

“多些答复，少些噱头” ——致“步道实验室”主持的多伦多更新项目 “MORE BUZZWORDS THAN ANSWERS” — TO SIDEWALK LABS IN TORONTO

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1. 多伦多东部海滨地区鸟瞰图

1. Aerial view of the Eastern Waterfront in Toronto

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摘要

近来,各大主流媒体和技术相关领域争相报道了美国基础设施公司“步道实验室”将在加拿大首都多伦多建造一座新型高科技社区(即一项名为“步道多伦多”的项目)。总的来说,国际评论界认为,在公众对建造“智慧城市”项目看法不一的情况下,政府将城市规划的诸项决策权下放至一家以数据为主营内容的私营企业的做法,可谓机遇与风险并存。

与大多数文章笼统谈及智慧城市和技术导向型项目的视角不同,本文旨在以“步道多伦多”项目为具体案例,提出下列5个问题:其一,作为私企的步道实验室(其为互联网巨鳄“谷歌”的姊妹公司)与推进城市水岸振兴的政府公共机构“滨水多伦多”达成合作协议的过程缺乏透明度,且作为推动项目进行的公共合作方,滨水多伦多也未向市民作出负责的解释说明;其二,步道实验室对于其将在哪些地块开展更新项目的表述含混不清,使得公众对该私营技术公司并未足够重视多伦多当地规划法规和房地产现状的情况表示担忧;其三,作为一项由数据技术公司积极推进的城市更新规划项目,人们不怀疑掌控数据信息才是步道实验室的真正意图;其四,这一案例呈现了城市更新项目中合同签订与开发权给予机制的相关问题;最后,正如文中所述,尽管多伦多市议会仍未获知步道实验室与滨水多伦多双方所签订协议的内容,但已经公布的该项目至今为止的推进方式,以及协议签订双方发表的声明,已足以引发公众对于企业和政府责任感的强烈质疑。

关键词

公私合营; 专项机构; 透明度; 担责

ABSTRACT

Many articles have appeared in mainstream media and in tech-oriented venues about Sidewalk Labs' ideas for a new high-tech neighbourhood in Toronto (a project named Sidewalk Toronto). By and large, international commentary has focused on the opportunities and risks of giving over control over many city planning decisions to a private data-oriented corporation, with people lining up for or against "smart city" ideas, in general.

This article will set aside generalities about "smart cities" and technology, and instead pose a few questions about the particulars of Sidewalk Toronto project. The first question concerns the striking lack of transparency of the agreement between Sidewalk Labs (a Google sister company) and Waterfront Toronto, the public authority promoting the project, which is not directly accountable to the city or the citizens. The second question concerns the equally striking ambiguity about which parcel of land is being sought by Sidewalk Labs — an ambiguity that suggests a worrying lack of concern, on the tech company's part, about both local planning law and local real estate realities. The third set of concerns is about the ownership of the data that appears to be Sidewalk Labs' real interest. Fourthly, problems in the contract award and procurement mechanisms will be raised. Finally, even though the agreement has not yet been seen even by city council, the process so far and the statements by both parties raise serious concerns about accountability, the fifth point raised in this article.

KEY WORDS

Public-Private Partnerships; Special Purpose Agencies; Transparency; Accountability

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TRANSLATED BY Xiaoxuan LU Robin SUN

相信全世界的城市规划学者都有所耳闻,一项名为“步道多伦多”的“智慧城市”项目正在多伦多一处占地面积巨大的后工业滨水区中如火如荼地展开(图1,2)。该项目的官方声明于2017年10月17日公布——这一天,美国私营企业“步道实验室”^①与多伦多当地一家以推进城市水岸振兴为主要工作的政府专项机构“滨水多伦多”公布双方已经达成一项合作协议,当时甚至还刊登了一张加拿大总理贾斯汀·特鲁多的照片为此造势。但在公告发布6个月后,不论是多伦多市民还是世界各地的城市规划学者都没有再得到有关项目的任何具体信息。

至今,即使是多伦多市议会也未能获知这份合作协议的具体内容。2018年3月20日,在步道实验室于多伦多举行的情况介绍会上,与会者被邀请在分发的便签上写下建议并粘贴在海报上,其中一则赫然写道:“多些答复,少些噱头”。在参加过几场活动并研读了相关档案和文章后,我们仍不知道该项目的主管和受益人分别是谁,权责关系如何;用于推进该项目的5 000万美元究竟是用在了项目所在地多伦多还是步道实验室所在的美国;以及步道实验室究竟如何从这一项目中盈利。

目前,大多数多伦多当地和国际观察者都将科技公司“谷歌”视为整个项目的真正推动者。谷歌方面曾表示,他们希望开拓数据收集业务,即开始尝试设计能够生成数据库的物理系统,从而建立起一座“构建于互联网之上的社区”(图3)。事实上,该智慧城市试点项目在首次公布时即受到了当地和国际范围内的热情响应;但近几个月来,这家位于硅谷的公司却一直未能获得舆论好评。该项目最初在当地发布时,正是有赖于

