urban factorisation report
Imagine if we could help you understand the factors that made your city what it is, and how to make it more liveable, while retaining the character that has been so uniquely its own. A character built by its inhabitants, whether they were there for a day or a lifetime. A character that is its uniqueness, its brand. A character that tells the story of who it is through its people, their stories and interconnected histories within its spaces and places. **This urban factorisation is not only a wishful potential but it is what factors will help you achieve and go beyond.**

Urban factorisation enables a city, and its decision makers, to keep building upon its uniqueness and remain the place people want to visit or live. It empowers them to build the future without destroying the essence of the place with misguided plans. Urban factorisation engages in a holistic, multidisciplinary and collaborative user centred approach that can enhance the chances of the city and minimize erroneous changes which emerge from ‘best practice’ attempts of imitating another city, aspirling to be what it is not, or trying to force what it can be.

Urban factorisation facilitates the decoding of the framework of the city as it reaches out from the olden-days, staging the to-days, forming the playgrounds of future-days. Through immersion, investigation and interpretation, factors will work with cities and their consultants to develop the tools and methodologies that create flexible systems’ frameworks that support the development of a city’s growth and future, with people at the core of the methodology, the understanding, the development and the experience systems. Urban factorisation enables the experiencer to see a city through the many perspectives engaging with it through a multitude of personae. The experiencer can then understand the city from the point of view of a child, or that of a mother, a teenager, a father, a businessman, a labourer, a grandparent or even long lost ancestors. It will allow them to experience a city as if they were a native and open up hidden treasures akin to having explored the city for a very long time, mixed with the awe and wonder of a first time transient.

Every city has a story to tell, one that can be as ancient as the oldest civilizations, or as new as the people imagining and inventing it today. We can help a city understand and build upon its framework which will allow its people to write their own stories within its passageways and its walls, within its straight lines and its curves. Through urban factorisation we empower cities to be places where the future is designed by the memories of its past, the action of its present and the needs of its future. We develop cities where there is a constant feedback loop between people, framework and space. We move beyond the idea of ‘smart’ cities that are created through integrating technologies, to SMART intelligent and empathetic cities by engaging their humanities.

To understand that framework and the application of urban factorisation take an example one of the most beloved urban dwellings today. Amsterdam. A place where time takes its time. A place with such slowness and cosiness there is even a word for it in Dutch; gezelligheid. But yet nothing is perfect. Let’s take a journey through Amsterdam by roaming through some of the factors that form its experience framework.
The song of the city is the interplay of every factor that makes up the city. Every city I have encountered has welcomed me with a special song, a harmony that talks about its mood and its place, its sense of self and its history.

The song of the city is the interplay of sounds and sites, of music and architecture, of heartbeats, drumbeats and spaces, with people. That reciprocation is what leads the conception of ‘invisible cities’ as portrayed by Italo Calvino in his book ‘Invisible Cities’. Uncovering and understanding that song is understanding the zeitgeist of the city at specific point in its history and throughout its history. The built environment of the city and its in between spaces are the instruments that the inhabitants form and build to overtly build its song. Yet those build concrete physical spaces, those instruments, covertly influence the way the harmony is played at any given point in time and in turn influences the evolution of the harmony and the song in the future and the behaviour of the people towards it, or because of it. This gestalt is a two-way constant ebb and flow with the human influencing the physical and the physical influencing the human.

To visualise the portrait of a city through a song we can think of it as an opera with its own libretto telling its story through sound and movement, through colour and timbre. Yet within a certain opera there are a multitude of arias that have very different tones and tell very different sub-stories. Each one of these arias depends on the character telling it and the instruments to tell their own part of the whole. Nevertheless even an aria can have so many different interpretations depending on the mode and state of mind of the interpreter and the observer.

As an opera, a city sings its song to its inhabitants and its visitors. It sings a song that evolves and cumulates the more you get to know the city. At first when you encounter this new city, this new friend, this new lover the song is simple yet mostly hopeful, for all the possibilities and the encounters to come. It reminds you of a song you have heard before, a song that is familiar that you can relate to, but it slowly filters in songs from that culture that you hadn't yet.

From the moment I first arrived, made my way to my new home and meandered across the canals of Amsterdam I was hearing a very distinct Jacques Brel in my mind. He transported me to the old port, where the ladies of the night and the sailors used to strike up momentary friendships. Where I could still hear the rogue voices of these visitors in a district that is painted red by the oldest profession known to man. Passing me through the flower market, where the clinging of the vases and the call of the flower sellers drowned the sound of the boats on the canals underneath. Through the munt plein where the song of the bell tower lets us imagine the stamping of coins in the most melodious of movements that tell stories of capitalism.
and colonialism. Jacques Brel’s songs, upon which I had grown up, were my map. Through their multilingualism they lead me through the flatlands, from spires that were the only mountains, to cathedrals whose stony devils hung on to fluffy cloudy skies...

