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Urban Trajectories and Posturing: The Place of Children and Teenagers in the Makeup of the City

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This article is a translation of:

Postures et trajectoires urbaines : la place des enfants et adolescents dans la
fabrique de la ville

Abstracts

Français English

Cadre de la recherche : De nombreux auteurs insistent sur le fait que l'histoire des rapports de l'enfant à la ville est une véritable histoire d'éviction, surtout à partir de la deuxième moitié du 20^{ème} siècle avec la généralisation de la circulation motorisée et que ce phénomène n'a cessé de s'accroître. Plus qu'une cassure radicale entre un avant, qui semble représenté un âge d'or de l'enfance en ville définitivement révolu, et un après, où les enfants sont représentés comme enfermés chez eux, interdits d'accès à la rue et connectés au monde au travers de leur téléphone intelligent ou tablette, il importe d'inscrire le phénomène dans l'histoire longue et d'identifier, contrairement aux discours alarmistes, qui sont les enfants et adolescents continuant de fréquenter les villes, même s'ils ne sont pas (ou plus ?) majoritaires.

Objectifs : Cet article introductif du numéro « Explorer la ville : le rapport aux espaces publics des enfants et adolescents » vise à présenter un état de la recherche et des pistes de réflexion et d'action novatrices sur les manières dont les enfants et les adolescent-es pratiquent les villes, agissent et sont agis dans les espaces urbains contemporains.

Méthodologie : L'article introductif s'appuie sur une recension des écrits anthropologiques, sociologiques, historiques, géographiques, architecturaux et urbanistiques ayant porté sur le

rapport aux espaces publics urbains des enfants et adolescents. Cette analyse est mise en relation avec des projets en cours cherchant à solliciter les jeunes lors des processus de concertation urbaine pour le réaménagement des villes, des métropoles voire des mégapoles.

Résultats : En réunissant des âges (enfance et adolescence) et des lieux habituellement traités séparément, les textes rassemblés nous incitent à prendre en considération divers aspects tels la faible présence des jeunes dans les espaces urbains, l'uniformisation, la réglementation et la ludification de certains espaces publics, l'attrait des espaces fermés (intérieurs, centres commerciaux) et leur appropriation, l'apprentissage des activités physiques, la mobilité autonome, l'engouement pour les médias numériques mais également les injonctions familiales afin d'apprécier l'influence des parents et de la fratrie sur le rapport à la ville des jeunes.

Conclusions : Cet article met en avant la nécessité d'une approche intersectionnelle qui tienne compte d'une multiplicité de variables, telles que le sexe, l'âge, la provenance socio-géographique, voire la couleur de peau dans l'analyse des rapports des enfants et adolescents aux espaces publics. Il expose l'importance du passage entre des espaces intérieurs (le logement, les institutions scolaires, les maisons pour jeunes, centre de loisirs, etc.) et extérieurs, la possible ou impossible exploration en autonomie de la rue, des parcs et jardins, des centres commerciaux,... ainsi que les relations-tensions entre les familles et les enfants, entre les jeunes et les gestionnaires d'espace, entre les jeunes avec ou sans la supervision d'un adulte, entre les jeunes et d'autres usagers adultes (acteurs ou témoins) dans les espaces publics

Contribution : Cet article fait une revue des enjeux sociétaux et anthropologiques sur les rapports aux espaces publics des enfants et adolescents de plus d'une dizaine de villes situées en Europe, en Amérique du Nord, au Maghreb et au Proche-Orient. Il identifie des pistes à approfondir et à mettre en oeuvre pour la recherche sur cette thématique.

Research Framework: Many authors prefer to focus on the acrimonious relationship that exists between children and the city. This narrative is given as a story of eviction, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, and the ubiquitous arrival of motorized traffic ; a phenomenon that has only accelerated over time. It is a radical separation between a before, which represents a golden age for children where the city revolved around them, and an after where children are represented as being shut in at home, forbidden from playing in the street and connected to the world via their smartphones and tablets. Despite this alarmist discourse, it is important to remember that children and teenagers continue to explore and socialize within their cities regardless of whether they are not (or are no longer) in the majority.

Objectives : This introductory article to "Exploring the City : Children and Teenagers' Relationship with Public Spaces" is designed to present the state of research as well as paths of reflection and innovative actions on how children and teenagers experience the city, the way they act and how they are influenced by contemporary spaces.

Methodology : The introductory article is based on a review of work done in the fields of anthropology, history, geography, architecture and urban studies, all of which discuss the relationship between urban spaces and children and teenagers. This analysis is juxtaposed by ongoing projects that ask the opinions of youths to establish a consensus-building approach to urbanism and urban redevelopment in cities, metropolises and megacities.

Results : By including all age groups (children and teenagers) as well as the types of spaces that are generally kept separate, the articles presented herein ask us to consider several important aspects including : the presence of youths in urban spaces, the standardization, regulation and gamification of certain public spaces ; the appeal of closed spaces (interiors, shopping centres) and their appropriation ; the practise of physical activities ; autonomous mobility ; the interest in digital media and familial injunctions to assess the influence of parents and siblings on the relationships that young people have with the city.

Conclusions : This article focuses on the necessity of taking an intersectional approach that considers a broad range of variables including gender, age and socio-geographical origin, race in particular, to analyze the relationships between children and teenagers and public spaces. Here we reveal the importance of the passage between interior spaces (homes, schools, youth homes, recreational centres, etc.) and exterior spaces, whether the exploration of streets, parks, gardens and shopping malls remains possible as well studying the relations and tension that exist between families and children, between youths and the managers of these spaces, between youths with and without adult supervision and between youths and adult users of public spaces as both actors and witnesses.

Contribution: This article takes a look at the societal and anthropological issues that affect the relationship between public spaces and children and teens in over a dozen cities located in Europe, North America, Northern Africa and the Middle East. It identifies paths of exploration and paths of implementation on this topic.

