 1974, p. 4) bonds with an element that remains mysterious to non-fishers and wherein purposeful activity is performed. Tuan (1974, p. 5) further points out that “no two social groups make precisely the same evaluation of the environment”. There is a notion of ‘*other*-worldliness’ to this way of life. Both boat *and* fishers could be regarded as ‘nonconformist’ due to the physicality of *their* environment being so different to the land (Peters, 2010). Nevertheless, this ‘peculiar’ place becomes theirs; they inhabit it instinctively – ‘the sea becomes them’.

Building on the insights that had been garnered from focus-groups and individual interviews, I endeavoured to deepen my insights into the everyday performances of these fishermen at sea. In Castletownbere in late September 2013 I had the opportunity to go to sea and experience my first fishing trip. Immersion into the everyday lives of the crew during this trip provided *my own* experience of *being* on board a fishing boat. As a cultural geographer, I view performance as a “means through which to examine how spaces are practiced and experienced” (Rogers, 2012, p. 60). ‘Being-in-the-*fishing*-world’ and watching them ‘perform their lives’ at sea gave me the opportunity to develop deeper insights and understandings of fishing − how it incorporates and embodies apparent contradictions. My observations reveal an ‘internal logic’ acquired by fishermen and, consequently, *their* coherence counters the contradictions imagined by outsiders.

To recall the philosophical perspective of both Ricoeur (1969) and Gadamer (1976)

our understanding and, hence, our interpretation are concurrently bound to *our own* histories and our *being* in contemporary society. Gadamer postulates (1989) that we cannot separate ourselves from the meaning of a text. Ricoeur (1976) goes beyond text to include action and, thus, in this circumstance, the meaning of fishing practices including bodily gestures and facial expressions. An action, like a text, is "open to an infinite amount of possible" 'observers' (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 196). I was aware of my own possibilities for being-in-the-world (Ricoeur, 1969). Although daily walks exploring both towns were essential to observing both home and pier activities, certain aspects of fishing compelled me to take to the sea in order to experience and appreciate what it *means to be* a fisher. In so doing, I was embracing what Ricoeur (1976, p. 73) terms the 'concept of appropriation'. Not only did I endeavour to interpret the meanings these fishermen give to their quotidian activities at sea but also to understand what this fishing trip meant to me. I needed to look beyond theory in order to focus on practice (Burrell, 2015) and to discover meanings hidden in *their* everyday life (Gadamer, 1989). I experienced life on the boat; I witnessed first-hand the working environment, the teamwork and the range of interactions that took place as the crew 'performed' in *their* realm. By participating in this fashion and becoming not so much a 'part of the crew' (as I did not engage in their work) but as member of the boat I witnessed their living and working conditions and gathered insights that could not have been gleaned from other qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups. For two days I watched them live their 'working lives' and achieved a degree of understanding that fully justified this methodological approach.

A final issue that emerged from my research was what I can best describe as the *more-than-local* element of fishing. This is manifested through fishermen establishing relationships with fishermen from elsewhere; the *sea as place* acts as the connecting element between all fishermen. This maritime space connects rather than divides and is experienced and practiced in specific ways by fishermen (Peters, 2010). The sea is "... a shared engagement with the domain that transcends people and place" (Minnegal *et al*., 2003, p. 66). The sea, along with fishing, could be understood as a "material signifier of identification" which contributes towards connectedness with maritime culture (Tolia-Kelly, 2004a, p. 676). Fishermen's perception of fishing as a way of life is revealed through their passion for *being* at sea. Understanding and interpreting their actions allowed me to explore how *being-at-sea* shapes their identity and provides an attachment to place that goes beyond the superficial. It includes a particular focus on the boat as 'alternative abode' and the importance of collaboration between all crew members including the skipper. This *all-male* environment differs

dramatically from landed society.

5.2 The Sea as Place

People come to closely associate specific places with who they are and how they identify themselves. In the same way, the sea as *place* comes to embody who fishers are and provides them with a recurring sense of self (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Cultural geographers have argued that people give meanings to their surroundings as they identify with specific landmarks (Crang, 1998; Urquhart and Acott, 2014). In turn, the natural and built environments play a significant role in our attachment to place. One of the key peculiarities at sea is the fact that there are no place names but numerical references to provide one's location (Casey, 1993). In contrast, the sea can be recognised for its emptiness, its vastness, its fluidity and its mysteriousness, but, as fishers have a direct contact with it, they are *in place* − in *this* element. For most people, the vastness of the sea generates a notion of 'abstract space' as it lacks the signifiers of location so readily identifiable on land. Political and cultural borders are invisible − there is an absence of boundaries. Signage, so commonly present on land, is absent (Escalier, 2007). However, the strangeness and emptiness of the sea becomes thoroughly familiar to fishers through the routine fishing activities they perform in it. Fishers seem to build connections with the sea primarily through familiarity. This too has been noted by cultural geographers as a mechanism for developing senses of belonging and attachment. Individuals may form very "personal connections to a place based on their own memories, experiences, and perceptions that they associate with particular places" (Acott and Urquhart, 2012, p. 6; see also Manzo, 2005). And like all places that become important to us fishers need to be in this place as frequently as they can. Fishers' relationship with the sea is complex and nuanced. Some of the issues relating to this relationship that emerged from my research are explored in more depth in this section.

5.2.1 Attachment to *their* Realm

> To a certain extent you have a certain feeling for the water different from ... well I wouldn't say land-lovers but people who wouldn't be on the sea a lot, you just feel natural there (Active Fisherman W, CTB, 2013).

The sea is familiar to fishers. They become accustomed to a life at sea by *being* and *doing*. To most fishermen being at sea has become a 'natural' state. They are *in* their element. For Fisherman W, there is a clear distinction between seafaring individuals and land-dwellers. There is an existential quality to their way of life (see Entrikin, 1991). Not only are fishers in

place but they are also part of this environment (see Ingold, 2007).



Figure 5.1 A time to ponder: The fishermen take the time to appreciate *their* environment. They contemplate the infinity of the sea. Their body language − relaxed posture − illustrates their 'being-in-*their*-world'. (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

Fisherman F reveals one of the contradictions of fishers' lives:

> When you're at sea everything is more relaxed in a sense. The job is dangerous but you're still relaxed in your own environment (Crew member F, CTB, 2013).

He stated that "the job is dangerous", yet, maintained that he and other fishers are "relaxed". For me the key to understanding this apparent contradiction of being relaxed while exposed to danger is that it is *their* "own environment". Surrounded by water they are, as it were, immersed; these fishermen embody their environment. Despite the potential dangers they are comfortable and feel safe. Through repetition they become accustomed to living and working in a potentially dangerous environment. Therefore when the elements are extreme fishers respond with resilience and when they [elements] are calm they [fishers] become aware of the tranquillity that surrounds them.

> There's nothing like it when the weather's fine outside and everything's going well, next thing there could be ten dolphins jumping out of the water ten feet away from the boat, there's something really nice about that, it's not your normal nine-to-five kind of thing (Active Fisherman W, CTB, 2013).

They know they do not perform a 'normal' job. They know they are different.

The use of words by fishermen in this study such as *need* and *withdrawal symptoms* conveys the passion they have for their life at sea. Consequently, as their life experiences were recounted they depicted fishing as a way of life rather than merely a means to an income (Acott and Urquhart, 2012; Britton and Coulthard 2013). They need to be at sea:

> I'd get withdrawal symptoms [we both laugh] I'm serious yeah. You'd nearly be looking at pictures of the sea. I've never been away from the sea for too long and anywhere on holidays it's been by the coast somewhere, there's definitely a longing for it; you'd feel something was missing. It's like home sickness but it's for the sea (Active Fisherman W, CTB, 2013).

> After being ashore for a while you get itchy feet to go out again (Retired Fisherman D, CTB, 2013).

> In the early days ... when I retired first. I'd get up in the morning and wonder what am I going to do for the day; … Yes I suppose you would [feel out of place] you're always drawn back to the sea (Retired Fisherman D, CTB, 2013).

Passion for the sea *and* for what they do is a 'prerequisite' to a life of fishing. To *be* a fisher and *to go to sea* requires a great amount of psychological *and* physical resilience in order to be able to live with the uncertainties and risks that this activity involves. A good fisherman is "able to commit and adapt to the variety of possibilities which arise" (Bresnihan, 2013, p. 7). Both active and retired fishermen spoke of deep and emotional attachments to the sea and to their way of life – it is/was their calling so to speak.

> *J'ai une grande passion pour la mer. Il y a quelque temps on est allé en vacances au Pays de la Loire et on a loué une maison pour dix jours, on avait déjà tout payé mais après une semaine j'ai dis a ma femme "on fait cap a l'ouest" et on est allé a La Rochelle. Il restait quatre jours mais je m'en fichais.* I have a great passion for the sea. A while back we went on holidays to the Loire Valley and we rented a house for ten days, we had already paid for everything but after a week we packed up and I said to my wife "we're heading west" and so we went to La Rochelle instead. We had another four days left [in the Loire Valley] but I didn't care (Retired Fisherman JL, LG, 2014).

> *Il faut être passionné. Il faut aimer le métier, on ne le fait pas comme ça je crois pas, surtout à l'heure actuelle. Il faut être né dedans.* You must be passionate .You need to love the job, it's [fishing] not something you just do, especially nowadays. You need to be born into it (Active Fisherman J, LG, 2014).

They need to *feel* this element beneath their feet; constant movement becomes a natural state of *their* being − being-in-the-*fishing*-world. JL is not the only fisher who feels like a 'fish out of water' or to employ Cresswell's (1996) term 'out of place' when he is not

by the sea. Being at sea is essential to fishers as they construct and maintain their *own* personal senses of identity through *being-in-their-sea world*. They are emotionally attached to the life that the sea gives them.

5.2.2 Adjusting to Life on the Boat: Fishing for Understanding and Meaning

As humans, land is our natural environment and since the Industrial Revolution we have evolved highly regimented and structured work routines that dictate how we organise and live our lives. Life at sea requires fishers work far more flexibly − to work when required and to rest only when the work ends. Work on a fishing boat is intense, hard, dangerous and demanding. This leads to difficulties re-adapting to life ashore which is highly routinised and structured:

> When you go home after a week or so of being out you're still detached for a day or two; you're not with it. Your hours are different; in the mornings you're sleeping; when you're out you could be up ten or twelve hours getting up at 7.00 am or sometimes three in the morning. When you're at home then you could be awake at three in the morning. You're mentally affected for at least forty-eight hours (Crew member F, CTB, 2013).

> It takes a while, forty-eight hours or so; you could wake up in the middle of the night and only sleep a couple of hours and be asleep by day (Crew member M, CTB, 2013).

> Yes you need at least forty-eight hours to adjust to a different sleeping pattern (Crew member J, CTB, 2013).

So much of their time is spent at sea that returning to solid ground necessitates that they readapt. Most fishermen I interviewed spoke about the difficulty to readjust especially to a more 'standard' sleeping pattern once they return to shore. Their sleeping pattern, or rather lack of it, at sea is irregular according to the season and type of fishery. Yet, surprisingly my research reveals that this is something that they find easy to adapt to.

> When you get into a rhythm once you're out the harbour's mouth whereas at shore you could be at gear a couple of days and it's not that you're not getting enough sleep but you'd have more of a rhythm outside [at sea]. You might be getting less sleep but it would be more frequent, at shore you could be rushing around to get gear then you must go home and get the wages done, you might have to collect parts from some courier whereas when you're at sea you can only do so much (Active Fisherman W, CTB, 2013).

These fishermen tend to adapt easily to conditions encountered on board the boat − in fact much more easily than re-adapting to life ashore. I draw on Cresswell's (1996) notion of *being* 'out-of-place'. For these men life on shore can be more difficult than life on the boat. In a sense, as they leave behind *their* place in the 'on-shore' world, they find a more

comfortable place − a better fit − on board the boat. The more exposed they become to a life at sea, the more uncomfortable they become with aspects of life on-shore.

> I find the city very hustle and bustle. Everyone is rushing now whereas before … society is changing an awful lot (Crew member F, CTB, 2013).

Perhaps the issues are scale and order. The limited space of the fishing boat may limit the commotion on board − the chaotic and frenzied periods of work are confined in space. But each crew member knows every other crew member, his own role on the boat and the role of the other crew members. Each crew member knows precisely what needs to be done, who needs to do it and when it needs to be done. There is a hierarchical nature to the crew, and there is no unnecessary rushing. On shore, roles are not so clearly and rigidly defined and the world is not as limited or confined. The world on-shore is more crowded and encounters with people more random. It may also be significant that the vast majority of crews are all male.

> *On dit souvent que c'est un autre monde, deux mondes différents [mer et terre] Pendant l'été j'aime bien voir d'autres visages, j'aimerais aller au marché le dimanche mais j'y vais pas car il y a trop de monde. Pendant les vacances je suis content d'être en mer dans mon zodiac. J'aime bien aussi sortir en zodiac avec ma femme et ma fille.* We often say that it's another world, two different worlds [land and sea]. During the summer I do enjoy seeing other faces, I'd like to go the market on a Sunday morning but I don't because I find it too crowded. During the holidays I'm happy to be out at sea on my own in my dinghy. I also enjoy going out in the dinghy with my wife and daughter (Active Fisherman J, LG, 2014).

On shore they tend to be like 'fish out of water'. On the boat the physical and mental challenges of their daily engagement with the natural environment and *their* place as part of a crew are key components in what helps these fishermen construct *their own* place in the world (Acott and Urquhart, 2012).

> *Premièrement, la différence est déjà physique, on est quand même constamment dans un milieu hostile. Normalement un être humain n'est pas fait pour être sur l'eau, on a été fait pour marcher sue la terre, mais nous [pêcheurs] on est parti en mer donc là dessus on est différent. On a une autre vision des éléments, je pense, peut être, moins fataliste, il pleut, bah il pleut, il y a du vent, on va faire avec, on n'est pas a se morfondrer ... [il rit]*. Firstly, the difference is physical, we are constantly within a rather hostile environment. Normally humans are not made for life at sea, we were made for walking on land, but we [fishermen] went to sea and so on that yes we are different. We have another vision of the elements, I think, perhaps not so fatalist, it's raining, well it's raining, it' windy, OK we'll put up with it, we don't mope around because of it ... [he laughs] (Active Fisherman F, LG, 2014).

The physical space of the sea can be somewhat adverse; nonetheless, it is an environment

where fishers are comfortable. They accept the challenging nature of their way of life and, as a result, they are very matter-of-fact about their everyday lived lives at sea.

> *On n'a pas la même vie qu'à terre, soit tu la redoutes soit tu l'apprécies [l'activité de la pêche], les vacances et le temps libre ne sont pas les mêmes, ce n'est pas la semaine de trente-cinq heures [semaine de travail légal en France], on ne les compte pas et on ne peut pas, c'est impossible. Il y a des contraintes mais pour celui qui veut y réussir peut et sera heureux. Et cela apporte aussi de la satisfaction.* You don't have the same life as ashore, you either dread it or appreciate it [fishing activity], holidays and free time are not the same, it's not your thirty-five hour week [legal work week in France], we don't count them and we cannot, it's impossible. It has its constraints but for the one who wants to succeed at it can and will be happy. And it also brings satisfaction (Retired fisherman, D2, LG, 2014).

> We have the privilege to see things differently from like people ashore like the sun rising on a clear day or a school of dolphins (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2013).

Being-at-sea perhaps changes their perspective of how they 'see' life. A 'sea-shore' perspective is experienced differently to a 'shore-sea' one. Those who have never been to sea will only ever observe the world from a landed perspective. Fishing offers fishers a unique vantage point from which to view both land and sea. Consequently they develop different perspectives. They are a *world* away from what has become the normative *métro, boulot, dodo* (commute, work, sleep). Their world intertwines the *linear* – journeys to and fro – and the *cyclical* – the movements of long intervals (Lefebvre, 2004). Being-at-sea provides these men with a sense of *being* 'elsewhere'; the act of fishing becomes second nature allowing them the time and place to experience peace, tranquillity and happiness.

> There's a great sense ... I don't know ... a great sense of peace of mind when I'm actually fishing. The way fishing has gone especially over the last few years there's actually more stress involved in setting it up and like we spoke earlier about policy and all the rules and regulations that's attached to fishing but when you get outside the harbour's mouth you're ... I feel that I'm living in a different space and have more time to think and to focus. I'm happy once I get past the harbour's mouth (Active Fisherman D, CTB, 2013).

Although fishing has changed over the past decade, fishermen remain attached to their way of life at sea through the meanings they give to their practice. They feel very much a part of a free world (Active Fisherman F, LG, 2014). Finding themselves in a 'different space' that encompasses sea and shore, they embody this *other*-worldly place.

> *L'espace. On n'a pas de comptes à rendre ! On est seul face aux éléments. Il y a cette sensation d'appartenir à un monde libre.* Space. We don't have to justify ourselves! We are alone facing the elements. There is the sensation of being part of a free world (Active Fisherman F, LG, 2014).

Space appears to be experienced differently by these individuals. There are no place names, no signposts, no routes − yet, fishermen invest this space with meanings through their work. The frequency of being-at-sea allows them to acquire knowledge of fishing grounds and coastlines that transcends the perspective that non-fishers have of travelling on land. On land people tend to strive for order and structure through visible signposting in the hope of controlling/managing their future – for example, by estimating arrival times. Fishermen and their families, however, do not have this possibility open to them. They know that they have little or no control over their future. They are very 'matter-of-fact' about ceding this control of their everyday lived lives.

5.2.3 Fishing for Freedom

The majority of fishermen that I interviewed indicated that the notion of 'freedom' is what inspires them to embrace fishing as a way of life. Yet, as outlined above, the contradictions appear to be that it is a freedom that is anchored in hierarchical crew structures and clearly defined roles. While it is true that the sea is a vast space, it is also strange that they experience a sense of freedom while on the tiny confined space of the boat in that wider space. This section aims to examine fishermen's relationships with the sea by exploring the reasons why fishermen are drawn to the sea in a quest for this 'ideal' of freedom (Trimble and Johnson, 2013).



Figure 5.2 Surrounded by sea: Apart from a glimpse of a fishing boat in the distance that quickly disappears into the mist, not a piece of land is in sight. This prospect produces the sense of freedom that so many fishers speak about (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

It is rather difficult to discern why so many fishermen speak of freedom. Tuan (1977, p. 64) argues that "to be free is to be exposed and vulnerable" and on the fishing boat fishers are both exposed and vulnerable. Their livelihood is anchored in risk and uncertainty. Ricoeur (1966) like Tuan (1977) maintains that freedom involves an element of risk. According to Brulé-Josse (2012, p. 734) the sea is the "*dernier espace de liberté*" − the last space of freedom. But the world in which this freedom is anchored is evolving. Change is taking place; increasing regulations govern the fishers' activities. Information technology reduces the isolation experienced at sea yet, fishermen still remain attached to *their own* notion of liberty.

> Years ago there was so little regulation, you went out and you caught fish, you watched for rocks obviously, you wanted to make sure that the crew arrived safely and you're boat is OK whereas now you have to watch what you're writing down, crossing your Ts and everything ... you could get into trouble over it over something small (Active Fisherman W, CTB, 2013).

Maintenant vous avez de l'information qui arrive de partout, même en mer,

> *l'internet est en mer, tout les gars ont des informations en temps et en heure, avant on avait un postes de radio c'est tout, y avait pas d'information, maintenant vous avez le téléphone par satellite, ils ne sont plus décrochés.* Now you have information that arrives from everywhere even at sea, internet is available at sea, the crew has news in real time, before you had a radio and that's all, no news, now you have satellite telephone so they [fishermen] are no longer detached (Retired Fisherman D2, LG, 2014).

Modern technology could come to symbolise a 'double-edged' sword. Although progress has improved communication between members of fishing families, it also means increased contact with fishing authorities. Enhanced technology has impacted the past notion of freedom wherein fishermen had little or no communication with landed society; there was complete detachment.

> *Je toujours voulais faire ça [la pêche] la liberté, la fait que ... il n'y avait pas de contraintes, on allait en mer, on rentrait à terre, pas de responsabilités à la maison …* I wanted to do that [fishing] ... freedom, the fact that... there are no constraints, we went to sea, we returned, no responsibilities at home ... (Active Fisherman Y, LG, 2014).

These men identify with their own sense of freedom through the choice they made in becoming fishermen and going to sea. Their notion of freedom can be interpreted as "the condition of being able to recognise [themselves] in [the act of fishing]" (James, 2012, p. 45). By continually returning to sea these men give meaning to their notion of freedom (see Ricoeur, 1986).

