

LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES

Strolling is Not Playing, But You Can Set Yourself Some Rules: From Calling Points to Drawing Dots

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Abstract: This article revisits a teaching experiment devised and implemented by Héloïse Lauraire and Alain Roger. They are art teachers in a preparatory class for the Grandes Écoles de Paysage (landscape higher education schools) at the Lycée des Métiers de l'Horticulture et du Paysage Jeanne Baret (Montreuil, France) and lecturers in a master's degree in geography at the Université Sorbonne Paris Nord (Villetaneuse, France). The aim of their teaching project is to introduce geography students to the aesthetic practice of walking and its graphic translation. For the aesthetic dimension of walking to be achieved, a set of rules must first be established.

Keywords: walking; aesthetics; pedagogy; arts; drawing; space

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Introduction

In March 2024, the Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Étude des Littératures d'Aix-Marseille (interdisciplinary center of literary studies), the CIELAM, devoted a university study day to walking and its theoretical, practical, artistic and cultural issues, as well as its didactic implications – an aspect that is perhaps less frequently addressed, yet nonetheless essential when, as we were invited to do, we are asked to reflect on the ways in which walking can contribute to the training of future students of landscape architecture or geography.

The question ‘What do we learn from walking?’ both complements and extends inquiries into the traditions and modalities, as well as the philosophical, exploratory and poetic dimensions of walking, which involves not only bodily movement through space but also reflexive processes shaping sensations and thoughts. As such, this question must be considered alongside at least two others: first, the one already raised by Honoré de Balzac in his *Théorie de la démarche* – ‘Why walk?’ (Balzac 1992: 30, 38) – and second, ‘How to walk?’.

The question we propose to address needs to be developed in three lines. This is because it is intertwined with the difficulty of revealing what is learned through the experience of walking:

- the situation of walking in an urban environment, in relation to the conception of landscape that has shaped Western culture since the end of the fifteenth century;
- the specific nature of walking as an educational experience for students, which we have chosen to describe as ‘aesthetic walking’, and the rules that derive from it;¹
- the use of drawing, which not only makes it possible to document one’s walk and the knowledge it generates, but above all to do so in a shared and debated manner – an approach we will illustrate through the analysis of the productions created in this context.

For us, the art teachers, as for the geography students involved, the challenge of the proposed experience lies not in representation, but in the capacity to express a singular point of view that can nevertheless be shared.

The teaching method we are proposing to revisit is grounded in our intention to develop a learning situation designed for geography students and closely connected to the core subjects of their discipline – territory, space, environments – while drawing on another field of study: aesthetics, approached through the *arts plastiques* (visual arts). This academic discipline, which articulates practice and theory, focuses on the process of giving form to an idea and making it visible and tangible through the use of materials and tools.

This approach, considered here within the field of visual arts, is nevertheless very close to those that in particular, English-speaking scholars have been promoting for several years under the label of ‘literary geography’ (e.g. Kenneth White, *Geopoetics, Place, Culture, World*, 2003; Marc Brosseau, *Tableau de la géographie littéraire*, 2022). Their common feature is that,

through representational practices and the describe and formal devices of literature or the visual arts, they disclose the characteristics of a place or landscape to which a subject is sensitive.

Walking in the Western landscape tradition

The etymology and history of the term ‘landscape’ are well known. In Europe, at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a new sensitivity to the world and its component elements emerged in Europe through contact with painting, the genre that gave landscape its name. This sensitivity was essentially visual. The attention devoted to a specific site or region constituted a cultural attitude, first embraced by a cultivated elite, and grounded in a contemplative pleasure comparable to that experienced in front of a painting.

Central perspective plays an essential role in the establishment of this attentional model. It assigns the spectator a fixed point of view, symmetrical to the vanishing point. Within this fictively reconstituted framework, landscape sensibility organizes the territory, endowing it with coherence and meaning. This dynamic was exemplarily illustrated by an installation presented in the Parc Montsouris (Paris) in the autumn of 2017 to mark the bicentenary of Adolphe Alphand’s birth. Entitled, precisely, *Alphand à Montsouris, mise en perspectives d’un parc Haussmannien* (Alphand in Montsouris, putting the Haussmannien park into perspective), the installation consisted of a series of empty, molded frames placed at various points throughout the park. Identical to those traditionally used by collectors and museum curators to frame paintings – both to protect and to enhance them – these frames were intended to interrupt the walker’s movement and direct the gaze toward a framed portion of space that stood in for the absent painting.

The longstanding connection between painting and landscape thus highlights the composite nature of what is offered to the gaze. By ‘composite’, we mean a form grounded in an overarching conception – a drawing or design – through which an ordering is imposed, assigning each element its place. *Point of view* is understood here in its double sense: both as the fixed spatial position from which the landscape is to be seen, and as the prior conceptual framework that determines its overall configuration. To capture what is at stake, Michael Jakob, who teaches the history of landscape at the Haute école du paysage, d’ingénierie et d’architecture, HEPIA in Geneva, does not hesitate to speak of a ‘*diktat du regard*’ – the dictate of the gaze.

