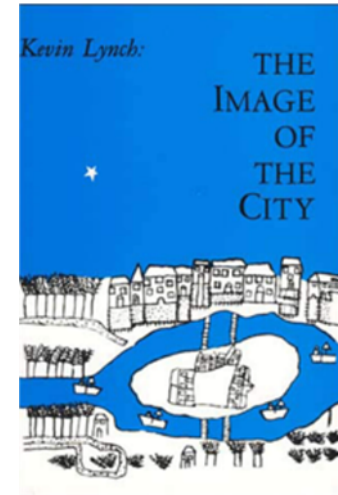What's in our mind (maps) today?

FREE
WIFI
GREAT
IRISH
COFFEE

MIMOSAS $6

Revisiting Kevin Lynch's work on the image of the city in the digital age.

Pauline Niesseron
Cecile Poullain

Sponsored by:

THE ACADEMY OF URBANISM
young urbanists

Kevin Lynch's approach: the image of the city

- Urban designer and planner - *Image of the city* (1960)

- How physical forms contribute to our navigation and collective image of the city?

- **5 identified physical elements helping us to navigate cities**
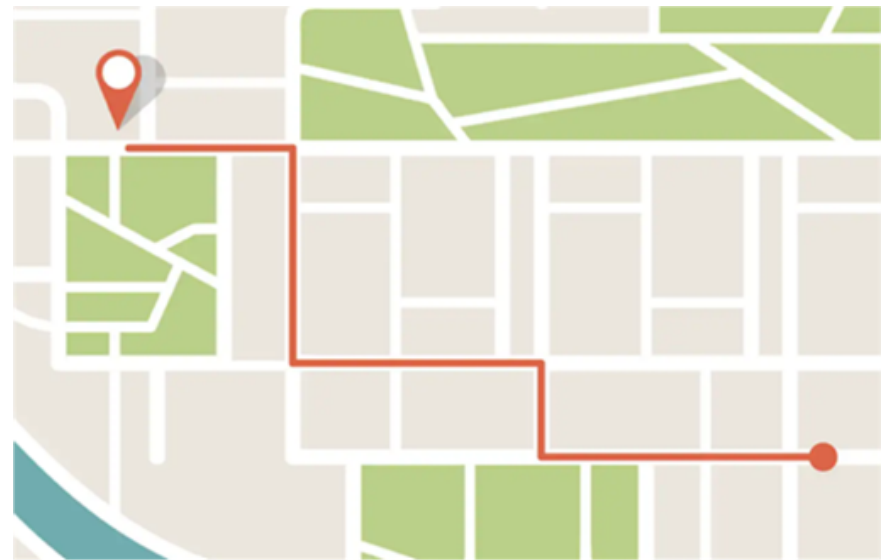
- **Mind maps** as a tool

