UCL-Osaka University Walking Cities Lab (WCL)

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About the lab

Walking in parts of Africa is commonly portrayed in a somewhat negative light: a cliched vision of people who have no choice but to walk, or a focus on the dangers of pollution and traffic.

Relevance: for SDGs, for health and wellbeing, for sustainable urban development

WALKING CITIES lab

About the lab

Walking in parts of Africa is commonly portrayed in a somewhat negative light: a cliched vision of people who have no choice but to walk, or a focus on the dangers of pollution and traffic.

Vision: To establish an interdisciplinary, multicultural, collaborative, and inclusive space for the co-production of innovative knowledge, methods, and partnerships in and about *walking cities that are not walkable*.

Mision: To document, challenge and expand current understandings in research and practice about walking in African cities from a conceptually, nuanced, and localised examination of the nature, challenges, and opportunities of everyday walking environments and practices for a more equitable and sustainable urban development.

WALKING CITIES lab

About the lab

Part of the Osaka University – University College London (UCL) International Joint Research Project on a street-based approach to informal settlement improvement in African cities.

The grant for this research was provided by the **Osaka University Global Knowledge Partnership Grant (GKP) Type A** with additional support from the Social Solutions Initiative (SSI) of Osaka University and the Development Planning Unit of University College London.

The lab has recently received further funding from the UCL-Osaka Strategic Partner funds.

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Researchers & Partners

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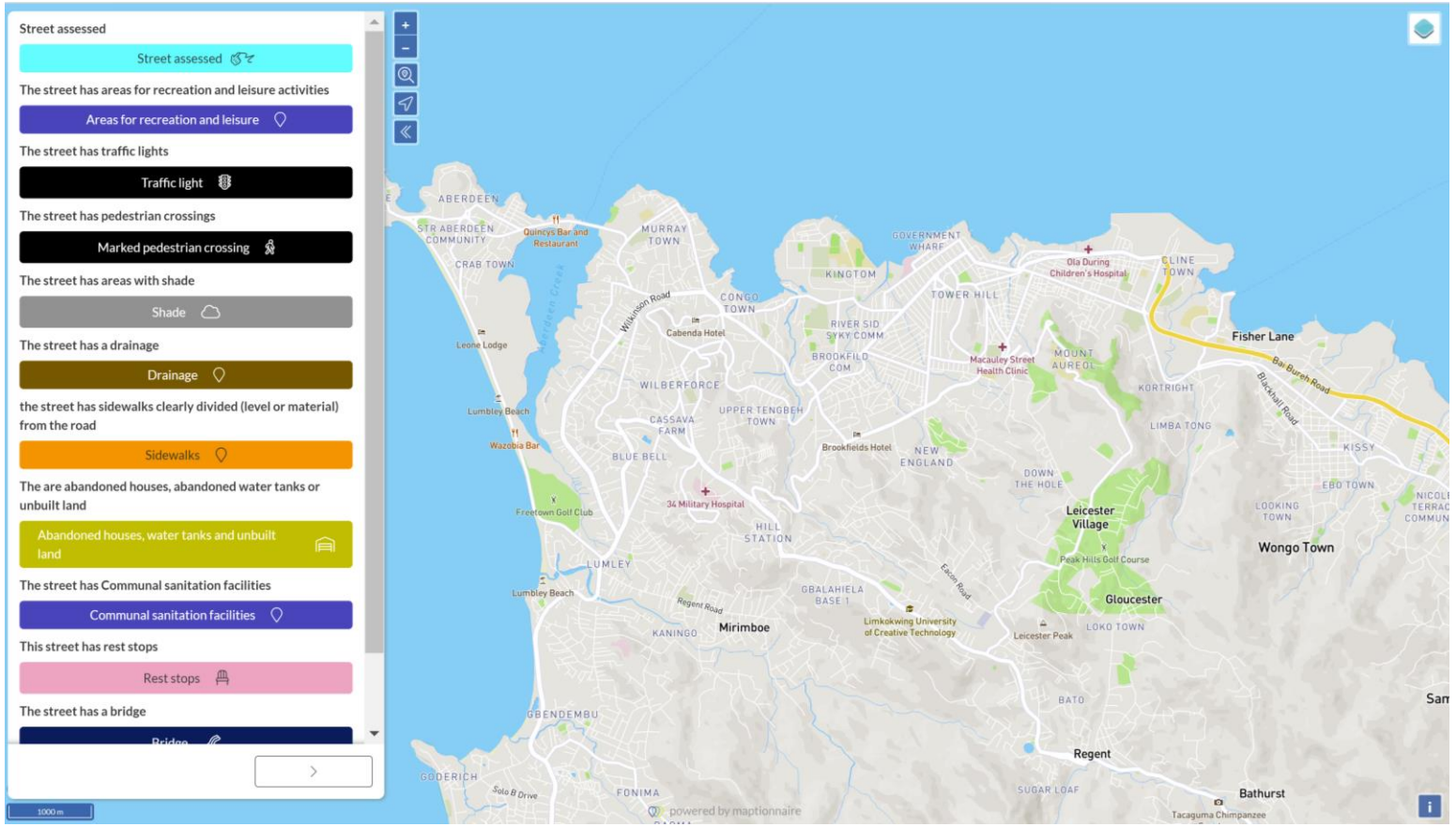
Research

