

## Metropolis Under Digestion

Emblematic, central, city of light: Paris has always occupied a very special place – in France, of course, as the centre towards which everything converges, and in Europe, where it has always occupied a central position. It was very early a metropolis: cosmopolitan, diverse, creative – the crucible of many trends, including urban trends.

So perhaps it is not appropriate to speak of Paris as a New Metropolitan Mainstream, since the city is Genetically Mainstreamed. The phenomena observed in the 1990s and the first decade of this century (mentioned by Inura) have been present for many years. The city of light does not seek to create an image for itself or to enhance its visibility, since these are principles it has embodied since the end of the 18th century, if not before. The Mainstream is indeed inherent to the urban energy of Paris, although it is interesting to note two “counter-flow” phenomena that are particularly dominant in contemporary debates.

First, the privatisation of urban functions. PPPs appear to local authorities as an extraordinary financing tool, as a response – even more in this period of crisis – to their lack of funds. However, this trend is completely new in a country like France where the State has always played a strong and proactive role,

putting its stamp on all urban policies. Second, the political emergence of a Greater Paris. President Sarkozy has made this a central theme of his term of office – the emergence of the capital region as a political institution and super-hub of competitiveness has become a national priority. Succumbing to alarms about its competitiveness, in 2007 France launched an international competition for architects to give the metropolis a futuristic face. Following this initiative – whose outcome remains very uncertain – a State Secretariat was created with the aim of building the “Greater Paris” (the English phrase was used in the text) advocated by the Head of State. However, two obvious questions need to be asked. First, is Paris really in competition with the other international metropolises? And do the effects of these attractiveness-boosting policies concern populations that are sufficiently large to deserve so much attention? Secondly, does this project focused on building gigantic transport infrastructure (for an amount close to 20 billion euros thanks – naturally – to a PPP-type structure) respond to the real challenges of a region that in 2007 had almost 12 million inhabitants?

Paris. We could no doubt also speak of gentrification, housing problems, the lack of natural spaces in the heart of the metropolis or the destruction of farmland. The debate around Greater Paris is an opportunity, throughout France, for a discussion between elites on the challenges of urban development and its omnipotent capital – with the inhabitants, and their aspirations, being completely left out of the picture.

But, finally, this has probably always been the fate of the French capital. Victim of huge town-planning movements imposed by the State, it has always been forced to absorb and digest the restructurings inflicted upon it. Napoleon III and Haussmann sketched out a visionary ambition for Paris, which the city and its inhabitants took 80 years to assimilate. Later, De Gaulle and Delouvrier devised a master plan which the metropolis is still trying to absorb today. And, even before the pressure has let up and the plan been finalised, a new ambition – Greater Paris – has seen the light of day. As if to remind the City of Light of its true destiny: a Metropolis under digestion.

These two phenomena illustrate the fact that the New Metropolitan Mainstream is at the heart of current trends affecting

France 675'000Km2 \* Inhabitants 65'400'000  
Urban Region 12'000Km2 \* Inhabitants 11'600'000



- Legend**
- Urban Region
  - Central areas
  - Areas of State-Led Reinvestment / Areas of Urban Regeneration
  - Areas of Private Reinvestment / Areas of Intense Neighbourhood Upgrading
  - Trendy Neighbourhoods
  - Gated Communities / Exclusionary Zones
  - Areas of Privatization
  - Very High Income Area
  - Areas of disinvestment
  - Subcentres
  - Strategic Urban Infrastructure Projects
  - Flagship Projects
  - Events
  - Failed and Grounded (large) Projects
  - Informal Settlements
  - Spaces and Places of Resistance / Alternatives
  - Ethnic Concentration

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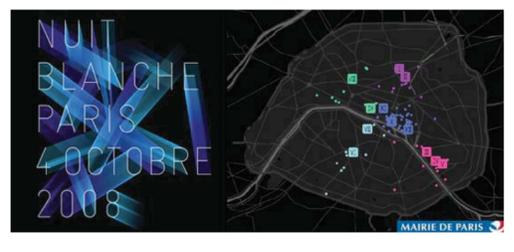
# Mega Event: Nuit Blanche

Purpose: To make art accessible to all, enhance the urban space by modern creativity, create a moment of conviviality

Cost: About €1.65 million

Investors: Municipality of Paris (two-thirds) and various sponsors

Architects/artists: Celebrities and others



Nuit Blanche was created in 2002 and takes place during the night of the first Saturday in October. This event involves contemporary artists exhibiting their work or performing in places that are normally not open to the public, or whose primary function is not artistic. The festival is held every year on the same date, but with a new programme.

