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Bruegel, 'Young Folk at Play'
(detail)
Introduction

“Space does not reflect society, it represents it. It is a fundamental dimension of society’s character and the overall process of social organisation and social change”

Over the past twenty years, affordable cars, improved roads and relaxed planning decisions among other factors have led to an unprecedented growth of suburban sprawl on the outskirts of Ireland’s urban centres.

With the car, people can travel freely when and where they want, meaning that proximity of home, workplace and other regular destinations no longer matters.

A lack of adequate public transport infrastructure anywhere outside of Dublin has led to a complete dependence on the car, to the detriment of buses, bicycles and cars themselves, through massive increases in traffic.

Ireland now faces a situation where its population, sprawled across the country, cannot be effectively provided for in terms of public transport or facilities. In embracing the car, we have abandoned the walkable neighborhood. In taking advantage of its benefits, we have become completely bound by it. We have replaced the street with the housing estate, where cars take precedence over all other users.

Our cities, hundreds of years old, find it difficult to cope with this volume of traffic they were never designed to take. This has taken its toll on the streets of Ireland’s cities and towns. Stagnant traffic, noise and fumes have made them undesirable as places to inhabit, further feeding the hunger for more sprawl.

A product of this massive growth in car use is that the distinction between road and street has largely been lost. Roads and streets both shape spaces and exist in many forms and scales. They are both infrastructural, yet behave very differently to one another and serve different functions. The primary function of the road is to transport, the movement of a vehicle to its destination. The street is a destination in itself. It is both passage and place. In some cases, urban Irish streets are designated as national roads. This condition is most evident in Limerick, where O’Connell St, the city’s main street, is also designated as the ‘N20’ National Primary Road. In actual fact almost half of the population live outside the city boundaries.

In a situation where a road and a street are apparently interchangeable, I believe some meaning has been lost. We no longer have a true understanding of the function of the street and what it can offer us. We need to take a step back, examine our streets, their uses, what they are to us and what we want them to be.


Image: Tempelhof former airport in Berlin, Germany’s new


Image: Tempelhof former airport in Berlin, Germany’s new
The city, having been laid out centuries before the car, was never designed to take the current level of motor traffic and cannot be retrofitted to do so with any success. Limerick is a prime example of such a road structure being incompletely and unsuccessfully adapted for current traffic.

A city is not a collection of roads. Rather, it consists of an assembly of components, the primary purpose of which is not to carry traffic but to serve the needs of the city. Roads through and around the city act as conduits. They impede the flow of pedestrians through the city, giving the impression that the street is the separation of movement and interaction. Interaction are intertwined. It is route and destination in one.

The street is made up of activity and engagement. It is not about things and places, but about the people who inhabit it. Buildings and points of exchange along the road mimic the street, albeit at a larger scale. The car becomes the atmosphere. They provide stimulus, vibrancy, activity and interaction even on a passive level. Cars do not do this. They are unimportant, but completely immaterial.

Where do we want to be? A situation where location and context is not only unimportant, but completely irrelevant. A situation where the road is the separation of movement and interaction. Interaction are intertwined. It is route and destination in one.

In City, People Planet: Subdivision We have established that such an idea, taking on an average range of 800 square metres of land, requires 200 square metres of tennis and concrete and produces 54 tonnes of carbon dioxide throughout its lifetime.

Road, Street, Car & Pedestrian A closer look at what we take for granted.
Prescription vs. Improvisation
Inhabiting the street

The nineteenth-century leftists were fond of the street, other than as a haven, at the initiative of the newly ascendant class. Through this class and others, the street increasingly became a pedestrian walkway, rather than a thoroughfare. This shift was driven by the growth of the middle class, which had fewer needs for privacy and comfort. The street became a place for public gatherings, socializing, and leisure activities.

City government sites their infrastructure on the street. These changes in the street reflect the growing importance of the city as a place of leisure and social interaction. The street is a public space that is open to all, allowing people to engage with it in various ways. This openness is a key aspect of the street's role as a public space.

By the early 20th century, the street as a public space began to lose its significance. The rise of the automobile and the development of the motorway led to the emergence of the car as a dominant mode of transportation. The street was increasingly disconnected from the social fabric of the city, as it became a place for motorized vehicles rather than for pedestrians.

In the context of the modern city, the street is a space that is both public and private. It is a place for interaction and communication, but also a place for solitude and reflection. The street is a space that is shaped by the needs and desires of its inhabitants, and it is a space that is continually changing as the city itself evolves.

In conclusion, the street is a space that is both public and private, and it is a space that is continually changing as the city itself evolves. The street is a place for interaction and communication, but also a place for solitude and reflection. The street is a space that is shaped by the needs and desires of its inhabitants, and it is a space that is continually changing as the city itself evolves.
Some forms of graffiti and 'paste-ups' were encouraged in such a way as to provide the mural in Neubrandenburg's forum, and due to its visibility, it has some damage from vandals. The city has taken steps to prevent this, such as installing protective measures and more frequent cleaning.

