

les ateliers

maîtrise d'œuvre urbaine

Les Ateliers Internationaux de
Maîtrise d'Oeuvre Urbaine de
Cergy-Pontoise

36th International workshop of
Urban Planning and Design

QUELLE VIE DANS LES MÉTROPOLES AU XXI^e SIÈCLE ?

LIFE IN METROPOLITAN AREAS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE GREATER PARIS TERRITORIES
AND LIFESTYLES

THE QUESTION OF THE GREATER LANDSCAPE

By Bertrand Warnier, workshop mentor

The Ateliers's partners for the 2018 session :



Let the BIRD be HEARD and the LANDSCAPE be VISIBLE

The banlieue [suburbs] does not bear its name by chance. To restore its prestige, we now call it “the periphery”. But this is not enough: if it has assets, there are no indications of it.

We went from the discreet city (roofs, monuments) to the modern city (cubes, towers and the ruptures created by major transit systems).

Like the design for the motor vehicles or trains that belong to the modern city and to which a lot of energy—along with research laboratories—is devoted, the metropolis is looking for an image.

Can we find it?

Les Ateliers devotes its energy to this search, as well as other themes; and the 2018 Île-de-France workshop will serve as one of these research laboratories:

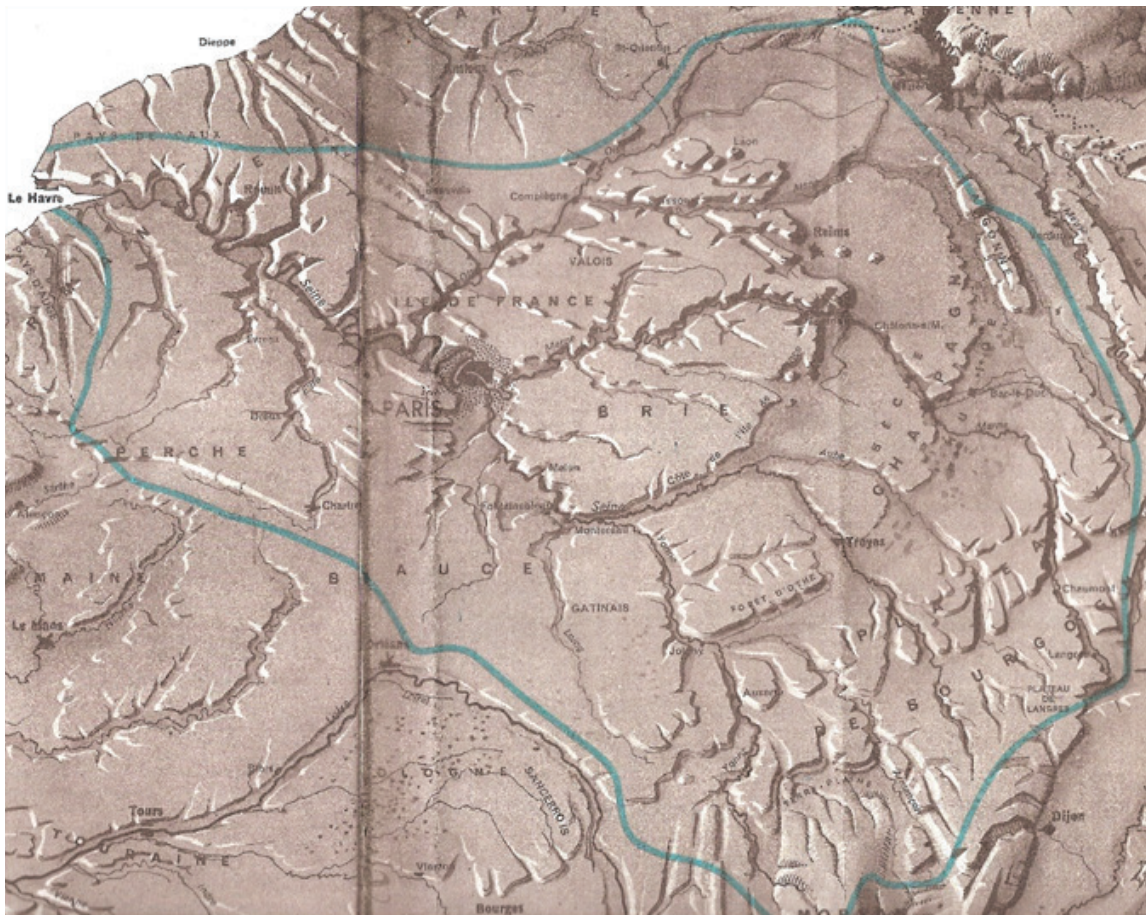
- a laboratory to capture the visible, the shapes, the emblems, the silhouette;
- a laboratory whose raw material is the greater territory with its diverse sites that intertwine and which define their own limits;
- a laboratory to reveal and shape landscapes (both constructed and natural forms) with the knowledge that we are in a dynamic situation and that we have to regulate a living matter that is in perpetual transformation.

