

# A Framework for Context-Aware Service Recommendation for Mobile Users: A Focus on Mobility in Smart Cities

Une plateforme de recommandation contextuelle de services pour des utilisateurs mobiles : le cas de la mobilité dans la ville intelligente

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**RÉSUMÉ.** Depuis longtemps, les systèmes de recommandation aident les utilisateurs à choisir parmi de grands ensembles de services. Dans l'environnement de la ville intelligente, pour gagner en précision, de tels systèmes de recommandation doivent également tenir compte du contexte de l'utilisateur. Qu'est ce que le contexte d'un utilisateur et comment peut-il être capturé ? Ce sont les deux questions auxquelles nous répondons dans cet article. Après avoir spécifié ce que nous entendons par le terme *contexte* nous montrons comment l'analyse de la mobilité urbaine permet de déduire des informations contextuelles riches. Le principal objectif de notre projet sera à terme de recommander des services en fonction du parcours estimé d'un usager dans la ville intelligente.

**ABSTRACT.** Recommendations have long been a means of helping users select services. In a smart city environment, recommendation algorithms should take into account the user's context to gain in accuracy. What is the context of a smart city user and how can it be captured? These are the two questions we answer in this paper. After specifying what we understand by context information, we show how the city's mobility pattern can be used to infer rich contextual information. The main objective of our project will be finally to recommend services according to an estimated trajectory of a user in the smart city.

**MOTS-CLÉS.** Ville Intelligente, Mobilité Urbaine, Système de Recommandation, Contexte, Profil.

**KEYWORDS.** Smart City, MCSC, Urban Mobility, Recommendation system, Context, Profile.

## 1. Introduction

Advances in sensors, IoT (Internet of Things), wireless communication, and information infrastructures such as GPS, Wi-Fi, and mobile phone technology expose users to an enormous amount of mobile services available anytime and anywhere (Georgakopoulos and Jayaraman, 2016). Nevertheless, considering the large number of services, it is very difficult for a user to find, among them, those that are the most adapted to her current situation. Even worse, the user could, in a given situation, be unable to find a relevant service. To overcome these limitations, the smart city, through its communication infrastructure and information system, has the capacity of recommending to the user the most appropriate services at a given moment by considering people, services, providers, and locations together. In the same way as recommendation systems have been used in various fields to pick the most adapted service according to a user's previous behaviors and actions, it seems natural to develop mobile recommendation systems to suggest the right services or informations to the right mobile users at a given time and place.

Considering such possibilities, the smart city would thus become a real-time Information System staging users, contexts and services and hence contributing to its users' decision making process. As such, the smart city tends to reduce the gap between the physical and digital worlds. According to the Smart City Council, a smart city can be considered as a city that uses information and communication technologies to enhance its livability, workability, and sustainability. Mobile Crowd Sensing and Computing (MCSC) (Haderer, 2014; Guo et al., 2015) is a recent paradigm that encompasses the major smart city issues for cross-space and large-scale sensing. It has resulted in the development of various sensing and computing applications in the field of smart cities (e.g., transportation, health-care, environment, urban mobility, e-service provisioning).

A consequence of the recent development of smart city applications is a growing research activity in several topics such as : mobile contextual recommendation systems (Levandovski et al., 2012; Bao et al., 2015), urban mobility (Musa and Eriksson, 2012), context-aware modeling (Bouidghaghen et al., 2009) or Big (geo) Data processing and analytics (Cranshaw et al., 2012). These works use various methods including reinforcement learning, filtering and clustering or Hidden Markov Model, to partly meet the requirements of smart cities. Moreover, those methods are enhanced by the rise of Big Data, which constitutes a new approach considered as the 4<sup>th</sup> scientific paradigm known as the "Big e-science" (Gray, 2009). It seems important to take Big Data into account as smart city projects are generally in line with the first 3 Vs of Big Data : Volume, Velocity, and Variety of data.

In the context of smart cities, personalization is a real challenge that focuses on bringing the services of a city closer to its citizens. The aim of our project is to design and implement a context-aware service recommendation system for mobile users in a smart city. Our system should be able to deliver the most appropriate service to a given user according to her geolocation and surrounding environment at a given instant. Considering the fact that the choice of the right service is a time consuming operation, it may be relevant in some cases to predict where the user will be in a near future in order to deliver a service depending on her future location and enviroing context. Thus, an important aspect of our work is to predict the location of mobile users in the smart city (Musa and Eriksson, 2012). In addition to real-time processing and its required scalability (Wanigasekara et al., 2016), we will need to take into consideration other known issues such as : the cold start problem (Nguyen et al., 2014), the short life-span of services (Wei et al., 2017), and context-awareness (Galichet, 2015).

The contributions of this paper are threefold:

1. Context modeling and sensing, which should allow us to capture and model information that characterizes the situation of users (Hammoudi et al., 2015). Actually, the context-model is a centerpiece for the design of a context-aware service recommendation system in mobile environments (Li et al., 2010; del Carmen Rodríguez-Hernández and Ilarri, 2016; Hermoso et al., 2015).
2. Study and prediction of urban mobility (Musa and Eriksson, 2012; Gambs et al., 2012) : The geolocation of the system's users is, of course, a key element in the recommendation of geolocated services. The study of urban mobility patterns in the city should allow us to define a realistic mobility model capable of providing the necessary elements for the prediction of user routes and thus, their future geolocation.
3. Implementation of a prototype : In our case study, we evaluate our approach through the implementation of a proof of concept framework that uses Wifilib, a citywide free Wi-Fi network deployed in Angers (France). We have developed a prototype (*Ur-MoVe* : Urban Mobility and Visualizer) that

used Wifilib connection traces to allow the visualization and prediction of urban geolocation in a city. In this paper we discuss and focus on mobility data in the city of Angers (France).

Thus, the purpose of our article is to describe the MCSC framework we plan to build for our smart city. Moreover, our objective will be also to focus on the first results we have obtained concerning the Ur-Move application, and what it can provide in terms of context data suitable for analysing urban dynamics.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the related works concerning research on mobile crowd sensing and computing (MCSC) applications and focuses more specifically on two aspects : recommendation systems and human mobility analysis. Section 3 describes our proposed framework along two dimensions : context and context-aware services, and context-aware recommendation systems. In Section 4 we go in depth into the analysis of urban mobility by presenting *Ur-MoVe*, the application we have developed and its results about mobility and prediction. Finally, Section 5 presents our conclusion and perspectives.

