

# Geodemographics and its place in the history of planning methods

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KEYWORDS: Geodemographics; history of planning methodology; local authority planning departments

## 1. Introduction

Thirty years ago, Michael Breheny and I wrote a paper that was critical of the field of planning history (Breheny and Batey, 1982). We commented that much of what was written under that heading concentrated too narrowly on physical planning, design and the realisation of particular planning proposals, such as new settlements, by specific eminent planners. We observed that important aspects of planning were being ignored, such as studies giving an insight into the motives or ideologies underlying the practice of planning. We commented in particular that planning history up to that point omitted discussions of how plans were produced, that is the methodology of planning or the planning process.

In the same paper we began to sketch out the agenda for a systematic study of the history of planning methodology, raising a number of questions that might justify further investigation by planning historians. This publication of this agenda was followed by a series of workshops each of which examined a particular topic (for example, surveys in planning; or the role of Coventry's planning department in advancing planning techniques), or period (for example, the 1940s). The workshops proved to be very rewarding in the way they created a dialogue between planning historians and those senior figures, by this time in retirement, who had played a part in developing planning methodology in practice. The workshops stimulated a series of publications in the early and mid-1980s in which some of the topics received detailed treatment, a good example being rationality in plan-making, the subject of a collection of essays edited by Breheny and Hooper (1985) and the article by Hebbert on the impact of social scientists on 1940s land-use planning (Hebbert, 1983)..

The present paper marks a return to the history of planning methods after a pause of more than twenty years. It focuses on the work of local authority planning departments in the 1970s. At that time it was common for larger departments to undertake an ambitious programme of applied research, much of which drew heavily on quantitative methods and on large datasets including the Census of Population. Strange as it may seem when one

considers present day local authorities, the level of research activity in many cases actually exceeded that carried out in university planning schools.

The paper focuses upon early attempts to employ Geodemographics in local authority planning departments by drawing upon the author's own experience as a newly-recruited planner working for Lancashire County Planning Department in the period leading up to local government reorganisation in the early 1970s. In 1971 proposals were published for a comprehensive reorganisation involving the creation of a two-tier system of local authorities which in the largest urban areas required the formation of new, upper-tier Metropolitan Counties. After parliamentary debate which caused some modifications to the proposed boundaries, the reorganisation plans were finalised with the enactment of the 1972 Local Government Act. The new authorities came into being in April 1974 but once it became clear that local authorities were to be reorganised, joint working arrangements were adopted, bringing together staff from the existing authorities making up the area covered by the new local authorities. In the case of planning, the opportunity was taken to undertake preparatory work on the new system of structure plans which were intended to provide a strategic planning framework. In the area of the new Greater Manchester Metropolitan County, eight local authorities worked together on the Greater Manchester Structure Plan, until the point at which new metropolitan authority was created, in shadow form, in October 1973.

One of the most important resources available to these planners was census data but although a census had been carried out in 1971, its results had yet to be published. As an interim measure, therefore, the decision was taken to use the 1966 10% Sample Census. This census data was available as a magnetic tape, with a comprehensive range of variables at ward and parish level. The new Greater Manchester Metropolitan County was made up of 440 wards with an average population of c.6,000. It had taken sometime to release the census tapes and prior to 1971 very little analysis had been undertaken.

## **2. Multivariate Analysis of the 1966 Census for Greater Manchester**

In August 1971, one month after taking up my first post in the Lancashire Planning Department, I was given the task of writing a brief for a Multivariate Analysis of the 1966 Census for the Greater Manchester area. The study was to include the selection of forty census variables. Its stated purpose was to:

...contribute to a better understanding of existing socio-economic and demographic structure of (the) new local government area, to enable comparisons to be made between the different parts of the county on a common basis. Most people's knowledge of the new area is likely to be very detailed for one or two of the constituent parts but much more vague over the area as a whole. This report, which is intended to supply background material for most of those involved in structure

plan preparation, is a first attempt to analyse census data for the new Metropolitan County in a consistent and comprehensive manner (Batey, 1972, p (iv).

The analysis was to be in four sections: a guide to the spatial structure of Greater Manchester based on correlation bonding and principal component analysis; a classification of wards in Greater Manchester based on their socio-economic and demographic characteristics (the geodemographic classification, constructed using cluster analysis); an analysis of areas of housing and social stress; and a social area analysis of Greater Manchester. The final report (Batey, 1972), produced in July 1972, contains a comprehensive series of maps (all hand-drawn) presenting the results of these analyses, transects to illustrate the spatial analysis, and a correlation bonding diagram. Examples are shown at the end of the paper.

Computing work, carried out on Lancashire County Treasurer's Department's mainframe computer over a four-month period were said to have cost £300 in computer and programming time.

### **3. Precedents and Subsequent Impact of the Greater Manchester Study**

The full paper explores the results of the Greater Manchester study in greater detail, focusing on each of the four components in turn. It reviews precedents for the 1972, including the Greater London study conducted by Kelly at the level of London Boroughs (Kelly, 1971), and the pioneering work carried out by Gittus (1964) using 1961 Census data. It proceeds to examine follow up studies for Greater Manchester itself, conducted by the Greater Manchester Council using the 1971 and 1981 Censuses.

