

# CHOOSING THE CITY ?

Toward a liveable  
Habitable  
Desirable city



39<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP  
OF URBAN PLANING AND DESIGN  
OF CERGY-PONTOISE  
30 AUGUST TO 17 SEPTEMBER 2021- PARIS REGION  
Application until 15 june

**les ateliers**  
maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine

## Les Ateliers internationaux de maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine de Cergy-Pontoise

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# Choosing the city ?

**Toward a  
Liveable  
Habitable  
Desirable  
City**

39<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL URBAN PLANNING WORKSHOP IN CERGY-PONTOISE

30 AUGUST TO 17 SEPTEMBER 2021

The 2021 workshop will bring together a group of twenty young professionals, students and researchers from different backgrounds for an intensive session of immersion and multidisciplinary work.

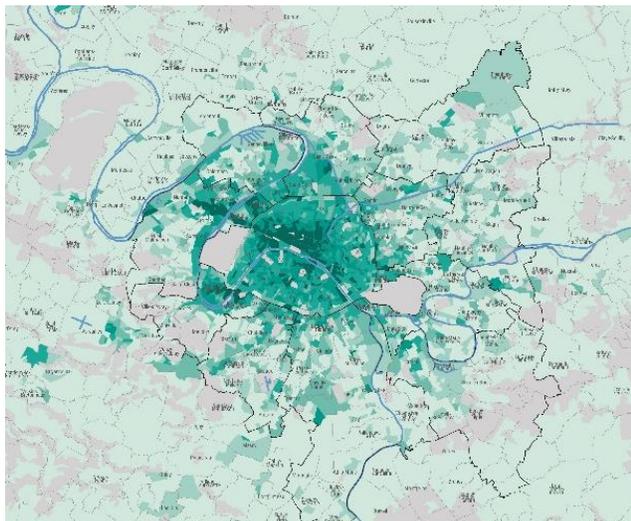
After a first week of meetings, visits and exchanges with the workshop partners, the participants will work in three teams for two weeks during which time there will be collective exchanges with local stakeholders. The teams' proposals will then be presented to an international jury made up of local specialists, territorial actors and international members.

The workshop is not a competition but a platform for collective exchange that brings together territorial actors and professionals to propose solutions and innovative projects for the territory at various scales.

The pandemic has dramatically upended our ways of life. A global health wake-up call, its impact went far beyond the health field, exacerbating inequalities and profoundly challenging our habits and convictions, our relationships with others and with our environment, our ways of residing, working, consuming as well as the ways in which we find fulfilment.

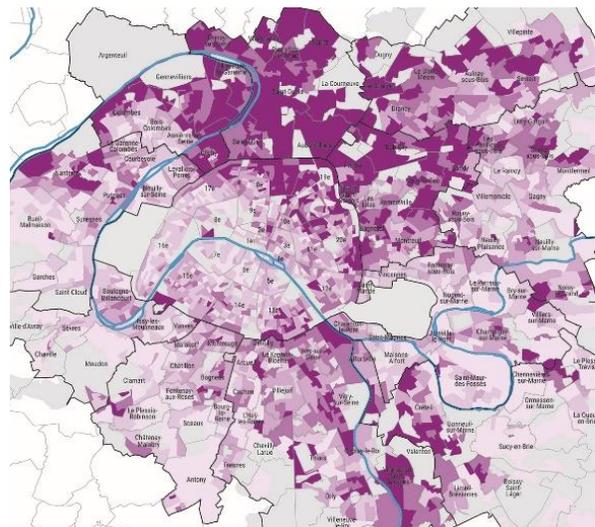
### **The pandemic: A revealer and accelerator of latent urban trends**

The successive lockdowns and confinement measures have brought to the fore our need for space and nature, **the importance of our physical and mental health.** At the same time, the fear of contagion has led to our disenchantment with places where people and passage are heavily concentrated (public transport, busy streets, etc.) and has highlighted the limits of densely packed populations, the densification of the built environment and work-home commuting distances.



