



STEP D

BEHAVIOURAL SURVEY



TIME: 1/2 day or two shorter sessions with observations taking place between them.



MATERIAL: photocopies of maps (A3/A4), acetate sheets, permanent pens or markers, flip charts.



PEOPLE: the working team and all willing participants.



WHAT IS A BEHAVIOURAL SURVEY?

A Behavioural Survey is an exercise in observing how people act in and react to their environment. It entails the observation of people using an area, space or facility. From these observations deductions can be made on the kind of activities that a space or area encourages or prevents from taking place, and also on the design features and other characteristics of a space or area that encourage or discourage such activities and interaction. The resulting information is very useful for the development of design guidelines for spaces and areas.

However, as accurate and detailed as the information gained through observation may be, unguided observation in itself is not sufficient. You will need to decide what to observe and for what purpose before you start observation; use the previous steps and discussions as the basis for these decisions. Furthermore, some kind of coding framework is necessary in order to simplify the observation process and the mapping of your findings. These are important issues that you must decide upon prior to the survey.

Recording different behavioural patterns at the scene can be difficult, especially if these patterns are complex. Observation may be supplemented by video-recording (get permission for this); you can replay what you recorded and interpret it later while drawing upon the outcomes of the past working sessions.

In practice, by observing behaviour in a public or semi-public space (e.g. people sitting on benches or crossing the road) or the effects of behaviour on a place (e.g. litter or graffiti), a behavioural study can help you to:

- identify the functions that a space (e.g. a street, square or play area) or facility (e.g. a building) in your neighbourhood was originally designed for;
- find out what that space or facility is actually used for;
- reveal patterns of use of that space or facility which inhibit the intended functions;
- help understand the appropriateness (or otherwise) of the design, the organisation and management of the space or facility;
- identify the limitations that the space or facility imposes on its use as a result of its specific design and other characteristics;
- identify changes to the space or facility which would support a wider range of uses and discuss the potentials for their implementation.

The observations gained through a Behavioural Survey will reveal by whom, for what purpose, and how the space or facility is used, and will help you understand its strengths and weaknesses. The study generates a series of snapshots, annotations and reflections of the interaction of people and space over a period of time, establishing their compatibility and the adequacy of the space and its intended activities. By observing people's use of a street, square, play area or building, for instance, attributes like comfort, danger, relaxation, safety etc. will come to your mind that help you to assess their people-friendliness, i.e. the degree to which their design encourages or discourages the gathering, movement and interaction of people.

NOTES TO FACILITATOR

Maps are needed to carry out this exercise. You can get advice on where to obtain Ordnance Survey maps from your local council planning office.

Ordnance Survey Maps can be expensive but a photocopy from a local A-Z can be a good substitute. (Always respecting copyright).

Always keep in mind the outcomes from previous meetings and exercises. The team will be able to recognise the progress they are making.

When preparing a time schedule remember that this exercise produces snapshot observations at fairly regular time periods. Therefore, you do not need to be on the spot for 24 hours a day. You will choose to observe a space at times which you consider crucial.

Observation time can vary: you can observe for a period of 10 minutes to an hour, and you should repeat the observation at regular intervals throughout morning, afternoon, evening, normal week-days, week-ends, during particular events (that are, somehow, typical of the area, such as a football match for example).

Observations conducted during a weekday (say Wednesday) and a weekend day (say Saturday) are likely to reveal quite different activity patterns.

It is helpful that the facilitator takes into consideration the following:

- for this exercise prepare maps of all the priority areas in your community area or neighbourhood. These will be used to record where specific observations or activities were made.
- allocate priority areas, spaces and facilities for observation to your team members; observation can be made individually or in pairs (e.g. one person mapping the place where activities occur, the other taking notes).
- Decide upon a time framework for observation. This can be done beforehand or as part of the discussion with the participants.
- Prepare photocopies of a simple matrix – such as the one shown on page 74 – for recording; it makes life easier for your observers.
- If a specific management or maintenance structure for the spaces or facilities exists, find out details about them by arranging meetings with those who are responsible for their delivery .



A space that can be transformed.

THE PROCESS: Behavioural Survey

1. Preparation

○ 30 mins

You should observe each of the priority areas identified separately. Start surveying each area in terms of priorities as identified earlier – those of being most urgently in need of improvement (use the Action Matrix as a guide).

The working team should discuss the spaces or facilities in the priority area and describe what they believe their intended functions are.

2. Instruction

○ 10 mins

Decide what to observe; generally, you will be observing people, activities, the settings, and timing. You will need therefore to prepare and agree upon a plan of action before you start the survey.

Find out which members of the team are available to observe behavioural patterns in this area and then draw up a timetable of tasks which details 'who' will observe 'what' and 'when'.

Make sure that each group of observers use the same time timetable so that all activities observed at the same time can be seen in conjunction.

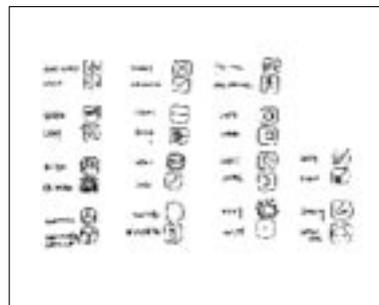
The easiest way to do this is to prepare a table for each observation task in each of the priority areas with the observation times indicated and space for the observer to enter information and comments. An example of such a matrix is given on page 73.

It is useful to have two observers work together; one to record observed activities and issues in the table, the other to plot the location of activities and issues in the map.

