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<b>Title</b>	Private apartments in Dublin
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<b>Publication date</b>	1986
<b>Publication information</b>	Reynolds-Feighan, Aisling J. "Private Apartments in Dublin." Geographical Society of Ireland, 1986.
<b>Publisher</b>	Geographical Society of Ireland
<b>Item record/more information</b>	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10197/3052">http://hdl.handle.net/10197/3052</a>

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## Private Apartments in Dublin

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Purpose-built private apartments first appeared in Dublin in 1952, but have only become common in the last 10–15 years. This note describes the spatial patterns of private apartment developments in Dublin for the period 1952–1984 inclusive, and thus updates and expands on the work done by Holdship and Gillmor (1976). 'Apartments' are defined in the present context in the following way: an apartment scheme denotes a particular site containing at least one apartment block. These blocks are privately developed purpose-built (irrespective of whether for sale or for letting) and contain a minimum of three apartment units, each of which is arranged on one floor and has a common main entrance with at least one other unit. Data were collected from fieldwork, estate agents, the Electricity Supply Board, Dublin street directories, property sections in daily newspapers and files in the three local authority planning offices from the area. Considerable difficulties were encountered when attempting to examine patterns on a yearly basis, so much so that aggregation into roughly five year periods was necessary before a high degree of consistency was achieved. Periods selected were pre-1970 (which effectively relates to a five year period, as very few schemes were built before 1965), 1970–74, 1975–79 and 1980–84.

In December 1984, 237 apartment schemes were built or under construction in Dublin, containing 7409 apartment units. Their distribution is mapped in figure 1 while tables 1 & 2 describe their size (in terms of the number of units) and, at a very crude scale, their location by local authority area for the four time periods. The schemes tend to be concentrated in the urban area along major routeways. Specifically these occur in a 2 km band running inland from the coast, in an area just beyond the canal ring on the south side of the River Liffey (i.e. Ballsbridge/Donnybrook and Rathmines/Ranelagh) and also in a 1 km scatter paralleling the coastline to Dun Laoghaire. Minor clusters occur at Clontarf, and along or near to the axis defined by the former Harcourt line extending out beyond Dundrum. The two most significant growth areas since 1969 have been the north city, with the proportion of schemes increasing from 6.7% (2 schemes) in 1969 to 18.1% (43 schemes) in 1984, and the Dun Laoghaire Borough which had 3 schemes in

1969 (10%) and 45 schemes in 1984 (19%). In the 1970s, schemes started appearing on the west side of the city for the first time; they remain few in number in 1984 with 2 schemes at Castleknock, one at Blackhorse Avenue (off Navan Road) and one each at Inchicore and Walkinstown. On figure 1 there is a noticeable absence of schemes in an area of 1 km radius from the General Post Office; in the 1980s some developments have occurred in areas just bordering this retailing core, possibly as a result of provisions in the Dublin Development Plan, which required a 20% residential component in some new office redevelopments, particularly in the postal district of Dublin 2. The acceleration in the number of schemes being built since 1970 may be attributed generally to structural demographic changes, provision of larger areas of serviced land suitable for housing, and an economic environment which promoted growth in the building

TABLE 1

Number of Units in each scheme

Units	Number of schemes (%)			
	1969	1974	1979	1984
<20	13 (43.3)	29 (41.5)	62 (40.8)	98 (41.4)
20-39	9 (30.0)	25 (35.7)	54 (35.5)	78 (32.9)
40-59	3 (10.0)	8 (11.4)	20 (13.2)	32 (13.5)
60-79	4 (13.4)	6 (8.6)	10 (6.6)	14 (5.9)
80-99	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	4 (2.6)	8 (3.4)
>100	1 (3.3)	1 (1.4)	2 (1.3)	7 (2.9)
Total	30 (100)	70 (100)	152 (100)	237 (100)
Average (units per scheme)	37.6	31.8	30.4	31.3

