



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Progress in Planning

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/progress](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/progress)

## Introducing real estate led start-up urbanism: An account from Greater Paris

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Calls for innovative urban projects  
Real estate developers  
Relational work  
Urban innovation  
Start-up urbanism  
Greater Paris

### ABSTRACT

In the past few years, calls for innovative urban projects (CIUPs) have become the most mediatized symbol of the ongoing transformations within the public-led French urban development system. In the name of urban innovation, CIUP is a policy instrument that brings together, early in the design phase of urban development projects, extended teams of real estate developers and other actors who usually intervene downstream in the development process. We explore these calls as a form of real estate led start-up urbanism and analyse its modalities in Greater Paris, with the first edition of the *Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis* (IGPM) call as a case study. We begin by tracing the genealogy of CIUPs and their particular articulation of urban innovation and urban development principles. In the remainder of the paper, we explore the implications of such urban innovation and spatial planning hybrids, by honing in on the relational work of real estate developers, i.e. the production of social relationships and networks that enables real estate developers adherence to the political ambitions during the bidding process. After establishing their centrality in the social networks defined by IGPM, we explore the apparent paradox between projects that are perceived as ordinary by call organizers and a visible effervescence of the urban planning milieu, including recruitment practices within real estate development firms, the emergence of small operators embodying imaginaries of urban innovation and the growing role of consultancies in supporting developers in responding to public authorities' ambitions. In the final empirical section of the paper, we focus on real estate developers' innovation strategies as a way of understanding the apparent contradiction between project content and the changing organizational landscape of the urban development milieu. In the concluding section, we bring these elements together through a discussion of the policy outputs and outcomes of CIUPs in general, and of IGPM in particular.

### 1. Introduction

When the Mayor of Paris launched a call for innovative urban projects (CIUP) dubbed *Reinventing Paris* (RP) in 2014, the French urban planning milieu found what has arguably become the metonymy for debates on the city of tomorrow. For RP and the several other following CIUPs, the need to *reinvent* the city is equally a need to reinvent processes and protagonists of city making. In the words of Jean-Louis Missika, the Parisian Deputy Mayor for Planning at the time:

*“When I think of the Paris of tomorrow, I think of a green city, a connected city, an ingenious city and a free city. This is the city we are building with Reinventing Paris [...]. The City makes a building site*

*available, and sells or rents it, not to the highest bidder, but to the best, most innovative project. [...] With Reinventing Paris, our aim is to “reinvent” the ways in which we think about and make cities. [...] At the City of Paris, we believe in the “bottom-up” smart city: [...], all stakeholders should be co-constructors. [...] Reinventing the city of tomorrow starts with each one of us”.*<sup>1</sup>

The equation according to Missika is deceptively simple: the innovative city is also a matter of ingenuity and freedom which usual procedures of selling public land are unable to nurture. The emphasis on public land stems from its relevance in French urban planning, especially in brownfield redevelopments: the most common procedures include public purchase of land from previous tenants, which after a

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<sup>1</sup> Interview of Jean-Louis Missika to Marina Bradbury from the New Cities blog. Available at <https://newcities.org/reinventing-paris-building-city-bottom/>, last visited on may 15th 2020.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2021.100625>

Received 30 November 2020; Received in revised form 1 October 2021; Accepted 6 October 2021

Available online 18 November 2021

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**Insert 1**

Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis, 1<sup>st</sup> edition.

IGPM is a call for projects launched in 2016 by the Greater Paris Metropolis, the State (via the *Préfecture* of the Paris Region) and the Société du Grand Paris (developing the Greater Paris Express subway network). Presented as the greatest architectural and urban development consultation in Europe, it is based on *Reinventing Paris*'s modalities. Municipalities propose sites for development and project teams composed of developers, investors, design teams, commercial operators and myriad other actors submit their vision. Competitors should demonstrate that future uses were taken into account, whereas the juries should consider environmental and innovation criteria in their deliberations.

59 sites were put up for bids, ranging from 800 sq. meters to 32 ha/79 acres in size. The consultation was launched in October 2016 and project teams were to submit an initial application by March 2017. Three finalists were chosen per site and invited to submit a final bid by July 2017. Nine months separated the call's launch from final bid submission. Throughout the process, contacts between public authorities and project teams were done online and visible to all contestants. Some public authorities organized workshops with finalist teams, where specific topics were addressed.

Bids were expected to enumerate all the innovations in their project and the respective providers (thus, the need for augmented project teams). Projects should also submit an evaluation protocol for innovations for a horizon of ten to fifteen years following project delivery.

(often long) process of program definition and land plotting, is sold to real estate developers (see Fig. 1, Section 2.2). Extremely successful in attracting applications and in creating a media frenzy, the call for innovative urban projects soon became a staple in French spatial planning, with experiments launched in other French metropolitan areas, in a program for shrinking cities and even in rural areas. Its metropolitan sibling, *Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis* (IGPM) was launched in 2016 and heralded by its proponents as “the largest urban and architectural consultation in Europe [generating] 7.2 billion euros of private investment and 2.6 million square metres of land for the projects” (Ollier, 2018) -see Insert 1.

In this paper, we will explore CIUPs as urban innovation and spatial planning hybrids, which we conceptualize as a form of real estate led start-up urbanism – an urban development tool that addresses economic policy objectives by promoting entrepreneurship and cooperation between real estate developers and an ecosystem of operators and consultancies associated with urban innovation. Rather than focusing on urban and/or architectural outcomes, we are particularly interested in the organizational implications of CIUPs, especially by the new roles which real estate developers are expected to play. Our approach thus lies at the intersection of planning ethnography and political and organizational sociology. Our choice is justified by the calls' organisers' emphasis on role redistribution and collaborative work by different urban stakeholders, which in turn implies the circumvention of existing public procurement procedures. Public procurement legally requires public authorities to thoroughly specify the project brief; in doing so, it makes buyers' financial proposals a major decision factor for public landowners, as all proposals are mostly equivalent in terms of program. CIUPs circumvent such obligations and allow municipalities to select buyers based on other criteria. To escape the scope of public procurement (and echoing a vision of innovation as collaborative endeavour), the criteria and public ambitions must be vague and a significant part of project content is therefore to be determined by competing consortia. As a consequence, actors traditionally on the supply side of urban development not only move upstream of the development process, but find themselves in novel collaborative settings. Real estate developers are particularly challenged by this new generation of calls: in order to access buildable land they must present themselves as providers of innovative projects capable of spearheading multidisciplinary project teams.

Our main hypothesis is that CIUPs are a driving force of organizational change in the urban planning system in Greater Paris. Through such calls, public authorities transfer the risk and financial burden of urban innovation to the real estate sector by opening up a new urban development market. The market is attractive enough for real estate developers to engage in deep organizational change, including internal restructuring, the diversification of employees' qualifications and, chief among them, the multiplication of partnerships with a plethora of

actors, both old and new in the real estate scene. Thus, to pursue our hypothesis, we hone in on the relational work of real estate developers, i. e. the production of social relationships and networks that enables the material production of space by real estate developers (Ballard & Butcher, 2020). We argue that the call's strongest impacts are to be found in the demands it placed on the relational work of real estate developers and we do so through an empirically thorough account of *Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis*, its genealogy as a policy tool and the responses it received in terms of project content and the actors involved.

The article is structured as follows. We begin with a literature review bringing together writing on start-up urbanism, recent trends in French urban development and the relational work of real estate developers, duly followed by a presentation of our research methods and different sets of data drawn upon for the purposes of this article. In our first results section, we analyse the genealogy of *Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis*. By highlighting the differences between *Reinventing Paris* and IGPM, we explore the implications of transforming CIUPs into a political instrument: policy focus progressively shifts from innovative projects to urban development objectives. As a consequence, traditional real estate developers play a more central role in IGPM than they had in *Reinventing Paris*. We continue by characterizing the specific innovation forms brought forward by IGPM which confirm the emphasis on processes rather than on substantial innovations in projects. That is why in the subsequent sections we focus on the call's effects on the spatial planning milieu, namely on three different groups of actors: real estate developers, small operators and emerging private consultancies. In doing so, we show how the growing importance of relational work leads real estate development firms to hire new kinds of urban professionals. In the final empirical section of the paper, we bring together relational work and the content of innovations in a typology of real estate developers' innovation strategies. We conclude the paper by discussing our main research findings in terms of IGPM's policy outputs and outcomes.

## 2. Literature review: unpacking real estate led start-up urbanism in Greater Paris

### 2.1. Start-up urbanism and urban development processes

When Jean-Louis Missika summons the “bottom-up smart city”, he invokes different conceptualisations of the relationship between innovation, urban policies and development. The literature on urban innovation policies is abundant and oscillates between the affirmation of its progressive potential and acute critiques of its enmeshing with neoliberal and unjust urban policies (Kitchin, 2014; Levenda & Tretter, 2019; Lombardi & Vanolo, 2015). However, there is less work on urban development projects as a tool for urban innovation policies.

Missika’s smart city is not only the technophile, big data driven smart city of ubiquitous computing and algorithmic governance powered by large multinational corporations such as IBM or Cisco (Evans et al., 2019). Rather, it is closer to an alternative understanding of the smart city as “the development of a knowledge economy within a city-region” (Kitchin, 2014, p. 2) through the development of “an emerging ecosystem of digital technologies” (Evans et al., 2019, p. 559), often involving start-ups and urban experimentation.

This take on the smart city is a public-private endeavour, initially translated in technopolitan policies seeking to emulate Silicon Valley’s success story. However, in the aftermath of the 2008 recession, urban policy-makers have shifted to the promotion of a “start-up urbanism” (Rossi & Di Bella, 2017). The latter is characterized by local government incentives, an emphasis on ecosystemic metaphors of economic stakeholders and public-private interactions, as well as an integration into globalized flows of ideas, discourses and skills.

Start-up urbanism is associated with public policies diversely combining direct intervention and liveability-based actions reminiscent of creative city policies (Levenda & Tretter, 2019; Moisiso & Rossi, 2019). The emphasis on the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the ideal of collaborative work often translates in two inter-related policy tools, which are also instrumental in connecting start-up urbanism to urban development processes. The first one is urban experimentation (be it technological or social/behavioural), with its emphasis on real life testing prior to scaling up, and urban laboratories (Karvonen & van Heur, 2014) which espouse principles of open innovation. The latter acknowledges the importance of external knowledge relations and interactions for a given organisation’s innovation activities (Teirlinck & Spithoven, 2008). Open innovation takes us to the second policy tool: meet-ups and other relational dispositive (Rossi & Di Bella, 2017), through which entrepreneurs, public and private actors network and, ideally, develop new business ventures together.

As we will see in the remainder of the paper, calls for innovative urban projects designate a market for a new urban/real estate product (the innovative urban project) and at the same time provide the means for organizations capable of delivering such products to emerge. This connection between innovation policies, the materiality of urban development projects and the organization dimension of start-up urbanism is generally overlooked in the existing literature. Through the concept of real estate-led start-up urbanism, we contribute to bridging this gap in the literature.

2.2. Calls for innovative urban projects as an example of the increased role given to private initiatives in urban development in Greater Paris

The French urban project was traditionally an urban development process marked by public tenure of land (see Fig. 1 below). As financial constraints weigh increasingly in public actors’ ability to own and keep land, a ‘negotiated’ form of urban development has emerged as a flexible approach to balance public and private interests with less public expenditure (Blanchard & Miot, 2017; Paris Sud Aménagement, 2019). One such trend leads to the redistribution of roles between private and public actors, as well as within these categories. The history of the Parisian metropolis is a history of public and private partnerships in urban development, with different equilibria and loci of public-private engagement through time (Orillard, 2018). Since the 2000s, the distribution of roles between the public and private sector in urban development has stabilized: the public sector is in a steering position, outsourcing the development of entire sectors to private actors. The increased penetration of private sector logics in public stakeholders’ actions (Boino, 2009; Devisme, 2009; Maurice, 2017), including that of investors (Guironnet et al., 2016), has been observed. Yet, it is arguably the growth in austerity property management practices by the public sector (Adisson & Artioli, 2019) that has favoured the emergence of new public-private interactions the most.

However, negotiated urbanism is only one demonstration of a shifting urban development system, with actors moving upstream and downstream from their traditional positions (Baraud-Serfaty, 2018; Baraud-Serfaty et al., n.d.; Llorente & Vilmin, 2017).

These movements have been analysed in a context of growing complexity of projects, partially induced by the public sector’s indirect engagement, but also by corporate strategies of value chain integration and by developments in service delivery mechanisms, such as ICTs and digital technologies progresses. Institutional stakeholders and corporations are not the only actors participating in renewed cooperation schemes framing urban development projects. As institutional participatory urbanism still struggles to promote effective co-production with city-dwellers (Bacqué & Mechmache, 2013), activist, tactic and/or event-based design collectives have emerged (Biau et al., 2013). These new collective actions sometimes intersect and are often assimilated to the increase in temporary uses of vacant plots and brownfield sites (Pinard & Morteau, 2019).

This period coincides with the affirmation of urban development projects as the mainstream process of urban development in France, at least for brownfield developments (Guironnet & Halbert, 2014). In this

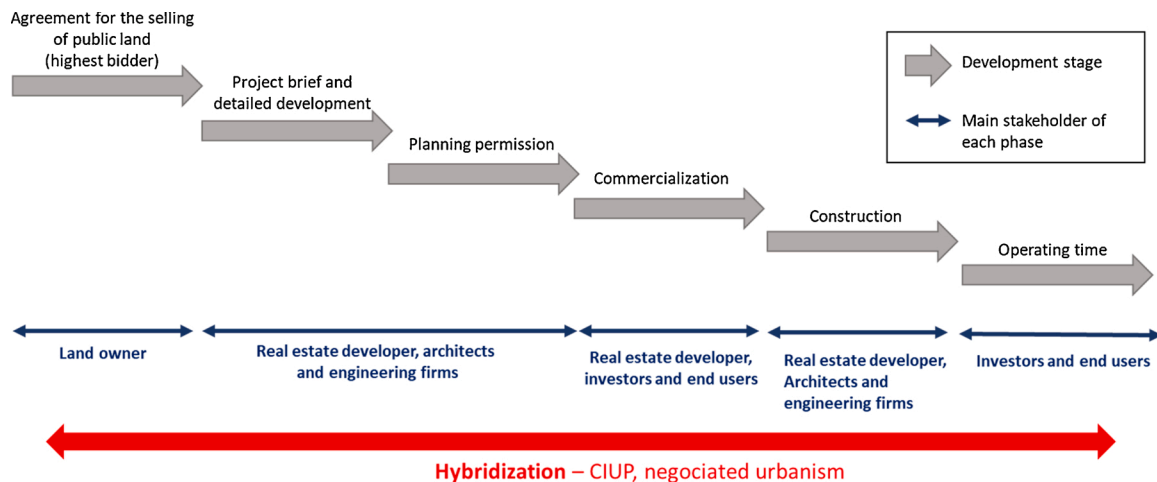


Fig. 1. Traditional and sequential chain of a real estate led operation on public land. Production: 2021, Yoann Pères.

context, real estate developers tend to scale up their operations, from single building plots to mega-plots (*macrolots* in French), to steer entire urban developments on behalf of public authorities (Citron, 2016). The involvement of private developers in urban development has been especially fuelled by the transposition of EU legislation on free markets, which made competitive calls for urban development concessions a legal obligation in 2005 (Idt, 2015). The scaling up of real estate operations brings forth a new set of problems (and opportunities) for real estate developers, including project branding, mixed-use development, mutualised energy and environmental services provision and the possibility of new financial equations at the scale of the large urban development project.

These changes in the context and scope of real estate development have great impact on developers' internal organization, many of them creating in-house divisions devoted to research and development and to urban development projects (Mosbah, 2017). The latter integrate pre-existing business units within the firm and are in charge of managing the increased demand for partnerships with external actors. In this context, the nature of interactions between public and private actors changes.

CIUPs are part of the trend for public actors and landowners to cope with the austerity agenda by giving up some of their assets. Thus, CIUPs capitalize on the experience acquired by public actors –plus consultancy and law firms– to develop negotiated urban planning processes, a continuity which has been highlighted by expert commentators (Béhar, Bellanger, & Delpirou, 2018). At the same time, these calls give the opportunity to young entrepreneurs, start-ups and collectives to work with real estate developers during the consultation phase. By summoning an idea of a “bottom-up smart city” in a context of increased and renewed interactions between actors of urban development, CIUPs bring the importance of relational work in urban development to the fore of the planning process.

### 2.3. Real estate developers' relational work

Real estate development is, by definition, a trans-scalar phenomenon wherein the transformation of the built environment is negotiated between the State and the private sector (Artioli, 2019). Academic research on the subject therefore balances the fine line between the specificity of spatially and temporally bounded real estate markets and the dynamics and flows of global capitalism. The relational work of real estate developers, in all of the diversity of social relations it entails, has recently emerged as a particularly effective way of articulating the diversity of real estate development practices within and between cities (Ballard & Butcher, 2020).

