



## WALKING IN SÃO PAULO: A SURVEY ON MOBILITY ON FOOT AND FRUITION

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Submitted: 08/18/2020

Accepted: 09/09/2021

### ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to investigate walking from two perspectives: the perspective of mobility and the perspective of aesthetics – the enjoyment of the city – analyzing the relation between the built environment and the personal daily experience of persons on foot. In São Paulo, our case study, there exists a clear paradox: despite the fact that walking is the most important means of transportation, the urban settings present a very challenging situation for the pedestrian – inadequate or nonexistent sidewalks, risky crossings and vulnerable conditions in the face of motor vehicles. Methodologically, the survey was based on a qualitative research conducted specifically for the author's thesis, bringing together in a series of focus groups, a sample of pedestrians who walk regularly in their daily affairs. The results have shown that, given minimum conditions of safety and infrastructure, a sense of enjoyment is often present while walking, and it is expressed in physical pleasure, in “experiencing the city” and the hidden surprises it can reveal – unexpected encounters, findings, and places.

Keywords: Walkability. Pedestrians in São Paulo. Walking in São Paulo. Mobility on foot.

### RESUMO

Em São Paulo, o ato de andar a pé embute um paradoxo: apesar de as viagens a pé serem o meio mais usado de deslocamento, as condições urbanas apresentam um quadro bastante desafiador para o pedestre – infraestrutura de caminhabilidade pouco adequada, travessias arriscadas e insegurança na relação com os veículos motorizados. O objetivo deste artigo é investigar o andar a pé a partir da perspectiva do pedestre para compreender se a experiência de mobilidade (andar para chegar a algum lugar) também pode vir acompanhada de uma experiência estética – a da fruição da cidade. Metodologicamente, foi usada uma abordagem qualitativa, por meio da técnica de grupos focais, realizada no contexto da tese de doutoramento do autor, com uma amostra de pessoas que se deslocam cotidianamente a pé pela cidade. Os resultados mostram que, dadas condições mínimas de segurança e infraestrutura, existe um componente muito presente de fruição da cidade inerente ao ato de andar a pé, manifestado no prazer sensorial, nas pequenas surpresas e na constatação de que o caminhar permite “experimentar a cidade”.

Palavras-chave: Caminhabilidade. Pedestres em São Paulo. Andar a pé em São Paulo. Mobilidade a pé.



## INTRODUCTION

Existing quantitative information provides important information to scale the phenomenon of walking as a form of mobility in the city of São Paulo. Through them, we know, for example, that walking is the most used means of transport by the population of the municipality (OD 2017) and that walking mobility is very associated with the use of other transports. This because the walking is commonly used to reach or leave stations and transport terminals, to change transportation modals, to access motorized individual transport and as a basis for exclusive mobility.

However, it is essential to deepen the knowledge about the perception of the walking to understand the pedestrian's relationship with the city. Several authors emphasize the importance of apprehending the city through walking. In her important work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in 1961, Jane Jacobs proposes a reflection on the importance of the urban environment on sidewalks as an inducer of vitality in the city (JACOBS, 2009). Danish urban planner Jan Gehl rescues the importance of prioritizing pedestrians to increase the quality of life in cities through a reconfiguration of urban design based on the human scale (GEHL, 2010). These references serve as a theoretical basis for the discussion of contemporary space in large cities. If walking is one of the pillars of urban conviviality itself, how can we approach the possibilities of enjoying the urban environment in a city as unequal as São Paulo?

The term fruition, used in this work, is linked to the pleasure that a walk through the city can generate. Jeff Speck, author of *The Walkable City*, proposes a "The General Theory of Walkability". For him, walkability is all the elements that influence the act of walking (SPECK, 2012). In a 2008 doctoral thesis, Sunjing Park proposes a definition more focused on the pedestrian scale, the 'micro-level walkability':

"[...] this research defines walkability as the quality of walking environment perceived by the walkers as measured by micro-level urban design attributes"<sup>1</sup>. What is important for this work is that both definitions consider that, in addition to those evidently linked to infrastructure or security, there are other elements that influence the quality of walking.

