

Urban Planning for the City of the Future

A Multidisciplinary Approach



Edited by

Susan Flynn

Richard Hayes

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Dr Ray Griffin hails from the Department of Management and Organisation at South East Technological University, Waterford, Ireland. His research explores complex disorganisations such as the labour market and professions. An Irish Research Council alumni, he is the principal investigator for both the EU H2020 project HECAT and SFI-funded PEStech projects, which explores seeing the labour market. With Tom Boland, he directs the Economy and Society Summer School, launched in 2015 by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins.

Dr Richard Hayes is Vice President for Strategy at South East Technological University. He is a graduate of University College Dublin, Ireland, from which he received a PhD for a thesis on American theatre. He has lectured in a number of higher education institutions in Ireland and abroad and has published articles and essays on many aspects of Irish and American literature. He has in more recent years focussed in his scholarly activity on aspects of urban and regional development and has a particular interest in the relationship between higher education institutions and the regions in which they are based.

Dr Carla Maria Kayanan is a political-economic geographer with strong interests in the spatial division of labour and its impacts on social justice, inclusivity and territorial inequality. Recent work includes examining how Dublin's tech-sector development contributes to issues of housing affordability, accessibility and rising homelessness; studying new emergent metropolitan governance structures resulting from Ireland's National Planning Framework; and disentangling the detrimental impacts of Ireland's urban-rural binary. Carla holds a PhD in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Michigan, an MA in Social Sciences from the University of Chicago and a BA in Sociology and Spanish language and Literature from the University of Maryland. She is currently a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Department of Geography at Maynooth University. Her work appears in academic journals, policy papers and across various news media platforms.

Dr Patrick Lynch is the Director of RIKON, an applied Business Technology Management Innovation Research Centre located in South East Technological University in Ireland. Over a 25-year period, he has amassed considerable industry, consultancy and applied innovation experience in process optimisation, business and market modelling and digital transformation. Patrick manages a team of 35 researchers and strategists who specialise in solving business problems and creating commercial opportunities through pioneering research advancements across business strategy, operational excellence and technology optimisation. Patrick is the principal investigator on over 450 innovation and research projects that are recognised for making real transformational change in businesses and re-imagining how companies can seize opportunities that transform their organisation. Patrick has extensively published in over 100 top-tier journals, conferences and books and he has received numerous accolades including the prestigious Emerald Global Literati Prize for Excellence.

Dr Niamh Moore-Cherry is Professor of Urban Governance and Deputy College Principal at the UCD College of Social Sciences and Law and leads a research group examining the relationship between *Cities, Governance and Sustainability*. In Feb 2021, she was appointed an Honorary Professor at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. Her research is focussed on understanding the territorial politics of urban and regional development. She has a strong record in policy analysis and community engagement and has significant experience in working at the policy–practice–research nexus. Previously Niamh input into the development of the National Planning Framework in Ireland and the UK 2070 Commission in the United Kingdom. She was appointed by An Taoiseach Micheál Martin to the National Economic and Social Council in June 2022.

Professor Bill O’Gorman is Director for Research in the Centre Enterprise Development and Regional Economy (CEDRE), South East Technological University (SETU), Ireland His research focus is on entrepreneurial regions, regional development and entrepreneurship. Bill is also a mentor to a number of new and developing indigenous organisations. Prior to joining academia in 1999, Bill was Managing Director of his own electronics sub-contract business for nine years. Prior to that, he amassed over twenty years experience working in various multinational organisations at senior management and executive levels. He has strong links with regional and national policy makers and implementers, and with indigenous and multinational organisations in Ireland. He is advisor on several government programmes and participates in forums examining the development of policy for SMEs, entrepreneurial regions, regional innovation systems and entrepreneurship education. He is a director of a number of local and regional enterprise support agencies and a number of micro-enterprises. Bill has been working on EU funded projects since 2005. The central focus of these projects has been on developing regional innovation systems based on engagement with relevant regional stakeholders into collaborative coalitions. The projects have included partners across the EU and former Eastern Bloc countries. Therefore, he has a breadth of experience and expertise at national and international levels.

