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**Teenagers in the Contemporary City:
Hypermodern Times, Spaces and Practices**

Luc Gwiazdzinski, géographe

Abstract This chapter aims to examine teenagers' practices in public space, the modes of appropriation that stigmatise certain types of places and worry parents and adults, particularly in the evening and at night. It is based for the most part on a study conducted for the French Union of Holiday Centres (UFCV) on 'teenagers' times and spaces of sociability' and on a more detailed survey conducted in the outskirt area of Besançon, in Eastern France. Our study highlights the importance of a spatial and temporal approach to youth, at the level of living areas, so as to allow for the co-construction, locally and with the youth, their parents and residents, of projects and policies adapted to their needs. The chapter emphasises the necessity of transcending preconceived ideas about teenagers, to acknowledge and respect their temporalities, in order to be able to conceive a city and public spaces that are more accessible and welcoming, places where they can express themselves and places where they can hide: ordered times and places but also places and times for freedom and adventure. More generally, these populations, whose behaviour is increasingly mobile, fragmented and unstable – caricatures of a hypermodern society – call into question the urban fabric, the duality and diversity of urban times and spaces. Between the 'poly-temporal city' and the 'à la carte city', the boundaries are increasingly blurred.

Keywords : Youth • Everyday life practices • Public space • Mobility patterns • design • Space-time use • Chrono-urbanism

Résumé. La communication propose d'aborder les pratiques des adolescents dans l'espace public, les modes d'appropriations qui stigmatisent certains espaces et inquiètent les parents et adultes notamment sur les périodes de soirée et la nuit. Elle s'appuie principalement sur une recherche menée pour l'Union Française des centres de vacances (UFCV) sur « les temps et espaces de sociabilité des adolescents » et sur une recherche plus fine dans la périphérie de l'agglomération de Besançon dans l'Est de la France. La communication met en évidence l'importance d'une approche spatio-temporelle de la jeunesse à l'échelle des bassins de vie pour co-construire localement avec eux, leurs parents et les habitants des projets et des politiques adaptés à leurs besoins. Elle insiste sur la nécessité de dépasser les idées reçues sur les adolescents, de connaître et respecter leurs temporalités pour imaginer une ville et des espaces publics plus accessibles et hospitaliers, des endroits où s'exposer et d'autres pour se cacher, des lieux et temps pleins organisés mais aussi des lieux et des temps de liberté et d'aventure. Plus largement, ces populations aux comportements de plus en plus mobiles, fragmentées et instables - caricatures de la société hypermoderne- questionnent la fabrique urbaine, la mixité et la diversité des temps et espaces urbains. Entre la « ville à plusieurs temps » et la « ville à la carte », les frontières sont de plus en plus floues.

Mots-clés. Adolescents • Temps des villes • Espace public • Design • Usages spatio-temporel • Chrono-urbanisme

Adolescence is the only period in which we learn anything
Marcel Proust

Introduction

Each society produces its own temporal system (Sorokin 1964) that results from the combination of all the social activities conducted in it. Time is the product of social activities and is the abstract measure of concrete things (Sue 1994). When and where can we create and form a territory, a community, a family, in an increasingly fragmented society (Gwiazdzinski 2003, 2007a, 2009)? Acceleration, mobility and the disappearance of great collective rhythms all call into question the foundations of collective life. Even leisure time is under pressure. In this 'à la carte society', we struggle to resist the demand for non-stop activity and individualism. Barriers emerge between individuals, groups and generations at the expense of social cohesion. Evenings, Sundays, meals and holiday times, for example, have become particular and fragmented times during which intergenerational sharing no longer necessarily occurs, and which need to be re-examined (Gwiazdzinski 2005; Gwiazdzinski and Rabin 2011).

In the face of this acceleration, it seems necessary to take a pause and to examine, in particular, the times that characterise the lives of the youth and teenagers. The aim is not to envisage them as disparate tribes exclusively defined by their behaviour, or as mere targets of marketing, but rather to bring to light their practices, life rhythms, mobilities and needs without isolating them from the rest of society.

