GCSE Geography Coursework Methodology

Following on from the Introduction, the question worth asking in order to continue with the investigation is *'Are there any changes in land use in Croydon's Central Business District?'*

We decided as a class, that Croydon would be a smart and suitable choice of site to conduct our investigation in for a number of different reasons. As we have studied the topic of settlement in depth and everyone in the class seems to have a good understanding of the subject, it seemed appropriate to choose a coursework investigation pertaining to it.

Croydon appeared an appropriate area to conduct the field work trip as it is close to our school and easily accessible; it only taking 7 minutes by train from the nearest train station to our school. Whereas traveling all the way to the City would be too time-consuming and demanding. Croydon is also a apposite sized town to investigate as it is not excessively large, but nor too small a CBD to study inside the recommended 1-2 days, but it is adequately large to demonstrate patterns than are able to be associated with geographical theory.

The danger risks of in undertaking this study are lower than that for say, investigating river landscapes etc. We also live in an urban area; therefore we can easily study patterns of these regions.

After discussing the details of the coursework in preparation for our trip to Croydon, a sequence of our investigation to follow was devised. We planned to begin by delineate our aims and hypotheses. This would follow by testing these statements to establish whether they hold any truth concerning the specifically selected site; Croydon's Central Business District.

Next we decided on suitable sampling techniques to put our hypotheses to the test. On June 25th we would visit Croydon to collect primary data using various data collection techniques, in order to assist corroborate our hypotheses, or perhaps contradict them.

Once we've collected the information we intended to obtain, the next step is presenting it in forms that facilitate the process of analyzing the gathered information, such as bar charts, tables, graphs etc.

At this point in the investigation, the next step is to analyze all the data we've collected. And consequently draw conclusions from this information see whether or not it supports the hypotheses, which should determine if there are *any changes in land use in Croydon's Central Business District.*

The final step of the investigation is the evaluation in which the overall success of the investigation will be assessed, and whether the methods used in the project were apt will be questioned.

On the 25th June, our Geography class went to Croydon with the purpose of collecting all the data we required to persist with our projects. In groups consisting of approximately five persons each, we used a variety of data collection techniques to obtain information for **Hypotheses 1 – 5** , which were put to us to investigate from our Geography teacher. In the course of the first week of the summer holidays, I revisited Croydon with the intention of gathering information on **Hypothesis 6** which made up for myself.

In order to collect data for **hypothesis 1 and 2**, we carried out a ***land use survey***. This procedure is relatively uncomplicated, but simply quite protracted. In our case it involved marking the land uses present in Croydon's CBD and the close surrounding vicinity, on a blank Goad Map

of the area. We started from North End which is at the top of the shopping high street, close to East Croydon, and worked our way down to West Croydon marking all the land uses on both sides of the road, however rather than map every single shop and service in Croydon's CBD, we came to the conclusion that it would be more logical to map particular examples of land uses. If all shops had been mapped, the procedure would have been overly lengthy. We also took into account that if a sample was taken it would be adequate to put our theory to the test. We used the following key whilst marking the various types of stores:

Cc = clothes shop (chain store)
Cp = clothes shop (privately owned)
Cd = department store
Sh = shoe shop
N = newsagents
O = other convenience shop
Is = instrumental shop (specialist shop)
Ps= photo specialist (specialist shop)
Ts= tanning shop (specialist shop)

The reason various types of shops were noted down the using this straightforward key was because this was a effortless and simple way of recording the different land uses without squandering too much time, as you perhaps would if you coloured the map in. furthermore, as there are countless shops to mark on the map, it wasn't apt to spend more than a brief amount of time noting each shop each shop. Also, using this key allows you to record a good number of several kinds of shops, as the symbols are short and precise yet easily identifiable.

The technique is appropriate to the investigation as it allows you to visually assess the placement of different stores such as department stores, convenience store etc by showing their location in the CBD, thus allowing you o make conclusions of where specific types shops are usually situated in relation to the CBD. Therefore it is possible to evaluate the land uses regarding shops in Croydon's CBD, as well as show how the positioning of stores is influenced by how close to the CBD they are sited.

