Revue indisciplinaire de sciences sociales
Espaces Temps.net

The Intricacy of Walking and the City.

Par . Le 16 September 2014



Walking in the city today, one seems to enjoy the benefits of a growing interest that is manifest in the renewal of pedestrian policies in numerous cities around the world. This is an emerging trend particularly in central zones of high density or in ‘eco-neighbourhoods’, and is typically enhanced by the promotion of active mobility by the main stakeholders of public health. Nevertheless, at a time when the process of metropolisation is characterised by the expansion, heterogeneity and discontinuity of the urban fabric, the place of vehicles remains predominant in public space as well as in street design and maintenance.

In this contradictory context knowledge about the intricate contextual factors associated with walking remains fragmented and not properly disseminated. Circulation models and ‘good practice’ techniques rely on first-hand experiences and not on long-term evaluation or massive surveys. Despite the significance of pioneering studies during the last forty years, walking remains relatively marginal in scientific exchanges on the city. This is why we see this symposium as an opportunity to invite scholars and young researchers of all disciplines, who have been working on this topic, to offer their insights on the subject.

In order to explain the reasons why walking has not managed to find a place in research and urban policy, we would like to invite you to explore the hypothesis that the intricacy of walking in the city renders it paradoxically omnipresent and invisible at the same time. As an elementary mode of access to services or facilities, a link between vehicular modes of transport and scheduled tasks, a micro-scale within the macro-scale of personal and collective organisation, walking is all the more essential – albeit undervalued, by ascribing to it a vague and trivial character in everyday life.

Questioning the forms and consequences of this complexity provides the general framework of the present invitation welcoming researchers to present their research methods and results. This includes examining and evaluating the context of walking in urban landscapes, not only in a variety of physical and biological conditions, but also inseparably in the context of social interactions, cultural representations, individual and collective motivations that include but are not limited to,

among others, the following questions:

A) Complexity raises the question between ‘weak’ and furtive links or signs vs. the ‘heavy’ elements of urban morphology, infrastructure and transport statistics, or even footwear industry… Is this acceptable in terms of notions of salience or affordance, of adherence and universal accessibility, or even the notion of shared space?

B) What place does intentionality have in walking? In most cases, it appears as a link between activities, mainly ‘with no intention’, as an invisible instrument of realisation of a principal intention: buy bread or pick the kids up from school, visit a neighbour or a doctor, use the metro station, the bus stop or walk to a parking space, cross a train station in transit, etc. In this way, walking offers an underlying link between vehicular transport modes and their inner life: what do these relations vary in according to the modes of transport and the types of spaces, population and motivation?

C) What are the relations between pedestrian mobility and values? What are the systems of values that can be associated to walking: economic? Ecological? Cultural? Political? What are the contradictions between these systems? What are the forms of resistance against imposed values? How can one revisit the sedentary and (im)mobility approaches? Can walking appear as a condition or result of the emergence of the post-functionalistic, resilient or post-scarcity city?

D) Are economic approaches to walking possible? In what scale? In particular, which are the positive and negative externalities of pedestrian urban mobility? Can we talk of supply and demand? What is the role of walking in commercial peregrinations, in urban tourism? How does the economy of perambulation interlock with urban walking?

E) The use of walking seems to be largely determined by complex environmental conditions. In what way can we describe the interdependencies between material determinants (absence, discontinuity or low quality of pathways, pavements, crossings, signage, lighting, etc.), social determinants (fear of road traffic, phobias of solitude or crowds, sexual or police harassment, racism, delinquency, etc.) and individual determinants (self-image, representations of walking as tiring or pleasant, capacity to adapt clothing levels, equipment or behaviour, etc.)?

F) Does walking have a specific relation to urbanity and the urban? Relation to others, connection with other provisions of the body, particularly with the historic institution of perambulation or with the question of the crowds? Can walking permit a redefinition of the urban rhythm? How do these two types of rhythm intermingle? What role does it play for the hyper-modern individual?

The scientific committee will be interested in, but not limited to, the above list of questions and invites proposals that raise other issues as well. We will pay particular attention to communications proposing:

· critical assessments of existing methods and data used to approach or measure walking in general, and especially walking in the city;

· studies concerning urban spaces that have been studied less than central, dense, old, well-equipped and frequented neighbourhoods (in particular peri-urban areas, activity zones, infrastructure in its relationship with implementation, etc);

· comparative perspectives, either inside an urban agglomeration, between several

agglomerations, or between different cultural regions, etc;

· multi-scaled approaches that allows to take into account the activity of urban walking in the various relations that it links to or in the link between biological and social body;

· precise perspectives on the historic and/or anthropological evolutions of city walking,

· analysis of experiences of action research or applied research partnerships between researchers and operational actors or the civil society;

· the implementation of methodologies that renew existing approaches and display their limitations;

· the presentation of innovative technologies, or the use of existing innovative technologies, relating observations of mobility with pedestrian activity; the focus could be on the interactions or links forged by walkers with their dynamic environment;

· re-embedment in the social, economic or political context of technologies that follow pedestrians or on which depend operational actors and researchers.