Everyone talks about the 'youth' but in actual fact no one really knows them, especially teenagers. There is a belief that we know who they are, what they want and what they do until they are about 13 years old. Later on, adults have more difficulty understanding them (Dubet 1991; Singly 2006; Fize 2009). Parents no longer recognise them. Public representatives fear them, particularly when they gather at bus stops or in the lobbies of apartment buildings. Youth activity and support organisations do not really know how to take care of them anymore. The groups that form and dissolve within a few days, the short-lived fads, changing tastes, the need for freedom and emancipation which traditional support systems poorly satisfy and their mobility make for a difficult task (Gwiazdzinski 2007b). Grown-ups criticise them, fear them and fantasise over them – particularly in terms of sexuality – forgetting, in the process, the kind of youth they themselves used to be not so long ago. Even though everyone speaks 'in their name' or 'for their sake', the youth are given very little consideration in public policies, which currently focus on the other opposite end of the life span: old age.

A First Approach

The spaces, times and practices of teenagers remain to be explored, not only by researchers but also by the public authorities.

Strangers. It seems that only clothing brands have 'figured out' this population; they target, very successfully, the 'youth' and segment the 'potential market' into 'pre-teen', 'teen' and 'adolescent' categories. In all cases, we often criticise young people, we observe and worry over

them, and yet, we spend our time mimicking their likes, dislikes and behaviours in terms of fashion and music; we even use their language and beg for their expert help in matters of information and communication technologies – for better or for worse.

A Need for Exploration. Several changes in daily life can be analysed from the point of view of time (Carlstein et al. 1978; Bonfiglioli 1990; Lepetit and Pumain 1993; Henckel and Eberling 2000; Boulin and Mückenberger 2002; Colleoni 2004; Boulin 2008; Marregi 2011). This is the reason why it is necessary to perform chronotopic studies of young people and their spatial practices (Gwiazdzinski 2007c), using a ‘rhythm-analytical’ (Lefebvre 1992) approach that will take into account the territory, the uses and users at different times of the day, of the week or of the year. The first elements presented here are based for the most part on a study on the different time periods in the daily lives of teenagers, conducted as part of a national, experimental initiative and for the French Union of Holiday and Leisure centres (UFCV). A first series of studies conducted in ten holiday centres and extracurricular organisations had led to a number of conclusions concerning leisure times and the youth (Gwiazdzinski 2007b).

An Observed Evolution. The evolution of social times has an impact on the internal functioning of leisure centres as well as on the quality of life of parents, social workers and children. Pressure from outside the centres affects the workers and the children. The children and social workers are pressured by more and more demanding parents who want more activities, production or outings. Recovery times like breaks, naps, quiet times or mealtimes are under threat. The times allotted for being together with other individuals are fewer and fewer. The essential interactions with parents and local actors are more and more difficult, in a context in which those organisations are more and more used as babysitters. The importance and respect of individual choice have become central issues, in spite of, or because of, collective living.

Finally and above all, the studies have raised the awareness of the difficulties facing the parents and traditional youth facilities in supporting or supervising a particular category of young individuals – teenagers – during their leisure times and have given rise to a desire to find out more about their temporalities, territories and practices, topics we had already explored in the context of participatory protocols in another region of France: In the Belfort area, through several research programmes on the mobility of young people, for the PREDIT (Programme of research, experimentation and innovation in land transport), in Nanterre, for the Youth Congress, and in other studies and programmes conducted at different scales in urban as well as in rural areas.

Objectives and Protocols of Exploration. The area chosen for this work is comprised of five small towns in the north of Besançon, Eastern France. The area in question represents a population of 10,000 inhabitants, among whom 1,000 young people aged between 10 and 20. The aim is to gain a better knowledge and understanding of the practices, uses and needs of the teenagers living in these peri-urban small towns, so as to be able, later on, to develop, together with the youth, the professionals, the parents and elected representatives, suitable responses.

