GOVERNING THE GCR PROVOCATION SERIES
THE GREATER PARIS DEBATE
REFLECTIONS FOR THE GAUTENG CITY-REGION

Author: Alan Mabin

October 2020

GCRO | Gauteng
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Observatory

The GCRO comprises a partnership of:

THE GREATER PARIS DEBATE:
REFLECTIONS FOR THE GAUTENG CITY-REGION

[to provoke: to stimulate, incite, stir up, challenge, irk, exasperate, vex]

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Contents

Governing the Gauteng City-Region: A Provocation series

The idea of the city-region is growing in international prominence. This is because the form has been hailed as a means to promote a range of agendas, including boosting economic competitiveness; fostering integrated development; building partnerships between state and non-state actors; and solving urban growth challenges by offering ways to think differently about mass infrastructure provision, environmental sustainability, and the like.

A growing amount of academic and policy work is being done on the issue of city-region governance, with many arguing that the burgeoning of thinking and practice represents a dedicated 'process of scale building' (Brenner, 1999; Harrison & Hoyler, 2014; Jonas, 2006; Scott & Storper, 2003). Brenner in fact argues that the rise of regional governance can be understood as a process of 'state reterritorialization' or 'state rescaling', and that the specific form of the city-region reflects 'state spatial selectivity'. In other words, this scale has been specifically chosen or assembled by the state to facilitate various processes such as economic agglomeration or competitiveness (Brenner cited in Wu, 2017, p. 1135). In other contexts, the scale has been asserted as a way to mitigate the negative effects of inter-locality competition (Wu, 2017).

Regardless of the deliberative processes behind this 're-scaling', the city-region is not a straightforward site in which to organise governance. As Storper (2014) points out, governance at this scale necessarily involves many large, contested and intertwined issues that arise as a result of strong interdependencies and cleavages, combined with fragmented geographies and overlapping implementing agencies. This means that the issues that become the object of regional governance are not amenable to a 'solution' so much as a haphazard muddling through. Similarly, Wu (2017) interprets the state's spatial selectivity of the city-region form less as a proactive model to manage social provision or promote democratisation, but rather as an attempt to manage intractable crises.

The Gauteng City-Region (GCR) is increasingly recognised in official and other discourse. That said, the acknowledgement of something that can be described as a city-region has not resulted in consensus on what this means, or should mean, for planning, public investment or governance.

This series of GCRO Provocations examines different aspects of governance of and in the GCR. Taken together, they hope to trigger debate and dialogue on various complexities of the issue, and signal a series of priorities for consideration in thinking about the future and the fortunes of the city-region.

Acknowledgements

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Figure 1: The president of the Métropole du Grand Paris (Patrick Ollier) opens the 'future routes of Grand Paris' exhibition on 6 June 2019, flanked by the president of the Région Île-de-France (Valerie Pécresse, left) and the president of the Forum Metropolitain du Grand Paris (Vincent Jeanbrun), the mayor of the City of Paris (Anne Hidalgo, right) and the Prefét of Île-de-France and Paris (Michel Cadot).

Photograph © Alan Mabin

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACU	Ateliers de Création Urbaine
AIGP	Atelier International du Grand Paris
APUR	Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme
CCIP	Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie
GCR	Gauteng City-Region
GCRO	Gauteng City-Region Observatory
GPE	Grand Paris Express
IAU-IdF	Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme – Île-de-France
IAURIF	Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région Île-de-France
IdF	[subnational government region of] Île-de-France
MGP	Métropole du Grand Paris
NGO	non-governmental organisation
RATP	Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens
RER	Réseau Express Régional
PMHH	Plan Metropolitain de l'Habitat et de l'Hébergement
SCOT	Schéma de Coherence Territoriale
SDAURP	Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région de Paris
SDRIF	Schema Directeur de la Région Île-de-France
SGP	Societé du Grand Paris
STIF	Syndicat des Transports d'Île-de-France

Glossary and notes on language

commune	smallest French unit of government, of which there are over 30 000 in the country and more than 1 200 in Île-de-France
département	body with jurisdiction over communes, of which there are about 100 in France and eight in Île-de-France
Grand Paris	phrase roughly equal to 'Greater Paris' with a sense of something 'Grand', used informally until the creation of a council for Grand Paris in 2016 with controversial boundaries and powers; puns in French with grand *pari*, or wager
Grand Paris Express (GPE)	name adopted for the new regional rail system (GPE), currently under construction with completion intended over the next 15 years
région	subnational unit of government, of which there are about 30 in France, in some ways similar to provinces in South Africa
Paris region	term used in a flexible way here for the city-region, containing the City of Paris and many more jurisdictions, variously thought of as having a population of between 7 and 14 million
Schéma de Coherence Territoriale (SCOT)	spatial development framework
Societé du Grand Paris (SGP)	state-owned company created to construct new Grand Paris Express railways
state	term used in this Provocation for *état*, the French national government and its institutions

Almost all the sources for this Provocation are or were in French, and I have not thought it necessary to translate these titles into English in the reference list. For various terms and in some quotations from sources, I have kept the original and only provided a brief translation when essential. In these cases, I have not cluttered the text with the note 'author's translation'. I have also capitalised each noun when naming French organisations (contra French style) so that these bodies are more instantly recognisable as such to the English reader's eye.

Although French and English have many commonalities, French terminology is full of forms of expression as well as puns, references and double meanings which do not translate simply. As in other contexts, knowledge of the primary language is thus essential to full comprehension – although it cannot guarantee it (Alan Mabin).

Abstract

This Provocation draws on the stimuli and progression of widespread, deep debate in and about the Paris region in order to contemplate possibilities for wider, creative and informed discussions on the present and future of the Gauteng City-Region (GCR) that it currently lacks.

Around the world, large, polycentric and highly diverse 'city-regions' pose challenges to the construction of governmental institutions. Residents of such regions do not necessarily share the perceptions of professionals and politicians, and often adhere to more local understandings of their identities. Proposals, plans and debates about the future of city-regions frequently take place out of public view. There are, however, cases in which much broader participation in debate has been accomplished. That has been particularly true in the Paris city-region over the past two decades.

The question posed in this Provocation is what there may be to learn from the Paris region case, specifically for widening debate about future prospects for the GCR. The paper describes the context of the Paris region and the search, over several decades, for ways of institutionalising the region with its multilayered forms of government.

Since the early 2000s, competing approaches emerged from national government, the Région of Île-de-France (similar to a province) and the City of Paris (together with its collaborators in other municipalities). National government first stimulated wide debate through sponsoring the production of diverse depictions of the future of the city-region, after which responses from other actors accelerated public discussion through mobilising both histories of change as well as alternative visions of the future.

Official public debate in 2010 and 2011 focused on different proposals for massive new investments in a new passenger rail system, emerging as the Grand Paris Express (GPE) project currently under construction. That debate proceeded to overlap into debates about the development of a new governmental entity at a different scale from existing bodies. Such a body came into existence in 2016, namely the Métropole du Grand Paris. Throughout this period, different public, private and non-governmental actors widened and deepened public discussion.

Finally, the Provocation considers how the Paris region experience might inform the expansion of public discussion in the GCR, and suggests roles within this discussion for all stakeholders, including the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (which has already sponsored and produced relevant materials), businesses, not-for-profit organisations and government actors.

1 City-regions, identity, popular debate

Professionals and politicians of the twenty-first century delight in defining and discussing 'city-regions', enormous concentrations of many millions of people.[1] Yet do the residents of such large places share those definitions or take part in the discussions? As city-regions around the world grow, how do residents think of themselves in relation to their more immediate localities and also in relation to their larger city-regions (Lidström & Schaap, 2018)? Do they engage in debate on the nature and future of 'their' city-region? If they do, how do such debates come about? What could provoke wider and deeper debate?

These questions are as relevant in Gauteng as they are in New York or Mumbai. Whilst professionals may long have thought of what is now called the Gauteng City-Region (GCR) as a unit (Mabin, 2013), do the people of Gauteng think of themselves as residents of a city-region of a dozen million or more? Since 1994, transitions to new provincial and metro forms of government have led to various wrangles, including over a city-region transport authority, the future of Rand Water, huge investment in and subsidy of the Gautrain, and the introduction of tolling on what had always been 'free' ways. By their nature, these significant public engagements have been controversial and have accordingly contributed to changes in approach. Yet such debates did not actually engage with the underlying conception and overall direction of the 'city-region', nor with the relationship of people to the whole and to its future. Such matters tend to remain in more arcane discussions among professionals and politicians. Internationally, there are 'tensions and uncertainties between the city-region as a concept and the experiences of local communities' (Brenner, 2004, p. 49). Public participation in shaping the future of the GCR will not take place with any intensity in the absence of provocations that spark debate – and these might be intentionally designed to do so rather than occurring by accident.

Conflict over governance in other city-regions has something to offer to thinking about the future of governance in Gauteng's city-region. To examine how wider debate, and perhaps direct engagement, at the scale of the city-region can come about, this Provocation explores one powerful example of how public recognition of the unity of a large city-region, and public debate about the conditions and future of that region, have been provoked over the past decade or more.

Recent debate across the city-region of Paris and its surrounds[2] contrasts strikingly with the earlier, more technical contests among professionals and sometimes politicians. By exploring the

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1   'City-regions' receive much attention in various literatures – for their polycentricity and complexity (Gugler, 2004; Mabin, 2005; Scott, 2001); their diversity (Jones et al., 2015; Sharpe, 1995); conflicts over the scale of authority (Hamel & Poitras, 2004; Hamilton, 2012; Keil et al., 2009); and research approaches (Booth & Jouve, 2005; Kübler, 2012; Lefevre et al., 2013; Mould, 2016; Phares, 2004; Storper, 2013).

