

Title: Sensing Public Spaces: Sensorial movements in Toronto's residential neighbourhoods

Where: Wards Island, Toronto

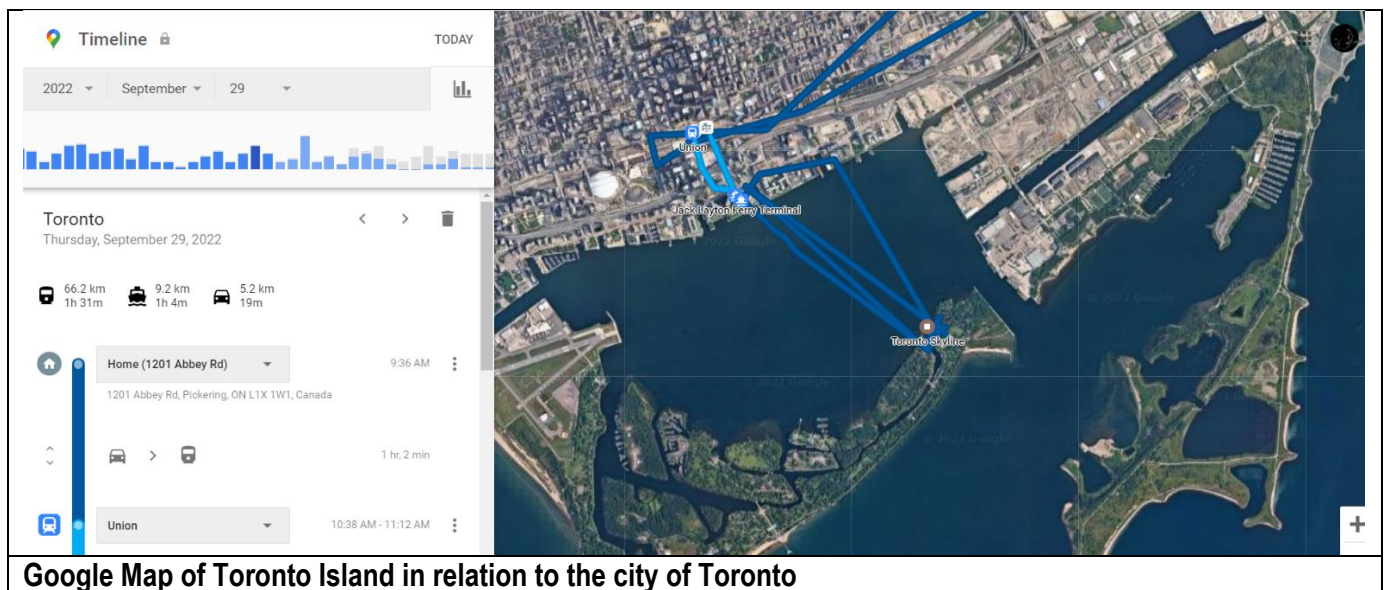
Live Experiment with Professionals 1: September 29, 2022

Objective: The objective of the experiment was to understand participants' sensory connections with the public spaces on Wards island. This public spaces within the residential neighbourhoods of this island was listed as one of the proposed sites of study for my research project at PPS.

Methodology: The experiment was conducted through a participatory method in which 3 professionals from the field of civil engineering and urban planning were invited to take part in a sensory walk on three streets within the residential neighbourhoods of the island. These professional work in the city and live in the suburbs. Two of the participants have never visited the island prior to this trip.

The participants were asked to take this walk for an hour - 45 minutes individual walk and 15 minutes group walk. In addition to the walk, a short movement and a short soundscape exploration in response to the visual and auditory experience of the public space were attempted with the participants by using scores. After the experiment, the entire group gathered for about 45 minutes to discuss the experience and to give feedback on the process.

