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Nancy Ottaviano, Sandra Parvu. Where Did the Architects Go in the Grand Paris? A Chronology. *trans magazin, Hg.*, 2012, 20, pp.132-139. hal-01612925

HAL Id: hal-01612925

<https://hal.science/hal-01612925>

Submitted on 3 Apr 2023

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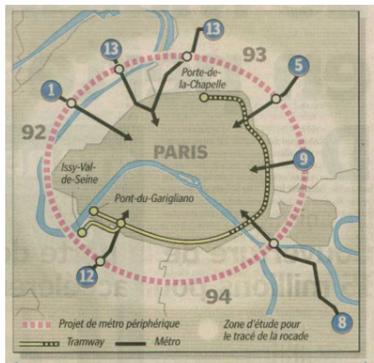
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Where did the architects go in the Grand Paris? A chronology

In 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy launched a consultation for the Greater Paris. Under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture, and over a period of nine months, ten teams were commissioned to reflect upon the future of Paris and its region in the context of the post-Kyoto metropolis. The teams were composed of a range of different experts including economists, sociologists, artists, advertising executives, and ecologists. They were represented by six Parisian architects, and four European figures: Yves Lion, Djamel Klouche, Christian de Portzamparc, Antoine Grumbach, Jean Nouvel, Roland Castro, Finn Geipel and Giulia Andi, Richard Rodgers, Bernardo Secchi and Paola Vigani, and Winny Mas. The visibility thereby given to the architects brings them back, once again, to the forefront of the stage in rethinking the metropolis as a whole.

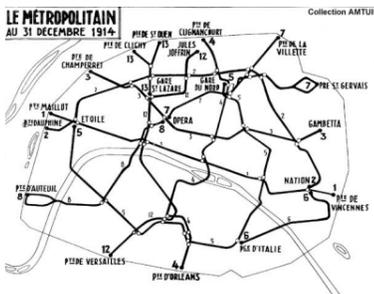
It is usual to start a discussion on the Grand Paris with large-scale maps of the region which have been drawn since the 1910s. We choose to contextualise the history of this consultation through a selection of maps easily accessible to the public. All were extensively published in newspapers or made available on the Internet. This kind of enterprise can only be partial and leave aside significant information. What we have achieved from this standpoint, however, is to reconstruct a specific narrative of the Grand Paris that investigates how public opinion is formed through this type of representation. Moreover through this process we reassess the relevance of the architectural contribution, and the figure of the architects themselves in the elaboration of this project.



Projet Orbitale, 1980 © Le Parisien

1980 ORBITALE The Outer Ring

Orbitale was first among a series of projects to develop a circular subway line outside Paris. Developed by the Paris Public Transportation Company (RATP), it aimed to bring together the ring of suburban towns that surround Paris. It was also connected to the subway lines going into the city centre.



Le Métropolitain, 1914 © AMTUIR

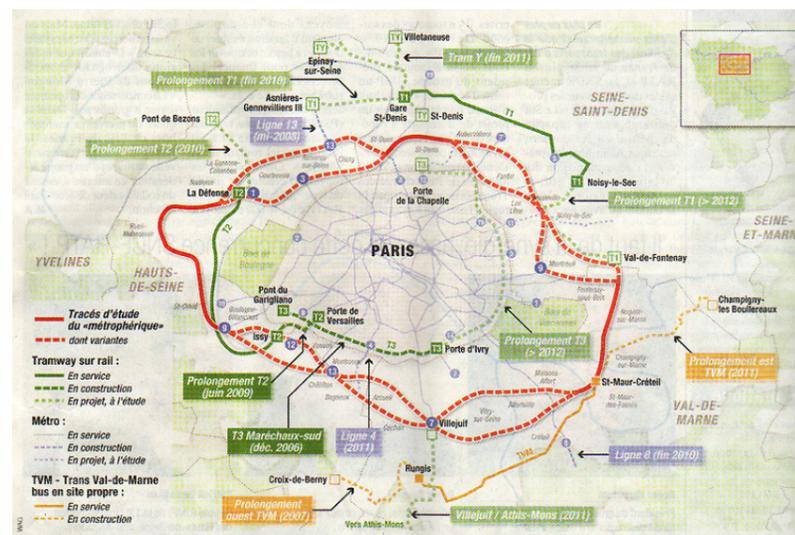
2006 METROPHÉRIQUE Thickening the Ring

For financial reasons, Orbitale was abandoned. The revision of the 1994 Masterplan of the Paris Region (SDRIF) led in 2006 to the presentation of a new infrastructural scheme. The striking aspect of this new proposal, called Métrophérique, is that rather than focusing on a particular trajectory, this new infrastructure was mainly defined by a “zone of pertinence” (in gray on the RATP map). This zone has almost the same density

