

A few Ideas on Cities, Places & 'Urban Energy'

Paul Lecroart

Urban Planner

Big Cities, Quiet Places Workshop

Copenhagen, October 17, 2010

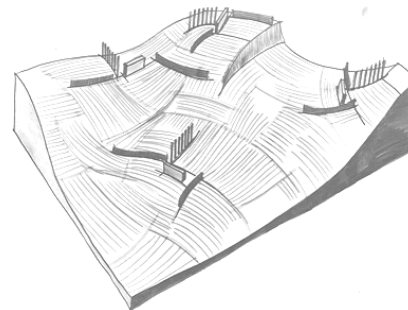
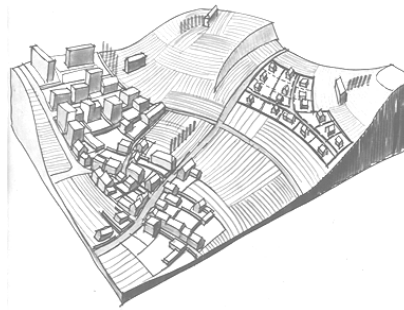
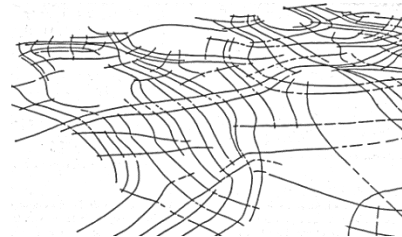
Before Cities, there is Land



Why did humans settle here?

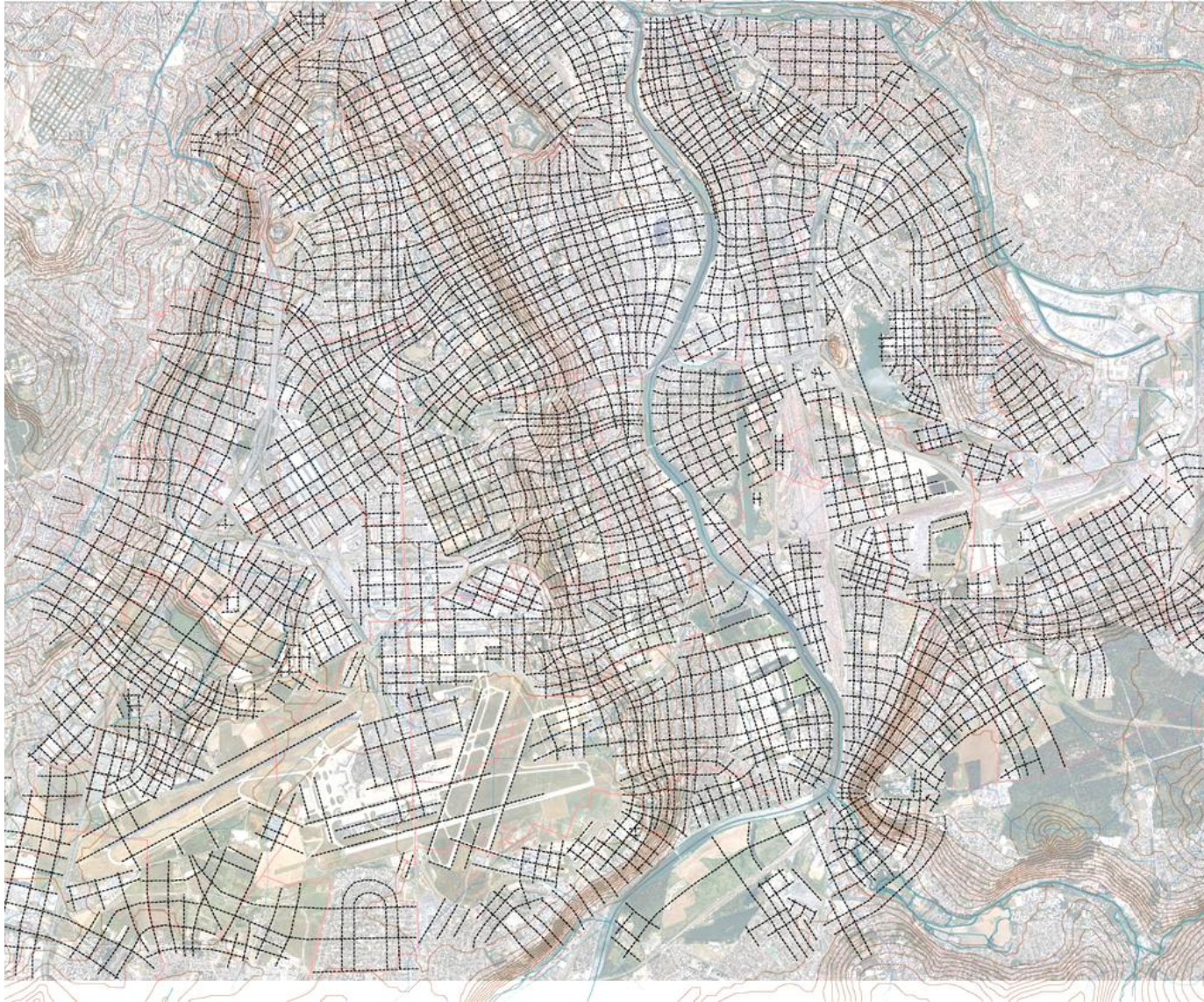
How does human activity relate to geography?