Researched the walking environment and residents' everyday walking practices in one informal settlement in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone.

Used a participatory mapping tool (Maptionnaire) to explore the variety of walking routes and their characteristics, and a qualitative assessment of local walking practices and experiences to shed light on the realities of everyday walking experiences.



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Phase of study	Variables	Instrument	Procedure	Sample
First phase (March 2-14, 2020) *Field Mapping of walking routes (walking environment)*	Waking routes (streets and pathways) Road condition (paving, surface materials) Facilities or features along walking routes (school, churches, trees, rest stops) Exposure to risks and safety	Maptionnaire (mapping), Observation kit, Photographs	Mapping of streets, paths and features along routes by enumerators Field notes	11.9 km audited
Second phase (March 15-21, 2020) *Everyday walking practices*	Walking route alternatives and use for everyday activities Preferred routes and reasons Initiatives along walking routes (e.g. stairs, street lights, benches) Everyday experiences of risk and safety Mobility options available to residents Reasons for mobility choices	Maptionnaire-based structured questionnaire	Convenient sampling of residents Shared walking experience, mapping	38 respondents

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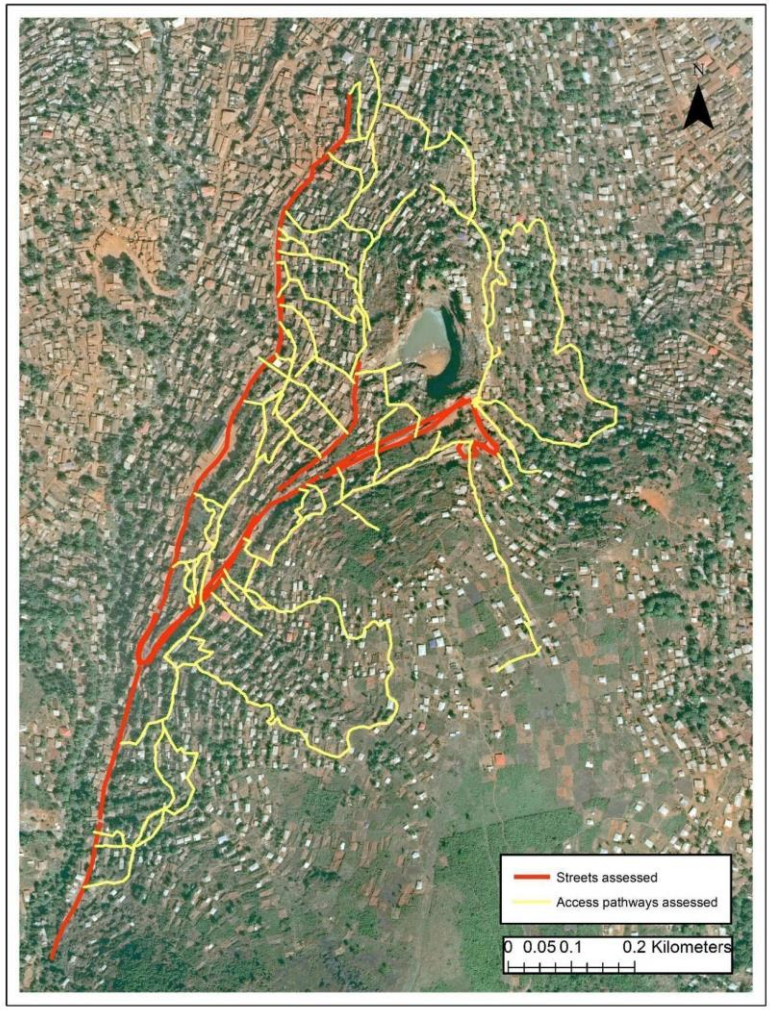