All night long, institutional cultural venues stay open and entrance is free. But the most interesting feature is the nocturnal artistic promenade: Nuit Blanche offers Parisians the chance to rediscover their own city through a variety of places, some prestigious, others abandoned and curious, sometimes presented from an unusual angle or in a particular light. Thus public spaces (parks, squares, streets) and building façades become the media for artistic events, including ordinary places such as schools and swimming pools. For each annual event, Nuit Blanche reserves singular locations and commissions works from artists.



At the beginning, Nuit Blanche concentrated on contemporary art and installations, but it is gradually becoming more interested in sound, light, street theatre, digital arts and so on – using the arts to transform our view of the city. The aim of the programme is also to propose a festive and convivial night (with more than 1.5 million people in the street every year), to foster the feeling of belonging to the city. Little by little, other towns in the Paris area have signed on to Nuit Blanche and the event has been reproduced across the world.

**Significance for NMM**  
Nuit Blanche is conceived as a combination of:  
- A high-level cultural event including the projects of influential artists but also more modest projects by young artists  
- An opportunity to rediscover the city in a fresh light  
- An effort to strengthen social cohesion via art. It therefore focuses mainly on public spaces often in out-of-the-way or sensitive neighbourhoods  
- An event intended for Parisians. However, a growing number of tourists come to Paris for Nuit Blanche.

**Stakeholders, deals**  
The municipality is the initiator and leader of this event, one of the series of major events (Paris Beach, etc.) initiated by the Mayor elected in 2001. The municipalities of each district (Paris has 20 sub-municipalities) can compete to host part of the Nuit Blanche. Artists are very keen to be chosen to participate.

**Impact**  
By including sensitive neighbourhoods, Nuit Blanche is one of the cultural operations that strive to “clean up” and enhance the security of inner-city Paris. Even if it lasts only one night, this event can be considered to participate in the overall gentrification process.

At the same time, the event plays an undeniable role in the dissemination of little-known artistic disciplines, like the digital arts and street theatre. It is also the opportunity for intense involvement on the part of associations and non-profits, which organise their own events alongside the official programme.



# Urban Regeneration Project: Ivry Confluences

Purpose: The development of the service sector in the Paris area and the obsolescence of its infrastructure have forced part of the built urban fabric of Ivry-sur-Seine into hibernation. This former industrial district needs to be resuscitated, while restoring a leading role to the River Seine.

Cost: Not indicated

Investors: Sadev 94, has selected Icade, the Brémond Group, Crédit Agricole Immobilier and Bouygues Immobilier

Architects/artists: The master plan has been entrusted to Bruno Fortier, who coordinates the architect-urban planner teams of Reichen & Robert, Guérin & Pedroza, Dusapin-Leclercq, Valode & Pistré and Paul Chemetov.



The Ivry Confluences sector is marked by its industrial past and its strategic position between two major north-south axes that cross the entire Ile-de-France region: the railways and the River Seine. It is located in the immediate prolongation of Paris's 13th district, which has almost completed its transformation (ZAC Paris Rive Gauche Business Park). It will ultimately become the emblematic gateway to Ivry, the upper part of the Seine and the Val de Marne, all areas that are the logical extension of Greater Paris. The industrial heritage today lacks coherence, but could become one of the major facets of the identity of Ivry-sur-Seine in the future.

**Brief pre-operational background**  
The whole of the Ivry-Port district has been the subject of projects and reflections by public-sector players since 2002. In 2004, the town of Ivry-sur-Seine endorsed a reference development scheme for the sector, which was presented to the Municipal Council and discussed with the population. The town appointed Sadev 94 (a departmental development entity) as concession-holder for the development project.