Walking thus entails distancing oneself from the model imposed by the fixed image. This departure from the previously outlined tradition becomes even more pronounced when one chooses, as we have done, to walk in a place that at least partially escapes the ‘*diktat*’ understood thus: a place not conceived in order to produce an image, lacking a widely shared pictorial analogue, and therefore resisting any immediately totalizing apprehension.

The setting of our walk was provided by the city itself – more specifically, by one of those urban areas that bear the traces of impulses and interruptions, of cutting and accretion. Such spaces correspond to what landscape theorists commonly designate as ‘urban landscape’,

an expression whose coinage, according to Michael Jakob, can be traced back to the Belgian writer Georges Rodenbach, in the preface to his novel *Bruges la Morte*, published in 1892 (Jakob 2015: 94). Quoted by Michael Jakob, the scholar Françoise Chenet-Faugeras, a specialist in Victor Hugo's work, confirms this genealogy and situates the emergence of the notion of *urban landscape* at the end of the nineteenth century – a literary expression forged in response to the changing and abundant spectacle offered by cities that, like Paris, had undergone profound transformations:

We may therefore understand *urban landscape* as the everyday spectacle of the city perceived by the walker who, without hierarchizing, engages with reality no longer through a circular and all-encompassing gaze aimed at immediate totalisation, but in the rhythm of walking, by integrating time into perception. (Chenet-Faugeras 2007: 35-48)²

The pedagogical walking experience we proposed to the students is grounded in this dynamic understanding of the urban landscape, in which the walking subject is both the author and the primary spectator of temporal arrangements revealed with each step. These arrangements may be punctuated by surprises as well as by redundancies, echoes or dissonances, moments of fluidity or rupture, without the framework that holds the elements together ever collapsing. This approach draws its theoretical foundations from the work of two philosophers who have long taught urban planners or landscape designers. The first of these is Thierry Paquot, who writes:

The *urban landscape* assembles both what it shelters as well as what circulates within it. It does not invite a totalizing, restful, or merely descriptive gaze; rather, it demands continuous movement, through which territories are constantly redistributed and their fluid boundaries intertwined ... The *urban landscape* aspires to be a network rather than a *view*, a form of transport rather than an *image*, an exchange rather than an *icon*. Belief and duration are here replaced by a sequence of situations, encountered in a contingent and aleatory fashion. (Paquot 2026: 5)

In a text entitled *La grammaire générative des jambes* (The generative grammar of legs), the second philosopher, Jean-Christophe Bailly, introduces the notion of 'urban sentence', whose syntax brings together, over the duration of the sentence, the composite dimensions of the urban landscape. As he writes: 'A city is a sum of arrangements already made and, with each journey, the realization of a new arrangement, of a new sentence' (Bailly 2013: 33).

For us, as visual art teachers contributing to the training of geographers, the terms 'floating limits' (or lines), 'network', and successive 'arrangements' do not merely serve as illuminating metaphors for the characteristics of an urban landscape – metaphors that can only be grasped, or perhaps truly understood, by walking through it. They also operate as plastic or graphic processes, through which bodily movement in the city and the gestures involved in the production of form become inseparable. In other words, the bodily movement

of walking and the movement of thought it engenders extend into the gestures and conceptualization of the drawing. This entails both an aesthetic dimension, in the sense of perceiving the form of a city, and a poetic dimension, in the sense that a form related to the visual arts is produced to render that perception tangible.

What we call ‘aesthetic walking’

There are many ways of walking, and it is useful to begin by clarifying what the students’ walking is not. In our framework, walking is not an artistic practice, such as that claimed by American artists Hamish Fulton, Richard Long or by the French artist Mathias Poisson. It does not aim to explore or exhaustively document the site, nor is it an exercise in contemplation designed to organize encounters with unnoticed beauties.³

For us, it is important that students do not merely adhere to what others have thought for them or to the constraints imposed by space. Instead, they must engage with the demands of the landscape as subjects endowed with free and mobile judgment. Whether they choose to respond to these demands or not, their walk takes shape through this engagement.

It is therefore an exercise in partly rediscovered freedom. This freedom recalls that claimed by *flâneurs* (Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin) and *situationnistes*. In his *Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine* (Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography), Guy Debord calls for ‘perfect insubordination to habitual demands’ (Debord 2006: 208). In his *Théorie* (*Theory*), he reiterates that ‘The difficulties of drifting are those of freedom’ (Debord, 2006: 257).

