

MOVING TO THE FLOW OF THE RIVER OISE

Seeing water as a source to dynamise the city(life) of Cergy-Pontoise



38th INTERNATIONAL URBAN
PLANNING WORKSHOP
OF CERGY-PONTOISE - PARIS REGION

From November 22 to December 8, 2020

les ateliers
maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine

PART 2 / 2

les ateliers

maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine

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“There are few places in the world where freedom of expression, mix of cultures and disciplines, mutual cross-fertilization and production of ideas, combined with a true professionalism allow us to think about those spaces where more and more inhabitants of our planet live: cities.”

Pierre-André Périssol, Chairman of les Ateliers

A non profit- organization since 1982, Les Ateliers – International workshops of planning and urban design – aims to develop the collective creation of ideas that tackle the challenges and processes of everyday city planning and design by promoting a process of collective and multi-disciplinary work that produces innovative and illustrative proposals relating to urban design and spatial development.

Whether it involves students or professionals, each “atelier” brings together people of diverse nationalities and disciplines: architecture and urban planning, but also geography, economics, landscape architecture, sociology, art, engineering, environment...

Year after year, Les Ateliers internationaux network has been growing: it includes more than two thousand former participants who are now professionals, academics, and decision-makers in the urban field.

Our convictions :

Creating cities is by its very nature a collective process. As true as architecture enables an individual and identifiable creation of masterpieces, developing cities cannot be ascribed to a single person who would dominate all the aspects of urban creation: this process is collective in its essence.

Based on the logic of laboratory work, urban project management should encompass the various disciplines required to plan urban areas and their interfaces. Therefore, each atelier is a place of freedom of proposal, where the aspirations of collective and voluntary work enable the development of new ideas, innovative projects and proposals for the future of urban areas which are in perpetual transition.

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INTRODUCTION

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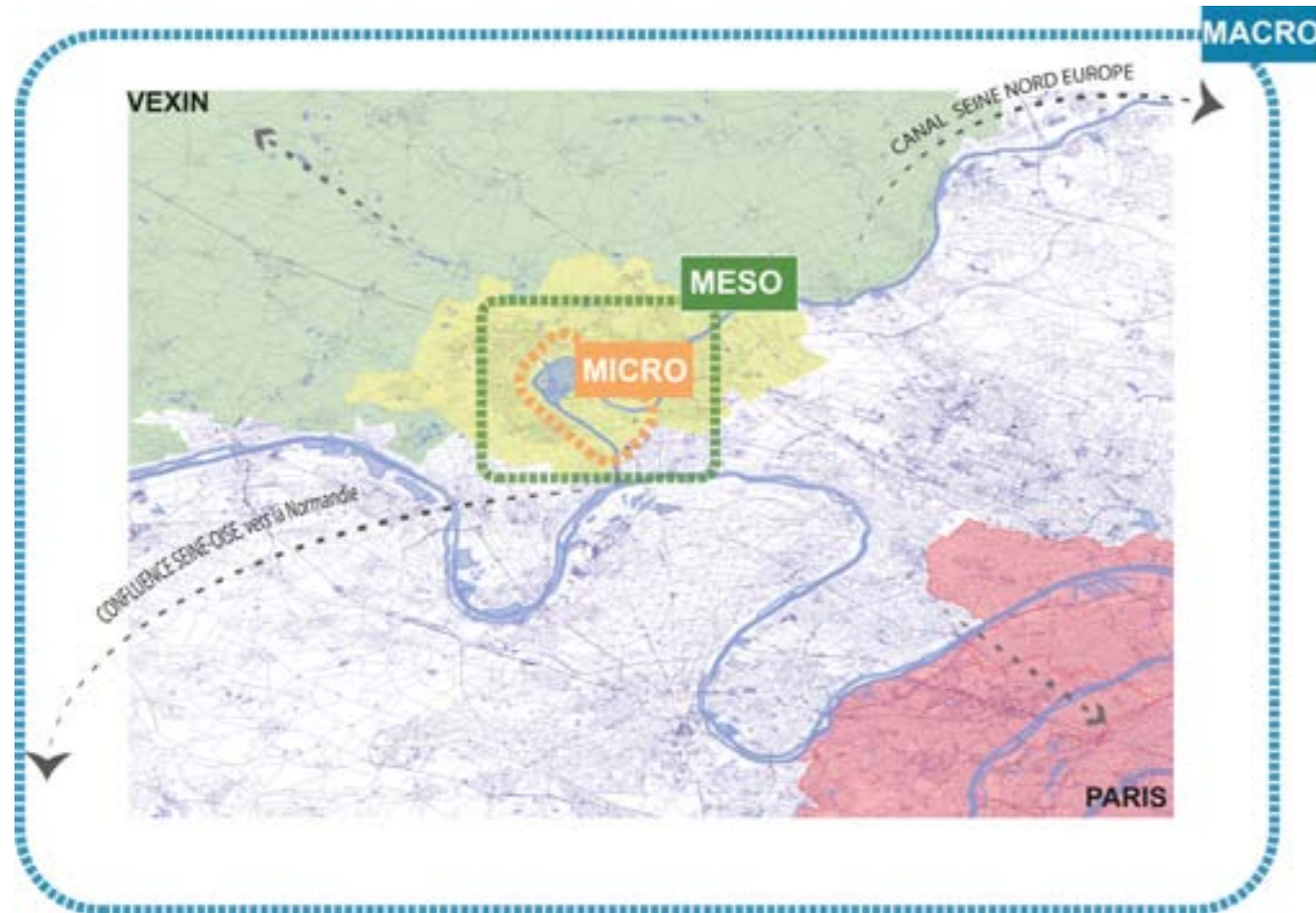
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Today, the focus on river landscapes is widely shared, as shown notably by the systematic efforts made to develop urban waterways as a powerful means of winning the current “competition for forging the identity and image of a town or city”. The idea is to restore lost ties, not with a past activity, but with a geographical feature that revives a physical relationship that has generally inspired local urban development and contributed to its integration into a given territory. In the case of the Cergy-Pontoise agglomeration, the Oise river played a founding role. It flows through and connects seven of the agglomeration’s municipalities, and its historic heritage value has enhanced the attractiveness of the area’s landscape. Moreover, the presence of water has been a positive, albeit complex, asset in terms of urban development. It has provided a positive response to citizens’ growing concern for nature in an urban environment as a factor of a better quality of life, while also making it possible to rely on such a powerful resource as an image enhancer and territorial marketing instrument. The network of interconnected waterways also enhances the overall vision and understanding of the area on a wider scale, revealing its positioning as a major structural feature of large-scale urban development projects. The winding loops of the river Oise have always been and remain the main feature of the Cergy-Pontoise agglomeration, both in terms of urban mythology, when it was chosen as the site for the new town, and in terms of the much more contemporary aim of fostering intermunicipal cooperation. When an area features a life-enhancing asset, all the local communities share the same challenges, including the risks and benefits.

Given that the “water city” concept is playing a more and more important part in urban planning, the Cergy-Pontoise agglomeration can only reassert its close connection with the river Oise that flows through it. The agendas of the candidates for the recent local council elections highlighted this, as they all included the relationship with the river Oise in their action plans. However, although they all reasserted their will “to reconnect with the river Oise”, “to use water to revive the town” and “to re-engage with the water”, the real issue was the operational feasibility of such a project. From the treatment of riverbanks to the development of the urban grid and the fostering of economic and tourist growth, the prospects for influencing what exists are plentiful through a broad range of projects.



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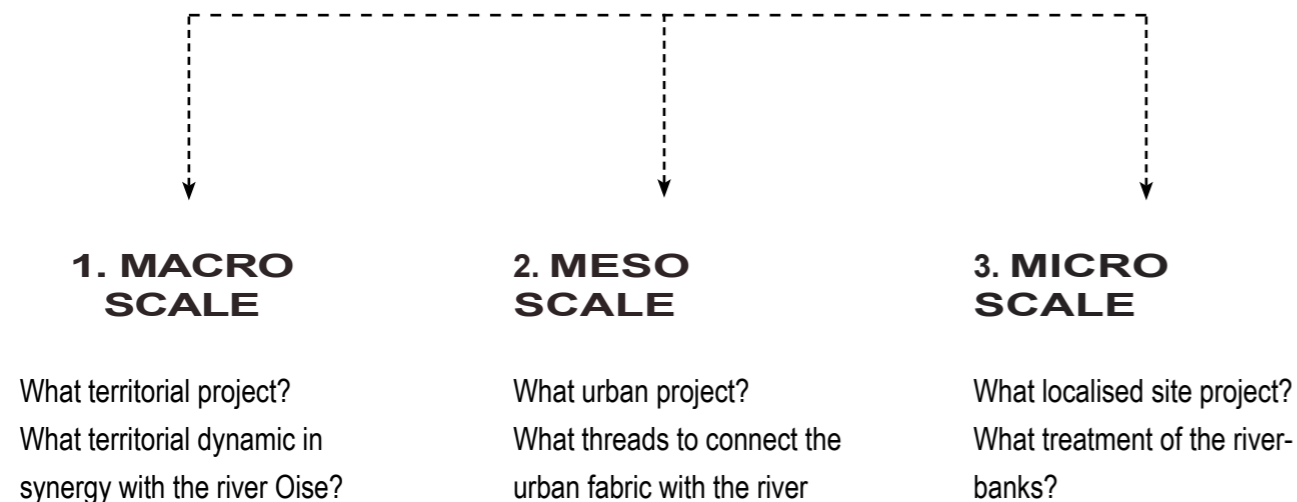
2. MESO SCALE

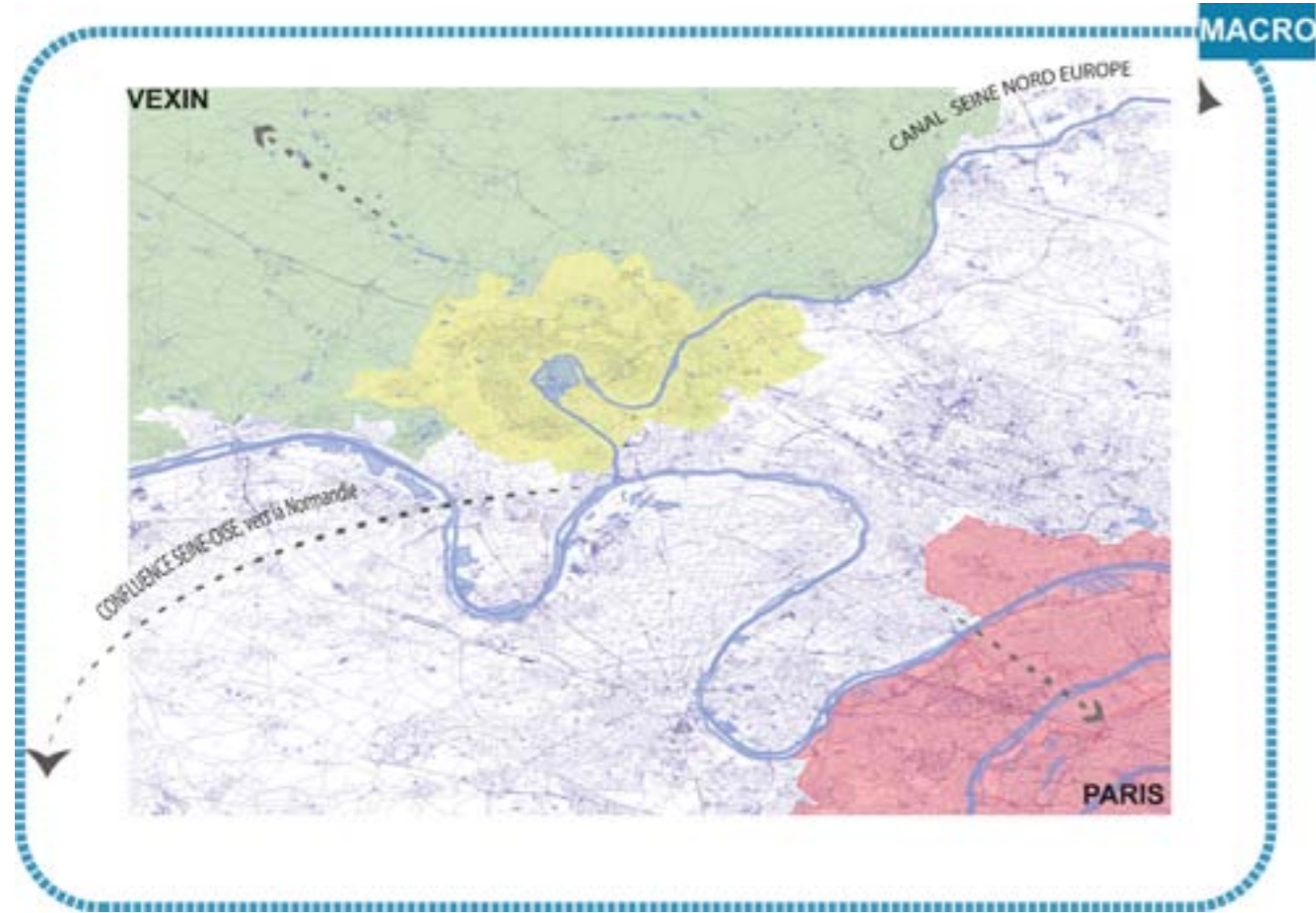
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ACTION ON THREE SCALES





The macro scale leads us to reflect on the positioning of Cergy-Pontoise in terms of territorial strategy and cooperation. The agglomeration has positioned itself between two driving-forces: on the one hand, a high-growth Paris metropolitan area with which it has historic ties; and, on the other hand, the Vexin Nature Reserve at the gates of the Paris area, which could open up new horizons and meet people's aspirations for a better quality of life. Finally, some large-scale projects are in progress – such as the Seine-Nord canal and the development of Metropolitan area ports along the river Seine – which encourage the development of river traffic on a very large scale and will certainly have an impact on the current environment, cultural identity and landscapes of the Oise area. What impact will this increase in traffic have on the loops of the river Oise in the town of Cergy-Pontoise in terms of risks and opportunities?

