

Planning for tranquil spaces in rural destinations through mixed methods research

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Advocates the use of MMR in addressing industry issues.
- MMR facilitates extensive access to visitors, residents & authorities.
- Exemplifies use of MMR in mapping tranquillity as a planning tool.
- Demonstrates utility of MMR to planning authorities & heritage organisations.
- Tranquillity aligned with natural environment; nontranquillity, manmade sounds & sights.

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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.

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1. Introduction

Their review of the top tourism journals (until 1996) led Riley and Love (2000) to conclude that quantitative research dominated the tourism literature, despite a growing recognition of the value of qualitative research. Furthermore, in journals aimed at solving industry problems, such as *Tourism Management*, there were fewer qualitative-based articles; these were more prominent in journals with a social science orientation and mission, such as the *Annals of Tourism Research*. Riley and Love (2000) found that

applied researchers were more likely to use quantitative methods or to use qualitative research simply as a precursor to subsequent quantification; there is a view that qualitative methods could not produce findings that would be useful to industry. The tourism industry requires findings that can translate into action and there is mistrust of case-study, non-generalisable findings (Riley & Love, 2000), despite their use in generating theory in emergent fields of research (Riessman, 2008).

A careful review of two leading tourism journals indicates that the state of tourism research and the methodologies used has changed somewhat. Tribe and Xiao stated in 2011 that 60% of papers in the *Annals of Tourism Research* embrace a qualitative or interpretive design. The two most dominant methods used by researchers continue to be interviews and participant observation

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though in more recent volumes of the journal, the following approaches have also appeared: grounded theory, focus groups, phenomenology, photography, netnography, autoethnography, and feminist memory work. In addition, [Tribe, Xiao, and Chambers \(2012\)](#) point to a 15% contribution of conceptual/review articles to the journal in 2011–2012. As [Xiao and Smith \(2006\)](#) observe, the *Annals of Tourism Research* is dedicated to promoting theoretical constructs. The journal also sees the development of methodological sophistication as part of its remit, and indeed, recent issues point to a shift towards a radical, postmodern perspective on data collection, analysis, display and authorial position. Furthermore, the journal now accepts the use of the first person, if this is consistent with the method used ([Tribe & Xiao, 2011](#)). Such a decision will facilitate the publication of reflexive research accounts, which are still lacking in the tourism literature ([Pocock, 2015](#); [Pritchard & Morgan, 2007](#)).

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

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

Despite the analysis offered above, there is an enduring view that the bias towards quantitative studies still exists ([Wilson & Hollinshead, 2015](#)). Tourism research is still hampered by a bias towards 'hard science' with which quantitative research is associated, and against the 'soft' science associated with qualitative research. [Dolnicar and Ring \(2014\)](#) also indicate a continuing bias towards quantitative methods given their utility to managers, especially in the area of tourism marketing, which occupies a third of content in the leading tourism journals. [Lynch \(2005\)](#) meanwhile claims that qualitative research continues to be under-represented in hospitality research, as reflected in the leading hospitality journals. [Ren, Pritchard, and Morgan \(2010\)](#) and [Pritchard and Morgan \(2007\)](#) state that the characterisation of the tourism research field as a divided community, based on those who are oriented towards or against a business management approach, is restrictive and naïve. Perhaps however concerns over the value of and editorial receptivity towards qualitative research explain why mixed

methods research is so attractive to researchers and practitioners alike. Indeed, in *Tourism Management*, there has been a discernible increase in the publication of mixed methods research since 2005.

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

2. Mixing methods and matching practice

[Ren et al. \(2010\)](#) argue that the challenge is for tourism researchers to adopt methodologies that reflect multiple positions, practices and insights. It is for this reason that a mixed methods approach is often viewed as the way to improve the validity and utility of findings, as well as to appeal to editors and reviewers, and practitioners. At the heart of MMR is pluralism, thus regardless of whether a qualitative or quantitative method dominates, its foundation is based on its 'central premise that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone' ([Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007](#) p.5). Hence, through the mixing of methods, research design, analyses, interpretation and data presentation ([Fielding, 2012](#)), the values of each approach are embraced with the result that qualitative data inform quantitative outputs and/or vice versa.

The pluralistic stance of MMR reflects the multiplicity of perspectives available to tourism researchers, and the approach might well appear obvious given the make-up of the industry that cuts across sectors. Tourism represents an increasingly interconnected world of enquiry that can be researched through various ways, from numerous starting points, leading to diverse outcomes hence it is 'characterised by equifinality and multifinality' ([Burke Johnson, 2015](#), p. 700). Taking this perspective, the use of one research method 'is not adequate for answering complex questions'. Instead, opportunities to expand and deepen our knowledge are realised by coming 'at things differently' ([Hesse-Biber & Burke Johnson, 2013](#) p. 103), through MMR that crosses the so-called methodological divide between qualitative and quantitative paradigms. The convergence of data on a topic leads to increased confidence in results and ultimately in the ability to overcome the weaknesses of any single method ([Campbell & Fiske, 1959](#); [Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007](#); [Dandekar, 2005](#)) for which triangulation is a 'core justificatory principle underpinning mixed method approaches' ([Torrance, 2012](#), p. 113).

