

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE EUROPE

#6



a selection of
groundbreaking projects
and **thought-provoking**
reflections



Second Glance



photo Florence Joubert

View towards La
Défense from the
Orgement Hill,
Greater Paris
Region.

‘A new way of being on Earth’

In essence, walking is about being mobile on the face of the planet. Yet, it is also about knowing and understanding your environment so you can navigate within it. When you meander through the streets of neighbourhoods that were formerly foreign to you, you develop a new relationship with your city. When you wander around in a landscape at your own pace and measure the surface of the Earth one step at a time, you start noticing things that you could not have seen from a car. Walking allows you to get to know your territory from a different perspective. Therefore, it is also projective. This is the philosophy of Metropolitan Trails, an interdisciplinary network of public and private actors focusing on creating public trails in metropolises across Europe.

Portrait by Nazlı Tümerdem



EB



PYB



PYB



EG



PYB



FJ



Views from the 600 km Greater Paris Trail. Its development started in 2016.

FJ



PYB

‘The further along the path we go, the more material is accumulated, and the more complexity is added. How to tell the story of Greater Paris?’

L'Art des Sentiers Métropolitains, 2020



EG



PYB

photos Emmanuelle Blanc, Pierre-Yves Brunaud, Eric Garault, Florence Joubert

It was February 2020, just before the global lockdowns made it impossible to travel. I took a plane from Zurich to Athens. I'd been to this city twice before. The first time was in 2010, a visit to a dear old friend. I really like drifting about to get to know the city, so I strolled around and put a check mark next to all the tourist attractions I found interesting. I saw the Parthenon, Tschumi's Acropolis Museum, the Archaeology Museum and the Museum of Cycladic Art. I went to Monastiraki and the flea market, saw the changing of the guards at Syntagma Square. I ate fabulous food at tavernas, drank retsina and listened to Rebetiko. In the few days I was there I walked the length and breadth of the city and got the impression I knew it quite well.

The second time was in 2018. I came to present my paper entitled 'Why Are We All Walking in Istanbul?' at the conference on Urban Struggles in Mediterranean Cities, organised by the School of Architecture at the National Technical University of Athens. I applied for solidarity accommodation offered by the organising committee and got to stay in Exarcheia. This time, I had no intention of seeing anything touristy. Every day I went to the School of Architecture on foot. After the sessions, I made excursions around the city and went back to my flat at night. I saw the wonderful market of Exarcheia, discovered new neighbourhoods like Kolonaki and Plaka, walked on Pikionis' pathway leading to the Acropolis, but skipped the landmark, came across local ouzeris with delightful food from Lesvos and Crete, and took the bus all the way to the Aegean Sea to see the new cultural centre designed by RPBW. This time I got to know Athens from a different perspective, more local than tourist, mostly by foot.

My third time in Athens was totally different from the previous visits. I went there to attend a walkshop organised by Metropolitan Trails, on exploring invisible neighbourhoods, discovering semi-urban areas, and experiencing in-between places of cities – in real life. After experiencing enforced confinement, I realised how essential the practice of walking – something almost everyone can do – is for our physical and mental well-being, which makes these 'on the ground' and 'on the move' urban experiences even more valuable than ever.

This portrait is not about a single designer but a collective. Metropolitan Trails (MT) is an ever-growing network of the arts, architecture, urbanism, landscape and tourism. It was created a decade ago by Baptiste Lanaspèze and Paul-Hervé Lavessière in Southern France. Now, it is based in various cities across Europe, and focuses on curating trails, maintaining them, walking them with multiple audiences, and promoting them as a public space that can be used as a tool to think differently about the future of cities and their territories. In 2013, the experience and knowledge they gained over many years earned them the Medal for Urbanism awarded by the French Academy of Architecture. In the words of its president, Thierry van de Wyngaerts, MT 'are inventing the city of tomorrow, they metamorphose a metropolis by connecting all its territories and shedding a new light on them.' Meanwhile, MT have completed an Erasmus+ funded project which allowed them to set up the Metropolitan Trails Academy and transfer their lessons into a massive open online course (MOOC), freely available on their website.

In February 2020 the Metropolitan Trails Academy organised a conference in Athens to present their first MOOC lesson, 'How to Draw a Trail'. As the initiator of Istanbul Walkabouts, a walking research project based in Istanbul, I did not want to miss this opportunity and travelled to Athens to attend the Academy's workshop on curating trails. Since the whole thing was organised by a collective that advocates mobility, it came as no surprise that we spent most of the time outside, walking, instead of being cooped up in a lecture hall.