## 2. Related Works on MCSC

Mobile Crowd Sensing and Computing (MCSC) is a new promising paradigm for cross-space and large scale sensing (Guo et al., 2015). MCSC is also useful from a computing point of view for recommendation systems. This paradigm encompasses a wide range of applications in very different domains : urban traffic monitoring, environment monitoring, transportation and traffic planning, urban dynamics sensing, location services, mobile recommendation, health care, public safety... Our work focuses on mobile context-aware recommendation and relies on urban dynamics sensing for context capture. It thus focuses on the two following main fields of research:

- **Service recommendation:** The main aim of our framework is to recommend services to users in a smart city using their profiles and surrounding environment according to their predicted location.
- **Human urban mobility/behavior patterns:** A user's context is closely linked to her mobility and to the global mobility in her surrounding. Therefore, in order to define the context precisely, it seems important to analyze and study the city's urban dynamics in order to extract mobility patterns. For this reason, our framework provides an urban mobility visualization tool. This tool also aims to estimate the next location of a given user. This estimated location of users will serve to enrich their context.

**Service/activity recommendation** is a wide field of research aimed at providing personalized suggestions of adaptive services and activities to mobile users. For example (Levandoski et al., 2012) propose LARS, a Location-Aware Recommender System using location-based ratings to produce recommendations, which are computed using a global item-based collaborative filtering (CF) method. Other works tend to use combined inputs for their recommendation system — e.g., (Zhang et al., 2013) propose a unified recommendation model for offline social events group recommendations. They consider location features, social features, and implicit patterns simultaneously. CF is considered as the most popular approach used for recommendation systems (Wei et al., 2017). A parallel field of research focuses on learning methods such as reinforcement learning or deep learning. It tends to advocate the use of hybrid methods in recommendation systems. For instance, (Wei et al., 2017) propose a hybrid method using collaborative filtering and deep neural network to find a solution to the cold start problem of newly added items to a preexisting pool of available items. Another approach is to use a reinforcement learning

method to solve the historical multi-armed bandit problem coined by (Robbins, 1952). For example, this is used for online or mobile user recommendation systems such as those described in (Bouneffouf, 2014). It uses different algorithms such as  $\epsilon$ -Greedy, UCB (Auer, 2002) or contextual bandit problem solving algorithms such as LinUCB (Li et al., 2010), OFUL or CL-BESA (Galichet, 2015). The use of those methods allows the system to learn from the users and their interests from a pool of information. They rapidly allow the selection of a strategy that discriminates the non-relevant items and selects the items which best match the users. After a sufficient number of rounds, this method tends to the best hidden probability convergence of matches between users and the service that is recommended. Such methods have high computation needs and must perform numerous rounds to reach an acceptable level of precision. For this reason they seem relevant to be used in a context such as smart cities in which large amounts of data produced by a large number of mobile users provide a sufficient quantity of information in a short time.

**Human mobility** is the subject of many works which study the mobility and behavioral patterns in urban areas. Different methods are investigated and used to carry out such studies. For instance (Noulas et al., 2012) highlights mobility patterns using the check-in histories of Location Based Social Networks (LBSN) users. An LBSN is defined as : “*a type of social networking in which geographic services and capabilities such as geocoding and geotagging are used to enable additional social dynamics*” (Bao et al., 2015). For instance, some studies use LBSNs for the recommendation of social events (Quercia et al., 2010), to discover user trajectories (Zheng and Zhou, 2011) or discover community-based neighborhoods in a city (Cranshaw et al., 2012). However, these methods are only efficient and useful in the case of very active social networks and a large amount of data is required to draw precise and representative conclusions. Other methods have been used to track smartphones and estimate their trajectories in a city using Wi-Fi. For example, (Musa and Eriksson, 2012) shows how Markov chains can be used to estimate trajectories using Wi-Fi connection traces.

In our case, LBSNs contain too little information concerning the city of Angers (France) for them to be considered. Conversely, the existence of a city-wide free public Wi-Fi network with an infrastructure of 250 access points mainly in the city center, makes the Wi-Fi connection traces a very rich source of data from which location of users can be studied using methods such as Markov chains.

In the next section we describe our framework, which proposes solutions to several of the issues presented above: data collection and sensing, data visualization and analysis, and implementation of a recommendation system for providing personalized services to mobile users in the smart city.

### 3. Our Proposed Framework

In the previous section, we have introduced the main research works in the field of Mobile Crowd Sensing and Computing, some illustrated by Citizen Centered Smart City applications. These works tend to highlight the importance of concepts such as context and context-awareness, and recommendation systems using artificial intelligence methods.

In this section we describe our proposed context-aware recommendation framework. First we will define the notions of context and what we understand by context-aware services. We then present the method we use for the context-aware recommendation of services to mobile users.

### 3.1. Context and Context-aware Services

The notion of context is the centerpiece of adaptability and personalization. Context-aware services constitute a mobile computing paradigm in which applications implemented as combinations of services capture and take advantage of contextual information to deliver the relevant service to the right person at the right time. This contextual information might be e.g., the user's location, date and time of day, neighboring users and devices, the user's activity. The definition of context has been the subject of many works (Chen et al., 2004; Broll et al., 2007). According to the literature, the most popular definition of the notion of context is given by (Dey, 2001) : “Context is any information that can be used to characterize the situation of an entity. An entity is a person, place, or object that is considered relevant to the interaction between a user and an application, including the user and applications themselves”.

(Hammoudi et al., 2015) have synthesized different definitions and approaches for the notion of context and aimed to propose a generic context model which should satisfy the following three requirements :

- be sufficiently general to be used by different user centered mobile applications,
- be sufficiently specific to cover the main contextual entities proposed in the state of the art of context-aware mobile applications,
- be sufficiently flexible to allow an extension and to take into account new entities specific to a given application domain.

Taking these three requirements into account, we are in line with Dey's definition. However, we can specify the context more precisely in particular for mobile crowd sensing and computing (Guo et al., 2015). Therefore, the two following remarks are considered in our approach :

1. A user should not need to interact explicitly with the application to receive recommendations. Pushed recommendations could be very relevant for mobile users and the system could decide to recommend a user a given service because of her current context.
2. The notion of context is defined in a very general manner and would benefit from being more precise. We argue that the *profile* and the *environment* are two main components of the context, and should be defined precisely, specifically for mobile context-aware services.

Figure 1 illustrates our generic context model involving its main components. The figure also shows how our proposed framework interacts with the context model.

