

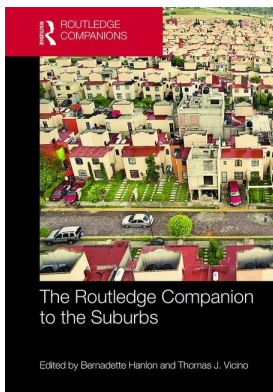
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### Suburbanization in Europe

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# Suburbanization in Europe

## A focus on Dublin

*Ruth McManus*

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### Dublin: setting the scene

The ancient city of Dublin, set against the stunning natural backdrop of Dublin Bay to the east, rich farmland to the north, and the dramatic skyline of the mountains to the south, is blessed with an attractive hinterland. Although the authorities celebrated the city's millennium in 1988, its origins go back much farther. The early Christian ecclesiastical settlement at the River Liffey predates the establishment of a semi-permanent Viking encampment in 841 (Simms, 2001). With the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1171, Dublin became capital of the English Lordship in Ireland, and its development since that date can be seen within this colonial context.

Medieval Dublin was walled and, like most similar towns, was extensively developed beyond these walls (Simms, 2001, p. 50). Clarke (1998) has suggested that some 80 percent of Dubliners in the early-fourteenth century lived outside the town walls. The archbishop and major monastic houses held large tracts of suburban land, known as "liberties," with ecclesiastical and municipal authorities competing at times. Such competition, though with different players, would be a recurrent theme in Dublin's suburban development.

Waves of outward movement continued in subsequent centuries as the city evolved from a walled medieval city to an elegant Georgian one. Economic prosperity and political change, notably the 1661 reinstatement of an Irish parliament in Dublin and the arrival of the Duke of Ormonde as viceroy five years later, set the stage for a development boom. By the 1680s, Dublin Corporation, the municipal authority, expressed concern that the area outside the walls was greater than that within them, potentially leaving the city exposed to attack, although unlike many continental cities it did not fortify its suburbs (Sheridan, 2001, p. 75). New speculative development shifted northwards and eastwards to private estates centered on Henrietta Street and Sackville Mall (now O'Connell Street) and later to the southeastern sector of the city (see Figure 7.1). The resultant fragmentation of the urban landscape, with poor connectivity between the various estates and the medieval core, ultimately required a radical solution. That came with the 1757 creation of Europe's first formal planning authority, the Wide Streets Commission, which brought order and cohesion to Dublin through a process of street widening and new street creation (Sheridan, 2001, p. 69). The need for formal intervention to curb or repair the excesses of uncoordinated and unregulated speculative development is another recurring feature of Dublin's suburban

