



How do I invite people and get them interested?

It's never a bad idea to start with your friends and their networks; if you happen to be the kind of person who's interested in these questions to begin with, you may well find that a quick caucus of the people you know suffices as far as recruitment is concerned. Blog posts are excellent for sharing longer accounts of your interest and motivation in wanting to do a walkshop, and we've found that social-networking tools like Twitter and Facebook are excellent ways to get out the word.

Each is good at addressing a slightly different facet of the challenge you face: Facebook has good built-in tools for event registration, while simple announcements tend to go viral more quickly (and reach a larger potential audience) on Twitter. In using Twitter, in addition to whatever hashtag you decide on locally, be sure to include #walkshop wherever possible so we can keep track of your progress!



Systems/Layers
How to run a walkshop on networked urbanism





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• We wish to thank: Natasha Lampard and Mike Brown of Webstock in Wellington NZ, for inspiring us to try walkshopping in the first place.

• Everyone who's invited us to run walkshops in your cities. All the participants, for your energy and insight.

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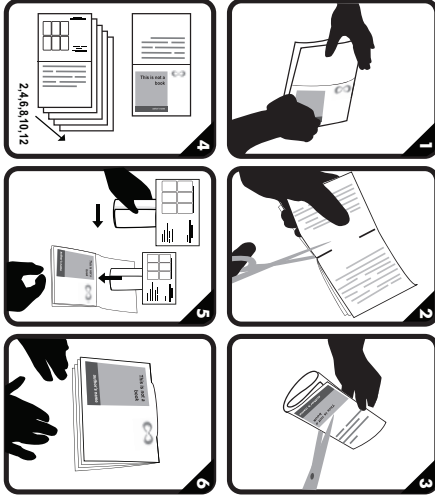
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Systems/Layers: How to run a walkshop on networked urbanism

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We believe that understanding this layer, the systems that make it up, and its implications for the freedom to move and act is vital to full citizenship in the congested, contested urban spaces of the twenty-first century.

Mobile phones, CCTV cameras, building-scale displays, embedded sensors, and remotely-operated barriers are all part of this transformation. Between them, these systems superimpose a layer of information on top of the physical bricks and paths of the city, and this is increasingly a place where control over space and behavior can be exerted.

We live in an age in which the form of cities, the ways in which we experience them, and the choices they present us with are all in the process of profound and rapid change, driven by the presence of networked information-processing systems everywhere around us.

What's "networked urbanism"?

Systems/Layers How to run a walkshop on networked urbanism

We also believe that there's a better way to lay out our cities, and how they operate on us, than by walking through the city with open eyes, remembering to look up and down, noting the various manifestations of the network and asking

What's a "walkshop"?

A walkshop is a new kind of learning experience that's equal parts urban walking tour, group discussion, and spontaneous exploration.

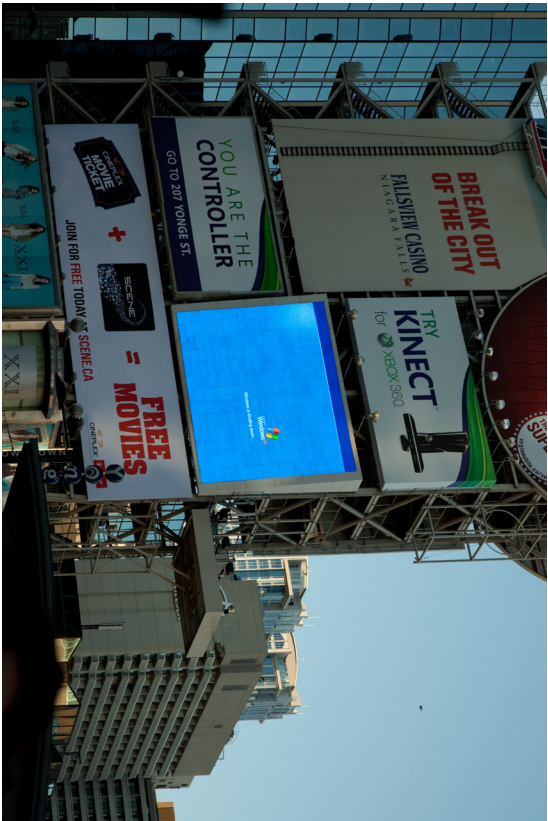
As we've presented them, in cities like Toronto, Barcelona, Copenhagen, Oulu and Wellington, walkshops are a half-day event, held in two parts. The first portion is dedicated to a slow and considered walk through a reasonably dense and built-up section of the city at hand. This is followed by a get-together in which participants gather over food and drink to unpack and discuss what they've just experienced.



