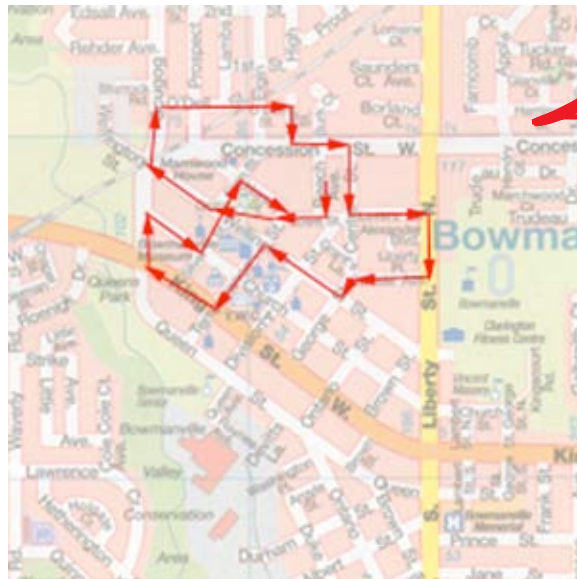


bowmanville

⌘ psychogeography ⌘ portrait



june
3rd, 2006

psychogeography, as understood here, is the active search for, and celebration of, chance and coincidence, concurrently with the divination of patterns and repetitions thrown up by the [meeting/collision] of the chaos and structures of cities, personal histories and interpretations. it is based on the technique of the "dérive", an informed and aware wandering, with continuous observation, through varied environments. it can be sought and can lead anywhere.



↑ <http://www.psygeo.org/essays/psychogeography.php>]

↑↓ psychogeography and the dérive by flemming funck - http://ming.tv/flemming2.php/___show_article/_a000010-001324.htm]

an example of a situation-creating technique is the *dérive*. the *dérive* is the first step toward an urban praxis. it is a stroll through the city by several people who are out to understand the "psychogeographical articulation of the modern city". the strollers attempt an interpretive reading of the city, an architectural understanding. they look at the city as a special instance of repressed desires. at the same time, they engage in "playful reconstructive behavior". Together they turn the city around. they see in the city unifying and empowering possibilities in place of the present fragmentation and pacification. this "turning around" or *détournement* is a key strategic concept of the situationists. *détournement* is a dialectical tool. it is an "insurrectional style" by which a past form is used to show its own inherent untruth- an untruth masked by ideology. It can be applied to billboards, to written texts, to films, to cartoons, etc., as well as to city

spaces. marx used it when he "turned hegel on his head." he used the dialectic in the study of history to expose the ideological nature of hegel's idealism. the situationists use *détournement* to demonstrate the scandalous poverty of everyday life despite the plenty of commodities. they attempted to demonstrate the contrast between what life presently is and what it could be. they wanted to rupture the spell of the ideology of our commodified consumer society so that our repressed desires of a more authentic nature could come forward. the situation is based on liberated desires rather than alienated ones. what these desires are cannot be stated a priori. they will emerge in the revolutionary process of situation-creation, of *détournement*. presumably, communality, unification, and public urban space will emerge as more desirable than commodification, fragmentation, and privatization.

I LIKE IN THE CITY

social contacts □
 architecture, modern
 architecture traditional
 public transportation
 culture, history, heritage □
 visions □
 paving □
 street furniture □
 people watching, mixed races, crime
 mixed genders
 conversations □
 natural materials
 street names □
 art - graffiti, stencil art
 visuals
 side walks □
 walkable. safe, protected □
 fun, performances, free entertainment
 subway, buses, tramways specially
 cafes, restaurants, patios □
 interaction between different
 generations and social status
 pedestrian areas, comfort
 squares
 language of urban squares
 language of urban space
 communication
 directions
 advertising
 monuments, memories □
 urban space - atmosphere
 urban people
 flags, symbols
 humor
 numbers □
 vistas, views
 nights, street lights
 excitement
 night clubs
 laughter, smile
 kindness □
 neighbourhood □
 passages, bridges □
 shopping streets
 shopping malls
 plazas
 scooters, mopeds
 cleverly used space
 open air markets
 art galleries
 museums
 public art □
 mature trees □
 side walks □
 zebra crossing
 display windows
 door signs and numbers □
 windows, doors