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Joy Rooney is a Graphic Designer, Lecturer and Researcher in Design, at South East Technological University (SETU), Ireland. She is a graduate of the University of the Arts, London (UAL). Her design research is underpinned by an interdisciplinary approach to innovation and design-led creativity. It employs a citizen science framework in the context of cultural landscape and inter-coastal community climate action and behavioural change. Her work is informed by creative engagement with inter-coastal culture and study visits in Antarctica and the Arctic. She is currently leading the transdisciplinary project entitled *Portalis*, within the Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme. Joy is a member of SETU's Creativity and Culture Research Group (CCRG). She is actively involved at community and civic level and is Chair of the Creadan – Waterford Estuary Steering Group.

Dr Moira Sweeney is a filmmaker, broadcaster, and lecturer and researcher at SETU. Her feature documentaries include Business to Arts winner *Starboard Home* (RTÉ, 2019), *Mná na bPíob* (TG4, 2021) and *Portalis* (SETU, 2023). Publications include: 'Space and the Geographical Imagination on the Dublin Docklands' in *Media & The City: Urbanism, Technology and Communication* (Giaccardi, Tosni, & Tarantino, 2013); 'Dublin Docks: Visualising Changing Identities, Communities and Labour Practices' in *Mind the Gap: Working Papers on Practice-Based Doctoral Research in the Creative Arts and Media* (Bell, 2016) and *Keepers of the Port: Visualising Place and Identity in a Dublin Dock Community* (2019). Multimedia artworks include *Stevedoring Stories* (PhotoIreland, 2012), *Rhythms of a Port* (Women and the Sea, 2014) and *Keepers of the Port* (Geographers Conference of Ireland, 2017; Royal Geographic Society International Conference, 2016). Her film approach is explored in *Creative and Media Arts: Challenging Practice* (Bell, 2019).

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Jane Jacobs once wrote that ‘cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody’. Here, we have tried to foster collaboration and co-creation across a range of disciplines, to open new lines of enquiry and to democratise knowledge. We are indebted to all of the authors in this collection, for sharing their approaches and ideas. Thanks to Ann Fripps, for kindly providing the cover image of Waterford city. We dedicate this book to the citizens of Waterford.

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City Limits: An Introduction to Urban Planning for the City of the Future

Susan Flynn and Richard Hayes

Introduction

Few topics have captured the social imagination more than the future city. Stakeholder engagement and urban greening are among a host of practices now ostensibly bringing the citizen into the planning and future-proofing of urban spaces. Echoing Raymond Williams's (1973, p. 272) assertion that the sociality of urban life offered the possibility to imagine creating the future, transforming it through collective agency, contemporary strategists and planners apparently democratise decision-making by including urban dwellers. Urban futurising and future-thinking have incurred a vast tranche of scholarship during recent decades, while social commentators have long acknowledged 'the future is a part of how societies shape their practices' (Appadurai, 2013, p. 292). In a world where the majority of people now live in cities, we are all potentially urbanists.

Contrary to the copious instances of well-documented failures of planning, government and strategy which ostensibly result in homelessness, social breakdown and failing services, the imagined future city is a place of optimism, where ordinary people's needs are envisaged and responded to. In contemporary social and political arenas, 'the future has become a preeminent focus of contemporary urban policy, planning, design, development, and governance' (Zeiderman & Dawson, 2022).

The seductive promises of future city planning are built on the premise of predictability, rationality and objectivity, far from the concerns and the vagaries of contemporary city life. However, city living has always been in crisis, in flux, and in question. In Ireland, as in many countries across Western Europe, the cost of living coupled with the cost of housing have created a housing crisis which is having profound impacts on so-called 'Generation Rent', whereby large swathes of younger workers are priced out of the housing market, threatening the economy and national stability. Meanwhile so-called 'derelict Ireland' is being catalogued, debated and vilified in the media as a blatant provocation and call to arms over the state of our cities and towns.

Hearne (2020) situates the origins of the crisis in the era of financial austerity, while bemoaning the growing marketisation and financialisation of housing stock, where global investors render housing unaffordable, instead turning it into an asset for the wealthy. Previous governments' approaches coupled with socio-historical forces have bequeathed a legacy of failing cities through the various agendas of laissez-faire economics, social reformism and misplaced prioritisation. This collection addresses some of these substantive themes through a case study of Ireland's oldest city.

