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# **WALKING IN THE CITY**

## **SELF AND SPATIALITY**

### **IN**

## **COPENHAGEN AND KATHMANDU**

MASTER THESIS

4Cities Erasmus Mundus Master's in Urban Studies

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## ABSTRACT

Walking as an everyday activity in the city, undertaken by billions across the world in diverse spatial contexts, has received scant attention, especially its embodied aspects and its relation to the spatiality within which it occurs. Every city dweller is a pedestrian at one point or the other, even if their primary mode of transport is public transport, a car or a motorbike or a bicycle. It is impossible to eschew walking in a city, whether it is walking from your home to your car, from your car to your place of work, to and from the bus stop or metro station, or just to the nearby store to purchase goods. Environmental and health concerns are growing among urban dwellers and walking is an apt solution to both these issues. However, when it comes to walking in the city, scholarly attention has largely been focussed on their pedestrianisation, often treating walking as simply another form of traffic. This thesis attempts to go beyond the characterisation of pedestrians as anonymous traffic and towards a more embodied exploration of what it means to walk in a city as an individual subjectivity.

Through two diverse case studies, in Copenhagen and Kathmandu, this paper explores the embodied experience of walking and the changing relations between the self and its surrounding spatiality. A series of directed walks on one particular route in each city provides experiential information to be parsed, explored and analysed. Through this exploration a diverse set of relations concerning affect, citizenship and the senses emerges between the self and spatiality.

**Keywords:** walking, pedestrian, micro-geography, subjectivity, the self

Das Gehen als eine alltägliche Tätigkeit in der Stadt, die in verschiedenen räumlichen Kontexten Milliarden von Menschen in der ganzen Welt unternommen hat, hat wenig Beachtung gefunden, insbesondere ihre verkörperten Aspekte und ihre Beziehung zu der Räumlichkeit, in der sie stattfindet. Jeder Stadtbewohner ist an der einen oder anderen Stelle ein Fußgänger, auch wenn es sich primär um öffentliche Verkehrsmittel, ein Auto, ein Motorrad oder ein Fahrrad handelt. Es ist unmöglich, in einer Stadt zu Fuß zu gehen, sei es zu Fuß von Ihrem Zuhause zu Ihrem Auto, von Ihrem Auto zu Ihrem Arbeitsplatz, von und zu der Bushaltestelle oder U-Bahn-Station oder einfach zum nahe gelegenen Geschäft, um Waren zu kaufen. Umwelt- und Gesundheitsprobleme wachsen unter den Stadtbewohnern, und Laufen ist eine geeignete Lösung für diese beiden Probleme. Wenn es jedoch um das Gehen in der Stadt geht, hat sich die wissenschaftliche Aufmerksamkeit hauptsächlich auf ihre Fußgängerzonen konzentriert, wobei das Gehen oft als einfach eine andere Art von Verkehr behandelt wird. Diese Arbeit versucht über die Charakterisierung von Fußgängern als anonymen Verkehr hinauszugehen und zu einer mehr verkörperten Erforschung dessen, was es bedeutet, in einer Stadt als individuelle Subjektivität zu wandeln.

Anhand von zwei Fallstudien in Kopenhagen und Kathmandu untersucht dieser Artikel die verkörperte Erfahrung des Gehens und die sich verändernden Beziehungen zwischen dem Selbst und seiner umgebenden Räumlichkeit. Eine Reihe von geführten Wanderungen auf einer bestimmten Route in jeder Stadt bietet Erfahrungsinformationen, die geparkt, erforscht und analysiert werden können. Durch diese Erforschung entsteht eine vielfältige Beziehung zwischen Affekt, Staatsbürgerschaft und den Sinnen zwischen dem Selbst und der Räumlichkeit.

## **PREFACE: Why Walking?**

Everyone is a pedestrian at some point or the other, but I have always been a walker. I have discovered, through my thirty-odd years, that the best way to know a space is to walk it. The ground underneath your feet tells a story, a geological palimpsest of mud and soil and stones and concrete. There are sounds and smells and sights that are impossible to experience when whizzing by inside a car or a bus or a train. The city is around us and when you walk its streets, you enter into a conversation with it.

Ever since I moved to Europe to pursue this Masters, I have marvelled at just how walkable these four cities, Brussels, Vienna, Copenhagen and Madrid, were. In each city, I walked for hours each day. I learned the rhythms of these spaces, the speeds at which others walked, at which they drove, at which they biked. There was a pattern to each traffic light and if I timed it right, I could hit every red light on my way to university, not stopping even once.

At the same time, I lamented my home town of Kathmandu. Over the years, I had started to walk less and less, as the pollution grew, the dust swirled, pavements disappeared and cars and motorbikes took over. Ten years ago, I could've walked across the city without nary a cough; a walk now meant that I had to hold a handkerchief over my nose and mouth or worse, wear a mask. So even as I revelled in walking in Europe, I despaired at my own's city plight.

In Europe, there was much talk of pedestrianisation and how certain spaces in the city had been reserved for walkers. I was happy that such spaces existed, but it did not strike a chord within me. For me, a walk was, and is, something done out of choice. If the city forces you to get out of your car and walk, the walk becomes a march. But then again, I realised that not everyone has the luxury of choice. For a vast many people across the world, walking is a necessity, as not everyone owns a bicycle, car or motorbike. I came to a compromise. Being a pedestrian was about regular walking, whether out of choice or necessity. Pedestrians walked out of habit. You trace the same path to your neighbourhood store and the same path to your place of work. There is repetition and within repetition, there is difference.

When I returned to Kathmandu during the summer of 2017, I discovered that there was something amiss. Kathmandu was still the same polluted dustbowl but my walking in Brussels and Vienna seemed to have triggered a self-consciousness. I began to actively reflect on my walks, what I saw, how I felt, what I heard and where I walked. I began to wonder just how much the space impacted my consciousness and my self as I walked through it. There was a dialogue here that I had somehow missed my entire life. It was this

very conversation I wished to listen to. Would Copenhagen speak to me differently than Kathmandu? Or do all cities speak the same language?

This thesis begins with a short delineation of the issue to be explored – the subjective experience of walking in cities and how spatiality might affect conceptions of the self. The paper will then move onto a review of relevant literature, tracing the evolution of mobility research, along with relevant concepts such as microgeographies of the everyday, *flâneur* ie, habit, rhythm, and psychogeography. The next section deals with method and methodology, including the significance of the methods adopted and an outline of the case studies chosen. Then, the paper will discuss all that was gleaned from the fieldwork conducted in the form of four topical essays that attempt to combine experiences in both case study areas. Finally, a conclusion will summarise the entire project and outline recommendations along with gaps in research and how similar research could be conducted in the future.



## INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH: Self, Subjectivity and Spatiality

Questions about the self have been a part of the canon of Western philosophy ever since Rene Descartes identified the self with consciousness. For Descartes, there was no self outside of consciousness, hence his pronouncement of 'cogito ergo sum' (Descartes and Lafleur 1960). Centuries of philosophical thought since Descartes has taken apart the notion of the self and consciousness and each philosopher has their own interpretation of how the self is constituted, what the self is and how it functions (Kierkegaard 2013, Nietzsche 1967, Kelly 2013). Immanuel Kant introduced the word 'subjectivity' to mean what Descartes implied when he aligned consciousness with a conception of the self (Kelly 2013). This Kantian definition of the self is what I shall be referring to when I use the word 'subjectivity' – namely, the subject is the conscious self (the 'I').

Michel Foucault (2017) elaborated on the subject and subjectivity at length in his Lectures at the College of France. For Foucault (2017), it was necessary for the subject to be constituted and moreover, constituted through he called 'techniques of the self'. These techniques are habits and practices that are employed by a consciousness and through repetition, they build up to something that is recognisable as an identity, a self. Foucault (2017) calls this process 'subjectivation'.

Taking Foucault's conception of the subject as the starting point for this thesis' investigation of the links between spatiality and subjectivity, we assume that the daily practice of walking can be considered a technique of the self, since it is a habitual practice that is repeated and conducted consciously. Thus, walking is something that actively influences and acts on the subject. However, through practice, we know that walking is not the same in every spatiality and changes in spatiality affect the practice of walking (Edensor 2000, Pinder 2001, Wylie 2005). Walking as an embodied practice, The embodied experience of walking is something that takes into account changes in spatiality -- geographical, sensorial and affective (Edensor 2000, Wylie 2005). With such changes in spatiality, there are corresponding changes in subjectivity.

Spatiality does not simply have to do with geographical space, that much the psychogeography of the Situationists has impressed upon us (Debord 1955). Spaces have ambiances that changes with time and with the people who occupy those spaces. These ambiances are most evident in cities, where space is compact and many make use of the same space for different purposes (Debord 1955). Thus, over time, the same space can have many uses, just as the same road can have many ambulatory uses. Walking through a space at different times can have different effects on the consciousness and can shape subjectivity differently (Debord 1955, Lynch 1960). This is the central premise upon which this thesis is based.

Thus, the research question that this thesis wishes to explore is as such: *How can the inherently spatial process of the urban and the ways in which it shapes subjectivity and experiences of sensation and encounter be explored and understood through the performative practice of pedestrian walking?*

Or put more simply: *How does walking impact subjectivity?*

## LITERATURE REVIEW: New Mobilities and the Urban

There has been a ‘new mobilities turn’ in the social sciences, resulting in a glut of academic works that see mobility and the mobile as a counterpoint to the largely sedentary academia of yesteryear. This new focus on mobilities does not just consider large-scale movements or transport research as important but also the small-scale microgeographies of the everyday. Walking, in particular, has become a central concern not just for academics but also for urban policy.

However, the latter has continued to treat walking as merely pedestrianism, i.e., pedestrians are seen as homogenous masses of people who simply move from destination to destination. A small body of research is attempting to upend this understanding and ask questions that heterogenise pedestrians. Instead of simply seeing pedestrians as a form of ‘traffic’, these academic studies try to look into the sociality of walkers and the ‘how’ of walking, rather than the ‘why’. Furthermore, postmodernism has introduced questions of identity and citizenship into pedestrianism while studying qualitative experiences of walking in the city. The following literature review attempts to trace academic research on walking all the way from the wider mobilities turn to the identity politics of walking in an urban environment. In relation to the theme of this thesis, the literature review will also touch upon the influences of habit and rhythm on urban walking, along with the affective turn of psychogeography.

### *A turn towards the mobile*

“All the world seems to be on the move,” declared Sheller and Urry, heralding the arrival of a ‘new’ paradigm in the social sciences that had emerged since the 90s (Sheller and Urry 2006, pp 207). Explicitly concerned with movement along with mobile theories and research methods, this turn in the social sciences was dubbed the ‘new mobilities paradigm’. Sheller and Urry (2006) trace the evolution of this new paradigm across a range of disciplines in the social sciences, from sociology, anthropology and cultural studies to geography, tourism and transport studies and science and technology studies. Sparked by globalisation and buttressed by technologies such as the internet and mobile telephony, mobility had become an explicit concern for social scientists. Then – and perhaps even more so now – “Issues of movement, of too little movement or too much, or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time, are central to many lives and many organisations” (Sheller and Urry 2006, pp 208).

Sheller and Urry’s (2006) contention is that the new turn towards a mobility paradigm was largely a response to the then sedentary and ‘a-mobile’ nature of the social sciences. Despite a spatial turn in the social sciences in the 80s, especially in the discipline of geography, Sheller and Urry argue that “the social sciences have still failed to examine how the spatialities of social life presuppose (and frequently involve conflict over) both the

actual and imagined movement of people from place to place, person to person, event to event" (2006, pp 208). Thus, the turn towards a study of mobility itself, not just as a byproduct or an in-between, is a consequence of this very sedentarism which "treats as normal stability, meaning, and place, and treats as abnormal distance, change, and placelessness" (Sheller and Urry 2006, pp 208). This, in turn, changes the conception of space itself. Instead of seeing space as static, fixed and rigid, space too becomes "plural, porous and con-constitution together with motion" (Hall 2009, pp 573). Space becomes what Massey (1994) sees as 'open and dynamic' and at the mercy of the same flows that make mobility a central concern.

It would, however, be fallacious to identify mobilities research simply with the mobile; its corollary, the immobile, is equally relevant. Mobility must thus be considered in relation to immobility. Places of movement are seen as relational to place of stillness and stopping. This is a contradictory dialogic process, as was pointed out by David Harvey in his explication of how globalisation facilitates the free flow of capital and at the same time, also enables its spatial fixity (the 'spatial fix') in particular locations (Harvey 2001). Similarly, Sassen (2005) illustrates how there cannot be an increase in fluidity and movement without widespread systems of immobility, using the emergence of 'global cities' that fix certain advanced producer services and act as command and control modules for a vast network of moving parts. Central to both mobility and immobility, thus, is the corporeality of moving and staying put.

This new mobility paradigm, as identified by Sheller and Urry (2006), has since expanded in scope and stature, with even a dedicated peer-reviewed journal, *Mobilities*. However, it is important here to make a distinction between what is mobilities research and what is simply the study of practices and structures that aid and abet movement. Tim Cresswell's three monographs (2010, 2012, 2014) on mobilities are crucial to this distinction.

What distinguishes mobilities study is that it "often links science and social science to the humanities" (Cresswell 2010, pp 551). Signs, symbols and signification often find traction in mobilities study, as it treats meaning and representation as an integral facet of that which makes movement possible. As much as work in the mobilities is concerned with the transposition of bodies across space and in time, it is as connected with ethical and political issues arising out of these movements (Cresswell 2010, pp 551).

This association with the humanities opens up varied methods of research and analysis. What are made possible are not just new objects of inquiry but also new methodologies for research, where mobile methods become more relevant to studying mobile subjects. Mobile ethnography thus becomes not just viable but essential. The essay as a tool of research and analysis also receives critical salience, vindicating the work of mobile theorists such as Walter Benjamin (1983), Georges Perec (2010) and Michel de Certeau (1984). This embrace of the mobile method allows mobilities research to "avoid seeing

mobility from the point of view which privileges notions of boundedness and the sedentary" (Cresswell 2010, pp 552).

### *Geographies of the everyday*

The fundamental questions that the mobilities turn asks concerning ontology and epistemology start with the "fact of mobility" (Cresswell 2010, pp 551). Mobility, however, occurs at vastly different scales, from the global movement of shipping containers leaving China for the United States to the very personal movement of pacing inside a moving metro car on one's way to work (Hall 2009). It is only with the mobilities turn that the scale of the personal everyday becomes eminently possible as object of inquiry. The micro-scale of daily mobilities is as open to investigation as the structural analysis of global systems (Cresswell 2012, pp 647). For the new urbanism, the concern is as much with a local order of fluidity and movement as it is with the global order. Small, mundane and everyday urban movements of people doing the same things over and over again define the city as much as transglobal movement circuits such as the ones described by Sassen (2005) (Hall 2009). Thus, there is as much interest in the microgeographies of everyday life as there is in much larger mobility systems.

The microgeography of everyday life considers what Binnie et al (2007) call "mundane mobilities", such as walking. Such mundane mobilities are part of the scheme of the everyday, in that they take place as banal or ordinary occurrences. There is little thought that goes into such mundane mobilities as they are simply considered natural or reflexive (Binnie et al 2007). However, even these mundane mobilities must be considered "heterogenous assemblages of embodied practices, sensual knowledges, affectual relations and spatio-temporal configurations" (Middleton 2010, pp 585). As such, these microgeographies are only mundane in the very essentialist use of that term. At the scale of the individual, even everyday mobilities such as walking are part of assemblages that include diverse technologies and materialities that must be considered in relation with one another.

There is one character who crops up fairly evenly in this study of the microgeography of mundane mobility, albeit in many different forms and known by many different names: the walker. Though this character might be multiple, one crucial quality is shared: all of them walk. Whether they are flâneur s, peripatetics, pedestrians, pilgrims, tourists, itinerants, vagrants or vagabonds, these mobile characters use the rhythm of their own two feet to traverse the various landscapes they inhabit.

If the walker is a human subject in this microgeography, then the walk must be the event and the process of walking an embodied act (Lorimer 2011, pp 19). These modules of analysis provide a starting point for the study of pedestrianism as a practice, not simply as the means to an end. Previously walking was "destination-oriented, generally regarded as

a functional mode of transport, and shaped by economic choices and constraints” (Lorimer 2011, pp 19). Walking was considered “tedious and commonplace”, something that only those without the means to travel by others forms of locomotion – the carriage and later, the car – did (Ingold 2004, pp 321). Ingold (2004) points out how the word pedestrian still carries connotations of being common and low. In contrast, the mobilities turn attempts to reconsider walking, not as better or worse than other means of transport but something inherently human and necessary, something that everyone does, whether they like to or not. The ‘everydayness’ of walking is what is paramount and thus, it treats walking as embodied practice and evaluates its performative realities as various in meaning, symptomatic of “changing social forms and norms”, “expressive of diverse cultural meanings”, and “leaving distinct impressions, both corporeal and materially substantive” (Lorimer 2011, pp 19).

Lorimer (2011) identifies a basic typology of walks: walks as “the product of places”; walks as “an ordinary feature of everyday life”; walks as “reflections of the self-centred walker”; and walks as “wilful and artful” (pp 20). First, walks can be understood as a performative activity that is shaped by the material specificity of a space. The urban infrastructure, the walking culture, the socio-spatial landscape, the topography, etc all shape the cultural milieu in which walking becomes a specific embodied activity. Second is the everyday walk which is characterised chiefly by the recurring frequency of the walk. In contrast to walks for religious, festive or touristic reasons, these everyday walks are undertaken frequently, often daily, and most often for functional purposes. Third, the walk as a lubricant to musings on the self. Walks are known to be conducive to self-reflection and critical appraisal, hence the frequency of such musings while on a meandering walk (Solnit 2001).

Finally, the walk as artistic practice (Pinder 2001, Pinder 2011). There are increasingly more performative artworks that make creative use of the walk as artform. Even as mobilities research and academia have “addressed routinisation, regulation, restriction, control, and coercion involved in much urban walking” artists and various other practitioners have also “frequently dwelled on its potentialities for experiencing, researching, weaving, re-enchanting, or subverting spaces, in keeping with a wider valorisation of mobility and the nomadic within currents of recent social and cultural thought” (Pinder 2011, pp 674-675). From the performative walks of Marina Abramovic and Ulay in *The Great Wall Walk* (1989) to the walk as following in Sophie Calle’s project *Suite Venitienne* (1988), there are countless examples of art forms where the walk figures prominently as an expressionist, exploratory or discursive tool. As Pinder (2001) points out, there is an intrinsic link between the act of walking as artistic expression and the urban cityscapes that act as the medium for their embodiment.

