Hackney Field Work

Group 6 – Moving Through Nature

Final presentation
14th January 2011

Agenda

- **Outline of our research: questions and methodology**

- Results of our research: hypotheses and findings

- Critical analysis and recommendations

- Acknowledgements

Summary

Purpose

- Investigate whether users have the choice, opportunities and ability to move through Hackney Marshes, Millfields and surrounding areas, according to their needs and aspirations, and whether there are conflicts or limiting factors.

Hypothesis 1

- Users are not satisfied with developments proposed in the Hackney and Millfields Master Plan

Hypothesis 2

- Certain factors limit the choices, opportunities and abilities of Hackney Marsh and Millfields users.

Findings

- Non-infrastructural factors are more important than infrastructural factors in impacting people's appropriation of Hackney Marshes and surrounding areas.
- There are different perceptions about changes to Hackney Marshes and these views are difficult to reconcile.

Research questions

A How do the activities grouped under the chosen category enhance the appropriation of Hackney Marshes and surrounding green areas?

B What are the potentials and constraints of Hackney Marshes and surrounding green areas to enhance environmental justice through such activities?

C How can the appropriation of the Marshes be enriched through cross fertilization among the activities taking place across the six categories?

Preliminary interpretation of research questions

A. Activities increasing appropriation

B. Potentials and constraints for environmental justice

C. Enrichment through cross-fertilisation

1 How good is the match between the proposed physical changes in the Hackney Marshes and Millfields master plans and the needs and wants of the users in enhancing their opportunities and experiences of the green space?

2 What are the factors limiting the opportunities and compromising the experiences of users in moving through and in/out of Hackney Marshes and Millfields?

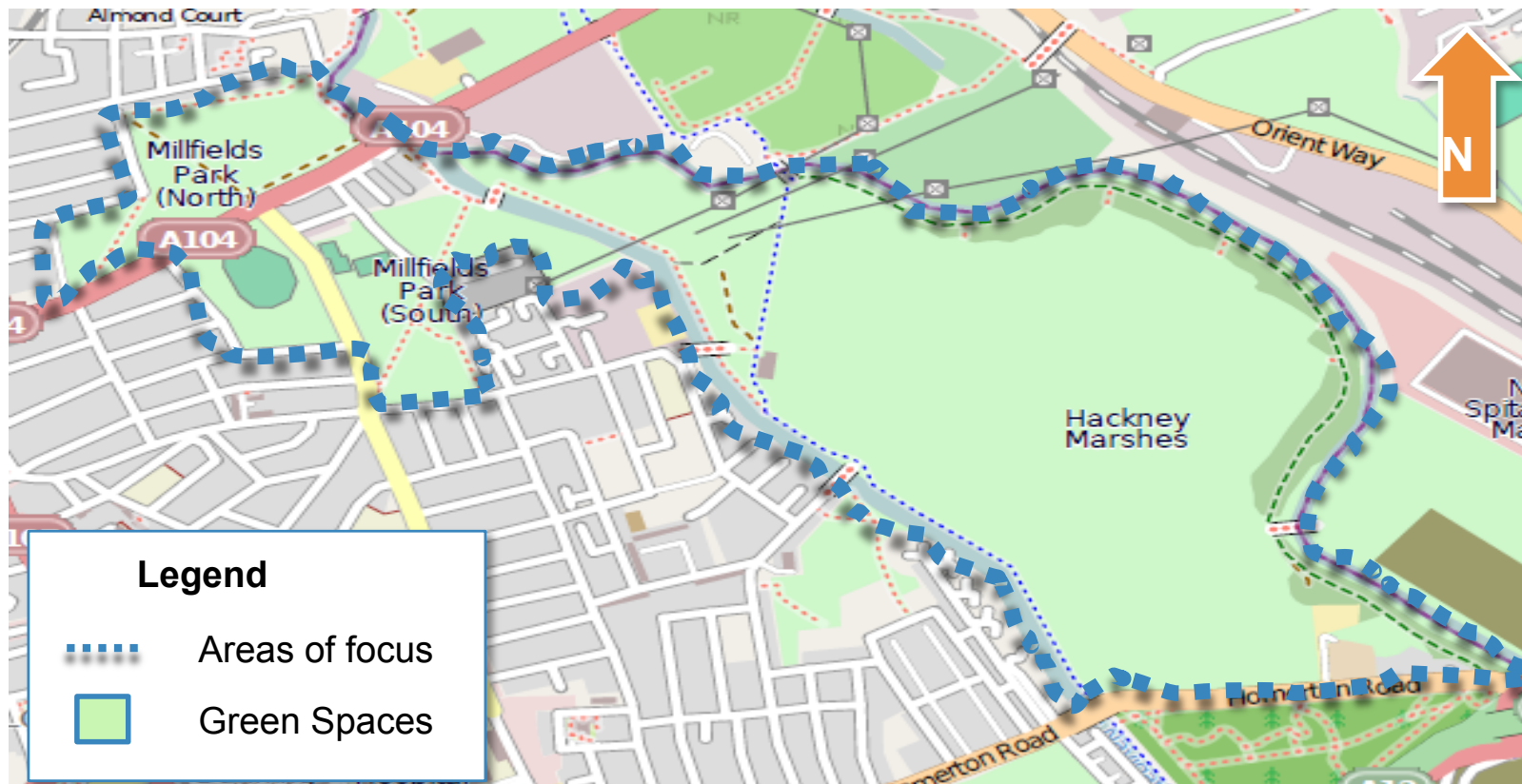# Our "experiencing the green" category: moving through nature