Index terms

Mots-clés : adolescent, aires de jeux, appropriation, autonomie, enfant, espace public, ludification, rue, trajectoires urbaines, ville

Keywords : adolescent, playgrounds, appropriation, autonomy, public space, gamification, street, urban trajectories, city

Full text

- 1 The urbanization of the world is a well-known reality that no longer needs proving. We will only briefly discuss the long historical process that led us into this situation by looking into the place of children and teenagers and, in particular, the place left for them in our world and in urban lifestyles. These authors are increasingly vocal in their concern about the fact that children and teenagers remain forgotten when it comes to the makeup of cities (see Breviglieri, 2015 ; Defrance, 2015 ; Lehman-Frisch et Vivet, 2012 ; Weber, 2015 in particular) despite the fact that an ever growing portion of them are growing up in urban environments : “Youths not only exist *in* the city but rather they are *from* the city and their lives are being shaped by urban dynamics” (Skelton and Gough, 2013 :457).
- 2 The 2009 symposium on urban Im/mobility of youths organized in Manchester by the Royal Geographical Society¹, discussed the existence of a double absence : youths who are underrepresented as researchers in the field of youth studies and as speakers who are given agency by public authorities in consultations on urban transformation. Ten years later, the situation is only beginning to change. Among the proposals received for this work, more than half were submitted by young researchers (though not all were selected) and several of them were careful to relay the thoughts and words of others working in the institutions that decide upon the future of cities. Young generations of researchers seem willing and able to address the question just as they are looking for a means to support the legitimacy of young spokespeople and give them the power to participate in the creation of the city and to make modifications to their living environments².
- 3 How do children and teenagers currently “live” in their cities ? In other words, which urban spaces do these youths³ visit and what do they do there ? How do they act in urban spaces and how does it act upon them ? What “desire paths”⁴ are drawn by these youths ? To best understand their travel within large cities (and mega-cities), we prefer to speak of trajectories rather than routes because it allows us to establish the biographies of the people who not only travel both physically and existentially by moving their bodies through space and time and because they are not the same citizens at 7, 12 or 25 years of age.
- 4 We explored the trajectories of youths in multiple cities through the nine texts that make up this issue. The majority are from France, though there are also case studies done in Italy, Canada, Lebanon and Morocco. These contributions are the result of multidisciplinary research that called upon teams of people with a wealth of different training (educational sciences, political science, geography and sociology) and texts written by a single author, trained in urban planning, architecture and geography who makes use of literature and the methods of other disciplinary fields than his own, sometimes combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to best understand the movement of urban youths. This approach calls to mind what Ulf Hannerz (1983) wrote nearly forty years ago in his manual of urban anthropology entitled *Exploring the City* (to which we pay homage in our own title—which any urban anthropologist will have surely recognized). In the conclusion of Henri Lefebvre’s 1968 book “*Le droit à la ville*” [Right to the City], he invited researchers to be inventive and creative in establishing a dialogue between different approaches and data to fully understand urban dynamics in all of their complexity. This necessary triangulation should also be accompanied by a capacity for adaptation and flexibility in the face of situations that are in perpetual transformation. Though this philosophical approach to urban research has since become a leitmotif and has largely become common practise, this issue is the fruit of many collaborations and is the result of an intersectional approach that considers a broad range of variables including gender, age and socio-geographical origin, race in

particular, to analyze the relationships between children and teenagers and public spaces.

- 5 Geographical crossings and exchanges of opinion were all part of the preparation that went into this issue⁵. This approach allowed us to appreciate the liveliness and originality of the research conducted in this field and it provided us with a broader vision of the ongoing projects and paths of action for their implementation.

Children, teenagers and public spaces : what is there to say ?

- 6 In recent years, the topic of public spaces has been hotly debated in several fields including architecture, geography, psychology, sociology and urban ethnography. Very little research has ever been conducted on the urban spatial habits of children and teenagers however. When the relationship between youths and urban spaces has been looked into, most often it is from the perspective of problems and/or specific spaces (suburbs, street children, children playing in the streets or street gangs). Isabelle Reste noted that children on the street “are the children who spend the lion’s share of their day on the street without the supervision of a parent or any other responsible adult. The time spent outside of the familial environment is entirely dedicated to fun, whether legal or not.” (1993 : 225). Michel Parazelli states that “in what is referred to as developing countries, they speak almost exclusively of street youths or street kids, whereas in the so-called developed countries, they are sub-divided into street youths, youths in a street situation, homeless youths, youths with no fixed address, vagrant youths, runaways, nomadic youth, marginalized youths and itinerant youths (in Quebec)” (2010 : 206).

- 7 The major share of contemporary research on public spaces looks into questions that revolve around poverty and the conflicting use of space between youths and other social groups. These works tend to focus heavily on issues of violence, degradation and intergenerational conflict including what the Spanish refer to as “botellón” or night noise in addition to substance abuse, sexism and bullying. A goodly portion of these youths are often socially neglected (abandoned, disregarded) and are the object of overexposure in the media which presents them as showcases (Didi-Huberman, 2012). The symbolic and performative images being presented only serve to perpetuate pre-existing stereotypes and shape opinions with tangible effects (Boukala, 2016 ; Chauvier, 2016 ; Fava, 2012). This media saturation is not reflected by any scientific dedication however. The perfect example of this is that in the *Dictionnaire de l’adolescence et de la jeunesse* [Dictionary of Youth and Adolescence](2010) headed by David Le Breton and Daniel Marcelli, not a single entry is dedicated to the relationship between youths and the city and its public spaces aside from the idea of “urban violence”, “vagrancy” and “acquiring civic-mindedness”.

- 8 Rather than feeding into the polemic that surrounds the abandonment of public paces by youths or their overuse by other youth groups (particularly in working class neighbourhoods), the theme of this issue is reflected by our desire to not focus on youth “problems” or “problem youths” including “out-of-school youths” (Reste, 1993). Rather, we prefer instead to look into their daily trajectories to better understand the dynamics and conflicts that exist between them and spaces which is highlighted by studying their use of these places⁶. This means not only looking into mobility but also at the meaning of space as discussed by Heather Snell “Working through mobility without thinking about space [...] is literally impossible” (Snell, 2016 :17).

- 9 With this in mind, the texts presented in this issue raise crucial societal and anthropological issues. The presence of youths in the city, in “a world of strangers” (Lofland, 1973) as well as “all the relationships that it entails including conflict and opposition” (Pétonnet, 1982 :17) are not made out of emotion but rather out of necessity. Richard Sennett, in keeping with Robert Park (1915) and Louis Wirth (1938), noted that that the city is the home to differences “the street presents differences in age, race and tastes that are far from one’s own familiar territory” (Sennett, 2000 : 115) where each person is exposed to otherness. In reaction to what he calls “the

neutralization of location” and the multiplication of “neutral cities” where it is increasingly difficult to be exposed to otherness, Sennett suggests other types of commitments including spatial and visual undertakings which are likely to forge remarkable and exciting encounters that create “stronger and better balanced adults who are able to face complexity and learn from it” (Sennett 2000 : 17). From a similar perspective, Kyriaki Tsoukala, based on research done in Themi and Thessaloniki in Greece, highlighted the richness of stimuli offered by urban environments and stated the point to which “the data on contemporary cities leans toward the legibility of strange environments for children and their need for movement and action as well the constant confrontation from diverse and complex stimuli, interactions with other individuals and groups but also with space itself” (2007 : 232).