Job density – Source: APUR 2020

*While cities remain attractive thanks to their extremely high concentrations of jobs, are they in themselves desirable?*



Household over-occupation – Source: APUR 2021

*Do people who reside in over-occupied housing have the opportunity to isolate themselves elsewhere?*

In addition, the increasing effects of urban heat islands, air pollution spikes and the lack of natural spaces within easy reach often push citizens to flee the city.

In the Île-de-France, in particular, the prohibitive cost of housing, combined with their small surface areas and more often than not absence of outdoor spaces, sometimes makes this territory undesirable and increasingly restrictive for the most modest populations.

While certain categories of inhabitants found themselves unable to choose or change the conditions of their living situations, the various waves of isolation allowed others to question their prevailing lifestyles in order to open up new horizons: to have the choice of their place of residence and work, to rediscover a calmer pace of life and living spaces, to reappropriate the resource of time, to take care of themselves and their loved ones, to learn how to enjoy the small pleasures in life...

### ZOOM... SANITARY MEASURES IN FRANCE

#### 1st lockdown march - may 2020

Closure of schools, non-essential businesses, green spaces, cultural and leisure places, restaurants and bars, work interruptions for non-essential sectors, permission to go out limited to one hour per day within a radius of one kilometer.

#### 2nd lockdown october - december 2020

Based on the model of the first one, but schools and green spaces kept open, perpetuation of non-essential economic activities.

#### 3rd lockdown april - may 2021

Based on the model of the second one, but with school closure and authorization to go out within a 10km radius for 3 hours maximum.

**Curfew:** between 6pm and 9pm + **Closure** of cultural places, bars and restaurants, sports activities

When they had the chance, many urban residents decided to spend the successive confinements outside the major cities. For instance, during the first confinement, nearly 1.2 million people dwelling in the Ile-de-France left the region within a week.

**At a time when a significant proportion of inhabitants in the Île-de-France say they are ready to move to another region, how can sustainable transformations of this territory be encouraged for it to remain attractive and desirable?**

**How can the Île-de-France be made more liveable by ensuring new health and environmental co-benefits?**

**How can this territory be made more habitable through public spaces and improved housing conditions?**

**How can new ways of living and working be better incorporated into the city?**



## Imagining the city as a set of urban ecosystems

The complexity of urban relations, both local and global, means that we now have to think of the city as an environment composed of interlocking natural and cultural entities which have been interacting for centuries, each adapting to the other. Nonetheless, the conditions for this cohabitation are multiple and mutable.

Currently, urban ecosystems are suffering from deteriorating environmental conditions (air, water and soil pollution; hydrogeological disturbances; higher average temperatures compared to those in natural environments; etc.). As such, these ecosystems are not always able to provide all the elements necessary to ensure the biological cycles of the species that inhabit them (which includes humans).

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That said, by rethinking urbanity and the city as ecosystems, there is the possibility to shift the paradigm in order to sustainably transform the city so that it can:

- Provide for the basic needs of all its citizens: **a liveable city**
  - Guarantee the quality of the living environment: a habitable city
  - Respond to the desires and aspirations of its inhabitants: **a desirable city**<sup>1</sup>
- 

The spectrum of intermediary urbanities between the dense historic city (with housing that is often too cramped) and the suburban city of the “Trente Glorieuses” (synonymous with urban sprawl and car dependency), where natural areas are intermingled with built-up spaces, makes it possible to explore the hypothesis of a resilient urban ecosystem in concrete terms. The variety of situations (sometimes highly contrasted) in the Île-de-France territory represents a particularly relevant and fertile field for experimentation.

