**Name:** Files\\Group 3 - Home Choice\\Participant 30 - Interview Notes

¶1: We met at Coffee Republic, inside the Sheffield University Student Union building at 9.00am on 16th April. I had initially contacted PropertyWithUS, which is a part of the University’s Accomodation Office suited to pairing students up with suitable private accommodation. The PropertyWithUS manager had asked Participant 30 to speak with me. She was 22 years old. She declined any form of recording, stating that she was worried she might stutter if recorded. The coffee shop was around one third full during the interview.

¶2: **Question 1: Which digital maps have you used?**

¶3: We discussed her everyday use of digital maps, including the recent search she had undertaken to find a property with her partner, and that they had recent put on offer on (to buy).
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¶5: She stated that for her “Google Maps is most Common”, when asked she felt this would be the same of students looking to rent. When asked which digital maps she has used when searching for the property she had recently put in an offer on, she stated that she had used “RightMove through Google” – she has used to Google Search Engine to locate the RightMove property Search Engine, which in turn hosts an embedded Google Maps layer.
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¶7: When asked why she had chosen that map, she stated it was the ability to narrow down search results of which “being near Netheredge, or that side of the city” was important”, with the refinement panel on RightMove able to narrow down results. She also discussed the importance of “Transport Routes”, noting that she was unable to drive, and affraid to take lessons because the thought of driving scared her.

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¶9: When asked how much digital maps like RightMove fitted in with that, she stated that she knew Abbeydale Road and Netheredge quite well, but that the digital maps helped her to “see where it was in relation” – to the city, to the surrounding areas and other areas. When asked if digital maps were useful to her in locating the property, she stated the she “…don’t know how we would do it.” without digital maps…”…if it’s on a map you can just click, it would take longer”.

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¶11: When discussing the information put out to students, she noted that the StudentPad website (<http://www.studentpad.co.uk/>) used Google Maps, which they advise students to look at. Although the layer is adjusted, she notes, to “…mark local bus routes, uni buildings, and properties” which as act as tools for students to assess travel times and directions to/from the Uni and related places. She notes that assist with using this – showing them how to use the site (doing so in the office, turning the monitor to face the student), how to access it (URL location). Their position is to generally try not to print following cost/green policy. They try to give out references for the specific property and are happy to e-mail that out, which is more appropriate than postcodes because there can be “…sometimes 5 houses on the same postcode”, suggesting density of information to be navigated through a map. She also notes that there is “also a big map print behind where we sit that we point at, and interact with board more than the digital sometimes”, making an anecdotal remark that recently some students have taken a photograph of the full wall mural map and used it via a smartphone “…those that have phones can just bring it up, I guess it’s Google, but they just bring up the directions and then just go”. When pressed if she felt there was any difference in types of student e.g. undergrad/postgrad, young/old, male/.female, Home/EU/Int. she noted that “International Students needed to be more in the city centre." – nor further qualification given, age, gender or course type had little or no differentiation.

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**¶13: Question 2**: Why did you choose those maps in particular maps?

¶14: **Question 3**: What did you use them for?

¶15: **Question 4:** How did you use the map for [**contingent on question 3 answer**] – how did using the digital map fit in with other activities.

¶16: **Question 5:** When and how have you used digital maps in [**CASE SPECIFIC PRACTICE**]?

¶17: **Question 6:** How did your use of digital maps fit with other activities in [**CASE SPECIFIC PRACTICE**]?

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¶19: Here we started discussion on when/where students came in to discuss properties. In timescales, she noted that students came in at all times of the year (not specifically linked to term times/dates), but she did note that larger groups (looking for a 6-bed house etc.) tended to come in around November. - “…students come in at all times of year, but don’t always want to be in Crookes because it’s at the top of a hill”. She referred back to interfacing with students, noting that ”I will get my map up and show them, and it may still be Crookes, but they are opposed to Conduit Road, but students don’t know where Crookes, Crookes Moor end”. Here, she suggests that her role as an information provider is also reliable on a better local knowledge of boundaries, and topography than the students, suggesting that she guides them past a specific objection to Crookes, showing them that it is a specific main road they are opposed to. When asked how they assess the location boundaries e.g., do they use land registry day, or is there an official set of postcodes – she notes that a colleague initially drew the border boundaries between areas on the map manually (a layer on Google Maps). When asked if this is ever amended, she notes that it was done as a one off exercise a few years ago (it’s static, not dynamic).