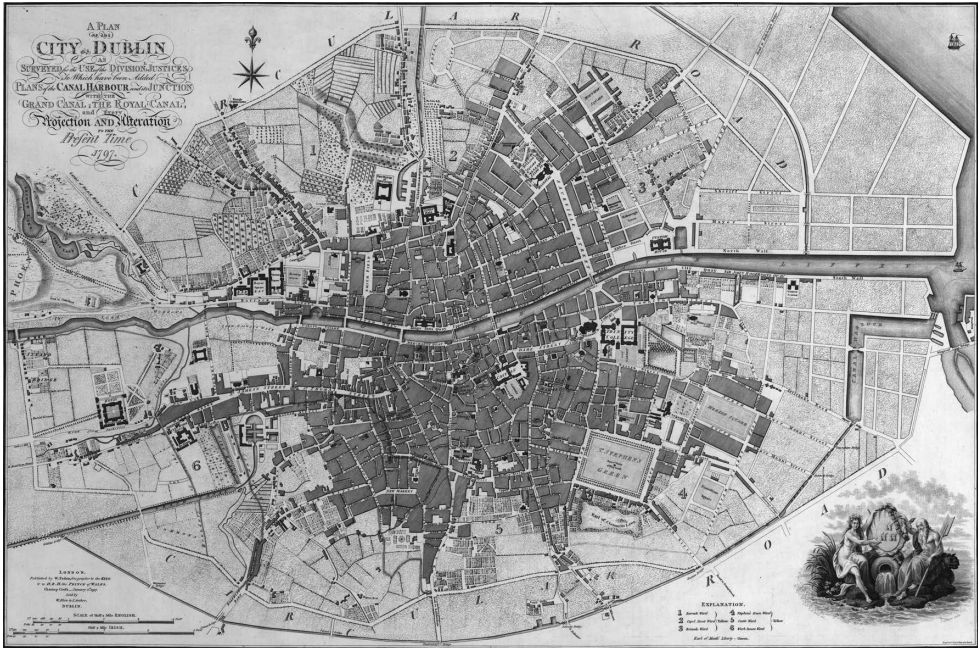


Figure 7.1 Faden map of Dublin

Source: Library of Congress, Geography, and Map Division

development. Concern at the scale of suburban expansion is not a recent phenomenon. In 1786, an anonymous pamphlet sent to parliament argued for the improvement of existing areas such as Temple Bar rather than promoting suburban expansion towards Ringsend, Donnybrook or Ballybough (Ó Gráda, 2015, p. 102).

The city's relationship with its surroundings evolved during the Georgian era, a period of affluence associated with the successive reigns of Kings George I to IV (1714 to 1830), as new landscapes of leisure were created in the urban hinterland. Seaside areas such as Howth, Blackrock, and Clontarf were developed, initially as areas of resort and summer lodging, for bathing and taking the sea air, but increasingly for permanent residence (Lennon, 2014; Ó Gráda, 2015). Suburban villas for better-off residents began to proliferate at a further remove from the city, often within reach of the sea breeze and with distant views of the bay. This development has been associated with a range of factors, including an increasing desire for single-family houses and social exclusivity, a growing ability and willingness to commute, the Romantic movement and taste for the picturesque, and perceptions of the health benefits of seaside resorts and rural air. Such villas could combine these many benefits with access to the city for association (Ó Gráda, 2015). Improving communications, including better roads and an expanded postal service, attested to existing suburban growth and acted as stimuli for further development. Nevertheless, this leading edge of development still generally took the form of “country” villas whose occupants also enjoyed the benefits of a “town” house; for example, Lord Charlemont kept a town house at Rutland Square and country residence at Marino. Therefore, the extent to which these dwellings for the elite in the urban hinterland were truly “suburban” is debatable.

These early phases of Dublin's suburban development echo Thompson's observations (1982, p. 2) that “there were suburbs long before the nineteenth century in the sense of places beyond city

limits, the outskirts of towns hanging on to the central area physically and economically.” He has pointed to the increasing desirability of suburban residences in London from the middle of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, in Dublin as in London, it was not until the early-nineteenth century that modern suburban development got underway on a significant scale.

### *Dublin’s Victorian suburban experience*

By the end of the eighteenth century, Dublin was one of the premier European cities, frequently claimed as the second city of the British Empire. Its economic success related to its position both within Ireland and the colonial context. Dublin was Ireland’s leading port, a national center of distribution, location of the higher law courts, financial services and higher education, as well as a political and social center due to the presence of a vice-regal court and national legislature (Dickson, 2001). Political, economic, and social change following the Act of Union (1801), which transferred power from the Dublin-based parliament to Westminster and thereby reduced the city’s status, was to have ongoing repercussions for both city and suburbs, discussed later. The nineteenth century saw major expansion, as the city’s population increased by over 43 percent and new middle-class residential suburbs were established (Daly, 1984). From about mid-century, the city began to experience the same impetus towards suburbanization that characterized most European cities at this time. The suburban trend was generally associated with the increasing separation of home and workplace, the expansion of the middle classes, the desire to move from the increasingly polluted and impoverished industrial city, advances in transport technology that made commuting more feasible, and the ongoing speculative development process, facilitated by mass production in the building industry. In the case of Dublin, these common processes played out against a very particular socio-religious and political backdrop, which gave Dublin’s suburbs a unique character.

