The Relation of Village and Rural Pubs with Community Life and People's Well-Being in Great Britain

Der Zusammenhang zwischen ländlichen Pubs und sozialem Zusammenhalt und Lebensqualität in Großbritannien

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Abstract

In Great Britain the make-up of rural communities is changing. Young individuals are moving to cities and the population of rural communities is ageing. In this context, it is important to sustain and enhance people's well-being and community cohesion. The purpose of this paper is to show that pubs are important facilitators of community cohesion and ultimately well-being of residents. This is done by compiling a database of secondary data at the parish level of rural communities of England. From this data, measures of community cohesion and social interaction are derived and correlated with the number of pubs within the parish. Pubs are found to be statistically significantly positively associated with community cohesion and social interaction. The paper goes on to construct regression and path models to relate the number of pubs and community cohesion and interaction to self-reported health as a proxy for well-being. Significant positive associations are again found. These findings provide a strong case to foster the sustainability of rural pubs.

Key Words

village pubs; community cohesion; socio-economic development; rural Britain

Zusammenfassung

Diese Studie untersucht den Einfluss ländlicher Pubs auf den sozialen Zusammenhalt und die Lebensqualität in ländlichen Regionen Großbritanniens. Die Autoren untersuchen dabei, ob ländliche Pubs einen positiven Effekt auf den gemeinschaftlichen Verbund und das Wohlbefinden in der Kommune ausüben. Die von den Autoren entwickelte ökonometrische Analyse umfasst Regressions- sowie Pfad-Modelle und nutzt die Gesundheitswerte von Kommunenmitgliedern als Proxy für örtliches Wohlbefinden. Die Ergebnisse dieser Arbeit liefern starke Argumente für die Förderung der Erhaltung ländlicher Pubs.

Schlüsselwörter

ländliche Pubs; sozialer Zusammenhalt; sozio-ökonomische Entwicklung; ländliches Großbritannien

1 Introduction

In economically richer countries, social cohesion is important with regard to individuals' wellbeing. This is particularly true for rural areas. The second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first century have seen the development of large urban conurbations in which employment is concentrated. This situation has led to a drift of population into urban centres in many parts of Northern Europe. Indeed, Great Britain has seen the diminution of rural communities. As young individuals move to the cities, the age profile of rural communities becomes older and often rural villages become no more than dormitory villages or homes for the retired. It has been recognised that for areas such these social cohesion is extremely important.

The concept of social cohesion can be defined in different ways; as "the reduction of disparities, inequalities and social exclusion" or "the strengthening of social relations, interactions and ties' (see BERGER-SCHMITT, 2000: 28). In this paper we think of social cohesion as the degree to which people form part of a community, interact with one another and communities behave in a manner to facilitate this interaction. Broadly, social cohesion is perceived as beneficial and to be promoted in order to combat social exclusion and poverty as illustrated by GILCHRIST (2004) and by the ODPM (2004, 2005). Many local authorities and

local councils have embedded the concept of fostering community and social cohesion as part of their strategy. See for example WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL (2011) and PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL (2011), or the identification of cohesion has a corner stone of the UK prime minister David Cameron's concept of "the Big Society" in which responsibility moves from the state to communities.

The degree of social interaction, cohesiveness and networking among individuals can be termed as social capital. PUTNAM (1995) found that core aspects of social capital and social participation have health protective effects. The need for community cohesion is especially important as population's age and ageing appear to be a phenomena occurring within rural UK communities, as demonstrated by WENGER (2001). JOSEPH AND CLOUTIER-FISHER (2005) showed that ageing "in place" in the community is preferable to institutional care. The importance of social networks and cohesion to the well-being of older adults has been illustrated by COHEN-MANSFIELD et al., 1999; GAYEN et al., 2010; and RAESIDE et al., 2010; in rural Ireland by WALSH and O'SHEA (2008) and in Finland by NUMMELA et al. (2008). Moreover, keeping active and involved in society is found to promote physical and mental well-being and even to reduce mortality (GLASS et al., 1999), and high levels of self-rated health within communities are frequently positively associated with social participation or social engagement (KAWACHI et al., 1997).