The short indoor part of the workshop starts with a talk by MT member Boris Sieverts. With his Cologne based Büro für Städtereisen (Office for Urban Travels) he has more than twenty years of experience of rambling through the

terra incognita areas of cities in Germany and elsewhere. We get a glimpse of his methodology as he flies virtually over Athens via Google Earth to give us a better understanding of the trail we will be following. Later, Jordi Ballesta, the author of the Athens trail, shows an excerpt from Akira Kurosawa's movie *Dersu Uzala*, a favourite of mine, which is about a native surviving in the uncharted territory of Siberia through his instinctive knowledge of geography and orientation. Afterwards, we go outside and begin our short stroll around the city to try out our locational skills and sense of direction.

We start our *walkshop* by simply starting to ramble around the Kallithea neighbourhood. In a matter of few minutes I spot bitter orange trees, prickly pears and mimosas. Of course, we are walking in one of the southernmost capitals of Europe. We continue on the paved road. We enter the campus of Panteion University, where date palms are scattered around a grass lawn, and students are enjoying the afternoon sun. After exiting the campus, Jordi invites us to figure out how to proceed, and we instinctively walk all the way down to an underpass and cross to the other side of the avenue. Our curiosity is roused by the Al Salam Mosque, or at least the point indicated as such on our maps. I take out my phone to find the way and the group follows. Jordi comments that it is a great relief that a woman is finally leading the group. MT started as an almost all-male network and they are well aware of this and very self-critical about it. When we reach the mosque, we are disappointed that it is just a closed garage, obviously for a very small community – a 'map and territory' mismatch between our imagination and reality. We follow Jordi and chat in small groups that naturally form when you walk together long enough. We start slowly going uphill and eventually reach a plateau to discover the

Church of Agios Giorgios. This is where I understand Boris Sieverts' idea of the trail as a choreographic experience. Rather than seeing trail-making as an 'art of space', he refers to it as an 'art of time'. The plateau offers a 360-degree view of Athens. To the northwest we see the Parthenon with Filopappou and Lycabettus Hill on each side. A snow-capped Mount Aigaleo is behind. I spot some tankers floating on the Aegean Sea behind the church where the sun is slowly setting. Mount Hymettus is on the southeastern side, white residential buildings scattered on its foothills which form the natural confines of the city. It is such a stunning view.

The next day we meet at the Marousi tram stop. We are divided into two groups and our routes will converge at one point. We start walking in a southwesterly direction. Boris gives us an introduction about the area. Marousi is located 13 kilometres northeast of central Athens. It used to be a remote summer refuge for the Athenians, but has turned into a rather fancy place for international companies. We wander around what seems to be a residential area and stop in front of *terrain vague* plots with overgrown vegetation. In one of these I spot an olive tree, prickly pear and an oleander – another manifestation of the Mediterranean. Then we continue for a few hundred metres and arrive at a semi-open shopping mall. A security guard tells us that we are not allowed to go on, but we do anyway. It feels good to leave the monotonous residential streets. This is just what MT's first lesson on trail-making suggests: creating variation en route. A little later we cross the highway by an overpass and after walking parallel to the highway for a little, we continue southwest along a stream. This is where I start chatting with Baptiste Lanaspèze. He was the initiator and one of the coordinators of the GR2013 Metropolitan Trail in Marseille, a 365-km long route and

the first officially marked metropolitan trail in the world. As it weaves around the city, it crosses urban areas ranging from old Provencal villages to 1960s high-rise districts to the industrial port, petrochemical complexes and airport runways. This trail won the Medal for Urbanism awarded by the Academy of Architecture and was chosen as the 'Best New Trail' by National Geographic. Intrigued by it, urban planner Paul-Hervé Lavessière travelled from Paris to Marseille to walk it on his own. A young, unemployed father at the time, Paul found walking the trail an intense experience. He remembers it as a dreamlike adventure in which he felt emancipated, even illuminated, which prompted him to find a new way of being on the Earth. He suggested to Baptiste that they create a metropolitan trail for Paris – and they did: a 600-km Greater Paris itinerary. Artists, architects, urban planners and landscape architects were all involved in designing it and it was realised in partnership with several public and private institutions.