What we borrow from *flânerie* and Situationism, then, can be summarised as follows:

- the ‘experimental’ dimension of walking (Debord 2006: 457), which also leads Debord to question whether psychogeography, which makes use of drifting, can constitute itself as a scientific discipline or ‘objective method of observation-transformation of the urban environment’ (458);
- a free rhythm – a pace determined by the walkers themselves;
- an individual autonomy and authority, through which the subjects regain control over their desires and disrupt the functionalist projects that shape, or seek to shape, urban space;
- a journey that can be repeated at will, liberated from any pragmatic goal (students do not follow the shortest or most pleasant route).

We still need to clarify two points regarding what we mean by ‘aesthetic walking’ within the context of our educational project.

First, we understand ‘aesthetic’ in the sense of aesthesis – that is, as an appeal to the senses, without restricting it to the vision alone. Once again, Thierry Paquot helps us highlight the importance of this sensory dimension of experience:

The sensory experience of a landscape is fleeting and is stored in the observer's memory where it is interwoven with many other memories, often privileging one of the six senses (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch and movement) (Berthoz, 1997). Consequently, it constitutes an exclusive and highly personal relationship between the individual and what is called the 'landscape', since no two observers share the same disposition to judge it or appreciate it.⁴ (Paquot 2016: 7)

In light of this observation, and given the central role it assigns to sensation in the relationship to the landscape, we cannot fail to acknowledge – especially since we were invited to the University of Aix-Marseille – the legacy of the painter Paul Cézanne, whose research has deeply informed much of the thinking around this question.

Secondly, we draw on the work of the contemporary French philosopher Jean-Marie Schaeffer, who has explored what he terms 'the aesthetic experience' (Schaeffer 2015). According to him, an aesthetically inflected experience of the world is neither mere pure entertainment nor a simple disorientation of our usual bearings. It requires the subject to actively engage finely tuned attentional capacities, often neglected in everyday, goal-oriented tasks. Repeatedly exercised, this experience sharpens the precision of attention and cultivates what Fernando Pessoa calls a 'scholar of sensitivity' (Pessoa 1999: 168), enabling one to return to the world better equipped. In other words, it constitutes a form of training in the subject's relationship to their surroundings – an intensification and enrichment of the capacity to be affected by the spectacles and epiphanies that the site, or more broadly the world, holds in the state of potentiality. These theoretical reflections resonate with earlier explorations of the photographic image by the French semiologist Roland Barthes in the early 1980s, as well as with the work of the contemporary Mexican visual artist Gabriel Orozco.

From Barthes, we recall his notion of the 'punctum' of a photograph: 'this chance which, in it, points me (but also bruises me, grips me)' (Barthes 1980: 49). From Orozco, whose artistic practice is largely based on walking and wandering, we remember his comparison of the elements and details he encounters – such as a cat, a window, a plane track in the sky, a flat bicycle tire or a road sign – to 'a series of puncta – focal points of attention' (Davila 2002: 56).

Game rules and productions

Walking aesthetically is, of course, not an instruction in itself. To translate the issues and reflections that we have just summarized into practice, we have established what we present as the 'rules of the game' to be observed during the walk.

That is to say (see figure 1):

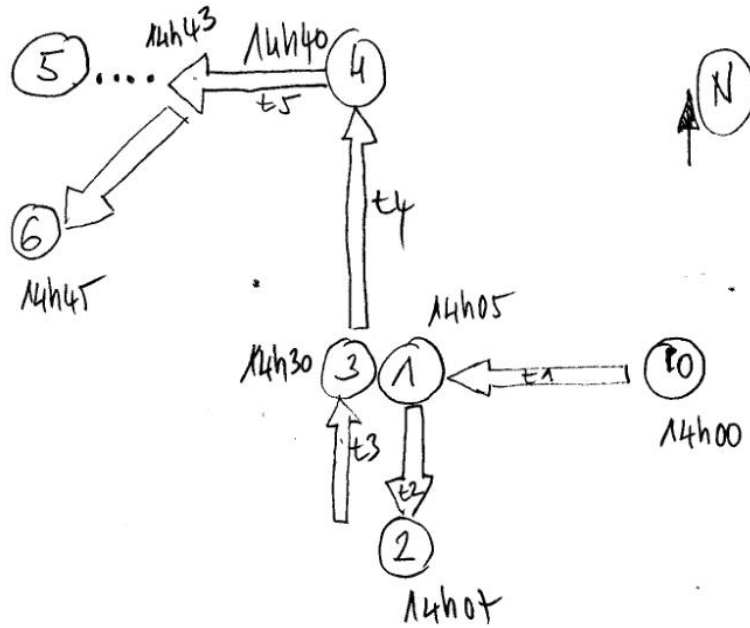


Figure 1. Alain Roger and Héloïse Lauraire, *Schéma des règles du jeu* (Game rules diagram), January 2024

