

The background features a large, stylized grey 'A' shape on a red field. A large, thick grey curved line, resembling a stylized 'C' or a partial circle, overlaps the 'A' and the red background.

# **REIMAGINE MAKING PLACE BETTER**

**Irish  
Architecture  
Foundation**

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# ARCHITECTURE BENEFITS EVERYONE

No matter where you work, live, or play, everyone should have access to well designed environments. Good design captures our imagination, changes thinking and behaviour and sets a standard for others to follow. It instills a sense of pride and ownership and simply improves our quality of life.

How do we meaningfully listen to, involve and collaborate with those most connected to design projects? This is what excited us about the Reimagine project. We are interested in how places and people can be transformed using creativity and creative practices as a collective within the community. Reimagine was supported by the Creative Ireland Programme under the National Creativity Fund for the last eighteen months. A cornerstone of our work is 'Creative Communities'. We're showing how culture and creativity contribute to well-being, social cohesion and economic development. Every single project we do is a collaboration. We emphasise how different parts of central and local government can work better together and also with outside organisations.

Supporting the creative involvement of local communities is central to both Reimagine and the Creative Ireland Programme. We could immediately see real value and long term impact in the blending of architecture, community engagement and consultation, helping to ensure better outcomes for communities. Now the challenge is to spread the word!

We are proud to have supported such an important and timely project. The relationship between people and the built environment has a strong influence on health and wellbeing. We must make the case for this again and again with policymakers. As we face an uncertain future, due to COVID-19 and the ever worsening climate crisis, it is our duty to harness the power of creativity to spark innovation and build resilience. We believe that communities, working together with architects, can come up with brilliant solutions to improve their towns and villages, and the world around them.

**Tania Banotti**  
Director, Creative Ireland Programme  
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# THE FOURTH STRAND

Nathalie Weadick, Director

In 2005, the Irish Architecture Foundation (IAF) was convened by a consortium of like-minded people from culture, politics and architecture, to address a range of needs to do with public engagement with architecture. The intention was that this new cultural organisation would be independent, formative and, above all else, ensure that architecture served the people.

**So the journey began**

We delivered our first Open House Dublin in 2005 to an audience of 3,500 visits and we have since expanded this festival to 33,000 visits and tours of buildings. Our learning programme has continued to grow strong. Our Architects in Schools Initiative that reaches 30 schools annually across this island will extend to 70 schools each year from 2021. We curate events in national and international cultural spaces and deliver an annual international talks programme.<sup>1</sup>

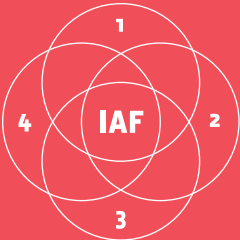
Our lesser-known programme strand – Placemaking – has been active in the background from inception. It has journeyed alongside Open House Dublin, our learning initiatives and the curated events programme, to take its rightful place as our Fourth Strand. In response to the recurrent question ‘What does the IAF do?’ We separate out each strand for clarity.

The strands define activity and purpose. In reality and in practice, the strands are fluid; they intersect, merge and support each other. All four taken collectively describe an organisation that is fully formed and equipped to serve the public. If Placemaking is the IAF’s Fourth Strand, then the Reimagine initiative, the subject of this book and our most ambitious placemaking initiative to date, will be central to the delivery of this strand.

The Fourth Strand is charged by our imperative to expand our activities beyond solely presenting and communicating the value of architecture in the built environment through events and conversations alone. We also wanted to physically transform a piece of the built environment. How? By creating the conditions where people working with design teams can shape their own environment actively and not reactively.

**‘We see a future where architecture is a civic right, fundamental to the fabric of life, culture and history, and a confident expression of who we are and who we might become’.<sup>2</sup>**

This approach opens up the potential of the IAF, the capability of architecture and the agency of communities. The Fourth Strand responds to a need stimulated by us and over the years by our creative encounters with the public, and by the growing recognition of architecture, globally, as an expansive practice embedded in social networks. The four strands foster a holistic approach that will benefit the advancement of the foundation’s vision.



- 1 Open House Dublin
- 2 Curated Events
- 3 Learning
- 4 Placemaking

<sup>1</sup> The IAF has had the honour of commissioning the Irish Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale on three occasions: SubUrban to SuperRural 2006; The Lives of Spaces 2008; Of deBlacam and Meagher 2010. The IAF’s outward promotion of Irish architecture includes a programme of talks called Irish Architecture Now that toured to six cities in the USA in 2013, and We Built This City, an initiative to celebrate the Irish diaspora’s contribution to London, New York and Chicago, curated as part of Irish Design 2015. The IAF inward promotion of international architecture has attracted speakers such as Tatiana Bilbao, Jeanne Gang, Bjarke Ingles and David Adjaye to Dublin through the New Now Next lecture series sponsored by Arup.

<sup>2</sup> Statement from ‘Shaping our Future’, the Irish Architecture Foundation Strategy 2019–2023



MEMBERS OF BALLYFERMOT YOUTH SERVICES, BALLYFERMOT  
BMX & PLAY PARK, 2020 IMAGE: STE MURRAY

A project which demonstrates the Fourth Strand is located in an urban village 7km outside of Dublin city centre. A precursor to Reimagine, this project emerged when Ballyfermot Youth Services and the BMX Club wanted to create a BMX Skate Park. Their vision was that the park would be so accomplished in its aesthetic and function that it would attract people from all over Ireland. Ballyfermot Youth Services had been lobbying for the facility in the area since 2011 and a site in Le Fanu Park was proposed by Dublin City Council. Then the project stalled.

We joined the conversation in 2016 to help get the project back on track. Our main priority was to create a process where design played a central role. We invited the Matheson Foundation to support the 'project-based' community facilitation. We delivered an international design competition; won by London based interdisciplinary architecture practice *Relational Urbanism*. Subsequently Dublin City Council provided the funding for it to be built.

We played the role of 'independent broker' between the community, local government and the architects. We recognised and utilised the skills the architects had to offer, and combined this expertise with the local, generational, historical wisdom of the community. Exchange, cooperation and communication were essential to ensure the best possible outcome. The BMX Skate and Play Park opened in 2020.

The IAF began to establish itself as an effective agent in advocating for better places for people. The Fourth Strand was proving every time that design has a positive effect on communities by bringing people together to make transformative creative decisions. Our placemaking projects up to that point were mostly achieved through impromptu invitations from a community or a local authority.

Our goal was to consolidate this experience gained over ten years into a structured framework for delivery, to build capacity in the IAF to enable more communities and design teams join the programme. We designed the Reimagine programme, which successfully achieved support from Creative Ireland's National Creativity Fund. This was the impetus we needed to position the IAF as a centre of excellence for placemaking in Ireland.

Reimagine is a national campaign that facilitates communities across Ireland to co-create and co-design solutions to challenges or problems they've identified in their locality. Reimagine plays a key role in the IAF's Strategic plan 'Shaping our Future' 2019–2023. In this strategy the IAF identified five strategic goals we wish to focus on; Consolidation, Advocacy, Empowerment, Innovation and Connection. Reimagine strikes all the goals.

Reimagine marks the moment when the IAF can centralise years of experience, collaboration and activity working with communities and architects, and distil this into a new digital platform, which has the ambition to become a digital locus of learning, research and development of placemaking. It will be a place of activity and contain toolkits, resources, and a directory of like minded people, and will promote opportunities for communities and teams to meet and work on future projects. The website supports our fieldwork. In this book you will read about the seven towns and villages that have participated in the programme so far. Reimagine in its physical form will continue to deliver projects 'in the field' with our design mentors, who are professionals in the built environment sector.

### **The time is now**

We are at a pivotal juncture of mounting issues around public health, climate, small town rejuvenation and ecological resilience; design once again can prove its value. Reimagine from its inception has expressed its faith in the power of design to contribute to, and be a catalyst of positive change. It is essential now to optimise our tools; to define and communicate the role architecture will play in the new world, when our priority dramatically shifts from a health crisis to a social and economic one, Reimagine will be already embedded in and working with communities.

IAF Placemaking Initiatives conceived or delivered in partnership. Some were opportunistic, tactical, once-off participatory activities between architects, community groups and stakeholders; others were permanent interventions, but all driven by pushing the boundaries of what is possible.



A SPACE FOR LEARNING EXHIBITION, NCAD 2009 IMAGE: ALICE CLANCY

**2009**  
A Space for Learning: A year-long project where 120 architects worked with 1500 students in ninety schools. The architects enabled the students analyse and re-think their school and town environment. An exhibition of 10 shortlisted concept co-designs by the students and architects toured Ireland in 2010. This exhibition also raised the need to address new thinking around school design.



