

# DESCRIBING, INHABITING AND GOVERNING URBAN FRINGE LANDSCAPES

## International Conference

### Call for communication

Narbonne, France  
5th to 7th November, 2014



Landscape and sustainable development research programme



In partnership with city of Narbonne, district of Grand Narbonne and PNR de la Narbonnaise en Méditerranée



## ***Describing, Inhabiting and Governing Urban Fringe Landscapes***

In Europe, urban projects at this beginning of a century are irremediably marked by references to sustainable development. New ways of considering the city and its development are announced. While it is best to take care when handling the new rhetorical devices and legitimating procedures rooted in sustainable development, such urban projects seek to address a set of issues which today can no longer be ignored, if only because they are being progressively integrated into legislation. It is first of all a question of containing the city to limit consumption of natural and agricultural spaces. There is also the issue of reattributing urban space to nature and biodiversity, of encouraging new relationships between the city and its environment and surrounding countryside. (Re)newed spatial policies with new forms of urban projects should be brought forward, offering urban populations pleasant life styles while constraining risks linked to urban densification and sprawl. Inhabitants should (re)gain a voice in how the city is developed and managed. Such urban projects develop at different scales and on different sites. Urban designs and the cities they lay out undergo numerous works. Still, the latter are focused either on the total city, understood as a total urban system, or on the city centres, dense or specific segments of the city, or peri-urban zones, the halo which is neither totally urban nor totally rural. It seems that the links between these spaces and the urban area are analysed solely from the point of view of functional relationships and inter-territorial flow.

The goal of this conference is to question European urban fringes, which we define as precise or graduated transitional spaces where the city leaves space for something else : countryside, forests, "nature," wasteland or fallow awaiting projects.... Situated at the edges of urbanised spaces, these interfaces fulfil diverse functions : city entries or exits, zones of relegation or balconies overlooking the surrounding countryside, protected zones or ignored spaces. Project territories or space resulting from unintentional processes, urban fringes are the subject of disparaging, even declassifying remarks as well as of reclassifying projects (and the inverse). As they offer possible urban extension and welcome new urban equipment, such territories represent high stakes for environmental installations and management. Very mobile within the city's expansion zone, urban fringes can also sustainably fix urban contact with the surrounding countryside. Hence, some of these spaces resist and indeed constrain the city in spite of ever stronger urban thrust.

These urban fringes can be understood at different scales, from the overall agglomeration down to the quarter or even at the installation project scale. At the interface of that which is unquestionably of the city and that which is not or no longer is, urban fringes offer particular physiognomies mixing extremely varied constructed and unconstructed spaces. Spatial organisation of these contact zones – which can be defined or progressive, linear or complex, open or closed – can follow an overall plan or represent the heritage of successive installations with no apparent underlying order. A reflection of numerous urban governance scenes, the actors impacting them are many. Still, due to their position as an interface, these territories, supports and objects of governance, sometimes mix urban and rural actors. Through their peripheral positioning, they are the scene upon which governing bodies propose policy compositions quite different from habitual central organisations, while because of their marginality, they can display novel relationships with norms. Finally, urban fringes are inhabited and experienced in a wide variety of ways. City edges, they can be at once marginal zones for captive poor populations or territories appreciated by comfortable, mobile populations. The populations inhabiting, crossing or experiencing urban fringes can be decidedly turned towards the city or, on the contrary, towards the neighbouring countryside. Such populations can also construct territories with original modes of habitation.

## **Axes for approaching the issues**

This conference is designed as a moment of exchange making it possible to compare research and management experiences around this original object concentrating numerous issues. Different axes of analysis are proposed, but they do not pretend to be exhaustive as concerns the questions which can be directed towards the subject of urban fringe. Hence, proposals which do not fit any of the 5 axes exposed below will also be given equal attention.

### **Landscapes and urban fringe physiognomies**

This axis proposes to question the construction modes and descriptions of urban fringes. How can their compositions and diversity be understood ? Do their physiognomies translate differing modes of habitation ? Are they the result of differing practices or projects carried out on them ? Do landscapes structure the installation projects of such transitional spaces ? This axis thus concerns the limits of the urban form : what methods of reading and evaluation are appropriate for such landscapes ? What typologies can be constructed and what do they reveal ?