Landscape pattern research gives clues to understand and transform rural areas as well as cities

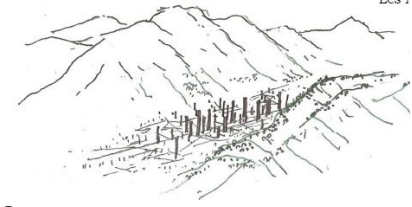


Before Cities, there is Land

Example South East of Paris (Seine Amont Orly Airport) : grid is parallel or perpendicular to the slopes [water flows and drainage]



Before Cities, there is Land



A urban fabric well integrated in geography creates a sense of peacefulness

Built environment connected to natural environment : river, sea, valleys, mountains,...

Connection between the street scale and the metropolitan scale

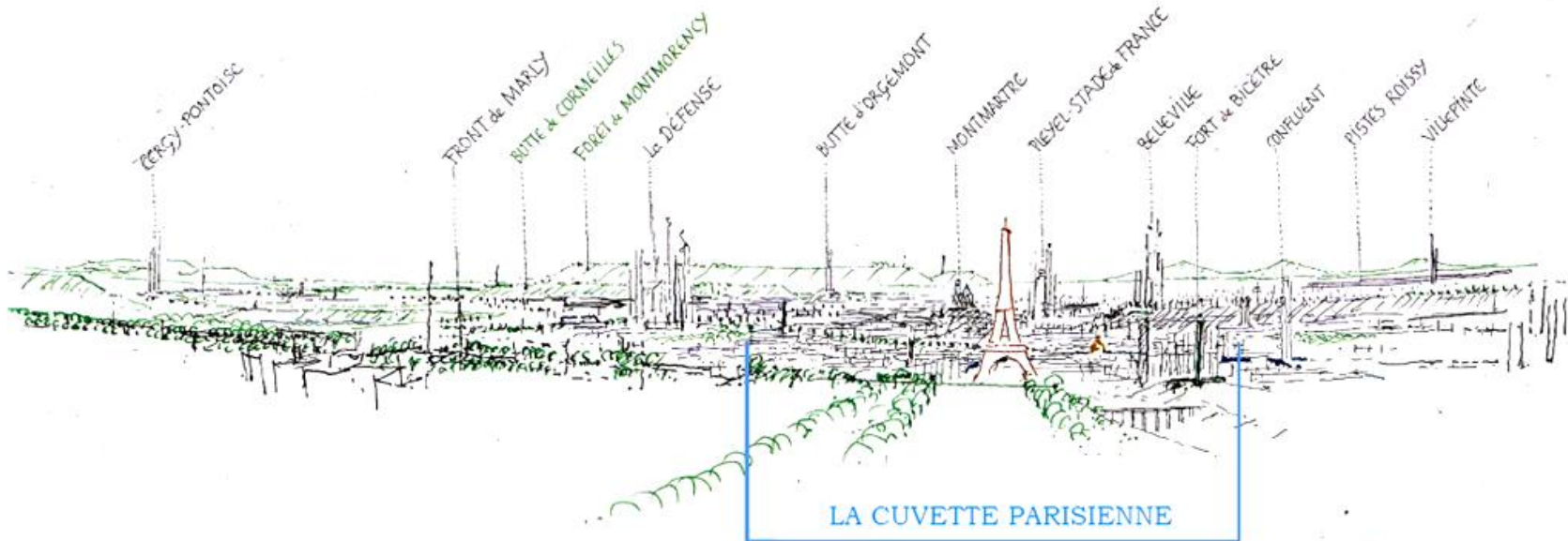
Genius Loci : here and not anywhere, place-making

