

UCD, Framework for Practice (ARCT30130) : Urban Design

My Insights on Ireland's Future

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"We have entered the urban millennium. At their best, cities are engines of growth and incubators of civilization. They are crossroads of ideas, places of great intellectual ferment and innovation..."

Kofi Annan (2000)

Ireland is currently at an exciting and crucial crossroads in terms of the future of our urban planning. We can take the passive approach and continue to allow the sprawl of commuter towns to spiral out of control or we can develop a comprehensive strategy, harnessing the potential of our cities and making them function. Personally I feel the best option for Ireland is to embrace density, building up rather than out.

Ireland has a predicted population increase of 1m in the next 20 years and therefore our plan for the future needs to draw from the example of our neighbouring European cities. Consider the redevelopment 19th century of Paris where people of all social ranks were thrown into proximity, and thus benefited from a rich mix of culture and commerce at street level.

Radical change is needed to successfully establish an urban strategy that will allow future Irish generations to prosper. We are currently at risk of settling for a life of suburbia which, considering the world's growing environmental challenges, is completely unsustainable. Robert Bruegmann remarks that the suburbs have all the congestion of a city and none of the human contact.

Ireland's developed urban areas need to create sustainable economic development and a high quality of life by excelling in the key areas of economy, mobility, environment, government and culture. Public infrastructure should be invested in and apartments should become the most popular form of house. We must aim to build cities which will attract successful people and enable them to collaborate.

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