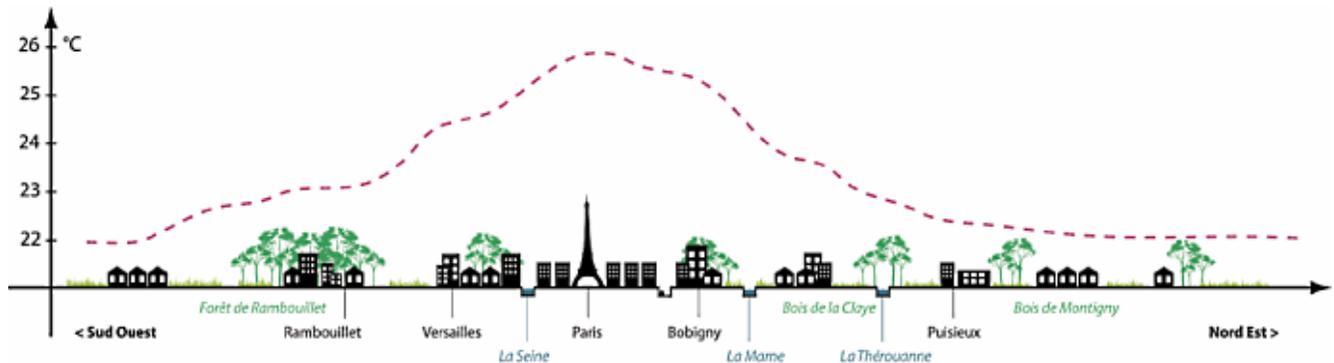
<sup>1</sup> The association of the terms “liveable”, “habitable” and “desirable” is inspired by an international colloquium organised by the Collège International des Sciences Territoriales in Grenoble in 2015 (“Habitable, vivable, désirable. Debates on the territorial condition”).

## A LIVEABLE CITY FOR A HEALTHIER POPULATION

The current pandemic tells us, once again, that the survival of the human species is in danger. The health crisis has come to compound the impacts of environmental (climate, energy, production, etc.) and societal (political, economic, ethical, etc.) crises. The city concentrates the most acute manifestations of these phenomena, highlighting the spatial injustices exacerbated by emergency policies.

**What interventions should be implemented to guarantee the health as well as physical and psychological well-being of inhabitants, in short, a better quality of life in the urban environment?**

**What can be done in the built environment to mitigate the effects of climate change and contribute to the reduction of CO2 emissions?**



*Cross-section schematic of night-time temperatures during a heatwave in 2008 (similar to summer 2003) – Source: © Groupe DESCARTES*

## **A HABITABLE CITY FOR A BETTER APPROPRIATION OF URBAN LIVING SPACES**

The world is becoming more populated and more urban. But is it also more habitable? The city juxtaposes urbanity, rurality and a multiplicity of in-between situations, but these components are not always integrated, coordinated or symbiotic. This can lead to conflicts of cohabitation.

In the city, we are both sedentary and mobile. We live simultaneously in several spaces (from the home to the neighbourhood to the regional metropolis) and on different timelines (the day, the week, the season). We live individually and/or in groups. We live differently according to our age and our relationships with others.

### **What type of city could be the most habitable today?**

- What new uses should be incorporated in the urban mix?
- What new spaces (public, collective, indoors and outdoors, etc.) could accommodate these uses and contribute to the attractiveness of the city?

### **How can the appropriation of public and shared living spaces be encouraged?**

- How can they be designed so that they are better adapted to contemporary urban practices (mobility, traditional work and telework, leisure, culture, sociability, etc.)?
- How can inhabitants be brought together around common projects, in order to live together better?

### **How can housing be reimagined so that it is simple and affordable, while preserving the spatial qualities of living together which proved to be indispensable during the pandemic?**

- How can the evolution of lifestyles, the (re)composition of households, as well as the “internalisation” of work and leisure practices within the home be supported?

## A DESIRABLE CITY FOR FINDING GREATER FULFILMENT IN THE CITY

The new aspirations of residents revealed by the pandemic go hand-in-hand with the reasons why many residents of the Île-de-France stated that they wanted to leave the region even before the health crisis (to live in a less stressful, less polluted, less expensive, safer environment, etc.).



*The Diwan participatory housing project in Montreuil – Source: © Anne-Laure Engelhard*

While the desire for nature was the driving force behind the departure of certain populations from the main urban centres beginning in the late 19th century, metropolisation has also profoundly transformed and hybridised those once rural areas.

In contrast, due to the pandemic, many of the classic functions of the city (conviviality, culture, work opportunities, etc.) have been undermined, at least temporarily.