A first set of relations is with the public sector. As the State at its different scales is responsible for the regulation of land use change, real estate development is by definition a public-private endeavour: real estate developers must necessarily interact with public bodies when doing their job. The relationship between public and private actors, their logics and interests thus embodies established theories in urban political economy, such as urban growth coalitions and urban regime theory; these theories explain the transformation of the built environment with the political work of developers and the gradual alignment of private and public interests (Harding, 2009). In spite of variation between cities in different countries (Mossberger, 2009), the importance of local development contexts and the contingency of political-relational work involved have remained fundamental contributions overall. For example, recent planning academics have shown how, amidst struggles for attracting investment, local governments negotiate in increasingly unfavourable terms with real estate developers and investors (Guironnet et al., 2016; Robin, 2018) and commit growing resources to networking and marketing activities (Guironnet, 2019). Conversely, political work is an integral part of developers' role of anchoring global capital in local contexts (Halbert & Rouanet, 2014; Theurillat, 2011).

Anglophone research's critical focus on coalition building has

downplayed the discordances and difficulties in interactions between public authorities and private developers (Kimelberg, 2011). Franco-phone scholars in planning, in emphasising the project as an empirical object (Arab, 2018), has traditionally paid greater attention to the diversity of stakeholder logics in real estate development (Boino, 2009; Devisme, 2009) and the specific forms and results of accrued public-private interactions (Bonneval & Pollard, 2017; Dubois & Olive, 2004; Maurice, 2017).

In a context of increased public-private negotiations, the definition of the ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdin et al., 2006) becomes a major issue in coordinating collective action. To a point that authors such as Raco (2012) use the notion of regulatory capitalism to describe the increased spending in regulation, including delegation to autonomous agencies, the contractualisation of relationships, etc. In these hybrid relationships between state and corporations, the distinction between providers and policymakers is increasingly harder to make: “private interests become involved in co-producing all aspects of urban projects” (Raco, 2012, p. 453).

The ‘rules of the game’ imply a second set of relationships, between real estate developers and several other private corporations, experts and consultancy firms whose role is to influence and/or decipher ever more complex financial, legal and organisational configurations (Brill, 2020; Idt & Silvestre, 2019; Raco, 2012; Robin, 2018). Besides traditional relationships with construction and design actors (Macaire & Zetlaoui-Léger, 2019; Pollard, 2007), real estate developers work with new types of experts, as technical and/or programmatic demands become increasingly specific: such is the case of CIUPs (Gréco et al., 2018).

Finally, real estate developers must interact with local communities when implementing their projects, be it because they are legally required to do so or because citizen opposition is a serious risk to development ambitions. To manage community relationships, real estate developers tend to collaborate with external consultants (Brill, 2020). Coordination of the myriad experts and expertise may eventually justify hiring consultancies in process management (Idt & Silvestre, 2019).

### 2.4. Materials and research methods

In order to analyse CIUPs as drivers of real estate-led start-up urbanism and to develop our argument that organizational change is their foremost consequence, we explore one particular call, *Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis* (IGPM). This exploration mobilises a plethora of data gathered over the past four years in different research contexts which are summarised in Table 1 below.

First, there are six interviews with elected officials, civil servants,

**Table 1**  
Empirical materials per research context.

Context	Research subject	Sample characteristics	Period
Internship at City of Paris and Master research	Reinventing Paris as managerial innovation	Interviews and direct observation of meetings	2017
Seminar on planning professionals	Changes to planning professions in Greater Paris	Collective interviews	2017-2020
Doctoral research	Evolution of public organizations and consultancies' working methods in face of CIUPs in France	Direct observation of meetings and public events	2018-2021
Consultancy work	Monitoring of several CIUPs in France	Deliverables to clients	2018-2021
Post-doctoral fellowship	Network analysis of IGPM finalists	Official database of IGPM finalists	2019
Post-doctoral fellowship	End-uses and end-users in innovative urban development projects	Interviews, planning documents and CIUP applications	2020

**Insert 2**

Doing research as a consultant.

In Section 5 of this paper, we draw directly on the consultant work done by one of us authors – an analysis of IGPM applications in terms of real estate developers' innovation strategies. As such, it is a form of situated analysis whose validity was above all constructed through action. Specifically, the quality of the results was discussed in interviews with a senior manager at the authors' consultancy firm and with his (consultant) colleagues who had done the preliminary analyses of each individual application.

project managers and lawyers who worked on *Reinventing Paris* and direct observation of over thirty meetings during a two-month internship at the City of Paris, in February and March 2017. Second, we mobilise a dozen interviews done since 2017 by a research collective within a seminar on planning professionals hosted by the *Planning Greater Paris* Chair. The collective successively interviewed three types of professionals: high-ranking individuals in public and private institutions at the centre of the planning of Greater Paris; 'newcomers' in the Grand-Parisian urban development scene in the backdrop of CIUPs (emerging real estate developers, new consultancies, venue operators); and engineering consultancies. Third, we use data gathered through on-field observation led by one of the authors, a PhD student at a consultancy firm involved in several CIUPs in France, including IGPM, since January 2018. Fourth, we also use some of the actual consultancy work done in that framework (see *Insert 2*). Fifth, we use data compiled by the *Métropole du Grand Paris* (2017) on the composition of finalist teams for network analysis. In both consultancy work and network analysis we use visualisation software Gephi (Bastian et al., 2009). Finally, we mobilise a corpus of twenty-six interviews made in 2020 with consortia members of four winning IGPM projects and their counterparts in public services, as well as desk analysis undertaken by one of us in post-doctoral research focusing on use-related innovations in IGPM.

Our paper thus mixes individual research done independently by both authors, as well as material gathered by a collective in which both of us played minor roles. Such a diversity of ethnographic material and entry points into an urban development policy is rare and contributes to the interest of many of the papers' results. An interest we believe is amplified by combining the presentation of traditional ethnographic material (interviews, field notes) with network visualisation and analysis, which are still rare in planning scholarship. However, it is important to stress that, precisely because of the breadth of available materials, the analysis made here is not the result of systematic, inductive exploration of the data in its entirety as a unified corpus. Rather, we have mobilised past and present research to answer three main questions: i) what are the particular forms of urban innovation favoured by IGPM, and why?, ii) who are the protagonists of finalist and winning projects?, and iii) how is real estate developer's work transformed by CIUPs?

In the next section of the paper, we mobilize the data to explore the genealogy of calls for innovative urban projects in the Paris region. It is a first step in understanding the specificities of real estate led start-up urbanism and the demands it places on different stakeholder categories.

### 3. The mainstreaming of a real estate-led approach to urban innovation in Greater Paris

#### 3.1. From 2001, a progressive shift of public policies toward uses and innovation in Paris

The genealogy of calls for innovative urban projects is rooted in the municipal policies implemented since the election of a left wing and green coalition led by the Socialist Party in Paris in 2001. In Paris, municipal policies conflate economic development and urban innovation, as illustrated by the merger of the respective municipal agencies in charge of economic development and in charge of innovation into a

single entity: Paris&Co (Linossier, 2012; "Paris région lab et Paris développement deviennent Paris&Co," 2015). This new agency encapsulates the Parisian take on urban innovation: incubate start-ups, develop their relationships to large corporations and provide opportunities for urban experimentation, and promote the diffusion of innovation (Paris&Co, 2020). The growing number of start-ups and other social projects deemed innovative in the Eastern boroughs (*arrondissements*) of Paris and its surrounding peripheries led to the creation of an *Innovation Arc*, a policy tool to which specific funds are allocated (Mairie de Paris et al., 2020) in order to develop initiatives and third places. Simultaneously, the municipality's smart city strategy progressively evolved from digital solutions in specific sectors of municipal service delivery to more comprehensive data-driven and digital imaginaries linked to an entrepreneurial ecosystem, open innovation and the sustainable city as an overarching goal (Zaza, 2019) – a Parisian version of start-up urbanism.

Socialist terms at the municipality were equally marked by new policy priorities in urban planning, which concentrated in the socialist bastions in the eastern boroughs of the city (Jeanne, 2014). These include new-build housing, including social housing (as opposed to the previous Mayor's efforts to increase supply in office space), which in turn demands more investment in public facilities (education, leisure, etc.); the construction of new green areas, through enhanced participatory mechanisms (Renaud & Tonnelat, 2008); and the construction of cultural facilities with an *ethos* of "openness" towards the city, simultaneous to the co-optation of artist squats in the city (Aguilera, 2018; Vivant, 2007). The urban planning paradigm under Delanoë was thus characterized by attempts at a fine-tuned approach to mixed-use developments, with the municipality and its contractors carefully curating the mix of activities (Vivant, 2007). *Vital'Quartier* is a final illustration of this changing paradigm, where detailed approaches to uses begin to imbricate with notions of an ecosystem of independent actors. It is a retail re-activation program steered by a municipal development corporation, SEMAEST. The corporation is given pre-emptive/first option rights of street shops in six areas of the city, so that it can curate their occupation with independent local commerce, i.e. shops catering to local needs, avoiding retail chains, specialization deemed excessive as well as forms of ethnic, low-end and/or gross businesses (Fleury, 2010). To sum up, since 2001, there has been progressive shift of public policies in Paris toward uses and innovation. Calls for innovative projects further the logics of these policies.

#### 3.2. From the lab to the city to Greater Paris: when the quest for new fields of experimentation meets urban development policies

##### 3.2.1. Defining the call for projects as the appropriate policy tool in Paris

The implementation of the Socialist Party's new policies faced resistance from the existing technosystem (Guéranger, 2009). To circumvent it, Delanoë's team enlisted external consultants, including Jean-Louis Missika on new technologies and their social impacts (Dequay, 2001). With a background in media and ICT in the corporate world, Missika was later appointed Deputy Mayor in charge of innovation, research and universities for Delanoë's second term in office in 2008. He steered the development of the municipal policy on start-ups, including the creation of Paris Region Lab (see above). An important

part of providing entrepreneurs with real life experimentation was done through different calls for projects on themes such as urban agriculture and innovative gardening (Bled, 2014) or smart street furniture (Delarc & Rollin, 2017).

In 2014, Anne Hidalgo, Delanoë's former Deputy Mayor for urban planning, was elected Mayor and Missika was appointed Deputy Mayor in charge of urban planning, economic development, innovation and Greater Paris. According to Marion Waller, his deputy chief of staff,<sup>2</sup> neither he nor the majority of his cabinet<sup>3</sup> were familiar with urban planning which, in hindsight, she believes contributed to the type of out of the box thinking that led to the first CIUP of its kind, *Réinventer Paris* in 2014. Upon arriving, Missika was simultaneously marked by the balance of his previous term, in which he had been unable to make great investments in the city, and by a simple question "how will we bring innovation to the [urban planning] field?". Waller also mentions the comparisons with London, overwhelmingly negative in tone at that time, wary of the city's attractiveness for private companies and its (in) ability to innovate. This global city craze had already justified some of Delanoë's urban projects (Fromonot, 2019), the creation of the Greater Paris Metropolis and the Grand Paris Express regional metro network (Desjardins, 2018; Lefevre, 2019). Once again, urban development and architecture were being called upon to improve images of the city in the race for global city podium.

However, the investment ambitions of the mayoral team elected in 2014 faced increased budget constraints. Previous terms' policies were first designed at a time where mounting real estate values and population growth increased the cash-flow in the municipality. However, the 2008 subprime crisis, together with the decrease in transfers from the national state and in tax revenue (Le Gand, 2012) and with the increase in municipal expenditure, led to a growing burden of debt; the municipality's credit ranking was eventually downgraded by rating agencies (Chambre régionale des comptes de l'Île-de-France, 2016).

Thus, in 2014, the new municipal team's objective of building 10,000 dwellings per year and of increasing investment in innovative urban projects was confronted with strong budgetary restrictions. In this context, the sale of municipal land became a major policy instrument (Piganiol, 2017) for Missika and his team. Like in many other contexts, public land privatization is a staple of austerity urbanism policies (Adison & Artioli, 2019): bringing in an immediate cash flow, off-loading costs and leveraging urban development in strategic sites. In Paris, the objective had been set: the sale of municipal land must bring 200 million Euros per year to the city's safes. Missika's team will also realize:

*"There is a blind spot in French public policies: land sales. There isn't really a rule, we're just supervised by a state agency called France Domaine. Besides that, we can define the rules we want. It's freer than public procurement, architecture competitions; it's the appropriate lever. In selling a land plot, we can do whatever we want"<sup>4</sup>.*

The realization of the land market's potential as a locus of innovation echoes municipal policy advisers' reports (Uri, 2012) on New York Mayor Bloomberg's competition to develop a private campus on public land funded by the private sector. A Cornell-Technion consortium won with a bid for a site on Roosevelt Island, in a competition provoking reasonable media buzz. For Parisian policy advisers, "the advantage of

such a light and low cost initiative is that it creates a brand name from the onset [...], the project must be beautiful, great architects have to be enlisted and signals of modernity must be sent" (Uri, 2012).

Furthermore, the austerity imperative to sell municipal land and the New York example resonated with Jean-Louis Missika's extensive use of the call for projects as Deputy Mayor in charge of innovation (see Missika's interview in the reference list) as a way to provide experimentation opportunities to Paris Region Lab's incubated entrepreneurs.

By 2014, real estate sales numbers in Paris remained unstable amid the Eurozone crisis, bringing uncertainty to the municipal tax base (Notaires de Paris Île-de-France, 2014), as municipal budgets in France partly depend on taxes on real estate transactions. Still, prices had far surpassed pre-subprime crash values and long term trends were increasing rapidly, with prices averaging in at more than 8000€/m<sup>2</sup>. High real estate prices, coupled with the promise of a real estate frenzy powered by the Grand Paris Express megaproject, put conditions in place to self-finance innovations within real-estate development projects. For a public servant working on *Reinventing Paris* at the Municipality of Paris, only the scarcity of land in Paris could explain developers' massive adhesion to the call and the increased costs it implies (interview, public servant, call organizers, 13/07/2017). The macroeconomic background was thus favourable to a policy instrument which, while resolutely growth-oriented, could introduce costly demands for innovation to the profit-oriented business of real estate development.

These different factors thus converge in a particular policy instrument, the CIUPs articulating the scaling up of innovation to real estate development. Real estate provides ground for experimentation, whereas open innovation rationales are mobilized to implement change in existing real estate development practices.

### 3.2.2. From the city to the metropolis: IGPM as a political instrument

The creation of the Greater Paris Metropolis in 2016, added a level of governance to the pre-existing region, inter-municipalities and municipalities intervening on urban and transportation policies and projects. Its competences are broad, including economic, social and cultural development, protection of the environment and metropolitan housing and urban planning policies. It shares its power with the Region, the intermunicipal bodies (*établissements publics territoriaux*) and the 131 municipalities (see Fig. 2 below).

As soon as the Metropolis was created, its civil servants were given significant strategic metropolitan planning missions by elected officials,

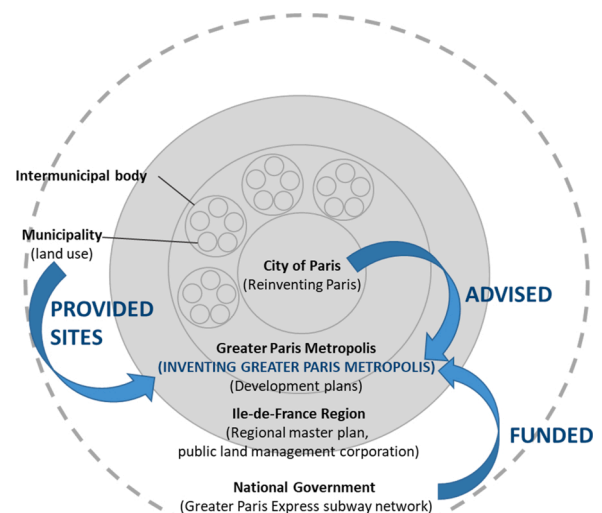


Fig. 2. Inventing Greater Paris Metropolis : the coordination of a complex partnership between the City of Paris, the National government and municipalities led by the Greater Paris Metropolis. Production: 2021, Yoann Pères.

<sup>2</sup> Marion Waller interviewed by Autrement Autrement, June 2020, podcast available on <https://soundcloud.com/user-259460351-18920668>, last visited on June 23rd 2020.

<sup>3</sup> The role of cabinet advisers is pre-eminent in the Parisian administration at the interface between political communication, coordination between deputy mayors of different political parties and technical oversight of projects and issues at stake (Idt, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Marion Waller interviewed by Autrement Autrement, June 2020, podcast available on <https://soundcloud.com/user-259460351-18920668>, last visited on June 23rd 2020.

such as a development plan (*schéma de cohérence territoriale*), and a program on housing (*Plan métropolitain de l'habitat et de l'hébergement*). Drafting such plans represents years of work for the civil servants; metropolitan policy could thus risk invisibility among the plethora of institutions shaping the Greater Paris' territory before the approval of any such plan. In order to exist among the other institutional layers, metropolitan elected officials sought alternatives to deliver effective policies and, consequently, to claim their legitimacy.

