

## **TRIALOGUE and REGIONAL SCALE**

### **Fundamental concepts and application to the Paris region**

#### **1- Introduction : the triologue is above all a political issue**

The triologue requires a response in terms of policy of territorial planning. It is therefore necessary to clarify the conditions necessary to enable democratic debate to proceed, to accompany and to validate each of the three phases of development: conception, projection and implementation.

Conviviality will be the cement of the triologue which, firstly will establish the couple: Citizen/Practitioner, during the process of development of living spaces, according to the following chain:

VISION → CONCEPTION ADHESION → PROJECTION VALIDATION → IMPLEMENTATION
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The people usually are not able to formulate their aspirations, their feeling of belonging entwined with elements of identity : the professionals are those who express this for them before returning to the population for validation. They take part in the action of social workers, they listen to the needs, they « see ». They add their knowledge in order to make proposals and to define the mode of execution. Together they formulate the question to be posed to those responsible politically. The planner must help the politician to see clearly the issues and to express them according to their vision, to take into account the reality and to open paths to the future. It is the role of the politicians to follow through the debate, to adhere to the project and to take decisions. Such a vision and its projection are necessarily at the scale of town planning and not only at the scales of urban design or construction (Ref.3).

#### **2 – The scale of the convivial region**

To attempt to find a solution to such problems, it is essential, beforehand, to delimit the territories involved in such a process. The conditions referred to above can more easily be brought together at small scales of consideration. The object of our paper is to identify and explain the largest possible area that can be perceived by the greater part of its inhabitants as being their space of belonging, that in which they can be directly involved and can have confidence in the system of governance. It must take into account the realities of history, of new technologies and of ecological responsibility. We refer to the intensity of participation as “conviviality” and to the space of belonging as “region”. It is the geographical space, having a history with which the indigenous population will identify as being their own and which will also be accepted by all of the inhabitants. We will refer to this as the “convivial region”.

Certain geographers refer to this as a “*configuration-socio-spatiale*” if it is potential (Ref.5). The notion of convivial region has not been explicitly recognised today, but it exists. It integrates the geography, the history, the new possibilities of mobility as well as pressing ecological obligations.

Its definition is predominantly ascending, democratic, based on the inhabitant. It thus distinguishes itself from descending principles of regional definition. As defined by the

Assembly of European Regions: "The region is the public territorial entity corresponding to the scale immediately inferior to the State and having a government with its own specific political powers". The regions so defined by national governments vary greatly in dimensions and while this organisation is interesting as a place of sharing of experience, it can only with difficulty be a place of comparison and of questioning. The descending process needs to encounter an ascending process of definition.

In a society where growth and quantity tend to predominate, the regional scale aims at quality and fulfilment, on a strong base of solidarity. The process of the triologue aims at the inclusion of all and as such escapes the grip of the specialist acting in isolation.

Translating from the Larousse French language dictionary, it is indicated that Humanism is a "doctrine that has as its objective Man and his fulfilment". The practice of humanism would seem to be directly linked to that of solidarity in civil life, a practice that privileges blossoming of community life based on intelligent management of the economy, in such a way that "better being for all" will always be preferable to "having more for some". It is this philosophy of existence that cannot always be found in the work of "specialists", those who "know" in political terms – specialists who "never make small mistakes on the way to making great ones".