Dublin remained a small, relatively compact city well into the nineteenth century. The city was almost entirely enclosed by the North and South Circular Roads, which were bordered for much of their 9-mile length by two canals (the Royal, to the north, and the Grand, to the south). This enclosed an area slightly over three miles long by two miles wide, comprising 3,800 acres (O’Brien, 1982). Early-nineteenth-century maps reveal ribbon development along the main routes out of the city, but even by mid-century Dublin’s exclusive suburbs were no more than one or two miles from the city center. The opening of the railway from Dublin to Kingstown (now Dún Laoghaire) in 1834 facilitated the creation of coastal suburbs at picturesque locations in Dalkey, Killiney, Blackrock, and exclusive Monkstown, although many of the fine villas erected there were occupied only seasonally (see Figure 7.2).

Dublin’s suburban exodus resulted in increasing social and spatial segregation, as single-class residential areas emerged, particularly to the south of the Grand Canal in Ballsbridge, Donnybrook, Rathmines, and Rathgar. The available research suggests that growth in the city area reversed in the 1830s, while the suburban population grew by one-fifth between 1821 and 1841. This suburban growth was most marked along the coastline to the southeast, with a population increase of just under 44 percent in the area that embraced Pembroke, Blackrock, and Kingstown (Dickson, 2001). Indeed, bourgeois Dublin continued to relocate outside the municipal boundaries, with a particular flight from the older parts of the city leading to dereliction in the Liberties area. As the better-off residents moved to the suburbs, vacating their single-family residences, impoverished rural to urban migrants who continued to stream into the city re-occupied these now-subdivided houses, known as tenements (Prunty, 2001). Over time the city became increasingly associated with poverty and slum conditions, while the upper echelons of society who resided elsewhere could, in the words of Engels (1845), avoid the “misery and grime which form the complement of their wealth.”



Figure 7.2 Seaside villas of Dublin

Source: Ruth McManus

Dublin's new suburbs in the Victorian era were constituted as independently governed entities, known as "townships," through the enactment of private legislation in Westminster. Thus, middle-class suburbanization brought about municipal independence and had financial as well as territorial implications. Suburban residents could avoid the disrepair, pollution, and increasing dereliction of the city, and enjoy healthier surroundings away from its unhealthy population, while also avoiding the financial costs of municipal taxation that supported workhouses, hospitals, and police. Although the nature and style of development, and the avoidance of what was perceived as an increasingly unsavory central city, were familiar to other cities, the continued political independence of Dublin's suburbs was unique, for reasons described as follows.

### Social class, religion, and political persuasion

The interaction of class, religion, and politics had a very direct bearing on the development of Dublin's suburbs. After Catholic Emancipation (1829) and legislation in 1840 that allowed a wider franchise, power shifted in Dublin Corporation. Protestant big business members were becoming a minority, while the increase in the Catholic middle class was reflected in the composition of the Corporation, which became more liberal and nationalist (Barry, 2011). After 1841, when Nationalist leader Daniel O'Connell became the first Roman Catholic lord mayor since the 1600s, there was an additional impetus to suburbanization, with many Protestant and Unionist citizens choosing to find refuge in the independently governed Tory suburban townships to the south of the city (Daly, 1984; Dickson, 2001; Ó Maitiú, 2003). The city was thereby deprived of their financial backing (through the system of rates) as well as their political influence. In some ways, the decision to avoid the jurisdiction of Dublin

Corporation resulted in a self-selecting system of “apartheid” among the Unionist and Protestant middle classes. There was a perception that the suburbs would offer a “well-ordered genteel environment away from the slums and the perceived unresponsive and high-taxing Corporation” (Barry, 2011, p. 50).