10 Since the 1990s however, research into youths has clearly been important to sociologists and anthropologists. While these reflections on childhood hold a significant place with historians since the pioneering work of Philippe Ariès (1960), the relationships between urban spaces and informal methods of socialization such as those which we see occurring in the public spaces of large cities (parks, plazas, streets, etc.) remains a rarely researched topic when it comes to the professions that decide on the make up of cities themselves (urban planners, architects) or in humanities and social science literature—with the exception of research done in English speaking countries where reflection on youths has been conducted in Children’s Studies, Children’s geographies and Youth Studies where their mobility has been looked into for several decades.

11 The group work directed by Marie-José Chombart de Lauwe⁷ (1976a and b) should also be highlighted for its pioneering nature. They were interested in the “rarely analyzed child-environment relationship with location and time” (1976 : 2), the free time between school and family that they called “third spaces”⁸ which appear to be neutral but, in point of fact, that are places of freedom and a space governed by adult-centred standards. The research conducted over a period of three years with four other researchers (architect/anthropologist Philippe Bonnin, psychologist Marie Mayeur, sociologist Martyne Perrot and ethnologist Martin De la Soudière) was conducted in four different locations⁹. Their work produced several publications and an exhibit at Beaubourg (from October 26, 1977 to February 13, 1978). More recently, it also led to the production of a book coordinated by Thierry Paquot (2015) and an exhibit entitled *La ville récréative ; enfants joueurs et écoles buissonnières* [The Recreational City : Children Playing and Cutting School] held at the Halle aux sucres in Dunkirk as a part of the Learning Centre’s “Ville durable” which conducts reflections on children in the city.

12 According to the authors of a youth survey guidebook, “this issue [the *Autrement* review, n.10, 1977, which summarizes the results of research done by the team of Chombart de Lauwe] remains as relevant as ever as its findings have not changed at all — a rarity for studies on the relationship between children and the city and the segregation of city children” (Danic *et al.*, 2006 :81). Just over a decade ago, their guidebook demonstrated the shortcomings in the field as only a few pages (barely four pages out of 220) were dedicated to the topic between the chapter on “childhood in the private sphere” and the one on the public sphere. Only two works were motioned, the above-mentioned work, and one by Daniel Gayet (2005) which focused on the acquisition of social rules in playgrounds which was done by observing the interactions between young children (aged between 18 months and 3 years) and between their parents in outdoor playgrounds designed with them in mind. To these works we should also add Éric Chevalier’s *L’enfant et la ville ; urbanisme, santé et socialisation* [The Child and the City : Urban Design, Health and Socialization] (1993) which drew up a portrait of the state of knowledge regarding relationships between children and the city in several country described as «industrialized» and «developing» by the author. These questions include the following : “How should we consider children in urban planning scenarios ?” Are cities beneficial to the physical and mental health of children ? What are the experiments are being done in developing countries to help “street children ?” (1993 : 11).

13 In the francophone social studies, the majority of the research has been outside of the private sector and is essentially focused in institutions other than the family (daycares, schools, recreational centres, municipal children's councils and youth associations) and little work has been done on children under the age of twelve in public spaces. Children and teenagers (though teenagers are represented differently) are presented as constantly being prevented from solitary exploration of the city. When they go out unaccompanied by adults, it is most often to perform utilitarian trajectories that take them to school or to home or from school to recreation centres or stopping in at a bakery or a store to buy candies and then heading to the home of a close family member such as a grandparent, uncle, aunt or cousin or to a friend's house while their parents are returning home from work.

14 Isabelle Danic, Julie Delalande and Patrick Rayou (2006), the authors of the above-mentioned guidebook explain that the reason for the lack of studies on children and teenagers and their relationship with the street is due to the place they hold in western society which pigeonholes youths into the private sphere or in specific environments such as schools, recreation and leisure centres, parks - which are increasingly theme oriented. They write that "In contrast with other eras and other societies, children are excluded formally and informally from public spaces. The only ones to deviate from this, and only partially, are older children between 12-18 years old (Danic *et al.*, 2006 :77). Since then, this statement has been further nuanced. The "confinement" of children has been changed to include differences made according to their gender, age and the socio-geographical background in which they grow up.

15 2010 was a watershed year for reflections on the role of children and teenagers in the city. In fact, researchers from different disciplines are increasingly putting together thematic issues of journals, including issue 12 of the *Enfances, Familles et Génération* Journal put together by Marie-Soleil Cloutier and Juan Torres (2010), entitled "L'enfant et la ville"¹⁰ [The Child and the City]. The online journal *Métropolitique.eu* gathered together articles that discuss the relationship between children and the city (Gayet-Viaud *et al.*, 2015). Bookended by these two publications came Issue 3 of *Carnets de géographes* which was entitled "Géographies des enfants et des jeunes" [Geographies of Children and Youths] (Lehman-Frisch and Vivet, 2012). In their historiographical summary of European children Didier Lett, Isabelle Robin and Catherine Rollet (2015) also called out the misplaced vision of their peers : "Following early studies which mainly focused on representations within social categories, these historians have produced a work that shed light on all youth stakeholders, in all of their diversity" (Lett *et al.*, 2015 : 233). A change was made, and more interest was then focused on individual trajectories. Historians then moved on to "l'enfance aux enfants" [childhood for the children]. In 2016, it was the turn of *Annales de la Recherche urbaine* to produce a themed issue (number 111), which was dedicated to "La ville des enfants et des adolescents" [The City of Children and Teenagers]¹¹. That same year in France, several radio stations aired programs on the subject, and several articles were published in the press¹². This was all thanks to the exhibit in Dunkirk, but also because of debates held at the Festival Image de Ville, an architecture and urban spaces film festival, that discussed youths as part of its topics for 2016¹³.

