

Outsmarted?
Communication infrastructures and students' reflective expressions
from experiencing London as a digital city



A Creative Methods Toolkit

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INTRODUCTION.

The Outsmarted project deployed digital, qualitative and creative methods and has sought to:

gain an understanding of the ways in which students' experiences of global cities, such as London, is filtered through digital technologies (apps, digital/data cultures and digital networks);

scale up participatory agency in students' experiences and contribute insights for the development of critical and resilient digital literacies surrounding digital cities, 'appification' and 'datafication' (e.g. information/cognitive overload, mis/dis-information, surveillance and privacy concerns, tensions surrounding representation biases, self-representation, civic participation, and their impact on mental health);

advocate for research-informed 'collaborative' pedagogies that focus on systems thinking, gamification and co-creation.

The project contributes to the further development of learning resources aligned with KCL's modules in digital culture and cities by putting an emphasis on civic awareness and fairness. As such, the project aligns with Digital Futures Institute's research theme of 'living well with technologies'.

The present toolkit draws on participatory, capacity building methodologies¹ devised by numerous projects including the Media, Community and the Creative Citizen project² and the UnBias AI project³ with further adaptations based on input of students from the Department of Digital Humanities at KCL.

LINKS

¹ Alevizou, Giota; Alexiou, Katerina and Zamenopoulos, Theo (2016). *Making sense of assets: Community asset mapping and related approaches for cultivating capacities*. The Open University and AHRC.

² Alexiou, Katerina; Aguista, Emma; Alevizou, Giota; Chapain, Caroline; Greene, Catherine; Harte, Dave; Ramster, Gail and Zamenopoulos, Theodore (2016). *Asset mapping and civic creativity*. In: Hargreaves, Ian and Hartley, John eds. *The creative citizen unbound: How social media and DIY culture contribute to democracy, communities and the creative economy*. Bristol: Policy Press, pp. 181–204.

³ UnBiasAI Project: <http://proboscis.org.uk/5970/unbias-fairness-toolkit/>

FACILITATION GUIDE.

1. Preparation

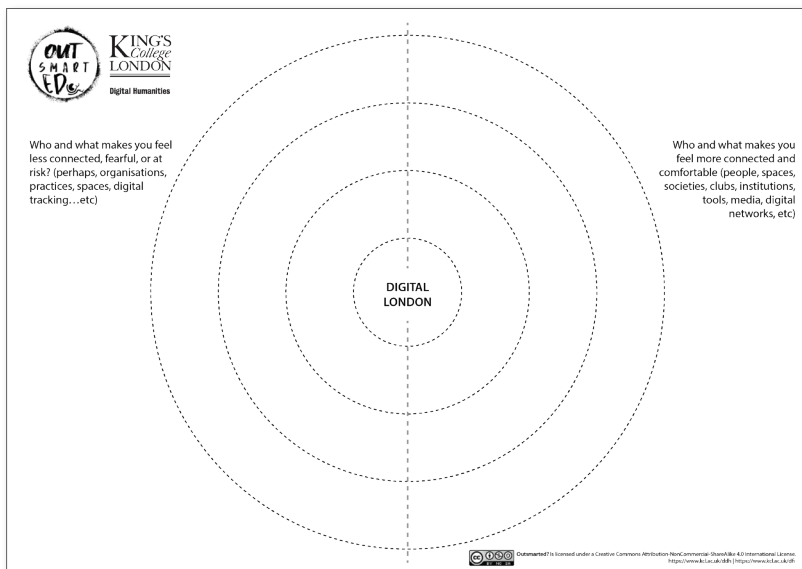
Set up the workshop space

- Welcome participants, introduce the purpose of the workshop and explain the format
- Ask everyone to introduce themselves to the group

2. Individual Activity [Optional]

Hand out the Individual Activity Sheet (Concentric Circles) and ask them to imagine that they are positioned in the central circle. Then they should identify:

- Who or what is most important for them while in London to make them feel connected and comfortable
- Who and what makes you feel less connected, fearful, or at risk? (perhaps, organisations, practices, spaces, digital tracking...etc)

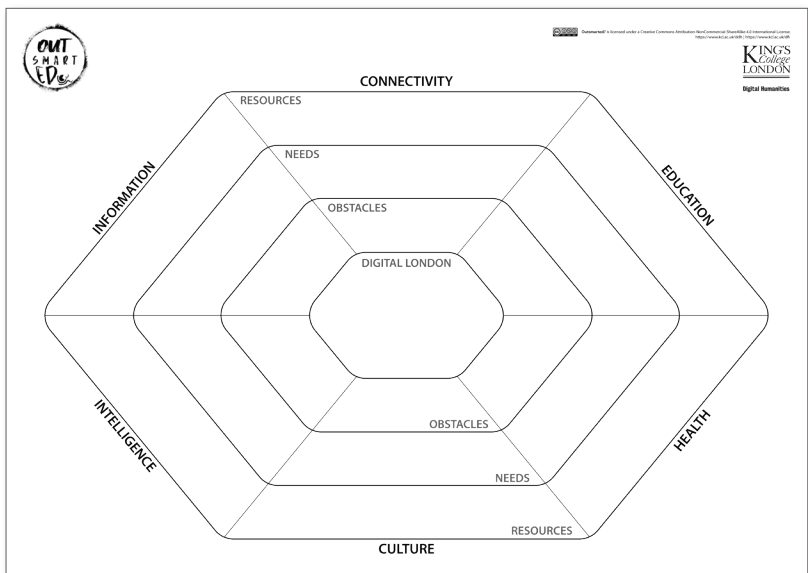


3. Main Activity [The Asset Map]

Introduce the aim of the 'game': Environment / Space and lived experiences: Is our experience of the city shaped by the digital? And how? (seeing, embodied, communicated, mediated).

Possible prompts:

- How can you make sense of the many ways that digital technologies are changing urban life? And what does this make you feel?
- What's the most useful tech that helps you orient yourself and your experiences of urban life?
- How can you make the most of the city's communication and knowledge infrastructures and how they relate with what you use already?



The Worksheet / MAP has 6 vectors to explore this by:

Connectivity | Information | Intelligence | Culture | Health | Education

Using the map, identify the needs, resources, and obstacles faced by students in the city. Use the category cards and post it notes write and place them on the map. Explain the categories and give examples to prompt.

Asset Card



Obstacle Card



Possible prompts:

- What are your **most used resources in these vectors**: the people, media, apps, places and services?
- What other **resources are used to cater for your specific needs?** (give examples: e.g. language lessons; learning support; housing but also smart phones, friends, communities, access to cultural resources, associations, clubs and societies, institutions)
- What are the other needs, difficulties or obstacles in relation to these areas?

4. Group Discussion

Ask participants to discuss their choices and explain how they have mapped out relationships on the worksheet. Open up the discussion to explore wider implications. Use prompts that relate to themes of experience, knowledge & learning, information and communication, creativity and imagination.

5. The Oustmarded Card Game

Towards the end of the discussion, you may ask: "To live well with the digital, we need to understand how to live through the digital. How can the resources, values and knowledge transcend the obstacles and make us more equipped to put forward our values and rights?"

You can play the game using the categories from cards with prompts around the following five themes: Knowledge, agency, values, rights, fears.



The game can be played separately (see Games Brief) or after the group discussion, prompting further critical reflection with emphasis on drawing connections and stimulating notions of agency.



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