The overall analytical approach to the times and spaces of teenagers rests on several cross protocols: a substantial awareness campaign, involving the creation and distribution of post cards, leaflets and posters designed with teenagers; a survey on the crossed representations of children and adults, conducted with about 20 families; a mobility analysis based on the GPS monitoring of 15 individuals (young and adult), for 1 week – so as to map their movements and whereabouts – followed by a session during which each individual comments the maps obtained; a survey of the territory and of the gathering places, conducted with the *gendarmerie*; periods of field

observations, with adults meeting with the youth of the area, and a survey on the needs of the teenagers (200 questionnaires were analysed and the organisation of creativity sessions and public meetings every other month involving the local youth and grown-ups). This work pursues a *strong participatory* approach and in particular the setting up of thematic working groups and the involvement of the local actors at the different stages of the initiative.

Particular Ties to the Territory

On the face of it, one cannot say that the youth do not have any ties to the territory.

Territorial Presence. In reality, they are the ones who ‘keep’ the territory, the district and the village for part of the day; they do so jointly with housewives, retired and unemployed people, when the working residents have gone away to work somewhere else. The phenomenon is very common in peri-urban areas, city outskirts and dormitory suburbs, where, during the day, one only sees these specific population groups.

Territorial Synchronisation. It is also the youth that usually forms the largest battalions of members in sports or cultural associations. One cannot say that they have no ties to the town and society. When everything dissolves and splits (e.g. territories, working hours, organisations, families), the one institution that still stands, the only surviving great social rhythm, is that provided by school. The ringing of the bell provides the tempo for part of collective life and particularly for families with children whose holidays, weeks and days it regulates. School remains a ‘time giver’ (Sansot et al. 1983), a synchroniser, which, among other things, enables the population of a district or a village to meet.

Territorialised Memories. On a different scale, by taking a look at the work of writers or filmmakers, one can easily see the ties the latter have to their youth and the territories of their youth: a space of play, of transgression, which the child and later the teenager paces and measures; a space he discovers at the same time as he discovers and constructs himself; a space he experiences and in which the first boundaries and limits are erected. Let us remember the first words in Pagnol’s trilogy in which he relates how he discovered the hills, with his father the rock partridge hunter, his mother Augustine, his uncle Jules, his aunt Rose, his brother little Paul, his friend Lili and his little sister: ‘I was born beneath the goat-crowned Garlaban, in the days of the last goat-herds’ (Pagnol 1957, p. 4). Or think of the urban trials and tribulations of the young Jean-Pierre Léaud in François Truffaut’s ‘Les quatre cents coups’ (Truffaut 1959) or of Romain Duris’ adventures in ‘L’auberge espagnole’ (Klapisch 2002), set at a time in life when the territory of young people opens up to the world.

To See the Particular Ties. That a young person has to the territory, we only need to relive our first school experiences, put a foot on the path we used to walk as a child, and later as a teenager. All we need to do is take a few steps and the memories come rushing back and we soon can feel where we come from. We once again experience a particular territory, which will forever be different to all the other spaces we have experienced since. The change in altitude, the landscape, the colours, noises and smells are all like Proust’s little ‘madeleines’, they are like rugosities that catch the memory. Even though many things have changed, some buildings and people have disappeared, we remember the trees, the stairs, pavements, pedestrian crossings, the snails that stuck to walls on rainy days, the songs of birds in the spring, the moss covering facades, the

people we bumped into, the baker's shop where we used to buy sweets, the butcher shop, the newsagent and the gardens in blossoms. We rediscover with emotion the hidden groves where we finally plucked up the courage to give our first kiss and the craggy spot where we built a shack or smoked our first cigarette. It was on those paths – which we often walked while playing truant, while we were rubbing ourselves to the land, its open and its concealed corners – that we stepped over the boundaries, tested our limits and that of others. 'We can only discover a place by discovering ourselves' (Maldiney 2007, p. 166) But the territory of childhood can also be a more male, a more warrior-like territory such as that depicted in Louis Pergaud's 'La guerre des boutons' (Pergaud 1912). It was into other spots of this territory that our teacher's 'object lessons' used to transport us and it was that teacher who skilfully introduced us to the trades of the local craftsmen and to the mysterious life of a pond. No one ventures there anymore for security and norm-related reasons. But there is no need here to depict a nostalgic view of youth and of the territory, which many have depicted before us. It was not better before and those who believe it was forget that in those days they were 20. Let us simply agree that strong ties develop between a young person and the territory, during their schooling times – which we have a relatively good insight into – and during leisure times, which we probably do not know quite as well.