谷歌的声望和地位才名噪一时;但如今,步道多伦多项目却正在试图摆脱与谷歌的这层关系。在上述于3月20日在多伦多举办的公众活动上,步道实验室首席政策官罗希特·阿格瓦拉强调,步道实验室并非谷歌的子公司,并重申该项目不会将当地居民的数据信息出售给广告商^②。

针对这一承诺(当时恰逢“剑桥分析”丑闻^③曝光),一位观众质疑阿格瓦拉:

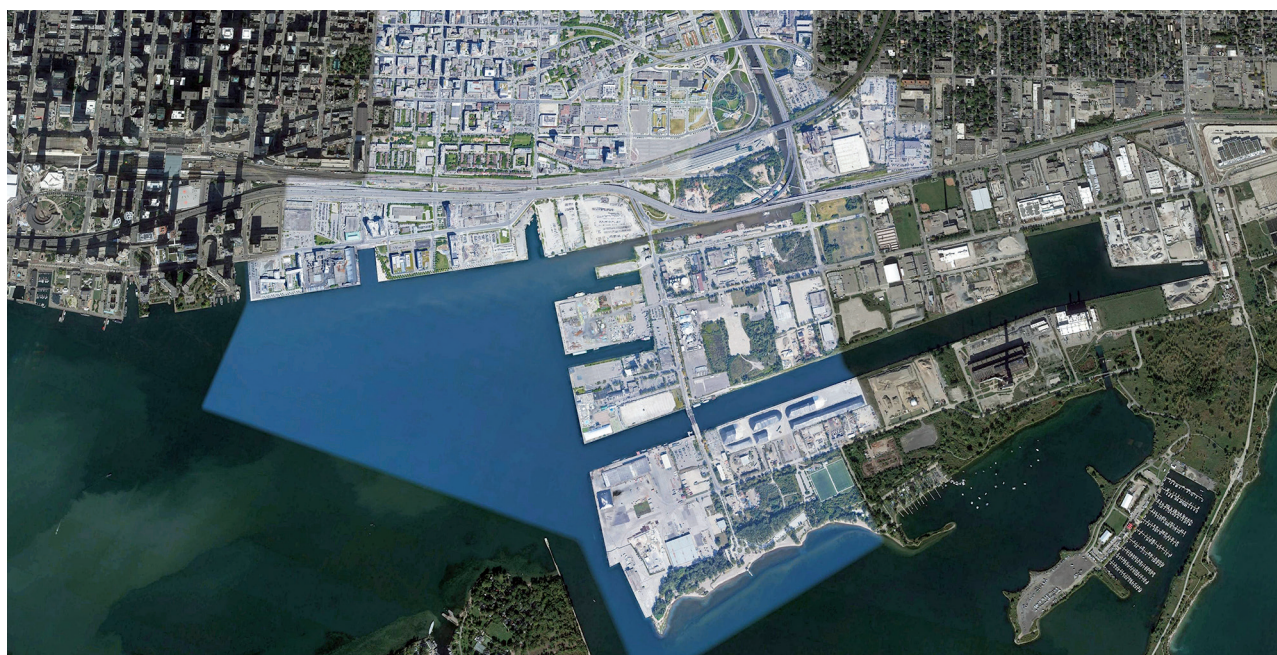
“如果不出售这些数据,你们将如何从这一项目中获利?”阿格拉瓦在抗辩时含糊其词地提到了房地产——虽然步道实验室并不具备任何土地的所有权或使用权。也许步道多伦多的性质是开发公司,而谷歌目前投入的数百万美元最后会以房地产的形式获利?

(图4)没有人知道答案。虽然作为一家大型美国私企,步道实验室没有义务对加拿大当地人做到公开透明,但是鉴于上述协议代表着公私双方的合营关系,人们自然期望公共合作方能够对公众透明且有担当。然而,事实却让公众感到失望。一些国际新闻报道将私企步道实验室/谷歌的合作伙伴表述为多伦多市政府,但事实上应该是三方合营且可自行委任董事的政府专项机构滨水多伦多。滨水多伦多曾经在很长一段时期内积极推进可持续发展项目,在当地、尤其是建筑界享有很高的声誉(图5~7);而现在,其董事会成员席位基本被企业代表所占据,不再包括任何环保主义者或公共住宅活动家。

