

NEA/fieldwork issues

South West Geography Conference

Andy Owen

Aims and objectives

AIMS: To consider the issues faced by students when planning the NEA.

OBJECTIVES: To consider:

- Planning aims that are achievable
- Suitable sampling frameworks
- Representing spatial patterns
- Knowing which method of analysis to use
- Improving annotation as a form of qualitative analysis

Planning aims: Tip 1. Focus on the small scale

Typical NEA title

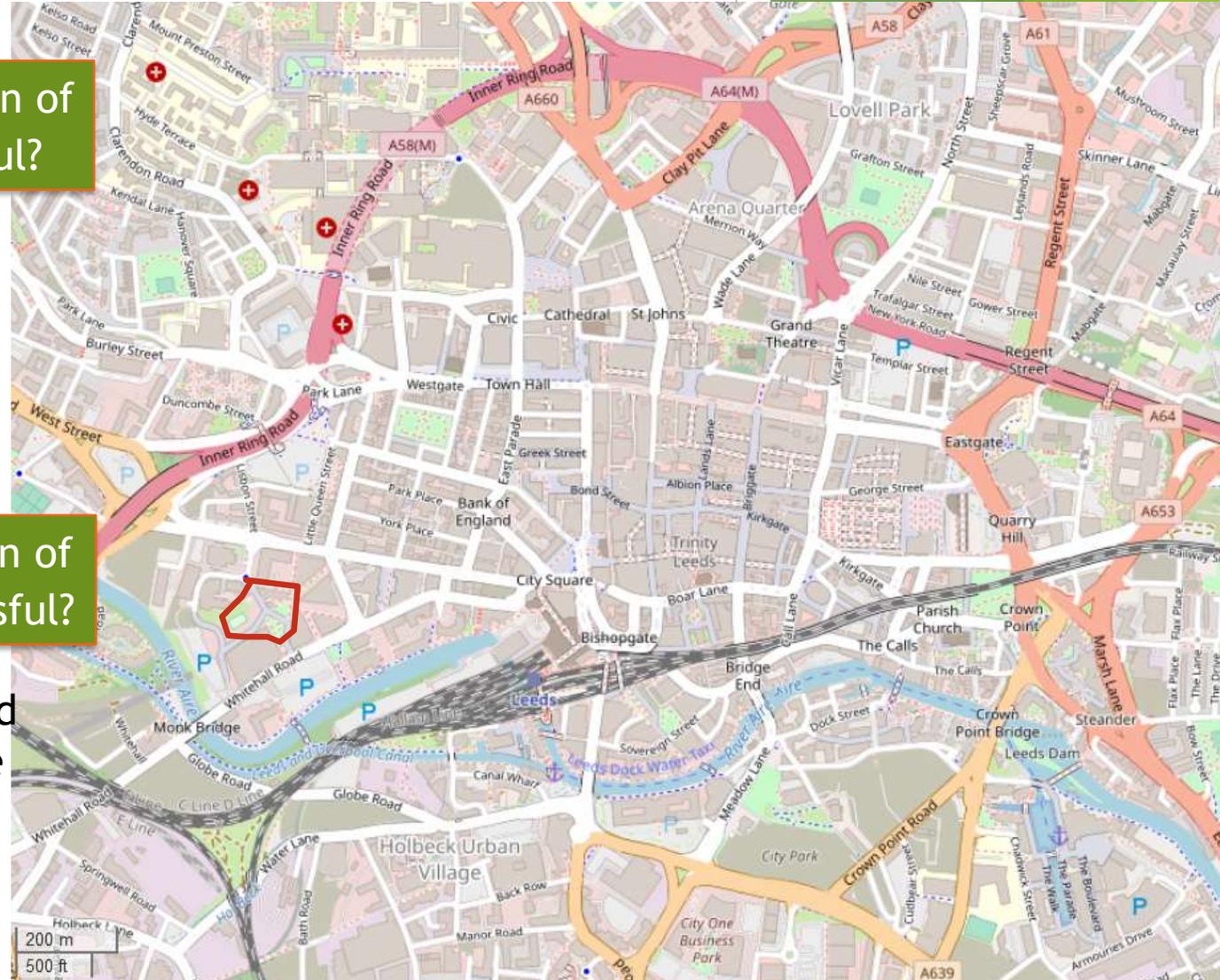
To what extent has the regeneration of Leeds's city centre been successful?

This title isn't really achievable. Leeds city centre, shown by the area of the map, is too large. A good NEA needs to focus on a smaller geographical area to make the investigation manageable.

A better NEA title

To what extent has the regeneration of Tower Square in Leeds been successful?

This title is better. Tower Square, which is outlined in red, is an area of appropriate scale, making the investigation much more manageable.



Planning aims: Tip 2. Choose aims that are achievable

Typical NEA title

To what extent has the regeneration of Tower Square in Leeds been successful?

This title is okay, but how will the student prove whether the project was successful? Without baseline data this is tricky.

A better NEA title

To what extent has the regeneration of Tower Square created a sustainable environment?

This title is better. However, sustainability is a big concept. To make the aims manageable, the student could focus on measuring three criteria from Egan's Wheel.

An even better NEA title

To what extent has the regeneration of Tower Square made the space safe for pedestrians and cyclists?

This title is even better. The focus is now on aspects of sustainability and mitigating risk. The aims are very clear and an answer to the research question should be achievable.