Bringing together ages and places that tend to be treated separately

16 When the topic of living in the city is approached, studies focus solely on either children or teenagers, and rarely offer up a dialogue between the two¹⁴. While not denying the differences, we prefer to not enter into a debate over differences in age groups in this issue. We prefer instead to delve into a better understanding of how children and teenagers position themselves in regard to learning urban codes as it is between these two ages that, for most people anyway, they begin their first outings with peers and start to experience the city without being accompanied by adults. It is this negotiation of the passage between interior spaces (homes, schools, youth homes,

recreational centres, etc.) and exterior spaces (what is possible and impossible when exploring the streets, parks, gardens and shopping malls) as well as the relations and tensions that exist between families and children, between youths and the managers of these spaces, between youths with and without adult supervision and between youths and adult users of public spaces as both actors and witnesses.

17 At the end of the 1970s, Philippe Ariès studied the disappearance of spontaneous childhood use of the city. He felt the city was being deserted by children who were rarely seen in playgrounds or streets. He felt this was a sign of transformation. Cities were becoming “anti-cities” or “non-cities” to use his terms. By establishing a tie “between the crisis in the city, deprived since the mid 20th century of areas of traditional sociability, the concentration of affective investment in the family and scholastic and domestic confinement of children” (Chartier, 1993 : 20), he sounded the alarm by writing that children must be “reintegrated into the city, without suppressing the city itself, under the pretext of protecting families and children ! “ (Ariès, 1993 [1979] : 253). His analysis that urban development and architectural arrangements are gradually distancing youths from urban excitement can be compared and contrasted by looking at the joint apparition of this phenomena and a more nuanced categorization of age groups. At the same time the public and private spheres were distinguishing themselves more clearly. Well-to-do women were slowly being relegated to interior spaces and the distinction in age ranges which we would now qualify as children and teenagers was being established (Monnet, 2018).

18 It should be of no surprise therefore that the term adolescent is, at its origin, tied to urban spaces. Historians tell us that the term was first used in the middle of the 19th century to describe conduct that was disapproved of in public spaces¹⁵. The first occurrences of the term describe young bourgeois men who were degrading urban property, it was only later that the categorization also came to describe young men from working class areas and then to finally include all social classes without a gendered differentiation. In his work *Histoire de l'adolescence* [The History of Adolescence] Agnès Thiercé writes :

While the 19th century didn't invent adolescence, it created the “model” adolescent : the concept of an adolescent took shape, became cohesive and acquired sufficient strength to expand its coverage to include all pubescents. Mentioning the adolescent “model” also expressed a new desire to express to the state the status of adolescent thereby implementing its political framework and a universal vocation. The latter half of the 19th century saw the term adolescence in its modern meaning, through the creation of the “adolescent” age class (Thiercé, 1999 : 7).

19 By regulating the work done by children, making elementary and then secondary school mandatory and creating playgrounds and play areas, the scene was set and the discourse around children and teenagers became more specific and their ability to explore unbeaten paths became indirectly limited. They received particular attention that did not exist before through the creation of spaces that were designed specifically for them. Doctors and psychologists theorized about how to best understand them, care for them and coach them throughout their growth. Adolescent pathologies emerged. Children and teenagers gradually became distanced from the daily lives of adults, becoming considered specific age groups that required specific needs.

20 Neighbourhood socializing around schools began to occur and this modified the dynamics that existed previously. Like now, the choice of parents to enrol their children in schools that correspond with their expectations rather than opting for a school located in the neighbourhood impacted the socialization of their children, which was no longer a neighbourhood-based sociability, but which was more reflective of their parents. A type of socialization which is more dispersed through different areas of the city, different parts of the country or even throughout the world. The delineation of age groups and the specialization of spaces seemed to go hand in hand : children in school and parks designed for them and teenagers in middle and secondary schools. Rigid separations (walls, fences, regulations) between schools and the street, between the spaces dedicated to play, sports and the rest seem to have progressively cloistered the spaces of age groups in contemporary cities.

21 In parallel with the planning of these spaces outside of the home, interiors also became transformed to correspond with the increasing demand for privacy. Family and professional lives began to use differing spaces, making the divide between family lodging and work spaces more common. According to Ariès, this “segregation of functions, between working and residential spaces” (1993 [1979] : 266) participated in what he called the “rotting of the 20th century city” (1993 [1979] : 265). The spatial organization of living spaces reveals a new way of considering children and a new sensitivity on their behalf : young boys and girls went from being a family member to a “miniature adult” and then became “little beings” who are given special attention and space. At more or less the same time, the concept of a corridor was invented (middle 18th century), it allowed for a distinction between the public and private realms. Children’s rooms were now of particular value and were specifically located for reasons which, at the beginning, were based on sanitation. It wasn’t until the 19th century however that individual beds for children saw the light of day : “In large cities and for the middle classes [of the 19th century], a children’s room became a necessity. In general, it looked out over the yard and had its own furniture” (Becchi, 1998 [1996] : 367).

22 In the beginning, this new space in the home was used for all the family children. As of the 1920s, privacy through domestic help, which was common in the previous century, progressively disappeared (Becchi, 1998 [1996] : 366). It wasn’t until the latter half of the 20th century that individualized children’s rooms became the new ideal which have since become the norm. Jessaca Leinaweaver and Diana Marre (2018) made an interesting demonstration in the case of families looking to adopt. The dominant spatial models, especially those regarding children’s rooms are important criteria for deciding whether or not a family is apt to receive an adopted child in the 21st century :

A “suitable” room for a child is relatively straightforward to measure—easier than, say, empathy or patience—and its absence is easy to give as a reason for denial. But clearly, it is not the best or only criterion for good parenting. However, according to social scientists who study adoption, the implication that a child should have a room of their own is widespread in the adoption process around the Western world” (Leinaweaver and Marre, 2018 : s.p.).

23 Through the strategies of couples attempting to re-arrange their lodgings and lives to meet the criteria expected of them by the organizations responsible for their evaluation (calling to mind the “degree of urbanity” opined by Colette Pétonnet (1982)), Leinaweaver and Marre present the approval process for transnational adoption as an important pathway in the interaction between the state and the individual for the communication of a range of class and gender norms. These norms are not explicitly given anywhere but which are nevertheless the advice that future adoptive families offer each other via the Internet as being tacitly important.