> People with different modes of movement from, to, through, within and between Hackney Marshes and Millfields

- Main focus of activities
  - Walking
  - Cycling
  - Running
  - Walking with dogs

Spatial focus

- Geographic scope: Hackney Marshes and Millfields Park

Source: elaboration on Open Street Map

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Methodology and research tools

Local news and Council Information

Participatory video

Testimonials

Transect
Walk

Online
survey

Focus group

Literature research

Interviews and Participatory Mapping

Cross-fertilisation mapping

Limitations of our research

Limited time span

- Depending on the seasons, patterns of activities and group composition may differ

Limited local knowledge

- Nobody in our research group is a UK national or Hackney resident

Limited community reach

- Reaching isolated residents
- Getting touch with target bodies (such as stakeholders and authorities)

General research limits

- Some results might be biased by interviewers/ interviewees

Definitions

Environmental justice

- Environmental Justice is achieved when people have the abilities, opportunities and choices to share, access, use, and appreciate green spaces so as to fulfill their needs and aspirations in their mobility experiences whilst also in harmony with the natural environment and flows

Appropriation

- The process through which people physically and mentally obtain achievements or goals they value
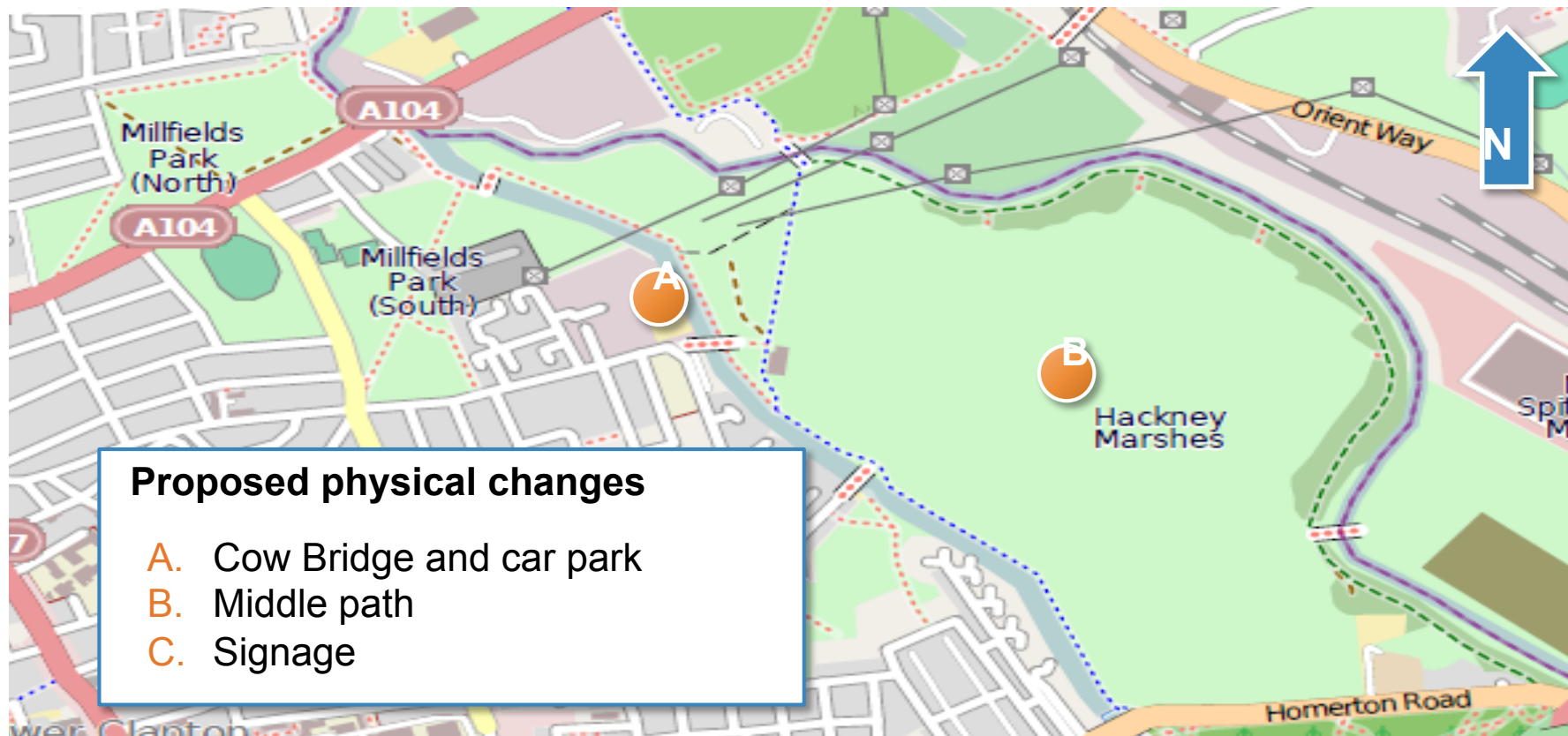
"Foundation"

- Moving through nature via the motion of walking, running or cycling through, around and within Hackney Marshes and Millfields enhances the appropriation of the green areas.

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Formulation of hypothesis 1