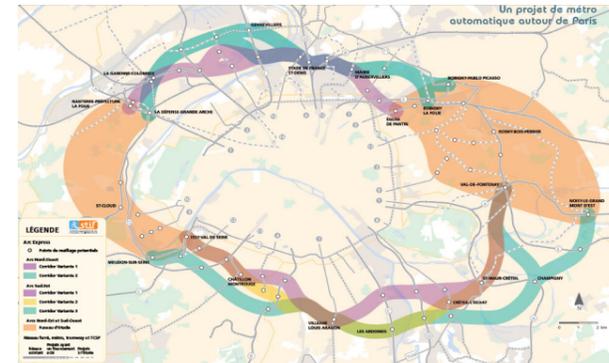


Métrophérique, 2006 © RATP

of population as Paris. Within this thickness, possible paths were indicated in dotted lines (20 minutes map). To the difference of Orbitale, this suburban area seems to have now become the point of attention: the arrows towards the centre have been replaced by tangential ones and the connections to the subway have been replaced by connections to the existing Regional Express Network (RER).



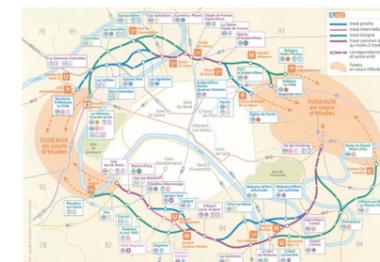
Métrophérique, 2006 © 20 Minutes



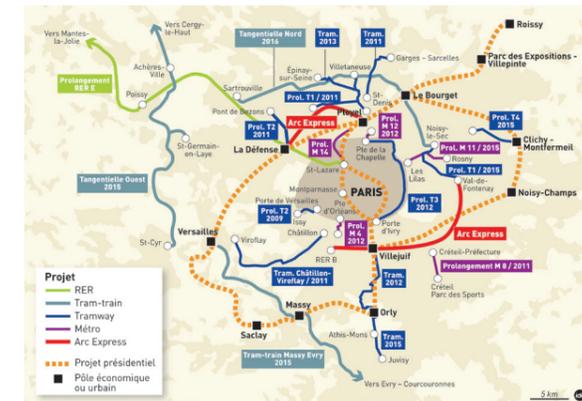
Arc Express, 2009 © STIF

2008 ARC EXPRESS A Braided Network of Lines

In 2007, there was a change in terms of responsibility and financial funding from the RATP to the region. Although the transportation scheme was rebaptised Arc Express, its general layout, and the areas affected by its development, were pretty similar. It is interesting to notice that the multiple paths of the Métrophérique come from the difficulty to decide where the subway lines should pass are now presented as actual trajectories. This transforms what used to be a single metro line into a braided network of lines. The proposal is divided in four sections: the Northern and Southern ones are relatively precise; the Eastern and Western sections are represented as blurry surfaces in which a number of possibilities can still be drawn. However, as the thickness of the lines indicate on the 2009 map presented by the transportation steering committee on behalf of the region (STIF), until the moment the scheme had to be defended in front of the public in 2010, the paths remained roughly defined.