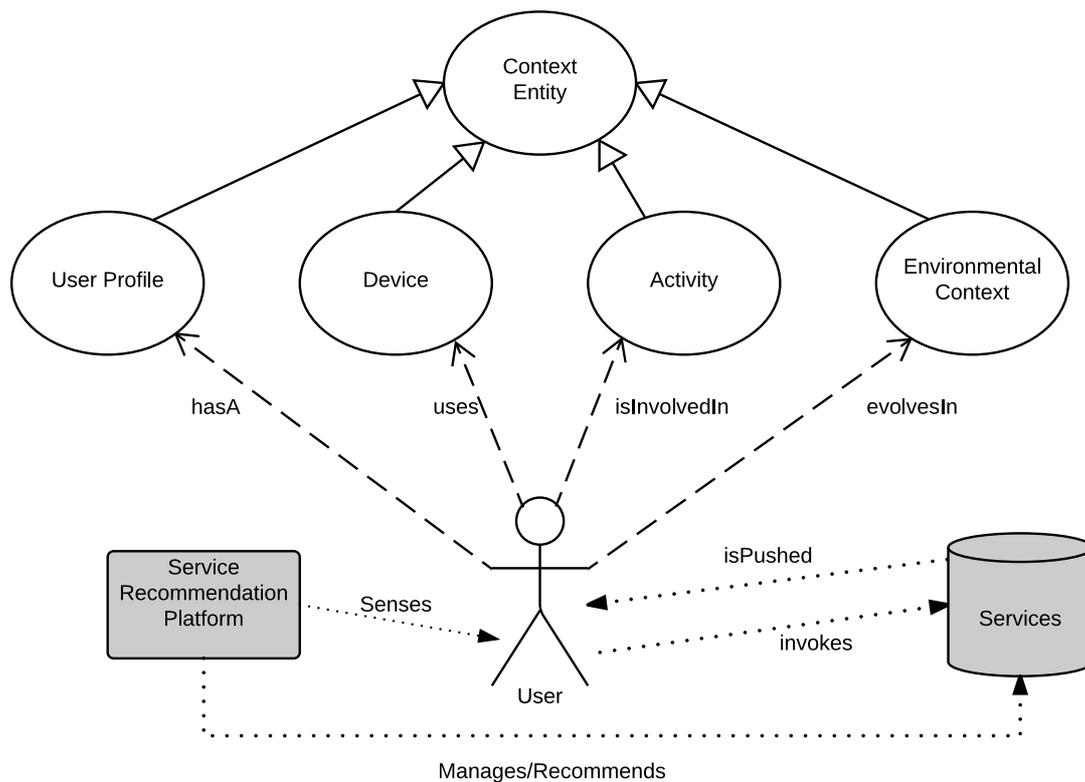
With respect to context-aware computing, our model focuses on the *who*, the *where*, the *when* and the *what* (that is, what activities are occurring) of entities and uses this information to determine *why* a situation is occurring (Krumm, 2009). Among these 5 “w”, the *why* should thus be deduced from the other four “w” (who, where, when, what) which can be captured : user, location, time and activity.

- **User:** A person that has a state and a profile. A user evolves in an environment and uses computational devices to invoke or receive services. The state of a user can be mobile or static.
- **Profile:** A profile is strongly attached to the user and contains the information that describes her. A user can have a dynamic and/or a static profile. The static profile gathers information that describes the user and that does not change over time (or very rarely). It can be the date of birth, name or gender. On the contrary, the user's dynamic profile contains properties that can change over time and reflect her present situation — e.g., the user's goals, preferences, intentions, desires, constraints. For

example the goal of a tourist searching for a restaurant is to have dinner. A profile in this case can give information concerning the tourist’s culinary preferences or whereabouts.

- **Activity:** The activity in which the user is involved may be a key to decide which service is relevant to her. However, recognizing users’ activities is still a tough task.
- **Device:** It is the mobile computing system used by the user to access the services and capture contextual information from the environment. The device can obtain information concerning its type (e.g., tablet, laptop, smart-phone), the application, and the network.
- **Environment:** It contains all the information that describes the surroundings of the user and its device, and that can be relevant for the application. It includes different categories of information such as:
  - **Spatial context information**, e.g., Location, city, destination, speed.
  - **Temporal context information**, e.g., Time, date, season.
  - **Climatic context information**, e.g., Temperature, type of weather.

Our framework senses users in the city in real-time and manages a set of services from which it selects specific services, which it recommends to users according to their context. The recommended services can later be explicitly invoked by the user or pushed by the framework to identified users. Now that the notions of context and context-awareness have been clarified, we can consider another major component of our framework: the recommendation system.



**Figure 1.** Context model

### 3.2. Recommendation Systems for Personalized Services

Recommendation systems have been popular in the field of Human Machine Interaction for many years. They are decision support tools that propose personalized suggestions of services or information to users

according to who they are, what they like or what their habits are. Because of the growing quantity of available data, information recommendation systems have become very popular on the Internet to recommend products to customers of e-commerce websites, music or movies to users, or to provide personalized travel information to tourists.

In the case of smart cities, the recommendation system should take into consideration the user's context and be a context-aware recommendation system. Just like Internet vendors combine the user profile with browsing or buying habits to recommend websites to visit, goods to buy or destination to visit here, our aim is to also consider data reflecting the actual life in the city and thus make the city a part of our Information System. The main challenge for the recommendation system is thus to fit the contextual information into traditional mathematical and systematic recommendation algorithms. Moreover, in the case of Smart Cities, it is necessary to recommend a wide variety of services. Thus, we propose to use a service selection strategy that maximizes both the quality of recommendations and the diversity of recommended services. To solve these issues, we propose to consider our problem as a contextual multi-armed bandit (CMAB) problem and use a reinforcement learning algorithm (*LinUCB*) to solve it.

According to the literature, *LinUCB* (Li et al., 2010), which is an “Upper Confidence Bounds algorithm”, has appeared to be the most effective and appropriate algorithm to be tested in our case study. Nevertheless, we will need to ensure the scalability of our method and ensure that it can cope with the large numbers of users and services present in the smart city.

According to the descriptions given in subsection 3.1. and 3.2., we have designed a global framework, synthesized in Figure 2:

- The Mobile Crowd Sensing component senses data related to our mobile users in the smart city
- The Context-aware Recommendation System is the “Artificial Intelligence” component and allows the recommendation of services to mobile users.
- The *Ur-MoVe* component we have developed for studying the human mobility/activity and predicting the geolocation of users in the city.
- Transverse issues such as security, privacy, performance, and energy consumption, will need to be considered in our future works and will be handled by a dedicated component.

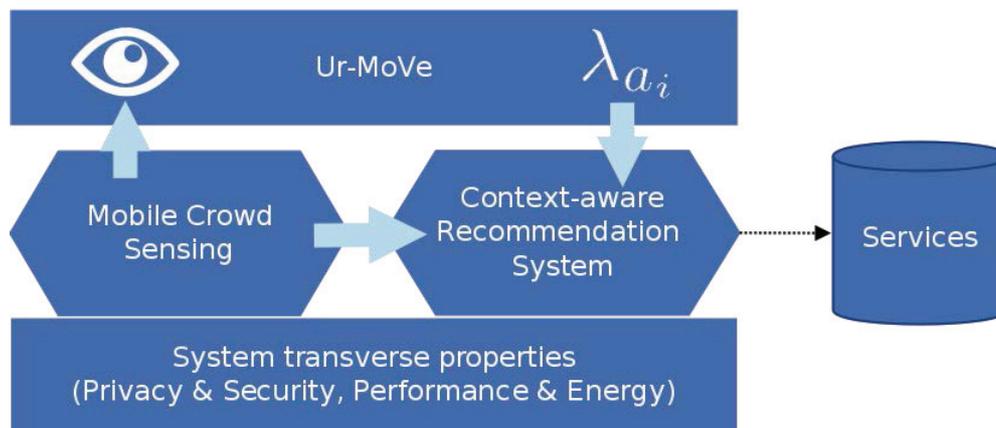
### 3.3. Main Components of our Framework

More precisely, data sensed by the Mobile Crowd Sensing component is used as input by both *Ur-MoVe*, to carry out its predictions, and by the Context-aware Recommendation System, to be used as context data. Moreover, the prediction results obtained by *Ur-MoVe* (referred to as  $\lambda_{a_i}$  in the figure) are also integrated in user contexts and considered by the Recommendation System.