A city is not one song, or one tune, or one singer. Functioning cities evolve in harmony with themselves and with the people who create that harmony and experience it; synchronously musicians and audience.

Slowly the songs in my head merge with song coming out from brown cafés like Andree Hazes singing a Dutch romanticism, from street musicians singing a Dutch pragmatism, from the sound of the language and conversations on the streets singing a Dutch rationalism. It builds up like layers of an orchestra. At first it is a warm-up cacophony. All instruments are screeching over each other, and then slowly as musicians and people find a congruous harmony, they start sounding more and more like a homogeneous whole that is made of so many unique and heterogeneous parts.

These songs and these arias come together through the people of Amsterdam, through its ‘musicians’, not through a master composer that imposes a song on the city but through a culmination of layers that have amalgamated through time and through people.

However much they try, no composer and no conductor can impose a song on a city. It will always challenge him and end up being what the people want it to be. Even the most choreographed place, such as Celebration, the town in Florida imagined and developed by the Walt Disney Company, still beats to the tune of its own people’s drums. Celebration demonstrates the danger of a choreographed city by highlighting a monodimensionalism that only comes from a forced existence. Its inhabitants have all gone through a selection process and been chosen upon very specific criteria eliminating diversity of the song of Celebration. However even this monotonous group manages to still have some individualised side songs, especially as the generations grow and deviate from the pre-set narrow framework, proving that no city experience can be choreographed.

Imagine what you then have when a city doesn't follow a prescribed formula, when you watch history take its course and the people sing their songs! It makes every city so unique and so wonderful. Some of the same people and cultures end up in different places, yet these places don't end up having the same songs. It is because the place, the space, the history, the environment, the weather and all other factors are unique instruments that get similar or the same people to compose such different songs in such different places.

Mixing together the locals and the immigrants, the elder with the children, the ages, the backgrounds and so on, one can only imagine what wonderful auditory harmonic stories one can anticipate hearing, and the reality is always so much more colourful than the anticipation.

It is very important to listen to these songs, to understand the overall opera, to decipher the individual aria and design areas that are in harmony with the people who have composed that multilayered and rich story, otherwise you start having a cacophony that is similar to that experienced by a new visitor but one that does not settle or become harmonious as you listen but ends up staying a series of discombobulated notes screaming incoherently at each other.

As I explore a city more in depth, and as I get to know it more intimately, with time these urban operas become more anticipative. I can navigate through them more blindly yet constantly hear new notes I had not heard before, even if they sound different and are being interpreted differently depending on my state of mind and that of the city. Yet even through all that variation and constant difference they still allow me to understand the city and the people that made and make that city, that have taken over that urban dwelling and have called it their home.

It is natural that we tend to conglomerate to places where we know we might have complementary people to us, but even this aggregation of similars still has enough diversity to write very different tunes and distinctive songs. People are not static they keep moving and the songs keep changing adding layers upon layers to the opera and the libretto without changing its essence and its core.
When factorising a city and its song it is important to take a look at where this song is performed, from the commonest location, the street, to the highest of shrines, the opera houses and concert halls, passing by every cultural institution, every living room, every radio station, every dance club, basically every space where the song is either performed, listened to or where contributions are made.

We cannot and should not contribute to the building or reinvigoration of a city’s tangible and intangible assets without taking into account, understanding and integrating these spaces, these places and these services, including the policies that make and protect them, with the people that experience and grow through them.

These gathering spaces, these institutions and ‘performance’ locations are not only the spaces where you will hear or participate to the song. They are also the gateways to our culture, to our past, to our future, to our history, to our ingenuity, to our sorrows, to our triumphs, to everything that has made us human or has connected us to the nature and the universe we live in.

These places are part of the covert intelligence of a city. They are where citizens are created and futures are written. They are the third places as described by Ray Oldenburg.

In Amsterdam these ‘performance’ places are part of the urban heritage, very well protected, as they are also part of the cultural and national heritage. They take shape in the form of museums that vary from the colonial, to the artistic, to theatres and concert-halls, to performance stages, and many others. The Dutch have been very good at taking these civic places and protecting them in order to protect their human heritage to the extent of almost excluding their current human capital from them. The fact that you have to pay to enjoy most cultural places and can’t freely engage with them, marginalises those who can’t afford it from connecting with this cultural life. Seeing the demographics of Amsterdam that is a rather sizeable portion of its population. This ends up reserving the best of the Amsterdam’s cultural life as a playground for the tourists and the well off.

