

Along the rhythms of water

Imagining the Seine metropolis

Ecology and habitability of the Seine and its tributaries

44TH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP OF
URBAN AND TERRITORIAL CREATIVITY

FROM 07 TO 25 SEPTEMBER 2026



**SESSION
BOOK**

les Ateliers
maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine



Along the rhythms of water: Imagining the Seine Metropolis

ECOLOGY AND HABITABILITY OF THE SEINE AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

44TH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP OF URBAN AND TERRITORIAL CREATIVITY

SESSION BOOK

VERSION 25 SEPTEMBER 2026

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Les Ateliers thank their partners



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Foreword

For over 40 years, the association Les Ateliers de Cergy has brought together students and young professionals of various nationalities and backgrounds each year in the Île-de-France region. They work on-site in multidisciplinary teams and present their proposals and strategies to a panel of experts and local representatives. The teams' proposals combine long-term visions for the territory with illustrated action plans, creating a range of proposals for local decision-makers to draw on. Since its inception, Les Ateliers has built a network of over 3,000 former participants.

Since the 2000s, Les Ateliers have been invited to organise workshops around the world. The approach remains the same: to address complex issues freely and at multiple scales, whilst taking a step back from the institutional context and facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue.

For their 44th session, Les Ateliers are continuing the workshop cycle "Ecology and Liveability of the Seine and its Tributaries", which began in 2025. The Seine river basin is, by its very nature, a space that transcends borders and disciplines, and the way it is understood evolves in response to changing challenges. Over the course of three successive sessions, teams of young professionals are exploring the basin and gradually developing visions and actions for its future.

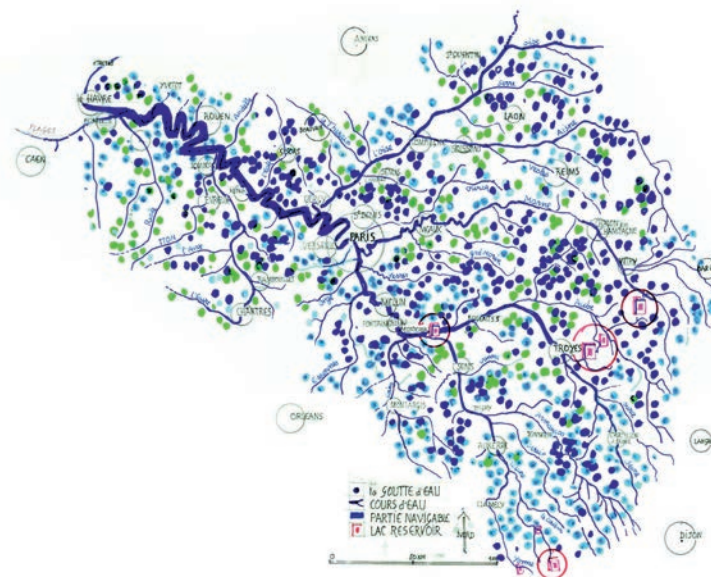
Following an initial session devoted to the Upper Seine Valley and the upstream areas, this second workshop focuses on the densely populated and heavily sealed-off heart of the basin: the Île-de-France metropolitan area, here referred to as the "Seine" metropolitan area. The aim of this series of workshops is to examine and reinvent the relationships between residents and the river, and between the river system and our daily lives. The workshops thus seek to demonstrate how the Seine and its tributaries, rather than merely bordering or crossing the metropolis, can once again become a living, shared backbone, governed by the rhythms of the water.

Against the backdrop of the combined risks of water scarcity and flooding linked to climate change, it is becoming essential to rethink our relationship with water and the river basin, particularly in its most urbanised and densely populated parts. Water, the very foundation of life, provides a framework for relationships between geography, landscape, living organisms and the mineral world, at the very heart of the metropolis. How can we bring this "Great Seine Garden" to life within the urban area itself, drawing on the river network, the symbolism of water and the narrative power of the garden?

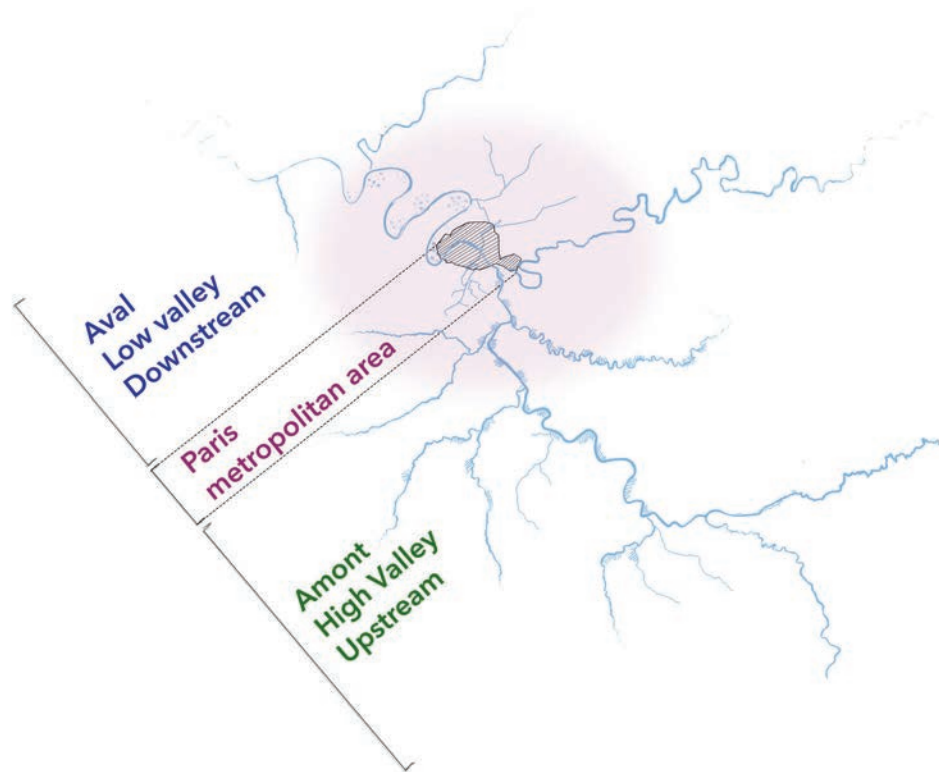
The Seine basin is a vast territory, stretching from Burgundy to Normandy and home to over 18 million people. At its heart lies the Seine metropolitan area, its most densely populated part, where uses of the river are most intense and where tensions and opportunities in the relationship between the river and its residents are concentrated. It is here that the narratives devised by the teams must come to terms with urban density, existing infrastructure and the daily lives of millions of residents.

This second workshop aims to contribute to the creation of this "Great Seine Garden" in order to craft narratives of desirable, inclusive and resilient communities for the residents of this vast catchment area.

Whilst following the river from its source to its estuary, the 44th session focuses on the Seine metropolitan area. A third and final workshop is planned for 2027, focusing on the downstream part of this vast catchment area and living space, all the way to the



La Seine et ses affluents © Bertrand Warnier



- A cycle of international workshops starting in 2025, covering the Upper Seine, the Metropolitan Seine and the Lower Seine
- 15 volunteer participants selected per workshop and more than 100 volunteer experts (partners, researchers, professionals, monitoring committee, productive seminar, jury members)
- 3 international, multidisciplinary teams of young professionals and students for each workshop
- For each workshop, 3 weeks of on-site work, with visits, discussions and presentations, accompanied by local stakeholders
- For this 44th workshop, 15 international young professionals and students (India, Colombia, Greece, Cameroon, Ukraine, Germany, Belgium, Georgia, France...) trained in complementary disciplines (urban planning, art, landscape, engineering, economics, sociology...) worked in Cergy and across the metropolitan area from 7 to 25 September 2026.

01

THE TOPIC

BY THE CO-PILOTS

LAURA CHATAIGNER & CESAR SILVA URDANETA



Imagining, along the rhythms of water, the metropolis of the great Seine garden

In order to address the contemporary state of the metropolitan system, which is characterised by territorial interdependencies, overlapping scales and governance boundaries, conflicts of use, and disjointed temporalities, this workshop proposes a method based on simultaneous frameworks of interpretation. Focusing on the dynamics of the wider basin re-centres the metropolis within the hydrological, ecological, and territorial relationships that sustain it. This marks a common approach to the triptych of the Greater Seine Valley, of which this session constitutes the metropolitan component, spanning both upstream and downstream areas.

The workshop invites participants to envisage the Seine metropolitan area through three key conceptual frameworks, which structure the discussions: inhabiting the metropolis through water; cultivating a metropolitan consciousness; and coordinating synergies between stakeholders. These frameworks are put into practice through three operational actions - revealing, connecting and activating - with a focus on temporalities as a method for generating project ideas that are in tune with the rhythms of water, its challenges and its possibilities. By interpreting legacies and revealing discrepancies between the rhythms of water, living organisms, practices and public action, we can then chart trajectories and make time a genuine component of the project. The focus shifts from imagining what the metropolis might become to understanding the rhythms at which it is already transforming, the times it inherits, the times it accelerates or thwarts, and how to act in harmony with them.



The Course of the Seine © Raoul Dufy.

From its source to its estuary, from Burgundy to Le Havre, the Seine winds its way. As it meanders, the outline of a "Great Seine Garden" emerges. At its heart lies a metropolis whose expansions stretch out along the tributaries. From the Upper Seine Valley, which is dotted with inhabited confluences, to the great bends of the Lower Seine, which are characterised by a mosaic of urban and natural landscapes, a remarkable diversity of metropolitan landscapes unfolds. There are historic towns such as Corbeil and Paris, the gardens of Versailles, the Forest of Fontainebleau, port towns such as Gennevilliers, and the enchanting islands of the Seine, including Île-Saint-Denis and Île-Saint-Étienne. There are also garden cities such as Suresnes and Châtenay, and new towns such as Évry-Courcouronnes and Cergy-Pontoise. All of which offer so many ways of shaping cities and inventing new ways of living.

Flowing along the water, these landscapes have driven the development of the capital region and the country as a whole. Yet the metropolis has not always fulfilled all the promises of its modernity: social and economic inequalities, along with varying levels of exposure to risks, compound the decline of its residential areas. Channelled water, buried rivers and sealed-off ground bear witness to a logic of control and production that has also exacerbated vulnerabilities. Today, faced with climatic, ecological and political uncertainties that challenge our built environments to embrace new futures, the workshop invites us to reimagine the metropolis of tomorrow based on what sustains life: the water of rivers and streams, that of aquifers and soils, but also the networks that supply, the land that nourishes and the environments that sustain life.



This follows on from the Manifesto for a Great Seine Park System (Warnier, Enquist, Wensley, 2022), an international and collaborative project led by the Ateliers de Cergy between 2017 and 2022, and from the first workshop in the Seine Valley trilogy, “The River Seine as a Great Garden”, held in 2025. This metropolitan workshop proposes to explore the subject through the landscape features of the metropolis - its valleys, loops and islands - and into the imagined space of a shared future, in order to foster forms of collective action, cooperation and citizen-led initiatives capable of giving substance to that future. The garden, a “mental territory of hope” according to Gilles Clément, gives shape to this perspective and offers a way of engaging with places through attention and practices of care for living beings and the relationships between them. The garden thus becomes a method for composing, with liveability as the horizon.



The garden city of Stains ©Seine-Saint-Denis-Tourisme



The Gardeners' Resource Centre ©Clément Dorval, Ville de Paris



Living with biodiversity © Laura Folmer, Topophile



The canal Saint Martin © La Grande Voyageuse

Inventing the Seine metropolis to the rhythms of water is a call to imagine it in three movements.

To inhabit the metropolis through water is to engage with the reality of its future spatial arrangements and uses, through the multiple presences of water within the everyday fabric of the metropolis: homes and gardens, courtyards and inner blocks, productive spaces, and the fringes of infrastructure. Housing links domestic intimacy to the challenges of density, cooling and making space for living organisms. Places of production and logistics, often kept at a distance, can also contribute to the conditions of liveability. Plots and land ownership become spaces for negotiation where ownership, uses, permeability and responsibilities intersect. Revealing these places and the relationships that shape them also brings continuities to light and allows us to imagine new alliances capable of nurturing relationships between species, between actors, and between territories.

To cultivate a metropolitan consciousness is to recognise the interdependencies and the solidarity they call for, and to connect what territorial divisions tend to separate. Stakeholder networks become levers for collective action. Institutions, businesses, organisations and residents all contribute to this, both through the partnerships they forge and through their everyday, cultural and civic practices. Building the common good therefore involves making choices: who has access, who decides, who maintains, and with whom do we share the metropolis? This attention extends to other actors - living and non-living, biotic and abiotic, natural and human-made - that also play a part in shaping the metropolis's future. It echoes Edgar Morin's notion of a 'community of earthly destiny', grounding our projects in a sense of responsibility towards the world on which we depend.

To coordinate synergies between stakeholders

ultimately means transforming this awareness into the capacity for action. The aim here is to identify the levers capable of setting in motion what is already there. Participants bring to this endeavour a diversity of skills, talents, cultures and emotions. Encounters, immersion and the exchange of perspectives enable us to develop new scenarios together. The Seine Valley metropolis thus takes shape through informed actions, with the responsiveness of martial arts: working with the forces already in motion, seizing possibilities, discerning rhythms and steering trajectories; but above all, with the generosity of a gardener, attentive to living systems: sowing the seeds of a shared future.

The participants' art has been, with Riverhood, to draw together new threads, enriching the social fabric through collaborations and commons and contributing to the future of a catchment area built on solidarity; with Flow, to open up monumental spaces to life-enhancing transformations, making room for residents' practices and for living systems to flourish; and with the Confluencers, to restore a tangible presence to the floodplain through the re-emergence of water and vegetation, social appropriation and encounters with art. Together, these proposals outline different ways of inhabiting the Seine Valley metropolis as a Great Garden. What remains is to interweave their movements over time. This involves reading the legacies that continue to exert their influence within the landscapes and infrastructure, revealing discrepancies between the rhythms of water, living organisms, uses and public action. On this basis, trajectories capable of articulating present actions and possible futures can be built. Therefore, to imagine the metropolis of tomorrow is not so much to assign it a future state, but rather to give it the means to evolve in step with the rhythms of water.

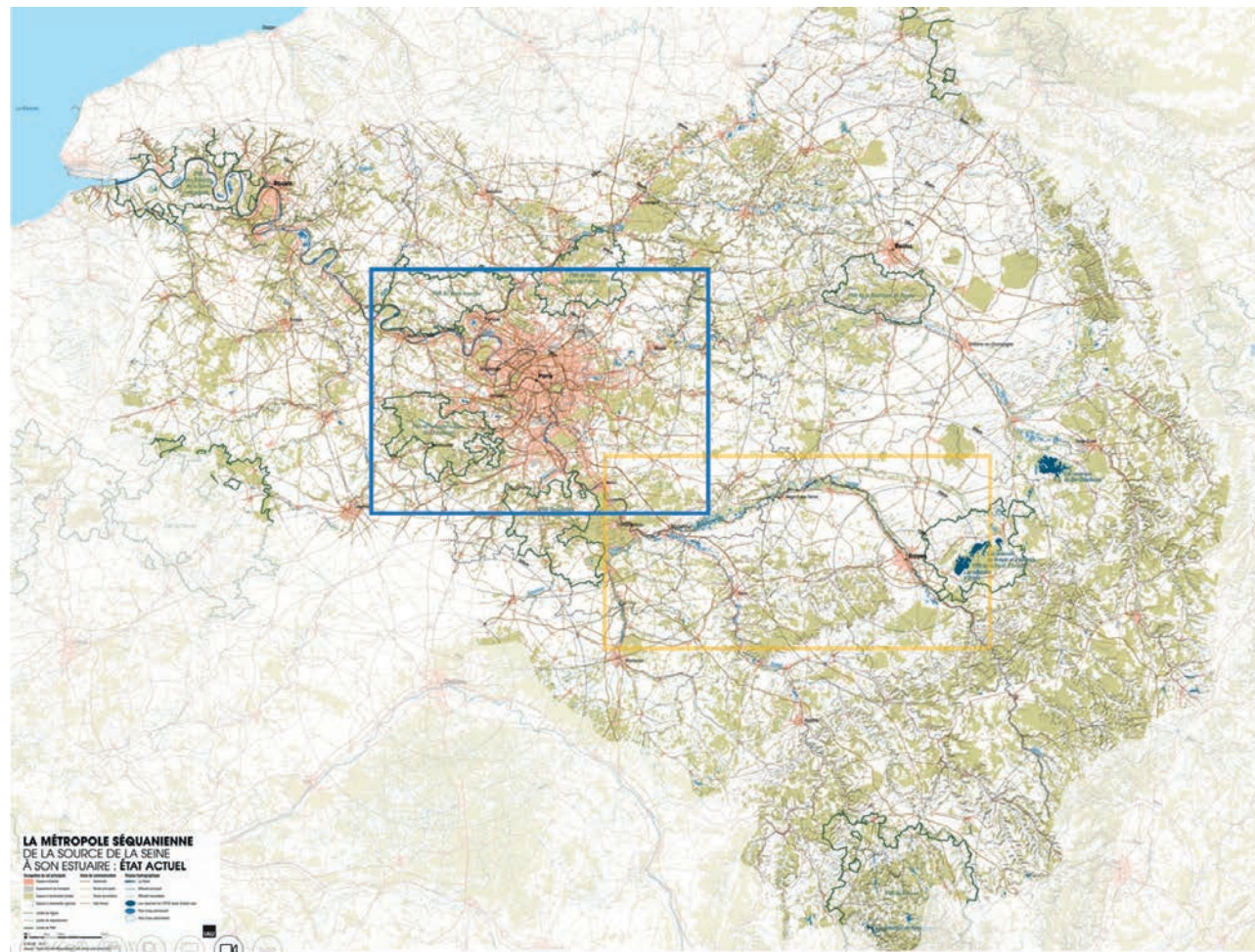


Ode to the Eukaryote © Shoshanah Dubiner



The territory: the Seine metropolis

The Paris metropolitan area is often described in terms of what is concentrated there: nearly 12.6 million inhabitants in Île-de-France, alongside an exceptional density of jobs, facilities, networks and centres of decision-making. This concentration shapes the rhythms of the region. Every day, millions of journeys connect Paris with metropolitan centres, large housing estates and suburban neighbourhoods, as well as business parks and logistics hubs. Goods, materials, energy, water and food converge on the capital region, while other flows move outwards. The metropolis is defined as much by these movements as by its physical spaces. Yet many of these flows depend on a less visible network of waterways that underpins the region's day-to-day functioning. Water moves through the metropolis via the Seine, the Marne and the Oise, flows between Paris's embankments, skirts its islands and feeds its canals. But it also circulates underground, through aquifers, soils and infrastructure networks. It falls as rain, runs off, infiltrates the soil, evaporates, and is abstracted, consumed, treated and eventually discharged. These movements vary with the seasons; changes in river flows, soil moisture and groundwater levels shape how water can be used and test the metropolis's capacity to secure its water supply, absorb rainfall, maintain cool spaces and keep its riverbanks liveable.



In blue, the metropolitan area at the heart of this workshop, within the Seine basin © Institut Paris Région, Laurent Perrin

A metropolis shaped by water

Following the water's course quickly takes us beyond the heart of Paris. The Seine catchment area stretches from the plateaus of Burgundy and Champagne as far as Normandy, gradually gathering the waters of the Aube, the Yonne and the Loing upstream, then the Marne, before receiving the Oise at Conflans-Sainte-Honorine and continuing its course towards the estuary. As one follows the river and its tributaries, these connections take shape in very different metropolitan landscapes.

In Paris, the Seine is at once monumental, productive and heavily urbanised. Contained between largely concrete embankments and spanned by a succession of bridges, it shapes the heritage landscape of the city centre whilst remaining an essential infrastructure for the functioning of the capital. Its ports and embankments are home to industrial and logistics activities, particularly those linked to the transport and storage of building materials, the supply of construction sites and the removal of their spoil, placing Paris within a port system that extends both upstream and downstream. The river route is also being utilised to reduce the reliance on road transport for supplying the metropolis: transporting goods as close as possible to the densely populated city centre via the Seine allows urban ports to be envisaged as relay points for 'last-mile' logistics that are less dependent on heavy goods vehicles. These productive functions coexist with the increasing reclamation of the riverbanks for leisure and walking, whilst improvements in water quality have allowed swimming to return. At the same time, the renaturation of certain sections and the restoration of ecological connectivity serve as a reminder that the river's environment is not limited

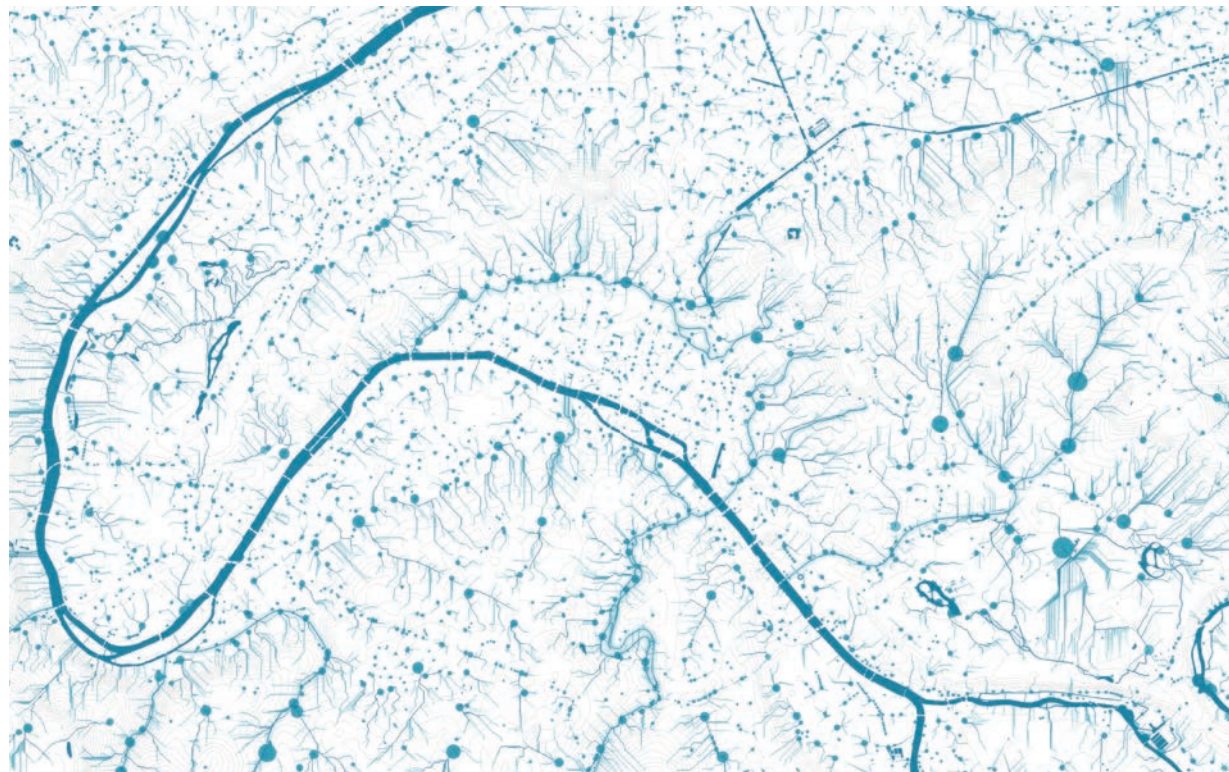


Water features in various forms and across different urban areas: the Seine in Paris; the restoration of the Croult in Gonesse; the Olympic Village on Île-Saint-Denis; along the Quai de Bezons; the Marne at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre; and the port of Gennevilliers.



to its banks: it also comprises a body of water whose flow and quality determine its uses, as well as aquatic habitats that support life beneath the surface.

