



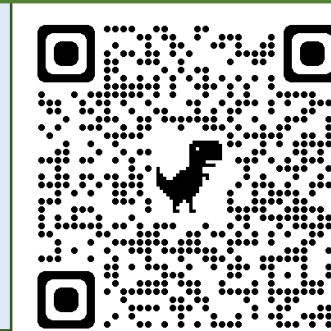
Your favourite park is not my favourite park

A participatory geographic information system approach to improve urban green and blue spaces: a case study in Edinburgh, Scotland

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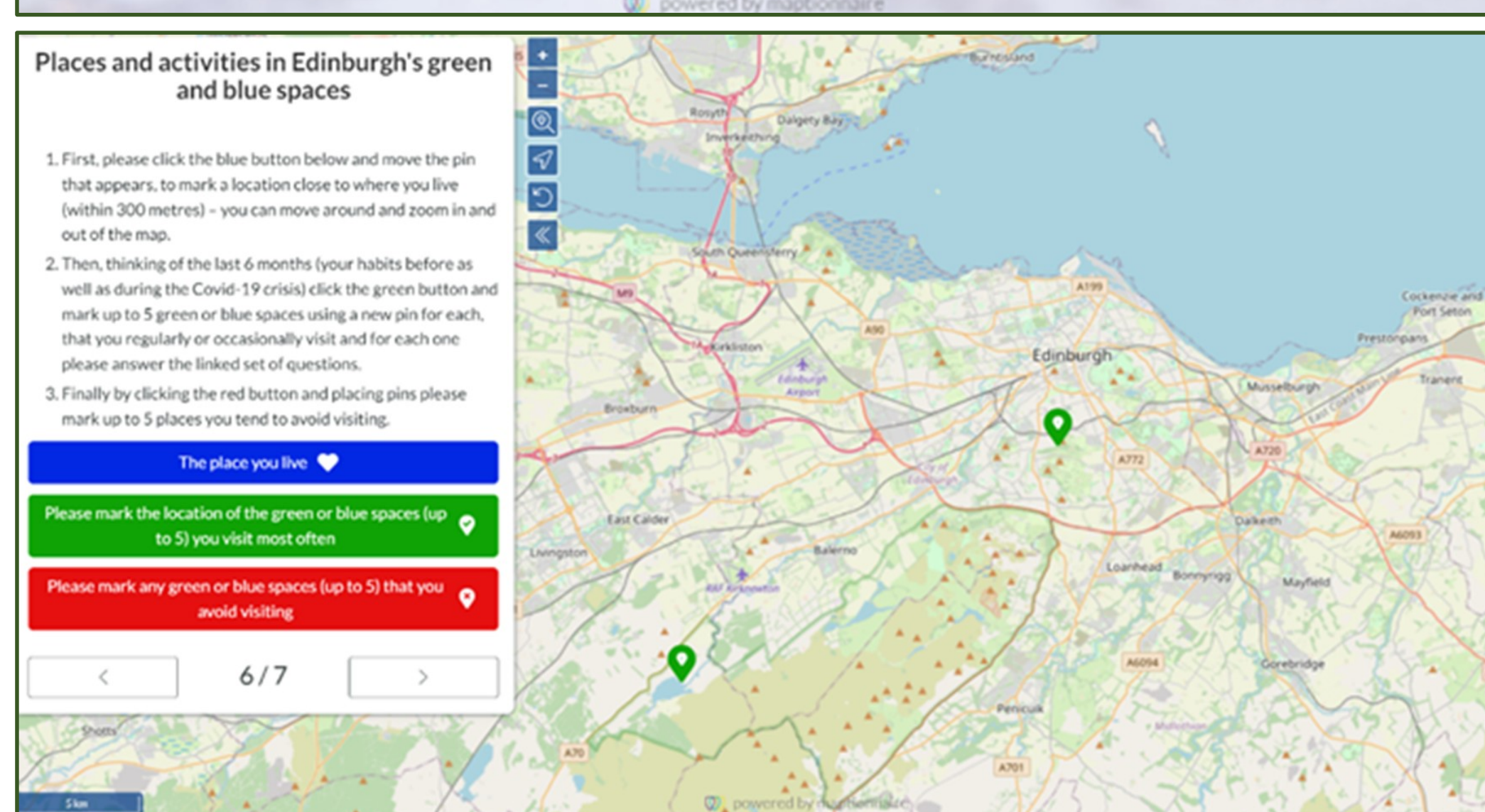


Introduction:

Access to urban green and blue spaces (UGBS) has been associated with positive effects on health and wellbeing; however, the past decades have seen a decline in quality and user satisfaction with UGBS. This reflects the mounting challenges that many UK cities face in providing appropriate public facilities alongside issues such as health inequalities, an ageing population, climate change, and loss of biodiversity. At present, little is known about the preferences of different population subgroups and the UGBS they visit.