Ó Maitiú (2003, p. 15) highlighted the “complex socio-religious gulf between city and suburbs.” While middle-class flight to the suburbs was common across cities of the United Kingdom during the nineteenth century, he points to the religious and political complexion of the social gulf between those left behind in the neglected city center and the businessmen, officials, and clerks who moved to Dublin’s suburbs. In particular, the two southern “townships” of Rathmines and Pembroke provided fine residential environments where the “Protestant and unionist Dublin middle-class could evade the unpleasant reality that they were a minority which was increasingly losing political control in both Ireland and in the city of Dublin” (Daly, 1984, p. 123). In Dublin, suburban disconnection from the city was, significantly, not simply a response to changing residential fashions, but also a deliberate choice to disengage socially and politically from a hostile city. “Within a ten mile radius, eight town halls represented their different communities” (Wallace, 2012, p. 934).

### The speculative development process

The landscape impact of suburbanization was variously interpreted positively, as progress, or negatively, as despoilization of the countryside. In 1859, the newly established *Dublin Builder* trade newspaper described the rapid transformation occurring at the city’s edges where

we find the same steady march in the path of improvement . . . where villas, single, and semi-detached, terraces &c., are springing up with an almost fairy-like rapidity, and the green sward speedily gives way to macadamized roads and populated thoroughfares, justifying the supposition that there is a universal move in that direction.

*(Dublin Builder, 1 Nov 1859)*

The suburban development process, as outlined by a witness to an 1885 housing inquiry, involved small-scale speculative operators, many of them new to the building trade (see Figure 7.3).

It is not large capitalists that build these houses, but small builders and enterprising industrious artisans. . . . When they have a little money, they come to me and get a plot of ground, and I get them a loan of money; and they build houses; and then, when they are built, they are sold to small capitalists, also men with savings of £400 or £500, grocers and butchers, and that class of people.

*(Comment by Edward McMahon in Third Report of Her Majesty’s Commissioners for Inquiring into the Housing of the Working Classes Ireland, 1885, p. 97, para. 24,603; see Great Britain, 1885)*

The development of Dublin’s Victorian suburbs was broadly similar to that described by Dyos (1961) for London’s Camberwell. While smaller suburban dwellings retained the urban terraced form, a new suburban-style of house form also emerged during this era. Where wider plots and greater setbacks were available, houses were separated into pairs, resulting in a semi-detached building model with gardens front and rear (Galavan, 2013). This new house style was to become the standard preferred model for Irish suburban residents to the present day (McManus, 2011).



*Figure 7.3* House variety on Hollybank Road, Drumcondra, built in the late nineteenth century

Source: Ruth McManus

### Specific suburbs: the various township experiences

The eight independent suburbs of Dublin each had a unique character. To the south, the neighboring suburbs of Rathmines (founded 1847) and Pembroke (founded 1863) between them had about half the total suburban population, whereas the northern townships of Drumcondra (founded 1878) and Clontarf (founded 1869) never reached critical mass. New Kilmainham was the only working-class township. The railway-dependent townships of Blackrock, Kingstown, Dalkey, and Killiney were far beyond the city and remained relatively secluded with low population growth.

Pembroke township, to the southeast of Dublin city center, comprised almost 1600 acres to the coast, including existing fishing villages at Ringsend and Irishtown, and south to Ballsbridge, Donnybrook, and Merrion. Much of the land (seven-ninths according to the Exham Commission in 1881) was owned by the paternalistic Fitzwilliam/Pembroke family, whose agent was an ex-officio commissioner. Development was strictly controlled through the leasehold system, ensuring that the area generally retained a high-status profile. The estate subsidized the costs of the town hall, main drainage, technical school, and parks. Pembroke attracted professional and wealthier classes, and it had a substantial Protestant population. It maintained its independence until 1930 when it was incorporated into the city along with neighboring Rathmines. The high quality of the built fabric with its substantial houses on tree-lined roads has ensured that the area has retained its social cachet into the present day.