Tricky Relations Between Teenagers and Grown-ups

It has to be said, first of all, that young people and adults have complex interactions, in which representations play a large role.

Caricatural Cross Representations. Beyond the cliché's, young people develop in the image of our society and do so, sometimes, to the point of caricature. When their parents are questioned, rather unflattering words pour out: 'always tired', 'unstable', 'fickle', 'scatterbrained', 'individualist', 'elusive', 'complex', 'contradictory', 'glued to their cell phones' or 'stuck to their pc' (Gwiazdzinski 2007b). What do they express if not the contradictory tendencies of a hypermodern society that fosters complexity and paradoxes (Barel 1989). When questioned about their parents, young people are not much more tolerant: 'old', 'tired', 'moaners', 'never here' and 'always in a rush' (Gwiazdzinski 2008). Return of the compliment. This is not to say that this play of cross representations means that the youth do not develop ties with the territory or that they do not engage locally. They do so differently from their seniors, in a more fractional and temporary way, at different scales and in different networks. They are fickle, sometimes seem to be elsewhere, often appear scattered, but they too get involved. The lack of understanding might result from a lack of intergenerational dialogue.

Difficult Dialogue. Teenagers hardly ever get the opportunity to have discussions with adults other than their parents or sometimes their parents' friends, or their cousins. Within the family, it is with their mother and older brothers and sisters that they interact the most. The favoured times for interaction with them are mealtimes and the evenings. They struggle to talk to their parents, particularly to their father. When dialogue does occur, the same issues keep cropping up, at the detriment of a serene exchange: school results, going out to parties and people they socialise with. They resent their parents for wanting to protect them and reproach them for continuing to often treat them like children and for being a little distant from them. They reckon that their parents do not move with the times, that they got stuck in the past. It is interesting to note that when adults are asked questions about their youth, they talk of freedom, of 'life on the wild side',

of the first time they got plastered and of their first cigarettes and first kisses. The very people who criticise teenagers readily describe themselves as rebels and miss ‘the good old days’.

A Specific Organisation in Space and in Time

Territories of Variable Size. By monitoring the itineraries of a teenager with a GPS and examining on a map, the routes he travels, one can take a good measure of his life space. Beyond his daily trips to primary or high school, his comings and goings reveal a more or less wide territory and social relations depending on whether he walks or uses his bicycle, his moped, public transport, and according to whether he is a boy and a girl (see Figs. 5.1 and 5.2).

