Chemins de traverses

(Side Streets)

**Summary of the research report for the North Region Architecture, Urban planning
and Environment Board
INTERPRETING THE CITY
Tools for Communication to Interpret the Urban Territory
From Fortified Town to Sustainable Town**

Emilie Da Lage, Maître de Conférences en Information-communication., Lille 3
Michèle Gellereau, Professeur en Information-communication., Lille 3

Warning

This document includes a summary as well as extracts of the research report

INTERPRETING THE CITY
Tools for Communication to Interpret the Urban Territory
Form Fortified Town to Sustainable Town

This report stems from experimentations in the laboratory for communication-information GERIICO, it can be consulted in its entirety in the North Region AUEB.

This summary proposes an experimentation of forms of visits and interpretation intended not to bring models, but to feed the reflection in the development of interpretation centres and visits of the *Septentrion* programme. This work mentions a reflection on mediation steps, on the tools accompanying these steps and encourages project agents to consider these reflections in the development of frameworks and methods.

Contents

1- Framework and Evolutions of the Action-research

1-1 Preamble

In the general framework of the Septentrion project, "From Fortified Town to Sustainable Town", the research was performed under the responsibility of the North Region Architecture and Environment Board. It focused on the estimation and research of tools for interpretation which are likely to contribute towards the building of interpretation visits and centres, which can offer a process of discovery, of reading of the town, encouraging people to think about the evolution of urbanization together with the interpretation of heritage.

The development of new territorial identities is based on the consultation and the participation of the local community to projects for the handing down of cultural heritage which are based on a sense of belonging to places. In this sense, culture is a mediator in the processes of understanding environment and energizes the civil community. The efforts made to reinforce the residents' sense of belonging to their Euro-region come within a voluntarist strategy, but can also be based on forms of urbanization and shared practices which must be interpreted to become conscious.

In the framework of the *Septentrion* program, interpretation Centres and visits, which towns participating to the network would equip with, are thought like action and culture spreading spaces. Contrarily to a museum-inspired conception which could freeze heritage places, they promise to make the population participate to projects of urban developments including the valorisation of these places by researching which interpretation forms and means are actually grasped and invested by populations. Besides sociological surveys which are designed to know what perception of their town residents have, as researchers in communication, we have focused, in this action-research of an experimental nature, on the estimation and research of tools for interpretation which make it possible for the residents to be involved. We have indeed observed that the interpretation of the town comes within educational programs which, if they make it possible for the residents to know their history and to understand its evolution, operate rather in a performative way (understanding what the fortified town was and what the sustainable town must be) than in a participatory way (inciting people to valorise their own forms of interpretation. Moreover, the difficult question of the transferability of experiments from one country to another meets with different habits of practice in the social, tourist and cultural roots of countries. A reflection on the conditions of a creative participation of residents, which circulates throughout the whole network seems therefore to be essential. Which forms of interpretation and mediation favour mutual comprehension and collaborations between residents, visitors, town planners and are suitable in the different contexts of the Euro-region? Which formats can correspond to more restrictive objectives or to a valorisation

of the specificity of each place? How do status and roles given to actors influence their ability to produce interpretation? Which vocabulary, marking systems or classifications are rapidly integrated? Which impact has such and such a kind of visit or a collective exploitation after walks? How can we choose a tool according to aimed objectives; how can we share experiences and reveal what common is without erasing the specificities of one place compared with another one?

Several formats have been produced, especially by the North Region CAUE, and are implemented by the partners of the project.

This report recapitulates the stages of the research, in accordance with the framework program of the contract (document below)

1-2 Framework document of the contract

Project of research in cultural mediation, information and communication

Framework
The research is located in the general framework of the Septentrion project, "From Fortified Town to Sustainable Town", and will be based on works realised by the CIR and the Action-study, which it will feed in return with its conclusions. It is implemented under the responsibility of the North Region Architecture and Environment Board.

Theme: "From Fortified Town to Sustainable Town": How can the reading axis starting from the fortified form of towns in Netherlands offer a process of discovery, of reading of the town, which encourages people to think about the evolution of urbanisation while it brings together interpretation of the heritage and productive imagination?

Involved searchers:
GERICO Lille3 Laboratory:
-One Professor, one lecturer in communication studies
- Four Students preparing a thesis and in postgraduate studies in cultural and tourist engineering, in communication sciences and in languages (English and Dutch).

- Other searchers or professor-searchers will be sollicited according to the needs in Lille3 and in universtities concerned by the subject, especially searchers from Belgian and Dutch universities

Objectives:

- The objective of the research is to propose a method and tools enabling to capitalize the produced work in order to make the tools for transnational engineering of communication and mediation and **to assess the relevance** of these latter in the light of the objectives of the *Septentrion* project. Favouring the mutual understanding between city planners, persons in charge of projects and populations in order to involve them further in the urban project demands not only to produce tools for mediation and communication but also to exploit their results and to refine them in order to create common languages, give sense to places and help project agents to better get the information produced by visitors and residents.

- Interpretation centers are spaces for action and cultural spreading. Contrarily to a concetion which consists in freezing heritage places, we would base on interpretations proposed by fortified spaces to make the population participate to projects for city planning which include the valorisation of these places by researching which interpretation means and forms are actually seized and invested by populations.