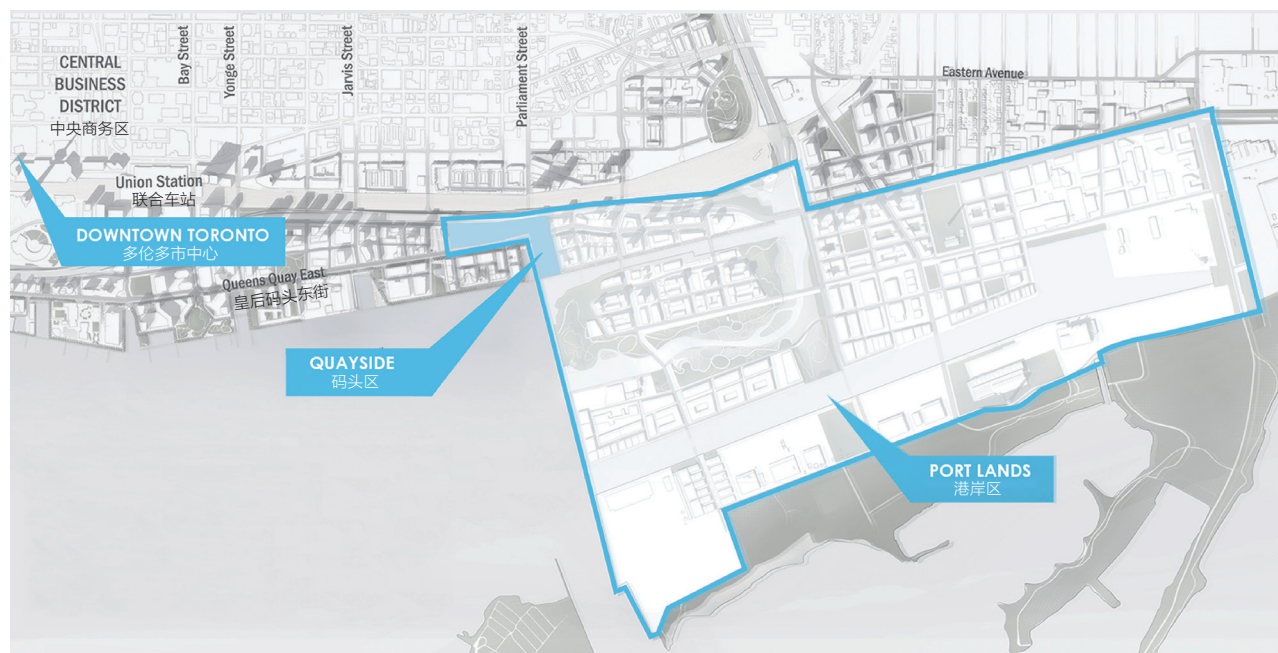
滨水多伦多与步道实验室合作关系的形成过程也谜团重重。在加拿大安大略省,当局必须向公众公布选定开展每个重大项目的原因。然而,滨水多伦多却拒绝透露相关标准,也没有详述为何会选择一家位于硅谷的科技公司作为多伦多当地项目的设计方。在

- ① 步道实验室与知名科技公司谷歌同为于2015年成立的字母公司旗下的子公司。
- ② 遗憾的是，这一承诺并未出现在步道多伦多项目的官方网站 (sidewalktoronto.ca) 所公布的涉及项目“概念”的相关文件中。
- ③ 2018年3月，多家权威媒体同时刊文，曝光了名为“剑桥分析”的英国数据分析公司违规窃取数据的丑闻。剑桥分析在未经用户许可的情况下，盗取了社交媒体“脸书”多达8 700万用户的个人数据，并为其受雇政客服务以操纵多国选举。剑桥分析丑闻唤起了人们对于不正当和不道德使用科学技术行为的警惕，以及对监管人工智能的需求。

- 2-1. 多伦多东部海滨地区由沿岸上百公顷的后工业用地组成。
- 2-2. 与谷歌同为字母公司旗下子公司的步道实验室承诺，将斥资5 000万美元在多伦多东部海滨地区建造一座智慧社区。
- 2-1. Toronto's Eastern Waterfront makes up of hundreds of hectares of post-industrial land along the lakeshore.
- 2-2. Sidewalk Labs, a subsidiary of Google parent Alphabet, has committed USD 50 million for a smart neighborhood on the Eastern waterfront in Toronto.