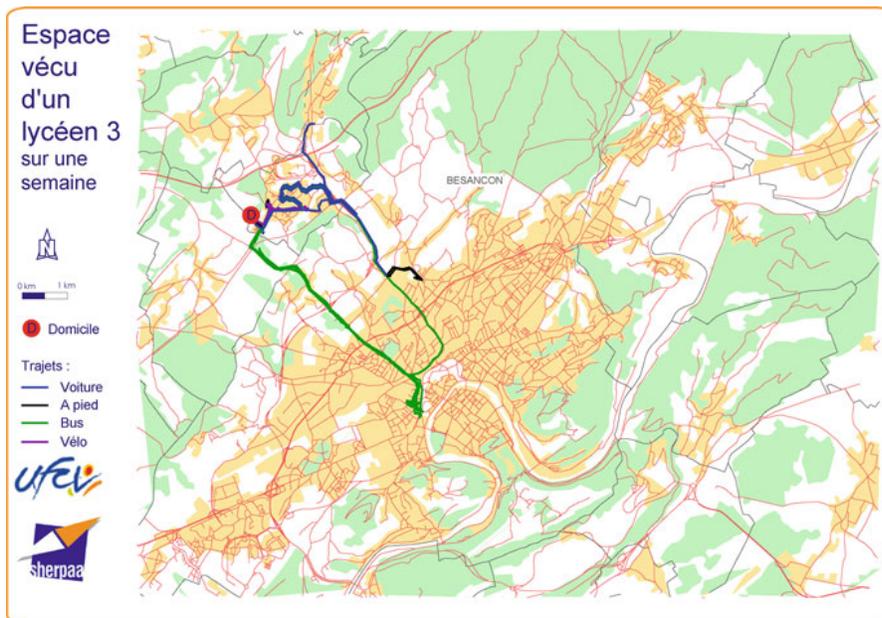


Fig. 5.1 Life spaces, travel routes and modes of transport of a male student during the week (Sylvaine Schlienger, Luc Gwiazdzinski)

This territory, which the young person has visited, figured out and appropriated, grows as years go by, whereas for elderly people it shrinks, ‘From bed to window, then from bed to armchair, and then from bed to bed’ (Brel 1964).

Practices that Differ from Gender to Gender. The practices, activities and social mobilities of the youth outside school also clearly differ according to gender. For example, time restrictions for going out and restrictions on where they may go are tighter for girls, whom parents watch more closely. Naturally, there are times and places when and where boys and girls meet, but it is interesting to note that the relations young people – as individuals or as part of groups – develop with their territory are strongly conditioned by their gender (see Figs. 5.1 and 5.2).

Landmarks for Sociability and for Anchoring. Teenagers often gather in specific places on the territory. Naturally, sports places are part of this social geography: skateboarding parks, the sports field next to a school, the soccer field or even the high school. Consumption places, such as McDonald fast food restaurants, the movie theatres or shopping malls, are important in this geography and constitute real landmarks. The younger children meet at the leisure centres to take

part in supervised activities. Later on, the bus stops, the public gardens or the old wash house are all places where young people can meet even in bad weather. They are the equivalent of buildings' lobbies in big cities.

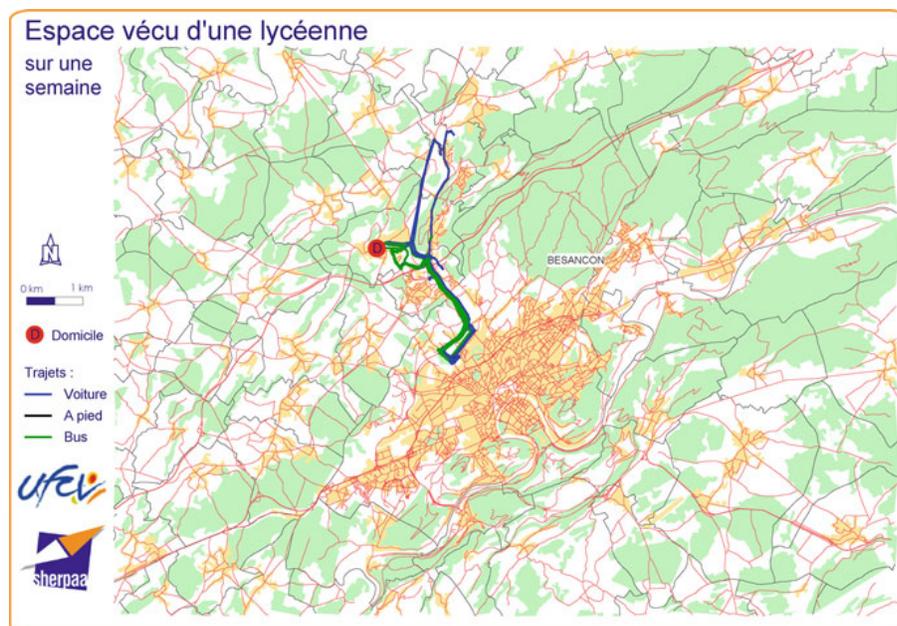


Fig. 5.2 Life spaces, travel routes and modes of transport of a female student during the week (Sylvaine Schlienger, Luc Gwiazdzinski)

