There are thousands of ways to be a guide, and we are not interested in dictating how you go about it. Here are some guidelines either to help you get started or to improve your guided walks.

# LESSON 4
# HOW TO BECOME A GUIDE

## SUB-CHAPTERS

Introduction
1) Before: Getting Ready
2) During: The D Day
Bonus: Economics of Walking

Some walkers show an inclination to lead others, notably those with cartographic skills (creating a route, locating themselves in situ on the map) or a capacity for storytelling (either through their eloquence or their ability to orchestrate a polyphony among fellow walkers).

How can you go about introducing people to a metropolis? How can you prepare your walk? How can you strike the right balance in your commentary? What are the secrets to a successful shared experience?

People expect guides to be reassuring (in their guiding and respect for everybody's time) and interesting (imbuing the spaces traversed with humor or attentive details).

## ASSIGNMENT

### Beginner

Write an email invitation for a walk (with meetup times and places, a map, an image, a few sentences to describe the day).

### Advanced

Send us photographs and sounds from a day walk you have organized.

Invite us on a walk you've organized.

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# Introduction
# THE LANGUAGE OF A PLACE

When they want to show you something before they can speak, children take you somewhere—they signal to you and take your hand.

Sharing spaces with others: for Boris Sieverts, guiding is the oldest form of language. This ancestral gesture should be forefront in a guide's mind. And you should be attentive to this pre-lingual mode of expression. The sequences of spaces you traverse should be your primary means of communication. The spatial context is the stuff that will help you "give voice" to places and objects. So, be sure to think carefully about how you approach a space, and how you want to take leave of it. That is why a guided walk requires detail-oriented preparations (see lesson 1).

Still, the guide's personality and the information gathered are important components.

# I. BEFORE: GETTING READY

Do not bring a group to a place you have not visited beforehand. The scouting and research phases are crucial. Both vital, they inform each other.

## Scouting

**Passageways**

One function of scouting is to check to make sure it works. Crossing transportation infrastructure (railways, motorways, etc.) is a recurring problem for metropolitan trails. So, you'll need to identify pedestrian tunnels and bridges fairly early on. Bridges provide the added advantage of a view. Other common blockages are dead ends, closed roads, gated properties, and so forth. Retracing your steps with the group should be avoided.

On the other hand, "secret passages" that are almost invisible, holes in walls, unlocked gates that open as if by magic, a supermarket's emergency exit: now, that's the stuff that makes a group feel lucky to walk with you.

To the extent possible, you should guide groups toward pedestrian thoroughfares (narrow streets, shortcuts, covered alleyways, staircases, etc.). Depending on the country and city, the area may be more or less porous—open to pedestrian crossings. You can cut through it by way of the city (as opposed to fields). Abu Dhabi's "super blocks" for instance, with their abundance of pedestrian streets, are actually more walkable than some areas of Provence, where residential complexes close off large swaths of towns to the public.

**Drinking, eating, going pee**

Scouting missions will also allow you to locate restroom facilities (public restrooms, cafes, etc.) and sources of water and food along the way.

Your picnic spot is also important. If your walk starts early in the day, plan a rather early picnic. Opt for an open space, a park, a shaded street corner, or plan the picnic at somebody's home—potentially the home of a special guest.

The picnic is one of the few good opportunities to set the stage. Just be sure it coheres with the rest of the walk. A nicely decorated banquet table, placed in the right setting, is a nice and festive touch as well as an artistic and architectural act. You will probably need to enlist the help of an assistant.

**Comfort and calm**

People in a classroom or lecture hall should be comfortably seated and sheltered from extraneous noise. The same goes for our trail academy. Walking should be a comfortable experience that encourages concentration and discussion.

You should opt for routes that allow walkers to immerse themselves in the city yet without feeling subjected to an onslaught from the urban environment. Noise is the most salient issue here. If noise is inevitable over a longer section, it should be addressed (with earplugs or some other solution). As Nicolas Mémain suggests, "Calm and silent continuities: it's a gift I offer people who walk with me—a welcome break."

## Research

Metropolitan guides should have a good general culture in history, geography, sociology, literature, architecture, urbanism, ecology, and so forth.

**Chronology as a device**

It is interesting to provide even rough dates for the buildings and infrastructure you come across. Dates provide objective and interesting information, giving the audience a good introduction to something. (This is something walkers can bring back with them into their everyday lives.)

Obviously, you should not limit yourself to focusing only on historic monuments (which tend to be few and far between once outside the city center), but highlight more recent urban phenomena (1980s, 1990s, 2000s, 2010s).