I DON'T LIKE

asphalt, concrete □
 fake "victorian" style □
 noise
 crime
 confusion
 graffiti, stencil art
 bicycle paths and lines
 pollution
 garbage
 directions
 advertising
 alleys without lights
 night clubs
 familiarity
 canals, lakes, rivers, quays
 plazas □
 wasted space □
 chaos
 manicured lawns □
 no side walks □
 signs that say
 "no skateboarding" □



I LIKE IN THE CITY

benches
 flowers and flower beds □
 parks □
 paralel parking,
 as a protection
 for pedestrians
 street dogs and cats
 squirrels, ducks, swans, geese
 town house
 apartment buildings
 canopies
 let people buid two three or more houses
 per property!
 density
 fountains, sound of water
 raised street crossings
 boats, ships
 small cars (smart cars)
 aquariums
 zoos
 railway stations, ports, airports
 taxis
 school, colleges, universities □
 embassies and consulates
 foreign cultural centers
 theaters, opera houses, ballet houses
 music halls
 street performers
 movie sets
 evolved organically cities □
 modern problem solving
 healthy growth
 tourist attractions
 the heart of a traditional town
 planned open area in a city
 planned hearth of the city (squares)
 democracy
 urban planning

I DON'T LIKE

parking on the open space □
 parking in front of business,
 between sidewalk and
 entrance □
 street dogs and cats
 detached individual houses
 (taking too much space) □
 apartment buildings higher
 than 8 floors
 faceless streets
 two stories retail
 large cars, vans
 kitsch □
 artificial system
 essentially self-destructive
 social inequity and isolation □
 artificial tourist attractions
 not in my back yard syndrome □
 zoning system □

goal:

1. to create an irresistible urban "package" where tourists and locals alike would love to congregate.
2. great urban spaces need only a common will, time and perseverance.
3. sociability is probably the most important attribute of urban life and if we want to keep cities alive, every effort to make them joyful and meaningful and contribute to the connectivity and identity of the neighborhoods, is essential in the development of community, culture and democracy.
4. with little effort, a very pleasant urban space can be created when the community is willing to pay attention to the messages sent by their own city!

aleksandar janicijevic [toronto, june 1, 2006] in preparation for this walk.
 after the walk symbol - □ - was added for items present in bowmanville.



it started as a 40 minutes drive from toronto with very heavy rain.



rain. first impression very old
large birch trees and the whole
town intensively green.





we started our walk surprisingly not along the street but with the shortcut between the seniors centre and some heritage buildings. park was created in this space from the couple of backyards. really effective but very expensive solution. was it a gift from the local lions club? in this idyllic atmosphere there was a small sign of rebellion. bin full of garbage was deliberately burned!





this land near the intersection belongs to the a seniors home. it is private but surprisingly left without any fences, available as a pleasant resting spot for public!



this is a spot where for a long time the bowmanville railway station stood. along with demolished station goes the story (myth?) about the only visit of elvis (presley) to this area when his train stopped for unknown reason and he wondered to the nearby school. contact local resident bill humber for full details. ambiguity about this event is actually adding attraction to this spot and the whole area!

once there was a big neighbourhood fight with the city officials to save this wooden bridge. it is now wonderfully restored and saved for future generations.





I was really impressed with the colour in the area. it was probably more intensive on this rainy day. huge properties and very well maintained greenery.

is the whole neighbourhood rich enough to afford this expense?



do you think that this is a street crossing? no, it is not. notice short black decorative pillars blocking the way and no paths in that directions. this is just a calming for traffic and huge opportunity is missed to use it as a crossing maybe slightly raised to the level of sidewalks and connected to the paths. is anybody using it as a crosswalk? during my stay nobody crossed the street there, we crossed where it was more convenient. otherwise nice effort to make the sidewalks and the whole area pleasant walking experience is somewhat diminished by this.

comment from other participant in this walk:
I disagree – in fact I think that it provide's a logical crossing point and the bollards narrow the road thus slowing traffic and making the space pedestrian friendly.





with big surprise to the locals I found out this market on the liberty street to be the most attractive (and original) structure in the bowmanville. it is even marked for demolition, notice the info board. facade near the street, nice neutral colour, informative sign, flowers, parking at the side of the building instead of as usual in front, nice very pleasant nostalgic atmosphere; these are just few of the good points for this buiding.

the other most original detail is on king street, few wooden boards hiding the ugly metal side of the building. is it possible that this was not even an intentional move? maybe they were using it for some other purpose and then it was just left like that!





