



NUI MAYNOOTH
Ollscoil na hÉireann M&Núad

Contested Ruralities: Housing in the Irish countryside

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Abstract

The countryside has undergone major transformations over recent decades as a result of global economic restructuring, state intervention in agriculture, and changing demographics. These changes are often contested and the source of conflict and tensions, which in Ireland have manifested in the debate on living in the countryside. The Irish rural housing debate is an illustration of wider rural change in a country with a strong tradition of farming on small to medium sized holdings, each owner-occupied. In addition, the media popularisation of the debate, rather than establishing the facts of rural housing, has rested in anecdote and emphasised the emotive. The housing debate strongly contests issues, such as who has the right to live in the countryside, how traditional settlement patterns can be sustained into the future - and indeed, what these traditional patterns are to begin with – and what interventions should be made in relation to rural housing developments. In order to inform the contested discourse of living in the countryside this thesis adopts a multi-scale, multi-method approach for the examination of rural housing in Ireland that investigates the complex relationship between settlement patterns, policy interventions and community dynamics. This involves an examination of broad scale, national data for dispersed dwellings in the countryside. The second stage of the methodology explores the institutional context within which Irish rural settlement patterns operate, critically assessing the hierarchy of spatial planning policies and processes from European to local levels. Finally, the third stage investigates local, small scale housing processes in three contrasting study areas. The overall objective of the thesis is to gather together a body of evidence that will advance our understanding of the nature and characteristics of contemporary rural housing in Ireland, thus facilitating the advancement of the rural housing debate in Ireland and contributing to the wider literature.

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Abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CDP	County Development Plan
CDB	County Development Board
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DoELG	Department of Environment and Local Government
DoEHLG	Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
DoENI	Department of Environment Northern Ireland
EA	Enumerator Area
ERB	Enumerator Record Book
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
EU	European Union
GDA	Greater Dublin Area
IFA	Irish Farmers' Association
IRDA	Irish Rural Dweller's Association
LA	Local Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NI	Northern Ireland
NSS	National Spatial Strategy
NWRFB	North Western Regional Fisheries Board
RoI	Republic of Ireland
RPG	Regional Planning Guidelines
SAPS	Small Area Population Statistics
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee
SRD	Single Rural Dwelling
TD	Teachta Dála (Member of Parliament)
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND

Until the early 1970s, rural economy and society in Ireland were for many synonymous with farming and farm-related settlement. Transformations brought about by membership of the EU, CAP reforms, a changing global economy, and generations of out-migration culminated in the decline of Irish full-time family farming. Today less than 100,000 people are employed in farming, a decline of 40% since 1991. Historically, most people who lived in the countryside farmed the land attached to their individual dwelling or worked in employment associated with the farming, primary resources or the rural community. It is clear that this situation has changed radically and there no longer remains that interdependent relationship between living in the countryside and farming. Transformations in daily rural activities and employment, changing population dynamics, and increased spatial mobility and accessibility have contributed to the shifting geography of rural settlement and housing in Ireland over the past half-century. Specifically, dispersed single rural dwellings have generated much debate in political, planning and popular discourse due to their dominance in the Irish settlement pattern. The geography of rural housing that existed during a more agriculturally-reliant era, however, has persisted despite large-scale changes in the rural economy over the last three to four decades. This juxtaposition of a desire to live in the countryside that results in a maintenance and extension of traditional dispersed settlement patterns with the move away from agricultural and rural based employment is giving rise to tensions about the future of housing in the countryside. The changing rural settlement pattern associated with this transition in rural areas is the primary focus of this thesis.

Housing in the countryside has become an increasingly contested issue in Ireland due to these fundamental socio-economic processes of change. The housing debate strongly contests issues such as who has the right to live in the countryside, how traditional settlement patterns can be sustained into the future - and indeed, what these traditional patterns are to begin with – and what interventions should be made in relation to rural housing developments. The debate, which has many contributors from politics, media and interest groups, has suffered from a lack of comprehensive,

supporting empirical research. The release of detailed sets of data from the 2002 Census of Population, however, has allowed for a greater focus on the spatial extent of single rural dwellings, the most contested and least known element of living in the Irish countryside. Using these new datasets in conjunction with the study of local level housing processes and the decision-making system within which settlement patterns operate, the geography of rural housing in Ireland will be examined in this thesis. The purpose of the research is to gather together a body of evidence that will advance our understanding of the nature and characteristics of contemporary rural housing in Ireland; that will investigate the complex relationship between settlement patterns, policy interventions and community dynamics; and will provide critical empirical and qualitative knowledge for future rural housing strategies at national, regional and local levels.

1.1 RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

The popular debate on rural housing in Ireland has centred on universal issues such as the role and function of the countryside now that agriculture is in decline, and the future of living in the countryside in a society that is becoming increasingly urbanised. The debate has highlighted two main issues, namely that the nature of housing throughout Ireland, both urban and rural based, has been significantly transformed over the last ten to fifteen years and that there is a deficit in knowledge, especially about the growth of housing in the Irish countryside. In the early 1980s a number of authors identified the need to address planning and rural housing issues in Ireland suggesting that if there was to be an economic upturn in the state, pressure for rural housing would centre on town and city edges (Storey and O'Flanagan, 1988). Duffy (1983: 185-6), in a preliminary study of rural settlement in Ireland, identified the changes that were already underway at the time and that these 'radical alterations' would pose significant challenges to the planning system. Many of these challenges and issues have intensified today due to the economic transformations and housing impacts that Storey and O'Flanagan anticipated.

The neglect of housing issues in rural economic and social research, which was initially identified in the 1980s, remains true today (Philips and Williams, 1982; Milbourne, 2006). Consequently, the need to fill the knowledge gap in the Irish rural housing debate is one of the main drivers for this research. The debate has occurred in a

vacuum without any baseline information. Inadequate knowledge about the geography and location of houses and their number and density, has resulted in misinformation, misperception, an over-reliance on anecdotal evidence and misconceived planning policy measures. The recent transformation and growth in rural housing throughout Ireland have meant that the gap in information has continued to widen, further reinforcing the need for detailed research. Rural studies are greatly influenced by research carried out in the UK with housing, in particular, having been an area of focus in the past. However, in contrast to Ireland, rural housing in Britain has for a long time been associated with social status due to the restrictive nature of planning regulation there (Milbourne, 2006). This perspective on living in the countryside, where issues such as affordability and the role of planning in the provision of housing in rural areas, has influenced literature and academic investigation in rural studies internationally. Ireland in contrast has a much stronger history of dispersed settlement in the countryside and a laissez-faire planning regime that has allowed this to continue for a number of decades (Gallent et al, 2003a). It is therefore important to examine the case of rural housing in Ireland in order to establish how its trends and characteristics compare to its nearest neighbour, from where its planning system and governance structure was derived, to contextualise trends within European spatial planning, and to place the experience of rural housing discourses in the international rural geography literature. The following three sections detail the background rationale for this research by reviewing the popular debate on living in the countryside as portrayed in the Irish media, by outlining the context for contemporary housing change in Ireland, and finally, by highlighting the lack of specific housing statistics for rural areas.

1.1.1 The Rural Housing Debate

In a specially commissioned piece for the *Irish Independent* newspaper in 2000 (29/01/2000), the Leitrim novelist John McGahern was invited to write an article provocatively entitled 'Rural Ireland's Passing'. Exploring contemporary farmer protests about falls in beef prices, in the article he wrote:

"I saw the mass protests and pickets outside the meat plants as one of those convulsions that occur when something that has endured for long and was deeply embedded in the life is coming to an end and facing extinction."

His article attempted to deal with issues such as what it means to be Irish and the assumption that national identity is somehow embedded in rurality, typifying the

provocative context in which rural issues are written about in the Irish media. Coverage of rural debates in the media has long been driven by a tension between the desire to maintain traditional rurals and the continuing external and internal changes currently at work in and affecting the countryside. Of particular interest are conflicting opinions on housing in the countryside which highlight the different arguments outlined by politicians, interest groups, commentators and, indeed, journalists themselves (outlined below). Although there had been disagreements about the nature of living in the countryside prior to the extensive economic changes that occurred in the 1990s, it was the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) report *'Rural and Urban Roles': Irish Spatial Perspectives* (DoELG, 2001) that highlighted the deficit in knowledge about rural housing and the need for further analysis of the issues (McDonald and Nix, 2005). The report investigated the number of single rural dwellings in the Irish countryside, based on statistics provided by the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) on electricity connections to new homes. Due to a lack of consistent local level recording of housing completions over a number of decades, the only statistics the Government could rely on were indicative and not entirely reliable. Acknowledgement of such an information gap from the Department of the Environment and Local Government through its NSS research made headlines in the national newspapers and set an agenda for the discussion of rural housing. In light of insufficient information on rural housing, particularly on the number of planning applications for single rural dwellings and the amount of house constructions completed in each year in the countryside, and the lack of consistent policy for rural planning and housing throughout the country, the subsequent debate has been over-reliant on anecdote and been characterised by exaggerated claims and assumptions by both sides.



Figure 1.1 Irish Times, September 12th, 1987 – Early example of the rural housing debate



Figure 1.2 Irish Times, September 12th, 1987 – Predictions for the future of rural housing

In media coverage of the rural housing debate, a number of key players can be identified, the most cited of whom are An Taisce (the National Trust for Ireland), the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), farmers, landowners and developers, the Irish Rural Dweller's Association (IRDA) and politicians, particularly locally elected representatives, as well as the rural public and the city dweller in general. Even journalists for national newspapers have contributed to the emotive debate with Frank McDonald, the environment editor of the *Irish Times*, and Fintan O'Toole, being particularly strong voices.

An Taisce, as the National Trust for Ireland, has a remit to protect cultural and natural heritage in Ireland and has a statutory role in spatial planning. On one end of the scale, An Taisce has been painted as the 'anti-rural' voice in planning, with media coverage of what is perceived to be its widespread objections to planning applications throughout the country. 'An Taisce objection puts paid to Murrisk man's house plan' (Laffey, *The Mayo News*, 10/09/03) and 'TD frustrated by intervention of An Taisce' (Gilbert, *The Southern Star*, 19/02/4) are among many headlines throwing a negative light on the role of the organisation in the planning system and the function of statutory bodies generally in the decision-making process. On the other hand, An Taisce is viewed as giving voice to the environment and landscape needs of the countryside, identifying current rural housing policy as "a timebomb" for rural areas (Hogan, *Irish Independent*, 04/03/04). The group often pitted against An Taisce is the Irish Rural Dweller's Association (IRDA), a relatively new interest group which regards itself as the voice of rural dwellers wishing to continue living in the countryside. One article published in *The Mayo News* in 2002 sums up the opinion of one of the founding members of the IRDA, with the headline 'Dr. Caulfield calls for de-listing¹ of An Taisce' as a statutory body in the planning system (*Mayo News*, 27/03/2002).

One element that is consistent throughout the coverage of the housing debate is the use of alarmist and emotive language, oversimplifying the arguments into one side against the other, often reduced to urban versus rural points of views. The use of terms such as 'victims' of the planning system (Fox, *Irish Farmers Journal*, 23/11/02) and 'whingeing farmers' (O'Toole, *Irish Times*, 30/10/98) arise out of notions of the perceived rights of rural dwellers and their families to build homes in the countryside. One of the most recurring narratives reported in both national and local newspapers is that of the farmer's son or daughter and their difficulty in obtaining planning permission to build a home on their own farm or in their home place. Coverage of 'victims' of the system and 'hard case' stories include examples of planning permissions frustrated due

¹ An Taisce is a statutory body in the planning system. This means that it must be consulted by Planning Authorities on planning applications that have the potential to impact on or be influenced by heritage and related issues. De-listing is a phrase coined by Dr. Caulfield and can be defined as removing the statutory basis of such organisations in the planning process.

to delays by third party appeals lodged through An Bord Pleanála (the Planning Appeals Board). For example:

“Richard Holmes is a part-time farmer ... and applied for planning permission in September 2000 and was granted planning permission by Mayo Co. Council in July 2001, but the NWRFB (North Western Regional Fisheries Board) objected to An Bord Pleanála, and in January of this year the objection was upheld.

‘I am a full-time resident of the area making my living on the farm and in the local community, and yet I can’t build on my own land even though I have adhered to all the conditions set down. I need to live on the farm to work effectively. It feels like local people are being penalised for where they live. It seems those with the least amount of power and the most vulnerability are been (sic) targeted’ ”

(Fox, Irish Farmers Journal, 23/11/02).

It is evident from newspaper reports like this that there is a deep-seated cultural rejection of intervention by the state and Local Authority in the property rights of farmers.

In examining the ‘local, rural’ argument in the debate, coverage tends to focus on individual rights of rural residents and their families. The ‘personal’ nature of where an individual is from, putting emphasis on attachment to place, the wider needs of the rural population, and impacts of ‘bad’ planning decisions on farming, are invoked in the emotive coverage of stories. Increasingly, the focus of the debate has moved towards the social impacts of rural planning decisions. At the local level, it has been argued that small communities have not been considered fully in wider policy interventions with perhaps too much emphasis being placed on the common, national good.

Planners and locally elected representatives also come under the spotlight in arguments about both negative and positive impacts on settlement patterns. More provocative headlines are evident here, for example: “How we’re planning a nightmare” (Hogan, 11/04/03); ‘The creation of an undemocratic planning system’ (Crowley, 05/01/04); and ‘causing population decline’ (O’Cuív, cited in McDonald, 13/09/02) are a few examples of what planners and county councillors have been accused of. This only adds to the emotive nature of the rural housing debate, particularly the suggestion that planning decisions may be contributing to population decline.

In April 2003 the *Irish Times* published a series of articles on the 'Commuter Counties', i.e. those counties located in the Greater Dublin Area and beyond. The series, led by Frank McDonald, examined issues of quality of life and the nature of contemporary rural communities in the national context of current trends in rural housing and suburbanisation. The articles focused on the reasons for choosing to move into the Dublin commuter belt while continuing to work in the capital, and the quality of life consequences of these choices. Cheaper house prices; more space and greater privacy and the consequent long-distance commute, leaving home at 6am returning at 8pm were all identified as worth the sacrifice. The *Irish Times* series highlighted the complexity of the decision-making process behind moving to the commuter belts: "while many people ... see only a suburban-type eruption in the middle of nowhere, newcomers look behind the bland housing to a rural idyll ..." (Sheridan, 26/04/03). From analysis of the media coverage of all sides of the debate, it is evident that the overriding drive behind the different arguments to live in the commuter belt countryside or rural areas in general is the universal ambition to achieve a better quality of life. This ambition spans the divide from rural dwellers that farm or come from farming families to traditionally urban dwellers seeking a different way of life or simply a larger house than they could afford in the city.

So many arguments colour the rural housing debate that it is difficult to pinpoint where one 'side' begins and the other ends, or whose right should have priority over another's. Perhaps the most limiting factor in the debate is the media insistence on dividing different 'sides' into a "crude shorthand" of rural-urban dichotomies (Woods, 1998:16-7). The greatest difficulty in clarifying the issues has been the deficit in baseline information about rural housing patterns, and in the identification of areas that are under pressure or in decline. One element that is clearly evident is that when local communities and where they live or desire to live appears to come under threat, emotions run high. Reflecting John McGahern's personal examination of the rural, Seamus Caulfield of IRDA described what it means to be Irish: "For me, to be Irish is to remain rooted to one's place of birth like a spreading bramble, which puts down new roots at its tips ... more than any other people, we are unwilling to sever the connection with the parent root. We have a real sense of place, of spiritual and physical home" (Lavery and O'Brien, 15/03/03). Not only does this highlight the emotive nature of the debate around

living in the countryside, but also the tendency to presume that the Irish attachment to land and the rural is unique and exceptional.



Figure 1.3 Examples of provocative headlines in the national newspapers on the future of rural housing

1.1.2 Housing in Ireland

In the late 1990s, a 'housing crisis' was deemed to be affecting markets in Ireland. With the unprecedented economic boom from the mid-1990s onwards, housing supply was unable to keep up with demand, despite an increase in the number of house completions during that time. This resulted in what was commonly termed the housing crisis, characterised by significant increases in house prices and a rise in housing need. The Department of Environment and Local Government commissioned a series of studies referred to as the 'Bacon Reports' (Peter Bacon and Associates, 1998; 1999; and 2000) at this time, and initiated a number of responses to counteract the increasing disparities between supply and demand. In planning terms, the most significant of these responses was the inclusion of Part V of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 which requires all Local Authorities to adopt a Housing Strategy in their County Development Plan and to allocate up to 20% of all new residential developments of four or more dwellings in zoned land for social and / or affordable housing. None of the government responses, and particularly the Local Authority Housing Strategies, included any reference to rural housing needs.

The rural housing debate peaked during the housing crisis of the late 1990s and early 2000s. One impact that was identified as resulting from the crisis in housing supply was that many traditional urban dwellers chose to get 'more value for money' by moving to or beyond town and city hinterlands to a home they could afford. The unrestrictive approach to planning in the countryside and ease of access to land made this a relatively straightforward option. In the aftermath of the housing crisis which peaked in the period 2001 to 2002, and now that supply is matching demand, it is timely to examine aspects of housing in Ireland. In general, the housing crisis was most evident in urban areas and as a result many of the responses initiated by the Government were urban-based and included the Serviced Land Initiative, introduced in the late 1990s by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, accelerating the provision of serviced residential sites in areas of high demand, and also Part V of the Planning and Development Act already referred to above (DoELG, 2002a: 15). Consequently, spatial strategies for rural housing have had little or no structured planning initiatives and have been largely ignored in legislation.

1.1.3 The Data Deficit

The rural housing data deficit had already been identified in the 1980s when contestation and rural housing change were beginning to emerge (Duffy, 1983, 1986; Storey and O'Flanagan, 1988). The only reliable data available up to the present that have direct relation to rural housing are statistics on planning applications and house building completions. Geographically, housing data in both of these publications is limited due to information being available at the county and city level only, and results in no differentiation between rural and urban housing. In the Quarterly Planning Statistics, which have been published since 1985, there is one category for dwellings alone, which is not divided into different housing types or location. According to the planning statistics, over half of all planning applications are for the construction of new dwellings, which in itself would indicate that there is a greater need to investigate the types of housing being applied for and its geographical location. The Quarterly Housing Bulletins publish data on house completions and go into a little more detail about the type of dwellings being constructed, examining the number of bungalows, detached, semi-detached, terraced houses and flats or apartments completed in each quarter. However, the geographical pattern of new dwellings is difficult to establish because the smallest level at which data are recorded is the county.

While the data provided in both the Housing Bulletins and the Planning Statistics assist in understanding general activity in planning permissions and construction, there is a clear information deficit in evidence. There is no way of knowing the localised geographical location of each application and dwelling, and the specific nature of that development. A number of questions, therefore, arise from the statistics available: for example, in counties where housing applications have increased significantly, where did the unprecedented growth take place? And what proportion of the applications for houses is rural? These are among some of the issues to be addressed in the following study.

1.1.4 Contribution to Rural Geography Literature

The elusive nature of the rural housing debate and the knowledge gap in baseline statistics drives the need for this thesis. Much of the rationale for the research comes from the need for a greater understanding of rural housing processes in Ireland. In particular, the geography of the Irish rural settlement pattern, and the specific element of dispersed, single rural dwellings within that pattern, has not been addressed at a national level for some time. This has resulted in an intellectual gap between the two disciplines of rural geography and planning, and in an information deficit in the everyday practice of professional planning. This thesis aims to address these disparities by examining the literature and establishing a conceptual framework for the study of rural housing in Ireland, and by spatially analysing the contemporary and historic pattern of single rural dwellings.

For some time, rural geography has had its research focus on the small area level, investigating processes within 'localities' (see for example, Hoggart, 1988; Day, 1989; Halfacree, 1993). This was adopted at a time when researchers were grappling with the fundamental notion of what the rural is and attempting to capture what the rural meant for people living in the countryside. In-depth studies took place at the small area level that contributed and continues to contribute to knowledge of rural places. However, Smith (2007) identifies a reluctance in some rural geographers to embrace the wider geographic dimensions and the broader-scale representations of rural social change. As a result, the use of large-scale empirical data is often overshadowed in and by detailed local-scale, idiographic-based studies. Smith (2007) suggests that the

knowledge of rural change may be enriched by contextualising wider transformations in socio-spatial patterns and that this will lead to more robust interpretations of small or local area processes. What this calls for is a 'readjustment' in how the rural is investigated. It maintains the idea that the countryside is not a homogeneous entity, but it distinctly asks for a contextualisation of the local scale within a broader geography, and also requires a stronger, complimentary use of both quantitative and qualitative data and analyses.

It is with this call for a readjustment in approaches to rural studies in mind that research for this study is presented. The thesis has adopted a multi-scale approach to the examination of housing in the Irish countryside that provides three windows onto a restless landscape of debate and contestation. This is carried out by engaging with broad scale national empirical data that establishes the spatial extent of dispersed settlement and its characteristics in the countryside; by investigating the policy perspectives and interventions that have shaped that pattern and influenced the politics and discourses of rurality in Ireland; and by exploring the small scale processes that have impacted on local housing patterns. It is intended that this multi-scale, multi-method approach will provide a new methodology for examining contestation and conflict in the countryside.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The changing rural settlement pattern associated with transitions in rural areas and wider socio-economic changes is the primary focus of this thesis. This will be addressed by establishing the geography of rural housing in Ireland through the examination of the location, density and number of dwellings in the countryside, the planning policy within which the settlement pattern operates, and housing processes operating in small, localised areas. From this overall objective, three specific research objectives have been identified for this thesis as follows.

1.2.1 The Geography of Rural Housing in Ireland

The inconclusive debate on living in the countryside in Ireland has done little to establish the location and number of rural dwellings. The lack of comprehensive empirical research has resulted in an over-reliance on anecdote and hearsay, and the debate has not moved on to the deeper processes behind rural housing supply and

demand. A handful of useful academic studies took place in the 1980s and 1990s, but no in-depth research has occurred on a national level. This overall lack of knowledge and understanding makes a national study of the geography of rural housing patterns a necessary element of this research. It also assists in contextualising analysis in later chapters in the thesis that aim to investigate how planning and community decision-making influence national rural patterns. Hence, the first research objective is:

To establish the location, density and number of dwellings in the Irish countryside.

This research objective will be addressed by mapping and analysing previously unpublished data from the Census of Population 2002, allowing the thesis to examine rural housing in general and single rural dwellings specifically (i.e. detached rural dwellings using an individual septic tank). These small area statistics of rural housing variables will be mapped and analysed to establish the spatial extent of dispersed rural settlement as it has evolved incrementally to form contemporary patterns.

1.2.2 Rural Decision-Making: Processes and Policy

Rural settlement patterns do not occur in a vacuum and the current planning system, which has been in place since 1963, has greatly influenced locational trends in rural housing. In order to enhance an understanding of the geography of rural housing in Ireland, policy needs to be examined in detail. This is carried out at multi-scale level, from European to national to local policy. Planning has shaped settlement both directly and indirectly: accessibility, the ability of urban centres to absorb residential development, and the provision and quality of infrastructure all contribute to the location of housing in the countryside. Hence, the second research objective is:

To examine the role of planning policy and decision-making in the evolution of the Irish rural settlement pattern.

The role of planning policy and decision-making will be addressed by investigating the policy perspectives and interventions that have shaped national and local rural settlement patterns and that have influenced the politics and discourses of rurality in Ireland. This will be carried out by engaging in a critical analysis of the planning hierarchy within which Ireland operates and a comprehensive examination of national

and local rural housing policies. This will provide a greater understanding of the rural housing policy context at national and local level.

1.2.3 The Dynamics of Living in the Countryside

The planning system is not the sole driver of housing location – people living or wishing to live in the countryside also shape the rural settlement pattern. Location choice and preferences, employment, changing household size and needs, and access to land are some of the complex factors affecting the location, density, and supply and demand of housing, all contributing to the dynamics of living in the countryside. Hence, the third research objective is:

To investigate the dynamics of living in the countryside at the small area level.

In order to address this objective there will be an examination of small area rural housing processes. This will examine why spatial variations in single rural dwelling construction emerged in the 1990s and provide an insight into small-scale rural housing processes. By utilising three case study areas that together contain a variety of rural area types the fulfilment of this objective will delve beneath the national patterns and trends so that a greater understanding of local dynamics and drivers can be established. This is achieved by investigating the nature of population change, the impacts of greater mobility and improved accessibility in the rural population, the need to engage in alternative, non-traditional employment which is often located in towns and cities, the emergence of localised housing pressures, and community perspectives and attitudes towards change.

1.2.4 Summary Remarks

The three identified research objectives investigate rural housing from a multi-scale perspective within the context of the literature review in Chapter Two. The fulfilment of these objectives will contribute significantly to primary knowledge in rural geography, adding to the range of British, European and North American literature that exists by presenting an alternative narrative of rural change. Some of the processes that are at work in Ireland are different to those in other countries but can feed into how we examine the rural and provide a fascinating window onto a restless landscape. By utilising the multi-scale approach in order to examine contestation, contributions will be

made to knowledge on spatial planning in Ireland, transformations in rural housing, and to wider, global processes of change that are resulting in rural restructuring.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The purpose of **Chapter Two** is to set the context for the study of rural housing, and to assist in understanding the processes and dynamics that are occurring in Ireland in relation to other countries, to critically assess and apply literature and findings from other academic studies, and to identify the key research issues that will be investigated in the remaining chapters. This will set the context for the research and assist in understanding factors that influence rural housing in contemporary Ireland. A series of research questions are outlined which are drawn from the literature and positioned within the specific Irish context.

Chapter Three outlines the methodologies used in order to carry out the research for the thesis. A multi-scale approach has been adopted to investigate housing in the Irish countryside. This is carried out in order to address the knowledge gap in baseline information about housing in Ireland and to address the reluctance of rural geographers to combine the use of broad scale empirical data with intricate locality studies. Various methods have been used spanning qualitative and quantitative approaches from macro to micro scales. Spatial analysis of census data using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and case study analysis of local areas have been brought together to provide a comprehensive examination of the geography of rural housing.

Chapter Four begins the process of addressing the knowledge deficit in rural housing by analysing broad scale empirical data for single rural dwellings. Using GIS, the rural settlement pattern and ancillary elements are examined in detail. The density, location and number of rural housing units are examined in a spatio-temporal framework providing a complete picture of the geography of rural housing in 2002.

Chapter Five is an examination of the Irish planning system. This will firstly look at the international context for that system, outlining European perspectives and policy. Secondly the chapter critically examines county level rural housing policy. The chapter sets out the policy context for the geography of rural housing in 2002, providing both a critical analysis of the Irish planning regime and a critique of the process of rural

planning. In addition there is an exploration of the contested nature of planning for rural areas where the comparative case of Northern Ireland is drawn upon.

Chapter Six addresses the local level, where three case study areas are selected to highlight different rural types in Ireland: peri-urban, weak and in transition rural areas, and marginalised rural areas. Each area is examined to establish the dynamics of living in the countryside including a changing rural population, the local patterning of rural housing distribution, the employment of local residents, local policy impacts and personal perspectives on living in the countryside. The main objective of the chapter is to examine why spatial variations in single rural dwelling construction emerged in the 1990s and to provide an insight into small-scale rural housing processes.

Finally, **Chapter Seven** synthesises the main findings from the previous chapters. The overall findings in chapters four to six are brought together to provide an understanding of the multilayered geography of rural housing in Ireland in 2002. Policy implications and future research questions are also outlined.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING RURAL HOUSING IN IRELAND

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Ireland underwent what Bartley and Kitchin (2007) describe as a 'great transformation' in the mid- to late 1990s fuelled by structural and cohesion fund support from the EU, the consolidation of foreign direct and indigenous investment, and the growth of social partnership. These, among other factors, drove Ireland from the peripheral, poor economy of the 1980s to become one of the strongest in Europe today and a model for new member states of the EU from Eastern Europe. Although these changes are not unique to Ireland, the time at which they occurred holds particular significance due to their emergence at a slower pace than our Western European counterparts. The impacts of such a relatively late socio-economic shift are wide ranging and appear to have affected every facet of society whether for good or bad. Rural and agricultural change that occurred in parallel with the wider national and global economic transformations have influenced how the countryside is understood and what its contemporary role is. One manifestation of change is the perception of the rural as a place of residence where there has been a shift from a productive countryside to the dual roles of consumption and production.

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise rural housing within the international literature, identifying both the similarities and differences in rural processes of change outside Ireland. Engaging in such an investigation assists in understanding what can be learnt from other jurisdictions and experiences, and attempts to locate Ireland in a much broader context. Additionally, it also provides a means through which literature from beyond Ireland can be critically assessed and contributes to overall international rural housing knowledge. Milbourne (2006) suggests three key themes in contemporary rural housing research: (i) regulatory process and rural housing structures; (ii) social and cultural change and its relationship with housing; and (iii) welfare, poverty and housing conditions. This thesis is especially concerned with the first two themes, and will examine the regulatory planning context for changes in rural housing and the socio-economic processes that are influencing those changes. The first section of this chapter

lays out the conceptual framework for the study of rural housing in Ireland, identifying debates in international literature about the nature of rural change and the theoretical underpinnings of a planning system that can cope with that change. The second section examines how the new urban-rural linkages which have been identified as an integral part of policy for rural areas, are impacting on the dynamics of living in the countryside in terms of the relationship between town and country, the mobility of rural populations, and changing household characteristics of the rural resident. The third section investigates the rural as a place of residence, the role of the state in the dynamics of housing in the countryside, and the emerging challenges for planning in the wake of a 'new rural'. In the final section, there is a return to the Irish perspective with an exploration of the origins of the planning system in Ireland and its legacy on settlement patterns in the countryside. Throughout this chapter specific research questions or issues are identified which come under one of the three objectives outlined in Chapter One and will be summarised in the final section.

2.1 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Discourses of rurality, defining the meaning of rural, and contested views of the countryside are among the dominant themes in rural studies in Western societies. Within the context of global socio-economic change, the notion of what rural constitutes has come under debate resulting in a move away from, or at least a call to move away from, the use of taken-for-granted definitions (Halfacree, 1993, 1995; Hoggart, 1988, 1990; Pratt, 1996). Indeed discourses of rurality and the difficulty in arriving at a meaningful consensus on its definition have led some authors to reflect on the idea of doing away with the category of rural altogether (Hoggart, 1990). For all the difficulties in defining the rural, it has remained a valid arena for research and is useful in the definition of certain types of localities (Hodge and Monk, 2004). The cultural reference points of rural and urban, countryside and town have resulted not in an abandonment of the term but in more extensive studies on the dynamics at work in the countryside and on the changes that are currently underway. While the cultural, economic and environmental setting of these reference points may have evolved over time, their importance remains the same, the changing context adding to the expediency of their analysis and understanding. An examination of living in the countryside offers a useful window onto this restless landscape(s) of change, providing an insight into the manifestation of rural restructuring and wider societal transformations.

This section examines key themes in rural studies at present, highlighting areas of relevance to housing and planning, aligning changes in both disciplines in order to establish a conceptual framework for this thesis. The framework provides the foundation for the thesis and is constructed by bringing together a very specific arena for analysis, framing it within a contemporary perspective. The dynamics of living in the countryside and the conflicts and contestation often associated with social and economic changes taking place in rural areas are reflected on briefly in this section with a view to introducing them into the conceptual framework. These two themes are integral elements of the thesis and as such will be explored in greater detail in following sections.

2.1.1 Discourses of Rurality

The instability of the term rural (Pratt, 1996) led to an intensive debate on its meaning in the 1990s and has since remained a strong theme in rural studies. The instability of the term and its meaning has the potential to lead to confusing and contradictory policies for the countryside, leaving residents unsure of the future, putting pressure on traditional economic activities and society, and providing new challenges for the environment. Debate around the meaning of the rural arose from the recognition that the countryside is not a homogenous entity and that traditional notions of the function of rural areas and the activities of its residents had changed. For example, many authors invoke notions of a rural idyll representing a place where little has changed and where traditional values around community and family have endured (Bunce, 2003). Changes within the rural sphere, particularly those associated with farming and traditional activities, have led to wider changes in who now lives in the countryside and how sections of the population interact with each other and within the rural domain. Furthermore, and perhaps more pertinent, are the changes that are occurring beyond rural areas which are impacting greatly on the countryside and resulting in uneven development and in differentiated space within a territory that was once perceived as homogenous (Ilbery, 1998; Marsden, 1998).

Establishing a general definition of the rural may simply be a matter of convenience appropriate to whatever 'object' is under investigation at the time (Newby, 1986). Cloke (2006) outlines three approaches to the examination of the rural that have been

adopted over recent decades, namely (i) the functional approach; (ii) the political economy approach; and (iii) the social constructivist approach. The functional concept of rurality is entwined with traditional notions of the rural, i.e. that agriculture dominates land use and the economy in rural areas, and thus has an impact on how the rural and its physical space are defined (Cloke, 2006). Research undertaken within the traditional functional frame tends to reinforce the notion that rural is synonymous with agriculture and relies on quantitative or empirical definitions. Consequently, typical definitions within a functional frame have highlighted characteristics such as a low population density (Volgyes, 1980; Clout, 1984); loose networks of infrastructure and services (Clout, 1984); and predominance of labour-intensive, usually agricultural occupations (Volgyes, 1980). These definitions also embrace less quantifiable facets of rural life associated with assumptions about a way of life and notions of kinship and community. The idea that close community networks are a defining factor was a major component of definitions in the past, but only adds to myth-building and romanticisation. Also, the characterisation of rural areas having below average manufacturing and office-based employment does not address the significant changes that have occurred in employment sectors in recent years (Hoggart, 1988). Perhaps the most limiting element of functional definitions of the rural is the emphasis on the distinction between urban and rural areas (Hoggart, 1988) and the conflation of countryside and agriculture (Cloke, 2006). In addition, the reliance on a symbiotic relationship between farming and rural in this approach, emphasises the impact of agricultural policy interventions. The 'human element' may be underestimated or at worst ignored, where drivers of change can only be deemed noteworthy if derived from government intervention and subsidies. Housing location choice, increased accessibility and mobility, the existence of off-farm employment, and urbanisation for example have the potential to be considered peripheral to the functional frame.

The broad use of the term 'rural' reveals little of what the rural is and of its internal spatial differences, and has problematic consequences attached that makes the use of generic terms difficult (Urry, 1984). This generic treatment of a widespread area results in a lack of understanding of the local and of the different (and sometimes conflicting) roles and actors at work within the countryside, which in turn may lead to inappropriate policy with regard to the future of the countryside (Hoggart, 1988). The political economy approach to rural studies marked a conceptual landmark in the examination of

countryside change (Cloke, 2006), recognising that external forces and changing internal dynamics have "... implications for the notion of [a] spatially and analytically distinct 'rural' category" (McHugh, 2001: 8). This frame of analysis established a number of new approaches to examining the rural where, as an arena for research, the countryside can be identified as a distinct space that contains overlapping geographies which can be interdependent, independent or at odds with each other; and can have much in common with areas that are considered urban and non-rural. This marked an important step forward that allowed firstly the cultural, physical and environmental meanings of the countryside to be debated and broken down; and also opened up new avenues of research that went beyond agriculture and empirical fact. The movement beyond traditional boundaries acknowledged similarities between rural and urban places, and perhaps more importantly, differences within the countryside itself, stimulating a vigorous debate on the meaning and definition of the rural (see for example Cloke, 1985; Hoggart, 1990). In addition to growing differences within rural areas, there are also characteristics that are common to a number of places, urban and rural (Cloke, 2006). For example, reliance on tourism as an economic lynchpin in many areas and the shifting location of employment for the majority of the population to suburban and urban places, means that rural areas are no longer as distinct from other places (Meadowcroft, 2005).

The next step in rural studies came with the 'cultural turn', which was driven by postmodern and post-structuralist thinking, and took on the debate around definitions of the rural, applying new ideas about socio-spatial distinctiveness (Cloke, 1997, 2006). This has led to expanding discourses of rurality that have returned to an analysis of idyll-isation and the social construction of notions of the countryside (Bunce, 2003), and to ideas about social representations of rural and intra-rural differences (Halfacree, 1993). The social constructivist theoretical framework examines the meaning of the countryside, emphasising the attitudes and perceptions of the 'user' and the perceived use value of space (for example, see Halfacree, 1993). In this context, the rural is presented within wider economic and social change whereby ideas of the rural are presented as 'post-rural' or even non-rural. This social constructivist framework legitimises the rural as a distinct arena for research, allowing for the examination of phenomena that would previously have been deemed beyond the countryside's traditional sphere of interest or influence. Areas of research that are now valid in rural

studies focus on examinations of the lived experience and practices of rural dwellers (Cloke, 2006), the idea of the 'other' (Cloke and Little, 1997), such as research into rural homelessness, and the examination of neglected geographies, for example children in the countryside (Philo, 1992). Although it continues to be inconclusive, with definitions remaining elusive, the debate about the meaning of rural has not disregarded the notion that the countryside is a spatial entity, with Halfacree (2006) arguing that rural is inherently spatial to begin with. The boundaries between urban and rural may blur but the ongoing debate has legitimised rural studies within a wider context of global change. When rural studies are undertaken, physical boundaries must be imposed and the spatial distinctiveness of the countryside and the adoption of a definition are justifiable when applied to a particular issue or policy implementation (Newby, 1986; Hodge and Monk, 2004).

While the three approaches to rural studies are presented in a loosely chronological manner, reflecting wider changes in fields of academic research and knowledge, there is value in considering the three in combination, as each frame of investigation has a role to play in extending our understanding of the dynamics at work in housing in the countryside. The extensive empirical work carried out by McHugh (2001) to create the Irish Rural Typology (see Map 2.1) provides a workable definition of the rural which has been adopted by a number of researchers and policy makers in Ireland. It is this typology, which was created within the conceptual framework of a political economy approach to the rural, that will be used as a practical and easily applicable definition of the rural and as the basis of a spatially defined area for the research. The rural typology, which will be examined in further detail in Chapter Three, allows not only for a clear definition of rural space but also for an acknowledgement of heterogeneous spaces where different processes are at work with a multitude of outcomes within many Irish countrysides. Smith (2007: 275) argues that idiographic-based research, which has arisen from the cultural-turn and the social constructivist approach, and which has taken precedence in rural geography of late, has led to two key trends in research: an avoidance of broader-scale representations of the rural with an increased focus on local level processes; and an obscuring of the real value of large-scale quantitative data for the analysis of general patterns of rural change. This thesis attempts to scale the three approaches to rural studies by addressing Smith's demand for a combination of quantitative, broader-scale data (political economy approach) with an examination of

local level societal change (social constructivism approach). The functional frame will be addressed by breaking down policy approaches to the countryside and how these have shaped agricultural and wider rural change.

The philosophical stance from which rural housing in Ireland is investigated in this thesis comes from the interface between the political economy perspective on rural change and the social constructivist frame which arose as a result of the cultural turn. This interface been identified as the most appropriate point-of-view from which to examine rural housing given the subject's place traversing a number of disciplines, particularly rural geography and rural planning. In addition, the researcher's own point of view has a part to play in the philosophical stance taken – growing up in a rural community and on a part-time farm has the potential to greatly influence one's perspective on rural change. Graduating from NUI Galway with a degree in Geography and from University College Dublin with a Masters in Regional and Urban Planning meant widening that perspective and led to a questioning of the processes behind localised rural change, and a recognition of the external, global forces effecting transformations nationally, and the policy and regulatory context for decision-making and governance in the countryside. Therefore, rural housing in Ireland requires an examination that is placed at an interface where the overlapping geographies (i.e. different meanings of the rural and the recognition of external forces) of the political economy approach and the social representations of the cultural turn can be combined to produce the appropriate lens through which rural housing in Ireland will be examined.

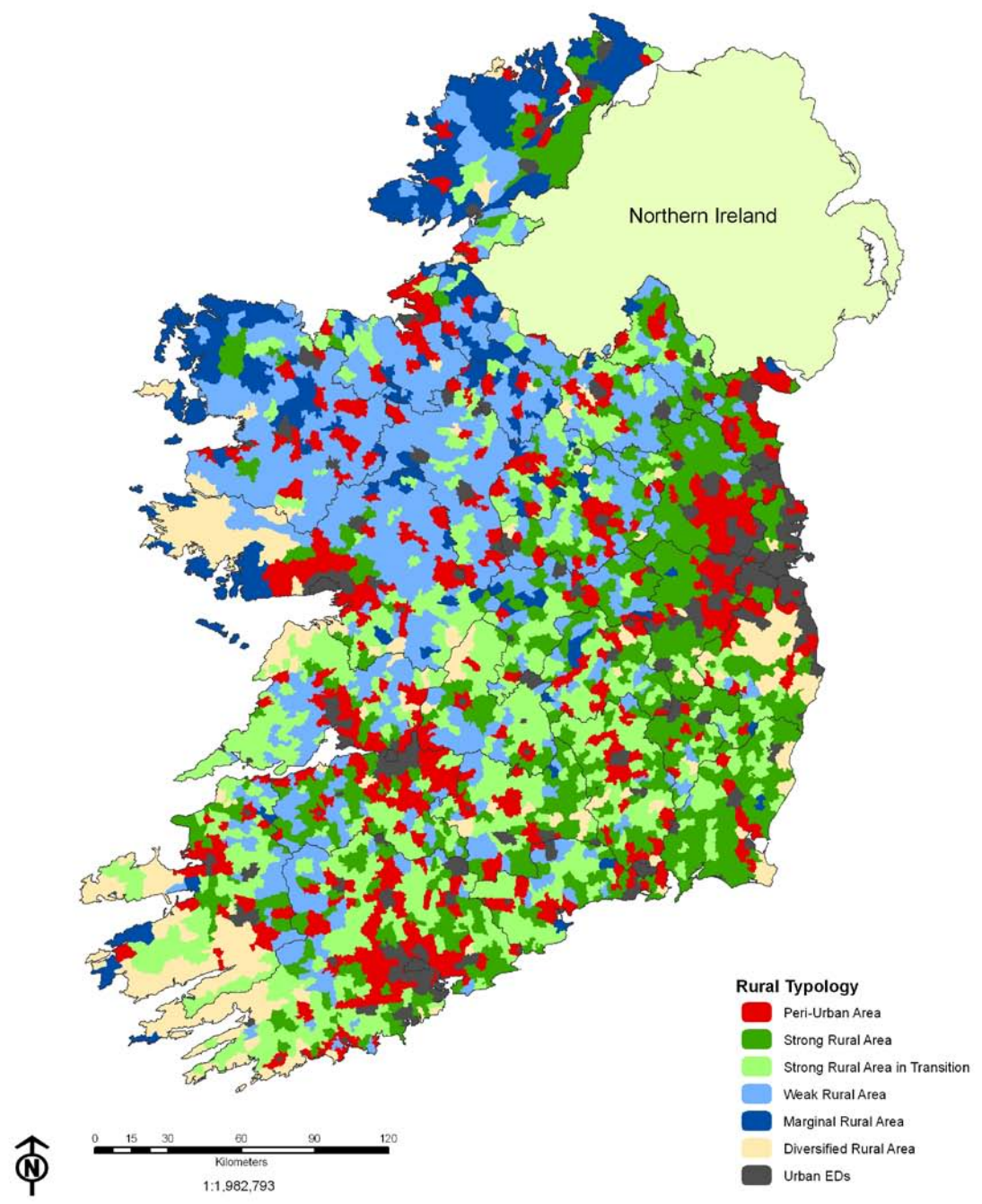
The challenge for research that is placed at the interface between philosophical approaches and at the interplay of disciplines – rural geography and planning – is the need to coherently address different theoretical and conceptual approaches. The professional practice of planning, for example, continues to be a modernist discipline despite the wider changes that have occurred in related disciplines such as in rural geography and sociology. The origins of physical landuse planning meant that it adopted a functional approach; moving into the era of spatial planning, political economy approaches have come to the fore – whereby external forces are recognised, and the interdependence of localities and regions gave way to a more strategic approach to planning for the future of places. However, while the academic disciplines that make contributions to planning have moved into post-modernist, post-structuralist

frames of investigation, planning as a professional practice has not made this leap. This is due to a number of constraints not least of which is the policy driven nature of planning and the need for regulated formulation, adoption and implementation.

The positivist approach influenced early planning studies, while useful in this research to address the empirical deficit so apparent in rural housing studies in Ireland, will not alone answer the key questions posed in this study. Delving beneath the statistics is vital to this research in order to understand the policy, political, community and personal perspectives on living in the countryside. Therefore, the combination of the political economy and the social constructs that result in approaches to, attitudes towards, and policy adopted for the countryside are examined in this thesis. The cultural context for planning policy and decision-making needs to be investigated in order to understand the dynamics of settlement evolution wholly.

The methodology adopted for this research is a multi-scale, multi-method approach which reflects the philosophical perspective influencing this investigation of rural housing in Ireland. McKendrick (1999) identifies that one element of, and reason for the use of, multi-method approaches can be the adoption of more than one theoretical framework when it enriches the understanding of the subject under examination. This is appropriate for the thesis given the nature of the interdisciplinary location of rural housing studies, the philosophical interface perspective adopted for the research and the multiple, geographical scales under investigation.

Rural Typology



From McHugh and Walsh, 2001

2.1.2 Rural Change

Inherent to the debate about the meaning of rurality is the idea that rural areas are undergoing change. The long held relationship between countryside and agriculture has inhibited research into other notions of rurality. Debate about the meaning of the rural allowed for a recognition not only of agricultural change but also of wider external transformations whose impacts were both wide-ranging and varied. One argument for the spatial distinctiveness of rural places is the particular type of change that is occurring in the countryside, for example the process of 'recovery' from agricultural decline perhaps being the most significant of these (Meadowcroft, 2005). Consequently there are now alternative uses of rural spaces where "... there is no longer one single rural space, but rather a multiplicity of social spaces that overlap the same geographical area" (Cloke and Milbourne, 1992: 360).

In 1988 the European Commission's report, the *Future of Rural Society* (CEC, 1988), identified agriculture as an element of the rural sphere rather than being synonymous with it. This was an important step in acknowledging the changing position of farming in everyday rural life and laid out a prophetic vision for the countryside as we now know it (Halfacree, 2006). Two dynamics are at work in contemporary rural change, namely the influence of global capitalism and the recognition of the increasing potential consumption role of rural places (Halfacree, 2006: 53). The dominant theoretical approach to rural change or restructuring has been the application of the post-productivist transition model of agriculture, and although it has come under some criticism, remains useful in understanding the changing nature of rural dynamics (Evans, et al 2002). In the productivist era, which spanned the post-World War Two period up the 1970s and 1980s, there was an industrialisation of agricultural practices emphasising intensified production, greater mechanisation, specialisation and concentration, and reliance on the state protection of prices (Woods, 2005a; Halfacree, 2006). In this period, food self-sufficiency and income security were joined and regarded as interdependent (Marsden et al, 1993). Intervention by the state into food production ensured prices, giving security of income to farmers, and improved yields, making, for example, "... two blades of grass grow where one grew before" (Shucksmith, 1993: 466). Agriculture became the "... cornerstone of rural local structured cohesion ..." (Halfacree, 2005: 53) during this period which was characterised by a contradictory acceptance of the rural as idyllic (upholding traditional

values associated with community) while also supporting a pro-development lobby that aimed to exploit natural resources to the full (Woods, 1998). High levels of exempted development (what Newby (1987: 216) termed 'agricultural exceptionalism' which will be discussed later in Section 2.4), cited in Halfacree, 2006) associated with farming reinforced both the pre-eminence of agriculture in the countryside and the power of the rural lobby and elites at the time.

Entering into the period of what Woods (2005a: 51) terms the 'farm crisis' in the mid-1980s in Western Europe, there was an undermining of the productivist representation of the rural (Halfacree, 2006) brought about by over-production and 'trade wars' in external export markets. This transition was marked by a changing social composition in rural areas where improvements in accessibility and mobility allowed more urban workers to live in the countryside, while a process of commodification of rural spaces also began with a shift in functions and use (Cloke and Goodwin, 1992). Agriculture as the cornerstone of the rural came under increased pressure particularly with a new rural population which questioned the validity of farm subsidies and the role of the farmer as a guardian of the countryside (Halfacree, 2006). A number of factors drove the transition of agriculture and rural change, including a growth in rural tourism and recreation; rising rates of car ownership; second home ownership and/or retirement to the countryside; industrial development in rural areas; and counterurbanisation where the countryside began to be viewed as a desirable place to live (Clout, 1998).

Productivism was the dominant trend in farming from the 1940s to the mid-1980s, until the farm crisis occurred, where the main goal of government was intensive agricultural production. State subsidies were at the core of this industrialisation of farming where wide-scale mechanisation and specialisation took place (Woods, 2005a). Post-productivism is a broad term used to describe change in state interventions and subsidisation that shifted emphasis to more sustainable forms of farming. The model proposes to explain the changes underway in the countryside but oversimplifies the dynamics of that change (Evans et al, 2002) and presumes that agriculture is present in some manner in all rural areas. As a general term, it is used to describe the current state of agriculture and its role in rural life, and infers changes in policy and intervention, and in everyday farming practices. The model of productivism / post-productivism is not supportive of the wider rural debate (Evans et al, 2002) where there is agreement that

the rural must be approached in a differentiated manner (Hoggart, 1990; Marsden, 1998).

Where once the historical imperative on the countryside was to produce food (Clout, 1998), that fundamental element of production has now been replaced and/or co-exists with other forms of production (for example, tourism). Concurrently, rural areas have also become areas of consumption (for example, recreation). The integral relationship between the countryside and production has in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries been brought into question (see for example Hoggart, 1988, 1990; Ilbery, 1998; Newby, 1986). Improved technology and innovation have meant that less land is required for production, which coupled with an increase in part-time farming, have resulted in extensive practices (Clout, 1998). The changing viability of agriculture through Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) reforms and European Union rural development initiatives has brought the 'traditional' role of the countryside into question. Two important trends can therefore be identified from the modern era of agriculture and rural change which can be applied to living in the countryside. These are (i) the undermining of the productivist model of the countryside and (ii) the rural emerging as a space for residence without the pre-requisite need to be connected to the land in some way. These two trends combined have been at the core of rural change throughout Western society, where the idea that non-rural (or non-traditional) populations could inhabit the countryside and adopt a variety of lifestyles not necessarily associated with the countryside.

2.1.3 Dynamics of Living in the Countryside

Both the discursive debates around rurality and the changes that are taking place within rural areas are driven by the shifting countryside dynamics discussed above. A fall in the number of people working in agriculture has resulted in a growth in other employment sectors which previously had not been represented to a great extent in rural areas. The rise in the proportion of these other sectors is a result of two things, i.e. the fall in agricultural employment and the consequent need to seek alternative work, and the changed social composition of rural residents. Together these are having knock-on effects for the demands on and the expectations of the modern countryside, and are also the source for conflicts and contestation where different residents' aspirations may clash. In spatial terms, the rise of alternative employment sectors

means that the town or urban centre has a more important and wider ranging role for the countryside. The town is not just a location for the provision of services but is also the centre of employment for many rural dwellers. For those who continue to live in the countryside and work in towns and cities, the peri-urban areas (hinterlands or commuter belts) provide the most obvious location for residence. It is these areas that are under the most pressure for rural housing, at present, reflecting the demand to live close to services and employment while still retaining a rural residential location (Hoggart, 2003). For example, rural areas with the highest population densities are located in urban hinterlands (McHugh, 2001); this pressure may be heightened in Ireland because of the general avoidance of traditional town and country planning tools such as green belts, where there is a blurring of urban-rural boundaries, both spatially and in policy (Gallent et al, 2003a; discussed further in Section 2.4).

The changing population in rural areas has also impacted on the dynamics of living in the countryside. The 'recompositioning' of rural society (Cloke and Goodwin, 1992; Halfacree, 2006) has resulted in new demands for housing from people who are willing to commute some distances to work, and from retirees and those seeking alternative lifestyles, with subsequent impacts on transport infrastructure and the community (Stockdale et al, 2000; Mitchell, 2004). Where once rural dwellers were mainly farming householders, there are now more complex dynamics at work, where changes in the demand for housing in the countryside is driven by, and results in, changes in the social composition of rural populations. The perception of the rural as a space for residence is one view of the countryside within which a complexity of demands and influences exist. For example, national policies for the location of rural housing, the design of individual dwellings, aesthetic impacts, environmental concerns, external costs, objectives for the common good, and the questioning of who should live in the countryside, locals or incomers, farmers or those employed in non-traditional rural sectors, are among the factors contributing to the complexity of living in the countryside and the contestation that at times underlies many policy interventions into the contemporary settlement pattern.

Changing rural dynamics are underpinned by four key factors that are at work on a broader, global scale and have direct and indirect effects on living in the countryside. These are: (i) the *historical legacy* of past trends, such as early state economic

interventions, former attitudes to development, and evolving settlement patterns; (ii) *socio-economic change* has greatly underpinned transformations in living in the countryside, where new employment sectors have emerged in rural economies and provided alternatives to agricultural employment; (iii) these changes have arisen in parallel with important variations in *demography* that have seen cycles of depopulation, counterurbanisation, and social recompositioning; and finally, (iv) *policy interventions* have greatly influenced rural dynamics from policies for national and global economies, agriculture subsidisation, and spatial planning and development guidelines. These four factors are undoubtedly interdependent and act together to drive change at a broad national / global level and within the rural itself. From these factors emerges the next layer that impacts on living in rural areas, namely contestation of the countryside, where socially recompositioned rural populations, new demands for localities, and the growing conflict between different countryside functions, has seen the emergence of new and challenging power relations. Lobbyists, politicians, and various 'winners and losers' (depending on ones view point) now characterise a new rural that is moving away from traditional debates to ones which question the very validity of living in the countryside.

2.1.4 The Contested Countryside

The term 'contestation' has arisen in recent years in an attempt to explain and to some extent quantify increasingly contested changes in attitudes to rural areas (see for example Cloke and Little, 1997; Woods, 1997; Milbourne, 2003). The drivers of rural change outlined above have resulted in a contested countryside where the role of rural housing and living in the countryside have come under debate for example. The uncertainty that now surrounds the role of the countryside has led to a conflict around the meaning of the rural (Ilbery, 1998) with significant changes in attitudes towards the countryside emerging since the 1960s. Clout (1998) suggests that this contestation has been characterised by two main elements from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, namely the rise of environmentalism and green politics, and the growing perception of the countryside less as a place for food production and more as a recreational arena for members of the urban elite. In addition, taken-for-granted associations with the rural, such as the propagation of a notional idyll and / or the synonymous relationship with agriculture, only furthers the misunderstanding of the processes and forces taking place in rural areas with the potential for long term negative impacts on policy (McDonagh, 1998).

The debate surrounding living in the countryside is typified by dualistic coverage in media where urban is pitted against rural, outsiders against locals, and where (depending on the perspective of the journalist or newspaper), the planner is perceived as the evil co-conspirator in, or the moral saviour of, development and change in the countryside. Although individual constructs of rurality draw on shared cultural perspectives and experiences which often reflect social and economic background, it is far too simplistic to present contestation in such a black and white manner (Woods, 1998). The complexity of the social composition of the countryside and transitions in the internal and external forces at work in rural areas creates anything but a straightforward, two-sided debate.

Contemporary countryside discourses centre on the creation and reproduction of "modern myths" where the countryside is presented, by some lobbyists or representatives, as a space of autonomy and liberty, where there has been an historic imperative for the freedom of choice of rural citizens, and as an arena which has now become a site for disempowerment and frustration (Woods, 2005b: 4). However, as Woods (2005b) suggests, meanings of rurality have long been entwined with discourses of power, often to produce or reinforce representations of the countryside that only serve the interests of rural elites. In the British case, on which Woods' (2005b) research is based, these rural elites have tended to be the wealthy landowning classes (sometimes referred to as the 'gentry' in personal and community narratives), in whose interest it was to uphold the notion of a rural idyll that purported an apolitical countryside. Any observer of rural history and contemporary society in Ireland would find the idea that Irish rural discourses may be apolitical difficult to uphold. In a number of societies contestation, debate and politics have long been associated with rural life; Ireland does not differ in this case. Prior to the origins of the Irish state, politics and contestation have been an integral part of the rural due to land movements in the 1800s and a strong rural fundamentalist ethos held by early governments. The contemporary rural housing debate reflects the legacy of past and current governmental interventions, political attachments to land and its entanglements with national identity, and a late rise of urban society coupled with the maintenance of a high rural population.

What may be of most interest and relevance to this study is the idea that highly complex and contested narratives of the countryside have been (re)produced by rural representatives and stakeholders, such as lobbyists and politicians, and by 'objective' observers in print and audio-visual media. The filter of journalism and media has meant that the notion of a simplistic dichotomy or dualistic debate has in fact been pitted against a far more complex disagreement on the fundamental role of the rural that is affecting all residents of the countryside. Any investigation of rural contestation must examine the role of all stakeholders in the debate and how they have been represented by the press; and of how policy for rural housing compares to how it has been represented, and its long-term spatial and societal impacts.

2.1.5 Planning and the Changing Countryside

Modernist ideals, rooted in the Enlightenment and in utopian thinking, have shaped the ethos and ideology of planning since the first Victorian social interventions (Allmendinger, 2002; Lapping, 2006):

“... the very notions of ‘planning’ and ‘planned change’ reflect the optimism, the belief in the power of empirical science, and the desire of people and states to shape both nature and society which accompanied the Enlightenment”

(Lapping, 2006: 104).

Although different theories of planning have developed since, the very idea that there is a need to intervene in some manner in how society interacts and develops remains at its core. The relationship between spatial planning (or town and country planning as it was known in its origins) and the countryside has often been uneasy and restless. The need for planning and intervention into the manner in which societies were evolving emerged from the rise of industrialisation in the Western world in the 1800s. The cornerstone of planning at the turn of the twentieth century was the need to protect the countryside from growing urbanisation, preserve a rural or traditional way of life, and contain urban sprawl. The rise of the Garden City movement in the nineteenth century attempted to ensure that, through land use control, the culture and amenities of urban places would be made accessible for countryside dwellers, so that as Ebenezer Howard argued, the lives of rural people would be improved (cited in Lapping, 2006: 104-5). It is ironic then that almost a hundred years later the *Future of Rural Society* (CEC, 1988: 32) would propose that the countryside should act to

“... take full advantage of the growing demand of urban dwellers for green spaces [where] the crux of the problem is to keep the countryside intact from an environmental point of view, not only so that it can fulfil its function as an ecological buffer and source of natural reproduction, but also to provide it with a new and lasting scope for development as an area providing recreation and leisure for city-dwellers.”

Throughout the evolution of modern planning since the late 1800s there have been parallel changes in rural areas that have simultaneously been both at odds and compliant with planning ideals. The broad impact this has had over many decades has been the positive reinforcement of the representation of rural areas as places where community, simplicity and ‘organic integrity’ were commonplace, thus responding to the excesses of modernism which were manifested in town and city (Lapping, 2006: 104). Jacobs (1961) argued that this reinforcement through ideas and legislation led to anti-urban planning movements, promoting rural ideals and an agricultural agenda, to what has been described as pro-development lobbies (Woods, 1998). According to Woods the pro-development lobby in the UK is made up of the landowning classes where development for profit takes precedence over other needs. In Ireland this pro-rural / anti-urban approach to planning and development can be identified in the high level of agricultural development that has historically been exempt from the need for planning permission. It could also be argued that pro-rural movements have managed to lobby government successfully in policy areas such as guidelines for rural housing which have remained flexible and pro-development despite calls for more sustainable guidelines from within government itself and the European Union.

Regardless of the outcomes of the origins of planning in the Western world, there has been a re-orientation of focus towards urban areas due to the rapidity of urbanisation and industrialisation (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997; Lapping, 2006). Ireland's weak urban fabric was a consequence of decades of emigration since the Famine in the 1840s, the late rise of urbanisation and industrialisation, and an historic reliance on traditional rural economies. As a result and in contrast to Western European counterparts, Ireland experienced a late orientation towards the urban in planning. Since the mid-twentieth century there have been a number of attempts to plan in a more regional and strategic manner, but it was not until the establishment of a dominant urban economy in the 1990s that planning in Ireland began to approach the state as urban. In reality, this change in approach is still in transition as the number of people

working in farming and farm related activities falls dramatically and where population growth is at its strongest in the east of the country and close to urban centres (discussed in the following section).

The focus of state interventions in rural areas, i.e. agriculture, during this re-orientation towards the urban has remained largely consistent throughout a number of decades, even if the nature of the policy itself has changed. These interventions consisted of legislation and policy for the security of food production in order to ensure the future of national populations (Lapping, 2006) and for the provision of materials for industry, manufacturing and construction (Woods, 2005a). Arbitration by national governments between farmers and other stakeholders in the countryside, therefore, was more likely to impact directly on food production than on housing or on other development. However, indirect effects (on settlement patterns, on the number of people employed in agriculture, and on the environment, for example) are clearly apparent but were not taken into consideration due to the narrow sectoral policy approach of governments over decades.

With the position that agricultural policy was by default rural policy, rural planning as a distinct and necessary category of expertise has had difficulty emerging. Different eras in rural intervention and support highlight this significant and far-reaching influence on development and change in the countryside. In the early part of the twentieth century the modernists chose not to allow rural areas to remain backwards, instead taking advantage of the innovation and technological advances associated with urbanisation and industrialisation, and harnessing them for agriculture (Lapping, 2006). In parallel with advances in farming, urban industrialisation and population growth required intensive food production in order to sustain patterns of development. Concurrently, the role of rural preservation groups had grown in the early twentieth century in Britain with the objective of promoting Victorian ideas about the countryside such as the need to protect amenities, nature, and rural traditions and ways of life (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997). This early form of lobbying had a major impact on the implementation of a number of national planning policies for the countryside in the early twentieth century. For example, the starting point of rural planning in Britain was marked with the adoption of the Town and Country Planning Act in 1932 (Cloke, 1983). In the post World War Two era, the market interventions that had taken place during the war continued and

widened into agriculture, with a recognition that laissez faire approaches had failed to guarantee food supply, marking the beginning of productivism (Marsden et al, 1993; Lapping, 2006).

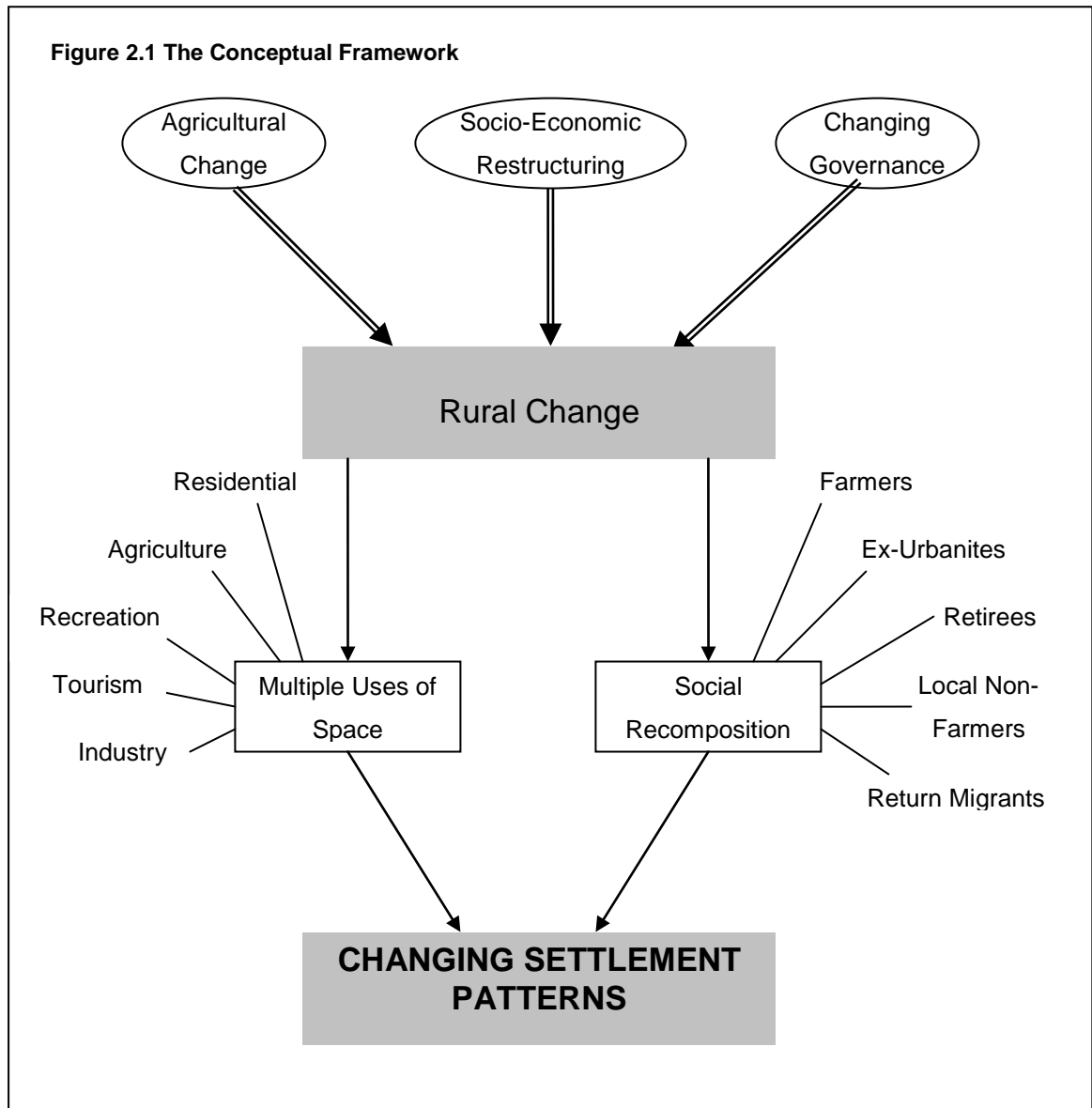
The modern era in planning, from the 1950s onwards, was characterised by a need to instigate anticipatory planning rather than being “ ... characterised by ad hoc solutions and timing dictated by crisis” (Graham, 1976: xii-xiii; cited in Lapping, 2006: 113). This new era viewed land use planning as an integral part of national economies and a number of countries at the time began to implement systematic policies, such as the identification of hierarchies of settlement for the attraction of different levels of foreign direct investment. Ireland was no different in attempts to adopt such systems and the government was encouraged to do so with expert advice from the World Bank and the United Nations (Bartley, 1999). However, with the increasing emphasis of planning on urban areas and the continued integration of rural and agricultural policy, rural planning had, and continues to have, unclear goals. In the British case this resulted in the adoption of very restrictive policy and highly regulated planning in the countryside for development other than agriculture-related. In Ireland, a different approach was adopted, although one that has been equally as passive, where there has been a blurring of urban and rural policy for a number of decades until recently (Gallent et al, 2003a). This is discussed in further detail in Section 2.4.

Due to the long-standing entanglement of agriculture with rural, planning and policy for other countryside issues has been stunted. Pillar Two of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) made some headway into a policy that accounts for multiple rurals with the introduction of Agenda 2000 and increased funding for rural development initiatives (Lapping, 2006). The post-productive period has brought new challenges to rural planning where more varied developments are being proposed. However, rural planning may be perceived as stopping rather than enabling development (Shucksmith, 2006) by its highly regulatory and restrictive nature, and as such may have negative social impacts. Woods (2005a) suggests that the very ‘tools’ of planning may actually be harming population dynamics with, for example, the designation of key settlements where restrictive practices characterise the open countryside resulting in population stagnation or decline.

Its utopian foundations have led some to cite planning as a modernist project in postmodern times (Allmendinger, 2002; Shucksmith, 2006), where its positivistic approach may be at odds with social representations now embraced by rural studies. Planning has difficulty in accounting for the multiple representations of the rural and may be unprepared for the complexity of demands it must address. Changes in government and policy intervention (from government to governance; see Section 2.4) and in agriculture (the productivist / post-productivist model), are at odds with theoretical approaches to the nature of change in the wider rural realm, and it could be argued that the complexity of change has not been properly addressed through planning. The current entrepreneurial period of planning, with its greater emphasis on partnerships and participation (Bartley, 2007), has attempted to address the complex changes in society as a whole. However, rural areas have been neglected because of the entanglement with agricultural interventions and policies, and embedded practices (Castells, cited in Shucksmith, 2006), such as laissez faire approaches to dispersed settlement, that have come to characterise rural planning in the late twentieth and early twentieth-first centuries in Ireland.

Representations of the rural are integral to how planning policy is formulated and implemented for the countryside, where conflict around the meaning and function(s) of the rural may lead to a misunderstanding of processes and have potential long-term negative policy impacts (McDonagh, 1998). The modernist tendencies of planning may have difficulty 'catching up' with the rapidity of rural change, where contemporary understandings of the meaning of rural have become distorted. In addition, the greatest challenge to spatial may not be within the traditionally bounded countryside but in the wider economic and social realm that influences and affects the everyday workings of the countryside (Commins and Keane, 1994). In order for rural planning to move forward not only must the complexity of rural change be acknowledged, the role of varied interests and actors giving voice to the new demands on countryside (Woods, 1998) and the emerging dynamic power relations should also be recognised (Shucksmith, 1994, 2006).

2.1.6 Summary Remarks



Themes such as post-productionism, rural spaces of consumption and changing population dynamics have all led to a re-imagining of the rural, and debates around housing and living in the countryside clearly manifest these new and sometimes conflicting ideas. While it has been established that taken-for-granted notions of the countryside can no longer be used, a conclusive definition or understanding of the term has not been found within the literature on the rural and rurality. Planning and intervention has had difficulty addressing the changing discourses of rurality, and while

often acknowledging transformations in the urban arena, has not instigated policy that can cope sufficiently with rural change.

The following examination of rural population dynamics, urban-rural linkages and the interventions into and drivers of rural settlement change will operate within the conceptual framework examined above and outlined in Figure 2.1. The framework indicates that rural areas are transforming as a consequence of agricultural change; wider external restructuring impacting on everyday life; and the repositioning of state and local interventions. Settlement patterns are just one outcome of these changes but as such, an examination of them, provides a window onto a restless landscape where dynamics are in flux. Conflict and debate around rural housing is a manifestation of wider change in the countryside culminating in the role of the rural as both a production and consumption space. Rural housing is no longer simply about need alone – the need to live on the traditional family farm – rather it is also about a demand to live in what is now viewed as a desirable residential space and with the goal to achieve a variety of lifestyles away from urban areas.

2.2 URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES

The extended scale of spatial mobilities and the growing networks of contemporary societies (Marsden, 2006), regardless of where they work or live, greatly affects the reach of home and the expectations people have of where they live. As discussed above, rural areas are undergoing great social change which has subsequent impacts on the dynamics of living in the countryside. The purpose of this section is to examine these social changes within the context of growing urban-rural linkages whereby rural areas can no longer be considered as isolated spatial entities but as places that work interdependently with other 'non-rural' spaces. There is a growing recognition of the changing relationship between rural and urban places and the processes that are at work in shaping the contemporary countryside. These are reflected in demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the rural population such as incremental depopulation and repopulation, changing household structures, and increased mobility and accessibility beyond the rural arena, and the subsequent impacts these have on housing. This section is concerned with the spatial implications of rural change on population mobility, access to employment and services in urban centres, and impacts on regional pressure for housing.

2.2.1 Rural Population

Rural population dynamics are an important factor in the location of housing and in the morphology of settlement in the countryside, with individual and collective decisions regarding place of work and home having knock-on effects for the provision of services and infrastructure. Since the industrial revolution rural populations in Western Europe have been in flux, with mass movement from the countryside to towns and cities characteristic of this era when employment and the desire for a better quality of life drew people into urban areas (Pacione, 1984). Long-term rural depopulation ensued resulting in a strengthening and consolidation of urban areas. However, improved mobility and accessibility from the mid-twentieth century onwards resulted in a widespread reversal of rural depopulation trends.

Pacione (1984) suggests that the reasons for rural depopulation have not changed significantly in the last 150 years with availability of and access to urban employment continuing to be the driving force behind population movements for the last century and a half. Two key trends can be identified since the rise of urban-industrial society in the Western world: (i) rural to urban movement of populations; and (ii) a reversal in migration trends since World War II with a reoccupation of peri-urban areas and some growth in remoter rural areas (Pacione, 1984: 124; Mitchell, 2004). Under this general framework of movement, a number of authors (for example Weekley, 1988; Champion, 1998; Westlund, 2002; Stockdale et al, 2000) have identified the following stages in rural population processes:

- (i) approximately 150 years of urbanisation since the early to mid nineteenth century;
- (ii) in the 1970s a turnaround with the movement of urban populations to rural areas;
- (iii) the 1980s seeing a decline in this urban to rural population movement; and
- (iv) a resurgent counterurbanisation movement from the 1990s onwards.

Counterurbanisation has been identified as characterising much of rural repopulation trends since the 1970s, being defined as “a process of population deconcentration (implying) a movement from a state of concentration to a state of less concentration” (Berry 1976:17). The application of this type of population cyclical trend to the Irish case is debatable due to relatively low population concentrations to begin with. Historically, a weak urban fabric with low population densities coupled with the maintenance of

relatively high rural populations and emigration, means that in Ireland counterurbanisation may not be as significant a feature of urban-rural movement as in other Western countries. Beyond Ireland, clear stages have been identified in the process of counterurbanisation. For example, in the case of Germany, Kontuly (1998) identifies a number of drivers of counterurbanisation which include cyclical economic factors (such as temporary expansion of rural occupations, e.g. tourism); deindustrialisation; spatial and environmental factors such as housing costs; and socio-economic and socio-cultural factors (such as changes in age structure, changes in attitudes to quality of life and lifestyle).

While Ireland exhibits a number of these trends, the basis for initial rural depopulation was quite different with, in particular, the late rise of an urban-industrial society which only began to emerge in the 1960s (Bartley, 2007). Reflecting on some of Kontuly's drivers may help to understand rural population movements in Ireland. For example, spatial and environmental factors that impact on housing costs, rather than encouraging deconcentration from a state of urban concentration, have resulted in a relatively high proportion of the national population continually living in rural areas and a largely consistent level of low concentration. High levels of access to land due to widespread ownership and the ease with which planning permission can be obtained to construct new dwellings in the countryside, has meant that living in rural areas has always been a viable and common alternative to living in urban centres. In addition, socio-cultural factors such as agricultural change while undoubtedly impacting on population movements to peri-urban and urban areas where populations have moved in search of employment, has also opened up land for development. In this case, farmers may chose to sell some land for housing sites in order to subsidise their business, with a largely unrestrictive planning regime making this a feasible and lucrative option.

Employment has remained a defining feature of population movements with widespread emigration to cities in Britain and America throughout the twentieth century characterising population trends in Ireland at the time. In the Irish case this resulted in less consolidation of Irish urban cores than in other European countries and a continuation of the small family farming tradition in all areas of the country (Cousens, 1967). It is evident from literature about Ireland and the rest of Europe that improved mobility and accessibility to employment are integral elements in the location and

movement of populations. The transformation in employment from a rural to an urban base over the past 150 years throughout Western Europe, accelerated by the growing global economy in more recent decades, has resulted in the movement of larger proportions of populations from the countryside to towns and cities. Underlying this, however, it is important to note that Ireland differs from its European counterparts in that a relatively high rural population has remained a strong feature of the national pattern over the a number of decades, averaging at present at approximately two fifths of the total population.

2.2.2 Population Distribution in Ireland

Modern features of population distribution in Ireland emerged in the post-Famine period (Cousens, 1967) and dominated until the late 1980s and early 1990s, establishing the foundation for contemporary settlement patterns. Prior to the Famine, the West of Ireland had experienced high natural increases in population with more moderate growth in the East. Cousens (1967) suggests that while the pattern of population distribution did not change greatly following the Famine, there was a clear slow-down in growth. The two main features in the late 1800s were large population losses in many areas of the West combined with less declines or small gains in the East, i.e. a 'holding' of the population. At the turn of the twentieth century Cousens identifies high-density 'edge' populations in the west, where settlement concentrated on coasts and bog-margins, and moderate densities in the east. Regional disparity marked the turn of the twentieth century and has continued to be identified as the underpinning characteristic of Irish population distribution (Horner, 1986; Cawley, 1994, 1996; and Walsh, 1991). Western decline and the 'holding' (retention) of the eastern population continued well into the twentieth century, with some reprieve in the 1960s where greater growth was experienced (Walsh, 1991).

In the 1980s, when a national population decline of 0.4% was experienced (for the period 1986 to 1991), a deterioration of the urban fabric, however weak to begin with, and the growing dominance of cities such as Dublin and Cork only added to regional disparities that had been established in the early 1900s. In this period, the small towns that dominated in the West and much of the Midlands experienced weak growth and / or decline. In contrast, in the East of the country, areas of expansion emerged which consisted of a low growth city (Dublin) and a number of rapidly growing sub-centres.

Based on these trends Cawley (1996: 88-9) identified three characteristics of population in Ireland at the time. These were:

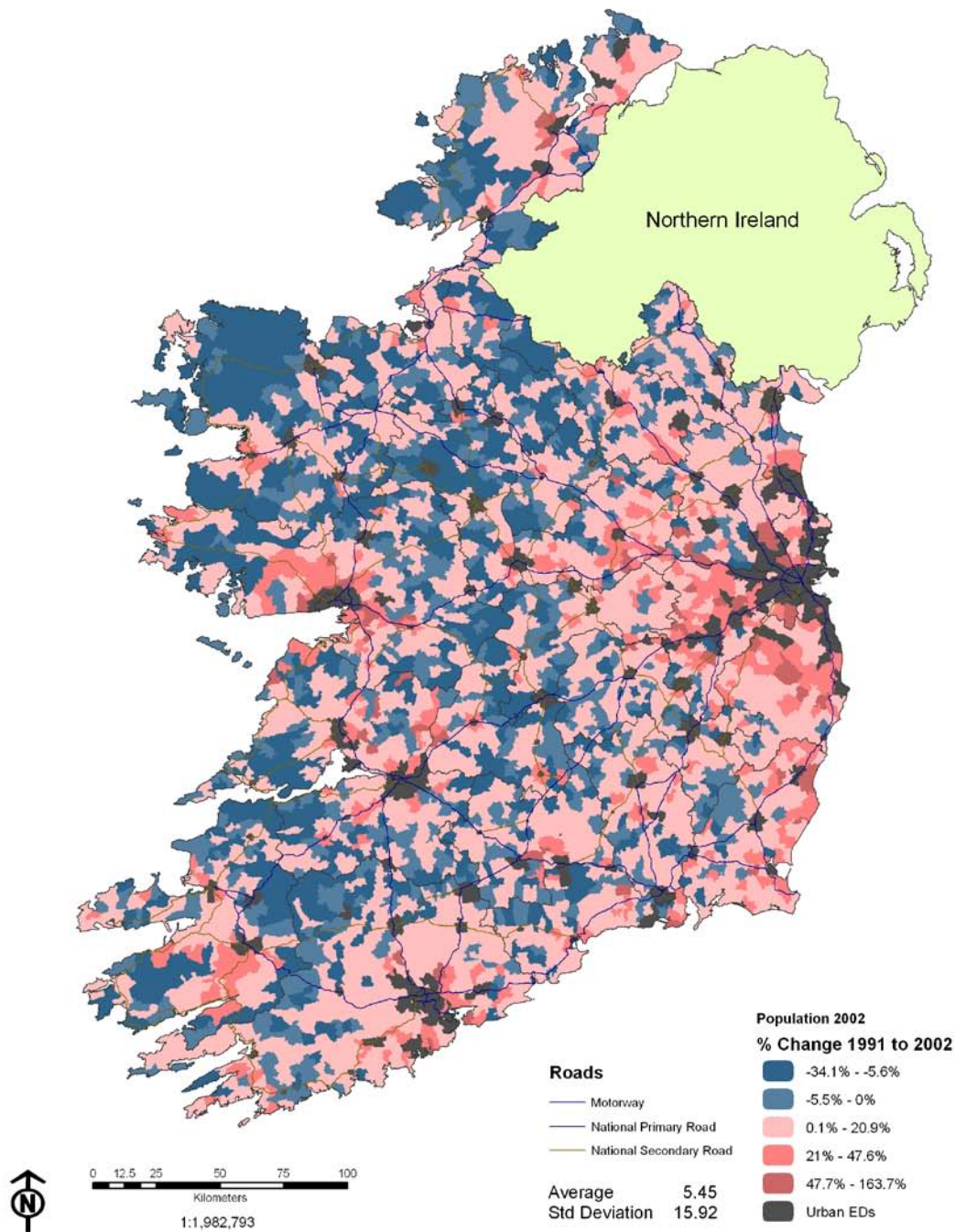
- (i) continual imbalance in the distribution of population between East and West;
- (ii) emergence of clearly-defined city and satellite systems; and
- (iii) the widespread decline of towns and villages outside the zones of influence of larger towns.

2.2.3 Rural Population in Ireland 1991 to 2002

There was an overall increase of 11% in population in Ireland in the period from 1991 to 2002 (CSO, 2003a). The only other decade which had similar proportionate growth was the 1970s when there was a 15% increase. However, while growth was very strong in the 1990s, due to the population distribution pattern that had been firmly established throughout the twentieth century, it was uneven. East-West disparities were maintained into the 1990s with trends similar even to those identified by Cousens (1967) at the turn of the century and by Cawley (1996) for the 1970s and 1980s. The greatest concentration of population was in peri-urban and strong rural areas, which predominate in the east and southeast and account for 85% of all growth in population from 1991 to 2002 (Map 2.2 and Table 2.1).

Rural Area Types	Area (km ²)	% Area (km ²)	1991	2002	% Change 1991 - 2002	% of Total Change 1991 - 2002	Density per Sq Km 2002
Peri-Urban	10080.79	15.47%	401,422	452,897	12.8% (51,475)	49.4%	44.9
Strong Rural	13432.09	20.61%	368,120	406,024	10.3% (37,904)	36.4%	30.2
Strong in Transition	13811.25	21.20%	210,160	210,210	0.02% (50)	0.1%	15.3
Weak	15908.55	24.41%	244,412	245,104	0.3% (692)	0.3%	15.4
Marginal	6218.05	9.41%	107,128	108,429	1.2% (1,301)	1.2%	17.5
Diversified	5771.60	8.86%	86,735	99,751	15.1% (13,016)	12.6%	17.3
Total	65170.37	100%	1,417,977	1,522,415	7.3% (104,438)	100%	23.3

Population Percentage Change in Population 1991 to 2002



An ongoing consolidation of population distribution in the south and southeast, and declines or small gains in the west summarise the pattern of change in the 1990s very simply. In the west, extensive pockets of population decline are evident, despite an overall slight gain in weak and marginal areas. Strong rural to urban flows of migration contributed to the consolidation of East-West imbalances (Bartley and Kitchin, 2007). However, the edge populations identified by Cousens and generally associated with diversified areas² had the greatest rise in population after the categories of peri-urban and strong rural areas with a 12% increase. The rise of population in traditional peripheral rural areas illustrates the complexity of growth and distribution in Ireland. More detailed examination of the spatial distribution of population change from 1991 to 2002 illustrates that while the East-West imbalance has been maintained, areas of strong growth exist within broader areas of decline. This is particularly evident in the peri-urban areas adjacent to urban centres of all sizes and may indicate that the greatest pressure for housing is in the hinterlands of urban centres where there has been up to a 50% increase in population. The distribution of the rural population in 2002, and the changes and movements in that pattern that occurred in the years leading to 2002 is of particular interest to this thesis due to its potential to impact on the construction of new dwellings in the countryside. Chapters Four and Six will investigate the relationship between population distribution and the construction of single rural dwellings.

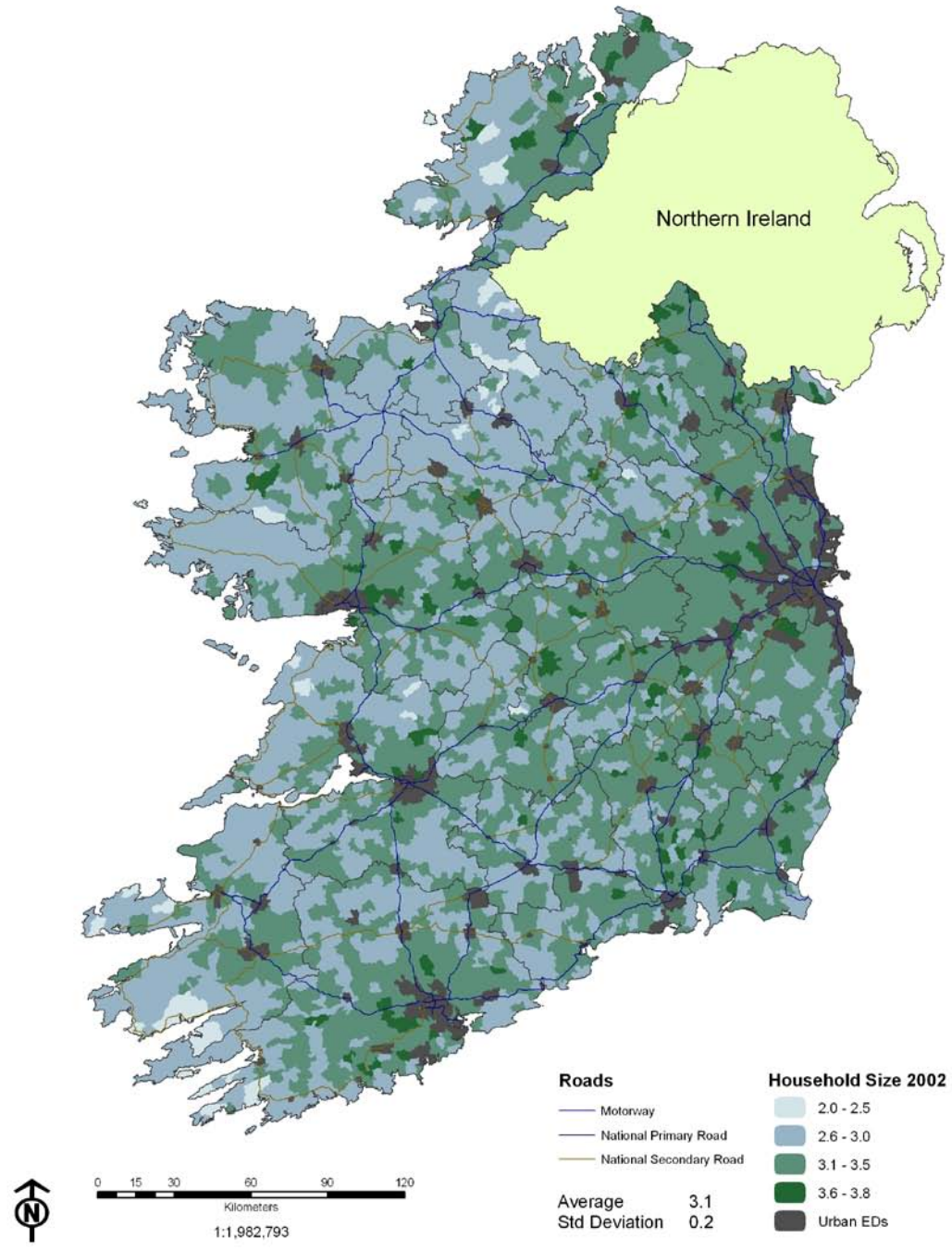
2.2.4 Changing Households

Considerable transition in household size and structure has taken place in Western society during the last thirty to forty years (Gaunt, 1991; Bonvalet and Lelièvre, 1997; Jarvis, 2003). A number of socio-demographic trends have been identified that contribute to transitioning households including falling birth rates, a decline in extended family households and an increase in the break-up of unions (Bonvalet and Lelièvre, 1997). For example, Ireland has now reached a fertility rate (an average of 1.98 children per women of child-bearing age) below that required for long-term replacement (Walsh, 2005; Bartley and Kitchin, 2007) and similar to other European counterparts (Prioux, 2002).