Following the media frenzy of *Réinventer Paris* and *Réinventer la Seine*, metropolitan elected officials, headed by their president Patrick Ollier, decided to launch IGPM following the advice of Paris municipality, which was pushing the new institution to develop a decentralised metropolitan leadership on urban policies instead of a recentralisation of power at national or regional levels. The CIUP method was thus transferred to Parisian peripheries. The Metropolis would coordinate the call and provide technical support, expertise on innovation and environmental sustainability, legal expertise, whereas executive and decision-making powers would largely remain municipal prerogatives.

The Metropolis did not act alone in deciding and implementing IGPM. Firstly, it counted with strong State support, as a way to strengthen the Metropolitan body's legitimacy. Indeed, the Greater Paris Metropolis is the most recent landmark of contested and conflictual governance in the Parisian metropolis, with State, regional and local initiatives coexisting and often competing against each other (Lefèvre, 2019). When it was founded in 2016, GPM's political clout was uncertain, all the more so as the process of territorial reorganization that should follow was abandoned in 2018 (Le Lidec, 2018). The State supported IGPM, then, by encouraging the *Société du Grand Paris* (the State agency in charge of designing and implementing a new automatic regional rail network called *Grand Paris Express*) to merge its own call, *the Hubs of Greater Paris*, with the Metropolitan initiative. SGP's call for projects included 17 sites surrounding the future stations, in an effort to attract real estate development and new investors to often peripheral locations. These 17 sites were merged into IGPM. Moreover, the State also enlisted some sites in its own "national interest projects", an important sign of commitment as State development corporations (*Etablissements publics d'aménagement*) are in fact in charge of some of the most important urban (brownfield and greenfield) development projects in the metropolitan area. Finally, State services provided technical expertise in the initial stages of site selection and preparation of site briefs. IGPM was finally launched as a joint initiative at the 2016 MIPIM, the international exhibition for real estate.

Furthermore, *Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis* was also part of a broader effort of mainstreaming the call for innovative urban projects as a policy instrument. Indeed, elected officials at the City of Paris actively encouraged its diffusion, with the City appearing as co-sponsor of other calls such as *Réinventer la Seine* (with two other municipalities along the river Seine) and *Reinventing Cities*, sponsored by C40, an international league of cities lobbying for greener urban policies. For the metropolitan version, Parisian 'policy boosterism', which Eugene Karvonen and van Heur, 2014; McCann, 2013 defines as "the active promotion of locally developed and/or locally successful policies, programs, or practices across wider geographical fields as well as to broader communities of interested peers", took different forms. Echoing political proximity between Parisian Mayor Hidalgo and metropolis President Ollier (Le Figaro with AFP, 2020) the short-staffed Metropolis<sup>5</sup> benefited from methodological support from Parisian municipal technicians, as far as having one of them write the consultation rules (interview, trainee, call organizers, 12/05/2017), whereas the municipal planning agency (APUR) prepared the documents presenting each site. The legal and project management consultancies involved in *Reinventing Paris* were also hired for IGPM. These firms were very active in promoting such calls, as they emerged as

new market niches. In doing so, these consultancy firms also "reassure the supply sector" (Deffontaines, 2012), i.e. the private actors of urban development and innovation. In this case, this reassurance translates literally into a networking and sourcing effort by some of these consultancies:

**"We're match makers between architects and developers. It's a networking job [...]. All this go-between work is quite interesting. I personally met over seventy real estate developers prior to the official launch of Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis".** (interview, senior staff, external consultancy to call organizers, 18/05/2017)

The political objectives of IGPM make it a different policy tool from *Reinventing Paris*. Rather than attracting (international) investors, IGPM is a way of asserting the legitimacy of the Metropolis in face of pre-existing regional and local authorities. Yet, IGPM is equally used as a policy tool by public institutions in charge of urban development, both local and State ones (Rio et al., 2019). Its objectives tend to be related to highly localized development and/or real estate market issues, as IGPM's consultation rules were less strict (than RP's), giving municipalities considerable leeway in specifying its own ambitions for each site. Consequently, the sites put up for sale are considerably larger and the innovation imperatives are milder and less clear in IGPM. This probably explains the higher share of major real estate developers among the metropolitan call's finalists when compared to the Parisian edition (Rio et al., 2019). In the remainder of this article, we will further explore the responses to IGPM, namely its actors and the projects selected by the juries.

### 3.2.3. The contours of real-estate led start-up urbanism in Greater Paris

As the CIUP methodology was scaled up from the innovation field to real estate at a plot scale (RP) and later on to large urban brownfields redevelopment (IGPM), collaborative approaches to urban development processes were effectively furthered. However, according to some participants, perceived legal obstacles remained in the French development system which prevented the generalization of collaborative ways of doing.

The first of such obstacles was the excessive segmentation of French development processes, especially the strict rules governing the relationship between public clients and private contractors. French legislation on the matter (the *loi MOP*, drafted in the 1980s) strictly establishes the sequence of the different design project phases and its relationship with investors and real estate developers. For a consultant in several CIUPs, one of their major challenges is "to implode the rigid triangle imposed by the 1985 law on public procurement, the MOP law, which really limits interactions between design teams, investors and developers" (interview, senior staff, external consultancy to call organizers, 18/05/2017); Hence the urgency of devising a tool – the CIUPs – outside the purview of public procurement legislation, which includes the MOP law (MOP stands for "*maîtrise d'ouvrage publique*", i.e. public steering activities). Only then would collaborative and iterative design processes be possible. While French urbanism, including in Paris, was bustling with experimentations in collaborative and participatory approaches to public space design, social housing, etc., real estate development remained largely impervious to these trends.

This obstacle was partially blamed for the alleged difficulties in attracting foreign investment to Paris, which was a sensitive issue in the context of a renewed global city craze, with local officials dreading London's ascendant in the aftermath of the 2012 Olympics. The segmentation of the French urban production system was seen as one of the impeding factors, as it is at odds with prevailing international calculative logics and profit-making techniques, as illustrated by a top-ranking director in the French branch of a large multinational firm:

**"In France, we have excellent construction economists, but those people don't have the project's commercial value as their priority. British project**

<sup>5</sup> They were 27 public servants in 2016, mostly occupying management positions (Doriac, 2016).

managers don't care as much about optimizing construction costs as they do about what is going to increase their client's asset's sale or lease value. That changes everything! [...] The French market has nothing to do with the world market – and I try and explain the paradox to my shareholders. In France, engineering is poorly paid. In other countries, profit margins are 10 %. In France, we're popping champagne if we get 4 %! **We have designers who know how to design, but with the MOP law cutting everything up in slices, we can't make economies of scale between different phases [namely construction], especially given that the contractor has to redo everything in the end. Sure, it assures public steering authorities, it diminishes design errors, but it also diminishes value.**" (collective interview, top ranking director, multi-national design firm, 08/10/2020)

The critique of system segmentation takes us to a second obstacle, which was the considerable estrangement between traditional real estate developers and the ecosystem of small operators (start-ups incubated by Paris&Co, culture and leisure actors, etc.). The call's terms demand developers to apply with a team composed of designers and future operators, and not a mere financial proposal (Pairot & Moreau, 2017). Developers are thus called upon to put their relational work into play in becoming aggregators of innovations. For innovations regarding the use period of buildings, this is considerable change for developers. Indeed, developers and downstream stakeholders hold very different conceptions of value-creation in urban development. Whereas for developers, the creation of value ends when the construction is sold to its buyer, for many start-ups and other actors of a "platform ecosystem", value is created during the use phase of artefacts, or in this case, of the built environment (Rajakallio et al., 2018). To make worlds meet, public authorities organized several *meet-ups*. Several interviewees acknowledged the crucial role of the first *meet-ups* in introducing real estate developers, architects and a varied ensemble of small businesses (culture, agriculture, third-places, social economy, etc.) to each other.

The inclusion of different types of actors upstream in the early design stages is supposed to contribute to better integration of programs, design choices, user demands and business models. However, the anticipation of management and operational constraints is not the only issue at stake in the municipality's choice of consultation process. It was also a way of outsourcing financial costs associated with traditional public procurement procedures, in which participants are paid during the bidding phases. The logic of offloading public expenditure with the design phase in *Reinventing Paris* and *Inventing Greater Paris Metropolis* was also evident in consultation rules, which were silent regarding contractual relationships between project team members. As a result, very few participants were actually paid for the work done during the competition stages, especially for *Reinventing Paris*. Costs were supposed to be internalized as development risks. There was a very strong polemic surrounding these arrangements, notably led by architects who were arguably at the centre of the design process (Rio et al., 2019) and who are usually paid for work supplied in competitions under the stipulations of the public procurement code. Subsequent CIUP consultation rules (including IGPM) made explicit that team leaders (and not the public authorities organizing the call) had to remunerate architecture teams, evidence at hand. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, CIUPs gave elected officials different options to choose from. For Ariane Bouleau-Saïde, the director of a Parisian municipal development corporation (Bouleau-Saïde, 2019) the process is a way of giving power back to the local government, no longer forced to sell its land to the highest bidder.<sup>6</sup> Others, however, have a more damning interpretation:

**"I think the problem today is that the public client is weak and that its problem is that it doesn't know where to go. It doesn't know what to impose on operators... The story of these 'Reinventing' is, of itself, the story of public authorities' lack of ideas"** (interview, senior staff, external consultancy to call organizers, 07/07/2020).

Whatever interpretation one might be inclined to follow, *Reinventing Paris*' and *Inventing Greater Paris Metropolis*' open innovation model undoubtedly represents an attempt at governing from a distance (Epstein, 2006) in a fine-grained way. Perhaps accepting that, like its Finnish counterparts, its "role as a system integrator is low and that the main responsibility for ensuring complementarity in developments lies with private-sector actors, predominantly the developer" (Rajakallio et al., 2018, p. 101), the Parisian municipality and later on the Greater Paris Metropolis gave themselves a loose, flexible tool, providing important leeway and freedom of action throughout the consultation process. "Calls for innovative urban projects are a form of soft power through which we can steer policies with our own unwritten rules and codes" says an influential cabinet member (interview, cabinet member, call organizers, 03/05/2017).

Reinventing Paris contributed to push the city of Paris' innovation and entrepreneurial agenda at the front of urban development processes. It led real estate developers to adapt their bidding strategies in order to obtain the right to build on consultation's sites. Initially, large real estate development firms did not succeed – they were largely absent from *Reinventing Paris* laureates (Rio et al., 2019). However, they capitalized on their failure to better grasp public ambitions during IGPM and attained a higher success rate. Hence, there is a progressive endogenization of innovations, entrepreneurial and the creative agenda within the real estate sector. In order to do so, they matched with newcomers and start-ups to promote a singular form of self-proclaimed creative and innovative projects during the bidding phase. We use the concept of real estate start-up urbanism to describe these tendencies: the real estate industry capitalizes on small operators' knowledge and innovations to assert their negotiating power – see Section 4. This strategy also opens up new possibilities of value creation for real estate developers: upstream, as they intervene in project definition and can thus define more advantageous operational conditions; downstream, as they develop business units catering to the exploitation phases (for example, assisted care facilities or student residencies, which they manage in the long run) – see Section 5.

#### 4. The urban production milieu's response to IGPM

##### 4.1. The innovations in innovative urban projects

"Even though the examples we present in this report show real motivation to innovate by some of the call's winners, the majority of submitted projects is very ordinary" (Bilhou-Nabéra & Barbé, 2018, p. 6). Calling out the projects' overwhelming ordinariness might seem surprising, considering that it comes from one of the call's organizers, the Société du Grand Paris. Dominique Alba, the director of the Parisian planning agency seems to agree, when she says CIUPs "make ordinary projects in a non-ordinary way".<sup>7</sup> How could it be, then, that ordinary projects would emerge from a consultation which explicitly demanded innovative projects, in which innovations were to be enumerated, their providers identified, and evaluation protocols designed? And yet, in his glossary of innovations in IGPM finalists, Ledoux (2017) identifies nearly 200 separate innovations. And even the Société du Grand Paris identifies nine innovation domains (see Table 2 below), some emergent,

<sup>6</sup> Intervention at the roundtable *Mais alors, qui joue l'ensemblier aujourd'hui?*, part of the seminar *Au-delà de l'effervescence du Grand Paris*, held in Paris on November 19th 2019. A video of her intervention is available on <https://podcast.u-pem.fr/videos/?video=MEDIA200107174129878> (last visited on 09/10/2020)

<sup>7</sup> Intervention at the roundtable *Les sites: une géographie névralgique?*, part of the 9th Journée du Grand Paris, held in Champs-sur-Marne on January 18th 2018. A video of his intervention is available on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIQX5NqInkc> [last visited on 09/10/2020].



**Table 2**  
Overview of innovations in winning IGPM projects.

Type	Domain	Innovations
Emergent	Temporary urbanism	Tactical urbanism
		Cultural and artistic urbanism
		Continuous participation and co-design
	Re-use and recycling in construction	Selective deconstruction
		Cradle to cradle, upcycling, dirt construction
		Used goods depots, digital libraries of things and material passports
	Wood construction	Europe's biggest neighbourhood built in wood
		The wooden building over the <i>périphérique</i> ring road
	Environmental and energetic excellence	Commitment through labels: experiments in IGPM
		The smart grid revolution
		Heat recovery systems
		The 2000 watts society and collective self-consumption
	Classical	New dwelling modalities
Evolutive housing and reversible architecture		
Life-long property		
Bringing the neighbourhood together: mutual help networks and proximity social networks		
Nature in the city		"Useful vegetation": phyto-reparation, biofaçades, biofilters
		Positive biodiversity and the Biodiversity label
		Biomimicry
		The bioclimatic approach
The edible city		Biophilia
		Trends, methods and actors in urban farming
		Urban farming at the industrial scale
		Urban farming at the neighbourhood scale
		Urban agriculture at the building scale
Orphan	Intermodality and innovative mobilities	Interconnecting future Grand Paris Express stations
		The advent of connected mobility apps
		Eco-mobility hubs, condensing active and shared mobilities
	Culture, sport and creation	Enhancing historical heritage
		A revolution for cultural facilities: urban arts and digital tools galore
		Interweaving a memorial duty with a comprehensive cultural approach
		The Olympics are on the way: e-sport and an ecological wave for surfing

Source : Bilhou-Nabéra & Barbé (2018, adapted).

others classic and others still, orphans, meaning that they were under-explored by winning projects.

Our purpose in this section is not to assert just how innovative CIUP winning projects are, but rather to present the spatial objects that were rewarded. And a mixed bunch of innovations it is, reflecting the vast

ecosystem of innovators and actors we will analyse further down the article (see Sections 4.2–4.4).

The thematic diversity shown by the table reflects the call's expectations for innovations in nine different domains (urban planning; architecture; economic development, shopping, tourism and handicraft, energetic transition, climate change and environmental quality, citizenship and social innovation, culture and sports, mobility, multi-modality and logistics, digital solutions), as well as in terms of innovative legal and economic models. Besides their diversity, then, there are also significant differences in the nature of the proposed innovations. There are, first of all, technological innovations (such as smart grids, digital apps, etc.). Then, there are technical ones, resorting not to new technologies, but rather inserting existing (sometimes ancient) ones into mainstream processes, such as construction with natural materials (wood, dirt). Another important set of innovations has to do with the post-occupancy life of projects. They are so to say time related, in that they reveal an anticipation of future operations and the projects' evolution in time, after their initial delivery. These include, for example, neighbourhood social networks and *conciergeries*, and modular/reversible design solutions. Finally, there are several innovations in processes, be it design processes (co-design), project processes (prefiguration initiatives) and construction processes (circular economies of construction sites, local circuits, etc.). More generally, winning projects appear as an assemblage of different innovations in a single design, a patchwork of contributions by different actors that materializes, spatially, the representations of open innovation at the origin of CIUPs.

These listings show that IGPM's innovation is not so much about the novelty of the designated innovations themselves, as most of them have already been experimented enough; it's a scaling-up phase. Indeed, it is their integration into urban projects in such an upstream phase as envisioned by Paris&Co and City of Paris elected officials that challenges established practices. IGPM created a field for experimenting pre-existing solutions provided by small operators and, consequently, originated a kind of mixed-use development which is still rare in France.

In the classification shown in Table 2, the so-called "orphan domains" invoke policy and territorial planning scales, such as mobility planning and cultural and heritage policy, including collective facilities. This shows that the real estate milieu was reasonably ready to adopt and/or mainstream certain discrete innovations into its practice, but less able "to innovate in terms of the urban system and not only of the urban artifacts that compose it" (Préfecture de Paris et d'île de France et al., 2016). By demanding the identification of precise innovations and their providers and by enlisting them in formal documents, the call has arguably contributed to a version of the innovative urban project as an assemblage of discrete innovations. Traditional French urban programming experts played a modest role in the first editions of CIUPs, due to

*"a change in how project programs are made, no longer on the qualification and quantification of territorial needs [...], as much as in the identification of new concepts. To put it differently, project content is no longer structured by an assessment of demand, but on the quest for the most attractive supply"* (Gréco et al., 2018, p. 3).

For some well-established professionals in the field (Meunier et al., 2018), it is the French approach to urban programming itself (the definition of project content as an autonomous activity to design) that is challenged. Existing urban programming methods are imbricated to municipalities' traditional role of guaranteeing public interest, appropriate dialogue with residents and project acceptability. As this traditional role of municipalities is itself under question, the iterative process of programming gives way, for these authors, to a competition of program-product hybrids.

