

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
FIRST SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
Master of Science in Architecture (Construction)
Honors theses

Grand Pari(s).

Method, legitimation and representation within the consultation process for the future of Paris metropolitan area

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Nowadays the scale of the metropolis is posing a huge challenge which is difficult to face because of the uncertainty of boundaries and the permeation of themes, techniques and scales. This kind of ambition has to deal with the hard task to match the big picture with the details, managing at the same time all the elements of the problem, without losing contact with a comprehensive image of the city.

These aspects and these challenges are well known, because of their extension and complexity, within the analysis made by various disciplines, not only the architectural one. However the consequent debate is often characterized by a lack of attention about processes, which leads to an analysis practice focusing too much on the outcomes rather than studying the path and its influence on the architectural culture. Looking at those design processes of huge metropolitan scale capable of rethinking of the entire city, even though not depending from their results, became a sort of requirement.

In this context a fundamental experience is the international consultation for the future of Paris metropolitan area, promoted by the French government between 2007 and 2009, to reach the goal of a global scale revitalization of the city by the redefinition of its identity, through the propositions of ten international and multidisciplinary work groups.

The task of this research is not to analyze the outcomes produced by the groups, already inquired by a wide literature, rather than to analyze the experience as a process.

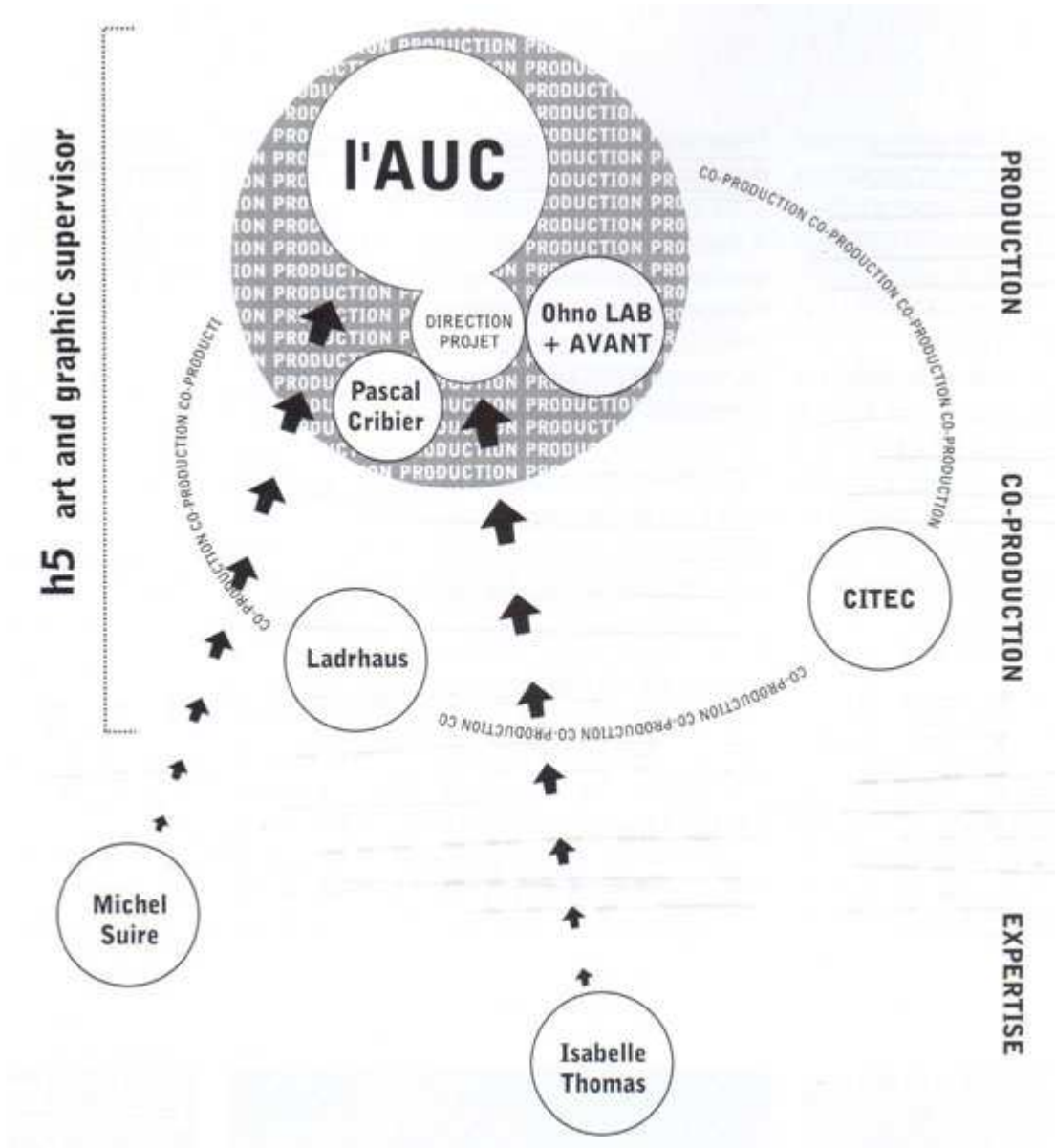
Consultative method, legitimacy of the architects' professional role in French context and representation are thus the principal axes of the analysis of an experience which is capable of considering the entire territory of the metropolis as its own object.



Poster of an initiative promoted by the city of Paris in the context of *Paris Métropole*.
The consultation process is an element of a constellation of experiences

This kind of work wouldn't be impossible without a deep study of the Grand Paris paradigm evolution, from the will of territorial control to the creation of metropolitan identity (already started at the beginning of the XX century) and a study of the changes in the territorial projects practice related to the French technocratic tradition, in the research projects developed within the academic institutions and in the political and economical strategy promoted by the French government and the city administration.

The consultative method, first aspect inquired in this research, is a new element in the French context, and is capable of starting a debate within metropolitan scenarios designers, the administrations and, more generally, within the French architectural culture. By considering the multidisciplinary aspects and the new role given to the architects, which wasn't taken for granted in this context, is clear the outstanding of a new way of conceiving projects for the metropolitan area.



Working scheme of the AUC workgroup. A complex meeting of disciplines works on the scenario project. From «AMC», *Le Grand Pari(s). Consultation internationale sur l'avenir de la métropole parisienne*, special issue 2009, p.100

The architects will be in charge of the large work group management, underlining the legitimation issue in the field of metropolitan scale, starting a process based on the balance between a “technical capital” and a “cultural capital” within the propositions. The seek for the creation of these kinds of “capitals” has an important element in the representation of the city which became a true subject of the design process, not only a means at his service.



Historical Paris imagined by Jean Nouvell. From «AMC», *Le Grand Pari(s)*.
Consultation internationale sur l'avenir de la métropole parisienne, special issue
2009, pp.162-163

The sources of this research are referred to the public archives situated in Paris and to direct oral accounts as control sources (administrators, members of the consultation bodies, architects) allowing the application of historical method to a contemporary subject, suggesting in this way the analyzing ability of this method to complex situations.

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