

The life of a trail exceeds its line. It cannot be reduced to its route: it is made up of the living communities along its way.

LESSON 2

HOW TO CREATE COMMUNITY

SUB-CHAPTERS

Introduction: The Trail Creates Community

- 1) Share your scouting
- 2) Bring the conversation to life
- 3) Build a common imaginary landscape
- 4) Making and sharing events

On your walks, as you designed your trails, and during your scouting missions, you brought walkers with you and met locals. You shared your walking experiences with friends and family. Clearly, you are not in this alone.

How can you bring a trail to life? How can you create the conditions for a shared trail? How can you share your scouting missions? How can you gain a loyal following? How do you keep the conversation going?

This lesson offers keys to fostering a “local learning community”: a group of fellow walkers who develop a shared local culture.

ASSIGNMENT

to be sent to us at the following address
contact@metropolitantrails.org

Beginner

Write an email inviting your contacts on scouting missions. Be sure to include the meetup spot, your destination, a blurb about the day, and the general idea of your trail.

Advanced

Create a webpage or flyer presenting a program of future scouting missions.

Create a list of experts, organizations, and institutions to invite on your scouting missions.



Introduction

THE TRAIL CREATES COMMUNITY

Temporary Societies

When we spend a day walking together, we form a temporary society of bipeds. We submit to different spaces, groups form and come undone, conversations get underway, hierarchies break down, we shed our social masks in favor of thousands of interactions with the landscape, people, and things. The experts return to their identities as citizens with partial knowledge and expertise. Walking awakens a welcome feeling of humility.

Metropolitan Communities

Metropolitan Trails bind spaces together, but their political virtue is to create or nurture bonds between the people who use them—as well as with the thousands or tens of thousands of locals near whom the trail passes.

Metropolitan Trails can be understood as “social networks” where urbanity is built—urbanity in its dual sense of urban space and the art of living as a community.

The Common Emergence of a Trail

The idea of “creating community” is not so much about forming a group to bring a project into fruition or walk an existing path, but to build a collective movement around the creation process. Designing a trail can be an adventure.

This movement, which should remain open and evolving, will slowly build common interest in the trail as it comes into being, through various interests, practices, and diverse readings of the local area.

This first community will form a strong core for the project. Even if this core is not a closed group (since its members can come and go), it will provide a first basis for exploring the local area and defining the trail. This common space will help:

- 1) Provide a shared foundation and local legitimacy for the project.
- 2) Unite different stakeholders (locals and experts) who may have diverging value systems and views of what is important in the local landscape.
- 3) Enlighten you as to the assets within a local area, thanks to members’ different fields of knowledge, perspectives, and uses. This will also help refine route choices.

Now, here are some methodological tips, which can be applied differently depending on the context.

I. SHARE SCOUTING MISSIONS

Although there is a personal component to creating a trail (when you consult public and private archives, for instance), group scouting missions are an essential experience in a trail's planning stages.

In and of themselves, group walks foster community and don't require any special planning. Moments of silence, wonder, and contemplation; discoveries and surprises; fun detours: all these components precede any commentary and very quickly produce a sense of group cohesion, even among people who don't know each other.

In terms of how long a scouting mission should last: a half day seems like the minimum, if only because getting to the appointed meeting place can easily take an hour within a metropolis. But I would suggest a full day for both practical and poetic reasons. That way, you can have a picnic and experience from dawn to dusk "the roundness of the day" as Jean Giono calls it. When people spend the day exploring, conversations bud and grow, often becoming more personal during the picnic.

If this first outing is planned within a pre-existing group, I suggest opening it up by inviting other people or encouraging conversations with other walkers you encounter (hiking clubs, etc.) and locals along the way. Inversely, if you are starting your project on your own, establishing regular meetings can help attract fellow walkers and build lasting cohesion.