Figure 1: Opening question of the TGS Maptionnaire survey; 'Do you ever visit parks or open spaces?'

Figure 2: For the map based part of the TGS Maptionnaire survey, the respondents were asked to mark where they live, UGBS they visit most often, and UGBS they avoid visiting.

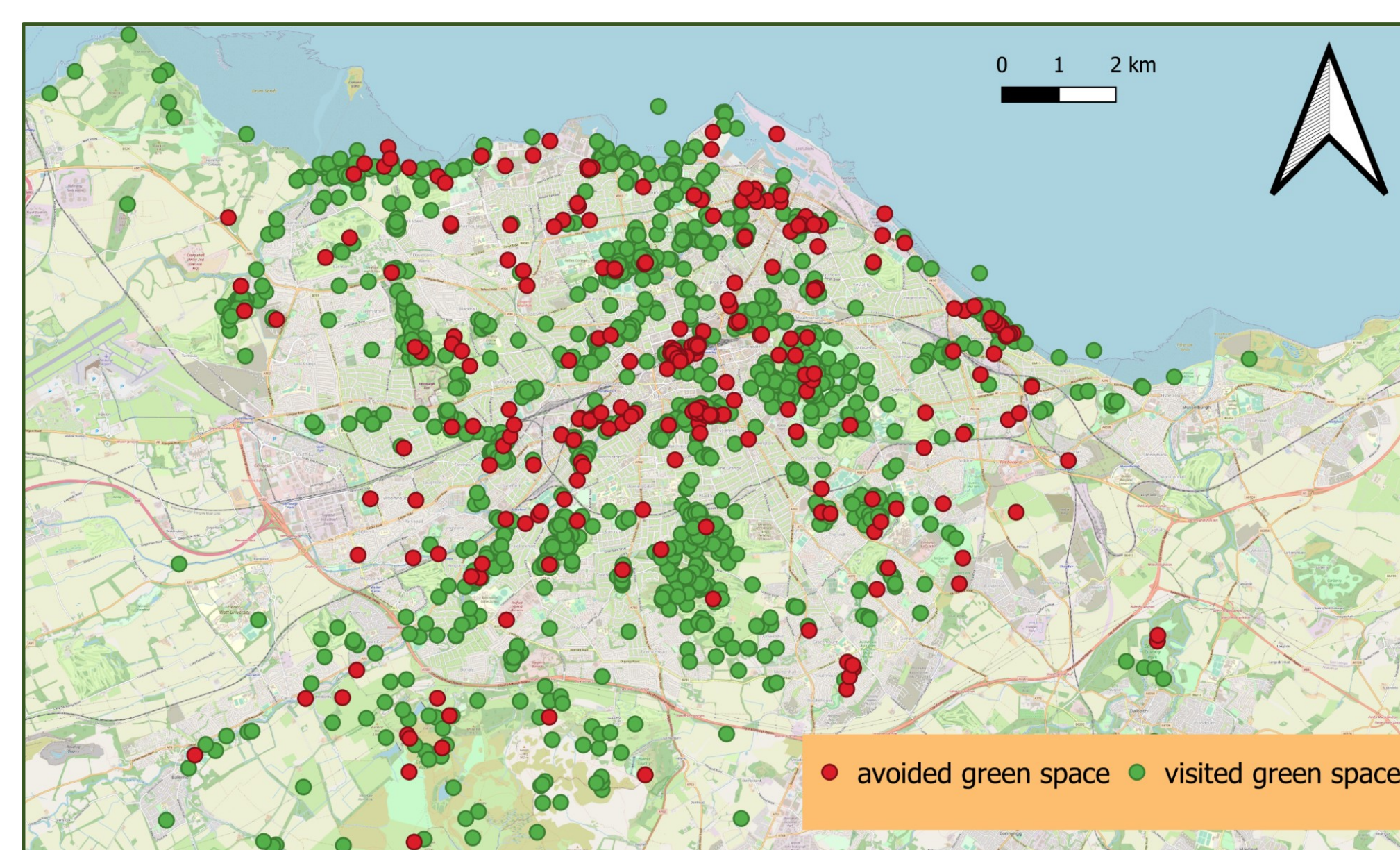


Methods:

Using Maptionnaire as a primary tool for public participation, the overall aim of the research presented here was to use a map-based participatory approach as a community engagement tool, to investigate the preferences of different population subgroups in urban areas, and the UGBS they visit.

