

RE-IMAGINING

ELDERHOOD

OPEN CALL TO TAKE PART IN A
PARTICIPATORY DESIGN CHALLENGE

REIMAGINING ELDERHOOD is a multi-strand collaborative research project which SOA Research CLG are coordinating throughout 2022/23, funded by the Arts Council of Ireland. The project explores the future housing needs of people in mid-life in Ireland, and the role of Community-Led Housing approaches in providing innovative responses to this challenge.

As a core element of the project, Self Organised Architecture (SOA) are launching an Open Call offering a paid opportunity for three architects (emerging or established) to develop their co-design and participatory community engagement skills while creatively exploring one of Ireland's greatest spatial challenges: how to design 'future-oriented' neighbourhoods that foster community for all ages and maximise the possibilities for positive ageing in Ireland.

This is an opportunity for three architects [individuals or collectives] based in Ireland.



APPLICATION
DEADLINE
5PM
WEDNESDAY
20 APRIL
2022

OVERVIEW

“ While I still have my brain about me I want to be contributing to the world that I live in, myself as a person. To be able to do that you need to be able to love the place where you live, to be happy about your surroundings... ...We need to know that there's a process, that there's a place where we can feel that we can give our best without being categorised as: 'You're an old person, you're not useful any more. ”

ANNIE CURBELO LANG, *THE IRISH TIMES*

REIMAGINING ELDERHOOD SETS OUT TO EXPLORE QUESTIONS SUCH AS:

- **What kind of places do we need to live well as we age, and how can aspects of our neighbourhoods be modified to support ageing well?**
- **Can we take steps in mid-life to imagine the places we would like to live in as we age, and to work together to create them?**
- **What is the potential of collaborative housing and neighbourhood design to improve the experience of ageing in Ireland?**
- **How can architects be 'agents of change' and facilitators of new approaches and thinking about how we live?**

This participative design challenge will engage each of three selected architects/collectives in exploring these core questions in the context of working with a specific community (of place or interest) of their choice, with a view to evolving their process of community engagement and co-design. The only criteria for choice of community is that they include **people in mid-life who are thinking about their future housing needs**. The architects will facilitate the communities involved in exploring their neighbourhood design, inventively imagining their future, and provide a unique real-life learning platform.

The selected architects will experience co-design and community engagement first-hand, and a chance to creatively explore and develop their method of practice. The project is an opportunity to test the boundaries of an architect's 'agency' by employing their skills to address a pressing societal challenge. The architects will design and lead the engagement process with their chosen community. In this they will be supported by a larger team that includes experts in co-design and participative design processes, and in creative community engagement, as well as administrative support.

The selected architects will be expected to produce **a defined creative/co-design output** that is meaningful and useful to the communities involved, and in a format suitable for showcasing as part of a local and national dissemination programme. The three architects will participate in planning how their collective work will be shared publicly in early 2023.

SOA Research will expect selected architects/collectives to have some basic familiarity with the concept of community-led housing and design, and will work with them to create and evolve a meaningful connection with their proposed community of place or interest, while investigating the issues and concerns that matter to them. SOA aim to build capacity at every level of the project. The architects will be encouraged and supported to connect their reading of the local context with national and international best practices, with a view to sharing that knowledge and expertise with their chosen community.

We envisage that the opportunity will be a hybrid of online and in-person engagement. We will review and amend the project in line with relevant Covid restrictions, prioritising the health of everyone involved.

CONTEXT

Reimagining Elderhood has been instigated by Self Organised Architecture and is funded by the Arts Council of Ireland. The programme has been developed in the context of SOA's broader action research mission which aims to develop and promote the possibilities for participatory, non-speculative, affordable and democratic housing creation in Ireland.

The project has been inspired by the challenge to develop better, more inclusive, and more community-oriented living environments for positive ageing, with a particular emphasis on the potential for collaborative housing approaches to offer new possibilities for ageing well.

Evolving better housing options for our Ageing Population is a core element of government (and EU) policy; and engagement with this challenge offers opportunities to explore intergenerational living, sharing of resources and space, connectivity, and human interactions. Some people in Ireland retire at the age of 55, the majority currently retire at 65. The current average life expectancy in Ireland is 82.5 years. This means that for many, up to one third of our lives will be spent in retirement from full employment. Can planning ahead for the design or adaptation of our homes and neighbourhoods help us to stay engaged and connected with our neighbours and society as we age?

The 65+ population in Ireland is projected to increase from 13.3% of the overall in 2016, to **20.7% by 2040**. Research shows that most of us wish to stay in our own homes and neighbourhoods as we age, with the associated independence, choice and ability to maintain friendships and family contacts. However, it is worth highlighting that Irish census statistics show that the number of adults aged 65 years and older who live alone **increased by 15% from 2011 to 2016**, to a figure of 156,799. The The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) has previously reported that more than 37% of people aged 50 and over feel lonely often or some of the time, and that this figure rises to 45% after the age of 74. This has been identified as a public health concern, with loneliness and isolation in later life shown to, among other things, increase the risk of dementia by two.

This project aims to explore how we can embrace the opportunity to live well as we age, and how we can take agency in co-designing neighbourhoods which maximise well-being and participation.

WHO CAN APPLY?

Emerging and established architects (collective and individual) based in Ireland (all island, Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland) are invited to apply. The opportunity is ideal for those who wish to further develop their co-design and participatory public engagement skills and experience. Interpretation of the word 'emerging' is open to applicants. It could mean that you have recently graduated, or that your practice has been established recently. You may also be a more established architect who would like to gain new skills in participatory public engagement and co-design.