- starting from a shared zero point, walk and collect the events encountered during the walk. In the experiment we report here, the zero point consisted of the exit of the Gallieni metro station in Bagnole, a town bordering Paris. This point is defined by a tangle of road bridges, flanked by tall buildings, and immersed in noise and constant movement in all directions;
- organize the collected observations in terms of calls and journeys;
- understand *calls* as the solicitations of the landscape – the signs or prompts it offers to the walker;
- understand *journeys* as the movements chosen by the walker in response to these calls;
- rely on your five senses, without the help of maps or GPS, using only a compass to orient the points relative to one another, and a watch to coordinate temporal and spatial measurements;
- construct, in this way, a descriptive database encompassing both the call points (their nature, location, and the way they are perceived by the walker), and the journeys (the observations made and the internal reflections experienced).

While these instructions appeared unusual to the geography students, they nonetheless proved to be highly productive in practice. The value of interdisciplinary teaching involving both visual arts and geography does not lie solely in identifying shared topics, such as walking and landscape. More importantly, it lies in the possibility of exploring these topics through

In the students' graphic productions (see figures 2 and 3), several recurring elements can be identified:

- components of the landscape (e.g., buildings, trees, signage, and other urban features);
- framed "views" isolating specific fragments of the urban environment;
- human or animal presences;
- climatic phenomena (such as sunlight or wind);
- sensory experiences, both positive and negative;
- emotions, inner thoughts or other evocative dimensions.

What emerges immediately from these drawings is the consistent aesthetic attention paid to each of these elements. Once experienced as events arising in the course of walk, all were considered equally worthy of representation, irrespective of their conventional status or perceived significance. Graffiti, illegally dumped rubbish, a hen or a twenty-storey building are treated equally, without hierarchy. This attests to a broadly open attention, freed from pre-established categories. The richness of the landscape is thus made visible, across scales and in the diversity of its manifestations.

These elements are also rendered from a point of view – most often a frontal perspective, through sometimes employing linear perspective. All is depicted from the ground, breaking with the cartographic tradition – which was not forbidden to use – even though some aspects of it remain present. This concern for embodiment extends, in some cases, to students representing themselves within the drawing, which we interpret as a claim to the bodily dimension of the experience.

Finally, the way the surface is occupied provides valuable insight into the field experience. While it is not possible to address all the choices made by the authors of these drawings, we highlight those approaches that increasingly depart from the type of representation most familiar to geographers – namely, the map with an explicitly objective purpose.

The graphic representation of the walk and the events that punctuated it is based here on a map background that adheres to the traditional conventions of this type of representation (see figure 4). This approach makes visible the walk within a space defined by streets, intersections, built-up areas, etc. It also serves as a reminder that, although the walk invites a sensitive gaze, the aesthetic experience remains anchored in the urban forms through which it unfolds.

‘The arc map’

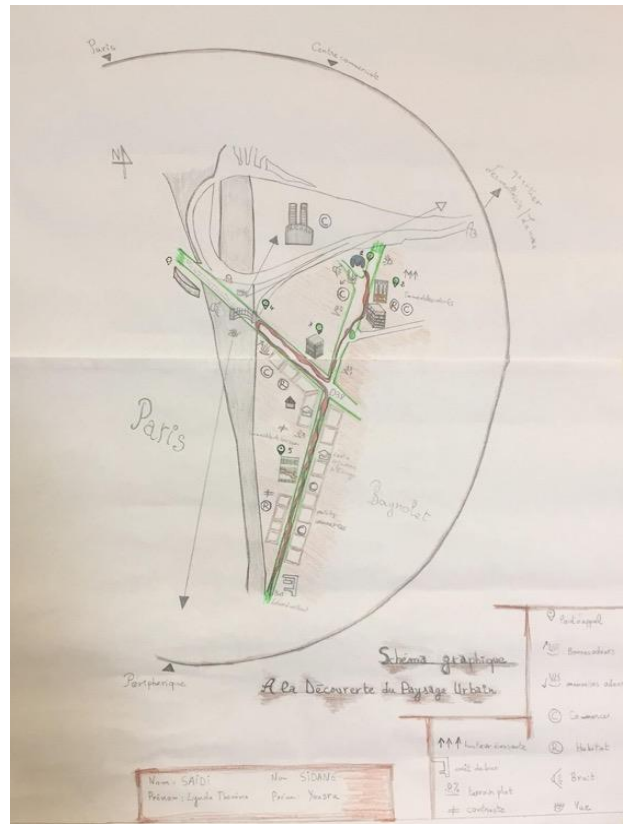


Figure 4. Graphic production by Lynda Thanina Saidi and Yousra Sidane, first-year Master students, PAMIT Géographie at USPN, January 2024

However, to fully convey this sensory dimension, a second, complementary graphic system was introduced alongside the traditional map. This takes the form of a circular arc surrounding the mapped fragment, which students deliberately bordered with a white margin to indicate that this graphic element reflects a spatiality of a different nature. It materializes the fact that, while moving through physical space, the walker contributes to a continuous shifting of horizons, creating what might be called landscape ‘*jumps*’. In other words, the local and the distant are no longer connected by an isotropic vision of space – for instance, Paris may be indicated twice, reflecting its manifestation in multiple ways, and the *Périphérique* (ring road) is no longer positioned strictly between Paris and Bagnole.