## 4. Urban Mobility and Prediction with *Ur-MoVe*

The global description of our framework has introduced key concepts such as context, context-awareness and recommendation systems. In this section, we will concentrate on a critical part of our framework: the *Ur-MoVe* prediction and visualization tool that we have developed. *Ur-MoVe* is able to visualize and predict the mobility of users through the analysis of their connection traces to a citywide Wi-Fi network.

The data that we have used in this work is provided by the Afone Group, a virtual operator based in Angers (France), which has launched a project called Wifilib — meaning free Wi-Fi — as a continuous Wi-Fi network in the busiest areas of the city of Angers (France). Using this data we can monitor and predict various indicators on network activity and urban dynamics. The *Ur-MoVe* tool is the entry point to fully understand the users' mobility and behavior patterns. We believe that by analyzing the mobility we could exhibit contextual information characterizing users and the city and thus enhance the accuracy of the recommendation system.



**Figure 2.** *Our Proposed Framework*

#### 4.1. Urban Statistics

This part of our study is the data storytelling part that every data scientist has to go through in order to explain observed data according to a global purpose. For the time being, our data are profiles and geolocation data and our main purpose is to study urban mobility. We have considered both types of data and interpreted them to understand what they depict in the real world. In order to achieve our analysis, we have developed *Ur-MoVe*, an **Urban Mobility Visualizer**. It is designed to display statistics and mobility patterns in a city and to give a representation of these statistics over time. For each access point identified by its id linked to GPS coordinates, the data in the connection logs contains, for each connection: the anonymized users' profiles, the time of disconnection, and the session's duration. Thus, our results, presented in Figure 3 and described below, are calculated with regards to a specific access point and displayed on the map at its position. When combined to Open Street Map (OSM) geographic information, our results can help us discover interesting venues such as stores, tram lines and stations, popular places and streets.

1. **Density of connections:** The density of connections for each access point is drawn on a color scale from yellow to dark red according to the number of connected users at the selected time. These first results let us determine popular and busy places and infer specific periods of the day such as peak hours. Moreover, those data can allow us to further calculate flows in the city. They will be necessary when predicting a user's position.
2. **Duration of connections:** An indication of the duration of connections to an access point is very important when categorizing places and streets; for example, as walk-through places or as venues in which people stay for a while. Moreover, in our figure, which drills down to the downtown of Angers we notice that people stay longer in the main city square (*Place du Ralliement*) or in the

commercial streets where there are cafés and shops in which they can stop. On the opposite, streets such as *rue Saint-Laud* appear as connecting ways and connection times in these streets are short.

3. **Main languages:** In our example we notice French speaking users in blue and English speaking users in red. This information could be very relevant to our recommendation system in the case of multilingual services, which should be provided in the users' language. This would be specifically interesting for applications in the field of tourism.
4. **Age scales:** Ages are grouped by decades from 0 to 100 and are displayed for each access point on a yellow to red color scale according to the average age of connected users. If used in combination with the time, this information seems very relevant in order to categorize the neighborhoods according to the ages of people in the area. For example, the figure shows that more people in age range 40-50 are in the "culture superstore", whereas users in age ranges 10-30 tend to *chill out* in the pubs and cafés around the main city square. Of course, this information will be a part of the context given to the recommendation system.
5. **Gender majority:** Our application allows us to display connections to the access points by gender. The access point to which a majority of women are connected are represented in pink and turn blue when a majority of men are connected. In the figure we notice that one category of people tends to be in places like pubs, cafés or "cultural superstore" whereas another category prefers shopping areas. The exact number of users belonging to each gender connected to an access point is displayed by clicking on it. This information will be full part of the context given to the recommendation system.
6. **Routable graphs:** Our data can also be used to infer more complex statistics such as routable graphs giving indications of popular routes in the city. We determine uncertain user routes by considering all connections between times  $t$  and  $t + 15 \text{ min}$ . From these uncertain user routes we then infer a graph of popular routes. This statistic is essential to compute results such as: top-k routes and transition matrices used in the processing of Markov chains.

## 4.2. Mobility and Prediction

Using the routable graphs introduced above, more results, such as popular routes, giving an understanding of urban mobility can be inferred. Moreover, using Markov chains, we can estimate where a new user who connects to a given access point at  $t_0$  will be from  $t_0+1\text{min}$  to  $t_0+15\text{min}$ . In this subsection, we will describe the methods we used and the results we obtained with regards to those mobility statistics.

### Top-k Routes

Our purpose is to highlight the best approximate and recalculated top-k routes used at a selected date and during a given time span. We believe that this is the entry point to infer mobility patterns in our city. A variety of methods are described in the literature to obtain such results. For example, (Han et al., 2014; Bao et al., 2015) describe how top-k trajectories can be calculated from user's location-based social network notifications or the traveling time. Most of the proposed methods use graph theory to efficiently solve such problems. Hence, before any further computation, we calculate the routable graph corresponding to a given interval of time. The routable graph is built by identifying all edges corresponding to the