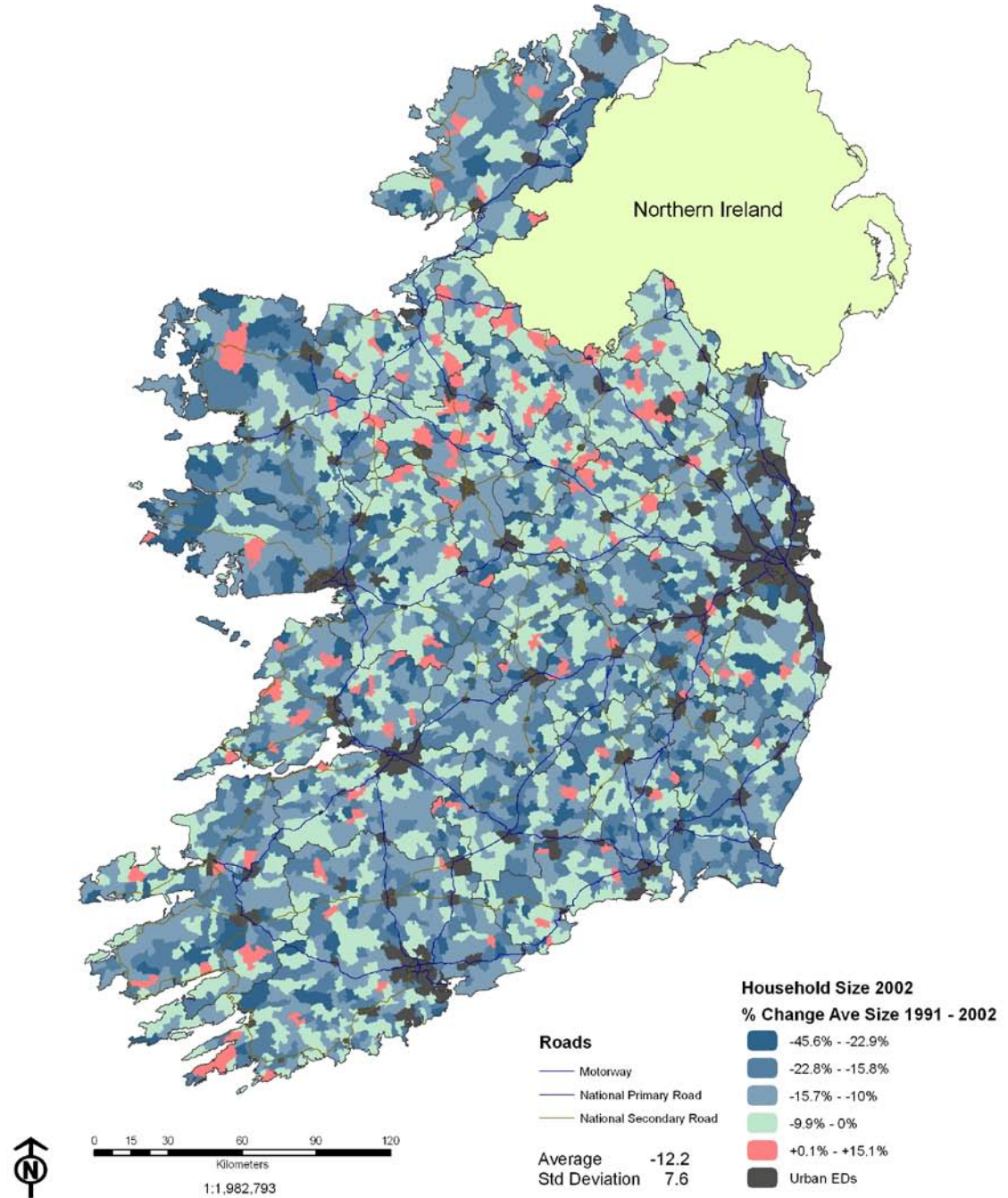
² These are areas with a relatively high dependence on alternative rural industries such as tourism; each rural area type is described in greater detail in Chapter Three (see also Map 2.1)

In addition to an increasing population, household structures are continuing to change in Ireland. Over past decades there has been a continual decrease in the average number of people living in dwellings. For example, average household size in rural areas has declined from 3.72 persons per household in 1981 to 3.09 in 2002. Map 2.3 illustrates the spatial pattern of average household size in Ireland in 2002, while Map 2.4 displays the pattern of change in household size over the period 1991 to 2002. Larger households tend to be dominant in the east and southeast with pockets above 3.5 persons per household adjacent to cities such as Dublin and Waterford. Extensive areas of high average households also reach westwards to the peri-urban areas of Galway and to the northeast in Letterkenny. Larger households tend to locate closer to urban centres where employment is accessible with smaller households locating in outer rural areas due to, for example, aging households or a migrant, retirement population (Birch, 1985). The examination of the number of people living in dwellings has been identified as an important area of settlement research due to its impacts on demands for housing and land. For example, Jarvis (2003) suggests that while population growth may remain steady over a number of decades, the land used for housing and development increases three to four times as a result of declining average household size. Thus in Ireland, a growing population, however uneven in distribution, and changes in the size of households have the potential to combine to produce significant impacts on the spatial distribution and density of housing in the Irish countryside. The pattern of the percentage change in average household size from 1991 to 2002 (Map 2.4), which shows that there has been a widespread decline in the number of people living in dwellings, means that Ireland is experiencing pressure for housing from changes in household structure alone. This will be examined in Chapter Four with spatial analysis of the distribution of single rural dwellings over time, and in Chapter Six with analysis at the small area level.

Average Household Size 2002



Percentage Change in Average Household Size 1991 to 2002



2.2.5 Population mobility

The increased levels of mobility and improvements in accessibility that have resulted in the movement of populations from urban to rural areas in processes such as counterurbanisation, are also impacting on the diverging relationship between places of work and places of residence. The spatial extent to which the rural population will travel to work, school and services has grown in recent decades. Greater connectivity and mobility have created flexible geographies (Bartley, 2007) and this, coupled with the changing social composition of rural areas, is creating distinct processes where access to urban centres and places of employment is of vital importance to the countryside. Increases in population throughout the country, a rise in the number of people, particularly women, participating in the workforce, and a general growth in affluence have impacted on travel patterns and access to transportation (Walsh et al, 2005a, 2007). The Irish population is a car dependent society with growth in the number of households with access to at least one car rising from 66% in 1991 to 78% in 2002. In rural areas this share is higher with 86% (2002) owning at least one car, and households with access to two cars rising from 18% to 46% in the same period (CSO, 2004).

Changing employment structures, therefore, as well as increased private car ownership due to greater levels of disposable income and a lack of adequate public transportation in the countryside (Department of Transport, 2006), has generated a car dependent culture in rural Ireland. With only 6% of the population in 2002 working in agriculture, and other sectors continuing to be dominant in both urban and rural areas (for example, the service sector grew by just under 70% over the period 1991 to 2002 (CSO, 2003b)), the need to travel beyond the reach of home has become more pertinent.

Distance travelled to work is also changing and is evidence of the repositioning of the rural population 'town-wards'. Walsh et al (2007) suggest that smaller towns have highly constrained zones of commuting with distances of no more than five miles travelled to work in 2002. These towns have a higher representation along the western seaboard and away from the Greater Dublin Area. As distances to work increase, so too does the size of the urban centre travelled to and its regional importance. Most notable is that the catchment areas of medium to large towns as centres for employment is increasing, having the potential to impact on the surrounding rural settlement pattern. Therefore the

urban orientation of the rural population can create an 'anchor' within the open countryside where the focus of everyday life (work, services, amenities, etc.) is centred and as such the demand for housing in hinterlands has the potential to cause pressure to concentrate spatially in small areas. Current research on travel to work patterns in Ireland, such as Walsh et al (2005a), indicates that increased mobility and the growing need to access towns for employment could have a great impact on the rural settlement pattern into the future. It is therefore necessary to examine how population mobility is impacting on the countryside settlement pattern, which this thesis will attempt to do by examining national trends in Chapter Four and small area dynamics in Chapter Six.

2.2.6 Rural Housing Pressure

A number of regions in Ireland have been identified as coming under pressure due to high levels of existing rural housing and as a result of increased demand for living in the countryside. Many of the processes that characterise rural housing in Europe are also occurring in Ireland. For example, the increasing demand for rural dwellers to locate as close as possible to or within easy reach of their place of work in urban centres is contributing to housing strains in concentrated parts of the countryside. Peri-urban areas or urban hinterlands are under a continued and apparently unrelenting pressure for rural housing (Hoggart, 2003). Sprawl and spillover effects have been identified as generating significant burdens on urban hinterland areas, thus putting demands on spatial planning and on the ecological footprint of environmentally vulnerable areas (Beatley and Manning, 1997; Jarvis, 2003). In the case of large city regions, the burden is particularly acute in greenbelt areas where planning policy is most restrictive (Hoggart, 2003). 'Leapfrogging' across greenbelt areas into less restrictive planning zones (Murdoch and Marsden, 2004) adds to the difficulty creating a bottleneck on the borders of protected belts. In Ireland, while traditional planning tools such as greenbelts have rarely been implemented, the potential for peri-urban pressure is perhaps even more acute than in countries such as the UK due to a legacy of the conflation of planning policy for urban and rural areas (Gallent et al, 2003a). This has resulted in a lack of distinctive, strategic policy that addresses specific rural needs and that differentiates between geographical area types.

In contrast to the rest of Europe, rural housing in Britain is associated with social status and cultural capital, where the restrictive nature of planning in the countryside and the

domination of idyllic constructions makes rural housing very desirable (Milbourne, 2006). This perspective on living in the countryside greatly evident in the literature and in academic investigation in rural studies internationally as a large proportion of such research is based on trends in the United Kingdom. For the majority of other countries in Europe, including Ireland, the ease with which new dwelling construction can occur and the relative affordability of housing costs in comparison to those in urban centres has been identified as attracting people into the countryside (Milbourne, 2006). The additional trends in Ireland of a comparatively high rural population and the tradition of small family farms where ease of access to land and development sites is relatively high, means that living in the countryside is even more desirable, and perhaps more significantly, is an attainable objective.

Beyond traditional commuter zones, new ex-urbanisation trends have been identified that are impacting on these areas and on destinations for counterurbanising populations. Mitchell (2004) suggests that peripheral areas beyond the daily commuting distance of towns and cities are now the location of new housing pressures that did not exist previously. In Ireland, for example, areas such as those identified by McHugh (2001) as 'diversified rural' (see Map 2.1) could be attracting new growth due to ex-urban movement. These areas would traditionally have had economies based on primary natural resources such as farming and fisheries. Their natural beauty and scenery has allowed local economies to transform and take advantage of alternative industries such as tourism and recreation, thus attracting short- and long-term residents seeking new lifestyles. This rise in population is evident in the recent population increases over the period 1991 to 2002 in these areas which were characterised by strong growth; although from the lowest base numbers of all the categories (see Table 2.1). It is important therefore to examine where pressure for new housing is most acute in Ireland. The spatial analysis of housing distribution will be carried out largely in Chapter Four. In addition, the perceptions and attitudes of those living in the countryside towards development and change will be investigated in Chapter Six, together with geographical analysis of pressure areas, in order to establish how rural residents perceive housing pressures in particular regions of the country and how these take shape in reality.

2.2.7 Summary Remarks

Modern features of population distribution in Europe were established in the mid-1800s where industrialisation and urbanisation resulted in rural depopulation and the growth of concentrated settlements. An urban-industrial society did not develop fully in Ireland until the mid-twentieth century resulting in a late developing urban fabric. Rural depopulation did occur, however, due to post-Famine emigration, largely to centres in America and England. Uneven population growth is characteristic of contemporary settlement in Ireland having been established around the 1900s and is reinforced by changing household structures and heightened regional disparities in populations in the 1990s. The increase in mobility and improved access to urban centres for employment and services has played an integral part in the pattern of population growth and change, making counterurbanisation and ex-urbanisation characteristic of modern trends. Significantly, these population movements are affecting areas beyond the reach of urban centres extending into traditionally peripheral rural areas.

The extended scale of spatial mobilities and the networks and reach of contemporary society, as identified by Marsden (2006), are the greatest influences on urban-rural linkages and subsequent dynamics behind living in the countryside. These can be broken down into four factors that give rise to an increasingly divergent socio-economy that influence on housing in rural areas: (i) the housing market - is driven by a multitude of elements including the location of employment and affordability, and has contributed to the demand for housing in specific regions of the country, exerting pressure on resources and infrastructure; (ii) the changing rural economy - has transformed from a primary sector economy based on natural resources to one that has an increasing urban orientation where the role of the town and city has growing importance; (iii) mobility, accessibility and networks – have facilitated flexible geographies allowing rural places to become 'smaller' and the reach of rural society wider, resulting in changing lifestyles associated with the countryside and new demands being put on localities; and (iv) the desire for a particular quality or way of life - has driven the maintenance of a rural population in Ireland, where a rise in affluence and disposable income has meant that the decision to live in the countryside is less about need and now more about the demand for a particular way of life. All of these factors combined have contributed to the social recompositioning of the rural population and the increased emphasis on urban-rural linkages that have created the rural as space of residence.

2.3 THE RURAL AS RESIDENCE

The literature that dominated rural studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s emerged at a time of great change in countrysides throughout the Western world. At the same time in Ireland, the state of the national economy and the need to address problems of unemployment and population decline understandably took precedence over discursive debates about the meaning or definition of the rural in academic literature. The early debates of Cloke (1985, 1987) and Hoggart (1988, 1990), for example, held little relevance to rural Ireland at the time due to the then slow-moving economy and the relatively high level of agricultural employment with farming still contributing 18% to national GDP (Walsh, 1986). Although the fifteen percent increase in population and the relative improvement of the national economy in the 1970s had resulted in population movements from rural to urban areas, this was short-lived and limited. The 1970s is regarded as an important era in rural population cycles and has been identified as the period in which counterurbanisation became a typical trend in demography. In the Irish case, however, the late rise of urbanisation meant that as a society we have not experienced the transitional population trends that have characterised rural Britain and other countries in Europe at the same pace or time. This makes the issue of living in the countryside in Ireland a highly interesting and distinct area for investigation. In particular, the idea that rural space could be, as one of its main functions, a place of residence without the associative links with farming or other rural economy-based employment, has only emerged in Ireland in the past few decades. Thus, the contestation and discourses of rural change that took place in the Britain of the 1980s are only now emerging as relevant to Ireland today. This section examines the processes at work within rural space that apply to rural housing as the countryside emerges as a place of residence; the integral role of the state in this transition and in the creation of a multifunctional rural as a result of its interventions in rural policy through guidelines and legislation and in its production of new notions of the role of rural spaces; and finally, the contemporary challenges to planning and governance in light of the complex demands being put on the countryside by residents, citizens and government.

2.3.1 Rural Space

To examine the notion of a (unique) rural space requires a reflection on the 'original' concept of the countryside, i.e. that it was synonymous with agriculture, or in other words, that it was perceived as a mono-functional space in its role as a producer of food for local, and later global, populations, as well as of materials for industry. However, due to agricultural transition and wider socio-economic restructuring, as discussed previously, the perceived role of the countryside has become contested and under dispute. To consider how this transition of the once commonly held perspective that the rural was mono-functional, the fundamental idea of space itself must be taken into account. Based on Marxist ideas, Smith (1984: 77, 85; cited in Halfacree, 2006: 45) reinforces the idea of multifaceted meaning and functions, regarding geographical space as "... a philosophical amputee ... (where) we do not live, act and work 'in' space so much as by living, acting and working we produce space". Thus, we produce space through societal interactions, expectations and cultural meanings that are applied beyond the traditional urban-rural dialectic. Space is not independent of everyday modes of production (Lefebvre, 1991) and therefore cannot be separated from interventions that act on society and exchanges that take place within it. In addition, Harvey (1985) has argued that social relations and processes take a spatial form and that the regulation of these processes acts to reinforce uneven development and multilayered localities (Cloke and Goodwin, 1992).

The idea that rural space is multifaceted is fundamental to an examination of rural change with the role of the countryside no longer being clear-cut as an entity inherent to this approach. Considering space as multifunctional and as a product of societal interactions allows us to define rural space as a residential space within its many functions. Viewing the countryside as a place for residency recognises a spatial disconnection between places of work and home, one which has traditionally only been acknowledged in the urban sphere. Applying the post-production transition model of the rural, the countryside becomes an arena both for production – as a producer of sites for housing and as a location of services for residents – and as a place for consumption – where the commodity of housing and attached status and affluence can be 'bought'. In this instance, emphasis is placed on the user and the use value attached to a given space (Halfacree, 1993). In addition, the social recompositioning of rural areas brings a population that questions the validity of farming practices and state interventions

(Halfacree, 2006), producing a multiplicity of spaces that overlap geographically (Cloke and Milbourne, 1992).

The attachment of social status is often perpetuated by restrictive regulatory policies and regimes, as is characteristic of the British planning system (Milbourne, 2006). In Ireland, however, the state itself has promoted the residency function of the countryside by allowing an ease of access through the highly attainable nature of planning permission for rural dwellings, and through the historical legacy of land re-distributions that guaranteed widespread small farm holding ownership.

2.3.2 The Role of the State

The role that state intervention has played in the changing dynamics of the countryside cannot be underestimated. In all areas of the rural socio-economy, interventions from European to national to local affect everyday workings of society and broader long-term decision-making. Cloke and Goodwin (1992: 331-333) identify three levels of state intervention in rural areas. These are: (i) local government intervention – evident in forward planning and development control and in the fulfilment of local social and economic needs; (ii) nation-state intervention – where modes of regulation are maintained and/or changed; and (iii) European level intervention – with a clear jurisdiction over rural areas in both agriculture and all other forms of development. These three levels of intervention take place in a wider context that encompasses the legacy of past policies and objectives for rural areas, personal histories and ties to localities, and contested representations of the countryside. This means that rural policy intervention, of which the common good is its cornerstone, must operate within the contested nature of countryside meanings and discourses. Often, this contestation is presented as personal and community struggles (see for example, the newspaper discussion in Chapter One) that seek to have their rural needs addressed and that, in light of the continual social recompositioning of the rural population, are often at odds with each other. Spatial and environmental planning in a number of countries perhaps provides the best example of how these contested narratives interact with each other and within the regulatory system itself.

DuPuis (2006) argues that for rural areas the ‘struggle’ is no longer just about how the landscape is shaped but also how it is represented. Various representations of the rural

derive from new meanings attached to it and the subsequent expectations placed on the countryside by, among others, new residents with different socio-economic backgrounds. Taking into account that the three levels of intervention operate within a wider context of contestation and historic legacy and that the idea that the imaginary world of rural representations has gained equal importance with the material world (DuPuis, 2006), three themes in state intervention can be identified in Ireland which will be examined in this section: the reinforcement of cultural identities and perceived rights to development in the countryside; the impact and legacy of traditional state intervention in agriculture and subsidisation; and transformations in the nature of spatial planning intervention in the countryside.

State reinforcement of a rural cultural identity and perceived rights to live and build in the countryside are borne of a legacy of 'struggle' (DuPuis, 2006). In Ireland this can be identified as the struggle for independence and, once the state was established, a struggle for economic viability. The now taken-for-granted expectation that each citizen is entitled to own their own home is deeply rooted in land tenure interventions of the 1800s and the ethos of early Irish governments. It also has much in common with a 'desire to inhabit' the working landscape in order to create levels of ownership and identity (DuPuis, 2006). This desire or perceived need to inhabit and own all land in the country by each citizen was very important symbolically in the early Irish state. Whelan (1997) characterises this ethos in Ireland as rural fundamentalism driven by the Fianna Fáil government of the 1930s whereby use of land was secondary to the symbolic ownership of that land.

Key stages can be identified in Ireland, where the notion that each citizen has a right to live in the countryside and construct a new dwelling became consolidated, by examining the legacy of both British and Irish state interventions. Firstly, the transfer of land ownership which was initiated prior to the foundation of the state through a series of Land Acts and continued to be promoted through to independence as a means of rooting Irish families to the soil. This sustained reinforcement of the perceived need to 'root' people to the land was used as a key principle in the establishment of an Irish cultural identity. It also meant that Irish people physically and symbolically inhabited and owned the land. De Valera saw the establishment of the Land Commission and subsequent completion of land transfer from landlord to tenant as creating ideal

'Irishmen' (Whelan, 1997: 97-8). The 1920s and '30s governments promoted the notion of self-sufficiency, an integral part of which included the efforts made to retain the rural population on farms (Whelan, 1997).

Following the widespread transfer of land to a large number of land-holders, the Irish rural economy became characterised by small-hold family farms, a result of which has been a struggle for economic viability ever since, particularly in those farms located in areas of poor land (for example, in the Western part of the country). The impact this had on housing was twofold - families lived in their own home on the land, thus consolidating a dispersed settlement pattern; and secondly, widespread ownership of small, often fragmented parcels of land meant that there was and continues to be easy access to land that can be used as sites for housing. With the introduction of a regulated planning system in the mid-1900s and despite the statutory authority given to development control in 1963, the planning regime reinforced this perceived right to build one's own home in the countryside due to the ease with which permission was granted for rural dwellings. This regulatory intervention has only acted to heighten the expectation that each individual has a right to build wherever and whenever they desire.

The identification of a cultural identity as intertwined with a rural identity is not unique to Ireland (DuPuis, 2006) for example, Gallent et al (2003a: 147) highlight Margaret Thatcher's famous description of the British countryside as 'a repository of cultural values'. Woods (2005b) also suggests a 'moral geography' attached to rural life, again in the British context, as perpetuating a politics of exclusion by placing importance on elites and emphasising an idyll-isation of the countryside. Ireland's translation of the 'rural' as 'national' resulted in the notion that each citizen of the new Irish state must own a piece of the land. Ferriter (2004) identifies the redistribution of land from the Congested District Board in the 1890s through to the Land Commission (up to the 1960s) as an issue of social justice as well as economic necessity. The national identity that came from the state desire for independence, and more importantly the national drive for land redistribution, translates itself in contemporary times to the notional right to build and to own a private home. Ironically of course, according to Ferriter (2004), the architects of this early state rural identity which still has a legacy today lived in Ireland's towns and cities, basing policies on their own personal rural narratives, memories and idylls. This also has contemporary comparisons in the perception that

interest groups and lobbyists, such as An Taisce, are superimposing their 'urban ideas' of the idyllic rural landscape on the reality of a 'working countryside'. In many ways this is the contemporary struggle which Dupuis recognises as one which is more concerned with how the rural is represented than how the landscape is shaped, and poses a key question for this thesis that requires comprehensive analysis of the different voices that are shaping how the contemporary countryside is now represented in Ireland and how, if any, this is impacting on policy. This is addressed in Chapter Five.

The legacy of agricultural interventions has resulted in the taken-for-granted role of the state in farming and in the provision of subsidies. Agricultural intervention is arranged from both national and European levels and has come to characterise modern farming. The functional approach to the rural identified agriculture as an integral element of rural life and as such it has repercussions in determining settlement patterns and everyday interactions (Cloke, 2006). However, the nature of traditional interventions have changed in recent years in line with the transition to post-productive modes of agriculture. This is manifested in the desire for alternative forms of production such as tourism and recreation, or diversification in farming such as the introduction of organic practices and participation in agri-environmental schemes. This multifunctionality has become a central tenet of state and European policies promoting a new rural in light of agricultural change (Wilson, 2001).

A relatively long record of state interventions in farming means that there is a certain level of acceptability associated with external involvement in everyday decision-making about the countryside. However, it could be argued that in Ireland this is the only 'acceptable' form of rural intervention, and when it extends to how and where people live in the countryside it is less welcome. These interventions, which have changed notably in how they have been implemented and used over recent decades, have always held the view that farming is an integral part of living in the countryside. As such this policy retains the pro-development ethos of the state treatment of the rural which, as Lapping (2006) identifies, has crossed over to all development in the countryside. State intervention has also encouraged the power elites to become an influential force in rural areas and Ireland is no different here with organisations such as the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) playing a strong role in national and local politics.

The three interdependent and hierarchical forms of intervention, from European to national to local level, attempt to address the interplay of rural need and the greater good. Decades of pro-development policy, firstly through agricultural support and followed in a number of cases by anti-urban and / or rural exceptionalism (bias in favour of rural areas) in planning, have resulted very specific approaches to the countryside. In the past this has meant that rural issues were considered in complete isolation to urban ones, and also that they were treated sectorally (for example, the rural economy) rather than in association with other factors such as wider societal changes (for example, changing global employment bases and processes). At the European level, there has been a reinforcement of the role of the rural which at times is at odds with national and local perspectives. For example, the identification of the rural as a buffer zone between towns and cities and its recreation function for urban dwellers (CEC, 1988) is at odds with Irish perspectives that the countryside has a socio-economic tradition that must be maintained not for the urban population but for the existing and future rural community itself (Department of Agriculture and Food, 1999). The repositioning of local level governance has significant implications for rural areas whereby the state must act both as a mediator in addressing all needs and the common good and as a 'steward' of favourable conditions for capital accumulation (Cloke, 1989). However, with the private interests that exist at both the national and local level this can be a difficult task and can give rise to tensions and conflict (Cloke, 1989; Woods, 2005b). This tension will be examined in the following sections in the context of changing rural governance and its impacts on planning in the countryside.

2.3.3 Contemporary Rural Governance

Traditionally, planning in rural areas was 'fixated' with agricultural development, at both national and local levels (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998). Recent changes in the role of local government, in the changing structures within rural governance, and in the increased complexity of demands on the countryside has repositioned rural planning, challenging both its interests and outcomes (Cloke and Goodwin, 1993; Marsden and Murdoch, 1998; and Woods, 1998, 2005b). Discourses around contested ruralities have become firmly placed in both national and local government, creating new challenges for planning in the countryside. Conflicts have arisen from the new interests in rural areas where the agricultural perspective is no longer to the fore. In addition, the role of policy makers for the countryside (i.e. local county councils) have also changed. Local

government's role has been the traditional paternalistic provider of social needs and services to the community which it represents. It assumed this role following the disintegration of the landlord estate system which until the late 1800s was the main agent of local control of the countryside (Woods, 1998; Duffy, 2000). In this role its job was to do its best for the local area (Grant, 1977, cited in Woods, 1998), which was largely unquestioned and singular because of the (perceived) homogeneity of the people it represented and the functions it carried out. In more recent decades, the rise of new governance structures and global economic changes have put new demands on rural planning and the roles that local councils play in their local area.

Local rural governance has now "splintered into a multitude of political processes, perhaps reflecting the diverse demands currently being made upon rural space" (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998: 1). The rise of new interests and social groups (Cherry and Rodgers, 1996), uncertainties about the future of rural land use and agriculture (Cloke and Little, 1990), the rise of environmental awareness (Clout, 1998), and the change of traditional rural local authorities from the role of government to that of governance, where traditional hierarchies have been repositioned and a plethora of organisations advocate for the community (Woods, 1998), have resulted in a repositioning of those who formulate policies and plans for rural areas and changed the demands on those policies. The idea of doing what is best for the local area, identified by Grant (1977) as an integral role for all local authorities has not changed; what has changed is the notion of *what* is best for an area; this lies at the heart of contestation of the countryside. With new social groups living in the countryside, the demands put on rural areas have come into conflict with each other. The local authority, once the 'leader' in its responsibility to both represent and provide for the local community, can now be viewed as just another pressure group lobbying for the rights of particular interests in rural areas (Woods, 1998). This new role for local government is a result of its weakening power in local matters, for example, in the tendering of services to private bodies, such as refuse collection, and its diminished role at the national level as a result of the withdrawal of the dual mandate which allowed local councillors to also be elected as TDs (members of parliament). Woods (1998) identifies a re-imagining of the role of local government as being more akin to a pressure group that will lobby public and private organisations and central government, among others, on behalf of its electorate. This new role is as an advocate of local interests rather than as the sole decision-maker

for an area, and as such, may opt to articulate particular discourses of rurality. This is apparent in the Irish context in the rise of the debate around representation in planning and the role of diverse interest groups. For example, local county councillors have highlighted what they view as negative influences on development control decisions and in some cases have called for the expulsion of certain statutory bodies from the planning process itself due to what is perceived as the imposition of urban ideals on rural traditions: “Councillors regard it as their aggressive duty to see that as many one-off houses as possible are provided in the countryside, regardless of any longer-term consequences” (McCabe, 2001: 65). Although contested perspectives do not fall into an incomer / local dichotomy or even an agricultural / non-agricultural dichotomy (Woods, 1998), they have been reinforced by national and local media’s overly simplistic distinctions of urban versus rural in the planning debate (as discussed in Chapter One).

The process of the formulation of planning policies for local areas reflects the balance of power in rural localities and the importance of decisions to all interests (Woods, 2005b). Traditionally in the UK, local government representatives were dominated by rural elites associated with large land holdings and local business, and therefore identified with a pro-development agenda in keeping with the perception of rural as a space for production. In Woods’ (1998) examination of housing in Somerset in south west England, the ousting of these traditional elites from local decision-making marked a politicisation of rural discourses and an embedding of new governance structures within local government. In Ireland this process is now underway with the growing support of alternative political parties, such as the Green Party, and a rise in their membership on local councils. Indeed the recent inclusion of the Green Party in the new Irish coalition government and the appointment of John Gormley (Green Party Leader) as Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, may mark a turning point in planning and environmental policy making in Ireland. Despite the political placing of new interests in local decision-making, no hegemonic discourse of rurality has been established, rather contestation has been “taken to the heart of rural local governance” (Woods, 1998: 18).

2.3.4 Planning for New Housing Pressures

The traditional remit of planning in rural areas has therefore undergone change in recent decades due to transformations in the role of the countryside in contemporary

society. Traditionally, Local Authorities were the sole providers of needs such as social housing, which has always been an integral role of local government. In more recent times, Local Authorities have become housing 'enablers' rather than providers, resulting in private ownership and the fulfilling of demands rather than needs (Milbourne, 2006). This means that the local role in housing provision has extended beyond the role of granting planning permission for new construction or renovation and the provision of social housing, to for example, allowing social and economic need to be addressed by advocacy and interest groups. The growing role of housing associations is an example of an organisation which has taken over some functions that were solely held by local government in the past. In addition, new challenges have arisen in planning for rural housing where despite, and perhaps because of, an increasingly urbanised society, there are escalating demands on the countryside. These challenges are largely driven by those who live and/or who wish to live in the countryside. New 'flexible geographies' must now be planned for that are driven by new technologies which allow for greater mobility and accessibility to both the physical and virtual world allowing people to live and work in very separate spaces (Bartley, 2007). The new housing pressures are both spatial and issue-based including 'new rural' planning challenges such as the demand for holiday homes, affordability for first-time home owners, the debate around housing for locals, and the impacts of commuter areas and counterurbanisation.

Holiday homes or second homes have become an area of controversy in rural planning in the UK and Northern Europe in recent years. In countries where the ownership of holiday homes has not been unusual for a number of decades there tends to be less debate. For example, in Scandinavia and North America ownership of holiday homes has been commonplace since the 1930s, while in Southern Europe second homes are associated with rural out-migration and the retention of family homes in native communities (Woods, 2005a). In Northern Europe holiday homes are associated with the usually urban-based phenomenon of gentrification, and debate arises due to a number of subsequent characteristics. Holiday homes tend to be spatially concentrated and area-specific, particularly in scenic coastal or mountainous areas; there may be impacts on the local housing market to the exclusion of low income and/or first-time buyers; and a debate has arisen around whether the planning system should or should not intervene in the use of dwellings as secondary residences (Shucksmith, 1990a, 1991; Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000, 2001; and Gallent et al, 2003b; Woods 2005a).

Holiday homes have the potential to contribute to tensions in rural localities – for example in Wales the ownership of such dwellings by ‘outsiders’ has been cited as contributing to the weakening of the Welsh language since the 1960s (Gallent et al, 2003b). The impact of the purchase of dwellings for use as holiday homes from the local housing market has been identified in a number of countries including Ireland (Finnerty et al, 2003). This drives most of the controversy on the role of planning intervention in holiday home ownership. There are a number of arguments in favour of such intervention in the use of dwellings as holiday homes. Many of these centre on the common good and on the negative impact of such dwellings on the community. For instance, in some spatially concentrated areas holiday homes may give rise to seasonal population decline, dramatically reducing local populations for periods of time (Fitzgerald, 2005; Woods, 2005a). Another argument for planning control centres on the potentially unjustifiable private interest in owning a holiday home that is used rarely throughout the year and that it is contrary to the public good. Therefore, the planning system may have a responsibility to intervene in its role in balancing competing needs and agendas. While this argument may be viable the challenge arises in defining what constitutes a holiday or second home in a rural area, particularly in light of changing living and working patterns (Gallent et al, 2003b).

Another challenge to rural planning is the nature of access to the rural housing market for first-time buyers or low income families, which occurs in a wider geographical area to the area-specific issue of holiday homes. The purchase of dwellings for use as holiday homes is one feature of the housing market that may drive up house prices, but other factors may also have a part to play. Counterurbanisation whether for retired residents or commuters, the slower-moving value of rural dwellings, and competition between a number of first-time buyers in a relatively closed market, can all impact on affordability (Shucksmith, 1990b; Gallent et al, 2003b; Hoggart, 2003). One method suggested by interest groups and academic commentators is that a policy for ‘locals only’ housing should be implemented through spatial planning measures. This has also been a strong theme in the media debate on rural housing in Ireland, where many groups suggest that ‘outsiders’ are getting planning permission to build dwellings before locals. Notably, this debate has been less about affordability and the housing market and more about the planning regime and its implications for housing location choice.

Legally there are many difficulties in defining 'outsiders' or non-locals whether the objective is to prevent holiday home householders, to restrict the market in order to balance house prices, or to create an overall restriction in the level of rural dwelling construction (Norris and Shiels, 2007). In Ireland some attempts have been made to put occupancy conditions with grants of planning permission in order to counteract speculative building. This has involved the grant of permission to construct a new dwelling with the stipulation that the applicant must live in the house for a minimum period of years. Similar efforts in the UK ran into difficulty due to problems with enforcement and legal definition (Gallent et al, 2003b), as well as the (un)willingness of local authorities to implement what are controversial policies (Gallent et al, 2002).

The final issue identified is counterurbanisation and its impact on both commuter areas close to urban centres and / or on outer, peripheral areas for those seeking retirement homes or alternative lifestyles. Some authors argue that the planning system itself and the provision and upgrading of infrastructure has created and influenced the geography of counterurbanisation attracting new populations into rural areas (Stockdale et al, 2000; Woods, 2005a). In addition, the use of restrictive planning tools to protect the countryside, such as greenbelts, have resulted in the 'leapfrogging' of rural dwellers beyond the greenbelt into areas of less restrictive policy but within reach of places of work (Murdoch and Marsden, 1994; Woods, 2005a). Indirect interventions such as road and sewerage infrastructure improvements or the provision of additional health care and education services can encourage people to live in the areas and make the countryside a more attractive place to live (Stockdale et al, 2000). Also, for example, the adoption of key settlements as a feature of the UK planning system has resulted in a concentration of population in restricted areas and the potential for population decline or stagnation in other rural areas (Cloke, 1979; Woods, 2005a). In light of the rural planning issues highlighted in the literature, this research will attempt to identify the new rural housing concerns that have emerged in Ireland in the 1990s and early 2000s in Chapter Six.

2.3.5 Summary Remarks

As the traditional focus of planning in rural areas changes, it is evident that there are new demands being put on the system that may cause policy to shift position (Gallent et al, 2003a). Changing notions of rural space and the recognition that the rural can have

residential use as one of its functions, would appear to be one of the most pertinent issues in contemporary policy for the countryside. The production of space through use and the expectations put on the countryside by 'users' have contributed to contested meanings of rural and on new and added demands for local government. The realm of state intervention at all levels, international to local, has changed dramatically and the role of the planning system and of local authorities must evolve with that. The arguments for and against the planning regime cannot simply be distinguished into two clear-cut sides with, on one hand, an argument for a more regulatory approach and on the other a preference for a more laissez-faire regime whereby locals would be free to do as they wish. The new phase in planning which has been identified as the entrepreneurial planning era in Ireland beginning in mid-1980s, has been characterised by a transformation in the focus of planning whereby there has been a shift from addressing every area to focusing on a selected number of places where need is more apparent (Bartley, 2007). This will be discussed in the following section.

2.4 SPATIAL PLANNING

This section examines the planning system in Ireland since its foundations at the beginning of the twentieth century, considering in particular the evolution of the regime and how it has been influenced by broad socio-economic transformations. The idea that a planning system, which emerged from a different era and place where industrialisation and major technological advances had occurred, could be applied in a jurisdiction that was far behind in terms of its development will be discussed here. The tenets of a system, which held countryside preservation at its core and was prompted by wide scale industrialisation, were implemented and interpreted for Irish needs and have thus resulted in unique planning responses to development issues ever since. Three overarching factors have influenced spatial planning responses and decision-making in rural housing policy since the introduction of a statutory planning system: individual perceived rights to planning permission for the building of new homes; late industrialisation and urbanisation in Ireland; and rural exceptionalism in the planning system which has led to a pro-development attitude to all construction in the countryside. These three factors will be considered in this section in light of the origins of the British planning system, its legacy in Ireland, and the contemporary evolution of the planning regime.

2.4.1 The Origins of Planning in Ireland

As a result of both a shared history and inherited governmental, legislative, and administrative structures, Ireland owes many of the characteristics of its contemporary planning system to Britain (Bartley, 2007). The origins of the British Town and Country Planning tradition arose from growing industrialisation, and subsequent urbanisation, with the desire to contain urban sprawl and preserve the countryside (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997; Carter, 2005). The first planning legislation in Britain was the *Housing, Town Planning, Etc., Act 1909* and arose following a number of mid- to late-nineteenth century health, sanitary and housing acts, identifying the need for a provision of basic services and standards of living and was driven by utopian ideals for a better way of life (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997; Lapping, 2006). The two factors which most strongly influenced health and sanitary legislation, and eventually the first planning acts in Britain, were the mid-nineteenth century surge in industrialisation and the Victorian idea that intervention in standards of living was necessary. Industrialisation drew large proportions of the population into the cities and with growing urbanisation and rapidly changing lifestyles, it is no coincidence that the need for regulation arose (Bannon, 1988). With growing industrialisation, the pull of the city and the allure of a better wage, western society moved from rural low density areas to urban places of increasingly high densities. A rising Victorian awareness of the societal needs, both individual and collective, drove a number of interventions into people's lives. These included the social experiments of the garden city movements in Britain such as the workers' village Bourneville (Cadbury) in 1878, among others, which took on board the views of Ebenezer Howard and later Robert Unwin (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997). With such developments, social responsibility for the provision of housing and good sanitary facilities was shifting from the private to the public realm (Aalen, 1988). The provision of mass housing for employees marked a new recognition of what individuals and their families needed to ensure a good standard of living.

Social housing provision has long been a function of local government in Ireland and was a precursor to the interventions in construction and development through spatial planning (Bartley, 2007). Forms of local government had existed since the eighteenth century in Ireland in for example County Grand Juries and although not having a role in housing, they did administer some local tasks such as receiving and distributing taxes for road maintenance. The Poor Law Acts of the 1840s and the Poor Law Unions

carried out many of the functions that Local Government would later take responsibility for such as rural sanitary infrastructure and health service provision, as well as in rural housing. The enactment of the *Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898*, introduced the first direct public intervention in housing (Duffy, 2000). With the introduction of the Land Acts in the late nineteenth century, which had established widespread owner-occupation of farms, the Local Government Act was necessary to fill the vacuum left by previous estate management. While the transfer to owner occupancy (landlord to tenant farmers) was well on its way through in the late-nineteenth century, farm labourers had not been given the opportunity to own property because they had never rented land in the first instance. The policy of local government was to build houses either individually or in small groups to replace substandard buildings by the road sides, or in existing villages, and close to farms so that work could be gained easily. By 1921, approximately 50,000 Local Authority houses had been built (Duffy, 2000).

The *Town and Regional Planning Act, 1934* was the first piece of planning legislation in Ireland empowering Local Authorities to make and adopt planning schemes (or town plans) but with no obligation to do so. At that stage, 'development control' did not exist because the plan, if made, had with it the force of law and the onus was on the developers to comply. However, the total town planning 'inertia' of Government at the time meant that no pressure was put on Local Authorities to "make themselves into planning authorities" (Nowlan, 1989: 74). The turning point for planning in Ireland came in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the Lemass-Whittaker government instigated major changes in national economic policy and settlement strategies. Policy to attract inward investment opened up the Irish market following years of isolationism (Bartley, 2007). Concurrently, the government was given expert advice from the World Bank and the United Nations that urged the state to adopt a physical planning system (Bartley, 1999). The enactment of the *Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 1963* was a watershed intervention because it introduced, for the first time, obligatory responsibility on Local Authorities to carry out development control and to adopt development plans, modelled on the *British Town and Country Planning Act 1947*.

The managerial approach to planning was established in the 1963 Act and remains a strong characteristic of the Irish planning system today (Bannon, 1989), and the similarities that now exist between the UK and Ireland, such as a development plan-led

system and development control (increasingly called development management) come directly from this legislation. However, a democratic deficit had been identified by the 1950s in the British system where the role of the professional planner took precedence over locally elected representatives (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997). The Irish attempt to address this deficit through the 1963 Act was initiated by establishing the role of elected representatives ahead of technical and managerial aspects in the decision-making process. However, this appointment of local councillors as the final decision-makers in all planning issues has been identified as a politicisation of the system (Bartley, 2007) that has opened up the potential for decisions influenced by the presence of vested interests (McDonald and Nix, 2005). Arguably, in its attempt to address the need for improved democratic procedures in the planning system, the Irish regime has reinforced a legacy of contestation at local government level. Chapter Five will address the idea that the 1963 Act contributed to contestation and politicisation by lessening the role and authority of the professional planner and giving precedence to another set of elites.

Another attempt to address the democratic deficit was the introduction of third party appeals to be administered by An Bord Pleanála (the planning appeals board). This allows external parties to appeal a planning decision made by the local authority with the overall objective of establishing transparency in the planning system. The right of third party appeal, largely viewed as a positive element in the Irish system, has also contributed to conflict about living in the countryside. The media debate, for example, has focused on the intervention of a number of interest groups at the appeal stage. It could be argued that the politicisation of the Irish planning system and the right to third party appeal may be another legislative reinforcement of contestation which continues to highlight disagreement and difference about plan making and everyday development control decisions and practices.

2.4.2 Ireland's Planning Regime

Cullingworth and Nadin (1997) identify three main features of interest when examining planning regimes, namely the extent to which a planning system operates within a framework of constitutionally protected rights, the importance of history and culture, and the degree to which a system embodies flexibility and discretion. In the Irish case it is interesting to note that although the evolution of planning policy owes much to the British town and country planning tradition, the context within which regulation operates

differs greatly in a number of aspects. Unlike Britain, which has no constitutional safeguards for property or housing rights (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997), individual property rights are enshrined in the Irish Constitution where it states, for example, that the “State shall ... vindicate the life, person, good name, and property rights of every citizen”³. This constitutional protection arose from the struggle for independence in the early part of the twentieth century when an abiding principle of the early state was that each citizen had a right to own property or piece of land (Whelan, 1997; Ferriter, 2005). Legislatively this means that regulatory decisions regarding interventions into land and development can be constitutionally challenged (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997; Grist, 1999). The widespread transfer of land at the turn of the twentieth century and the constitutional backing of property rights in the new Irish state, greatly influenced attitudes to the development of individual homes in rural areas in the twentieth century. Housing as a right was the immediate response to increased land transfer, where governments in the early days of the state identified individual ownership of land as a right and not a privilege and was outlined in Article 43 of the Constitution: “The State accordingly guarantees to pass no law attempting to abolish the right of private ownership or the general right to transfer, bequeath, and inherit property”⁴. However, the same article also recognises that property rights must be regulated by the principles of social justice and the serving of the common good, thus paving the way for the intervention of planning legislation and regulation into individual decisions regarding housing: “The State, accordingly, may as occasion requires delimit by law the exercise of the said rights with a view to reconciling their exercise with the exigencies of the common good”⁵.

The second feature in the investigation of planning systems is the importance of culture and history. A number of issues which come under this theme have already been discussed in this chapter. The slow growth of industrialisation in Ireland had long-term impacts on the urban fabric in Ireland which remained a predominantly rural society up until the 1960s (Bartley, 2007). Ireland did not experience the same trends that originally inspired British town and country planning policies, the main objective of

³ Article 40.3.2

⁴ Article 43.1.2

⁵ Article 43.1.4

which was to contain urban sprawl and protect the countryside. The lack of industrialisation in Ireland generated population decline and emigration to England and America. The consequences of rural decline were a weakening of settlement patterns and a lack of consolidation of urban centres. In addition, the rural fundamentalism of the early state which promoted the idea that the national identity was intertwined with rural identity and the countryside, reinforced the public attachment to land and all things rural. Subsequent legislative interventions through the planning system only acted to strengthen the expectation that each individual had a right to construct a new dwelling in the countryside. In addition, high levels of owner-occupancy resulting from land transfer since the late nineteenth century, continue to contribute to the expectation of home ownership as a right.

The third feature of planning systems is the level to which they provide for flexibility and discretion, which in the British system is viewed as a positive (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997). However, the adoption of such an approach in Ireland translated into a laissez-faire regime prior to 1963 (Bartley and Waddington, 2001), allowing for an inconsistent and weak planning regime (Gallent et al, 2003a). The rural bias of the Irish planning regime, i.e. the limited nature of interventions into development in the countryside, has not been documented directly in literature and while coverage of any perceived bias is always questionable when produced in the media, there is some evidence to assume that it may exist and is possibly the strongest example of the inappropriate application of flexibility and discretion in planning. The most tangible example of such a bias is evident in planning regulations over the years which have continued to allow large amounts of agricultural development to be exempt from planning control. While this level of exemption is also a feature of the British system, what appears to have happened in Ireland is that flexibility around agricultural development has crossed over to residential construction in the countryside, embracing an unrestrictive rural housing policy. The tradition and culture of rural exemption remains a strong characteristic of the Irish planning system and has recently been reinforced with the adoption of new rural housing guidelines (examined in detail in Chapter Five).

2.4.3 Outcomes of the Irish Planning Regime

While the impacts and the outcomes of the planning regime in Ireland and the UK may differ there are also a number of similarities, particularly in day-to-day operations and in

the hierarchy of centralised to local government which was adopted in Ireland in 1898 with the Local Government (Ireland) Act (Duffy, 2000). However, the Irish planning system implemented since 1963, which was based on the British model of the time, failed to address the specific spatial issues and social needs in Ireland of the mid-twentieth century. Urbanisation had not yet occurred and there was a continual weakening of the population base through long-term emigration as a result of a poor economy. Regional disparities existed even then with Dublin as the dominant city taking in much of the limited growth that did occur. The fact that even in 1963, Ireland was a predominantly rural country did not align with the basic principles of planning in Britain where urban containment was an overriding objective. The adoption of the 1963 Act had the potential to be a foresighted, strategic intervention if forecasts about the future of urban development in Ireland had been correct and, perhaps more importantly, if initiatives planned for in legislation had come to fruition. One such strategy which was never implemented was the Buchanan Report, published in 1968, which outlined a regional planning framework for the state with the objective of ameliorating regional disparities and spreading urban growth outside Dublin (Bartley, 2007). The regional imbalances, which have been the bugbear of so many government policies over a number of decades in Ireland, could have been addressed at an earlier stage if the recommendations of the Buchanan Report had been implemented effectively, particularly as it was prior to the widespread economic and urban changes of more recent times. The greatest limitation to planning policy and to the potential positive spatial development was the economic instability and high levels of unemployment and emigration that continued until the early 1990s. Cawley (1996) suggests that it was the overriding need to slow down emigration and unemployment that drove regional and national policy for a long number of years. Even until the 1980s national economic concerns took precedence over more strategic spatial planning matters. Concurrent with the lack of national spatial goals was an ongoing urban expansion and rural weakening through largely uncontrolled development and sprawl. Economics underpinned everything with the goal of decreasing unemployment foremost, and spatial impacts remaining a secondary priority.

2.4.4 From Land Use Planning to Spatial Planning?

The physical land use planning system administered by local government in Ireland has been the subject of criticisms for its failure to redress regional disparities and ensure

that development is carried out in a sustainable manner. The greatest limitation of both the planning system and legislation is that it has tended to be a reactive process rather than pre-empting trends and forecasting changes into the future. Because of its roots in physical, managerial planning (Bannon, 1988; Bartley, 2007) attempts were not made in the past to reconcile social needs with spatial concerns, hence resulting in a non-strategic planning system. The economic context of high unemployment and the need to attract foreign direct investment limited government spatial policy which could have ensured more regional balance in the long term. Also, there was a reliance placed on the private sector to provide for development needs, with the response of 1970s and early 1980s urbanisation trends being suburban residential development characterised by little or no supporting infrastructure (Bartley, 2007).

The emergence of the tiger economy in the mid-1990s marked a new era in Ireland where benefits from long term investment in education, European funding, and wider global transformations came to fruition and resulted in a changing focus where the economy no longer held the country back but actually made it one of the strongest in Europe. This rapid transformation resulted in increased demand for infrastructure, net in-migration of both new and return migrants, and a strong urban-ward flow of population (Kitchin and Bartley, 2007).

With increasing demand being put on the planning system from the 1990s, there was a requirement to adjust accordingly to economic changes and to become a more proactive regime. Additionally, the withdrawal of government from regional planning, with the disbandment of the Regional Development Authorities in 1987, had left a serious gap in the potential for strategic planning (Cawley, 1996). European Union objectives to examine and plan for the territory of Europe as a whole in the 1990s also drove the attempt to plan more strategically at national and local levels. The adoption of the Planning and Development Act 2000 came almost forty years after the statutory system had been implemented in Ireland, when in the years following the 1963 Act there had been little regulatory change. A wide range of new legislation was adopted through the new Act, including the strengthening of legal requirements around development plan making, and setting in place mechanisms for time limits for decision-making and adoption. In addition to alterations to everyday decision-making in local authorities, the act also set in place legislation that would enhance the proactive and

pre-emptive role of planning. For example, Part X of the act legislates for Strategic Development Zones (SDZs) which allows for the fast-tracking of development decisions so that housing and other needs are provided for efficiently. Another new element of legislation is Part V which addresses housing need by ensuring that developments of four or more dwellings in zoned areas provide up to twenty percent social and / or affordable housing.

The adoption of the new planning act coincided with the publication of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP; CEC, 1999) which recognises inter- and intra-regional cooperation between states and views each member as a collective territory (Faludi, 2002). The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was published in 2002 to address the objectives of the ESDP and to plan at a far more strategic level for the island as a whole (DoELG, 2002b). The NSS is implemented through the eight Regional Planning Authorities which were re-established in the 2000 legislation. It is hoped that the NSS will provide a strategic framework for all spatial challenges in Ireland. One of the main concerns highlighted in the pre-publication reports (see for example, DoELG, 2001) and in the final adopted NSS document was the pattern of rural settlement in Ireland. One of the objectives of the NSS is to provide a strategic spatial policy for rural housing that maintains the traditional dispersed pattern and also addresses sustainability demands. It has been argued by a number of observers that the objective of maintaining traditional settlement pattern is at odds with sustainable development principles (McDonald and Nix, 2005) and that, in the case of rural housing, planning approaches have not adjusted accordingly. Hence, in Chapter Five this research will address and comprehensively examine contemporary approaches to planning in Ireland by investigating whether policy for rural housing changed from physical, land use planning to a more strategic, spatial planning in the 1990s.

2.4.5 Summary Remarks

The need for strategic spatial planning has only emerged in recent years as a serious government concern due to the dual pressure of rapid widespread economic and population growth in the late 1990s, and European Union principles of territorial cohesion and cooperation. The limits to progress in planning in the past, such as late urbanisation and politicisation of land ownership, continue to influence perceptions and attitudes towards the planning system and state interventions into development. This

has resulted in contestation of all elements of the rural economy, society and settlement, from formal decision-making in relation to housing to conflicting views advanced by decision-makers, advocacy groups, lobbyists and individuals. The system is fraught with opposing viewpoints and Ireland provides an ideal arena for the investigation of a jurisdiction that although emerging from strong growth and development holds on to the idea of attachment to place and to the notion of a traditional living and working rural where change is an integral element.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has presented housing processes in the countryside as a manifestation of wider rural change. The conceptual framework outlined three main processes causing change, i.e. agricultural transition, socio-economic restructuring and changing governance structures. From the examination carried out in this chapter it has become clear that subsequent rural housing processes are highly complex and difficult to negotiate. In order to address the objectives set out in Chapter One a number of key research issues were identified throughout this chapter. The historical legacy of past trends, including changing patterns of population distribution and growth, socio-economic transformation within the countryside and, in the wider realm, demographic variations, and past and current policy interventions were all identified as influencing contemporary rural housing processes. Three research objectives will address these issues comprehensively in order to further our understanding of rural housing in Ireland and to contribute to the literature on rural change and contestation.

The first objective is *to establish the location, density and amount of dwellings in the Irish countryside* which will be addressed by identifying the spatial extent and characteristics of single rural dwellings through the research questions outlined below:

- How does the distribution of the rural population in 2002, and the changes and movements in that pattern that occurred in preceding decades, reflect the geography of the construction of new single rural dwellings?
- How does the combination of a growing population with a declining average household size impact on the spatial distribution and density of contemporary rural housing?

- How does increased spatial mobility and the growing need for rural populations access towns for employment impact on the national rural settlement pattern?
- Where are pressures for rural housing most acute in Ireland in 2002?

The second objective for this thesis is *to examine the role of planning policy and decision-making in the evolution of the Irish rural settlement pattern*. The role of the state in rural areas and intervention into rural housing through planning has been identified as a particularly contested element of local and national settlement processes. An investigation of rural housing planning and policy will be carried out by addressing the following research questions:

- Is there a rural bias in the Irish planning system which maintains a pro-development ethos?
- Has policy for rural housing changed from physical land use planning to a more strategic, spatial planning in the 1990s?
- Has the planning system contributed to contestation and politicisation of decision-making by lessening the role and authority of the professional planner?
- Is planning in Ireland able to account for multiple representations of the rural and prepared for the complexity of demands it must address?

Finally, the objective *to investigate the dynamics of living in the countryside at the small area level* will be addressed with the questions below. Spatial and issue-based rural housing pressures are best understood at the local level as this is where the contested nature of national discourse is negotiated. Many of the research issues outlined above will be addressed again under this objective in order to strengthen understanding of rural housing processes at the small area level. In particular, the following research questions will be addressed:

- What new rural housing pressure issues have emerged in Ireland in the 1990s?
- What are the local, community perspectives and attitudes to rural change and development?

CHAPTER 3: DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

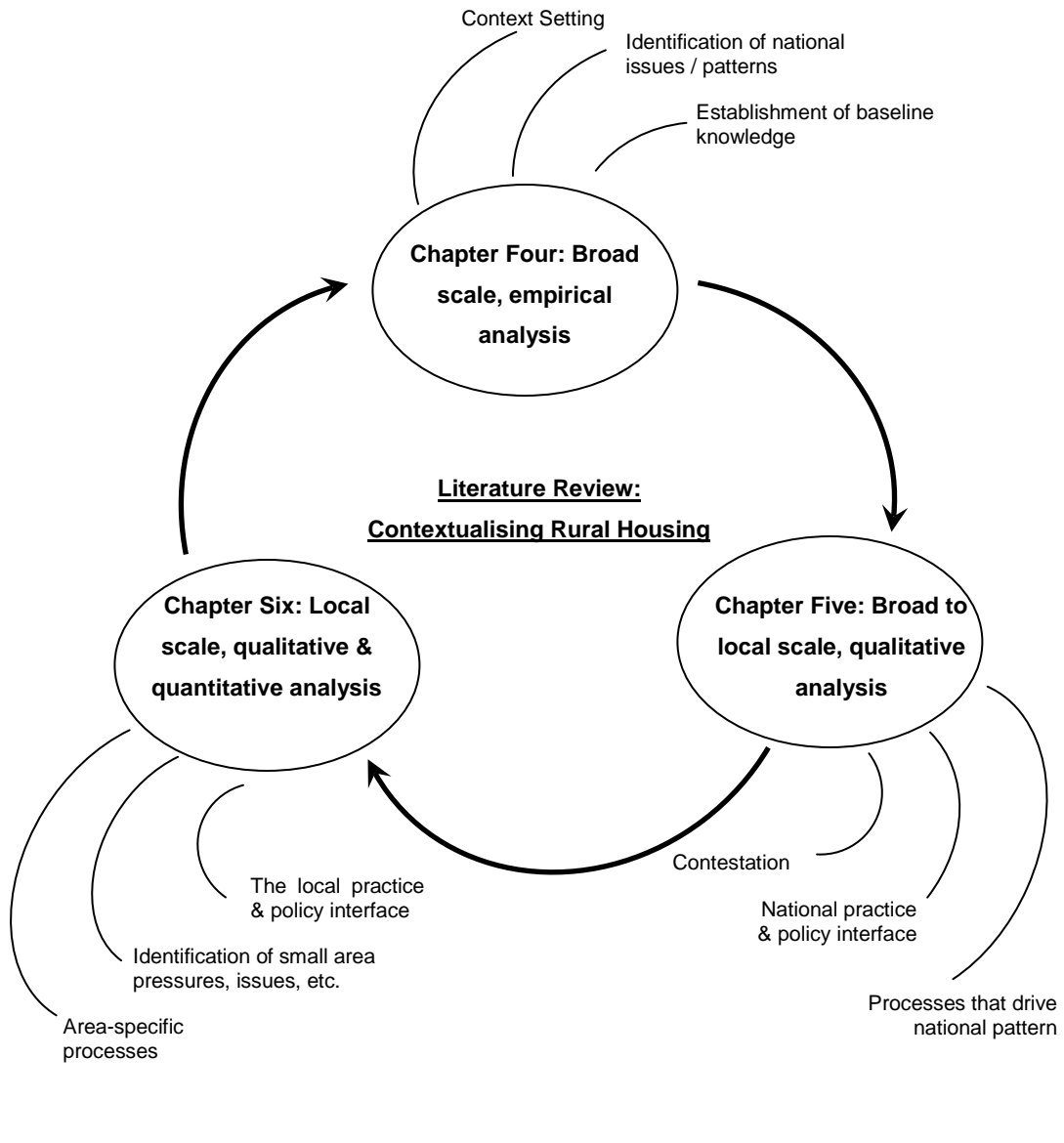
3.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter One identified a knowledge gap in empirical and baseline data for rural housing in Ireland. This gap is also evident in rural geography studies where the emphasis of research has tended to focus on intricate processes at the local scale. In order to address these gaps, this research will adopt a multi-scale frame for the examination of rural housing that embraces three key approaches, namely the spatial analysis of broad scale empirical data, a qualitative investigation of policy perspectives and interventions that have shaped national settlement patterns and influenced the politics and discourses of rurality, and the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to explore how national housing dynamics are negotiated and interpreted at the local level. The following section presents a discussion of this multi-scale, multi-method approach to investigating contestation of the countryside. Following this the data sources used in the research, including census and questionnaire survey results, and the mapping and analysis of that data will be outlined. The chapter also describes the case study areas that are used in the thesis and explains the rationale for their selection.

3.1 A METHODOLOGY FOR INVESTIGATING CONTESTATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The three chapters which follow this methodology chapter will each concentrate on one of the three methodological techniques outlined above and will form part of a cyclical analysis that feeds into the knowledge of the other two chapters (see Figure 3.1). At the centre of these three approaches are the exploration, context setting and literature review which formed Chapter Two. Using an approach such as this utilises a number of secondary sources, and together with the use of primary data and analyses, can combine to provide a powerful basis for the investigation of processes of rural change. This methodological approach contributes to primary knowledge on housing in the Irish countryside, to the wider rural literature and to the understanding of contested ruralities through the application of multi-scale analyses.

Figure 3.1 Multi-Scale, Multi-Method Approach



Chapter Four engages in the empirical analysis of national, broad scale quantitative data by mapping and spatially analysing census data. This analysis has two roles: it achieves the objective of establishing the location, number and density of rural dwellings in Ireland, and also sets the geographic context for the examination of processes that drive the national rural settlement pattern. Chapter Five follows on from this empirical study by critically assessing the role of spatial planning policy and local government decision-making, considering how contestation has been manifested in national and local governance and policy, and how strategic tools are utilised in addressing the contentious nature of housing in the countryside. It begins the analysis of planning and other policy interventions at the international, European scale, examining the interface of these policies at the state level, and ends with a comprehensive study of the interpretation of wider guidelines in local government planning regimes. Finally, Chapter Six focuses on the local, taking in the analysis from the previous two chapters in order to explore how spatial patterns are manifested at the small area level and how state interventions negotiate the local challenges that are faced. The community perspective is considered here in order to assess perspectives and attitudes towards rural change and single rural dwelling construction. By engaging in this multi-method and multi-scale approach it is intended that a greater understanding of the socio-economic processes and policy interventions that shape the contemporary rural settlement pattern will be achieved.

When adopting a multi-method approach to research, the types of data used and the manner(s) in which they are analysed are very significant. Multi-methods employed at multiple scales are deemed appropriate for this research because such an approach applies not only to the number of methods used but also to the ways in which the methodologies are “epistemologically positioned” (McKendrick, 1999). This is particularly important as it highlights the important interdependencies of theory and methodology. As discussed in Chapter Two, this research is philosophically positioned at the interface between political economy and social construction frameworks. Indeed, placing this research at such a philosophical interface is an example of a multi-method (McKendrick, 1999). Accordingly, therefore, the methods employed to investigate rural housing in Ireland must traverse conceptual approaches and utilise relevant, appropriate ‘tools’.

The most significant methodological contribution the thesis makes to rural geography and wider rural studies literature is the adoption of a multi-scale approach. Supplementary to this is the use of multi-method investigation. Approaching rural housing in Ireland firstly at multi-scale levels, and then deploying multi-methods, addressing weaknesses and deficits in existing data. Table 3.1 outlines the goal of a number of multi-method approaches. Addressing weaknesses in existing data resources and approaches, where modification is not feasible, recognises that although extensive data sources such as a census of population provide comprehensive information, it often needs to be supplemented by the deployment of additional techniques. Such supplementary work can include, as it does in this research, the use of qualitative questionnaire surveys, for example. Another multi-method approach identified by McKendrick (1999) is the utilisation of different modes of survey. This is applied in this research by the use of the census of population and the survey of housing vacancy – both are conducted by individual dwelling contact on census night but the former is completed by each head of household and the latter is completed by the census administrator (see Section 3.2 for further explanation).

Goal	Applied when ...	Example
1. Address weaknesses in existing data resources and approaches; where modification is not feasible	Existing censuses / surveys cannot be modified; interviews are a complementary multi-method approach	<i>Alternatives to census-based indicators of social disadvantage in rural communities</i> (Higgs and White, 2000)
2. The breadth of understanding that is provided by multi-method research is consistent with traditional academic ideals of scholarship	Knowledge of statistics alone does not answer questions	Combining knowledge of demographic statistics with behavioural trends and individual perspectives, e.g. counterurbanisation (Stockdale et al, 2000; Stockdale 2002; 2004)
3. Gain confidence of an audience	'Tactical' deployment may be required to gain confidence of policy-makers; communication of key findings may be enhanced by the careful of integration of quantitative results	Policymakers may be wary of conclusions drawn from small sample, in-depth qualitative investigations (McLafferty, 1995)
4a. Selection of case study areas for detailed research 4b. Set context for case study findings	Multi-scale investigation	Examining the paradoxical relationship between agricultural decline and rural population growth in Quebec, Canada (Paquette and Domon, 2003)
5. Variations on the triangulation method – using more than one method to address a particular research question	Confirmatory purposes to strengthen a research conclusion with supporting evidence derived from an independent and different approach; examining different aspects of the same research question	<i>Understanding the use of rural space: the need for multi-methods</i> (Madsen and Adriansen, 2004)

3.2 DATA SOURCES

The application of a multi-scale approach to the investigation of contestation in the countryside requires the use of a number of information sources which include data from the census of population, the majority of which is previously unpublished and was kindly made available specifically for this research; textual analysis of local government rural housing policy; place of work records; and primary questionnaire survey data. This section explains the use of these data, their application, limitations and value.

3.2.1 Census of Population 2002

The majority of secondary data used for the thesis are demographic, social and economic variables found in the Census of Population (CSO, 2002) and the Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) (CSO, 2004). The largest portion of data was obtained from the SAPS which are published every five years. The data is drawn from the

Census of Population and published for private and/or academic purposes only. SAPS data are available at the Electoral Division (ED) level for each county and provide far more detailed information than the Census of Population volumes which are published and freely available. The 2002 SAPS contain 1,161 variables for 3,440 EDs. In this research and for the purpose of confidentiality, some EDs have been merged. This occurs when the population of an ED is less than 50 persons. In addition, some urban EDs have either been split or merged so that direct comparison of previous census years can be made.

The use of census data in research is very useful because rather than relying on a sample of population the census figures relate to the entire population. The census of population in the Republic of Ireland is carried out every five years and in 2002 it was administered on the night of Sunday, 28th April. However, for the 2002 census there was a six year gap since the last enumeration. This was due to a delay by one year in the administration as a result of the outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease in early 2001.

3.2.2 Unpublished Census Data

In addition to published census and SAPS data, unpublished data were made available by the Central Statistics Office specifically for this thesis. These data were integral to the research, making it possible to map the geography of single rural dwellings for the first time in Ireland. Two unpublished data sets were made available:

- (i) detached houses with individual septic tanks: these data was made available by Electoral Division for 'before 1971' and from 1971 by ten yearly intervals up to 1990, and then from 1991 to 1995 and 1996 and after. This is based on a combination of published census data that is available in Volume 13 of the Census of Population (CSO, 2004). In addition, all other dwelling types were included in the dataset for comparative reasons.
- (ii) vacancy rates: as part of the administration of the Census of Population, enumerators are required to identify each house that is visited and record each one in their Enumerator Record Books (ERBs). Each dwelling is assigned a number and marked on a townland map of the relevant area (see below for explanation of the townland unit). If the house is vacant, then it is either temporarily vacant or 'permanently' vacant. If permanency is recorded it is

further broken down into four categories as follows: habitable, holiday home, under construction, and uninhabitable.

Although there is a range of data available for the purposes of this research, there are certain limitations in its use and analysis which must be identified. In general, CSO data and in particular SAPS are quite adequate in the information they provide. Limitations that arise are associated with the amount of data that the CSO choose to make available to the public. In the case of this research, the CSO released additional unpublished data for specific use in the thesis which assisted in mitigating against the shortfall in data, and provided a greater insight.

The 'detached houses with individual septic tanks' dataset reinforced the already available SAPS data on housing and households, and most significantly allowed for the establishment of indicative numbers for individual rural houses. From the dataset statistics for the number of single rural houses, which are based on the entire population rather than on a sample, can be ascertained. This is the first time this has been achieved at such a detailed scale in Ireland.

In the case of vacancy rate data, there are number of limitations in its use. Each dwelling, vacant or occupied, is recorded by townland and each Enumerator Record Book (ERB) covers an Electoral Division, part of an Electoral Division or a number of EDs. Each Enumeration Area (EA) generally comprises of approximately 300 households and as a result, EAs rarely correspond to individual EDs. When the data is extracted from the ERBs by townland address, it can be aggregated to the ED level, mapped and analysed. The information recorded in ERBs is not published because it is not a statutory element of the Census of Population. Additionally, the recording of vacancy data is relatively subjective because of the nature of data collection and involves a certain amount of guesswork for each enumerator. In some cases, the enumerator made an extra effort to obtain information about the vacant home in order to confirm the nature of the vacancy by talking to neighbours, for example. However, the usefulness of the data cannot be denied. The insight gained by obtaining data on housing vacancies enables a greater understanding of the housing stock in Ireland and allows for a more solid foundation upon which housing data can be analysed.

3.2.3 County Development Plan Analysis

The analysis of rural planning policy in each of the twenty-nine County Development Plans (CDPs) is a detailed and important primary data collection that contributes to the qualitative analysis of European and national spatial strategies. Two studies that analysed the policy approaches of CDPs have taken place in past, the first one being in 1983 twenty years after the adoption of plan-led development control. This study was carried out for An Foras Forbartha, entitled *The preparation of development plans: a survey of the process* (Grist, 1983), and was part of wider research that reviewed the impact of the planning system in Ireland since its statutory adoption in 1963. To date, An Foras Forbartha's review is the only in-depth countrywide examination of the planning system in Ireland but is clearly outdated at this stage. More recently the DoELG (2000) carried out an analysis of rural planning policy in County Development Plans for a National Spatial Strategy report (*'Rural and Urban Roles' Irish Spatial Perspectives (NSS Paper 13)*) using only six criteria. The issues identified in that paper have been incorporated into the criteria which were selected for analysis for this research.

Each of the twenty-nine largely rural Local Authority CDPs were examined under a number of variables. Criteria for examination were developed based on the two previous studies that had been carried out and from preliminary examination of a number of CPDs. It was important to include a wider number of variables than had been used in the NSS report in order to address key research considerations and themes in the rural academic literature. As a result themes such as differentiated space and corresponding policy were included in the textual analysis. The Plans were analysed around the years 2002 and 2003 in order to correspond with the spatial analysis of single rural dwelling data in Chapters Four and Six. In total, twenty-five variables were selected and were subsequently divided into five categories (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Criteria for Textual Analysis of County Development Plans	
THEME	VARIABLE
1. Rural Settlement Policy Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourages development into existing settlements • identifies priority settlements • identifies areas in decline or static • county differentiation by: area and / issue • corresponding policy for specific: area and / issue • Section 47 agreement (former S. 38)⁶
2. Design Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate design guide book • Written statement only • Supplementary drawings
3. Presumption for Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • genuine need / necessary dwelling • locally employed • from farm family • family connections • replacement houses • infill / consolidation • restoration of empty / derelict houses
4. Conditions Accompanying Grants of Planning Permission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occupancy – general • occupancy - specific, defined in terms of years and legality • Section 47 agreement (former S. 38)
5. Identified Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reference to 'one-off' housing / dispersed settlement • sustainable development: specific economic, environment, social reference • visual aesthetics • second homes • areas of decline • pressurised areas

3.2.4 Place of Work Sample of Anonymised Records (POWSAR)

The POWSAR is a randomised sample of 13.43% of the Census of Population and only includes those who:

- were enumerated in a private household;

⁶ A Section 47 agreement is an agreement to 'sterilise' lands owned by the applicant for a period to be agreed by the Local Authority and the applicant under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, i.e. land is not to be used for further residential development within the agreed time period

- were 15 years old or over;
- were enumerated at home (Question 7 = Here); and
- indicated that their Present Principal Status was 'working for payment or profit'

The records relating to persons within households were anonymised by stripping off all identifiable information such as household number, person number within household and by recoding variables where the number of categories could lead to the identification of an individual when combined with other information on the record. The location of the place of work was coded for each person in the sample on the basis of the reply to Question 29 and Question 30.

3.2.5 Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire is an important instrument of research and a useful tool for primary data collection (Oppenheim, 1992: 100). The questionnaire survey (see Appendix One) was administered in the case study areas in order to address research objective three *to investigate the dynamics of living in the countryside at the small area level*. It was administered in order to delve beneath the available census data in order to understand the socio-economic dynamics of living in the countryside and to capture the study area populations' attitudes and perspectives on development and change in rural areas. An objective of the questionnaire was to make contact with rural dwellers that might not otherwise voice their opinion through interest groups and / or the media. Because of the emotive nature of the debate portrayed in popular media, it was critical to the research that attitudes, opinions and perceptions could be gauged in some way, and framed in the empirical context of all the available data and statistics. The collection of qualitative perspectives on living in the countryside and on attitudes to development and change are an important complement to the local scale quantitative analysis which takes place in Chapter Six. The administration of the survey also adds the final element to the multi-method approach which this research applies.

It was clear from the beginning of its formulation that the questionnaire would contain a variety of question types. Of particular interest to the research is the examination of attitudes towards and perceptions of, development in the countryside. The aim of these questions is to attain a level of understanding of what householders think about the current rural housing situation. In this sense, the attitude questions are explorative.

When asking these questions, it is hoped that the outcome will be a greater insight into how the 'local' perceptions and attitudes of rural dwellers fit into the popular, national debate.

Sample

Once the decision is made to use a questionnaire as a method of primary data collection, the question of whom the target group will be was addressed. A number of options were available. The first one of these was to use the electoral register as the population frame from which the sample would be drawn. The advantages of using the electoral register is that it is readily available and can easily be used in drawing a random sample. However, when selecting the method by which the sample is to be drawn the main objectives of the research and in turn the questionnaire must continually be kept in mind. A key objective of the questionnaire was to contact householders and homeowners in the countryside. The electoral register is useful if a postal survey is to be engaged in but as only the name and address of potential respondents is supplied, this was not deemed an appropriate frame from which the sample could be drawn. It was clear that a type of stratified sampling was necessary. It was important for the research that opinions that are not voiced in the popular debate be recorded and quantified for the reasons discussed above. Thus the choice of sample selection and the method of administration are interdependent. The first criterion for the required target group is that the respondents are homeowners. The second criterion is that there is a requirement that approximately 50% of the respondents live in new dwellings (from the 1990s onwards). This stipulation was identified because of the significant rise in house building since the early- to mid- 1990s. The possibility of using the planning register as sampling frame was considered but ruled out at an early stage due to a number of identified disadvantages. In research on rural housing in County Cork in the 1980s Storey and O'Flanagan (1988) conducted a survey using a planning register as the sampling frame but found a number of difficulties. All development types are included on the planning register from residential to industrial to agricultural. In addition, while approximately 80% of planning applications are granted, a lot less are actually built and completed. As a result, there are a large number of omissions and 'dead ends' in the planning register. Storey and O'Flanagan (1988) found that after the sample was made it was discovered that over 50% of the sample was ineligible due to non-relevant development and/or non-commencement of development.

The technique of stratified sampling using 1:50 000 maps as the sampling frame was identified as the most appropriate method to select the questionnaire sample. Stratified sampling is when the population is grouped into strata based on additional information. A random sample is selected from each stratum whereby each is represented in the final sample. In this case, there are two strata in the sampling frame: (i) pre-1990s dwellings, and (ii) post 1990 dwellings. In addition, it was required that the homeowner or main householder would complete the questionnaire. A stratified sampling technique was used because a greater degree of representation should be obtained, there should be less errors and ineligibles, and ensures that there are enough units in each sub-strata.

The sample selection involved two major steps. Firstly, 1:50 000 maps were used as the sampling frame. The map is divided into a 1 km sq grid. The objective was to cover the case study area by randomly selecting 2 km sq areas. Once a random start was made, selecting a 2 km sq area, all other sample areas were selected systematically every four kilometres. The final stage took place during the administration of the questionnaire. The age of dwellings in each selected area was identified upon visual inspection.

Questionnaire Administration

In order to maximise response rates due to the labour intensive method of administration it was decided to adopt the 'call and collect' method. Having randomly selected the areas where households were to be surveyed, the second step of the stratified selection took place. On visual inspection dwellings were chosen based on the age of the building. The aim was to leave questionnaires with four households in each selected area. The administration of the questionnaire was based on two contacts with the potential respondent. The initial contact was made when approaching the householder and introducing the study and questionnaire. The questionnaire was self-administered. The potential respondent was asked to complete the questionnaire in his or her own time over a two-day period. The follow-up contact took place two days later, at the same time of day as the questionnaire was initially left with the respondent which was in the early evening in order to maximise contact. This allowed for a more representative sample because it accounted for householders who work away from

home. On a number of occasions on the follow-up and collection call, the respondent had not completed the questionnaire. In this instance, the respondent was given the option to fill out the questionnaire for collection twenty to thirty minutes later. In general, this method of administration proved quite successful with an average response rate of 68% (see Table 3.3). There are a number of benefits associated with conducting the survey by the call and collect method. By instigating personal contact with potential respondents, there is a heightened onus on the householder to complete the questionnaire. As a result, response rates were high.

Case Study Area	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
South Meath	28	56%
North Leitrim	35	70%
Clew Bay Area	37	77%
Total	100	68%

3.3 MAPPING THE DATA

The CSO (2003a: 161-166) outlines the spatial units applied to the presentation of Census of Population data. For mapping, Ireland's census administration is very useful for two reasons. Firstly, the census of population is administered on regular and frequent basis (every five years). Secondly, and perhaps most significantly for spatial analysis, the units of data presentation have remained largely unchanged over many decades. This allows for meaningful long term comparison, something which has posed a number of problems in Britain (Martin, 1992).

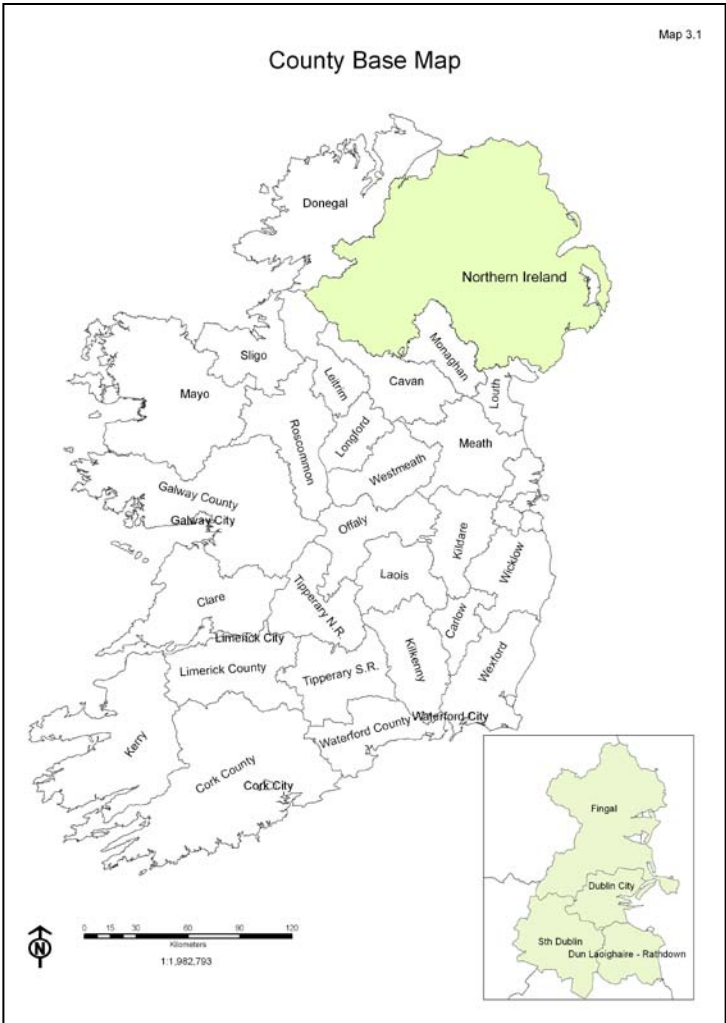
3.3.1 Spatial Units

The spatial units relevant to this research are outlined below (CSO, 2003a):

Counties and Cities

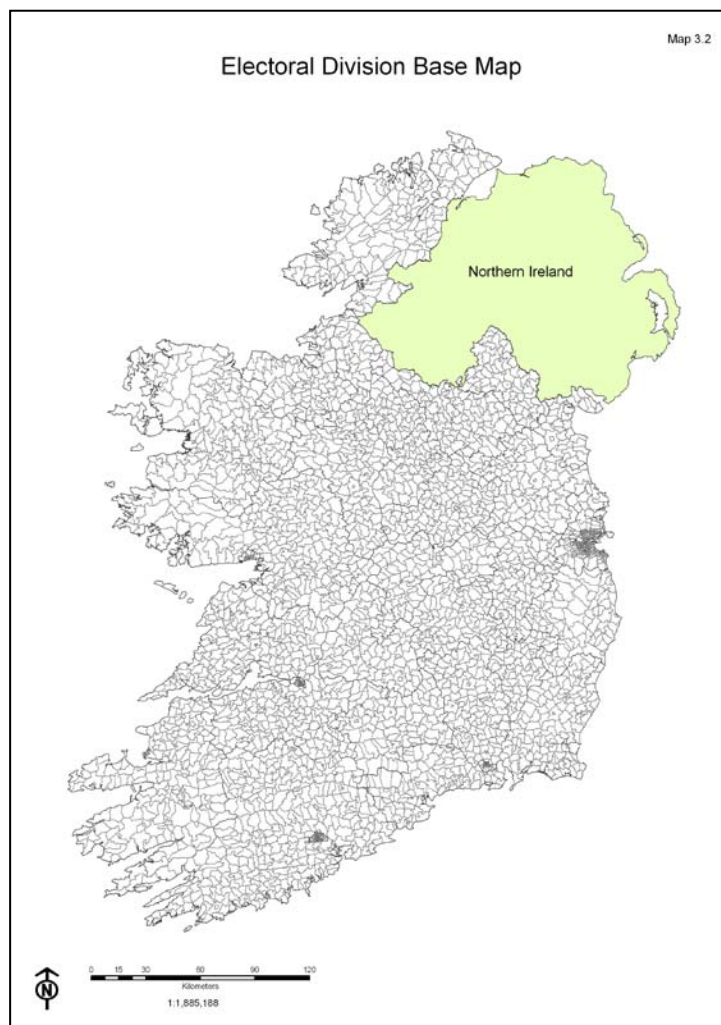
In census reports the country is divided into 29 Counties and five Cities (Map 3.1). Outside Dublin there are 26 administrative counties (Tipperary North and Tipperary South each ranks as a separate county for administrative purposes) and four Cities, i.e. Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Galway. In Dublin, four areas are identified separately,

i.e. Dublin City and the three Administrative Counties of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin.



Electoral Divisions (EDs)

The smallest administrative area for which census statistics are published is the Electoral Division (Map 3.2). In rural areas each ED consists of an aggregation of entire townlands. There are 3,440 Electoral Divisions in the State. Electoral Divisions are aggregated up to Towns (or Cities where appropriate) and Rural Districts which, in turn, build up to counties. In this research, urban EDs have been excluded leaving a remaining 2,709 rural EDs (this number includes a number of EDs that were merged for comparative and confidentiality purposes).



Townlands

Census enumeration is carried out by townlands in rural areas and by streets in urban areas. The townland is the smallest territorial division used for administrative purposes. Population figures in respect of townlands, of which there are approximately 51,000 in the state, have not been published since the census of 1911, and are aggregated up to Electoral Division level in census publications. Vacancy data for the case study areas was collected from the ERBs by townland and were also aggregated up to ED level for comparative purposes.

Northern Ireland

Data for this thesis is only available for the Republic of Ireland, hence the 'gap' in spatial analysis in the northeast of the island. Due to different data sources, collection methods, and definitions all-island maps could not be produced.

3.3.2 Mapping the Data

Data for mapping was firstly analysed in Microsoft excel which can support a large number of records (spatial units) and variables. Once calculations were made the excel document was attached to ArcGIS 9.2 in order to both display the spatial data and carry out analysis such as querying and cluster analysis. Data is displayed in areal units (polygons) which are used to create choropleth maps. In total 2,709 polygons were used to display and analyse the data.

All maps in the thesis are choropleth maps which are appropriate for displaying densities, rates of change and percentage shares. The data are displayed sequentially meaning that colours are selected to correspond with this, i.e. from light to dark for low to high data values. In addition, for rates of change maps two different colours represent positive and negative shares (pink to red for positive values, light blue to dark blue for negative values).

One disadvantage associated with choropleth mapping, and one which is pertinent to the examination of settlement patterns, is the perception that the area covered by the polygon is representative of the entire areas. In the case of this research, natural features such as waterways, mountains and bogs are included in the defined ED area. As a result the landscape impacts of the settlement pattern are sometimes different to

that produced in the choropleth map, for example, the pattern could be linear, i.e. along roads rather than being dispersed evenly throughout the areal unit (see Figure 3.2 for an example of the actual landscape effects of settlement patterns). The data in the series of maps throughout the thesis are presented in classification breaks that are based on natural breaks in the distribution of variables – this uses the Natural Breaks (Jenks) method.



Figure 3.2 Clew Bay, County Mayo – how the natural landscape impacts on settlement patterns (source GoogleEarth)

3.4 THE CASE STUDY AREAS

Three case study areas have been selected as the location of the local scale investigation of small area housing processes and each contains at least two of the rural types developed by McHugh (2001). While each area has its own spatially specific dynamics at work, it is hoped that the three study areas together will provide for a better understanding of the wider processes in action at the regional and national levels. This section discusses the use of the case study in the multi-scale approach, details McHugh's rural typology and profiles the three study areas.

3.4.1 The Case Study Method

There is no definite method necessary for collecting information, and as a result there is great flexibility in how the study can be carried out. The case study method of research is an umbrella term for a family of research methods that have the objective of examining dynamics around a specific subject. For example, while surveys are considered to be a separate methodology from case study research, it is also possible to include surveys as a method of investigation (Yin, 1994). For this research it was decided that selecting a number of study areas for a more in-depth analysis of rural settlement patterns would provide greater insight into the national pattern. As case studies are "...the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed ... and when the focus is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin, 1994: 1), the selection of small areas was deemed appropriate to explore the local level dynamics of the rural population and housing.

3.4.2 Selection of the Case Study Areas

Three study areas were selected using the following criteria:

1. The Irish Rural Typology
2. Population Change
3. Planning issues

The rural typology (McHugh, 2001) categorises the Irish countryside into six different area types (see Map 2.1 and Table 2.1). The in-depth analysis which was carried out to establish the Irish rural typology allows for a strong understanding of rural change and the processes at work in the countryside. Using Census of Population (over the period 1986 to 1996) and Census of Agriculture (1991) data, a large number of socio-economic and demographic variables were analysed for rural Electoral Divisions (EDs). Urban EDs, which were defined as areas with a population of more than 1,500 people and a population density of 150 per square kilometres, were extracted leaving over 2,700 spatial units of enquiry.

The six rural area types are as follows:

Area Type 1 - Peri-Urban Areas

These are areas that are characterised by high population densities with a advanced transition into higher socio-economic profiles, for example a large proportion of the population work in professional services, and have a low level of reliance on agricultural employment. Peri-urban areas tend to dominate in the east, but are present in the direct hinterlands of all medium to large towns and cities throughout the country. These areas accounted for 50% of total population growth over the period 1991 to 2002, representing one third of the state's rural population. There was a population rise of 13% from 1991 to 2002 in these areas.