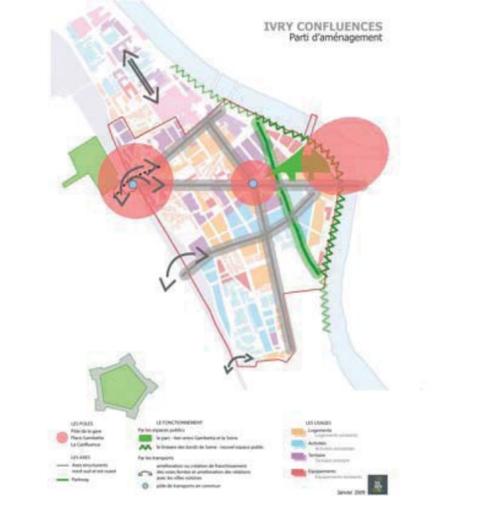
Ivry Confluences also comes under the scope of the “Orly-Rungis-Seine Amont” major urban operation (GOU) of national interest, the basic principle of which was set by the Government at the Interministerial Committee on Regional Development (CIADT) of 6 March 2006.

**Scope and programme:**  
The Ivry Confluences development project covers an area of about 145 hectares. The urban programme is based on the construction of large public spaces with a surface area of 1 million square metres, including 420,000 square metres of housing, or about 4,500 housing units. This programme is scheduled to run from 2009 to 2022.

**Features of the project:**  
An urban project management team has been set up to implement the project. It is composed of a coordinating architect (Bruno Fortier) and five teams of reputable architects and urban planners.

The project has been divided into five sectors, each allocated to a team. The overall project will be further refined by the definition of the public spaces, and the detailed development of each of the five operational sectors.

**Project package:**  
Sadev 94 has signed an agreement with private operators (Bouygues, Icade, Brémond) for the purchasing arrangements of the future development land.



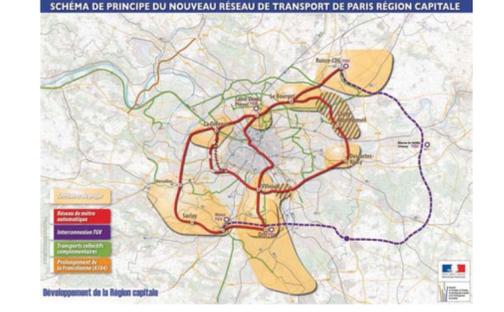
# Flagship Project: Paris, a true great?

**Le Grand Paris**  
Purpose: Raise the status of Paris in international city rankings

Cost: About €25 billion

Investors: Private sector

Architects/artists: Several celebrities



With an inner city population of 2 million and 10 million in the suburbs, Paris has been a metropolis to which all roads lead for more than a century. The exclusive seat of power and the economic centre, as well as a transport hub traversed by all the flows, the French capital enjoys an exceptional position in the country, arousing the jealousy and rancour of other municipalities.

Aware that his city was isolated and unloved, the socialist mayor elected in 2001 initiated a dialogue with the suburbs, giving one of his deputies specific responsibility for the consultation process. In 2004, the Ile-de-France Regional Council, also left leaning, launched a review of its Master Plan, an urban planning document that organises the territory for over 15 years.

It was against this backdrop of metropolitan effervescence that, in 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy was elected President of the Republic. Convinced of the need to reverse the decline of Paris in the international rankings, and eager to leave his mark on the landscape of the capital, the new President affirmed the idea of creating a “Grand Paris”, or a new, expanded Greater Paris. The idea of reorganising local government structures was quickly shelved in face of the powerful opposition of local elected officials. Next, the urban planning aspect became largely dominated by the transport issue.

Setting its sights high, the Elysée launched an international architects' competition which attracted 10 prestigious teams. Their reputation gave the project huge visibility, and the publicised deliberations aroused public excitement.



At the inauguration of the exhibition presenting the architects' proposals, Nicolas Sarkozy gave a speech underscoring two main ideas:

- the heart of this new metropolis would be a 140 km automatic supermetro for a total investment of €35 billion
- the new Greater Paris project would be expensive and would be financed by using PPPs.

Things subsequently bogged down. The economic crisis hobbled the transport project, which will be difficult to finance. The Greater Paris international workshop, intended to unite the efforts of the architects, is going nowhere: the ideas proposed by the stars cannot conceivably materialise for the time being. And finally, the local authorities remain deeply distrustful of the presidential ambitions, and the opposition between Nicolas Sarkozy, the Mayor of Paris and the President of the Ile-de-France Regional Council seem to have reached deadlock.

Greater Paris, a reflection of a powerful state-backed urbanism, has become a caricature of the most common pitfalls: enlisting prestigious signatures, disregarding the opinions of the population and local elected officials, and limiting the city to a question of transport. That is decidedly not the way for Paris to grow.



