



Spatial Economics Research Centre

Monday, 23 May 2011

Grim down South?

Prof. Danny Dorling (from Sheffield) has a track record of producing interesting maps for the UK. His "[New Social Atlas of Britain](#)" proves no exception.

A slightly nerdy confession - I like maps. This is partly an aesthetic statement, but also an analytical one. Maps provide an excellent way of summarising descriptive data to help inform further analysis. But I do think you need to be very careful in how you interpret them.

So, in an echo of their 2008 reporting of the [impact of the recession](#), the Guardian reports the maps as showing "[It's Grim in Kensington and Chelsea](#)". you are struggling to fit that with your own reading of the data, it's because the Guardian is performing a standard journalist trick of confusing levels and changes. On some criteria, conditions have deteriorated more in Kensington and Chelsea - ergo it's grim down south.

Standard fare, but I find the subsequent analysis more baffling (and worth quoting at length: "The atlas [...] reveals the places with the best environmental records across the UK's 408 local authorities were Durham in north-east England, South Lakeland in Cumbria, Purbeck in Dorset, Broadland in Norfolk and the Ribble Valley in Lancashire. "What is most interesting is how these rankings are changing," said Dorling. "The bigger picture shows that, when comes to environmental sustainability and sociability in Britain, some of the richest areas are suffering while some of the poorest areas are winning out. Part of the reason, he said, was industrial decline, especially in places such as Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham. "This means there are fewer cars on the road, fewer people able to go out and get drunk, get into fights and commit a criminal offence. Of course, it also means fewer people are able to heat their homes so well."

So poverty lowers carbon footprints and means people resort more to social networks to help them cope with low incomes and joblessness? I imagine this silver lining will not do much to cheer poor households in these areas.

Posted by [Prof Henry G. Overman](#) on [Monday, May 23, 2011](#)

 Recommend this on Google

2 comments:

Marianne Sensier said...

If these statistics are increasing does this not point to a deterioration in living standards in London? In my view London is an agglomeration that has become too big and overcrowded and is now producing negative externalities as shown in Prof. Dorling's maps. Hopefully the Coalition Government's Enterprise Zones will help redistribute economic activity and take the pressure off London, see my blog post at [cities@manchester](http://bit.ly/kxC8BG) (<http://bit.ly/kxC8BG>).

[24 May 2011 at 10:50](#)

Nick Gray said...

Marianna

I'm not convinced that these new EZ are going to achieve much at all. Henry is probably tempted to argue that they at best shuffle jobs around localities and at worst they move jobs to less productive parts of the country. I don't even get to that stage of the argument. The only really concrete offer so far is the business rate waiver which amounts to very little for a large company. I don't know what the "enhanced capital allowances" will involve and I suspect the government doesn't either - I can't see the European Commission granting the sort of big state aid exemptions that it did for EZ in the 1980s and 1990s. "Super fast broadband" is real in-the-pub-the-night-before stuff, as is much of the content of the "growth plan" that came out with the budget.

[24 May 2011 at 15:27](#)

[Post a Comment](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)