You could conceivably do a walkshop on just about any feature of an urban place that strikes your interest, whether general or particular, but in Systems/Layers we've chosen to focus on one particular aspect of the contemporary built environment: places where the global information network either draws information up into itself, or returns it to the street.

What are we looking for?

What you're going to be looking for are appearances of *the networked digital in the physical*, and *vice versa*: apertures through which the things that happen in the real world are gathered up by the global informational network, and contexts in which information originating on the network affects what people see, confront and are able to do.



Either way, we hope you both have fun and wind up learning something unexpected about the place you live. We've certainly found it an excellent way to learn about the cities we've visited, as both we and they move through a technologically-mediated transition that is almost certainly without parallel in the history of human habitation.



By far the most elaborate thing we've seen is a small, portable photo printer, which allowed participants to print out the pictures they'd taken and directly situate them on the master map. Again, though, measures like this aren't necessary to have a great conversation.

You don't absolutely need to do this, though, and we've found on quite a few occasions that conversation flows around and through and over the map without ever quite using it. If you do decide to provide a map, though, it's nice if you also bring along plenty of Post-Its and marker pens for annotation.



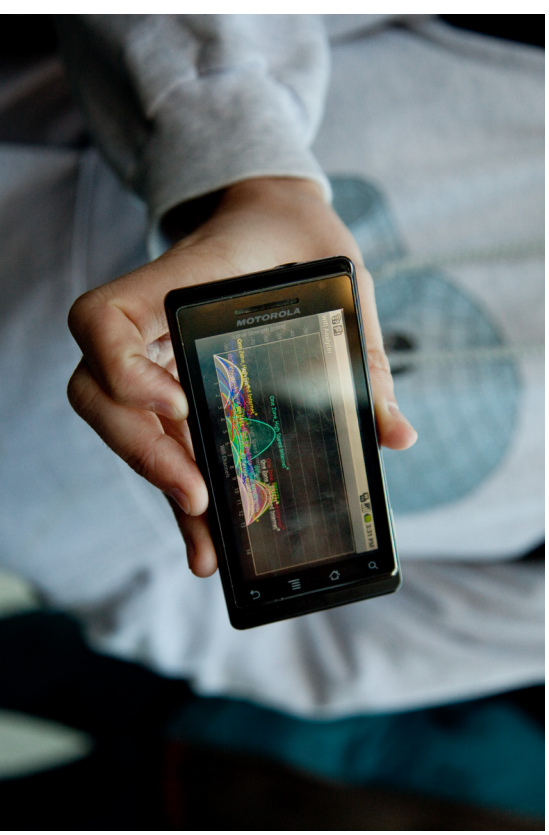
And afterward?

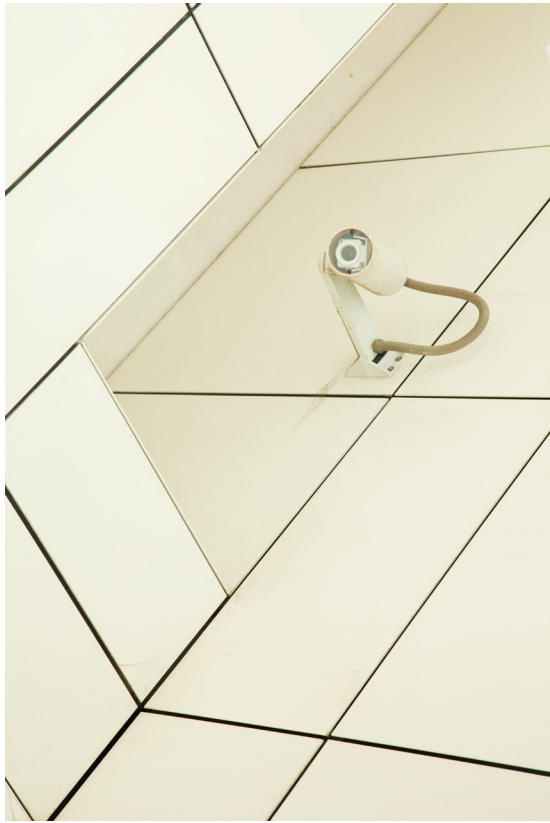
Share your experiences! Blog about them, post them to Twitter, upload your pictures to Flickr. (If you do, remember to tag them "walkshop.")

We hope, too, that you'll consider staying in touch with the people you've met in the course of preparing and executing the event. You may well find this leads to other kinds of involvement in the life of the city.

You may want to revisit the box after a week or a month has passed, and see if your perceptions of that place have changed.

Finally, we hope you'll drop us a line and let us know about your experiences. We'd love to hear from you – whether it's to celebrate your successes, or explore things that haven't worked out quite the way you expected or wanted them to.





Wherever you do wind up choosing, make sure there are enough tables and chairs for thirty-odd people to hang out, including a surface large enough for the map described below, and a noise level conducive to involved conversation.