Energy flows 'naturally'



Before Cities, there is Land

Recognition of landscape features is important



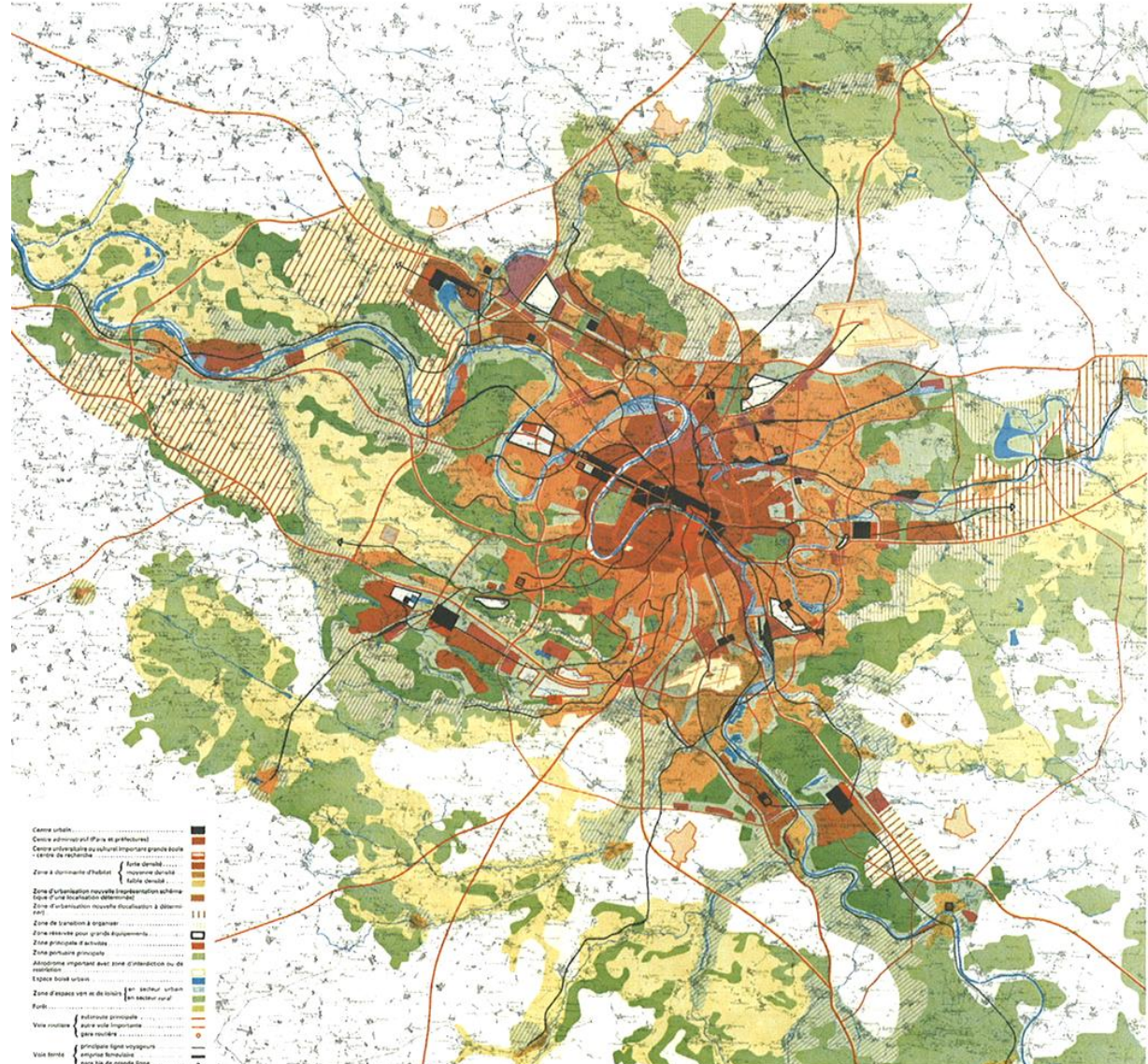
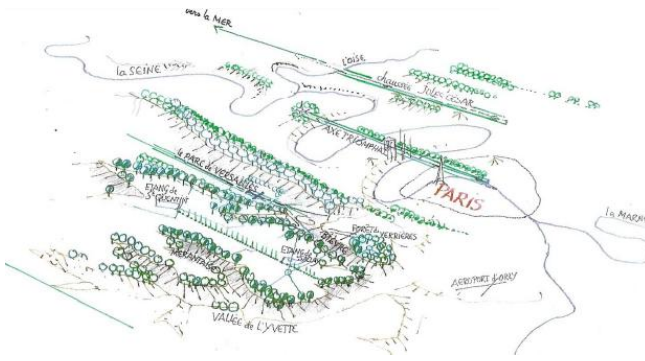
Before Cities, there is Land