It seems then important to facilitate interaction in rural communities to allow social capital to be developed and social capital to be acquired. Village pubs represent vital and essential networking places for those communities located in areas disadvantaged with regard to major railway routes and road connections. As reported by MAYE et al. (2005), each village pub 'has its own unique cultural terrain', where 'terrain' identifies a 'sedimentary layering of networks' which includes the whole networking system which links villagers, traditions and modern facilities. For the villagers, "the pub may operate as the centre of their social life, especially if there are no other alternative social facilities" (HUNT and SATTERLEE, 1986: 523). Pubs have a significant impact on the population – they are fertile terrain for various social activities, and represent important incubators for the development of human relationships and social networking (see HUNT and SATTERLEE, 1986; BOWLER and EVERITT, 1999; JONES et al., 2000; PRATTEN and LOVATT, 2002; PRATTEN, 2003).

Despite the importance of these places for rural and peripheral communities, many sources indicate a progressive decline in the number village pubs in the UK during the past ten years (BLRA, 2000; PRATTEN and LOVATT, 2002; BBPA, 2008; BBPA, 2010). This decline is parallel to the downturn of beer consumption in the UK, which passed from 5.05 litres per head/year in 1999 to 4.48 in 2007 (INSTITUTE FOR ALCOHOL STUDIES, 2008). Data provided by BBPA (2008) indicate that different increments in the level of taxation applied to alcohol sold in pubs and bars (+161% between the period 1987-2008), compared to alcohol sold in supermarkets and licensed retailers (+46% in the same period), could be the major cause of decline for British village pubs. Other causes are many and diverse: the rise of pub chains and theme pubs which target a more commercial type of custom, the result of progressively tough drink-driving laws, rising cost and alcohol duties, the increased popularity of home entertainment, the smoking ban (PRATTEN and LOVATT, 2002; CABRAS and REGGIANI, 2010). In some cases, village pubs have reacted by expanding their portfolio and by focusing upon the provision of good quality food and good quality local beers (LINCOLN, 2006). This variation has allowed several businesses to survive, but has also altered their customer base, by attracting more tourists and occasional visitors than villagers and locals.

For rural communities, pubs play an important role in enhancing and stimulating socio-economic activities inside communities, such as business activities, volunteering organisations and charities, and leisure services (CABRAS and REGGIANI, 2010). Moreover, village pubs are important generators of part-time and casual employment and work as selling hubs for local producers, which use them for placing their products (CABRAS, 2011). Village pubs are important places for the development of socio-economic activities and are vital incubators for social engagement within local communities in rural areas, as demonstrated by CABRAS and REGGIANI (2010) in their study of pubs in rural Cumbria, Northern England.

In this paper we seek to investigate further the role of pubs in facilitating social cohesion and once establishing this role then we consider the impact of rural pubs on well-being. Specifically we wish to test two hypotheses. The first – are rural pubs associated with community cohesion and the second is – are the provision of rural pubs associated positively with well-being. To conduct this investigation we use secondary data which is outlined in the next section to relate the

number of pubs in rural parishes (the smallest administrative area within a local authority) to measures of social and community cohesion and also to measures of physical and mental well-being. The data to be used is outlined in the next section, this is followed by a statistical analysis of this data, then conclusions and a discussion are presented.

2 Data and Methods

Information used in this study has been gathered from a number of sources, assembled and collated into a unique dataset, which was formed from the attributes of 2,779 rural parishes in England. Rural is defined in this study as 'communities or parishes with no more than 3,000 individuals, situated at least 5 miles (or 10 minutes drive) from towns or large parishes counting 5,000 inhabitants or more (CABRAS and REGGIANI, 2010: 6). Sources used to compile the dataset include the Office for National Statistics (ONS), National Archives (NA), and the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). In particular, the NA provided data about social, cultural and volunteering activities carried out at a parish level. These data supplied significant information related to various aspects characterising the communal life in rural parishes, from individuals'

level of engagement in religious and volunteering activities, to the presence of centres and places for enhancing social aggregation among villagers. To this end, the authors created a dataset that comprised 2,779 parishes and over 1,700 village pubs which serve a parish population of slightly more than 1.7 million individuals. The parishes represent all of rural England. Variables in the data are compiled of counts of engagement in communal activities such as sporting events, child and youth activities and local meetings. Other variables are counts of local facilities such as post offices, local markets, places of religious worship, doctors' surgeries and so forth. From these variables an index of social cohesion will be constructed and this will be taken as a dependent variable. A number of control variables are also included such as the rates of people who are economically inactive, measures of education level, average hours worked and measures of the local transport infrastructure. Also recorded is the number of pubs serving food and small independent or free houses in the parish. These data were expressed as per capita by dividing by the number of residents in the parish.