How can we do it?

Geography is the first means. This includes the topography, to which mental images, historical values and footprints are attached.

Aesthetic concerns are not simple embellishments. They have, in turn, social implications. The humanization of megacities is a necessity accentuated by the perils of the moment.

“Urban planning is not a discipline, but a combination of disciplines. This combination is not science but Art.” — Marcel Roncayolo (Geographer-Urban Planner)

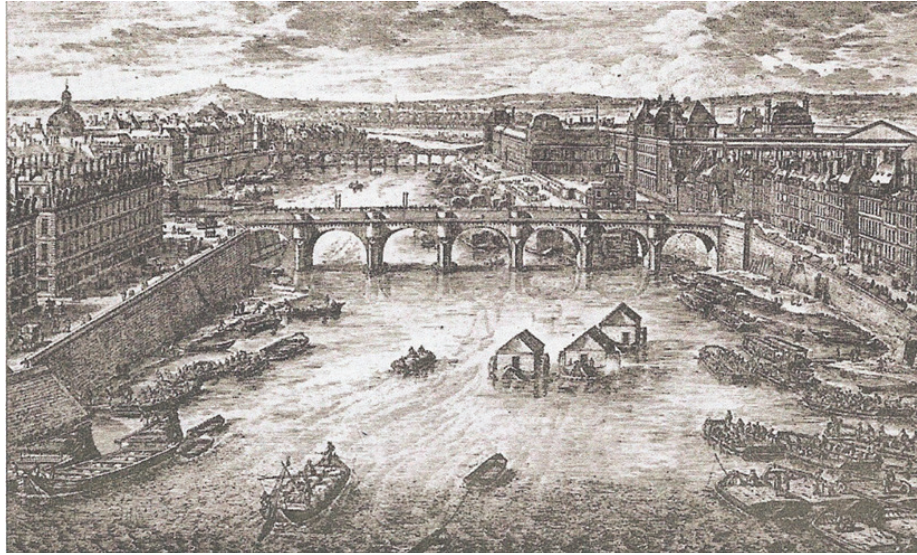


The topography of the Paris Basin (source: educational textbook)

The NATURAL ASSETS of the PARISIAN TERRITORY

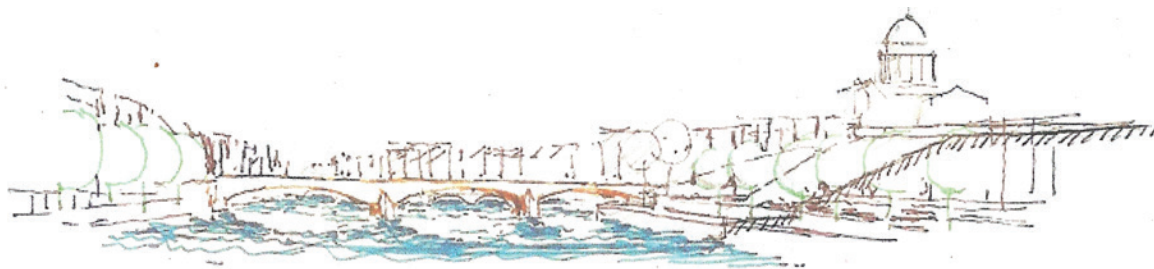
PARIS was established in one of the RIVERBENDS of the SEINE; where it was EASY to CROSS; and where the HILLS which BORDER the RIVER did not rise ABRUPTLY from the banks.

The CITY has EXPLOITED these ADVANTAGES by DEVELOPING over TIME in this HOSPITABILITY “BOWL”.