2   The terms 'Greater Paris', 'Grand Paris', 'metropolitan Paris', 'Paris region', etc. are all politically loaded and the 'Région Île-de-France' is not exactly the 'city-region'. The general term employed here is 'Paris [city] region'.

'Grand Paris' story, this Provocation seeks to explain how wider and deeper debate came about there, and draws some tentative conclusions for the benefit of the GCR's case.

As Frédéric Gilli has put it, 'a large number of representations […] have structured thought and action around the [Paris] region' (2014, p. 27). Key elements in the recent, enormous expansion of discussion at the Paris-region scale have involved mobilisations of history and depictions of the future that feed, stimulate, inform and transform debate. Such mobilisations in the form of public events and exhibitions have fostered new popular understandings of the city-region as well as identification with it. In turn, they have spurred both formal debates and widespread informal engagement via the use of digital media and all sorts of print forms. The Paris experience does not directly translate to every other large city-region – but it is provocative in suggesting possibilities for engagement elsewhere.

The Paris region has a similar population size to the GCR (12-plus million, depending of course on the definition). The region is part of a republic with electoral democracy at multiple scales of government, from local to national. It is in a country with strong traditions of open speech and citizen movements, and that also has histories both of oppression and revolution. In these ways, it allows readier comparison with South African conditions than with authoritarian societies. The region also contains the national capital and main economic focus of France, as Gauteng does in South Africa. For some years, the present author has observed events and the media and collected substantial information on recent developments in the Paris city-region, offering an opportunity to reflect on that experience. Whilst the city-regions of Paris and Gauteng are certainly in the global North and South, respectively, there is much in common across this global division (Mabin, 2014).

The next section provides context for the Paris region. In following sections, the Provocation examines mobilisations of future imagery and history by actors (national state and municipalities, and various institutions in between) who have sought to influence shifts in city-region government and governance as well as in policy, planning and massive infrastructure investment. It concludes by returning to Gauteng and what might be done there to provoke similar developments.

Conflict over governance in other city-regions has something to offer to thinking about the future of governance in Gauteng's city-region

2 What is Paris? Government and governance in the Paris region

For more than a decade since 2007, a ferment of images, memories and ideas has enveloped the city-region around Paris. Ignited by anxiety that this globally prominent metropolis could fall behind others, and by concern across French cities about peri-urbanisation, downgrading, gentrification (Donzelot, 2005) and consequences, such as the riots of 2005 (Le Goaziou & Mucchielli, 2007), public debate on the city-region and its futures exploded. Tens of thousands of people got involved, and this decade-long maelstrom has resulted in new kinds of identification with place, a massive expansion project for public transport, and a new (and still disputed) form of city-region government.

Whilst coincident with other responses to the economic crisis after 2008, the Parisian debate had prior origins. The direction and consequences of the debate have more to do with actors and attitudes in the city-region itself than with global economic difficulty (Enright, 2012). The roots of debate involved much more than just another revision of a strategic framework (Orillard, 2018).

The Paris case stands out globally due to its mobilisation of ideas and materials by diverse actors. Whilst other city-regions around the world have seen some such stirring over the past century, the Paris case is probably the most dramatic in any electoral democracy. For people interested in the future of big city-regions in other places and confronting the huge difficulties in the way of 'thinking the city-region', let alone 'refashioning the city-region', the Paris case suggests that widespread discussion, debate, contest and (perhaps) new kinds of planning can be developed at this notoriously difficult scale.

Arguments for particular forms of city-region governance and proposals for changing existing forms are frequently supported by all sorts of claims. What has happened in the Paris region is distinct in the extent that it has become a battlefield of ideas, directions, proposals and memories involving many thousands of people. This Provocation turns here to the Paris region context, and proceeds to focus on ways in which imagery of both the future and the past has been mobilised in the course of the debate.

Paris is not just the City of Paris (*la ville de Paris*), a small area with a population of perhaps 2 million within a much larger 'city-region'. A strong notion of difference between the City and its surrounds has persisted for generations. This distinction is physically symbolised by the dual-carriageway ring road (the Boulevard Périphérique) that closely follows the administrative boundary of the official city (Cohen & Lortie, 1991), and is further reflected in divided institutions, as outlined below.

In the very recent past, the introduction of a fifth, metropolitan sphere to the four already established scales of government represents a 'historic transformation' (Gilli, 2014, p. 20). The Métropole du Grand Paris (MGP), which came into being at the start of 2016, has not yet substituted for, nor absorbed, other spheres, but is nevertheless a very significant institutional change that

reflects the underlying transformation of social, economic and physical conditions in the region. Understanding the processes that resulted in this new body requires some exposition on the Paris region's changing spatial, infrastructural and institutional context.

The Paris 'basin' is on occasion described as including not only the port of Le Havre at the mouth of the Seine (over 100 km from the Eiffel Tower), but also cities such as Nantes and Dijon, arriving at a population of 25 million (IAU-IdF, 2010). Most of the debate about the city and its future does not include such a large area, and the focus in this Provocation is on something that varies from the new 2016 MGP (7 million) to a slightly larger area than the Région Île-de-France (12-plus million). These names and structures and their histories are aired as this Provocation proceeds (Enright, 2016; Gilli, 2014; Lemoine, 2015; Orfeuil & Wiel, 2012; Subra, 2012).

Between the national government (*l'état*, to which this Provocation refers as 'the state') and the *commune* or municipality at the smallest governmental scale, there have long been *départements* (something like counties in some anglophone countries); and for over a generation, the larger *région* (a bit like a province in the South African case, with less autonomy than federal units as in Brazil or the United States). The Région Île-de-France includes eight départements, one of which is coterminous with the City of Paris. The City and the majority of communes in the région have retained essentially the same boundaries since 1860. The hundreds of communes or municipalities surrounding the City are usually termed the *banlieue*, an untranslatable word which resembles 'suburbs' in some ways but not in others. Their boundaries have remained mostly unchanged for over 150 years. Viewed from elsewhere, deprivation, riots and no-go zones predominate, but the banlieue provide home to at least three quarters of the city-region's population and are extremely varied, as is their history (Fourcaut et al., 2007). They range from the wealthiest communes such as Neuilly, where former president Sarkozy was mayor from 2004 to 2007, to the least resourced, and are spread across the whole region from Chanteloupe-les-Vignes in the north west to Grigny in the south east.

A reorganisation of départements took place in 1965 following the creation of a national government 'district' around Paris in 1961 with new (again, nationally driven) planning powers. The old département of Seine, which for not quite a century included much of the expanding agglomeration, was split into four – one congruent with the City of Paris at its centre and three new ones immediately surrounding it.[3] In addition, there were some further boundary shifts in the next ring of départements, often termed the *grande couronne* whilst the inner ring is called the *petite couronne* (large and small crowns).

Under the presidency of General de Gaulle (1959–1969), radical new policies were driven by Paul Delouvrier, who was appointed in 1961 to lead planning for the city-region as the 'general delegate' in charge of the 'district'.[4] He led the preparation for the Schéma Directeur

3   Given new names and new numbers. Each of the French départements is often best known by its number, originally in alphabetical order; thus whilst Paris keeps the old Seine number 75, new 1965 Seine-St Denis is number 93. These numbers are easily observed on motor vehicles, registered by départements with plates that bear these numbers.
4   Delouvrier had previously been appointed by De Gaulle in 1958 as chief French representative in Algeria in the later years of the anti-colonial war (Henni, 2016).

d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région de Paris (SDAURP), reasonably accurately translated as 'the master plan for the Paris region'. To reinforce this work and before moving on to lead the national electricity provider in 1969, Delouvrier created a national planning agency for the Paris region in 1967. In time, the agency became the Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région d'Île-de-France (IAURIF). A first major element of an increasingly polycentric geography of the Paris region took shape at La Défense, 3 km west of the City of Paris and straddling several communes. Planned from 1958 by the Établissement Public d'Aménagement de la Région de la Défense (EPAD), the first large area-based planning organism set up by the state, it has become a major business zone, altering the shape of the city-region, and creating new mobilities as well as attendant difficulties.

Photograph © Alan Mabin

For a decade, there followed a 'greater Paris of infrastructures' (Roseau, 2016). The De Gaulle–Delouvrier regime planned and created *villes nouvelles* or new towns in the départements around Paris, such as St Quentin, Cergy Pontoise, Evry and Marne-la-Vallée. These were placed at some separation from the built-up region developed by (nationally driven) public corporations and, in most cases, straddled existing commune boundaries, leading to new degrees of governmental complexity. Unlike British new towns, they were conceived as residential and commuter spaces. A further plank involved the construction of the Réseau Express Régional (the regional express network, RER), with railway connections across (and under) the city that reached each of the villes nouvelles through the late 1960s into the 1970s. This network provided radial mobility for a large part of the population living in the banlieue but did not provide fast direct connections between growing centres of employment outside the City (such as La Défense) and the majority of the residential zones. Investment in the transport system failed to match the growth of the city-region for the next few decades, leading to extreme crowding on many public transport routes at peak times.

Although increasingly tied together by new transport infrastructure – rail and *autoroutes* (freeways) – the city-region did not have a matching governmental institution. In the early 1980s, France created more than 30 régions as elected bodies with considerable competencies. That resulted in the Région Île-de-France (IdF), which includes almost all of what many would regard as the city-region around Paris, but much rural territory as well (including the home of Brie cheese). The Région proved a weak approach to a *métropole* (Delpirou, 2014) since significant powers remained divided across a complicated patchwork involving four scales of government, development corporations for new towns and various service agencies. National government continued to play a dominant role at the scale of the city-region, occasionally challenged politically by local actors. To complicate matters further, elections at each scale take place in different years.