In any case, a series of concentric circles will quickly emerge: starting with the first circle (strong core of founders or "forerunners"), a second circle of supporters (local organizations, small institutions, local experts and authorities, etc.), and a third circle comprising the general public and locals.

Scouting missions are all embedded in a social context and act as a stage in project design (educational workshops, scouting missions with partners, public walks, etc.). Group size can vary from a few people to a hundred participants (for large events), but an average size would be about 10 to 15 people for shared scouting missions, and around 20-30 people for guided public walks (see lesson 4).

Practical Tip: Regular Meetups

Your core group can be relatively unstable in terms of its members, remaining open to people coming and going. The scouting process, however, would benefit from having regular meetups.

Regular events (every first Wednesday, for instance, or the last Saturday of the month) make the process easier to grasp and share. They also help keep the collective movement open. It's probably the simplest way to build a community of walkers.

Repérages du Sentier Métropolitain du Grand Paris
PROGRAMME
2018-2019

Chaque mois, le long du futur Sentier Métropolitain du Grand Paris, une journée de repérage sur invitation (vendredi) suivie d'une journée de repérage ouverte au public (samedi).

MARS
VEN. 23 : Charenton - Cachan
SAM. 24 : Fontenay-aux-Roses - Vitrofly (public)

AVRIL
VEN. 13 : Gergy-le-Haut - Conflans
SAM. 14 : Achères - Cormeilles-en-Parisis (public)

MAI
VEN. 25 : Franconville - Pontoise
SAM. 26 : Pontoise - Erment (public)

JUIN
VEN. 29 : Charles-De-Gaulle Terminal 1 - Sevran
SAM. 30 : Sevran - Le Raincy (public)

JUILLET
VEN. 13 : Villeneuve-Saint-Georges - Perigny
SAM. 14 : Perigny - Port-aux-Cerises (public)

AOUT
PAUSE ESTIVALE

SEPTEMBRE
GRANDE MARCHÉ POPULAIRE : Poissy - Conflans

OCTOBRE
VEN. 19 : Versailles - Trappes
SAM. 20 : Trappes - Saint-Rémy-les-Chevreuses (public)

NOVEMBRE
VEN. 23 : Saint-Denis - Nanterre
SAM. 24 : Nanterre - Saint-Germain (public)

DECEMBRE
PAUSE HIVERNALE

JANVIER
VEN. 23 : Saint-Denis - Sarcelles
SAM. 26 : Goussainville - Mesnil-Amelot (public)

FEBVRIER
VEN. 15 : Champigny - Noisiel
SAM. 16 : Noisiel - Thorigny (public)

MARS
VEN. 23 : Bercy - Bourg-la-Reine
SAM. 24 : Bourg-la-Reine - Igny (public)

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LE SENTIER METROPOLITAIN DU GRAND PARIS
www.esentierdugrandparis.com

Monthly scouting program of the Grand Paris trail sent to the community of authors and guests of the project.
Le sentier du Grand Paris, 2018.

2. BRING THE CONVERSATION TO LIFE

>> SEE RESOURCES/OTHER RESOURCES
EXPLORATEUR DE LIMITES - YVES
CLERGET (PDF + VIDEO)

Even when someone is acting as a guide and/or main knowledge provider, a day of walking is polyphonic (see lesson 4). This has been conceptualized well by Yves Clerget—the Parisian founder of “urban walks”.

Group scouting is a “walking conversation” and an exchange of knowledge from different perspectives. Conversation gives voice to different forms of expert and lay knowledge on the sites, landscapes, and situations. The intersection of expertises provides all participants (including “experts”) with the opportunity to acquire many new forms of knowledge, making these walks a type of informal education.

Conversation can emerge spontaneously from observations and experiences along the way. Here are two tips to getting conversations going, making them last, generating lasting interest among walkers, and creating multi-dimensionality:

- **Invite walkers to share their knowledge**, memories, and observations during the walk and/or at the end of the day (see lesson 5, “debriefing”). This fosters horizontal relations and prevents experts from monologuing. It also encourages shier walkers to speak.

