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**MEGA-MALL, GLOBAL CITY AND SOCIAL ISSUES OF OUR TIMES  
THE CASE OF EUROPACITY IN PARIS**

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## MEGA-MALL, GLOBAL CITY AND SOCIAL ISSUES OF OUR TIMES

### THE CASE OF EUROPACITY IN PARIS

**Abstract:** The retail trade fully participates in the international competition between the world's major cities, whether it be by the wealth it generates, or by the ways it reveals city and regional territorial displays. One can argue that city department stores had demonstrated this in the 19th century, while recently mega-shopping malls show that a wide range of public and private actors can be involved in a regional (metropolitan, national...) development project, each playing their own cards, at different scales. The goal of this article is to show how the social, political and economical interests interact regionally (locally) around a commercial project in the context of globalisation. It focuses on the Europacity retailtainment mega-mall project, in the town of Gonesse located north of Paris, and framed within the "*Métropole du Grand Paris*" (Greater Paris Metropolis) urban development project, in itself a government ambition to strengthen the French capital's global position. We will analyse how such a project brings together supporters and opponents at all levels. Indeed, it is common to treat opponents as representatives of localism against globalized entrepreneurs, but this article illustrates a more nuanced reality where each side is part of a multiscale game of scale.

**Key words:** retailtainment megaproject; glocalization; spatial tensions; Europacity project; Greater Paris; city of Gonesse.

Globalization has been the driving force behind profound structural changes (Sassen 1996) that have facilitated the emergence of a megapolitan archipelago, composed of cities of global influence and power (Dolfus 1997). These economic, but also social and cultural changes, have increased competition between the world's major cities (Florida, Gulden and Mellander, 2008), and have led them to implement new public and urban policies aimed at showing that they are participating in it (LI 2020). As Ulf HANNERZ (1993) wrote: "*World cities derive much of their importance from being cultural market-places*" (p. 77). Culture is indeed an indicator of international influence and visibility. The fact is not new, each era bears witness to the use of cultural productions to enhance the richness and quality of a man, a nation, a society. Whether they are events such as Universal Exhibitions or the Olympic Games, major institutions such as the Natural or Art Museums, or yet research centers and universities, culture in all its registers and forms of expression is at the heart of globalized cities' competition. In mixing culture and business, commerce occupies an importance place in the latter. In this article, we pose that megamall projects, in which culture and commerce blend in, plays a part in the global city competition.

As a geographer studying commercial spaces, I am particularly interested in commercial configurations, and how they reflect the state of society. I observed their diffusion outside the Western world (XX 2001; 2016), and was especially intrigued by the contestations they sometime generate, and by the demand for other types of commercial places that accompany them (XX 2017). This is what I had in mind when I started to register the societal noise produced by the planned mega-mall project, EUROPACITY, on the northern outskirts of Paris. *Europacity* is a €3.1 billion private investment, a 550 000 m<sup>2</sup> commercial space to be built on agricultural land and in a depressed economic region. Economic and environmental

issues are at stake, as well as private-public cooperation, since the project goes along with important investments in roads and in the transport system. Furthermore, a global versus local tensions seems to be transcending all issues.

I started to gather information on the different positions and discourses while the debates were going on, while the different actors confront each other. For the most part of my research, I did not know how it will end, but on November 7<sup>e</sup> 2019, the French president announced that the government was renouncing to participate *Europacity* on the basis of the ecological argument. By following this saga and looking up to the issues it raises, I will question the place retail, and more particularly its retailtainment mega-mall forms, occupy in globalized metropolises vision, by their materiality but also through their symbolic dimension. My point is to show that this project, and the likes, can be seen as a model case study of the social and cultural transformations with which territorial actors, whose aims and actions are not on the same scale, collide while facing the challenge to find – invent – ways to live in different scales at once. What I am trying to say is that this “local case” is not local at all, it is driven by competing visions of the global; and that this global confrontation is not global at all either, since it focuses on local issues.