This first example offers a graphic translation of this reflection by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: since the body, characterized as an ‘interlacing of vision and movement’ (Merleau-Ponty 1985: 16) ‘sees and moves, it holds things in a circle around itself’ (19). Only walking in the landscape allows one to experience this phenomenology in action, in which the visual calls and the paths that mobilize the walker are both discovered and intertwined. In doing so, walking challenges the model of the painting and the face-to-face that it dictates.

'The constellation graph'

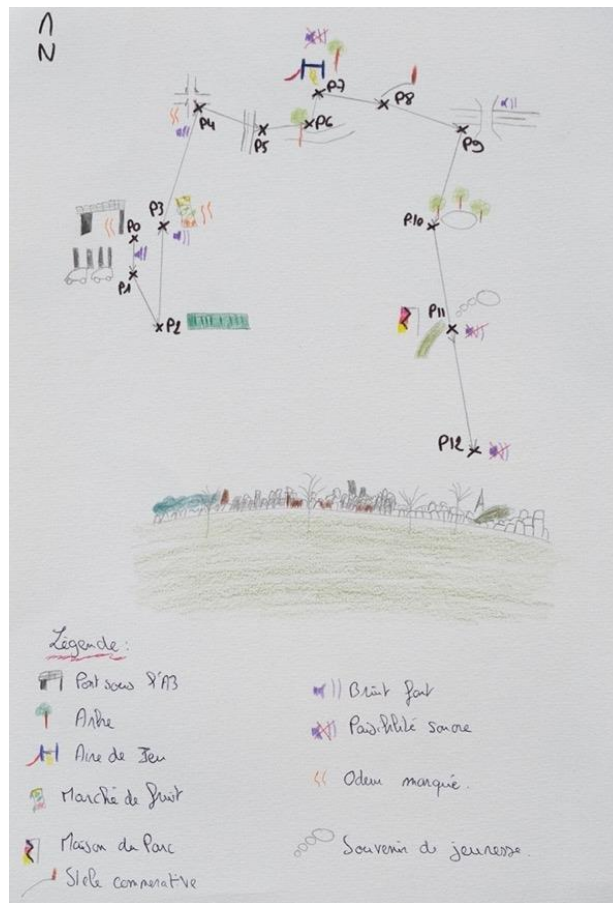


Figure 5. Graphic production by Corentin Mouezy, first-year Master student at USPN, January 2024

This work (see figure 5) is emblematic of a family of drawings resembling graphs – that is, representations based on a set of point-to-point connections, the arrangement of which on the surface does not faithfully reproduce the site's morphology. Distances and directions are not linked to a single frame of reference, such as cardinal points, nor is there a scale. The sequence of points therefore reflects not a concern for precise localization but rather the sensitive variations perceived through movement. Inscribed on a blank surface, the graph plastically asserts that movement – both of the walker's body and of the drawer's hand – generates its own spatiality. In this sense, this diagram emphasizes spatialization over the established, available space, even when the latter is invested by a sensitive subject, as we have seen.

Nonetheless, that type of drawing can maintain a relationship to topography. In this case, the vertical position dominant sensory tone of the points on the sheet indicates altitude – for example, the site of Porte de Bagnolet, which exhibits significant differences in level. In addition to altitude, the line records sound inflections, perceived primarily in terms of

intensity, suggesting that the calls were first detected through hearing. The horizontal band bordering the bottom of the drawing can be interpreted as a visual complement, represented in section, of this walk experienced predominantly through sound. What prevails in the graph is therefore the dominant sensory tone: an uninterrupted line along which the gaze alternates between recurrences and inflections, much like following a melody.

These graphs may indeed be contemplated as a form of musical or choreographic notation recorded on site, attempting to grasp what Hans Robert Jauss, in his *Little Apology for Aesthetic Experience*, calls ‘the cosmological function of aisthesis’ (Jauss 1990: 159). It is worth noting that this notion also underscores the critical dimension of aisthesis in relation to what Jauss describes as a ‘world alienated by industrialization’, subjected to the “oppression” of experience reduced to purely functional ends. We will return to this point in our conclusion.

