

# Information and the Transformation of Sociology

The Difference that Makes a Difference  
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# Structure /plan

- Introduction: information and sociology
- The importance of *interactivity*
- The challenge to social science research of the vast commercial databases that link demographics, public and transactional data to postcodes
- Case study/ illustration: using such information to understand interactivity: using Sysomos to understand social media at the BBC World Service
- Conclusion: the future for sociology

# Information society

- Information shaping society
- 'Information society' thesis/ studies
- Antecedents in post-industrial society/ deindustrialisation
- Breadth of empirical areas, e.g. work, domestic life, economies, culture, politics, warfare, surveillance
- Recent variant is Castells' 'network society'

# Manuel Castells on information

- The network society is characterised by the centrality of information and IT
- In the informational economy, networks are the key organisational form
- The network society is characterised by information flows along networks, between nodes
- The rise of the informational mode of development

# The informational mode of development

The specific form of social organisation in which information generation, processing and transmission become the fundamental sources of productivity and power.

i.e. society is permeated by informational organisation.

# But what about *interactivity*?

- Shaping organisations' communications and structures
- Restructuring democratic engagement
- Facilitating new forms of cultural production:
  - growth of online participatory, collaborative and open cultures

# Commons-based peer production

‘the networked environment makes possible a new modality of organizing production: radically decentralized, collaborative and non-proprietary; based on sharing resources and outputs among widely distributed, loosely connected individuals who cooperate with each other without relying on either market signals or managerial commands’ (Benkler, 2006: 60).

# User-generated content; citizen journalism

- Give the media more of a sense of conversation: more immediate, more personal
- Contrast with broadcasting/ press model of mass communication
- The 'Arab Spring' (on Al Jazeera)

# Social media as a source for social research

- Vast archives of information (re gender, physical attributes, geographical location, background, employment, educational qualifications and experiences and social life; in text and images)
- Many are open and accessible archives of information that, historically, has been seen as private (they operate in a culture where self-promotion takes priority over privacy)
- Extraordinarily rich compared with, say, mass observation archive

# Transforming social research

- Sociology was built on sample survey and interview (Savage & Burrows, 2007)
- Today there's an abundance of information more vast than social scientists could gather
- ACORN and MOSAIC: transactional data
- Merged with official data per postcode (1.7m in UK, each covering average 14 households)
- Real time analysis of 'sentiment' as well as geo-demographics of social media users



# Mosaic classifies UK into 11 main groups & 61 types

Group	Distinct types	Percent age of UK Households	Typical names	Social Groups	Description	Media
<b>Symbols of Success (A)</b>	A01 Global Connections	9.62%	<i>Rupert and Felicity</i>	Upper Middle and Middle class	This group represents the wealthiest 10% of people in Britain, set in their careers and with substantial equity and net worth. These people tend to be white British but with some Jewish, Indian and Chinese Minorities. Tends to contain older people advanced in their careers.	Internet, some TV
	A02 Cultural Leadership					
	A03 Corporate Chieftains					
	A04 Golden Empty Nesters					
	A05 Provincial Privilege					
	A06 High Technologists					
	A07 Semi-Rural Seclusion					
<b>Happy Families</b>	B08 Just Moving In	10.76%	<i>Darren and Joanne</i>	Lower middle class and Middle middle class	Families from <a href="#">Middle England</a> , focussed on children, home and career. tends to be in new suburbs in more prosperous areas of the UK, Mostly white with few minorities	Sky TV and internet
	B09 Fledgling Nurseries					
	B10 Upscale New Owners					
	B11 Families Making Good					
	Middle Rung Families					

<b>Suburban Comfort</b>	C20 Asian Enterprise	15.10 %	<i>Geoffrey and Valerie</i>	Lower Middle Class	People in comfortable homes in mature suburbs built between 1918 & 1970, moderate incomes. Includes Middle class Asian Enterprise	Internet, <a href="#">Daily M</a>
<b>Ties of Community</b>	D25 Town Centre Refuge	16.04 %	<i>Lee and Norreen</i>	Lower middle class and Skilled working class	People focussed on local communities, families concentrated near Industrial areas, Includes lower income Asians	The Mirror The Sun
<b>Urban Intelligence</b>		7.19 %	<i>Ben and Chloe</i>	Mixture of Middle classes	Young educated people in urban areas starting out in life, Includes significant minority presence and students	The Guardian, The Times, and internet
<b>Welfare Borderline</b>		6.43 %	<i>Joseph and Agnes</i>	Working class and Poor	Poorest people in the UK, Urban with significant ethnic minority presence	The Sun, and high TV viewing
<b>Municipal Dependency</b>		6.71%	<i>Wayne and Leanne</i>	Working class and Poor	Poor people in council houses and dependent on benefits, Mostly white British with few immigrants	The Sun, and high TV viewing
<b>Blue Collar Enterprise</b>		11.01%	<i>Dean and Mandy</i>	Skilled Working Class	Enterprising rather than well educated, includes <a href="#">White Van Man</a> , Few Ethnic minorities	The Sun, and high TV viewing
<b>Twilight Subsistence</b>		3.88 %	<i>Percy and Ada</i>	Working class pensioners	Poorer pensioners in council houses, few ethnic minorities	The Sun, and high TV viewing
<b>Grey Perspectives</b>		7.88%	<i>Edgar and Constance</i>	Middle Class pensioners	Pensioners in comfortable retirement and traditional values	Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail
<b>Rural Isolation (K)</b>	...last one is K61 Upland Hill Farmers	5.39%	<i>Huw and Gwenda</i>	Mixed	Rural People with relatively low incomes but high non liquid assets, traditional values, very few ethnic minorities	Internet, Radio 4

## Mosaic UK index of main household groups and sub-types

### Group A - career professionals living in sought after locations

Type A01	Financially successful people living in smart flats in cosmopolitan inner city locations
Type A02	Highly educated senior professionals, many working in the media, politics and law
Type A03	Successful managers living in very large houses in outer suburban locations
Type A04	Financially secure couples, many close to retirement, living in sought after suburbs
Type A05	Senior professionals and managers living in the suburbs of major regional centres
Type A06	Successful, high earning couples with new jobs in areas of growing high tech employment
Type A07	Well paid executives living in individually designed homes in rural environments

### Group B - younger families living in newer homes

Type B08	Families and singles living in developments built since 2001
Type B09	Well qualified couples typically starting a family on a recently built private estate
Type B10	Financially better off families living in relatively spacious modern private estates
Type B11	Dual income families on intermediate incomes living on modern estates
Type B12	Middle income families with children living in estates of modern private homes
Type B13	First generation owner occupiers, many with large amounts of consumer debt
Type B14	Military personnel living in purpose built accommodation

### Group C - older families living in suburbia

Type C15	Senior white collar workers many on the verge of a financially secure retirement
Type C16	Low density private estates, now with self reliant couples approaching retirement
Type C17	Small business proprietors living in low density estates in smaller communities
Type C18	Inter-war suburbs many with less strong cohesion than they originally had
Type C19	Singles and childless couples increasingly taking over attractive older suburbs
Type C20	Suburbs sought after by the more successful members of the Asian community

### Group D - close-knit, inner city and manufacturing town communities

Type D21	Mixed communities of urban residents living in well built early 20th century housing
Type D22	Comfortably off manual workers living in spacious but inexpensive private houses
Type D23	Owners of affordable terraces built to house 19th century heavy industrial workers

Type D24	Low income families living in cramped Victorian terraced housing in inner city locations
Type D25	Centres of small market towns and resorts containing many hostels and refuges
Type D26	Communities of lowly paid factory workers, many of them of South Asian descent
Type D27	Inner city terraces attracting second generation Londoners from diverse communities

### **Group E - educated, young, single people living in areas of transient populations**

Type E28	Neighbourhoods with transient singles living in multiply occupied large old houses
Type E29	Economically successful singles, many living in small inner London flats
Type E30	Young professionals and their families who have 'gentrified' older terraces in inner London
Type E31	Well educated singles and childless couples colonising inner areas of provincial cities
Type E32	Singles and childless couples in small units in newly built private estates outside London
Type E33	Older neighbourhoods increasingly taken over by short term student renters
Type E34	Halls of residence and other buildings occupied mostly by students

### **Group F - people living in social housing with uncertain employment in deprived areas**

Type F35	Young people renting hard to let social housing often in disadvantaged inner city locations
Type F36	High density social housing, mostly in inner London, with high levels of diversity
Type F37	Young families living in upper floors of social housing, mostly in Scotland
Type F38	Singles, childless couples and older people living in high rise social housing
Type F39	Older people living in crowded apartments in high density social housing
Type F40	Older tenements of small private flats often occupied by highly disadvantaged individuals

### **Group G - low income families living in estate based social housing**

Type G41	Families, many single parent, in deprived social housing on the edge of regional centres
Type G42	Older people living in very large social housing estates on the outskirts of provincial cities
Type G43	Older people, many in poor health from work in heavy industry, in low rise social housing

## **Group H - upwardly mobile families living in homes bought from social landlords**

Type H44	Manual workers, many close to retirement, in low rise houses in ex-manufacturing towns
Type H45	Older couples, mostly in small towns, who now own houses once rented from the council
Type H46	Residents in 1930s and 1950s London council estates, now mostly owner occupiers
Type H47	Social housing, typically in 'new towns', with good job opportunities for the poorly qualified

## **Group I - older people living in social housing with high care needs**

Type I48	Older people living in small council and housing association flats
Type I49	Low income older couples renting low rise social housing in industrial regions
Type I50	Older people receiving care in homes or sheltered accommodation

## **Group J - independent older people with relatively active lifestyles**

Type J51	Very elderly people, many financially secure, living in privately owned retirement flats
Type J52	Better off older people, singles and childless couples in developments of private flats
Type J53	Financially secure and physically active older people, many retired to semi rural locations
Type J54	Older couples, independent but on limited incomes, living in bungalows by the sea
Type J55	Older people preferring to live in familiar surroundings in small market towns
Type J56	Neighbourhoods with retired people and transient singles working in the holiday industry

## **Group K - people living in rural areas far from urbanisation**

Type K57	Communities of retired people and second homers in areas of high environmental quality
Type K58	Well off commuters and retired people living in attractive country villages
Type K59	Country people living in still agriculturally active villages, mostly in lowland locations
Type K60	Smallholders and self employed farmers, living beyond the reach of urban commuters
Type K61	Low income farmers struggling on thin soils in isolated upland locations

## Type A02: Voices of Authority

Influential thought leaders in comfortable and spacious city homes

Andreas & Katharine

1.18%  |  1.45%

### Select Data

Search  Enter Keyword(s)

#### Experian Variables

- ▼ Who we are
  - ▶ Gender
  - ▶ Age
  - ▶ Marital status
  - ▼ Ethnicity
    - English
    - Celtic
    - Irish
    - British
    - Western European
    - Pakistani
    - Eastern European
    - Italian
    - Hindu
    - Hispanic
    - Sikh
    - Other Muslim
    - Black African
    - Bangladeshi
    - Chinese

#### Custom Variables

### Streetscapes



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



**Profile:** Who we are | Age at first childbirth  
Age at first childbirth

◀ ◀ **Type A02 ranked 6 out of 67**  
with an Index of 114

▶ ▶ **Profile Rank**  
Type Order



## Type A02: Voices of Authority

Influential thought leaders in comfortable and spacious city homes

Andreas & Katharine

1.18% | 1.45%

### Select Data

Search  Go

- Experian Variables
  - ▶ Who we are
  - ▶ Where we live
  - ▼ How Green we are
    - ▼ Green classification
      - Type 01: Eco-evangelists
      - Type 02: Convinced consumers
      - Type 03: Green but doubtful
      - Type 04: Confused but well-beha
      - Type 05: Doing their best
      - Type 06: Sceptical libertarians
      - Type 07: Too busy to change
      - Type 08: Why should I bother?
      - Type 09: Constrained by price
      - Type 10: Wasteful and unconvinc
    - ▶ Carbon footprint
  - ▶ How we live our lives
  - ▶ How we communicate
  - ▶ How we view the world
  - ▶ How we get by
  - ▶ Our financial circumstances

Custom Variables

### Data Chart

#### Green classification

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Most Represented Characteristics  Least Represented Characteristics

Data Options  
Rank Order  
Default Order

Profile: Who we are | Age at first childbirth  
Age at first childbirth

◀ ▶ Type A02 ranked 6 out of 67  
with an Index of 114

Profile Rank  
Type Order

## Type A02: Voices of Authority

Influential thought leaders in comfortable and spacious city homes

Andreas & Katharine

1.18% 1.45%

### Select Data

Search

- Experian Variables
    - ▶ Who we are
    - ▶ Where we live
    - ▶ How Green we are
    - ▶ How we live our lives
    - ▶ How we communicate
    - ▼ How we view the world
      - ▼ Political attitudes
        - Happy with standard of living
        - Sacrifice time with family to get a
        - Don't want responsibility, rather I
        - Like taking risks
        - Like a life of challenge, novelty a
        - Look on work as a career rather I
        - Go to work for the money
        - Want to get to the very top in ca
        - Worry about work during leisure
        - Would like to set up own busines:
        - Important to juggle various tasks
        - Not enough hours in the day
        - Little can be done to change life
- Custom Variables

### Data Chart

#### Political attitudes

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Data Options

Most Represented Characteristics ▶ Least Represented Characteristics ▶

Profile: Who we are | Age at first childbirth  
Age at first childbirth

◀ ▶ Type A02 ranked 6 out of 67  
with an Index of 114

Profile Rank

ACORN Classification

Category	Group	Type
Wealthy Achievers	Wealthy Executives	01 - Affluent mature professionals, large houses
		02 - Affluent working families with mortgages
		03 - Villages with wealthy commuters
		04 - Well-off managers, larger houses
	Affluent Greys	05 - Older affluent professionals
		06 - Farming communities
		07 - Old people, detached houses
		08 - Mature couples, smaller detached houses
	Flourishing Families	09 - Larger families, prosperous suburbs
		10 - Well-off working families with mortgages
		11 - Well-off managers, detached houses
		12 - Large families & houses in rural areas
Urban Prosperity	Prosperous Professionals	13 - Well-off professionals, larger houses and converted flats
		14 - Older Professionals in detached houses and apartments
	Educated Urbanites	15 - Affluent urban professionals, flats
		16 - Prosperous young professionals, flats
		17 - Young educated workers, flats
		18 - Multi-ethnic young, converted flats
		19 - Suburban privately renting professionals

	<b>Aspiring Singles</b>	<b>20 - Student flats and cosmopolitan sharers</b>
		<b>21 - Singles &amp; sharers, multi-ethnic areas</b>
		<b>22 - Low income singles, small rented flats</b>
		<b>23 - Student Terraces</b>
<b>Comfortably Off</b>	<b>Starting Out</b>	<b>24 - Young couples, flats and terraces</b>
		<b>25 - White collar singles/sharers, terraces</b>
	<b>Secure Families</b>	<b>26 - Younger white-collar couples with mortgages</b>
		<b>27 - Middle income, home owning areas</b>
		<b>28 - Working families with mortgages</b>
		<b>29 - Mature families in suburban semis</b>
		<b>30 - Established home owning workers</b>
	<b>Settled Suburbia</b>	<b>31 - Home owning Asian family areas</b>
		<b>32 - Retired home owners</b>
		<b>33 - Middle income, older couples</b>
	<b>Prudent Pensioners</b>	<b>34 - Lower income people, semis</b>
		<b>35 - Elderly singles, purpose built flats</b>
<b>36 - Older people, flats</b>		