**In contrast, due to the pandemic, many of the classic functions of the city (conviviality, culture, work opportunities, etc.) have been undermined, at least temporarily.**

**What can be done for the city to remain desirable?**

**How can inhabitants be empowered to make it their own, to be proud of it, to live well in it?**

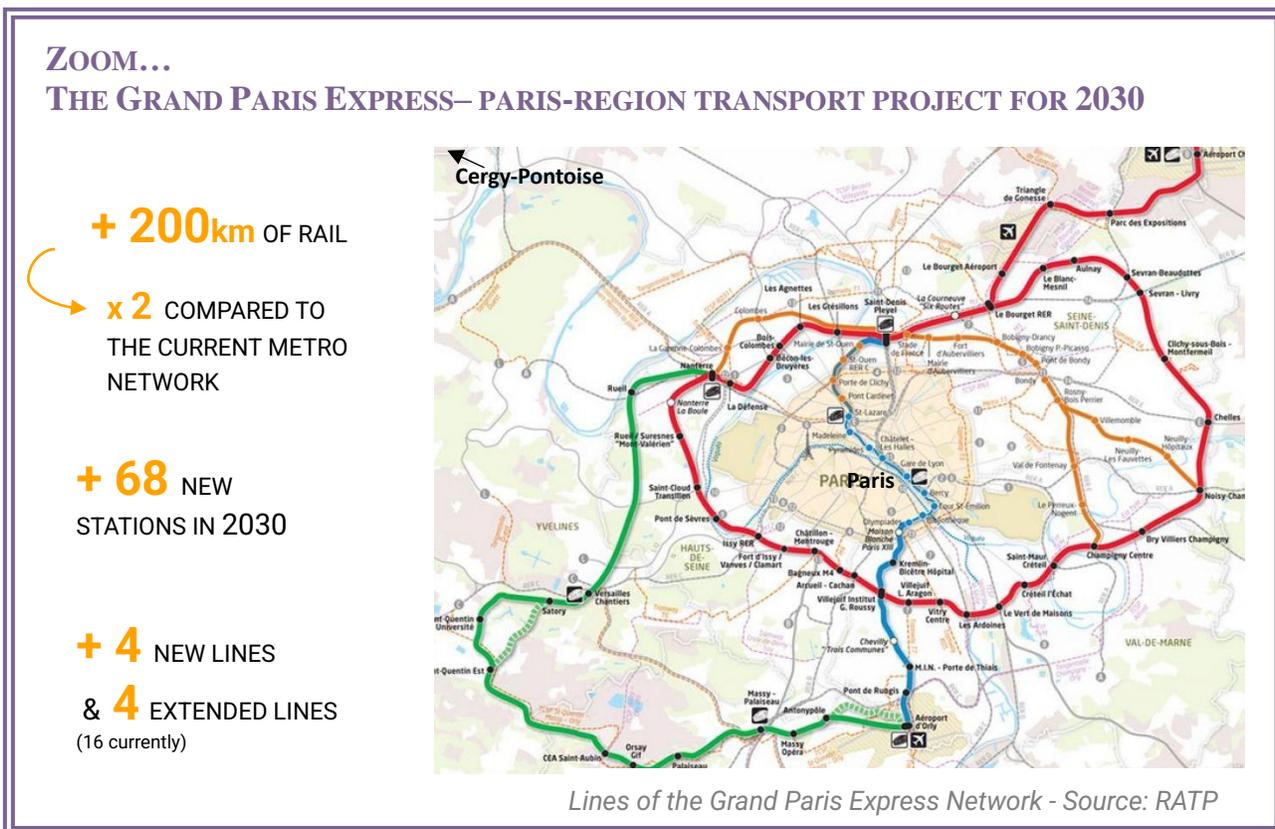
**What urban spaces, especially outdoors, could accommodate alternative forms of sociability and culture?**

## What are the alternatives to pre-existing models of development?

### MAJOR ÎLE-DE-FRANCE INFRASTRUCTURES ON A SCALE OF PROXIMITY

Over the next decade, the Île-de-France will see the inauguration of the Grand Paris Express (a public transport network consisting of four automated metro lines), which aims to connect and strengthen secondary centres by attenuating the initial radio-concentric organisation of the Parisian metropolis.