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For comparison, another drawing (see figure 6) highlights the preeminence of sight. The systematic nature of the blue frame, which references the landscape tradition discussed above, along with the assignment of a title to each of these ‘views’, indicates that the walk was motivated by the creation of a collection of what the students called, quite significantly, ‘captivating points’. As the walk progressed, it was experienced by the students as a quest for – and we quote them again – ‘the extraordinary within the ordinary’, a pursuit clearly reflected in the graphic emphasis and the attribution of a title (written in green letters).

‘The graph with blue frames’

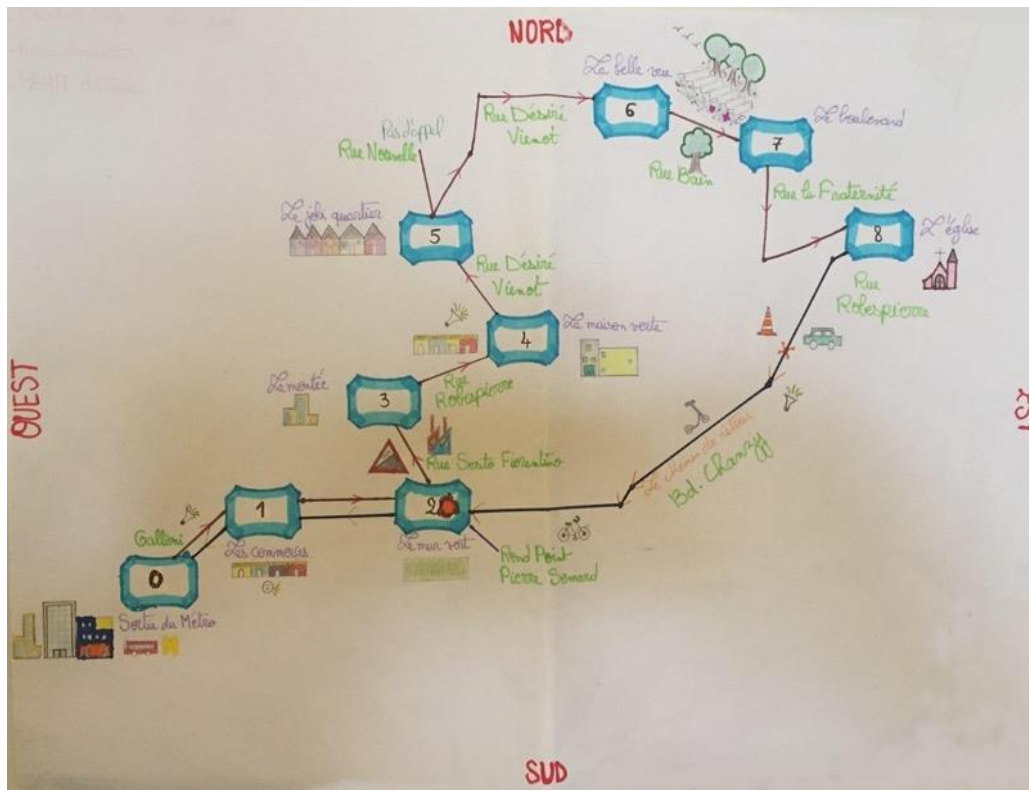


Figure 6. Graphic production by S. Belabdi and A. Kane, first-year Master students, PAMIT Histoire at USPN, January 2024

The authors’ deliberate attention to marking points of interest in their drawings resonates closely with the dual nature of aesthetic attention described by philosopher Marianne Massin as both distinctive and suspensive:

Distinctive because such an experience distinguishes a moment and the quality of that moment. This distinction is linked to the enactment of an availability, so that we do not have such an experience without actively participating in it ... Such an experience is therefore suspensive, not in a negative way but through an attentive focus. Certainly, it detaches me from the flow of surrounding events and I surrender myself to the primary

stimulus of an encounter, but at the same time, and no doubt less consciously, it is I who detaches this experience by a happy effort to dive into it. (Massin 2013: 35-54)

In this drawing, the blue frames trace the connections between the students' gaze and their movements through the city. We also observed that the curved, hallowed sides of the frames cause the angles of the blue quadrilaterals to protrude. This formal motif, suggesting a sense of an expanding tension, may indicate the potential amplification of the 'sentir esthétique' – 'aesthetic sensations or perceptions' – that we asked the students to identify during their walk as moments of 'dehiscence'.⁶

“All over”

