

Afterword: Reflection of Project in Relation to Discourse

Rural life is often associated with isolation and social sedentariness. This perception may also be an outcome of the nature of physical distancing brought about by agrarian activities —a farmer's house on its piece of agricultural land, at a substantial distance from other farmers. Although this isolation is not entirely a false, various forms of a collective dimension have existed in the Irish collective realm. Through the seven-part study the project surveys the changing nature of the collective social dimension in Rural Ireland – the reasons for its formation, and the ingredients of its design.

The examining of the collective dimension within the context of rural Ireland was found to be relevant in light of the three conditions that were identified to delimit a future for the county of Donegal. The uncertainty around the Brexit and the possibility of a hard border, the Atlantic Corridor road-project and the Project Ireland 2040. The villages in rural Donegal are currently dependent on the cities and towns across the border. These urban centres serve as vital centres of employment and provide the retail, leisure, education etc and other non-residential components that these villages do not have. Although these villages will never be self-sustaining the inclusion of non-residential activities within the new house types reduces the load of dependence on outside locations; thereby reducing the current dependence on a transit-oriented lifestyle. In addition, the Atlantic Corridor encourages the physical growth of these village which is made possible by their increased accessibility. This physical growth is seen as vital to qualitatively transform these villages from commuter estates to socially activated communities. Finally, the repairing and re-design of the village makes it a suitable destination for the demographic growth and diversification envisaged by the 2040 plan.

The first four moments evaluate four moments in Irelands housing examining the changing nature of the collective realm. Some of these are seen as models to emulate and re-appropriate while others become lessons to learn from and spatial configurations that need repair. The first, exposes the clachan as a collective model based on systems of sharing resources. The sharing of agricultural land also results in the formation of the clachan cluster – a spatial and social construction

resultant from this system. Here the house becomes a member of a larger whole, within a productive agricultural community. The second, the Big-house, is a complex system of collective living, where people of various casts and classes reside within a multi-storeyed building complex - the estate. Some as employees, others the masters, and still other prominent figures who regularly visit. The house serves as numerous things – a place of work, a place of production, a place for social events, a house etc. However, the extreme economic pressure exerted on surrounding agricultural lands owned by the owners of the Big houses eventually resulted in its destruction. The third, the Suburban estate, for the first time introduces collective planned housing at such a scale. The morphological uniformity and the sequence of public spaces can only be sustained by non-residential activities which these suburban estates lack. While the first precedent, i.e Marino Dublin was located at close proximity to an older village, which provided the social infrastructure necessary to sustain the community – the pub, a market etc; the future replications of these models, especially during the Celtic Tiger years would result in neighbourhood's dependant on the automobile transport to make up for what these estates did not provide. The fourth model, resulted in the bungalow blitz, the one-off house ideal resulted in the disintegration of community.

The next three moments the village as a morphological artefact and seek to repair and redesign it. The focus on the village as a site for intervention, is also a statement to the need of containment and

consolidation. The fifth moment, like the clachan, recovers the house as a productive space, within the new social reality of working from home. The increased duration of time spent within the house immediately reactivates that nature of the neighbourhood as a vital space for diverse social activities – recreation, exercise, leisure etc. The village green is introduced as a new shared communal open space with individual houses and non-residential activities abutting its perimeter. The design of the individual unit overlooking this collective space, is one that conforms to the current insistence on individual land ownership. However, the introduction of a central utility shaft, makes it possible for the two storied unit to incrementally subdivide into a two, three or even six different parts containing a mix of users and uses – stay, work retail etc. The dissolution of the individual units over time will make this block like the big-house an entity

capable of containing varied classes and conditions like the big house. The sixth moment, directly addresses the question of dispersal, introduced by the Bungalow Blitz. By introducing a strip of dense plots reserved for self-build houses along the main village road, this proposal seeks to recover the village street as a vital collective space. The plots are grouped in fours around reserved common entrances to create a sequence of open and enclosed places. The width of each plot being 5 meters makes it possible for a tiny tenement to be alongside a large bungalow that occupies multiple plots. The seventh moment is the stitching of successive semidetached houses to form a composite building type. This model directly engages with the semi-detached house that was discussed in moment 3.

In this way the seven houses interact with each other through the story of the family and the changing nature of their everyday lives.