Title: High-Density Sprawl? The Contradictions of the development of an Irish New Town

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This paper seeks to examine the evolution of a master-planned suburban development in the context of Ireland's recent economic boom and subsequent bust. The paper draws upon the case study of Adamstown, a master-planned suburban new town situated to the west of Dublin developed from the early 2000's onwards. Adamstown was originally designated to be the location of 10,000 homes, in a high-density mixed-use environment including essential services, delivered predominantly via private investment and on privately owned land. In as much as it rejected the mono-functional and spatial dynamics of 'traditional' semi-detached housing that had predominated Irish suburbia for much of the 20th century, it was heralded as a new and more sustainable approach to suburban development. However, in the context of the ensuing economic crisis as it became manifest in Ireland from 2008 onwards, and its impact on the Irish built environment, at present there are currently approximately 1,000 homes built, and many of the promised services have failed to be delivered.

This paper therefore argues that the example of Adamstown raises fundamental contradictions within embedded notions of suburban sustainability. The argument will revolve around three key dimensions. First, in the context of the relationship between the global economic crisis and the built environment in Ireland, it will question the role of privatized forms of housing delivery. Second, it will seek to unpack the relationship between ideals of density and suburban life along with the realities of urban fragmentation. Finally, in following the work of Peck (2011), the paper will seek to situate the Irish suburban reality within the wider framework of neoliberal spatial dynamics.

The paper will be structured as follows. First, it will outline the wider context in which the example of Adamstown has emerged. This will include reflections upon the evolution of Irish suburbia and its relationship to wider international literature. This will be followed by a demonstration of the evolution of Adamstown from the late 1990s onwards. Here, and in drawing upon archival material and recent interviews with key actors, the paper will include detailed information on the original development of Adamstown. This will be contextualized both in terms of the local and regional context of Dublin and in terms of the adaptation of new ideals imported from locations such as Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands via 'policy transfer'. The paper will then examine the evolution of Adamstown in the context of the economic downturn. It is at this point that the key arguments discussed above will be fleshed out in detail. Finally, the paper will conclude with reflections on the significance of the example of Adamstown in terms of wider suburban change of recent decades.

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""To say that parts and wholes are mutually constitutive of each other is to say much more than that there is a feedback loop between them" (Harvey, 1996, p.53).

Introduction

This paper sets out to examine the connections between a particular form of suburban development – that of a 'sustainable community' – and wider trajectories of urban transformation. It is argued that while there is a tendency to idealize particular spatial forms, they cannot be separated from the wider socio-spatial context in which they are situated. The paper draws upon the case study of Adamstown, a 'sustainable new town' built to the West of Dublin from the early 2000s onwards. While being developed according to principles of a 'sustainable urban community', it is argued that the evolution of Adamstown cannot be understood outside the wider trajectory of urban transformation in Dublin during the years of the 'Celtic tiger' (mid 1990s to c.2008) and its aftermath. In so doing, the paper seeks to elucidate the importance of a dialectical understanding of the relationship between cities and suburbs. In drawing upon the work of Merrifield (1993), it argues that too often there is a tendency to invoke suburbs as wholly distinct entities decoupled from the cities they surround. While there is certainly recognition of the direct relationship between such spaces, through, for example, commuter-oriented suburbia and critical debates about inequalities (Schafran, 2013), there is also a tendency within wider discourses to treat the 'suburbs' as a distinct identifiable entity. Moreover, as is evident in the case of Adamstown, there is also a tendency to treat particular urban spaces as though isolated from their close surroundings and as something distinct if not special. This might be due to its particular form of governance structure, or due to a perception that its design and build sets it apart from its surroundings.

It is argued that engagement with new theories of the 'urban' requires a continued appraisal of the manner in which the different elements become intertwined in a dialectical manner at a variety of scales. As is commented by Harvey (1996, p.50), "…in our contemporary world, flows of capital (goods, and money) and of people give rise to, sustain, or undermine places such as factories, neighbourhoods, and cities understood as things." However, the tendency to examine cities as 'things' continues apace. One example of this, which is outlined below, is the tendency to focus upon urban form as constitutive of particular ways of life. This can be broken down into the belief amongst many practicing 'urbanists' that the key to a better way of urban life is through the manipulation of urban and suburban forms, where, recently, design or 'design thinking' is perceived to be of key importance in addressing perceived social deficits. Indeed, within such debates, the virtues of density are often extolled as though holding the key to the 'good city' (Lawton, forthcoming). This paper seeks

to challenge this premise and argues that there are significant deficits in the current official discourses about the connection between wider forms of urban transformation and the notion of urban livability. The paper draws upon ongoing research focused on Adamstown in the context of wider regional transformation of Dublin in recent decades. More specifically, it includes an analysis of background documents, such as those pertaining to its original planning and interviews with planners, architects and policy makers from local, regional and national bodies, both in the public and private sectors.