There is a mismatch between the proposed physical changes in the Hackney Marshes and Millfields master plans and the wants of the users in enhancing their appropriation of the green space

Proposed physical changes

A. Cow Bridge and car park
B. Middle path
C. Signage

Sources: Hackney Marshes master plan (data), Open Street Map

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Main results for hypothesis 1

	Council's opinion	Local users' view

Cow Bridge and car park	• The new car park will provide additional parking spaces to users who access Hackney Marshes by car
	• The old bridge needs to be replaced with a new bridge that is accessible for motor vehicles
		• ☹ Building new Cow Bridge and a car park would
		  1. Encourage people to drive rather than walk and cycle
		  2. Create additional traffic onto the Marshes
		  3. Remove green space

South Marsh cycle path (middle path)	• South Marsh cycle path will link the East and the West • It will improve accessibility and permeability within the marshes and benefit cyclists and walkers	• ☹ Hackney Marshes User Group thinks the path will cut through the Marshes and may destroy the feeling of open space • ☹ By increasing permeability (i.e. South Marsh cycle path) wildlife is put at risk due to increased human traffic • ☺ LCCiH supports additional paths (including the South Marsh cycle path), as long as they are shared between cyclists and pedestrians

Main results for hypothesis 1

| Council's opinion | Local users' view | Consultant's opinion |

Signage

Council's opinion
- Additional way-finding system and signage would help visitors and new users navigate and move around more easily

Local users' view
- ☹ New established signage will urbanise Hackney Marshes, and make it a metropolitan space