This simple exercise helps create connections between places and historical events. By way of example: "the Bourget airport, with its art deco façade, contains many references to the French colonial empire. It dates back to the 1930s and bears some similarity to the large staircase in front of the Saint Charles train station in Marseille. 1930: that's 100 years after the conquest of Algeria; and the Third Republic was meticulous in establishing a coherent colonial propaganda campaign as part of its rivalry with the United Kingdom."

Generally speaking, dating can spark myriad conversations, and the group will probably have different reactions, leading to debates.

As you write up a walk, time can become a particular focus and you can use it to give dramatic flair to the day. An idea for a walk: "From one of Europe's first interchanges to the post-oil city."

Walking is also a journey in time.

**Maps, plans, and photos**

Iconographic archive materials are often useful. They can breathe past life back into a landscape. They testify to the change inherent in a city. Archives of projects that never came to be can also help a group visualize what could have been built in a given space and begin to acquire a sense of a "project culture". Similarly, maps, project plans, masterplans, blueprints, and the like can lead walkers into the minds of city planners and help them better understand the genesis of a constructed environment.

Finally, during the scouting phase, you can hunt for documents that will make sense within the walking environment. For instance: a power grid diagram when you're in front of a high voltage pylon; or a nineteenth century gravity-fed canal system when you're looking at an old irrigation canal, etc.

See the experience below ("Document Binder")

**Minor Stories**

"Little stories" are especially interesting if they help broach larger questions (e.g. a sidewalk curb can lead to conversations on various construction methods, geology, logistics, and so forth. Same goes for a poster for the circus, a recurring tag, an empty house, an old newsstand, etc.). Blogs, videos, and social media groups are all mines of more or less verifiable information that can help you come up with ideas for topics you wouldn't find through traditional outlets.

You may consider taking a break from veracity and venturing into the realms of myth, urban legends, and rumors. Urban walking lends itself to the intrusion of local stories and unverifiable rumors found on the internet or heard on the street or in a local cafe. Ambiguity can be an art [link to Milan master class].

**Encounters**

Locals are an obvious source of knowledge. You may want to identify authorities and experts within the local community as resources.

One or two special guests during a day of walking can always be interesting for the group. Farmers, researchers, local organizations are all good examples. Obviously, this involves some advance planning.

## Inviting the public

Whether you do it via social media, email, or flyers posted in the neighborhood, here are a few guidelines:

Make sure your meetup point is practical. Ideally, it will be at a train, tram, bus, or subway station. Check the hours of operation and identify a specific place where you can all meet up—a train station is big, and there

are usually several entrances. Put yourself in the shoes of your public and try to anticipate things that could be misunderstood in your invitation.

An open café near the station can be a good meetup point.

Provide a phone number for people who have trouble finding the meet-up point.

If your departure time is at 10 in the morning, you may consider arriving at 9:30. It generally takes some time for the group to assemble, so during this half hour participants can have some coffee and start talking amongst themselves. And you can speak with them individually so they know who you are before the briefing.

# 2) DURING: THE D DAY

"The experience—the social moment resulting from collective walking—is at least as interesting as the 'subject' of the visit." (Boris Sieverts)

Always keep in mind that you are sharing this time and space with others. You are sharing a situation. The information you provide is not separable from this situation (unlike in the case of a book or a Wikipedia entry, etc.). The walk is like a class trip: participants are leaving their usual context and walking into a new situation as a group. In this situation, the behavior of each member of the group becomes an expression of its personality.

There are different kinds of guides. Some work on being very charismatic, others are more discreet. Some use a lot of materials (archives, etc.), others forego paper. From performer to troubadour, gonzo investigator to umbrella-toting guide, it's up to each guide to find the style that best suits them

Still, here are some guidelines:

## Briefing at the start

**Introducing yourself**

People are more inclined to follow someone they can relate to. You can quickly say who you are, why you've chosen to be a guide, when you started, and what training you have—and if you don't have any special training, that's also interesting for the group.

If you're a skater, tagger, nature guide, or retiree from the petrochemical industry, you'll want to say so. That will help the group better understand your walk and the choices you've made for the itinerary and framework. It will also help the group better react to the information you give. Subjectiv-

ity can imbue urban walking. You should feel free to express yourself—as if you were writing a book.

Asking everyone to introduce themselves can also be an efficient way to create group cohesion. Don't let it go on too long (10-15 minutes only). If you have a large group, people can simply state their first name, where they live, and if this is the first time they've done this kind of walk. For instance: "Sonia, Argenteuil, first time!" or "Paul, West End, second time!"

**Contract**

Your initial briefing is important: it acts as a contract between you and your group. This is a moment to assuage any worries (picnic time, restrooms, walk duration, arrival time) and start building the group's trust.

Note: this briefing should not be a spoiler of the entire day. Don't deprive walkers of the surprises you have in store ("After the picnic, we can go swimming, but I won't say where.")