The paper begins by examining wider debates around suburban and urban ideals. This draws predominantly upon debates in a U.S. context. Here, the aim is to elucidate some of the wider debates that dominate urban professional circles. The paper then turns to debates about the relationship between urban change, gentrification, suburbia and neoliberal forces. This is followed by the case study of Adamstown. Here, the paper seeks to unpack the manner in which the mantra of sustainability was promoted in an Irish context in recent decades. The paper concludes by seeking to reflect upon the relationship between the case study and current urban debates, both in terms of wider discourses of urban development and academic debates about the nature of urban transformation.

Questioning 'Urbanity'
A recent body of literature has sought to espouse the city centre as a space of 'urbanity', diversity and tolerance (Florida, 2002; Lloyd, 2006; Zukin, 2009). While this has been particularly marked within literature emerging in response to sources such as Richard Florida's 'creative class' (2002), the tendency to perceive those city spaces that contain traits of 'diversity' and mixed use as the definitive form of the city has become a marked element of current urban debates throughout various forms of media, from online promotional sites to lifestyle magazines such as *Monocle** (see Lawton, forthcoming). Pointedly, while there are key elements which mark this body of literature out against each other, there are overlaps which serve to bring together an image of the city based loosely on Jane Jacobs' (1961) imaginary of the early to mid-20th Century city mixed with a suave air of sophistication associated with new waves of gentrification (*Ibid*; Smith, 2002). While Florida's notions have been heavily debated within academic writing (see Lawton, et al., 2013; Peck, 2005), the creative city literature continues to have a certain level of influence within urban circles. When conjoined with the significant shift in attitudes towards high-energy consuming suburban lifestyles, work such as Florida's fits neatly within the rhetoric of high-density living as a counter-point to the unsustainability of the suburbs. Very often, within this discourse, the suburbs are presented as 'backwards' or 'behind', while the centre is presented as dynamic and forward looking.

For those who defend suburbia, it is presented as inevitable and ubiquitous. As summarized by Kotkin (2013): "But contrary to the narrative espoused by Florida and other proponents of high-density cities, the predominant future urban form in America is emerging (largely unrecognized to the media) elsewhere, in places

less dense, economically diverse and, perhaps, just a bit less hip and cool." For Florida, and other leaders of what might be labeled a 'downtown' movement, such narratives smack of unregulated and unsustainable sprawl that is neither 'cool' nor economically viable. In his response to Kotkin, Florida (2013) retorted:

> "America's leading cheerleader for suburban sprawl likes to tell a story about how cities are dying and the suburbs are our future; about how ideas and knowledge don't matter because America's economic future revolves around "the Material Boys" (a telling phrase) of extraction, energy, and manufacturing; and how the sprawling cities and suburbs of the Sunbelt and the mountain states—not "hip" cities like New York and San Francisco—are the nation's present and future economic centers."

While Florida's work is primarily focused upon the relationship between density and growth, there is also a specific focus on the relationship between such densities and ways of life (Peck, 2005; Lawton et al., 2013). When arguments such as those of Florida are striped down, density, it is posited, will serve to produce a more economically prosperous, open and tolerant way of life.

At its greatest extreme, such a perspective puts forwards ways in which suburbs can become more like city centres by becoming densified and, as it is implied, more 'urbane'. Indeed, as highlighted by Florida (2013) "Our suburbs are being transformed bit by bit into more walkable, denser mixed-use places. A new urban revolution is upon us, driven in large part to returns to density, skills, and creativity."[1] Here, the key elements of 'urbanity', such as vitality and diversity in a setting of hustle and bustle, are deemed *a priori* superior to the 'mono-functional suburbs'. The common discourse, or dogma, of the modernist period has been somewhat reversed; places must now become more 'vibrant', be more urban to survive.

