

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

# Along the rhythms of the water Imagining the Seine Metropolis



## International call for applications

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

# Les Ateliers de Cergy: creativity, community, and foresight

15 to 18 participants

Three weeks of field and collective work

International and pluridisciplinary

Territories at the heart of the process

Freedom of proposals

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

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

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

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



## The workshop team

Scientific pilots:

César Silva Urdaneta and Laura Châtaigner

Assistant-pilot: Clotilde Trivin

Director: Véronique Valenzuela

Director of projects: Simon Brochard

Management and communication: Victoire Bayle

Logistics and accounting: Lhakey Tenzin

## Partners of the cycle

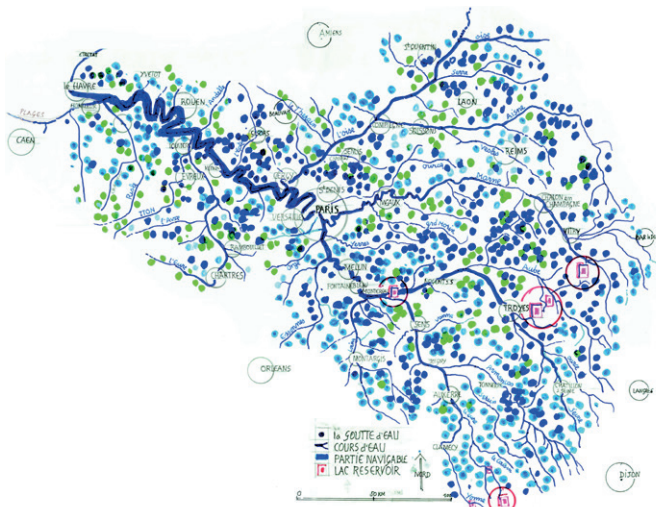


# Living with water, a major challenge for Greater Paris and the Seine basin

At a time when ecological and social balances are becoming increasingly fragile - with pressures on resources, intensifying climate hazards, and widening inequalities - our ways of living are being profoundly questioned.

Cities, with their legacy of development that has gradually distanced them from water, bear the brunt of these effects: channelled rivers, impermeable soils and altered environments. While this has fuelled their growth, it has also weakened ecosystems and increased vulnerabilities. Nowadays, it is not just a matter of controlling water; it is also about **learning to live with it and adapting to its cycles and dynamics**.

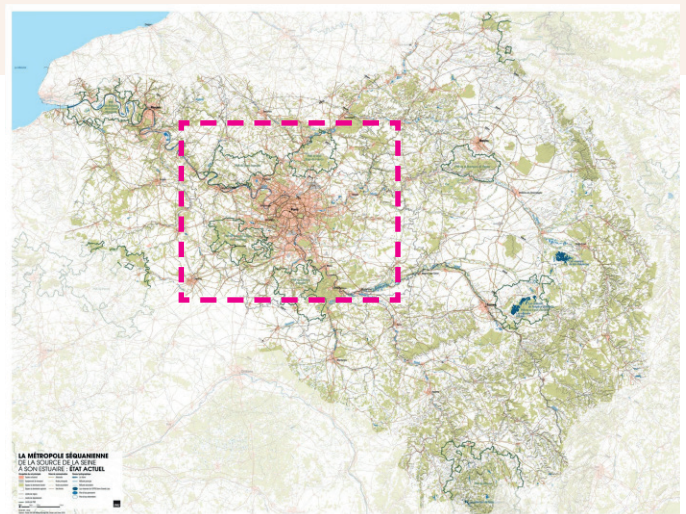
At the heart of these challenges lies the **Paris metropolitan area**, a territory that is both central and under strain.



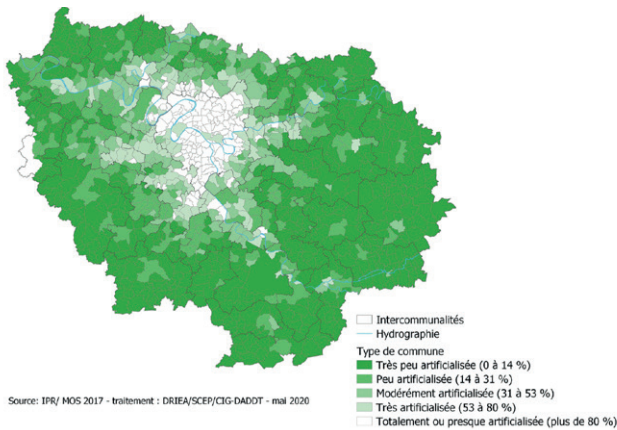
The Seine watershed, represented here as "water drops" by Bertrand Warnier, covers 80,000 km<sup>2</sup>, the equivalent of the size of Austria

