

## *Ireland 2040: The Utopia*

To define what is wrong in our society I must first focus on what I consider to be an ideal society; namely the Mezzogiorno region of southern Italy. Having spent three months last summer travelling Italy, my eyes were opened to the differences between how I *want* to live, and how I *thought* I wanted to live.

Southern Italy is dotted with small towns and villages. People live in compact cosy apartments in the town centres and work within walking distance of their home; everything is conveniently located in a compact proximity.

Italian people are loud and bubbly; narrow pedestrian laneways are full of life and mystery. It's easy and wonderful to get lost in a beautiful town... but what makes a town beautiful?

Buildings in Italy are generally 4 or 5 storeys tall – not too tall to dwarf the individual, but tall enough to hold high densities within small areas, tall enough to generate the life and activity that we crave. A perfect balance between order and chaos, no two buildings are identical and it's always a mystery what lies beyond the next corner. Yet order is found through materiality, or repeated dimensions such as the heights and widths of buildings.

My proposal for the future of my country is to stop mindlessly building monotonous housing estates, and instead consider the fact that people actually prefer living in close proximity. Given our small population, commuting times in Ireland are unacceptable. Deforestation levels in Ireland are unacceptable. The colossal amount of energy that go into building and maintaining gigantic, unnecessary houses is unacceptable.

We are not a complete failure: Georgian Dublin is beautiful; houses the same height and width, gaining originality through coloured doors and flowerpots. Shop Street in Galway is bustling with life and joy. We need to use what is vitally Irish to create original architecture; perhaps limestone from the Burren for cladding, forms mimicking the Giant's Causeway or the Cliffs of Moher.

We need to distinguish how we really want to live; we need to take risks. If we continue our current path, I fear our entire country will be destroyed, and we will sit in regret.