

# Global-Rural

Researching Rural Change  
and Globalization



European Research Council



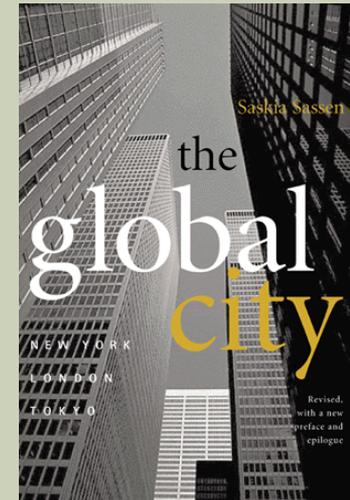
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Dr Jesse Heley  
Dr Laura Jones  
Dr Anthonia Onyehialam  
Dr Marc Welsh

# Background

- European Research Council Advanced Grant
- February 2014 – January 2019
- Understanding globalization and its impacts in rural localities
- 5 work packages
  - (Re-)assembling the global countryside
  - Mapping and narrating the global countryside
  - Everyday globalization in a small town
  - Differential global engagements in emerging rural economies
  - Rural assemblages and grounding global challenges

# Research rationale

- Bias to the 'global city'
  - Focus in rural research on transnational processes, flows and networks
  - Tendency to study spectacular examples
- 
- For most rural places, the impact of globalization is more subtle and mundane



# Everyday globalization



How do these processes work together to change (our experience of) rural places?

# Theoretical Context

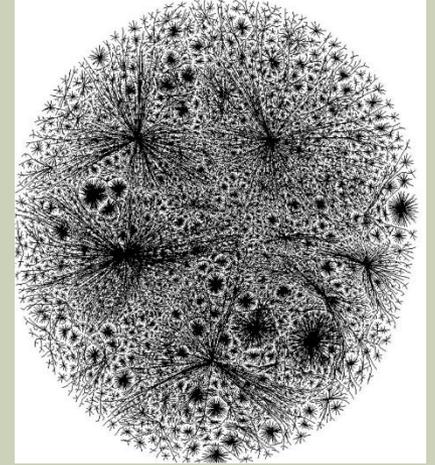
Building on Prof Mike Woods previous work on the **Global Countryside** and **DERREG FP7** project, which involved the application relational approaches to globalization and rural change....

## The Relational Rural

- Rural places are not discrete, bounded territories that share an essential absolute rurality
- Rural places are complex assemblages of diverse social and physical elements that each part of wider networks and relations
- Rural places are always connected to other places (both rural and non-rural) through social, economic and political relations
- The rurality of place is always defined in relation to other places
- ***How do we develop the theorisation and application of the relational rural?***

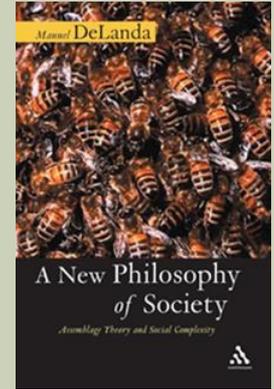
# Theoretical context

## Assemblage Theory



- “a collection or gathering of things or people” Dictionary definition.
- “assemblages are composed of **heterogeneous elements** that may be human and non-human, organic and inorganic, technical and natural.”  
Anderson and McFarlane (2011) in *Area*, p 124
- “The term is often used to emphasise **emergence, multiplicity and indeterminacy**, and connects to a wider redefinition of the socio-spatial in terms of the composition of diverse elements into some form of **provisional socio-spatial formation**”  
Anderson and McFarlane (2011) in *Area*, p124

# Theoretical context



## A New Philosophy of Society, Manuel DeLanda (2005)

- Assemblages are dynamic, being continuously and actively stabilized and destabilized through processes of **Territorialization** and **Deterritorialization**
- Approach emphasises **Material** and **Expressive** roles of components
- An assemblage is given an identity through **Coding** and **Decoding**
- Assemblages are characterised by '**relations of exteriority**'
  - “[The capacities of an assemblage] do depend on a component’s properties but cannot be reduced to them since they involve reference to the properties of other interacting entities” (De Landa 2005, p 11)
- Multiple assemblages **co-exist and are mutually constituting**. An individual entity can be a component of different assemblages simultaneously
  - “A component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different” (De Landa 2005, p 10)
- Assemblage does not privilege one level of organization over another; **social reality is 'multi-scaled'**

# Assemblage theory and place

- Assemblage theory has gained popularity in human geography and sociology
- Emphasis on ‘translocal assemblages’: processes and networks operating across space
- Applications in rural geography/sociology:
  - Global land-grabbing assemblage (Murray Li 2013)
  - Global biofuel assemblage (Hollander 2010)
  - Forest management (Murray Li 2007)
  - Rural microfinance (Rankin 2008)
- Little examination of *places* as assemblages



# Rural Places as Assemblages



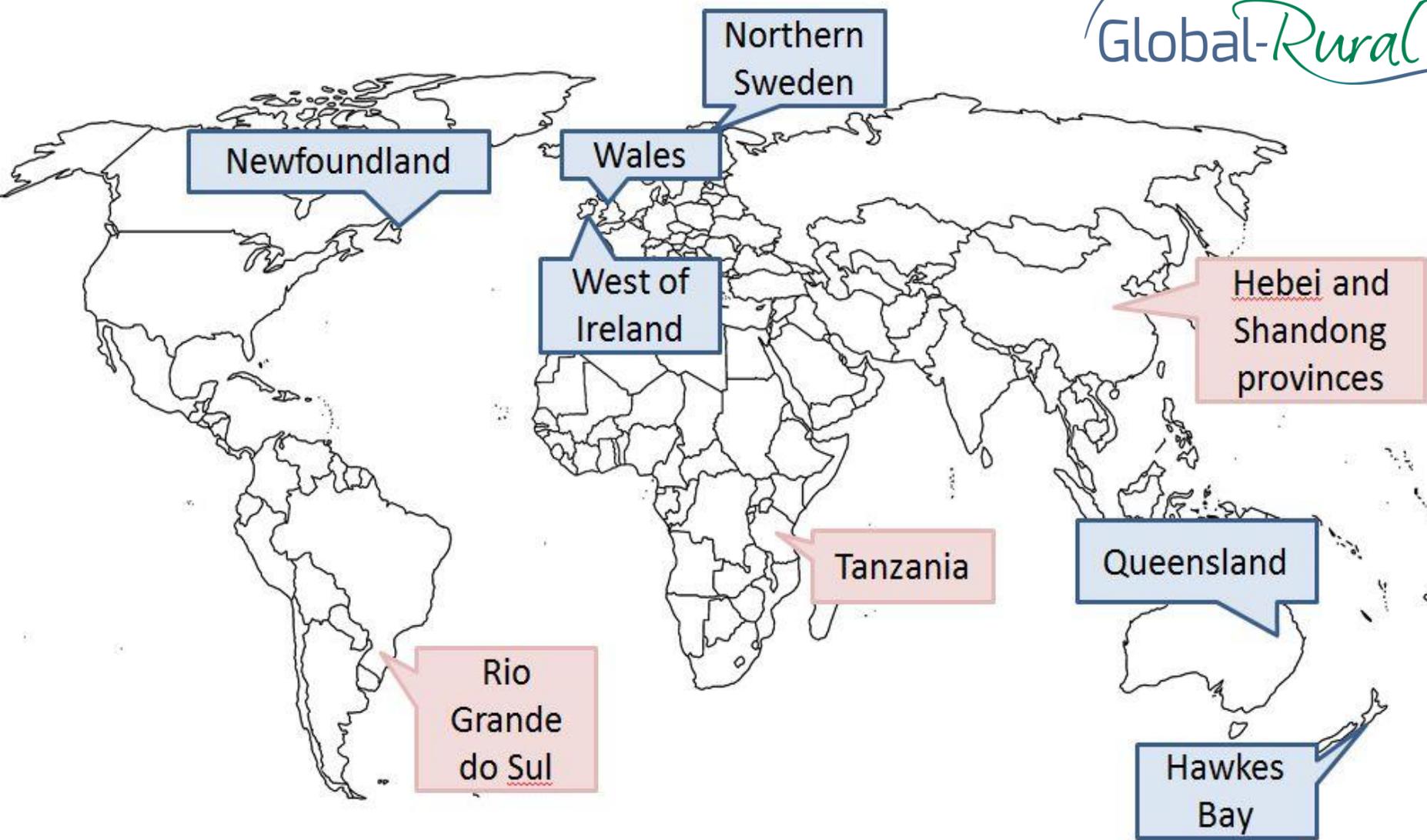
- **Material components:** Landscape, buildings, crops, livestock, wildlife, economic commodities
- **Expressive components:** Aesthetic qualities of landscape, 'rural idyll', folk culture, emotional attachments, sense of identity
- **Territorialization:** Working the land, family inheritance, administrative boundaries
- **Deterritorialization:** Migration, loss of rural services, amalgamation of municipalities
- **Coding:** Description as 'rural', eligibility for rural development programmes
- **Decoding:** Changing meaning of rurality
- **Relations of exteriority:**
  - Interactions with local towns and the region
  - Migration flows
  - Economic transactions
  - Power relations
  - Intersections with 'translocal assemblages'

*Understanding the relational constitution of rural place in the context of change, restructuring and globalization*