It is home to a large population and a variety of activities, networks and infrastructure, while facing growing vulnerabilities such as flood risks, urban heat islands, pressure on land and significant inequalities in access to resources and cool spaces. Water is omnipresent here, often invisible in the form of rivers, tributaries, aquifers and networks, yet it is fundamental to the territory's balance. It is within this complexity, caught between the intensity of urban life and the fragility of environments, that our ability to imagine more sustainable and inclusive ways of living is now being tested.

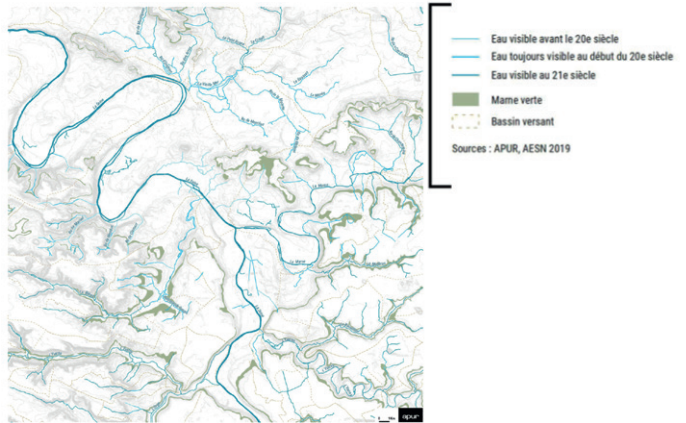
The international workshop therefore invites us to rethink our relationship with water and its pathways, and to place them at the heart of the Parisian metropolis.



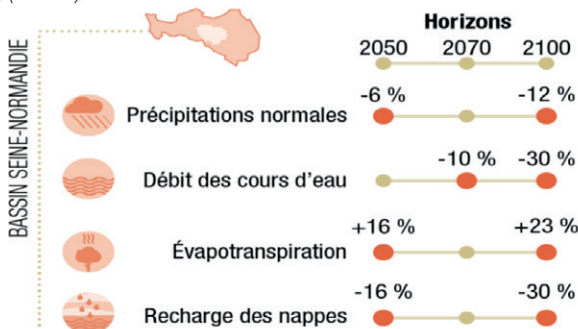
The Paris metropolitan area sits at the centre of the basin, where numerous confluences concentrate the waters of the territory (Institut Paris Région).



The heart of the metropolitan area is characterised by highly artificialised soils (DRIEA).



Many waterways have been buried within Greater Paris (APUR).



© L'INSTITUT PARIS REGION, 2021 / Sources : DRIAS, GREC IdF, AESN, SDAGE  
Climate change will have numerous impacts on the role and presence of water in the city and across the entire basin.



Flood of the Seine in 2018, Lionel Allorge.

## Living in the metropolitan Seine

**Living along the metropolitan Seine means traversing a territory where water is ever-present, sometimes visible and often hidden, but always active.** Spanning 78,600 km<sup>2</sup>, the Seine basin encompasses a diverse array of landscapes, environments, and societies, centred on the Paris metropolitan area.

The river flows through spaces with contrasting uses, forms, and imaginaries, from the historic heart of Paris, between the Île de la Cité and the Île Saint-Louis, to the major port facilities in Gennevilliers, and from the reclaimed riverbanks to the transforming areas of Plaine Commune. However, the Seine is merely the most visible part of a much larger system. Beneath the city, at its edges or in its interstices, a dense network of streams, rivers and tributaries flows - the Marne, the Oise and the Yonne, as well as the partially restored Bièvre, the buried Croult, the Morbras and the Ru de Gally - which together trace a diffuse yet structuring geography of water. Added to this grid-like underlying structure are groundwater aquifers, wetlands, living soils, drinking water and sewage networks, and water treatment plants and stations, which connect territories that are sometimes very far apart.

This hydrological and urban configuration gives rise to **a wide variety of territorial contexts**. Paris combines historic centres, residential neighbourhoods, economic activity zones, industrial and logistics areas, and natural and semi-natural environments, such as riverbanks, river islands, hillsides, peri-urban forests, and wetlands. These environments play a decisive role in regulating the micro-climate, filtering water, and supporting biodiversity. The city therefore relies on close interactions between soils, infrastructure, built-up areas, and living environments. These dynamics are accompanied by **significant social and territorial disparities**.

