

TERRITORIALISING THE TRANSITION ENERGETIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, URBAN AND RURAL

32nd Urban Project
Workshop, Île-de-France
September 1 - 26, 2014

THE SOUTH OF PARIS AS LABORATORY

It is agreed upon: there is an urgent need to organise the transition! The initiatives and reflections on the subject are multiplying. The changes to embrace are important and involve diverse subjects: food production, consumption, energy production, etc., and question the evolution of our cities, both large as well as small, in their operational territories. Developing our cities and their territories to adapt to the transition, and also to make them more enjoyable and welcoming, are the objectives that les Ateliers would like you to work on.

les ateliers
maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine

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Les Ateliers, a non-profit organisation created in 1982 by the planners of the new town of Cergy-Pontoise, organises in France and internationally workshops for collective production in the service of territorial projects; porting a new point of view, varying scales, forgetting administrative boundaries and revisiting territories. Over the years, an international network is formed around two thousand people who have already participated in one of these workshops: professionals, academics and policy makers in urban planning. The added value of these workshops lies partly in the analysis and production of original ideas, which are not always possible to emerge in the heat of everyday life and with the restraints of institutional roles, and partly in the encounters and exchanges among policymakers, stakeholders and urban professionals, who mark the progress of the workshops.

For over 30 years, each year a workshop is organised in the Ile-de-France region: This workshop gathers during four weeks thirty participants younger than 30 years old, who work together in international and multi-disciplinary teams at the cross-section of planning and architecture, integrating other disciplines: geography, economy, landscape, sociology, art, engineering and environment. The collective work is assisted by professional and paced by meetings and exchange forums.

The conviction that carries these workshops is that the audacity and inventiveness of the students and young professionals can directly serve the decision makers, for their strategic orientations as well as for development projects in their territory, with the final proposals presented directly to the people responsible for the territory.

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Requirements for applications

The workshop is open to all disciplines: artists, urban planners, designers, architects, sociologists, geographers, economists, engineers, photographers, landscape architects... or other: aimed at young professionals and students of all nationalities with at least a master level.

Conditions: Fluent in English, full availability for all the dates of the workshop, age limit of 30 years. In addition, a document must be send containing the subject of the workshop applied to another site, preferably in the country of origin of the candidate. Get more information at

www.ateliers.org/transition

Provisional timetable for the 2014 session

Autumn-Winter 2013 mobilisation of partners of les Ateliers within a monitoring committee, with input from a scientific committee.

January 2014 publication of the topic document, including a problem statement and the launch of the international call for applications

April 2014 deadline for application to participate

Spring 2014 Development of the detailed program of the workshop and the context document (to be used as a reference by the participants)

1 - 26 September, 2014 workshop for students and young professionals, during four weeks

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The transition: less and better

The massive use of fossil fuels, and along with them minerals, technical progress; they have made us believe that in the twentieth century anything was possible. A longer lifespan, the elevation of the standard of living and the comfort obtained were the driving forces of this energy revolution on a planet with seemingly endless resources. Climate change is also reminding us of the negative consequences and the flip side of this way of life. In view of the limits of natural resources and the growing number of people (seven billion today, nearly nine, to less than two billion in 1900), we (humanity) have no other choice for a better life than living differently, according to a clearly identified theme: "Less fossil fuels, less minerals... and more collective intelligence, in rationalised sharing of spaces and resources, along an economic and social acceptable path, enjoying life"

Movements across the planet

Nowadays, humanity has the means - human, material and immaterial - to initiate the necessary changes. The question is how to mobilise them, as quickly as possible? Committing to these changes requires a commitment of all, at their respective levels: citizens to national governments through international or supra-national institutions. Given the scale and urgency of the issues, the ratio of sharing is fundamental. However, the relative failure of international climate conferences show that the solutions to climate change is probably not born out of an inter- or supra-governmental dynamics.