In the U.S. context, as is made evident through the Kotkin-Florida debate; the division can be presented as something which is deeply politically rooted. Fundamental issues that define the so-called American way of life are at stake, such as freedom, the automobile and, indeed, the ideal of the suburb itself. Yet, such debates ignore some of the more nuanced realities of suburban experience. Moreover, implicit within much of this debate is a form of negative connotation about suburban life. This is dangerous territory, as the critique of urban forms either implicitly or explicitly requires a critique of ways of life. As commented by Wyly (2011, p.6): "When we attack the building styles or street layouts found in suburbia, for example, are we also criticizing the intelligence of people who have chosen to live there?" We could go further with such reasoning and also question the relative level of 'choice' people have about the places in which they live (see Lawton, et al., 2013). What are the factors that produce particular tastes. How do these become reproduced within wider frameworks of capitalist reproduction, which includes the development of housing. Affordability, social class and taste

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[1] http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/03/21/did-i-abandon-my-creative-class-

are inextricably linked and should not be underestimated in determining the reproduction of particular urban forms, which themselves come to be seen as being representative of 'ways of life'. Yet, we must also seek to challenge such assumptions, while also being mindful of the relationship between the development of particular suburbs and inequalities at a regional scale.

At the other end of the spectrum, and from a more critical perspective, the relationship between particular ways of life and higher densities needs to be examined in a more nuanced manner with place-specific factors coming to the fore. The forms of social life produced in high-density settlements are, after all, far different in cities such as New York than Asian cities such as Bangkok. In particular, there is a need to be more mindful of the trajectories of urban restructuring and associated inequalities in influencing the social reality of cities. In reflecting upon Jane Jacob's oft invoked Hudson Street, Gans (2006, p.214) stresses the importance of such as follows: "Coming from a bourgeois neighourhood in Scranton and observing Hudson Street's lively street life may have led her to romanticize that neighbourhood, but it may also have blinded her to the economic insecurity and the resulting personal and social problems that some of her Hudson Street neighbours were surely experiencing." There is a significant amount that can be taken from such a perspective, in terms of the relationship between the city, the suburbs and dynamics of inequality at various scales. The 'locational seesaw' of investment to which Smith (1982) refers has become increasingly complex in the context of regional urban development of the last number of decades.

Much urban scholarship focusing upon inequalities over the last three decades has been predominated by debates about gentrification. Whether it be debates over the origins, significance of the term, or its future, it has become a term which urban scholarship seemingly cannot escape from, leading to debates over from the 1980s over its causal nature and impact (Slater, 2009). While the research on gentrification has morphed to cover topics such as 'rural gentrification' and gentrification in the global south, it has been dominated by the focus on central areas, often at the expense of a more open approach towards the wider urban scale. However, pointedly, it is perhaps through its recognition of the so-called 'Global South', potential has emerged to open up debates about the nature of gentrification in the early 21st Century. As commented by Lees (2012, p.59):

> "I find the social construction of gentrification as 'an object of study' increasingly problematic in the face of the mutation of gentrification (e.g. from an urban to a suburban mindset) and its rapid spread in the Global South. I am concerned that traditional conceptualizations of gentrification from the Global North will dominate and thus distort accounts of gentrification in/from the Global South."

Later, Lees (Ibid, p.6) comments: "Focusing on the specifics of gentrification across a variety of cities world-wide would be begin the task of decentering the dominant narratives of gentrification from the Global North." Perhaps, in so doing, it might be possible to throw the net wider and examine the multiple forces at work that serve to produce and reproduce inequalities across the urban and

suburban realms, both in the 'Global North' (Cheshire, et al., 2013) and the 'Global South' (Swilling, et al., 2015). The forces at work on the contemporary city are as likely to produce segregated enclaves of the wealthy (*Ibid*) as they are gentrified city centres. This will be discussed in further detail below.

Neoliberal Urban Forms?
Current debates focusing upon the role of neoliberalism within urban change perhaps offer one of the best possibilities to explore trajectories of urban transformation on an urban regional scale. While urban research, including that focused on gentrification, has been contextualized within a framework of neoliberalism, it is difficult to discern any particular spatial pattern that can be defined as a distinctly neoliberal urban form. Indeed, it is evident that the processes of neoliberalism are just as likely to pop up within downtown Manhattan as central Dublin or peripheral Mumbai or Washington. Two separate pieces of writing by Peck (2005; 2011) clearly express this tendency; one that is focused on the 'creative class' and the other that is focused on suburbia. In writing about the 'creative class', for example, Peck comments (2005, p.764):

> "Creative-city strategies are predicated on, and designed for, this neoliberalized terrain. Repackaging urban cultural artifacts as competitive assets, they value them (literally) not for their own sake, but in terms of their (supposed) economic utility. In order to be enacted, they presume and work with gentrification, conceived as a positive urban process, while making a virtue of selective and variable outcomes, unique neighborhood by unique neighborhood".