Depending on the context, living conditions can vary greatly in terms of access to water and cool spaces, proximity to amenities, exposure to climate hazards, environmental quality, and the ability to take action and participate in community life. At the same time, water and soil are subject to multiple and sometimes conflicting uses, such as preserving resources, sustaining economic and logistical activities, developing recreational uses, and strengthening connections with living organisms.



Water appears in many forms and in diverse metropolitan spaces: the Seine in Paris, the Olympic Village on Île-Saint-Denis, the renaturation of the Croult in Gonesse, the Seine in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, the Marne in La Ferté-sous-Jouarre, and the Port of Gennevilliers.

## Reinventing the metropolis through water and time

It is against this backdrop that the workshop proposes to rethink the metropolis: **using water as a starting point to transform the ways in which we live, produce and govern.**

The vision of a garden metropolis thus outlines a territory where living environments, uses and infrastructure evolve together, and where collective action - revealing, connecting, activating - becomes a lever for futures that are both desirable and sustainable.

The workshop proposes to explore this transformation through two complementary approaches: **the garden metropolis as a project horizon, and time as a method for revealing its dynamics.** The concept of the 'garden metropolis' encourages us to reconsider the relationship between urbanisation, environments and landscapes.

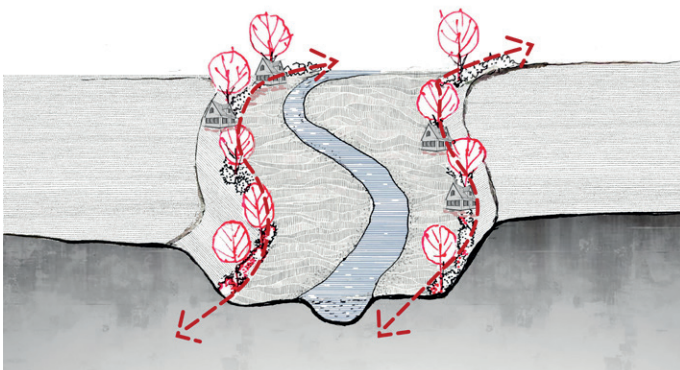
This vision is being renewed through experiments that **reintegrate cities into the cycles of life** - cities capable of absorbing and reusing water (such as the sponge cities in China), or regulating microclimates (such as the cool city in Stuttgart) - while grappling, in dense metropolises, with land scarcity and artificialization as well as the intensity of land uses. The garden there-

fore no longer merely refers to a landscape feature, but also to a means of inhabiting and transforming the territory by articulating production, ecology and social life. This can be seen in everything from food gardens to urban commons and agricultural landscapes.

When it comes to the garden metropolis, it is important to consider the role of time. Rather than producing new forms, it is about working with what already exists: preserving what works, transforming what needs to be transformed, and passing on what can endure.

Territories appear as systems traversed by multiple temporalities, such as water cycles, environmental changes and infrastructure legacies, that coexist, intertwine and often clash. **Using time as a method involves making these dynamics legible, revealing discrepancies and guiding long-term transformations.**

This requires anticipating the increasingly acute trade-offs of rising flood risks, resource pressures and conflicts over land use, in order to support transformations, distribute vulnerabilities and build **more equitable and sustainable pathways to liveability.**



Illustrated productions from the 2025 workshop «The River Seine as Great Garden: The Sources». All productions are freely available on the Les Ateliers website.

## From management to coexistence: how can we rethink the city, based on its water and living environments, to make it more liveable, resilient and inclusive?

With this in mind, we would like to invite you to engage with this issue and explore it from various angles. The workshop invites participants to explore the transformation of the metropolis through the lens of water, focusing on three themes that intertwine spatial, social and political dimensions. These are complementary starting points for identifying concrete levers for action - in landscapes, practices, forms of governance or land tenure rules - and thus contributing to the emergence of a garden metropolis attentive to water cycles, territorial solidarity and long-term liveability.

### Living in the metropolis through water

*Recognising aquatic environments, infrastructure and landscapes as essential supports for metropolitan life and examining how daily practices, housing and care can contribute to re-establishing liveability.*

### Cultivating a metropolitan consciousness

*Highlighting the interdependencies between the metropolis, its rivers, ecosystems and productive territories, and reconsidering these spaces as resources that can foster new forms of solidarity.*

### Fostering synergies among stakeholders

*Imagine forms of cooperation between public, economic and community organisations and residents, using land and collective initiatives as levers for transformation.*