To amass relevant data for the purpose of analyzing **Hypothesis 3**, we performed a ***pedestrian count***. This was yet another easy technique to execute. These counts are taken at specific points in Croydon, which we plotted on out maps by using ***systematic sampling***. We chose our sample to an agreed interval of between each point. We spread our points out systematically so we could get an all over spread of the population around Croydon.

The counts were taken at specific points to gauge the number of pedestrians different places in Croydon. Using a hand-held stopwatch, one person in the group tallied the number of pedestrians walking on one side of the street for duration of exactly five minutes at each point.

This count is investigating the fact that some areas of Croydon's CBD will be busier than others. Thus enabling you to investigate whether the land use in the particular quality of land use are higher in the area in which the pedestrian counts are greater.

Ideally, if one was to compare the results of from a number of sites, it would be preferable to conduct the pedestrian counts at the exact same time at each point in order to make a just comparison. However, in actuality it is unattainable to be in several separate places simultaneously. Therefore, to deal with this predicament a pedestrian count was conducted at each point for a brief amount of time (5 minutes precisely) and then we were to hasten to the next point as promptly as possible, so there was minimum time difference between the first and last point.

We also decided that we should only conduct the pedestrian count for a maximum of 5 minutes and only on one side of the street so the person counting would not lose count.

We carried out an ***environmental survey*** to obtain data for **Hypothesis 4**. This survey was relevant to the study as it is an analysis of the environmental community present across the survey area. Once all the information is collected it allows you to compare the environmental quality at different points in Croydon.

This was yet another easy method, which essentially involved filling in a table. The table (*Attachment 1*) allowed us to evaluate various features of the environment to be assessed, such as litter, trees and plants, street furniture, noise, state of building maintenance, traffic, etc.

To collect information using this method we visited each specific point plotted on our maps, and inspected the nearby area to assess all the quality of the surroundings at that point. For each feature, we would look at the appropriate area and score the quality of the particular aspect of environmental quality, by giving a score between 1 to 10, on how effectively that area represented a certain environmental condition (one being the lowest and ten the highest mark possible). For example if you were assessing "litter" at a certain point, you would examine the area in your vicinity and if there was little sign of litter anywhere the score you should allocate to that area for the quality of that particular aspect, would consequently be quite high, scoring perhaps an 8 or 9. The scores for each site would be added up at the end of the column, and the higher the mark the better the environment in that area.

Although we were not told to, I also decided to ***take photographs*** to depict the environmental quality at each point. I considered this to be a skillful idea as the pictures of every specific point could support the assessments taken on the environmental quality surveys. I took photographs at each point, of the features at that point which clearly illustrated the typical environmental quality at that area. For example pictures of a low scoring site would be expected to have a certain amount of litter, rundown buildings, and graffiti on walls and so on. These photos would also provide a visual record of land uses in the area, allowing me to compare the quality of the environment at different points.

When collecting data for **Hypothesis 5,** *we carried out a similar method to the one we carried out for hypothesis 1 (land use surveys).* But instead of mapping the land uses, we marked the number of stories of each building on the map. It was a very simple procedure as all that was needed to be done, was the building's number of visible stories outside being counted by eye, and then recorded onto the map. This was done by simply putting the number of stories on the correct illustration of the building.

This relates to the initial theory as it makes it possible to compare the data that has been gathered, and we can view the contrast between the location of high storey building and wider, lower storey buildings.

I felt the only way possible to get data for my own hypothesis **(6)** was to compile a ***questionnaire*** (attachment 2) inquiring peoples' opinions on the area around them. Whilst producing my questionnaire I took a few points into consideration:

- A polite start and finish.
- Not too many questions, to not lose interest of the person
- Closed questions with easy to record answers so as to not encourage bias

At each point plotted systematically on the map I would ask the same number of people (20) the same questions from my questionnaire. I recorded the results by placeing tally marks beside the answers. I used different copies of the same questionnaire so I did not get information about different sites muddled up.

Using this particular technique allows me to contrast the views of the public on one area to another.