Good moments for encouraging conversation (reading the landscape, mini lectures, student presentations, etc.): during the walk and social time (breaks in areas designated by the group or during the picnic).

- **Invite people to act as resources** (site or subject experts) for the entire walk or for some stopping points. Students, educators (experts on local sites, architecture, urbanism, ecology, sociology, and so on), local officials, technical authorities, site managers, artists, photographers, writers, local authorities....



Scouting sessions of the Greater Paris Metropolitan Trail, 2018, Nanterre (photo Eric Garault)

A sign of a vibrant conversation is that it tends to go on for longer than the walking time. It sparks a thirst to know more, to dive deeper into a subject or space, giving birth to sub-groups, two-way conversations, and new ideas for projects. The splintering off into smaller interest groups is not a threat to the overall community, since the aim of a trail is to become a platform for all manner of projects. (Maintaining a stable group on a trail is not necessarily a good sign in terms of a project's growth).

The Landscape as Conversation

To a certain extent, we can see the landscape itself as a space of conversation and negotiation between different stakeholders. Walking as a group can therefore be seen as a means of including oneself in existing conversations between the natural and constructed worlds, rock and concrete, earth and sky, locals and users, geology and history, etc.

“I often compare the art of landscape to that of conversation: three or four people are talking; we can interrupt them with what we have to say, but we can also take a few minutes to listen and then assert our own point of view. That way, our ideas marry with the general thrust of the conversation.”
(Michel Corajoud, landscape architect)

3. BUILDING A COMMON IMAGINARY

A natural outgrowth of collective walking experiences and independent trail research, storytelling is an important feature of “local learning communities”.

Narrative production during exploration nourishes knowledge tools and helps build an imaginary landscape. Over time, a local trail narrative and common culture will emerge.

All manner of media can be used to tell your trail’s story, and all forms are interesting—from annotated slide shows (a classic of hiker blogs) to more literary narratives by an author from within the community, to a sound journal of real conversations, to various incarnations of the travel journal.

Conversations generate a desire to learn and discover. They can be guided and structured in various ways (e.g., “memory workshops” with neighborhood locals interested in documenting a fragment of the area or a particular subject, like workers’ housing developments/gardens, etc.)

The Hôtel du Nord cooperative experiment in Marseille, known as “Story Factory”, is a reference in experiments to build local urban communities of walkers in terms of practice, conversation theory, and implementation.

>> [SEE RESOURCES/OTHER RESOURCES](#)
[HÔTEL DU NORD](#)

4. MAKING AND SHARING EVENTS

Events don't have to be limited to the grand opening once the trail is ready. They can arise at different stages of the process, and even help to give structure to trail creation.

Events can take the form of festive picnics, artistic walking experiences, and public walks (to attract more participants). All events, regardless of type, should have goals and stages, highlight a less visible aspect of trail creation, reach out to new potential community members, increase project visibility among partners, and reinforce community membership and commitment in a way that reaches out to other people.

You can organize standalone events. Or you can keep an eye on local happenings in which you could take part. Participating in local events gives your trail exposure to other community groups. For instance, in Marseille, urban walks on the city's outskirts throughout the year were mostly put together by people living along trails, but they were expanded to a larger public thanks to "European Heritage Days", which have been heavily promoted in France.



Suburban picnic organised by the collective "Bruit du Frigo" (Bordeaux, 2000)

Experiences

>> SEE RESOURCES/OTHER RESOURCES
L'ATLAS DES CONNAISSANCES, BUREAU
DES GUIDES DU GR2013

a) A Knowledge Atlas

A knowledge atlas is an encyclopedia of a territory which helps create an inventory of points of interest throughout the different phases of a trail project. It contains all the information provided by different stakeholders interested in the project. The atlas provides walkers with autonomy in their research and acts as a shared resource.

It provides documentation and helps define the trail. It can be used for future publications on the trail. It acts as the first archive of materials and documents. It is the soil from which the trail will grow.