Public discussion of governmental possibilities at city-region scale remained sparse. In the professional arena, limited debate focused on urban strategies (Mazzoni & Tsounis, 2004) rather than on city-region government. Formal participation focused on the strategic plan required of the Région rather than on its institutional dimensions.

The Région adopted a new plan in 2008. However, by that time President Sarkozy was in power (2007–2012), with very different ideas about the future from those of the Région. National government rejected the plan, which placed the ownership of powers in the city-region in question. How debate and contest developed over the subsequent decade and shaped both a new mobility megaproject and a city-region government forms the subject of subsequent sections of this Provocation, beginning with divergence and contest between different spheres of government.

3 New initiatives, new debates: Contest between city, Région and state

Since the early 2000s, the Paris region has experienced a 'bumpy road' to metropolitan or city-region government (Kipfer et al., 2016). Rising anxiety about the urban future, accelerated by riots in 2005, accompanied a sense of Paris falling behind other cities such as London. '[E]xpensive housing, jammed routes, saturated transport and marginalisation of youth' (Gilli, 2014, p. 313) disenchanted a large proportion of the population. The Paris Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie (CCIP) increasingly expressed concern over the competitiveness or investment attractiveness of the city-region through the early 2000s (Barilleau, 2010; CCIP, 2009; Debost Damas, 2007) and influenced a national government politically linked to business interests. Many voices called for critical issues to be addressed, such as the overburdened parts of the public transport system that had seen no major expansion for decades; and various authorities, including presidents of départements and the mayor of Paris, actively began to pursue new forms of collaboration across traditionally difficult institutional boundaries.

Photograph © Alan Mabin

The City of Paris had no mayor for almost the entire period from the French Revolution until the 1970s. The state effectively controlled City government through the *préfet* of the département. From 1977, when the office was created, mayors came from the right wing; but, in 2001, Bertrand Delanoë came to power at the head of a socialist–green–communist coalition. His popularity and profile rose through such ploys as introducing one of the world's first extensive public bike rental systems (V*é*lib'), and the conversion of roads along the Seine river into 'beaches' in summer (Paris-Plages). In 2005, Delanoë launched a completely new effort to draw together local governments in the city-region with the City of Paris.

Local initiative: Paris Métropole

Politically, this innovation required a different conception of what the city is. Delanoë's administration began a process of building a common city-region approach in opposition to national government, setting the broad 'left' in the city-region (and many local politicians of whatever stripe) against the centralising 'right' in the state. The relationship between the City of Paris and the banlieue was generally unequal, characterised by degrees of arrogance on the part of the former – including its large infrastructure and housing developments outside the boundaries of the City not always being in harmony with their neighbours.

Years of patient work, led initially by one of Delanoë's adjunct mayors, Pierre Mansat, created a voluntary association of communes that began as the Conférence Métropolitaine in 2005 and was semi-formalised as the Paris Métropole in 2009. This body has no direct powers: in its early stages, Delanoë described it as 'supple and informal [...] a space of debate and collective action [...] pragmatic [...] and concrete' (Delanoë, 2006, cited in Offner, 2007, p. 97). Its formal role was to undertake studies of the area and to encourage greater collaboration. By 2011, 160 communes as well as all the départements were members. Although the presidency of the association has oscillated between left- and right-wing mayors of diverse communes, the common thread has been one of facilitating and consolidating approaches from within the city-region, often counter to state-driven initiatives.

After 2007, for the right-wing national government under the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, the Paris Métropole threatened the control that the central state had enjoyed in directing major initiatives in the Paris region. The Région, too, found the Paris Métropole's hints at new forms of city-region governance irritating. The Région Île-de-France engaged in numerous activities seeking to position itself as the prime authority for the city-region – both against the state and against initiatives from communes and the City. As Sarkozy's 'Grand Paris' initiative took hold of the public imagination (see below), competition between top-down and somewhat bottom-up moves towards new forms of city-region governance became increasingly evident. In October 2011, Delanoë stated that President Sarkozy was 'trying to claim for himself an urban dynamic begun long ago by the local governments' (Vincendon, 2011). The nature of state and other approaches diverged.

The Région's attempt to direct the agenda

In the early 2000s, the Région promoted itself as the principle governing and planning agency for the city-region, claiming that it had 'acquired a major role in piloting the Paris agglomeration, a role based on principles of negotiation and consultation' (Azéma, 2009, p. 23). Yet, as is often the case in urban planning around the world, apparently greater powers at such a scale can cause conflict and result in failure.

J.P. Huchon – a somewhat conservative socialist – was elected president of the Région in 1998 and re-elected in 2004 and 2010. Under his aegis, the Région enthusiastically promoted regional identity, in particular the notion of the *francilien(ne)*, a resident of the Région Île-de-France. As a financier of public transport, it renovated RER trains, and provided new trains for 'suburban' lines which it dubbed *francilien*, emblazoned with the Région's logo. The notion of the city-region was reinforced for many by the development of a single ticket system on public transport, with electronic Navigo cards, during the early 2000s. Being able to travel throughout the city-region on one ticketless, weekly or monthly rechargeable card perhaps contributed to the further development of (city-) region identity.

The Région also conducted mass publicity campaigns promoting the notion that Île-de-France would resolve the mobility problems daily confronting commuters. Costing over a million euros per year (at the time around R10 million), the campaign attracted hostility from right-wing opponents, who claimed that huge billboards at such places as the national stadium in St-Denis, and large posters in all sorts of railway stations, unfairly used public money to promote Huchon and his party (Caillat, 2009). Yet these activities effectively raised awareness of the unity of the city-region.

The Région also supported annual workshops from 2008, in which architecture, economics and engineering postgraduate students at six higher education institutions participated. These Ateliers de Création Urbaine (ACU, urban creation workshops) ran for seven years and culminated in several exhibitions (ACU, 2008; 2015). Their intention was to produce creative ideas on 'possible futures' of the city-region, and students studied and produced imagery, reports and more on themes such as 'the sustainable, dense, mobile city without limits', 'destination Île-de-France 2030', 'culture of risk' and 'six possible scenarios for Grand Paris' (ACU, 2015). This, too, contributed to wider public discussion and represented an early mobilisation of future imagery in service of a particular approach to city-region government.

Huchon, as Région president, firmly incorporated the former national government planning agency, the IAURIF, as a unit of the Région (called the Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme – Île-de-France [IAU-IdF] from 2008). From 2005, it worked to revise the strategic framework that had come into effect in 1994, namely the Schema Directeur de la Région Île-de-France (SDRIF). This detailed plan is mostly a spatial document of maps and explanations which are linked to a range of targets in housing and other sectors. The SDRIF had some power to influence urban development, particularly through directing state and Région project funding. After years of preparation and hundreds of (mostly local) public information meetings, the Région's council adopted a 2006 draft of the plan in 2008. The plan contained proposals for major public transport investments originating from the Région's agency for mobility infrastructure and operations, the Societé des Transports Île-de-France (STIF), now

renamed *Île-de-France* Mobilités. It proposed a major new set of metro lines in several 'arcs', which together made up a proposed circuit not far outside – but outside nevertheless – the City of Paris. These 'Arc Express' proposals represented a major mobilisation of images of the city-region in the future (STIF, 2010). The state, however, did not respond positively.

It took until October 2010 for right-wing state president Nicolas Sarkozy to submit the SDRIF to the Conseil d'Etat (the supreme court for administrative justice, with powerful advisory functions), which rejected it in November 2010. It was during this period that Sarkozy elaborated his new and different proposals. This setback for the Région, which wished to be cast as a major city-region champion, raised the question of who would lead at such scale if not the Région – the state, or some other, perhaps new, entity?

In 2008, President Sarkozy had appointed Christian Blanc as the Secretary of State for the Capital Region, a new ministerial position. Previously head of the Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens (RATP), the agency responsible for the Paris underground metro railways and buses, Blanc cast doubt on any financing being provided for the Arc Express by the state. And, in April 2009, Sarkozy announced his plan for a new metro network mostly outside Paris of at least 130 km of automated lines, in some ways similar to the Arc Express. Prior to that, Sarkozy had launched much more debate about the future prospects of governance and transport by promoting ideas and images of the future far more powerfully than anyone had before.

Figure 2: 'The Région is growing your transport system' – poster from Paris Metro stations, 2009
Photograph © Alan Mabin

4 Mobilising images of the future: The state grabs centre stage

Newly elected President Sarkozy seized the political initiative in relation to the Paris region in 2007, and to some extent maintained it for the rest of his term, ending in 2012. In so doing, he contested potential threats from both the Région and the Paris Métropole. In a speech at Charles de Gaulle airport in June 2007 (a symbolically significant location, not in the City but at the edge of the city-region), Sarkozy announced his intention to reorganise government in the city-region. Three months later, he opened the new state museum of architecture (Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine) by announcing 'Le Grand Pari de l'agglomération parisienne' (the grand wager of the Paris region). 'Grand Paris' translates as 'Greater Paris' and happens to pun with *grand pari*, which means a big wager. And Sarkozy, with state funds to the tune of several million euros placed his bet on a string of activities designed not only to provoke debate but to keep control of it. He initiated a huge competition, involving ten large teams of big-name architects and others, to propose ideas and images for a future 'Grand Paris'. Less in the spotlight, a team led by Minister Blanc had started planning a state alternative to the Région Île-de-France's transport plan.