24 This culture of the child's bedroom, combined with the increased attention paid to childhood, are factors which are less often stated in works compared to the invasion of the street by vehicles and traffic to explain the disappearance of children in urban spaces. Historian Egle Becchi (1998 [1996] :369) ends one of his sub-chapters, entitled “Environments” with the statement that the 20th century closed its grip on transitional childhood spaces while offering spaces for their imagination instead including film, television and sporting spaces. The 21st century is indelibly marked by the development of mobile telephones and other digital tools which are increasingly blurring the “traditional” distinctions between the public and private.

The eviction of youths from urban spaces and their return in the long course of history

25 Many authors have chosen to focus on the acrimonious relationship that exists between children and the city. This perspective is given as a story of eviction¹⁶, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, with the ubiquitous arrival of motorized traffic ; a phenomenon has only accelerated over time. For an ever growing number of children, the appreciation of space is done from behind the window of a car or bus (Lewis, Torres, 2010). Based on recent studies conducted in Western countries, Alain Legendre highlights that “the increasing marginalization of children and teenagers in city spaces (Chaulrton et Hollands, 2002) and their exclusion from public spaces (Lennard et Lennard, 2000) has seen them confined to spaces that have been specifically designed for them (e.g. : skate park) or because they have been kicked out of shopping malls (Vanderbeck et Johnson, 2000)” (2010 : 75). Some might even go so far as to say that children are now growing up “in captivity” (Louv, 2008). The Italian architectural collective known as Palomar (2009) coined the term “non-ordinary autonomy” of children to describe these issues of time management, practicality, safety and perceptions of real or supposed danger, in addition to changes in the child/parent relationship over the course of the last century.

26 Several works conducted at the École Supérieure de Travail Social de Genève (Dos Santos and Zinguinian, 2004 ; Roulin, 2005 ; Sand, 1997) looked into the increasing institutionalization between adults and youths in the 1960s. After school, children are supervised by monitors of free time and teenagers are asked to not loiter in the streets but rather to go to the spaces that are specifically designed for them where they can engage in activities created by social workers or be under the supervision of an adult. They also act as the mediators in the case of conflict with other users of the space. These interventions as well as the ever-increasing pressure placed on parents (when it comes to the rights and needs of their children) limit any intergenerational conflict that could likely end up the streets, directly negotiating the possibilities of each person. Who would dare to comment on the behaviour of youths in public spaces ?

27 There has been a radical separation between a before, which represents a golden age for children where the city revolved around them¹⁷, and an after where children are represented as being shut in at home, forbidden from playing in the street and connected to the world via their smartphones and tablets. We prefer instead to include the phenomenon as being part of a long history where movements have slowly fallen into place over the 20th century are redrawn in a non-homogeneous manner. Not all families react the same way to the possibility of allowing their child to roam the city independently. This would allow for the identification of which children and teenagers who continue to travel the city regardless of whether they have reached the age of majority— in contrast to the alarmist discourse where our youths are cloistered at home.

28 While we don't always share the same nostalgic tone, like historian and noted pessimist Philippe Ariès (1993 [1979]), we nevertheless find the idea of associating this change with a change in the city. For Ariès, the fact that children no longer played in the street was a sign that the city had changed. This is also what was proposed by Clément Rivière (2012) when he suggested that children are the ones who reveal our relationships with public spaces. Sonia Curvier felt however that “at all times, the mission of public spaces is to reflect an ideal : the monarchy, the democratic revolution, the society of leisure... We are now in a global society, a society of narratives and images. A society that values immediate and unique experiences. This is how our public spaces now look. “ (Curvier, 2018 : s.p.).

29 What does this mean for the place and role of children and teenagers in spaces that seem to be progressing toward a uniformity of design ? While the culture of rooms is correlated with the decline of the street and the development of home media, we should also be interested in studying the manner in which digital spaces influence the relationship between social subjects and materially palpable locations. What connections exist between “physical” spaces and digital communications ? While these issues are indirectly addressed in some of the articles presented here, none of these proposals discuss the role of digital media in depth (including the role played by smartphones, social networks, etc.) in the daily practises of urban spaces where children and youths are the “receptor, emitter and the relay” (Marzloff, 2008). It seems therefore that in a field where communicational aspects are all important, studies are lacking on

the intersection between the urban spatial practises of children and teenagers and digital culture. Anne Jarrigeon and Joëlle Menrath (2010) advanced interesting thoughts in their analysis of the use of mobile phones among secondary school students. They see this tool as a means to remain open to the world despite parental restrictions on leaving domestic spaces. Mobile phones and Wi-Fi connections are putting into question the limits between private and public spheres that the architects of the 19 and 20th century were devoted to implementing. Regarding the comparison H  l  ne P  try (2015) made between the digital practises of high school students from poor neighbourhoods in two large cities (Paris and Rio de Janeiro), she revealed little about the questions raised here, detailing instead the impact that digital technology has had on the education of youths, their leisure practises and the makeup of their increasing social capital and how it influences perceptions of social distance and proximity between youths. How the digital world affects issues of space is unclear, especially in regard to how groups of peers form, however, it is certainly worth exploring in greater detail, especially when it comes to the spatial practises of youth.

Does the gamification of space facilitate its use by children and teenagers ?

- 30 The passiveness of children as being determined by their environment is no longer a hot button topic. Functionalist and structuralist theories are now considered outdated with children being theorized as full-blown social actors and co-builders of the situations that create and transform them throughout their growth :

From this perspective, they are no longer the object of social shaping or cultural modelling with no input of their own. The notion of social actors itself gives credit to the capacity for action in the face of social determination : they are not the passive subject of schooling or a familial burden but instead, they participate in their own definition, resisting control and overcoming pressure (Danic *et al.*, 2006 : 27).

- 31 Youths are not citizens in training but rather citizens from the time of their birth. Nevertheless, it seems clear that in several countries that they are rarely consulted during the urban planning processes of redesigning towns, cities and megacities. To “give the city back to the children”, collectives have been organized around the world. In Italy, educator Francesco Tonucci is concerned about the reduction of the presence of children in urban spaces since the 1970s. He created the La citt   dei bambini [The City of Children] network (www.lacittadeibambini.org), in the early 1990s which has since spread into several other countries including southern Italy, Greece, Spain, and some countries in Latin America) and many of his ideas have been taken up by the UNICEF “Child friendly cities” initiative. In many Nordic countries, parts of the city are built with children in mind to help slow their desertion and to return the streets to the children. The “Children’s Town” or “Recreational City” has become the symbol of a city with good living, a city where the quality of life is excellent. This perspective on cities is considers the “child” variable as essential to understanding the health of a city : no children in the streets is a bad sign ; children in the streets is a sign of excellent health.