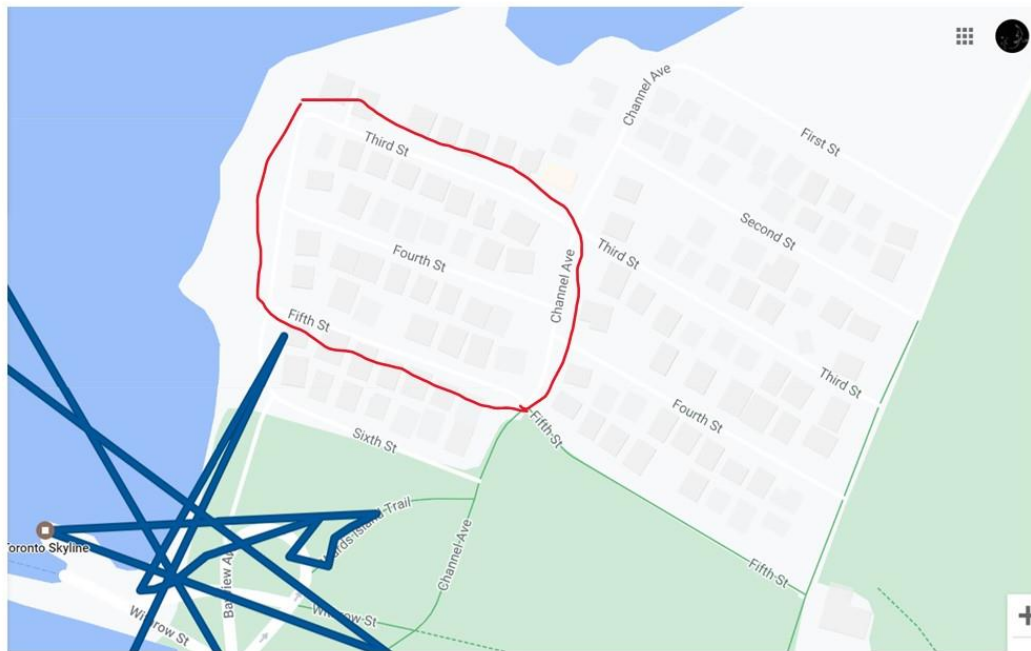
Island Map:



Google Map of Toronto Island in relation to the city of Toronto

Neighbourhood map:

The three streets that were assigned for the sensory walk were: Third Street and Channel Avenue, Fourth Street and Channel Avenue, Fifth Street and Channel Avenue



Google map view of the neighbourhood



Google satellite view of the neighbourhood

Activity:

The participants were given a copy of the island map and a pen.

The day unfolded as follows:

When	Where to meet	What
11am	Mushtari arrives on the island by Ferry	
11-12:50pm	Between Ferry terminal and the island	Mushtari documents her activities via photos, videos.
1pm	Fourth Street and Channel Avenue on Wards Island	Experts arrive
1:15-1:30pm	Fourth Street and Channel Avenue on Wards Island	Mushtari discusses the objective of the day
1:30 – 1:50pm	Fourth Street and Channel Avenue on Wards Island	Warm-up with Mushtari (Breathing, looking, tasting, hearing, touching)
2-3pm	Wards Island	Task-oriented Neighbourhood walks 45 minutes individual and 15 minutes group walk
	Fourth Street and Channel Avenue on Wards Island	Meet back (Coffee break in the middle of the street)
3-3:20pm	Fourth Street and Channel Avenue on Wards Island	Quick Feedback from the experts
3:30-4pm	Two spots identified by the experts	Movement improvisation led by Mushtari's score
4-4:45pm	At Island Cafe	Detail discussion and feedback
5pm		Wrap up

Participants were asked to do the following during the walk:

Questions:

1. **Street Mapping:** Identify on the map the streets that you have visited. Which one was the most interesting and which one was the least sensorially. Please identify.
2. **Personal Sense Mapping:** Identify on the map what you see, smell, touch, taste (or want to taste), hear during your walk. Can you identify spaces/places where these senses are evoked? Make a note of where you linger and where you don't. Is there any sensorial reason for choosing these spaces? A place/space can evoke multiple senses simultaneously. For instance, in one place you perhaps saw and heard something interesting and in other places you wanted to touch something.
3. **Personal memory Mapping:** Identify on the map spaces/places that have evoked (if any) a memory – could be a childhood memory, a memory of meeting your friends etc. through senses?

4. **Places where I paused:** Identify on the map spaces/places where you take a break during the walk. Any sensorial reasons for choosing this space?
5. **Re-imagine your neighbourhood (for later):** Imagine public spaces in your neighbourhood with the senses that you have experienced here on the island's public spaces and list or colour your wishes on your neighbourhood map. Please return this map to Dewan next week or take a picture of this map and email it to me at kathakexchange5@gmail.com

Photo documentation of the walk:



View of Channel Avenue and Fourth Street in the Winter



View of Channel Avenue and Fourth Street in late summer



Participants in the experiment 1. Ready to start their individual walk



The free library in front of the house was an attraction point for the participants



Each participant chose different street to start their walk. This participant started with Channel Avenue and Fifth Street



This participant is a cat lover and she met her love on the street.



