

Planning for tranquil spaces in rural destinations through mixed methods research

Abstract

There is a view that applied researchers produce more relevant findings for practitioners in the tourism industry if they use quantitative methods. This paper claims that findings relevant to industry can be produced through the use of qualitative methods of data collection, and indeed a unique perspective is offered by qualitative research that a quantitative approach may not produce. Furthermore, a mixed methods approach to research combines the advantages offered by both qualitative and quantitative research, and is advocated as an appropriate way forward when both types of data are needed. Using a unique mixed-methods study of the meaning of tranquillity to visitors to and authorities and residents in Dorset, Southern England, this paper illustrates the value of both qualitative and quantitative data to tourism planners. The study reveals that tranquillity was most commonly aligned to the natural environment whereas non-tranquillity concerned both sounds and sights of manmade origin.

Key words

Experience; Perspective; Landscape; Mixed methods; Qualitative & quantitative research; Tourism planning; Stakeholders; Views.

1 **1. Introduction**

2

3 Their review of the top tourism journals (until 1996) led Riley and Love (2000) to
4 conclude that quantitative research dominated the tourism literature, despite a
5 growing recognition of the value of qualitative research. Furthermore, in journals
6 aimed at solving industry problems, such as *Tourism Management*, there were fewer
7 qualitative-based articles; these were more prominent in journals with a social
8 science orientation and mission, such as the *Annals of Tourism Research*. Riley and
9 Love (2000) found that applied researchers were more likely to use quantitative
10 methods or to use qualitative research simply as a precursor to subsequent
11 quantification; there is a view that qualitative methods could not produce findings
12 that would be useful to industry. The tourism industry requires findings that can
13 translate into action and there is mistrust of case-study, non-generalisable findings
14 (Riley & Love 2000), despite their use in generating theory in emergent fields of
15 research (Riessman 2008).

16

17 A careful review of two leading tourism journals indicates that the state of tourism
18 research and the methodologies used has changed somewhat. Tribe and Xiao stated
19 in 2011 that 60% of papers in the *Annals of Tourism Research* embrace a qualitative
20 or interpretive design. The two most dominant methods used by researchers continue
21 to be interviews and participant observation though in more recent volumes of the
22 journal, the following approaches have also appeared: grounded theory, focus
23 groups, phenomenology, photography, nethnography, autoethnography, and feminist
24 memory work. In addition, Tribe, Xiao, and Chambers (2012) point to a 15%
25 contribution of conceptual/review articles to the journal in 2011–2012. As Xiao and
26 Smith (2006) observe, the *Annals of Tourism Research* is dedicated to promoting
27 theoretical constructs. The journal also sees the development of methodological
28 sophistication as part of its remit, and indeed, recent issues point to a shift towards a
29 radical, postmodern perspective on data collection, analysis, display and authorial
30 position. Furthermore, the journal now accepts the use of the first person, if this is
31 consistent with the method used (Tribe & Xiao, 2011). Such a decision will facilitate

32 the publication of reflexive research accounts, which are still lacking in the tourism
33 literature (Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; Pocock 2015).

34

35 Riley and Love (2000) indicated an under-representation of qualitative-based studies
36 in *Tourism Management* until 1999, with only 5% of articles being based on
37 qualitative research: a review of the journal shows that this situation persisted for
38 some years. However from Volume 26 the journal would start to reflect the diversity
39 of approaches used by tourism qualitative researchers. There has been a move
40 towards diversity in method, as advocated by Ryan in his editorial to mark the
41 journal's 30th volume (2009). In fact, the division between quantitative and
42 qualitative papers is now more or less even in many issues, with roughly a third of
43 papers based on quantitative research, a third on qualitative research and a third on
44 mixed methods research. Furthermore, one could argue that this journal's
45 representation of the diverse methods used by tourism researchers is more fair than
46 that of the *Annals of Tourism Research*.

47

48 The notion that *Tourism Management* is reluctant to accept papers based on more
49 radical approaches because of its mission to address industry issues appears to have
50 shifted. The following approaches have been used in addition to interviewing,
51 observation and focus groups: netnography, grounded theory, autoethnography,
52 phenomenology, narrative inquiry, hermeneutics and scenario planning. Also of note
53 is that the first person is occasionally used to report qualitative findings, in keeping
54 with the importance attached by qualitative researchers to reflexivity. Indeed, in their
55 paper on constructivism Ryan and Gu (2010) call for a more reflexive voice in
56 tourism research. Thus, there appears to be some convergence between *Tourism
57 Management* and the *Annals of Tourism Research* towards acceptance of the
58 authorial presence in tourism research papers, bringing the field in line with other
59 disciplines such as anthropology and sociology. As Xiao and Smith assert (2006) and
60 Cohen (2013), tourism is a young field that is keen to achieve the rigour associated
61 with more established disciplines.