Consultant's opinion
- ☹ The proposed corporate design of signage is unfit for the "wildness" character of the Marshes
- ☹ The signage will be designed by the Council itself and it may not consider local people's view
- ☹ Signage reflecting establishment is less likely to be accepted by residents and may be subject to vandalism
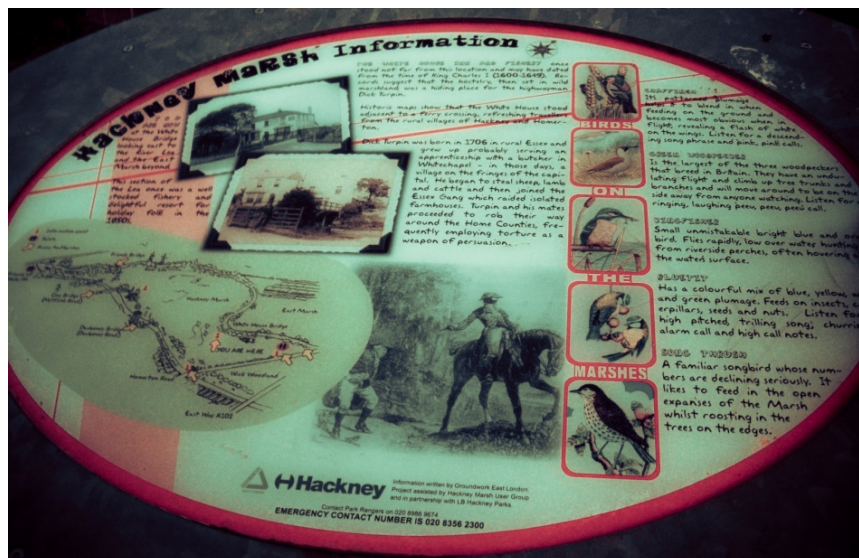
Our conclusions for hypothesis 1

Hackney Marshes / Millfields master plans are proposed in order to increase usage. However, our research shows that the Council's rationale for change conflicts with the users' needs and aspirations in moving though nature and may result in decreased appropriation

Formulation of hypothesis 2

Certain factors limit the capabilities of users in moving through and in/out of Hackney Marshes and Millfields.
As such, their appropriation of the park via moving through nature is decreased

- Factors include:
  A. Infrastructure and maintenance (i.e. access points, paths, in terms of facilities, accessibility & permeability)
  B. Sense of security
  C. Differences in how people appropriate the shared green space
  D. Information sharing between the Council and the users


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2.A. Infrastructure and maintenance

Overall satisfaction

22%   **78%**

■ Excellent ■ Good ■ Average ■ Poor ■ Terrible

- Opinions are largely positive on general maintenance and status of Hackney Marshes and Millfields, even in light of specific criticisms

- Satisfaction can be for very different reasons:
  - Some are happy about improved maintenance and infrastructure
  - Some are happy about the lack of maintenance, in keeping with the "wild" quality of the parks
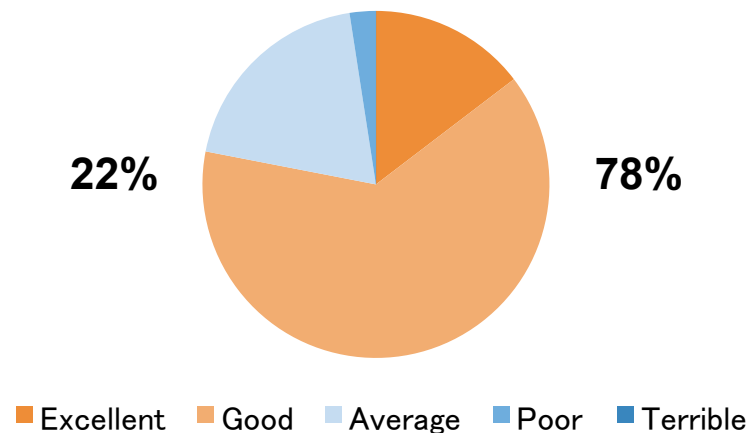
Source: elaboration on interviews and online survey (48 responses)