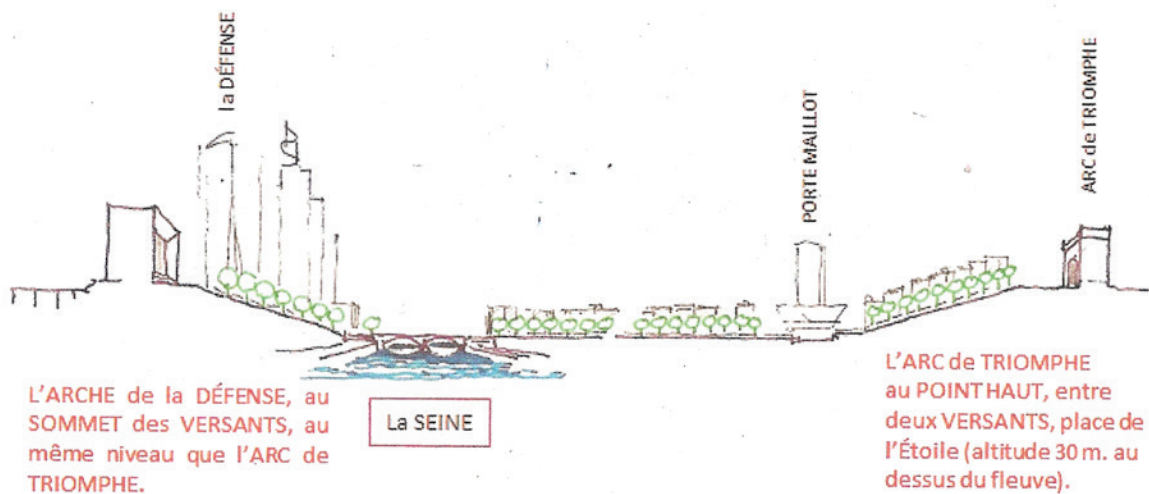


The Seine in Paris (source: etching)

- First, it was along the Seine, where palaces, religious buildings and large public spaces were built to magnify the immediate surroundings of the river.
- Then, thirty metres above the river, the ridge was where edifices of powerful and diverse identity values were positioned:
 - the Pantheon (on Mount Sainte Geneviève);
 - the Arc de Triomphe;
 - the Palais de Chaillot and the Trocadéro Esplanade;
 - the ARCHE de la DÉFENSE.



Seine Panthéon.
Croquis B.W.

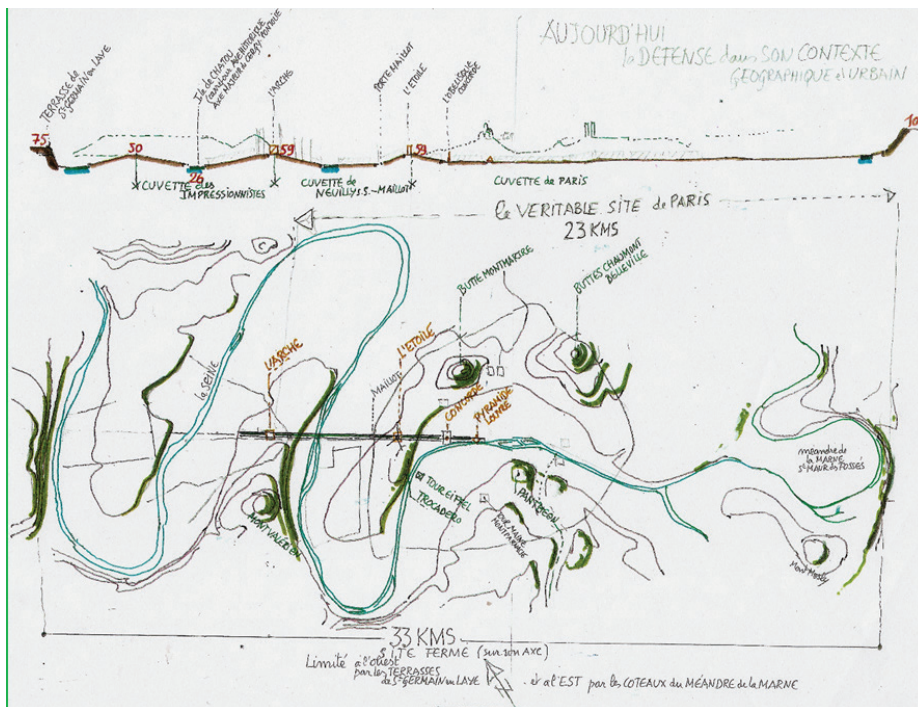


Sketch of the Seine (source: Bertrand Warnier)

The STRENGTHS of the GEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE of the SEINE BASIN in the prolongation of the "BOWL" of PARIS

The Seine dug its bed from the limestone plateau of the ÎLE-de FRANCE and as such has some exceptional characteristics:

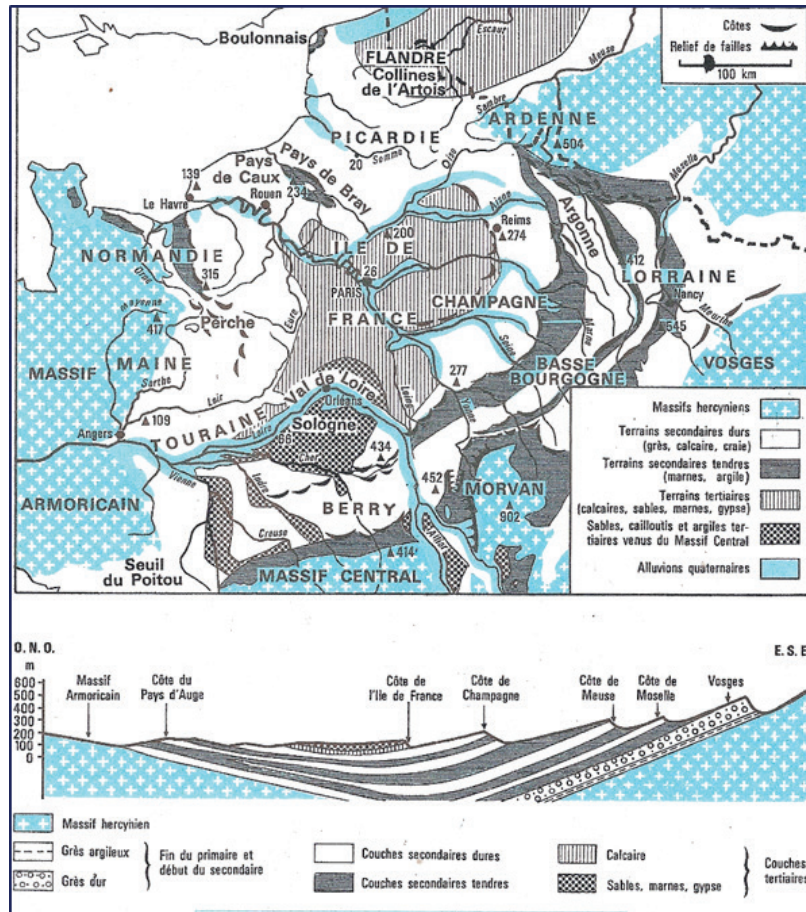
- The extensive bends of the river created a highly diverse landscape.
- The great severity of the plateaus' south-east/north-west orientations influenced the REMARKABLE COMPOSITION of the REGION'S AXES (the Champs Elysées, the gardens and the city of Versailles, the Vallée de Montmorency).
- The hills that line the territory (Montmartre, Mont Valérien, the hills of Corneilles-en-Parisis, Vexin, Goele, Arthies, etc.) were fit to host ARCHITECTURE with SYMBIOLIC and DIRECTIONAL VALUE.



Maps of the Seine's landscapes (source: Bertrand Warnier)

The STRENGTHS of the SEINE VALLEY

The SEINE, like how it wends through the Île-de-France, is a slow and winding route. This waterway is in no rush to reach its outlet and empty into the sea. Numerous tributaries cut into the plateaus and create a variety of local landscapes. The geological bedrock changes from one place to another. This is because, as its name suggests, the Île-de-France stands on Tertiary formations; while Normandy and Champagne were built on sedimentary clay. The effect is striking when looking at the architecture, as here in the Île-de-France it is made of stone, while there of brick, wood, and slate.



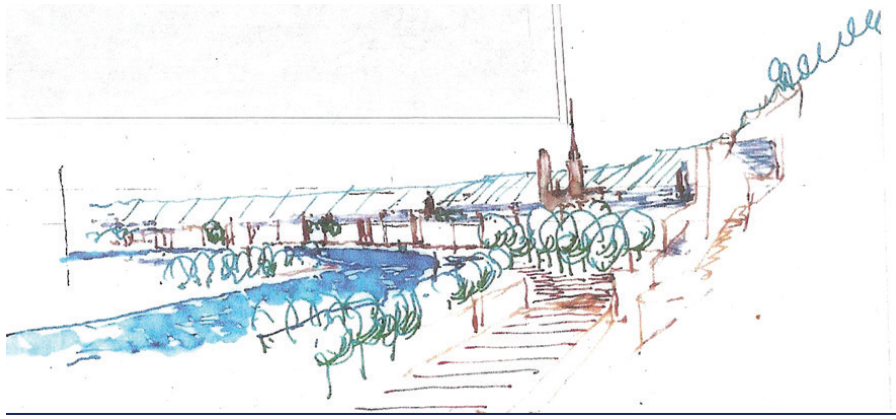
Topography map of the Seine Basin (source: geography textbook)

The river, quiet and slow meanders between slopes which reveal themselves across stretches of chalky peaks.



