

Human geography field work: social and environmental quality in Coventry.

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Introduction

This report will analyse the human field work completed within the Coventry area. It will look at the aims and methodology of the work as well as criticising it and identifying any special variations within Coventry. Field exercises are important and this report will outline some of the skills that have been used in this field exercise.

Aims of the field work

The aims of the field work were to identify the variations in environmental quality in Coventry. This exercise has outlined the importance of environmental quality as a factor within urban environments. It was an important exercise as it helped students to use field skills that are still developing. The final aim of this field exercise was to.

Methodology of the field work

The methodology used in the field was adapted from Nottinghamshire county council scheme for assessing environmental quality. This involved dividing the city into 8 areas and then assessing each area for various factors. These factors included,

- Landscape / visual quality
- Townscape / visual quality
- Appearance of gardens
- Intrusion of non conforming uses
- Traffic
- Noise
- Air pollution
- Access to primary school
- Access to other facilities
- Access to park or other open space
- Access to public transportation
- Garaging / parking provision
- Garden provision
- Provision of neighbourhood amenities
- Land use

These factors helped to identify the environmental quality of Coventry. Figures 1, 2 and 3 show the results of the analysis. Each result was ranked between 0 and 5. Areas marked 0 in any criteria were the places with the best amenities. For example, parks and open spaces would be ranked 0 if there was an open space within the same survey square. We then changed these ranks into colours. The

key for colours can be seen with the figures on page 5. Land use was classed by colour. For each area outlined, the predominant land use was ranked for example; if the area was mostly residential it would be coloured black.

Spatial variations of environmental quality

The three figures on page 5 show the special variations of land uses, appearance, amenity, access and provision. This section of the report will look at what these figures show about Coventry City.

Figure 1 shows access and provision. There are very little areas ranked below 7 in this figure, unlike figure 3. Apparently, the area with the best access and provision in Coventry is Corley. This is the only area found to be yellow, or ranked below 7. The majority of the city has a rank of either 17- 25 (purple) or 8-16 (green). This means that overall there is poor provision of amenities and poor access in Coventry. Areas to the north-east and south-east also contained high amounts of ranks of 26 and above. This may be because these areas ranked so high are on the outskirts of the city so the local people have to drive into the city to get their amenities. The access is bad in these places because people are used to commuting to the nearest school and do not feel they need to encourage urban sprawl any more by increasing the number of amenities and accessables in the area.

Figure 2 shows land use within Coventry City. This figure shows only what the majority of land within that sector square is used for, not all of it. At first glance, it is clear that the majority of Coventry is residential areas (shown in black). This is to be expected within a city area. Outside the boundaries and to the north-west part of the city there is also a high amount of land used for horticulture and agriculture (shown in blue). This demonstrates urban sprawl in progress. The agricultural land is in small quantities and pushed to the edges and outside the city. The residential areas on the other hand appear to be expanding outside of the city boundaries as seen mostly to the south and south-east but also to the north. Public sector, open spaces, retail and industrial areas appear to evenly spread throughout the city, except to the west. This may be because there is a high amount of agriculture and horticulture here so these services are less needed. Overall Coventry City appears to be a moderately equip city with a wide variety of land uses.

Figure 3 shows the appearance and amenity of Coventry. This figure almost divides the city in two. This is because it is clear where the areas with best amenity and appearance are. The areas to the west and south-west of the city show high amounts of yellow. Sectors A and G especially have a high amount of ranks below 7. This could be due to the high amount of agriculture land in these

areas. The countryside is often seen to have better appearance than the city. The rest of the city shows a majority of ranks between 8-16 but with some areas having a rank of 26 or above. These areas are more densely populated residential areas. The areas that show to have the highest ranks are places with high population density.

Critique

The completion of this exercise was extremely inefficient. It is hard to visit every survey square in the time given for completion.

It was also very hard to be able to answer all the questions given. For example in some survey squares it was not possible to see the square due to lack of roads. For these squares we had to rely on the maps provided. In other instances the scoring system made it hard to answer questions. An example of this is in an area where it is predominantly agriculture with no residential areas; it was hard to measure the amenity section. This was because the questions are access to primary school, shops, garage and garden provision. But in an area where there is no residential area, these things are not needed. In order to be able to rank these squares we had to rank it with a 5. This meant that the agriculture land had a low access and provision score.

The scoring system was also quite vague. For instance, in all the appearance and amenity questions the scoring system was as follows,

Air pollution

Eligible or non existent	0
Light	1-3
Heavy	4-5

This gives no help to identifying what is light and what is eligible. For this reason, if more than one group was to carry out the same survey then they could get totally different results. The scoring system has too many variables in this sense.

In real life there exists a transition between different land uses. In figure two, there is no transition demonstrated. If the squares were smaller more of a transition could exist.

Due to the scoring system being so lax, many groups had varying results. This is because of differing values. For example, in figure 3, appearance and amenity, groups A and G have returned a high about of squares with scores of 7 or below. This means that these areas had brilliant air pollution, noise, traffic, gardens etc. If a different group had valued the same area they may not have been so

agreeable and would have found survey squares with a rank of above 7.

Conclusions

This field exercise has taught the students how Nottinghamshire council classifies an area's land use, appearance, amenity, access and provision. It has helped to enable the students to use a ranking system. As the work was carried out in groups it has also helped to build team work skills. Finally, it taught the students time management skills as there was a limit to how long the exercise should take.

The city of Coventry, like any other city, has a wide variety of areas all with different land use, appearance, amenity, access and provision. This exercise aimed to identify the special variations within Coventry. On any of the mentioned factors, the result is not black or white. The results have proven Coventry to be as unique and complex as any other city is. There exists too many variables to be able to simply state that what Coventry's dominant land uses, appearance, amenity, access or provision is. This report has demonstrated some of the factors that could have influenced the results of the exercise.

Like any other city, some areas of Coventry are better than others. This is prominent on the maps. Sector C for example shows that the Foleshill and Aldermans green areas have high results in both maps, and has a predominant land use of residential. This helps to identify where the less desirable places in the city are and where the more desirable places are.