By elevating the phrase 'Grand Paris' to national, indeed global, prominence, Sarkozy wanted the concept of something new and grand to persist and to always be associated with him.[5] Ten years later, he noted that he was 'very happy that the word, the concept of Grand Paris has not been possible to stop' (Auffray & Vincedon, 2017). His eye was on 'the economic actors' who, as the reports and proposals of the CCIP revealed (CCIP, 2009; Debost Damas, 2007), eagerly awaited the creation of new spaces for business activities that would facilitate profit-making and capital accumulation.

His point of departure was to focus on physical as well as governmental futures for the city-region. His competition resulted in the recruitment of ten teams led by international big-name architects/urbanists.[6] They were directed by Sarkozy to reimagine the capital as a global city, with at least the boldness of Haussmann's famous recasting in the mid nineteenth century.

Working from mid-2008 into 2009, their images and plans were presented at the 1 250-seat national theatre on 17 March 2009, and then formed a large exhibition at the majestic Cité de l'Architecture, housed in the Palais de Chaillot, opposite the Eiffel Tower. Well over 200 000 people saw the exhibition,[7] which sparked an unprecedented volume of media coverage and vast amounts

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5   Henri Prost, who produced a city-region plan in 1934, is often credited with the invention of the title 'Grand Paris' (Le Moniteur, 2014).
6   Jean Nouvel, Richard Rogers, Christian de Portzamparc, Roland Castro, Djamel Clouche, Antoine Grumbach and others, working with urban planners, economists and scholars.
7   Interview with Ms Agostina Pinon, communications officer, Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine, Paris, 10 November 2010.

of commentary in blogs and social media. The images put forward ranged from the mundane to the utopian. All were based on the notion that the city-region's public transit system was saturated, its appearance spoiled by ugly housing and other projects, and that the banlieue were an undefined sprawl of disconnected towns – in short, that the city-region did not work as it needed to do.

The exhibition, the proposals and their images were extremely widely publicised, a comprehensive source being a volume produced by the magazine *Le Moniteur* (Drevon, 2009). Commentary may be found, amongst many other sources, in Enright (2016).[8] The images in Figure 3 give some sense of the grand scale and the sometimes extraordinary ideas put forth by the teams. A major common theme encouraged viewers to see much faster travel times across the city-region as a tantalising future prospect – a theme which has been pursued ever since.

Producing and disseminating these images of the future had several results: the phrase 'Grand Paris' entered the popular lexicon; its use conjured the leading role of the state as opposed to other bodies; and the publicity generated widespread informal discussion. In addition, the exhibition and debate prepared the public for megaprojects with objectives similar to the fanciful futures imagined by the architects, and provoked responses from a range of other actors. With support from various public sector stakeholders, the Atelier International du Grand Paris (AIGP, Grand Paris international workshop) drew together numerous professionals for several years (it was disbanded in 2018). The AIGP mounted a much more modest exhibition that travelled to several museums in the Paris region for a month at a time in 2016/2017, though its effect on wider public discussion was probably limited.

One answer from the Paris Métropole, whose preferred name for the city-region had been partially eclipsed by Sarkozy's 'Grand Paris', lay in organising competitions for new across-commune projects. In 2010, the Paris Métropole ran a competition for innovative projects called 'Initiatives Métropolitains'. Each round of these initiatives has seen large-scale public exhibitions of planning proposals, and has thus widened debate. Proposals prepared by teams working for groups of communes were exhibited at the Cité de la Mode et du Design (fashion and design centre) during November 2010 and again in later rounds. Creative but practical projects were proposed by groups of communes across their, sometimes impermeable, boundaries. Themes were tilted towards creating a 'metropolis for all'. Such Paris Métropole initiatives kept alive the notion of alternatives to the state's agenda for the city-region.

Meanwhile, a different challenge to Sarkozy's 'Grand Paris' initiative was developing as the City of Paris sought to mobilise history as a means of rethinking the city-region.

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8 A useful summary in English can be found at http://bustler.net/news/768/ten-scenarios-for-grand-paris-metropolis-now-up-for-public-debate

Figure 3: Select images from three of the ten 'Grand Pari(s)' teams exhibited in 2009

GARE NORD EUROPE

Le plus grand réseau de métropole mondiale
TGV la consultation européenne

Autour de la gare, à Aubervilliers et à
Paris, se développeront les quartiers
d'affaires et tertiaire à l'échelle
européenne.

Gare Nord-Europe, hub européen et
local, accès direct depuis les RER B,
D et E, depuis l'annulaire rapide et le
périphérique.

Sur les emprises ferroviaires de la gare
du Nord, un parc serait créé, bordé d'un
magnifique front bâti résidentiel.

Le boulevard Sébastopol prolongé sur les
rails gare de l'Est serait un nouvel axe
avec trois hauteurs de constructions en
croissance vers le périphérique.

Situé au prolongement du
boulevard Sébastopol, le
nouveau hub européen
qui regroupe à la fois la
gare du Nord et de l'Est,
connecté au réseau de
transport en commun
parisien, formerait le
point de départ d'un pôle
d'affaires, de rencontres,
de commerces, de finances

5 Mobilising history: 'I learnt to see my urban universe differently'

Whilst the scale (and expense) of the state's Grand Pari(s) mobilisation of future imagery lay beyond the capacities of other authorities, that did not mean there were not alternative ways of influencing debate and expanding it in the direction of wider populations. The City of Paris (and some other actors) chose to mobilise history in the service of debate over future institutions of government.

In *The city and the grassroots*, Manuel Castells (1983, p. 335) wrote that 'cities are the products of history, both of the urban forms and functions inherited from the past, and of the new urban meanings assigned to them by conflictive historical change'. As Jean-Louis Cohen (2009) noted, a key theme running through much more than a century is that of contest and occasionally open conflict between the central state and the City of Paris – and sometimes between the state and a larger part of the city-region. Understandings of these histories are not only divided, they also constitute powerfully diverging approaches to change.

Since the last expansion of the City of Paris in 1860, when numerous communes surrounding the city were incorporated in whole or in part and the City more than doubled in area, that year provides a key reference point in contested understandings of the metropolis or city-region, raising questions such as 'Should the City of Paris expand again?' or 'Should there be a new city-region authority?' Seeking to regain a powerful position in the debate with respect to future structures of city-region government, and taking advantage of the century and a half since 1860, in 2010, Delanoë's City of Paris mounted an exhibition, a series of events and conferences, and worked with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to interpret that period in history in support of the politics of alternative ways of seeing.

Photograph © Alan Mabin

The City's 'committee for the history of Paris' (a Delanoë creation in 2007) mounted an exhibition called '150 ans – 1860: Agrandir Paris' ('150 years – 1860: To expand Paris'). The exhibition, curated by historians of Paris, Florence Bourillon and Annie Fourcaut, mobilised history in much more than an antiquarian fashion. In 1860, the City incorporated several neighbouring communes into Paris (bringing familiar names to the Paris neighbourhoods of today such as Montmartre, La Villette, Belleville and Grenelle) (Fourcaut et al., 2007).

The key figure in the imperial reshaping of the city in the 1860s was 'Baron' Georges-Eugène Haussmann. Appointed in 1853 by Napoleon III during the 'second empire', Haussmann is known well beyond the discipline of city planning as the creator of the boulevards which sliced through the city in mostly straight lines. The boulevards provided military advantage to armies, including the national one that bloodily put down the Paris Commune of 1871 (Harvey, 2006); they also revolutionised the use of city space for property development and large-scale commercial activity. As dangerous as drawing historical parallels may be, it is hard to avoid a sense that the presidential regime of Sarkozy sought a similarly massive project of reorganisation and restructuring of the city-region for capital accumulation. The City, on the other hand, sought a more socially inclusive future.[9] A series of events culminated in an evening debate at the City's architecture museum, the Pavillon de l'Arsenal, on 14 October 2010, with its theme confirming the underlying purpose of the City's mobilisation of history: 'From Haussmann's Paris to the construction of the Métropole: Diverse perspectives and intersecting questions'.

What distinguished this series was the representation of the changes from the 1860s as controversial, contested, and not simply handed down and accepted by all. That latter view – more suited to the state's programme than the City's approach – was communicated by a competing exhibition. Also seen by thousands, the 'Paris Avant/Après: 1860–2011' (before/after) exhibition was sponsored by BNP Paribas Real Estate in sumptuous spaces off the Place des Vosges at the conservative Academie de l'Architecture – the most expensive real estate one can imagine (16 000 euros/m^2). This version's message was that Haussmann's brilliantly directed and centrally planned expansion of the city had fostered wonderful property development in the newly included areas to the greater glory of what had been, in this account, awful *faubourgs* (outside areas). In this treatment, the expansion of Paris was part of creating new spaces with new mobilities (along the famous Haussmann boulevards especially, as well as on incorporated territory) for successful capital accumulation and its supporting architecture (De Moncan & Marville, 2010).

These exhibitions deeply etched the mobilisation of history into present debate on the meanings of 'metropolis' in the Paris region. Several strategies were central to the City's own '150 years' exhibition, but none more so than sensitively treating the change in relationships between Paris and its neighbours. That strategy tied in with the ten years of transformation of Paris–banlieue relationships through the Paris-Métropole. Good publicity meant that a series of related events were well communicated in

various media. The '150 years' exhibition formed part of a series of events which included conferences and nine walking tours, as well as more detailed publications (e.g. Mairie de Paris, 2010).