2.A. Map of access points
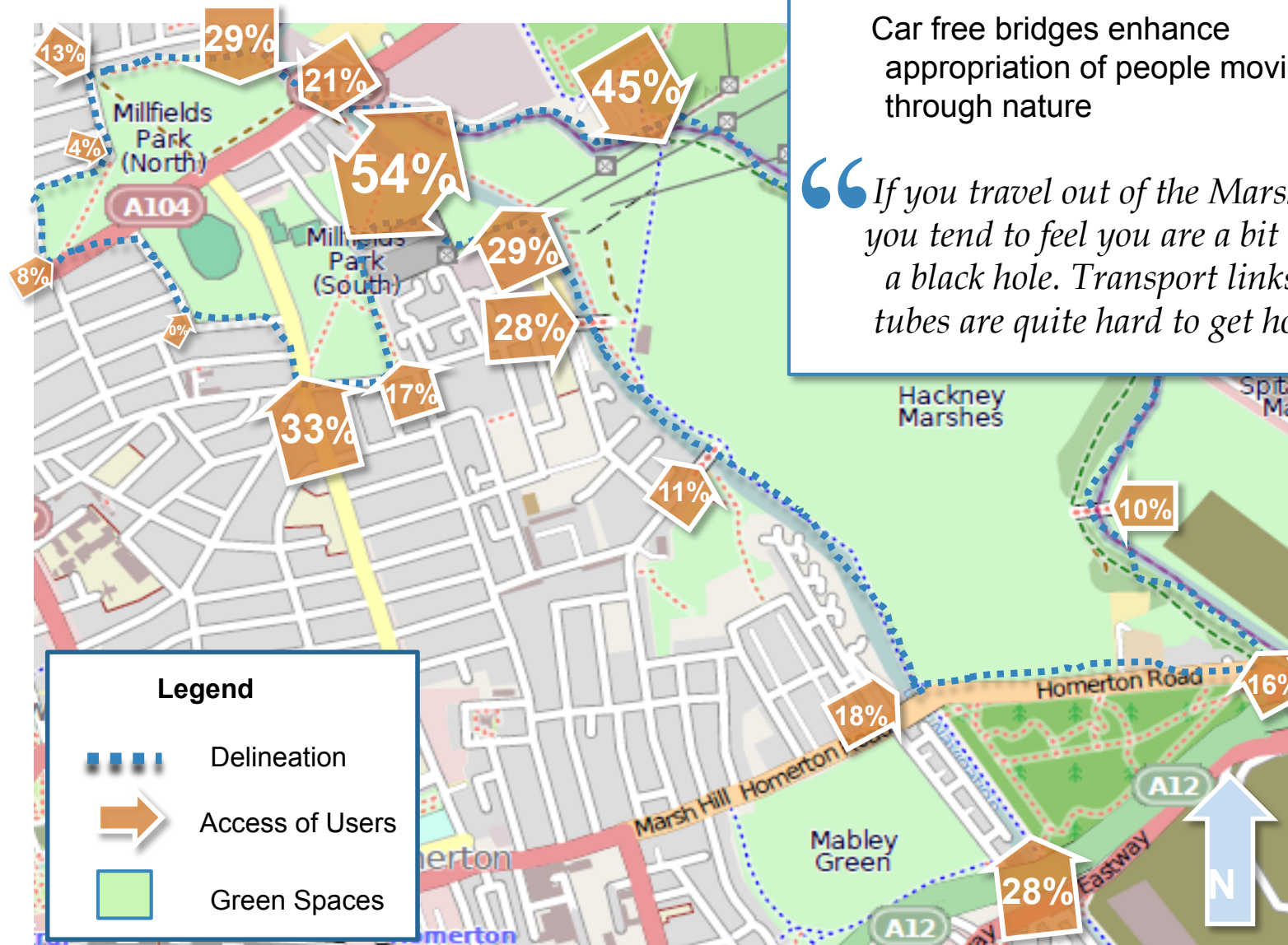
Car free bridges enhance appropriation of people moving through nature