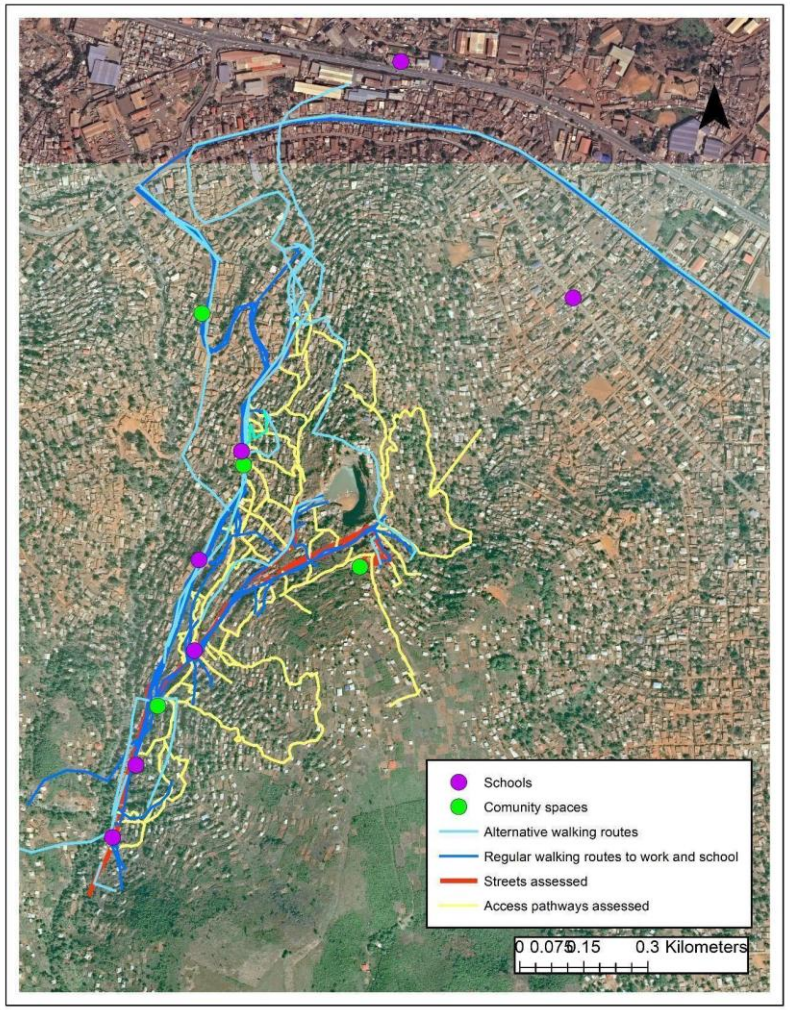

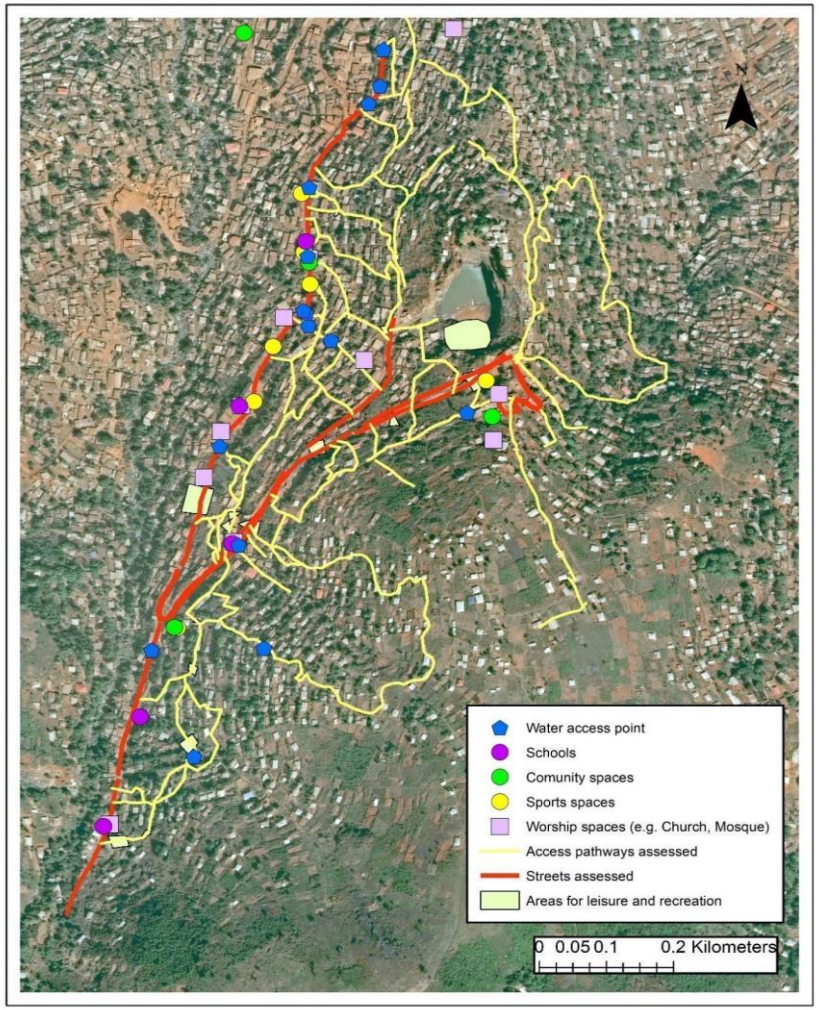

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Research

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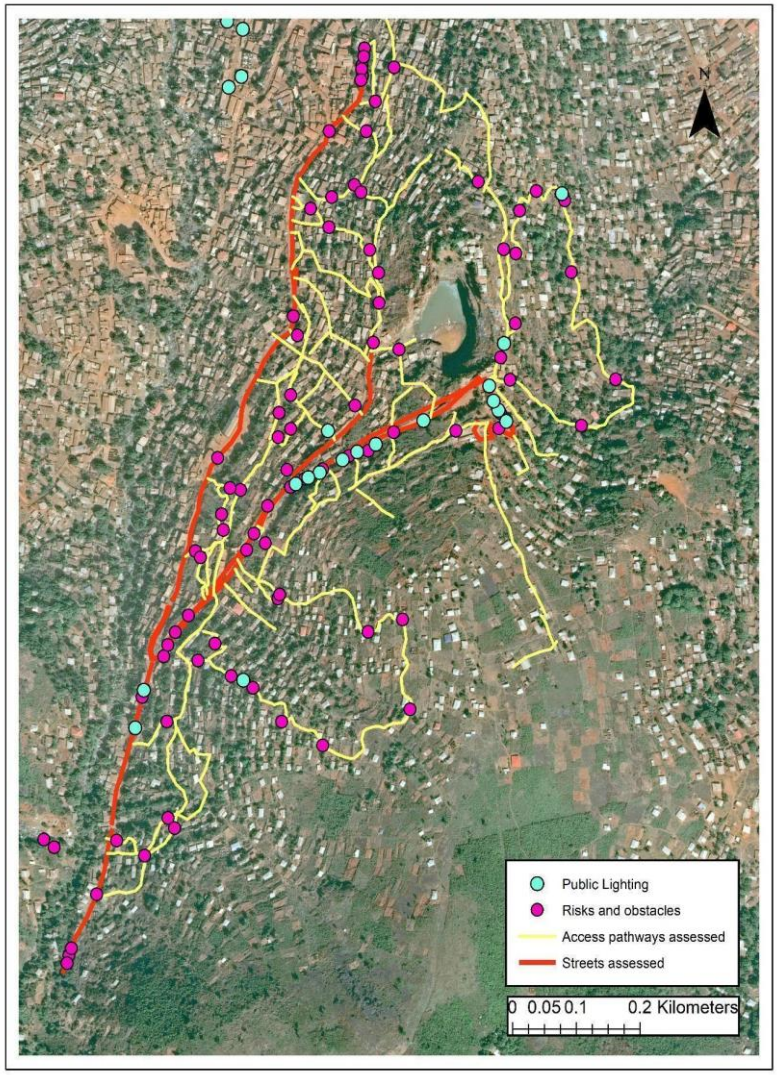
Findings suggest the need for more attention from planning authorities to mundane but important practices of everyday walking as a relevant source of knowledge about the walking environment.

Devising collaborative strategies, particularly through experimentation and coproduction can therefore reduce risks and enhance the comfort and pleasurability of the walking experience.

By combining more flexible methods we can adapt better to the conditions of rapidly changing informal settlements and the core features of walking when it is not a choice.



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Impact

On March 2, 2021, The Walking cities lab delivered the research outputs from the participatory mapping of walkability and walking practices in Moyiba, Freetown (Sierra Leone), to the neighborhood communities.

In association with the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) and with virtual presence from the UCL and Osaka co-directors of the lab, community members shared their thoughts, opinions, and expectations about using the maps.

Community leaders and development partners are using the maps for advocacy, community-led planning, and support of implementation work in Moyiba. They have used the maps as basis for establishing a partnership with the Freetown City Council for future walkability interventions.

Thank you!

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