KILLYBEGS PLAY PARK 2011

**2011**  
Killybegs Playspace: The IAF worked with Donegal County Council and the local community. Peter Tansey from Lotus Architects designed an innovative and adventurous new play space for the town, and local children were involved in early stages of design development.



PLACE SHAPERS IMAGE: JONNY SAVAGE

**2013**  
Place Shapers: The project provided young people in Fingal with the opportunity to team up with architects Robert Bourke and Kate Dowling to investigate the architecture and urban design of their own neighbourhoods. They designed and built temporary structures that provoked a discussion on a better way of doing things. This project won the Participatory Planning Award at the National Planning Awards 2013–2014.

**2016**  
BMX Skate and Play Park: The IAF delivered workshops with local community groups and schools. The IAF launched a competition and community-led design project to build a Skate and Play Park in Ballyfermot, through an innovative and collaborative process with Dublin City Council and Ballyfermot Youth Services.



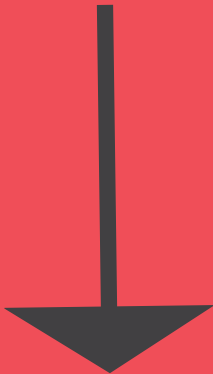




PUBLIC AGE WORKSHOP IN DUN LAOIGHAIRE IMAGE: THE DECORATORS

2017

Public Age: The Decorators, a London-based multidisciplinary design studio, in collaboration with the Dublin-based artist Joe Coveney explored how public space could be, and should be, designed with the participation of older people. Collaboration between IAF and Dun Laoighaire Rathdown Arts Office.



THROUGH THINNING LANDSCAPES IMAGE: BOTHAND GROUP

2020

Reimagine: The IAF launches a virtual one-stop-shop called *Reimagine*, a website funded by Creative Ireland, for people who are passionate about placemaking.



MELT THE WALLS, PUBLIC VOTE IMAGE: STE MURRAY

2019

The IAF publishes ‘Shaping our Future’ 2019–2023 which prioritises placemaking through the following objectives:

- To embed and resource community engagement and community-led design initiatives in the IAF’s annual programme.
- To create opportunities for increased public participation in shaping the built environment especially for communities of interest and communities of place.
- A community-led design unit will be operating from the IAF, which will encourage opportunities for architects working as socially engaged practitioners on place-making initiatives.

Reimagine: The IAF received the Creative Ireland National Creativity Fund for a community-led design initiative called Reimagine, to be rolled out across seven towns in 2019 and 2020. This project is ten years in the making and marks a significant development in the IAF’s Place Making programme.



BONNIE DEMPSEY, DYEHOUSE MAKING SITE SPECIFIC IMAGE: STE MURRAY

BMX Skate and Play Park opens. This park was featured in the Open House Dublin film programme *SITE SPECIFIC* and screened in Meeting House Square, Temple Bar Dublin on the 9th and the 10th of October.

# THINGS COULD ALWAYS BE OTHERWISE: THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY-CENTRED DESIGN

Daisy Froud

There is a way of thinking about the world, one we seem often encouraged to take, that suggests that things can really only be the way that they are. That there is an inevitability about the way in which spaces and buildings around us are produced and sustained; about who gets to live in them; to do whatever in them; and to change them.

Of *course* some areas are desirable and cost more to live in, and some are seen as grotty and cheap. Of *course* not everyone can have a decent-sized home. Of *course* when times are tough, we cannot necessarily have the community spaces we would like. But actually, of *course*, this is not the case. 'Things' as political scientist Chantal Mouffe stresses 'could always be otherwise'.<sup>1</sup> When we look out of our windows, or down our streets, everything we see is the result of decisions that have been taken about how the world should be organised. The origins of some may be lost, taken so long ago, and re-enacted so many times, that they now seem somehow natural; Mouffe calls these 'sedimented practices'. Some may be taken unconsciously. But none 'just happen' or are somehow objectively pre-destined. Good, community-centred design practice can help us become more aware of those decisions, and the world views that underpin them, and then, if necessary, to challenge them. 'Every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities,' Mouffe goes on to say. When we, as citizens and practitioners, work consciously and carefully to re-imagine together, we start to not only see those other possibilities, but to be able to test them, and to take them, together. And ultimately to start to order things differently.

This all sounds great. Terms like 'co-production' and 'community-centred design' are in vogue. But what do they mean in practice? Working to design or change the built environment collectively requires more than good intentions and warm feelings, particularly when resources are tight and participants may have different ideas or needs. There are situations where a community comes with a unified vision – a consensus – and the role of architects is simply to help give form to that. Or where a project is hands-on and spontaneous, evolving through non-confrontational collaboration. But this is rare. And maybe not that interesting, or even healthy? Arguably the joy of how humans share space, and make meaning, once given the real opportunity to do so, is that of working out how to do it together, of encountering and engaging with difference. Changing the world, and being changed ourselves in the process?

I find it helpful, as both participant and facilitator, to think of community-centred design as a form of politics; a process of creatively determining 'who gets what, when, how' – to use a classic definition from another theorist, Harold Laswell.<sup>2</sup> Decisions about the form of the world are structured through power relations. That is a given. Inevitably, those who hold more established and traditional forms of power – land, money, or formalised roles – end up with more influence over how the world is designed and organised. In turn, that organised, designed form helps sustain the status quo. Community-centred design offers an opportunity to draw attention to power relations; to be conscious of – in the way in which we deliver projects – who is holding power, of who benefits and in what way, from different decisions; and having made those decisions, and power relations, more visible, to invest critical creative thinking about the best and most equitable way to address them.

In community-centred design, the design of the process is therefore just as important as the design of the finished building, space or object. When I support community groups in the selection of architects for projects, I always encourage them not just to look at their design vision and practice portfolio, but also to interrogate how the architects propose working with them. And not just to tick off buzzwords, like 'collaboration' or 'workshop', but to demand specific examples of tools and techniques. Similarly, when facilitating a project, one of the first things I do is map out the decision-making process, simply and transparently. What needs to be decided when, how and by whom? Where are the key decisions, the catalytic moments? And where are the ones, that, if we don't pay attention, might get taken by accident, or by design 'magic', but that actually residents might want to be consciously part of? That way, from the start participants are made aware of the potential agency they hold and, perhaps, can challenge power-holders for more.

<sup>1</sup> Chantal Mouffe (2006) 'Which Public Space for Critical Artistic Practices?' In Cork Caucus: On Art, Possibility and Democracy, ed. Tara Byrne, Dublin: National Sculpture Factory, pp.151–170

<sup>2</sup> Harold D. Lasswell (1936) Politics: Who Gets What, When, How (New York: Whittlesey House)





DAISY FROUD MASTERCLASS, DECEMBER 2019  
IMAGE: STE MURRAY



Then you can have fun designing the creative, enjoyable ways in which those decisions will be taken.

Because community-centred design is not *just* about decisions: that meta-level of negotiation and process. (And indeed, decision-making is not just a conceptual exercise; sometimes we take decisions live, by picking up material and consciously constructing things together.) It is also, vitally, about – with the assistance of an architect – imagining things into a form, and then introducing those forms into the world: a skate park, a public square, a building for community activity.

This can require a different approach from architects to the one they may have been schooled in; architectural education often relies on an imagined client and a hypothetical site, pushing the architects to put their own subjectivity, and their own reading of a site or a problem at the heart of the process. Community-centred design not only requires professionals to de-centre ourselves, but also offers the opportunity to positively de-discipline: to consider how the processes by which we go about architecture and contribute to placemaking could be done differently: more inclusively, more collaboratively, more fruitfully – inflected by other knowledges and experiences.

Researcher Ann Van Herzele, in her article *Local knowledge in action* entertainingly narrates the tale of architects co-designing a new park in Antwerp with local residents.<sup>3</sup> Repeatedly, the interpretative frames of the bewildered architects collide with those of community members. ‘The architects started from the point of view of the place as a ‘void’ ... while the participants started from the concept of a place that was full of memories and expectations for the future’, Van Herzele reflects. Similarly, the design team are forced to rethink the ‘order of things’ – the norms of the design process ‘They start thinking in great detail of things which are not on order yet, for example about fences and little gates. They zoom in on bits and pieces while you must think on big lines,’ reports an architect with frustration.