TABLE 2

Location of schemes by Local Authority area

Local Authority area	Number of schemes (%)			
	1969	1974	1979	1984
Dublin Corporation	26 (86.7)	56 (80.0)	113 (74.3)	177 (74.7)
—North City	2	6	21	43
—South City	24	50	92	134
Dublin County	1 (3.3)	3 (4.3)	8 (5.2)	15 (6.3)
—North County	0	0	1	2
—South County	1	3	7	13
Dun Laoghaire Borough	3 (10.0)	11 (15.7)	31 (20.5)	45 (19.0)
Total	30	70	152	237

industry. Specifically, it may be attributed to the freeing of legal and institutional restrictions, which hampered purchase of units until this date and thus initiated a new 'sales' market. All units built before 1970 were for letting only — the rental market declined during the 1970s, until, a decade later, section 23 of the 1981 Finance Act offered tax benefits as an incentive to invest in this subsector. This section of the act entitled the purchaser of an apartment unit to considerable tax relief if the unit was rented out. These tax benefits could be extended to other properties also rented out by the purchaser.

The average number of units per scheme declined from 37.6 in 1969 to 30.3 in 1979. The small increase in this mean in the 1980–84 period is attributable to the 7 schemes of at least 80 units built during the period. There is a relatively constant proportion of schemes in each of the size categories in table 1 over the four periods. It is worth noting that the largest scheme in Dublin was built in 1955 at Mespil Road/Sussex Road and consists of some 300 units, explaining the high mean figure for the first period. The spatial extent of these differences can be described as regular (fig. 1), with for example, the largest schemes distributed in a pattern similar, but obviously on a smaller scale, to that described earlier for all schemes in 1984.

Examining the patterns temporally, figures 2, 3 and 4 illustrate the evolution of the trends just described. The maps are overlaid by the 2 km National Grid for ease of comparison. There was a total of 1129 units in Dublin in 1969, with only the one scheme exceeding 100 units. In this period all but 2 of the 30 schemes lay south of the River Liffey, with 24 (80%) in a concentrated cluster centred on Ballsbridge/Donnybrook. In subsequent periods this pattern is reinforced, although by 1974 the outward spread is noticeable. The increase in the proportion of schemes on the north side of the river is still marginal (2%) by 1974, while in the Dun Laoghaire Borough a 6% increase had occurred.

By December 1979, the total number of schemes in Dublin had more than doubled on the 1974 stock; 82 new schemes were built and the total number of units stood at 4618. The central core at Ballsbridge/Donnybrook now extends over Dublin 4 and 6 — essentially the southern inner suburbs. This expansion was in contrast to the private housing stock in general which declined considerably through the 1960s and 1970s. Typically the housing stock was quite old; all of the areas comprising postal districts Dublin 2, 4 and 6 for example, in 1961 had at least half of their stock built before 1940, and significant tracts had over half

