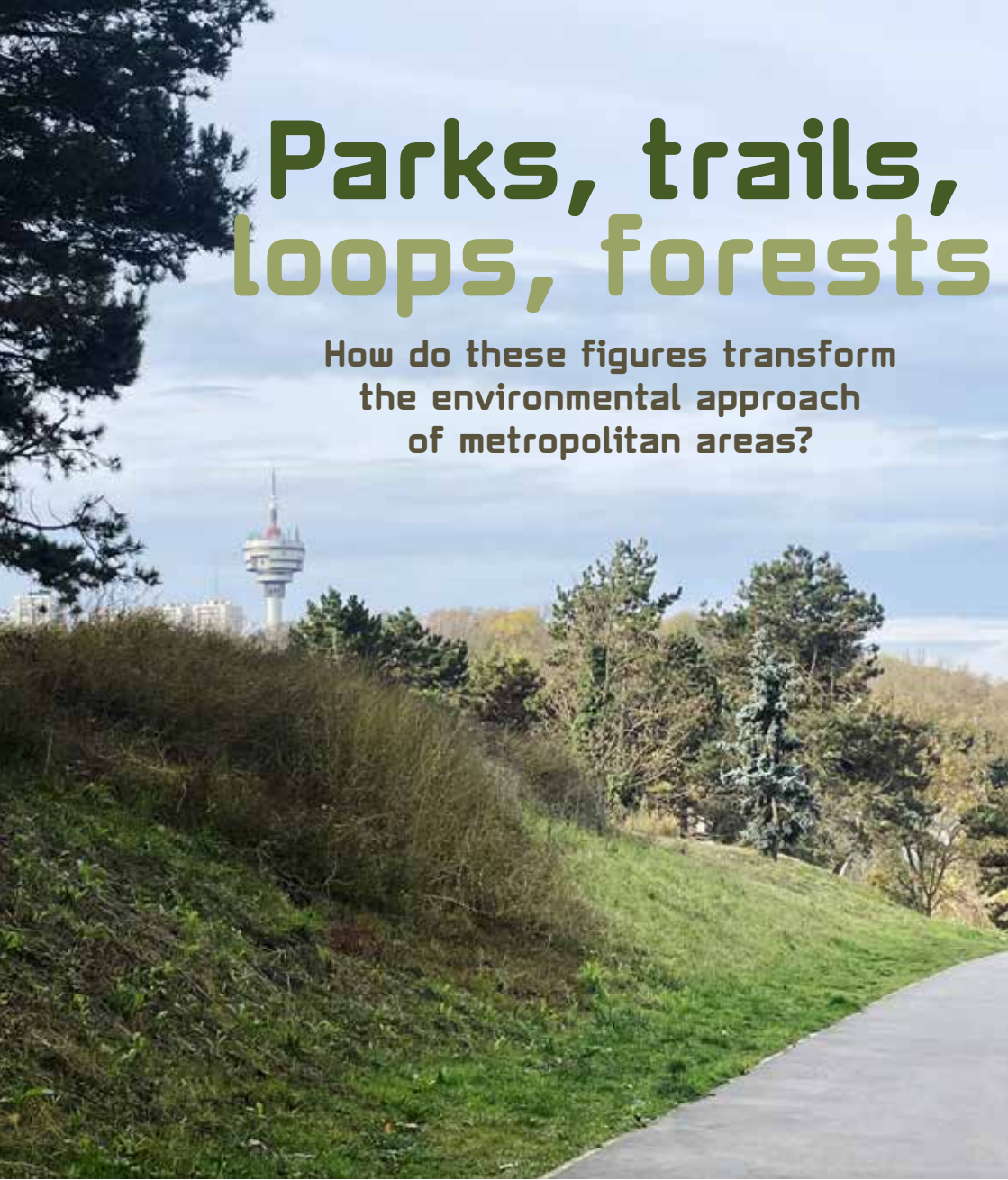




Parks, trails, loops, forests

How do these figures transform
the environmental approach
of metropolitan areas?

Program

October 13, 2026
from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

MSH Paris Nord
amphithéâtre, 1st floor

This international and interdisciplinary study day is part of the Par(c) Image research project ("Deploying the idea of the metropolitan park. A visual history in the service of territorial transformation"), supported by the Maison des Sciences Humaines et sociales Paris Nord (2026–2027), in collaboration with the Inventing Grand Paris: Entangled history of metropolitan areas program (www.inventerlegrandparis.fr). At the intersection of urban, landscape and visual history, this program focuses on the representations of the eastern Greater Paris region and its Grand Chemin project—a 55-kilometer green loop currently in the planning and construction stages that builds upon existing infrastructure, incorporating continuities, crossings, parks, and gardens. Rooted in the environmental and urban challenges of the Anthropocene, this program explores a reverse chronology of the soils, uses, projects, and morphologies that have shaped this territory from Paris to Romainville, prioritizing a visual approach—and more specifically, photography.

The concept of nature is inextricably linked to that of the city, with visits to "natural" living spaces serving as a counterpoint to the artificialization of urban spaces. This "city-nature" pairing is itself changing, depending on the configurations and representations of inhabited territories. Green loop, metropolitan trail, greenway, linear park, urban forest: in addition to reflecting a desire for nature, these terms refer to indeterminate entities that develop through fragments, infiltrations, interstices, and hybridizations. The co-evolving functions they embody sketch out a large-scale dialectic that is both rooted in localized situations and embedded in regional and metropolitan interdependencies. The aim is to integrate living organisms into urban dynamics (ecology of green networks), to structure regional planning (park systems), to connect agriculture to the city (urban farms), to promote walking (hiking trails), and to create vantage points (panoramas, viewpoints).

This profusion of emerging figures invites us to revisit their genealogies and representations—photography and cartography in particular. What are the antecedents of these figures, forms, and practices? How do they engage with the political and vernacular structures of the large city in transformation? How do they redefine the porosity between the urban and the non-urban? What shifts in urban and landscape paradigms—in planning and design—appear in the contemporary era, driven by the need for cities to adapt to the "new climate regime"? How can research engage with this, at the intersection of knowledge and practice?

The Par(c)Image public seminar is organized by **Raphaële Bertho** (Université de Tours, INTRu), **Sonia Keravel** (École nationale supérieure du paysage de Versailles-Marseille, LAREP), **Frédéric Pousin** (CNRS, CRESSON), **Nathalie Roseau** (École nationale des ponts et chaussées, LATTs);

<https://www.mshparisnord.fr/event/seminaire-parks-trails-loops-forests/>

PROGRAMME

9:00 On-site Welcome

9:30 Introduction

Raphaële Bertho, Sonia Keravel, Frédéric Pousin, Nathalie Roseau

10:00 *Figures, forms, practices: antecedents and emergences*

The ecosystem, The landscape and the infrastructure. Waltz for an urban park

Marine Legrand École nationale des ponts et chaussées, LEESU

Questioning non-intervention as a Nature-based Solution on spaces of spontaneous urban nature

Marion Brun École nationale supérieure de paysage de Versailles-Marseille, LAREP
and **Cécile Mattoug** Haute école d'ingénierie et d'architecture, Fribourg

Insights into the Grand Chemin: historical layers and spatial complexities

Raphaële Bertho, Sonia Keravel, Frédéric Pousin, Nathalie Roseau

12:15 General discussion

13:00 Lunch (for organizers and speakers)

14:30 *International perspectives: shifts in urban and landscape paradigms*

The Atlas of park systems. Drawing as a research method

Loïc Massias Université de Montréal, École d'urbanisme et d'architecture de paysage

Broken landscapes. Rethinking post-industrial legacies and landscape futures

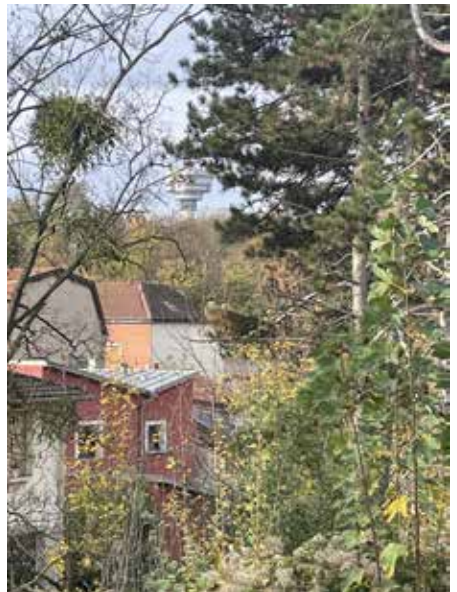
Mattias Qviström Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala

Albuquerque's RailTrail. Re-imagining natural and industrial landscapes for urban revitalization

Chris Wilson University of New Mexico, School of Architecture and Planning

16:45 General discussion

17:30 Conclusion





ABSTRACTS

The ecosystem, the landscape, and the infrastructure. Waltz for an urban park
Marine Legrand, École nationale des ponts et chaussées, LEESU

As urban areas continue to spread and the severity of climate change and biodiversity collapse calls into question the livability of major cities, the need to make room for non-human life in cities is becoming increasingly crucial. At the heart of this issue is the centennial figure of the urban park, which has continually evolved over time in terms of both landscape design and daily maintenance practices. Here, we propose revisiting the introduction of ecological approaches to managing these specific spaces at the turn of the 21st century, establishing a dialogue between three concepts: ecosystem, landscape and infrastructure. Emblematic of this evolution, the case of Georges Valbon Park (Seine-Saint-Denis) will serve as our guiding thread as we focus specifically on the relationship between water and soil — the essential foundations of all life.

Questioning non-intervention as a Nature-based Solution on spaces of spontaneous urban nature

Marion Brun, École nationale supérieure du paysage de Versailles-Marseille, LAREP
Cécile Mattoug, Haute École d'ingénierie et d'architecture de Fribourg (Suisse)

Spaces of spontaneous urban nature —including vacant lots, wastelands, and interstices —face significant pressure in metropolitan areas. These spaces can offer a range of qualities, such as a refuge for wildlife, for soil regeneration and urban microclimates, but also for environments conducive to social activities and to urban quality. Yet these qualities are largely overlooked because of negative perceptions among stakeholders. In the realm of public policy, inaction is often viewed as a form of neglect; yet it is precisely non-intervention that contributes to the existence of spontaneous urban biodiversity and its qualities. By acknowledging non-intervention as a nature-based solution, we assume that a hands-off approach is a conscious act of coexistence with spontaneous urban biodiversity. This presentation will focus on the collaboration conducted with the City of Ris-Orangis (Paris Region) since 2022, which led to workshops and the creation of a children's book, enlightening alternative perceptions of these often-overlooked areas thanks to science and artistic collaboration, at the genesis of the SUNLOOP project (BiodivNBS 2025-2028).

Insights into the Grand Chemin: historical layers and spatial complexities

Raphaële Bertho, Université de Tours, InTRu; **Sonia Keravel**, École nationale supérieure du paysage de Versailles-Marseille, LAREP; **Frédéric Pousin**, CNRS, CRESSON; **Nathalie Roseau**, École nationale des ponts et chaussées, LATS

This paper seeks to capture the *Grand Chemin* project, a 55-kilometer green loop currently being developed in the eastern Greater Paris region. Describing its routes, components, and key stakeholders in order to highlight both its spatial complexities and the constellations of interventions, reveal a project difficult to grasp, caught between planning and uncertainty. An approach that seeks to understand the *Grand*

Chemin only through its contemporary space and its institutional dynamics is insufficient unless it is accompanied by an in-depth exploration of its historical context. Taking a historical perspective on the territory of the *Grand Chemin* allows us to draw on the richness of the archives and their producers and to gain a deeper understanding of the project's multiple dimensions, whether regarding its constantly evolving nature, the intertwining of the political and vernacular landscapes, and the interwoven temporalities. This paper finally proposes a photo-historical perspective to focus on two emblematic sites along the *Grand Chemin* project: the Parc des Guilands in Bagnolet and Montreuil, and the Porte de Bagnolet.

The Atlas of park systems: drawing as a Research Method

Loïc Massias, École d'urbanisme et d'architecture de paysage, Université de Montréal

Between 1868 and 1914, Frederick Law Olmsted and the firm he founded designed fifteen "park systems": networks of parks connected by parkways. Today, these green frameworks in Buffalo, Chicago, Boston, and Baltimore, among others, still structure urban form, support active mobility, improve living conditions, and contribute to stormwater management. Yet one question remains underexplored: how did these projects take shape and circulate between the United States and France? This is a challenge, as archives are scattered, incomplete, and difficult to compare. This paper argues that drawing can operate as a research method. Based on the Park Systems Atlas, a corpus of original maps, plans, and sections produced for my doctoral research, it shows how reconstruction can compensate for missing archives, enable comparison across contexts, and reassess these systems' relevance today. Redrawing fifteen cases at shared scales and with consistent graphic codes, the Atlas reveals transfers, adaptations, and the resilience of these landscape infrastructures.

Broken landscapes: rethinking post-industrial legacies and landscape futures

Mattias Qviström, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Uppsala (Sweden)

Post-industrial wastelands are contested resources for revitalizing the urban landscape. Critical scholars interpret decay and dereliction as a strategy for land-use speculation. For instance, Don Mitchell uses the concept of "anti-landscape" to stress the severe landscape effects of this economy. On the other end of the academic debate, Steven Jackson discusses breakdown and repair as sparking innovative thinking, an argument which is echoed within contemporary literature hailing the potential for rewilding the city with, for instance, ruderal vegetation and temporary nature. By combining the critical and the "creative" discourses on ruination and reuse, this paper aims to conceptualize this broken landscape and discuss its capacity to revitalize the urban nature. It does so with the help of the post-industrial landscape of Malmö, Sweden, and its debated transformations over the past 25 years. Drawing on historical studies and field studies, in which photography has played an important role, the paper discusses the transformation with special attention to the role of disused railways. The paper concludes with a discussion on the need to interpret post-industrial reuse not only (only) as an opportunity but also as a responsibility for urban greening. We might find clues towards the future urban landscape by unpacking these responsibilities.

Albuquerque's RailTrail: re-imagining natural and industrial landscapes for urban re-vitalization

Chris Wilson, School of Architecture and Planning, University of New Mexico

Founded in 1706 as a Spanish colonial administrative and trade center, Albuquerque industrialized following the arrival of the Railroad in 1881. The construction of concrete-lined canals and levies between the world wars separated residents from the city's river, the Rio Grande. Formal government planning starting in the 1950s created a system of roads and limited-access highways which facilitated suburbanization and deindustrialization. The rise of tourism in New Mexico after 1900 fostered a keen understanding of the role of photography in promotion. When the environmental movement brought attention back to the Rio Grande in 1970s, the city responded by developing the 16-mile Paseo del Bosque Recreational Trail highlighted by the 1982 Rio Grande Nature Center. Its architect, Antoine Predock, began each project by creating a vast image collage to immerse himself in the spirit of place. This led to his use of the utilitarian vocabulary of dams, levies, canals and culverts for the Nature Center. In 2020, the city initiated the similar RailTrail, a seven-mile recreational trail loop utilizing a two-mile segment of the Bosque Trail and railroad rights-of-way, and conceived to catalyze infill residential construction. To counter the demonization of inner-city Albuquerque, the city commissioned Predock to develop an image-heavy, mytho-historical narrative of the adjoining natural environments, historic neighborhoods and industrial relics expressed through sculptural structures, photo collage mosaics and QR-code-connected text and image archives.



BIOGRAPHIES

Raphaële Bertho is a photography historian, curator and lecturer in the Arts at the University of Tours. As a member of the InTRu Laboratory, she works on the aesthetic and political issues surrounding the representation of contemporary landscape, architecture and territory, particularly in the context of public photography commissions and institutional iconographic collections, in France and Europe.

Marion Brun holds a Ph.D. in urbanism, and is a research engineer in ecology in LAREP Laboratory at the Versailles Landscape Architecture School. Her work focuses on spontaneous urban natural spaces and their socio-ecological potential. She examines the role of nature in cities from an ecological perspective and in terms of perceptions by residents and public policies.

Sonia Keravel is a landscape architect and a senior lecturer at the Versailles Landscape Architecture School. As a member of the LAREP Laboratory, her research focuses on the project criticism and the history of landscape architecture, the specificity of the landscape approach to metropolitan areas and the role of visual representations, particularly photography, in landscape architecture practice.

Marine Legrand holds a Ph.D. from the National Museum of Natural History (Paris), with a training in biology and environmental anthropology. She studies the ecologization of landscape planning and city making in Europe. Her approach stands at the

intersection between multispecies ethnography and the study of urban metabolism (water, nutrients, soils).

Loïc Massias, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor at the School of Urban Planning and Landscape Architecture, Université de Montréal. A landscape architect trained in Munich and Versailles and a former Fulbright doctoral grantee at Harvard GSD, he studies Olmsted park systems and Canadian waterfront park systems through archives, fieldwork, and drawing.

Cécile Mattoug is an architect and Ph.D. in geography, a post-doctoral fellow at the HEIA- Fribourg, Switzerland on the SUNLOOP research program. Her work focuses on the conflicts of use generated by urban development on urban open spaces, crossing qualitative inquiry (mapping, image, sound) and experimental practices.

Frédéric Pousin is an architect and research director emeritus at the National Centre for Scientific Research (UMR CRESSON). He has been working extensively on urban landscape and the epistemological value of visibility in landscape planning and urbanism. He headed the ANR program Photo Paysage (2014-2018).

Mattias Qviström is a professor in landscape architecture at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala. His research concerns the interplay between everyday landscapes and planning, particularly those affected by the legacy of 20th century modern society. He draws on relational theories combined with ethnographic methods and/or landscape and planning history. Post-industrial landscapes, green planning and leisure mobilities are some of the topics he has explored in recent years.

Nathalie Roseau is a professor of urbanism at the École nationale des ponts et chaussées and a tenured researcher at the LATTIS Laboratory. Her researches, which favor a historical perspective, focus on the dynamics of metropolitan transformation and the place of infrastructures, their temporalities and their representations. Her current work explores the relationship between mobile and urban cultures in the Anthropocene.

Chris Wilson is J. B. Jackson Chair of Cultural Landscape Studies, Emeritus at the University of New Mexico School of Architecture and Planning, and author of *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*, J. B. Jackson, "La Photographie et l'Essor des Études du Paysage Culturel" and "Vernacular and Modern Infrastructures on the Converging Mexican and American Frontiers."



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Par(c)Image public seminar organized by:

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LATTS

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