Meanwhile, we follow a meandering stream and reach the Olympic Village. Walking under Calatrava's roof feels somehow generic – Olympic complexes around the world are all rather similar – but it is certainly intriguing to experience these changes in the scale, fabric and typology of the built environment along the route. Baptiste tells me that following the success of the Paris trail, the duo set out to create more metropolitan trails across Europe and this is how MT was born. They conceived trails in Avignon, Athens, Toulon and Cologne. As the number of MT trails grew, the network gained in reputation and in 2016, MT was invited by the Marseille-based Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations (MUCEM) to exhibit its trail-making. As a result, a 12 metre long showcase was prepared with all trails in chronological order. It incorporated trails dating from prior to



photo Mariel Agboton

View of Athens and the working-class neighbourhoods in the west of the city, seen from the southern peak of the Tourkovounia hills.

Metropolitan Trails, www.metropolitantrails.org/en

2013 Creation of the GR2013 in the Marseille metropolitan region for Marseille Cultural Capital of Europe; awarded Medal for Urbanism by the French Academy of Architecture

2014 Awarded 'Best New Trail' by National Geographic

2015 Haussmann Prize for the Best Book on Paris for *La Revolution de Paris – Sentier métropolitain* by Paul-Hervé Lavessière (Editions Wildproject, 2014)

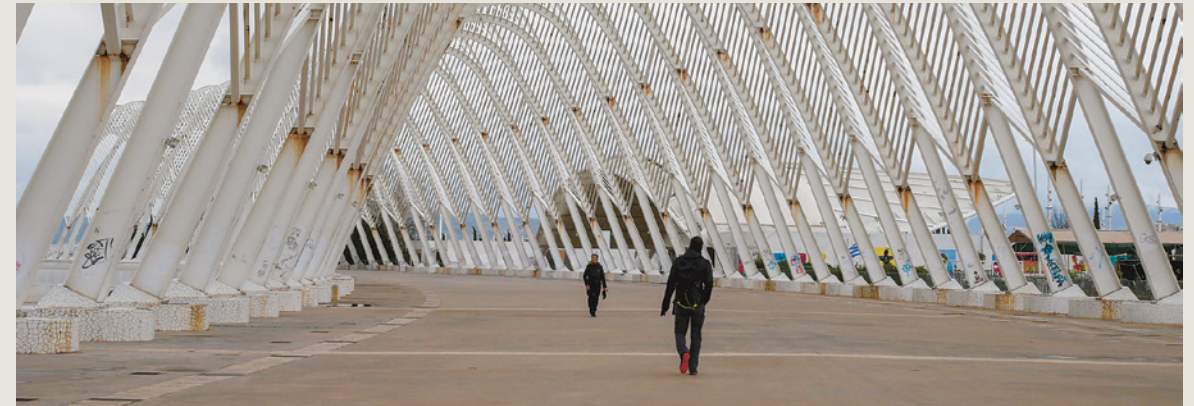
2018 Awarded Prix du Grand Paris by Club des Entreprises du Grand Paris

2020 Adopted the Metropolitan Trails International Charter, Athens

2021 Published *Learning from the Trails – A Guide for Metropolitan Trail Designers* (The Metropolitan Trails Academy)



'In Athens we walked uphill and downhill, on tarmac and on dirt, we traversed a residential area, a shopping mall, a highway, an Olympic complex, an urban park, a former quarry area, and a squat.'



Views from the 250 km Athens Trail. Development started in 2018.

photos Mariel Agboton

‘The metropolitan paths are a collective creation. They have been discussed and invented in different forms, in different places - just as a river has many tributaries, not a single source.’

L'Art des Sentiers Métropolitains, 2020

the existence of the MT initiative, such as Yvan Detraz's *Terres Communes* in Bordeaux, and other people's trails inspired by MT activities, such as Serkan Taycan's *Between Two Seas* in Istanbul. In December 2017 all the European trail creators met in Marseille and discussed how to share methodologies and expand the MT network into new places and reach more diverse audiences. The discussion resulted in applying for and subsequently securing an EU-funded Erasmus+ project to set up an MT Academy.

