

Mapping Welsh neighbourhood types

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Introduction

Wales is often regarded as being quite a uniform country but, for its relatively small size, it is very diverse with distinct geographical differences in population and other socio-economic and cultural characteristics (Welsh Assembly Government, 2000). Wales has been rather neglected in terms of small area mapping and analysis of social data. This is partly due to a lack of detailed social survey data for small areas within Wales. However, Wales has recently acquired a new data source; one which allows small area mapping and analysis - the annual 'Living in Wales' survey (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007). We aim to explore some small area differences using this relatively recent source of Welsh data, and in particular, whether we can identify and classify distinct neighbourhood types in Wales based on the attitudes of people who live within them.

Between 2004 and 2007, the annual 'Living in Wales' survey asked the same eight questions on people's attitudes towards their local neighbourhood and the people who lived there. Responses for these eight questions were pooled together for each of 413 neighbourhoods and entered into a cluster

analysis. This is a statistical technique that grouped the neighbourhoods into five categories based on the similarity in responses and these are mapped in Figure 1. The map on the left shows the conventional topographic map of Wales, with neighbourhoods drawn in proportion to land area. But this emphasises the sparsely populated rural areas of Wales, and hides a lot of the variation in population characteristics in the most densely populated parts of the country, that are difficult to discern. To address this problem, the map on the right represents the same neighbourhoods but they have been distorted in proportion to the size of the population living within them. Such a map is called a population cartogram. This distorted map of Wales, with the rural areas in mid- and west Wales shrunk and the densely populated areas of south and north-east Wales expanded, allows a clearer picture of where most people live and not at the expense of the interpretability of the map.

Findings

Neighbourhood 1 (608,100 people; 15,552 km²; 90 areas)

Found in predominately rural areas, it is characterised by people who trust most of their neighbours and who believe