The architectural practices I enjoy working alongside relish those challenges to process: that ‘disorder’. Collaborative practice muf, for example, on one housing project, responded to similar tendencies by carefully drawing all the small details of people’s home life that mattered to them at the start. These fragments, combined, then helped to shape the big moves, rather than being put on the back burner until they were ready for them at the appropriate RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stage.

Anarchist Gustav Landauer famously said: ‘The state is not something which can be destroyed by a revolution, but is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently.’<sup>4</sup> A snappier way of saying that might be: ‘Be the change you want to see in the world.’

Community-centred design, with the spotlight it throws on decision-making and the challenges it poses to power dynamics, is one location where new relationships and behaviours are forged. The present pandemic has highlighted how much society needs to do things differently. It is now impossible to ignore how inequitable and inadequate so many environments are, from poor quality housing, to access to good community and open space. In lock down, we are denied many of our normal relationships. Yet simultaneously, impressive networks of mutual support and community interaction have formed or strengthened. As – fingers crossed – we move on and out into the world expansively again, I hope there will be many more projects centred on community values, needs and knowledge. And that the ‘otherwise’ will continue to reveal itself.

### About Daisy

Daisy Froud designs tools and processes to support collective decision-making about future buildings and the future of existing places. She has an MA in Cultural Memory, and is a Teaching Fellow at The Bartlett School of Architecture, where she specialises in spatial politics and the role of non-professionals in architecture and planning. She is a Mayoral Design Advocate to The Mayor of London, advising on community engagement.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Van Herzele (2004) ‘Local Knowledge in Action: Valuing Nonprofessional Reasoning in the Planning Process’, in *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, Vol. 24, No.2, pp. 197–212

<sup>4</sup> Gustav Landauer, cited in Colin WARD (1973) *Anarchy In Action*, 2nd edition (London: Freedom Press), pp.11, 19

# REIMAGINE TALLAGHT MELT THE WALLS

In 2018 and 2019, the IAF worked in partnership with South Dublin County Council (SDCC) Arts Office and Tallaght Community Arts (TCA) to use creative strategies and architectural interventions to find a way to better connect people, place and institutions in Tallaght town.

The plan was to increase collaboration and engagement between some key cultural organisations through activation of Chamber Square, with the aim of bringing a key space in the neighbourhood to life.

Chamber Square was the apex of a vibrant cultural community in Tallaght, connecting organisations including but not limited to the Civic Theatre, Tallaght Library & County Hall and Tallaght Community Arts (TCA). However more could be done to welcome the communities resident nearby into this public space and into these cultural spaces. The mission was to 'melt the walls' between the institutions themselves, and between the institutions and their neighbours.

## Fieldwork

In 2018 a process of stakeholder consultation, community consultation and engagement began. Through a series of light-touch engagement activities, anchored to existing events, festivals and activities in Tallaght's cultural calendar, the IAF began investigating in small ways how local people could engage better with these institutes and spaces.

The first task was to establish how Chamber Square was currently being used, and by whom. These insights would also establish what prevented or discouraged people from using this space. The IAF took a number of approaches when engaging with different stakeholders and communities, including regular stakeholder meetings, in-depth interviews, surveys, observations, self-directed activities, facilitated workshops, facilitated drop-in sessions and events.

MELT THE WALLS, CULTURE NIGHT 2019 IMAGE: STE MURRAY



Stakeholder meetings were held with the Arts Office, Tallaght Community Arts, Tallaght Library, Civic Theatre Tallaght, Rua Red, as well as linking in with key Local Authority staff and local independent practitioners. Consultations linked in with many local workshops and events, including Tallaght Community Arts lantern workshops; Books for Babies workshop; Dance2Connect festival; and #Councils4ClimateAction Public Info Event. Architecture workshops were held with three language communities through Mother Tongues Festival, as well as engagement workshops in Chamber Square, Tallaght Library and Tallaght Creative Campus.

Lego was used to visualise and rebuild the space, collaborative maps were created, and a game was developed by the IAF to use in parent and child workshops. Often while these activities were happening, a dialogical approach was used to explore more detail and personal feelings connected to the space, which enriched the detail and quality of the contributions.

From the observations and interviews it is clear that people do in fact spend dwell time in the space, as an alternative to the parks nearby. As it was closer for local residents than some of the parks, families came here to allow children to play in an open space.

People also used it for:

parking bikes / pushing prams (toys and real) / walking / gymnastics / twirling / dog walking / chalk drawing / reading sitting listening / watching phone / scooting / cycling / reading / smoking / taking a break, sitting on steps / football / hurling / eating lunch / meeting people / running up ramps and down steps / scooting down ramps / coffee break / training / filming / climbing the walls

ARCHITECTS  
OBFA

PARTNERS  
South Dublin County Council  
Tallaght Community Arts

People wanted the space to be more welcoming or inviting but also wanted it to remain as an open space, not be fully or permanently occupied by something. A popular idea was of Chamber Square being used as a spill out area from the civic spaces, such as for shows or choirs to rehearse, or a reading space for the Library.

**‘The space is pretty good as it is; the kids come to scoot and run around before/after trips to the library. It’s a more convenient open space than the park close to home, shops library.’**

#### CONSULTATION RESPONDANT

Consultation Respondant: ‘Maybe a little market or something to catch attention and make you stop. For kids, an extension of the activities that happen in the library happening in the Square... Get some of the theatre people out here on good days, rehearsing etc. Music sessions or a choir would be nice.’

From the children consulted, green spaces were mentioned, as well as a water feature and spaces for yoga, reading, drama and play. People want to see the space become more inviting, while still allowing the everyday activities that happen there to continue, and for it to continue to be a walk through space.

From this fieldwork period, it was recommended that there be an open call for an intervention in Chamber Square, partnered with a curated programme to activate the space, complementing the programmes in the surrounding civic spaces.

#### The Project 16–28 September 2019

Following a creative process of public consultation, the IAF ran a nationwide competition for architects, designers and multidisciplinary teams to create an installation to activate Chamber Square. As part of competition, local Tallaght residents were invited to adjudicate on the entries.

The project brief was to create a welcoming environment in Chamber Square that connected the square to its civic neighbours as well as those further afield, responding to the public requests to see the activities in the surrounding buildings spill out into the space, and introduce greenery and places to sit in Library Square.

Designed by OBFA Architects, and constructed by AB Projects, this winning installation was launched in September 2019. Designed to be a conversation starting point for users of the square, users were encouraged to sit and occupy the space, engage with the installation, and change their perspective of Library Square. It was also a space for discussion about the future of the square, among partnering organisations, and local community participants.

A broad and engaging programme of workshops and events was created for this new space, including drumming workshops, theatre pieces, creative drawing sessions, poetry, singing, gardening, and a social drop-in event for Culture Night. The programming of the space connected with the programmes of the neighbouring cultural institutions, while also reflecting the many varied existing uses of the square.

One of the conclusions of the fieldworks stage was that there was already active community engagement in Chamber Square, but that there could be more opportunities for lingering and activities. While the programmed events provided a conduit to the work being delivered by the creative and cultural organisations in the area, the installation also was key to support the unprogrammed uses of the square – the post-library moments; toddling children looking for space to roam; a new route for scooters; a rest stop before going home; and a space to meet and have a chat with an old friend.

#### About the Architects

OBFA is a progressive architectural practice providing professional architectural and project management services throughout Ireland and the UK.





# REIMAGINE DUNDRUM

In the summer and autumn of 2018 the IAF worked with the community group Imagine Dundrum in their efforts to influence the future development of Dundrum Village, and in particular the Dundrum Local Area Plan (LAP) as being prepared by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.

Imagine Dundrum is a group of concerned local residents of Dundrum and surrounding areas, actively interested and engaged in the changes and developments in their community. They are working for a community-focused vision for the renewal of Dundrum's core built environment, in collaboration with the County Council Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, with local developers and with all interested local organisations, businesses and individuals. The context for Imagine Dundrum was the imminent redevelopment of the extensive 1960s Shopping Centre site, including most of the west side of the Main Street. The group has ambitions for Dundrum village to be developed sensitively and sustainably, with consideration of its existing built heritage, provision for pedestrians and cyclists, support of small, local, independent businesses, sufficient affordable housing and adequate provision of cultural and civic amenities.

Imagine Dundrum engaged the Irish Architecture Foundation to devise and deliver a series of workshops with, and for, children and young people to hear and include their voices, their lived experience and their aspirations and ideas for Dundrum's built environment and its future. The children's ideas and work were to influence the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council Local Area Plan, with subsequent impact on a specific site development in the locality of Dundrum.