Yet, we also see the very same forces producing an entirely different urban form, that of suburbia. Here, Peck (2011, p.885) argues: "Since the 1970s, suburbia has become a significant, but perhaps underappreciated, spatial expression of neoliberalism's deregulatory moment, in the course of the protracted unwinding of the metropolitan-Keynesianism, gradually morphing into a distinctive field of regulatory minimalism" (Peck, 2011, p.885). Thus, while Florida and Kotkin may play out a form of pantomime of density v's sprawl, the reality of both is infused by an increasingly marketized system influencing city regions in vastly variegated ways. Indeed, for all the discussion of gentrification, suburbanization remains a key element of reality and analysis. This is further emphasized by Eker et al., (2012, p.414): "Suburbanization became a staple of a neoliberal, 'vulgar' regime of capital accumulation which ultimately contributed to the financial crisis that has held the world in its grip since 2008…"

In seeking to unpack the wider dynamics of urban transformation, urban scholarship needs to be mindful of the tendency to place boundaries around socio-spatial divisions within the city based on binaries of 'urban' and 'suburban'. To this end, a broader set of literature has recently emerged which demonstrates the actually existing suburban reality and the unevenness of experience, even at a relatively local scale, ranging from affluence to the commodification of community (Cheshire et al., 2013), fore-closures and outright poverty. Yet, great

care is also needed here. Schafran (2013), for example, astutely points to the dangers and pitfalls of recent media attention to the shifting realities of U.S suburbia, documenting the dangers of a media discourse around the term 'slumburbia'. In as much as Schafran unpacks the historic relationship between the city and the suburb in a North American context, he also demonstrates the strong dialectical relationship between the two. Schafran's work also points to the dangers of allotting blame on a place and a people over and above structural causes of crisis. Similarly, as he also argues, before getting carried away with the representation of a reversal of the inner city/suburban dialectic, we must become aware of the complicated and multi-faceted nature of contemporary urban restructuring. Moreover, in so doing, it must be carried out in a manner that seeks to unveil the local specificities of different forms of urban change. As summarized by Ekers et al. (2012): "However, the universalism of this process should not occlude the particularities of how suburbs are produced and lived. Both the form and the content of different suburban spaces are heavily path dependent, reflecting different political, economic, cultural and environmental histories" (Ekers et al, 2012). With this in mind, the paper now turns to the example of Adamstown, a 'new town' located to the west of Dublin, Ireland. The case study is used as a means elucidating the manner in which questions of density, forms of investment and approaches to governance within an urban region challenge dichotomies between 'urban' and 'suburban' discourses[2].

Adamstown, Co. Dublin:
Adamstown is a new town development situated to the west of Dublin. It is located within the administrative boundaries of South County Dublin, one of four local authorities that constitute Dublin city. It was developed from the early 2000's onwards with the explicit aim of becoming a 'sustainable urban community'. Originally, it was planned to accommodate 10,000 housing units, which equates roughly to a population of 25,000 people. In the context of wider approaches to suburban development in Ireland, the area was rezoned from agricultural land under the 1998 South Dublin County Development Plan. This entailed rezoning 214 Hectares (500 acres) of lands, all of which were and remain in private ownership.[3] In so doing, three land holdings came under the remit of the plan: Castlethorn Construction (approximately 125 hectares), Maplewood Homes (approximately 52 hectares), and Tierra Construction (20 hectares). Pointedly, Adamstown is the first example of a Strategic Development Zone (SDZ), which was introduced under the Planning and Development Act of 2000 in 2001 and which allows for the fast track planning of a location deemed to be of strategic importance. It is also important to note that this legislation

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[2] Future versions of this paper will seek to better contextualize the emergence of Adamstown within wider transformations of Ireland in the 1990s and 2000s.