Area Type 2 - Very Strong Rural Areas

These areas are most dominant in the east and southeast of the country, and have a strong agricultural base coupled with an average level of transition to non-farming employment. The rate of population expansion is similar to that in peri-urban areas (just over 10% from 1991 to 2002) but accounted for less of the total growth (36%).

Area Type 3 - Strong Agricultural Areas Undergoing Adjustment

Again, these areas have a strong agricultural base but due to EU CAP restrictions on farm outputs, longterm employment in this sector is weakening. Low female participation in the labour force and higher levels of full-time farming resulted in low rates of employment growth in the 1990s. Population growth stagnated from 1991 to 2002 with a barely discernible increase of 0.02%. Population density is lower than in peri-urban and strong rural areas with 15 people per square kilometre.

Area Type 4 - Structurally Weak Rural Areas

Area types four and five represent parts of the country that are most economically and demographically disadvantaged. Weak rural areas rely on a fragile farm structure with an elderly population and high levels of out-migration. These areas are most extensive in the west and northwest. While there was holding of the population in these areas (0.3% growth from 1991 to 2002) there were also large pockets of decline (see Map 2.4).

Area Type 5 - Marginal Rural Areas

Marginal areas are also characterised by weak farm structures and low population growth. They are peripherally located along the western coast in inland pockets mainly in north Mayo and Leitrim.

Area Type 6 - Highly Diversified Rural Areas

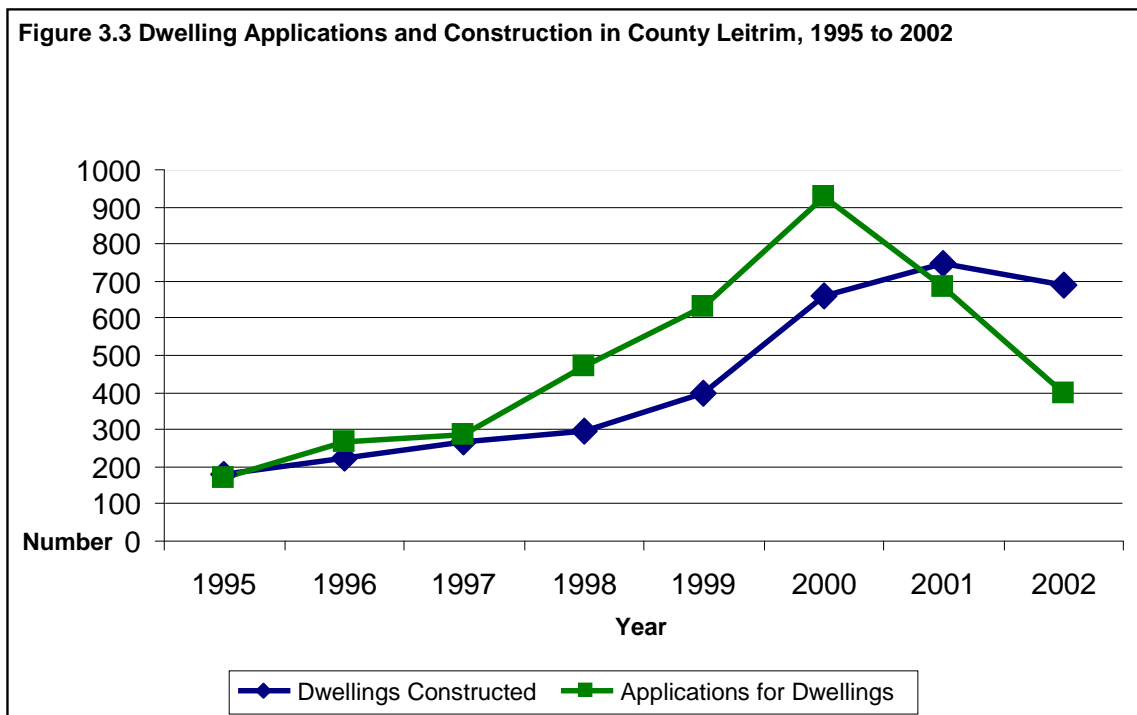
Diversified areas are mainly located in traditionally peripheral areas but are characterised by scenic and high amenity landscapes where the potential for alternative rural industries is higher such as tourism. There tends to be higher levels of off-farm self-employment and more women participating in the labour market. Over the period 1991 to 2002, these areas experienced the highest level of population in the country with a rise of 15%. Although population numbers were low to begin with, it indicated significant levels of in-migration.

The rural typology assisted greatly in the selection of the three study areas for research in this thesis. The three areas were selected so that each rural area type was represented in the local analysis. In addition to each rural type other issues were examined that have direct impacts on settlement patterns – population change and planning policy. Population change over a number of decades was examined in order to identify varying trends across the country. The rural typology which was based on census variables from the 1980s and 1990s and the addition of the updated 2002 data made this analysis relatively straightforward. Again, different levels of growth and decline are represented in each study area. Finally planning policy, plus trends in planning applications and permissions for dwellings, were taken into account. Map 3.3 shows the geographical location of each case study area.

3.4.3 Case Study Area Profile – North Leitrim

County Leitrim is located in the northeast of Ireland and is dominated by rural areas type five and six – marginal and weak rural areas. The northern part of the county was selected as the study area because of the mix of marginal and weak rural area types (see Map 3.4). In total there are 28 EDs in the North Leitrim study area. Of the total areas there are thirteen marginal; ten weak; two peri-urban; and three strong and strong in transition areas. North Leitrim was selected because it is one of the most marginal parts of the country and has a legacy of population decline over many decades. There

is a very weak urban structure and it is the only study area with no urban ED. The two peri-urban EDs contain the two largest towns in the North Leitrim – Dromahaire and Manorhamilton. In the 1990s, the first increases in population occurred in the county and it experienced unprecedented levels of growth in the number of planning applications for dwellings. Applications for dwellings peaked in 2000 having risen by 500% since 1991 (155 in 1991 to 928 in 2000; this number dropped in 2002 to 397) indicating that population changes were impacting on demands to construct new dwellings; house completions⁷ also rose up to 2001 (see Figure 3.3).

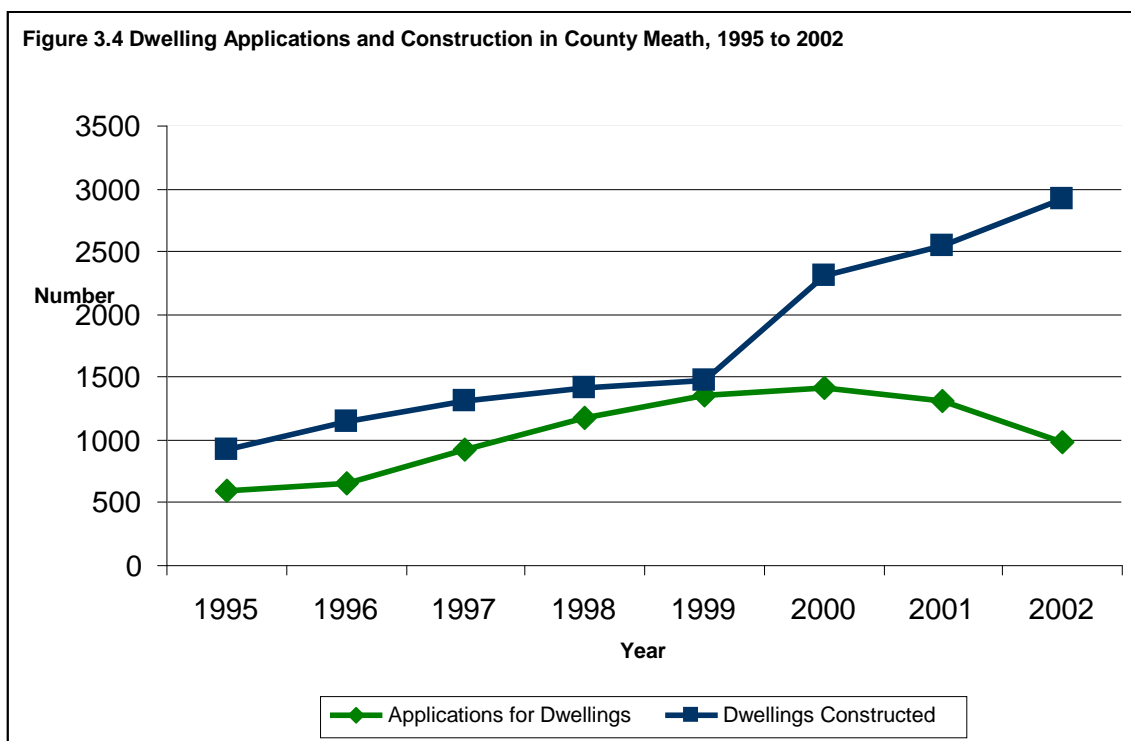


3.4.4 Case Study Area Profile – South Meath

County Meath is located in the Greater Dublin Area where there is a predominance of urban, peri-urban and strong rural area types (see Map 3.5). The South Meath study area was selected because it straddles two rural area types that are characteristic of the east of the countryside – peri-urban and strong rural area. There are 18 EDs in total in the Meath study area, of which seven are peri-urban and eleven are strong rural. In comparison to Leitrim, the Meath study area has a strong urban structure with the presence of large towns such as Navan and Trim. In addition, its proximity to Dublin city

⁷ Statistics for house completions are only available since 1995.

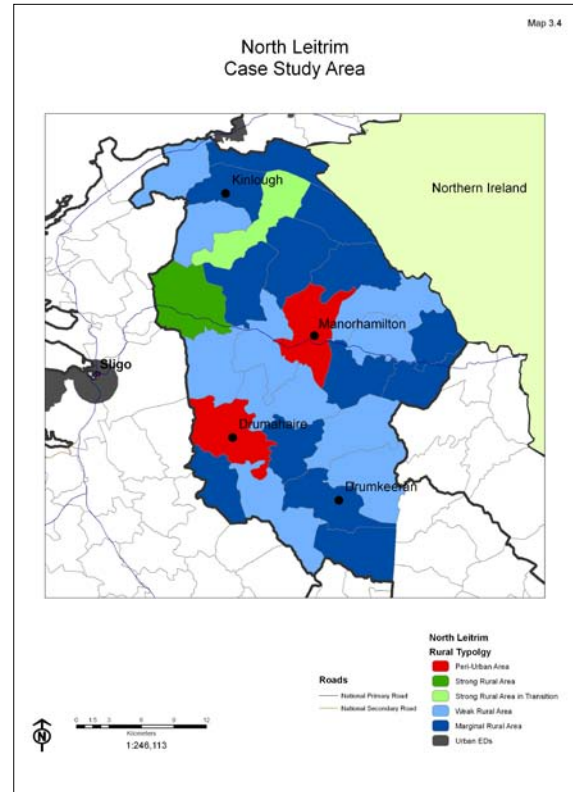
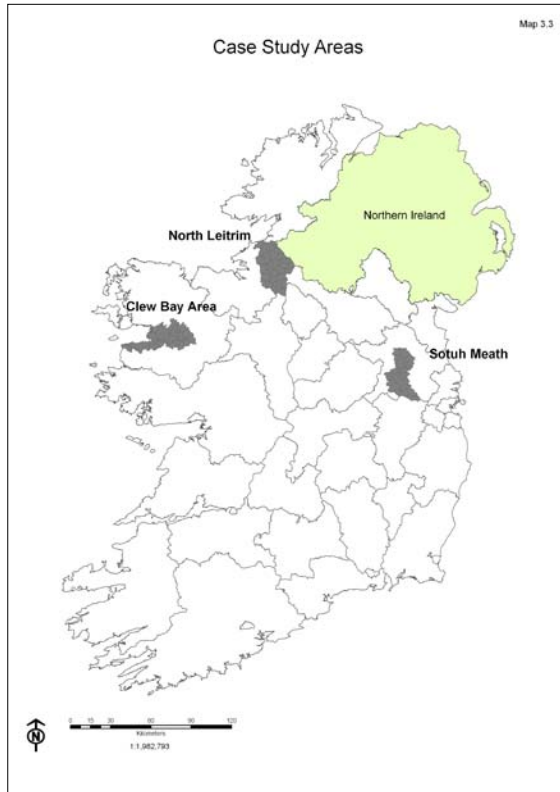
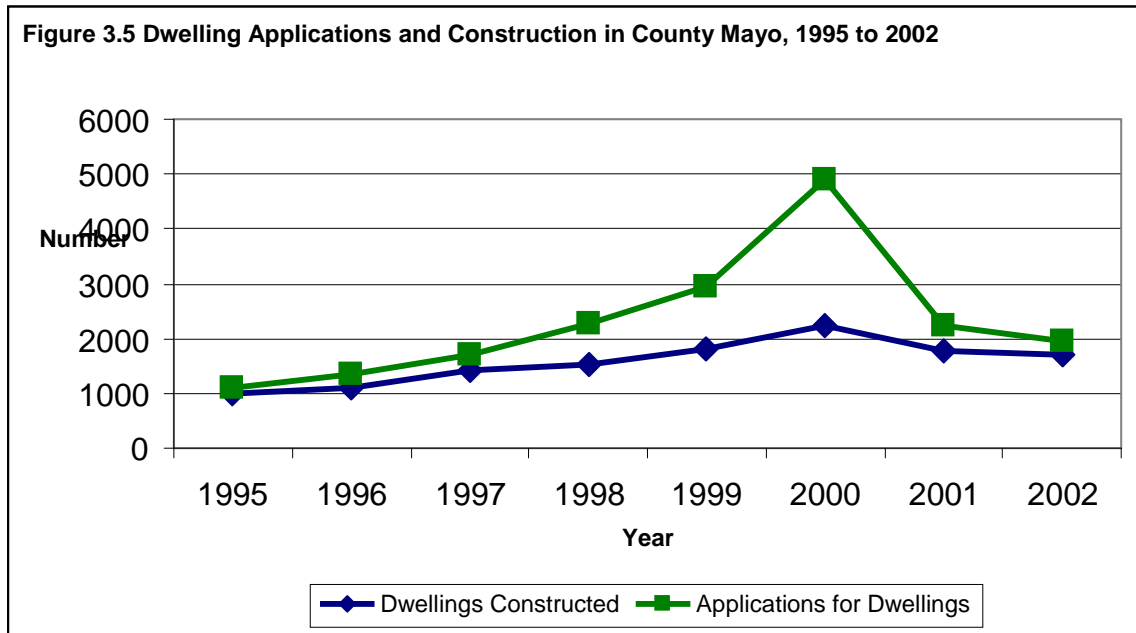
means that rural Meath is strongly influenced by urban areas. Population growth tends to be strong in County Meath, with the majority of increases in towns and their direct hinterland. Planning applications for dwellings rose by 50% over the period 1991 to 2002 (see Figure 3.4), peaking in 2000 at 1409 applications. Dwelling completion rates remained ahead of planning applications over the period.

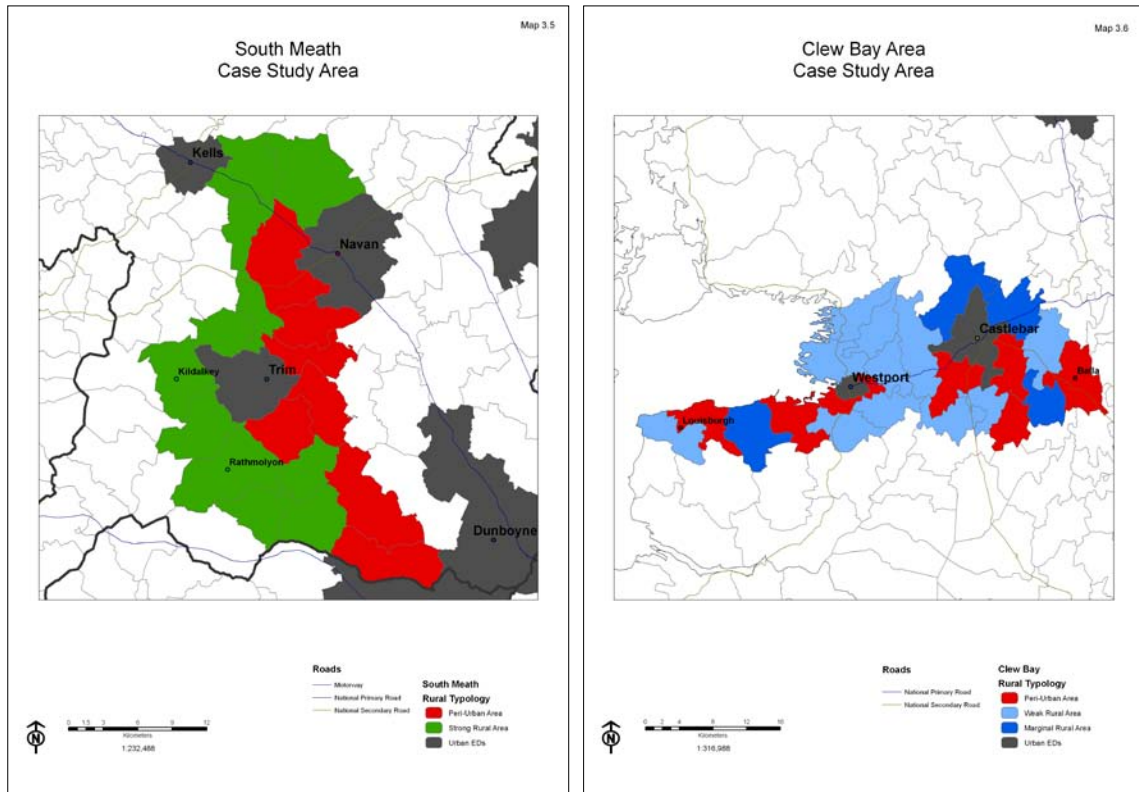


3.4.5 Case Study Area Profile – Clew Bay area

The Clew Bay cases study areas is located in mid-west County Mayo in the West of Ireland (see Map 3.6). The area was selected because it represents a number of different rural types, consisting of seven peri-urban, four marginal areas and eleven weak areas. Clew Bay is an area that although characterised by high levels of marginalised and weak rural types, is a very scenic mountainous and coastal region that attracts tourists and alternative industries. The presence of strong urban centres – Westport and Castlebar – and the adjacent peri-urban EDs, contrasts with weaker areas. As a result of the presence of various rural area types, population growth has fluctuated with increases more likely close to urban centres. Planning applications for

dwellings rose dramatically around the year 2000 (from 858 in 1991 to 4910 in 2000; a rise of 472%; see Figure 3.5).





3.5 SUMMARY REMARKS

The multi-scale, multi-method approach of this research aims to address the knowledge gap in Irish rural housing which centres around the elusive debate on the future of living in the countryside. The research methods and data sources outlined above will consider the key issues and questions which were identified in Chapter Two and fulfil the three objectives in Chapter One. Using the multi-scale approach means that this thesis will provide a useful and insightful contribution to primary knowledge in Ireland and to the substantial academic literature that already exists on the subject of rural housing beyond these shores. Ireland’s experience with rural change and the associated contestation around housing gives a unique perspective on living in the countryside.

CHAPTER 4: THE GEOGRAPHY OF RURAL HOUSING

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the location, density and number of dwellings in the Irish countryside, key features of the housing debate which have remained elusive to date. This addresses the first objective of the thesis identified in Chapter One, which is:

To establish the location, density and number of dwellings in the Irish countryside.

By addressing the above objective, this chapter provides the broad scale empirical basis for the examination of decision-making and small area housing dynamics that take place in subsequent chapters, and the first stage in the multi-scale examination of contestation in the countryside. Analysis in this chapter identifies layers of change over time and the incremental spatial pattern of Single Rural Dwellings (SRDs) which have created the rural settlement pattern in 2002. Referred to as one-off houses in the media, SRDs have become the main preoccupation of the rural housing debate in Ireland. This is because SRDs potentially have the greatest impact of all residential development in the countryside due to the number built coupled with those using mains sewerage, the potential environmental impacts of septic tanks or other individual sewage treatment, related infrastructure provision for dispersed settlement, access to services, and the social impacts on future communities. While the debate has addressed numerous issues such as who has the right to live in the countryside in light of agricultural decline and has concentrated on the emotive narratives of rising planning refusal rates and subsequent impacts on rural life, there has been limited examination of the baseline information associated with one-off housing and an over-reliance on anecdote and hearsay. This chapter attempts to address the vacuum in which the debate has taken place by establishing the pattern of rural settlement up to 2002. A study of the national geography of rural housing patterns provides a necessary context for the following two chapters where the decision-making processes in relation to rural housing and the dynamics of living in the countryside are both examined.

The pattern of rural housing growth and change will be examined by addressing some of the key research issues which were identified in Chapter Two. The distribution of the rural population in 2002, and the evolution of movements and cycles in that pattern that have taken place in the years leading up to 2002 were identified as having the potential to impact on the construction of new dwellings in the countryside. This chapter will consider how the distribution of the rural population up to 2002 reflects the geography of the construction of new single rural dwellings over recent decades. Additionally, changes in the size of households have the potential to produce significant impacts on the spatial distribution and density of housing in the Irish countryside and will also be addressed.

A key finding of Chapter Two was that increased mobility and the growing need for accessibility to towns for employment could have a great impact on the rural settlement pattern into the future. It is therefore necessary to examine how population mobility is impacting on the countryside settlement pattern by examining the national settlement pattern and its relationship to transport networks and urban centres. This will set the context for the investigation of small area dynamics in Chapter Six and contribute to the identification of the location of areas of acute housing pressure in 2002 in Ireland.

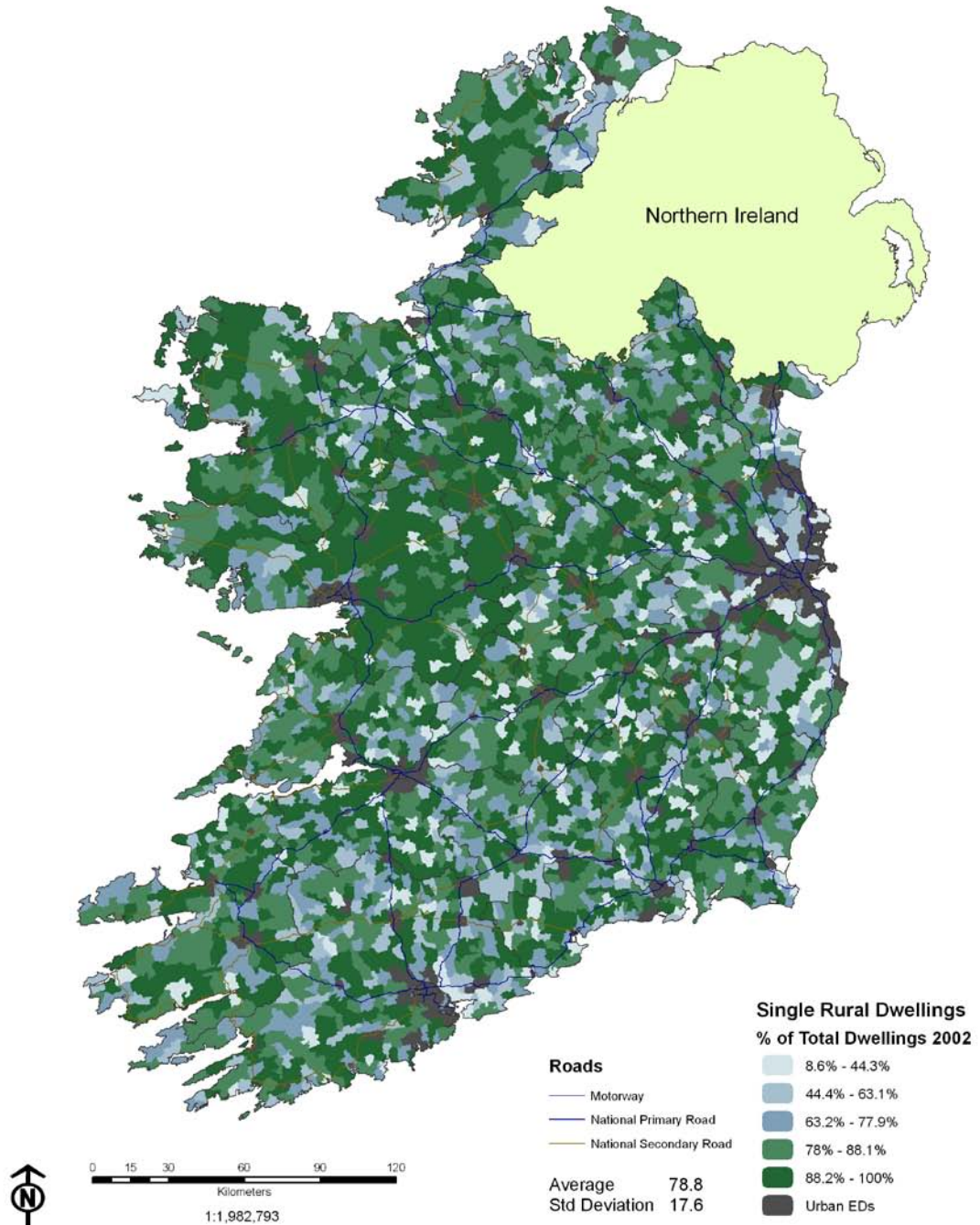
Once the baseline information regarding the location, density and number of SRDs has been established, other dimensions of rural housing including the nature of occupancy (or tenure) of rural dwellings, dwelling size and vacancy levels will be examined. This is necessary in order to understand the nature of housing in the Irish countryside and provides a clearer picture of what is occurring within the national settlement pattern. Also, in order to assist in establishing the social context for investigations in subsequent chapters, the spatial distribution and proportion of a number socio-economic groups living in rural dwellings are examined. Following the analysis of the geography of rural housing in Ireland, Chapters Five and Six can proceed to address the drivers behind the spatio-temporal development of rural house location by examining the impacts and nature of policy and planning in Ireland, and at the small area level, the dynamics of living in the countryside.

4.1 SINGLE RURAL DWELLINGS

Single Rural Dwellings (SRDs) are defined as detached dwellings with an individual septic tank. In 2002, over 330,000 SRDs were inhabited in Ireland, accounting for over one quarter of all dwellings in the state and 70% of all rural dwellings nationally, with the remaining 30% using public sewerage infrastructure located in small towns and villages (Map 4.1). Half of the current SRD stock is located in peri-urban and strong rural areas (see Rural Typology Map 2.2 for reference; explanation of area types in Chapter Three) meaning that spatially the highest concentration of SRDs are in the east and southeastern parts of the country. The remaining SRDs are distributed in transitional, weak, marginal and diversified areas which tend to be found from the midlands to the west (see Table 4.1). The following two sections assess the share constructed and the density per square kilometre of SRDs in each period of construction since the 1970s. Share of SRD construction identifies the relationship between the age of rural housing stock and the location of construction in each period, while an examination of density ascertains the actual amount of housing, pinpointing where pressures may have built up incrementally.

Rural Area Types	Electoral Divisions	% Electoral Divisions	Area (km ²)	% Area (km ²)	Number of SRDs	% of SRDs	Average Density (per km ²)
Peri-Urban	442	16.32	10080.8	15.47	83714	24.97	8.3
Strong Rural	628	23.19	13432.1	20.61	82578	24.63	6.1
Strong in Transition	610	22.51	13811.2	21.20	55687	16.61	4.1
Weak	642	23.69	15908.5	24.41	66423	19.81	4.2
Marginal	200	7.38	6218.1	9.41	26180	7.82	4.2
Diversified	187	6.91	5771.6	8.86	50581	6.13	8.8
Total	2709	100	65170.4	100	335203	100	5.1

Single Rural Dwellings Percentage of Total Dwellings 2002



4.1.1 Single Rural Dwellings: Period of Construction

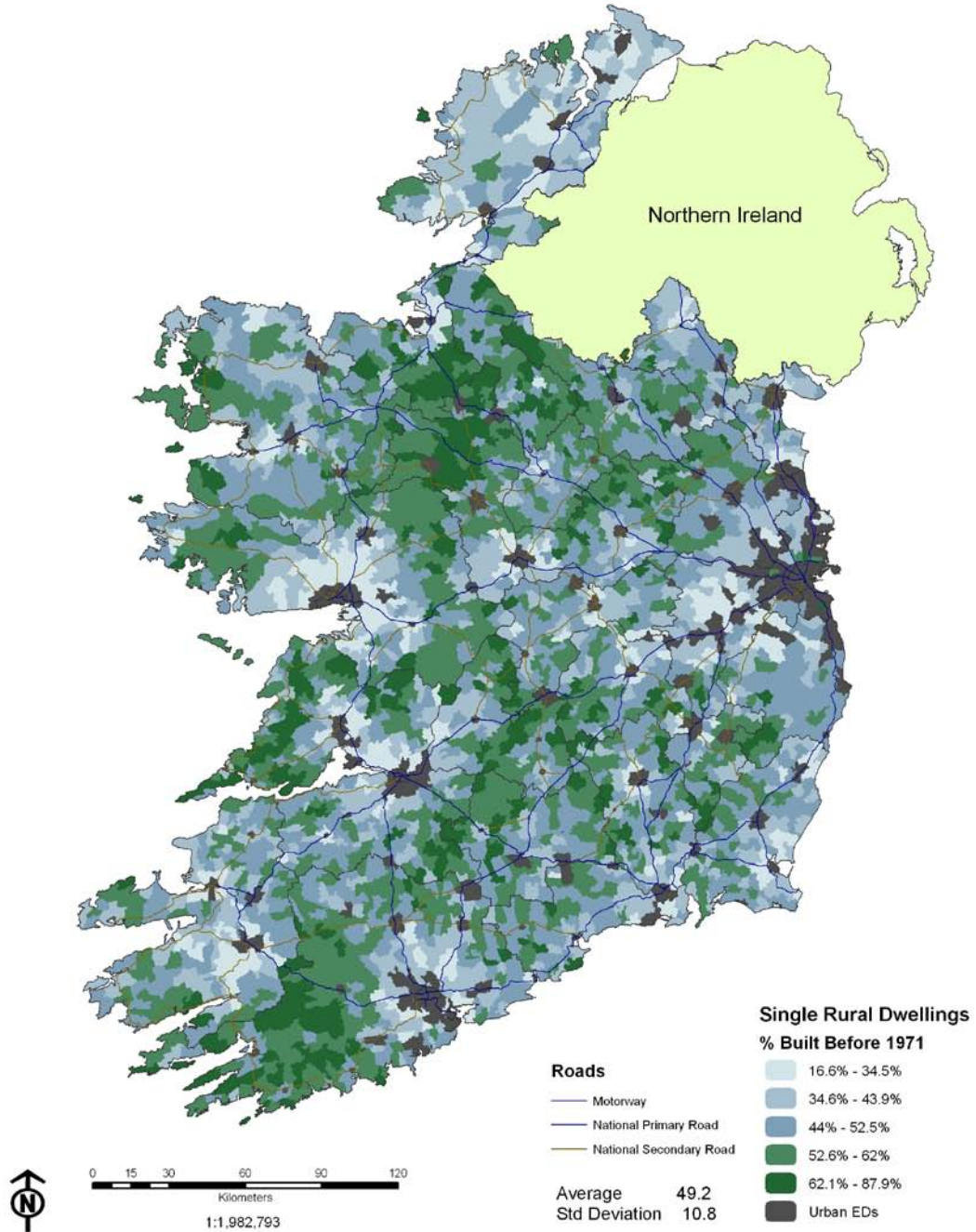
Examination of the period of construction of Single Rural Dwellings addresses arguments in the debate about rural housing that have focused on recent building and planning trends. Tracing the evolution of the rural settlement pattern over time increases understanding of the 2002 pattern, determining the significance of these recent trends, and provides the spatial parameters that will help to establish the geography of rural housing in Ireland. The series of maps showing SRDs built from before the 1970s to 2002 (Maps 4.2 to 4.5; see also Tables 4.2 and 4.3) show that, in very simple terms, there has been a reversal in the distribution of regional settlement patterns over recent decades. SRDs built before 1971 (accounting for half of all currently inhabited SRDs) tend to be located in peripheral rural areas, either coastal or inland rural, with the lowest percentage located in urban hinterland areas. Comparatively higher proportions are found in the area from north Roscommon to south Sligo, and in coastal concentrations, for example in southwest Cork. A reversal of this pre-1971 distribution can be discerned in the pattern of SRDs built in the 1990s (Map 4.5) with the greatest concentration close to major urban centres. The evolution of the SRD settlement pattern from the 1970s to the 1990s clearly illustrates the movement from peripheral or outer rural areas to peri-urban zones. Map 4.3 (1970s) illustrates the first movement towards a concentration of SRDs adjacent to urban centres (for example, in County Meath). In addition, coastal areas in the west (e.g. Donegal, Kerry) which had previously experienced a relatively low share of SRD settlement, display an increasing proportion. The 1980s (Map 4.4) show a decline in the consolidation of SRD settlement in peri-urban areas but with a continuing urban orientation. The peripheral coastal areas in Donegal and north Mayo experienced a continued consolidation.

Table 4.2 Number & Percentage of Single Rural Dwellings Built in each Period of Construction					
	before 1971	1971 to 1980	1981 to 1990	1991 to 2002	Total
Number	154739	55742	53380	67419	335203
% of total	46.16%	16.63%	15.92%	20.11%	98.82%⁸

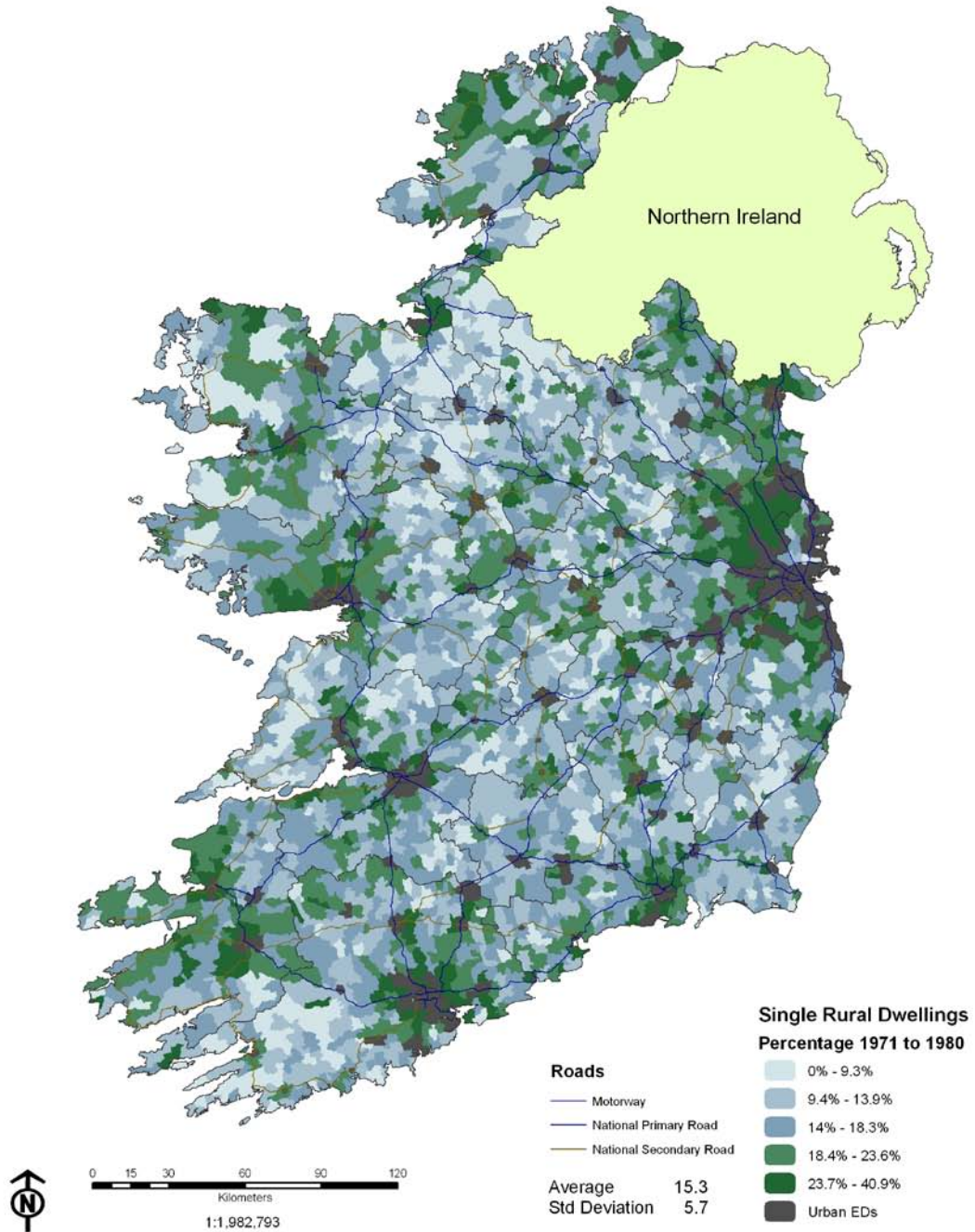
⁸ The period of construction of approximately 1% of SRDs is unaccounted for.

In the period from 1990 to 2002 (Map 4.5), however, one trend is most dominant: the consolidation of peri-urban SRD zones, particularly evident, for example, in the hinterlands of Galway city, Limerick city and Letterkenny. In addition to this peri-urban domination, a number of anomalous factors occurred. While the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) experienced its highest level of SRD building in the 1990s, County Meath experienced its least. This is a direct result of policy change in the 1980s where rural housing construction in the county fell from just over 4,000 in the 1970s to 2,200 in the 1990s (see Table 4.3). Other such anomalies include the greater Cork area which displays an inverse pattern of settlement growth when compared to other city regions. Similar to south County Meath, the highest proportion of Cork's SRD building occurred in the 1970s. The City introduced a restrictive planning policy for its hinterland in the 1990s (Cork Area Strategic Plan, 2001) which would appear to be having some effect with its relatively low proportion of SRD building in this period. County Wexford, which previously had a low to medium proportion of SRD building, experienced a surge in the proportion built in the 1990s. The high levels extend continuously from the hinterlands of its main towns to its coastal boundary and are particularly evident from 1996 onwards (Map 4.6 and 4.7). This is likely to be a result of its location close to Dublin where overspill may be occurring beyond Wicklow into Wexford.

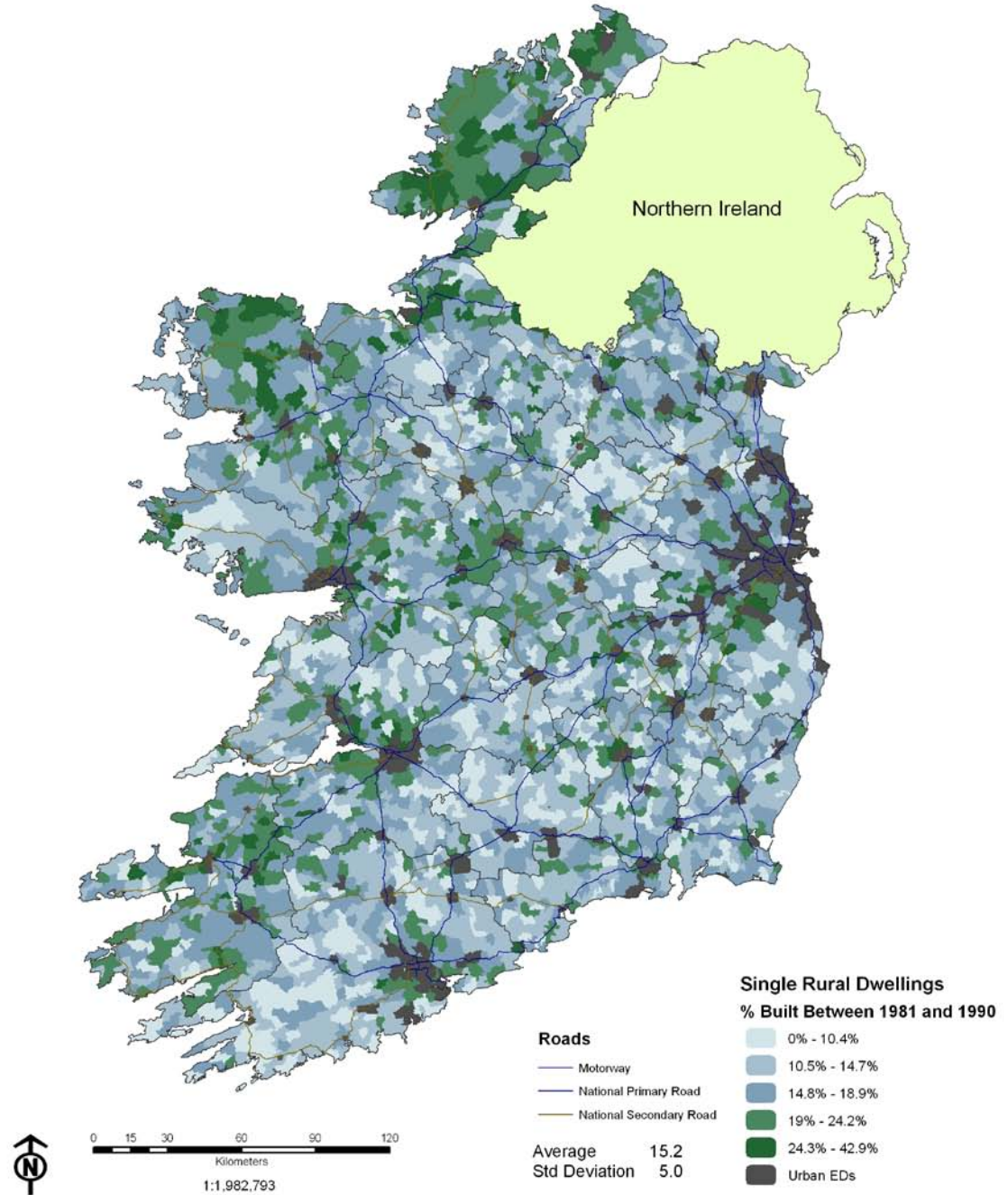
Single Rural Dwellings Percentage Built Before 1971



Single Rural Dwellings Percentage of Dwellings Built Between 1971 and 1980



Single Rural Dwellings Percentage Built Between 1981 and 1990



Single Rural Dwellings Percentage Built Between 1991 and 2002

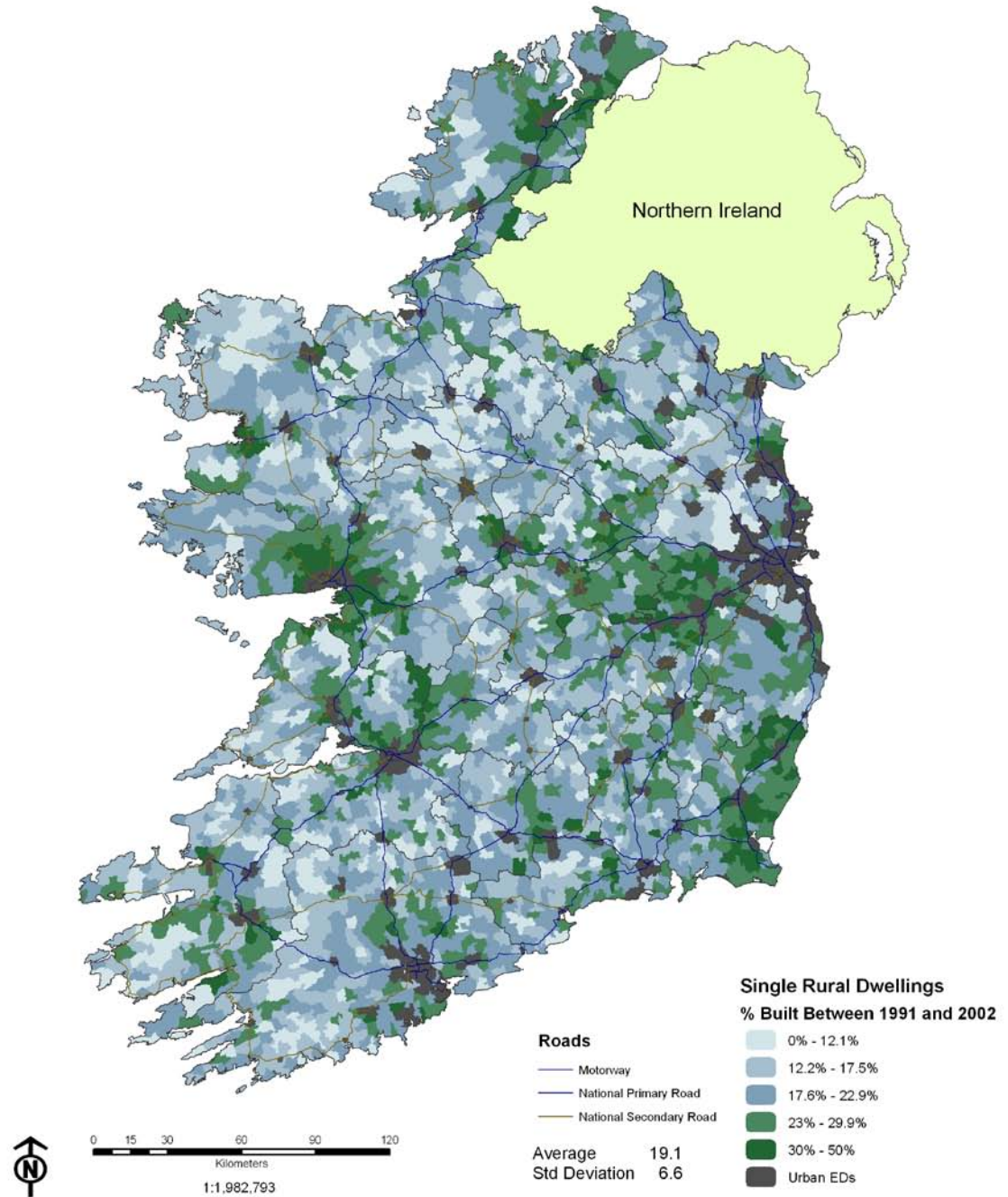
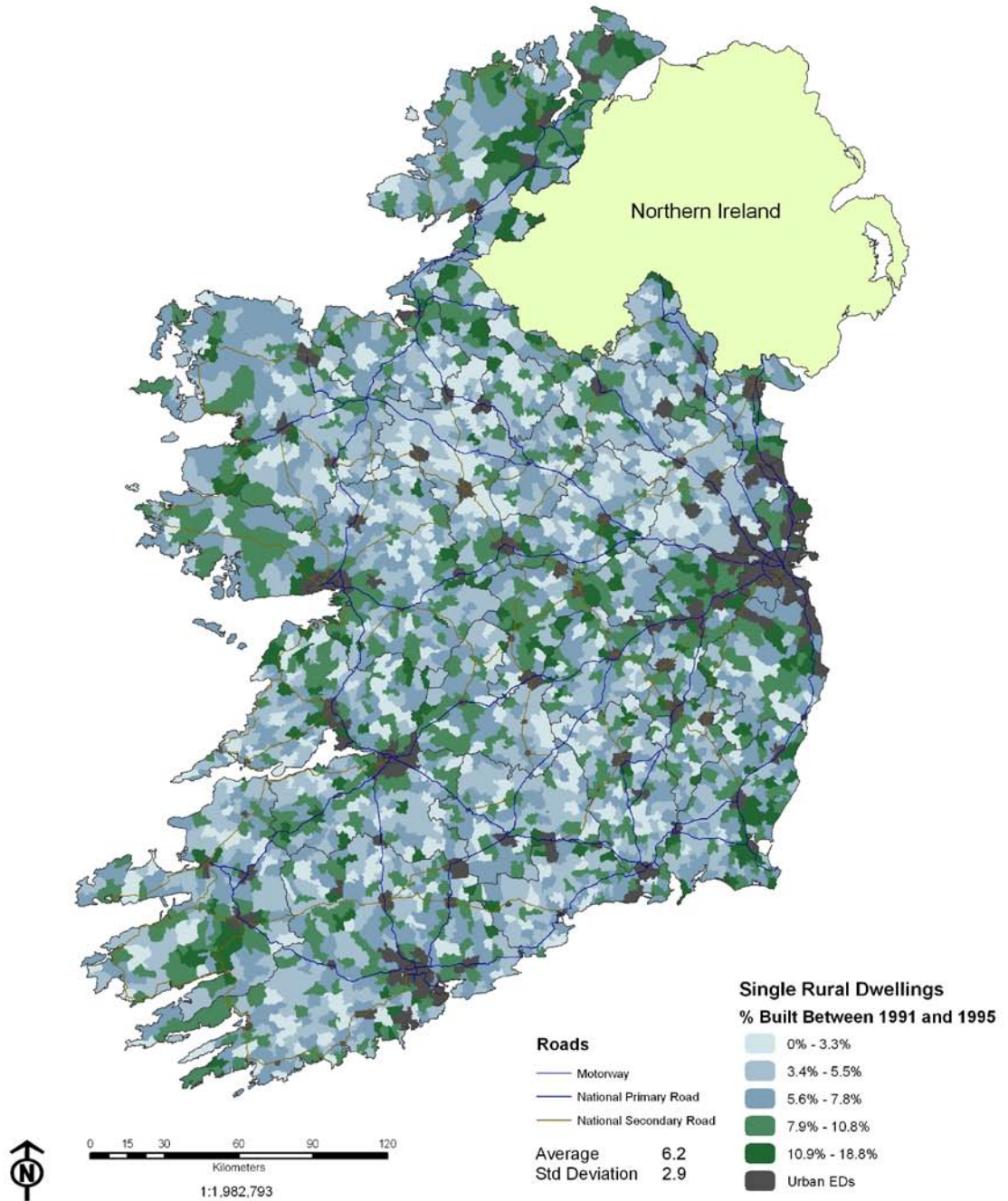
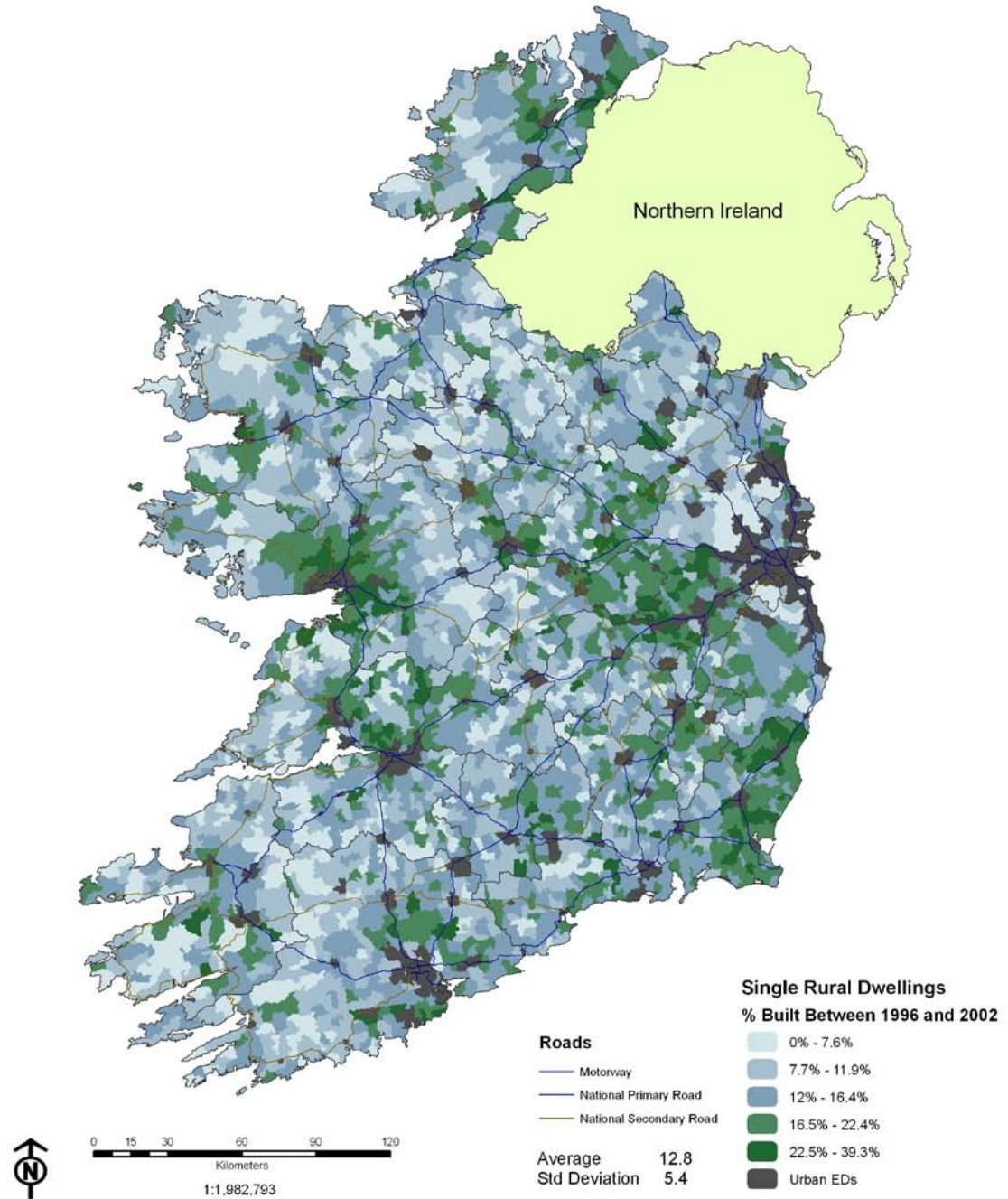


Table 4.3 Period of Construction for Single Rural Dwellings by County, 1971 to 2002						
	1971 to 1980	% 1971 to 1980	1981 to 1990	% 1981 to 1990	1991 to 2002	% 1991 to 2002
State Total	66032	17.4	61435	16.2	76557	20.2
Carlow	723	13.6	769	14.5	1157	21.8
Cavan	1500	13.8	1713	15.7	2143	19.7
Clare	2595	16.8	2535	16.4	3291	21.3
Cork County	8314	18.5	6615	14.7	8355	18.5
Donegal	4634	19.0	4966	20.3	5608	23.0
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	198	16.0	163	13.2	163	13.2
Fingal	549	17.0	540	16.7	687	21.3
Galway County	5411	17.3	5321	17.1	7323	23.5
Kerry	4256	19.2	4078	18.4	4300	19.4
Kildare	2197	18.1	2036	16.8	3074	25.3
Kilkenny	2101	17.5	1897	15.8	2304	19.2
Laois	1475	16.7	1418	16.1	1789	20.3
Leitrim	654	11.7	920	16.5	962	17.3
Limerick County	3416	17.5	3191	16.4	3725	19.1
Longford	1006	17.1	910	15.4	1045	17.7
Louth	1780	21.8	1270	15.5	1766	21.6
Mayo	3630	16.0	3975	17.5	4306	19.0
Meath	4036	23.0	2675	15.2	2211	12.6
Monaghan	1859	19.9	1566	16.7	1742	18.6
Offaly	1351	15.9	1243	14.6	1881	22.1
Roscommon	1667	14.3	1798	15.5	1943	16.7
Sligo	1470	16.4	1570	17.5	1621	18.1
South Dublin	265	20.2	273	20.8	203	15.5
Tipperary North	1556	16.1	1463	15.2	1927	20.0
Tipperary South	1659	14.6	1499	13.2	2222	19.5
Waterford County	1592	18.2	1310	15.0	1760	20.2
Westmeath	1491	15.8	1385	14.7	2120	22.5
Wexford	2708	14.9	2740	15.0	4749	26.1
Wicklow	1560	17.2	1321	14.6	1911	21.1

Single Rural Dwellings Percentage Built Between 1991 and 1995



Single Rural Dwellings Percentage Built Between 1996 and 2002



4.1.2 Single Rural Dwellings: Density per square kilometre

There are two ways of measuring the amount of SRDs in rural areas: (i) as a share of all housing and (ii) as absolute densities. An examination of absolute housing density per square kilometre allows for a clearer picture of the location and amount of dwellings in rural areas, and while high densities may not always equate with the highest shares of total dwellings, it gives a better indication of where pressures may exist and how incremental changes in the number of dwellings constructed has impacted on rural settlement patterns. For example, some of the highest SRD densities are in peri-urban zones but the greatest share is in traditionally peripheral rural areas where the lack of urban infrastructure has generated higher levels of single dwellings using individual sewage treatment facilities. In addition, a note of caution should be entered. As discussed in Chapter Three, some areal units include uninhabitable areas such as waterways, mountains and bogs. As a result the actual, local landscape effects are often concentrated in linear, road-orientated settlements, where a density per sq km is in reality a linear density along road networks. This can be seen in aerial satellite imagery in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 which present an occurrence of linear development that radiates outwards from town centres. In the case of Westport in County Mayo, the physical limitations of the natural terrain are particularly apparent with mountains to the south and Clew Bay to the north and west. There is evidence of road-oriented ribbon development which leads to localised concentrations of settlement in otherwise lightly settled countrysides.



Figure 4.1 Westport and hinterland, County Mayo – natural landscape impacts on settlement patterns (source GoogleEarth)



Figure 4.2 Navan and hinterland, County Meath – natural landscape impacts on settlement patterns (source GoogleEarth)

The average national density of single rural dwellings in 2002 was five dwellings per square kilometre (see Map 4.8a and Table 4.1⁹). The highest SRD densities occur in areas adjacent to urban centres of all sizes (peri-urban areas), adjacent to the national road network, and in coastal areas (often the 'Diversified Rural Area Type'), with up to 25 dwellings per square kilometre in these areas. The areas of highest SRD density (12 to 25 dwellings per square kilometre) are found in the peri-urban zones surrounding the five major cities (Dublin, Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway), with smaller belts adjacent to large, county towns, for example Athlone, Castlebar and Kilkenny. Lowest densities of three dwellings per square kilometre tend to be located in outer rural areas. However, even within these areas the presence of small to medium size towns generates a rise in their hinterland SRD densities. Low SRD densities are found in locations most distant from the national road network. The natural terrain of some areas also adds to low dwelling density, for example in northwest County Mayo, much of the area is peat land and unlikely to support any sizeable structures.

Period	before 1971	1971 to 1980	1981 to 1990	1991 to 2002	Total
Density	2.37	0.86	0.82	1.03	5.14

Map 4.8b displays the spatial analysis of SRD density in 2002 by using 'Hot Spot Analysis' (applying the Getis-Ord Gi* Statistic¹⁰) which identifies the presence of non-randomised clustering of SRD in the national settlement pattern. The map shows 'hot spots' of non-random clustering of SRDs close to roads and urban centres (in the legend represented by results above zero and by the colour pink; blue areas (below zero) show areas that are less likely to be influenced by the location of national road networks). In this case, the analysis is used to ascertain if there is a relationship between towns and transportation routes, and the location and density of SRDs. A distinct pattern is evident in the map, showing a number of trends:

⁹ As explained in Chapter Three, the average value shown on the maps is the unweighted average across all Electoral Divisions.

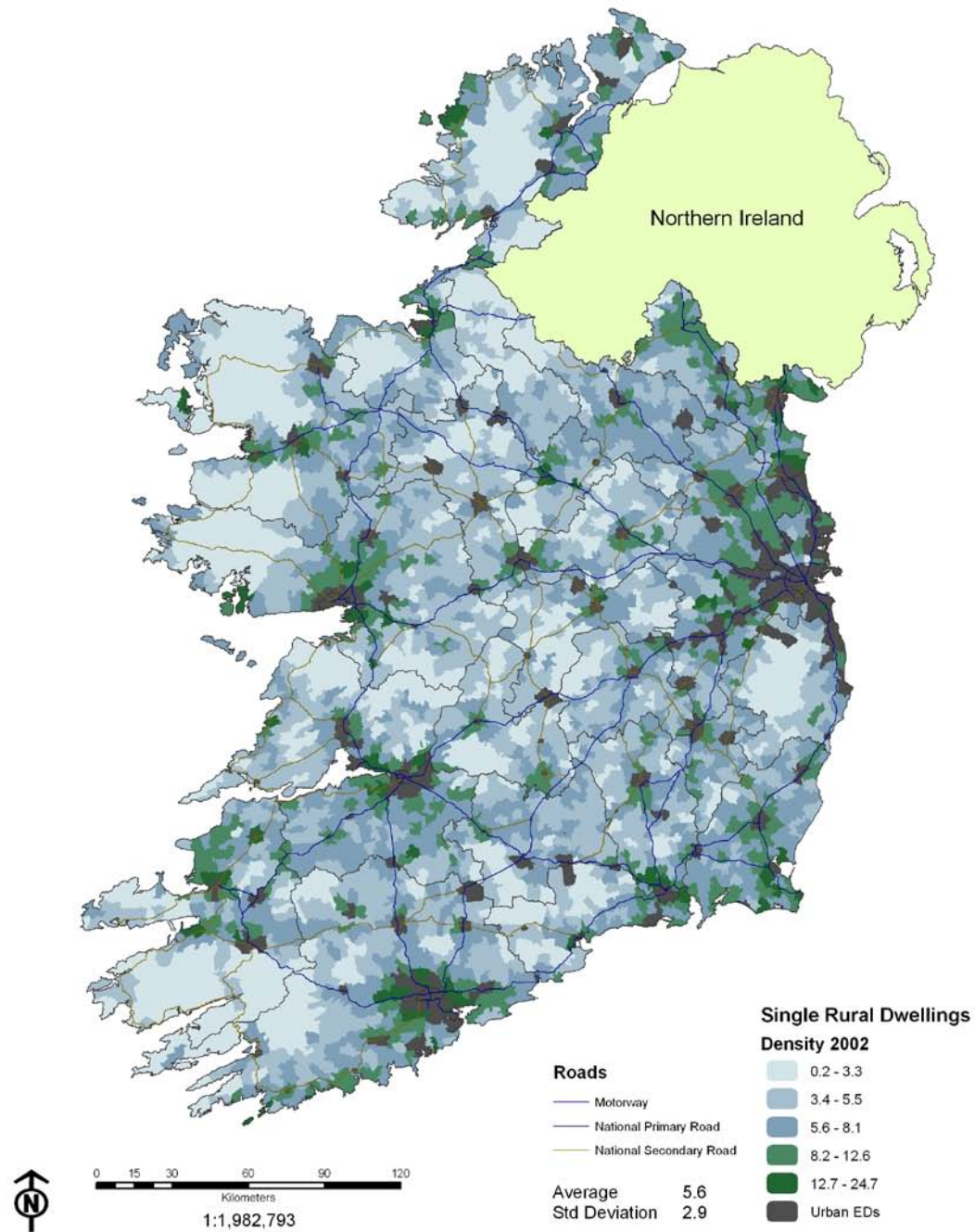
¹⁰ The Getis-Ord statistic can be used to identify if there is higher than average clustering of a particular variable in relation to surrounding areas.

- (i) above average densities occurring adjacent to the national road network are not randomly distributed. This non-randomised clustering can be identified as being influenced by the high levels of car ownership and dependency in the Irish countryside, and by the need to be located within easy access and / or reach of employment, services and amenities which tend to be located in urban centres;
- (ii) the second identifiable trend in the analysis are belts of non-random clustering of SRDs around cities and large towns, also influenced by that need to be located in accessible rural areas. In regions where there is a strong urban fabric, there tends to be higher housing densities in rural hinterlands and the closer SRDs are located to these cities and larger towns the less likely their presence is random;
- (iii) the combination of high densities along the national road network and close to cities and large towns produces extensive regions of non-randomised clustering of SRDs, for example in the Limerick-North Kerry area or the coastal area of Wicklow-Wexford-Waterford, that can contribute to the identification of acute pressure zones; and
- (iii) in areas with a weak urban fabric, where small to medium towns are more characteristic, the location of SRDs tends to be more random. These areas are particularly prevalent in the West and along the border with Northern Ireland where the economy is weaker and a higher reliance is farming remains, there is low level service provision in small towns, and only regional and county road networks exist.

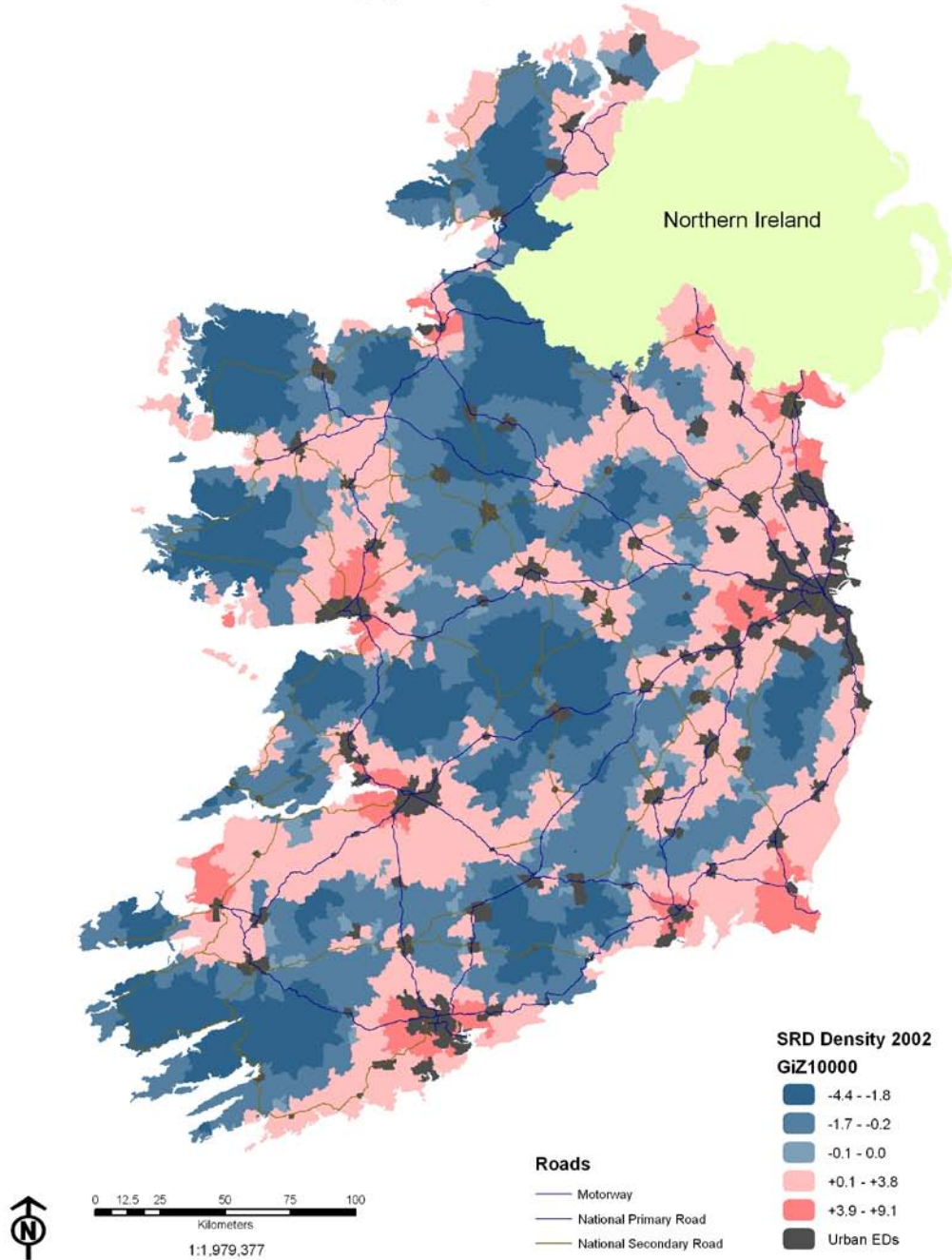
The period before 1971 accounts for half of all currently inhabited SRDs and was characterised by higher proportions of rural house construction in outer rural areas. However, in absolute terms densities for this period tend to be higher in peri-urban zones with up to 13 dwellings per square kilometre located close to urban centres (Map 4.9). The most distinctive characteristic of SRDs built before 1971 is that higher densities are located in the east and southwest of the country, close to urban centres and along primary roadways. In addition to this pattern, higher densities occur in coastal areas and in urban hinterland areas in the west. Extensive bands of high density pre-1971 are evident in north Kerry, the coastal boundaries of Wexford through to Waterford, and in Meath. The pattern of SRD density from the 1970s onwards exhibits less coastal development with a greater consolidation of settlement into peri-urban zones. The average national density of SRDs over the three decades from the 1970s to the 1990s (Maps 4.10 to 4.12; see also Table 4.4) is approximately one dwelling per square kilometre per decade. Examining the four periods, it is clear that while the

proportion of SRDs built varies over time, there has been a continual trend of urban oriented SRD building since the seventies. The pattern of pre-1970s densities has greatly influenced the contemporary settlement pattern and can explain the high densities that are found in areas today such as Counties Monaghan and Meath, and along coastal areas in the southeast, where traditionally higher rural populations with greater levels of growth have existed since the post-Famine era (Cousens, 1967). In the final period of the 1990s (Maps 4.13 and 4.14, and Table 4.5), average densities are higher than in the previous two decades, accounting for the overall rise in house-building (72% increase since 1996). The hinterlands of Galway and Cork cities display the greatest consolidation of SRDs, while County Wexford had the greatest increase in density, attributable to overspill from commuter housing demand from Dublin.

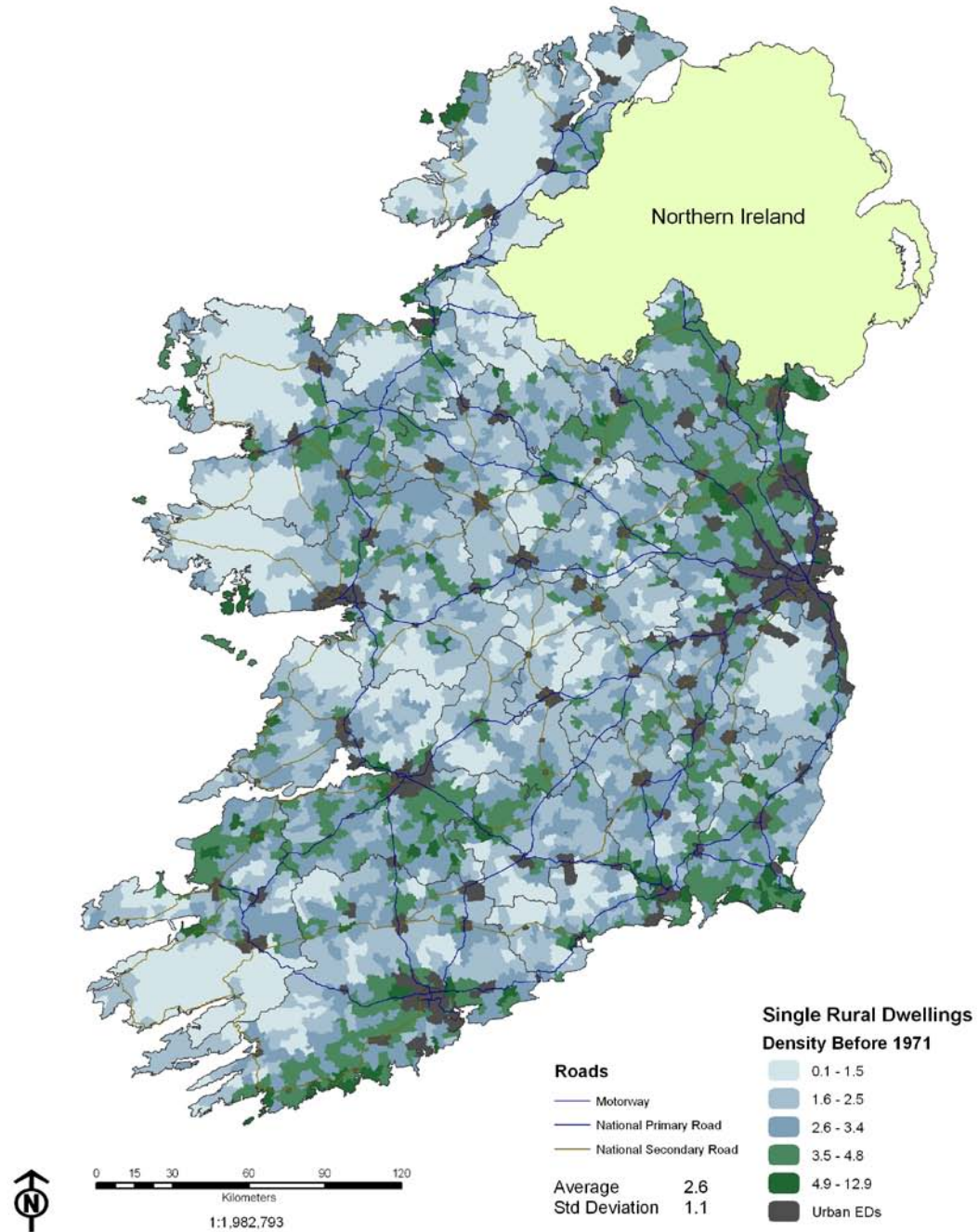
Single Rural Dwellings Density 2002



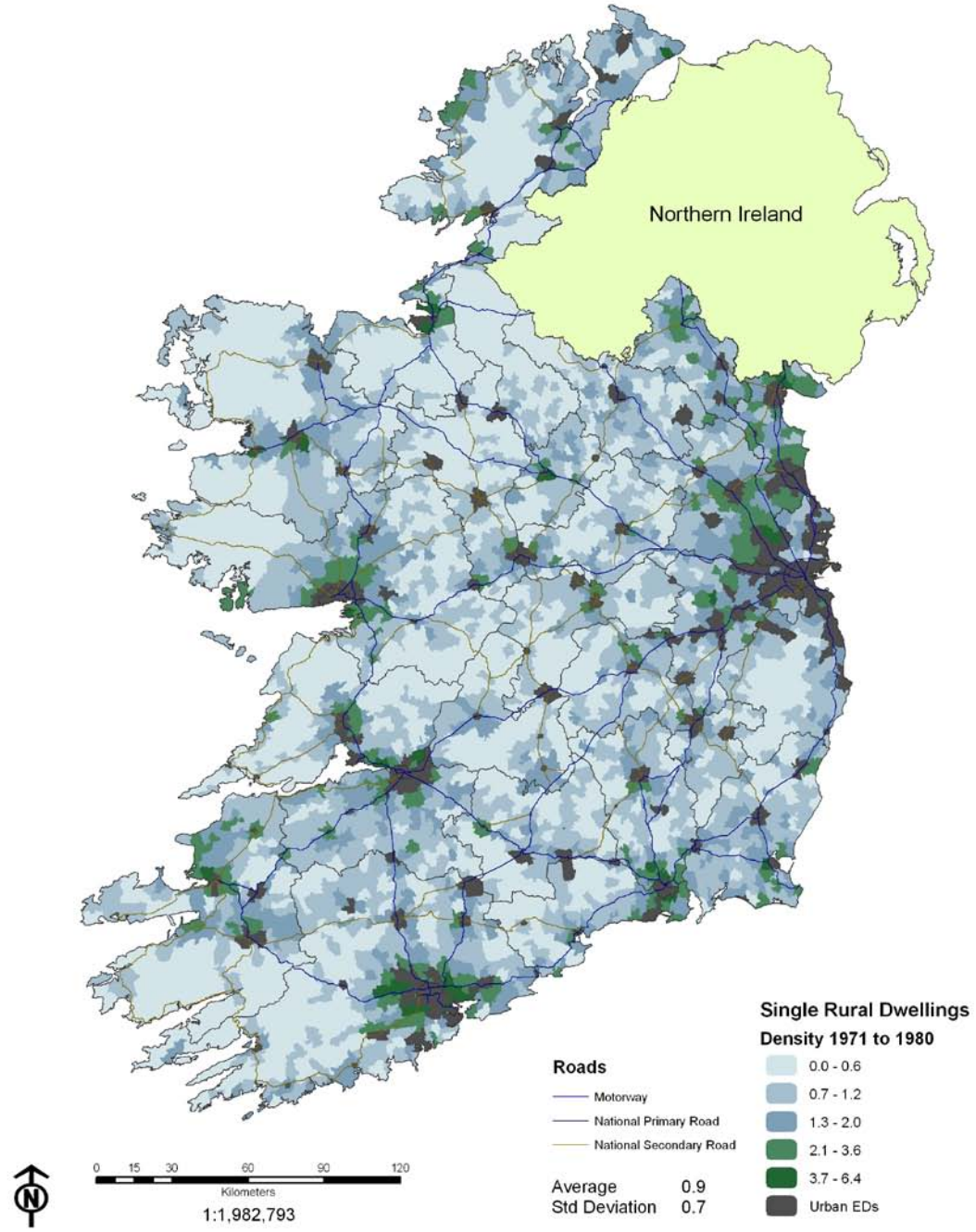
Single Rural Dwellings Hot Spot Analysis (Getis-Ord G_i^* Statistic) of Density per square Kilometre 2002



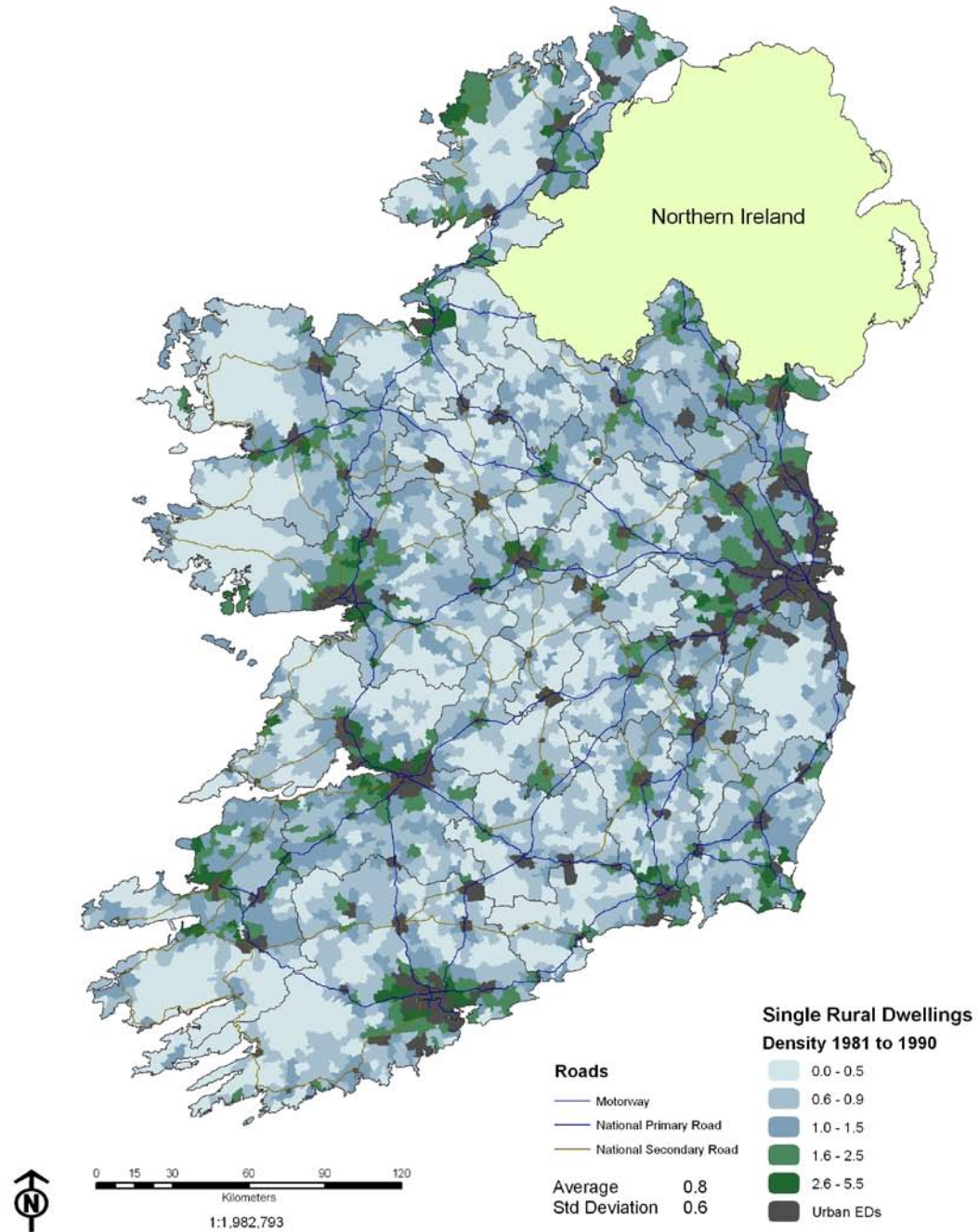
Single Rural Dwellings Density of Dwellings Built before 1971



Single Rural Dwellings Density of Dwellings Built Between 1971 and 1980



Single Rural Dwellings Density of Dwellings Built Between 1981 and 1990



Single Rural Dwellings Density of Dwellings Built Between 1991 and 2002

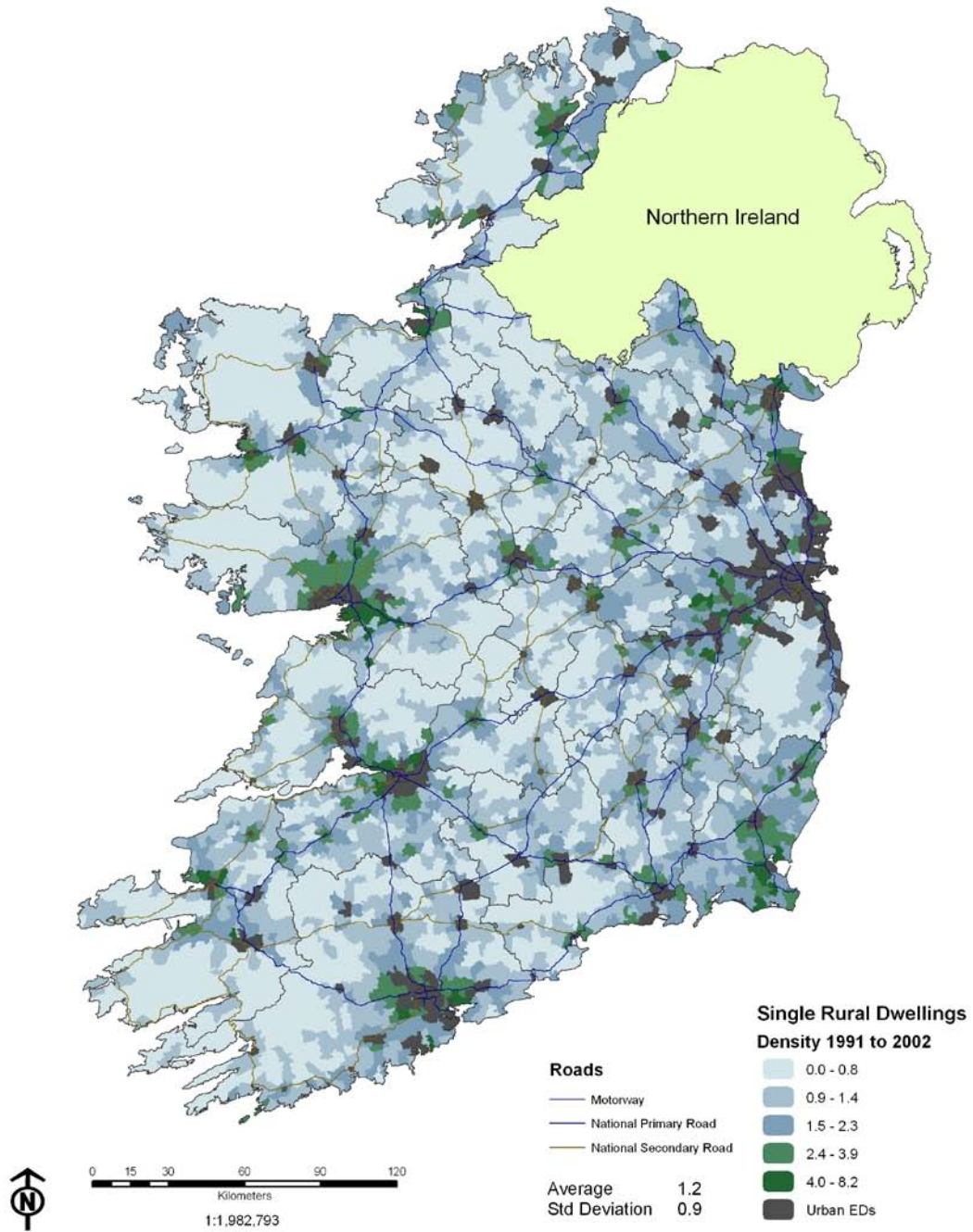
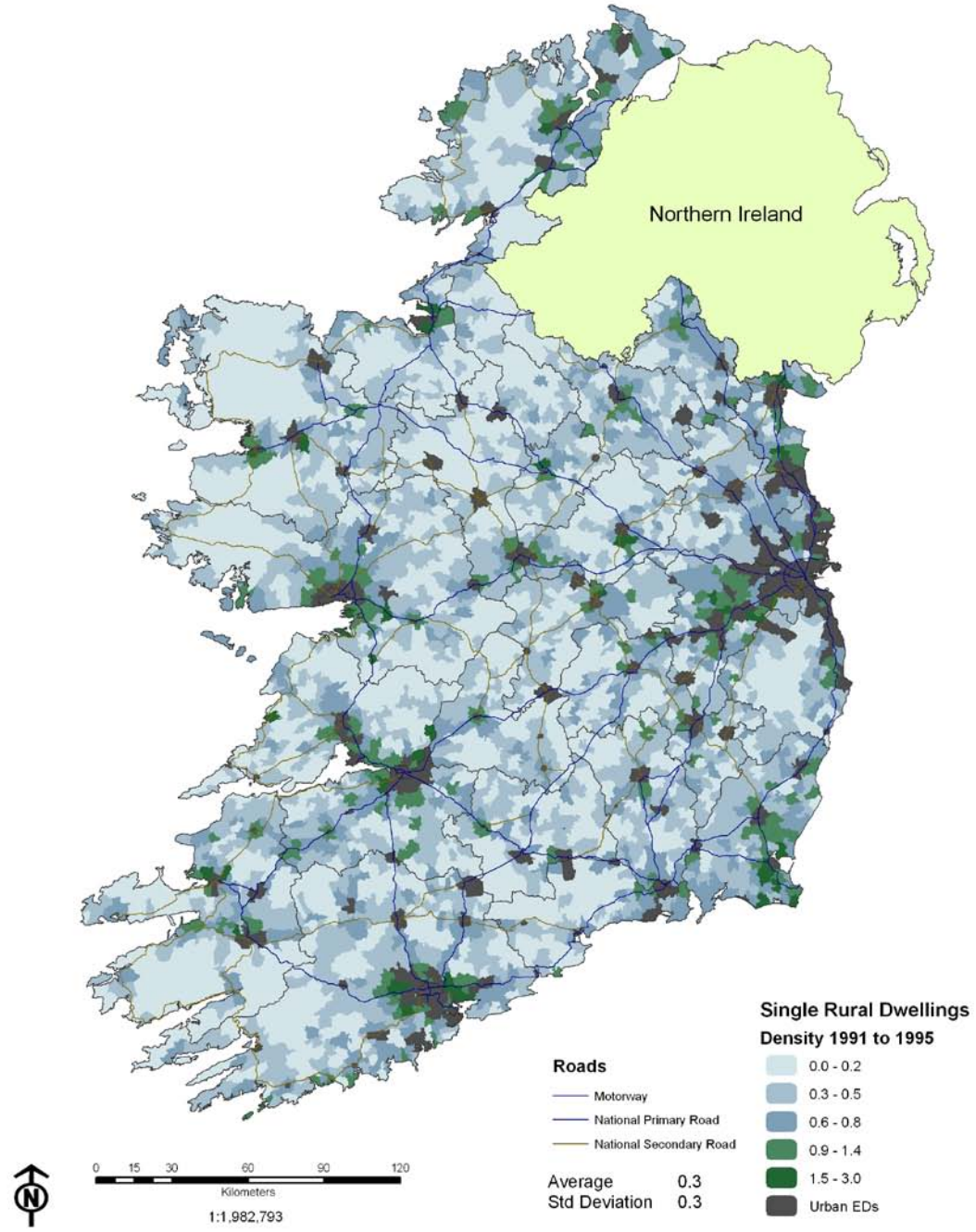
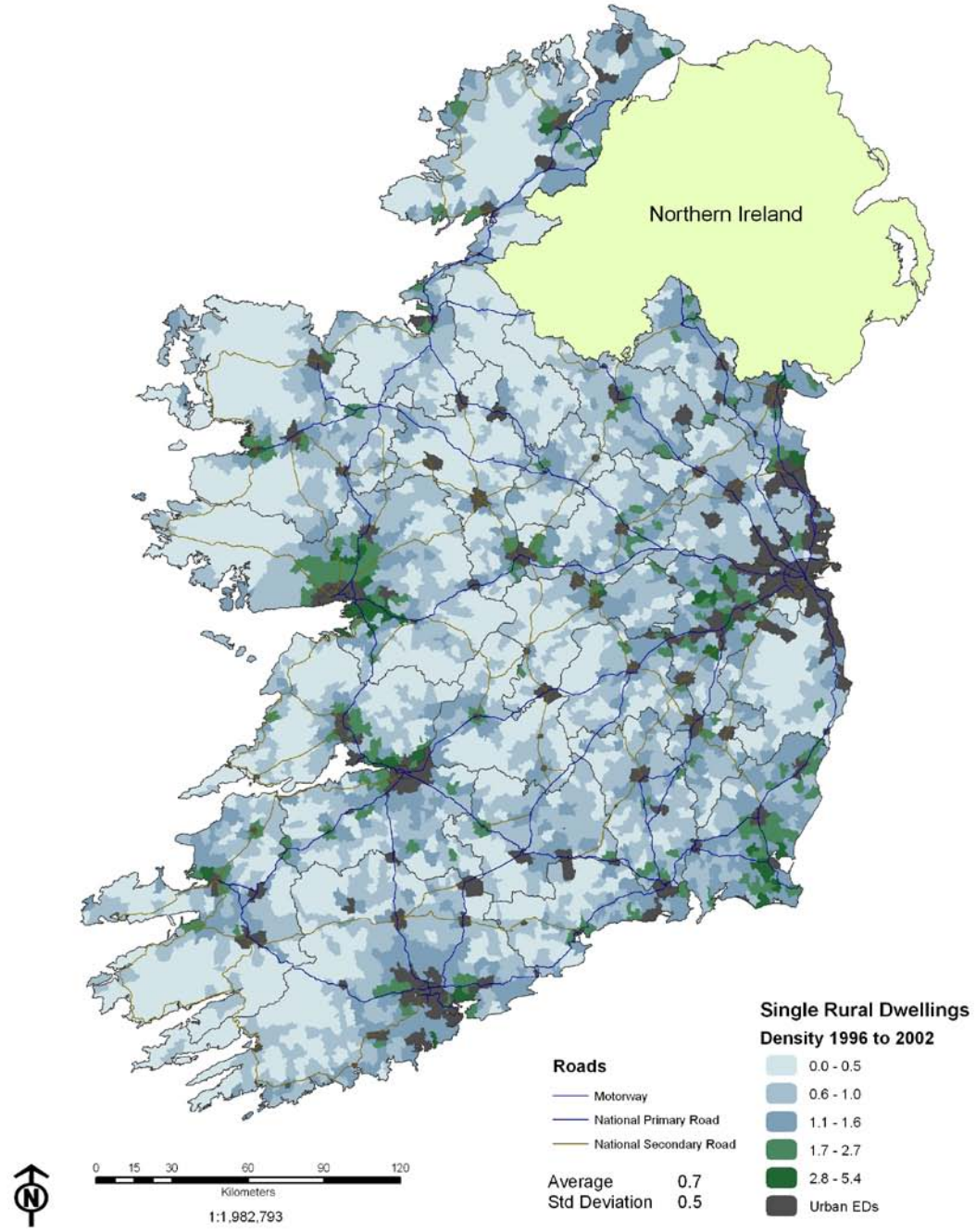


Table 4.5 County Densities of Single Rural Dwellings, 2002		
	Density 2002	Ranking Change (1=highest; 29=lowest)
State Total	5.14	
Carlow	5.95	9
Cavan	5.75	12
Clare	4.79	22
Cork County	6.07	8
Donegal	5.07	19
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	9.83	2
Fingal	7.13	7
Galway County	5.36	15
Kerry	4.70	24
Kildare	7.18	6
Kilkenny	5.82	11
Laois	5.15	16
Leitrim	3.59	29
Limerick County	7.31	5
Longford	5.43	14
Louth	9.92	1
Mayo	4.09	28
Meath	7.54	4
Monaghan	5.49	13
Offaly	4.35	27
Roscommon	4.58	25
Sligo	5.14	18
South Dublin	5.89	10
Tipperary North	4.73	23
Tipperary South	5.06	20
Waterford County	4.86	21
Westmeath	5.14	17
Wexford	7.73	3
Wicklow	4.48	26

Single Rural Dwellings Density of Dwellings Built Between 1991 and 1995



Single Rural Dwellings Density of Dwellings Built Between 1996 and 2002



4.1.3 Summary Remarks

The main trends for the period of construction of single rural dwellings from before 1971 to 2002 are a 'reversal' in the distribution of the pattern of SRD settlement, from outer rural to peri-urban belts, and a recent expansion of SRDs in coastal areas in the west and southeast. It is evident that policy changes have had a role in the development of some localised settlement change and have intervened in the traditionally dispersed pattern evident before 1971, for example in the contrasting pattern between the 1970s and 1990s in County Meath which will be examined in Chapter Six. SRD densities have been continually higher in areas adjacent to urban centres, and to a lesser extent, close to road networks, and settlement trends displayed in the period before 1971, i.e. high densities in peri-urban and coastal areas, set the foundation for the current national housing density. It is evident that 2002 trends are consolidating the settlement footprint established in the late 1800s which was characterised by regional disparities between east and west (Cousens, 1967; Cawley, 1996). With that pattern present as an overall footprint, there has been a greater consolidation of rural housing in the east and the continuance of a weaker structure in the west, with edge populations re-emerging in the 1990s by the coast, particularly along the Atlantic seaboard.