The article is divided into three parts. In the first one, I will highlight the singular place retail trade occupy in global-minded cities, before examining at how retailtainment mega-malls have become for the latter the must-have equipment. In the second, I will present the Greater Paris Project, before, in the third one, first presenting the *Europacity* project, then looking at the debates it generated in moving through the scales they induce.

## **1. RETAIL TRADE AND GLOBAL CITIES**

Competition between large European cities already existed in the 19th century when Department Stores, often built by renowned architects, were a sign of their richness, modernity, and attractiveness. Exhibitions were held there, concerts were given, as well as lectures and conferences by famous people, something incidentally Department Stores have recently relaunched, like for example, Le Bon Marché, which hosted in 2016 the first exhibition of original creations by the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei. These merchant places have become urban heritage sites, and are now part of metropolitan tourist circuits in Paris: Galeries Lafayette, in New York: Macy's, or in Tokyo: Mitsukoshi. In addition to these commercial sites, a new-generation shopping centres are now being added in global cities, based on the same architectural and event-driven finery of the past century, giving them the status of quality cultural object - Beaugrenelle in Paris (2013), or "Les Terrasses du Port" in Marseille (2014).

This urban equipment stands out as a landmark in its environment. In addition, there is a determination to welcome all international brand outlets. Moreover, "shopping" as a leisure activity is associated with “*flânerie*,” (Benjamin 2006) it contributes to the inclusion of these centres in urban visits in the same way as department stores, museums or urban parks. Department stores, shopping malls and now mega-malls participate clearly plays a part in the competition of international metropolises. Needless to say, Paris has certain assets in this domain: it is the birthplace of department stores with Aristide BOUCICAUT's *Le Bon Marché*, and it has historically defined itself as the "capital of fashion." This title, now

disputed, has its origins in the 17th century, but more to the point in the middle of the 19th, when Charles Frederick WORTH, a British-born French couturier, gave birth to French *haute couture*. He inaugurated collections and fashion shows. Anyhow, we do not need here to go further: the material and immaterial dimensions of the merchant spaces are fully part of city development, and today's international global city's influence and competition. Let's see how its modern forms play out in it.

### ***Birth of Retailtainment Megamall***

The shopping center was born in 1916 in the suburbs of Chicago and has since been constantly transformed to adapt to economic, social and cultural contexts and demands. The retailtainment megamall projects are no exception; they are the latest avatars of the commercial spaces that mark out cities or their surroundings. In fusing pleasure and shopping, they are designed to provide an entertaining offer capable of responding to new consumer desires, and, in so doing, to stand out in a highly competitive environment.

The first major retailtainment center appeared with the West Edmonton Mall in the Canadian province of Alberta; it now covers 500.000 m<sup>2</sup>, resulting from transformations in several stages since its opening in 1981. It opened as a classic shopping centre, then in 1983, entertainment facilities such as an indoor amusement park or an ice rink were added, thus giving rise to the concept of *retailtainment megamall*. The West Edmonton Mall also innovated by promoting what can be called "Theming." In some parts of the centre, a setting copying iconic "places" such as a European or New Orleans boulevard is designed to create a (shopping) landscape, that is, an atmosphere that promotes a "consuming experience". This contributes to the "added value" or "differential value" of the product. Then, the complex added a hotel (1986) with 118 themed rooms as varied as Hollywood, Rome, Polynesia, or even "a trip by Canadian Rail" (the national rail company). The idea is to create a fanciful atmosphere by using markers to identify these places, moments and times.

Europacity is directly inspired by this type of project. It differs in two ways. First, it will take form at once, not in an evolving project. Second, it is part of a larger one: that of the Greater Paris.