- 32 When it comes to public policy, urban planning is being rethought. While playing is as old as humanity itself, play spaces are an invention of the last century. The first playgrounds appeared in England and the United States and were designed to “channel the energy of working class children who loitered in the streets of increasingly densely populated cities” (Gauzin-M  ller, 2015 : 100). Dominique Gauzin-M  ller specifies that in the U.S., “in 1920, approximately 700 playgrounds were created to play their part in the integration of immigrants and to complete their assimilation of future adults” (ibid). Creating playgrounds, in the early 20th century was a major political issue. They were designed as a tool capable of transmitting the regulations of living together for newcomers and for the at-risk section of the population by gradually creating a distinction between street activities, which were considered disorganized and without

rules and those of supervised playgrounds where children's activities could be guided by an adult. The structures made available to children offered/imposed behaviour for play¹⁸.

33 Following a regulatory phase that aimed to improve urban safety and functioning which was done in different manners based on the countries in which they occurred, Éric Chevallier (1993 : 30-32) found that through more or less restrictive regulations, depending on policies and latitudes that encourage child-citizens, the designers of these spaces currently appear to focus on designs that attempt to police¹⁹ their use and, first and foremost, create the type of ambiance that encourages and rewards movement rather than remaining in place despite the numerous benches which are generally made available. Walking, rolling, sliding and circulating are preferred to remaining stationary.

34 Theories on the city of tomorrow in terms of comfort and well-being are becoming increasingly frequent when it comes to the reworking and gamification of public spaces. The goal is to make cities better for children (and to a lesser extent for teenagers as well) though these theories still need to be scrupulously analyzed.²⁰ Regarding this subject, Jérôme Besson's (2012) desire to speak of places for playing rather than playgrounds themselves are worth mentioning. Do cities need to be recreational at all costs ? Does the city itself need to become a playground for children and teenagers, to paraphrase the article by environmental psychologist Kaj Noschis (2006) When will cities be named "friendly to teenagers" or "allies of teenagers" ? When will more urban projects be based on a "by and for youths" approach ?

35 To put the city back within the grasp of younger generations, Sylvie Brossard-Lottigier (2015) recommends putting play where we least expect it. In other words, it is by making play not just about fun activities but rather as a flexible concept²¹ of play as an "interval [...] creating comfort as a space between two activities" and by re-introducing the unpredictable as "an interval between two parts that allows for them to move freely" (Brossard-Lottigier, 2015 : 77). In her opinion, our Western cities are lacking. They are "wound tight, with a lack of play between all these parts that are fastened tight, all of these zones of activity, habitats, leisure and limited transportation that are walled off, barricaded, juxtaposed but never tied together" (ibid). This proposal is reminiscent of those of Colette Pétonnet who stated that "the space where people live must not, and should not, be absolutely rational. Irrationality preserves nooks and crannies and unpredictable elements because there is no better use than free use and the unpredictable, otherwise it is disciplinary. An architectural rationality suppressing hidden progression and complexity, that causes everything intimate and secret about the outside to disappear, not only enclosing people at home but that participates in administrative rationality, the building of a disciplinary space were everyone supervises each other" (1982 : 174).

Which families are right for which independent and physical activities ?

36 The texts presented in this issue lead us to consider several issues including the attraction of closed spaces (interiors, shopping malls), the infatuation with digital media but also calls upon the family to appreciate the influence of parents and siblings on the relationship between young people and the city. Clément Rivière describes two socially diverse sub-central spaces respectively located in Paris and Milan, and the commonalities of the teachings that parents shared with their children when it comes to exploring the city without them. This research has greatly enriched studies on children's socialization with the city. The comparative and intersectional approaches used shed light on the advice parents give children on how to behave in urban public spaces. Oscillating between caution, cautiousness and politeness with strangers, this guide toward interactions sees the production of a "male version" and a "female version" of reality where recommendations of discretion are given for girls. This confirms what Michel Fize (2010) noted regarding the role of parents in the non-egalitarian transmission of rights to access public spaces. He states that teen girls were asked to try

to be discreet and to brave their fears. The parents who rebuked their boys to rectify untoward comments about girls or their appearance were far rarer.

37 In a similar vein, David Sayagh, when writing about the sociology of dispositional social relationships asked : “Do teen girls ride bikes less often because there is a reduced possibility of truly investing in public spaces ? ” Based on a study done in Montpellier and Strasbourg where cycling is seen as a distinct practise that is gendered, social and spatially based, the author draws three portraits related to cycling by teen girls (utilitarian, recreational and adepts). Using direct observation and semi-directed interviews with teen girls that were 17 and 18 years old and entrusted by their parents, he created a nuanced description (according to socio-economic, residential and contextual backgrounds) of the manner in which socializing injunctions about them reinforced their fear of travelling alone, being adventurous or simply hanging around in public spaces. Despite certain variations, the incorporation or reinforcement of restrictive “feminine” inclinations by girls contrasted with the “masculine” encouragement of boys.

38 It is this same pervasive gendered relationship that occurs in public spaces that Gilles Vieille Marchiset, Sandrine Knobé, Enno Edzard, Arnaud Piombini and Christophe Enaux analyzed through the means of the use of bicycles by 9-10 year old children in a working class Strasbourg neighbourhood. Through the careful analysis of the bike as a learning tool, this team of sociologists and geographers has proven to be repeatedly instructive. By demonstrating the limits of these safety arrangements, the changes to how public spaces are perceived and used and the transformation of family configurations, the authors highlight what they refer to as “a socio-spatial spiral of openings and closures” This system tends to penalize girls rather than boys and, for the girls, it also appears to accentuate a spiral of closures marked by lower technical comfort, feelings of insecurity, assignation in the neighbourhood and familial limitations particularly from mothers. This situation is not set in stone however. A social intervention process (sports facilitation, meetings with families, etc.) paired with emphasizing the value of “cyclability” is likely to promote and encourage the practise of cycling for everyone.