However, the influence of towns within a wider rural settlement pattern is not uniform and a variation of characteristics can be identified in different regions where there have been shifts in orientation over the past three to four decades. The highly constrained nature of commuter belts in small to medium sized towns, particularly on the west coast may reflect distinctly on rural patterns where ease of access to land and planning permission for new construction allows spatial shifts to occur within short periods due to the need to react to employment opportunities and live within reach of them. For example, in the 1970s the orientation of new build housing in the Clew Bay area was towards Castlebar which shifted in the 1990s towards Westport. This is also evident on a larger scale where, for example, in North Kerry there was an orientation of new SRD construction towards Tralee in the 1970s, soon followed by a re-orientation in the 1980s towards Limerick.

The orientation of housing towards urban centres which emerged as a key trend in the 1970s is a very important characteristic of the Irish rural settlement pattern and reflects wider socio-economic changes that occurred during this time. The rise of an urban

economy had direct impacts on where people chose to live, with accessibility being a key factor in that decision-making process. An urban orientation of rural housing coupled with a well established dispersed settlement footprint results in a challenging pattern of development for both rural residents (and those wishing to live in the countryside), where traditional patterns and functions of the countryside are changing rapidly, and for policy makers, who must approach rural space more strategically and heterogeneously. Broadly speaking, it also highlights a very important feature of rurality which is the enduring relationship of the countryside and housing in Ireland. It certainly supports the suggestion that rural areas have been, and continue to be, approached with a pro-development agenda (Woods, 1998), that in the Irish case, has gone beyond agricultural development to usage as a residential space.

4.2 RURAL HOUSING CHANGE

The geography of SRDs provides the empirical basis to our understanding of the trends that characterise rural housing in Ireland and in order to enhance that, other dimensions of the settlement pattern will be examined in this section. Three factors are identified that reinforce the understanding of the location and density of SRDs. These factors are: (i) nature of occupancy (or tenure); (ii) dwelling size; and (iii) vacant dwellings.

4.2.1 Tenure

Examination of housing tenure assists in understanding the nature of occupancy of SRDs and indicates a relationship between the age of dwellings and owner occupying households either making mortgages repayments or not. Milbourne (2006) identifies the housing structure in rural areas in a number of European countries as being dominated by the private sector and owner occupancy. This trend appears to be self-reinforcing with a tradition of self-sufficiency in rural areas as a result of the involvement in traditional activities such as agriculture and a minimum state role in the provision of social housing, squeezing out all other tenure types (Finnerty et al, 2003; Milbourne, 2006). This trend is no different in Ireland with the dominant category of owner occupancy in rural areas allowing little room for other tenure types (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7). In the Irish case, high levels of owner occupancy throughout the state, which are particularly high in rural areas, may be identified as stemming from the culture of property and land ownership established in the early years of the state. In total, 85% of all rural dwellings are inhabited by owner occupying households, either making or not

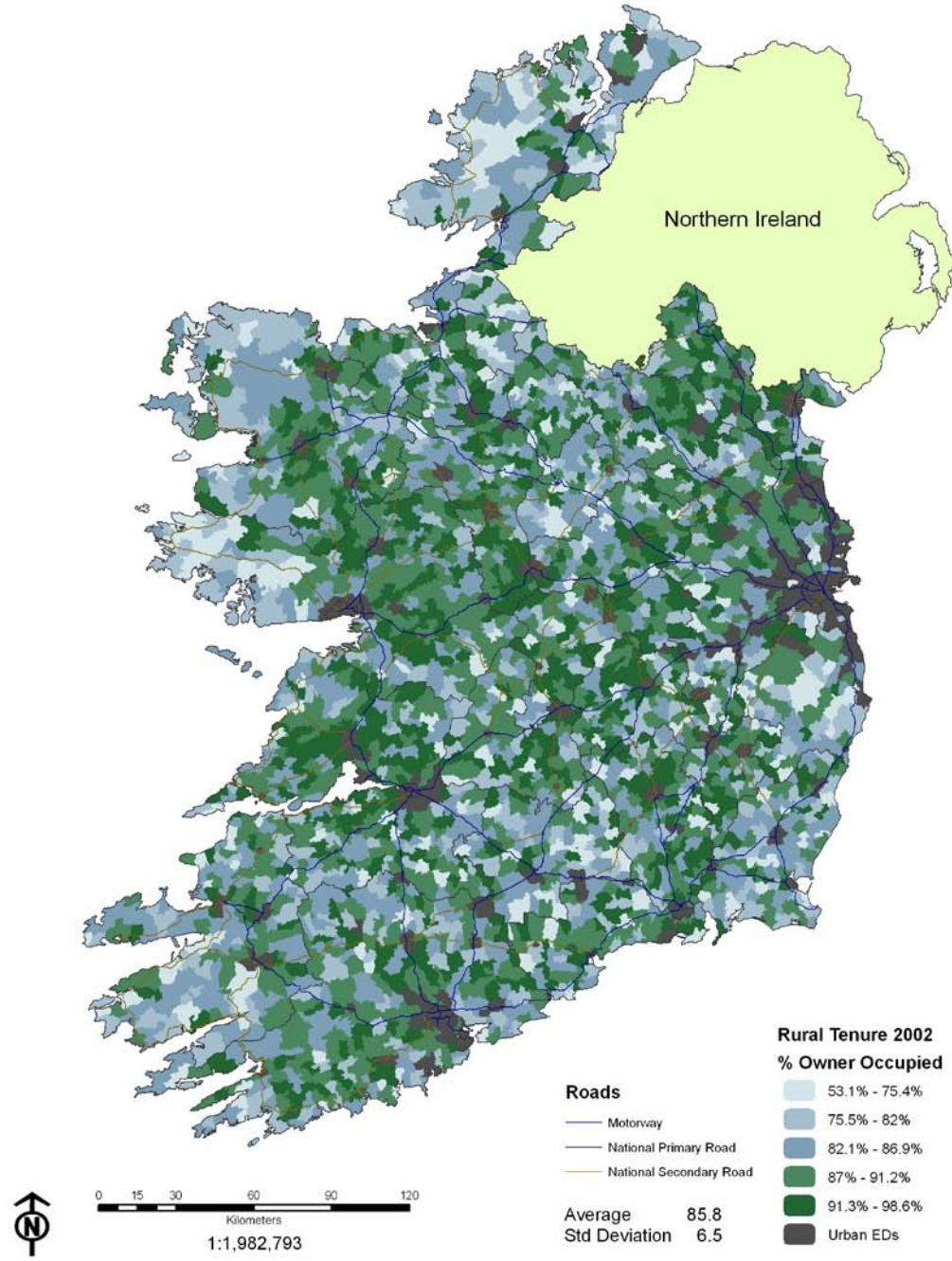
making mortgage repayments, the second highest rate in Europe (NAEH, 2003). Other categories of tenure include renting from the Local Authority (4% of total rural households), renting from a private source (5% of total rural households) and households that are in the process of purchasing their home from the Local Authority (2.5% of total rural households). Renting, be it from the Local Authority or through a private arrangement represents a very small proportion of the rural householding population, much lower than urban counterparts where one quarter of households are in this category. The focus of this section is owner occupying households due to their dominance in the rural housing tenure profile.

		Owner occupied: making mortgage repayments	Owner occupied: making no mortgage repayments	Being purchased from Local Authority	Rented from Local Authority	Rented unfurnished	Rented furnished	Occupied free of rent
State	Number	484774	461166	44783	88206	25883	115576	21560
	% of total	37.88	36.04	3.50	6.89	2.02	9.03	1.68
Urban	Number	317517	225791	32926	69195	19054	98862	10024
	% of total	39.69	28.23	4.12	8.65	2.38	12.36	1.25
Rural	Number	167257	235375	11857	19011	6829	16714	11536
	% of total	34.87	49.07	2.47	3.96	1.42	3.48	2.40

The highest proportions of owner-occupying households are closer, but not exclusively so, to urban centres and along the national roads (Map 4.15). In some areas, the proportion of owner occupying households reached up to 98% of all households. The lowest proportion of owner occupying households (53 to 75%) tends to be located in outer rural areas, in particular in western coastal areas. In terms of change from 1991 to 2002 (Map 4.16; also Table 4.8), there was an average increase of 20% in the number of owner occupying households (accounting for over 90% of total increase in rural households). The average increase in owner occupying households was widespread throughout the country with pockets of large increases located in the peri-urban belts of the five major cities and some large towns (e.g. Letterkenny) where the majority of new rural dwellings were constructed, particularly since 1996.

Table 4.7 National Owner Occupancy Change, 1991 to 2002				
	1991	2002	Change 1991 - 2002	% Change 1991 - 2002
State Total	743129	945940	202811	27.29
Urban	413623	543308	129685	31.35
Rural	329506	402632	73126	22.19

Nature of Occupancy Percentage of Owner Occupying Households 2002



Nature of Occupancy

Percentage Change in the Number of Owner Occupying Households 1991 to 2002

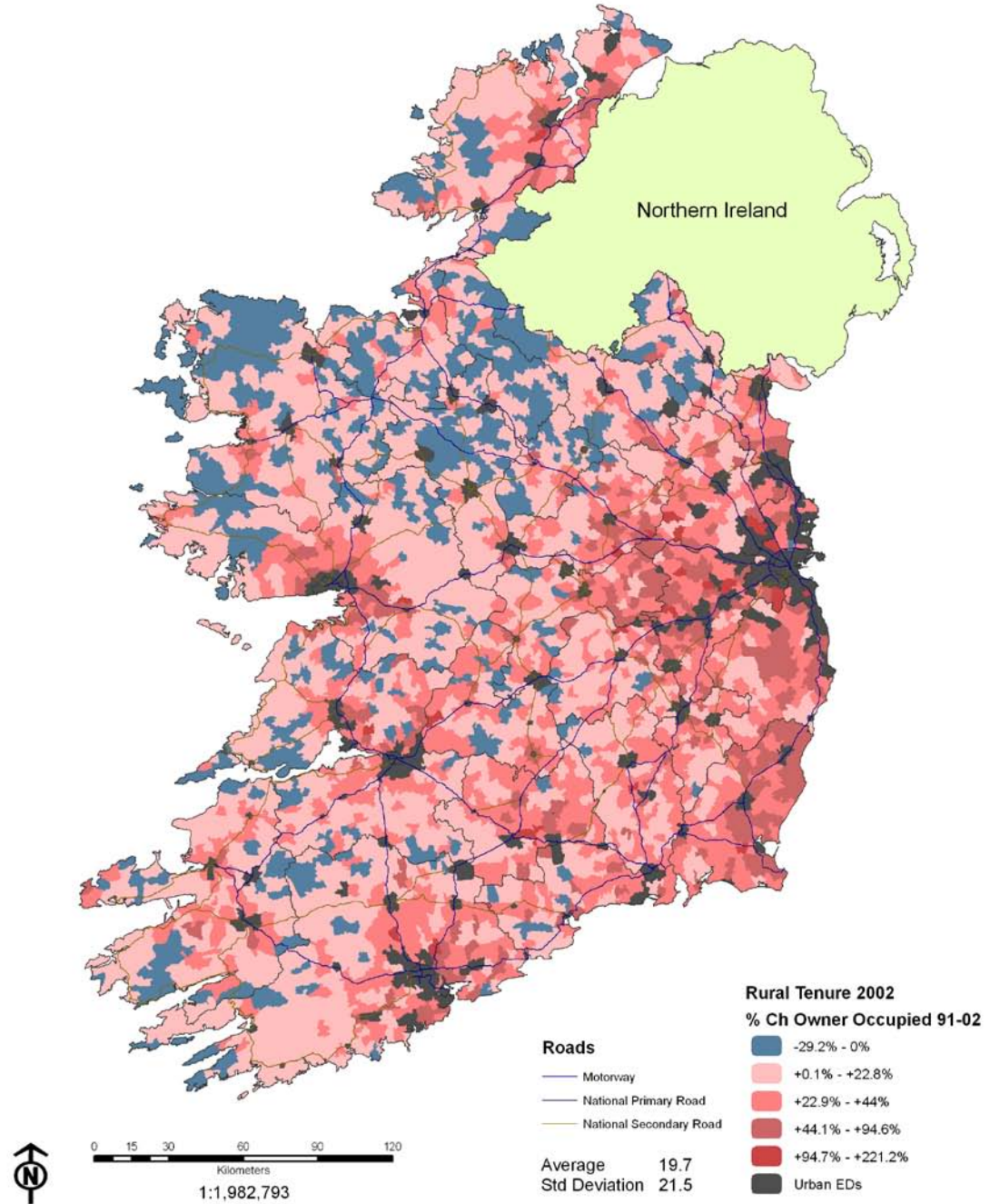


Table 4.8 Owner Occupancy Change by County, 1991 to 2002							
	1991	% 1991	2002	% 2002	Change 1991 - 2002	% Change 1991 - 2002	Ranking Change (1=highest 29=lowest)
State Total	743129	72.9	945940	73.9	202811	27.3	
Carlow	8107	72.8	10891	73.6	2784	34.3	7
Cavan	12762	82.6	14643	80.6	1881	14.7	24
Clare	20824	79.5	26796	79.7	5972	28.7	15
Cork County	64442	80.3	83781	80.1	19339	30.0	13
Donegal	27718	77.5	33919	76.9	6201	22.4	20
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	43127	76.6	49447	77.1	6320	14.6	25
Fingal	32549	80.7	48738	80.6	16189	49.7	3
Galway County	30112	84.8	36862	82.5	6750	22.4	19
Kerry	27019	75.7	32771	76.5	5752	21.3	21
Kildare	24825	76.2	39555	79.0	14730	59.3	1
Kilkenny	15665	77.2	19891	78.3	4226	27.0	16
Laois	10909	77.2	14655	79.9	3746	34.3	8
Leitrim	6748	83.2	7092	78.8	344	5.1	29
Limerick County	24261	79.4	30308	79.5	6047	24.9	18
Longford	6788	76.9	7609	73.9	821	12.1	27
Louth	18666	72.5	25403	76.1	6737	36.1	6
Mayo	26960	83.1	31145	79.6	4185	15.5	23
Meath	22347	78.1	34278	82.9	11931	53.4	2
Monaghan	11615	80.0	13301	80.2	1686	14.5	26
Offaly	11864	74.4	15719	79.0	3855	32.5	10
Roscommon	13497	85.9	15015	83.4	1518	11.2	28
Sligo	12760	78.5	14772	75.7	2012	15.8	22
South Dublin	40729	74.7	56483	77.1	15754	38.7	5
Tipperary North	12395	75.4	15727	78.5	3332	26.9	17
Tipperary South	14933	69.1	19455	74.1	4522	30.3	12
Waterford County	11431	77.3	14762	79.9	3331	29.1	14
Westmeath	13537	77.5	17826	77.0	4289	31.7	11
Wexford	19957	71.0	28660	76.6	8703	43.6	4
Wicklow	20651	74.4	27717	76.7	7066	34.2	9

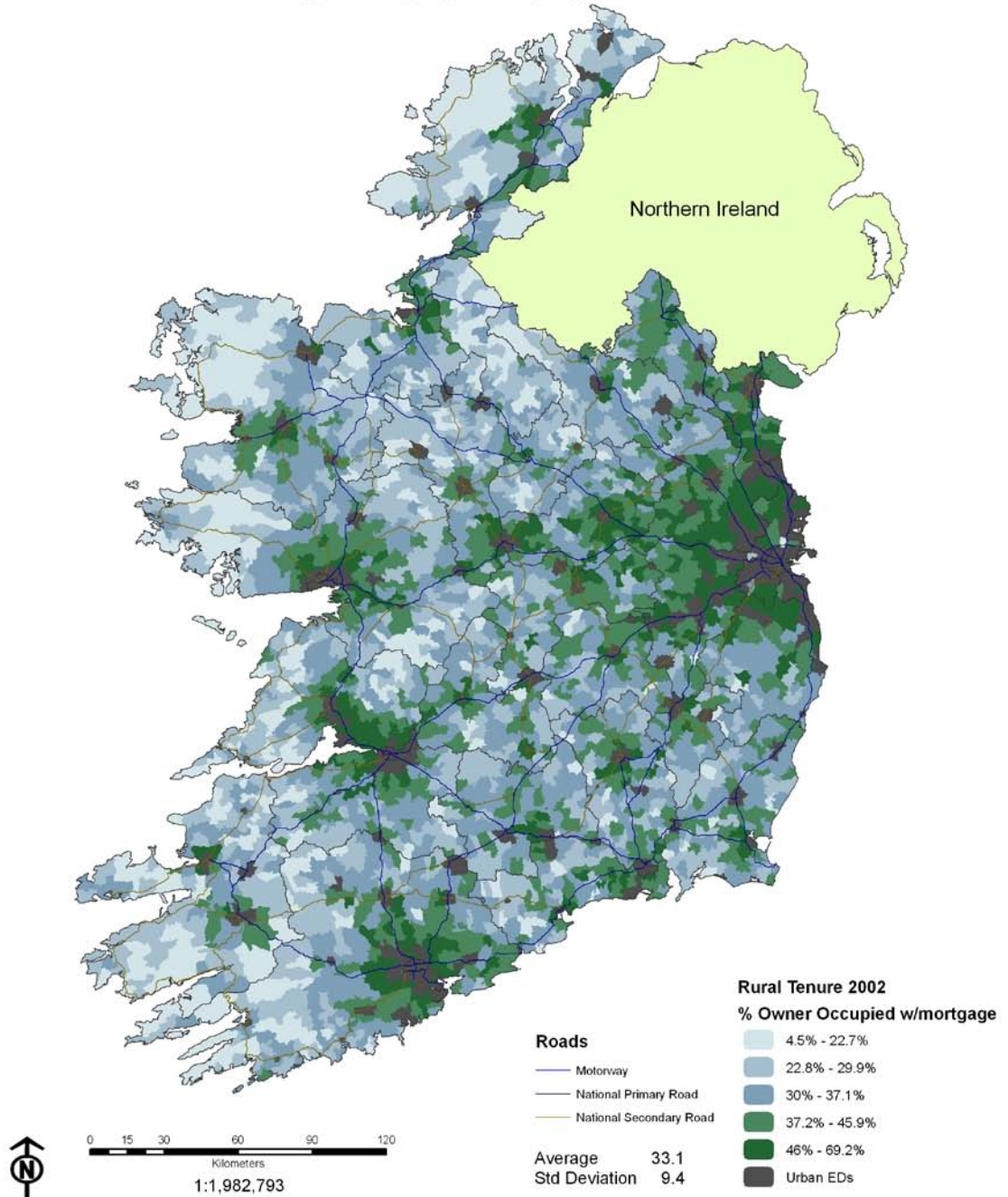
Thirty-five percent of all owner occupied dwellings are making mortgage repayments (Map 4.17; also Table 4.9). Up to 70% of households living in the peri-urban belts of the five major cities and of large towns fall under this category. Map 4.17 displays a distinct pattern of owner occupying households making mortgage repayments. The most extensive area of owner occupying households making mortgage repayments is in the Greater Dublin Area which reaches westwards as far as the Midlands. High proportions are also evident in areas adjacent to Cork and Galway cities, and in belts linking large towns and/or cities such as Limerick and Ennis, and Castlebar and Westport. Over the period 1991 to 2002, there was an average increase across the Electoral Divisions of 75% in the number of owner occupying households making mortgage repayments (see Map 4.18). Where there were some decreases in the number of households in this category since 1991, spatially this accounts for relatively small pockets scattered throughout the country. Generally, the increases are distributed evenly throughout the country, with some pockets of high increases (over 165% increase) in areas that had low base numbers in 1991, for example in Connemara in the west of the country and in parts of west Kerry, where there is evidence of in-migration and rural repopulation. Pockets of large increases are also located in the Greater Dublin Area where there were high levels of new house building in the period 1991 to 2002 (see Map 4.21).

The pattern of owner occupying households making no mortgage repayments is shown in Map 4.19. The spatial distribution displayed in this case is the inverse of the pattern of owner occupying households making mortgage repayments. In total, half of all rural households in 2002 were owner occupied making no mortgage repayments. The most extensive areas of high proportions (up to 85%) are located in the western 'half' of the country, with particularly high pockets in coastal zones. These areas tend to have the highest level of older dwellings so large proportions of owner occupying households making no mortgage repayments may be accounted for by family inheritance of homes or the completion of mortgages repayments. The lowest levels of owner occupying households making no repayments are located in areas where dwellings tend to be younger. This is most clearly evident in the peri-urban belts of Dublin and other cities and large towns. The percentage change in the number of owner occupying households making no mortgage repayments over the period 1991 to 2002 is, on average, quite low at just under 4%, where there were also large areas of decline in the number of households in this category. Examining Map 4.20, extensive areas in the west can be

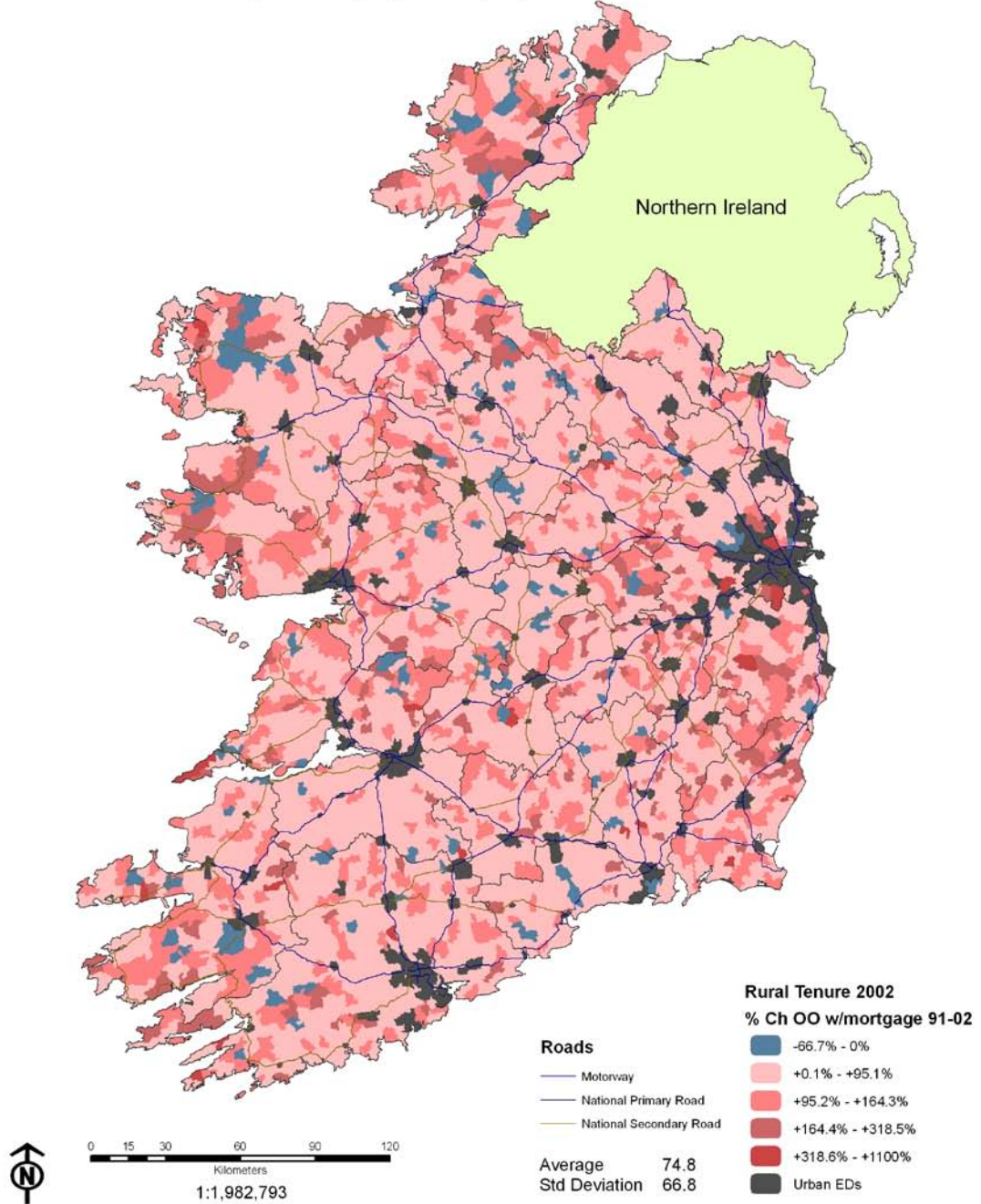
identified where there was a fall in the number of owner occupying households making no mortgage repayment, with up to a 50% decline in some areas. Although the average change is relatively low, where there were increases in the number of households in this category, they were located in areas where house construction was highest in the 1990s (areas to the east and southeast; see Map 4.21). Decreases occurred in areas where housing stock reached a 'maturity', built in the 1970s and coming to the end of mortgage repayments.

The distribution of households living in dwellings and not making mortgage payments indicates a longer established housing stock which in the main is shaped by the traditional rural settlement pattern. The spatial pattern of households making mortgage repayments clearly illustrates the more recent patterns of rural-urban linkages, with the highest proportions in districts in the hinterlands of the urban centres, and is extensively represented in the east. High levels of owner occupancy throughout the state, which are considered more common in rural areas in general and are particularly high in rural Ireland, can be traced back to the early state interventions of land transfer and limited local government provision of social housing for rural residents.

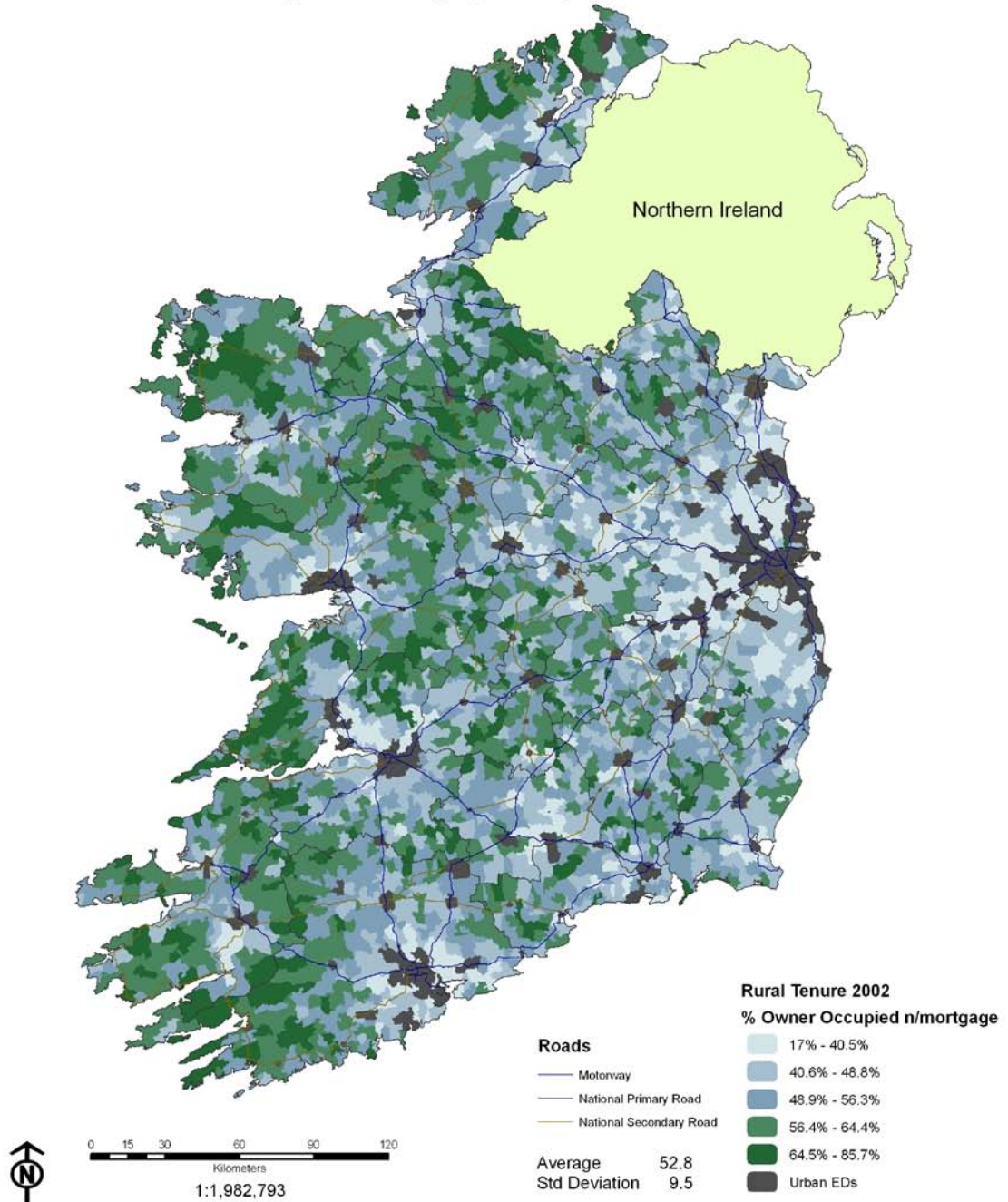
Nature of Occupancy Percentage of Owner Occupying Households, Making Mortgage Repayments 2002



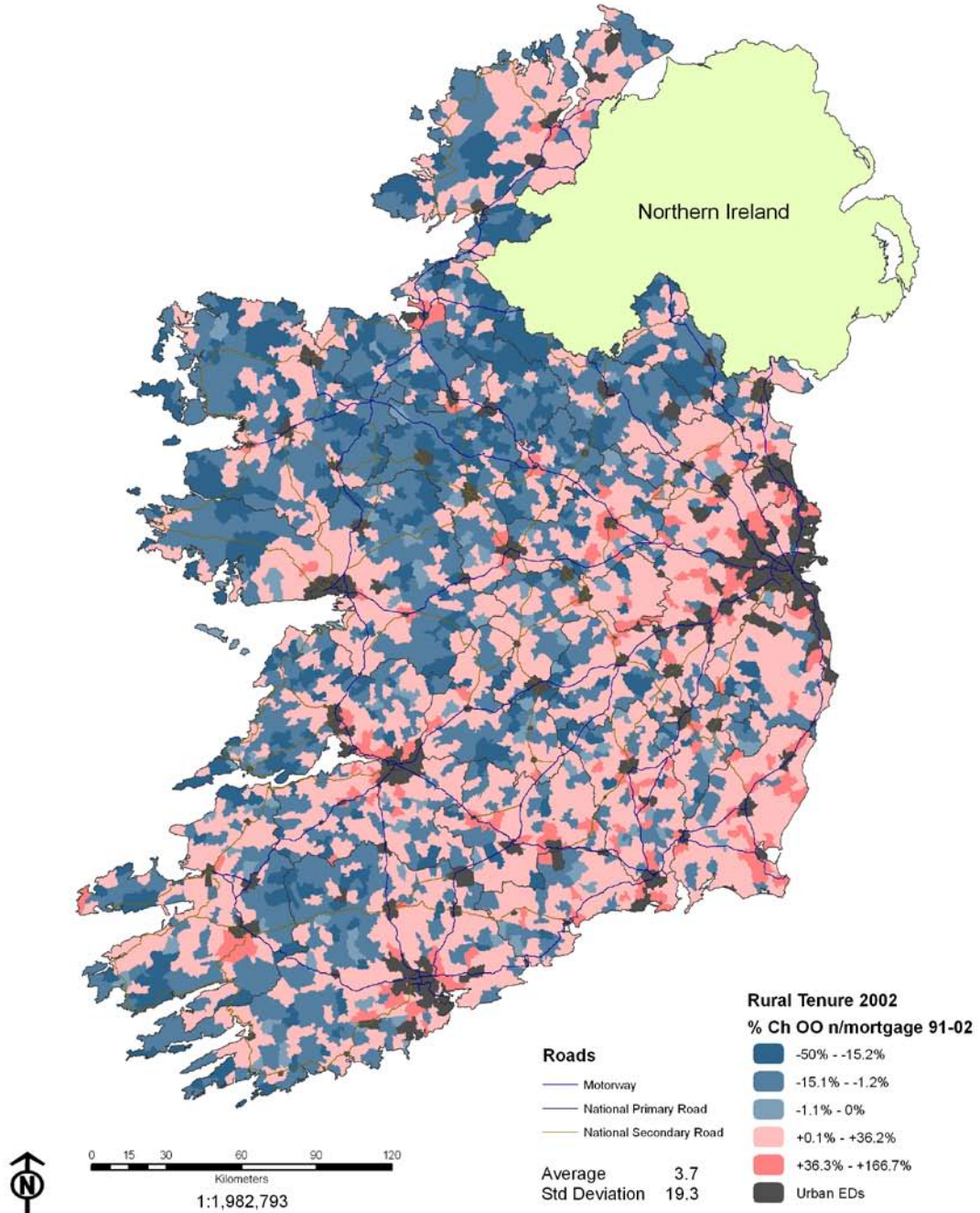
Nature of Occupancy Percentage Change in Number of Owner Occupying Households, Making Mortgage Repayments 1991 to 2002



Nature of Occupancy Percentage of Owner Occupying Households, Making No Mortgage Repayments 2002



Nature of Occupancy Percentage Change in Number of Owner Occupying Households, Making No Mortgage Repayments 1991 to 2002



Period of Construction Percentage of Total Dwellings Built 1991 to 2002

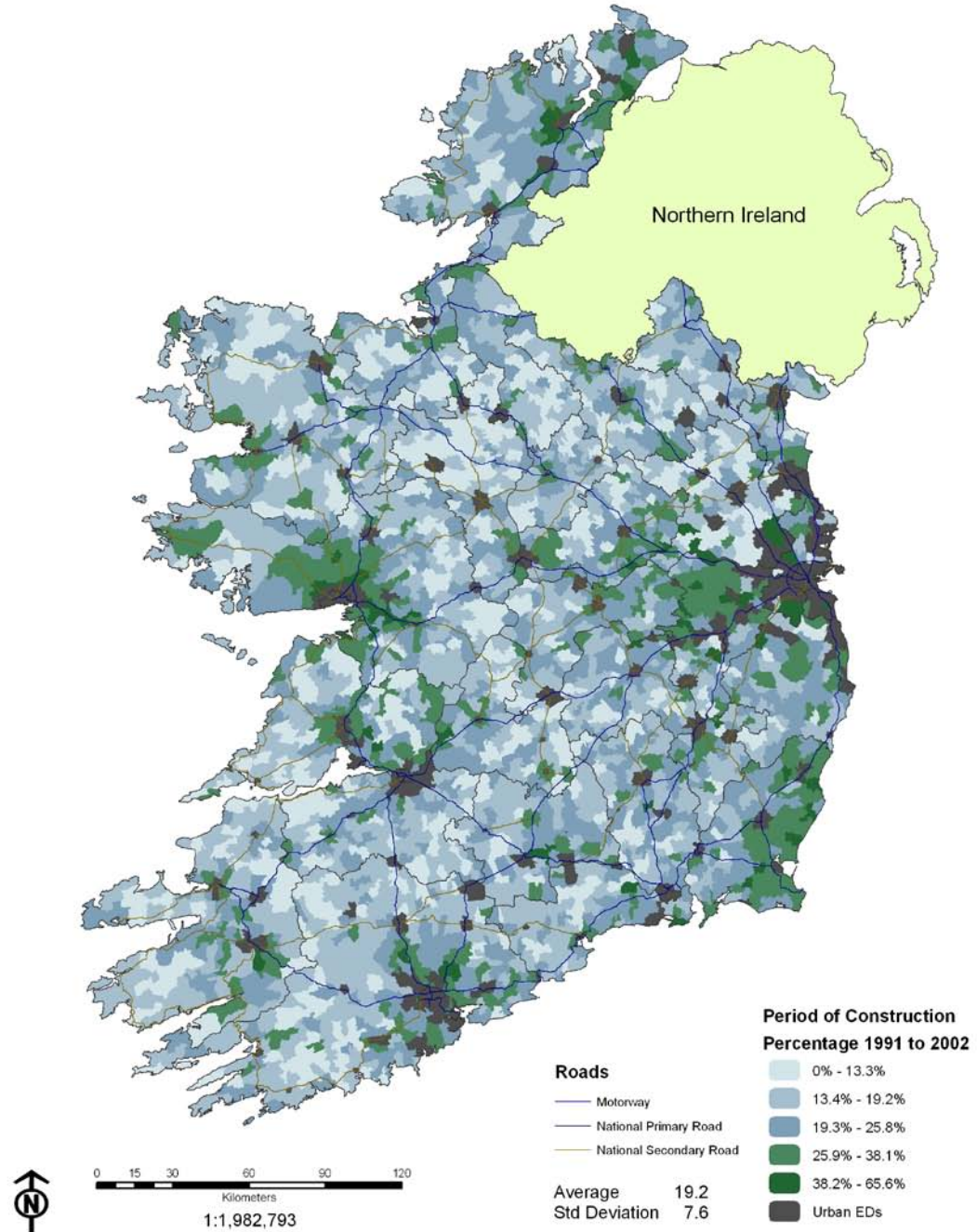


Table 4.9 Owner Occupancy Making Mortgage Repayments by County, 1991 to 2002							
	1991	% 1991	2002	% 2002	Change 1991 - 2002	% Change 1991 - 2002	Ranking Change (1=highest 29=lowest)
State Total	355851	34.9	484774	37.9	128923	36.2	
Carlow	3315	29.8	5197	35.1	1882	56.8	11
Cavan	3859	25.0	5930	32.7	2071	53.7	12
Clare	8411	32.1	12890	38.3	4479	53.2	14
Cork County	27964	34.9	42070	40.2	14106	50.4	16
Donegal	7991	22.3	13104	29.7	5113	64.0	7
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	27277	48.5	26975	42.1	-302	-1.1	29
Fingal	24920	61.8	34703	57.4	9783	39.3	21
Galway County	8962	25.2	15220	34.0	6258	69.8	4
Kerry	7819	21.9	12458	29.1	4639	59.3	8
Kildare	15438	47.4	25963	51.8	10525	68.9	5
Kilkenny	6514	32.1	8924	35.1	2410	37.0	24
Laois	3888	27.5	6794	37.0	2906	74.7	2
Leitrim	1649	20.3	2394	26.6	745	45.2	18
Limerick County	10694	35.0	14536	38.1	3842	35.9	25
Longford	2432	27.5	3126	30.4	694	28.5	27
Louth	9581	37.2	14618	43.8	5037	52.6	15
Mayo	7935	24.4	12442	31.8	4507	56.8	10
Meath	11897	41.6	20351	49.2	8454	71.1	3
Monaghan	4380	30.2	6071	36.6	1691	38.6	23
Offaly	4493	28.2	7068	35.5	2575	57.3	9
Roscommon	4260	27.1	5905	32.8	1645	38.6	22
Sligo	5040	31.0	6716	34.4	1676	33.2	26
South Dublin	31839	58.4	38518	52.6	6679	21.0	28
Tipperary North	4144	25.2	6841	34.2	2697	65.1	6
Tipperary South	5743	26.6	8821	33.6	3078	53.6	13
Waterford County	4648	31.4	6683	36.2	2035	43.8	19
Westmeath	6410	36.7	9441	40.8	3031	47.3	17
Wexford	7232	25.7	12653	33.8	5421	75.0	1
Wicklow	10858	39.1	15376	42.5	4518	41.6	20

Table 4.10 Owner Occupancy Making No Mortgage Repayments by County, 1991 to 2002							
	1991	% 1991	2002	% 2002	Change 1991 - 2002	% Change 1991 – 2002	Ranking Change (1=highest 29=lowest)
State Total	327605	41.9	385433	36.0	57828	17.6	
Carlow	4792	43.0	5694	38.5	902	18.8	10
Cavan	8903	57.6	8713	48.0	-190	-2.1	28
Clare	12413	47.4	13906	41.3	1493	12.0	17
Cork County	36478	45.5	41711	39.9	5233	14.3	16
Donegal	19727	55.1	20815	47.1	1088	5.5	21
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	15850	28.2	22472	35.1	6622	41.8	4
Fingal	7629	18.9	14035	23.2	6406	84.0	2
Galway County	21150	59.6	21642	48.4	492	2.3	24
Kerry	19200	53.8	20313	47.4	1113	5.8	20
Kildare	9387	28.8	13592	27.1	4205	44.8	3
Kilkenny	9151	45.1	10967	43.2	1816	19.8	8
Laois	7021	49.7	7861	42.9	840	12.0	18
Leitrim	5099	62.9	4698	52.2	-401	-7.9	29
Limerick County	13567	44.4	15772	41.3	2205	16.2	14
Longford	4356	49.3	4483	43.5	127	2.9	23
Louth	9085	35.3	10785	32.3	1700	18.7	11
Mayo	19025	58.6	18703	47.8	-322	-1.7	27
Meath	10450	36.5	13927	33.	3477	33.2	5
Monaghan	7235	49.9	7230	43.6	-5	-0.1	25
Offaly	7371	46.2	8651	43.5	1280	17.4	13
Roscommon	9237	58.8	9110	50.6	-127	-1.4	26
Sligo	7720	47.5	8056	41.3	336	4.3	22
South Dublin	8890	16.3	17965	24.5	9075	102.1	1
Tipperary North	8251	50.2	8886	44.4	635	7.7	19
Tipperary South	9190	42.5	10634	40.5	1444	15.7	15
Waterford County	6783	45.9	8079	43.7	1296	19.1	9
Westmeath	7127	40.8	8385	36.2	1258	17.6	12
Wexford	12725	45.3	16007	42.8	3282	25.8	7
Wicklow	9793	35.3	12341	34.1	2548	26.0	6

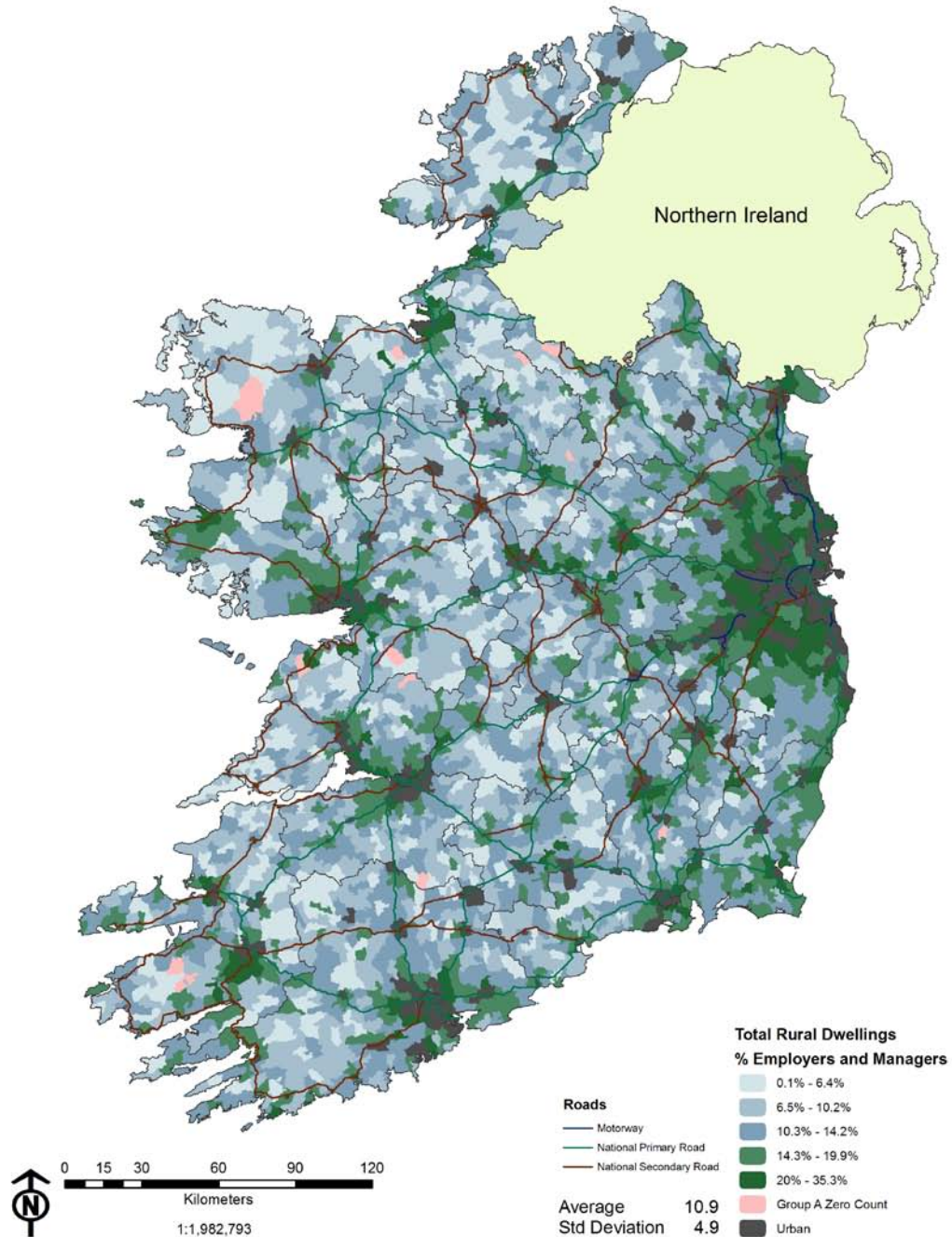
4.2.2 Socio-Economic Groups Living in Rural Households

In addition to examining the spatial distribution of the 'physical' elements of the geography of rural housing in Ireland, it is important to investigate 'who' is living in the countryside. Chapter Two identified that one cause / effect of rural change in the Western world is the social recompositioning of populations living in rural areas. This has been explained by changing employment bases, particularly the decline in agricultural employment, and the desire of people to live in the countryside being driven by lifestyle, quality of life, and status factors. Table 4.11 outlines the spatial breakdown of rural households by eleven socio-economic groups (A to Z; as determined by the reference person in each household). Despite striking declines in agricultural employment since the 1990s, farming continues to dominate the socio-economic representation of private households in rural areas. Excluding Group Z (all others gainfully employed and unknown), households where the reference person is categorised in the Farmers socio-economic group accounts for the highest proportion of households in five out of the six rural area types. Peri-urban areas are more likely to have a higher dominance of Employers and Managers and Non-manual workers (see Map 4.22 and Map 4.25 respectively). Higher Professionals are less likely to live rural areas, particularly in weak and marginal areas in the west of the island (Map 4.23). This group averages a 2.7% representation in each Electoral Division, with a large number of EDs having no households categorised under this grouping at all.

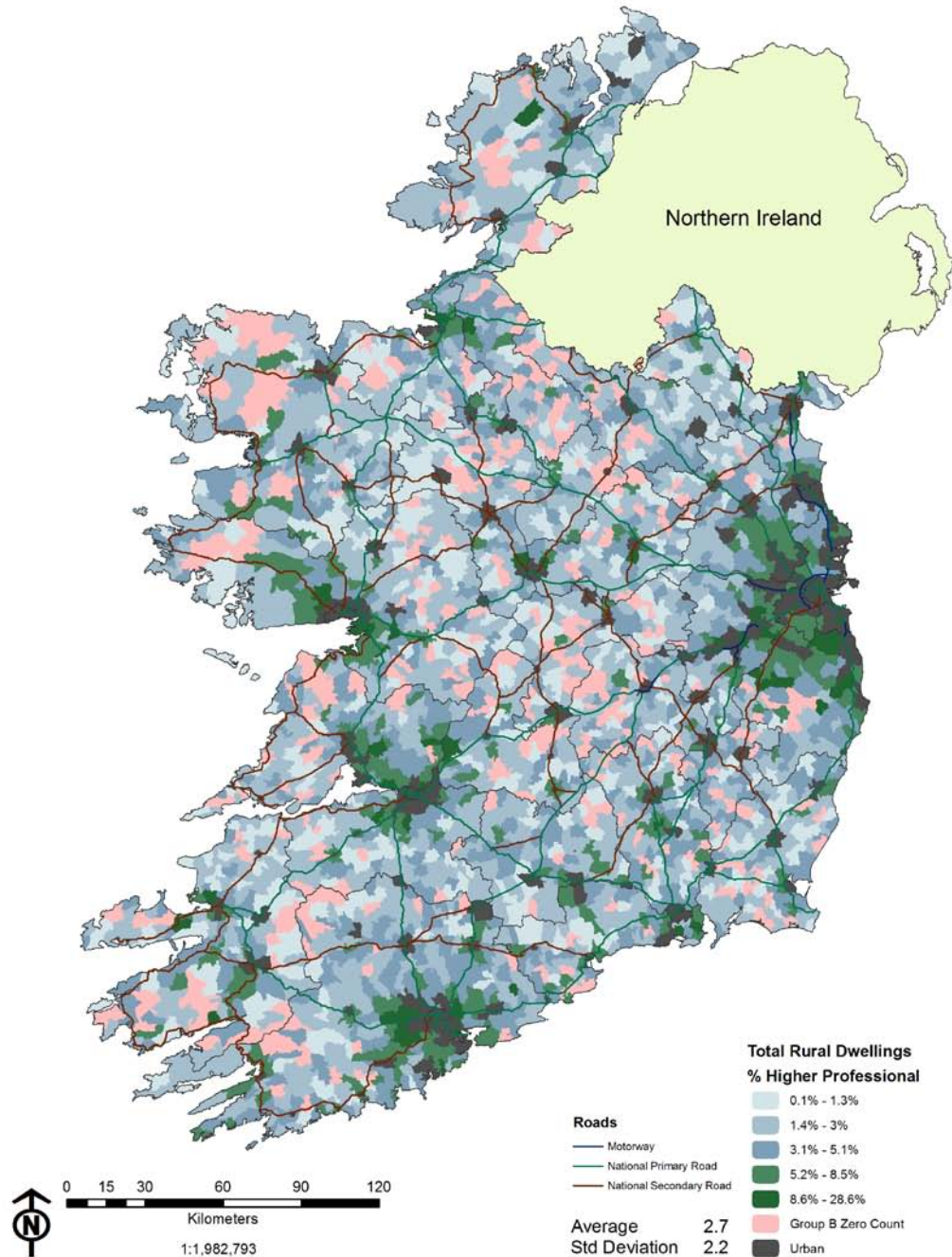
The Lower Professional group are more likely to be represented in rural areas although the average for these is still relatively low at 6.8% (see Map 4.24). In contrast, the Farmers and Agricultural Workers socio-economic groups combined (Maps 4.30 and 4.31) result in an average representation of just under 25% throughout all rural EDs, and have the greatest dominance (31%) in strong rural areas in transition and in weak rural areas (26%). Although farmers continue to dominate household socio-economic groups, the second largest group (excluding Group Z: unknown) are employers and managers with a national average of 11%. This percentage (accounting for a total of 59,921 households) has its largest representation in peri-urban areas, which is unsurprising given the greater likelihood of service sector employment being located in towns and cities. Interestingly, diversified areas have the second highest percentage of employers and managers, highlighting the nature of these areas as more diverse than other rural types and the alternative employment opportunities available there.

Table 4.11 Socio-Economic Groups (determined by the reference person in each household) by Rural Area Type, 2002											
Rural Area Types (total number of households in each area)	Employers and Managers (Group A) Households	Higher Professional (Group B) Households	Lower Professional (Group C) Households	Non-Manual (Group D) Households	Manual Skilled (Group E) Households	Semi-Skilled (Group F) Households	Unskilled (Group G) Households	Own Account Workers (Group H) Households	Farmers (Group I) Households	Agricultural Workers (Group J) Households	All others (Group Z) Households
Peri-Urban (142739)	22869	6864	13534	17551	16064	11091	7554	9044	14368	1845	21955
<i>% of total</i>	16.0	4.8	9.5	12.3	11.3	7.8	5.3	6.3	10.1	1.3	15.4
Strong Rural (125893)	15634	3389	7888	12950	16142	10679	8847	7944	19205	3077	20138
<i>% of total</i>	12.4	2.7	6.3	10.3	12.8	8.5	7.0	6.3	15.3	2.4	16.0
Strong in Transition (67984)	6317	1450	4083	5407	6675	4397	3773	3920	19602	1728	10632
<i>% of total</i>	9.3	2.1	6.0	8.0	9.8	6.5	5.5	5.8	28.8	2.5	15.6
Weak (81096)	7479	1629	4976	6726	9192	6507	5085	4539	19938	1504	13521
<i>% of total</i>	9.2	2.0	6.1	8.3	11.3	8.0	6.3	5.6	24.6	1.9	16.7
Marginal (35687)	3079	709	2433	3105	3824	3092	3344	2052	5449	611	7989
<i>% of total</i>	8.6	2.0	6.8	8.7	10.7	8.7	9.4	5.7	15.3	1.7	22.4
Diversified (32218)	4543	1212	2485	3619	2687	2263	1906	2489	4764	554	5696
<i>% of total</i>	14.1	3.8	7.7	11.2	8.3	7.0	5.9	7.7	14.8	1.7	17.7
Total (485617)	59921	15253	35399	49358	54584	38029	30509	29988	83326	9319	79931
<i>% of total</i>	12.3	3.1	7.3	10.2	11.2	7.8	6.3	6.2	17.2	1.9	16.5

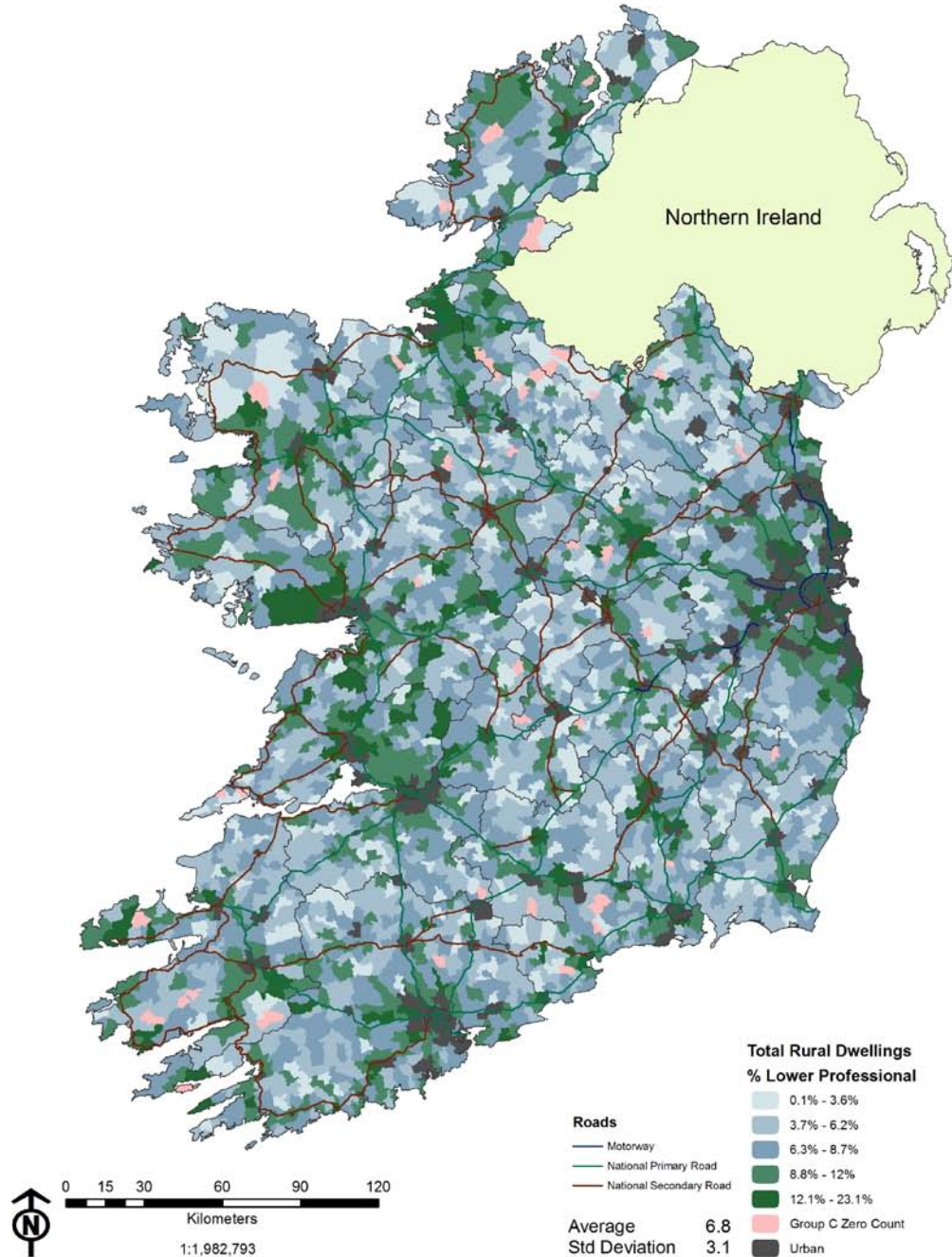
Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Employers and Managers (Group A)' Households



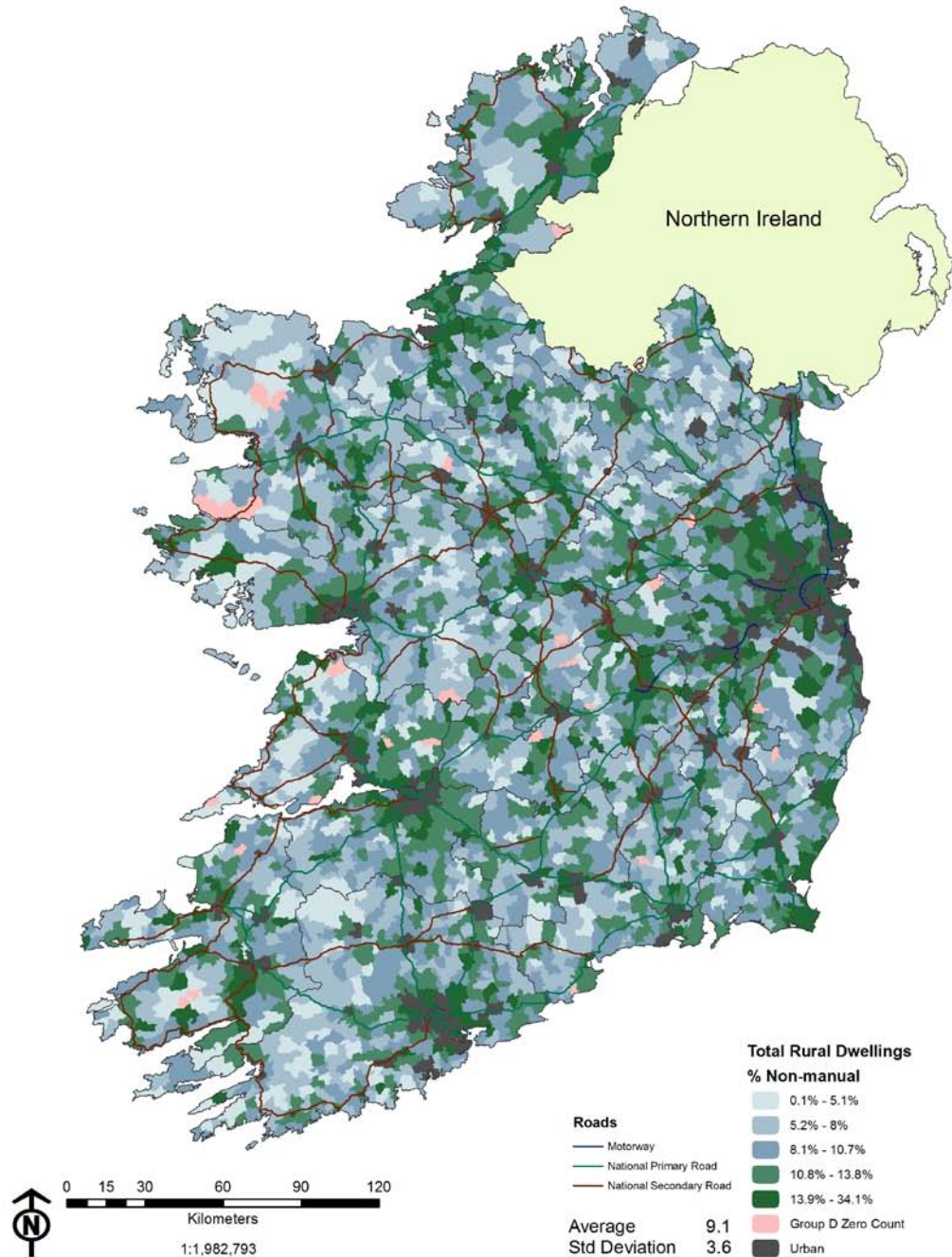
Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Higher Professional (Group B)' Households



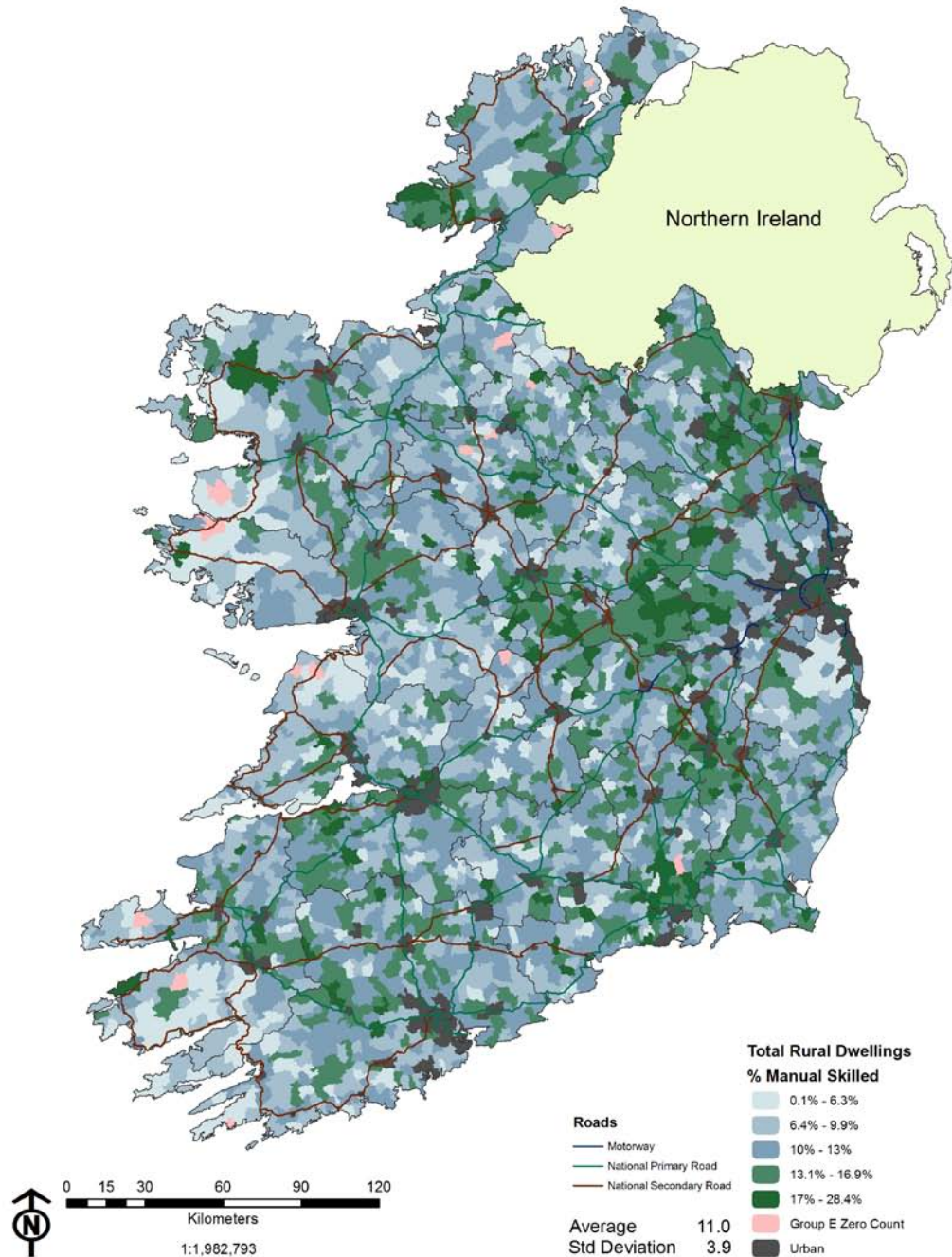
Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Lower Professional (Group C)' Households



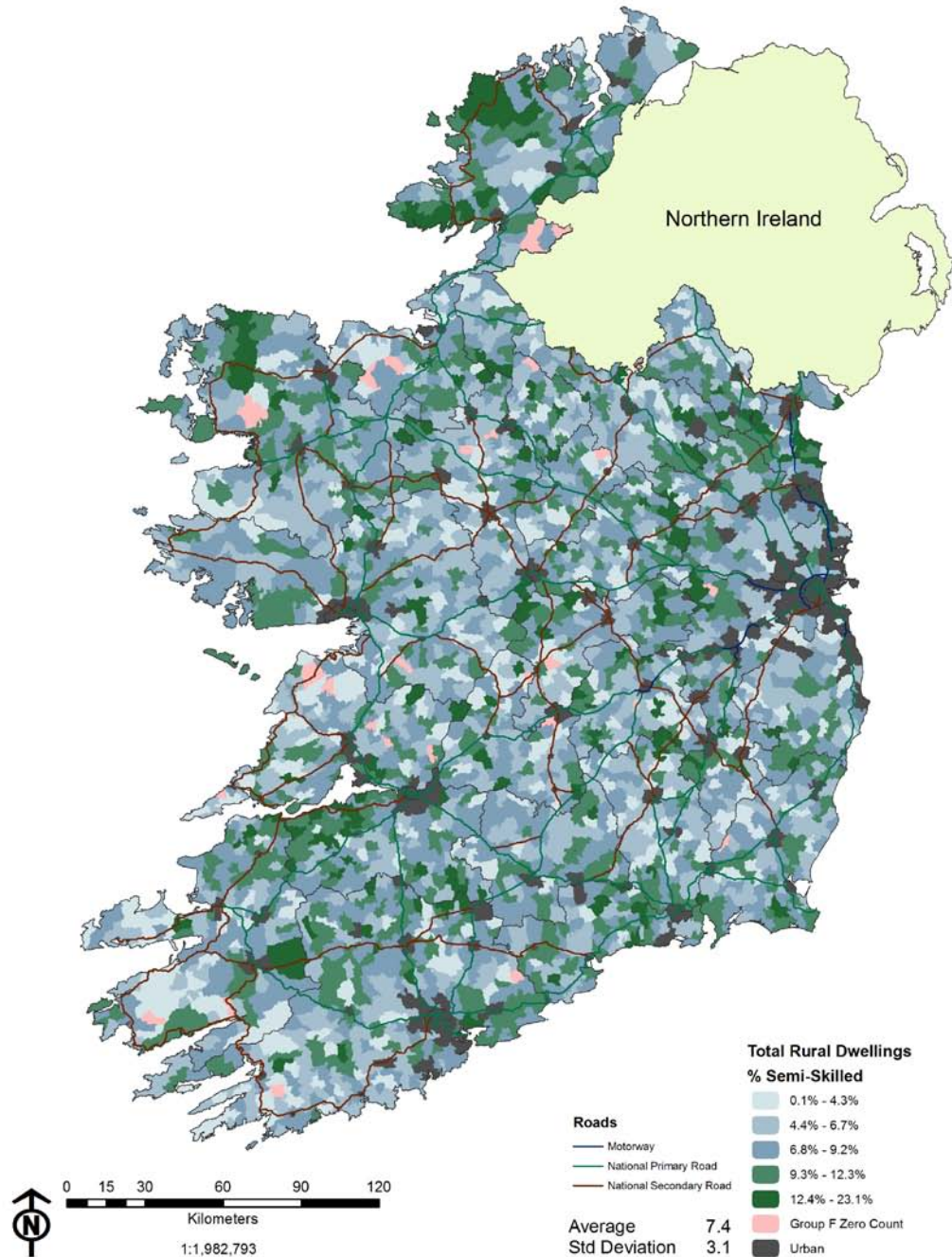
Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Non-Manual (Group D)' Households



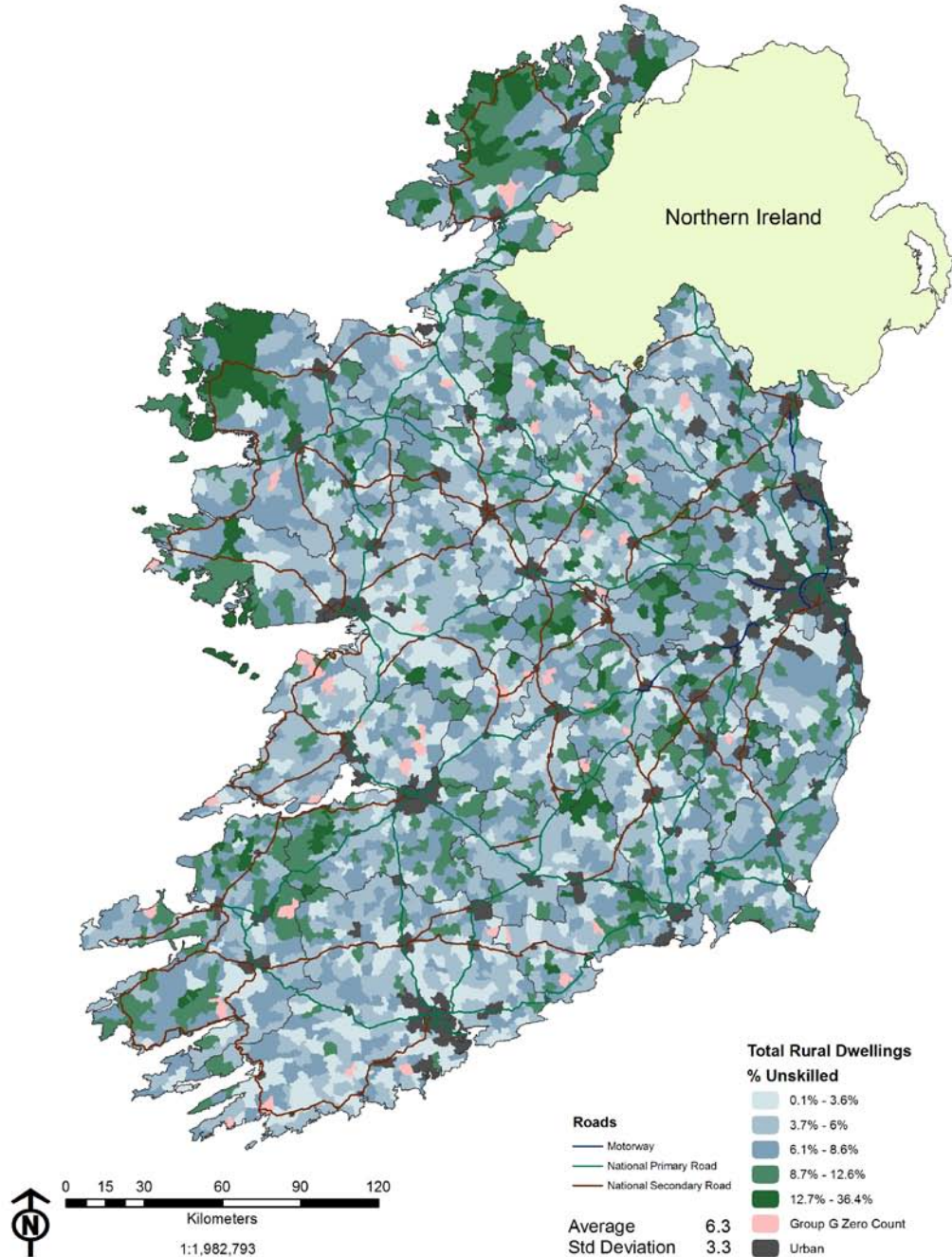
Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Manual Skilled (Group E)' Households



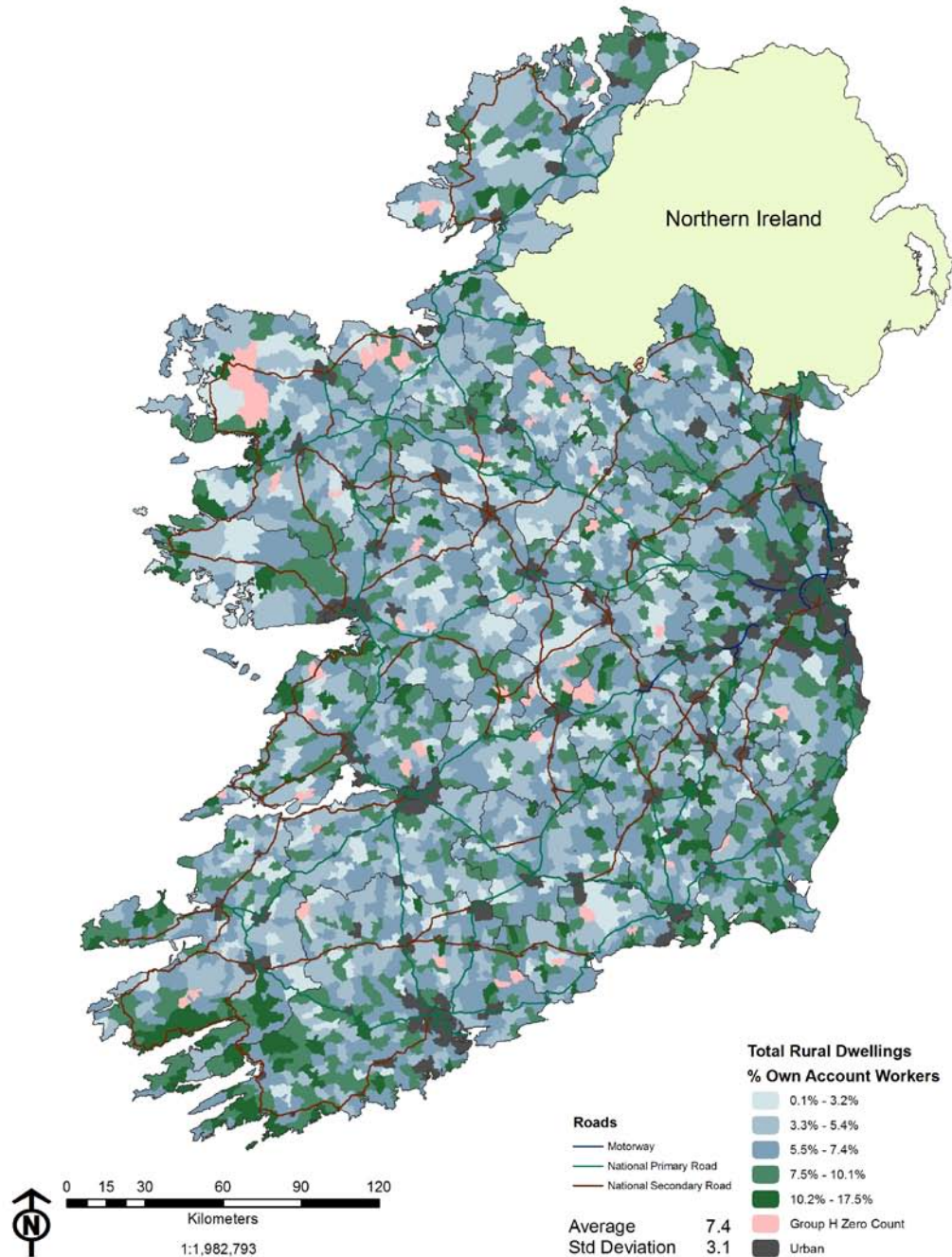
Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Semi-Skilled (Group F)' Households



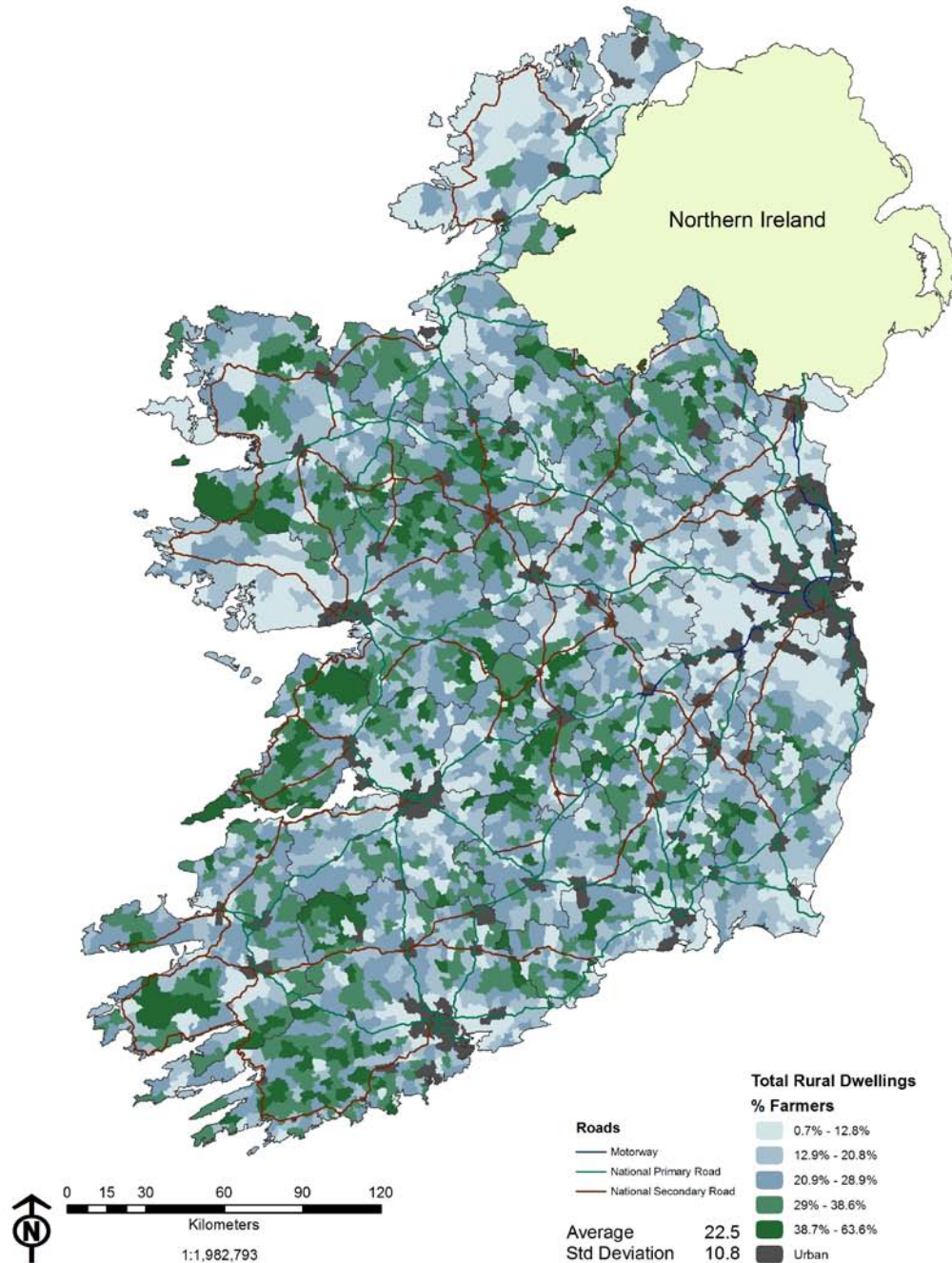
Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Unskilled (Group G)' Households



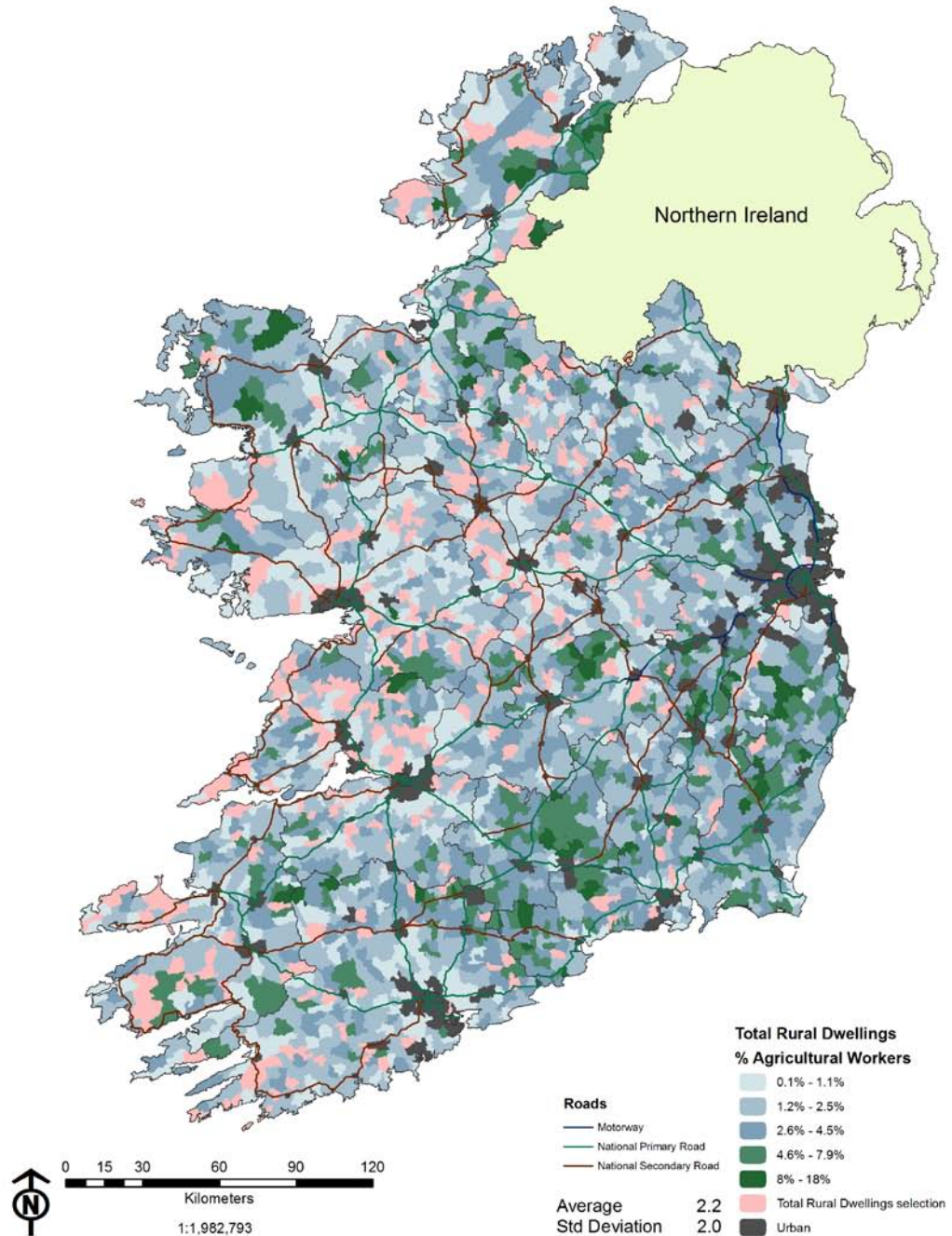
Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Own Account Workers (Group H)' Households



Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Farmers (Group I)' Households



Total Rural Dwellings Percentage of 'Agricultural Workers (Group J)' Households



4.2.3 House Size

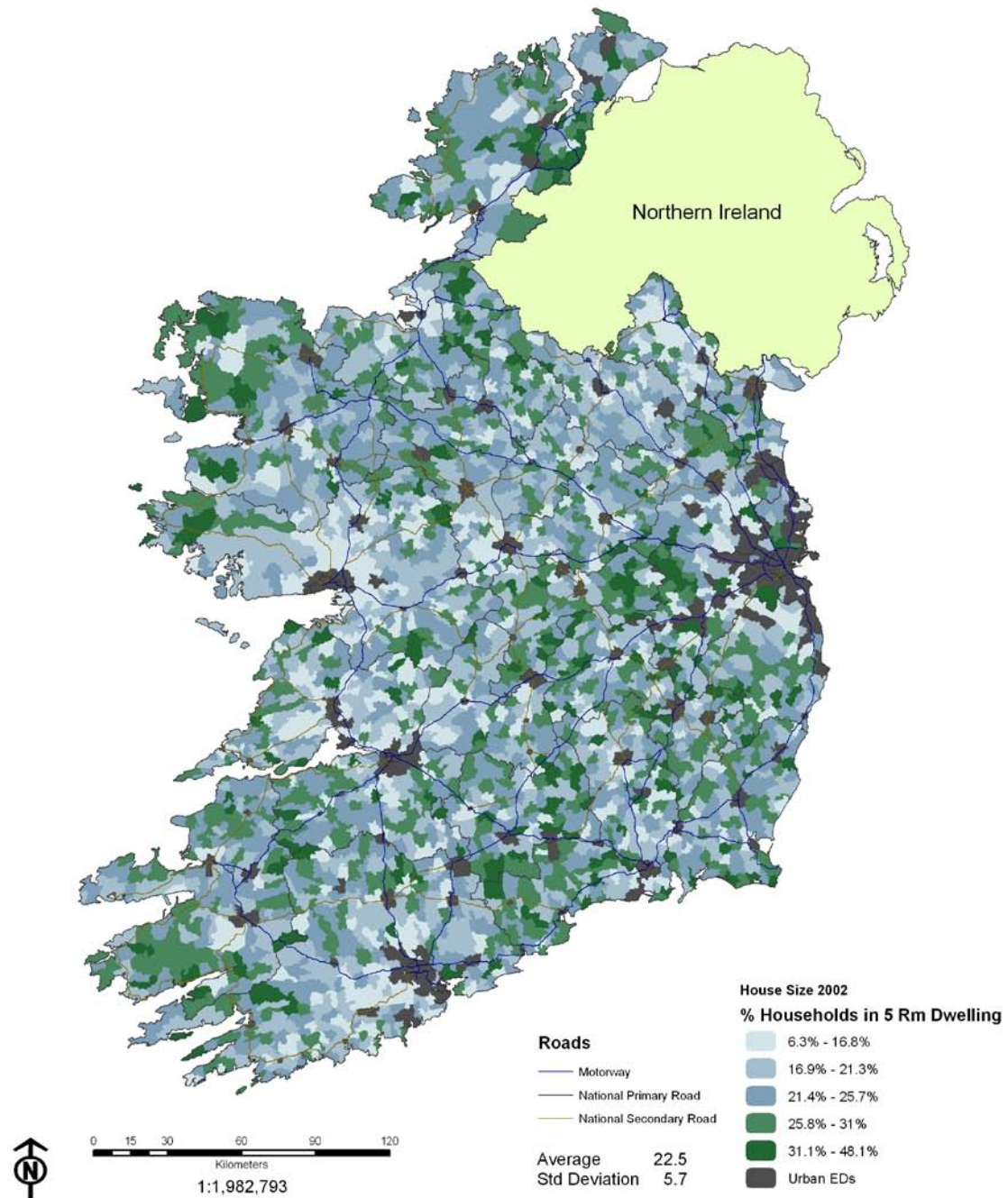
		Dwellings with 5 rooms	Dwellings with 6 rooms	Dwellings with 7 rooms	Dwellings with 8 plus
State	Number	327392	262554	179434	173265
	% of total	25.59	20.52	14.02	13.54
Urban	Number	216683	157319	101867	96870
	% of total	27.09	19.67	12.73	12.11
Rural	Number	110709	105235	77567	76395
	% of total	23.08	21.94	16.17	15.93

One anecdotal element of the rural housing debate has centred on the argument that rural house sizes are increasing despite falling average household size. Maps 4.32 to 4.35 illustrate the spatial distribution and pattern of different house sizes in 2002 (see also Table 4.12). Dwellings with five rooms represent the largest proportion of all dwellings in rural areas (23%). This high proportion may be more representative of an older housing stock as it accounted for just 8% of all household change in the period 1991 to 2002, and tends to have a stronger representation in outer rural areas, away from built-up urban centres where much of the pre-1971 dwellings were constructed. The low growth is in great contrast to change in the 1980s when dwellings with five rooms accounted for 35% of household increase. Map 4.36 displays large areas of decline in the number of households living in dwellings with five rooms for the period 1991 to 2002. Households living in dwellings with six rooms account for just over a fifth of all households and is represented by a spatial pattern that is associated more with urban areas (Maps 4.33 and 4.37). Again it is evident that the category of dwellings with six rooms is representative of older housing stock because it accounts for a declining amount of total housing growth (from 56% of total housing growth in the 1980s to 33% in the 1990s). The larger dwelling size categories of seven to eight or more rooms experienced the greatest level of change in the period 1991 to 2002. Sixteen percent of all households in 2002 lived in dwellings of seven rooms, with the strongest representation in peri-urban belts. This category is one of the largest growing categories of house size, accounting for 40% of total household growth in the 1990s. The final category of households living in dwellings with eight or more rooms represents less than 16% of total households. Spatially, the strongest concentrations (of up to 52% of total households) occur in the peri-urban belts of the five major cities and of larger

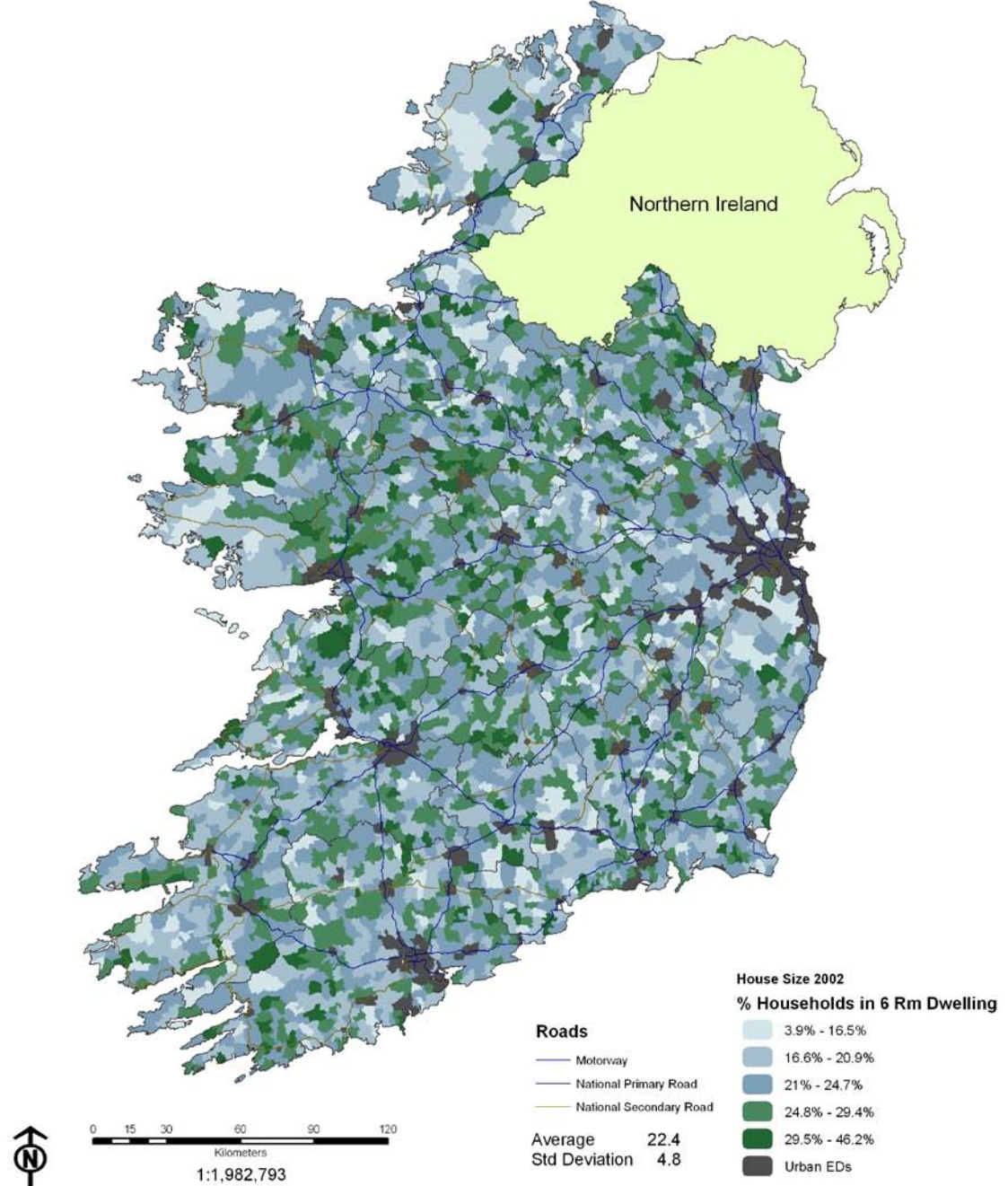
towns. This category is the fastest growing dwelling size accounting for 60% of household change in the period 1991 to 2002.