I. RURAL TROPISM: TOWARDS ATTRACTIVE RURAL AREAS

1. Agricultural landscapes in the Paris Region: between urban and rural lifestyles
2. Cergy-Pontoise town: the gateway to the Vexin region
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II. THE OISE RIVER, AN OPENING TOWARDS EUROPE

1. The confluence of the Seine and Oise rivers
2. The Seine-Nord-Europe canal

III. METROPOLITAN TROPISM: BETWEEN ATTRACTIVENESS AND DISTANCE

1. Historical review: planning in the Paris region
2. An urban centre for balancing the Paris region
3. A staging post on the metropolitan trail
4. New metropolitan dynamics

IV. TESTIMONIES :

TOWARDS A POSSIBLE "BIO-REGION"
LED AND STRUCTURED BY THE RIVER OISE?

I. RURAL TROPISM: TOWARDS ATTRACTIVE RURAL AREAS

1. AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPES IN ÎLE-DE-FRANCE: HOW URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

The Paris agglomeration, known to be both evergrowing and densely populated, is also characterised by its agricultural belt, which used to feed the capital. Even though the Ile-de-France region is the most urbanised in France, it is made up by 80% of rural areas, with 48% of agricultural land and 24% of forests. This is due to the regional project of Ile-de-France, who's aim, since their 1974 master plan, is to maintain rural and agricultural areas and to minimise the spread of urban fringes. To reach this goal, 3 strategies have been put into effect :

- A nature belt should be maintained within a 10 to 30km radius around Paris to retain the urban sprawl, protect forests and preserve periurban agriculture.
- The conservation of a rural and agricultural crown outside of the Paris agglomeration.
- The protection of green corridors and ecological continuity at the border of the parisian agglomeration.

The rural area of the region are defined by open field landscapes divided into vast plateaux, separated by valleys. These plateaux have been shaped by climate, topography and hydrography, and are ideal for lowland agriculture where beets, oil seed crops and most of all cereals are being grown, hence the name 'cereal growing basin of Paris'. Whether located on plateaux or valleys, the landscape is always one of three typologies : open spaces of field crops, areas dedicated to livestock and specialised production, or forests. These three landscapes are the product of complementary farming methods and the rural history of the region.



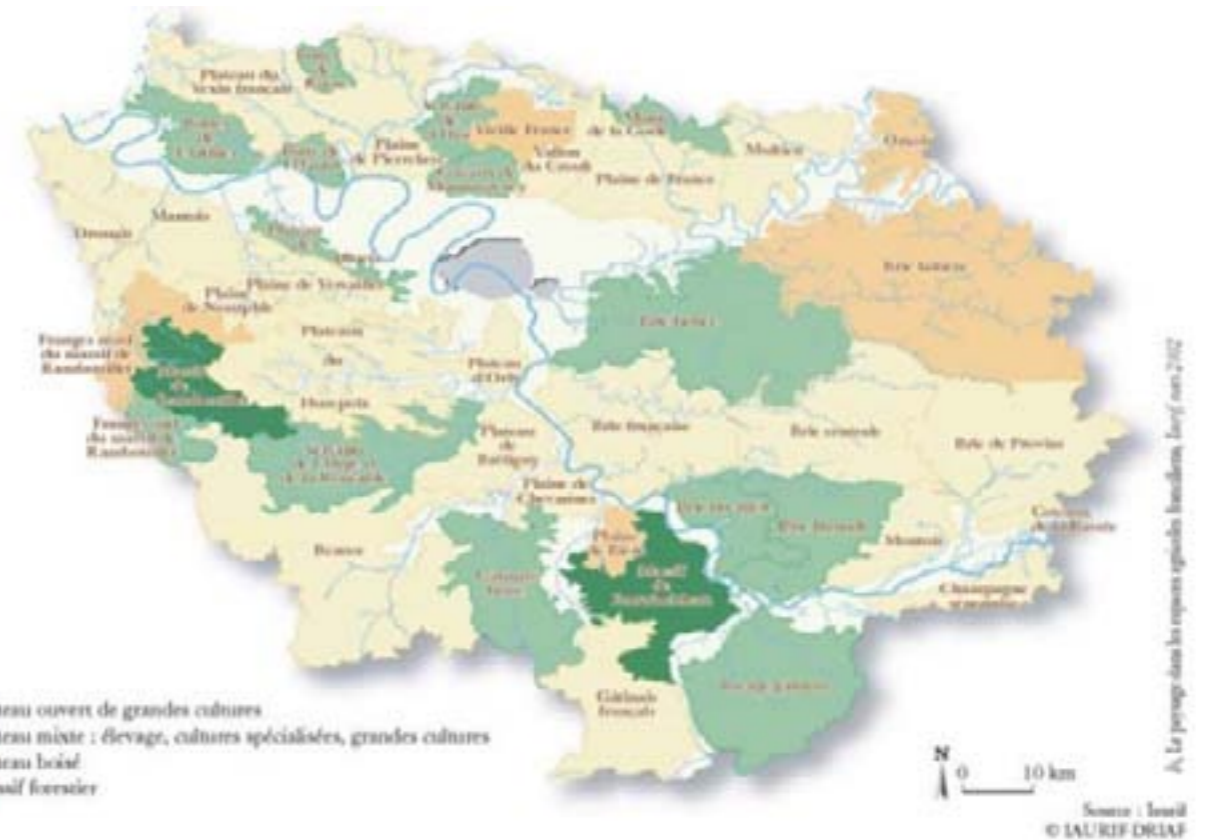
Forested valleys only include sparse agricultural spaces and are often threatened by urbanisation. IAURIF 2002



Large open field landscape of the Beauce. IAURIF 2002

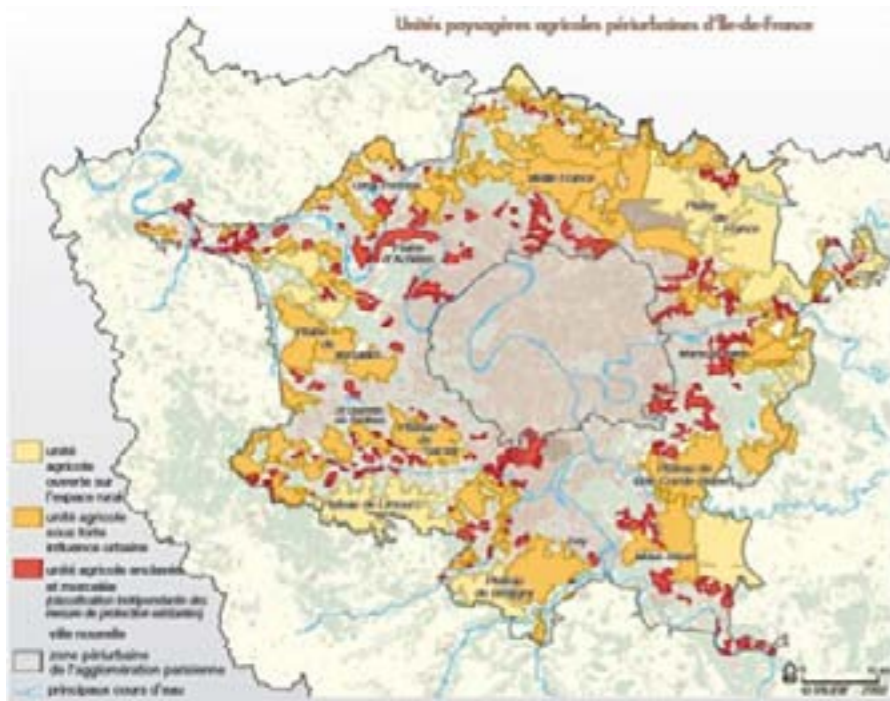


The different landscapes in agricultural areas in Ile-de-France. IAURIF/ DRIAF



Landscape units in agricultural areas in Ile-de-France. IAURIF/ DRIAF

- Periurban agricultural landscapes



Agricultural landscape units IAURIF 2002



The agri-urban programmes of the region SDRIF 2005

Periurban agricultural landscapes are the transitional area between the dense city and less inhabited rural spaces. They are located all around the parisian agglomeration, where agricultural spaces are particularly vulnerable, and along the axes of the region's main valleys. Closer to the agglomeration, periurban agricultural landscapes become more and more sparse as the urban fabric takes over. They are most often squattered and surrounded by buildings. The agricultural areas furthest away from the capital however are in a direct connection with the rural spaces of the suburbs.

In order to protect, but mostly add value to these particularly vulnerable spaces, so called 'agri-urbain' programmes have been put into place in Ile-de-France since the 1990s. Their goal is to take heed of agricultural areas and their landscape when planning urban constructions. These are spaces where projects and dialogues show a willingness to redefine the landscape based on agricultural resources and the food issue. These 'agri-urbains territories' incorporate in one spacial envelope the municipalities which include the three different types of areas of the region as determined in a morphological approach by the institute for urban planning of the Paris region : dense urban areas, areas under the influence of the city with 20 to 55% of built space, and mainly rural areas with 80% of the space covered by crops or forests. The placement of these areas showcase the concentric structure of the Paris region, as they are arranged in circles around the urban center that is Paris and are a buffer strip between the Regional Nature Parks and the Paris basin.

2. CERGY-PONTOISE : GATEWAY-TOWN OF THE VEXIN



Cergy-Pontoise, the gateway to the French Vexin

Département Ile-de-France



The Regional Nature Parks of the Paris region

Département d'Ile-de-France

The curves of the river Oise neighbor two Regional Nature Parks (PNRs): one named 'Oise-Pays de France' and one called 'Parcs Naturels Régionaux du Vexin'. The latter has a long history with the town of Cergy-Pontoise which is at its front door.

A Regional Nature Park is a rural inhabited territory, recognised on a national level, which falls under the scope of a project based on sustainable development and on the protection and valorisation of its heritage and its landscape. They are created by decree for a minimum time of twelve years and can then be renewed.

These Parks were created in 1967 in order to protect the land and its biodiversity from urban sprawl. The first one in the Paris region was only created in 1987 and is called 'Haute-Vallée de Chevreuse'. As of now, PNRs cover 18% of the region (2680 km²), which shows how valuable the natural and agricultural areas around the metropolis are. The Parks' limits are determined by two factors: cultural and landscaping continuity, and more importantly depending on areas of ecological interest, where the quantity and diversity of flora and fauna demand particular attention. But Regional Nature Parks are also living environments as they inhabit more than 380 000 people. Urban projects are regulated by a charter that mainly focuses on the challenges of sustainable development, and how housing, consumption and work is changing.

The Regional Nature Park of the Vexin was established by decree in 1995 and incorporates 98 municipalities over two French departments ('Val d'Oise' and 'Yvelines'), and 87 100 inhabitants on 71000 hectares. Cergy-Pontoise is the 'gateway-city' of the Park, which means that the collaborations between the agglomeration and the Park are defined by bilateral accords that deal with the touristic, economic and social development, the environment and the management of the urban fringes; all these evolutionary challenges being a common trait of the territories in question.

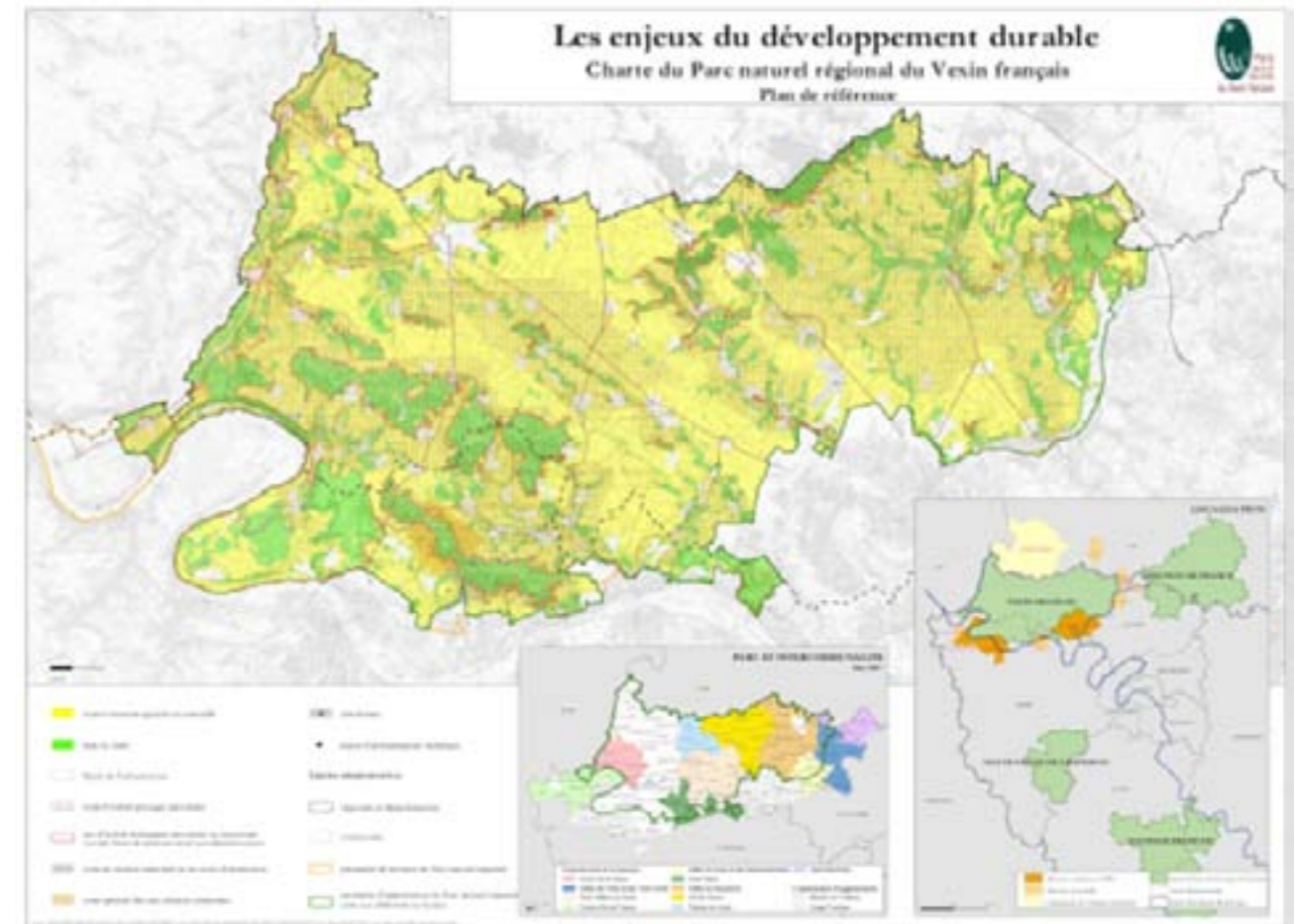


Cartographie of the Regional Nature Park 'Vexin'
PNR du Vexin

The Vexin region was labeled 'a place of art and history' in 2014 and is a resting spot for many dwellers in Ile-de-France. Being bordered by two motorways (the A13 to the south and the A16 to the east), the Park benefits from a very structured road system which makes it accessible to the Paris agglomeration. The road D14 cuts across the Park before reaching Cergy-Pontoise which secures its inclusion in an even broader job network. The PNR has many appeals, like the diversity of building design and the existence of protected plant species, or the fact that 120 churches and 80 castles can be found there. Some of its most famous tourist sites are Auvers-sur-Oise (the village of painters), the Roche-Guyon and Ambleville castles and the Villarceaux estate. It mostly consists of a limestone plateau that is chiselled with different looking valleys, some long and thin, others open, overlooked by floodplains. The landscape of the Vexin is dominated by the farming of large scale crops (corn, barley and rape). Agriculture and forests make up 70% of the terrain.