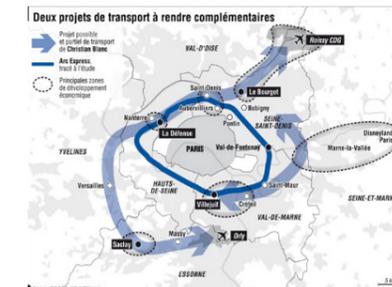
Arc Express, 2010 © STIF



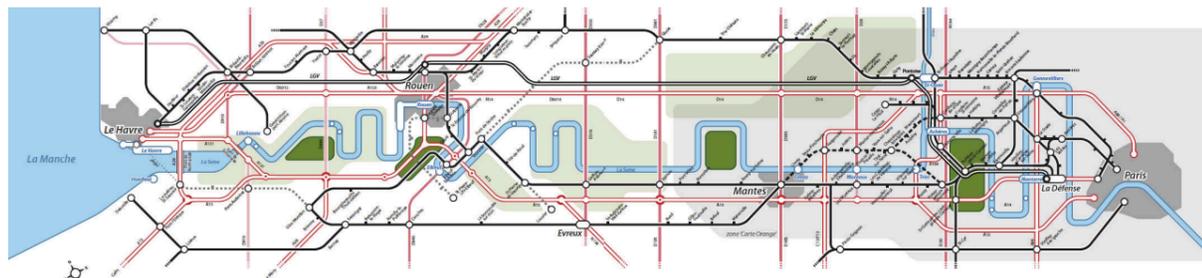
Grand Huit «projet présidentiel», avril 2010 © 20 Minutes

2009 « GRAND HUIT » The Presidential Project

The day before the opening of the exhibition at the Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine which publicly presented the projects of each team of architects, the newspaper 20 minutes publishes a map of the «presidential project», nicknamed after the figure 8 of its path, the «Grand Huit». The juxtaposition of the maps shown in various newspapers illustrates the confusion brought by this new project to the existing regional transportation proposal. Christian Blanc's scheme breaks with the tradition of circular infrastructures developed for Paris and its region until then. The two loops cutting through the city, extend much further into the suburbs than previous proposals, and bind places that are described as present and future poles of economic development.



Arc Express, february 2010 © Le Figaro



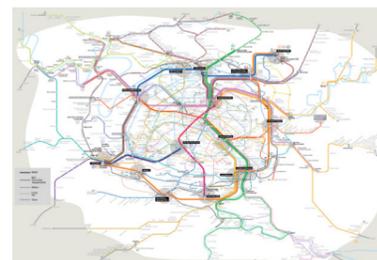
Seine Métropole, Paris, Rouen, Le Havre, 2009 © AGA

2009 GREATER PARIS PLAN Twelve Proposals

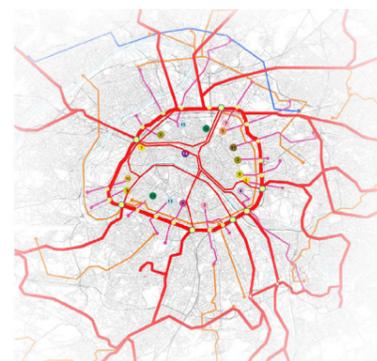
The teams of architects have worked for nine months. The volume of documents produced is impressive. The variety and complexity of topics they have covered is vast. For the exhibition, each team had to fit the synthesis of their work in an enclosed box of 20m².

At the opening, on April 29, Nicolas Sarkozy reiterated his support to Christian Blanc. He introduced the «Grand Huit» with the following sentences. «We are not to oppose architects to engineers. The financier should not decide alone through a simple quantitative approach. We are not to see the architect carried away by the mad dream of an ideal city that makes a clean slate of reality.»

In a nutshell, the issue of transportation has been addressed as a poetical enterprise by Roland Castro's team, while Bernardo Secchi's proposed a dense network of tramways, Geipel Lin's focused on the juncture between different scales of mobility, Jean Nouvel's introduced a ring of high-speed lines a few kilometers outside Paris, Antoine Grumbach's developed the Seine Métropole that binds Paris to Le Havre through a network of high-speed trains, and Christian Portzamparc's designed an airtrain on top of the Périphérique, the ring road around Paris... Ten teams, and twelve ways – counting in the Region's and the State's – of seeing the Paris region transportation development.



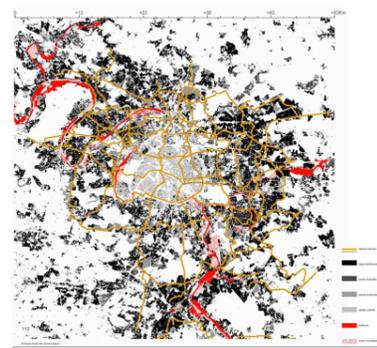
Networks, Connexions, Meshings, 2009 © Ateliers Jean Nouvel, Jean-Marie Duthilleul (AREP), Michel Cantal-Dupart (ACD)



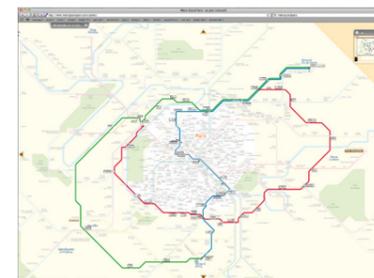
The annular, 2009 © Christian de Portzamparc