© Google Maps
2-1



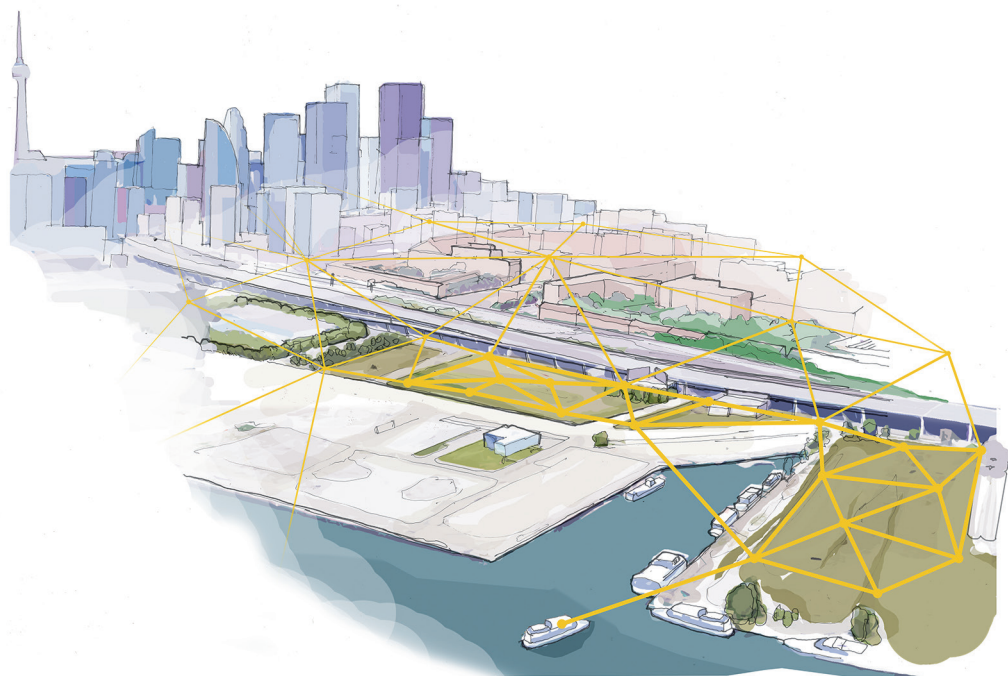
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2-2

上述提及的于3月20日开展的公开活动上，除步道实验室的首席政策官阿格瓦拉以外，滨水多伦多的两名副总裁也上台发表了演讲，但并未提供任何其他信息。一位坐在我们身后的当地科技产业创业者低声表达了对滨水多伦多未能通过这一项目成功促进本地科技行业发展的不满，但他没有公开详述这一观点。

声明公布6个月后，协议仍继续保密，且没有给出合理的保密理由。事实上，早在情况介绍会举办两个月之前，即在1月24日于多伦多大学进行的一次讨论会上，作为步道多伦多项目支持者的大数据工程学教授马克·福克斯曾指出，该项目文件中所提到的小型科技装置（自动驾驶汽车、地下自动化垃圾处理系统和融雪自行车道）都不是全



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3-1



© Sidewalk Labs
3-2

3-1. 位于多伦多东部海滨地区的码头区鸟瞰图

3-2. 未来城市构想渲染图：数字基础设施将全面覆盖整个社区。

3-1. Aerial view of the Quayside, which is part of Toronto's Eastern Waterfront.

3-2. Rendered view of the future city, which has a comprehensive digital infrastructure that connects all neighborhoods.

新的设计（图8，9），并不涉及知识产权保密，且目前没有任何财务细节需要纳入商业保密范畴。在同于1月24日举办的多伦多市议会执行委员会会议上，唯一浏览过这一协议全文的议员黄旻南⁴在投票前告诉同僚们：“虽然我不能告诉你们协议的具体内容，但在读过全文后，我可以告诉你们协议里的内容非常值得期待。”

尽管步道多伦多项目团队在当地社区的意见咨询工作上投入了一定资源，其进展却并不顺利——这大概是因为该项目的政府公关人员是一位来自美国纽约的非本地人，且其聘用的项目推进协调机构又是一家刚在多伦多落脚的英国公司。总之，所谓的“当地社区意见咨询”究竟是向谁咨询、咨询什么以及由谁咨询，我们一无所知。出席公众会议的项目推进协调机构告诉我们，他们计划采用当地规划中常用的方法——通过向多伦多各地随机发送邮件来获取人口统计学意义上的代表性“参考群体”。即便如此，公众仍不清楚是谁在向该协调机构发布指令，最终决定权又归谁所有。

获得公众的信赖显然不是该项目的强项。相比之下，通过借助谷歌公司纽约总部出众的实力，步道多伦多在公关工作上的投入反而更能为当地人创造福祉。步道实验室为19~24岁的多伦多公民提供了12个免费成为项目研习员的名额，儿童也可以在当地备受尊敬的基督教青年会的带领下免费体验夏令营。步道实验室还推出了两款由其纽约办公室研发的免费应用程序，其中一款服务于多伦多的公共交通系统使用者（尽管运输公司本身已经具备自己的应用程序），而另一款名为“昔日多伦多”的应用则适用于当地的历史爱好者。尽管昔日多伦多在推行伊始受到了当地知识分子的追捧，但由于开发者缺乏当地知识，应用中很快就出现了许多令人尴尬的错误。比如，作为多伦多旅游胜地的皇后街，在该应用中被赫然标示为美国冰淇淋连锁店“冰雪皇后”⁵。