Further upstream, the Seine flows through the industrial valley of Ivry, Vitry and Choisy, before winding its way around Orly, Villeneuve-Saint-Georges and Ablon through an area where major infrastructure and residential neighbourhoods lie directly alongside floodplains. The Marne offers a different landscape: around Joinville, Saint-Maur and Champigny, its meanders, islands and banks bear witness to a history of residential development and recreational engagement with the water, which is now being revitalised, notably through the return of swimming. Downstream from Paris, the northern loop of the Seine was one of the workshop's key areas of exploration and dialogue. Around the port of Gennevilliers and the industrial landscapes of Argenteuil and Bezons, the river retains a major productive and logistical role, bordering residential neighbourhoods that are undergoing transformation. The Seine also remains deeply ingrained in the identity of the riverside towns. In Argenteuil, the river's landscapes and the Impressionist heritage nourish this long-standing relationship, even as infrastructure and industrial sites have weakened the physical links with the water. The reconnection sought today extends beyond the riverbanks alone: from the hillsides in the town centre, all the way to the Seine, the aim is to restore landscape and ecological continuity across the entire area, by giving greater prominence to the green and blue infrastructure and to green public spaces. In L'Île-Saint-Denis, this relationship involves a physical and cultural re-engagement with the island's character. The transformation of former industrial sites, the redevelopment of the riverbanks, and the return of swimming are intended to break down the barriers separating the island from the water, turning the



Map showing areas where water accumulates and rivers. Rain shapes the natural landscape. Watercourses, based on the gradient of the streets as derived from the digital elevation model, give rise to numerous natural valleys. ©Apur, 2024

island's character into a catalyst for fostering a sense of belonging, identity, and attractiveness. However, the immediate proximity of the port of Gennevilliers serves as a reminder that, given the current conditions of supply and consumption in the capital region, this reconnection must coexist with essential productive and logistical functions. Across the northern loop of the Seine, the tensions and possibilities involved in reshaping the relationship with the river thus come into focus: maintaining the functions and transport links that connect these areas to the metropolis, whilst bringing everyday life closer to the water and to nature. Further west, the great bends of the Seine gradually

loosen the urban fabric, bringing hillsides, islands and open spaces more into view, before the confluence with the Oise at Conflans-Sainte-Honorine opens up towards Cergy-Pontoise and another system of valleys. This journey reveals not so much a single metropolitan relationship with the Seine as different ways of engaging with the river, shaped by the landscapes, heritage and specific functions of each area. Yet these relationships are never entirely local: water flows, uses interact, and transformations in one area take place within a system that links them to other territories, both upstream and downstream. It is within this

Managing water, living with its variations

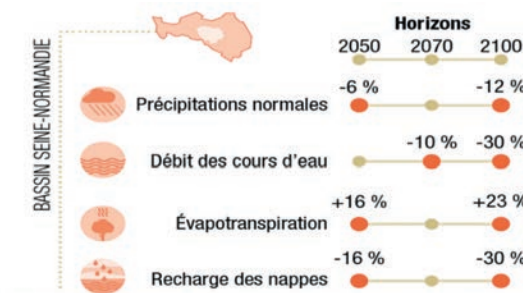
The centrality of Paris has been shaped by this geography as much as it has transformed it. The valleys of the Seine, Marne and Oise rivers constitute key corridors for urbanisation, transport and industrial development. From the 19th century onwards, the expansion of water supply and sewerage networks has accompanied the growth of the urban area, profoundly transforming aquatic environments in the process. Watercourses were straightened, channelled or covered over: the Bièvre gradually disappeared beneath Paris and its inner suburbs, whilst streams such as the Croult were culverted or incorporated into the sewerage networks. Wetlands receded as more and more land was built on and sealed. Containing, draining, discharging, supplying: for a long time, managing water meant adapting its flow to the city's needs and rhythms. Yet water continues to shape the landscape, in groundwater, soils and former valleys, and is now re-emerging in watercourses that have been restored to the open air, such as the Bièvre in Arcueil and Gentilly. In Seine-Saint-Denis, the Vieille Mer offers another example: transformed into a sewer and buried during urbanisation, it is gradually regaining its open course, restoring to the landscape a hydraulic continuity that the city had incorporated into its networks. What has been buried thus continues to exert an influence on the territory, and what has been controlled is never entirely removed from its own temporal rhythms.

This control relies on a vast technical system, largely underground. The water consumed in the conurbation is partly drawn from sources far from the densely populated centre; after use, it travels thousands of kilometres through networks before being treated,

notably at Seine Aval in Achères. Upstream, reservoir lakes retain part of the floodwaters and release water to sustain low-flow periods. Beneath the city, sewers, pipes and aquifers also encounter a geology transformed by the historical extraction of limestone, gypsum and chalk. The remaining quarries and cavities make water flow particularly sensitive: in gypsum-rich areas, particularly north of Paris and in Seine-Saint-Denis, seepage, leaks or fluctuations in groundwater levels can dissolve the rock and weaken the subsoil. The return of water to the ground is thus shaped by this technical and geological complexity, which determines where, how and at what rate it can infiltrate. From the catchment area to the buried networks, the flow of water thus links infrastructure and environments whose functioning remains closely interdependent.

Climate change is exacerbating these discrepancies and disrupting the rhythms that urban planning has long sought to synchronise. In the densely urbanised valleys of the Seine, Marne and Oise, soil sealing accelerates surface runoff during heavy rainfall and puts pressure on the sewerage networks, occasionally leading to discharges of wastewater into the Seine. Exposure to flooding remains just as significant: more than a million residents of the Île-de-France region now live in areas that would be flooded in the event of a major flood on the scale of that of 1910. But water accounts for only part of the risk landscape. The interdependence of infrastructure networks would extend the disruption far beyond the submerged areas: electricity, drinking water, sewerage, transport, telecommunications and district heating could be cut off or severely disrupted, with effects lasting several weeks or months after the waters have receded. Therefore, living with flooding also means considering the period after the flood, when the water has receded but the city's daily functioning remains severely disrupted. At other times, droughts

and prolonged low water levels reduce the flow rates of the Seine and its tributaries, whilst water continues to be in demand by both the city and aquatic ecosystems. Heatwaves exacerbate these tensions in the densest, most mineralised urban fabrics. These transformations thus shift the established boundaries between technical infrastructure, inhabited spaces and living environments, and call for new alliances, in which the soil, vegetation or aquatic environments can themselves play a part in the functioning of metropolitan infrastructure.



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

Climate change will have many impacts on the role of water in the city and across the entire basin.



Seine flood in 2018, Lionel Allorge



The trade-offs of an interdependent metropolis

Finding ways to better accommodate water and living organisms thus has very concrete implications for the way in which metropolitan space is shared and transformed. In valleys that are already densely developed, making more room for water involves trade-offs between uses, environments and timeframes that sometimes overlap in the same spaces. In Ablon-sur-Seine and Villeneuve-le-Roi, the lock-dam maintains navigable conditions whilst the riverside neighbourhoods cope with the river's flooding: following the floods of 2016 and 2018, Villeneuve-le-Roi notably raised electrical equipment and access routes and created walkways above flood level. On the opposite bank, the open spaces of Vigneux contribute to the spread of floodwaters whilst also being sought after for logistics and port functions. The port project led by HAROPA has been met with opposition from neighbouring municipalities who highlight the risk of flooding, the impact on wetlands and agricultural land, and the disruption to residential neighbourhoods. This section of the Seine therefore illustrates the trade-off between river traffic, flood protection, economic development, open spaces, and the liveability of riverside neighbourhoods in a very tangible way. These uses do not require the same land take or the same timescales: maintaining a navigable channel, preserving a floodplain, or adapting a neighbourhood to recurrent flooding result in different ways of utilising the valley and managing the river's movements.

These tensions are an inherent feature of a dense metropolis whose functioning depends on interconnections that extend far beyond its boundaries; the challenge lies in the choices made in allocating space and resources. The growth of the Paris metropolitan area has relied on its ability to draw on ever-larger territories to sustain and intensify its own activities, making the Seine and its catchment area at once a resource, an infrastructure and a space for adjustment. Decisions concerning water thus reveal the extent to which territories and environments are required to adapt to the demands of the metropolis, but also the possibility of reversing this relationship: changing the metropolis so that it takes greater account of their own timescales and limitations. Behind decisions about what is protected, slowed down, supplied or allowed to transform lie different ways of shaping the metropolis - and of imagining and distributing the conditions for its liveability.



In Ablon-Sur-Seine

02

THE PROCESS





The workshop is the outcome of a collective preparatory process, bringing together the steering team and the various water-sector partners and stakeholders at each key stage. The preparation process is punctuated by regular meetings of the 'monitoring committee', which supports and guides the workshop's development, from defining the topic through to the final presentation to the jury.

The plea

2022

In early 2022, Les Ateliers and Urba2000, with the support of the Institut Paris Région, published the 'Plea for a Great Seine Valley Garden', written by Bertrand Warnier, urban planner and co-founder of Les Ateliers, in collaboration with Phil Enquist and Drew Wensley,

with a foreword by Erik Orsenna.

In the words of Bertrand Warnier: "This Plea - which could be a Manifesto - deals extensively with the issues of existing limits and boundaries. And it is in this context, and through the eyes of a gardener, that there is most to be said - or at the very least, said in a very different way - compared to the perspective of an accountant, on such essential issues as gigantism and over-concentration, the role of water and the place of farmers, biological balance and the need for space, and quality of life in the 21st century."

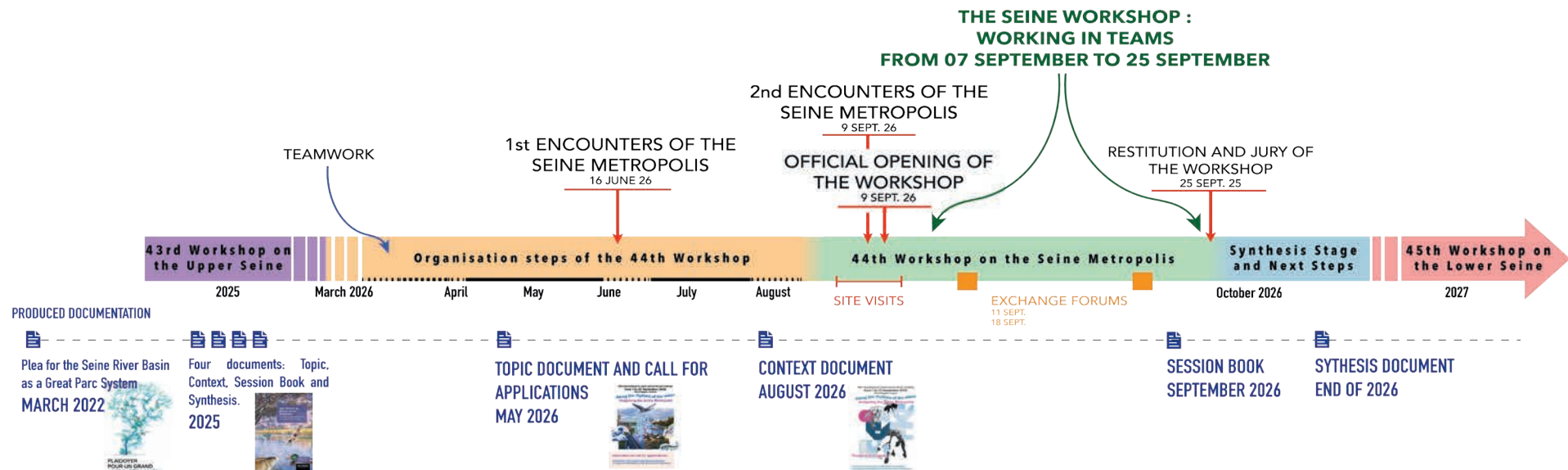
It was from this Plea that the Seine workshop series was born: three successive sessions, spread over three years, inviting participants to explore the basin from upstream to downstream.



THE SEINE RIVER BASIN AS A GREAT PARK SYSTEM

Plaidoyer pour un grand Jardin Séquanien

Bertrand Warnier - Phil Enquist - Drew Wensley



The 43rd workshop

SEPTEMBER 2025

The 43rd session, **"The River Seine as a Great Garden"**, opened the series in September 2025. It focused on the upper Seine, a vast yet relatively unknown area that is sometimes overlooked by those further downstream. However, it plays an essential role in the hydrological regulation of the wider basin.

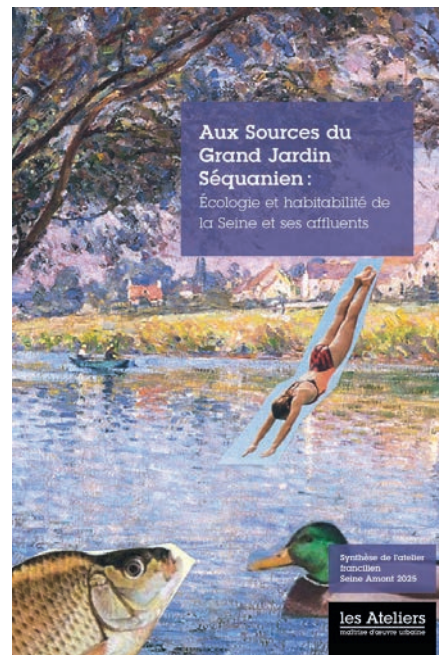
The fifteen participants took part in three weeks of collaborative work, enriched by a seminar, field visits and discussion forums with local stakeholders. Each team embraced the metaphor of the "Great Seine Garden" to explore a unique imaginary of water: the NOU(E)S team revived the concept of "noues" (streams, ditches and upstream thalwegs) as a network of biocultural corridors; the BEAVERS team took the beaver - the "weaver-hydrologist" - as their guide to imagine pathways linking agriculture, urban life and nature; the KI LU CRUE team revived legends and vernacular knowledge to map the sacred aspects of the Upper Seine region.

From these three narratives emerged a common framework comprising five themes (river, paths, the sacred, animals, watercourses) and a shared understanding of vulnerabilities, inviting us to transform the fragility of these environments into a resource for regenerative practices.

Presented to the jury and analysed in the workshop summary written by the two co-leads, Armelle Varcin and César Silva Urdaneta (available online and in print), these proposals laid the narrative and methodological foundations upon which this session is now based, dedicated to the inhabited heart of the basin: the Seine metropolis.



Participants from the 2025 session



Teamwork

MARCH 2026

As part of the preparations for the workshop, students from CY Cergy Paris Université, the University of Warwick (United Kingdom), Babeş-Bolyai University (Romania), Technische Universität Dresden (Germany) and the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia) took part in "Teamwork", an online collaborative project held over one month in spring 2026. Organised in partnership with the EUTOPIA network of European universities, this initiative builds on several previous editions held since 2024.

Entitled "Living with European rivers", the initiative aimed to generate interest in the international workshop organised by Les Ateliers in Paris in September 2026, where 15 international participants will spend three weeks exploring the future of the Seine: its role in the Paris metropolitan area, the long-term protection of its water resources, and its contribution to residents' quality of life.

Over four weeks, the students and young professionals shared information, photographs and reflections on their own cities and rivers. They carried out research and field visits before collectively producing a booklet presenting each European river from a variety of perspectives, including identity, history, biodiversity and flood prevention.

This comprehensive booklet, entitled **"Living with European Rivers"**, takes readers on a journey through the pages to discover the rivers of Ljubljana, Dresden, the Shannon, the Sabarmati... and their relationship with the areas they flow through. The booklet is freely available on the Ateliers' website: <https://ateliers.org/fr/workshops/245/>



Encounters of the Seine metropolis

16 JUNE 2026

On June 2026, Les Ateliers brought together researchers, practitioners, local stakeholders and the association's partners for a one-day seminar devoted to the ecology and liveability of the metropolitan area of the River Seine and its tributaries. The encounter was organised around time as a method, understood as a focus on the mosaic of temporalities that shape the metropolis: from the long-term timescales of aquifers, soils and environments to the daily rhythms of residents; from the temporalities of planning to the urgencies of crisis management and the horizons of political projects.

The day's activities were enriched by a presentation from **Nathalie Blanc**, research director at the CNRS and director of the Centre des politiques de la Terre. She invited the audience to move beyond a strictly technical interpretation of vulnerability and to consider it as relational: it is constructed through the links between societies, environments, spaces and timeframes. Habitability thus depends on the ability to maintain vibrant relationships with a territory and to come to terms with both its strengths and its weaknesses. Local vulnerabilities must therefore be situated within broader transformations - those affecting the Earth's major balances.

This involves thinking collectively about relationships at different scales and moving beyond the separation between nature and society. Territories are systems of interdependencies whose vitality depends on the quality of the relationships between humans,



Introduction by Nathalie Blanc



Working groups

environments and other forms of life. In the Seine metropolitan area, these interdependencies are formed and transformed at different rhythms, which do not always coincide. Thinking about liveability therefore requires paying attention to how these rhythms interact, to the discrepancies between them, and to the tensions they may generate.

To open up a dialogue on these issues, two round-table discussions were held simultaneously to explore two complementary perspectives.

The first round-table discussion focused on the short rhythms of everyday life: living, working, travelling and enjoying the river. Drawing on concrete experiences - swimming, accessing cool spaces, infiltration, water reuse and urine recovery - the discussion explored resource flows and the links between the city, sanitation and agriculture. From Paris's non-potable water network to persistent pollutants, it highlighted the importance of making water cycles visible in order to connect everyday practices with broader changes in urban planning models. The second round-table discussion focused on the longer rhythms of environments, infrastructure and public action. Developments along the Seine have left lasting legacies that continue to shape uses, vulnerabilities and possibilities for transforming the metropolis. While institutions face pressure to respond to emergencies, political cycles and the need for visible results, environmental transformation follows different temporalities: a century of development cannot be undone in just a few years, and soils, vegetation and ecosystems regenerate according to rhythms that extend far beyond those of projects and public decision-making.

This need for visibility can come into conflict with the time required for reflection, experimentation and the transformation of environments. In the field of renaturation in particular, a century of development cannot be undone in just a few years. Few transformations, however, are entirely irreversible, but reversing them takes time. Numerous initiatives are already underway - ecological restoration, partnerships, experiments, evolving practices - without their results being immediately visible to most residents.

The seminar thus highlighted a key challenge: identifying the conditions under which the different timescales of projects and action can be brought into alignment in order to rethink the metropolis. This interplay, however, requires us to recognise that the different timescales of metropolitan transformation do not progress at the same pace nor according to the same constraints. We have therefore identified six key ideas:

THE LONG TERM SHAPES DAILY LIFE: infrastructure, river developments and land-use legacies have a lasting influence on the uses, vulnerabilities and potential for transformation within the metropolis.

ACTING ON DAILY LIFE INVOLVES THE LONG TERM: swimming or reclaiming the riverbanks demonstrate how transformations conceived and built over the long term can alter the practical conditions of living.

TRANSFORMATION REQUIRES CONTINUITY OF ACTION: moving beyond immediate crises and electoral cycles requires passing on knowledge, maintaining partnerships and embedding experiments within sustainable trajectories.

WORKING WITH THE TIMESCALES OF ENVIRONMENTS: soil formation, tree growth and ecosystem regeneration invite us to recognise rhythms that do not conform to project timetables.

EVERYDAY LIFE IS A SPACE FOR PREFIGURATION: customs and practices make other possibilities desirable, put them to the test, spread them from one territory to another and give rise to new expectations amongst residents.

DAILY LIFE IS NOT SOLELY HUMAN: plant growth and evapotranspiration, the activity of microfauna and the cycles of organic waste all invite us to broaden our attention to the rhythms of the environments and living beings with which we coexist.

Rather than seeking to bridge these temporal gaps, the challenge is therefore to learn to work with them and turn them into a resource for the project. It is this capacity for articulation that we invite participants at the September 2026 workshop to draw upon: linking present-day experiences to long-term transformations, making the possibilities already in the making visible and accessible, passing on knowledge, cooperating and experimenting in order to construct trajectories of habitability capable of holding these different temporalities together.

EVERYDAY TIME
HUMAN AND NON-HUMAN INHABITANTS AND THEIR TEMPORALITIES

LONG TIME
ENVIRONMENTS, INFRASTRUCTURES, DECISIONS, TRAJECTORIES





Sites of the visits during the immersion days of the workshop.

The workshop visits

MONDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2026 1ST DAY OF IMMERSION

The first stop of the morning was at the confluence of the Seine and the Oise in Conflans, where the future Seine-Métropole Ouest river port will be located.

Visit 1: The visit to Argenteuil began with a welcome from the Town Council and a meeting with **Camille Gicquel**, Deputy Mayor of Argenteuil and Vice-Chair of the EPT Boucle Nord de Seine. A walk through the town, from Avenue Gabriel-Péri to the Seine, provided an opportunity to explore connections between the different neighbourhoods and recent transformations of public space. The redevelopment of this key avenue - reducing it from four to two lanes, widening the pavements, reducing sealed surfaces and introducing more greenery - demonstrates a commitment to making more space for pedestrians and vegetation, whilst street art helps to revitalise and enhance the urban landscape. The tour continued along the recently renovated Quai de Saint-Denis to the Pont d'Argenteuil, which is currently undergoing works. Here, restricted access to the riverbanks, connections with the surrounding neighbourhoods and traffic challenges provided an opportunity to discuss Argenteuil's place within the wider metropolitan area and its links with neighbouring territories. The tour concluded on the heights of the Butte d'Orgemont. Its sweeping panorama of Paris, the Seine and the surrounding area reveals the full depth of Argenteuil's landscape, from the hillsides down to the river. This vantage point provided an opportunity to explore Argenteuil's distinctive landscape identity, as well as its connections with the Port of Gennevilliers and its own industrial heritage, which remains a prominent feature of the area.

The tour was led by representatives of Argenteuil Town Council: **Jérôme Freynet, Thomas Guillaume** and **Emmanuelle Sancet. Lucie Spangenberg, Marjorie Clément and Jasmine Dozias**, representing the EPT Boucle Nord de Seine, also joined the visit.

Visit 2: The day continued in Bezons, where the group

was welcomed by **Aël Tressard**, Director of Planning and Urban Development for the City of Bezons, and **Manon Mininger**, Deputy Director. The visit provided an opportunity to explore the already well-advanced project to redevelop the towpath along the banks of the Seine, combining sustainable mobility, greening, and cultural and community spaces, particularly around the Gerموir community garden. The City is also planning to introduce new barges to encourage new uses and activities along the river. With its unobstructed views of the Seine and La Défense, the towpath serves both as a leisure space much appreciated by residents and as an important connection. However, the proximity of the tramway and the continuity of the riverbanks towards Carrières-sur-Seine contrast with the challenges encountered in the direction of Argenteuil. Industrial areas, major road infrastructure such as the D311, and congestion on the Pont de Bezons highlight the complexity of reconciling different uses, mobility needs and ecological continuity within a highly constrained area. These infrastructures also contribute to maintaining a separation between the town and its river. Improving access to the riverbanks and reconnecting them with the surrounding neighbourhoods is therefore a key priority for the City of Bezons, and one that is also reflected in the ongoing revision of its Local Urban Development Plan. The tour concluded with a picnic in Nelson Mandela Park.



Guided visit in Argenteuil, with Camille Gicquel and the City team.