Each walking tour was repeated three times. They all started from a specific point on the pre-1860 boundary, traversed a section of the territory included in 1860, and continued into a neighbouring commune or two. Each day-long tour (of course with a long lunch stop) could be called a '"transect walk" that provide[d] a sense of how former suburbs have been absorbed into the city and become urbanised, and suggests how current suburbs may evolve over time' (Association les Promenades Urbaines, 2010). That comment could be interpreted in either of the modes of the two exhibitions described above: but other comments by over 150 participants recorded by the Promenades Urbaines team reveal that the thirst for enriched understandings of a complicated history trumped the idea of Haussmannian success in creating new terrains of capital accumulation. In addition to excitement at 'discovering unknown localities', the comments include 'above all I learnt to see my surrounding urban universe differently'. And numerous participants spoke enthusiastically along similar lines – of discovering 'complementarity between Paris and the banlieue' – gaining 'another view of the banlieue, valuing them more highly' – of learning a lot about the banlieue, as one pre-school teacher of 54 years of age put it, 'where I never go'. Overcoming insularity was exactly the purpose of the city-linked events around '150 years' of Paris boundaries. One participant wrote that the walking tour 'gave access to a collective vision of the city'.[10]

Similar comments were recorded by viewers of the '150 years' exhibition in its *livre d'or* (comment book). Some noted how much planning for the future of the Paris area was usually hidden, or pointed to the event's questioning of whether the new project of 'Grand Paris' was achievable.[11] The image of Paris and its history created by the exhibition, the tours and other events, matched that promoted by the Paris Métropole. The tours, conferences and the City's exhibition provoked many to think that Paris was once again in need of reorganisation – an incorporation of much of the metropolitan space into some new form of government. So did the competing 'before and after' event – but with different ideas on what that form of government would be.

Overcoming insularity was exactly the purpose of the city-linked events around '150 years' of Paris boundaries

10   Written comments collected in a spreadsheet were supplied by Noémie Giard, Association les Promenades Urbaines, Paris, 25 February 2011.
11   I read these comments in the exhibition's comment book on 28 November 2011.

Figure 4: Poster for the exhibition '150 ans – 1860: Agrandir Paris'

Poster © Comité de l'Histoire de la Ville de Paris, used with permission
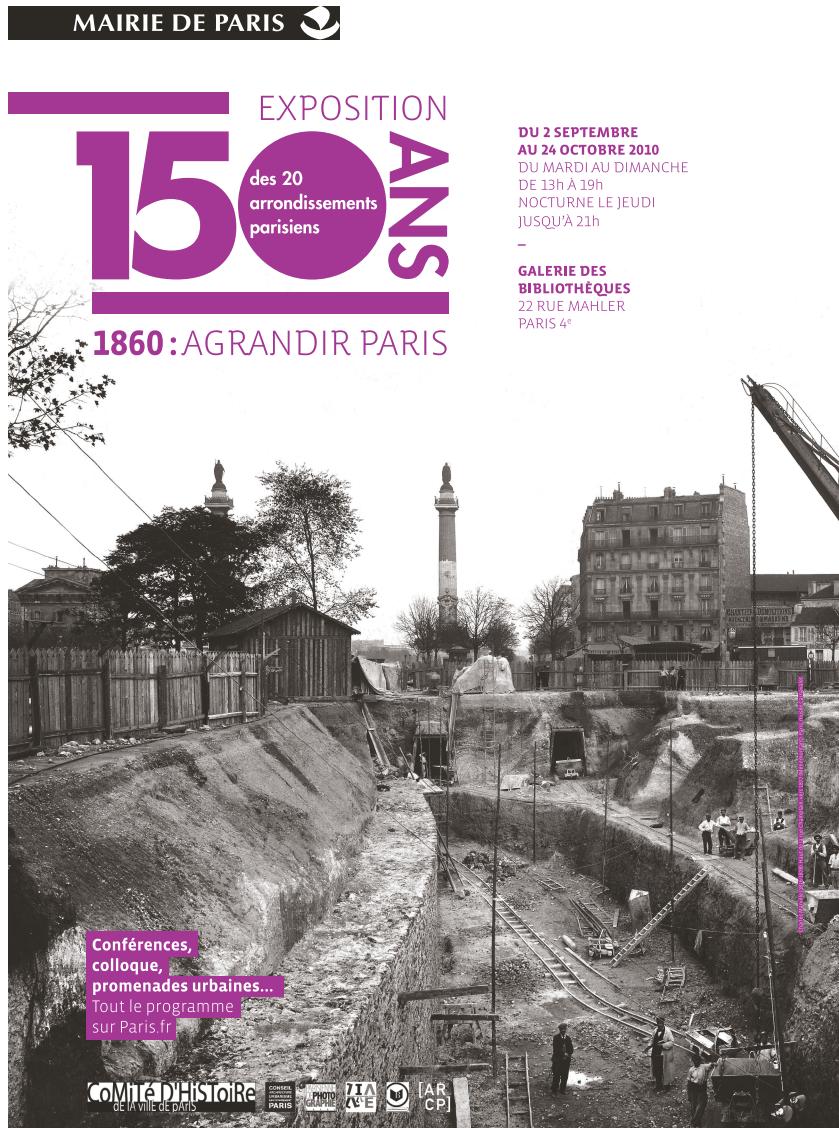
Whilst it would be impossible to prove direct connections from any of these events to positions in debates about Grand Paris, this unprecedented groundswell of representation and activity – as with the Grand Paris exhibition – stimulated debate and involvement in debate about the future of the city-region. Although only a fraction of the 2 million people who live in the City of Paris or the 12 million who live in the Région Île-de-France could participate, a variety of stories became available to people through many kinds of events and exhibitions. These stories supported a recognition of the concept of the city-region, and an expansion and deepening of debate about government and mobility at city-region scale.

The City of Paris – still led by the left with Delanoë's deputy and successor Anne Hidalgo as mayor since 2014 (who won the 2020 mayoral elections) – continues to mobilise history in the service of its ambitions. A further (free) exhibition, running at the Hôtel de Ville for three months under the title 'Le government des Parisiens: Paris, ses habitants, l'état, une historie partagée' ('Government of Parisians: Residents, the state, a shared history'), displayed attempts on the part of the state to control government in Paris. It did so from the violent suppression of the Paris Commune in 1871 to then President Pompidou's 1973 annotation on a memorandum concerning the re-creation of a mayoralty for Paris: 'I don't want a mayor with complete powers.' The last panel in the exhibition (seen on 9 June 2017) claimed that in 'The long history of relationships between Paris and the State [...] adjustments and [joint] projects continue to shape the futures that it is always possible to reinvent.'

National institutions also have frequent recourse to mobilising history, sometimes via their websites. A 2016 short film posted by the Societé du Grand Paris (SGP) – the national agency pursuing construction of the Grand Paris Express (GPE) and property development around dozens of new stations – begins with images of Paris in the nineteenth century: Eiffel is seen designing the tower that bears his name, the tower emerging from the ground (1889), followed by images of new complexes springing up around GPE stations.[12] This contribution evokes the supposed need for massive state intervention to deal with city-region issues following in the steps of Eiffel – a mobilisation of historical imagination in the service of a top-down approach.

The extent of contest over memory empowers many people to think about the future in a more complex way. New notions of the city-region entered into public debate which were focused on megaproject proposals for new passenger rail lines from late 2010 onwards, before returning to contesting questions of city-region government after 2012. These issues form the subject of the next two sections.

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12   View this film, *Créons ensemble la Métropole du Grand Paris,* at https://youtu.be/FHsA6wqiL-c

6 Official debate on future transport: Grand Paris Express

Whilst the explosion of discussion on city-region futures can be seen in the spaces of the internet and all sorts of media, the national commission for public debate (set up in 1995) provided an official space for discussion. From the end of September 2010 until January 2011, the Région's Arc Express project was pitted against the state's transport network proposals, originally titled 'Réseau de Transport Public du Grand Paris'.

 The Arc Express called for a new metro rail system in a ring roughly parallel to the Boulevard Périphérique highway along the borders of the City, connecting poorly served communes. National government proposals, prepared under Sarkozy's aegis, sought a more extensive system, in part similar to, yet mostly further from, the geographical centre, and certainly more expensive. 'The former favoured serving existing areas of population density, particularly disadvantaged communities [...] while the latter emphasised establishing and reinforcing economic clusters in the far periphery linked to airports and high-speed TGV [Train à Grande Vitesse, high-speed train] lines' (Belkind, 2013).

Figure 5: Comparison of Région (green) and state (red) proposals for public transport in 2010

Map © Institut Paris-Region, used with permission
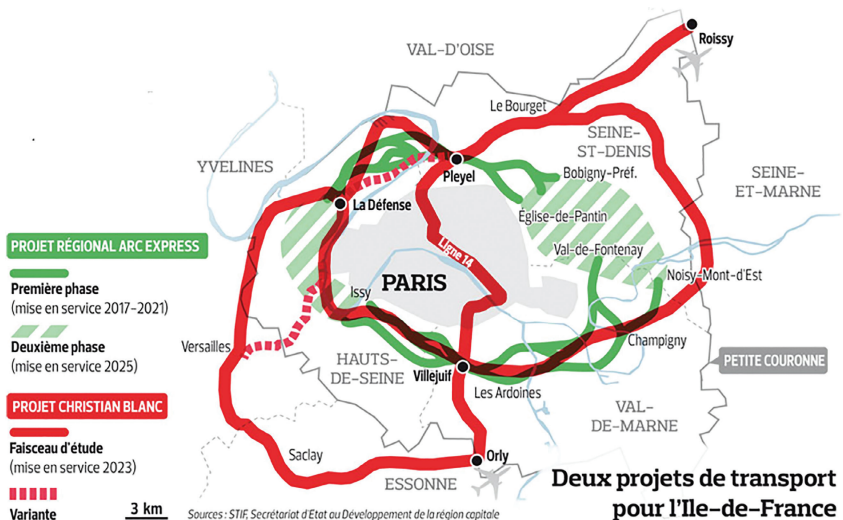
More than 50 events in the public debate can be seen, heard or read on the internet.[13] A 12-member commission, drawn from professionals and wider (mostly elite) society, took submissions. Perhaps 20 000 people attended in total. Questions were posed online during live debates. It would be hard to say exactly how many people viewed the recordings, transcripts and summaries, but the reach of the participants went far beyond the traditional audience of professionals and other officials. Historian Annie Fourcaut called these 'techno-political' public debates, in which major underlying issues of governance and the voices of public transport users were submerged beneath views on exact station location.[14] Many residents stressed their apprehension that transit plans focused on serving new, globally oriented economic 'poles' whilst ignoring longstanding transport inadequacies in existing communities.[15]

Some days before the last public event in January 2011, the state and the Région reached agreement on a final proposal, pushed along by widespread public discussion and the threat of electoral disaster if conflict continued. Reflecting the dominant position of the state, particularly with respect to finance, the outcome was close to the national proposals with additions to serve more communities, especially in the east. The Grand Paris Express (GPE) emerged as the snappy name for the new network.