- Several formats of interpretation have been produced and are implemented: the action-research will look for actions which correspond the most in the European context of the Interreg project, to lay the bases of the networking of interpretation centres and to invent forms of languages common to different centres: which forms of interpretation and mediation favour mutual understanding and collaborations between residents, visitors, city planners, and can be implemented in the different contexts of the Euro-region ? What formats can correspond to more restrictive objectives or to the valorisation of de specificity of each places?

- From this perspective, the team of searchers from the Research centre for communication GERICO will work on the implementation of an experimental project, "trial format", which has been tested in several places participating to the Septentrion project (in France, Belgium and Netherlands) by proposing an inventory of interpretation systems and a more prospective experimental phase.

The action-research will be located on three levels:

- The first level would be the follow-up of a certain number of actions of interpretation in order to assess their relevance for the aimed visitors or populations; a production of analysis grids will make it possible, in the field observation, to understand **the influence of interpretation actions** on the reading of the town: what vocabulary, what marking systems, what classifications are rapidly integrated ? What impact has such and such a kind of visit, or such and such a collective exploitation after the walk ? How to choose a tool according to aimed objectives (for instance, which tool is the most relevant and what practices of it are adapted to show the specificity of a place compared with an other ?).

- The second level of the action-research will be to consider **tools for the capitalisation of the work**. By proposing a "creative" try, searchers hope to incite partners to seize both contents and forms of interpretation, and thus enabling the CAUE to better understand the language of the agents and also to perceive the role of "footprint" which interpretation centres can play by influencing the ways of reading the places.

- The third level will have to consider, after a flagging of the "key" or productive elements of interpretation, the laying of bases for the production of new documents or new actions or event which make it possible to return to the population the advancement of its own interpretations.

This experimentation could feed the implementation of the "in the long term" project of interpretation centres. It would be done in collaboration with the researches of the CIR and the other implemented studies.

1-3- Following up of the activities « Indices dans la ville / *Signs in the city*»

The results of the follow-up of the activities "Signs in the City", organised by the North Region AUEB, were produced during the meeting of the partners of the *Septentrion* project in January 2005 in Lille. They highlighted the pedagogical interest of the tool and, moreover, invited to a reflection on forms which enable residents to participate in a creative way.

During the Big Meeting in May 2005 in Brussels, Gerico searchers proposed to experiment a process with the objective of creating tools for interpretation which are not only those of the experts, but also bring in the point of view of people living in the city, whether as residents or as visitors. In a both educational and participatory process, which enables us to understand why one lives well in a neighbourhood or not, the point is therefore to produce tools collectively created which are not only tools for *reading*, but also improvable tools for *participation*.

This is why it seemed important to associate the story with the use of photography. The notion of interpretation requires not only to propose theoretical or historical explanations concerning the evolution of the cities, but above all to base on the experience of people, to address the whole human. "Interpretation leads to comprehension, which in turn leads to judgement, which in turn leads to protection" (F. Tilden, about the protection of Canadian parks). We can call to memory, to collect souvenirs, pictures marking events of life. It is all about developing a new imagination of the territory for European objectives, as well as leaving space for utopia.

We propose therefore to develop a participatory process encouraging residents to exchange their interpretation of the city, on a visit which shall be seen as a life framework.

The instruction is to take pictures, to write down or record stories during the visit and then comments during the collective feedback.

The following extracts (Part 2) relate the experience and show the kind of collected "raw material" as well as the sense of the process.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

2- **Side Streets**
Visits with residents

</div>

In this experimental format, we do not want to develop models, but to understand, through the experimentation of new processes, what residents can bring in the forms of interpretation of the city.

2-1 Objectives

Three objectives for the experimentations of visits in Lille, Aire sur la Lys and Brussels:

Collecting points of view
Residents, accompanied and recorded, explore a zone of the city and produce their own visit and story. They are invited to take pictures and to write down their impressions about places they choose. Their comments will feed a discussion during a feedback organised after the visit. The documents could feed a database which circulates from a member of the network to another.

Réflexion autour de thématiques cibles
Une démarche de pédagogie active a été mise en place à destination d'un public adulte en formation. Il est ici invité à réfléchir, selon le même mode, à des thématiques cibles telles que : les limites, l'eau, le développement durable.

Understanding ways of life
A specialist accompanies a group of resident and show them their neighbourhood in a guided visit. Residents are then invited to go back to these places and to take pictures of the (positive or negative) elements they want to discuss later on.

The tool enables us to collect citizen points of view and to treat them and expert opinions as equals. We want to take individual stories into account to develop the collective memory. The resident or visitor becomes an actor with a research into the creation of an exchange. The development of data collecting and treatment methods can enable us to really take what residents say into account and better understand their practices (databases, exhibitions, virtual exhibitions, exchange days etc.).

2-2 Examples of results

Results are consultable in their entirety in the long version of the report (consultable in the AUEB).

Extracts of the visit Lille, Faubourg de Béthune neighbourhood

The choice of the Faubourg de Béthune neighbourhood as a place for experimentation was made in consultation with Valérie Lenglet from the Heritage Entertainment department of Lille City. After the experimentations in the Vieux Lille neighbourhood, we wanted to find a place where the marks of the fortified town are less spectacular. We chose a neighbourhood which the Heritage Entertainment department was already reflecting on, on the theme of *limits*. One of the features of the neighbourhood is that it is composed of several sub-neighbourhood which are the heritage of the past fortified town, industrial evolutions and car traffic. The ring road crosses the neighbourhood. There is no visible architectural trace of the fortified walls any longer; we can guess these in the forms of urban planning. The reflection is therefore more on the evolution of the city than on the discovery of the older fortified town.