62

63 Despite the analysis offered above, there is an enduring view that the bias towards
64 quantitative studies still exists (Wilson and Hollinshead 2015). Tourism research is
65 still hampered by a bias towards 'hard science' with which quantitative research is

66 associated, and against the 'soft' science associated with qualitative research.
67 Dolnicar and Ring (2014) also indicate a continuing bias towards quantitative
68 methods given their utility to managers, especially in the area of tourism marketing,
69 which occupies a third of content in the leading tourism journals. Lynch (2005)
70 meanwhile claims that qualitative research continues to be under-represented in
71 hospitality research, as reflected in the leading hospitality journals. Ren et al. (2010)
72 and Pritchard and Morgan (2007) state that the characterisation of the tourism
73 research field as a divided community, based on those who are oriented towards or
74 against a business management approach, is restrictive and naïve. Perhaps however
75 concerns over the value of and editorial receptivity towards qualitative research
76 explain why mixed methods research is so attractive to researchers and practitioners
77 alike. Indeed, in *Tourism Management*, there has been a discernible increase in the
78 publication of mixed methods research since 2005.

79

80 The aim of this paper is to advocate the use by tourism researchers of mixed methods
81 research (MMR) to address contemporary issues and challenges in the tourism
82 industry. This paper will reveal that applied researchers can produce useful findings
83 for industry practitioners if they use both qualitative and quantitative research. Using
84 as an example an MMR-based study on the meaning of tranquillity to authorities,
85 visitors and residents, our paper will show that the findings from this project that are
86 of wide industry relevance and applicability could not have been produced by one
87 research approach alone. Only a series of in-depth focus groups with representatives
88 of authorities, community groups and local residents was able to yield the data on the
89 meaning people attach to tranquillity. Such valuable insights fed into the household
90 questionnaires and visitor onsite surveys subsequently used, and the resulting sets of
91 data led to the creation of a planning tool for destination planners. We will thus argue
92 that only the qualitative approach could deliver key findings in this research project,
93 which would not have been completed without its incorporation into the
94 methodological approach. Meanwhile the quantitative phases of the project offer
95 statistical evidence to support the both the development of the planning tool and the
96 direction of further research required. Combined together, we will show that the
97 findings produced in this project have industry relevance, and that they can be used
98 to improve practice.

99

100 2. Mixing methods and matching practice

101

102 Ren *et al.* (2010) argue that the challenge is for tourism researchers to adopt
103 methodologies that reflect multiple positions, practices and insights. It is for this
104 reason that a mixed methods approach is often viewed as the way to improve the
105 validity and utility of findings, as well as to appeal to editors and reviewers, and
106 practitioners. At the heart of MMR is pluralism, thus regardless of whether a
107 qualitative or quantitative method dominates, its foundation is based on its 'central
108 premise that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination
109 provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone'
110 (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008 p.5). Hence, through the mixing of methods,
111 research design, analyses, interpretation and data presentation (Fielding, 2012), the
112 values of each approach are embraced with the result that qualitative data inform
113 quantitative outputs and/or vice versa.

114

115 The pluralistic stance of MMR reflects the multiplicity of perspectives available to
116 tourism researchers, and the approach might well appear obvious given the make-up
117 of the industry that cuts across sectors. Tourism represents an increasingly
118 interconnected world of enquiry that can be researched through various ways, from
119 numerous starting points, leading to diverse outcomes hence it is 'characterised by
120 equifinality and multifinality' (Burke Johnson, 2015 p.700). Taking this perspective,
121 the use of one research method 'is not adequate for answering complex questions'.
122 Instead, opportunities to expand and deepen our knowledge are realised by coming
123 'at things differently' (Hesse-Biber & Burke Johnson, 2013 p. 103), through MMR
124 that crosses the so-called methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative
125 paradigms. The convergence of data on a topic leads to increased confidence in
126 results and ultimately in the ability to overcome the weaknesses of any single method
127 (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Dandekar, 2005; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008) for which
128 triangulation is a 'core justificatory principle underpinning mixed method
129 approaches' (Torrance, 2012 p. 113).

130

131 There are also limitations to MMR. The transformation of qualitative responses into
132 numerical forms are 'a staple of MMR' (Sandelowski *et al.*, 2009 p. 208), enabling
133 their analysis from quantitative perspectives. Yet this process of quantification can

134 be complex. When quantifying the qualitative, compromises will be made in terms of
135 'what and how to count' fundamentally qualitatively informed data and trying to
136 'balance numerical precision with narrative complexity (Sandelowski *et al.*, 2009 p.
137 208). A further concern relates to the sample size derived from qualitative studies
138 which are commonly considered too small to enable statistical analyses (Driscoll *et*
139 *al.*, 2007). Nevertheless, the value of MMR lies in researchers' ability to generate
140 research findings that have a pragmatic use. Indeed, the very philosophy of
141 pragmatism is associated with MMR, (Creswell & Clark 2007), sometimes referred to
142 as the third research paradigm (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2009).

143

144 This is highly pertinent in the area of planning policy related to tourism development
145 where the use of MMR is common in professional practice. Public consultations, key
146 processes used to collate public views and subsequently inform planning decisions,
147 tend to be formed on focus groups and surveys when decisions are to be made on a
148 destination's tangible assets such as infrastructure and spatial considerations. Indeed
149 driven by critiques of Euclidian designs of planning in favour of relational notions of
150 space as social constructs (Healey 2004), planning policy has increasingly placed
151 emphasis on qualitative methods and public engagement in order to capture local
152 communities' views on what they consider as the special qualities of their local
153 environments (c.f. DCLG 2012).