Many issues surfaced in the official debates, not only transport. Blogs, letters to editors, columnists and endless conversations in private and elsewhere, illustrated that the issues exercised many people in the city-region. 'Desperate Banlieuesard' noted in January 2011 that the contest between 'the metro of the right against the metro of the left' seemed to be 'emerging from the tunnel',[16] an amusing example of wide engagement.[17]

The state had already, in June 2010, established a public company, the Société du Grand Paris (SGP), to drive new transport development in the region. Construction began in numerous places in 2016, and first sections were scheduled to open from 2020 (now unlikely with pandemic-related delays), with most to follow over the next five to ten years. The SGP has been given extensive powers to plan and acquire land within a radius of 400 m (50 hectares, the size of Johannesburg zoo) around at least 68 new stations (Gilli, 2014). In total, the SGP holds powers over 3 500 hectares, roughly 30 times the area of central Sandton in Gauteng. By mid-2019, projects were in process for new development around many of the 15 new stations along what may be the first entirely new line to open, going from east to west in the south of the City of Paris itself. More than a fifth of the area subject to SGP control along that line was already affected, with promises of 33 000 new housing units, 1.4 million m^2 of office space and another million for commercial and other activities in

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13 A record of public debate on transport proposals for the Paris region from 2010 to 2011 is available at http://cpdp.debatpublic.fr/cpdp-grandparis/
14 Interview, Professor Annie Fourcaut, Université Paris 1-Sorbonne, 15 September 2011.
15 I observed several of the debates on site and others live via the internet.
16 See https://parisbanlieue.wordpress.com/2011/01/22/grand-paris-metro-des-champs-et-cantonales-temps-confus-pour-la-metropole…/
17 See Jean-Paul Chapon's blog post at https://parisbanlieue.wordpress.com. For an eclectic selection of wide debate, see https://blogs.mediapart.fr/scopfair/blog; www.bondyblog.fr; https://bambiaparis.com/grand-paris/; https://monaulnay.com/category/grand-paris-2; https://twitter.com/gpso_seineouest; www.facebook.com/VisionGrandParis/; and many more.

Figure 6: Plan of Grand Paris Express lines and stations under development, 2018

Map © Societé du Grand Paris
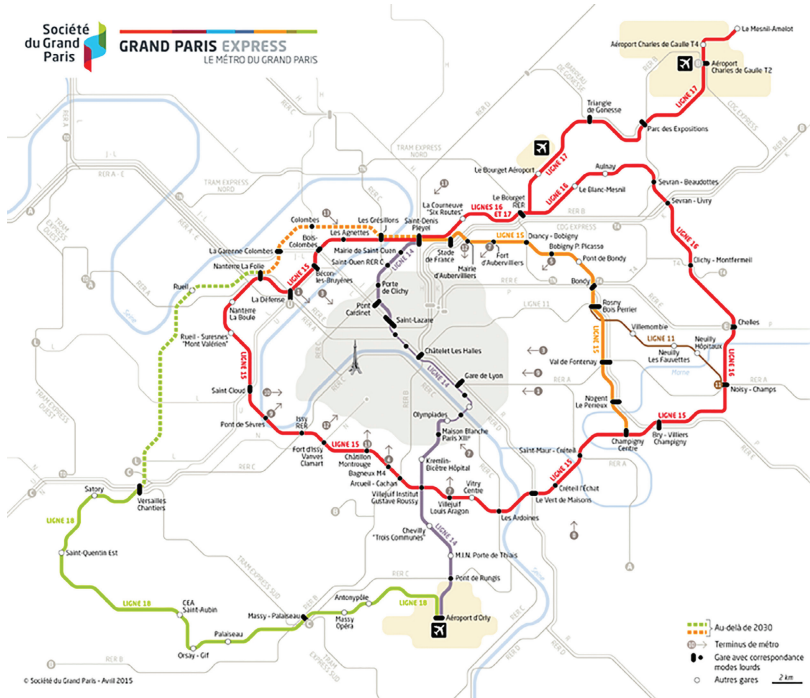
these new, decentralised city-region nodes (Paquier, 2019a). The GPE and SGP are intended to do something which Haussmann did in mid nineteenth-century Paris – to create new spaces for capital accumulation. In Haussmann's case, that happened in the territories annexed to the City of Paris in 1860 as well as along the famous boulevards (Bourillon & Fourcaut, 2012).

Some authors suggest that 'Grand Paris' reveals 'a new mode of neoliberalism in France that combines the republican values of social cohesion and vast public spending, particularly in infrastructures of mass transit, with speculative development, global finance and private enterprise' (Enright, 2012, p. vii; see also Kipfer et al., 2016). The GPE – the so-called largest construction project in Europe – is driven by the state according to a plan significantly affected by other actors. It has the potential to dramatically remake the space of the city-region as its various lines reach (projected) completion over the next six to 15 years.

Like all megaprojects, cost estimates continue to rise and postponements occur. By early 2018, official estimates approached 40 billion euros (around R700 billion or something like 20 Gautrain projects). Cost issues have led to arguments about dropping or postponing some of the lines in the

east of the region; this is controversial since those lines would serve less advantaged communities. The SGP continues to seek ways of legitimating its project, promising for example that, from Pont de Sèvres in the south west to Noisy-Champs in the east, the GPE will reduce the present travel time of '1h01' on public transport to 37 minutes.

Some imagined that Sarkozy's defeat in the presidential election of 2012 by a socialist (François Hollande) would reverse the GPE project. However, Subra (2012) has suggested that the election did not change the GPE's direction, not least because the densification of areas around proposed stations is strongly supported by many local politicians. Details of the new tracks, services and stations received much attention in the course of official public debate. Different local options came under scrutiny and, right through to subsequent hearings on each section of the new system, the public debate exercised some influence over the final plans. Yet matters such as the enormous planning and development powers of the SGP were less subject to public discussion.

All these moments stimulated interest in, and the expression of views on, the future of the city-region as a whole, bringing questions beyond the purely local into focus. Such publicity gave impetus to gathering changes in institutions of government. Whilst the massive construction of the GPE continues at 150 sites (interrupted by the pandemic for two months in 2020) and as areas around many of its stations are prepared for new investment, institutions of city-region government are also being recast.

Figure 7: Construction site of the Grand Paris Express Line 14 extension station at Pont Cardinet, March 2017

Photograph © Alan Mabin

7 Institutional debate: Towards 'La Métropole du Grand Paris' and after

Whilst official debate on new rail systems occupied much attention in 2010/2011, an outpouring of publications from 2008 onwards had put forward a gamut of ideas concerning future institutions of government in the city-region. Architect/urbanist Philippe Panerai produced a popular volume exploring the Paris region – supported by the national ministry of culture – in which he remarked, 'between the Paris inherited from Haussmann and the Région Île-de-France, there is a lack of an intermediate scale, an entity that makes sense and has a name that unifies and federates' (2008, p. 14). That theme was picked up by researchers at two elite Paris universities (Sciences Po and the École Nationale de Ponts et Chaussées), who argued that a 'new kind' of institution should be created, which they called the 'Haut Conseil du Paris Métropolitain' (Gilli & Offner, 2008, pp. 170–171).

Consensus about a need for change is not the same as consensus about what kind of change should take place. Whilst diverse visions continued to seek support (e.g. Belkind, 2013; Gilli, 2014; Lemoine, 2015; Orfeuil & Wiel; 2012; Subra, 2012), the question of what new institution might emerge remained open. Between 2008 and 2012, institutional debate was shaped by the two competing forces of the national government under President Sarkozy and the City of Paris and its allies led by the office of Mayor Delanoë. For some participants, the Paris Métropole association was intended to lead to a new demarcation and form of government in the area. The Paris Métropole took a step towards new city-region government by preparing a green paper (Paris Métropole, 2012; Wiel, 2012) on future government. It proposed holding 20 public debates on its thinking – but these were suspended when the new government under President Hollande (2012–2017) prepared a law to set up a metropolitan government (Gilli, 2014). Once again, in 2015, the Paris Métropole held a series of forums, 20 around the region, to debate city-region futures less formally and metropolitan government more specifically (APUR, 2015). Lengthy debates in the National Assembly and the Senate were hotly contested (inside and outside the chambers).

Nonetheless, the Hollande presidency produced a new institution. The Métropole du Grand Paris (MGP), established by a law finalised in late 2015, is much larger than the City of Paris with a population of 7 million, but rather smaller in area than the Région Île-de-France. This outcome was made possible since '[l]ittle by little the positions and interests of each actor have crystallised around the idea that a modernisation of the Paris region is necessary' (Gilli, 2014, p. 27).