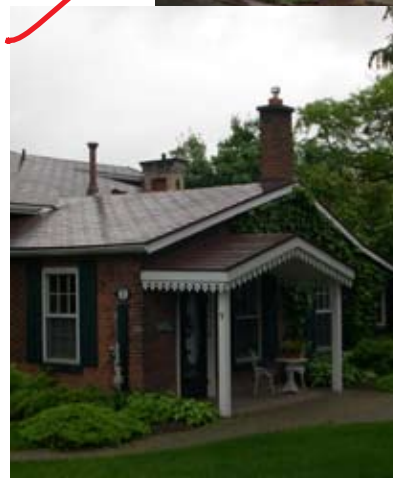
locals in our group took me to this street, with much pride. lovers lane really looks very pretty, nice houses and very well maintained gardens. oldest still standing house in the bowmanville is also in this lane. even with all this beauty I notice two things that are bothering me. street is very narrow (I do not have anything against it). no side-walks. obviously car traffic is having a priority. if there is not enough room for both sidewalk and the two way street, make it one way, is too much to ask for little inconvenience?

comment from other participant in this walk:

actually it looks close to the dutch "woonerf" or "naked street" where cars slow to allow pedestrians to walk along shared space. two ways also slows traffic making it less of a trouble-fare street.

ps. excellent point!

after rethinking, this is for sure the best solution in this and many other cases!



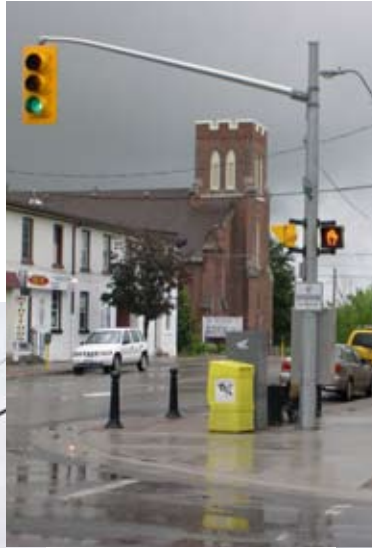


beautiful house after beautiful house, beautiful garden after another one. they are showing up around each corner, very impressive and very expensive. located in one of the most beautiful houses is bowmanville museum. there was no time for visit, some other time.



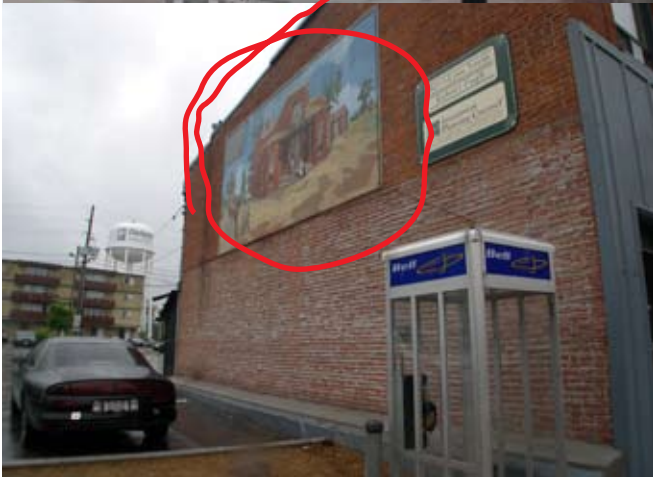


windows, doors and numbers are my most favourite architectural symbols. strongest words in the language of urban space are speaking loud and clear here in bowmanville. I've heard you!



churches are present specially here on church street. how many and what denomination I do not know, but I know that there is no temple of any other denomination than christian. correct me if I am wrong. is that a message?





around this main urban setting intersection of the king street and temperance there are interesting paintings - murals on the walls. I was really shocked to find out that all those painted buildings were relatively recently DESTROYED. they are not replaced with anything of any value, few parking spots, bank and some one story retail facilities.

totally insane specially for me coming from the place where public is fighting (and winning) for every single piece of history.

good side of this story is that someone in the city obviously understand that valuables were demolished and at least memory, in the form of murals, is standing there to remind community not to make any more mistakes of that kind in the future, or at least I am hoping that they are standing there for that reason.





I like traffic signs, they are part of the complex language of urban space but there is one that I really hate. no skateboarding. in this case there is even a by law number added, to make it more threatening. what are those young guys hanging around there damaging? asphalt? or is their appearance disturbing someone? see in a small photo bellow similar, little more colourful, sign from paris, ontario. they hate them too, do not worry city people, you are not lonely.





more **GOOD**
points in the neighbourhood
on the left and some not so
good points on the right.

1. well preserved king street.
vibrant, colourful, some-
what authentic, clean, friend-
ly, well proportioned.

2. one of the nice surpris-
es in bowmanville was a
store called "alcatraz" sel-
ling "skate, snow and style".

3. some coffee shops are
providing outside public sea-
ting, very rare site.

4. overlooking conservation
area 5 minutes walk from the
centre. nice park is formed.

NO SOOP

1. some streets are too wide
to provide any atmosphere
or authenticity.

2. huge parking spot without
any trees or any other urban
furniture.

3. very uninteresting archi-
tecture of many new (con-
temporary) buildings.

4. ultimate architectural and
planning crime is this facility
for bank of montreal. wrong
size, wrong material, wrong
colour, built on a spot where
"one of the most beautiful
commercial buildings built
in 1866 stood for years.





story about bowmanville market square is a very sad one. back in 1897, see little scanned photo top right, people were celebrating queen victoria's diamond jubilee on their wonderful, architecturally well defined, urban square. it was their favourite place for trade and social communication. what was left today of that space? nothing, not even a name.

city hall, built in 1903, is on its place and almost invisible from the temperance street hidden behind row of trees, is a left over space. it does not have any functions except the monu-

ment to the solders who died in world wars. see next page for the unhappy atmosphere on this left over square in 360° degrees panoramic image. old market square space is today used mainly for parking and some one story retail. it was totally unnecessary to destroy the heart of the city.

great effort from the group of enthusiasts is obvious in nice preserved atmosphere in the king street and old residential neighbourhood, but the potential to be the national tourist attraction and example of how historic neighbourhoods should

be treated and saved, is in a big way lost. still there is lot of things to do to save what was left.





think about missed opportunity for a great urban square while exploring sad, unhappy atmosphere on this left over space. picture above is an 360° interactive panorama that you can navigate around and zoom in and out. click inside the image to start.

IMPRESSIONS

bowmanville is secluded, even a hidden place. last 13 years I was wondering in a circle of 400 km around toronto and I never passed through the bowmanville? first impression on this rainy saturday morning was sense of being somewhere else almost like stepping out of this time. immediately sense of not belonging here also developed. I have visited over one hundred cities with more than one million inhabitants and countless smaller cities and towns in four different continents. in most of them you have something in common with the place, something you can connect to. in bowmanville it was just like being in the museum with some unreal people (wax museum?).

I still tried to use my usual way of observation and analysis in order to interpret urban language of the place. results you can see on previous 20 pages, but somehow I have a feeling that I am missing something that in this situation I do not understand it. is there some other dialect used here. even in small towns in england (I have visited couple of them), where I had similar feeling of not belonging, there was something to connect to: pubs, friendly people, historic architecture, tradition, understanding of tourist needs and curiosity, appreciation for our money etc. in bowmanville whole atmosphere is aiming towards isolation and distance from the surrounding world, they do not envision newcomers or tourists as a potential. according to the new study published for biennale of architecture in rotterdam, holland, july 2005, tourism is the biggest and fastest growing industry. socio-cultural and direct economic impact of tourism can be the only available way to preserve existing historic neighbourhoods.



based on a past as a reference point and inspiration, the only way to look at the future (in my modest opinion) is to keep city as alive as possible. way to do it is to use existing urban texture and ambiance, past experiences and observations to encourage and orchestrate development of urban society.

one can compare city to the living organism and best way to keep it healthy is to treat it like one. there is an issue of connectivity and identity. how does the downtown drift into the neighborhoods? where is the centre - heart of the city. redevelop old market square in the case of bowmanville. sociability is the basis of many of the activities and events that make social life on the square joyful and meaningful. in these sociable interactions people do not encounter each other in terms of specific roles, as for instance employer-employee, or cashier-customer, but as complete human beings. the status of each, their social or economic position, knowledge or fame is not as important as personal qualities. in this sense sociability makes for more democratic relations.

if these important social functions of the square are not understood, and if mechanisms are not found to protect the traditional multi-functional character of the square, a powerful context for socialization, acculturation, and democratization of society will be lost. respecting the principles of sustainability, democracy and social justice is essential for city's livability factor.

how to achieve all of this, well, I am leaving that for some other interested people, I am just the urban enthusiast, observer and psychogeography walker.
a.j. toronto, august 2006.

ps. observation of one other participant of this walk that bowmanville is not actually the city or town, that it is more like urban setting or field is one of the possible explanation for unique atmosphere within this place?