THE ELEMENTS OF A CITY

PATH   NODE   LANDMARK   EDGE   DISTRICT

Landmarks
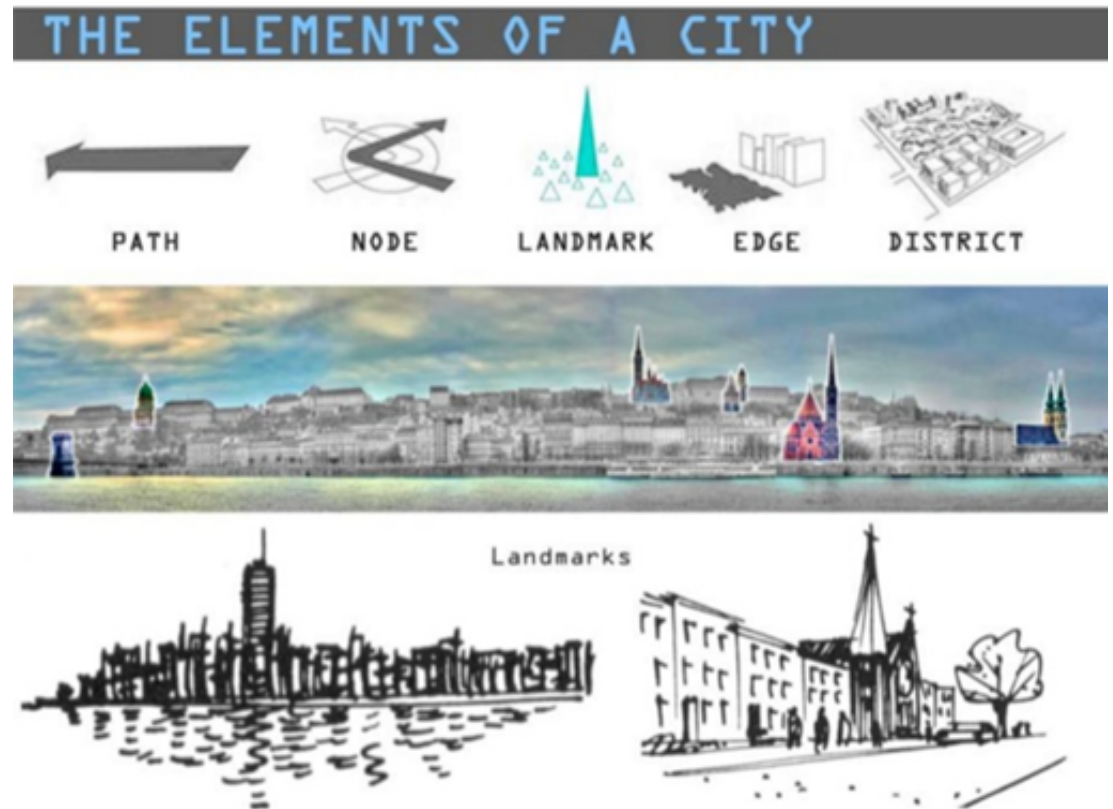
Our assumption for this project

Smartphone is a new tool to perceive and practice our urban environment.

What difference does it make in our:

- Navigation & practice of our urban environment
- Perception & Imageability of the city

Our approach

- January 21 - Awarded YU Small Grant.

- March 21 - **Online survey: *Can you survive in the city without your smartphone?***

- May & June 21 - **2 online workshops** with 15 participants total.

- July 21 - Final event presenting the research outcomes.

- Next - Publishing a short report and infographics on the Academy of Urbanism website
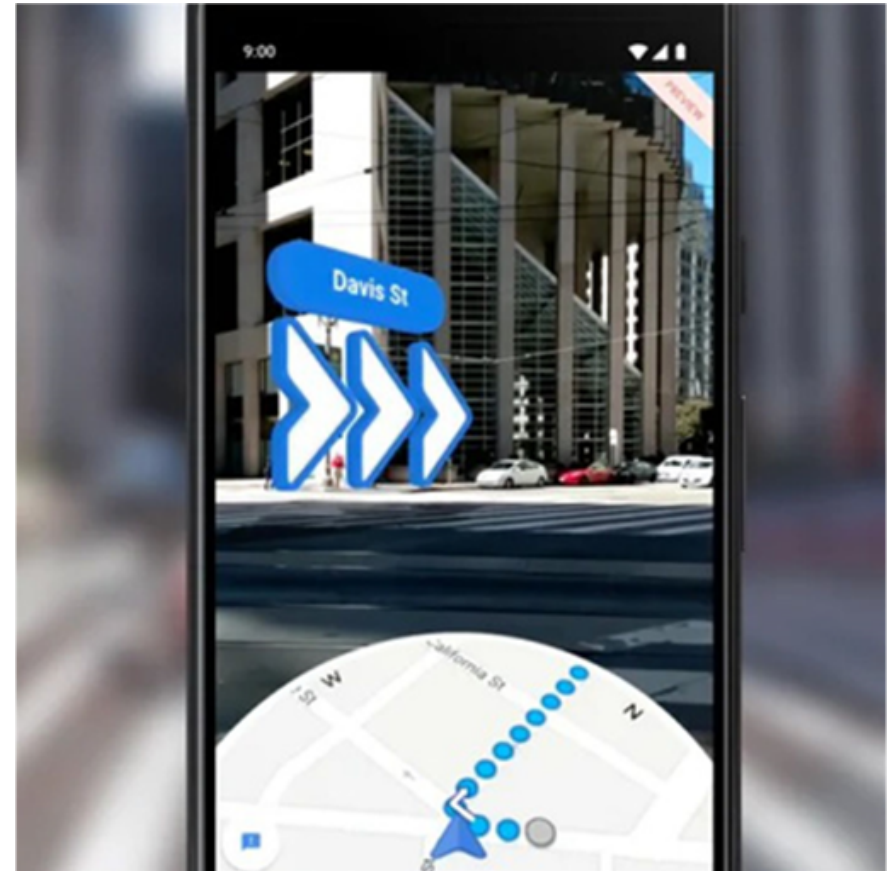
What are our findings of the online survey?