In summary, the main trends for dwelling size from before 1971 to 2002 are that fewer small dwellings (five to six rooms) were built in the 1990s than in previous decades. Where smaller houses exist, they tend to be located where there are high proportions of older housing stock, in outer rural and coastal areas. There is also appears to be a growing preference for larger dwellings (of seven or more rooms), particularly in peri-urban areas.

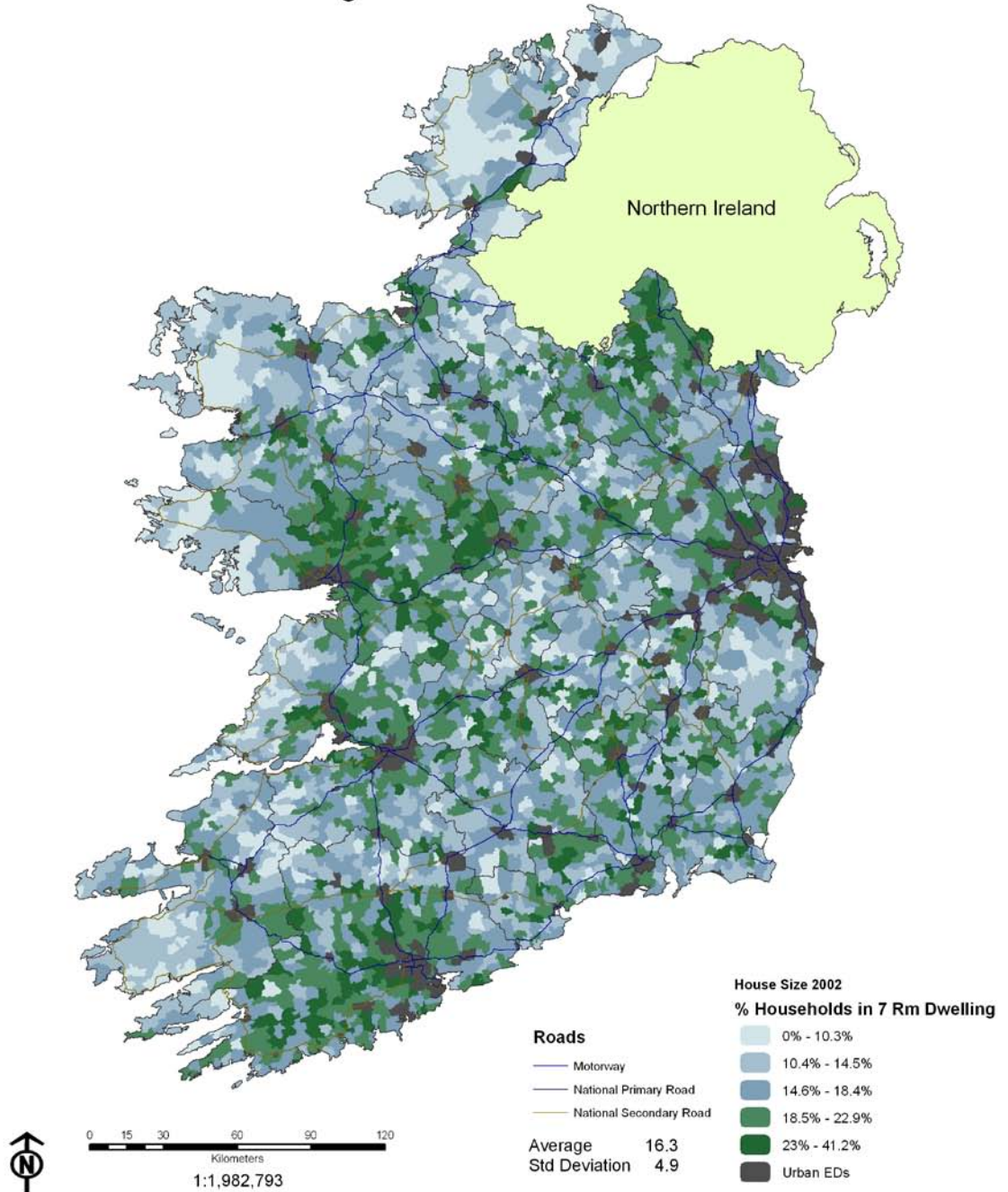
House Size Percentage of Households Living in Dwellings with Five Rooms 2002



House Size Percentage of Households Living in a Dwelling with Six Rooms 2002

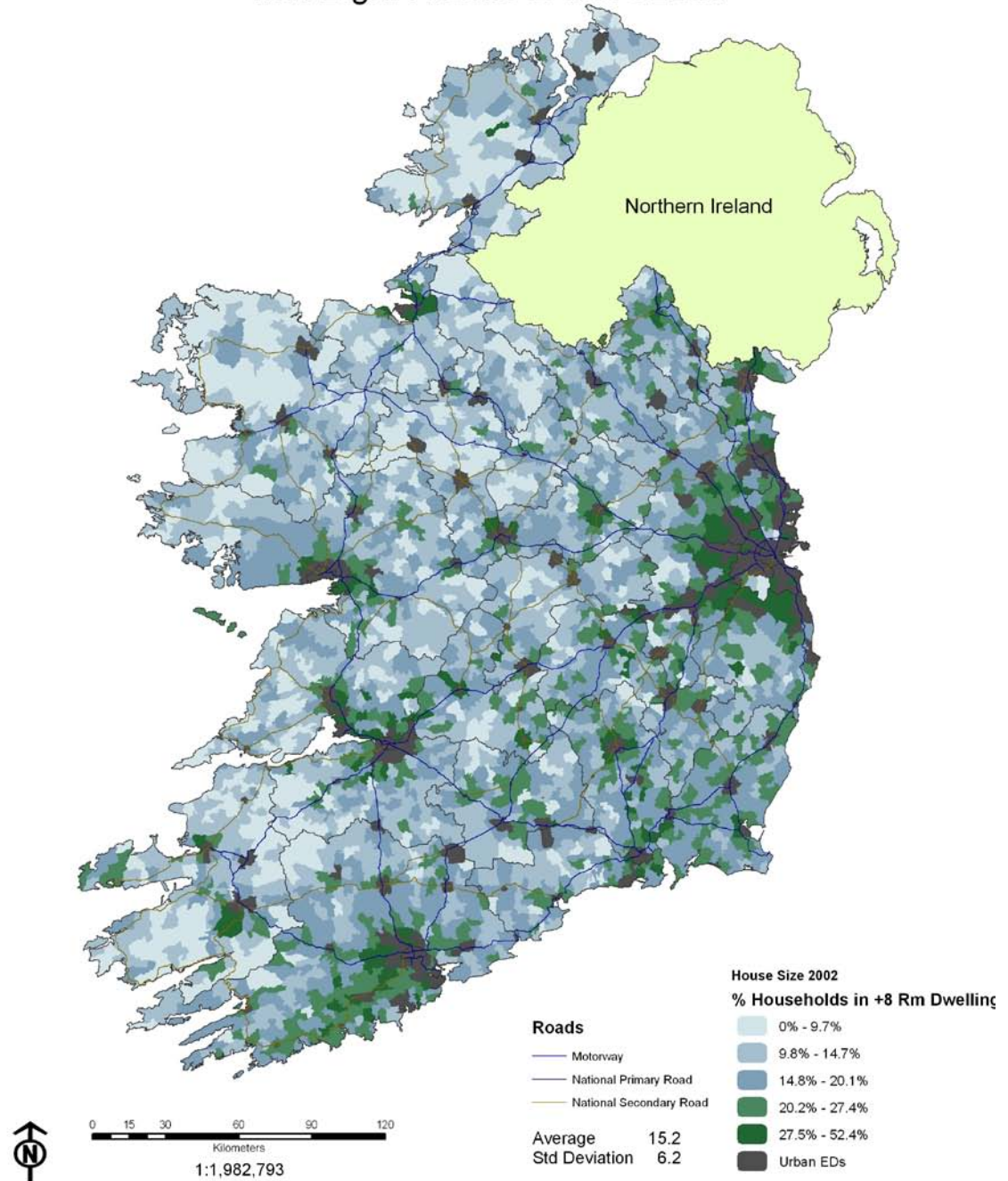


House Size Percentage of Households Living in a Dwelling with Seven Rooms 2002



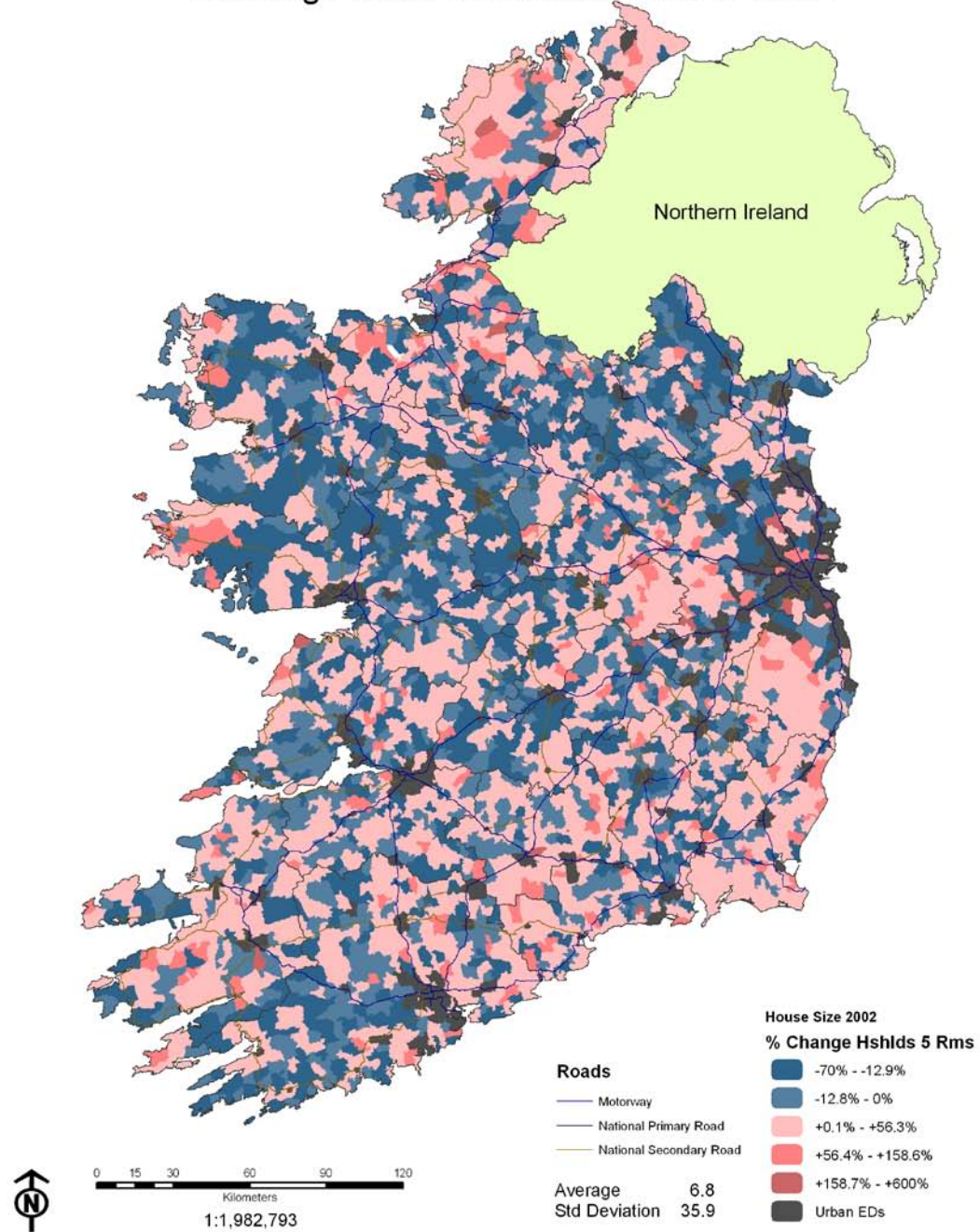
House Size

Percentage of Households Living a Dwelling with Eight Rooms or more 2002



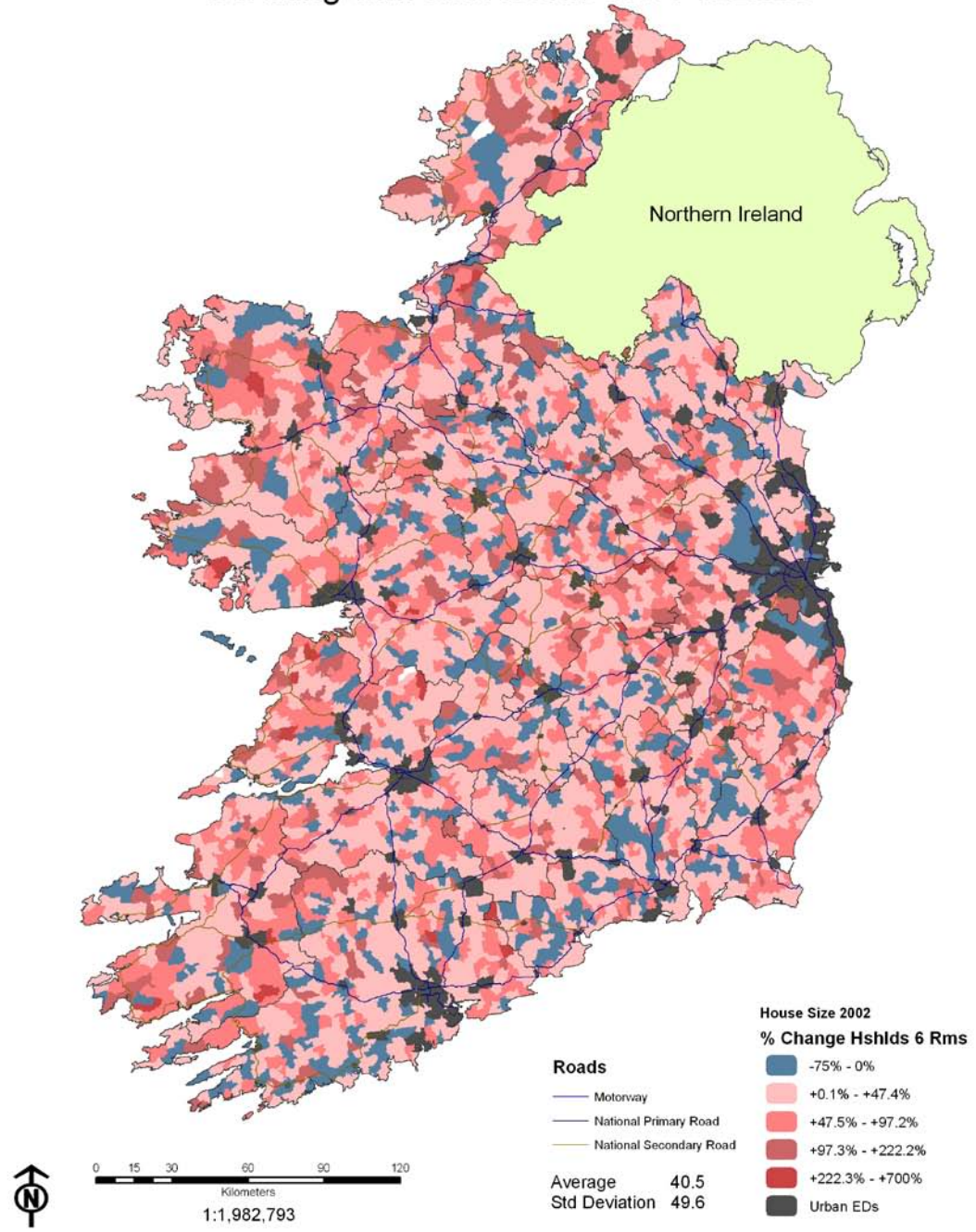
House Size

Percentage Change in the Number of Households Living in Dwellings with Five Rooms 1991 to 2002



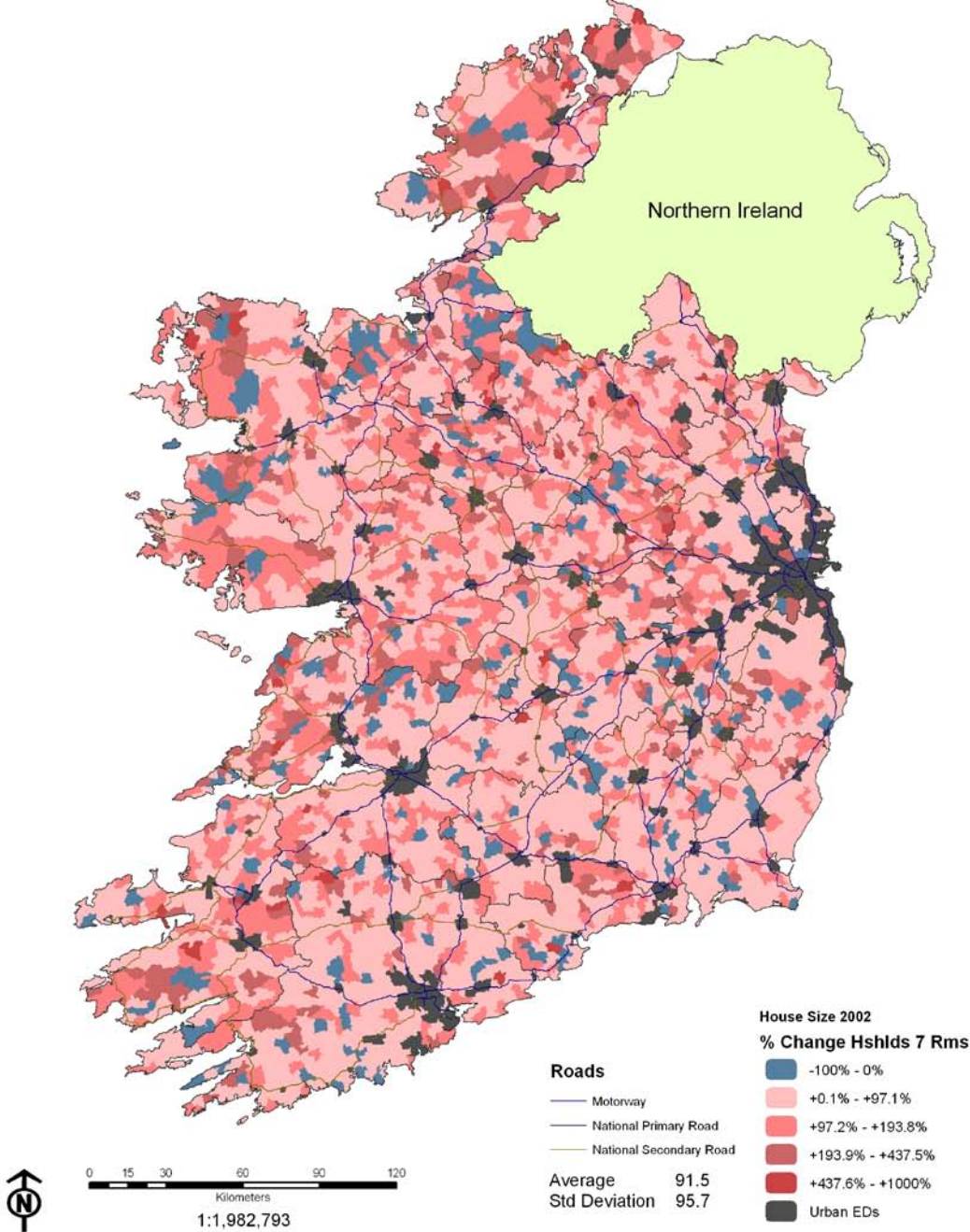
House Size

Percentage Change in the Number of Households Living in a Dwelling with Six Rooms 1991 to 2002



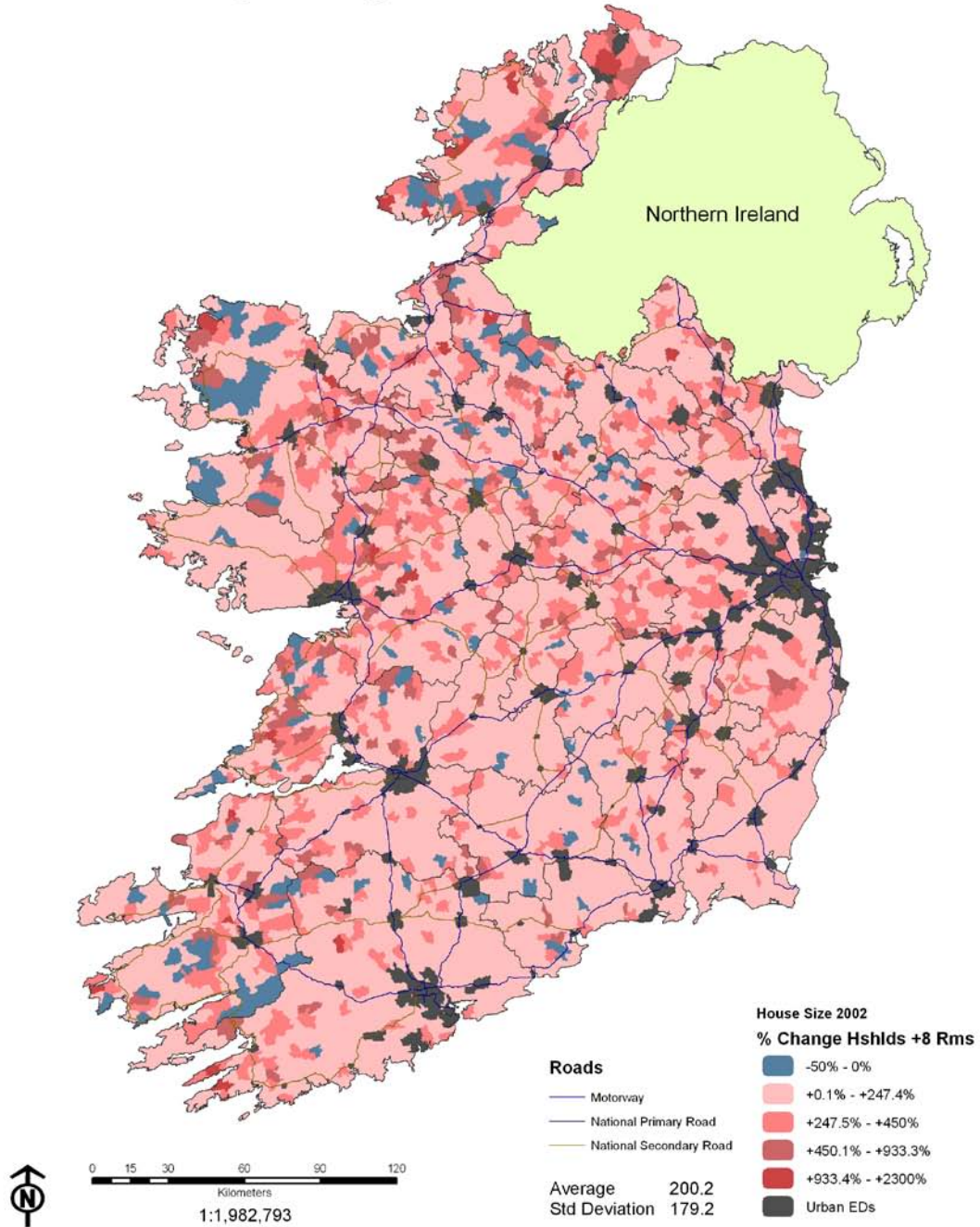
House Size

Percentage Change in the Number of Households Living in a Dwelling with Seven Rooms 1991 to 2002



House Size

Percentage Change in Number of Households Living in a Dwelling with Eight Rooms or more 1991 to 2002



4.2.4 Vacancy

Another component in understanding the geography of rural housing in Ireland is vacancy rates. Derelict dwellings may have come to symbolise rural depopulation (Milbourne, 2006) but the true story is more complex than this with different categories of vacancy and different reasons behind that vacancy. Population flows which have come to characterise rural demography have contributed to shaping the features of the settlement pattern. Depopulation, migration and flow, repopulation, social recompositioning, and counterurbanisation have all contributed, at different times to the occupancy of existing dwellings and to new construction. Rural dwelling vacancy has been a difficult area of research in housing studies in Ireland due to inconsistency in recording of data (which was discussed in Chapter Three). Generally, data for vacancy is aggregated up to the county level and is not available to the public. Access to the vacancy data was granted to this research, with additional local level statistics being made available for the case study areas, to be discussed in Chapter Six. Despite limited study of vacancy levels in Ireland, figures collected by the CSO reveal that 11.7% of all dwellings were classified as permanently vacant in 2002; increasing to 14.4% when temporarily absent dwellings are included (see Map 4.40 and Table 4.13 showing the county variations). Counties with the highest vacancy rates are located along the western coast, with Atlantic seaboard counties having a steady rise over the 1990s - from 16.9% in 1991 to 19.4% in 2002 (Fitzgerald, 2005). Generally there is a distinct drop in the vacancy rate towards the east but anomalous patterns in Counties Waterford and Wicklow are evident, relative to surrounding areas, with higher vacancy rates (16 – 17%). The overall spatial pattern of permanent vacancy can only be understood by breaking down the four vacancy categories. These categories are: (i) habitable but vacant dwellings; (ii) holiday homes; (iii) under construction; and (iv) uninhabitable. Breaking down the categories of vacancy provides a greater indication of both current housing pressures, in the case of holiday homes, and in the future in the case of the under construction classification. Habitable but vacant dwellings and uninhabitable dwellings give an indication of the potential for 'renewable' housing stock and of the footprint for future house construction from those that are currently derelict.

The first two categories (habitable and holiday homes) account for the greatest overall proportion of vacant dwellings. Accounting for an average of 50% of total vacant dwellings, habitable empty houses are found to be at their highest in the east midlands

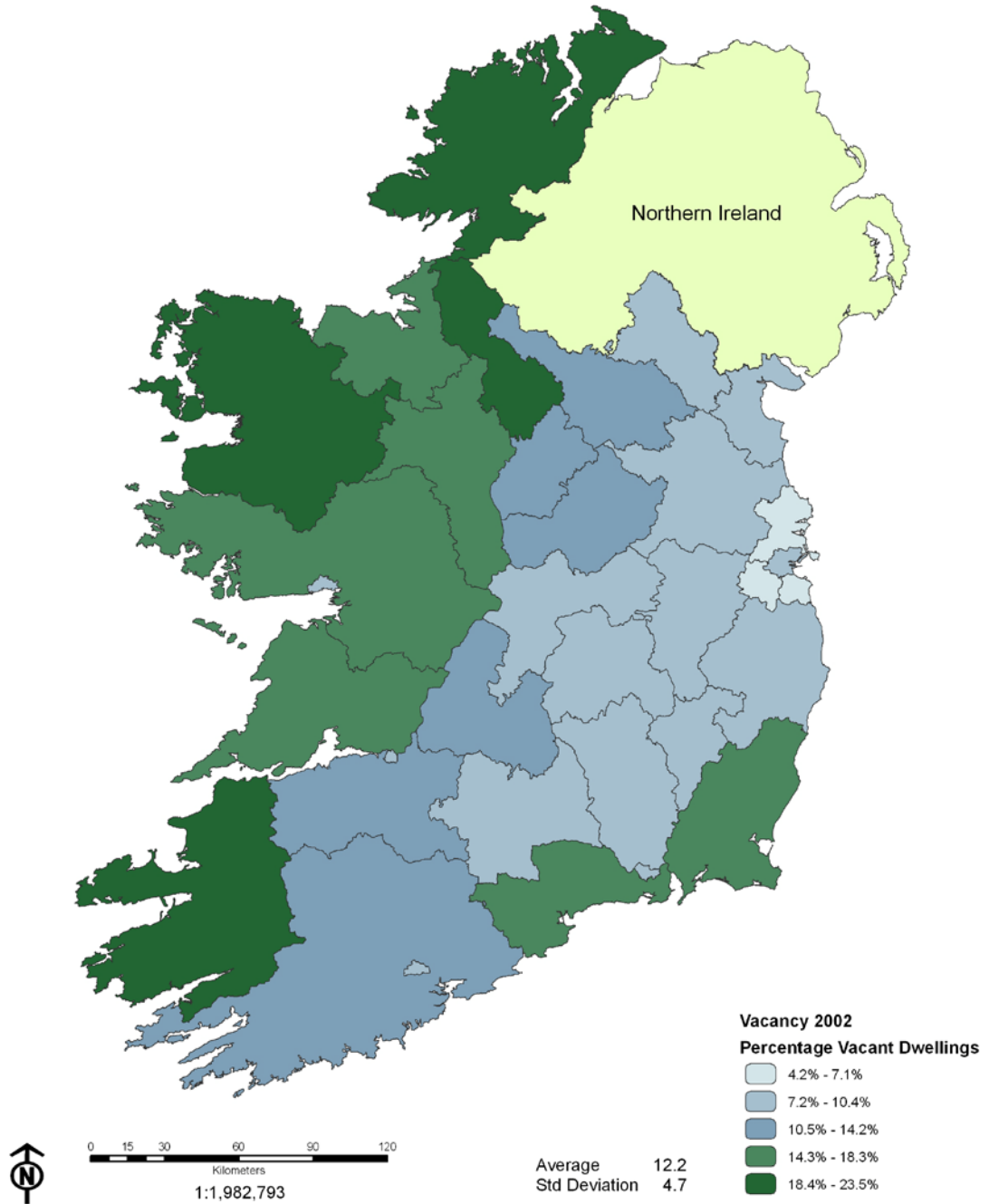
and Limerick, reaching up to 68% in County Laois (see map 4.41). The lowest representation is found in the west and southeast, almost directly opposite to Map 4.40 of total vacancy discussed above. The spatial pattern of holiday homes (Map 4.42) bears more similarity to the map of total vacancy. Coastal counties on all sides of the island have the highest proportion of holiday homes with the traditional tourist areas of Donegal, Clare, Kerry and Wicklow having the highest representation (27 to 44%) with lowest percentages of 4% in Laois further inland.

The final two categories of vacant dwellings account for a relatively small proportion of all dwellings. In 2002, dwellings classified as being under construction accounted for 13% of all vacant dwellings. Spatially (see Map 4.43) the pattern correlates with maps of recent house building. The difficulty with this category of vacancy is that, although it is defined by the CSO as permanently vacant, it is subject to continual change due to the completion of house builds. The pattern exhibited in Map 4.44 of dwellings under construction is not too surprising considering where levels of population growth have been greatest (see Map 2.2) although analysis of correlations between this vacancy category and population change is limited due to the nature of statistical aggregation at the county level. The final category of vacancy is uninhabitable dwellings (Map 4.44), representing only 8.5% of total vacant dwellings, with a largely even pattern throughout the country. Monaghan represents the most distinctive area in that it has a well above average 32% of total vacancies classified as uninhabitable dwellings. Although a relatively small category, it may perhaps be the most significant for future planning recommendations. The potential to provide a footprint for replacement dwellings, which has not been a characteristic of Irish rural housing to date, is strong.

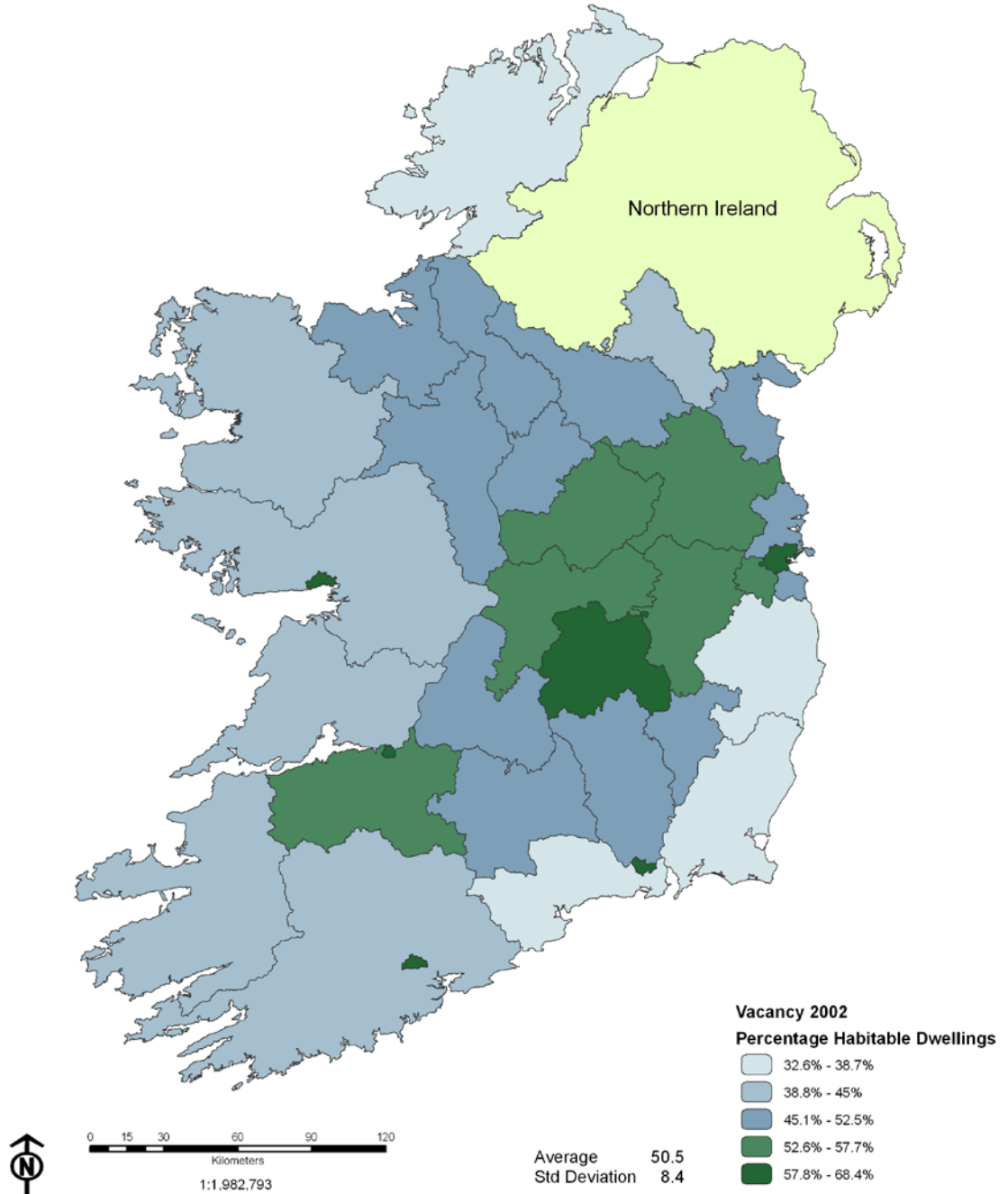
In summary, the main trends for vacant dwellings in 2002 are that the category of vacant dwellings which accounts for 14% of all dwellings in the state tends to be dominated by holiday homes and empty, habitable dwellings. Spatially, holiday homes dominate in coastal areas while habitable dwellings have the highest proportion in the midlands. The reasons behind dwelling vacancies are varied and complicated. A history of high levels of out-migration throughout Ireland whether to other urban centres within the state or to other countries, may contribute to the dwelling vacancy rate in Ireland. Emigration may not only result in habitable and/or uninhabitable dwellings, but also in the use of family homes as a holiday home. Fitzgerald (2005) suggests that the growing

number of elderly people has resulted in less availability of housing on the market with a subsequent need for more new build dwellings rather than replacements.

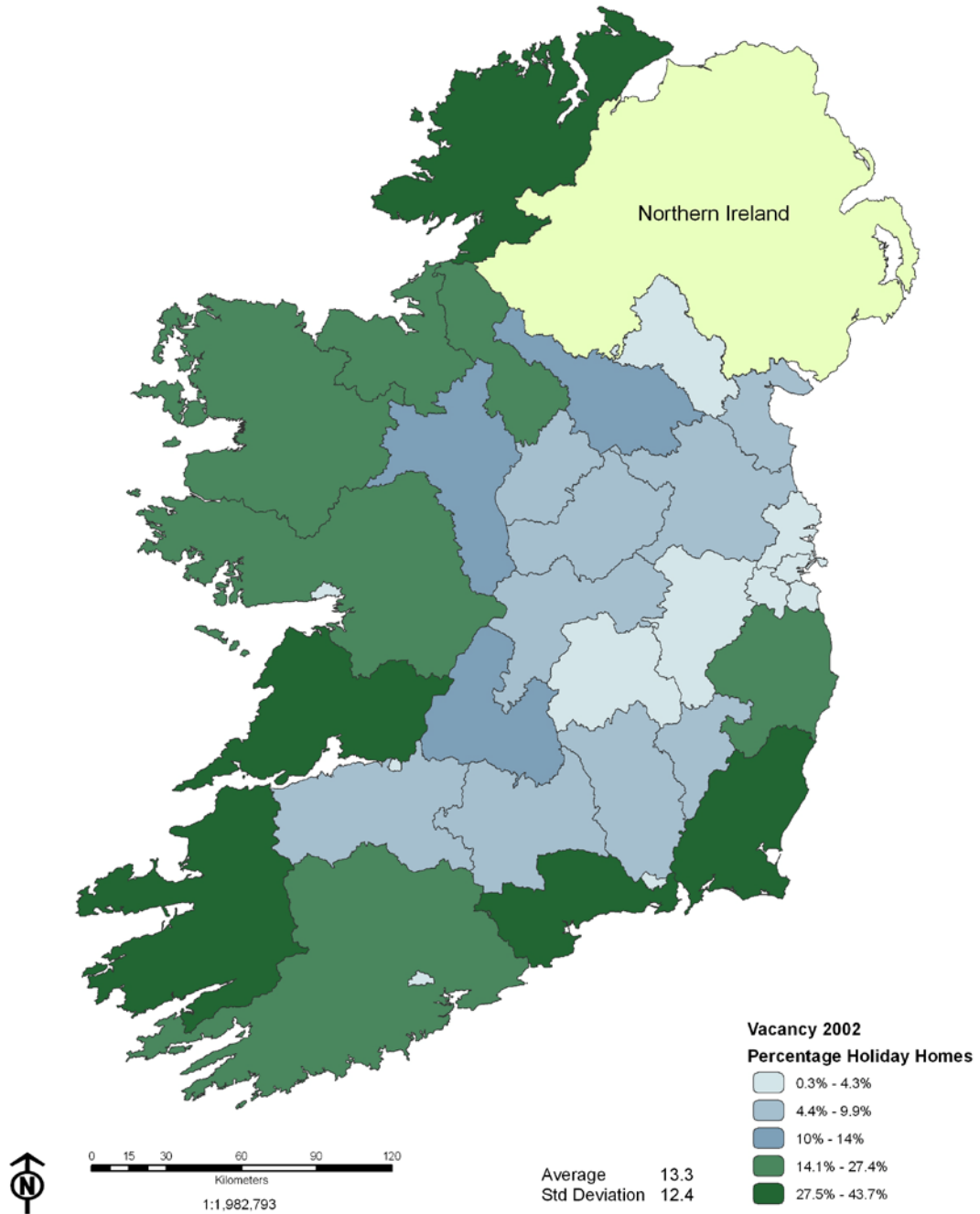
Dwelling Vacancy Vacant Dwellings as a Percentage of Total Dwellings 2002



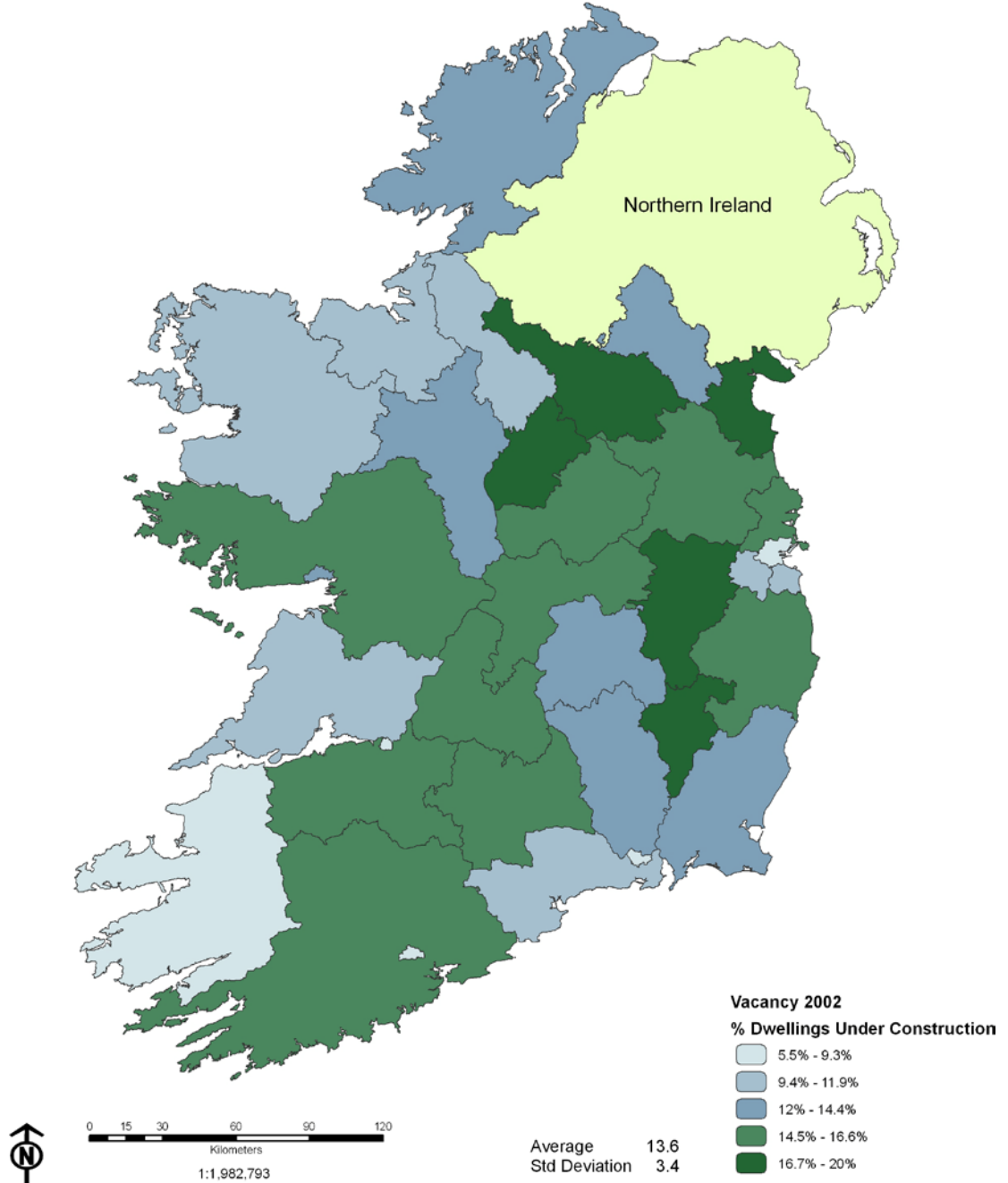
Dwelling Vacancy Habitable but Vacant Dwellings as a Percentage of Total Vacant Dwellings 2002



Dwelling Vacancy Holiday Homes as a Percentage of Total Vacant Dwellings 2002



Dwelling Vacancy Dwellings Under Construction as a Percentage of Total Vacant Dwellings 2002



Dwelling Vacancy Uninhabitable Dwellings as a Percentage of Total Vacant Dwellings 2002

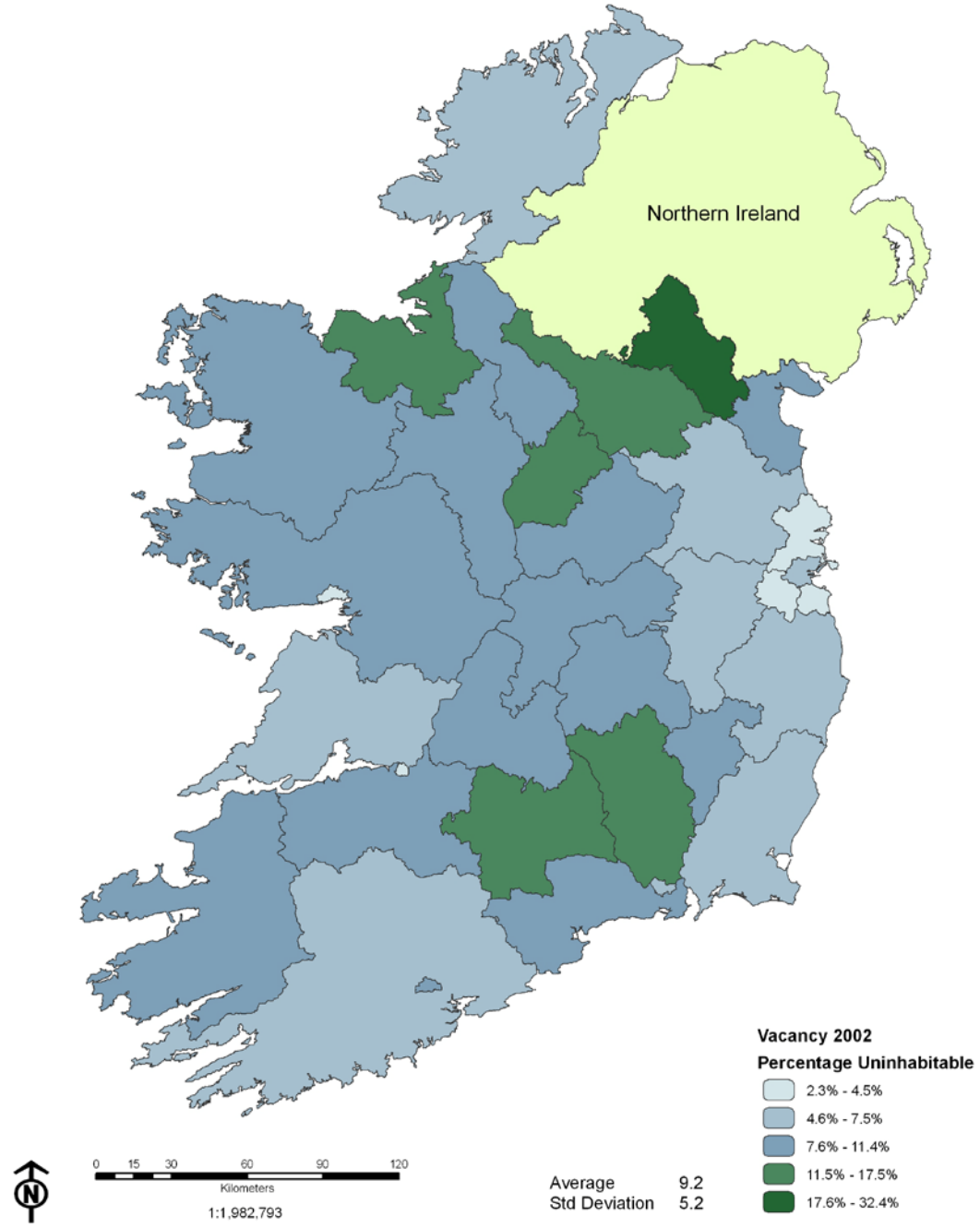


Table 4.13 County Total Vacant Dwellings 2002						
	% Habitable Vacant of all Vacant Dwellings	% Holiday Homes of all Vacant Dwellings	% Uninhabitable Vacant of all Vacant Dwellings	% Under Construction of all Vacant Dwellings	Total Vacant Dwellings	% Total Vacant Dwellings
State Total	48.0	18.2	8.5	12.9	216709	11.7
Carlow	51.8	7.9	10.4	18.6	2154	9.29
Cavan	50.9	11.2	16.0	18.0	4380	13.60
Clare	41.2	30.9	6.8	11.0	9259	18.33
Cork County	44.1	24.4	7.5	14.8	21451	13.67
Donegal	32.6	42.6	6.6	13.3	16007	22.29
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	52.4	1.2	2.3	9.7	5555	7.08
Fingal	51.6	3.3	4.0	16.6	5851	7.09
Galway County	43.7	22.3	10.2	15.3	12133	16.63
Kerry	41.0	33.8	9.6	9.3	13399	20.06
Kildare	54.3	2.5	5.1	18.6	5630	7.85
Kilkenny	47.8	9.9	13.4	14.4	3181	8.23
Laois	63.9	3.0	10.1	12.7	2787	10.39
Leitrim	51.6	22.2	8.5	11.6	3495	23.49
Limerick County	57.7	5.4	10.2	16.6	6398	10.89
Longford	48.0	8.4	17.5	20.0	2745	14.19
Louth	55.2	5.5	7.5	15.2	5030	10.41
Mayo	45.0	27.4	10.9	11.3	12504	19.82
Meath	50.9	9.3	11.0	17.2	4809	7.65
Monaghan	43.3	2.8	32.4	14.4	3255	9.38
Offaly	54.5	7.4	8.3	15.7	2759	9.42
Roscommon	52.5	14.0	11.4	13.3	5106	17.50
Sligo	48.5	18.9	12.6	10.4	4816	15.88
South Dublin	55.3	0.3	3.3	11.8	3828	4.23
Tipperary North	50.3	8.3	12.3	16.3	3688	9.06
Tipperary South	49.9	13.7	8.6	15.7	3647	12.01
Waterford County	38.7	33.4	8.4	11.9	4559	16.34
Westmeath	56.3	6.1	9.1	15.1	4100	11.74
Wexford	35.4	43.7	5.4	14.0	9584	16.88
Wicklow	35.6	23.5	5.9	15.3	4922	9.59

4.3 CONCLUSIONS

Chapter Four has addressed key research considerations raised in Chapter Two by examining the rural settlement pattern at the national level and by setting the context for the investigation of decision-making for the countryside and small area housing processes. The purpose of the chapter *to establish the location, density and number of rural dwellings in Ireland* and by doing so, offset the anecdote and assumption that has overshadowed the popular rural housing debate. Single rural dwellings (SRDs) dominate the rural housing profile, accounting for all dwellings in some Electoral Divisions and 80% on average (see Map 4.1). Current debate on living in the countryside tends to focus on the recent house building boom of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The broad scale impacts of SRDs range from their physical effects on the environment and the natural landscape; social impacts including the provision of services to an increasingly dependent, dispersed population; the rise of personal narratives in light of the perception of high refusal rates and the changing rural economy; media focus on those personal narratives and on the long-term societal and community interactions; and the changing relationship between place of work and home which is resulting in (or requiring) flexible geographies and a disconnection with agriculture.

As a result of the focus on recent house construction over the past ten to fifteen years, presumptions about the cause of high development levels have ignored settlement patterns prior to the 1990s. While there is no doubt that Ireland's increasingly urbanised economy dictates a growing urbanised settlement pattern, it would be short-sighted to exclude additional factors that have influenced the location and density of settlement. For example, historic settlement patterns in Ireland are one of the greatest influences on current patterns, with half of the current rural housing stock built before 1971 and the historical footprint established in the mid- to late-1800s. Ireland's characteristic dispersed rural housing pattern, which has laid the foundation for settlement in 2002, arises from traditional small family farming with an ease of access to land through farm fragmentation and an intricate hierarchy of road networks.

The first key research consideration in the analysis of the national rural settlement pattern was how the distribution of the rural population in 2002 reflects the geography of the construction of new single rural dwellings. It is evident from the analysis in Section

4.1 that there is a clear relationship with both the historical footprint of population established since the mid- to late-nineteenth century and the changes that occurred in the 1990s. In 2002, half of the current SRD stock was located in peri-urban and strong rural areas, with younger dwellings dominating in these areas. Spatially this means that the highest concentrations of SRDs are located in the south and southeast of the country, and locally in belts around towns and cities. The older housing stock is located furthest from urban centres, in outer rural areas. However, despite this pattern, the history of higher SRD densities per square kilometre in peri-urban belts laid the foundation for the rural settlement present today. Throughout the decades, the densities in these areas have remained consistently higher than in others. The rural settlement pattern present in the 2000s is a result of decades of this consistent pattern. High densities in peri-urban areas were finally consolidated in the 1990s with the highest level of house building in the state. The settlement footprint laid out over a number of decades was consolidated from the 1970s onwards due to increases in population (particularly in the 1970s and 1990s), economic boom in the 1990s and continually decreasing household size which resulted in a demand for a greater number of new dwellings than had previously been the case. For rural areas, despite the growing presence of an urbanised population, there is an enduring relationship between countryside and dwelling place in Ireland despite the wider socio-economics changes. This has been bolstered by the widespread perceived rights to live and / or build in the countryside which has been influenced by a legacy of various state interventions.

Clearly, accessibility to urban centres by road networks has continually been a driving force in the location of housing and indicates that population mobility has a very important role in SRD density. This finding addresses a key research issue which identifies increased population mobility as having a part in impacting on and contributing to the contemporary rural settlement pattern. Densities in 2002 reached up to 25 households per square kilometre along the national road network and adjacent to urban centres (Map 4.8a). The spatial analysis of densities in 2002 (Map 4.8b) displayed important trends and presented a correlation between the location of a greater number of SRDs and the national road network and urban centres. A stronger urban fabric, which is more characteristic of the east and south of the country, tends to have a denser rural settlement pattern and more extensive areas of population increase. Improved mobility and the need to access employment and services in

medium to large towns results in that denser SRD pattern and thus has had a highly significant influence on the national rural settlement pattern. Conversely, where a weaker urban fabric exists and the rural population needs to travel further for employment and services, and / or are employed locally in traditional rural economies, SRD density is lower and tends to have a weaker locational relationship with the road network and urban centres.

The spatial analysis of SRD density helped to identify areas that are or have the potential to come under acute pressure for housing, thus addressing a key research question for the thesis. Areas that can be highlighted as coming under rural housing pressure are (i) peri-urban zones located in the hinterland of cities and large towns, particularly where population growth has risen continually in recent decades; (ii) medium to large town regions such as the midlands 'triad' of Athlone, Mullingar and Tullamore, where population growth is steady and location allows commuting and access to a number of regional and county towns; and (iii) coastal edges, particularly along the western seaboard where landscape impacts may be heightened and the presence of a higher proportion of holiday homes has the potential to add pressure.

Despite the growing levels of SRD construction, the average density of five dwellings per square kilometre is low in European terms. Problems may arise with the impacts of such housing due to their location in the open countryside and the reliance on potentially environmentally degrading septic tanks. Also, despite some coastal areas having their highest population growth in the 1990s they have historically had continually higher housing densities relative to surrounding areas. This is a result of the influence of the natural terrain (i.e. coastal areas are generally on the edge of mountainous, uninhabitable areas) and the history of traditional marine employment such as fishing. This population footprint was established in the nineteenth century with a traditional coastal settlement fabric along the western seaboard from Donegal to Kerry. In more recent years, increased population is influenced by a number of factors including the demand to live in scenic areas. Areas that are experiencing acute rural housing pressures pose a number of challenges for planners and policy makers because they tend to be in areas where rapid growth is already taking place and planning for the existing urban centres is a problem. In addition the edge populations which have been a feature of population distribution in Ireland for some time, and are

now experiencing rapid growth, will face challenges due to the often sensitive landscapes and environments that characterise these areas. Also, where new populations are vying with older, established ones there is the additional potential for tensions and conflict to arise and contestation around the policies for development and change.

Vacant dwellings add the final physical layer to the understanding of the Irish rural settlement pattern. Study of vacancy levels in the rural housing stock poses challenges to the planning system but could open up opportunities for future home ownership. For example, uninhabitable dwellings provide potential footprints for replacement dwellings in the Irish countryside. This has not been a popular route for households in Ireland, being more typical of the UK. Habitable dwellings could also provide alternative housing for households. It would seem incongruous to have approximately 8% of total housing stock in the country empty and/or habitable while the level of house building continues to rise. Holiday homes account for the second highest proportion of vacant dwellings. Typically associated with traditional tourist areas, they have the potential to add to local economies. Challenges arise when planning legislation and development control do not have the capacity to deal with holiday homes appropriately (this will be examined in Chapter Six) and when the amount has not even been quantified by planning authorities. Additionally, if a dual demand exists for both primary and holiday homes within one area, pressure on resources, infrastructure and amenities may be too high.

The geography of rural settlement in 2002 is influenced by the historical footprint of older dwellings in peripheral, traditional rural areas. Older dwellings are associated with smaller dwellings (five to six rooms), have a higher representation in peripheral rural areas away from built up areas, and tend to have households that have completed payments on their mortgage. Spatially, this represents concentrations in the most rural areas of the west, northwest and southwest reflecting the dominance of traditional farm related settlements in these areas. In the 1990s, contrasting developments emerged in the east and south, with a disintegration of the traditional rural settlement pattern. Despite falling household size, larger dwellings are being built with seven or more rooms (this will be examined in Chapter Six). The pattern of younger households in urban hinterlands illustrates the emerging patterns of rural-urban linkages. While most of the recent increases have occurred within the peri-urban zones of the main centres

there has also been a notable increase in some coastal areas where a new service based economy has begun to flourish. These areas correspond with the diversified rural area type identified in the McHugh (2001) rural typology and represent a new form of more distant rural-urban relations.

CHAPTER 5: PLANNING FOR RURAL SETTLEMENT

5.0 INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that the rural housing debate in Ireland is simply the next episode within the long running battleground that is the Irish countryside. As an arena of change and contestation over a number of centuries various types of 'interventions' took place such as the Plantations, the Land Acts, and the transfer of land ownership by British and Irish governments to more recent developments that include the implementation of agricultural production quotas and farm subsidisation through the European Union Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Clearly, upheaval and change have always been at the heart of living and working in the countryside, and contestation continues to be an integral element of that. The rural housing debate differs in many respects, however, from contestation and conflicts in the past in Ireland. The notion that the rural has been entangled with a national identity, and that in the Irish case, this was interpreted as a right for all citizens to live, build and work in the countryside, has greatly influenced the contemporary housing debate. But it also reflects the changing socio-economy of the countryside where new rural dwellers represent greater diversity than had previously been the case. This has been manifested in the way that the debate has moved beyond traditional arguments about the countryside, relating to the future of agriculture, to discourses on, for instance, quality of life, the environment, and sustainable development. Concurrently, representatives of the rural have changed to reflect these arguments and are no longer the domain of traditional agencies such as farming lobbies and countryside preservation groups.

Planning in rural areas has transformed from a function of local government alone to a challenge that is of interest and importance to a wider spectrum of people and groups. This has led to contestation of the countryside that has not been experienced in the past and which is far more representative of society as a whole rather than being a concern with one sector of the economy – agriculture. Woods (2005b) argues that traditionally the countryside has been considered an apolitical space, an idea that gained currency in the inter-war period in Britain because it reinforced an idyllisation of the rural that pitched the urban as a realm for conflict and discontent. This sweeping

assumption about the countryside, which was also held by political representatives and many others in Ireland, has often worked to hide a restless landscape of change. Rural planning policy, in the way it is formulated and implemented, has an important role in addressing both the continually diversifying expectations and needs of the changing rural population and the requirements of sustainable development into the future. However, as highlighted in Chapter Two, the rapidity and impact of social recompositioning in the countryside, and the positivistic nature of spatial planning is creating challenges for a planning system that has difficulty in accounting for multiple representations of the rural and one that may be unprepared for the complexity of demands it must address.

At the core of this thesis is the principle that rural settlement patterns have not evolved in a vacuum and are influenced by a number of considerations, one of which includes the planning system. Hence, the objective to be addressed here is:

To examine the role of planning policy and decision-making in the evolution of the Irish rural settlement pattern.

This chapter is placed as a bridge between the preceding analysis of national rural settlement patterns (Chapter Four) and the following investigation of the local, small area processes and dynamics of living in the countryside (Chapter Six). As such, the discussion and analysis in this chapter occur in a hierarchical manner which begins by providing the international context for rural planning in Ireland and ends at the local policy implementation level. In addition, the three themes that have characterised state intervention in rural Ireland (discussed in Chapter Two), i.e. the reinforcement of cultural identities and perceived rights to development in the countryside; the impact and legacy of traditional state intervention in agriculture and subsidisation; and transformations in the nature of spatial planning in the countryside, are addressed throughout.

The role of local government policy is very important in the analysis of settlement patterns, as they works together to influence the national rural pattern, or acts individually at the local level in the form of separate decision-making bodies. Local government as the sole paternalistic provider for the countryside has changed, as has the idea of what is best for a locality, resulting in increased challenges for policy-

makers. This chapter will examine the key stakeholder involvement in and politicisation of the rural housing debate in Ireland in order to critically assess the contemporary role of Local Authorities as enablers of development. The planning system and its policies for rural housing are examined in order to address the research issues outlined above, and to consider how the Irish planning regime may have perpetuated a legacy of contestation at the local government level; and contributed to the perception of the entitlement to live and build in the countryside and to ensure the enduring relationship between rural areas and housing.

5.1 INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT FOR RURAL PLANNING IN IRELAND

With increasing global and European efforts to provide guidance for sustainable development, there are growing demands on regional and local planning agencies to adhere to international standards. Within this context this section outlines the international context for rural policy and spatial planning in Ireland by providing an overview of sustainable development guidelines and an explanation of the state's position within European territorial planning. In addition, the implications of international European guidelines for sustainable development and territorial planning in Ireland are considered. Also the wider background for the contestation that has arisen in planning for rural areas in Ireland and how it is being interpreted at national and local levels will be presented.

5.1.1 Rural Policy

Similar to much of the Western world, rural policy in Ireland was largely concerned with agriculture until recent decades. The emphasis of rural policy on farming and traditional countryside economies in the past has resulted in the stunted development of frameworks for rural areas. By the 1970s in Ireland, when agriculture began its definite decline and with membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) on the horizon, rural policy widened its parameters to include rural development and the future of communities living outside areas of growing urbanisation. However, it was not until 1999 that a specific document for the future of the countryside was adopted by government in the form of the White Paper for Rural Development: *Ensuring the Future - A Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland* (Department of Agriculture and Food, 1999). This paper called for rural proofing of all government policies and frameworks so that the countryside would be treated as another element of the national economy and

society and not as a separate entity reliant on agriculture alone. Often, the lack of distinctive rural policies has resulted in the adoption of agriculture-oriented guidelines for change in the countryside (Lapping, 2006; Bonnen, 1992). In addition, it has also resulted in elusive frameworks for the future of rural areas and highlights a political approach to the countryside that is heavily influenced by vested interests and lobbyists, and a limited understanding of the needs of the rural population (Woods, 2005a).

Since the 1970s, and particularly since Ireland joined the EU in 1973, the rural agenda has widened and a number of agencies such as Teagasc (the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority) and the National Economic and Social Council (NESCC) have made significant contributions to national policy for the countryside. In addition, the government has initiated a number of programmes and schemes in rural areas in order to assist in future social and economic sustainability. The importance of the countryside to national government was reiterated in 2002 with the separation, at Ministerial level, of rural affairs from agriculture, when the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs was established.

The challenge for rural policy and spatial planning in Ireland is that no policy document exists that comprehensively addresses planning in the countryside. Sectoral policies including those for housing (which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter), water quality, and provision of services, have been published with responsibility for the countryside and its associated needs resting with a number of government departments including the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Contemporary rural planning policy is now largely directed from the European level and based on objectives for long-term sustainability. The problem that lies at the centre of all policy is the uncertain future of the countryside in light of ongoing urbanisation, increased reliance on knowledge-based economies, and the continual need for high quality and efficient food production. The Irish case adds an additional, challenging layer of need and expectation, i.e. the tradition of a relatively large rural population and an ongoing desire to live in the countryside in a wealthy, rapidly urbanising society. The following sections outline the policy context for spatial planning in Europe and its implications for Ireland in light of these concerns.

5.1.2 European Territorial Planning and Sustainable Development Policy

The World Commission on Environment and Development (or the Brundtland Commission) provided the first international framework for sustainable development policy with the publication of *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The Brundtland Commission set the objective to make all development policy achieve sustainable goals and has since evolved with subsequent earth summits in 1992 (Rio de Janeiro) and 2002 (Johannesburg). The aim of the World Commission on Environment and Development was to propose a long-term environmental strategy that went beyond “... the narrow notion of physical sustainability” (1987: ix) identifying wider concerns that include social, economic and cultural elements. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which took place in Rio de Janeiro, was organised mainly in order to respond to the challenges set by the Brundtland Commission Report and established Agenda 21 as a means of developing national sustainable development strategies to meet its objectives.

In the European territorial context, the process leading to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) emerged following the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro with the publication of the document *Towards Sustainability: A European Community programme of policy and action* (CEC, 1999). The 1999 ESDP Potsdam Report is in line with the wider principles of sustainability, and is consistent with the ESDP's role as the first integrated view of the whole European territory, addressing a broad range of policies in a proactive manner. The ESDP has strong relationships with a number of other European and international initiatives, which include Local Agenda 21; Environmental Action Programmes (currently the 6th EAP); and the Directive of the European Commission on Habitat protection.

The ESDP is the overriding document providing guidance for strategic spatial planning in member states of the European Union. Approaching Europe as a diverse territory with regional disparities and differences the three objectives of the ESDP are: the development of a balanced and polycentric urban system and a new urban-rural relationship; securing parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge; and sustainable development, prudent management and protection of nature and cultural heritage (CEC, 1999: 11). The objective of a polycentric settlement pattern, where there is an

attempt to counteract regional imbalance throughout the continent, is a central tenet of European territorial planning. The adoption of polycentricity in planning marks a move beyond traditional conceptual notions of linkages between 'core' and 'periphery'. A focus on the regions rather than on traditional member states, the idea that wealth and economic activity can be less imbalanced, and recognition that the role of the city within its hinterland and surrounding rural areas, all lie at the centre of the polycentric development paradigm.

Within the concept of polycentric development, rural areas are regarded as highly complex, non-homogeneous places without one single identity. *The Future of Rural Society* (CEC, 1988) and *Europe 2000+* (CEC, 1994) outlined the role of the countryside within the European territory prior to the publication of the ESDP, presenting the rural as having an important function within the urban realm as a buffer between centres, an area for recreation and tourism, and as supporting new populations. Economy, culture, location and population density (and the differences within them) all contribute to the experience of people living in these areas and to patterns of settlement and development. The ESDP recognises the new challenges that face rural areas such as, on one hand, the changing viability of traditional agricultural practices sometimes located in peripheral areas with poor infrastructure and accessibility, and in contrast, places that are experiencing growing pressure from their location close to urban centres. The "... treatment of the city and countryside as a functional, spatial entity with diverse relationships and interdependencies" and the recognition that in "... a polycentric urban system the small and medium-sized towns and their inter-dependencies form important hubs and links, especially in rural areas" (CEC, 1999: 24) are of particular importance for the development of settlement patterns in rural areas of all types.

The distinctive relationship between urban centres and settlement in the open countryside identified in Chapter Four and which will also be discussed at the small area level in Chapter Six reflects this idea that either entity, i.e. rural or urban, cannot be examined in isolation. The anchor role of small to large urban centres is of increasing importance in rural areas where the reach of the town goes beyond its physical boundaries. The policy options for rural areas in light of these new urban-rural linkages outlined by the ESDP include the promotion of diversified development

strategies sensitive to indigenous potentials; the strengthening of small and medium-sized towns as focal points for regional development; maintenance of a basic supply of services and public transport in urban centres within the countryside; and the endorsement of co-operation between towns and countryside aiming at supporting functional regions (CEC, 1999: 24-26).

Modern planning, with its origins based on the need to contain sprawl and to preserve and protect the countryside, has changed from implementing policies that were influenced by anti-urban principles to a re-orientation towards the urban in the later half of the twentieth century (see discussion in Section 2.1.5). This frames the countryside as a space that lies between urban centres and that exists for use of urban dwellers, but that is also characterised by highly complex processes. New policies for rural areas are sometimes at odds with the early origins of planning that espoused the notion that towns and cities should not infringe on the countryside and should maintain the role of provider of services for rural residents. However, modern planning emerged at a very different time for rural areas which were then heavily reliant on agriculture, where low levels of mobility and limited accessibility meant that proximity to the location of food production was vital to the existence of towns, and pressure on the environment and natural resources was not as significant as it is today. European territorial strategies attempt to address the complexity of these demands and while there is a recognition of the role of rural areas, particularly in their function within city regions and as urban hinterlands, spatial policies increasingly place the countryside as buffer zones and spaces that function for the use of urban residents, that in the continent as a whole average at approximately 80 to 90 percent to the total population. The experience in Ireland creates an additional challenge for European spatial strategies not only in its location in the periphery of North-western Europe but also due to its consistently large and dispersed rural population.

5.1.3 Implications for National Rural Planning Policy

The need to adopt national spatial strategies that address the requirements of sustainable development has influenced planning policies in Ireland in recent years. Since the 1980s when international frameworks for sustainability gained prominence, the direction and agenda of national policies have changed. In the Irish case, the document *Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland* (Government of Ireland,

1997) was the first in a series of joined-up, cross-sectoral strategies that sought to achieve the principle of sustainable development. These policies have had to address significant rural change such as the transition from productive agriculture to post-productivism, the legacy of the pro-development agenda in the countryside, and a growing urbanised economy. In addition, national policy is placed at a difficult position in that it must interpret and implement European guidelines while also considering local needs. It is at the state level that tensions between need (for example, the common good, long-term sustainability) and demand (perceived rights, expectations, historical legacies) are played out.

Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland outlined goals for the future of national development by adopting objectives for the environment, spatial planning and land use, the built environment, and public action and awareness. The Strategy promotes planning as a means of facilitating a multifaceted approach to sustainability that in the context of the common good aims to meet all needs, recognising that land use planning can balance competing needs. Interpreting the role of planning in its rural context means that it has a responsibility to mitigate against the adverse effects of development in the countryside while not rejecting the notion of development in the countryside completely. It promotes the idea that in sustainable development, planning should perform a mediation-type function whereby competing needs are balanced, adverse impacts are prevented and mitigated against, and the needs of society are met, be they basic human needs, economic and social, or recreational and cultural. One of the main planning tools in the achievement of sustainable development is the Development Plan where a more strategic view of settlement patterns, development needs and major infrastructural services is required and a greater recognition given to the quality and character of the countryside, and the maintenance of social fabric (Government of Ireland, 1997).

Since the 1997 sustainable development strategy publication, Ireland has undergone major socio-economic change and many land use and strategic planning policy documents have been adopted in the meantime. In 2002, the Government published *Making Ireland's Development Sustainable* (Department of Environment and Local Government, 2002a) as a response to the transformations that had occurred since 1997 and as a contribution to the Johannesburg summit discussion. In this document there

was an identification that although the economic growth experienced in the late 1990s made extra resources available that could address social and cultural issues, there had also been a number of challenges such as increased demand for housing and growing rural and urban disadvantage.

The transition in Ireland from a physical, land use focused planning regime based on the traditional British town and country system to one with more long-term, strategic spatial objectives (examined in Chapter Two) has been greatly influenced by European territorial and sustainable development policy. The adoption of broader concepts into Irish planning such as sustainable development and polycentricity has resulted in a directional change in policy that incorporates wider European objectives and approaches the island as part of an extensive urban system. This was clearly marked by the adoption of the National Spatial Strategy (NSS; DoELG, 2002b) in 2002 which adhered to the policy options and principles set out in the ESDP and the national sustainable development strategy. Although structures for regional planning have existed in Ireland for some time, the new National Spatial Strategy has attempted to bring all national, regional and local elements of spatial planning together in a more efficient and strategic way. The NSS acts as the spatial framework for the state and as such is positioned at the top of the planning policy hierarchy. Since the publication of the NSS a number of 'sub-spatial' documents have been adopted, most notably the Regional Planning Guidelines, which provide the next layer in the hierarchy for the implementation of the national spatial framework. In addition, sectoral guidelines are also published for issue-specific implementation, the most relevant of which for this study is *Sustainable Rural Housing: Guideline for Planning Authorities* (DoEHLG, 2005).

The NSS follows key principles of the ESDP whereby hubs and gateways have been identified throughout the island in order to drive development in the regions and critical mass of population, infrastructure provision and accessibility drive all policies. In addition, recognition that rural areas are diverse and non-homogenous and therefore require area-specific policy forms the basis of planning for the countryside. Also, the island is considered as a spatial entity as a whole rather than being treated as an isolated jurisdiction and has been formulated in order to 'join-up' with development corridors and spatial objectives for Northern Ireland. The everyday implementation of

the NSS framework is carried out by Local Authorities which must adhere to national guidelines and policies. Prior to the publication of the NSS the government had encouraged Local Authorities to take a more strategic view of settlement patterns, development needs and major infrastructural services, combining the statutory review of the development plan with the national strategic frameworks (Government of Ireland, 1997). The adoption of the NSS established the objective for a national framework that will provide spatial and sectoral policies to guide and support Local Authorities.

5.1.4 Summary Remarks

Of the multitude of dynamics that are at work in the countryside which influence national rural settlement patterns, policy has played a very significant role. The pressure to address issues such as declining agricultural viability and transitions in production together with the increasing importance of environmental, social and economic sustainability, has provided new challenges for planning in rural areas. National policy implementation must also deal with the challenge of interpreting European and other international guidelines in order to address regional and local needs. The local perspective, be it at the national level when positioned within the context of the EU or at the small area / county / regional level when positioned nationally, is the location of restless landscapes where transformation, change and tension are manifested. These are multiple landscapes that are becoming increasingly locked in contestation where the role of an area is no longer clearly defined. Rural housing is an example of one of these landscapes, where restlessness is played out in the form of conflict about who should live in the countryside, where new dwellings should be constructed and the future of rural areas in general. How this contestation is both addressed and played-out institutionally greatly impacts on attitudes to development in the countryside and on the long-term pattern of rural settlement. The Irish planning system is placed in the position of having to address these demands, not only for rural housing but for the multiple representations of the countryside that now exist and that will become increasingly diverse and complex into the future.

5.2 RURAL PLANNING – REGIME AND IMPLEMENTATION

The politicisation of rural discourses and an embedding of new governance structures within local government have both resulted in a transformation in the rural planning agenda throughout Europe. The influence of the rural and agricultural lobby over a

number of decades and the pro-development agenda of planning in the countryside, which in Ireland was interpreted as a laissez-faire approach to all development outside urban areas, is now being challenged because of the rise of multiple representations of the rural. Local government has implemented development control and management below the national level in Ireland since 1963 and over the last ten to fifteen years has experienced fundamental changes in how the formulation and adoption of spatial policies occurs. Rural exceptionalism was identified by Newby (1987) as being associated with farming and resulted in the reinforcement of the pre-eminence of agriculture in the countryside and the power of the rural lobby and elites. In the UK this has been associated with resultant high levels of exempted development for agriculture and is similar to regulations in Ireland. However, in the Irish case, as was discussed in Chapter Two, this exceptionalism has also resulted in a presumption for all development types in the countryside, particularly residential development. Changing international, European and national standards for sustainable development and the emergent multiple representations of the rural create a new challenge for local government and rural planning particularly where the legacy of laissez-faire attitudes prevails.

The purpose of this section is to examine the decision-making system and policy hierarchy within which rural settlement patterns operate and evolve. The section acts as an introduction to the following comprehensive analysis of rural housing policy in the twenty-nine predominantly rural County Development Plans in Ireland. An explanation of the hierarchy within which planning operates will be followed by an examination of the role of Local Authorities in the implementation of policy. This is presented in light of recent structural changes in governance and the repositioning of local government in the future of rural localities. Contestation is at the core of this repositioning and this section includes an exploration of the nature of planning and regulation in Northern Ireland and the current challenges that are being experienced there. This provides a useful comparison with the Republic of Ireland in light of a shared history and common governmental structure but diverging regulatory systems.