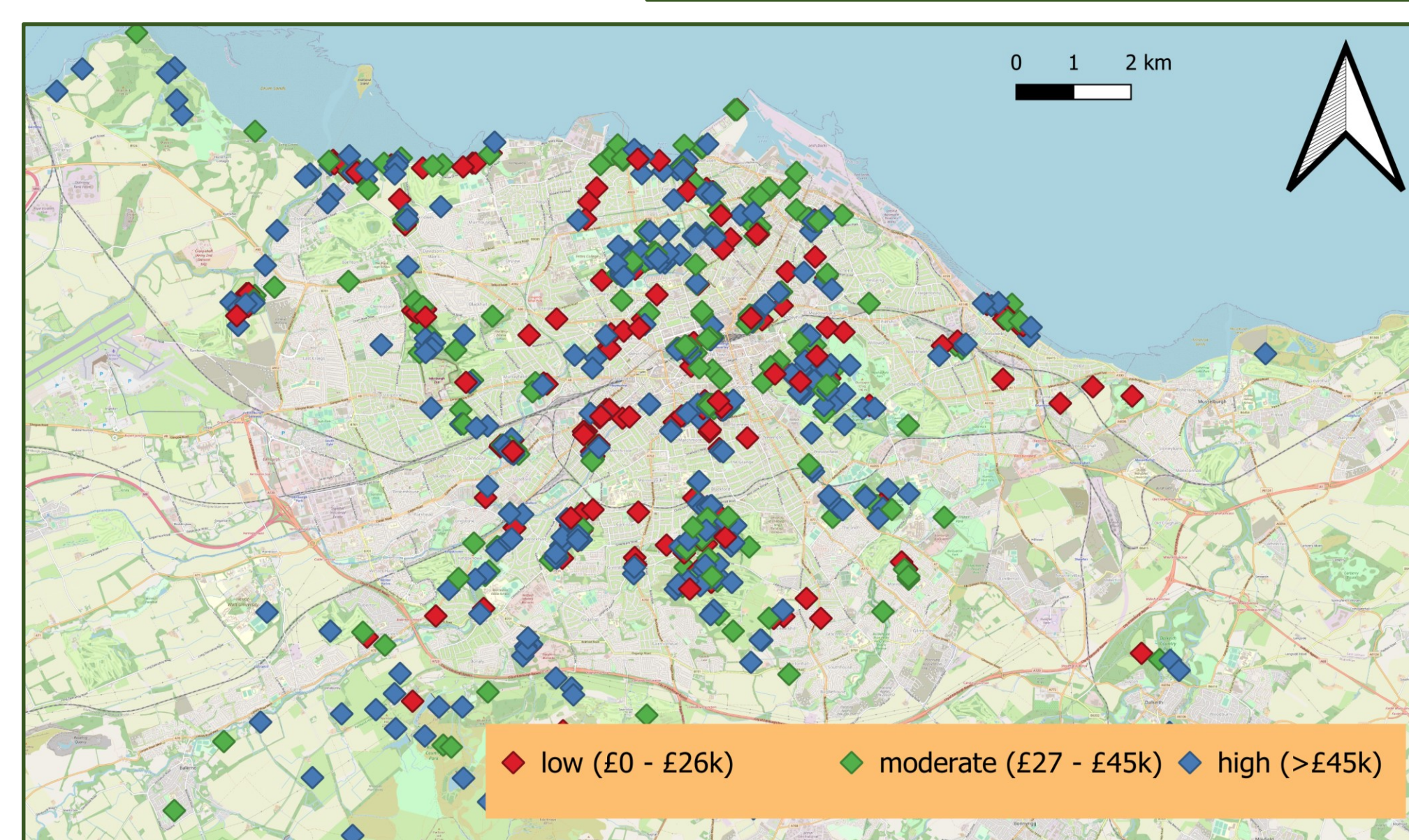