Aims

The forward-looking discourses that often promise to deliver heightened urban efficiencies prophesise a future city that is ultimately manageable. Such conversations frequently dispel the importance of the lived dimension of cities – the diverse lives, experiences and meanings that occur within and through spaces. As Shannon Mattern (2017) wrote, a city is not a computer, and therefore we should be considerate of the myriad enlightening experiences of all inhabitants, citizens and non-citizens, in the realisation of change. What Mattern calls the 'indigenous intelligences' of city dwellers must inform the fields of strategy, urban planning, architecture, and sociology, rather than becoming blurred by the 'futurising' discourses about progress, regeneration and the crises of urbanisation.

This collection brings together a broad range of experts from across a number of disciplines – including sociology, strategy, architecture, urban planning, geography, media, technology and politics – to consider the city as a canvas that is and can be stretched, manipulated, reformed and repurposed. Taking Harvey's notion of 'the right to the city', we explore how power structures and vested interests continue to shape the city and how finance and trade, local, regional and national politics, inward and outward migration, technological change and a range of other forces find expression in the city's structure and character. We ask how best to plan the city of the future and how to prioritise citizens' rights, participation and engagement.

The collection uses Ireland's oldest city, Waterford, as a case study, and the various chapters map out how a city can be inhabited, transformed, merged, used and visited. The contributors use varying approaches to imagine a city of the future, challenging notions such as 'liveability' while investigating strategies to ensure cities are, first and foremost, places to live, spaces for citizens. Using a multidisciplinary lens we consider the case study of Waterford, looking at growth, regeneration, planning and demographic urgency in the light of globalisation, rapid technological change and climate change. We attend to some of the crises of the modern city – unused buildings, poor infrastructure, failed plans and urban decay – and offer potential solutions that will put citizens' rights at the heart of city life. In this way, this book aims to build a compelling, comprehensive, multi-faceted case-study of a modern, small European city that can serve as a laboratory for future planning elsewhere.

Waterford City

Waterford hosts a diverse concentration of industries, business and enterprises, as well as nationalities, religions and traditions. Waterford is a city that is both ancient and modern: founded by Vikings in the ninth century, it is now leading in innovation in high technology industry, in pharmaceuticals and advanced manufacturing, as well as in fields such as art, music, drama and creativity, while reflecting thousands of years of history in its topography and buildings. The future of Waterford city and the choices currently facing leaders and citizens present us with a series of questions about services provision, planning and strategising, which can and should be interrogated across disciplines, professions and sectors. The Central Statistics Office [Census \(2022\)](#) illustrates that Waterford has had a higher percentage increase in population since 2016 than that of the State overall (+9.4%), which highlights not just the attractiveness of Waterford as a place to live, but also the urgent necessity to conceive of the city of the future.

A medieval walled city, Waterford has a rich and fascinating history as one of Ireland's focal points of trade and commerce. As it moves into a new phase, with the newly formed South East Technological University, and large-scale developments, city planners, strategists and politicians have tussled with the competing forces of preservation and growth. Situated in the context of post-industrial financial crisis, housing urgency and rising crime, this city, like so many others across Europe, is a place of contrasting foci. Taking this city as a case study provides a method of mapping varying concerns, visions and approaches to city planning. It allows us to map the complex social situations and lived experience of the city against national and international planning agendas and strategies, and to concentrate on design, support, regeneration and repurposing. This case study facilitates an ontological exploration of the urban, considering the city's vast reservoirs of history and its literal and metaphorical walls and gatekeepers. It allows us to probe the ancient buildings and their many lives, exploring how buildings themselves act as stewards of urban intelligences. The case study allows us to blend multiple disciplines to forge a new vision of the city, one which is future-proof and at the same time respectful of its past traditions. Our previous work acknowledges that knowledge silos do not and cannot attend to the questions that emerge from city planning for the future ([Flynn, 2022](#); [Hayes, 2022](#)).

Methodologies and Methods

Our methodological approach for this work is fluid, in an attempt to encompass as many approaches as possible, as this diversifies our view of the issues at hand, since 'methodological choices actively frame what it is possible to see' ([Robinson, 2016](#)). While the authors here explore governmentality, policy and extant strategy, they also examine how city planning results in unexpected outcomes, how lives are lived differently by differing people, the multiplicity of understandings of our shared urban spaces and the potential future of our spaces. We aim to inform the widest possible interpretation of urban matters which can feed into our vision of a more equitable and diversely habitable future. We are acutely aware that

there is a form of soft power, whereby only certain experiences of the city become constituted as 'knowledge' and so we attempt here to attend to a variety of experiences and viewpoints, unearthing varied uses of the city.