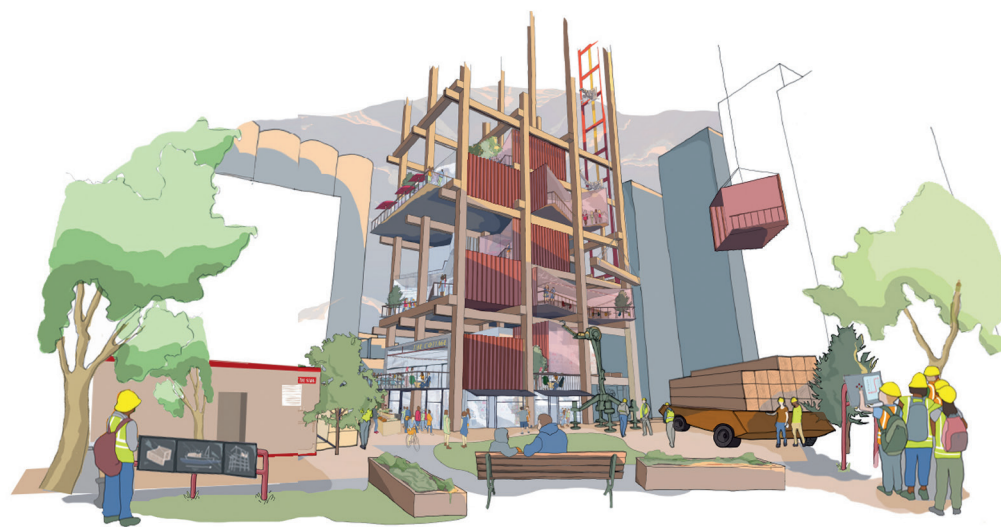
最后，自该项目启动至今，有关其所涉及的具体地段的描述始终处于一种极度模棱两可的状态——这可能会导致项目最终以

失败收尾。步道实验室和滨水多伦多所达成协议的范围包括哪些区域？难道该项目仅仅着眼于位于议会大街末端那块目前唯一可开发的地段，即被称作码头区的面积仅有4.8hm²的小型地块？亦或，该协议实际上涉及滨水多伦多在诸项声明中经常提及的占地约3.2km²的港岸区——若步道实验室不能成功获得这一更广阔地段的开发权，是否有退出合作协议的可能性？事实上，多伦多市议会在2017年12月已经通过了一份港岸区规划方案——而这一事实至今未出现在步道多伦多项目的官方声明中。步道实验室官方资料中所呈现的一系列公寓建筑愿景图，与已由市议会通过的规划方案中将整个港岸区划分为就业用地的现实相悖（图10）。目前受聘于步道实验室的多伦多著名规划师肯·格林伯格曾表示：“步道实验室将着手建造一个名为码头区的新社区……步道实验室和滨水多伦多旨在将首先应用在码头区的先进创新技术，逐步推广到横跨东部海滨的超过325hm²的区域范围内……”^[1]。格林伯格必然知道他所谓的“东部海滨”在法律上指的是港岸区——而握有项目最终决定权的市议员，也同样知道步道实验室所述信息与城市用地规划并不相符的事实。

国际评论家们曾指出一个颇具全球共性的议题，即以美国硅谷为代表的科技巨鳄们正逐渐将欲望的触角伸向世界各地的地域开发项目——正如我们目前在步道多伦多项目中看到的那样。同时，在政府专项机构滨水多伦多逐渐失去公信力的情况下，究竟由谁来维护公共利益、公共法律和公共政策，也同样令人担忧。在公私合营关系中，通常不乏降低或消除财务风险的有效措施——这要归功于私人合作方强烈的营利动机；与之相比，此类项目在信誉风险方面则缺乏相应的策动机制——尤其是当公共合作方并非民选政府，而是由委任董事会运营的公私属性模糊不清的机构时。即将在2018年10月举行的新一轮多伦多市政选举，或许是公众对步道多伦多项目透明度和可信度提出要求的契机——他们需要的远非迄今为止展示出来的那些漂亮的项目构想图。**LAF**



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4-1



© Sidewalk Labs
4-2

- ④ 黄旻南是滨水多伦多董事会中唯一当选市政府官员的人。
⑤ 昔日多伦多应用程序似乎已经修正了这一错误。

- 4-1. 东部海滨地区景象：前景为维多利亚大豆筒仓，远景为加拿大国家电视塔。
4-2. 未来城市构想渲染图：采用新型施工方法建造更多经济住房和办公空间。

- 4-1. View from the Eastern Waterfront, with Victory Soya Mills Silos in the foreground, and the CN Tower in the background.
4-2. Rendered view of the future city, where new construction methods are employed to create more affordable housing and offices.

Urbanists around the world know that a “smart city” project, Sidewalk Toronto, has been announced for a chunk of post-industrial waterfront in Toronto (Fig. 1, 2). The official announcement came on October 17, 2017, when an agreement between Sidewalk Labs¹, and the local special-purpose authority Waterfront Toronto was announced at a photo-op featuring Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. But six months after the announcement, neither Torontonians nor urbanists around the world have any concrete information.