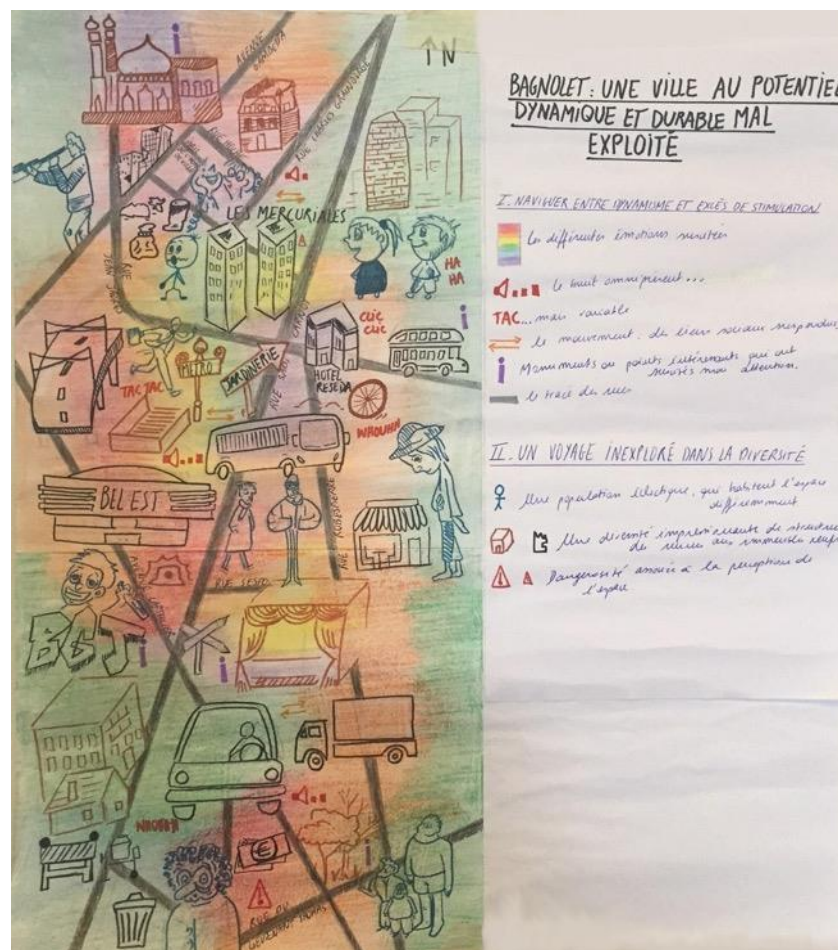


Figure 7. Graphic production by Lily-Marie Barre, student in Master 1 TES at USPN, January 2024

The above proposal (see figure 7) represents, without doubt, the most significant departure from traditional cartography. It can be considered more as an image – or even a painting – which at first glance might seem at odds with the project of freeing oneself from

the original model. On closer examination, however, this representation exhibits the main characteristics of the *all-over*, a term from art history to describe a way of filling the canvas, most famously employed by Jackson Pollock. The surface is uniformly saturated, and elements appear to escape the frame, generating a sense of abundance, intensity, and disconcerting energy. Moreover, the frontal perspective is assertive. The heterogeneous components encountered during the walk – which remain faithful to the site – seem to be applied directly to the surface, saturating it and challenging the eye to find stable points from which to reconstruct a coherent whole. Even the perception of a path becomes blurred.

The student who produced this drawing described a ‘discordant symphony’ and the ‘eclectic’, even ‘confused’ character of the landscape through which she was travelling, leaving her – again in her words – ‘lost’ and ‘dumbfounded’. Yet she also speaks of the ‘dances of the city’ and imagined an ‘open-air theatre’, another term she used to convey the convergence of diverse cultures and languages, as is indeed the case in this part of the city.

What this image captures is the student’s oscillation between pleasures and displeasures throughout the walk. This sensory and emotional instability is vividly conveyed by the coloured background and its variations: green areas mark points of support, while red indicates points of rejection. Against this moiré of emotions, the events of the walk are interwoven. The work seems to capture what Jean-Christophe Bailly, who has also explored these heterogeneous neighbourhoods, calls the ‘*bariol*’ of the landscape – a neologism derived from the French adjective ‘*bariolé*’ and the Spanish ‘*barrio*’, meaning a working class district (Bailly 2011; 2012: 468).

Finally, without elaborating in detail, it is worth recalling that Jackson Pollock’s *all-over* paintings were celebrated – especially by American critics Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg – as a radical challenge to the pictorial space inherited from the Western tradition and as a site where art and life intersect. Without explicitly claiming such a lineage, this work can be seen as a distant heir of Action Painting, reflecting the movement’s emphasis on gesture, bodily movement and the traces left behind. Far from confining dots and lines to the surface, this drawing conveys a gestural quality that echoes the energy required to traverse the site, hence the student’s recourse to the registers of dance and theatre.

These few examples demonstrate that drawing does not simply serve to record or reproduce the experience of walking after the fact – *a posteriori*. By the way, as Hamish Fulton reminds us, ‘it is not possible to reproduce the experience of walking’ (Fulton and Alexander 2019: 50-60). Because drawing engages with space, movement, and the tensions generated between the elements depicted, the act of drawing – performed in the present moment of each gesture – revives the experience, making it visible both to the person who lived it and to the viewer. In this way, drawing allows us to see not only what the artist saw, but *how* the artist saw it.