Planning aims: Tip 3. Focus on everyday geographies

Typical NEA title

How is place identity in Bristol changing?

This title isn't achievable. Place identity is a big concept and the scale of study is geographically too large.

A better NEA title

Which factors affect place identity in St Paul's Bristol?

This title is better because the scale is manageable. Place identity is still a big concept. What does the student really want to achieve? It isn't clear.

An even better NEA title

What are the social, economic and environmental impacts of street art & graffiti in St Paul's, Bristol?

This title is better because the aim is really clear. It focuses on graffiti, which is an example of everyday geography. The student can still make a clear link to place identity when they justify their aims.



Saint Paul's, Bristol

ACTIVITY

Think about the everyday geographies shown on this slide and the two that follow.

1. Develop at least one achievable title that focuses on this everyday geography.
2. For each title that you develop, link it to one of the geographical theories or concepts on the right.

Broken window theory

Place identity

Egan's Wheel

Gentrification

Rebranding

Studentification

Mitigating risk

Urban heat island

Inequality

Distance decay



Manchester



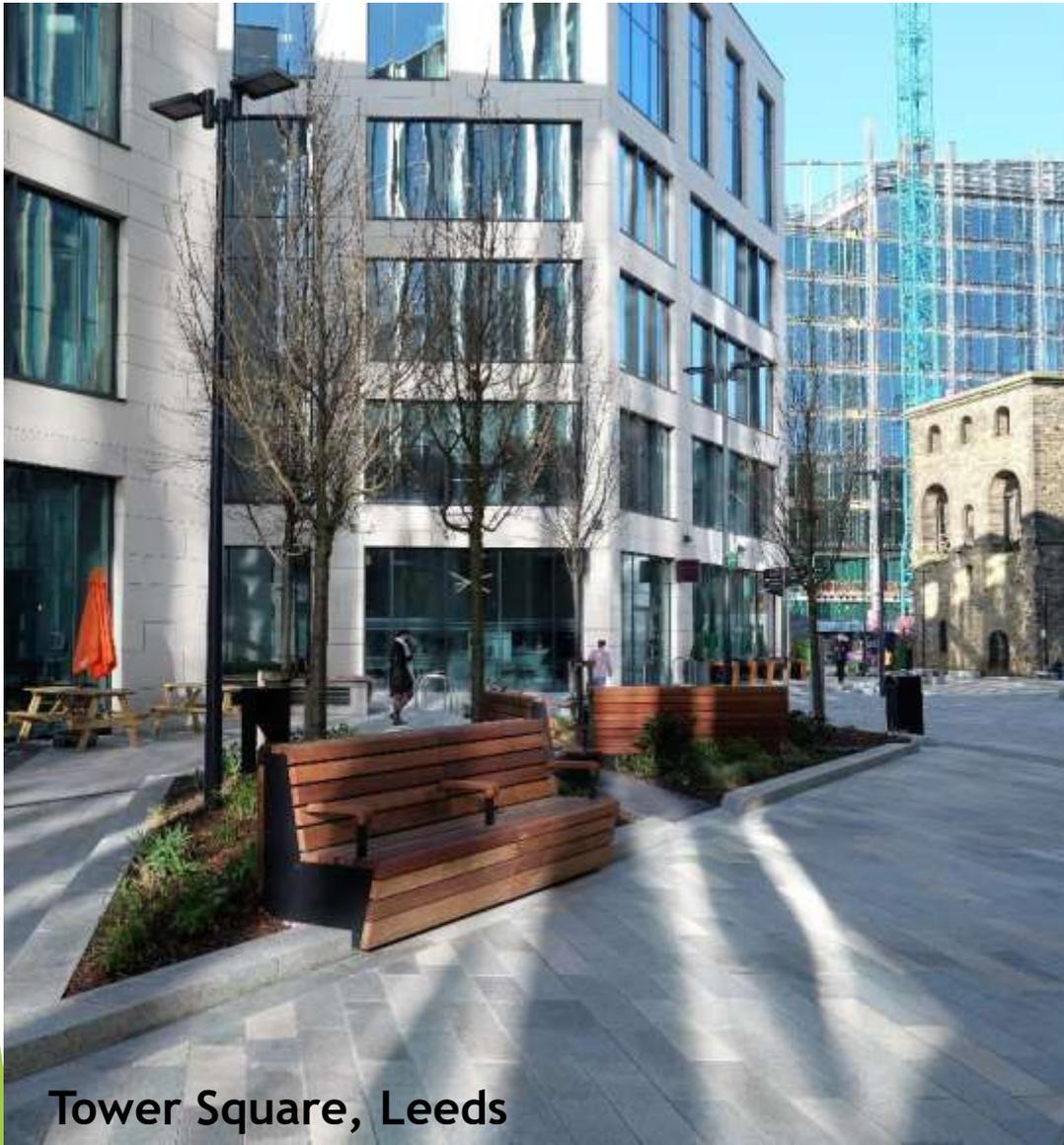
Stokes Croft, Bristol



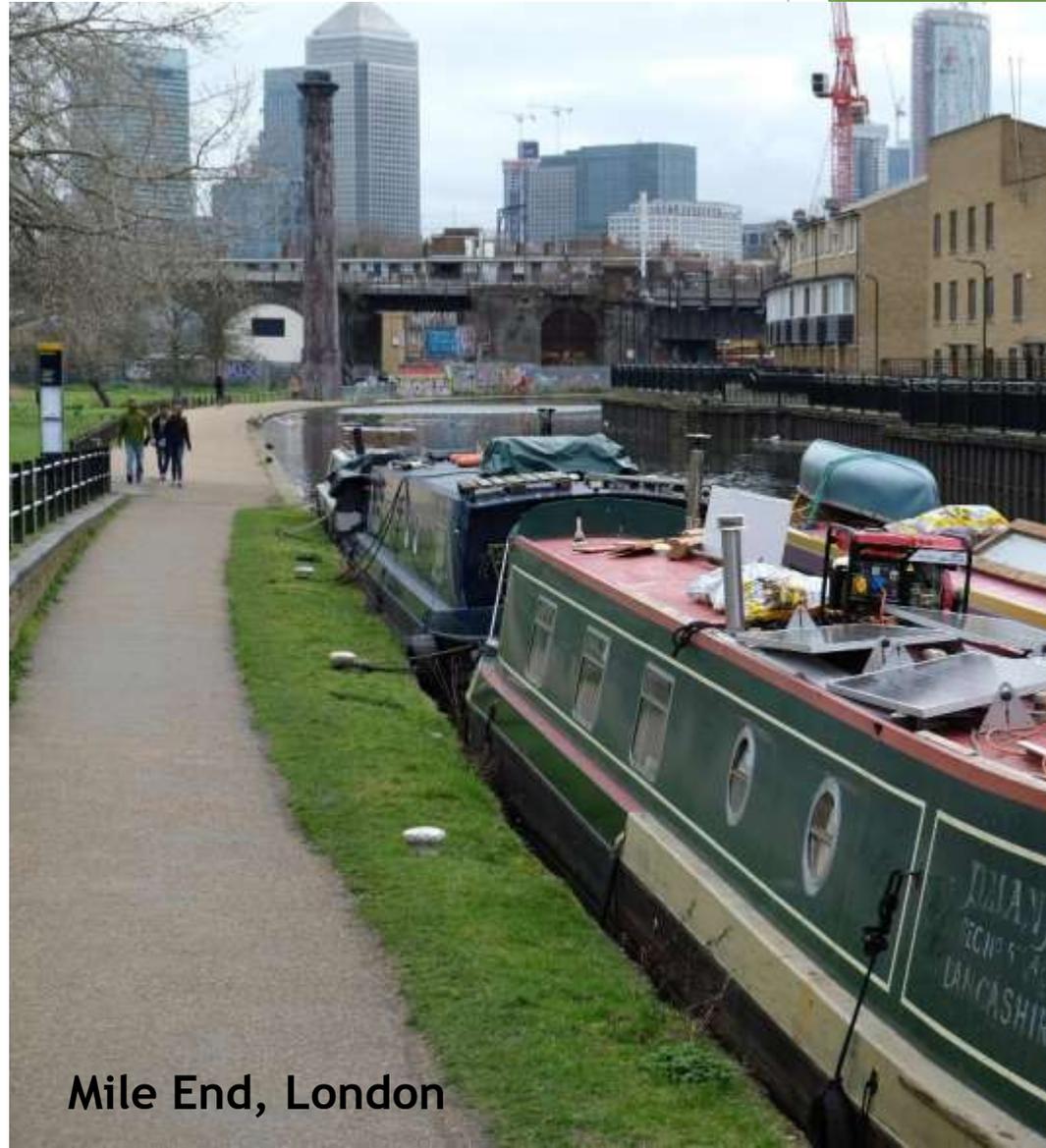
Cardiff

Everyday Geographies: open spaces

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Tower Square, Leeds



Mile End, London

Everyday Geographies: cleanliness

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Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Sampling frameworks/strategies

OVERVIEW The design of an appropriate sampling framework is important if students are going to collect enough of the right kind of data.

Sampling is still misunderstood by many students.

Random sampling is often confused with pragmatic (or convenience) sampling.

Students need to be able to justify their sample size, frequency and location.

Geography fieldwork sometimes involves the investigation of an **environmental gradient**. For example, in an urban environment it should be possible to investigate the following environmental gradients:

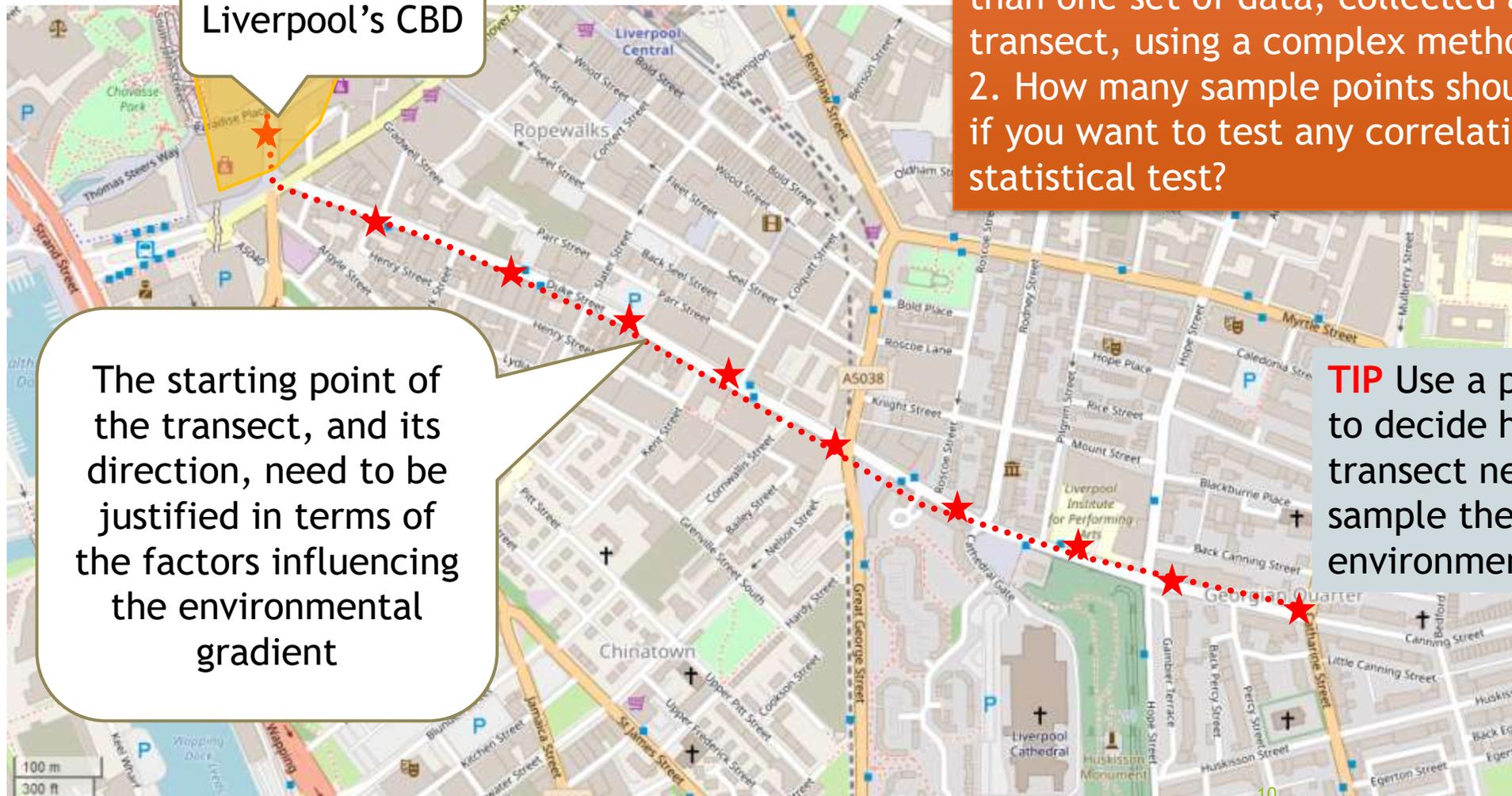
- House prices with distance from a green open space
- Urban land use with distance from the city centre
- Street cleanliness with distance from a fast food restaurant

In a urban park you could investigate:

- How noise declines across a park with distance from a major road
- How light intensity decreases with shading from trees

Sampling along a line (or using a **transect**) is the most effective strategy to investigate environmental gradients.

Transects



Liverpool's CBD

The starting point of the transect, and its direction, need to be justified in terms of the factors influencing the environmental gradient

ACTIVITY

1. Think about how you might present more than one set of data, collected along a transect, using a complex method.
2. How many sample points should you use if you want to test any correlation using a statistical test?

TIP Use a pilot survey to decide how long the transect needs to be to sample the whole environmental gradient