[3] The question of land rezoning has been one of the dominant political discussions in Ireland in recent decades. With a significant amount of questioning over the nature of other rezoning in Dublin in the late 1990s and early 2000's, the rezoning of Adamstown was also put under scrutiny at a political level: http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2002/12/12/00021.asp

stipulates against any forms of planning appeal to the planning board, an Bord Pleanala. The development also included 15% social and affordable housing, and was thus deemed to promote a greater level of social inclusion and social mix than was the general norm at the time.[4]

The desire in the development of Adamstown was to get away from the dominance of car-oriented transit. Thus, Adamstown is surrounded by low-density forms of development that have predominated Dublin's development from the post-war period up until and including the 'Celtic tiger' period of the 1990s to c.2008. Instead, it was desired that Adamstown become a 'sustainable urban community' that differed in all aspects to its surroundings. In keeping with wider trends in Dublin throughout the period of the 1990s to the 2000's, the design approach drew predominantly upon a 'European' frame of reference (see Lawton and Punch, 2014). Indeed, while the mono-functional approach to suburban development is perhaps the greatest contribution to actually existing urban development throughout Ireland (O'Callaghan, et al., 2014), the dominant discourse within design and planning circles has revolved around a desire to promote higher density living that gets away from reliance upon car transportation (*Ibid*).

Throughout the interviews, planners and architects involved in the development of Adamstown evoked a number of different models. Two key elements came to the fore. First, was that of the desire to promote an urban model based on infrastructure, which drew explicitly upon approaches to urban development around rail-based networks, such as in the Netherlands and other European countries. The focus on infrastructure was outlined by a planner involved in Adamstown:

> "And when I talk about sustainable communities I don't mean it in a social engineering sense of bringing in mixed-class type neighbourhoods or even mixed-income type neighbourhoods, I talk about, or at least in this document we talked about sustainability primarily in the form of the delivery of physical infrastructure to serve the people who live in the locality, and the entire focus of the document and everything to do with it was tied in with that infrastructure delivery." (Former Planner, Local Government involved in Adamstown)

This perspective needs to be contextualized within the wider planning framework operating in Ireland from at least the 1960s, if not before-hand, with little by way of connection between transport infrastructure and wider planning models. Instead, vehicular traffic had been allowed to dominate and the city had become increasingly oriented towards car-based planning. Thus, the development of a 'new town' on a rail-line was perceived as a revelation within planning circles. The railway station would thus become the focal point of the main services in the town, with a mix of functions surrounded by residences of mixed densities. In

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[4] The provision of up to 20% social and affordable housing was also introduced under Part V of the 2000 Planning and Development Act, with the local authority dictating the precise breakdown in each area.

keeping with wider trends of the time, the relative hype around Adamstown glowed about the future of the area:

> "The plan was created over a three year period by **"a design team of unprecedented scale lead by seven architectural practices supported by 55 professional consultancies"** including movement consultants, colourists, lighting designers, wind consultants, landscape architects and engineers. The team's brief was to reconcile the social, environmental and commercial considerations of 21st century urban living while creating a unique place of distinction in the European built environment." (Emphasis in Original)[5]

Figures 1 and 2: Renderings of the Central Area of Adamstown demonstrating mix of uses and densities

The second element of this approach was to promote a 'design-led' approach. Again, the predominant influence here was in drawing upon a 'European' frame of reference. Here, the mantra of higher densities – including a mix of apartments, terraced housing and town houses – front onto interconnected streets oriented around pedestrian and bike use. While the planner above outlined the influence of Dutch approach, the urban design mantra drew explicitly upon a Swedish model of contemporary urban transformation:

> "*The Danes have done a couple of beautiful suburban new towns which are really, really attractive and so on – but they're quite suburban, they feel low density. Skarpnäck [Stockholm, Sweden] is more like a village street and it is a suburb but it's more on that sort of higher density feel to it, and they got the idea of creating housing right up to the edges of streets, street scales that tier down, but a high street feel, side street feels, laneways and mews' and then back into a slightly lower density. … And sitting in the middle of the main street is an underground station, there're churches and so on, there's green spaces and parks and whatever. So, we kind of felt that that was a very nice model, and it's one that we tried to replicate… (Architect, Local Government, involved in Adamstown)*

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[5] http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20080130005482/en/EUR-1.2-Billion-Irish-Town-Centre-Revealed#.Vd7Lx84ePNI [Last Accessed: 26th August, 2015]

Thus, the aim of Adamstown was to have a mix of densities, beginning with higher densities oriented towards main streets and gradually moving towards lower densities within smaller streets and laneways. Moreover, as is evidenced within the above quote, there was a notion that particular policy ideals could be taken and replicated within an Irish context. As in other contexts, policy is here perceived as mobile and amenable to the particularities to which it is being altered without significant reflection on what impact wider social and structural differences might have upon its implementation (see McCann and Ward, 2010; Lawton and Punch, 2014).