Rathmines became a township in 1847 and was extended on three subsequent occasions, so that by 1880 it included Rathgar and Milltown, with a land area of over 1,700 acres. Development

was organized along purely speculative lines, as detailed by Daly (1984), and catered to the wealthier section of society. Individuals laid out roads and prepared sites that were then leased in small units. This small-scale and piecemeal development process resulted in a varied landscape with a wide assortment of house styles and streets that took years or even decades to complete (Brady, 2001). The township commissioners were members of the building trades or professional men who favored low property taxes (rates) to encourage development at the expense of services. The city's first tramline in 1872 ran to Rathmines from the city center and seems certain to have spurred development. Toward the end of the century, development began to focus on smaller houses at higher densities, in recognition of the growing demand for suburban dwellings among the clerical population of the city, who were also being catered to by the Drumcondra township.

The relatively high-status areas established at Pembroke and Rathmines gradually expanded outwards over time as the built-up area grew in size. However, they retained their status as they grew, so that in the present day, the legacy of the township era remains in the social geography of the higher status "south side" (predominantly Dublin's southeastern suburbs). To the north side of the city, middle-class enclaves did not develop to the same extent during the nineteenth century. A combination of reasons has been enumerated (Ó Gráda, 2015; Brady, 2001; Lennon, 2014) including the prevalence of toll roads, changing fashions favoring the south side, the rundown nature of the city's northern side, the prevalence of institutional land use and the insalubrious sloblands at Fairview. Both Drumcondra and Clontarf, to the north and northeast of the city, respectively, developed later and failed to achieve the degree of critical mass evident in the southern townships. Slow, incremental development in a piecemeal fashion was once again the norm, as seen in the work of particular builders such as Alexander Strain (McManus, 2002). Coastal Clontarf, which was largely controlled by the Vernon family, similar to the role played by the Pembroke estate in the township of the same name, grew slowly. Amenities were limited and the challenges to provide drainage to this extensive area, given its low base of rate-payers, were ultimately used as the definitive argument in bringing the township under city control in 1900.

### Independence or annexation?

By 1899, it was being argued that Dublin was the only major city in Britain and Ireland that had not had its area extended during the previous half-century (O'Brien, 1982). The local government system confined an increasingly impoverished city within outdated boundaries, while most of the better-off, with their higher rate-paying capacity, lived in independently governed locations yet within easy reach of the city (Brady, 2001). The inequity arose from the fact that these suburbanites, over 45,000 of whom came to the city daily for work, shopping, and business, could also enjoy the many services and facilities of the city without paying for them. The valuation of the city would increase by 50 percent (£350,000) if the townships were incorporated. Increasingly, arguments of efficiency and economy were used to demand a centralization of municipal services in the greater Dublin area. Already in the early 1880s the Exham Commission (the Municipal Boundaries Commission [Ireland]) had endorsed the Corporation's proposal to annex the townships to the city proper, rejecting the claims of those "who enjoy all the advantages and escape many of the disadvantages of the citizens" (quoted in O'Brien, 1982, p. 15). The persistence of a fragmented suburban governance system denied Dublin Corporation badly needed revenue to address poverty and poor housing in the city area, while also preventing holistic management of development. Nevertheless, opposition to annexation was fierce, as seen in the evidence given to subsequent inquiries in 1899 and 1926 (Brady, 2014). The less powerful townships of Drumcondra, Clontarf, and Kilmainham were absorbed along with part of the county area in 1900, doubling the spatial extent of the city from 3,733 to 7,911 acres



and adding 30,000 people, but securing a far smaller income potential than that of the surviving independent entities of Rathmines and Pembroke. While there was a general distrust of Dublin Corporation and its inefficiencies, as Wallace (2012) demonstrated, resistance to annexation in Clontarf, Rathmines, and Pembroke rested on a principle of Unionist self-government. In preserving their independence, the latter two suburbs continued to express their residents' British and middle-class identity. Whereas the Free State government dissolved the long-time Nationalist Dublin Municipal Council in 1925, Rathmines and Pembroke survived until 1930, perhaps offering some comfort and reassurance to suburban Unionists at a time of unprecedented social and political upheaval (Wallace, 2012).