There are also limitations to MMR. The transformation of

qualitative responses into numerical forms are 'a staple of MMR' (Sandelowski, Voils, & Knaf, 2009, p. 208), enabling their analysis from quantitative perspectives. Yet this process of quantification can be complex. When quantifying the qualitative, compromises will be made in terms of 'what and how to count' fundamentally qualitatively informed data and trying to 'balance numerical precision with narrative complexity' (Sandelowski et al., 2009, p. 208). A further concern relates to the sample size derived from qualitative studies which are commonly considered too small to enable statistical analyses (Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib, & Rupert, 2007). Nevertheless, the value of MMR lies in researchers' ability to generate research findings that have a pragmatic use. Indeed, the very philosophy of pragmatism is associated with MMR, (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), sometimes referred to as the third research paradigm (Burke Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2009).

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

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

3. Collaborative planning: moving views from consultation to evidence

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

Research designs will invariably combine quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to generate the data required to formulate and inform the implementation of planning policy. Both the research framework and its outputs need to be robust enough to provide tourism planners with 'good information...and facts that can be communicated', 'and that are amenable to translation by policy makers and elected officials', whom are often non-planners 'working in highly politicized often turbulent and changing environments' (Dandekar, 2005, p. 130). In reality, the demands of this working environment encourage outputs of a quantitative design, relegating the views obtained from the public during focus groups and public meetings to secondary and contextual considerations.

This sits alongside the rhetoric espoused by planners and local politicians who promote the importance of communities deliberating with planners and participating actively in informing planning practice (Ledwith, 2005). As Cornwall argues (2008 p. 279), 'it is even more common for rhetoric about involving people in decision-making to boil-down to engaging them in marginal choices when the real decisions are clearly being made elsewhere'. Yet increasing political attachment to identifying the key qualities of public spaces according to local communities' views is progressively being reflected in planning practice.

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

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

The political importance of including such an abstract quality as tranquillity in planning policies is easily explained. There are concerns over the UK's overall population growth, an increasingly urban population (Champion, 2014) and an evident clash is gaining momentum between the goals of infrastructural growth and constraints of space and land-use (Gosden, 2014). This context sits alongside the diminishment of green spaces in urban areas and additional concerns over encroachments of infrastructure in and increased visitor usage of protected areas (Benjamin & Adu, 2016; Swinford & Riley-Smith, 2016). This will invariably result in fewer opportunities to experience tranquillity in either urban or rural spaces. Concurrently, concerns for a financially ailing National Health Service being able to continue to meet increasing demands for treatment of the public's health and mental wellbeing is encouraging renewed attention on strategies of prevention rather than cure (NHS England, 2013) that are being progressed through place-based decision making (NHS England, 2015). Subsequently, there is a resurgent interest in the benefits to be gained from the public's experiences of green spaces and tranquil environments, in order to assist in enhancing their physical and mental health and overall sense of wellbeing (e.g. Natural England, 2009b; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1988; Ulrich et al., 1991). Thus, there is increasing support for what is generally coined as a Natural Health Service, engineered to result from collaboration between the Health Services, Planning Officers and Environmental Managers. The quality of green space provision, where tranquil spaces are notable, is the responsibility of the State and its managing agencies (DCLG, 2012). As such, rural locations and particularly protected landscapes are important and are generally considered to be relatively free resources to capitalise upon (IUCN, 2015).

Recognition of the bank of tranquillity found in protected areas as a freely obtained, natural resource is exploited in tourism marketing literature (Pieraccini, 2015). The term tranquillity is liberally promoted synonymously with such equally abstract descriptors as peace and quiet, free from disturbance, calmness, used to refer to both a rested state of mind and the experience to be had in rural

and protected area destinations. In the UK, tranquillity is identified as a key motivating attractor for visitors to rural areas (Jones, 2012). Internationally, tranquillity has been recognised as a special, fundamental quality of protected areas (e.g. Balasinorwala, 2014; Phillips, 2002). Indeed, in the United States, 72% of visitors to National Parks reported their key purpose for visitation was to experience natural sounds, views and peace (Haas & Wakefield, 1998).