The experimentation unfolded in two times, according to the objectives defined in the project.

1) First step of the experiment (28 May 2005)
Thematic visit: From rupture to link, led by VL from the Heritage Mediation department.
2 Second step: "Residents" visit (02 July 2005)
Example of production (extracts, the complete document is twelve pages long**)**

The visit lasts a bit more than an hour, the itinerary is not the one of the "guided" visit; it is designed from what represents for J.V. the limits of his own walks in the neighbourhood, these limits are associated to activities (work, shopping) or to walks for curiosity.

Pictures were taken by the resident and the story was recorded during the walk.
The following text is an extract of the transcription of the visit

Tour proposed by a resident (middle aged, living in the neighbourhood, member of the neighbourhood council, not working in the neighbourhood); pictures are taken by the resident and his comment is recorded
H : Here we are ! The rails ! This is my limit in a very unconscious way. The entrance to Lille is here. In my opinion, the city clearly starts here
There used to be district signs which were evidences that we were in Lille but the actual city, in my opinion, starts from this limit, or used to. I was in a "glacis", a recent zone which used to have another use… Fields maybe…
These rails were a great mystery to me because they have a whole history. What are these rails exactly ? Where do they lead to, what did they carry, Where were they going to ?
So among the signs indicating that I have entered Lille, there are obviously these rails. They are like a break. The marketplace is also another characteristic element. It irrigates the city. It used to go through when I was on my way to work, on foot or on my bicycle.

We can find an other limit, but we have to go back to the past, with the two buildings over there, including one in Art Deco style which has just been renovated and this porch with the two stones and the pavement… I guess it used to be an entrance for barouches. At this point, we are not in the Vieux Faubourg neighbourhood any longer, but in Lille. Actually, they are two different places. Now, from a practical point of view, I'd like to show you the *rue d'Isly* street… Here we are! I used it for a very long time…

Summary of the results

Signs, *symbolic signs* are the terms used by J.V.; according to him, the photography seems therefore to be a good way to collect *traces*, for it leaves marks and *tells* past stories. We are here in the reporting; the itinerary has been thought beforehand; the photo is used as means to support the speech which explains how he perceives the neighbourhood and as a practice, already used before, which helps us to remember traces (pictures of traces of older factories); the sustainable town aspect is very present.

The involvement is high, as well as the desire to take part to the improvement of the neighbourhood.

Extract of the Aire sur la Lys visit

Circumstances of the visit

During the contacts with the city of Aire sur la Lys, we have set a perimeter which corresponds to the projects of city development and gathers elements of the former fortifications and traces of the city of Aire sur la Lys as a garrison city (barracks, powder magazine…). This perimeter is very close to the city centre, it also includes the banks of the Lys river which have been the object of a reflection (development of the river tourism…) by the city. We have also come to an agreement on the theme of limit.

The urban development in Aire sur la Lys is indeed marked by the relationships between the "hamlets" and the city centre.
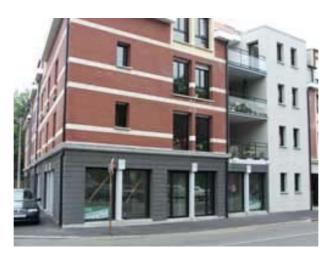
A first, rather historical and architectural, guided visit by an official guide of the city has already been made with the same group on that perimeter.

The second visit, a guide free one, has been a bit prepared, what made it possible to collect spontaneous approaches of the city.

Extracts of the visit: the text is a narrative of the accompanying person following two students

Attempts to get orientated (the collegial church stands in front of us). Every road leads to Roma. Before the collegial church or the church as a landmark.

The student criticizes the architectural choices of a building facing the cyber-centre and apparently intended to house older people residences. The other student thinks that the initiative is good and the place is adapted and good enough for older people. She notes that this type of construction is after all more satisfying than "*the blocks behind the crossroads*", even if "*indeed, it may be wrongly placed among old houses.*"

We are short of time to cross the bridge towards the swimming pool so we walk back towards the quay of the boatmen. But the road goes past the hospital and we have probably not seen the starting point of the path, you must know it exists to go to that point.

The student says he does not know the path, and he makes it once more clear that although he has been living here for two years, he has rather driven than walked across the city.

The path goes past a former foundry: "*Even if it is not very beautiful, it gives the impression of being somewhere else, a former factory, a foundry I think. In fact, the back of the studio flats.*"
The path goes past behind the flat of the two students, though, none of them has ever taken this way. One of the students notes that "*the first time I took this road was on last Thursday when we made the visit. I did not know this area at all and I find it very beautiful.*"

Element of conclusion:
It is not easy to account for limits or for the sustainable development dimension when you can not show them on pictures. The interaction comment/picture makes it possible to talk about it; the mystery of the fallow lands can also be a theme of visit. The diversity of the visits proposed by the residents highlights different uses and knowledge.

Brussels/Hal Gate visit

The residents' visit experimented in Brussels was made in the St Gilles neighbourhood, a former village which has formed itself outside the city, in front of one of the gates of the second fortified wall: the Hal gate. Today, now that the walls have been broken up, there is a huge ring boulevard where the former fortifications used to be. We have worked with a group of older people, members of the aegidium, a sort of day residence where they meet, spend time together and share diverse activities. We were also accompanied by a young searcher in philosophy. As a common feature, they have all been living in the neighbourhood for a very long time and they are therefore very interested in this idea of visit.