The agreement, kept secret when announced, has not been released or even shown to city council. At a Sidewalk Labs information meeting held on March 20, 2018, attendees were given post-it notes to affix comments to posters, and one read: “more buzzwords than answers.” After attending several events and poring over documents and articles, we still do not know who is in charge, who benefits, who is accountable to whom, whether the promised 50 million

dollars is being spent locally or in the US, and how the investment made by Sidewalk Labs will be recouped.

Most observers, local and international, believe that Google is the driving force. Google folks have expressed a desire to go beyond data collection and start designing the physical systems that generate data, building “a community from the Internet up.” (Fig. 3) The initial announcement of a “smart city” pilot was greeted with enthusiasm, locally and internationally; but in recent months Silicon Valley has not had good press. Locally, early announcements made much of Google’s prestige and capacity, but now Sidewalk Toronto is trying to look independent. At the March 20 Toronto public event, Sidewalk Labs’ chief policy officer Rohit Aggarwala emphasized that Google is not Sidewalk’s owner. And he repeated that Sidewalk Toronto will not sell data generated by local inhabitants to advertisers².

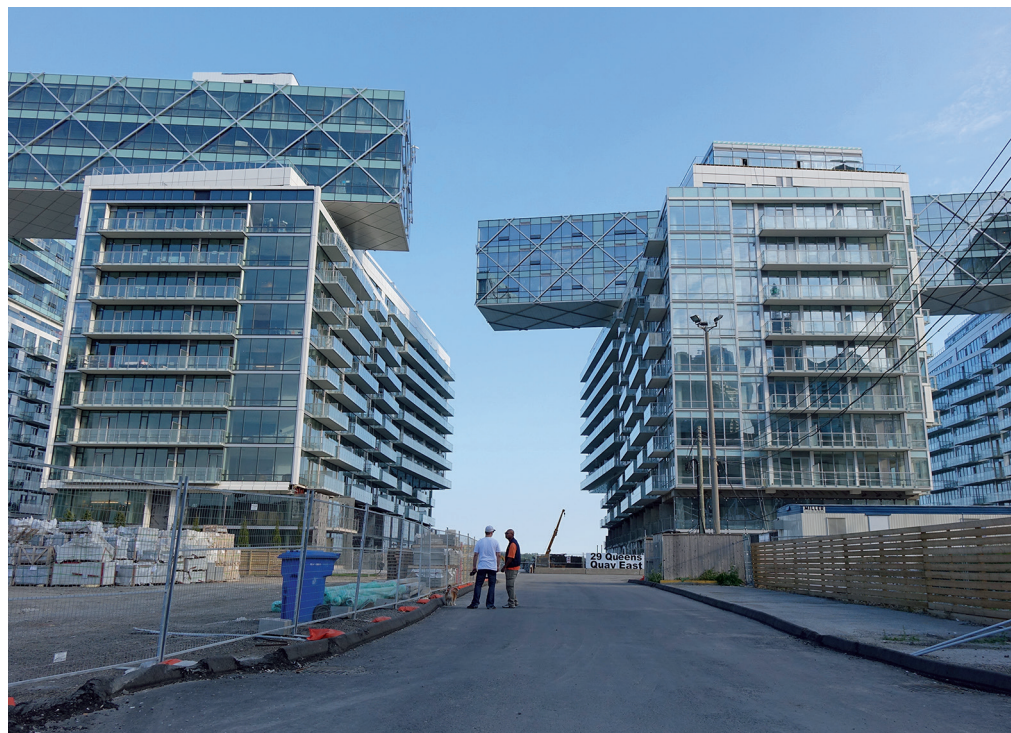
In response to this promise (which came on the very day the Cambridge Analytica



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scandal³ broke), an audience member asked Aggarwala, “so how will you make money from the project if you do not sell the data?” He demurred, vaguely mentioning real estate — though Sidewalk Labs does not own or control any land. So is Sidewalk Toronto a development corporation into which Google is putting a few millions now to make profits from real estate later? (Fig. 4) Who knows. A giant private American corporation has no obligation to be transparent with locals in another country. However, the agreement is a public-private partnership — and one would expect the public partner to be both transparent and accountable. This is not the case. Some international press reports made it seem as if Sidewalk Labs / Google’ partner was the City of Toronto; but in fact the public partner is Waterfront Toronto, a tri-

government agency with its own appointed board. Waterfront Toronto has a fairly good reputation locally, especially in architectural circles, and has supported sustainability projects in the past (Fig. 5 ~ 7). Now, however, the board is a largely corporate affair, including no environmentalists or housing activists.

