

“This is a huge opportunity for revitalising rural areas. Only then can they fully exploit their potential and attract more people and investment.”

Ursula von der Leyen, Building the World we want to live in. EU State of the Union Address, 2020.

UCD CFIT TEAM

UCD CfIT is located in the UCD School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy and is led by Co-Directors Orla Murphy and Philip Crowe, supported by a Working Group and Advisory Board.

Two-thirds of the population on the island lives in or is dependent on a town.

(CSO and NISRA 2011)



ENGAGE WITH CFIT

If you are interested in hearing more about UCD CfIT or would like to get involved, please get in touch with us at:

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UCD Centre for Irish Towns



UCD CfIT is supported by the UCD Earth Institute Strategic Priority Support Mechanism

A trans-disciplinary research centre focusing on towns on the island of Ireland

UCD Centre for Irish Towns

The UCD Centre for Irish Towns (CfIT) brings together researchers and stakeholders from across the island of Ireland to support the revitalisation of Irish towns.

THE CHALLENGE

Irish towns are home to approximately one third of the population and play a critical role in the cultural, social and economic life of the nation. But towns face multiple challenges such as long-term vacancy and a lack of investment in physical and social fabric, all exacerbated by a lack of data and knowledge, joined up thinking, and a coherent, evidence-based approach in terms of governance, policy and funding. These challenges negatively impact on social cohesion, urban resilience, and the well-being of current and future generations.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Irish towns are ideally placed to help accommodate predicted population growth and facilitate sustainable communities. Towns also have a key role in the just transition to a post-pandemic and low carbon society.

A consensus that change is necessary is evident, for example in the emerging *Town Centre First Policy* (Programme for Government); the Government's *Town Centre Living Initiative*; and the Heritage Council's *Collaborative Town Centre Health Check* Training Programme. There is also a growing recognition of the need for research, knowledge sharing and collaboration to support this change.

WHY UCD?

The combination of a broad range of disciplines and an outward facing network of connections with other universities in Ireland and abroad, makes UCD an ideal home for CfIT. The cross-cutting nature of towns resonates with each theme of the UCD Strategy *Rising to the Future*: creating a sustainable global society, transforming through digital economy, building a healthy world, and empowering humanity.

CFIT THEMES

CfIT has identified research themes that are cross-referenced to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and Indicators:

- > Understanding our towns
- > Respecting our heritage and culture
- > Supporting resilient and sustainable communities
- > Promoting inclusive and innovative economies
- > Design for resilient infrastructure
- > Championing nature-based solutions
- > Promoting open and participatory democracies
- > Ensuring an inclusive and fair decarbonisation pathway

“Each town has its own urban system, a unique fingerprint comprising an overlay of topographical, historical, political and economic influence, played out over time.”

Orla Murphy, *Town: Origins, Morphology and Future*, 2018.

“Social cohesion is critical to the efficient functioning of the country and towns are an important part of this.”

Philip Crowe, *Putting Town Centres First* podcast by The Heritage Council, November 2020.

CFIT ACTIVITIES

The revitalisation of towns is a complex national and global challenge. In response, CfIT provides a centre of excellence that will:

- > Identify, target and address gaps in knowledge and data on Irish towns through responsible research and innovation;
- > Provide an evidence-base for policy and decision-making;
- > Build a network of Irish and international researchers and stakeholders for knowledge-sharing and collaboration;
- > Bring together trans-disciplinary teams to work on identified challenges;
- > Support a just transition to a post-pandemic and low carbon society;
- > Secure research funding from national and EU programmes;
- > Develop excellence in teaching and learning delivery, co-ordination and capacity at all levels;
- > Co-design CPD with partners to address present and future demands;
- > Contribute to the implementation of EU Programmes and Directives;
- > Support progress on UN SDGs.

CFIT IMPACT

CfIT will support the emergence of thriving and resilient Irish towns for sustainable communities