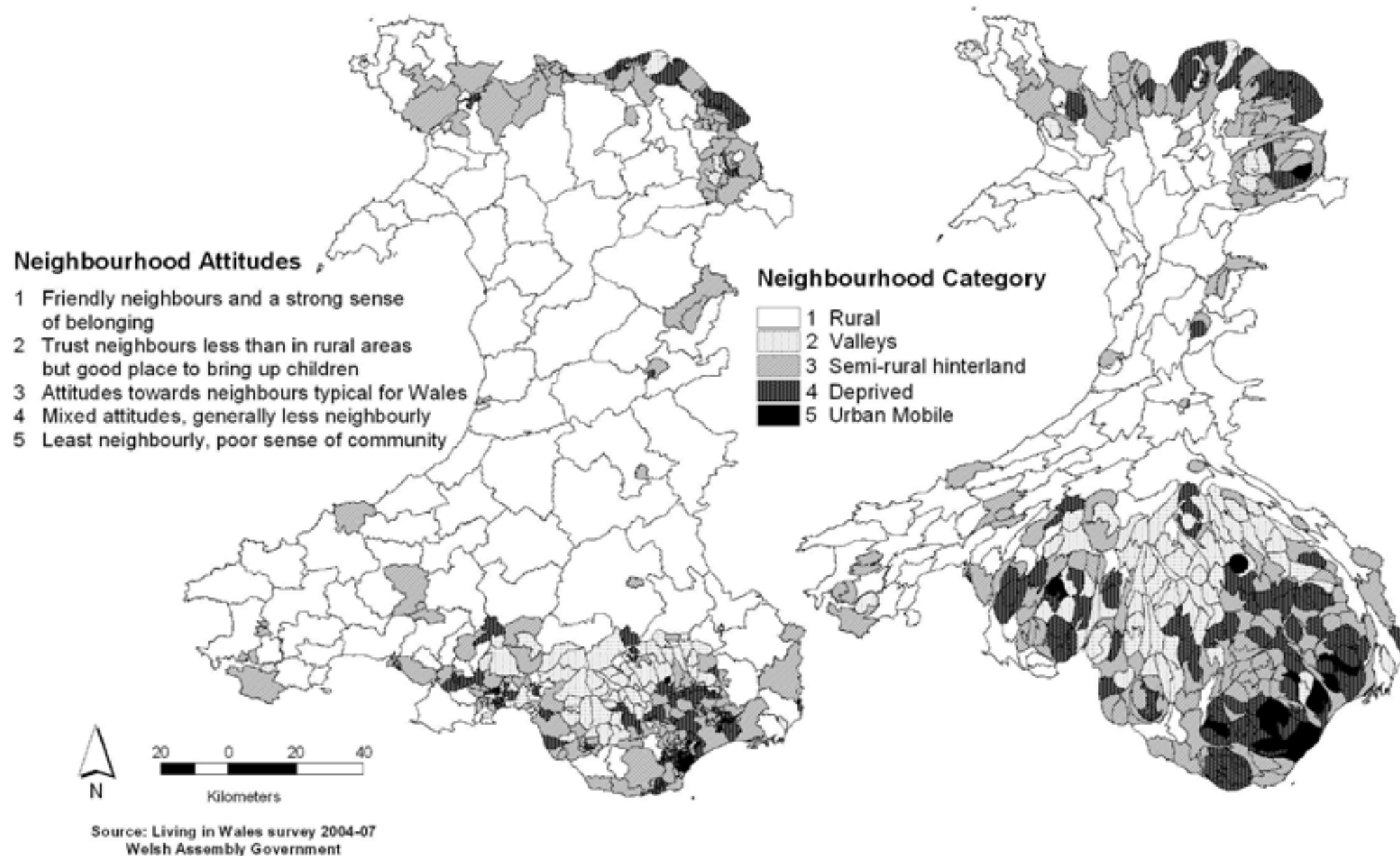


Figure 1: A classification of Welsh neighbourhoods using Living in Wales attitudes data.

that their neighbourhood is a very good place to bring up children. Over half talk to their neighbours on most days, and regard their friendship as meaning a lot to them. They tend to ask their neighbours for advice and for favours and to borrow things from them. They have a very good sense of belonging to the area and tend to see themselves as similar to other people in their area and are willing to work with others to improve their neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood 2 (566,500 people; 1,223 km²; 76 areas)

Almost exclusively found, and almost entirely composed of the former coal mining communities of the Welsh valleys. The only other areas outside of the valleys where these neighbourhoods can be found are in the former slate mining communities of north-west Wales and a few neighbourhoods in north-east Wales. This neighbourhood is characterised by people whose attitudes are quite similar to those in neighbourhood 1, with two main exceptions. The first is that they trust their neighbours a lot less than in neighbourhood 1, with fewer than half trusting most of their neighbours and a quarter trusting very few of them. The second is that only a quarter believe that their neighbourhood is a very good place to bring up children, although half think that it is a fairly good place.

Neighbourhood 3 (952,300 people; 2,942 km²; 136 areas)

Found predominately in the suburbs of the cities in south Wales or the semi-rural hinterland that surrounds them. They can also be found in the more affluent areas of the coastal fringe of north Wales and the market towns of mid-Wales. The attitudes to neighbours and neighbourhood tend to reflect that of the Welsh average.

Neighbourhood 4 (656,500 people; 627 km²; 93 areas)

Located in more deprived areas of Wales, and generally outside of the former mining communities, they are concentrated in the south Wales urban areas and the coastal fringe of north Wales. They are characterised by people with a mix of attitudes towards their neighbourhood. Compared with the previous neighbourhood types, fewer people tended to strongly agree that they rely on their neighbours for advice, favours and friendship and fewer people strongly agreed that they have a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood and that they thought themselves as similar to their neighbours.

Fewer people trust most of their neighbours with a third trusting very few people at all. Despite this, around half believe that it's a fairly good place to bring up children with a further fifth believing that it is a very good place.

Neighbourhood 5 (119,600 people; 37 km²; 18 areas)

Found predominately in the inner-cities of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea and very rarely outside of these areas. They are not necessarily deprived areas (although some are) with this neighbourhood including regenerated docklands. Instead, it is characterised by private rented accommodation and a very varied and mobile population. It is the smallest neighbourhood and is perhaps the least neighbourly. Only a quarter trust many people in their neighbourhood and over half trust few people or no-one at all. Two fifths believe that it is a fairly good place to bring up children, but nearly one third think that it is a poor place. Fewer people talk to their neighbours compared to the other neighbourhood types with a quarter talking to them less than once or month or never. Here, people are less likely than in the other neighbourhood types to see neighbours as friends and less likely to ask advice and favours from them. They have less of a sense of belonging and are less likely to see themselves as similar to others in their neighbourhood.

Conclusions

- The patterning of the five neighbourhoods suggests that the attitudes of people in Wales towards the neighbourhood in which they live are broadly very similar – people living in similar places broadly share similar attitudes.
- The analysis suggests that these attitudes are strongly embedded within particular parts of Wales allowing a distinctive geography to emerge.
- They also broadly conform to other metrics used to classify Wales at small scales, such as deprivation indicators, commuting patterns and local labour market areas (Milbourne et al., 2005). This association suggests that people's attitudes towards their neighbours and their neighbourhood are broadly related to socio-economic, demographic and cultural factors that vary across Wales.

References

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