

Please note the deadline (May 5th) of the call for international applications to select the participants. Students and young professionals selected will work on the topic in four different teams :

REPLAY\*

FROM AN IN-BETWEEN SPACE TO A  
TERRITORY OF THE GREATER PARIS

THE PLAINE DE PIERRELAYE  
BESSANCOURT

>> 30th August - 27th September 2013  
Cergy-Pontoise

\* Innovating, understanding, inventing, renewing, regenerating, convincing, daily habits and long-term periods, uses and strategies, investments, places, visions and processes

HOW TO PARTICIPATE :

- students (master level) or young professionals
  - open to all fields of studies
  - preparatory research work
- >> see last page

Participants will, for a month and within a multidisciplinary and international team, build freely a project that will then be defended in front of the decision-makers and professionals of the site.

The Ateliers wish to thank the partners who accompany them throughout the year or for the 31st session of workshops Ile-de-France in particular :



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After working on the urban/rural interface at the edges of large metropolises in 2010, on the business center of La Défense in 2011, and on the staging the metropolitan landscape in 2012, Les Ateliers suggest that the 2013 summer workshop focuses on a specific site of the Parisian metropolis: the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt, an open space located to the north-west of the Parisian conurbation, where the project of creating a metropolitan forest is taking shape.

This document aims at setting out the issues raised by the topic, presenting the collective work process that will be implemented, seeking partnerships, bringing along universities, and receiving applications. It is produced by the managing team of the workshop.

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# PREAMBULE

There are so many unexplored possibilities, so much potential, within a metropolis. Is it possible that what already exists will form the substance of the city of tomorrow? This is the question raised in the elaboration of future scenarios for the development of the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt, a territory to the north-west of the Parisian conurbation, a true second-hand space.

Unlike spaces of structured urban fabric, even unlike areas of large concrete buildings from the 1960s undergoing urban renewal processes or industrial lands punctuated with buildings or visible structures, the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt gives the impression of an open and almost-available territory in an area that was on the contrary very much built in the last decades. It is only an impression.

The Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt calls for a different approach to investigate what we could designate as the metropolitan reverse. It is a paradoxical invitation to long-time thinking.

An invitation because such a territory, in a fast-growing conurbation like the one of the Greater Paris, offers the opportunity to implement new ideas, new projects, new functions and new approaches.

The scale is big. We stand here at the crossroad with a wide green corridor, the two important nearby forests of Saint-Germain and Montmorency large transportation infrastructures leading to Normandie and the north of France. The surrounding infrastructures already existing or projected in the context of the development of the Greater Paris, the Seine River and Oise River merging territory nearby, the projected Seine-Nord Canal, the haven built on the river in the town of Achères, are also elements that are new opportunities and can potentially generate a new deal. A paradoxical invitation, because the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt is a patchwork of more or less regulated functions, recreational activities for some of them, but also heavily subsidized agricultural activities, market gardening fields sold piece by piece, plots and houses with instable leases, horse-riding clubs, outdoor activities...Under the ground, the issues are totally different.

There is a high level of pollution, coming both from organic components and agents polluted by heavy metals. If the pollution is not everywhere, it nevertheless affects a wide territory, as a result of it having been used very early by the metropolis and of the spreading of Paris' used-waters on this area in the second half of the 19th century.

In order to change things, build a new future, give a new impulse, and make the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt an attractive territory again, it was suggested to create a large forest for the Greater Paris. The announcements made by the French President in 2009 comforted the ideas carried out by the local authorities and the project was launched.

The various scientific studies, soil analyses, sanitary studies based on a remediation with the plants, have however highlighted the complexity of controlling in the long term the transmission cycles of polluting agents and the chemical transformation of the soil even in the case of the creation of a forest. Assessing the level of the resources in renewable energy in the Paris Region (SRCE 2012) also stressed the limits of using a new forest for biomass purposes.

One could dig out the layer of polluted soil, but to store it where? And moreover, what uses or projects could justify such an important cost?

The solutions would then only be partial, minimal? maybe they would even aim at organizing formally the disassembling of the territory instead of just tolerating it as it is the case today ?

Probably not. Les Ateliers are part of a deliberately positive and constructive approach, without ignoring the constraints that still apply to creativity. Let us broaden the vision.

Other potential solutions are currently being tried in the area of the loop of Chanteloup near the town of Achères, on sites that are not very far away and that have the same history as the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt <sup>1</sup>. Can they be used as an example ?

Other cities, like Berlin, found solutions a long time ago to solve the problem of such polluted fields. Can they be applied in the context of the Paris area? In some other places, the examples of re-using polluted and abandoned lands are numerous but they often apply to much smaller scales, often to industrial pollution, often to simpler ones.

There are also many examples of new urban policies or urban projects elaborated by mixing new social practices and seemingly unsolvable situations, and this as much in cities in developed countries as cities in developing ones.

The priority is to rewrite a history, re-open the possibilities, build new horizons, without forgetting the constant pressure

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1 : Project of Green Heart

and need for urbanization along the RD14 road which, with its array of commercial installations, crosses the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt from east to west, and also at the edges of the towns of the area.

To reach this goal, easy generic solutions and assertions should probably be excluded. We are at the crossroad of history, of the different lives of a metropolis, the one of yesterday and the one of today, but also of people's life, of the users and neighbors of the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt. How can the project of the Greater Paris really contribute in making a difference?

Creating a forest is a long-time work, of at least 50 or 60 years. How can this process entail a coherent long-term mobilization of public authorities? Will the inhabitants and neighbors of this territory support the project and find a different use for the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt, where they would find services, entertainment, social uses impossible to have in the old and historical woods of Saint-Germain and Montmorency?

Can creating a forest generate new urbanization practices? On the edge of urban planning and history, at the crossroads of long and short-term thinking, the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt invites us to build a new consensus, to elaborate new processes, imagine long-term transformation scenarios, mixing numerous areas of expertise such as social innovation, soil engineering, architecture, biotechnology, small- and large-scale urban planning, economics, agriculture and agronomy, and of course history.

Because this is indeed what it is all about. Stopping. Listening to the metropolis' heartbeats. Not rushing into things, but finding the strategies that will provide the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt with an inventive, subtle, determined, local as much as metropolitan future. Let us hope that once more, the visions, experiences, and crossed skills brought by Les Ateliers will bring a useful contribution!

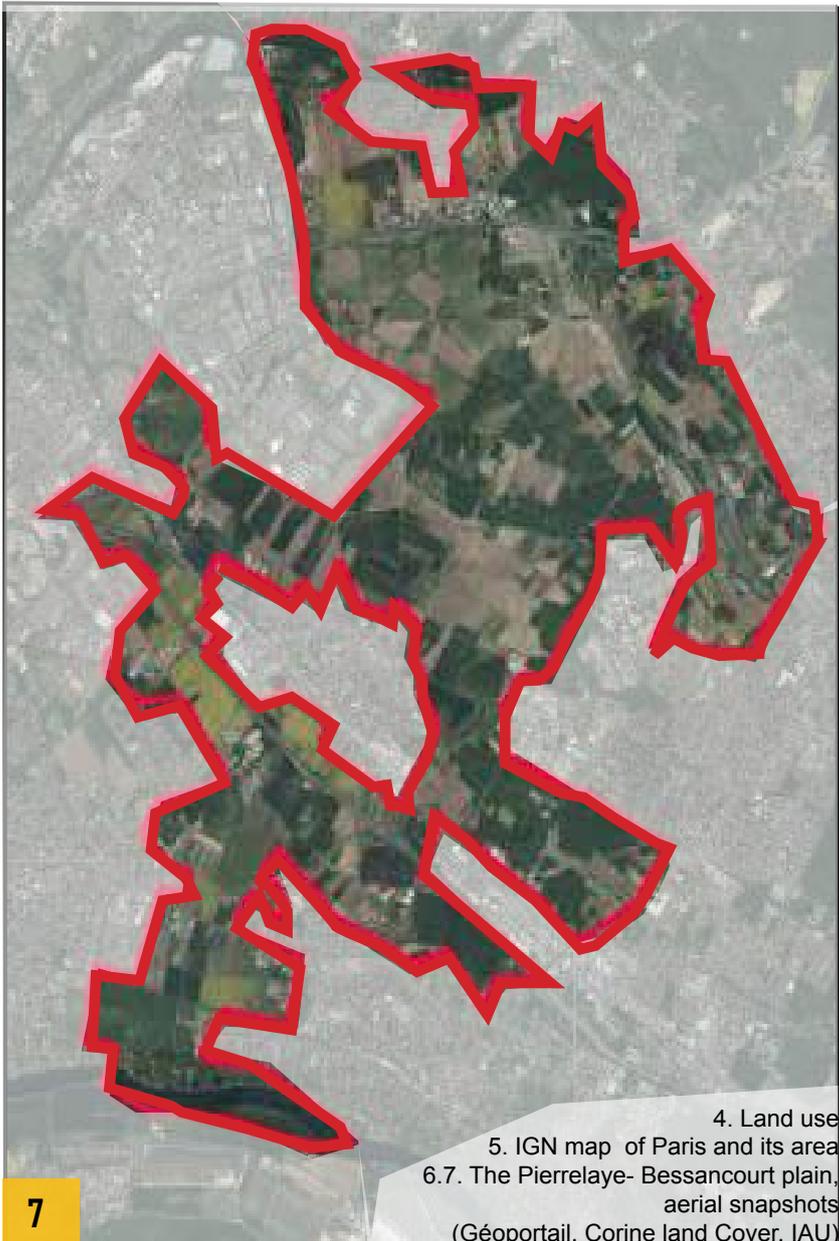
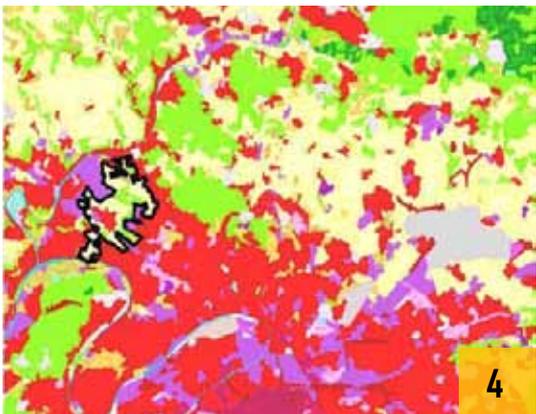
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Nicolas Buchoud and Patrice Berthé,  
workshop pilots

