



# *Postcodes as National Infrastructure*

## *“SYMPOSIUM ON POSTCODES”*

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# *Introduction*

- *Not here to talk about commercial or business advantages such as better organised mail despatch*
- *Main focus on the use of Postcodes for:*
  - *Research directed at policy*
  - *Planning by both the public and private sectors*
- *I have not done a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis of Postcodes, but believe that one should be carried out*

# *Disaggregated Spatial Analysis is vital*

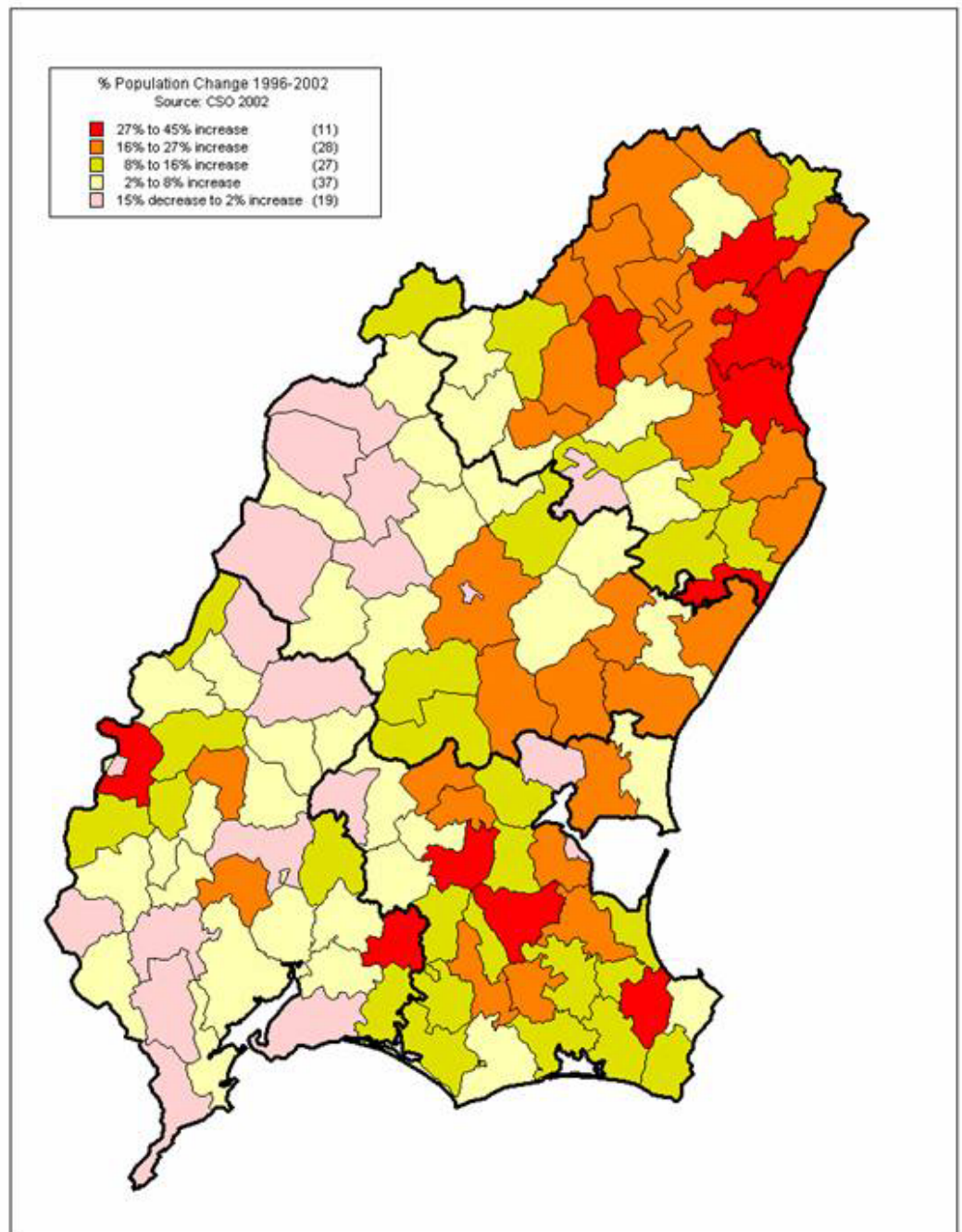
- *New regions – BMW + S&E*
- *The National Spatial Strategy – but much our data is at county level*
- *Analysis of the patterning of deprivation – ESRI research shows how complex and counter-intuitive this distribution is.*
- *Epidemiology – cancer clusters*

# *Existing spatial descriptors poor*

- *Basic unit of the Census and other publications is the District Electoral Division.*
- *About 3,000 with average population of about 1,000, bigger in urban areas*
- *Set up in Victorian times - out-of-date*
- *People do not know what DED they live in – naming not consistent*
- *Too big for some purposes*
- *Not consistent with Dublin postal districts*

Co. Wexford

Population change 1996-2002



# *Examples of how postcodes could help...Survey Sampling*

- *Done by private and public sector agencies*
- *Two types of sample – quota & random*
- *Random best but needs a frame*
- *Kish*
  - *“A perfect sampling frame is one on which every element appears once, only once and nothing else appears on the list”*

# *Survey Sampling – contd.*

- *Up to now we have used the Electoral Register – soon will no longer be possible*
- *Other countries use the “Post Office Address File” – in some ways better than the Register*
- *Vital that sampling frame can be linked to other spatial units – esp the Census DED units*

# *Health Research*

- *Many submissions to COMREG emphasised value of postcodes for Health Research*
- *Both epidemiology and services efficiency*
- *Transmission of diseases, cancer clusters, link between health and social inequality etc.*
- *Present address data very inconsistent – impossible to infer exact location*
- *Example of HIPE – spatial information very crude . Would be much better with a widely used Postcode*



# *Economic & Business Research*

- *Top Government priority to develop regions and promote linkages – NSS*
- *Very poor lists, especially in service sector*
- *Needed for sampling and for analysis of firm locations, installation of services, commuting etc.*
- *ESRI paper on Dublin had to rely on Revenue data re-coded to DED*

# *Other Administrative Statistics*

- *The recent report of the committee headed by Professor Frances Ruane on social statistics laid special stress on using administrative statistics better*
- *The spatial dimension of this would be much more easily achieved with postcodes*
- *Relevant to statistics in all areas: education, health, employment etc.*

# *Desirable Features of New System*

- *Easy to remember so they are widely used  
– embed information if possible*
- *Linked one to one with a geo-code*
- *Respect existing statistical boundaries  
(counties, DEDs etc.) where possible*
- *Can be systematically and logically revised  
for new building etc.*
- *Underlying logic of coding scheme clear*



# *What to do?*

- *Classic case of an externality*
- *One good system would benefit all – competition unlikely to provide this*
- *Should the “free riders” pay – how and how much?*
- *Don’t be driven by perception that postcodes come free*
- *Study to:*
  - *value the benefits of postcodes (both commercial and public interest)*
  - *Define the right system*
  - *Recommend how it should be financed*