# Why assemblage ~~theory~~?



- Globalization is not an unstoppable, homogenizing force imposed from above
- It is reproduced through local places in acts of negotiation and contestation (Massey 2005)
- Need to examine the micropolitics of globalization in rural localities
- Assemblage as a *way of looking at things* – an ontology of relations and associations - as opposed to an explanatory framework
- *Bottom-up methodology* - a complex social system is best understood by building it from the ground up...
- Drawing attention to different aspects of rural change and restructuring
- Application of existing research methods in different ways



# GLOBAL-RURAL Case Studies

WP1

WP4

# Newtown case study



Textiles



Agriculture

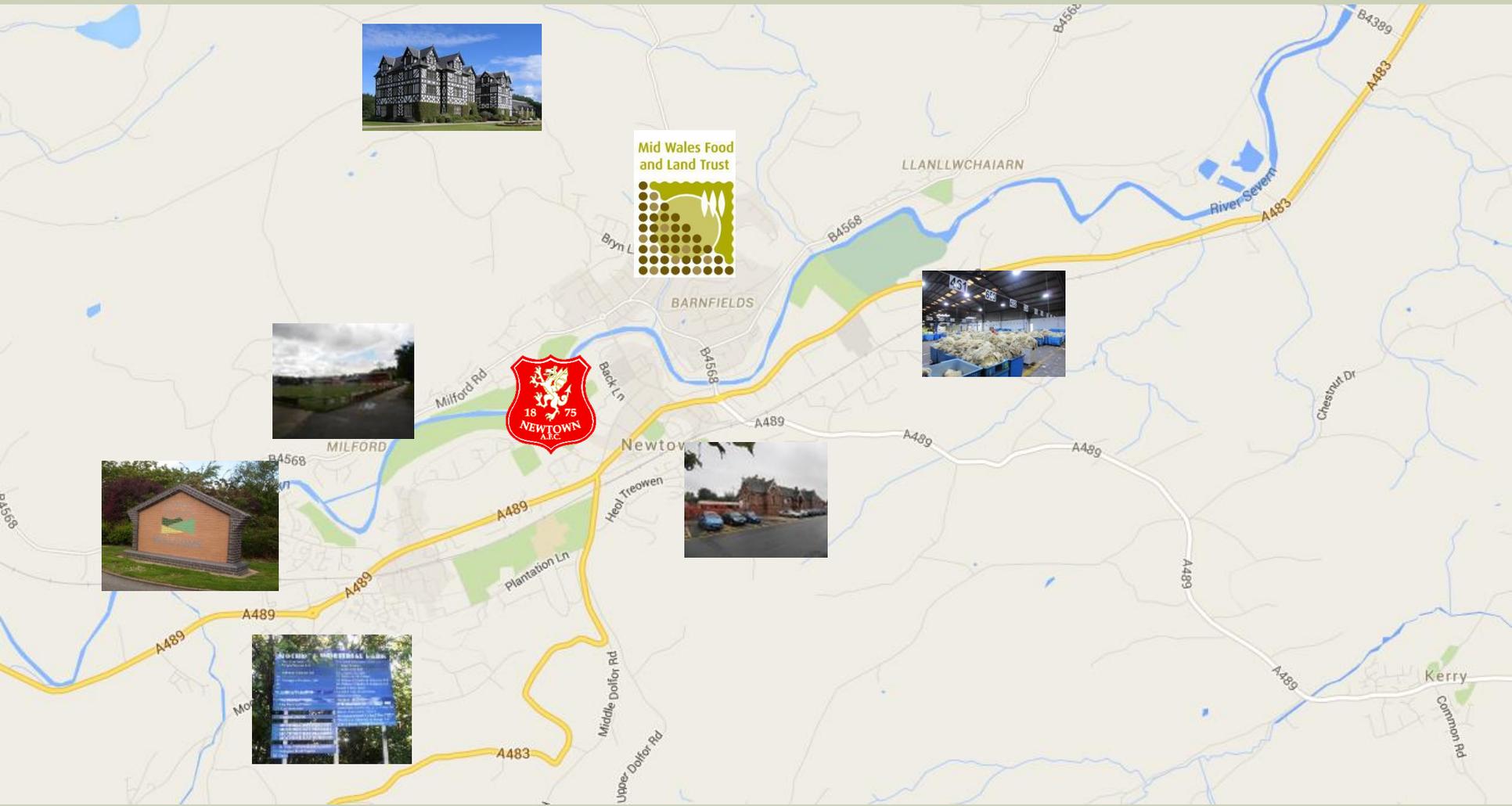


Population (2011): 11,317

# Research questions:

- What social, economic, political and cultural connections link Newtown with the wider world?
- What have been the key factors in shaping the connected geographies of Newtown over the last 50 years?
- What has been the effect of evolving global connections on the social, economic and cultural life of the town?
- Have evolving global connections contributed to the development of a 'global consciousness' among residents of the town?
- What do the dynamics and experiences of everyday globalization in Newtown tell us about how globalization is reproduced through local places?

# Points of entry

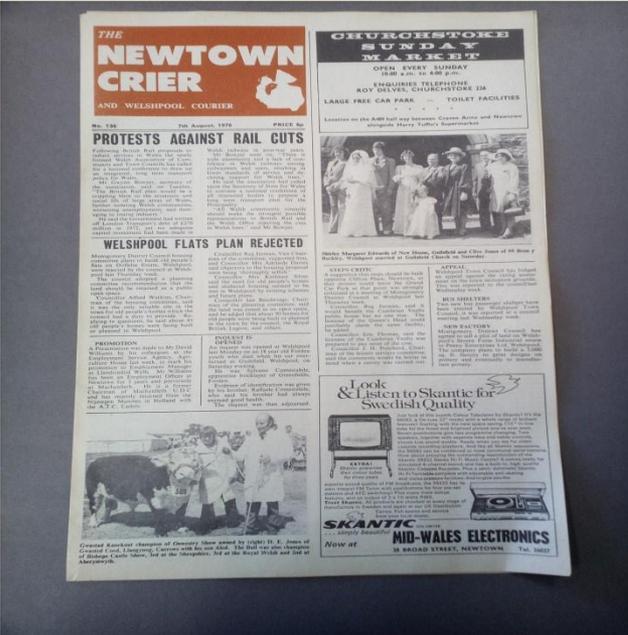
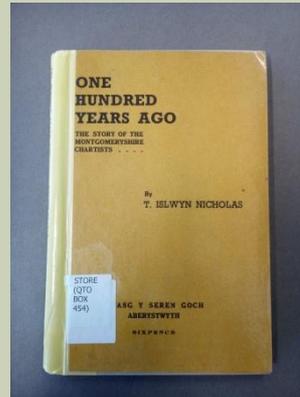
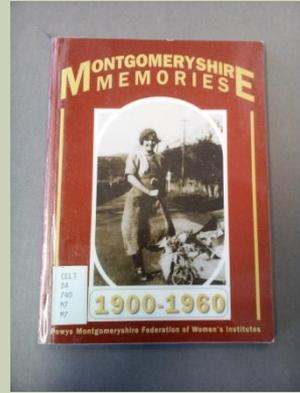
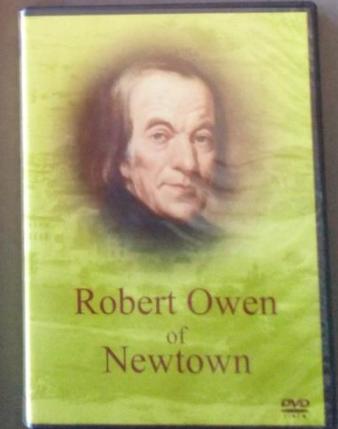
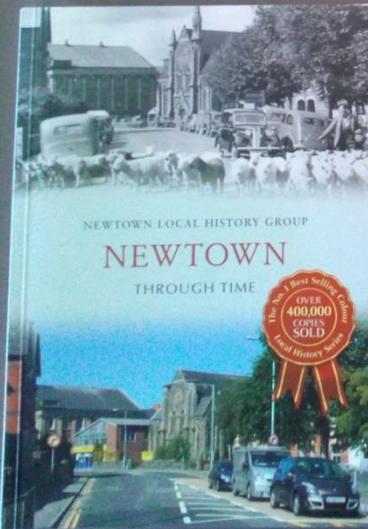
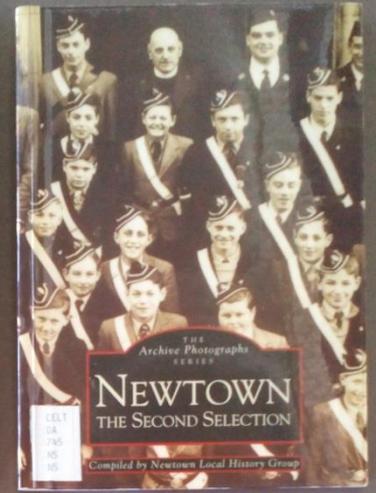
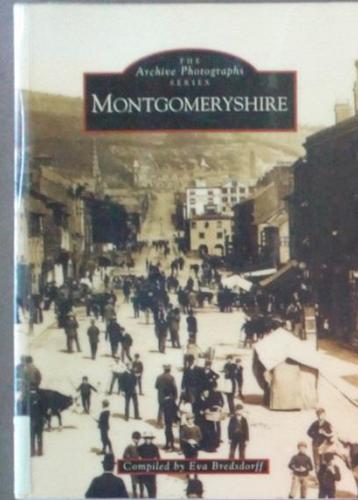
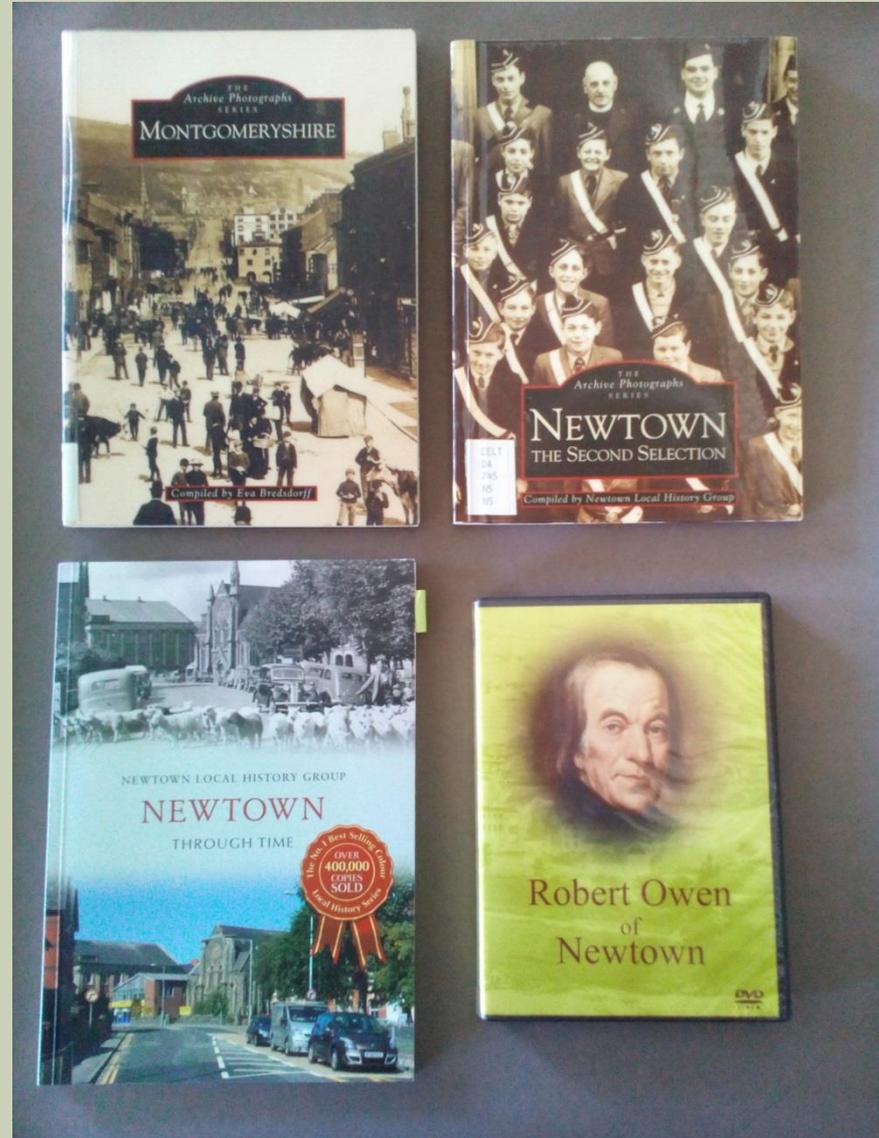