> *Je préférais être seul sur la passerelle. […] Je préférais être pénard, tranquille, ça me plaisait d'être solitaire mais pas dans le sens solitude. J'aimais bien faire mon truc; c'était ma manière de me concentrer sur ce que j'étais en train de faire; et je me sentais là libre.* I liked the idea of being alone on the deck. [...] I liked being on my own but not in the solitude sense, but when I was doing my own thing; it was my way of concentrating on the task in hand; and there I felt that I was free (Retired Fisherman D2, LG, 2014).

My 'mission', so to speak, was to observe and participate in the *fishing-world* that is beyond "*des limites géographiques visible sur terre*" – geographical limits visible in land (Escalier, 2007, p. 335). Although Morriss (2012, p. 6) suggests that freedom could also be observed as an "absence of constraints", the complex nature of life at sea reveals a space where freedom is *theoretically* without limits, yet, in today's fishing-world, fishermen have limits (Escalier, 2007, p. 332). They are constrained by fishing regulations and the 'Laws of the Sea'. Having said that, adhering to these rules safeguards this finite resource and permits present and future generations of fishers to continue fishing and going to sea. Additionally, despite the constraints of EU policy, they continue to embrace their unique way of life (see James, 2012). While both Breton and Irish fishers are disheartened with the inequities of the

regulatory system, they persevere to make a living from the sea. Fishing, as a way of life, encourages self-reliance and despite contemporary society, it continues to symbolise the notion of the 'hunter-gatherer'.

> Our everyday practices are performed and are deemed appropriate in worlds, for example, the world of work or the world of the family. Here we tend not to take a stand on what we might be (i.e. Heidegger's notion of authenticity), but allow ourselves to be carried along with what others may want us to be; we fit in, we are accepted and find comfort in being just one of the crowd (Gibbs, 2010, p. 390).

Heidegger's notion of authenticity could be understood through observing and experiencing fishers' 'alternative' way of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1962). They engage in an activity that is a vocation rather than just a means of earning an income – *their calling* so to speak. Historically, they were marginalised from landed society (Mac Laughlin, 2010) as they live most of their lives at sea. They do not strive to 'fit-in' so much so that they are comfortable with the inconsistencies observed by those on the outside.

> *La liberté peut-être, quand on est en mer, on est un moins contrôlé et aimer la mer, il faut aimer la mer*. Freedom I suppose, when we're at sea, we're less controlled and of course the love of the sea, you *must* love the sea [to go fishing] (Active Fisherman S, LG, 2014).

For these participants freedom is the absence of authoritative constraints which means being less controlled by the 'powers-that-be', free from the 'frenzied' nature of land-based society, nevertheless, to experience freedom at sea one must be passionate about fishing. It is *this* passion for the sea and their self-realisation that encourages these individuals to continue going to sea despite the intensification of regulations. There are so many terms used to distinguish fishermen from their landed counterparts. Fishing *is* as it were 'in the blood', or, as many fishermen contend they have 'salt in their veins'. Could there be something 'impulsive' about fishermen? Their need for freedom could be anchored in a desire for risk and uncertainty, or it could be based on a need to be apart from on-shore society (with all its responsibilities) and to exchange these for an all-male, highly organised work environment where the repetitive routines of fishing somehow allow fishers to find an inner freedom in an inner space − not unlike undertaking the repetitive rituals of a pilgrimage (Scriven, 2014). Perhaps the vastness of the sea is *not* the liberating agent. To be free is to be "creator of our own life" (Morriss, 2012, p. 11) and according to Rousseau (1952; cited in Morriss, 2012, p. 11) "responsible for [one's] acts". The next section explores these ideas in greater depth.

5.2.4 Sailing towards Solitude

> The lonely man finds himself surrounded by others with whom he cannot establish contact or to whose hostility he is exposed. The solitary man, on the contrary, is alone and therefore 'can be together with himself' (Arendt, 1973, p.476).

Freedom could be recognised as a 'sailing-towards-solitude'. To be free is to be alone with one's thoughts; there is a notion of solitude attached but not in a lonely sense. According to Barbour (2004; cited in Gilpin, 2006, p. 355) "solitude is always bounded, both temporally and spatially, [...]". Geographically isolated, yet, this feeling of isolation is experienced as solitude rather than loneliness. Being at sea enabled me to gain a better understanding as to why fishers 'feel' the need to go fishing - 'the call of the sea' as it were. When I was *there* amongst the elements I experienced a strange feeling of serenity, of *being-in-the-element*. Strange in the sense that I found myself within the confinement of the boat which was located 'somewhere' in the vast space of the sea without any view of land. Alone save the other crew members and a few other fishing boats observed at a distance. I felt rather insignificant in this infinite-like space. It was an experience that rekindled my humility. It was a *humbling* notion of being-in-the-world.



Figure 5.3 Losing sight of land: Feelings of 'disconnection' from landed society began to awaken within me. It was not so much a sentiment of solitude as one of *being* solitary. It was a time to be with oneself – to contemplate *their* world enveloping me. I was 'escaping' landed society (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

The sea was relatively calm but what would have happened if there were a freak wave; assistance would take time to arrive. I was experiencing this situation from a non-fisher point of view. These fishermen have the skill and the ability to react and respond to all eventualities. At that point I understood Ricoeur's (1966) and Tuan's (1977) contention, that to be free is to be vulnerable.

Many of the fishermen in this study, both Breton and Irish, appreciate their own company and do not necessarily seek the company of others. The notion of solitude experienced by these fishermen relates, in a way, to Levinas' (1987, p. 67) view that "solitude is an absence of time". Being-at-sea engenders an experience that one is in *another world* or in a world *adjacent* to those on shore. Conversations reveal how fishermen, feel 'removed' from landed society and, consequently, tend to be somewhat individual or even solitary due to the very nature of their way of life at sea. There is a perception of the 'hunter-gatherer' to the act of fishing – a throwback to a pre-Industrial Revolution lifestyle.

> *On est souvent déconnecté de la vie à terre. Le métier du marin c'est un métier de chasse et solitaire oui c'est une certitude, malgré qu'on a une équipage on est assez solitaire* ... We're usually quite detached from society The work of a fisherman is to hunt and he is usually quite a solitary being even though there is a crew ... (Active Fisherman J, LG, 2014).

Gilpin (2006, p. 355) questions whether solitude "can be recognised as a social activity in itself, or [if] is it clearly an oblique one: engagement through withdrawal". Solitude at sea expresses itself through invisible narratives of the fisherman's own personal life – a meeting with one's self so to speak (Gilpin, 2006). Being-at-sea is a time for "self-discovery; and an attempt to transcend the normal social consciousness of everyday life" (Gilpin, 2006, p. 356).

> *Je me rappelle des après-midis et tout le monde faisait la sieste et moi j'étais seul à la passerelle, il faisait beau et il y avait des dauphins qui venaient sur le trave du bateau et j'étais là, seul. Le bateau suivait sa route, j'étais la pénard, aucun bruit, personne, ça, c'est la liberté.* I remember some afternoons when everybody was having a nap and I would find myself alone on deck, it was sunny and there were dolphins near the bow of the boat and I would be there, on my own. The boat would follow its own course and I was at the bow of the boat, alone, no noise, nobody, that is freedom (Retired Fisherman D2, LG, 2014).

Freedom comes in the guise of solitude. The spirituality of solitude seeks an "encounter or intimate relationship with something outside the self, whether a part of the natural world, God, or the cosmos as a whole" (Barbour, 2004; cited in Gilpin, 2006, p. 355). While solitude can be acknowledged as being-with-oneself, fishermen, *being* in such a place, experience encounters and personal relationships with their environment – *their* world. When these fishermen are not engaged with their fishing practice on board the vessel, rare moments of quietude allow them to be absorbed by personal reflections. Moreover, there are instances when the splendour of nature appears in the shape of a rising sun and they are aware that they alone have the luxury of absorbing such a scene; they are attuned to nature (see Gilpin, 2006).

> We have the privilege to see things differently from people ashore like the sunrise on a clear day or a school of dolphins (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2013).

The idea of being in the middle of *nowhere* during my fishing trip led me to expect tranquillity but the sound of the generator, the clanking of metal and the roar of the engine resounded in my ears. Fishermen become 'immune' to sounds on board; for them noise equates to the 'commotion' of life on shore. I realised for the first time the reason why so many fishermen have the tendency to speak so loudly even in calmer surroundings. This habit of shouting was not the only characteristic of these men; the irregular eating pattern on board the boat causes them to literally gulp their food. Yet, fishermen, 'being-in-their-own-world'

are fully absorbed by their own *alternative* place and time (see Levinas, 1987). I was experiencing a whole *new* world; to be a fisher is to have passion and to embrace this way of life without asking themselves why. They remain attached to *their* notion of freedom at sea despite the continual pressure of EU and national rules and regulations. They appreciate the solitude that this livelihood provides and yet they do not see themselves as being solitary. The fishermen I encountered in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec tended to be reserved at first encounter, yet, they frankly discussed their life-experiences with me. They remain approachable and receptive to those who have a genuine interest in *who* they are and *what* they do.

5.3 Mobility and Movement

Increasingly the issue of mobility is attracting the interest of geographers (Cresswell, 2006, 2010a, 2010b, 2012, 2014; Gerrard, 2013; Merriman, 2016, 2016). However, as Cresswell (2011, p. 555) pointed out "people and things have always moved and mobility did not start in the twenty-first century" and that ships are a good place to start as "ninety per cent of the world's goods still move around the world on them". The idea of exploring *fishing* mobilities expands the knowledge base in cultural geography. Fishers at sea are both mobile *and* in motion − *mobile* as they move between sea and shore (Prince, 2013) and between fishing grounds and *in motion* as their body constantly moves to the movement of the boat. This section explores in particular the *unrelenting* moving body at sea rather than fishers' mobility (movement between places) and, consequently, contrasts one's capacity to control movements on land with the many involuntary and almost subconscious readjustments one make to maintain balance at sea.

My excursion on a fishing trip in September 2013 facilitated a *first-hand* understanding of fishing as a mobility practice. Ingold's (2007) research shows how movement itself can be essential to the way we experience the world and live with it. The boat had been 'tied-up' in Cork Harbour and, therefore, the crew and I travelled the two-hour journey by car from Castletownbere. In the car our bodies moved to the rhythm of the 'twisting and turning' West Cork roads but this motion was as nothing to the constant movement of the boat at sea that I was about to experience.

5.3.1 The Fishing Vessel: A Fisherman's *Mobile* 'Home'

Fishing boats are fishermen's 'dwellings' while at sea. These metallic structures are where they live out sustained periods of their lives. On 28 September 2013 I boarded a

fishing vessel with its crew; this boat was my ‘abode’ for the next two days. Much like any dwelling it contains living quarters. The upper deck includes the galley, eating quarters, television/lounge area and second washroom. The wheelhouse is situated above. The sleeping quarters consist of four cabins which are located in the lower deck each comprising two bunk beds. Also located on this deck is the main bathroom. The engine room is situated below.



Figure 5.4 Sleeping Quarters: Each cabin consists of a bunk bed unit where two crew members share this confined area of four square metres. The bunk is the only ‘physical’ place fishers can call *their own*. A few hours ‘detached’ from their fishing activities − to *be* in *their* own ‘mental’ space (Photo: Elaine O’Driscoll-Adam).

Prior to the departure each crew member busied himself in preparation for the fishing trip - stocking food, checking and preparing fishing gear. Even before the boat set sail the crew were already ‘on the move’ (Cresswell, 2006). I kept company with the skipper. While the crew slept he steered the twenty-seven metre vessel south at 1.00 am. Tossed by the waves the boat rolled towards our destination; the skipper reminisced about his youth and how, together with his brother, they would use the pier as their playground. It was evident that both he and his brother would one day go fishing – their father and uncles were fishermen before them.

At 2.00 am it was time for me to get some sleep and I left the skipper to navigate to

the fishing grounds. Complete darkness surrounded us. I settled myself into my bunk; I had my own 'personal' cabin. I was discovering first-hand that constant movement impeded any sense of stillness and even control. Fishermen appear to be accustomed to the constant movement of the boat as if they are *'bercer' par la mer* – 'swayed' by the sea. In contrast, no matter what position *my* body found itself I was struggling with this *perpetual* motion which contrasted greatly with the stillness of the land. After a weather-beaten night and ten hours steaming we reached our destination by mid-morning.

Home is often associated with the notion that it is a fixed and stable location. In the complex world of fishermen the idea of home relates to the fishing vessel which is mobile in addition to their 'shore' home which is 'anchored' in place. According to Blunt (2006) home does not necessarily signify a house and refers to concepts of transnational homes. Fishermen can experience this notion of the 'transnational' where "home is unfamiliar" when anchored at or in proximity to foreign fishing ports (Blunt, 2006, p. 113; see also Ingold, 2007; King-O'Riain, 2015). This transnational notion of home, to fishermen, is "shaped by the [recurrent] interplay of both mobile and located homes" as their everyday lived lives are performed between shore and sea (Blunt, 2006, p. 196; see also Sampson, 2003).

> *C'est ma maison [son bateau]. En fait, quand j'ai fais [l'avoir construit] le bateau j'ai fais un an et demi sans arrêter, Je ne donnais le bateau a personne, et la première fois que j'ai donne le bateau c'était a mon frère et quand j'ai vu le bateau partir, j'étais sur le bord du quai, je pleurais car j'avais l'impression qu'on m'avait volé quelque chose. C'est incroyable mais c'est la vérité [il rit] on à l'impression qu'un a pris une partie de soi-même.* Yes it is *my* home [referring to his boat]. Actually when I had my boat I did a year and half without taking a break, I never let anyone skipper her, and the first time I gave the boat to my brother [to go to sea] and when I saw the boat leave, I was on the edge of the pier I was crying because it was as if someone had stolen something from me. It's astonishing but it is the truth [he laughs] you have the impression that someone took a part of you (Active Fisherman Y, LG, 2014).

This fisherman's sense of loss can be felt as he tells his story. His loss is revealed through the use of the expression that *someone took a part of him*. His fishing vessel *is* his life; it means everything to him. It is part of *who* he is and his gateway to 'being-in-the-*fishing*-world'. During interviews like this one, fishermen conveyed the sense of attachment that they have (and had) to their boats, particularly, skippers and long-term crew members.

One's dwelling place evokes a multitude of feelings and attachments (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). Our sense of self is expressed through our place of residence (Blunt and Dowling, 2006). It is through a fisherman's way of life, and the fishing vessel – their 'alternative' abode – that fishermen in part construct their sense of self. This sense of self *is*

framed by their mobility and *constant* motion at sea. However, fishermen also experience mobility through their recurrent movement from home to pier and from pier to fishing grounds (Gerrard, 2013). It is important to examine the possibilities of mobility *vis-à-vis* fishermen's lives and recognise it as an intrinsic part of their practice (see Ricoeur, 1966). Three of the fishermen on board the vessel in which I went to sea are from other coastal communities but have mostly worked out of Castletownbere. JJ, M and F live in coastal villages in West Cork and travel to and from the fishing port. JJ has fished all his life on a Castletownbere-based fishing vessel. Castletownbere continues to sustain opportunities for those who want to go fishing and, therefore, attracts fishermen from elsewhere. Only by going to sea on board a boat can one understand mobility, motion and 'flow'.

Spending significant amounts of time on a fishing vessel eventually has an effect on the body. There are many occupations that involve strenuous activities. However, because the act of fishing or 'simply' mending a net on board is performed while the boat rises and falls on the crest of the waves and rolls from side-to-side it is imperative that the body maintains its balance to prevent accidents (Gerrard, 2013). While the French authorities have taken this into account with fishers' retirement age at fifty-five years, fishers in Ireland continue to go to sea until the age of sixty-six. Activities that appear altogether mundane become challenging both mentally and physically.

> *J'ai jamais trouvé le métier difficile. La plus grande difficulté c'est que ça bouge [bateau]*. I never found fishing to be hard work. The most difficult thing is that it's constantly moving [boat] (Retired Fisherman JM, LG, 2014).

> *La différence est le danger et c'est le fait que le bateau ça bouge tout le temps, même qu'on se rend pas compte il y a le corps qui se use.* The difference is the danger and the fact that the boat is in constant movement, and even if we don't take any notice our body is using itself (Retired Fisherman D1, LG, 2014).

No matter what the 'head' decides to do, it is the 'body' that takes precedence over the endless motion. In so doing, the body is using itself unconsciously. Being-at-sea teaches the novice the importance of coordinating corporal movements.

5.3.2. The Crew: Teamwork

Crew culture varies between boats and is predominantly an all-male environment. Growing up in Castletownbere in the 1980s I was aware of the specific boats wherein the youths would have wished to start their fishing life. These were boats where the skipper and crew had respect for one another and a fairer share-system existed. Moreover, some boats had a 'no alcohol' policy and, as a result, crew dynamics were stable. Prior to this millennium

fishing was based upon kinship. Nowadays there is a hybrid nature to contemporary crews as individuals have become more mobile (see Marshall and Foster, 2002; Britton and Coulthard, 2013).

> *Quand quelqu'un part pour une raison ou pour une autre, j'essai de trouver quelqu'un, enfin je prends quelqu'un pour faire une marée et voir s'il s'entend bien avec l'équipage, et si l'équipage l'accepte et que lui accepte l'équipage. Je veux la paix à bord, la tranquillité, je cherche une harmonie. Pour moi c'est prioritaire.* When someone leaves, for one reason or another, I take a fisherman on to see whether he gets on well with the crew, if the team accept him and he accepts the crew. I want to have peace on board, to have tranquillity, I look for harmony. For me it is the main concern (Active Fisherman Y, LG, 2014).

The arrival of new crew members requires getting to know their personality and how well they will integrate their 'foster' family. At sea it is essential to maintain harmony amongst fishermen. Crew members know exactly what it is that they must do; there is no need for words. The thrashing musical notes of the wind and rain muddled with the discord of the engine and generator results in a cacophony of noises. There is discordance between expecting serenity in the vast open space and experiencing the noise level on board the fishing boat. Gestures from one crew member, such as a nod, are used in response to a facial expression from another (Lefevbre, 2004). As the crew get to know one another silences emerge as *their* way of communicating which reveals there is not always the need for the spoken word. Distinctive ways of communicating are constructed over time underlining the importance of well-established crews.

> *C'est mieux qu'on s'entende bien. Mon frère est avec moi depuis vingt ans et l'autre ca fait douze ans. C'est important de bien s'entendre. Des fois y a même pas un mot, tout le monde sait ce qu'il a à faire.* It's much better that everyone gets on well together. My brother fishes with me for the last twenty years and the other guy is with us for twelve years. It's important to get on well together. Sometimes nothing needs to be said everybody knows what to do (Active Fisherman S, LG, 2014).

The boat is a confined space and life on board can be dangerous. Due to the wet and windy weather during my first day at sea I remained in the wheelhouse making and recording observations. It would have been too risky to be among the fishermen. I would have hindered the momentum of their activity as they got 'into the flow of things' both physically and psychologically. The tough conditions highlighted that communication between fishermen is performed through corporal expressions and gestures; "not everything can be captured in words" (Wright *et al.,* 2012, p.56).

Should anything happen at sea they are, in a sense, left to 'their own devices'. There is

a *feeling* of 'isolation' and of 'other-worldliness'. One of the female participants in Castletownbere empathised with the feeling of 'seclusion' that fishermen could experience.

> You're alone; whereas on land there are people; on the road there are people. Out at sea there is nothing around you. If something happens that's it; you could be gone (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant B).

> *Et puis un routier, il est loin aussi mais c'est pas pareil, il est à terre quoi, quand on est en mer on est en mer ! C'est aussi l'environnement, en mer il y a des trucs qui peuvent devenir catastrophiques, ça va commencer par un petit truc et puis ça s'enchaine et puis finalement on peut être vite débordé ... Il faut savoir se débrouiller. Il faut avoir un ou deux bons copains avec qui on peut avoir confiance, une vraie confiance.* Even take a lorry driver, he is away too but it's not the same, he remains on land whereas when we're at sea, we're at sea! It's also the environment at sea, a small problem could arise but then it could easily blow out of proportion and in the end you could be completely snowed under ... At sea you have to learn to manage everything, to sort things out for yourself. And you need to be able to depend on at least two of your crew whom you can trust, a real trust, it's very important (Retired Fisherman D1, LG, 2014).

As a *group* they *are* alone facing harsh elements or confronted with serious situations they need to fend for themselves; they *must* depend on themselves and each other. Such circumstances reveal the significance of trust and respect between all crew members.

The majority of fishermen that I interviewed agreed that the crew dynamics is vital to the smooth running of the fishing trip; all crew members need to know *their* place and what is expected of them. 'Respect' is a word that came into conversations discussing crew dynamics in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec.