# Alternative: Organised Resistance

Name of project: «Ministry of the Housing Crisis»

Purpose: Draw the attention of the media and decision-makers to the issue of housing

Cost: -

Investors: -

Architects/artists: Group of artists and militants



The housing crisis that Paris so badly suffers from is a direct legacy of the Second World War. The massive destruction caused by the war exacerbated the gaps already present for many years. With the combination of the baby boom and decolonisation, the shortage became dramatic, leading to the development of slums on the outskirts. Resolute policy decisions and the construction of large complexes were not enough: the housing shortage in the capital became chronic. In addition, the inflationary spiral went hand in hand with speculation.

This is why supply today is far outstripped by demand – and rents and prices are far beyond the means of the population. And yet there is a law that allows the requisition of vacant housing and stipulates that “the representative of the Government in the Département can proceed, by requisition, for a maximum renewable period of one year, with the partial or total possession of vacant unoccupied or insufficiently occupied premises for residential use”. Issued by the National Council of the Resistance at the end of the war, this provision “only gives a right to the precarious and personal occupation of the premises to the beneficiaries”, who are also required to pay monthly compensation.

The social movement associations have been fighting for years for the enforcement of this provision, especially in Paris, where it is estimated that 10-3% of all buildings are vacant. But this battle assumed a new dimension with the creation of the Ministry of the Housing Crisis. In late 2006, three associations started occupying a 1,000 square metre building that had been left empty for three years. Dubbed the “Ministry of the Housing Crisis – Association HQ”, this place, which accommodates a few families and young people in difficulty, and also hosts associations and creative projects, has given tremendous visibility to the struggles around housing.



The building has now been bought by City Hall, which plans to turn it into housing units. But the militants engaged in this battle are continuing the fight by occupying new buildings, of which the most symbolic is La Marquise, in the 4th district. A historic residence uninhabited for over 50 years, the building stands on the Place des Vosges, one of the capital's most expensive locations. And yet, the occupants cannot be expelled because they are sheltered by the DALO law. During the winter of 2007, after a long battle, the social movements secured the creation of an enforceable right to housing, which guarantees everyone the right to a home. But since you cannot erect housing units by simply passing a law, the Government is stuck in an inextricable quandary, unable to expel or to re-house. The Council of State has stepped in, and the Paris Council even endorsed the Jeudi Noir (Black Thursday) occupation, qualifying it as “totally legitimate”.

These movements have the novel feature of bringing together long-standing social battles with young activists engaged in artistic struggles. This eminently political current is the most dynamic today in the Paris area, and the only one that creates alternative housing.



## Synthesis over all four projects and outlook

Paris may be genetically mainstreamed, but it is not a trend follower – much the contrary. Although focused on its own problems (of governance, of relations with the suburbs, the housing crisis), the capital nonetheless remains open to the world. The clearest signs of this are obviously the central role that it occupies in international tourism and its status as a university city. This makes it a city of flows, a city of passage, a city enriched by those who pass through it and cross it.

The resulting cosmopolitanism is the best guarantee that Paris will never be inward looking. A museum city par excellence, it is in fact seriously threatened by the risk of becoming a city of waxworks, in which the past could become more present than the future. The lack of significant new architectural achievements (for the last 15 years at least) is a worrying indicator of this. Although the work of Inura underlines the obsession with starchitects as a symptom of the NMM, the opposite could on the contrary be the sign of a lack of creative urban dynamism.

Faced with the NMM, what are the strengths of this “dowager” city?

First, and despite the existence and impetus of PPPs, the central role of the public decision-makers is a strength. Elected officials, forced to underscore their opposition, push competing projects to be able to exist politically. Added to the complexity of the administrative networks, this phenomenon is turning the public personality into the principal and virtually exclusive player in urban policies. Thus the influence and weight of the local officials of the 1,281 municipalities of the Ile-de-France region could presage the advance of an NMM that is closed to local realities and to the aspirations of the population.

Next, the suburbs are the future of the metropolis. With more land reserves, lower housing costs and more green spaces, the suburbs are in fact becoming fashionable. The past decade has witnessed an accelerated gentrification of the “red” suburbs (traditionally working class and communist towns of the inner suburbs). The power of the history of these areas guarantees that Greater Paris will preserve the diversity of its identities.

