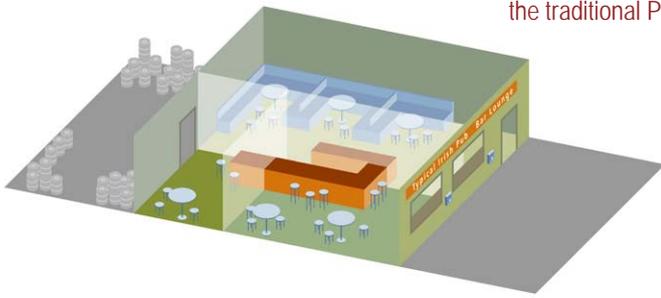


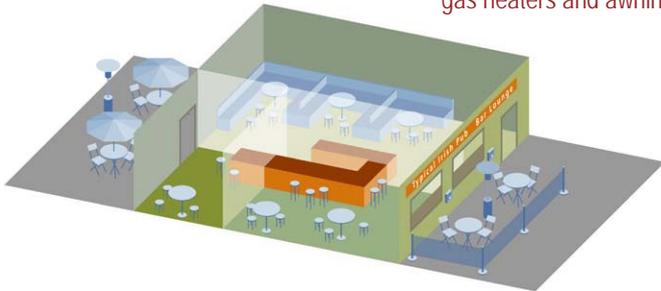
the traditional Pub



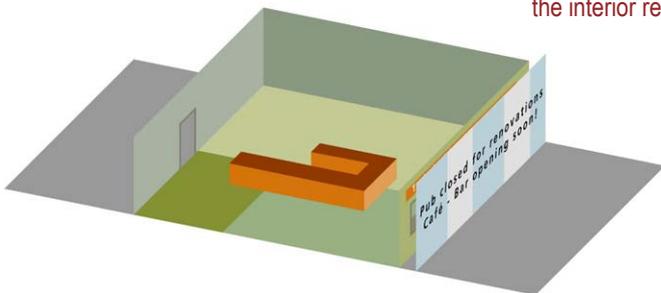
wall mounted ash trays and outdoor seating



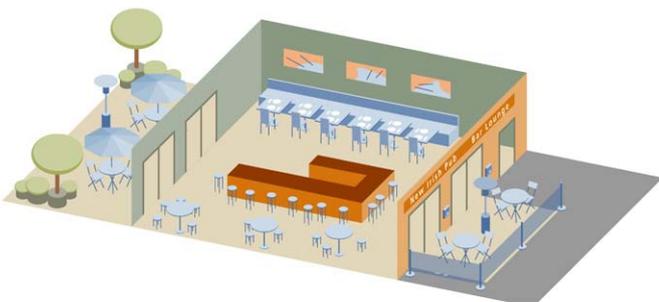
gas heaters and awnings



the interior re-fit



transformation complete; from traditional pub to cafe-bar



The Smoking Ban ... Public life, Public health

March 9th 2004 saw the introduction of a ban on the smoking of tobacco in enclosed places of work. Overnight a blanket ban came into effect on smoking inside all work places, including restaurants, bars and cafes.

In an extremely short space of time the smoking ban has had a profound impact. Beneficial public health implications have seen a plummet in tobacco sales (15-20%) and a subsequent 80 million euro drop in tax receipts (2004 versus 2003).

The most perceptible impact of the smoking ban has been the transformation of the most ubiquitous and uniquely exportable icon of Irish culture; the Irish pub. The traditional Irish pub represents an old troglodytic and introverted indoor culture,. More than just a bar, it was an *Agora* of sorts; a meeting place, a location for political, community and family events, romantic encounters. It had many of the qualities of a great public space. Pubs were also smoky, dark and discreet, for hushed conversations and secrecy. Pub frontages are typically opaque, with frosted/stained glass, high level windows or even a front of house grocery store. Inside, pubs were often segmented into smaller spaces by partition screens and snugs. The pub also reflected in its interiority the prevalence of a wet climate, from which stepping indoors offered respite. Ireland experiences typically 150-250 rain days a years and short winter days, averaging 1-2 hours of sunshine.

Now that the air has cleared, in a quantum leap from a time when standing outside pubs was the exotic preserve of summer festivals, the sight of people standing and sitting outside pubs has become a year round, all weather occurrence.

The smoking ban has launched a new vocabulary of social engagement in public space; the word *smirting* from the root words "smoking" and "flirting", describes the regular encounters at the door of the pub, where romance often springs from meeting over a cigarette. It has provided a new momentum of outdoor life, new eyes on the street surveying the public domain late into the evening and night. Outdoor life is becoming consistent and even more resistant to extremes of climate.

The new transient life on the streets has brought with it the colonisation of sidewalks with the paraphernalia of awnings, screens and gas heaters, besides the transient



architecture of tent-like lean-tos and shack-like 'smoking rooms'.

The public health policy action of the smoking ban has brought unintentional benefits. These include; reinforcing emerging patterns of pavement cafes and restaurants, generating new demand for pavement spaces and wider pavements and new public spaces. Commercial activities on the pavement will, over time, demand a higher environmental quality for their customers and streetscapes will be seen as critical to cultivating and sustaining commercial vibrancy.

The momentum of change from pub culture to cafe society suffered a brief setback earlier this year, when the Government and Minister for Justice Michael McDowell backed out of introducing a new cafe-bar licence. This was a step too far for a Pub industry suffering from a substantial drop in business (c. 16% drop in annual turnover for Dublin publicans from 2003-2004).

The challenge now will be how best to cultivate the momentum for positive spatial and physical outcomes, how to harness the potential for revenue generation through licensing and possibly

Business Improvement District schemes (BIDS), and how to pay for real and durable improvements to the environmental quality of our towns and cities. There is a need to address how to manage the life outdoors, avoiding the typical nuisance and noise pitfalls of the night-time economy and finally how to manage, visually, the new vocabulary of street furnishings, to regulate or not to regulate; to be the intentional city or to laissez-faire.

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The article is a synopsis of a Paper presented at the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP) Conference, Portland, Oregon, 22-25 May 2005