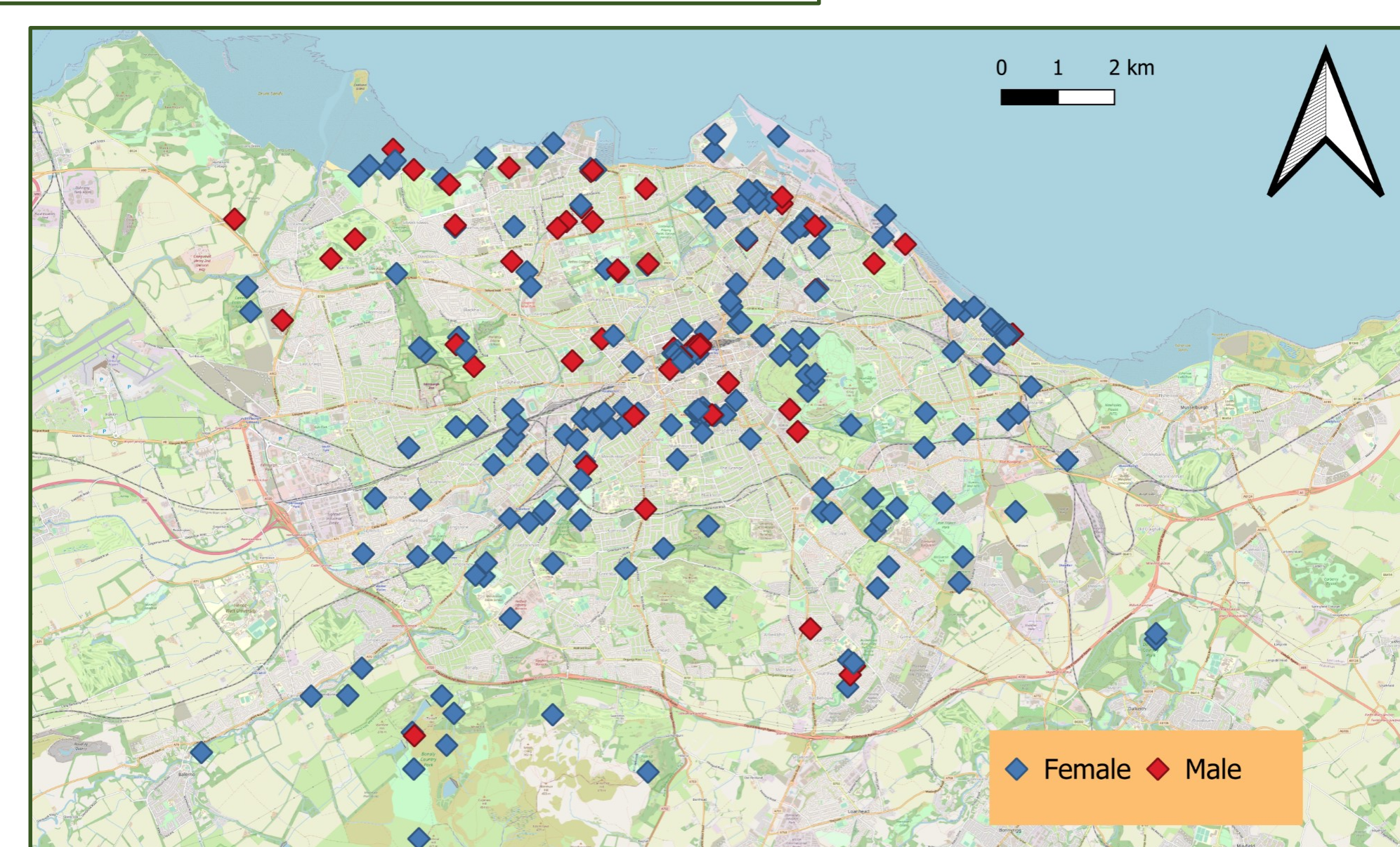
Results:

The data clearly illustrate considerable variation in UGBS preference: one person's favourite UGBS may be one that someone else dislikes and avoids. It is clear that adapting UGBS to suit local communities should not be a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. Numerous UGBS (including key parks) are deemed good for visiting by some and are avoided by others, suggesting that experiences of these spaces differ substantially. The participatory GIS-based approaches enabled people from across society (gender, age and income) to participate in UGBS research. The study showed that the majority of UGBS in Edinburgh are used by diverse populations in terms of gender, age and income. Contrary to popular opinions, there are no obvious clusters of usage related to income or age. However, woman are more likely than men to avoid UGBS, particularly in north Edinburgh. The level of avoidance is not correlated with the level of deprivation of the area the UGBS is located within.



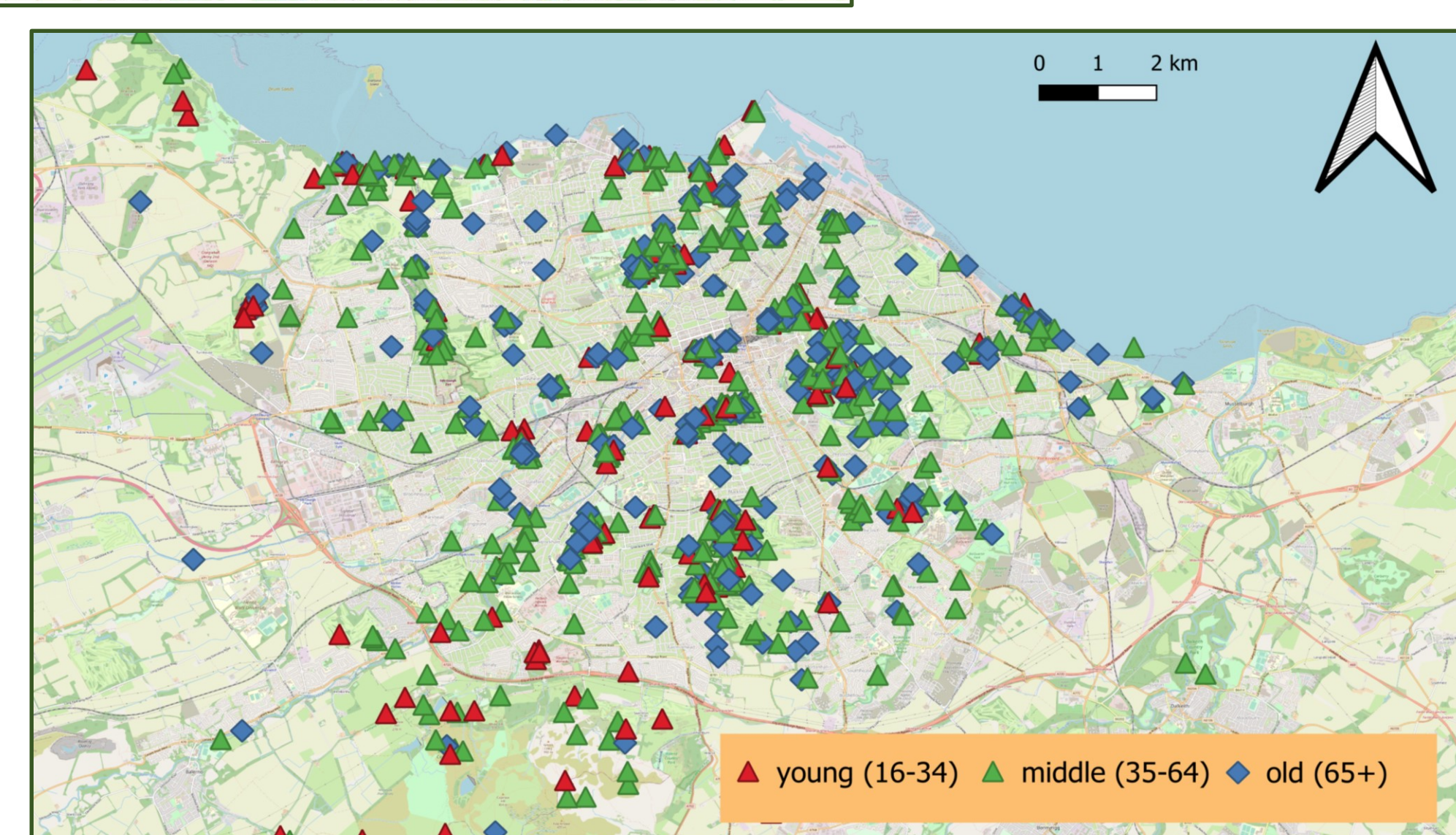
Map 1: UGBS avoided (279) and visited (1629) by the 531 participants taking part in the survey

Map 2: The UGBS avoided, divided into groups of females and males



Map 3: The UGBS visited, divided into groups based on income level of the person visiting

Map 4: The UGBS visited, divided into groups based on age of the person visiting



Conclusion:

The Maptionnaire approach was successfully used as the primary tool for obtaining information through a public participation process. A solution to accommodate the variation in individuals' preferences for UGBS could be to section parks into smaller defined areas, targeted towards different types of visitors, preceded by targeted action to engage local residents, encouraging them to actively participate in their local community, place-making, and development of local UGBS areas. There is a need for gender-focused UGBS research to minimise gender-related barriers. Mixed perceptions of UGBS, both positive and negative, suggest the presence of contested spaces in Edinburgh.

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