

# Preface

This book has been written for students at university studying at the start of the second decade of the twenty-first century, assumed to be living in, or interested in, the UK. The population of these countries is presented here in a way that is unusual in contemporary teaching.

First, the population is mainly described through maps, and the maps in this book are based on a new and very novel projection. Although they initially appear to be showing a crude landscape of the UK, the shape of areas on the maps shows a social rather than a physical landscape. Areas are drawn in size in proportion to the numbers of people being depicted. This, after all, is a book about the population of the UK.

Second, this book uses quantitative evidence. Trends from the 1990s, from around the millennium, and more recent birth and death statistics have been brought together to draw the maps and figures shown here. In all cases sources and methods are given, in many cases in sufficient detail to allow a student to replicate these illustrations through simply having access to the Internet.

Third, this book is not written as an objective account, although the use of quantitative evidence can give that impression. Instead, the book is a story of some of the aspects of life in the UK which are most influenced by people's times, places and ages, and a story that begins with ways of imagining childhood and education. It is a story about things that interest me and which I think affect most people, thus issues of identity, ideology and inequality appear at the heart of the book. It ends where it began: with a view of children's lives, but a view of how the children of the UK fit within a global picture of human geography. This is necessarily a partial, parochial, and particular story of the population of these countries.

What this book does hopefully achieve is, at the very least, a description of the UK which is different from most that have been presented before. This book is based on an earlier text, *Human Geography of the UK*, which has now been revised to look back from the vantage point of 2012 on what was thought to be going on a few years ago. All the maps and graphics have been both redesigned and redrawn in full colour for this edition. Previously missing data for Northern Ireland, on births in the last decades, deaths in the last year, student numbers and the 2005 and 2010 general elections have all been added, and most of what was shown before is now interpreted a little differently to how it looked seven years ago.

This book provides a description painted from numbers collected to record key moments in people's lives: their births, movements, literacy, exam results, how they are labelled by the state, how their voices are counted within its democracy, their incomes, expenditures, work, caring, deaths, homes and how

these appear when contrasted with the narrow global context of worldwide childhood poverty (Chapter 10). The text accompanying these descriptions suggests something of the processes that have created these images.

For anyone using this book in teaching about the UK, the figures have all been made available as PowerPoint slides on an accompanying website. (See link on this page: <http://www.dannydorling.org/>). At the end of each chapter a possible activity is described whereby students can themselves carry out an exercise which illustrates part of what is being suggested in the chapter. Just as you often learn far more by looking at source data than by reading other people's summaries of it, so too it is better to play out what is being described rather than simply listen to such a description in a lecture.

All the exercises given at the end of each chapter are ones that I have used in teaching students ranging (now) from age 8 to 80, with between 12 and 270 in a group. It should not be difficult to interest students in the population of a country, especially if they form a part of that population, but somehow we often manage to turn what should be the most interesting and directly relevant of subjects into an academic exercise in passing exams.

The human geography, economics, politics, demography and sociology of the UK is not only of interest to those whose bodies help make it up, those who can expect to play out most of the remainder of their lives in it. It is also of interest to many people living outside the UK. England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are a very rich set of countries, as is made abundantly evident in the final chapter of the book. The key question to ask throughout this book is why, given the resources that we have, do we organise ourselves across these countries in this way? Why do we most often have children where we do at the ages that we do? Why do we sort children out both through space and education as shown here? Why do we label people as we do? Why are most of their votes wasted (if they use them)? Why do so many live in poverty? Why can so many not read and write in such rich countries?

Why do we tolerate inequalities in illness and death which are so clear to see in the maps shown here? Why have we allowed what were our most successful industries to continue to become as geographically concentrated as they have? What really made them appear successful, and why are we still migrating towards those (financial) industries so that many of us are squeezed into very little space, while others watch their areas empty out? But before you can ask why, you need to know what has happened, to whom, when, and where. You need to start with the population of the UK.