

# Walking Between Place & Identity

## A Comparative Case Study of Katong & Siglap Neighbourhoods

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### INTRODUCTION & RESEARCH QUESTION

### METHODOLOGY

### PARTICIPANTS

This research looks at how walking shapes the way people perceive the identity of their neighbourhood. In cities, walking is often seen as something good for health or getting around, but it is also a personal and emotional activity. The study asks:

#### Semi-Structured Interviews

20 Participants  
10 from each neighbourhood  
At least 1 year living in the neighbourhood  
30-45 minute interview  
Snowball sampling through personal networks

#### DEMOGRAPHIC MIX

11 Males, 9 Females  
11 Chinese, 2 Malay, 2 Indian, 5 Other Ethnicities  
Average Age: ~41 years  
Age Range: 22 to 84 years  
Average Residential Tenure: ~21 years  
Range of Residential Tenure: 1 year to 56 years  
18 SG Citizens, 1 Perm Resident, 1 Non-Resident  
15 Local-born, 5 Foreign-Born  
Degree of Connection: 7 first, 11 second, 2 third  
11 Industries Represented

#### How does walking shape residents' perceptions of neighbourhood identity?

The following sub-research questions support the main research question:

- How do residents **experience walking** in their neighbourhood?
- How do residents perceive **the identity** of their neighbourhood?

The research compared two neighbourhoods in Singapore—Katong and Siglap. Katong is more walkable and richer in culture, while Siglap is more spread out and suburban.

#### Thematic Analysis & Spatial Analysis

Audio recordings were transcribed  
QDA Miner and WordStat for coding  
QGIS for spatial analysis and visualisation

## KEY FINDINGS

### Key Factors in the Conceptualisation of One's Neighbourhood

Walkability, Familiarity, Social Sphere, Proximity to Amenities

#### Perceptions of Neighbourhood Identity

Katong	Siglap
Convenient	Safe, Quiet, Peaceful
Vibrant, Diverse	Rich, Atas
Peranakan, Cultural, Heritage	Chill, Relaxed, Laid-back
Changing	Residential
	Friendly

### NEIGHBOURHOOD IDENTITY

#### Examples of Place Identity Anchors

Colourful Shophouses at Koon Seng Road

Bars & Food Establishments Along Joo Chiat Road

F&B Establishments in Siglap & East Coast Road

Siglap Linear Park



### WALKING EXPERIENCES

#### Purpose of Walking

Food & Drinks, Shopping & Services, Health & Leisure

#### Walking Experiences

Katong	Siglap
Very walkable (+)	(-) Uneven walkability
Access to many and varied amenities (+)	(-) Weather an issue when walking
Enjoyable, interesting, engaging (+)	(+) Calming and relaxing



### WALKING EXPERIENCES & PLACE IDENTITY

#### How Walking Mediates the Perception of Place Identity

##### Familiarisation & Knowing

"Walking brings familiarity to the one that walks around, right? Whether it be a new resident that moves into that area and just trying to familiarize themselves, or someone who has stayed there for a long time... sometimes just like walks in the evening as a form of like after dinner digestion activities... those kind of things... become part of your daily life. It's not something spectacular or memorable that... gives you the identity. It's just the sense of familiarity that builds the identity over time."



##### Noticing & Observing

"...it's a pleasant walk, especially at night... you see people so happy... singing at this coffee shop with red lanterns... I go slower and I'll look at the people and it gives me happy vibes... every time I walk past those places... I wonder how their lives are like."

##### Social Encounter & Connection

"Actually, walking my dogs has allowed me to make a lot of friends within the neighbourhood... you do tend to make friends because regularly you see the same people walking the dog or seeing people walking, pushing the grandkids or things like that. So you really get to know people, in that sense, even though it is maybe casually."

##### Discovery & Exploration

"The few times when I walk with my kid and then we walked past some people's garden, I'll stop and show my kids the garden, tell them about the flowers or the insects. Itself is an activity, it's engaging, but the beautiful part, the owner will come out, and then 'ehh, this one, I just plant' and talk to my kids about it. Wow."



### RECOMMENDATIONS

- More walkable social spaces that facilitate 'encounters'** (aligned with URA's Draft Master Plan 2025 for Katong and Siglap precincts).
- Building in places to discover and explore**, e.g., pop-ups, allowing more self-expression in the neighbourhood.
- Aligning place identity anchors with walkable routes** (making place identity anchors more accessible and walkable).
- Limit gentrification by supporting and preserving traditional businesses** with strong place identity (new Heritage Business Scheme introduced in 2025 but limited to Central Area).



### CONCLUSION

The participants in this study could have not said it better about the spirit, essence and invaluable learning of this research journey:

"The more you know... the more you can identify with it. There's a Malay saying... 'Tak kenal maka tak cinta'... if you do not know, you will never love... walking is an excellent way of doing that."

"Every walk is in itself a journey. And how many places can you find where that's the case, right? And the destination becomes a minor part of the process. So, **the journey itself become a joy.**"