While such visual cues elucidate a notion of 'sustainable urbanity' within official planning and design circles, the reality of delivery retained the dynamic of market-led urban transformation. This was summarized as follows:

> "And the logic of Adamstown would be that they would all travel together and that the model would be much closer to that of a traditional town and the idea of a series of these towns coming along the railway line rather than the endless circular expansion around the city at low density, so it had a kind of proposition about that, and then the mechanism for the release of it was that land and property were beginning to go up, and up, and up, famously dangerously as we now know, but at the time, we owned no land up there but the model for how we were leveraging the facilities and the things as they came along was the release of equity through increasing land values, so they bought this thing at one level and they could sell it at another and the difference between the two would be their profit plus whatever we could manage to get for social facilities and community facilities and parks and all the things that would normally … schools, all the things that would normally come with them." (Respondent A4, Architect, Local Government, Involved in Adamstown).

The notion was that progress had been achieved in as much as the normalized approach of independent developers building upon separate parcels of land had been challenged, and the dominance of the three-bed semi-detached house also challenged. However, the economic crisis of 2008 has had a significant impact upon Adamstown, and resulting in the stalling of the development of both future housing and the development of town centre. One respondent involved in the development of Adamstown described how the economic and associated property crash of 2008 hit like a 'tsunami'. The economic downturn thus limited the extent to which the development of Adamstown continued. The current scenario is thus of two pockets of development to the south east and north east being developed (approximately 1000 of the 10000 housing units), but large tracts awaiting future development.

The impact of the property crash in Ireland has been well documented within academic literature (O'Callaghan et al., 2014). Moreover, the depiction of the unfinished or 'ghost' estate has become one of the dominant symbols of the economic crisis (O'Callaghan et al., 2014). Indeed, as is outlined by Kitchin et al.,

(2015) as of 2010 there were 2846 unfinished housing estates in Ireland. While a significant portion contained occupied housing, there were over 23,000 units recorded as completely vacant. Perhaps more strikingly, there were a total of 230,056 out of a total housing stock of 1,994,845 recorded as vacant in the 2011 census. Thus, while the 'ghost estate' has become the symbol of the economic bust, it is only a partial part of the tale. Never the less, it remained the dominant image of the crash. Furthermore, whereas much of the symbolism around the 'ghost estate' depicted 'un-planned' and poorly designed housing schemes, the stalling of the Adamstown development was perhaps more stark for the underlying 'sustainability' credentials it had to its name. It should, however, be said that, at least relatively speaking, the levels of vacancy of the stock that was built has not been as stark as in other parts of the country. As of 2014, the vacant units that had been built were occupied by Housing Associations, who have increased their presence in the context of the economic crisis (see Lawton, 2015b).[6]

At present Adamstown is caught up within wider debates about the future delivery of housing in Ireland. One striking feature of these debates is the extent to which the development sector continues to invoke a notion of 'consumer demand' for three bed semi-detached housing. In the Adamstown example, this has played out through the proposal to reduce the densities for future developments. Pointedly, however, and perhaps going against normalized notions of 'suburban ideals', for those living within Adamstown there is has been an expressed desire to continue to promote a mixture of densities.[7] Further research could thus seek to examine the connection between such desires and wider features of suburban and urban residential preferences.