ACTIVITY

1 Suggest a hypothesis that could be investigated where a transect would provide a valid sampling framework



Brick Lane, London



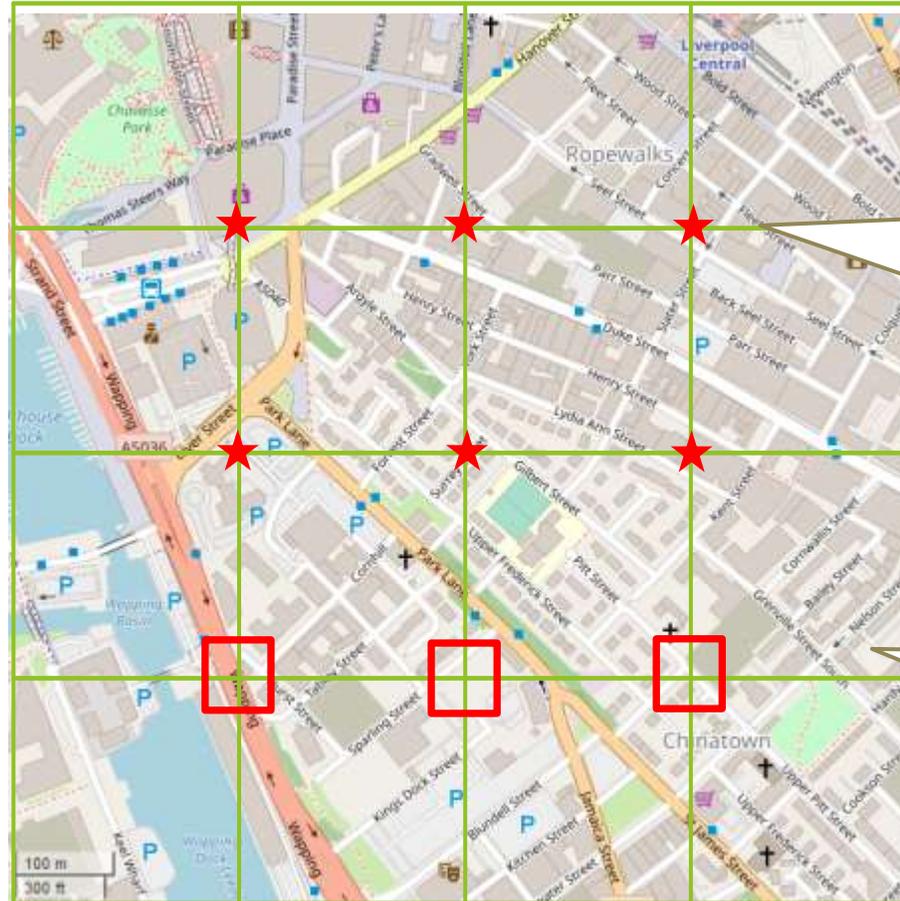
Sampling across an area

OVERVIEW Sampling across an area allows you to collect data with a spatial dimension.

This means you will have the option of creating more complex and sophisticated methods of data presentation.

You can sample systematically, collecting data at each intersection or from within each grid square.

Alternatively, you can sample using a random number generator.



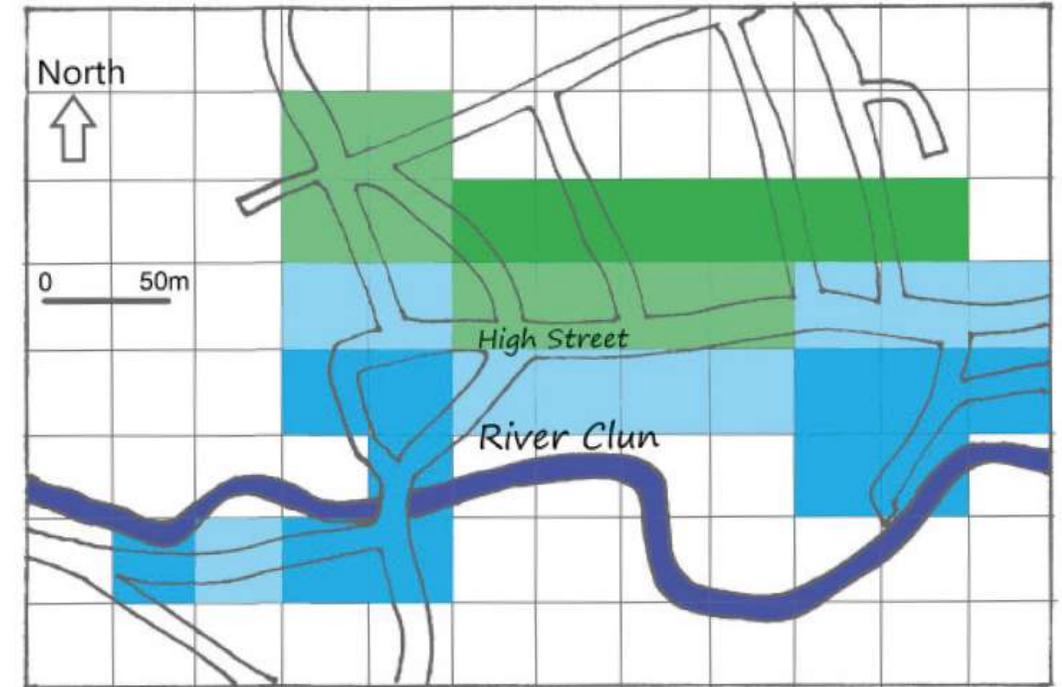
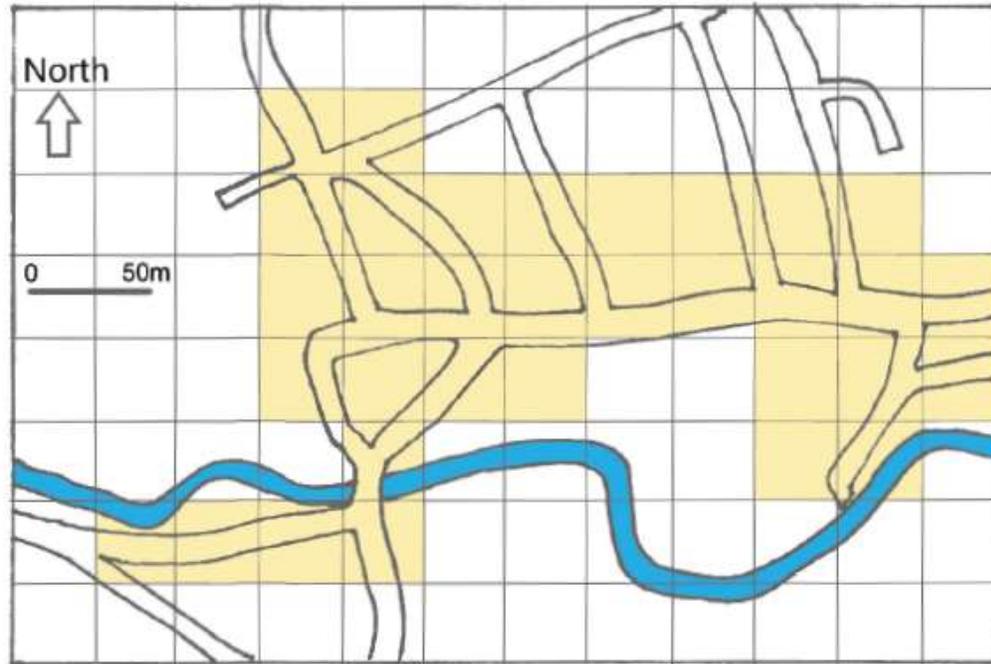
By drawing a grid on a map it is possible to collect data from points in space...