154 One such case is presented in this paper, using research that aimed to identify the
155 perceptual quality of tranquillity in the protected landscape of Dorset, Southern
156 England. Consideration of context is fundamental in planning projects of any design
157 (Engwall, 2003). In recognition of geographical nuances and national biases, we will
158 next focus on the implementation of landscape management directives in the UK
159 since they are relevant to the project carried out in Dorset.

160

161

162

163

164 **3. Collaborative planning: moving views from consultation to**
165 **evidence**

166

167 Professional planning is directed by strategy, principles of project management and
168 pragmatic concerns that are usually related to time, cost and considerations for
169 human resources. These will influence the choice of methodology used, whether
170 primarily qualitative, quantitative or MMR (Dandekar, 2005). Baseline information
171 is generally informed by two broad lines of enquiry. The first is primarily of
172 quantitative orientation and relates to spatial and geographical parameters, economic
173 forecasts and tourism specific data. The second and most complex concerns an
174 attempt to understand the social reality of communities and to use this information to
175 shape planning decisions made. Thus an attempt using various modes of
176 communication is made by authorities' to consult with local communities (Healey,
177 2004; 2006; Hewlett & Edwards, 2013).

178

179 Research designs will invariably combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in
180 order to generate the data required to formulate and inform the implementation of
181 planning policy. Both the research framework and its outputs need to be robust
182 enough to provide tourism planners with 'good information...and facts that can be
183 communicated', 'and that are amenable to translation by policy makers and elected
184 officials', whom are often non-planners 'working in highly politicized often turbulent
185 and changing environments' (Dandekar, 2005 p. 130). In reality, the demands of this
186 working environment encourage outputs of a quantitative design, relegating the
187 views obtained from the public during focus groups and public meetings to
188 secondary and contextual considerations. This sits alongside the rhetoric espoused
189 by planners and local politicians who promote the importance of communities
190 deliberating with planners and participating actively in informing planning practice
191 (Ledwith, 2005). As Cornwall argues (2008 p. 279), 'it is even more common for
192 rhetoric about involving people in decision-making to boil-down to engaging them in
193 marginal choices when the real decisions are clearly being made elsewhere'. Yet
194 increasing political attachment to identifying the key qualities of public spaces
195 according to local communities' views is progressively being reflected in planning
196 practice.

197 **4. Qualities of space: the case for tranquillity and its multiple values**

198

199 In Europe, perceptual qualities are most commonly aligned to landscape
200 characterisations, which relate to the European Landscape Convention (ELC, 2000).
201 Whilst purely a protocol for informing landscape management amongst EU member
202 states, the ELC does emphasise a requirement on the part of planners to broaden their
203 understanding of how landscape can be interpreted, so that the public's views on the
204 physical and aesthetic aspects of the landscape are incorporated into their planning
205 strategies. Amongst the key characteristics considered to be inherent in natural
206 landscapes is the highly subjective notion of tranquillity (Natural England, 2009a).
207 References to the term tranquillity appear for the first time in the UK's National
208 Planning Policy Framework (2012) through which a statutory duty is placed on Local
209 Planning Authorities (LPAs) to work with local communities in their identification of
210 tranquil spaces (DCLG, 2012).

211

212 The political importance of including such an abstract quality as tranquillity in
213 planning policies is easily explained. There are concerns over the UK's overall
214 population growth, an increasingly urban population (Champion, 2014) and an
215 evident clash is gaining momentum between the goals of infrastructural growth and
216 constraints of space and land-use (Gosden, 2016). This context sits alongside the
217 diminishment of green spaces in urban areas and additional concerns over
218 encroachments of infrastructure in and increased visitor usage of protected areas
219 (Benjamin & Adu, 2016; Swinford & Riley-Smith, 2016). This will invariably result
220 in fewer opportunities to experience tranquillity in either urban or rural spaces.
221 Concurrently, concerns for a financially ailing National Health Service being able to
222 continue to meet increasing demands for treatment of the public's health and
223 mental wellbeing is encouraging renewed attention on strategies of prevention rather
224 than cure (NHS England, 2013) that are being progressed through place-based
225 decision making (NHS England, 2015). Subsequently, there is a resurgent interest in
226 the benefits to be gained from the public's experiences of green spaces and tranquil
227 environments, in order to assist in enhancing their physical and mental health and
228 overall sense of wellbeing (e.g. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1988; Natural England, 2009b;
229 Ulrich *et al.*, 1991). Thus, there is increasing support for what is generally coined as

230 a Natural Health Service, engineered to result from collaboration between the Health
231 Services, Planning Officers and Environmental Managers. The quality of green
232 space provision, where tranquil spaces are notable, is the responsibility of the State
233 and its managing agencies (DCLG 2012). As such, rural locations and particularly
234 protected landscapes are important and are generally considered to be relatively free
235 resources to capitalise upon (IUCN, 2015).