## **2. THE GREATER PARIS PROJECT: REAFFIRMING PARIS AS A GLOBAL CITY**

On a European scale, only two metropolitan areas are undisputed members of this "club" and in the top ranks: London and Paris (Abrahamson 2004). Then, at various levels and depending on the criteria used, there are, according to the Globalization and World Cities research network (GaWC, [www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc)), metropolis such as Amsterdam, Brussels, Berlin, Frankfurt, Madrid or Milan, that want to be part of it. Besides, competition is fierce and has increased within the European Union since the announcement of the United Kingdom's departure in 2019. In this context, the French government decided in 2008 to strengthen the position of Paris by setting up a new public institution: The *Métropole du Grand Paris* (MGP), which brings together 131 of the 412 municipalities in the Paris metropolitan area, weighting 7.2 million people (Béhar, Delpirou, Gallet, et Piolet, 2020; Desjardins 2016). As stated on its website, it is the "first employment centre and first office

park in Europe". The MGP project takes aim at the global metropolis's competition, it lays out a serie of programs in terms of urban planning and international applications. In this last category, Paris has for example successfully launched its bid for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Summer Games.

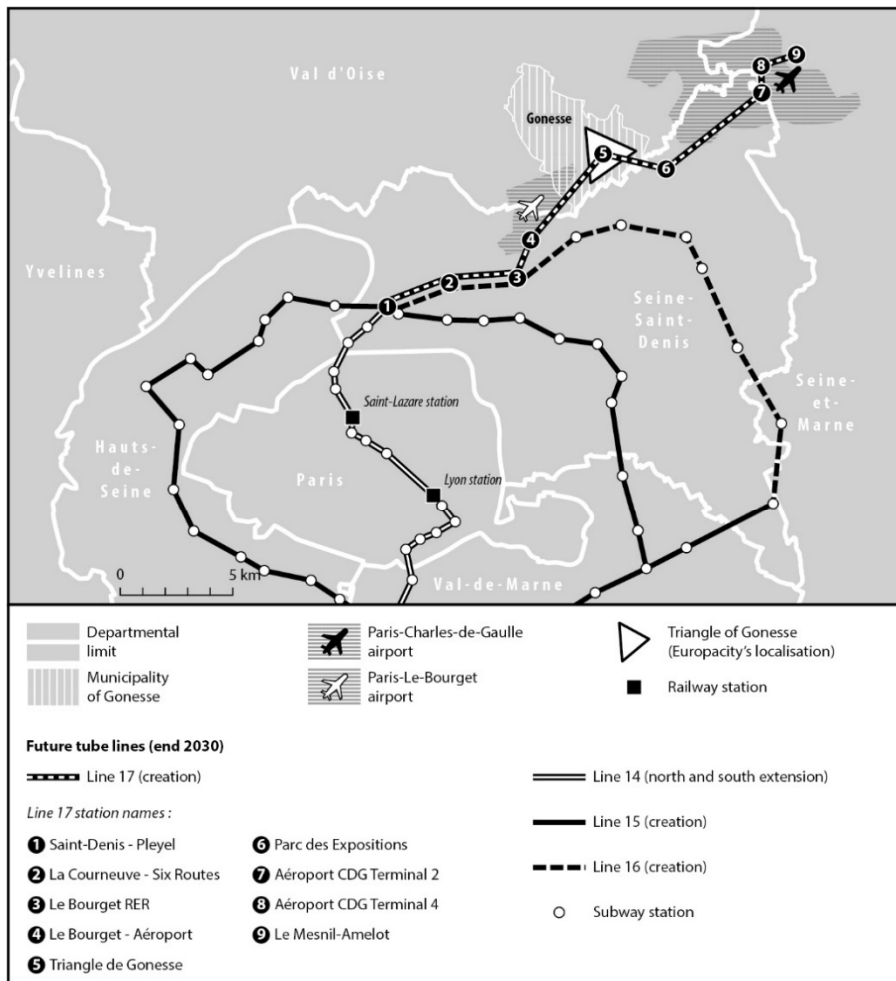
In terms of development, an ambitious urban planning plan gives priority to the transport network: extension of metro lines, new interconnections, renovation of infrastructure such as the Gare du Nord (Europe's first railway station). In the same spirit, the government is building two very large campuses, one in the north of the city (Condorcet), the other in the south (Parais-Saclay), to concentrate higher education and research institutions (Bontje and Burdack 2005). Paris is also densifying its urban tissue by encouraging housing projects: the goal is to build 70,000 units every year for 25 years, prioritizing the closeness of the new metro and tramway stations to limit the use of cars. All this is combined with economic competitiveness clusters aimed at increasing the visibility of Paris as a global city. It promotes geographical and economic sectors that have already been identified, such as the Défense District with finance, and Roissy-Charles de Gaulle with international trade and "events" like the 2024 Olympic Games as its main focus. Finally, until its abandonment, MGP includes the construction of a retailtainment megamall: *Europacity*. This project was part of this dynamic because of its material dimension, as well as its commercial and cultural objective aimed primarily at national and international tourists (Vallérugo, F., Gonguet, J.-P., et Guénod, J.-M. 2016).