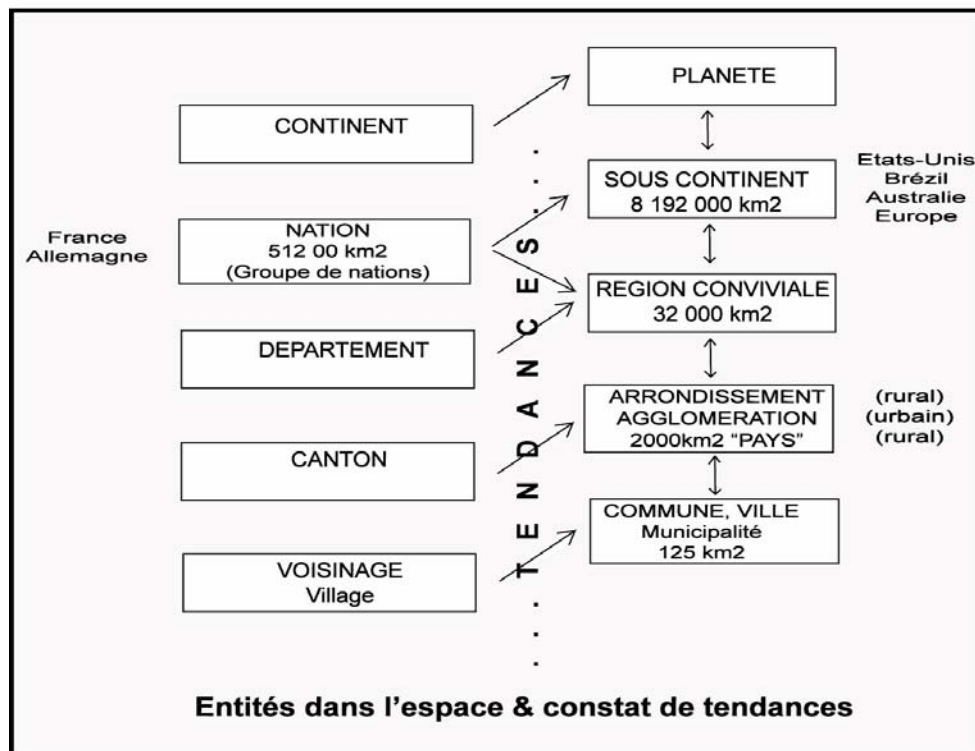


Fig 1 (Ref. 8. Paper by Bill Twitchett, ISoCaRP congress 2003)

It is important to situate the notion of today's region in the overall organisation of various scales of human society. Following observation of recent experience in France an attempt is made in the accompanying table to indicate transitions that are taking place (Fig 1)

It is predominantly the inhabitants of a region, existing or potential, who are able to experience a feeling of belonging and to express that in terms of territory. It is predominantly the planners who identify with these inhabitants who are apt to translate this experience in technical terms.

The triologue, with its dimension of “vision”, is capable of leading to alternatives to existing regional entities and it is an essential process in the adjustment of regions to their optimum potential societal reality. The triologue is the tool for testing the pertinence of emerging regional societies. There is even place for prolongation of the notion of society beyond the human to animal, plant and mineral domains (Ref.11). It is the responsibility of the professionals to express their point of view, to inject their knowledge, into the relationship between the people involved and the political representatives.

Throughout the continents, the diversity of potential regions is such that this reality merits an inventory, comparable to the international guide to professional practice established progressively by members of ISoCaRP since the 1980's. Could this be another task for another new generation of members?

In France the theme of regional development has been a field of major debate and adjustment since the 1960's and this justifies its presentation within the present context of an international congress.

### **3 – The French experience of organisation and reorganisation of the national territory**

France has a rich experience of organisation and reorganisation of the national territory. This however has tended to open the way to predominantly administrative decisions and attitudes. Adjustments to the present situation are now essential

The following text recalls some of the modifications in time: “It was a bloody revolution that brushed aside the traditional provincial boundaries, replacing them with those of the (90 to 95) highly rational *Départements* which were considered as being valid during a period of 150 years. In the 1960's the need for reform led to the grouping of these entities into 22 *Régions de Programme* in 8 of which the capitals were declared *Métropoles d'Equilibres*, so ensuring reduction of pressure for (over) development of the national capital, Paris. Now with elected assemblies the regions have become relatively autonomous, but they are mostly too small to enter into the lively international competition that is now occurring. Further changes would now seem to be not only conceptually and administratively difficult but also politically risky and even dangerous” (Ref.8).

Let us insist on the fact that these regions created by central government have been established by grouping smaller entities which were themselves defined earlier by decree. In government circles numerous initiatives exist throughout the national territory in favour of modification of the present regional entities, but it is in the private sector of the economy that a free choice of boundaries prevails, to the extent that it is difficult for many citizens to have a sense of belonging. The authors of “*La France redécoupée*” (Ref.1) present numerous manners of choosing one's own regional boundary.

Following a detailed comparative study of urban regions in three countries (Ref.10), Bill Twitchett devoted a short commentary on territorial implications of such questioning of the status quo. His option of reducing the number of entities to 12 regions within continental France can be considered as a welcome contribution to the present debate. Such regions could better satisfy the criteria of conviviality, economic viability and ecological responsibility.

Attempts to modify civil boundaries can now refer to new clauses in a recent revision of the French Constitution. An important innovation has been introduced in Article 72-1, for which an approximate translation follows : “When it is envisaged to create a civil entity on a specific

territory, endowed with a particular legal status or modifying the existing organisation, it can be decided by law to consult the electors within the areas concerned. The modification of the boundaries of territorial governments can also give rise to consultation of electors within the conditions provided by law”.