236

237 Recognition of the bank of tranquillity found in protected areas as a freely obtained,
238 natural resource is exploited in tourism marketing literature (Pieraccini, 2015). The
239 term tranquillity is liberally promoted synonymously with such equally abstract
240 descriptors as peace and quiet, free from disturbance, calmness, used to refer to both
241 a rested state of mind and the experience to be had in rural and protected area
242 destinations. In the UK, tranquillity is identified as a key motivating attractor for
243 visitors to rural areas (Jones, 2012). Internationally, tranquillity has been recognised
244 as a special, fundamental quality of protected areas (e.g. Balasinorwala, 2014;
245 Phillips, 2002). Indeed, in the United States, 72% of visitors to National Parks
246 reported their key purpose for visitation was to experience natural sounds, views and
247 peace (Haas & Wakefield, 1998).

248

249 **4.1 Tranquil perspectives: approach and diversity**

250

251 Whilst attention is drawn to its importance in national and local planning, guidance is
252 completely lacking on just how to identify and determine tranquillity in any given
253 area. The traditional approach to decisions on local plans and development strategies
254 being taken by professional planners has been rational, linear, founded on
255 quantifiably fixed parameters of land-use and depicted on tangible characteristics of
256 place (Legacy 2010). However, due to the National Planning Policy Framework's
257 emphases on the meaning and values attached by communities to their special places,
258 a far broader approach is warranted that is capable of not only capturing, analysing
259 and interpreting the number and range of views collated but also for integrating these
260 into planning decisions taken. Consequently, broad public engagement should be
261 expected with local residents. Yet mindful of the allure of tranquillity for visitors,

262 any consultation on the concept might also reasonably be expected to include visitor
263 perceptions and expectations.

264

265 Political support for such extensive engagement and its subsequent influence on
266 decisions taken, results, at least in theory, from the Localism Act 2011 that
267 reemphasises the Statement of Community Involvement created in 2000. Together
268 these policies assert and instruct LPAs on the importance of enabling communities to
269 contribute towards shaping the places where they live. However, public consultation
270 is commonly considered in practice to result in a 'more complex socio-political
271 context for plan-making' (Legacy, 2010 p. 2707). This complexity increases in
272 tranquillity studies as any identification of 'place is more than location' (Hague &
273 Jenkins, 2005 p.4). In the case of tranquillity as a characteristic of rural places,
274 deliberations will be exacerbated by the highly subjective nature of the concept in
275 that views are informed by an individual's experiences and memories (MacFarlane *et*
276 *al.*, 2004). Tranquillity is also relational, specific to a given location and 'shaped by
277 what others tells us about the place and filtered by our own socialisations as shaped
278 by class, age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, professional education etc.' (Hague &
279 Jenkins, 2005 p. 5). Consequently and specifically with reference to rural locations,
280 it will be informed by just how well acquainted an individual is with a country way-
281 of-life and with the biodiversity of nature found in rural areas (Strife & Downey
282 2009).

283

284 Tranquillity is therefore geographically and socially constructed and as a topic of
285 research, is a multidimensional concept. Interpretations of tranquillity are potentially
286 infinite and feelings about an area, about its community and what is valued in that
287 area will be highly significant (Creswell, 2015; Hague & Jenkins, 2005; Relph, 1976;
288 Williams, 2014). Thus, whilst community engagement and implementing national
289 planning policy is mandatory, in practice a diverse range of views can be expected,
290 and as yet, a universally agreed approach to researching tranquillity and determining
291 how results should influence planning practice is open to debate. This is not to
292 suggest that tranquillity is the only challenging descriptor for researchers working
293 within tourism planning and area management: the same can be said of research on
294 other commonly used yet nebulous concepts that are frequently deployed in

295 descriptions of rural and protected area environments, including *beauty, character*
296 and a *sense of place*, to name but a few examples.

297

298 **4.2 Researching tranquillity**

299

300 In the specific case of tranquillity, a broad and innovative range of methods has been
301 used to research its multivariate nature. Three key approaches can be discerned. The
302 first serves to demonstrate the use of purely qualitative designs that were led by
303 practitioners and resulted in the creation of 159 National Area Character
304 Assessments (e.g. Natural England, 2009a). The second and by far the most
305 numerous concerns the use of applied acoustic studies of primarily academic
306 initiative, founded on post-positivist designs and concerning relatively narrow
307 interpretations of tranquillity as primarily related to variables of sight and sound in
308 both urban and natural environments (e.g. Pheasant *et al.*, 2010).

309

310 The third approach, and the most relevant to our case study, involves the
311 identification of tranquil spaces and their visual depiction through maps. Initial
312 mapping activities resulted from expert-led definitions, calculations and
313 measurements of tranquillity to determine what the public perceived to be acceptable
314 levels of noise and negative visual impacts from main roads (e.g. Bell, 1999; Rendel,
315 1996). Two subsequent studies have taken a far broader and more inductive
316 qualitative approach.