And it is those clearly visible gathering places that crystallise the adults' fantasies. Other, less welcoming places, like the fountain behind the graveyard, allow for more intimate meetings. An old, dilapidated caravan served as a landmark for a while. A secret shack plays this role but the caravan sticks in everybody's mind: that of the teenagers who are still angry about it and that of the adults who are glad that this 'gathering and drinking place' has finally disappeared. These gathering places are often marked with territorial graffiti and tags that serve as signals to others that 'this is our turf' and that they must 'stay out'. It is interesting to note that these places last and serve the same functions from generation to generation.

A Tendency of Territorial Control. Teenagers generally restrict their comings and goings to the towns in their area, and when they do go beyond, it is generally to visit the main city in the region. In the summer, a natural sandpit attracts the local teenagers but also those from other areas, who, in the adolescent Imaginary, only come to 'pick fights or take our girls'. Strange stories of drug dealing and of outside dealers circulate among teenagers as well as their parents. Exchanges develop between young people of different towns; parents give their 'big boy' or 'big girl' a lift to a bus stop and fetch them again later. Young people occasionally come from other towns to play soccer or basketball. Children invite one another to their homes; this is common particularly among girls, as it makes it easier for the parents to supervise their daughters' activities and friends.

Breakaways to the City. The teenagers go several times a month to Besançon, in particular. The girls go for walks about the city and shop for clothes and shoes. The older boys tend to visit the public places of the city centre such as bars and pool halls. Boys and girls meet in the

metropolitan temples that the ice skating rink and bowling alley constitute for them. The oldest ones go to nightclubs.

The Constraints Related to Leisure

The functional space of teenagers and their leisure-related practices are necessarily limited by a number of constraints:

- A limited space-time budget. Young people claim to be very busy and to have heavy workloads during the week, and that they have very little time for hobbies and friends. Whereas many of the parents have a 35-h per week work schedule, the children themselves complain that they have to work over 40 h a week.
- A limited financial budget. The majority of the teenagers get a pocket money allowance of less than AC30 per month. They spend most of their money on video games, airtime, DVDs, movie tickets, comic strips, clothes and sweets.
- Going out hours. The days and number of hours children are allowed to go out are restricted and vary depending on their parents' flexibility. The teenagers generally have similar time restrictions. They are allowed out until 7 pm during the week and until 10.30 pm on weekends and a little later in the summer. The hours mostly vary depending on the age and gender of the teenagers. Many of the girls still have to stay at home in the evening until they are 18 years old.
- Discriminatory transport modes. In this type of peri-urban territory, it is the parents who generally drive their children to their recreational activities when they take place outside their town. These 'taxi-parents' are not always available. For the other activities, closer to home, the children cycle, walk or use the public transports. For a minority of the children who have problems getting around, the difficulties are mostly related to a lack of public transport or to the fact that bus times might be unsuitable, particularly in the afternoons and evenings. Sociability strongly varies depending on whether the teenager has a scooter or not.

Particular Practices and Behaviours

Observing the recreational activities of teenagers over a given period of time reveals particular practices and behaviours.

Specific Temporalities. Teenagers generally meet on Saturdays, Wednesdays and in the holidays. They hardly ever go out on Sundays, which are still days for family time; and this does not seem to bother them. They often meet at McDonald's or at the local Kebab place in the early evening. They arrive at about 8 pm even though there is no prearranged meeting time. They seldom decide in advance what they are going to do and decide at the last minute, depending on the information they have and on what they feel like doing. They claim to get bored on weekends and wish they could go to Besançon or to a lakeside or river bank. They also get bored in the holidays and get out of bed late.