4.1. *Tranquil perspectives: approach and diversity*

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

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

Tranquillity is therefore geographically and socially constructed and as a topic of research, is a multidimensional concept. Interpretations of tranquillity are potentially infinite and feelings about an area, about its community and what is valued in that area will be highly significant (Cresswell, 2015; Hague & Jenkins, 2005; Relph, 1976; Williams, 2014). Thus, whilst community engagement and implementing national planning policy is mandatory, in practice a diverse range of views can be expected, and as yet, a universally agreed approach to researching tranquillity and determining how results should influence planning practice is open to debate. This is not to suggest that tranquillity is the only challenging descriptor for researchers working within tourism planning and area management: the same can be said of research on other commonly used yet nebulous concepts that are frequently deployed in descriptions of rural and protected area environments, including *beauty*, *character* and a *sense of place*, to name but a few examples.

4.2. *Researching tranquillity*

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

The third approach, and the most relevant to our case study, involves the identification of tranquil spaces and their visual depiction through maps. Initial mapping activities resulted from expert-led definitions, calculations and measurements of tranquillity to determine what the public perceived to be acceptable levels of noise and negative visual impacts from main roads (e.g. Bell, 1999; Rendel, 1996, pp. 9–11). Two subsequent studies have taken a far broader and more inductive qualitative approach.

The first was conducted in the north-East England by a team of academics and practitioners who devised a participatory appraisal approach (*sensu* Chambers, 1994) to consulting with countryside users, managing agencies and LPAs on their views on tranquillity in two protected area landscapes (MacFarlane et al., 2004; CPRE, 2007). Participants were asked to openly share their perspectives on tranquillity in focus groups and onsite surveys. Subsequently a prioritisation process comprising votes allocated amongst the participants was conducted resulting in 44 factors identified by participants as enhancing or detracting from their views on tranquillity. The final stage comprised modelling participants' prioritised views into models of tranquillity in a Geographical Information System (GIS). The findings contributed to the production of a national map of tranquillity in England (CPRE, 2007; Jackson et al., 2008). Yet fundamentally this was a pilot study and there are limitations to its design and to claims made for its results. Firstly, engagement specifically with local residents was not an objective. Secondly the GIS resolution initially of 500 m and later 250 m cells (MacFarlane et al., 2004; CPRE, 2007) has proven to be too broad to apply in practice. Thirdly, in part due to the extrapolation of views originally collated in the North of England, anomalies are evident in relation to key landmarks and infrastructural developments being omitted from national maps of tranquillity. Finally, a key concern centres on the validity and representativeness of the research. One wonders just how representative views derived from research initially investigated in one area; in this case the North of England, can be representative of those in another. As discussed previously, tranquillity is a perceptual quality and the value placed on an environment is highly subjective, socially constructed, relative, and influenced by specific geographic landmarks of any given location (Hewlett, Munro, Harding, Terradillos, & Wilkinson, 2017).

5. *Broadly engaging with tranquillity: a practical application of mixed methods research*

To address the above limitations whilst building on the progress made by MacFarlane et al., the second and most recent study is the *Broadly Engaging with Tranquillity* project (BET) that was commenced in 2013 and conducted over 12 months through funding awarded by the Economic and Social Science Research Council. Full details on the project's findings resulting from each stage of the quantitative and qualitative research conducted are reported elsewhere (see Hewlett et al., 2017; Hewlett & Harding

2015a,b; Terradillos & Wilkinson, 2015) whilst the research design, the case study area and an overview of key findings are reported below.