317

318 The first was conducted in the north-East England by a team of academics and
319 practitioners who devised a participatory appraisal approach (*sensu* Chambers 1994)
320 to consulting with countryside users, managing agencies and LPAs on their views on
321 tranquillity in two protected area landscapes (MacFarlane *et al.*, 2004; CPRE, 2007).
322 Participants were asked to openly share their perspectives on tranquillity in focus
323 groups and onsite surveys. Subsequently a prioritisation process comprising votes
324 allocated amongst the participants was conducted resulting in 44 factors identified by
325 participants as enhancing or detracting from their views on tranquillity. The final
326 stage comprised modelling participants' prioritised views into models of tranquillity
327 in a Geographical Information System (GIS). The findings contributed to the

328 production of a national map of tranquillity in England (CPRE, 2007, Jackson *et al.*,
329 2008). Yet fundamentally this was a pilot study and there are limitations to its design
330 and to claims made for its results. Firstly, engagement specifically with local
331 residents was not an objective. Secondly the GIS resolution initially of 500m and later
332 250m cells (MacFarlane *et al.*, 2004; CPRE, 2007) has proven to be too broad to
333 apply in practice. Thirdly, in part due to the extrapolation of views originally collated
334 in the North of England, anomalies are evident in relation to key landmarks and
335 infrastructural developments being omitted from national maps of tranquillity.
336 Finally, a key concern centres on the validity and representativeness of the research.
337 One wonders just how representative views derived from research initially
338 investigated in one area; in this case the North of England, can be representative of
339 those in another. As discussed previously, tranquillity is a perceptual quality and the
340 value placed on an environment is highly subjective, socially constructed, relative,
341 and influenced by specific geographic landmarks of any given location (Hewlett *et*
342 *al.*, 2017).

343

344 **5. Broadly Engaging with Tranquillity: a practical application of** 345 **Mixed Methods Research**

346

347 To address the above limitations whilst building on the progress made by MacFarlane
348 *et al.*, the second and most recent study is the *Broadly Engaging with Tranquillity*
349 project (BET) that was commenced in 2013 and conducted over 12 months through
350 funding awarded by the Economic and Social Science Research Council. Full details
351 on the project's findings resulting from each stage of the quantitative and qualitative
352 research conducted are reported elsewhere (see Hewlett *et al.*, 2017; Hewlett 2015:
353 Hewlett & Harding 2015 a; Hewlett & Harding 2015 b; Wilkinson & Terradillos
354 2015) whilst the research design, the case study area and an overview of key findings
355 are reported below.

356

357 The case study area comprises the Purbecks in the Dorset Area of Outstanding
358 Natural Beauty (DAONB) in southern England (see Figure 1). A primarily rural area,
359 it neighbours the Bournemouth-Poole conurbation of 465,000 people. It has a range
360 of culturally important and natural features that are protected under EU, international

361 and national legislation and directives, and a coastline comprising 76km of the Dorset
362 and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site. As one of the major tourist destinations in
363 the South of England, in 2014 it attracted 2,132,000 overnight stays, and 434,000 day
364 trippers, who spent £113 million (South-West Research Company Ltd., 2015; Hewlett
365 *et al.*, 2017). The area is managed by a number of authorities led by the team of the
366 Dorset AONB whose remit includes managing the area's 'special qualities' as part of
367 its protected area status, inclusive of maintaining and enhancing tranquillity in the
368 national interest (Phillips, 2002).

369

370 **Fig. 1: Location of case study area in the UK and in Dorset.**

371

372 The BET's project aims were threefold: firstly to identify and broadly engage with
373 the widest range of stakeholders in the Purbecks; secondly to test a framework that
374 would collate and make sense of a range of views; and thirdly, to explore how
375 tranquillity is best spatially depicted for practical use.

376

377 The focus on practicality and pragmatism was informed by working in partnership
378 with staff from the Dorset AONB and from Dorset County Council (DCC) GIS
379 teams as early as the research design stage. The first research objective was achieved
380 through our partners' ability to facilitate broad stakeholder engagement. Access to
381 more than 300 representatives of authorities, to the most current householder
382 database and to visitors to the area was facilitated directly through our partners'
383 networks. The first primary data collection stage, involved eight focus groups,
384 comprised of representatives of authorities, managing agencies and local community
385 groups. Through a series of tasks, led by a trained facilitator, participants were
386 initially required to convey how they individually perceived the concept of
387 tranquillity and nontranquillity in general terms. Subsequently, with the aid of maps
388 of the Purbecks, additional views on how tranquillity and non tranquillity could be
389 experienced in the Purbecks was elicited from each group. The final task required
390 each group to examine all of their views previously collated and collectively agree
391 on the key factors they considered most enhanced or detracted from their perceptions

392 and experiences of tranquillity in the Purbecks. These factors were assigned by the
393 group with a set number of votes that ultimately resulted in providing the research
394 team with a prioritised list of factors each group felt most or least represented
395 tranquillity in the Purbecks.