### *Twentieth-century mass suburbanization and its implications*

Dublin evolved from a still-compact city at the start of the twentieth century to a hugely expanded suburbanized and globalized city-region by its end (Horner, 1999). In the nineteenth century, Dublin's suburbs had generally been the preserve of the better-off and their servants, but during the twentieth century suburbs were provided for everyone (McManus, 2002, 2003). Suburban rehousing of the working classes was largely a response to the processes that had played out in the previous century, whereby the middle classes had left the city and its worsening slums. It can also be understood in the context, from 1922, of a newly independent state that promoted home ownership and improved housing quality. Dublin's suburbs had an uneasy relationship with a planning system largely adopted from the UK and never fully accepted.

The seeds for Dublin's mass suburbanization in the twentieth century had been sown in the nineteenth century. By the early decades of the twentieth century, there was an acknowledged need to address the appalling conditions of the working classes. Many of these residents resided in tenements and suffered from overcrowded, subdivided decaying homes of the former aristocracy. This process became associated with the modern town planning movement (Bannon, 1985). The garden city influence was strong, with Patrick Abercrombie's competition-winning plan for the city (1914, published 1922) demonstrating the potential for low-density housing (at a suburban norm of 12 houses per acre) to radically alter the population's living arrangements. The competition took place against the backdrop of a housing inquiry undertaken in October 1913, in response to the public outcry following a tenement collapse in which seven people died. The Inquiry's findings left no doubt as to the dire situation. Almost 14,000 houses were urgently required and, given the limited availability of sites and perceived desirability of a fresh start in healthy surroundings, the commissioners recommended that these be located in suburban areas. Opponents, including some members of the Dublin Corporation Housing Committee, argued strongly that many city center residents would not wish to leave their communities or afford the additional transport costs to their work. Ultimately, however, the construction of suburban housing for the working classes became a pillar of the city's housing policy. Indeed, central area flat (apartment) complexes were provided only for those who could not afford the additional costs involved in living in the suburbs. One result of the policy was increased segregation among the working classes. In the longer term, the decentralization of the population was followed by suburbanization of business, retailing, and industry by the second half of the century, with negative effects for the inner-city.

### **Dublin suburbs after national independence (1922)**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, despite the developments of the nineteenth century and the social, political, and psychological importance of the suburbs to Dubliners, the city remained relatively compact. In 1911, almost 88 percent of Dublin county's urban population

lived within four miles of the city center; this only changed significantly after 1936 (Horner, 1999). The shift toward lower-density housing for all classes was linked to the perceived importance of the modern town planning movement, itself largely associated with the garden city and garden suburb idea, in providing a solution to the slum problem.

The decision to build garden suburbs from the 1920s reflected the spirit of the age and Dublin's involvement in broader international trends (Kincaid, 2006). A further impetus to construct high quality suburbs for Dublin's working classes came with national independence in 1922. The Marino garden suburb was clearly intended as a model for others to follow, but also as a signal that the new Irish Free State would do better than the previous administration in tackling its citizens' housing problems (McManus, 2002). New housing schemes had the added benefit of providing much-needed employment in construction. As low-density suburban housing was favored, it is not surprising that the built-up area of the city began to grow significantly (Horner, 1999). In the working-class suburbs built by Dublin Corporation in the 1920s, home ownership was being promoted for the first-time through a tenant-purchase system. Kincaid (2006) suggests that both politicians and planners of the new state were middle class in their outlook and saw suburbs as capable of promoting values such as property ownership, self-reliance, and financial frugality among the working-class population. Certainly, the government preference for suburban housing and owner occupation promoted a stable society and responsible citizens (McManus, 2003).

### Social segregation in twentieth-century suburbs

By mid-century, the decanting of the population from central areas to newly emerging suburbs was an established practice, not just for the middle classes but also for all members of society. This mass suburbanization did not necessarily imply increased social mixing. In general, the private speculatively developed middle-class suburbs avoided the location of new social housing suburbs provided by the city authorities, although some limited social mixing arose through the application of a "reserved areas" policy typically at the edges of the new Corporation "schemes" (McManus, 2002). To the city's south, where the pattern of middle-class respectability had already been largely laid down in the nineteenth century, there was limited scope for the city authorities to build large estates, although social housing was built at Crumlin and Kimmage to the southwest of the city in the 1930s and 1940s. By contrast, the picture to the city's north was less clear-cut (Brady, 2016). Here there had been more limited development and therefore greater tracts of land remained available for construction. The social geography became much more mixed, with smaller pockets of middle-class housing interspersed with local authority (Dublin Corporation) housing estates, a pattern that has persisted to the present.