> *Il faut qu'on soit tous unis ; bien sur il y a des tensions quand vous avez cinq gars sur le bateau pendant quinze jours de mer. Là c'est le rôle du patron d'empêcher qu'il y a des tensions. Il faut que son équipage soit soudé pour que la vie à bord se passe bien. J'ai toujours travaillé avec un bon équipage, on s'est toujours bien entendu.* A crew needs to group together; of course there are tensions on board when you have five fishermen together during fifteen days at sea. It's the role of the skipper to prevent tensions from arising. His crew must get on well together in order to work well together. I always fished with a great crew, we always got on well together (Retired fisherman, M, LG, 2014).

The fishermen in this study, from both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec, reiterated that a crew symbolised an alternative family structure – a 'second' family so to speak wherein each member must cooperate for its smooth running. They discussed the necessity for 'genuine' trust between skipper and crew. A problem at sea can rapidly amplify. It is vital to be able to depend on one another. There was a sense of reciprocal respect amongst crew members on the vessel in which I went fishing.

> We need to be able to work well together and get on well. When you're out ten days it's a long time to spend together. We're all friends or neighbours (Crew member M, CTB, 2013).
>
> The crew on this boat are great. And when my mother was sick the brothers [skippers] told me to take as much time as I wanted. We're all here for so long that everyone knows his job. When you have the same crew it makes it better and safer (Crew member F, CTB, 2013).

The majority of its members have fished together for a long time and, accordingly, there is a kin-like solidarity on board.



Figure 5.5 Cooperation: On a boat teamwork and trust is essential as the crew work closely together. In confined and cramped on-board conditions and working with heavy and complex machinery, the risk of serious injury is ever-present. The boat's constant motion increases the element of danger (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

By close of the second day, after a hard day fishing, the vessel was steering homeward at 7 pm. A queue formed for the bathroom to have well-earned showers. At last the crew was able to relax and enjoy their meal without having to gulp it down. However, while the skipper joined us another crew member had to 'keep watch' in the wheelhouse. It was interesting to listen to the 'banter' while we ate. These individuals spend most of their lives *dis*connected

from the ‘everyday’ of the wider world and, yet, the main conversation was steered toward the most recent smart phones; the youngest crew member – in his early twenties – revelled in the latest technology − a glance at changing ‘tides’. After dinner we helped clear-up. Each member had their own way of relaxing that evening whether reading in their cabin or watching television.

A pair of them spent time telling me about their lives at sea. JJ and M are near retirement. The two of them have fished for over forty years – since the age of sixteen. They both come from fishing families and, therefore, for them, ‘fishing is in the blood’. As a child M spent most of his time around boats: “I loved boats and it’s [fishing] what I always wanted to do”. M further stated that “fresh air and a healthy lifestyle” were reasons why he enjoyed fishing and that he would rather be fishing than doing anything else (Crew member M, CTB, 2013). I felt comfortable there and, consequently, the notion of the boat being a home became clearer. I did not experience or observe any tension between crew members and while my presence may have been a factor, their ‘true colours’ would have shown after two days at sea. Nonetheless, this is not to say that there are never any tensions either onboard this fishing vessel or on others. I could relate to the fact that while the boat is a confined space there is a sense of freedom from the ‘ticking clock’ of landed society (Yarrow and Obhi, 2014). The second night was much calmer as the wind had subsided and, as a result, I slept soundly. The ‘*mélange*’ of noises, previously mentioned, appeared to distance themselves as my body and mind relaxed to the rhythm of the sea.

We arrived ashore on Monday morning at 10 am. Before unloading commenced the skipper and crew awaited the arrival of a fisheries’ officer to embark in order to verify compliance with fishing regulations, that is, the verification of quota and the logbook (which records catch data). Once the ‘catch’ was pumped directly into the fish lorry the crew washed the holding tanks and deck ready for the next fishing trip that evening. The crew worked well together – laughing and joking, yet, ensuring jobs were done appropriately. During this time the ‘cook’ prepared us breakfast which consisted of freshly-caught herring fillets. There was time for ‘chitchat’ in this short moment of rest. As we ate I used the opportunity to interview the crew members.



Figure 5.6 A moment of respite: The only time that *all* crew members can sit together around the table. Breakfast time upon arrival to shore consisted of freshly-caught herring fillets (Photo: Jocelyn Adam).

Due to their workload it was not feasible to conduct interviews while at sea. However, while crew members agreed to be interviewed upon arrival to shore work was still required of them. The fishing net had been ripped at sea and had to be mended before the next trip that evening. This unrelenting and frequently intense nature of the work is part and parcel of fishers' lives. Ricoeur's notion of 'reciprocity' (1990; 2000) was encountered during my fishing trip.



Figure 5.7 Teamwork continues ashore: The net was damaged at sea but fortunately they could repair it on shore as the quota had already been reached. This is usually not the case revealing the uncertain nature of fishing. To repair a net at sea involves collaboration and skills among the crew. Moreover, the constant motion heightens the difficulty involved in this essential task. On the pier, it becomes a relatively straightforward process for the skilled fisher (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

These men spend prolonged periods of their lives at sea. There is a 'kinship' quality to the relationships established between crew members that are maintained to a lesser or greater degree depending on the boat and the crew. Moreover, on some fishing vessels crew members are relatives but changes in crew dynamics are taking place due to increased labour mobility driven by EU enlargements and the downturn in the Irish economy since 2008[19]. No doubt my presence altered the dynamics of this ordinarily all-male environment, nonetheless, my familial background enabled candid conversation.

5.4 Sea Change: The Turning Tide

Society is constantly evolving; fishing is no different (Trimble and Johnson, 2013).

19 Personal communication with fishers in Le Guilvinec highlighted that some crew members migrate from other French coastal areas. Also, in Castletownbere, there are Spanish and Lithuanian crew members who work alongside Irish fishers.

Changes have been gradual and, consequently, the effects were not so intensely experienced within the home. However, at sea transformations have been visible. The age of information technology has facilitated a shift towards bigger and more efficient boats (Standal, Sønvisen and Asche, 2016).



Figure 5.8 The Wheelhouse: Being a fisher not only involves having a specific skill-set for going to sea and catching fish but also the ability to operate technical devices. The evolving industry means fishers need to be *au fait* of the latest technology (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

For many of the retired fishermen modern technology has improved safety on the boats which is regarded as a major advance by many fishermen and their families.

> They were definitely different times [...]. You'd have to be knowledgeable of the area as you never knew what would come in your path. These are things now that the present man wouldn't even think about, he just looks into the speed box. The latest ones now tell you what course you have to alter to avoid boats and everything. It's a different era altogether (Retired Fisherman K, CTB, 2013).

> It has changed a lot since we [older generation] started. There was a lot of fish that time. The way we fished we had to come in every night or every second night to send the fish on to the Dublin market. There was no exporting that time, not 'til later years (Retired Fisherman M, CTB, 2013).

> The conditions are better now than the damp old boats. We didn't know any different we got into a damp boat. When I started there weren't even any lights, they were a real God-send. They're [times] changing anyhow, certainly changing, it's a whole new ball game now (Retired fisherman, D, CTB, 2013).

Retired fishermen K, M and D are brothers. When their father was not cultivating the land he went fishing. There were six brothers and all of them went fishing; the elders encouraged and supported the younger ones. The three of them recalled the conditions of fishing in the early

days. Prior to modern sonar equipment their knowledge of the local environment was pivotal to bringing both boat and crew safely to shore especially in bad weather conditions. Advances in technology have definitely been welcomed by all fishermen. The older generation of fishermen relied on their local knowledge acquired by experience (Gerrard, 2013).

> *J'ai démarré en cinquante-huit, et les bateaux à l'époque ils n'avaient pas le confort de maintenant. Ca sentait le gazole, il n'y avait pas de cloisons hermétique, les ponts n'étaient pas couverts, […].* I started in fifty-eight and the boats back then didn't have the comfort that the boats have today. There was the smell of diesel, the partitions were not air-tight, the decks were uncovered, [...] (Retired Fisherman D2, LG, 2014).

> *Maintenant c'est plus confortable pour les jeunes. C'était un travail dur, souvent des problèmes de dos. On travaillait souvent à genoux tandis que maintenant ils travaillent sur des tables et il y a plus de confort.* Now it's more comfortable for the youth. It was such heavy work, often back problems. We were often working on our knees whereas today they work on tables and there's more comfort (Retired Fisherman JL, LG, 2014).

The cabin conditions were inadequate and, by modern standards, unacceptable. The old boats comprised of one communal space consisting of several basic bunks. The retired fishermen acknowledged the more-than-confined space in the old boats, yet, despite the basic conditions, they spoke of *freedom* as if they were the last to experience it. Many retirees maintained that the increasing lack of freedom at sea is due to the increasingly oppressive nature of fisheries control both national and supra-national. However, they are not alone in criticising the current fishing policy. Active fishermen also have issues with the CFP. While Breton and Irish fishermen alike accept the necessity for a sustainable and viable industry, there is serious discontent with the regulatory framework currently in place.

5.4.1 National and EU Policy: Rules and Regulations

The changes taking place within their industry have led many fishermen to reconsider the notion of freedom they experience while at sea. Both national and European-wide rules and regulations from fishers' perspectives often hinder the progressive development of the fisheries sector. Policy-makers tend to neglect the human element of this industry and focus predominantly on ecological measures (Urquhart and Acott, 2014). These fishing families contribute to the social fabric, economic well-being and cultural identity of these fishing communities (Urquhart and Acott, 2013a). Although fishermen acknowledge the need to manage resources, the strategies are solely concentrated on the management of fish stocks through the use of quotas and other restrictive measures.

> *Tout est en train d'être délocalisé et les gens qui arrivent sur ces postes là ont souvent été dans la pêche mais ils sont dépassés par les contraintes, par l'évolution de la nouvelle technologie... On est bouffé par le système. Il y a des subventions mais tout ce qu'on demande c'est de vivre comme on vivait avant, mais il faut passer au niveau de l'Europe. J'ai pris un jeune apprenti pour le former pendant deux ans mais à cause de la législation de travail il n'a pas le droit de travailler la nuit, comment je fais pour lui apprendre correctement, il ne peut pas faire ci peut pas faire ça. […]. Il y a des abréactions des textes mais au niveau de la pêche il y a beaucoup qu'ils comprennent pas. Il faut de l'harmonie ; il faut trouver une solution avant de changer les choses.* Everything is being delocalised and although these posts are taken by former fisherman they are no longer up to date, they are out of their depth in relation to the evolution of new technology. We're consumed by the system. OK there are subsidies but all we ask is to live and make a living as before, but you need to go through the European administration. I took on an apprentice to train him for two years but due to legislation he's not allowed to work at night so how am I going to train him correctly, he's not allowed to do this, not allowed to do that. [...]. There are aberrations in texts [laws] and in the fishing industry there is a lot they don't understand. We must find harmony; we must find a solution before changing things (Active Fisherman Y, LG, 2014).

This participant also discussed the ban on discards (where fish are thrown away at sea) due to ecological factors yet he continues "they [policy-makers] don't realise what are the seagulls going to eat, plastic?" For him, policy-makers are not considering the role of fishers in the food-chain. Fishermen are often regarded as pillagers by policy-makers and there is a lack of meaningful interaction between all stakeholders within the industry. Conservation and proper control of fish stocks remains vital, however, the socio-cultural aspects of fishers' livelihoods needs to be addressed (Urquhart *et al*., 2011; Reed *et al*, 2013). Fishermen see the CFP as focused on economy and ecology. In theory policy-makers are beginning to consider social and cultural factors, however, in practice these fishermen feel they continue to be ignored (Couliou, 2010).

> [...]. It will have to be a level playing field. I understand the need for restrictions and quotas. Maybe they should get rid of quotas and bring in effort-days. We're fighting for crumbs here [in Ireland], we seem to always have the same sad story. There are two French boats that come in here [Castletownbere] there is the same monkfish quota for those two boats as there is for the whole of Ireland. In the 1970s 'froggy' [the French authorities] over was telling them [fishermen] to put a zero onto everything they were catching [to declare more than what they were actually catching] and the clowns in this country were putting down about a third of what they were catching, it's phenomenal the difference. It's a pity that something like that happened so many years ago and is still having such an effect in the industry now. How we're going to get out of it I don't know, I do feel a little bit bitter yeah I do. We were sold out by the politicians the first day when we went into the EEC and they never stood-up [for their fishermen] and didn't have the foresight either to tell us put [write] this down and so on but I suppose they were doing

> what they thought was right at the time but it's a pity that a full generation on we're probably dealing with the bad management that happened back then. The whole thing needs to be reformed but where do you start? Food for thought! (Active Fisherman W, CTB, 2013).

I could empathise with Fisherman W as I have often heard my father and uncles – who are now retired – speak about the industry. Moreover, he (CTB, 2013) highlighted, they are now dealing with the legacy of incompetent management that happened just prior to Ireland's entry to the EEC (de Courcy Ireland, 1981; Mac Laughlin, 2010). It is true that French boats have larger quotas but needless to say that they also have their own issues to deal with. According to fishermen in Le Guilvinec the French government is not doing enough to attract youths into the industry.

> *J'ai eu la vie que je voulais, mais un peu amer, si le métier était mieux reconnu ça attirerait plus de jeunes*. I had the way of life I wanted, but a little bitter, if the occupation was recognised more it would attract more youths (Retired fisherman, D1, LG, 2014).

Many of the fishermen in this study regard national and EU governance as antagonistic to fishing. They highlighted that policy is taking fishing on a course towards a corporate company-run industry that will deplete coastal communities of their sense of identity. It will wipe out small fishing families who will be replaced by major corporations. In addition, these participants spoke of their frustrations in relation to inequity within the industry and poor communication with authorities.

> The [local] community is trying its best, they can do nothing any more without signing this and that and the department telling you what to do. Quotas cut down another twenty per cent and the department isn't fighting for fishermen. The minister is just a name. They're being led by the civil servants. [...] It's very hard for a minister to do anything, his hands are kind of tied as well. He has these people going to Brussels with him and if you don't have strong civil servants with you you're going to lose out. For an island our coastal communities should be thriving more than what they are, you can see all the emigration out of this place alone since 2009 (Retired Fisherman M, CTB, 2013).

> *[...] Le métier se perd, on est sur une très mauvaise pente. C'est plus facile de discuter avec quatre ou cinq financiers qu'avec un group d'individus [pêcheurs de leur l'entreprise familiale].* [...] There has been a huge decline in fishing. It's much easier to discuss issues with four or five financiers than to many individuals [fishermen from familial businesses] (Retired Fisherman D1, LG, 2014).

The future of fishing appears to be turning towards a larger-scale model where major fish companies will gain control over the industry. Many family owned businesses will cease to exist. Fishermen have the knowledge and expertise that should be recognised to

accomplish new ways of doing.

> *Je pense pas que le gouvernement est contre la pêche ni les pêcheurs mais ils veulent pas s'occuper. Les pêcheurs diminuent, on est l'espèce qui va disparaitre avant les poissons.* I don't think that the government is against fishing or fishermen but they don't do anything for it [the industry]. Fishermen are diminishing, we are a species that will disappear before the fish (Active Fisherman S, LG, 2014).

> Everyone's being tarred with the same brush whether you're a small fisherman in a sixteen-foot boat or ... it's the stereotype really I suppose (Active Fisherman W, CTB, 2013).

Many fishermen, like Fisherman W, maintained that some people have a stereotypical view of fishermen. They feel criminalised, and are frequently portrayed as being polluters and pillagers.

> *Des pêcheurs de mon âge [la quarantaine] ont cherché une vie de liberté sans contraintes, mais plus ca va plus on se renferme dans les contraintes, tous les jours a la télé il y a des crimes et si on fait pas [suivre les règles] on reçoit des amendes de 20,000€ to 30,000€. On est pire que des prisonniers, il faut qu'on sache où on est et que ce qu'on fait comme si on était des gros truands. Quand ils font des contrôles et tout se passe bien ... mais parfois ils cherchent pendant cinq, six heures de temps et il n'y a rien [anormal de trouvé], il n'y a rien à dire, il n'y a rien à dire! Tout le monde est sujet a la même réglementation. C'est dur à avaler. Je sais qu'ils font leur travail mais c'est dur.* Fishermen of my age [mid-forties] looked for a life of liberty without any constraints, however, as time evolves we tend to shut ourselves away in the restrictions, every day we hear of crime stories and if we don't adhere [to rules] we get fines of €20,000 to €30,000. We are worse than prisoners, they must know where we are and what we're doing at all times as if we were dangerous thugs. When they do controls and everything goes okay ... but sometimes they search for five to six hours, – there's nothing [abnormal found] and there's nothing to add! Everybody is subject to the same control. It's hard to swallow. I realise they're doing their job but it's hard (Active Fisherman Y, LG, 2014).

Breton and Irish fishers are experiencing the same changes. Their notion of freedom is in flux and evolving. This situation reveals that the retired fishers experienced a different notion of freedom. The older, but still active, fishers have lived through times of change wherein the fishing industry went from having a lack of restrictions to being constantly under control and monitored.

These fishermen spoke frankly and from the heart. I could understand their aggravation as they all want an equitable and well-managed industry for future generations. Vessels are equipped with electronic surveillance material and, as a result, their every move is monitored and managed. They feel like 'prisoners' equipped with electronic bracelets. Additionally, it is increasingly challenging to enter the industry due to restrictions on licences

and the high cost of access to fishing, which consequently, deters younger people from adopting this industry. The new legislation on discards will engender more inequity within the industry. It is a complex situation whereby restrictions on targeted species under Total Allowable Catch (TAC) regulation must be implemented, yet, this does not mean that other species will be harvested (Villasante, *et al*., 2016). Moreover, the discard ban would need to be properly enforced in order to reap the benefits (van Helmond *et al*., 2016). The CFP has failed to consider the lives of fishermen and their fishing communities (Da Rocha *et al.,* 2012). The time has come to re-shape the concept of change within the industry that will benefit all stakeholders (Le Floc'h *et al.*, 2015). Fishermen argued that with the increase in surveillance from the authorities they feel increasingly restricted. While many spoke about freedom, the constraints of EU policy represent a serious infringement of their autonomy.

5.5 Conclusion

Being-at-sea is being on one's own and to have the possibility to contemplate one's environment from the unique perspective of the world observed from the sea. This understanding took shape and was achieved during my *own* experience at sea. Being free, in the sense *being-at-sea*, disconnects fishers from landed society; as they become detached from on-shore society and states of freedom and solitude emerges. Freedom and solitude are experienced by fishers as positive 'encounters' with oneself. The vastness of the sea instilled in me a sense of freedom that could not be matched on *terra firma*. Detached from the rhythm of life ashore, fishermen have their own pace based upon their daily activities at sea. For these fishermen, there is an inherent logic to their way of life despite the contradictions observed from the outside. They highlighted the notion of freedom, yet, they are constantly challenged by external forces. These fishermen remain attached to the sea, to their boat, and to their way of life despite the continual changes taking place around them.

By participating on the boat and observing how each individual fisherman lives his life at sea gave me a deeper insight into how they work as a crew and how to interpret the wider meanings of what their life experiences are at sea. The boat symbolises an alternative abode that is mobile and 'other-worldly' wherein predominantly all-male crews construct their own senses of place within this parallel world. The 'fluid' character of the boat contrasts the 'fixed' nature of the traditional notions of home. It embodies fishermen's second dwelling place as they spend as much time onboard the boat as in their 'shore' home. The production of space within the *confinement* of the fishing vessel differs significantly from that produced and sensed on shore. While modern technology connects fishers to land, they remain,

nonetheless, in their *own* world, dependant on their *own* support structures. Drawing on Levinas (1987) "the [place] of the Other and my [place] ... do not occur in the same [place]" − the boat finds itself, in a manner of speaking, in a place parallel to land. The camaraderie and interaction between crew members portrayed a kin-like structure. They learn to understand and adapt to the different personalities on board. I was at the heart of what it *means* to be a fisher. I was becoming aware of my own possibilities for *being-in-their-world* rather than interpreting someone else's experience (Heidegger, 1962); to employ van Manen's (1990, p.36) term: "Lived experience is the breathing of meaning".

