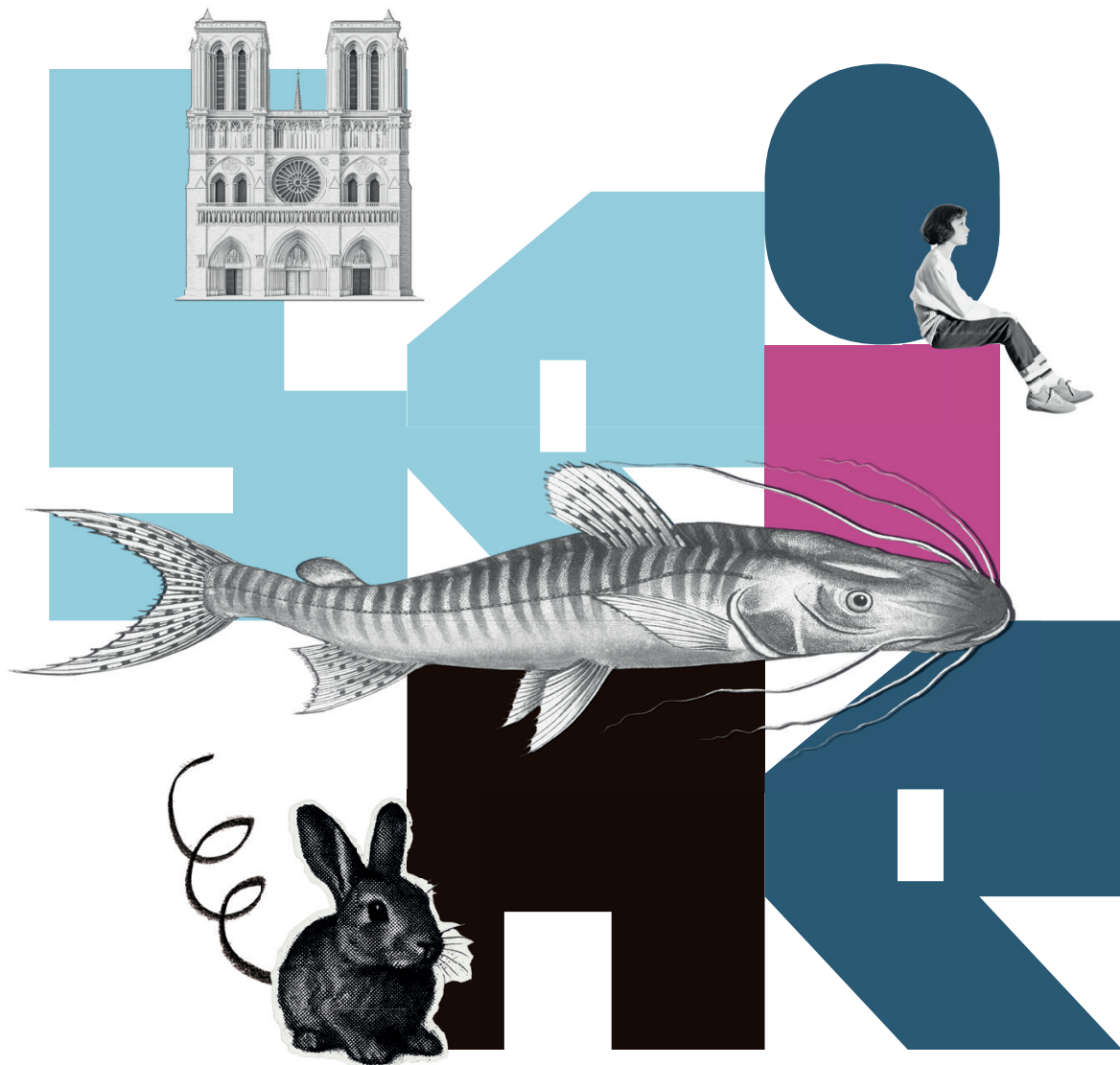


44th international of urban and territorial creativity
from 7 to 25 September 2026
Paris Region, France

Along the rhythms of the water
Imagining the Seine Metropolis



International call for applications
Expanded topic document

2nd session of the cycle of international workshops
«Ecology and Habitability of the Seine and its Tributaries»

Les Ateliers de Cergy: creativity, community, and foresight

15 to 18 participants

Three weeks of field and collective work

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Territories at the heart of the process

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Participating in Les Ateliers offers a unique learning experience, combining direct engagement with the territories with a multidisciplinary, immersive approach. It also means embarking on a meaningful human adventure filled with international encounters and collaborative work. Finally, you will become part of the Greater Paris ecosystem and join an international network of participants, stakeholders and alumni.

The 2026 session is part of the Sequanian Workshops cycle, a collective reflection on the future of the Seine basin, in a context of water scarcity, increased hydrological risks, and the need to renew forms of governance.

Every year in the Paris region, Les Ateliers brings together around twenty students and young professionals from a variety of disciplines and countries, who are selected to work in multidisciplinary teams. Over the course of three weeks, these teams explore a specific territory in close collaboration with local stakeholders, developing strategic visions and operational proposals in the process.

Drawing on a unique method of intensive, collaborative and creative work informed by expert input, field visits and stakeholder engagement, the workshop sits at the intersection of a research laboratory and a field project. The production of visual representations, such as drawings, maps, narratives and scenarios, is a key focus to allow exploration of imaginaries, visualisation of territorial dynamics and sharing of proposals in a sensitive and accessible manner. The teams present their work, which encompasses long-term visions and concrete courses of action, to an international jury and then make it available to local stakeholders to inform public policy.



The workshop team

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Introduction

Vivre avec l'eau, enjeu majeur pour le Grand Paris et le bassin de la Seine

In times marked by uncertainty and the deterioration of our living environments - pressure on essential resources, rising inequality, urban heat islands and climate hazards - the challenges of metropolitan liveability are coming to the fore with renewed urgency.

Since the Industrial Revolution, cities have been built with their backs to the water: rivers have been channelled and watercourses covered over, land drained, riverbanks developed, and surfaces sealed. These technical approaches to water management have enabled the Île-de-France region to undergo exceptional urban development, particularly due to French centralisation and the concentration of power. However, they have also contributed to exacerbating vulnerabilities.

The stakeholders in this unique territorial system are now rediscovering the importance of water cycles, soils, wetlands and ecological connectivity. Beyond a management-centred approach, the challenge is to embrace the imperative of **living with water** and to transform the ways in which the metropolis is shaped, based on what water enables, what it limits and what it connects.