Fortunately, local and collective initiatives are multiply across the planet to organise the transition on the territory. Gradually, these initiatives are adding up, from communities up to the planet. It is this movement that can let emerge the world to come. It is from the territories that we with out a doubt can find an economic and social path for an energetic, ecological and acceptable transition. We are the problem, we are the solution, where we live, work, and have fun.

Flows and people

Committing to change starts at the territory and requires a local translation of global issues: it can be based on CO² emissions from cars or housing, for example, but also the commuting distance from home to work, the kilowatt-hours used for heating, or the source of what we eat. It is thus necessary to characterise the flow on the territory, which forms its metabolism: movement of people and goods, products and waste, flows of energy, greenhouse gas emissions, etc. The quantification of these flows also allows the identification of handles for action for this territory.

But it is impossible to initiate a transformation without also taking into account the human reality of the territory. Each actor or institution has its constraints, its own objectives: we can be dealing with companies that are committed to investments for a period of 20 years, which «prohibit» them to make any change, associated with limited financial means but a lot of human energy... as well as social, economic and cultural logics that form the territory. When taking action, this reality needs to be taken into account and it should be based on this diversity, to adjust the actions to the actors, to identify their handles, seize the changes underway, creating effects of chain reactions.

In fact, the area is dotted with "silent changes" permitting the realisation of the transition (for example the establishment of a network of bike parks suitable for the recovery of an obsolete logistics facility into a place of culture) that deserve to be highlighted, to be coordinated and integrated into an territorial strategy of transition. Beyond the observation (previously made on the Titanic) of an "Iceberg on the starboard side" and the need to change direction without stopping the machine, it is strategic to identify the social, economic and territorial handles before it is too late. It is essential to make the ordinary pioneers of transition visible and to catalyse the actions and interaction with public policy.

Urban and rural Essonne...

And what about the Ile-de-France region in all of this? Like all big cities, it has known a development - human and territorial - unprecedented in the twentieth century on the basis of a well-tested recipe: infrastructural development and general increased mobility, urbanisation by major projects and development of mono-functional zones. To meet the major challenges of the transition, the emphasis is now placed on the development of new infrastructures for public transport (le Réseau Grand Paris Express - the Grand Paris Express Network) and on the densification of areas served by these transport systems. It implicates as well the re-structuring of the most central part of the Paris agglomeration.

We propose to work on the southern part of the Ile-de-France region, which covers the entire department of Essonne and parts of the departments of Yvelines and Seine-et-Marne. This area is characterised by urban growth (and urban systems) based on fossil fuels and at the same time has strong assets to organise the transition. The Essonne is part of what is commonly called the secondary or outer suburbs which organises the transition between the central and urban part of the agglomeration (approximately bounded by the A86) and rural areas of the Paris Basin.

Up until the nineteenth century, the territory is mostly rural and forms the "breadbasket" of Paris structured around historical cities like Corbeil and Arpajon. The arrival of the railroad in the nineteenth century results in a first urban development around the train stations. In the early twentieth century and especially in the inter-war years, it are the division of parcels for large farms and the construction of detached houses by (and often for) labourers and employees of Paris, which transform hamlets and villages into cities suburbs. After the Second World War, it was the time of the "grands ensembles" (typically sets of collective dwellings, often in large numbers - hundreds to thousands of units - marked by a grid planning and towers inspired by modern architecture), to be built quickly to address the housing crisis. Empty space in the urban fabric is used, but the plateaus are also urbanised, often far away from public transportation. In the 60s, these large urban extensions of the twentieth century must be organised and structured, so that they are not only "sleeping suburbs bedrooms": the new town of Evry (prefecture of Essonne) emerges from the fields. In parallel, the road and rail infrastructure continues to develop and organise the territory.

Since then, urban development has continued, always extending: the "internal boundary" now moves to the plateau of Vert-le-Grand or even south of d'Arpajon. It still regularly takes the form of trade or logistics areas around the main roads and housing estates around existing hamlets. The last twenty years renewal operations within the existing urban fabric have also emerged. The northern part of the Essonne region is thus characterised by this city of the twentieth century, with an appearance of a "patchwork" due to the mixture of large business parks, housing estates but also green spaces and agricultural areas. It also characterises its metabolism and its strong dependence on cars.