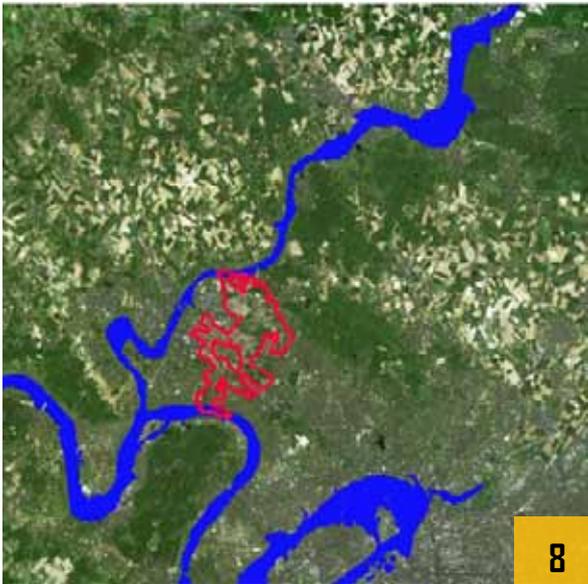




The Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt is located about 25 km to the north-west of Paris, in the Département of the Val d'Oise, between the urbanized areas of the Montmorency Valley and the conurbation of Cergy-Pontoise. It stretches upon the towns of Bessancourt, Frépillon, Herblay, Méry-sur-Oise, Pierrelaye, Saint-Ouen l'Aumône and Taverny.



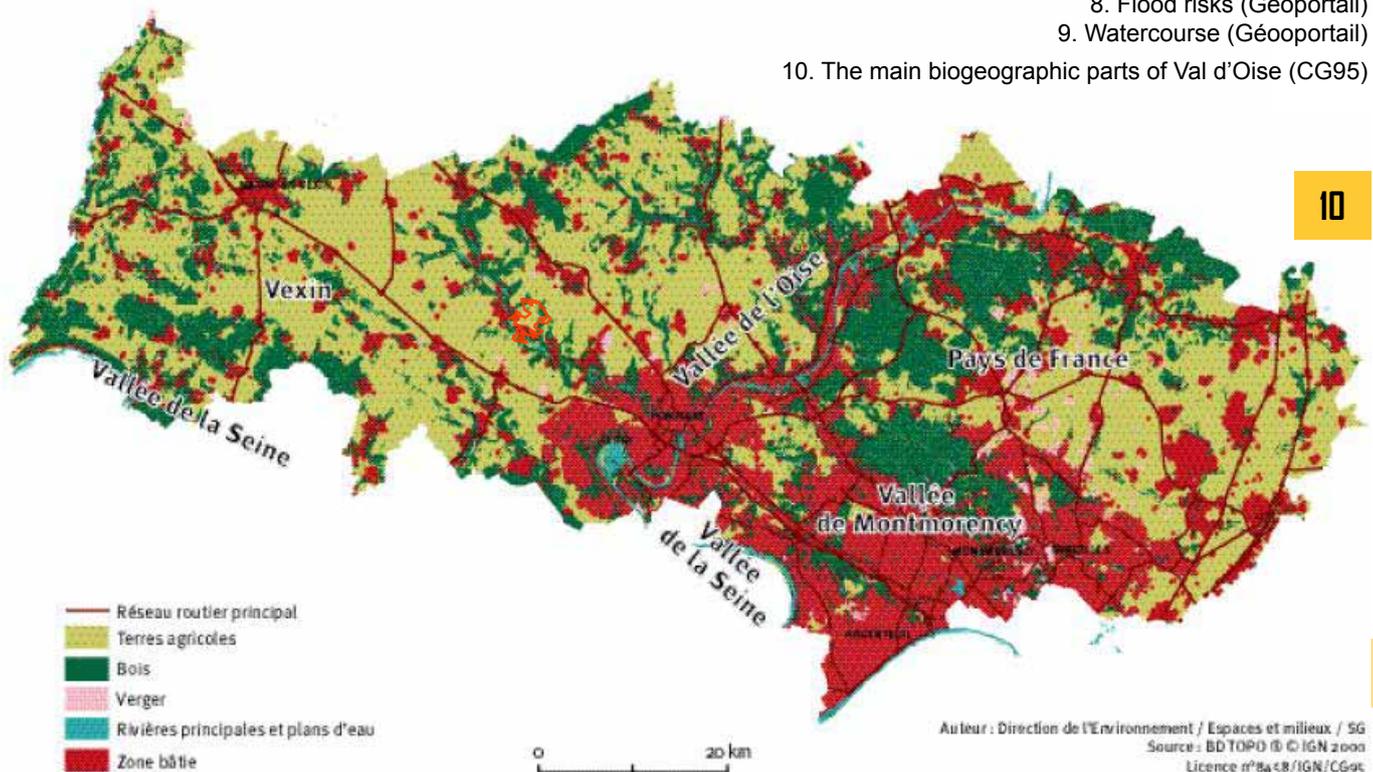
4. Land use  
5. IGN map of Paris and its area  
6.7. The Pierrelaye- Bessancourt plain, aerial snapshots (Géoportail, Corine land Cover, IAU)



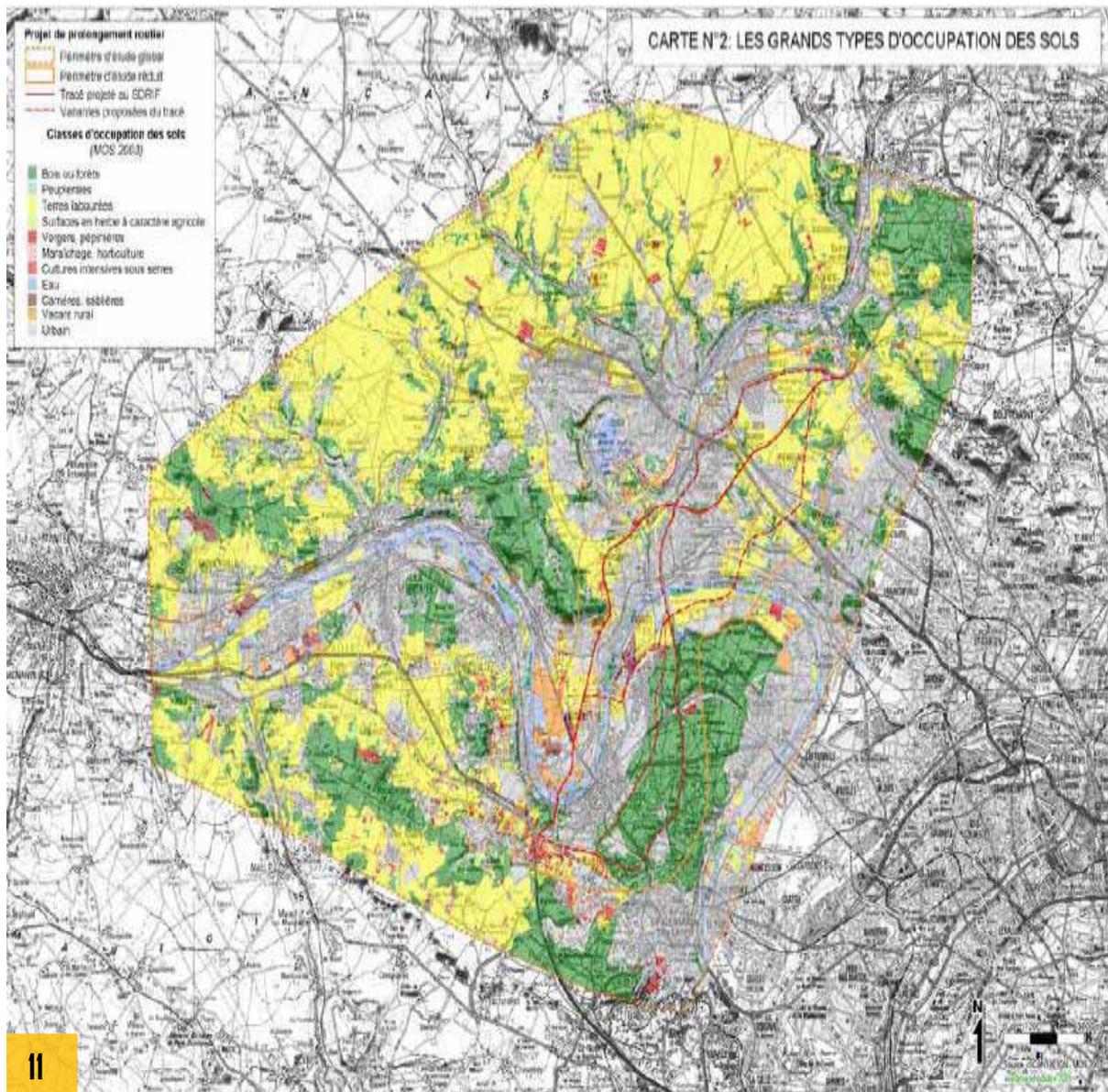
It is an agricultural and wooded territory of about 2 000 ha, very flat, which lies in the middle of a very urbanized site, between the Oise and Seine rivers valleys. It is a transitional space with rural areas such as the agricultural plateau of the Vexin. Topography, hydrography and geology have largely shaped its landscape and the way urbanization happened. The hills of the Seine and Oise valleys are of a relative height, and the buildings are sometimes built in the bed of the streams, and thus exposed to flooding risks.