First step: S. T'Kint has prepared a guided visit on the theme of the older paths which used to lead to the Hal gate. This visit was based on an opposition and a comparison between today's routes and ways of the past.

Second step: participants, with their camera, show us the routes they use in the neighbourhood, they show us what they like and what they don't.

The older persons gave us instructions and we had to take the pictures ourselves because of the problem of the digital camera.

The residents were recorded during the collective feedback.

Extract

(…) L- But since they've installed this for children, a lot more people use this place, before that, there were only parents with their children, and your dog is not allowed inside, so that it can not do its business or anything. But now it's getting really deteriorated. Some people drink beer, you can see their bottles, they throw them behind benches. Well, we're not the rulers and they don't care of what we think.

M- It's somewhere around the Hal gate.
- It's the church… I know! It's the chapel.
L- They transformed it as well with a large wall to build a car park inside. It didn't use to be like this before
- No but this car park is for blind people [sic], there is a part for other people and any older person can go there, but there aren't much.
M- So this is the tower and what is the building just beside ?
- This is the older building.
L- They have demolished everything around it and now it looks more modern.

M- So this is the gate.
- The other façade of the castle.
(end of the extract)

Conclusion

The feedback highlights a large number of remarks of the residents on the traces of the older fortifications or historical traces: street names ("mill street, there probably were a spinning mill in the past"), embellishments (the statue of the fireman indicates the place of an older fire station), dates (inscriptions on façades), Roadway-exit names (Louise gate, Namur gate), limits ("we note that we go out of the St Gilles neighbourhood, there is a very large space, there are no longer houses in the continuity"). We note a lot of precise references to the past: dates of construction, evocation of war. They seem to put a point on locating each building back in its time. On the other hand, the residents do not have the same perception of time: "The roundabout was rebuilt as he presently is only a short time ago, about twenty years."

This tool enables us to collect a large number of data on the representations of the residents. We know for instance that they are conscious of the ruptures due to the older fortifications but they can't put a name on it. They feel the physical limits (the ring road), and the mental ones (the Marolles, "Marollians have a very special mentality"), we don't cross limits, we do our shopping in our own neighbourhood. We do feel oppositions between the neighbourhoods. We also notice that they have difficulties to go beyond their conceptions: although they know that the Hal gate is a gate, they still call it "the small castle". They seem to find the object easier to identify with this name, as the renovations make it really look like a castle ("explain them that this is the Hal gate, they will say 'what the hell is this!'"). Finally, this tool is very interesting from the point of view of itineraries. It can enable us to understand why a resident prefers such or such a way. We have noted that the shortest way is not necessarily taken. During this feedback, four kinds of itineraries have been identified: access easiness (the street goes downhill for instance), aesthetic taste (the beauty of the Grand Place), well-being sensation (Second-hand book sellers Street), sociability (passing people).

There is a perceptible will to get interested and compare their city to other ones: Do they also have a car free day in France?

3- Results of the Inquiries – Conclusion – Proposals

3-1 Framework of the Experiment

How to get participants mobilized?

If the towns of the network are interested in the global project, only a few partners were ready to carry out the experimentation. Moreover, the partners have had difficulties to mobilize residents. In Brussels for instance, the call to participation was widely diffused in the neighbourhood (small ads in shops… at the end of August), only one "resident" has contacted the "Gateway of Hal", she was ready to do the guided visit, but not to propose her own visit. The mobilization of the residents was easier when we then addressed to residents already involved in associations or neighbourhood councils, or in a process of valorisation of the town.

This reluctance to involvement can be understood in different ways. This kind of project requires an important investment in time and reflection as well as a will to give one's point of view on the town. This involvement, which is required in the process as well as in a reflection on the neighbourhood is not a problem for work if it is understood that we call for people who think they have a point of view to share. From these involved points of view, it is possible to make tools adapted to residents, as these persons play a role of mediation. In this case, we can make networks of resource-persons (this is one of the objectives of the "Interpretation Centre" of the "Gateway of Hal").

For a work more addressed to the general public, we would have to think of a wider work of communication, which encourages residents to involvement (see 4-4).

What about the theme when the traces of the fortification are no longer visible?

The three places which wished to experiment the process focused on the production of the residents are places where the traces of the fortifications have almost disappeared. Maybe the other towns are more involved in processes of tourist valorisation and pedagogical approaches?

The problem encountered in the carried out experiments is the problem, which was already underlined by D. Alcaud's report, of the relationship to the fortified town when the traces can only be shown by the specialist. Every town which we have worked with has no longer walls and the visits proposed by the residents deal rather with their use of the town. The fortified town does not appear in an explicit way, but its influence is underlying in the uses, for instance the walls of the older non aedificandi zones (going through the "zone" is painful) or places which were once besieged by garrisons (in Aire, the remains of the military presence seem to have been perceived in a negative way too and the period of not renovated fallow land has been a hard time to go through – forbidden places which are not to be visited.

So this participatory process shows all the interest of linking the interpretations of the experts and the points of view of the residents, the forms and levels of intervention being complementary or opening the debate.

In this conclusion, we propose therefore to search for interests and problems by comparing the experimented forms according to three axes;
- In the visits organised by residents, Which elements could feed the reflection on interpretation?
- In what the proposed system can be a mediation tool?
- Is this tool transferable, how to diffuse the creations of the residents and develop the links between partners?