Finally, the ramp up of a democracy of opinion will perhaps be the best barricade against a blind NMM in the future. A tardy builder of participative democracy, Paris nonetheless knows that it cannot ignore the opinions of its residents. In this respect, the lagging renovation of the Les Halles neighbourhood is a powerful illustration of the nuisance power that organised citizens can project. Thus the decision-makers of the cities (public and private alike) now agree on the need to harvest and heed civic expression.

Faced with the economic crisis and the spreading talk about international competitiveness between cities, the coming years will tell us whether NMM will gain the upper hand or whether public and civic resistance will succeed in limiting its deleterious effects. And it is precisely at this price that Paris can remain, as it has already done for hundreds of years, in the vanguard of urban trendsetters.

## Central Area

The central districts of Paris represent the compact centre where the main commercial, touristic and administrative functions are concentrated. But to properly describe the central area, we add "La Défense" (on the West) and the Lyon's Station (on the East) which are the most important component of the central business district.

## Trendy Neighbourhoods

This phenomenon can be observed from the North West to the South East after the ring road - what is called "The little crown". It's composed of the ancient "red municipalities", which used to be communists. Most of the housing units are individual houses with a private garden, what is particularly attractive for the Parisians.

## Gated Communities / Exclusionary Zones

There is no "Gated Communities" in France. But the areas that have been indicated on the map are not gated places, but areas where no one comes as there are only housing units without public spaces or public services. This fact combined to the rent's highness leads to constitute excluding zones.

On the opposite of the social scale, there are areas like "Couronne Street", where drug deals reinforce the excluding side of the zone.

## Areas of Privatization

1) Marne-la-Vallée in one of the "New Cities" created by the National Government in the 60s. It's composed of 4 districts. When Disney decided to implant a park in Europe, it chose the 4th district, named Val d'Europe and negotiated to have a part of the urban planning responsibility. It's the single example of shared authority between public (municipalities and EPA Marne-la-Vallée) and private (Disney).

2) A14 and A86 Highways are infrastructures designed, financed (partially), built and operated by private companies. The privatization of the major transport infrastructures was restricted to the highways, but the PPP opened the way to extend it (starting by the rail network).

## Areas of State-Led Reinvestment / Areas of Intense Neighbourhood Upgrading

The main examples of neighbourhood upgrading due to a state-led reinvestment are in Paris. It's the case of almost all the traditionally working class areas, such as the Canal de l'Ourcq used to be.

Located in a housing and industrial area dedicated for several years to drug deal, the canal started its mutation with the opening of a trendy cinema named MK2. This cultural place, joined to a volunteered public policy, attracted a new population and, day by day, changed deeply the neighbourhood in the fifteen last years.

## Areas of Disinvestment

From the beginning of the 80s, areas have been identified for needing social and security problems. Here is the ironic: whereas every government agrees on the diagnostic, none of them have been able to launch an efficient action. Then, the "Areas of Disinvestment" should be more considered as areas of under or worth investment.

## Informal Settlements

Townships born after the second world war have been suppressed in the 80s. But new populations are creating new informal settlements. There are located in the cities' corner (highways, cross rails...)

## Flagship Projects

Since the "Grands travaux" (great works) signed by François Mitterand, Paris, as a metropolis under digestion (cf. introduction), have no more flagship projects. The Stade de France and the renovation of Les Halles are the two exceptions. But the Greater Paris – and Nicolas Sarkozy – will probably launch a new wave...

## Strategic Urban Infrastructure Project

As detailed in the poster, the Greater Paris's main project is a large automatic subway. It definitely is the most important infrastructure that Paris have ever decided... if it begins one day.

## Important Events and Festivals

All the major cultural events (Paris Plage, Nuit Blanche, Fête de la Musique, Rock en Seine...) are financed and managed by public structures (municipalities, region, public operator, Ministry for Culture...). But the region also counts several small festivals or local celebrations often initiated by associations. Most of these events are set in summer.

## Failed and Grounded Projects

The reason why there is no failed project on the map is that when an idea comes up two scenarios are possible: it becomes a project and then it will be realized, or it stays on the paper. None of the major urban project has failed.

## Ethnic Concentration Area

This is neither about ghettos nor excluding areas, but more something like urban villages where a particular culture or ethnic is more numerous than the other. Some of these areas became attractive for the tourists.