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 been a uncontested, diverse, capital – the cradle 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 genetic in the sense that many of its features have always 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 phenomena that are particularly dominant in contemporary debates. First, the privatisation of urban functions. PPPs appear to be a natural way to deliver public services, but especially in this period of crisis – even more so in a country like France where the State has always played a strong and proactive role.

Second, the political emergence of a Greater Paris. President – 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 serve 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?

These two phenomena illustrate the fact that the New Metropolitan Mainstream is at the heart of current trends affecting Paris. The need to deal with growth has been a part of the city’s history, and the challenge of urban development and its consequences – both positive, and negative, sometimes completely left out of the picture.

But finally, the city must also address the face of the 21st century. We are used to seeing huge new developments, but not necessarily, even in the past, to such a volume. In Paris this trend is even more pronounced, since the relationship between the city and its population has been a key factor in its development. The challenge is to maintain the allure of the City of Light while ensuring that it remains a place where people want to live and work.

Paris, the city that never sleeps, is a symbol of globalisation, melting pot, but also of nostalgia. The need to deal with growth has been a part of the city’s history, and the challenge of urban development and its consequences – both positive, and negative, sometimes completely left out of the picture.
Nuit Blanche was created in 2002 and takes place during the night of the first Saturday in October. This event involves contemporary artists exhibiting works which are protruding in places that are normally not open to the public, or whose primary function is not artistic. The festival is held every year since its inception, with various themes each year.

Nuit Blanche is an event that opens Paris to the city’s own citizens, allowing them to rediscover their city through the eyes of artists. It is a major event in the city’s cultural calendar, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The event is known for its innovative and creative spirit, and for its ability to bring together people from all walks of life.

The event is also known for its focus on social cohesion via art. It is a platform for artists to showcase their work in public spaces, and for the public to experience art in a new and engaging way.

In short, Nuit Blanche is a unique event that celebrates art and culture, and that brings people together in a spirit of creativity and innovation.

The iconic South Bank in London is one of the most recognisable landmarks in the city, and it has long been a symbol of the city’s cultural identity. It is home to some of the most famous cultural institutions in the world, including the Tate Modern art gallery and the London Eye. The South Bank is also home to a wide range of other cultural attractions, including the London Dungeon and the South Bank Centre for the Performing Arts.

The South Bank is a popular destination for tourists and locals alike, and it is a key part of London’s cultural landscape. It is a place where people can come together to enjoy a wide range of cultural activities, and to experience the vibrant and diverse culture of the city.

The South Bank is a testament to the rich and diverse history of London, and it is a symbol of the city’s ongoing commitment to culture and creativity.

In recent years, the South Bank has undergone a major transformation, with a number of new cultural attractions being opened. These include the South Bank Centre’s new Royal Festival Hall, which opened in 2013, and the Royal Shakespeare Company’s new home, which opened in 2016.

The South Bank is not only a place of cultural significance, but it is also a hub of economic activity, with a significant number of businesses and organisations headquartered in the area. It is a key part of London’s economy, and it is a symbol of the city’s ongoing commitment to innovation and progress.

In conclusion, the South Bank is a symbol of London’s culture and identity, and it is a place where people can come together to enjoy a wide range of cultural activities. It is a testament to the rich and diverse history of London, and it is a symbol of the city’s ongoing commitment to culture and creativity.
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

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

These are informal, slum-like areas where social and economic problems are acute. They are referred as “informal settlements”.

Flagship Projects

Since the “Grands travaux” (great works) signed by François Mitterrand, 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 ethic is more numerous than the other. Some of these areas became attractive for the tourists.