To measure well-being we took the numbers who reported to be in good health (both physical and mental) in each parish. IDLER and BENYAMINI (1997) stated that self-rated health is a suitable measure of a

Figure 1. The distribution of pubs per capita across the parishes
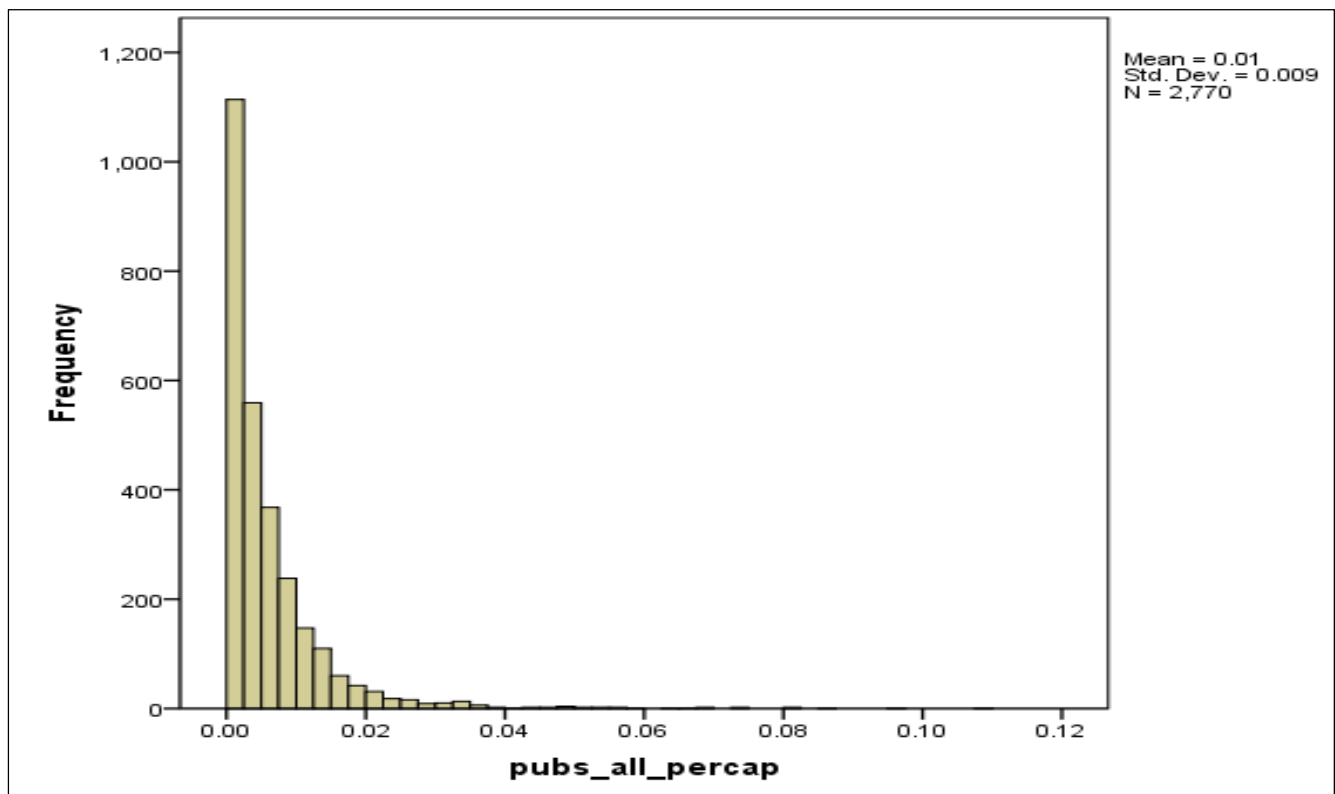
Source: study dataset (2011)