The higher the brow of the cultural expression in Holland the higher the price you have to pay to enjoy it. Unfortunately that applies to many countries and cities, where access to the culture is not universally accessible.

The Dutch have been good at reserving free access to their cultural institutions for specific times of the year through festivals like the Uitmarkt, the Amsterdam Heritage Days, through free weekly access like the free lunch concerts at the Concertgebouw or the free jazz evening at the Bimhuis. You can get a taste of a ‘democratised’ culture if you are aware of the secrets of the provision. That selective democratisation is restrictive in terms of access to the citizens and visitors alike making these
gateways like drawbridges with many a window. You can see the treasures through them but you don't get to taste their bounties except occasionally.

That type of exclusion has a lot of repercussions on the people. It creates a sense of alienation between them and the civic society. It removes them from any integration within civic and cultural life in the short and long term. Cultural and civic inclusion and integration should thus be considered as part of the educational, and the civic engagement platforms and policies, down to immigrant integration which the Dutch are very keen on.

On the other hand culture, history, art, design are very ingrained in the national education and are a matter of national pride that you don't need to convince the Dutch public of the necessity of cultural governmental expenditure. They demand it in many ways, even if they don't have complete access to it. Their national pride is build as much on Van Gogh and Rembrandt, the National Ballet and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra as it on Droog Design, typography, architecture and many other such achievements.

That pride has given rise to other ways of making their culture accessible to the masses through 'performance' spaces that are open and public, through the plethora of festivals that are free, making art in its different forms more accessible to the people. It also comes through the markets, the café spaces, the street performers, the artistic endeavours as well as the means of transport. The markets are a place of cultural exchange that are always open and available to everyone, providing a platform of exchange that is more constant and upon which the people can build. That is of course aided by the common modes of transport of which bicycles are a big part.

Being a pedestrian or a biker gets you to explore the culture of a city, something barely possibly as a car user in the city. The bike paths and the walkways in Amsterdam are a big part of the cultural backbone of the city. They allow the people to engage with the city and its culture more deeply, hear its stories and contribute to them.

Public transport stations have in some cases also been transformed into cultural spaces, such as the Nieuwmarkt where the station design tell the story of the neighbourhood. Those stories extends and connect upwards on the street level in the Waag which used to be a city gate and weighing house, a guildhall, a museum, a fire station, an anatomical theatre, innovation and technology house and a café restaurant. The stories also extends to the square, the old port, the red light district, the old church, Chinatown and so on like ripples in the water.

On the other hand that traditional democratic cultural space in Amsterdam, which had long countered the less democratic cultural institution has been seeing a reversal of influence on the street level. The street level and its energy as a cultural platform or performance space have been battling the space taken by the museums extending their bubble beyond their peripheral walls.

If you go the Eye Museum the newly built film institute across the Ij from the central station, you will find yourself facing a rather uninviting streetscape that does not provide a place to sit and gather protected from the elements. It does provide concrete stairs to sit on, but no cover, no green spaces, no protection from the winds of the Ij or the North Sea sun. The building tries to suck you in as soon as it can through a rather awkward staircase in the back. The space inside, which is meant for museumgoers, café consumers and flinglers, so basically paying customers, is a beautiful framing of the Ij, Centraal Station and the area around it. Instead of spreading its cultural expression onto the street level it vacuums the streets in. The same can be seen happening on the museum plein especially with the new Stedelijk and others. How did this happen?

When planning a cultural institution or a cultural space, and the cultural aspects of an urban experience we need to consider the way they are experienced by the people and how the people influence these institutions through different touchpoints.

The first touchpoint is the tangible manifested through the physicality and the physical attributes of the space, the building, the exterior expression and the interior space.

The second touchpoint is the intangible manifested through the brand (planned or unplanned), the virtual presence, the interactivity, the memory it leaves, its sensory footprint, the attachments it creates and the aspirations it builds.

The third touchpoint is also intangible as it is through education, the educational outreach of the institution to schools, its educational programs and mission, its legacy with the younger generation as well as the educational programs within its walls.

The fourth touchpoint is tangible again as it is the way a cultural institution and its physical presence interacts with the city and the city interacts with it.