The atlas can be an impetus to go into the field with experts and locals. It can help facilitate knowledge sharing.

The suggested assignment is to gather the following into a single document: maps, schematics, and layouts; articles, notes, expert reports; stories, interviews, and narratives; photograph series; drawings; collages; excerpts from a selection of works; archive documents, etc.

All of these documents can be accompanied by the author's name, the source information, and a title chosen by the team to communicate its significance to the project.

There is no predetermined form this group of documents should take. You can augment the corpus as the trail project progresses with a series of volumes, to be made available to all stakeholders, observers, and participants during the project creation phase.

Documents can be gathered in a digital space or in a binder. Photograph series can be included as contact prints (one or more representative photos can be presented in another format). For texts and articles: the whole document cannot be included, but an excerpt should be presented in an epigraph.

A knowledge atlas was used with students at the Ecole nationale Supérieure d'Architecture in Marseille (ENSA•M), and at the Foresta Project with the GR2013 Bureau des guides, YesWeCamp, Hôtel du Nord, and the community of local residents.

b) Heritage Community and Heritage Walk (Faro Convention)

A “heritage community” consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage, and who wish to ensure their upkeep and transmission to future generations.

It is defined by the Faro Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society (Council of Europe, October 27, 2005), which promotes an expanded vision of heritage and its relationship with communities and society. The importance of cultural heritage has less to do with objects and places than with the meaning, relationships, and uses that people attach to them and the values they represent.

In line with the terms of the Faro Convention, a “heritage walk” is a walk designed by and with those who live, work, and inhabit a local area. It takes shape through the stories of its stakeholders, via research into scholarly sources and a body of local experiences, and through an identification of local curiosities and accumulated information in and about the local territory. The application of the Faro Convention in Marseille and different countries and contexts has led to regular “Faro Community” meetings.

>> [SEE RESOURCES/OTHER RESOURCES](#)
[HÔTEL DU NORD](#)

RESOURCES

The online resources for this lesson are listed below. You can consult them at your leisure on the “Resources” section of the Metropolitan Trails Academy website.

>> Our articles & interviews

Marcher pour changer notre regard sur les territoires (FR) - Lanaspèze, Field
DEHORS #1 - Bureau des guides du GR2013 (FR) - Paul-Hervé Lavessière
DEHORS #2 - Bureau des guides du GR2013 (FR) - Collectif SAFI
DEHORS #3 - Bureau des guides du GR2013 (FR) - Nicolas Mémain

>> Exerpts from our books

Zone Sweet Zone (FR) - Yvan Detraz
Le guide du sentier du Grand Paris (FR) - Denissen, Lavessière, Lanaspèze, Moreau
Les refuges périurbains (FR/EN) - Bruit du Frigo

>> Milano master-class

Track n°3 : Walking creates worlds - Baptiste Lanaspèze
Track n°8 : Involve locals - Fivos Tsaravopoulos
Track n°13 : Can trails be walked alone? - Mikael Mohamed
Track n°14 : Polyphonic walking - Denis Moreau
Track n°15 : About Yves Clerget - Denis Moreau
Track n°21 : The trail as a political space - Alexandre Field
Track n°26 : The art of being a guide : the light at nightfall - Boris Sieverts
Track n°29 : Freeing the real from representation - Boris Sieverts
Track n°30 : Milano Maratown - Gianni Biondillo

>> Our videos

Le Voyage Métropolitain - Sylvain Maestraggi

>> Other resources

Ventilo “ 1001 Nuits ” (FR) - Bureau des Guides du GR2013
Lagrandcaravane.com - Sentier du Grand Paris
Podcast la Grande Caravane - Sentier du Grand Paris
E-mail d’invitation pour le sentier métropolitain de Boston - Pascal Menoret
La Gazette du ruisseau - Collectif Gammare
Eplorateurs de limites - Yves Clerget