By the 1960s, suburban housing dominated the capital. The residual city center population was increasingly elderly, socially excluded, unemployed, and impoverished, residing in poor quality, privately rented accommodation or in the local authority flat complexes that had been a feature of the 1930s as well as the 1950s and 1960s. Like many Western cities, economic forces conspired with the existing centrifugal forces to cause a hollowing out of the central population.

### Fifty years from Dublin's planned "new towns" to exurban sprawl

Despite the early-twentieth-century interest in town planning associated with the garden suburb ideal and limited application of planning legislation in the 1930s, urban planning and development control were relatively weak in Ireland until the introduction of the 1963 Planning Act. The newly independent state remained relatively rural (the tipping point where over 50 percent of the population was urbanized was not reached until the 1970s), with a weak economy, where

construction was generally viewed positively because of its job creation potential. Furthermore, the Irish constitution of 1937 generally promoted property rights, going so far as to guarantee “to pass no law attempting to abolish the right of private ownership or the general right to transfer, bequeath, and inherit property” (Article 43.1.2). The overwhelming support for private property, at the expense of the common good, can perhaps be attributed to Ireland’s post-colonial sensibilities. Whatever the cause, it had negative implications for development control.

While emigration remained a feature of Irish life until the 1990s, Dublin’s population continued to grow throughout the twentieth century because of rural to urban migration. Many new suburbanites therefore had rural roots and both desired and expected to live in a house with its own garden. A 1967 study remarked on the “obsession with the land” that saw a preference for single-family houses with gardens (see McManus, 2012). The attractions of a pastoral ideology remain important in the constitution of new suburbs into the twenty-first century, helping to inculcate a sense of place (Corcoran, 2010). The expectation of home ownership was also a factor, associated with the land struggle and thus another legacy of Ireland’s colonial experience, which probably contributed to the typical suburban-style. Until the 1970s, the sale of private flats (apartments) to tenants or availability of mortgages for the same was problematic (McManus, 2012).

By the time that effective town plans were being introduced in the late 1960s, the suburban housing preference was well-established. Under the Myles Wright advisory report and development plan for the Dublin region published in 1967, growth would now be directed into four (later three) “new towns” to the west of the city, Tallaght, Blanchardstown, Lucan, and Clondalkin. However, given their scale and distance from the capital, these “new towns” (based around existing settlements) never became truly independent of the city, as was the case with their British antecedents. Instead, as implemented in the 1970 Dublin City Development Plan, the outcome can be seen as an acceleration of suburbanizing tendencies. Again, the characteristic suburban-style housing with its low densities, single-family houses of a standard type, with gardens front and rear, remained the favored type. This preference also hampered the provision of services, particularly public transport, contributing to sprawl and social isolation for non-car owners (MacLaran, 1993).

The impact of the Wright plan was effectively the intensification of the existing suburbanization processes. Inner-city residents were rehoused in single-class local authority housing schemes in the “new towns” (effectively suburbs) of Blanchardstown, Tallaght, and Lucan/Clondalkin. As a result, the socio-demographic structure of the inner area changed dramatically. Its population was already in decline, but now there was a reduction in families with children, a disproportionate concentration of the elderly and those in the lowest socioeconomic groups, and relatively few owner-occupiers. Overall, the population of the area within the canals/circular roads dropped by more than half between 1961 and 1991, to just 76,558 (see Census 1991, Vol. 1, Table 13 in Central Statistics Office, 1993).