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Los Angeles, showing a complex multi-level highway interchange in the foreground. The city is densely packed with buildings, including residential blocks and commercial structures. The image illustrates the conflict between different landscape patterns, such as the grid-like street layout and the chaotic highway system, which can lead to a sense of dis-orientation. The text is overlaid on the image in white.

Conflict between different landscape patterns creates chaos and sense of dis-orientation
Legibility of the city's structure is crucial to cities

Urban form is about integrated planning –long term, short term

1965 Paris Region Master Plan : urban development follows geological structure

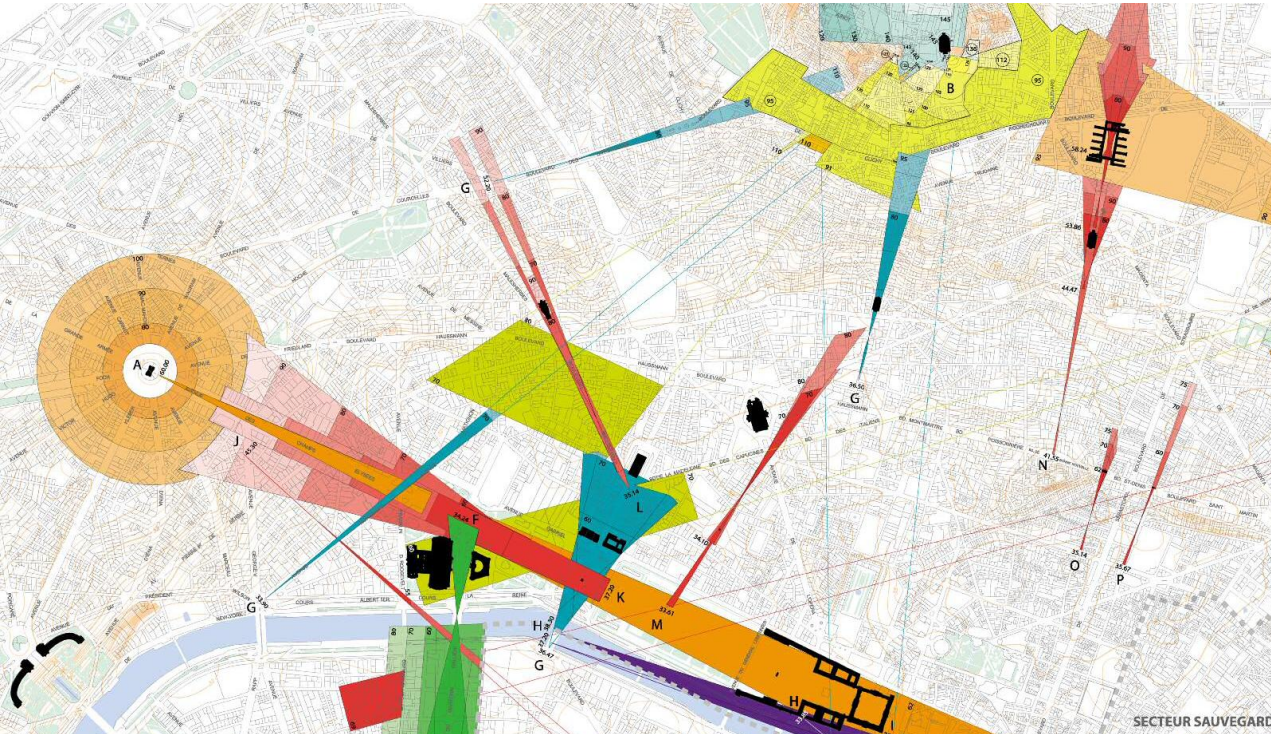


Urban form is about integrated planning –long term, short term

2000-year landscape building process



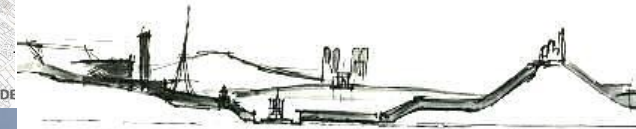
Urban form is about integrated planning –long term, short term



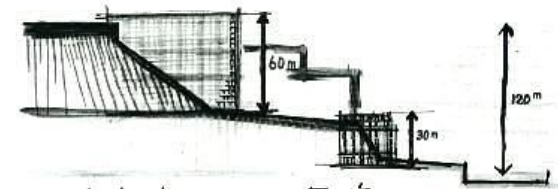
Scale of buildings must be related to:

- scale of landscape
- and scale of streetscape

Not only regulations :
Creative thinking



Les grandes masses bâties ont l'échelle des grands reliefs naturels...

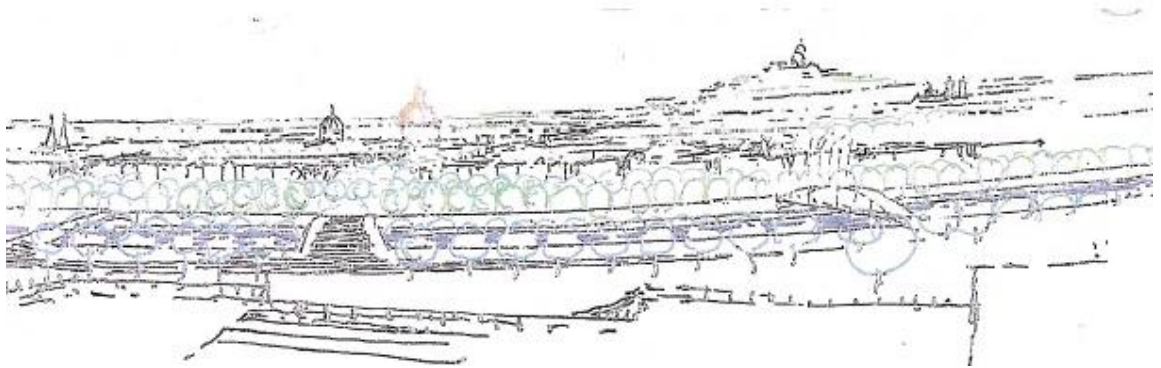


... la hauteur des constructions courantes marque les dénivellés topographiques...



