# Fieldwork ideas: Changing places

This resource has been designed to show how fieldwork and the independent investigation could be linked the study of Changing places.

## Link with the specification

*"The concept of place and the importance of place in human life and experience.*

*Insider and outsider perspectives on place.*

*Categories of place: near places and far places, experienced places and media places.*

*Factors contributing to the character of places: Endogenous: location, topography, physical geography, land use, built environment and infrastructure, demographic and economic characteristics. Exogenous: relationships between places.*

*The ways in which relationships and connections, meaning and representation, affect continuity and change in the nature of places and our understanding of place.*

*How humans perceive, engage with and form attachments to places and how they present and represent the world to others, including the way in which everyday place meanings are bound up with different identities, perspectives and experiences.*

*How external agencies, including government, corporate bodies and community or local groups make attempts to influence or create specific place meanings and thereby shape the actions and behaviours of individuals, groups, businesses and institutions.*

*How places may be represented in a variety of different forms such as advertising copy, tourist agency material, local art exhibitions in diverse media (eg film, photography, art, story, song).*

*Local place study exploring the developing character of a place local to the home or study centre. Contrasting place study exploring the developing character of a contrasting and distant place.*

*People's lived experience of the place in the past and at present and either changing demographic and cultural characteristics or economic change and social inequalities."*

## Investigation ideas

- Investigation of changing service provision in two different villages.

- Investigation of changes in or characteristics of suburbanised villages: population size and structure, employment characteristics, housing.
- Investigation of impact of tourism on two different honey pot sites.
- Investigation of insider and outsider perception of place.
- Investigation of the effect of the building of new housing estate(s) on a chosen place.
- Investigation of the endogenous factors affecting the character of two places.
- Investigation of changing infrastructure in two contrasting places.
- Investigation of land use patterns in contrasting places.
- Factors affecting demographic contrasts between two places.
- How the built environment varies between two places.
- Assessment of the success of flagship projects, eg sports sites, festival sites, tourism projects in an area of urban or rural rebranding.
- Investigation of the sustainability of a regeneration project.
- Investigation of contrasts between media representation of place(s) and local experience of place(s).
- The impact of the building of a by-pass on a chosen place.
- Investigation of the environmental and social impact of the construction of an incinerator/landfill site/industrial site/supermarket on a place.
- Investigation of how change in a village/neighbourhood affects its residents.
- Investigation of the effects of a regeneration project on the local community and economy of a place.
- Investigation of how retail changes affect the lives of people in a place.
- Investigation of differences in leisure provision in two contrasting places.
- Investigation of the changing quality of life in a place.
- Investigation of the environmental, social and economic impacts of a single, large tertiary employer, eg a hospital complex on a place.
- Investigation of the conflicts associated with a major new development.
- Factors affecting house prices in two contrasting places.
- Clone town investigation, comparing two or more places.

## Possible hypotheses

- The growth of second home ownership has major effects on tourist area X.
- Tourism in places X and Y has significantly changed the local environment.
- The presence of a football club has environmental and economic impacts on place X.
- Place X is a typical suburbanised village.
- Places X and Y show significant differences in quality of life.
- Housing developments in place X have both positive and negative impacts on the local economy and environment.
- Variations in the incidence of crime and vandalism in place X are affected by environmental and social conditions.

- Service provision in different places depends on population size.
- The development of a new superstore/by-pass/factory estate causes local conflict between different interest groups.
- Local experience of people in place X is different from media representation of that place.
- Social and environmental factors influence house price variation in places X and Y.
- The layout and growth of place X is largely affected by physical factors.
- Place X is perceived very differently by different age groups/ethnic groups/income groups.

## Possible methods

- Age of building surveys.
- Surveys of function of buildings.
- Environmental quality surveys.
- Housing condition surveys.
- Residents' perception surveys.
- Questionnaires.
- In-depth stakeholder interviews.
- Service count and surveys.
- Noise, litter and pollution surveys.
- Residents' quality of life survey.
- Crime risk assessment.
- House price surveys.

## Sample investigation

The social and environmental impact of a by-pass on a place X.

There are two possible approaches to this type of investigation: the potential impact of a proposed by-pass or the impact of a by-pass after its completion. It may be possible to compare two places: one where a by-pass has been constructed and another where one is proposed. By-pass development involves a balance between costs and benefits, and almost inevitably leads to conflicts of interest affecting different groups of people.