### **Agriculture and city**

Urban fringes are the sites of proximal relationships between the different forms of agriculture which can be found at the gates of agglomerations. Still, proximal as such relationships may be, they in no way limit the functional and symbolic interrelations between the urban and agricultural worlds with which they are associated. What are the characteristics of the agricultural forms valorised ? What forms are least affected or not affected at all ? What are the urban actors maintaining functional or symbolic relationships with such forms of agriculture ? What opportunities - or what constraints - does the proximity of the city foster for farming activities ? What consequences do such relationships have on the choices of consumption, practices or modes of appropriation of farming space ? Do such developments modify the ways new quarters are constructed on or around such farming space, or even modify the agricultural landscape itself ?

### **Nature and biodiversity**

Today, the place of nature within the city is being reaffirmed. Urban fringes thus appear as spaces where nature can be integrated during new constructions or during procedures of reclassification. Urban fringes are also the sites of contact with spaces considered natural. Their management is as well envisaged as a privileged production support for eco-systemic services on the borders of agglomerations. They are the spaces through which biodiversity can be afforded entry points into the city, continuities can be drawn towards green urban frames, interior and exterior can be linked.... How are such aspects integrated within installation and management projects for such spaces? How are the inhabitants' practices on the urban fringe articulated within the stakes of conservation of biodiversity or modes of valorisation of nature? What political processes preside over the articulation between human constructions and the living?

### **Urban margins : marginalising and social mixing**

Different types of neighbourhoods inhabited by different populations have developed on the edges of cities (on the immediate edge of the main agglomeration or as satellite zones). Such sites are appreciated by very diverse populations, ranging from the most comfortable to those trying to find a space of freedom or refuge in the present-day urban system. Such social groups do not, however, mix : contrasts between sub-divisions of popular housing and groups of luxurious homes are sometimes combined with contrasts between generations which date back to the moments at which the inhabitants moved in. Certain urban fringes have been and still are the subject of disparaging or declassifying remarks : they become the marginal sites, far from political centres, used for installing public equipment or for relegating undesired populations. What are the means of valorising / devalorising urban fringes ? What political projects underlie such processes ? What roles do such spaces play in the capacity of urban system resilience or in the radical recomposing of such systems ?

### **Urban limits under constraint: risks and protected spaces**

The limits of urban spaces are sometimes designed according to constraints linked to different risks : flooding, fires, unstable terrain, etc. Limits can also result from the location of protected spaces : reserves, classified sites, classified woodlands, national or regional parks. City limits thus run up against the limits of such zones of protected nature which both disrupt the real estate market and impose a framework of constraint on the elaboration of urban projects. Still, several questions emerge. Do such limits really fix the contours of the city (physical, symbolic and functional limits)? What are the consequences of these zones of risk and protection for urban fringe landscapes and their modes of (de)valorisation? How does the city react to these dangers and green spaces scattered across its fringes?





## Instructions for proposals

**The deadline for receiving communication or poster proposals is 1st April, 2014.**

Presentation languages at the conference are French, English and Spanish.

All proposals are to be sent in pdf file format. The title of the communication should be given in the language of the proposal on the first page, followed by the translation of the title in the other language of the conference, the keywords, and the surnames, first names, university titles, present functions, institutions and e-mails of each author or co-author.

A free summary of the communication should be given on the following page, repeating the title of the proposal and keywords. This summary should be written in Times fond 12 and contain a clear presentation of the main question as well as the methodological elements used to address it, the field(s) addressed and the main results. 400 words max.

Selected authors will be informed before the end of May 2014. They should forward their written communication or a long summary of it by the beginning of October for distribution of the acts (digital or paper, without ISBN) before the conference in order to facilitate exchanges and discussions. Communications will be given in English or French. Instructions will be given concerning the use of French/English bilingual slides or slides in a language other than that of the presentation .