From a more macro perspective, there was a belief amongst policy makers, both within local and national government, that unless Adamstown was promoted through various mechanisms of delivery, such as the afore-mentioned reduction of densities, it would be largely ignored within development circles. This was manifest in a fear of development taking a piecemeal form and continuing to expand at the edges. This fear was appraised by a senior figure within central government as follows:

> ""If you're not proactive, you know, the market will go round you. It's like water; it'll find its own course. If there's demand there it'll find its own course and it'll end up being in the wrong damn place. So, you either dig in and find a way to unravel those STZ problems or you can kiss your plan goodbye,

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[6] Future phases of this research project aim to examine the social dynamics of Adamstown. As a starting point, it should be noted that it is a highly socially diverse location, with up to 80% of residents being ethnically 'non-white Irish'. The local schools also reflect this diversity, with one national school being up to 90% non-white Irish. During the interviews, a number of planners discussed the politics of such, but a greater level of research is needed to understand these dynamics in detail.
[7] http://www.irishtimes.com/business/construction/plans-to-restart-adamstown-approved-by-an-bord-plean%C3%A1la-1.2036385

sustainable communities, all that lovely stuff." (Respondent SH51, Planner, Central Government).

Here, the respondent is discussing an imbedded fear of piecemeal development evolving throughout the urban fringe in Dublin without any real powers to stop it. Predominantly, this is due to a significant division in powers between the four local authorities in the Dublin area, each of which are seeking to attract investment. Thus, as well as the metaphor of water being drawn upon, another respondent referred to 'forest fire' of development looping the fringe of the city. While promoted as a new form of 'ideal community' differing from its surroundings, Adamstown can thus be seen to be caught up in the wider processes of urban and suburban transformation impacting upon the Dublin region.

Figures 3 and 4: Adamstown Housing and Proposed Location of Town Centre

The example of Adamstown illustrates the continued importance of understanding the dynamics of place based on its relationship to wider urban processes. Spatially, Adamstown stands as an outlier from much of its surroundings. As a higher-density ideal community, it sits in relative isolation. It stands opposed to the embedded approach to suburban development in Ireland and instead attempts to impose, at least spatially, an ideal of urban development based on permeability and walkability. Yet, in the context of Ireland's reliance upon market forces and the manner in which they have impacted upon the transformation of the Dublin urban region, the ability for it to become 'successful' is severely hampered. While, as is pointed out by the work of O'Callaghan et al., (2014), the image of the 'ghost estate' in Ireland from the economic bust is one of half-built generic housing estates, the collapse of the Irish property market also had a significant impact upon what was mooted as a 'sustainable urban community'. The internal contradictions to capitalist forms of urban transformation are thus brought fully into view in the context of Adamstown, whereby the development is situated within and reliant upon market factors for its delivery.

Conclusion: Towards a Synthesis of Suburban and Urban

This paper has sought to stress the tensions between ideals of development embedded within contemporary approaches to suburban transformation in Dublin, Ireland. More particularly, it has sought to demonstrate the importance of urban processes in influencing the outcome of particular ideals of urban transformation within one particular suburban location in Dublin, Ireland. While Adamstown was perceived as a 'sustainable urban community', the manner in which it was delivered was tied up within wider trajectories of urban transformation as they evolved throughout the 2000's. Thus, although for many planners and architects involved in the scheme, its relative 'sustainability' could be achieved through design approaches and connectivity, in reality, its evolution is tied in with the wider dynamics of Dublin as an urban region. The dialectical relationship between Adamstown and both its local and regional surroundings is thus of significant importance in understanding its manifestation over the last number of years (Walks, 2013), While seemingly visibly isolated, its reality is directly intertwined with that of the wider transformation of Dublin as an ever-evolving urban region.

While the long-term aim of the research seeks to tie together wider urban dynamics linking the centre to the suburbs, this has not been fully evoked in this paper. Never-the-less, in as much as the ideal of Adamstown was to somewhat 'urbanize the suburbs', it is evident that the wider processes of urban transformation, and in particular the economic crisis, dictate the manner in which Adamstown's development has evolved. There is thus a need to further scrutinize what is meant within policy discourses by urban sustainability or other related terms. The dominance of a density or livability fetish remains predominated by notions of design and density. While there is an acknowledgement of the wider forces at work, there remains a limitation as to modes of delivery that engage in social justice or rights (Lawton, 2015a). Further work might thus seek to elucidate the relationship between social life, residential selection, affordability and the predominance of market forces in Adamstown and its surroundings. Indeed, following from the work of Cheshire et al., (2013), it might seek to engage in understanding in what ways everyday life actually might differ in such a space than other 'less planned' spaces. In evoking the work of McLeod (2011), we are witnessing new forms of urban metropolitan restructuring throughout the urban regions of the world. One of the tasks of urban scholarship must be to understand how these spaces are interconnected across the urban and suburban realm, both in terms of structural dynamics and everyday experiences.

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