This type of urban development centred on the articulation between urban planning and transport is mainly based on a principle of efficiency which leads to considerable densification around the stations. At the same time, however, reflections are emerging on alternative forms of urban planning (circular urbanism, transitional urbanism, specialised approaches to the city based on usages, etc.) aimed at meeting the challenges of proximity, ecology, rationalisation and the mutualisation of space, as well as a better integration of participatory processes.



For some years now, the Paris Region Workshop series has been highlighting the need to take into account the diversity of the needs and wishes of the territory's inhabitants by seizing on the great variety of urbanities found outside the metropolis. This has led to questions about other ways of living in the city, in particular through reflections on business parks and urban wastelands, on the difficulties of living with dignity and happiness in the metropolis, and on the theme of alternative housing in the rural fringes of the Île-de-France region.

**What scenarios for urban transformation can therefore be proposed in the face of the densification model, which would also avoid the promotion of an urban sprawl that consumes agricultural land?**

**ZOOM ...  
THE OLYMPIC GAMES (2024)**

**Paris 2024 : les sites des Jeux olympiques**

*Olympic Game sites – Source: AFP*

In 2024, the Paris Olympic Games will take place. Although 95% of the sites already exist or will be temporary fixtures, there is no doubt that they will have an impact on the city and its development.

**What are the impacts of major international events on the making of the city?**

## BETWEEN TEMPORARY ADAPTATIONS AND STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS: LESSONS FROM THE CITY DURING A HEALTH EMERGENCY

Since the beginning of the series of containment measures applied in certain European countries, several scientists and practitioners in the field of urban planning and construction have been inviting us to see the pandemic as an opportunity to **reflect on a “structural” change** in the way we conceive of our living spaces at different scales. The health crisis, in fact, is just one more sign of the global upheavals of which humans are already suffering the effects, but for which they are also largely responsible.

While more health-friendly urban planning must be pursued, the new living conditions in the city also raise questions about our desire for urbanity. On the one hand, the shortage of certain urban functions and spaces has made them more desirable, even indispensable; on the other hand, the difficulties experienced in accessing them have often allowed us to rediscover, through close proximity, hidden beauties and previously underestimated values (empathy, solidarity, civic commitment, etc.).



*Cities have also revealed themselves as calmer and more welcoming places, both for humans and non-humans alike.*

*Les Grands Voisins transitional urban planning site in Paris – Source: Les Grands Voisins*

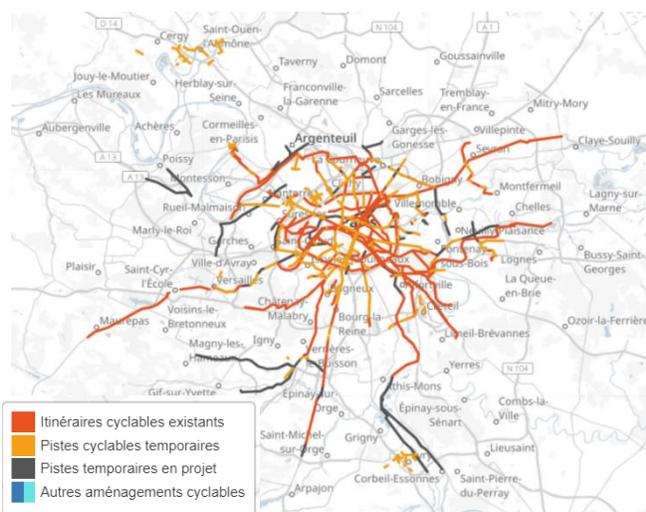


Cycling facilities of the Rivoli street in Paris, implemented following the 1st lockdown – Source: Commute de Paris

Moreover, the emergency urban planning highlighted during the pandemic made it possible to carry out flexible and quickly implemented temporary arrangements (cycle lanes, pedestrianisation, etc.). These projects were then maintained or removed according to the uses observed.

## How can the city be conceived as reversible?

- How can the flexibility and adaptability of spaces be considered from the outset in order to respond to the constant evolution of needs?
- Can the examples cited constitute a new way of transforming the city through experimentation and consultation, as a complement to institutional urban planning?
- How can the proposals from the 2021 Paris Region Workshop contribute to this reflection?