... or from small areas

“© OpenStreetMap contributors

A systematic sampling framework was used to interview one resident in each grid square in the village of Clun.

This method allowed the student to present flood perception data as a choropleth map.



Source: Andy Owen (2019) A Level
Geography Independent Investigation
Insight and Perspective

- Key
- Definitely no need for flood defences
 - Probably no need for flood defences
 - Flood defences are probably needed
 - Flood defences are definitely needed

Representing spatial patterns on a map allows the student to draw more complex maps, like this isoline map.

Simple sampling frameworks often limit the student to simple data presentation methods. More sophisticated sampling frameworks usually allow the student to use more sophisticated data presentation methods.

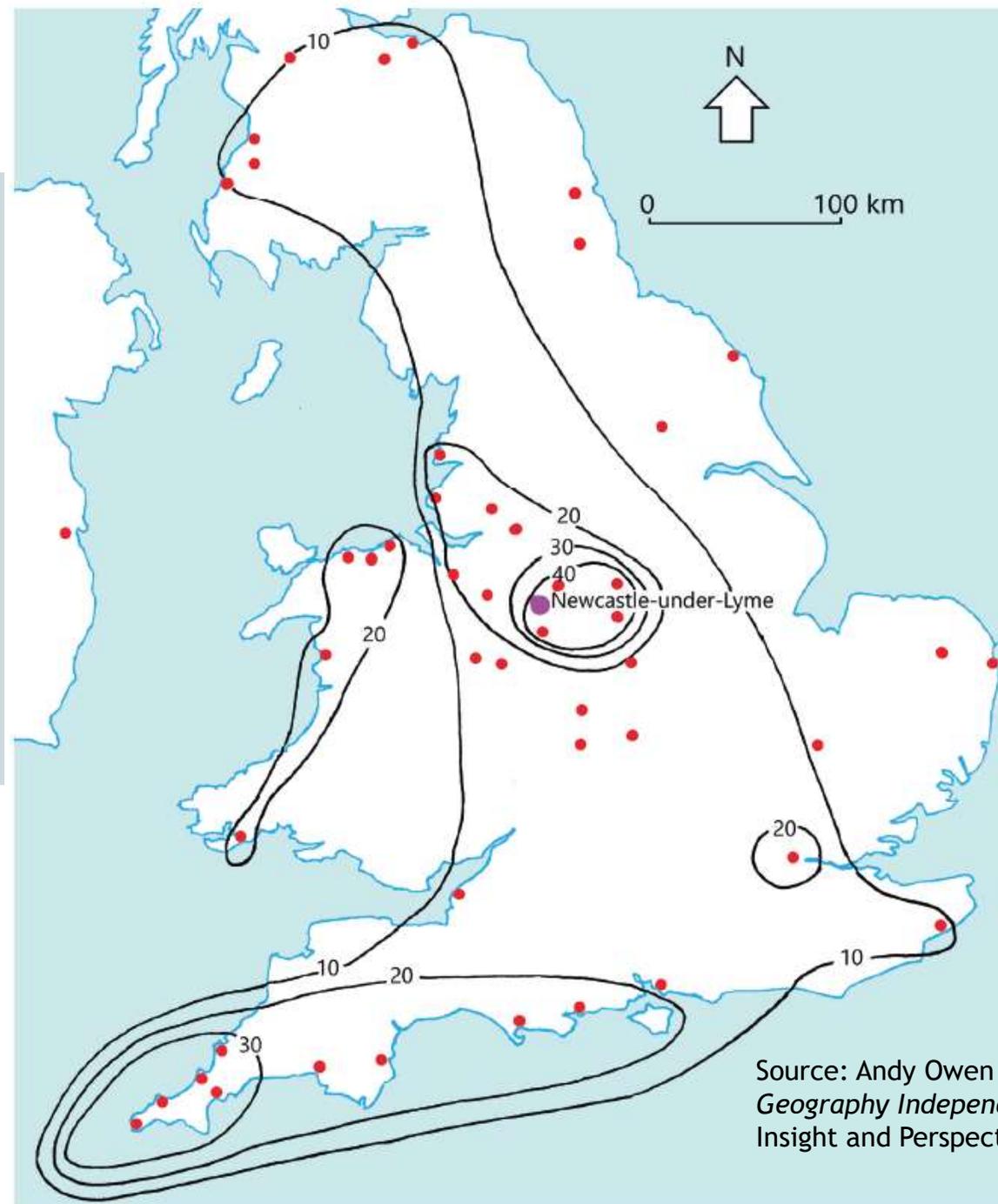


Figure 11.7 An example of an isoline map. It shows places known by a class of 8 year olds who live in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Source: Andy Owen (2019) *A Level Geography Independent Investigation Insight and Perspective*

Using photographs to collect more sophisticated data

- ▶ You can use photos in several different ways. You can:
 - Show photos of particular places that are of interest to your investigation to participants of a survey and ask them to respond to them emotionally or as part of an interview
 - Take photos of places and then annotate them. Annotation is important - it shows that you can interpret the evidence in the photo which is a key analytical skill.
 - Find photos of places from a secondary source that were taken in the recent past and then visit that location and take a new photo (a technique called re-photography).
- ▶ If you can't visit the place in person, you could make a virtual visit using Google Street View and take a screen shot for your photo.