5.2.1 The Irish Planning System

Formal decision-making in regard to the location of housing has been implemented through the Irish planning system since 1964 when development control and plan-

making became a statutory process following the enactment of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act 1963. Following the adoption of the Town and Regional Planning Act, 1934, and throughout the 1940s and 1950s, insufficient skills and resources were available to carry out what may have been a very effective legislation for spatial development in the early state. Although other legislation had been enacted before 1963, the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act was a watershed because it introduced, for the first time, obligatory responsibility on Local Authorities to carry out development control and to adopt development plans. Since statutory intervention has become an everyday element in decision-making around the location of housing and the construction of new dwellings, settlement patterns have operated within a distinctive hierarchy of process, policy and decision-making. The underpinning principle of sustainable development in planning was included in Irish legislation with the adoption of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. Bartley (2007: 31) identifies three main functions in the contemporary Irish planning system, namely:

- making development plans;
- deciding on planning permissions through the assessment of planning applications, including appeals against planning decisions; and
- planning enforcement.

Table 5.1 outlines the basic structure of both the administrative and policy hierarchy in Irish planning. At the top of the structure, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) and An Bord Pleanála are the bodies with the main central responsibility for planning, with the DoEHLG overseeing all legislation and policy formulation (Bartley, 2007). The Planning and Development Act 2000 established the statutory requirement for regional planning guidelines (filling the gap left after the 1987 disbandment of the Regional Development Authorities) which local planning authorities are not legally obliged to adhere to but are advised to give regard to. There are eight Regional Planning Authorities whose responsibilities include the adoption of Regional Planning Guidelines, the monitoring of the use of EU structural funds and the coordination of Local Authority activities. At the local level, Local Authorities are recognised as Planning Authorities and these include all County Councils, City Councils, Borough Councils and Town Councils (DoEHLG, 2007a).

Table 5.1 Planning and Rural Settlement Policy Hierarchy		
Administrative Hierarchy		Policy Hierarchy
Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and An Bord Pleanála	National Level	National Spatial Strategy and National Development Plan ↓
		Sustainable Rural Housing: Guidelines for Planning Authorities
↓		↓
Regional Assemblies ↓ Regional Planning Authorities	Regional Level	Regional Planning Guidelines
↓		↓
Local Authorities (city councils, borough councils and town councils)	Local Level	County Development Plans (local plans, town plans, etc)

5.2.2 The Role of Local Authorities

Local Authorities are democratically elected bodies with planning decisions being arguably their most important role. The current system of local government in Ireland has been in place since 1898 but unlike other European countries, public administration is highly centralised at the national level. Local Authorities have responsibility for the day-to-day running of their functional areas such as the maintenance of county and local roads, refuse collection (although this is becoming increasingly privatised), and spatial planning. Due to the highly centralised government system in Ireland, there are a number of national semi-state bodies that are in charge of sectors that have local impacts: for example, the National Roads Authority (NRA) oversees major decision-making for national road network. The elected members of the Local Authority have

'reserved functions' which, as the main policy makers, vote and decide on matters such as finance, the adoption of the development plan, and bye-laws. 'Executive functions' are carried out by the full-time chief executive (the County Manager) and the administrative and technical staff of the Local Authority (DoEHLG, 2007a).

Development Plans are a critical element in a Local Authority's day-to-day activities with overall development and settlement policies being of key strategic importance in spatial planning. They are the main instruments for the regulation and control of development in the Local Authority functional area. Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, each planning authority is required to make a new plan every six years, reviewing it no more than four years after its adoption (DoEHLG, 2007b). Each plan will outline guidelines and policy for various forms of development such as industrial development, settlement policy and transportation. The plan making stage, which lasts for up to two years, is viewed as a democratic and consultative process whereby members of the public can comment on and view drafts of the plan and final responsibility for adoption lies with the elected members. A critical assessment of rural housing policy in the 29 predominantly rural Local Authorities is discussed in Section 5.3.3.

The role of local authorities as a paternalistic provider and manager of the countryside has been until recently distinctive and unchallenged. With changing governance structures and the increasingly contested nature of the countryside there has been a splintering of political processes (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998) which has not left local government in Ireland untouched. In 1996, the system of local government in Ireland was changed significantly with the introduction of *Better Local Government* (Department of Environment, 1996). This document transformed the structure of Local Authorities by, among other things, creating a less dualistic system which separated administrative and technical staff and acknowledges the expertise that exists beyond the traditional realm of the engineer. It broadened the remit of what had been distinctive sectoral departments by establishing umbrella groups that could work together more cohesively and effectively to address local needs by ensuring joined-up thinking where, for example, planning departments could now be a part of a wider socio-economic service unit. And it introduced the idea that local representatives other than elected politicians, such as local community representatives, business people and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), could contribute to the decision-making process by setting up

Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) which became the overseeing bodies for service units under a Director of Services.

The restructuring of local government in Ireland in the 1990s reflects the fact that the role of Local Authorities has been repositioned, and that the technical and professional expertise once regarded as having authority over all decision-making for an area has now broadened its parameters to recognise that other bodies such as NGOs and community groups have as much say in the future development of their area as the local Council. As a result Local Authorities have been instead placed as an advocate for local interests, vying with other groups and organisations for what is considered necessary for the functional area, reflecting Woods' (1998) suggestion that local government is now more akin to a pressure group in contemporary governance. The introduction of non-elected community representatives means that the Local Authority is now more accountable and transparent in its decision-making, attempting to counter the vested interests that may have influenced policy in the past.

Over the past ten to fifteen years a growing perception of powerlessness for locally elected representatives has been documented with councillors throwing negative light on pressure groups that are becoming more involved in the planning process, citing it as undemocratic (McDonald and Nix, 2005). The formalised role of non-elected representatives in Strategic Policy Committees has introduced new discourses of rurality into the everyday decision-making and the long-term development plan-making of a planning authority and may be resulting in an undermining of the traditional power structure. However, it is an example of how local government and specifically spatial planning is attempting to address the needs of multiple representations of the rural and the changing socio-economic characteristics now associated with the countryside. In the past the traditional power structure was framed with a distinct "localist spatiality" (Woods 2005b: 10) where a pastoral myth that the countryside was an agricultural space prevailed (Short, 1991, cited in Woods, 2005b) and the political order was dependent on that particular discourse of rurality being upheld. With the recent social recompositioning of the countryside, planning for a local authority area needs to look beyond the idea of the rural as homogeneous, dealing with applications for development in an ad hoc manner which has been in the case in Ireland for a number of years and begin to plan more strategically recognising the varied needs of its locality.

5.2.3 A Comparative Study in Rural Planning – Northern Ireland

The origins of the Irish planning regime were outlined in Chapter Two and it is the purpose of this section to examine the practical implications of a system that is deeply embedded in British planning ideology. A shared history of landownership and rural perspectives operating within a different regulatory system places Northern Ireland as an ideal comparative study and assists in understanding contestation and perspectives on housing in the countryside. In Northern Ireland the media have also played a role in contestation with some reports identifying “rural building (as) a building acne” (BBC News, 27/04/2006). Contestation is apparent in the consultation process embraced by the Northern Irish regulatory system and in the presentation of associated emotive and personal stories (Murray, 2005). Trends in rural housing in the north of the island have become a concern in the wider UK planning system due to the level at which construction has taken place, with more single dwellings in the open countryside than in England, Scotland and Wales combined (Nutall, 2004).

The late nineteenth century land acts in the island of Ireland instigated a transfer of property tenure from estates to tenant farmers which established the contemporary agricultural characteristic of a large number of small family farms that characterise agriculture and land ownership, and widespread owner occupancy in Ireland. The political partition between the south and north of the island came in 1921 with the independence of the new state of the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and the retention of the six Ulster counties in the UK as Northern Ireland. Until the early 1970s, although under two different legislative jurisdictions, the planning systems bore much resemblance due to similarities in political administrative structures and the adoption in RoI of the planning model from the UK of which Northern Ireland is a part. The removal of local democracy and normal democratic procedures in Northern Ireland in 1972 marked the first major administrative departure in from the Republic of Ireland practice. With the deterioration of public order and the escalation of civil protest over issues of misuse of public power in the late 1960s and early 1970s, planning became a central government responsibility, with district Councils having only a consultative role in 1972. Until this time Northern Ireland had adopted some traditional British town and country tools such as greenbelts, referred to as a ‘stopline’ in the 1963 Matthew Plan for Belfast (Murray, 2005). Within this policy there was a restriction of dispersed and ribbon development

settlement but otherwise the rural dimension received little attention (Caldwell and Greer, cited in Murray, 2005).

The responsibility of planning and the potential political bias, due to human rights violations and the Troubles (Hughes et al, 1998), was removed from local authorities with the establishment of The Town and Country Planning Service in 1973, and marked a major landmark in rural planning in Northern Ireland (Berry et al, 2001). Restrictive policies were adopted following centralisation and were implemented through the *Regional Physical Development Strategy* (RPDS) (DoENI, 1977) which was the key strategic planning policy for NI from 1975 to 1995. Residential development was highly restricted in order to prevent the landscape from being damaged and to avoid the high costs of providing infrastructure such as electricity, mains water, etc to isolated houses. Planning permission was only to be granted to those who showed genuine need – full and part time farmers, farm workers, retired farmers, members of farmers' families, managers of rural businesses etc – employment, family or health reasons.

The opposition to this restrictive policy, particularly from district councillors, resulted in the appointment of a committee in 1977 under the chairmanship of Dr. WH Cockcroft to conduct a review of rural planning policy (Milton, 1993). The Cockcroft Report (1978) recommended that restrictions on rural housing should be relaxed both within and outside Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). As a result it was no longer necessary, in most areas, for applicants to demonstrate a need to live in the countryside in order to obtain planning permission for a dwelling which meant that approval was no longer tied to the applicant and would allow for speculative building of single rural dwellings. At present this policy is under review and the *Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 14: Sustainable Development in the Countryside* (DRDNI, 2006) has proposed to reintroduce policies similar to those of the 1960s which identified key settlements and open countryside restriction and a presumption against development.

Both political jurisdictions in the island of Ireland are characterised by a dispersed rural settlement pattern (for Northern Ireland see Nutall, 2004), small landholdings, a traditional agricultural economy undergoing change and growing contestation and debate on living in the countryside (Murray, 2005). While the regulatory systems in each

jurisdiction have differed from each other over time similar outcomes are apparent, particularly with the publication of rural housing guidelines around the same time. Cullingworth and Nadin (1997) identify the role of history as having an impact on planning implementation and outcomes. In the case of Ireland, north and south, the shared history of land tenure and small family farming has given rise to a dispersed settlement pattern despite operating in increasingly diverging regulatory systems.

In comparison to the Republic of Ireland which adopted its first rural housing policy in 2005, Northern Ireland has a legacy of intervention and consultation. The presence of a strong agricultural lobby particularly in the form of the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) in the Republic has meant that since the foundations of the state, there has been a vocal rural representation at all levels of politics. This rural voice found a legitimate role in the planning system in the appointment of local councillors as the final decision-makers in all planning decisions in the 1963 Act. In rural areas, there has been a long history of farmers taking an active role in local decision-making through the involvement of interest groups and by running for election. The politicisation of the planning system has been reflected in national and local policies, not least for rural housing, one of the most contentious spatial issues in Ireland. The late publication of a rural housing policy in the Republic of Ireland, over forty years after the adoption of a statutory system, is an example of the weak approach to rural planning that has been identified by Gallent et al (2003a). This results from the late development of an urban-industrial society, but also from a strong rural lobby and high levels of rural locally elected representatives. Indeed, when a rural housing policy was finally adopted, its weak policy and apparent lack of evidence based guidelines, reflected that strong rural political voice.

The experience in Northern Ireland is somewhat different, not least in the number of policy interventions that have been implemented in rural areas over a number of decades since the 1960s. The centralisation of the Northern Ireland planning system, however, has meant that while there has been less politicisation of some planning issues, the strong emphasis on consultation, and in more recent years, processes of collaborative planning, has meant that there is a strong record of disagreements and conflict around rural housing. The restrictive policy that was introduced by the Regional Physical Development Strategy in 1975 became a serious source for debate in rural planning in Northern Ireland. It also gave voice to local elected representatives who

may have felt sidelined by the centralisation of the Planning Service in 1971. The series of consultations that took place with the appointment of the Cockcroft Commission in 1977 provided a platform for the rural housing issue and marked out Northern Ireland as having different attitudes to the countryside than its jurisdictional counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales. It became apparent that the high levels of individual farm ownership and the tradition of a dispersed settlement, similar to the Republic's, influenced the demands of rural dwellers. Hence, although the regulatory system differs between the two jurisdictions of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, the rural lobby's widespread negative reaction to restrictive countryside policies is common to both. In addition, local elected representatives have had a continually important and influential role in policy outcomes. This role is clearer in the Republic of Ireland where it has been established since 1963 and has been more or less legislatively unchanged. For example, there are a number of powers that councillors have in the South that can influence planning decisions, such as Section 140 of the Local Government Act 2001¹¹ which allows a decision to be overturned on a specific planning application, and Section 34 of Planning and Development Act 2000 allowing for material contravention of the Development Plan. The use of both of these instruments is in decline but peaked around the years 2000 to 2003 (and will be discussed later). In Northern Ireland, in the context of rural planning policy, the role of councillors has been more akin to Woods' (1998) suggestion that they are yet another pressure group in the countryside. This arose from the centralisation of the planning system and is best exemplified by the role elected representatives played in the Cockcroft investigation

However, Murray (2005) suggests that there is a 'consultation burnout' in Northern Ireland which, rather than creating proactive policy has stalled the process, burying it in bureaucracy. Contestation has been heightened by political processes in Northern Ireland which until mid-2007 was governed from Westminster. Lord Rooker, the NI Minister for Agriculture rushed through PPS 14 in order to call a halt to the 'pepperpotting' and 'wasting' of the landscape (McDonald, 2006), adding to the contested nature of debate and a feeling of disengagement. McDonald (2006) cites, rather provocatively, 'a partition in attitudes to rural 'bungalow blitz'' (see Figure 5.1) with the adoption of two very different rural planning policies, with Northern Ireland

¹¹ Formerly Section 4 of the City and County Management (Amendment) Act, 1955

returning to the pre-Cockcroft restrictive years and the Republic adopting increasingly flexible and ambiguous intervention.



Figure 5.1 Irish Times Headline, March 25th, 2006

5.2.4 Summary Remarks

In the previous section the idea that rural policy is undergoing a process of change in order to attempt to adapt and respond to transforming functions of the countryside and multiple representations of the rural was discussed. The following section deals more with how that process of change is impacting on traditional power structures. That local government is an advocate for its locality rather than the sole authority and expert has now added another challenge for decision- and plan-making in the countryside. New discourses of rurality have been introduced to the Local Authorities that have in some cases resulted in a sense of powerlessness being experienced by the 'old elites' – influential farm lobbies and longstanding elected representatives.

5.3 RURAL HOUSING POLICY AND PLANNING

Rural housing, while a genuine issue in Ireland for a long time has, unlike Northern Ireland, not generated as much direct policy intervention since the adoption of the formal planning system in 1963. The contested nature of rural housing and its highly politicised nature have acted as impediments to the adoption of a strategy. The Local Authority based planning system which has the ability to tackle area-specific issues at a very small area level, allowing for territorial differences, is the ideal exponent of an effective rural settlement policy given the understanding of local processes. This section examines current rural housing policy in Ireland, outlining its origins and scope. An investigation of rural housing policy in County Development Plans is carried out under a number of key themes: rural settlement policy, design guidelines, presumption for

development, conditions applied with grants of planning permission and identified issues. The theme of contestation is applied throughout identifying key actors in the debate and emerging issues of concern.

5.3.1 National Rural Housing Policy

Until April 2005 there was no national strategy or guidance for rural housing in Ireland despite an atypically high rural population for a country in Western Europe and a challenging dispersed settlement pattern. Prior to the adoption of *Sustainable Rural Housing: Guidelines for Local Authorities* (DoEHLG, 2005), policy for rural settlement and housing was found in overarching frameworks such as various National Development Plans, central guidelines and in the national sustainable development strategy. In addition in 1984, the *Advice and Guidelines for Planning Authorities*, which was commonly known as the 'Yellow Book', outlined policies to restrict ribbon development and dispersed settlement development. While they were not guidelines specifically for rural housing, the Yellow Book addressed all development pressures in Ireland and, in keeping with general planning policy approaches at the time, there was an overarching encouragement and presumption for development of any type, in any location.

In 1997 the document *Sustainable Development: A Strategy for Ireland* (Government of Ireland, 1997) provided the most specific guidelines for the direction of rural settlement prior to the 2005 national guidelines, with the additional *Sustainable Development and Local Authorities: Guidelines on Local Agenda 21* (Department of Environment, 1995), providing the local framework for the implementation of sustainable development objectives. The national sustainable development strategy recognised that the pattern of land use and the shape of the landscape come under the influence of a large number of forces which include the continuing expansion of urban settlements and what it terms one-off rural housing (referred to as single rural dwellings in this thesis). In the strategy there is a presumption against the "unhealthy and unsustainable growth of human settlements (where) it is necessary to promote land use patterns that minimise transport demands, save energy and protect open and green spaces" (Government of Ireland, 1997: 151). Urban generated housing in rural areas was identified as being unsustainable because it is separated from all other activities which the householder normally carries out, such as work, shopping, school attendance and entertainment,

resulting in high levels of energy usage through, for example, reliance on private transportation. In addition other concerns for the countryside include a growing awareness for groundwater protection because all single rural houses served by individual septic tanks; the increasing costs of road and transport usage; and the negative impact of dispersed settlement in terms of the weakening of the urban fabric of towns by diffusing development into rural hinterlands. In some cases genuine needs necessitate the construction of housing in rural areas but when this is the case certain principles were identified as being necessary to adhere to: any development along national primary and secondary roads should be restricted for traffic safety reasons; outstanding landscapes and views of special importance should be preserved; housing should be integrated into the landscape through good design, good use of site and use of appropriate building materials; the site should be suitable for sewage disposal and drainage; and the rehabilitation of derelict houses should, in certain instances, be encouraged as a more sustainable option than the construction of a new dwelling (Government of Ireland, 1997: 151).

The 2002 National Spatial Strategy superseded the sustainable development strategy, identifying policy in the strategy for sustainability as being 'over-rigid' and 'inflexible' (DoEHLG, 2005). Instead, the NSS highlighted specific area types with corresponding policy responses (outlined in Table 5.2) designed to allow greater flexibility in planning for local rural areas. In addition, the NSS also has specific policy for housing location aligned to the different rural area types (based largely on McHugh's 2001 typology – see Map 2.1). Overall, in acknowledging that rural areas are complex with a wide number of varied issues and needs, the NSS supports sustainable settlement that takes account of traditional patterns throughout the country. However, in reality the NSS policy remains general, ambiguous and non-committal in light of the then anticipated publication of the national rural housing guidelines. The overall guidelines for rural housing in the NSS are:

1. to sustain and renew established rural communities;
2. to strengthen the established structure of villages and smaller settlements;
3. to ensure that key assets such as water quality, the natural and cultural heritage and the quality of the landscape are protected in order to support quality of life and economic viability; and

4. to ensure that rural settlement policies take account of and are appropriate to local circumstances (DoELG, 2002b: 105).

The lack of a comprehensive strategy for the open countryside and the adoption of relatively flexible rural policies places the NSS a little uncomfortably with the objectives set out in relevant documents such as *The Future of Rural Society, Europe 2000+* and the ESDP. In a number of ways the NSS complies with requirements of these frameworks by, for instance, recognising differentiation across space and the non-homogeneity of the countryside. However, rather than adopting a complex differentiated policy to address the emerging complexity of rural space, the approach of flexibility is presented as a positive, leaving the responsibility of negotiating contestation to the Local Authority level. Without doubt it is this level of governance that has the greatest understanding of local needs, demands and dynamics. However, inconsistencies which have dogged spatial planning policies across Authorities for decades are not assisted by maintaining overly flexible and sometimes ambiguous guidelines. Perhaps more significant is the fact that the fundamental planning principles for rural areas adopted in the NSS are at odds with the Government's own sustainability policy from 1997 which are outlined above. The national sustainability strategy clearly stated that a large proportion of rural settlement was becoming increasingly unsustainable due to high levels of car ownership, the prevalence of commuting to urban centres, and the construction of larger dwellings among many other reasons. What has changed in the subsequent years to transform this? The spatial analysis in Chapter Four highlights distinct areas where pressure on the environment and infrastructure has the potential to build rapidly. Areas under particular pressure are in peri-urban zones located in the hinterland of cities and large towns, medium to large town regions, and along coastal edges, largely along the western seaboard. The sustainability strategy tended to regard the countryside as relatively homogeneous entity which was not appropriate given the growing recognition of differentiated space. However, it did identify a number of concerns for the ongoing pattern of dispersed settlement in rural areas that included groundwater protection, energy usage and transportation costs among others. In regard to rural housing and planning for the countryside, these concerns are not addressed comprehensively in the NSS, and without a distinctive framework in which Local Authorities can adopt settlement strategies, it is unlikely that much will change into the future in the nature of policy objectives and implementation.

Table 5.2 Rural area types and policy responses (DoELG, 2002b: 53)	
Rural Area Type and Description	Rural Area Policy Responses
<p>1. Areas that are strong</p> <p>Mainly in the South and East where agriculture will remain strong, but where pressure for development is high and some rural settlements are under stress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support agriculture by maintaining the integrity of viable farming areas ▪ Strengthen rural villages and small towns by making them attractive to residential and employment-related development ▪ Reduce urban sprawl though a renewed emphasis on appropriate in-fill development
<p>2. Areas that are changing</p> <p>Including many parts of the Midlands, the Border, the South and West where population and agricultural employment have started to decline and where replacement employment is required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support communities where the viability of agriculture is under stress through promoting diversification in enterprise, local services and tourism
<p>3. Areas that are weak</p> <p>Including more western parts of the Midlands, certain parts of the Border and mainly inland areas in the West, where population decline has been significant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build up rural communities through spatially targeted and integrated measures ▪ Develop new rural tourism resources such as inland waterways
<p>4. Areas that are remote</p> <p>Including parts of the west coast and the islands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote marine and natural resource based development ▪ Overcome distance barriers with the support of technology
<p>5. Areas that are culturally diverse</p> <p>Including parts of the west coast and the Gaeltacht which have a distinctive cultural heritage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance accessibility ▪ Strengthen existing settlements ▪ Conserve cultural identity

5.3.2 The Sustainable Rural Housing Guidelines

Sustainable Rural Housing: Guidelines for Local Authorities (DoEHLG, 2005) reflects the flexible and open policy outlined in the NSS. It recommends that all County Development Plans should facilitate those people that wish to build dwellings in the countryside in order to sustain rural communities. Overall, the national rural housing guidelines recommend that:

- people who are part of the rural community should be facilitated by the planning system in all rural areas, including those under strong urban-based pressure;
- anyone wishing to build a house in rural areas suffering persistent substantial population decline will be accommodated; and

- the development of the rural environs of major urban areas, including gateways and hubs identified in the NSS and county and other larger towns over 5000 in population, need to be carefully managed in order to assure their orderly development and successful functioning into the future (DoEHLG, 2002b: 1).

A number of positive features can be gleaned from the rural housing guidelines - for example, in accordance with the NSS they acknowledge differences across space and within localities. However, McDonald and Nix (2005: 131) identify the guidelines as "... disingenuously titled Sustainable ...". A number of examples of unsustainability and unworkability can be identified in the policy document. For instance, rather than attempting to address different rural area types with what could be imaginative and complex responses, policy is left open and flexible giving ultimate responsibility to Local Authorities. Dick Roche, the then Minister for the Environment viewed the new rural housing guidelines as "... usher(ing) in a new era which enables planning authorities to respond positively to the housing needs of rural communities as an integral part of sustainable development of rural area" (McDonald, 25/03/06). This reliance on local government to maintain, apply and interpret a national strategy in a context that can only be described as ambiguous at best is cited as one of the main positives of the document because it allows for flexibility in decision-making. For example, the idea that a rural dweller must contribute and be a part of the rural community has been left open to wide interpretation. Additionally, the driving forces behind rural decline are not investigated in any detail, particularly those that have resulted in depopulation and dwelling vacancy. A blanket policy of allowing planning permission for single rural dwellings to be built anywhere in these areas of decline is identified as the solution when it may perhaps be part of the problem. For example, County Leitrim's rural planning policy for many years was to allow housing anywhere due to ongoing population decline. However, as will be examined in Chapter Six, this has contributed to some of the highest dwelling vacancy rates in the state and to high densities of single rural dwellings impacting on the environment and the landscape.

The publication of the rural housing guidelines gave rise to more debate on the nature of living in the countryside and the rights of those already resident there or wishing to live in rural areas. Of most controversy from some quarters in the debate was the fact that the guidelines had maintained the status quo and in some cases actually made

rural housing guidelines in local authorities less restrictive (see discussion in Section 5.3.3). Claims of an over-politicisation of the planning system which have bubbled under the surface throughout the years of the media debate came to the fore, together with a disgruntlement with other government regional policies, such as the proposal for departmental decentralisation, that are perceived as being at odds with the spatial objectives of the NSS.

Despite the identification of the potentially negative impacts of rural housing, particularly when urban-generated, in the national sustainable development strategy and in NSS reports, and the recognition in Europe of the changing role of the countryside as a buffer between urban centres and as a place of recreation and amenity, central government have continued to uphold outmoded notions of community and idyll, believing that individual rights to live in the countryside are not incompatible with the common good. Indeed the very presence of a population appears in the government's view to equate to community and social cohesion. While the basis of the rural housing guidelines is, in planning terms, the ESDP and NSS, ideologically, it has a stronger relationship with the 1999 White Paper for Rural Development (*Ensuring the Future: a strategy for Rural Development in Ireland*, Department of Agriculture and Food, 1999). The White Paper called for a continuation of traditional rural patterns of growth despite an acknowledgement of the parallel wider socio-economic changes at work in Ireland. Dispersed and vibrant communities and the traditional way of life are all identified as vital elements of rural society and as such should be supported through policy and intervention. Therefore, the idea that the rural is a place for residence firstly and that all other activities are dependent on that use of space is reinforced in the national rural housing guidelines. This does not recognise areas of pressure that are building up in peri-urban zones, particularly around medium to large town regions, and areas that have other challenges such as design aesthetics and protection of the landscape.

When policy documents for rural housing or those that relate to settlement and community are considered together, there is a clear objective apparent throughout – the strong relationship between the countryside and residence. All documents from the White Paper for Rural Development to the NSS recognise the changing role of the countryside in modern Ireland. However, despite these changes there appears to be a reluctance to apply less laissez-faire approaches to planning in rural areas, particularly

for housing. The enduring function of the countryside as a place of residence is strongly supported in these frameworks and strategies, and while this is not necessarily a negative thing, the assumption that a dispersed settlement can continue in the way it has for over a century in light of increased spatial mobility seems short-sighted.

5.3.3 Local Authority Rural Housing Policy

County Development Plans (CDPs) are the main strategic planning tool for Local Authorities in Ireland. This section examines how the plans vary from county to county, and also how they approach rural issues specific to their functional area in order to accumulate a body of evidence within which contestation can be examined in the following section. In theory, at least, the 1963 Planning Act introduced strategic planning and a framework through which application decisions could be made. The more recent Planning and Development Act, 2000 has changed a number of elements of the Development Plan system but for the most part they remain the same. In 1983, twenty years after the adoption of plan led development control, An Foras Forbartha carried out a review of the planning system in Ireland (Grist, 1983). To date, An Foras Forbartha's review is the only in depth countrywide examination of the planning system in Ireland. More recently the DoELG (2000) carried out an analysis of rural planning policy in County Development Plans for the NSS using a limited number of questions (six). The issues identified in that paper have been incorporated into the analysis below.

Each of the twenty-nine largely rural Local Authorities CDPs were examined under a number of variables. Criteria for examination were developed through the few previous studies that had been carried out and from preliminary examination of a number of CPDs. For example, the six criteria identified in the NSS preliminary reports (DoELG, 2000) were incorporated into the analysis. Also, themes such as differentiated space which has been widely acknowledged in literature and classified in Ireland most recently by McHugh (2001), were included in the examination. The Plans were analysed around the years 2002 and 2003 in order to correspond with the spatial analysis of single rural dwelling data in Chapters Four and Six. In total, twenty-five variables were selected and were subsequently divided into five categories. The main categories for analysis were:

1. rural settlement policy;
2. design guidelines;
3. presumption for development;

4. conditions accompanying planning permission; and
5. identified issues.

The first category of analysis is the identification of an overarching **Rural Settlement Policy** (see Table 5.3) which examines the identification of areas under pressure and areas that are static or in decline. The adoption of corresponding policy for these areas and issues is a very important part of rural planning. Thus, six main elements were identified, namely, (i) the encouragement of development into existing settlements; (ii) the identification of priority settlements for future development; (iii) the identification of areas in decline or that are static; (iv) differentiation of the county by area and/or issue; (v) a corresponding policy for different areas and/or issues; and (vi) the requirement for a Section 47 (formerly Section 38) agreement¹².

Resettlement policy analysis indicates that the majority of counties have the objective to direct all future development into existing settlements, which usually consist of towns and smaller village settlements. Subsequently, nearly all counties have identified priority settlements. In addition to naming the towns or villages, Local Areas Plans are also adopted for the priority settlements. However, while the majority of Plans recognise that some areas are in decline or are 'static', in this case specific areas are less likely to be identified. There may be political pressure here not to identify or 'name and shame' settlements which have not managed to grow or develop as well as their neighbours. As a result, settlement policy for these areas tends to be unclear. For example, Tipperary North identifies very specific policy for a pressure area (environs of Lough Derg) outlining the requirement to prove 'genuine need' and farm family connections in order to be eligible for planning permission. However, the remainder of the County is left without any specific policy, implicitly suggesting that outside of the pressure areas rural areas are able to accommodate housing. Leitrim on the other hand identifies the County as a whole as being in decline, stating that it will allow development virtually anywhere because of the need for repopulation and regeneration, resulting in an honest but weak strategy:

¹² A Section 47 agreement is an agreement to 'sterilise' lands owned by the applicant for a period to be agreed by the Local Authority and the applicant under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, i.e. land is not to be used for further residential development within the agreed time period.

It shall further be a basic aim of the Council to ensure that rural populations are strengthened. In this regard, in particular, the Council will support development in rural areas where population decline has been evident. It is recognised that rural communities need diversity and support through persons, not just persons engaged in agriculture.

(Leitrim County Council, 2003: xvi)

Very few counties avoid the issue of one-off or scattered housing, but some do manage to avoid introducing any meaningful settlement policy to address the challenge at all. Monaghan is an extreme example of this, whereby five out the six variables in this category are avoided. Notably, all the County Development Plans identify spatial differences across the county, recognising different demands such as urban pressure, tourism and second homes, sensitive landscapes and changes in agriculture. However, not all counties have corresponding policy for spatial and issue-based differences. In the category of Rural Settlement Policy, therefore, most counties are consistent in their policy. However, policy 'gaps' appear more obvious in the western and northern counties.

The idea that a traditional rural settlement pattern exists is a theme in a number of counties, which in some of cases, despite the identification of the necessity for new housing to concentrate in existing clusters, results in allowances favouring a continuation of the dispersed pattern:

Mayo is essentially a rural county with a tradition of dispersed rural housing located in established physical and social clusters. This has played a large part in defining the character of Mayo as a county and in terms of its cultural and physical landscape. Rural housing also plays a pivotal role in sustaining rural communities and in maintaining the vibrancy of such areas.

(Mayo County Council, 2003:

9)

Table 5.3 Rural Settlement Policy Analysis								
County	encourages development into existing settlements	identifies priority settlements	identifies areas in decline or static	county differentiation by:		corresponding policy for specific:		Section 47 agreement (former S. 38)
				area	issue	areas	Issue	
Carlow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cavan	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-
Clare	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cork County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Donegal	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dún Laoghaire	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fingal	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-
Galway County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kerry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Kildare	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Kilkenny	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Laois	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓
Leitrim	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Limerick County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Longford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Louth	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mayo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meath	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Monaghan	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-
Offaly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Roscommon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Sligo	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
South Dublin	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tipperary, Nth	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Tipperary, Sth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Waterford County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-
Westmeath	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Wexford	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wicklow	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓

The second category of analysis is **Design Guidelines** (see Table 5.4) with three criteria identified: (i) the adoption of a design guidebook (separate or incorporated into the County Development Plan); (ii) a written statement; and (iii) supplementary drawings. In general, most County Development Plans scored very low in this category of analysis. Few counties have in depth design guide manuals with exceptions such as Louth, Mayo (in draft) and Donegal. Other Local Authorities such as Monaghan and Roscommon have committed to publishing separate guides in the near future. Although all counties have a written statement on design for rural houses, some do not go beyond a brief paragraph. It is also important to note that basic engineering requirements tend to fall under the title of Design Guidelines and that in some cases visual aesthetics are not considered at all. The emphasis on engineering requirements in the design section of development plans is a throwback to a time when civil engineers were considered the only technical experts in a Local Authority and trained planners were rarely appointed. In addition, there tends to an overuse of the word 'appropriate' which results in ambiguity and potential for a very flexible and non-strategic interpretation. In the case of County Mayo, a draft design guideline booklet was prepared but never adopted by the Council where it was vetoed. As design guidelines are not a statutory element of the County Development Plan, the Council was within its legal right to reject the guidelines completely.

All County Development Plans identify certain criteria under which it is more likely that applicants will be granted planning permission for a one-off rural house. Under category three **Presumption for Development** (see Table 5.5) variables were identified as follows: (i) that there is a genuine need for the dwelling or a necessary dwelling; (ii) the applicant is locally employed; (iii) the applicant is from a farm family; (iv) the applicant has farm connections; (v) the application is for a replacement dwelling; (vi) the application is for an infill site or will consolidate an existing settlement; and (vii) the application will restore an empty or derelict dwelling. Most Plans have adopted one or more of the variables with the phrase 'genuine need' used frequently as a requirement for eligibility. For example, Kerry CDP states:

Although fewer landholders' children are involved in agriculture, improved employment opportunities and more readily available modes of private transportation allow a higher proportion than heretofore to remain in the locality. It is recognised that there is a need to make provision for these people to reside in rural areas, particularly where there are strong established links to the locality.

(Kerry County Council, 2003: 30)

However, few Plans attempt to define what genuine need actually is. Louth County Development Plan is an example of a very good attempt to define genuine need at an in-depth level where it outlines specifically the relationship an applicant must have with the local area: that the applicant must be from the area, working in the countryside, or from a farming family. In addition, eligibility criteria tend only to be adopted as policy in pressure areas where there is a high demand for housing. Outside of these areas there appears to be a laissez-faire approach where individual applications will be assessed on individual merits. Notably, however, this individual approach policy is more dominant in the west and south of the Country. Based mainly on the need for repopulation, a policy to allow any housing in any area appears to be seen as good policy. Counties that rely on this approach are Cavan, Leitrim, Monaghan, Roscommon, Tipperary North and Waterford. For example, while Roscommon takes the positive step of establishing Special Policy Areas (SPAs) in areas of scenic beauty or in areas under development pressure and requires an applicant to show need due to farm family connections in order to be eligible for planning permission, no other strategic policy is adopted for any other part of the County. In fact, it appears that the question of rural housing is avoided altogether outside SPAs despite Roscommon having one of the highest rural populations in the country. The latter three variables in the category of criteria for presumption for development relate to the application type. Nearly all counties encourage replacement dwellings or the restoration of dwellings as applications while infill sites are not encouraged outside villages because they may lead to ribbon development. No strategy however is presented to encourage the renovation of older or derelict dwellings or use of the existing settlement footprint.

Table 5.4 Design Guidelines Analysis			
County	Separate design guide book	Written statement only	Supplementary drawings
Carlow	-	✓	✓
Cavan	-	✓	-
Clare	-	✓	-
Cork County	-	✓	-
Donegal	✓	✓	✓
Dún Laoghaire-	-	✓	-
Fingal	-	✓	-
Galway County	-	✓	-
Kerry	-	✓	-
Kildare	-	✓	-
Kilkenny	-	✓	-
Laois	-	✓	-
Leitrim	✓	✓	✓
Limerick County	-	✓	-
Longford	-	✓	-
Louth	✓	✓	✓
Mayo	✓ (Draft not adopted)	✓	✓
Meath	-	✓	-
Monaghan	-	✓	-
Offaly	-	✓	-
Roscommon	-	✓	-
Sligo	-	✓	-
South Dublin	-	✓	✓
Tipperary, Nth	-	✓	-
Tipperary, Sth	-	✓	-
Waterford County	-	✓	-
Westmeath	-	✓	-
Wexford	-	✓	-
Wicklow	-	-	-

Table 5.5 Presumption for Development Analysis							
County	genuine need / necessary dwelling	locally employed	from farm family	family connections	replacement houses	infill / consolidation	restoration of empty / derelict houses
Carlow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cavan	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓
Clare	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cork County	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Donegal	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Dún Laoghaire	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Galway County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Fingal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
South Dublin	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kerry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Kildare	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Kilkenny	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-
Laois	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Leitrim	-	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓
Limerick County	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Longford	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
Louth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mayo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Meath	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
Monaghan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Offaly	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Roscommon	-	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
Sligo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tipperary, Nth	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓
Tipperary, Sth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Waterford County	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
Westmeath	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Wexford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wicklow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Conditions Accompanying Grants of Planning Permission (see Table 5.6) is the fourth category for analysis. Occupancy is included in this category and is identified as an important measure in Research Paper 13 of the NSS (DoELG, 2000) because it attempts to determine if an application is speculative or for genuine use by the applicant. Section 47 agreements are included again in this category because of their frequent use in the conditions of a planning permission. Thus the three variables in the conditions analysis are (i) general occupancy (i.e. not defined); (ii) occupancy defined in terms of years and legality; and (iii) the requirement to a Section 47 (formerly Section 38) agreement. This category is the least subscribed to of all the categories of analysis. Few counties (Fingal, Galway, South Dublin, Kerry, Carlow and Meath) established and defined occupancy as a condition for planning permission to build a rural dwelling. For example, County Galway's occupancy policy is as follows:

In areas, where restrictions based on housing need apply, an enurement condition shall apply for a period of 7 years, after the date that the house is first occupied by the person or persons to whom the enurement clause applies.

(Galway County Council, 2003: 55)

Notably, Fingal and South Dublin County Councils are predominantly urban so in actual figures only four 'rural counties' adopted a defined occupancy period as a condition of planning permission. Also, it is more likely that an eastern county will identify general occupancy and an obligation to a Section 47 agreement as a condition than other counties, i.e. in areas that are under high levels of urban pressure. The addition of occupancy conditions to grants of planning permission for the building of private homes can be a cause of problems when the need for enforcement arises and can be challenging in seeking agreement on legal definitions (Gallent et al, 2003b).

Table 5.6 Conditions Accompanying Grants of Planning Permission Analysis			
County	occupancy general	occupancy - specific, defined in terms of years and legality	Section 47 agreement (former S. 38)
Carlow	√	√ (5 yrs)	√
Cavan	-	-	-
Clare	√	-	√
Cork County	-	-	-
Donegal	√	-	√
Dún Laoghaire	√	-	√
Galway County	√	√ (7 yrs)	√
Fingal	-	√ (5 yrs)	-
South Dublin	√	√ (min 1 yr)	√
Kerry	√	√ (2 yrs)	-
Kildare	√	-	-
Kilkenny	-	-	-
Laois	-	-	√
Leitrim	√	-	-
Limerick County	-	-	-
Longford	√	-	-
Louth	√	-	√
Mayo	-	-	√
Meath	√	√ (10 yrs)	-
Monaghan	-	-	-
Offaly	-	-	√
Roscommon	-	-	-
Sligo	-	-	-
Tipperary, Nth	√	-	-
Tipperary, Sth	√	-	-
Waterford County	-	-	-
Westmeath	-	-	-
Wexford	√	-	√
Wicklow	-	-	√

The final category examined **Identified Issues** (see Table 5.7) in relation to rural housing in each County Development Plan. The variables are (i) a reference to one-off housing or dispersed settlement; (ii) recognition of the need for sustainable development, which is subdivided into the three elements of economic, environment and social; (iii) reference to visual aesthetics; (iv) the issue of second homes or holiday homes; (v) the identification of areas in decline; and (vi) the identification of pressurised areas. All counties recognise that one-off or scattered housing is an issue; however,

inconsistent in this reference is the identification of what drives the demand for rural housing. The recognition of drivers of single rural dwelling construction tends to be limited to the knock-on effects of pressure areas and hinterlands. In general, areas under pressure are areas close to urban centres and thus the pressure for development is urban-generated. As a result many of the County Development Plans refer to 'urban generated one-off housing' and regard this as the only problem. Some County Development Plans adopted following the publication of the NSS have recognised that there is a process of rural generated housing also, e.g. Leitrim.

The approach to issues around sustainable development is inconsistent throughout the County Development Plans. In the majority of Plans, the need for sustainable development is referred to in the introduction of the County Development Plans. However, reiteration of the themes of sustainability is not carried out consistently in adopted policy. In a number of cases only one of the three elements of sustainable development is referred to in relation to rural housing. For example, Laois, Sligo and Westmeath refer only to the economic sustainability of one-off housing. Limited analysis of long-term social sustainability is engaged in and the potential impacts that a dispersed settlement pattern may have on this. Also, in terms of environmental sustainability engineering requirements are outlined such as the parameters for run-off water and septic tanks.

As a result of limited design guidelines in plans, visual aesthetics as an issue in rural housing is given different levels of significance and again the term 'appropriate design' is used without definition. Also in this category, the issue of the identification of areas experiencing pressure or decline is analysed. As discussed in the analysis of category one, identification of such areas is inconsistent. While the majority of Plans identify and adopt Local Area Plans for towns which are under pressure, they tend not to identify specific areas that are in decline. As a result, little or no policy is adopted for these areas.

The struggle to balance the demand for residential development, the need in some counties or in parts of counties to counteract population decline, and the desire to protect the landscape and the environment from further degradation is a recurrent theme in the majority of plans. The tradition of decades of single rural dwelling

development on a dispersed settlement footprint and the resultant expectation of permission to continue developing in such a manner appears to have left Local Authorities attempting to keep everyone happy. Often the result of this attempt is an overly-flexible and ambiguous rural settlement strategy that maintains the status quo. Some of the greatest difficulties associated with CDP policies is actual implementation once they have been adopted many may turn out to be 'pious policies' that do not come to fruition (McDonald and Nix, 2005). This lack of implementation can arise for two reasons, firstly, the policies may have been too ambiguous to begin with, and secondly, while not material contraventions, development control decisions do not always 'match up' with the goals and policies of the CDP.

Overall, a number of key issues arise from the detailed examination of rural housing policy in County Development Plans. An acknowledgement of disparity and difference within a geographic area is a basic tenet of European territorial planning and the National Spatial Strategy. In many cases, CDPs acknowledge that there are areas of decline in a county, specifying their location and the extent to which they are in decline but are inconsistent in the adoption of a corresponding policy. Conversely, where areas are identified as being under pressure, for example from urban generated housing or second homes, it is more likely that a clear, restrictive policy will be adopted. The most apparent limitation to emerge from this examination is the weak strategic approach of Planning Authorities to rural settlement and housing. For example, the assessment of applications for housing on its individual merits cannot be sustainable in the long-term without the operation of an overarching settlement policy. Also, areas in decline that have been highlighted as needing widespread population growth need much more cohesive strategies. The historic approach in areas of this type has been to assess applicants on individual merits which at the least is a very weak policy that in the long-term will be potentially detrimental to future sustainability. Indeed the very notion of what is sustainable for rural areas is difficult to distinguish and / or identify in an extensive number of the CDPs. If a development plan is unable to define what sustainability is to begin with, then it will have major problems realising development that is in the long-term beneficial to its functional area. A number of questions need to be asked, for example, is the fact that an area is under pressure from outside demand the only reason for adopting a strict rural housing policy? And how does a strict, unambiguous policy for a pressure area impact on its adjacent non-pressure areas? Do

applicants for housing simply cross the boundaries when looking for a site and apply for the same house under the same circumstances in the non-pressured area?

County	reference to 'one-off' housing / dispersed settlement	sustainable development			visual aesthetics	second homes	areas of decline	pressurised areas
		economic	Environment	social				
Carlow	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cavan	√	√	√	√	√	-	-	√
Clare	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Cork County	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Donegal	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Dún Laoghaire	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	√
Fingal	√	√	√	√	√	-	-	√
Galway County	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Kerry	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Kildare	√	√	√	-	√	-	√	√
Kilkenny	√	√	-	√	-	-	√	√
Laois	√	√	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leitrim	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	√
Limerick County	√	-	-	-	√	-	√	√
Longford	√	-	-	-	√	√	√	√
Louth	√	√	√	-	√	-	-	√
Mayo	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Meath	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Monaghan	√	-	-	-	√	-	-	-
Offaly								
Roscommon	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	√
Sligo	√	√	-	-	√	√	-	√
South Dublin	√	√	-	√	√	-	-	√
Tipperary, Nth	√	√	√	-	√	-	-	√
Tipperary, Sth	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Waterford County	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Westmeath	√	√	-	-	√	-	√	√
Wexford	√	√	√	√	√	√	-	√
Wicklow	√	-	-	-	√	-	-	√

5.3.4 Planning and Contestation

The attempt to address the democratic deficit that was apparent in the British Town and Country Planning Act 1947 has become a lynchpin of the contemporary Irish system. The statutory role of a number of semi-state bodies and interest groups, the power of local elected representatives, and the right to third party appeal all contribute to the democratic objectives of the Irish planning system. The basic function of any local authority is to do what is best for its administrative area and population (Woods, 1998). However, with what could be argued as an over-politicisation of planning decision-making, what is best for a local area is now contested and what were once the core functions of local government have now been delegated to the private sector. This gives rise to the question of whether the planning system has contributed to contestation and politicisation of decision-making by lessening the authority of the professional planner. The loss of power or at least the perception of powerlessness for the old elites and elected representatives is leading to a stalemate in decision-making, where the strategic objectives of spatial planning have stalled due to the desire to keep everyone happy. Contestation has arisen as a result and is seen in the national and local media debate and manifested in a number of actors. This section discusses the theme that the Irish planning system may have acted to perpetuate a legacy of contestation at the local government level and that it has contributed to a popular expectation of a right to live and build in the countryside. This will be carried out in the context of the previous study of national and local rural housing and planning policy, and in light of the suggestion that the Irish planning regime has become increasingly politicised (Bartley, 2007). In addition, the notion that the struggle for the rural has become more about how it is represented than how it is shaped (Dupuis, 2006) and how this further reinforces contestation will be considered.

If there was no conflict there would be no need for planning, which has at its centre politics, conflict and dispute (Cullingworth and Nadin, 1997). However, one of the beliefs of planning is the optimism that with intervention comes a reduction in the future potential for conflict. The emergence of a new local governance (Woods, 1998; Bartley, 2007) has pushed elected Councils into the role of a pressure group vying for position with all other stakeholders in the planning process. In Ireland, five groups can be identified as contributing to the rural housing debate and also impacting on strategic planning for rural areas. These groups have been identified through a number of

sources specifically for the purposes of this research. The five key groups discussed below are selected here for a number of reasons, including: they feature regularly in media coverage of the rural housing debate; some have a statutory role in the planning process and in development control decision-making; they have highlighted specific elements of the debate such as planning ideals for rural Ireland and sustainable development requirements; and have contributed to the emotive nature of the debate by emphasising personal narratives. The key five lobbyists / groups are as follows:

1. local elected representatives: the role of councillors in the Irish planning system was established legislatively in the 1963 Planning Act, giving them a number of powers including the final adoption of development plans and the right to overturn development control decisions. In local media coverage councillors, as the voice of the community, are often pitted against the local authority planners who are perceived as attempting to establish 'Dublin' ideals on rural traditions or to (re)introduce British planning standards to the Irish case. In national newspapers on the other hand, coverage tends to verge on the more controversial, highlighting the potential for vested interests and the fact that many councillors are also local landowners and farmers. Also, the informality of the relationship between the elected and the electorate, has given rise to suspicions about the planning system which in the case of some urban planning cases in the 1980s and 1990s have been investigated through the Planning Tribunal. Of the powers given to local elected representatives, the most controversial and likely to be given attention in the headlines are 'Section 4's' (as they are popularly referred to). In the Local Government Act 2001 these were changed to Section 140 powers where councillors have the authority, once a voting majority of three quarters is reached, to overturn a planning decision. In reality, limited use of this power is actually made and their application is actually in decline (in 2003 there was peak in their usage at 101 nationally, this has fallen to only 15 (out of 34) being passed in 2006 (DoEHLG, 2007c)). As well as there being limited application of this nationally, only a small number of counties account for total usage, with Counties Donegal and Wicklow dominating in 2006. Section 34's are also used in order to allow for a material contravention of the Development Plan. Again, the application of this legislative tool has diminished – in 2000 132 motions were passed out of 141 (94%) nationally, while in 2006 this fell to 67 out of 99 motions (67%). The number of motions to

overturn decisions and plans fell in occurrence with falling planning applications, but interestingly the proportion of motions that were passed also declined. This could reflect the changing composition of local government as a result of the 2004 local elections which for the first time disallowed councillors to sit in national parliament. This resulted in significant shifts in voting patterns which saw, for example, a 44% rise (8 to 18) in the number of Green Party representatives and a decline of 21% (382 to 302) in the more established Fianna Fail politicians since the previous 1999 elections.

2. professional practice planners: planners have two roles in local decision-making, the most dominant of which is as local authority planners both formulating and implementing policy. Planners in this context are not the decision makers and act only as advisors to those with the final say, i.e. the locally elected representatives. In Ireland the voice for planners is the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) which is a professional body similar but smaller to the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in the UK. The IPI contributes to consultations on draft planning guidelines and associated policy and as a result has not been immune to the rural housing debate. Principles of rural planning such as key settlements and restrictive regional policies have been promoted by the IPI, very much in line with UK planning practices. However, this has been perceived by councillors as promoting planning objectives that are detrimental to traditional rural settlement and ways of life.
3. national government and policy: the 1999 Rural Development White Paper and the 2004 national rural housing guidelines purport a rural laced with idylls and romanticisation of community and traditional ways of life. These are out of place within the context of wider European policies which identify a functional role for the countryside that fulfils the consumption demands for an urban and urbanised population. Instead Irish policy has veered along the safe route of reinforcing rural ideals. Aligned with politicisation of the planning system, the interests of government ministers, and of pressure groups such as the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) and the Irish Rural Dwellers' Association (IRDA), national policy acknowledges the widespread changes in agriculture and rural areas, but tends not to proceed beyond these, preferring instead to remain rooted to generally acceptable romantic notions of the countryside rather than courting controversy by adopting more challenging alternative views of the rural. Although locally elected representatives are becoming increasingly politically disconnected from national government through the abolition

of the dual mandate which allowed councillors to also sit as TDs, party politics, such as the Fianna Fail pro-development approach, remains a key factor in influencing national and local policy decisions alike. However, as the separation of local and national politics continues and becomes a mainstay of day-to-day governance it could provide the foundation for a disconnection between macro and micro which has not been a feature of politics in Ireland to date.

4. interest groups: as discussed in Chapter One, interest or pressure groups have had an integral role in contributing to the rural planning debate and representatives of the rural have changed to reflect the new multiple roles of the countryside. Also rural issues are no longer the domain of traditional agencies such as farming lobbies and countryside preservation groups. The media juxtaposing of An Taisce versus the IRDA, or in other words urban versus rural, has reinforced the contestation prevalent in policy formulation and development control, and moved the regulatory system into the spotlight leaving it open for dispute from all sides. Personalisation of the rural planning debate adds to the evocative nature of disagreements but provides useful sound bites for the media. The legacy of older interest groups, particularly those associated with farming have had longer term impacts on contestation in planning due to their agricultural focus and pro-development agenda.
5. media: beyond the four stakeholders above, are those who are not represented directly by interest groups or feel that national or local policy does not accommodate or acknowledge them. Consequently the media itself has provided a voice for those wishing to contribute to the debate. Frank McDonald, the environment editor of the *Irish Times*, has led much of the media coverage of the debate, but more than that has also come to be identified as a fundamental and knowledgeable contributor to it. Thus, not only does he report on the machinations and outcomes of the debate but also contributes to the arguments themselves. Other newspapers contribute to the debate by outlining the stories of the 'victims' of the Irish planning regime or of the landowners that are 'farming sites' (see Chapter One; also McDonald and Nix, 2005).

The changing population in rural areas and the consequent social recompositioning as identified by Cloke and Goodwin (1992) and Halfacree (2006) have resulted not only in new demands for housing but also in multiple representations of the rural. In Ireland,

and particularly in relation to rural issues this has emerged as an 'us' against 'them' debate similar to contestation identified by a number of authors such as Woods (1997) which tend to fall into traditional urban-rural dichotomies. Of debate among these different stakeholders is the future of the countryside not simply in light of agricultural change but because of new rural populations and wider social, economic and environmental needs. Hence, new interest groups have emerged, for instance, that no longer reflect traditional attachments to the rural. The Irish Rural Dwellers' Association (IRDA) is one example of a lobby group that formed in order, in its view, to better represent a wider range of rural resident. The emergence of new voices in the debate is manifested in the way that discourse has moved beyond traditional arguments about the countryside, i.e. the future of agriculture, to discourses on, for instance, quality of life, the environment, and sustainable development. In addition, because contestation has moved beyond the concern of agricultural decline, there is no longer the assumption that the rural is subject to less or different levels of scrutiny, i.e. that laissez-faire approaches to planning and the legacy of the perceived right of citizens to live in the countryside will go unquestioned. The fall in the use of traditional powers held by locally elected representatives also reflects a repositioning of local government that appears to be changing (albeit slowly) as a result of a changing electorate. The powerlessness of the old elected elites may be amplified by the lessening acceptance of material contraventions and the overturning of planning applications.

Within the context of changing power relations within the rural realm, it is important to consider the laissez-faire approach to housing in the countryside in an alternative light. For example, is it possible that the relatively unrestrictive nature of planning in rural Ireland could potentially offer an alternative model of regulatory planning and for an alternative rural community? The laissez-faire nature of planning in Ireland has been identified as being a significant feature of the system in international literature (in particular in Gallent et al, 2003a). This thesis has identified a number of negative elements of such a system which include the lack of strategic planning and a legacy of the conflation of urban and rural in policy approaches. However, the nature of the planning system in Ireland, where relatively high levels of rural housing are granted permission for construction has resulted distinctive dynamics for the countryside and contrast in particular to countries which adopted highly restrictive regimes. Laissez-faire approaches to planning may allow for an alternative model for rural planning in Ireland

whereby a greater social mix of lower and middle income households can be allowed to occur.

In jurisdictions where highly restrictive models of planning operate, obtaining planning permission to build one's own home is a sought after rarity, coming with attached status symbols and high monetary value. From the analysis of the various socio-economic groups in Chapter Four, it is apparent that although farming continues to dominate extensive parts of the country, other socio-economic groups are well represented. The relatively unrestrictive approach to planning in Ireland has created a system that has passively worked against social exclusion by limiting the social status and cost attached to building a home in the countryside. It therefore has the potential to provide for an alternative regulatory model for the countryside whereby social mix is greater than in other countries. In addition to good levels of social inclusion, the ease of access to housing in the countryside also implies the longevity of communities. For 'pro-rural housing' groups in the housing debate, one point of argument has been that if younger generations can easily access housing in their home communities, then a large proportion of long-term care and social needs will be addressed through the informal networks that will naturally form because of a sustained rural population.

The benefits that can be gained for social inclusion and rural communities as a result of the ease with which access to housing is achieved, needs to be considered in conjunction with the environmental and physical impacts of a dispersed settlement pattern. This is perhaps the greatest challenge for the pro laissez-faire lobby who have struggled to address the evidence on, for example, septic tank run-off and subsequent negative impacts on groundwater, and road traffic safety.

5.3.5 Summary Remarks

The visionary framework of the NSS and its contextual document the ESDP has not yet been translated down to the settlement policy at the local level. Indeed although CDP housing policy in rural areas in 2002 can be identified as being largely weak and non-strategic, the recommendations of the national rural housing guidelines which were formally adopted in 2005, have actually further weakened local plans and made them less restrictive. This compounds inconsistencies with the objectives and policy options

for rural areas in the ESDP. The use of flexible language at the national and local level allows for multiple interpretations of policy, however unstrategic this may be.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

Preservation of the countryside, which lies at the centre of the British town and country planning traditions, could not be further from the Irish planning ethos. Agricultural exceptionalism giving rise to farm construction exemptions in legislation crossed over to all development in rural areas, and particularly to grants of planning permission for the construction of one-off private dwellings, unlike the British system which has adopted far more restrictive housing policy. The evolution of the Irish rural settlement pattern has operated within a planning system that at best can be described as flexible and open and at its worst weak and non-strategic. Since the adoption of a formal legislative planning process in 1963 the framework has existed for a national to local level system that allows for non-homogenous spaces and complex differences. However, it is apparent that the opportunity to plan strategically for rural places was rarely grasped and the introduction of national rural housing guidelines perpetuated this failure. The publication of the rural housing guidelines in 2005, which all planning authorities were expected to adopt, superseded any local policy already in implementation stage. The notion that applicants are eligible to apply for planning permission to construct a dwelling if they 'contribute' to the local area may simply be too flexible and open a policy. In reality, the real complexity of rural housing is not addressed in the national rural housing guidelines. The changing function and nature of agriculture in Ireland and the growing role of the speculative developer are resulting in changing land values throughout all rural area types from urban hinterlands to scenic and remote areas. The promotion of the idea of flexibility in policy making has resulted in inconsistent decision-making rather than the proactive responses it aims for.

CHAPTER 6: DYNAMICS OF LIVING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

6.0 INTRODUCTION

The final objective for the thesis will be addressed in this chapter:

To investigate the dynamics of living in the countryside at the small area level.

This involves the examination of the socio-economic attributes associated with living in the countryside that drive the changing rural settlement pattern. The planning system is not the only driver of housing location as people living in the countryside shape the rural settlement pattern through location choice and preferences, employment, changing household size and needs, and access to land. These complex factors directly affect the location, density, supply and demand of housing in rural areas. This chapter provides a local area level qualitative and quantitative analysis of the socio-economic aspects of living in the countryside in different rural area types, positioned within the previous national, broad scale empirical analysis of SRDs and the hierarchical exploration of policy and intervention. The main objective of this chapter is to examine why spatial variations in single rural dwelling construction emerged in the 1990s and to provide an insight into small-scale rural housing processes.

This chapter is the final stage of the analysis of housing in the Irish countryside. It pieces together key dynamics that influence housing and settlement at the small area level. The previous two chapters explored the national characteristics of the rural settlement pattern, contextualising it in state interventions and spatial planning objectives with a view to understanding the institutional environment in which rural housing operates. Chapter Four spatially analysed the pattern of settlement change at the national level over a number of decades prior the 1970s and concluded that the impacts of SRDs range from their physical effects on the environment and the natural landscape; social impacts including the provision of services to a continuing dispersed population; the rise of personal narratives in light of the perception of high refusal rates (see discussion in Chapter One) and the changing rural economy; media focus on those personal narratives and on the long-term societal and community interactions;

and the changing relationships between place of work and home which are resulting in (or requiring) flexible geographies and a disconnection with agriculture. This chapter will address these impacts in order to establish what drives them and to provide a better understanding of how the national pattern of SRD construction works at the local level. The analysis of the community perspective from each area in relation to attitudes to the rural, to change and development and to the perceived demands for living in the countryside will assist in breaking down the restless landscape of contestation and debate with its supposed losers and winners which often presented in national and local print media.

By utilising three case study areas that together contain all the rural area types from McHugh's (2001) typology, this chapter will delve beneath the national patterns so that a greater understanding of the local dynamics and drivers identified above can be established. Specifically, the key trends that emerged from the analysis of the national pattern need to be explored further in order to fully understand why there has been a reversal in the share and distribution of rural housing from outer rural areas to locations in urban hinterlands. This is addressed by investigating the nature of population change in the three study areas and how this distribution reflects the geography of the construction of new single rural dwellings in 2002. The urban orientation of rural housing has been influenced by greater mobility and improved accessibility in the rural population and the need to engage in alternative, non-traditional employment which is often located in towns and cities. The analysis in this chapter allows for a deeper examination of population mobility on the small area settlement patterns and to ascertain how this impacts locally. In addition, a number of new or potential housing pressures were identified in previous chapters reflected in vacant dwellings, holiday homes, high density edge populations in scenic regions, and also high densities in urban hinterlands and close to the national road network. This chapter attempts to understand how and why these pressures are emerging and the community perspectives and attitudes towards them.

6.1 A CHANGING RURAL POPULATION

Population and its relationship with the national rural settlement pattern are investigated in greater depth in this section at the small area level for the three case study areas (outlined in Chapter Three). Ireland's spatial pattern is dominated by an East-West

population imbalance. Within this regional disparity, it is apparent that there is notable unevenness at the small area level where pockets of decline are located adjacent to areas of growth. Each of the three case study areas has different population dynamics, ranging from strong historical growth to decline and instability. This section will examine small area population change and household structures in relation to how it has impacted on SRD construction up to 2002. Specifically it addresses the combination of a growing population coupled with a declining average household size impact on the spatial distribution and density of rural dwelling construction.

6.1.1 Population Change

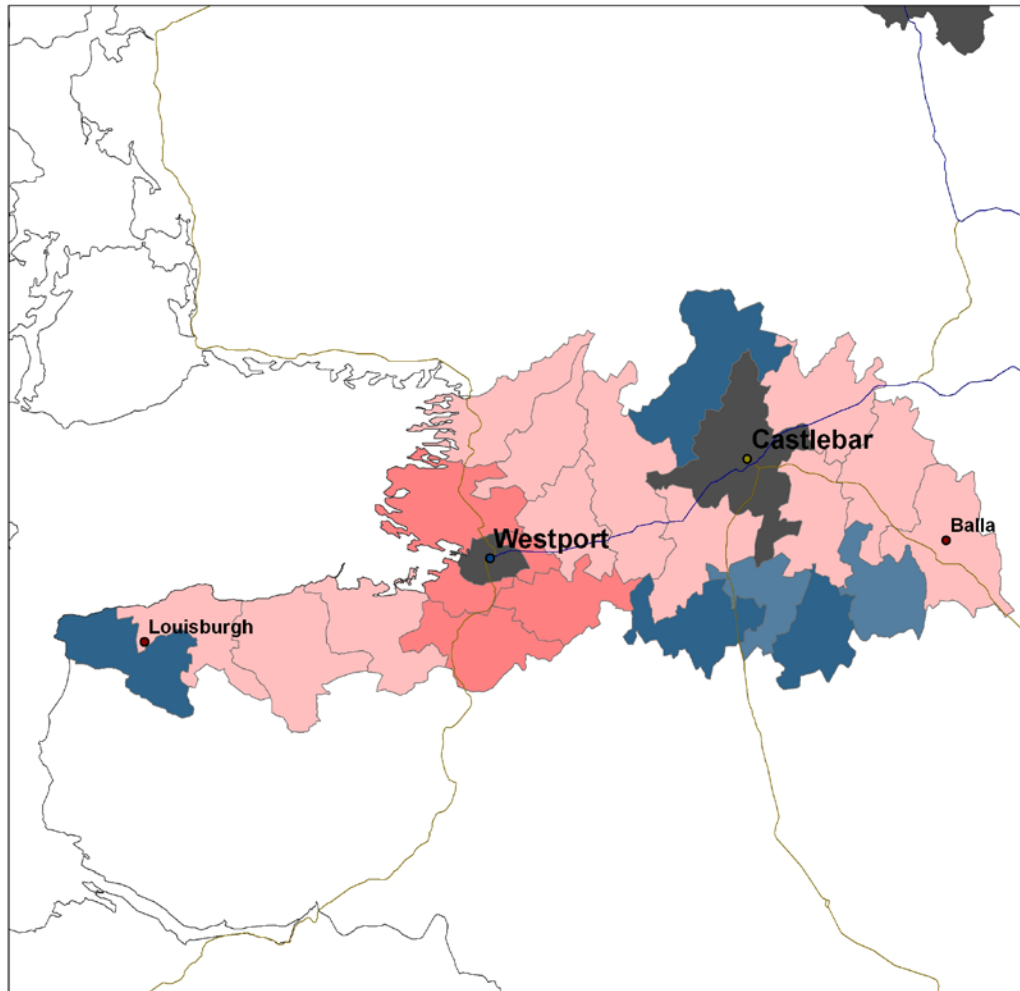
The regional imbalance in population growth identified by a number of Irish authors (Cawley, 1991, 1994; Walsh, 1991) is further complicated by the unevenness that occurs at the small area level (see Map 2.2). For example, although, South Meath and the Clew Bay area in County Mayo had an overall growth of 9.4% and 7.5% respectively, they also contained pockets of decline.

Clew Bay Area

The Clew Bay area can be identified as having an 'edge' population, with high densities between the mountains and the coast (Maps 6.1 and 6.2). Both of the main towns, Castlebar and Westport, had a population growth of 70% and 45% respectively over the period 1991 to 2002, absorbing the greatest amount of growth in the study area as a whole. Furthermore, the environs of Westport experienced high levels of growth, with population increasing by nearly a third in the Westport Rural ED. Castlebar appears to have less of an impact on surrounding EDs. The most extensive area of population decline occurs south of Westport, reaching an 8% fall in the Clogher ED. In summary, the population characteristics of the Clew Bay area from 1991 to 2002, are:

1. town absorption of population growth
2. growth outwards from Westport
3. high coastal edge density

Population - Clew Bay Area Percentage Change in Population 1991 to 2002



Roads

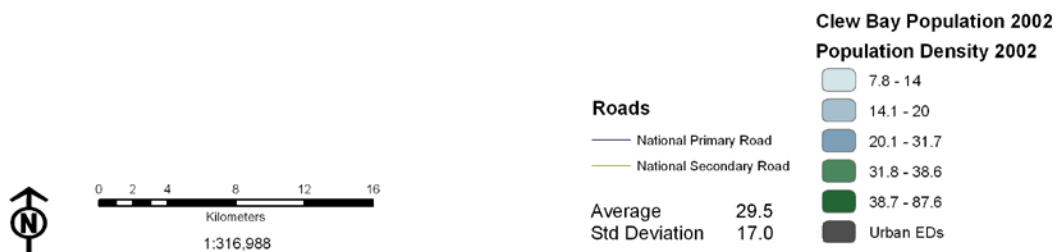
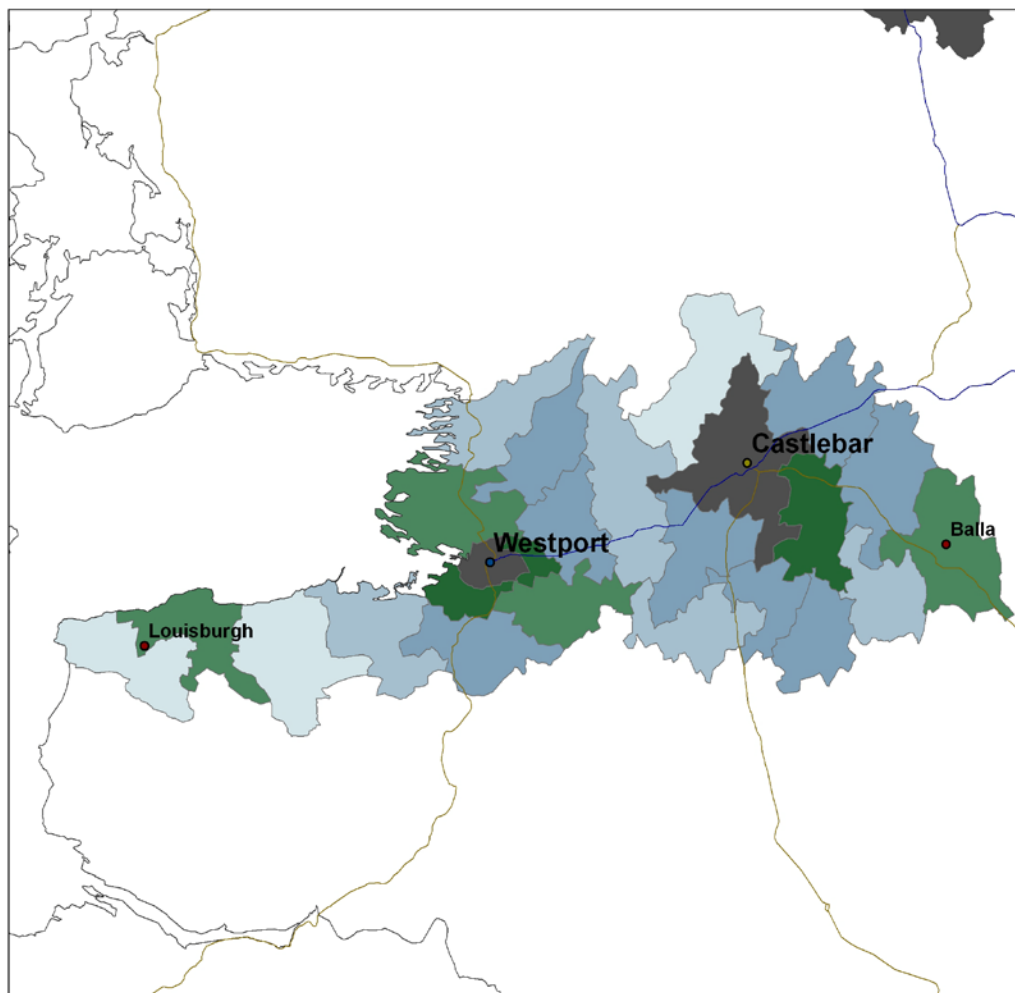
- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Average 7.5
Std Deviation 11.5

**Clew Bay Population 2002
% Change 1991 - 2002**

- 7.9% - -6.5%
- 6.4% - -3.9%
- 3.8% - 0%
- +0.1% - +17.1%
- +17.2% - +30.7%
- Urban EDs

Population - Clew Bay Area Density of Population per square Kilometre 2002

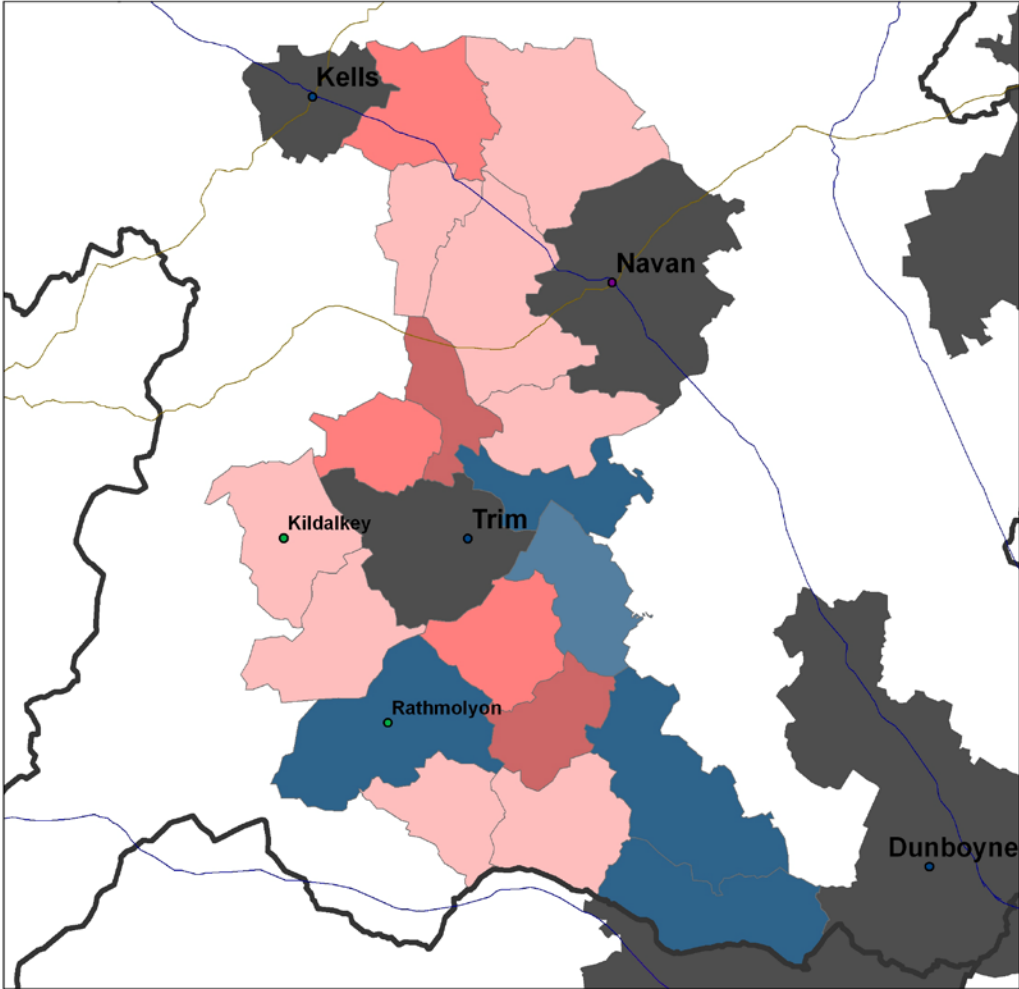


South Meath

From 1991 to 2002 there was population growth of 27% in the South Meath study area. In a number of cases where its towns were unable to absorb the strong growth experienced throughout the county, growth tended to concentrate in the urban hinterland areas instead (Maps 6.3 and 6.4). For example, Trim Rural ED had a population increase of 60% (from 3,420 to 5,442 people) while the town had a decline of 18% (from 1,784 to 1,447 people) over the same period. In addition, Navan Rural ED had a population increase of 70% (from 10,549 to 18,020) while Navan town had a minor loss of -0.3% (from 3,415 to 3,406). South Meath, although having some of the strongest growth in the country also experienced areas of decline. Decline occurred in the southeast of the study area, with the greatest loss occurring in the Rodanstown ED (-6%) adjacent to Dunboyne. In summary the population characteristics of South Meath from 1991 to 2002, are:

1. strong overall growth
2. non-absorption of population growth into towns
3. direct hinterlands of towns had the greatest absorption of growth
4. slower growth relative to urban hinterlands in outer rural EDs

Population - South Meath Percentage Change in Population 1991 to 2002



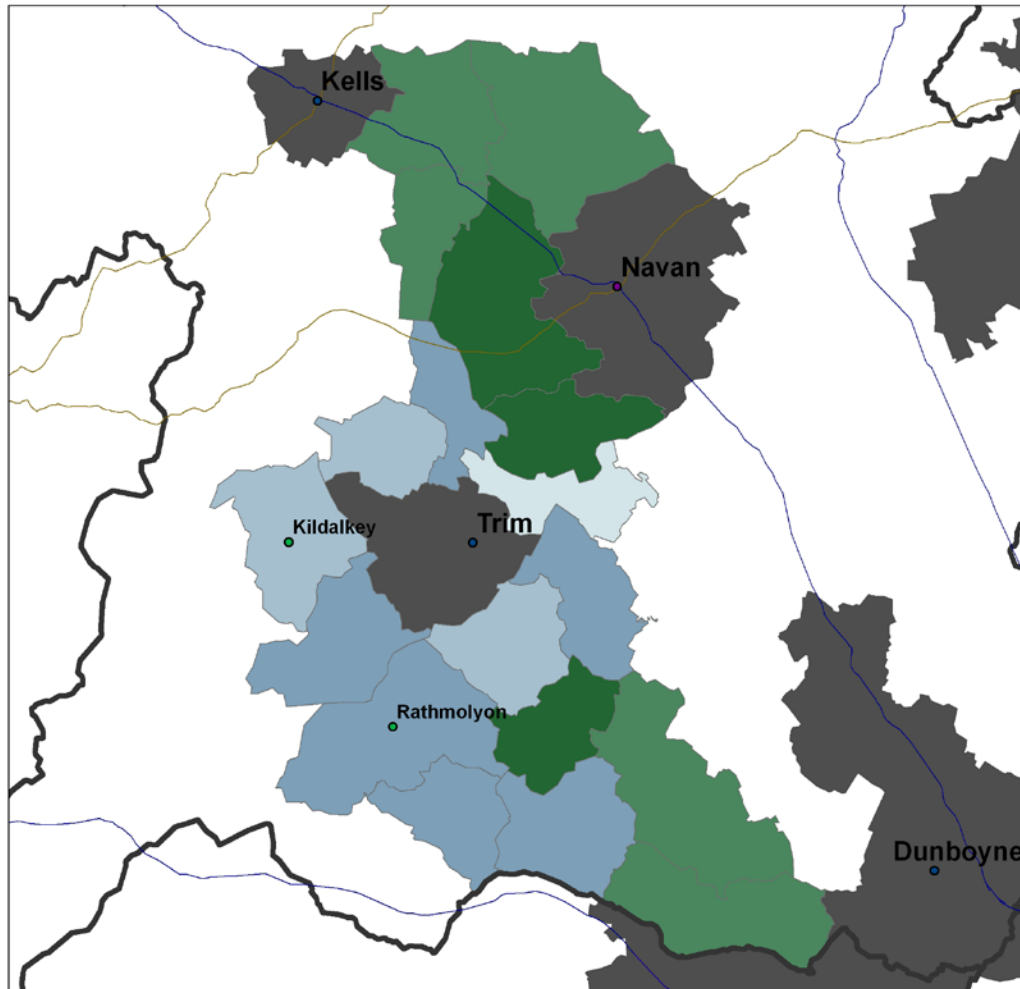
Roads
— Motorway
— National Primary Road
— National Secondary Road

Average 9.4
Std Deviation 11.0

**South Meath Population 2002
% Change 1991 to 2002**

- 6.3% - -1.1%
- 1% - 0%
- +0.1% - +11.5%
- +11.6% - +16.3%
- +16.4% - +38.5%
- Urban EDs

Population - South Meath Density of Population per square Kilometre 2002



Roads

- Motorway
- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Average 33.6
Std Deviation 11.5

**South Meath Population 2002
Population Density 2002**

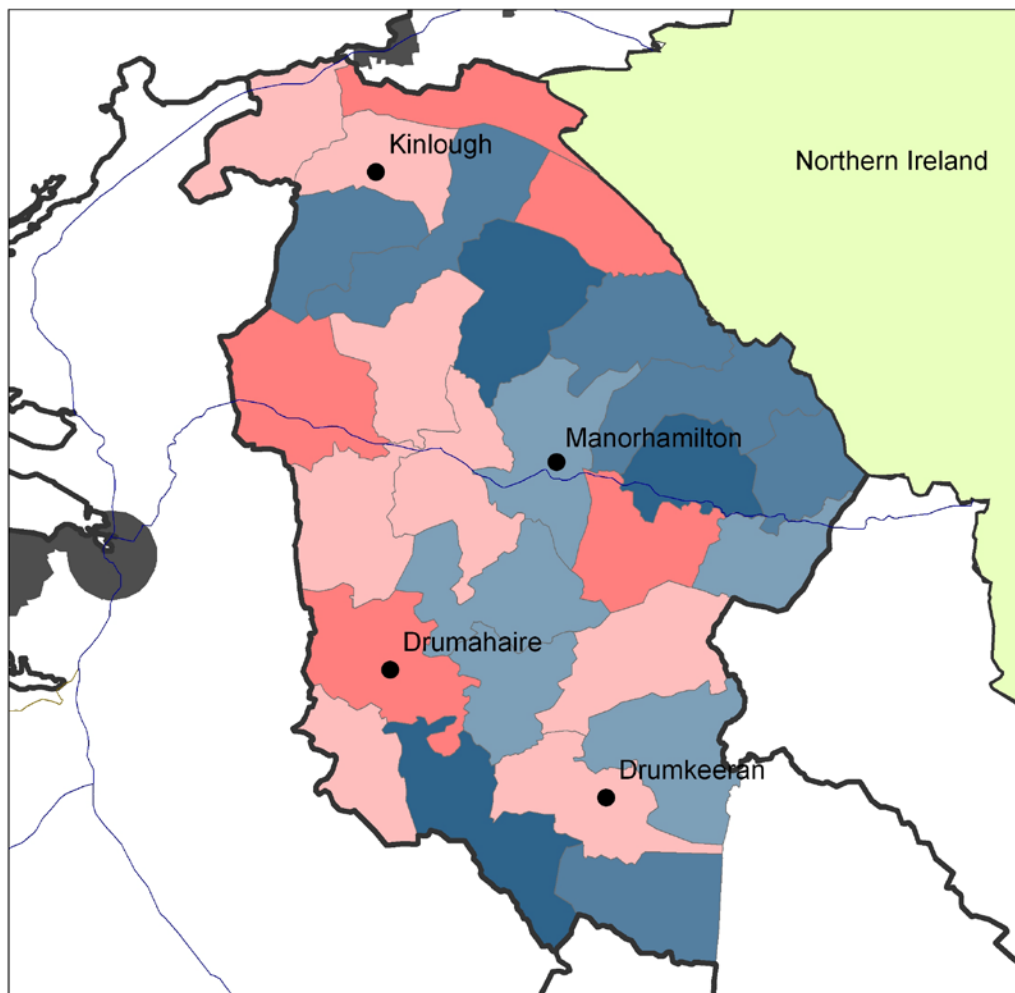
- 14.8
- 14.9 - 23.6
- 23.7 - 31.7
- 31.8 - 38.6
- 38.7 - 67.3
- Urban EDs

North Leitrim

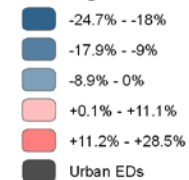
County Leitrim experienced its first increase in population since the early 1900s in 2002. From 1996 to 2002 there was growth of 3% balancing out to 2% over the 1990s. The greatest growth occurred in the south of the County while in the study area of North Leitrim there was an average growth of 1%. In examining Maps 6.5 and 6.6 there are clearly equal areas of decline and growth. North Leitrim displays similar population traits in its towns to Meath whereby there was an inability to absorb growth (although it should be noted that in the North Leitrim study area, the 1991 base numbers were low to begin with). In the case of Leitrim towns this inability to absorb growth is attributed to unprecedented growth, or at the very least a holding of the population in the late 1990s, and the presence of a weak urban fabric which resulted in rural overspill. For example, Manorhamilton, the largest town in the area at 927 persons in 2002, had a population decline of -7% since 1991. The other main towns in North Leitrim, Drumahaire and Drumkeeran, also experienced declines. Their corresponding EDs did, however, have growth with Drumahaire having a rise in population of 17%. Kinlough was the strongest growing settlement despite declines in the early 1990s (1991 to 1996: -6%) with an overall growth of 10%. Its surrounding EDs also experienced very strong growth of up to 20%. North Leitrim also displays some of the characteristics of edge populations. Kinlough and its environs is a good example of this whereby there is a high density population between the coast and the mountainous, less habitable areas and its location on the main route to Sligo town adds pressure from the commuter population. In summary the population characteristics of North Leitrim from 1991 to 2002, are:

1. slow overall growth (1%) but after years of decline
2. high population density at the coastal edge
3. non-absorption of towns resulting in rural overspill

Population - North Leitrim Percentage Change in Population 1991 to 2002



**North Leitrim Population 2002
% Change 1991 - 2002**



Roads

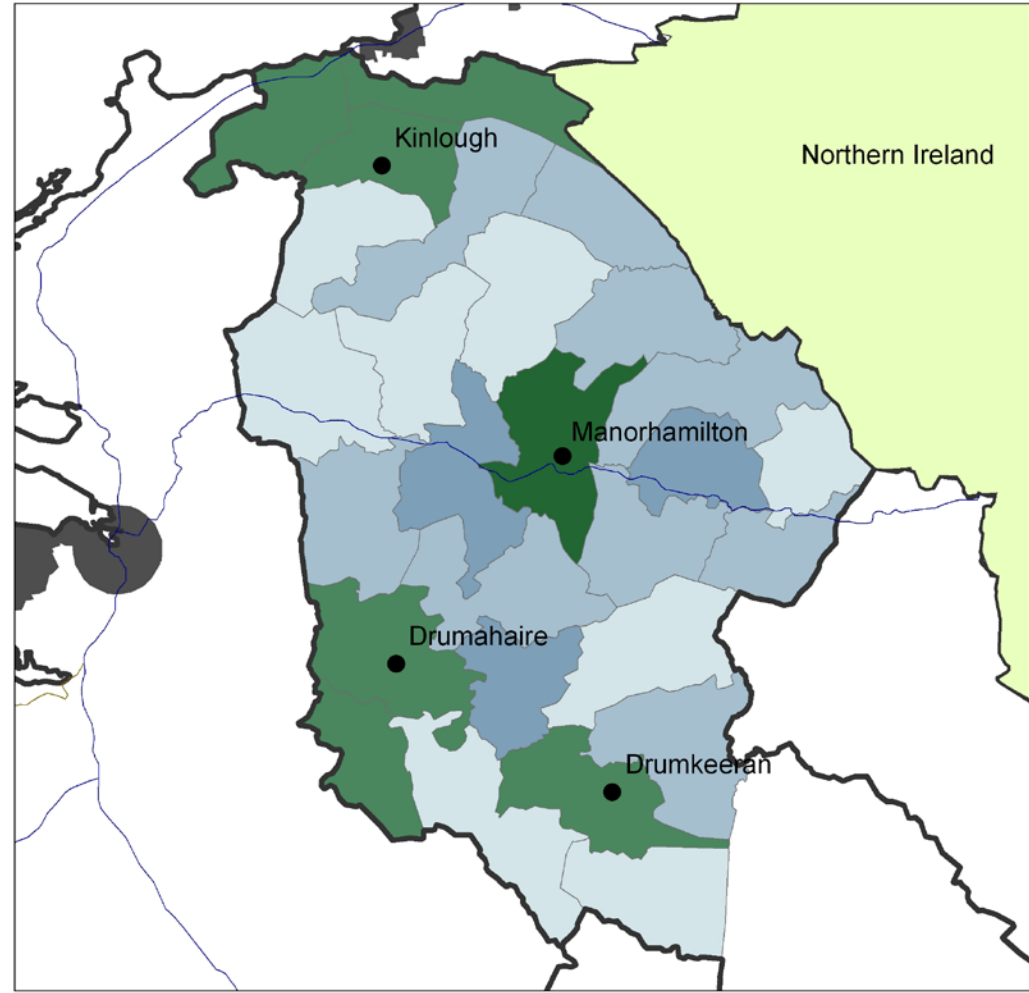
- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Average 0.9
Std Deviation 13.7



Population - North Leitrim

Density of Population per square Kilometre 2002



North Leitrim Population 2002

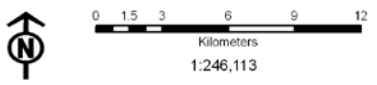
Density 2002

- 2.9 - 6.5
- 6.6 - 9.1
- 9.2 - 13.1
- 13.2 - 28.7
- 28.8 - 45.9
- Urban EDs

Roads

- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

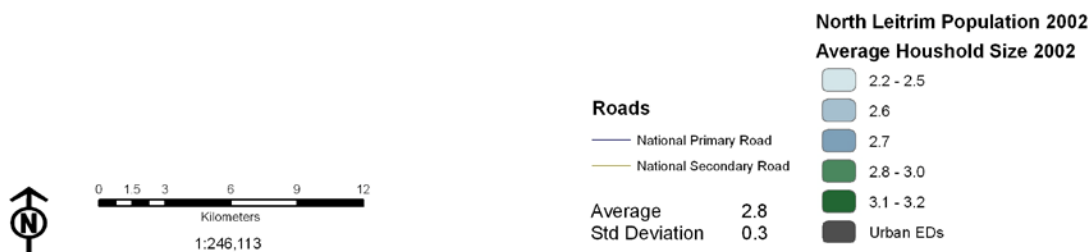
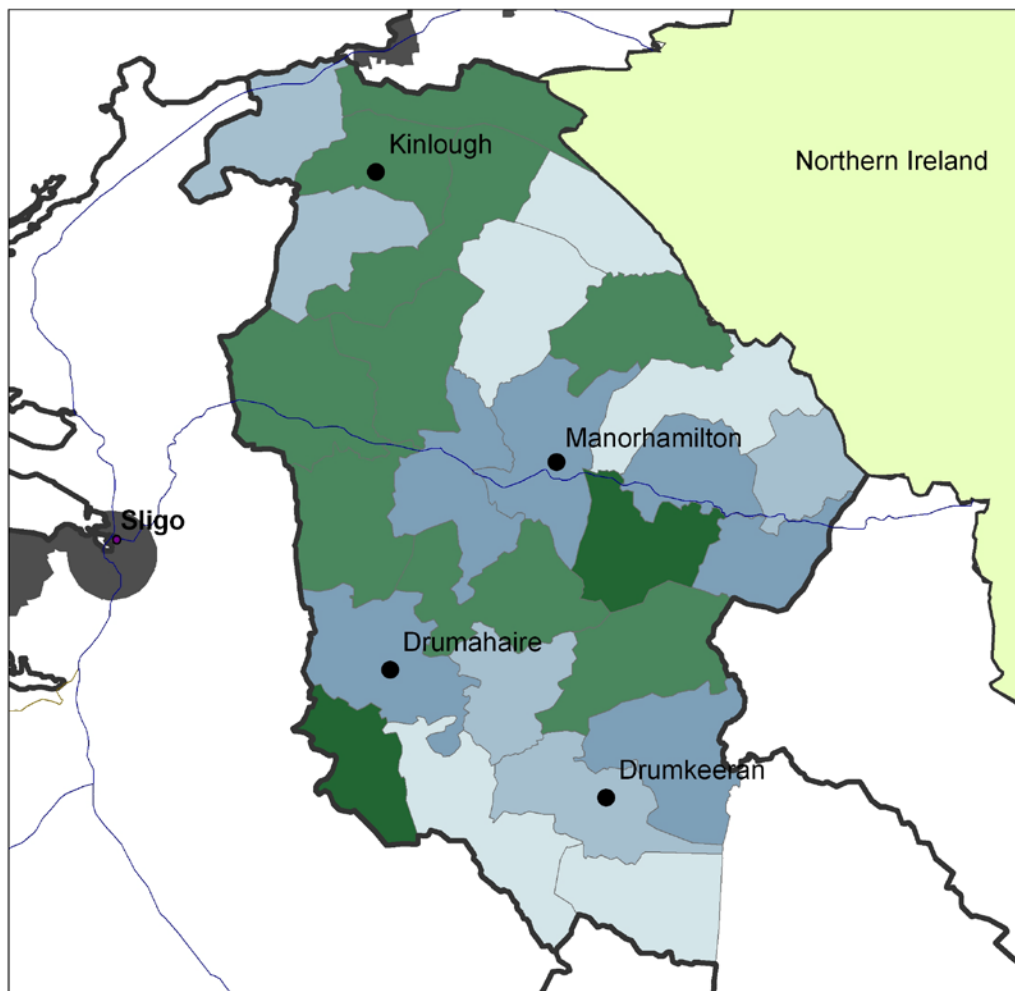
Average 11.8
Std Deviation 8.9



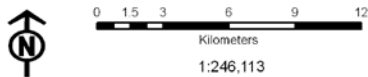
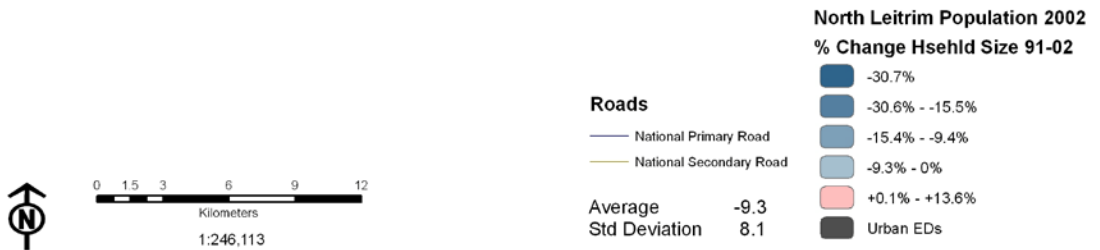
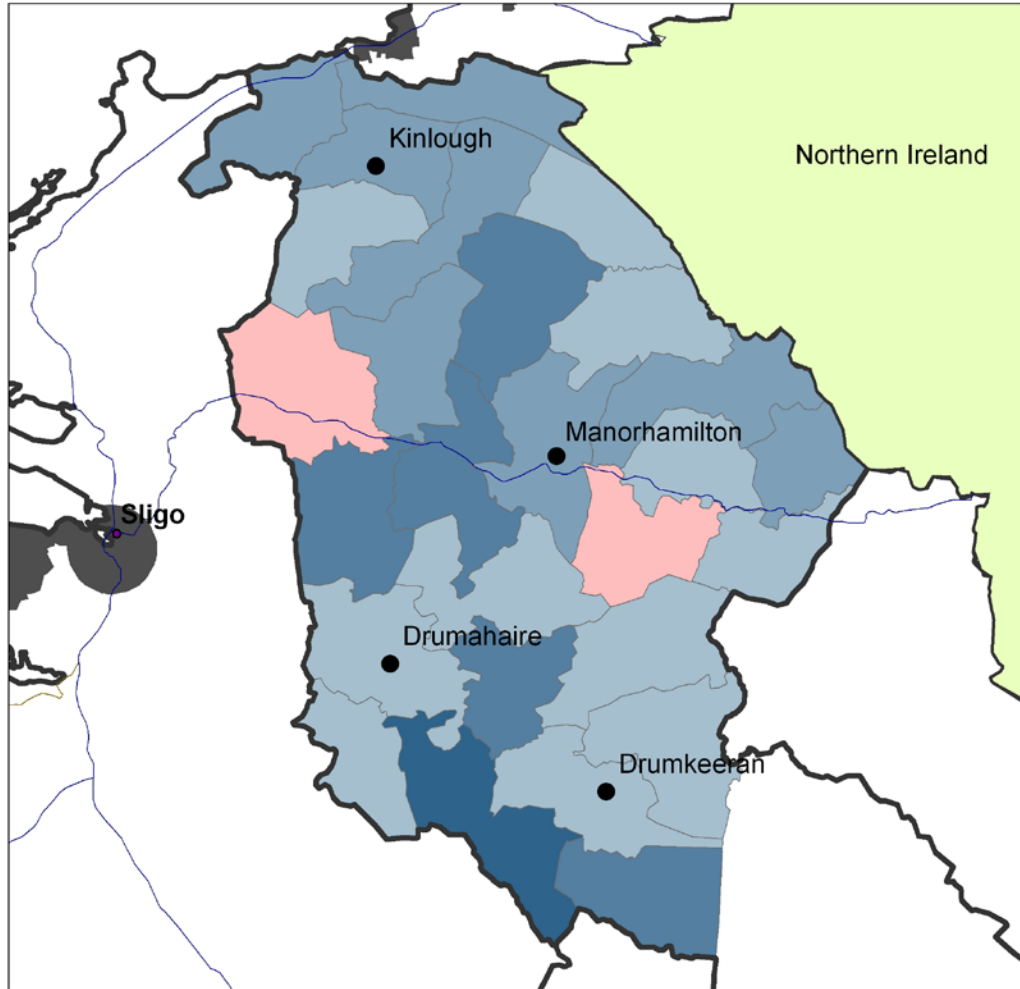
6.1.2 Household Size

An increasing population and its changing spatial pattern is one of a number of factors in housing demand and location. The changing household size identified by a number of authors and discussed in Section 2.2 has an equally important impact on housing. The combination of population growth and declining household size contributed to 80% of total housing demand in the period 1991 to 2002. For example, although North Leitrim had a slight population increase, the 9% decline in household size contributed to a growth in the number of households (Maps 6.7 and 6.8). Smaller household size in this study area is characterised by contracting, dependent households, where there has been long-term depopulation. Leitrim has some of the smallest average households in the state, with a history of long-term population decline. However, the 1990s was an uncharacteristic period for North Leitrim with population growth for the first time in decades. The Clew Bay area had the same average household size as the national level and a similar fall of 12% (Maps 6.9 and 6.10). Both North Leitrim and the Clew Bay areas are typical of Western marginal and weak rural areas in that there is an average or below average household size coupled with declines of between 12% to 9%. South Meath, in contrast, has an average household size slightly above the national level with a decline of around 10% from 1991 to 2002 (Maps 6.11 and 6.12).