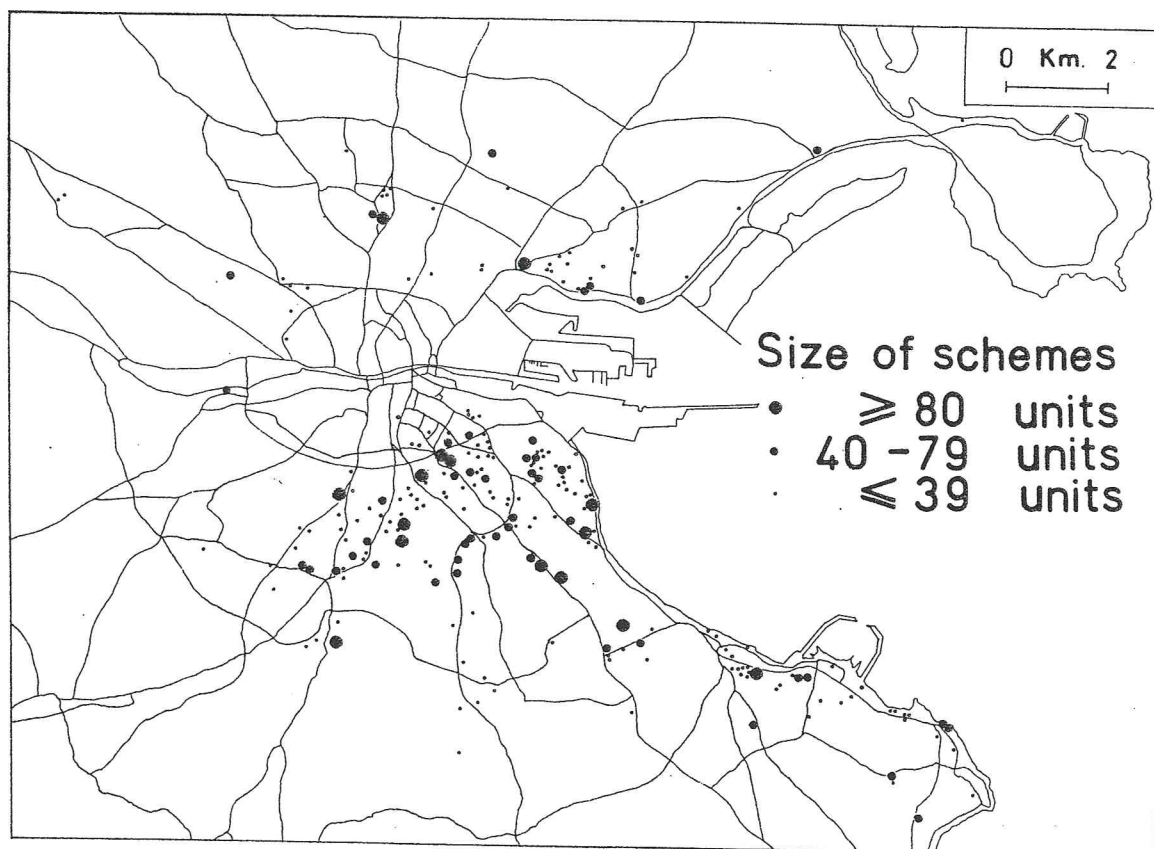


Fig. 1. Private Apartments in Dublin, 1984.