Online survey

Objective: Understand the use of smartphones while people are in the city

Who responded?
- Over 200 respondents
- Majority of the respondents were 45 years old

Poll: Can you survive in the city without your smartphone?

YES we can...

YES we can BUT...

>>>>>> **96% of respondents** take their smartphone when leaving their house

.. and for 76% of the respondents, it's a must-have!

Respondents' views

''Survive, yes. But I choose not to''

''Yes I could "survive" but I would probably feel anxious.''

''No - I wouldn't be able to carry the equivalent amount of equipment with me.''
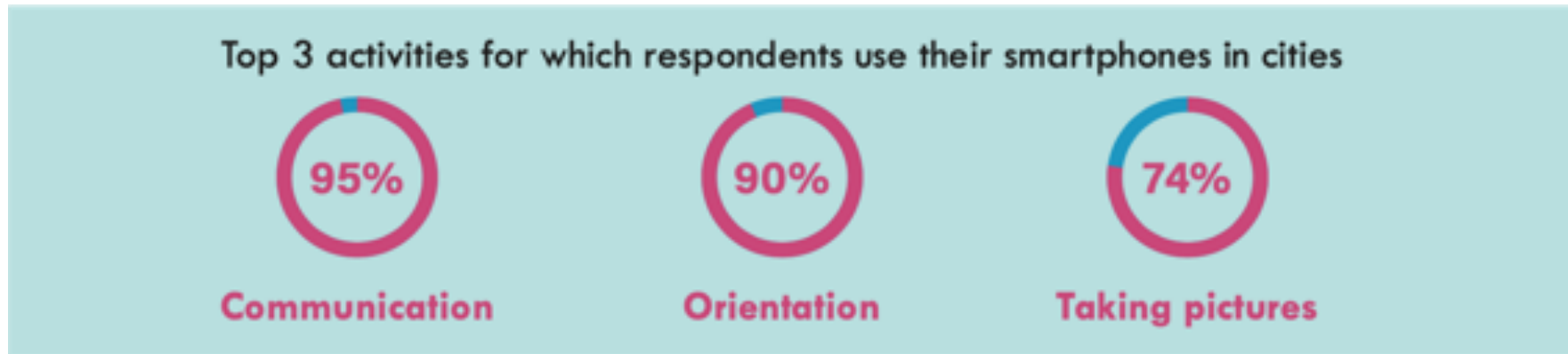
"No - functions as an extension of me!"

''No if retaining the same lifestyle (i.e. not planning on advance, checking opening hours).''

''I'm part of this generation that feel a kind of a vacuum when I don't have my phone.''

How do people use smartphones?

Top 3 activities for which respondents use their smartphones in cities

95% Communication

90% Orientation

74% Taking pictures

-- Other common activities for 1 in 2 respondents:

When do people leave their smartphone behind?

62% of respondents were more comfortable going out in their local area without their smartphone; especially when going to a park, walking, or doing sports activities.

33% vs 8% The more confidence people have in their navigational skills, the more likely they are to leave their phone at home (33%) compared to people without solid orientation skills (8%).

Only 15% of respondents won't take their smartphones for local activities

Smartphones generally make moving across the city more accessible....