How Waterfront Toronto came to partner with Sidewalk remains a mystery. In Ontario, authorities must release the selection factors for major projects. Waterfront Toronto, however, has refused to show the criteria, and has not discussed the choice of a Silicon Valley firm for a local project. At the March 20 public meeting, at which two Waterfront Toronto vice-presidents joined Aggarwala on the stage but provided no additional information, a local start-up innovator sitting behind us was quite scathing (*sotto voce*) about the failure of Waterfront Toronto to stimulate the very lively local tech sector; but he did not press the point publicly.

Six months after the announcement, not only is the agreement still secret, but no reasons for the secrecy have been given. At a January 24 panel at the University of Toronto, big-data engineering professor Mark Fox, who is in favour of the project, noted that none of the gadgets mentioned in the Sidewalk documents (self-driving cars, underground automated garbage disposal system, and bike lanes that melt snow) are actually new (Fig. 8, 9), so no intellectual property secrecy can exist. And there are no financial details as yet that could require commercial secrecy. At a January 24 meeting of the Executive Committee of Toronto City Council, the only councilor who has seen the agreement, Denzil Minnan-Wong^④, told colleagues: "I can not tell you what is in it, but I have seen it and I can tell you that you would want to know what is in it" before voting.

Sidewalk is putting resources into some community consultation, though hampered



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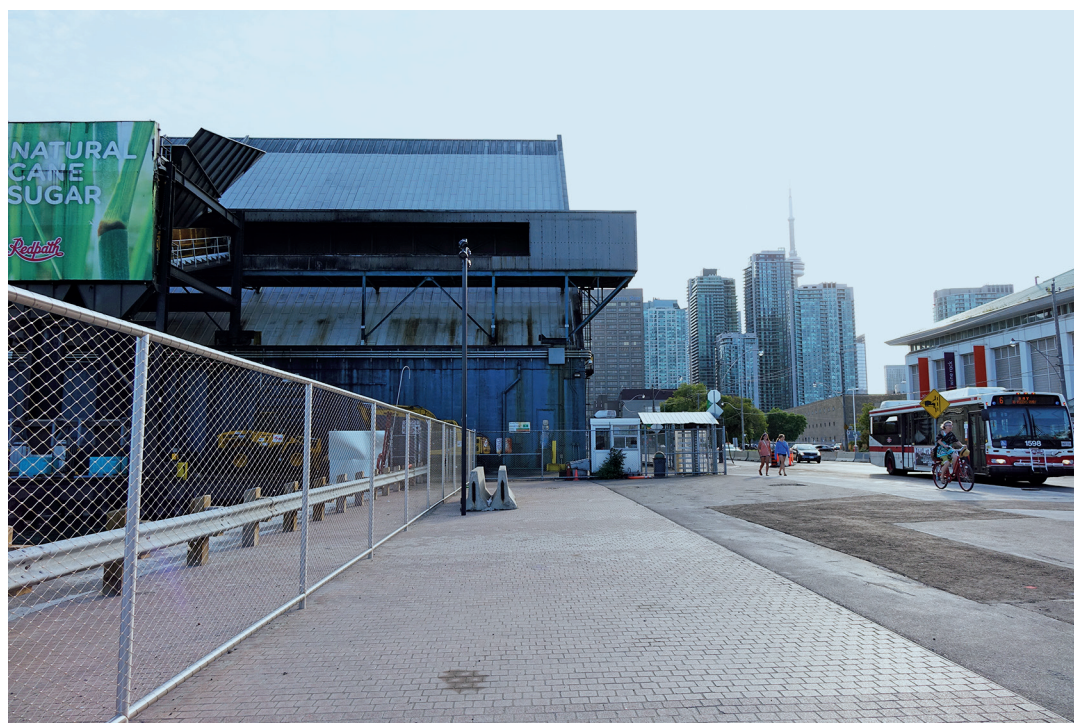
- ① Sidewalk Labs is a subsidiary of Google parent company Alphabet set up in 2015.
- ② Unfortunately, this promise is not included in the "concept" documents found at the project website [\[sidewalktoronto.ca\]](http://sidewalktoronto.ca).
- ③ In March 2018, a story broke on how a London-based data-mining firm named Cambridge Analytica had improperly obtained personally identifiable

- information of up to 87 million Facebook users. The data was used to influence voter opinion on behalf of politicians who hire them. Cambridge Analytica scandal has raised awareness on dangerous and unethical use of the technology, as well as the demand for AI regulation.
- ④ Minnan-Wong is the only elected city official on the board of Waterfront Toronto.