Table 1.   Variables used in the study

Variable	Score
Count of separate post offices in parish	Post Offices
Count of post offices combines [sic] with general shops	
Count of post offices combined with other facilities	
Count of general stores in parish	Local Shops
Count of small village shops in parish	
Count of farm shops in parish	
1 where mobile shop recorded in parish, 0 otherwise	
1 where milkman recorded in parish, 0 otherwise	
1 where locally produced eggs on sale in some or all identified shops etc	Local Food Availability
1 where locally produced meat on sale in some or all identified shops	
1 where locally produce dairy products on sale in some or all identified shops	
1 where locally produced baked produce available in some or all identified shops	
1 where locally produced preserves available in some or all identified shops	
Count of restaurants open all year	Food outlets
Count of restaurants open seasonally	
Count of cafes open all year	
Count of cafes open seasonally	
Count of take-aways open all year	
Count of restaurants open seasonally	
Count of places of worship in parish	Worship
1 where any place of worship in parish used for arts/music	Church Halls
1 where any place of worship in parish used for public meetings	
1 where any place of worship in parish used for school assemblies	
1 where any place of worship in parish used for school assemblies	
1 where parish contains a permanent library	Information
1 where parish has a mobile library available	
1 where parish has a public/parish noticeboard	
1 where parish has a public/parish noticeboard	
1 where parish has community internet facility available for public use.	
1 where parish contains a community legal service	
1 where parish contains a counselling service	
Count of village halls in parish	Halls
Count of church halls in parish	
Count of school halls in parish	
Count of 'other' meeting rooms/hall available for public use in parish	
Count of number of formal play areas with equipment in parish	Play Areas
1 where parish contains a swimming pool available for use by local residents	Sports Facilities
1 where parish contains a tennis court available for use by local residents	
1 where parish contains a sports hall available for use by local residents	
1 where parish contains a playing field available for use by local residents	
1 where parish contains a bowling green available for use by local residents	
1 where cricket matches are held within parish	Events held
1 where football/rugby matches are held within parish	
1 where pub games are held within parish	
1 where art or music events are held within parish	
1 where fetes/galas/traditional festivals are held within parish	
1 where beavers/cubs/venture scouts operate within parish	
1 where rainbows/brownies/guides/rangers operate within parish	Children and Youth Facilities
1 where a youth parish council operates within parish	
1 where young farmers club(s) operate within parish	
1 where a youth parish council operates within parish	

Source: study dataset (2011)

person's health status in general. Social cohesion will be taken as a three dimensional concept. The first dimension of social cohesion will be related to participation and will encompass number of events, such as sporting events, community child and youth activities. The second dimension is formed from a composite measure of the parish variables that relate to the infrastructure of interaction – e.g. number of places of worship, community halls and transport. The third dimension will be related to participation and will encompass a number of events such as, sporting events and community child and youth activities. The other dimension was the availability of local shops and food. These dimensions were constructed by the application of factor analysis to the parish variables referred to above. Variables relating the presence of infrastructure or events are aggregated into scores and these scores are then expressed in per capita terms by dividing by the population size in the age range 26 to 74 years. The variables are listed in table 1. The number of pubs per capita is a key variable in this study and its distribution is portrayed in figure 1. The distribution for this variable is very skewed and so is categorised in to those parishes with no pubs (28.4% of parishes), those with more than zero pubs but a pub density of less than 0.01 pubs per population (54.0% of parishes) and those with more than 0.01 pubs per population (17.7% of parishes).

To test the first hypothesis the number of pubs will be correlated to the social cohesion variables. To investigate the second hypothesis ordinary least square regression will be used to relate the social cohesion and number of pubs per capita to self reported good health. It is recognised that there are serious endogeneity issues relating to causality in this simple approach and so in an attempt to overcome this structural equation models will be developed using AMOS 18.0 (BRYNE, 2010).

The inherent causality of studies of this nature make this a complex area to research and in this paper our aim is to give insight rather than to be conclusive and to do this we explore the field with a number of statistical approaches in the hope we can triangulate on findings pertinent to the hypothesis.

Table 2.   Rotated component matrix

Variables	Active	Infra-structure	Local Shops & Food
Events Held	.816		
Sports Facilities	.808		
Childern and Youth Facilities	.759		
Worship	-.331	.735	
Public halls		.702	
Play Areas		.673	
Post Offices		.668	
Information	-.536	.537	
Local Shops			.956
Food Availability			.918

Source: study dataset (2011)