- 8. Flood risks (Géoportail)
- 9. Watercourse (Géoportail)
- 10. The main biogeographic parts of Val d'Oise (CG95)



The Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt is the place where the wastewaters from the City of Paris used to be spread in the 19th century. It is mainly composed of cultivated plots within which some wooded areas can be found (brook of Liesse, villages of Beauchamp and Méry-sur-Oise). The southern part of the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt was recognized of floristic interest with the creation of a Natural zone of ecological interest (ZNIEFF) of type I.



11. The main types of land use (CG95)

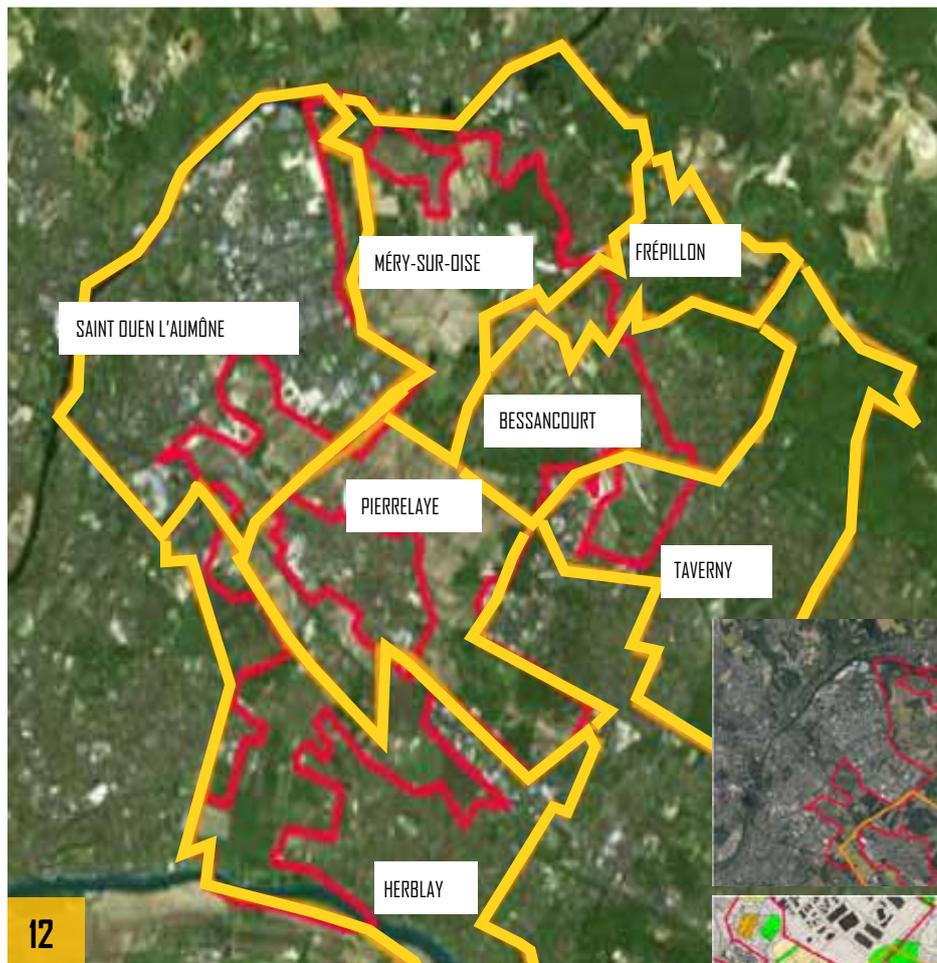
# URBAN SPACES AND OPEN SPACES

The Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt presents a diversity of landscapes as a result of the strong interaction between human activity and nature. Recent urban extensions and the numerous infrastructures on the site contradict the characteristics of the previous rural constructions and give to the site a conflicting identity. Nevertheless, the constant interaction between city and nature is one of the specificities of this territory.



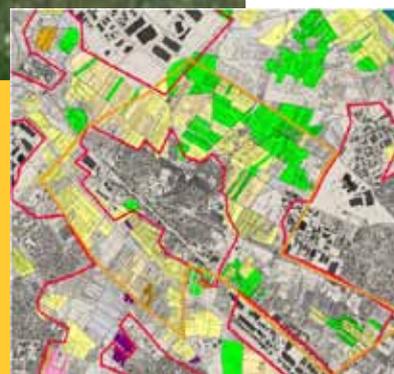
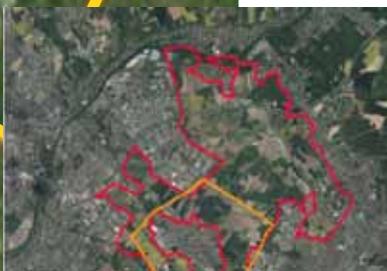
# THE 7 TOWNS OF THE COMMITTEE

The 7 bordering towns of the Plaine de Pierralaye-Bessancourt benefit from a global network of local infrastructures (schools, sport facilities, social and cultural equipments) and small businesses that structure the old town centers. These centers are characterized by a close relationship between the built areas (R+2) and the public spaces, built next to each other, with very irregular parcels. As for more recent urban development, it follows regular frames and shapes, the houses usually built in the middle of the parcels. More than 80% of the individual houses, which represent the majority of the houses in many of these towns, were built in the last 50 years. The industrial activity is scattered on the edges of the towns, next to which there are sand quarries, cultivated lands and vacant fields. The built urban space amounts to about 45% of the territory, whereas rural and non-built spaces amount respectively to 48% and 7% of the territory. The employment rate is 0.53, ie 2 working persons for 1 job, which is quite typical of what is commonly called a residential area. The main economic activities are linked to retail, transportation and various services, followed by the industry and the construction. The unemployment rate is relatively stable in all towns (between 5 and 10%).



## MÉRY-SUR-OISE

Intercommunal association of the Valley of the Oise and the Impressionists 9396 inhabitants in 2009 (8 942 in 1999) 841.2 in. / km2 11.2 km2	In 2011 64.3 % of economic activities deal with commerce, transport et services, 19.5 % with building sector, and et 7.7% with industry. Farming represented 580ha in 1988 and 514ha in 2000	29.7% of collective housing in 2009, and 60.3% of single-family homes
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12. The 7 towns of the committee (Géoportail)

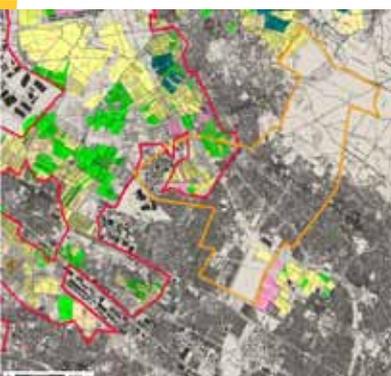
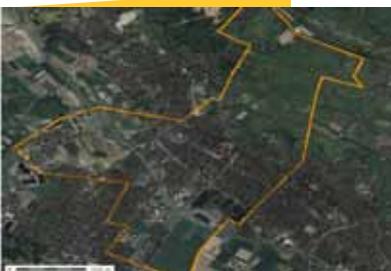
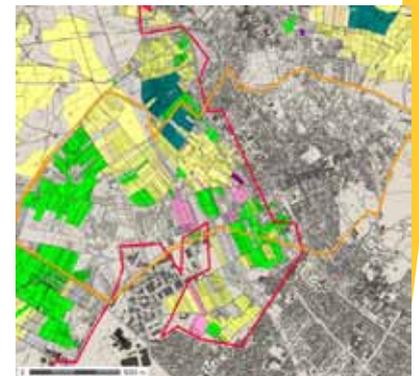


## PIERRELAYE

<p>Urban Community of Parisis 8122 inhabitants in 2011 (6931 in 1999) 859 in. / km2 9.21 km2</p>	<p>In 2011 the areas of transport, commerce and various services (including trade and repair of motor vehicles 38%) account for 68% of companies, 18.8% for the building sector and 8% for the industry</p>	<p>40% of collective housing in 2009 and 58.8% of single-family homes</p>
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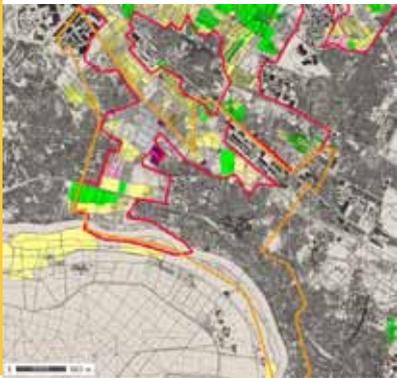
## BESSANCOURT

<p>Urban Community of Parisis 7400 inhabitants in 2011 (6998 in 1999) 1188 in. / km2 6.23 km2</p>	<p>In 2011 the areas of transport, commerce and other services (including trade and repair of motor vehicles 21%) represented 64% of the territory, 19% in building sector and 5.5 for the industry. Farming represented 135 ha in 1988 against 88ha in 2000</p>	<p>20% of collective housing in 1999 to 21% in 2009 and 74% of single-family home in 1999 to 75% in 2009</p>
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## TAVERNY