Speck proposes a simple formula: walking needs to be useful, safe, comfortable and interesting. This division suggests that, in addition to the basic elements normally associated with walking, such as sidewalk infrastructure, the absence of holes or safety, there are other variables that positively or negatively influence the pedestrian experience. The author lists several variables that can contribute to making a walk more interesting: shop windows, people on the street, inviting façades, possibility of resting, trees along the way, historic buildings, etc.

This research is inserted in this context, which seeks to investigate the perception of pedestrians in São Paulo about the quality of the experience of walking in the city. Therefore, this research deals with the enjoyment of the city. Can people who need to walk enjoy the city? Do the theoretical references apply to the reality of our cities and the experience of our pedestrians? What are the pleasures (and the displeasures) associated with walking? What kind of sensations can the activity of walking from one place to another in the city generate? What is the attitude of someone who walks vis-a-vis other modes of travel? Are there differences in perception between men and women? Are there differences in perception between people who live in central or suburban neighborhoods? Finally, we seek to understand if walking can bring an experience of enjoyment of the urban environment during daily mobility as a contribution to the understanding of the elements that make up walking in São Paulo.

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<sup>1</sup> "In terms of definition boundary and measurement scale, this research defines walkability as the quality of walking environment perceived by the walkers as measured by micro-level urban design attributes", PARK, 2008, p. 42.

## 1. The research

To address pedestrian habits and attitudes, the qualitative research technique was chosen through focus groups, which allowed exploring and deepening the motivations of those who walk regularly in the city of São Paulo. The research was conducted as part of the author's PhD thesis activities.

**Technique:** Based on the research objectives, the qualitative research technique was chosen through focus groups. Morgan (*apud* GONDIM, 2002) defines focus groups as a research technique that collects data through group interactions when discussing a special topic suggested by the researcher. The choice of this technique was due to its potential to raise relevant themes and perceptions even if they were not part of the research hypotheses. The technique involves the presence of an experienced moderator to ensure that the group discussion can hear all respondents and encourage interaction between participants within a pre-established script. It was chosen because it allows gathering information and insights that might not be explicit and, therefore, measurable through quantitative research, especially with regard to issues involving personal, often subjective, choices

The choice of group discussions is based on the premise that the interaction between a group of people with a similar socio-demographic profile – and, with a minimum level of confidence to express opinions – it could stimulate exchange, bring out differences and develop the theme beyond individual exploration (Figure 1). As we will see, the technique was adequate to the objectives, as it stimulated the groups to engage in the theme of walking and raise extremely interesting information for the object of study.

**Criterion:** Considering the scope of the research: knowing the opinion of those who walk in the city, the criterion for choosing the interviewees was established as: “walking to work or study, at least 20 minutes a day, at least four times a week”.

Thus, it was hoped to guarantee a consistent base of experiences so that the discussion could become concrete. People who walk for exercise or leisure or people who do not walk were not surveyed. We believe that this last group can be an important object of analysis for another research, seeking to understand the reasons for not walking in the city. The first – people who walk for leisure or exercise –, although interesting, would not be essential to establish a parallel between mobility and enjoyment.

The last criterion was the classification by social class. Eliminating the extremes of income and possession of assets, both the highest and the lowest, we worked with a reasonably homogeneous sample – B1, B2 and C1, according to the Brazilian Economic Classification Criteria (CCEB), a standard of socioeconomic classification created by the Brazilian Association of Research Companies (ABEP). However, it is still quite a large part of the social pyramid, which could show differences in individual and territorial perceptions about walking, without interference from extreme income situations or urban situations. We believe that these situations deserve further investigation, in a probable ethnographic study of walking and urban precarious situations, such as slums or informal settlements, for example, which are not necessarily covered in this research.

**Sample:** The choice of groups followed two criteria. The first was the separation of men and women. This decision is based on the hypothesis that there are essentially different behaviors and attitudes for each gender and that an eventual merger of the two groups could inhibit the emergence of these specific issues.

The second criterion was the separation of people living in the central and peripheral regions of the city. The adjacent hypothesis is that it would be worth addressing the specifics of each area to highlight the differences in experience caused by very different urbanization processes.

According to market research practice, the groups should have between six and eight participants, to encourage the exchange of information between the participants.

To select the domicile regions of the sample, two circles were drawn from the downtown of São Paulo, with radius of approximately 9 km and 12 km. Neighborhoods within the first circle would be considered “central neighborhoods”. Those outside the second circle would be considered “peripheral neighborhoods”. Between the two, there are neighborhoods that were not considered in the sample, such as Jabaquara, Freguesia do Ó, Vila Leopoldina and Vila Matilde. These regions would not typify the desired opposition between neighborhoods closer to Downtown and those further away, with characteristics of the periphery, which could exemplify issues of walkability.

The list of target neighborhoods was reduced based on an HDI assessment, which sought to include neighborhoods that were comparable, with an HDI at least equal to 0.8, in both groups, allowing for comparisons.

**Recruitment:** Recruitment was carried out by a company, the Opinião Recrutamentos, under the direction of Cristiane Pineschi Balzano, based on socio-demographic and established criteria. Participants signed a term of participation in the research, authorizing the recording of discussions and the dissemination of their opinions and responses, without individual identification of the authors.

**Local:** Group discussions were held in a specific location for this type of dynamic, the Coworking.eco, in Perdizes, São Paulo, with a mirror room and resources for recording and later transcribing the dialogues. Participants received an allowance to get to the site.

**Dates:** May 22nd and 23rd, 2018.

**Moderation:** José Roberto Labinas Oliveira, professional focus group moderator for several research companies over the last fifteen years, conducted the group discussions. His participation in the project was voluntary.



Figure 1 – (a) Women living in peripheral neighborhoods. (b) Women living in central neighborhoods. (c) Men living in peripheral neighborhoods. (d) Men living in central neighborhoods. Photo: author (personal file), 2018.



*Figure 2 – Pedestrian at pedestrian crossing, west of São Paulo. The decision to walk considers several aspects such as practicality, economy and comfort. Photo: author (personal file), 2018.*

**Script:** The script served as the basis for conducting the focus groups, with some dynamics to encourage participation. Initially, the moderator presented the research objectives, encouraged individual participation and informed participants that the meeting would be recorded, but protected by confidentiality. After the presentation of each of the participants (name, marital status, hobbies), the participants made spontaneous associations about walking in São Paulo.

From there, the moderator asked about the daily itineraries of each participant (as one of the criteria for participation in the research was walking, everyone had experience in walking to answer the questions): frequency, location, destination, duration and other modes. The participants were asked to answer why they chose to walk on these routes in comparison with other possibilities – public transport, car, motorcycle, etc. Then, there was a discussion of perceptions about walking: memories of bad and good elements along the way, exploring details and generating a list of positive and negative attributes.

The next item in the script concerned the perceptions of 'being a pedestrian in São Paulo': feelings and emotions linked to walking in the city. In this part, the collage technique was used (from a series of identical magazines in each group available in the room). At the end of this part, the participants answered the question: "Would you like to change the way you move around?"

The last part of the group meetings was dedicated to letting the participants freely express their opinions about 'the ideal walk' "What should be different for you to walk more or have more pleasure in walking in São Paulo?"

## 2. Results

Qualitative research has proven to be a very effective technique for generating observations and insights into the point of view of people walking in the city. As well as, specifically, for the questions related to this thesis – the walk between mobility and fruition.

### 2.1. The decision to walk for everyday mobility

The decision to walk to a certain destination considers the difficulties and advantages of walking. The difficulties pointed out by the participants are several: sidewalks in terrible condition, risk of accident (Figure 2), bushes, dirt, people living on the streets, noise pollution, noise, smoke, fear of being run over, long distances, tiredness, foot pain, heat, rain, insecurity, fear of violence and assault.

Considering these difficulties, what explains the decision to go out on foot? The decision does not seem to be a result of chance; on the contrary, the interviewees clearly verbalized the arguments that lead them to make this decision, in a rational process that involves a combination of practicality and economy.

The potential discomfort of each hike is a weighing factor, depending on the specific conditions of the day, such as rain or the size of the luggage, for example.

The comparison between walking and the various means of transport, from the point of view of pedestrians themselves, can help to understand this process of choice.

#### *Walking versus public transport*

On relatively short regular routes, of up to 15 minutes or so, the choice of walking is often the simplest.

The use of public transport, especially the bus, implies waiting, long distances to the stop and the route of the bus lines, which often “goes around many times” to an apparently close destination.

Walking avoids the inconveniences of using public transport, such as the long wait, the stressful discomfort of overcrowding, the winding and time-consuming paths, and the time wasted in congested traffic.

I feel at the advantage, the traffic stops and you of the people stopped in it

– *Man living in a central neighborhood.*

On the bus, people complain, the bus is crowded, the driver who runs, there is nothing like that on the walk, on the bus you are stuck.

– *Man living in a peripheral neighborhood.*

On the bus, people talk loudly, fight on the phone, I think it is horrible.

– *Woman living in a peripheral neighborhood.*

#### *Walking versus car*

Almost half of the sample owned at least one car and were economically able to use public transport on a

daily basis. Even so, people chose to take part in their displacements on foot.

The use of the automobile generates operational costs and logistical difficulties. Even those who own a car often choose to leave it at home due to the cost of fuel or parking at the destination. Difficulty in finding a space also contributes to choosing the foot as a means of transport for small displacements.

#### *Applications (Uber)*

The use of shared transport services by applications appears spontaneously among groups. Uber, specifically, seems to be used as a synonym for the category and is part of the list of choices made by families.

Apparently, it is used in special situations: for “a club”, in which the costs are shared with friends, for “a visit to the mother’s or mother-in-law’s house” on a weekend. In addition, especially when parents are carrying children or have to carry heavy things. On these occasions, the extra expense with transport seems to be justified as a resource to improve the comfort and safety of the route and, at times, even as a small extravagance.

## **2.2. Differences between walking on the outskirts and in the central regions of the city**

The perception of residents of more peripheral neighborhoods about walking demonstrates that the problems pointed out by any pedestrian are clearly greater than in the central neighborhoods (Figures 3 and 4).

In the central neighborhoods, reports show a situation in which there are some stretches with poorly maintained sidewalks, on the periphery this is added to the lack of sidewalks, or to the invasions and constructions that advance through the public area until reaching the light posts or the curb. Furthermore, there is the behavior of drivers, who drive far above the allowed limit, on narrow streets, without sidewalks, without speed radar, without traffic lights and without pedestrian lanes.



Figure 3 – Sidewalk in Jardim Damasceno that demonstrates one of the many difficulties faced by pedestrians who live on the outskirts of São Paulo. Photo: author (personal file), 2018.

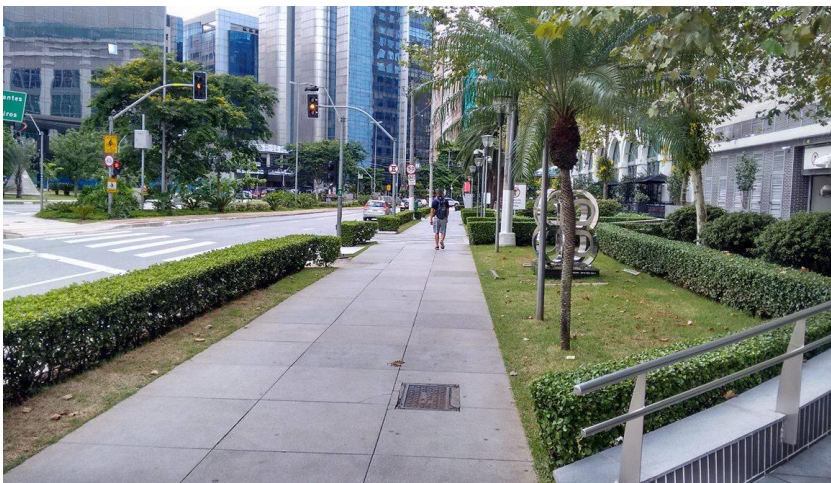


Figure 4 – Sidewalk in Vila Olímpia, which shows an almost ideal situation for pedestrians and explains the contrasts in the city's walking structure. Photo: author (personal file), 2018.

In the periphery, everything is very difficult, there is no pedestrian crossing, no light, no respect, it is different from the downtown. I think education is different, in the downtown, they give you permission to pass, they give preference to pedestrians, in the periphery they do not.

– *Woman living in a peripheral neighborhood.*

It is very different, people take care in some neighborhoods, you can't compare the Cachoeirinha neighborhood with the Morumbi.

– *Man living in a peripheral neighborhood.*

### 2.3. Differences in perception between men and women

The analysis of group discussions allows us to infer that men and women live different realities in relation to various aspects of the experience of walking in the city.

#### *Times to avoid*

There is a widespread perception that the city is violent and dangerous for both men and women. However, the fear of walking takes on different expressions between the two groups. The women interviewed explain that, in general, at dawn and at night, there



Figure 5 – A woman walking in the Parada de Taipas neighborhood, illustrates the urban landscape on the outskirts of the city. Photo: author (personal file), 2018.

is a greater risk of violence, assault and harassment, which seems to be intensified by poor lighting in the neighborhoods (Figure 5).

The fear of being mugged, the fear of leaving and not getting on your way, or arriving without your bag, because it depends on where you walk, if there's someone behind you, you're afraid of being robbed.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

To deal with this, Women develop several strategies. The first is simply to avoid going out on foot after sunset. The second strategy is to walk in groups. They also try not to attract attention, “not be distracted” and keep the cell phone hidden.

I was walking up a street the other day and a man came with a motorcycle, I was so scared, I could barely breathe, in the end it was just a pizza delivery man who stopped at a building.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

The feeling of insecurity, violence and fear of assault is constant, but it seems to be greater in the periphery. People's perception is that the chance of being mugged is greater when they are waiting at a bus stop than when they are walking.

Almost every day I hear reports from neighbors who were robbed at the bus stop, the thieves already know that there are always people standing there, in relation to us who are walking, it is more difficult.

– *Woman living in a peripheral neighborhood.*

Bus stop is common. They look for many people, crowds. They look for ease and not the guy who is walking, the guy who can run away.

– *Man living in a peripheral neighborhood.*

The perception of insecurity for men, however, is not restricted to the fear of robbery. There is also the fear of the police. Several interviewees report that police in the street approached them. Some say that this happens even on a daily basis, which encourages them to never forget the identity card at home.

The fear of being approached violently becomes an almost certainty for black respondents. The most vehement accounts of police approaches, accompanied by cursing and insults, come from them. “I was mistaken for a burglar because I was taking the printer from one office to another across the street. My boss saved me and explained that I was working”, says one of them, resident of the periphery.

For women, the issue of harassment is unavoidable. It is most felt within public transport, on the bus, subway or train, as it is not possible to get away, which is not the case when they are on the street.



I am afraid of a crowded bus, not to mention harassment, there are people who do it accidentally, but there are people who do it on purpose.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

I prefer walking to taking a subway at peak hours.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

The results are largely supported by quantitative data from existing surveys. According to a survey carried out in four countries by the YouGov Institute (YOUGOV, 2019), 86% of Brazilian women have already suffered sexual violence or harassment in public spaces, 50% have already been followed and 44% had their bodies touched.

#### 2.4. Walking as an aesthetic experience

If the choice of walking has a clearly rational component, once it has been taken, the act of daily walking starts to be associated with a series of positive attributes. In group discussions, it was possible to verify that, despite the difficulties mentioned, walking provides many types of compensation and pleasures for pedestrians. The pleasures arising from walking

are varied and were divided here into ‘families’ for systematization.

#### *Connection with the neighborhood*

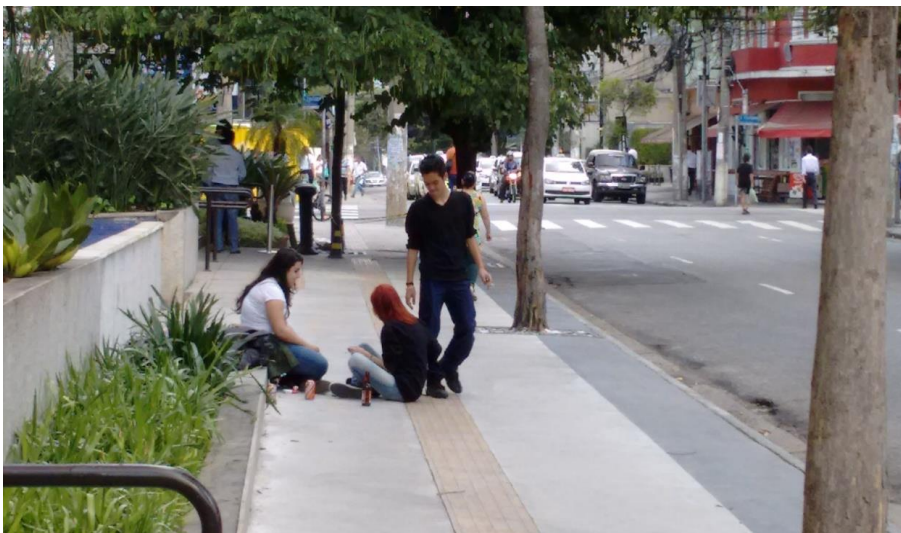
The first set of pleasures concerns the relationship with the city (Figure 6). The urban landscape is responsible for amplifying (or denying) the pleasure of walking. In central neighborhoods, it is common to report someone who, walking, realizes that he/she is in the midst of “beautiful buildings”.

I came every day to downtown and I didn’t know it, so I started walking and got to know it, you discover people, places, opportunities too, that’s a very interesting fact, you discover a restaurant you didn’t know you had there, a butcher that sells a specific meat.

– *Man living in a central neighborhood.*

However, in the neighborhoods, walking allows for an integration between people and with the range of local commerce and services.

I learned to know more about my neighborhood on foot, I love coffee shops and I found out that Campo Belo has many.  
– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*



*Figure 6 – Young people relaxing on the sidewalk on Bandeira Paulista street demonstrate the appropriation of sidewalks as a space not only for passage, but also for permanence. Photo: author (personal file), 2018.*

On the bus, you do not have the same view as when you walk on foot. I saw that they opened a tobacconist next to my house and I did not know that, they opened a supermarket, so if you do not walk you do not know about these things.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

There are people who prefer to leave the neighborhood where they live to go to another one because they know that there are good things in the other neighborhood, but what about our neighborhood, does not it have good things?

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

A motivator for most respondents is the surprise, or the possibility of finding different things, they report with pleasure the discovery of a new business, or meeting a neighbor.

The eye contact you have with people. The feeling of open air. Looks like you are living longer.

– *Man living in a central neighborhood.*

I live in Saúde, it is an urban neighborhood, but on the street above my house, you pass by and there is a banana tree, a papaya tree and there is papaya, the person next door has a chicken, you do not see all this from car or public transport.

– *Man living in a central neighborhood.*

In the rush of everyday life, there is always some time, “call me later, send me a WhatsApp”, but on that walk, you exchange a dozen words, it is great to meet people.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

### *Physical activity*

Walking is seen as good physical activity, which helps you relax and focus. On the other hand, on the subway or bus, there are those who do not like excessive proximity, which prevents the person from relaxing.

You do the walk, I saw the result after a while, there is a big benefit, not in terms of physical fitness, but in terms of conditioning, in being able to run and not get exhausted.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

I am not in the habit of doing physical activity, so it was a way to move, walking changed my routine.

– *Woman living in a peripheral neighborhood.*

### *The possibility of being alone*

When walking, people narrate the pleasure of being alone, which allows time to think or just relax.

Your head is more open. Works better. You get more to yourself. It is easier to concentrate. It is a good time to think.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

Sometimes you are not very cool and you want to cry, you cannot get on the bus, it is strange, when you walk, you can cry as you please.

– *Woman living in a peripheral neighborhood.*

The best reflections of my life, I had walking.  
– *Man living in a central neighborhood.*

We keep looking at people and when you are walking, it is just you and God.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

### *Time optimization*

The possibility of taking small, unplanned detours helps to run errands along the way – such as shopping, paying bills, etc. Even if he walks further, people narrate the pleasure of solving a problem, such as “going to the butcher shop” before going home.

...You get off the bus, go to the butcher, go to the perfumery, go to the pharmacy, go to the market.

– *Woman living in a central neighborhood.*

You can settle on the walk, talk to someone on the phone, a customer, your girlfriend. You can stop and eat. Stop to go to the pharmacy.

– *Man living in a central neighborhood.*

### **3. Inferences about urban planning and mobility decisions taken in the history of São Paulo from research with pedestrians**

People’s narratives about the act of walking in the city shed light both on the city that was being built and on the consequences of decisions taken in the past – to which, therefore, it is possible to link some of today’s walking conditions.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the narratives is the permanent conflict with the automobile, whose origin can be found in the historical priority given to wheeled transport in detriment to other transportation modals. In São Paulo, the predominance of the automobile was consolidated due to road expansion focused on individual motorized transport (VASCONCELLOS, 1999), implemented through various plans, but with special emphasis on the Plan of Avenues of São Paulo 1930, which was implemented over the decades following (ANELLI, 2007).

At the same time, public transport was gradually losing priority: the dense network of tram tracks, which kept

the city reasonably concentrated until the 1930s, lost its importance until it was completely deactivated in the 1970s. Bus transport, its replacement, was erratic from the start, allowing urban expansion beyond the rail limits and suffering from changes in the rules of operation. It can be said that the priority for public transport only seems to have been resumed, at least in the form of the law, with the 1997 Brazilian Traffic Code (VASCONCELLOS, 2009).

Several of the discomforts narrated by the interviewees stem from this story: the lack of reliability in public transport, the generalized discomfort with the noise and pollution caused by cars, the fear of being run over and the perception of danger in crossings. The systematic construction of expressways and viaducts in the second half of the 20th century generated effects that are felt daily by pedestrians today (Figure 7).

The lack of quality in the circulation spaces linked to public transport appears in the interviewees’ criticisms and reveals a historical neglect with the displacements to and from the peripheral neighborhoods. It is also worth noting the little concern with the quality of transport stations and passages as public spaces (Figure 8), from poor access to the coexistence inside the trains and buses, which arouses, especially among women, criticism of overcrowding and invasion, and even everyday harassment.

The aggressive behavior of car drivers is also felt on a daily basis by the interviewees, who reiterate the importance of having traffic education. However, the differences they establish between the behavior of drivers in central areas and in the periphery are so clear that they allow us to infer that urban design, signage and the presence of inspections in central areas may have a direct influence on this behavior. This issue can be evidenced in the historical index of pedestrian fatalities. After a peak of deaths in the 1980s, successive measures have contributed to the drop in the number – use of seat belts, reduction of speeds on city streets, increased inspection and even the establishment of pressure groups to increase safety in the traffic. Despite this, the city still has an average



Figure 7 – The uninviting scenario in the scene of the woman crossing the street with two children in Sacomã. Photo: author (personal file), 2018.



Figure 8 – Pedestrian faces cars under rails. The difficult transposition of the railway in Bom Retiro, together with the priority for cars, is an example of the barriers arising from the transport system. Photo: author (personal file), 2018.

death rate of approximately 6 people per 100,000 inhabitants, almost twice as much as New York, for example (MALATESTA, 2015).

Pedestrian comments about walking difficulties also point to historical issues: narrow or absent sidewalks, difficult crossing, and lack of signage. The urban design of São Paulo's road system was at least erratic in the 20th century (MEYER, 1993), but perhaps the legislation on private subdivisions that has governed part of the city's growth since the first half of the 20th explains the precariousness of the walking network in the periphery (GROSTEIN, 2004).

From the beginning of the 2010s onwards, it was possible to see several initiatives that point to the revaluation of walking in the city. Among them, the Municipal Decree Number 56,834 stands out, which established the São Paulo Mobility Plan – PlanMob/SP 2015, the planning and management instrument of the Municipal Urban Mobility System. It stipulates the priority of walking over other modes of transport, the use of emergency funds (however small) for sidewalks and the establishment of a Thematic Chamber for Mobility on Foot at the Municipal Transport Council. Which established for the first time a forum for the pedestrian's opinion to be placed together with that of other predominant actors in traffic (CALLIARI, 2019).

Other difficulties can be related to differences in inspection and legislation concerning urbanization processes. Permissive legislation for private subdivisions in the past may have contributed to the current narrow sidewalks (or even the absence of sidewalks) in peripheral neighborhoods (ROLNIK, 1999).

Finally, there is a very interesting cultural issue in pedestrian narratives. The cultural pattern in force in much of the 20th century reached its peak between the 1970s and 1990. Which generated a dichotomy between those who have and those who do not have a car (GREGORI, 2018). Part of this dichotomy may be being softened by a change in attitude, in which other forms of transport, such as walking and cycling, are beginning to be revalued.

Contrary to this author's initial hypothesis, "being a pedestrian" in São Paulo does not, a priori, bring negative connotations and even causes very positive impressions among most interviewees. Despite the construction of the cult of the car and a historical social devaluation of those whose only alternative was walking, even though it was, at first, a choice forced by circumstances, it gained new contours over time.

However, in this set of positive perceptions, the car is not seen as an opposition. On the contrary, it is both a common presence in the city and an object of desire. There were no comments from the groups that criticized the space occupied by cars or their priority.

Even when criticism is made of the width of sidewalks or the absence of crosswalks or even the behavior of drivers, the solution proposed by the interviewees never involves a more conceptual challenge to the predominance of the automobile. It is just a matter of guaranteeing the pedestrian's right not to be run over, without implying the contestation of the car's power or value. The car, on the contrary, sometimes appears as the possibility of a more comfortable displacement, especially on days of rain or intense sun – "oh, if I had a car now...".

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we exposed a representative panel of the perception of pedestrians about the act of walking.

Despite important changes in the distribution of modes of transport, walking remains the main mode of travel in São Paulo. Whether to get somewhere, or as an auxiliary displacement, to different means of transport. In quantitative data, it is possible to note that these small displacements of around 15 minutes are essential for people to access buses, subways, trains and even the private vehicles they use.

Qualitative research brought several concrete elements to understanding the role of pedestrians in the city.

The first is that the decision to walk is made rationally, in a balance between cost and convenience, but that, when it becomes a regular activity, walking gains new valuable components. Walking is an exercise, a way to get in touch with yourself, to disconnect from problems for a while, and a very pleasant way to relate to the city. People welcome small surprises and report with pleasure the encounters that take place along their paths. Walking is both a means of transport and an urban experience.

The reports also reveal a series of difficulties faced on these same routes, linked to infrastructure, the relationship with cars, fear of robbery and violence. It is possible to say that several of these difficulties could be mitigated by simply complying with the existing

legislation, both in relation to traffic and in relation to basic infrastructure, the sidewalks.

The experience of walking is not homogeneous. Women feel different difficulties and fears, avoiding walking in certain places and times of day because of this. Although walking conditions are not excellent anywhere in the city, residents of the periphery face a much worse reality in their neighborhoods, where the problems of sidewalks, insecurity, uncivilized drivers, urban design and even the lack of urban amenities greatly degrade the experience of walking in relation to the central region of the city.

The research also demonstrated the relevance of the theoretical references on walkability, mentioned at the beginning of the text. The pedestrians involved in the research emphatically express the basic concepts of good walkability – such as safety and infrastructure. However, in addition to the basic attributes, the research also demonstrated that enjoyment is not an abstraction, on the contrary, it is a possibility felt and expressed by pedestrians. In line with the theoretical works, in the perception of pedestrians in São Paulo, the possibility of meeting people and surprises increases the quality of the walking experience. This finding, as well as the practical expression of walkability, may open up important fronts in public policies and certainly reflect the current debate that began in the 1960s in other countries. Which perhaps only entered the municipal management agenda from the beginning of the 21st century, with the consequences of the 1997 Brazilian Traffic Code and the mobility plans.

Based on the wealth of reports of individual experiences, it is possible to relate pedestrian perceptions to the built environment and the city's history. This highlights the fact that urban planning and mobility decisions taken decades ago are part of the daily life of pedestrians today. Similarly, it is possible to infer that municipal decisions currently taken could have a much greater impact on walkability if they incorporated pedestrian perceptions into their design.

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