From the hill of Orgemont



On the bridge of Argenteuil



Stop on the Gabriel Péri avenue, Argenteuil



Welcome by Aël Tressard on the banks of the Seine



On the Seine towpath at Bezons



Visit 3: This first day of visits concluded in L'Île-Saint-Denis, a unique territory entirely surrounded by the Seine. The group was first welcomed at the Town Hall by the Mayor, **Mohamed Gnabaly**, who outlined the transformations currently underway and the municipal team's vision for the island's future. The renewed interest in the river, notably through the return of swimming, reflects this desire to reconnect residents with the Seine. **Philippe Monges**, City Councillor responsible for Sustainable Development, Urban Planning, Energy Transition, the River and Sanitation, and **Matthias Poignavent**, Director of Heritage and Sustainable City, then outlined the history and socio-economic profile of this long, narrow territory. From north to south, contrasting landscapes succeed one another: protected natural areas, including Natura 2000 sites, residential neighbourhoods, major infrastructure and former industrial sites now undergoing significant transformation.

A walk along the riverbanks provided an opportunity to discover this distinctive geography, between the two branches of the Seine and as far as Thorez Beach, as well as the 'village' identity fostered by the municipality and its residents. This insularity is both an asset and a constraint: despite the immediate proximity of Saint-Denis and Saint-Ouen, limited crossings and major infrastructure continue to raise questions about connections with neighbouring areas. The new bridge linking the island to Saint-Denis - built as part of the Athletes' Village and designed for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport - illustrates one response to this challenge of reducing the island's isolation. The tour concluded in the riverside eco-neighbourhood, developed on former industrial land and extended to accommodate part of the Athletes' Village during the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Car-free, extensively greened and designed to promote rainwater infiltration, the neighbourhood now provides

a tangible example of the legacy of the Games and the transformations they accelerated. Finally, a visit to the Maison Fleuve, the neighbourhood's new cultural 'third place', provided an opportunity to explore the area's long-standing popular culture around water and new forms of collective reappropriation of the riverbanks and the Seine itself.

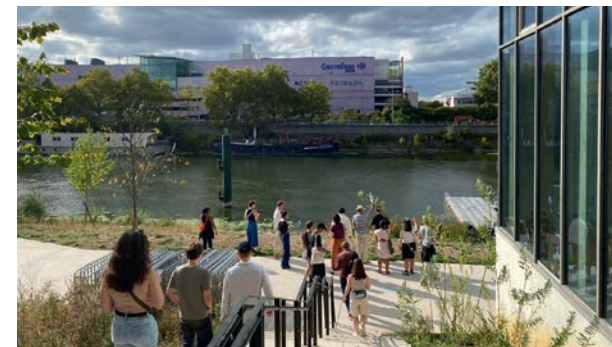


Welcome by the Mayor of l'Île-Saint-Denis, Mohamed Gnabaly



On the banks of the Seine, guided visit by Philippe Monges

Matthias Poignavent



Near the summer swimming spot on Île-Saint-Denis



On the banks of the small branch of the Seine



The bridge between Saint-Denis and Île-Saint-Denis





TUESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2026 2ND DAY OF IMMERSION

During the morning, participants split into small groups to explore different areas and exchange perspectives on the many facets of the metropolis: the Paris Sewer Museum, to gain an understanding of water issues and the invisible flows beneath the capital; Ablon-sur-Seine, to discover the landscapes and infrastructure upstream; and the canals of Paris, to observe conflicts over their use and emerging visions for their future.



At the Sewer Museum



The dam of Ablon-sur-Seine

The Paris Sewer Museum

The journey to the Paris Sewer Museum began in the heart of historic, upmarket Paris: a group walked down the Champs-Élysées towards the Seine, crossed the Pont de l'Alma, then descended into the heart of the sewerage network. The museum is situated at the junction of the Avenue Bosquet collector and the Alma double siphon, through which water from the left bank passes beneath the Seine before reaching the right bank and the treatment facilities, including Seine Aval, at Achères. Beneath the streets and monuments lies the technical infrastructure on which the capital's day-to-day functioning relies.

The history of the sewerage system shows how the city has developed infrastructure to collect, drain and treat water, bringing about lasting changes to its soils, watercourses and subsoil. In the operational tunnels, the network appears as a living infrastructure, subject to variations in rainfall, flow rates and use, as well as to the daily work of maintenance and regulation. The tour brings to life the shift from viewing water simply as a flow to be discharged towards understanding it as part of a complex system of circulation, temporal patterns and relationships between the surface and the subsoil. It also reveals the limits of this control: during heavy rainfall, volumes can exceed the capacity of the networks and treatment plants, occasionally leading to excess water being discharged into the Seine and reminding us that infrastructure, however extensive, cannot on its own absorb the imbalances it faces.

From Ablon-sur-Seine to Vigneux-sur-Seine

Further upstream along the Seine, a group explored the towns of Ablon-sur-Seine and Vigneux-sur-Seine, discovering their town centres and signs of decline among some local shops. The route passed through very well-maintained residential neighbourhoods, where houses and gardens convey a sense of privacy, tranquillity, belonging and connection to the outdoors - qualities that contribute to their appeal. At the same time, many gardens had highly sealed surfaces, limiting biodiversity and the capacity for water to infiltrate. Housing estates showing signs of disrepair punctuated the route.

Arriving at the quays revealed another contrast: despite the immediate proximity of the Seine, fences and "no entry" signs restricted access to and use of the river. The high walls surrounding some recent buildings reinforced this sense of distance. Raising the level of living spaces in response to flood risk also sparked questions about the relationship between housing, public space and the Seine. Crossing the footbridge over the Ablon-Vigneux lock and dam led the group towards the Saussaie des Gobelins, where farmland remains on land owned by HAROPA PORT.

The tour continued through a succession of very different settings: motocross tracks and old buildings of heritage interest, followed by suburban housing and large housing estates, predominantly social housing, in Vigneux-sur-Seine. On both sides of the Seine, this succession of contrasting urban forms, land uses and social conditions highlighted the diversity - at times very pronounced - of the situations that make up the upper Seine valley and the challenges it faces within the wider dynamics of the metropolis.

The canals of Paris

The meeting with **Marie-Pierre Padovani**, head of the City of Paris's canal department, provided an opportunity to place the Parisian canals within the long-term context of their construction and uses. Created in the 19th century to meet the needs of water supply, navigation and logistics, they must now contend with new challenges: water resource management, adaptation to climate change, maintaining navigation, changing uses, and the role of tributaries and reservoirs in supporting low-water levels. A visit to the lock control and monitoring centre provided an insight into the practical workings of this hydraulic infrastructure, complemented by the passage of a boat through Lock No. 1 on the Canal Saint-Denis.

Finally, a stroll along the canal to the Millénaire shopping centre in Aubervilliers, on the outskirts of the ring road, offered a different perspective on the metropolitan waterfront landscapes. Less dominated by leisure activities than the Canal Saint-Martin, the Canal Saint-Denis reveals more of the urban fringe, where infrastructure, productive activities, major facilities, urban divides and spaces undergoing transformation coexist.

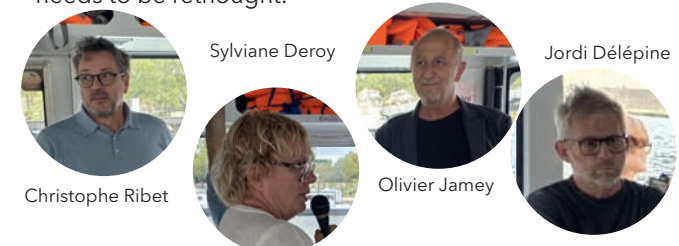


Along the Saint-Denis canal

The afternoon began with a cruise aboard the *Fluctuat*, a boat operated by the City of Paris, setting off from the Port de l'Arsenal and travelling along the Seine. The journey provided an opportunity to observe the diverse uses of the river - surveillance and service vessels, transport, tourist cruises - and of its banks, ranging from industrial activities and storage and handling banks to promenades, leisure activities and sustainable mobility. Travelling across Paris from one ring road to the other also provided an opportunity to revisit the history of the embankments and the evolution of the relationship between the city and its river: long dominated by hard surfaces, then largely devoted to motor traffic, they are now being reclaimed for walking, sport and sustainable transport, whilst also forming part of the heritage landscape of the Seine. From the water, the city reveals itself in contrasting sequences: the François-Mitterrand district, the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, Haussmannian and Neo-Haussmannian façades, the Île de la Cité, the Eiffel Tower and the modern architecture of Beaugrenelle.

The tour also provided an opportunity to consider the Seine as a living environment to be protected and restored. In this heavily developed environment, artificial spawning grounds have been installed to recreate breeding and refuge areas for fish where natural habitats have partly disappeared, illustrating efforts to reconcile the river's many uses with the restoration of its ecological functions. The tour was guided and accompanied by Christophe Ribet, Head of the Seine Department at the City of Paris; Roxanne Caillaud, Project Manager for Aquatic Environment Management (GEMAPI) at the Greater Paris Metropolis; Jordi Delépine, General Delegate of "La Seine en Partage et ses Affluents"; Olivier Jamey, President of the Paris Port Community; and Sylviane Deroy, Head of the Port de l'Arsenal Users' Committee. Finally, the diversity of the bridges tells the story of

the relationship between the Left Bank and the Right Bank. More than a dividing line, the Seine appears as an urban link, connecting neighbourhoods, uses, temporalities and urban forms, but also as a living environment whose place at the heart of the metropolis needs to be rethought.



On the *Fluctuat*, intervention from Roxanne Caillaud



On the *Fluctuat*



The second encounters

WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2026

Following the first two days spent exploring the territories and meeting stakeholders on the ground, the 2nd Encounters of the Seine Metropolis, hosted on Wednesday 9 September by the Institut Paris Region, invited participants to take a step back and shift their focus to the Metropolitan Seine. Véronique Valenzuela, director of Les Ateliers, began by situating the session within the Seine Valley cycle and the ongoing discussion surrounding the 'Great Seine Valley Garden'. Co-pilots **Laura Châtaigner** and **César Silva Urdaneta** then presented the three main themes of the topic proposed to the teams: inhabiting the metropolis through water, by making aquatic environments, infrastructure and water landscapes the foundations of liveability; cultivating a metropolitan consciousness, based on the interdependencies and solidarity that link the metropolis to its rivers, ecosystems and supporting territories; and fostering synergies between stakeholders by envisaging new coalitions between actors from the public, economic and community sectors, as well as residents, to enable ecological and social transformations.

The morning session then brought together the perspectives of researchers, practitioners and thinkers to introduce concepts and approaches capable of shifting the usual frameworks for understanding the metropolis. Following a presentation by **Chris Younès**, two panel discussions compared the approaches of **Frédéric Rossano** and **Ludovic Faytre**, and then those of **Reena Mahajan** and **Armelle Varcin**, focusing on vulnerabilities, coexistence with water, urban rhythms and possible transformations of metropolitan environments.

Chris Younès, philosopher and lecturer at the École Spéciale d'Architecture, opened the discussion by inviting participants to consider forms of "regenerative naturo-cultural sustenance" through the example of the metropolitan Seine garden. In the face of changing conditions of habitability, her talk proposed that we no longer position ourselves "above" or "at the centre" of nature, but "among", "with" and "through the environment": starting afresh from what already exists, repairing and cultivating the interdependencies between humans and more-than-human beings. From this perspective, the garden becomes a "school of time", where one comes to terms with impermanence, the seasons and repeated actions. On a metropolitan scale, this concept thus invites us to imagine new forms of support, capable of regenerating environments by cultivating alliances and interdependencies between humans and more-than-human beings.

An initial discussion, focusing on vulnerabilities and risks, brought together the perspectives of **Ludovic Faytre**, Head of Research on Major Risks and Urban Planning at the Institut Paris Region, and **Frédéric Rossano**, a landscape architect and lecturer at ENSA Strasbourg. Ludovic Faytre contextualised the risk of flooding at the scale of a metropolis, where the concentration of housing, activities and networks amplifies the effects of flooding far beyond the areas directly submerged. Drawing on the interplay between hazard, exposure and vulnerability, he demonstrated in particular how metropolitan interdependencies prolong and spread disruptions, prompting us to consider the city across the different timeframes of a flood: before, during and after the event. "Coping with risk" therefore requires better coordination of planning, prevention, crisis management and post-crisis recovery, as well as breaking down barriers between sectors and decision-making levels.



Ludovic Faytre



Reena Mahajan



Armelle Varcin



Frédéric Rossano



Extracts from the presentation of Reena Mahajan



Extract from the presentation of Ludovic Faytre



Extract from the presentation of Armelle Varcin

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Frédéric Rossano has expanded on this idea with the concept of "floodscapes" - landscapes designed to accommodate fluctuations in water levels, rather than systematically attempting to contain them. Drawing on various projects and flood landscapes, he demonstrated how spaces designed to allow water to spread can be conceived at multiple scales and, depending on the circumstances, accommodate other functions linked to natural environments, landscape continuity or recreational uses. Making room for water thus becomes a planning resource and a way of coping with uncertainty. The panel ultimately encouraged a shift in perspective regarding the river: its normal functioning consists of variations in flow rate, water level and floodplain extent, of which flooding is one manifestation. Making this variability an integral part of territorial planning requires designing for the river's various states, by bringing together risk management, landscape, ecology and planning.

A second panel, devoted to living with the rhythms and presence of water, featured contributions from **Armelle Varcin**, a landscape architect, lecturer at ENSAP Lille and co-pilot of the "The River Seine as a Great Garden" workshop in 2023, and Reena Mahajan, an architect and urban planner, founder of Studio Divercity and leader of the "Water and Metropolisation" workshop organised by Les Ateliers in Hyderabad in 2024. Their perspectives examined the ways in which water is perceived, transformed and experienced in the city, as well as the attention given to its different temporalities. Armelle Varcin proposed taking the diversity of waters and their movements as a starting point to rethink how landscape architects approach the territory. By exploring the affinities between water, time and landscape, she re-examined urbanisation and canalisation through the flows, appearances, disappearances and fluctuations of water, from the catchment area to the lived environments of residents. Her concept of "generative vulnerability" invites us to use the fragilities revealed by pollution or climatic events to spur action, reawaken memories and build collective responses. **Reena Mahajan** linked the gradual disappearance of water to an urban model based on acceleration, where urbanisation and infrastructure prioritise rapid flow and drainage at the expense of the time needed for infiltration, soils and ecosystems. Slowing down, allowing water to infiltrate, making water visible and giving ecosystems time to recover thus become avenues towards a more resilient city that is attentive to living organisms and the experiences of its inhabitants. The dialogue thus invited participants to examine what metropolitan rhythms make visible, what they cause to disappear, and what they prevent from unfolding. Living with water involves recognising the plurality of its manifestations and temporalities, and using the landscape, residents' practices and vulnerability as starting points to transform the relationships between the city and its environments.



The official opening

In the afternoon, the workshop was officially opened. Stakeholders involved in shaping and governing the Seine metropolis at different levels on a day-to-day basis were invited to share the challenges they face and their expectations for the workshop. Speakers included **Camille Gicquel**, Deputy Mayor responsible for urban planning, development and urban projects, City of Argenteuil; **Philippe Monges**, Deputy Mayor for sustainable development, urban planning, energy transition, the river and sanitation, City of L'Île-Saint-Denis; **Emilie Bonnet-Derivière**, Deputy Head of the Water Policy and Enforcement Department, DRIEAT Île-de-France (via video link); **Bruno Leménager**, Director of Water and GEMAPI at the Greater Paris Metropolis; **Sébastien Alavoine**, Deputy Director-General of the Strategy and Resources Division, Île-de-France Public Land Agency; and **Jean-Claude Oliva**, Director of Water Coordination for Île-de-France and Vice-President of Est Ensemble, responsible for water and sanitation. Their contributions allowed participants to explore different perspectives on the Seine Valley metropolitan area and the practical realities of action, including institutional remits, land management, project timelines, risk management, trade-offs and the capacity for cooperation.

The day drew to a close at the port of Gennevilliers, where **Romane Maréchaux**, the port's director, outlined the challenges facing this major river transport hub situated downstream from Paris. As an industrial and logistics enclave nestled within a dense urban fabric, the port offers a very tangible illustration of the tensions and synergies between industrial activities, river use, environmental transition and relations with the surrounding areas.



The opening words Brigitte Guigou, Head of Training and Research Partnerships, Institut Paris Région



Welcome to the Port of Gennevilliers by Romane Maréchaux



Camille Gicquel



Philippe Monges



Emilie Bonnet-Derivière



Bruno Leménager



Sébastien Alavoine



Jean-Claude Oliva



Collective photo at the Port of Gennevilliers

Exchange Forums

THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER SETTLING IN AT THE ÉCOLE NATIONALE SUPÉRIEURE D'ARTS DE PARIS-CERGY

After three full days of site visits and presentations of local issues, the participants, organized into 3 multidisciplinary, international teams, began to settle into the art school. The landscapes they travelled through, the people they met and the questions gathered along the way are starting to weave into a common body of material, the starting point for the stories and projects to come.

FRIDAY 11 SEPTEMBER SMALL EXCHANGE FORUM At the École d'Arts de Cergy

After a day and a half of teamwork, the exchange forum is a first moment of opening up and pooling ideas. Still inspired by the previous days' visits, the teams share their impressions, the broad imaginaries running through their discussions, and the first avenues beginning to emerge. This first stretch of work allowed them to bring their disciplinary perspectives together and to place the territories they visited in relation to other contexts and experiences. At this stage, the forum is above all a chance to discuss the first stories and ideas emerging for the metropolis and its territories, and to open up new perspectives.

WEEK OF 14 TO 18 SEPTEMBER TEAMWORK, RETURNING TO THE FIELD

The teams continue their work, refine their projects and return to the field to explore other areas and feed their thinking. Graphic productions, discussions and territorial analyses fill the week until the Grand Exchange Forum.

FRIDAY 18 SEPTEMBER GRAND EXCHANGE FORUM At the Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations

The Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations hosted this second exchange forum, during which the teams presented the progress of their projects. Discussions with experts, local partners and members of Les Ateliers made it possible to question and enrich the proposals before the final week of work and project finalization begins.



Small exchange forum



Teamwork during the working days



Grand Exchange Forum

03

TEAM PROPOSALS



TEAM RIVERHOOD



TEAM FLOW



TEAM LES CONFLUENCEURS





TOM

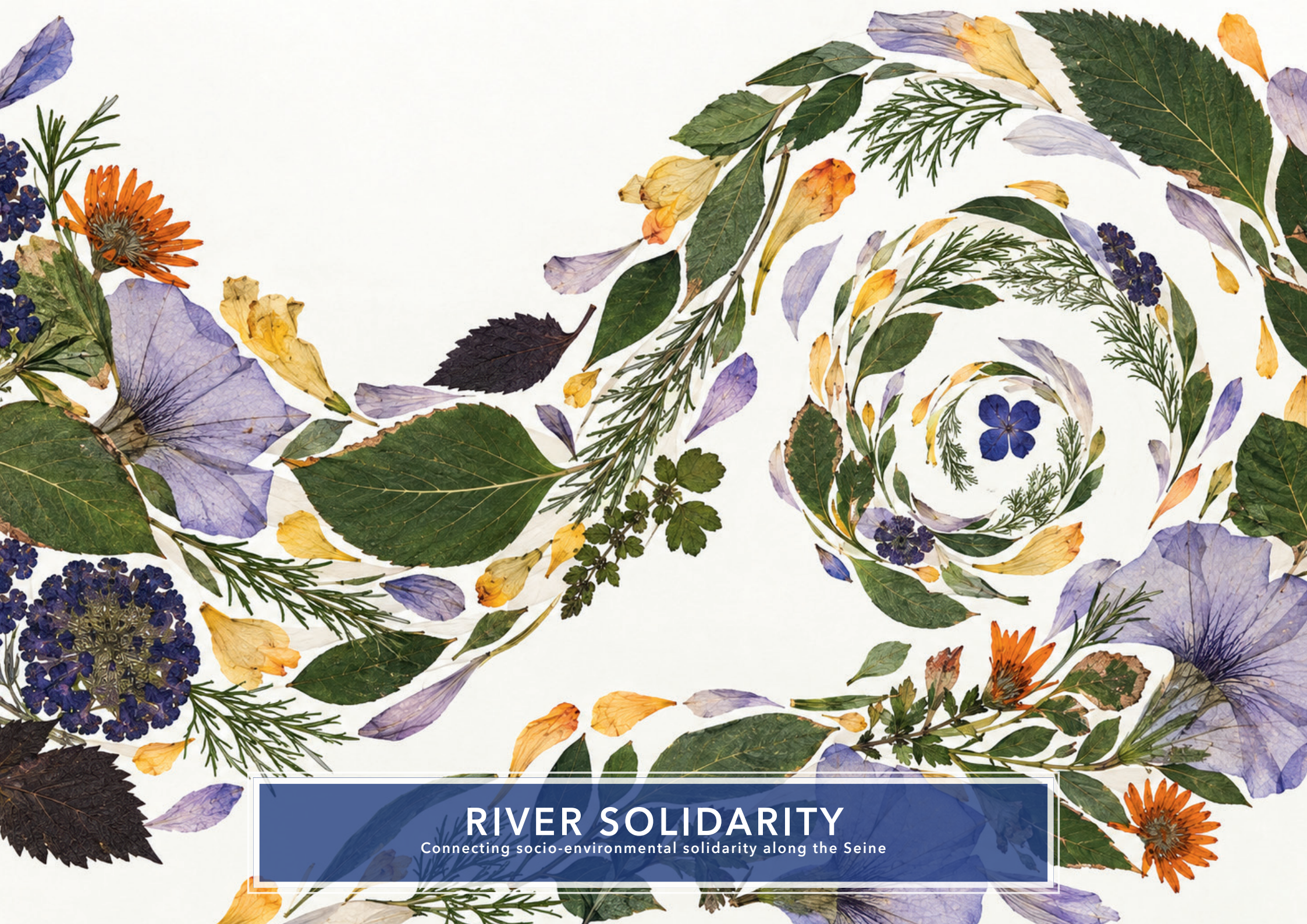
JEANPIERRE

VINITA

JULES

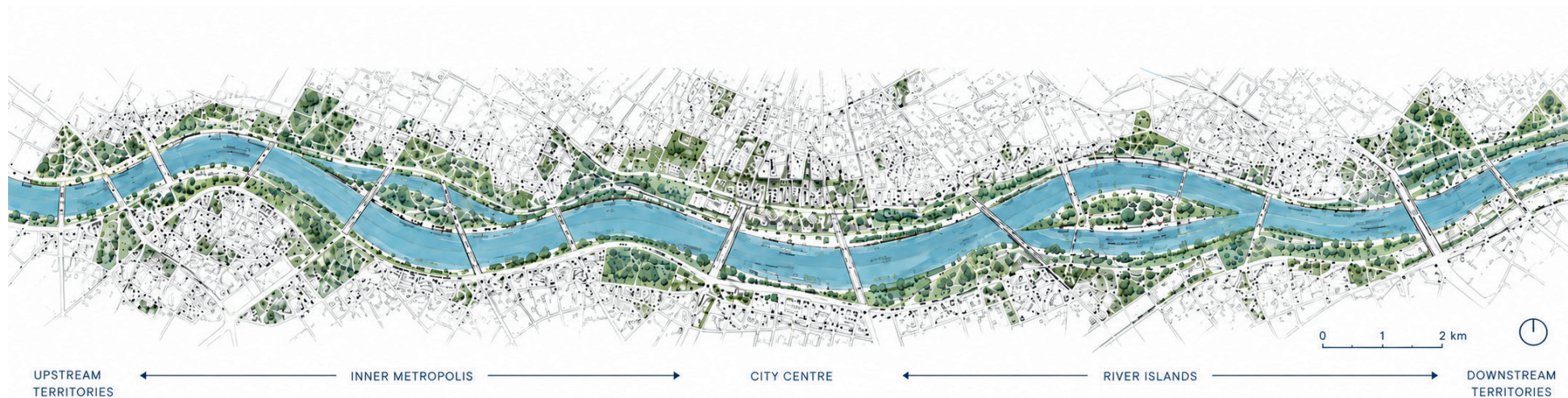
MAËLLE

RIVERHOOD



RIVER SOLIDARITY

Connecting socio-environmental solidarity along the Seine



Imagine the Seine as a basin of solidarity

River Solidarity

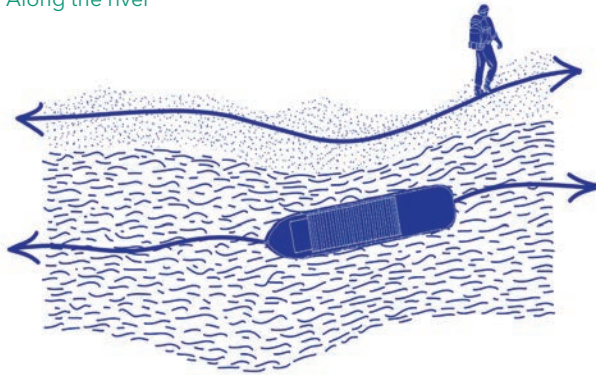
Building on the philosophy of river basin solidarity – first introduced by the Etats Généraux de l'Eau à Bruxelles during a 2002 meeting titled « Friendly Waters or Enemy Rivers » – this work explores the concept of river solidarity. Based on the idea that water unites us within a network of interdependencies between humans and more-than-humans, this approach requires a sensitive understanding of the impacts and potential of actions taken upstream and downstream.

