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A Case for the Urbanisation of Future Irish ShoppingScapes

Abstract: This paper puts forward a case for the urbanisation of future Irish shoppingscapes. It does so out of concern over the lack of urban design that factors in urban social sustainability found in Irish shoppingscapes built during the Celtic Tiger years. With reference to the challenge set to designers by De Solà-Morales (1992): “the urbanization of the private domain as a new challenge,” this research investigates urbanisation from the socio-cultural perspective. It informs itself from the discourse in urban theory focusing on conditions that allow for urban social sustainability. In attempting to define design’s role in the creation of these conditions, an evaluation criterion is drawn from this discourse and applied to shoppingcase case studies, to determine if their designs factor in urban social sustainability. The findings highlight Celtic Tiger shoppingscapes and also demonstrate how the concepts derived from urban theory can inform the design of future shoppingscapes, emphasising conditions that allow for socio-cultural urbanisation.

Keywords: ShoppingScapes; Urban Conditions; Urban Design; Urbanisation; Urban Social Sustainability.

1 Introduction

In putting forward a case for the urbanisation of future Irish shoppingscapes, this research attempts to contribute to both national and international research on shoppingscapes. At national level, it highlights a disregard for the *longue durée* in the design of Irish shoppingscapes built during the Celtic Tiger years, notably 1995 to 2008.¹ Celtic Tiger Irish shoppingscapes, each packaged as the new ‘town centre,’ promised to develop and extend both physically and socially the existing urban conditions of Irish towns and cities. However, this paper contends that their design, led by factors other than urban social sustainability, will make this promise difficult to keep. At international level, this research responds to the theoretical discourse that surrounds socio-cultural urbanisation, in particular, the discourse that focuses on conditions that allow for the development and extension of urban social practices. This research contributes to this discourse by demonstrating how the conditions highlighted can be created by design that factors in urban social sustainability. This research highlights how sustainable urban design can create conditions for urban social practices in shoppingscapes. In so doing, this research engages with the case put forward by De Solà-Morales (1992) for the “urbanization of the private domain” of shoppingscapes. It responds to De Solà-Morales challenge to designers to “resist ceding the battle over the design of shopping malls [...] to commercial logic and developer standards [...] rather see these as challenging new areas for architectural investigation” (Bekkering 2008: 45). This research takes up De Solà-Morales’s challenge by investigating the role of architecture and urban design in the creation of future shoppingscapes that can allow for the development and extension of the public realm.

2 Irish Celtic Tiger Shoppingscapes

With the rapid urbanisation of Ireland during the Celtic Tiger ‘building boom’ years came the Celtic Tiger shoppingscape. Forming a spatial relationship with the existing territory of many Irish urban centres—placed in, adjacent to or at a distance from the urban core—these shoppingscapes transformed and reconfigured the existing Irish

¹ “Celtic Tiger: the Irish economy, or Ireland itself, as regarded during the period of rapid economic growth that characterized the 1990s and early 21st century.” “Celtic tiger,” Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press. [online] Available at: <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Celtic%2Btiger> [Accessed 10 January 2010]

urban landscape. The Celtic Tiger shoppingscape proliferated from 1996 until 2010 spreading like a rash all over the country. Total Irish shopping centre stock was recorded at more than 2 million square metres in 2010, compared to well below 500,000 square metres in 1996 (CB Richard Ellis 2010). The most dramatic increase occurred from 2003 onwards. By 2008 Ireland had the second highest shopping centre stock per 1000 population out of 25 European Countries (Jones Lang LaSalle 2009). The extremely rapid pace and extent of new shopping centre development in Ireland has been unprecedented. When mapped the scale and quantity of these shoppingscapes appear in stark contrast to the existing urban morphology of the Irish urban centres they invaded or replaced (Fig. 1).