3-2   The visit with "residents": which elements are new?

One of the elements of assessment on the tool "Signs in the city" was the relative standardisation of the obtained pictures according to the questions. Did the free visits of the residents enable to create a wider diversity? Did the residents bring in new elements which are likely to improve the debate on the theme "From Fortified Town to Sustainable Town"? What is the conclusion of what residents show and say or, on the contrary, conceal?

What the pair picture/text reveals in this framework

The visitor seeks to give "sense" rather than illustrating: "I took this because it's beautiful, it's old". They integrate other elements of sense than the building, for instance transportation and ways of life. As a result, even if it always makes the opposition old/new visible, it seems that "freedom" orientates the reflection towards the notion of "sustainable town".

Residents are interested in angles, in oppositions, they use the picture to make impressions visible. It also depends on their experience of photography. (see below "The System as a Tool for Mediation"). The picture reveals elements that remain unseen in everyday walks. The one who takes it sometimes discovers something else than what he intended to take. Thus, in Brussels, a picture of the "Chaussée de Waterloo" lets appear a tower which the residents thought to be invisible from the "Gateway of Hal". In the open discussion at the moment of the feedback, some people even contest the reality of the picture, or else they discuss the terms that shall be employed ("*Gateway*" or "*Castle of Hal*" or, *barracks* or *residence*…). The good reasons to employ such or such a term (older use, possibility to make oneself understood) can be stated.

Signs and traces: towards a new imagination of the city

First of all, it is interesting to notice that the notions of signs and traces, already at the core of the system "Signs in the city", are reinvested in the visits of residents.
Compared with the answers of "Signs in the city", we have here access to practices outside the framework of the experiment itself; the visit also deals with atmosphere, noises, movements… JV, who lives in the "Faubourg de Béthune", focuses his visit on the

highlighting, thanks to photography, of traces of the past ("Well, I'm going to find them… The rails are over there…") which, in his opinion, constitute signs of the past life ("I personally think that the rails were a great mystery, because there is a whole story in these rails… there are journeys, stories of journeys, stories of… These rails, what are they ? Where do they lead to ? What did they carry ? Where… Where were they going to?").

In Aire sur la Lys, Mrs H, while she was taking a picture of the Rue des Clémences, underlined the absence of pavement, "*this is so typical, we took the floor, the gutters, the channels. I've always known this, I imagine the life of the neighbourhood in the past, I like history*".
Mrs H likes history, her tour is marked by these revealed traces of the past. As regards the students, they are interested in fallow lands, in what the slightly decrepit façades hide. The question of the secret, of the mysterious side of the buildings which we try to guess the use of, was so present in the tours in Aire sur la Lys that it was even suggested, at the moment of the feedback, that it should be made into a theme for a tour.

These traces revealed by residents are supports to the development of a new imagination of the town. From this signs (of time, use…), residents develop plots and stories, they ask for further information… In the wording of the residents, it is possible to feel this need not only to "know" or to "learn" elements which are likely to answer their questions, (*the train linked such or such a place to such or such another place, it enabled workers to work in the surrounding factories*) but also to let their imagination work, or, so to say, to add something magic in their memory and their knowledge of the past life which is also a reservoir of plots and stories (of journeys…)

> ➢ *Leads for interpretation tours*
> Give place to imagination? The specificity of the interpretation tour compared with a pedagogical approach is not only to learn, but also to give the opportunity of producing sense. Do not try to lock people's imagination, but, on the contrary, stimulate them, make them want to…

Past plots and stories of life…

The traces of the past revealed by residents can also be a chance for them to share the knowledge they have of the life and practices of others residents in the neighbourhood. (In Brussels for instance, Marie explained how the workers of the road maintenance used to stroke a statue on their way to work.)
The exercise "Signs in the city" gave us a typology of the potential signs (water, a date…), but these signs were those of the expert, they could only make sense in the framework of the feedback. Here, signs are picked up for residents who invest these traces of their knowledge and/or their imagination (the water carrier, the stained-glass window).

Therefore, the trace very often serves as support to the report, this propensity for reporting is all the more important than the presence in the neighbourhood is old and the experience of the neighbourhood intensive. (see Louise and Marie from Brussels or Mrs H from Aire sur la Lys). The stories liven traces up by giving them a coherence in their experience of the town.

Finally, the pictures show the roads taken by residents, the tours are very characteristic, individual, feed by experiences of life. They do not necessarily go through the places which are inevitable in "experts' visits", but they can reveal other tours, spaces of life (backs of houses or buildings, the family gardens in the *Faubourg de Bethune* neighbourhood, the "Courée du Génie " in the "Vieux Faugbourg" neighbourhood). The pictures show more streets, spaces of life, places which offers an opportunity to explain what is/was going on there.

In Aire sur la Lys, the student notices that free visits lead residents to deliver stories and social material which can liven up the visit: "*this is interesting: leading residents to discussion among themselves can lead them to tell anecdotes, and these do well in visits*".
Mrs Cousin notes indeed that it is important to *bring some everyday life in history*, because *we can imagine ourselves in the past*. She notices the interest in comparing for instance old pictures with our contemporary point of view to understand the evolution of the town.
The guide underlines that he knows one of the buildings only as barracks, he didn't know so far that the neighbourhood was called "the Chicago", he learned it in the visit. He therefore recognises the difference in the register of knowledge mobilised by the residents and their complementary quality.
According to Marcel Detienne, "the decision of interpreting" is an act which "opens unknown ways, invents new visits, builds original registers in a field that was so far walked through by the means of exegesis or the gloss defined as a permanent as well as immediate commentary which is made by a culture about its symbolism, its practices, and anything that represents it as a living culture."[1] A reflective posture in which we place the "amateur resident".

