

International conference, Paris-Marne la Vallée, 21-23 January 2015:

The Intricacy of Walking and the City. Methods and Experiments

Panel “Interdeterminations: The Social and Spatial Conditions of Walking”



How the City Interferes with Walking: Case-study in a Commercial Street of Central Paris

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1. Introduction: Postulates of the project



Walking is a situation

Reasons frequently not inherent to the action of walking

Going to work or back home
Shopping
Delivery
Parking
Strolling...

“Trip purposes” may appear among these reasons, as well as being present in the street without any intention to move.

The “walker” is an *in-situ* subject

(as opposed to “pedestrian”)

Self-identification and uses of public space are interwoven with “strategies” and “tactics” for the **interaction with “others”**: alterities as **manifestations of the city.**

Night, cold
People
Vehicles
Shop-windows and signs
Waste, street furniture etc.

These “others” are agents for walking and intricately with it

Their study is necessary to understand the **systemic functioning of the street** and to **plan its social and spatial arrangement.**

Sidewalks' size, uses and congestion
Crossings
Operating hours...

2. Urban context of the “Rue du Faubourg du Temple” (RFT) Project



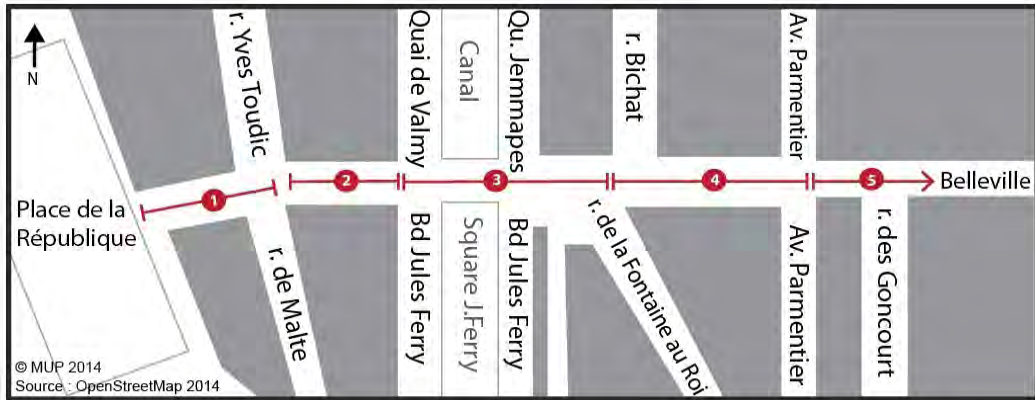
Conference location

One of the main **accesses** to the medieval downtown and to the “Place de la République” hub (5 subway lines)

Heritage of **working-class neighborhood** actualized by global immigration

Retail district for local residents and workers

One of the **nightlife centers** for the city



550 m.



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3. Methodology applied during the first semester of 2014

Participant observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Walkers, passers-by→ Users of other means of transportation (bike, bus, subway)→ Customers (cafes, restaurants, bakery)
Following of passers-by, Flash-surveys	Conducted by undergraduate students as practice
Video-recorded observations	30 minutes round circuit, every hour during 24h (approx.): <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Tuesday to Wednesday;→ Saturday to Sunday
Observations and interviews on specific interactions (alterities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Nightlife (F. Guérin & E. Hernández)→ “Cluttered” pedestrians and walking logistics (P. Alvarez)→ Informal parking of motorized two-wheelers (J. Kozlowski)• Sense-walking group surveys, thermal walks (C.Vasilikou)
Detailed on-line survey	conducted mainly through: <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Closest primary schools & Neighborhood council

4. Results: a typology of “others”

Everyday urban walking is characterized by discontinuity, meandering and ‘stop-and-go’ movements, produced by constant ‘interruptions’ by ‘others’:

Some 'others' are relatively stables:

- Street morphology, urban furniture, shops' stalls, signs, windows and terraces, etc.
- Institutional arrangements (cleaning, garbage disposal, traffic rules...)
- Social rhythms and norms, frequent presence of others pedestrians or circulating and parked vehicles, opening hours of schools, businesses, stations...
- Circadian and seasonal variations of the urban environment

4. Results: a typology of “others”

Some 'others' are unstable, coincidental and potentially innumerable:

- Weather, Chance meetings, Incidents and events produced by other humans' uses of the street



5. Results: typology of “walking modes” in a busy street

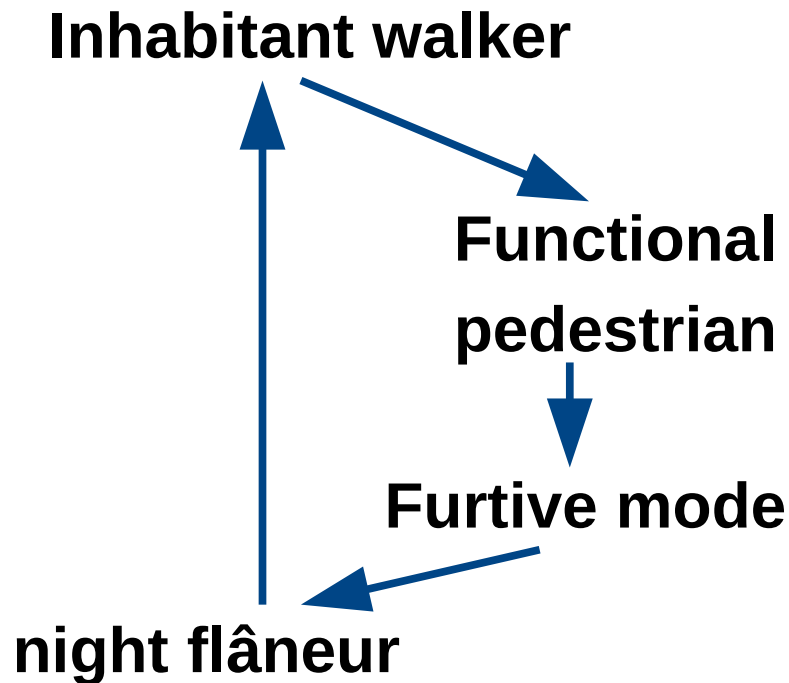
<i>Flâneur</i>	slowness, trampling and standing, smooth avoiding of all kinds of “others”; conscious and intense interactions with human “others”	opportunistic deviation of non-human others into support for alcoholic conviviality or drunken walking (“night owls”)
Functional behavior	pedestrians using the street as a strategic channel between their origin and destination	often combined with an opportunistic use of street resources such as shops etc.
Furtive walking	fragmented in the smallest space-times possible	drivers parking their vehicles, or passengers getting down from a bus or a taxi, at the minimum distance to their destination
Last Meter Logistics	not only delivery workers but also pedestrians carrying baby strollers, shopping trolleys, suitcases, packs...	cluttering items determine interactions with any kind of “others”: people, sidewalk width, stairs, anti-parking devices, etc.
Inhabited walking	Those who can stop at any instant to start a improvised conversation with somebody they know	who reside, work or shop on a daily base in the street Extreme case: homeless persons or beggars

6(a). Results: swinging pedestrian behaviors

Each ideal-type:

- a virtual role that any subject could endorse successively depending upon various reasons and circumstances.

Example: **Local resident**



6(b). Results: swinging behaviors

Each walking roles implies different relations with the “others”:

- **Resources** in one mode → **obstacles** in an other mode
- **Changing priorities, strategies, tactics and tolerances.**