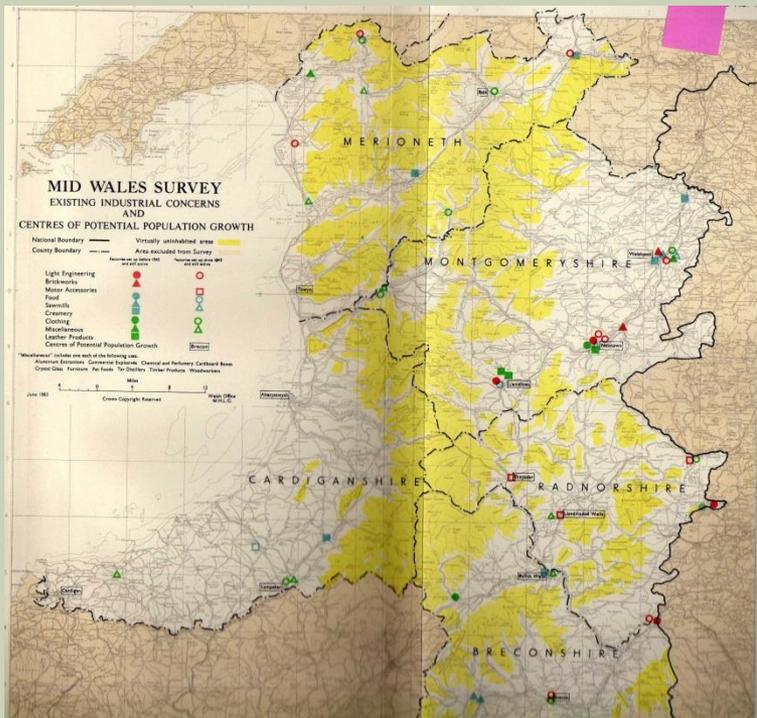


# DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS



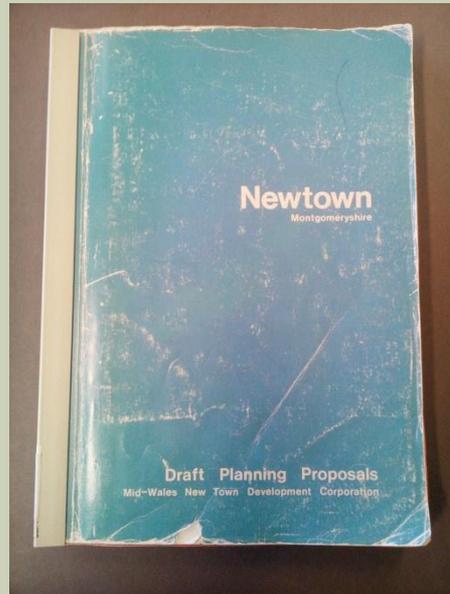
Newtown, 1968



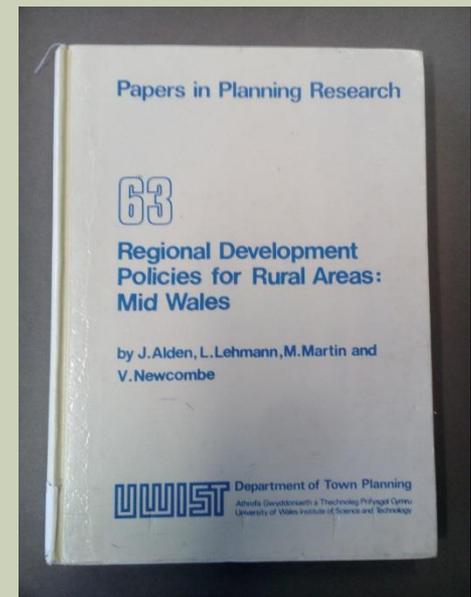
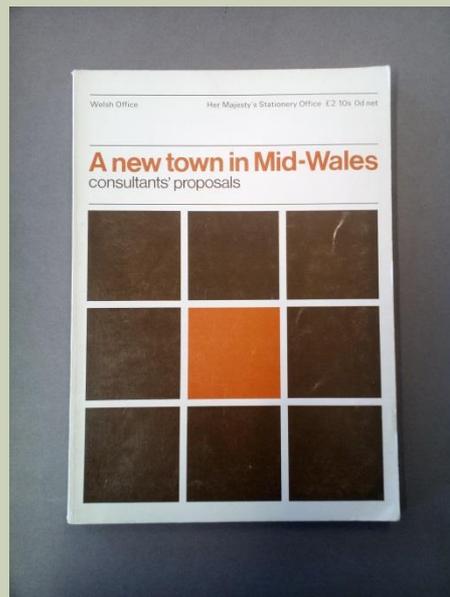
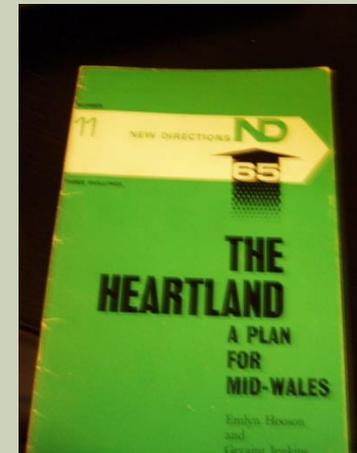


## Beacham Committee 1964

“irrespective of the level of population, a policy of reducing the existing scatter by nucleation into larger and fewer settlements should be implemented. This would enable improved services and social amenities to be provided at a lower cost and would form a structure upon which a viable economy could be developed to its fullest capacity.”