YOUTH FOCUSED ARCHITECTURE WORKSHOP IN DUNDRUM IMAGE: STE MURRAY



Imagine Dundrum wanted young people to engage in imaginative exercises to visualise their aspirations for Dundrum while considering the following issues:

- Opportunities for cycling and walking
- Connectivity, easy movement between green, cycle, walking and reduce traffic routes
- Places to play
- Making Dundrum green – how to improve the environment
- A litter-free Dundrum
- The library – what it should offer for young people
- Music and the arts, leisure
- Public art
- Accessibility – making Dundrum a good place for people with disabilities, older people and little people in buggies
- What makes a healthy village
- Ugly places and nice places in Dundrum – what to keep and what to change
- Reflect the history and heritage of Dundrum

## TEAM

Ricardo Rico **RELATIONAL URBANISM**

John Lennon **HISTORIAN**

Patrick Dunne **ARCHITECT**

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Imagine Dundrum

**Fieldwork/Workshops**

The IAF and Imagine Dundrum worked with the two closest primary schools to the site, Taney Parish Primary School and Holy Cross Primary School, as well as fifth year students of St. Benildus College and children and families in attendance at Open House Dublin 2018. Each group took part in two sessions — one walking tour with local historian John Lennon and a design workshop with urbanist Eduardo Rico, of the architecture practice Relational Urbanism.

Every session involved a walking tour with John Lennon, giving a detailed insight into the heritage of the village. The walking tour gave students a rich history and background to Dundrum main street and the site of the old shopping centre, helping set the context of their big task: reimagining Dundrum’s future built environment. John highlighted many interesting features related to Dundrum’s built environment, including the unique design of chimney stacks and moulded faces on the gutter of Dundrum House Pub. He shared historical facts about changing building use and detailed the massive decrease in people living on the main street, which dropped from hundreds to just six people. Before the tour, the children undertook a drawing task to describe what they see and feel about Dundrum, which was subsequently compared to the new drawings they created afterwards. This new knowledge then guided their vision for the future.

The second sessions with every group of children and young people involved creative activities, designed to elicit ideas around the future of Dundrum, encouraging them to imagine not only what they would like to see in their village but what others might want and need too. They drew and they mapped; they considered movement by walking, crawling and dancing on heat sensitive surfaces to track their movements. They mulled over big ideas and small details, and they discussed the materials, character and qualities they would like to see in future designs.

With the older students, the architect Patrick Dunne explained the basic framework of Local Area Plans and County Development Plans, and how they are used by planning authorities to direct future development of an area. The students discussed the roles of developers, construction professionals, planners and the general public in policy making and design of future towns.

The drawings that were made over the two sessions created a rich picture of how the children see the development of Dundrum into the future. Wish lists were generated by the children of what they want to see implemented for them, including:

A health centre for older people / hurling wall / Tesla electric car garage / skate park / playground / park / museum / parking / swimming pool / music centre

There was a sense that the young people wanted to see the old character of Dundrum maintained as much as possible, with a real preference for a ‘squiggly aesthetic’ — spaces that are organic or curvy, meandering and relaxed.

Imagine Dundrum’s submission was one of a remarkable 153 submissions made by members of the Dundrum community in the pre-draft consultation phase of the development of the Dundrum Local Area Plan.

**‘Imagine Dundrum believes that engaging children in the urban design and planning process has value that goes well beyond the learning and insights that it delivers for children and young people, though these insights are crucial. It helps to create a sense of place and a pride in that place. It lays the roots of community engagement and belonging, that can last a lifetime...’**

IMAGINE DUNDRUM SUBMISSION TO DLR LOCAL ACTION PLAN



TOUR WITH HISTORIAN JOHN LENNON IMAGE: IAF



# REIMAGINE MOHILL

Mohill is a small town in County Leitrim, situated in the Rinn Valley, above the Rinn River. It is only a few kilometers from Lough Rynn, which attracts a large range of visitors for tourist and recreational activities, in particular rowing and canoeing.

In 2019, the IAF worked with the local community in Mohill and Leitrim County Council to carry out local research and an engagement report. Given its close proximity to the very popular Lough Rynn, the local community had identified the potential of water-based activities to bring more economic activity in the town. However, while the nearest hotel was the four-star Lough Rynn Castle Estate & Garden, there was a dearth of low to mid-range accommodation in the area to support this industry. Two vacant properties had been identified by the Town team as potential sites to be repurposed as accommodation – a former VEC school, and Ashbrook House, locally known as the old Fever Hospital.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION, MOHILL AGRICULTURAL SHOW IMAGE: ANNE KEARNS



## Fieldwork

The IAF were asked to work with the town team to assess what the accommodation these groups would need. The resulting report would then be used as part of a feasibility study to apply for funding to begin work on that project or building. The IAF spent three months producing a community engagement report indicating which amenities were most needed. This involved working with the local school and wider community, as well as rowers at the Lough Rynn Regatta other users of the Lake. There was a lack of data on the specific needs of this visiting community, so the brief was to engage with them as well as the local community to explore opportunities and ideas. What amenities should be available in a new accommodation project? Which building would be most suitable? How would the community feel if these buildings were repurposed for this purpose? The IAF were also asked to investigate how local residents in Mohill would feel about this project, if they had any preference or aversion to which building was used or if the wider community would prefer another project entirely to occupy these spaces.

ARCHITECT  
Ciara Reynolds

COMMUNITY PARTNERS  
Mohill Business Association  
Mohill Community Development Association CLG  
Leitrim County Council



In an effort to get feedback from the wider community the IAF took a stand at the Mohill Agricultural Show on the 18th August. The aim was to make people aware of the project, gather input and ideas on feasibility or amendments, but also to consider if either building had particular emotional memories for people which might result in strong objections to either being repurposed. Other groups engaged with included Tourism Ireland, Rynn-Shannon Angling Club, and local GAA representatives.

In order to further include the voice of young people, we worked with the architect Ciara Reynolds to establish which building would be the most preferred among young people for this project. Reynolds ran sessions with secondary school students, asking what activities they thought were missing in Mohill, how they would feel about the proposed project, their thoughts on buildings being repurposed and their general ideas about architecture in the town. While they felt their town was friendly and welcoming, the young people felt there was a disconnect between the town and the major regatta on Lough Rynn, with its annual influx of people to the town. They disliked that buildings were disused, and felt excited about the idea of buildings being updated in a contemporary or different way. They were happy to consider different types of design, as long as the building was looked after. More broadly, they identified a need for more local restaurants and social spaces.

At the Lough Rynn Regatta, rowers and canoers were consulted about what they needed, in terms of accommodation and services. The social and group aspect was important in the feedback, reflecting the group and collective nature of the sports. To add to these findings, a wider survey was shared on line with Canoeing Ireland and Rowing Ireland.

Based on the engagement report produced in the town, Leitrim County Council then commissioned the IAF to create an architectural brief for this project. This was to support future plans and funding applications related to tourism development in the community. This finalised report and brief were then submitted to the Mohill town team and Leitrim County Council.

**About The Architect**

Ciara Reynolds is a designer and architect with extensive experience across various fields, including Masterplanning and Urban Design.



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION, LOUGH RYNN REGATTA MAGE: ANNE KEARNS

# REIMAGINE LETTERKENNY CULTURAL DISTRICT LETTERKENNY

The Reimagine Letterkenny project  
focused on developing a pedestrian  
‘cultural corridor’ to better link  
three existing, cultural buildings in  
Letterkenny, County Donegal.

The Irish Architecture Foundation worked with Donegal County Museum, An Grianan Theatre, Regional Culture Centre and Donegal County Council to explore creatively with the local community how an under-utilised interconnecting walkway connecting the Port Road and the High Road could be used more often by the townspeople. Recent development in the area had disrupted previous routes between the three buildings, resulting in many people not realising that a path between the three existed. The aim was to explore how this path could become an attractive pedestrian asset, thereby reconnecting the three buildings in the public imagination, while also supporting the creation of a cultural identity in this area of Letterkenny town. This project was delivered in three stages.



LETTERKENNY CULTURAL DISTRICT WAYFINDING INSTALLATION, 2020 IMAGE: PAUL MCGUCKIN

**Stage 1 Fieldwork:** This was led by the IAF team, working to develop a brief with which to better understand the issues being addressed, feeding into the design brief and the commissioning process. This stage culminated in the commissioning of an architectural team to respond to the brief.