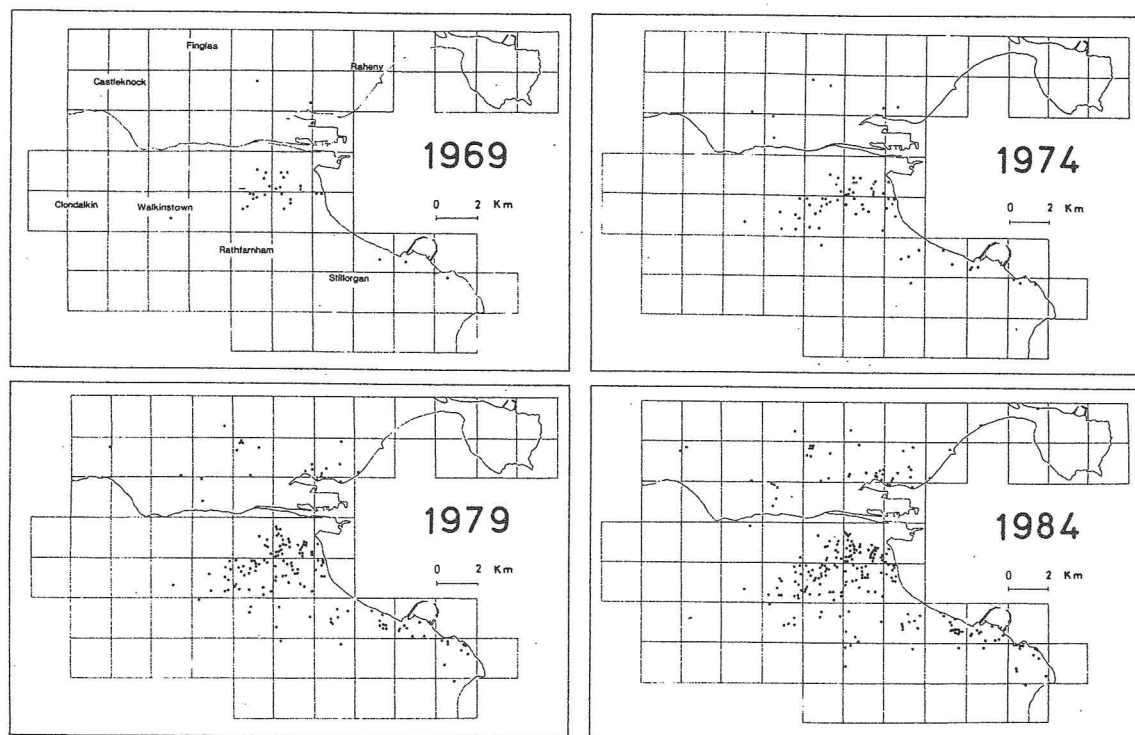


Fig. 2. Private Apartment Schemes, 1969-1984.

that stock built before 1900. By the 1960s many of these properties had very high valuations given both the extent of the property and buildings and its location. The post 1960 period saw a rise in the demand for office space and Dublin 2 and 4 saw the

greatest activity in these terms. The purpose-built apartment, because of its high density form, developed in areas bordering or alongside new offices. The simultaneous outward spread to the suburbs is observed most obviously in the graph of figure 3, and

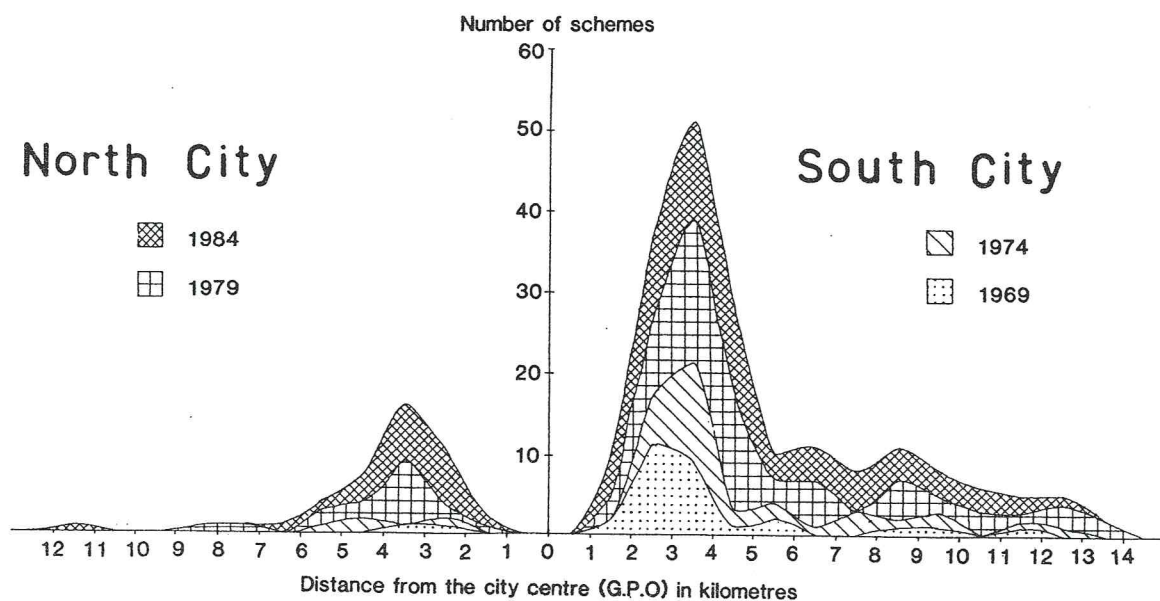


Fig. 3. Distribution of Apartment Schemes in relation to the City Centre.