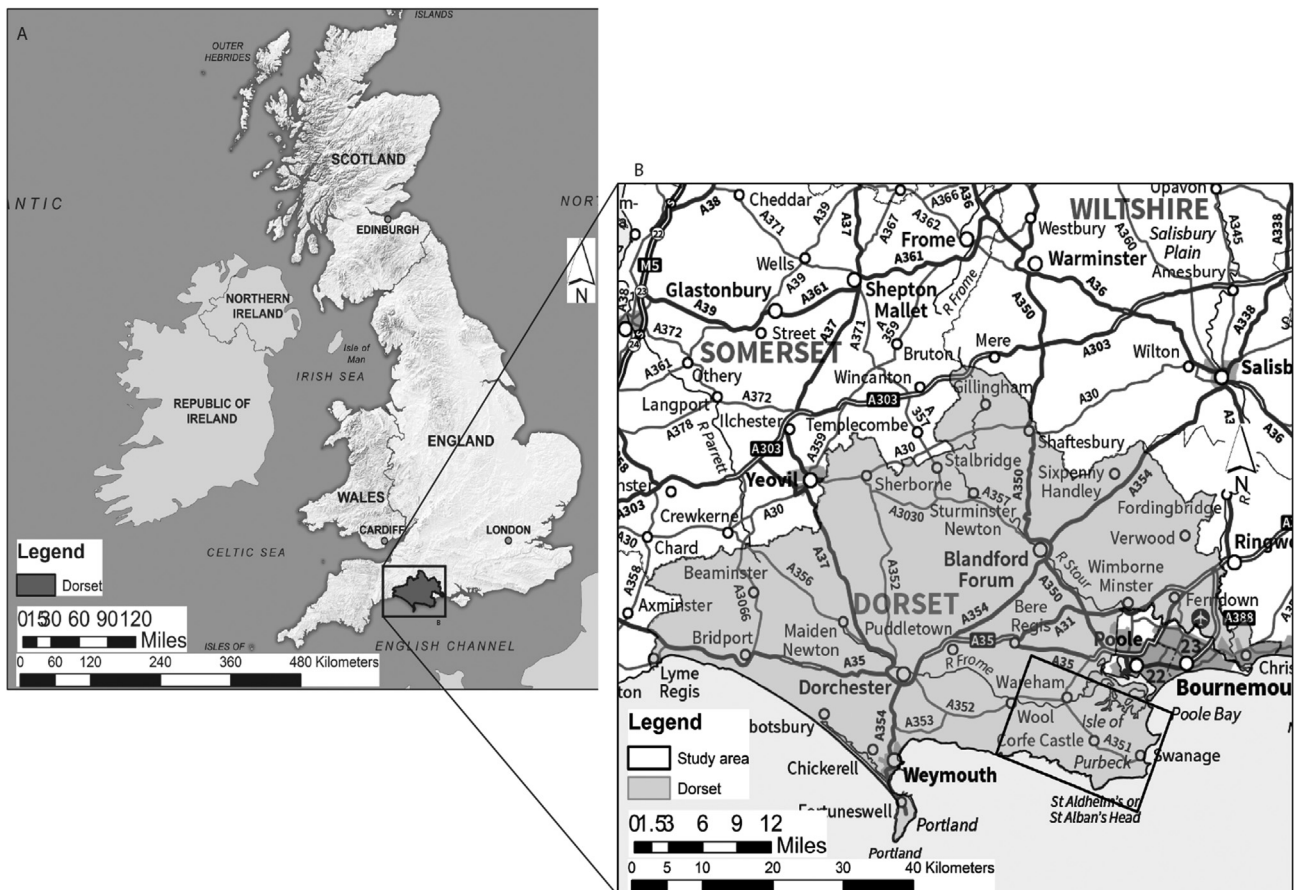
The case study area comprises the Purbecks in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (DAONB) in southern England (see Fig. 1). A primarily rural area, it neighbours the Bournemouth–Poole conurbation of 465,000 people. It has a range of culturally important and natural features that are protected under EU, international and national legislation and directives, and a coastline comprising 76 km of the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site. As one of the major tourist destinations in the South of England, in 2014 it attracted 2,132,000 overnight stays, and 434,000 day trippers, who spent £113 million (South-West Research Company Ltd., 2014; Hewlett et al., 2017). The area is managed by a number of authorities led by the team of the Dorset AONB whose remit includes managing the area's 'special qualities' as part of its protected area status, inclusive of maintaining and enhancing tranquillity in the national interest (Phillips, 2002).

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

The focus on practicality and pragmatism was informed by working in partnership with staff from the Dorset AONB and from Dorset County Council (DCC) GIS teams as early as the research design stage. The first research objective was achieved through our partners' ability to facilitate broad stakeholder engagement. Access

to more than 300 representatives of authorities, to the most current household database and to visitors to the area was facilitated directly through our partners' networks. The first primary data collection stage, involved eight focus groups, comprised of representatives of authorities and institutions. Through a series of tasks, led by a trained facilitator, participants were initially required to convey how they individually perceived the concept of tranquillity and nontranquillity in general terms. Subsequently, with the aid of maps of the Purbecks, additional views on how tranquillity and non tranquillity could be experienced in the Purbecks was elicited from each group. The final task required each group to examine all of their views previously collated and collectively agree on the key factors they considered most enhanced or detracted from their perceptions and experiences of tranquillity in the Purbecks. These factors were assigned by the group with a set number of votes that ultimately resulted in providing the research team with a prioritised list of factors each group felt most or least represented tranquillity in the Purbecks.