Urban form is about integrated planning –long term, short term

Paris Today : Landscape is enhanced by buildings



Tomorrow ? Landscape features may disappear...



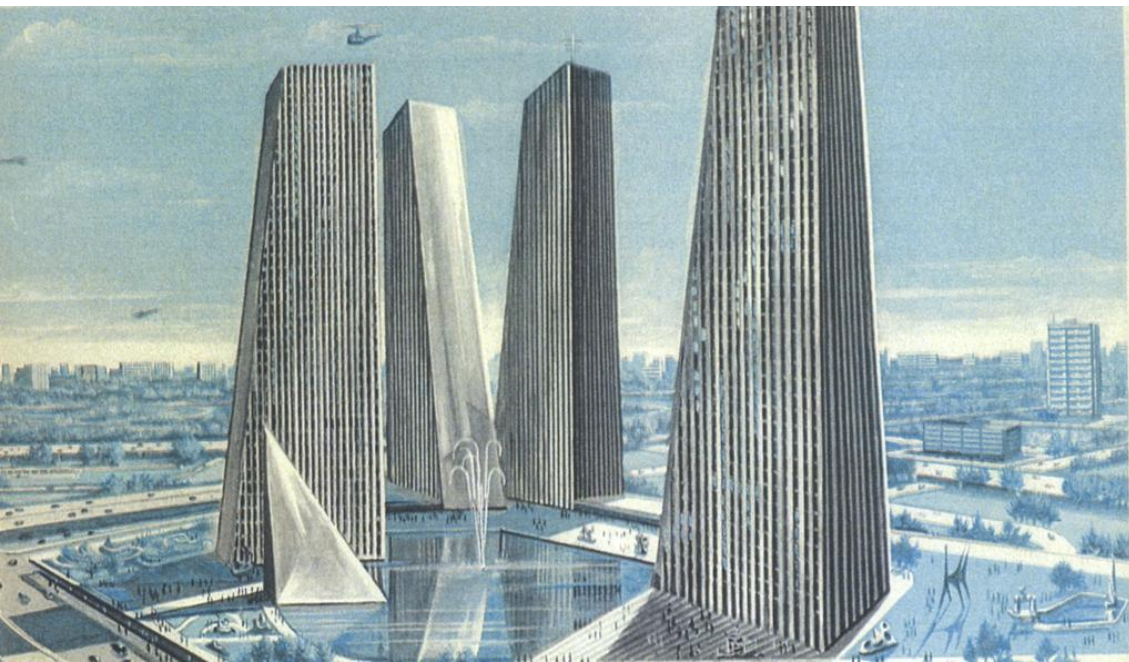
Urban form is about integrated planning –long term, short term



Landmarks are useful in cities, but :
Is this architecture at the right place?
Will it still be attractive in 50 years?
Is it sustainable?

April 2009, Proposal for Plaine Saint Denis

[Grand Pari(s) Consultation, Portzamparc arch.]



April 1963, Plans for a CBD 2 km away

(not a success : only one tower built)

Urban form is about integrated planning –long term, short term



Planning highways needs attention !!! (Eiffel Tower at center)

Room for the unplanned: diversity, surprise, ambiances, poetry...

A « city for people » : people create cities' vibrancy

Attention needed to the use of urban spaces

Ex : The Frigos in Paris Rive Gauche Development : an artist squat influences planning



Room for the unplanned: diversity, surprise, ambiiances, poetry...

Can an elephant change a city? Yes, see Nantes



Elephant taking people around the development site of the Ile de Nantes former shipyards

New streets designed for the elephant and other 'animal-machines' built in the sheds!

Room for the unplanned: diversity, surprise, ambiances, poetry...