Figure 2. Error plot of number of pubs and means of factor scores
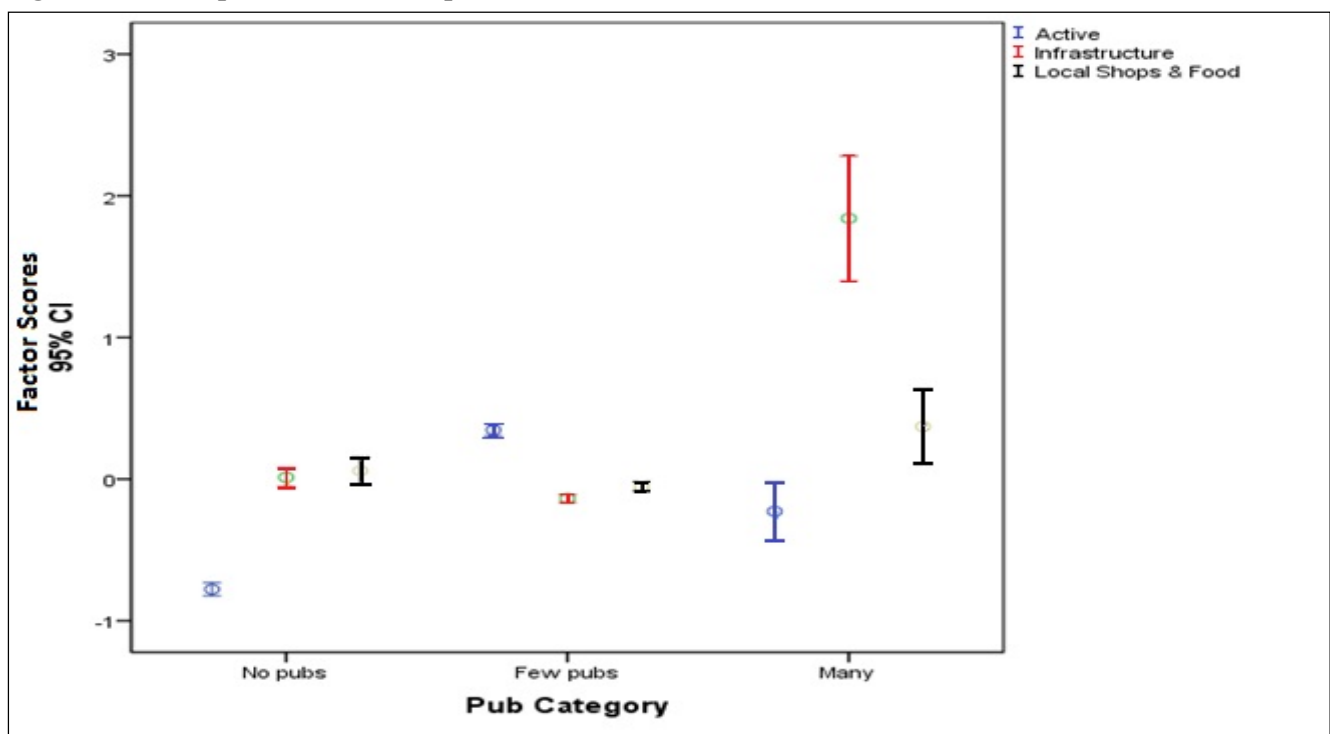
Source: study dataset (2011)

3   Results

Factor analysis with VARIMAX rotation was conducted on measures of community infrastructure and activities in parishes. The procedure worked well with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy being 0.729 (fairy adequate) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity being statistically significant. Three factors emerged which are labelled Active, Infrastructure and Local Shops & Food, these accounted for 23.9%, 23,4% and 19.1% of the original varia-- tion. The rotated component matrix is displayed in table 2. The factor scores will be taken as representatives of social and community cohesion are plotted against the categorical variable of the number of pubs per capita in the parish and these are displayed in the error plot in figure 2.

From figure 2 it seems that where there are pubs then the activities in the area are more, infrastructure and the local shops and food are statistically significantly higher with many pubs. Thus, there seems an association in that the more pubs the greater the measure of social and community cohesion.

A radar plot is produced to illustrate how the measure of community cohesion and the proportion of people in good health varies with the categories of pubs and this is shown in figure 3, in this figure all variables are standardised using a z transform we also add two potentially important variables to represent frequencies of engagement rather than merely presence. The additional variables are frequency of farmers markets and frequency of social clubs for the over 60 year olds.

From figure 3 it is noticeable that the parishes with no pubs occupy lower values of the social and community axis than where pubs are present. This also applies to the axis *goodhealth_percap* representing the proportion of the population who are in good health. The measures of community cohesion were correlated with the number of pubs per capita and the proportion of people in good health and this correlation are displayed in table 3. (Also included in this table are the frequency of social clubs for older people and the frequency of farmers markets.)