The top five factors of tranquillity and a further top five related to nontranquillity informed the construction of the second stage of research, a household semi-structured survey from which householders were invited to choose which factors they felt most or least represented their own perceptions of tranquillity. An additional open question introduced the survey to the householders and required the respondent to convey how they perceived the notion and experience of tranquillity. A final task asked respondents to review a map of the case study area and identify spaces on the map that they considered most or least reflected their idea of a tranquil/



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

nontranquil space in the Purbecks and why. This survey was distributed to 2100 residents, 15% of the total population in the study area, who were identified through a stratified random sample of households in the area. This survey tool was useful in three ways. Firstly, unlike McFarlane et al.'s study, through our receipt of 457 completed and usable questionnaires (a 21.9% response rate), the survey provided an opportunity to engage directly with residents and collate their opinions on the views previously identified during the focus group research on how much/little tranquillity could be experienced in the Purbecks. Secondly, we aimed to incorporate in the BET views from residents commonly classed as being hard-to-reach in that they do not engage in local community groups, do not ordinarily engage in planning consultations and therefore whose views could easily be excluded through their disengagement from civic matters (Hewlett & Edwards, 2013; Lyons, 2006; White, 2006). Indeed, more than half of the questionnaires received (55.3%) comprised the hard-to-reach (Hewlett & Harding, 2015a,b). Through the breadth of residents involved in the BET, and quality of its findings, we have been able to increase the legitimacy of decisions taken by local authorities post research subsequently encouraging practitioners use of the BET and its data in practice. Thirdly, due to the Data Protection Act (1998), direct access to householders could not be facilitated by our partners. Thus a question was included in the survey asking respondents to volunteer to take part in a third stage of research involving a second series of focus groups formed specifically of residents. These focus groups adopted the same format as those conducted during the first stage of research with representatives from authorities and institutions whereby the twenty residents who attended were directed to collectively agree on a prioritisation of factors they asserted most/least represented their views on tranquillity in the Purbecks.

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

Views collated from each stage of data collected were initially examined to identify the presence of views being repeated, enabling the researchers to determine the point at which theoretical saturation of the data had been attained (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Subsequently, views from each of the four data collection stages were analysed discretely in order to facilitate a comparative study. The qualitative data were analysed thematically, using the guidelines produced by Braun and Clarke (2006). This led to the identification of 19 themes (Table 1). This thematic framework displayed the categorisation of the views collated throughout the research, whether qualitatively or quantitatively derived.

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

Depending on the number of categories within each variable, the strength of relationship between two variables was additionally tested using phi co-efficient or Cramer's V. Analyses demonstrated statistical significance, albeit small, in the household survey regarding the perception of noise/sounds by gender. More men than women considered the coastline to be noisy (64.4% of men compared to 54.8% of women), thus informing their perception of non-tranquillity ($\chi^2 (1) = 3.60$, $p < 0.05$, $\phi = 0.10$) whereas more women than men (54.3%–45.7%) reported that being able to see the coastline and hear the sea related to tranquillity ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.11$, $p < 0.04$, $\phi = 0.10$). Data from the BET project were compared with those from previous studies, and a strong similarity in patterns was identified, which contributed to convergent validation (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Fielding, 2012) and indicated the validity of the research and its outputs (Bryman, 2004; Fielding, 2012; Torrance, 2012). The credibility of the results was highly important, thus member-checking was undertaken (Reason, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2005). All participants were invited to a series of road-shows at which research reports and GIS models were presented in draft form to be confirmed and/or amended by participants.

5.1. Modelling views in GIS

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

All collated views were examined initially to determine if they had the capacity to be geographically expressed and to be related to a mode of sensory perception (sight, sound, touch or smell). Secondly, to progress the views through a GIS system required that they could be made quantifiable. This aspect was addressed in the case of focus group data through the votes cast; in terms of household questionnaires through in the number of times a view was expressed; and in the visitor survey through how the tourists prioritised their views. Thirdly, a series of algorithms was created to process the information through GIS. Thus, where a participant had articulated that, for example, the sound of church bells was in their opinion a characteristic of tranquillity, this perspective could be mapped through identifying churches in the case study area, and its intensity on the models and maps created was depicted by the amount of times this opinion on tranquillity was expressed. This exploration and comparative process of the views collated with cartographic features in the area resulted in for but one example, in c.72% of the initial views generated through the first stage of focus groups being adopted into the formulation of GIS models. Full details on the progression of the GIS modelling processes and algorithms used are outlined in Terradillos and Wilkinson (2015).

5.2. The results in brief

In total, almost 15,000 views were collated from 1000 research participants drawn from LPAs, community groups, local tourism businesses, residents and visitors to the Purbecks, across four stages of primary data collection. The initial results from the qualitative and quantitative stages of the research demonstrate that tranquillity in the Purbecks refers most commonly to what can be seen especially in relation to open spaces and natural features of landscapes such as woodlands, streams, villages and fields and pastoral scenes. Conversely, non-tranquillity, again perhaps unsurprisingly, is primarily related to noise, particularly resulting from motorised transport, visitor numbers during the tourist season, especially in

Table 1
Thematic categories associated with Tranquillity (Hewlett et al., 2017).