The notions of mobility and motion are key characteristics that differentiate fishing from other economic activities and ways of life. While mobility is intrinsic to fishing, it has also become increasingly part of contemporary society; the constant motion of the body, however, is what sets this way of life apart. In this thesis, I have highlighted that concepts of mobility go beyond the notion of movement from place to place by introducing the corporal motion of fishers at sea. During my fishing trip I was confronted with this experience of trying to keep my balance. Even lying-down I had no control over my body as it moved this way and that. The constant roll of the boat – up-and-down and side-to-side – is challenging for the body. Not only is fishing strenuous, especially in extreme weather conditions, but also many fishermen revealed that it is not unusual to suffer 'wear-and-tear' due to relentless movement of the body. The performance of mundane tasks is intensified. This persistent motion suggests fishermen's adaptive nature – always on the *qui-vive*. No matter how calm the sea, the body is continually challenged to keep its balance.

A fishing life at sea is imbued with contradictions. Yet what appears difficult to understand for the 'outsider' is intrinsic to fishers and their way of life. In the fishermen's world these contradictions are part of *who* they are; they are embedded in *how* they live their everyday lives. They come to terms with the inconsistencies as they try to adjust to a life *straddling* sea and shore; motion and stillness; freedom and confinement and crew and family. However, changes have been taking place within the industry at both EU-wide and national levels. Fishermen's notion of freedom is increasingly challenged by the incessant influx of rules and regulations to the fishing sector and is slipping through *'les mailles du fillet'* − 'the meshes of the net'. Nevertheless, they continue to embrace this difficult way of life as it is, for many, 'in the blood'. While their struggles may differ in some instances, fishermen from both sides of the channel understand the necessity for sustainability and its significance for future generations.

This chapter brings to the fore the 'other-worldliness' of being-in-the-fishing-world.

This fishing trip propelled me to understand that concepts of freedom and solitude are reciprocally bound through the personal experience of being-in-the-fishing-world. It was a journey into the mysterious world of the sea where boundaries are invisible and space appears boundless − an experience of what it means to *be* 'in-the-middle-of-nowhere'. Concepts such as freedom and solitude are complex socio-cultural constructions but given the uncertainty of fishermen's livelihood at sea they are in some ways even more complex. They are intricately bound to the notions of mobility and perpetual movement. Being mobile *is* being free to move. Being in constant motion is experiencing the body 'drifting' which in turn enables the mind to float freely. Movement at sea engenders feelings of solitude that have come to symbolise liberty − detachment from landed society – thereby 'encountering' oneself.






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Chapter Six
The Pier

6.1 Introduction

The pier is a central place in any fishing community. It symbolises many things for members of the fishing community. It is a meeting place, a workplace, a point of departure and a point of return. At times busy, at times still, it is a focal point for the entire community[20]. The pier and fishing boats signal the importance of fishing to the local economy to locals and visitors alike. The pier is where the world of home and shore intersect and connect with the world of sea and boat. My research reveals that the pier is a complex place with both practical and symbolic significance in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. This chapter introduces the pier in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec as a place of unparalleled importance. It explains how the pier while still very deeply anchored in the everyday lives of both fishing communities has, in more recent times, become a place of ritual, heritage and tourism. Traditionally connecting sea to shore and boat to home it now also connects fishers to non-fishers and in some ways I will argue a fishing past to a more pluri-activity-based future.

The complexity of this 'in-between' place is conveyed through the performances enacted and (re)negotiated by all local residents – some remain on *terra-firma* while others embark on fishing trips. This chapter explores the importance of the pier for local inhabitants both as individuals and as a collective. It examines how the pier is an important place for both daily routines and the practice of rituals and festivals. I focus on these annual festivals and rituals as both an expression of a living heritage – a way of life, but also as representing a degree of commodification that testifies to the changing world of fishers. The fishing industry's survival necessitates that fishers integrate their way of life more deeply into that of the wider community. Whereas traditionally fishers remained a part of but apart from the community now they strive to integrate more cohesively. The livelihoods of fishers and non-fishers alike in remote rural settlements are under threat and both parties have realised that by working together they can improve their chances of survival. This willingness to explore new

20 'A peopled place is not always a community, but regardless of the bonds formed with it, or not, *a common history is being lived out*. Like the places they inhabit, *communities are bumpily layered and mixed*, exposing hybrid stories that cannot be seen in a linear fashion… [emphasis added]' (Lippard, 1997, p. 24).

and different futures speaks to the resilience of the fishing community and a willingness to adapt to a changing world. In this context, I explore both the authenticity and the commodification of fishers' festivals and rituals and the pier as the location where these debates are played out.

The aim of this research was to negotiate encounters with local people and to develop an awareness not only of *my* own relationship with the natural and built environments but also *their* own. This chapter explores the pier as *place* in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec and as 'lived' from the inside and 'observed' from the outside. The significance of these local voices was essential to this research and, consequently, participants and researcher concurrently 'steered the course'.

There is a constant cycle of departure and return on the pier recalls Lefevbre's (2004) work on rhythmanalisis. It is a place that can be full of life when the boats return from fishing, but also a quiet place for the wider community when boats have gone to sea. When the weather permits it is a busy place where fishing practices are performed and boats 'come in' and 'go out' to the rhythm of catches. For fishers the pier is a place of constant movement and activity where work and encounters intermingle. During periods of adverse weather conditions it becomes a meeting place for fishers. After a sustained weather-enforced period ashore many fishers tend to become *eager* to go to sea. For spouses and partners the pier symbolises risk, uncertainty and absence when husbands/partners have gone to sea. For retired fishermen and their spouses/partners, the pier no longer signifies *personal* feelings of uncertainty and risk (while they will always maintain a concern for those at sea) the pier evolves into a meeting place. In the care-free imagination of children the pier acts as a playground where the notions of risk and uncertainty are non-existent until such time as they grow-up.

My understanding of inhabitants in these fishing communities is based upon my *being-in* these specific places and partaking in practices. This understanding derives from *my* situation − my position of *being*. "We must first *find* ourselves, find ourselves *there* and *feel* ourselves, even before we orientate ourselves" (Ricoeur, 1981, p. 56). To understand is to hear − during my fieldwork I learned to listen carefully to participants' narratives as they shared their life experiences with me. As Heidegger (1962, p. 206) argues "hearing is constitutive for discourse", in the same way, seeing/observing is integral to interpreting action (see Ricoeur, 1986). I am opening towards the world and towards others as I interpret these specific places as experienced (Delanty, 2010).

This chapter explores the pier as place that *connects* - sea and shore, the past to the

present, the fishing community to the non-fishers and the entire community to outsiders and visitors. It focuses on the pier as a place where community members and visitors (composed of both diaspora and strangers) congregate for very different reasons. It examines the annual festivals and events that take place there and explores how through the performance of rituals geographies of memory and heritage identity are both revealed and created. Using the pier as a lens, this chapter explores the nature of fishing communities. It investigates the importance of rituals and events, both sacred and secular that are enacted on the pier, for fishers, fisher families, local people and visitors.

6.2 Sea-Shore Convergence: The Pier as a Place 'In-between'

Connecting sea and shore, the pier's liminality is manifest in that fishers find themselves neither at home nor on the boat (see Entrikin, 1991). The pier is the first place where fishers place their feet on solid ground after every fishing trip. It is not surprising that the pier conjures up a multitude of meanings for them. As they step onto the pier they leave behind the 'other-worldly' quality of the boat, yet, they are not quite home. They are, as it were, *in-between* places. This state of *being* physically in-between also embodies their state of mind where psychologically their thoughts are caught between wanting to stay (home) and wanting to go (to sea).

> Well I suppose you think of being ashore especially when you run into bad weather. But once you're out there … and when you come back to shore you're looking forward to going home. But when you're at home then you're kind a half anxious to go away and do something you know (Crew member D, CTB, 2013).

My research suggests fishers live in a perpetual state of liminality (both physically and mentally). As they straddle different worlds I would argue that the pier as a place *in between* is hugely symbolic of this.

The pier is a place where *all* members of the community, whether directly involved in fishing or not, gather and *se rencontrent* − meet. For tourists and visitors, the pier is where the shore meets the sea, a place where they can create their own stories. For locals, both resident and diasporic[21], fishers and non-fishers, the pier is imbued with memories of past and present life experiences. The pier is at the heart of both communities in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec.

[The pier is] a working place for a start and I suppose a meeting place as well

21 Diaspora refers to natives of Castletownbere who return during their holidays.

> where you'd meet different groups of people, visitors, locals and fishermen through the year when you'd come in to land fish. And without it and without the development of the harbour the town of Castletown[bere] would have been nearly lost on the map only that a few got together to develop the place (Retired Fisherman M, CTB, 2017).

For Retired Fisherman M, the pier is responsible for Castletownbere's existence. Fishing is what drives the economy of the area and many local businesses benefit. Fishing is vital to the town's economic survival. It provides direct and indirect employment. The pier is at the centre of all fishing related activity. At all times of the year people enjoy a stroll or drive around the pier to meet others and 'see' what is going on. While people share experiences on the pier the importance and significance and meanings that are attached to these experiences can vary greatly. Discussions about the pier reveal how central it is to local life and how without it the town would lose its *raison d'être* – purpose.

> The pier to the fishermen is the equivalent to the square in a market town. It's the focal point of the community. Ninety per cent of the activity in Castletownbere up to now has been fishing-related. It varies, predominantly a work place but there are times when there's leisure activity related to it around Regatta time, you know there's amusements and the fun fair. The Fishermen's Mass is held in the [former] auction hall every year so ... umm I've gone to school there, there's the college [BIM Training facility] down on the pier, I've done my fishing and skipper's tickets there. All my life revolves around it, the more I think about it the more I realise my life revolves around it (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2017).

The pier is a vital place for active and retired fishermen. It is a work place and a meeting place. When fishers retire they continue to visit to the pier to meet people and to 'see what is going on'. It becomes a daily ritual that sustains their relationships with other fishers maintaining their sense of identity as fishers. Active fishermen can become so involved in securing their livelihood that they need to distance themselves from fishing (see Ricoeur, 1986) to fully understand the meaning and significance they attach to the everyday places in their lives. The notion that the pier is comparable to the square in a market town reveals its influence on *and* importance to coastal life. But meaning is embedded in the pier as it is a place that is deemed to be significant through the economic, social and cultural engagements/interactions that take place there (Wise, 2015). Fisherman L realised, when questioned, that the pier means so much to him and recognised that his whole life revolves around the pier. I 'unleashed' an epiphany – for the first time he realised the taken-for-granted relationship he has with the pier. He understood his "life revolves around it".

When fishers land their catch or are working on the pier it attracts locals and visitors who want to be 'part of the action' so to speak.

> *Les gens se trouvent sur le quai et ça se discute. Surtout pendant le mauvais temps quand les bateaux sont à quai les pêcheurs se rencontrent pour discuter.* People gather on the pier and have the 'banter'. Especially during bad weather when boats are at the pier [tied up] fishermen gather to chat (Active Fisherman Y, LG, 2014).

This 'in-between' place is where story-telling, net-mending and other shore-based activities are performed. Even when fishers are not at sea some feel the need to go to the pier to do 'something' whether it is on the boat or to meet people (see Urquhart and Acott, 2013a). The 'call of the pier' has a ritualistic quality to it − 'rite of passage' so to speak – as fishermen incorporate the act of going there into their daily routine. Sharing 'fishing-tales,' exchanging knowledge, and observing what other fishermen are doing differently is part of the routine performances on the pier.

> The pier is a meeting place; you'd always bump into colleagues, if you're walking along or driving along you'll still meet friends and colleagues. [During bad weather] you'd go down to see what's happening around the place or if there are any new boats in or if there's anybody using any different equipment to you (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2017).

Most people can *only* imagine the risks involved when faced with uncontrolled elements at sea, such as, a torn net, technical failure or an accident. Viewing and understanding the work of fishers solely through the lens of the pier is far too limiting. The work on the pier represents only one aspect of what fishers do. The fixed, solid and permanent structure of the pier contrasts starkly with the dangers and uncertainties, and the movement and motion of life at sea.

> From the pier they [visitors] see the boats coming in, they see the boats going out and they think that if they have fish that's great but it may not be great at all. They never perceive what's involved getting the boat out there and what's involved in what has to be done (MnM Member B, CTB, 2013).

> *Ils [le publique] ne comprennent pas notre manière de vivre. Je pense que c'est un aspect carte postale, les bateaux viennent et on débarque la pêche, on regarde d'une manière superficiel, ils aiment voir un peu mais entrer vraiment dans la vive du sujet je crois pas, c'est difficile d'ailleurs. [...] Une journée vous allez le faire et surtout s'il fait beau mais si vous êtes dans du mauvais temps* ... They [the wider public] don't understand our way of life. I think it has a postcard aspect, the boats arrive and land the fish, people look at it in a superficial way, they like to see a little but to really go into the way of life I don't think so but it is difficult. [...] If you do it for one day it's great especially if it's sunny but if you do it in bad weather ... (Retired Fisherman D2, LG, 2014).

People who do not 'live' the experience of being-at-sea can only imagine what it is like to *be* a fisher. Although the fishers regain firm ground, they continue to experience the swaying of

both body and mind; it is as if they *perdent pied* – 'lose their footing', yet, they are on *terra firma*. From my two days at sea I can attest to the fact that it takes fishermen at least two days, every time, before they readapt to a 'motionlessness' state – an experience that pursues them all their sea-life as they never become accustomed to it.

> *On sent qu'on bouge.* You feel like you're still moving (Retired Fisherman JL, LG, 2014).

Returning to the pier after a period at sea movement and activity on the pier is both internal and external. The mind keeps the fishers' bodies in motion long after they return to shore (see Paterson, 2009). But when fishers are present, the pier itself is alive with activity and movement: fishers unload their catch, fish boxes are transported to processing plants, await fish lorries are packed to transport fish to their destination. In addition, nets are mended, and boats refuelled and stocked-up with food ready for the next fishing trip.

For fisher's spouses/partners, the pier represents a point of departure and return − a place where their beloved goes to sea and later arrives home from fishing. It is a place that constantly reminds them of their husbands/partners.

> *Le port est le monde de mon mari. Il a vécu toute sa vie sur le port. Quand j'y vais-je pense à lui. Il y a beaucoup de choses qui se passent sur le port, un lieu d'entreprises*. The pier is my husband's world. He has spent all his life on the pier. When I go there I think of him. A lot happens on the pier, it's a place of business (Fisherman's spouse, telephone conversation, LG, 2017/FG 1, 2014, Participant C).

For Participant C, the pier is, above all, a place that reminds her of her spouse especially when he is at sea. Like Fisherman L in Castletownbere, her spouse's life has always revolved around the pier. Although the boat symbolises the fisher's world, the pier is associated with fishing activities. This reveals the complex nature of their way of life wherein fishers and their spouses/partners do not give the same meanings to the same place. In times past, women would accompany their husbands to 'see them off' at the pier and would come to greet them upon their return.

> *Toute sa carrière, j'étais sur le quai, a chaque fois même avec les enfants, peu emporte l'heure et puis comme il faisait des marées de quinze jours et bien quant il rentrée il faillait aller le chercher au port.* During his whole life as a fisherman I would always see him off at the pier even when we had children no matter what time of the day it was (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant B).

The emotion in her voice belied the fact that the events she described had occurred two decades ago − yet, these memories are so vivid. Her story recalled that of so many participants and that of my own mother's. Our connections to local places are enhanced through memories and life-experiences (Bennett, 2014).

> For me, well, it [pier] symbolises when my husband was fishing and the children were young sometimes we'd see him off to the boat, we'd go down there [to the pier] and watch him going out and we would see the boats going out from the pier out the harbour's mouth and the same when they returned. My children were very interested in the boats and we all [fishing families] were you know (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant D).

Since Participant D's spouse retired her feelings towards the pier changed. Once the pier symbolised a *personal* sense of absence whereas now it signifies a meeting place and a social place where fishing activity occurs. Even though retired it is still a focal point in her husband's daily life. Participant D from Le Guilvinec, whose spouse continues to go to sea, discussed the centrality of the pier in her daily life.

> *Et puis la difficulté aussi les allées et venues, j'habite à Pont l'Abbe donc je vais et je viens, c'est pas facile [entre Pont l'Abbe et Le Guilvinec]. Est-ce qu'il part, est-ce qu'il ne part pas ? C'est des journées a non pas finir, ça c'est la plus grosse difficulté.* And then the difficulty is the to-ing and fro-ing, I live in Pont L'Abbé so I'm always coming and going, it's not easy [between Le Guilvinec - eleven kilometres]. Is he going [fishing] or is he not? The days are very long, that's the biggest challenge (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant D).

This participant and her family live eleven kilometres from Le Guilvinec and, as a result, she not only has her own job to contend with but also performs 'taxi' duties for her husband and children. The pier has come to symbolise a 'waiting area' in a 'passenger terminal' where oftentimes they are *uncertain* as to whether the boat will go to sea or not.

In the past, for many children, the pier acted as a playground to those who lived nearby and/or whose fathers went to sea. Participants on both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec highlighted that the pier was an inherent part of children's lives.

> My daughter, well, all her memories are of fishing, like she ... the pier was her playground. She actually never went to the [real] playground. The pier was her playground and she played there with all her friends (Businessperson B, CTB, 2013).

The pier was a *natural place* to be for people from these fishing communities and specifically fishing families.

> *J'ai toujours vécu ici [au Guilvinec], près de la mer, petit je passais mon temps sur le port, on savait ramer avant de marcher. Le port était notre terrain de jeux.* I have always lived here [in Le Guilvinec], close to the water, as a youngster I was always around the pier, we knew how to row before how to walk. The pier was our playground (Retired Fisherman M, LG, 2014).

The notion that they "knew how to row before how to walk" (Retired Fisherman M, LG, 2014) reveals the similarity between Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. The pier was the playground for those who grew-up near the sea and perhaps even more so for those in fishing communities. There is a 'natural' turn towards the sea. There is constant activity − fishing

boats come in and go out to the rhythm of the tides and the seasons. Fishing communities identify with the pier as a place to which they are deeply attached as a focal point, a meeting place, work place and social space.

> I suppose when you're brought up a coastal community the sea is there in front of you the whole time, I guess anything we did, even as youngsters, in the summer time we used to be mackerel fishing off the *pier* so we always had that love of the sea, it was always there yeah (Active Fisherman B, CTB, 2013).

The pier evokes different emotions for different people. For fishers, it is first and foremost a place of work − in-between boat and home. For women whose husbands/partners continue to fish, it conjures-up feelings of uncertainty and absence. For those retired, it no longer evokes personal risk or absence but has become a social space and a meeting place. For children, it presents notions of adventure, fun and play where imagination creates different worlds to those perceived by adults. This simple structure − a manmade construction that connects the sea to shore − reveals itself as a complex place – simultaneously functional and symbolic − that defines the fishing communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec.

6.3 Geographies of Festivals and Ritual

Cultural traditions "can be transmitted across generations only by creative and lively engagements and resignification. A story that is not well told will not be remembered" (Benhabib, 2002, p.103). Local culture is often expressed and commodified in community festivals. In coastal communities maritime festivals provide fishing families with opportunities to meet amongst themselves but also involve the wider local population in certain aspects of their lives. According to Urquhart *et al.* (2014, p. 26) "understanding and witnessing the community/industry traditions, skills and cultural norms that are associated with this local produce [fish] encourages cultural sensitivity" and, consequently, opens-up new dialogues within the local community and between the local community and visitors. Festivals can be steeped in tradition and signify a community's sense of self (Derrett, 2003). Critically they also attract visitors and generate economic activity. They are a way of perpetuating local heritage through valorising ongoing practices (Acott and Urquhart, 2012). Most festivals occur during the summer months and provide entertainment that usually revolves around music and food, namely, fish and seafood. Some festivities involve specifically fishers and their families while others involve the wider local community and visitors. Cultural innovation, including community events, can lead to these fishing villages increasingly becoming as a visitor destination (Ford and Acott, 2015). Festival and community events offer communities ways both to reflect and project their perceptions of

local heritage and identity.

As Lukken (2005, p. 19) points out rituals “bridge across boundaries” and they not only “bring past and future together in the present” but also young and old, locals and visitors. According to Hall (2013, p.51) “vernacular practices connect, rather than inhibit, locals to larger worlds”. Many festivals and rituals linked to fishing as a way of life can be observed in places worldwide. Local customs, enacted through festivals and rituals, are not of necessity unique to particular locations and similar customs and ‘ways of doing’ can be shared across borders. I participated in festivals anchored in the sacred and secular in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. I came to understand the significance of these festivals for both my study sites. Like the pier which connects sea to shore and boat to home, these festivals act as a bridge that allows outsiders, visitors and tourists to connect to the fishing world. Significantly many of the festivals are based on the pier. Again, the pier itself is a space of welcoming inclusivity and connection acting as a portal between the fishing and non-fishing worlds for the duration of the festivals. On the pier and through the festivals people come together to experience aspects of fishing life. My research revealed that Castletownbere has not advanced as far as Le Guilvinec in this re-positioning process. As I will show in this chapter, in an effort to strive for greater inclusivity (between fisher/non-fisher and local/visitor), the people of Le Guilvinec have invested in capital projects placing permanent infrastructure on their pier to facilitate access to the fishing community and their way of life.