... A laboratory for transition

This area thus represents an intermediate scale between:

- › The municipality which is the first level of territorial governance; the municipality council, the city services, the residents and businesses, their associations and unions. They are the leading policymakers, with a capacity to act, and the mayor is the key actor. However, this area is too narrow to affect the flow of materials, eco-energy and eco-materials.
- › The Ile-de-France region which allows for greater control over the flow of people and materials, and has advantages in the transition (it is three quarters agriculture and forestry, while being a pure product of the population explosion and the urban migration that has resulted from the energy revolution). However, it is too big to be able to integrate it into the everyday lives of citizens.

This level coincides with the organisation of daily life while allowing to reflect and organise strong trends towards the transition. The relationship between the urban fabric and agricultural areas can allow action to be taken on the flow of materials, eco-energy and eco-materials, and can bring out courses of action such as local cycles of food and energy, circular economy (remember: most of our food grows in the countryside, but most of it is used in the city!). It is at this scale, which is large enough for multiple actions and various changes of metabolism of the sustainable city and countryside to take place. This area has hosted many urban experiments of the twentieth century (housing developments, the grands ensembles, a new town, but also the movement of 'castors' - people that group around auto-construction): this is a great place to think about the challenge of the 21st century!

The diversity of the urban fabric and the importance of its infrastructures, makes the place ideal to organise the transition: how to mutate the existing that was based on the previous energy revolution? How to make this territory more autonomous, which was often seen only as part of a whole (the place of habitat of people that are working in the centre of the city, the place where logistical activities necessary for the entire region are hosted)? The brilliance of urban growth has led to urban fabric that sometimes trivialise the landscapes (or even ignore) and often forget the necessary amenities for city life. How to make this urban fabric more welcoming, more enjoyable? Can we bring the city and its territory closer together, the city and the landscape that it is hosted by? How to move from a fossil fuel based metabolism, an metabolism based on renewable energy? How to continue and extend the history of this territory since the industrial and energy revolution?