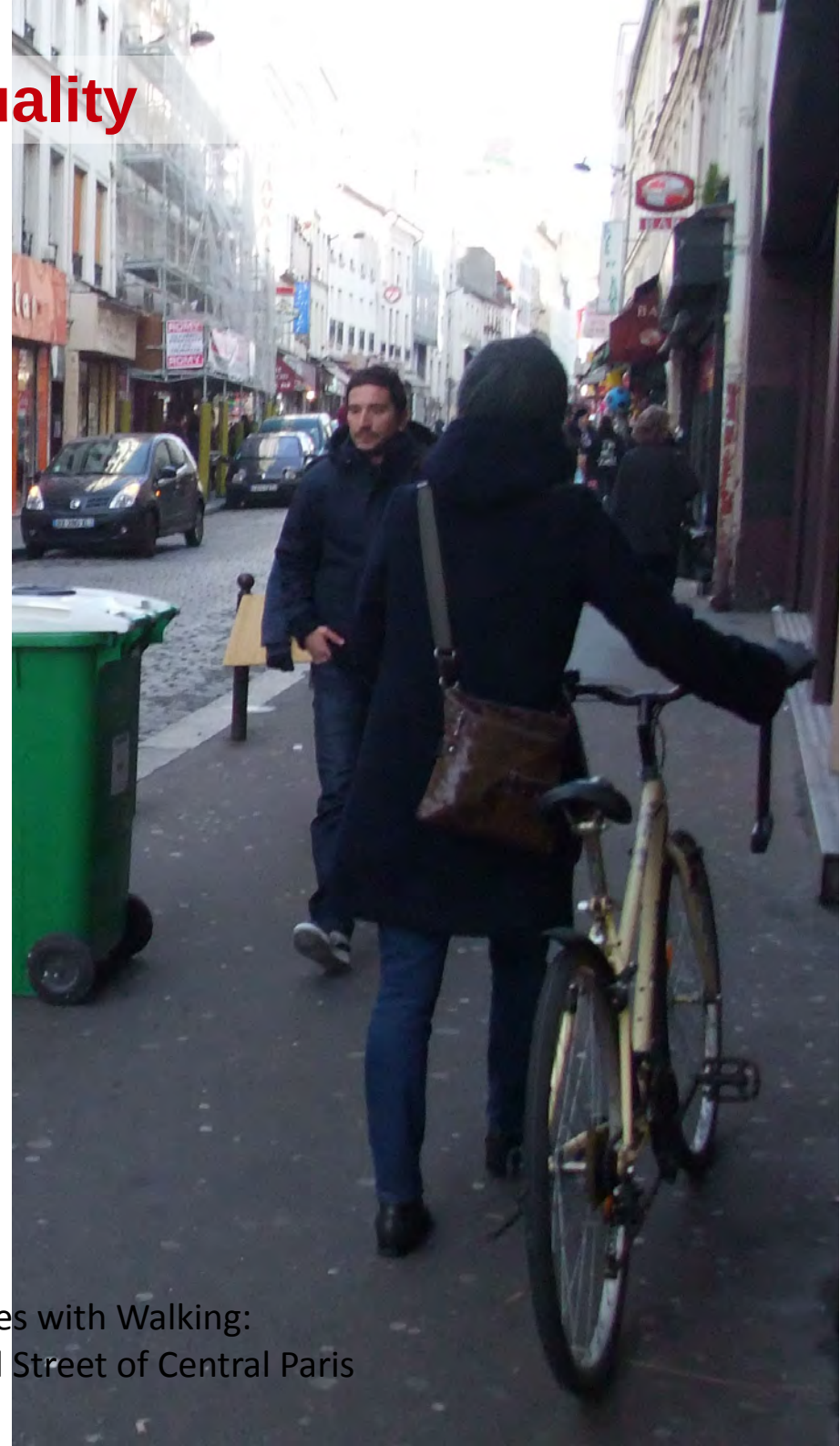
Example with a motorcycle informally parked on the sidewalk:

- On the way to school with the children, or walking with a luggage or with any other disability, one may be upset with this motorcycle;
- but when you're a hurry, fit and functional walker, you may not notice the same motorcycle!
- During the night, this one could even become a furniture to lean on, or put on a drink outside the bar.

7(a). Perspectives on social inequality

Some remaining questions:

- Role of social and individual inequality?
- Uneven ability to interchange the walking roles and to adapt to changing circumstances?
- Is walking the most convenient solution for who are able to avoid unfavorable conditions by adapting their pedestrian behavior?
- Do other people choose to walk only when they don't have another possibility, because their walking modes are limited and restricted?



7(b). Perspectives for urban design

Some obstacles to walking are created by street designs or rules, oriented toward an homogeneous functional traffic

- The decision of walking (or not) stands at the intersection of intentions with obstacles on which the subject's control is limited or inefficient.
- Obstacles to walking appear when the self meets specific “others”:
 - a type of person I would avoid
 - a crossroad I'm afraid of
 - a circumstance in which not to be caught with a big pack.
- The most sensitive to the permanent design of the street are the ones who depend upon it to regulate their relationship with “others”:
 - aged, disabled or cluttered persons; tourists, etc.
- But street design and rules are calibrated for the most valid walkers, who are most likely able to free themselves from these rules



Thank you for your attention

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