" *If you travel out of the Marshes… you tend to feel you are a bit like in a black hole. Transport links like tubes are quite hard to get hold of.* "

Legend

▪▪▪▪ Delineation

➡ Access of Users

🟩 Green Spaces

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Sources: Our Surveys (data); Open Street Map (map)

2.B. Sense of security

Council's plans (master plans)

- Aim to increase sense of security by:
  – Increasing presence of people (staff and users)
  – Increasing lighting

Hackney Crime Map 2004, by Research and Statistics Team of Hackney Council

Local users' view

- Women in HMRG* do not feel secure near North part and run in group **BUT** Hackney Marshes have the lowest crime rates in Hackney

- People unfamiliar with Hackney Marshes are afraid to go **BUT** Regular users don't generally talk about lack of sense of security
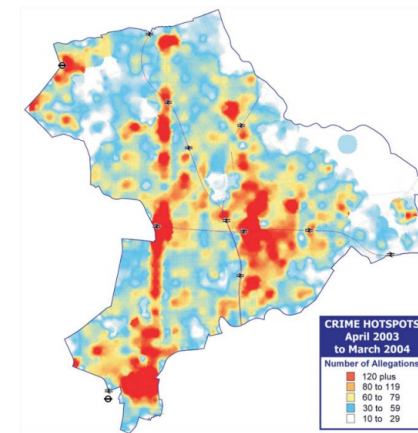
Our findings

- Proposed physical changes do not address the key reasons related to the lack of sense of security, which pertain to unfamiliarity

- Increased utilisation of the green areas may not actually result in increased sense of security and may cause conflicts with what the existing users want, i.e. maintaining emptiness

* Hackney Marshes Runner Group

2.C. Different types of appropriation
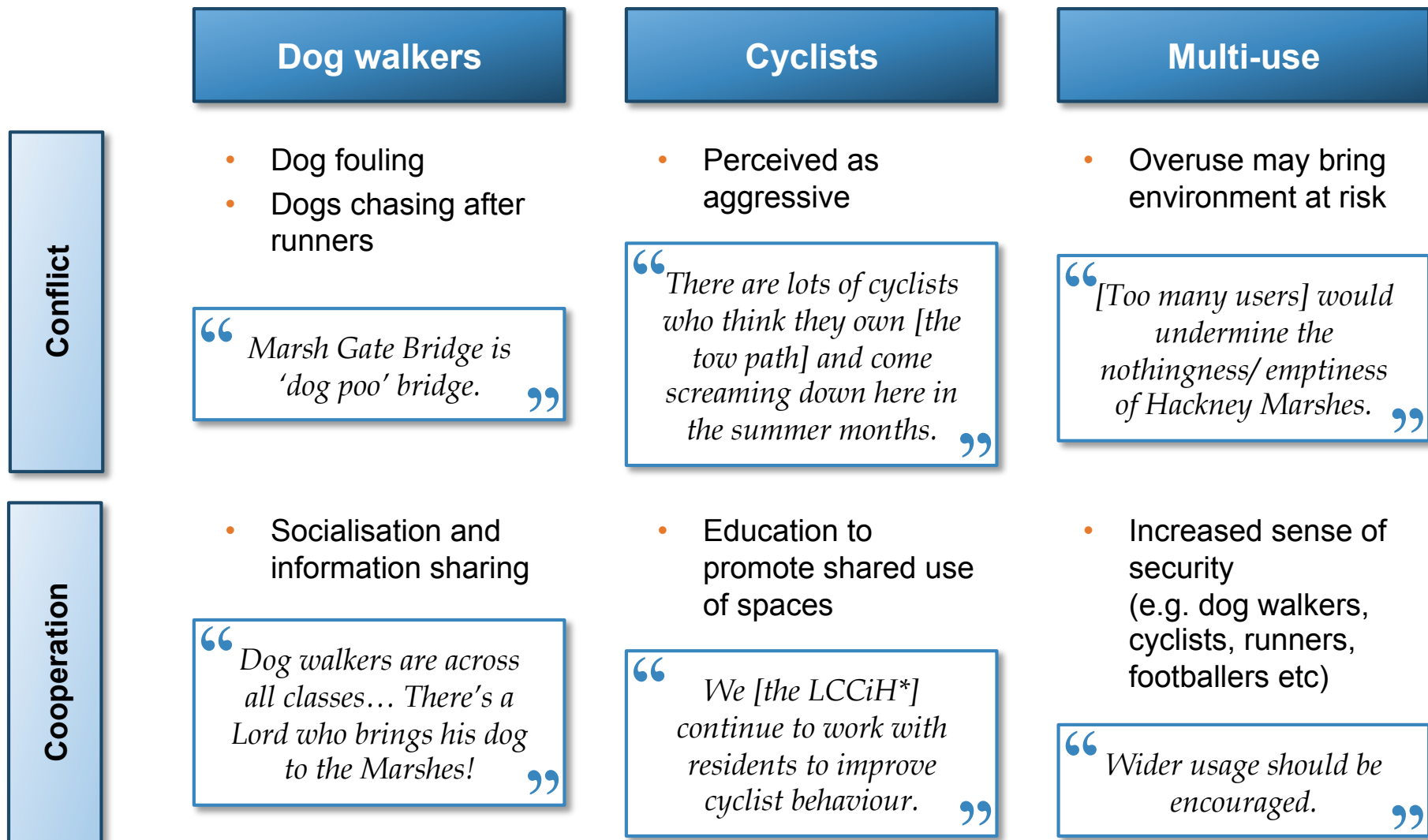
|	Dog walkers	Cyclists	Multi-use
Conflict	• Dog fouling • Dogs chasing after runners *"Marsh Gate Bridge is 'dog poo' bridge."*	• Perceived as aggressive *"There are lots of cyclists who think they own [the tow path] and come screaming down here in the summer months."*	• Overuse may bring environment at risk *"[Too many users] would undermine the nothingness/ emptiness of Hackney Marshes."*
Cooperation	• Socialisation and information sharing *"Dog walkers are across all classes… There's a Lord who brings his dog to the Marshes!"*	• Education to promote shared use of spaces *"We [the LCCiH*] continue to work with residents to improve cyclist behaviour."*	• Increased sense of security (e.g. dog walkers, cyclists, runners, footballers etc) *"Wider usage should be encouraged."*