*"In order to meet the demand for a new approach and discourse, real estate developers have widened the range of expertise they mobilise."*

**Table 3**  
Overview of stakeholders involved in IGPM bids and integrated in the SNA analysis.

Core competences			CIUP's newcomers during the development stage	
Real estate industry	Designers	Engineering firm	End users	Others
<i>Real estate developer</i>	Architect	<i>Environmental engineer</i>	<i>Property manager (inc. temporary one)</i>	<i>Start-up (IoT, mobility, etc.)</i>
Investor	<i>Landscape designer</i>	Structural engineer	Hotel and hostel	Research and development firm
	<i>Programmer and strategic consultancies</i>	<i>Other engineering</i>	<i>Social landlord</i>	<i>Communication agency</i>
			Shop and restaurant	
			Sport and leisure firm	
			<i>Urban farming entrepreneur</i>	
			Service provider (maintenance, etc.)	

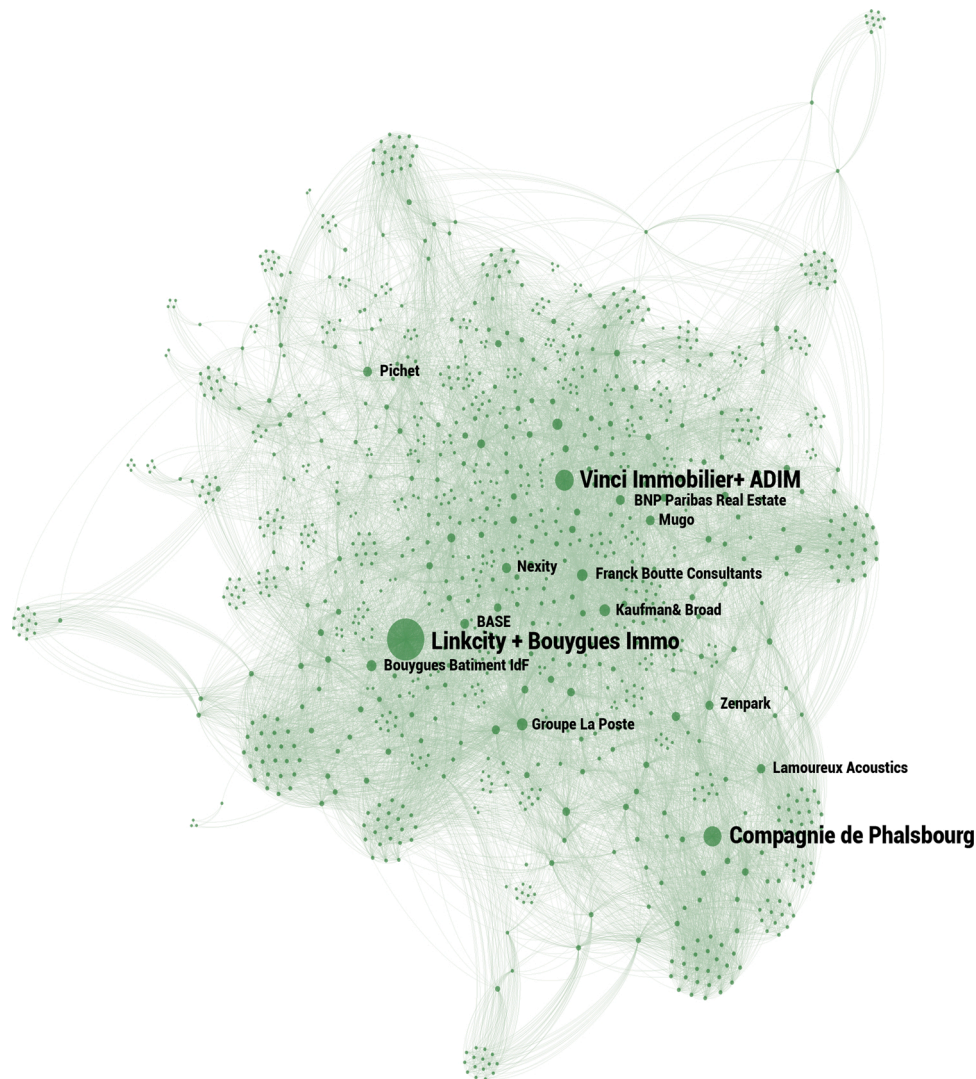
*Italics* : category of actors mentioned and analysed in this section.

*In addition to partners from civil society, most project teams now include project management assistants specifically dedicated to innovation and communication issues” (Lemarchand, 2018).*

In the remainder of the article, we will explore the implications of IGPM and similar CIUPs from the point of view of urban actors. Indeed, the traditional coupling of public authorities and urban programmers in the initial phases of program definition gives way to an effervescence of changing positions by actors old and new in the arena of urban production.

#### 4.2. Real estate developers at the centre of IGPM

As stated previously (see [Insert 1](#)), the consultation rules explicitly address consortia (*groupements*) whose composition should reflect the stakes specific to the site. Thus, each consortium leader should form a team which, by its sole composition and role distribution among members, would guarantee that site complexity is taken into account and future uses would indeed see the light of day. To better grasp what kind of networks emerge from these calls for the “bottom-up smart city”, we designed social network graphs of all IGPM finalist consortia ([Métropole](#)



**Fig. 3.** IMGP finalists graph (giant component) with degree centrality measures.  
Legend: circle size and colour are proportional to weighted degree values. The nodes with the highest weighted centrality degrees are named.  
Source: [Métropole du Grand Paris \(2017\)](#). Production :2020, Pedro Gomes and Sophie Jeannin with Gephi.

du Grand Paris, 2017) with software Gephi (Bastian et al., 2009). Some usual indicators in structural analyses of social networks (Lazega, 2014) are used to characterize the network 2.

The consultation attracted an impressive number of actors: 1160 organizations participated in at least one IGPM finalist team. Its sheer size shows that the call’s collaborative aspirations were met successfully, summoning many actors usually absent from similar urban production processes, at least in such early stages (Table 3).

Indeed, average consortium size is of 11 members (Gréco et al., 2018). Fig. 3 shows that rather than the explosion of the pre-existing system of urban production, IGPM encouraged its expansion, with the major real estate developers in France at the centre of the network.

Degree centrality measures indicate the number of relations established by a given node (or actor). Among the actors with higher values, we find almost all of the country’s top major real estate development groups: Linkcity/Bouygues Immobilier, Vinci Immobilier, Kaufman & Broad, Nexity, Altarea-Cogedim, BNP Paribas Real Estate, as well as emerging ones such as Pichet and Compagnie de Phalsbourg, with growing revenue and increasingly diverse portfolios. This is an indicator of the importance of the relational work of developers in IGPM, namely with other consortia member organizations. Besides developers, the actors with highest degree centralities include specialized engineering firms (Lamoureux Acoustics and Franck Boutté Consultants), end-users

and operators such as Zenpark (mutualised car parks) and landscape design studios such as BASE. The remaining are somewhat harder to classify, as they may intervene in different phases of the urban production chain. Groupe La Poste (the postal service) is most often an end-user in mixed use developments, but it may also intervene through its real estate branch (Poste Immo) as an investor and developer. Mugo is a company which, in IGPM, was enlisted as a design studio, expert consultant and/or operator of urban farming solutions. The centrality of real estate developers among the finalists is confirmed by tests run with other centrality measures on Gephi. Despite the call’s emphasis on end uses, end users are not central in the network. There are, however, some more exceptions to the ones just mentioned, such as social housing landlords (from the Caisse des Dépôts and Action Logement groups), GNC (specializing on flat sharing), Mamie Cocotte (company canteens). Thus, questions about end users’ or other use-related consultants’ input to the consultation seem to address the margins of the network, rather than its centre.

These margins are quite vast, as network density is low, i.e. most nodes are not directly connected to one another. Many actors only participate in one finalist consortium: this is shown by the groups of small nodes in lighter colour, most visible in the outer areas of Fig. 4. This figure displays clustering coefficients, an indicator used to identify “small world” effects in network graphs, i.e. how close neighbouring

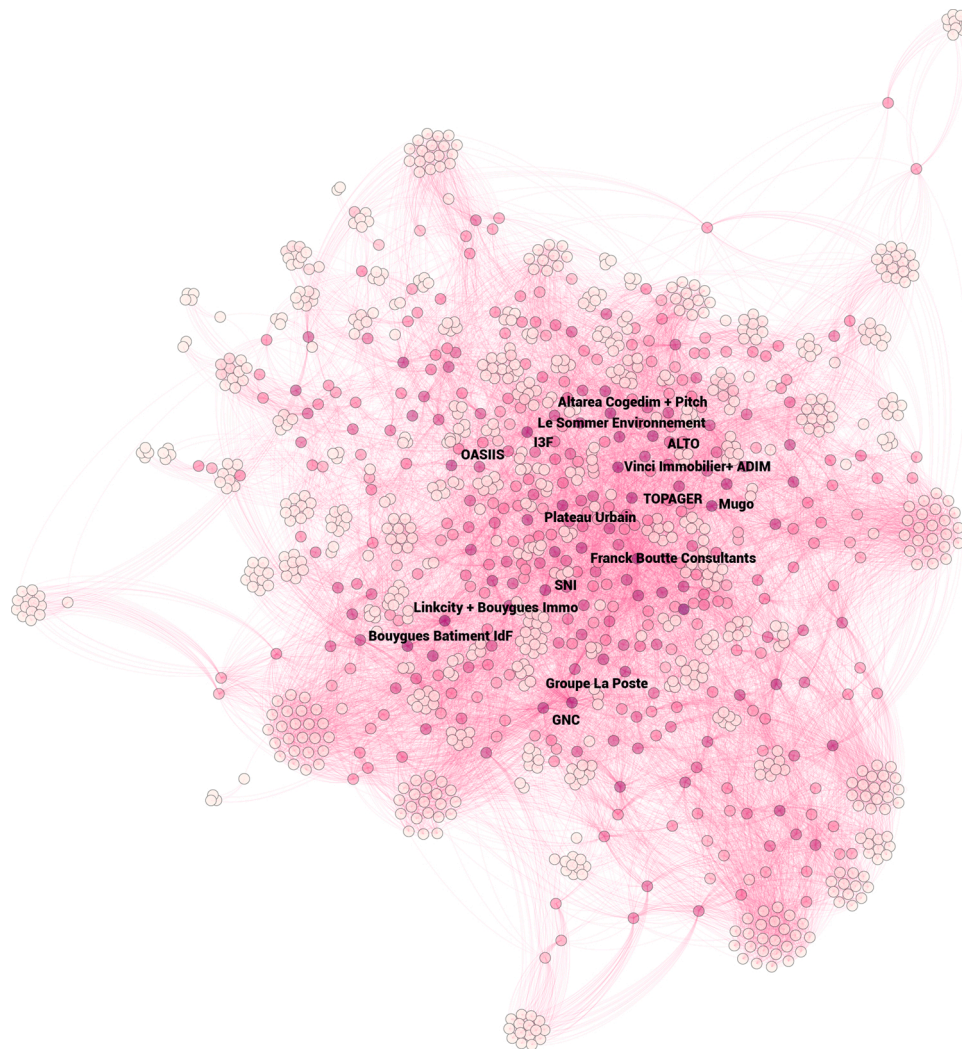


Fig. 4. Clustering coefficients in IGPM finalists’ network.

Legend: colour varies inversely to clustering coefficients values. The nodes with the lowest clustering coefficients are named.

Source: Métropole du Grand Paris (2017). Production : 2020, Pedro Gomes and Sophie Jeannin with Gephi.

nodes are to being all directly connected to one another (a *clique*, in graph theory). Of particular interest to us are those nodes with low clustering coefficients (in darker shades of pink) because they are those which are present in different, unrelated consortia. These correspond to two kinds of actors. The first one includes those actors who are leaders of several consortia and whose consortium members do not overlap. Linkcity/Bouygues Immobilier, Vinci Immobilier, Altea-Cogedim are real estate developers that occupy such a position. Thus, their relational work tends to be multiplied by the number of projects they participate in, as most participants do not repeat project appearances. The second kind corresponds to actors who participate in multiple consortia composed of different members and leaders. Social housing landlords, environmental consultancies, urban farming studios and temporary urbanism agencies occupy these positions. Therefore, for some actors operating in the fields addressed by IGPM's demands in terms of innovation, the call was a significant vector of business expansion. And yet, remarkable as the 1000+ actors taking part in the consultation may be, they are far from overtaking the centre of the French urban development system.

#### 4.2.1. New hires to implement urban innovation within real estate firms

Fig. 1 showed the centrality of real estate developers in IGPM project consortia. As we have seen, calls for innovative urban projects emerge in a context of role redistribution in the urban production system, with new demands being placed upon real estate developers. Specifically, the definition of project content, or at least of expectations, are traditionally the prerogative of public authorities in French urban planning. The 1985 MOP law enshrined the distinction between the public client who sets the brief and steers the operations (*maîtrise d'ouvrage*), and the private contractor who answers to the brief (*maîtrise d'oeuvre*). With CIUPs, public authorities become, at best, *porteurs de site* (site leaders) and consortia gather both *maîtrise d'ouvrage* (most often real estate developers) and *maîtrise d'oeuvre* (urban design studios) roles.

We have seen how real estate developers are at the centre of the network conceptualizing and delivering IGPM projects. This puts pressure on their relational work. They must identify and coordinate all team members. Moreover, the changing nature of the interactions with public authorities is a source of uncertainty for real estate developers' practices. Whereas codified and minimal dialogue is common in public procurement procedures, the absence of a clear project brief in calls for innovative urban projects calls for different skillsets.

To meet these new demands, which also correspond to new business opportunities, real estate developers have been developing in-house functions which were traditionally external to their organizations: urban development and urban innovation (Mosbah, 2017). These changes are visible in the creation of dedicated departments in the organizations. They have also adapted their recruitment practices and started hiring professionals with different academic backgrounds and professional trajectories to their usual employees. These new hires are of two kinds. The first one is characterized by top level private-public careers and urban planning experts; the second one consists of (young) social and political scientists, whose skills (and habits) fit with CIUPs application procedures. These new hires are intertwined with the in-house development of the abovementioned functions; they set-up research and development business units in large urban development projects or in innovation.

As an example, the Director for urban projects in one of the major French real estate firms has previously occupied top positions in a public agency in charge of implementing a major Greater Paris development project. Prior to that, she had worked at the *ad hoc* organization created by former French President Nicolas Sarkozy, to coordinate research and development activities on the future of the metropolitan region. When

asked why she thought her employers were on the lookout for a profile such as hers, she replied:

*"In order to implement the projects [firm X] had won in IGPM, it needed to invoke broader issues than traditional real estate development. There's the issue of programs but in a way, developers, and [firm X] in particular, handled it on their own – that's why they won so many. But there was also this urban dimension, a neighbourhood scale they weren't necessarily familiar with, especially with the operational stages and setups. And then, these are projects where interfaces with public authorities or development corporations are more demanding and longer than in traditional developments. So, they were interested in a profile like mine, because of my experience on the other side of the dialogue [...]"* (interview, senior staff, real estate development firm, 22/07/2020)

Such revolving doors and porosities between public and private careers are a reflection of the changing nature of public and private roles and of the interactions between public and private sectors we alluded to in our literature review. This changing nature is partly constructed in "project stages" (Devisme et al., 2007), i.e. actual physical spaces, events and editorial practices where the urban professionals meet, network and exchange on their professional practices and opportunities. Far from new, these project stages seem to be changing in nature since 2010, when several think-tanks, professional groups and conferences began organizing events attracting elected officials, start-ups, artists and real estate top directors. Until then, such scenes and the consultancy in urban projects and strategies market more broadly were dominated by the public sector (Linossier, 2012), which in turn perpetuated precarity among the majority of private consultancies as profitability diminished with the onset of fiscal austerity for local authorities in France. These new project stages can be understood as a way of influencing public policy, but also of private sector adaptation to the new conditions of public engagement in urban projects. The motto of one such club, called *Ville Hybride – Grand Paris (Hybrid City – Greater Paris)* is telling: "hybridize projects, make actors meet, embody the Greater Paris".