Solidarity along a watercourse is characterized both by its poetic nature – which opens up new imaginaries and visions – and by its grounded territorial analysis, from a perspective of socio-environmental justice and the management of risks and fluctuations in the water cycle.

Mainly viewed through a technical lens, the Seine river has been reduced to a resource to be controlled, gradually distancing itself from everyday practices and daily interactions. Consequently, its presence acts as a physical and cognitive territorial divide, weakening the potential for connectivity with its immediate surroundings, its metropolis, and its river basin. But along its course (including its tributaries), various atmospheres unfold, each offering its own story. Through simple gestures, ecological environments, sounds, ordinary places, emotions, and many other unexplored drivers, river solidarities thrive and manifest themselves daily. Although these realities may be difficult to grasp at first glance, this project seeks to explore and highlight these sometimes intangible elements, which, when connected, hold significant potential for fostering more resilient and inclusive territories.

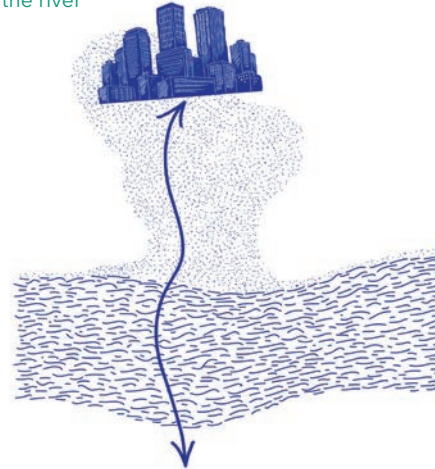


Longitudinal Along the river



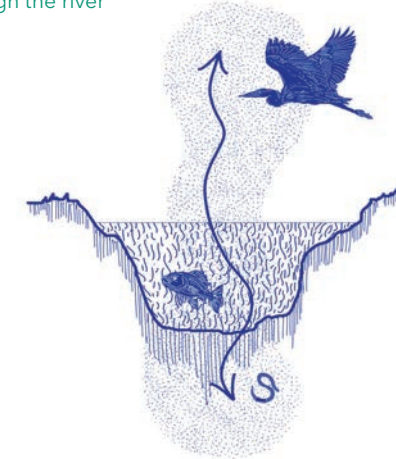
Linear relationships of movement and flow along the river

Lateral Across the river



Conditions for crossing and connecting to the river from its banks and adjacent urban or rural areas

Vertical Through the river



Sensory interaction with the river's multiple layers, from the subsoil to the strata above its surface

The three dimensions of river solidarity

Inspired by the concept of river connectivity, introduced in 2017 by Kondolf and Pinto, the notion of solidarity is approached, both physically and cognitively, along three dimensions : longitudinal, lateral, and vertical. While the longitudinal dimension corresponds to linear relationships of movement and flow along the river, the lateral dimension refers to the conditions for crossing and connecting to the river from its banks and adjacent urban or rural areas. The vertical dimension characterizes direct, sensory interaction with the river's multiple layers, from the subsoil to the strata above its surface. These three dimensions refer to the relational approach involving people, narratives, assets, systems, ideas, and cultures along and across waterways, and help

assess the potential for connecting and activating existing and/or imagined forms of solidarity within the hydrographic territory of the Seine basin. Over the past centuries, the rectification of river courses—undertaken to improve navigation and control flooding—has significantly reduced hydro-social solidarity, leading largely to the loss of lateral and vertical interactions, including daily activities such as fishing, laundry, water supply, swimming, and other recreational practices.

Throughout the 18th century, the banks of the Seine in Paris were extensively used by merchants and industries, most of which had established themselves there to facilitate deliveries and stay close to their customers ; some depended directly on the river's

waters, such as mills, laundry boats, tripiers, and dyers. Around 1750, population growth and the resulting pressures led to conflicts between local uses and river navigation (as ships grew in size), to such an extent that the government intervened to improve navigation conditions, gradually banning river trade and designating the river for national navigation. As a result, the Seine has become increasingly detached from the city's economic and social life. In the case of the Seine in Paris, the rich lateral connection that once existed between the river and the city has been sacrificed in favor of a better longitudinal connection intended for navigation. Today, the Seine is accessible visually, but less so physically, due to high, vertical walls that cut the river off from its people.



Reveal

Immersions

During our initial visits and surveys of the Seine and its banks, we discovered the following three areas:

Argenteuil

A town with a long history of agriculture and winemaking, made famous by Monet, Argenteuil underwent a major industrial transformation beginning in the late 19th century, leading to massive urbanization after 1945. This industrial legacy, compounded by the prominence given to automobiles, is now one of the main obstacles to the visibility and accessibility of the riverbanks.

Bezons

A former village on the banks of the Seine, Bezons began to urbanize in the mid-19th century with the establishment of factories and a shipyard along its riverbanks (rubber, cables, chemicals). Today, the redevelopment of former industrial sites along the river is one of the key challenges in improving accessibility and reconnecting residents with the riverbanks.

Île-Saint-Denis

Long prized for its open-air dance halls and café-cabarets, Île-Saint-Denis underwent an industrial transformation in the 19th century: metallurgical and chemical plants, as well as shipyards, sprang up along its banks, taking advantage of a bustling port on the Paris-Le Havre river route. Today, its residents have retained the spirit of solidarity and camaraderie of days gone by, but access to the riverbanks—still limited by barriers, elevation changes, and discontinuous edges—would benefit from being improved.

Enriching Encounter

To support these visits, various experts shared their knowledge and perspectives on the waterfront with us:

Chris Younès

Chris Younès, philosopher and professor of architecture, urges us to break away from the mindset of controlling nature and instead seek potential alliances with it: establishing symbioses, caring for the environment, and recognizing our interdependence with the non-human world. The challenge of the 21st century is to sustain conditions for habitability, centered on two pillars—supporting and coexisting—by building upon what already exists, restoring our relationship with water, and recognizing the dignity of the river.

Ludovic Faytre

Ludovic Faytre, from the Institut Paris Région, presented flood risk as a metropolitan challenge. While construction in flood-prone areas continues unabated, a major flood would have effects extending beyond the most vulnerable areas and would disrupt all urban networks and services. He urged participants to consider risk across different scales and timeframes (prevention, crisis, post-crisis). Resilience requires an understanding of one's own vulnerability. This presentation highlighted the importance of risk assessment, particularly for an island territory such as Île-Saint Denis.

Reena Mahajan

Reena Mahajan, an architect and urban planner, proposes a paradigm shift regarding water: from water that is merely visited to water that is experienced in daily life ("daily water, not a Sunday visit"). Using the example of Hyderabad, she demonstrates that a waterway represents a complete ecosystem: its banks can recharge the groundwater, support biodiversity, provide communal spaces, and protect against flooding. Water becomes a social issue, and she approaches the banks as levers of solidarity: who cares for the waterway, and what place do we assign to it?



Île Saint-Denis as a Research Laboratory

During our initial investigation of Île-Saint-Denis, we quickly recognized the area's potential for fostering solidarity—particularly along the Seine, which borders the island on both banks. Beyond its historical connection to the river, widely depicted by the Impressionists of the time, the island appears to have strong ties and ways of engaging with the Seine. Beyond its local significance, Île-Saint-Denis offers an opportunity to rethink the Seine and its relationships on the scale of the Paris metropolitan area.

Its symbolic importance grows even greater when the discussion turns to the Île-de-France region. Furthermore, Thomas More, in his famous *Utopia*, also drew inspiration from the island's imagery to envision an alternative society and other ways of living together. Consequently, the idea of creating "islands of solidarity" along the Seine occurred to us: to identify and design spaces capable of building on existing bonds of solidarity, and potentially strengthening them through various courses of action.

In this sense, Île-Saint-Denis presents a particularly interesting experimental site for solidarity, without necessarily producing it automatically.

"The problem isn't distance; it's the relationship."

Comparing islands Île de la Grande Jatte et Île de Puteaux

To support our analysis of Île Saint Denis, we also visited Île de Puteaux and Île de la Grande Jatte. Puteaux, largely composed of gardens and sports facilities, offered a useful, though limited, point of comparison. Île de la Grande Jatte, a residential island, proved far more revealing. The two islands differ markedly in population and standard of living. Île Saint Denis has a high density of public housing, while Île de la Grande Jatte, in Neuilly sur Seine, has very little.

Our observations, informed by informal conversations, point to a paradox. On Île de la Jatte, the riverbanks are carefully landscaped and provide pleasant places to sit, walk, or exercise. Restaurants, cafés, and supermarkets keep the island lively. Yet interactions with residents felt more reserved, and some told us that neighbourly support was limited. The soundscape, meanwhile, was marked by traffic, industrial barges, and construction work.

On Île Saint Denis, there are fewer places to linger by the water, but the welcome was warmer. The island has a strong community network, one that appears far more conducive to different forms of solidarity.



Photo, Ile de la Grande Jatte, 15/09/2026



Photo, Ile de Saint Denis, 12/09/2026



Looking at Île-Saint-Denis solidarities

Human uses

Investigation 1 : Informal interactions

To understand residents' relationship with the Seine, we explored the island and conducted nine brief conversations throughout our expedition, in groups or individually: with teenagers, adults, and seniors; cyclists; walkers (with their dogs); restaurant employees; and a pharmacist.

The conversations flowed easily, and what emerged was highly revealing: the river is close by, but rarely a part of daily life. Only one person—an elderly resident—walks along the left bank year-round and describes a strong, ongoing connection to the Seine. For the others, the connection is occasional or visual, limited by time (restaurant employees, the pharmacist) or by the surrounding infrastructure.

This is the case for a young woman walking her dog, whose home blocks direct access to the riverbank. Teenagers say the river plays a minor role in their daily routines. Several people, even those who rarely go there, identify the left bank as the place where locals gather. Meanwhile, the right bank, which is less developed, serves mainly as a place for strolling and passing through. The island's riverbanks and the river itself are close by, but there is a lack of spaces to gather there and of time to spend there.



Investigation 2 : Interactions of solidarity

Uncovering the bonds of solidarity along the river requires observation, time, and a touch of persistence. This is especially true when the quest touches on the intangible, the ordinary, and the subtle. Frequent trips back and forth to the site under investigation—in this specific case, Île-Saint-Denis—allow one to become familiar with the area and its users, while encountering them at different times of the day and week. Every walk across the island, every moment of pause, brings its share of surprises and confirmations. The notebook then becomes an indispensable companion.

Somewhere between strolling and listening intently, discipline is essential, and every opportunity must be seized. This research method sometimes requires pushing open a door or stepping over a fence, on the lookout for intimate stories and unexpected encounters. We were glad we did—the reward was often well worth it. Whether it's a long conversation on the deck of a houseboat, a mint tea at the bar, a session drying aromatic herbs, or a journey back to the time of the Impressionists, each interlude contributes to our understanding of and immersion in the areas along the banks of the Seine.

The stories told by some immerse us in the history and imagination of these places, while the actions and practices of others further anchor our daily relationships and connections to the flow of the water.

These encounters and shared experiences allow us to take our time, to tap into our feelings, and to bring to light connections that often exist yet remain underutilized. The depth of these exchanges reveals ideas and visions—essential drivers for fostering solidarity.

More-than-humans uses

Investigation 3 : Biodiversity

Along the Quai de la Marine in Île-Saint-Denis, a narrow road barely 7.5 meters wide separates two very distinct forms of biodiversity. On one side lies a park with landscaped, controlled, and uniform vegetation, where flora and fauna have little chance of developing spontaneously.

On the other side, along the less accessible bank of the Seine, competition for light and space gives rise to much denser, more diverse, and dynamic vegetation: shrubs grow alongside trees, mosses, flowers, and plants at different levels. This diversity also supports a greater presence of insects and birds, notably the *Psittacula krameri*, an invasive species that has adapted perfectly but has not been observed in the neighboring park.

It was found that organic matter—primarily leaves that fall from trees—allows life to reemerge even on the river's concrete embankment. In areas without trees, only mosses and a few grasses grow; in contrast, where leaves accumulate, their decomposition creates a new substrate in which other plants and even small trees germinate. This observation demonstrates that, when natural cycles find even the slightest opportunity to unfold, biodiversity can rapidly colonize and transform artificial surfaces, giving rise to new habitats. This process offers a clue as to how we might replicate or encourage these natural dynamics to create spaces where human activities and other forms of life can coexist.



Connect

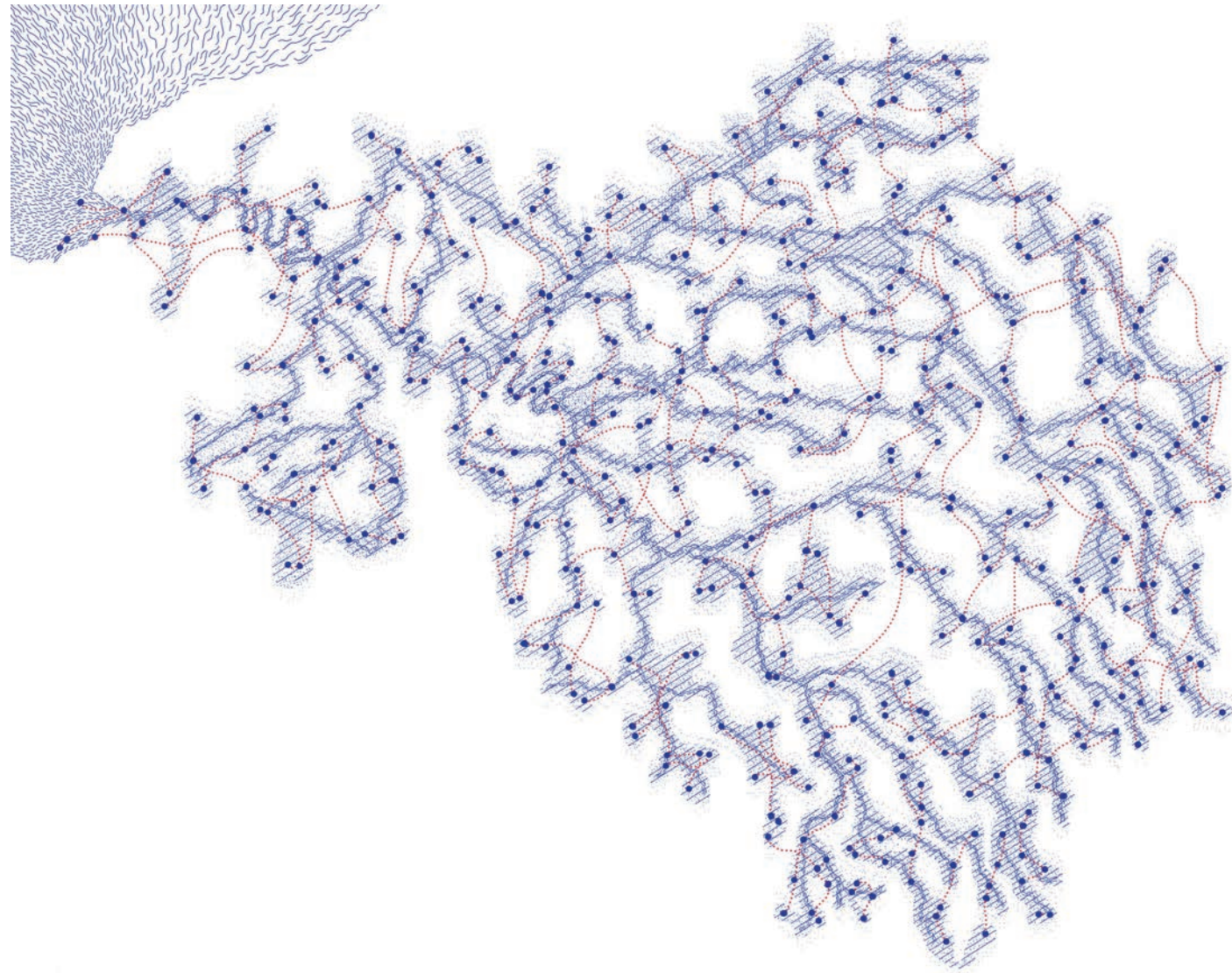
Intermediate map and layers

Vision

Building on the work of Bertrand Warnier, Philip Enquist, and Drew Wensley on the “Grand Jardin Séquanien” as a vision for the future of the Seine basin, our proposed vision imagines the Seine and its tributaries, within the collective imagination, as a territory of solidarity.

Too often confined to the strict limits of its hydrographic network, the Seine’s territory is here reframed as a network of interdependencies linking its upstream and downstream sections. Along its length, this territory contains numerous forms of solidarity and levers for action, some already visible and others yet to be uncovered. Once connected, these can extend the river’s capacity for solidarity and resilience across the metropolis and its surrounding regions.

Conceived as a vast garden of solidarity, the river’s extended territory casts the relationships we identify as its gardeners: tending to the Seine and its tributaries while offering a fresh perspective on the watershed through its interdependencies, connections, and everyday practices.



Ouf !
J'ai enfin mon sandwich poulet-provençal.

Il fait très chaud ! Quelques jeunes
s'abritent sous les parkings couverts,
à l'ombre.
La Seine coule à quelques centaines
de mètres seulement.

Sensitive Map

Once revealed, mapping these perceptual observations, sensory data, and everyday narratives opens a dialogue between existing levers of solidarity that rarely intersect. These feelings, elements of daily life, ecological systems, and other social vectors, once brought together, communicate and interact, revealing collaborative processes whose effects can be felt locally, at the metropolitan scale, and beyond.

Le tracé du parcours
est super pratique. Dommage
qu'on ait pas davantage
de vues sur la Seine.

J'ai faim !
Comment sortir de ce labyrinthe
et trouver à manger ! ?

Il est bon Amar, il a réussi à faire
couler son gros bouchon.
Avec une perche, il est bon !

Ça serait génial de pouvoir
développer cette conscience
de l'eau, ce patrimoine, et
créer un référentiel de
connaissances commun.
C'est ça la robustesse.

Salut, pourquoi ? Pour Ouf !
C'est à l'écouir de 1971.

J'ai proposé d'accueillir les
habitants de l'île et d'ailleurs
sur la terrasse de la péniche
les jours de canicule. Tu sens
cette petite brise ?
C'est agréable, non ?

C'est le centre
du village.

Gamins, on rêvait de détacher les ponts
et de partir naviguer sur la Seine, à bord
de l'île, comme un bateau.

Salut Xavier !
Ça va mieux ?

Activate

Risks & Solidarities

This activating study provides a cross-reading of the territory, connecting the tangible elements of Île-Saint-Denis the Seine, land uses, road and transport infrastructure, as well as areas exposed to heatwave and flood risks with the intangible elements revealed by the Sensible Map. These include practices, uses, social relationships, local initiatives, perceptions and forms of solidarity observed during the fieldwork. The superposition of these different layers helps us understand that these forms of solidarity do not exist independently from space: they rely on specific places, infrastructures, uses and environmental conditions.

The Sensible Map thus becomes an interface between the lived experience of the territory and its spatial reality: it helps identify where solidarities emerge, which physical elements they interact with, and in which risk situations they can be mobilised. This reading therefore represents an intermediate step between understanding the territory and activating solidarities: it moves from a sensitive mapping of local relationships and resources towards identifying their potential to respond to heatwave and flood risks.

Heat wave Risk

The illustration shows a progression from risk exposure, to the solidarities already present on Île-Saint-Denis, and their transformation into collective responses. In the short term, sensitive elements of the territory and everyday life are used as solidarity resources: the houseboat can be opened occasionally to allow residents to benefit from the breeze of the Seine, while cafés and meeting places can host meetings and discussions about solutions to be implemented during

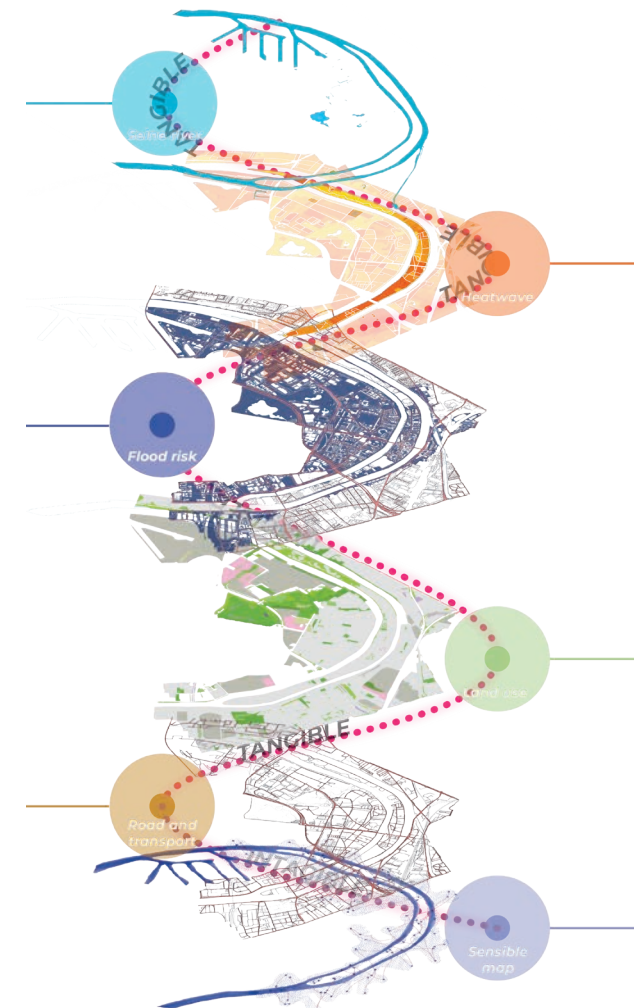
heatwave events. In the longer term, these initiatives can be structured into a network of cooling refuges connected to the Seine, combining houseboats, boats, water-based facilities, etc.