396 The top five factors on tranquillity and a further top five on nontranquillity informed
397 the construction of the second stage of research, a household semi-structured survey
398 from which householders were invited to choose which factors they felt most or least
399 represented their own perceptions of tranquillity. An additional open question
400 introduced the survey to the householders and simply required the respondent to
401 convey how they perceived the notion and experience of tranquillity. A final task
402 required respondents to review a map of the case study area and identify spaces on
403 the map they considered most or least reflected their idea of a tranquil/nontranquil
404 space in the Purbecks and why. This survey was distributed to 2,100 residents, 15%
405 of the total population in the study area, who were identified through a stratified
406 random sample of households in the area. This survey tool was useful in three ways.
407 Firstly, unlike McFarlane *et al.*'s study, through our receipt of 457 completed and
408 usable questionnaires (a 21.9% response rate), the survey ultimately provided an
409 opportunity to engage directly with residents and collate their opinions on the views
410 previously identified during the focus group research on how much/little tranquillity
411 could be experienced in the Purbecks. Secondly, we aimed to incorporate in the
412 BET views from residents commonly classed as being hard-to-reach in that they do
413 not engage in local community groups, do not ordinarily engage in planning
414 consultations and therefore those whose views could easily be excluded through their
415 disengagement from civic matters (Lyons, 2006; Hewlett, 2010; Hewlett & Edwards,
416 2013; White, 2006): more than half of the questionnaires received (55.3%)
417 comprised the hard-to-reach (Hewlett & Harding 2015). Through the breadth of
418 residents involved in the BET, and quality of its findings, we have been able to
419 increase the legitimacy of decisions taken by local authorities post research
420 subsequently encouraging practitioners use of the BET and its data in practice.
421 Thirdly, due to the Data Protection Act (1998), direct access to householders could
422 not be facilitated by our partners. Thus a question was included in the survey asking
423 respondents to volunteer to take part in a third stage of research involving a second
424 series of focus groups formed specifically of residents. These focus groups took the

425 same format as those conducted during the first stage of research with institutions
426 whereby the twenty residents who attended, were directed to collectively agree on a
427 prioritisation of factors they asserted most/least represented their views on
428 tranquillity in the Purbecks.

429

430 The final and fourth stage of primary data collection comprised a series of onsite
431 surveys with visitors to the case study area. In recognition that visitors have wide-
432 ranging interests that are addressed by the diversity of attractions in the Purbecks, six
433 of the key tourism hotspots in the area, including natural environments, heritage
434 sites, and coastal locations, were sampled. Timing was also important in a
435 seasonally dependent location, thus the surveys were conducted during the busiest
436 month of the summer and on the August Bank Holiday Weekend. As new visitors to
437 the area were expected to have limited knowledge of the Purbecks, this group was
438 asked simply to state five factors respectively that most and least represented their
439 views on tranquillity and to prioritise these in order of personal importance. In total
440 309 surveys were used in the compilation of the GIS maps created.

441

442 Views collated from each stage of data collected were initially examined to identify
443 the presence of views being repeated subsequently enabling the researchers to
444 determine the point at which theoretical saturation of the data had been reached
445 (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Subsequently, views from each of the four data collection
446 stages were analysed discretely in order to facilitate a comparative study. The
447 qualitative data were analysed thematically, using the guidelines produced by Braun
448 & Clark (2006). This led to the identification of 19 themes (Table 1). This thematic
449 listing served as a framework to which views collated throughout the research,
450 whether qualitatively or quantitatively informed, could be classified.

451 Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS V21 to explore statistically significant
452 associations amongst the data. Relationships amongst categorical variables
453 comprising of nominal and ordinal data were progressed using Pearson's chi-squared
454 test for independence. Where variables comprised but two categories, Yates
455 correction for continuity was utilised. An association between variables was
456 recorded as significant when the significance value was ≤ 0.05 .

457 **Table 1. Thematic categories associated with Tranquillity.**

Step 1. Topics	Step 2. Thematic categories	
Natural	Activity (participant or of others)	Sight
	Auditory	Smell
Human/Mankind	Behaviour (linked to mankind)	Space: Open/cramped
	Coastal (seascape and resorts)	Spiritual
	Cognitive (inclusive of values, judgements & memories)	State of Mind
Natural and Human/Mankind	Time of day	Touch
	Mankind	Water (natural)
	Natural Environment (landscape and nature reserves)	Weather/climate
	Rural Environment (pastoral landscape)	Wildlife
	Seasons	

458

459 **Hewlett et.al (2017)**

460 Depending on the number of categories within each variable, the strength of
 461 relationship between two variables was additionally tested using phi co-efficient or
 462 Cramer’s V. Analyses resulted in demonstrating statistical significance, albeit small,
 463 purely through the household survey according to how noise/sounds were perceived
 464 by gender. These instances depicted more males than females considered the
 465 coastline as noisy (64.4% of males compared to 54.8% of females), thus informing
 466 their perception of non tranquillity ($\chi^2(1) = 3.60, p < 0.05, \phi = 0.10$) whereas
 467 more females than males (54.3% compared to male respondents 45.7%) reported
 468 that being able to see the coastline and hear the sea related to tranquillity ($\chi^2(1) =$
 469 $4.11, p < 0.04, \phi = 0.10$). Data from the BET project were compared with those
 470 from previous studies, and ~~some~~ a strong similarity in patterns was identified,
 471 contributing to convergent validation (Campbell & Fiske 1959; Fielding 2012) and
 472 thus, indicating the validity of the research and its outputs (Bryman, 2004; Fielding,
 473 2012: Torrance, 2012). The credibility of the results was highly important, thus
 474 member-checking took place (Reason 2006; Tashokorie & Tedllie 2005) . All
 475 participants were invited to a series of road-shows at which research reports and GIS
 476 models were presented in draft form to be confirmed and/or amended by
 477 participants.