Smartphones as a navigation tool seems to enhance understanding and improve practicality of the urban environment through:

- **Orientation**
- **Transportation**
- **Experience**

For **61%** of respondents, moving across the city has been made more accessible with the range of transport options and applications available.
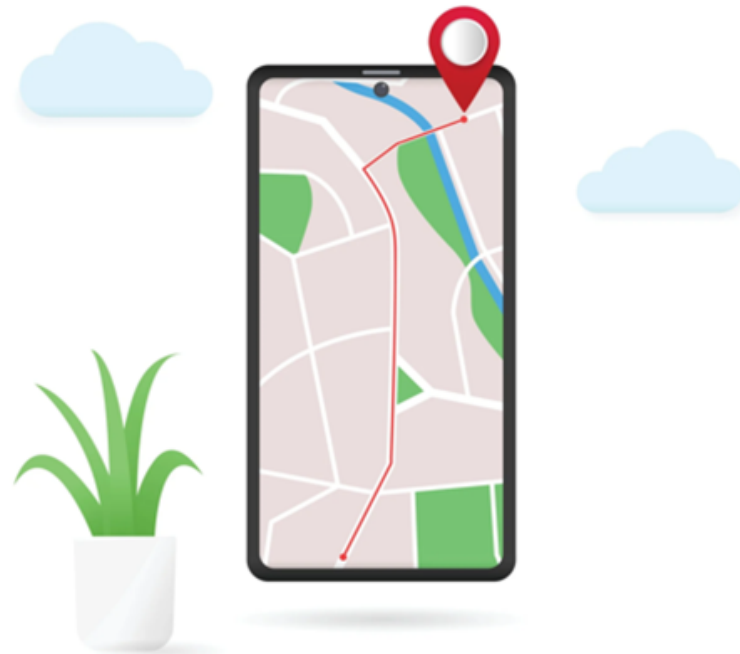
Next step: 2 workshops

To test our assumptions with 15 participants in total on how people use smartphones in cities in relation to:

Navigation

Imagealsility
KEVIN LYNCH

MENTAL IMAGE:
- VITAL TO ORIENTATION
- WAYFINDING
- GENERAL WELL-BEING
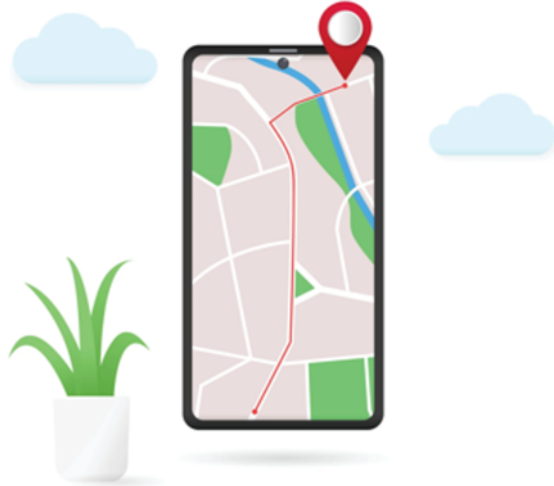
What are our findings from the survey & workshop on navigation?

Navigation apps vs Physical settings

Objective: How much are physical settings still relevant in our navigation when moving across the city?

Findings:

- Lynch's core elements are still widely use for navigation

- Google Map's vision of a place <u>versus</u> the nitty gritty and reality of cities

- Google map provides a limited version of a place

- **Risks with navigation app:**
  - Promoting a place over another
  - People more short sighted while using navigation apps
  - It doesn't capture the more daily, detailed or community approach of places

Navigation apps can be a real support for some people

- **2 different navigation profiles:**

    - More methodical approach to navigation and maybe less confident in orientation skills

    - More spontaneous/sensorial approach and a better understanding of their environment

- Use of smartphone might differ depending on people's profile

- **37% of respondents relied more on their smartphone** than physical landmarks when navigating a new place.
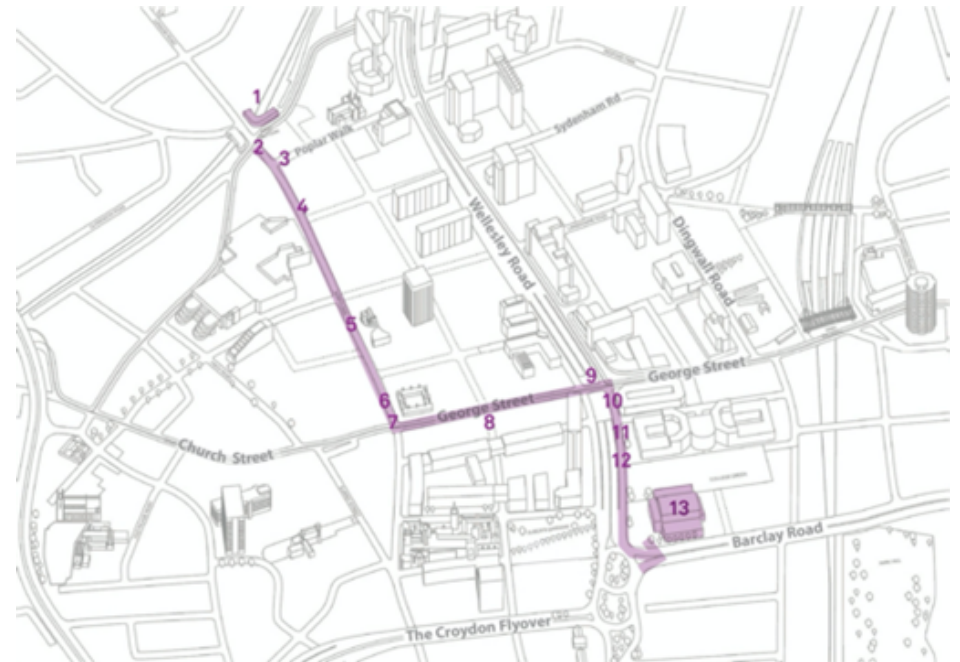
Different ways to guide ourselves through the city

Google Map instruction:

1. Walk out and to the left
2. Take the first left and then a right on Wardour street
3. Turn left right before going under the Chinatown gate
4. Jog slightly to the left and take Great newport street to Long Acre
5. Pass Five Guys on the right and continue until Boots is on the right
6. At Boots, turn right and cross into covent garden
7. Halfway through Covent Garden, turn left and take Russell street to Drury lane
8. Right on Drury lane and left around the strand
9. At the end of the curve continue towards the river to Arundel St all the way to the station

Physical landmarks remain important to orientation

However physical setting remains key to orientation for respondents:

44% use physical landmarks and navigation apps equally to navigate the city

78% still use physical landmarks to find their way in a new place

What physical elements according to Lynch do people use most?

UNDERGROUND

YES I can survive BUT...what?

- Most of respondents have answered YES to survive in the city without their smartphone

- Leaving the smartphone behind is mostly **for wandering around or getting lost**

- People pointed out an **unhealthy dependence** on their smartphone

What difference do smartphones make in our navigation of the city?

"If the city is accessible and has plenty of landmarks and is laid out in a way that makes navigation easy then yes I can survive!"

What are our key findings from the survey & workshop on imageability?

Our cities feel more familiar places with smartphone

What difference do smartphones make in our navigation of the city?

84% of respondents consider that smartphones have definitely or possibly helped them to know their city better.
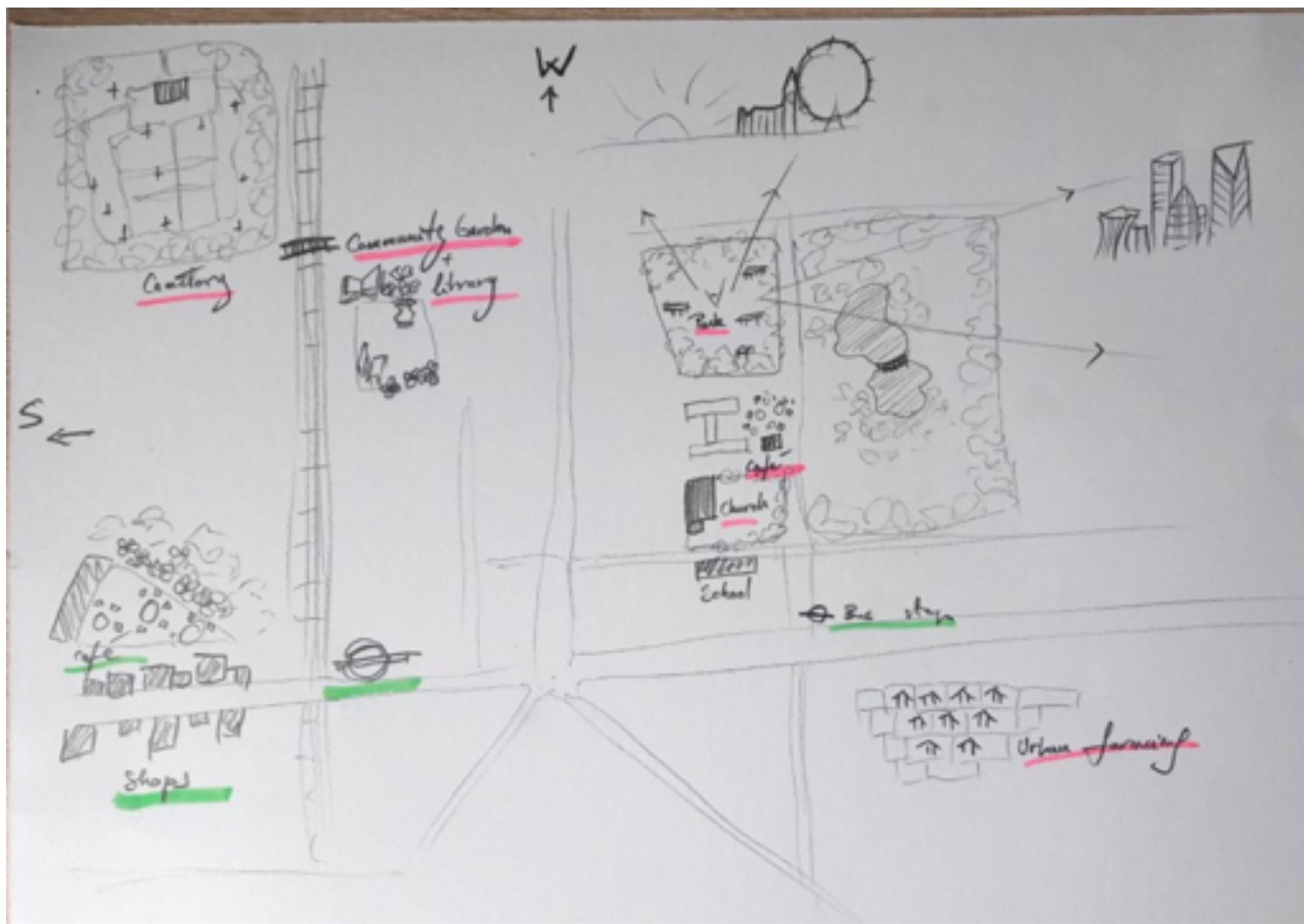
The city feels...

... more convenient and accessible to travel
... safer to explore
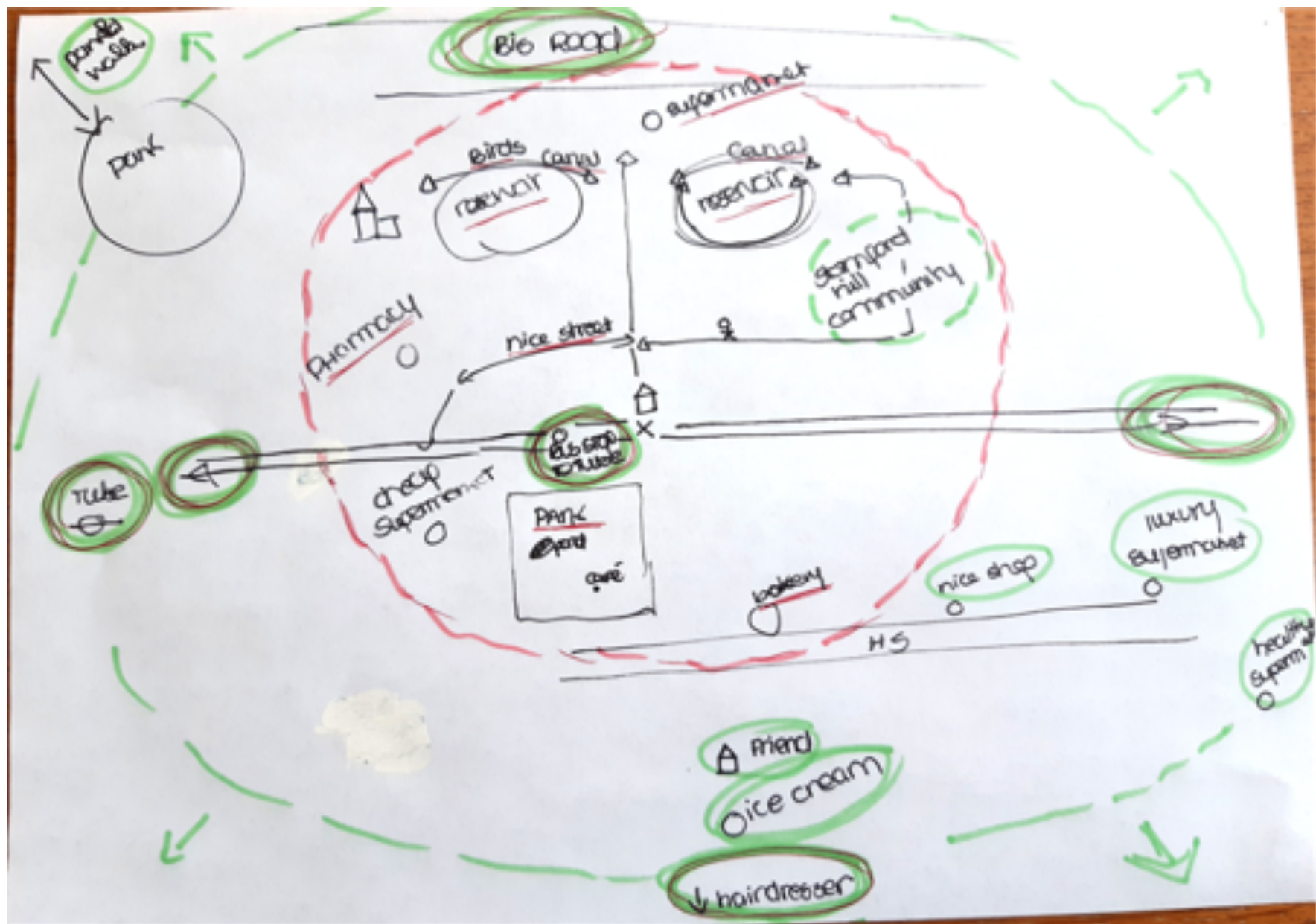... always within reach - allowing people to experience places more fully

Smartphone contributes to our understanding of places

Smartphone is a real companion in cities and contributes to our personal knowledge and mental image of places for the following reasons:

- Orientation
- Exploration of new places
- Practical & efficient
- Experience and knowledge of places
- Taking pictures

Cemetery

Community Garden + Library

W ↑

S ←

Park

Cafe

Church

School

Bus stop

Cafe

Shops

Urban farming

Smartphone, a tool to share personal experience with others

- Smartphone is a support:
  - To remain **connected with different networks**
  - Be **part of a collective experience** through sharing daily life experiences from their smartphones.

- How personal experience captured through our smartphone is becoming part of a collective experience and image of places?
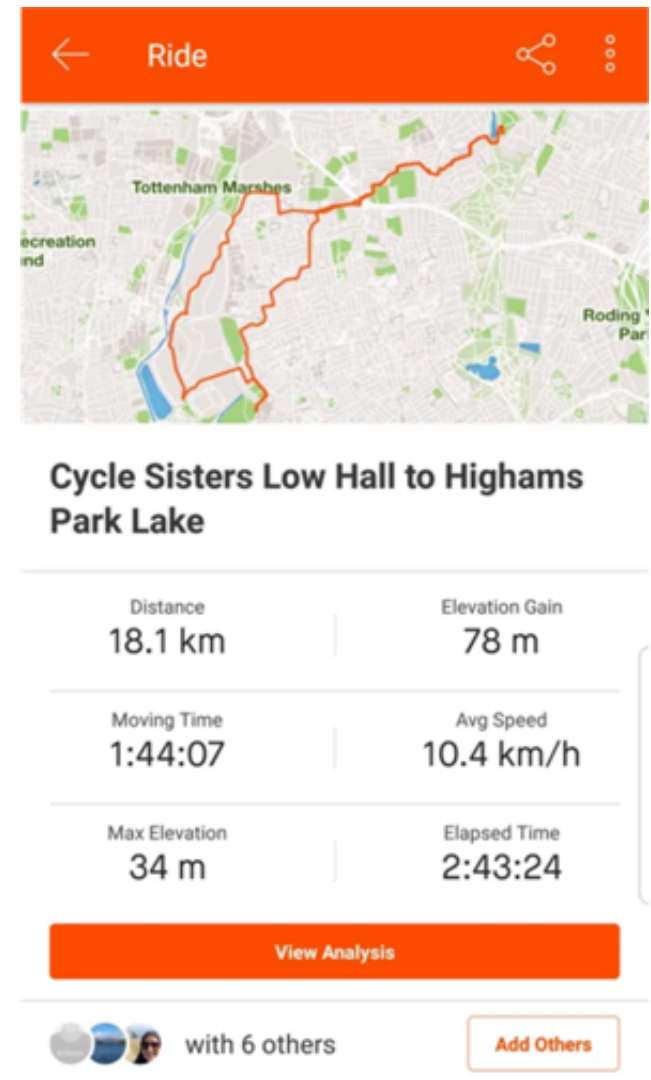
Overall, smartphones create new habits in our practice of the city

''No (I can't survive) if retaining the same lifestyle (i.e. not planning on advance, checking opening hours).''

''I'm part of this generation that feel a kind of a vacuum when I don't have my phone.''

New habits in our practice of the city:

- o More purpose driven trips

- o Optimised experience of a place or area based on online information available

- o Less preparation time required for maybe more 'spontaneous' trips

- o More individualised trips based on the person's preferences

Almost there… our conclusion!

- **Smartphones facilitate our navigation in cities** with access to new and live information tools through transportation and navigation applications.

- **Smartphones make most of us feel more comfortable in cities** in relation to accessibility, safety and experience.

- The use of smartphone in cities influences:
  - Our **mental image of places** through navigation apps
  - Our **approach of cities** with new tools and habits

Discussion: questions to you (1/2)

Sidewalk vision for Toronto

LEGIBILITY - Should cities be more legible to allow for all users to find their way without a smartphone?

Poll questions:

- Do you think the extensive use of smartphones for navigation can have a long term impact on the design of places?
- Do you think cities can become more legible and simpler to navigate without smartphone?

Discussion: questions to you (2/2)

NAVIGATION - With cities becoming more complex, how can navigation apps capture the more special character of places?

Poll questions:

- Do you think smartphone is our 'audio-guide' to the future megalopolis?

- Is it the role of navigation apps to provide information on the local knowledge of places such as existing open sources maps?
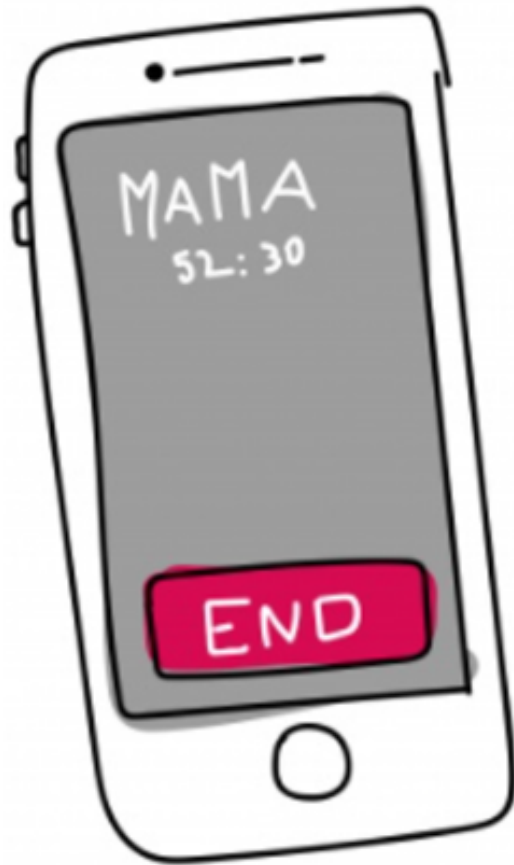
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p.niesseron@gmail.com