39 In North America and Europe, walking as a means of transportation between home and school and the mobility of children is on the decline, Sylvanie Godillon and Marie-Soleil Cloutier are exploring the differences in the perception of road risks between parents and children (aged 5 to 11) through the implementation of the Trotibus Program (walking school buses) in Quebec. As with the works of Rivière and Sayagh, safety is a core principle of this means of accompanying children to school through a pedestrian school pickup program that is supervised by an adult and which provides for the acquisition of independence and sociability through as the core components of the study. In this way, parents and children see the benefits of walking (as well as the importance of friends and moments of dialogue as highlighted by the children) as well as a better understanding of the area they live in. The perceptions between parents and children diverge however regarding crossing at traffic lights and the ease of travelling on sidewalks. Based on a wealth of data, the authors deliver paths of reflection and innovative actions for the transition toward the independent mobility of children.

Appropriation of public spaces : between visibility, invisibility and an “invisible visibility”

40 The phenomenon of appropriation of public spaces has launched many contemporary (Houssard and Jarvin, 2005 ; Danic *et al.*, 2010) and older research projects even though the notion is not always explicitly worded in the same manner as it is in the proposal by Colette Pétonnet : “For a newcomer, it [the city] can be a hostile and unknown space and for an individual, living there, they can feel lost in the crowd, never humanizing it or making it their own” (1982 : 15).

41 Here, Sophie Ruel, Véronique Bordes, Gaëlle Boutineau and Philippe Sahuc propose to examine the means of appropriation, uses and functions of urban public spaces in Toulouse for youths between the ages of 11 and 28. Based on cartography and ethnographic observations, the research team exposes the diverse use of spaces by youths by type (educational and training services spaces, “working class” spaces) over the course of daily routines. While the cartographic work reveals that the entire Toulouse area is covered by the presence of youths, their varied and thorough observations show a physical and symbolic nature for the youths according to the age and their gender. The visibility of certain boys and young males contrasts with those of the effacement of girls and young women in public spaces depending on the geography of the space, their social situation and the informal surveillance that occurs there. As an extension to the considerations behind the invisibility of young women in certain public spaces in France, an analysis led by Arnaud Alessandrin and Johanna Dagorn studies urban sexism in the city of Bordeaux and its agglomeration. More specifically, the authors aimed to quantify sexism by measuring factors including ties to the global understanding of the city, the feeling of sexism being experienced, and the evidence revealed. By enriching the quantitative approach with a microscopic and biographical view, they shed light on how urban sexism, through repeated trivialized experiences, become integral to the city itself, revealing an “invisible visibility” that affects us all whether we are victims or witnesses.

42 In the “La reconquête de Beyrouth pour les enfants et les adolescents au prisme des infrastructures scolaires” [Reconquering of Beirut for Children and Teenagers Within Educational Infrastructures] Cynthia Azzam considers the school as a common or public good. She contextualizes the dysfunction of public spaces in Beirut and then analyzes the possibilities and means of creating a porosity between educational structures and the urban fabric that surrounds them by making the play areas of schools open to the public outside of school hours. Based on a case study in the city centre that analyzed the current situation as well as through the means of a projection, the author highlights the impact of laws that regulate access to schools as impediments to projects designed to open up the city as well as insisting on the fact that, in order to rethink the urban conditions of youths, we must act upon the imagination of inhabitants and local decision makers.

43 Fanny Delaunay is interested in play spaces. Her focus is on the spaces located outside of educational institutions in Grande Borne in Grigny (near Paris). The importance of play in the development and socialization of people (Bettelheim, 1988 ; Brossard-Lottigier, 2015 ; Lebovici and Diatkine, 1962 ; Marinopoulos, 2013 ; Winnicott, 1975) is well known, and it is this crucial question that architect Émile Aillaud addresses in the design of exterior spaces in the vast social city that was predicted for the future in the 1970s. Based on a survey conducted in La Grand Borne as a part of her doctorate in urban planning, Fanny Delaunay analyzes the transformation and revitalization of the city’s play areas and points to the standardization of these spaces as a standard policy that was designed to minimize risk at all costs. For reasons of assurance and responsibility, play areas are now thought of as spaces where the dangers faced by children and designers must be minimized. Therefore, the potential for play in these spaces is reduced to mitigate dangers for the sake of safety.

Entering the City, Entering Life?

44 Going into the city (for youths who live in its suburbs or in the country) or mastering the city for those who live elsewhere in the town is often considered an important time in the acquisition of independence and freedom. When a youth knows how to travel in the city without being accompanied by an adult, they often feel as if they have reached a new level. Entering into the city helps them in their growth. Their body is now part of the city itself. They feel free to experiment with things they may not have been allowed to do when with their family or when close to home. In a study conducted by Tarik Harroud, we see how young Rbatis, particularly girls, free themselves of parental and

social controls imposed by their home neighbourhoods and domestic environments by roaming, consuming, parading and “plugging into” the new public spaces of shopping malls. These girls, freed of the burdens of history and heritage, express a version of themselves without negatively affecting Moroccan public spaces through safe activities of distraction, culture and celebration. They are participating in the creation of a new type of public space for young Rbatis. This “fantasized” urbanity holds an increasingly important social and symbolic space in the lives and imaginations of these young Moroccans and it is a predictor of a renewal for public spaces throughout the city.

45 Is the posturing of youths in public spaces provocation, or is it a sign of the transformation of our societies ? Do these “bodies of resistance”, to paraphrase the title of the exhibition catalogue used by photographer Valérie Jouve (2015), performed in urban spaces succeed in sustainably transforming the connections that tie us together or are they a sign of temporary transition related to an age group ? Once these youths become adults and return to the fold, re-aligning themselves with the standards shared by their families and loved ones from childbirth and/or through societal injunctions, will they retain a portion of these experiences of freedom ? These “little urban castaways” (Paquot, 2010) are constantly in action in the public spaces that we use on a daily basis. “Because space is not instantly given, it must be conquered. Children and teenagers play with discovery, exploration, imagination and symbolism in these places through the means of play” (Hocini *et al.*, 2006 : 6).

46 Observing and analyzing their posturing/recreation is necessary to the reorganization of our urban spaces. Developing new urban designs through dialogue and meeting points with public policy allows us to consider their experiences, practises, their ideas and their welfare as well as their discomfort. They become more than simple consumers of space, they become producers with agency.

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Notes

1 The proceedings of this colloquium were published in the 2013 Urban Studies Journal which was specifically dedicated to urban mobility and youth (Skelton and Gough, 2013).