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

coastal areas and in rural spaces, and organised cycling events. It was also found that modern built infrastructure, especially road networks and renewable energy resources, were considered to affect the overall sense of tranquillity expected in the Purbecks as being ‘wholly out of keeping’ with a protected area (Hewlett, 2015). As one focus group of residents argued, the natural environment of the Purbecks has become over commercialised; it has been turned into ‘a theme park for the sole purpose of promoting tourism’—‘when visitors come in we go out! Even visitors don’t get what they came for anymore’ (Hewlett, 2015). Interestingly, and perhaps ironically, a similar perspective was conveyed by visitors who specifically cited the pejorative effects of traffic and other noise (Hewlett & Harding, 2015a).

What is particularly interesting concerns the similarities and distinctions that can be made from a review of the following four GIS models (Figs. 2–5 below). All four models relate any manifestation of mankind to nontranquillity as shown through for example settlements of Swanage and Wareham representing the most nontranquil spaces. This sense of nontranquillity and its source are

also expressed through noise related to human activity such as traffic, thus areas close to the road networks are depicted as non-tranquil. Tranquil spaces on the other hand are found in areas away from roads and settlements. Such spaces were deemed by participants to be associated with ‘isolation’ and ‘wilderness’, important aspects that contribute to how tranquillity might be perceived and experienced.

Notwithstanding the similarities, there are distinctions between the models, for example residents considered the notion of remoteness to be a greater factor of tranquillity than authorities and institutions, as such their model denotes more tranquillity than that of institutions (Figs. 2 and 3). Further, on comparing Figs. 4 and 5, the householders’ model emphasises a greater representation of tranquillity than the visitors’. Conversely, this comparison also depicts visitors’ emphasis on traffic and road networks as the key factor they consider to most represent nontranquillity in the Purbecks (Fig. 5).

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

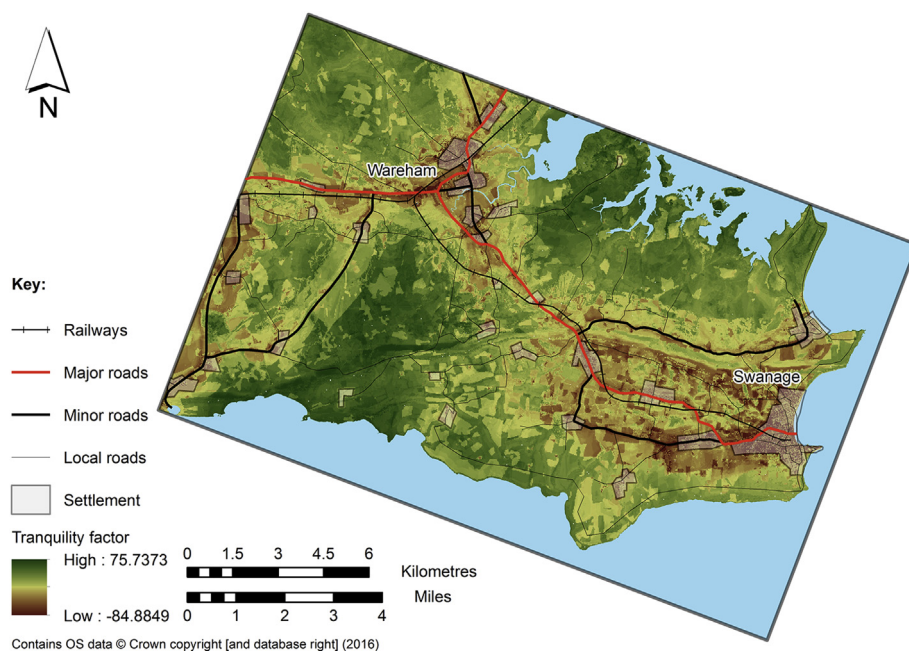


Fig. 2. GIS model: Residents (Hewlett et al., 2017).