Landscaping unite of the Regional Nature Park 'Vexin'
PNR du Vexin



The elements of the PNR Vexin charter
PNR du Vexin

For the length of a charter, the Park's municipalities have committed to have a maximum growth of 0.75% per year and to limit their consumption of natural and agricultural area when planning new buildings and infrastructure. This charter has three main points :

1. 'Manage the territory and highlight its heritage'
2. 'Promote sustainable agricultural, touristic and economic growth, as the driving force of a quality local life'
3. 'Place people at the heart of the territorial project'

The charter was written based on a diagnosis of the territory and its action plan and is now being rewritten based on meetings with inhabitants, economic actors and local organisations.

- 'How could we improve our food and consumption ?'
- 'How could we house ourselves ?'
- 'What environment are we going to leave to our children ?'
- 'How should we deal with our mobility ?'
- 'Why and how should we involve ourselves in our territory ?'
- 'How do we entertain and educate ourselves ?'
- 'How should we live and work ?'
- 'How should we preserve our quality of life and our health ?'

THE HERITAGE BUILT ON LOCAL STONE



A LANDSCAPE OF HEDGES



Photographies of landscapes in the Regional Nature Park Vexin
Chartre du PNR du Vexin

3. UNIQUE PROJECTS IN HARMONY WITH THE TERRITORY

- The sheepfold of Villarceaux



Presentation of the project : the sheepfold of Villarceaux
La bergerie de Villarceaux

At the heart of the Vexin, the sheepfold of Villarceaux is both an agricultural and forestry land of 600 hectares dedicated to the transformation of rural territories. Its 'make and inform' spirit makes it a place of reflection and action, which helps it towards its goal of an agroecological model. It approaches this by treating the domain as an ecosystem where it tackles not only the protection of the soil, water and biodiversity, but also energy transition (sobriety, efficiency, renewable energy, etc). It is also a place of multifunctional life, as the estate also organises internships and seminars where activities and knowledge is shared. The

The former farm has been renovated to offer housing for 95 people. This transformation has enhanced the ecological quality of the land and include nearly passive buildings that recover rainwater, phyto-purification of used water, vegetal biomass as insulation and thermal wood heating. But the domain doesn't just care about the environment, it also focusses on people. It is a living space open to inhabitants of the area, and a cooperative of actors and consumers, which means the farm's products are directly or almost directly sold to the consumer.

- The 'eco-hamlet' of Champ-Foulon



The eco-hamlet of Champ-Foulon
Source : www.colibris-lafabrique.org

The eco-hamlet project is being built in the Saint-Cyr-en-Arthies municipality, in the heart of the Regional Nature Park of the French Vexin. It is being planned with the participation of its future inhabitants. The goal is to build five islands of varying sizes (700 to 1 500m²) which will house between 2 and 7 inhabitants each. The project aims to create a symbiotic relationship with the environment by using ecological materials like wood, straw, hemp or plaster and by making it energy efficient as to less the environmental footprint. The challenge is to propose a new way of living, which includes food self-sufficiency .

through a microfarm with permaculture and shared equipment and knowledge (know-how, services, transportation, bread ovens, laundry rooms etc). The future inhabitants get a say in every aspect of the planning and building on site. They are partners with 'Polymorph' and 'Courtoisie Urbaine' and collectively create the maps for their individual houses and shared services, which fosters more social diversity and facilitates the access to ownership.

II. L'OISE, UNE BRECHE OUVERTE VERS L'EUROPE

1. THE CONFLUENCE OF THE SEINE AND OISE RIVERS

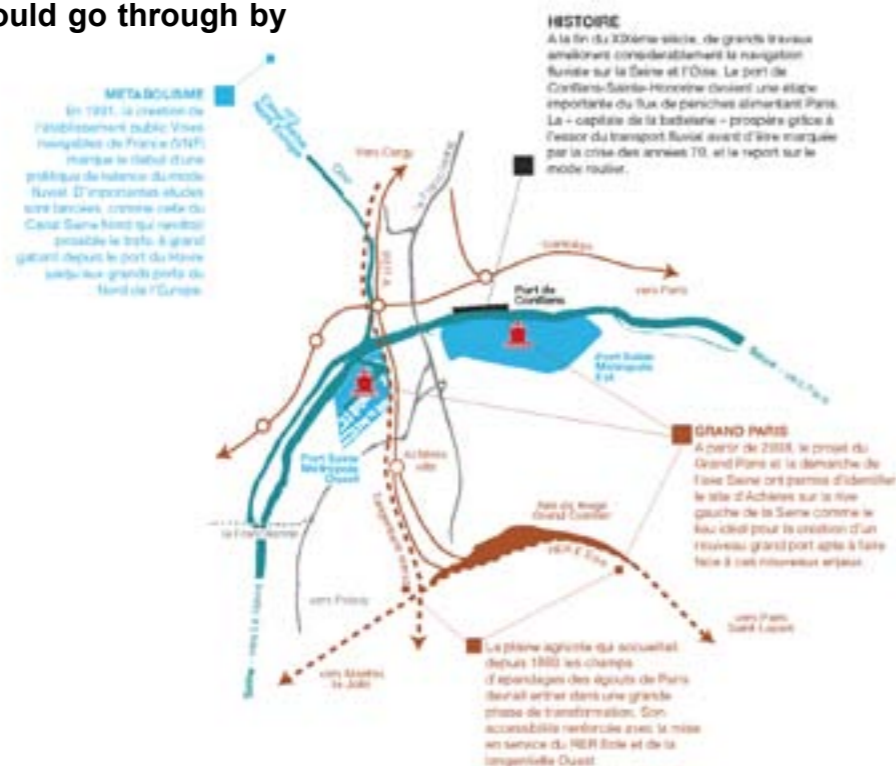
The Seine and the Oise merge in Conflans Sainte-Honorine, a town at the edge of the Parisian agglomeration in the Yvelines department and is on a major developmental axis of the metropolis. The confluence is a key element of the Seine Valley's development plan as it has a strong economic potential in various industries, like transport, automobile and digital technologies.

The confluence is at the geostrategic meeting point of the axis connecting Paris and Normandie through the Seine and the Seine-Nord Europe Canal, which makes it an essential link in large scale projects like The Greater Paris and opens up the region towards the sea by connecting it to normand harbours.

The two harbours of the Seine and Oise confluence, one in Conflans-St-Honorine, the other in Achères (in construction), are co called 'Seine Metropolis Harbours'. An ongoing project is planning to expand the Achères harbour to 400 hectares. It is expected to be a relay port for larger harbours like Le Havre and Rouen. This riverhub will have intermodal connections (rails, roads, river) and the quantified target has already been announced : 1 100 tons of aggregates should go through by 2025.



Strategic location of the 'Seine-Oise' confluence
Les ateliers internationaux du Grand-Paris



16 Profile of the 'Seine-Oise' confluence
Les ateliers internationaux du Grand-Paris

2. THE SEINE-NORD-EUROPE CANAL

In an effort to develop river freight, the Seine-Nord Europe Canal's goal is to connect the river Seine's basin (in Compiègne) to the many northern canals of the Escaut and the Rhin (in Dunkerque), in order for the region to join large scale commercial navigation routes in northern Europe. To reach this goal, the plan is to build an extensive large scale freight transportation corridor that's in line with European standards. It will be 54 meters wide and 106 km long between Compiègne and Douai.

This would multiply the waterway traffic by 3 and the total weight would jump from 4 to 13 million tons. The traffic on the river Oise would increase by 40% compared to today. Even though transporting freight by river is seen as a more sustainable method (one 4 500 ton barge amounts to 250 trucks), the canal has some downsides. They are mostly due to its minimum depth of 4.5 meters, which could potentially have a draining effect on the areas it crosses and greatly impact ecological corridors.

- Does the Seine-Nord Canal project threaten the environment, the cultural identity and the landscapes of the river Oise ?

- Stuck between threats and opportunities, what would the consequences of such an increase in freight traffic on the loops of the river Oise in Cergy-Pontoise be ?

- What to think of the call for action to close the loop of the Oise in order to protect the area from the territorial changes that this new dynamic would bring.



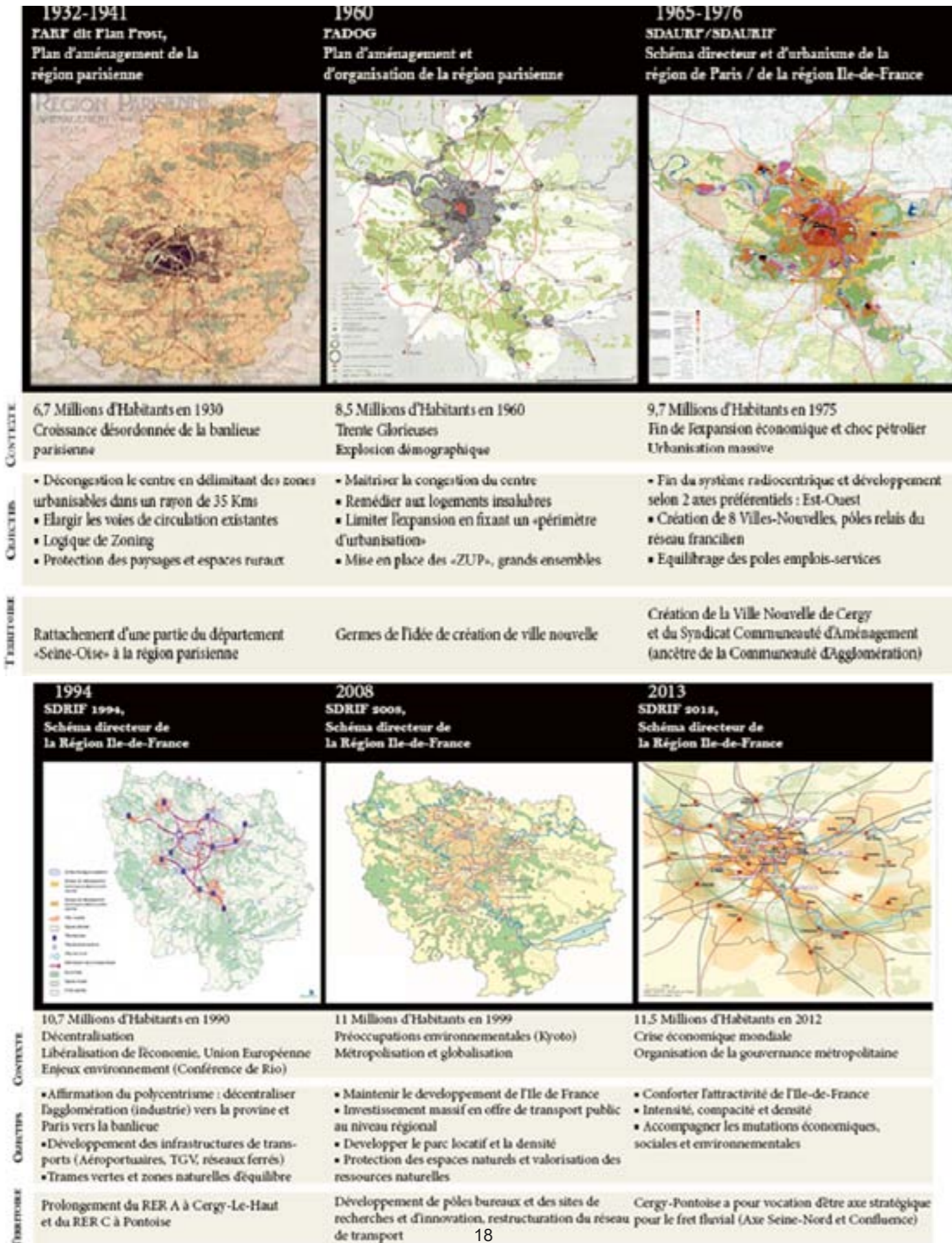
The Seine-Nord Europe Canal and where it is at now CLAC
CLAC



