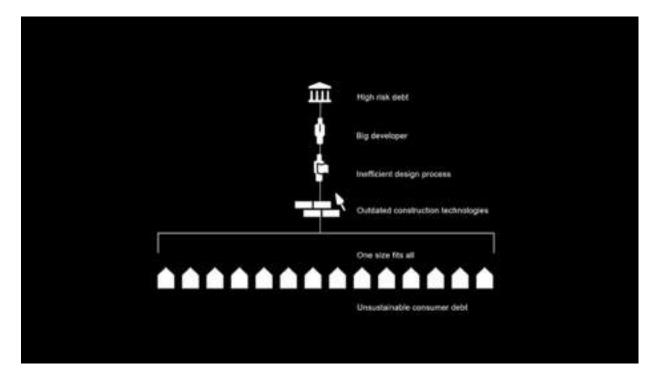National Planning Framework Submission

Fig.1. Development: the current model. Image courtesy of Wikihouse

Fig.2. Development: the Wikihouse model. Image courtesy of Wikihouse

The future of Ireland will be that of an increasingly integrated and globalised culture and should champion flexible, mixed-use buildings and public spaces of a high standard. The definition of a career is changing and professions expanding. Our generation are required to diversify our skill set and the use of buildings and public spaces should reflect this trend. As banks continue to transition to a predominately online presence, post offices replaced by electronic mail etc. the vacant lots and/or redundant premises these businesses leave behind should be re-appropriated for civic and cultural use. In light of our rapidly changing landscape, partially due to such technological advances, cities will condense and employment trends point to an increasing proportion of the population working remotely without need for

a fixed office. It is imperative to counter the symptoms of the digital age by designing better public spaces to encourage a vibrant and connected social life in the city.

With Brexit, the number of immigrants is predicated to rise in Ireland. As the only other English-speaking country, it seems natural that businesses should look to Ireland in a potential relocation, however, would our infrastructure support this influx? Better transport links would help connectivity within the capital and prevent further urban sprawl. The provision of an extended 24-hour bus service would also encourage a more vibrant nightlife and less reliance on taxis. Safer pedestrian and cycle-friendly streets should be a top priority. Dublin is comparable in scale to places such as Copenhagen and Amsterdam and has the potential to become a green, cycle-dominant city.

Housing is a problem that will not remedy itself without radical change and is likely to grow in severity. Not only do the government need to take direct action about social housing but the best form of engagement is community-led initiative. As a profession, architecture, its practitioners and students, must be aware of urban design issues and seek to address them, rather than act as passive 'for hire' agents. Eduction is key to this success and we must participate in this dialogue as early as possible in our careers. If students are educated on a socio-economic and political level then it allows them to make more informed decisions for the future and contribute on a wider-level to public policy programmes such as NPF. Developers should not be the major influencers of our built environment and disproportionately incentivised for accommodating social housing. The government should take precedent from the early years of the Free State and take back control of the property market. Creating a post for a Housing Architect, similar to the role of Herbert Simms in (then) Dublin Corporation, for Dublin City Council and building non-profit housing would be a practical way of addressing the issue at hand. Less protectionism of banks and more transparency of organisations such as the National Asset Management Agency should be called for. People should come before profit.

In Ireland, the work of Dominic Stevens and Claire McManus, and internationally, that of Wikihouse, suggest particularly interesting and innovative solutions. Stevens and McManus are proposing, among other ideas, housing co-operatives similar to *baugruppen* in Germany. Stevens as quoted from The Irish Times - "Developers here are looking for margins that are too high. In Europe there is a greater long-term investment in making high rises that families will want to live in for a long time…and if we did this in Dublin, it would be a great place to live in 20 years time."[1] Wikihouse is at the forefront of digital social innovation in architecture and developing an open-source resource which encourages 'hacking' of an existing knowledge-base and technologies in order the share and improve designs which communities, in turn, can download and, with the aid of CNC machines, easily build. Ireland should be fertile ground for this type of development, given the scale of the country's tech industry.

As our life expectancy expands and the age of retirement set higher, more research should go into gerontology. This not only falls on the medical profession but also that of the design profession. How do we make spaces more accessible and user-friendly? Care facilities should be integrated within the life of the town or city rather than kept at the fringes of society. Studies show inclusivity and social interaction to be key to the health and happiness of the elderly. Projects such as Niall McLaughlin and Yeoryia Manolopoulou's *Losing Myself* and McAuley Place have helped forward this discussion and more investment should be provided to further encourage this line of inquiry.

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[1] Deirdre McQuillan, "A social housing solution for the people." *Irish Times,* November 26, 2015, accessed February 27, 2017, http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/homes-and-property/a-social-housing-solution-for-the-people-1.2443507