In an important paper in the colloquium, *“Territoires institutionnels, Territoires fonctionnels”* in the city of Macon, 25th and 26th September 2003, Pierre-Yves Le Rhun commented on the above-mentioned text : “The Government announces a clear preference for this consultation of the electors, although the texts do not impose it. It so provides for the possibility to avoid blockages by voters or by existing assemblies that obstruct modification of boundaries” (Ref.2). This commentary encourages the principle of adhesion and participation by the population.

With increasing debate in favour of larger and more democratic regions, France identifies itself with the reference “l'Art des Fondations”. It can also be noted here that the paper presented by Philippe Vaillant in another workshop of this congress deals with the region of north eastern France, under the title *“Vosges-Ardenne au sein de la région d'étude Saarland, Luxembourg, Grand-Est français”*. (Ref.11)

In terms of responsible development it is first necessary to determine the physical space within which the major part of vital problems of the population can be solved. There are important arguments in favour of regional spaces, assuming that one can avoid a predominately administrative conception of this scale of territory, even to the extent of taking into account international boundaries. (Ref.11)

In France there is an important reform to be carried out concerning the geographic boundaries, the dimensions of the territory and of its population, as also the governance of the regions. Is such a need felt in neighbouring countries? Will the future of Europe be that of a Federation of Regions, or a Confederation of Nations? Without significant reform it will not be possible to establish the social consensus necessary for a balanced and responsible development of the regions. We refer to such a consensus as “conviviality”. The regions will be convivial or they will not become sustainable, viable realities.



Figure 2: France en 13 régions

#### 4 - The Paris region: an example of questions raised by the notion of convivial region

We have chosen to use the Paris region as an example to demonstrate the issues involved. In the near western suburbs during the 1970s, the development of the quarter of the *Defense* provoked controversy, but it enabled the city to maintain its specific character. The Paris

region has now grown beyond the official boundaries of *Ile de France*. A new opportunity for healthy growth has become manifest to the east, involving more precisely the Chessy railway junction which merits reflection as a pole to create new balance between the major agglomeration and the satellite cities of the essential water catchment areas of the Seine basin beyond.

### ***The region Ile de France:***

There is already general awareness that the present *Ile de France* has an administrative boundary that is too restrictive. But what new limits could be envisaged? Should the Paris region touch several of the surrounding regions, as studied by the *Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement et à la compétitivité des territoires (DIACT / ex.DATAR)* (Ref.4) within the concept of the *Bassin Parisien*

### ***Open Paris to the Ile de France, to France and the international scene***

Conviviality supposes life and life implies projection into the future. A vision of the future implies sustainability and this principle raises specific questions for the city of Paris. It can be argued that the word sustainable (*durable*) is not applicable to a small territory, such as a municipality, defined only by its administrative boundary. Pertinence is achieved only when applied to a physical space, the "site" which in terms of human geography can be referred to as the "urban site", itself included in a coherent territory which can be referred to as the "urban region".

The Paris region, although generally conceded as not covering the whole of the national territory, has nevertheless been studied in terms of the Paris Basin (Ref.4). This entity, while taking into account the phenomenal predominance of the city of Paris, with its remarkably attractive transport infrastructure, has the inconvenience of compromising radically the coherence of the surrounding regions. At the opposite end of the scale, the city of Paris itself is enclosed within the motorway that has replaced the demolished city walls.

When speaking of Paris as a sustainable city it is necessary to fully understand the reality of the convivial region of which it occupies the centre: region which enables it to live and to which it gives life. There exists nevertheless an entity that is perfectly perceived by its inhabitants living in this natural space (its geography) and in its temporal continuity (its history). In embracing this situation, the first thing to do is to "liberate" Paris. In fact, the circular motorway plays at present the role of wall that confines Paris in its function of Capital, whereas the dynamic of its conviviality lies in its opening out, its fulfilment in the very earth of its region. It is for this reason that one can encourage the approach "*Conférence métropolitaine*" undertaken by Bertrand Delanoë, Mayor of Paris, in proposing a work theme for Paris and the surrounding municipalities that are the first ones concerned by the barrier of the *Boulevard Périphérique*. It has become necessary to neutralise the imprisoning effect of the motorway, to open wide the 40 gates, to go out towards the region... One could then begin to speak of a sustainable city.

A small illustration of the present situation of the Paris "gates": no need to register for a hiking adventure in Bhoutan or Klondyke: go by foot from the metro station *Porte de la Chapelle* to Avenue Wilson, the great royal axis northward towards the Saint Denis Basilica, preferably, if you are courageous, on the eastern footpath. In the first 500 metres you will live a trekking equivalent to that of the "*Arche perdue*". If you survive, you will deserve a diploma of war correspondent...