With that in mind, the methods in this volume include qualitative and quantitative approaches, which represent the status of the city and the experiences of and within it. Just as the city is neither a static nor a single entity, no one approach can adequately capture the challenges and affordances of the city as a place to live, work and congregate. Similarly, urban research cannot be captured by one scholarly discipline or methodology. New ideas and approaches may be obtained by including scholarship from different disciplines; this is essential to the project of envisaging a future city where the various and multiple forms of experience need to be represented. The benefit of locating such a multidisciplinary study in one locale is the potential for disruption of theory and knowledge, providing a test-bed where our theoretical approaches can be played-out and where plans, strategies and initiatives can be measured and assessed. The chapters in this collection are each alert to the specificity of the locale and the relevance for the wider world, European cities in particular. The various chapters are written from within the city, highlighting the value of place-specific experience, thereby encompassing auto-ethnographic approaches which are rich with insight of the lived dimensions of space and place. Theorising from a particular location is productive in that it allows us to interrogate how the 'best laid plans' can go wrong or right. It facilitates a conceptual revision of urbanism in light of direct experience in/of a city. Disparate realms of academic research can in this way be brought into dialog over the shared space. The chapters in this collection identify shared features across small to medium sized cities across Europe in particular. As such, our understanding of urban issues is located, but outward looking.

Contributors

This collection is divided into three thematic sections. In the opening section, the authors consider national and international planning strategy and developments. In [Section 2](#), consideration is given to how we conceive of our urban spaces and how we might best learn from history to mould the city of the future. [Section 3](#) explores 'futurising' options, examining various approaches to how we might conceive of the city of the future. The *afterword* explores how these various chapters together help to contribute to our ideas of the European city of the future.

Section 1: Strategy, Planning and Economy

In the opening chapter, Proinnsias Breathnach explores the potential of forming effective urban systems via the devolution of various powers across a region in 'Waterford City's Future in Regional Context'. Breathnach explores the evolution of Ireland's Southeast region alongside previous ineffective strategies, which have left Waterford city fall behind European counterparts in terms of competitiveness

and attractiveness for investment. Against a backdrop of demographic change, Waterford has consistently underachieved in terms of economic growth. Breathnach's in-depth analysis of the region's economic-industrial complex illustrates the necessity of rethinking bureaucracy and governance in order to expand on regional specialisms and enhance economic prosperity.

In Chapter 2, 'A City and the State: Towards an Analysis of the National Plan for Waterford' Richard Hayes critiques the spatial plan for Ireland's development, *Project Ireland 2040*. The plan assigns a particular role to Ireland's cities, offering a national strategy which focusses on preparing for population growth. However, Hayes suggests that it is economic growth, rather than population growth, which is at the heart of this plan, and that the city can be conceived of as a 'stage set' for such growth, playing into the narrative of regionally balanced development. The chapter in this way provides a useful lens with which to examine and critique the rhetoric of growth in the planning of other European cities.

In Chapter 3, Ray Griffin provides a sociological exploration of the economy of Waterford and its region in 'That's Your Bloody GDP: Performing the City-Region Economy'. This social science study illustrates the performativity of economics, and the pervasiveness of 'modelling' in both illustrating and creating the economy. The chapter contests the contemporary narrative of the city-region and its relationship to a seemingly neutral economics. Griffin suggests that economics imagines all people universally the same, contributing to a standardisation of needs and resources, which is not reflective of the myriad human experiences in a region or city. He explores the fallacies of regional economics and calls for a more diverse approach to the economic narratives of cities.

Section 2: Heritage, Archaeology and Belonging

Chapter 4 examines the potential of buildings to facilitate diversity and inclusion. Here, Susan Flynn explores the changing remit of library buildings and their place in the cultural ecology of the city. The Waterford Central City Library, located in the centre of the city, is an example of a 'Carnegie' library, built by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1904. This chapter looks at the concept of a 'library commons', whereby the library can facilitate an interrogation of extant power structures and challenge which sorts of knowledge become instituted. The 'library commons' supports diversity by focussing on the co-creation of knowledge, thereby contributing to the democratisation of place-making.