Global-Rural





# SURVEY WORK

# The Industrial Estate

## MOCHDRE INDUSTRIAL PARK

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 42 The Zest Sauce Co.                     | 79 Control Techniques Drives Ltd   |
| 43 Virgin Projects Ltd                    | 80 Virgin Projects   |
| 44  | 81 Actia (UK) Ltd  |
| 45 Selwyns Systems Ltd                    | 82 Celipath Plc (Dist)   |
| 46 The Orthodontics Centre                | 83 Millbrook Mouldings   |
| 47 Pamargarn Products Ltd                 | 84 William O'Hanlon & Company Ltd  |
| 48  | 85 William O'Hanlon & Company Ltd  |
| 49  | Castell-Y-Dail Hostel  |
| <b>50 Constructiv Clothing</b>            | Castell-Y-Dail Smallholding  |
| 51  | British Gas Wales  |
| 52 City Electrical Factors                | Morgans of Newtown   |
| 53 City Electrical Factors                | <b>DYFED STEELS Mid Wales LTD</b> <small>TURN RIGHT<br/>TURN RIGHT<br/>TURN LEFT</small> |
| 54 Aura Associates                        | Confederate Chemicals Ltd & Catron Ltd   |
|   | Powys Ambulance Control  |
| <b>56 Central Dairies</b>                 | Development Board For Rural Wales <small>Maintenance<br/>Depot</small>                   |
| <b>58 MOCHDRE DAY NURSERY</b>             | Woodhouse (Removals & Storage) Ltd   |
| <b>59 MOCHDRE DAY NURSERY</b>             | G & T Evans Timber Products  |
| <b>60 MOCHDRE DAY NURSERY</b>             |  |
| <b>61 MOCHDRE DAY NURSERY</b>             |  |
|   |  |
| <b>63 St. John Ambulance Headquarters</b> |  |
| <b>64 Nottingham Rehab Supplies</b>       |  |
| <b>65 Custor</b>                          |  |

Business and trade

# Business survey

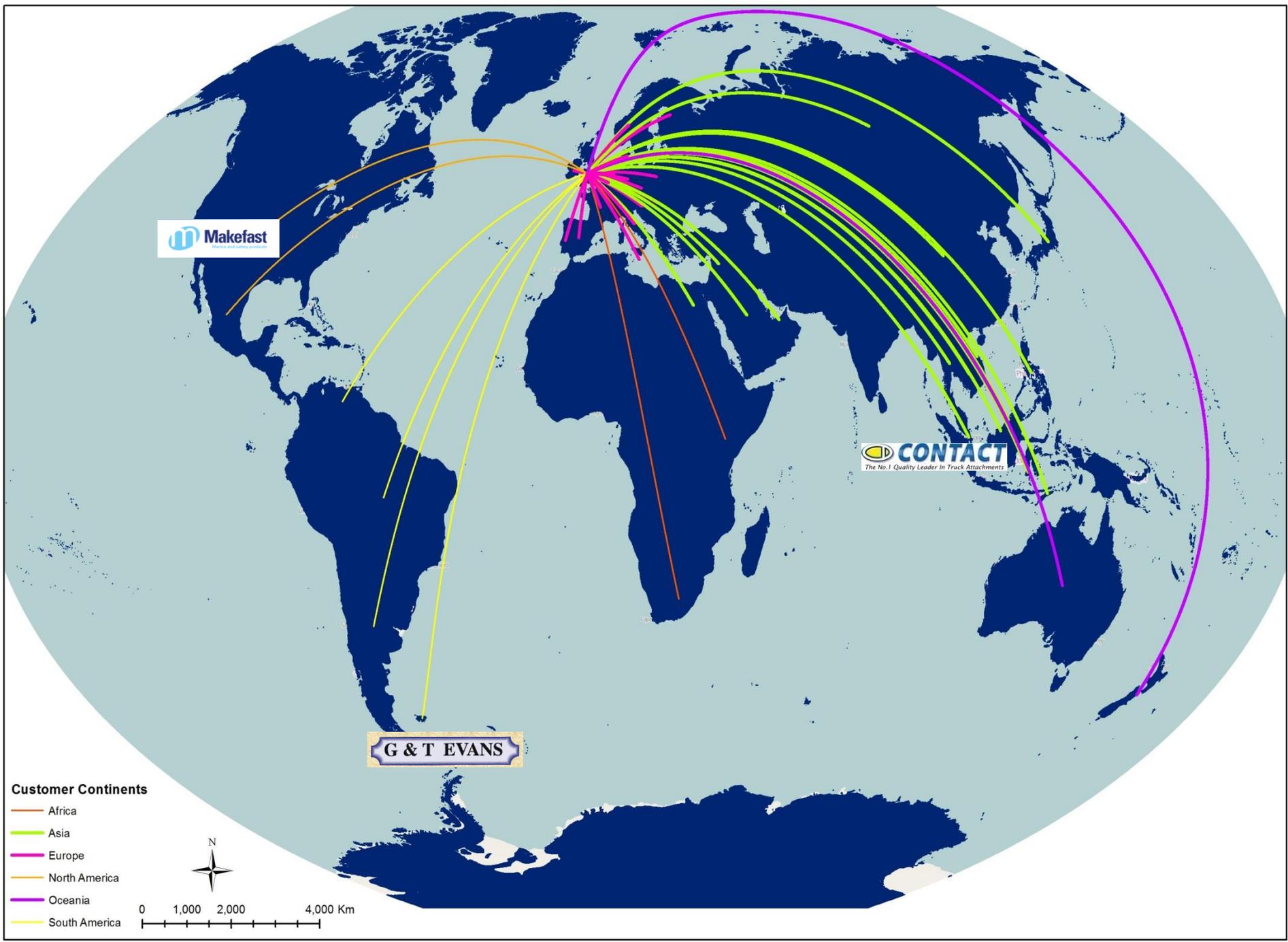
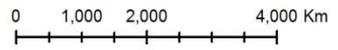
- Surveys (online, self-administered and researcher-completed) & with follow-up, in-depth interviews with representatives of businesses based across Newtown's 3 industrial estates
- Of the 48 businesses that completed surveys...
  - 31% Manufacturing; 35% Retail
  - 47% with <9 employees; 45% between 10-49 employees
  - 35% of businesses established in Newtown before 1990, 65% of businesses after 1990
  - 48% made purchases from suppliers outside of the UK
  - 33% made sales to international customers



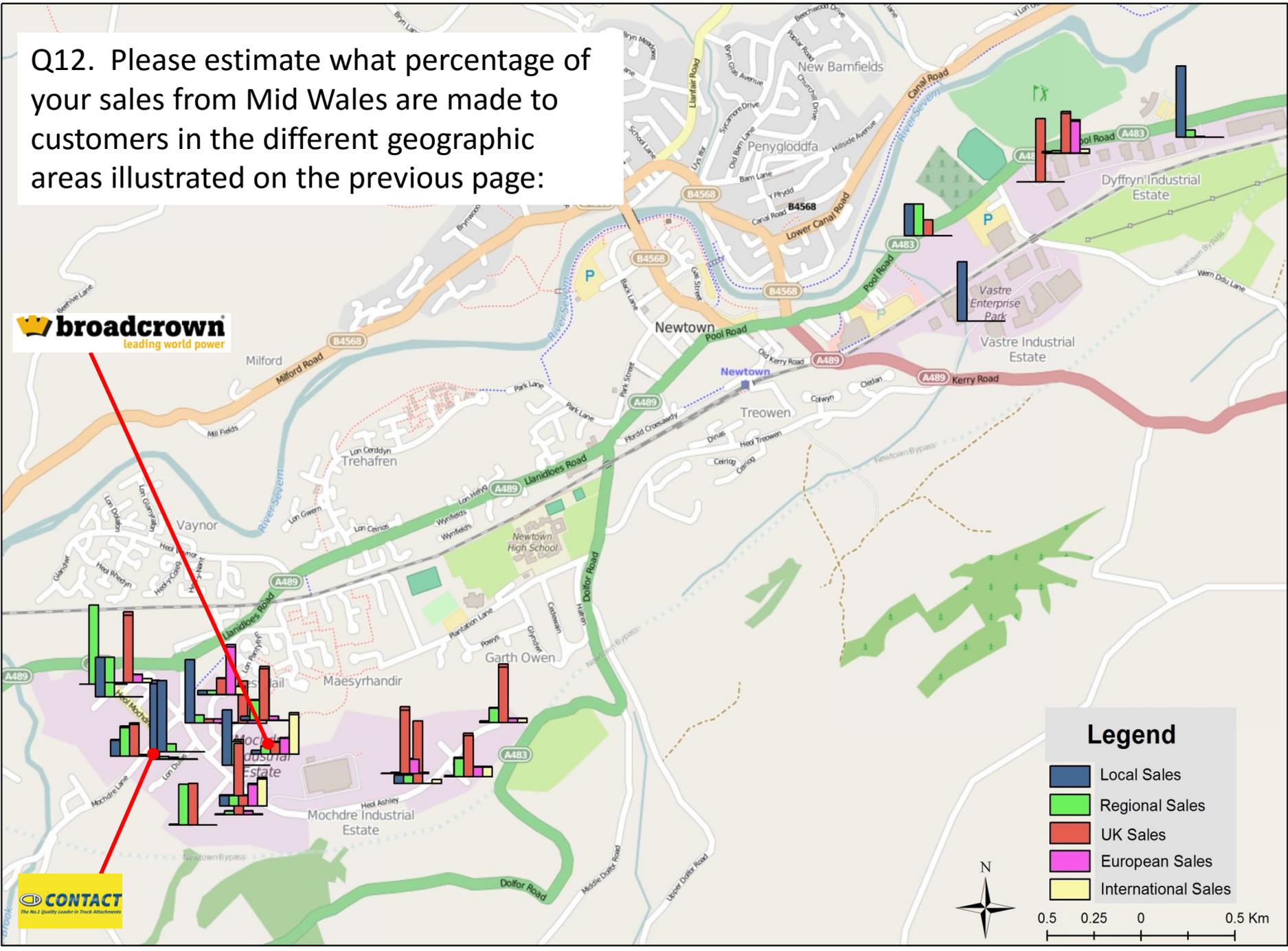
G & T EVANS

**Customer Continents**

- Africa
- Asia
- Europe
- North America
- Oceania
- South America

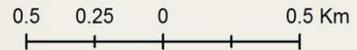


Q12. Please estimate what percentage of your sales from Mid Wales are made to customers in the different geographic areas illustrated on the previous page:



**Legend**

- Local Sales
- Regional Sales
- UK Sales
- European Sales
- International Sales



# Contact Attachments

- Relocated to Newtown in 1970s due to government-backed financial incentives
- Manufacture of forklift truck attachments
- Customers include: BP, the UN, Chevron, Singapore Airlines, Eurostar, Honda, Glaxo-Smith Kline
- Internet sales
- Poor transport connections



Map of Contact Attachments' customer base

# Business networks

- Behind the ordinary facades of the industrial estate are a complex set of international networks and supply chains
- Newtown residents enmeshed in the global economy through their everyday work
- More-than-human mobility of materials, components & products and human mobility of managers, sales reps, migrant workers
- Affinities through networks but vulnerabilities to distant events
- Re-territorialization of industries and production



# INTERVIEWS & ORAL HISTORIES

# Migration stories: what drew people to Newtown?

“Newtown was a place I never, kind of, envisaged that I would live. Well when I did my teacher training I was obviously starting to look for jobs. I was living down in South Wales at the time and I kind of always thought I’d live around that area for a long time... **then the job in Newtown came up** and I thought oh Newtown. That sounds lovely and I looked online a bit and thought it looks like quite a quaint farming, just a nice rural place...”

My brother came first in 1975. He was one of the (Vietnamese) **refugees**. That was actually from a boat. So he landed in Aber and from Aber they rehomed him and things. So he was taken in by a family and then we got escorted over here.

“I WAS BORN IN THE WEST MIDLANDS IN A PLACE CALLED ROWLEY REGIS WHICH IS NOT FAR FROM DUDLEY. I CAME HERE IN 1947 AND HOW WE CAME HERE WAS THAT **MY FATHER WORKED IN THE CYCLE INDUSTRY** IN THE MIDLANDS AND HE CAME HERE SATTELLITE WORKER TO START THE CYCLE FACTORY WHICH IS NOW THE LION WORKS ON THE POOL ROAD”

I used to work for an American company and they chose Newtown purely because of the beautiful site they see in the **countryside**. The alternative was Merthyr Tydfil and the WDA were desperate for them to go to Merthyr Tydfil... (but) they just stopped here for lunch that’s all and said, that’s it. This looks like a nice place. We’re going to stay here..

# How do people live in a small town in a global world?

“I’ve just got used to **Internet shopping** quite a lot. I mean, there is enough here for people to... and a lot of people like the town and the shops that are there. It’s just not what I’m used to, but when we’re having to **travel** for forty-five minutes to have a decent shopping experience”

“I have to say that **YouTUBE**, I mean, I burn it really. You know, I’m downloading stuff all the time now. It’s just fantastic because in more recent years music has really got hold on me and realising that **I’ve got a whole new world to discover**”.

“you think oh gosh how does a place like Newtown get a **McDonalds**? Everybody was very grateful for that... (But it’s) not just like a food outlet, it’s more like... it’s a meeting place. It’s a social place because everybody, you know, meets at McDonalds”

“...the Internet has enabled me to move here and carry on working and live in the area”

“They sit along those red benches and sometimes you’ll walk past a group of about seven or eight students and they’re all just sat with their heads in their **mobile phones**. Some actually communicating to each other sat next to each other on the bench”.

“I booked myself a **holiday** to Jordan and... it was a wonderful holiday. It was really wonderful and it was the food and I came back absolutely, completely transported by my **middle-eastern food**. I really, really loved it... put it this way I keep the cumin industry going!”

“Basically it’s [a] one horse town, for the best graduates to want to come and make a life here. It’s a **nice place to bring up children**.. but maybe not to consider coming here when you’re twenty-one, twenty-two ... it may be more difficult to go on progressing your career if you got stuck here”.



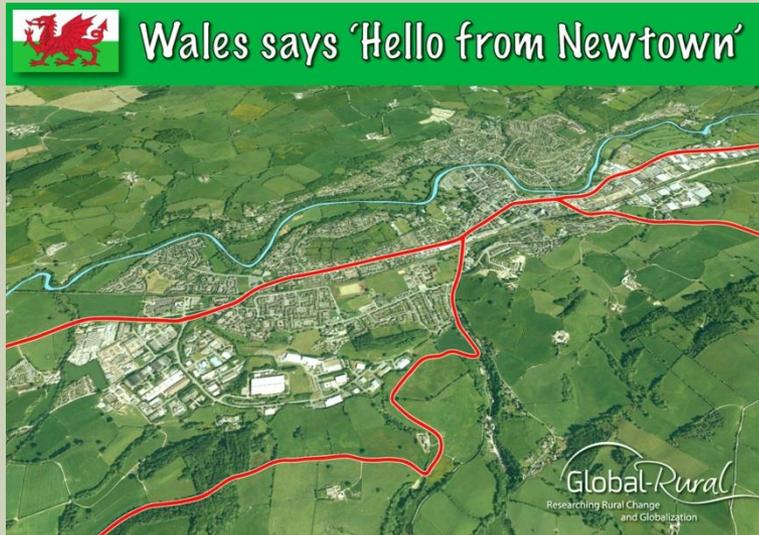
# PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES

# Methodological challenges:

- How do you engage people in more mundane discussions of everyday life???
  - It can be hard to convince people to talk to you if you do not have a clear agenda and specific issue
- Accessing everyday practices and knowledges



# Postcard project



*Greetings from Newtown!!*

To:

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

You have received this card from someone you know in Newtown, Powys in Wales. They are helping us map the different ways a small town like Newtown is connected with other parts of the world. We think it is always nice to get a hand written postcard and hope it has brightened your day! **Can you help us with our research?** Go to the web link written on the left and answer just 5 short questions. It should take less than 3 minutes to complete!

Our project looks at 'globalization' and how rural communities are connected to different places around the globe, through things like trade, migration, family, technology. This card is part of our research in Newtown, which in turn is part of a larger five-year research project funded by the European Research Council and based at Aberystwyth University in Wales. For further information on our Newtown work visit our website at: [assemblingnewtown.org](http://assemblingnewtown.org)

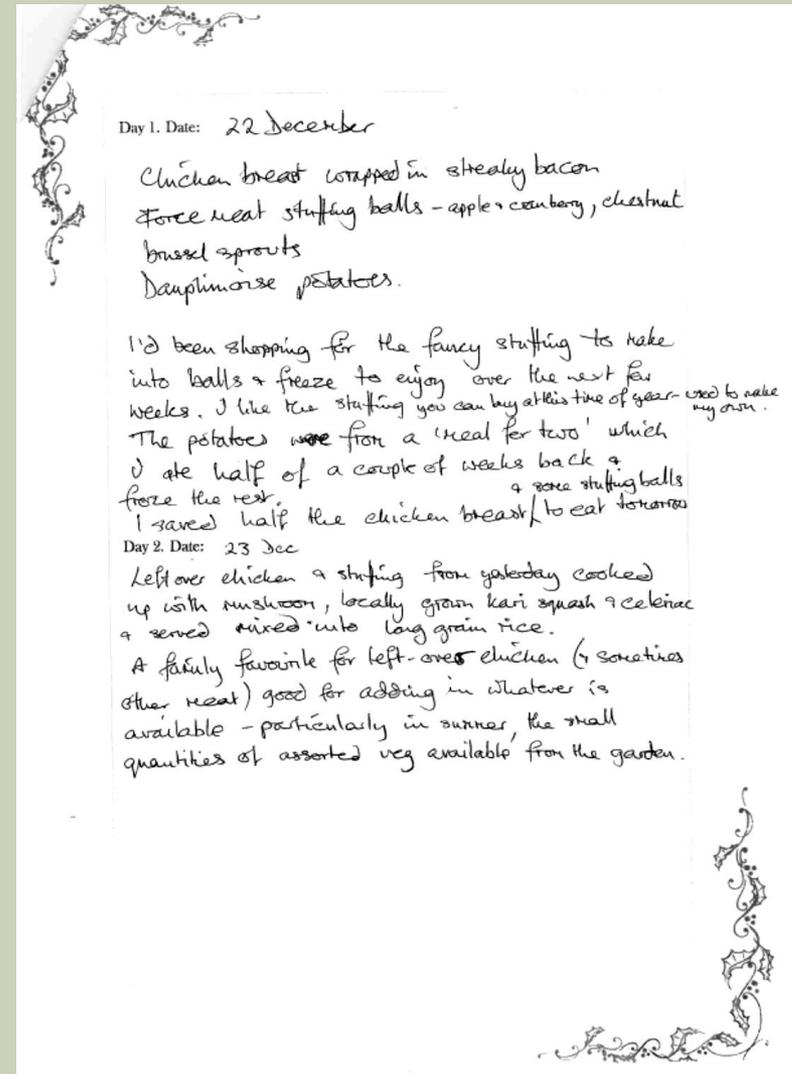


Please type following link into your web browser :  
[goo.gl/XTpnUE](http://goo.gl/XTpnUE)

- Working with approximately 60 school children, aged 8-11.
- Send a postcard to relatives/friends in other parts of the world
- Mapping these connections
- Recipients undertake survey exploring their relationship with Newtown
- Engage with ideas around communication, technological change and migration in the classroom

# Food diaries

- 15 members of Newtown WI
- Food diary for 2-week period over Christmas
- Recording what they cooked and why?
- Reflecting on incorporation of international influences into our food practices and traditions
- Issues of food provenance, sourcing etc.