Description of the Seine-Nord Europe Canal project
EGIS

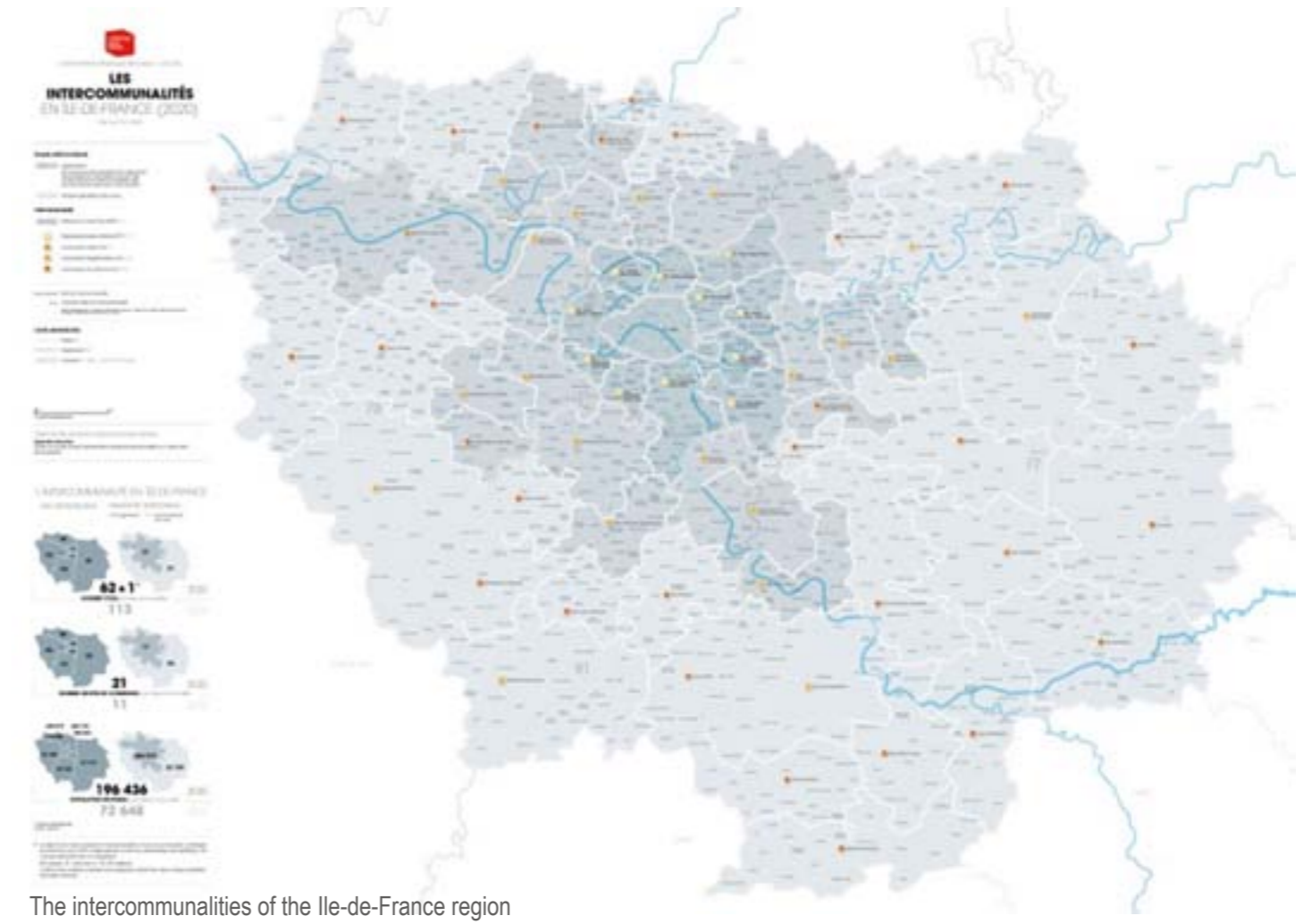
III. METROPOLITAN TROPISM: BETWEEN ATTRACTIVENESS AND DISTANCE

1. A HISTORICAL RETROSPECTIVE: PLANNING THE PARIS REGION



2. BALANCING ELEMENT OF THE PARIS REGION

- Cergy-Pontoise's central position of intercommunality



The intercommunalities of the Ile-de-France region Institut Paris Région

The Île-de-France region counts 63 intercommunalities, including the new Greater Paris intercommunality: a public institution for intercommunal cooperation with 131 municipalities including Paris as members which amount for 814 km² (8 times the surface of Inner Paris) and more than 7 million inhabitants. As a comparison, the 10 largest French metropolises would hold a similar demographic weight.



The strategic position of Cergy-Pontoise in the European and metropolitan networks CACP

Cergy-Pontoise's status is quite atypical because its very creation was a bid to form a counter balance to Paris, autonomous in its development with its own balanced life force (housing, jobs and its own structures and facilities). The aim was autonomy but a strong connection to the capital, economically (to catch some of its growth and develop it) and geographically (as a gateway to the north it is included in the metropolitan project). The town has a peculiar position within the influential range of the metropolis but outside of the administration and various projects of the Greater Paris and also outside the Grand Paris Express project.

- How does Cergy-Pontoise exist in this metropolitan region?

According to the long-term scheme of the region (which plans the general approach to the territory) done in 2013:

- Cergy-Pontoise doesn't aim to build new train stations, but rather to strengthen the exiting ones and offer more Paris bound rides. It is planned to create central points around stations for the town to assert itself as a multimodal entity but also as a living space, optimising its available properties.

- Cergy-Pontoise is presented as an important area in the region and a territory in transition. One of the main challenges is the development of the service industry, in an effort to balance out the eastern and western parts of the region.

- On top of that, in the context of the potential fluvial freight connections with other waterways of the basin, Cergy-Pontoise is presented as a strategic point for the increase in relevance of container and river traffic at the harbour of Le Havre which could be generated by the upcoming large scale Seine-Nord Canal.

PLANERIE – ÉQUIPEMENT :
Une région plus vivante et attractive

- Optimisation de tous les axes
- Agglomération centrale
- Basin de la Seine-Nord
- Le Havre
- Les régions métropolitaines
- Les communes limitrophes
- Les communes
- Le Havre
- Le Nord



«A more diverse and attractive region»
SDRIF 2013

RELIER – STRUCTURER :
Une région plus connectée et plus durable

- Les systèmes de transport métropolitains viables
- Le Havre
- Les communes limitrophes
- Les communes
- Les communes limitrophes
- Les communes
- Les communes limitrophes
- Les communes
- Les communes limitrophes
- Les communes



«A more connected and sustainable region»
SDRIF 2013

3. A STAGING POST ON THE METROPOLITAN TRAIL

'With 600 km on foot and 30 days of walking, this trail is the first cultural metropolitan asset on the scale of the Greater Paris. Just like other societal movements (for example urban agriculture and environmental urban planning), metropolitan hiking changes how we inhabit a territory. These trails allow us to reconnect with the physical space that is the main focus of the ecological crisis and they contribute to our vision of a city post-oil.'

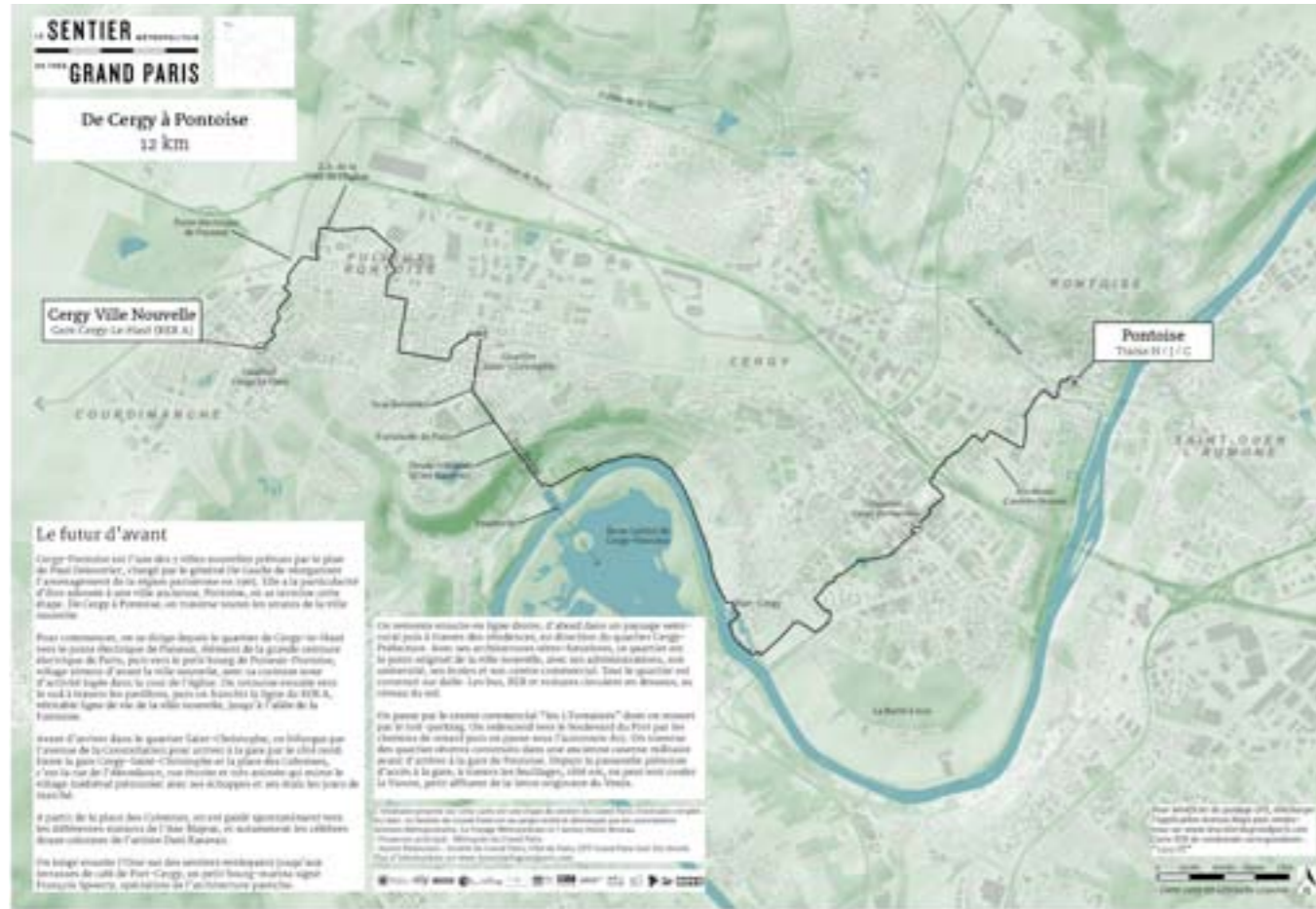
Excerpt from the catalogue for the 'The Art of Metropolitan Trails' exhibited at the 'Arsenal Pavillon' in Paris in October 2020.



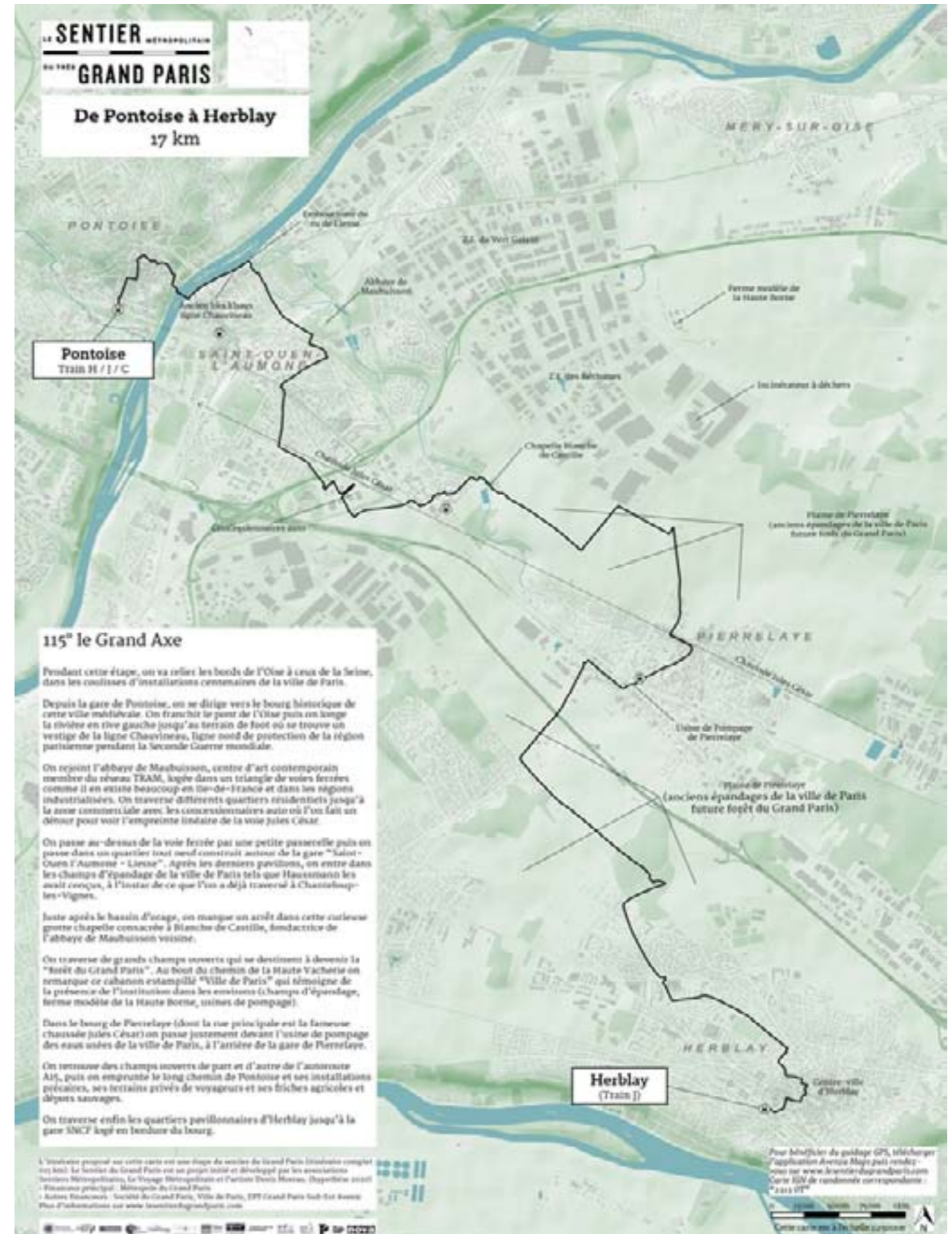
The route of the larger green belt
Sentiers Métropolitains



Cergy-Pontoise is a part of this 600 km long metropolitan trail, which was created in a joint effort by artists, trekkers and urban planners and connects the outer suburbs to the inner ones, and thus disregards the bureaucratic limits of the Greater Paris Metropolis. The Metropolitan Trails are at the crossroads of urban planning, art, tourism and ecology. The routes have been carefully placed and the various actors of the given territories have been consulted. Walking the trail lets trekkers collect several stories: artist's projects, articles, tales etc which contribute to an outlook of collectiveness and emancipation of the territory in question. The path roams through suburbs and new towns and connects the heart of the metropolis with the agricultural fringe areas of the capital. It links two very different scales: the Greater Paris that include former blue collar and residential suburbs (the previous department of the Seine, now known as the Greater Paris Metropolis) and the other Greater Paris that includes new towns and the green belt. By integrating Cergy-Pontoise in the trail, an empowered vision emerges from the Greater Paris, where the Cergy-Pontoise agglomeration could exist within the metropolitan life, even though it is outside the purely administrative borders.



source : <https://lesentierdugrandparis.com/de-cergy-pontoise-a-saint-denis>



source : <https://lesentierdugrandparis.com/de-cergy-pontoise-a-saint-denis>

4. NEW METROPOLITAN DYNAMICS

The last workshop of the Ateliers in the region dealt with ‘happy fringe areas’, these are areas neighbouring but on the margin of the metropolis that can be ideal spaces for experimenting with new ways of living : these include direct producer consumer circuits for food, sharing of goods, services, know-how and systems of mutual assistance. These ambitious efforts to nurture neighbouring relationships now help some areas to regain attraction after being neglected for a long time.