<p>Urban Community of Parisis 26,415 inhabitants in 2009 (25 906 in 1999) 2600 in./ km2 10.42 km2</p>	<p>In 2011 the areas of transport, commerce and other services represented 67% and 13.4% for the building-sector and 7.3% for the industry. Agricultural activity in 1988 represented 42 ha against 17 ha in 2000</p>	<p>51.5% of housing collective in 2009, and 47.6% of single-family homes</p>	<p>Note: A perimeter on wood Aulneyes (7 hectares) and Boissy (36ha) is subject to protection under Sensitive Natural Area</p>
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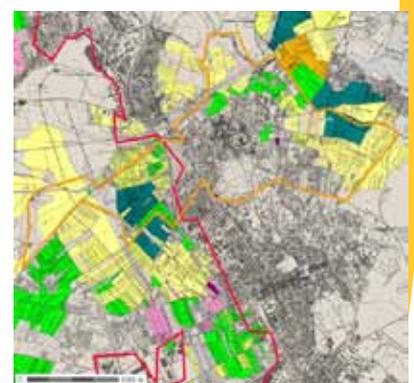


## HERBLAY

<p>Urban Community of Paris 26,016 inhabitants in 2010 (23 080 in 1999) 2049 in./km2 12.7 km2</p>	<p>In 2011 the industry represented 6.4% of the area's businesses and 14.1% for the building sector. The areas of trade, transport and other services represented 70.4%. Agricultural activity is 169ha in 1988 to 178ha in 2000</p>	<p>34.2% of collective housing in 2009, and 64.2% of single-family homes</p>	<p>Note: Herblay is the only common Plaine river and fits into the landscape of the hills providing a window into the loop of St Germain</p>
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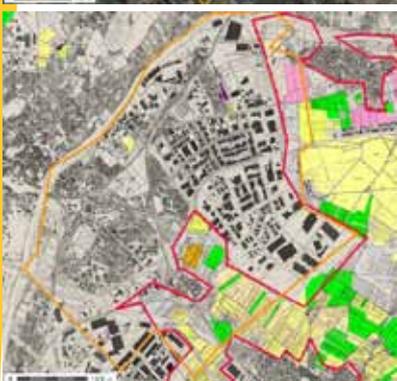
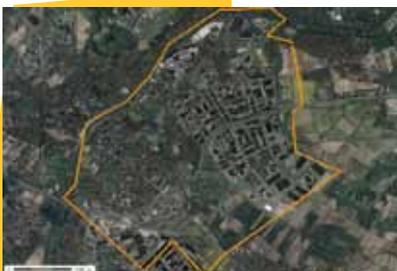
## FREPILLON

<p>Intercommunal associations of the Valley of the Oise and the Impressionists 3200 inhabitants in 2010 (2 260 in 1999) 955 in./km2 3.35 km2</p>	<p>In 2011 the building sector represented 14,4% of the economic activities and 72,1% concerned the areas of commerce, transport and other services and 9,6% for the industry. Farming represented 200ha in 1988 against 53ha in 2000</p>	<p>11.5% of collective housing 2009, and 88.2% single-family home</p>
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## SAINT QUEN L'AUMÔNE

<p>Intercommunal associations of Cergy Pontoise 23,459 inhabitants in 2009 (19 653 in 1999) 1921 in./ km2 12.2 km2</p>	<p>In 2011 the building sector and industry account for 12% of economic activities and 69.4% for the areas of commerce, transport and other services. Agricultural activity is 122ha in 1988 to 117ha in 2000</p>	<p>63.6% of collective housing in 2009, and 35.7% of single-family home in 2009</p>
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## 2. A TERRITORY SERVING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

The Plaine de pierrelaye-bessancourt is an **IN-BETWEEN TERRITORY** at three levels : the geographical one, the one of the uses and functions, and the one of time. The Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt has a distinctive geographical situation which makes it a territory that is between :

- Two scales : a metropolitan aspiration since medieval times and up to today, but which has to be redefined as the area today lacks a unifying project
- The Seine and the Oise rivers
- Paris and the new town of Cergy-Pontoise
- The forests of Montmorency and Saint Germain-en-Laye
- Two highways : A15 and A115
- Two railways
- Open spaces and wooded spaces
- Plateaux and hills
- Town and countryside
- Polluted and non-polluted soils
- Inhabitable and not inhabitable areas
- Regulated and informal activities
- Center and periphery, the area has become the periphery of the towns, after it had been their center.

An in-between territory in the uses and functions, first organized around agriculture then in its periphery around economic and commercial activity zones.

Eventually, an in-between territory in time: It needs a new planning and development project, at the heart of a network of metropolitan projects. It is a territory awaiting a new design, a new aspiration, a new destiny.

### A TERRITORY SERVING THE NEEDS OF OTHER CENTRALITIES.

The different uses that were made of this land across the centuries share a common characteristic : *the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt has been (and still is) a territory serving the needs of close or farther away territories such as Paris or the center of the metropolis. It remains outside the distribution of the functions of a higher level.. It is the land in which resources are taken, in which low-level, harmful or space-consuming activities are located in order to make the conurbation functions, and this during the different cycles of evolution and mutation of those functions. This type of land declines, is abandoned or deserted when those functions are no longer needed or become obsolete. They disappear or relocate.*

This vocation of being a land that serves of needs of others is highlighted by the main functions that have structured the place :

- Big infrastructures
- Technical equipments
- Agricultural activities
- Wooded areas
- Relaxing and agreeable areas for city dwellers
- Illicit and/or harmful uses, but necessary ones in order to have the metropolis functions
- Commercial, logistical and industrial activities.

## A. A LARGE SPREADING ZONE FOR DIRTY WATERS

Things went on differently for the area where wastewater was spread. Since the quality of the water of the Seine River and its banks kept decreasing, the City of Paris was forced by the 1894 law to treat all of its dirty waters in 5 years. Without any technical alternative, the choice was made of spreading the waters on agricultural lands, linking water treatment and market production (« increasing the productivity of the cultivated lands by transforming the former sterile lands into fertile lands » and « giving the water of the Seine River a «crystal-clear» aspect », Risler, 1897).

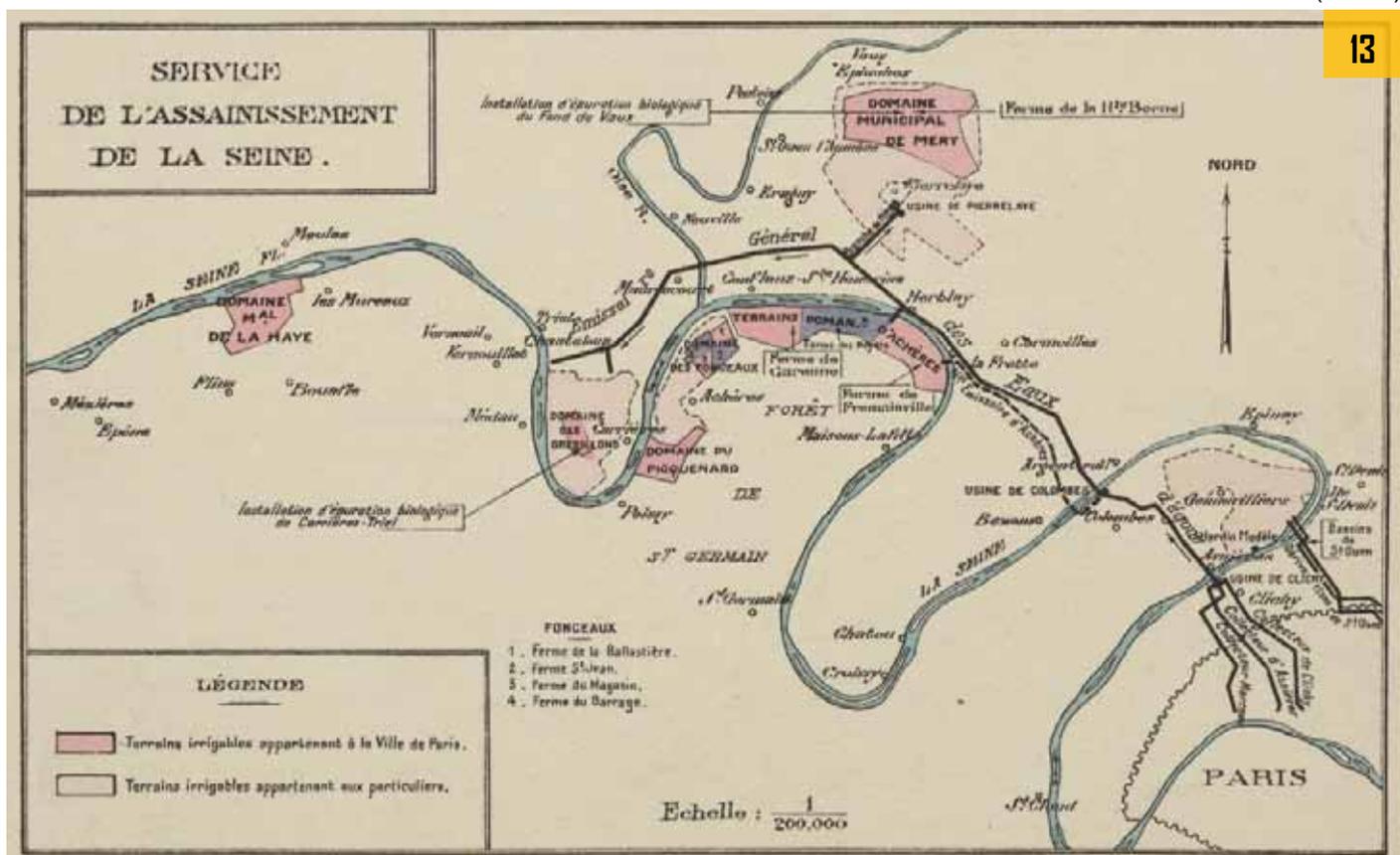
The idea was to treat the waters before they reached back the groundwater tables and the water streams, and to enrich the filtering sandy soils that could potentially be the support of numerous agricultural activities. In 1899, 2400 hectares of the Pierrelaye/Méry-sur-Oise area were fulfilling these functions : they had also been chosen because of the poor quality of their soils but especially because the City of Paris had been acquiring pieces of land for 30 years in the area in order to carry out the project of building a big necropolis for Paris because these lands were easily connected to Paris thanks to the railroad.