All of these touchpoints are the covert manifestations of city's expression on its people, its inhabitants and their experiences. Together all these touchpoints should form a symbiotic experience that connects the institutions to the city and the institutions to each other. Unless we work on connecting all the points of experience of the city we will miss on creating a holistic interconnected city to experience, explore and live in.
In order to uncover another layer of a city and its holistic user experience we need to look at a city's mobility and accessibility. The level to which a city is inclusive and experienced by all its people and inhabitants relies heavily on the level of their mobility in the city and the level of integration of the modes of transportation with each other and the street level.

Accessibility, which is the ability for users to gain complete access to the city's life, infrastructure and services, is a key aspect of integration of experience and a major collaborator to making cities more liveable. Accessibility massively relies on mobility. Accessibility also plays on people's sense of belonging and wellbeing.

The way a city is designed liberates and makes more accessible the constraints of the urban setting. It defines the users' ways of life and their interaction with a city and its inhabitants. If city dwellers have to spend a lot of time during the day commuting from home (the first place) to school or work (the second places), they are left with very little time to interact with the third place and the fabric of life that takes place there.

In terms of transportation everyone wants to be Amsterdam. Well they think they do. The biking haven that is Amsterdam is the envy of every city that is trying to be more connected and more sustainable. In many regards it is. It is a city that moves more humanely than others because it's mobility is linked to modes of transportation that are either pedestrian or to human scale.

It is a very legible city since the pace with which you read the street level is mostly powered to a rate that is slow and allows one to look around. That in turn makes the design of the street level more compact and condensed since one has more time to read and decipher the street level.

Even when in a bus or tram they move slower in the heart of the city than they do in other cities to contend with the whizzing bikers and the crisscrossing pedestrians.

That in turn affects the way people bike and the bikes they use. When watching people bike in Amsterdam and the Netherlands in general...
they are bobbing along, swaying on bikes that are sturdy and efficient. These bikes rarely have gears and in some cases have backpedal brakes. It is in the reflexes. No road warriors there, no helmets, no lycra or spandex, no messenger looks and activity detachment.

Biking is an integral part of the day and no need for a ritualistic change of clothes as if it has its own party going on. Men and women ride sharing the road equally, which is not the case in aspiring biking societies. Women's bikes, or oma fiets, have low middle bars to accommodate skirts and the pedals can hook your high heels for extra grip. Wearing a hat is a great way to protect yourself from mild elements, as long as you make sure you pin or strap that hat very securely on otherwise you will end up running after it.

When cities get all excited about mimicking Amsterdam's biking cultures the connections are not made to understand why Amsterdam is so and why it works there.

Of course to start with it is an issue of mentality. We are talking about the Dutch after all, very hearty and very Calvinistic even the most atheistic of them. The sense of deserving and accumulating rights with age and experience manifests itself in biking as well. You won't deserve the rights to more comfortable means until you have earned those rights. So old bike before new bike, new bike before public transport, public transport before scooter, scooter before car. Whenever biking campaigns were conducted throughout the country's history it always hit the right note in that sense of deserving.

That might be why it worked as well to have priority for pedestrians and bikers on the streets, in city and town centres the right to speed is taken away and you have to deserve that by leaving the city or your car. In the centres the speed limits is lowered giving more freedom to the slower moving entities. It is a policy that reinforces a mentality through a behavioural reinforcement.

The same reasoning is probably why children are on the bikes and have to get themselves around as soon as they can pedal. Family excursions or getting to the school, playing and exploration adventures, all happen on the bike.

This system is far from perfect though. Especially when it comes to shared public transport it does not offer choice or flexibility and it definitely does not accommodate chain transportation and does not offer integrated accessibility for those with limited mobility and do not live within the centre. It focused on getting people to the centre with a limited arsenal of train lines. If you are not close to one of them then your options are biking, buses that are slow or infrequent, or praying for either a jet pack or a flying carpet. With all its personal mobility, accessibility is rather limited in Amsterdam.

The transportation methodology and means in the Netherlands in general and in Amsterdam in specific should definitely be looked at and understood in order for them to be replicated and adapted as they offer a wider accessibility to the city to its inhabitants and its visitors, at least in the centre. It has a very unique cachet and its character is very fitting to its inhabitants.

When it comes to building a city's transportation, accessibility and mobility strategy, duplicating Amsterdam's modes without understanding its holistic integration, its users, its people, its culture, and the policies that lead it to be what it is, will not lead to any effective change in behaviour or an evolution in ways of life an mobility in the city.
Having journeyed shortly together through Amsterdam we can look at how we were revealing the hidden worlds that make up that city in order to understand how it has emerged, how it is and how it will be.