In conclusion, we now turn to clarify the didactic objectives that underpinned the pedagogical project of having geography students to walk and draw.

In conclusion: the object and the subjects

In conclusion, we would like to highlight some of the key lessons emerging from this experience of walking and drawing.

First, this practice positions the walker and the drawer as an author. Everything they communicate about the world results from a series of complex and complementary operations, beginning with the walk itself, guided by the calls of the landscape. In carrying out these actions, the subject must make authorial decisions independently, without relying on established procedures or pre-existing methods.

Second, producing a form that seeks to render visible what the walk reveals about perceived space and individual sensibility enables the sharing of a subjective experience. In this respect, drawing helps avoid the pitfalls of solipsism. We suggest that this approach offers an effective way to temporarily set aside the posture of the expert. For future landscape architects, planners, and urban designers, it can help to nuance scientific discourse, making room for sensitivity and perhaps even for beauty – sometimes in unexpected places. This, in turn, may constitute a first step toward collectively imagining solutions that preserve the habitability of our world.

For us, this constitutes a modest but deliberate response to the calls of thinkers such as the French philosopher Baptiste Morizot and the French sociologist and anthropologist Bruno Latour, who speak of a ‘crisis of sensibility’ (Morizot 2020) and the ‘need to land’ (Latour 2017). It also allows us, through practice, to rediscover – or, in essence, enact – the political significance of walking, as defended by Lucinda Childs, dancer and choreographer, but also a remarkable draughtswoman. In her critical reflection on the work of Lucinda Childs, Corinne Rondeau writes:

When we walk, we change our point of view and move into that which observes us. Walking is the first movement in space because it incorporates the trajectories of the gaze into the visible, the first moment of any constellation ... to walk is first of all to create a relationship of equality between all bodies in a movement that has nothing technical about it. As a point of contact between the horizontality of the ground and the verticality of the body, walking is the clearest form of politics. (Rondeau 2013: 33)

This political dimension remained central throughout the entire process, from the surveying to the commentary on and analysis of the drawings. One detail, in our view, particularly illustrates this: by using their sensibility as a compass in observing spaces and environments, the students assumed the role of designer-authors – a position they fully embraced. The appearance of signatures on the students’ graphic productions, which were exhibited at the end of the course, attests to the emergence or affirmation of the subject as author. In some cases, the word ‘author’ appears on the work; in others, signatures are traditionally placed at the bottom of the sheet, sometimes they are framed, or enhanced through calligraphic or colour choices.

While the graphic project is grounded in the experience of the aesthetic walk and the motifs encountered during it, the act of design allows the drawing to emancipate itself from the immediate field experience. This demonstrates that the graphein – from which the term geography derives – was taken seriously, both as a trace and a line, and as what Jean-Luc Nancy calls an ‘opening of form’: a commitment to form and the provision of a space that can accommodate the gaze of others (Nancy 2007: 13).

The students’ drawings thus emerge as autonomous and singular objects. As François Robic reminds us, they become the ‘site of the subject, where the one who makes and the one which has been seen meet’ (Robic 2014: 276).

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Notes

¹ The reflection presented in this article is based on one of the teaching experiments conducted with geography students enrolled in the first year of Master TES (Territoires, Environnement, Société i.e. Territories, Environment, Society), and Master PAMIT (Patrimoine, Médiation et Ingénierie des Parcours Touristiques i.e. Heritage, Mediation and Engineering of Tourist Itineraries), majoring in History or Geography at Sorbonne Paris Nord University, France (Paris XIII).

² All translations by the authors except when otherwise noted.

³ In France, these last two aspects are, for example, at the heart of the walks organized by the association Les Promenades urbaines, with the support of the Cité de l’architecture & du patrimoine, the CAUE (Conseil d’architecture, d’urbanisme et d’environnement) of the Essonne and Val-de-Marne départements and the Pavillon de l’Arsenal (Centre d’information, de documentation et d’exposition d’urbanisme et d’architecture de Paris et de la métropole parisienne), i.e. by ‘experts’.

⁴ Alain Berthoz is a French neurophysiologist. Paquot refers to his essay ‘Le sens du mouvement’ (The sense of movement), 1997.

⁵ The often inventive work that went into the captions, for example, or the relationship between full and empty spaces in the drawings, is beyond the scope of this article.

⁶ Dehiscence > from dehiscent/e > (Latin dehiscens, from dehiscere, to open). Botany > Dehiscence is the sudden opening, at maturity, of a plant organ (sporangium, stamen, dried fruit) along a specific line.

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