After the conference, the authors will have until 20th February 2015 to submit their revised texts for publication envisaged by the scientific committee in the form of files proposed to international journals or in the form of a collective work proposed to approved scientific editors, taking into account the themes and chosen language of each author. The scientific committee makes no guarantee concerning publication. Authors will be informed by the scientific committee at the end of June 2015 of the publication proposal concerning their personal work, under condition of a favourable decision by external proof-readers and reviewers as well as by the solicited editors.

## Scheduling reminder

Remittance of summaries for 1st April, 2014

Examination by the Scientific Committee : up to 15th May 2014

Answers to authors : from 20th to 25th May, 2014

Pre-programme : first week of June, 2014

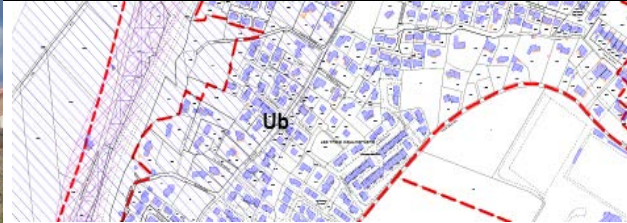
Confirmation of participants and beginning of inscriptions : 15th June, 2014

Final programme and closing of inscriptions : 1st October, 2014



**Address to send the proposals or inquire :**

[colloque.pfp@gmail.com](mailto:colloque.pfp@gmail.com)



## Scientific Committee :

**Philippe Béringuier**, Géographie et Aménagement, Université de Toulouse Le Mirail  
**Sophie Bonin**, Agronomie et Géographie, Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Paysage de Versailles-Marseille  
**Ségolène Darly**, Agronomie et Géographie, Université de Paris 8 Vincennes - Saint-Denis  
**Mireille Deconinck**, Sc. Géographiques, Service Public de Wallonie  
**Denis Delbaere**, Paysagiste, Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'architecture et de Paysage de Lille  
**Pierre Dério**, Géographie, Université d'Avignon  
**Pierre Donadieu**, Sciences du Paysage, Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Paysage de Versailles-Marseille  
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**Yves Luginbühl**, Géographie et Agronomie, CNRS  
**Johan Milian**, Géographie, Université de Paris 8 Vincennes - Saint-Denis  
**Joan Nogue**, Géographie, Observatoire du Paysage de Catalogne  
**Gilles Novarina**, Urbanisme, Institut d'Urbanisme de Grenoble  
**Philippe Poullaouec-Gonidec**, architecte paysagiste, Ecole d'architecture de Paysage, Université de Montréal  
**Maria Teresa Pinto Correia**, Landscape and Biophysical Planning, University of Evora  
**Richard Raymond**, Sciences Humaines et Sociales, CNRS, CIST  
**Lionel Rougé**, Géographie, Urbanisme et Aménagement, Université de Caen-Basse Normandie  
**Anne Sgard**, Géographie, Université de Genève  
**Elise Temple-Boyer**, Géographie, Université de Paris-Ouest-Nanterre-La Défense  
**Monique Toublanc**, Sociologie, Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Paysage de Versailles-Marseille  
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**Marc Verdier**, Architecture et urbanisme, ENS d'Architecture Nancy  
**Pierro Zanini**, Anthropologie, ENS Architecture Paris-La Villette

## Organising Committee:

**Marta Benages**, Architecture et Paysage, Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura, U. Internacional de Catalunya  
**Philippe Béringuier**, Géographie et Aménagement, Université de Toulouse Le Mirail  
**Sophie Bonin**, Agronomie et Géographie, Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Paysage Versailles  
**Ségolène Darly**, Agronomie et Géographie, Université de Paris 8 Vincennes - Saint-Denis  
**Pierre Dério**, Géographie, Université d'Avignon  
**Johan Milian**, Géographie, Université de Paris 8 Vincennes - Saint-Denis  
**Richard Raymond**, Sciences Humaines et Sociales, CNRS, CIST

**E-Mail : [colloque.pfp@gmail.com](mailto:colloque.pfp@gmail.com)**



école  
nationale  
supérieure de  
paysage  
Versailles Marseille



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