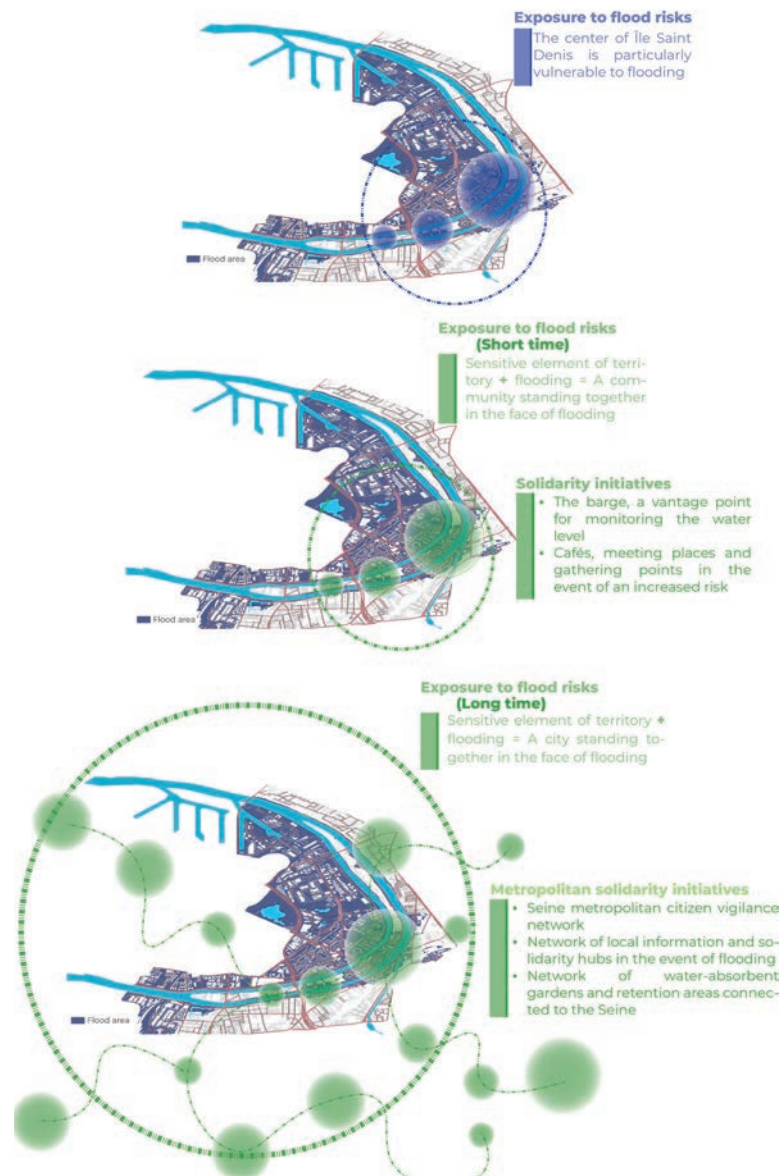
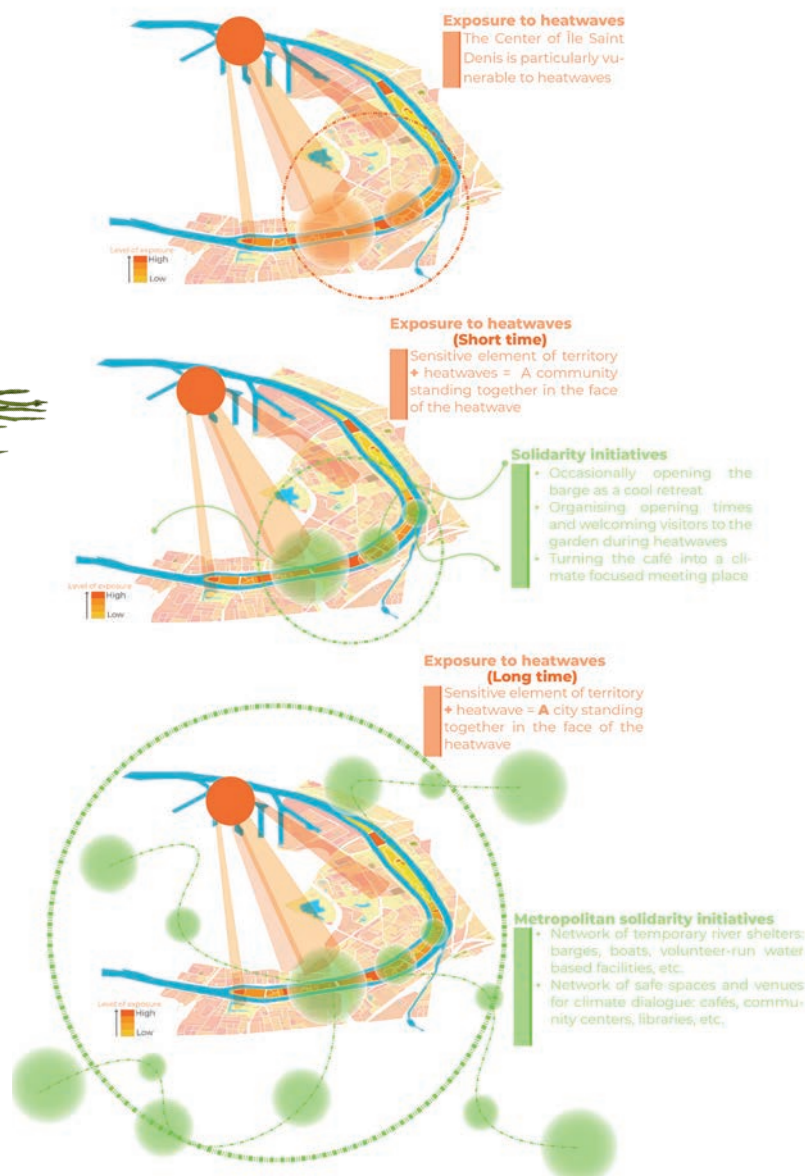
Flood Risk

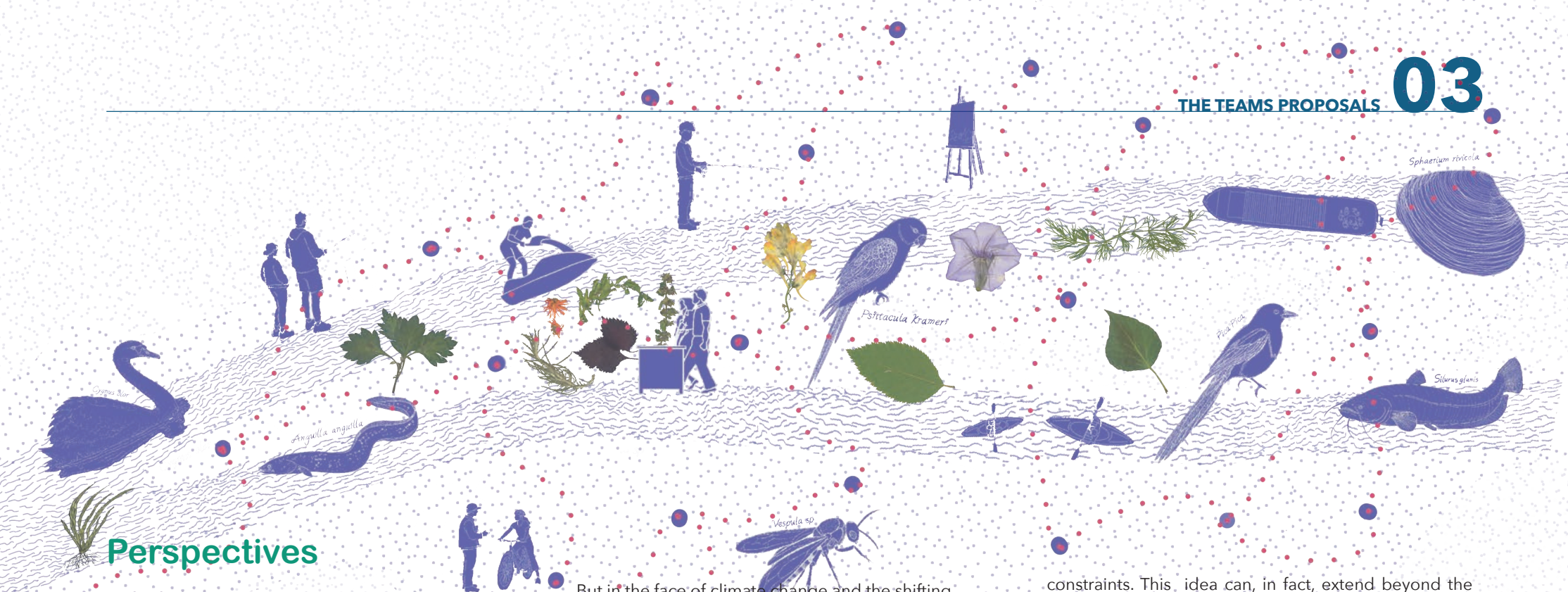
For flood risk, the illustration proposes a different approach: existing solidarities become supports for monitoring, information and collective mobilisation. In the short term, the houseboat provides a strategic observation point for monitoring the level of the Seine, thanks to the direct proximity of its occupants to the river. Cafés and meeting places, meanwhile, serve as gathering points and information hubs when the risk increases. In the longer term, these initiatives can be complemented by gardens and spaces capable of absorbing or temporarily retaining water.

Metropolitan Activation

At the metropolitan scale, these initiatives can be transformed into a network of riverside solidarities capable of responding simultaneously to heatwaves and floods: houseboats and water-related facilities can become temporary cooling refuges during heatwave events and observation points during floods; cafés, community facilities and other meeting places can serve as relays for information, discussion and coordination; while gardens, vegetated spaces and riverbanks can contribute both to creating cooler areas and to slowing down or temporarily retaining water. The objective is therefore to connect these local initiatives to create a metropolitan infrastructure of solidarity, cooling and resilience organized along the Seine.







Perspectives

Thinking of the Seine as a basin of solidarity also means addressing inequalities among territories and populations in relation to the river. Fatima Ouassak points out that working-class neighborhoods are particularly exposed to pollution, noise, and heat. According to Ouassak, the problem stems not only from a lack of awareness but also from the limited scope residents have to influence their environment and feel empowered to take action in their communities. Applied to the Seine, this line of thinking leads us to ask what role residents are actually given in how the river is conceived, developed, and managed. The issue of flooding also highlights these differences. As Ludovic Faytre has shown, the consequences of a major flood would extend far beyond the flooded areas alone. However, not all areas have the same resources to cope with these risks. This raises the question of who is protected, who participates in decision-making, and who remains the most vulnerable. The vision of a “solidarity basin” thus becomes all the more essential.

But in the face of climate change and the shifting landscape of the Paris metropolitan area, the Seine can also be viewed as a resource for better navigating periods of risk. The heat waves of the summer of 2026, in particular, underscored the importance of access to water, riverbanks, and cool spaces in a metropolis that is getting hotter. In L’Île-Saint-Denis, this connection is already evident through Thorez Beach, water sports, and initiatives developed along the river. The municipality is also seeking to prioritize environmental and transition issues in its local initiatives. The island could thus become a testing ground, capable of inspiring other areas under pressure.

The island is interesting for the contradictions it suggests. By definition, it is separated from the rest of the land by water. However, this isolation often brings the people who live there closer together, as they share the same space, its realities, and its daily

constraints. This idea can, in fact, extend beyond the geographical island itself. In the metropolitan area, certain neighborhoods or residential complexes also function as “islands”—spaces separated from their surroundings by the networks and infrastructure that encircle them, their layout, and their physical boundaries. In this sense, places such as Choisy-le-Roi or Paris

Jardins in Draveil challenge conventional wisdom and offer concrete, sustainable avenues for solidarity that benefit the entire metropolitan area.

Thought-provoking idea:

1. Ouassak describes Verdragon (Bagnolet) as France’s first “house of popular ecology.” This echoes Reena Mahajan’s “House of Common Waters.” A “House of the Seine” where residents share responsibility for caring for the river
2. Idea to open up the barges during heat waves



Springing River Garden Metropolis

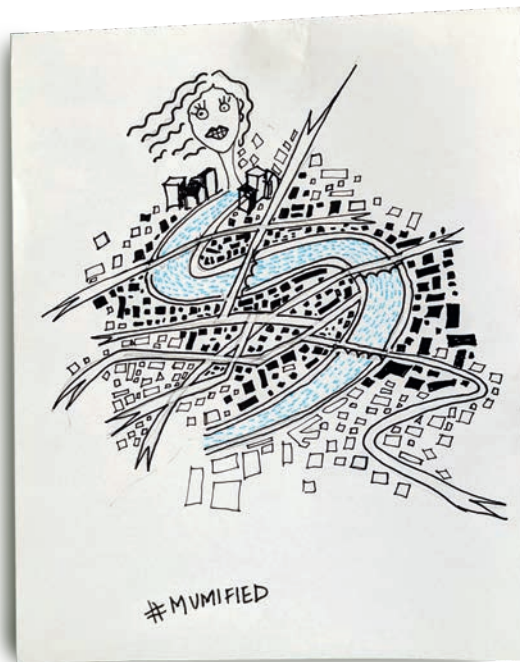


Fig. 1. Sketch depicting the mummified Seine.

Act I. The Finding: a Mummified River

Paris began as a trading port, and the settlements before it followed the same logic. This original dependence on the river has shaped the city's development ever since, down to the condition of the river today.

Since then, heavy engineering and manufacturing have severed the natural cycles of the Seine, its tributaries and the entire basin: canalisation, dams, reservoirs, canals. **What remains is a contained river**, confined rather than alive: embalmed (Fig 1.)

Maintained that way for what? To the benefit of the port and logistics activity that occupies the longest stretch of the basin's banks – and to the benefit of an image. The banks of the Seine in central Paris have been inscribed

on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1991, its boundaries extended again in 2024, protecting the very profile the embalming produced: the quays, the embankments, the river held still enough to be looked at. Trade and heritage ask the same thing of the river, in different registers. One holds it still to keep it working. The other holds it still to keep it beautiful. Both hold it still.

HAROPA port authority holds a territorial footprint stretching from the coast at Le Havre through Rouen to Paris, cutting across dozens of municipalities, several départements and two regions. Each of these governs its own territory. None of them governs the port, because none of them is built at its scale. What looks like an administrative overlap is in fact a structural exemption: a scale of infrastructure that no local authority is positioned to hold accountable. This is the extraterritoriality of port infrastructure and activity.

This is not a local anomaly. It is one expression of the ecological upheaval that can no longer be set aside. The urban is not a bystander to that upheaval – it is where it concentrates, and where it is produced. **It must also be where it is undone.**



Act II. Habitability, for whom?

The theme of this three-year workshop cycle is the habitability of the Seine and its tributaries. We ask: habitability for whom? Not for humans alone: the conditions of life on Earth are failing for every being, our own species included.

Descola's *Beyond Nature and Culture* (2005) shows that separating nature from culture is not a universal fact but one cosmology among others – the one that happens to dominate the modern West, and the one on which ecology becomes an “environment”, something external to us.

What we call order is the arrangement we impose: straightened banks, regulated flows all year round, zoned land. **What we call chaos is often the complex organisation of the living.** Admire a single leaf: its veins, its cells, the light it captures. Is that chaos? Stack all the leaves of a fern into a heap: is that order? Our cities are that heap, and we take them for order.

Having dissociated ourselves from the ecology to which we belong, we have adopted a functionalist approach to it. Of all possible relations to water, we have kept one. We list our “usages” of the river and do not ask how we live with and within it.

What we do on this territory matters because global

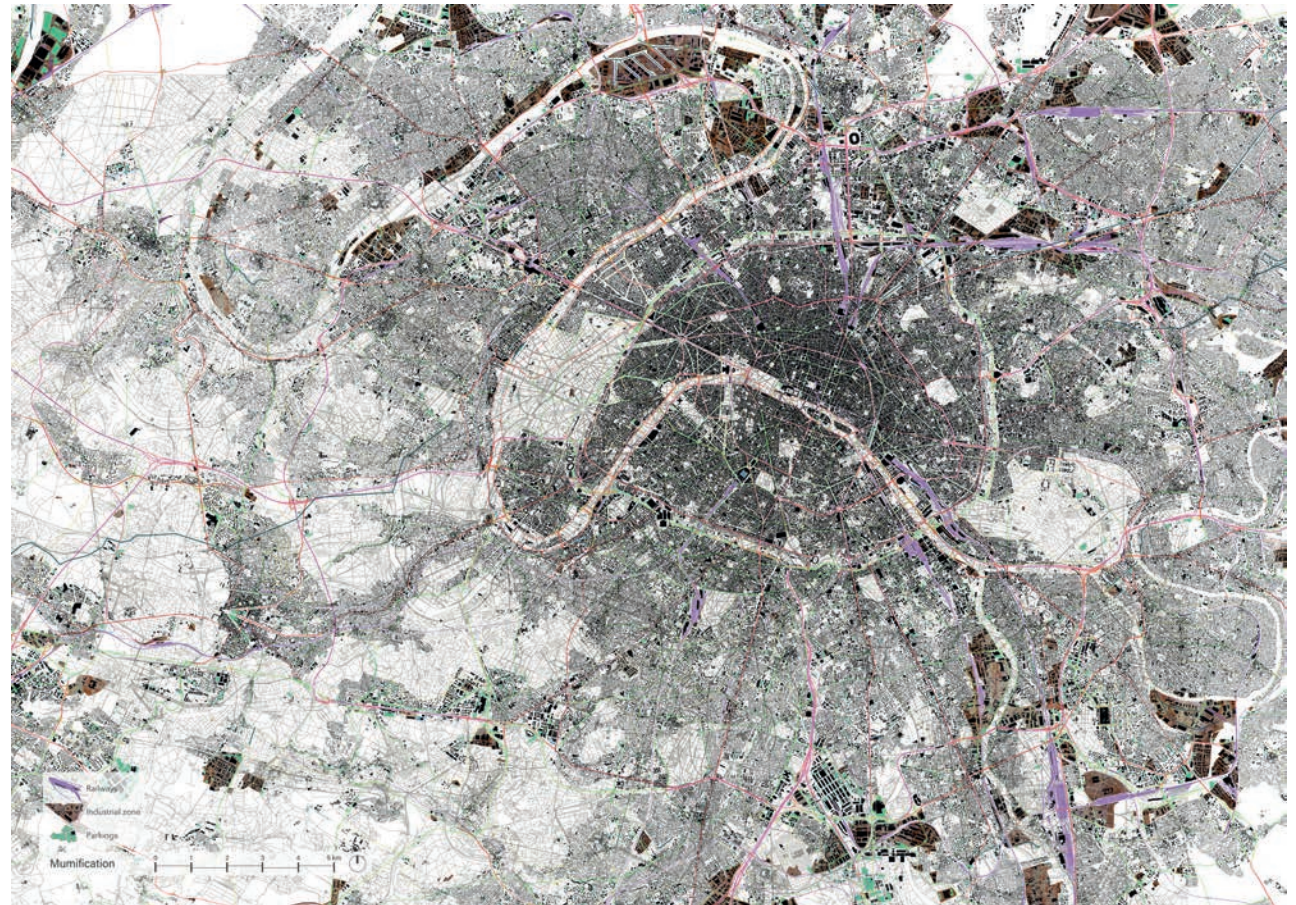


Fig. 2. Map showing the human-made infrastructure.

crises, local contexts and global impacts converge here. In 1992, Clément proposed the planetary garden: the Earth as a garden, finite and traversable, which humans, as gardeners, are called to facilitate rather than manage (Clément, 1999, p. 130).

We take up this figure and propose to make water literacy spring up in the river garden metropolis of the Seine – the largest scale on the matrix (Fig. 6) we built to think through this proposal. Its smallest scale went through the same shift as Clément's figure: we began

Act III. Revealing Pirates: The Gardener Within

Anyone can garden, as Gusteau would put it. Before humans there was already a garden, and therefore gardeners – existing, in our matrix's own word for that scale, before anyone arrived to name them. **In our vision the gardener is not a species but an act.** A bee, a beaver, a root, a raindrop, a river's current and the soil each interact with their environment and work with it. They do not merely extract. Whoever performs this act becomes part of the river garden. Institutions and administrations too can garden, or refuse to. The gardener is each of us and lives within each of us.

We did not begin with "gardener." Its first scale, at the smallest end, was people. People, we found, already limited the garden to humans. We renamed the scale being, and being still named a category rather than an act - so we renamed it again, gardener.

Designers must recognise the gardener within themselves. Their role is not to author the garden but to facilitate it, because gardening is participatory. A gardener knows the land and the ecology of which they are part, which demands water literacy. Care, following Younès, is everything we do to maintain, continue



Fig. 3. Water Illiteracy Map, showing the behaviour of human-made infrastructure with respect to the water.

with people, but people already assumed a single species at the centre of the garden, so we set that scale aside for being – existing, before it is anything else – and only then, in Act III, for gardener.



and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible (2024). Care for the land, the soil, the air, the water, the fauna and the flora is ultimately care for ourselves.

But naming a landscape shared, or a garden common to all, can itself obscure what is unequal within it. Landscape architecture often describes sites this way, and the phrase is appealing, but not everyone has an equal ability to shape land use, influence policy or absorb the consequences of environmental change; some are better positioned than others to determine where risk, restriction and responsibility fall (Nair, n.d.). That ecological processes cross boundaries is already known. The harder task is naming who gets to act on that knowledge, and who is left to live with what others decide.

We place this proposal under the flag of pirate ecology, against an environmentalism that speaks to some and not others. Ouassak works from the banlieues, from the lived realities of racialised, working-class and postcolonial communities, decentring ecology away from the default perspective of the middle and upper classes of city centres (2023, p. 8); her ecology reaches more-than-humans, victims of the same colonial and capitalist violence. Barkat, co-founder of Banlieues Climat, puts this into practice among people who have historically been barred from the ecological conversation, all the while being blamed for individual unsustainable gestures (Banlieues Climat, n.d.). Pirate ecology answers that double bind: it does not ask for a seat at a table that excludes and blames in the same breath. It takes ecology back, as a matter of survival, and as a way to share belonging, and build community with the living, on its own terms. Institutions and administrations too can garden, or refuse to – and where they hold power over land, water or heritage,

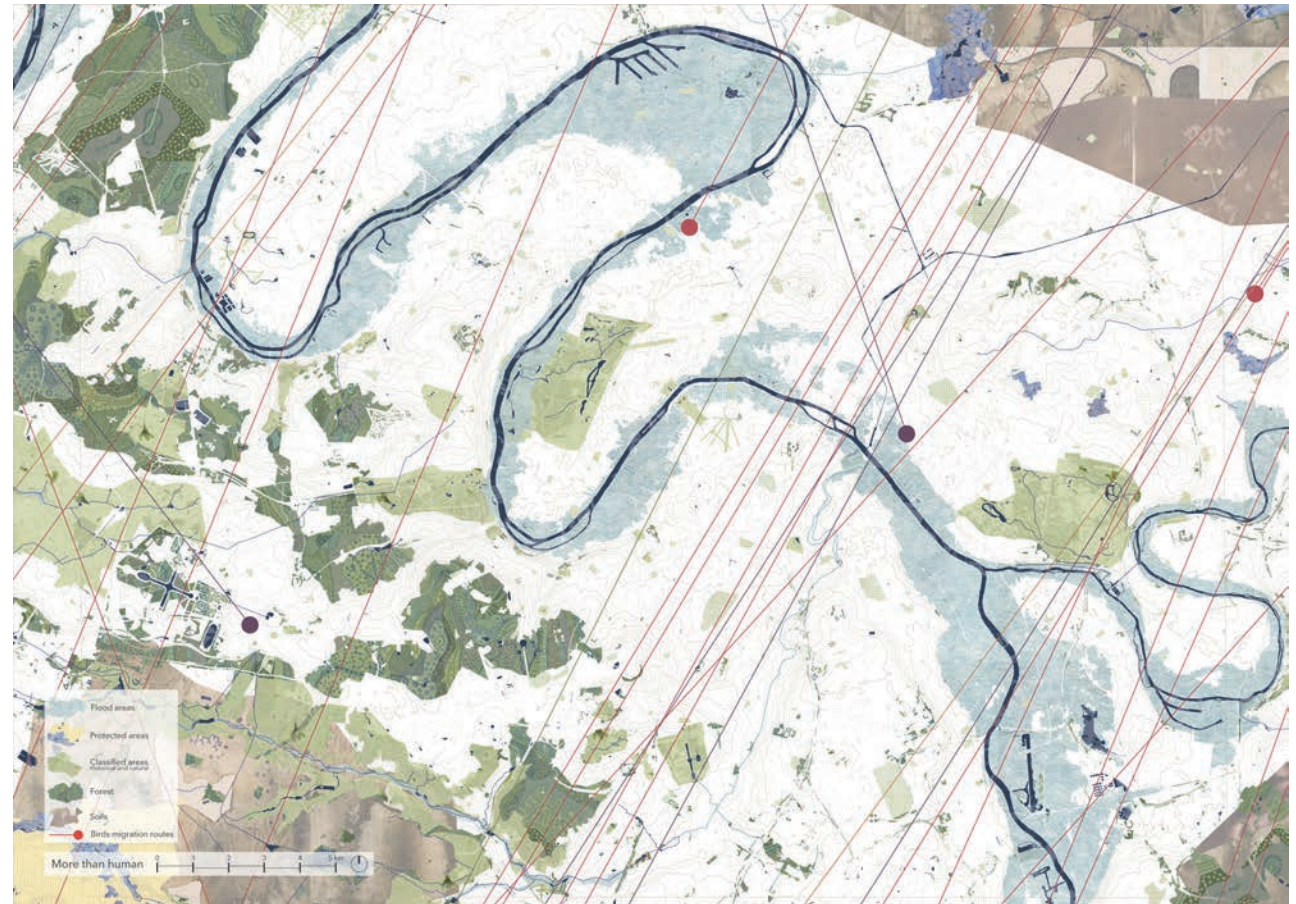


Fig 4. More-than-human catography of the territory.

gardening means working alongside gardeners who hold no institutional power at all, not gardening in their place.