**Stage 2 Reimagine Phase:** The commissioned team began their community consultations, and worked closely with the key partners and branding consultant Lisa Gildea to develop a brand identity. The identity was rolled out, and a wayfinding route created, in 2020. This was paired with continued community feedback on the response to this route.

**Stage 3:** The architects continued their relationship with the cultural partners, creating more detailed plans and visions for future redesign opportunities for the area.

**TEAM**  
Pasparakis Friel **ARCHITECTS**  
Lisa Gildea **GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**  
Donegal Museum  
Regional Cultural Centre  
An Grianan



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSION, CULTURE NIGHT, 2020 IMAGE: PAUL MCGUCKIN



### Fieldwork Phase

From Spring 2019 to Autumn 2019, the IAF performed space-use studies and explorations in the area connecting the Port Road to the High Road. The aim was to better understand how local people already use, or don't use, this space, as well as to gauge what other potential uses people might envision. Activities undertaken included observations, interviews and questionnaires gathering data on space use and community opinions. Additionally, creative way-finding prototypes were trialled to gauge the impact of these interventions on space usage. This took the form of chalked and cardboard signage, detailing distances in minutes between the three buildings, paired with observations on public responses to the signs.

The IAF interviewed people using the path to a) see if they were regular users, b) if the way finding indicators had had any impact and c) if they could think of anything to improve the experience of using the path. A session of in-depth interviews was undertaken in the Donegal Museum, asking respondents a series of questions relating to the use of the interconnecting path and wider accessibility in the area.

### Letterkenny Cultural District Stage 1

Following the Fieldwork stage, a public competition was announced to commission an architect/team to respond to a detailed brief. Donegal architects Pasparakis Friel were the successful team, with a proposal that wove in the importance of including clear public communication as well as branding as a key element of the project. In March 2020, after working with the community partners to explore concepts for an identity for the project, the first public consultation event was set to launch. What could not have been expected was the country going into full lock down due to a global pandemic.

COVID-19 not only scuppered plans for this event, but also created challenges for any in-person forms of consultation. The Irish Architecture Foundation paused all in-person engagement for an initial period of three months, to ensure the safety of everyone involved, but also to allow for the tough and traumatic process of adapting to new ways of living, creating and connecting. With these new parameters, Pasparakis Friel were able to refocus on the online consultation work they had been developing, including a website, social media, and online survey, from which they received 180 responses. These responses were then turned into creative, clear graphics and re-communicated via social media to the public to re-engage with. Through this process, they were able to build a community conversation regarding what role a Cultural District could play for Letterkenny and further afield.

Six months later, a much different on-site consultation was held in a very different world. Pasparakis Friel held a public consultation in An Grianán Theatre Forecourt as part of Culture Night on Friday, 18th September. The aim was to hear from locals as to how this project could be a catalyst for the growth of culture and arts in the region whilst also improving Letterkenny's public realm. Outside An Grianan, a new addition to the open plaza announced itself in a swath of colour. Colourful signage was constructed from flag material wrapped around a steel structure, taking on a playful, sculptural form. From this point on the Port Road, a trail of chromatic dots led up to the steps to the Regional Cultural Centre, An Grianan's nearby next-door neighbour, where another colourful structure stood commandingly. Following this path around the perimeter walls of the newly built courthouse, a few minutes later you were walking along the High Road towards the Donegal Museum. A third installation there completed the route, playfully contrasting with the historic stone facade of the former Letterkenny Workhouse.

Culture Night would normally see thousands of people enter the doors of these three cultural buildings, while instead, many precautions were taken to reduce the numbers of visitors and to limit interactions. This reflected the new challenges facing the Cultural and Heritage sectors, with the public not able to have the experiences they once had. However, perhaps this created a new value around the public shared space that a creative, innovative and well-designed Cultural District could be.

### Letterkenny Cultural District Stage 2

The creative installation on signage and wayfinding routes tied in with the community engagement elements to feed into a further, more long term vision, which was to consider how the urban realm could be redesigned to create Letterkenny Cultural District. This strand of the project progressed alongside and as well as developed from Stage 1, allowing the team to adapt and explore various avenues and opportunities with the space.

### About the Architects

Donegal based Pasparakis Friel seek to utilise a detailed historical knowledge of place and people to inform and develop concepts for the places and spaces that they design. As a studio the architects enjoy engaging with, unravelling and reimagining briefs to find the most lasting and effective solutions.

# REIMAGINE KELLS

Reimagine Kells is a project which was developed between the IAF, Kells Creative Placemaking – The Bigger Picture and Meath County Council. The aim was to think strategically about the development of Kells in the future, with a focus on the regeneration work already being carried out by Kells Creative Placemaking Group.

The project is considering how the public realm in the area might be improved to answer the wider communities needs and to connect with buildings that have been renewed as part of regeneration work.

A heritage-led regeneration scheme, Kells Creative Placemaking; the Bigger Picture, intends adaptively reusing a selection of protected structures for creative endeavour, this scheme aims to reconcile the sustainable management and conservation of Kells’ built heritage with the cultural, economic and social requirements of its contemporary environment.



COMMUNITY WORKSHOP, HINTERLAND FESTIVAL 2019 IMAGE: ANNE KEARNS

## Fieldwork

In June 2019 the IAF ran a community workshop as part of Hinterland Festival of Literature. The location was a disused Church of Ireland building that is part of the Kells Creative Placemaking project. This day-long participatory engagement invited the public to share their vision, ideas and concerns for the future of buildings involved in the programme. Participants were able to explore a charette of the building designs, as well as play creative games to stimulate their imagination on the topic. The feedback from this session was rich and creative, as well as practical and thorough. People raised concerns, such as financial sustainability, venue management, and how to link public access with privately owned property.

There were also visionary ideas, such the creation of a calm place to come and sit without having to buy anything and opportunities for artist residencies. Throughout it all, there was a sense of pride in the fantastic heritage offerings in the town, and a desire to share it with more people. Ideas were gathered and shared for public consideration and discussion, as well as to feed into a brief that would be issued to a design team.

## PARTNERS

Kells Creative Placemaking – The Bigger Picture  
Meath County Council.



**Project**

Responding to a brief developed through public consultation, LiD Architects were selected to connect the three regenerative projects in Kells. The objective was to engage with the community, bringing them into the design process. The brief focused on the task of creating an identity to connect some key locations that were the focus of Kells Creative Placemaking.

LiD Architects created a project built around a programme of community engagement workshops, supporting public contribution to their public realm. These workshops would be tailored to specific groups in the community; gathering feedback on how Kells is developing; get opinions on the regeneration project currently underway; and consider the need for other amenities. This process would then generate highly useful insights and information that would inform spatial plans for Kells, highlighting the connections between these new developments and feeding into larger development plans for the area. This project was due to kick off in Spring 2020.

As plans were being finalised for the delivery of this project, the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in the country. All plans were halted. The Irish Architecture Foundation paused all in-person projects for three months, to allow communities and architects to adapt to the changing landscape. There was no clear path for the delivery of this kind of project, and as the health crisis grew, it became clear that there would be new, more pressing, concerns in terms of our public realm. Even as communities pulled together, fissures in society were exposed. The 2km travel limits created micro-studies of spatial inequalities, with some people enjoying gardens, parks and beaches, and others limited to their homes and isolated from society. As well as providing a lens with which to rediscover the beauty in our local towns, the imposed lockdown also forced us to consider what was not working, and what we should be aspiring towards.

New ways of community engagement would need to be developed, which would diverge from the previous stages and moments in the Reimagine programme, especially in Kells, where community gatherings formed a vital part of the social fabric of the town. Paired with a need to speedily adapt to new methods of engagement, it was also important to take the time to reflect on and learn to accept the dramatic and drastic changes to community life. It became clear that, while the key brief remained the same, the ways of working would need to be more agile, light of touch, and responsive to the community in Kells. LiD architects engaged in a process which tapped into the vibrant groups and initiatives that have been active in placemaking in the town, connecting with them online and remotely. This method allowed for more discursive engagement, with conversations and themes emerging which formed an interactive process of co-design. Alongside this, ideas and plans were developed which fed into, and out of, these dialogues. While COVID-19 has restricted how groups meet, it opened up new ways of sharing, discussing and responding to ideas, and it was clear that having well designed spaces to walk, sit, live and play are more important than ever before.

**About the Architects**

LiD Architecture is an award winning practice that incorporates playful and innovative tools for engagement into their research, design and delivery processes.