In the exploration of microgeographies under the larger rubric of mobilities, walking is personal activity, even though it’s habitus might be essentially social. The history of the act

of walking is large and varied, as illustrated amply in Rebecca Solnit's excellent book, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2001). Solnit traces the history of walking beginning with the peripatetics in Ancient Greece to walking as an art form in today's postmodern society. The lineage she identifies is one of vast difference and rich history. The thread that she traces throughout the ages, however, is one of walking's deep-seated relation to the body, not just the body as physical but the body as self (Solnit 2001). After all, the most elementary form of movement that relies completely on the geography of the self is the walk.

For Solnit (2001), walking is the "intentional act closest to the unwilling rhythms of the body, to breathing and the beating of the heart" (pp 5). Walking is an intentional act that slowly becomes unintentional through the repetition of a refrain. It "is a bodily labor that produces nothing but thoughts, experiences, arrivals" (Solnit 2001, pp 5). In a 'production-oriented culture' walking might produce nothing of 'value' in material terms but it strikes an internal balance between the one doing the walking and their inner self. While walking, the body becomes experience as much as it does the experiencing. As consciousness takes flight in the form of the thinking that so often accompanies walking, it also becomes unconscious, in that the thinking self becomes unaware of the process of walking: "the rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking" (Solnit 2001, pp 6). The state is one akin to hypnosis where walking seems to happen on autopilot as the brain turns over thoughts unrelated. Thus, as the self first comprehends itself and then forgets itself, subjectivity is both born and erased in the process of walking: "...pedestrians can become both aware and unaware of their bodies as they walk" (Middleton 2011a, pp 585).

Walking enables a microgeography of the self, where movement through a landscape seems to echo movement through a series of thoughts. The result is a mirroring of the external landscape of the environment and the internal landscape of the self. The mind itself becomes a "landscape of sorts and...walking is one way to traverse it" (Solnit 2001, pp 6).

Walking mediates between the internal and external but for some, walking can even be a means to find a "better sort of fit between self and world" (Lorimer 2011, pp 23). As Solnit (2001) points out, thinkers from the Sophists in Ancient Greece through Jean-Jacques Rousseau wandering through Geneva (1992) to Soren Kierkegaard in Copenhagen (2013) and Walter Benjamin in Berlin and in Paris (1983), walking has acted as a means through which the most metaphysical questions of ontology and epistemology have been considered. Walking is the "embodied space" where these questions are asked and sometimes, even answered.

That walking has a meditative effect on the mind and acts as a lubricant to thinking is well established, as in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1992). This

can be tested empirically simply by taking a leisurely walk. So, it is no surprise that the philosophically inclined might take up walking as a means to work out matters of being and becoming. To do so would be to “fold walking into the quest for greater harmony, and to meet philosophical needs that are both deeper and wider set” (Lorimer 2011, pp 23). Why walking is so conducive to such considerations, however, is a matter beyond the scope of this paper and would, in any case, require a thorough neurological study of the brain while on a walk, which has most certainly already been conducted (see: Fukuyama et al 1997, Mirelman et al 2014). Nevertheless, it is enough to assert that walking finds expressive outlet as a means through which “founding aspects of the self can be centred” and “ideas of release, renewal and replenishment” find expression (Lorimer 2011, pp 23).

The argument therefore is one in favour of a microgeography that is territorialised by the self but is not limited to the confines of the physical body. The self as bounded is a notion that structuralism and postmodernism have done away with (Foucault 2017). In walking, the self is free to contemplate its relation to that which is continually remaking it. Even as the self itself is reterritorialised by the landscape, it is active in the process of deterritorialising that very space (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). The microgeography of the everyday, therefore, is one that is intimately considerate of the walker as an individual but is not limited to the purview of that walker as a bounded, constrained being.

### *Walking in the city*

The rise of urbanity has led to different kinds of employment opportunities, where walking figures prominently, such as the postman, the travelling salesperson or the tour guide. However, employment opportunities now call for walking on a microscale – pacing or patrolling, such as the beat policeman, the security guard, the household cleaner. As such, mobile geographies remain an essential part of the everyday. There are many names for those who walk in the countryside, but in the city, one category can perhaps capture the essentials of all those who walk – the pedestrian.

One of the earliest embodiments of the urban pedestrian in the Western world was the flâneur, the detached bourgeoisie male who wandered the streets observing. The flâneur was developed as an archetype primarily by Walter Benjamin, drawing on Charles Baudelaire’s writings (Benjamin 1983). Benjamin (1983) did not delineate the characteristics of the flâneur so sharply as simply sketched a vague outline: the flâneur was identified with leisure, crowds, alienation, detachment, observation, and most particularly, with walking.

In our new world of postmodernism and hypercapitalism, the flâneur has taken on a more consumptive role, quite dissimilar from Benjamin’s detached observer (Bauman 1994). For Bauman (1994), the flâneur of the old world has been appropriated and privatised by capitalism. Strolling has been robbed of its aimlessness and what appear aimless on the



surface is often directed covertly towards consumption, as in strolling in a shopping mall. Even when looking is simply looking, it acquires a sense of consumption, as in the invention of the window-shopper. To walk is increasingly becoming a privatised and individualised activity (Bauman 1994). We have now arrived in an era where looking is fully consumptive in its function, where the locations of billboards are based on how many people tend to look at that particular space. Advertising is an industry completely predicated on the act of looking. Bauman (1994) laments that “In the post-modern world – that flâneurisme writ large, flâneurisme commercially triumphant in its political defeat – it takes a heroic constitution to refuse being a flâneur” (pp 156).

While the flâneur might have been appropriated by hypercapitalism and the modern city, the prosaic pedestrian still finds purchase. Pedestrians continue to be part and parcel of urban planning, however shrinking their roles and spaces may be. However, even though pedestrians are considered in the plan of the city, they are simply seen as objects and users, not so much as subjects or actors (Middleton 2011, 2011a). An overwhelming focus on urban design and urban infrastructure has meant that “there is little that engages with the actual practice of walking in terms of its many types and forms, what it means to different people, and the multiplicity of those experiences” (Middleton 2011a, pp 578). Even though walking has become more prominent in mobilities research, it has become necessary to also address the regulated alongside the accidental, the ordinary alongside the extraordinary, the fixed alongside the transient and the errant, especially in an urban city-based context where walking fulfils all of these oppositions in a geography of the everyday (Pinder 2011, pp 675).

Even though scholars like Middleton lament the lack of rigorous academic work, they acknowledge the plethora of theoretical writings on the geographies of everyday walking practices from Baudelaire and Benjamin to Simmel and de Certeau. Michel de Certeau, in particular, has found a niche with human and cultural geographers taking renewed interest in his chapter on walking in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). While Middleton (2011) might fault theorists like de Certeau for their abstraction, it is nevertheless useful to take the latter’s work as a theoretical jumping off point in the study of the everyday geographies.

For de Certeau (1984), the city comes alive on the streets, from an eye-level view of the pedestrian rather than the bird’s eye view of the city planner. For him, “the ordinary practitioners of the city live ‘down below’,” (de Certeau 1984, pp 93). In de Certeau’s conception, the city is not what determines how pedestrians act or move about but rather, it is the pedestrians who create the city through their movements. This argument is put forward through an extended analogy of the city as a speech act and the pedestrians as its speakers. What follows is a complex valorisation of the pedestrian as those “whose existence in fact makes up the city” (de Certeau 1984, pp 97). The analogy of the city to language is a symbolic one, made earlier by Roland Barthes in his paean to the Eiffel

Tower (Barthes 1979). However, de Certeau's extension borrows heavily from Augoyard in order to advance his metaphor using synecdoche and asyndeton. If synecdoche, as a part that represents the whole, "expands a spatial element", asyndeton, as rhetorical ellipses, "opens a gap in the spatial continuum" (de Certeau 1984, pp 101). This dual process can be made concrete by thinking back to a stroll in the city, where a pedestrian simultaneously comes to identify certain singular elements (such as a particular building, a sign, a street) with the entire neighbourhood while also eliminating unconsciously whole sections of streets and landscapes by virtue of simply being unaware or unobservant. The pedestrian, in this manner, creates a city by at once making more dense and cutting out, transforming the city into "enlarged singularities and separate islands" (de Certeau 1984, pp 101). Still, for de Certeau (1984), this abstraction of the city is not simply semantic; it is a lived process. As another great thinker on cities once said, "the city is not only a language but also a practice" (Lefebvre 2000, pp 143)

De Certeau's invocations of the synecdoche and the asyndeton recall Elizabeth Wilson's comment on the nature of the city: "One never retraces the same pathway twice, for the city is in a constant process of change, and thus becomes dreamlike and magical, yet also terrifying in the way a dream can be" (quoted in Pinder 2001, pp 17). The application of the synecdoche and the asyndeton as metaphors result in the creation of a city that is at once familiar and strange, a space that you feel you know intimately and yet, hides something from you. This characteristic might have to do with the enunciative shortcuts that we take in articulating the city. In compressing certain aspects while wholly cutting out others, walkers create an image of the city, as Kevin Lynch (1960) would later go on to identify and make concrete in his famous mental maps. These memories can rush to the fore when those same spaces are traversed again, as if streets were "repositories of stories and spectres that may suddenly be actualized in the present" (Pinder 2001, pp 17). Synecdoche and asyndeton serve to function in service of what Marcel Proust (1928) called the *mémoire involontaire*, an involuntary invocation of the past triggered by a sensory detail. Densification through synecdoche, as omission through asyndeton, results in certain aspects of the city becoming imbued with more meaning than others, causing memories to appear unbidden.

De Certeau's abstractions might be difficult to parse when it comes to social science research but they are helpful in providing a theoretical lens through which to pursue more concrete instances of his postulations. For instance, his distinctions between the 'strategy' adopted by the planners and the powerful in their production and control of space is disrupted and challenged by the tactics of the pedestrians who enunciate the city according to their own speech patterns. De Certeau, therefore, sets up the pedestrian as driver of urban emancipation and democratic possibility, even if his "abstract renderings of pedestrian movement" obscure the actual practice of walking (Middleton 2010, pp 579).

In line with de Certeau's (1984) assertions of urban walking as a process of emancipation and urban democracy, there has been more empirical work that assert the emancipatory potential of city spaces. Most famously, Jane Jacobs, in her seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1972), illustrates how important pedestrians, streets and sidewalks are to the safety of a neighbourhood. Similarly, Richard Sennet (1970) points out how encounters between pedestrians in public spaces act as 'socially progressive and civilising' modes of interaction and citizenship. These perspectives are important to consider in light of the fairly common perception of the city as never a completely safe space. The city has long been described as a "wilderness" or an "urban jungle" because it is "lawless, dark, and full of strangers" (Solnit 2001, pp 203). Bauman's (1994) work also points to the 'fear' that is often experienced by urban pedestrians, illustrating that walking is not a homogenous activity for everyone and that it consists of a striated, rather than smooth, space where action and reaction are unpredictable and often unsafe. The pedestrian who cannot afford the security of the car is at the mercy of the proclivities of the streets, which is "more a jungle than a theatre" where "one goes there because one must" (Bauman 1994, pp 148)

Whether seen as dangerous or safe, public spaces provide citizens with a shared space (the street) and a shared purpose (the walk). With these two things in common, disparate individuals are able to forge something that binds them together – citizenship (Solnit 2001, pp 218).

### ***Walking, citizenship and the right to the city***

Most sustainable transport and pedestrian policy considers walking largely as self-evident and homogenous (Middleton 2010, Middleton 2011a, Middleton 2011b). The experiential and individual decisions, habits and practices that are part of everyday walking are largely disregarded or seen as secondary to the quantitative data of transport patterns. Policy and transport research quantify the frequency of pedestrian activities into a homogenous whole where individual experiences are turned into data that assumes all journeys to be the same (Middleton 2010). This perspective is a flawed one, as it is important to consider the experiential dimensions of urban walking, i.e., how individuals react, adapt to and oppose the stimuli they encounter. There are significant academic works dedicated to the experiential side of walking, especially in relation to the self and individual decision-making (Solnit 2001, Wylie 2005, Middleton 2009, Middleton 2011a, Middleton 2018). These studies lead to issues of citizenship and a 'right to the city'.

What allows the citizen to walk the streets of the city is the individual's implicit citizenship in the city. The working definition of citizenship employed here is not simply as a legal status granted by the state that allows certain rights and demands certain obligations, but more broadly with concerns to subjecthood and participation in a certain space. Broadly put, the working definition of citizenship, as utilised by Spinney et al (2015), is "at its most

general level, citizenship refers to full membership in the community within which one lives. Membership, in turn, implies certain rights in and reciprocal obligations toward the community" (Glenn 2011, quoted in Spinney et al 2015, pp 326). Citizenship in a city allows the resident of a city the right to "move in, through, across and between different places" (Middleton 2018, pp 302) or put more succinctly, "the capacity to move is central to what it is to be a citizen" (Cresswell 2009, pp 110). Instead of a rigid citizenship that is an either/or, citizenship is considered here as a "set of processual, performative and everyday relations between spaces, objects, citizens and non-citizens that ebbs and flows" (Spinney et al 2015, pp 325). Thus, the relationship between citizenship and mobility in an urban context requires investigation.

This conception of citizenship as a consequence of inhabitation in a city, rather than a legal status, draws heavily from the work of the Marxist thinker Henri Lefebvre who pioneered the idea of a 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 2000). Lefebvre saw the city, not the home, as that "which expressed and symbolized a person's being and consciousness" (Lefebvre 2000, pp 7-8). Lefebvre took an explicitly Marxist view of the city and citizenship, and 'the right to the city' as something that was rooted in the revolutionary potential of the working class and its demands for equal access to the city. With industrialisation, cities had given birth to a new form of citizen, turning the "old 'social animal' and man of the ancient city, the urban animal, towards a polyvalent, polysensorial, urban man capable of complex and transparent relations with the world (the environment and himself)" (Lefebvre 2000, pp 149). This new urban man had an inalienable right to the city which was not simply a right of visitation or a right of existence, but rather, a "transformed and renewed right to urban life" (Lefebvre 2000, pp 158). For Lefebvre (2000), the right to urban life meant renewed access to both place and space, to a freedom of usage of all spaces in the city without the mediation of exchange value, and to spaces of encounter. As a revolutionary concept, it was both a means and an end, that which would allow the new urban man a right to that which was denied to him through spatial segregation, implicit and explicit urban planning policies, and hegemony.

Many contemporary social movements have picked up the right to the city as a political slogan, but often stop short of the revolutionary potential of Lefebvre's thinking. Critics note that Lefebvre's opacity requires a critical engagement that must go beyond simply demanding rights on the behalf of the marginalised and the dispossessed (Harvey 2008, Purcell 2013, Middleton 2018). Middleton (2018) employs Lefebvre in a particularly poignant manner, consider the right to the city in explicit relation with mobility and the use of urban space, particularly on foot. In more material terms, the right to the city included the right to "appropriate space in terms of inhabitants having the right to occupy, use, work, live, etc. in specific city spaces" and also the right to "participate in decisionmaking at various political scales in the production of urban space" (Middleton 2018, pp 302).

Middleton's (2018) interpretation of Lefebvre allows for a more personal and subjective notion of the right to the city to emerge – as a personal right to access and alter the city, a right guaranteed by citizenship, which in turn is conferred by inhabitation. This right, however, is not evenly distributed. As mentioned earlier, scholars like Jacobs (1972) and Sennet (1970) see the streets and pedestrianism as emancipatory forces while others, like Bauman (1994), see a preponderance of fear in the city streets. These conceptions acknowledge the existence of power relations that mediate the experience of the city. Power and citizenship are closely related, in that, certain typologies of citizenship or selfhood are more disadvantaged than others. Race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. all mediate the experience of the city through lenses of power.

Who can walk where and with what degree of safety are manifestations of these power relations. Middleton (2018) cites several studies on women's and black men's experiences of walking in city spaces in order to expand on how cities can be both spaces of excitement and opportunity and also a place of fear (pp 303). Experiences are multiple and cannot be reproduced as a simple equation, but must be seen as the outcome of a complex matrix of power relations. Citizenship and rights are not fixed; rather, they are "ongoing negotiations of identity and difference where the resources required for success are unevenly distributed" (Spinney et al 2015, pp 326). Inclusion or exclusion in certain groups can change the experiences of walking and being in the city.

The ebb and flow of power is something that is always contested and for de Certeau (1984), walking is one of the ways in which this is done. Walking is transgressive, not just because it directly opposes the power of planners in their great ivory towers but precisely because it does not know what it is doing. The 'tactics' adopted by pedestrians are not deliberately destructive to power; they are "blind" and simply "seize opportunities as they arise" (Pinder 2011, pp 688). However, Pinder (2011) interprets de Certeau as having stopped short of where Lefebvre goes, in that the former's walkers "remain blind to the possibilities of strategic struggles that would give resistance direction" and thus, leave "unaddressed the processes through which urban space is produced" (pp 688). Still, Pinder (2011) does admit that walking by itself has the potential to be liberating, if aligned with the progressive and the oppositional. As Phillips (2005) suggests, for de Certeau "to look is to know; to move is not to know, or to know differently" (pp 511). So even everyday tactics like choosing when or where to walk can have revolutionary consequences. One need only look at the political 'march' to see just how political walking can be. There is something inherently oppositional to walking, as Andrea Phillips (2005) puts it:

*"Walking has enchanted us precisely because of its own unfinished nature, because it does not seem to acquire a regulatory air, because it is a proposal, not even a maquette or a map...It offers no problematic resolution, and so ties in with a whole series of philosophical strategies of undoing, evading, revoking the legislative. It is enchanting because it offers a way of 'writing' the landscape that does not seem to be colonial...Walking, it is presumed, produces choreography that is inflected with, but not controlling of, the social."* (509)

Therefore, walking, the city, citizenship and power are all linked together. One cannot discuss citizenship without also discussing conceptions of the self. If citizenship is a right to move through the city then the self as citizen can be defined through its relation with this very mobility.

### *Habit and rhythm*

Here, we must move on from a political discussion of citizenship to a more esoteric exploration of the body while walking. Corporeality and walking were touched upon earlier, but two facets bear further exploration, especially when it comes to walking in a city – habit and rhythm.

Many thinkers have made habits and routines the object of their inquiry, not least of whom is Nietzsche (2001) who considers the ‘brief habit’ an invaluable tool to get to know oneself. Deleuze (2001) considers habit as a way of being, in that habits and routines are not practices we adopt from the external but rather, are intrinsic to ourselves. As Deleuze puts it, “Isn’t this the answer to the question ‘what are we?’ We are habits, nothing but habits—the habit of saying ‘I’” (Deleuze 1991, pp x). Deleuze’s account of the habit is made up of both time and space. Moments of time settle into a pattern, a “matrix of experience” that due to repetition, turns into a habit that is acquired (O’Keefe 2016, pp 75). But these moments in time must necessarily take place within a space, real or virtual. The space of the self is one such matrix whereas the space of the city is another.

Habit, however, is not rigid. Although there is an element of repetition, there is also room for difference. Habit is prone to falsification and changes in pattern when confronted with adverse stimuli (O’Keefe 2016, pp 77). As contradictory as it may seem, habit is at once the same and at once different. It is the potentiality for difference that provides habit with the power to constitute the self. Therefore, for Deleuze (2001), habit is not a ‘law’ since the character of the law is that it is always the same, for everyone. Habit is personal and open to change. Habit is “an elastic sort of experience, as if a given set of repeated experiences snaps into a tautness that carries within it a tension ready for the next moment of habitual reflex” (O’Keefe 2016, pp 82).

Deleuze finds concordance on habit with another thinker, Ravaillon, who is also interested in the seemingly contradictory logic of habit. For Ravaillon, while habit is mechanistically repetitive, it is also a liberatory experience. While Deleuze’s formulation is much more abstract, Ravaillon is material, illustrating how “repetitive action makes movements become easier, which results in greater freedom” (Middleton 2011b, pp 2865). Thus, habit is active and dynamic. Habits are not static and limiting sets of actions that are repeated in a dull manner. Instead, they allow for freedom and activity in one sphere even as their repetitive nature unfolds in another.

Much urban walking is habitual. People walk from place to place as a matter of habit. Policy documents reflect this understanding and thus, design pedestrian pathways around a 'line of best fit'. These policies see habits as an "external force that somehow drives human behaviour" (Middleton 2011b, pp 2857). These habits, since they are predetermined and fixed, limit the capacity of individuals to make decisions while they are mobile. So, while policies and academia recognise the centrality of habit in the walking practices of pedestrians, they see it as limiting and constraining. As illustrated above, with recourse to Deleuze and Ravaissou, a more productive and informed conception of habit would be as something that is an "emergent, unfixed and ongoing" process and practice (Middleton 2011b, pp 2858).

Middleton (2011b) argues that walking is not dictated solely by the built environment and infrastructure. People's decisions on where to walk, how to walk and for how long are not only dependent on the quality of the built environment. Instead, these decisions are made with regard to the "coordination of their everyday routine" (Middleton 2011b, pp 2862). If the former were true, it would imply that decisions to walk are somewhat divorced from the actual practice of walking. Even the work of Danish architect Jan Gehl (2011) illustrates how people's walking patterns and decisions are not dictated well in advance but are instead made on the go. The latter perspective is one that places individual agency at the centre of urban walking. Instead of the individual being just the nexus of a series of external factors such as the social, cultural, structural or institutional, the decision-making ability of the conscious self is reaffirmed. Thus, the habit of walking, even if it is repeated every single day at a certain time, is open to change. When walking is habitual, it becomes effortless and instinctual while allowing for spontaneity in other spheres of activity (Middleton 2011b).

In speaking of habit and repetition, there is one more theoretical framework that proves illustrative, namely that of rhythm, as articulated by Henri Lefebvre (2000). Rhythm, for Lefebvre, is the concatenation of time and space. The unfolding of a pattern within a certain time and within a certain space is what creates rhythm. In *Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities*, Lefebvre (2000) puts it thus:

*Every rhythm implies the relation of a time with a space, a localized time, or if one wishes, a temporalized place. Rhythm is always linked to such and such a place, to its place, whether it be the heart, the fluttering of the eyelids, the movements of a street, or the tempo of a waltz. (230)*

The notion of rhythm recalls Simmel (1997) and his explicitly urban notion of the 'tempo' as "the pulse of city life which drives not only its social, economic, and infrastructural formations, but also the psychic forms of the urban dweller" (Sheller and Urry 2006, pp 215). Simmel's (1903) metaphor of the tempo provides a poetic notion to the study of mobility as rhythmic movement. Tempo concerns proximity and corporeality, the relation of one presence to another. The proximity of strangers in the metropolis, mediated by

what Simmel calls the 'money economy', can lead to hyper-stimulation and the mere presence of other bodies in the city can become a burden (Simmel 1903). Therefore, the only way to deal with these moving bodies that are also a world in and of themselves is to adopt a blasé attitude, an indifference to the world around you. This nonchalance is a wilful limitation of the 'affect' that other bodies have on your own in the metropolis (Simmel 1903).

Temporality and spatiality are inextricably linked in rhythm, which is a product of repetition and difference. A synthesis of Deleuze, Ravaillon and Lefebvre produces a more enigmatic form of habit, one that is at once free and emancipatory while also grounding the linkage of behaviour to time and space. Lefebvre further provides the character of a rhythm analyst, a model for the researcher that this thesis takes up wholeheartedly. For Lefebvre (2000), the rhythm analyst is "neither psychologist, nor sociologist, nor anthropologist, nor economist" (pp 228). This particular researcher takes a transdisciplinary approach to the study of a city and its rhythms and patterns. In adopting this persona, this thesis hopes to attend to Lefebvre's contention that the rhythm analyst pay attention times and spaces, moods and images, and atmosphere and particular spectacles (Lefebvre 2000, pp 228).

### *Psychogeography*

The character of Lefebvre's (2000) rhythm analyst can perhaps be identified with a character that crops time and again when studying walking practices and their relations with spatiality – the psychogeographer. In simplistic terms, psychogeography refers to a ludic exploration of urban environments that do not adhere to notions prescribed by architecture and urban planning. In its most popular iteration, as conceived of by Guy Debord (1955) and the Situationist Internationale in the mid-50s, psychogeography is an explicit break with habit. Inspired by Dadaism and Surrealism, psychogeographers do not follow paths and patterns as prescribed by the science of architecture or planning but rather, emotions, feelings and attractions (Debord 1955). For the Marxist Situationists, this is a deliberate rebellion against "capitalist propaganda" turning cities into a space for cars (Debord 1955). Debord, therefore, proposes a series of radical walking 'games' that would emphasise playfulness, creativity and chance encounters in order to disperse the prevailing organisation of cities as built around cars.

Chief among these games is the 'derive', which is a "mode of experimental behaviour linked to the condition of urban society: a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances" (Wood 2010, pp 186). For the Situationists, 'ambiance' refers to the mood or emotion inspired by a certain place, including its character and the various feelings it gives rise to. Thus, the derive is a movement through these ambiances and through "unities of ambiance" which are neighbourhoods or areas of a city united by particularly powerful emotions, moods, tones, characters or feelings. Going on a derive is to walk



through a city pulled this way and that by these very ambiances. The derive and psychogeography in general “set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals” (Debord 1955).

While the Situationists seek to break with habit, at the same time, they attempt to reintroduce a more radical form of rhythm in the form of the ambiance. Attuned only to the ambiance of the city, the Situationists distinguish themselves from a normal walk or stroll as their method entailed “playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects” (Wood 2010, pp 187). This is not to say that the derive is completely random. In fact, it is anything but random. The psychogeographical elements of an urban environment are what dictate the path and flow of the derive. As Debord (1955) puts it, derives are “certain wanderings that express not subordination to randomness but complete *insubordination* to habitual influences”. He narrates as an example an instance of when a friend walked around the region of Harz in Germany following directions from a map of London.

At around the same time that Debord was developing his radical critique of urban geography, scholars at Clark University in the United States were attempting something similar. Wood (2010) draws attention to the seminal work of Kevin Lynch who is most famous for his book *The Image of the City*. Lynch provides a particularly psychological manner of evaluating and analysing the city with a particular interest in rhythms, feelings and mental images of urban environments. Lynch’s four motives are “an interest in the connection between psychology and the urban environment; fascination with the aesthetics of the city...; wonder about how to evaluate a city; and a commitment to pay ‘more attention to those who live in a place – to the actual human experience of a city’ (Wood 2010, pp 189). As with Debord and the Situationists, Lynch too is concerned with psychology and the city and seeks an explicit connection between the two. For instance, Lynch’s 1956 book *Some Childhood Memories of the City* opens with “What does a child notice in his city” and his 1959 co-authored book *A Walk Around the Block* opens with “What does the ordinary individual perceive in his landscape? What makes the strongest impression on him and how does he react to it?” (quoted in Wood 2010, pp 190).

Both Debord and Lynch pursue similar concerns, although their methods are different. While the Situationists are more interested in the push-and-pull of ambiances on their derives, Lynch is famous for his mental mapping of cities and his isolation of five syntactic elements that make up the city, namely paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (Lynch 1960). The Situationists are also able to stand outside of the “planning profession” and critique urban geography in a much more radical manner while Lynch, as an urban theorist and planner, is beholden to the vagaries of “city

government” (Wood 2010, pp 194). So, while the Situationists represent “a drift from the ideal and the rational to the extraordinary and the revolutionary” the psychogeography of Lynch represents “a march toward the ideal and the rational” (Wood 2010, pp 195).

The purpose behind this thesis’ own ‘derive’ is to admit a debt to psychogeography. My methodology owes a lot to the derive and to the concerns of psychogeographers such as Debord and Lynch, while they themselves might have eschewed such a label. This interest in the psychology of an individual as they walk through the city is an explicit point of investigation for this paper and thus warrants a thorough investigation of the methods adopted beforehand. However, my point of departure from the works of these psychogeographers, namely Debord, is that my method is one of habit. While the paper will outline the methodology in greater detail in the following section, suffice it to say here that pedestrian walking as conceptualised by this paper sees it as something habitual and something practiced in the same manner day after day. My walking is less attuned to ambiances. In that sense, it is closer to the psychogeography of Lynch and his colleagues at Clark University. My project is explicitly concerned with what the ordinary individual, myself in this case, perceives in the urban landscape, along with what impression it makes upon me and what my reaction to it is.

It is against this theoretical and philosophical background that this thesis proposes its object of study and its methodology. The details of the method and methodology will be elaborated upon in greater detail in the upcoming section. In brief, the intention behind walking the same route for seven or so days was an attempt to cultivate a habitual pattern of urban walking. The routes undertaken for the fieldwork were ones that had been walked countless times in the past. Thus, the routes were familiar and routine, and constituted a certain habitual framework to the object of inquiry. Given the importance of habit in urban walking and its relative disregard in policy documents, it was considered essential that a thesis that investigates the relations between self and spatiality take into account the difference and repetition of habit, rhythm and psychology.

## METHODOLOGY

In the following section, I will discuss at length my chosen modes of research: autoethnography while walking as fieldwork, complemented by qualitative interviews with ordinary people in each case study area, along with the essay as method of analysis. I chose walking as my primary method since the study of pedestrianism doesn't benefit from a sedentary mode of research. Further, autoethnography is a valuable tool in such modes of mobile research since it allows for the generation of qualitative data that is not contingent upon the experiences of others. I have also chosen the essay since I believe writing itself can be a mode of research and exploration with inherent links to the embodied experience of walking. Both these methods provide my study with an intricate link to the humanities, which in turn acts as a theoretical toolbox for the interpretation of my autoethnography.

### *Walking as method*

The study of the microgeography of the everyday and the mundane mobility of urban pedestrianism requires a mobile methodology. If the new mobilities turn is about the study of objects, subjects and networks in motion, then it only follows that the study of such movements also be done on the move (Sheller and Urry 2008, Cresswell 2010). The important question to ask while studying an embodied and performative practice such as walking is not 'what is a walk?' but rather, 'how do you walk?' (Lorimer 2011, pp 27). This reformulation places emphasis on the phenomenology of the walk, its sensory experience and encounters. Instead of observing the walker from afar, detached, as if a specimen under a magnifying glass, the researcher is forced to undertake the walk themselves and in doing so, understand first-hand the spatialities that direct and mould the walk, the sensitivities of encounter that are experienced on the walk, and the paradoxically durable transience of experience.

The embodied practice of urban walking can be one of the most important tools in the arsenal of any geographer. For many researchers, walking is an almost unconscious act that is undertaken while performing other methods of research, such as ethnography. As Pierce and Lawhon (2015) put it, "Identification and delineation of important sites, processes, and questions for examination often proceed from an embodied knowledge of a city, or local literacy, that can be produced through observational walking and related techniques" (pp 655). By privileging the walk itself, this paper attempts to not only glean data from the experience of walking but to interrogate the practice of urban walking itself. Pierce and Lawhon (2015) define observational walking as "a self-conscious, reflective project of wandering around to better understand an area's physical context, social context, and the spatial practices of its residents. By walking we do not mean just the act of moving through the city on foot but also include related processes of standing, casual interaction, and observation" (pp 656). As such, walking also encapsulates moments of

immobility, such as standing, talking or observing. In urban contexts, it is often impossible to keep moving at a steady pace since there are obstacles, other people, traffic lights, etc. These hindrances can direct and shape the experience of autonomy and free movement in cities.

Therefore, the methodology of this thesis is the urban walk, accompanied by a mobile autoethnography. As for Phillips (2005), it is also of interest to me the similarities and differences between “between walking as an activity that is seen to open up previously inaccessible spaces to research, and walking as a mode that demonstrates the limits of, or homogeneous construction of, such space. (507). Despite the fact that I am a bourgeoisie male, this walk is mere *flâneury*. Pedestrians do not consider their everyday movement as the wanderings of a *flâneur*. Further, since the *flâneur*’s stroll is a “deliberate counter rhythm to the regular and quotidian patterns of everyday life in the city” (Middleton 2011, pp 97), it would be an inappropriate method to adopt if the aim is to explore how everyday pedestrian subjectivities are shaped by diverse spatialities.

Instead of detached observation while strolling aimlessly about the arcades and boulevards, I established a strict point of departure and a point of arrival, with a rough duration of when I should arrive at the endpoint. The route between these two points was be predetermined and this walk repeated over a period of seven days, each at different times of the day in order to gauge changes in tempo, rhythm, density and mood, culminating in a total of fourteen walks. Notes, musings and observations were written down, along with photographs to assist in recall. The idea was to immerse myself in the embodied experience of the walk but also have some record of the experience so that reflections can be made later on. Fourteen walks each, back and forth, were conducted in the two case study areas of Copenhagen and Kathmandu.

To summarise:

What: Walking, accompanied by autoethnography; Qualitative interviews

How: Repeated walks over the course of a week at different times/different days

When: A week in Copenhagen (14 walks) / A week in Kathmandu (14 walks)

In order to compare and contrast my own experiences while walking, I also conducted several short, open-ended interviews with ordinary people in the case study areas about their own experiences while walking. While my fieldwork was largely based on my autoethnography, the short interviews provide my own fieldwork with a counterpoint along with verisimilitude. Furthermore, my fieldwork is also evaluated alongside existing literature and the fieldwork conducted by scholars such as Jennie Middleton whose work I have cited extensively throughout this thesis.

My primary method of walking and autoethnography was chosen in part from cues taken from the work of geographer John Wylie, who has been a vocal advocate of such seemingly subjective methods in social science research. In his article on reflection on the self and landscape during the course of a single day's walking, Wylie (2005) writes that there is a spurious assumption that a "landscape would always speak most cogently via archival, archaeological or ethnographic fieldwork" (pp 245). Wylie's argument parallels the new mobilities turn where sedentary methods of research are increasingly abandoned in favour of more mobile ones. This is not to say that amobile methods are less relevant or even unproductive but that mobile methods most suit the study of mobility.

Further, the subjective nature of an individual's walk, whether in the city or in nature, can give rise to doubts of whether such research would ever be applicable or relevant to anyone else. A common concern about observations made while walking is that they might fail tests of reliability or validity. However, a smart answer to this charge concerns where the tests of reliability are aimed. Pierce and Lawhon (2015) respond to this concern with the beautifully succinct answer that "the test of observational walking is not whether it produces data objects that another researcher can independently analyze but rather whether another researcher engaged in a similar process would develop similarly useful results" (pp 658).

Wylie (2005) responds to this concern on a more philosophical level. For him, this line of questioning splits the world into the external, which is presupposed and inherent to the physical world, and the internal, which is experimental and a projection onto the former (Wylie 2005, pp 245). However, the distinction between the external and internal is not so clear-cut. The postmodern world of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has done away with presupposed conceptions of the self and identity as fixed and discrete (Wylie 2005, Ellis et al 2011), as has the idea of objectivity as speaking from nowhere while "transcending the particulars of body and place" (Solnit 2001, pp 27); Feminism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism have established that the first-person experience cannot simply be considered arbitrary, subjective and of little value. A more multifaceted conception considers the individual in relation with the environment as a complex assemblage of embodied, material and technological relations (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, Middleton 2010).

Here, a second concern arises regarding embodied observational walking, namely that the conclusions drawn from a subjective and personal observational walking method might be "inappropriately generalized truth claims based on their specific perceptual experiences" (Pierce and Lawhon 2015, pp 658). These charges stem especially from postcolonial and feminist circles that have long railed against the embodied experiences of mostly white male bourgeois researchers who generalise their findings to all of the world, which is not just white or male (Solnit 2001, McLees 2013, Robinson 2016, Storper and Scott 2016). This is an extremely valid concern that informs much of my work in this paper. As a researcher, I am a straight bourgeois male, which affords me a fairly

limited perspective, especially when my project includes a very subjective observational method. However, my positionality changes in my two research areas. In Copenhagen, I am distinctly a foreigner, an Asian brown man from a third world country who does not speak Danish. This places me in a minority position, one that allows me to expand my straight male identity into that of an immigrant, a person of colour. By contrast, in Kathmandu, I am in the majority, as a straight male from a so-called 'upper caste'<sup>1</sup>. This too informs my observations and perhaps limits them to a certain extent. Throughout my research, I have kept these positionalities in mind and attempted to address them through self-reflection and contrast them with the experiences of others through short semi-formal interviews.

Still, the crux of this second concern remains valid and I take recourse once more to Pierce and Lawhon (2015), who offer that the "central goal of walking is to shape questions rather than support specific conclusions, requiring the researcher to further interrogate impressions generated from walking" (pp 660). By placing emphasis on the questions generated, rather than the answers, walking allows the researcher space to self-reflect and interrogate their own identities and the observations they have made. This change in focus "helps us check assumptions and the relevance of experiences to others in different positions and with different power relations" (Pierce and Lawhon 2015, pp 660).

In light of these new understandings of social science research born out of the postmodern 'crisis of confidence' the 80s, along with their various concerns, I will elaborate on the benefits and rationale behind choosing autoethnography as my supplementary method for fieldwork in the following section.

### *Autoethnography*

Autoethnography at its most basic is a combination of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis et al 2011). Whereas traditional ethnography sees the researcher 'observing' subjects and situations in order to draw conclusions, autoethnography takes the researcher themselves as subject; hence, the object of observation becomes oneself.

The development of autoethnography as a form of social science research came after the 'crisis of confidence' in the 1980s. (Ellis et al 2011, pp 2). Postmodernism as a movement had led to the questioning of traditional social science's "ontological, epistemological, and axiological limitations" (Ellis and Bochner 2000). Cultural critics like Roland Barthes (1975) and philosophers Jacques Derrida (1976) pointed to the limitations of text and the multifarious relationships between texts, authors and audiences. Since then, reading and

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<sup>1</sup> Nepali society is still structured to a great extent around Hindu notions of caste, namely the four castes of Brahmin (Bahun in Nepali), Kshatriya (Chhetri in Nepali), Vaishya and Shudra, in descending order of purity. Brahmins and Kshatriya are considered 'upper caste' and are still privileged in many ways.

research is no longer seen as a one-way street but rather, a dialogic process, not just between the researcher and the reader but also the researcher and the subject. More importantly, scholars have to come to terms with the fact that objectivity is always limited and that the facts and truths uncovered by scientists are inextricably linked to the paradigms carried by the scientists themselves (Ellis et al 2011, pp 2).

Against this critical backdrop, scholars began to realise the value of narrative and storytelling. Rather than simply being limited to the spheres of the literary humanities, the conclusion now is that social science can also benefit from producing “meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience” (Ellis et al 2011, pp 3) as this kind of research takes into account the subjectivity of the researcher and makes it plain for all to see. Instead of disregarding, downplaying or denying the role of subjectivity, bias and the researcher’s own paradigms, a new form of social science research acknowledges and accommodates them all. By laying bare the personal nature of the research, the researcher can do away with any attempt at objectivity, but not at reliability or validity, the cornerstones of social science research.

Thus, autoethnography has been adopted by scholars as an attempt to take identity politics and the multiple nature of selfhood into account while also providing forms of representation that do not ‘other’ research subjects or treat them as objects to be studied (Ellis and Bochner 2000). It is also a move away from more canonical forms of research, which many scholars found to be advocating “a White, masculine, heterosexual, middle/upper-classed, Christian, able-bodied perspective” while dismissing or disregarding other perspectives as “unsatisfactory or invalid” (Ellis et al 2011, pp 4). Autoethnography thus provides a channel to empathise with those whose experiences might be different from that of the establishment or the ‘traditional’ audience.

Autoethnography also allows the researcher to engage in a variety of sensory observations that might otherwise be neglected. Indeed, it is the contention of some researchers that sensory responses to urban environments have not received the attention they deserve. Degen and Rose (2012) argue that most contemporary studies “neglect to investigate the immediate, in situ corporeal experience of the multiple urban dwellers of these spaces on a day-to-day basis” (pp 327). While they allow that there has been research on socially excluded groups and how they respond and react to urban regeneration projects, there hasn’t been the same kind of scholarship on the affective reactions of users to their urban environments on a sensory level (Degen and Rose 2012, pp 3273). Furthermore, even when research is conducted on sensory experiences, it is the visual that is privileged, at the expense of other sensory apparatuses. Degen and Rose (2012) point out the need for two more elements in contemporary urban research, namely “how sensory perception is mediated by different and shifting spatial and temporal practices” (pp 3273).

This last point is particularly important for this thesis, as autoethnography allows for the evaluation of shifting temporalities and spatialities through one fixed subjectivity – mine. Since the spatial and temporal variables change, it is prudent to keep subjectivity constant in order to see what the changes are and how they affect the self and subjectivity.

The specific mode of autoethnography that I have chosen for my fieldwork is the layered account, which focuses on “the author's experience alongside data, abstract analysis, and relevant literature” (Ellis et al 2011, pp 20). Therefore, my walks in my case study areas will be analysed alongside the qualitative data gleaned from my short interviews with residents and the theories outlined in the literature review. This layering of my autoethnographic narrative with other forms of data will yield a richer analysis of greater veracity.

### *The essay as analytical tool*

Moving on, the method of analysis for this experimental research is the narrative essay, i.e., reflective writing as a mode of making sense of experience. Drawing on the insights gained from the literature review, including metaphors and philosophical tools, a series of related essays form the bulk of my findings gleaned from the method of research. In the tradition of writers from the humanities, including Georges Perec (2010), Roland Barthes (1979), Walter Benjamin (1983) and geographers such as Doreen Massey (1994), the narrative essay is an ideal companion to the walk, since the essay, like the walk, can “be seen as the collection of fragments – reflections, ideas, sights, visions, sounds” (Forsdick 2006, quoted in Phillips 2016, pp 8). The narrative essay becomes part of analysis but is also simultaneously fieldwork since it assists in the attempt to search through experiences for meaning. While it may not prove or satisfy a hypothesis, it can work very effectively as an exploratory and descriptive attempt. In line with Pierce and Lawhon’s (2015) proposition that the goal of walking as fieldwork is to formulate questions rather than arrive at answers, the essay as fieldwork too “searches for something that is unlikely to be revealed, but in which the act of searching may be enlightening...it is the searching that matter, the exploring, rather than the findings” (Phillips 2016, pp 18-19).

### *Significance of method*

The next question, or doubt, might perhaps be, what then is the value of such a fieldwork and such an analysis? As established earlier in the first section of the literature review, there is a need within human, cultural and transport geography to explore the experiential embodied dimension of urban walking, not just as data sets of how many pedestrians and where they walk, but more intangible qualitative information that reflects on the sense of ‘being’, where individual subjectivity is mediated by spatiality. Autoethnography allows the researcher to analyse the embodied experience armed with the tools for analysis. Even if quantitative datasets are eschewed, for the purposes of this research thesis, a collection of



empirical interviews, no matter how in-depth or numerous, would still be a set of subjective opinions based on which generalisations would have to be made. If we agree with Middleton (2011a, 2011b), that walking is not a homogenous activity that can simply be distilled into a set of numbers depending on where and when the activity is being conducted, then we must attempt to step away from traditional methods that do this very thing. Therefore, this thesis attempts a more experimental approach of combining walking and autoethnography with a small set of qualitative interviews.

The driving force behind this thesis is the understanding that “place and space are always embodied” (Low 2009, pp 22). Low elaborates on this enigmatic statement further by explaining that while space and place are physically located, they can also be metaphoric and discursive and thus, not always rooted to geography; they can be carried about. And because place and space travel with us as we move about, these spatialities can be explored on differing temporal and spatial scales through a constant subjective lens. The embodied practice of walking is thus directly applicable to this understanding of place and space. Low sees the corporeal body itself as embodied space, as “being-in-the-world”, which includes all the “existential and phenomenological substance of place: its smell, feel, color, and other sensory dimensions” (Low 2009, pp 29). The body as embodied space incorporates “metaphors, ideology, and language, as well as behaviors, habits, skills, and spatial orientations” (Low 2009, pp 22). In this regard, the embodied space of the body is in a direct and constant relationship with the embodied space of the city. Thus, it only makes sense to explore this relationship between space and self through the embodied practice of walking in the city.

The hope then is to gain a complex and richer understanding of the manner in which spatiality affects subjectivity during the practice of urban walking. How people walk is more important for us than where or why people walk. Spaces are not abstract and they are not inert; they are socially constructed (De Certeau 1984). If spaces are “produced by the individual, through his/her movements, thoughts and imaginings” (Low 2009, pp 34) then it is precisely this process of production that I, the researcher, will attempt to experience first-hand and interpret through a framework that is gleaned from academic literature and theory. In that way, the information gained will be reflexive but also more focused and relevant to the issue at hand. This kind of data will assist urban planning and policy to engage in a more productive dialogue with pedestrians wherein the experiences are multifarious and diverse, and not simply dictated by functionalism (Middleton 2011a, pp 102). The embodied practices of urban walking and their linkages to bodily senses, their responses to diverse encounters, their evolving subjectivities and how these are linked to material spatiality and a sense of place can provide novel opportunities for linkages between urban planning, pedestrian policy and experimental methods of urban research and theory (Middleton 2010, pp 577).

## *Comparative urbanism*

A natural question that might arise in the course of reading this paper is ‘why a comparison between Copenhagen and Kathmandu’? After all, it is quite evident that Copenhagen and Kathmandu are two widely disparate cities with their histories of urban development and hence, it is only quite natural for there to be differences. Furthermore, given their own urban trajectories, Copenhagen as a city of the Global North and Kathmandu as a city of the Global South, it is no surprise that the former has an urban spatiality that is more receptive to walking than the latter, no matter what the other variables might be. Why then should the two cities be compared?

To answer this question and to justify my comparative methodology, I take recourse to Jennifer Robinson and her unique brand of comparative urbanism. Kathmandu and Copenhagen are what Robinson (2015) might call ‘unexpected comparisons’ in that they do not share any common ground through which to explore their divergences. This type of comparison, however, is a necessary one. As Robinson (2015) points out, urban scholarship might have opened up on a ‘global scale’ to include a wider range of cities from across the world spectrum but that “the opportunity to study a wide swath of cities across the semi-periphery and centre of the world-economy on the same terms was quickly undercut by a stronger focus on a very small number of ‘global’ cities” (pp 191). Despite the fact that the growth of most cities across the world has been led by neoliberalism, developmentalism, globalisation and a “geopolitically ambitious national project of global presencing” (Robinson 2015, pp 192), cities do not receive the same kind of theoretical and academic investigation. Even when scholarship arrives from the ‘periphery’, it is often found incompatible or is rejected by centres of academia (Robinson 2015).

The most pertinent question that Robinson (2015) asks, and this thesis attempts one small answer to, is “can we promote theory cultures which are alert to their own locatedness and sources of inspiration, open to learning from elsewhere, respectful of different scholarly traditions and committed to the revisability of theoretical ideas?” (pp 188). By pursuing this thesis in Copenhagen and Kathmandu, I am not attempting to map Copenhagen’s ‘superior’ spatiality onto Kathmandu, but rather, taking theories and ideas from the Global North and attempting to “generative productive insights in settings beyond those which shaped their conception” (Robinson 2015, pp 193). While my theoretical toolboxes of mobility, habit, rhythm, citizenship and subjectivity might be drawing from explicitly Western scholarship, the attempt to investigate how they play out in a setting like Kathmandu, so far divorced from the contexts in which they were developed, might generate insight and epiphanies not possible otherwise. The attempt then is to generate “a more global urban studies” that is not just rooted in Europe or the United States but also takes into account fast-growing urban agglomerations in the Global South.

Following Robinson, this thesis will not attempt to control for differences but will rather stay open to differences, of which there will be many, and similarities, of which there might be few or none. The answer must be in the attempt. The comparison here is not an explicit side-by-side measuring of these two cities but rather, a reflection on embodied experiences in one city alongside the embodied experiences in another city. One is not privileged over the other and one does not hold authorial mastery over the other. The Deleuzian mode of investigation that Robinson (2015) espouses is particularly suited for what I wish to explore, as it treats urban comparisons as “generative” where “variation across shared features provides a basis for generating conceptual insights supported by the multiple, sometimes interconnected, theoretical conversations which enable global urban studies” (Robinson 2015, pp 195). The shared feature here is the embodied experience of walking in cities, which is supported by the conceptual insights outlined above in my literature review. By expanding the scope of study outside of Europe, the hope is to enable the very kind of global urban studies that Robinson champions.

This paper will stay cognizant of its locatedness and of the limited subjective perspective of its author. That is why the approach here is one of embodied walking in two disparate spatial contexts. The subjective approach taken is not to oppose an objective method but to better locate sources of scholarship and the attempt to parse them in contexts outside of where they were generated. Without an explicitly subjective approach, the personal insight of why and how a city like Kathmandu, which is my hometown, and a city like Copenhagen, where I was a migrant, might be lost, even though it is not inconsequential. Without acknowledgement of these two facts, a different method might appear objective but would not truly be so. Therefore, the broad aim of this comparison is to attempt to understand “an expanding and diverse urban world, building theory from many different starting points, perhaps resonating with a range of different urban outcomes, but being respectful of the limits of always located insights” (Robinson 2015, pp 194).

## **CASE STUDIES: Global North vs Global South**

My two comparative case studies were a week of walking in Copenhagen and a week of walking in Kathmandu. I chose the two cities because they represent two extremes. One is a meticulously planned Scandinavian city with one of the world's highest standards of living, consistently voted into the top 10 of the world's most liveable cities (Economist Intelligence Unit 2018, Monocle 2018). The other is an extremely informal city in the Global South with one of the lowest standards of living in the world (Reuters 2010, Lodge 2014). Despite these two cities being located at two ends of the development spectrum, what binds them together and what allows for a critical comparison is the persistence of pedestrians.

### ***Copenhagen, Denmark***

Copenhagen is the capital of Denmark and its largest city, with a population of 777,816 inhabitants in the city of Copenhagen of whom 546,371 live in the province in the Copenhagen, as of the second quarter of 2018 (Statistics Denmark 2018). With a history dating back to the middle ages, Copenhagen has been a central space in the history of Denmark and its development. The growth of the city was fuelled in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by industrialisation, contributing to the city becoming a space for cars. However, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Copenhagen started to undertake some radical urban design efforts, particularly the development of pedestrian-only streets in an effort to move away from cars and promote walking and cycling.

In 1962, Copenhagen's primary street, Stroget, was turned pedestrian only as an experiment. The conversion of the 1.15km shopping thoroughfare was initially opposed by shopkeepers and locals who assumed that business would decline with the absence of cars (Global Designing Cities 2018). This fear turned out to be unfounded as not only did business not decline but actually thrived (Hagen et al 2017). This provided the impetus for more urban design experiments aimed at reducing a dependence on cars and turning Copenhagen into a 'walkable city'. Led by the architect Jan Gehl, who was instrumental in this transformation, Copenhagen has since placed much greater emphasis on pedestrians and cyclists, often at the cost of vehicle drivers (Gemzoe 2001).

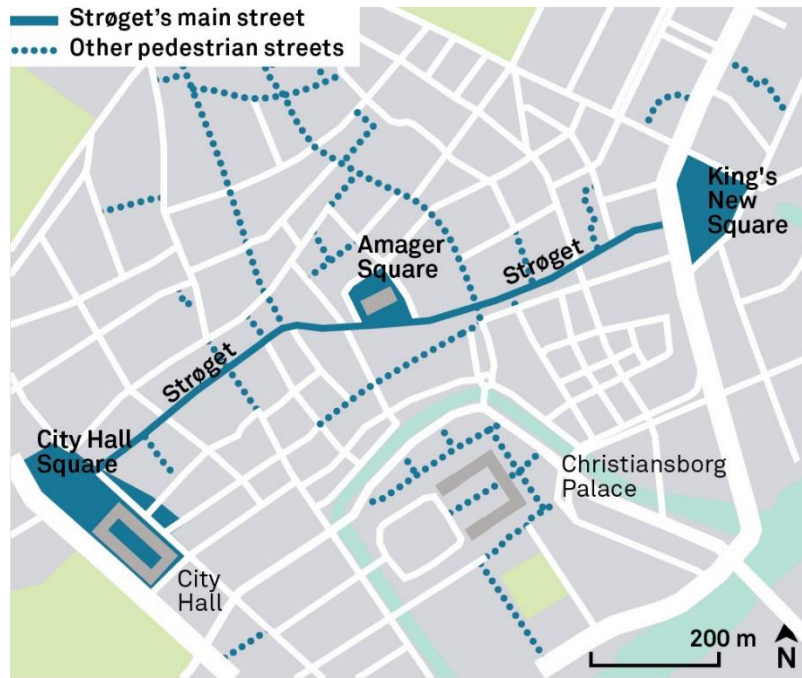


Illustration 1: Map outlining Stroget, the primary pedestrian street in Copenhagen  
(Source: globaldesigningcities.org)

Stroget, with its 0.6km square area, is now one of the largest car-free zones in the world (Hagen et al 2017). While this area is pedestrian and cyclist only, there are many other streets in Copenhagen where traffic is regulated through one-way provisions. Within the pedestrian zone, there are parking spaces for vehicles but these are mostly for delivery vehicles that are allowed only within certain times (Hagen et al 2017). There is goods delivery even outside of the allowable times but this is done in a coordinated manner where goods are first delivered to a “consolidation centre” outside of the city where the goods are collected, repackaged and then delivered (Hagen et al 2017, pp ii). Furthermore, motorised traffic is not completely absent from the pedestrian zone as vehicles are allowed inside but “on the terms of pedestrians” (Hagen et al 2017, pp iii). The focus, however, is on “soft traffic” (Gemzoe 2001, pp 20).

While Stroget and its surrounding areas have been gradually incorporated into a pedestrian priority area, much of Copenhagen remains car-friendly. The area of my research, from Vesterbro going down to the island of Amager, is not pedestrianised, even though there are dedicated cycle lanes as there are throughout Copenhagen and much of Denmark. Indeed, Amager Boulevard, which begins at the Langebro Bridge connecting the Zealand landmass with the island of Amager, is a highway for cars. There are few pedestrian crossings and the sidewalk is smaller in comparison with the centre of Copenhagen. The cycle lanes also often eat into the sidewalk, rather than the street itself. The island of Amager, where my research area terminates, remains a car-centric space, with wide boulevards and few pedestrian crossings. The island of Amager, with its “new buildings of the global economy” is “oriented to the automobile and parking lots and not to pedestrians on sidewalks” (Bosselmann 2008, pp 137).



Illustration 2: Amager Boulevard, a veritable highway, January 6, 2018 (Source: Author)

Even as Copenhagen adopted measures to reduce car traffic, or at least keep it stable, initial results showed that pedestrianisation helped reduce car traffic in the city itself while traffic increased in Greater Copenhagen (Gemzoe 2001, pp 24). Policies to reduce car traffic have included the reduction of through-traffic and limited parking space, along with the reduction of lanes in major entryways into the city (Gemzoe 2001, pp 24).

What is interesting about Copenhagen's pedestrianisation is that development on the streets have been accompanied by other measures that facilitate walking in the city, namely opportunities for rest, relaxation and recreation. A number of squares have been redeveloped in resting areas for pedestrians and numerous cafes, restaurants and shopping areas have sprung up to cater to the increased foot traffic in and around Stroget. As Gemzoe (2001) puts it "The city centre is not just a shopping centre, a workspace, a recreational area or an amusement park. It is a finely balanced combination of them all, neatly woven in and around public spaces" (pp 24).

Despite all of Copenhagen's achievements in pedestrianising the city, much of the progress has been limited to the city centre, where such changes are possible. For areas outside of the centre, Copenhagen is still not technically a walking city; it is more of a cycling city. Cyclists get priority over all other kinds of traffic, even pedestrians (Gemzoe 2001). Still, on the grand scheme of things, Copenhagen serves as a great example of how cities can move away from cars and motorised traffic towards more environment-friendly and healthier forms of transport, namely walking and cycling. Further, Copenhagen's, and Jan Gehl's, understanding of walking as not simply an activity that takes you from point A to point B has been instrumental in how the city has approached

pedestrianisation. Sitting, standing, resting and looking are all as important to the embodied experience that is urban walking (Gehl 2011). Peter Bosselmann's (2008) conclusion about Copenhagen seems very apt: "The city is an endless compression of lives that were lived here with much continuity. It is a cultivated place and a very fortunate one" (pp 139).

### *Kathmandu, Nepal*

The city of Kathmandu, with a population of 1.7 million as of 2011 during the last census, is the capital and administrative heartland of the country of Nepal (CBS 2011).