Fig. 5. (above) Illustrated journal based on the reflections, experiences and dicussions upon the relationship with water.

Fig. 6. (below) Matrix with all seven scales of analysis and intervention.





Act IV. Tending The River Garden

A river garden is not a green screen: a backdrop for activities that could take place beside anything else. Gathered by the water without touching it, the same scene could unfold in a forest or on a mountain – the water only decor. Nor is it greening, which too often adds green space without questioning the system around it.

The river garden is first a mental space, where we recognise that there are many gardeners besides us. In our matrix (Fig. 6.), the scale after gardener followed the same move: house became home, because one is never homeless, only houseless: home is inhabited, nested in, before it is ever a relation. It is then manifested in the basin as a physical space where each gardener finds the medium to work with. It lives through maintaining, evolving, gardening and nurturing, and it makes the interdependence between the garden and ourselves explicit: each benefits from the other, and they are inseparable. The river is water and the water is river, in a single cycle.

This interdependence has a material counterpart in how the basin is actually used, and nowhere more starkly than at its ports. **What are ports for, and whose needs do they serve?** Field trips took us to Gennevilliers and Ivry-sur-Seine, where industrial, logistics and port activity is still active. At Ablon, we found HAROPA-owned land held in reserve: agricultural land farmed on precarious, yearly



Fig. 7. Aerial view of the Ivry-sur-Seine cemetery (left) and the proposed rain water catchment garden (right).

renewable leases. At Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, we watched a new port being built in real time, land dug up and materials extracted to feed the construction of the Grand Paris metropolis, its train stations among them. The system, in other words, feeds itself: what it extracts from the territory returns as the very infrastructure that lets it extract more.

The dependence this produces is measurable: Paris has only about three days of food autonomy (Thierry, 2025), and the Île-de-France now produces only 10% of what it consumes (Sinaï et al., 2020). This is not a shortage of production. The region's hinterland, the Seine watershed, produces at scale – but for national, European and global markets rather than its own basin (Thierry, 2025). We do not propose self-sufficiency: feeding Paris from its green belts alone is an illusion (Barles, 2017). We propose a redirection: toward the basin that already surrounds it.

This redirection answers to a specific and long-

diagnosed rupture. Marx observed that capitalist agriculture ships food from country to city but never returns what the city consumes: the nutrients drawn from the soil leave with the harvest and come back only as waste, dumped elsewhere, not restored to the land. He called this a robbing of the soil, and argued that only the collective, rational governance of this exchange, rather than its abandonment to market relations, could close it. Foster (1999) names this the metabolic rift, and traces it to the same separation of town from country that severed the Seine from the territory it runs through.

Ports are, at their bluntest, trading facilities built for exactly the kind of distant exchange that produced this rupture. We propose to turn that infrastructure against itself: repurposing port space along the basin as the physical backbone of a Food Social Security at basin scale, communal spaces hosting food banks and granaries, linking the farms of the river garden metropolis to consumers within the same basin

through its water arteries. Biowaste would return to the granaries and back to the farms as fertiliser: the nutrients the city withheld, restored.

We recognise that this remains a utilitarian relation to water. But it is one that mends the rift rather than widening it.

The same tension appears where heritage protection, not exploitation, holds the basin still. Act I named UNESCO status as one of the forms mummification takes. That protection is not something we want removed, and this is not a call to let the water take the city back. What we ask is narrower: protected for what, and at what cost to the space the basin now needs?

Cemeteries suggest an answer. Among the most fixed, most historically weighted spaces in the city, they remain largely planted, soil that breathes and trees that root inside a boundary nobody proposes to move. In this configuration, humans retain ownership of the landscape. We ask: **can cemeteries become the nesting place for all ecological beings?** (Fig. 7.) We propose testing the same flexibility on the places that line the basin: paved squares reopened as oases, ground opened up to retain water and support planting, hosting food banks or the gardener training grounds Act III calls for. In our matrix (Fig. 6.), these are the scales we came to call commons and riverhood: ground opened up, and water interlinking it to everything else.

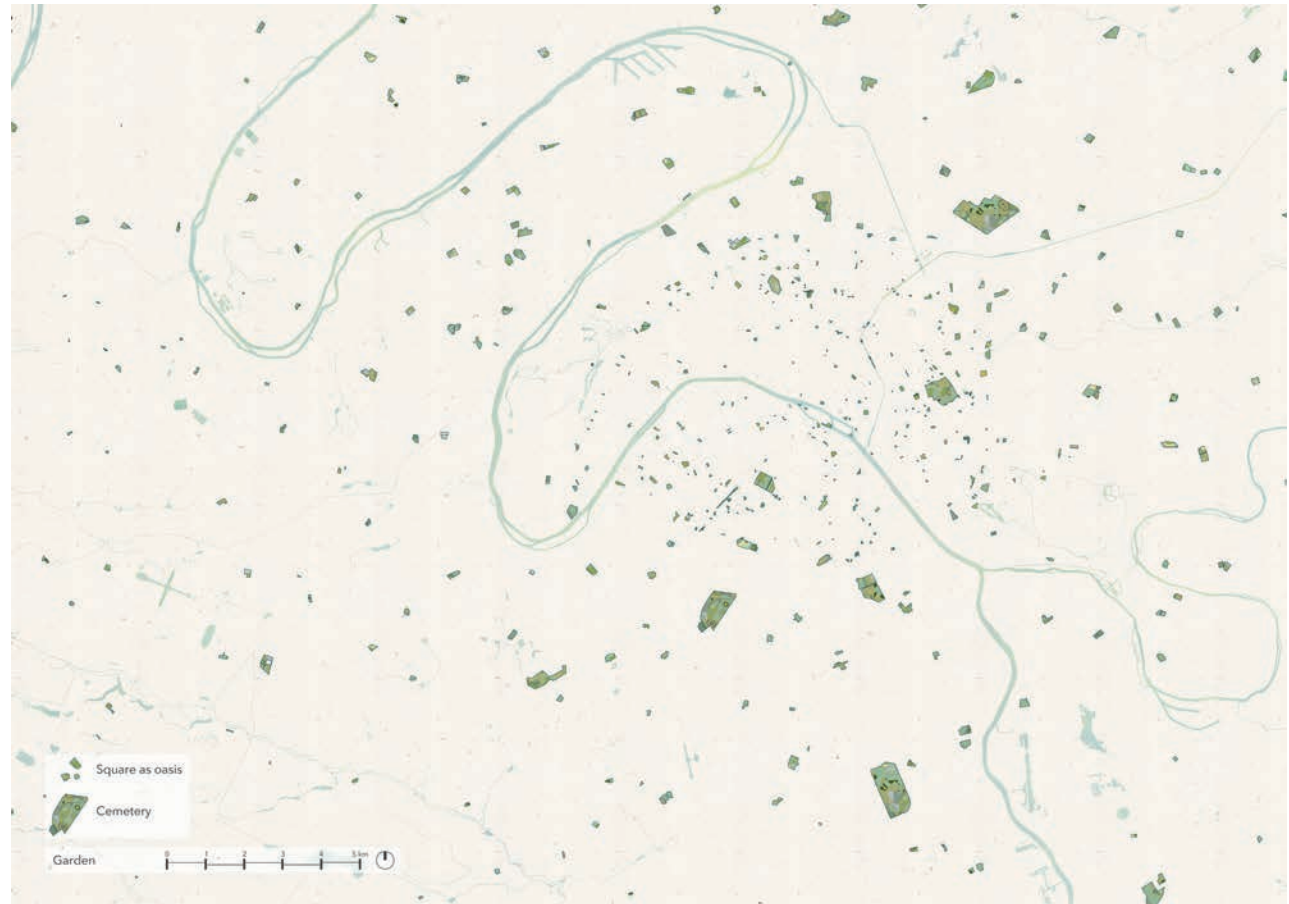


Fig. 8. Map showing location of cemeteries and public squares (oases) in the River Garden metropolis.

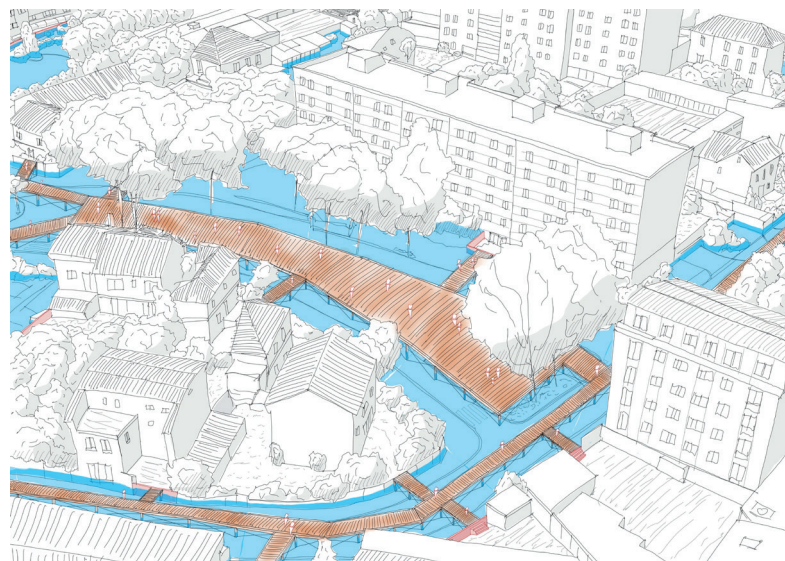
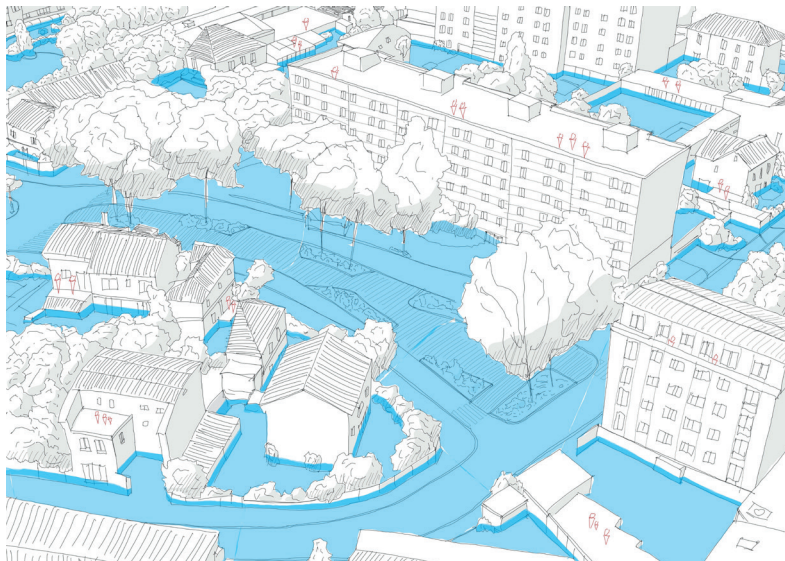
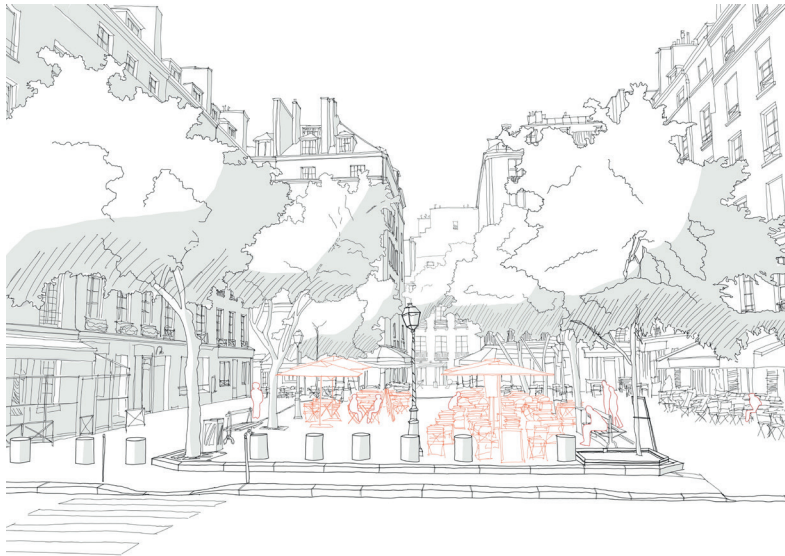


Fig. 9 (Top-left) . Sketch of Place Sainte-Catherine (Marais, Paris).

Fig. 10 (Top-right). Proposed oasis for the Place Sainte-Catherine (Marais, Paris).

Fig. 11 (Bottom-left) . Aerial view of public square (Ile Saint-Denis).

Fig. 12 (Bottom-right) . Proposed floating platforms as flood adaptation for public square (Ile Saint-Denis).

Act V. Undisciplining The Urbanist

We go beyond what mainstream, institutional urbanism expects. Much of our work throughout the three weeks was collective brainstorming, not prospective design: its purpose was to lay out a narrative, not deliver a single scheme. This follows from what we refuse – a productivist approach to urbanism that measures itself by outputs produced, rather than by the water literacy and relations it manages to bring forth and perhaps revive. What we offer instead is a critique turned on ourselves, as humans, professionals, thinkers, inhabitants, neighbours. Our interaction with nature creates culture, and the wall between the two must fall. If not now, when?

The designer's role is not to pour concrete(d) plans, fixed the moment they set, but to provide frameworks and space for evolution, change and transformation. Design and non-design are both political acts, and ours began as one: a matrix, built early in the process, crossing our scales – gardener, home, commons, communityhood, organism, riverhood, river basin – against three scopes: narrative, policy, design. The five of us filled it with sticky notes: observations, sensations, new visions and designs. Even its structure was never fixed. Its scales were renamed as we worked, because naming, we found, is already a design decision, not a given. The matrix and the maps (Fig. 2,3,4,8.) that came from it make this concrete in a different sense: they bring layers of analysis together, and overlaying them stops being an analytical process and becomes a synthesising one, a form of proposal in itself. Analysis and new visions coexist in both. The act of bringing them together is the proposal.

Narrative, one of our three original scopes, was never the softest of the three. If naming a scale is already a design decision, then telling a story about a river is already a way of acting on it. Barrau goes further: « *Art, literature and poetry are precision weapons in a total war against the univocity of meaning. Art produces reality* » (2022). For him, it is no longer a question of commenting on or understanding reality but of producing it. What kills us is our lack of imagination, our sinking into inertia, and in the face of catastrophe, art is how we betray the legacy that forbids elsewhere (2022). **We need artists and poets in power rather than (only) engineers and trained politicians.**



Fig. 13. Sketch showing a section at the Valley of the Bièvre.

ਪੜ੍ਹ ਪੜ੍ਹ ਇਲਮ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਕਿਤਾਬਾਂ,
ਕਦੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਪੜ੍ਹਿਆ ਨਹੀਂ।
ਜਾ ਜਾ ਵੜਦੇ ਮੰਦਰ ਮਸੀਤੀ,
ਕਦੇ ਮਨ ਆਪਣੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੜਿਆ ਨਹੀਂ।

Fig. 14. Lines from Sufi poetry (kalam) by the 18th-century Punjabi poet and philosopher Baba Bulleh Shah.

English translation: You read thousands of books of knowledge, but you never read your own self. You constantly enter temples and mosques, but you never entered your own heart.



Act VI. This is Not a Map

Maps are political, colonial, sexist, speciesist and anthropocentric. Every representation of a territory starts from one, and every intervention in that territory follows from the representation. **We add layers that conventional cartography obscures: the intangible, emotions, stories, everything that makes up lived experience, in the tradition of radical cartography.** Terra Forma (Aït-Touati et al., 2019) sets out to map living things rather than space emptied of life and available for conquest – moving, as its authors put it, from the horizon line of conventional cartography to the thickness of the ground. This is the cartography we claim.

Our proposal lands within bioregional thinking, which defines territories through ecological systems rather than administrative boundaries, starting with water (Reclus, 1855; Geddes, 1918; Berg & Dasmann, 1990). We share that scale, but not its confidence in representation: a bioregion cannot be mapped without already choosing a point of view, and no map, however layered, escapes that choice. The maps (Fig. 2,3,4,8.) we show are therefore an output and a failure at once – a necessary one, since it still omits most of what matters. What it cannot hold, we ask the mental space to carry instead: the recognition, developed in Act III, that we are not the only gardener.

This scepticism about the map extends to what mapping imposes on the river itself. The Seine expanded and contracted long before we arrived to draw it, depositing the sediment that made land

fertile for every form of life; its meanders purified and oxygenated the water, and where it met rock it came alive again. That was its own arrangement, not ours. What we have built in its place – straightened, regulated, walled – is the heap from Act II, laid across a living system: not the river's order, but the chaos we mistake for one.

We are not exempt from the trap we describe. Act II named the functionalist reflex: the search for a function, and specifically a human one, before anything else. Our own proposal fell into it. Food banks, granaries, the ecoservices of an oasis, these are functions too, and they were not where we began. They surfaced later, once we had put the map aside and worked, scale by scale, through the matrix behind this text. Only then did the intervention areas name themselves: cemeteries, squares, balconies, each carrying the same question at a different scale.

Act VII. Mythologising

We move away from tangible representation here, deliberately. Where the earlier steps proposed food banks, oases, gardener training grounds, this final act proposes nothing that can be built. Its aim is to let the river garden take up space in our minds first, and it does this by unmaking a representation before offering another (Fig. 15.).

The river is a mummy: caught somewhere between life and death, neither fully. This is what canalisation, confinement, straightening did – not only an engineering programme but a mythological one. We

have humanised the river because we could only value what looked back at us.

We propose to mythologise the river: to recognise it as an other-worldly entity, an ancient being, older than the species that now speaks for it. An elder is owed a different kind of care than a child. A child is shaped, corrected, made presentable for the world it will enter. An elder is listened to, deferred to, allowed to remain what it already is.

This shift belongs to the scope we have called narrative throughout the three weeks. Consider how the Seine's tributaries, and their confluence within the Grand Paris region, have been rendered in art: differently across periods and hands, and yet bound, in nearly every depiction, to a single aim – to be appealing, legible, pleasing to a human eye.

What we ask for is a different kind of mental space: not one built for consumption or human pleasure, but one that lets water reclaim its own agency, on terms that are not addressed to us at all.



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Fig. 15. Mythologising the River Garden Metropolis.



Giving

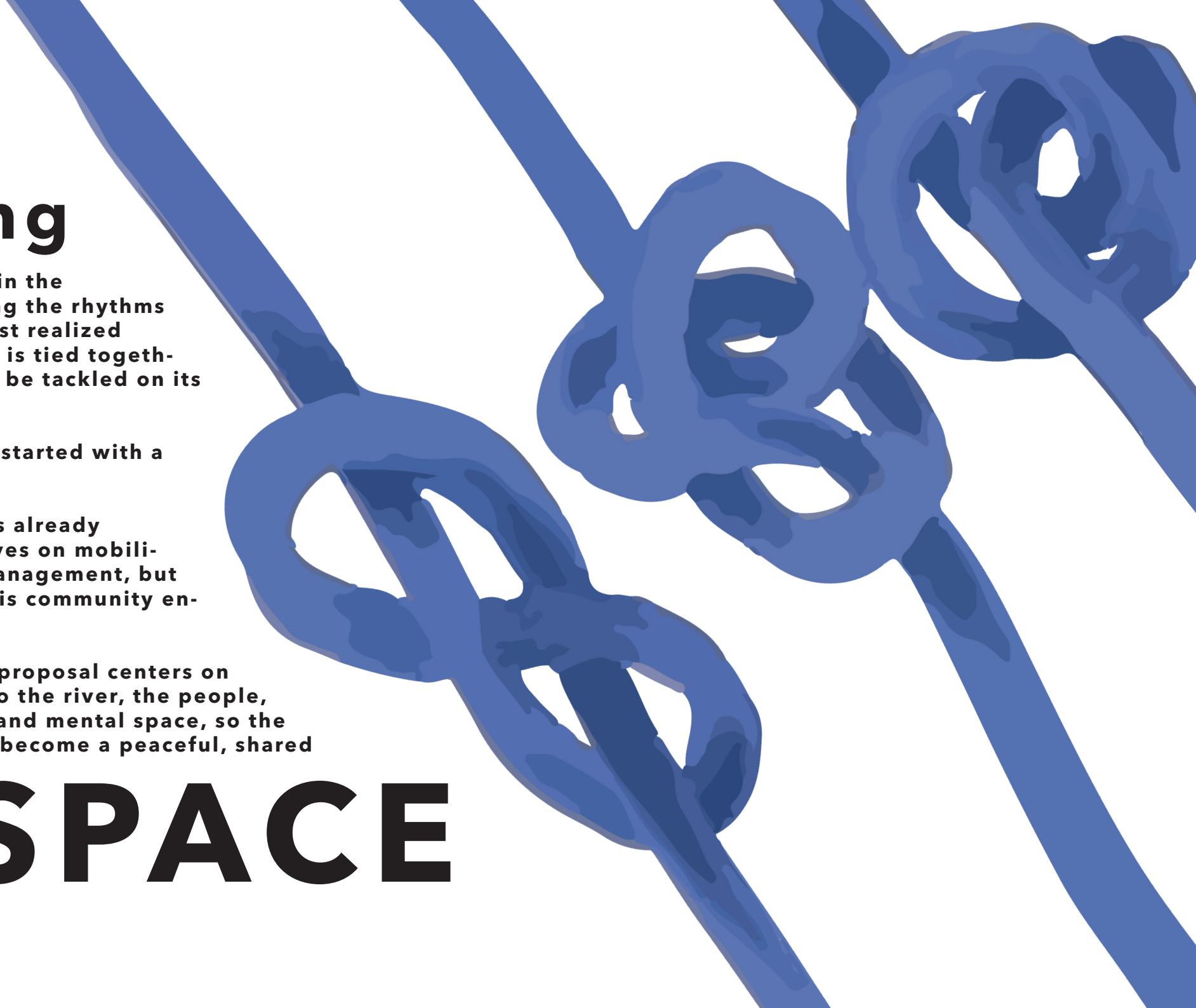
Looking at life in the metropolis along the rhythms of water, we first realized that everything is tied together. Nothing can be tackled on its own.