3-3 The System as a Tool for Mediation

Our objective here is not to know what people think, but rather, on the one hand, how the urban makes sense in their life, what their uses of the city are, how they integrate the points of view of the specialists in city planning and, on the other hand, how we can share this experiment as exchangeable tools.

Mediation: different practices according to method: story, thematic division or fragments

According to the degree of preparation, the role of the mediator changes as well as the results:
In Lille, JV thought about his tour and the coherence of his visit appears very clearly; his tour is a quite complete and coherent story. He uses the notions he learned in the guided tour to give further details about his visit ("*here were the front parts of the walls*").

In Aire for instance, one of the groups which we made the visit with did not prepare its tour, neither did they think about the themes. The visit must therefore be made in interaction with the accompanying person who completely plays his role as a mediator. This has an influence on the walk: the accompanying person, together with the residents, is in charge of designing the tour within the time of the visit. The accompanying person chose to ask the two residents to take paths they already know so that he can look at them with an eye marked by the theme of limit.

---

[1] Detienne, M., p.131. *L'invention de la mythologie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1981

The fact that the two residents knew only partially the perimeter obliged them to abandon the idea of a visit via known axes. Little by little, the tour became a shared walk in which discoveries and known paths alternate.

The visit alternates known places and places to be discovered and offers residents time for reflection. It also offers them an opportunity to take other paths crossing their usual itineraries.

Influence on the treatment of themes

Here again, the work of mediation of the accompanying person is essential: within the time of the visit, he puts the remarks of the residents in relation with the chosen themes. A crossed reflection can then be started.

The interest lies in the construction of the reflection. The theme of limit is interpreted by the student as something negative, a limit cannot be positive, it is a barrier, an obstacle. From this first observation, the identified limits were those impeding movement, impeding look, impeding the sustainable development of the town.

Limits also seem to be those we impose on ourselves through our way of life, our activities. When we are walking around, we are looking for calm, for *what will put our imagination into motion*. When we are going to work, routes are practical.

> ➢ Hence the question as regards the Septentrion visits: Which activity do we want to put in relation with valorisation: entertainment? Well-being in the everyday life? Tourism? We must get out of the point of view architecture/view in order to think about living activities: can things enjoyed by tourists or walkers be boring for others…?

The story can be made during the visit, during the feedback, or afterwards.

Influence on the relation with the picture

The shooting of the elements pointed at was far from systematic. Several times, the accompanying person had to suggest that photographs of the elements pointed at should be taken.

Several reasons can explain this reservation about using the camera. First of all, the fact that the explanation and the exchange of points of view come within the visit itself makes the act of taking a photograph more minor in the opinion of residents.

The notion of collective feedback, of sharing a reflection with the other residents did not necessarily have priority compared with the explanation of one's point of view or the exchange with the accompanying person.

The constraint of the "good picture" remains present. The use of the camera in the framework of the exercise is above all illustrative. The photographs illustrate a point of view, they serve as traces and marks in the tour, but they do not correspond to what we can expect from a "good photograph". The interest of a gate or stairs blocking the way only exists in the framework of the exercise. They are not elements we "usually" take photographs of.

The accompanying person is therefore in charge to remind the possibilities, to encourage people to take pictures. During the visit, it is then possible to ask questions from a photographic point of view as a not only technical point of view, but also as a subjective and meaningful one. The possibility to create a visual comment about the questions to be treated can be initiated with residents who, being forced to take a picture, ask themselves the question of the point of view, of how the picture can match their impression. Of course the photographic skills of the resident have an impact on the exchange and are an important element in the framework of the interaction.

Example of the perspective in the "rue du Moulin" street
Once more, the comment was made during the visit.

Relating experts' reports: expert of one's neighbourhood?

The system which links periods of visit by the specialist in city planning or in heritage with periods not of feedback, but rather of creation of visits by the resident, enables us both to see how the vocabulary and the notions are reused, and how residents tell and walk through their town.

In order to create a feeling of belonging to a common space, it is important that private anecdotes can enter in the group; from this point of view, the development of a personal story which accompanies the pictures makes it possible to tell stories, to liven characters up, to remind souvenirs, to show feelings for places. But, in order to create this same feeling of belonging, it is important that the residents can resituate what they know in a wider historic whole and can be in contact with the stories of residents from other places.

The specialist in heritage or city planning helps to interpret and the participatory process has interest only thanks to the linking of experts' interpretations with residents' points of view. The system with its two stages (a guided visit led by the specialist and a tour proposed by residents) is therefore a tool for mediation which enables to interpret places and to link the individual with the collective. Three examples:

- In Lille, after we had learned a lot of things during the heritage visit, our resident-guide showed us he had the keys of the hidden zones of the city. Together, we got into private places which can only be known by a resident. He often refers to his friends who are the memory of the neighbourhood (the priest, for instance). At this point, the dialectics between

the improvement of experience, which is easier to understand for it is interpreted by experts, and the living of the urban, which is recognisable in the private use of places, shows up.