6.3.1 Castletownbere: The Festival of the Sea

> A festival empowers a region economically, culturally, and socially by exhibiting customs, rituals, and ceremonies, [...].It also enhances pride among local residents and offers multiple recreational opportunities (Girish and Chen, 2017, p.1).

Known as the Regatta for many years, the festival consisted of the gig races that took place on the August Bank Holiday Monday. The exact origins of the festival are unknown, however, newspaper articles referring to the Regatta date back to 1912.

> This race excited a considerable amount of local interest, as the home crew competed at the recent Castletownbere Regatta [...]

Source: *Southern Star*, 1912 [22]

In 2004 an article regarding the Festival of the Sea made reference to the Regatta which "has been running *for over a century* [emphasis added]" (*Southern Star*, 2004) which means that the Regatta existed already at the turn of the twentieth century.

> Ever since the Castletownbere Festival of the Sea was launched over twenty five years ago, it has been established as the premier family entertainment event in West Cork and South Kerry regions. Beginning on August Bank Holiday Monday with the annual regatta, which has been running for over a century, there were ten days of action-packed events which were devised into an exciting and wide-ranging programme.

Source: *Southern Star,* 2004

> I remember going way back, there was only the gig races the day of the Regatta. The gig races are going back over a century ago. It was a big thing altogether (Fisherman's spouse, CTB, 2017/FG 1, 2013, Participant, E).

> Yes I think so [local festivals are important]. For example during the Regatta festival there used to be at least fifty per cent of fishermen involved in the rowing ... maybe not so much now because they wouldn't have any time to go practicing. Actually back then you had a fishermen's gig and they took part in the races (Retired Fisherman M, CTB, 2013).

It was a day for family entertainment. In the early 1980s it evolved and became the 'Festival of the Sea'; ten days of festivities that encompass both secular and sacred rituals revolving around the sea, fishing, food and music. This festival continues to attract both local residents and members of the Castletownbere diaspora. It is still referred to as the 'Regatta' by many local residents.

The Festival of the Sea is an annual festival which commences on the Friday evening of the August Bank Holiday weekend. This ten-day-long celebration of fishing heritage which encompasses a variety of marine-themed activities, the Fishermen's Mass, the Blessing of the Boats and the laying of a wreath, is deeply anchored in local tradition and culture. During this festival fishing boats are decorated with coloured flags, as part of the Best Dressed Boat competition. This competition gives skippers the opportunity to repaint their boats prior to the festival and, consequently, the fishing boats tied-up at the pier add to the attractiveness of the place for locals and visitors alike (see Acott and Urquhart, 2012). Many

22 This and the following original documents were too blurred to utilise.

fishermen stay ashore for this period, especially for the long weekend, as the festival continues to have significance for them. In addition to the maritime-themed events, music is another important element. There is music for everyone – from live bands to 'disco'. This activity, based primarily on the pier attracts young and old, locals and visitors, both day and night and reinforces (and expands) the importance of the pier as a cultural place and a meeting place in Castletownbere.

The festival represents an important series of events in the community's calendar. The majority of local people ensure that they are at 'home' during the long weekend and many others plan their summer holidays around the festival.

> It's an important festival to us [to her family]. It is part of our long weekend to go [to events]. It influences what we do so we plan around it (Fisherman's spouse, CTB, 2017/FG2, 2013, Participant E).

The Saturday of the Bank Holiday weekend is a specific day for 'all-things' to do with fishing. A variety of activities take place at various places along the pier. As part of a competition fishermen, both local and visiting, demonstrate their fishing skills, such as, filleting fish, mending nets, splicing, and throwing lines. However, these 'performances' provide a mere 'glimpse' of the skills developed and utilised, on a daily basis, by fishers. The pier is *the* setting for these fishing events. Also doing these tasks on the pier is much less challenging for the fishers than undertaking them on the boat which is continuously moving on the water – and fishers regard these competitions as fun events.

> The fine weather on Saturday last brought out huge crowds to watch the annual Fishermen's Skills competition. [...] There was a large entry for the various competitions with both young and not so young fishermen taking part.

Source: *Southern Star*, 2001.

> The day of the fishermen's competition is an important part of the festival. My husband takes part. It's a celebration of the skills required and it shows that it's [fishing] not just about going out on a boat. It's also a bit of fun (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

Participant E grew up in a fishing family and is married to a fisherman. She regards the competition, and the festival as a whole, as a significant part of local life. It is her family's way of life that both she and her husband transmit to their children. The Fishermen's Skills Competition continues to draw large crowds of all ages as it portrays a set of skills that land-based people have few opportunities to witness. Over the past few years this competition has also attracted local women who wish to show their filleting skills (Fig.6.1).



Figure 6.1 Fish Festival Day: Fishermen's skills competition is part of the Castletownbere Festival of the Sea. Everyone tries their hand at filleting − active and retired fishers; women and men. Both women work in the local fish processing plant. They wanted to show that women also have the necessary skills and *savoir faire* to fillet fish correctly (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

But for some these competitions and fun events are not of significant interest. Fisherman L (quoted below) sees these events as targeted at fishers with families. However, what is hugely significant is that he always makes it back to Castletownbere by Monday to be present for the annual mass and the blessing of the boats. Once that is over he heads back to sea.

> I've never taken part in fishermen's competition; we're often at sea for it, in recent years the boat makes it in for the Sunday and the Monday and away again on the Tuesday. For the fishermen's families they love it. [...] It's a way of showcasing to the tourists, be they indigenous or strangers, a small bit of the skills involved, it's a bit of fun for the fishermen that participate. There's a bit of rivalry involved, it builds up in every competition [...] (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2017).

People relate to these competitions in different ways. It attracts crowds from the hinterland year after year. The local population continue to engage with this living tradition as it is part of what this community is about. Fishermen revel in participating in these challenges. It is an opportunity for them to meet and 'banter' with other fishermen both local and visiting. Observing the fishers during the fishing contests revealed both their *pride* and *humility* as they demonstrated to onlookers the dexterity with which they 'do their job'; it is a celebration of a living tradition. Watching them being awarded the 'symbolic' trophies was, for me, recognition and appreciation from the wider community for their efforts at sea and an acknowledgement of their importance to local economy, society and culture. I could see the joy in their faces as they received their awards – yet it was more a joy in the fact that their

contribution to the local community was recognised, even at this superficial level. There was an unassuming demeanour about them as they stood for the 'photograph for prosperity' knowing that the fun would soon end and for the next fifty-one weeks only they and their families would know the highs and lows of their chosen way of life, lived on the edge of society. These festival events do not reveal the hardships of fishing; however, these fishermen got involved as a way of 'performing' in a sociable atmosphere as they are proud of who they are *and* what they do.

> I nearly always take part in it [fishermen's competition]. It shows people the skills involved and it's a bit of fun (Active Fisherman W, CTB, 2013).

> The fishermen's competition is as much for the locals as it is for visitors. There's net-mending, splicing and all that ... it shows people the skills fishermen have (FG 1, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

For most fishing families the skills competition is a way to showcase the techniques required for fishing but above all it is a time for socialising and for entertaining not only themselves but onlookers. It symbolises the local living heritage that is evolving and adapting to an increasingly mobile population. Heritage can be regarded as "something that displays forms of inheritance passed down to present and future generations" it also "includes various dimensions of culture, identity, language and locality" (Trinh, Ryan and Cave, 2016, p. 130).

The Bank Holiday Monday which consists of the main event of the week – the Regatta – offers many water-based events at the pier organised by the Castletownbere Rowing club and Castletownbere Business Development association.

> The Regatta on Bank Holiday Monday is full of tradition. It is a meeting place, a positive way to meet people. These events are part of our community. Traditions remain strong and people coming home, coming together. People enjoy them, there's a bit of banter. They're very much part of tradition, of our make-up. They are for the locals, they [locals] were there before tourists, it is locally acknowledged as local businesses sponsor events. But I see the tourist side of the festival as a positive thing (Fisherman's spouse CTB, 2017/FG2, 2013, Participant E).

Gig races, both junior and senior, pillow fights, swimming races and greasy pole are just some of the events, located at the pier, that attract not only tourists but also a large number of the Castletownbere diaspora (Fig. 6.2). The Regatta generates a sense of 'togetherness' that is experienced by both permanent residents and the members of the Castletownbere diaspora.



Figure 6.2 Traditions live on: Such traditions can be observed in many coastal communities throughout the island of Ireland. Although over half a century has elapsed, crowds continue to gather for the Regatta festival in Castletownbere. Wooden structures have given way to concrete and metal revealing both the passage of time and infrastructural progress (Photos top left and right by local photographer Billy Black (Beara Historical Society): Regatta in the late 1960s. Photos below left and right: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

The pier becomes a space where different worlds meet. This distinctive place embodies social and cultural interaction and reminds us that place is significant to festivals and rituals (Lukken, 2005). The Regatta Festival represents a specific time and place that remains vital to the production of social networks. By mixing fishing traditions with other non-fishing activities, the festival attracts more participants and visitors as it signals that it is not exclusive to fishers.

> You have the festivals especially in the town pier. It's something that the town developed and wants to keep going. Attracting tourists, it [festival] gives a bit of business to the town itself. Especially the Regatta weekend, it's a weekend where visitors come and meet their families that are home. But the Regatta and Festival would still go on regardless of tourists. It's an annual event for the local gigs, it's for the tourists as well of course (Retired Fisherman M, CTB, 2017).

Fundamentally, this festival is *about* these people and *for* these people − permanent residents and visiting members of the Castletownbere diaspora − as a celebration of their maritime culture. People's attachment to their heritage is revealed through their regular return visits to their native place (Prat Forga and Cànoves Valiente, 2017).

> It's a celebration of local heritage. The Regatta existed ever before tourists started coming. It wasn't as big, they had the 'pig and pole' and the gig races all the time. Now they have a lot of events for children and younger people. There is a younger group now organising the events (Fisherman's spouse, CTB, 2017/FG 1, 2013, Participant E).

Anchored in older festivals the Castletownbere Regatta has evolved to maintain relevance. The new festival has grown out of the old regatta and the old and new elements have been blended seamlessly. There is an argument that could be made that fishing has been commodified for tourist consumption (see Brookfield *et al.,* 2005). But it has retained a sufficient degree of authenticity that local and visiting fishers are happy to accept the changes and continue to participate. The majority of participants from Castletownbere did not view the evolution of the festival negatively. They still see the festival as an intrinsic part of the life of the community and embrace and almost celebrate the fact that tourists are interested in their lives.

> I think there's no harm that there is a little more of an emphasis on tourism because the way fishing has gone it's not going to sustain the town on its own any longer. We were for a while I suppose ... tourism and fishing didn't really get on together because the fishermen were maybe a bit intolerant of tourists but that's changing. We'd encourage tourism now (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2017).

That said, the *commodification* of their culture could be 'hidden' in that participants' in my research highlighted the difference between the tourist as 'stranger' and the tourist as 'returning' locals for their holidays. The fact of 'knowing' who these visitors are changes the experience of the tourist 'gaze'. Members of the local diaspora return to Castletownbere annually at the time of this festival, the Festival of the Sea has become synonymous with creating and maintaining social and cultural relationships.

> Tourists are mainly people returning [home] more than what we'd call strangers you know, if I can make that distinction. There is no room in Castletown[bere] ... for the want of a better term strangers, because every place is booked out by returning locals. It tends to be more ... indigenous people that are around for the week or two I think anyway. They're two separate entities the returning diaspora and the strangers, well strangers is a bad term, I suppose tourists (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2017).

It is a time and a place for 'all' locals to meet and transmit the local heritage to future generations. As many people do not meet with one another outside of this festival due to

professional and personal commitments in addition to geographical circumstances it is through the act of socialising during this festival that heritage and identity of the fishing community in Castletownbere is maintained (Hannam and Halewood, 2006). The festival is important to fishing culture as an agent that strengthens the ties between an increasingly dispersed 'community'.

It was interesting to observe these events take place as a researcher. I had long acted as a spectator but without the 'scrutinising eye' of the researcher. As a researcher, I observed as the crowds watched the 'unfolding' of different events. Some gasped in awe at the tenacity of certain competitors. The sheer resolve of the contestants offered an example of theatrical performance to the spectators. The competitors, locals and visitors alike, were both young and 'not-so-young'.

> The day of the Regatta is a family day and even the tourists join in, in the fun. There are gigs from Kenmare, Skibbereen, Schull, but it was ever like that (Retired fisherman's spouse, CTB, 2017/ FG 1, 2013, Participant E).

Contenders for the gig races came from many coastal towns around the south-west shoreline including Kenmare and Bantry in addition to the Castletownbere local teams. The last gig race was patiently awaited. I could sense the excitement mounting. The atmosphere was electric, almost emotional, as the Castletownbere women's and men's senior local teams were finalists. A local woman I know well was standing beside me and she told me that her brother was the coxswain of the senior men's team and together we shouted for our local team. Every year the excitement mounts in her family that translates into a strong sense of place attachment. The finals offered both locals and tourists alike a great spectacle. The senior women's and men's local teams crossed the finish-line in first place.

> You'd be so excited and there would be a knot in your stomach and to think that they [local teams] are winning. And there are loads of little punts around the place and there would be a big crowd on the pier especially for the senior ones [gig races]. It's brilliant, it's pride, it's part of our heritage. It's going on well before I was born. As a child all I can remember is people taking about the gig races and the excitement of it all (Fisherman's spouse, CTB, 2017/FG 1, 2013, Participant E).

People invest emotionally in these events. In fishing and coastal villages and towns local rivalries are played out on the water as much as on GAA pitches. While the Regatta is the main attraction of the festival, many other events take place during the week. What initially started with gig racing has, over the decades, evolved to reflect the interests and needs of the community and wider society. The current festival involves various strands of activities such as children's fancy dress parade, barista competitions, open-air traditional music and dance

sessions. These individual events are significant parts of the annual celebrations in their own right and together they encompass the whole Festival-of-the-Sea experience.

> Most people in Castletown[bere] plan their holidays around it. You get people coming home from abroad and the same week or two every year to coincide with the festival. It means you get a lot of the diaspora coming back at the same time and they get to meet up, it keeps the community together I suppose, once in the year (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2017).

Events like these reveal a collective sense of attachment to the pier as a place for social gatherings (Scannell and Gifford, 2016). My fieldwork on the pier provided me with the opportunity to explore and reflect on what *this* place meant not only to me but also to the wider community. I was aware of myself 'being-in-an-*in-between*-place' – me as a local *and* me as a researcher. Further, this festival brings the community – near and far − together and acts as a bridge between those who left and those who stayed. I left over twenty years ago but through the Festival of the Sea – I like many others – maintain links to Castletownbere and my fishing heritage.

6.3.2 Castletownbere Pier: The Fishermen's Mass and the Blessing of the Boats

> A ritual never exits alone. It is usually one ceremony among many in the larger ritual life of a person or community, one gesture among a multitude of gestures both sacred and profane, one embodiment among others of traditions of behavior [sic.] down from one generation to another (Bell, 1997, p. 171).

In an ever-evolving society, there is a blending of institutional religion and cultural traditions (Inglis, 2007). Through the Fishermen's Mass and the Blessing of the Boats in Castletownbere there is a coming together of religion and fishing heritage and practice; each makes concession to the other to create a hybrid ceremony. This section explores the significance of two *religious* events that take place each year on the pier. The first, the Fishermen's Mass, is of recent origin and the second, the Blessing of the Boats, dates back many decades. Both of these events are now key parts of the wider Festival of the Sea. However, while the Festival of the Sea has events that are aimed at both locals and visitors these two events are aimed primarily at locals and specifically the fishing community. Again the pier is central to both of these events.

6.3.2.1 The Fishermen's Mass

Until relatively recently there was no specific mass celebrating the fishermen's livelihood as the emphasis had been on another ceremony − the Blessing of the Boats. By the turn of the twenty-first century *Mná na Mara* proposed and organised a special mass for

fishermen on the August Bank Holiday Sunday celebrated on the pier in the open air.

> At midday on Sunday, the annual open air fishermen's Mass was celebrated on the pier. The celebrants were Fr. Donal O'Connor, assisted by Canon Patrick Sheehan and Fr. Sean O'Shea. Fishermen and their families read the prayers and brought up the gifts of nets, twine, needles, and seafood to the altar. [...] Following the Mass, the three priests were joined by Rev. John Howorth, Crosshaven and Miss Maud Levis, Church of Ireland, for the Ecumenical Blessing of the Boats.

Source: Southern Star, 2001.

However, just as fishermen have to deal on a daily basis with the unpredictability of the Irish weather so too did the mass organisers. Even though the mass took place in early August it was frequently affected by inclement weather conditions. Mass organisers soon discovered that it was not always an easy task to perform mass outdoors or to re-locate it, with haste, to the former auction hall[23] (Fig. 1.2). In 2010, the then parish priest suggested celebrating the mass in the former auction hall, located on the pier, regardless of the weather (Fig. 6.3). The idea was supported by fishing families, the choir and the organisers. The Fishermen's Mass was rescheduled to the Bank Holiday Monday with the Blessing of the Boats immediately following. It is an ideal start to the long-established Castletownbere Regatta.

> We used to have the mass on the Sunday before the Regatta and Father S would say the mass as our own priest would be saying mass at the same time in the church. I prefer to have it in the [former] auction hall as it's all to do with fishing, everything, such as the gifts, is all about fishing and the hymns we sing they are appropriate to fishing and the water. A lot more come, the [former] auction hall is packed. Then the canon decided to do it on the [Bank Holiday] Monday as he thought it was a lovely way to start the day [Regatta] off. Everything is to do with the sea the boats, it's a lovely idea (Retired fisherman's spouse, CTB, 2017/FG 1, 2013, Participant E).

Celebrating the Fishermen's Mass in the former auction attracts participants year after year as it is a place of "specific performance" (Rogers, 2012, p. 65).

> There are those who go to this Mass who wouldn't go every Sunday. It's more for the fishing community (FG 2, CTB, 2013, Participant E).

The pier is "a meaningful location" for fishers and their families (Cresswell, 2004, p. 7) and locating the mass in the former auction hall on the pier acknowledges this. As Lukken (2005, p.117) suggests place is "such an essential and fundamental part of the ritual itself". This

23 Auction hall closed in 2002 since fish sales are conducted via internet.

place allows them to go beyond institutionalised religion by incorporating places that are part of their daily working lives into the celebration and, consequently, encourages deeper thinking about what they are *actually* experiencing (Maddrell and della Dora, 2013). Additionally, having the mass outside the Church is one of the ways in which fishing families are "shaping the debate about the place of belief, faith and religion" in contemporary thought and action (Brace *et al*., 2011, p. 2).

> I find the mass very uplifting and you'd be thinking of the sea at the same time. I see young fishermen that make it their business to be there and visiting fishing families that are always there (Retired Fisherman's spouse, CTB, 2017/FG 1, 2013, Participant E).

The Fishermen's Mass "through different means that includes ..., embodied gestures, ... hymnic praise, sermons and prayers ... evokes a community and space of and for the faithful and that to which they act" (Holloway, 2011, p. 44). One particular participant described the feeling of attending the mass as "very uplifting". She is part of the local choir and her annual participation in this mass is a way of (re)embedding herself more deeply in both her faith and the fishing community.

> The bringing up of the gifts, mending needles and twine makes me think all these things that I used as a fisherman and then the fish if they have platters of seafood you'd be delighted to see it at the side of the altar because you know it was the fishermen here who brought it in, maybe even one of the fishermen at the mass. It brings together the past and the present. It's a ritual and a time for reflection of times past (Retired Fisherman M, CTB, 2017) (Fig. 6.3).



Figure 6.3 The Annual Fishermen's Mass: The importance of this special mass is revealed through the attendance of fishing and non-fishing families every year. It is a time when these families gather together to celebrate their way of life and commemorate those lives lost at sea (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

This occasion fuses past and present. Retired fishermen reflect on times past through the presence of fishing artefacts that reinforces their thoughts that they are *still* present to celebrate their way of life. The idea of giving a 'secular' space to ritual and faith reveals the

changing face of Irish Catholicism (see Inglis, 2007) and the practice of orthodox religion. This change in people's way of living their faith is opening up new ways of practising their beliefs (Holloway, 2011).