From there, we started with a hypothesis:

Current policies already include initiatives on mobility and water management, but what's missing is community engagement.

That's why our proposal centers on Giving Space, to the river, the people, natural cycles, and mental space, so the metropolis can become a peaceful, shared garden.

SPACE





DIAGNOSIS

We started this workshop with trying and understanding the different stakes of the metropolis.

Here are some of the questions we were having after visiting the territory:

- Is there a way of slowing down / giving space back to the Seine?
- Should we change our perception of flooding?
- How can we make project planning more flexible to adapt to future change?
- How can we balance economy and ecology?
- Who owns the river? Who is responsible for it? Who is managing the land?
- Is there any way to give space back to the seine?

The Seine is deeply integrated into the metropolitan structure, but its relationship with the city remains fragmented. In many areas, heritage constraints, infrastructure, logistics, and existing urban structures limit the potential for major physical transformation.

At the same time, large sections of the riverfront remain disconnected from everyday urban life. Extensive paved and impermeable surfaces, limited vegetation, shade, seating, and public access reduce opportunities for people to experience and inhabit the river.

The river is also an essential resource for industrial, logistical, ecological, and urban systems, yet these functions often create physical barriers between the population and the water. The challenge is therefore to strengthen the relationship between the Seine and its territories without compromising the functions, heritage, and ecological systems that already depend on it.

Water as a common resource

Water raises questions about ownership, access and collective responsibility. Although the Seine is a shared natural system, different sections of its banks and associated infrastructure are controlled by public institutions, private companies or other actors. This fragmentation can create tensions between water as a collective resource and water-related spaces or resources as privately controlled assets. The governance of the Seine involves multiple levels of institutions, municipalities, landowners, infrastructure operators and economic actors. This creates a complex question of responsibility: who owns the land, who manages it, *who is responsible for the water, and who has the authority to make decisions about its future?*

Many transformations of the river territory are planned and implemented through institutional processes, while citizens may not always feel directly involved in them. There is a gap between the technical management of the river and the everyday experience of inhabitants. Increasing public awareness and participation could strengthen the relationship between communities and the river and create a greater sense of collective responsibility.

Flooding and Living with Risk

Flood risk is a reality for many communities living along the Seine and its tributaries. However, the presence of risk is not always visible in everyday life, and many inhabitants may not fully perceive their exposure to flooding. Urban development has progressively occupied areas that are naturally connected to the river, increasing the complexity of managing water during extreme events.

Drought as a Slow and Less Visible Risk

Drought is an increasingly important challenge for the Seine basin, but unlike flooding, its impacts are gradual and often less visible. While floods generate immediate and highly visible events, drought develops over longer periods and can therefore be perceived as a less urgent threat. This difference in perception may influence how society and institutions prepare for and respond to water scarcity.

Preservation and transformation

The Seine and its surrounding territories are shaped by a strong tension between preservation and transformation. Historic landscapes, infrastructures, industrial activities and ecological systems coexist within a territory that is continuously evolving. Preservation is essential for maintaining cultural and environmental values, but it can also create limitations when responding to contemporary challenges such as climate change, flooding, drought and changing patterns of use.

General Concept

What is the metropolis?

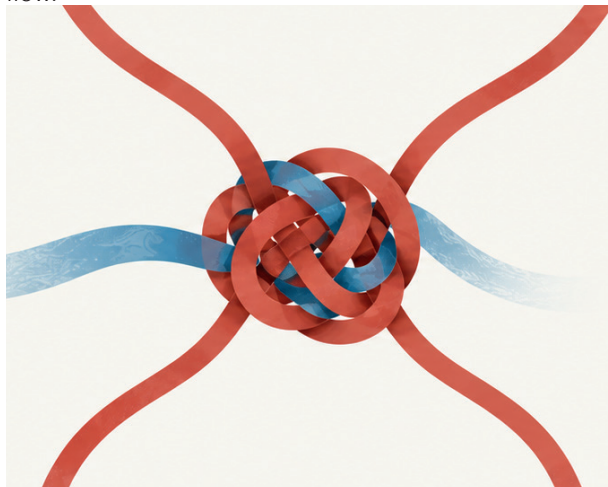
In the beginning there was water and a blooming ecology. Then came the people, started to settle, built infrastructure and developed an economic system.

We imagined this process and each "actor" as a string, that is being thrown above the water and economy strings, entangling with themselves and with each other until it is what we find today in the metropolis:

A knot.

A system that is so deeply intertwined that it is difficult to move a single part. It is stiff and inflexible. Water and ecology are buried under thousands of layers of regulations, rules and norms.

To imagine a future vision of the metropolis and a life in harmony with the rhythms of the water and the surrounding ecology, our approach is to detangle this knot, loosening stiff ends, allowing for flexibility and flow.

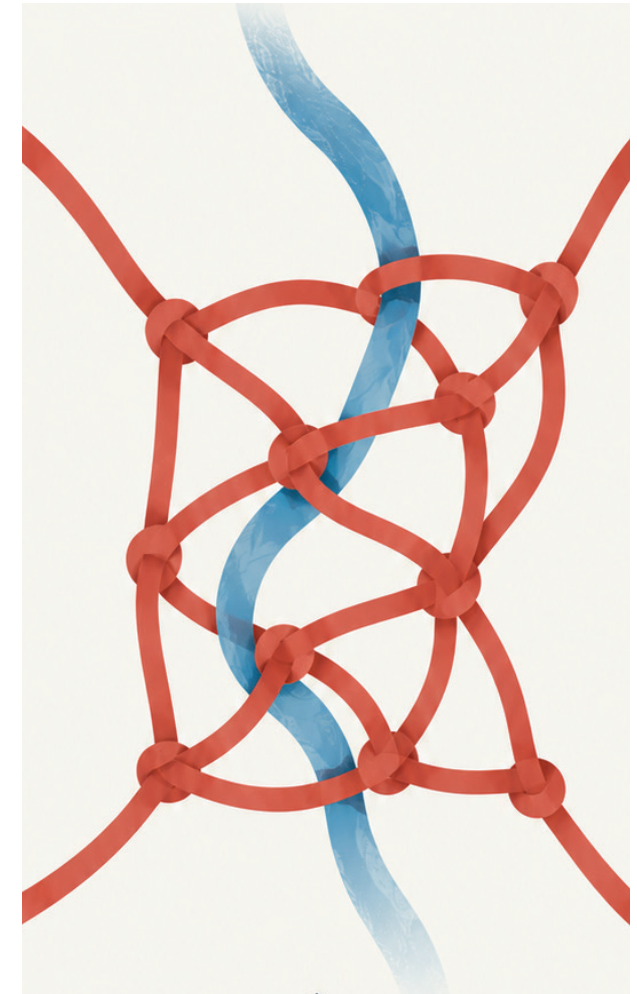


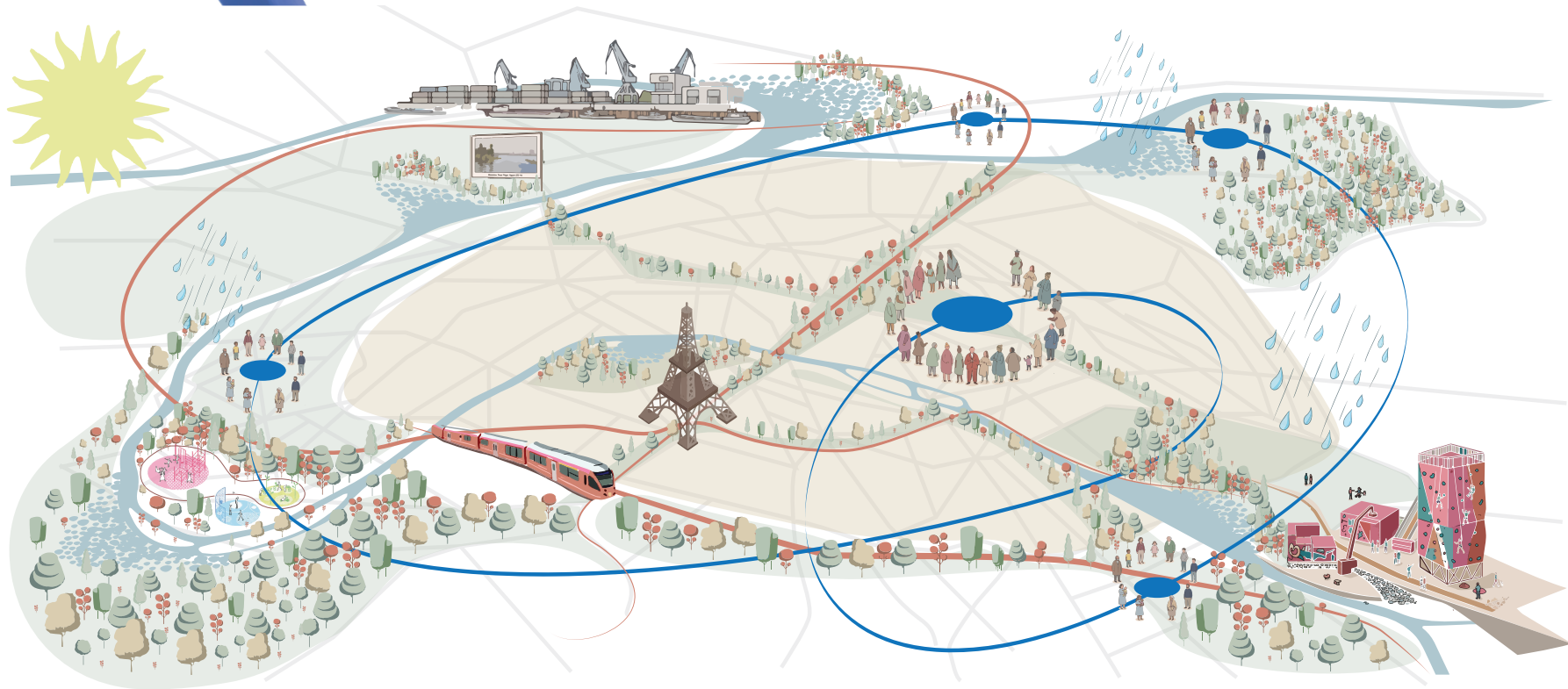
GIVING SPACE

Giving space to the river - We want it to meander and therefore break up concrete banks, allowing natural inflow. This lets the river be seen as a natural part of our ecosystem again.

Giving space to flora and fauna and their cycles - we want to renaturalize our streets, give space to plants, insects and other animals to grow and thrive and most of all allow rainwater to infiltrate and nourish the soil. A natural cycle that allows for better air quality, cooling and a healthy and safe environment for all.

Giving mental space to the people - we want our citizens to have enough time and the freedom to shape their surroundings, care for the ecosystem and each other. We want their voices to have a place within our society and enable them to take immediate action.





An Ideal Future

From this general concept of giving space, we then tried to imagine an ideal future, asking ourselves what life would look like if we gave more space.

We narrowed the actions supporting this ideal world down to three pillars:

mobility, water and community engagement.

MOBILITY

Drawing on our analysis of the metropolitan knot, we thought of ways to give people and the river Seine environment back their space.

This challenge is linked to ongoing changes in mobility.

Currently, cars and related infrastructure are saturating urban space and cutting the city off from its waterfronts. While efforts are already being made to encourage soft mobility, we believe in the need to go further. We think mobility should follow a clear hierarchy:

Space for pedestrians and soft mobility first, then public transport, then shared vehicles, and private cars last.

One key approach would be to free the city center from private cars: rolling out a cheap, accessible **sharing system for small electric vehicles**, combined with large **park-and-ride stations** outside the city center, would free up parking space and reduce traffic inside the city.

Alongside this, access to **public transport** needs to improve and more **cycling lanes** need to be built, so soft mobility is a real option, not just an afterthought.

WATER

From the raindrop to the Seine, **water connects what the metropolis has progressively separated.**

Territorial analysis reveals that aquatic elements extend beyond the riverbed, forming a network connecting built environments, public spaces and natural systems. Metropolitan expansion has altered these flows: rainfall is quickly converted into runoff and routed through subterranean infrastructure, while channelised rivers and built-over floodplains hide natural cycles behind artificial barriers.

The question is not how to manage water, but how to **reveal connections, create relationships and make space where possible.**

Where does water want to go?

Where can we give it space?

How can that space be connected to people?

The river system can act as a **foundational net**, linking urban landscapes even where existing infrastructure hides these connections. Rather than replacing what's already in place, the aim is to gradually untangle these layers and **realign infrastructure with natural flows.**

The real challenge is not a lack of technical tools, but rethinking how the infrastructures we've already built relate to one another.

How do we make room for water, nature and people within the metropolis we've already built?

COMMUNITY

We are convinced that another key to making the Seine a livable environment lies in collective involvement. For now, community engagement regarding public policies is limited, it usually is represented by associations that raise the population's voice about a specific subject, and they often do not have a place at the decision-makers' table.

The idea would then be to implement a large-scale democratic system for citizens to make decisions about the territory.

By giving citizens the mental space and opportunities to express their needs, the goal is to foster the development of an environmental awareness that promotes understanding and protection of their local area.



The Labs

Experiments & Proposals

4+1 day workweek

An experiment at neighbourhood scale. Four days of regular work, one paid day for caring for and shaping shared space.

1 Set up

Selecting a neighbourhood. Determining the set up and financials: funding of projects and individual payment.

2 Onboarding

Introductory sessions led by practitioners: gardening, painting, small repairs, elderly care, youth work etc.

3 Assemblies (biweekly)

Neighbours bring in proposals for the shared spaces, discuss them and decide on actions.

4 Action

Neighbours act on their decisions, alone or in small groups. A rotation for maintenance and caretaking: who does what, and when?

5 Review

Tracking and assessing visible as well as invisible actions.

Questions

Is the payment efficient?
Do people enjoy the system?
Were there conflicts?
Are people doing more than they "had to"?

Local assemblies in residential areas

Goal of giving space: giving people the space to act, shape their surroundings, and freely express their needs and proposals for change.

The knot metaphor: This experimentation involves revealing and understanding the blockages that individual people are facing in their everyday lives, stopping them from interacting with their surroundings and each other.

In the social layer, the knot currently is time, skill, and bureaucratic prohibition/complications.

Giving people time, educating them in the important/forgotten fields, and allowing them to interact with their environment means loosening three strings of a knot, which can turn social neglect into care. The experiment would take place on the scale of a residential neighborhood, or even part of a residential neighborhood (housing blocks). Thus, all residents of that neighborhood would follow the new **4+1-day workweek** model.

What happens on the fifth day, when people have free time?

We propose establishing a neighborhood-level structure dedicated to community engagement. By "engagement," we mean not only valuing existing knowledge about the neighborhood environment but also expanding that knowledge, so that people can understand the neighborhood and commit to its healing.

Environment and community diagnostic:

The first stage in the emergence of this structure is based on the principle of popular education. In this sense, we do away with the idea of a division between the knowledgeable and the uninformed. Through a needs assessment, the goal is to bring to the table the knowledge and skills of everyone in the community.

Who knows how to do what?

The aim is to reconsider the knowledge about our territory as a commons (a process that will continue throughout the project).

Assessing the territory:

In what ways is the region suffering today, environmentally and socially?
What are the problems encountered, the challenges, and the key players behind it all?



What are the opportunities?

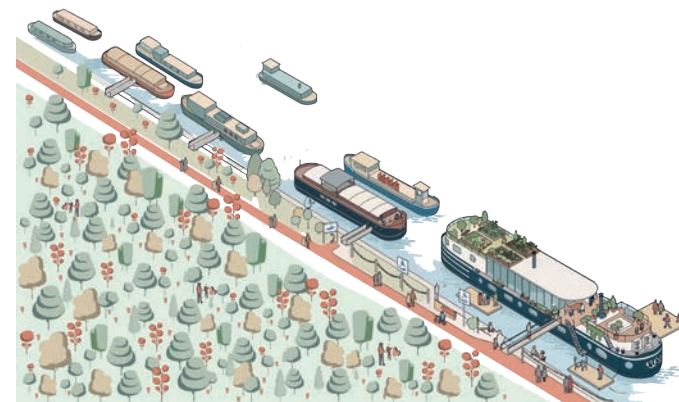
Based on this assessment of the territory (existing facilities, initiatives, etc.), its environment, and its people, what opportunities for action exist? The goal is to collectively develop small-scale projects to heal the territory.

Taking Action: At the launch of the initiative, the city hall, with a view to eventually handing it over to citizens, could serve as a liaison with experts relevant to the projects' needs.

In light of both the challenges and opportunities presented by the community, both human and non-human, we could envision projects developed through the following activities:

Scientific research activities: This could take the form of participatory science, particularly by giving non-humans greater representation in the projects, such as implementing data collection using sensors to generate reports on the health status of non-humans and, consequently, their needs. (Cf. "Convivial Commons" by Alexander Rentsch.)

Hands-on activities: In the case of a community garden, this would involve learning gardening techniques and how to cultivate crops, for instance. Sharing insights from the various activities with the group, including discussions on what has been learned and an evaluation of the ongoing projects.





The Water Assembly

Participation in the Water Assembly is an activity that complements the one mentioned above. We could envision a random selection process in which citizens would be chosen to represent their community (both human and non-human) at this broader assembly, which brings together other neighborhoods.

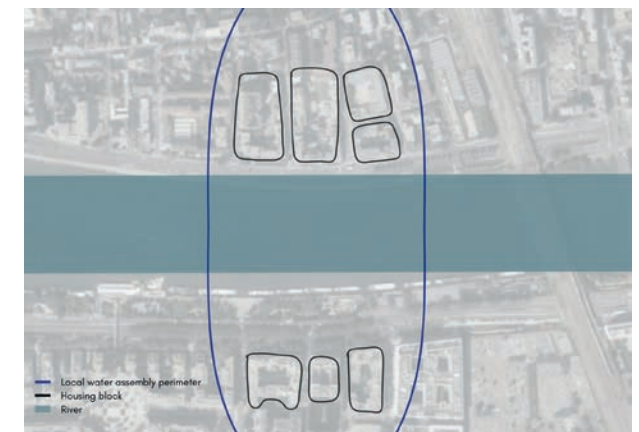


The knot metaphor: Here, the knots can manifest themselves through the complexity of water governance, both in the institutional overlap of competencies and in the broad scale represented by the watershed. Experimenting with this governance through a bottom-up democratic ecology, in which the community (both human and non-human) participates by drawing on field experience, is an attempt to untangle these knots.

The idea is to draw the water-related issues and challenges specific to each area from local projects, bringing a field-based reality with its own constraints. An alternative territorial division could be considered by moving beyond municipal administrative boundaries.

Let's take the theoretical example, shown in this diagram, of two residential areas facing the same stretch of the Seine but belonging to two separate municipalities. The goal is to create a joint governing body for these two areas that share the same stretch of the river.

This space for dialogue would also serve as a testing ground for discussions to prepare for the Water Assembly at the scale of the whole Seine watershed.



Art festivals on industrial riverbanks

To give space back to the river, its various habitats, and the people so that they, too, can reconnect with it. But where do we start when some of our spaces are governed exclusively by economic considerations, face significant operational constraints, or are more difficult to restore?

We believe that an interesting approach is to focus on the reappropriation of these riverbanks that have been privatized, so people can learn more about these spaces, their history, their objectives, and their current needs. This is meant to fuel discussion and give people the opportunity to suggest new ways of reclaiming these places.

The knot metaphor: This experimentation involves revealing and understanding the complexities and blockages embedded in these privatized spaces lining the river. The goal is to bring stakeholders together to collectively untie these knots through discussion, by bringing tensions to the surface in order to better resolve them and envision a shared future for these industrial riverbanks.

Principles of the experiment:

Street art as a means of integrating infrastructure into the landscape: Along these industrialized riverbanks, dominated by silos and surfaces made of concrete or metal, temporary street art and graffiti pieces will be created. With the guidance of artists, citizens will be able to propose new ways to visually integrate these infrastructures into the river landscape, transforming industrial sites into cultural spaces that hold meaning for the people.

Local memory to break with opacity: Exhibitions and screenings of archival films will trace the development of these industrial zones. By recalling this shared history, the project aims to replace the feeling of a private, opaque space with a genuine sense of local belonging.

Co-creation workshops: This shared learning process will lead to cross-functional discussion workshops. Citizens, industry representatives, and local stakeholders will come together to discuss possible future uses (for example, rock climbing during weekends or outside office hours).

These festivals would also be great occasions to invite experts to give talks on how to care for biodiversity and gradually transform the area.

Because these festivals would be open to all, the idea would be to reach compromises between the factory, the people and the artists on how to give the space its best possible use; for example, if some options like climbing are not possible without compromising the structure, maybe a biowall option could be considered.