- In Brussels, Marie told the guide there used to be a fountain for horses and dogs in front of the *Gateway of Hal*; Sophie said that there was a first wall of the Middle Age which the old ladies had never heard of. In these exchanges, everyone is delighted to discover something new. They trust each other and the equality of status is rapidly accepted. Pieces of information complete each other. Marie also explains the transformations she experienced, the changes of use, but she also reveals past uses which have become inappropriate in the new urban form: the old cinema has become "God knows!", the old city hall has become a post office. The judgements on the relevance of the developments can be motivated by new visitors asking for information.

 - In Aire, the first visit was led by a guide of the city and residents had then to "invert the roles" and be in charge of the visit. We encouraged them to let us know about their particular knowledge of the city. By doing this, they also assigned the guide to a new status, he became a visitor. The legitimacy of this inversion was not obvious for them and the story they could create depended partially on their will to accept this new status, especially for young people. Although they lived in the surroundings, the two students of Aire said they did not know the neighbourhood very well.

 - They noted they never look at the city as a place for activities, which they could do when going somewhere (to classes or to driving lessons…)
 - "*We are in a hurry, we go somewhere to do something and we do not look at the environment.*" Uses of the city: no walks, only routes to such or such a place.
 - The visit was punctuated by resort to the map to find the good direction.

 Yet, in their comments, they noticed some places they particularly liked or, on the contrary, they did not like, they also made remarks which were evidence that they knew the neighbourhood their own way (affective and marked by their knowledge of the use of places: the market because of which they can not move their car on Fridays, the rehearsal of the city brass band on Thursdays…). Of course, some places remained outside their habits, they did not go through them. Similarly, they were not in the habit of walking in the neighbourhood, but rather of driving.

On the contrary, Mrs H asserted she had a good knowledge of the town, supported by her activity as a regular walker and the fact that she had been living in the neighbourhood for ages. Her project was also to introduce her husband, who rarely comes to Aire, to these places which are ideal for walks. The itinerary was more decided, she never used the map. Her visit was studded with personal details and assertions concerning her control of the neighbourhood. She put a point on making the guide discover new things, told personal anecdotes about the places…
For the group working for the municipality, the good knowledge of the city is obvious. They took part in setting up the perimeter, etc. The knowledge of the neighbourhood was therefore not a subject of discussion during the visit. This latter is very organised, definitely not personal, much more technical and orientated towards the objectives of the action.

Amateur in one's neighbourhood

Rather than a status of expert, this position asked to the resident (being the guide for a moment) is also a recognition of his status as an "amateur of the neighbourhood", mobilising important registers of knowledge which mix together affective attachment, processes of improvement and enhancement. Asserting one's attachment to one's neighbourhood means showing a relation to the Septentrion project which includes the affective and the pride of being chosen as a place which is worthy of the interest in the project (especially in Aire). Being amateur does not mean being "fan", the amateur can also develop a critical and argued vision; in this, talking about amateurs of neighbourhood enables us not to obliterate the citizen dimension of the resident.

Leads to work on the attachment to the project: According to the philosopher Hannah Arendt, the word *public* "firstly means that everything that appears in public, that can be seen and heard by everyone, enjoys the best advertising possible" and secondly that "it qualifies the world itself as a place belonging to everyone and different from the place we individually possess inside. (…)"*. With the opportunity to make one's point of view visible and sensitive, we can create a space of belonging to a common world. A reading of the space which focuses on the spatial arrangement of the built elements and does not integrate the reflection on the human history linked to these elements does not enable to develop the feeling of belonging we are looking for. The interpretation tools to be created must try to produce forms of visibility which are not only adapted to residents and visitors, but also partially produced by them. This notion of amateur, valorised or used when meeting residents can be a means to clarify their position in our request: they are neither professional experts, nor ordinary walkers or resident, but they are definitely amateurs, who like their attachment and have chosen to develop it.

3-4 Transferability/ sharing with other cities at European level

Making common themes emerge

The accumulation of different points of view makes it possible to clarify the points of view according to their respective position (as expert or as amateur). The difference made between the visit of the expert and the resident's one is essential to clarify the positions and make it possible to work in collaboration. The involvement in the city planning projects enables everyone to develop their skills, providing that they are clearly recognised as individuals endowed with a certain kind of skills.

The point of view of the experts, which is essential, can only be an aspect of this construction and, rather than encouraging the residents to feel it, it would be more interesting to work on the setting up of diversified systems, enabling everyone to understand the point of view of the others. Furthermore, as the agents of the projects, anxious to be operational, may well resort to already existing tools experimented in museums, the pedagogical forms of interpretation based on the act of learning enjoy an advantage in comparison to other forms, to be invented, which do not collect the opinion of ordinary people, but rather mobilize them so that they take part to the project too. A reflection on the interpretation demands therefore to differentiate the knowledge of the actual world (in this case, the explored neighbourhood) from the experimentation of a false visit intended to make it understood. The creation of systems of interpretation of the space , in the context of the heritage, is not meaningless, for it involves

collective pictures, different manners of understanding the space, of talking about it, to highlight themes which do not freeze the heritage and see the space as a space of life.

The fact that points of view are complementary makes common themes emerge in the cities where the experiment was carried out.

- The question of the limits, initially worked on as a possible theme and described by experts as very relevant is indeed very present, even in cities which have no walls any longer. The complementary dimension of the points of view is here fully effective since the visits of the residents highlighted different definitions of the limit and made it possible to understand the importance of uses and practices related to this notion. (see Results.)
- The theme of the crossing seemed to be very close to the question of the limit. Fortifications which have been crossed or pulled down are no obstacle to the valorisation of the theme of the fortified town, it is quite the opposite, they make it possible to consider the questions from another point of view.