Kathmandu city is not to be confused with the Kathmandu Valley, which consists of the three districts of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur. Kathmandu Metropolitan City is the largest metropolis in the country and a part of the district of Kathmandu. The urban agglomeration of the Kathmandu Valley encompasses roughly 5 million people (CBS 2011).

The history of Kathmandu itself dates back to the first century AD and urban planning was a significant feature of the city from the 1600-1700s during the reign of the Malla kings and from the 1800s onwards during the reign of the autocratic Rana regime. After the advent of democracy in the country in 1950, development became much more haphazard, leading to unplanned growth and the chaotic construction of buildings and roadways (Shrestha 2011). Due to poor governmental oversight and a lack of proper regulations on building construction, individual homes were not regulated, thus leading to "no trace of street-wall formation, unity in elevation and control of building height, and hence no volumetric definition and sense of place" (Shrestha 2011, pp 113).

Furthermore, sidewalks and public open spaces, once a significant feature of the city ever since the 1600s, began to disappear as more homes and commercial buildings began to encroach on public land, making these streets less sociable and less conducive to walking (Shrestha 2011). These negative changes have "destroyed the physical form, reduced social activities, increased accidents and decreased pedestrian comfort on all types of streets" (Shrestha 2011, pp 107).



Illustration 3: Waiting to cross the road in Kathmandu, July 16, 2018 (Source: Author)

Authorities have attempted to stem the growing unplanned growth but new regulations are neither not enforced or are too weak. Often, the regulations themselves are myopic and instead, discourage pedestrians and replace public spaces with traffic (Shrestha 2011, pp 107). In order to meet housing demands for an ever-growing population, Kathmandu authorities have transformed the medieval city into a “high-rise, high-density” zone in the historic core and “low-rise, low-density” zones in the peripheral areas (Shrestha 2011, pp 114). Furthermore, the number of privately owned vehicles is increasingly exponentially but the number of paved streets are not being built at the same pace. This leads to daily gridlock on the streets and in absence of proper regulations, vehicles begin to encroach on buffer zones and sidewalks, providing even less space for pedestrians. These factors in turn have led to increasing traffic accidents and fatalities as pedestrians are forced to walk on streets in the absence of sidewalks. The figure below presents a correlation between the rising population, the rising number of vehicles, the stagnation in the construction of streets and traffic fatalities.

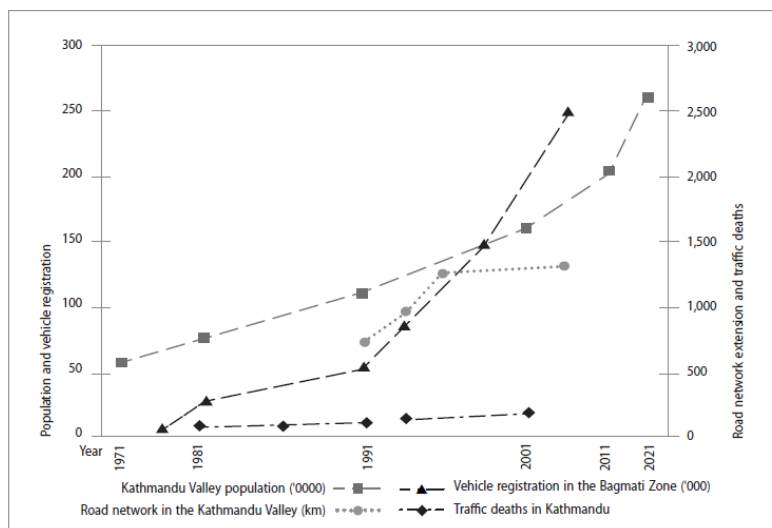


Illustration 4: A chart correlating population with vehicle registration and traffic deaths  
(Source: Shrestha 2011)

It is not just the vehicles that make walking difficult and dangerous in Kathmandu. While the absence of contiguous sidewalks forces pedestrians onto the street, even existing pavements are occupied by hawkers and shopfronts or used for parking. Electrical poles, where the same pole is used for telephone, television and internet wiring, are often positioned in the middle of sidewalks, presenting yet another hazard for the pedestrian.

Moreover, recent urban planning projects aimed at roads and streets have focussed on “vehicular movement and drivers’ convenience rather than pedestrian comfort, convenience and safety” (Shrestha 2011, pp 116). These plans include recent drive, from 2011-2015, to further widen the capital city’s roads to accommodate traffic. While the new roads have gone some ways towards alleviating traffic jams, they have not ensured



the safe and convenient movement of pedestrians as pavements are still missing at a great many areas, there are few zebra crossings and even fewer traffic lights and even when pedestrian overpasses are present, the old, infirm and disabled are at a distinct disadvantage. In many thoroughfares, the road has been expanded at the cost of sidewalks, reducing the width of the sidewalk to less than 1.5 metres, which is the minimum prescribed width in the 2013 Nepal Road Standard (Khanal et al 2017). Ongoing projects, like the redevelopment of the old bus park at Ratnapark into a commercial complex with underground car parking, are further misaligned with the city's needs as they will only invite more traffic into the city centre while discouraging pedestrians and destroying the existing social fabric (Shrestha 2011, pp 117).

Jan Gehl (2011), the architect of Copenhagen's pedestrianisation, outlines how streets for walking do not just include wide, straight roads. In fact, long straight roads are often a deterrent to pedestrians. Gehl (2011) explains that "a stretch of 500 meters (1,600 ft) viewed as a straight, unprotected and dull path is experienced as very long and tiring, while the same length can be experienced as a very short distance if the route is perceived in stages" (pp 137). The road expansion carried out from 2011-2015 demolished many structures and spaces that were helping to break up this "experienced distance" into shorter chunks. The primary structures here were traditional *paatis*, wide covered platforms built during the medieval era along major thoroughfares to serve as resting areas for travellers. These *paatis* not only broke up the experienced distance but also served as social spaces for pedestrians and locals. The road expansion required space for cars, thus leading to the demolition of centuries-old *paatis*, resulting in understandable outrage among locals and conservationists (Khanal et al 2017).

The problem with Kathmandu is not just physical, but also psychological. There is a widespread notion that owning cars and motorbikes are a symbol of wealth and prosperity while walking, cycling and public transport are looked down upon (Shrestha 2011, Khanal et al 2017). Residents, therefore, see wide roads, flyovers and highways as signs of the country's development and their own prosperity. The government does little to dissuade people of these notions and instead openly promotes such a paradigm through political speeches, leaflets and plans. Even as editorials and op-eds in the local newspapers bemoan the lack of public spaces and sidewalks for pedestrians, the general understanding seems to be that such ills are a cost on the path to progress. What was once an eminently walkable city from end to end has slowly morphed into a dirty and dangerous walking space.

### ***Copenhagen vs Kathmandu***

Despite how pedestrian friendly Copenhagen is and how unfriendly Kathmandu is, there are pedestrians in both cities, often in numbers that dwarf other means of transport. What is it like for a pedestrian to walk in Copenhagen when the entire city population seems to

be on bicycles? Conversely, what is it like for a pedestrian in Kathmandu when the pavement you are walking on suddenly disappears and you suddenly find yourself on the shoulder of a busy road? I believe that there are distinct points of convergence despite the very real and very many points of divergence between the two case studies.

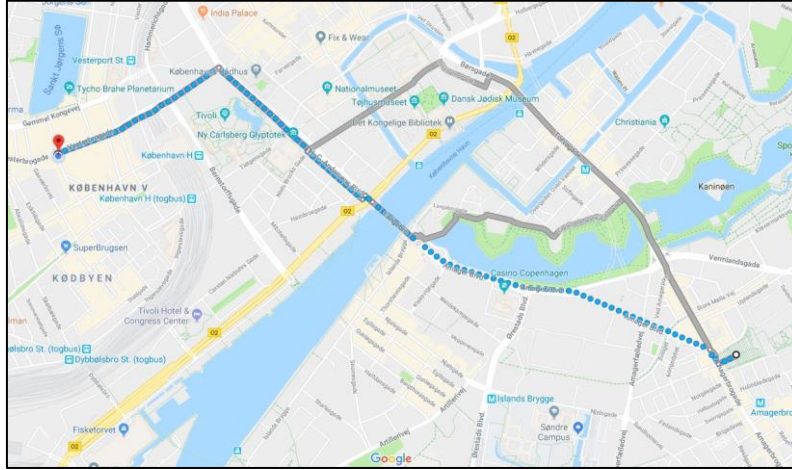


Illustration 5: Walking route for Copenhagen (Source: Google Maps)

Specifically, in Copenhagen, I walked from the central Vesterbro neighbourhood to the Islands Brygge neighbourhood in Amager, and back. This was roughly a 30-minute walk. Vesterbro is a neighbourhood that is home to the central station and various tourist attractions like the Tivoli gardens. Thus, it is pedestrian-friendly with large wide sidewalks and an abundance of people walking around. Amager, on the other hand, is a more recently developed space whose primary feature is a large highway that cuts across the island. This route was chosen for these spatial features but also because it was a route that I had traversed on foot many times over the last four-five months. Vesterbro was where I lived and Islands Brygge was where I went to school. Since this was a route I was familiar with, it fit into my investigation of everyday geographies and not flâneurie or the derive of psychogeographers.

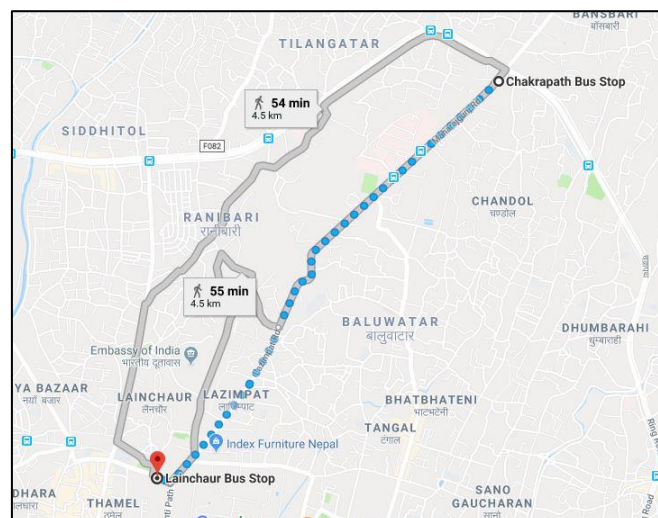


Illustration 6: Walking route for Kathmandu (Source: Google Maps)

Similarly, I adopted the same method in Kathmandu, walking from the Lazimpat neighbourhood to the Chakrapath neighbourhood, which is roughly analogous to the Copenhagen walk. Lazimpat is a central area of Kathmandu, much like Vesterbro. It is a relatively upscale neighbourhood of the city with many embassies and hotels. Thus, it has relatively well-maintained roads and sidewalks and significant foot traffic. Chakrapath is much like the Amager neighbourhood in that the central feature of this neighbourhood is a large roadway. This area is less friendly to pedestrians and more to motorised transport. Similar to the route chosen in Copenhagen, the route in Kathmandu is also one that I have travelled many times in the past, as I lived in Chakrapath and would walk to Lazimpat often.

While conducting mobile ethnography over a period of a week, walking back and forth between the two chosen destinations in both cities, my observations were informed by my previous experiences and familiarity with the two routes. Geographies of the everyday concern repeated actions and the establishment of a pattern. Picking a completely new route would not have the same effects and would have taken away from my aim to study pedestrian movement that is habitual. The role of memory and habit both came into play here. As conceptions of the self cannot be divorced from memory and the past, they were equally important to a study of subjectivity and spatiality.

## RESULTS: Four Movements

The first phase of the fieldwork was carried out over a week in early January 2018 in Copenhagen, from January 5-11. As decided earlier, a total of fourteen walks (seven towards and seven from) were taken between the Vesterbro neighbourhood and the Islands Brygge neighbourhood of Copenhagen. The second phase was carried out over another week in mid July in Kathmandu, from July 15-21. Fourteen total walks were taken between the Chakrapath neighbourhood and the Lainchour neighbourhood of Kathmandu.



Illustration 7: The pavement in Copenhagen (left) vs the pavement in Kathmandu (right) (Source: Author)

After an initial round of walks, five short qualitative interviews each were also conducted with ordinary people in order to gain diverse perspectives on what it is like to walk in both Copenhagen and Kathmandu (See Annex 1 for interview guide and transcripts of all interviews conducted). The interviews were conducted with random individuals of varying age groups, ethnicities and sexes to act as supplementary material in order to provide a wider context to the conclusions I drew from my own walks and also to present a slightly more diverse perspective that would allow me to step outside of my own positionality as a straight, male, young Nepali man. These interviews are intended to add veracity to my very subjective research method.

The bulk of my findings are presented below as essays drawn from my autoethnography while walking in Copenhagen and Kathmandu, supported by excerpts from short interviews. I have attempted to corral the most important findings and group them under wide headings, as it was impossible to list and go through all of the findings individually. Further, structuring my findings as essays helped me process the qualitative data and work through them to find meaning. The essays are thus structured as 'movements', a reference to the word's many complementary meanings – movement as locomotion, movement as change or development, and movement as a section of a longer musical piece with its own key, tempo and rhythm. In the essay, I attempt to draw meaning from my walks in an exploratory manner, linking back to the theoretical frameworks explicated in my literature review.

## *Movement I: Affect*

A walk is a physical activity. It requires the movement of the feet in pendulous motion, not metronomic but rhythmic; depending on various environmental and physical cues, the rhythm of the walk can vary (Ingold 2004). A walk, generally speaking, is outdoors. Of course, it can take place indoors but then it might be better called pacing than walking. Walking calls to mind a use of the body. When walking, all bodily senses are in play, from sight, smell, hearing, touch and sometimes even taste. There is also balance, direction and thermoregulation, the lesser known senses. Every walk is an exercise of the body.

Walking recentres the body as an affective vehicle through which notions of mobility and transference are mediated and experienced (Wylie 2005). I became acutely aware of this fact during my walks across both Copenhagen and Kathmandu. In January, Copenhagen was cold, foggy and rainy, as it was on almost all of the days when I took my walks. Walking in such weather can only serve to impress upon the walker the body's ability to experience every slight and every inconvenience. It is as if the senses are heightened and every prick in the foot becomes a needle jabbing you, every drip of the nose becomes a cascading torrent, and every sharp wind against the ears becomes a roaring banshee. Thus, one cannot help but become aware of one's corporeality. After all, it is the body that moves and as it moves, it experiences.



Illustration 8: Pedestrians in Copenhagen wait at a traffic light, 5 January 2018 (Source: Author)

Similarly, in Kathmandu in July, it was the height of summer and also the height of the monsoon. Walking during the day time, especially noon and afternoon, was often accompanied by a profuse sweating and a growing discomfort with the body's own natural functions. When it rained, as it did (heavily) on at least five of the walks



undertaken, the sensations of the body came even more into focus. Rain would seep through my clothes and onto my skin, initially producing a cooling, calming sensation but after a while, a cold and clammy one. As the water sucked the heat out of my body, I became acutely aware of every piece of fabric that lay on my skin. The fluctuations in heat and rain caused my body to respond in like fashion to each change, forcing me in turn to notice every bodily intensity.



Illustration 9: Walking in the rain in Kathmandu, 16 July 2018 (Source: Author)

After Deleuze, we might call this bodily ‘intensity’ affect, which can be understood as the “shifting mood, tenor, colour or intensity of places and situation” (Wylie 2005, pp 236). In other words, affect is experience that is mediated not through the mind but the body. Affect is the domain in which emotions, feelings and sensations reside, but it is not reducible or synonymous to any of these and is distinct from all of them (Wylie 2005, pp 236). As translator and philosopher Brian Massumi explains, affect “is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act” (Massumi, pp xvii). To put it in less abstract terms, feelings are sensation that are directed or modulated by past experiences while emotions are the outward display of those feelings. Affect, on the other hand, is a “non-conscious experience of intensity” (Shouse 2005, pp 5). It lies outside of consciousness and thus, can only be negotiated through the body.

How does this highly abstract Deleuzian notion of affect fit into our discussion on walking? The sensations described above, in both Copenhagen and Kathmandu, were simple bodily reactions to changes in environment, temperature and climate. However, the hyper awareness of the body that those reactions prompted could be seen as the domain of affect. In feeling certain sensations while walking, my consciousness was occupied with the

practice of walking and the sensations themselves were either wholly outside or on the periphery of my conscious mind. It is in that liminal space, between recognition of the body and the flight of the mind that affect resides. This affective relation was common to both cities and by that token, I assume, common to the experience of walking, not just urban walking.

There are moments during walks when the mind goes blank, when consciousness is relegated to the background and one enters a sort of meditative, fugue state. During the course of my walks in Copenhagen, I constantly found myself walking as if in a trance, where my body and my footsteps would move as if directed independently, responding to the twists and turns in the street. I would then come to a halt, as if jerking myself awake and realise then that I had been walking for many long minutes without consciously realising it. Affect, in this case, is the body's negotiation of movement without an intervening consciousness. My subjectivity, it seemed, was put on hold and I became a purely perceptual being. The sensations of walking, whether in cold, heat or rain, were often directed towards their physicality and less towards what I thought of them. Although subjectivity would intrude after the fact of the sensation, in order to make sense of what I felt, during the moments when I simply walking and not thinking, it seemed as if my subjectivity had taken a leave of absence.

This feeling was echoed by one of my interviewees, Jakob, a 26-year old Danish graphic designer, who had this to say:

*I like to take my time while I am walking. But sometimes I find myself just walking without thinking where I am going. I listen to music or think about something and then suddenly I find myself in Amager or in Nørrebro and I realise that I have been walking for half an hour without noticing where I am going. It is scary sometimes because it is like I am, how you saying, walking in my sleep, a sleepwalker. (Jakob 2018)*

It would, however, be reductive to say that affect is simply that what happens unconsciously. After all, involuntary actions are not considered affective. Affect includes the before and the after; it is the relation from which new configurations of feeling, emotion and self emerge. In the example cited above, consciousness before and after this fugue state is coloured differently. We are much more aware of what was missing when it was gone. It must be noted that what was missing is not just the interior but also the exterior. Experience is neither all interior nor all exterior and hence, the unfolding of the sidewalk, the sounds of the car engines and the crunch of dirt and ice underneath the shoes as one walks are all exterior stimuli that determine perception. But if all of these stimuli were simply uniform, there would be a loss. As Wylie (2005) remarks, "the circulation and upsurge of affects and percepts is precisely the relation, the primary capacity of affecting and being affected from which these two horizons, inside and outside, self and landscape, precipitate and fold" (pp 236).

Affect is intrinsic to the body and it is happening everywhere, at all times. But for us, the next question we must ask is – is there something unique about the city that acts on or gives rise to affect? If affect is the relation that individuals enter into, what is it about the city that engenders this relation?

During my walks, there were several instances where I reflected upon the ability of the city of Copenhagen to induce meditation. This is a city that is conducive to contemplation, particularly because of the monotone of its sounds. The whirr of car engines is rarely punctuated by the shriek of a horn. Even in the heart of the city, there is little noise that rises above a hum of voices. Even at night, drunken shouts and giggles are rare. This city is seemingly the anti-thesis of the one described by Simmel (1903), with its hyper-stimulation. Furthermore, Copenhagen has little geographic variance and hence, any walk becomes uniform when one does not encounter any uphill or downhill slope. Since there is no reason to change one's gait or apply more effort, walking becomes mechanical. Thus, the affect one enters into is particular to Copenhagen.

On the other hand, Kathmandu is the city epitome of Simmel's (1903) hyper-stimulation. The chaotic traffic, the dust and pollution in the air and the press of pedestrians make it so that one cannot help but feel assaulted when one is walking in Kathmandu. There are very few moments available to the walker to become lost in thought or go into a fugue state like the one described above by Jakob. Stimulants are everywhere, whether it is noticing where the sidewalk ends, the obstructions that are often on the pavement, the mass of people who are moving along with you, or the constant noise of the cars and motorbikes around you. Unlike Copenhagen, in Kathmandu, there are horns galore. In one specific walk from Lainchour to Chakrapath (20 July 2018), I managed to count five sirens (police and ambulance) within a span of 15 minutes.



Illustration 10: The pedestrian must contend with other animals on the streets of Kathmandu, 17 July 2018  
(Source: Author)



Furthermore, Kathmandu is a very hilly city. Unlike the flat expanse of Copenhagen, there are numerous ups and downs in Kathmandu, one substantial hill on this Chakrapath-Lainchour stretch alone. The unlaboured walking of Copenhagen is possible to a certain extent only because it is flat and requires much less exertion. Kathmandu forces you to be aware of your breathing and your body's exertions while walking uphill. Geographic variations play a significant role in the affective relations that the body enters into. On an uphill walk, there are relations of tiredness and stress. When there are obstructions, like dangling wires, holes, or other objects, the relation is one of negotiation. This sentiment was echoed by a number of my interview respondents who said: "...people do not shy away from nudging, or pushing while over taking other pedestrians. People don't stick to their sides and I often have to zig zag my way through a crowd" (Priyankana B 2018), "it's not easy to cross roads or if there's a lot of muddy water to walk past" (Prateebha T 2018), and "There are also various kinds of vendors, cars and carts parked on the side of the street taking up valuable walkway space and forcing pedestrians to venture into the middle of the streets" (Prajesh R 2018).

Therefore, it appears that there is something unique about the spatiality of the city that engenders a specific affective relation between the individual and feeling. It is this relation that leads the walker to become conscious about the physical act of walking. One's subjectivity does not remain limited to the internal, as was possible for long stretches in Copenhagen. In cities like Kathmandu, with their hyper-stimulation, the self must become actively conscious and subjectivity must be employed towards navigating and negotiating urban spatiality. Following Lorrimer (2011), walking acts as a bridge between the internal and external, allowing one to reflect on the other. In this instance, it is not simply subjectivity reflecting on spatiality but also spatiality's affect on subjectivity. Though the relations generated might be different in Kathmandu and Copenhagen, it is walking that binds these two disparate experiences together. In other words, it is the practice of walking that allowed affective relations to rise between the self and spatiality, despite their differing contexts.

### ***Movement II: Sight***

In his seminal book on the use of public space, the Danish architect Jan Gehl (2011) outlines the importance of sight for pedestrians. It is not simply the physical distance that determines the length, ease and propensity to walk for pedestrians, but also the 'experienced distance.' Gehl says that "a stretch of 500 meters (1,600 ft.) viewed as a straight, unprotected, dull path is experienced as very long and tiring, while the same length can be experienced as a very short distance if the route is perceived in stages" (Gehl 2011, pp 137). His solution is to break up the distance with squares and for the street to wind a little so that the entire distance to be traversed is not seen as one long, endless path. This wisdom is contradictory to the Hausmann-style of planning with its long,

wide boulevards that are oriented towards a 'view'. Bosselmann (2008) quotes William James in this regard, with a very apt quote, which goes: "A time filled with varied and interesting experiences seems short in passing, but long as we look back. On the other hand a tract of time empty of experiences seems long in passing, but in retrospect short" (pp 189-190). The metaphor employed here, 'looking back', hinges on the sense of sight. It is testament to just how dominant the sense of sight is in our everyday perception.

In my walks in Copenhagen and Kathmandu, I discovered Gehl's pronouncements to be very apropos. I perceived the walk from Vesterbro to Amager Boulevard, which winds its way by Tivoli Gardens, to be much shorter than it actually was. This had to do with the fact that this stretch of road is broken up by traffic squares that add variety in sight to the walk and also the large amounts of tourists and other pedestrians. Because there were instances where I constantly had to stop, either to avoid other walkers or to wait at a traffic light, the walk was broken up into smaller more manageable segments. Hence, the walk felt shorter. However, the walk down Amager Boulevard to Islands Brygge was much more tedious. Since the walk was by a major road artery, which cuts straight down Copenhagen in a long, unbroken path, I often found myself gazing into the distance and wondering why the end point took so long to arrive. Even though the walk itself was not very long, perhaps 15-20 minutes at the most, it often felt like it was half an hour or more. I even lost track of time while walking because it felt like a march, a ponderous plodding, rather than an enjoyable stroll through the city.

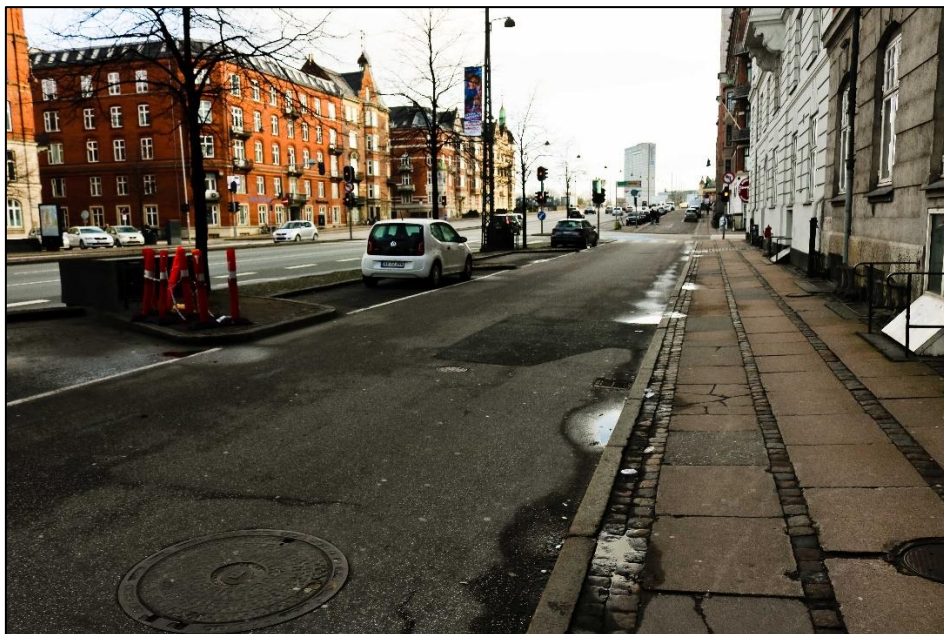


Illustration 11: The long view down Amager Boulevard, 5 January 2018 (Source: Author)

In Kathmandu too, Gehl's idea of the perceived distance was very much in effect. The stretch between Chakrapath and Lainchour is a long and straight one. Standing in the

middle of the street, one is able to look straight down the road and see off to a distance of over a kilometre. However, for a pedestrian, though road itself might be down a straight line, the walk is never parallel. Due to a lack of separation of the elements in Kathmandu, a walk is never uninterrupted. Oftentimes, you are forced to stop and walk around the pavement and onto the street. You are even forced to cross the road and walk on the other side as the pavement has completely disappeared on one side. The obstructions on the pavements are too many to list, from trees smack in the middle to signboards that intrude and people that block your view. So while the road itself might look straight on paper, vision, and the walk itself, is constantly interrupted.



Illustration 12: A tree grows in Kathmandu, 17 July 2018 (Source: Author)

A city like Copenhagen is meticulously planned and therefore, street setbacks are strictly observed. In Kathmandu, due to a failure to enforce building codes and setbacks for roads, buildings intrude onto the street and there remain many boundary walls that encroach onto the street itself (Khanal et al 2017). For instance, the wall of the French embassy, which falls towards the Lainchour end of my walk, cuts into the pavement,

eliminating it. Thus, when looking straight ahead from one end of the pavement, one sees a brick wall, breaking any perception of a long walk. So if in Copenhagen streets form a uniform straight edge, in Kathmandu, the edges are jagged and uneven, confounding and interrupting vision.

Visual perception becomes an even more interesting phenomenon at night. On 8 January 2018, it was a cold and foggy night when I stepped out at roughly 8pm for my walk. While 8pm might not be too late for some countries, given the amount of light it gets, in Scandinavian Copenhagen, it was pitch dark with only the lights of the city, the headlights of cars and the pale yellow of the street lights illuminating my path. The darkness was one impediment to my sight, another was the fog. With sight obscured, I was no longer able to see far into the distance and the walk felt distinctly different. Copenhagen felt like an alien city, one made of shadow and smoke. The city emerged from the fog like a leaping animal that was at once ferocious and friendly. It invited you in but kept you at a distance. At night, the city was juxtaposed with itself. The alluring bosom of its bright lights created shadows in which dangers lurked.

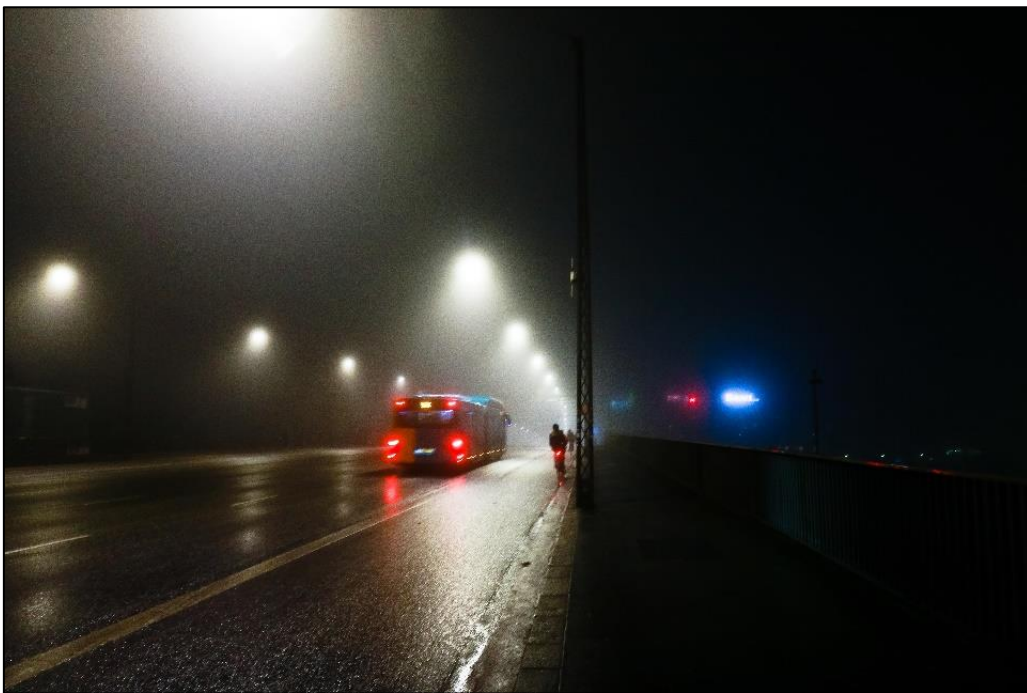


Illustration 13: The bridge to Islands Brygge at night, 8 January 2018 (Source: Author)

My night-time walk in Kathmandu, taken on 20 July 2018 at roughly 7.30pm was similar in experience to the night-time walk in Copenhagen. Even though Kathmandu was much brighter than Copenhagen was at roughly the same time of night, due to the amount of light in that part of the world during the summer, Kathmandu felt much more perilous. Natural light was still present as dusk had just settled in, and the passing vehicles created moments of temporary blinding brightness. However, unlike Copenhagen, Kathmandu lacks streetlights. In Copenhagen, street lights are bright and evenly distributed on both



sides of the street. In Kathmandu, street lights are either absent or do not come on, and even when they are present, they only light up one side of the street. Thus, the same obstacles that I had avoided during the day were now invisible at night and I was forced to attempt to remember where the danger lay. I found myself tripping on uneven pavement tiles and bumping into abandoned objects.

This impediment to sight was sorely felt as it forced me to reevaluate just how much of my subjectivity depends on the apex sense of sight. Without the ability to see, is my agency and consciousness the same? The answer would be definitely not, as the agency of blind people is severely limited, even in cities like Copenhagen.



Illustration 14: At night, the only lights in much of Kathmandu are headlights, 20 July 2018 (Source: Author)

Sight becomes especially important given the space you are in and your own identity. A city like Copenhagen is safer than most. There are few dangers lurking out there but that is not to say that there are none. One of my interviewees, a Nepali immigrant to Denmark, had this to say about his experiences walking at night:

*In Norrebro, it is sometimes dangerous to walk as someone might try to rob you. There are sometimes fights and the streets are quite dirty when you compare to other areas of Copenhagen. Also, there is always police going around this area so I don't like walking in case they think that I am doing something wrong and then ask me questions. (Bimesh 2018)*

For Bimesh, Copenhagen at night is more akin to Bauman's (1994) characterisation of the city as "more a jungle than a theatre" (pp 148). The above account is characteristic of the fact that walking is not a homogenous activity. Bimesh's ethnicity decides his negative experience of walking that perhaps a white Dane might not experience similarly. He is

perhaps more sensitive of the dangers lurking in the dark since he lives in an area that is not as safe as the rest of Copenhagen. For him, sight becomes much more paramount, especially at night, since someone unsavoury could always be lurking in the darkness. Bimesh described an account where he was robbed and another where his wife was almost robbed:

*This happened when I had just moved to Copenhagen around two years back. I used to live in a much worse area and one night, I was walking home after working for the whole day and two guys tried to rob me. I think they were drunk or on drugs because they could not talk very well. I said I didn't have any money but one of them had a knife and he said to give my phone. I only had a cheap phone that I had brought from Nepal so I gave it to him and he didn't even take it, he just threw it on the ground and broke it. Then both of them ran away. I guess I was lucky that only my phone was broken. Like I said before, my wife also nearly got robbed. Someone stopped her and asked for money but she just screamed and ran away. That is why I don't like walking here at night or in dangerous areas. You cannot see where robbers are hiding. Anything can happen. If you are on a cycle then you can run away and they cannot catch you but if you are walking then they can catch you and stab you or beat you. (Bimesh 2018, emphasis mine)*

As is evident, in the night time city, the ability or inability to see is polysemic. For pedestrians walking in safer areas and perhaps of a certain identity, the obscuring of sight can make for a more pleasant walk. It hides the experienced distance and turns the once-familiar city into one that is mysterious and alluring. For others, vision is key to safety as the darkness hides many dangers. Perception, thus, is paramount to experiencing the city, whether positively or negatively. But as Ingold (2004) points out perception is also a function of locomotion as “what we perceive must, at least in part, depend on how we move” (pp 331). The point Ingold (2004) is making concerns our ability to perceive a thing in its entirety, where we do not see something from a “single vantage point, but rather by walking around them” (pp 331).

To understand how vision shapes our understanding and experience of the city, it is important to begin first with movement, in that perception is a function of movement. To see the city is to know it but to know it well, one must walk as well as see, for “walking is itself a form of circumambulatory knowing” (Ingold 2004, pp 331). If seeing is a characteristic of cognition then so is movement. To move is also to know. But one must learn to see as well as learn to walk. How to walk and where to walk determines as much what it is you see and how much. On one of my walks, on 5 January 2018, while walking by Tivoli, I noticed a number of tourists looking up and taking pictures either of the city skyline or of some interesting architectural composition on one of the buildings. I had never looked up like that since when I walked, my sight is at eye-level. Sometimes I look at the ground in order not to trip over things but my sight does not go above. Tourists see each new city with fresh eyes; they are constantly looking around. Similarly, in Kathmandu, on 18 July 2018, my walk took place during a time when school had just let out and there were children walking home. I noticed that children tend to see the city differently, as their eye line much lower than that of the adult. Like tourists in Copenhagen looking up, the sight of children in Kathmandu was on a different plane. What then do children notice that adults do not?



Illustration 15: Tourists can upend the centrality of the eye-level gaze in Copenhagen, 6 January 2018  
(Source: Author)

Once one has lived in a city for some time, it is easy to get jaded and ‘see without actually seeing’. The route that I walked in Kathmandu, from Chakrapath to Lainchour, is one that I have walked countless times in the past. The muscle memory of my walking in Copenhagen was informed by a few months but in Kathmandu has a history of decades. Familiarity, however, breeds complacency and when I was actively looking around and walking, I noticed so much that had passed me by before. I was impressed by how much the cityscape on that stretch alone had morphed, even though the basic spatial layout of the street had not changed at all. New buildings, wider roads, unexpected outcroppings of pavements and obstructions, and makeshift structures all were new to my seeing eyes. While conducting the autoethnography, I turned into a tourist, or a child, looking at the old with new eyes. The above and below of the street, where I would’ve simply walked on without a second thought, was now a subject of interest.

There was a significant reversal here. I had assumed that my walks in Copenhagen would be consciously informed by my walks in Kathmandu but instead, my walks in Kathmandu turned out to be informed by my walks in Copenhagen. In Kathmandu, I found myself reflecting time and again on comparisons with the spatiality of Copenhagen. Perhaps this was because I had never looked at Kathmandu with the same eyes that I had looked at Copenhagen with. The burden of knowledge, all the theoretical tools that I now carried, caused me to see Kathmandu with the filter of Copenhagen and the research that had begun there. Sight, therefore, is not simply a function of the eyes but also one of the consciousness and of memory (Ingold 2004). What ones sees is not necessarily what is in front of us but rather, what the consciousness chooses to focus on. Subjectivity covertly intrudes upon vision and dictates what enters into memory. In this specific case, spatiality lies inert but our subjectivity acts upon it in such a way that neutral spatiality takes on

personal meaning and thus, either becomes irrelevant or more relevant. Or as Doreen Massey (1994) would put it, how 'space becomes place'.

### ***Movement III: Citizenship***

Although it might not seem evident, subjectivity is intricately linked to citizenship. Consciousness, agency and personhood depend to a certain extent on how much the person feels like they belong to the space that they inhabit. As elaborated on earlier, citizenship in a city has much to do with the ability to move in and through the city (Cresswell 2011). Citizenship in a city, therefore, has as much to do with how free one is to move around and how free one feels in that endeavour. As per Lefebvre (2000), citizenship entails a stake in the production of space, not just its use. Walking, following de Certeau (1984), can be one instance of how space is produced, as walking is an enunciative act that creates the city anew.

In Copenhagen, I should have felt differently. To a young, immigrant with a beard, Copenhagen, with its abundance of white Scandinavian citizens, should have felt alien and perhaps a little discomforting. This was not the case. I found myself very much at ease in Copenhagen. I walked without any feelings of fear, prejudice or discrimination, not just on the route I had chosen to walk but also everywhere else I walked in the city. Although, it must be mentioned here that I did feel a little more at home in Norrebro, because there were more people who looked like me.

However, when it comes to being an active participant in the production of space, Copenhagen felt slightly prohibitive. One can walk in Copenhagen without fear or without obstacles, but there are prescribed patterns of walking in Copenhagen that are to be adhered to. One cannot walk anywhere, and perhaps that is a positive from a civic sense. Pedestrians cannot be walking on the streets or on the bike lanes if the city is to function properly. This is basic planning and basic civic sense. However, how much agency does a citizen have if all they are doing is walking prescribed paths laid out for them by an authority? This is a philosophical question that goes to the heart of what citizenship is, namely that in order to gain some rights, you must give others up to Hobbes' leviathan. If you wish to have a safe, orderly, functional city, you must give up your right to walk wherever you please and on whatever surface.

Kathmandu, because of its laissez-faire approach to urban planning and rules and regulations, is on the opposite end of Copenhagen. In Kathmandu, you can walk anywhere and everywhere, whether on the pavement or on the street. The pavements are often coopted by stores and shopfronts and used as informal parking for motorbikes. The right of the pedestrian to walking space clashes with the right of the motorbiker to parking space. And because authorities are not enforcing anyone's rights, the streets turn into an actual shared space. While the concept of shared spaces is taking off in Europe and the west, the Global South, to my eyes, seemed a pioneer of such spaces, although perhaps not by design. Streets in cities like Kathmandu are a careful amalgam of users who are



consciously and unconsciously parcelling out their own right to the spatiality of the street. Pedestrians must manage walking space from motorcyclists who use the pavement as parking and street vendors with wares or store fronts that emerge onto the sidewalk. Every user of the street must carve out their own niche in a limited space. This is negotiated space that has evolved through a lack of direction and authority.

In that sense, Kathmandu is a more stimulating space than Copenhagen. In the latter, walking is a pleasant experience but it is monotonous. Even though you have agency to walk, this agency is circumscribed by where and how you can walk. True anarchical freedom is missing in Copenhagen and that is exactly what Kathmandu seems to offer, at least on the surface. Of course, true freedom has its costs and it is always a matter of concern over who actually gets to exercise that freedom and who doesn't.

In an anarchical city like Kathmandu, power relations are more evident than ever. One need only look at the various embassies that line my walking stretch from Chakrapath to Lainchour. The American Embassy in Chakrapath is a large monolithic structure with a fence around it. It is guarded at all times by uniformed armed policemen and if you linger for just a few minutes on the pavement outside the fence, you will be told to move on. Signs are posted expressly forbidding photography and there have been anecdotal instances of innocent photographers taken inside the embassy premises and made to delete all their photos. Even though no domestic law supports these actions, the repercussions can be severe for violators. Further on, the Japanese embassy at Lazimpat has removed pavements from outside its premises, and as elaborated earlier, the French embassy has built its wall right onto the street, cutting into the pavement. Thus, the freedom to walk and stand where one wants to is heavily circumscribed. Even in a city where I am a Nepali citizen, I am prevented from standing on my city's space by foreign, more powerful, entities. Who then does this city belong to?



Illustration 16: The walls of the French Embassy in Kathmandu put an abrupt end to the pavement, 15 July 2018 (Source: Author)

All of the respondents to my interviews in Kathmandu reported difficulty with walking in Kathmandu, but more women spoke significantly about the specifics of being a woman in the city and the dangers therein. Prateebha R (2018) had this to say, “A man groped my breasts. He was with a friend. possibly drunk. I started to hit him with my umbrella and my umbrella broke. Not a good memory” while Priyankana B (2018) also had something similar to report, “I was once flashed by a homeless person while walking back home. I have been followed, catcalled and almost hit by a speeding car, on multiple occasion, while crossing the road (in a zebra crossing).”

Thus, there is a paradox at the heart of citizenship. For everyone to be truly free to engage in the production of space and take up true citizenship in the city, they must be allowed free reign over the spatiality of the city. However, in such cases, as in Kathmandu, one person’s freedom can come at the cost of another’s. And thus, it appears that some form of authority is necessary to ensure that all are able to exercise an equal right. But this then is a limited form of citizenship, where one must take part in democratic tools of engagement in order to help shape the city. The revolutionary potential of the ‘right to the city’ as enunciated by Lefebvre (2000) and elaborated on by Pinder (2001) lies in the fact that the right to city be oppositional, i.e., it must stand opposed to pre-existing notions of how the city can be used. When it comes to walking, this can be as simple as walking outside of prescribed paths, as in an evocative example cited by Gehl (2011) where the movement patterns of pedestrians through a square can be witnessed after a recent snowfall; pedestrians will eschew paths that go around the square and will take the most direct route possible, fashioning a new path through the snow that cuts diagonally across the square. This is a simple but effective exercise of the citizen’s right to the city, whereby citizens carve out their own path because it is faster, easier and more intuitive to go through a square rather than around it.

Similar instances can be spied in Kathmandu, where pedestrians often walk on the road, as they lack a proper sidewalk. As I observed, pedestrians will also cross the street wherever it is easier for them, often bypassing incoming traffic, because of a lack of proper crosswalks. While these habits might seem uncouth or instances of openly flouting the laws, i.e., jaywalking, these are acceptable behaviours in Kathmandu. In all of my 14 Kathmandu walks, I did not observe one instance of traffic policemen citing pedestrians for walking on the road or crossing the road without a crosswalk as they understood that there are often no other alternatives. When a city openly neglects the needs of a sizeable group of its citizens, pedestrians themselves must exercise their right to the city and fashion their own solutions.



Illustration 17: Pedestrians in Kathmandu are forced to walk on the road as the pavement outside the Japanese embassy is laughably unusable, 17 July 2018 (Source: Author)

In cities such as Kathmandu, the issue of citizenship in a city is tied to Lefebvrian notion of the right to the city in a manner that is revolutionary and banal, both at the same time. Pedestrians here do not mobilise the right to the city as a slogan for a social movement but rather, mount their own microgeographical challenge to the priorities of the city. By walking in a space that is reserved for cars, the possibility of an alternative manner of organising the city is laid bare. Future research could quantify the number and locations of crossings on a particularly busy Kathmandu street and those specific spots could be where new crosswalks are painted. Just as in the Copenhagen example cited by Gehl, urban planners could build their designs for the city on the behaviour of people, especially pedestrians, as they might currently be the most disenfranchised users of the city in Kathmandu.

In my walks in Copenhagen and Kathmandu, I discovered that the notion of citizenship, especially while walking as a pedestrian, is a relative concept. In Copenhagen, citizenship in the city is tied to issues of identity and subjectivity while in Kathmandu, citizenship is a more material concept that can be seen as heavily exercising the right to the city, albeit unconsciously. In Copenhagen, with its social democracy and its responsive and intelligent urban design, there is little need to marshal the right to the city in its more radical and



revolutionary form. In Kathmandu, with its myriad limitations on where people can walk, it is more about everyday microgeographies. For pedestrians in general, and especially for vulnerable groups such as women, walking in the city can be fraught with danger and thus, unwelcome. These issues are not entirely absent in Copenhagen, as we saw with the interview excerpt from Bimesh (2018) but in my research, they were present to a lesser degree than they are in Kathmandu.

#### ***Movement IV: The Self***

In the city you are never alone. When you are walking, you are always walking with other people. Sometimes you walk alongside them and other times, you walk opposite them. When you pass them, there is an instance during which you enter into their personal space and they give you a glance. When you encounter them and your eyes meet, for an instance, there is a shared communion, a moment when the other becomes self and the self becomes other. There is an old Pink Floyd song that goes, “Strangers passing in the street / by chance two separate glances meet / And I am you and what I see is me.” A recognition of the other is a recognition of the self, when you yourself mirrored in their eyes. But what of the city? What reflection of ourselves do we see in its cement and stone?



Illustration 18: In a city, one is never alone, Copenhagen, 9 January 2018 (Source: Author)

The self is an amorphous entity, always in the Deleuzian process of becoming. In the city, it is becoming-city; on the street, it is becoming-street; and when confronted with others, it is becoming-other. The boundaries around the self are permeable and what transpires between it and the surroundings are often not in our control. When walking in the city, the physicality of the endeavour is something that forces itself upon me, like a large hand that

wraps itself around me. The city is everywhere; it cannot be escaped. I am within the city and the city is within me. What starts out at the beginning of a walk has been changed inexorably at the end of that walk. Conceptions of the self as a stable entity are passé; everything changes, including the self.

In Copenhagen, this change is slow and steady. This city is not one of speed, as is evident from its primary mode of transport: the bicycle. It is thus possible to walk slowly, taking the time to take in everything. Except for the inclement weather, the spatiality of the city itself is conducive to the leisurely stroll, alighting from one Situationist ambience to another. The press of people parts around you like the Red Sea before Moses. There is no pushing, no shoving. Shoulders rarely bump. Care is taken to give you as wide a berth as possible. It is perhaps the Scandinavian way, or perhaps laws and rules for pedestrians and motorised traffic have been absorbed by citizens over the years, resulting in a culture of etiquette.

In Kathmandu, changes to the self happen in instances. From moment to moment, there are intensities to respond to and the self seizes from the sheer abundance of catalysts. This is no neon city; it is not New York or Tokyo. This is a guttural city, a city of smoke (Lodge 2014) and sewage, a broken city that is attempting to catch up to the rest of the world and in the process, wrecking itself, like a cyclist injecting themselves with steroids in order to win the race. The hormonal change is instantaneous, but it is not lasting. What is desired in that one moment arrives, like the crossing of a busy street in heavy traffic. You are on the other side but the traffic is now in a snarl because you have interrupted it.



Illustration 19: In Kathmandu, things can change in the fraction of a second, 21 July 2018 (Source: Author)

These, however, are banalities. Walking is an embodied act and as such, it is an expression of the self (Low 2009). The unfoldings of the self are always in tune with the unfolding of space and landscape (Wylie 2004). One only needs to climb to a height and look out over a vast distance in order to experience how the self soars and expands as it attempts to encompass everything and everyone that can be seen. Contrary to Michel de Certeau (1984), it is not necessary to contrast a bird's eye view with a street-level walk. Both can go hand-in-hand, even though the former might be more proscriptive and the latter more performative. The walk, however, is more in tune with spatial unfoldings. It is while walking that the self can enter into various relations with the space in which it is present. These relations act on the self and vice-versa. What emerges is a product of the intermingling of subjectivities and spatialities.

In Copenhagen, lulled by a contemplative and quiet city, it was easy for me to enter into a pensive state, one where the self was fully internalised and reflective. I had to force myself to look around and take note of where I was and what I was seeing. It wasn't an easy task to pull myself out of my own reveries and focus on the task at hand. The ease with which I was able to traverse the city only added to this state. Everything worked like clockwork and hence, there was no need to engage with the spatiality, no give-and-take. The city presented itself and I took it for what it was.

In Kathmandu, there was an active process of negotiation. The city emerged from a constant tussle between the self and its surroundings. The city fought for attention and reflecting on the self was nigh impossible. If Copenhagen was internal then Kathmandu was external. My subjectivity was always outward-facing, turning over various elements of the city's spatiality that beckoned to me like flashing neon lights. And so, the city that I walked in Kathmandu was a city of my making, one that was closely aligned with my subjectivity. This city was constructed from the various elements that my consciousness chose from among the clamour. I imagined that my Copenhagen was not too different from the Copenhagen of another. If another walked the same route I did, they might perhaps come to the same conclusions. If they did the same in Kathmandu, the city they come up might be completely alien to mine. Through synecdoche and asyndeton, every walker remakes the sight in their own image, through their own recollections (De Certeau 1984). An interruptive and stimulating city like Kathmandu is, I believe, more conducive to these twin processes.

When walking, the self is constantly evolving, responding to the stimuli of the city, reinventing itself with every step. But if the self changes constantly, what is it that confers selfhood and maintains a stable subjectivity throughout the walk? This is where we must turn to habit. Following Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty, if we assume that "the formation of the self occurs not, primarily, in relation to a final cause, but through the momentum of accumulated, contracted patterns" (Carlisle 2006, pp 24), then we are nothing but habit;

the self is accumulation of a repeated set of habits and patterns. When walking the same route over a period of days, albeit at different times, a kind of habit evolves. The walk becomes a pattern and a special self, exclusive to the walk, comes into creation. This self, though not fixed, is a constant becoming. And habit is what gives it contours. Thus, for every pedestrian who walks the same route every day, to and from work or to and from the bus station, or to and from the nearest shop, the self is one that is a habitual becoming-walk.



Illustration 20: On every walk, responding to habits and patterns, reacting to the spaces all around, the self is constantly becoming, Kathmandu 19 July 2018 (left), Copenhagen 6 January 2018 (right)  
(Source: Author)

Out by the bridge that connects the island of Amager to Copenhagen proper, the waters lie dormant, a mask for the turmoil that lies underneath. On top of the hill at Panipokhari, looking down as the street falls away, I think of Kathmandu spreading out like an ocean before me. One thing I have learned from this research is that walking is an exercise is building the self and that the self is all encompassing.



## CONCLUSIONS: Who Makes the City?



Illustration 21: A mother pushes a stroller down Amager Boulevard in Copenhagen (left), A man walks past shuttered stores in Kathmandu (right) (Source: Author)

This paper began with a simple research question: how does spatiality affect subjectivity? More specifically, how does spatiality affect subjectivity while walking in a city, and do different cities affect subjectivity in different ways? The aim was to take two diverse cities on two opposite ends of the ‘development’ spectrum and attempt to parse together the manner in which the specific spatialities of these cities affect the subjectivity of a person walking. Because of the personal nature of self and subjectivity, I decided to eschew traditional research methods and opted for a more experimental method of research, namely to conduct a series of walks along the same route, at different times of the day and of the week, and through autoethnography, explore what emerges.

I did not begin with a specific hypothesis in mind, as this was meant to be purely exploratory research, although I did have preconceived notions stemming simply from the fact that Copenhagen is a city in the Global North and Kathmandu in the Global South. I had walked a lot in Kathmandu and a lot in Copenhagen, my two case studies, and I hoped to raise questions, rather than find answers. The essays that I developed through my research are not conclusions, rather they are starting points for a variety of further research that takes more traditional approaches to urban research. My essays provide ample subject matter for further exploration and research that could in turn provide fodder for transport and pedestrian policies, along with urban design considerations. For instance, my essay on the sense of sight could provide urban planners with more qualitative insight on how pedestrians perceive walking and how sight shapes the experience of walking, not just in different urban contexts but also during the night and day. Further, the essay on citizenship outlines how agency while walking is circumscribed depending on your identity, especially in cities like Kathmandu. More specifically, walking spaces should be made safer for women. My essays, however, are not meant to be proscriptive. They are meant to provide qualitative insight into a process that is largely focussed on mechanical interpretations of pedestrianisation and traffic.

Drawing on the new mobilities turn, especially the empirical work of Middleton, Solnit, Wylie and Pinder, along with theoretical frameworks drawn from De Certeau, Lefebvre



and Deleuze, I discovered that walking is an eminently more complicated endeavour than it seems on the surface. The unfoldings of the self in tandem with changes in spatiality were multifarious. However, the overarching conclusion that I would like to make, in relation to the comparative urbanism of Copenhagen and Kathmandu, has to do with the production of the city and the production of space.

Kathmandu and Copenhagen could learn much from each other when it came to production of space and citizenship in the city, although it might seem counter-intuitive to have the latter learning from the former. These lessons could apply to more cities in the Global North and the Global South, as Copenhagen and Kathmandu can be seen as archetypes of pedestrian-friendly urban design and an almost complete lack of design and forethought, respectively. For Kathmandu, Copenhagen provides lessons on the importance of proper pavements and the promotion of walking, even at the expense of motorised traffic. For Copenhagen, Kathmandu provides lessons on the negotiated creation of the city, i.e., how urban spaces can act as catalyst for negotiated action and a give-and-take with the city itself so as to create a more interesting and stimulating cityscape.

How, then, does spatiality affect subjectivity? With proper foresight and planning, the subjectivity of a pedestrian can be made habitual. In spaces like Copenhagen, walking is so easy that it becomes a habit, leaving the consciousness free to pursue other activities, such as contemplation and free thinking. In Kathmandu, it is difficult for habit to coalesce, even if walking the same route every day, as there is just so much to take into account. The self evolves but subjectivity remains occupied with the practice of walking.

Subjectivity depends on a great many factors that are mediated by spatiality. Consciousness, agency and self-reflection are all bound to spatiality in one way or another. This becomes all the more obvious when you compare two disparate urban milieus like Copenhagen and Kathmandu. Their impact on the walker's subjectivity becomes stark and stands out in sharp relief. My findings are thus contrasting visions of a self-aware pedestrian.

Walking as an urban phenomenon and as embodied practice has a long and storied history. My research is one more contribution to a growing body of work that does not dismiss the subjective or the experimental but seeks to engage with them in productive ways that translate into tangible changes in how urban design in cities are considered. In this post-modern world where self-consciousness and identity have become objects of inquiry in themselves, it would be foolish to continue to dismiss the subjective in favour of the seemingly objective. My research values the perspective of a subjective consciousness and seeks to open up experimental research to include embodied practices such as urban walking and phenomenological methods such as autoethnography and self-reflective essay writing.

Thus, this paper concludes that urban walking is a practice that has inherent deep links to both subjectivity and spatiality. Being a pedestrian in diverse spatial agglomerations means developing subjectivities that are bound by affect and shaped by habit. Both affect and habit, in turn, are shaped by spatiality. There is thus a dialogic process between the self and space that comes to the fore during the practice of urban walking. Furthermore, how much the spatiality extends to the pedestrian's subjectivity is a matter of citizenship in the city and the freedom to produce the city as much as it produces the pedestrian. The city makes the pedestrian as much as the pedestrian makes the city.

**THE END**

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## APPENDIX

### Semi-structured interview guide for residents

1. How often do you walk?
2. Where do you usually walk to?
3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?
4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?
5. What do you dislike most about your walks?
6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?
7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?
8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?