Interactive map depicting the main temporary or lasting bike paths (called « coronapistes ») in the Île-de-France region – Source : collectif vélo Île-de-France, Métropole du Grand Paris

## The workshop format

The workshop is organised according to the original method of Les Ateliers, which consists of bringing together professionals from different countries and professions in multidisciplinary teams. The approach of the workshops is multi-scalar, ranging from the Île-de-France region as a whole to the scale of the communes and neighbourhoods, and even to the scale of the street.

The first few days are devoted to fieldwork, meetings and visits allowing everyone to discover and appropriate the territory and its different scales for the workshop. The teams then start working in groups.

At the end of the second week and after working with computers and other technological tools, a jury composed of local and international professionals and local decision-makers is gathered to listen to and analyse the proposals and approaches of each team. The presentations are public. At the end of the presentations, a jury deliberation is organised, the objective of which is not to choose a project, but to pinpoint important and strategic information that will allow the work to be continued as well as to find and create complementarities between the different groups.

These exchanges will make it possible to draw up an initial summary of the workshop, highlighting the jury's recommendations and the work of the three teams.

### **Lieu et Date**

The workshop will be held in Cergy-Pontoise from 30 August to 17 September 2021. The workshop is open to young professionals of all nationalities and disciplines, and to students with at least a master's degree. Urban planners, designers, architects, geographers, engineers, photographers, landscape architects, artists, journalists, etc. We are especially keen to open our sessions to applicants specialising in economics, sociology and/or ecology.

Participation is voluntary and unpaid.

Conditions: Proficiency in English (must be able to work within an international team), full availability for the workshop dates, and a maximum age of 30 years.

Requests for information and/or documentation [villedesirable@ateliers.org](mailto:villedesirable@ateliers.org)

## How to apply ?

### Preparing your application

The selection of twenty-one international participants who will work in 3 teams supervised by professionals will be made on the basis of an application packet to be sent in no later than 15 June 2021 at 11pm (Paris time), compiled in the following order

1. Completed application form,
2. Your CV/Resume (one to two pages maximum)
3. A short personal work based on the workshop's topic. By developing your thoughts on a "liveable, habitable, desirable city" on another site, preferably in your home country, the aim of this assignment is to engage applicants in a personal reflection prior to the workshop on the themes being addressed. This work is to be done individually. We encourage applicants to use a variety of formats: illustrations, poems, photos, etc. (3 to 4 pages in A4 format or 2 pages in A3 format).

Applicants must submit the application packet as a single PDF file containing all of the elements listed above, compiled in order and entitled LAST NAME\_First Name\_INC. Work in pairs is accepted as long as the work of each individual is clearly identified. Applications are individual and cannot be submitted as a team.

Applications should be sent to [candidatures@ateliers.org](mailto:candidatures@ateliers.org)

Selection results will be announced approximately one month after the close of the application period.

### Registration conditions

The registration fee is 150€ (including association membership fee), which includes accommodation in Cergy-Pontoise for the whole duration of the workshop, local transportation, certain group meals, site visits, conferences, and design materials.

## Application form Paris-Region Workshop 2021

From 30<sup>th</sup> august to 18<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Family name : \_\_\_\_\_

First name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth : \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality : \_\_\_\_\_

Postal address : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail : \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile phone : \_\_\_\_\_

Somebody to contact in case of problem : \_\_\_\_\_ Tél. : \_\_\_\_\_

Degrees : \_\_\_\_\_

Current situation: \_\_\_\_\_

Participation to other collective works: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about Les Ateliers?

Former participation	
Friend/colleague	
University/professors	
Internet	
Other (please specify)	

**Skills** (from 0 : nul to 4 : mastery)

LANGUAGES	0	1	2	3	4
French					
English					
Other (please specify)					

EXPRESSION	0	1	2	3	4
Hand drawing					
Computer drawing					
Writing					
Photo					
Indesign software					
Oral/written presentations					
Other (please specify)					

SPECIFIC SKILLS	0	1	2	3	4
Engineering					
Visual Arts					
Economy					
Design					
Environmental planning					
Public Transport					
Landscape design					
Do you cycle? <i>Information for visits</i>					
Other (please specify)					

**Describe yourself in 80 words** (English or French)