The issues you may want to explore in relation to the priority area might, for example, be:

- whether the area encourages or inhibits communication amongst its users, what type of communication takes place, and which of the area's features determine the above;
- whether the area generates segregation between different groups that use it, or whether it prevents some group from using it at all, and what particular design features of the space determine such segregation;
- whether the area is accessible to anyone at any time or not, and which characteristics allow or prevent this to happen;
- whether the area is perceived as secure or not and which characteristics generate that perception;
- whether the area allows one or more uses at the same time or at any time, and which features determine its versatility.

Decide what to observe (eg. noise, usage, litter, vandalism) and map those characteristics where they occur.



THE PROCESS continued

3. Conduct Study

○ Dependent upon timetable

Provide groups with the observation form (page 74) and map prepared in Step 2 for the priority area they are going to survey.

Agree a colour coding scheme for the mapping of activities (e.g. children: yellow; youngsters: orange; adults: red; elderly people: blue) and ensure that each group has all colour pens.

Send out the groups and ask them to record their observations marking each different issue (for example particular activities or specific problems like litter) on a separate map.

4. Collate

○ 1 hr

Each behavioural map that has been generated will contain information relating to:

- one specific priority area;
- the type of people using the space/facility;
- the time when the observation took place;
- indications of use, such as vandalism or litter.

It is now important to collate individual maps and establish a complete picture of the priority area at each different time slot observed.

For example, if a public square has been observed at 10 o'clock every day for one week you will have seven different maps to collate. To achieve this:

- place a sheet of tracing paper over one of the maps. Copy the information using one colour according to the colour choice made in Step 3:

- repeat this with each of the seven maps, using the same piece of tracing paper. The information will start to build up.

With the help of the resulting combined map and the activities recorded in the forms, anomalies, trends, problems and opportunities which have to be dealt with will be revealed.

Identify unintended behaviour and maintenance issues that might deter people from using the space, such as:

- unplanned uses;
- a dangerous overlap of uses;
- disused parts;
- litter and vandalism;
- overgrown vegetation;
- busy roads.



An example of a fully annotated behavioural map

5. Summarise

○ 1 hr+

Discuss with the whole team the patterns of use identified in the collated maps.

Translate the patterns of use you identified into statements such as:

- busy traffic on the main street deters the elderly from using the shops on the far side;
- the over-grown bushes around the play area encourage youngsters and adults to hang about on the benches and smash glass bottles etc.

Translate outcomes and priorities into 'action statements' such as, for example:

- add traffic calming and a new road crossing near the shops;
- remove bushes from around the play area.

Once the outcomes and priorities of the discussion are agreed upon by the working team, they have to be integrated in the Action Matrix last updated at the end of the Photographic Survey.

The updated matrix now represents a full Draft Neighbourhood Plan in terms of improvement actions and priorities.

Prepare the matrix for presentation at the next working session: it should include the identified strengths and weaknesses of spaces and facilities in each priority area, as well as the action statements and time priorities given to them.

Any new goals not originally included in the Action Matrix agreed upon during the Goal Setting need to be highlighted for discussion.

At this stage it is possible to take the information collected in the last four sessions and translate them into a Design Brief (Working Session G)

However, it is important to ensure that these outcomes are shared and understood by the community at large.

The next two stages, Multiple Sorting Task and Environmental Assessment will allow this to happen. Therefore it is not recommended to prepare a design brief at this point.

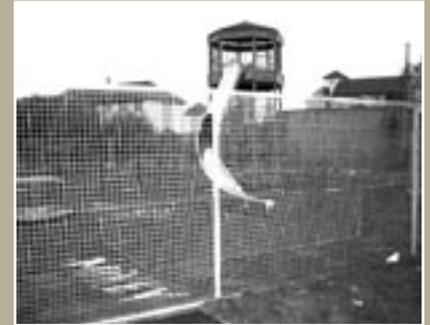
After the working session, contact all relevant local authorities and other public bodies and discuss your priority area programmes. It is important to get their feedback and also for them to be aware of your objectives so that they can advise you on the feasibility of your programme and, where appropriate, ensure cognisance is taken of your programme in their own plans.

EXAMPLE OF A BEHAVIOURAL SURVEY

The observation table below shows the behaviour that was observed in a play area, part of a 'priority area' identified in one of the pilot projects.

Initial concerns were raised because of the poor maintenance and inappropriate use of the space by older youths.

The lack of surveillance and the location of the space (directly behind the local off licence) were main issues of debate.



Time of day	What to observe: the use of a play area in one of the priority areas			
	e.g. Children alone	e.g. Youngsters	e.g. Adults with children	Issues of importance
Morning (9am)	none	none	three mothers with their toddlers, mothers talking with each other, toddlers playing in the sandpit	there is litter on the grass; there are stray dogs; there are no waste baskets
Lunchtime (12pm)	some children alone on the way home for lunch;	some youngsters from the nearby secondary school eating their lunch and throwing waste to the ground	none	there are some outsiders sitting on benches in the far corner drinking beer
Afternoon (4pm)	towards later afternoon more children on their way home from school, using equipment in play area	none	earlier in the afternoon more mothers with toddlers and children	lots of dogs; there is a lot of dog fouling
Evening (7pm)	none	lots of them hanging about, very noisy conversations and shouting and horse play; neighbours complain, some kick a ball about	none	it is also clear that the play area is not suitable for ball games (too small and not level); the youngsters seem to prevent other evening uses (noise etc.)

Form to record observations

Time of day	What to observe: the use of a play area in one of the priority areas			
	e.g. Children alone	e.g. Youngsters	e.g. Adults with children	Issues of importance
Morning				
Lunchtime				
Afternoon				
Evening				

BEHAVIOURAL SURVEY ACTION MATRIX

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