The paper ends by considering this early geodemographics classification in the light of subsequent work in this field, and in particular the desirable features of a geodemographics classification for use in today's planning practice.

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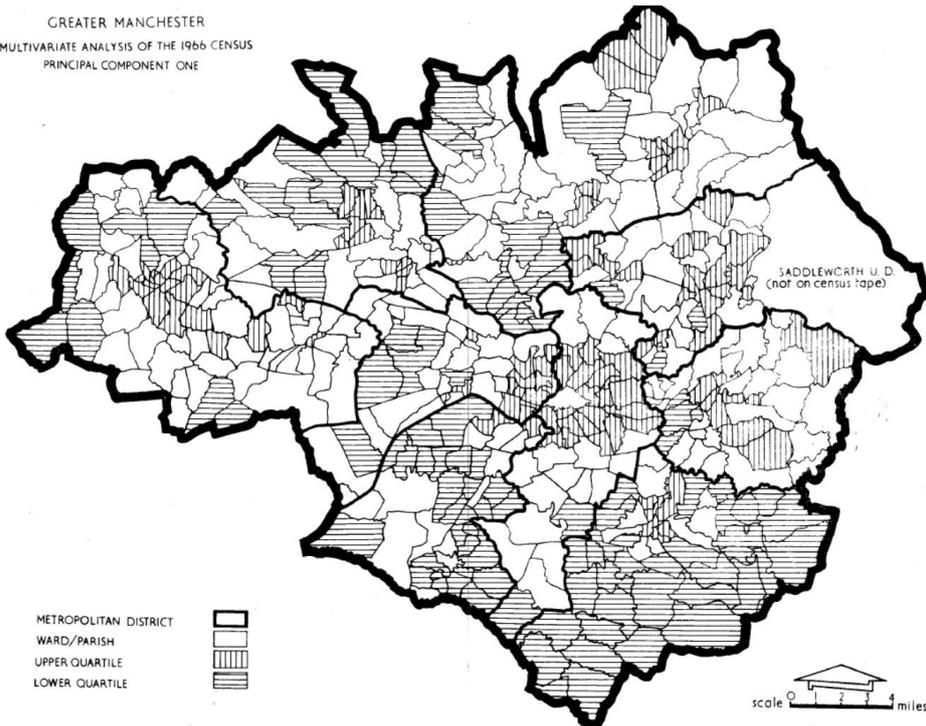
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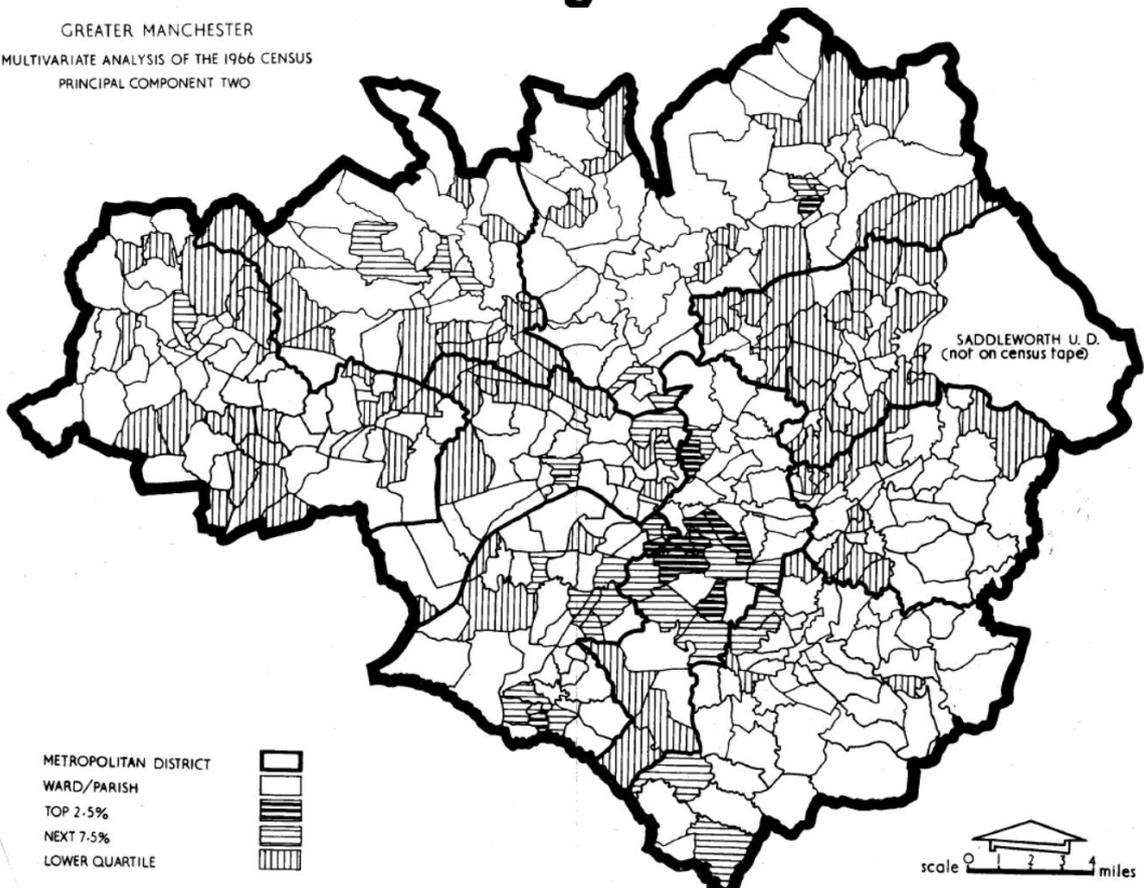