* London Cycling Campaign in Hackney

2.D. Means of information about development activities and planning

People may not be informed until too late and this may decrease their ability to use the green spaces

- For example, a Hackney Park Run leader asked the council to be informed of dates of developments impacting their running routes, but they were not informed and had to adapt on the day of the run

Means of information about development and planning activities
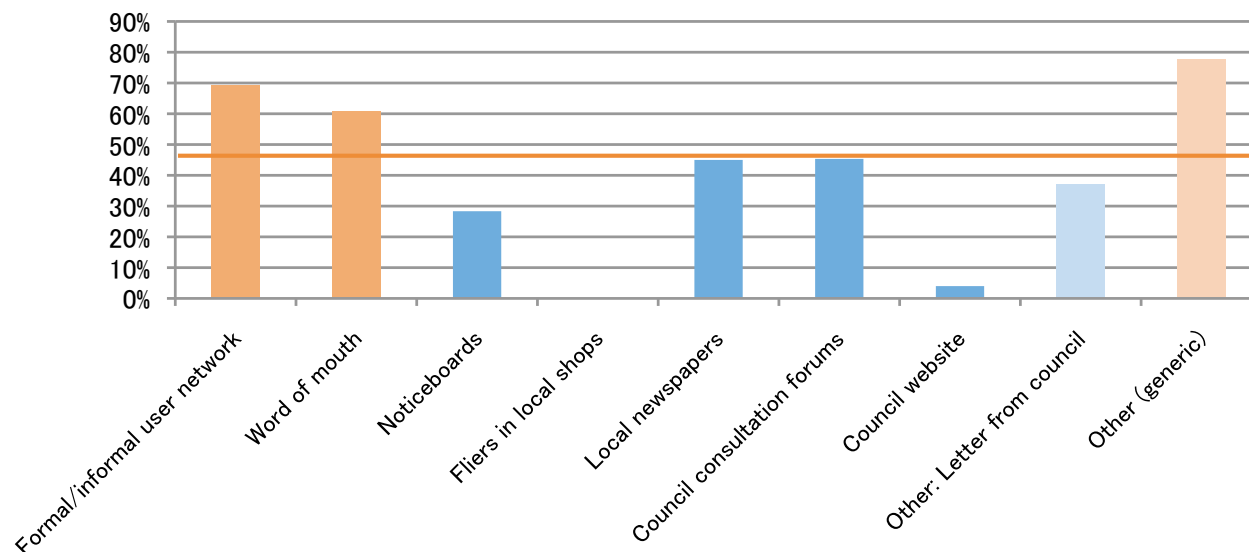
Source: elaboration on interviews and online survey (48 responses)