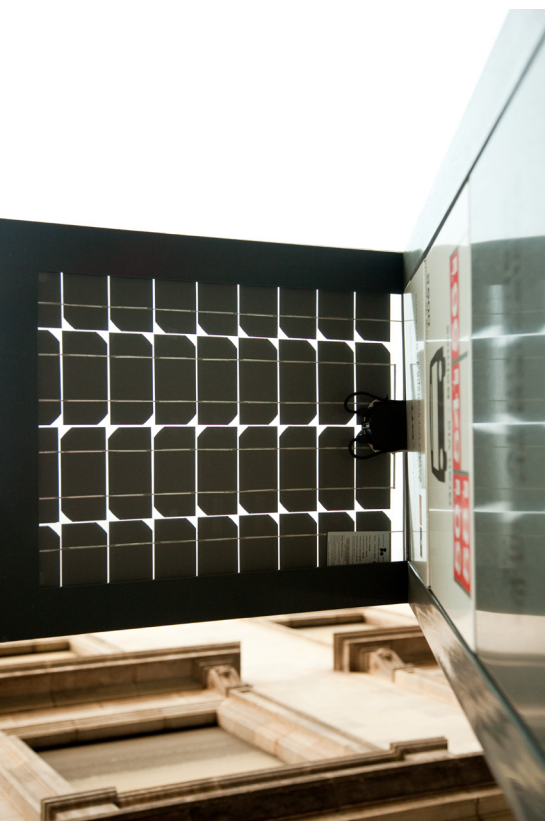
What do I need by way of tools and materials?

Aside from the things we've already mentioned, you may also find that your discussion is enhanced by having a large-scale map of the "box" available.

This is something you can easily enough make by zooming in either Google Maps or Open Street Map to the highest level, and printing full-page "tiles" which you then tape together into a larger map. (We have, in the past, projected the map onto a wall, but find that flat surfaces within easy touch range make annotation and discussion that much easier.)

- Pay particular attention to:
- *Places where information is being collected by the network.* This could certainly mean surveillance cameras, air-quality sensors or decibel meters – but also things you don't ordinarily think of as being networked, like some newer parking meters. Don't forget, either, that these days most mobile phones, games and music players also function as networked input devices.
 - *Places where networked information is being displayed.* Everything from gigantic billboards to multitouch HD screens emplaced on the street to the LED signboards at bus stops. Consider, too, how people's choices in the city are being inflected by personal-scale information displays, whether this means conventional maps or data visualizations (for example, of traffic, crime, air quality, or social activity).





What happens next?

After the actual walking portion of the day, gather your participants in a convenient “command post” to rest their feet, and map, review and discuss the things you’ve encountered together.

You should allot an hour for this, at minimum, but since (as noted below) we recommend choosing a comfortable place for the debriefing portion of the event, discussion can go on as long as participants feel like hanging out.

What do I need in terms of space?

The important thing is to choose a comfortable command post that offers reasonably-priced food and drink, that has enough space for all of you, and that won’t mind that large a group setting up shop for an hour or more. Given these constraints, it’s crucial to make arrangements beforehand – though it’s also true that business owners, in our experience, have tended to be relatively happy about having this kind of guaranteed custom.

Why is this interesting?
It may not be, for everyone. But we genuinely believe we’re living through an inflection point in the history of urban form and experience, in which ways of making and understanding place that have endured for centuries, if not millennia, are in the process of radical change. From our perspective, this is a hugely interesting transition to be living through, and we feel like we probably ought to be paying close attention.

At any given moment of your walk, any or all of these can be acting upon you. The challenge at hand is to figure out the ways in which the novel element – the presence in the streetscape of networked information-gathering, -processing, -storage and -display systems – is influencing all the others.

- *Places where networked information is being acted upon*, either by people directly, or by physical systems that affect the choices people have available to them. This could be a “swarm” of people responding to the cues of a mobile social-networking application, an ATM, the state of a physical system (such as a barrier), or even something much subtler still – like people carrying umbrellas on a still-sunny day, because their phones have told them it’s likely to rain later on.

You can get a good idea of the sort of things that make for fruitful conversations from the pictures in this pamphlet.

Why the name?

You’ve probably caught on by now, but just to be extra-clear: we understand the contemporary city as an ensemble of discrete systems stacked up in layers: infrastructural and technical, of course, but also systems of law, custom, culture and etiquette.



Don't let yourself fall into the role of tourguide. This is a many-to-many experience. Not to be a hippie about it, but our experience suggests that the overwhelming majority of participants have something insightful to offer. So give people the space to share their perceptions.

Try to draw out the quieter participants: collectively, you're a many-eyed urban beast, and we've found that just about everybody on a walkshop sees something that no one else noticed.