The story of the Plaine de Pierrelaye Bessancourt is an early case of urban metabolism: «These agricultural spaces, created complementarily to the urban spaces they were surrounding, rely on cities for their survival, in the same way that cities depend on them for getting rid of their residues. They fulfill the double task of being dumping grounds as well as spaces feeding the city inhabitants » (Claudia Cirelli). Thanks to the engineer Belgrand, it was also a technical success and a major innovation: on 28 km, there were pools of primary decantation, stations to lift the water, ventilation columns and pipes crossing the Seine and the Oise rivers thanks to aqueducts or siphons. Then, there were more than 70 kilometers of underground network, of furrows for “mild” and half-purified waters.

But also : « Those who lived at this time will never forget the pestilential smells nor the clouds of blue flies... » or the infiltrations in wells, quarries, the floods and the deep transformation of the soils due to pollution.

\* Glossary p 29

13. Sanitation service of the Seine (SIAAP)



**B. L'AGRICULTURE.** Whereas it was not originally favorable to agriculture, the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt has become an agricultural space « not like any other »:

- From the feudal times to the 19th century, the cultivation of crops compatible with poor soils such as rye, barley or hemp was the most frequent. Market farming, wine growing and flour-milling have also developed.

- In the 20th century: intensive market farming (vegetables, aromatic plants) in open-field replaces meadows. This activity requires innovation with the Haute Borne farm which covers over 500 ha. In this farm promoting a different and modern way of farming, new agricultural and breeding techniques will be developed.

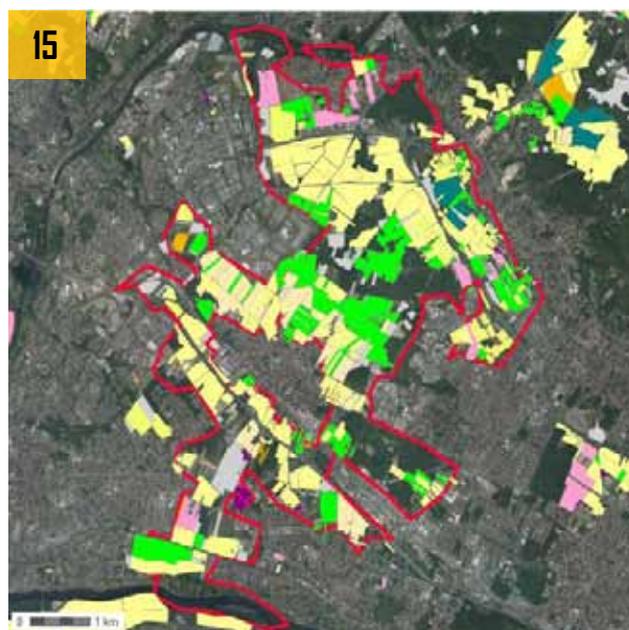
- The year 1999 is a turning point, when the préfecture of the Val d'Oise area is forced to issue a temporary order forbidding the marketing and consumption of raw vegetables coming from the area. This forbidding became permanent on March 31st, 2000 – instantly jeopardizing numbers of market farming organisations – and is still in force in 2013. Since then, different surveillance plans have confirmed that a large proportion of the soils was contaminated by MTEs (Metal Trace Elements : a very high accumulation of lead and cadmium, a high one of copper, zinc and mercury, and a limited one of nickel, chrome and selenium with higher degrees in uncultivated zones than in cultivated ones) which are a potential threat for human health. Furthermore, « human pathogenic » and « opportunist pathogenic » risks exist. Bacteria capable of resisting antibiotics were detected in the earth, but without any proof of concrete risks.

- From 2000 to 2005, a monoculture of corn for animal feeding, linking management of polluted soils and profitability, developed on some areas subject in the past to the spread of used waters (around 1300 ha) and on part of the 500ha of land that were not irrigated. Some market farmers were relocated on the edges of the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt. This monoculture of corn has resulted in the design of a monotonous landscape, bare after each annual crop, and had important consequences on biodiversity.

- From 2005 onwards, subsidized agricultural activities producing products for animal consumption was prioritized. After the appearance of the corn root worm, alternatives to corn cultures had to be implemented (energetic cultivations of wheat – for ethanol, of sunflowers – for methyl ester), and were encouraged by the central government and the Regional Council of Ile-de-France region in the context of the sustainable agricultural contracts of 2006-2010 and the PRAIRIE contracts.

14. Wheat fields (les Ateliers)

15. Agricultural parcel division, 2010 (IAU)



## B. THE FOREST AND WOODS.

More than half of this land was covered with woods until the 18th century, against approximately 350 ha of woods today in a bad shape as a result of both a low forestry value and a lack of management. This forest used to be filled with oaks, honeysuckles, ferns and birches used for the manufacturing of brooms sold in Paris.

Beyond the use of the forest as a resource for wood – as a raw material or a resource for heating, the Plaine de Pierrelaye was used as a hunting ground, a place of leisure for the high-society, and was the Prince of Conti's hunting ground in the 18th century. Let us mention a significant anecdote, quoted by Jean Aubert, in his book *Memorable events from the Val d'Oise* : « During the last years of the Old Regime, the proliferation of rabbits and hares caused great ravages to the cultivated lands. Thus the peasants from the villages that were located on the Prince of Conti's hunting grounds started to get organized in order to fight these animals...that they were not allowed to hunt ».



16. *Châteaux de DOMONT (S.-et.-O.) — Le Château. La Ferme et l'Étano de la Chasse.*



17. *Forêt de MONTLIGNON (Seine-et-Oise) — Hutte des Bûcherons. — ND Pbot.*



16. The castle of La Chasse, the outhouses of the castle and the upstream pond of La Chasse (Association for the promotion of history and heritage of the Montmorency Valley)

17. Montmorency Forest, woodcutter huts (idem)

18.19. Montmorency Forest (IAU)

**D. LARGE PARISIAN EQUIPMENTS.** Even though the Baron Haussmann's project of a big Parisian cemetery (necropolis of Paris) connected to the capital city by the railroad was abandoned, the first plots of land were acquired by the city of Paris in 1857. This cemetery was first meant to be created in the Montmorency valley, but due to strong local oppositions, the site of the Plaine de Pierrelaye was eventually chosen because of its easy connection with Paris, before the idea was left aside.

More recent times have seen the building on this territory of equipments no longer serving the needs of the metropolis but the ones of a closer center, the conurbation of Cergy-Pontoise, such as the incinerator for domestic waste of Auror'Environnement in the town of Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône or the thermic plant supplied with wood.

**E. MAJOR ROAD AND RAIL INFRASTRUCTURES.** They have consequences on the landscape, generate multiple discontinuities, but are also potential sources for development. The process started during the 1st century with the gallo-roman road, called Julius Caesar road, connecting Lutecia (former name of Paris) to the sea, then reinforced to the south by the royal road. History accelerated in the 19th century with the arrival of the railroad line connecting Paris to Belgium (completed in 1846, bringing into service the Pierrelaye station in 1881) and in the 20th century :

- A national road which became the major RD14 road
- The fast train RER C
- Two highways: the A15 and the A115 (with 3 interchanges). The construction of the A115 highway put into question the agricultural activities on the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessencourt by not reestablishing the irrigation canals that were broken during the construction
- The national road 184 of four lanes able to support the development of a High Level Service Bus (HLSB)
- There is also a highway project with the objective of completing the A104 highway that goes around the forest of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. This layout goes through the south-west of Cergy Pontoise and connects, for 22 km, the towns of Mery-sur-Oise, Pierrelaye, Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône, Eragny-sur-Oise and finally Orgeval. This extension without toll would be financed by the central government
- An extension project of the tramway (T8) on the RD14 road
- A project of fluvial « link » between the Seine River (new harbour called "Achères Seine Métropole") and the large-capacity Seine Nord Europe canal. An important element regarding this: in the 18th century onwards, several projects of canals crossing the whole Montmorency valley to connect the Seine and the Oise rivers were abandoned.



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- 20. Elevatory factory of Pierrelaye (SIAAP)
- 21. Pierrelaye Station (CG95)
- 22. The "Green layout" of the A104 (2 Rives de Seine)
- 23. Road N 184 (les Ateliers)

**F. THE GREEN BELT.** Its agricultural dimension and wooded spaces have made the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt the last remaining large natural space between the large conurbations in the Val d'Oise area such as the Montmorency valley, the new town of Cergy-Pontoise and le Parisis. The Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt is also the missing connection between the ancient forests of Saint Germain-en-Laye (in the Yvelines area) and of Montmorency (in the Val d'Oise area). The Masterplan for Regional Cohesion (SCOT) of the conurbation of Cergy-Pontoise thus defines the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt as an important «*breathing*» space in the area and as a «*natural transition*» between the regional natural park of the Vexin and the forest of the green belt.

The different regional masterplans – on potentially different perimeters- and tools such as the label «*Sensible natural spaces*» or «*provision for large equipments*» have allowed its protection and listing but without any real project to valorize and secure the agricultural activities. These tools have reinforced a progressive transformation of the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt into a mostly deprived space, losing its identity, a «*vacant quarter*» (see below) with negative economic, social and environmental consequences. Some called the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt «*the doomed territory*», considering also the discontinuities generated by the large infrastructures, high-voltage electric lines, fallow lands, polluted soils....



**G. THE «*VACANT QUARTER*»** refers to deprived or vacant open spaces that shelter city-related activities but which were not taken into account by the city. It is for instance the place of the development of illicit travellers' sites, of unauthorized tracks motorcycles and quads, open-air junkyards for broken cars, informal dumps for various types of garbage, storage areas for construction equipments or for the deconstruction of equipments related to logistics, etc...