> For any profession if you have a special mass it gives you a good feeling. [...]. When you do believe there is a bit of spirituality involved in it. There is always a reference given to lads that have been lost and you get a little nostalgic of course over that, it brings you back and you get a lump in your throat sometimes depending how recent events are, it's unfortunate in the industry we're in. It's a celebration as well, and a prayer that everybody will have a good season, a good year ahead and I suppose as fishermen it's the only time we're really all together and pulling in the one direction under the one roof. Because of the nature of our business we're usually pulling against each other, every fish has everybody's name on it until somebody catches it. There is a sense of camaraderie (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2017).

While fishing communities are close-knit particularly in times of tragedy and hardship, at sea fishermen are competing for limited quotas of fish with other crews. This annual event unites all fishermen (and their families). The mass simultaneously commemorates lost lives and celebrates a living practice and a way of life. The precariousness of a fisher's life intensifies the meaning of this mass and adds to its significance. Taking place in the former auction hall on the pier, the mass illustrates that religion has relevance beyond the confines of the walls of churches and religious institutions − that it is connected to the 'outside'. God is not only within the Church but also in nature and the "interplay between spirituality and our everyday lives is made more explicit" (Friend, 2007, p. 211).

It is a special time and place for fishers and their families to come together in prayer to remember the past and celebrate the present though the performance of readings, prayers of the faithful and the offertory procession. The gifts brought to the altar are linked to fishing and certain artefacts – piece of a net, life jacket, platter of seafood – can be seen as parts of an authentic whole (Maddrell and della Dora, 2013).

During my field research in 2013, for the first time, the ceremony of the Fishermen's Mass and Blessing of the Boats occurred during the June Bank Holiday in the local Catholic Church. The parish priest told me that a few fishermen had requested a change in the date. Following discussions it was decided to "give it a try" (Parish Priest, CTB, 2013). The attendance was poor; even those who are regular mass goers revealed that having the mass on the pier is hugely significant to the Fishermen's Mass. In retrospect, taking the mass from the pier and its August date was a mistake.

> It's established in the mind-set that it's held during the August Bank Holiday; it's woven into the local culture. Deep down they [fishers] are quite religious and have faith but they just don't show it (Parish Priest, CTB, 2013).

In contemporary society being religious is becoming more personal and confined to the private realm (Inglis, 2007) and, therefore, reveals why younger fishermen do not tend to openly display their faith and beliefs.

> Less than half turned up when they had it one year in the church. When it's down on the quayside or in the [former] auction hall there is a big gathering. Everyone preferred it in the auction hall, down at the seafront. It's more appropriate to have it in the [former] auction hall, it *is* a Fishermen's Mass (Retired Fisherman M, CTB, 2017).

The mass has since returned to its usual place on the pier and its usual date on the Bank Holiday Monday. Not only is the concept of *place* essential to the ritual but also the notion of *time*. Because the 2013 mass was held in a different location and at a different time of year I judged that it was very much an aberration and could not be deemed as representative of the experience of previous years. My observations and interpretations therefore relate to the mass was of 2014 − which was a more accurate reflection of the 'traditional' Fishermen's Mass and, consequently, provided a better opportunity for understanding this ceremony. Although inherently religious, the Fishermen's Mass is not just a religious occasion but fundamentally blends religious beliefs with a way of life. It anchors religion in fishing and fishing in religion. The mass is also about (re)affirming identity as individuals and as a collective (Friend, 2007). The importance of the mass is demonstrated through the dedication and commitment to the mass of all those who participate. Celebrating this mass in the former auction hall on the August Bank Holiday remains a significant community event. This tradition has entered into the mind-sets of local fishing families − it has quite quickly become anchored in the local calendar of community events. It is highly significant that this mass takes place on the pier. Just as the pier connects sea and shore, the past to the present, the fishing community to the non-fishers and the entire community to outsiders and visitors, through this mass the pier is the location where the religious and the secular also connect. The institutional Catholic Church has come to meet a component part of its congregation *in their own world.* While this is not unique (it must be acknowledged that it began in Castletownbere at a time when the Catholic Church in Ireland was losing *its place* in Irish society) the number of fishers attending each year shows that there is more than novelty at play here. And critically, from my perspective as a researcher, I note that the pier emerges once again as a pivotal place in maintaining a link between the fishing communities and traditional religious practices in an increasingly secularised world. The pier is the point where these two worlds − the secular and the sacred − connect.

6.3.2.2 The Blessing of the Boats

While supstition appears to be the reserve of folklore in contemporary society, fishers, nonetheless, have turned to and retained the ritual of blessing the boats. During my fieldwork, the majority of fishers and their families, both Breton and Irish, acknowledged the decline of superstitions or *piseogs* within the realm of sealore. Many suggested that today's fast-paced society and modern technology have altered their belief systems. Despite this reason, their belief in the holy water exists as much today as it has in the past. They put the safeguard of their lives into the blessing ritual in spite of the modern equipment on board the vessel.

The Blessing of the Boats is a ceremony that is not unique to Castletownbere. Similar ceremonies survive in fishing villages and towns in Ireland (for example Courtown, County Wexford (McGain, 2016); Howth, County Dublin (personal communication) and Claddagh, County Galway (*The Irish Catholic*, 2017). However, the impact of EU membership since 1972 and the consequent decline in the status of fishing as the central economic activity in many coastal settlements has seen a decline in traditions such as these. These ceremonies are not standardised and exhibit characteristics that are locally unique. While some focus on blessing boats others bless the sea, the bay or the nets. Interestingly, there is no specific single structure to these 'blessing ceremonies'. However, from what I could ascertain many of them occur in August, but unlike in Castletownbere, the preferred date is the Sunday nearest the feast of Assumption of Our Lady in mid-August and for this reason Our Lady features strongly in many fishing-related religious ceremonies across Europe.

Many Castletownbere inhabitants could recall the attending the Blessing of the Boats in the 1940s; however, it is difficult to identify the exact date when this ceremony was initiated. Traditionally it took place after Sunday mass on the August Bank Holiday weekend. At that time there was no specific mass for fishermen, the Blessing of the Boats ceremony took place after Sunday mass; most of the congregation followed the priest from the church to the pier for the Blessing of the Boats.

> Yes it was ever there when I was growing up. One Sunday in the year and it was usually the Sunday before the Regatta that the priest would come down and he'd bless all the boats (MnM Member B, 2013).

Since the mass is currently celebrated in the former auction hall the Blessing of the Boats follows directly afterwards on the pier (Fig. 6.4). The performance of this ritual is experienced by participants as a means of celebrating the local fishing activity.

> Years ago it used to be centred on the Blessing of the Boats rather than the Mass. There'd be Sunday Mass and everybody would go down to the pier afterwards and go around to all the boats. I think it's nicer the way it's done

> now, having it on the pier is a better idea, it's more relevant, everyone makes an effort, well that's if we're ashore, we try and make it if it's possible and if it's not we get the boat blessed separately anyway (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2017).

The blending of these two rituals − the Fishermen's Mass and the Blessing of the Boats − on the pier (which signifies both workplace and meeting place to fishers) highlights how "the sacred has increasingly come to permeate ... the geographies of everyday life" (della Dora, 2011, p. 163).

> I get the boat blessed. The main thing is that things go okay for you and keep the crew safe. I would transmit this religious tradition to the children. It's important that they are part of it. I feel strongly about it whether they go to sea or not (Active Fisherman W, CTB, 2013).

The Blessing of the Boats is quite a simple ceremony. After the Fishermen's Mass in the former auction hall the priest and congregation process to the pier. Lined up at the pier are the vibrantly coloured, freshly painted fishing boats dressed with flags. These recently painted boats adds a sense of occasion to the event − but more significantly it indicates that this ceremony is important to the fishers who both want their boats to look well for the ceremony but also through painting and dressing their boats show respect for the ceremony. Using an aspergillum[24] to sprinkle the holy water that is contained in a special vessel, the priest walks the length of the pier to bless as many boats as possible.

[24] The name derives from the Latin verb *aspergere* 'to sprinkle'.



Figure 6.4 The Blessing of the Boats 2014: Occurring immediately after the Fishermen's Mass, many fishers and their families observe this annual tradition as a marker of their identity. It is their way of honouring a living practice. It celebrates the present and commemorates the past. Whatever its origins the blessing ceremony continues to take place in fishing communities (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

It is critical to understand the factors that motivate fishers and their families to attend and participate in this ceremony. For them, the annual Blessing of the Boats is regarded as a very important event and the key to understanding its significance lies in the dangers inherent in this way of life. My research revealed a strong belief in the power of holy water as an agent of protection (Foley, 2010). This is intensely experienced by these fishermen. Holy water is connected to the major life events of those born into the Catholic Church – baptism, confirmation, weddings and funerals. My research revealed that fishers believed that the importance of the boats being blessed did not lie in securing bigger catches or in maximising incomes but rather in keeping the crew safe at sea and returning them safely to shore. The Blessing of the Boats represents a 'psychological crutch' to help fishers cope with events and conditions that are, in reality, beyond their control. They find comfort and security in the ceremony.

> The Blessing of the Boats is for spiritual protection [...]. For me it's the safeguard of the crew and then catching fish. Number one is that you come back with everyone you go out [to sea] with. Holy water is international. To me it's related to my faith. I know that most of my crew would be the same, they may not be weekly mass goers but ... (Active Fisherman L, CTB, 2017).

The Blessing of the Boats reveals that in spite of the many advances in communications technology, in spite of far more accurate monitoring and prediction of weather and an

increased awareness and regulation surrounding attention to health and safety issues on board the boat, the fishermen of Castletownbere continue to turn towards the power of the holy water for protection. In the words of Lukken (2005, p. 59) "rituals are not about technology or science but about people and how in and through ritual let go of reliance on their own capacities". There is a sense of the 'mystical' attached to this religious ritual. Observing people's body language revealed the importance of this ritual to them as they made the sign of the cross with purpose that recalled Bocock's (1974; cited in Friend, 2007, p. 211) definition of ritual as "the symbolic use of bodily movement and gesture in a social situation to express and articulate meaning". While people are adopting a science-like rationale in their everyday lived lives, the participants in Castletownbere, nonetheless, continue to engage with their religious beliefs (or at the very least some expression of spirituality) through the performance of the Blessing of the Boats (Friend, 2007).

> It's to bless the boats and all who sail in them, it's to protect them. I believe in the power of the holy water. Personally I have great faith in holy water (Retired fisherman's spouse, CTB, 2017/FG 1, 2013, Participant E).

Holy water is not just part of religious ceremonies but has a place in many homes. This use of holy water in the home is not unique to fishing communities – however, there is a generational shift in progress in Irish society and the ubiquity of holy water is in decline. But in Castletownbere among the fishing community holy water continues to be used in the everyday lived experiences and practices. Fishers' homes still have holy water fonts by the front door and my research repeatedly revealed that even non-practising Catholic fishermen tend to have faith in its power of protection. Its use feeds into the narrative of uncertainty and risk that permeates fishers' lives. It can best be understood as an agent of protection, a shield from adversity. It is interesting that the use of water in rituals that dates back millennia remains so deeply rooted in these modernising secularising households.

The ten-day Festival of the Sea encompasses both sacred and secular rituals and events. It is a celebration of fishing and coastal life as a living tradition. These rituals and festivities for members of the fishing community are integral to their internal/personal and external/communal expressions of identity. The Festival of the Sea and particularly the Fishermen's Mass and the Blessing of the Boats is an important part of the local culture, fishing heritage and fishing identity. These events matter to people. As long as fishing continues to be the main employer of the town, the rituals and events will continue as an integral part of community life.

The Fishermen's Mass and Blessing of the Boats could be regarded as a cultural

identifier where both religion and a way of life converge through the performance of ritual (Inglis, 2007). People attending and participating in these rituals express their own ways of being-in-the-world. These events are significant for many fishing and coastal villages and towns and can be adjusted to suit the needs of the locality.

6.4 Le Guilvinec Pier: Exploring Geographies of Heritage, Identity and Memory

> The act of preservation becomes almost the defining local characteristic; not only what is preserved but the practice and places of preservation themselves define the local culture (Crang, 2000, p. 103).

Since the last decade of the twentieth century interest in the importance and relevance of memory has become prevalent in geography (Said, 2000). As geography is keenly concerned with place, it is not surprising that geographers began to explore the notion of memory because it is closely related to concepts of heritage and identity (Said, 2000). Sharing memories is a way to simultaneously both *archive* them and keep them 'alive'. Transmitting ideas, beliefs and *ways of doing* to future generations enables people to both preserve and perpetuate their heritage (Nora, 1989). For Trinh, Ryan and Cave (2016, p. 130) heritage is regarded as "something that displays forms of inheritance passed down to present and future generations" it also "includes various dimensions of culture, identity, language and locality". Hervieu-Léger (2000, p. 141) highlights that "there is a need to recover the past in order to continue our (re) construction of both individual and collective identities".

The majority of coastal towns where fishing contributes to the local economy tend to have "a strong cultural heritage based on the fishing industry" (Urquhart *et al.,* 2011, p.245); this cultural heritage can then give rise to "a strong sense of place that is important for local residents as well as visitors and the tourism industry" (ibid). The local people in Le Guilvinec, through the creation of a visitor centre − on the pier that invites visitors to access and explore fishing culture and life − have developed a mechanism that they hope will both communicate to the wider public the 'real' nature of fishing (Foxwell-Norton, 2012) and develop new income streams for the town.

6.4.1 The *Pardon de Saint Trémeur* in Le Guilvinec

Much like Ireland, life in early twentieth-century Brittany was rhythmed by religious events especially by *pardons*[25]. They formed part and parcel of the everyday lived lives experienced by Bretons throughout all departments. The newspaper article below recounted

[25] From Old French pardoner (verb) to forgive; religious indulgence in the Catholic Church.

how the arrival of fairground stallholders to *Pays de Cornouaille* − south Finistère (Fig. 1.4) engendered protesters demanding the respect of Breton *Pardons* (*Le Courrier du Finistère*, 1920).

Pour le respect des Pardons Bretons

Cette protestation, que l'on veut bien vous communiquer, et à laquelle nous associons, est d'un membre bien connu de l'Institut.
Voici le temps où recommencent les grâces et beaux pardons de Bretagne. Tous ceux qui ont visite en été le Cornouille ou le Léon ont vu avec émotion et respect ces assemblées d'un petit clan – Roscovettes ou Capistes, Glaziks ou Bigoudens, − dont toutes les femmes portent les mêmes coiffes et atours, tous les hommes le même chupen noir ou bleu, borde de broderies ou des sequins.

For the respect of Breton *pardons*

'This protest, that we wish to communicate to you, and to which we associate ourselves, is a well-known member of the Institute. Here is the time when graces and beautiful pardons of Brittany begin again. All those who have visited *Cormouille* or *Léon* in the summer saw with emotion and respect these assemblies of a small clan - *Roscovettes ou Capistes, Glaziks ou Bigoudens,* - all of whose women wear the same headdresses and attires, all the men the same black or blue chupen[26], bordered with embroidery or sequins'.
Source: *Le Courrier du Finistère*, 1920, p. 2.

At this time, local people in Le Guilvinec already celebrated the *bénédiction de la mer* – the Blessing of the Sea – and the *Pardon de Saint Trémeur*[27]. The construction of the chapel, which dates from the fifteenth century, was initiated by *seigneur* (Lord) Kergoz in honour of the saint. Following the construction of the town's new church dedicated to Saint Anne in 1887 the Chapel of Saint Trémeur, was abandoned as a place of worship and became dilapidated. It was partially restored at various times throughout the nineteenth century. However, after years of neglect the creation of a local association *Gwarez Chapel Sant Trevel* (Safeguard of the Saint Trémeur Chapel) brought new life to the edifice with the assistance of the *Fondation du patrimoine* (Heritage Foundation). Since 2005 volunteers oversee its preservation with the *Pardon de Saint Trémeur* now being held annually. Since the turn of the twenty-first century there has been a wider revival of *pardons* throughout Brittany (Badone,

26 *Chupen* is a traditional Breton man's short jacket.

27 Initially baptised Gildas, Saint Trémeur lived during the first half of the sixth century. He was given the nickname Trémeur which signifies 'great victory'. It is said that the saint was decapitated by his father for having beaten him at a game of *soule*−the ancestor of rugby. His feast day is November 8 (www.fondation-patrimoine.org).

2012). Many chapels across the region, like that of Saint Trémeur, are being restored and maintained by local groups (Badone, 2015). Brittany has witnessed a (re)attachment to the past through the safeguarding of *lieux de memoire* − places of memory − and, consequently, this part of France has witnessed the return and/or strengthening and deepening of such rituals (Nora, 1989; Marschall, 2012; Badone, 2015). Historically the *pardon* was the act of indulgence which was granted on the day to parishioners who celebrated the memory of their patron saint through rituals and religious festivals. Today, through the performance of such rituals, local people celebrate their heritage as a means of constructing collective memory and identity (Marschall, 2012).

Religion and religiosity has been in significant decline in Brittany in the last few decades (Celton, 2008; Badone, 2015). Some local fishers in Le Guilvinec told me that religion was not important to them and, consequently, they have never attended the *Pardon de Saint Trémeur* or the Blessing of the Sea.

> *Avant les gens étaient plus religieux et la bénédiction de la mer était importante pour les habitants. Je ne savais même pas que cette bénédiction de la mer existe.* Before people were more religious and the blessing of the sea was important to the inhabitants. I didn't even know that this blessing of the sea existed (Active Fisherman A, LG, 2014).

> *Je suis au courant mais je n'y participe pas et je suis pas religieux. J'apprécie qu'il y ait une reconnaissance. C'est important de ne pas oublier les péris en mer.* I'm aware but I don't participate and I'm not religious. I appreciate that there is an acknowledgement. It's important to remember those who lost their lives at sea (Active Fisherman J, LG, 2014).

While fishers such as Active Fishermen A and J do not participate in the *Pardon de Saint Trémeur* or the Blessing of the Sea, they recognise its significance for those who do. In contemporary society where religion is no longer imposed, people can choose to participate [or not] for their own reasons (Badone, 2012). Nevertheless, while the separation of the French State and Church occurred in 1905, Catholicism remained embedded in Brittany longer than elsewhere in France (Celton, 2008). As in Ireland, religion in Brittany was part of the fabric of daily life throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. It even had pride of place on the front page of the regional newspaper *Le Courrier du Finistère.*

Le vrai catholique est catholique dans sa vie privée, est catholique dans sa vie publique.

'The real Catholic is Catholic in his/her private life, is Catholic in his/her public life'

Source : *Le Courrier du Finistère*, 1930.

While religion has declined, it still survives just beneath the surface in society where today

there is a *blurring* of the religious and the secular. What was once sacred has been integrated into the secular and *vice versa*. It could be argued that the preservation of such traditions as the *Pardon de Saint Trémeur* is linked to the notion of a collective identity (Badone, 2015). Initially it was religious practice that brought these people together, however, down through the decades the reasons people attend have become more diverse. Moreover, as Nora (1989) suggests, this religious architecture constitutes *lieux de memoire* – places of memory and, accordingly, the study of place should "include their connectivity to events" (Crang, 1997, p. 363). People are still attached to such rituals as they have come to symbolise who they are and their own being-in-the-world. The *Pardon de Saint Trémeur* is no longer only about religion but also about a shared cultural heritage and a shared way of life experienced through the performance of ritual; moreover, it constitutes "*un lien tangible avec un passé collectif*" − a tangible link with a collective past (Badone, 2012, p. 640). "Being Catholic seems to be becoming less a matter of adherence to Church teachings, rules, and regulations and more a matter of belonging to a cultural tradition and heritage, to a shared collective memory" (Hervieu-Léger, 2000, p. 141).

> *Je n'ai jamais fait bénir mon nouveau bateau mais à l'époque beaucoup l'ont fait.* I never got my new boat blessed but back then many did (Retired Fisherman JM, LG, 2014).

> *On est dans un pays catholique malgré tout et c'est normal de bénir les enfants donc pourquoi pas bénir un nouveau bateau' c'est une tradition aussi.* We're in a Catholic country all the same and it's automatic to baptise the children so why not bless a new boat; it's a tradition too (FG 1, LG, 2014, Participant E).

Retired Fisherman JM never got his boat blessed, however, he acknowledged many who did. For him, this ritual remains in the realm of religion whereas Participant E regarded it as a *mélange* of both religion and tradition. Religion provides divine protection from danger and risk while tradition symbolises who they are as fisher folk. Although the meanings that individuals give to these rituals differ, the experiences are, nevertheless, constructed and shared collectively.