This 44th workshop is set against the backdrop of the Great Garden of the Seine, serving as a framework for re-examining the metropolis through the lens of what sustains life. In this context, the workshop proposes to explore the possibility of a Garden Metropolis: a metropolis that no longer seeks to control water but to work with it within a new territorial vision. The aim is to shift our perspective on metropolitan functioning by focusing on what underpins its habitability: what infiltrates, connects, cools, nourishes, shelters and redistributes. The Garden Metropolis therefore suggests a change of approach: moving from a system centred on hydraulic control to a society attentive to the cycles, variations and conflicts of use of the river.

The workshop invites participants to rethink the Parisian metropolis through the lens of water and the Seine basin, exploring how a Garden Metropolis might emerge through new ways of living, producing, governing and transforming the territory over time. It is structured around three complementary themes - **inhabiting the metropolis through water, cultivating a metropolitan consciousness and fostering synergies between stakeholders** - which are broken down into six key questions examining the relationships between environments, housing, productive spaces, governance, collective initiatives and land use.

The theme of collective action forms the central thread of the session. The workshop invites participants to work on the basis of three operational actions: revealing, connecting, activating. **REVEALING what already underpins metropolitan life yet often remains largely unseen; CONNECTING scales, stakeholders, uses and territories; and, finally, ACTIVATING concrete levers for transformation, capable of sustaining collective dynamics over the long term.**

Understanding the metropolis therefore involves situating its dynamics within the territorial system of the Seine basin. The introduction to the territory will reveal its landscapes, structures and relationships, as an invitation to situate project initiatives at the scale of the wider basin



The territory: the Seine metropolis

The Seine basin is a historic basin and the vital heart of a territory with complex dynamics. Its 78,600 km² catchment area, and the diversity of its landscapes and sociologies, have led the Cergy Workshops to develop a novel approach for the three spatial sequences of the Seine, addressed in successive workshops.

The work of this 44th workshop explores the catchment area as a whole but focuses in this session on the metropolitan Seine. This represents the central section of the catchment area and forms the heart of a 'world city', where a large proportion of urbanisation, networks, services and economic activities are concentrated. It is also characterised by a concentration of functions, the intensity of land use, infrastructure and major services, as well as institutional complexity. This uniqueness stems from the centralisation of the French model. The capital region brings together a major proportion of the country's political, administrative, scientific and economic functions. It is also the main hub for employment and value creation. As a key hub for infrastructure networks, the metropolis thus emerges as a "city-region" whose organisation and structuring role extend far beyond its administrative boundaries.

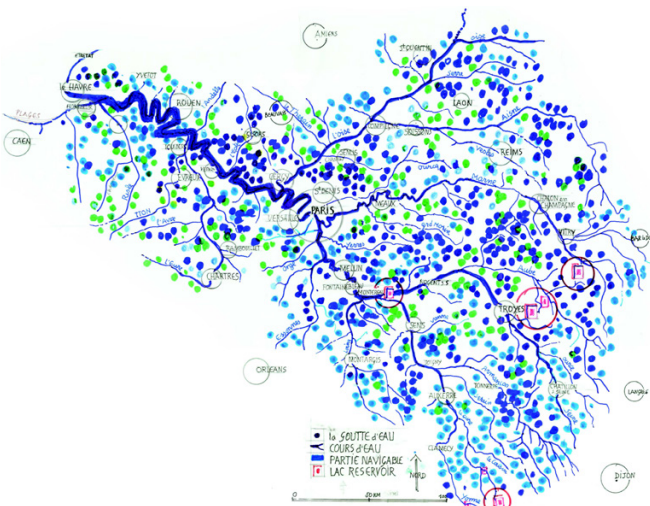
Beyond the Seine, the project takes into account the network of streams, rivers and tributaries, both visible and buried, as well as aquifers, wetlands, soils and water supply and sanitation networks. The metropolis is indeed characterised by a water geography that is both dense and at times discreet, marked by the Seine, by major tributaries, such as the Marne, the Oise or the Yonne, but also by more modest watercourses, such as the bucolic Bièvre, the invisible Croult, the discreet Morbras or the picturesque Ru de Gally. This workshop pays particular attention to the hydrological continuities that structure the conurbation and the possibilities they reveal. It thus invites us to experience the metropolis through the Seine and its tributaries, restoring clarity to

this network of relationships often obscured by the urban fabric or relegated to the background in peri-urban and rural areas. This approach highlights the upstream-downstream interdependencies: although far from the source and the estuary, the metropolis depends on its upstream areas to maintain flow rates, regulate floods and ensure navigation.

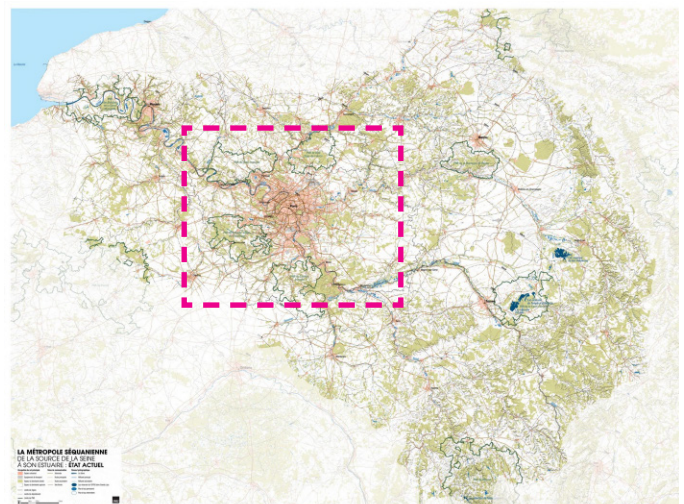
Thanks to the large reservoir lakes, some of which are located several hundred kilometres upstream – such as the Lacs d'Orient, Lac du Der-Chantecoq and Lac de Pannecière – the water flowing from Parisian taps can come from as far away as the rains that fall on the famous Champagne vineyards. In turn, the metropolitan area influences the downstream region through its hydraulic, ecological and metabolic effects, as well as through the diversity of uses taking place there – from river trade and tourism to the return of swimming. It also supports a complex water supply and sanitation system, from the drinking water treatment plants at Orly and Joinville to the large wastewater treatment plants at Valenton and Achères (the largest in Europe!). Added to this network are reservoirs and canals that criss-cross the metropolitan area and contribute to the appeal of its landscapes and the quality of its living environment.