Taken by a participant during his walk: The coloured houses created a visual appeal during the walk for this participant.



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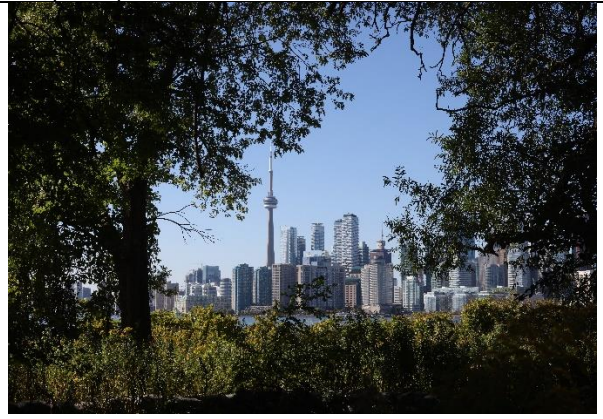
Taken by a participant during his walk: Many artists live on the island's neighbourhoods. Their art works placed on their front lawn right next to the street or on the windows facing the street generated curiosity in this participant's mind.



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Taken by a participant during his walk: One participant took comfort in knowing that the city is in close proximity while others were happy to leave the city behind because the city reminds them of the anxiety associated with their way of life there.



Taken by a participant during his walk: One participant noticed the abundance of this native plant in the island's neighbourhood. Their swaying movements when the wind touches them 'calmed' him down as he mentioned.	Discussion and Feedback gathering at the end of the walk.
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Results:

Attached is a summary (Experiment1_responses.xlsx) of items the participants have identified in the map during their walks. Further analysis will be done in order to dig out any hidden trends in the information. The post-walk discussion summary is in the audio format which will be summarized at a later date.

Movement Score:

Score 1: Embodying Visuals_nondancers

Walk to the public space that was most visually appealing to you during the walk

Stand quietly

Close your eyes

Take a deep breathe.

Open your eyes

Look to your right

Look to your left

Look up

Look down

Now take two minutes to look from right to left. Scan every minute details

Now take one minute to look from up to down. Scan every minute details

Bend your body as if you are going on forward bend and look through in between your legs. What do you see?

Look to your right. Notice if there is anything interesting/disgusting. Move to express your feeling.

Look to your left. Notice if there is anything interesting/disgusting. Move to express your feeling.

Video recording of the guided score <https://youtu.be/OXROcoQx9IU>

Score 2: Embodying Sounds_nondancers

Walk to the public space that was most auditorily appealing to you during the walk

Close your eyes

Take a deep breathe

Keep your eyes closed. What do you hear?

Pick two sounds. One that you like and one that you don't like.

Imagine intensifying the sound that you like. How does the intensified sound make you feel physically? Express through a movement.

Imagine intensifying the sound that you do not like. How does the intensified sound make you feel physically? Express through a movement.

Vocalize a sound from the surrounding first individually and then collectively.

Video recording of the guided score: https://youtu.be/cReqpD0in_Q

What's next in this experiment:

1. Analyze the results above for further trends, analyze the audio files of discussions with participants
2. Find an alternative (may be artistic) way of presenting data on maps.
3. Three more experiments between November and December – one solo movement improvisation in public spaces on Wards Island, movement improvisation with dancers, social interaction experiment (incorporating and evoking sensorial experience and movements) with islanders on public spaces

Challenges I need to be better prepared for:

1. Recording observations in writing on the map was a difficult process for the participants. One participant used a numbering method on the map and used those numbers as references in her descriptions that she provided in typing. This method may work for some participants in future but for older population, typing in handheld electronic devices such as cell phones will be challenging.
2. The participants sometimes reflected on their experience of the walk in an unscripted fashion and/or outside of the designated discussion/feedback session. I wasn't prepared to capture those.
3. Movement experiments did not work well with nondancers. They feel shy to move. I might either have to keep the movement experiments for dancers only or make the movements for nondancers more **socially engaged** (I have to find a better term for this)
4. For solo improvisation, I will need a better strategy for recording myself on the film.
5. I will need to invest time in further reading on sensorial experience and embodiment in order to create better questionnaire and movement scores.