# REIMAGINE KILRUSH

The IAF has been working with Kilrush Town Team to support their capacity to lead changes and improvements in their town core, making it an attractive place to live in.

Kilrush Town Team is a representative body for the wider community which was setup under the Clare Market Towns project supported by CLDC. Although a relatively new entity, the team has already been successful in developing new initiatives for the town, and sought some support in developing a spatial vision for its public realm, with a focus on town centre living.



KILRUSH SITE RESEARCH IMAGERY  
IMAGE: SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, UL INTELLIGENCE UNIT

## Supports

IAF support ranged from identifying and advising on practical resources; sign-posting to existing supports; and helping to identify what their core needs would be. The aim was to provide support that could help improve the liveability of the town today, anchored around Francis St, Market Square, while linking into projects in Cappa Pier, the Vandeleur Gardens and newly restored Terret Lodge. As the team played a very active role in identifying and applying for funding to improve their town, this project would need to support these processes, including building local capacity and knowledge of placemaking and urban design. During this process, it became crucial to find ways to work with the wider community, gathering as much information and input as possible to support this community-led initiative. A key challenge to this project was the volatile public health crisis, and the ever-changing restrictions to movement, events and community life. While this initially delayed the project, it became clear that this new context was part of a shared experience which needed to be accounted for and absorbed into the process. How could a community come together to share ideas? What kind of spaces do they now need to feel safe and connected? How can we future-proof community and public life?

**ARCHITECT TEAM**  
School of Architecture at  
the University of Limerick (SAUL)  
Intelligence Unit

**PARTNER**  
Kilrush Town Team



### Project

Given the open and exploratory nature of this project, the IAF brought in the Intelligence Unit that had been established by the School of Architecture the University of Limerick. They worked with the Town Team to further explore their town and generate ideas for improving liveability and provide practical contributions to support the Town Team in their future projects. The Intelligence Unit (IU) run by the School of Architecture at the University of Limerick (SAUL) is a think tank which works on solutions for real world problems. In the past they have worked on urban, community, construction, fiscal, physical, policy, arts and environmental issues in a variety of domains. These range from single school buildings; to a whole airport (Shannon); or a whole county (Mayo, Limerick, Fingal). Their method uses the best intelligence available in a blended team of academic experts and community/industry/ local authority expertise. The method used by the IU is to plug in the needed expertise from within the University disciplines (architects, engineers, economists, marketing, arts, historians and others), linked to research and output work prepared by students of architecture researchers. This allows the researchers to lead, while tapping into a whole community of expertise. In turn this is paired with a programme of community engagement, creating a dynamic conversation between the IU, the local community and the university.

In Kilrush, the IU was able to connect with the community using multiple online and offline tools. By creating a site specific project, a free space is opened up for collaborative exploration and sharing of research.. Unencumbered by the constraints of consultancy or a time-bound process and operating in an iterative way, it uses design methodology to spot solutions and join the dots.

With a format that invited inputs from a broad range of people and communities, the IU helped crystallise some ideas. By providing practical and technical skills in mapping and visualisations, the unit was able to respond to information, stories, research, ideas and plans gathered by, and with, the community. This was then shared with the community, to generate a broader discussion and understanding of some of the long term visions that the Town Team had for the spaces. As well as feeding new perspectives, research and ideas into the town, the IU was more importantly able to refine, build on and reflect back some of the amazing work and ideas already in motion in Kilrush.

### About the School of Architecture at UL

The Intelligence Unit (IU) run by the School of Architecture at the University of Limerick (SAUL) is a think tank that works on solutions for real world problems. Kilrush IU Researchers are Britney Ryan, Lorcan Whelan, Séamus Bairéad, and Gráinne Hassett.





# REIMAGINE LOUGHREA THROUGH THINNING LANDSCAPES

The IAF was asked by The Walks Steering Group in Loughrea to help build community engagement and ownership over this important space in the town.

The Walks is a crucible walkway in Loughrea, County Galway which serves as a public amenity as well as a pedestrian route running parallel to the main street. It has national monuments status, with considerable work done in recent years to restore the bridges over the moate, the only one of its kind in Ireland, and to reinstate the historic walls. The Walks was originally laid out as a public space by Clon Richard in 1791 as a walkway/promenade along this moat. Since then, the space has played a special role in public life in Loughrea, people walk there, the boxing club train there in summer, and school children use it for surveying nature.

#### TEAM

BothAnd Group  
Jarek Adamczuk / Alice Clarke  
Andrew Ó Murchú / Kate Rushe

#### COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The Walks Steering Group  
Galway 2020 – Small Towns, Big Ideas  
Galway County Council.

THROUGH THINNING LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURAL INSTALLATION IMAGE: BOTHAND GROUP



#### Fieldwork

In 2019, The IAF spent a number of months researching how people use The Walks, how they feel about them and how they feel about a project happening there, using methodologies ranging from movement surveys, community workshops to consultations at local events. During this process, it was recognised that young people needed to be important voices in this project; they would be future users, residents, and potentially returning visitors to the area. A design workshop was run with local secondary school students, and a youth focused workshop was set up on-site in The Walks as part of the Architecture At The Edge festival.

Based on this fieldwork, the IAF compiled a research report on Attitudes to Creating an Architectural Intervention on The Walks, Loughrea. Responding to this research, it was proposed to create a temporary architectural intervention to frame conversations and activities along The Walks. The aim was to activate the space, to shine a light on its history and its use, and to create a sense of ownership of The Walks with the local community. This brief would also link in with future landscaping plans for the area. In 2019, the IAF put out a call that would see the winning team collaboratively engage with groups from Loughrea in order to develop a public outcome, installation, temporary intervention and/or happening in the The Walks, Loughrea in 2020. After an open call, the architectural research collective BothAnd Group were selected as the winning bid to undertake this project.

### Through Thinning Landscapes

From 18th of September to 10th of October 2020, The Walks in Loughrea, Galway, became the location of a unique site-specific installation 'Through Thinning Landscapes'. If you happened to be taking a lunchtime stroll through The Walks in Loughrea in the middle of September, you might have noticed something new and intriguing, a long narrow structure had appeared in the landscape. Walking to the end of this tunnel, you would contemplate at your grass-framed reflection in a looming mirror. Hemmed in between sloping banks of intense green lawn, the reflection trimmed out the overhanging trees, cutting you off from the diversity of surrounding nature, providing a space for contemplation. What is the link between our impossible expectations of tidy green spaces, made of grass monocultures, and the critical loss of biodiversity we are now facing?

This project aimed to create an awareness-shifting experience for the individual: to provide a mandate for empathy with all stakeholders, including plants and animals, with whom we share our environment. Through experiencing the installation, the architects wished to draw attention to the loss of the richness of life in the Irish landscape, and to inspire people to take action to resolve urgent biospherical issues. In his book *Whittled Away*, ecologist Pádraic Fogarty describes Irish wildlife as having 'been squeezed into... thin ribbons of tree-lines and hedgerows'. In this installation, grass monocultures dominate and loom over a narrow corridor through which there is just enough space to move. The individual moves through these thinning corridors for Irish wildlife, confronted by their loss. At the far end of the installation stood a mirror, positioning the individual as a responsible agent within the complex systems of an environmental crisis

This architectural installation formed the backdrop to a series of community engagement activities, including talks and workshops, geared towards increasing awareness of the biodiversity crisis and supporting a Pollinator Plan for the locality.

On Friday, 18th September, as part of Culture Night 2020, a conversation took place with the BothAnd Group and Fogarty, hosted by Frank Monahan. The conversation was recorded as a podcast and explored issues of landscape design, biodiversity loss, individual responsibility and architecture's role as agency. On Saturday, 26th September, biologist, conservationist and broadcaster Éanna Ní Lamhna delivered a talk to the local community on the subject of biodiversity, ecology and supporting pollinators in community spaces. Finally on Saturday, 3rd October, a short film, documenting the project, was broadcast in public spaces in Galway city, as part of a film screening project with the Architecture at the Edge Festival.

With a focus on the circular economy, the architects made the installation materials available to local partners such as Loughrea Mens Shed, to facilitate a 'pollinator route' in the town. This was part of an ongoing series of relationships and conversations that emerged during that project, regarding the role the BothAnd Group could play in supporting biodiversity projects in Loughrea, as well as developing ecological imperatives in their own work.