A range of studies have charted Irish population growth and demonstrated Dublin’s ongoing magnetic effect as a primate city from the 1960s onward, despite some government attempts at regional dispersal (Horner, 1999; Lutz, 2001). Although Dublin remains a major focus of population (about one-third of the national population) as well as economic opportunity, increasingly both have been suburbanized within an ever-expanding greater Dublin region. The 1970s witnessed five- and six-fold population increases in many places beyond the main built-up area, for example at Portmarnock, Malahide, Leixlip, and Celbridge, where suburban housing estates were built for commuters. Relatively slow change due to economic recession and high emigration in the 1980s was followed by major transformations in the 1990s as the population grew and there was a significant shift to smaller household sizes. For the first-time in the 1990s, urban renewal

policies targeting the inner-city led to an increase in population of the city center, reversing the trend of decline evident since 1936. At the same, private developers began to construct city center apartment blocks aimed at the middle classes. Nevertheless, research has shown that most apartment dwellers in Dublin aspire to future suburban residence, while the scale of urban renewal-fueled central development was not sufficient to counter ever-increasing suburban centrifugal movement. Indeed, by the turn of the millennium, a series of studies and reports demonstrated that Dublin's position as a primate city within Ireland had strengthened, with significant impacts on its rapidly suburbanizing and ever-enlarging hinterland (Department of the Environment and Local Government, 2000, Horner, 1999). Although the city's innovative urban renewal policies were viewed internationally as being relatively successful, inadequate management of peripheral development was resulting in an acceleration of suburban sprawl (Williams and Shiels, 2000).

During the 1990s, it became evident that Dublin-related suburban-type development was incorporating even more distant locations into a functional relationship with the city, requiring ever-longer commutes for workers. New suburban-style housing estates generally replicated the building type found in Dublin's suburbs, but were located at a greater remove from the capital, including the outskirts of smaller villages that had not previously experienced large amounts of construction. Examples of the former include "Dublin suburbs" in Rochfortbridge, Co. Westmeath and Gorey, Co. Wexford, while the latter can be found at Clonard and Robinstown (Meath), Prosperous (Kildare), Baltinglass (Wicklow) and Collon (Louth). Corcoran (2010) has explained some of this development on the "leading edge of the suburbs" as relating to the new residents' aspirations for an idealized rural lifestyle (see also McGrath, 2013).

The most recent phase of suburbanization and exurban development around Dublin has, perhaps, cemented the city's position as a typical Western globalized metropolis, with all the challenges that entails. In their 2007 report for the Society of Chartered Surveyors, Williams et al. demonstrated the increasing outward growth of the commuter belt, now stretching over 60 miles (100 kilometers) from the capital, contrary to official national and regional planning policy objectives, creating sprawl-type settlement with a near-total dependency on the private motorcar. They argued, "the absence of integration of housing, land use and transportation policies, poses major problems for accessibility, sustainability, and quality of life" (Williams et al., 2007, p. 4). Relatively modern suburbs with an aging profile have been experiencing population losses, resulting in potential under-utilization of social infrastructure, although some existing suburbs served by public transport, such as Dundrum, have begun to experience a population resurgence associated with new apartment development. However, the most recent suburban housing constructed during Ireland's economic boom (c. 1995–2008) is inherently unsustainable, with the designs of newer developments encouraging car dependency (Caulfield and Ahern, 2014).

Despite the challenges outlined earlier, and the frequently negative portrayal of suburban life in the media and in academia, an important comparative study of Dublin's recently constructed suburbs has revealed the resilience of new suburban communities and the degree to which new suburban affiliations become established (Corcoran et al., 2010). In the same way that the mass suburbanization of Dublin in the twentieth century can be seen as an almost inevitable response to the slum problems of the nineteenth, so too can the present day issues of sprawl and long-distance commuting trace their lineage back to decisions made almost a century before. The provision of single-family suburban dwellings for all social classes inevitably led to rapid expansion of the city, increasing outward pressure and demand for land. Although contemporary commentators generally portray suburban sprawl in a negative light, the majority of Dublin's citizens still choose to replicate their own childhood experience by bringing up their families in suburban surroundings.

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