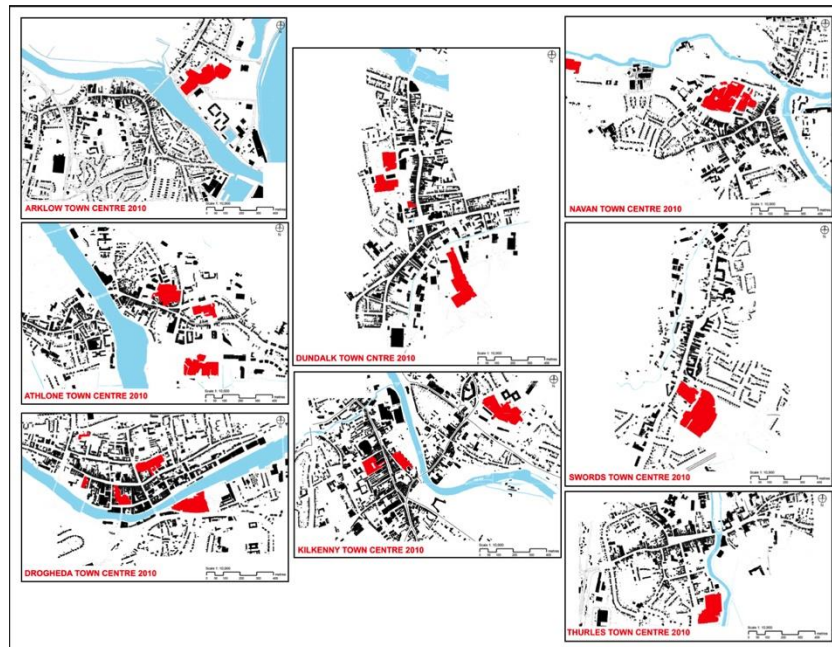


FIG. 1: Sample selection of mapped Celtic Tiger Shoppingscapes. Source: Author.

When explored the design of the majority of these shoppingscapes are found to conform to the traditional commercial typology of the suburban 'shopping mall.' Globalisation during the Celtic Tiger years not only "enabled Ireland to move from the periphery towards the centre of the new global economy" (Murphy 2000: 4) it also enabled the 'shopping mall' to move from the periphery to the centre of the urban core. The move to 'in-town' did not result in an urban, contextualised approach to the

design of shoppingscapes, rather, “in response to the pull of the periphery [...] its design and control principles are simply copied in the city” (Hajer *et al* 2002: 24). The concern, therefore, rests with “the belief [...] that to make the city urban requires submission to the model of the suburban” as this results in “the only experience of urbanity; being ‘a residual one’” (McMorrough 2001: 202).

The organising potential of the Celtic Tiger shoppingscape focused predominantly on satisfying the mantra of retail consultants, with little consideration given to the urban life of its citizens. Instead of sustainable urban design, shiny examples of architecture with appendages of landscaped public spaces, often located in strange locations, are found. Simultaneous over specified and simplified design solutions affect the provision for the public realm, and as De Solà-Morales (2008: 186) highlights “perhaps it is this simplification that lies at the root of the schematic stiffness of the result.” Simplification is further evident in the branding of these shoppingscapes as the ‘town centre.’ All the components of a new urban centre—“the world in a shopping mall” (Crawford 1990)—are promised under the roof of a large-scale shopping centre structure. However, in addition to only a residual experience of urbanity, only a partial urban vision can be offered. As Boyer (1995: 88) notes “the history of how advertising works is a template for understanding how representations of the city [...] are moved from a total system to the elevation of a partial vision.” The marketing images of the Celtic Tiger shoppingscapes express how the image of Irish town centres has been moved from the complete urban experience to a partial vision, to urban life inside the mall (Fig. 2, Fig. 3).



FIG. 2: Sample selection of marketing images of Celtic Tiger ShoppingScapes. Source: *Various*.²

² Athlone Town Centre. [online] Available at: <http://www.murrayolaoire.com/mixeduse/projects/>

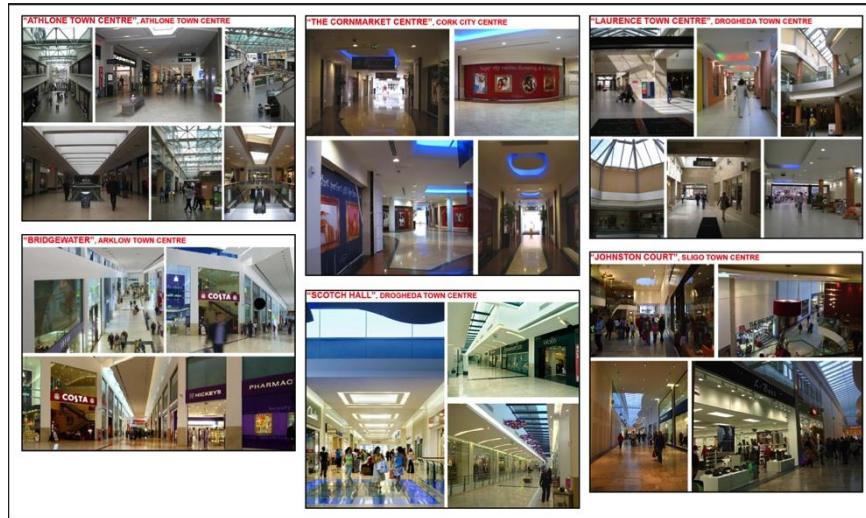


FIG. 3: Sample selection of photographs of Celtic Tiger Shoppingscapes. Source: Author and Various.³

The most obvious and detrimental consequence of the design of these shoppingscapes is a lack of regard for the *longue durée* of public space, “the traditional capacity of public buildings to play a role in the collective memory of citizens, and of streets and squares to offer an enduring structure to the city” (Avermaete *et al* 2010: 36). With a design practice fixated on the urban interior and indifferent to the urban exterior, the Celtic Tiger shoppingscape “incorporated more and more of the urban centre inside its walls” (Crawford 1990: 22). Large tracts of land which could have added new streets and squares to the centre, instead provided an interiorised, regulated street, accessible only within certain hours of the day. The wider urban context is ignored with blank facades and inactive frontages presented to the exterior realm (Fig. 4).

athlonetown/index.html [Accessed 13 July 2010]; Savills, “Bray Town Centre.” [online] Available at: http://www.savills.ie/commercial/displayretail.aspx?prop_id=10006558; [Accessed 13 July 2010]; Bannon Property Consultants & Chartered Valuation Surveyors, “Thurles Shopping Centre Phase 2.” [online] Available at: <http://www.bannon.ie/property.php?intProductID=123> [Accessed 13 July 2010]; Bannon Property Consultants & Chartered Valuation Surveyors, “Swords Pavilions, Swords, Co. Dublin.” [online] Available at: <http://www.bannon.ie/property.php?intProductID=157> [Accessed 13 July 2010];

³ Bridgewater Shopping Centre. Retrieved July 16, 2010, from: <http://www.bridgewatercentre.ie/>; Douglas Wallace, “Scotch Hall mixed Use Scheme”, 10. Retrieved May 30, 2010, from: <http://www.douglaswallace.com/cs/SCOTCH%20HALL%20Case%20Study.pdf>; Johnston Court. Retrieved June 20, 2010, from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/14692679@N03/1893664506/in/photostream/>



FIG. 4: Photographs showing an indifference to the urban exterior in the design of the Celtic Tiger Shoppingscapes. Source: Author.

With “cavernous old malls [...] dinosaurs that can’t compete” (Chuihua *et al* 2001: 126-127) now found across the USA and Europe, there is little hope that the new ‘town centre’ as an enclosed shopping centre can offer an enduring structure to the Irish urban town or city. Outdated malls, pre-Celtic Tiger, are already lying vacant in Irish urban centres, falling into disrepair, supplanted by the new larger models, the exaggerated versions of the Celtic Tiger shoppingscape. A summary of some of the factors, which influenced the design of the Celtic Tiger shoppingscape, and the resulting consequences are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of findings from Celtic Tiger Shoppingscape investigation. Source: Author.

DESIGN LED BY: ↓	Desires of a single developer/land owner (individual ownership)	Mantra of a retail consultant	Designs of a single architectural practice (individual expression)	No urban design-led framework
SHOPPINGSCAPE EQUAL: ↓	Rigidly controlled and managed environment	Retail-dominated ‘new town centre’	Single monolithic building	Uncontrolled urban development

SPATIAL CONSEQUENCES: 	Shutdown of the shoppingcape in the face of external forces	Shift and replacement of the existing centre	Over-determined visual form and social functions.	Incongruous juxtapositions of scale and uses.
PROVIDING LACK OF:	Urban and social resilience	Continuity	Flexibility	Design that factors in urban social sustainability

3 The Challenge – The Urbanisation of Future Irish ShoppingScapes

The concerns highlighted over the design of the Celtic Tiger shoppingcape are not however new to the commentary and critique of the traditional typology of the enclosed shopping mall, many have highlighted the issues raised here before (Crawford 1990, Sorkin 1990, McMorrough 2001, Hajer *et al* 2002). The issues identified are widely recognised with this type of shoppingcape and, therefore, many research areas exist with which this research could align itself. This research on shoppingcapes is interested in promoting, for future Irish shoppingcapes, architectural and urban design that factors in urban social sustainability. Its primary concern is for the future collective territories of Irish shoppingcapes. This paper argues that during the ‘building boom’ of the Celtic Tiger years, the design of shoppingcapes became more of a standardised formulaic design task led by forces other than design that factors in urban social sustainability. This paper contends that in the future the emphasis needs to be reversed. This research, therefore, aligns itself with the research of De Solà-Morales and with the emphasis he places on the “urbanization of the private domain” of shoppingcapes as a design task (De Solà-Morales 1992).

De Solà-Morales (2009: 89) recognises the collective territories of shoppingcapes as an integral part of the city’s future. He sees these territories as representative of “the significant places of daily life, the collective modern spaces.” In his writings, De Solà-Morales (2009: 188) argues for the design of spaces found in shoppingcapes to not be “abandoned to advertising and profit” but to be “stimulating parts of the multiform urban fabric.” De Solà-Morales believes that “urbanity is and remains inextricably tied to the tangible, the material” (Ibeling 2008: 13). De Solà-Morales

(2008: 186), therefore, calls on designers to bestow “an urban, public character on buildings and places that would otherwise remain solely private. Urbanizing the private, that is the concept: in other words, absorbing it into the public sphere.” De Solà-Morales (2008: 189) contends that only when private buildings act as public elements to “serve as vehicles for social meanings and values that reach beyond themselves” they then become urban. The belief held is that the design of the publically used spaces of shoppingscapes should provide conditions that give rise to productive and sustainable forms of urban experience.

De Solà-Morales’s research is particularly relevant to a country such as Ireland, which has undergone unprecedented urbanisation over the last two decades. Ireland’s globalised economy during the Celtic Tiger years brought with it both demographic and economic urbanisation. However, whether the full dimension of urbanisation has been realised could be questioned. Friedmann (2002: 3) highlights that “the broad concept of urbanization has [...] three distinct, if interrelated meanings.” The three meanings are: demographic, the increase of people in urban areas; economic, the increase in economic activities associated with cities; and socio-cultural which “refers to participation in urban ways of life” (Friedmann 2002: 4). For urbanisation to occur it must be holistic and produce all three changes. While the demographic and economic urbanisation of the Irish urban landscape, can easily be determined through statistics and census reports,⁴ socio-cultural urbanisation is more difficult and complicated to determine. In this research the relationship between urbanisation and the Celtic Tiger shoppingscape is considered. Evaluation criteria, which can be used to assess to what extent the design of the Celtic Tiger shoppingscapes can create sustainable conditions for urban social practices, are looked for. De Solà-Morales’s call for the urbanisation of the private domain of shoppingscapes highlighted the need to focus on the socio-cultural perspective of urbanisation in the design of shoppingscapes. This research, therefore, informed its search for criteria by exploring the discourse in urban theory that focuses on urbanisation from the socio-cultural perspective.

⁴ 62% of the population live in urban areas in Ireland in 2011, compared with 46.4% 50 years ago. Central Statistics Office, “This is Ireland, Highlights from Census 2011, Part 1,” March 2012, 13. [online] Available at: <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/documents/census2011pdr/Census%202011%20Highlights%20Part%201%20web%2072dpi.pdf> [Accessed 14 April 2012].

4 Urbanisation from the Socio-Cultural Perspective

Since Wirth's sociological definition of urbanisation, in his seminal 1938 essay, "Urbanism as a way of life," urbanisation from the socio-cultural perspective has been explored and theorised by many urban theorists (Jacobs 1961, Sennett 1991, Lofland 1998). Wirth (1938: 5) in his essay included in the meaning of urbanisation as defined by "geographers, historians, economists, and political scientists" its reference to "that cumulative accentuation of the characteristics distinctive of the mode of life associated with the growth of cities." Wirth (1938: 5) emphasizes the "peculiar characteristics of the city as a particular form of human association." This form of human association is commonly referred to by many urban theorists (Sennett 1991, Lofland 1998, Madanipour 2003) as the public realm and is defined more often than not as "the city's quintessential social territory" (Lofland 1998: 9). Wirth (1938: 5) in looking at urbanisation from the socio-cultural perspective and in considering "that cumulative accentuation" defined urbanisation as "the development and extensions" of the characteristics of the public realm. De Solà-Morales's meaning of "urbanisation," while also referring to extending the public sphere, in addition asserts the importance of extending "'material' urbanity" (De Solà-Morales 2008: 148). He contends, "today's urban project can lie more in [...] the material" (De Solà-Morales 2008: 152). This focus on material conditions that can enable urban social sustainability is found within an increasing discourse that considers the relationship between the public realm and the designed built environment.

Due to this urban age, when "individual ownership and expression are so much in evidence" and recognised as being "so corrosive to [...] the public realm" (Leatherbarrow 2012: 39), there is increasing acknowledgment in urban theory discourse of a pressing task—the clarification of specific urban 'conditions' that allow for the public realm to develop and extend (Sennett 2006, Christiaanse 2009, Leatherbarrow 2012). A discourse exists which examines "places and spaces which allow for the gradual evolution and opening up of rituals of behaviour" (Sennett 2009) and identify conditions which nurture "particularity in the urban public realm, sustaining local practices and allowing the identity of place and culture to flourish," (Frank *et al* 2007: 20-21). Contributions to this discourse emerge from a range of disciplines: architecture, urban design, urban geography, urban sociology and social and environmental psychology. The emphasis placed on design, and its role in the creation of 'conditions' for sustainable social practices, however, varies in this discourse across the different disciplines. This paper contends that this discourse holds a lot of potential for designers, in assisting the design of shoppingscapes that

can enable a thriving public realm. Whether each contribution is original or reiterative, responds to corrosive or catalytic urban conditions, each highlights either accidental or purposeful urban design principles that factor in urban and social sustainability. There is recognition in this discourse that “behaviour is derived from models that, in their ‘urbanity’, are spatial, dimensional and physical” (De Solà-Morales 2008: 146) and that “the connection with *civitas* remains strong, under certain conditions of plural and inclusive organization of public space; conditions that [...] must be traced to the situation itself” (Amin 2008: 15). This research identified two useful theoretical concepts - the concept of “looseness” (Frank *et al* 2007) and the concept of “openness” (Sennett 2009). This paper examines how these concepts can be used to derive conditions for sustainable social practices in shoppingscapes.

5 Conditions for Socio-Cultural Urbanisation

The concept of ‘*looseness*’ in urban space is put forward by Frank and Stevens (2007) in their research on public space. They define loose space as space which “allows for the chance encounter, the spontaneous event, the enjoyment of diversity and the discovery of the unexpected” (Frank *et al* 2007: 4). Looseness in urban space allows for the development and extension of the public realm. In loose space “the urban resident, with creativity and determination” can “appropriate public space to meet their own needs and desires” (Frank *et al* 2007: 4). Frank and Stevens explore certain social and physical conditions that can encourage ‘*looseness*.’ In their research they identify ““ringy” spaces” and “appropriation” as two defining features of ‘*looseness*’ in urban environments (Frank *et al* 2007). They point to the condition of “different, densely interconnected and overlapping circulation loops” (Frank *et al* 2007: 6) found in ringy space, and the physical features of corners or fixed and semi-fixed elements, found in public space, which enable appropriation to occur. Stevens (2007: 211), in his research, highlights that ringy spaces “provide more opportunities to change direction when moving through the city and allow spaces and people to be encountered in different sequences.” This formal condition helps “sustain and enhance the general vitality and robust diversity of social practice” (Stevens 2007: 211). Urban corners have been recognised by many urban theorists (Whyte 1943, De Solà-Morales 2004) as places that encourage appropriation and social interaction: “street corners express the nature of the city as a meeting place” (De Solà-Morales 2004). Similarly, fixed and semi-fixed elements found in urban space are often appropriated and “made use of in a variety of social acts” (Stevens 2007: 178). The physical features of public space,

identified by Frank and Stevens (2007) keep it open to possibilities, encouraging social practices to develop and extend.

The concept of '*openness*,' put forward by Sennett (2009), emerges in response to the basic principle of over-determined form. Drawing analogies between the natural and the built environment, Sennett (2009) advocates for "rules which open up the environment to change rather than stabilize it." The concept of '*openness*,' put forward by Sennett (2006), forces designers to consider how public space can be opened up, how the divide between inside and outside can be bridged and how visual form can invite engagement and identification. Sennett (2009) believes that "openness can be planned" and that "in the public realm, openness can be defined in terms of built fabric and its context." Focusing on edge conditions within the city, Sennett distinguishes between borders and boundaries and explores the design of porosity. Sennett identifies passage territories and porous urban space as two defining features of '*openness*.' He points to the condition of "the edge as border" found in passage territories, and the condition of "the porous wall" found in porous urban space (Sennett 2006: 12). Sennett (2006: 12) argues that these conditions "create essential physical elements for an open system in cities." These conditions "create [...] space at the limits of control, limits which permit the appearance of things, acts, and persons unforeseen, yet focused and sited" (Sennett 2006: 12). These conditions allow for social practices to emerge.

The identified defining features and conditions behind the concepts of '*looseness*' and '*openness*' are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of findings from theoretical investigation. Source: Author.

THEORETICAL CONCEPT	DEFINING FEATURE	CONDITIONS
'Looseness'	Ringy Spaces	Densely Interconnected and Overlapping Circulation Loops
	Appropriation	Corners; Fixed and Semi-Fixed Elements
'Openness'	Passage Territories	The Edge as Border
	Porous Space	The Porous Wall

6 Establishing an Evaluation Criteria

Having uncovered the two theoretical concepts of '*openness*' and '*looseness*' from the discourse identified, the next step in this research was to use the findings from the literature to define criteria which could be used to evaluate the design of shopping-scape case studies. The physical and spatial conditions of: 1. Densely interconnected and overlapping circulation loops; 2. Corners and fixed and semi-fixed elements; 3. The edge as border; 4. The porous wall; represent conditions created by urban design actions which should allow for urbanisation. The following image, Fig. 5, illustrates these conditions and their abstract interpretation. The presence of each of these conditions was looked for in the case studies analysis.

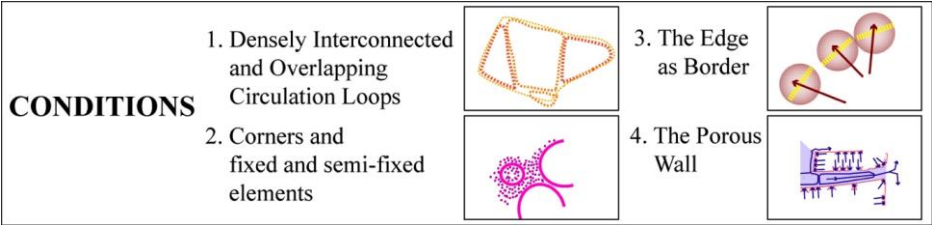


FIG. 5: Conditions looked for the case studies analysis and their visualization. Source: Author.

7 Case Studies Selection

In order to further inform future shopping-scape design in Ireland, shopping-scape case studies from a comparison field were selected in addition to the Celtic Tiger shopping-scape case studies selected from Ireland. The country these case studies were selected from was The Netherlands. Dutch shopping-scapes were chosen for a number of reasons. The Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe and is perhaps one of the most urbanised. The Netherlands is widely recognised as a leader in urban sustainability. Unlike Ireland, it is a country with a strong and historical reputation for urban design practice. Both Ireland and The Netherlands in 2008, after the peak of the Irish property boom, had the highest shopping centre stock per 1000 population out of 25 European countries (Jones Lang LaSalle 2009). Both countries are located in Northern Europe and share a similar climate. Therefore, in choosing a country from which to select shopping-scapes

designed to allow sociocultural urbanisation, The Netherlands seemed an appropriate choice. Four case studies were selected in total. Two Celtic Tiger shoppingscapes were chosen from Ireland's largest town, the town of Drogheda. Two shoppingscapes were chosen from the Dutch cities of Nijmegen and Arnhem.

Awarding winning projects, the Dutch shopping centres selected, represented a 'better practice model' than those chosen from Ireland. The case studies from The Netherlands represented, therefore, a comparison field from which to analyse the case studies from Ireland against. The case studies selected are listed in Table 3. The four case study sites and comparative scale are illustrated in the following drawings, Fig. 6 and Fig. 7.

Table 3: Information on the case studies selected. Source: Author

CASE STUDY NO.	NAME OF SHOPPING CENTRE	URBAN CENTRE	COUNTRY	YEAR OPENED	NO. OF SHOPS	URBAN DESIGN-LED FRAME-WORK	NO. OF ARCHITECT PRACTICES INVOLVED
1	Mariënburg	Nijmegen	The Netherlands	2000	48	Yes	3
2	Musiskwartier	Arnhem	The Netherlands	2006	45	Yes	4
3	Scotch Hall	Drogheda	Ireland	2005	48	No	1
4	Laurence Town Centre	Drogheda	Ireland	2006	35	No	1

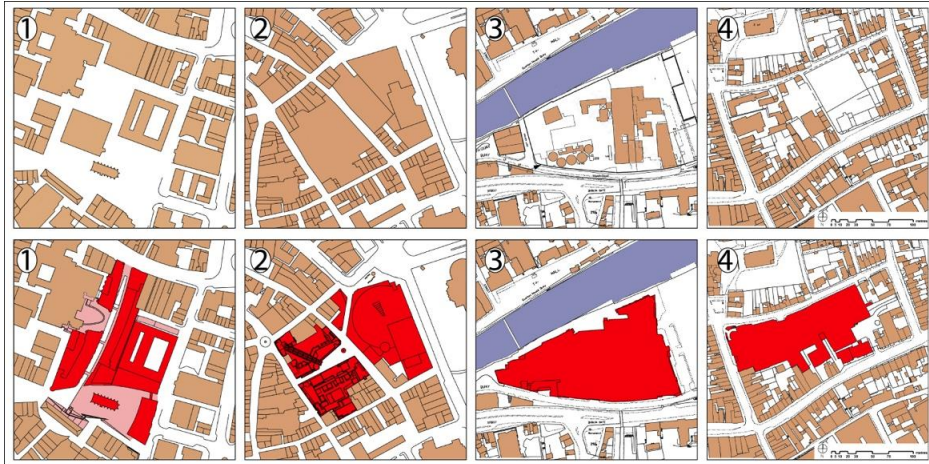


FIG. 6: Site area of shoppingcase case studies numbers 1-4 before and after redevelopment. Source: Author.

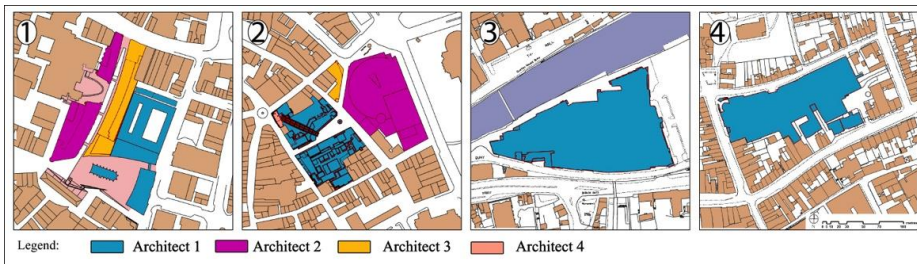


FIG. 7: The number of architectural practices behind the design of the case study shoppingcases. Source: Author.

7 Case Studies Analysis using Evaluation Criteria

In the case studies analysis each case study was assessed against the evaluation criteria established from the theoretical concepts of *'looseness'* and *'openness.'* The design of all the case studies were assessed to determine the extent to which each design provides the conditions identified from the theoretical investigation. This was done by gathering original empirical material through non-participant observation fieldwork. Fieldwork was carried out in and around the ground plane and public spaces of each of the four shoppingcases. The findings were recorded in field notes, behavioural maps, visual surveys and photographs. These findings were then visually represented through mapping and diagramming. Each of the four case studies were

evaluated using the same graphic language to facilitate effective comparison. The findings from the case studies evaluation are made visual in the following images, Fig. 8; Fig. 9; Fig. 10; Fig. 11.

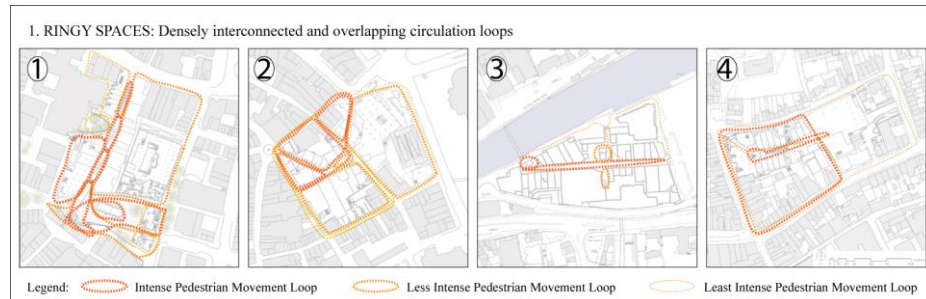


FIG. 8: Recorded prevalence of condition number one: densely interconnected and overlapping circulation loops, and related social use: movement intensity, across the four case studies. Source: Author.

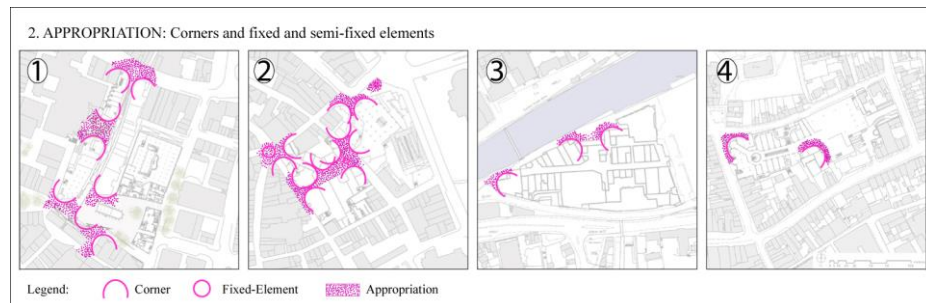


FIG. 9: Recorded prevalence of condition number two: corners and fixed and semi-fixed elements, and related social use: appropriation, across the four case studies. Source: Author.

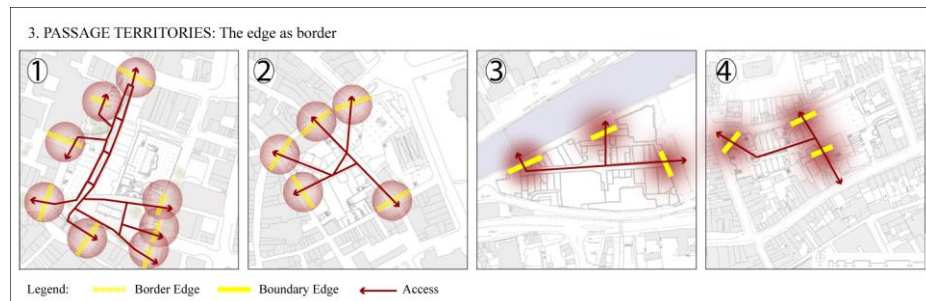


FIG. 10: Recorded prevalence of condition number three: The edge as border, and related social use: access, across the four case studies. Source: Author.

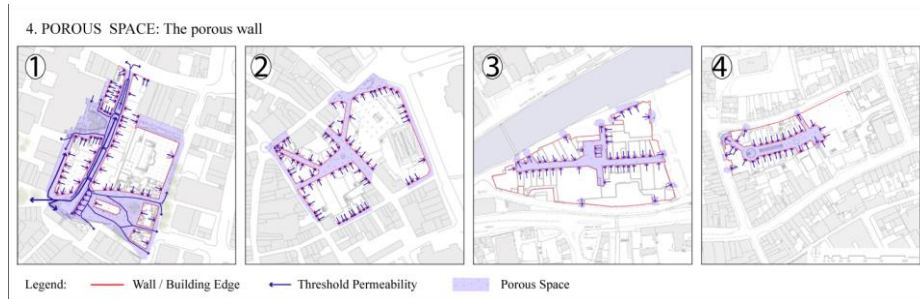


FIG. 11: Recorded prevalence of condition number four: the porous wall and related social use: threshold permeability, across the four case studies. Source: Author.

The images, Fig. 8, Fig. 9, Fig. 10 and Fig. 11, highlight the relationship between the public realm and the designed built environment in the four shoppingscapes analysed. They illustrate the extent and presence of each of the conditions and the related social use across the four case studies. They demonstrate how the design of each shoppingcape created the conditions looked for and, therefore, the intensity of use of their collective spaces. What was projected at design stage and actually experienced when realised are closely related. For example, as illustrated in Fig. 8 the design of ringy spaces in case study number one set up intense pedestrian movement loops. The lack of ringy spaces designed in case study number four meant that less intense pedestrian movement loops were recorded. The number of corners and fixed and semi-fixed elements found in the design of case studies numbers one and two, meant that numerous appropriations around or on these physical features were recorded (Fig. 9). In case studies numbers three and four, where very few appropriations of the public spaces were recorded, very few corners and fixed and semi-fixed elements were found in the design (Fig. 9). In summary, the design of the case studies from the Dutch centres show a much stronger prevalence of the four conditions looked for when compared with the Irish models. A corresponding higher rating of social use and practice was found in the Dutch shoppingscapes and lower rating of social use and practice was found in the Irish shoppingscapes.

This initial analysis emphasises the role of architectural and urban design in the creation of shoppingscapes that allow for the development and extension of the public realm. This analysis also emphasises the threat posed to future social practices in urban areas by the introduction of over-determined built forms and controlled environments. The levels of sustainable social practices, such as appropriation, relate to the physical features and spatial conditions of the publicly used spaces of

shoppingspaces, as they indicate what is permitted and invite use. The findings presented in this paper highlight how sustainable urban design, design that factors in urban social sustainability, can “play a significant role in elaborating a public realm which mediates, and promotes a civilized relationship, between private interests with their spatial expressions, private domains, and the collective needs of the various groups and individuals that live together in cities” (Madanipour 2003: 217).

8 Conclusions

This paper draws attention to the Celtic Tiger shoppingscape found in Ireland’s urban landscape. The research presented highlights the suburban as opposed to urban design approach taken during the Celtic Tiger era and advocates for architecture and urban design that factors in urban social sustainability in the design of future Irish shoppingscapes. This research is timely, in that with the present halt to shoppingscape development in Ireland it is an opportune time to reflect on what has been built in Ireland during the building boom years of the Celtic Tiger years. In building the case for the socio-cultural urbanisation of future Irish shoppingscapes, this research looks to urban theory for support. Increasingly in architecture and urban design theory the importance of clarifying conditions that allow for or can lead to urban and social sustainability is reiterated. The belief is not that urban designers or architects can actually design communities or sociability in urban areas, but designers “definitely can design urban structures or physical conditions that stimulate the emergence” of social practices (Christiaanse 2010). Therefore, clarification of these conditions is crucial if social sustainability is to be considered in the design process.

In deriving conditions for socio-cultural urbanisation from theoretical concepts found in the discourse on urban social sustainability, this research considers their practical application and relevance to the design of shoppingscapes. The findings presented suggest that this discourse’s value lies in emphasising what needs to be considered to create the conditions for the development and extension of the public realm in shoppingscapes. The over-determined form and function of the Celtic Tiger shoppingscapes create tight spaces and closed conditions, which leave little room for the public realm to develop and extend. The concepts of “looseness” (Frank *et al* 2007) and “openness” (Sennett 2009), in contrast, promote conditions that can allow for the urbanisation of shoppingscapes. The visualisations of the findings, presented in this paper, attempt to translate the theoretical concepts found into a visual language that could communicate more easily with architects and urban designers.

Identifying and communicating urban design conditions for sustainable social practices in shoppingscapes may enable the successful urbanisation of future shoppingscapes. It is proposed that this paper can inform the continued development of a framework against which the design of proposed shoppingscapes can be considered, to ensure their design can allow for socio-cultural urbanisation, enabling the development and extension of the public realm and thus the urban.

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