From world city to city-region

Whilst Paris concentrates to an exceptional degree the functions that underpin its status as a global city, the world on which it depends is not confined to its borders. The resources it draws upon, the flows it organises, the infrastructure that supports it and the territories that sustain it link it to a much broader whole. It is in this sense that it must also be conceived as a city-region.



The Seine watershed, represented here as "water drops" by Bertrand Warnier, covers 80,000 km² – roughly the size of Austria



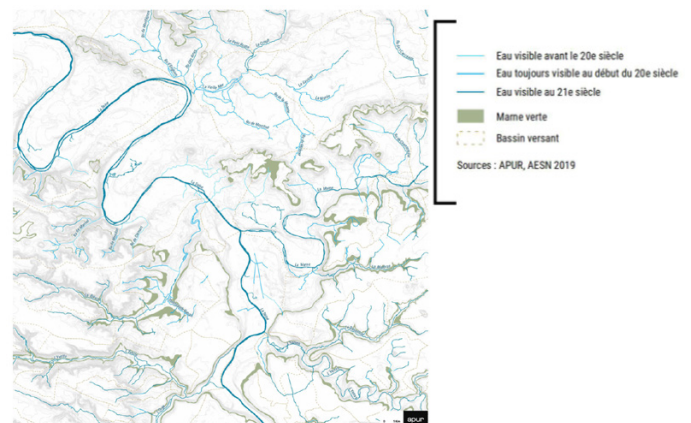
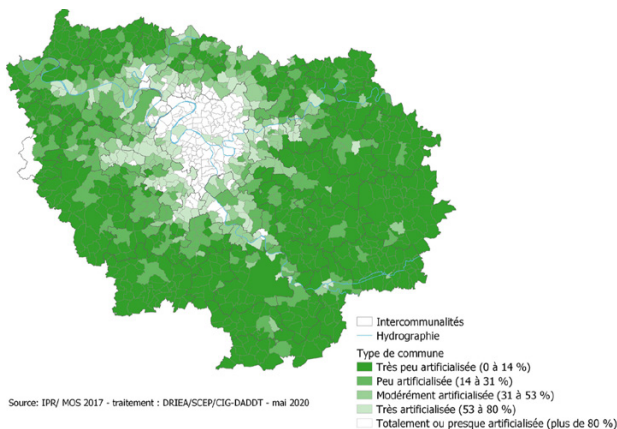
The Paris metropolitan area lies at the centre of the basin, where numerous confluences gather the waters of the territory (Institut Paris Région)

This spatial complexity coexists with natural and semi-natural environments – riverbanks, river islands, hillsides, peri-urban forests and wetlands – which play an important role in regulating the microclimate, filtering water and supporting biodiversity. However, their presence, quality and accessibility remain unevenly distributed across the metropolitan area. In this context, natural landscapes and heritage emerge as valuable resources that can be utilised to create a more ecological and resilient metropolis. This can be seen in the efforts to renature the Bièvre in southern Paris and reopen urban watercourses such as the Ru du Sausset in Tremblay-en-France on the outskirts of Île-de-France... It is this interplay between living environments, built forms and the capacity for territorial action that is particularly vividly reflected in the question of interactions between soils, land, built spaces, infrastructure and living environments.

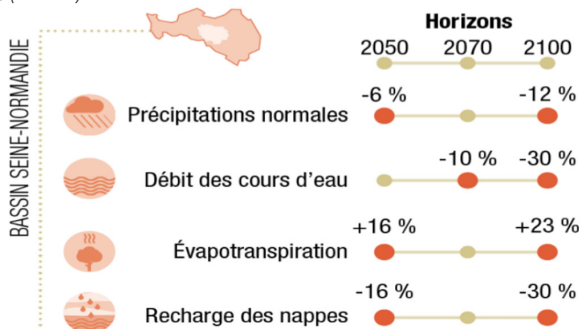
The Seine Metropolitan Area is also a socially diverse territory where multicultural populations with varied socio-economic profiles are concentrated. Living conditions vary greatly: access to nature and leisure spaces, proximity to amenities, exposure to climatic hazards, air and water quality, but also the ability to participate in civic life: housing status, community life, access to public spaces or housing. Added to these contrasts are sometimes contradictory demands placed on water and land: preserving resources in the face of climate change, supporting logistical and productive uses, whilst simultaneously enhancing recreational uses and our relationship with the living world. These tensions prompt us to reconsider the dynamics of the metropolis as a collective endeavour to create a great garden: a desirable and achievable project that prioritises life support in the broadest sense, promoting territorial solidarity and fostering shared resilience.

The metropolitan Seine: a territorial pivot and a space of articulation

The metropolitan Seine occupies a unique position between the upper Seine, a largely rural area that fulfils functions relating to food supply, regulation and energy across the basin, and the lower Seine, a hub for river transport, trade, logistics and tourism across an entire region. As the central section of the basin, it is a junction where the continuity of the river, urban intensity, crossings, statutory functions and governance tensions all converge. While Paris maintains a relatively stable relationship with the river, balancing heritage preservation with dynamics that encourage civic engagement, this relationship becomes fragmented beyond the capital. There, the continuity between the banks weakens, and the disconnections between local authorities, their uses, and their responsibilities re-emerge. The metropolitan session is therefore not solely concerned with the dense heart of the conurbation; it also examines the capacity of this central section to re-establish links with its tributaries, peripheries and upstream and downstream areas, with the aim of becoming a genuine hub for coordination across the wider basin.



The core of the metropolitan area is characterized by highly artificialized soils (DRIEA)



© L'INSTITUT PARIS REGION, 2021 / Sources : DRIAS, GREC IdF, AESN, SDAGE

Climate change will have numerous impacts on the role and presence of water in cities and across the entire basin.

Many waterways have been buried beneath the Greater Paris area (APUR).



Seine flood in 2018, photograph by Lionel Allorge.



Water appearing in multiple forms and across diverse metropolitan spaces: the Seine in Paris; the Olympic Village on Île-Saint-Denis; the renaturation of the Croult in Gonesse; the Seine in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges; the Marne in La Ferté-sous-Jouarre; the port of Gennevilliers; La Grande Borne in Grigny (Grand Paris Sud); Disneyland Paris (Benoit Prieur); Vaucresson; and La Plaine Saint-Denis (Som Vosavanh).