We continue walking on the curved road around a circular grid in Alsoupoli, Nea Ionia. Exiting the grid, we step in to Adrianiou Square and stumble upon Hadrian's Aqueduct, built in the 2nd century. After walking for a while on a hard surface, we continue following the ridge upwards. Again, we have an extensive panorama. Looking back northeast, we see the area we have traversed. Towards the northwest is the Veikou Road where beehives are scattered at the foothills of the mountain. The whole city is evenly lit under an overcast sky and encircled by mountains. At about 300 metres above sea level, we reach the top. We leave the forest behind and skirt a residential area as we slowly go down. At one moment, we encounter a spiral made of grey and brown gravel, which seems to be a homage to Smithsonian's *Spiral Jetty*. Then, we enter a former quarry site where the earth has been eroded randomly. Now our panoramic vision has vanished and we are surrounded by barren hills. This is where we meet up with the second group and have a picnic together. Afterwards, we exit the gorge by climbing one of the depleted hills. Going uphill, we again get to see the Athens Basin. The clouds are dispersing as we approach to the end of our walk. We walk down through the Nea Filothei neighbourhood and finally arrive at Prosygika, a residential complex built in 1930s in Bauhaus-style

to house the Greek refugees that fled Turkey after the population exchange in 1923. Even though the buildings have been given protected status by the government, it is a seemingly derelict area. Today, the overtly neglected and run-down buildings are partially occupied by the original owners, but also squatted by refugees, immigrants, homeless and drug addicts. Understandably, the occupants are not very keen on visitors, yet after a small exchange, we get a tour of the complex.

I end up accompanying my group to the place where they are staying and witness the memorable moment of signing the Metropolitan Trails Charter. Acknowledging the current climate crisis and the fact that we live on a 'damaged planet' as American anthropologist Anna Tsing calls it, the charter claims that today we need to look elsewhere and walk differently to have a better understanding of our world and our place in it. Instead of tourist strolls in the city centre or through 'nature', MT invites people to walk through areas that are under the influence of multiple forms of urbanisation. In Athens we have walked uphill and downhill, on tarmac and on dirt, we have traversed a residential area, a shopping mall, a highway, an Olympic complex, an urban park, an ex-quarry area and a squat. We have seen several views of Athens from different hilltops and encountered a historical artefact and an earthwork. After my third visit to the city, I had a much more extensive understanding of Athens – its geography, landscape, urban fabric, and history.

MT's Erasmus+ project concluded in the spring of 2021, but Metropolitan Trails continues. After years of walks through large metropolises, MT is now reaching out to smaller cities and increasing numbers of applications are coming in from people with their own projects in cities as diverse as Sarajevo,

Casablanca, Brussels and Angoulême. Regardless of the size of the city or the shape of the trail, all MT routes are intended to activate large-scale public spaces that narrate manifold stories and create opportunities to reimagine the urban landscapes we want to inhabit.

Authors Greater Paris Trail: Paul-Hervé Lavessière, Jens Denissen, Denis Moreau, with Métropole du Grand Paris, Société du Grand Paris, Pavillon de l'Arsenal et al.

Authors Attiko Monopati Athens: Jordi Ballesta, with Institut Français d'Athènes, Paths of Greece, MUCEM

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE EUROPE #6

SECOND GLANCE

The new edition of the triannual series of Landscape Architecture Europe looks greener and bluer – with health, climate-proofness and biodiversity as drivers. But it also shows how to trigger the poetic appreciation of space, the place- and community-making by intuition, and the respect of landscape-inherent collective memories.

This richly illustrated book offers thought-provoking texts in support of landscape

architectural approaches to the challenges of this century:

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- Europeans culture of public spaces
- communication and awareness
- the urban city
- over 60 projects
- essays on design theory and political ecology by Andrea Kahn and Riccardo Mastini
- portraits of Jacqueline Osty and the Metropolitan Trails.



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Eric Luiten, LAE Foundation

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Will we manage, by the end of this decade, to get the tools and techniques in place that the scientists believe are our last chance to secure a habitable environment? This sixth edition in the *Landscape Architecture Europe* series presents and reflects on 63 contemporary projects from all over Europe. They demonstrate the ability of landscape architects to come up with convincing conceptual and physical answers to burning questions – by responding sensitively to sites and their various life forms, and by translating abstract sustainability ideas into spatial solutions.

This richly illustrated book offers food for thought on – and a second glance at – four landscape architectural ambitions: to counter the climate crisis and other challenges, to develop the long-standing European tradition of public space, to enhance people's empathy for their social and natural lifeworlds, and to conceive just and healthy urban futures.