This is rather new jargon in a real estate profession based on financial and operational expertise and negotiations, both commercial and political (Bardet et al., 2020), and less so on softer skills. Unsurprisingly, many firms sought new skill sets to deal with such "hybrids". These professionals were often hired as intrapreneurs, adding new competences to put new practices in place:

*"Question: So in a way, when those real estate developers hired you, it was already a bit of a 'slip'?"*

*Oh, completely! And when I got there, they gave me this stupid title like 'innovation officer'. Obviously, that got everybody laughing because, precisely!, the real estate world isn't a world of innovation, that's not the subject of real estate development, at least at that time and especially for a mid-sized developer [...]. So they hired me because they didn't have the kind of profile to [prepare bids for innovative projects]. It's not really a skill, there isn't something to be known, it's more about having a kind of flexibility of the mind and, bam!, take the subject into your own hands, work it out and put up a discourse that is convincing but also solid, with proper foundations"* (collective interview, senior project developer, real estate development firm, 02/10/2018)

One of their key missions is coordinating stakeholders and activities incorporated into extended project teams, networking and introducing new stakeholders and concepts to the development units within the real estate firms. As summarised by Alice Fournier senior project manager at Kaufman & Broad, a top real estate firm:

*“the creation of the Large Urban Projects department [in her firm] responds to feedback from Réinventer Paris, and is designed as a development tool to coordinate the plethora of stakeholders and win new projects. These projects make us work with new players, new skills. Furthermore, collective processes allow us to change our practices”.*<sup>8</sup>

These new hires do not come from a real estate background (in France, typically specialized colleges or business schools), but rather from political science or other social sciences – and sometimes both. Some have spent part of their careers abroad, often not in real estate. In part, they push for new ways of building a city, where public and private interests are more imbricated. But hiring political and social scientists also reveals that the imbrication of public and private interest requires developers to think in more strategic, or even political, terms. When asked why he hired so many people with backgrounds in political science, the Director of urban development projects at a real estate development firm replies

*“there’s a truly political dimension to our work. That’s what goes on in calls for innovative urban projects: there’s a delegation of public ambition to private actors. It’s not a mere public-private partnership. As they no longer have the means to undertake projects, municipalities are selling their land to private actors, as long as they respect public ambitions. In such projects, we really have the opportunity to think about the housing of tomorrow, about cultural flagships within a real estate project and how you ensure its longevity, about sports and leisure facilities which are open to the city, etc. It’s partially due to the conjuncture [...], but I really think that private actors and the political are now partners, really more than just the people you sell land to”.* (collective interview, senior staff, real estate development firm, 13/11/2018)

This newfound role has practical implications in developers’ work. As calls for innovative urban projects become a recurrent means of accessing developments of hundreds of millions of Euros, developers need to win such bids. And to do so, one of our interviewees argues, they must be able to interpret public expectations and put them into paper. There is a need for “adaptable and sly profiles for whom complexity isn’t a problem, rather something interesting to work through”, because

*“the issue isn’t traditional land development, but participating in competitions which require either brain juice if you’re feeling nice, or rhetoric and cosmetics if you’re not [...]. Do you know how [CIUPs] work? What matters is the ten page note, so all of a sudden you have to write, that’s the big deal [...]. The question now is: who writes? [...]. Controlling that written piece decides whether you’re selected to the final stage [...]. That kind of work, of hermeneutics, of reading ‘the bible’, when it comes down to it, people don’t really like to do it, and don’t do it that well... it’s actually important for those people, you know, 100,000 sq. meters or new headquarters... It’s important, they don’t want to get it wrong. They’re trying to say something, they took the time to write them [the terms of reference], but they write confusingly and sometimes it’s their logic itself that is confused... You have to make choices on their behalf, articulate the different stakes at play for them: ‘that’s the tension, we think we should go that way’ and to do that kind of work, you need to document yourself and you need to read.”* (collective interview, senior project developer, real estate development firm, 02/10/2018)

Hermeneutics become important because in CIUPs, public ambitions are no longer formulated in a prescriptive manner, rather in the form of advice and answers to specific questions made via an online platform

<sup>8</sup> Public intervention by Alice Fournier, senior project manager at Kaufman & Broad at Réinventer les faiseurs de la ville, quels impacts des AMI sur le jeu des acteurs de l’urbanisme et de l’immobilier, conference held in Paris, at Pavillon de l’Arsenal, May 18th 2018.

and, if site leaders decided to, in scarce meetings held with finalist teams. During the bidding phase, developers must manage without much public-private dialogue and thus interpret public demands and propose rallying visions for the city (or at least the project) of tomorrow.

The absence of a clear project brief from the onset also has impacts on the nature of negotiations after the announcement of consultation laureates. On the one hand, gaps between (unspoken) public expectations and private bids might entail increased negotiation. On the other hand, negotiations might also regard the contractual definition of each innovation, its expected performance and penalties for non-compliance. To handle both situations, development firms seek and hire unusual profiles: political and social scientists and senior public officials, respectively. The emergence of generalists with backgrounds in social and political science in previously technical-intensive corporations has been identified in other urban professions in France as a response to the changing nature of urban issues and of public-private interactions (Bataille, 2020; Lacroix, 2019). However, it would be wrong to minimize the permanence of traditional real estate development firms’ core activities. The quote below not only illustrates the importance of those core activities, but also their adaptation to the objects enshrined in innovative urban projects. Real estate developers eventually had to learn how to deliver on promised visions, a challenge for pre-existing work routines.

*“[The urban development projects and innovation division] is actually a business unit. The major evolution is that in the beginning we only worked on the bids to calls for projects. We won one with [public development corporation Y] and the next day the project was [...] hogged by the operational people and it was a disaster! They got rid of ideas, of all the interesting third parties we had enrolled [...], of everything, in the end! It was such a disaster that we ended up integrating the operational phases in the urban development projects and innovations division. Meaning that after having won something, you had to implement them and teams were at a loss... and at that moment we had to develop the [operational] skill set really quickly”* (collective interview, senior project developer, real estate development firm, 02/10/2018).

In one event organized by Ville Hybride on the topic of resilience in 2020, a political science graduate and development officer at Legendre Groupe gave a passionate speech on how the articulation of urban innovation and real estate should challenge existing calculative practices in development firms and eventually the whole profession’s scope. After claiming that political science’s adoption by real estate development is often a mere marketing ploy and that political scientists’ “ecosystemic and holistic frame of thought” is an important contribution for the real estate world, she continued in a quasi-activist fashion:

*“Previously, CIUPs were perceived internally as a constraint, but they should become the basis for all projects. [...] CIUPs have changed real estate developers’ [educational] background and the time-frames of the consultation seem inadequate: to answer to all the stakes, we need five years, not six months! [...] The reorganisation brought about by CIUPs [between developers and design teams, between technical and generalist professionals, through the involvement of small operators] demands that we rethink the developers’ balance sheet from expenses/revenue to a model based on objectives, as we already do with building materials”.*<sup>9</sup>

In the following sections we continue exploring the milieu’s response to IGPM and its implication for collaborative forms of urban production and, consequently, for the relational work of different stakeholder

<sup>9</sup> Public intervention by Estelle Sabatier at the roundtable Ville résiliente et économie symbiotique : quelles déclinaisons architecturales et urbaines dans le Grand Paris...tout de suite?, organized by Ville Hybride on February 3rd, 2020.

groups. We begin by looking at the variegated ensemble of small operators and start-ups that populate finalist and winning teams and their projects.

#### 4.3. Small operators embodying current spatial imaginaries on innovation: real estate as a new market to conquer

##### 4.3.1. A surge of young entrepreneurs: on the role of Paris&Co in the emergence of a new milieu

In 2019, *Partager La Ville*, a company that defines itself as a ‘platform for innovative urban projects’ and that participated in 35 project teams in different CIUPs, including 6 laureate projects, launched a survey (Chavent et al., 2020). The purpose was to assess whether start-ups and new entrepreneurs were satisfied with having participated in the CIUPs or if, due to their lack of resources and to power asymmetries within consortia, they had not succeeded in implementing their concepts. The poll showed that 90 % favoured the method despite the low number of achievements to date. Therefore, we must raise the question of the reasons for this plebiscite.

The plethora of start-ups, architecture collectives and other third place entrepreneurs in consortia is deeply linked to a surge of new entrepreneurs in the past few years. Indeed, new small operators appeared in the Parisian urban milieu thanks to policies aiming at better engaging environmental firms and residents in framing their urban environment, such as Paris&Co’s calls for projects in niche businesses such as heat insulation, new types of hotel accommodation and innovative revegetation (Bled, 2014).

Paris&Co’s call for projects methodology, inspired by the development of new ICT firms (Section 3.2), consists of incremental development goals and steps: find an idea, launch market research, communicate and enrol, raise funds and experiment. Thus, “*experimentation represents an opportunity for project leaders to test their products or solutions in situ as well as their economic models*” (Chavent et al., 2020). Simultaneously, for public authorities, these emerging companies and their ideas are a way of testing new policy ideas and models, by resorting to private actors. Partnerships are key for these start-ups to develop and CIUPs provided fields of experimentation. Indeed, “*small operators used to join developments at the last stage of the urban project development process. They are now integrated into the early phases. This gives them increased negotiating power which is [editor’s note: may be] reinforced by the backing of politics*” (Lienhard, 2018, p. 46) during implementation phases.

##### 4.3.2. Matching real estate developers with small operators: IGPM’s meet-ups

CIUP organizers have arranged the meeting of start-ups with real estate developers, namely through meet-ups enabling deeper links between solution providers and resource holders, respectively. Start-ups were thus provided with new fields of experimentation as the consultation garnered further media coverage:

*“Don’t miss the 3rd meet-up of the innovative urban consultation “Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis” [...]. This networking event is a unique opportunity to get in touch with start-ups, finalists of the consultation and other actors of city making, and to develop sustainable economic partnerships! This meeting will particularly focus on the themes of supply chain and citizen participation, without leaving out the themes of cultural programs, third places, innovative mobility, intelligent buildings, health, training or reversible uses”. (“MEET-UP Inventons la Métropole du Grand Paris #3,” 2017).*

The collaborative ideal is highlighted by stakeholders:

*“The factors of time and involvement are important during these calls for projects, without remuneration,<sup>10</sup> and it’s a hard pill to swallow for some [...]. But in spite of everything, it is interesting to note that working together on a project, devoting so much common energy to it, makes it possible to federate a team, to establish partnerships that will be fruitful on other achievements than on the call for projects itself”.* (Valentine de Lajartre quoted in “*Les start-up plébiscitent les appels à projets urbains innovants,*” 2019)

Some other small operators have a more central relationship with real estate developers. Such is the case of Le Grand Réservoir, whose task is to find new uses for projects. In the words of their Chief Innovation Officer Jérémie Bouaziz<sup>11</sup>:

*“We are not here to decorate your projects, to serve as flower pots. Today, developers ask us to take the lead. Architects are aware of this, they tell us that for once they understand the ambition of projects.”*

Fig. 5 illustrates Grand Réservoir’s relationship with different real estate developers (in red), characterized by a multiplication of partnerships and downstream opportunities. Le Grand Réservoir not only intervenes as a consultant early in the design stages, in identifying trends, uses and end-users, but also positions itself as a potential investor and future operator in some projects. IGPM is thus a source of revenue in itself, but also an opening into new business ventures downstream in victorious IGPM projects. The call is equally a pretext for inaugurating a working relationship with several developers, in the hopes of securing other business opportunities.

For small operators, CIUPs and the financial resources associated with real estate developers are central in their development strategies, some of them are even working for free in the bidding phases of CIUPs. It is a way to network and create new business opportunities, be it in IGPM itself (if the project wins the bid) or in other contexts. Conversely, for most real estate developers and architects, teaming up with small operators in CIUPs is a way to develop research and development solutions that could fit in other future projects.

##### 4.3.3. Strategies developed by small operators in the face of CIUPs: pitching and consulting

As we have seen, small operators accept the uncertain implementation of their solutions in the latter stages of urban development projects because IGPM provides a networking environment filled with opportunities for scaling up their businesses. Indeed, “*these projects, even if not realized yet, have been formidable communication channels in the general opinion*” (“*Les start-up plébiscitent les appels à projets urbains innovants,*” 2019). During meet-ups and in expressions of interest submitted as part of bidding projects, pitching, a common practice for start-ups, is used as a way to attract the attention of all of the stakeholders participating in CIUPs. As summarised by Thierry Lajoie, former director of Grand Paris Aménagement, a State urban developer, “*in the context of*

<sup>10</sup> As seen earlier, this is not the case for all team members and is explicitly forbidden when it comes to architects. In IGPM, most consultants and analysts are paid during the consultation stages (Rio et al., 2019), as they are not concerned by the downstream exploitation phases. Non-remuneration mostly concerns end-users for whom calls for innovative urban projects are development opportunities.

<sup>11</sup> Public intervention by Jérémie Bouaziz, CIO of Le Grand Réservoir at Réinventer les faiseurs de la ville, quels impacts des AMI sur le jeu des acteurs de l’urbanisme et de l’immobilier, conference held in Paris, at Pavillon de l’Arsenal, May 15th 2018.

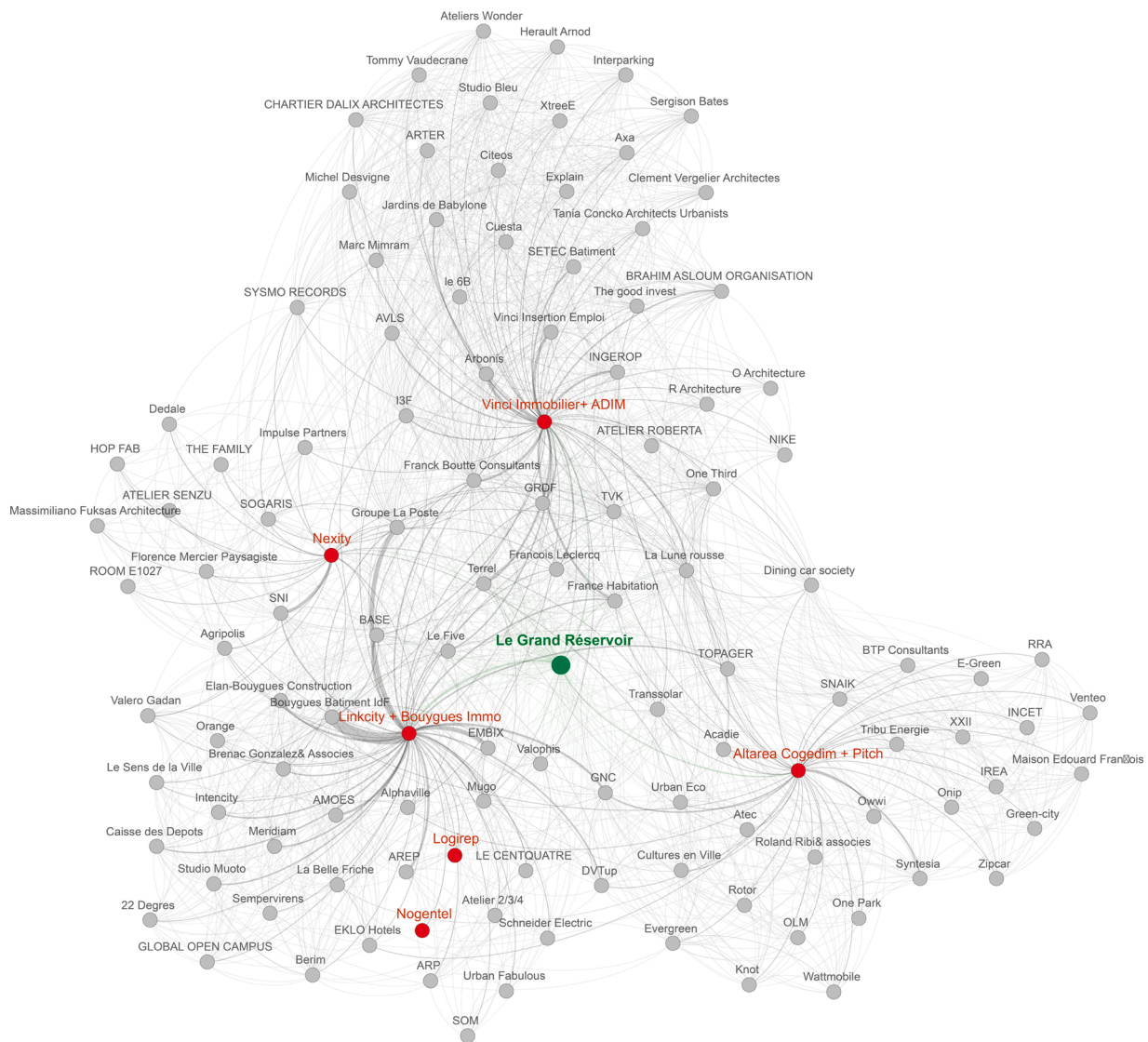


Fig. 5. Ego-network for Le Grand Réservoir in IGPM finalist projects. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

Legend: real estate developers are depicted in red.

Source: Métropole du Grand Paris (2017). Production : 2020, Pedro Gomes and Yoann Pères with Gephi.

CIUPs, the marketed concept is at least as important as the urban project”.<sup>12</sup> CIUPs participate in a reduction of traditional tasks assigned to urban planners in charge of carrying out urban, social and economic analyses, replacing them by the search for concepts likely to appeal to elected officials. Marked by a tight schedule for designing projects, this quest for innovative concepts, whether for new uses, new materials or the provision of new services does not, however, make it possible to secure effective implementation. In this context, small operators use communication strategies inspired by the world of start-ups to exist in this competitive arena. However, the timeframes for these small operators are hardly compatible with those of urban development projects: the time lapse between the bidding stage and project implementation may potentially be too long.