Indeed, culturally speaking, Paris has a reputation that makes it one of the top tourist destinations in the world, whether for professional or private tourism. As the "City of Light" or as "Cultural Capital," Paris benefits from a heritage that strengthens its dimension as a global city. Among these, the Department Stores occupy a significant place, although nowadays one of the most visited places in Paris is... Disneyland Paris. This reflects the place that recreational facilities now occupy in cultural and leisure practices. All in all, MGP, with its grand projects and projection, was made to encourage public and private actors to support major retailtainment projects such as the *Europacity*. So it was presented and sold with an air of inevitability.

### **3. EUROPACITY: A PROJECT, TERRITORIAL ISSUES, A SOCIETAL DEBATE**

#### **1. The project**

Supported by the Auchan Group through its real estate subsidiary and its Chinese partner, Dalina Wanda Group, *Europacity* was designed to cover 80 hectares (800.000m<sup>2</sup>) among the most fertile agricultural land in the Paris region. Its 550.000 m<sup>2</sup> of equipment includes 230.000 m<sup>2</sup> of shops, leisure facilities, cultural facilities, hotels, restaurants, as well as an urban park and an urban farm. The project was a part of a 300-hectare (3 Mm<sup>2</sup>) development area which, beyond the 80 hectares of *Europacity*, was destined to become an international business district of the Greater Paris metropolitan area (figure 1). There is no known equivalent project of such a scale in terms of urbanized surface combining so many activities, but a permanent housing program. Indeed the situation of the project between the airports of Bourget and Roissy-Charles de Gaulle prohibits the construction of housing units due to aircraft overflights.



**Figure 1:** Localisation of Gonesse municipality and Triangle of Gonesse

The project was born in 2006 in the Auchan group and two years later, the site chosen by the group was in the commune of Gonesse, 17 km from Paris and within the Greater Paris area. As soon as it was publicised, Europacity faced opposition on several sides: from its direct competitors, the local shopkeepers; from citizens who saw their living environment being disrupted; and from politicians who questioned the model of society associated with this type of project. Yet many citizens and elected politicians supported this project, including the State: Some wanted to use it to change the negative local image and bring about local development; others saw it as one of the instruments for making Paris more attractive on international (and commercial) stage. Throughout the 10 years between its announcement and its abandonment, the project was transformed manifold. It is worth looking at how and why those changes were made.

The first design, presented in 2014, drew a huge ring of concrete, steel and glass, stretched to take in a triangular shape all the equipment that composes the project (Thépot 2015). Around a central square, called "*Place de l'Europe*", there was a 150.000 m<sup>2</sup> leisure park that includes a covered ski run and an aquatic centre; a 50.000 m<sup>2</sup> of cultural area; a 2.000 room hotel; a 230.000 m<sup>2</sup> shopping centre; and 20.000 m<sup>2</sup> of restaurants, along with conference and seminar venues. The shopping centre aims at attracting 31 million "visitors" annually. This number includes all customers, from the Paris Basin to international tourists, predicted to be 6 million, in passing by regional French visitors to the Capital. In 2016, the project was modified following a public inquiry conducted as part of the legal procedure, and which

indicated significant reservations on three main aspects: ecology, jobs, and the architectural design. In a press release published to announce major changes, *Europacity* (2016) announced that it was abandoning the architectural form of the ring, and instead propose to adopt a design more in phase with the characteristics of the regional territory.

*Europacity* thus claimed on its website to be "a project integrated into its immediate environment" [...] "while preserving the urban and architectural quality of the site". On the issue of local employment, the response came in the form of the creation of a dedicated structure: *EuropaCity Compétences*, whose objectives were to "welcome, guide and train the inhabitants before the opening of the project and during its operation." As for the sustainable objection, which covers many aspects, such as the question of transportation, or the waste related to the use and consumption on the site, the project leaders announce that the ski run will be built "if it can be demonstrated that it complies with the environmental ambition of the project"; that "the energy, water and waste aspects of the project will be, [...], treated in synergy with the facilities in the territory." Access to the site by public transport will be promoted and reinforced by specific actions by the contracting authority (case in point, the new metro line 17 designed as part of the Greater Paris project) (figure 2).

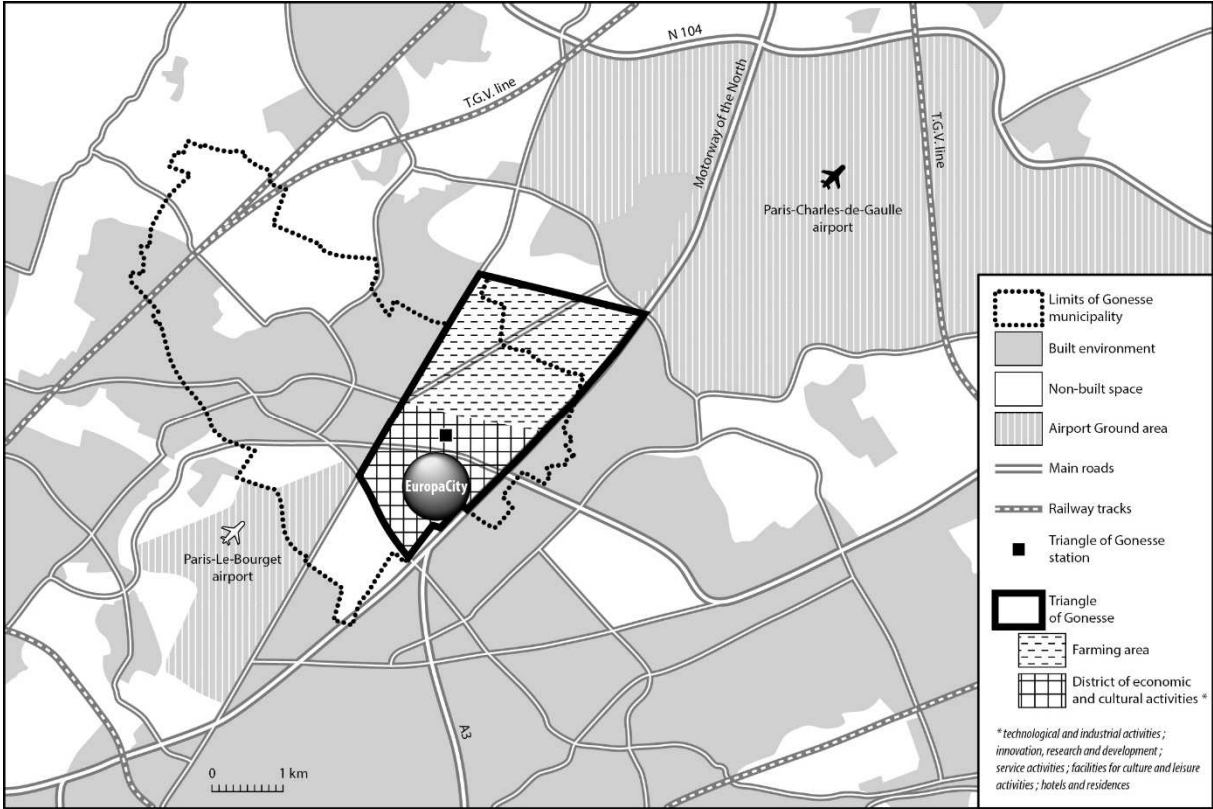


Figure 2 : Land use patterns in the Gonesse triangle and the surroundings

This appropriate reaction and sounded changes were not surprising. The private investment was as huge as the project itself: 3.1 billion euros. It was the largest of its kind in France since the building of Disneyland Paris in 1992. But the Ceetrus Real Estate Group, a subsidiary of the Auchan Group, and Wanda, could only ensure a large part of the success of this investment by relying on the developments linked to the Greater Paris Project, and especially the extension by metro line 17, and the building a station serving the site, whose estimated cost was 100 million euros. In one of the public documents related to the



*Europacity* debate, it is stated that about 38% of the station's flows would be inherent to the shopping centre.

This station was itself the subject of public debates due to its location and financing. Indeed, where the construction project was located, within the development zone intended to accommodate a new business district, serves at the time nothing more than fields. Reading an exchange in the public debate on the *Europacity* project in 2016, it is clear that part of this public investment could, however, be negotiated with private actors. "*The financing of Triangle de Gonesse station by the Greater Paris Society (GPS) is indeed in the general interest, while noting, however, that the GPS has initiated discussions with investors and local officials to ensure that they participate in the financing of the corresponding investment*" (National Public Debate Commission, *Europacity* public debate, response of the CPDP - Special Commission on Public Debate - to question n°111, 2016). This station is included in a first civil engineering contract for line 17 north of 439.4 million euros, excluding tax, containing the two stations "Le Bourget Airport" and "Triangle de Gonesse." On November 15, 2019, one week after the declaration of the abandonment of the *Europacity* project, work on the station was suspended for one year for additional studies.

## **2. From Gonesse to the Val d'Oise, and up to the national-global matrix**

*EUROPACITY* project demonstrates multiscale territorial stakes combining the international ambition of the Greater Paris metropolis, and the issue of local development of a socio-economically fragile territory. The planned location for the project was in the commune of Gonesse, which is included in larger administrative and political areas, the department and the urban community, which share the management and the development of a group of communes. This set of scales was overwhelmingly favorable to the *Europacity* project, mostly for economic development reasons, but also for social and cultural ones. Indeed, this part of the Ile-de-France region is unattractive because of its limited public transport services, but also because of its lower socio-economic data and characteristics compared to the Ile-de-France region as a whole. Gonesse is one of the Paris Region communes with a very high unemployment rate, more than double the average of the Ile-de-France region (17.3% compared to 7.4% in 2016). The percentage of the population without a diploma is 38.7%, whereas in the Ile-de-France region it is 25.5%. Only 21.4% have a higher education diploma and the poverty rate is 24%. On the scale of the Val-d'Oise department, the figures are better, but remain higher than the Ile de France in all sectors; unemployment in the department for example is at 13.4%.

In this context, the *Europacity* project, with its promise of creating 10,000 residential jobs mainly for the benefit of the local population, seemed to be an economic lever. In addition, the successive transformations of the project to reduce the negative environmental consequences, including environmental policies (urban farm; 100% of non-drinking water needs covered by recycling; renewable energy...), strengthened the regional support. The project was also supported by the municipality of Gonesse, which saw the construction of this recreational and commercial complex as a guarantee that a new urban rail station would be built on its territory to improve public transport services. In the context of the new public transport network plan for Greater Paris, no services were planned for this area, nor for the Val-d'Oise, prior to the *Europacity* project. To encourage support for the project, the city of

Gonesse opened a website and a public space dedicated to the project, called "the house of the Gonesse triangle development project." The municipality thus decided to modify its local urban plan to make the 300 ha of agricultural land in the Gonesse Triangle constructible for "commercial" projects. At the State level, support to the project was expressed - until November 2019 - by successive statements by then-President Sarkozy (2010), Minister Laurent Fabius (2014), and by legislative actions to validate the creation of a development zone dedicated to the project. Finally, the project was supported by a large part of the population (81% in 2019), that was seeing it as a hope for employment and development of its territory - despite the fact, paradoxically, that 59% respondents admitted its lack of knowledge of the project. All in all, these actions and intentions clearly show that the local issues were intertwined with the regional, national, and international dimensions. A seemingly perfect match, what else can you ask? However, this well-aligned combination of scales favourable to the project was also found on the opposition side.

Indeed, as soon as the project was announced, a mobilization is organized and structured in several associations, for one part, and in the field of the political expression of elected officials, for another. The associations coalesced around different priority issues: environmental issues, for instance, with the "Collective for the Triangle of Gonesse" (CPTG), which refuses the artificialization of agricultural land; economic issues with the "Euro Pas du Tout" (Euro Not at All) association, which brought together shopkeepers from the surrounding communes, in denouncing the consequences that Europacity would have on the reduction of their business and on the loss of local jobs. The most visible of these oppositions was the association CPTG, that is the "Collective for the Triangle of Gonesse". As a citizens' movement, which are regularly participating in regional development projects (Raymond, 2009), it positioned itself as a leader in the social and citizen protest. It organizes regular citizen mobilizations on the future site by welcoming journalists and social networks to participate in meetings, and in public debates on the subject. Its positioning was on the preservation of agricultural land that would be disappearing, and in support of the alternative project CARMA (Cooperation for an Agricultural, Rural and Metropolitan Ambition for the Future), associated with another less consumerist societal model. Gathering a few hundred protesters at each event on the site, it has also established strong political and artistic support, which increases its exposure and thus building support at the regional, national, and even international scale. Its members take part in climate marches or demonstrations against soil sealing, and for the defense of local production by walking behind their banner. Their relays at all levels were elected officials, but also environmental associations which, in the context of climate change, benefit from a more affirmed public and political interest. Thus, the elected representatives of ecological and left-wing parties (Communist Party and the socialist "France Insoumise") took a stand against the project. In the category of associations or cooperative enterprises, we find "Terres de Liens" - Association working for access to land for people with agricultural, organic and solidarity projects - the AMAP - Association for the preservation and development of peasant and community agriculture - network in the Ile-de-France region, as well as the "BioCoop" - a cooperative association of 600 stores, 20 organic producer groups, employees and consumer associations - network of shops, and the architects and town planners of the "Atelier citoyen". The latter are stakeholders in the CARMA project.

At the regional level, there was also an association of shopkeepers from the surrounding communes, whose opposition is essentially economic: the fear of the competition that a

mega-mall would cause to their business. Among them are elected officials from neighbouring municipalities that feared the consequences for the businesses in their own municipalities. Here, the idea of building an economic zone is rather supported for the expected economic spinoffs, but it is the heart of the project that arouses opposition, namely the retailtainment mega-mall. The world of retail and the shopping centre sector were also concerned about the effects of the opening of this mega-mall, and took action to slow down or stop the project. In a highly competitive context, these companies, symbols of globalization, were each defending their local presence. Their media visibility was not as important, but their political and economic support was nonetheless being felt. Among them was the National Federation of City Centres (FNCV) that fights against the decline of city centres, which are losing their economic and social vitality partly due to the construction of large peripheral commercial centres.

In sum, we can see that both supporters and opponents of such projects, at all scales, have the same arsenal of environmental and economic arguments at their disposal. Through them, we are talking about a debate on our model of society.

### ***3. Society of consumption and shopping areas: a societal debate***

If all regions of the world have not fully entered what is usually called the consumption society, it has been slowly and surely sweeping in all parts of the world. It has given reality to the global world, through the supply-chain economy for instance, and, thanks to the Internet, providing us with a sense of an interconnected world. In France, social scientists generally consider that the consumer society took off in the 1960s, accompanying a few decades of economic growth and marked by the construction of a very large number of retail stores and shopping malls (Baudrillard 1986).

Today, the societal context is no longer the same, and large-scale hypermarkets and shopping malls are losing visitors. This situation is the result of a number of changes, those of consumers as well as those of the retail sector. Thus, as in many European countries, the French population is ageing, and households at the beginning of the 21st century have a much more diversified profile than in the middle of the 20th century; they are more multicultural and often have fewer individuals. In addition to these demographic changes modifying the use of hypermarkets and supermarkets, there are societal and cultural concerns. The issue of food security is leading to a new confidence among craftsmen and "small retailers". This attention is complemented by increased concern for the preservation of environmental resources. For instance, the expanding consumption of organic products encourages new local or regional distribution channels. The demographic, sociological and cultural changes have been accompanied by major transformations in the distribution sector, and by the arrival of new players: e-commerce, transit trade (stations, airports or car trunk deliveries), pop-up stores or alternative channels, all of which have led to new strategic thinking in the retail sector. Culture, personify by the value-oriented consumer and the global-local awareness, has affected the places and the ways we act as consumers. Two models or orientations have emerged; they might be in opposition, but they share some of the values and societal concerns of the time.