The 6 workshop key questions

Living in the metropolis through water

Affirming the role of aquatic environments, infrastructure and water landscapes as the foundations of metropolitan life and deepening our uses of and relationship with water.

1. In what ways can practices of caring for water and its landscape features improve metropolitan liveability?

Water can be viewed as either a resource or a risk. Within an ethic of care, it can also become a guiding principle, placing water back at the heart of the metropolitan project. The landscape features of water, such as tributaries, confluences, valleys, islands, hillsides, soils and edges, can be used to identify concrete points of action. How can the practices of retaining, infiltrating, slowing down, reopening, sharing and refreshing transform living conditions in the face of the climate and ecological crisis?

2. How can we connect housing, density, water and living organisms in order to create an attractive and hospitable metropolis?

Housing constitutes a significant aspect of the metropolis, so addressing it is a key way of influencing its transformation. Housing serves as a vital link between intimate and territorial scales. It encompasses summer comfort, access to water, rainwater management, land efficiency, communal areas, gardens and inner courtyards, as well as daily interactions with the natural world. So, how can we harness living as a means of driving ecological, social and climate action in the Garden Metropolis?

Cultivating a metropolitan awareness

Building a shared understanding of the interdependencies and bonds that link the metropolis to its rivers, ecosystems, and productive and food-producing lands.

3. How can productive and economic spaces be redefined as territorial resources that serve a desirable and sustainable metropolis?

Although productive and economic spaces are often considered to be detrimental to quality of life, they nevertheless form the basis of metropolitan life, providing agriculture, services, supplies and logistics and production. How can we move beyond a narrow focus on economic attractiveness and view these spaces as resources for territorial regeneration? The challenge lies in improving their relationship with water, soil, ecosystems and quality of life so that they can contribute fully to metropolitan liveability.

4. What forms of governance could support a 'Garden Metropolis', which is synonymous with territorial solidarity?

The metropolis does not exist in isolation; its tributaries, agricultural landscapes, infrastructure, supporting territories, and logistics, energy and production systems are all integral to its existence and function. How can we foster solidarity between the city centre and its outskirts, between upstream and downstream areas, and between institutions, residents, activities and ecosystems in order to effect an ecological, social and political transformation across the Seine metropolitan area and its tributaries?

Fostering synergies between stakeholders

Envisioning coalitions between public, economic and community stakeholders and residents, in order to remove the barriers to the ecological and social transformation of the metropolis.

5. How can we accommodate collective initiatives within the metropolitan project?

In the face of the risks of democratic breakdown and the challenges of a shared project in a metropolis characterised by social and territorial disparities, it is essential to recognise and strengthen the role of citizen action within the metropolitan project. Resident-led initiatives, such as community projects, cultural events and other activities, are not merely a matter of support or facilitation; they also contribute to building a more resilient and fairer metropolis that is better prepared for climate change. How can we give these initiatives a more strategic role in the metropolis's transformation?

6. How can we transform plots of land into infrastructure for change?

Land parcels can be viewed as concrete units where ownership, uses, regulations, permeability, biodiversity, vulnerabilities, and capacities for action intersect. They also constitute a strategic space for coordination between stakeholders, where trade-offs, responsibilities, and opportunities for coalition are negotiated. Against a backdrop of land pressure and net zero land take, how can we ensure that land is recognised as genuine infrastructure for negotiation, action and metropolitan transformation, rather than merely a constraint or a resource to be managed?

Three ways to act in the metropolis

REVEAL : Make visible the ecological and social foundations of the metropolis, such as river landscapes, living soils, invisible infrastructure and local practices. This involves re-examining the geographical structures within the metropolitan project, such as reclaiming the place of vegetated hillsides, the relief of valleys and plateaus, and the uniqueness of confluences, islands, and viewpoints as features that can influence the way we live and transform the territory.

CONNECT : Linking scales, actors and uses, from housing to catchment areas, land parcels to territorial dynamics and local initiatives to metropolitan policies. This involves re-establishing concrete connections between riverbanks, neighbourhoods, tributaries, urban fringes, agricultural areas, productive sites and public spaces, as well as bringing together in new ways those who use, traverse and bring these spaces to life. The aim is to set in motion the solidarity and dynamics that link the metropolis to its living environments.

ACTIVATE : explore strategies for catalysing change, catalyst ideas capable of overcoming institutional or land-use obstacles and initiating concrete dynamics of transformation. This involves identifying what can act as a lever in metropolitan contexts: partnerships to strengthen, practices to expand, events to reorient, collective uses to support, and cultural resources to mobilise, in order to open up shared and effective dynamics of transformation.



Imagining the metropolis of the Seine's great garden

Beyond the landscape metaphor, the Garden Metropolis signifies a shift in perspective on metropolitan reality. It involves re-examining the city through the lens of what sustains life and supports liveability, as well as ensuring long-term viability – and then setting in motion collective and individual actions based on this renewed focus on living conditions.

Such a reinterpretation also involves a shift in perception. The image of the garden links the real, the imaginary and the symbolic (Younes, 2025) and establishes fruitful connections between the different aspects of the metropolitan project. Territories are not only transformed through tools, rules or programmes, but also by drawing on narratives and imaginaries that shape what we consider to be possible, acceptable or desirable. The Garden Metropolis emerges as a framing narrative and a principle of action, as well as a method of building a metropolis through the planning and governance of open spaces, including natural, agricultural and forested areas, waterways, suburban gardens, public spaces,

courtyards, inner courtyards, islands, hillsides, plains and valleys – all of which form the basis of an infrastructure for liveability. Anything that can bear, accommodate or sustain life has the potential to become the 'matrix' of this renewed metropolis.

The concept of the garden provides a framework for considering all its components, treating them with equal care through nurturing practices, and establishing them as the foundation of a territorial project. In this sense, the Garden Metropolis project establishes water landscapes as the foundation of metropolitan living environments, drawing on the concept of the garden to enhance the liveability of diverse urban and peri-urban spaces. The concept of the garden transcends food and leisure to attain an 'existential dimension linked to care and dwelling' (Moquay, 2023). From this perspective, the garden can be understood as a framework for regenerating inhabited environments by nurturing, connecting, and recreating the conditions for our living environments to thrive (Younès, 2012).

The Water Garden Metropolis

The Garden Metropolis takes on a broader meaning within the context of the Greater Seine Garden. It is not just a way of describing the metropolis, but also a way of situating it within the geographical, hydrological and landscape features of the Seine basin. In this sense, the metropolis can be understood as being centred around the water cycle, which is the primary condition for life in the basin. The metropolis appears less as a mere functional assemblage and more as a system of relationships, interdependencies and possibilities on the scale of the basin and along the watercourse.



2025 workshop production

In contrast to a certain historicist view of the garden as a closed world (Moquay, 2023), the Garden Metropolis refers to a network of interconnected and interdependent spaces. It denotes an open system, traversed by the flow of water, materials, living beings, uses and attachments. Rather than being a composition held together by a single hand, it is an arrangement of acts of creation, maintenance and transmission distributed over time amongst various actors. In this respect, it is more an ethical and political project of habitability than an aesthetic concept, founded on the sustainable articulation

of environments, practices and ways of life. Building on this historical, regenerative, imaginative and methodological foundation, the Garden Metropolis aims to facilitate engagement with water, soil and living organisms so that these transformations can be adopted by coalitions of stakeholders and residents through local uses and practices that can maintain and renew the conditions of habitability and bring about a liveable, just and desirable metropolis: the **Great Garden of the Seine**.

From the Barbaric Metropolis to the Garden Metropolis

The concept of the Garden Metropolis can be seen as an implicit response to Guillaume Faburel's (2019) critique of 'barbaric metropolises': a model driven by economic competition, accelerated flows, wealth concentration and confiscation, land artificialisation, and environmental and societal depletion. Rather than disputing the harshness of this assessment, the Garden Metropolis seeks to reverse this trajectory by prioritising habitability, territorial interdependencies, and care for water, soil, and living beings. It also aims to re-engage metropolitan imagination within the balances of subsistence, orienting it towards fairer and more desirable ways of living.

Taking this as a starting point, the Garden Metropolis unfolds through a series of complementary approaches. It is conceived as a water system and examined in terms of its subsistence conditions. It is organised by its continuities and porosities, and its vital functions are considered. It is also guided by an ethic of care, governed as a commons, and embedded within articulated temporalities. These different perspectives do not constitute a closed programme, but rather a means of articulating the dimensions through which the metropolis can become habitable once again – or, more precisely, co-habitable – in the sense of a shared life between inhabitants, environments, and living beings.



Organised by its continuities and porosities, a relational metropolis

The Garden Metropolis works with continuities – blue and green, as well as social – and the porosity of land, whether collective or private. It transforms edges, banks, courtyards, interstices, ponds and pools into strategic places of habitability, offering coolness, refuge, filtration and sociability.

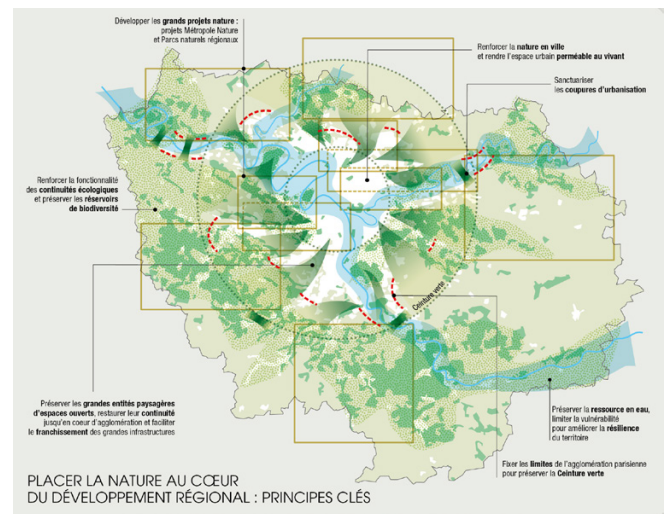
These continuities and permeability are not just environmental imperatives; they also connect environments, uses, and landscape experiences at different scales. They encourage us to consider all these spaces with equal attention, respecting the uniqueness of each environment while following a shared logic of habitability. From this perspective, any space capable of supporting life can be understood as part of the vast metropolitan garden – a territorial infrastructure that should be integrated with local transport, water management, and everyday access to nearby nature.

Continuities in the service of well-being

From suburban gardens, which are common across the whole region, to the banks of the Seine and its tributaries; from the edges of infrastructure to the fringes of economic activity zones and productive sites: metropolitan continuities play out in spaces that are often ordinary yet crucial. The Garden Metropolis encourages us to view these spaces as conduits for connection, fresh air, biodiversity and sociability.



Garden City of Suresnes, photograph by Rémi Jouan



The Île-de-France Regional Master Plan aims to strengthen ecological continuities. SDRIF-e 2040.

Organised around its vital functions, a bioregional metropolis

The Garden Metropolis recognises productive spaces, logistics, ports, agriculture and food production as integral components of metropolitan life. Rather than pitting them against quality of life, the challenge lies in redefining them so that they contribute to environmental health and the practical conditions of liveability. This involves moving beyond an interpretation based solely on ecosystem services and considering the local co-benefits they enable, particularly with regard to water, soil, local supplies and the balances of a sustainable bioregional metabolism.

Developing productive spaces as infrastructure for habitability means moving beyond a residual understanding of their contribution to vital conditions. On a metropolitan scale, cultivating, producing, transporting and exchanging no longer refers solely to flows or stocks, but to the broader capacity to sustain and connect living environments and nurture the conditions that allow life to flourish and endure within a territory.

The bioregional approach to avoiding collapse

Contrary to the traditional view of a metropolis as merely a concentration of activities and flows, contemporary, forward-looking perspectives encourage us to reinterpret it as a network of interdependent territories. This network links productive functions, living environments, watercourses, employment areas and local resources. From this perspective, the concept of an urban bioregion enables us to view the metropolitan Seine not as an autonomous centre, but as part of a broader system connected to hinterlands that provide food, logistics, energy and ecological support. This is the objective of the Bioregion 2050 project, “Île-de-France after the Collapse”, led by the Momentum Institute. The project highlights that “Île-de-France has exceeded its subsistence basin and now produces only 10% of what it consumes” and calls for the metropolis to be reconsidered in terms of its material dependencies, territorial resources, and conditions of subsistence. The project also paves the way for a more relational understanding of the environment based on “a culture of balanced coexistence between humans, animals, waterways, soils, forests and the atmosphere”.

Guided by an ethic of care, an attentive metropolis

The Garden Metropolis is based on concrete actions to care for water and the environment: retaining, infiltrating, slowing down, sharing, refreshing; through the introduction of care, the aim is to maintain, repair and perpetuate (Tronto) our shared world. It is part of a logic of composition, where action adapts to the dynamics of living things and builds with and for them rather than against them.

This ethic of care begins with an attitude of attentiveness. Caring begins with seeing in order to understand, then becoming attached. The gardener is not merely one who maintains; they become the embodiment of a broader responsibility, attentive to vulnerabilities, interdependencies and the need to maintain shared living conditions. As such, gardening emerges as an ethical stance: a way of caring for oneself, others and the world, founded on attentiveness to others, an appreciation of otherness, empathy and solidarity.



More than 100 Parisian schools now benefit from a greened playground as part of the Oasis Schoolyards program. CAUE75.

A metropolis where care is at work

From the re-naturalised banks of the River Yerres to the allotments and family gardens of Seine-Saint-Denis, and from the "1,000 Ponds in Île-de-France" regional programme to the Oasis courtyards and school streets (urban cooling and living environment improvement schemes led by the City of Paris), care is embodied in the metropolis through concrete practices of attention, maintenance, repair and sharing. These places show that caring for the environment is more than just technical management or a declaration of intent. These are ongoing processes that must be sustained, revealed and articulated in order to preserve land, re-establish connections, create space for life and pass on practices that can maintain and perpetuate desirable and sustainable living conditions.

« Gardening stems from concern and care for oneself, concern and care for others, and concern and care for the world. »

Naugrette, 2023



The Rambouillet Forest, a vast woodland easily accessible to metropolitan residents. Pline.

Governed as a commons, a shared metropolis

The Garden Metropolis raises questions about capacities for action and responsibilities. Land-use decisions, rights of use and environmental and infrastructural maintenance thus become matters of shared habitability. Therefore, governing the metropolis as a commons means thinking of these spaces not as sectoral entities or a juxtaposition of properties, but as interdependent realities that require sharing.

As metropolises establish themselves as entities of place, time and action, this form of governance prompts us to consider the role of life in our everyday spaces collectively, rather than for the exclusive benefit of individuals in isolation, but as components of a territorial commons that must be nurtured, maintained and shared. In this sense, the Garden Metropolis is less about the administration of fragments and more about a policy of extended responsibility: the responsibility for a habitable world that everyone depends on, and which no one can use without also being accountable for its continuity.

From the forests of Fontainebleau, Rambouillet, Sénart and Saint-Germain, to major metropolitan parks such as the Georges-Valbon Park in La Courneuve and the shared gardens in Choisy-le-Roi, to the banks of the Seine in Paris - which have been transformed from a space for cars into a public promenade and great commons - the Garden Metropolis can be seen in spaces that are already experienced collectively. It can also be seen in the commons of tomorrow, such as the extraordinary metropolitan network of suburban gardens, which outlines the prospect of a great metropolitan garden in the making. The horizon of the commons does not abolish rules or conflicts; rather, it makes access to these spaces, how they are used, and how they are shared matters of shared responsibility and attachment at metropolitan and regional levels.

Embedded in articulated temporalities, a chronotopic metropolis

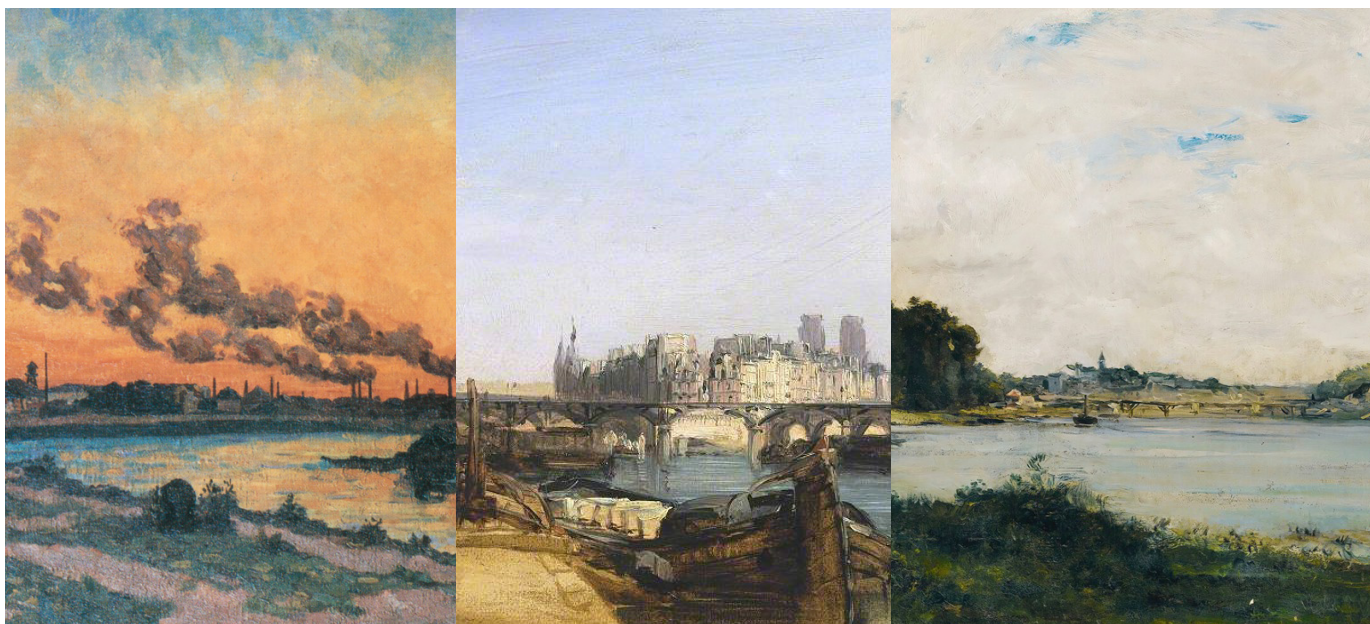
The Garden Metropolis uses time as a method. It recognises the long-term cycles of water and soil, the time inherited from infrastructure, the short-term nature of projects and mandates, and the time of crises. Rather than one-off responses, it constructs trajectories, sequences and adjustments.

In this respect, it is less a matter of an absolute beginning than a process of nurturing, continuity and transmission. Considering the future of territories involves more than producing new forms; it also requires knowing how to sustain what already exists, preserve what works and envisage what can be passed on. Inhabiting and building the Garden Metropolis thus involves conceiving of transformations in time and space as situated cycles of the regeneration of inhabited environments that serve both the future and the present whilst respecting and being attentive to the legacies of the past.

**« Gardening is at once work, art and action, and neither wholly one nor wholly the other »
Naugrette, 2023**

Thinking about the metropolis through time

From the International Workshops of Greater Paris – an international consultation on the metropolitan future from which the Seine Métropole Paris Rouen Le Havre proposal by Antoine Grumbach emerged, forming the cornerstone of an interregional metropolitan vision – to the 1,000 Places of Greater Paris, a cartography which mapped the places shaping metropolitan identity; from the Grand Sentier du Grand Paris, a 615 km walk exploring the metropolis across a vast territory, to the Parc des Hauteurs, a large-scale landscape system linking over 300 hectares of open spaces via a 30 km promenade – the metropolis is being built across interlocking temporalities: times of vision, narrative, projects, as well as landscapes and environments. The Garden Metropolis thus invites us to conceive of metropolitan time as a composition of sequences, continuities and transmissions, rather than a succession of disjointed interventions, from local initiatives to the wider metropolitan area and beyond.



Soleil couchant à Ivry, Armand Guillaumin / Une baignade à Asnières, Georges Seurat / Conflans, Charles-françois Daubigny

The Garden Metropolis: a creative genealogy

The Garden Metropolis boasts a long creative lineage. As Jean-Noël Consalès points out, it is a historic concept in French spatial planning, formulated within the framework of the Organisation for Studies on the Planning of the Middle Loire, the current relevance of which is, he says, “surprisingly topical” (Consalès, 2025). The significance of this concept, which we propose to reinterpret here, thus appears to be particularly stimulating once again. Through the oxymoron it embodies – between the metropolis, a world of flux, speed and complexity, and the garden, a world of

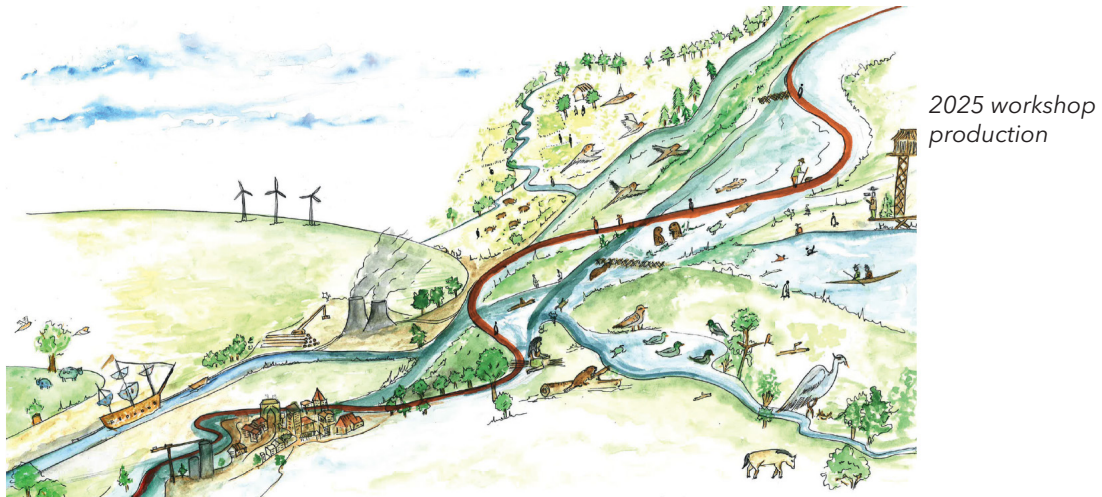
slowness, proximity and care – it enables a bridge to be rebuilt between the contemporary logic of the metropolitan project and ecological and holistic approaches to planning. From this perspective, the Garden Metropolis regains particular relevance in an era of uncertainty. This relevance is evident in the work of the Cergy Workshops and the Plea for a Great Seine Garden, which emerged from discussions initiated during the 2017-2018 Urban Project Management Workshops on Life in Metropolises in the 21st Century. These discussions were continued through meetings of the National Federation of Urban Planning Agencies, the Fabrique Écologique, and a survey of the valley conducted by the “Group of Seven”, comprising Bertrand Warnier, Laurent Perrin, Louis Moutard, Michel Jaouen, and Drew Wensley. Additionally, recent work by the GRAU agency in Bordeaux demonstrates that the Garden Metropolis can be reinterpreted as a future urban form, neither centre nor periphery, where the built environment and landscape work together to promote well-being and community spirit.

Time as a method

The Garden Metropolis does not evolve within a single temporality. Rather, it is articulated through hydrological and ecological cycles, infrastructural legacies, patterns of use, political timeframes, and climatic events. Therefore, thinking about the metropolis through the lens of water involves acting in both space and time: identifying active legacies, making discrepancies visible, anticipating trade-offs, and formulating trajectories of transformation. From this perspective, time is not merely a backdrop to the project; it is one of its fundamental components. This enables us to recognise that water territories are traversed by dynamics of varying speeds that are sometimes compatible and sometimes conflicting: the long-term timescale of environments; the intermediate timescale of developments; and the short-term timescale of uses, decisions and crises.

Anticipating water trade-offs

Using time as a method also involves anticipating increasingly acute trade-offs, such as rising flood risks, pressure on water resources, weakened insurance schemes, conflicting use priorities, and adapting infrastructure designed for different hydrological regimes. The challenge lies in defining not only where to act, but also at what pace and according to which priorities, in order to cope with shocks, distribute vulnerabilities and ensure that transformations are fairer, more sustainable and more accessible.