Holidays. Sports are a large part of teenagers' recreational time, with soccer and basketball being the most popular. When interviewed about their activities when they are together, the teenagers claim that they 'don't do much'. When they can't go to Besançon, they 'bum around' at the local shopping mall. When they 'go to town', they often just 'hang around'. They chat, laugh, go for

strolls or walk to the shack. When asked what their activities are, they generally reply that they do not do anything in particular.

Generational and Territorial Identity. They outraged between 13 and 18 feel like and call themselves ‘teenagers’. Ninety percent of their hobbies are activities they share with other people their age. Most of them claim to be part of a ‘group’. Most of them are high school, higher education, technical school students or apprentices. They all claim that they ‘like the place’ and that they feel attached to the territory even though it is not the place where they imagine living when they are older. The social relations and interactions they develop with other young people present on their territory do not seem to be determined, in any way, by the socio professional status of the parents.

Permanently Connected. Many of the children, particularly the girls, prefer cell phone to direct contact. Most teenagers have a computer (95 %) and a cell phone (90 %), except the youngest ones. They all use the Internet on a regular basis and have an email address. One third of them have a blog. They report spending on average half an hour a day on their cell phone (SMS) (mostly the girls), 2 h a day watching TV and two and a half hours on their computer (e.g. chat, email, discussion forum). The digital game enthusiasts (mostly boys) spend over 3 h a day playing (e.g. console, network games) but do not feel they spend much time doing so.

Instability. Though most teenagers are part of a mix-gender group of about ten friends, the composition of these groups (mostly boys) seems to change regularly, which poses a problem for a researcher. In the realm of friendship, the so-called friends for life sometimes only remain so for a week or so. The children often move from association to association and from club to club so as to try out new activities or new sports. When it comes to matters of the heart, the teenagers are relatively quiet but pride themselves in being unattached. Only a few couples make excessive displays of affection in public.

Presentism. Teenagers struggle to make medium- to long-term plans. They know they will meet at the end of the day or on weekends but generally decide what they are going to do and change plans at the last minute and prefer to decide in the moment according to the best offer or idea.

Space and Time-Related Claims

In the face of the space and time-related constraints that restrict their freedom, and of the absence of certain services, the teenagers have a number of claims.

The Right to Freedom and to Difference. They suggest that the grown-ups ‘give them more freedom’, ‘avoid criticising them’, ‘stay calm’ and ‘not be too clingy’. They do not want to be judged or controlled. They do not want to be ‘called drunks just because they have a bottle in their hand’. They do not want to be considered as delinquents even though they acknowledge that ‘when someone entrusts something to young people, it often ends up being damaged’.

The Right to Idleness. Teenagers demand the right to not do anything, to relax without being deemed ‘lazy’. They curse orders to ‘get moving!’, ‘do something’ and ‘get some work done!’.

The Right to ‘Relax’. They refute the adults’ claims about alcohol or drugs even though, for the oldest teenagers, a fun evening always starts with the purchase of a bottle. They recognise being

attracted to cigarettes, alcohol and even certain drugs. They teasingly remind us that their parents use tranquillizers and sleeping pills to be able to sleep.

The Right to Night Life and Mobility. Their demands revolve around three main areas: the lack of activities and events at night, particularly in winter ('everything shuts down before 11 pm', 'nothing happens at night, there are no parties for young people'); the lack of venues where young people could meet when the weather is bad (no hall or shelter, such as a caravan or bars where they could get together) and the difficulties of getting out of the territory: 'no trips to the swimming pool, to Europa-Park in Germany' and 'no buses in the evening'.

The Right to be Recognised as Equal Members of the Community. They would like to be able to discuss certain topics with their parents, about the 'challenges of life'. They acknowledge that they seldom express this need with their parents or other adults. They know little of the local representatives or their functions. The mayor seems rather unapproachable, and yet they reckon that they need to be able to express and discuss their needs with him. They think that the best way to understand young people is to meet them on their own ground and to ask them questions. More generally, they would like to share more activities, events and parties with the adults. Beyond their demands, the teenagers do offer some propositions.