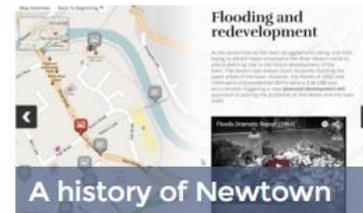
# Crowd-sourcing data



## Home

Newtown, in Powys, is typical small market town, an urban centre in a rural setting, common to many parts of the UK and Europe. Like all these other towns Newtown is also totally unique, with its own history, its own mix of people and businesses and buildings, and its own problems and opportunities for the future in a rapidly changing world. Like most rural towns it has been integrated into international networks of trade and culture for a very long time. It has experienced peaks and troughs and had to continually reinvent itself as markets and social attitudes have changed.

The **Aberystwyth University** Geography Department is leading an international research project looking at how rural places are changing in response to global events and global processes, and how people in different places increasingly interact with each other in a world where distance does not seem to matter. This larger project (GLOBAL-RURAL) is



## Our Projects

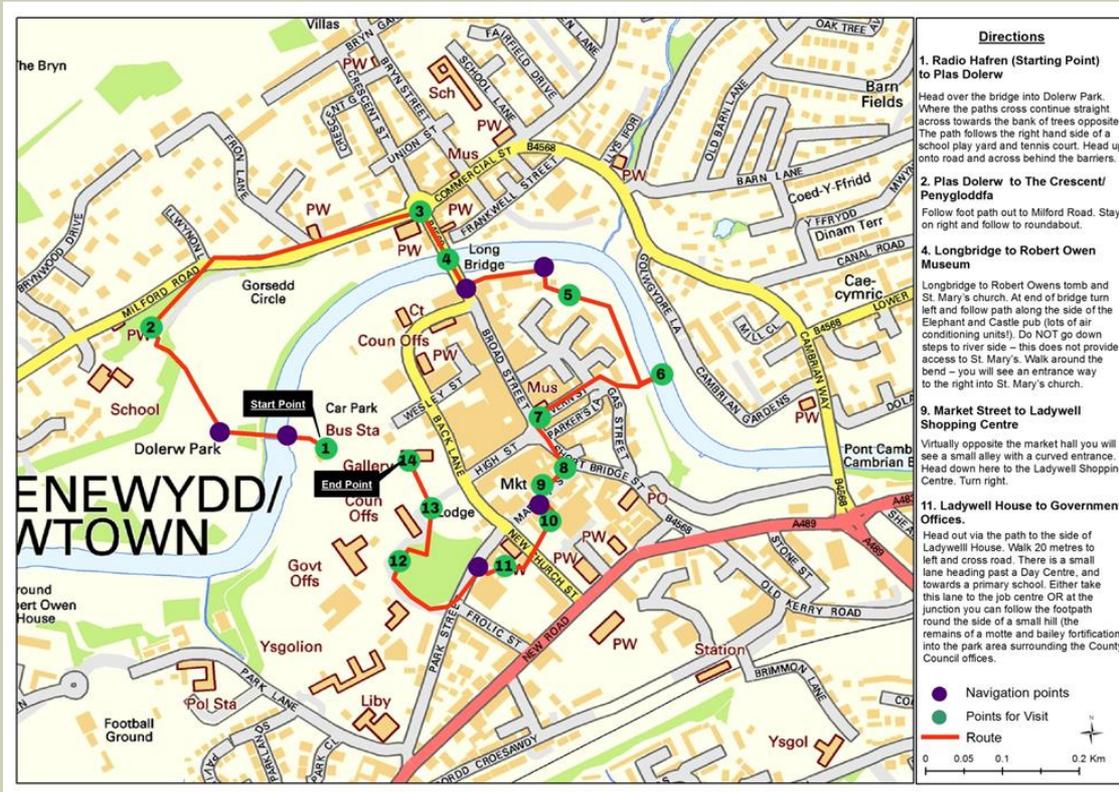
Assembling Newtown involves a broad range of investigations into the ways Newtown is connected with other parts of the world. Some of these issues are being explored through a large number of in-depth

## Submit Your Stories

Tell us your story.

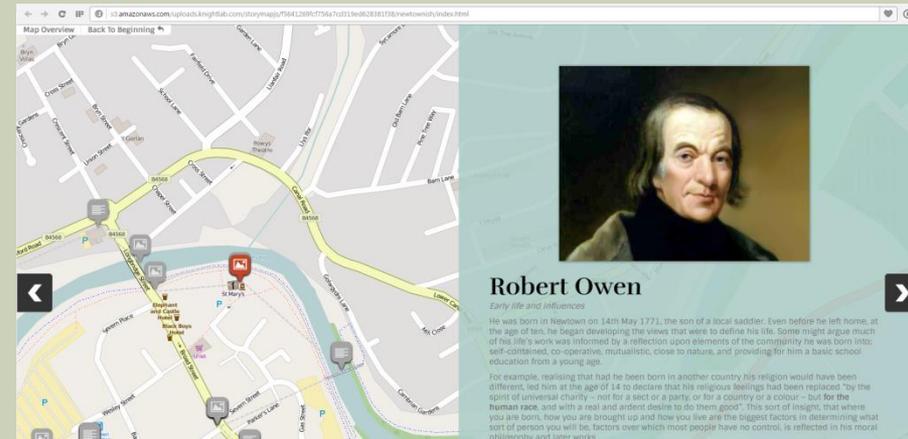
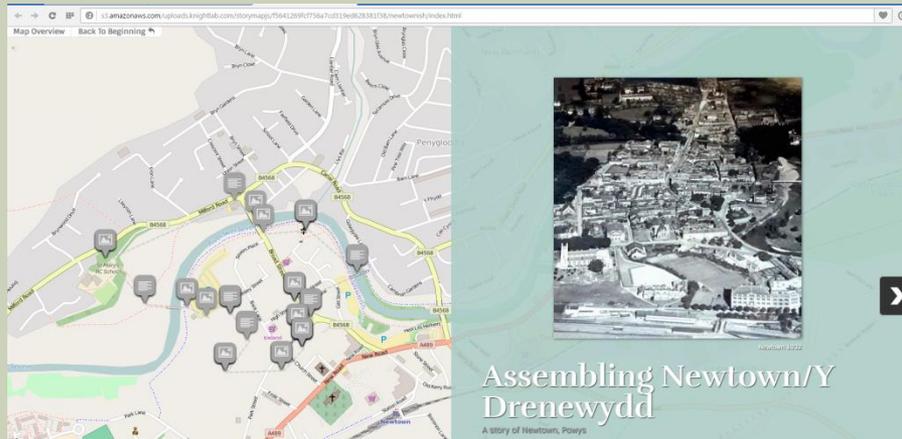
Send us your pictures, memories and thoughts about the town and how it has changed or will change in the future. Or get in touch if you would be willing to be interviewed for Assembling Newtown.

[View More](#)



# REPRESENTING THE DATA

# Newtown Storymap





**CASE STUDY EXAMPLE:**

**Wool – unravelling an assemblage...**

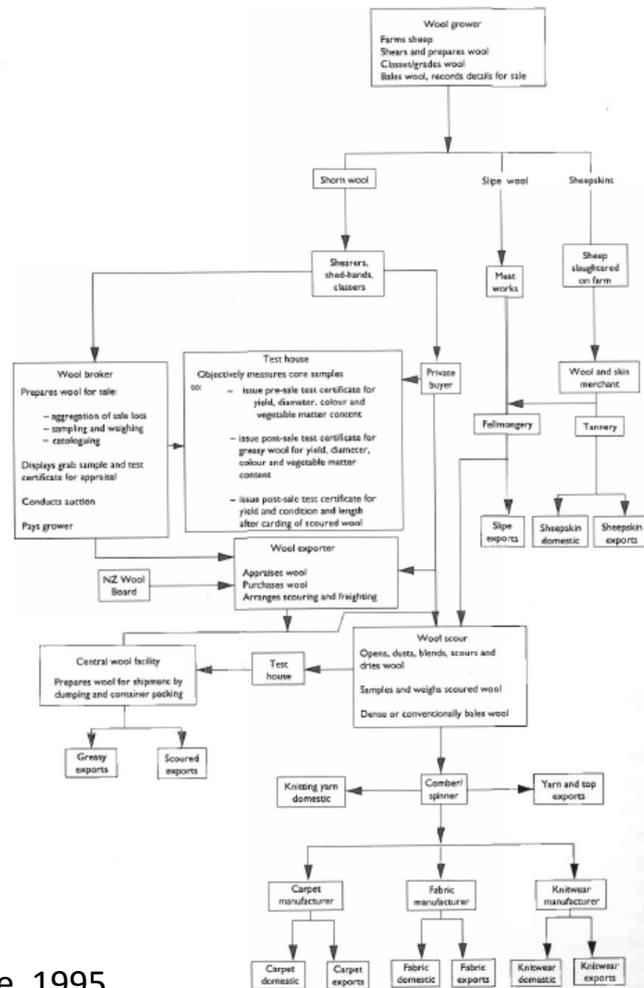
# Newtown Wool Industry

- **1820s** – Newtown was the largest producer of woollen fabrics of Wales
  - River Severn providing power, railways facilitating exports
- **Pryce Jones** – World’s first mass mail order company
  - Sold Welsh flannel to European Royalty, German Army and customers in Australia and America
- **1880s onwards** – decline due to competition from modern factories in N England
- **Today** - Local sheep farmers remain, with the British Wool Marketing Board maintaining a regional collection depot in Newtown