As an example on the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt :

- More than 5000 tons of garbage are dropped illegally in 150 different places in one year. (2004 datas)
- Around 700 vans or precarious shacks are listed today in the area.

**H. A PROGRESSIVE URBANIZATION PROCESS** typical of the territories that were urbanized at the edge of dense areas, that accelerated due to the construction of big road and rail infrastructures. The territorial organization remains thus unstable and with a constant characteristics: the towns, whose development used to rely on agricultural activities, have gradually turned their back to the agricultural territory of the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt. The area got parcelled out and abandoned. It became « the towns' hinterland », sheltering commercial, craft and industrial activities on its edges, aiming at large economic hubs outside the territory, especially Cergy-Pontoise : *a change in the nature of a territory serving the needs of other cities.*



**PIERRELAYE**

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Urban52

www.delcampe.net



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- 24.25. Electric lines (Geoportail)
- 26. Illicit camps of mobile homes (les Ateliers)
- 27. Unplanned warehouse (les Ateliers)
- 28. Postcard of Pierrelaye
- 29. Commercial zone in Pierrelaye (les Ateliers)

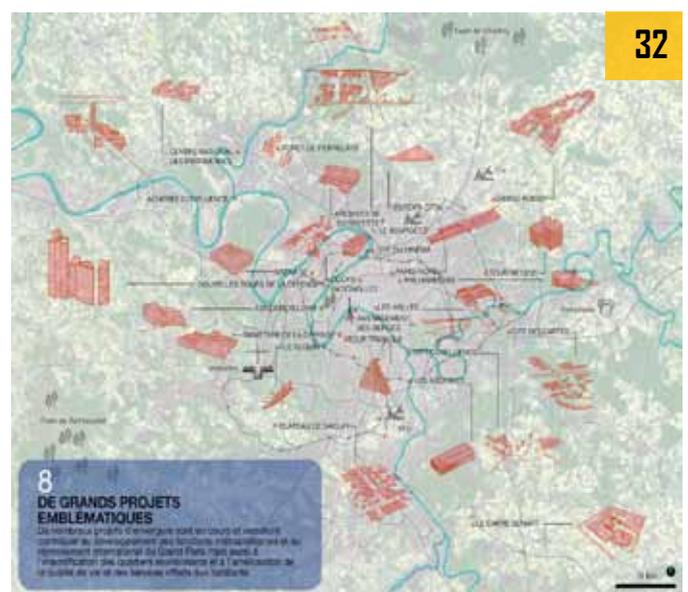
# 3. BIG FOREST, BIG PROJECT

The future of the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt can only be apprehended at a regional level, given the special situation of the site: its remarkable location between the Montmoyency Valley and the Saint Germain-en-Laye forest on a north-south axis, between the town of Cergy-Pontoise just westwards and the heart of the metropolis 27 km eastwards.

Several scales must be taken into account :



**MÉTROPOLITAIN.** In 2009, the French President announced that, among the projects of the Greater Paris, the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt would be specially identified as a « *green lung, symbol of a sustainable planning project* ». This project, based on some of the proposals made by the different teams of architects and town planners working on defining the strategies for a Greater Paris and supported by local councilors, consists in creating a new 1 000-ha-forest : a unique initiative since the creation of the royal forest of Tronçais by Colbert in the 17th century. It is important to note also that 6,000 to 8,000 new houses and accommodation buildings should be built on the urban fringes of the forest. The project of a forest of 2,500 ha (the ambition of the project then came down to 1,000 ha) was first meant to be implemented in the area of Roissy-Charles de Gaulle airport, but this suggestion faced strong local opposition.



- 30. Regional Natural Parks in Ile de France (SDRIF)
- 31. Greenbelts of the Greater Paris
- 32. The 8 major projects of the Greater Paris (ateliergrandparis.com)

## THE SEINE AND OISE RIVERS CONFLUENCE AREA.

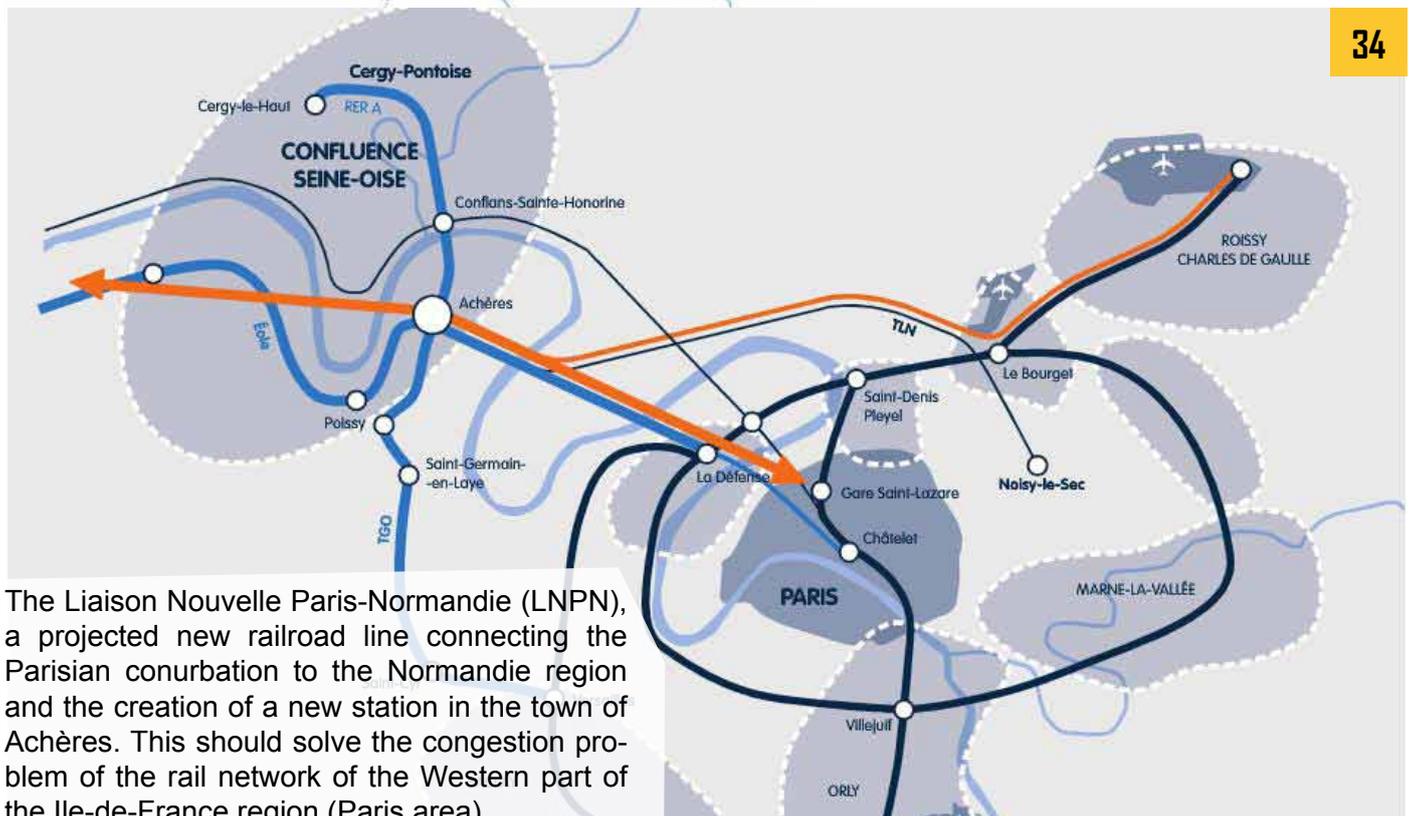
In the new masterplan for the Paris area, that was just finalized and brought to public consultation, the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt is considered as a territory of metropolitan-interest (MIT) in the area where the Seine and Oise rivers meet. This area of 350,000 inhabitants, structured around the new town of Cergy-Pontoise, is positioning itself as the new polarity of the metropolitan West, between the territories of La Défense business district and the areas of Boucle Nord – Val-de-Seine and Seine-Aval, at the junction between the central conurbation and the western rural and agricultural spaces. From a regional point of view, the main issue for this territory is carrying out an urban development that takes all the following elements into account: the development of logistical functions and large urban services, of economic and residential functions, the preservation and development of open, planted and natural spaces, the preservation of the ecological functionality of the Seine River and the development of large landscapes typical of the Seine-Aval area and its hillsides.

On the territory where the Seine and Oise rivers merge several big infrastructure and equipment projects are planned, that are necessary to the functioning of the metropolis, but also enabling future development :



The extension of the fast train **RER EOLE** (line E) from La Défense business district to the town of Mantes-la-Jolie and a **TRAM-TRAIN** system to the west.

The completion of the **HIGHWAY A104** between Cergy-Pontoise (Méry-sur-Oise) and the town of Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines (Orgeval) necessary to connect the future metropolitan harbour of Achères.



The Liaison Nouvelle Paris-Normandie (LNPN), a projected new railroad line connecting the Parisian conurbation to the Normandie region and the creation of a new station in the town of Achères. This should solve the congestion problem of the rail network of the Western part of the Ile-de-France region (Paris area).

33. Confluence Seine-Oise : a center interregional (SDRIF)

34. Confluence Oise Seine, the issue of transport (<http://www.agglo2rivesdeseine.fr>)

**THE FUTURE TRAIN STATION IN ACHÈRES**, this rail hub will allow better regional transportation and provide an access to national networks and to the airport. It will better connect an area of 1.5 million inhabitants and of 600,000 jobs to the metropolis.

**THE RIVER HARBOUR « SEINE-MÉTROPOLE » OF ACHÈRES OF 420 HA.** This multimodal harbour platform (river, train, road) located on the Seine River where the large “Seine Nord Europe Canal” opens, will be the most important harbour project in Ile-de-France area for the next 20 years.