<b>Moderate Means</b>	<b>Asian Communities</b>	37 - Crowded Asian terraces
		38 - Low income Asian families
	<b>Post Industrial Families</b>	39 - Skilled older family terraces
		40 - Young family workers
	<b>Blue Collar Roots</b>	41 - Skilled workers, semis and terraces
		42 - Home owning, terraces
43 - Older rented terraces		
<b>Hard Pressed</b>	<b>Struggling Families</b>	44 - Low income larger families, semis
		45 - Older people, low income, small semis
		46 - Low income, routine jobs, unemployment
		47 - Low rise terraced estates of poorly-off workers
		48 - Low incomes, high unemployment, single parents
		49 - Large families, many children, poorly educated
	<b>Burdened Singles</b>	50 - Council flats, single elderly people
		51 - Council terraces, unemployment, many singles
		52 - Council flats, single parents, unemployment
	<b>High Rise Hardship</b>	53 - Old people in high rise flats
		54 - Singles & single parents, high rise estates
	<b>Inner City Adversity</b>	55 - Multi-ethnic purpose built estates
56 - Multi-ethnic, crowded flats		

## Living in CF64 3LL [Change location](#)

### [How the information for this profile is collected](#) »

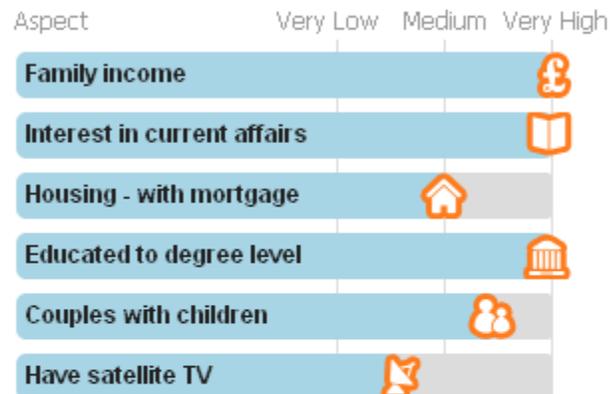
Often, many of the people who live in this sort of postcode will be well-off professionals living in larger houses and converted flats. These are known as type 13 in the [ACORN](#) classification and 0.87% of the UK's population live in this type.

Neighbourhoods fitting this profile are found in many urban areas of the UK, but particularly in London (Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth, Ealing, Richmond-upon-Thames and Fulham), Edinburgh and university towns such as Durham, Oxford and Cambridge als

These are predominantly well-off professional people living in urban areas of the UK. Most are well educated individuals in professional and managerial occupations, but there are also students and young singles starting out on their careers. Houses tend to be large, with four or more bedrooms, often in Georgian and Victorian terraces. Many are owner-occupied by professional couples and families. There are also high levels of converted flats, some of which are privately rented. The younger singles in these areas will often be sharing flats and houses. Car ownership is high, reflecting the wealthy nature of these neighbourhoods, but because of their urban location, travel to work is mostly by public transport. Incomes tend to be high, with many residents earning over £50,000 a year. They are financially aware and have high levels of savings and investments. They also have high levels of credit card useage. These technologically sophisticated consumers make great use of the Internet for financial services, as well as buying other products and services. They enjoy the arts, including theatre, classical music, opera and the cinema. The most widely read newspapers are The Guardian, Independent, The Times and Observer. Foreign travel and skiing are popular leisure activities.

[How the information for this profile is collected](#) »

### Here is an overview of the likely preferences and features of your neighbourhood:



# Mosaic and Acorn neighbourhood classification systems used by:

- Government bodies for planning and delivering services
- Insurance companies and pension funds
- Retailers to decide where to open shops
- (using call line identification, CLI) queuing systems at call centres
- Dunnhumby especially with Tesco's clubcard

# Informational capitalism' (Thrift)

- Software is becoming increasingly important
- And classification systems (Bowker & Starr, 1999)
- Information being used increasingly to order populations
- Information is ordering social lives as does the physical environment
- Information and software are patterning social space and have become key agents

# Sysomos

- Social media analytics: web analytics and content aggregation
- Instant access to all social media conversations from blogs, social networks, micro-blogs, forums, video sites and media sources (supplementary systems for FB)
- Key geo-demographics
- Frequency with which people are discussing a news subject; and sentiment analysis(using NLP)
- Comparisons with competitors
- Identification of key influencers

# Conclusion

- 'Problem' for sociology is that it's colonised other disciplines; culture more broadly; and commercial data gathering
- Some recognition within the discipline of the vast data available
- Future role has to be to engage with this
- Issues of ethics; and access