# Woolly networks

THE INTERNATIONAL WOOL TRADE



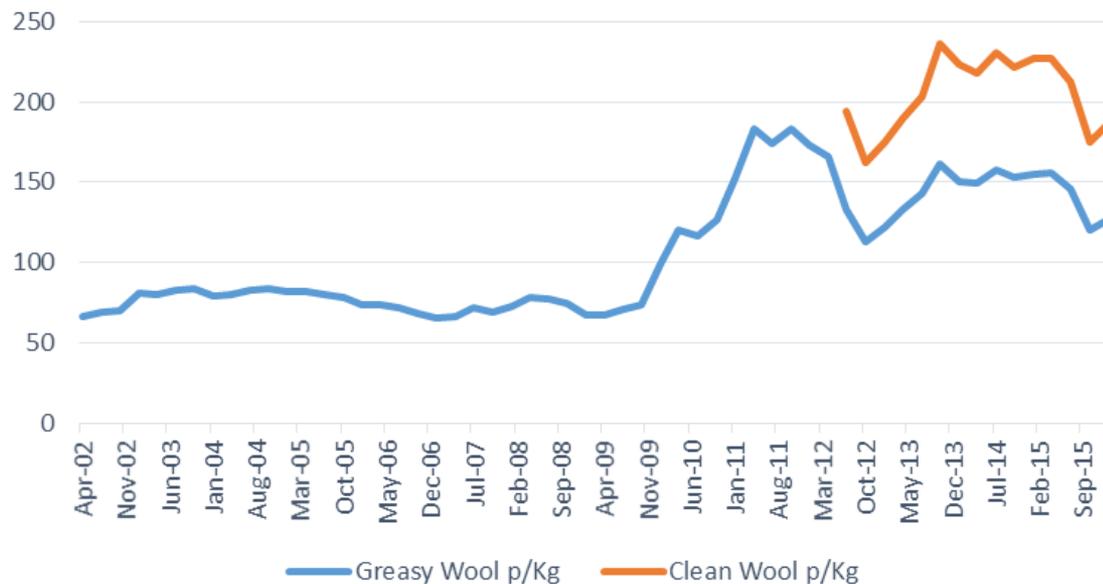
Roche, 1995

- Range of actors represented in narratives on global wool production, including
  - Sheep farmers
  - Wool Merchants
  - Processing and manufacturing companies
  - Retailers
- Economically-centred accounts tend to overlook more-than-human factors, including:
  - Sheep
  - Wool
  - Land
  - Climate
  - Viruses and pathogens

# Farm



### British Fleece Wool Price Indicator



British Wool Exports					
	2014/15	2013	2011	2005	2003
Europe	55%	61%	65%	63%	86%
China	<b>31%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>3%</b>
Far East	7%	9%	10%	18%	3%
America	3%	3%	3%	2%	4%
Australasia	2%	3%	3%	4%	1%
Africa	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%

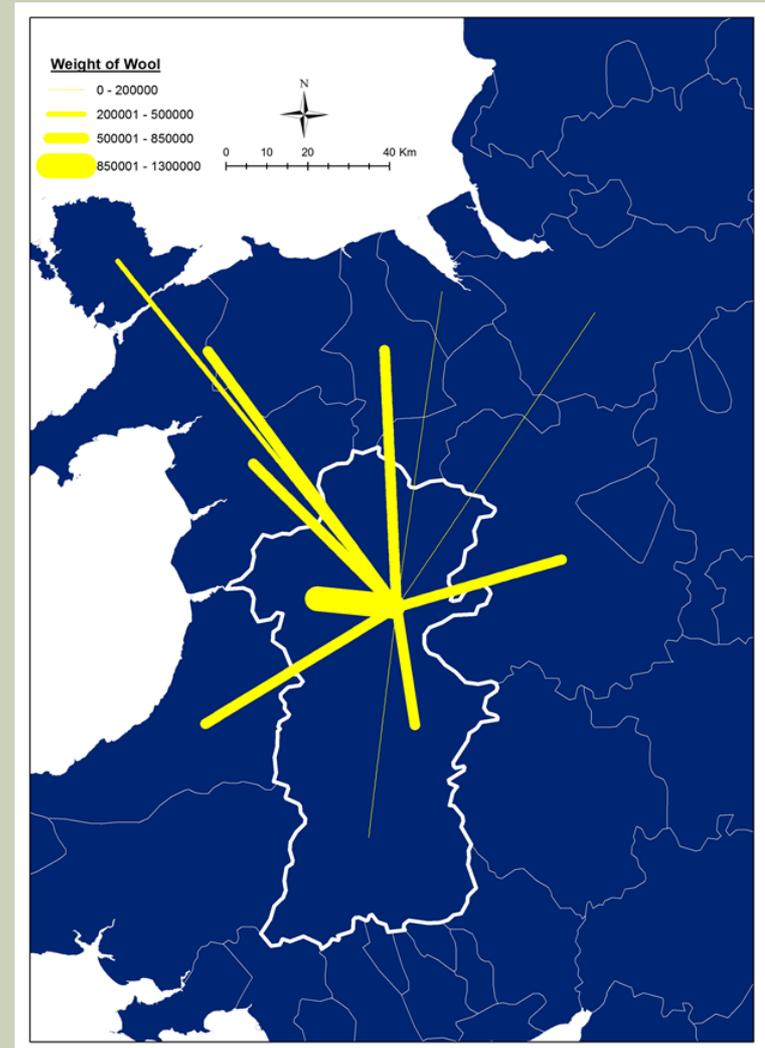
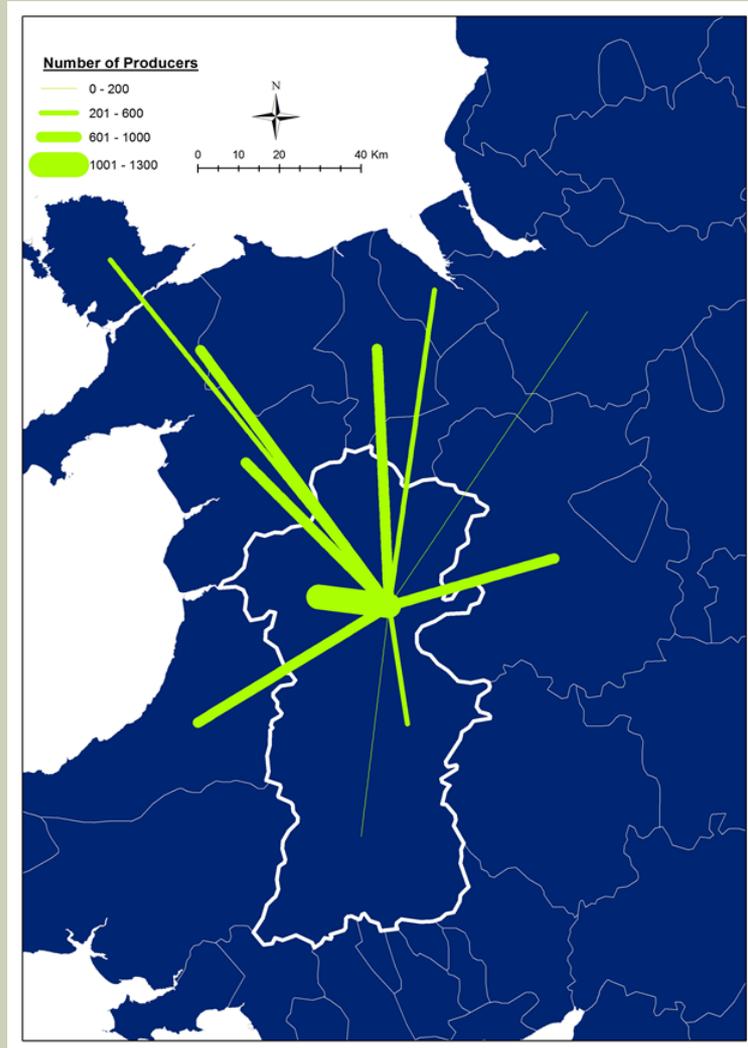
# Wool as 'by-product'

“As a percentage of what that sheep makes, **I think it's definitely a by-product. It's a by-product that's got to be taken off the sheep.** If people could get away with not shearing they would, and some people sell their old ewes before. They'll sell them in the market prior to shearing to save the cost of shearing [...] People shear then at the moment because if you don't the sheep will be dead and they get struck with maggots without treatment and they will be dead”. (Steve)

“We're talking about **£5 a ewe at the most when it's costing you £1 just to pay the shearer.** The actual gathering and then packing, because for every shearer you'll need probably one and a half men after to get the sheep in. To pack the wool. Sort the sheep and get them back in the fields and so on.