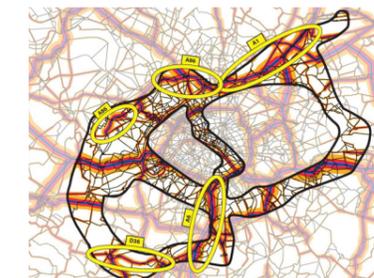
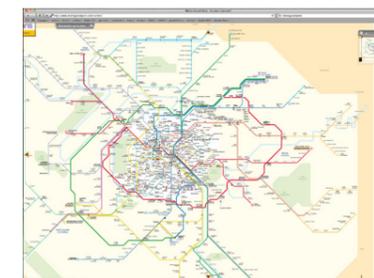
The tangential BRT lines becomes an orbital figure, 2009 © LIN Finn Geipel + Giulia Andi



Tramways, urban fabric and wetlands, 2009 © Studio 09, Bernardo Secchi, Paola Viganò



The future transport system shown as a RATP map, 2010 © metrograndparis.com



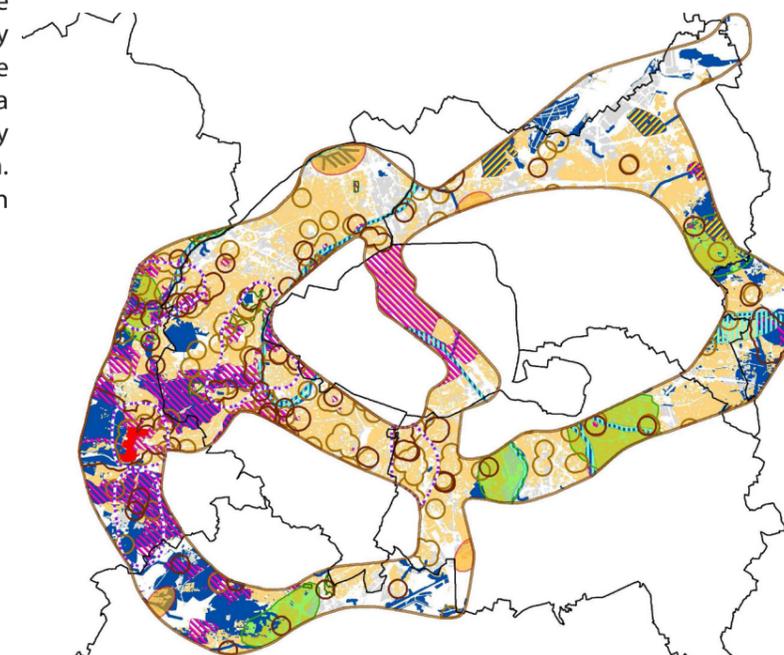
Trajectory studies, 2010 © SGP

2010 FEASIBILITY STUDIES Power Shift

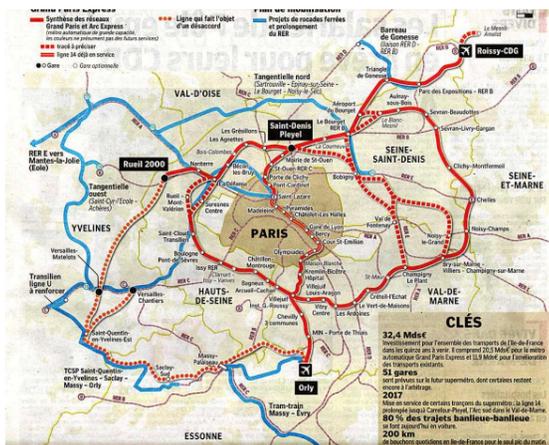
None of the ten architectural proposals were kept. Christian Blanc wrote a project to pass a new law that would enable the implementation of the «Grand Huit». Among other things, the law should stipulate that the Société du Grand Paris (SGP), the company in charge of the project on behalf of the State, has the right to expropriate and pre-empt the land around each station at a radius of 1.5km. This distance has been reduced to 400m in the actual text of the law. One of the SGP's first actions was to create a website on which one can calculate transit times enabled by this future infrastructure as if it were already in use. The adopted graphics are those of the RATP website, a website used regularly by many inhabitants of the Paris Region. This contributes to give an even

stronger feeling of reality to the users. Additionally, the Society commissioned feasibility studies along the trajectories of the two loops, including a thorough analysis of aerial, land, and underground constraints.

