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Panthéon - Sorbonne

**Political and cultural events
in the Parisian *métro*:
Manifestations of urban or mobile communities ?**

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AAG Annual Meeting – 3/25/09

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1. Introduction and background

- > Subject : The expression of social groups inside the Parisian *métro*
- > While cultural expression has found a place inside the system, any political dimension has remained undesirable
- > Yet, political expression is more and more frequent
- > The majority of these political claims focus specifically on the system itself

- >> Mobility spaces are subject to some kind of territorial appropriation or at least territorial claim



1. Introduction and background

Parisian *métro* system:

> 16 lines

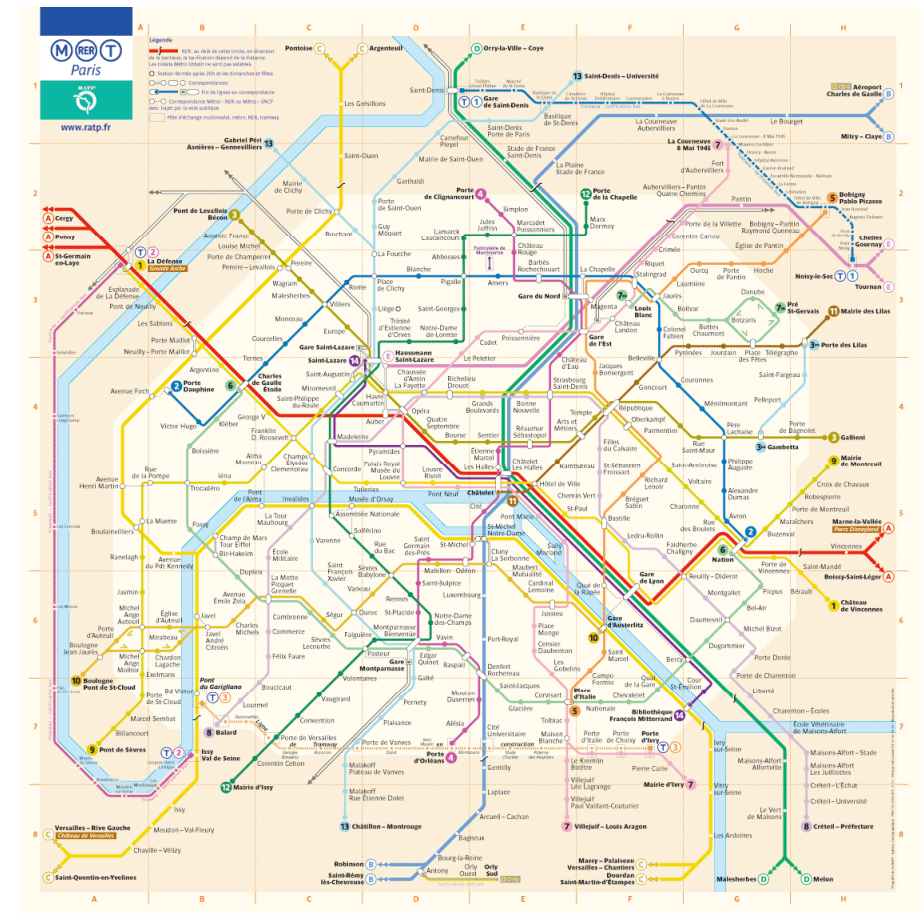
> First ones opened in 1900 /

Last one opened in 1997 (« *Météor* »)

> 4,7 million passengers per day

> 297 stations, each 500m apart

>> a utility network, technical artifact





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2. Social events

- > At the beginning of the seventies, a technological change transformed the way of planning
- > The automation (instead of ticket-punchers) of control gates allowed all sorts of people to enter the system
- > New commercial and cultural changes entered the system
- > The Parisian transport authority (RATP - Régie autonome des transports parisiens) first tried to dissuade them but finally accepted them integrated them into its own service.
- > RATP issued music players with permission cards and even organized some live performances inside its spaces
- >> A large part of the cultural events, even the most recent ones like the flash subway parties, have been absorbed by the RATP within the framework of a process of « humanization » of its spaces



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3. Political claims

Graffiti:

- > Since the opening of Parisian subway spaces, a new kind of practice has appeared : the tag (Kokoreff, 1990)
- > A new, wild and sharp way to communicate
- > It challenges the « smooth order » (Kokoreff, 1990: 124) of *métro*
- > A territorial marker...
- >> ... as well as other political events that mushroomed throughout the system





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3. Political claims

« Stop-ad »

> Since the beginning of the nineties, around the key figure of Yvan Gradis

> First, without any mask or anything covering their face and with journalists recording the action

> Then began the time of police and justice repressions

> While passengers seemed to judge them more favorably

>> A region-wide debate could have been chaired





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3. Political claims

Free transport

- > Blossomed during the sixties for ecological reasons
- > Recurred in the nineties for social reasons
- > « RATP » collective : « Réseau pour l'Abolition des Transports Payants » /
literally : « Network for the Abolition of Paying Transportation »
- > Distribution of tracts and free tickets to passengers.
- > Free transport weeks and some kind of « open houses »
- > They also blocked parts of the sidewalk and forced pedestrians who
wanted to walk across to pay for it
- >> People can feel in public spaces when they walk across the mobility
spaces and they don't understand why they should pay for it



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4. Discussion

- > Other kinds of demands for territoriality may grow
- > For example the women's demand for separate spaces on the train or even in the station
- > This makes it clear that territorial appropriation also means the exclusion of the stranger
- > That's why it seems so urgent that the Parisian transportation authority take this demand into account
- >> The mobility spaces are no longer a machinery but evidently a territory

Thanks for your attention