From 1 January 2016, the Paris city-region has for the first time a 'metropolitan' governmental authority. The MGP includes geographically (but does not replace) the City of Paris. It groups 130 other communes into 11 territorial collectives which must share resources and plans, and which, some suggest, could become new kinds of government in the future.

Figure 8: Five perimeters of the Paris region: the urban catchment (*aire urbaine*), Île-de-France, the continuous urban area (*unite urbaine*), the Métropole du Grand Paris and the City of Paris

Map © Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques
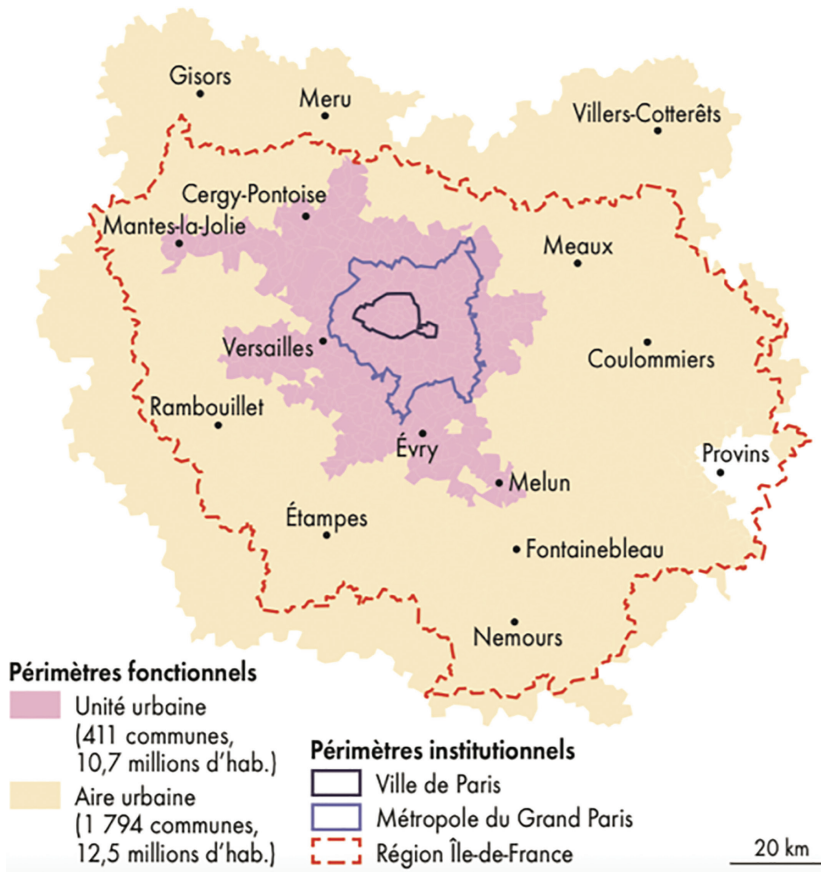
The MGP Council has 209 members, who are appointed by commune councils from among their membership, and elects its president. The MGP has four potential major powers, some having been progressively transferred to it from the communes:

- Economic, social and cultural planning and development;
- Environmental protection, including preparing a climate–air–energy plan and a master plan for energy reticulation;
- Metropolitan spatial planning; and
- Housing policy.

The MGP is empowered to take over delegated functions from other bodies, including the state, particularly for housing, major infrastructure and large projects. It is supposed to share its mandate operationally with the territorial entities in its area. The most significant of the MGP's powers relate to housing policy, and to the preparation and adoption of a land use plan that would, in time, substitute for the local plans of communes (described below). With respect to housing, the MGP is required to prepare a Plan Metropolitain de l'Habitat et de l'Hébergement (PMHH, a metropolitan plan for housing and shelter). The plan is required for the MGP to become the key housing authority in its area, to be able to set goals, for example for social housing production in each commune, and to pursue their enforcement. Diagnostic work contracted to the City of Paris urban planning agency, the Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme (APUR), was completed in early 2018 and a PMHH was then drafted. However, in March 2019, right-wing members of the MGP Council prevented adoption of the plan because it could have forced recalcitrant communes to undertake major new social housing projects. The president of the MGP then postponed the process in April 2019. Agreement had not been reached before the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020, and the potentially powerful housing role of the MGP remains to be realised.[18]

According to some actors, the MGP was 'created in a coherent fashion in the history of Paris, making a natural step in the development of the city-region' (Préfet de la Région d'Île de France, 2016). But this 'fifth layer of government' (in addition to communes, départements, the Région, plus the state) remains controversial. On one side, current national government under President Macron seems intent on extending its scope, to the extent of collapsing the départements into the Métropole: 'where there is the Métropole, the job of the départements is to disappear', Macron stated during his campaign in early 2017 (Vincendon, 2017). But that notion, which Macron did not pursue,[19] is hotly contested, especially by leaders of the départements.

18 Elements of this history may be found at https://www.elugaucheblr.fr/le-plan-metropolitain-de-lhabitat-et-de-lhebergement-rejete-par-la-droite/; http://mgp.pmhh.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/demarche-PMHH.pdf; and https://www.metropolegrandparis.fr/sites/default/files/2019-01/Conseil_Métropolitain_Délibération_18_12_07_01.pdf

19 President Macron appointed a single person, Roland Castro, to produce a report on the future of the city-region as a whole; but unlike Sarkozy's Grand Paris initiative, this appointment and report fell on unfertile ground (Castro, 2018; Vincendon, 2018).

The right-wing president of the Région – Valerie Pécresse, elected after Huchon in 2015 – argued even before the MGP began that 'it's already time to abandon the Métropole du Grand Paris [...] Why add a fifth layer to the territorial mesh?' (Vincendon, 2015). In the political realignments of French national politics after the election of President Macron in 2016, fluidity of opinion on the subject increased: the future of the long-powerful Socialist Party was thrown into question and, further to the right, uncertainty grew. 'One hears a new solution almost every day', according to Vincendon (2017). Région president Pécresse quit her conservative party in June 2019. To the left, mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo called for 'accelerating the pace' of the MGP's work (Faure, 2018). It remains to be seen whether the MGP is something 'that costs little because it does so little', or whether it begins to take up greater authority as a form of city-region government (Faure, 2018).

The MGP's actions continue to raise controversy. During 2019, preparation of a first potentially authoritative spatial development framework (the Schéma de Coherence Territoriale, SCOT) for the Métropole attracted conflict among mayors, who would be required to keep development approvals in line with the SCOT as it replaced each commune's plan. Planners preparing the SCOT insist that 'a series of major issues can only be addressed at metropolitan level', against voices contesting a potentially 'prescriptive' outcome, and calling for delay until after the 2020 local government elections (Paquier, 2019b, p. 5). Opposition to densification in single family dwelling zones provided one motivation. Others – accepting an incremental process – nonetheless emphasised the negative impacts that individual communes could impose on others, stating for example that 'it's for this reason that we created a Métropole' (Paquier, 2019b, p. 5).

The MGP remains a work in progress, with both the PMHH and the SCOT delayed beyond their anticipated 2019 implementation (Paquier, 2020). Its development has been slowed by deep internal dispute and by the 2020 pandemic, which in turn delayed the second round of municipal elections. The new MGP councillors, largely the same people as before, were finally elected on 20 July 2020. The re-elected president Patrick Ollier, who was challenged from the anti-metro side but won in the first stage of the election on 9 July, stated that, 'My aim is to continue working to advance the interests of the 7.2 million inhabitants in a constructive fashion and without any partisan division [...] our mutual objective to open debate on the future Métropole, ever more resilient, cohesive, creative, ecological and attractive' (MGP, 2020).

In relation to the future shaping of the city-region, the SGP – the state-controlled public company implementing the GPE – is playing a powerful role, backed up by a major publicity campaign. The enormous powers to create and transform space around the 80 stations of the new rail system allow the SGP to claim that 'as the Paris Metro shaped the city in the twentieth century, the GPE will make its imprint on the city of the twenty-first century. The GPE carries a new conception of the city, more compact and more mixed. It encourages a more dense city without the car, attractive and ecological. It has an unprecedented potential for densification of the city' (SGP & IdFM, 2019, p. 12).

Whilst the MGP will continue to gather powers to shape the city, it will not do so in a vacuum, and contests between different authorities are likely to continue, particularly as the massive impact

of the GPE and its stations on property, residence, inequality, potential gentrification, employment and development in general unfold (Béhar & Estèbe, 2019).

A prominent academic observer of the Paris-region scene noted in March 2020 that 'Grand Paris is largely absent from the debate on municipal elections [...] the candidates carefully avoid an institutional question [...]: should we strengthen an emerging Métropole du Grand Paris or rather rely on the affirmation of the Région?' (Béhar, 2020). A long-time journalist focused on city-region questions, Sybil Vincendon wrote (with a colleague) in the newspaper *Libération*, 'municipal localism is winning in Grand Paris' (Vincendon & Belaïch, 2020). Indirect election to the MGP Council means that local concerns predominate in municipal elections: but public debate on the Paris-region government, hugely expanded over the past decade, has continued. Its further continuation perhaps depends on the growth of NGOs at metropolitan scale, something not guaranteed and probably needing stimulus from diverse actors (Béhar & Delpirou, 2020). Can there be an 'altermétropolisation' – an alternative to the two developments under way at Paris city-region scale – the new MGP and the new railways (the GPE) driven by the SGP?

At the time of writing, and even after the delayed election, the future of the MGP remains unclear, with the possibility, depending on various political processes, that the pendulum could be swinging back in favour of the Région.

For all city-regions, the question remains, how can different actors inform and challenge each other in debate and through action at city-region scale? The last section of this paper turns to these questions, seeking to learn from the Paris experience.