Propositions to Expand Their Time Horizon and Territory. Their propositions revolve around the possibility to widen their 'play arena' by expanding their time horizon, i.e. by being able to go out for longer hours and to be able to venture further away (spatially), by gaining access to public transports and activities on offer beyond the neighbouring towns. The oldest teenagers (15–18-year-olds) would like to go on camps, for example.

Simple Ideas. When they are asked to choose a project, they suggest the idea of a hall with lights, chairs, a sofa, an alcohol-free bar, just as a meeting place; and they also would like a end-of-year group outing. Most importantly, they express the wish to organise these projects themselves and to manage them without the grown-ups constantly peering over their shoulders.

Conformist Dreams. They all see themselves later in life with a family, and some of them even have an idea of their future profession: doctor, nurse and even policeman.

Contributions to Society

The Advantage of Spatio-Temporal Approaches. Research confirms that a spatio-temporal approach is an asset for understanding individuals, groups, organisations and territories. Time is one of the rare public policy issues that is truly transversal to all public domains. All the sectors of collective life are concerned, whether they be transports, private and public services, housing, schools, nursery school, trade, cultural and recreational facilities, etc. A competence of everyone and no one, time is one of the only themes that make it possible to involve all public and private actors in the debate, without any tension or without anyone retreating behind institutional barriers. Time imposes partnership, from the observation phase to that of experimentation and of evaluation. A sensitive dimension, time naturally repositions man at the heart of the debate. It is an opportunity. Even though the data and observations collected and analysed cannot always be generalised to all teenagers, nor to all European territories, they still provide useful information about territories, society and territories.

Individuals Looking for Hyper Choice. The observation and interviews conducted in this peri-urban territory revealed profiles of individuals who are mobile, unstable and connected, who more and more frequently make their decisions at the last minute. They reveal individuals who want more freedom, more mobility and wish to have a say in the decisions that concern them and to participate in projects, locally and elsewhere.

'Influential Outsiders'. These teenagers are the outposts or the caricatures of their seniors. Through their spatio-temporal practices, they outline the contours of a hypermodern society (Lipovetsky 2004; Aubert 2010) that fosters paradoxes: they stick to themselves but want to be more open to the world; they want to be consulted but are seldom available; they want services to be more open but demand the right to do nothing; they want to be surprised but get stuck in routines; they want to meet others but confine themselves at home, in a permanent tug of war between the 'I' and the 'We', the here and there, the real and the virtual.

The Paths to Hyper Territories. The practices of teenagers outline the contours of a 'widened citizenship' (Gwiadzinski and Rabin 2011) that knows no administrative boundaries, cliques or frontiers. They inscribe themselves within a 'hyper territory' in which they pack accumulation, connectivity and mobility, multiply connections and juggle with sociability scales and networks. They force their parents and elected representatives to rethink 'the institutional mechanic' and to make it more open and diverse.

Sentinels of the Future. Sometimes 'influential outsiders', often outposts of society, teenagers have a lot to say about society and the world. The distorting mirrors and caricatures of the adult world, they are the transmitters of weak signals and also useful sentinels that we would be well advised to try and understand and to associate with the life of the city, rather than to judge or mimic. In this respect, listening more attentively to young people, as outposts of a society that will eventually imitate them, is a duty and a necessity. To understand them is also to identify the future possibilities, to avoid getting trapped in the dogmas of proximity and of urgency in terms of territory and of democracy. For them just as for us, there are a thousand and one ways of experiencing the spaces and times of hypermodern society and just as many new ways of getting involved in the life of the city, its networks, territories and places.

These observations point in the direction of a reflection on 'expanded territories' and on 'widened' citizens: in other words, on individuals capable of crossing networks, knowledge, competences and scales in order to be able to move beyond the here and now. Our society must not withdraw into idealised, but outdated, life territories. It has to adapt to the reality of our plural and poly-chronic life modes and cities, shift from a stock identity to a flow identity, move from the spot to the pathway, from permanence to situation without falling prisoner to the present while doing so. Teenagers invite us to join them on the paths of diversities and multitudes. Let's follow them!

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