¶20: Once a property has been located, rather than giving a map, she gives a property reference (they may be several of the same street, so postcodes are not feasible [see **Question 1**]. So with the property reference, a few photos (accessed via their own website) and a brief description, she provides contact details for the landlord.

¶21: Alongside the details on locating the property, they also provide “guides on what to expect in a viewing” which is provided to all students (interestingly in both printed and digital format, suggesting the guide in prioritised over maps against the cost/green policy of printing). They also give out details of local agents from a manually collated list (based on staff knowledge, and updated ad-hoc not systematically), and where a student “..really can’t find anything suitable we direct them to Zoopla, but we try to help as much as we can”.

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¶23: **Question 7:** Are digital maps an important part of [**CASE SPECIFIC PRACTICE**]?

¶24: **Question 8:** Why are they/why are they not important in [**CASE SPECIFIC PRACTICE**]?

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¶26: This was asked as a direct question, and she responded that: “I think they are important, we’ve got the one behind us but you can’t be very accurate, like at times it’s hard to find boundaries on paper” referring to the big mural wall map in the office, and the boundaries manually drawn on a Google maps layer by a colleague. When asked if they were specifically important to students, or just giving info to students: ”I think they are to a certain extent, but they like to know they are not more than 15 minutes” suggesting that for students they were relational – it was more about locating where a property was in terms of travel distances (pedestrian and public transport). IT was here that she also noted that “some people take photos of the big map”. When asked how she believed students might use digital maps in relation to other media or resources e.g., word-of-mouth, she suggested that she didn’t know, but guessed they would “sit in the IC and look through after…” the meeting with her, trying to get a property on a ‘good road’.

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¶28: **Question 9:** Do digital maps have an effect on the way you feel, or the sense you have of a place or location?

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¶30: ”It does and it doesn’t, it depends if everyone lese on a road is a student fro not” she discussed her own experience as a Sheffield Hallam University student, and their students’ use of Ecclesall Road. She added that “with Street-View you can get a bit of an idea, so you think probably”, but what is misses is “what parts of Walkeley have more undergraduates than postgrads”. Here she looked embarrassed, and apologised before saying that undergraduate students (she termed ‘normal students’) “want to have a party”. Here she gave the story of a male student that asked for properties where he could have parties, which she perceived a s a place where he could play music late and make lots of noise and “get away with it”, which she juxtaposed against her formal position – to suggest that landlords might have some dispute.

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¶32: When asked the same question about her everyday life, she noted that “I would say so, definitely”. Here she drew on her own experiences of recently searching for a property, and discussed that her partner “..wanted to be in a ‘nice’ area, so on Street-View, and on a map he got up on crime statistics”. When asked about the timing on how they negotiated using digital maps, they use a laptop, usually after dinner in none scheduled times as a joint activity. When asked where a digital map was of most use, she stated that it was of “most help when looking at specific areas”, suggesting that criteria of ‘where’ to look had been narrowed prior to looking at a map.

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**¶34: Question 10:** Do digital maps have any effect on the places or sites you decide to go to?

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¶36: I think it does in a way…” here she gave an example of advising a students on properties, where “in September we would say there is this one, get a bus – and showed them the bus route” suggesting that ability to make transport information visible on a digital map had expanded the range of options to a wider a geographical area, allowing the students to consider properties further away. She also noted that they launched a new website in November (2014), where they previously just used Google Maps direct on their monitor and when interacting with students. When asked here *“why Google, and not say BING r OpenStreetMap?”* she stated “Just always used Google Maps, find it easier and I didn’t even know Bing did maps”.

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**¶38: Question 11:** Do digital maps have any effect on the choice of how you get from place to place, or the route you take?

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¶40: Referring to her own personal life with her partner, she stated that “We like to go to the Peak District” here she notes that because neither her or her partner have a car, and they she can’t drive (her partner can drive, but has no car), they often assess both choice of site choice of location for leisure activity by going “right, where can we go by public transport, and go ‘that’s a good way’” For doing that she often did the planning and used Google Maps on a smartphone app – “Look at area, Zoom in, get a bus stop and then see, then look at the blue lines”. Referring here to a mixture of using StreetView, the Navigation function and public transport data within the map.

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**¶42: Clarfication Questions**:

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¶44: When asked about students’ use of maps and choice of transport, she states students preference was “bus or walking, walking definitely most common. If they are in Enfield they might jump on a bus”

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¶46:

**Linked Memo**

Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Initial Memos\\Variance in in importance of centrality