478 **5.1 Modelling views in GIS**

479 Data integration and modelling was facilitated with the ArcGIS 10.1 package.
480 Cartographic resources informed the bases of the models and were accessed through
481 Digimap (University of Edinburgh 2014). Our partners, Dorset County Council
482 made databases available to the research project under a licence agreement and
483 where further data was required, open source archives made accessible on the
484 internet were used.

485 All views collated were examined initially to investigate if they had the ability to be
486 geographically expressed and could be related to a mode of sensory perception
487 (sight, sound, touch or smell). Secondly to progress the views through a GIS system
488 required that they could be made quantifiable. This aspect was amply addressed
489 through in the case of focus group data, the votes cast, with householder
490 questionnaires – in the number of times a view was expressed and with the visitor
491 survey, in how the tourists prioritised their views. Thirdly, a series of algorithms
492 were created to process the information through GIS. Thus, where a participant had
493 determined that for example, the sound of church bells was a characteristic of
494 tranquillity in their opinion, this perspective could be mapped through identifying
495 churches in the case study area and its intensity on the models and maps created was
496 depicted by the amount of times this opinion on in this case, tranquillity, arose. This
497 exploration and relative comparative process of the views collated with cartographic
498 features in the area, resulted in for example, c.72% of the initial views generated
499 through the first stage of focus groups being progressed into the formulation of GIS
500 models. Full details on the progression of the GIS modelling processes and
501 algorithms used are outlined in Terradillos & Wilkinson 2015.

502

503 **5.2The results in brief**

504

505 In total, almost 15,000 views were collated from 1,000 research participants drawn
506 from LPAs, community groups, local tourism businesses, residents and visitors to the
507 Purbecks, across four stages of primary data collection. The initial results from the
508 qualitative and quantitative stages of the research demonstrate that tranquillity in the
509 Purbecks refers most commonly to what can be seen especially in relation to open

510 spaces and natural features of landscapes such as woodlands, streams, villages and
511 fields and pastoral scenes. Conversely, non-tranquillity, again perhaps
512 unsurprisingly, is primarily related to noise, particularly resulting from motorised
513 transport, visitor numbers during the tourist season, especially in coastal areas and in
514 rural spaces, and organised cycling events. It was also found that modern built
515 infrastructure, especially road networks and renewable energy resources, were
516 considered to affect the overall sense of tranquillity expected in the Purbecks as
517 being ‘wholly out of keeping’ with a protected area (Hewlett, 2015). As one focus
518 group of residents argued, the natural environment of the Purbecks has become over
519 commercialised; it has been turned into ‘a theme park for the sole purpose of
520 promoting tourism’– ‘when visitors come in we go out! Even visitors don’t get what
521 they came for anymore’ (Hewlett, 2015). Interestingly, and perhaps ironically, a
522 similar perspective was conveyed by visitors who specifically cited the pejorative
523 effects of traffic and other noise (Hewlett & Harding, 2015a).

524

525 What is particularly interesting concerns the similarities and distinctions that can be
526 made from a review of the following four GIS models (Figures 2-5 below). All four
527 groups relate any representation of mankind to nontranquillity as shown on these
528 models through for example settlements representing the most nontranquil spaces.
529 This sense of nontranquillity and its source, is additionally expressed through noise
530 related to human activity and seeing traffic thus areas close to the road networks are
531 depicted as nontranquil. Tranquil spaces, on the other hand are found in areas away
532 from the roads and settlements. These spaces on the models are enhanced by
533 participants’ and respondents’ views conveyed during the primary data collection
534 that considered ‘isolation’ and ‘wilderness’ as important aspects contributing to how
535 tranquillity might be perceived and experienced.

536

537 Figure 2 GIS Model: Residents (Hewlett et al. 2017)

538 Figure 3 GIS Model: Institutions (Hewlett et al. 2017)

539 Figure 4 GIS Model: Householders (Hewlett et al. 2017)

540 Figure 5 GIS Model: Visitors (Hewlett et al. 2017)

541

542 Notwithstanding these similarities, there are distinctions amongst the models.
543 Amongst these, residents considered the notion of remoteness as a greater factor of

544 tranquillity than institutions, as such their respective model represents more
545 tranquillity than that of institutions (Figures 2 & 3). Further, on comparing Figures 4
546 and 5, the householders' model emphasises a greater representation of tranquillity
547 than that of the visitors' who interestingly out of the four models shown, emphasise
548 traffic on the roads in relation to how non tranquillity might be experienced.

549

550 Whilst the similarities are encouraging in terms of just how institutions, householders
551 and visitors consider the Purbecks, the distinctions presented here and many other
552 differentiating factors identified post research, question just whose views should
553 lead on decisions taken in relation to tourism planning and its management in the
554 Purbecks –institutions and managing agencies, householders or visitors to the area-
555 and just how publically acceptable LPA decisions on development in the Purbecks
556 will actually be, if their views dominate planning decisions taken. Yet, as previously
557 discussed the law states that local people's views should be considered by LPAs in
558 determining local planning decisions and further in determining what local residents
559 consider as areas of significant local value. Conversely a long-held critique of
560 planning practice is that LPAs may consult with local people, but residents' views
561 can be fashioned to support authorities' objectives thus creating the potential for the
562 steering of the public's views to fit political agendas and development plans
563 (Burton, 2003; Hewlett, 2010; Hyden & Court, 2002; Ledwith, 2005; Richardson &
564 Connelly, 2002) .