### Copenhagen Interview 1: Anne-Grethe B., Danish female, 53 years old, self-employed

1. How often do you walk?  
Not too often. I am old and am out of breath easily so I only walk if I really have to.
2. Where do you usually walk to?  
I walk to the Irma [grocery store] and that is it. I go everywhere by bike or by train.
3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?  
Very much out of necessity. If I was younger then I would walk for pleasure but my knees do not let me walk very much these days.
4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?  
I like that my walks are short. I walk 5 minutes to the store and back 5 minutes.
5. What do you dislike most about your walks?  
The pavements are quite uneven so it is hard to walk for old people like me. There are also too many people in this part of Copenhagen [Vesterbro] so I do not enjoy the crowds.
6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?  
Like I said, there are too many people so I have to stop myself many times on the street. Then there are the traffic lights and sometimes the street is closed for repair or construction. Sometimes, even my 5 minute walk to the Irma takes 10 minutes.
7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?  
Copenhagen is a good city for bicycles and for public transport but not so much for walking. You must have seen that there is a lot of construction and the streets are always blocked for walkers. Most people you see walking in Vesterbro are tourists. All the residents ride their bikes. Even in the winter Copenhageners will



rather ride their bike than walk in the city. So I think this is not a good city for walking but it is the best city in the world for cycling.

8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?  
Hmm, I do not walk much so I don't know what to tell you. Let me think. Maybe one week ago I was walking home from the train station and I saw a large crowd outside the Lidl. I thought something bad happened so I asked someone and they said that a girl had fallen from the second floor window while she was smoking. Someone else said that she was pushed but I don't know. I did not see the girl as the ambulance had taken her away already. I think that is the most memorable thing that happened to me recently that I can remember.

### **Copenhagen Interview 2: Lisa C., American female, 29 years old, teacher**

1. How often do you walk?  
I walk almost every day since I am a bit of a yoga freak and I believe that walking is really healthy, actually even more than jogging. So if I have a big dinner or I don't feel too good, I take a walk and I usually feel better. But of course I walk much less during the winter because it is absolutely miserable outside.
2. Where do you usually walk to?  
I usually walk by the water because it feels fresh and cool. Other than that, I walk to the grocery store and for shopping. I take my bike to work because I have to drop off my son at daycare and it is quite far from home.
3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?  
I would say both. I walk for pleasure because it is healthy and it makes me feel good. But I also walk for necessity, like when I have to go to the supermarket to buy groceries or diapers or something else.
4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?  
I like that it makes me feel fresh and it clears my head. If I am stressed then a walk always helps me feel better. Copenhagen is nice to walk because the sidewalks are not too crowded and there is always room to walk. I guess most people are cycling. I like to bike but I think I prefer walking in Copenhagen. It is such a beautiful and calm city.
5. What do you dislike most about your walks?  
I don't think I dislike anything. In the winter, it can get wet and slippery. I don't really like the snow that much and I can't take my son out in his stroller so I don't like walking in the winter. And Copenhagen is really cold and rainy in the winter so I prefer to stay inside.

6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?  
I guess I've never really thought about that. Now that I think about it, I think it's funny because I don't think I stop too much when I take my baby stroller. I think people let me pass and avoid me so I find myself stopping less often. But when I am alone and walking then either the people in front will be too slow or there will be others taking up the whole sidewalk. I mean, it's not a big deal of course but it happens sometimes. I really think that I find myself walking much more smoothly when I am with Samson's stroller. Isn't that ironic?
7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?  
Oh I think it is a great city for walking. In the US, you can't really walk anywhere unless you live in New York City. Every other city, you need a car or you need to take the subway. But in Copenhagen you can walk almost everywhere. I guess it helps that Copenhagen is so small but even then, it has nice wide sidewalks that are usually empty. There are no big highways that are unpleasant to walk next to. Well, there is Amager but that is nothing compared to highways in the US. Sometimes the cyclists get angry at the pedestrians but that's usually because they are on the bike lane. But yeah, I think this is a great city for walking.
8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?  
Well, a few days ago, I was walking with my son and I was about to cross the road when this bike nearly hit me. I thought I was wrong because cyclists here are quite respectful of the traffic light. But I checked and I had the green light so he was wrong. And he nearly hit a woman with her child. The guy also gave me a dirty look so I yelled at him in English and he yelled back at me telling me to cross before the light changes! I was shocked at his rudeness when you know Danish people are quite polite. This guy was really rude and especially when it was his fault. So I guess that was the most memorable thing that I can remember right now. But it was a bad experience and since I don't have many of those, maybe I just remember it more than others.

### **Copenhagen Interview 3: Bimesh A., Nepali male, 33 years old, works in a store**

1. How often do you walk?  
I walk a little bit every day but not much. I usually take the bus or bike.
2. Where do you usually walk to?  
I walk to the bus station every morning and back to home every evening. Other times, I will walk to the supermarket or nearby restaurants to get food.
3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?  
I mostly walk for necessity. I don't think I walk for pleasure. If I want to exercise then I exercise in my room or I go on my bike but walking is not pleasure for me. I only walk if I have to go somewhere.

4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?  
I don't enjoy walking very much. It is better than walking in Nepal because there is no dust and pollution here but still, I prefer to ride the bus and go on my bike than to walk. If I have to say something then I guess it is the fresh air.
5. What do you dislike most about your walks?  
I don't hate walking. I think it is something everyone has to do sometime in their day. You have to walk to the bus or to the supermarket or anywhere else. I don't like that in Norrebro, it is not safe to walk at night. My wife was nearly robbed when she was walking home from work some weeks ago so I don't feel very safe walking here at night.
6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?  
I try to walk straight to my destination without stopping. The only times I stop is at the traffic light when I have to cross the street. Sometimes, if there are no cars then I don't even stop at the traffic light. My intention is to get to my destination and come back because we are all busy people and we have to use our time well. I don't have time to waste by walking and looking at things like tourists you know?
7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?  
I think Copenhagen is a great city for everything, for cars, for buses, for trains, for bikes and even for walking. But for walking only in some areas, like in the city center and other nice parts of Copenhagen. In Norrebro, it is sometimes dangerous to walk as someone might try to rob you. There are sometimes fights and the streets are quite dirty when you compare to other areas of Copenhagen. Also, there is always police going around this area so I don't like walking in case they think that I am doing something wrong and then ask me questions.
8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?  
This happened when I had just moved to Copenhagen around two years back. I used to live in a much worse area and one night, I was walking home after working for the whole day and two guys tried to rob me. I think they were drunk or on drugs because they could not talk very well. I said I didn't have any money but one of them had a knife and he said to give my phone. I only had a cheap phone that I had brought from Nepal so I gave it to him and he didn't even take it, he just threw it on the ground and broke it. Then both of them ran away. I guess I was lucky that only my phone was broken. Also, like I told you, my wife also nearly got robbed. Someone stopped her and asked for money but she just screamed and ran away. That is why I don't like walking here at night or in dangerous areas. You cannot see where robbers are hiding. Anything can happen. If you are on a cycle then you can run away and they cannot catch you but if you are walking then they can catch you and stab you or beat you. It is not that safe to walk in this area, especially if you are alone.

#### Copenhagen Interview 4: Jakob P., Danish male, 26 years old, graphic designer

1. How often do you walk?  
I walk every day.
2. Where do you usually walk to?  
I walk to my office, which is just down the street. On the way there, I stop to get a coffee and on my way back, I will stop at a restaurant to eat or get some food for home. Other places, I take my bike.
3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?  
I walk for pleasure. I could take my bike to work but it feels nice to walk in the morning. I can also stop for coffee and carry it with me, which I can't do if I am on my bike.
4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?  
I like that you can do other things while walking. You can listen to music, drink coffee, eat a sandwich, or just think about your day and your plans. It is harder to do that while biking because you have to concentrate on the road. I like to plan my day on my walk to work. I think I come up with good ideas while walking.
5. What do you dislike most about your walks?  
I guess I don't like the crowds in this area [Vesterbro], even though other parts of Copenhagen are not like this. There are too many tourists with their suitcases in this area sometimes and they are taking over the whole pavement. Sometimes they will also be stopping right in front of you to take pictures or go on their phone. That is what I dislike but it doesn't happen very often. I enjoy more than I dislike.
6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?  
I find myself stopping quite often actually. It is not just at the traffic light or the crossing but I stop to get coffee, to get something to eat or sometimes I just look at things. I like to take my time while I am walking. But sometimes I find myself just walking without thinking where I am going. I listen to music or think about something and then suddenly I find myself in Amager or in Nørrebro and I realise that I have been walking for half an hour without noticing where I am going. It is scary sometimes because it is like I am, how you saying, walking in my sleep, a sleepwalker.
7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?  
It is a good city for walking because it has wide pavements and there is not much traffic. People are also not rude and there are not many crowds on the street. Sometimes there is construction and repairs on the street but it is finished fast. It is a small city so you can walk anywhere.
8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?  
One time I had just gotten a coffee and I was walking to my work when a guy who was jogging hit me and I dropped my coffee. The jogging guy did not even see me drop my coffee and he was listening to music so he did not hear anything either. So I thought my coffee was wasted but another guy who saw what happened stopped the jogging guy and told him what happened. The jogging guy then came and said sorry and bought me another coffee. So I think people are kind and polite

in Copenhagen and you can meet nice people when you are walking. I don't think you can meet people when you are biking.

### **Copenhagen Interview 5: Martin K., Norwegian male, 31-year old, works in a store**

1. How often do you walk?  
Not very often I'm afraid. I mostly bike.
2. Where do you usually walk to?  
I walk from building to my bike and then from my bike to my work. Mostly, I am just walking to get to my bike. Oh and sometimes I walk to the supermarket and the restaurant.
3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?  
Necessity. If I did not have to walk to the supermarket then I would not but it is too short distance to take my bike and I also have to carry my bags. I think it is always easier and better to ride your bicycle than to walk. It is more healthy and you get more exercise.
4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?  
I don't walk very much so I cannot say that I enjoy my walks very much.
5. What do you dislike most about your walks?  
I think cycling is just better than walking so I would rather take my bike than walk somewhere. I only walk if I have to.
6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?  
I always walk to a destination. I know where I am going so I don't stop along the way. Usually, I walk very short distance. If it is more than 5 minutes walk then I would rather take my bike. So I don't stop very often.
7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?  
It is a good city for walking, yes. I see people walking and my girlfriend likes to run in the mornings. So if it is good for running then it must be good for walking. I don't know much about walking actually so I cannot say. I don't find any problems in the city with walking.
8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?  
I caught a guy trying to steal a bike when I was walking to the supermarket. Actually, it was outside the supermarket, near the side. A guy was trying to cut the chain on a bike so I asked him if that was his bike. He said yes but he lost the key so he was trying to cut the chain. I did not trust him as the bike looked quite nice and the guy did not look like it was his bike. So I said I don't believe him and that I was going to go inside the supermarket to tell someone. When I turned around to go inside the supermarket, the guy just ran away. So that is the most memorable thing I can remember while walking. I don't think I would have stopped to ask the guy if I was biking. But I was walking and I saw him so I just asked.

**Kathmandu Interview 1: Priyankana B, 25 years old, Nepali female, school administrator**

1. How often do you walk?  
I am a frequent walker.
2. Where do you usually walk to?  
I usually walk to the bus stop, or taxi stands. However, I prefer walking to taking rides so I prolong it on purpose and only take vehicles when absolutely necessary.
3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?  
A little bit of both. I walk more when I'm trying to save money, but I also walk a lot when I'm moody. If I'm in a pleasant mood, I'll walk a lot more than usual.
4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?  
I listen to music when I walk. It helps build rhythm and I walk a lot faster.
5. What do you dislike most about your walk?  
I dislike walking in mud, water, gravel, stone- a common experience in Kathmandu. It makes walking difficult, and is really hard on the shoes.
6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?  
I find myself stopping often because pedestrians in Kathmandu have different walking styles and speed. It's easy to spot people walking abreast narrow lanes in a leisurely manner. Others rush to get to work or avoid the rain. It's a mix of brisk and slow walkers. There is also a lack of etiquette because people do not shy away from nudging, or pushing while overtaking other pedestrians. People don't stick to their sides and I often have to zig zag my way through a crowd.
7. Do you think this city a good city for walking? Why or why not?  
Kathmandu has the potential for being a good city for walking because it hosts an impressive number of cultural heritage sites and scenic overviews. However, motor vehicle pollutants, large heaps of trash collection on the sidewalk makes the experience an unpleasant one. The usually jutting sidewalks in Kathmandu are sometimes nonexistent and poses a danger to pedestrians.
8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?  
Unfortunately, I don't have a pleasant memory that particularly stands out but plenty unpleasant stories. I was once flashed by a homeless person while walking back home. I have been followed, catcalled and almost hit by a speeding car, on multiple occasion, while crossing the road (in a zebra crossing).

**Kathmandu Interview 2: Prateebha T, 38 year old, Nepali female, mediaperson**

1. How often do you walk?  
Everyday
2. Where do you usually walk to?  
Walk from work to the bus stand, going home. But I also just get off the vehicle I am in, at random sometimes so that I can walk. I'm always walking toward home, I

think. Or to go to a certain destination with friends who like walking as much as I do.

3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?

Mostly out of necessity. But also a lot for my own pleasure. I see walking as the only exercise I provide my mind and my body. It is a time for me to clear my head, as well as to oil my joints. But I think I mostly walk because I enjoy the experience of my feet making improvement on the streets. I walk because I enjoy watching people when I walk, noticing how interesting their expressions are. I also notice street animals. I walk, because even though it's only home I'm walking toward, it gives me a sense of purpose. And walking also makes me feel independent. And I like that feeling of freedom, being on my own, just walking.

4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?

I think I answered that already

5. What do you dislike most about your walks?

I hate it when it's not easy to cross roads or if there's a lot of muddy water to walk past or if it's a terribly hot day.

6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?

I stop when I notice something worth my attention. But otherwise, I walk fast and I like to keep walking.

7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?

Kathmandu used to be beautiful and not so crowded when I was growing up, so I imagine it must have been lovely to walk then. I started walking only like a decade ago and it's been a polluted crowded city that keeps getting worse. I don't think it's a great city for walking. Nevertheless, I walk, because I want that bit of freedom for myself, even in this place of squalor.

8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?

A man groped my breasts. He was with a friend. possibly drunk. I started to hit him with my umbrella and my umbrella broke. Not a good memory. Bad memories are easier to recall than good ones. I've mostly enjoyed walking and running into strangers, who sometimes smile at you for no reason. It doesn't matter who it is, but some people are just happy to see you.

### **Kathmandu Interview 3: Prajesh R, Nepali male, 26-year old, works for an INGO**

1. How often do you walk?

I take short walks everyday and longer walks when I have the time.

2. Where do you usually walk to?

I usually walk to work from the nearby bus stop. And in the evening, I take a walk from a junction that is farther away. Since I take the bus, there are many such walks that I take. Even while going out for social gathers, I take a 10-15 walk from my home to my friend's house nearby.

3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?

Mostly out of necessity.

4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?  
I enjoy walks because it very mechanical. Walking around in the morning helps me exercise a bit and helps me wake up. In the evenings, the weather is better and it feels good to walk. I also listen to music while I'm walking and it turns into more of a relaxing experience.
5. What do you dislike most about your walks?  
While I walk, a cleaner environment would have made the experience much better. As I'm walking I'm constantly being bombarded with dust and vehicle exhaust clouds. The roads are also difficult to walk on because there aren't any properly constructed walkways and because of this, pedestrians are constantly hounded by cars and bike while on a walk. There are also various kinds of vendors, cars and carts parked on the side of the street taking up valuable walkway space and forcing pedestrians to venture into the middle of the streets.
6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?  
My walks aren't smooth and I constantly stop because there are potholes, cars and interrupted walkways to manoeuvre around. I'm also in a walking trance when I'm walking and often don't stop.
7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?  
I would say it is not a city good for walking. There are many complex alleyways and side-streets that end with some good urban vistas like temples, open spaces and social gathering sites around the city that would have been great place to walk. But the amount of people, cars and bikes within the alleyways makes walks more of a chore than a pleasant experience. These already small thin alleyways are constantly being used by vehicles that make it even more difficult for pedestrians have a good experience with walking. On wider roads, the dust, soot and smoke from cars hamper the walking experience even more.
8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?  
While I was walking, I was hit from the back by a microbus. It wasn't a particularly hard bump but the microbus stopped in front of me and while I continued by walk, the vehicle bumped me from the back as it resumed it's drive after dropping some passengers. A perfect example of how the lack of a walkway demarcation makes it difficult and not safe for pedestrians.

#### **Kathmandu Interview 4: Madhu S, Nepali female, 51-year-old, housewife**

1. How often do you walk?  
At least one or half an hour every day.
2. Where do you usually walk to?  
I walk to the market to buy some vegetables. It takes about 20 minutes.
3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?  
Mostly out of necessity but sometimes I like to take a walk.
4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?  
I get fresh air, I meet friends and get to talk to people. I feel fresh after going on a walk.
5. What do you dislike most about your walks?



I don't like the mud and the dust in the air when I walk. Also the traffic and how hot it can get in the summer.

6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?  
I stop often and talk to people on my walks. I also stop sometimes because of potholes or traffic on the road.
7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?  
It is not a good city for walking. There is a lot of dust and there are too many cars. It is also a very crowded place. It was better before but now it has gotten much worse due to the crowd.
8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?  
A few years ago I had gone to get some sweets. A motorcycle was coming from the other side at high speed, it was a Maoist guy. I was in the middle of the street and I couldn't move but he tried to avoid hitting me and while doing so, he slipped and fell from his motorcycle. Then, he started yelling at me instead. I am afraid of crossing the road. I've nearly been hit by cars and bikes many times. They speed a lot and there are so many of them. So it's not a good place to walk.

#### **Kathmandu Interview 5: Kandarpa R, Nepali male, 88-year old, farmer**

1. How often do you walk?  
I walk nearly one and half hours in the morning and 45 minutes in the evening?
2. Where do you usually walk to?  
I start from here [my home] till the main road that leads to the nearby club. The distance must be nearly one and a half kilometres. It takes me about one hour.
3. Would you say you walk for pleasure or out of necessity?  
I don't walk for pleasure. I walk to get some provisions, some newspapers or to visit goddess temples.
4. What do you enjoy most about your walks?  
I get fresh air from the north-west, coming from that sanitorium or whatever it is, in Tokha. That breeze is refreshing and I meet friends and neighbours.
5. What do you dislike most about your walks?  
I dislike the unruly motorcyclists that do not take particular side. Sometimes they are in the middle of the road and they drive very fast.
6. Are your walks uninterrupted and smooth or do you find yourself stopping often?  
I stop to meet people and chat with them. I do not stop out of fatigue or tiredness. I stop to talk to people.
7. Do you think this city is a good city for walking? Why or why not?  
This city is a bit polluted these days due to traffic. I cannot say that this city is bad for walking since we get refreshing breeze coming from the hillsides.
8. Can you tell me one memorable incident that happened to you while walking?  
There are several kinds of incidents but what is in the back of my mind is that some people from mountain, they want to be friendly with me and they slap me on the back and sometimes manhandle me. I don't like this overchumminess. I met this

one mad chap onetime. He touched me and held out his palm. I thought I would give him a sock but then I realised that he was emaciated and beggarly. The appearance itself was mad so with a person like that I realised that I should not do anything.