...but with a feeling of belonging to this region...

**Proposition for the development of the Paris convivial region:**

The city of Paris is saturated. There remain several vacant plots near the city limit, but such availability is not at the scale of the need. It is now 30 km from Paris that it is necessary to search for land to construct high rise buildings.

A similar situation of saturation was already that of Paris in the 1960's. A clear thinking planner Robert Auzelle proposed to concentrate all projects for high rise office buildings on a single location, the *Défense*, in order to safeguard Paris. He was *Inspecteur general de l'Etat* and he was able to make himself heard. The consequent development to the west of the city, enabled Paris to maintain so far its harmonious urban environment.

Today an analagous situation is occurring and to safeguard Paris a new site is necessary. Is a new "Défense" indicated ? Paris is the national Capital and will remain so. It is also capital of French culture, capital for the French language. But what of the centre for regional functions ? Towards the west of the city there is a clear boundary with Normandy, dating from 911 when Charles III signed a treaty at *Saint Clair sur Epte*. Towards the north a new polarisation would be contrary to desirable development of the northern region of France, while towards the south a concerted development would compromise the autonomy of the Loire basin. It is therefore towards the east that a possible solution would best be envisaged.

On the eastern limit of the new town of *Marne la Vallée*, which deploys itself along the plateau south of the Marne river, one can identify a place of particular interest : that of the TGV Chessy railway junction with the terminus of the suburban rail line. Recent history saw the negotiations between various public authorities and Eurodisney, resulting in the development of the leisure park and hotel complex on part of the site, enabling good communications with central Paris, with Roissy airport, as well as TGV and motorway connections to all of France and beyond. It is also remarkably well situated for access to the whole of the upper basin of the Seine. (Fig.3)