“When real estate developers recruited them in CIUPs so that they would bring their touch of innovation, start-ups thought they had been brought out of anonymity by the wave of a magic wand. But many are paying the price for the economic reality of project implementation”. (“Les start-up plébiscitent les appels à projets urbains innovants,” 2019)

This seems to be especially the case for the new uses whose economic models involve finding new investors likely to support projects with a low rate of return on investment. In November 2019, a progress report of IGPM winning projects indicated that five of them were in search of investors to support their development, after having lost their initial ones (Métropole du Grand Paris, 2019).

However, some of these small operators succeeded in strengthening their financial and organizational capabilities, through hybrid financing models, closer institutional relationships, etc. Plateau Urbain is one of these operators. First created as an association in 2013, the enterprise is now developing short-term leasing of vacant spaces to cultural actors, associations, start-ups and enterprises in the social and solidarity economy. Their initial development was backed by the City of Paris, who

<sup>12</sup> Interview of Thierry Lajoie by Le Journal du Grand Paris, published on November 3rd 2019 as *Les AMI ont apporté un formidable bol d'air*. Available online at <https://www.lejournaldugrandparis.fr/t-lajoie-les-ami-ont-apporte-un-formidable-bol-d-air/>. Last visited on October 9th 2020.

encouraged their setting up of *Les Grands Voisins* in a former hospital along with other associations and collectives. Having become very visible thanks to this large scale “*meanwhile space*” (Latham, 2018), Plateau Urbain took part in sixteen IGPM finalist projects. The large number of projects in which they participated (among them IGPMs) led the collective to progressive professionalization: In late 2020, Plateau Urbain employed 35 people and had changed their status from an association to a SCIC (“*Société coopérative d'intérêt collectif*”, community-oriented cooperative enterprise). They are now able, thanks to their reputation, to choose the type of projects they wish to position themselves on, both in terms of size (more than 800sq m) and duration of temporary leases (more than 24 months) (Plateau Urbain, n.d.).

Nowadays, experienced small operators are moving upstream as a way to make their activity more profitable and valuable, for instance through consultancy work for real estate developers and municipalities. Hence, their very strong market position enables them to pick the type of projects they want to work on. According to Paul Citron, development director for Plateau Urbain<sup>13</sup>:

*“we value working for the municipalities, but lately we’ve been approached by big real estate development groups a lot [including for CIUP bids]. And in those cases we are much more reluctant, because we draw the line at working for someone who is just going to sell after construction. If it is a matter of making us intervene in the pre-sales phase, to create attractiveness and to demine the relationship with the neighbourhood, if there is no continuity in the uses and if they intend to sell the land to the highest bidder, then it does not interest us. It would be different with a developer who we know will be the long-term operator of the site. We could work together because what we suggest will have a place in the future.”* (Paul Citron, interviewed in Rollot & Ateliiergeorges, 2018)

The cooperative’s view of real estate developers should be understood in the aftermath of their first experiences with developers, including in IGPM, in which they were present in several bids (Fig. 6). Their lower participation in IGPM’s second edition reflects the learning process illustrated by the quote. These bids engage different real estate developers (in red) who, as we had seen in Table 1, massively resorted to temporary urbanism in their quests for innovative urban projects.

Plateau Urbain’s stance on their role, somewhat independent from traditional real estate operators and investors, is all the more visible in the creation of a property investment branch alongside a consultancy firm, Le Sens de la Ville. This firm is equally no stranger to real estate developers and CIUPs, having done consultancy work in different bids and managed one such call on behalf of the public development corporation in Saclay, the scientific hub of Greater Paris. The new joint venture with Plateau Urbain, specialized in commercial ground floors, will allow its associates to operate over a longer stretch of time, further downstream, by circumventing the classic investment market’s demands in terms of profitability.

Thus, diverse trajectories are emerging among the universe of small operators revealed by CIUPs, as some collect experience and conquer market share and others struggle to depart from an embryonic state. The first CIUPs awarded a set of then-emerging small operators who profited from opportunities to secure strong market positions. In face of those strong positions, there is the risk of project normalization with other small operators, and their products, potentially being kept off the market, namely traditional or politicized associations. Among the new generation of confirmed small operators, firms such as Le Sens de la Ville and Plateau Urbain have adopted strategies moving upstream and downstream, from profitable consultancy missions for the public and private sector, to site management and hybrid financing to ensure their

capability to operate in the long term.

#### 4.4. Emerging consultancies supporting the bidding process for the teams

It’s January 2018, the innovative urban project craze is at its peak, with the second editions of *Reinventing Paris* and *Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis* on the horizon. A real estate consultancy organizes a breakfast conference tellingly titled “*IGPM, why real estate developments and urban projects will never be the same*”. The room is packed with 250 people, mostly from the real estate industry. For the organizers, a management assistance firm for real estate developers providing solutions and ideas along bidding processes, the stakes are high. It is an opportunity to network with attendees and a demonstration of its capacity to draw lessons and capitalize on its experience. The keynote speaker uses a marketed tone as he reveals the firm’s analysis of the innovations among IGPM winning projects. Topics include “*architecture as the experience’s keystone*”, “*a shift towards uses*”, “*nature in the city, a project staple that has been pushed further*”, or “*environmental responses*” and “*comfort and well being*” as “*true project assets*”. Besides innovations, the speaker argues that the call for projects is a real life proof of concept, bringing together top real estate development firms, start-ups, residents and associations. In doing so, it reinforces a collective dynamic on city-making practices.

The keynote above, which one of us attended on January 25th 2018, shows how the sum of IGPM projects might appear as a jumble of current trends and discourses on city making practices, both in terms of methodology (the collaborative paradigm) and in terms of urban design (resilience, greening, etc.). Events such as these became a staple for consultancy firms as a way to assert their legitimacy as viable partners for real estate developers’ bidding teams or as contractors of public authorities organizing such calls.

This type of consultancies and agencies is very significant in the process. In his own work as a consultant for call organizers, one of us identified at least 19 structures who are particularly involved in bids to CIUPs, without necessarily having the formal status of consortium members. Their role is to identify the major challenges set up by the Greater Paris Metropolis and translate them into (marketable) concepts, which sometimes extends to sourcing consortium members who fit the project brief. According to Jérémie Bouaziz, Chief Innovation Officer of Le Grand Réservoir<sup>14</sup>:

*“one of the challenges is to find achievable utopias that are fundable [... because] real estate training focused on finance does not shape a desirable city. Our respective software are not compatible, there are cultural and educational gaps that have to be overcome”.*

Some of these firms have a different approach to traditional real estate consultancies, in that they anchor their urban strategist roles in specific project themes and/or methods. Companies such as The Street Society, Le Grand Réservoir, NeoTopics or Promoteur de courtoisie urbaine have each created their own hybrid offer of urban strategy and concept digging, storytelling or expertise in new uses. They participate in clarifying the concept, thereby adding new competences to financial and technical expertise, traditionally at the centre of bidding processes led by real estate development firms. As the co-founder of one such company, whose background is in the advertising and marketing industries, puts it:

*“I thought it would be interesting to apply the strategic planning methods we use in advertising agencies to real estate [...]. I believe today there’s this immense opportunity – and that’s our first area of*

<sup>13</sup> Interview of Paul Citron by Mathias Rollot and ateliiergeorges, published in Rollot, Mathias and Ateliiergeorges (2018), *L’hypothèse collaborative : conversation avec les collectifs d’architectes français*, Marseilles: Hyperville.

<sup>14</sup> Public intervention by Jérémie Bouaziz, CIO of Le Grand Réservoir at *Reinventer les faiseurs de la ville, quels impacts des AMI sur le jeu des acteurs de l’urbanisme et de l’immobilier*, conference held in Paris, at Pavillon de l’Arsenal, May 15th 2018.



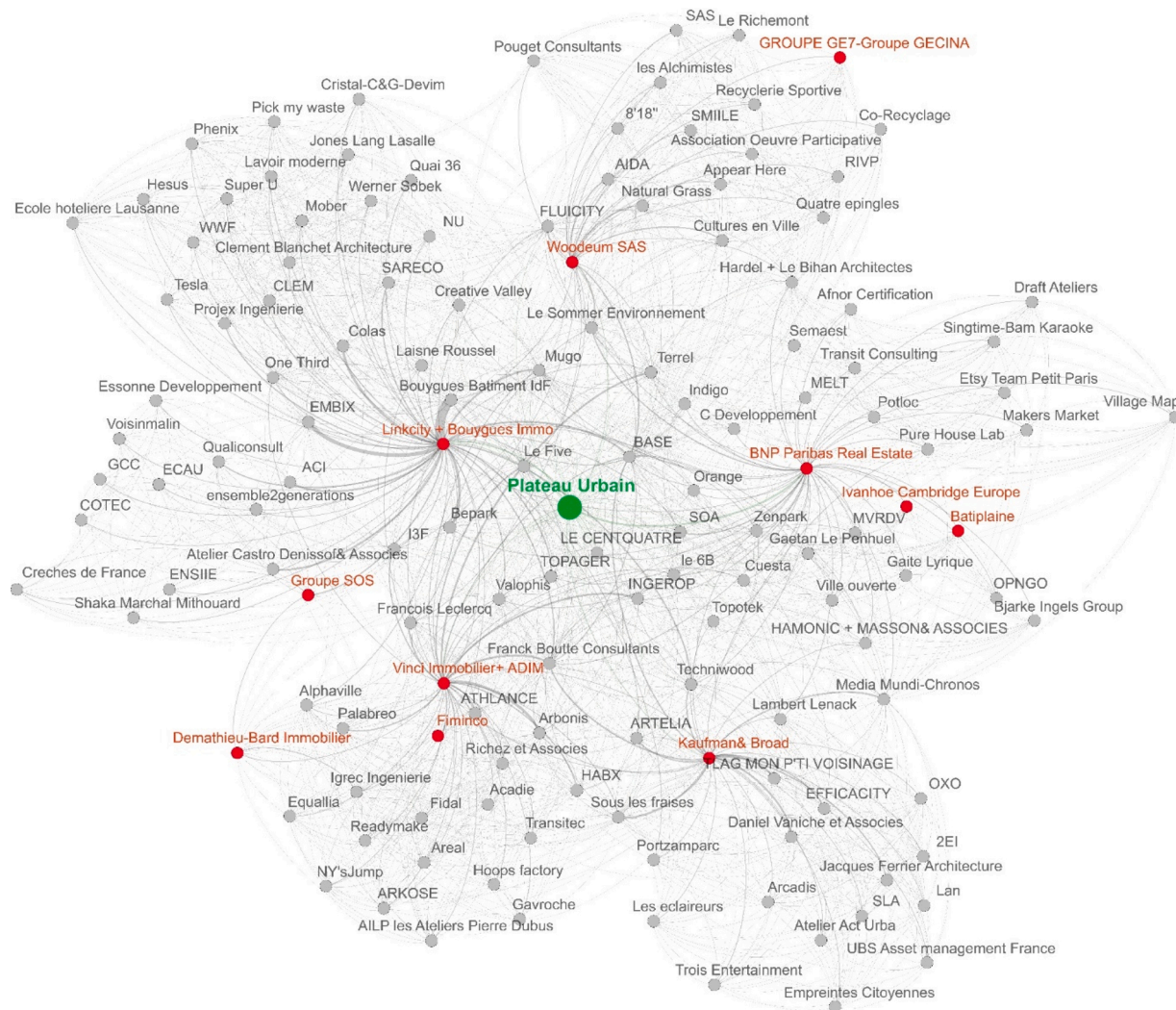


Fig. 6. Ego-networks: Plateau Urbain in IGPM finalist projects. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)  
 Legend: Real estate developers are depicted in red.  
 Source: Métropole du Grand Paris (2017). Production : Pedro Gomes and Yoann Pères with Gephi.

*business – of giving sense to things. [...] So our first area of business is consultancy on [market] research and foresight to identify themes [...] to create polarities and give sense to programs”* (interview, co-founder, private consultancy, 05/02/2020)

These up-and-coming firms put forward and operationalize a conceptual discourse on innovation as collaborative endeavour and as urban experimentation that bridges political goals and private-led businesses. In doing so, both civil servants analysing the candidate projects and elected officials during jury panels are expected to respond positively to project bids. Thus, IGPM contributed to the emergence of new market niches specialized in storytelling and urban innovation.

Some of these emerging consultancies also make themselves visible through written production reporting research on CIUPs (Chavent et al., 2020; Gastine et al., 2016; Rio et al., 2019; Sabbah & City Linked, 2018). The following example of a self-proclaimed “think and do tank” is telling. It was founded to prepare a bid to *Reinventing Paris* by five well-established professionals in urban development in the public and private sectors. The group comes together informally as “a sort of think tank” developing a personal project in co-housing as the embodiment of a professional reflection on the excessive segmentation of urban production into distinct phases, with little iteration between them and an insufficient and too downstream involvement of end users. The group

eventually formalises as a firm committed to experimenting and pushing for procedural change in French urban planning, rather than sticking to a specific role in the urban production chain. When asked what they do, one of the firms’ co-founders replies:

*“Our title is ‘consultants in programmatic urban strategy’, but it’s actually hard [to answer the question] because we’re really on a case-by-case basis... Still, we’re adamant about having a cross-cutting, transversal role. For us, good project strategies come from a transversal understanding of the different issues at play, be it economic, management, legal, spatial... We’re generalists who aren’t afraid of getting into the nitty-gritty of other professions’ technicities [...]. So we’re a broadband consultancy [assistance à la maîtrise d’ouvrage] for organizations in steering positions which places questions of method and stakeholder interactions at the core of their practice [...]. We do urban project management as eclectic and transversal as possible. I think there are few steering organizations [public or private] who do it all the way [because they don’t have the time nor the organization to do so]. For me, it’s a sort of outsourcing of steering functions in urban projects [...]. But we also have a bunch of projects which are truly research and development, which in turn allow me to be all the more pertinent and on point [...]. It really feeds into our practice and it’s that*

*complementarity that creates added value*". (collective interview, co-founder, urban consultancy firm, 19/03/2019)

This quote is yet another example of a new generation of private consultancies and companies emerging in the French urbanist scene. It is a heteroclite group of organizations, who seem less bound to a single offer or one position in the urban production chain and easily move upstream and downstream (Idt et Silvestre, 2019). A new milieu has emerged, specialized in CIUPs, and led real estate development firms to capitalize on specific individuals to develop a niche market embodying a political vision on innovation in urban development projects.

#### 4.5. The black box of project teams' inner workings

Developers, small operators and consultancies are the professional categories highlighted by the magnifying glass of CIUPs. However, as the section on small operators has already suggested, the actual contribution of different actors to project design and implementation can vary greatly between projects – especially considering that project implementation is still underway.

The inner workings of project design and implementation are necessarily contingent (Arab, 2018; van Assche et al., 2014), especially so in a consultation aiming for innovative, non-standardized urban objects. We have seen that IGPM was apparently able to push forward collaborative design processes, given team sizes in the early stages of project design. However, the actual processes are far from a horizontal collaborative ideal: a "star-shaped model" of interactions (Rio et al., 2019, p. 45) still predominates. As project leaders, developers are at the centre of the design process, working closely with the architectural design teams on the designs themselves and on project deliverables. Other team members, namely consultancies, technical design studios and end-users mostly interact bilaterally with the developer-architect duo and rarely interact with each other: hence the star shape.

The relevance of architects and design studios in the inner workings of project consortia is understandable, as architectural design remains the most important criteria in IGPM jury decisions (Rio et al., 2019, p. 26). (see Fig. 3) when compared to their major role in project processes. The collaboration between architecture studios and real estate developers has arguably become a higher stake in the context of changing modalities of public procurement, increasingly adamant in controlling the design quality of urban development projects (Ordre des architectes, 2017). Arguably, the increase in the number of consortium members highlights the growing stakes placed on design as a coordination and synthesis activity (Biau, 2018). For a project officer at a well known design studio:

*"[CIUPs] ask questions that go beyond the building and [bring forth] actors who, I think, would have never been selected in a more traditional private competition. So, it's really positive that the whole program is completely elaborated by the project team. Actually, we feel we're as much architects as we're programmers. That's our biggest motivation and it somewhat changes our profession – it changes developers' profession, too!"* (interview, project manager, architecture studio, 17/03/2020).

The role of future end-users and operators is more diverse and harder to grasp. Yet, their ability to play a central role in team dynamics along developers and design studios depends on them being investors on the overall financial make-up of the project – in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors, mostly. Yet, being an end-user investor is not a sufficient condition – some may only intervene in the definition of their allotted part of the project and stay away from overall project definition. The actual circumstances leading to these different degrees of engagement require further enquiry. The role of investors is, unsurprisingly, relevant in project dynamics; otherwise, the usual developers, social housing landlords, retail, leisure and hospitality investment firms are the most common investors in IGPM, as it is usually the case in French urban

development. The participation of institutional investors in the upstream phases of urban development projects remains modest in Greater Paris, especially financialized forms of asset management such as investment vehicles (Llorente et al., 2020).

We have shown that real estate developers are at the centre of the network defined by IGPM tenders and at the centre of individual project team dynamics. In the following section, we will see, however, that real estate developers were unequally prepared to adopt such agile and contingent development strategies.