**THE ECO-INDUSTRY CENTER IN THE LOOP OF CHANTELOUP** where companies in eco-construction using biosourced materials and showing initiatives in industrial ecology are based. The agency of the eco-construction pole created a section insisting on eco-material samples and new construction techniques.



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- 33. Confluence Seine Oise (Cergy Pontoise.fr)
- 34. Seine Métropole Port (Habitat durable.com)
- 35. Seine Aval Eco-building cluster (ecoconstructio-seineaval.com)
- 36. Seine Aval land use, 2008 (AUDAS)



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**THE COMMITTEE.** The 7 towns that organized themselves into a Committee have integrated into their urban planning documents evolution scenarios for their territory by 2015-2020, as stated by the masterplan for the Paris area of 1994. All of them generally agree on limiting the urbanization process on the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt and its hillsides. At the same time, building new houses and developing the urbanized areas at the fringes of these towns and boosting small businesses and services close to train stations and large equipments seems to be a priority.

**The town of Bessancourt** plans to urbanize an area of about 30 ha, in the area surrounding the Plaine de Pierrelaye, between the road RD 191 and the town limits of Taverny (collective and individual homes, public equipments). This urbanization of the area is limited to the north of the RD 191 road and the west of the A 115 highway (protection of the woods of Poêle). The general idea is to reinforce the poles activities of the train station and the city hall area. Moreover, a Travellers' site of a capacity of 13 people must be built according to the regional masterplan approved in 2004. The will for preserving market-farming agriculture on non-polluted lands is also stated in urban planning documents. Furthermore, an important effort deals with mobility and transportation, and a project of improving the road RD 928 is currently being discussed.

**The town of Frépillon** plans on creating an economic area of about 45 ha, on areas available for urbanization and areas less available for urbanization according to the 1994 masterplan, to the West of the railroad, in the area of Les Epineaux.

This economic zone should generate dynamism for the territory through the settlement of companies (between 50 and 80 of them) and the creation of new jobs (1,200 to 1,800 projected jobs eventually). The project is managed by the conurbation board of the Vallée de l'Oise et des Impressionnistes (now acquiring the land).

**The town of Méry-sur-Oise** is currently changing its Local Urban Planning Plan (PLU). The project of the economic zone of Epineaux will impact the town on an area of 15 ha.

**The town of Pierrelaye** is changing its PLU as well. An area for Travellers in Pierrelaye-Beauchamp which would be able to take 26 vans is projected for 2013.

**The town of Herblay** is thinking about creating an activity zone of 80 ha in Les Beauregards neighborhood across the A15 highway. An area for Travellers is also projected with a welcoming capacity of 25 vans.

**The town of Taverny** projects to expand by 18.6 ha the economic area (8,000 new jobs projected), to the North-East of the Montmorency forest, with eventually the construction of houses and public equipment as well as a new bus line.

**The town of Saint Ouen l'Aumône** is currently running a study for improving the 27-ha-area of the Porte Jaune, whose industrial activities are polluting (previous land study made exists). Areas for Travellers are also planned.

**THE PLAINE DE PIERRELAYE-BESSANCOURT.** For the finalized project of the masterplan « the area constitutes indeed an important open space of the Île-de-France green belt, between the traditional forests of Saint-Germain and Montmorency. The urbanization of its urban edges is planned, in order to take part in the regional effort for building houses. Cultivated agricultural lands will be protected from this urbanization. The plantation of a forest covering about half of the area on polluted agricultural lands is thought of but subject to environmental studies justifying the interest in terms of removing the pollution».

An urban area of regional interest was formalized between the urbanized limit of Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône and the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt. On its edges, 16 preferable-urbanization spots will be identified, as well as a densification spot.

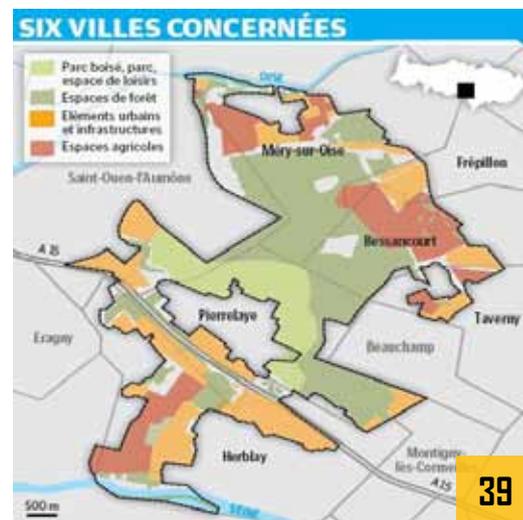
Since 1994 and in different ways (union of the towns, committee), the 7 towns involved in the evolution of the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt, associated with the central government, the region and the area of the Val d'Oise, have had discussions and debates aiming at building a strong project for the territory, shared the different partners.

In 2011, on the central government's initiative, three scenarios were elaborated and debated upon :

- Scenario A, the most urbanized one, with three variations,
- Scenario B favoring an open wooded and agricultural landscape,
- Scenario C insisting on a wooded urban park.

A decision will be made between these scenarios after the completion of 5 pre-operational studies launched by the central government/the Ile-de-France Region/The General Council for the Val d'Oise département/the 7 towns :

- a. A study on the sanitary risks due to the former spreading of dirty waters on the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt (study n°1),
- b. A study on the technical ways of integrating the forest into the masterplan (study n°2),
- c. A study for defining operational planning principles (study n°3),
- d. A study for backing up the restructuring of the agricultural activity on the Plaine de Pierrelaye (study n°4),
- e. A study on the set-up of the whole planning operation on the area and the contracting ownership (study n°5).



## THE 2012 NATIONAL WORKSHOP « ECONOMIC TERRITORIES »

on the RD14 road from the town of Franconville to Pierrelaye. During this 2012 national workshop given to a project-team placed under the responsibility of François Leclercq, associating the landscape designer Franck Perrier from the Base agency, several recommendations were made regarding the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt: the starry forest mixing agricultural zones on the borders of the forest, inhabited edges and glades, leisure clearings and areas, hills ending with wooded ecological corridors connecting the forests of Montmorency and Saint Germain-en-Laye.

39. Projet de la forêt de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt (le Parisien)

40. Atelier National Territoires Economiques, le Parisis (developpement-durable.gouv.fr)

41. Tracé RD 14 (maitrise d'oeuvre F.Leclercq architecte)

## 4. QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt needs to evolve, transform itself. In the late 19th and the early 20th century the area was a place for innovation. But eventually these innovations caused the loss of fundamental core elements of this territory. Can the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt become a new territory for innovation in the 21st-century? a model, a reference, a prototype, a laboratory or a showcase for all these functions? How can the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt be completely integrated into the Greater Paris and change from being an in-between territory to a connecting one, from an area serving the needs of other cities to a territory welcoming productive functions and activities (in an industrial sense)? How to put an end to the process of continuing deprivation that the « open space of the green belt » classification in the general masterplan cannot stop but can only accelerate?

Trying to answer these questions is the first step to formulate multiple-issue proposals. During the workshop, the teams will tackle the following issues about the Plaine de Pierrelaye :

- What is the role of the Plaine de Pierrelaye in the Greater Paris « system », which is different from the Paris urban system of the 19th and 20th centuries? How can this territory evolve from just being a place serving others to a great open and protected space of the green belt according to the masterplan project (green belt, biodiversity, large ecological gullies, large landscapes) and become a major asset in the project of a multifunctional territory corresponding to a 300,000-inhabitants conurbation?
- Which links – between indifference and integration - with the rivers Seine and Oise merging area? What future for this territory in a new geography (with a broad meaning)?
- What common project for the 7 towns of the area, and between « small » fragmented territories? Is the Plaine de Pierrelaye an periurban territory?

a countryside town? and urban countryside or the suburb of a big conurbation? Is it a territory whose functions would be spatially organized or which would rely more on hybridization? spatially organized or which would rely more on hybridization?

- What functions for the metropolitan forest within the regional green belt? What landscapes? What connections? What ecological continuities? What uses in the time before the forest actually exists? What destiny for the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt, from a leisure space where people could go for a stroll to a biomass-energy resource resulting from the production of limber (furniture, construction), or a « compensation » space (carbon audit, biodiversity) or a carbon capture area (5 tons a year)?
- What possible affectation for polluted soils (treatment, management, containment, sanitary risks, application of the safety-first principle, occupation, temporality)? With regards to the complexity of the question including scientific uncertainties, the teams will have different « possible » scenarios at their disposal.
- What future for agricultural production? Maintaining it on the polluted area is uncertain because of several factors :
  - juridical (what compatibility between the agricultural activities and the nature of the pollution?)
  - technical (what possibilities for irrigation? and at what cost?)
  - financial (what financial effort is the collectivity ready to make?)
  - regarding the complex structure of the site with some agricultural activities located on the non-polluted areas that would be devoted to « *a patrimonial agriculture with truck farmers and bio culture* », will the farming activities still be viable?

On the other hand, past experience has shown that growing agricultural products not for human consumption and *subject to enrichments and irrigation* seems to stabilize the pollution. Agricultural activities also seem essential, at least during a transitional period, to avoid the intrusion and deconstruction of the territory by other activities not compatible with the project.

- What future for the functions linked with the fact of being a vacant quarter or «second-hand» space? How to take the « informal » activities into account and the existence of Travellers on the site? These activities are the expressions of the some real needs from the whole metropolis, and should be considered important by every public authority : they can no longer be ignored, the choice has to be made today between regulation, evacuation, partial or total integration.
- What urbanization of the fringes of the area, with the building of 6,000 to 8,000 new houses? How to take into account a new city/nature relationship and work on the integration of nature in the urban environment, the interface, the transition between vacant spaces and urbanized areas (old villages, residential suburbs, collective spaces, large commercial and activity areas that need restructuring, redevelopment, evolution or extension) ?
- What future for large existing and projected infrastructures? How to reconcile urbanity/landscape and mobility along the A15 and A115 highways?