These are but a few layers in the framework that make up the city and create a symbiosis between the effects of man on the city and the city on the man.

We can keep delving deeper into the hidden world of the city by looking at the virtual city, at food, streets and consumerism, its infrastructure, its energy, its architecture, its green and white spaces, its playgrounds, its history, its education, its health and wellbeing, its healthcare, its fear, its love and emotions.

Most importantly we need to delve into the world of its people, understand who they are as a group, as communities and as individuals, understand their connections and disconnections to the city and the place.

It is only through that understand of the city through the users and the people can we build our cities for the future, not only through bricks and mortar but through the people, through policies, through governances, through services and through the interconnection between the visible and the invisible, the virtual and the physical, to create our uniquely individualistic and cultured liveable cities.

Epilogue
User experience strategy: users

In order to build an unique user experience, especially in a urban setting, we need to look at the framework that allows the experiences and memories to happen.

Experiences are a series of memories that interconnect. Memories are a series of moments in time. Each moment in time is the intersection of the four cardinal points of a user's sense of being:

- Who is the user as an individual; which changes depending on our sense of connection to
- What community does the user belong to; an ever-changing sense of belonging that shifts through our day and throughout a lifetime
- What physical sphere the user is in
- How does it interconnect with the virtual realm.
User experience strategy: project

An effective urban factorisation strategy is a user centred approach that starts by putting the users and the stakeholders at the core of the development effort.

Through a holistic, multidisciplinary, collaborative approach all stakeholders, disciplines and parties co-create through design thinking methodologies to build a more sustainable liveable city.
User experience strategy: spatial strategy

The transformation of the approach to a user centred one, with community engagement and empowerment, allows the city to become a place that attracts people as well as preserves the place that people love.

This approach has a rippling effect extending from the end user to the built environment, to the public realm and the character and brand of the city, encapsulated with city's cultures, histories, traditions, lifestyles and ways of life.
Methodology: overarching

The general process and methodology is non linear, especially when approaching and developing a city. It starts with a deep immersion, from which emerges a cloud of strategic imagination feeding into tactical implementation whether in tangible or intangible applications.

The non linearity of the process allows constant growth and re-evaluation as the city and its framework grow and progress.
Methodology: immersion

Focusing on the first phase of the process, we look at immersion as a deep delving into what makes a city what it is, what defines its people, its systems, its character and its essence.

From the findings of the immersion emerges more specific themes that focus the investigation and the definition of the factors that make the city what it is.

Interpreting those factors sets a strategy and guidelines for the development of the imagination phase, as well as provides us with the tools to evaluate future imagination and development.
In order to perform an effective immersion into the city, its essence and its people there are a variety of tools that can be used, interpreted and evolved.

These tools are not set nor are they constant but they fluctuate and transform with the needs of the city and its inhabitants to give us a complete understanding of the city and its people and allow us to become the end users and design from their perspective.
factorisation lab
The Urban Factorisation Lab will be having a talk and then a walk to decypher and analyse the factors that make up the area around St James's Park along the same vein as the Urban Factorisation for Amsterdam.

Some of the factors to be taken into consideration are, but not restricted to:

- Sounds and songs
- Cultural spaces and places
- Movement and transportation
- Accessibility and mobility
- Food
- Services
- Play spaces
- Walkable areas
- Openness
- Smells
- Comfort and wellbeing
- Safety and security
- Sense of belonging
- Social realm
- Virtual connectivity
- Technology
- Intersection between physical and virtual
- Cleanliness
- Character, uniqueness and distinctiveness
- Pedestrian space versus vehicular space
- Sense of community
- Responsiveness to needs
- Overall experience
- People

**Itinerary**

0. The Work Foundation
1. Palmer Street
2. Cathedral Walk
3. Victoria Station
4. St James's Park
What happens when you bring an idea as simple as getting people back at the heart of the city and invite people to join in the discussion and the exploration? What happens when you remind the city, its governance and its planners that it is all about being human.

What happens is that you get an event that is fun and enlightening and that is aptly named Urban Factorisation. You get an event that opens the door for just one second, you can never close it again. You get an event where you start to hear the stories of the humanity of the city and how we have been stripping it away. You get a place to share, explore and innovate, a space where the outcome is unpredictable, the stories are memorable and where laughter is guaranteed.

This is what happened on Monday the 21st at the Work Foundation, at the launch event for the Urban Factorisation.

It began with London Fusion telling us how they have been supporting the brain of the city by supporting its emerging small to medium enterprises, its creative and intrepid base that are reimagining the future of London and the UK.

Then MP Barry Sheerman engaged us and reminded us that knowledge is the centre focus for people and cities. He made the case that no city can emerge and compete on the market without a university, a knowledge and research base that engages with the city and its service and industry base. He emphasised the point that transportation and connections can revitalize the smaller cities. He highlighted how the future of the city is in crowd sourcing and crowd funding. Ultimately he affirmed that it is about people and happiness.

MP Ben Gummer made the case for the small cities that struggle with loosing talent to London especially when it comes to design and planning talent. He showcased his point by telling the story, in very vivid words and mental imagery, of what is currently happening in Ipswich with a housing development that is needed but is not being designed with the behaviour and preferences of the people who already live in Ipswich in mind, and how a user centred design would have avoided a plan that barely took the people into consideration except to ask them would they like the school to be built “here” or “there”. A question that is irrelevant without understanding the way of life of the people, the landscape of their lives and their stories. Ben pointed out that in order to release the potential of the small cities, or as he called them the Big Towns, user centred design needs to be brought in to understand the factors that make the place and its people.

Dr. Cathy Garner followed speaking about cities as places for people and the influence of people on the place. She maintained that in order for our city to survive and grow we need to be ensuring the city is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Putting people back at the heart of the city and making the three legs of the city, society economy and environment, equally strong in order to be able to carry the city into the future. This strong city is the kind that develops, nurtures,
attracts and sustains citizens, making the cities stronger and more liveable through its citizens. She emphasised that we should be building social capital not incurring social costs.

Afterwards came Ann Marie Aguilar who spoke of the influence of design on human behaviour. She explained the research work that is being done in collaboration between ARUP, the Department for Communities and Local Government, RIBA and RCA where the challenge was to identify the influence of behaviour on the built environment and vice versa. The behaviour change research agenda focused on the built environment as three categories: the product, the building and the district, crossed by the human interaction on three different levels health and wellbeing, energy and performance and how these two axes affect each other. She took her lead from the way that products are designed – with the needs and preferences of the user and the ways they wanted to use them as part of their lives at heart.

Samar Héchaimé concluded the talks by introducing the concept of Urban Factorisation, its origins and its emergence as a counterbalance to the effects of built environment, bad planning and modernism. She spoke of the influences of culture on behaviour in the built environment and how legacy can help balance impact of badly designed places and cities. But legacy is not enough and eventually it adapts to the influences changing ways of life and places. She mentions the crossovers between our physical environment and our digital environment and how we should be building cities that combat the isolating that is emerging from too much digitisation and bringing life back onto the street level. She brought all together by talking about how Urban Factorisation can point people back into the heart of urban design, policy and strategy building frameworks that allow cities to grow in a sustainable manner and create positive experiences and happier citizen. Building utopias rather than dystopias.

After lunch the Urban Factorisation Lab took place with everyone in the audience taking part in an interactive walk/workshop around the St James’ area. This workshop was designed to allow participants to visualise and understand the city through the eyes of its citizens and visitors. The walk was wrapped up with a download session identifying the challenges of the users and coming up with tactical recommendations that crossed the board from service, to built environment to digital. These recommendations would enhance the holistic experience of the area for its citizens.

The day ended with a networking event where the participants continued the conversation with wine and lots of excitement on how to take the ideas and methodologies to the next step within their own councils, cities and organisation since the methodologies are applicable to all spaces where people live and spend time.
The first thing to do before we go on the walk is to select a personae through which you will be conducting this walk.

As we go around the St James & Victoria area you would need to observe and analyse your experience as your character.

• First try to understand that character.
• Then break down your experience through the perspective of the character.
• Answer the observation questions from the perspective of the character.
• The questions are guidelines to analysing the experience, other factors could be mentioned and analysed if they are more relevant to the character.
• Write down the answers to the questions or any other relevant points you believe are pertinent to your experience.

What is the overall feel of the place?
What is the character of the place?
Describe the culture and cultural spaces?
Describe the song of the place?

Does it accommodate your needs?
Does it offer you a variety of choice in the accommodation of your needs?
What is missing?
What is unexpected?

What do you find welcoming about this place?
What do you find uninviting?

How does the environment help you access your needs?
How does the environment hinder your mobility and accessibility?

How does the environment help you help yourself?

What role does technology play in your experience?

What is the emotional character of your experience?
What is your emotional response to the place?
Tareek, 8

Tareek is a very bright boy who enjoys science, space travel and history. He goes to Westminster School. His parents are originally from Lebanon. He was born in London and has an older brother and a younger sister.