Máirín Doddy, Architectural Conservation Officer at Galway County Council, stated: 'The installation and the series of events in a unique way for the people of Loughrea to engage with their local natural environment, and we look forward to opening the installation on 18th September. This project supports one of our main strategic objectives – Places and spaces: to revitalise and regenerate our towns, villages, townlands and islands, and to improve the connectivity of communities to the built environment and public spaces'.

### About the Architects

BothAnd Group is a research and spatial design practice that aims to understand the behaviour of living systems; to design a more equal environment for all forms of life.



COMMUNITY BIODIVERSITY TALK WITH ÉANNA NÍ LAMHNA, OCTOBER 2020 IMAGE: BOTHAND GROUP



# PLACEMAKING NATIONWIDE

Reimagine is nationwide programme for co-design and placemaking. We work with communities across Ireland to co-create solutions to challenges or opportunities they've identified in their locality.

## Mohill PAGE 14

ARCHITECT  
Ciara Reynolds

COMMUNITY PARTNERS  
Mohill Business Association  
Mohill Community  
Development Association  
CLG Leitrim County Council

## Loughrea PAGE 22

TEAM  
BothAnd Group  
Jarek Adamczuk / Alice Clarke  
Andrew Ó Murchú / Kate Rushe

COMMUNITY PARTNERS  
The Walks Steering Group  
Galway 2020 –  
Small Towns, Big Ideas  
Galway County Council.

## Killrush PAGE 20

TEAM  
School of Architecture  
at the University of  
Limerick (SAUL)  
Intelligence Unit

PARTNER  
Kilrush Town Team



## Letterkenny PAGE 16

**TEAM**  
Pasparakis Friel **ARCHITECTS**  
Lisa Gildea **GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**  
Donegal Museum  
Regional Cultural Centre  
An Grianan

## Kells PAGE 18

**PARTNERS**  
Kells Creative Placemaking –  
The Bigger Picture  
Meath County Council.

## Dundrum PAGE 12

**TEAM**  
Ricardo Rico **RELATIONAL**  
**URBANISM**  
John Lennon **HISTORIAN**  
Patrick Dunne **ARCHITECT**

**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**  
Imagine Dundrum

## Tallaght PAGE 10

**ARCHITECTS**  
OBFA

**PARTNERS**  
South Dublin County Council  
Tallaght Community Arts

# MASTERCLASSES IN PLACEMAKING SEPTEMBER 2020

Bláithín Quinn, Curator of Learning

**Context and Rationale**

Reimagine supports projects with diverse methods of public engagement, to facilitate authentic creative expression within communities, in response to design challenges in the built environment. In participatory placemaking projects it is vital that local insight and tacit knowledge are integral to evolving design solutions, fostering a sense of agency, ownership and pride among communities. Durational projects can be more successful than one-off engagement events, as a relationship of trust is built up between the community and a facilitator. How can communities unlock their know-how and innate creativity to reimagine their local areas? To do this successfully, there is a need for specialised architect-facilitators, with the ability to mediate and explore architecture with a wide public audience. The Reimagine Masterclasses aim to address this gap.

**Overview of the Reimagine Masterclasses**

The IAF delivered a series of three virtual Masterclasses in Placemaking in September 2020. Participants included architects, local community representatives, local authority staff, councillors, stakeholders, community engagement practitioners, representatives from cultural organisations and others actively engaged in placemaking. Between seventy and ninety participants attended each session. A core group attended all three sessions, which ensured a continuity of conversation throughout the series. The term ‘masterclass’ is used, not to promote one way of practice, but rather to create a forum for discussion and an exploration of ‘placemaking’ as a dynamic and responsive set of practices and processes, drawing on the knowledge and experience of the speakers, facilitators and participants present.

**Format**

The Reimagine Masterclass series featured diverse modes of virtual learning and engagement, including case studies, presentations, break out groups and moderated discussions. Each two-hour event had three distinct parts. The first, Part 1: *Place in Focus*, showcased current and recent IAF placemaking projects, linking people and place. These case studies illustrated community engagement processes in a range of spatial and social contexts. The second, Part 2: *Topics in Focus*, was a core part of the learning experience, providing a wider framework for placemaking as a practice of public space improvement, largely based on the ground-breaking work of organisations such as Project for Public Spaces in New York and various projects in the EU URBACT’s Programme. ‘Break-out rooms’ offered small groups of participants the opportunity to discuss topics set by the facilitators. The final section, Part 3: *Theme in Focus*, featured presentations by three architects on three distinct themes, followed by a key question and a moderated discussion, inviting contributions from the floor. The content developed by the architects informed the Reimagine Pocket Guides to Placemaking.



## Reimagine Masterclass 1 How Play Makes Place

Wednesday 9th September 2020

The narrative running throughout this session was linked to play and place; from the importance of playfulness during the community consultation process, to the transformative potential of a playful activation of place.

### Place in Focus

'BMX Skate and Play Park, Dublin' with Rebecca Blake, IAF and Ger O'Reilly, Ballyfermot Youth Service

Rebecca Blake described the community consultation process as playful, engaging and creative, directly informing the finished architectural intervention. Ger O'Reilly spoke insightfully about this process being key to the success of this placemaking project, as it led to a real understanding of the needs of the 'community as client' by the architects. It is evident that the Play Park has changed Ballyfermot as a place as it is now a hub of activity in the area. There is an increased sense of belonging, ownership and pride, evidenced in the care taken by Ballyfermot Community Action Group and the daily enjoyment of the skate park by the young BMX bikers. Starting with a live and engaging case study, the speakers set the scene for this masterclass by bringing placemaking to life.

### Topics in Focus

'Principles of Placemaking I' with Wessel Badenhorst, Director of Urban Mode

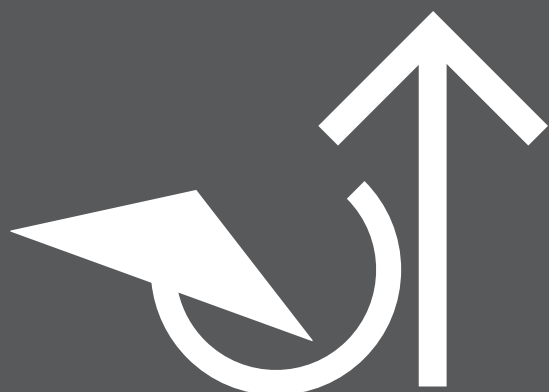
This session provided a comprehensive overview of topics including: 'An introduction to public space challenges'; 'The eleven principles of participatory placemaking as defined by 'Project for Public Spaces', and 'Playmaking and Placemaking: Learnings from the Playful Paradigm Project'. Group break-out sessions were facilitated and the following questions were put to the participants: What is placemaking? How do we harness stakeholder and community participation in design processes? How does play enhance public spaces? The narrative of playful placemaking continued during the group discussions.

### Theme in Focus

'Building Capacity for Placemaking' with Alan Mee, Architect, Urban Designer and Lecturer

Alan Mee's introduction situated placemaking in an Irish context, referencing a strong, historical link to place. Today there is a 'hyper-awareness' of place in relation to spatial opportunities and restrictions; placemaking has become more immediate and responsive during this pandemic. His presentation highlighted the importance of 'knowing the ground' (an understanding of the local, global and in-between web of knowledge about place); using research collectively (research needs to be more directly 'useful on the street', in other words beyond the academic sphere); and 'iteration' (considering how the use and activity in a place evolves over time).

The discussion opened to the floor with a question – 'What placemaking capacity do we (and could we) have?' The diversity, knowledge and national reach of the participants in the virtual room led to a lively discussion. It was evident that the real national level challenges are not always about 'play' but more about potential conflict. Issues arising in the interactive 'chat-box' included Public Participation Networks (PPN), people's rights to be part of consultations about large-scale developments and the fact that there is no real roadmap for community-centred design in Ireland. The IAF was described as a specialist 'broker' with an understanding of the processes of placemaking and community consultation and the ability to communicate and mediate between communities, architects, stakeholders and councils. A forum such as the Reimagine Masterclass series is a key part of building capacity for placemaking; it is important not only to capture the conversation, but to keep the conversation going.



**Reimagine Masterclass 2**  
**What makes a great place?**

16th September 2020

What are the factors that make a place ‘great’ to spend time in, to enjoy and to return to? The Project for Public Spaces (USA) produced the Place Diagram, a diagnostic tool to measure the success of a place. This radial diagram provides a framework for the qualitative assessment of a place, the quadrants referring to the key attributes of uses and activities, comfort and image, access and linkages, and sociability. Tools such as this, introduced in this masterclass, offer a structure for the analysis, observation and understanding of place, providing a foundation for great placemaking.