Thus, it seems that the factor scores correlate significantly positively with the number of pubs per capita and the proportion of people in good health (for the frequency variables only the frequency of social clubs for older people had a slight positive correlation with the proportion of people in good health). This analysis along with the information provided in figures 1 and 2 then leads to the acceptance of hypothesis in that

Figure 3. Radar plot of the distribution of pubs, social and community cohesion variables and the proportion reporting to be in good health
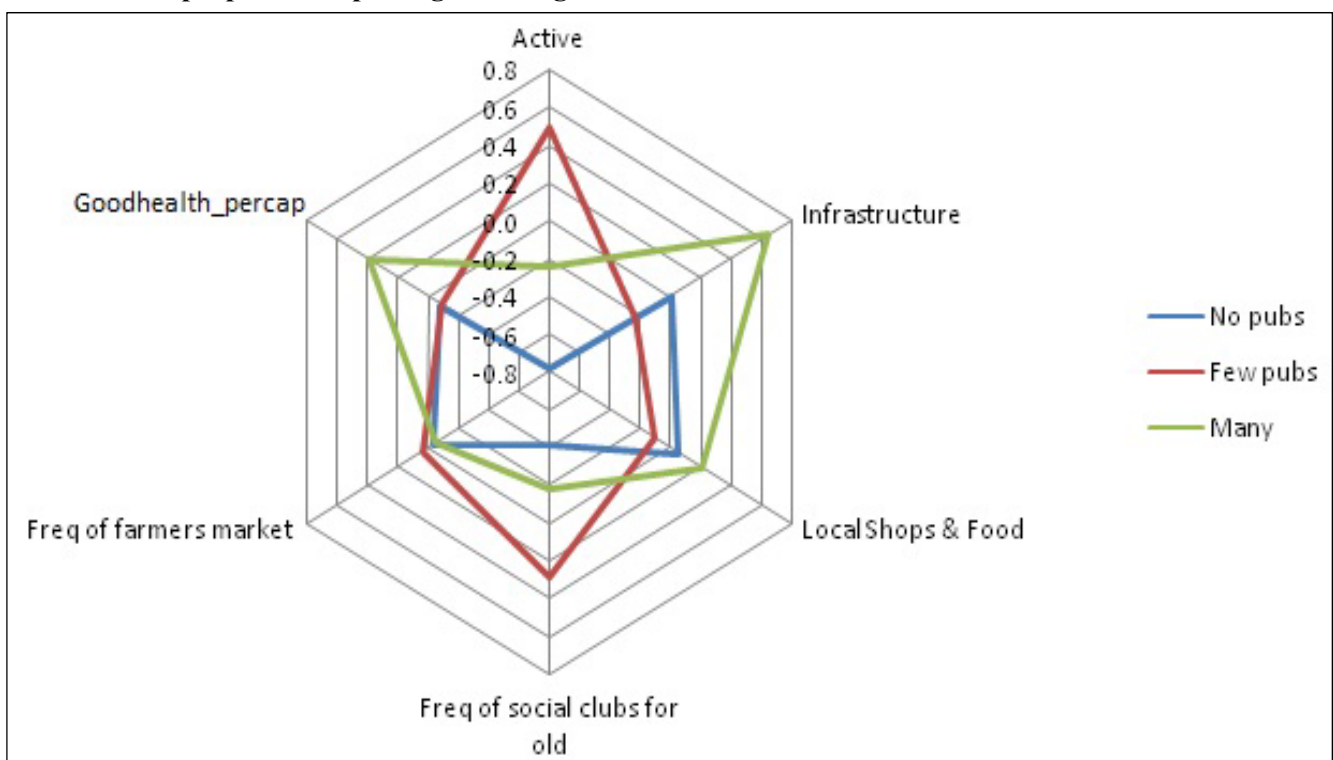
Source: study dataset (2011)

Table 3. Correlations with number of pubs and good health

	Freq of social clubs for older people	Freq of farmers market	Number of pubs per capita	Proportion of people in good health
Active	0.444**	0.079**	0.055**	0.101**
Infrastructure	0.01	0.003	0.495**	0.488**
Local shops & food	-0.02	-0.037	0.135**	0.138**
Freq of social clubs for older people		-0.081	0.017	0.087*
Freq of farmers markets			-0.003	0.007
Number of pubs per capita				0.419**

*significant at the 5% level
**significant at the 1% level
Source: study dataset (2011)

having pubs in the parish is positively associated with social cohesion.

An ordinary least squares regression models was used to relate the variables to the logarithm of the proportion of people in the parish who self reported to be in good health (logarithms of the proportion of people reporting to be in good health were taken as initial analysis indicated skewness in the response variable). Two control variables were used: the proportion of people who are economically active and employed and the proportion of people in the parish who have qualifications at levels 3, 4 and 5 – labelled E&E and Education, respectively. This model explained 21.7% of the variation in logarithm of the proportion of people reporting to be in good health. The coefficients of the model are displayed in table 4.