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TIP You could use Google Street View to compare the current street scene to a recent historic date (i.e. pre Covid-19). If you are shielding you could use Street View instead of an actual visit.

Urban context: photos

- ▶ Photos are a suitable way to collect evidence in almost every urban fieldwork context. For example, you could:
 - Combine photography with participant observation to investigate how people behave and move through a busy urban environment
 - Use re-photography to investigate rebranding, de-industrialisation, or gentrification
 - Ask participants to take photos of locations they think should be conserved or need to change in your neighbourhood as part of an investigation of place identity.
 - Take photos and annotate them to illustrate concepts such as flood risk or mitigation and adaptation of the high street to Covid-19



Brick Lane, London

How to analyse qualitative and quantitative data

Qualitative data

Patterns and trends in speech e.g. an interview

Patterns and trends in written text e.g. from a blog

Ascribing meaning to significant features of an image or the landscape

Text (or discourse) analysis

Coding

Annotation

Image elicitation

Field sketching & annotation

Quantitative data

Numerical patterns/trends

Spatial patterns

Statistical tests

Sediment shape

Measures of central tendency

Measures of dispersion

Chi square test

Mann Whitney test

Spearman's Rank

Zingg analysis or Cailleux Index

Mean, median & mode

Range, inter-quartile range

Location quotient

Nearest neighbour analysis

Analysis involves interpretation

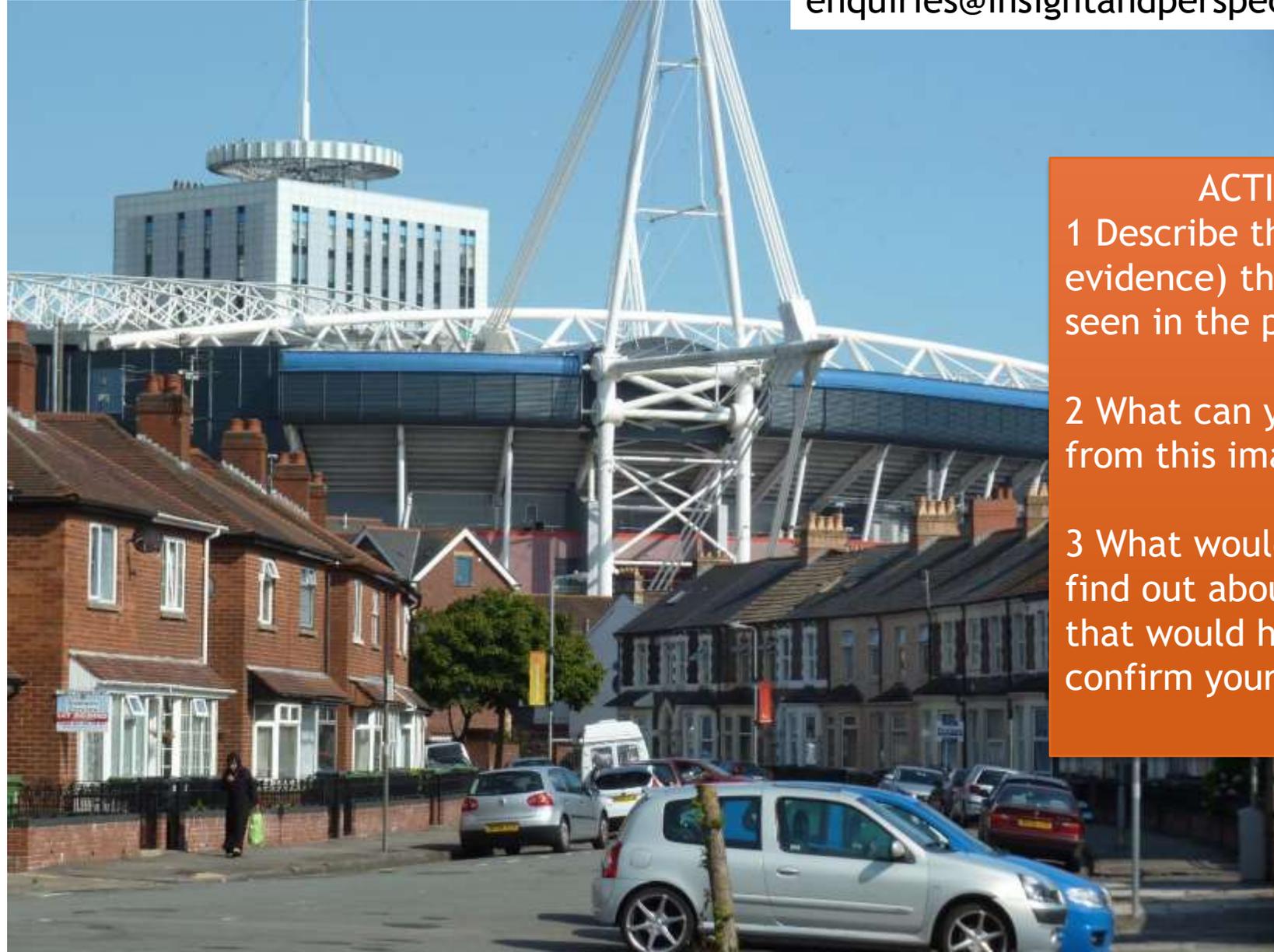
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What does the data tell me?