#### 5. Real estate developers' innovation strategies: tailor-made expectations versus ready-made solutions

It's April 2019. In a meeting room at the headquarters of one of the top real estate developers in France, a team of consultants, including one of us, is presenting its analysis of the implications of CIUPs for the real estate development industry. The client is one of the largest economic groups in France, with subsidiaries in public works, transportation, energy provision, waste management, among others. The consultants had analysed a great amount of bids for different CIUP organizers. Addressing the firm's regional development directors sitting around the table, the firm's director for innovation introduces the meeting as follows:

*"The goal today is to design an innovation that we can integrate into all of our urban and real estate development projects. This solution should not be patchy but replicable"*.

His ambition, we will soon find out, was at odds with the consultants' analysis of the CIUP phenomenon. Titled *"Reinventing cities: a new deal for real estate players?"*, it was a broad presentation of the innovation strategies of major real estate developers in IGPM. Central to the consultants' argument was the notion of *"real estate as a service"* as a way of creating added-value in the use phases - the city of tomorrow as a leased city, filled with services. They back their presentation by quoting Isabelle Baraud-Serfaty, one of the most well-known real estate economists in France:

*"in this [new] model, the key actor is the one who is able to aggregate actors, integrate newcomers [...], by being able to go as far as the exploitation phase"*.

They develop their argument further, by going through the trends identified in candidate projects: hybrid workplaces, inhabiting over ownership, etc. In face of these socio-economic issues, the consultants argued, their real estate client should start embodying the political vision of (public) landowners on a long term basis – therein lies a new market, an *à la carte* model of urban innovation. The consultants concluded by presenting three main courses of action to implement this new strategy. First, the client should reorganize its bidding processes, by adopting *beehive* teamwork that would improve the integration of development and construction management teams within the firm and, consequently, be more inclined to take risks. Second, to broaden the fields of expertise such as integrating fieldwork with residents or improving storytelling through outsourcing to communication agencies. Third, the firm should consider applying for EU and State programs for (urban) innovation as to assert their efficiency and find new funding sources.

The discussion that ensued revealed what, for the client, was a misunderstanding of the constraints of real estate development. The focus on new uses and services seemed of little relevance for a firm that does not operate as an investment trust (*société foncière*, i.e. a company that owns real estate for leasing and/or direct management and/or operation). Their firm would not be able to capture the value associated with the downstream phases alluded to in the presentation; long term return on investment arising from the use phase was impossible. Furthermore, for the Director for Innovation, the consultants had also

**Table 4**  
Main real estate developers in IGPM per category.

	Categories of real estate developers				
	Public works and construction group branches	Bank subsidiaries and listed firms	Investment trusts ( <i>foncières</i> )	Regional and independent regional estate developers	Other project leaders (non developers)
Examples	Bouygues Immobilier, Linkcity, Eiffage Immobilier, Vinci Immobilier	Nexity, Kaufman & Broad, BNP Paribas Real Estate, Sogeprom	Compagnie de Phalsbourg, Altarea Cogedim	Groupe Pichet, REI Habitat, Woodeum	Architects, cultural operators, etc.

overestimated the importance of the innovation unit within the firm:

*“My mission statement does not involve reviewing the company’s strategy as a whole and I have a limited set of resources. Our meeting’s purpose is to find a replicable, marketable concept that we can implement indiscriminately in our urban development projects”.*

This episode encapsulates two paradigmatic, and opposing, takes on urban innovation in the French urban real estate milieu. The consultants echoed the mainstream political vision on urban innovation, as designed by Missika and his team in 2014. The real estate firm, however, had an economic and financial model that prevented it from moving downstream, where the ‘battle’ for end-uses takes place.

The diversity of real estate developers’ preparedness to “think downstream” is dependent on the company’s history and organization. The importance of path dependencies in developers’ strategies when responding to IGPM is also visible in the way they structured their consortia. In the remainder of this section, we will show that real estate developers’ bidding strategies in IGPM are correlated with their economic models and corporate cultures. Specifically, we mobilized Moisiso and Rossi, 2019; Pollard, 2009 typology of French and Spanish real estate developers, consisting of four categories: i) branches of major public works and construction groups, ii) listed real estate developers and bank subsidiaries, iii) investment trusts (*foncières*), and iv) regional/provincial real estate developers. Table 4 shows the distribution of firms per category.

For each category of developers, we selected one firm as an example and present graphs illustrating the consortia for every project bid the firm was involved in IGPM. We present, then, one example per category, namely the one we found most representative of the category’s traits. Naturally, these categories are not hermetic and each real estate developer has their own idiosyncrasies. In every figure, each project (star shapes) is at the centre of a cluster. Organisations participating in more than one project are placed midway between those different projects.

5.1. Branches of public works and construction groups

Consortia led by this real estate subsidiary of a construction group have an average of 19 members, which is significantly higher than the average of 11 for the whole of IGPM. Fig. 7 shows a paradigmatic example of this type of developer, who typically engages alongside co-investors and co-developers in projects where environmental innovations and nature-based solutions are highly prevalent. Design teams mix well-known and established architects with up-and-coming agencies, who take charge of overwhelmingly themed projects; for instance, culture (in sites in La Courneuve and Saint-Denis), sports (as in Thiais-Orly and Fort de Romainville) or entrepreneurship and digital technologies (as in Cachan). To better convey the concepts of these projects, this developer resorts to communication agencies, who provide convincing language elements and storytelling to the written pieces of the applications, in the hopes of upping their chances of winning the bids.

Unsurprisingly, developers in this category focus more on constructive innovation, such as new materials and energy solutions aimed at improving environmental performances, so as to engage as many branches of the construction group as possible in the project (such as

Embix, a start-up in BIM modelling incubated within Bouygues). This way, the innovative urban project opens new markets to other branches of the group. For instance, one of them designed a turbine connected to a motorway tunnel with heat recovery in order for the project to be self-sufficient in energy consumption. Another branch of the company later on will build this turbine. Projects are designed at the company-scale with the replication of innovations, as seen above. This same industrial-like approach to project design is visible in Fig. 7, with many actors being solicited for several projects. Some degree of efficiency in consortium-building is thus sought, perhaps at the risk of standardization between projects.

Pushed further, such group-wide strategies can lead to the creation of integrated business units within the group who assemble and coordinate all the group’s different areas of business in preparing project bids and, if bids are successful, in implementing them. UrbanEra, a branch of Bouygues Immobilier created in 2011, is paradigmatic of integrated organizational models (Mosbah, 2017) as a response to three inter-related factors. First, the growing complexity and the increasingly urban scale of developments leading to higher coordination costs for bridging the organizational cultures of different business units. Second, they perceive the need to present (public) client organisations with a single contact point within the organization. Finally, the push to develop in-house a retail branch as a way to respond to (public) clients’ demands for large scale mixed-use developments. Consequently, Bouygues Immobilier’s consortia tend to be smaller in size, teaming with external consultancies in specific domains such as the arts or environmental assessment of building permits.

5.2. Bank subsidiaries and listed firms

This bank’s real estate subsidiary’s strategy is quite different from the previous. It favours young architects and includes comparatively few end-users and small operators: an average of four per project. The average consortium size of 15 is due to the presence of technical and environmental design studios. Whereas choice of architects favoured emerging studios, this developer teamed up with mainstream, well established technical consultants, such as Techniwood, and co-investors/end-users like Accor hotels and Foncia Croissance. Risk taking is low and shared among co-investors (square shapes). External consultants were hired to shape programs, be it generalist urban programmers or specialized operators/consultancies in the arts.

The little number of external consultancies, engineering firms and end-users (see Fig. 8) is likely a sign of a lack of risk taking. The importance of engagement committees, i.e. review boards where project decisions are made, tends to privilege return on investment and distribution of dividends and, consequently, hinder the emergence of riskier propositions. The success rate of this category was low in IGPM.

Like bank subsidiaries, real estate development firms which are listed in the stock exchange tend to privilege financial criteria in project building. The major traits of the previous category also apply here: even though major developers such as Kaufman & Broad and Nexity went through the kind of internal reorganization described above (namely the creation of “large urban development projects” units), they were unsuccessful bidders in IGPM. However, this unsuccessful run hides a prolific activity in urban development projects elsewhere, especially for Nexity’s branch *Ville & Projets*. Unlike UrbanEra, Nexity opts for custom-

### A 'group construction's branch' example



Fig. 7. Projects and project teams steered by a public works and construction groups' real estate branch. Source : Métropole du Grand Paris (2017), Algoé (2017). Production : 2020, Yoann Pères with Gephi.

### A 'bank subsidiary' example

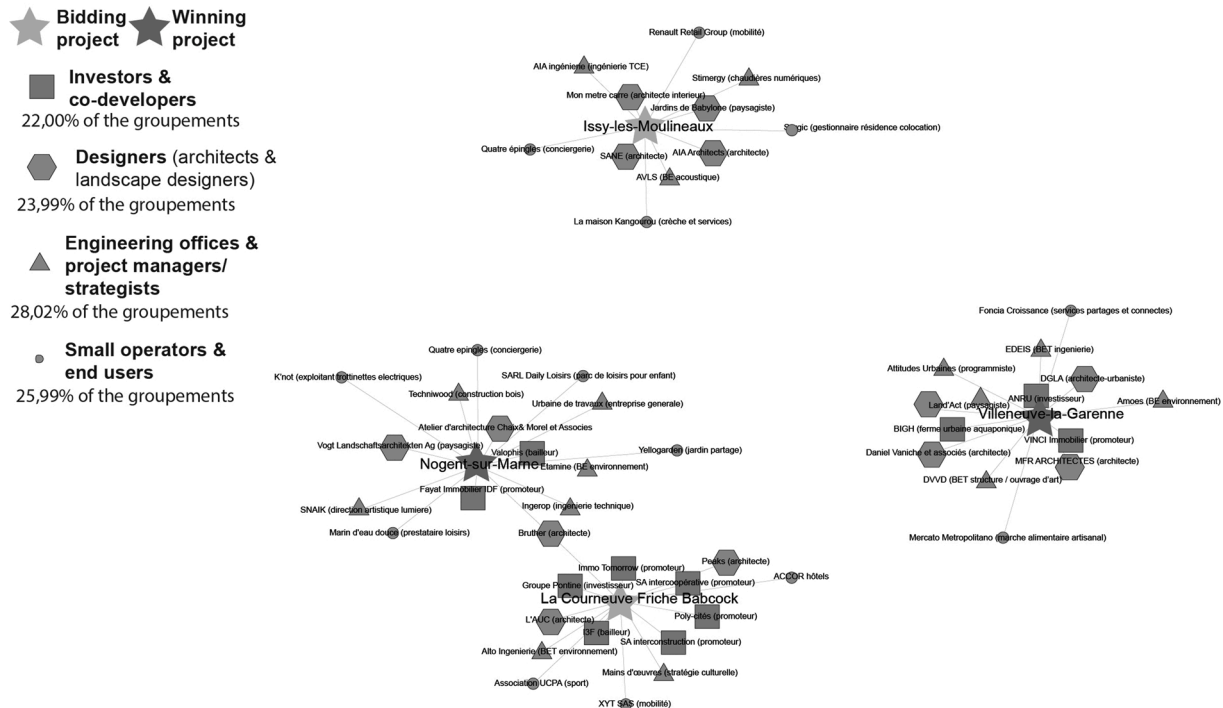


Fig. 8. Projects and project teams steered by a bank subsidiary. Source : Métropole du Grand Paris (2017), Algoé (2017). Production : [anonymized] with Gephi.

### A foncière' exemple

- ★ Bidding project
- ★ Winning project
- Investors & co-developers  
3,58% of the groupements
- Designers (architects & landscape designers)  
14,28% of the groupements
- ▲ Engineering offices & project managers/strategists  
21,43% of the groupements
- Small operators & end users  
60,71% of the groupements

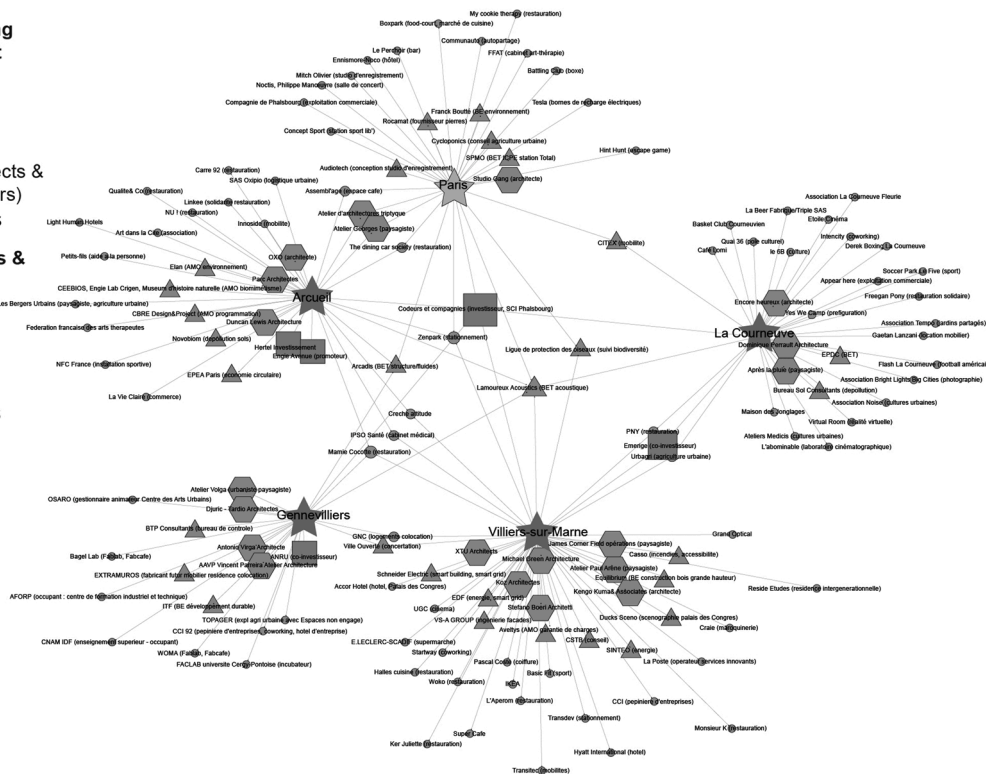


Fig. 9. Projects and project teams steered by an investment trust. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

Source : Métropole du Grand Paris (2017), Algoé (2017). Production : 2020, Yoann Pères with Gephi.

made and flexible organizational models, relying on an extensive network of partners – from co-investors and developers (especially for retail spaces) to end-users and myriad consultancies and technical design studios (Mosbah, 2017), closer to open innovation models.

### 5.3. Investment trusts (foncières)

As we have seen before, *foncières* are companies whose core business is owning, managing and operating buildings, notably in the retail and hospitality sectors. Upstream urban real estate development (buying land, building real estate and selling it) is something these firms have

started doing as a response to the growing interest in end-uses and end-users in French urban planning. The firm illustrated in Fig. 9 below is a telling example.

This *foncière* brings together a large number of organizations in its project consortia: 32 on average with a high proportion of end-users (circle shapes). End-users include a mix of local actors, highly specialized operators and newcomers. Moreover, numerous technical design offices are in charge of the constructive innovations, whereas general design plans are handed to tandems of renowned architects the likes of Sou Fujimoto and emerging collectives like Encore Heureux. On the long term, this strategy may lead to enhanced heritage and financial value.

Table 5  
Success rates in IGPM per real estate developer category.

Categories of real estate developers	Examples	Expressions of interest (nb.)	Finalist bids (nb.)	Laureate projects (nb.)	Success rate (EOI /Laureates) (%)	Revenue in France in 2016 (M€)	2016 market share (among IGPM participants) (%)
Public works and construction group branches	Bouygues Immobilier, Linkcity, Eiffage Immobilier, Vinci Immobilier	111	55	19	17	6 722	27
Bank subsidiaries and listed firms	Nexity, Kaufman & Broad, BNP Paribas Real Estate, Sogeprom	38	9	3	8	8 108	32
Investment trusts ( <i>foncières</i> )	Compagnie de Phalsbourg, Altarea Cogedim	88	48	19	22	7 211	29
Regional and independent real estate developers	Groupe Pichet, REI Habitat, Woodeum	95	31	9	9	2 509	10
Non-developers	Architects, cultural operators, etc.	49	10	3	6	585	2
TOTAL	–	381	153	53	14	25 137	100

Source : Métropole du Grand Paris (2017), Algoé (2017), Pollard Julie (2009), 2016 Revenues and market share: Chiffre d'affaires.com, Le Moniteur 2017. Production : 2020, Yoann Pères.

Moreover, there is a low recurrence between projects and, contrary to the bank subsidiary in Fig. 7, in this case it does reflect a strategy of developing singular projects for each site. Thus, each project is specialized on a theme (culture in La Courneuve, biophilia in Arcueil) and an external consultant is hired to source a mix of compatible end-users including local and metropolitan actors. In the centre of Fig. 9 in red, is the long-term investment firm, common to all projects. There is a clear difference between this developer, whose logic is based on long-term ownership, and previous developers, who mostly function as builders-developers. Consequently, this *foncière* is able to put end-users forward (more than 15 per project on average). This focus on end-users is integral to the company's culture and logic of action; it has an established reputation in shopping centre design and management.