Then you get it packed, you've got to deliver it and get a date in which to take it in, and **it's a bulky product** and it's not the easiest thing to carry. We had five tons of wool here last year and it takes a lot of room.” (Steve)

# Wool Producers

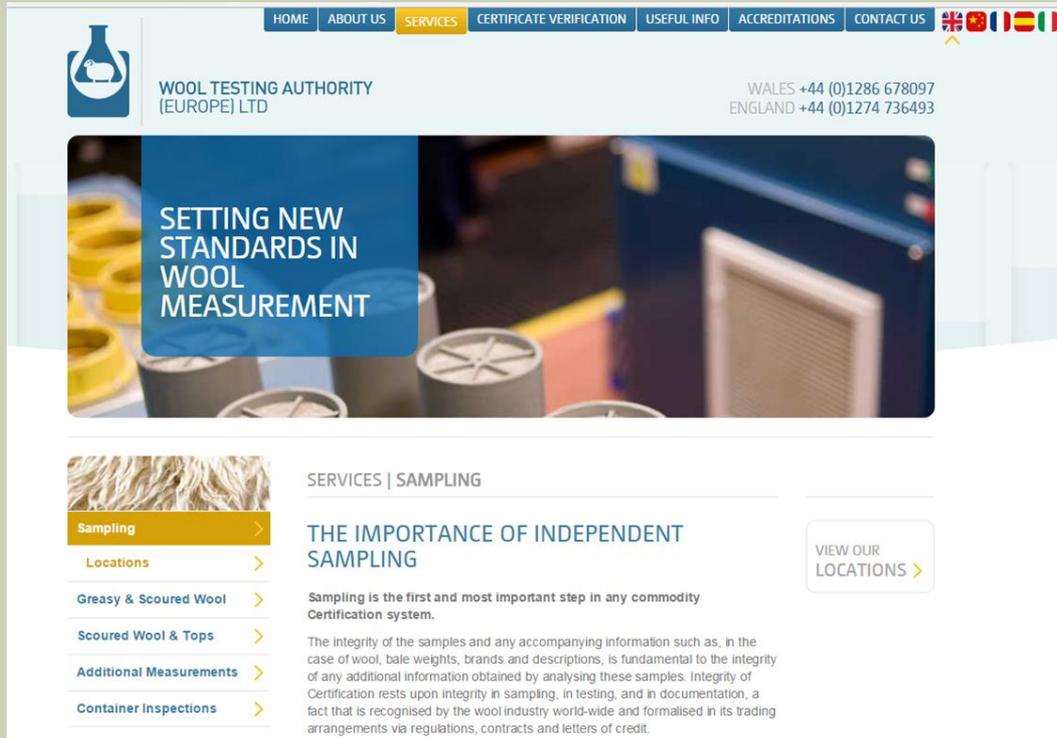


# Wool Grading Depot



British Wool Marketing Board  
Grading Depot, Newtown

# Lab Testing



The screenshot shows the website for the Wool Testing Authority (Europe) Ltd. The navigation bar includes links for HOME, ABOUT US, SERVICES, CERTIFICATE VERIFICATION, USEFUL INFO, ACCREDITATIONS, and CONTACT US. The main header features the company logo and contact information for Wales (+44 (0)1286 678097) and England (+44 (0)1274 736493). A large banner image displays laboratory equipment with the text "SETTING NEW STANDARDS IN WOOL MEASUREMENT". Below this, a "SERVICES | SAMPLING" section is visible, with a sub-heading "THE IMPORTANCE OF INDEPENDENT SAMPLING". A sidebar on the left lists various services: Sampling, Locations, Greasy & Scoured Wool, Scoured Wool & Tops, Additional Measurements, and Container Inspections. A "VIEW OUR LOCATIONS" button is also present.

“Some of the data is not really relevant for certain wool types like your kempy mountain types, but for other types your finer, sort of, bred type wools where it’s going to go into cloth or knitting and **then it does have a bearing on what we’re prepared for pay it on a given day.** It tells us that it’s suitable for a certain product which one of our customers will need” (Wool buyer)

# Auction



A screenshot of the British Wool Marketing Board auction software interface. The interface is displayed on a large monitor and shows various data points and tables related to a wool auction.

**BRITISH WOOL MARKETING BOARD**

SALES NUMBER : BW80      SOLD 100% - AVERAGE : 145

GRADE	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHT
0830	FINE & MEDIUM NATURAL DISCOLOURED LAMB	3349

GRADED BY	LYING AT	VM	S/DRY %	BALES
NEWTOWN		0.1	67.4	10

SPEC. NO.	TERMS	MICRON	COLOUR
144100692	SPOT	31.1	5

LOT	BID P/KG	CLEAN P/KG
85	118	175.1

BUYER	BID P/KG	CLEAN P/KG
STANDARD	118	175.1
CURTIS WOOL DIRECT	117	173.6
STANDARD	116	172.1
UNSOLD LOT	115	170.6

LOT	BUYER	BID P/KG	STATUS	TERMS	GRADE	CLEAN P/KG
84	CURTIS WOOL DIRECT	102	Sold	SPOT	0805	159.6
83	CURTIS WOOL DIRECT	163	Sold	SPOT	0803	223.3
82	CURTIS WOOL DIRECT	153	Sold	SPOT	0802	222.1
81	CURTIS WOOL DIRECT	117	Sold	SPOT	0791	171.3
80	DICKIE	113	Sold	SPOT	0790	171.0
79	DICKIE	105	Sold	6 MTHS AVAIL	0763	164.8
78	MODIANO	107	Sold	6 MTHS AVAIL	0763	163.4
77	STANDARD	111	Sold	3 MTHS AVAIL	0763	164.4
76	MODIANO	112	Sold	3 MTHS AVAIL	0763	162.1
75	MODIANO	108	Sold	3 MTHS AVAIL	0763	161.4
74	CURTIS WOOL DIRECT	106	Sold	SPOT	0763	158.0

British Wool Marketing Board  
Auction Rooms, Bradford

# Scouring



“China obviously is a big market where they have a lot of primary processing, scouring and combing. **So there’s a lot of business there which goes out in greasy wool.** So it’s not processed in this country, which in a way is a shame that you’re not adding value more within this country, but that is an effect of globalisation as well”.

(Curtis Wool Merchants)

# Blending



Haworth Scouring and Combing Plant, Bradford



# Marketing provenance



## Feedbacks...

- Currency fluctuations, policy and regulations, climate change, diseases and pathogens
- Opportunities and Vulnerabilities

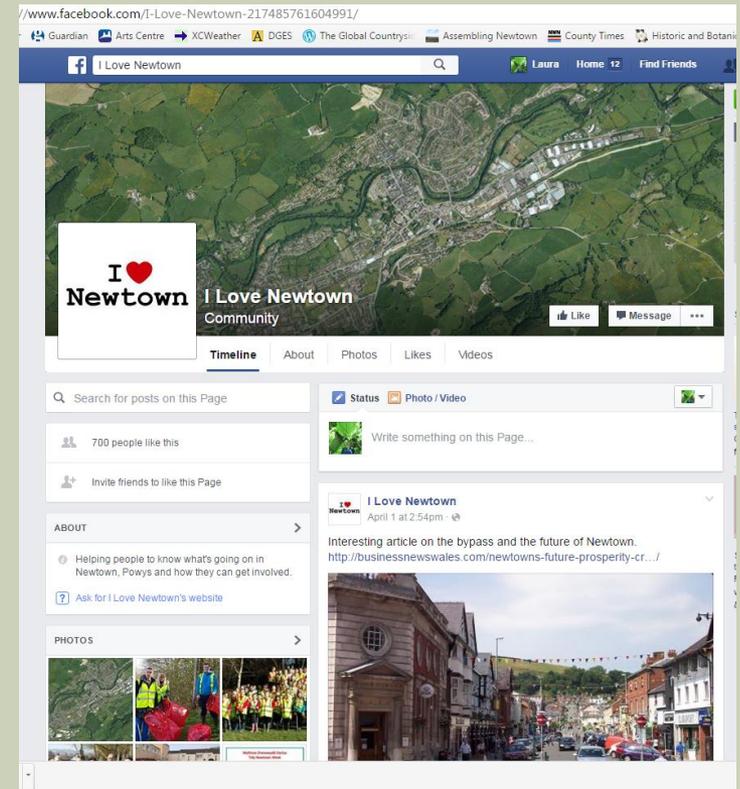


## Summary...

- Place-based processes and interactions between human and non-human components
- Material and discursive mobilization of wool between sites
- Integration of Welsh sheep farmers into global wool assemblage
- Feedbacks from distant events and dynamics
- *More-than-human Globalization*

# Next steps:

- Ongoing research themes  
e.g. travel, migration, global consciousness
- Online research
- Ethics
- Data analysis



# Feedback and Questions:

- Resonate with your own projects
- Methodological and ethical issues encountered?
  - Institutional ethical guidelines and their ability to react
- Practical issues
  - Ability to trace assemblages and follow connections
  - Where to stop???