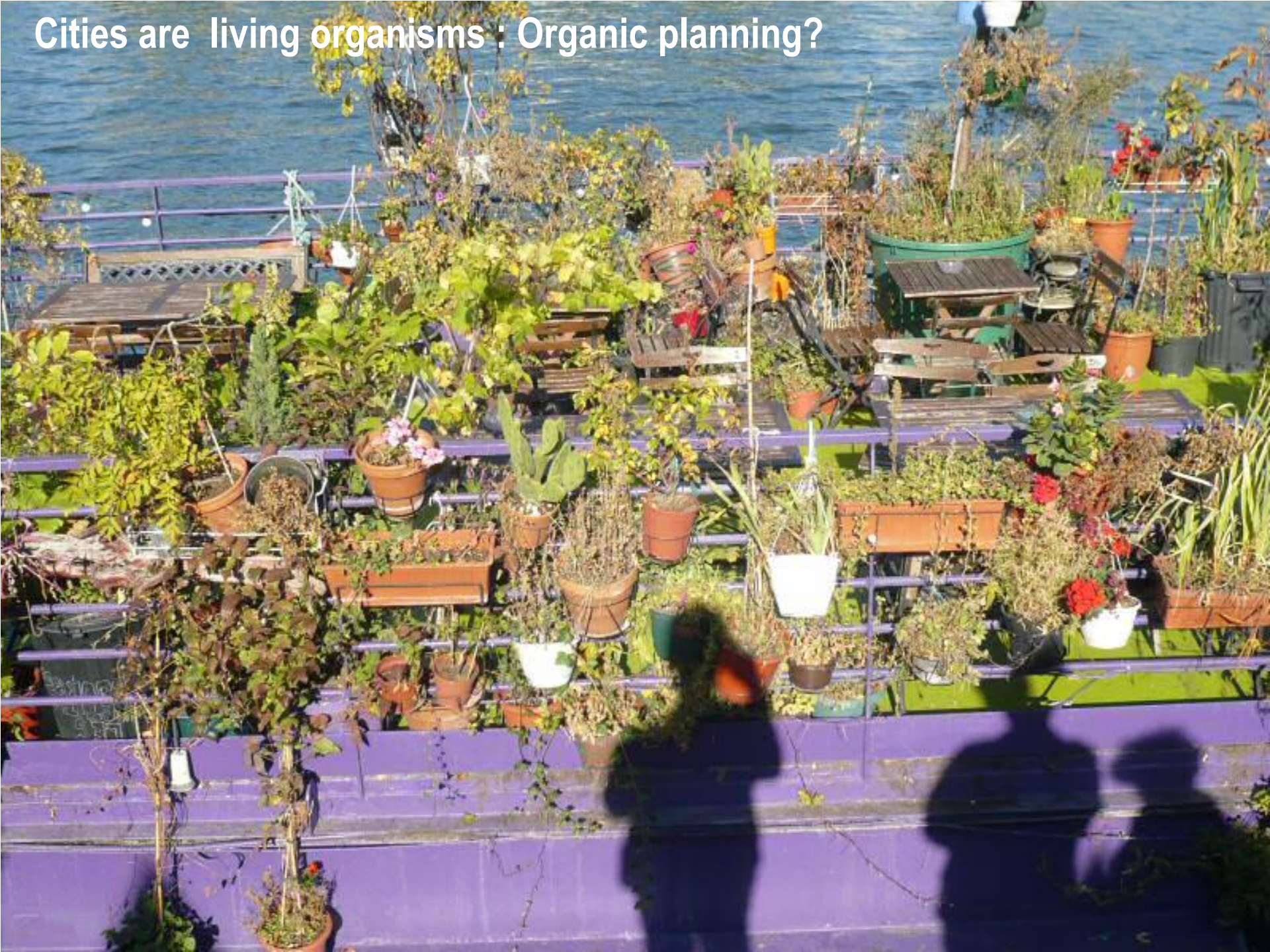
Paris-La Défense, Barcelona, Hamburg,...



Room for the unplanned: Public debate, participation, hands-on design...



Cities are living organisms : Organic planning?



Planning =
Capturing spirit of place, vital energy!



Merci Hanne!

And good workshop