Three approaches for working across time

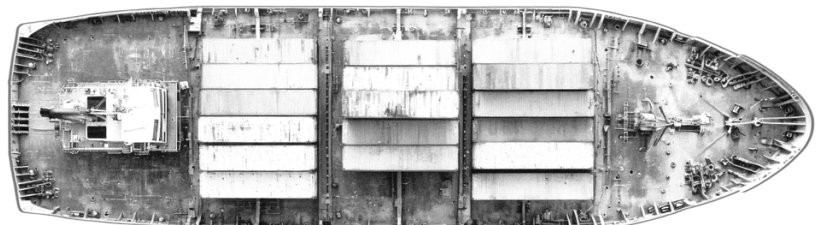
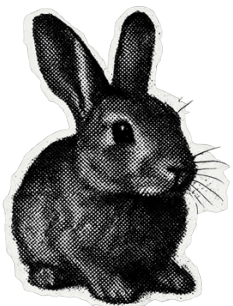
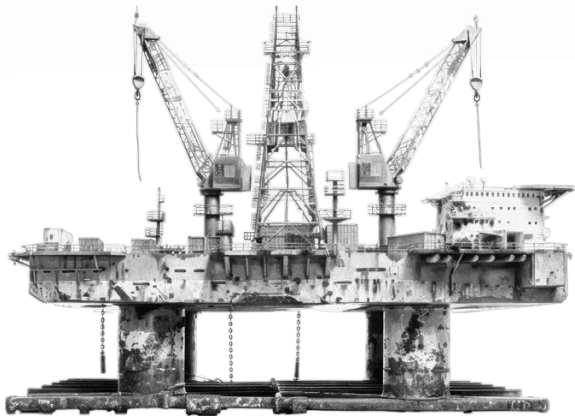
Reading the temporalities of the territory: viewing the metropolis as a territory traversed by heterogeneous temporalities, such as water cycles, ecological dynamics, technical legacies, urbanisation rhythms and everyday uses, in order to better understand vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities.

Revealing discrepancies and tensions: making visible the misalignments between urbanisation, infrastructure, environments and climates, such as urbanisation in flood-prone areas, sealed soils and structures designed for past conditions, in order to highlight both inherited vulnerabilities and concrete opportunities for transformation.

Envisioning trajectories of transformation: opening up credible futures from these tensions, by articulating immediate interventions, gradual shifts, and long-term horizons, so as to situate metropolitan transformation within a lived and shared timeframe.

Interpreted in this manner, time becomes less of an additional theme and more of a means of navigating the workshop's broader questions. It encourages us to view the metropolis as an evolving system interwoven with rhythms, legacies, divergences, and possibilities, rather than a static state.

In conclusion: The 44th workshop proposes opening up a space for collective exploration centred on the Garden Metropolis across the Seine basin. In the face of climate change, pressure on resources and social fragility, the aim is to re-examine ways of **building the metropolis by starting with what sustains life: water, soil, living environments and territorial solidarity**. Using time as a method and water as a guiding thread, teams will be invited to imagine transformative pathways capable of reconciling environments, infrastructure and societies. They will also be asked to outline the conditions for creating a more liveable, fairer and more resilient metropolis.



Who is it for?

The workshop is open to **young professionals of all nationalities and disciplines, and to students at the master's level or higher, from all disciplines** (urban planning, sociology, arts, economics, agronomy, engineering, architecture, history, landscape architecture, etc.) who are 30 years of age max. A good command of English is required to work within international teams.

How to apply?

Fill out the **online application form**:
<https://www.ateliers.org/l/apply-seine>

Please attach **your resume (1 or 2 pages)** and a brief 80-word introduction about yourself. Include **a personal work (max. 6 pages)** related to the workshop's theme and/or your home region and/or the waterway closest to where you live. This project can take any form and may include illustrations, photos, and other visual materials.

Eligibility requirements:

Application is free. The workshop participation fee (including association membership fees) is 150 euros, covering accommodation for the entire duration of the workshop in Cergy-Pontoise, regional transportation and organized tours, group meals, lectures, and drawing materials.

Application deadline

Extension!

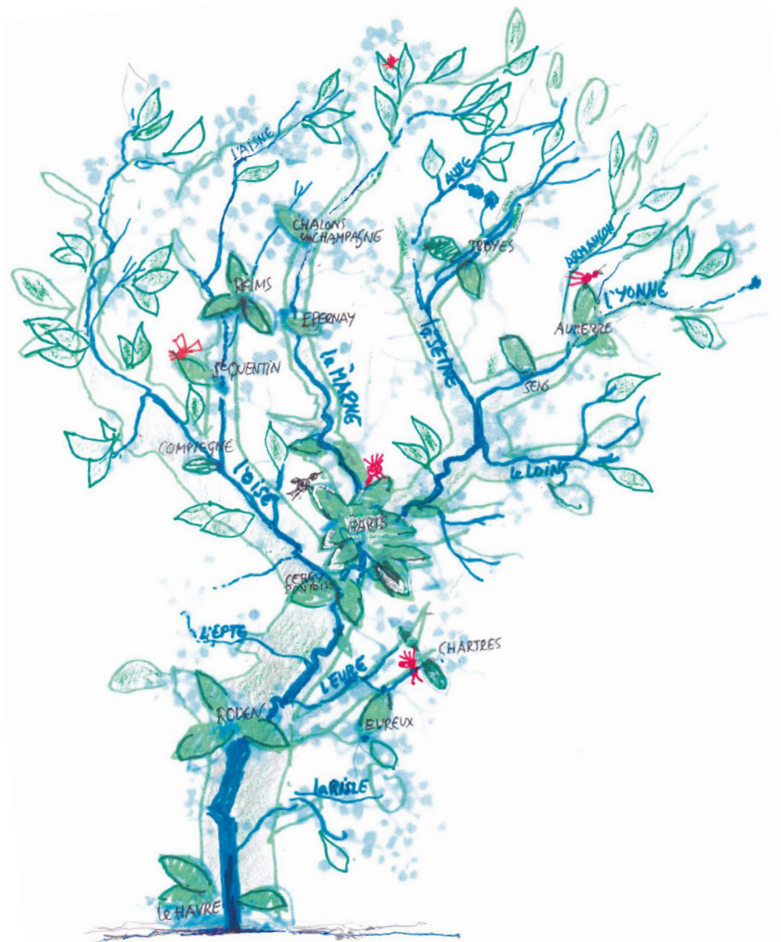
31 May, 2026 at 11:59PM (Paris time)

A workshop is:

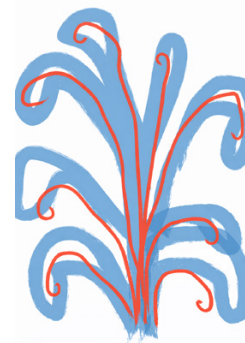
3+ days of immersion in the Greater Paris area, combining field visits and presentations by specialists;

2 weeks of collaborative and creative work, interspersed with interim presentations and group discussions;

1 final presentation to an international jury chaired by local decision-makers



*Representation of the Seine hydrography as a tree of life,
Bertrand Warnier*



**For any request, please write to:
seine@ateliers.org**