Collectives applying may be previously established or newly formed for this commission. If you apply as a pair or a collective, the support and fee will be shared between you.

WHAT SUPPORT WILL BE OFFERED?

Each of the three selected architects/collectives will be supported by a mentor who is an architect and expert in participative design, with a view to developing the participants' co-design and public engagement approach.

Mentors have been chosen based on their extensive experience in the field of participative design, and include:

- **INKA DROHN**
Founder and Director at [archid](#), Berlin
- **DOUGAL SHERIDAN**
[LiD Architecture](#), Ireland / Berlin
- **ANTHONY ENGI MEACOCK**
[Assemble Studio](#), London

Additional mentorship and support will be provided at key stages by:

- **SELF ORGANISED ARCHITECTURE**
[Community-Led Housing](#) action research
- **JUDE TISDALL** and **MARIA BRENTON**
[Older Women's Cohousing](#), London
- **ROSIE LYNCH**
[Workhouse Union](#), Callan, Co.Kilkenny

SOA will also provide administrative support and will arrange public dissemination of the creative output in early 2023 - whether in person, online, or a combination of the two.

WHEN AND WHERE

Reimagining Elderhood takes place from May to December 2022 in Ireland. The final dissemination of project outputs will take place in early 2023. Specific project timelines will be devised by each selected architect, who will work over a series of engagements with a group that they have identified. SOA and the mentors will assist in this process.

SOA will be accepting applications from **any location across the country** [ie. all-island, Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland]. The opportunity is anticipated to involve time spent on remote work, direct community engagement, mentorship, and dissemination preparation throughout the programme of the project. The architects/collectives will be responsible for scheduling their own time.

The Reimagining Elderhood opportunity includes:

- **Hands-on co-design/participatory public engagement opportunity, led by the selected architects**
- **Architect fee of €7,000.00 per project (to be divided between participants if applying as a pair or collective)**
- **A series of mentorship engagements with architects (both international and local) who have specific expertise in participative and collaborative housing design**
- **Travel stipend of €200.00 per project**
- **Additional limited budget for exhibition materials (TBD based on agreed dissemination format)**
- **Access to expertise and mentorship of Self Organised Architecture (as required)**
- **Opportunity to share work as part of the final project dissemination (which may be live or online or a combination of both)**

Ultimately, the choice of community and processes of engagement will be determined by the selected architects, but SOA envisage that activities might include engagement workshops, research, drawing/ model-making, and analysis to realise 'future-proofed' place-making through innovative design approaches.

HOW TO APPLY

The deadline for applications is **Wednesday 20 April 2022 at 5pm**. To apply, submit the following to hello@soa.ie marked 'Reimagining Elderhood Proposal':

- 1. OUTLINE DESCRIPTION OF YOUR PROPOSAL** (no more than 1200 words), to include:
 - A brief outline of how you imagine you might approach this project.
 - A community (of place or interest) you would like to engage with during this project, and whether you already have contact with that group. (This could be a group that lives in or would like to live in a particular place, that has a background or interest that unites them, that is multigenerational and/or already beginning to engage in the area of future planning. Whether or not you have a contact with a particular group, SOA will work with you to identify and engage with a group that will fit your proposed project.)
 - A brief description of how your proposal will be feasible with respect to the available budget and timeline.
- 2. PROJECT PORTFOLIO** containing at least 3 examples of previous work
- 3. CV or BIOGRAPHY**
- 4. LETTER OF MOTIVATION** (no more than 500 words), describing why you are interested in taking part in this project.



SOA is committed to making our application process accessible to everyone. If you need to submit your application in an alternative format (for example by video or audio recording) please let us know in advance and we will work with you to find a suitable solution.

PROGRAMME OF KEY OPEN CALL DATES

LAUNCH OF OPEN CALL	09 th March 2022
ONLINE Q+A/COLLOQUIUM	23 rd March 2022 @ 7pm
FINAL FAQ UPDATES (ON SOA WEBSITE)	13 th April 2022
OPEN CALL APPLICATION DEADLINE	20 th April 2022 @ 5pm
JURY MEET TO EVALUATE APPLICATIONS	25 th April 2022
SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS NOTIFIED	09 th May 2022

HOW WILL SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS BE SELECTED?

Applications will be assessed by SOA Research and the mentors, based on factors including the track record of applicants, the feasibility of the proposal within the timeframe, and the anticipated richness of the proposed group engagement.

SCORING OF APPLICATIONS WILL BE WEIGHTED AS FOLLOWS:

- Richness of proposed project/approach Max 40 points
- Feasibility as a project Max 20 points
- Portfolio of previous work and experience Max 20 points
- Motivation of applicant to develop their co-design and participatory public engagement skills and experience Max 20 points

SOA are eager to ensure that there is a clear contrast and juxtaposition between the three successful projects. As such, in selecting the three successful proposals, consideration will be given to ensuring there is a clear variety between the three.

In order to clarify any queries in relation to the Open Call and selection process, SOA will hold an online Q+A session on the evening of **Wednesday 23rd March at 7pm**. Registration for the Q+A session is available [here](#). Responses to particularly relevant questions, received by email or via the Q+A process, may be added to the SOA website, so do check back to our FAQs section before you complete your application.

All applicants will be notified of the outcome by **9th May 2022**. We thank you in advance for putting your time and creativity into your application.

**REIMAGINING ELDERHOOD IS LED BY
SOA RESEARCH CLG AND FUNDED BY THE ARTS COUNCIL.**