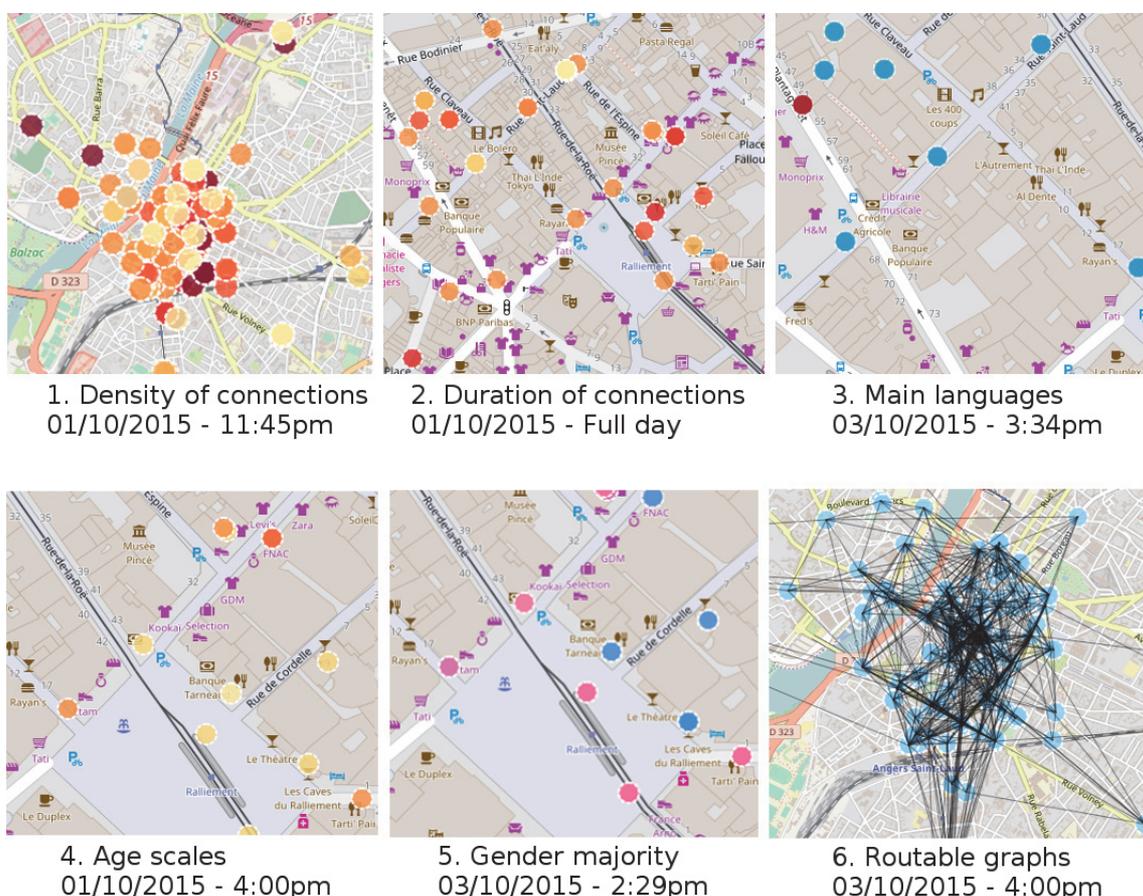
transition between a disconnection from an access point followed by a connection to another one, over a given time period. The weight of each edge is initialized with the value of 1. It is then incremented each time a transition between the two same access points is observed. The resulting routable graph is the starting point of all route-related calculations. For example, the top-routes in a given interval are calculated as follows:

1. For each user  $u \in \mathcal{U}$ , compute the list  $\mathcal{L}_u$  of all her routes  $l \in \mathcal{L}_u$  that occurred in the last 15 minutes. We consider a user's route  $l$  as being a set of at most five of her connections  $c_{u,i}; \forall i \in [1, 5]$  to different access points  $a_i$  ordered by timestamp over the interval  $T = [t, t + 15min]$ . Let  $\mathcal{L} = \bigcup_{\forall u \in \mathcal{U}} \mathcal{L}_u$  be the set of all 4-segment routes  $f_{u,j}; j \in [1, 4]$  for all the users.
2. Sum each segment flows  $f_j$  of all routes  $l \in \mathcal{L}$ . This corresponds to the user flows between each pair of access points between  $t$  and  $t + 15min$ . This enables us to highlight the best segments for an approximate and *recalculated* route  $l$ .
3. Compute the top-1 recalculated route by selecting  $\arg \max_{f_j \in \mathcal{L}} \sum_{j=1}^5 f_j$

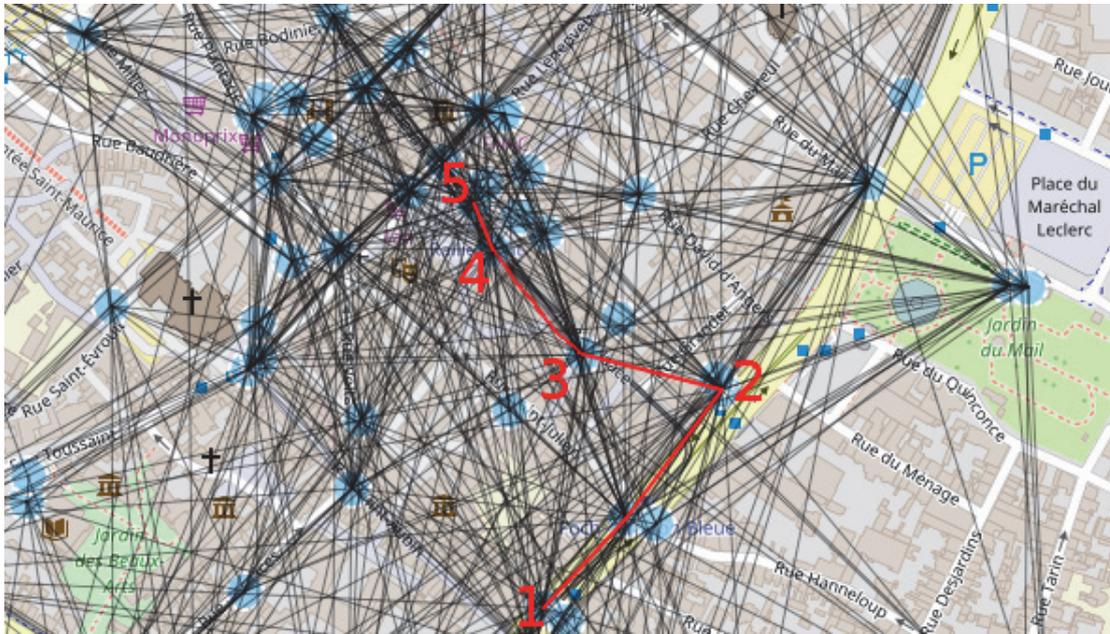
For example, Figure 4 displays the top-1 route in Angers (France) on Saturday, October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015 between 4 :00pm and 4 :15pm.

The next top-k routes are computed following the same method.

Combining our knowledge about the city of Angers (France) and the computed top-k routes, we notice that the top-1 route corresponds to the city's Tramway line. Moreover, it fits with the main places of attendance and flows that we expected to obtain at the given time and day.