Photograph © Alan Mabin

8 Debate on the GCR can broaden and deepen

What is striking about the Paris case is how exponentially the sheer volume of discussion, debate and contest has grown in a decade – and how so many members of the population, not only professionals and politicians, became involved. What actions, accidents, intentions, projects and publicity have provoked widespread debate on structures of government, megaprojects and plans for the city-region of Paris, involving many thousands of people? This Provocation provides an eclectic review of some of the factors that have resulted in wider and deeper popular discussion; and, indeed, consciousness of the city-region, as opposed to local or smaller areas within it, as the setting of collective and individual lives and futures. This last section summarises the benefits of this broad and deep public discussion about the Paris region, and asks how, drawing on that French experience, debate might be broadened and deepened in the GCR.

Adaptation to rapidly shifting circumstances – social, political, economic, spatial – confronts government and governance in all large city-regions. Yet public debate is absent in many, including in the GCR. In Gauteng, much of the debate about the future is limited to professionals and politicians: technical dominance in government structures and processes has left little space for diverse, broader and deeper public engagement. Some efforts have been made to stimulate discussion: there has been public participation in planning for Gauteng 2055 and the Gauteng Spatial Development Framework; however, these efforts do not yet engage a broad and deep public. For example, present planning for the expansion of Gautrain's tracks across the city-region is taking place well out of public view and is thus deprived of the public debate for which the potential expenditure of billions cries out. Stresses among municipal, provincial and national government structures continue everywhere. The perils of too little public discussion can be revealed uncomfortably, as public resistance to the Gauteng e-tolls shows. Yet the public needs opportunities to engage in thinking about future forms and directions. Of course, wider debate brings risks, but it also brings creativities. Open discussion can help to tilt against proprietary and sectional political agendas.

In the Paris-region case reviewed in this Provocation, a first significant benefit of wide debate in Paris has been the far greater identification as citizens and residents of a city-region – in whatever way that region is understood or defined. One of the effects of the events of the past decade has been to help many citizens and others 'to forget that there is a périphérique symbolic of separation' between the city and its surrounds – that the ring freeway is not the perimeter of the metropolitan space (Bleskine, 2008). In the Paris case, visitors are exhorted on arrival to 'VisitParisRegion'[20] now that there is, for the first time, a 'Paris Region Tourist Board' to promote the city-region – and not only a small part of it – as a tourism destination.The Paris debates have brought an outpouring of creativity, which helps to cure the stultifying nature of debates that take place behind closed doors. There has been an empowering of 'citizenship' to engage in future-oriented, rather than 'I need now', participation.

20 https://www.visitparisregion.com/en/

How could such wider and deeper debate be stimulated in the GCR? Can history as well as images of the future be mobilised to help people to see and engage with the possibilities of Gauteng as a city-region? What would make the city-region a space for citizenship claims (going beyond Baiocchi & Checa, 2009)? Whatever new forms are created, there will continue to be demands for change, dissatisfaction with structures and processes, and the incremental progress of change – sometimes staccato – will continue. The proposition here is that, as in the Paris region, deeper debate will help to carry the city-region forward.

Drawing on the Paris experience, a variety of agencies in the GCR might consider the following suggestions for broadening debate.

Mobilise history as a story of solidarity, not just separation

Mobilisations of history to provoke reflections at city-region scale in Paris contrast with the relative absence of appeals to the past in Gauteng, beyond holding apartheid accountable for its many undoubted legacies of harm. These distant but compelling initiatives from abroad are suggestive of ways to stimulate a different public conversation about the city-region of Gauteng. Mobilisations of history are not only a way of provoking such debate, but can also be a very powerful means of drawing participation and learning anew, especially if connected to conferencing, other forms of discussion and special activities – the Paris '150-years' walking tours being an example.

Photograph © Alan Mabin

Sponsor international involvement in generating images of the future

Also powerful are mobilisations of competing visions and images of the future. The scale of funding that President Sarkozy was able to harness to promote the 'Grand Paris' idea might be difficult to achieve in Gauteng's context. Nevertheless, the notion of bringing in teams from other places to collaborate creatively with local people, the media and all sorts of local organisations might be extremely effective in generating new ways of seeing the city-region's future. If government structures at different scales led such activities, they could also be encouraged not to frustrate other agencies doing the same.

Encourage and support the production of literatures on and in the city-region

A major project that could be funded (and indeed funded by different institutions and foundations) is to *write* the GCR into being, adding to what the GCRO has already set out to do.[21] Hard as it would be to reach the exceptional levels of literary and scholarly output set in Paris and its region, a fascinating result of recent debates has been the far greater output of work set at the scale of the city-region, or large parts of it, and not merely at the local. One could refer to many texts to observe the massive variety from the Paris case – some of it provocative, such as Lemoine's (2015) *Les 101 mots du Grand Paris* (101 words of Grand Paris). Creative writing – such as the essays and stories in Bleskine's (2008) *Le Grand Paris est un roman* (Grand Paris is a novel) – contributes to widening and popularising discussion on the notion of Grand Paris as composed of many stories. Authors range from journalists to novelists to outsiders to scholars and professionals, and sometimes citizens who do not readily fit such categories. A novel, such as Bellanger's (2017) *Le Grand Paris*, that part-fictionalises events across the region might do the same. And creative work need not be limited to the written word. Photography – commissioned, for example, as in Parr (2014), whose 40 images substitute for traditional maps – may generate a much wider appreciation of the city-region and its issues. Competitions and sponsorship provide a way to accomplish such things.

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21 The GCRO, together with colleagues at Gauteng's universities, has the rich opportunity of engaging the international city-region literatures with their implications of polycentricity and complexity (Gugler, 2004; Mabin, 2005; Scott, 2001). Pressures for change in forms of metropolitan or city-region government are global and continuous whether city-region scale bodies are disbanded (London) or newly created (Toronto) (Barlow, 1991). The present state of international discussion raises 'critical questions about how governance reform is reshaped' (Jones et al., 2015). It is still not clear why experiences of city-regions have differed so markedly (Sharpe, 1995) and the literatures continue to expand rapidly (Booth & Jouve, 2005; Hamel & Poitras, 2004; Hamilton, 2012; Keil et al., 2009; Kübler, 2012; Lefevre et al., 2013; Mould, 2016; Phares, 2004; Storper, 2013).

Keep growing research

There is plenty to do – see, for example, Mark Purcell's (2007) research agenda on city-region governance. The GCRO has sponsored and produced materials that are lightly critical of directions of development in Gauteng (e.g. Trangoš, 2014), and could do more in that way. Publications produced by the GCRO have had some effect in widening debate, establishing that the GCR is an increasingly recognised concept (see Harber & Joseph, 2018). But there could be much more. Perhaps the kind of 'essay' full of images and innovative ways of seeing the unity of city spaces that was produced for the Paris region by Philippe Panerai (2008) and supported by a national ministry, could prove provocative and creative in Gauteng. Business organisations could do more too. A great step would be collaborative research on key themes of change around what is governed and what is not.

Build platforms for public discussion

There are surely wide opportunities for NGOs, including local government associations, to organise platforms for public discussion on the city-region and its future (as the Paris Métropole did in 2015). Many NGOs of varying dispositions exist in Gauteng, and encouraging some of them to foster discussion rather than fearing their critique of existing policies and practices may bring new thinking and positive contributions to official bodies, the provincial government, the metros, the districts, and national as well as local actors. Such NGOs can help to draw on a wider circle of participants who are not always reachable through official processes. Such encounters may also lead to initiatives such as the research, writing and other productive activities suggested above.

* * *

To conclude, exploring 'the complexities of apportioning power and functions across a multi-layered, multi-dimensional "territorial" construct, and the issues and implications that result' (Harber & Joseph, 2018, p. 3) is surely beyond the capacities of any one organisation, however large, precisely because of the complexities, layering and multidimensionality of *what people think*. Despite such challenges, little or no public debate on the constant change within a large metropolis, the big city-region, has consequences that can defeat the best ideas. In the absence of public discussion, the thinking, identification and aspirations of people can diverge rapidly from those of professionals and politicians. Gauteng's city-region – governments, agencies and citizens – can draw on the experiences of other city-regions, such as that of Paris, in pursuing much wider discussion. This Provocation, in the end, is an argument for finding ways of expanding this kind of public debate and involvement.

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About the Provocations series

[to provoke: to stimulate, incite, stir up, challenge, irk, exasperate, vex]

The Gauteng City-Region Observatory's Provocations are an ongoing series of thinkpieces that give a platform to cutting-edge thinking on current issues of the day, written and presented in non-academic style and format. Each Provocation is offered by an academic or practitioner for reading by a wide audience, with the hope of shedding light on key topics relevant to researchers, policy-makers, business people, activists and members of the public. The series aims to challenge conventional understandings, stimulate new thinking, stir up debate and incite readers to respond with interpretations of their own. At times, the thoughts offered will exasperate, perhaps even anger. Each piece goes through rigorous editing, but the analysis, views and opinions presented are solely those of the authors.

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Alan Mabin is Emeritus Professor of Urbanism in the School of Architecture and Planning at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg and was previously head of the School (2005–2010). He holds a doctorate from Simon Fraser University, Canada, and a master's degree from Wits, and is a member of the South African Planning Institute. Alan has worked in a variety of development fields for 35 years. He was involved in several aspects of the transformation of local government in South Africa, particularly in Johannesburg, and has collaborated with colleagues in Brazil, Canada, France, Tanzania and other countries on several projects. Alan helped to establish Planact in 1985, an NGO working with communities to 'make cities work for people'. He works closely with the Gauteng City-Region Observatory.

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