Indeed, the kind of *foncières* that were successful as project leaders in IGPM are specialized in shopping centres and hotel development. Their business model includes land and property ownership over the years, increasing their revenues from renting. Their design approach was thus already one of articulating the built form with uses and the exploitation phase. *Foncières* were the most successful category in CIUPs (see Table 5 below).

#### 5.4. Regional and independent real estate developers

Finally, regional and independent real estate developers capitalize on market niches to build specific representations of innovation directed to elected officials and civil servants. For instance, REI Habitat promotes wood constructions, whereas Pichet (a Bordeaux-based investment trust) focuses on new uses and favours young architects. These companies' willingness to innovate stems from the necessity of opening-up a new market - visible in the creation of Greater Paris business units, common among provincial developers. CIUPs thus appear as an effective tool in obtaining attention from elected officials and their administrations. Accordingly, developers in this category mainly competed for the smaller sites of the consultation and they do so, overwhelmingly, as the sole developers and investors in the project team (see Fig. 10).

#### 5.5. The fates of different developer types in IGPM

Overall, even though IGPM and other CIUPs might have played a role in organizational change, Table 5 reminds us, first of all, that IGPM represents a small proportion of real estate developers' work and revenue: Patrick Ollier's quote in the beginning of this monograph mentions a total of 7 billion Euros worth of private investment for IGPM, whereas participating developers made over 25 billion Euros worth of revenue in 2016 alone. The table also stresses that the remaining indicators, in terms of number and/or proportions of bids, hide big differences in terms of square meters and expected revenues between project sites. Therefore, the remaining values should be interpreted with caution and IGPM is not to be analysed as a representation of the real estate development sector as a whole.

Still, real estate developer categories shed light on the unequal success rates among real estate developers. Reasons include the role of engagement committees, the opposition between dedicated project teams to each bid and firm-based innovation strategies, organizational cultures, and the calculative practices of return on investment associated to different positions in the urban production chain (construction and exploitation phases, land purchase price, etc.). Articulating innovation strategies and categories of real estate developers reveal different types of actors who, according to their corporate culture and business models develop differentiated responses in the context of CIUPs. The result is a

higher success rate among real estate operators who are moving upstream from the use phases, especially retail-based investment trusts (but also cultural operators, for example). As summarised by Jérémie Bouaziz<sup>15</sup>:

**“Most CIUPs bring property investors (*foncières*) to the front of the pack. They become long term managers of the built environment - there are links to be made with car manufacturers who develop leasing”.**

Our account of the meeting between consultants and the innovation department at a construction group showed the latter's reluctance in moving downstream to the exploitation phases. Instead, they were keen on developing replicable solutions. Added symbolic and economic value would then emerge from endogenous innovations, incubated within the real estate development firm itself. Gastine et al., 2016; Blein, 2019 analysed this trend with regards to shared working spaces. He demonstrated how real estate developers have taken up the concept of co-working to develop new real estate products as new branches in an industrial and labelled approach to innovation and collaborative uses: Wojo/Nextdoor for Bouygues Immobilier for instance. Developers with the highest revenues tend to foster such skills in-house, either by supporting intrapreneurship schemes or by buying into existing structures. For example, Nexity recently bought shares in Anticafé, a co-working/café hybrid among the most successful end-users in CIUPs. Their extensive project portfolio allows them to think in terms of economies of scale, replicability, and the like. Conversely, mid-sized and small operators tend to adopt tailor-made approaches to projects, sourcing a mix of small independent operators for each bidding project, rather than developing those skills in-house.

Generally snubbed by *Reinventing Paris*, construction groups were much more successful in IGPM: their success rate is around 17 % and they scooped 19 of the 54 sites up for grabs. Clearly, these large firms were able to position themselves on very large sites requiring strong financial commitment. Conversely, regional and independent developers can only bid on smaller sites because of their limited financial resources.

The lower rate of laureates among listed real estate developers and bank subsidiaries (8 %) reveals that their risk minimization and profit maximization strategies somewhat missed the mark. Consequently, if the higher proportion of major developers among the winners when compared to *Reinventing Paris* suggests that the innovation stakes are lower in IGPM (Rio et al., 2019), they are still relevant - as shown by bank subsidiaries and listed companies' underwhelming performance.

## 6. Conclusion

Throughout this paper we have analysed the implications of calls for innovative urban projects for the planning system in Greater Paris, namely of the first edition of *Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis*. Our main arguments are that CIUPs give way to real estate led start-up urbanism, a hybrid policy tool that infuses urban development with economic and urban innovation objectives by making urban development projects an instrument for bringing together economic actors and markets which were previously separate. In doing so - and this is our second argument - CIUPs become important drivers of organizational change in the Greater Paris planning system and for real estate developers in particular.

In the first results section, we have shown that from their inception at the City of Paris to their emulation by the Greater Paris Metropolis, calls for innovative urban projects change in nature. IGPM is a politically

<sup>15</sup> Public intervention by Jérémie Bouaziz, CIO of Le Grand Réservoir at *Reinventer les faiseurs de la ville, quels impacts des AMI sur le jeu des acteurs de l'urbanisme et de l'immobilier*, conference held in Paris, at Pavillon de l'Arsenal, May 15th, 2018.

### A 'regional developer' example

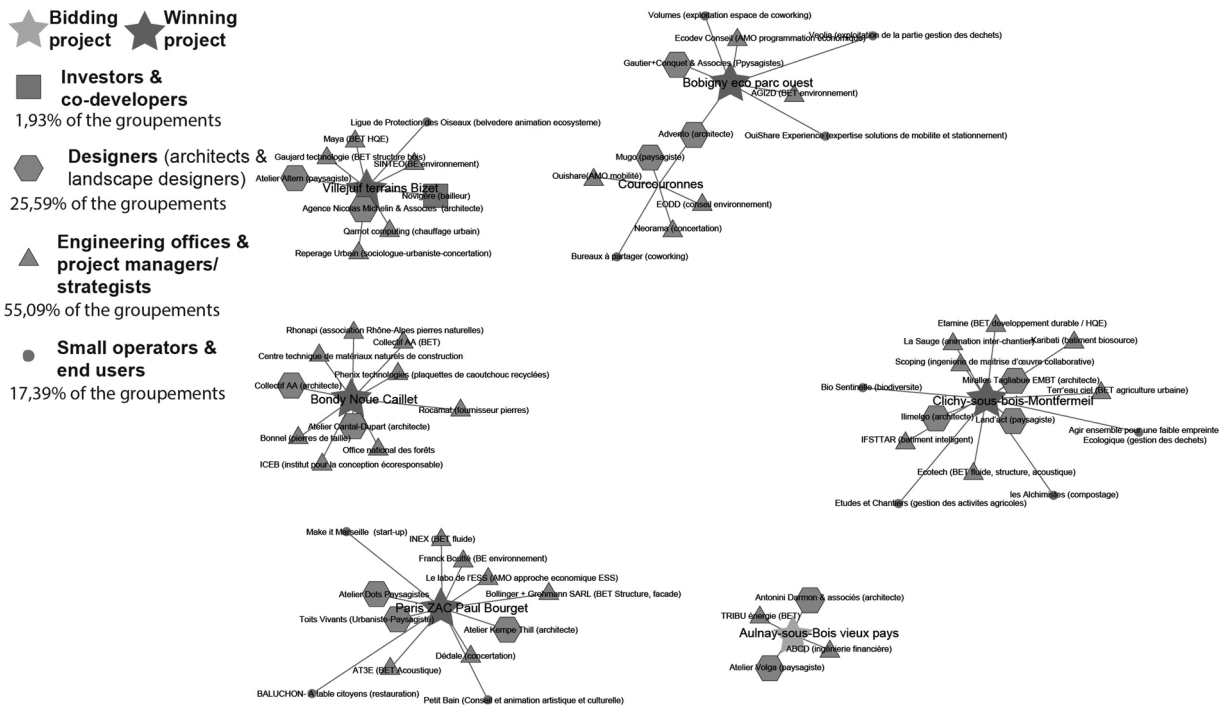


Fig. 10. Projects and project teams steered by a regional and independent real estate developers.  
 Source : Métropole du Grand Paris (2017), Algoé (2017). Production : 2020, Yoann Pères with Gephi.

motivated call aimed at establishing a working relationship between the newly created metropolis and its constituent municipalities – or their mayors, at least. IGPM with its (very) large sites and complex brown-fields effectively upsized CIUPs, with real estate developers leading large consortia and thus steering business opportunities for local innovation actors. In the following section, we highlighted that despite the high number of individual innovations inventoried in IGPM bids, call organisers seem largely unimpressed by the innovative character of the projects. This led us to interrogate the organisational responses of the planning milieu to the call, where we found ample proof of important changes associated with the demands CIUPs make to real estate developers in terms of relational work. Changes include the further internal restructuring of developer organisations, the recruitment of new types of professionals. New consultancies emerge, offering services catering to the stakes emerging from increased relational work. Small operators try to secure positions in the delivery stages of projects and, in the meantime, move upstream offering consultancy services as way of securing cash flow. In the final results section, we show that even though CIUPs are an important driver of organizational change for real estate developers, the latter respond variously to the innovation impetus. Pre-existing organisations and group-wide entrepreneurial strategies are powerful determinants of developer behaviour in IGPM.

These results are derived from the bidding phase of the call's first edition. In order to grasp the extent of a possible generalization, it is important to continue monitoring IGPM projects throughout the operational and implementation stages. It is also necessary to pursue further research on the evolving practices of urban development and real estate actors in the aftermath of the first CIUPs. In the remainder of this concluding section, we present three themes which we believe could steer further research on the matter. The first one is the evolution of collaborative arrangements and power dynamics between stakeholders throughout project implementation. The second relates to the scope and permanence of the organizational and collaborative changes we have analysed here. The third and final one discusses the potential social and spatial outcomes of IGPM.

At a roundtable, Sébastien Chambe,<sup>16</sup> former Deputy Director of the regional planning agency (Institut Paris Région), stated that he could not recall anything which, “in the past fifteen years, ha[d] pushed the boundaries more, that ha[d] called into question professional postures and role distribution between actors more” than CIUPs. But he warned, immediately after, against the “deforming prism” of the 55 IGPM projects: in 2018, the planning agency’s database counted around 1600 projects! These remarks, as well as the apparently cynical take on just how innovative finalist projects actually are, suggest that for the planning milieu the stake for CIUPs is higher in terms of outputs than in terms of outcomes. Policy analysis traditionally evaluates results by differentiating “the effects produced on the organizations and behaviour (outputs) and the consequences of public action, the impacts on the problem we wanted to address (outcomes)” (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2012, p. 19). It is, indeed, the direction of the arguments we have developed in this paper.

The story of *Inventing the Greater Paris Metropolis* is far from over. It is important to keep in mind that the timeframes of project development and implementation will span well beyond the period we have analysed here. One important question is the actual ability of IGPM to deliver on its promises – will projects be implemented and if so, how much of the initial plans will be respected? Behind this form of operational monitoring, it would be particularly interesting to access the negotiations going on behind the scenes. First, between public authorities and developers/consortia leaders, to understand whether CIUPs weaken the state in face of private actors or, on the contrary, if there is indeed some form of public-private co-production. And between consortia members themselves: what happens to those members who are not engaged in the negotiation and development stages? Does collaboration survive the

<sup>16</sup> Intervention at the roundtable *Les modes de faire de la maîtrise d'ouvrage publique: Quelles transformations?*, part of the 9th Journée du Grand Paris, held in Champs-sur-Marne on January 18th 2018. A video of his intervention is available on [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jg\\_ZLTeEhKE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jg_ZLTeEhKE) [last visited on 12/10/2020]

long timespan between project bids and their implementation?

In a recent seminar,<sup>17</sup> Jean-Louis Missika suggested that the driving force of CIUPs might be dying down. The succession of calls was effective in redistributing opportunities within the real estate development profession, with a handful of until then mid-range companies (Pichet, OGIC, Emerige, for instance) climbing the ladder of the most important developers in France in terms of revenue. Moreover, a number of firms much like the consultancies and small operators we have analysed in 4.3 and 4.4 conquered strong, quasi-hegemonic positions in their respective market niches and the revolving doors between operators, consultancies and real estate developers abound – as do the job opportunities for intermediary professionals. Have CIUPs given way to a new normal? Research taking a step back from CIUPs and focusing on the overall strategies and trajectories of both organisations and professionals is indispensable to better understand the scope of change we have analysed in this paper.

In his book reflecting on principles for a new urbanism at the wake of a new millennium, François [Public intervention by Alice Fournier, 2021; Ascher, 2001](#) discussed the tensions between substantive (favouring results) and procedural (emphasising ways of doing) approaches to city making in their relation to the public interest. According to him, modernist conceptions of planning were overwhelmingly substantive in nature, technical expertise acting as the depositary of the general interest. As the growing differentiation of society challenges unified conceptions and gives way to pluralist understandings of the public interest, planning tends to move towards procedural approaches (as conceptualized by communicative and collaborative planning theorists). In such approaches, the general interest is dependent on the process and procedures, namely their ability to go towards forms of co-production.

Calls for innovative urban projects are undoubtedly manifestations of procedural ways of doing the city and a successful tool in pushing towards collaborative forms of city making. Whether or not these collaborative forms lead to enhanced contributions to the general interest is less clear, however, because the organizational changes we have analysed in this paper remain limited to the supply side of the urban development process. The everyday citizen, on the contrary, is virtually nowhere to be found in the general picture of the “bottom-up smart city”. Despite being an explicit topic of expected innovation, and the fact that 45 % of winning projects did propose some kind of citizen involvement in the project ([Sabbah & City Linked, 2018](#)), CIUPs exclude residents and the general public from the initial stages of project development. Developers in charge of consortia do not include residents because of time constraints, to maintain secrecy around their ideas during the competition stages and, more generally, because it is not their prerogative as mere competitors. There are cases of citizens being consulted during the bidding phases – mostly for design purposes, not democratic scrutiny.

Besides negative practical implications of such an absence – legal battles initiated by disgruntled residents, projects abandoned in the eve of the 2020 municipal elections – there are more fundamental political arguments regarding citizenship. The everyday individual’s role in the “bottom-up smart city”, too, is filtered by consortia members (consultants, future operators) and the proposed activities. Residents are, first and foremost, future users or recipients of the services to be provided. At best, they possess civic energies expected to come and bring future spaces to life – as members of third sector organisations, for instance. There is little question of citizenship as an exercise of democratic debate and action. In so doing, IGPM and other CIUPs enshrine mainstream representations of ‘smart citizens’ while circumventing certain mechanisms of democratic control. There is no arena to express different conceptions of the city and alternative views on urban development. One of the risks of there being little debate and of concentrating urban

development in a restricted number of actors is what [Sébastien Chambe](#) called “the sociological gimmicks of our time, of our professional class – of our social class, even”.<sup>18</sup> According to him, the renewed planning and design methods brought forth by CIUPs “are invoking a vocabulary and a set of representations which are primarily addressing the juries in front of them and the project teams: urban educated classes”. To put it simply, the “bottom-up smart city” is potentially exclusionary. Now that the competition has passed and the secrecy of negotiations come to an end, will there be more and better means of engaging with democratic processes? How inclusive and just is the city that CIUPs bring to life? Herein arguably lie the elements of most vital scrutiny during project development and implementation.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

Part of the work (collective interviews, Pedro Gomes’s post-doctoral fellowship) were undertaken within the *Planning Greater Paris* chair, which is funded by thirteen public and private planning institutions involved in the processes analysed in this article. The article also mobilizes Yoann Pèrès’s work as an intern at the Municipality of Paris and as a consultant. However, none of these institutions had any supervision of article content and were not directly engaged in its writing whatsoever.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Pedro Gomes:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing, Visualization. **Yoann Pèrès:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing, Visualization.

## Acknowledgments

This paper is the fruit of immersion in several professional and research collectives. The authors would like to thank each and every one of them: the Greater Paris Metropolis, the City of Paris, Algoé Consultants, the *Planning Greater Paris* Chair, namely Héléne Dang Vu, and its directors Daniel Béhar and Taoufik Souami – and all interviewees who shared their time, stories and opinions. The authors are especially thankful to Guillaume Lacroix, Pierre-Alexis Tchernovanoff and Elsa Vivant for their precious comments on a previous version of this paper, to Maria Gusarova for her wonderful help in proof-reading and to Sophie Jeannin in data visualization. The authors also acknowledge the constructive comments received from three anonymous reviewers and insist that all opinions and errors that might linger are their own.

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<sup>17</sup> *A-t-on réinventé Paris?*, *Création* seminar series at the Ecole de Paris du management, december 8th 2020.



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- Public intervention by Jérémie Bouaziz, Chief Innovation Officer of Le Grand Réservoir at Réinventer les faiseurs de la ville, quels impacts des AMI sur le jeu des acteurs de l'urbanisme et de l'immobilier, conference held in Paris, at Pavillon de l’Arsenal, May 15th, 2018.
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