

Suburbs at today's scale originated during the industrial revolution in an attempt to escape the noise and pollution from factories, and come closer to nature. Modern Dublin is not an industrial city - as indicated in the NPF there is a rise in the number of high skilled jobs from companies such as Google or Microsoft. Do we spend enough time in our back gardens to justify the significant amount of valuable space they occupy? There is no need to escape the city anymore - it's time to abandon the suburbia ideal. Today most of our air and noise pollution comes from the automobile industry, which is as prevalent as it is because of the huge distances we have to commute to get to work. If Dublin city had a higher density, if we built up rather than out, sprawl would be eliminated as well as our dependence on cars to get us anywhere. I think it's time for Dublin's public transport network to be brought in line with that of other major European cities.

Architecture has the ability to alleviate many issues Dublin's population faces as outlined in the NPF. Our cities are losing the public realm as we tend towards privacy (read: isolation). Public space in suburbia consists of the street and footpath - it ends at the driveway or garden wall. What a lost opportunity to create spaces for interaction and activities! It's time to refocus on the city's centre, to build upwards and gain privacy at higher altitudes, while harnessing the ground floor's potential for social activities. Single use land zoning must be reviewed - let's make Dublin's streets a blend and hub of activity rather than vast apartment terrains barren during the day and industrial quarters devoid of life after dark.

Simultaneously we must remember the importance of nature and green spaces - this small-minded idea that we must choose between the countryside and city needs to end. Our environments are not limited to remote lush greenery or convenient concrete. And suburban sprawl is not the ideal combination of the two - more so the negative aspects of both - the need for the car to get anywhere of interest coupled with a complete absence of nature.

Henriette Roessing