The Seine in the Val-d'Oise (Source: magazine of the Conseil Départemental du Val-d'Oise)

The cities established along its course exploited the GEOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS of the SITE. This is how ROUEN found itself nestled between the river and the hillsides. The cathedral was able to position itself to exalt this privileged environment.



Sketch of the Seine in Rouen (source: Bertrand Warnier)

The QUESTIONS this RAISES

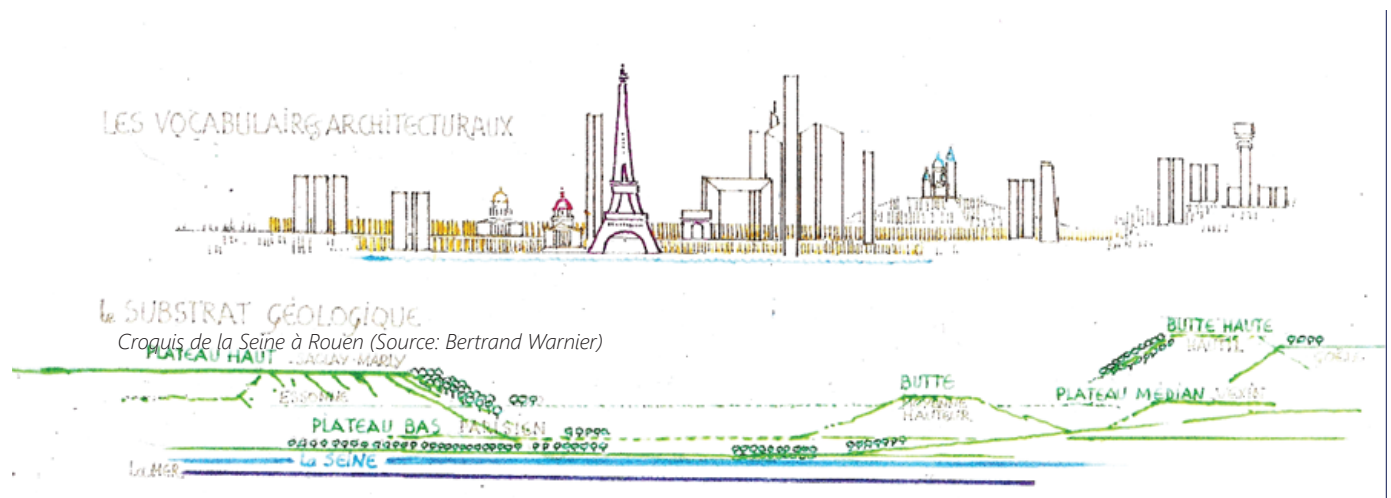
The IMAGE of a METROPOLIS, which IS also A CAPITAL (that of France, in this case), must VALORIZE its COUNTRY. Parisians are not the only ones concerned, nor even the inhabitants of the Île-de-France.

Geography and history cannot be ignored when shaping future forms. In this respect, it is useful to recall that Paris remains one of the only major cities in the world (with Rome; Washington, D.C.; St Petersburg) to have preserved the SILHOUETTE of a "FLAT CITY" dominated by clearly identifiable architectural or geographical features (notably domes, bell towers, victory arches), but also a "useless" tower, the Eiffel Tower.

Does this cause such cities to be the «CITIES OF YESTERDAY»? Or should they act to become, as is being done everywhere, CITIES OF TOMORROW, taking into account that verticalization—tower blocks—is the characteristic of the world in the making.

This raises the question of the "spectacular";

- That which BREAKS the VIEW could be, in one case, the accumulation of buildings of all types resulting from the economic pressure of the moment and a laissez-faire attitude. Today, this is what has led to metropolitan areas that all look alike.
- In another conception, the CULTURAL CODES of the COUNTRIES in which world cities develop could become a priority, in which the "styling" of a conurbation would be considered a COMMON GOOD, like for some PUBLIC SPACES today.



Sketch of the architectural elements and the geological bedrock (source: Bertrand Warnier)