**The question here is :
are we slowly reclaiming these territories ?**

A recent IPSOS survey seems to say we are, it estimates that 57% of the population would like to live in a municipality of no more than 20 000 inhabitants and that 41% of French people would like to live in medium-sized town and try teleworking. The social and ecological impact of lockdown made us question how we relate to the territory we live in, our housing and its set-up, and our close environment. This joint experience highlighted the flaws, the inequalities but also the renewed ambitions we have for our living habits. The ideals and perils of cities under Covid are plentiful : the 15-minute city, the accessible city, the sanitary city, the dense city while respecting social distancing. The tagline is clear: all on bikes, telework from the countryside, offer balconies in cities! Admittedly, this trend predates the pandemic, but the latter has only made it stronger.

- With these renewed aspirations in mind, could the municipalities along the loops of the river Oise become ‘get-away towns’?

- Could the Vexin serve as an example for a reinforced quality of life?

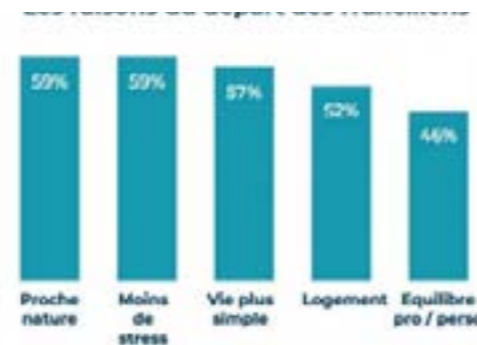
Excerpt of a study by Elisabeth Auclair and associates, ‘Happiness in the Vexin’

*‘I think for example that what’s being done to keep agricultural land as it is, it means that there’s a lot of paths and such and we can go on walks, we can go from the city to the countryside, we can relax there, and live there completely... because after all it’s a terrain on which we can live, work, have hobbies, it’s part of what makes this place so fulfilling’
(social worker, 45-55 years old, Auvers-sur-Oise).*

*‘The greenery, it’s the greenery that so obviously attracted us here (...) When I was near Paris, I was unhappy, I was surrounded by concrete. Here, there’s so many beautiful little villages in the Vexin, the old houses are being renovated instead of destroyed like they do elsewhere to build all these towers.’
(preschool assistant, 35-45 years old, Follainville).*



Atelier sur les franges heureuses, Les Ateliers



Main reasons why people leave Paris, Les échos, 2020

IV. TEMOIGNAGES

**TOWARDS A POSSIBLE “BIOREGION”
INSPIRED AND STRUCTURED BY THE OISE**

See the full transcript of the round-table discussion.



The 8 Bioregions of the Ile-de-France
Insitut Momentum

A “bioregion” is a territory of “Common Good” that embodies the principles of strong local governance, the balanced management of a territory’s resources, and the reinforced understanding of the notions of “care” and “habitability”. The fundamentals behind the development of the Parisian Bioregion, as proposed by the Momentum Institute, are: a demographic redeployment in which the Île-de-France would see its population decrease, a territorial governance marked by local decision-making, reduced energy consumption, increased “active” transportation and less intense forms of mobility, and a restructuring of jobs towards a booming agricultural sector.

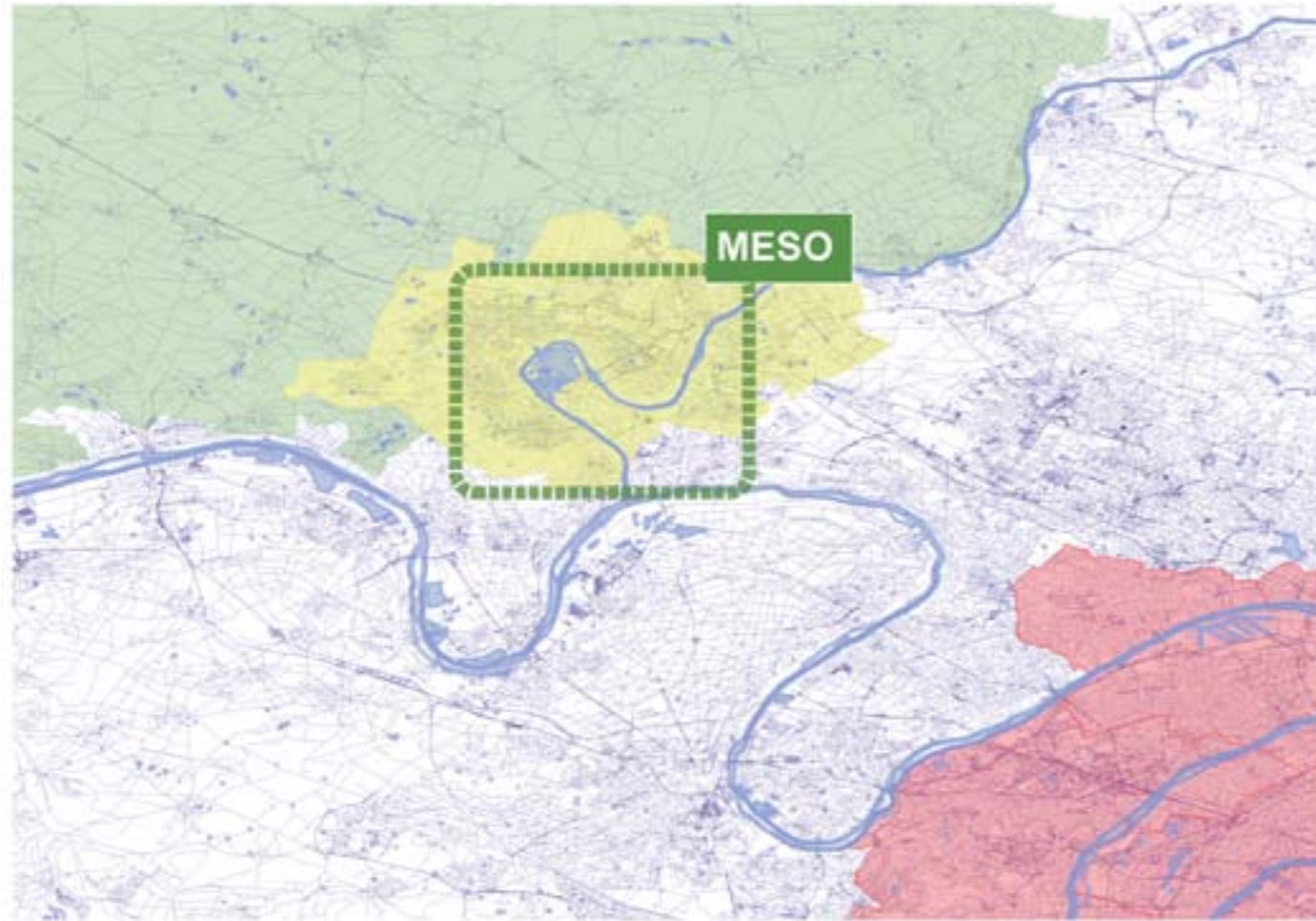
The vision proposed by bioregionalists invites us to move past our long-held beliefs associated with administrative boundaries, which are not necessarily consistent with a territory, the different lifestyles it hosts or its morphology. It is an opportunity to reconsider the links that unite this territory with its environment, and more specifically with the River Oise that flows through Cergy-Pontoise and the Vexin. Rooted in an idea of rupture and degrowth, this approach runs counter to the paradigms that underpin the ambitions of Greater Paris, which itself is marked by visions of grandiosity and competitiveness in a world of finite resources. It is therefore a proposition that responds to the challenges of decline and which can be applied to a territory defined by a scale at the local level. Promoting a bioregional culture means redefining our collective ways of living.

- How can a renewed consideration of the geography of water contribute to the emergence of a harmonious territorial fabric that links its different scales and reinforces the notion of “common good”?

- What would be the first step in the undertaking of this endeavour?

- What is the appropriate scale for the creation of a bioregion around the Oise?

- How should production sectors be restructured within this bioregion?



On an intermediate scale many uses and ambitions for the territory come to mind: the harbour of Cergy and its marina, the vegetable growing lowland which reasserts its food producing role and the leisure park which is the number one touristic destination of the Val d'Oise. Although Cergy-Pontoise has many strengths (tourism, food production, its university), its weaknesses cannot be overlooked: the rarity of available housing, the vulnerability of the terrain, the disparity of usage that don't necessarily coexist peacefully are urgent challenges. Furthermore the question of legibility of the site and its urban making arises and remain a challenge for the agglomeration as it was developed with different timescales and reasons in mind. Finally, as Cergy aims to develop its urban center and its university campus, could we imagine the integration of the river Oise in those new dynamics?

I - URBAN DYNAMICS

1. The urban settlement logic
2. A steady urban increase

II. URBAN LANDMARKS THAT INTENSIFY THE RELATIONSHIP WITH WATER

1. The Axe-Majeur
2. The Leisure Island
3. The Harbour of Cergy
4. The fertile lowland

III. A TERRITORY AT THE PROJECT STAGE: HOW WILL THE RIVER OISE BE INTEGRATED?

1. The project of the Cergy-Pontoise agglomeration
2. The CY campus: from a university to an urban project

IV. TESTIMONIES :

HOW CAN THE RIVER BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS?

I - URBAN DYNAMICS

1. THE URBAN SETTLEMENT LOGIC



Urbanisation strategies
Atlas des paysages du Val d'Oise, CAUE95



Urbanisation strategies
Atlas des paysages du Val d'Oise, CAUE95

The topography of the terrain and the placement of the new town have created a disruption between recent urbanisation on the plateau and old villages at the bottom of the hills.

Street-villages at the bottom of the hills

The villages along the winding river have a strong connection with the water, as most houses are built further away from the river bed, at the border of the former flood stage, so far enough from the risky plains and mostly at the bottom of the hills. These villages have a notable rural character, and are often composed of small hamlets where people mostly live in terraced houses that are placed on one single axis. This type of grouped housing set-up are called 'street-villages'. Agricultural land and kitchen gardens are located in between street-villages, separating them from one another.

The wooded hillsides

After having been agricultural land for a long time, the hills are now mostly wooded. This means that when standing by the river Oise, the landscape is predominantly that of a forest and the new town and more recent urbanisation is barely visible.

More recent urbanisation on the plateau

The newer urban core and the new town have mostly been constructed on plateaux, further upstream from the hillside. This created a distinct break between older and newer urbanisation, and life at the bottom of the hill and on the plateau. The greater part of the newer connected urbanisation has been built following the slope of the Oise, along the axis of the amphitheater.



Schematic sectional view
Atlas des paysages du Val d'Oise, CAUE95

2. A STEADY URBAN INCREASE

At the start of the 20th century, the villages that are now within the agglomeration were small rural and agricultural towns that had less than 1 000 inhabitants each and were squattered around the loops of the Oise. From the second half of the 1960s onwards, general long term schemes for development and urbanisation were put together, and the first one had a strong incentive to create a dense and autonomous nucleus outside of Paris, which would then become Cergy-Pontoise.



Sensification of the area with time
SCOT

-- From 1966 to 1975 : Housing and equipments.

The 'Cergy-Préfecture' and 'Touleuses à Cergy' districts were given most of the new housing units that welcomed 24 000 new inhabitants in the agglomeration during that time. The new residents consist either of blue-collar workers who have come to work in the automobile factories or of middle class employees and civil servants wanting to live further away from Paris. During that time plans were made in a zoning pattern around the buildings that had an urban function: the prefecture, the town hall, the shopping mall ('les trois fontaines'/the three fountains), schools and educational centers.

- From approximately 1975 to 1985: Development of individual housing and innovation

Following the instructions from the State authorities who condemned ridiculously big urban expansion and following the opinions of the general public who supported living in the countryside and denounced the urban sprawl in the suburbs that terraced houses were causing, gave a new life to urban culture which greatly profits from this time. It was planned from the start to build individual housing on the outskirts of the town, and this period strengthen the idea, as shown by the architecture competitions for town halls in Val-Maubuée and Jouy-Le-Moutier, whose specifications emphasised landscape integration and respect for pre-existing sites.

According to the 1975 census, there were 72 800 inhabitants in the agglomeration with 38% blue-collar workers, 24% employees and 17% of higher ranked executives, a sign of a balanced social diversity on the territory. The other motto of this period was innovation, which was expressed at different levels: the aerotrain in Cergy, cable television, videobuses, but also in terms of functional diversity. The Center for Culture and Administration built in 1979 is a striking testimony: it is simultaneously the town hall, a library, it includes shops, a leisure center and a music school

- From the 1980s to 2000: Great urban project and development of the university

This is when the campus of the Cergy-Pontoise university was built. Education was of course a need for the growing population but it was also strategy to alleviate the crisis in the industrial sector, by attracting new jobs and train new activities. Meanwhile, grand urban projects were being planned out, the most notable one being the Axe-Majeur but also the ZAC of Puiseaux which would then become the district of Cergy-Saint-Christophe which is known for mixing working spaces and housing.

- Since 2000, and more recently: A changing housing structure

If between 2006 and 2011, population growth has been maintained, with a positive natural balance, the agglomeration gains an average of 1 149 inhabitants per year, but in order to maintain itself, it must build an average housing for 1 300 people per year.

Another important detail is that the endogenous needs of the territory are changing: decohabitation, reduction in household sizes and a growth in the number of single-parent families. Many elements come question how housing structures and offers can be adapted.

II. URBAN LANDMARKS THAT INTENSIFY THE RELATIONSHIP WITH WATER

1. THE AXE-MAJEUR

Classified as a regional heritage site, the Axe Majeur is located inside the loop of the Oise that make up Cergy Pontoise. The urban yet artistic structure connects the Island to the amphitheater. The axis is a space for life, walks, shows and meet-ups. The axis is 3.2 km long, made up of twelve stations and gave its name to the district (Axe Majeur-Horloge). It ends at the border to Neuville-sur-Oiseau at the Ham Junction after crossing the artificial ponds of Cergy-Neuville.

12 stations

Sur les trois kilomètres de l'Axe Majeur, 12 stations jalonnent le paysage naturel et urbain.