The first model is representative of the large transnational corporations of globalization. Indeed, through the mergers and associations combining financing, production, logistics and distribution of commercial spaces and consumer goods, the companies of mass distribution have expanded horizontally and vertically while crossing borders. There is therefore local

and international competition, which is leading the actors in the sector to reflect on their developmental strategy. Aware of these transformations, the developers of the retail sector, supported by many private and public actors, are following the success of the West Edmonton Mall in Canada to promote a new generation of centres in which shopping is combined with leisure (Barata-Salgueiro and Erkip 2014). The aim is to assert the playful nature of the "shopping experience" in itself, but also through its association with other facilities such as cinemas or a skating rink. Everywhere, the economic, tourism and political reasons are combined: jobs, regional promotion and local development seem to be the three pillars on which these projects are based, to which we can add the tourist attraction they can represent in their regional context. In short, it favors the promotion of territorial marketing.

Another model has emerged. Going along with these societal changes and transformations in the retail sector, a new category of merchants combines the local and global in their commercial discourse, with their products and the location of their shops (Kasinitz, Zukin, Chen, 2015); they are "glocal retailers". Set up in metropolitan areas, and more particularly in neighbourhoods undergoing urban transformation mixing social categories and urban functions, they are at the heart of a "post-large retailing" commercial gentrifying landscape. An urban ideal in which local merchants, such as creamers, butchers or wine merchants, but also hairdressers or cafetiers who, by the presence of their shops and the entertainment they provide, encourage social and cultural value-oriented interactions (Jacobs, 1961). The "local value" of these businesses is complemented by a global dimension linked to their "repetition" in the world's metropolises, to which is added the globalized route taken by some traders. They become "local" retailers for a clientele that is itself partly "glocal". Thus, based on these characteristics, they propose an offer of local and international products "packaged" in a "local" space and discourse (Delamarre, 2019). From the local to the global, in both models, these two scales combine to create shopping landscapes that accompany metropolization.

## **CONCLUSION: A COMPLEX SOCIETAL DEBATE**

Thus, the dynamics of globalization have been combined with a local development project that brings together around a hybrid object, both a mall through the collection of shops intended to satisfy material consumption (objects, clothing, etc.), and a cultural centre through its playful, sporting and artistic components (cinemas, exhibitions, sports facilities, etc.) satisfying immaterial consumption. These new retailtainment centres, which in their imposing forms, can cover several dozen hectares, as was the case with the Europacity project on the outskirts of Paris, which fueled the controversy in France from 2006 to 2019.

This project and its abandonment raise interesting questions and points of debate. For one, it shows that commerce in the context of globalization cannot be reduced to commercial trades or global supply economy trade off. Second, we can say that when one is going to a mega mall, he/she is entering a global place locally, a place where he/she can buy local/global goods, and enjoy entertainments that are more or less the same all over the world (including block buster's). Third, and more importantly for this article, mega mall projects are for private and public actors in a global city, a local issue; while for the locals, it is a local issue fought through global conflicting visions.

The abandonment of the Europacity project is today giving rise to new debates and new questions: what should be done instead of the project, which could be a lever for local development? How can we continue to mobilize to ensure that this agricultural land is the breeding ground for a new model of local development? How can we ensure that a new, less gigantic project with the same consumer philosophy is not chosen and promoted by local political and economic actors? Finally, the question of the place of these retailtainment mega-malls and, more broadly, of shopping areas and the value placed on consumption remains topical: for example, rumors concerning the liner Europacity state that the project abandoned in Paris is being negotiated in ... London.

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