

# Toolkit for the Ethnographic Study of Space TESS

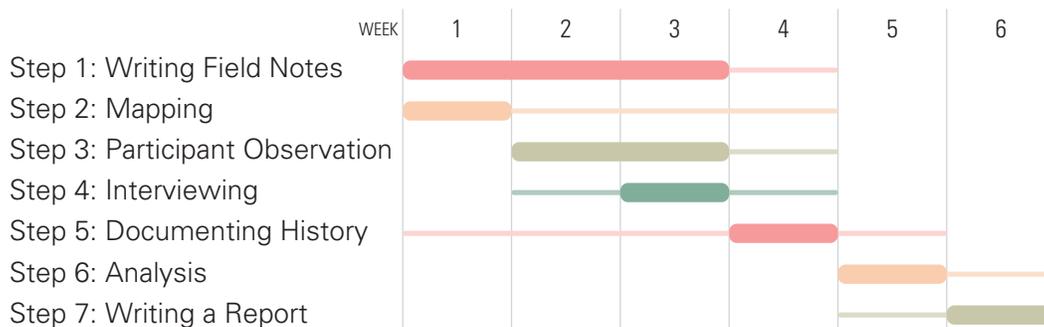


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## TESS Project Timeline

*This is an example of a timeline for a study of a public space using the TESS methods. The duration and amount of fieldwork can vary considerably from project to project, but the timeline below is provided as a general guideline for the minimum requirements.*



Toolkit for the Ethnographic Study of Space  
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# INTRODUCTION

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The Toolkit for the Ethnographic Study of Space (TESS) is an in-depth method for studying the everyday life of a particular public space. It is a qualitative method that helps you understand the meaning and context of what you learn. *Ethnography*, a cultural description of a place, is a way to uncover the cultural rules, beliefs, feelings, and practices that make up public life. It complements quantitative survey and demographic methods by adding people's experience of place. Most importantly, a TESS study is a way to uncover the causes and dynamics of social exclusion, lack of diversity, and inequality in the use and access of a space so you can work toward creating a socially just space for all community groups and members.

TESS is an excellent way to begin evaluating a public space because it highlights what conflicts or opportunities may exist in a way that does not assume the researcher already knows what they might be. In other words, an ethnographic approach encourages us to learn what we did not already know, as well as confirm whether our ideas, plans, and goals are in fact correct. In addition to asking direct questions, TESS is comprised of a series of techniques that, when viewed together, create a rich portrait of a public space—a detailed picture of what is happening and why at a particular moment in time.

Thus, TESS provides a *snapshot* that can be used to understand the social dynamics of a public space at a moment in time. It is an efficient tool for user assessment because it does not require the same time commitment as a Rapid Ethnographic Assessment Procedure (REAP) or other more extended fieldwork. However, it also is limited by being undertaken at one point in time, so the results from the process should take that into account.

Because multiple tools are used (mapping, observing, photographing, interviewing, and documenting the history of the space), the researcher or community member will produce different understandings of the space and ultimately bring them together to create an inclusive description. One strength of this methodology is that the researcher or community member can compare what is learned from each tool and search for an explanation when the findings differ. This technique of comparing and contrasting different methods is called *triangulation* and is the basis of the methodological utility of TESS. The different kinds of

observations, field notes, interviews, and historical documents all focused on one public space allow the researcher to check what they are finding from multiple points of view. These differences often highlight the most important aspects of life in a public space.

The TESS methods include both a physical and architectural recording of the public space through mapping and photographing as well as a social recording of activities and behaviors. It includes an anthropological technique known as *participant observation* that emphasizes the experience of the researcher or community member when working in the public space. Observing objects and behaviors can help orient you toward the space overall, while participating in activities allows you to immerse yourself in the feelings, smells, sounds, and a sense of comfort or discomfort in the life of the space. Finally, a TESS includes documenting the history of the space and oral histories of community members to provide a richer understanding of its meaning.

This booklet is a first attempt to outline the basic steps of TESS. The individual methods have been adapted from previous work by the Public Space Research Group and the application of REAP studies in parks and plazas in the United States and Central America. It was designed to be a quick and efficient method to interpret an individual public space with the ultimate goal of helping community members, planners, designers, and social scientists assess its everyday life and activities. We do not include here a discussion of sampling protocols, which is a crucial consideration but to which approaches vary significantly depending on project scope and available resources. The following pages outline the basic steps of the toolkit and, by example, its application to a single public space.

## ABOUT PSRG

*The Public Space Research Group (PSRG) is a research sub-group of the Center for Human Environments (CHE) at the Graduate Center, City University of New York. PSRG engages in ethnographic research, theory, and policy projects with a focus on the relationship of public space to people and communities within the context of legal, political, and economic forces. For more information, visit the PSRG website at [www.thepsrg.org](http://www.thepsrg.org).*

## Field Notes, General

Project	NYC Parks	Researcher	[Researcher Name]
Location	Tompkins Square Park	Date	March 25, 2018
Note Type	Scratch <b>(Field)</b> Interview (circle one)	Weather	Cool / Windy (42°F)
Part ID	N/A	Time	Start: 2:00p.m. Stop: 2:15p.m.
General	Arrived by subway later than expected		

Observations / Questions	Personal Reflections and Ideas / Responses
<p>I am seated on a green bench in the southwest corner of the park. The bench is the first in a line of approximately ten benches on each side of the sidewalk. I am facing a fenced in grassy green space with my back to the intersection of Avenue A and 8th St. To my left is an entrance to the playground where approximately two dozen very young children are playing and approximately ten adults are standing. There are no other people sitting in my line of benches.</p> <p>I can hear the sound of skateboards as they zoom by quickly on the sidewalk on the street behind me. I also hear cars, both their tires and occasionally their horns.</p> <p>Two blonde women (30s) are throwing a ball for a doberman pinscher in the gated dog run space across from me. The dog is running around the area without a leash, but the gate is keeping the dog within the space.</p>	<p>It is a really nice spring morning, and I feel comfortable sitting outside. I imagine school-age children are in class at this time and I wonder how the park might feel, or who might be here, at different times.</p> <p>Although the park has noises of birds, it also feels very much located in the city to me, with the sound of tires and horns constantly in the background. I never forget I am in the middle of New York City while sitting here.</p> <p>The dog looks friendly, but I am glad there is a fence to keep it from running out onto the sidewalk or onto the street.</p>

Write your observations as carefully as possible, including physical and social details. When taking notes about the actions of others, record what you see and hear and not what you think people are thinking.

On the other half of the sheet you can put down how you feel about your experience.

Add any insights or questions you might have about what is going on.

# STEP 1: Writing Field Notes

This toolkit is designed to give you practical tools to engage with a public space and take field notes from different perspectives. Field notes are the core of any ethnographic method in that it is through taking field notes that you can learn about how people use, think about, and change places. One of the most important things about taking field notes is making sure the information you gather is captured in a way that makes it easy to understand at a later time. After leaving the field, memories quickly change and fade, so it is important to have a process of taking, and refining, notes so the richness of detail can be recorded.

We suggest using a general strategy toward note-taking that involves three different kinds of notes: (a) scratch notes, (b) field notes, and (c) memos. All three of these kinds of notes are taken to help you recall and record what occurs on your site. One way to think about this process is to imagine that as you are watching and listening, you are simultaneously mentally recording everything in what we call *head notes*. Head notes are what you will be trying to remember when you write down physical notes.

## Scratch Notes

Scratch notes are the notes you take while you are in the public space itself; they can be simple and include specific words to remind you of experiences, observations, or short quotations of things you overhear. Scratch notes can accompany all of the different types of methods described in this toolkit. Scratch notes are often taken in your native language or even in a kind of shorthand that you develop over time. For example, Setha uses abbreviations for words such as public space (ps), community (comm), children (ch), and others. You can develop your own set of tricks for writing things down quickly.

## Field Notes

Field notes are a more formal and elaborate version of the scratch notes and they are written shortly after spending time in the field. Field notes are where you organize your scratch notes and other memories into complete sentences and expand upon ideas you had on site. Field notes should be written in as much detail as possible so that they will be useful to you or another person even a year or two later. Remember to try to write clearly and with examples since writing field notes is also a form of analysis. When you put your head notes and scratch notes into

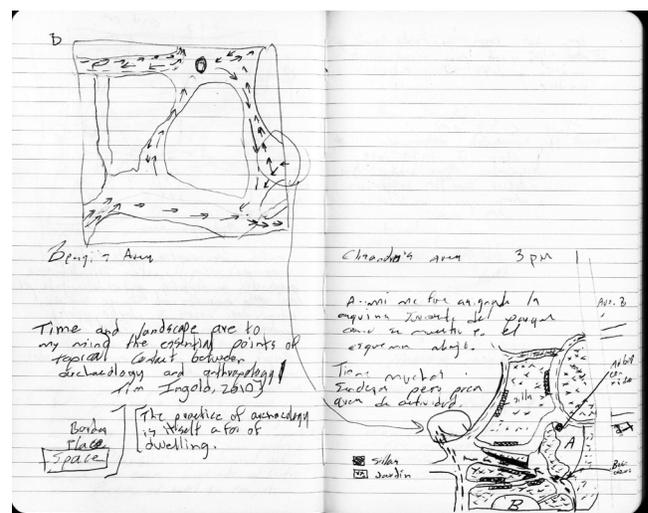
this written form, you will remember more, so use this opportunity to provide as rich of a story of what happened as you can.

## Memos

Over time, as you gather scratch notes and field notes, it will be helpful to write memos that organize your thoughts about reoccurring themes or ideas that appear. For example, if you were studying a park that has a playground area, you might write a memo about why younger children do not seem to use the playground based on your observations of teenagers often using the swings in the playground to hang out.

Be sure that your field notes include the date, time, and location written at the top of each page to keep this information organized so you can return to it later. When you are taking notes, separate notes about what you observe from your reflections or feelings. One way to do this is to take notes on a piece of paper with two columns: observations on the left and personal feelings on the right. We have provided a template for field notes in this toolkit as well as an example.

It is helpful to bring something to write on, pencils or pens, and water or snacks if you are going to spend many hours working in the field. Taking field notes in public space is exciting and rewarding but also tiring and uncomfortable at times.



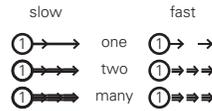
Scratch notes can contain a combination of drawings, words, and spoken phrases heard in the field to help you remember important observations to write about later when you draft more formal field notes.

## Key

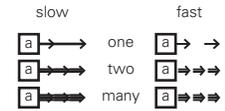
**1** **People** – Draw a circle and line to indicate the location and direction each person is facing; and use a unique number to reference in fieldnotes

**a** **Objects / Traces** – Draw a square to indicate the location of each object/trace; and use a unique letter to reference in fieldnotes

### Moving People



### Moving Objects

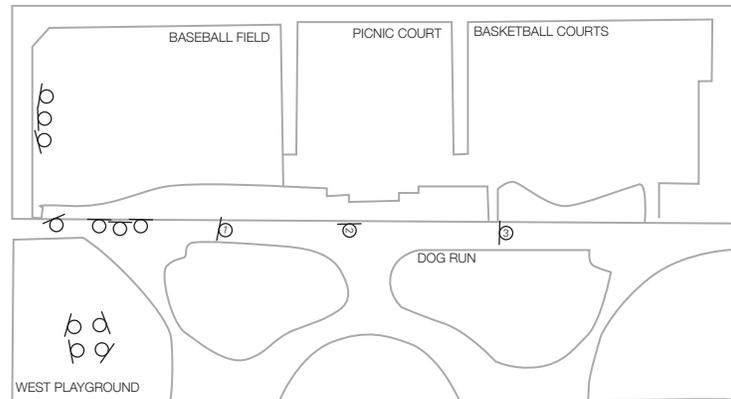


## Behavioral Map

**1** Female, 40s, walking across the park wearing a peabot, black tights, and black high heels

**2** Female, 50s, sitting alone on a bench rearranging clothing between plastic bags

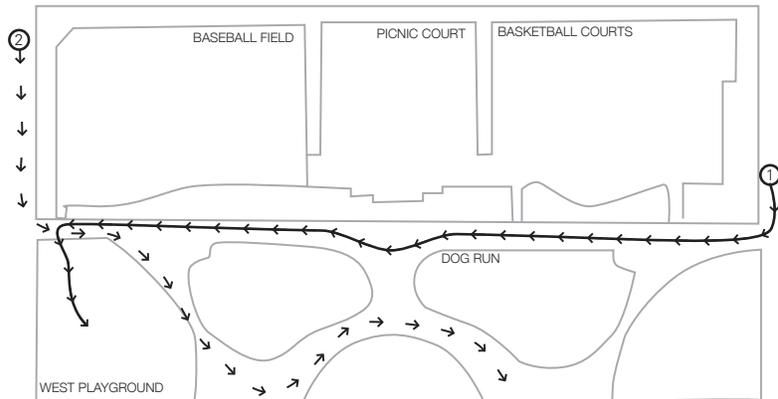
**3** Male, 70s, blue jeans and white t-shirt, long gray beard; throws bag of bread into the air toward pigeons



## Movement Map

**1** Female, 30s, pushes a high-end stroller with covered bassinet to the playground

**2** Male, 60s, on a bicycle with yellow antennas and a loud speaker balanced on the handlebars plays music and rides toward the center of the park

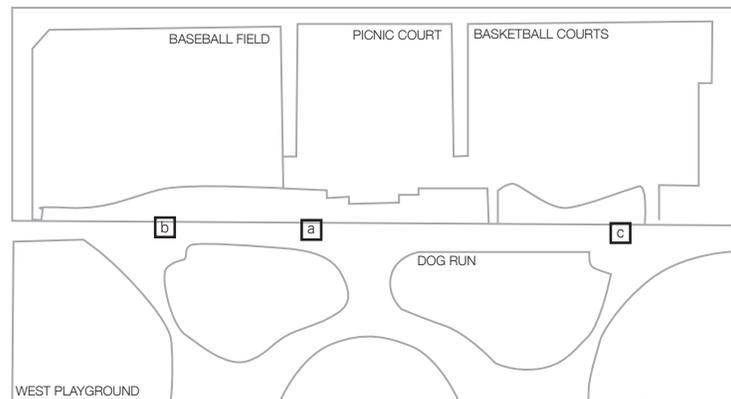


## Physical Traces Map

**a** Cardboard box with various books

**b** Empty water bottle and a brown paper bag underneath a bench

**c** Dark gray sweatshirt left on bench



## STEP 2: Mapping

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Mapping is a way to record people and objects as well as their relationships to one another in a particular space. By mapping the behavior and activities of people along with their movements and daily rhythms, you can begin to understand what is happening to whom, where, and when. Mapping can be used to simply record everything that is in a space, including its designed and natural elements. Maps are often place-centered and used to observe relatively small spaces over a specific period of time. There are however, a number of specialized mapping techniques and technologies that can allow you to track many more people and other moving objects such as global positioning system (GPS) tracking or geographic information system (GIS) mapping.

TESS as a beginning methodology includes just a few mapping strategies to get started. As you become more experienced you might include more factors and create maps of sounds, smells, textures, and other sensory stimuli in a space. Further, there are formalized systems of behavioral mapping such as SOPARC (System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities) that focus especially on health, behavior, and physical activity.

Begin by creating a *base map* of the study area. There might be one produced by the designer of the space or you can create one yourself. If available, you can use a mapping platform like Google Maps to trace the general dimensions of the space to help ensure proportions are accurate. If you do not have a computer-generated or designer's map, use paper and draw an outline of the space. After creating a general outline, locate the permanent and semi-permanent features such as benches, lights, statues, monuments, trees, flowers, pathways, trash cans, play equipment, and other designed and natural elements that make up the physical environment. Make copies (by hand or machine) so you have separate base maps to complete the different types of observation maps. On each map include your name, date, time, weather, and type of observation.

### Behavioral Maps

Locate the people and activities that you see. Record as much as you can during a short period of time. If the space is crowded, record the activities that you see for a short time—about five minutes—and cover a small portion of the space. If it is not crowded, then record for longer—15 to 20 minutes—and cover

a larger area. Create behavior maps for different times of day and days of the week. Most public places have a social order and pattern of behaviors and activities that you will uncover. You will learn who the *regulars* are and who just stops to look and moves on. You will also learn whether users make the space inviting to newcomers. Record people by age (children/adults), gender (m/f/t), behaviors (e.g., sitting, standing, sleeping, reading), or specific activities (e.g., playing soccer, reading, sleeping, playing cards, shining shoes, selling lottery tickets).

### Movement Maps

Using a new base map, track the movement through your space by people, animals, vehicles (e.g., cars, taxis, buses, motorbikes, bikes, trucks), and other objects. This movement map should record movement by gender, age, ability, or any other factors you are interested in. A series of movement maps can help you understand how movement changes the space throughout the day or week.

### Physical Trace Maps

Record the trash, eroded paths, holes in fences, and other traces of activities that are occurring when you are not there. Physical trace maps are a way to learn about what happens over time or late at night—for example if there are liquor bottles or drug-related materials remaining in the public space when you return to observe in the morning. It might be useful to record physical traces of different categories, with a focus on one type at a time:

- *by-products of use (e.g., trash, worn objects)*
- *evidence of changes to the space (e.g., things people have brought to the space)*
- *personal displays (e.g., peoples' names, personal items)*
- *public messages (e.g., signs)*

### Photographic Recording

Photographic and video recording can be used to record activities, physical traces, and the edges of the public spaces—the sidewalks, stores, buildings or vacant lots that surround the area—all of which can provide valuable context about the space. Such recording, however, can be intrusive and you should not take pictures of people without their permission. For this reason, it might be best to wait to photograph activities until you are familiar enough with the place and its users to ask for explicit permission.

## Field Notes, Participant Observation

Project	NYC Parks	Researcher	[Researcher Name]
Location	Tompkins Square Park	Date	May 2, 2018
Note Type	Scratch (Field) Interview (circle one)	Weather	Cool / Windy (42°F)
Part ID	N/A	Time	Start: 7:30p.m. Stop: 8:30p.m.
General	Participant observation, sitting with people listening to music		

Observations / Questions	Personal Reflections and Ideas / Responses
<p>I came to the park in the evening to get a better sense of who comes here then, and to listen to the musicians that often play here on summer evenings. When I arrived, there were no seats near the musicians, but a spot eventually opened up on a bench.</p>	<p>My goal for this trip was just to participate in the experience of sitting and enjoying the evening and the music alongside other people doing the same thing. I planned to take fewer notes and just see what it would be like to experience the park in this way.</p>
<p>An older man (I later learned he is from Cuba) asked me for money (“Hola chico, mira, soy homeless, ayúdame para el trago,” [“Hi boy, look, I am homeless, please help me buy a drink,”] he said). I gave him the only dollar I had on me. We then talked for a bit, and he told me how the park is comfortable now, but that it can become dangerous at night— especially Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. He said “crazy” things can happen at those times.</p>	<p>I think the homeless man assumed I could speak Spanish based on my appearance. I hadn’t spoken to anyone prior to him addressing me. This is another reminder how I can’t forget my own positionality as a researcher in the park - and how people see and interpret my presence here. Also, I got distracted and missed the opportunity to ask him about the “crazy” things!</p>
<p>Another man sitting to my left noticed me watching him as he took a book with the Trappist monk Thomas Merton on the cover out of his bag. We struck up a conversation and he shared with me a devotional that had stuck with him today: [paraphrased] “We take God’s grace and form it into false idols.”</p>	
<p>I mentioned my amazement at the implications of the devotional, and then we began to chat more generally. I told him about my research and that I was trying to conduct interviews, and he said he would be happy to be interviewed, so we began an interview about his experiences with the park.</p>	<p>It is interesting to me how comfortable I have become watching and interacting with strangers in the park - I think maybe being in the role of a “researcher” makes me feel comfortable interacting with people I otherwise wouldn’t have any connection to.</p>

Record quotations in the original language used by participants. Doing so ensures original expressions are retained and any translations can be returned to, and refined, if necessary.

Participant observation can provide useful experiences interacting with public space users, and also opportunities to build relationships that can lead to in-depth interviews.

## STEP 3: Participant Observation

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Participant observation is the practice of becoming directly involved in activities and the daily life of the public space to learn what it feels like to be there and behave like a member of the community. The idea is that through participating in activities you can begin to learn the cultural rules, beliefs, feelings, and practices that occur in public space. For example, you might bring a child to the playground and watch the child while talking with other parents and caretakers. Or you might take a walk, eat your lunch, read on a bench, or join a soccer or softball game. Any kind of activity that allows you to participate in the space while still observing will add to your knowledge of the space. Participant observation helps you understand the place both through your own experience and through the ways you interact with other users and non-users.

It is not easy to write notes while participating, so take a break from time to time to scribble notes of what you see happening and how you feel, including any thoughts, ideas, or questions you have. If you join in an activity like a soccer game or walking your dog, record how you came to be a part of the activity. Write scratch notes while in the space and fill in details later, as soon as you can. Return to the section on writing field notes to complete this task.

Participant observation will also help you to reflect on how your gender, age, race, ethnicity, and other social characteristics relate to the ways you can participate and experience the space. For example, a young female might be able to easily join other women dancing while a young male might be more comfortable hanging out with young men. The police in the United States and Latin America are more likely to question a young man of color about what he is doing, while a young female researcher might not be bothered by police but by men who whistle when she walks by. Older researchers are seen as *elders* in many cultures, which gives them more freedom to walk up to people and talk.

Be aware that your presence changes the social interaction in the public space and try to understand that the roles you take or are given change what you can observe and experience. Social scientists suggest that you think about your social impact on the observed situation as one of *positionality*, that is, to try to figure out what your social status and other social characteristics (gender, age, ethnicity,

language, occupation, and education) might mean to those who you are observing. This is particularly important if there is a power difference between you and the users. If you are a member of the same community and are similar in social characteristics to those whom you are observing, then your positionality and access to power might be quite similar to theirs.

However, in many cases, the researcher is a visitor from outside the neighborhood, may have been sent by a government agency or local university, and therefore could be seen as having more access to power. They may not have a similar positionality as other public space users. This is a part of the complexity of doing ethnographic research and is always present in any social situation. For your project, however, you should simply note what you think your positionality might be in this context and throughout the project, and then use that process of reflection to guide you when you analyze the data or if others read your notes or report.

Regardless of your own positionality, it is always important to be open and honest about the nature of your research. Trying to be an *invisible observer*, or hiding the fact that you are conducting research is not only dishonest, but also will likely reduce the quality of what you learn. People might think you are a journalist or an undercover police officer, so be open about what you are doing, and explain that you are trying to learn about the public space and the people that use it. Record how users respond to you and if they have questions about what you are doing. The contacts you make during such discussions can lead to relationships with those who know about the space and can help you understand it from their point of view. It is your responsibility, though, to not disrupt or insert yourself into the ongoing situation as much as possible. Of course if there is danger or harm to someone you must aid them, but in general you should try to fit seamlessly into the social scene.

Some questions to ask yourself as you write up your participant observation field notes include:

- *What did I learn about the space from my own experience?*
- *What unexpected ideas or questions emerged?*
- *Were there any surprises?*
- *What was it like to be a participant?*
- *Did I learn anything about how other users might feel and experience the space?*

## Field Notes, Interview

Project	NYC Parks	Researcher	[Researcher Name]
Location	Tompkins Square Park	Date	Apr. 22, 2018
Note Type	Scratch Field <u>(Interview)</u> (circle one)	Weather	Sunny (64°F)
Part ID	#001	Time	Start: 3:30p.m. Stop: 3:45p.m.
General	Early-20s female sitting on a bench reading, NYU student		

Observations / Questions	Personal Reflections and Ideas / Responses
<p>Why do you come to this space?</p>	<p>"It's within walking distance from where I live, and it's not swarming with NYU students like Washington Square. I need some space sometimes. There's always people here, though, which some people might find annoying, but it's nice to have kids around. It doesn't feel desolate. Some parks in Chicago where I moved here from are often empty, scary. It's nice to have folks around doing things. Parks are good."            ---- I wonder if there are times when this park is empty or feels more 'scary'?"</p>
<p>What do you dislike about the space?</p>	<p>"I guess the only thing I don't like about the park is how close it is to the city. That might not make sense. I mean, it's nice to see buildings peeking out of the landscape, but the noise pollution is not preferred. You can hear cars honking and stuff, which I don't like. I don't enjoy that."</p>
<p>Do you feel safe in the park?</p>	<p>"Yes." [Would you go at night?] "Maybe not alone. I don't know who's here at night."</p>

List the questions that you are going to use in this column.

Write the answers to the questions in this column. Add any other comments or conversations that you had with the interviewee about the space or the local community.

Add comments about how you felt during the interview and any problems you had while interviewing.

## STEP 4: Interviewing

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Various approaches to observations, mapping, and even participant observation are very valuable but not adequate on their own to develop conclusions about the meaning, uses, and functions of a place. Asking people directly what they think about a space, and the experiences they have there, is a crucial step of the TESS process. Asking questions and listening for an answer is the basis of what social scientists call an *interview*. Unlike an everyday conversation, an interview is structured in that it is expected that one person (in this case, the interviewer) will ask questions and the other person or group of people (the respondent[s]) will give answers.

### Rapport

A crucial part of interviewing is communicating that you are interested in what the person has to say. It can be helpful to begin with a general conversation about being in the public space, the weather, or an activity they are engaged in. This is considered establishing *rapport*, a comfortable and temporary relationship that eases the awkwardness of asking questions. In some situations and cultures, it is impolite or inappropriate for a younger person to ask questions of a more senior person, or to ask questions at all. In those situations, you might try to undertake some activity with the respondent so they can *teach* you in a more informal manner. However, most urban residents will have some familiarity with interviewing from other social contexts in their daily lives.

### Completing an interview

Begin an interview by introducing yourself and explaining the project in general terms. Additionally, explain how you plan to use and protect any information they give you, as well as any risks they could encounter from participating. Make clear that their participation is entirely voluntary, and obtain their clear consent before beginning. To begin the interview, select from a few of the provided questions about the space. You can try walking with people in the space and asking them questions so they can show you their favorite areas and parts of the space they do not like. Ask them to give you a *tour* of the space and encourage them to tell you about their experiences and memories. You may find that respondents do not always answer the question you asked, or at least the question you thought you asked. Sometimes this is due to a problem with the question itself—maybe it is unclear or too general—but sometimes the respondent wants to tell you something other than what you are asking, which can be a valuable opportunity to learn something new. Regardless, it is important that you listen carefully and write down answers. When you do not understand something, ask again or rephrase the question. Some questions to consider for reflection when writing notes following your interviews include:

- *How do users' perspectives differ from my own?*
- *How do users' perspectives differ from one another?*
- *What did I learn by asking people about the space rather than observing or participating?*

### Sample interview questions

*Why do you come to this place?*

*Who are the people who use this place? Who does not use it?*

*Why do you think some people come to this place and others do not?*

*What are the main conflicts or problems that you have experienced personally or are associated with this place?*

*Can you tell me about a time when there was tension or disagreement here?*

*How does this place promote good will among users? Among users and non-users?*

*Are there any rules (posted or unspoken) about what is okay or not okay to do here?*

*What do you enjoy most about this place?*

*What do you dislike about the place?*

*Does this place have any special meanings?*

*Does it remind you of other places?*

*Do any of the following issues influence who uses this place? Language spoken, cost of entrance, presence / absence of certain people, safety, access, mobility, activities offered, size (too small / too large), sun / shade (too hot / too cold), time available*

## Historical Documents

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### MOSES IS CRITICIZED ON PLAYGROUND PLAN

#### Tompkins Sq. Property Owners Vote to Petition Mayor to Halt Project.

At a meeting of property owners last night in Christodora House, 147 Tompkins Square East, Miss Winifred Forsyth, acting head worker of the 'settlement house, criticized Park Commissioner Moses's plans for a new playground in Tompkins Square Park.

The park is bounded by Avenues A and B and Seventh and Tenth Streets. Mr. Moses already has started WPA work on the playground, which is planned to lie in the northern third of the park. A letter, objecting to these plans, was

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Residents of the Tompkins Square Park area resting and playing cards at the edge of the park yesterday. After an early-evening visit Thursday, Mayor Koch called the park a "cesspool."



openings at the top to let in the light—and the rain—most of these arches being constructed of rotten palm branches, with a canvas covering laid upon them. The bazaar is narrower than usual in Persia, and is lined with the ordinary little open shops on either side. Their proprietors sit cross-legged on a sort of splayboard (here not inappropriate), and patiently await the

The individual shops are very small affairs, commonly about six or seven feet deep by three or four wide, and one long counter, extending the whole length of the street, serves for all. The bazaars are all deserted and closed at sunset, your Turk having no notion of prolonging the hours of business into the night, and we might borrow his custom with profit.

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**The Villager** Since 1933

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West and East Village, Chelsea, SoHo, NoHo, Little Italy, Chinatown and Lower East Side, Since 1933



Photos by William Alariste, NYC Council

Councilmember Rosie Mendez channeled her inner kid on some new, state-of-the-art play equipment at the official ribbon cutting for the Tompkins Square playground renovation last week, above. Below, former Giants running back Tiki Barber tried out a slide. Congressmember Carolyn Maloney, Borough President Scott Stringer and Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe were among other officials also at the event.

New Tompkins Square playground is an overdue hit

By Harry Bartle

Much to the delight of parents and children throughout the East Village, the Tompkins Square Park playground reopened last month after almost a year under construction. Designed by Parks Department architect Gail Wittner-Laird, the \$1.1 million renovation has outfitted the playground with state-of-the-art jungle-gym structures and a distinctly modern sensibility.

## A Playground 'Derelicts' Can't Enter

By TODD PURDUM  
Mayor Koch, calling Tompkins Square Park a "cesspool" where "sandboxes are soiled with feces and urine," said yesterday that the New York City Parks Department would set aside a playground inside the East Village park that would be off-limits to anyone not accompanied by a child.

"There are hundreds of people who are derelicts and people who you used to call derelicts. I don't know if you're allowed to go that anymore," the Mayor told reporters at City Hall yesterday after making an unannounced visit to the park shortly before 7 P.M. Thursday.

"You see very few, if any, women and children in the park, and I don't blame them because I'd be scared to death," he said. Two weeks ago, 44 people were injured when demonstrators protesting a

Koch wants no adults admitted without children.

new curfew in the park clashed with police officers attempting to enforce it.

Portable Toilets to Be Installed

Mr. Koch has ordered the 1 A.M. curfew suspended until cooler weather. But he said he had asked the Parks Department to install signs around the fenced playground, similar to those in Washington Square Park, barring adults from entering without children.

He said that park workers and the police would enforce the rules and that the playground would be locked at night.

The Mayor, who acknowledged that he had not seen human waste soiling the park but had been told about it by residents in the area, said city workers would review the idea of installing portable toilets in the park.

"There are people, hundreds of them, I'm told, who park there all 24 hours a day, and obviously there are bodily needs," the Mayor said, noting that the park lavatories are closed in the evenings because the city cannot afford round-the-clock attendants.

Without attendance, Mr. Koch said, "then all you would have is, you'd have a new homeless motel, 'cause they would move in."

"I mean, it's just a fact of life, and you've got to understand it. Or if they didn't move in, they would tear the fixtures out and sell them."

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NEW YORK CITY Department of Transportation

Bicycles are prohibited on expressways, drives, highways, interstate routes, bridges and thruways, unless authorized by signs.

#### § 4-12 (a) - Bicycles

- Bicycle riders must use bike path/lane, if provided, except for access, safety, turns, etc.
- Other vehicles shall not drive on or across bike lanes except for access, safety, turns, etc.
- Bicyclists may use either side of a 40-foot wide one-way roadway.

#### § 4-14 (c) - Restricted areas of parks

No person shall ride a bicycle in any park, except in places designated for bike riding; but persons may wash bikes in sinks to fill to and from such places, except on beaches and boardwalks.

#### N.Y.C. ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

#### § 10-157 - Bicycles used for commercial purposes

- Business must be identified on the bike by name and identification number.
- Operator must wear upper body apparel with business' name and operator's number on the back.
- Business must provide operator with a helmet according to A.N.S.I. or Snell standards.
- Operator shall wear a helmet provided by business.
- Operator must carry and produce on demand a numbered ID card with operator's photo, name, home address and business' name, address and phone number.
- Business must maintain log book that includes the name, identification number and place of residence of each bicycle operator, and the date of employment and discharge. The log book must also include information on daily trips, identifying the bicycle operator's identification number and name; and name and place of origin and destination.
- Owner of business must file an annual report with the Police Department identifying the number of bicycles it owns and the identification number and identity of any employees.

#### § 10-178 - Bicycles operation on sidewalks prohibited

Bicycles ridden on sidewalks may be confiscated and riders may be subject to legal sanctions. See also N.Y.C. Traffic Rules and Regulations §4-07 (c).

## STEP 5: Documenting History

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Another way to learn about social divisions, injustices, and other dynamics that might be occurring is to research the history of the place you are studying. Reviewing a diverse range of historical documents is an important step that can help you gain insights into the underlying conflicts, inequalities, and struggles of groups for recognition and their assertion of a right to the city. A historical perspective enables you to place what you are learning within a broader social, political, and economic context. For example, Tompkins Square Park has a long history of political and social struggle beginning with its initial construction. In later years, the park became a center for people to obtain social services and live in tents and self-constructed shelters, while the surrounding neighborhood protested that they were losing their ability to use the public space. Police actions and evictions marred the relationship of park users and neighborhood members, and created a public space that is highly contested. This history can be documented in many ways including newspaper archives, municipal documents, and published articles and books that can help the researcher understand the ongoing nature of observed social conflicts.

### Archives

Researching the history of the public space in local libraries or museums of local history can provide rich details about the space, its meanings, and its importance in the community. Online databases and archives in libraries and universities can provide valuable information such as records associated with different events and people who lived in the area over time. Putting these documents together in a notebook to make available to space users and community members can improve understanding about its history, present condition, problems, and possibilities.

### Newspapers

Local and national newspaper articles about the public space can provide insight into how the place is seen from the outside. These perspectives often do not reflect the views of the users or the community, but nonetheless are often a useful way to understand how outsiders view the space. From newspapers you can learn whether the space you are studying is considered “dangerous” as opposed to “safe” or a “good place to visit” as opposed to “one to avoid.” All this information will help construct a deeper perspective of why the public space functions in the ways that you are observing and documenting.

### Oral Histories

Documenting history can also be accomplished by interviewing people who were directly involved in the creation or history of the space. These interviews use similar techniques as previously described, but they have the purpose of emphasizing historical narratives. If available, some examples of people to consider interviewing to gain a deeper historical perspective include community members who know the history of the space or were involved in its design and development, as well as designers, planners, or builders if the space was created by professionals.

It is also useful to interview people who have lived in the community for a long time and who have seen the community change. Make sure to interview women and men, as well as people who represent diverse groups in the community. These oral histories can form the basis of park interpretation and a way that diverse users can learn more about each other. Consider working with the interviewees to create story boards that can be shared about the history of the site.

### Sample interview questions for documenting history

*When was this place designed and built?*

*Who designed and built it?*

*Were any community groups or members involved in building it?*

*Why was this place built?*

*How has the place changed over time?*

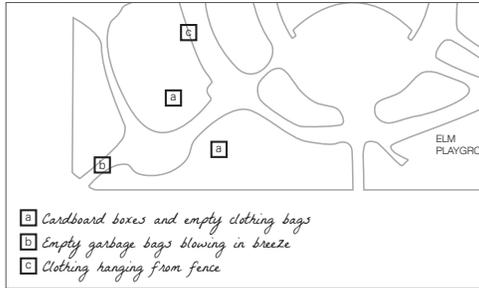
*Is the space associated with any accomplishments or conflicts?*

*What is the history of the people who live near this place? Have different groups of people lived nearby over time?*

*Over time, how has the surrounding community related to, or used, to this site?*

## Deriving the code "Danger" from multiple sources

### PHYSICAL TRACES MAP



### INTERVIEW

Interviewer: What is your opinion about the fences?

Participant: **The fences make me feel safe. They keep my children safe from dangerous locations and people.**

### FIELD NOTES - INTERVIEW

Then we talked for a while. He mentioned that it was **dangerous to be at the park during the night**. He added that during the night is when the park becomes conflictive. And that the most difficult nights are Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. He said that most people go to party and do crazy things in the park.

### FIELD NOTES - INTERVIEW

The primary takeaways are a consciousness about "junkies" or "homeless" in the southwest corner of the park, as well as discourse that connects the built space to **relics of drugs and therefore danger (needles, rape)**.

### CODE: "Danger"

Fieldnotes from Tompkins Square Park, a public park in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York City, mentioned that users thought high fences were important because the park was "dangerous," particularly at night. Behavioral maps showed that the southwest corner of the park was described by interviewees and by newspaper articles as "dangerous." In interviews with three individuals who lived in the park, they also confirmed that they left the park late at night because the southwest area was perceived as dangerous. Thus, "danger" turned out to be a useful code that brought together observations, interviews, maps, and even articles from the newspapers. That a section of the park is perceived by users as dangerous is valuable evidence that could be used by park designers, planners, managers, and community members to begin to address this perceived problem.

### HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS - NEWSPAPER

"There are hundreds of people who are disheveled and people who you used to call derelicts. I don't know if you're allowed to do that anymore," the Mayor told reporters at City Hall yesterday after making an unannounced visit to the park shortly before 7 P.M. Thursday.

**"You see very few, if any, women and children in the park, and I don't blame them because I'd be scared to death,"** he said.

## STEP 6: Analysis

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The analysis of what you have collected—field notes, maps, interviews, oral histories, and archival and newspaper documents—is perceived by many as the most difficult part of conducting ethnographic research. This is because analysis requires bringing different kinds of information—visual, written text, newspaper stories, etc.—together into one coherent overview of your public space. It is a process that necessitates that you think about what you have learned from the entire fieldwork experience.

One way to begin the analysis process is to ask yourself “*what have I learned about this public space?*” and write down your answers. This question should encourage you to think about all of the steps you have taken and what you have learned from each. It encourages you to integrate the disparate things that you have heard, seen, and recorded. Asking yourself this question, however, is just one way to begin your analysis. There are a number of ways that you can bring your collected materials together in an attempt to form clear conclusions. We propose the following steps:

### 1. Cleaning and organizing the data

Begin by cleaning and organizing your data. Read everything over, correct errors, and fill in missing information. In some cases, you might need to transcribe your interviews (i.e., type up a word-for-word script of the entire interview or of key sections thereof) if you recorded them and have not completed this task. You want to be able to put all of your materials into organized files that are labeled by the type of data. Interviews should have *cover sheets* that list any major points or questions that arose, especially if the interviews are lengthy or include oral histories.

### 2. Writing memos

As you clean your data and write cover sheets, take your time and re-read everything a couple of times. As you read, you will find that ideas about what is going on in your public space will begin to form. Write down these ideas in the form of memos, as introduced in step one. For example, you might have a group of memos organized around recurring themes that you notice emerging from your data. As you re-read your data, you can refine and strengthen these memos with support from various sources. Memos will provide ideas that you can use for creating codes and questions for the next technique.

### 3. Coding

There are many ways to *code* your data. Coding is a way of identifying and looking for recurring patterns across all of the different forms of data you have gathered. It can be very difficult to decide what you will code, but your memos can provide some guidance in that they can give you ideas about potentially recurring themes in your data. For example, you could choose the topic of one memo (e.g., an idea, word, or problem) and see if there is evidence of that issue across multiple data sources (e.g., fieldnotes, maps, interviews, oral histories). If the topic is present in many areas, you can be confident that it is important and worth focusing on. The example provided to the left relates to the idea of Tompkins Square Park being perceived at certain times as “dangerous,” and identifying that code throughout multiple data sources.

### 4. Types and counts

Another way to analyze your materials is to see whether you can develop a *typology* (i.e., a list of types of things that are related) of the events, objects, actions, or settings that you found. For example, it might be helpful to make a list of all of the kinds of activities that take place in your public space and then count how often each one occurs. You can then use this to describe the frequency and types of activities as well as determine what kinds of activities are missing. You could do the same with the kinds of events that occur and who attends them. Even simple counts of the frequency of events can be useful in helping you to understand the life of your space.

### 5. Themes and patterns

A final way to analyze your materials is to search for underlying themes and patterns that reoccur throughout the data set. We discussed triangulation as a way to verify that something you observe is confirmed in an interview, map, or news article. In the search for broader themes and patterns, you employ triangulation to interpret your findings from a conceptual or theoretical perspective. For example, a pattern of social exclusion might emerge from observations of which groups of people sit together or apart (e.g., by ethnicity or gender), even when they are using the same space, suggesting you look further into underlying causes and repercussions. Themes such as degree of belonging, recognition, cooperation, or contestation might also emerge. Try to focus on themes or patterns that are the most compelling or useful for understanding the public space you are working on.

## Constituency Analysis Matrix

<b>User Group</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Needs and Desires</b>	<b>Conflicts</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Skateboarders</b>	Skateboarding	Better equipment	With others who want to use the space, only teenagers	Question: Do single user spaces work well in this park? Could there be other uses so that more people had access?
<b>Sunbathers</b>	Lying on grass center area	Cleaner grass area	With others, such as people, who sleep there	Many complain about the smell and drugs in the bathroom.
<b>Homeless individuals</b>	Resting, sitting, sleeping	Shelter, meals, safety to sleep	Their use of the facilitates disturbs others, afraid of the park after midnight	The homeless population is quite stable, possibly due to meals provided by volunteer groups and the provision of other social services. One observer said there were fewer problems with the homeless than the past.
<b>Chess players</b>	Playing chess and hustling	Less surveillance, more tables	Uneasy relationship with police because of illegal betting	They seem to play a dominant role in keeping the park safe. They know many users and talk to the police if problems arise.
<b>Police</b>	Surveilling park, offering assistance	More social service providers to help with drugs users	Role of helping others and also keeping the park safe	Some users want more police, while others want less.
<b>Artists</b>	Painting, riding bicycles, and talking to people			Again, this is a known regular group in the park that acts as a kind of ambassador, but they also exhibit behavior seen as unusual that frightens some mothers and children.
<b>Young adults</b>	Sitting, texting, using devices, and talking	Better bathrooms, Wi-Fi, other technological improvements	Smelly bathrooms and unkempt green space and benches	
<b>Children</b>	Playing and running	Did not interview children		
<b>Families</b>	Walking, playing, eating	Safer playgrounds, cleaner bathrooms, higher playground fences	Traffic, noise, rats, worry about other people	Overall, families use the playgrounds and are concerned about their children's safety. They are quite vigilant, and yet they say that they love the park.
<b>Dog walkers</b>	Dogs playing in dog run	More space as the space is quite successful and heavily used	Non-dog walkers using the space; the smell of the dog run	They love the dog run and the people who use it. A real social center.
<b>Older men</b>	Talking and drinking	Bathroom, safety at night		

# STEP 7: Writing a Report

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Once you have completed your TESS analysis, the last step is to write up your *findings* and present your conclusions and recommendations. There are many ways to write a report, ranging from simply listing your findings with your conclusions and recommendations on a sheet of paper to drafting more comprehensive documents. Regardless of the approach, it is important to take the time to write down and record what you have learned about the value of the public space, how it is used, and its design for the benefit of people in the local neighborhood and the city at large. Final reports of TESS studies can be valuable assets to local communities, governmental agencies, and non-profit organizations who may have supported the research or can benefit from it.

## Initial Questions Report

Most people who are using TESS will undertake this kind of ethnographic research to answer specific questions about a public space. These questions can vary from general ones about who uses the space on a daily basis, or how to make the space more user friendly and inclusive, to specific issues such as reactions to threats of closure or an alternative form of development or land use. In either case, the initial questions that inspired the project can provide a framework for the final report. Of course, more questions will emerge as you gather data through observation, mapping, interviewing, photographing, and oral histories, but your initial questions can be a useful framework to organize and present your findings.

## Constituency Analysis Report

Another way to write up your findings is to consider the activities, meanings, and conflicts of the different groups who use or would like to use the public space. One way to begin is to make a *matrix* of all of the user groups you have observed or interviewed with columns across the top of the page with headings such as: current activities, needs, desires, conflicts, likes, dislikes, and other topics on which you collected information. After making this matrix, you can begin to write sections of a report about the life, needs, and interests of each group and how the space does or does not accommodate those daily activities. This kind of report is helpful if you want to be able to understand space as a center or forum for diverse kinds of people who might have very different goals in their use of public space. Often you can use this type of *constituency analysis* to address local conflicts over who should be in the public space and how to realize a more socially inclusive setting.

## Academic Report

A third kind of report is an academic report using a format drawn from the social sciences. Reports of this nature often follow the general outline below, and also contain a more in-depth review of scholarly and theoretical research and writing, particularly in their introduction and discussion sections. Reports in this format can be useful for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals or for presenting study results to government agencies, universities, or other institutions.

Suggested report outline	
<b>Introduction</b>	<i>Explain why you undertook this TESS study and your objectives and questions.</i>
<b>Setting</b>	<i>Briefly describe the public space that you studied and summarize its history. You can use your maps and / or photographs to illustrate what you write. If you have room to do so, include the design details or the process by which it was built.</i>
<b>Method</b>	<i>Describe the elements of the TESS you used to conduct your study.</i>
<b>Findings / Evidence</b>	<i>List your findings with examples of each. For example, if one finding is that a section of your space is perceived as "dangerous," include a quote from an interview or from your participant observation that illustrates what "dangerous" means for the users.</i>
<b>Discussion</b>	<i>Use this section to interpret what you have learned. What are the most important lessons or themes that emerged from the fieldwork? Also, write about other issues, such as if you have some concerns about what a particular finding means, or if you think you need to do more research to develop a clearer understanding of a particular issue.</i>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<i>List your conclusions from the TESS.</i>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<i>List what you now want to do based on your TESS conclusions.</i>

Project		Researcher	
Location		Date	
Note Type	Scratch Field Interview ( <i>circle one</i> )	Weather	
Part ID		Time	<i>Start:</i> <i>Stop:</i>
General			

Observations / Questions	Personal Reflections and Ideas / Responses

Project		Researcher	
Location		Date	
Map Type		Weather	
Part ID		Time	<i>Start:</i> <i>Stop:</i>
General			