<p>LA TOUR BELVÉDÈRE Sa hauteur de 100,7 m et de 100,7 m en fait un véritable phare. À l'origine, un escalier monumental de 12 stations, en son sommet, un observatoire de 6 mètres permet d'observer l'évolution du paysage au fur et à mesure. Son sommet offre une remarquable vue panoramique sur le nord-ouest de la métropole parisienne.</p>	<p>LA PLACE HUBERT RENAUD ET LE LACER Sa forme circulaire symbolise le monde avec ses 216 degrés. C'est le point de rencontre urbain. Le paysage déployé dans les bâtiments de la ville par Corbusier et les jardins de la place est une invitation à la découverte de l'Axe Majeur. Au-dessus, un rayon laser relie l'axe du haut de la Tour au lac de la Tour de l'Horloge. Au-dessus, les 12 stations.</p>	<p>LE VERGER DES IMPRESSIONNISTES - CAMELLE PÉDRAUD Situé dans le parc de Cergy-Pontoise, le verger est dédié à la culture et à l'art. Les impressionnistes comme les sculptures de Camille Pédraud y ont un peu plus d'un siècle. À l'heure actuelle, le Parc des Impressionnistes offre un voyage artistique. Elles sont conçues de façon à offrir une œuvre d'art en forme de sculpture.</p>	<p>L'ESPLANADE DE VINCI C'est un lieu de promenade, de rencontre et d'animation de l'Axe Majeur. Une place à une architecture moderne, les gens de la Tour de l'Horloge y ont été créés. Elle s'inscrit dans le plan de l'Axe Majeur et est un lieu de rencontre de Paris. Au centre, la fontaine de l'eau, offerte par les habitants de Cergy-Pontoise, est le symbole de la gouvernance et de la vie.</p>	<p>LES DOIXE COLONNES ET LA TERRASSE À l'initiative de l'association, les 12 colonnes ont été créées en l'honneur de Vincent dans le territoire. Ce sont des colonnes qui ont été créées par les habitants de Cergy-Pontoise. Elles sont situées dans le territoire de l'Axe Majeur. Elles sont créées par les habitants de Cergy-Pontoise. Elles sont situées dans le territoire de l'Axe Majeur.</p>	<p>LES AMBASSADEURS DES DROITS DE L'HOMME - PIERRE MENDES FRANCE Les Ambassadeurs des Droits de l'Homme ont été créés en l'honneur de Pierre Mendès France. Ils sont situés dans le territoire de l'Axe Majeur. Ils sont créés par les habitants de Cergy-Pontoise. Ils sont situés dans le territoire de l'Axe Majeur.</p>
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Axe Majeur Brochure- Cergy-Pontoise Association Axe Majeur

Valorisation of the culture and heritage

The house of Anne and Gérard Philippe is a place of memory and heritage. The bourgeois house and its five hectares park along the Oise was bought in 1954 by Gérard Philippe, a famous French actor for theater and film after the Second World War, and his wife Anne, a writer. Their house, the amphitheater and the basin of the Axe Majeur form a whole. One could ask how cultural, heritage based, leisure and food production activities could be encouraged on the site.



The house of Anne and Gérard Philippe Town de Cergy Ville de Cergy

Axe Majeur accessibility and spatial insertion

As of now, the Axe Majeur is accessible via two routes, one from the hill in the Axe Majeur-Horloge district where there are parking spaces and one from the bottom of the hill past the banks of the Oise via a pedestrian road. Are these routes and parking opportunities sufficient to access the Axe Majeur? What are the visual connections, and spatial and social integrations between Saint-Christophe, the QPV district and the adjacent Axe-Majeur?



Saint-Christophe district Pavillon de l'Arsenal

Showcasing the landscape

The Ham junction is the last station on the Axe Majeur and it is a strategic landscaping spot as it connects the Leisure Island, the harbour, the banks of the Oise and the university campus of Neuville. The junction is at the entrance of the town, on the interchange RD203. How should the Ham junction be approached in terms of road building and landscaping in order to enhance the loop of the Oise and integrate the station number 12 of the Axe Majeur into the landscape?



The Ham Junction Association Axe-Majeur

2. THE LEISURE ISLAND



Aerial image of the Leisure Island, Office du tourisme de Cergy-Pontoise



The Treasure Island, film by Guillaume Brac on the site France Culture

Created more than 40 years ago on former sandpits, the Leisure Island revolves around artificial ponds which cover 250 hectares and 150 hectares of water surface. It is one of the main attractions of the territory as it gets more than one million visitors per year. The Leisure Island is the number one visited site of the Val-d'Oise and is a privileged spot for locals who storm it when the weather allows it. It is a central feature of the region, which aligns with the State's desire to provide the new towns with structural facilities for the general public in the Paris region. Accessible from the Axe-Majeur footbridge and from a footbridge located at the Cergy harbour, the island offers a five km trip in a natural setting, as well as various water sports such as sailing, kayaking, pedal boating, tree climbing and 5 000 m² of swimming areas. It is an island of fresh air and biodiversity, but the question of the environmental preservation of the site arises: the nuisances and littering are significant, the quality of the water is irregular and regular droughts alter the site.

There is also the safety question: since 2020 between 400 and 500 interventions related to drowning have been recorded and there are many cases of incivility. With 1.5 million visitors per year and 30 000 visitors per day on peak days, the Leisure Island welcomes 50% of its visitors from the Val d'Oise, 30% from Seine-Saint-Denis and 20% from the rest of the region. The Leisure Island can be seen as a socio-cultural urban park, «the garden of those who do not have one,» as its manager, Nicolas Cook, puts it.



Accessibility of the Leisure Island Institut Paris Région

It is a place for living and blossoming, a place for family and friends to meet, especially for the least privileged households. It is also a specific housing opportunity that includes an emergency shelter for women and homeless people. Finally, there is the question of the site's sustainability, as its business model is fragile and management costs, especially equipment maintenance, are very high.

This vulnerability and complexity of the site calls for «developing an ambitious and shared vision of this space» as its director indicates. In summary, the leisure island is a popular social place that presents a challenge for tourism development and questions the possible means of achieving economic sustainability, but it is also an environmental sanctuary under pressure.

3. THE CERGY HARBOUR



Photographs top to bottom: Cergy Village and Cergy Harbour Office du Tourisme de Pontoise

The Cergy Harbour is at the junction between the new town, the old village of Cergy and a gateway to the Leisure Island. Located 10 minutes on foot from 'Cergy-Préfecture', one can notice the transition from a motorway atmosphere to a village atmosphere with its cobbled streets lined with window boxes and lamp-posts in a 19th century style.

As a place of togetherness, the marina offers terraces to eat on by the edge of the water. Also a residential place, the harbour of Cergy borders an old village, thus creating an urban connection between the village and the new town. It is also a touristic area, although fully inhabited by locals. The marina is entirely artificial, and it was designed in the 1980s. The architecture of the harbour, originally designed by François and Bernard Spoerry, is different than that of the new town. With its pediments, its false bell towers, its half-timbered tower etc, it almost ridiculously quaint, as it's reproducing an idealised village architecture. Sadly, the Cergy Harbour is very sensitive to housing pressure and an extension project, called Port Cergy II, was under discussion until recently. The harbour in its current state accommodates 60 boats, the challenge was to create an extension to triple the accommodation offer. The project's aim was to combine an increase in housing offer for 300 to 600 people and a threefold increase in commercial offers.

The project was contested by local residents who feared a considerable change in flows in their living areas and a densification that was difficult to maintain on a site of this scale. Another crucial aspect of the debate was the proximity to Cergy's vegetable growing lowland. Indeed, the project would have surrounded about thirty houses and several hectares of farmland.

4. THE FERTILE LOWLAND

In the center of the new town of Cergy, the vegetable growing plain has become a crossroads location, with the Oise bordering it in the south, the Cergy Forest in the north and a two-way high speed road called 'boulevard de l'Hautil' which crosses the Oise on an elevated bridge (about fifteen meters high), thus isolating the vegetable growing area from its western part. The vegetable growing land is located on a flood prone area, and it is the evidence of the powerful agricultural past of the agglomeration of Cergy-Pontoise from the middle of the XXth century.

There are 13 farms that share 82 hectares of surface area, and grow in market gardens and greenhouses, with a third of the production being organic. A 2012 survey estimated that 95% of agricultural production in Cergy-Pontoise was sold outside the agglomeration marketed by Rungis or the Parisian markets, from Amap to Bagnolet etc.).



- Even when direct sale points are organised, these farmers do not sell many of their products on the four street markets that take place in the agglomeration of Cergy Pontoise. **Is it because of isolation or urban integration of the growing areas? What links them to the rest of the town and its citizens? Who are the town's agricultural products meant for?**

- Threatened by the Cergy II Harbour project (which is now on hold), the market gardening plain sees its land gradually taken over by the housing opportunities the area could represent. **What form of land security should be adopted to ensure the sustainability of local agriculture?**

- The place often falls victim to incivility, tagged greenhouses and waste. **What can be done about the maintenance of the area? And what about conflicts of usage?**

Current map of the vegetable growing site IAU/IF, 2005



Areal view of the vegetable growing plain, Atlas du paysage du Val d'Oise, CAUE 95



36 Photograph of the vegetable growing site 13 communes

III. A TERRITORY AT THE PROJECT STAGE: HOW WILL THE RIVER OISE BE INTEGRATED?

1. THE PROJECT OF THE CERGY-PONTOISE AGGLOMERATION



The Major Centre project CACP

The Major Centre project's ambition is to assert the strategic role of Cergy-Pontoise and to render the agglomeration more attractive. According to documents on this matter, the goal is to develop a strong, dynamic and innovative hub of urban, economic and educational centrality.

Aerial map of Cergy-Pontoise with project locations marked and detailed descriptions for each:

- Quartier Marjoberts et siège de 3 M**: Nouveau bâtiment de 11 000m² et nouveau quartier de 11 000 logements
- Centre 3 Fontaines**: Travaux d'extension avec la création de 16 000m² supplémentaires et reconfiguration des parkings
- l'Ilot Etoile**: Nouvel immeuble de bureaux pour 350 salariés et 150 logements étudiants
- Pole Gare**: Restructuration de la gare de Cergy-Préfecture renforcement du pôle d'échange multimodal, amélioration de sons accessibilité et visibilité Ouverture de la gare sur le parvis et implantation de commerces
- Immeuble de bureaux du Verger**: 22 000m² sur 2 bâtiments
- Bassin nordique**: Bassin extérieur chauffé de 50 m de long, 8 lignes de nage
- Batiment CAF et la Tour Engie**: -Travaux de reconversion de l'ancien bâtiment de la CAF, -Reconversion de la Tour Engie, classé immeuble de grande hauteur (IGH)

Immeuble des Vergers, Bassin Nordique, Bat Etoile, Marjoberts, siège 3 M

About public spaces



The Major Center project
CACP

The main challenge is to improve green spaces to respond positively to the construction of buildings and to preserve a «garden city» structure. To tackle this challenge, 16 new hectares of green spaces are being planned - on a total area of 110 hectares, so 22% of greenery in total. Furthermore, the project tackles a landscaping dimension, through the creation of belvederes aimed at preserving a visual connection with the green fabric of the area.

About housing



Le projet Grand-Centre
CACP

3 000 new housing units are planned to be built, for a new generation in the area, and urban renewal operations are also underway, including in the Croix-Petit district which is meant to boost university development and in districts near the Great-Centre, (including Touleurs, Plants, Chênes and Linandes) to improve the quality of life for local residents.

About jobs



The Major Center project
CACP

As of now the supply in office space is diverse but aging. Maintaining an office cluster in the Great Centre is a priority in order to maintain service activity and employment in Cergy-Pontoise.

The project's aim is to create 3 000 jobs in an additional 45 000 m² of office space, accompanied by urban and commercial activities in order to strengthen the service offer for workers.

One of the goals is to restore commercial uses to the first floor and to complete the local offer. The referenced urban project plans a commercial itinerary in the neighborhood around three axes:

- the 'rue des galeries', an existing shopping street
- the 'mail des Cerclades' with the enhancement of shops on the ground floor
- a new 'mail' that will see the light while Cergy 3 is being reshaped and will connect the 'Three Fountains' shopping mall to the existing footbridge above the Oise boulevard.



The Major Center project
CACP

The commercial route will also undergo a major rebranding of the public space: floor paving, benches, children's games, sculptures etc. In addition, the commercial pole of the shopping mall 'Three fountains' in the heart of the Great-Centre island is planned to be restructured, with the objective of redefining its position in terms of brands and market. The extension of the shopping center by 15 000 m² and the reorganisation of the parking lots will optimise this operation.