He loves to travel and books. He likes to see the explore the neighbourhood he lives in, which is Westminster, and always likes to find places to go with his friends, or go read his books close to home.

Walk Experience & Findings

Street-scape:
• Only circulation spaces, no communal spaces
• Too many people, narrow pavements
• Tourists standing either looking or lost (seems to happen often) causes jams
• The area piques curiosity, with its history and architecture, entices exploration
• Area is combative and hostile, hard to see where you are going with the crowds blocking your view
• Cool Britannia store had interesting things that would be interested in buying
• All shops targeting adults
• Without phone very difficult to find friends around the area
• Only food and souvenir stores, no interesting stores like booksellers

Victoria Station:
• There are no children in the station
• Not a child friendly space
• Space invites to cause mischief
• Finding way home is difficult, where is tube

St James’ Park:
• Hard to get in the park barriers everywhere
• Only child friendly area, but it is basically a sand pit
• Playground in the park has more parents than children (supervision paranoia)
• Playing and watching the animals is fun, could spend the whole day there
• Park is a great place to hang out alone or with friends

Brainstorm Recommendation
• Create better meeting spaces and seating areas in Victoria
• Turn Victoria into more community space
• Add candy shops
• Add more book stores and interesting things to do
• Add cycle paths that are safe for children
• Remove physical barriers in the park
• Provide information, history and story of the area accessible to all ages, through apps, physical information points and interactive story telling helping in discovery, learning and adding to the history

Personae

Tareek, 8

Tareek is a very bright boy who enjoys science, space travel and history. He goes to Westminster School. His parents are originally from Lebanon. He was born in London and has an older brother and a younger sister.

He loves to travel and books. He likes to see the explore the neighbourhood he lives in, which is Westminster, and always likes to find places to go with his friends, or go read his books close to home.
Walk Experience & Findings

Street-scape:
- Urban traffic noises and construction noises are too loud
- Street are very crowded
- Some crossing paths were not clearly indicated
- Uneven & narrow sidewalks
- Very little space for pedestrians at traffic lights
- Poor signage, only one language
- Narrow pavements
- No sense of cultural buzz
- Limited space
- Too many people
- Streets are bumpy
- More accessible for bikes than roller skates

Victoria Station:
- Busy station
- Poor sign posting, signage was not multilingual
- It is only for pedestrians, no space for skateboards or wheeled personal vehicles
- Not cycle or skate friendly, one would need to get off wheels or around station
- Not easy to get around effectively
- Not safe to get around on wheels
- Can’t stand still
- Continuous movement
- Space is limited

St James’ Park:
- Green space
- Good traffic free area allows car free mobility
- Too many pedestrians
- Too many barriers
- Not good for cycling or roller skating
- Spacious but restricted
- Ground very uneven

Brainstorm Recommendation
- Giving car free priorities
- Restricting traffic and reallocating spaces
- Softer spaces
- Create and allow creative and cultural space
- Add street furniture that is multifunctional usable for skateboarding and sitting
- Add recreation spaces that can attract and fulfill the needs of different types of people
- Bring in technology to enhance signage, wayfinding, navigation and user experience
- Add communal skateboarding space, or transform spaces into multi use spaces
- Enhance connectivity with better 3G and wifi to be able to use public spaces for work and fun
- Add languages to information in the public space

Personae

Pedro, 23

Pedro is a designer, skateboarder. He works in digital UX. He lives in Brixton and works in Vauxhall.

He sometimes goes through Victoria on his way to clients or to the Museums and he likes to stop by St James’s park.

He usually uses his skateboard to go around the city or enjoys the skateboard park in Southwark. He tries to take the bike instead of the tube whenever he can.
Walk Experience & Findings

Street-scape:
• Poor pedestrian crossing points
• Variety of spaces making it interesting
• Difficult to find facilities
• No coherent signage
• Crowded and narrow pavements difficult to navigate with pram
• Car traffic dominates the street

Victoria Station:
• Too many steps, difficult to navigate with pram
• Signage is unclear
• Facilities are hard to find

St James’ Park:
• Park is vibrant and full of life
• Park has wide pavements easier to navigate

Brainstorm Recommendation

• Add nappy and baby changing spaces
• Add toilets and feeding areas
• Make street islands wider and crossings safer to cross with a pram
• Enhance signalling and signage
• Restrict private vehicles in the area
• Restrict lorries and divert their traffic or minimize to off peak hours
• Smart traffic control
• One way streets
• Widen pavement and narrow traffic zone
• Minimize fumes which are straight in the face on the children sitting in the prams

Personae

Emma, 32, mother of Sarah 8 months

Emma is a new mother who lives in the council house of Carey Mansions. She is on maternity leave. When she is working she works at the local Waitrose.