Results show that all the factor scores representing social and community cohesion are positively associated with good health as are parishes which have many pubs. The two control variables E&E and Education are also statistically significantly positively associated with good health.

Due to the interrelated nature of the variables structural equation modelling was carried out, as a result a path model was generated using AMOS 18.

The model obtained is displayed in figure 4. It is noted that the coefficients of the factor scores all have a statistically significant positive association with good health, Pubs have statistically significant (at p < 0.001) direct and indirect effects via the social and community cohesion variables on the logarithm of the proportion of people who report to be in good health. This again illustrates the significant positive association of the number of pubs both directly and indirectly through positive associations to community cohesion and social interaction to self reported well-being.

Community and social integration is also significantly directly associated to self reported well being. Regarding the control variables only the proportion of those who are economically active and in employment is significantly and positively associated with well-being. The coefficients of the model are displayed in table 5. It is noted that the coefficients of the factor scores all have a statistically significant positive association with good health, Pubs have statistically significant (at p < 0.001) direct and indirect effects via the social and community cohesion variables on the logarithm of the proportion of people who report to be in good health.
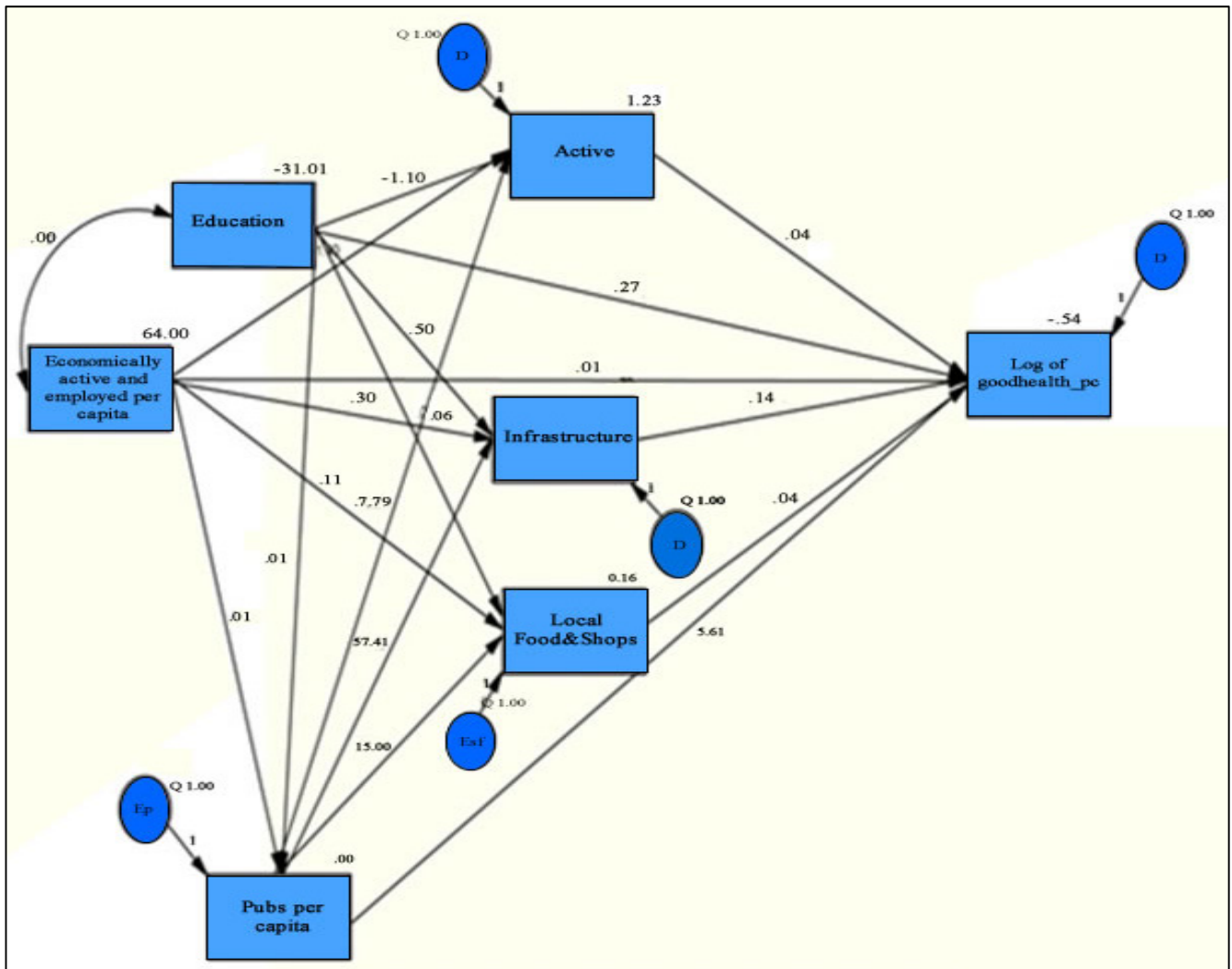
Table 4. Coefficients for the regression model of self reported health