Like the majority of pardons in Brittany the *Pardon de Saint Trémeur* takes place in July. Prior to the outdoor mass at Saint Trémeur chapel, people gather on the beach for the Blessing of the Sea the second Sunday in July. This particular Sunday, 13 July 2014, I attended the ritual. Despite the rain, a crowd of locals gathered by the beach. In addition to the presence of the local choir, the priest was accompanied by second priest and a deacon. At 10am the priest blessed the sea as a source of life and sustenance and also to protect those

who use it. The lifeboat was present at the shoreline. A local representative placed a wreath in the water in memory of all those who had lost their lives at sea. The congregation participated in singing as the choir sang hymns in both Breton and French. However, one particular song *Astre béni du marin* − 'Star blessed the seafarer' − was sung with passion; a hymn dedicated to the Virgin Mary for the protection of seafarers predominantly sung in coastal areas of north-west France.

Vierge propice aux marins
Conduis ma barque au rivage;
Garde moi de tout naufrage,
Blanche étoile du matin.

Virgin for seafarers
Steer my boat to shore;
Keep me from sinking,
White star of morning.
(Author Unknown)

This ritual brought to light similarities and differences with Castletownbere where the boats and not the sea are blessed. But while the Le Guilvinec ritual was broader in that it blessed the sea as a source of life and food, a key shared characteristic was the focus on safety – that this ritual represented an attempt to manage the risk and uncertainty that permeates fishers' lives: "Steer my boat to shore, Keep me from sinking,". While the emphasis on safety aligns with my study area of Castletownbere, other elements of the Le Guilvinec ritual recall similar ceremonies in other parts of Ireland particularly in Claddagh in Galway where the bay is blessed and where there is an equally strong focus on the Virgin Mary.

In Le Guilvinec model boats are made by retired local fishermen. No longer active in fishing and no longer attached to particular boats, the model boats provide the retired fishers with a (re)connection to this way of life and enables them to participate fully in the ceremony. These model boats are shouldered through a pathway (Fig. 1.5) and are blessed by the priest (Fig. 6.5).



Figure 6.5 The Blessing of the Sea and Procession: As the crowd gathers, the priest, accompanied by the local choir, opens the ceremony. Revived over a decade ago, the Blessing of the Sea and Procession has re-emerged as an important event to local coastal life. Residents reconnect with their maritime heritage that is both sacred and secular (Photos: (above) Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam and (below) Francois Derrien).

The hours invested in creating these model boats reveals their pride in their way of life and also reinforces their identity as fishers. Banners representing Saint Nicolas (patron saint of sea rescuers) and Saint Peter (patron saint of fishers) were also carried (Fig. 6.5). While there is a blending of sacred and secular in this ritual, the presence of banners dedicated to saints

reveals that religion remains significant. Once the sea was blessed the crowd proceeded towards the Saint Trémeur chapel where the mass took place and where the model boats were put on display for the rest of the year.

> *Je vais avec les enfants. Les enfants ont déjà portés les maquettes de bateaux. C'est [une rituelle] religieux, c'est quelque chose qui est un héritage, c'est la tradition. Je ressens des émotions par rapport à ceux qui ont péri en mer. Les prières au bord de la mer m'émois par rapport au monde marin de mon mari, ca me travaille, ils [pécheurs] risquent leur vie.* I go with the children. They have already carried models of boats. It's religious, it's heritage, it's tradition. I feel emotional when I think of those lost at sea. The prayers said by the sea move me regarding my husband's world at sea, they [fishers] risk their lives (Fisherman's spouse, telephone conversation, 2017/FG 1, LG, 2014).

> *Je porte les bannières pendant la procession du Pardon de Saint Trémeur. Les gens portent des maquettes de bateaux. A l'époque on avait une messe et la bénédiction des bateaux, c'était aux années soixante, et puis ça s'est estompé. Il y a une couronne qui est jetée à la mer pour les péris. C'est important pour moi d'y participer pas seulement pour les pêcheurs mais aussi pour tous ceux qui prends la mer.* I carry the banner during the procession of the *Pardon de Saint Trémeur.* People also carry models of fishing boats. Back in the olden days they used to have mass and bless the boats, that was during the 1960s and then it began to dwindle. There is a wreath placed at sea for the lost lives; it's important for me to partake in this procession not only for the fishermen but for all those who take to the sea (Retired Fisherman D2, LG, 2014).

This is a complex ritual that blends religion and tradition. It is a colourful celebration of fishing life but it is underpinned by the dangers and risks associated with this way of life. Different people attached to the fishing community give their own meanings to these practices. For fishers' spouses/partners this *pardon* symbolises the world of their husbands/partners. It is a place *and* time for them to reflect on the risks and uncertainty that underpins their way of life. For practicing and non-practicing Christians alike it is a ritual that offers a moment of peace and tranquillity – an opportunity for reflection. It is an inclusive ceremony with relevance in the words of Fisherman D2 "for all those who take to the sea".

It is essential to these fishermen that lives that have been lost at sea will not be forgotten. "Remembering is intensified by the fact that ritual and text become efficacious only in the presence of others" (Casey, 2000, p. 218). When we experience *past* memories by *present* doings (Casey, 2000) we learn to cope with tragedy and, in so doing, create a connection to the 'otherworld'. As Casey (2000, p. 290) fittingly highlights that there is "freedom in remembering". The practice of remembering is, therefore, "rooted in the present" (Meier *et al.*, 2013, p. 424). It is interesting that this ceremony conjures up, in a different context, themes that have already been explored – notions of 'otherworld' and 'freedom'.

The choir, together with the congregation, continued singing hymns as the procession journeyed towards the old chapel of Saint Trémeur through a wooded path. The whole performance recalled Maddrell and della Dora's (2013, p. 1109) assertion that contemporary Celtic Christian theology puts its belief in the notion that "the immanence of God can be found in the everyday and surrounding world". As we neared the chapel the bells pealed; this special mass was celebrated outdoors (Fig. 6.6).



Figure 6.6 The open-air ceremony: Rows of benches had been put in place; flowers bordered the path to the altar where the model boats were placed during the ceremony. People began to fill the seats that awaited the dedicated congregation (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

> *La messe est importante pour le pardon. Je suis Catholique, pas vraiment pratiquante je ne vais pas à l'église tous les dimanches mais en ce moment je prépare les enfants pour leur profession de foi. Le Pardon de Saint Trémeur est un moment de se retrouver, on discute, on chante, on change les idées.* The Mass is important for the pardon. I am a Catholic, not really practicing, I don't go to Church every Sunday but at the moment I'm preparing the children for their confirmation. The *Pardon* of Saint Trémeur is a time to meet people, we chat, we sing, we exchange ideas (Fisherman's spouse, LG, telephone conversation, 2017/FG 1, LG, 2014).

This highlights how the secular and religious worlds blend and merge through this ceremony. It remains important for these fishing families that their children are brought up within the Catholic Church as their faith is also connected to their coastal heritage and identity. During the sermon the priest identified the importance of the sea and the respect that everyone should have for it. As the mass came to a close the priest invited the congregation to share *un verre de l'amitié* − a glass of friendship − organised by the *Gwarez Chapel Sant Trevel* association. People mingled and chatted with one another. Not only is it a 'place of memory' but also a time to socialise with those who identify with their local heritage (see Bradley and Kennelly, 2008). These fishermen were proud to be part of this ritual as it symbolises their fishing identity and way of life. Finding suitable ways to acknowledge and remember those who have lost their lives at sea remains hugely significant to coastal inhabitants and this ritual also addresses this need. Through the creation of this event/experience the community somehow makes the intangible more tangible.

Through the performance of these rituals members of fishing families can (re)construct *and* deepen their sense of identity (Friend, 2007). The rituals of the Blessing of the Boats and the Blessing of the Sea afford "an opportunity for a more fine-grained understanding of belief, faith and religion accepting that these are not synonymous and that they have different geographies" (Brace *et al*., 2011, p. 2). The yearly (re)creation of these rituals reveals their importance. Through the ritual, the fishermen and their families celebrate *their* being-in-the-world; some are regular mass goers, some are not but each one believing in a 'divine' or 'superior force' in their own ways.

These events, both secular and sacred, provide a vehicle for uniting family and friends through the ongoing practices and performances of festivals and rituals (Badone, 2012). They also play an essential role in maintaining a community's heritage.

6.4.2 *Haliotika*: Le Guilvinec Visitor Centre

While the Festival of the Sea in Castletownbere allows non-fishers to engage with

aspects of the fishers' way of life it is very much an ephemeral event. It lasts for ten days and then all evidence of the festival disappears until it re-emerges the following year. As a mechanism to diversify the economic base of Castletownbere and allow insights into the fishing community it is both transitory and temporary. In Le Guilvinec this process of diversifying the economic base of the town is significantly more advanced. The *Haliotika* Visitor Centre – *La Cité de le Pêche* (The Hall of Fishing) (Fig. 1.5) allows locals and tourists to become immersed into the world of fishers. Located on the pier it opened in 2000 following an initiative of the then Mayor, Hélène Tanguy (1995-2012) and the local authorities. This permanent structure on the pier provides a year-round gateway for visitors and locals alike into the fishers' world (Fig. 6.7).

> *Certain individus sont heureusement impressionné par ce qu'on fait. Haliotika montre vraiment ce que c'est [la pêche] vraiment.* Some individuals, fortunately, are in awe of what we do. *Haliotika* Visitor Centre really shows what it [fishing] is *really* like (Active Fisherman J, LG, 2014).

In contrast to museums that exhibit the past, the visitor centre portrays fishing within a contemporary context rather than *what it was* and, consequently, reveals a 'living' heritage of the vibrant industry of Le Guilvinec (Acott and Urquhart, 2012). While Fishermen J and M (see below) highlighted the significance of this visitor centre for tourism, many local residents appreciate the activities and enjoy the atmosphere it brings to the pier. Conversations with non-fishing local residents revealed the importance of the *Haloitika* Visitor Centre for the wider community.

Near the start of my fieldwork in Le Guilvinec I met with one of the tour guides who explained the idea behind the centre. The initiative was developed to illustrate the lived lives of fishers and their families *via* interactive exhibitions including a film documentary showing life on board a fishing vessel. The exhibitions are changed approximately every two years or with the evolution of the fishing port. The centre links fishing activities and *pesca*-tourism through an interactive environment for adults and children (Haliotika, 2017; see also Acott and Urquhart, 2012). With significant inputs from local fishers and the wider community, the centre is constantly co-creating knowledges (Wright *et al.,* 2012). In 2007 the visitor centre changed its status to become a s*ociété d'économie mixte* (semi-public company); while it receives funding to renew and develop exhibitions, it remains self-sufficient in terms of the day to day operation of the centre. I was invited to visit the centre before opening hours. This enabled me to explore the centre at my own pace. The array of activities, for both adults and children, ranged from cooking workshops − with a female fisher who explores the culinary characteristics of seaweed − to quizzes for children. This fisherwoman not only goes fishing

but also sells her ‘catch’ at various food markets in the surrounding area. Everett (2008, p. 337-338) argues that fish as food is a “multidimensional cultural artefact capable of linking issues regarding the relationship between place and identity, and the material and symbolic”.

> *Je toujours voulais pêcher mais mes parents ne m’ont pas permit donc dès que j’avais l’âge j’ai décidé d’aller en mer. C’est ce que j’ai toujours voulu faire.* I’ve always wanted to fish but my parents wouldn’t allow me so once I was old enough I decided to go fishing. It’s all I ever wanted to do (Active Fisherwoman S, LG, 2014).

Fisher S is an expert in seaweed and her aim is to promote this product that remains unfamiliar to many. She is extremely passionate about the sea and her work and could not see herself doing anything else. The work at the visitor centre enables fishers like Fisherwoman S to share their experiences of fishing with the wider public (Foxwell-Norton, 2012). The participation of local fishers in the visitor centre reveals their attachment to a life of fishing (Chapin *et al*., 2012).

The *Haliotika* centre is located next to the local auction hall (Fig. 1.5) and, therefore, in addition to the various activities described above, there are guided tours of the hall during live fish auctions.



Figure 6.7 Haliotika Visitor Centre: This is where it all happens – from the roof-top terrace, local and visiting 'onlookers' can delight in the spectacle of arriving boats after their twelve-hour fishing trip. The centre attracts people from near and far in search of authentic tourist experience. Haliotika shows how fishing remains a living practice in Le Guilvinec and has the ability to combine this vital industry with tourism (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

The roof-top terrace of the fish auction hall (Top right Fig. 6.7) overlooks the pier and acts as a viewing platform from where people can watch the return of the daily fishing boats, between 4pm and 5pm, unload the catch of the day (Bottom left and right Fig. 6.7). The pier is both a place of production and a place of consumption.

> *Haliotika était une très bonne chose, ça montre le public ce que c'est réellement la pêche. Et les expositions changent tous les quelques années. C'est très intéressant. Haliotika* [visitor centre] was a very good thing, it shows the public what fishing really is about. And the exhibition changes every couple of years. It's very interesting (Retired Fisherman M, LG, 2014).

Fishing is part of who these people are; their identity is (re)constructed *via* the practice of their occupation. The presence of a vibrant fishing industry allows the visitor centre to exhibit a living tradition. Through the *Haliotika* centre, the fishing sector is making a double contribution to the local community − while fishing continues to yield a revenue stream for Le Guilvinec in its own right, this centre has expanded the economic reach of the fishing

industry and has allowed non-fishers to benefit economically because visitors to the centre generate important revenue streams. The success of the centre is anchored in its ability to allow the local people engage with their own heritage while also giving them a voice in how they portray it to others (Acott and Urquhart, 2012). By exploring and mining communal memory, heritage and tradition, the fishing community in Le Guilvinec responds to present tourist demands in diverse ways. For non-fishers the centre can help them appreciate their relationship with (and dependence on) the local fishing industry and their wider natural environment (Johnson, Henry and Thompson, 2014).



Figure 6.8 View of roof-top terrace: Even on cloudy days the arrival of fishing boats for the afternoon action entices people to catch sight of and be part of the 'action' (Photo: Elaine O'Driscoll-Adam).

During my fieldwork I visited the live fish auction at 5.30am when the offshore fishing vessels unload. The pier was quiet except for a few fishermen and some auction hall workers. The morning I attended only five vessels landed so there was not a lot of margin for the buyers the majority of whom were there to purchase on behalf of restaurants and supermarkets. On several occasions I observed the arrival of the inshore boats. Each time the pier was as crowded as the last. People gathered, tourists and locals alike, to experience the scene. It gave the 'audience' a chance to 'glimpse' the fishers' world as they unloaded their catch on the dockside.

> *Quand on débarque notre pêche les gens viennent nous rencontrer et de nous acheter du poisson mais c'est différent de venir voir un pêcheur [à quai] et de connaître cette vie est réellement.* When we land our fish people come down to meet us and to buy fish from us but it's different to come *see* a fisherman [on the pier] and what the livelihood really is (Active Fisherman D, LG, 2014).

But observing the daily boats arriving for auction provides only a 'sample' of fishers' lives; it

did not reveal the 'hidden realities' of their way of life. This place − the open air visitor centre terrace that overlooks the pier − creates the ideal setting where the "intersection of gazes" emerge (Crang, 1997, p. 361). Nevertheless, fishers understand their own reality and at least this opportunity transmits authenticity and knowledge to the viewer. Moreover, a couple of boats sold their daily catch directly at the quayside and, as a result, brought crowds of locals to buy fresh fish and seafood. In contrast to the early morning auction, the afternoon fish auction was densely populated with people.

The *Haliotika* centre operates guided tours that take place every fifteen minutes. I took a guided tour to observe its functioning from the visitor's viewpoint. The guide was competent and the tour was detailed and comprehensive. The tour guides with whom I spoke were passionate about their work and very knowledgeable in relation to the local fishing heritage. This centre has opened up new ways of 'doing' tourism. Special culinary programmes, guided tours of live fish auctions in addition to watching the inshore boats land their catch *all combine* to make the *Haliotika* Visitor Centre the central place that it has become.

The *Haliotika* Visitor Centre, in addition to annual festivals, makes Le Guilvinec an attractive place for visitors to explore both fishing heritage and Breton culture. This unique centre allows access to the lives of fishers, fishing boats and fishing techniques. Heritage tourism that "effectively uses interpretation" can steer a community "toward an ability to engage in cultural preservation, and even revival" (Johnson, Henry and Thompson, 2014, p. 12). In contrast to geography debates about the artificiality sometimes engendered by the commodification of culture and heritage (see Brookfield *et al*., 2005) the people of Le Guilvinec have succeeded in presenting to visitors a 'real and authentic' living experience that focuses on fishing as a way of life that is not overly 'packaged and sanitised' (see Kneafsey, 2000; Nadel-Klein, 2000). While not a complete representation or portrayal of fishing life – for what it portrays it is accurate. The Haliotika Visitor Centre exhibition provides a mechanism for 'telling stories' about local fishing heritage through the narratives of local fishing families and, as a result, creates vibrant and living memories for present and future generations. Its authenticity is revealed through the performance within a contemporary context *without* the desire to hold-on to the past *à tout prix* − at all costs. Through the visitor centre fishers and their families want the wider public to understand and respect who they are and what they do.

Located on the pier, the *Haliotika* Visitor Centre reinforces the importance of the pier as a place and its centrality to all things related to fishing. The centre has established links to

the pier and the auction hall where from the open air roof-top terrace all the activities on the pier can be observed. This adds vibrancy and a real-time interactive dimension to the experience offered by the centre but also contributes an added vibrancy to the pier. The two work symbiotically to create new synergies and energies around fishing.

6.5 Towards Geographies of Resilience and Adaptation

Not all communities react in the same way when challenged with change. The capacity to adapt becomes part of the social, cultural and economic fabric of communities faced with adversity (Sherrieb, Norris and Galea, 2010). In the words of Johnson, Henry and Thompson (2014, p.2) "resilience acknowledges, rather than resists, change" and in relation to fishers in Le Guilvinec and Castletownbere, having long understood the value of these events (blessing of the boats, blessing of the sea, blessing of the sea, the regatta, the pardons etc.) for locals, have now realised their potential for tourism (Chang, Gibson and Sisson, 2014). However, prior to turning to tourism as a means of enhancing the community's economic viability, fishers had begun to adapt within their own sector by diversifying. The catching sector adapted to increased fuel costs through the use of more selective and lighter gear. Polyvalent vessel design has encouraged diversification that allows a combination of different seasonal fisheries which is vital for the viability of fishing families and their communities[28] (BIM, 2012; Ross, 2015; Symes *et al*., 2015).

> Diversifying is resilience. Fishing families are resilient but sometimes you have to be realistic about it (Fisherman's spouse and daughter, CTB, 2017/FG 2, 2013, Participant E).

The fishing industry is changing. Constantly facing new challenges, fishers need to be resilient. They understand that their future depends on their integration into wider economic processes and, therefore, they assist with the development of tourism (Johnson, Henry and Thompson, 2014).

> Definitely yeah [fishing and tourism complement each other], there's the angling aspect of it for example; but we'd need more hotels here to cater for tourists, we've got it [unspoilt beauty] but we have nothing [enough hotels] to bring people here, we should have more (Active Fisherman B, CTB, 2013).

> *Le tourisme s'ajoute à la pêche, par exemple, Haliotika sur le port est basé sur la pêche donc si on n'a plus de pêche il n'y a plus de centre.* Tourism is an addition to fishing, for example, *Haliotika* [visitor centre] on the pier is based

[28] Polyvalent vessels are multi-purpose and include small inshore vessels (netters and potters), and medium and large offshore vessels, targeting whitefish, pelagic fish and bivalve molluscs.

> on fishing so if you take away the fishing there's no more visitor centre (Active Fisherman A, LG, 2014).

The importance of developing mechanisms of adaptation in response to change from within rather than imposition from external influences creates and maintains senses of identity for local community members (Chapin *et al*., 2012). Ross (2015, p. 319) emphasises that "there is a perception that policy decisions are limiting the capacity of fishing businesses to plan for the long term, and that changes in regulations are affecting the inherent nature of being a fisherman".

> *Tout ce qu'on demande c'est de vivre et de gagner notre vie comme avant, mais on doit passer par l'administration européenne*. All we ask is to live and make a living as before, but you need to go through the European administration (Active Fisherman Y, LG, 2014).

> Some are leaving [the fishing industry] some who would like to progress can't, even if you have resilience, restrictions still come your way, only those who are already in it [the industry] can progress. Some are ring-fenced (Fisherman's spouse and daughter, CTB, 2017/FG 2, 2013, Participant E).

Access to finance can be a barrier to reinvestment (BIM, 2102) especially for first generation fishermen. Multi-generational fishers can depend on kinship relations for both social and economic support (see White, 2015). Symes *et al*. (2015, p. 245-6) argue that due to the growing burden of regulations and environmental issues, "the resilience of fishing communities and the stability of fishing livelihoods" are being put to the test.

