



# Visions of Ireland: ideas to end sprawl of suburbs

by Stephen Rogers

SEASONAL sinkable homes in the sea, 'caravansera' boats bringing people to cities along our rivers and planning laws which forbid building outwards in favour of building up and down.

Those are just some of the ideas created by nine of Ireland's top architects as means of halting the ever-increasing suburban sprawl in Ireland.

The architects make up Ireland's entry to the Venice Biennale 10th International Architecture Competition, which will be held in Italy from September 10 to November 19, 2006.

The entry is entitled Suburban to Super-Rural and, according to the organisers, the projects and scenarios offer a vision of how our suburban island can evolve into a 'super-rural' one between now and 2030.

Below are descriptions of the projects.

■ **Boyd Cody Architects: 26+1**— A vast, ex-bogland landscape, as big as greater Dublin will come free in the midlands Boora Complex by 2030. What would you do, faced with future food and energy shortages, if you could start from scratch with a new county?

■ **Bacholz McEvoy Architects: Learning Landscape**— As Ireland's future lies

within a global economy, trading on ideas, can we invent a 'learning landscape'— something as powerful as Singapore but where, instead of living in skyscrapers, people can continue to live on the land while contributing to the global knowledge economy.

■ **dePaor architects— Tall-house**— At current levels of output, 20,000 per annum on average, 500,000 more new one-off houses will be built by 2030. It would consume 250,000 acres, have a road frontage equivalent to four times the coastline of Ireland and would take 10 days to drive past. It's just not sustainable, so why not change the planning laws to ban all footprint extension outside urban areas? From now on, you can only build up or down— not out.

■ **FKL architects: Hinterland**— Develop the hinterlands of the national motorway network planned under Transport 21 for housing, so that everybody can live sustainably in the country but still work in town. Individual plots of 1.5 hectares within 3.3km of the motorway would support a house, vegetables and bio-fuel crops.

■ **Henchion+Reuter Architects: Demographics**— If the 1.6m population increase expected by 2030 were concentrated strictly



within a 'penta-zone' linking cities, it could support high-speed trains that would 'shrink' Ireland— travel time from Dublin to Sligo would go from 3h20m to 48 minutes!

■ **Heneghan.peng.architects: ElastiCity**— Dublin-London is the

world's second busiest air route and short-haul flights are fuel-inefficient. Build a bridge from Rosslare to Fishguard: High-speed trains travel Dublin-London in 2.5 hours and on to Paris. The power of this 'magnet' turns Dublin into an elastic, stretched city

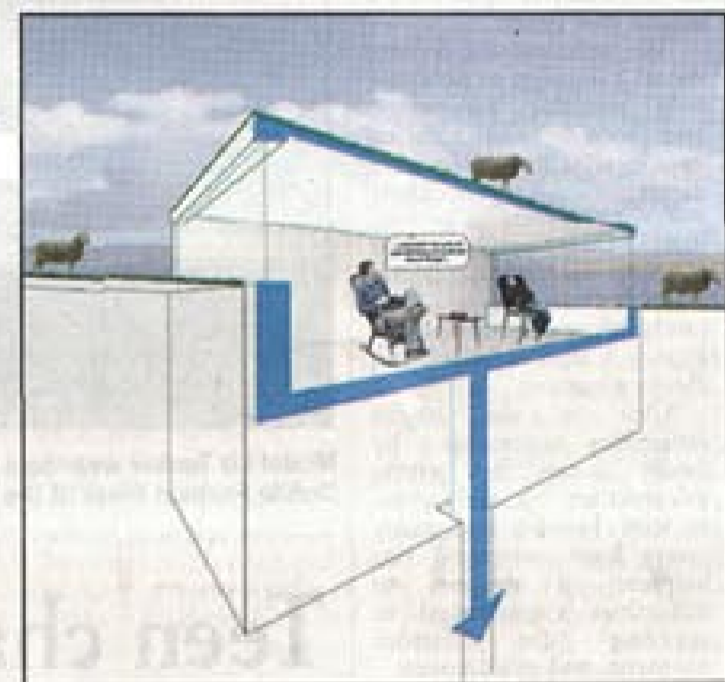
along the Irish Sea, instead of a blob spreading out over the midlands.

■ **MacGabhann Architects: Tideaways**— Tideaways includes seasonal homes in the sea on a pontoon that are towed into derelict Donegal harbours for winter storage and hill-

side 'sinkable' houses on a hydraulic system, linked to the pontoon, that rise and fall with the tides. When nobody's at home, the empty sinkable house collapses on its hydraulic ram, disappearing from sight into the ground. Its grass roof becomes part of the land-



A selection of the Irish entries for the Venice Biennale 10th International Architecture Competition. Top, FKL architects entry titled Hinterland. Clockwise from below, DePaor Architects entry Tall-house; Heneghan.peng Architects entry ElastiCity; Boyd Cody Architects entry 26+1; and MacGabhann Architects entry Tideaways.



scape you can walk over. ■ **Dominic Stevens Architects: Fluidcity**— The Shannon-Erne River system can support a population of 240,000. People live in the countryside, facing the river. Much like the travelling cinema bus today, a river-borne caravansera arrives

once a week, bringing the city to your doorstep. ■ **ODOS architects: Vertical Sprawl**— a cautionary tale, told in the form of a comic book from 2030, of what happens when horizontal suburban expansion is no longer possible. In 2030, the sky is the limit.