Scully was speaking at a time when Park Avenue had been recently damaged by monumental landmark buildings such as the Whitney Museum of American Art. These buildings, which have been controversial, have transformed the streetscape of the Avenue. From entertainment cartoons to political statements and messages, the artist is in constant communication with the street's users.


Cities are often cited as places of social detachment, loneliness, and quietness, which is neither necessarily the case. Hertzberger discusses the negative psychological effect of modern society's disconnect from its immediate surroundings and context, and hints at a reason for this:

"This state of affairs is characterized by the confluence of cosmic and social homelessness, of a world-anxiety and a life-anxiety which have probably never existed to this degree before. In an attempt to escape from the insecurity brought on by his feelings of isolation, man seeks refuge in their glorification of individualism. " 24

Suburban development ignores the importance and richness of opportunities offered by the street. It lacks the population density for economically viable local facilities, passive security and interesting and stimulating social environments and situations. It damages the importation of pedestrian movement both in its destructions from enemies and its acute contamination of the aesthetics of the street’s surface. Things don’t change; there is a lack of activity. Suburbs is not conducive to the walker.

As society drifts to the individualistic, the street provides opportunities for chance, for light social interactions, for a release from one’s own norm. It offers us inspiration and a connection to worlds outside of, but which run in parallel to, ours.

In Conclusion

Perhaps we need to change direction. We need a new trajectory that enhances our experience of the street and the journey. That realises the benefit of walking and public interaction. Streets are the veins and arteries that bring life to the city, providing stimuli, activity and engagement. Road infrastructure within a street is acceptable, but not if it is to the detriment of the street itself. In the city, the street and pedestrian must come first. Roads and cars in urban environments have the potential to do great harm, unless the streets have been designed to accommodate the current level of traffic intensity without impinging on the life of the street. Europe and North America both provide examples of how to do this well. For example, Berlin and Paris, through long, wide streets, manage to accommodate cars, bicycles and pedestrians all at once, without sacrificing the life of the street. Regarding Ireland, the majority of Irish cities neither require nor can accommodate this type of infrastructure. Irish streets are simply too narrow to provide for roads and Irish urban centres are mostly small enough to be able to survive without car traffic.

A New Urban School

The chosen site is peculiar. Nine, mostly independent educational establishments operate here simultaneously. Between them they cater for students of both genders and all ages, from infants to adult education. The premises are separated into two distinct zones and offer the school buildings through passage instead of by much having to be glimpsed multiple times only seen together and clear from any single glance. 26

The announcement of a new orbital route around the edge of the city centre significantly affects the area. The primary route will cut a lot of the road traffic, a key concern for the schools and the local area, effectively opening up the centre.

The site is adjacent to Limerick’s bus and rail station and as such bears huge potential as a pedestrian route for commuters and other travellers.

The existing school buildings are of assorted ages and types, some of which are originally built as dormitories, convents and orphanages, something in the case and not so old in the centre. In these cases, the school is focused on what connects the buildings. Cells will be made into the ground for better pathways, new routes, covering the site, intertwined with one another. These cells will also act as channels, curving rain water from aspects of the site in the order. New spaces shared open up.

An aspect of their slab with a substructure will accommodate new programme and provide a threshold from the city center. The third, a new parking facility will combine with an illuminated car-parking slip to accommodate the bus station.

In the new proposal, the school grounds are to be connected; the boundaries dissolved. Cuts will be made into the ground to form pathways, new routes crossing the site, intersecting with one another. These cuts will also act as channels, carrying rain water from aspects of the site in the order. New spaces shared open up.

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Research

Image: Study of pedestrian routes in Shannon town. Author's own.

Image: Movement patterns by foot and by car in neighbourhoods Corrib Drive and Aidan Park in Shannon. Author's own.
Research

Right: Pedestrian routes in Temple Bar, Dublin
Above: The ‘Public Realm’ in Temple Bar, Dublin

Left: Pedestrian routes in Trinity College, Dublin
Above: The ‘Public Realm’ in Trinity College, Dublin
Site Analysis

The site is a large, impermeable block on the edge of the city centre. Author's own.

Fishing rod holders fixed into the boardwalk in Porto, Portugal. Author's own.

Bench incorporated into a new walkway in Porto, Portugal. Author's own.
Proposal

1. Site Plan. The proposed cuts into the ground connect to the existing school buildings and allow for passage through the site.
Section perspective drawing showing the new proposal within the existing school complex.
A section through the carpark and pedestrian route, with the train station and existing primary school.

A section through the sunken playing courts and the building, showing it as an interface with Parnell Street.
An axonometric view of the proposal

A detailed section cut through the Parnell St. building.

Collage bringing the idea of Bologna’s covered streets to Sexton St. Limerick.
Bibliography


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