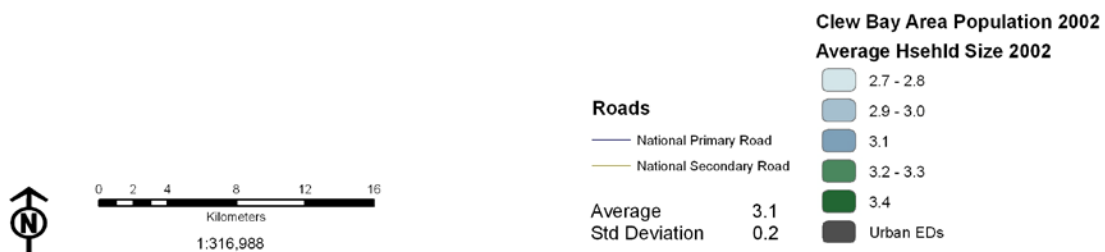
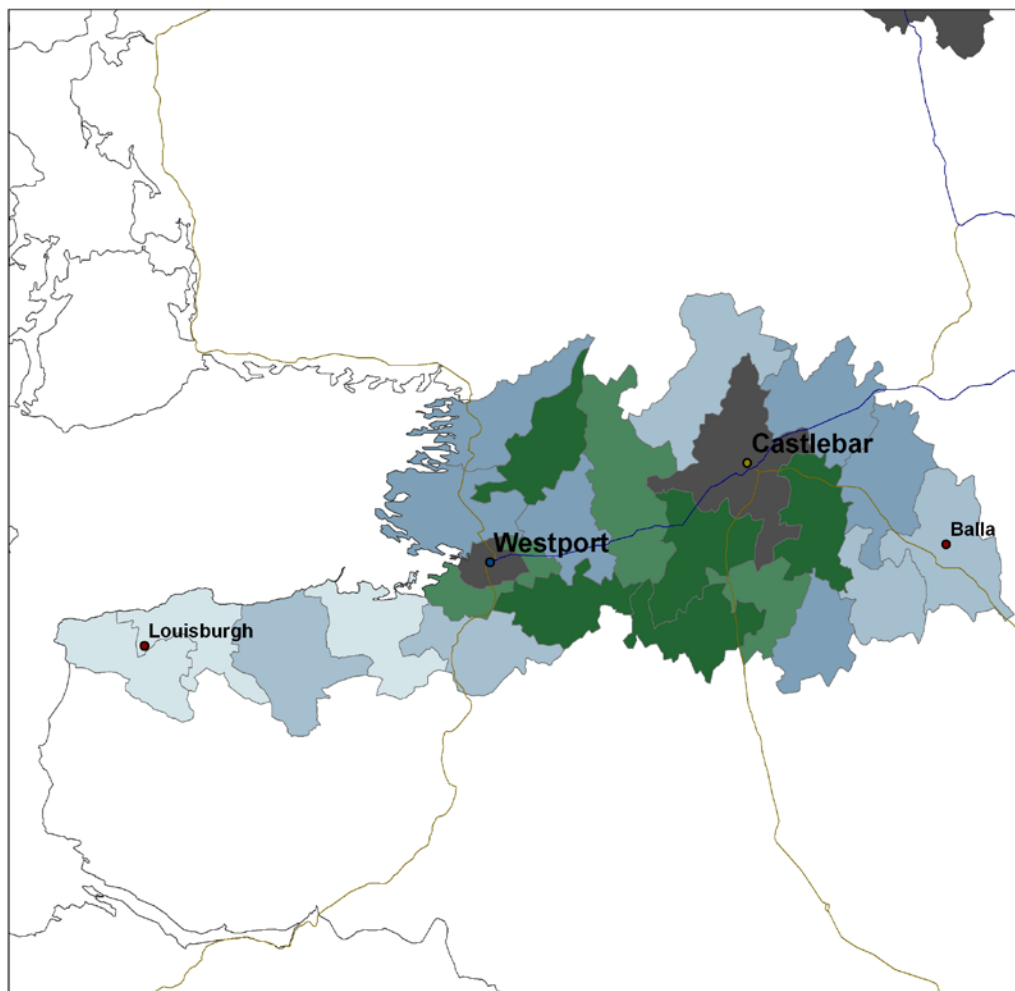
Population - North Leitrim Average Household Size 2002



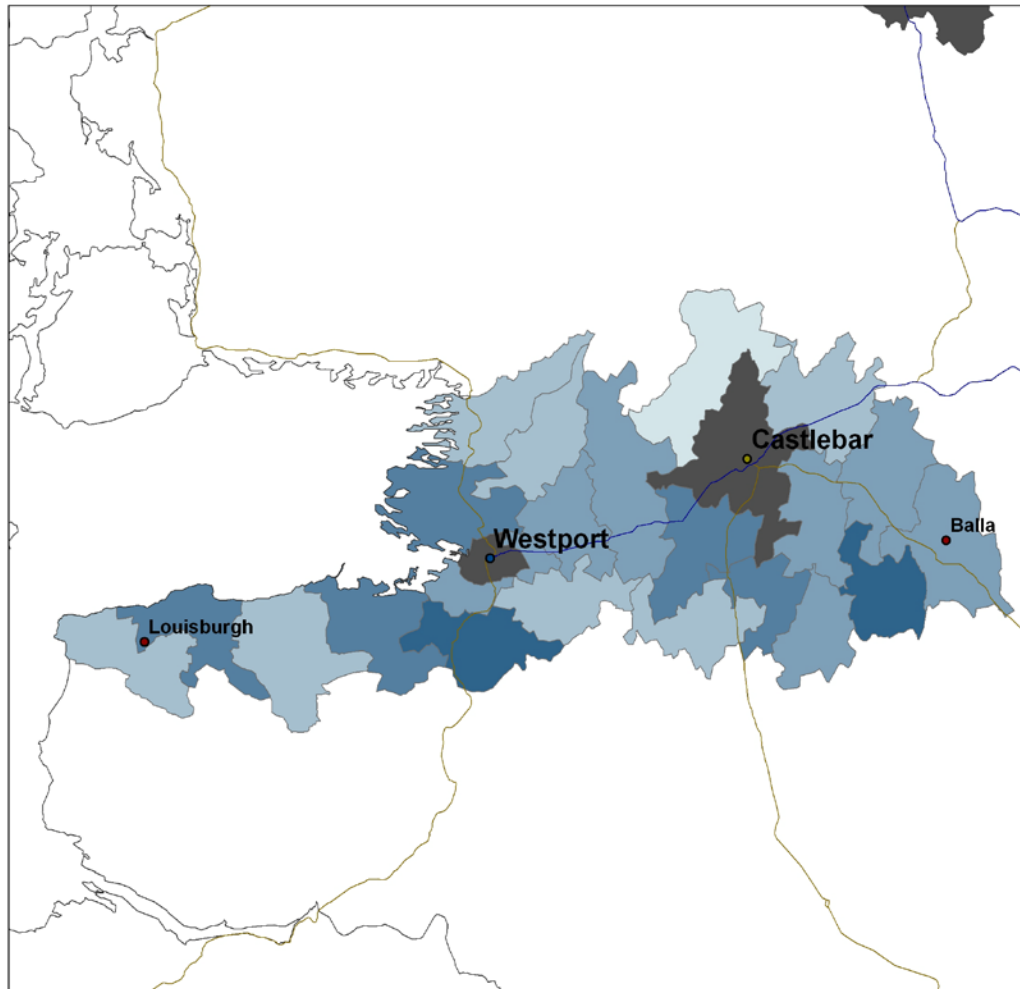
Population - North Leitrim Percentage Change in Average Household Size 1991 to 2002



Population - Clew Bay Area, Mayo Average Household Size 2002



Population - Clew Bay Area, Mayo Percentage Change in Average Household Size 1991 to 2002



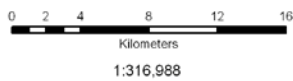
**Clew Bay Area Population 2002
% Change Hsehd Size 91-02**

Roads

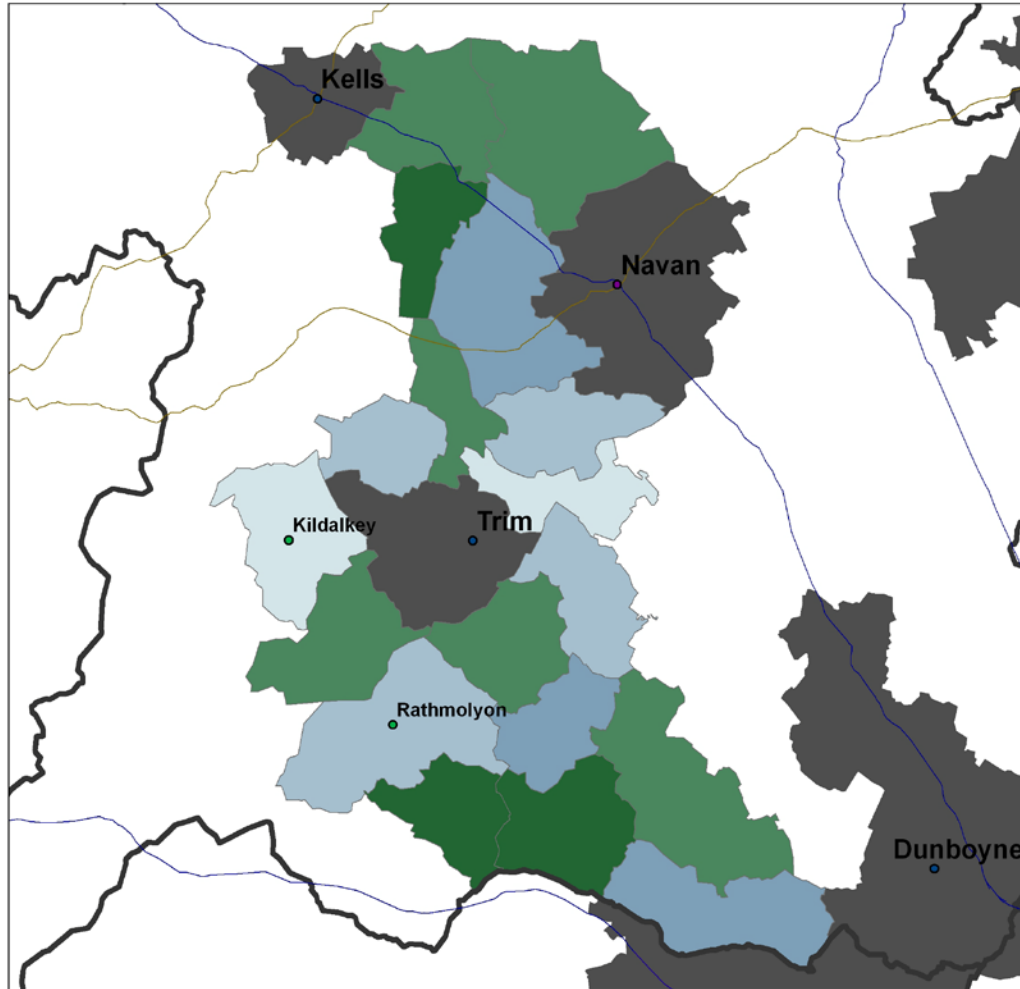
- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Average -12.6
Std Deviation 5.2

- 23.5 - -20.5
- 20.4 - -16.0
- 15.9 - -11.4
- 11.3 - -6.0
- 5.9 - -2.0
- Urban EDs



Population - South Meath Average Household Size 2002



South Meath Population 2002
Average Hsehd Size 2002

Roads

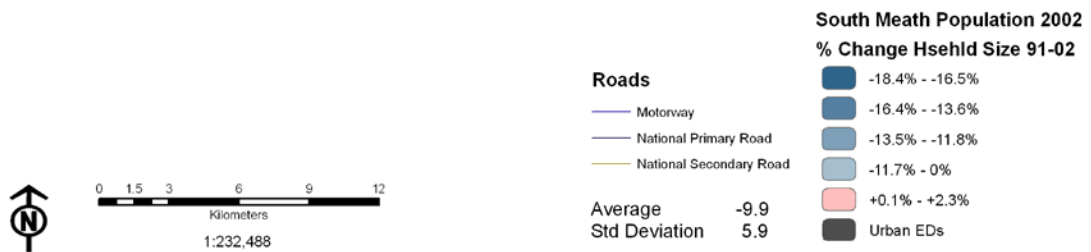
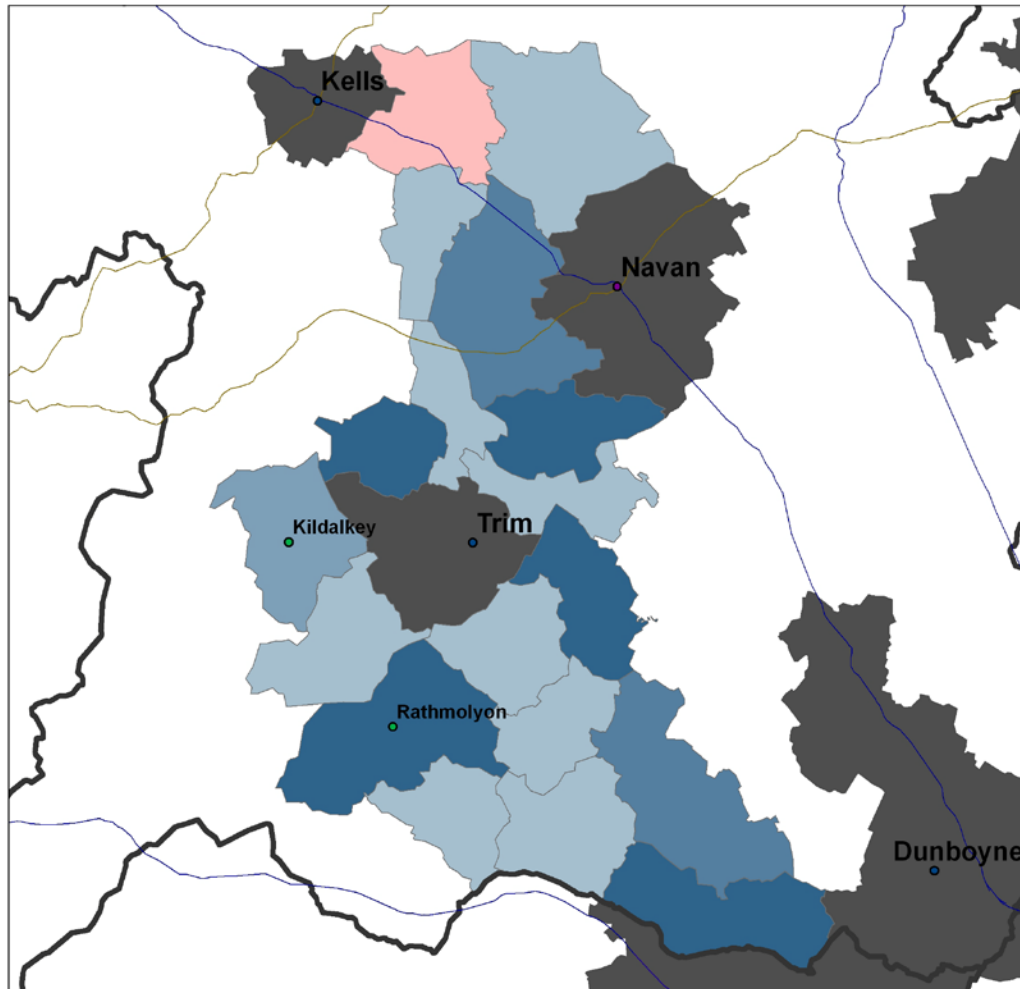
- Motorway
- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Average 3.3
Std Deviation 0.3

- 2.9
- 3.0 - 3.2
- 3.3
- 3.4 - 3.5
- 3.6
- Urban EDs



Population - South Meath Percentage Change in Average Household Size 1991 to 2002



6.1.3 Implications for Rural Dwelling Construction

Almost three quarters of all dwellings in the Irish countryside are classified as Single Rural Dwellings. The detailed examination of SRD distribution and density in Chapter Four pinpointed that up to half of all SRDs are located in peri-urban and strong rural areas concentrated in the east and southeast of the country. From the 1970s to 2002 there has been a shift in the construction of SRDs with a reversal in the share and distribution from traditional peripheral rural areas to growing urbanised centres and their hinterlands. In addition, the 1990s saw a consolidation of already relatively high dwelling densities in two key areas: peri-urban centres, more concentrated in the east but present throughout the countryside adjacent to towns and cities, and in coastal, edge zones particularly prevalent in the west. The three case study areas selected for this research represent one or more of the main trends identified in Chapter Four. South Meath is located within the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), characterised by peri-urban and strong rural area types. Such areas experience strong population growth and large urban centres. North Leitrim represents the weak and marginal rural area types with low population growth, poor agricultural land, fragmented land ownership and a weak urban fabric. Finally, the Clew Bay area has a number of contrasting rural types. These are the contrasting peri-urban areas coupled with prevalent weak area types and the presence of some marginal EDs. Mayo tends to share some of the characteristics of the two other case study areas with the addition of being a prominent tourism region.

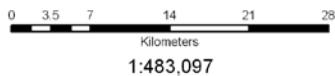
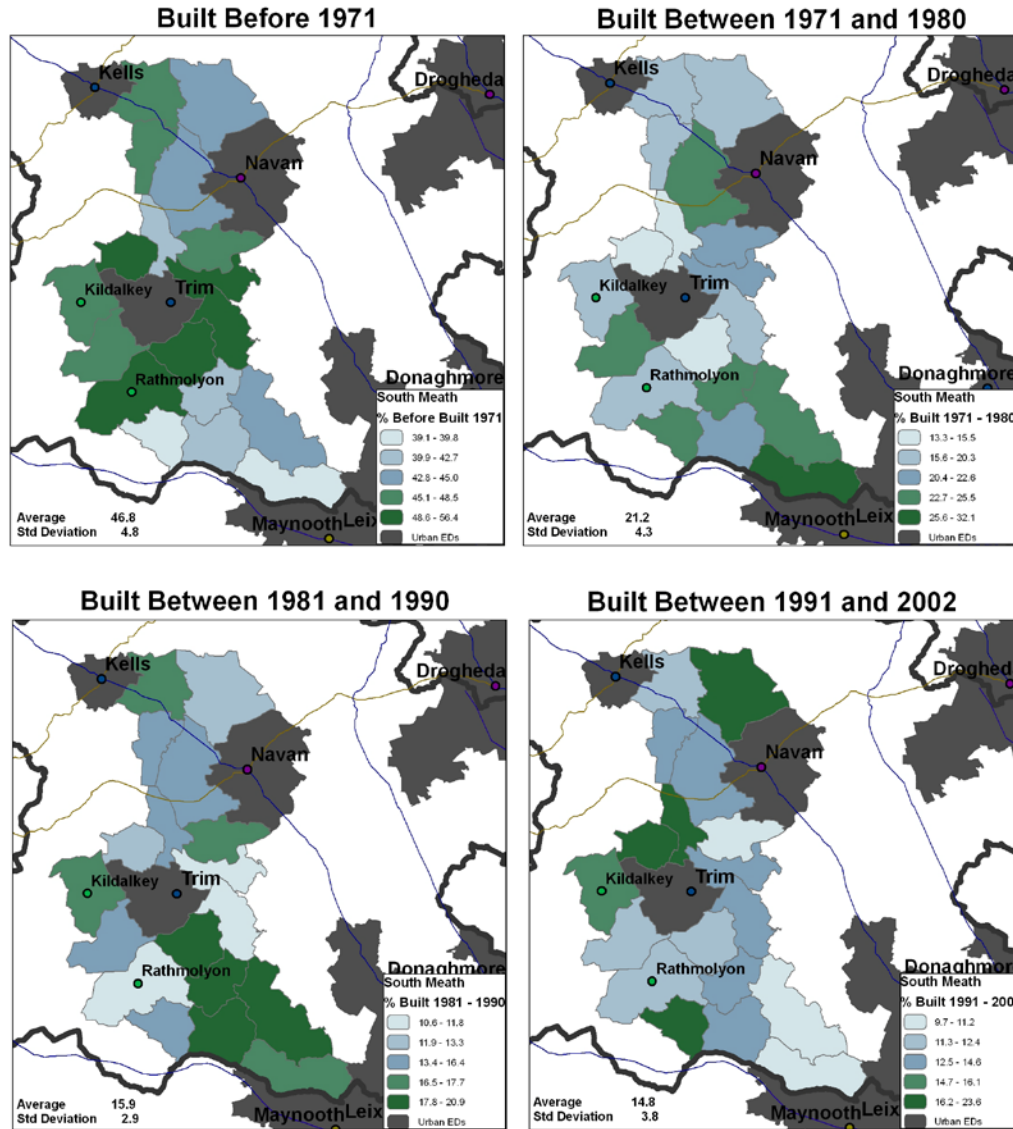
South Meath

The South Meath case study area is characterised by peri-urban and strong rural area types. As a result two processes operate within this area: (i) the influence of urban settlements, particularly the potential demand for housing in hinterlands; and (ii) good quality agricultural land characterised by large, economically viable farms (Crowley, 2007). These two processes have the potential to create tension between housing demand and supply where there is high demand for housing due to the presence of urban employment centres coupled with a lack of housing land in the countryside due to the strength of the agricultural economy. Together with a restrictive planning policy (see Section 6.4.2), this has directed housing into clustered settlements such as in the direct hinterland of Trim and Navan (classified as urban in the Rural Typology). With the population of the two largest towns in the case study area not growing as would be expected in the 1990s, the overspill into the Trim Rural and Navan Rural ED's resulted

in 17% and 11% of dwellings classified as SRDs respectively (Maps 6.13 and 6.14; and Table 6.1). Excluding the period before 1971, the 1990s had the highest levels of SRD construction in the country. This is not the case with South Meath where below 15% of inhabited SRDs were built in the same period. This proportion represents a decrease in the amount of SRDs built since the 1970s in Meath, with the density of SRDs per square kilometre also decreasing. In summary, the main characteristics of SRD construction in South Meath, are:

1. a large share of SRDs (84%) are found in the rural EDs due to high levels of construction before and during the 1970s;
2. from the 1980s onwards there is a declining level of SRD building with a falling density (1.2 in 1990s) and percentage share (average of 15%); and
3. evidence of some inter- and intra-county overspill, most evident in the case of Ardraccon ED adjacent to Navan Rural with a density of up to 12 SRDs per square km, and Kilmore and Rodanstown close to Dublin.

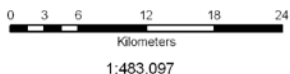
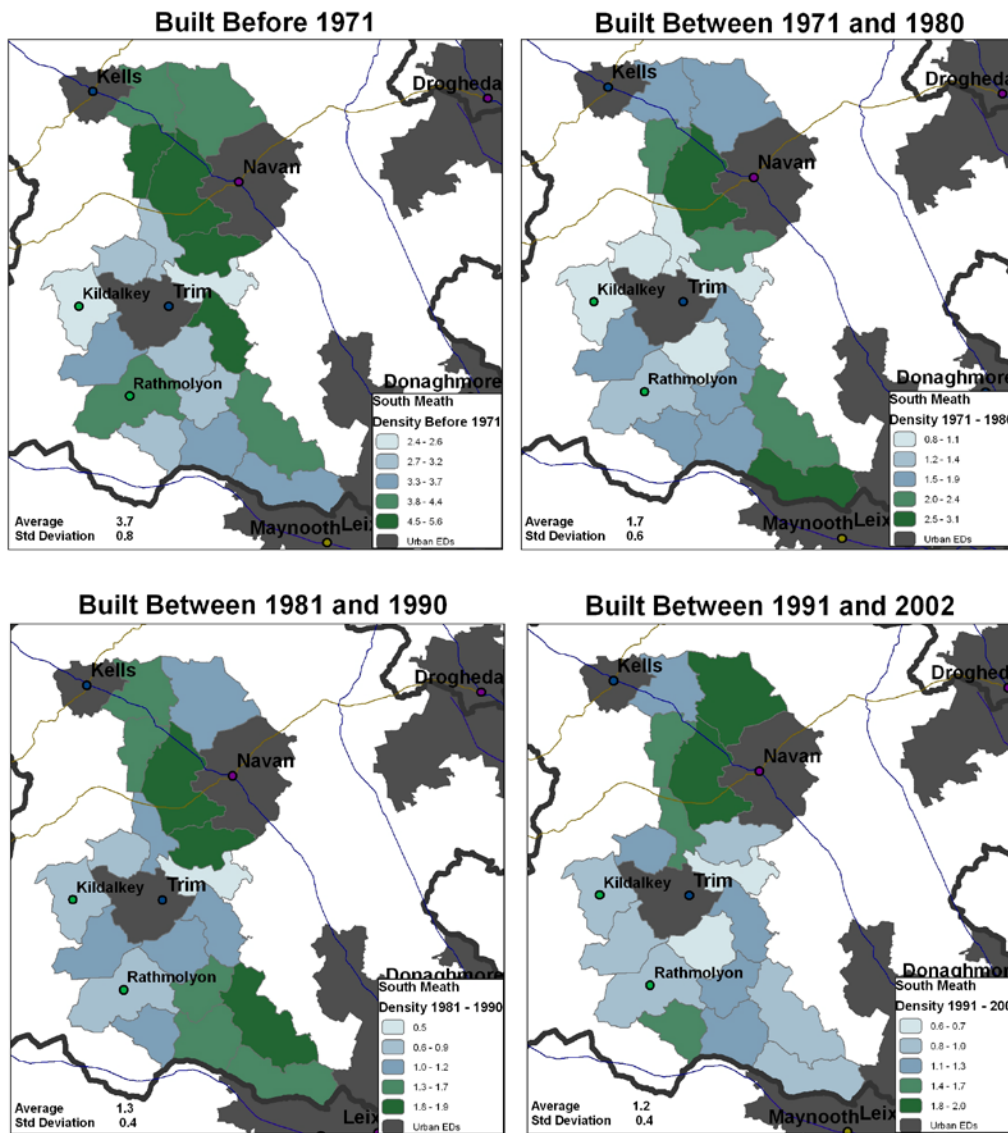
South Meath - Single Rural Dwellings Percentage Built in Each Period



Roads

- Motorway
- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

South Meath - Single Rural Dwellings Density per Square Kilometre by Period



Roads

- Motorway
- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Electoral Division	Before 1971	1971 to 1980	1981 to 1990	1991 to 2002	Total Number
Kilmore	43.7	25.5	19.0	11.2	357
Rodanstown	39.1	32.1	17.2	10.6	302
Martry	48.3	20.3	16.3	14.5	172
Teltown	48.5	18.9	17.6	12.3	227
Ardbraccan	44.7	24.3	15.2	14.3	481
Bective	48.4	22.6	17.7	9.7	186
Ballyconnell	47.7	23.8	15.0	12.4	193
Clonmacduff	42.7	15.5	16.4	23.6	110
Gallow	40.9	22.2	20.9	14.2	225
Galtrim	51.7	19.1	11.8	14.6	178
Kilbride	52.0	13.3	13.3	20.4	98
Kilcooly	51.8	22.4	10.6	14.1	85
Kildalkey	47.4	19.7	16.8	16.1	137
Laracor	53.7	15.4	18.7	12.2	123
Rahinstown	39.8	25.0	15.6	19.5	128
Rathmolyon	56.4	18.6	11.5	12.2	296
Rathmore	48.8	22.1	12.2	16.9	213
Summerhill	41.9	24.0	20.2	14.0	129
Total	46.6	22.4	16.0	13.8	3640

North Leitrim

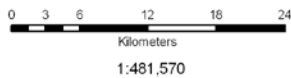
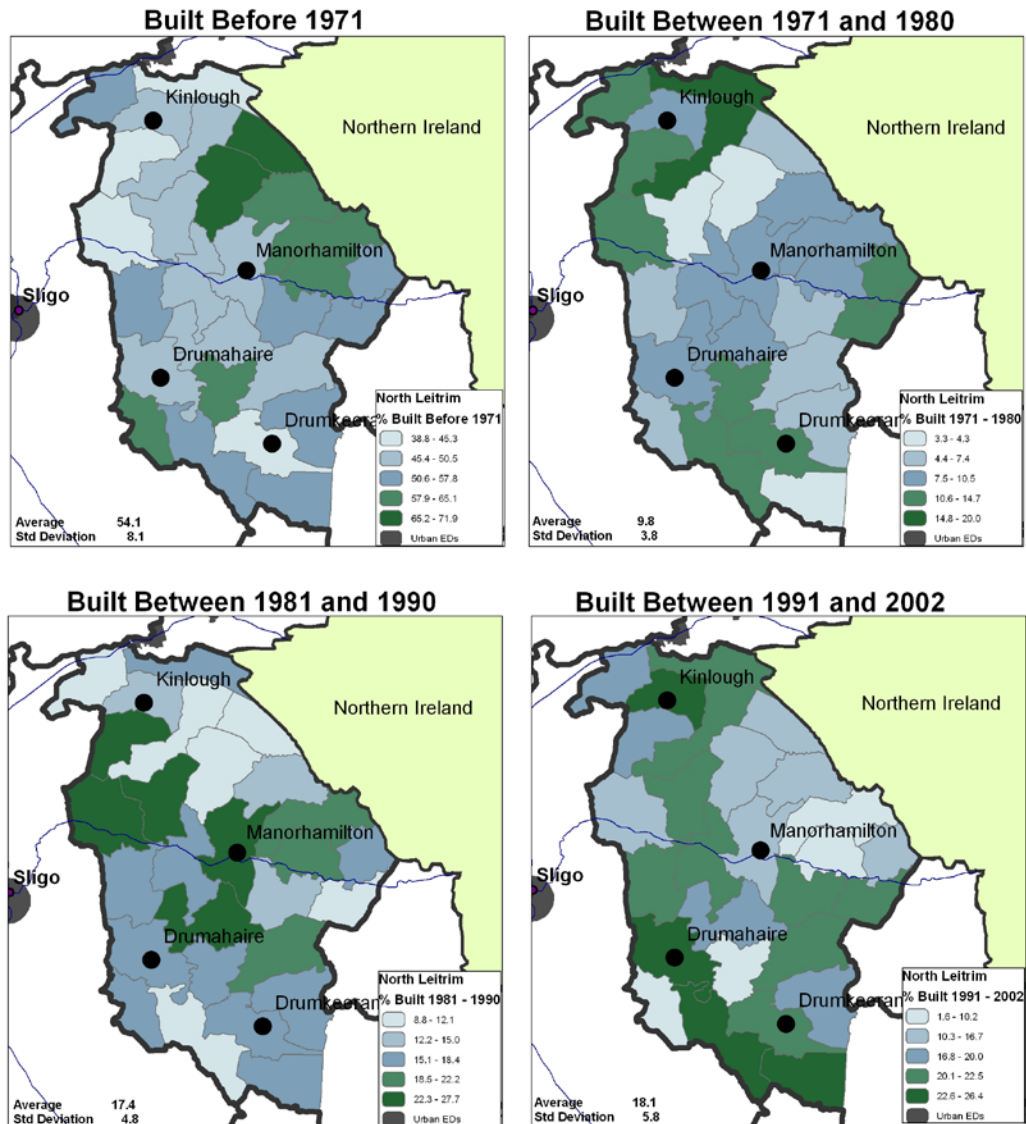
North Leitrim has two distinctive population characteristics over recent decades: (i) a decline until the 1990s when it first began to ‘hold’ the population; and (ii) relatively high densities in the (small) coastal zone and in urban hinterlands due to adjacent uninhabitable and/or inaccessible areas. Some similar trends in the pattern of population change can be identified in South Meath and North Leitrim, for example, population inertia in the main towns. In North Leitrim the main town of Manorhamilton and others such as Drumahaire and Drumkeeran had declines in population with strong growth in their hinterlands. In 2002, 65% (1966) of all dwellings were classified as SRDs in North Leitrim (Maps 6.15 and 6.16; and Table 6.2). The inclusion of all urban centres in the case study area results in this lower than average representation of SRDs. For example, the Manorhamilton ED has only 30% SRDs due to the presence of a relatively large urban centre (but classified as peri-urban in the Rural Typology). The inability of the main urban centres to absorb population results in very high levels of SRD construction in hinterland areas in the period from 1991 to 2002. Leitrim is unique

in that it experienced its first population growth in the 1990s. Despite this, SRD construction was steady throughout the 1970s and 1980s, while the spatial distribution changed over time in North Leitrim. For example, in the 1970s, construction was more concentrated in the northern coastal area which lies between the growth centres of Bundoran (Co. Donegal) and Sligo. Overall, North Leitrim has an SRD density below the national average reflecting its population characteristics.

The greatest impacts on SRD construction in the North Leitrim case study area are:

1. intercounty impacts: the role of external towns, in this case Bundoran and Sligo, resulting in a concentration of building in the north coastal zone, particularly in the 1970s;
2. in the 1990s, a greater share and higher density of SRD building along national primary roads; and
3. the influence of towns on surrounding areas where it was more likely that an absorption of population and new house building occurred in urban hinterlands.

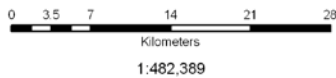
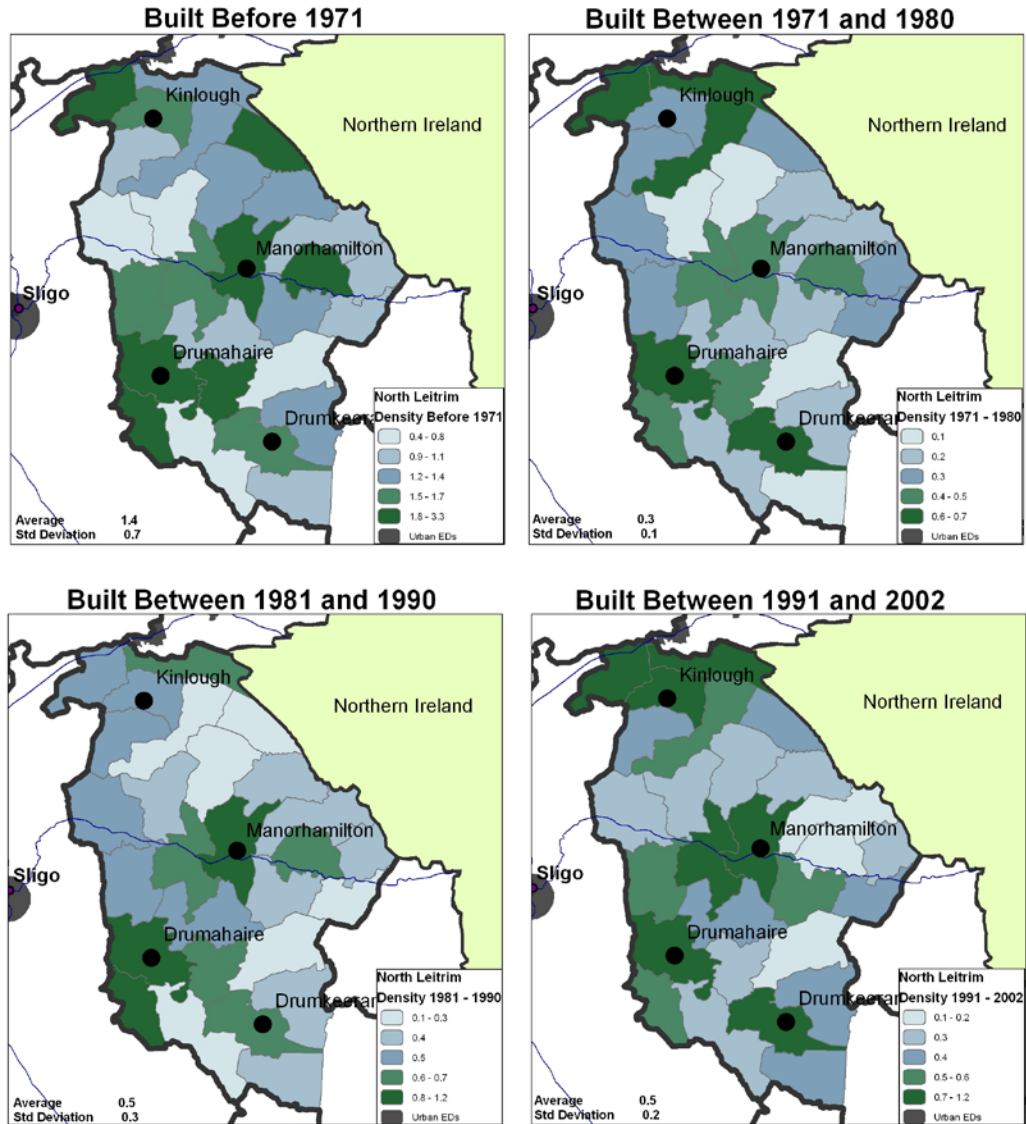
North Leitrim - Single Rural Dwellings Percentage Built in Each Period



Roads

- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

North Leitrim - Single Rural Dwellings Density per Square Kilometre by Period



Roads

- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Electoral Division	Before 1971	1971 to 1980	1981 to 1990	1991 to 2002	Total Number
Aghanlish	44.7	12.8	23.4	19.1	47
Gubacreeny	38.8	19.4	18.4	21.4	98
Kinlough	50.5	8.8	14.3	26.4	91
Melvin	71.9	7.0	8.8	12.3	57
Tullaghan	57.8	11.2	12.1	18.1	116
Ballaghameehan	61.7	8.3	15.0	15.0	60
Belhavel	63.9	11.1	18.1	6.9	72
Cloonclare	53.5	11.6	11.6	20.9	43
Cloonlogher	47.9	8.5	25.4	18.3	71
Drumahaire	48.6	9.8	17.3	23.7	173
Drumkeeran	45.3	14.7	17.9	22.1	95
Glenade	48.9	4.3	25.5	21.3	47
Glenaniff	70.0	3.3	11.7	15.0	60
Glenboy	57.6	6.8	13.6	22.0	59
Glencar	44.6	12.3	27.7	15.4	65
Glenfarm	55.6	11.1	16.7	16.7	36
Killanummery	63.3	7.1	18.4	10.2	98
Killarga	48.1	7.4	22.2	22.2	27
Kiltyclogher	62.0	10.0	20.0	8.0	50
Lurganboy	49.5	10.5	17.9	22.1	95
Mahanagh	57.3	6.7	16.0	20.0	75
Manorhamilton	48.1	9.1	24.0	16.2	154
Munakill	65.1	9.5	20.6	1.6	63
Sramore	53.0	7.2	16.9	21.7	83
St Patrick's	53.1	4.1	16.3	24.5	49
Garvagh/Arigna	52.4	11.9	11.9	23.8	42
Aghalateeve/Aghavoghil	47.5	20.0	10.0	22.5	40
Total	53.4	9.9	17.7	18.3	1966

Clew Bay Area

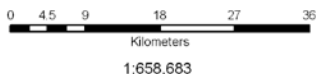
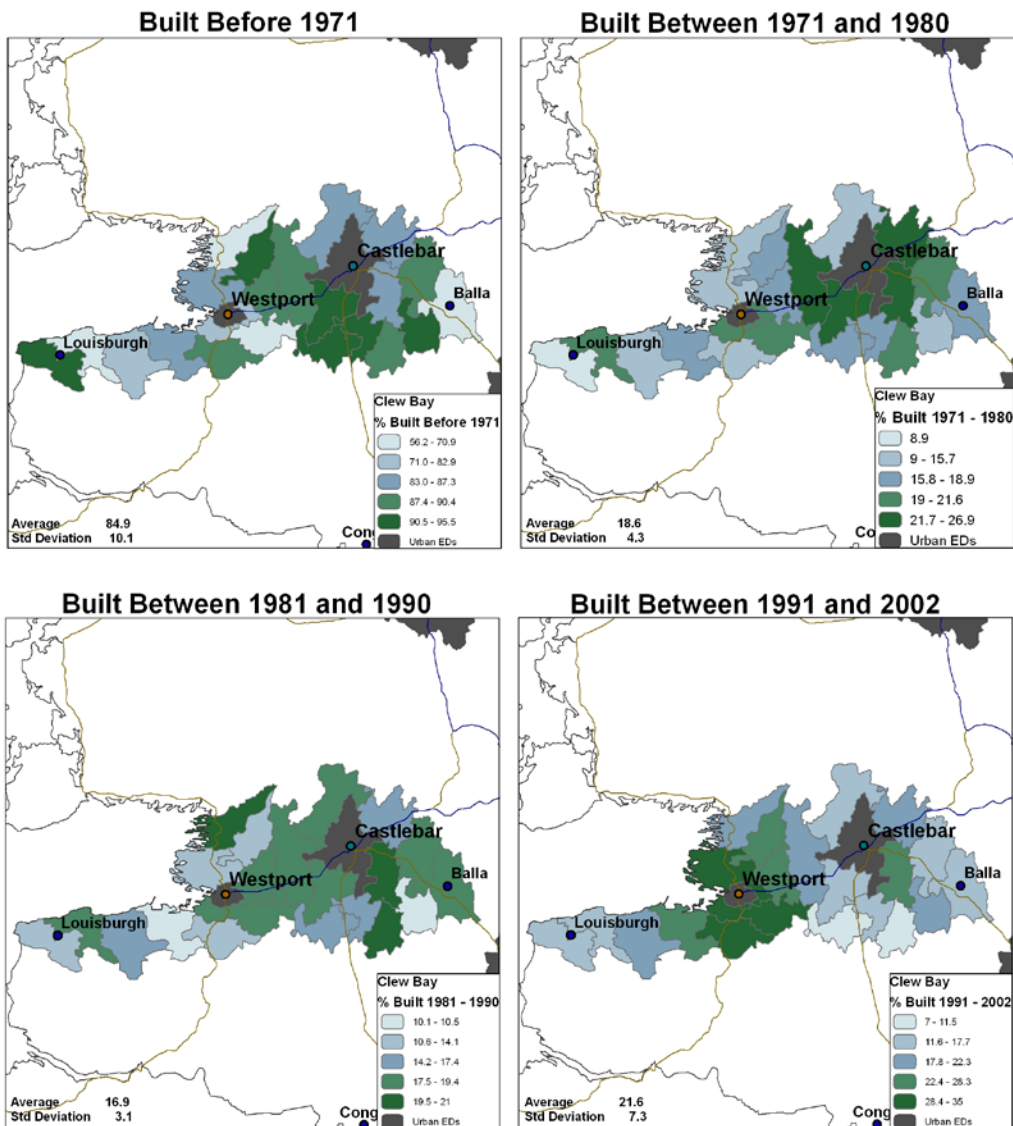
Population change and SRD construction in the Clew Bay area is more in keeping with national averages with just under 70% of all dwellings classified as SRDs but the presence of an above average density of 8 per square kilometre. The greatest level of new development took place in Westport and Castlebar towns with significant concentrations in the accessible rural hinterlands. Just under half of the current housing stock in the Castlebar hinterland, for instance, was built in the period from 1996 with one fifth in Westport hinterland area (Maps 6.17 and 6.18; and Table 6.3). In total, most

of the housing stock was constructed in the 1990s. For example, in the Murrisk area of Clew Bay, to the north of Croagh Patrick, over a quarter of the total rural dwellings were built since 1991, in one of the most prominent sites in Mayo. In contrast to North Leitrim and South Meath, there was continued population growth within the urban centres with additional evidence of hinterland overspill, although to a lesser extent in Castlebar than in Westport. Reinforcement of the coastal edge population is evident, exemplified by changes in the share and location of SRDs over time. Castlebar dominated in terms of population growth in the pre-1980s period where the largest share of dwellings was built. The 1980s saw a shift in emphasis towards Westport and coastal areas, consolidating in the 1990s with the highest proportion of construction and increasing densities.

The main characteristics of SRD construction in the Clew Bay case study area are:

1. the impact of the two main towns, Castlebar and Westport, which both absorbed population and grew outwards resulting in a concentration of SRD construction in the urban hinterlands; and
2. concentration of high impact SRDs in the scenic, coastal edge zone from Westport to Louisburgh.

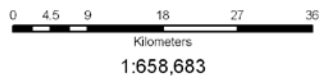
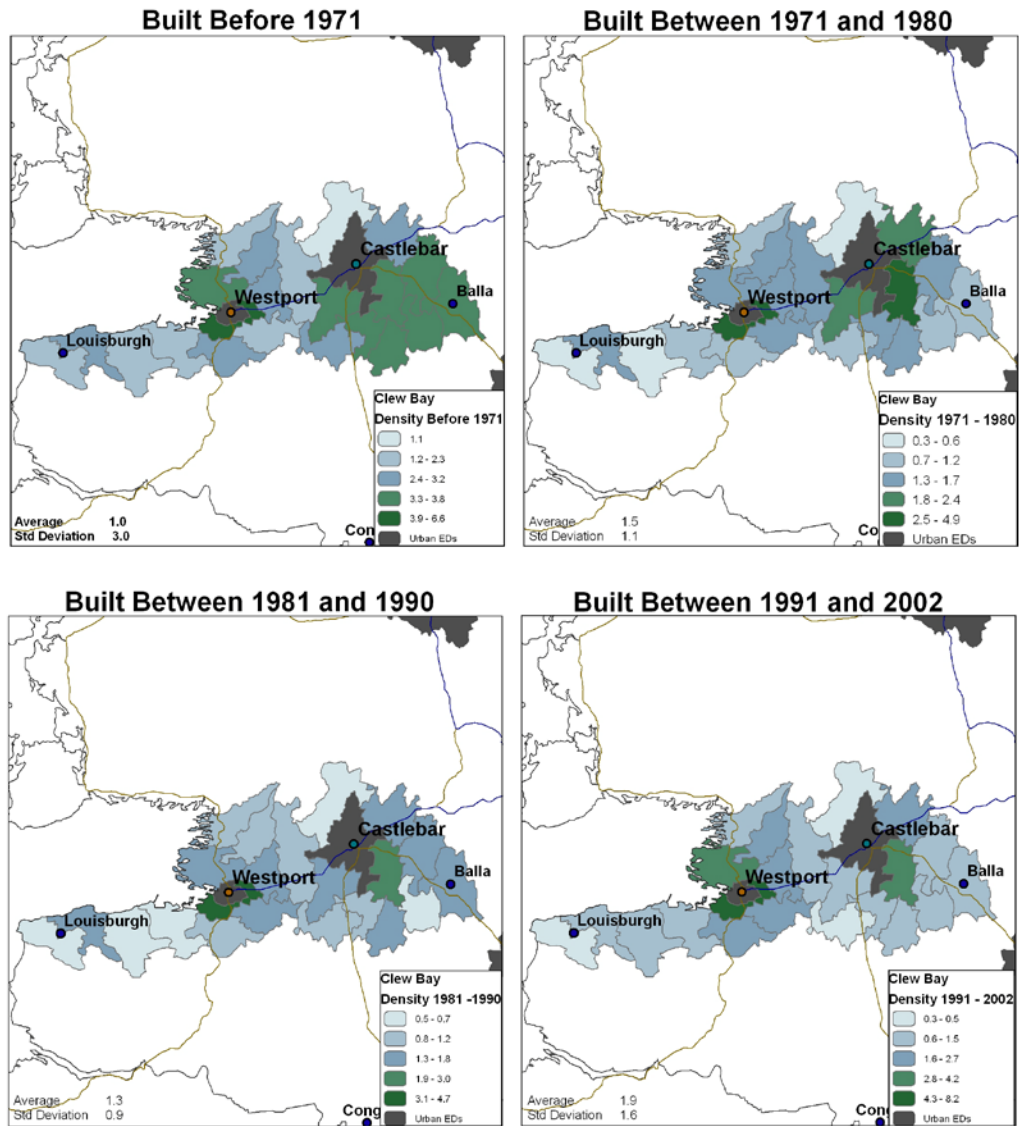
Clew Bay Area - Single Rural Dwellings Percentage Built in Each Period



Roads

- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Clew Bay Area - Single Rural Dwellings Density per Square Kilometre



Roads

- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Electoral Division	Before 1971	1971 to 1980	1981 to 1990	1991 to 2002	Total Number
Balla	50.0	16.8	18.0	14.8	244
Ballinafad	56.1	14.4	10.1	19.4	139
Ballyhean	48.9	18.8	15.8	16.5	133
Breaghwy	25.5	25.5	20.1	28.3	329
Burren	48.2	15.7	19.3	16.9	83
Castlebar Rural	29.6	21.6	19.5	28.8	565
Clogher	44.6	21.6	20.9	11.5	148
Cloonkeen	37.0	26.9	19.4	16.2	216
Killavally	57.4	17.4	17.4	7.0	115
Manulla	41.6	20.4	19.0	17.7	226
Turlough	36.0	23.4	16.9	22.3	278
Aghagower North	26.7	19.8	19.2	31.4	172
Clogher	33.7	18.3	18.3	26.9	208
Croagh Patrick	43.4	18.9	10.5	27.3	143
Derryloughan	44.2	15.2	21.0	18.8	138
Emlagh	63.3	8.9	13.3	14.4	90
Island Eady	33.6	26.4	18.1	21.1	265
Kilmeena	37.8	14.1	13.1	35.0	320
Kilsallagh	45.3	14.8	16.4	21.9	128
Knappagh	38.7	13.8	13.3	32.6	181
Louisburgh	40.4	19.9	18.5	17.1	146
Westport Rural	26.6	19.9	18.9	33.2	376
Total	37.8	19.8	17.5	23.9	4643

6.1.4 Summary Remarks

In the period 1991 to 2002 an increasing population, the consolidation of high density populations in peri-urban and coastal areas, and a declining household size acted together to greatly impact on the amount, density and distribution of Single Rural Dwelling construction. The greatest growth in SRD construction took place in peri-urban areas regardless of the size of the corresponding towns or cities. In total, the overall population rise of 11% and the average decline in household size of 12% accounted for 80% of all house construction in the 1990s. At the small area level there was widespread growth in SRD construction with pockets of very high development generally associated with urban centres, either due to the spread of previously small, settlements and / or the inability of centres to absorb populations. Although parts of the west experienced extensive areas of population decline, this did not result in a slow

down in SRD building in North Leitrim and Clew Bay. These two study areas displayed a pattern of change whereby emphasis shifted from one area or town to another. The movement of growth from Castlebar to Westport, for example, exemplifies changing employment and social dynamics at the small area level. North Leitrim's changing pattern illustrates the growth within the county with EDs such as Manorhamilton and Drumahaire forming much stronger centres than in the past. Previously sole dependence on Sligo and Bundoran along the N15 meant that growth was concentrated at the northern coastal edge of the study area. South Meath is the exception to the rule with its location in the GDA suggesting that population growth and SRD building should be high and widespread. In reality, population growth was anchored around towns that were unable to absorb further population growth within their boundaries which resulted in high levels of house building in suburban type developments located in urban hinterlands. Outside these areas, building of SRDs was low due to the concentration of the population in towns or urban hinterlands and rural planning policy restrictions.

6.2 ACCESSIBILITY AND LOCATION

The location of housing is determined by a number of factors (personal choice, place of work, expectations for different qualities of life, etc) but the overriding influence is accessibility: access to services, amenities and employment. Chapter Four established that in 2002 there was a distinctive pattern of SRD habitation that clustered in high density areas in urban hinterlands, changing to a more dispersed settlement pattern further from medium to large centres (see Map 4.8 a & b). Map 4.8b was used to ascertain if there is a relationship between towns and transportation routes, and the location and density of SRDs at the national level in Ireland. From this analysis, using the Getis-Ord G_i^* Statistic (explained in section 4.1.2), a number of national trends in the location of SRDs and their relationship with urban centres and the national road network: (i) non-random, above average densities occurring adjacent to the national road network; (ii) belts of non-random clustering of SRDs around cities and large towns; (iii) extensive regions of clustering of SRDs; and (iv) in areas with a weak urban fabric, where small to medium towns are more characteristic, the location of SRDs tends to be more random. The three study areas, while displaying various characteristics, have one thing in common: the role of the town in determining surrounding settlement patterns. Although some of the towns are unable to absorb population growth within their boundaries, they remain important as centres for employment and service provision.

This section examines the place of work of rural residents and method of travel to work, outlining how urban centres impact on the different rural types under investigation, and builds on the understanding of how increased population mobility has impacted on the 2002 rural settlement pattern.

6.2.1 Place of Work for Rural Residents

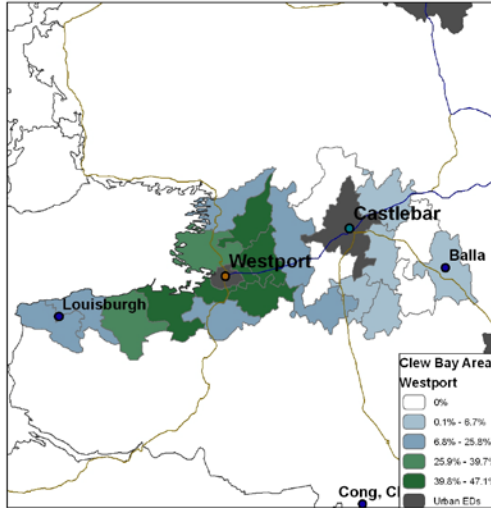
Walsh et al (2005a) identify that employment bases changed significantly in the period from 1991 to 2002 due to a sectoral shift from traditional jobs to service industries. Part of this change is the focus on towns as primary centres for employment particularly for rural residents, with tourism and construction identified as the two main new areas of employment where traditional agricultural occupations would once have dominated. The shift in settlement pattern and SRD construction identified in Chapter Four supports this assertion, with a decline in agricultural employment coinciding with a greater share of rural dwellings being built in peri-urban areas. Data for this section is from the Place of Work Sample of Anonymised Records (POWSAR) prepared by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) from an Anonymised sample of approximately 13.5% of working individuals over the age of fifteen (CSO, 2004) which was discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. The relevant EDs were extracted from the national sample where there were 500 to 900 records analysed in order to carry out a detailed examination of the three study areas.

Clew Bay Area

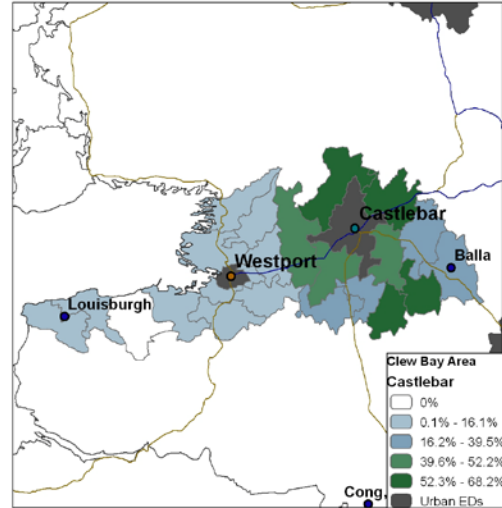
Each case study area has a main town, providing a variety of services, functions and employment, with an additional secondary town or towns. The Clew Bay area has the best example of primary and secondary urban centres, with administration functions and largescale employment located in the county town of Castlebar, while Westport provides an amenity role with smaller but still significant industries and services. Thirty percent of working residents in the study area over the age of fifteen are employed in Castlebar, while 20% travel to Westport for work (see Map 6.19). The next largest group travel to towns with populations of less than 1500. Castlebar has the greatest catchment area for workers with the highest number commuting from surrounding rural EDs (up to 70%). People travelling to work in Westport come from shorter distances and only up to 50% of the population sampled work in the town. It is also in the coastal hinterlands of Westport that higher proportions of the population work at or from home.

Clew Bay Area - POWSAR Place of Work 2002

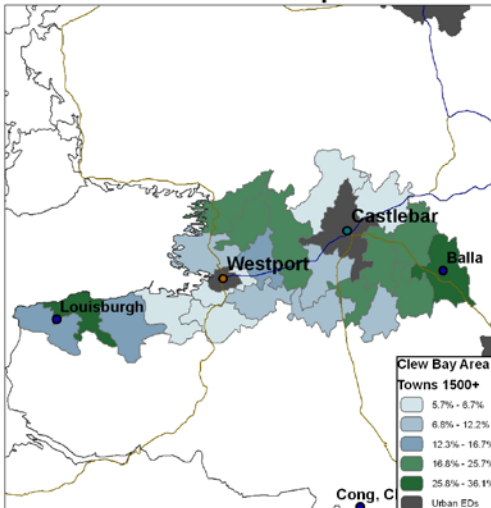
Percentage of Population Working in Westport



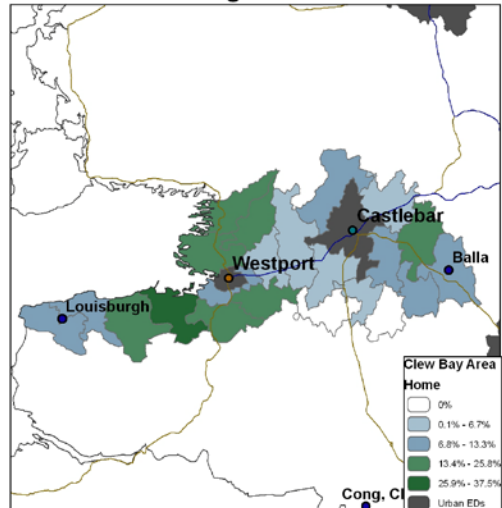
Percentage of Population Working in Castlebar



Percentage of Population Working in Towns Less Than 1500+ Population



Percentage of Population Working at Home



Roads

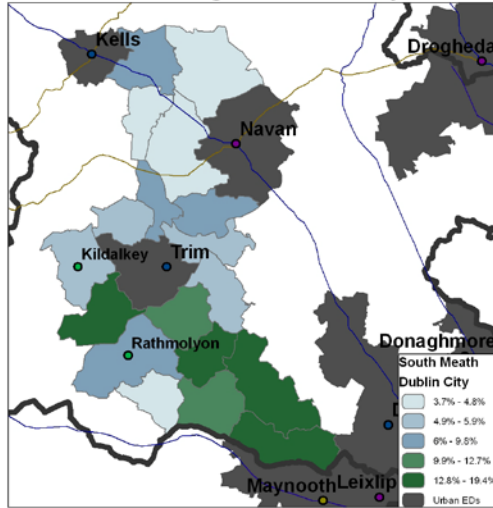
- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

South Meath

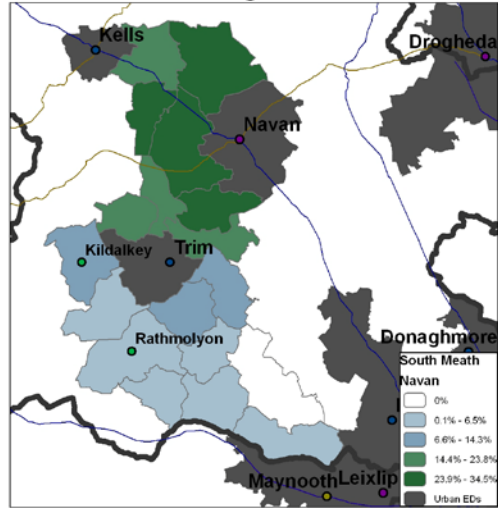
South Meath has similar town characteristics to the Clew Bay area with the large primary town of Navan, and a number of secondary centres. Although Navan has a significant 'pull' factor within the County, the case study area has a much wider spread in terms of the distance its residents travel to work. In South Meath 10% of the sampled population work in Dublin City with smaller percentages employed in the suburbs located in South Dublin, Fingal and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown (Map 6.20). Electoral Divisions located on the Kildare and Dublin borders have the highest proportion of the population travelling to the city for work, up to 20% in some cases. Navan, the administrative centre for Meath, has the largest proportion of people working there, travelling mainly from its hinterland but also from throughout the study area. The secondary town of Trim, south of Navan, has far less of the sample working there at just under 4%. Examining the pattern of those travelling to work indicates that the largest proportion of those travelling to work in Trim come from the town's hinterlands. This level only reached 15% of the total sample where in some of the EDs, high proportions of the population in the Trim hinterland work in Navan or Dublin. Eleven percent of the sample for the study area work at or from home.

South Meath - POWSAR Place of Work

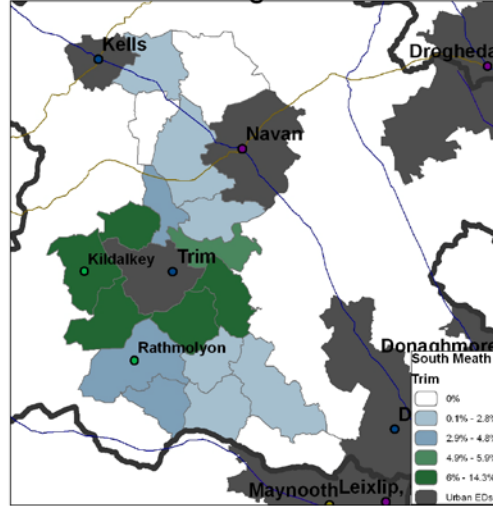
Percentage of Population Working in Dublin City



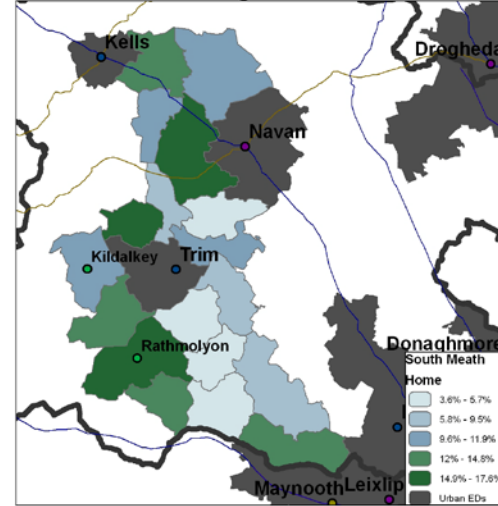
Percentage of Population Working in Navan



Percentage of Population Working in Trim



Percentage of Population Working at Home



Roads

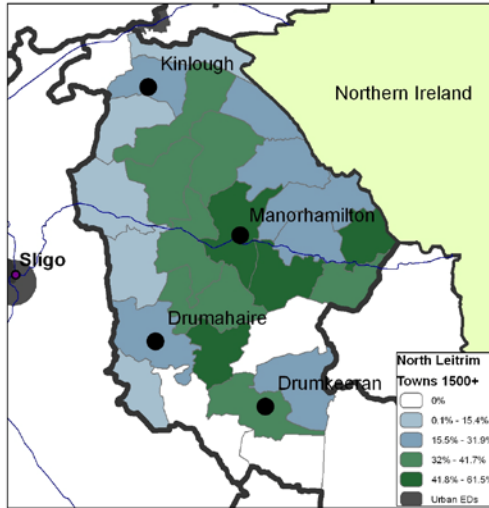
- Motorway
- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

North Leitrim

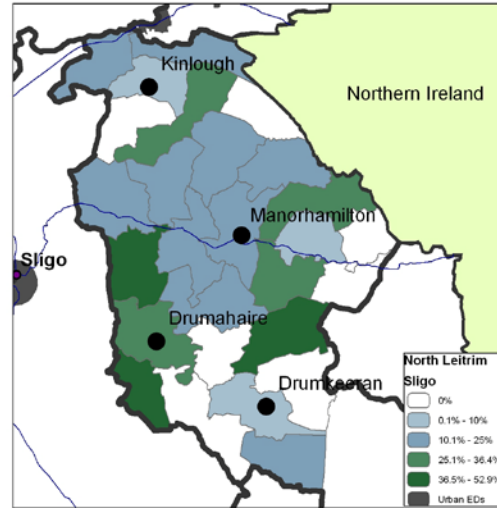
The highest proportion of workers (31%) in North Leitrim travel to towns within the county that have a population of less than 1,500 people (in this sample towns with a population of below 1,500 are not named individually). Included in these towns is the main centre of Manorhamilton and the pattern in Map 6.21 would indicate that up to 60% of the sampled population living in its hinterland travels to work there. Other small centres of employment include Drumkeeran and Drumahaire. Carrick-on-Shannon, which is the administrative centres for the county, would be expected to draw a substantial percentage of the population for employment, but in this sample only 2% of the population travel for work. North Leitrim experienced the greatest external influence of all the case study areas with over 20% travelling to Sligo towns for employment. The external pull of Sligo as an employment centre reaches as far as the Northern Irish border with over a third of the sample living in the Kiltyclogher ED working in the county town, for example. The SRD dense coastal zone is particularly influenced by both Sligo town and the Donegal towns of Bundoran and Ballyshannon with up to 25% and 40% respectively of the sample population working in these towns. Despite the high level of external pull, it is clear that small towns within the local area still have an influence as employment centres. In the northern coastal zone, for example, Kinlough has relatively fewer people leaving the ED for work elsewhere with one of the highest proportions of people working at or from home in the area (18.5%) and one fifth working in Leitrim towns of less than 1500 population suggesting that the settlement provides employment for local residents.

North Leitrim - POWSAR Place of Work

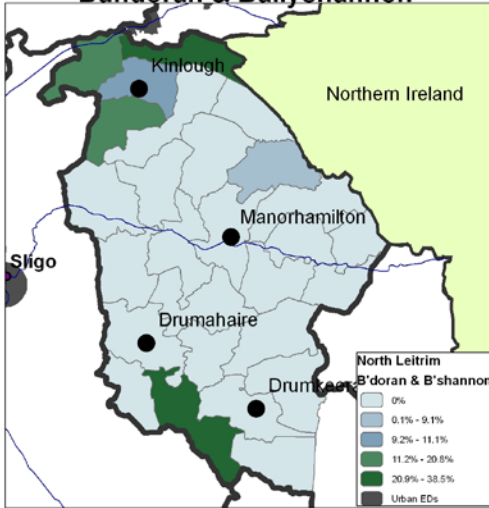
Percentage of Population Working in Leitrim Towns Less Than 1500+ Population



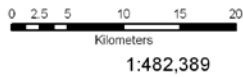
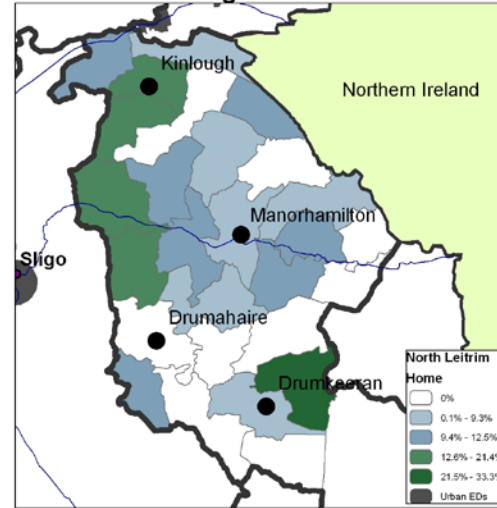
Percentage of Population Working in Sligo Town



Percentage of Population Working in Bundoran & Ballyshannon



Percentage of Population Working at Home

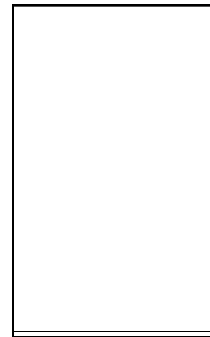
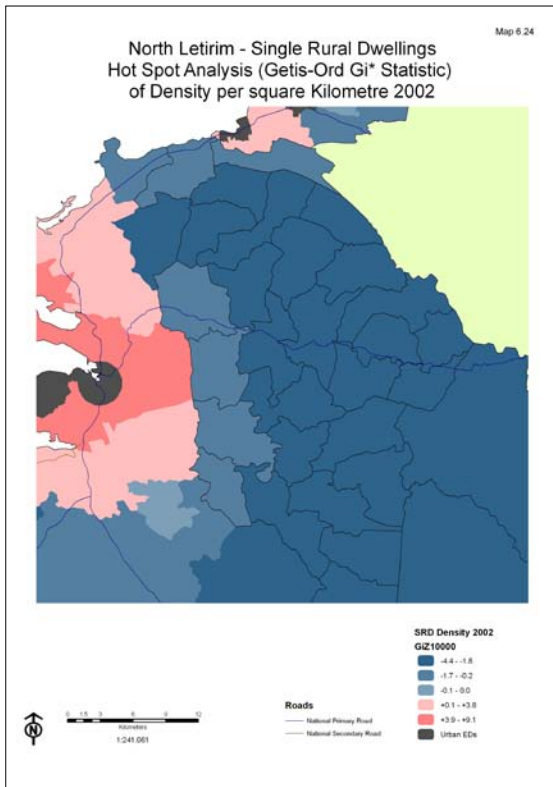
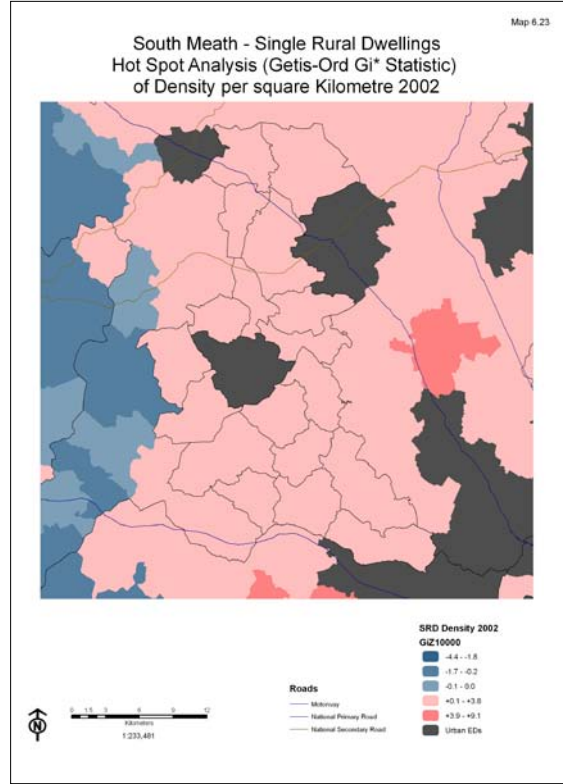
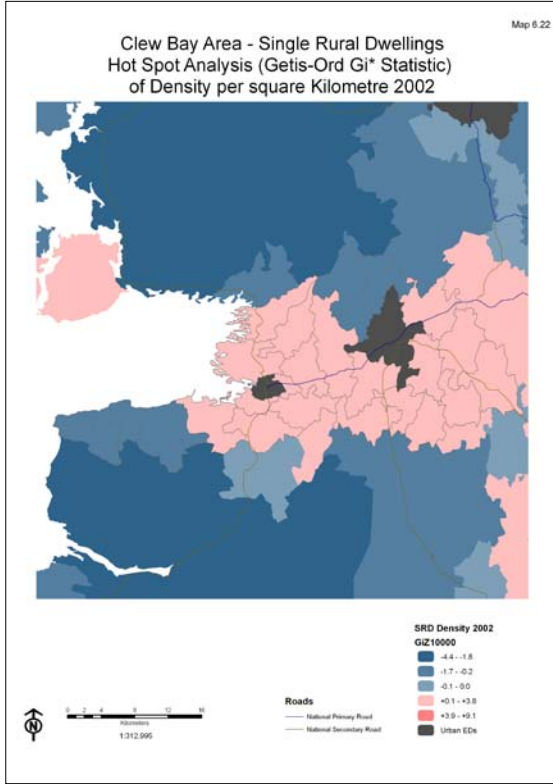


Roads

- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

6.2.2 Mode of Travel to Work for Rural Residents

Examination of the mode of travel to work of rural residents allows for a greater understanding of how places of employment are accessed. Map 4.8b in Chapter Four displays the non-random clustered pattern of SRD density centring on medium to large towns – Maps 6.22 to 6.24 displays the non-random clustering of SRD density in each of the three case study areas. The results of the three study area hot spot maps reflect national trends, i.e. where there is the existence of a strong urban fabric and a dense network of national primary and secondary road routes, the density of SRDs per square kilometre is higher and the pattern of housing is less random because of its association with access to centres. In South Meath, and indeed for most of County Meath, the location of SRDs displays a strong relationship with urban centres and the road network. In the Clew Bay study area, the presence of a dense settlement pattern in the hinterlands of Westport and Castlebar indicate that the location of SRDs is not random and related to employment and service centres. In contrast, in the more peripheral area along the coast where there is the presence of an edge population, the pattern is less dense as a result of the dispersed settlement footprint and a weaker urban fabric. North Leitrim's pattern of SRD settlement is more likely to be random because of the network of small and dispersed urban centres and the need for residents to seek work outside the study area and county. In addition to town centred clustering, national road networks tend to have high SRD density levels (of up to 25 SRD per square kilometre) and almost 80% of all households in 2002 had at least one car available to them (CSO, 2004). Among the sampled population of those aged over fifteen years at work, availability of a car was much higher with, on average, only 2.6% having no access at all. Sixty-three percent of the sample population from each study area travels to work driving a car, with an additional range of 8% to 10% travelling as passengers. Uses of alternative forms of transport such as cycling or walking are minimal and not surprising considering the distance some rural residents travel from their home to work. Availability of public transport such as buses or trains is very limited in the Clew Bay area and North Leitrim. South Meath workers avail of these services but to a very limited extent with 4% using a bus or coach to travel to work.



6.2.3 Summary remarks

The significant role of the town in rural settlement patterns at the small area level is further strengthened by the above examination of the location of employment. It is clear that despite living in the countryside, residents are drawn to towns for work and therefore other services and functions. Both North Leitrim and South Meath, despite differences in population growth and location, were unable to absorb population and housing demand in their urban centres. The construction of SRDs within commuting distance of towns and the share of the population working in the towns indicates that a primary determinant of housing location choice is employment availability. In addition both North Leitrim and South Meath display high external pull influences whereby the presence of larger urban employment centres result in inter-county travel to work. South Meath experiences this to a lower level than expected with its location within the GDA where in the study area there was a 10% share of the population travelling to Dublin city for work (up to 20% in some EDs). While North Leitrim is smaller in scale, the proximity of Sligo town means that almost a fifth of the population work there (over 50% in some EDs). The Clew Bay area on the other hand, because of its location at some distance from external urban centres and the presence of a number of industrial and other employment opportunities, displays different trends to the other two case study areas. Half of the sample population work in either Castlebar or Westport. In addition, both of the main towns showed an ability to absorb the growing population into their boundaries. However, hinterland growth was also very strong and high levels of SRD construction took place in the 1990s indicating that the demand to live in the Westport or Castlebar locality is growing in parallel with increased access to employment.

High levels of car dependency and the availability of more than one car indicate that road networks are an integral part of access to the urban centres of employment and services. National Primary roads have high SRD cluster corridors surrounding them, connecting medium to large towns throughout the state. Nationally policy, discussed in Chapter Five, disallows the building of new access points, such as gateways or dwelling entrances, off these roads types. Despite this rule, high levels of new construction continue along these corridors due to the intricate network of regional and county roads that exist adjacent to and off the primary routes. National Secondary roads exhibit similar trends of high SRD density located adjacent to them. However, higher SRD density corridors on secondary roads are found in the east and southeast where there

is a greater consolidation of dwellings and higher commuter levels to Dublin and other major centres.

6.3 EMPLOYMENT OF RURAL RESIDENTS

The examination of the place of work of rural residents and modes of transport gives a clear picture of who inhabits rural dwellings and how they access employment. Underlying that investigation of place of work is the factor of a decline in traditional rural employment and a shift to urban based sectors. From 1991 to 2002 there was a decline of 40% in the number of people employed in farming while there were rises in all other sectors, particularly in services and construction (CSO, 2003). This section examines the nature of agricultural employment decline at the small area level, and economic investment in the regions up to the present with subsequent changes for employment availability and location. In doing so it further investigates the nature of population dynamics by examining employment change and its impact on increased rural mobility and the role of the town.