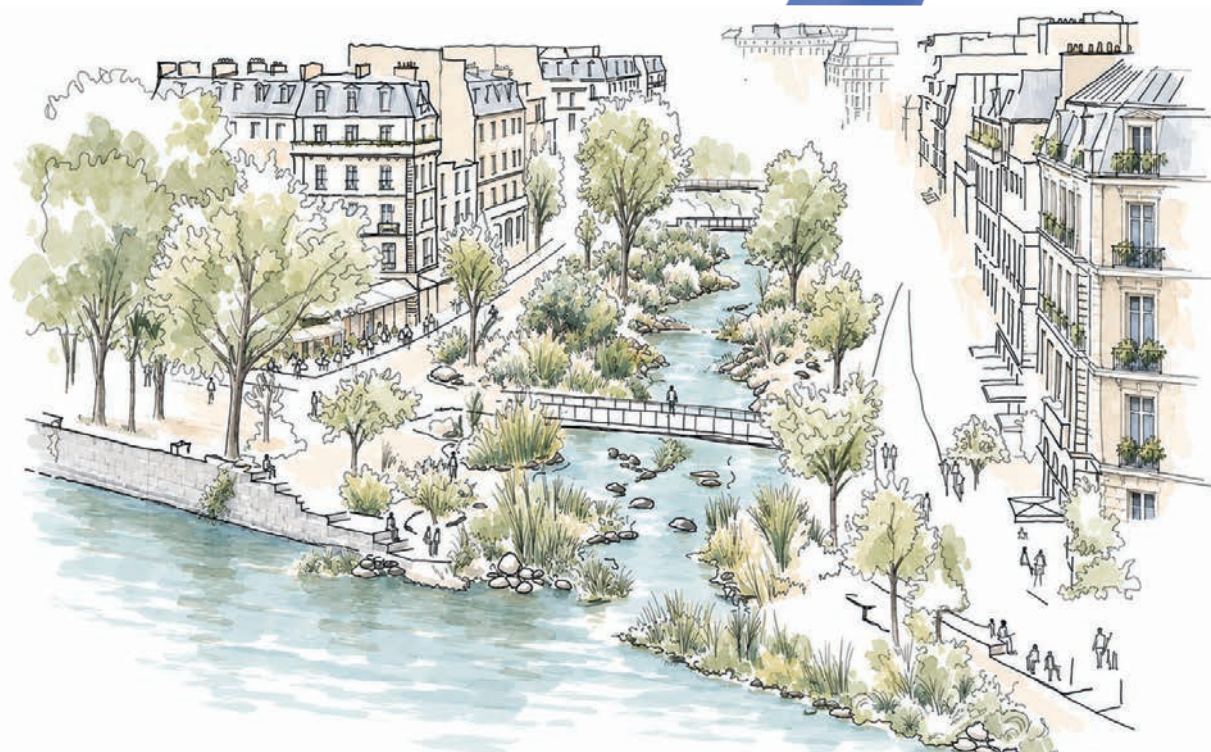
Flood Streets & Water Inflows

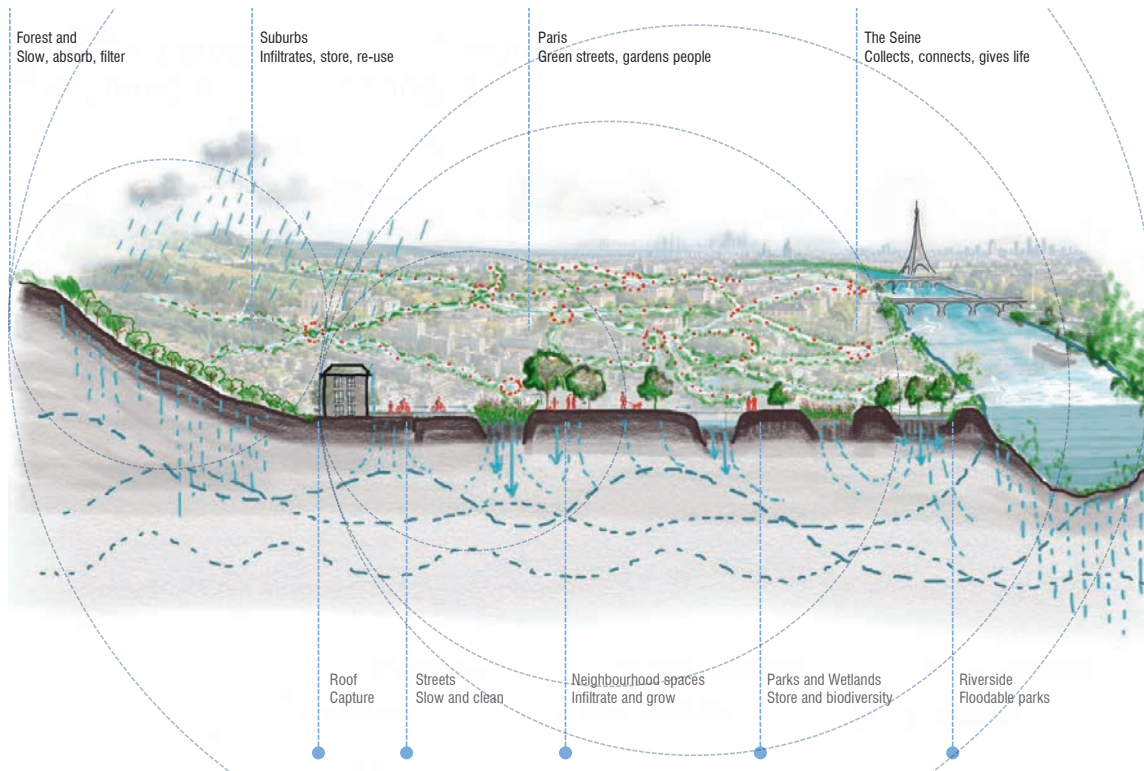
Goal of giving space: Giving space for the river to take back part of its natural place and shape, to infiltrate naturally into the soil, and to give people the mental space to understand and reintegrate the natural water cycle.

The knot metaphor: The “flood spaces” are very vulnerable neighborhoods where any human activity is at risk of being interrupted by every flood, and every house might be damaged, but also, paradoxically, the space is very mineral and decorrelated from the water. The idea is to return water to the soil, slow its flow, and, in doing so, reestablish the connection between people and water through these spaces.

Principle of the experiment: The goal is to create a green corridor in those spaces that would, during “non-flood times”, be used as a playground, a place for water to infiltrate naturally, a gathering space, or a community garden, and, during “flood times”, would serve as a discharge for floodwater to circulate more easily through the city.

To achieve this goal, the first step would be for the city, situated in a Seine loop, to bring some spaces back into public use, or even to transform one existing street, to create several vegetated swales.





These swales could be kept natural as an “ecosanctuary” inside the city, used as a local community garden, or used as small parks for people to come and relax, depending on their location.

When rising, the water would then slowly invade these successive swales, allowing the flood to be more easily managed and less likely to invade productive areas of the city, while also connecting people with the water.

A final projection could be for those “green swales” to eventually recreate more natural rivers inside the city when the water rises, following its natural cycles.

Apart from the floods, these swales would also act as natural water catchments during rain events, and provide a place for natural infiltration as well as habitats for biodiversity.

Conclusion:

Our approach aimed to answer a central question: how can we restore space to the river environment and enable citizens to reclaim and preserve it?

In such a densely populated metropolis, the network of relationships between river and its banks, having different functions, are complex and fragmented. Our approach has consisted of testing and challenging the relationships between these different spaces (economic, residential) and the river through experimental labs.

Today, economic imperatives have fixed certain areas in place and restricted the public space allocated to the river and its people. We believe the first steps must involve citizens reclaiming these economic sectors so that they can become actively involved in them. By analyzing current connections with these now-privatized spaces, the goal is to propose transformations that fully include the community, particularly by diversifying uses toward greater mixed-use development.

However, more residential areas seem to offer fertile ground for initiatives aimed at “making space.” Along with the opportunity to free up physical space for water, we think there are possible initiatives to foster the bottom-up approach needed to redefine our imagination and perception of our living environment, to care for it, and to act collectively to protect it (for all species). Ultimately, the goal is not to erase, but to highlight connections, forge links, and free up space where possible. Visions for the future do not require the complete destruction of existing structures. Rather, they call for relaxing rigid standards to integrate natural cycles into the current urban fabric.

04

THE JURY

The jury of the 44th international workshop on urban and territorial creativity meets on Friday 25 September 2026 at the Académie du Climat. It is made up of elected officials, local representatives, French experts and the association's partners. They attend the presentations of the proposals made by each of the three participant teams. After these presentations, discussions and debates took place to identify the ideas that stand out for their creativity, innovation and relevance, and that can serve as avenues for the future of the Seine basin and its tributaries.



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Président Les Ateliers
President,
Former Minister of
Housing



**MENHAOUARA
Nessrine**

Mayor
Bezons



GUILLOU Antoine

Deputy Mayor, to the
green spaces, food
system and the river
Seine
Paris



COSTIL Xavier

1st consellor, delegate to
the water cycle
Communauté
d'agglomération de
Cergy-Pontoise



OLIVA Jean-Claude

Deputy president of **Est
Ensemble**
Director of Coordination
Eau Île-de-France



GICQUEL Camille

Deputy Mayor, Urban
planning and urban
projects
Argenteuil



MONGES Philippe

Municipal conselor,
delegate to Sustainable
planning, Urban
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GRUET Brice

Municipal conselor
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Researcher Studies on
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Landscape architect
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VARCIN Armelle

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Europa and Asia counselor
Global conservation, Türkiye



HEIN Carola

Teacher, history of architecture and urban planning
TU Delft and Institut Etudes avancées de Paris, Germany



KALRA Ripin

Climate, resilience and risk expert
University of Westminster, United Kingdom



CASSÉ Lamine

Researcher and teacher
Département Géographie - Univ. Gaston Berger, Senegal

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THE WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS



Team Flow

THE PARTICIPANTS **05**



CHARPENTIER Théo

France, 24

theocharp92@gmail.com

Having graduated in June 2025 with a Master's degree in Architecture from ESA, I would like to take part in this workshop because the theme of water and its role within the Paris metropolitan area is a subject that interests me. Although I have worked on both architectural and urban projects during my studies, the theme of water is one that I have had very little opportunity to explore. Taking part in this workshop alongside other young people from different disciplines could enable me to deepen my knowledge of this type of project.



DEBRETSENI Valeriia

Ukraine, 21

valery.debretseni@gmail.com

I am a final-year Architecture and Urban Planning student whose interests have shifted from sustainable design toward strategic and participatory planning: how spatial visions are shaped through dialogue, and how coordination between diverse actors drives urban transformation. Currently, I am part of a real planning process, coordinating between design teams and stakeholders. The workshop's focus on rethinking the metropolis through water cycles, temporal dynamics, and stakeholder synergies aligns directly with my growing interest in planning under ecological uncertainty and complexity.



DEFFNER Marina-Aliki

Greece, 29

deffner.marina@gmail.com

Born and raised in Athens, Greece, yet always had an intense affiliation with the region of Thessaly. Architect engineer and urbanist, with studies in Greece, Austria and the Netherlands. I am passionate about designing for sustainability and activating resilience through ecosystem-based adaptation, as well as examining the intersections between cultural heritage with architecture and urbanism. My interests include the arts, culture and traveling. Currently based in Paris, where I am exploring professional opportunities and immersing myself in the culture.



DUVAL Annabelle

France, 30

a.duval@tudelft.nl

Annabelle Duval is a social geographer and postdoctoral researcher at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, TU Delft. Her doctoral research examined the metabolic relations between ports and their territories amid socioecological transition, drawing the Los Angeles city region and the Loire estuary into perspective. Her current work turns to post-transition temporalities, investigating how counter-imaginaries can be co-created through infrastructural narrative-building, with case studies along France's Seine Axis.



SHUBHANKAR Goswami

India, 31

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I come from a landscape where agricultural rhythms, cultural memory, and rivers are inseparable. Growing up, it taught me that land and culture are not distinct. I work across architecture, performance, and heritage because I experience the world across disciplines. I have a scientific mind, an artistic eye, and consider myself a storyteller. I am currently in Belgium studying preventive conservation. My proposed thesis asks whether rivers themselves can be understood as cultural and historical agents. This workshop is where I can expand on my ongoing enquiry.



Team Riverhood



DETRY Tom

Belgium, 29

tom.detry@umons.ac.be

I am currently working on a PhD thesis at the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Mons (Belgium). This research appears to resonate particularly strongly with your own areas of interest, as I am exploring the concept of water culture through its various uses, the ways it is imagined, and the mechanisms of solidarity surrounding the River Haine (and its tributaries), in a region deeply shaped by its past industrial activities.



GARZON Jeanpierre

Colombia, 28

jeanpierregarzon98@gmail.com

I am a curious, creative person with a deep interest in the relationship between humans and nature. Fascinated by ecosystems and wildlife since childhood, I later discovered architecture as a tool to connect people and nature through design, landscape and environmental conservation. This led me to develop an interdisciplinary approach combining urban planning, architecture and ecological awareness. My final-year project at the École Spéciale d'Architecture, awarded an honourable mention, explored this connection by examining how architecture can facilitate coexistence between human communities and the Amazon.



LULLA Vinita

India, 31

vinitalulla@brick.edu.in

Architect, environmental consultant and educator based in Pune, working at the intersection of climate, design and pedagogy. My practice engages with sustainability through certification systems, passive strategies and resource-conscious planning, translating environmental complexity into spatial clarity across scales. I lead design studios, mentor interdisciplinary teams and contribute to international research platforms. My work extends into global sustainability discourse through initiatives linked to the United Nations Environment Programme in Switzerland, shaped by a commitment to bridging practice, policy and education.



NKOURI Maëlle

France, 25

maellenkouri@gmail.com

Born and raised in Montreuil, I have a particular interest in the ways in which local people live in and transform their neighbourhoods. Having studied sociology and then urban planning, I take a sensitive approach to everyday spaces, informed by field research, observation and personal encounters. My Erasmus year in Seville deepened my interest in the links between the city, its uses and the environment. I enjoy exploring neighbourhoods on foot or on rollerblades and reflecting collectively on their possible futures.



TAMWO WATO Jules Osy

Cameroon, 26

tamwowato@gmail.com

I am a qualified urban planner from EAMAU and a research officer in urban planning and development at the African Agency for Architecture and Urban Planning in Lomé, Togo, and a prospective PhD student at the University of Paris Nanterre. My experience in urban planning, territorial analysis and climate resilience has led me to explore the links between water, cities and environmental governance in African metropolises. As a winner of several international competitions and a participant in the 2025 Venice Biennale, I am developing an interdisciplinary approach combining cartography, territorial foresight and nature-based solutions.

Team Les Confluenceurs

THE PARTICIPANTS **05**



AUTE Kadambarl

India, 29
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A critical thinker and explorer at heart, who has grown up amidst rapidly changing urban landscapes. Experiences have cultivated human-centric perspectives which grounds my professional approach. Trained as an architect and urban designer, I've built on this foundation with skills in research, on-field engagement and execution. With an analytical and experimental mindset, I embrace responsibilities and challenges as opportunities to learn, crafting thoughtful solutions - design and non-design, that resonate with people and places they serve.



EDELMANN Johann

Germany, 29
johann.edelmann7@gmail.com

I am a Berlin-based artist and light designer passionate about shaping emotional and livable urban environments through light, spatial design, and artistic interventions. My work explores the relationship between public space, atmosphere, ecology, and human experience. I am especially interested in how art and design can contribute to safer, more inclusive, and environmentally conscious cities. My long-term goal is to collaborate on urban and landscape architecture projects where light, sustainability, and public life are thoughtfully connected to create spaces that people genuinely enjoy inhabiting and sharing.



GOGOLADZE Giorgi

Georgia, 29
Giorgigogoladze1997@gmail.com

I am an architect and urban planner from Georgia. I've worked on sustainable urbanism, land use planning, and public space design, including roles at Tbilisi City Hall and the Department of Sustainable Urbanism in Braunschweig. Coming from a context where water management remains a major challenge, I am interested in how ecological systems can shape more inclusive urban futures. My previous participation in the Seine workshop strengthened my interest in collective landscape strategies and multidisciplinary collaboration. I would like to contribute this perspective while learning from international approaches to water and Metropolitan Regeneration.



LHOMMEAU Carla

France, 24
carla.lhommeau@gmail.com

Having completed a Master's degree in Urban Planning and Development (Urban Studies), I found myself examining the role played by water - through the prism of torrential rain and flood risks - in the collective imagination and awareness of local residents. Keen to continue exploring this theme, I am currently contributing to the development of outreach tools for the Waterwise project, as part of the design of strategies to adapt to water-related vulnerabilities in Alpine catchment headwaters.



TRAMIER Amélie

France, 24
amelie.tramier@laposte.net

I have lived and studied for the vast majority of my life along the Seine, between Elbeuf, Rouen and Le Havre; in fact, I'm planning to write my final-year project on architecture designed to combat the heat along the banks of the Seine. I've had the opportunity to take part in two Erasmus programmes and go on a long train journey, which have strengthened my desire for international exchange. Ultimately, I'm a firm believer in collective action to bring about change, which is reflected, amongst other things, in my voluntary work with local organisations.



Les Ateliers team



SILVA URDANETA Silva

France
Architect
Co-pilot
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A graduate architect from the École Spéciale d'Architecture and holder of a DES (Diplôme d'Études Supérieures) in Environmental Architecture, he is currently conducting project-based research at the ENSP's Landscape Project Research Laboratory, where he is interested in the ecological potential of the upper Seine valley in a metropolitan context. With thirteen years of experience at the Hamonic+Masson agency, he now leads a project management practice committed to programmes with a strong ecological and territorial dimension, at the crossroads of experimentation and design.



CHATAIGNER Laura

France
Landscape-architect
Co-pilot
laura.chataigner@laposte.net

Laura Chataigner is an urban planner, a Ph.D. candidate in geography, and a comic book writer. Her research focuses on territorial transformations and ways of living related to water. At the same time, she develops research-creation projects combining photography, writing, and comics. Her fieldwork experiences, both in France and abroad, inform a sensitive approach to territories, attentive to how practices, narratives, and imaginaries contribute to their transformation.



VALENZUELA Veronique

France / Chile
Geographer
Director of Les Ateliers
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I'm Véronique, French and Chilean geographer. I have always been interested in the social and urban issues of large cities, first through the recovery of historical memory and the study of mechanisms of exclusion and socio-spatial segregation. My personal experience allowed me to discover and study urban and social dynamics of Latin America, Africa and Europe. I worked in public institutions and associations, and have been active in Ateliers since 2010 as an assistant pilot, participant, coordinator, project manager, director of projects and director.



BROCHARD Simon

France
Geographer
Director of project
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Geographer, urban planner, and historian, I am interested in city representations and the evolution of our lifestyles. I have worked in a middle school as a history and geography assistant teacher, but I spent more time organizing and facilitating international urban workshops these last years, involving local and international actors around complex urban and territorial issues. I also love making music and biking.



BAYLE Victoire

France
Communication & Management Officer
victoire.bayle@ateliers.org

With a background in marketing, I wanted to combine my interest in the social and solidarity economy, ecology, sustainable lifestyles, and travel with my professional career. At Les Ateliers, I am learning a great deal about land use planning and urban development in response to current environmental challenges. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time in nature, going on adventures, and discovering the world.



TRIVIN Clotilde
France
Pilot assistant
trivinc@hotmail.fr

As an urban and cultural geographer with a Ph.D. in geography, I am interested in the physical and sensory fabric of cities and the policies that shape their transformations. My research examines urban policies through the geographies of architecture, post-industrial transformations, and the futures of port areas, with a particular focus on post-socialist contexts. At Les Ateliers, I pursue this approach by listening to and surveying these territories, while deepening my reflections on water and non-human relationships.



ZAPATA Marilou
France / Chile
Logistic assistant
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As a recent urban planning graduate, I'm interested in social dynamics in the city. After an internship at Les Ateliers in the summer of 2024, where I became familiar with the Île-de-France workshop method, I was determined to be part of the experience. Here I am two years later, serving as an assistant for the 2026 workshop, and I'm thrilled to be able to engage with passionate people from around the world to reflect on the city together.

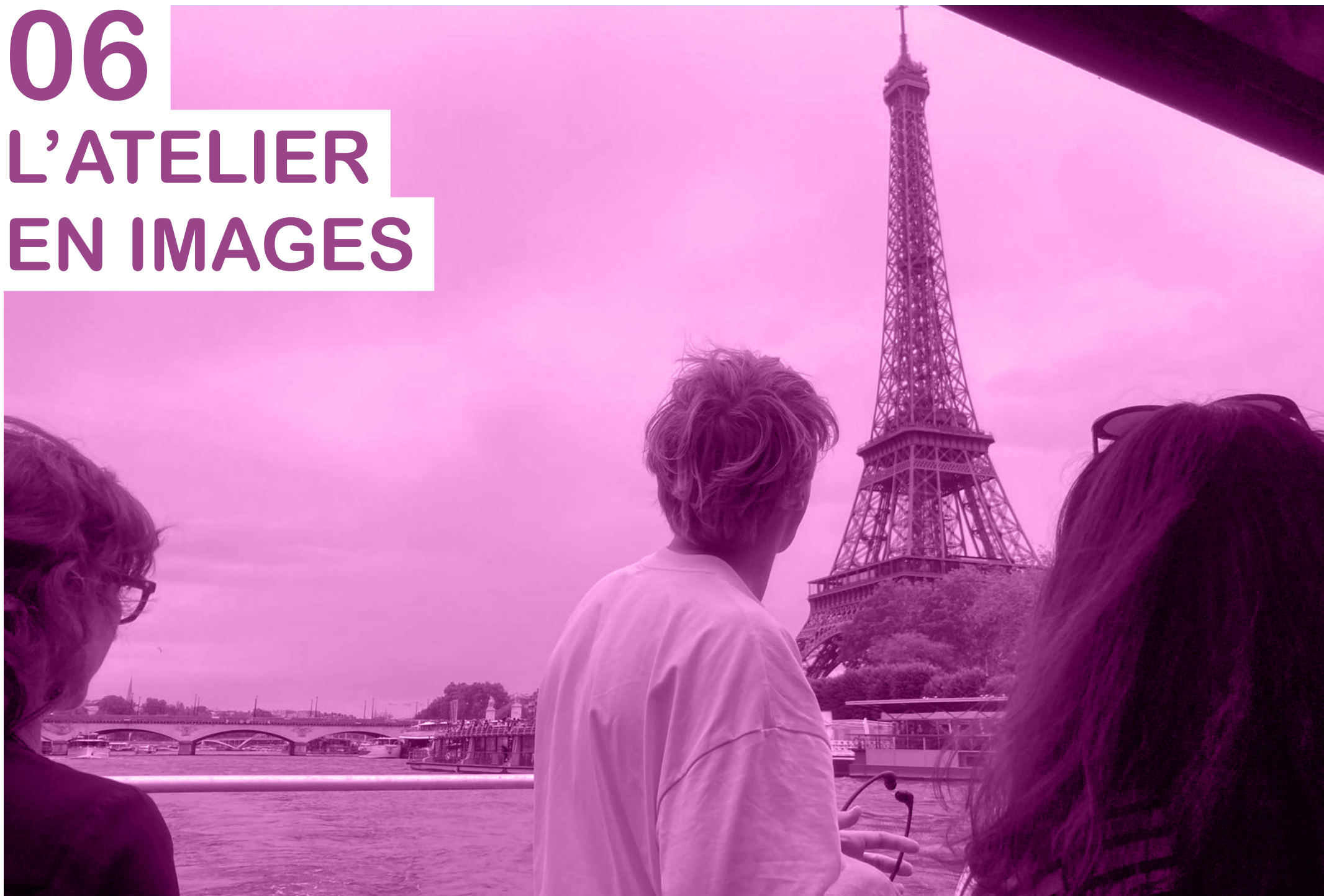


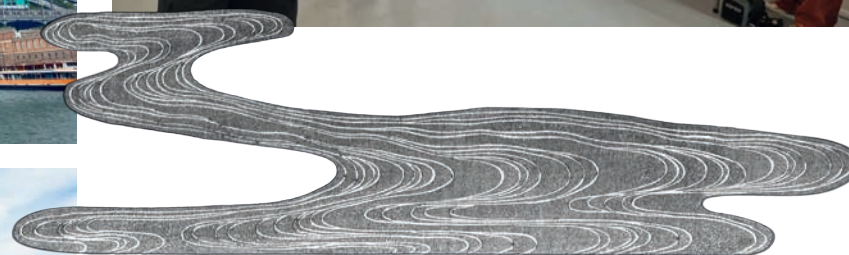
TENZIN Lhakey
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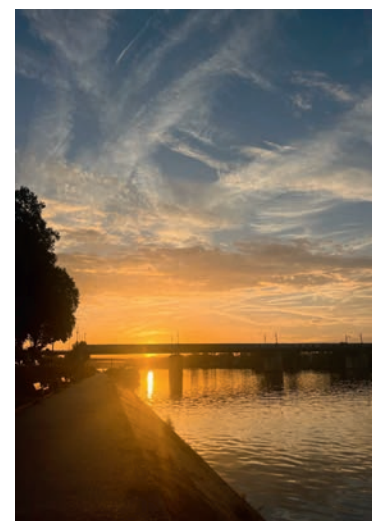
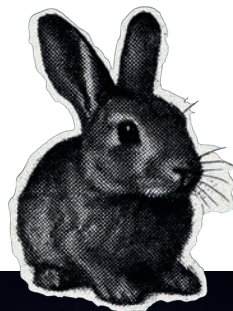
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L'ATELIER EN IMAGES









Along the rhythms of water: Imagining the Seine Metropolis

ECOLOGY AND HABITABILITY OF THE SEINE AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

Les Ateliers warmly thanks the workshop participants, the members of the monitoring committee, the Teamwork students, the participants of the Rencontres de la Seine métropolitaine, the guides, translators and interpreters, the members of the workshop team and steering group, the initiators of the Grand Jardin Séquanien, and the institutions and partners who made this workshop possible.

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