5. 毗邻雷德帕思制糖厂的27号码头公寓是多伦多海滨地区的一处新建公寓开发项目。
6. 由West 8事务所设计的波浪桥是滨水多伦多赢得中央滨水区开发权的原因之一。
7. 滨水多伦多委托Claude Cormier+Associés事务所设计的蜜糖海滩是一处滨水空间复兴项目。
- 8-1. 东部海滨地区多伦多港35号码头景象，背景为加拿大国家电视塔。
- 8-2. 未来城市构想渲染图：交通方式因自动驾驶技术和数字导航的出现而彻底改变。

5. Pier 27 Condos adjacent to the Redpath Sugar Refinery, is a new condominium development on Toronto's waterfront.
6. Simcoe WaveDeck designed by West 8 is one part of Waterfront Toronto's award-winning design for the central waterfront.
7. Sugar Beach designed by Claude Cormier + Associés is another project commissioned by Waterfront Toronto

- as part of the waterfront revitalization program.
- 8-1. View from Toronto Harbor Pier 35 of the Eastern Waterfront, with the CN Tower in the background.
 - 8-2. Rendered view of the future city where transportation is overhauled with self-driving technology and digital navigation.



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9-1



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9-2

by the fact that their government relations person is a New Yorker, and the lead facilitator appears to be a very recent British import. But in any case, it is highly unclear who is to be consulted and about what — and by whom. The facilitators staffing the public meeting spoke with us about their plans to use random mailings to form demographically representative “reference groups” from all over Toronto, a technique that has been used for local planning purposes. But it was unclear who was giving the facilitators their briefs, or making final decisions.

Accountability is clearly not the project’s strong point. By contrast, public relations efforts, which draw on Google New York’s vast capacity, are creating some local goodwill. Sidewalk is offering a free “fellows” program for 12 Torontonians age 19 ~ 24, as well as a free summer camp for kids, run by the respected local Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). And Sidewalk launched two New York-made free applications, one for Toronto transit users (though the transit company has its own) and one for local history buffs called “Old Toronto.” The Old Toronto App was initially admired by the local intelligentsia, but, quickly, major errors showed an embarrassing lack of local knowledge: Queen Street, one of the best travelled streets in Toronto, apparently appeared as “Dairy Queen”[®].

Finally, a shocking ambiguity regarding the space at play has plagued the project from the start — and may well result in its ultimate failure. Does the agreement between Sidewalk Labs and Waterfront Toronto cover only the small so-called Quayside area, a 12-acre plot at the bottom of Parliament street, which is indeed currently available for development? Or would Sidewalk withdraw if they are denied to extend their activities to encompass the far larger expanse of the Port Lands, about 800 nearby acres, as numerous Waterfront Toronto statements suggest?

Nowhere in the project's official statements is it mentioned that the Port Lands area has a district plan, passed by city council in December 2017, which zones the whole area as employment lands (contrary to the apartment building drawings in the Sidewalk literature) (Fig. 10). Noted Toronto planner Ken Greenberg, currently on Sidewalk's payroll, wrote: "Sidewalk will begin with a new neighbourhood called Quayside.... Sidewalk Labs and Waterfront Toronto aim to bring the innovations advanced at Quayside to scale across the Eastern Waterfront, more than 325 hectares...."^[1]. Greenberg undoubtedly knows that what he calls "the eastern waterfront" is, legally, the Port Lands district; as do city councilors, who will ultimately decide on the project.

What we have seen so far raises globally important questions about Silicon Valley's emerging territorial ambitions, as international commentators have pointed out. But it also raises worrying questions about who will be upholding the public interest and public laws and policies, since Waterfront Toronto seems to have lost the plot on that. In public-private partnerships, one can count on the private partner's profit motive to ensure that financial risks are mitigated or insured. But there is no similar set of incentives tending to mitigate accountability risks — especially when the public partner is not an elected government but an obscure agency run by an appointed board. There is a municipal election in Toronto in October, and that will be the time for citizens to demand transparency and accountability, instead of the pretty pictures provided thus far. **LAF**

REFERENCE

- [1] Greenberg, K. (2017). Greenberg: How Sidewalk Labs could make a vital contribution to Toronto's evolution. Retrieved from <http://spacing.ca/toronto/2017/11/21/greenberg-how-sidewalk-labs-could-make-a-vital-contribution-to-torontos-evolution/>

⑤ This error seems to have been fixed in the Old Toronto App.

- 9-1. 从皇后码头东街望向雷德帕思制糖厂。
 9-2. 未来城市构想渲染图：自动驾驶汽车在街道上行驶，机器人在地下辅助管道中清扫垃圾。
 10-1. 从东部海滨地区港岸区望向船舶航道，右侧为堆放的除冰剂。
 10-2. 东部海滨地区港岸区靠近樱桃海滩克拉克海滩公园一侧所见景象。
 10-3. 未来城市构想渲染图：海滨地区将建造起一系列公共空间。

9-1. View from Queens Quay East towards the Redpath Sugar Refinery.

9-2. Rendered view of the future city, with self-driving cars on the street and subterranean utility channels filled with robots whisking away garbage.

10-1. View from Port Lands of the Eastern Waterfront towards the Ship Channel, with piles of deicers on the right side.

10-2. View from Port Lands of the Eastern Waterfront, near Cherry Beach Clarke Beach Park.

10-3. Rendered view of the future city, with series of public spaces to be created along the waterfront.



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10-1



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10-3