2 We know of at least four large recent research projects (three of which are still ongoing) that are working toward this goal: the international research group *Youth-friendly and Public Spaces in Hanoi* (Boudreau et al., 2015); the POP-PART participative research group which works in working class neighbourhoods of Paris directed by Sociologist Marie-Hélène Bacqué [<https://poppartrechercheparticipative.com/>]; an interdisciplinary project supported by the Swiss National Fund (SNF) "*Exploring the way to and from school with children: an interdisciplinary approach of children's experiences of the third place*" headed by Zoe Moody, Philip D. Jaffé and Frédéric Darbellay as well as the GRAPHITE project in Marseilles lead by Geographer Elisabeth Dorier [<https://urbanicites.hypotheses.org/1324>].

3 We use this term as defined by the OMS (site visited in November 2013) which categorizes it as people between the ages of 10 and 24 years of age when grouping together both children and teenagers.

4 Desire paths or Desire Lines are the traces left behind on the ground by pedestrians, animals, bicycles, scooters and mopeds through repeated use. They generally indicate the routes taken and the shortcuts used between the official pathways drawn by urban planners. *Líneas de deseo* was the title of an exhibition held in 2012 at La Obra Social de Caja Madrid in Barcelona. It presented a series of artistic practises that explored alternative and/or subversive means of navigating urban social conventions and spaces as well as the manner in which these "tactics" generate new spaces of dialogue and creation in relation to power. For further reading about this notion in regard to urban planning, see the article by Sonia Lavadinho (2008).

5 We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the participants (the authors, published and not, and the many evaluators for their patience, meticulous work and the writing staff).

6 Our process includes several questions raised by Isabelle Danic, Olivier David and Sandrine Depeau in their group work entitled *Enfants et jeunes dans les espaces du quotidien* [Children and Youths in Everyday Spaces] (2010), with the sole difference being that the articles that make up this issue only look into the public realm and not the private or domestic.

7 As a student in medicine, she was deported to Ravensbrück in 1942, and was assigned to the *Kinderzimmer* (the children's room) in 1944. Following her return from the camps, she returned to her studies and in 1954 she began at the CNRS, working with Georges Heuyen, Head of Child Psychology at the Salpêtrière Hospital. Her work on childhood (which she began nearly forty years prior to the creation of "Children's Studies") were conducted at the Centre d'Ethnologie sociale et de Psychosociologie (Centre Edgar Morin – IIAC UMR8177 CNRS/EHESS).

8 Hugh Matthews et al. (2000) and more recently Zoé Moody et al. (2018) now speaking of "third spaces".

9 In a working class neighbourhood of Paris, in two new cities (La Grande Borne in Grigny, located in the Paris region, and Villeneuve in Grenoble) as well as in two towns in Lozère.

10 Five years before, a social sciences journal for social and educational professionals had already published on the subject (*Diversité*, 2005). In its general introduction it broached the subject of children in the city in a general manner, highlighting the lack of attention being paid to this portion of the population in its urban projects but the articles in question were primarily focused on issues of inclusion for recently arrived school-aged immigrants to France and street children.

11 In Spain as well, publications on the subject became increasingly common during roughly the same period thanks to the (albeit non-exhaustive) work of research groups on the metamorphosis of the Madrid area, headed by anthropologist Francisco Cruces (García Canclini *et al.*, 2012). Works were also published by a team of geographers from the Autonomous University of Barcelona who, after 2010, became interested in the spatial practises of youths in the Besòs area of Barcelona (Baylina Ferré *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, there was also a publication made by Mercè Zegrí (2014).

12 Among these, a double issue of *Teledrama* (2016) ended the year with a production entitled "Being a child today" with an article that invited parents to open "the hamster cage" and offer children a chance to travel independently and explore the world around them either alone or with friends.

13 We should also mention the film, "Allons enfants ! Which was released in April 2018. Its director, Stéphane Demoustier, worked with his own children Paul and Cléo, a pair of three year old twins, who slip away from their nanny to explore Parc de La Villette and its surroundings.

14 In addition to the previously mentioned work, the team of Chombart de Lauwe (who worked with 6-14 year olds), we should also mention the works of Pascale Legué (2015) who studied several cities of differing sizes (Paris, Lyon, Marseilles, Sarcelles, Quetigny and Saint-Pierre-Les-Elbeuf) with children between seven and thirteen years of age. To our knowledge, these work are the only references that discuss these two age groups together whereas in other works they tend to be analyzed separately.

15 Agnès Thiercé (1999) mentions that the word has seemingly existed since antiquity though it is confused with many notions and age groups.

16 Should you be interested in further reading about the theme discussed in this section, we suggest reading the following: "Écologie urbaine" (Calmettes, 1993), "Jeunesse et espace public" (Moreau, 2010), and "Enfants *en* et *hors* villes: rappel historique" (Le Bras, 2015).

17 There is a certain nostalgia to these writings and visual productions where children are presented as being free and unconstrained, happily playing in the street. The photographs of Robert Doisneau are an excellent example. Equally impressive however are works of film like Louis Malle's *Zazie dans le Metro* (1960), Yasujirō Ozu's *I Was Born, But...*(1932), Christophe Ruggia's *Le Gone du Chaâba* (1998) as well as more contemporary works including the sung documentary of Flavie Pinatel (2017), *Les chants de la Maladrerie* à Aubervilliers or the film shot by Florence Lloret in Marseille entitled *Histoires de trois poussières de sable* (2002).

18 Regarding this proposal, see Anne Marie F. Murnaghan (2016) who analyzed playgrounds in Toronto in the early 20th century and the role they play in learning social codes and the hold they have on shaping children's bodies.

19 Controlling use and reducing friction plays the dual role of minimizing conflict and avoiding confrontation.

20 This is the suggestion Julia Moutiez makes in her ongoing thesis work on fun and practical games in the design in contemporary European public spaces.

21 In his article, "Family and the City" Ariès notes: "It is remarkable that in both French and English, "play" and its equivalent "jeu", both mean playing and free space in an assembly. Perhaps free play is the best way to maintain play spaces:(1993 [1978]: 259). We would also like to add that the contents of interstitial spaces is the starting point of a collective work led by Nicolas Houssard and Magdalena Jarvin called "C'est ma ville ! [That's my city!]" The appropriation and diversion of public spaces (2005).

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