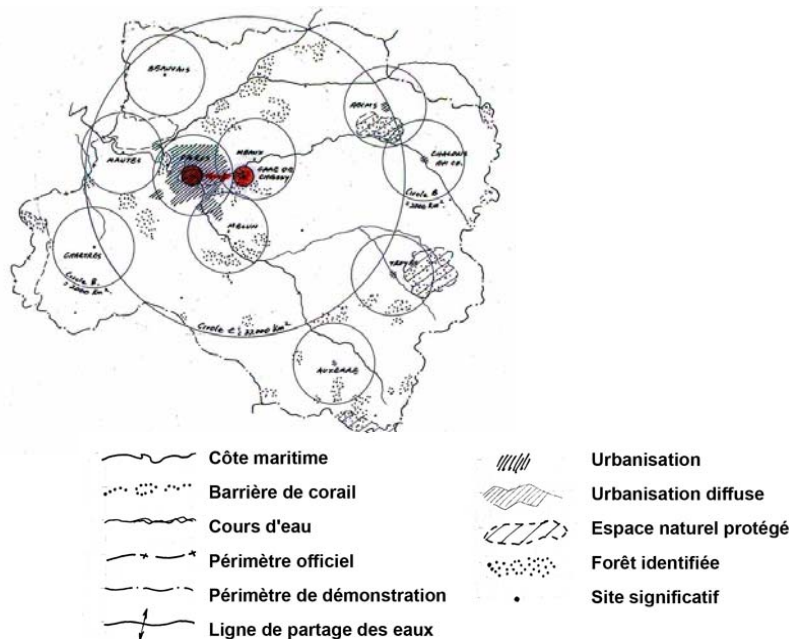


Fig. 3 - Légende des cartes

**Fig 3 : Paris'region**

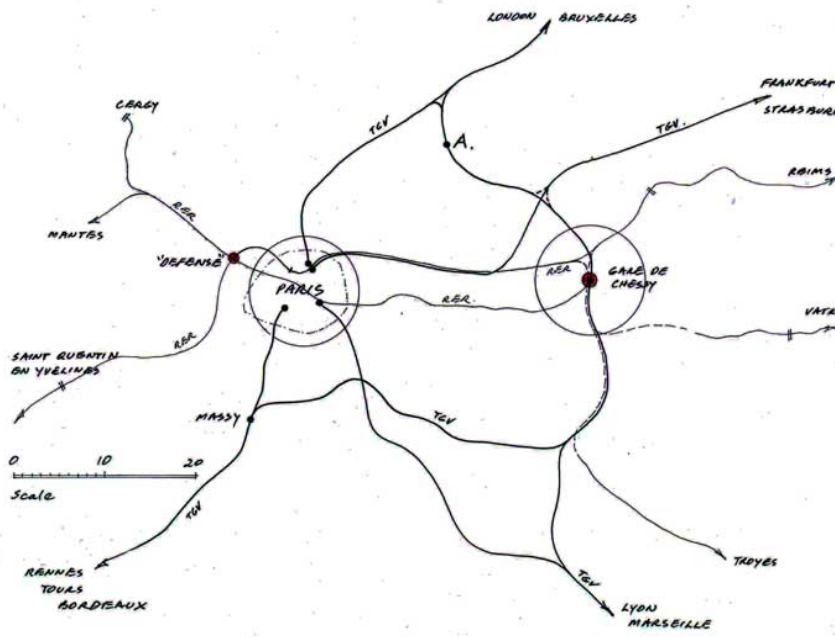


Fig 4: Paris : « Défense 1 » & « Défense 2 »

The basic infrastructure exists almost entirely. A connection of several kilometres of railway is needed to enable an express line to central Paris and beyond, via existing lines on the northern slopes of the Marne valley (Fig.4). What is new is the concept as well as the awareness of what is at stake. Chessy is a transit station so that the whole of France can pass through here, while the six Paris stations are terminal stations. One goes up to Paris ; one remains there; then one goes down to the provinces. To develop a “Défense 2” around Chessy is to open up Paris. It is the necessary gesture of escaping, of going beyond the circular motorway that at present plays the role of fortification and moat in modern terms!

The choice is above all political. The planner is there to hear about needs and to interpret these in technical terms so as to enable decisions. The present message is the following: *L’Ile de France*, in order to maintain the urban quality of Paris, should develop in proximity to the Chessy TGV station, a high density complex of offices and accompanying buildings capable of continuing the recognised role of the quarter named *La Défense*.

This proposal is the transcription by the planner of a citizen’s vision for Paris and *Ile de France*. The citizen hears the request and contributes to the opening of a path towards the future: he uses the triologue.

We would like to share our reflection concerning the application of real democracy in urban development with the three actors: politicians, inhabitants and planners. They should work on convivial spaces. One could also say citizen spaces: the spaces where people are the actors in their daily life, where they feel that the political decisions concerning development also concerns and interests them. It seems to us that the region is the pertinent scale where that can best take place

We have taken as example the Paris Region. In the 1970’s the creation of predominately office space at *La Défense*, situated on the banks of the Seine river in the inner western suburbs of Paris, raised controversy and for several years was fraught with problems. The introduction of housing units and commerce as well as completion of transport infrastructure helped greatly the users to appropriate the quarter and to make it attractive to visitors. It has



now achieved the status of being an integral part of Greater Paris and one of the most important quarters of the Paris region.

Today it would seem to be of primary importance to make land reservations for an equivalent development to the east of the city, between the Marne river, tributary of the Seine, and the forests to the south, a privileged site, accompanied by an established leisure park, directly accessible by motorway as well as by suburban and international rail.

## 5 – Conclusion

In close relationship with the historic centre of Paris, the Chessy vision has the potential of becoming the key to a coherent development of the whole of the surrounding region as a convivial space where the quality of landscape and accessibility would permit both inhabitants and users to perceive a community of interests, enabling application of real democracy.

The convivial region could be the fundamental entity enabling favourable inclusion of man in the environment – the model for future responsible and balanced development of the planet.

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- 8) Twitchett William, 2003, *The Convivial Region*, ISoCaRP Congress, Cairo , 12 p.
- 9) Twitchett William, 2004, *Typology of Urban Regions*, ISoCaRP Congress, Geneva, 10 p.
- 10) Twitchett William, 1997, *Le Site Urbain: Potentialités. Réflexions sur le développement responsable et équilibré des établissements humains à partir de six exemples français, égyptiens et australiens*, Villeneuve-d'Ascq, Septentrion, 390 p. & annexes
- 11) Vaillant Philippe, 2007, « The convivial région « Vosges-Ardenne » within the study region of Saarland, Luxembourg and North-Eastern » France, ISoCaRP Congress, Antwerpen *The Triologue*.

## Web sites :

- 1) [www.tercitey.org](http://www.tercitey.org) (this site includes texts and illustrations concerning the convivial region)
- 2) [www.are.eu](http://www.are.eu) (concerns existing regions within Europe)
- 3) [www.arturbain.fr/arturbain/presentation/robert\\_auzelle/robert\\_auzelle.htm](http://www.arturbain.fr/arturbain/presentation/robert_auzelle/robert_auzelle.htm)
- 4) [www.paysagglomerations.com](http://www.paysagglomerations.com) (this web site refers to democratic procedures in local government areas)