**Figure 3.** Results (in color) using Ur-MoVe from Wifilib connections



**Figure 4.** Top-1 route calculated with Wi-Fi connections flows

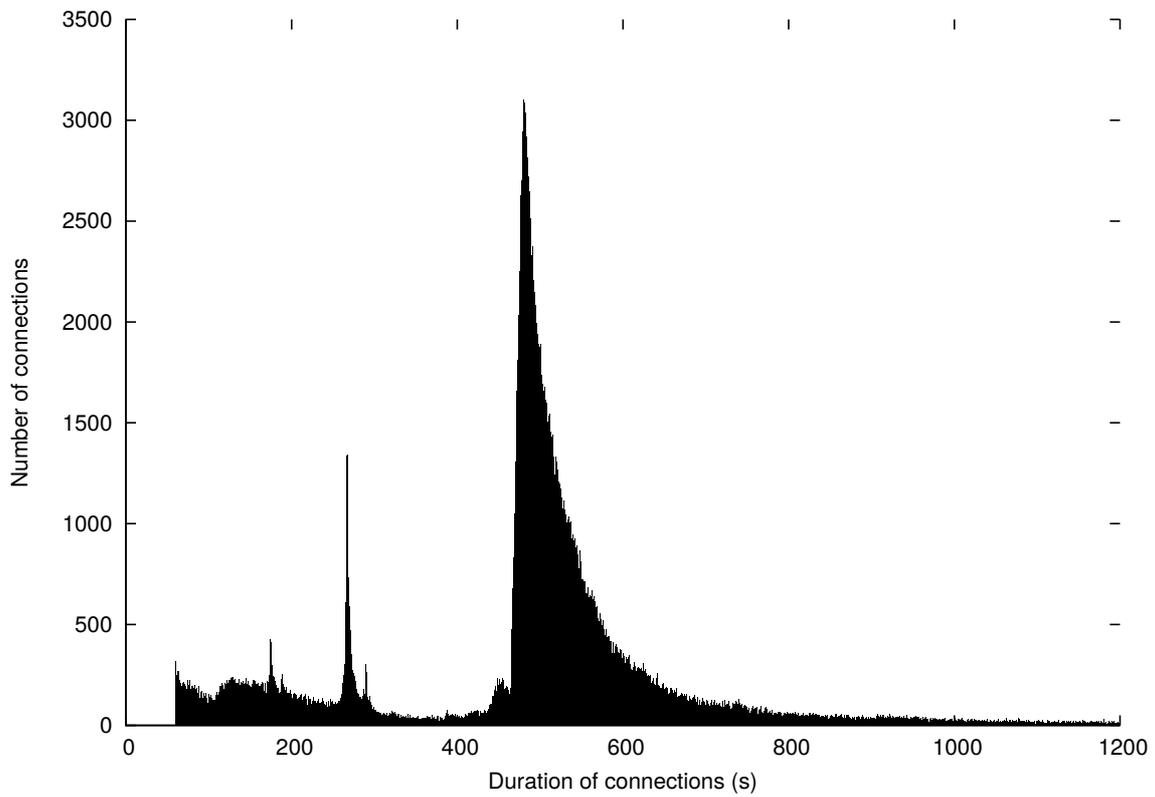
## Predictions

The main issue of our architecture is to predict the future location of a user in order to recommend her a service accordingly. Indeed, we believe that users interested in a located service have more chance of using it if going in the right direction (i.e., towards the geolocated service). Hence, it seems relevant to integrate both predicted and current user positions in their context. Moreover, the predicted positions of all users give an indication of the global oriented mobility flows in the city.

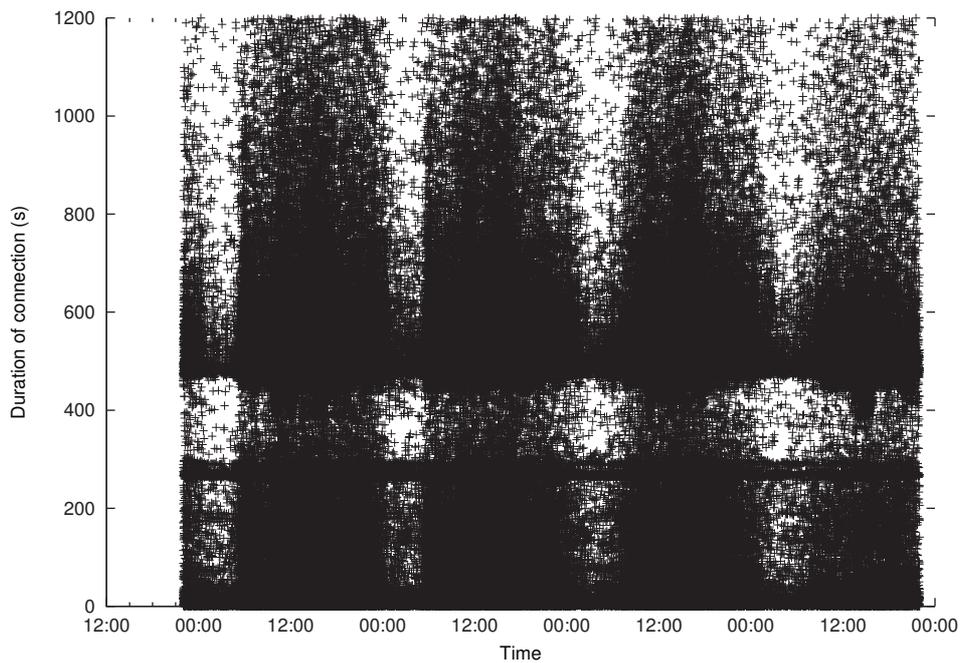
## Preliminary study

We have done a preliminary work aimed both studying different features concerning the connections and understanding the timescale on which people evolve. Indeed, we plan to use Markov transition matrices that evolve over the time. Thus, in order to go deeper concerning the use of such matrices, we should determine both its refresh period and the time, in the future, for which it is relevant to compute the location prediction. Thus, we have observed an average duration of connections of 8 minutes and 2 seconds and a standard deviation of 33.47 seconds in the studied population (See Figure 5). Moreover, we have shown that there is no relation between the duration of connections and the time of day:

- There is no linear correlation between the time of day and the duration of connections. Namely, the Bravais-Pearson correlation  $r(T, D) = 0,0002$  for  $r(T, D) = \frac{\text{Cov}(T, D)}{\sigma_T \sigma_D}$  where  $T$  is the timestamp of the connection and  $D$  the duration of the connection.
- There is no nonlinear correlation between time of day and duration of connections. Namely, Spearman's rank correlation  $r_s(T, D) = 0,0003$  for  $r_s(T, D) = 1 - \frac{6 \cdot \sum_{i=1}^N (rg(T_i) - rg(D_i))^2}{N^3 - N^2}$  where  $N$  is the number of observations and  $rg(T_i)$  is the rank of  $T_i$  in  $T_1..T_n$  distribution and  $rg(D_i)$  is the rank of  $D_i$  in  $D_1..D_n$  distribution.
- We have observed in Figure 6 that there are no non-monotonic relations either.