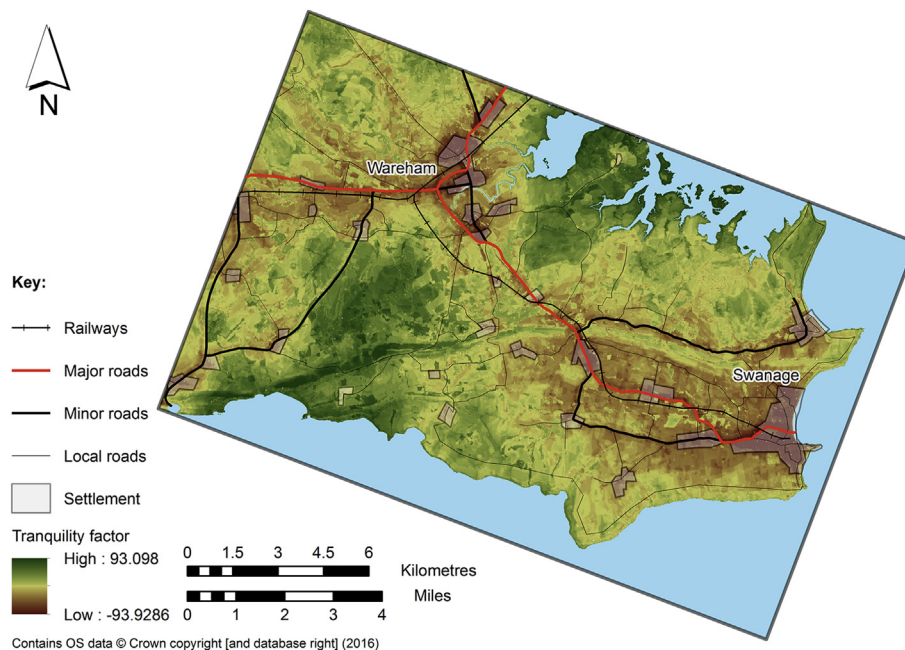


Fig. 3. GIS model: Authorities and institutions (Hewlett et al., 2017).

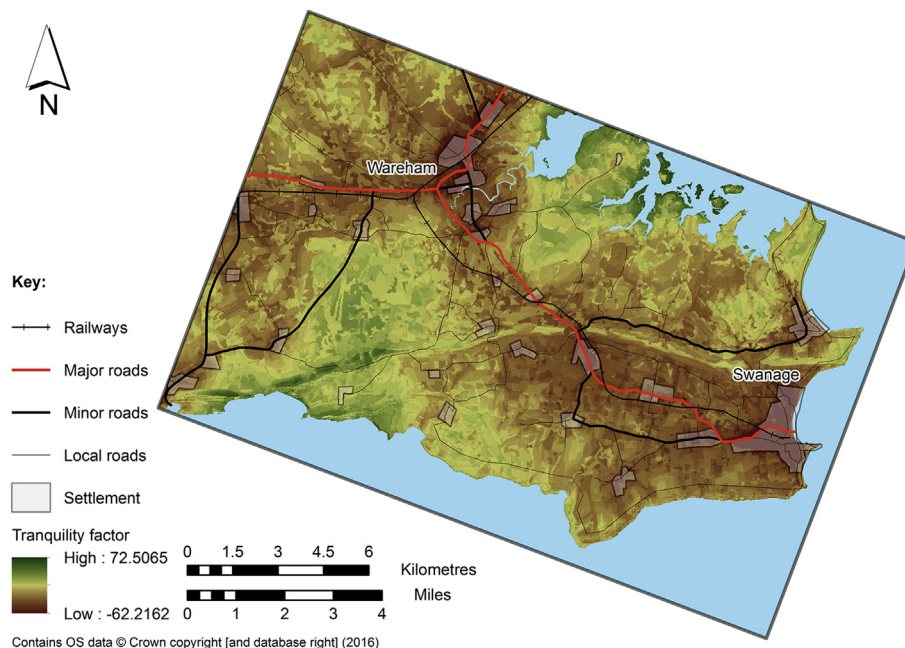


Fig. 4. GIS model: Householders (Hewlett et al., 2017).

6. Putting BET into planning practice

The BET framework is a predominantly qualitatively-informed MMR design for investigating the highly subjective quality of tranquillity in rural and protected areas. This is not to undermine the quantitative element of the research, which demonstrated statistical significance for example, according to how noise, as a negative experience and sounds from a positive perspective, can be interpreted according to gender (Hewlett & Harding, 2015b; Hewlett et al., 2017). Furthermore without the householder survey, it is suspected that more than half of the respondents classed

as hard-to-reach would not have been involved in BET (Hewlett, 2015) and certainly we would not have been able to hold the focus groups with householders due to current restrictions placed on our partners by the Data Protection Act 1998.