Concrete tools for sharing

The results of the visits constitute a raw material rich in information for those who want to question the relationship between residents and the fortified town, however, they need to be treated first in order to be transferable and usable in interpretation centres and visits.
For elected representatives…
For those in charge of projects
For residents to share their knowledge and their imagination

For residents, it is necessary to work on the valorisation of the material. This can take several forms according to the project of the town which will decide to develop them.

- The work on narration for instance (visits involve the notion of story, see *shared memories*) can give rise to writing workshops.
- The work on points of view can be the starting point of a photo workshop…

The use of digital photography enables us to capitalise information and to organise it in a shareable form which is likely to circulate from an interpretation centre to an other. Several kinds of software can be used to recreate residents' visits on computer (with multimedia professionals or during workshops with residents) and consult them on computers installed in interpretation centres.

Several degrees of interactivity can be considered: developing a system in which pictures are indexed by residents or project officials, creating a website directly feed by residents who can send their pictures and comments via the Internet, or developing a system which would be only administered by project officials (what could enable them to control and respect the standards as regards the freedom of speech without imposing a too heavy system of control and also to work on the aesthetic and the design of the website).

It seems however that the collected documents need a treatment:

- for professionals and elected representatives : an analysis of the tour, flagging of the appreciated places, assessment of the level of knowledge, of the mediation systems, collect of opinions about a city planning project…
- for residents: they need simple but comfortable ways to browse the tours.
- for project officials in the interpretation centres: they must be able to develop a treatment by theme (for instance the limits perceived by the residents of Lille, or, at international level, the limits in Lille, Brussels, etc.), to compare, to connect, to oppose the different points of view.

<u>Virtual visit of the platform:</u>
The platform could give access to an interactive cartography of the cities leading to a virtual visit in which the pictures and comments of the residents would be integrated.
The flexible and malleable aspect of the tool must be highlighted. It can be adapted to different cities, it can go from a pedagogical approach to a participatory one.

As a conclusion… Leads for reflection

Enabling knowledge and imagination to circulate: towards an imagined community ?

One of the observations made is the importance of getting residents' imagination mobilised. The system, thanks not only to the sharing of knowledge of the cities of the network, but also to the sharing of imaginations, can enable citizens to feel as members of a unique "imagined community". This concept of imagined community is precisely worked on by the cultural anthropology to describe transnational situations (see Arjun Appaduraï, cultural consequences of globalisation, Payot 2001) and can be an answer to the peculiarities of territories crossed by national borders "*in that they are supposed to develop from a connection between two different areas (one which crosses the border) and to confront at least two territorial cultures, histories, imaginations. Through them, the border no longer represents a prerogative of the public power, it no longer is a line of demarcation between two States, a limit of the national sovereignty, but rather a point of connexion.*"[2]

The system can enable the citizen to situate himself between the local and the global on the basis of a sharing of imaginations related to every single territory. This system enables the citizen to imagine himself as a member of a macro territory by making the representation of this territory more concrete and based on elements of experience which belong to his own imagination of the city.

Shared memories

The practice of the system reveals the will of residents to share their memory of the city. However, this resort to the memory of the residents and its sharing is essential in order that the identity of the border crossing territory does not appear as a conflicting one: "*the fact of putting residents in relation with one another can reactivate forgotten stories, repressed fears, crystallised believes and can request a real archaeology of embedded memories, a genealogical reflection thanks to which it is possible to resist the typically technocratic temptation of adding cities arithmetically on both sides of the borders without taking the logic of their ambitions and their past strategies into account*".(Nicolas Pélissier, Dominique Pagès).

---

[2] Pélissier N., Pagès D., *Territoires sous influences,* l'Harmattan, 2001.

Moreover, thanks to the multiple points of view, the system makes it possible not to give in to the fiction of the creation of a common memory which residents would only partially identify with, but rather to share individual memories while respecting their logic and avoiding their crystallisation.

This aspect corresponds more to the network developed by Septentrion. The tour can motivate the creation of a new place for mediation in which lists of actions can be developed for citizens involved in this participatory process. It reinforces the possibility to take the cultural dimension of the public space into account (the places where aesthetic standards are established and where cultural cohabitations are developed) but also its psychosocial and communicational dimension (the place where one directs oneself and the way to make a collective identity more objective).

However, the point is not to make out of the system a miraculous element which would make it possible to resolve all the questions related the participation of residents to the Septentrion project. It remains a system among others. Indeed, experiments carried out in other territories and using new communication technologies in the framework of participatory projects, show that the networking of the agents via the new technologies does not make participation grow. See the experiences carried out in the territory of Roan concerning the development of an economy of solidarity and analysed by Eric Dacheux from the University of Saint-Etienne, for instance). On the other hand, the technical network offers the opportunity for agents involved in a project to structure their actions and make them visible. The technical platform we could imagine from the "signs" experiences can therefore play this role: making citizens' investments visible in the project and reinforcing their capability of action by reinforcing the capabilities of interactions. Finally, it would offer the residents of the cities of the network a concrete framework while avoiding a "local selfishness" as it would stay open. Here again, experiments to set up participatory platforms show that open social networks together with a territorial identity are crucial elements in the creation of a dynamic public space.