565

566 **6. Putting BET into planning practice**

567

568 The BET framework is a predominantly qualitatively-informed MMR design for
569 investigating the highly subjective quality of tranquillity in rural and protected areas.
570 This is not to undermine the quantitative element of the research, which
571 demonstrated statistical significance for example, according to how noise, as a
572 negative experience and sounds from a positive perspective, can be interpreted
573 according to gender (Hewlett and Harding, 2015b; Hewlett *et al.*, 2017).
574 Furthermore without the householder survey, it is suspected that more than half of
575 the respondents classed as hard-to-reach would not have been involved in BET
576 (Hewlett, 2015) and certainly we would not have been able to hold the focus groups

577 with householders due to current restrictions placed on our partners by the Data
578 Protection Act 1998.

579

580 The findings have proved useful to local authorities in informing protected area
581 management plans, in implementing management objectives and in policy
582 formulation on the management of the Purbecks. The models are additionally being
583 used to inform tourism and visitor management strategies, the promotion of tourism
584 attractions and de-marketing of other areas valued for their cultural heritage and
585 protected as environmentally sensitive sites. Such is the importance of the BET that
586 its research design is being discussed nationally by heritage management
587 organisations and the research framework has been transferred for use by authorities
588 in other areas in England, including Devon in the South-West, Kent in the South
589 East and York in the north from where it has encouraged further interest in being
590 tested overseas in New Hampshire, in the United States. What has attracted interest
591 in this research design is the mixed methods approach that has led to the
592 development of GIS models which have been able to visualise the multifaceted
593 nature of a subjective landscape quality such as tranquillity, (see Hewlett *et al.*,
594 2017) and that have already demonstrated their utility in policy implementation.

595

596 Just how widely the BET framework will be adopted by other authorities
597 countrywide is yet to be seen. It offers numerous advantages to professional
598 planners not least in using techniques used in professional planning practice of public
599 consultations on planning strategies. The MMR approach adopted in this project
600 represents a robust methodology and technology for determining public views on the
601 subjective qualities of landscape; it addresses the practical demands of the National
602 Planning Policy Framework; and through the use of maps and models of tranquillity
603 it results in a powerful and easily accessible mechanism for heritage organisations,
604 planners and their wider audiences of local politicians' to gauge public views.

605

606

607

608 **7. Conclusion**

609

610 An increasing emphasis in academia on knowledge exchange and on research impact
611 demands that academics direct their attention towards practice. From a practitioner
612 perspective, the BET project offers data and a methodology that can legitimise and
613 enhance planning practice and help to inform and legitimise decisions taken in the
614 public realm. The MMR approach is valuable to planners because of the access it
615 offers to both qualitative and quantitative data and the ability through GIS, to
616 visualise a highly subjective and value-laden concept such as tranquillity. No single
617 method, we argue, can address the nebulous topic of the meaning attached by key
618 stakeholders to the term tranquillity. A real potential exists therefore to adopt this
619 framework further to investigate, as noted earlier, other equally nebulous concepts
620 that are so commonly referred to in planning and in marketing contexts.

621

622 Limitations to this research project are however, acknowledged. The universal
623 application of case study findings cannot (Yin 2003) and have not been made
624 however, the research framework and the designs of the GIS models used can and
625 have been transferred to alternative locations. Secondly, taking a primarily qualitative
626 approach to understanding the meaning of a highly subjective concept such as
627 tranquillity is open to claims of researcher bias particularly also in relation to the
628 analyses of the qualitative data collected, examined and counted according to the 19
629 themes identified on tranquillity. We hope to have addressed this critique in a
630 number of ways not least through the facilitation techniques used, the inclusion of
631 quantitative analyses where variables permit and the triangulation of data emergent
632 from analyses. Through the laboured efforts additionally to reconvene participants to
633 verify/amend their views presented in the GIS models, a legitimisation of the work is
634 claimed. This, we hope, helps to correct the problem of an expert, top-down
635 approach to civic engagement.

636

637 Further research is warranted particularly in terms of distinctions on views of
638 tranquillity amongst social groupings including by gender and the effect of
639 domiciliary residence on attitudes. Additional testing of the methodological
640 framework is also called for, especially in relation to the power of GIS and the effect
641 that maps and GIS models may or not have on decisions taken by LPAs. Overall,

642 perceptual studies require not only research and contextual expertise, but time and
643 funds to support public consultations. However, the availability of a
644 methodologically acceptable template that can be adopted easily and effectively by
645 practitioners is a priority area of research in progressing perceptual studies in
646 landscape planning. This challenge is amply met by the BET project which provides
647 a tried and tested framework that can not only be deployed in identifying and
648 determining tranquillity in a given space, but that can easily be adapted to discern
649 public perspectives on other equally ambiguous concepts used to describe rural
650 destinations. Furthermore, the practical use of this ESRC funded research project on
651 tranquillity, is increasingly evident through its adoption by protected area managing
652 agencies, heritage organisations and LPAs both in England and more recently, in the
653 United States, for determining planning and development decisions designed to
654 enhance rural destinations within their jurisdictions.

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