6.3.1 Rural Employment Change

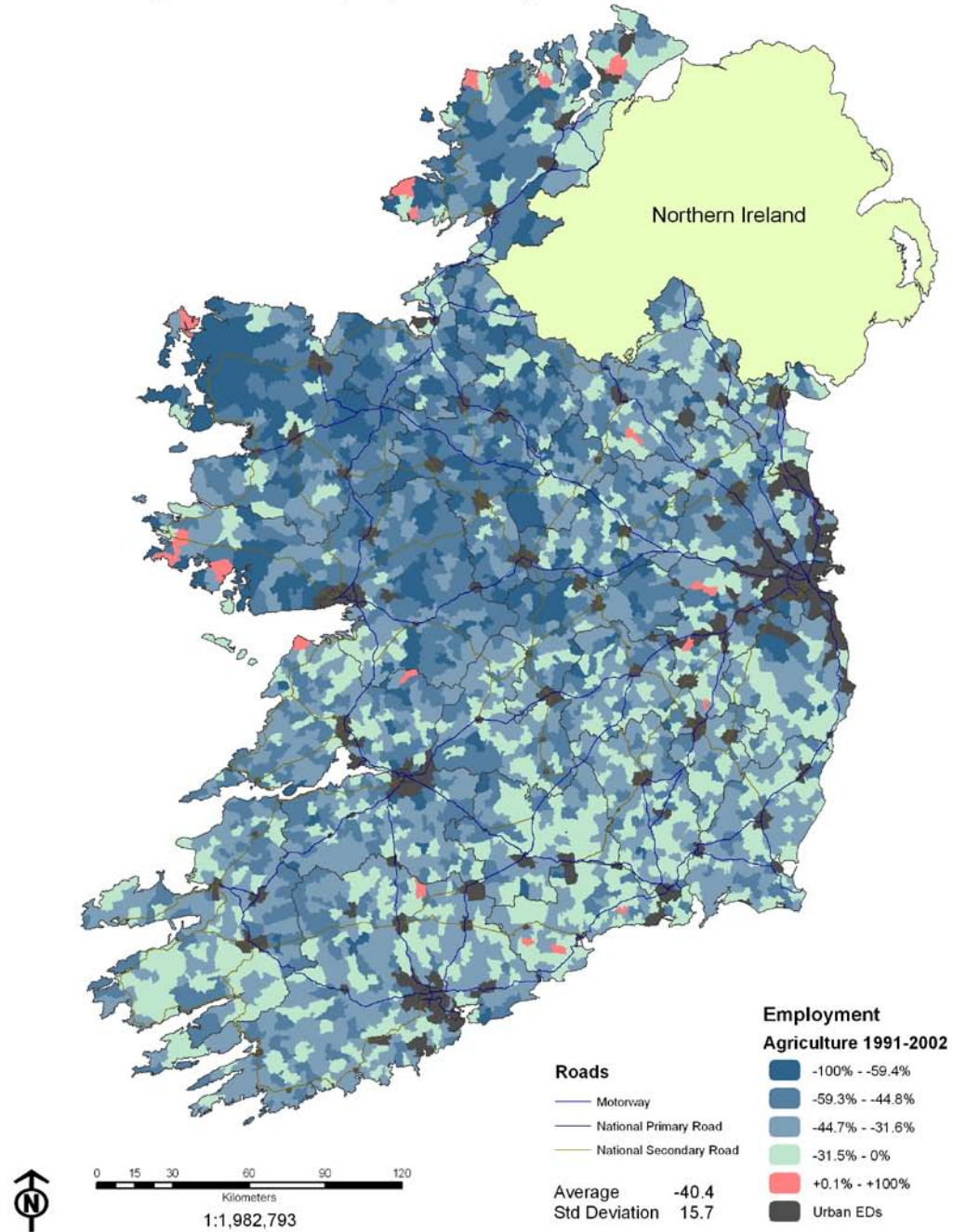
Nationally there was a 40% decline (60,228 persons) in the number of people working in agriculture from 1991 to 2002 (Map 6.25) while at the same time there were rises in all other employment sectors over the same period (CSO, 2003). This steep decline in agricultural employment reflects a period in Ireland and beyond where the productivist countryside has changed to become a more complex space determined more by external consumer and changing internal demands (Hoggart et al, 1995). When examining housing within the context of agricultural change, the countryside is approached as a place for rural residency where a large proportion of those living there are no longer connected to farming. Ireland has a long tradition of living in the countryside which has historically been tied with the traditional employment of agriculture. Since the widespread decline of agriculture began in the late 1960s and was consolidated in the 1990s in Ireland (Lafferty et al, 1999; Crowley, 2007) that taken-for-granted connection between rural housing and farming has changed. That break has important implications for housing in the countryside as the examination of where people travel to work above shows with the focus for a large share of the rural population now being the urban centres.

Both European agricultural policy and regional investment policy over past decades have had wide impacts on the scale and nature of the rural economy in Ireland. In 1992 the MacSharry CAP Reforms were introduced in order to attempt to change the direction of farming from what was perceived to be unsustainable productivist agriculture that resulted in imbalances between supply and demand. The focus changed towards the implementation of quotas, which had begun in the 1980s, limiting production and encouraging farmers to change their practices and outputs. In addition the 1992 CAP Reforms built on previous policy that encouraged farm diversification, emphasising the alternative roles that farm families can play in the countryside. Changes in agricultural policy continued throughout the 1990s with Agenda 2000 (adopted in 1999) and the decoupling of farming output and income support in the mid-term review of CAP in 2003 (Crowley, 2007). These reforms called for a broadening of rural development policy taking into account the changing nature of the rural population and the need to look beyond agriculture as the main activity and source of income in the countryside. It is arguable that, although these reforms have widespread impacts throughout the country, it is the peripheral areas and/or those with poor land and small farms that are most affected by change. For instance, the greatest decreases in agricultural employment occurred in the west and northwest of the state, with extensive areas of above average decline evident in Map 6.25. Some areas have responded to agri-environmental policy change by seeking alternatives to traditional farming practices. For example, in North Leitrim there was a notable uptake in organic farming in the 1990s according to the Organic Census 2002 (Crowley, 2007). On the other hand, in areas of good land and large farms, agricultural outputs remain high. In South Meath there have also been declines in the number of people working in agriculture, tending to be equal to or below the national average. Meath, with traditionally stronger agricultural viability, has had falling levels of new SRD building indicating that, in conjunction with restrictive rural housing policy (see Section 6.4 below), there is less availability of land for building resulting in the concentration of settlement in small to large urban centres.

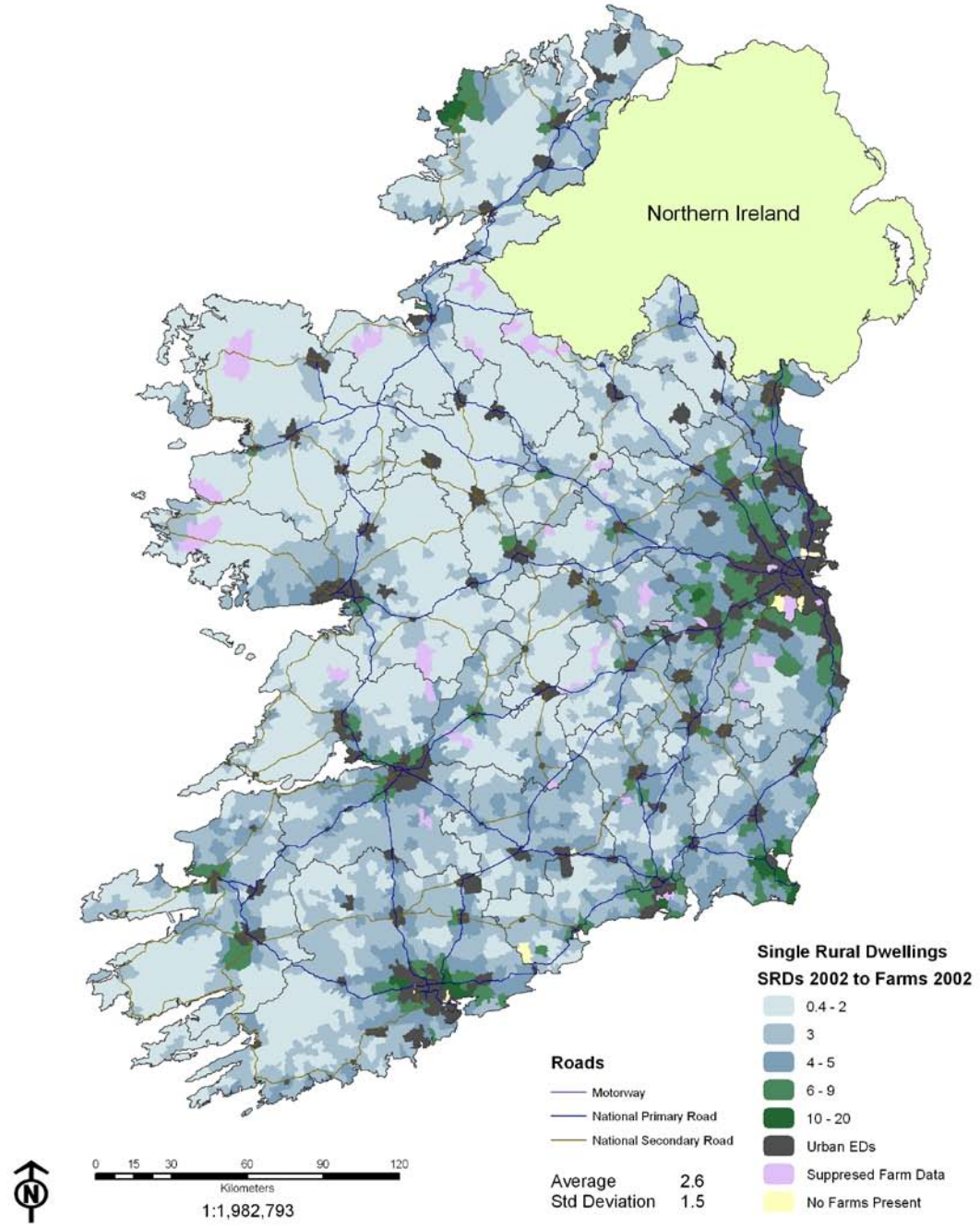
The breakdown of the relationship between the rural dweller and farming that is evident throughout the analysis in this chapter is reinforced in the analysis in Map 6.26. As noted above the once taken-for-granted assumption that rural households are farming households is no longer true. Map 6.26 shows the relationship between farms and

SRDs and indicates that there are on average 2.6 SRDs to each farm in rural Ireland. Nationally, this ratio increases in the south and southeast and in peri-urban areas, with up to 20 SRDs to each farm in some cases. However, what the map confirms is that despite falling numbers of farms or employed full-time in agriculture there is an enduring relationship between housing and the countryside. In the east and southeast, where the largest proportion of recent house building took place, SRDs are outnumbering farms by a significant amount. In contrast, the study areas in North Leitrim and Clew Bay where the ratio of SRDs to each farm remains at or below the national average, less house building occurred and there is a continuation of part-time farming.

Employment Percentage Change in the Number of Persons Aged 15+ Employed In Agriculture, 1991 to 2002



Single Rural Dwellings Ratio of Total Number of SRDs 2002 to Total Number of Farms 2000



6.3.2 Economic investment

Regional economic investment has been an objective of governments in Ireland since the 1950s with the overall goal of securing employment for the population as a whole. The widespread unemployment that dominated the Irish economy up until the 1990s resulted in a government regional policy focus on economic investment. This initially targeted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) managed by the IDA (Industrial Development Authority) with the hope that external investment would encourage an indigenous entrepreneurial culture. That policy of economic investment at times worked at odds with regional strategic planning (Cawley, 1996) but contributed greatly to the success story of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy that saw Ireland change dramatically in the 1990s.

Clew Bay Area

Marginal and weak areas such as North Leitrim and parts of the Clew Bay area were key foci of such regional economic investment and benefited in terms of counteracting declining unemployment and increased accessibility through road and telecommunications investment. The Clew Bay area is the best example of the two marginal case study areas within this research of benefiting from successful economic investment. Initially Castlebar was the main focus of investment, both with direct employment opportunities and third level educational provision. The opening of the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT) Castlebar Campus in 1994 was seen as an integral part of rural development for the county as a whole as it provided opportunities for higher education for a local population who would otherwise have to leave the area and would provide skilled training for existing industries and open up the potential for further economic investment (Burke, 1993). In this role GMIT provides three industry-focused training networks, including 'Innovation Capacity Building in the Biomedical, Manufacture and Marine sectors in the West' and 'Tourism Learning Network in counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon, and the Aran Islands'. Castlebar, as the administrative capital for County Mayo, is also the location of a number of public and Local Government centres. In addition, businesses have been established in the town such as 'clean' industries that manufacture computer hardware (e.g. APC) and healthcare and pharmaceuticals (e.g. Baxter Healthcare SA). Westport, as the secondary town in the case study area, also has a number of industrial and manufacturing sites established there. Allergan Pharmaceuticals Ireland (established in 1978) is an example of a high skills employment base in the town. Westport also has a

number of alternative industries, with textiles firms such as Portwest and Carraig Donn Knitwear, and as well as being the centre for tourism in the region.

North Leitrim

North Leitrim, as the most marginal and weak case study area has less internal economic strength than South Meath and the Clew Bay area and relies on employment bases in Sligo and other external towns. There has, however, been some investment in the area, the most notable of which was the opening of the \$138m Masonite production facility and the MBNA call centre in Carrick-on-Shannon, which has predominately female employees, both based outside the study area. Although at the time of its opening in 1996 there was controversy about the environmental impacts of the Masonite plant with its location close to the River Shannon, there was an acceptance that the county and region would benefit greatly from the investment (Bree and Ellis, 1995). The main areas of employment in North Leitrim have traditionally been in primary based sectors such as farming and coal mining in Arigna also providing work for local people for a number of years. In 1958, the Electricity Supply Board (ESB) founded the Arigna Power Station with its primary goal to secure employment for the local area. With the closure of the plant and mine in the 1990s, the marginal location of North Leitrim and the high dependency the local community had on the mines was emphasised (Belton and Treacy, 1993). The opening of the 'Arigna Mining Experience' is one example of an attempt to encourage alternative income within the area, promoting tourism and establishing more service based employment as well as instilling pride in local heritage and history. Within the case study area, Manorhamilton is the largest urban centre and a number of public and private economic inputs have created more employment opportunities with, for example the headquarters of the Health Service Executive North West region in the town. Private manufacturing firms include the local family business Merenda, veneer edging manufacturers, and Eaton Automotive, a global electrical components firm.

South Meath

The South Meath case study area contrasts strongly with Mayo and Leitrim. Its location within the GDA and accessibility to a number of employment centres make it a much stronger economic area. Good road and rail networks mean easier access to centres for employment both within and outside the county. However, there is a greater demand

from people living in the county to work locally rather than commuting great distances to Dublin or elsewhere (Meath County Council, 2003). The presence of a number of large towns within the county and more specifically in the study area provides anchors for employment. In contrast to surrounding counties, such as Kildare, the population of Meath tends to be employed in traditional sectors such as food and textiles with less emphasis on high value service sectors (Walsh et al, 2005b). Another contrast to the other two case study areas is the amount of high quality agricultural land present, providing the basis for the continuation of economically viable farms and employment.

6.3.3 Summary Remarks

The most significant trend to emerge from the above examination is the decline of agriculture and the shift in employment to urban centres. As discussed above, agriculture was once the primary source of employment for people living in rural areas. In recent decades other sectors of employment have grown rapidly, for example, construction and building is the largest growing sector in all three case study areas (apart from the miscellaneous category of 'other' which rose by 183% nationally) with a 120% increase in the number of people working in this sector. Despite such a high increase in the number of people employed in the construction and building sector, it accounts for an average of 13.5% across the three areas, which although representing a large proportion of the population, is not the largest group. In both South Meath and the Clew Bay area the commerce sector is the largest accounting for approximately a fifth of all employed persons over the age of fifteen. The professional service sector is the largest in North Leitrim at 20%. Growth in all sectors, other than in agriculture, illustrate the changing dynamic of rural employment and the role of the rural as a place of residence and the town as place of work for a large proportion of the population.

6.4 LOCAL POLICY IMPACTS

Each case study area has unique attributes and trends influencing the geography of rural housing at the small area level. The variations in settlement distribution have been attributed to the legacy of past population distribution and settlement patterns, and contemporary drivers of change such as access to and location of employment. Chapter Five examined the role of the planning system and policy in driving settlement patterns in Ireland from the national to regional and county levels. The purpose of this section is to examine the role that different policies, initiatives and programmes that

have been implemented at the local level have had on the geography of small area level rural housing. This considers the key research issue identified in Chapter Two that questioned how policy for rural housing has in recent decades, addressing it at the small area level. Each study area has a different story to tell in terms of its regional and national location, and how this has determined the nature of living in these different countrysides.

6.4.1 North Leitrim – Scheme for the Upper Shannon Region

In light of the wide scale economic and population decline experienced in a number of urban centres in Ireland in the 1980s, particularly in inner-city areas, the Department of Finance introduced measures that hoped to promote growth and stability. Urban renewal schemes were introduced in 1985 “in an effort to alleviate the increasing problem of dereliction and dilapidation which had affected large parts on the inner areas of towns and cities nation-wide” (Department of Finance, 2003). A number of urban renewal schemes ran from 1986 to 2004, including a Living Over the Shop (LOTS) and a Seaside Resort Scheme. All schemes had similar objectives for the achievement of long term economic and population stability. The decline associated with inner city areas was identified as not being unique to urban areas and in June 1998 the Pilot Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon Region was introduced (under the Finance Act, 1998). The region covered all of Counties Leitrim and Longford and parts of Counties Roscommon, Sligo and Cavan. The area was identified as having long-term population decline, less than average economic growth and a dearth of significant urban centres that would otherwise have acted as economic anchors (Department of Finance, 2006). In line with the other renewal schemes, tax relief or incentive allowances were given by the Department of Finance in order to encourage people to live in the area and to promote new economic activity. In the case of the rural renewal scheme the two main elements were:

1. Business Tax Incentives: tax relief for the expenditure incurred on the construction or refurbishment of industrial buildings (from July 1st, 1999); and
2. Residential Property Tax Incentives: tax relief for both owner occupiers and renters. In the case of owner occupiers, dwellings could not exceed a floor space of 210 sq metres. For those who would gain tax relief as tenants of property, the dwelling had to be the main or sole residence for a minimum of three months per annum in order

to counteract the potential of a proliferation of holiday homes (Department of Finance, 2003).

The rural renewal scheme, which ended in 2004, was in place over a period of great change in Ireland. As discussed above, the period 1991 to 2002 was the first time County Leitrim experienced a rise in population, with particular growth in the late 1990s. However, this rise in population, although coinciding with the rural renewal scheme, has not been attributed to the initiative because it is likely that the already existing population took up residence of qualifying dwellings rather than drawing new populations in (Department of Finance, 2006). Residential property construction dominated the scheme accounting for just under a quarter of all private dwelling completions in the Upper Shannon region (based on Goodbody Economic Consultants' estimates¹³). The scheme was identified as being successful in increasing housing output. However, higher levels of construction occurred in addition to the projected number of dwellings, and were most likely to have been built speculatively (Department of Finance, 2006).

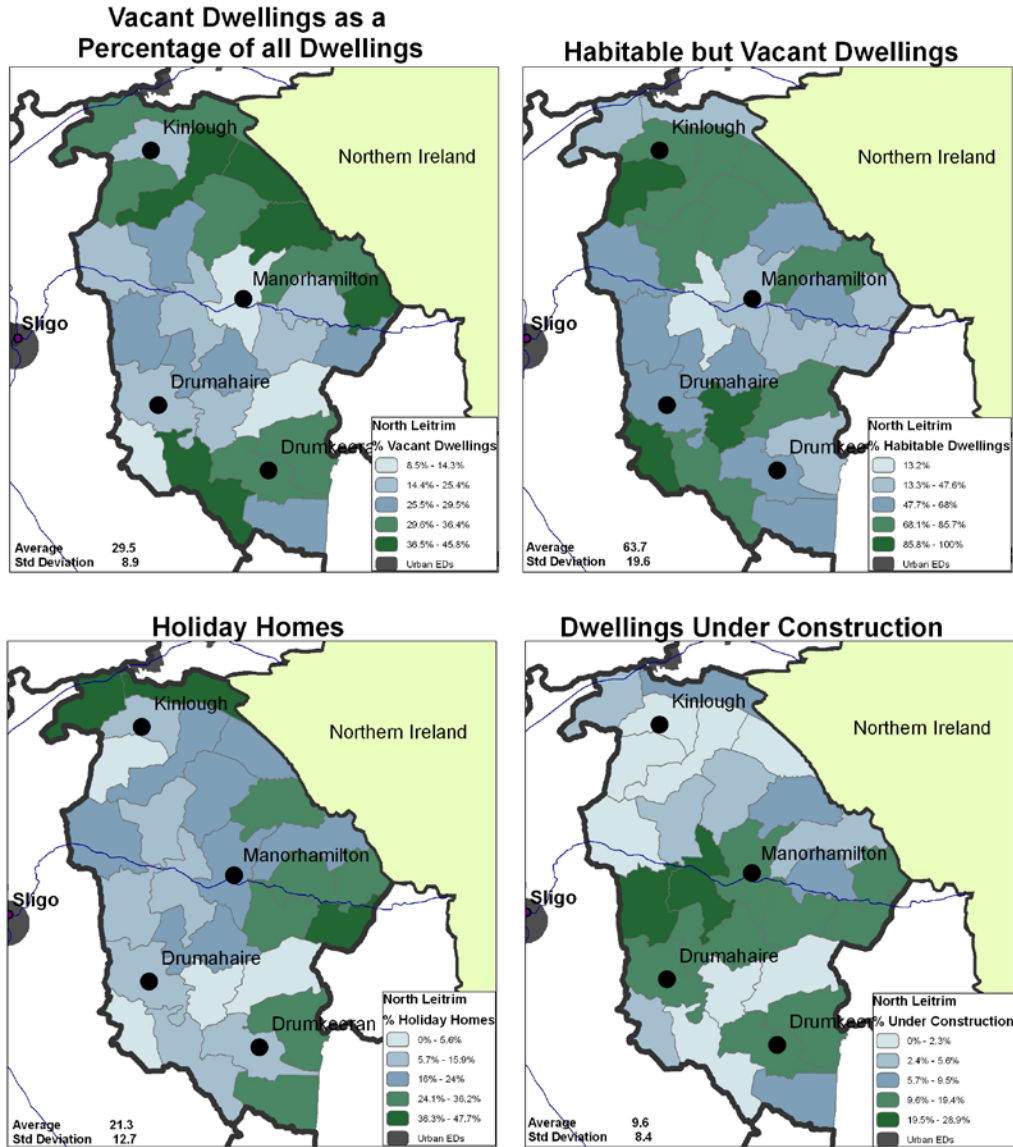
The scheme was initiated by the Department of Finance and as a result the overall objective of economic stability was the main focus of the departmental review, with the only spatial aspect addressed being population distribution and stability. Goodbody Consultants concluded that there had been little impact on economic activity in rural areas; a large proportion of the housing output was built speculatively and/or was 'deadweight'; excessively large dwellings were built in some cases; it was poor value for money; and there is now an oversupply of dwellings (Department of Finance, 2006). Research carried out for this thesis provide evidence for this where one of the strongest characteristics of housing in Leitrim is its large proportion of vacant dwellings, the highest in the country at 28% for the entire County. The case study area of North Leitrim is just below the county rate at 27.4% with habitable but vacant dwellings dominating at 60% of all vacant dwellings (16.5% of all dwellings; see Table 6.4 below). Map 6.27 illustrates the pattern of vacant dwellings, showing dominance in EDs east of the case study area along the Northern Irish border and in the south, reaching over

¹³ There have been a number of difficulties in confirming the estimated number of new build development qualifying under the rural renewal scheme due to limited recording of data in Local Authorities and to time delays in applying for Building Completions Certificates from the DoEHLG (see Chapter 3).

40% of all dwellings in some instances. Holiday homes feature to a certain extent in North Leitrim accounting for a quarter of all vacant dwellings. These tend to account for a greater share of housing in the two main scenic areas in North Leitrim, at the coastal area around Tullaghan and in the southeast close to Lough Melvin.

The Pilot Rural Renewal Scheme for the Upper Shannon Region failed to address the complex needs of Leitrim where undoubtedly economic investment was necessary in the area, but because of the lack of any strong spatial element in the initiative and little understanding of local housing needs, construction exceeded demand and encouraged speculative building. The overarching spatial policy for Leitrim in the form of the County Development Plan did not contribute greatly to identifying areas under pressure or where housing need existed in rural areas, adopting a laissez-faire approach in its positive presumption for all housing to be allowed everywhere (examined in Chapter Five).

North Leitrim - Vacant Dwellings as a Percentage of all Vacant Dwellings 2002



Roads

- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

Electoral Division	Habitable but Vacant	Holiday Homes	Under Construction	Uninhabitable	Total Number of Vacant Dwellings	Percentage of Dwellings Vacant	Total Number of Dwellings (inc. vac)
Aghanish	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	28	36.4	77
Gubacreeny	42.0	47.7	9.1	1.1	88	36.2	243
Kinlough	85.7	14.3	0.0	0.0	56	24.1	232
Melvin	78.3	19.6	2.2	0.0	46	39.7	116
Tullaghan	38.7	43.4	4.7	13.2	106	35.3	300
Ballaghameehan	58.1	32.6	9.3	0.0	43	39.4	109
Belhavel	96.9	3.1	0.0	0.0	32	25.4	126
Cloonclare	42.3	42.3	15.4	0.0	26	28.6	91
Cloonlogher	61.3	19.4	19.4	0.0	31	26.7	116
Drumahaire	59.6	12.5	15.4	12.5	104	24.1	432
Drumkeeran	63.6	10.2	18.2	8.0	88	32.4	272
Glenade	75.0	15.0	5.0	5.0	20	27.8	72
Glenaniff	75.0	19.4	5.6	0.0	36	36.4	99
Glenboy	47.6	33.3	19.0	0.0	21	24.4	86
Glencar	68.0	24.0	0.0	8.0	25	24.3	103
Glenfarm	46.9	34.4	18.8	0.0	32	41.6	77
Killanummery	88.9	5.6	5.6	0.0	18	14.3	126
Killarga	80.0	0.0	0.0	20.0	5	11.9	42
Kiltyclogher	73.2	19.6	3.6	3.6	56	35.4	158
Lurganboy	13.2	15.8	28.9	42.1	38	22.6	168
Mahanagh	42.6	36.2	19.1	2.1	47	34.3	137
Manorhamilton	43.5	21.7	17.4	17.4	46	8.5	542
Munakill	60.9	30.4	8.7	0.0	23	24.2	95
Sramore	59.0	10.3	23.1	7.7	39	29.5	132
St Patrick's	61.9	28.6	9.5	0.0	21	27.6	76
Garvagh/Arigna	77.3	15.9	2.3	4.5	44	45.8	96
Aghalateeve/ Aghavoghil	80.6	19.4	0.0	0.0	31	40.8	76
Total	60.3	23.3	10.3	6.2	1150	27.4	4199

6.4.2 South Meath – Overdeveloped Areas Survey 1985

With its location in the Greater Dublin Area, its high levels of commuting and stable population growth, South Meath has been susceptible to both rural and urban housing pressure. In 1985, Meath County Council identified the Electoral Areas of Dunshaughlin and Ashbourne, parts of which lie within the case study area, as having extensive tracts of overdevelopment. A study was carried out to assess the levels of development in the area producing a document entitled *A Comprehensive Survey Report of Overdeveloped Rural Areas in South-East Meath* (Meath County Council, 1985) and identified 97

overdeveloped areas and 42 potential or borderline pressure areas. Overdevelopment was defined “where there are 10 or more houses each separated by a maximum of 250 metres as measured along any public road or private lane” (Meath County Council, 1985: 7). In addition, the population living in the area and the number of car accidents were taken into account. Among the findings of the survey was an identification of five factors that contributed to overdevelopment, which were: proximity to major roads; commuting distance of Dublin; ribbon development out of towns and villages; difficulty of obtaining planning permission; and an absence of physical constraints to development. Overdevelopment was identified as creating a number of pressures on both the landscape and roads. Roads were identified as already being at full capacity in the 1980s with the number of car accidents increasing; towns and villages were underdeveloped and emptying; there was a proliferation of septic tanks potentially causing health and environmental problems; and planning policy was not rigidly enforced.

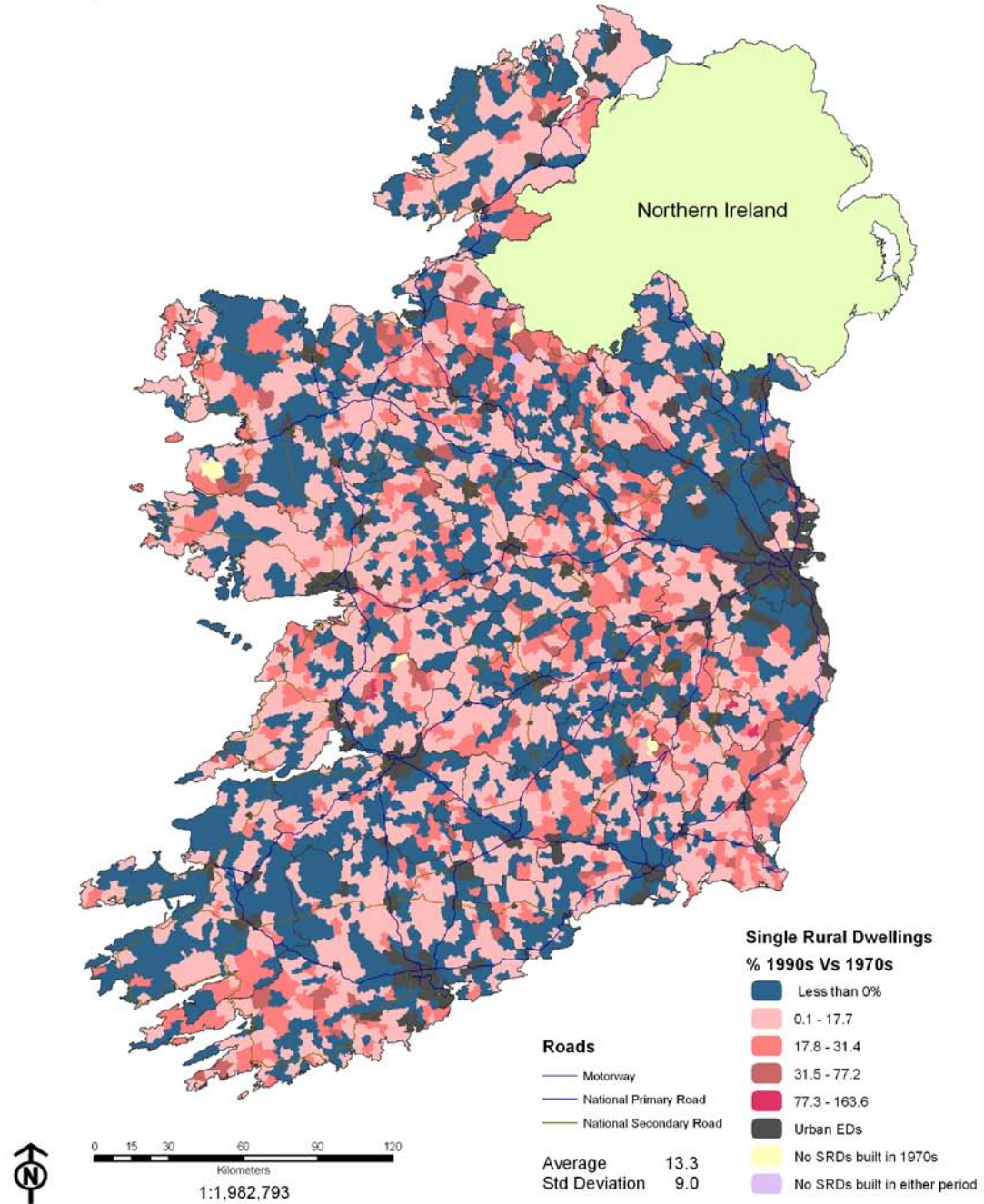
Following the comprehensive survey of the overdeveloped areas, a number of development control recommendations were made. In summary these were: severe restriction of planning permissions within the overdeveloped rural areas other than in core-nodal centres; severe restrictions on planning permissions granted to urban-generated occupants defined as a person working in an urban centre even if they were from the area; full economic costing of building a one-off dwelling to be established in order to educate potential applicants; restrictive development along regional and side roads leading to National Primary Routes; and larger minimum sites and greater building line set-backs should be enforced. Additional Development Plan recommendations were made which included all of the above as integral parts of development plan policy; core-nodal centres should be designated; and the positive presumption against unserviced remote clusters of housing should be enforced.

The implementation of the above policies has impacted greatly on the spatial distribution of SRDs in Meath. Examining Maps 6.15 clearly identifies the high levels of house construction in South Meath before and during the 1970s. A distinctive decline emerges in the level of construction in the 1980s, consolidated in the 1990s where there was 45% more SRDs built than in the 1970s (see Map 6.28). The adoption of restrictive development control in South Meath marked a new era in planning in the County Council where a more strategic policy on the general and widespread issue of

SRDs was implemented. As was examined in Chapter Five, rural housing tends to be treated as an issue to be dealt with on its individual merits and without an overarching policy framework. Undoubtedly this has resulted in rural areas under severe pressure both environmentally and aesthetically. Meath County Council was in many ways ahead of its time in identifying areas under pressure from the overdevelopment of housing. The factors identified as contributing to housing demand such as proximity to roads and the location of towns, does not differ greatly from the issues identified in this research. Addressing the question of whether planning policies for rural housing have become strategic in recent decades, it is apparent that some policies when driven by extensive research and which have area-specific objectives can be effective in mitigating against the negative impacts of SRD construction. The rural EDs that have had the greatest growth in population are those with urban centres or core-nodes such as in Summerhill and Kildalkey, while outer rural areas with a weaker urban fabric have experienced a decline in the level of SRD construction and the density of new builds.

Single Rural Dwellings

Percentage of the number of SRDs Constructed in the 1990s in comparison to the Number of SRDs Constructed in the 1970s



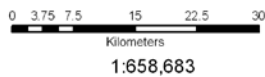
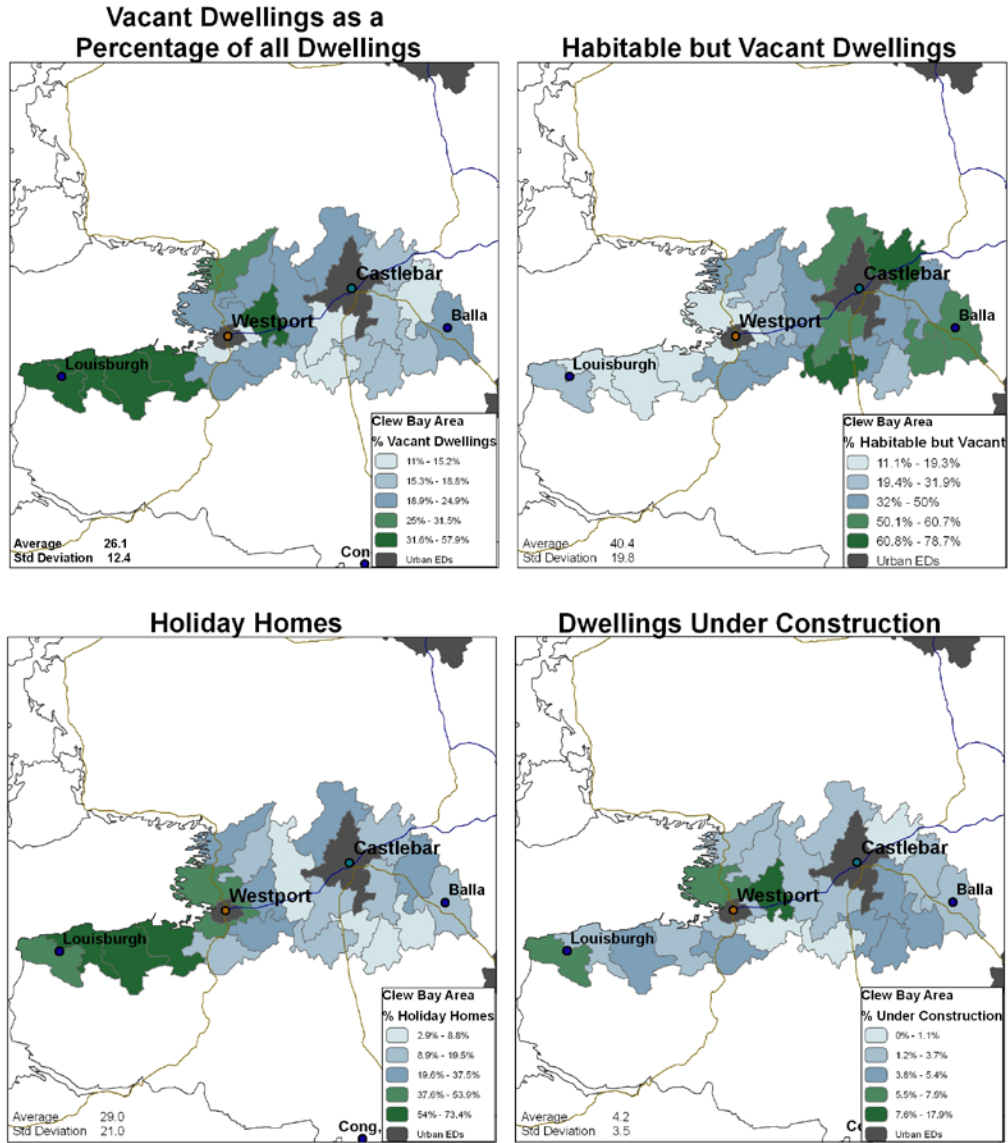
6.4.3 Clew Bay Area – Second Homes

Unlike the other two case study areas, the Clew Bay Area has not been subject to area specific planning policy other than the required County Development Plan and town plans. The Clew Bay area has long been a popular tourist destination with attractive coastal and mountainous scenery and the pilgrim mountain of Croagh Patrick. As discussed above, the high-quality coastal landscapes in particular have experienced intense amounts of single rural housing. In the Murrisk area of Clew Bay, to the north of Croagh Patrick, over a quarter of total rural dwellings was built since 1991, and mostly since 1996, in one of the most prominent sites in Mayo. In addition to high levels of recorded development in these scenic areas, there is also a demand for holiday homes. The rate of second homes as a percentage of all dwellings in the state is relatively low at 3%. However, counties along the west coast have above average rates, with County Mayo having one of the higher rates at 7% of total dwellings.

In 2002, one tenth of housing in the Clew Bay area was recorded as holiday homes, concentrated in particular localities: for example, a third of all dwellings in Louisburgh were recorded as holiday homes, dominated mainly by house clusters which are rented out on a short-term basis (see Map 6.29). The second highest rate of holiday homes is located in the Croagh Patrick ED where 27% of all dwellings are holiday homes, in this case mainly one-off, privately-owned houses. In the County Development Plan (CDP) for 2003-9 the policy adopted for both single rural dwellings and holiday homes is brief, focusing mainly on physical planning considerations about minimum basic standards for site size and location. Eligibility criteria for planning permission in the countryside are not addressed. In addition to the Mayo CDP, draft Housing Design Guidelines were produced in 2002¹⁴. In this policy document the local authority acknowledges the need to preserve both the rural community and the unique natural landscape.

¹⁴ The Design Guidelines were never formally adopted. New guidelines were to be proposed in 2006.

Clew Bay Area - Vacant Dwellings as a Percentage of all Vacant Dwellings 2002



Roads

- National Primary Road
- National Secondary Road

6.4.4 Summary Remarks

This section highlights the role of housing and planning policies at the small area level, both in how they can influence characteristics of local settlement patterns: in how pressures can emerge due to either inaction or inappropriate spatial policies and in how pressures can be addressed through evidence based strategies. Each of the three study area exhibit a number of current rural housing pressures that affect various parts of the country including second home ownership, vacant dwellings, abandonment of houses and / or dereliction, and high density SRDs. All of these pressures are incurred due to a complexity of processes such as population fall and rise, agricultural decline, rising affluence and the urban orientation of society. In the North Leitrim study area, years of population decline coupled with its location in a peripheral border region resulted in a need for government to intervene and encourage economic and population growth. While the overarching objective of the tax incentive scheme in Leitrim was to establish population stability and improve the local economy, because it lacked spatial goals and was coupled with a weak County Development Plan, it contributed to an oversupply of housing. Not only has the overspill created pressure points in North Leitrim, most notably at Kinlough, there is also the added issue of holiday homes in areas such Tullaghan and high levels of vacancy in Border EDs and in towns such as Drumahaire.

The Clew Bay area in Mayo is an example of an area under pressure for both full-time residential housing and holiday homes where levels of population and economic growth have been stronger than in other peripheral areas along the west coast. However, despite this dual housing pressure, planning policy has not come close to adopting area specific policy, devoting only a brief paragraph in the County Development Plan to holiday homes and a generic rural housing policy for full-time residential dwellings. This is also despite the presence of vulnerable landscapes that characterise this scenic part of the county, which are a valuable tourist attraction and contribute significantly to the local economy. In contrast, the findings of the *Comprehensive Survey Report of Overdeveloped Rural Areas in South-East Meath* resulted in the adoption of a restrictive rural housing policy in the subsequent County Development Plan. The strong spatial context for the both the survey and the policy implementation resulted in a distinctive change in the settlement pattern in South Meath. The decline in the number of SRDs constructed in the 1980s and the 1990s in South Meath clearly resulted from this policy.

6.5 PERSPECTIVES ON LIVING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The final section of this chapter will examine how new and changing rural identities impact on local residents' attitudes and perspectives to living in the countryside. This addresses the rise of personal narratives that have characterised media coverage in local and national print media and which have been contextualised in perceptions of high refusal rates; the impact of the refusal of planning permission on livelihoods; changing rural society; and the reliance on urban-rural dichotomies, insiders versus outsiders, and on victims and victors. As with previous analysis in this chapter, the purpose of this section is to delve beneath the national picture of the rural housing debate that is often presented in the media and to investigate local attitudes to living in the countryside. This includes analysis from each area in relation to attitudes to the rural, to change and development and to the perceived demands for living in the countryside and supplements the quantitative analysis in preceding sections.

New, emerging issues are examined in the context of the contested debate around rural housing which has been discussed in previous chapters. This section has been divided into four sections; the first section will examine the broad issue of residents' attitudes to the rural, with the following three sections having the more specific focus of attitudes to planning policy and development control; to development and change in their area; and perspectives on why they chose to live in the countryside. Findings in this section are from the survey administered in each study area in the summer of 2004 which is discussed in Chapter Three (see Appendix One).

6.5.1 Attitudes to the Rural

While literature on the rural continues to dispel the myths of idylls and taken-for-granted notions of the countryside, it is apparent that although population dynamics have changed, perspectives have been slower to alter. When rural residents in each of the three study areas were asked what in their opinion was attractive about living in the countryside, largely positive responses were given. Many of the responses were aligned with notions of the rural idyll identified in the literature (see for example Halfacree, 1993) and tended not to vary throughout the three study areas despite the different rural area types inhabited by the respondents. Residents articulated notions of

a rural idyll when describing both their reasons for moving to the countryside or outlining the attractions of living in the countryside.

Despite different historical and governmental approaches to the rural, similar notions of the countryside to those found in studies carried out in Britain can be identified in responses to the surveys for this research. To a certain extent the idylls that are highlighted correspond to Woods' (2005b) suggestion that 'modern myths' around the countryside abound. Therefore, similar to other jurisdictions, notions of community, kinship and privacy were expressed by residents, particularly those who had returned from living in towns emphasising ideas of a rural idyll:

"After living in Manchester for several years – escape back home – no traffic jams to work – sense of belonging in local community – next door neighbour speak in the morning!!"

Under a third of the total number (30) of respondents had returned or moved to their current dwellings from either living in another part of the country or having previously emigrated. Therefore there was a strong emphasis on the idea of returning to live in a better place and that the choice to live in a rural area was a "no-brainer" as one respondent commented!

Other positive issues associated with living in the countryside focused on the feeling of being close to nature and wildlife, being able to fully experience seasons and living in close proximity to the sea and beaches (for Clew Bay area). A recurrent theme is the idea that living in rural areas is more akin to a 'real' existence. This results from a number of reasons including the idea that because one grew up in a locality then they should continue to live there, that children have a better quality of life, and that the pace of life is better than in urban areas. In Clew Bay and North Leitrim the attractiveness of living in the countryside was juxtaposed with the supposed unattractiveness of living in towns. For example, one Clew Bay resident when asked who should live in the countryside responded with: "Anyone who wants to escape the hell hole that living in a town or city is".

Not everything about the rural is positive for the respondents. For example, although the rural is a peaceful place to live, negatives do arise. These tend to focus 'outside' factors beyond the control of local residents, such as lack of public transport, bad road maintenance and traffic speeding. There was a general acceptance that there was

some amount of sacrifice that had to be put up with in order to benefit from the quality of life gained from living in the countryside. However, if these negatives infringed on that quality as the issues above do, then residents saw it as their right to have these negated.

South Meath respondents, when asked about any negative features of living in the countryside were more likely to focus on access to services, poor infrastructure and the reliance on cars. Because of the location of the Meath study area, respondents lived in greater proximity to towns and as such felt that these negatives were easily dealt. In general living close to local the town was viewed as a positive, and hence there were less negative connotations associated with the urban.

6.5.2 Attitudes to Planning Policy and Development Control

When examining attitudes to planning policy and development control practices in each study area two themes are evident: (i) the rights of locals to build above the needs of the common good and / or the entitlements of 'outsiders' to gain planning permission for a new dwelling; and (ii) the suspicion or mistrust of the planning system in general. These themes were based on a number of experiences including personal experiences of the planning process, stories from neighbours and friends, and narratives from the local media coverage of specific applications and decisions. Many respondents stated that locals should have preference for grants of planning permission over others, suggesting for example that the process would be improved by "eas[ing] planning for local residents, allow[ing] sites to [be] sold only to locals". This evidence of tension between long-term full-time residents and newcomers to the area is found in references to outsiders getting planning permission before 'locals' and to developers and builders getting preference in the planning process, indicating a resentment of the planning regime. It is difficult to ascertain the level to which these perceptions are true for specific cases but analysis of the planning statistics for the counties in question show that although refusal rates are falling, they remain high at 10 to 20% of all applications.

The personal experience of the planning process, given in responses such as "[I] did state to Meath County Council that a person who already had a house in this area got planning to build another house much quicker than we did - unfair: why was this so - connections?" illustrates mistrust or suspicion of the planning process, evident to some

degree throughout all three case study areas. It also highlights the issue of outsiders where there is a resentment in some cases of newcomers moving into an area and subsequent impacts such as exerting different demands on the countryside and not wanting traditional activities to continue as they did in the past. Mistrust of the planning system was highlighted where respondents saw inconsistencies in decision-making within small areas, and inconsistent reasons for refusals of planning permission.

Power or powerlessness were recurrent themes in the responses when asked about attitudes to the planning system. Often respondents questioned why the Local Authority has such “power” to decide who lives where, why politicians have too much “pull” and why there are perceived inconsistencies in decision-making. The general perception was that if a person was from an area they have a right to build a home there because that is the way it was in the past.

6.5.3 Attitudes to Living in the Countryside

As in many rural locations in Ireland, there is a tension between the desire to live in the countryside and an acknowledgement that while the local population continues to grow the initial reasons for moving to the countryside may dissipate. A number of respondents felt that there should be conditions for those who want to live in the countryside. For example, only “people who can accept and appreciate the rural way of living” should live in the countryside while those

“who cannot treat the environment with great care and respect, ... [who] start dictating how we should live or who should live or build thereafter”

should not be allowed to live there. In line with the personal nature of attitudes to living in the countryside respondents felt that if there is to be change and development in their local area then only those “who [are] going to contribute to the community in the countryside” should move there. In all of the representations of rural life, a tension between existing residents and others’ desires to live in the countryside is acknowledged. The language here used reflects both coverage of narratives in local newspapers and the terminology that is used in government policy. For example, the White Paper on Rural Development (Department of Agriculture and Food, 1999) and the Rural Housing Guidelines (DoEHLG, 2005) espouse a settlement pattern that is traditional and dispersed, and that can sustain anyone who contributes to the local

area. For example, a number of respondents suggest that residents should contribute to the local community and economy:

“Anybody [should live in the countryside] who contributes to community and is respectful of local environment. Anybody who is willing to support the local businesses and schools”

The language used to describe those who should or should not live in the countryside tends to be emotive and personal, particularly using terms such as ‘respect’ and ‘have regard to’, for example, local residents suggested that “anybody who respects nature and values its worth” can live in the countryside. ‘Outsiders’ who chose to live in the countryside should not impact on existing residents. For example, respondents wanted new residents of rural areas who chose to live in the countryside

“... who can accept and appreciate the rural way of living and ... who cannot treat the environment with great care and respect. Those who when in situ, start dictating how we should live or who should live or build thereafter”.

Potential urbanisation of the countryside is regarded as a negative despite the contradictory demand for improved services and infrastructure (see discussion above). Some residents groups seeking to improve their rural areas by introducing ‘urban’ amenities like street lighting, footpaths and landscaped road verges are highlighted as a downside of this urbanisation or suburbanisation of landscape:

“... we now find our beautiful pastoral landscape becoming over populated and “suburbanised” by local resident committees – eg orange street lighting, ugly footpaths, overly cultivated roadside landscaping scenarios”.

Often, urbanisation is associated with the perceived impacts of outsiders in the area: “People with city attitudes i.e. ‘this is private property,... you can’t park here!!” As such a negative correlation emerges from the survey responses between outsiders and urban values. The implication of this correlation is that urban or outside people do not understand the nature of living in the countryside because they uphold unfounded idylls. One Clew Bay respondent drew an evocative picture of this by quashing notions of myths and idylls, when asked who should not live in the countryside:

“Persons who want the countryside to remain in a 1950’s timewarp, with romantic notions of Ireland, derived from watching ‘the Quiet Man’ [Movie]”

One particular area-specific issue that was raised in North Leitrim and the Clew Bay area was holiday or second homes. It is evident that internal tensions simmer around

this issue. For example in Mayo, a number of respondents took issue with houses lying empty and locked up for most of the year contributing little to the local community: “anyone who feels they can build a holiday home, live in it for 2 weeks a year, and try to dictate to locals how they can develop their locality.” Other negative aspects associated with holiday homes included perceived impacts on the housing market: “Holiday homes are boosting prices sky high.”

Much of the literature on moving to or living in the countryside focuses on the decision-making process around house location choice, but as examined in Chapter Two, the nature of the rural population in Ireland is different in a number of ways from the UK, for instance. The underlying reason for this is that the traditionally high levels of rural population means that very often the decision to live in the countryside is not a conscious one and is taken-for-granted. Coupled with this is the ease with which planning permission can be gained and high access to land for construction sites, living in the countryside is often an easy and natural choice. For example, a number of respondents’ sole reason for living in one of the three rural case study areas was because they had always lived there (“... I farm and I grew up here”) or because they were from the countryside (“... we always lived in the countryside”).

Despite this natural choice, need was also identified as a determining factor in deciding to live in the countryside. A number of respondents chose to live in the countryside because as a large family they needed more space or needed to be close to elderly parents in order to take care of them and / or for grandchildren to have a good relationship with them. Also, a large number of respondents cited the quality of life that the countryside provided, identifying clean air, open space and peace and quiet as contributing to this.

A tension simmers below the surface whereby local, full-time residents of the study area do not want to deny others the opportunity to live in the countryside yet do not want the very reason they live there being destroyed. There is also evidence of a tension between long term full time residents and newcomers to the area. References to outsiders getting planning permission before ‘locals’ and developers and builders getting preference in the planning process indicate a resentment of the planning process:

“Builders appear to get preferential treatment, is the “big brown envelope” culture still alive and kicking in rural Ireland?? Word on the ground would say yes. Unless of course it is tribal politics”.

6.5.4 Summary Remarks

The most recognised way in which rural dwellers have their opinions represented on rural issues and in particular, on the housing debate are in the media. However, it is more likely that these rural dwellers are actively involved in interest groups or make a particular effort to be heard. As a result, a bias may exist in the opinions expressed. As a result, media reports cannot be relied upon solely to quantify the attitudes and perception of rural dwellers. There is also the potential for media reports to influence the attitudes and perceptions of rural dwellers. For example, a recurring theme throughout the survey responses is that local people are having difficulty obtaining planning permission over non-locals and speculators. There is no evidence to support this perception but it has been a strong theme in media coverage of the debate.

Despite different historical and governmental approaches to the rural, similar notions of the countryside to those found in studies carried out in Britain can be identified in responses to the surveys for this research. To a certain extent the idylls that are highlighted correspond to Woods’ (2005b) suggestion that ‘modern myths’ around the countryside abound. In the Irish case, and particularly in the three study areas, respondents tended to hold two parallel views – that the rural provided the best quality of life option when considering where to live and that rural people have an unquestionable right to live in the countryside.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS

The third objective for this thesis, which was the examination of the changing socio-economic attributes associated with living in the countryside, has been addressed in this chapter. This objective was identified in order to examine why spatial variations in single rural dwelling construction emerged in the 1990s and to provide an insight into small-scale rural housing processes. With the establishment of the Irish rural settlement pattern in Chapter Four, two key drivers of housing location were identified, i.e. policy for rural areas and interventions by the planning system, and the socio-economic dynamics of people living in the countryside. The examination of the Irish rural settlement pattern established the characteristics of housing in the countryside, and the

identification of local, small area trends has been very important in adding to this understanding of national processes. The main findings from Chapter Four have been reinforced in this chapter, i.e. that there has been a reversal in the location of SRD construction share from outer rural to peri-urban areas; there has been a consolidation of high densities in peri-urban areas; coastal edge zones are under pressure; there is an oversupply of housing in weak/marginal areas; and the national road network impact in the creation of high density housing corridors. Therefore, four factors can be identified as influencing housing in local areas: (i) population distribution, density and change; (ii) town 'anchors': in their role as a location of employment and services and in their ability or inability to absorb housing demand; (iii) road networks and accessibility; and (iv) the breakdown of the traditional link between agriculture and rural dwellers.

The complexities of population change in both rural and urban areas have been illustrated by the variation in growth and distribution across space. For example, in the case of South Meath and North Leitrim the inability of the main towns to absorb population growth and subsequently housing demand resulted in suburban and SRD construction in urban hinterlands. Additionally, even if a town was able to absorb the growing population and housing demand, such as Westport and Castlebar in the Clew Bay area, overspill into hinterlands remained a strong characteristic. Undoubtedly, the town regardless of its size plays an influential role in the countryside settlement pattern, seen particularly in travel to work patterns where it is clear that rural dwellers find employment in urban centres and travel from hinterlands and beyond to work there. Map 4.8b clearly displayed the non-random clustering of housing around large to medium sized towns, and the additional corridors of SRDs along national and secondary primary roads networks, indicating that a principal objective for rural dwellers is accessibility. This was also recognised as an important factor for residents who were surveyed for this thesis where a particularly negative element of living in the countryside there is limited access to services and amenities, and a high reliance on private transport in order to travel to nearby urban centres to avail of these.

The change in the traditional link between living in the countryside and agricultural employment with the town as the location of the majority of work opportunities for rural dwellers has also had an impact on settlement patterns. This has influenced housing location choice and resulted in clustering around towns and the road network, and it has

also influenced what the rural dweller demands from their countryside residency. While many rural dwellers are happy to live in the countryside they also desire better services and greater access, in other words they demand what their urban neighbours have. This is a challenge to local planning policy because, although the rural population is happy to live in the countryside, a number of contentious issues are of concern: the over reliance on cars, reflected in the settlement pattern; area specific issues such as mistrust of the planning system; 'empty houses' in Mayo and Leitrim; community contributions to the local area; negative attitudes towards urbanisation juxtaposed with the demand for better services and infrastructure.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.0 INTRODUCTION

A complex geography of rural housing is being produced in contemporary Irish society. Steeped in the agricultural tradition and with growing urbanisation, much of the 'problem' around the rural housing issue is simply a question of 'what do we do with the countryside now?' The examination of the rural housing debate in Ireland provides a fascinating window onto a restless landscape; one where the emergent urban society has growing aspirations to live the rural life and where traditional residents are wrestling with the idea that they no longer have a taken-for-granted right to live in the countryside. Where these two outlooks meet tensions emerge, only to be reinforced by an inconsistent, and at times deeply confusing, policy adoption and implementation. The Irish case, often feted in media to be unique in Western Europe, could be just another case study in global rural change. However, certain aspects make the processes somewhat different, namely (i) high levels of access to land through fragmentation of land and an extensive road network, (ii) the large proportion of new build construction as a result of a laissez-fair planning regime places Ireland at odds with restrictive practices, exemplified in systems such as in its nearest neighbour the UK, and a (iii) a cultural imperative to live in the countryside. This has been reinforced by the legacy of policy-led dispersal of the rural settlement pattern and a pro-rural policy adopted by government

At its most basic this thesis set out to establish baseline information for rural housing in Ireland. Previously, little was known about the contemporary nature of housing in the Irish countryside with the lack of basic broad scale empirical data masking the additional need for knowledge of the processes behind decision-making, power relations and the forces driving the location of rural housing. Thus many layers had to be unravelled and understood to establish the contemporary geography of rural housing in Ireland. The first of these layers was the settlement pattern of single rural dwellings. Due to inconsistent and poor recording methods at national and local levels little was known of the scale, pattern, location and amount of housing that existed in the countryside. An additional layer of knowledge that was necessary to establish and analyse was the relationship between the location of rural dwellings to urban

settlements of all sizes and with the extensive road network throughout the country. Once this basic information was established, it became apparent that higher densities of rural housing are located in the hinterland of urban settlements of all sizes and in corridors along the national road network. This may be of little surprise and tended to confirm most of the anecdotal evidence that had been reported in print and broadcast media. However, what became blatantly clear was that little had been done to join-up policy between government departments or indeed in many cases to implement national guidelines for location of dwellings, particularly in relation to development restrictions on the national road network. On the other hand, the establishment of baseline data contradicts much of the media coverage which suggests that planning permissions for rural housing were reaching higher refusal rates. It was clear, therefore, that the processes behind the location and construction of housing, and the discourses around living in the countryside were far more complex than the black and white media and pressure group dichotomies.

Following the establishment of baseline data on the location, density and amount of rural housing in Ireland, two key objectives for the research were identified. It is important that the findings from the multi-scale, multi-method approach inform future policy interventions at the national strategic level and in local, everyday decision-making. However, the objective of the thesis is not only to add to empirical knowledge; it is also to contribute to wider theoretical debates about processes of countryside change which are taking place in rural geography literature. The findings address these two arenas by opening up a window onto a restless landscape that is changing rapidly and under continual pressure. There are complex dynamics at work in the countryside including changing policy pressures for agriculture, the environment and sustainable development; rural restructuring and economic change; and transformations in traditional demographic patterns. The geography of rural housing offers a useful and interesting perspective on these complex dynamics. For instance, this research explored changing rural population patterns which are characterised by traditional rural dwellers attached to agricultural and / or local employment being subsumed into a wider demographic where the reach of the rural has widened and where those who live in the countryside have more varied and contrasting socio-demographic profiles. It highlights a countryside which achieves a strong social mix in the type of population resident there; one that is not dominated by the middle classes which is a defining characteristic

of other jurisdictions (for example studies by Phillips (2005) in England. This transformation in the profile of the rural resident has put pressure on and questioned the traditional purpose of the countryside itself and the role of its occupants. Such an inquiry has centred on the examination of the legacy of a traditional or specific way of life and, in the Irish case, has brought the dispersed settlement pattern which has been characteristic of the rural landscape for some time into question, giving rise to widespread debate and creating one of the greatest challenges to contemporary spatial planning in Ireland. From these issues two key themes have emerged in the thesis and will be discussed below: (i) the contribution of research on the contestation of rural housing in Ireland to rural geography literature, and (ii) the institutional environment in which rural settlement patterns evolve. The significance of examining such issues from a philosophical stance that is placed at the interface between political economy and social constructivism cannot be understated. This standpoint on the research allowed for broad scale, empirical findings to be considered together with small-scale, individual perspectives; the contribution of which is to enlighten narrow views on the rural housing and enrich understanding of the planning and housing process in the countryside.

7.1 CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL LITERATURE

Discourses of rurality and inconclusive attempts to define the rural have formed the basis of studies in rural geography since the mid-1980s. Chapter Two examined these debates and the philosophical approaches adopted over a number of decades to address the challenges of 'grappling' with the rural. Attempts to define the rural arose from a questioning of the functional approaches to traditional countryside economies and activities, and to a large extent, although less explicitly so than in the past, continue to dominate rural geography research in some way or another. Woods (2005b) identifies the drivers of rural studies and of the contestation that prevails in a number of countryside contexts as deriving from traditional, functional approaches that uphold notions of an idyll; supporting the premise that rural is all that is good in society and urban is all that is bad. For many studies in the 1980s and 1990s, the contested nature of the rural idyll and a questioning of its very existence formed the foundation of research that adopted political economy approaches to the countryside which recognised that external forces were at work on localised areas and that the idyll itself had become a commodity upon which notions could be 'sold' and lifestyles be 'bought'.

Conclusions in the search for a definition of the rural have never been reached or agreed upon; instead (ironically) a functional designation has been applied as deemed appropriate to the topic of under investigation. However, the questioning of taken-for-granted ideas resulted in a move away from two inhibiting but long held assumptions – that the rural is synonymous with agriculture and that it is anything that is not urban in character. By moving beyond simplistic, functional approaches, rural studies could flourish in new spheres and question the future of the countryside, and ultimately, what its role is – or, perhaps more appropriately, what its roles are. The recognition of the applicability of the political economy frame allowed researchers to address alternative rurals; acknowledging that the countryside has a multi-functional role in modern society. This emphasised that the various functions of the countryside can work in tandem with each other, and within the one place, so that the rural becomes a series of overlapping spaces.

The significance at this point for this research is that the rural can be recognised as a residential space, and thus gave validity to a wide range of studies on housing in the countryside which took place in the 1990s. Much of the research from this era was presented by key authors or studies such as by Cloke (1979, 1983), Shucksmith (1990a; 1990b; 1991), and Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones (2000; 2001), and focused on issues such as affordability, housing for locals, and second homes, and often having a keen eye on the contextual spatial planning system. Literature from the UK has dominated the Anglo-Saxon perspective on rural housing with the result, and rightly so given the breadth of literature on the subject, that the norms identified have coloured perceptions of planning regulation and of how rural housing is investigated in jurisdictions where the context may differ significantly. The Republic of Ireland is a case in point here – it is close enough to British governance structures that it provides an appropriate comparative study, but distant enough in its planning regime and outcomes that it warrants in-depth investigation.

As outlined throughout the thesis, accessibility to housing in the Irish countryside is high (although this is disputed in some media interpretations) with the result that the 'meaning' of living in rural areas is distinctly different to our nearest neighbours in Britain. The highly regulatory approach to planning in the countryside in Britain

underpins the status associated with the ability to afford to buy or build a home in the countryside and thus, its sought after nature as exemplified in studies by Milbourne (2006). A number of counter-arguments to the long-standing, highly regulated control of development in the British countryside have highlighted, among other features, the 'leap-frog' effect of no build zones (or greenbelts) on surrounding areas, the crisis in affordability particular for local would-be dwellers, and in cases of holiday home ownership in Wales, the potential loss of indigenous language. Given that the research agenda for rural housing has been set to a large degree by British studies, one may question the appropriateness of Ireland as a case study, particularly in a discourse that, in its inception as it was in the 1990s is considered over or outdated (Milbourne, 2006), having moved beyond regulatory, political economy approaches to social constructivist frames and explorations of alternative and 'other rurals'.

In its simplest form the case of rural housing in Ireland provides an alternative view of living in the countryside, given that it owes its origins to a British colonial past particularly in terms of the contemporary governance structure, and its belated movement away from the land, i.e. from agricultural to urban-related employment. However, the story is far more complex than that. A study of housing in the Irish countryside has presented a complex and contested narrative on a rural(s) that is at odds with the very foundations of modern spatial planning and that, despite the rapid urbanisation of the state since the 1960s, one that continues to uphold an unrelenting relationship with the rural. Unlike its British counterparts the Irish relationship with the land has not been overshadowed by traditional concepts of idyll-isation and apoliticism. The countryside in Ireland is too real an object for Irish society to ever consider it associated with notions of conventional romanticism – it is far too accessible to be considered an unobtainable idyll. Instead, the rural in Ireland is considered a working and living environment that exists for the use of the population, which means it can be used for a wide range of functions, but in most cases is interpreted as a place to build houses.

All of this is not to say that the countryside in Ireland is not valued. The key difference is that while landscape has been inscribed as the object with the greatest value in the British rural planning regime, land has been given this dubious honour in Ireland. By its very nature land exists to be utilised and to yield, and in the years of property boom and

rising housing markets, living in the countryside simply became a part of the produce. As has been examined in detail in this thesis and in contrast to countries with restrictive planning regimes, access to planning permission to build a new home has been and continues to be relatively easy to attain. This coupled with the continuing high levels of part-time family farming in the state has resulted in a widespread acceptance of a living countryside rather than a preserved one.

The 'big question' therefore is: is the 'living countryside', as it may be interpreted in Ireland, a good or a bad thing? The media debate which has dominated rural planning in Ireland for some time has sought to answer this question, however unsuccessfully, by imposing a dichotomous structure on an issue that is highly complex and founded in a legacy of cultural expectation and political intervention. This research, in bringing together the three elements of the investigation into housing in the Irish countryside (i.e. empirical broad scale analysis, multi-scale policy analysis, and the examination of local dynamics), presents the potential for an alternative model of planning and living in the countryside that is distinctly disparate to countries with restrictive regimes, and runs against the grain of contemporary thinking about sustainable development. Numerous studies in the UK have highlighted the characteristics of populations living in the countryside – populations dominated by the middle classes, those seeking alternative lifestyles, and retirees, for example, described in some cases as processes of rural gentrification (see Phillips, 2005). The dynamics of the Irish rural population highlight a significant contrast to processes such as gentrification, being characterised to a large extent by a greater social mix and not being dominated by higher earners or exceptionally large proportions working in professional or managerial positions. Farmers still account for the greatest proportion of rural dwellers, with people working in manual employment also accounting for a significant proportion of the population.

Given the greater social mix of the rural population in comparison to other countries, Ireland could therefore boast an alternative sustainable future for the countryside. Thus, answering the 'big question' above in a positive manner – yes, Ireland's living countryside is a good thing. The negative impacts of the restrictive regimes, in England and Wales for example, that have been identified in studies (see for example Shucksmith, 1991; Woods, 2005a), consequently are not evident in Ireland – the Irish system does not advocate the widescale use of greenbelts, therefore leap-frogging of

populations is less likely to occur; the Irish system conflates rural and urban, therefore distinctions between town and country are less apparent; the Irish system generally applies a laissez-faire approach to housing in the countryside, therefore planning permissions for new builds are very accessible; land ownership is dominated by the many not the few, therefore access to sites is attainable. Adding all of these factors together means that an alternative model for rural areas can be presented – one that implicitly promotes a good social mix, ensures a population of mixed age groups, the local support of services, and the provision of hard and soft infrastructure by local government as the needs of the population arise.

By presenting Ireland's countryside as an alternative model for sustainability, it questions the nature of the wider rural debate that is taking place in literature and definitions of sustainable development. It also subverts the idea of the rural idyll by questioning the British perspective, or in the context of cultural and political legacies in Ireland, a colonial perspective on what constitutes the countryside, that is, a countryside that is the sum of its lands rather than its landscapes. However, by subverting one idyll, the Irish rural housing debate has imagined another idyll which has been reinforced through the domination of personal and victim narratives in the media. The idyll portrayed in the Irish context is one of the living countryside where land is passed from one generation to another and the right to build is maintained by a pro-development government and planning regime. The 'desire to inhabit' (DuPuis, 2006) that is so prevalent in the Irish relationship with housing in the countryside, thus reinforces an alternative idyll unique to Ireland.

The negative side of the pattern of housing in the countryside cannot, however, be denied. The dispersed nature of rural housing, damaged landscapes, poor housing design, and threats to groundwater quality are among the factors that are in direct defiance of conventional notions of sustainability. The next big question that needs to be addressed therefore, and one that requires further in-depth study, is: does a choice have to be made between social sustainability and environmental sustainability when planning for housing in the countryside? In subverting the British rural planning tradition (town and country planning), housing in the Irish countryside has potentially created a more socially sustainable arena (a living and working countryside). However, in doing so it has gone against the founding principles of planning by not protecting countryside

landscapes – by damaging its own aesthetic and environmental assets. Rural housing in Ireland, by its very nature, challenges the guiding principles of sustainable development by achieving social, and to a lesser extent economic, sustainability whilst on the whole ignoring environmental needs.

7.1.1 Contribution to Rural Studies

From any research project, regardless of the objectives which are specific to the area under investigation at the time, it is important to reflect on the contribution that the research makes to the wider disciplinary field. Throughout this thesis three key areas can be identified as contributing to the field of rural geography and wider rural studies literature:

- (i) This study examines in detail a settlement pattern which has risen from a laissez-faire or liberal planning regime. Although criticised for its lack of strategic vision and its tendency to act reactively rather than proactively, there is some significance in the counter-argument that a liberal planning system has a number of benefits which may include the potential for greater inclusion and a better social mix in the countryside. It is important, therefore, to consider the laissez-faire regime in its positive embodiment particularly in relation to the sustainability of rural communities. The contemporary planning system in Ireland, owing its foundations to British town and country planning, has manifested a number of the tradition's guiding principles in a subversive manner that are at odds with widely accepted practices for preservation and sustainable development. While the Irish system may present an alternative model for development in the countryside, the forces that drive the decision-making have operated within the legacy of struggles for independence and a colonial past. This study of planning and housing in rural Ireland demonstrates within the wider literature the outcomes of a reactionary regime that has sought to define 'rural' by its own experiences.
- (ii) Placing this research at the interface of cultural geography and political economy approaches serves to enrich the understanding of planning processes and decision-making for rural housing. This thesis argues that these two, separate philosophical stances be brought together to enlighten our understanding of the relationship between policy and people, particularly in the context of contested spaces such as the changing countryside. The regulatory

system in Ireland stems from the legacy of colonialism where the origins of the independent state sought to bring the land to people, and vice versa, by completing redistribution of ownership and ensuring an agrarian system characterised by small, family farming units. The cultural expectation to build one's own home and have continued access to land throughout the generations has been reinforced by successive governments and political interventions. Many of the decisions made by Irish governments up to the 1980s were driven by the need to address economic crisis and as a result rural housing in a stagnant population was not the challenge to sustainable development it is today. Access to cheap housing and the provision of little or no social housing in the countryside meant that allowing people to build new homes was a convenient way to manage demands for new homes. The only way in which these processes (cultural expectation and housing demands) can be truly understood is to draw together the two philosophical approaches of the political economy and social constructivist frames.

- (iii) Debates on rural housing are not just about need, demand and affordability. The Irish case highlights the need to include less tangible, cultural historical elements into debates such as notions of nationalism and identity. Exploring these issues in this piece of research added insight into the legacy of land-use decisions prior to the origins of the state and the influence these continue to have despite broader movements towards strategic spatial planning. While wider external forces have a major influence on the form development takes in contemporary society, the role of history and cultural imperatives cannot be underplayed when investigating rural change.

While the challenge of examining rural housing in Ireland identified an interesting and important empirical problem, the research contained in this thesis has made significant contributions to international rural studies. These are: (i) highlighting the role of history and culture as a vital adjunct to political economy processes; (ii) examining the rural at various scales – broad to local; and (iii) questioning the validity of the laissez-faire planning regime versus restrictive, strategic practices.

Using the rural housing debate in Ireland as a case study in rural change and contestation provides a useful way to interrogate and investigate literature from other

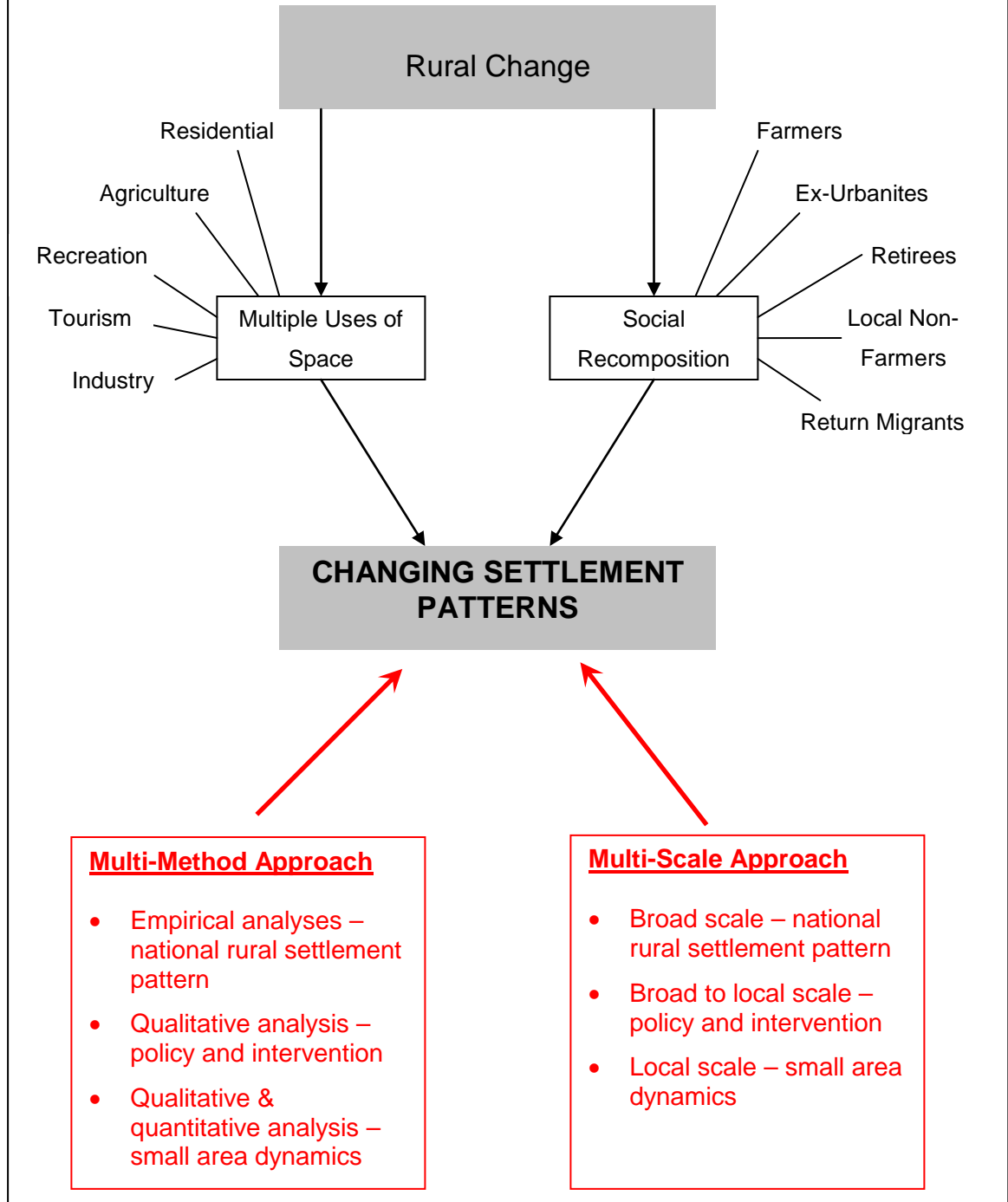
jurisdictions by contextualising the processes of rural change in Ireland; critically analysing that change in Ireland; and also acts as a means to critically analyse that literature itself. This thesis has managed to breakdown the elements of rural change within the context of housing in the Irish countryside while also locating that change within wider European and global transformations. Some of the 'problems' with housing in the countryside that have fuelled the rural housing debate relate to the fact that there has been a limited knowledge about how they impact on rural areas and on how government from national to local level is tackling the issue. Other challenges include the inconsistent nature of policy, the complex drivers that influence housing location choice in rural areas, a lack of understanding of how the contemporary pattern of settlement has been reached, and what the future of living in the countryside will look like. The limited understanding of processes and a lack of empirical knowledge about housing in the Irish countryside was the departure point for this thesis. Thus, the overriding objective for this research was to establish the spatial extent of single rural dwellings in 2002 and to ascertain the processes that influence and determine that pattern.

In light of processes of rural change in Ireland that have much in common with our European neighbours but which may be occurring at a different pace, it is important to present an assessment of rural housing processes within an international context. The most obvious comparative model for rural housing is the UK which provided Ireland with the framework for its contemporary planning regime. This research has addressed two of Milbourne's (2006) suggested themes in rural housing, i.e. regulatory process and rural housing structures; and social and cultural change and its relationship with housing. In addition, while rural studies in the UK have 'moved on' to theoretical frameworks bounded by social constructivism, rural geography and planning research in Ireland is only beginning this journey. Therefore, it has been important to legitimise the study of Irish rural housing in a broader conceptual and theoretical framework so that instead of it being viewed as a passé issue that has already been covered by UK research, it is in fact an exciting subject in rural studies that can contribute to wider, international theoretical debates and provides fresh insights into housing studies.

In addressing Smith's (2007) call to engage in broad scale empirical analysis of rural change this thesis applied an innovative means with which to investigate contestation of

the countryside. The multi-scale approach (see Figure 7.1) from broad to local scales allows for a deeper understanding of process that characterise the national rural settlement pattern but have a variety of impacts and drivers at the small area level. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies furthers that understanding. This multi-scale, multi-method approach has provided a powerful lens through which a restless landscape can be explored and understood.

Figure 7.1 Contributions to Rural Geography (based on Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework)



7.2 THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The institutional environment in which the contemporary Irish rural settlement has evolved has been shaped by a number of factors that include a planning system that was derived largely from British town and country planning principles, government interventions that have ranged from transfer of land ownership and the virtual abolition of the landlord system, to current national guidelines for sustainable development, and European Union and other international requirements for territorial planning. It is evident that attitudes to the countryside in Ireland are somewhat different to those in other European countries. This is as a result of the enduring relationship between dispersed housing and rural areas that in other countries is manifested in village type settlements and clustered developments. Ireland has one of the most dispersed settlement patterns in Europe. This is not necessarily a bad thing, however – there is a small population and density is relatively sparse. The average five single rural dwellings per square kilometre is, by any standard, low. However, when this figure is examined in detail it is evident that the pattern is more complex than first meets the eye. In some parts of the country, particularly in the south and southeast and in locations that are in proximity to the national road network and urban centres of any size this density rises dramatically – over 25 dwellings per square kilometre in some cases.

The institutional context for housing in the countryside is complex and is often driven by a variation of policy interventions and strategies that have become the subject of conflict and contestation in the public realm, in politics and in the media. Contestation about the future of the countryside is a common theme in rural studies examining anything from agricultural decline to rural restructuring to the changing social dynamics of the countryside. Ireland is in an interesting position and point in its history to investigate contestation of the countryside with the debate around rural housing an ideal manifestation of that contestation. One distinctive argument that can be identified arising from the analysis of the institutional framework within which rural housing and settlement evolves is that state interventions into planning for rural areas in Ireland have continually reinforced the relationship between housing and the Irish countryside. This is a highly unusual position for a northwestern European country to be in because of the tendency for other jurisdictions to have rural settlement patterns that consist of networks of towns and villages, minimising dispersed settlement, and where planning policies direct new housing into existing settlements or encourage replacement

buildings and the use of existing footprints. These more restrictive policies, which are characteristic of countries such as the UK and France, enable the adoption of far more strategic policy and guidance for the future development of the countryside. So where does this leave Ireland? Does this mean that the settlement pattern that has evolved over a number of centuries, and in particular since the mid-1800s, and the rural policies that have been adopted over a number of years are wrong, inappropriate or unsustainable?

Much of the policy that addresses rural settlement in Ireland is based on the assumption that traditional countryside landscapes and society are characterised by dispersion and networks of very small clusters of population. This perpetuates the notion of a traditional settlement pattern that is unique to the Irish countryside being continued and maintained. This argument is a key principle of pressure groups such as the Irish Rural Dwellers Association (IRDA) which have cited a continuity of settlement patterns going back as far as the Neolithic landscapes. One of the key proponents of this argument in the IRDA is Prof. Emeritus Seamus Caulfield, an archaeologist who through his professional standing has given legitimacy to this position. The idea of a traditional settlement pattern as a determinant of contemporary policies for rural housing has also gained currency politically because it means that the *status quo* can be maintained, and particularly for rural constituencies there is less likelihood for upset among the electorate. The term 'traditional' appears regularly in government documents, for example, in the 1999 Rural Development White Paper which set the current framework for rural areas and living in the countryside. This document was undoubtedly necessary for rural areas at a time of great change in Ireland and set the visionary framework for the future of the Irish countryside, one where a vibrant community and a strengthened social economy can survive and prosper despite the dramatic decline in agriculture and other primary employment bases. The White Paper was promoted by TD Eamon O Cuiv, then a Junior Minister in the Department of Agriculture and Food and now Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Minister O Cuiv is a major proponent of housing in the countryside and is considered a champion of many rural people who wish to construct new dwellings. The idea that tradition must be upheld is a key principle of this perspective to rural housing and must be considered as legitimate. However, one of the 'problems' with rural housing in Ireland is the ambiguity of what is traditional to begin with.

Going back as far as the Neolithic period, using sites such as the Ceide Fields in County Mayo where archaeologists have found evidence of dispersed, farm settlements, as a reason to maintain the current housing pattern is a thin argument. However, it is very difficult to ascertain what the traditional pattern is. A number of historians have suggested that the settlement pattern in Ireland has been in flux for centuries, shifting from clustered to dispersed, cyclically for many generations. In terms of the contemporary pattern of development in Ireland, its roots have been identified as becoming firmly established in the mid- to late-eighteenth century where a number of upheavals in Irish society took place that impacted dramatically on population trends and the nature of land ownership. The mass emigration and the high number of deaths that occurred as a consequence of the Famine in the 1840s resulted in the establishment of a population distribution characterised by regional disparities and dispersion. In contrast to our western European neighbours, population trends were not influenced by the rise of industrialisation and subsequent urbanisation. Instead, high levels of out-migration to other rapidly urbanising countries meant that Ireland did not consolidate its population in its urban centres. The third factor which directly impacts on current housing trends is that the series of Land Acts adopted by the British government in the late nineteenth century began the widespread transfer of land from landlords to tenant farmers. The continuation of this land transfer by the early Irish government through the Land Commission established high levels of owner-occupancy of land and consequently of housing.

Settlement has for many years been influenced by its institutional environment and it would be naïve to think that there was no framework for housing or planning prior to the adoption of the statutory planning system in 1963. There have been a number of agents of development control in recent Irish history that have impacted on how settlement patterns have been shaped. This is why it is a very difficult, if not an impossible task to ascertain what the traditional pattern of settlement may be or indeed if one exists or existed at all. The cyclical nature of settlement patterns, particularly since the mid-nineteenth century, has been influenced by external interventions. Clustered settlements would have characterised the rural landscape during the time of landlord management with tenant farmers often living away from the land they farmed. Around the time of the Famine the series of landlord 'improvements' that took place resulted in

a scattering of populations and in a pattern of dispersed and ribbon or linear type development ensued. When the failure of the landlord system became apparent in Ireland, the British government intervened to bring about the transfer of land ownership along the western half of the country through the vehicle of the Congested Districts Boards. High owner occupancy which is not unusual in rural areas in general became widespread from this time onwards. Ireland is not unique in its high levels of owner occupancy due to the more limited use of other housing mechanisms and tenancies in rural areas compared to those in towns and cities. What is interesting the Irish case was that, from the origins of the state and before that in the struggle for independence from Britain, government through its interventions and policies has continued to reinforce a very strong association between countryside and housing. This approach was not problematic and indeed was probably highly appropriate until the latter half of the twentieth century when the society and economy was still largely agrarian. When mass emigration, a weak economy, a strong reliance on farming, and a dispersed settlement pattern characterised rural areas, housing or the notion of living in the countryside was not a concern – it was just the way things were.

When economic growth and increases in the national population first began to speed up in comparison to previous years in the 1970s, and agriculture began to decline, debate about living in the countryside emerged. This debate was relatively short-lived due the number of economic crises that arose during that decade until the early 1990s in Ireland and globally. During this time, until the 1990s, government's main concern was understandably with job creation and achieving regional economic balance. Spatial planning was not a consideration as long as jobs were created and infrastructure, if possible, was put in place where it would achieve the maximum amount of employment. The result for planning in Ireland was the implementation of a laissez-faire regime due to limited resources, a lack of political interest and the non-implementation of spatial strategies.

The strengthening economy in the 1990s brought both great opportunities and challenges for government. The consolidation of the urban society and the economy within which farming accounted for a small proportion of GDP meant that the countryside was a very different place than it had been even twenty years previously and new challenges were faced for its future. On the other hand, more resources and

support were available to face this challenge. Spatial planning took on a renewed importance as a result of frameworks from the EU, rising urbanisation, and a growing population. Rural areas took on a new role separate to agriculture and became a place of residence for around 40% of the national population many of whom had no connection with the traditional economy. The Planning and Development Act (2000) was enacted in order to redress the some of weaker elements of the planning system such as inconsistencies in the adoption of County Development Plans which now have to be renewed every six years.

7.3 SUMMARY REMARKS – FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The fundamental characteristic of rural settlement in Ireland is the enduring relationship between the countryside and housing. In Ireland, rural space is being reproduced as residential space and this is perpetuated firstly by government frameworks for intervention into and policies for rural area, and secondly, by the perceived rights held by citizens that they have a right to build and live in the open countryside. The elusive debate that has surrounded living in the countryside in recent years had done little to establish the location and number of rural dwellings. As identified in Chapter One, the lack of comprehensive empirical research has resulted in an over-reliance on anecdote and hearsay, and the debate has not moved on to the deeper processes behind rural housing supply and demand. This thesis has not only established the geographical extent of single rural dwellings in Ireland, but has also provided a comprehensive examination of the planning policy context for the location of housing in the countryside, the manifestation of the contestation that surrounds living in the countryside, and a snapshot of local level processes the drive change.

Previous studies into rural housing in Ireland that focused on individual localities provided valuable insights into the rural settlement pattern and planning decisions at the local level. However, because of difficulties with access to data at a state level, these studies tended to act as stand alone insights rather than providing a conclusive national picture. The intellectual gap in rural geography and the knowledge deficit in planning, particularly in the everyday professional practice resulted from difficulties in gaining access to data and the lack of a broad scale, national empirical study of rural housing. This study, acting as a catalyst to further research into national rural housing processes, has provided a comparative framework for housing in different rural area

types. One clear gap in the spatial analysis of SRDs is the lack of data for Northern Ireland. While institutes such as the National Centre for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA) and the National Centre for Geocomputation (NCG) have advanced all-island mapping (see for example Gleeson et al, 2007), more could be done to collect data that are comparable across the two jurisdictions. In the case of rural housing, this could go some lengths to improve understanding of similar patterns of development and discourse in two different regulatory and legislative contexts.

The case of housing in the Irish countryside provides a useful and fascinating examination of power relations that could be expanded greatly, which a number of authors have highlighted as needing further attention (for example Woods, 2005a; Shucksmith, 2006). The historical and cultural implications of land ownership, the Irish planning regime and the highly contested nature of the rural housing debate provide a basis for an extensive study into decision-making, power relations and the nature of planning in Ireland. In particular, the rural typology which has been used as a planning tool, could provide the basis for a typology of planning decisions and interventions, investigating how different socio-economic structures demographic compositions influence rural decision-making discourses.

The high level of anecdote and opinion, and the emotional nature of the rural housing debate provided challenges to the research but ultimately highlighted the need for the establishment of baseline information. Now that this has been established, greater insight can be gained into the multi-faceted debate that surrounds rural housing. The examination of media coverage in Chapter One could be expanded to examine how the media has influenced the decision-making process itself. It is clear that rather than recording the debate, writers have in fact become another voice in the debate presenting a comparative discourse of rural housing, contributing to the language of the debate that has spilled over into the political and popular.

Finally, new rural housing issues that have been the focus of research in other parts of the world over a number of decades are now emerging as relevant in Ireland. Issues such as affordability, rural housing market processes, holiday homes and second home ownership, social housing and homelessness, and dwelling vacancy are among a

number of research areas that need to be investigated in order to expand our understanding of the geography of rural housing.

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Appendix One

LIVING IN THE IRISH COUNTRYSIDE

Questionnaire Survey

This is a questionnaire about living in rural Ireland. The questionnaire is part of a research project funded by the Rural Economy Research Centre, Teagasc and the Department of Geography, NUI Maynooth on housing in the countryside. The purpose of the project is to obtain information that, we hope, will improve policies for people living in rural areas. We would be grateful if you complete the questionnaire as fully as possible.

Any information which you provide will be treated as **TOTALLY CONFIDENTIAL**, and is collected **SOLELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY**. No information on any individual will be passed to a third party.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE HOMEOWNER (Where questions refer to Homeowner A and Homeowner B, this allows for joint ownership of a house).

THANK YOU FOR SPENDING YOUR TIME DOING THIS.

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