Don't worry if you don't get to everything. Part of the point of a walkshop is experiencing for yourself just how astonishingly densely our cities have been provisioned with network interfaces of one type or another. If you spend the entire 90 minutes discussing a single feature of interest, that's a 90 minutes well spent.



arts, architecture or urbanist organization – generally, but not necessarily, a nonprofit – that's willing to defray your costs with a modest sponsorship. (These costs will not be large in any event.)

No matter what you decide with regard to price, it's a good idea to keep one or two scholarship places available for those who absolutely cannot afford to participate otherwise.

How do we conduct the actual walking part?

The best advice we could probably offer you is "slowly." Take ten minutes to walk the length of a single block, looking up, looking down, tracing cables and connections, asking what might be implied by the angle at which satellite dishes are tilted or the three different kinds of antenna sticking out of a box mounted on a lamp post.

Day of the event, of course, at least one of you should take the lead role in coordinating your walking group and driving the conversation.

walk.

It really doesn't need to be a big team, though: say one person to pre-walk the terrain you've chosen, note particular features of interest, and otherwise concentrate on site selection; one to handle recruitment, registration and communication with participants; and one to make arrangements for a "command post," in which to gather and discuss the event like this entails.

You could probably pull one off by yourself, if you have unlimited time and energy and are unflaggingly motivated. For those of us, though, who don't happen to be superhuman, it helps to have a few friends on hand to manage and coordinate the many decisions even a modestly-scaled event like this entails.

How do I set up a workshop?

Eight (relatively) simple steps:

1. *Gather* co-conspirators to help you plan and organize the event.
2. *Choose* a fruitful part of town.
3. *Set up* a command post.
4. *Invite* participants.
5. *Ensure* they've got everything they need.
6. *Walk!*
7. *Get together* and discuss what you've seen.
8. *Document* and follow up online.



How much should we charge?
Given that walkshops are all about lowering barriers to participation in the city, we think you ought to be aiming for the lowest achievable cost. Best of all, of course, is if you can do it for free, perhaps by finding a local

What should we provide participants?
It's nice if you provide each participant with their own printed map of "the box," the area through which you'll be walking, with start and end points clearly marked, as well as the perimeter beyond which you don't want people wandering. You may also want to furnish them with your phone number, and perhaps a checklist of things to keep an eye out for – the one above is a reasonable place to start.

the availability of W/F/i signal, or see if a particular business establishment or point of interest has a representation online, but they're not necessary.

How do I select an area to walk?

Walkshops seem to work best if the groups stick to a pre-chosen area roughly two kilometers on a side. (We call it "the box.") The idea is to follow your instinct as the whim takes you within the box. Don't worry that you won't have enough to explore; if you're doing it right, you may find that the entire 90-minute period is taken up by consideration of just a few blocks.

You should try to ensure, though, that the area you're planning to walk has plenty of parking meters, ATMs, surveillance cameras, map kiosks, and other things to unpack and discuss. This will often (but not always) mean the central business district. We've also had fruitful walkshop experiences in a city's designated "bohemian" quarter and, especially, along the faultlines and transition zones between different kinds of neighborhoods – fewer things in our experience have been quite so stark as the gradient along which street prostitution dropped off, and CCTV coverage densified, as we moved out of the Raval and into Barcelona's more overtly tourist-oriented districts.

If you can manage to ensure that both groups are represented, you're well on the way to a successful walkshop.

What's the right size group for a walkshop?

We feel the walkshop works best if it's limited to roughly 30 participants in total, split into two teams for the walking segment and reunited for the discussion. From experience, we can tell you that it's hard to maintain the cohesion of any group larger than fifteen or so on the streets of a city. Worse, the walkshop tends to degenerate into a one-to-many lecture, rather than the multi-way discussion it ought to be.

What do participants need to bring with them?

You should let your participants know that they'll most likely want to bring seasonally-appropriate clothing, good comfortable shoes, and a camera. Smartphones can be handy to do situationally-relevant things like check for



Who should I invite?

In our experience, the most successful walkshops bring together (at least) two groups of people. On the one hand, it's productive to have people who are unfamiliar with the terrain they'll be walking, but have some domain insight into networked informatics. These people tend to ask the questions long-time residents forget to ask, and they notice the particularities of place that have dropped beneath everyone else's threshold of attention. By contrast, they'll be able to shed some light on the inner workings of the technical systems you stumble upon.

On the other hand, it's absolutely crucial to have a bunch of local experts/ mavens/"mayors" on hand. These are the folks who will situate the networked technology in local history, practice and experience. They'll know that the CCTV cameras almost weren't installed, after only barely passing a citizen referendum, or that free WiFi used to be available in the park, but isn't any longer.