> *Je passais une quinzaine de jours en mer, et j'ai fais aussi de la pêche côtière, à la journée. Avant je passais dix / douze jours [en mer], j'ai fais ça pendant dix ans, mais depuis 2000/2001, depuis l'augmentation du prix de gazole, je fais des sortis de quatre jours. On est trois à bord avant on était quatre.* I used to be at sea for the duration of a fortnight, and I've also done inshore fishing, daily trips. Before I used to do ten/twelve days [at sea], I did that for about ten years, but since 2000/2001, since the price of diesel increased, I do four-day trips. There are three of us on board before were there were four of us (Active Fisherman S, LG, 2014).

Challenged by and responding to changes, many of which occur at irregular paces, fishers and their families must continue to weave a "fabric of resilience" in order to overcome the plethora of complexities from internal and external factors (Symes *et al*., 2015, p. 246).

> *On a tendance de s'accrocher au passé au lieu d'essayer de changer les choses pour le mieux et d'avoir une vision pour le futur.* We tend to hang onto the past instead of trying to change things for the better and have vision for the future (Active Fisherman P, LG, 2014).

According to Ross (2015, p. 309) fishing communities are "shaped and defined by the thoughts and feelings of those belonging to it". Communities rise to the challenge in order to preserve their collective identity as fishing communities (Johnson, Henry and Thompson,

2014). However, in so doing, fishing communities must learn to embrace the future through diverse processes including exploiting elements of their past that appeal to wider societal groups.

The performance of festivals in the present reveals how the past and future can be combined. This chapter has explored the pier as a place that connects. It is on the pier that many of the initiatives that connect fishing to heritage and tourism in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec are anchored. The potential of tourism and heritage as a mechanism to generate new income streams is more advanced in Le Guilvinec. There, infrastructural projects such as the *Haliotika visitor centre* are concrete examples of a new partnership between fishers and the land-based community. While fishing must continue so that the current 'product' is maintained as a 'living heritage' experience in Le Guilvinec, if the fishing industry was to fail then the *Haliotika* could re-invent itself quite quickly as a more usual heritage centre celebrating a way of life that has passed. The challenge for Castletownbere is to create a less ephemeral tourist product that matches that offered in Le Guilvinec; one that can continue to generate revenues should the worst happen and the fishing industry decline and cease. In this context it may be worth noting that Kinsale, County Cork was a fishing village until the 1960s but has since reinvented itself as a tourist destination with a strong emphasis on (sea)food. While Castletownbere does not have the same locational advantages in terms of proximity to a major city, it may be that part of the pier be designated as a space for more permanent tourist infrastructure to create a similar experience to that which is offered in Le Guilvinec. The ultimate importance of the pier in the coming years may be in how its functions as a location and an agent that connects the past and the present to the future.

Community resilience takes us beyond making plans for adversity. It involves building strengths in a community that will facilitate the process of resilience when needed (Sherrieb, Norris and Galea, 2010). Pride and passion are key elements that promote resilience and maintain fishing as a way of life. Additionally, the resilience of fishing communities like Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec is "tied to their abilities to live with uncertainty and adapt to change" (Ross, 2015, p. 317). Nevertheless, nowadays entry into the industry depends to a large extent on whether a new entrant comes from a fishing family or not as access is becoming more restricted (White, 2015). Since fishing has traditionally relied on intergenerational continuity, resilience reveals itself as a challenging and constant process of *renouveau* − renewal (Symes, Phillipson and Salmi, 2015).

6.6 Conclusion

Places like Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec owe their existence to fishing. The fishing sector has enabled these towns to develop and expand. Moreover, fishing has put these places 'on the map'. Therefore, in addition to their fishing industry these ports attract visitors adding to the economic viability of both places. The focal point of these towns is the pier. When people think about either place – Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec – they think of fishing; the pier is both a practical necessity but also a key symbol of these fishing ports. It plays a significant part in the everyday lived lives of fishers, their families and wider community members. It is more than a piece of infrastructure; it is a place where the economic, social and cultural intertwine.

Our everyday lived lives are shaped by experiences that are rooted in particular places. Fishing communities (re)create their attachment to place on the basis of on-going relationships with people and to their physical environment. The presence of fishing-related buildings and structures on the pier contribute to the distinctive character of these places. In the case of Castletownbere, the former auction hall − apart from being used for storage − is now used annually for the Fishermen's Mass; it has found an alternative function, yet, it remains connected to the fishing industry and its way of life.

The constant movement, both in winter and summer, brings life not only to the pier but to the wider fishing community. The fishing activities that take place on the pier – boats coming-in and going-out, landing fish, loading ice and fish lorries being loaded – differentiates fishing settlements from other coastal communities. The pier is 'a constant in fishers' lives' whether during quiet times or busy. There is a constant interplay between work and social encounters. Furthermore, it is not only where fishing activity takes place but also a communal place where locals gather to share life experiences. The importance of the pier in both research sites was conveyed through experiences shared by participants and my own observations. The notion of pier as an in-between place evokes mixed emotions for fishers and their families as it both 'disconnects' and '(re)connects' all members.

Tuan (1977) writes about people's emotional ties with place that can be recognised by its 'unique setting' experienced through the geographies of the senses such as sight, sound, and smell. Recurring events, aimed to celebrate tradition and culture, provide meanings that are sometimes difficult to understand. Interpreting such events, therefore, depends upon the expertise and pre-understandings (Heidegger, 1962; Gadamer, 1989; Ricoeur, 1969) of the researcher. The past is an important vehicle for understanding others (Gadamer, 1976). To a large extent our understandings of life are influenced by our perceptions of places and events

that are in turn constructed within a specific context (see Elizabeth Malcolm, 2005).

The pier is the ideal setting for both festivals and rituals and, as a result, provides meanings to all those who use it. Whether secular or sacred, they celebrate local identity and place attachment that is both personal and communal (Badone, 2012); initially performed for and by locals, these events are increasingly attracting visitors. Local residents are becoming more receptive to tourism. The attitude of residents towards their local heritage and fishing industry plays a vital part in the development of an authentic cultural tourism that not only attracts visitors but also creates new ways in experiencing their heritage identity. People are re-evaluating their role within their locality. They re-evaluate their identity as a cultural process in and through which they safeguard their heritage and, consequently, they become aware of its significance for future generations (Prat Forga and Cànoves Valiente, 2017). The people of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec have revealed their resilience through their capacity to adapt in an ever-evolving and increasingly mobile society. Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec are at different stages in this transition to diversify the economic base of each town. Le Guilvinec has invested heavily in maximising the returns from a living fishing heritage.

The pier is where fishing is most visible to others; it is where social and cultural activities take place. It is a complex place where many worlds converge. By communicating the everyday lived lives of the communities of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec ‘as is’, the local residents can raise awareness of their heritage and practices to the wider public.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions

> Fishing's influence is not confined to the activities that take place at sea, but spills over onto land to create a particular identity and sense of place in coastal towns inherently linked to fishing (Urquhart and Acott, 2013a, p. 45).

7.1 Introduction

The principal objective of this research was to explore fishing as a way of life in communities in Brittany and South West Ireland. It is informed particularly by theoretical and methodological approaches in cultural geography. Cultural geographic perspectives are central to this research as they bring to the fore the meanings people give to their everyday lived lives (Blunt, 2005; Crang, 2010a). This research is underpinned by concepts derived from cultural geography including sense of place, belonging, mobility and identity. These concepts provide the necessary scope and depth to explore these communities in all their richness and complexity. Cultural geography is about creating connections and other ways of understanding people and place (Blunt *et al.,* 2003). Cultural geographers' attempts to understand the world in all its richness has involved a focus on practices and performativities (Shaw *et al.,* 2015). This study reveals new ways of *doing* cultural geography through understanding and interpreting the performance of fishing activities in the home, the boat and the pier.

Heretofore, there has been a dearth of research on fishing as a way of life as the focus has been predominantly on fisheries management. Making sense of fishers' lives is challenging but is at the core of this research. How fishers and their families experience and understand their world is a critical part of this research hence the importance of interpretation, meaning and insight. The main objective of a hermeneutical approach is to arrive at understanding and insights.

7.2 Hermeneutics as a Theory of Understanding

While anchored in theoretical and methodological discussions in cultural geography, the research is principally predicated on elements of hermeneutical thinking derived especially from Heidegger (1962), Gadamer (1976) and Ricoeur (1969, 1986). Hermeneutics offers ways of understanding that allows the researcher to make sense of everyday lifeworlds. A key element in the hermeneutical approach is a facility to make sense of lives lived in

particular places at particular times by conceptualising daily events and daily performances as texts that can be explored and interrogated. Ricoeur (1986, p. 77) describes the idea of digging deeper as "unfolding the world ahead of the text". Understanding is also derived from the interpretation of interview transcripts. Hermeneutic theory allows us to arrive at insights that are meaningful for the both researcher and the researched. As Gadamer (1988, p. 68) explains understanding "the whole from the individual and the individual from the whole stems from ancient rhetoric and was carried over by modern hermeneutics from the art of speaking to the art of understanding. There is in both cases a circular relationship".

Interpretation leads to insights which are central to the hermeneutical endeavour. The aim is not to arrive at a final truth but a refinement of our understanding. The interpretive strategies highlighted research as performative as I engaged with the fishing world. This process of interpreting the meanings people give to their everyday lives is also framed by human geographers Tuan (1974), Buttimer (1993) and Kitchin and Tate (2000) who emphasise the significance of hermeneutics in the interpretation of lifeworlds. While the ontological approach to hermeneutics remains essential to our being-in-the-world, I agree with Ricoeur's (1986) reintroduction of an epistemological perspective. Understandings of the world around us can best be arrived at when we bring together our lived experiences through practice and our *being* in the world.

Understanding the different parts – boat, home and pier – enabled greater insights into fishing as a way of life as a whole. Through this circular framework, hermeneutics unearths the hidden meanings of both text and action (Gadamer, 1975; Ricoeur, 1986). My pre-understandings of fishing lifeworlds provided a structure to formulating rich meanings. My prior knowledge of the French language and familiarity of Breton culture was useful in translating the subtleties of transcribed interviews. Gadamer (1976) argues for the recognition of 'prejudices' as a positive aspect of hermeneutics and according to Schmidt (2006) "the epistemological task is to discover those positive prejudices".

Hermeneutics is appropriate for the study of people-place relationships and human experiences in the context of the everyday. Furthermore, through hermeneutics the past and present can be interpreted and understood. My role as a cultural geographer in the production of knowledge was enhanced by my use of hermeneutics as a research methodology and overarching theoretical framework.

7.3 Key Insights

Being-in-the-fishing-world is a lived experience that reveals the complex nature of

this way of life. My immersion in this world resulted in an authentic relationship with participants and with the natural and built maritime environment. The participants in this study, in both Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec, spoke about their everyday lived lives in similar ways. The language used whether through words or actions (body language) expressed the complexity and uncertainty of fishing as a way of life. This immersion also led to a heightened sense of awareness of my own background and pre-understandings that shaped each new encounter and experience with local fishers**.** Hermeneutical theory in the end provided me with the tools to interpret this fishing world in all its depth, richness and complexity.

My place within my own fishing family and community is not so much renegotiated as it is naturally evolving. Since I began this 'fishing trip', my *being* in the world of academia and my *being* part of a fishing community merged to generate new insights. Through my research of fishing life in the two fishing ports of Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec three places revealed themselves as being of particular significance: the home, the boat and the pier. Consequently, the three research chapters were structured around these three locations. Key insights emerged from each of these realms.

7.3.1 The Home as Collaborative

The fishing home is not unknown to me. However, my research facilitated the emergence of new understandings of the *fishing*-home. My own being-in-the-fishing-world was merged with meanings participants gave to *their* being-in-the-world. Fishers' wives/partners were always seen as independently responsible for running the fishing home, however, a significant shift from matriarchal household (McKinlay and McVittie, 2011) as portrayed in the literature, to collaborative household was a major insight that emerged from this research. Moreover, my research revealed that fishermen have begun to embrace their role in the home as the women in these contemporary fishing families aspire to the development of careers and economic activities outside the home. There is a 'consultative' nature to fishing families particularly those who have a fishing business. While both spouses/partners work outside the home, there is a great sense of collaboration and decision-sharing within the home.

Home is where individuals experience – usually the first place and for the first time – emerging sense(s) of identity and place attachment. Enriched with maritime artefacts, the fishing household manifests its fishing identity. It is a place of constant negotiation due to the 'ebb and flow' of fishers' lives. The tensions and stresses of this constant and ongoing (re)negotiation are mitigated by the strong collaborative relationship between both

spouses/partners.

7.3.2 The Boat as Otherworldly

A life at sea engenders unique perspectives of the world. Being-in-the-*fishing*-world disconnects fishers from landed society. The constant movement of the boat contrasts the permanent nature of traditional concepts of home. The fishers' world is charged with contradictions that are obscure to non-fishers. As my research revealed, notions of freedom and confinement, motion and stillness are contradictions with an inherent logic. However, such inconsistencies are part of *who* fishers are and *what* they do; they are embedded in *how* they live their everyday lives. Despite the dangers and precarity of fishing, the 'otherworldly' aspect of the boat shows how notions of freedom continue to inspire fishers to go to sea. The risks and uncertainty of fishing engender a mutual respect among crew members and a reliance on each other.

The otherworldly character of the boat at sea produced a melange of freedom and vulnerability. These concepts – especially freedom – were difficult to express in words. The interview transcripts provided a 'glimpse' of fishers' sense of freedom through their 'fish-tales'. However, by being-in-the-fishing-world-at-sea I encountered and understood the peculiarity of such notions. My research revealed how fishers adapted quite quickly and easily to life on the boat but struggled with the transition back to life ashore. The constant cycle of going-to-sea and coming-ashore recalls the hermeneutical circle; understanding fishers' lives at sea and ashore revealed pathways to in-depth interpretations and meanings (Ingold, 2007).

7.3.3 The Pier as In-between

The pier is the focal point in fishing communities. This 'in-between' place is where different worlds converge. By being in this *liminal* place, I could immerse myself in the wider context of fishing. Fishing and non-fishing narratives coexist on the pier. It is where the fishers and non-fishers from both communities meet; it is where visitors and locals meet; where the sacred and the secular intersect; where the past and present are connecting to new futures. The pier provides an important location for the performance of rituals and festivals that link fishers to their maritime heritage and non-fishers to the fishing world. While these performances are a way to create and maintain individual and collective senses of identity and attachments to fishing places my research reveals that through outside interest in these performances fishing as a way of life may be transitioning to fishing as a commodity for

tourists. For the moment my research illustrates the significance of fishing as a living tradition but is aware that as a way of life fishing is under threat and in decline. In decades to come these festivals and rituals may outlive the fishing industry and may exist as part of a heritage narrative that commemorates a way of life that has ceased to exist.

7.3.4 Three Realms Converge

The contexts in which I encountered participants evoked shared experiences and memories. It was important to acknowledge my own sense of place in order to understand the meanings participants gave to their own notion of place (de Wit, 2013). Observing these places unfold, I perceived the diverse ways in which different people create and maintain relationships with their fishing worlds. Additionally, different people have distinct sets of beliefs about places and, consequently, they give disparate meanings but share experiences (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001; Cresswell, 2013).

The study of one's own culture means that one is already 'situated'. Understanding my own culture allowed me to perceive the practices attached to it for what they are (Geertz, 1973). From the material culture of the home to the rituals performed on the pier, I could appreciate the values that people imparted on them and why. Cultural traditions are transmitted from one generation to the next and, in so doing, illustrate how the past influences our present (Ricoeur, 1990). My past enables me to unearth what is 'hidden' as I interpret both interview transcripts and cultural events. Moreover, my background facilitated thinking thoroughly about how I transcribe interviews. Careful transcription enables a 'feel' for the data (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Crang, 2005).

7.4 Key Findings: Similarities and Differences

Qualitative research is time-intensive especially if exploring a culture or a place distinct from one's own. The process of developing familiarity with research sites and rapport with residents can be slow. However, the strength of comparative work lies in the emergent insights from recording similarities and differences across sites (Herbert, 2010). Similarities emerge between Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec in relation to who they are as fishing and coastal people through the performances enacted in their lifeworlds. Their everyday lives are constructed in *and* around a way of life that is revealed through their being-and-doing-in-the-fishing-world.

Fishing remains important in terms of its role as a local employer, but also as a cultural and social identifier. Fishing identity is an inherent part of those I encountered during

my research. Their way of life reflects who they are *and* what they do. However, I encountered a distinctive difference between both communities. Participants in Le Guilvinec, both women and men, spoke of an identity that is intrinsic to *being* Breton, in other words, that is embedded in their Celtic heritage whereas this sense of place attachment was not as evident in Castletownbere.

Breton and Irish fishers alike experience similar challenges in their everyday lives both at sea and ashore. Nevertheless, they feel an innate connection to the sea through their daily engagement with it. Mobility practices and perpetual motion occur in their everyday lives without being questioned; namely, their being-and-doing-in-the-fishing-world is embedded in this way of life.

Participants from both communities agreed that the role of women in the home was critical to marinating this way of life. They are aware that for a well-balanced relationship it is vital to construct and maintain collaboration between spouses/partners.

Religion and rituals are essential to the lives of fishing families in Castletownbere and Le Guilvinec. While religion continues to play an important role in the lives of families, both young and old, in Castletownbere, it appears to have lost it some of its significance among fishing families in Le Guilvinec. Nonetheless, a return to celebrating *pardons* can be observed whereby some local fishing families attend whether for religious or cultural reasons.

Through fieldwork in both fishing towns, this research has revealed how fishers, their families and wider fishing communities construct their identities and attachments these fishing places. It also shows how fishing contributes to a sense of belonging to the maritime environment.

7.5 Key Research Contributions and Potential for Future Research

My research makes a distinctive and significant contribution to both cultural geographies of fishing by developing a theoretical and methodological approach anchored in both cultural geography and hermeneutics. New understandings suggest that fishing is embedded in coastal communities in complex and multifaceted ways. It contributes to the construction of particular identities and senses of place. This doctoral research allowed me to explore cultural geography through my engagement with fishing communities and also fishing communities through my engagement with cultural geography. Fishing activity is potentially charged with uncertainty and risk, nonetheless, it remains, for now, a vibrant and living tradition in both field locations. The comparative study has encouraged me to continue engaging with new narratives of these changing communities in fishing places further afield.

As Herbert (2010, p. 75) points out, such 'comparative work can expand theoretical understandings by explaining the existence and significance of similarities and differences between cases.

Comparing and making sense of these fishing worlds was central to the research. The words and silences that participants applied to their *lifeworlds* were understood and interpreted through my being-*and*-doing in the fishing world. By contrasting both places, one can take into account both the factors that "generate difference and those that compel similarity"; such comparative studies "yield[s] theoretical lessons of trans-local consequence" (Herbert, 2010, p. 77).

The practice of fishing is about people and places, their environments, and their relationships with such places. The immersive approach facilitated a conscious 'being-in-the-world'. The meanings people give to their everyday lived lives manifested themselves in many ways. At the heart of these manifestations lay the performances through which people expressed themselves.

The strength of this research lies in my pre-understandings and the immersive and interpretive approach applied. The hermeneutical perspective of understanding the parts – boat, home and pier – in order to understand the whole – way of life – is central to the interpretive process of contemporary lifeworlds. I encountered new ways of undertaking qualitative research in the realm of cultural geography. I continue to experience the world around me and to explore the essence of human existence.

As fishing communities continue to decline in Ireland and Brittany it becomes ever more important to document, record, interpret and make sense of this way of life before it disappears. This doctoral thesis represents a novel exploration of lives lived in fishing communities at a critical point in time. The paucity of research in this area prompts cultural geographers to explore these communities as they rapidly transform. The voices of participants revealed that fisheries policies are increasingly part of this rapid transformation. This research provides valuable groundwork for new research in this area and represents a vital link between policy and fishing community stakeholders.

As this study has revealed the importance of women's roles within the fishing home, I am interested in researching fisherwomen as I think this would be a significant study in its own right as these women deserve to be given a voice so that wider society can gain a deeper understanding of the fishing industry from their perspective.

By undertaking this work, I have created an interpretative and methodological framework which can be deployed in a range of geographical contexts. As the vestiges of this

old world collapse under the weight of regulation, globalisation and modernisation, new worlds are being formed. This is not unique to fishing communities. Cultural geographers can inform understandings of how everyday lived lives are being transformed and show how individuals and communities are responding to and coping with these processes.

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