What can I infer from this?

What does the data **not** tell me?

What other data might I need?



ACTIVITY

1 Describe the data (or evidence) that can be seen in the photo.

2 What can you infer from this image?

3 What would you like to find out about this place that would help you confirm your inferences?

Improving photo analysis

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Delivery van parked partly
on the pavement



Trees have been
planted

ACTIVITY

1 Think about what can be inferred from the evidence in the image. Turn the simple descriptions into annotations that make geographical inferences.

Annotation involves interpretation

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Delivery van parked partly on the pavement

... so space is restricted for pedestrians. This means that partially sighted pedestrians or people in wheelchairs may find the pavement inaccessible.



Trees have been planted

... so some particulates from vehicles will be absorbed by the vegetation. This means that local residents will benefit from better air quality.



TIP Use connectives like 'so' and 'this means that' in your annotations

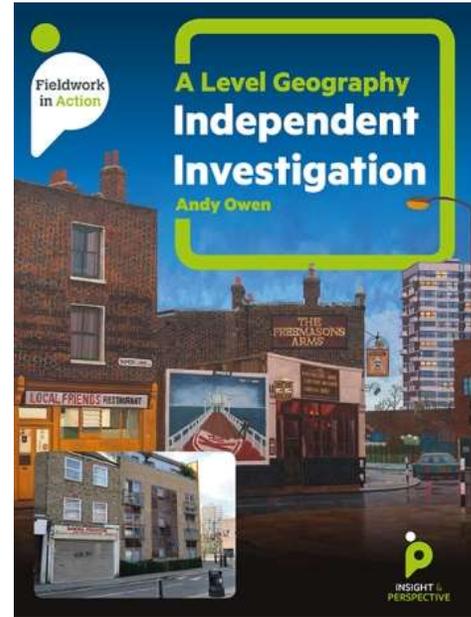
Parking on the pavement reduces the capacity for pedestrians. **This means that** people struggle to keep 2 metres apart.

Repeated parking has damaged the paving stones. **This means that** the pavement is a trip hazard and poses a risk for elderly or people with reduced mobility.

Stokes Croft, Bristol

About Andy Owen

Andy Owen is an author who has written several books about fieldwork. Andy is an assessment expert who has experience as a senior moderator. His book, [A Level Geography Independent Investigation](#), has won a prestigious Geographical Association award. The book is published by Insight and Perspective.



Amazon Customer reviewed *A level Geography Independent Investigation: A Practical Guide (Fieldwork in Action)*

1 of 1 people found the following helpful

★★★★★ **Brilliant - a real find** 22 May 2020

This is the BEST book for staff and students alike. The content is user friendly, and refreshing. New ideas and clear instructions combined with the necessary fundamentals that geographers need to know.

1. **Jonathan Powell** reviewed *A level Geography Independent Investigation: A Practical Guide (Fieldwork in Action)*

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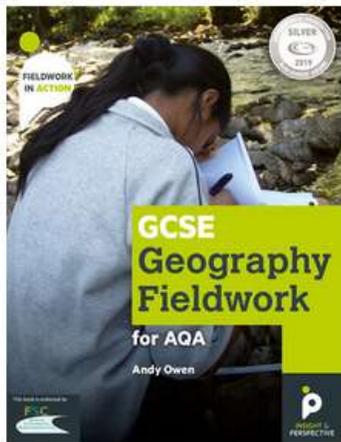
Very well organised under chapter headings that guide students through the process from choosing a focus to beginning the write-up and wrapping it all up. Highly recommend this book!

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Fieldwork at GCSE

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Andy Owen has written books to support GCSE fieldwork. They are available at <https://insightandperspective.co.uk/geography-1>

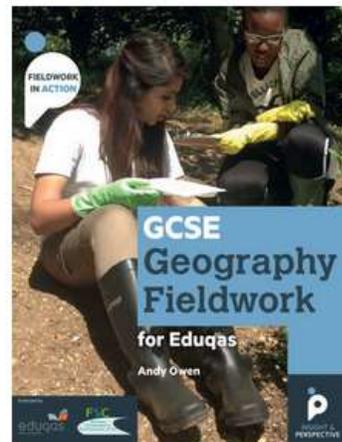


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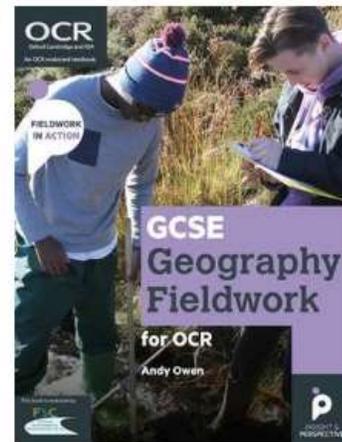


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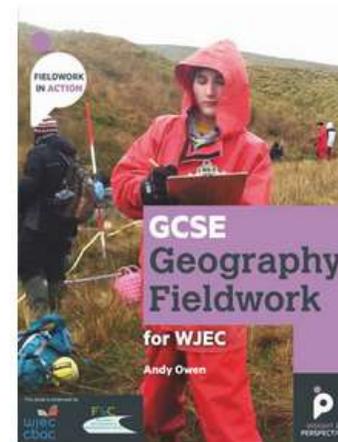


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