**Place in Focus**

‘The IAF Reimagine Programme’, with Nathalie Weadick, IAF Director and Bernardine Carroll, IAF Engagement

Nathalie Weadick’s presentation set the context for Reimagine by outlining the IAF’s vision and mission and by providing an overview of the IAF’s many placemaking projects. The extensive knowledge and experience of the IAF as an organisation, working on placemaking projects with communities and architects, is consolidated in the centre of learning, development and research that is Reimagine.

Bernardine Carroll described the strong history of community development in Ireland with examples of activism in the 1960s and 1970s, when empowered communities were involved in the protection of built heritage and public land for uses including public housing. This expertise and embodied knowledge was formalised by organisations (family resource centres; community development initiatives) a decade later, in recognition of the groundwork done by communities. These models of social provision have opened up possibilities of working within communities today. Carroll outlined the approach to the Reimagine programme; the process has a number of stages to facilitate engagement. A call for towns to become involved is followed by the IAF co-creating a brief with a community, involving multiple workshops and site visits to identify and understand their specific needs. An architect team is then engaged to work with the community and to develop the project. As the needs of a community can radically change during this process, there is a need for flexibility, resilience and the ability to adapt. Carroll also gave an overview of the Reimagine programme at the various stages, from work in progress, to completion in towns all over Ireland.

**Topics in Focus**

‘Principles of Placemaking II’, with Wessel Badenhorst, Director of Urban Mode

The main focus in this session was on understanding – what makes a place great – through the observation and analysis of place, and key to this was an introduction to the Place Diagram developed by Project for Public Spaces as outlined above. Observation of place includes noting how people behave in a space, and how and when and if a space is used. This leads to an understanding of the challenges and opportunities of a place. A bespoke plan can be devised by communities and stakeholders working together. Generating and testing ideas for placemaking – tapping into local knowledge and creativity, was also explored as a topic. A breakout session was facilitated to ask participants: ‘What are practical ways to observe uses in public spaces?’ – bringing the Place Diagram to life.

**‘Placemaking is about strengthening the connections-physical, social, economic and cultural-between people and the places they share’**

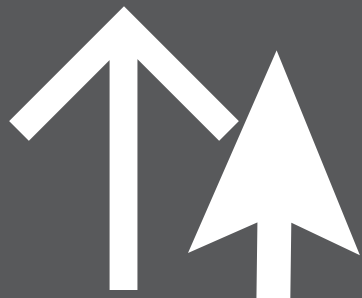
EMMA GEOGHEGAN, REIMAGINE POCKET GUIDE

**Theme in Focus**

‘Placemaking and the Irish Town’ with Orla Murphy, Architect and Lecturer

Orla Murphy’s presentation addressed the adaptability, distinctiveness, connectivity and sociability of Irish towns. Her points were illustrated by examples including her work (as part of a team) as co-curator/co-commissioner for the Irish Pavilion, Free Market (Venice Biennale, 2018), an exhibition and ongoing research project exploring the unique identity of the Irish rural town. Murphy (with Philip Crowe) also leads the Centre for Irish Towns (CfIT), an emergent trans-disciplinary centre for research and collaboration in University College Dublin focused on the towns of the island of Ireland.

A group discussion was initiated with the question ‘What are towns for?’ with specific reference to Irish towns as places that were historically linked with cultural, economic and social exchange. Participant’s responses explored the potential for Irish town centres to be reimagined as valuable places to live and work, as they offer a range of facilities and amenities in close proximity. The social function of towns, as places where we experience culture collectively and interact with our fellow citizens, was also discussed. The well-designed town with a ‘great’ sense of place can offer unique and irreplaceable experiences, even if we must rethink its identity and value. The conversation about placemaking is even more important and urgent now due to the current pandemic; this emergency is prompting us to take more immediate action in public space.





### Reimagine Masterclass 3

#### How can we activate and take responsibility for public places?

23rd September 2020

The successful activation of public space can be supported by inclusive and responsive programming of accessible cultural and social activities, based on an understanding of the challenges and opportunities of a place, on multiple levels. By drawing on local community insight gained during community consultation processes, stewardship and care of place evolves from a sense of citizen ownership and agency, nurturing an authentic sense of responsibility and pride in place.

#### Place in Focus

‘Through Thinning Landscapes, Loughrea, County Galway’ with Máirín Doddy, Conservation Officer, Galway County Council; Jarek Adamczuk and Andrew Ó Murchú, BothAnd Group

Máirín Doddy gave an overview of the many local community groups involved in the care, conservation, fundraising and programming of festivals and events that activate the town of Loughrea. Significant groundwork in the form of community engagement has taken place over a period of time, which has led to projects and initiatives including the temporary installation by BothAnd Group ‘Through Thinning Landscapes’ at The Walks.

Following the narrative of care and stewardship of place, Jarek Adamczuk spoke of the responsibility of architecture as a discipline in a climate and biodiversity crisis. BothAnd Group seek alternative solutions: often proposing the re-activation, re-use and improvement of existing places rather than the addition of a new architectural object. Their original research-based competition entry for IAF Reimagine Loughrea is striking as no designed object is present; instead, they demonstrated an understanding of place from an ecological perspective. A detailed, carefully drawn analysis and observation of the ecology of The Walks was created in collaboration with ecologist Janice Fuller. This, in tandem with an understanding of the local community demonstrates a responsive approach to the process of placemaking. Andrew Ó Murchú spoke about how temporary architectural interventions can activate a place and create momentum while simultaneously acting as a testing ground for practice. He concluded by asking how we can mitigate the negative consequences of development by actively bringing ecologists into the design process, embedding the logic of living systems into spatial practice? Each of us has an individual role to play when it comes to taking responsibility for place.

#### Topics in Focus

‘Principles of Placemaking III’ with Wessel Badenhorst, Director of Urban Mode

Continuing with a focus on the activation and stewardship of place, the placemaking topics explored in this section included: ‘How can we best create shared visions for improvements to place?’ and ‘Programming events and activities in public space: how do we get buy-in of stakeholders in placemaking projects?’

There can be a tendency to over-plan, however informal programming can be very successful. Important considerations include a honed sensitivity towards the end-user’s needs; the diversity of people using a place; and the range of uses over time. The foundation of successful programming is a deep understanding of place through observation and analysis, followed by planning with partners, stakeholders and the local community, and a testing and tweaking of ideas over time. Break-out groups gave participants time to reflect on activities in public spaces nationally and internationally. With reference to programming as placemaking, Badenhorst quoted activist Jane Jacobs: ‘The main responsibility of city planning should be to develop cities as congenial places for a great range of unofficial plans, ideas and opportunities to flourish.’ (Jane Jacobs. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961)

#### Theme in Focus

‘Inclusion and Accessibility in Placemaking’ with Emma Geoghegan, Architect and Lecturer

Inclusion in placemaking is broader than physical access to buildings and spaces, it also includes social and cultural accessibility. Active citizenship can only happen if one feels included, however there can be impediments and challenges to this. Emma Geoghegan’s presentation highlighted the importance of recognising that communities are at the heart of great places. In order to reach diverse demographic groups, programming for inclusion is vital. It is important to identify the people who may not always participate, merely inviting them is not enough; community facilitators must consider alternative tools and strategies to encourage engagement. Great places welcome difference and diversity, so participatory processes must be designed to accommodate a wide range of needs and abilities to encourage active citizenship. To illustrate her points, Geoghegan gave examples of the Nimble Spaces Project in Callan, County Kilkenny (in consultation with the Camphill community, through interactive activities designed by LID Architects); Street Feast, Clonakilty, County Cork (eating together as an easy way for citizens to participate and engage); and My Carlow (workshops for teenagers and young people at Visual Centre for Contemporary Art). The discussion opened to the floor with the question ‘What are the challenges to inclusive placemaking in Ireland?’ Participant’s responses identified challenges including power dynamics, authority and ownership, and practical issues such as legislation, funding, insurance, health and safety. The responsibility of a large workload for community volunteers was also noted as a challenge, especially for projects of a longer duration. It can also be difficult to hear the ‘silent voices’ in a community – who is left out of the conversation, and why? Successful placemaking is iterative and inclusive, with an inherent flexibility and responsiveness in the design of both place and programming.

**Reimagine is a Creative Ireland supported, national campaign that works with communities across Ireland to co-create and co-design solutions to challenges or problems they have identified in their locality.**

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**Reimagine would not be possible without our key partners**

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