The findings have proved useful to local authorities in informing protected area management plans, in implementing management objectives and in policy formulation on the management of the Purbecks. The models are additionally being used to inform tourism and visitor management strategies, the promotion of tourism attractions and de-marketing of other areas valued for their cultural heritage and protected as environmentally sensitive sites. Such is

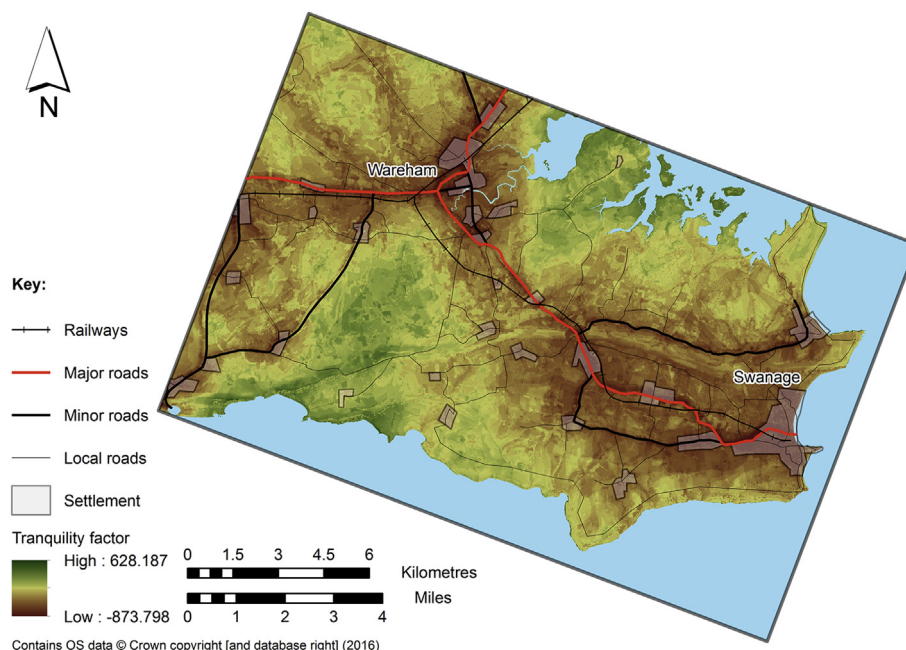


Fig. 5. GIS model: Visitors (Hewlett et al., 2017).

the importance of the BET that its research design is being discussed nationally by heritage management organisations and the research framework has been transferred for use by authorities in other areas in England, including Devon in the South-West, Kent in the South East and York in the north from where it has encouraged further interest in being tested overseas in New Hampshire, in the United States. What has attracted interest in this research design is the mixed methods approach that has led to the development of GIS models which have been able to visualise the multifaceted nature of a subjective landscape quality such as tranquillity (see Hewlett et al., 2017), and that have already demonstrated their utility in policy implementation.

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

7. Conclusion

An increasing emphasis in academia on knowledge exchange and on research impact demands that academics direct their attention towards practice. From a practitioner perspective, the BET project offers data and a methodology that can legitimise and enhance planning practice and help to inform and legitimise decisions taken in the public realm. The MMR approach is valuable to planners because of the access it offers to both qualitative and quantitative data and the ability through GIS, to visualise a highly subjective and value-laden concept such as tranquillity. No single method, we argue, can address the nebulous topic of the meaning attached by key stakeholders to the term tranquillity. A real

potential exists therefore to adopt this framework further to investigate, as noted earlier, other equally nebulous concepts that are so commonly referred to in planning and in marketing contexts.

Limitations to this research project are however, acknowledged. Case study findings cannot be generalised (Yin, 2003) and no such claims are made for this study's findings; however, the research framework and the designs of the GIS models used can and have been transferred to alternative locations. Secondly, taking a primarily qualitative approach to understanding the meaning of a highly subjective concept such as tranquillity is open to claims of researcher bias particularly in relation to the analyses of the data collected. We hope to have addressed this critique in a number of ways not least through the facilitation techniques used, the inclusion of quantitative analyses where variables permit and the triangulation of data. Through the laboured efforts additionally to reconvene participants to verify/amend their views presented in the GIS models, a legitimisation of the work is claimed. This, we hope, helps to correct the problem of an expert, top-down approach to civic engagement.

Further research is warranted particularly in terms of distinctions on views of tranquillity amongst social groupings including by gender and the effect of domiciliary residence on attitudes. Additional testing of the methodological framework is also called for, especially in relation to the power of GIS and the effect that maps and GIS models may or not have on decisions taken by LPAs. Overall, perceptual studies require not only research and contextual expertise, but time and funds to support public consultations. However, the availability of a methodologically acceptable template that can be adopted easily and effectively by practitioners is a priority area of research in progressing perceptual studies in landscape planning. This challenge is amply met by the BET project which provides a tried and tested framework that can not only be deployed in identifying and determining tranquillity in a given space, but that can easily be adapted to discern public perspectives on other equally ambiguous concepts used to describe rural destinations. Furthermore, the practical use of this ESRC funded research project on tranquillity, is increasingly evident through its adoption by protected area managing agencies, heritage organisations and

LPAs both in England and more recently, in the United States, for determining planning and development decisions designed to enhance rural destinations within their jurisdictions.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.01.011>.

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