In Chapter 5, psychology and trauma studies offer a new approach to city futures. In 'Heritage and Conscience: Waterford's Former Magdalene Laundry and Industrial School', Jennifer O'Mahoney explores cultural heritage and memory, which contribute a sense of identity and belonging. Exploring a 'place of memory' in Waterford city, the former Magdalene Laundry site at College Street, O'Mahoney illustrates how such sites can connect memories to actions and contribute to more just societies and city spaces in the future. Creating a 'site of conscience' offers such complex city spaces the potential for co-constructing

relationships with a troubled past. In this way, sites of conscience have much to offer our visions of future cities, acknowledging, and representing the overcoming of the difficulties of the past.

In Chapter 6, Moira Sweeney and Joy Rooney re-position the city in a much longer time-frame, describing a project that examines the Mesolithic past of the Waterford estuary area. The project offers opportunities to empower citizens through citizen science to engage more meaningfully with the local place as well as offering interesting methodological paradigms – design thinking, and, as they put it, ‘how filmic visualisations of early settlement on the Waterford Estuary can provide expanded, tangible and accessible understandings of one of the overlooked dimensions of Waterford’s maritime and cultural history’. In the process, new ways of projecting Waterford’s future are suggested.

Section 3: Futurising, Smart Cities and Critical Technology

Niamh Moore Cherry, Camilla Siggard Anderson and Carla Maria Kayanan propose a new model of everyday living which is sustainable, both socially and environmentally, in Chapter 7, ‘Engaging 15-minute Cities as a New Development Model: The Potential of Waterford City’. The chapter explores how the past century’s development trajectory of increased distances between people and their employment has had a catastrophic effect on peoples’ lives. The problem of over-reliance on commuting to economic centres has been underscored by poor spatial planning and lack of foresight. The 15-minute city idea, initially conceived of in 2015, is now gaining traction. Here, the authors propose that Waterford could be the ideal 15-minute city, where a range of amenities could be within walking distance from most peoples’ homes. Exploring how this concept has been applied in other European cities, the authors make a compelling case for applying it in Waterford, where the rich history of the oldest city in Ireland, and its Viking past, is evident throughout the city’s streets. The authors note that necessity for sound governance and a shared political vision, in order to maximise on the proximities of heritage, commercial and domestic zones.

In Chapter 8, Pat Lynch explores the evolution of Smart City thinking with a view to outlining an approach to citizen empowerment in Waterford’s ‘smart’ future. Lynch traces the evolution of Smart City thinking through a number of its iterations and describes the development of a Smart City 4.0 project in Waterford as an example of a new way of thinking about Smart City futures, opportunities for adding transformative value to any future city.

Eleanor Dare employs the concept of critical technology in Chapter 9 ‘In the Deep Water: Envisioning a Contingent City of the Future/Past and the Tools to Do So’. Exploring how Smart City research can unfold in the online space, Dare considers city research in the context of post-Covid-19 limitations, where technology ostensibly offers solutions. Engaging with the concept of an ‘abstract terrain’ Dare considers subjectivity and spatiality together with the concept of ‘fictioning’, where workshop participants build a virtual representation of their city online. Dare identifies the three tributary rivers of Waterford city as

contentious sites which enact and resist fixed representation. Through these spaces, Dare illustrates how mapping or ‘cartographical thinking’ has an uneasy relationship with city life.

Finally, an afterword by Professor William O’Gorman provides an overview of the contributions, linking these city snapshots to the wider debates in Europe and beyond.

Conclusion

Together these chapters represent an attempt to come to terms with that most evasive concept which is the lived reality of the city itself. We anticipate future research will build on these imaginings of this particular corner of Ireland; this book is understood as a provocation to new thinking about European cities of a particular scale as well as an attempt to instigate broader understandings of urban studies as a discipline, or cluster of disciplines. The attempt in this book is to offer multiple methodological approaches to thinking about future cities, with special emphasis on the opportunities to empower citizens to seize their ‘right to the city’ and to reassert their ‘right to change the world, to change life, and to reinvent the city more after their hearts’ desire’ (Harvey, 2013, p. 25).

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