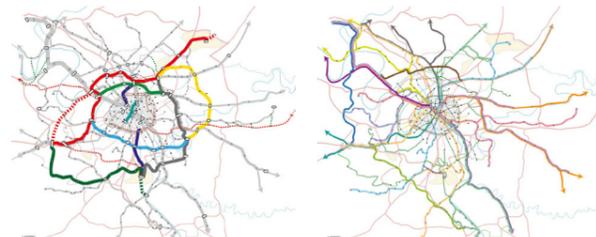
Right-wing State and left-wing Region confronted each other through the defense of their respective projects. As can be seen in the France Info map, there was no more discussion of accommodating the Arc Express with the Grand Huit. Each party stood now its own separate ground.



Aerial and land constraints, 2010 © SGP



Synthesis of the Grand Paris and Arc Express projects, janvier 2011 © Le Parisien



Projects and existing lines, novembre 2010 © AIGP

2010 NATIONAL DEBATE Seeking Public Opinion

This disagreement led to the presentation of the competing projects in front of the National Public Debate Commission (CNDP), a structure created in the 1970s to inform citizens of the impact of major regional projects on their environment. The public debate lasted four months and was conducted through surveys and public talks in the course of which anyone, private individuals as well as associations, could contribute their point of view.

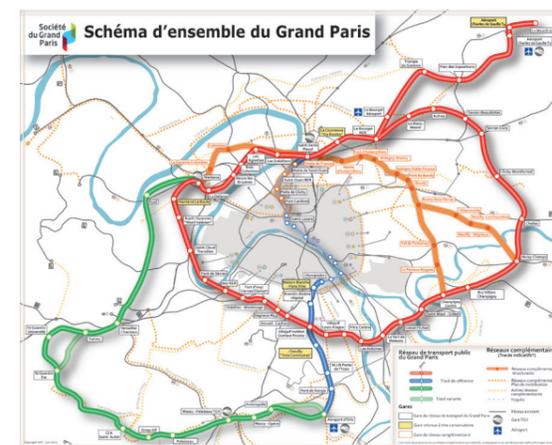
The commission drew a widely published map of both projects synthetically represented on top of each other. It showed the territory and name of each commune involved by the project set against a blue background. The graphics remind one of an island. Looking at the choice of colors for each

project, one notices that the light green of the Arc Express recedes into the blue background, while the red shades of the Grand Huit make it stand out.

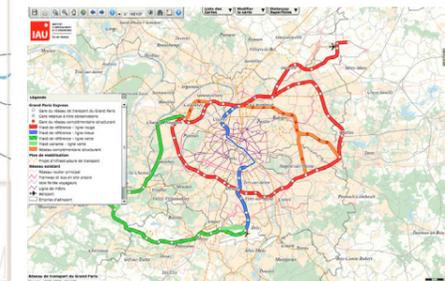
Pushed aside the Grand Paris debate, the ten teams of architects joined forces in the Atelier International du Grand Paris (AIGP) and presented together a counter proposal for a new and single transportation design.



Synthetic view of both projects, 2010 © Commission Nationale du Débat Public (CNDP)



Final trajectory of the Grand Paris Express, 2011 © SGP



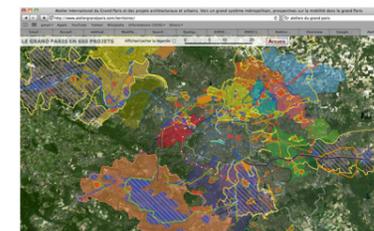
Grand Paris' network of infrastructure, 2011 © IAU idf

2011 SUPER METRO The State takes over

According to the protocole of the national debate commission, two months after the end of the public consultation, a report was handed out that settled the disagreement between the State and the Region. An overall scheme was published that reconducted to a large extent the project proposed by Christian Blanc. The main contribution of the Arc Express to this final project is an extra line shown in orange in addition to the double loop. The discrepancies between the two maps – one published by the SGP for the State, the other by the institute of architecture and urbanism of the Region (IAU IdF) – mainly consist in the fantomatic shadow of the old Arc Express path that continues to float in the IAU IdF map underneath the double loop. It has an ambiguous status because as mentioned previously, this path has been officially approved by the final automatic super metro scheme on a restrained specific stretch and erased from others.

2011 650 PROJECTS Multiplicity of Scales

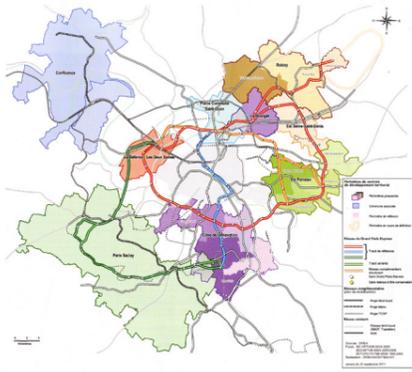
Four years after the beginning of the consultation, the Grand Paris appears as more than one project. On the one hand, there is the transportation scheme to which at times it seems to have been reduced. On the other, the map of the Grand Paris as presented by the ten architects of the AIGP has become a superposition of all sorts of projects that address the local changes of the Grand Paris. It includes zones defined as representing a national interest (OIN), sensitive zones in terms of their infrastructural needs (ZUS), underprivileged areas (ZFU), perimeters undergoing heavy urban renovation (PNRU), large-scale building sites, and the potential contracts of regional development signed between the State, the Region and the communes (CDT). In total, as indicated on the map, 650 projects. The image resulting from their superposition, as illustrated by the picture of the invitation to the Cité de l'Architecture conference entitled « Grand Paris, 4 years later », reminds one of a nebulous constellation.



650 projects of the Grand Paris, 2011 © AIGP



Picture of the invitation « Le Grand Paris, 4 ans après », octobre 2011 © Cité de Chaillot



Grand Paris Express and CDT, novembre 2011 © AMC

2011 ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSIONS

From Dream to Reality

Eventually, most architects invited to the consultation and their associates received commissions to develop poles that stretch along the trajectory of the newly rebaptised Grand Paris Express, as seen on the map published by the French architecture magazine, AMC. At this point, Yves Lion's office continues to work in Marne-la-Vallée, an area East of Paris where he founded a new school of architecture in 1998. Roland Castro's team now works in La Courneuve-Le Bourget, an area to which he has dedicated much attention since 1983, as evidenced by a visit with François Mitterrand, then president, and the program of urban renovation that ensued. For other teams, the consultation provided an opportunity to work on new areas, such as l'AUC in Saint-Denis, Secchi-Vigano in Orly-Rungis, Christian Portzamparc as well as Jean-Marie Duthilleul on different aspects of Le Bourget, and Geipel Lin in Clichy-Montfermeil. Each of these projects was approved under the seal of the Grand Paris. Thus, the promise of a vision has become fragmented into a multitude of projects and in this process a label « Grand Paris » is currently being instaurated.



Nine of the commissioned projects, octobre 2011 © Le Figaro

The consultation had raised the hopes for an encompassing vision that would give an overall direction to the future of the metropole. What becomes clear from this chronology is that the consultation was a parenthesis in the Parisian long-term problem of developing a transportation scheme at the scale of its Region. In the space of four years (2007-2011), the architects have moved away from a privileged position in which they were to design a Grand Paris

masterplan. What can be said for now, as the implementation of the Grand Paris is only starting, is that they are responsible for the design of local projects. Yet, at the metropolitan scale, their role as performed in the context of the AIGP, has been turned into that of advisors. As long as the motor behind the development of this project will be a transportation plan, one remains sceptical toward the possibility that architects shall fill a role other than that of peripheral consultants.

Nancy Ottaviano, born 1981

Architect, Phd Candidate at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris and at the Laboratoire Architecture Anthropologie (School of Architecture Paris La Villette). She works on the process set in place by representation in contemporary urban design projects, and has collaborated on research projects funded by the City of Paris and European Commission, including . Curator of the exhibition "être & transmettre, the teaching and practice of Michel Kagan", she teaches at the School of Architecture of Paris-Belleville.

Sandra Parvu, PhD. Born 1973

Research fellow at the Laboratoire Architecture Anthropologie (School of Architecture Paris La Villette). Her work focuses on urban design, public housing, the politics of place, and landscape architecture. Author on these topics of several articles and books, including Grands ensembles en situation. Journal de bord de quatre chantiers (Metispresse 2010) and Stalker à La Praille (with Eunata Torres, IAUG 2005). Following graduate studies at Princeton University, she taught at the University of Geneva.