The ZAC housing 'Linandes II' – Cergy



The ZAC project of the Linandes II agence Uaps

The housing in the Bossut district in Pontoise



The Bossut barracks in Pontoise Agence Phileas

Liesse II, in Saint-Ouen-L'Aumône



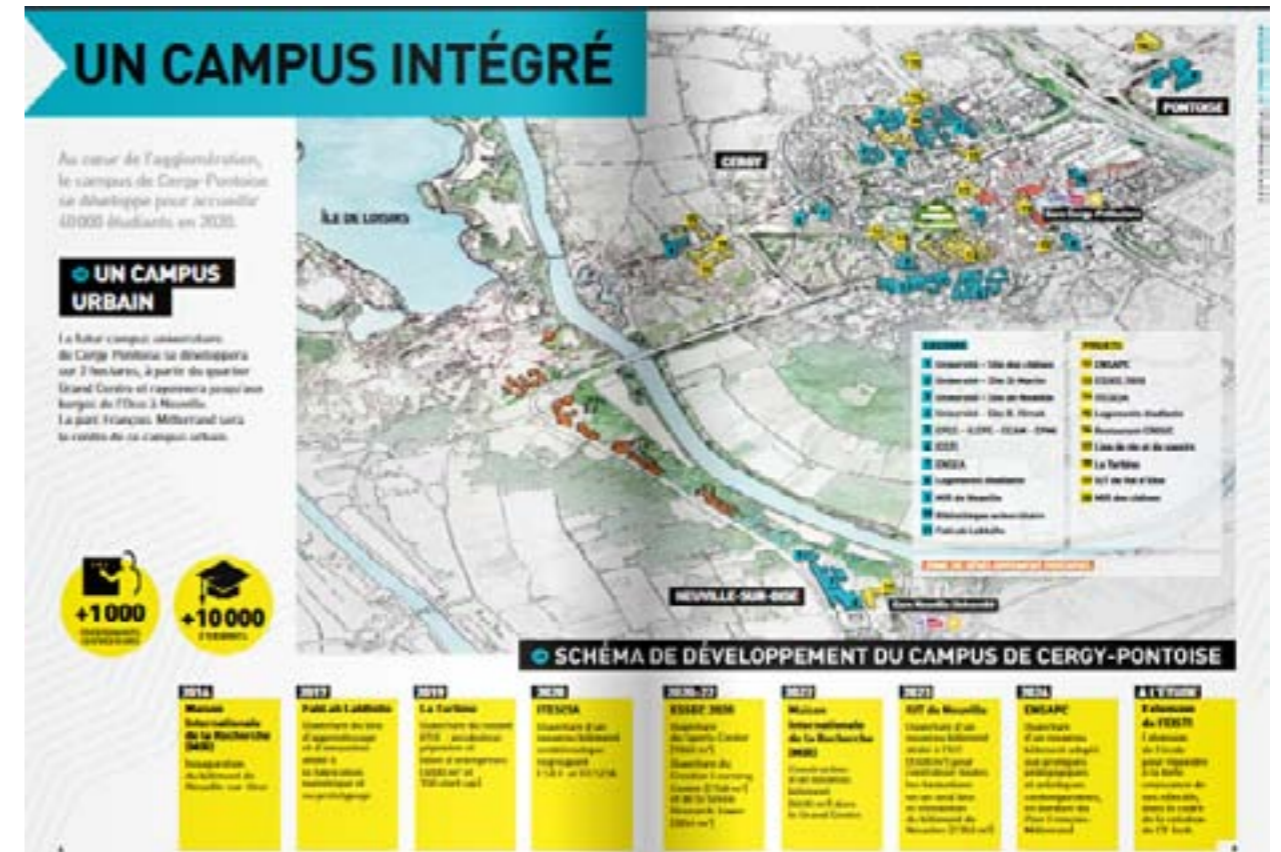
Liesse II Agence Phileas

Supported by the agglomeration, the Linandes is a mixed urban project, 57 hectares of which are reserved for sports and leisure activities, close to an eco-district project with 1 500 housing units and a 10 hectares large urban park.

On the site of former military barracks, 25 hectares are being transformed, this include the construction of an eco-district with 2 600 housing units, offices and shops, as well as public facilities around a large urban park.

The Liesse II project in Saint-Ouen l'Aumône aims at an urban expansion of 90 hectares by building housing units.

2. THE CY CAMPUS: FROM A UNIVERSITY TO AN URBAN PROJECT



Development model of the campus CACP CACP

As the third university centre in the region, with 24 000 students at the moment, the university campus has experienced a strong growth and is set to stay on course and welcome 40 000 students by 2030, which will involve the question of student housing. The campus is made up of 15 public and private institutions and structured around 5 university buildings. The objective for the 'Campus project' is to have the top 200 of the world's best universities while ensuring that academic staff enjoys a high quality of life. In order to do this, the challenge is to structure the integration between the establishments and to strengthen its visibility and attractiveness on an international level. But it is also an urban issue, since the university project affects territorial dynamics, with a significant student population in the agglomeration, which will grow stronger in the coming decade. A university town is taking shape, and is being organised around two hubs. The first is on the outskirts of the Cergy-Préfecture district, which focusses around services and training centers. The second, around the site of the current Neuville campus, on the banks of the Oise River, which is intended to provide a concentration of sports and housing facilities.

- There are many questions that this campus project raises:
- The forecasts are ambitious in terms of student intake. Will the town be able to provide sufficient housing? **Is there a risk that current housing will be rebranded to student housing at the cost of the most vulnerable population? If so, what are the means of action to control and limit this trend? What are some way in which residents and students could coexist?**
 - The appeal of a territory also depends on the image it conveys. Nature, landscape and water are crucial components for the construction of this image of «well-being». **How could the town take advantage of the opportunity to work in a pleasant setting? Is the offer of services sufficient to accommodate this new population?**

IV. TESTIMONIES :

HOW CAN THE RIVER BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS?

See the full transcript of the round-table discussion.

In Cergy-Pontoise, the river is where it all begins. From the city's appeal to its landscape, everything has been built around the historical and patrimonial presence of the river. The territory's urbanization was even conducted in a stratified fashion. The approach adopted early on was one that avoided building too close to pre-existing villages, including the "villages-rues" along the banks, in order to preserve their identity. The second phase of urbanization was marked by the challenge of linking the city to the Oise through the creation of the Axe-Majeur, the lakes of Cergy and the city's scenic lookouts. While the conurbation's urban projects have often placed an emphasis on the landscape and societal dimension, the current challenge is to expand on this work in order to respond to the extremely different conditions of today and to take it even further.

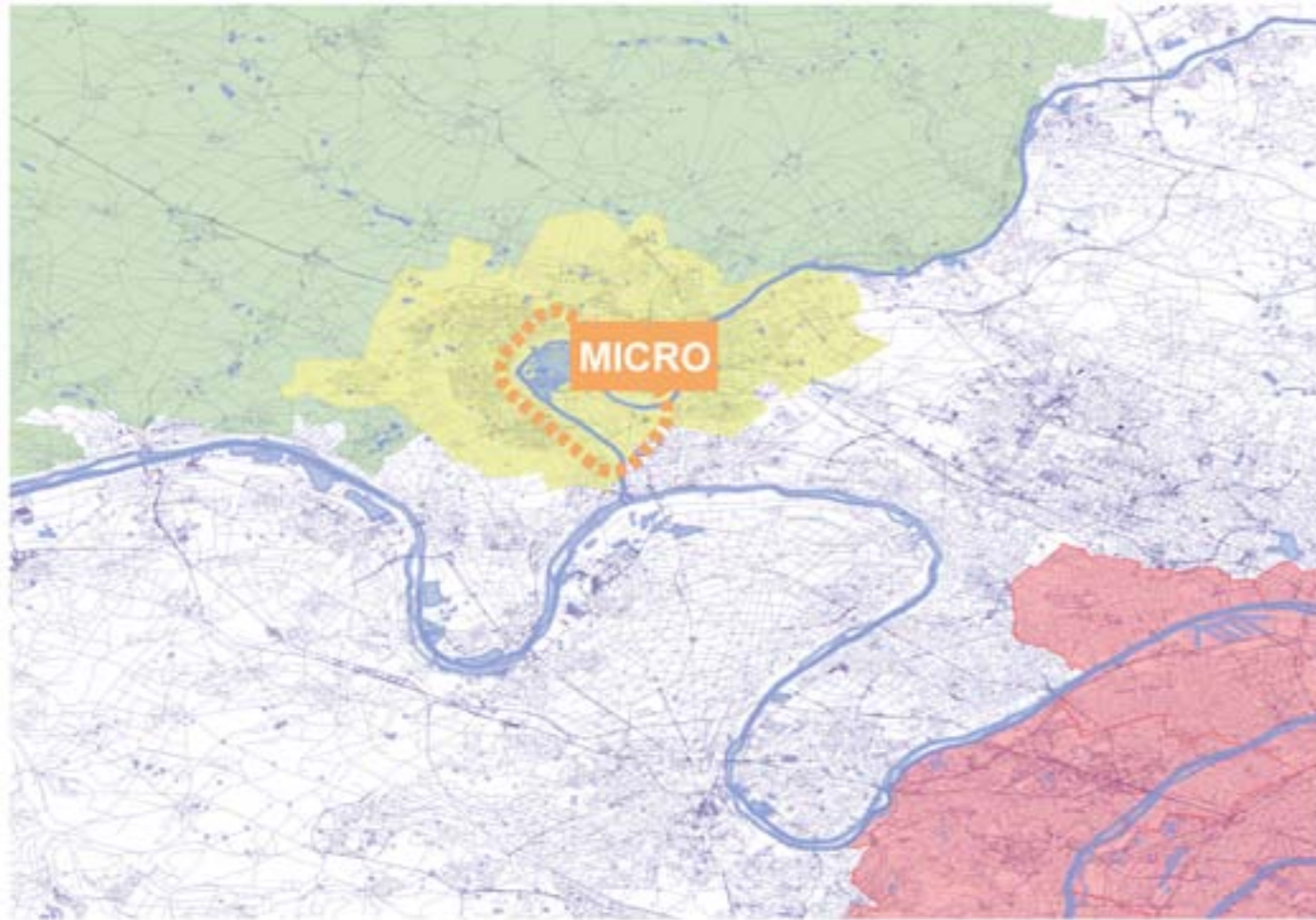
The expansion of the university campus is one of the major projects currently underway in the territory. The university's locations are characterised by their proximity to the river, which is a key element of the project. But is this just urban marketing or is there a real consideration for the importance of water's role? The project of further developing the campus is intended to reinforce the Pontoise–Saint-Martin–Neuville triangle which encompasses the Base de Loisirs and integrates the River Oise into its fold. As such, the project proposes to create a campus structured as a "hub" around the François Mitterrand Park and a second university district that would "flow with the water" along the banks of the river and serve a residential function. The challenge is to increase the number of uses in order to federate the university community within this triangle and to strengthen the links which, although already existent, are not necessarily evident.

- What services are available to the university community?

- How can these uses be arranged and deployed within the organization of the space?

- Does the River Oise bring something to the project?

**- Is the existing campus model an academic project or an urban project?
If it is an urban project, then it has a central role; if it is an academic project, then it only performs a peripheral function in the context of greater academic competitiveness.**



On a small scale when observing the banks of the river Oise, the challenges of available housing and protecting the environment make of these strategic terrains delicate sites. But the banks remain privileged spaces. They offer walks, relaxation, fellowship and encounters, which makes them breathing spaces in the heart of urbanisation.

I. RIVERBANKS: FINDING THEIR WAY BACK TO THE WATER

1. Riverside typology
2. The riverside raising the thorny issue of coexistence

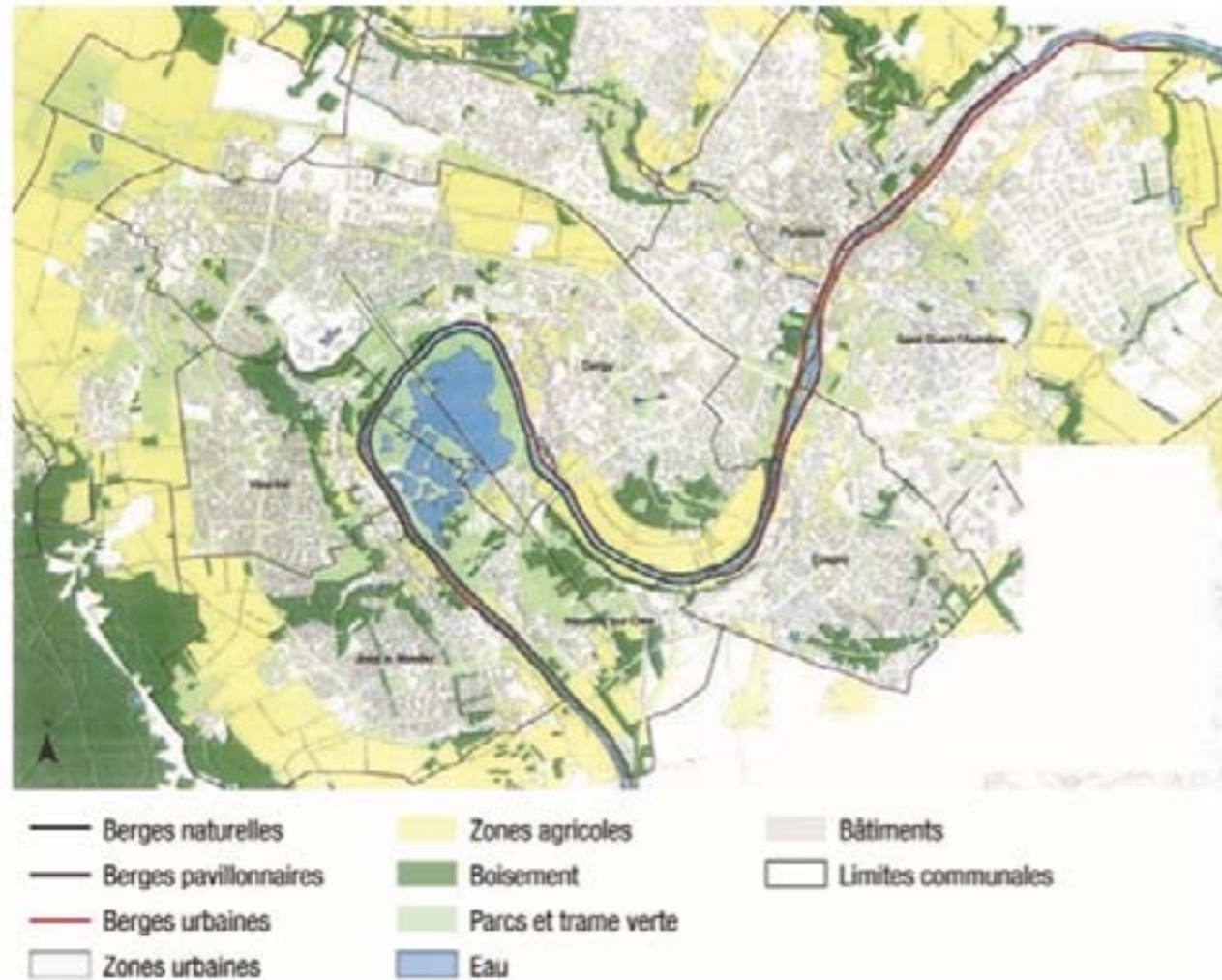
II. USES: BETWEEN FRUITFUL EXISTING USES AND PROSPECTS FOR NEW USES

III. TESTIMONIES:

« Cergy-Pontoise, 50 years on:
What aim(s) for this new town shaped
by the geography of the Oise area ? »

I. . RIVERBANKS: FINDING THEIR WAY BACK TO THE WATER

By weaving its way through the urban fabric, the river, and especially the river's banks, opens the doors to dialogue. And although the riverbanks here have only undergone partial urban development, there are nevertheless some places where the river Oise remains hard to spot due to the spontaneous regeneration of woodlands on its banks. Settlements or diversified activities, temporary makeshift housing or on the contrary, important urban projects such as Port Cergy are features of these riverbanks. On studying the variations, river banks of three types can be found in this area : natural -building free- riverbanks, suburban riverbanks (public or private housing) , and urban area riverbanks which reinforce ribbon development in town centres and are developed as pedestrian areas and near industrial infrastructures.