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-.550	.071		-7.721	.000
Active	.034	.009	.086	4.037	.000
Infrastructure	.154	.007	.386	20.725	.000
Local shops & food	.043	.007	.108	6.363	.000
Freq of social clubs for old	.019	.006	.060	3.173	.002
Freq of farmers market	.021	.016	.022	1.313	.189
Economically active and employed per capita	.618	.108	.099	5.696	.000
Education	.298	.082	.063	3.620	.000
few_pubs	.008	.018	.010	.468	.640
many_pubs	.107	.036	.057	2.963	.003

Source: study dataset (2011)

Figure 4. Path model of associations with the logarithm of the proportion of people who reported to be in good health

Source: study dataset (2011)

Table 5. Coefficients for the regression model of community and social integration.

			Estimate	S.E.	P
Pubs per capita	←	Education	0.006	0.231	0.978
Pubs per capita	←	E&E	0.005	0.304	0.986
Infrastructure	←	E&E	0.328	0.304	0.282
Infrastructure	←	Education	0.498	0.231	0.031
Active	←	E&E	-1.404	0.304	<0.001
Active	←	Pubs per capita	7.794	0.019	<0.001
Active	←	Education	-1.194	0.231	<0.001
Infrastructure	←	Pubs per capita	57.406	0.019	<0.001
Local shops and food	←	Pubs per capita	15.829	0.019	<0.001
Local shops and food	←	E&E	0.112	0.304	0.714
Local shops and food	←	Education	-0.05	0.231	0.829
Log of good health	←	Infrastructure	0.141	0.019	<0.001
Log of good health	←	Active	0.044	0.019	0.021
Log of good health	←	Local Shopsand Food	0.038	0.019	0.047
Log of good health	←	Pubs per capita	5.314	1.142	<0.001
Log of good health	←	E&E	0.611	0.306	0.046
Log of good health	←	Education	0.274	0.232	0.238

Source: study dataset (2011)

4 Discussion and Conclusions

As society changes rural areas demographic profile has changed as younger people have moved to cities or use rurality as a dormitory. In order that peoples well-being is not damaged there is a need to promote factors associated with community cohesion and social integration. In this investigation we have shown that measures of community cohesion and social cohesion are indeed associated with peoples self reported well-being. Furthermore, we have demonstrated that parishes with more pubs have higher scores of community cohesion, social integration and ultimately well-being, as measured by those self-reporting to be in good health is higher. Thus, it would seem that pubs are associated with social cohesion and social integration and with well-being. Hence the effect on well-being is both direct and indirect via improving community cohesion and social integration. However, one must be careful about this interpretation as causality cannot be reliably assumed all that can be said is that there is an association. Also parishes are structured within local authorities so there will be a hierarchy of variance. This means that multilevel models should be considered (SNIJDERS and BOSKER, 1999).

Rural pubs are being faced with more and more pressures in Great Britain as a consequence of drink driving legislation, smoking bans and general societal views to promote health. Policy needs to be formed to achieve a suitable balance and the positive side of pubs on communities needs to be appreciated. Recently: a number of opportunities of financial help for local communities have been approved from the public sector. For example, in March 2010, the Plunkett Foundation announced a £3.3m programme in support of 50 communities who are attempting to save their local pubs. The programme, funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government, aims to expand co-operative-ownership by providing the funding required and the advice and support necessary to open and run a successful community-owned pub. In this way, the programme also aims to create opportunities for those businesses operating in local supply chains, which would be likely to use village pubs for selling their products (CABRAS, 2011; CABRAS and REGGIANI, 2010).

These are positive initiatives, but more research needs to be done in order to support a more focused strategy in favour of village and rural pubs. For instance, further research taking a longitudinal approach rather than a cross sectional one could help to reliably understand the effects of the presence of rural pubs. Nevertheless, we believe that there is a need to recognise the importance of pubs in facilitating and promoting community and social cohesion in peripheral and remote areas.

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