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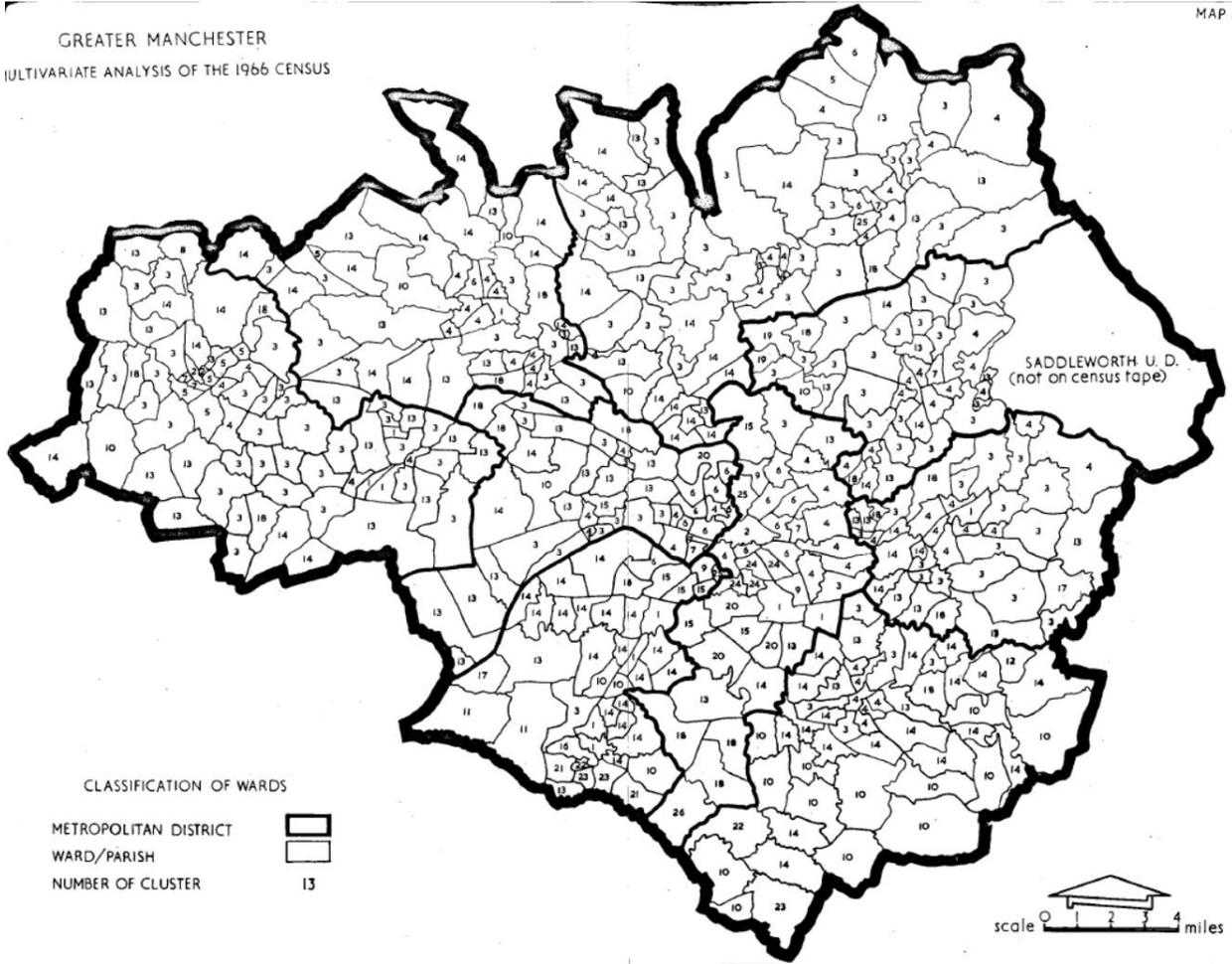
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GREATER MANCHESTER  
 MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF THE 1966 CENSUS  
 PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ONE



GREATER MANCHESTER  
 MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS OF THE 1966 CENSUS  
 PRINCIPAL COMPONENT TWO





(Captions and commentary will be added later)