Similar types of work could be carried out in relation to other new developments such as a new superstore, housing estate, industrial site, or incinerator. In all cases the subject is likely to be emotive, with strong views and perceptions exhibited by different interest groups. The link to the specification on changing places is how external agencies, including government, corporate bodies and community or local groups make attempts to influence change in places.

### Hypothesis

The proposed by-pass will have significant environmental impact along the new route but will improve social and environmental quality in place X.

Or

The economic, environmental and social advantages of the by-pass around place X outweigh its disadvantages.

## Data collection

### Equipment

- Noise DB meters.
- Traffic counters and tally sheets.
- Base maps, cameras and sketching materials.

## Primary data (a selection of these methods might be used)

- Traffic surveys at regular intervals during week/day. Note type and volume of vehicles. Convert to passenger car units (PCU).
- Work out speed of selected passing vehicles by using 2 fixed points and convert timing to speed.
- Measure noise levels during each traffic count and streets 300-500 metres from main road.
- Estimate pollution levels using baby wipes around lamp posts at each study site. Leave for a week and compare dirt accumulations.
- Conduct questionnaires of people living, working and walking along main routes and also those affected by new building, assessing local views about the proposal (or completed route). Use stratified sample to cover residents, shopkeepers, pedestrians, drivers.
- Consider carrying out some in-depth interviews of people affected by the proposed scheme/completed by-pass.
- In congestion hot-spots, try to find out when and why congestion takes place, the length of queues and the length of delay.
- Draw detailed map of proposed or completed by-pass route(s). Identify land uses and measure number of/length of woodland areas and hedgerows affected.
- Carry out EQS of the existing roads. Note congestion problems, safety issues.
- Conduct an environmental impact assessment along planned/completed route. Stop at a number of key points.
- Take photographs and draw field sketches to illustrate the EQA values. Consider noise, smell, air pollution, vibration, traffic congestion, public safety etc.
- Time how long it takes to go through the town at different times on various routes. What is the average congestion time?
- Map the main through routes. Identify major bottlenecks, places with most congestion, road obstructions, traffic lights and pedestrian crossings, traffic

calming, on-street parking, resurfacing. Label factors that reduce traffic flow rates.
- Interview local farmers/landowners to assess their views about the by-pass.

## Secondary data

- Obtain detailed planning proposal for the by-pass including local traffic surveys. Work out length of by-pass, accident statistics, number of houses affected within 200 metres, disruption to farm holdings.
- Collect evidence of the costs of the by-pass scheme including compensation to be paid to landowners.
- Research house and land values for areas affected by the by-pass.
- Classify local press reports to ascertain local views of various interest groups (supporters and opponents).
- Obtain before and after photographs and maps – locate historic photos of the area before the by-pass and take new photos to identify the changes in the same places.

## Presentation of data

- Draw flow line maps of traffic at different times. Incorporate types of traffic.
- Graph EQA responses, perhaps as located proportional symbols.
- Annotate photographs of different locations. Use google street view image with sketches superimposed.
- Graph questionnaire responses.
- Tabulate summary of local press reports.
- Draw detailed annotated land use map of the by-pass proposal/completed route.
- Draw located graphs to show noise and pollution levels and compare main road with more distant sampling sites.
- Word cloud based on results of in-depth interviews.

## Analysis

- Work out mean, median, mode or traffic statistics. Analyse patterns and trends.
- Compare traffic flows before and after by-pass completion. Apply chi-squared to test for significant difference between traffic volumes before and after road was built.
- Using results of in-depth interviews, summarise the views of different interest groups and their attitudes to changes in place X.
- Using cost benefit analysis and EQA, discuss whether the proposed route is appropriate. Are the benefits worth the costs? Consider all aspects – social, economic and environmental impacts.

## Possible limitations

Large-scale studies of traffic issues can be time and labour intensive. Traffic counts in busy places will be very hard to achieve successfully by one person.

Keep the investigation to an achievable scale and maintain the focus.

It may prove difficult to obtain secondary data, for example the volumes of traffic before a development (needed for comparison). However, the local council will be a good starting point, as a detailed investigation will need to have been undertaken before the development was started.

Remember the good points! New developments often bring positive impacts in terms of employment and economy, local industry and property prices.

## Sources

- Planning documents and reports of consultation meetings.
- Local structure plan.
- Highways Agency – statistics department.
- County highways department.
- Department for transport statistics
- Websites opposed to/in favour of new scheme.
- Local press reports.
- Old land use/OS maps of the area.