Now that she is on maternity leave she goes with Sarah to the park every day.

She is waiting to get her place in the daycare so she can get back to work.
Walk Experience & Findings

Street-scape:
• Sidewalk are not wide enough
• The area is very noisy and crowded
• The signage is not clear
• Street names are not easily found at intersections
• No place to sit or rest
• No interaction with the city and its story, especially for such a tourisy area around Buckingham Palace and St James’ Park and a big transportation hub which is Victoria station
• Landmarks are not well denoted, missed Westminster Cathedral and had to go back to find it

Victoria Station:
• The station is non ergonomic, signage is difficult to find and no seating

St James’ Park:
• Not able to enjoy the park
• Not enough benches to sit
• Annoying pigeons
• Odd smells

Brainstorm Recommendation
• Signage and information leading to landmarks
• Tourist trail helping to explore the area
• Information in multiple languages
• Add interactive public space and outdoor engagement spaces
• Add more interesting shops, less chains, on street level
• Less hostile environment

Personae

Qin, 41
Qin is a art gallery manager. She specialises in Chinese Han Dynasty ceramics and paintings. She lives Shanghai and she is on holiday in London. She is always very fashionable and well dressed even on holiday. She caters to an elite clientele that also comes to London on holiday or sends their children here for university.

She travels a lot for work but she has never visited London.
George, 59

George owns a London-based political strategy and communications consultancy that deals with government, media and the public sector. His base and his clients are all around Westminster, so he spends a lot of time between his office and theirs. It is mostly quicker to walk there and often the meetings are held at a local restaurant or cafe. To unwind he enjoys going to the gym, which mostly is the one close to the office as he lives in Putney.

Walk Experience & Findings

Street-scape:
• Knows the area and navigates through it seamlessly
• To him everything is walking distance and he knows the shortcuts that avoid him the crowds
• Enjoys the food diversity of the area, knows how their routines and knows how to avoid their rush hour or where to get a special coffee at certain times of day
• Likes the busy streets but knows how to avoid them
• Likes to hear all the different languages spoken in the area

Victoria Station:
• Knows, has a sense of customer moods, types and tastes and operates his day accordingly

St James' Park:
• Knows the seasons of the area in terms of weather and people
• Uses the park as a mental space and takes blue skies walks

Brainstorm Recommendation

• He likes the area as it is and does not want it to change
• Enhance connectivity
• Add charging points to be able to work outside
• Interactive information
**Walk Experience & Findings**

**Street-scape:**
- Pavements wobble making movement slow and unsteady
- Nowhere to sit and rest
- Only space to sit are buildings' stoops which if sat down would not be able to get up again
- People sitting on any flat surface they could
- Street are narrow and fast moving, no space to take time
- Too much people on main streets and footpaths, walk was stressful
- No community spaces
- All paying retailers, and chains not accessible to pensioner
- Retailers are all chains, no markets and definitely nothing ethnic, no diversity
- Too many cars making streets uninviting
- Crossings need speed of movement
- Noise levels are too high, can't hear crossing signalling
- Some street signals do not have sound signals making it difficult for someone with deteriorating eyesight
- No public toilets
- Everything is so expensive

**Victoria Station:**
- Sight lines are too far
- Space in the station is hard for circulation, especially for someone with slow movement
- Luggage and the way people drag them and the way they sit on the ground is tripping hazard
- No seating
- Space is confusing
- Train times are hard to read
- People can be helpful, someone stopped and read the times for me

**St James' Park:**
- Not seating area
- Uneven paving
- Walk to the park from station is too long and no resting space in between

**Brainstorm Recommendation**
- Even out the pavements
- Add hand rests
- Add spaces to sit at regular intervals
- Add toilets
- Integrate rest areas in all the construction barrier since they take up most of the pavement and restrict pedestrian areas
- Removable seating areas
- Greening the paths and street, add trees and seating spaces underneath
- Diversify retail offering
- Make wayfinding clearer
- Improve quality of footpath
- Improve communal spaces

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**Personae**

**Lenore, 83**

Lenore was born in Jamaica. She moved to the UK in the 50s with her husband and they both worked at transport for London. He was a conductor and she worked in the main office as a secretary. They were entitled to council housing in which Lenore still lives. Her husband passed away and she does not want to leave the council housing as many of her friends still live there. She spends her time between the community centre, the park and her neighbours.
Images of the day
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