

Q-Step Internship: Evaluating Estates

Affinity Sutton

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Affinity Sutton is one of the largest house associations in the UK. Operating 58,000 homes, the company aims to tackle the shortage in affordable housing.

"We're a business for social purpose"
- Affinity Sutton

Objectives

The main task of the internship was to evaluate the benefits of a new quantitative research approach the company is planning to use. This new research strategy is called GIS Mapping, also known as Geotagging. The results must then be visualised and presented to the company at the end of the internship.

Other tasks include:

- Calculating the social well-being of estate residents using the HACT Methodology
- Understanding estate based investment tools (eFin, eQual, HACT)
- Understanding the basic operations of a housing association

Method

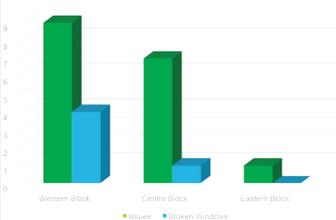
Geotagging focuses mainly on documenting the geographical coordinates of various estate-based assets. But deciding which variables should be geotagged was a challenge and required personal creativity.

Undertaking field work to the estate was a key solution to the challenge. Other than speaking to experienced professionals working in the company, a direct insight on understanding of estate based issues require a face to face conversation with residents living in the estates.

This led to three factors the research project focused in:

- Testing the Broken Window Theory
- Evaluating the quantity and geo-location of trees and its correlations with the estate's sense of belonging to the community
- Using Geotagging to help investment decisions in repairs and maintenance:

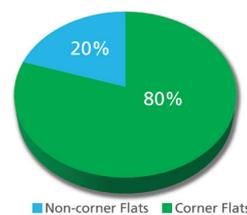
Key Findings



The graph on the left demonstrates the correlation between broken windows and anti-social behaviour. The results of the correlation confirms the broken window theory, which argues that if one broken window is left for too long, it will have a signalling effect. The effect is that the unfixed window demonstrates lack of authority, thus leading to more anti-social behaviour activities.



The graph on the left demonstrates the correlation between the geolocation of trees and anti-social behaviour activities. The findings prove that estate blocks with less natural territorial reinforcement, meaning less trees identifying the borders, have more anti-social behaviour activities.



The first step was to gather the top ten flats with the most amounts of repair calls and issue. It turns out that 80% if the flats have a similar trend of issues: damp and leaking walls. After further investigation, the cause of damp on corner flats are caused the cracked external walls of the flats. Further investment in plastering these walls are therefore recommended.

Impact

- Understood the different estate based investment tools (eFin, eQual and HACT)
- Recommended a new research strategy that will help the company evaluate investment decisions
- Emphasised estate based issue that were not taken under consideration before the project
- Emphasised the importance of qualitative data (fieldwork experiences)