Proposals of papers.

The submission process and communication mode with the authors will be exclusively electronically.

Submission of anonymous abstracts of 5,000 to 10,000 characters (spaces included) in one of the following languages: English – Spanish – French. The abstract needs to have a title and specify:

· the domain in which the proposal brings new knowledge,

· what is the specific research question discussed in the communication,

· the context and factual data that construct the argumentation

· the principal conclusions of the communication.

Submission website: https://sites.google.com/site/2015intricacywalkingcity/

Evaluation and selection of proposals.

The proposals will be submitted for peer-review by at least two members of the scientific committee (external expertise could be obtained should a specialised proposal requires it).

After the pre-selection of the highest quality proposals by the scientific committee, the organisers will compose the detailed programme of sessions and will decide on the final selection, ensuring that the selected authors represent a variety of scientific positions, geographical origins, generations and genders.

The conference.

Each communication will have duration of 15 minutes, followed by a Q & A session of 15

minutes. All communications have to be presented in English (there will be no simultaneous translation), in order to allow discussions that include all participants.

We estimate 5 half-day sessions, each consisting of approximately 5 communications (this structure may change in function of the number and nature of received proposals). A sixth session will be dedicated to a meeting between participants with the view to envisage international collaborations, and a round table with the operational actors and civil society.

Total provisional duration of the symposium is three days. In order to promote an ethic where listening is deemed equally important to speaking, we would like to ask potential participants to plan being present and taking part in all sessions of the symposium. The conference will take place in the Cité Descartes campus in Marne-la-Vallée. Some additional activities (walks, meetings, dinners) are likely to take place elsewhere in the greater Paris area.

This conference is part of a week of academic activities organized by Université Paris-Est “Labex Urban Futures” (http://www.futurs-urbains.fr/en/)

Financial coverage for all authors of selected papers.

There are no registration fees;

hotel accommodation (with breakfast) provided for four nights, for one author per paper;

three lunchtime meals and one dinner provided by the symposium organisation;

a four-day pass on the Greater Paris public transport network provided.

All travel expenses between Paris and city of origin, as well as all other costs, will be covered by the participants. The organisers will provide certificates of attendance to support them in their efforts with regard to other funding sources. Exceptionally, in support of authors located in countries that cannot provide financial support for attendance, the symposium organisers will explore ways to provide this support.

Publication (2015).

Following the symposium, an editorial committee will be constituted to put together a collective publication based on presented papers. This committee will propose to authors potential modifications of their paper in order to elaborate a work of the highest quality, to be published in partnership with Labex Urban Futures and an English publisher.

Important dates.

NEW! 30 September: deadline for the submission of proposals

31 October: announcement of selected proposals

21 November: submission of final titles and revised abstracts

15 December: publication of conference programme

21-23 January 2015: conference

Scientific committee (chair: Jean-Paul Hubert, IFSTTAR/AME, France)
J.M. Auberlet (IFSTTAR/COSYS, France), P. Berenstein-Jacques (U. Federal de Bahia, Brasil), J. ?arský (Technical U. Prague, Czech Republic), S. Chardonnet (ENSA Paris-Malaquais, France), H. Charreire (UPEC, France), M.-S. Cloutier (INRS, Canada), M. Colleoni (U. Milano Biccoca, Italia), B. Faivre d'Arcier (U. Lyon, France), L. Gemzøe (Gehl Architects, Danemark), S. Gonzalez Arrellano (UAM, Mexico), M.A. Granié (IFSTTAR/TS2, France), V. Henshaw (U. Sheffield, UK), S. Hodge (U. Exeter, UK), A. Jarrigeon (UPEM, France), L. Kisgyörgy (U. Budapest, Hungary), A. Loukaitou-Sideris (UCLA, USA), D. Marchand (CSTB, France), J.M. Oppert (AP-HP, France), A. Piombini (U. Strasbourg, France), N. Saunier (Polytechnique Montréal, Canada), P.O. Schut (UPEM, France), G. Simon (UPEM, France), J. Torres (U. Montréal, Canada).

Organisation committee (coord.: Jérôme Monnet, UPEM, France) :
Labex Urban Futures' "Pedestrian Urban Mobilities" group (F. Guérin, E. Hernandez, J.P. Hubert, B. Pradel, J. Roussel), G. Capron (UAM, México), K. Vasilikou (U. Kent, UK).

Article mis en ligne le Tuesday 16 September 2014 à 09:47 –

Pour faire référence à cet article :

"The Intricacy of Walking and the City.", *EspacesTemps.net*, In brief, 16.09.2014
https://test.espacestemps.net/en/articles/the-intricacy-of-walking-and-the-city/

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