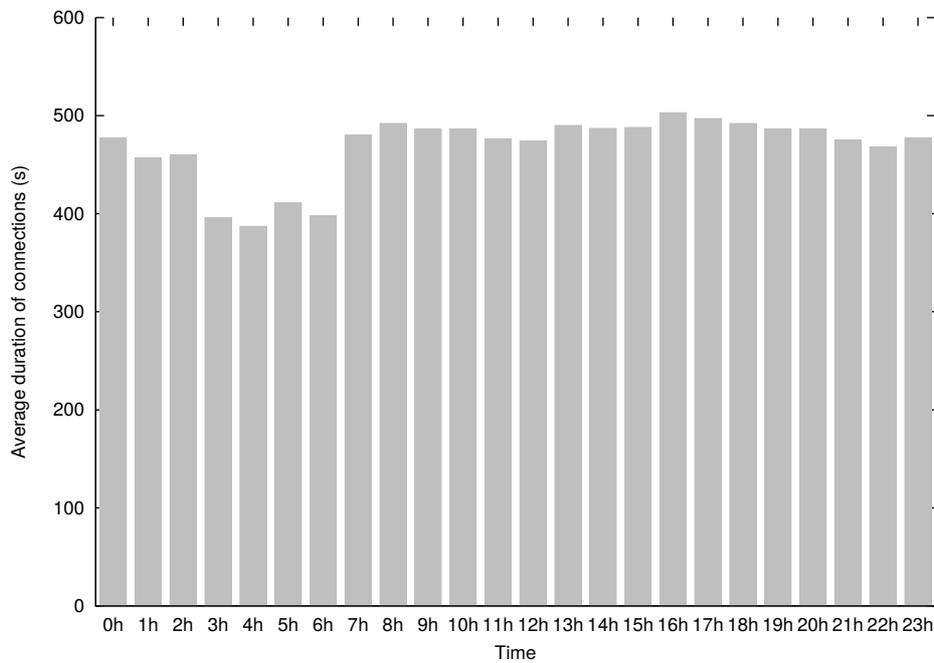


**Figure 5.** Durations of connection distribution (from Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> to Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> 2015)



**Figure 6.** Durations of connection versus timestamps (from Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> to Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> 2015)

Hence, when computing the predicted location of a user, it does not seem relevant to consider instants later than 15 minutes. Moreover, this will be relevant in each different moment of the day except during the night, where we can observe in Figure 6 that there are less connections and users stay connected for shorter periods of time (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Average duration of connections depending on time of day (Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> 2015)

### Problem statement

To solve our prediction problem, we propose to use Markov chains. We consider the countable set  $\mathcal{A} = A \cup \varepsilon$  to be the Markov chain states, where  $A$  is the set of all access points ( $\{a_i, a_j, a_k, \dots\} \in A$ ) and  $\varepsilon$  represents an imaginary access point to which are “connected” non reconnecting users (those that disconnect from an access point and never reconnect to another). Thus, each  $a_i \in \mathcal{A}$  is considered as a state and  $\mathcal{A}$  thus represents our countable set of states-space.

We work in a probability space  $(\Omega, \mathcal{F}, P)$ .  $\Omega$  is a set of outcomes,  $\mathcal{F}$  is a set of subsets of  $\Omega$ , and  $\forall \chi \in \mathcal{F}, P(\chi)$  is the probability of  $\chi$ . The object of our mobility study is a sequence of observed variables  $X_0, X_1, \dots$  (taking values in  $\mathcal{A}$ ). Thus, an observed variable  $X$  with values in  $\mathcal{A}$  is a function  $X : \Omega \rightarrow \mathcal{A}$ . Then we consider a row vector  $\lambda = (\lambda_{a_i} : a_i \in \mathcal{A})$  which is called a measure if  $\lambda_{a_i} \geq 0$  for all  $a_i$ . Since  $\lambda_{a_i}$  is a probability measure, then  $\sum_{a_i} \lambda_{a_i} = 1$ . In our location prediction problem we start with an initial distribution over  $\mathcal{A}$ , specified by  $\lambda_{a_i} : a_i \in \mathcal{A}$  such that  $0 \leq \lambda_{a_i} \leq 1$  for all  $a_i$  and  $\sum_{a_i \in \mathcal{A}} \lambda_{a_i} = 1$ .

Ur-MoVe considers each new connection. Thus, we can observe each new connection in  $\mathcal{A}$  to determine to which  $a_i$  our user is connected. This new connection observation will result in a probability of 1 for the observed user to be in state  $a_i$  at time  $t_0$ . This is denoted  $\lambda = \delta_{a_i} = (0, \dots, 1, \dots, 0)$ . Starting from this initial case, for each new user connection at time  $t_0$  we can thus calculate the probabilities of the user to be connected to another  $a_j \in \mathcal{A}$  from times  $t_{+1min}$  to  $t_{+15min}$ .

For this computation we need to calculate the Markov transition matrix  $P$ . We mine the data to compute : the flows between any two access points, the number of stationary users and the number of non-reconnecting users. This allows us to infer the probability of state changes over time. For each new connection of a user to any access point  $a_i \in \mathcal{A}$  at time  $t$ , *Ur-MoVe* computes the probabilities that, at time  $t_{+k}; k \in [0, 15]$ , the user will either : be connected to another access point  $a_j \in \mathcal{A}$ , still be connected to  $a_i$ , not have reconnected and will have thus reached state  $\varepsilon$ . Namely, let  $P$  be the transition matrix,

$P = (p_{a_i a_j} : a_i, a_j \in \mathcal{A})$  with  $p_{a_i a_j} \geq 0$  for all  $a_i, a_j$  and  $\sum_{a_j \in \mathcal{A}} p_{a_i a_j} = 1$  (each row of  $P$  is a distribution over  $\mathcal{A}$ ). Matrix  $P$  is thus a stochastic matrix. In our case,  $(X_n)_{n \geq 0}$  is a Markov chain with initial distribution  $\lambda$  and transition matrix  $P$  which evolves every minute from  $P_{t_0}$  to  $P_{t_{+15min}}$ .

In more practical terms, Ur-MoVe calculates the probabilities  $p_{a_i a_j}$  of the transition matrix by considering each flow between each pair of access points in  $\mathcal{A}$ . Those flows are given in percentages and then are deduced as probabilities. In future works, we will not consider impossible transitions to non reachable access points. The transition matrix is updated each minute in order to limit the errors that could be induced. Thus, let  $u$  be a new user connected in any state  $a_i \in \mathcal{A}$  at time  $t_0$ , then  $\lambda = \delta_{a_i} = (0, \dots, 1, \dots, 0)$ . We can calculate its next probabilities of state change using the transition matrix as follows :  $\lambda_{t_{+1min}} = \delta_{a_i} P_{t_0}$  is the probability row vector at time  $t_{+1min}$ ,  $\lambda_{t_{+2min}} = \delta_{a_i} P_{t_0} P_{t_{+1min}}$  is the probability row vector at time  $t_{+2min}$ , and  $\lambda_{t_{+3min}} = \delta_{a_i} P_{t_0} P_{t_{+1min}} P_{t_{+2min}}$  is the probability row vector at time  $t_{+3min}$ . Namely, the obtained row vector is  $\lambda = \delta_{a_i} \prod_{k=1}^n P_{t+k}$  where in our case  $k = 15$ . Finally, it will further allow our system to consider a predicted position at time  $t_{+k}$  by selecting  $\lambda_{a_i} = \arg \max_{a_i \in \mathcal{A}} \lambda_{a_i}$  which thus represents the best probability for user  $u$  to be connected to the next access point at the given time  $t_{+k}$ .