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Our conclusions for hypothesis 2

> There are conflicting views on sense of security, infrastructure/ maintenance and different types of appropriation

- Improved infrastructure / maintenance may increase accessibility and permeability but may endanger the natural environment and also decrease the satisfaction of users in their mobility experiences
- Sense of security in Hackney Marshes is related to familiarity and not necessarily to the presence of other users
- Different uses can decrease appropriation but also enhance it

> Users perceive a lack of information on planning and restructuring activities and rely on unofficial means of communications to compensate

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Our conclusions from both hypotheses

> Non-physical factors are more important than physical factors in impacting people's appropriation of Hackney Marshes and surrounding areas

- Changes proposed in the Hackney Marshes and Millfields master plans are infrastructure-focused. These changes may decrease appropriation for existing users and also put biodiversity at risk

> There are different perceptions about changes to Hackney Marshes and these views are difficult to reconcile

- Users value the wildness characteristic of Hackney Marshes and are opposed to changes
- At the same time users would also like to see improvements to the accessibility and permeability aspects

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Recommendations

- **Youth education** (collaboration with Unstructured Play)

  Encourage and provide opportunities for school children to play and appreciate the natural environment of Hackney Marshes

> " *The best way to encourage more people to use the Marshes is to show people that it is possible to find their own way to use the Marshes. We can do that by bringing school children there (who usually do not go there, or are brought with a specific purpose, e.g. football) for unstructured play.* "

- **Natural/artistic signage** (collaboration with Creative Ars)

  Use the natural assets as a signage for better accessibility and mobility and reflect the local culture with involvement with local artists

> " *Along the canal, walking along a long and straight path without big changes in scenery is a bit boring and monotonous. Artistic signage or landmark may make the space very interesting and will invite more people and enhance people's activity and associations.* "

> " *[City ID's] idea is to put less signs, less point to point directional signs and try to encourage people to engage in maps* "

Further research

Accessibility for people with disabilities

- Analyse the issues that people with disabilities face in accessing and moving through the Marshes
- Toilets, lighting, and security might be relevant issues to consider as well

Change of sense of security over time

- Determine how users' sense of security might change from the time they start using the Marshes to when they become familiar with the green spaces

Measurement of intangible factors

- Identify a set of indicators in order to quantitatively compare the relative importance of non-physical factors

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Acknowledgements

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- Trevor Parsons, London Cycling Campaign in Hackney
- Zee, local resident

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- All interviewees and respondents to our online survey and questionnaires

UCL Tutors and interns
- Natan Doron
- Gynna Millan Franco
- Pascale Hofmann
- Alexandre Apsan Frediani

Video pitch

Key themes

- The non-infrastructural dimensions such as information sharing, sense of security, maintenance have a larger impact on constraining people's capabilities than infrastructure dimensions
- People want to preserve the "wildness" and biodiversity of Hackney Marshes

Narrative flow

- Introduction, hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2, conclusion, recommendations

Sources

- Testimonials, interviews and video footage of different movements, maps

Effects

- Video clip of path being drawn on a map to show where the different developments are proposed (i.e. Cow Bridge, Car Park)
- Voice over video clips
- Use of video clips showing opposing views to transition through different sections of the storyline.

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