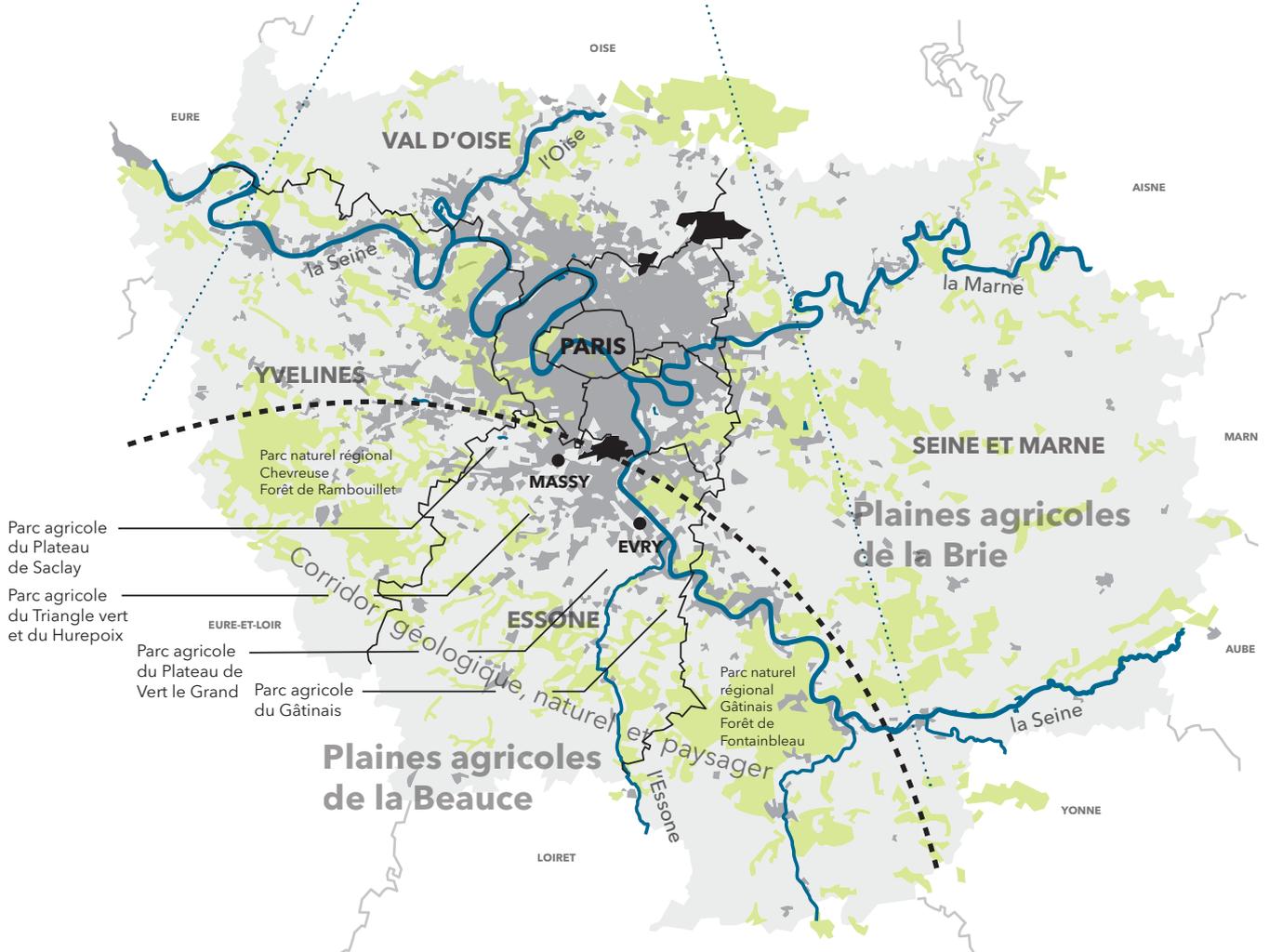
To meet the challenges of the transition, the south of the Ile-de-France region with nearly a million inhabitants, has an unique potential: numerous logistical infrastructures, a diversified economic fabric (tertiary, industrial and logistic), quantity agricultural and biomass resources, a leading network of universities and research, natural areas and landscapes of high quality, and recognised local initiatives. The idea is thus to consider the south of the Ile-de-France region as a laboratory of change, insofar as it has considerable advantages to invent and implement its own transition.



The Ile-de-France region ("Franciennne" in French) is centered on the city of Paris and spreads within the Bassin Parisien. This river basin includes the regions of Marne, Picardie and Centre as neighbors of the Ile-de-France. Cities such as Reims, Amiens, Le Havre and Orleans are situated less than two hours by train from Paris and less than three hours from Orly airport.

legend

- urbanized areas
- forest and semi-natural habitats
- rural areas



The south of the Ile-de-France region is growing from the hub between Orly (International Airport, National Market) and Massy (Hispeed train station, Opera). It can be decomposed as :

- › A mostly urban area based on the tripod of Orly, Massy, Evry (built ex-nihilo into an urban pole), and spreading along the Seine valley until the city of Melun.
- › East of that area, in the Seine-et-Marne county, start the wide agricultural plains of the Brie.
- › South-East of that area, beyond the stampian axis, start the wide agricultural plains of the Beauce (Essonne, Eure et Loir, Loiret)
- › The stampian axis is both a geological and ecological corridor that brings landscape value to the Essonne county, from the Fontainebleau forest in Seine-et-Marne to the Rambouillet forest in Yvelines.
- › In the space between the stampian axis and the urban area, we find open spaces with agriculture as the main activity (agriculture parks), broken by urban valleys and infrastructures.

legend

- south of ile-de-France
- urban area
- woodland area
- agricultural area
- airport