## Results

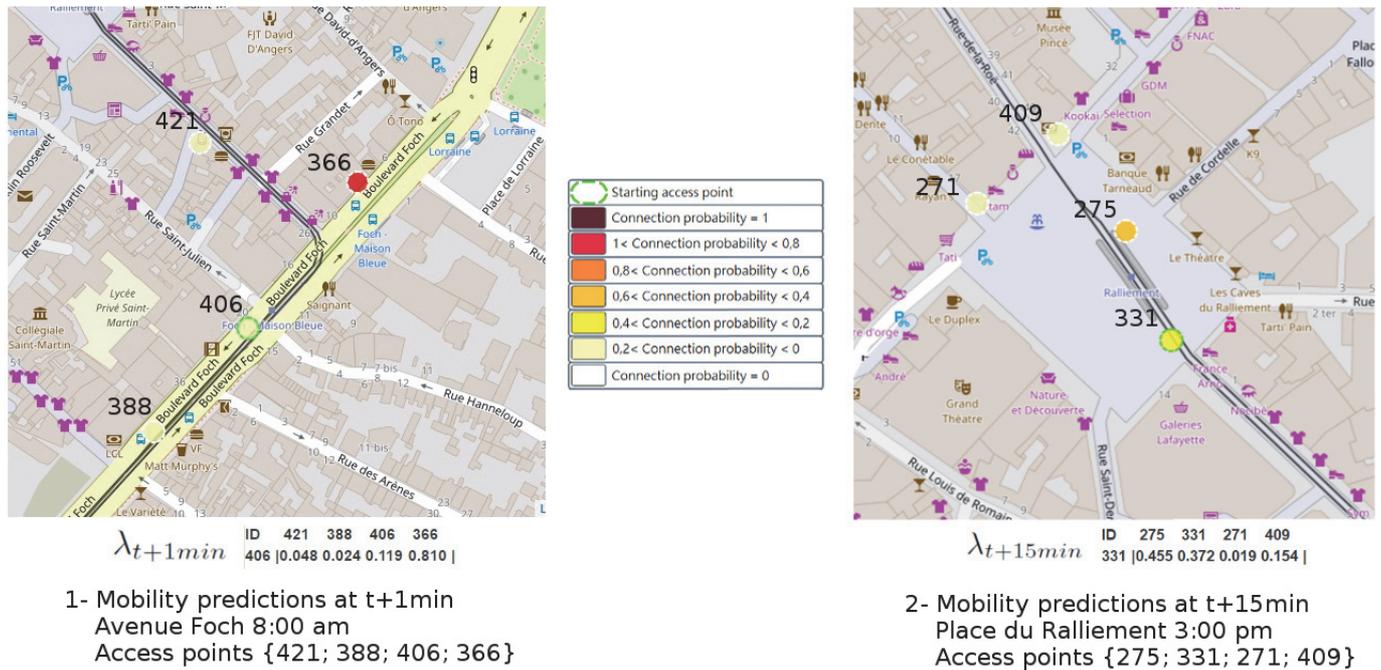
We have decided to study and show two kind of places in Angers (France) on which we expect to highlight different types of results: Places where people stay, and thoroughfare places. This is a first prototype which we plan to evaluate in the city.

Figure 8 shows the prediction results obtained by *Ur-MoVe* on Oct. 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 at different times in two different kind of places:

- The first experiment (see Figure 8.1) aims to study one of the main connecting roads of Angers (France) — *Avenue Foch* — where we expect people to be moving rather than staying still. In this case,  $\{a_{421}; a_{388}; a_{406}; a_{366}\} \in \mathcal{A}$  are the studied access points. In this figure we can observe that, after 1 minute, the predicted next connection of a user connected to  $a_{406}$  is estimated to be to  $a_{366}$  with a probability of 0,81. We believe this is due to the characteristics of the road which is a typical thoroughfare. For our demonstration we have chosen to observe this place at 8 :00 am on a usual working weekday.
- The second experiment (See Figure 8.2) aims to study Angers' main city square — *Place du Ralliement* — where people are expected to stay longer and where there is a Tram station. In this case,  $\{a_{275}; a_{331}; a_{271}; a_{409}\} \in \mathcal{A}$  are the studied access points. In Figure 8.2 we can observe that, after 15 minutes, the predicted next connection of a user connected to  $a_{331}$  is estimated to be to  $a_{275}$  with a probability of 0,455 and to be still connected to  $a_{331}$  with a probability of 0,372. Before predicting the mobility after 15 minutes, we have explored the first 14 minutes which showed that a user connected to  $a_{331}$  had more probability to stay connected to  $a_{331}$  than of moving to another access point. We believe this to be due to the characteristics of the main city square, which is a typical place where people stay for a while ; in a café, shopping or waiting for the Tramway. For our demonstration we have chosen to observe this place at 3 :00 pm, which we consider, according to our experience of the city, that represents a good time for maximizing observations.

In this study, we have worked with four days of data collected from October 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> 2015. Thus it allows us to validate the accuracy of our prediction by comparing them with the real data. Nevertheless,

in our final platform, which will be deployed in the smart city, we will work with real-time data. Our predictions will thus need to be dynamically validated and corrected according to observed data.



**Figure 8.** Mobility predictions using *Ur-MoVe* from Wifilib connections

## 5. Conclusion and Future Works

In this paper, we have given a global description of our MCSC framework aiming at providing context-aware recommendations to mobile users in the smart city of Angers (France). Before fully deploying the framework, it seemed important to analyze urban mobility in the city. With this in mind, we have developed *Ur-MoVe* as a first component, a tool that allows the precise analysis and prediction of human mobility using Wi-Fi connection traces.

*Ur-MoVe* allows the computation and visualization of several urban statistics such as the density of connections or information concerning the profiles of connected users over time and space. Moreover, it allows deeper and more complex analysis such as top routes calculation and mobility prediction.

After our first experiments and analysis we can conclude that *Ur-MoVe* is one of the main entry points to understand the city and, as such, that it will be the centerpiece for further and more complex calculations such as predictions enriching our context-aware recommendation system. Considering what *Ur-MoVe* is able to provide to our system, we believe it would be interesting to consider its results as part of the context. Indeed, information such as the density of connections or main languages of connected users give an indication of the crowd around an access point and thus could be considered as part of the environmental context used by the recommendation system. Also, a user's predicted future location could be considered to be related to that user's activity (the user's activity would thus either be *static* or *mobile* and in the second case it would carry an indication as to an estimation of the direction of her mobility). Moreover, the transition matrices used for the location predictions, together with the routable graphs and top-k routes are indicators of the global crowd mobility in the city and should thus enrich the users' environmental contexts.

To the best of our knowledge only few works using both location prediction and global urban mobility have been proposed in recommendation systems (Assam et al., 2016) and hence represent an interesting direction of research to explore for our future works.

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