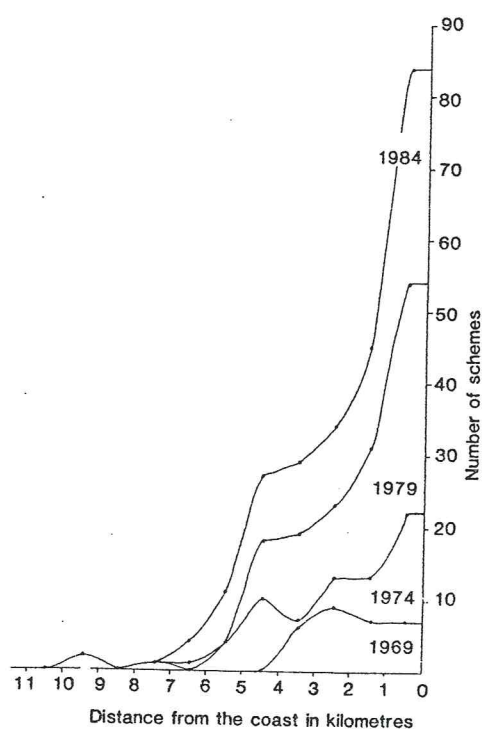


Fig. 4. Distribution of Apartment Schemes in relation to the Coast.

also in terms of the gain in the proportion of schemes in the north city area and in the Dun Laoghaire Borough.

A further 85 schemes had been added to the apartment stock by the end of 1984, a marginal increase of 3 schemes (414 units) on the last time period, so that the pace of expansion seems to be levelling off. The proportion of larger schemes (i.e. schemes of 80 or more units) increased slightly, along with a 5% increase in the proportion of schemes north of the river. Looking again at figure 3, the concentration of schemes in the area lying 3-4 km from the G.P.O. is now well established on the north side of the River as well as the south side.

Table 3 summarises the previous land use of the sites on which apartment schemes are located, in three categories, namely residential, where the structure was demolished; residential, where the structure has been retained; and, 'vacant sites'. The first two categories are reasonably distinct and self-explanatory; the latter category consists of a considerable mix. Sites in this group include large scale vacant sites (such as the former Royal Dublin Society property off Serpentine Avenue); former schools and their grounds (six in all, for example St. Fintan's, Sutton); religious orders' land (the former 'Trabquilla' convent on Cowper Road is typical); former sports grounds (such as Palmerston Rugby Football Club on Milltown Road) and some small private sites. Clearly sites with demolished residences account for the the largest amount of land made available for apartment development, but the

TABLE 3

Land Use	Previous land use of schemes			
	Number of schemes in percentages			
	1969	1974	1979	1984
Residential (Building demolished)	83.3	72.9	67.8	62.0
Residential (Building retained)	10.0	22.9	21.1	24.5
'Vacant Sites' (See text)	6.7	4.2	11.1	13.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(Sources: planning applications; street directories; fieldwork)

proportion of such sites has fallen by 20% in the 15 years since 1969. The growth in 'retained residence' sites reflects a willingness, whether voluntary or involuntary, on the part of these proprietors to intensify use of the site. This type of development may offer owners of larger houses an alternative to selling-out because of the increasingly high maintenance costs or taxes associated therewith. Alternatively, there has been a number of cases where the original house was converted from a single dwelling to multi-dwelling building, and then sold or rented out along with the new apartment block(s). Raglan Hall on Clyde Road is a case in point. Cross tabulations of previous land use with the location of schemes in respect of distance from the city centre revealed little if any trend in the distribution. For example, 60% of the 'residential-demolished' sites were located within 5 km of the city centre — but then 68.4% of all schemes were within this distance. Similarly, 66% of vacant sites were also within this band.

While collecting data, the high profile of small building firms in the apartment market was noted. A detailed probing of the market's 'supply-structure' would provide useful insights into the increasing popularity of apartments in the current recession. The apartment stock accounts for less than 0.5% of the total housing stock in Dublin, but in terms of new private housing built in the region, apartments accounted for 17% of the increment in 1983 (the most successful year to date, in term of 'starts').

Future developments may be expected to continue occurring in the inner suburbs north and south of the River Liffey: the number of schemes to the west of the city and in the central business area may be expected to remain small. The tendency to locate near the coast is also likely to continue. Apartments are expected to maintain their importance as a redevelopment feature in these areas, with concentration, rather than an outward spread, dominating the pattern.

### Reference

- HOLDSHIP, J. A. and GILLMOR, D. A. (1976) Private apartments in Dublin, *Irish Geography*, 9, 123-128.