Types of riverbanks in the Cergy Pontoise region
S.A.N, 2003

1. RIVERSIDE TYPOLOGY :

Natural riverbanks :



Riparian forest, in the vicinity of
Neuville
Cihôé Ottini

L'Isle-Adam's riverside
promenade
13 Communes

We call «natural riverbanks» the edges of the river characterised by the absence of buildings, and which are covered by riparian forests -wild groves- home to various flora and fauna. They are found in rural areas like woodland plains, prairies or arable farmland. A majority of these riverbanks are located in flood-prone areas and become absorption areas for highwater during the flooding season. The paths along the river banks offer a wide variety of landscapes : shaded walks along the forest's edge at Neuville sur Oise or Vauréal au clos, through the Oise river valley, across the vegetable producing plains of Cergy, keeping to the Main Axis or straying off it into Jouy le Moutier's allotments.

The residential riverside :



This part of the riverside, where individual residential housing is the norm, has the specificity of being mainly within the floodplain. There are two kinds of residential riverbanks : privately owned areas and public areas. The banks adjoining private residences are on occasion planted, serving as an extension to private gardens.

But they may also remain neglected and abandoned, considered as being on the edge of a property, used for waste disposal and not accorded aesthetic landscape interest. These neglected riverbanks cannot be associated with a particular class of residential housing. And they may be found at the back of a house with a grand façade or equally a more precarious type of housing which opens onto the road.



Eragny riverbank
in Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône
13 communes

Whereas the riverbanks which have been turned into public spaces are essentially found in Eragny and Saint Ouen, up to its railway bridge and they are part of more general restructuring involving landscaping and often linked to new housing developments.

Urban embankments :

These man-made embankments are to be found in a dense or industrial urban context.

- City centre embankments :



Cergy's harbour riverside
Office du tourisme de Pontoise



Pontoise's riverside
Office du tourisme de Pontoise

Located on both sides of the railway and motorway bridges of Pontoise and St Ouen de l'Aumone, they highlight the unfolding of both cities' history, where commercial activities flourished via the waterway and led to the building of docks using a variety of techniques. Set on a kilometer-long line, the embankment is a link between the two cities, as well as a meeting point for locals. The fact that Pontoise's fortifications have remained intact has a considerable impact on the urban embankment. Within the more urbanised areas, we reach the riverside via public spaces : elaborate urban promenades, extended greenery, squares with trees, all contribute to encouraging the locals to walk down to their river. The embankment is in an urban landscape with public infrastructures such as Maison du Parc at Jouy le Moutier or the Larris Park at Pontoise but also the developed embankment of Port Cergy. There are many paths, alleys and lanes which link the villages and neighbourhoods to the Oise river, and they form together a vernacular heritage. Despite the speed of urbanisation, this traditional network has been preserved. On the other hand, the new neighbourhoods and the river are rarely connected to each other.

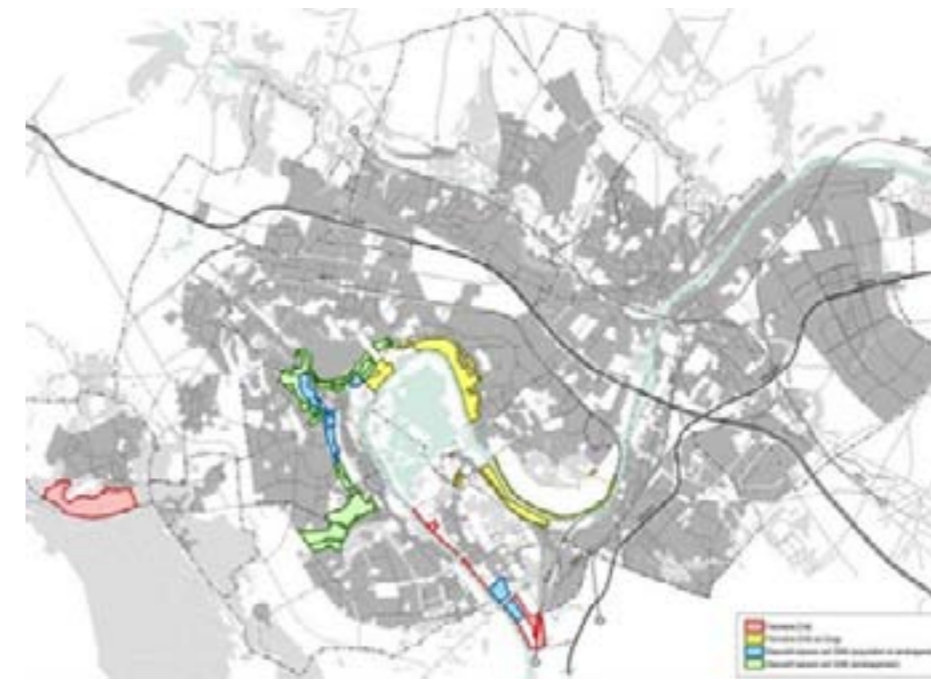
- Industrial embankments :



Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône embankment
Atlas des paysages du Val d'Oise, CAUE 95

Industrial embankments meet up to form a junction between the cities of Neuville-sur-Oise and Mery-sur-Oise and it puts an end to the pedestrian pathway along the river. However this sector is concentrated in Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône with its three major industrial areas dating from the 1970s. Along the industrial zone at Epluches, as well as along the Parc Jaune area, the riverside belongs to industry, mainly to that of the construction sector. Some industries use the waterway (MGF, Lafarges, Béton de France) or have docks and use the river for freight transport in relation to their customers' needs. Former abandoned industrial spaces are also located in this area and both construction factories and the latter combined are responsible for creating serious environmental challenges, with the contamination of both the river and the nearby soil. The projected relocation of the Porte Jaune factories is currently under discussion.

2. THE RIVERSIDE RAISING THE THORNY ISSUE OF COEXISTENCE



ENS (Natural Area at Risk) perimeter round Cergy Pontoise
SCOT de Cergy-Pontoise

The «ENS» (Natural Areas at Risk) aims to preserve the quality of these sites, these landscapes and the natural habitat as well as raising awareness among local inhabitants about natural heritage and landscape conservation. Areas entitled to be part of this conservation project (ESN) are those containing uninhabited spaces where the ecosystem, the landscape and/or the social context is fundamental and in cases where the ecosystem of these areas is threatened or vulnerable. The aim is to preserve these spaces from urbanisation. «ENS's» mission in the Boucle de l'Oise region is to restore and preserve biodiversity and the quality of its landscapes. Limiting the housing sector on the riverside is considered a priority. As is making sure the access to the public is maintained as far as possible.

Many different types of landscape follow on from one another along the banks of the Oise river, where the flow of the river coincides with many striking discontinuities. A continuous walkway has been re-established from Conflans-Saint-Honorine to the port of Cergy, via the Ile de loisirs (leisure park) at Neuville-sur-Oise, however for other areas conservation is still an issue. Many makeshift, unplanned houses have been built along the riverbanks. This fact leads us to ask questions about how the right to build should be managed on a floodplain and in a vulnerable environment with clay soil and a constant risk of erosion. The local authorities have taken a variety of stances towards this issue. With a view to protecting these spaces, the Cergy city authorities have gone ahead with the classification of almost all of the right hand side bank of the river as a Vulnerable Natural Area (Espace Naturel Sensible) which is a guarantee of checks on rogue developments. At Cergy Rive-Droite over a dozen small paths link the centre of the settlement to the river. These picturesque walkways are punctuated with lavoirs (outdoor wash houses) and are protected under their ZPPAUP classification as a Protected Zone with Architectural, Urban and landscape Heritage. On the privately owned riverbanks a case by case negotiation has been undertaken between the authorities and the landowners, often exerting local government pre-emption right. Meanwhile in Vauréal, the local authorities have established the right of estate eviction which has led to the removal of informal housing established unexpectedly upon narrow sections in order to restore a 130-metre-long axis along the riverside.

These different examples of riversides enable us to examine the sequences and disruptions along the Oise embankment. In order to cross the river, there are bridges and pontoon crossings : Linking Jouy-Le-Moutier and Neuville-sur-Oise, across the Axe Majeur, in Cergy harbour, next to Boulevard de l'Hautil, linking Bois-Cergy and Neuville, and also linking Oise Boulevard and to Eragny-sur-Oise, as well as the Pontoise bridge and the A15 crossover. However, setting up pedestrian and cycle paths is problematic and the variety of types of riverside make it all the more difficult to give coherent directions to footpaths. This raises many uncertainties in the walker or cyclist regarding which direction to take, due to breaks in the routes and a sense of discontinuity.



Public transport network of Cergy Pontoise
CACP

II. USES: BETWEEN FRUITFUL EXISTING USES AND PROSPECTS FOR NEW USES

From the way the locals and visitors make the most of the area (doing sport, having barbecues, etc.), the Oise embankment can be described as hosting spontaneous «re-creative» activities. On the other hand, it is also where several local more formal initiatives are taken like seeking to promote alternatives to live and build together in harmony with the environment. Finally, the embankment is also where cultural events and festivities are organised, which highlights the important interaction between the Oise and the inhabitants' cultural heritage.

LABBOITE



LABBOITE
13 communes

A place for learning, creating and sharing : this «Fablab», located in the main city centre (Grand-centre) focuses on technological innovation. Inside the Labbox («Lab-boite») there are individual and collective workspaces, a machine area, a creative area, a space for archive documents as well as training sessions of all kinds. It is also a place where locals can relax, in an open-minded and friendly atmosphere.

LA TURBINE



La turbine
CACP

The turbine is 6500m² infrastructure focused on management and innovative concepts, shared between 3 sites : one in Cergy harbour, another in l'Abbaye de Maubuisson and one in Saint-Ouen-l'Aumone. It is a place for potential start-ups, a hothouse for businesses offering office space and guidance for project managers.

THE INCREDIBLE EDIBLES



Cergy's incredible edibles
Incredible-Edible

Cergy's incredible edibles which originated from the 'citizens without borders' movement also called Incredible edible, aspires to a self-sustainable and co-creative future. The organisation develops vegetable patches inside public spaces, on balconies, in front of blocks of flats so as to encourage food-sharing. There are up to 24 different spots that can be found throughout the whole district.

NO MAD FESTIVAL



Soirée salsa au No Mad festival
No-Mad-Festival

LA RUCHE



Evènement organisé par La Ruche à l'Axe-Majeur
La Ruche

CERGY, SOIT !



Festival Cergy Soit !
Cergy-soit

ART OSONS



Fresque réalisée sur le centre 3 fontaines dans le cadre
du cap's attack 2019
La Gazette du Val d'Oise

Focusing on elsewhere and world cultures, the No Mad Festival actively encourages interculturality. Every year it is held on Cergy's tourist centre's rooftop, next to the Oise riverside.

Created in 2003 by the younger generation of the Cergy-Pontoise metropolis, the Hive works on encouraging everyday cultural life in the area. Core values include : a sense of proximity, alternative and original styles, artistic diversity and active pedagogy. The organisation holds a party every year for the music day on the Axe Majeur.

Born in 1998, Cergy, Soit ! is an artistic open air and circus art festival set in the heart of Cergy Grand centre city centre. 40.000 people gather every year for this 3 day long event, where between 40 and 50 professional troupes of artists organise around 100 to 150 shows.

Art Osons aspires to the gathering of artists' works which focus on creativity, the sharing of artistic works and the building of cultural projects. Every year, this organisation showcases the "Cap's Attack" festival during which 48 artists create real-time frescos on walls and façades (up to 7-metre-high and 26-metre-wide artworks) of the old city.

III. TESTIMONIES

CERGY-PONTOISE, 50 YEARS ON : WHAT AIM(S) FOR THIS NEW TOWN SHAPED BY THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE OISE AREA ?

See the full transcript of the round-table discussion.

The Oise is a living, vivacious expanse of water whose presence should play a significant role in the territory's urban planning strategies. For a long time, water has been the object of a desire to control it by those who build cities (dykes, retention basins, etc.) or an element to be managed for hygienists (purification, distribution). More recently, it has been viewed from the angle of risk (as shown by the PPRI). The geography of water, i.e., considering its integration in the environment as a whole, can be seen a foundational support for envisioning the city in a different way. Even now, diverse forms of living and residing oriented towards the Oise already exist. They range from the vestiges of former holiday villages to once industrial zones or buildings with patrimonial heritages. The city is also now home to twice as many housing units than the average for the Île-de-France and possesses a substantial land reserve that would enable it to develop future projects. Today, the imperative of an urban quality of life is being grafted onto calls for densification. Redeveloping the city on top of the city? Yes, but under what conditions? Faced with the uncertainties of our time, urban expansion projects must be thought of in terms of mutability and reversibility in order to produce urban forms that can be adapted to the different needs of the times to come.

- How can the links between urban density and landscape elements (e.g., the riverbanks) be reimagined in order to encourage the implementation of new uses, which would then contribute to the local dynamics of the territory?
- On the banks of the River Oise, a cohabitation exists between residents of upscale units and those of informal settlements, particularly in the area's urban wastelands. What are the conditions of cohabitation?
- How can other, less standardised forms of housing be incorporated within the existing framework?

The issue of the place of rivers in an urban environment questions us about the foundations for our actions: are we aiming for real ecological integration of rivers or are we treating them as simple components of territorial marketing? Are we thinking in terms of genuine eco-systemic planning that takes into consideration the entire water-cycle? Or is the river Oise seen as a showcase and a promotional tool designed to enhance the territorial attractiveness of the site? The issues raised here reflect the complexity of approaching a living territory by connecting its various scales, challenges and uses in order to achieve an overall view that is not static but truly dynamic. The city-water relationship in the built-up area of Cergy-Pontoise and the winding river Oise makes us wonder how we can:

- **RECONCILE THE COEXISTENCE** of different and equally vital economic activities ranging from river tourism and logistics to urban agriculture

- **WHILE AT THE SAME TIME INTEGRATE THE EXISTING LAND AND DYNAMICS** of the land and property aspects of metropolisation to an international campus and housing needs

- **BY RELYING ON AN ENVIRONMENT** that is inherited and high quality, but also fragile, featuring a picturesque or more modern living environment, a landscape that exists but needs to be revealed and water as a source of both risk and opportunity.

“Is the Oise river a borderline or a link with the neighbouring territory?”

“How can the actual presence of the Oise river be preserved, highlighted and activated on site?”

“How can physical and non-physical links be created around the presence of the Oise river?”
e de l’Oise ? »

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