## On the trail

You're off! You're at the head of the group and everyone is following you.

Talk about what you see. "You're live, with real people, in a real space that's brimming with information. Avoid talking about things that aren't visible." (Boris Sieverts)

So, you should avoid talking about things before you can see them. Keep the group guessing. Give them the pleasure of discovering things for the first time, without commentary from you.

"When you arrive in a space where you've planned to say something, take your time. Don't start talking as soon as you arrive somewhere. Let your fellow walkers absorb the space first. When you're sampling a dish, you don't start by asking if it's good. You let a little time lapse." (Boris Sieverts)

Don't try to know everything. "Avoid only speaking as an expert. You can also talk about what interests you, what you like, what moves you—anything that can help us understand what we're seeing. Not everyone will think like you, but they'll understand why they're stopping in a given place and looking at a given thing.

Start with information related to your own fields of research. Then select other types of information, always opting for things that speak most to you. For more abstract information, but which you don't want to leave out for whatever reason, be sure to explain the source—who, when, and where you read it, etc. You should do this not out of scientific scruples but again as a means of situating information for your audience.

Emphasize information that makes connections between different eras (see "chronology as a device"), places, and scales. For instance: "When you look very closely at the map, you will see the fragmentation of these fields throughout the structure of the whole city".

You can lean on your group. Walking is a social experience, and when you don't have anything to say, you can take a breather. Leading a group by yourself can be tiring. When everybody introduced themselves at the start, you may have identified people who could speak on different subjects. Your role is also to be a conductor—but keep an eye on the time.

Keep in mind that whenever you speak to the group along the trail, it is always an interruption—an interruption in the soundscape you're traversing, in the conversations amongst walkers, and almost always an interruption in movement, since you have to wait for the group to be gathered around you to begin speaking. So, it's important to think about where, when, and how often you're willing to accept these kinds of interruptions.

Try to limit interruptions to a length of time that will let people return to their conversations and that won't jeopardize the group dynamic or movement forward. When participants start taking off their backpacks, looking for places to sit, or leaning on their partners, you know it's time to wrap it up.

As the walk progresses, your need to speak may dwindle. You start to get a sense of the participants. The route you've chosen and the spaces you're traversing present the landscape in a unique light. Think of your spoken interventions as props that bring out this light. Once it's shining, let the group walk.

This also applies to specific moments and situations. For instance, a length of distance where walkers have to remove their shoes, a dark tunnel, a moment in front of a fruit tree, a stop in front of a music school where music notes hang in the air: these are moments where no comment is necessary, where speaking would pollute the atmosphere.

### 2.3 Debriefing

At the end of a walk, the group should not disband immediately. You can find a place to share a drink—because you're thirsty and tired, but also because it's an opportunity to reflect on the day together.

Let everyone speak (including and especially those who haven't spoken all day) and listen to each other. Count the number of people present and make sure the time is equitably shared. What stands out for you among the things we have seen, the places we have been, and the details we have observed? What narrative lines emerge? What objects stand out? Which places most have left the greatest impression on us? How has our vision of the city changed? With the help of endorphins, the conversation is often inspired and even funny.

A recording device may be useful here as a means of keeping track of what are generally very interesting moments. It can also help bring struc-

ture to the conversation: the microphone, which implies silence, facilitates listening within a group without you having to ask for people to listen.

These moments of collective intelligence can give birth to new ways of representing a metropolis.

## Bonus
## ECONOMICS OF WALKING

A recurring and oft debated question is to know if these walks should be free or include a fee. Metropolitan Trails are conceived as a "travelling people's university" and a "walking conversation". They are polyphonic and inclusive. They may also receive public funding. All of that would argue for free experiences.

Practically speaking, though, we've noticed that a fee—even a small one—means fewer cancellations. It also serves as a reminder that guiding is real work and may create more attentiveness in walkers. Small organizations understand that what's free has a cost, and that only well-established institutions can afford it!

It's up to you. Consider your organization, financing, social context, and public. In general, walks tend to be free during the initial scouting phase or as the trail is being conceived. And they tend to include a fee once the trail is established or the public walk is built up as a kind of performance (like a theater play).

## Experience
## DOCUMENT BINDER

Making a portfolio of documents is a device that helps 1) enrich your "dramatic flair" with "transitional objects"—documents that you can take out, show, comment, and pass around, 2) build yourself as an expert who has done your research, 3) collect fragments for a metropolitan narrative built on "stepping stones", 4) give your fellow walkers the feeling they are learning things they wouldn't learn elsewhere (opt for documents you'll find in archives and not online).

We also suggest relying on your group to create photographs and sound recordings of the day (even recruiting an ally within the group).