These issues meet the following question : how to live on a transforming site? This excerpt from the planning magazine *Frictions urbaines 2013* can apply to the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt :

« A planning operation is not implemented in the middle of a desert and but in a context of habits and familiarities. Though there will be a difference between “before” and “after” the project [...], there is also a long period of the implementation of the project which, when lasting several years, comes to be a way of life. As the project goes on, the mechanisms of memory activate and the itineraries and the practices of the inhabitants in their large diversity, adapt to the new environment. How do the successive steps of urbanization [or planning] get superposed and solidify? What can we do for the inhabitants [or users] to continue live and work in those areas [or territories] that are being renewed and to make them enjoy, step by step, the transformations of the site? How, in an evolving place, to create a specific feeling of the urban environment? »

Can one speak of a process? It is necessary not only to consider the long-term dimension of planning but also the time that the forest will take to grow, which is of about 50 or 60 years. Is is also important to imagine a positive short-term future for the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt, for the next 10 or 20 years, that would take into account the issues of climate change and energy transition.



**AQUEDUCT** : Structure for conveying water, transporting it.

**BIOSOURCED MATERIALS** : The family of eco-materials gathers : recycled insulators such as cotton cellulose, or « Métisse » (insulation in textile recycling), materials coming from animal or vegetal biomass, ie biosourced materials. The most famous biosourced materials are wood, straw, hemp, cork, sheep wool ...

**EDICULE** : Include several small constructions isolated in a public area or open spaces, with various use or status.

**EMISSARY** : Ditch or watercourse used for draining the water that flows by streaming or drainage.

**FURROW** : Small channel digged for water to flow.

**LIFTING STATIONS OF WATER** : Device for collecting and treating water.

**PRIMARY DECANTATION** : Process of separating solid materials by using gravity, that ends up eliminating solids in suspension, which are denser than water, through the exclusive action of the gravity force.

**SIPHON** : The siphon bridge is the second way of crossing a valley. It aims at conveying high pressure water in a penstock.

**VENTILATION COLUMNS** : Construction used for ventilation, ie the renewing of air, through a movement in a closed area. It is implemented in areas with risks of low oxygen levels, or where polluting agents or other undesirable substances (humidity for instance) could accumulate without it.

## 7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- **Mandinaud Vincent**, « The pollution of soils in fields manured with wastewater, constraint and/or resource for sustainable development in the Bessancourt – Herblay – Pierrelaye plain », in *Revue Développement Durable et Territoires*, 2005, available on line : <http://developpementdurable.revues.org/1543>
- **Conseil général of Val d'Oise** : <http://www.valdoise.fr/>
- **Town members of the entente** : **Pierrelaye** (<http://www.ville-pierrelaye.fr/>), **Bessancourt** ([www.ville-bessancourt.fr/](http://www.ville-bessancourt.fr/)), **Taverny** ([www.ville-taverny.fr/](http://www.ville-taverny.fr/)), **Frépillon** ([www.frepillon.fr/](http://www.frepillon.fr/)), **Méry-sur-Oise** ([www.merysuroise.fr/](http://www.merysuroise.fr/)), **Saint-Ouen l'Aumône** ([www.ville-saintouenlaumone.fr/](http://www.ville-saintouenlaumone.fr/)), **Herblay** ([www.herblay.fr/](http://www.herblay.fr/))
- **Grand Paris** : <http://ateliergrandparis.com/12clefs/>
- **Schéma Directeur of the Région Ile de France (SDRIF)** : <http://www.iledefrance.fr/>
- **Institute of Planning and Urbanism of the Région Ile-de-France (IAU IDF)** : <http://www.iau-idf.fr/>
- **Association for the promotion of history and heritage of the Montmorency valley** : <http://valmorency.fr/55.html>
- **National Institute of statistics and economic studies (Insee)** : [www.insee.fr/](http://www.insee.fr/)

## 8. THE ASSOCIATION LES ATELIERS

Les Ateliers is a non-profit organization and an international network of professionals, researchers and decision-makers in different fields related to urban planning. The association has been organizing international workshops on the demand of local authorities, putting the emphasis on creativity, dialogue and the collective elaboration of projects. In France or in other countries, these workshops provide local authorities with an international point of view and with innovative proposals on their planning issues. Through the interaction between various fields of work and cultures, these workshops are also a place for rich debates and exchanges, as well as an opportunity to question everyone's experience.

### **WORKSHOP MANAGEMENT**

Patrice BERTHE, pilot / Nicolas BUCHOUD, pilot/ Georgia BAGAOUI-MEYER, assistant-pilot

With the help of : Maria BASILE, Benoît VERNIERE, Bertrand WARNIER, and the permanent team of Les Ateliers (Léa MORFOISSE, Claire VIGE-HELIE, Laïla HADDAG)

### **THE MONITORING BOARD**

The issue of the Plaine de Pierrelaye-Bessancourt mobilizes numerous actors in the Ile-de-France area. The workshop being a contributive platform and not a rival initiative regarding institutional activities, we suggested to our partners and regional authorities to take part in this work by gathering together in a monitoring board that meets every two months. Its composition includes representatives from : the Région Île-de-France, the City of Paris, Paris Métropole, the Conseil Général of the Val d'Oise area, the CAUE of the Val d'Oise, the Direction Départementale des Territoires of Val d'Oise, the Agence Foncière et Technique of the Région Parisienne (AFTRP), the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the University of Cergy-Pontoise, the Ecole des Mines-ParisTech

### **THE DRAC AND THE ARTISTS**

The Regional Direction for Cultural Affairs (DRAC) backs up the workshop of Cergy every year by mobilizing two visual artists, who take part in the collective production of the workshop through a specific research, and by being present with the international teams during the time of the workshop. The two artists will be selected in the spring 2013.

# 9. CALENDAR AND APPLICATION

SATURDAY	08/31	Arrival of participants Welcoming dinner
SNDAY	09/01	Free Day - Visit of Paris
MONDAY	09/02	Presentation of the programme Visit of the site
TUESDAY	09/03	Presentation by the participants Opening ceremony + Conferences
WEDNESDAY	09/04	Presentation by the participants Visit of the site
THURSDAY	09/05	Presentation by the participants Visit of the site
FRIDAY 09/05		Presentation by the participants Training of the teams Corrections
SATURDAY	09/07	Workshop work
SUNDAY	09/08	Free day
MONDAY	09/09	Workshop work
TUESDAY	09/10	Workshop work
WEDNESDAY	09/11	Workshop work
THURSDAY	09/12	Workshop work
FRIDAY	09/13	9.30 am – 4 pm at the Ecole d'Art : Exchange Forum n°1

SATURDAY	09/14	Workshop work
SUNDAY	09/15	Free day
MONDAY	09/16	Workshop work
TUESDAY	09/17	Workshop work Presentation by the artists
WEDNESDAY	09/18	Workshop work
TUESDAY	09/19	Workshop work
FRIDAY	09/20	9.30 – 16 at the Ecole d'Art : Exchange Forum n°2
SATURDAY	09/21	Workshop work
SUNDAY	09/22	Free day
MONDAY	09/23	Workshop work Arrival of the members of the jury
TUESDAY	09/24	Workshop work Hand-in of the graphic works Visits and conferences for the jury
WEDNESDAY	09/25	Rehearsal for the presentations Reading of the projects by the jury
THURSDAY	09/26	9 am : International Jury 8 pm : Evening
FRIDAY	09/27	Departure of the participants

## 31st session of Les Ateliers de Cergy international workshops

### The workshop is open to all fields of work and studies!

Artists, town planners, designers, architects, environmental sciences specialists, sociologists, geographers, economists, agronomists, engineers, photographers, landscape architects... and others: Participants of the workshop are young professionals of all nationalities and fields, and students with at least a master degree.

Only restrictions: A good knowledge of English, full availability at the time of the workshop, age limit of 30 years-old.

For any information and/or documents, write to [pierrelaye@ateliers.org](mailto:pierrelaye@ateliers.org). To apply, write to [application@ateliers.org](mailto:application@ateliers.org)

### HOW TO APPLY:

Les Ateliers will select 24 international participants who will work in 4 or 5 teams of 5 or 6 people, managed by professionals, based on a research work. The application work must be sent to [application@ateliers.org](mailto:application@ateliers.org) by **May 5th, 2013** :

1. single-page CV (name the file as follows : SURNAME\_First name\_CV) ;

2. A personal work on the subject of the workshop (name the file as follows : SURNAME\_First name\_RW) ;

The research work focuses on the topic of the workshop, applied to another site, preferably in the home country or country of residence of the candidate. The goal of this research work is to show a personal position of the topic prior to the workshop. The research work is individual (8 pages A4 or 4 pages A3 maximum). Works made by several people are allowed as long as each one's work can clearly be identified, please keep in mind that it is possible that only one person of the group is selected

3. The registration form is available on the Website :

[www.ateliers.org/sites/default/files/docschantiers/name\\_firstname\\_id\\_cergy\\_2013\\_0.doc](http://www.ateliers.org/sites/default/files/docschantiers/name_firstname_id_cergy_2013_0.doc) and must be filled and signed (SURNAME\_First name\_ID).

### PLACE AND DATE :

The results of the selection will be given from June 3rd.

The workshop will take place in Cergy-Pontoise (near Paris) from August 31st to September 27th 2013.

### BUDGET :

The registration fees are 300 euros, including accommodation, breakfasts, ceremony meals, visits, conferences, and drawing equipments. Free registration for grant holders.

Thanks to a partnership with Cergy-Pontoise University, participating to the workshop leads to the awarding of a Summer University diploma, and the granting of 12 ECTS credits.

**Les Ateliers Internationaux  
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**les ateliers**  

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**maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine**