

## Ourcq Territories, Seine-Saint-Denis, France

### Urban ecology along the Ourcq canal near Paris

This Integrated Urban Programme in Seine-Saint-Denis on the outskirts of Paris illustrates the relation between the regeneration of a deprived urban area, a local Agenda 21 campaign for sustainable development and inter-municipal cooperation, in the framework of regional and sub-regional master plans. Dedicated partnerships and multi-level governance are based upon endogenous resources and fed by a thriving civic tradition of participative democracy. The planning method of urban ecology is used as an investment in the service economy and green growth.

### Urban ecology along the Ourcq canal near Paris

This ambitious project aiming to reinvent the landscape and economy of a heavily industrialised area illustrates the use of Article 8 in ERDF support, with two key elements. First, **urban ecology** is used as an innovative method of integrative planning along the canal axis, as a means to transform the image and quality of life of these ill-reputed Paris outskirts. Secondly, **green technologies** are developed through the renewal and expansion of a waste-processing plant into a hi-tech eco-compatible industrial site in Romainville, the creation of an eco-business centre in Bobigny and an incubator dedicated to innovation in Bondy.

A selection of the 36 projects supported by this €5.3 million ERDF and €0.5 million ESF Integrated Urban Programme is examined through the dimensions of governance, infrastructures and socio-economic development. Issues of policy integration are tackled through the Agenda 21 initiative for sustainable development, set up in 2008 by the Seine-Saint-Denis Council.

The concept of using the Ourcq canal as the backbone of its urban development programme was thus born under an inter-municipal cooperation process, strongly supported by the four municipalities concerned: Bobigny, Bondy, Noisy-Le-Sec and Romainville. They formed a Public Interest Group (*Groupement d'Intérêts Publics – GIP*) with the operational goal of revitalising an area in industrial decline by using assets based on the future economic potential of the area (eco-industry, health and care), on university and research networks (public and private), and also on the transport infrastructure and the environmental asset of the Ourcq canal and the park of 'Corniche des Forts' (located in a former gypsum quarry). The main structuring element of the Ourcq Territories programme is the redesign of the RN3 national road to include a reserved lane for a bus rapid transit service (*bus à haut niveau de service – BHNS*). This achievement is the common denominator for the success of the integrated approach, as it reinforces the area's attractiveness in terms of job creation and new inhabitants, by linking it to amenities in the metropolis. The aim is to solve traffic congestion in this part of Paris, and to reduce nuisance.

The encouragement of behavioural changes towards more sustainable living in this very dense and fragmented conurbation relies upon strong policy integration, calling for a variable geometry of horizontal and vertical partnerships, involving civil society and public authorities in manifold ways and complementary roles, without being dominated by any of the stakeholders.

## Urban ecology along the Ourcq canal near Paris

The Ourcq canal in the north-east of Paris, part of the greater Paris canal network, was conceived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to supply the city's water. In recent years, its name has been reintroduced by the municipalities in this deprived former industrial periphery of Seine-Saint-Denis, as a promotional symbol of integrated sustainable development. In 2008, a 16 km portion of the Ourcq canal became the geographical spine of an Integrated Urban Programme (IUP), part of the ERDF operational programme for the Île-de-France region.

The area covers parts of four municipalities: Bobigny, Bondy, Romainville and Noisy-Le-Sec. It is characterised by a young<sup>1</sup> lower middle class population of 168 227 inhabitants<sup>2</sup>, composed of many ethnic groups (mainly from southern Europe, the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa). They are low-skilled, and face high unemployment. Several neighbourhoods suffer from social unrest despite numerous programmes (*Zones Urbaines Sensibles – ZUS*) set up at national level to address specific issues of urban deprived areas.<sup>3</sup>

But according to the regional master plan,<sup>4</sup> the canal area has a great potential for innovation and brownfield restoration. In spatial planning terms, the area is well-served by rail, canal and road. As a result, over the past 30 years it has attracted many industrial activities related to transport and logistics, pharmacy and waste management. The downside has been that these industries have low added value and high pollution risks, and therefore impact negatively on the quality of the environment and landscape. The industrial sector is nowadays fragile but remains the main employer, and many SMEs servicing these industries are precarious. The railways and roads crossing the conurbation have become internal barriers within the area.



Figure 1 View of the Ourcq canal with Paris in the distance

The 'In'Europe' call for proposals launched by the managing authority (MA) of Île-de-France in 2008 to support Integrated Urban Programmes (IUPs) under the first axis of the regional operational programme triggered the four municipalities and their two main partners – the Seine-Saint-Denis Council and the Chamber of Trade and Industry – to formalise an innovative and integrated urban plan for the area.

### **Budgetary choices and restricted eligibility**

The IUP, with a budget of €25.5 million over a six-year period, supported by €5.3 million from the ERDF and €0.5 million from the ESF, started implementation at inter-municipality level and focused on five goals:

- (i) Innovative economic development, bringing business closer to training and research, based on endogenous resources;

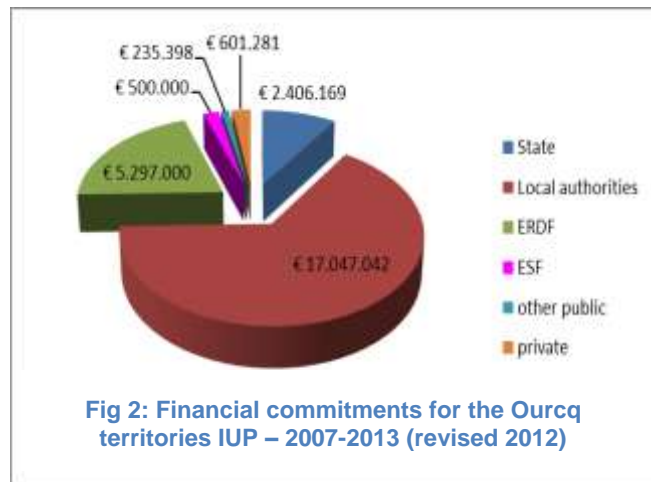
<sup>1</sup> 30% of Seine-Saint-Denis population is less than 20 years old (2007 – INSEE)

<sup>2</sup> 2009 census

<sup>3</sup> Deprived urban areas or *zones urbaines sensibles* (ZUS) are infra-urban areas defined by public authorities as priority targets of urban policy (*politique de la ville*), based upon local criteria linked to difficulties encountered by their inhabitants.

<sup>4</sup> SDRIF = [Schéma Directeur Île-de-France](#), setting the regional urban development strategy up to 2030.

- (ii) Sustainable territorial development with a strong emphasis on the environmental improvement of the canal area;
- (iii) An inclusive approach targeting fragile populations at local level, giving a fresh impulse to north-south entrepreneurship initiatives;
- (iv) Giving a new image to an ill-reputed area through improvements in public services and amenities;
- (v) A new system of governance for integrated sustainable development, with a common roadmap for four municipalities united in a Public Interest Group.



Programme implementation was not easy. In 2011, owing to budget cuts by the local authorities, budgetary choices had to be made. Priority was given to measures allowing for basic infrastructure to be created, such as the bus line along the canal, the footpaths across it, and the environmental impact analysis related to them.

Some difficulties with the administrative structure of the IUP project were also reported during interviews. Changes in eligibility criteria over the implementation period were a baffling problem. For instance, energy efficiency targets were raised to ensure compliance with the environmental priority axis of the operational programme, which was not initially foreseen by the operating municipality. Decontamination, which is formally eligible under the ERDF, was not authorised by the regional MA, for fear of creating a precedent and generating unmanageable expectations in other areas.

Another pitfall mentioned during interviews was the sometimes arbitrary rules imposed by the MA in the design phase of the integrated project. ERDF support to activities promoting participative democracy in the planning phase was considered ineligible under the IUP.

These administrative constraints did not stop the IUP staff from carrying on the process. Delivery was ensured by reallocating responsibilities and funding where possible. For instance, the environmental agency ADEME took over decontamination costs, and the participative strand was mostly financed by the Seine-Saint-Denis Council through a regional grant. In reality, ERDF support gave the initial trigger, but became slightly detrimental to delivery, mostly because of rules and regulations imposed by the managing authority, whose choice was not to exploit the opportunity for greater flexibility provided by Article 8.

### **A sustained ambition**

Beyond budget cuts, the ambition survives and can be summarised in two key elements. The first of these is **urban ecology**<sup>5</sup> or integrative planning – which is precisely what Article 8 targets – along the canal axis, as a means to transform the image and quality of life of these ill-reputed Paris outskirts. The second is **green technologies** with the renewal and expansion of the waste-processing plant into a hi-tech eco-compatible industrial site in Romainville, the creation of an eco-business centre in Bobigny and an incubator dedicated to innovation in Bondy. To further investigate this double-sided strategy and the way it develops the integrated approach to ERDF and Article 8 goals, the dimensions of governance, infrastructures and socio-economic development are examined below. To conclude, issues of policy integration are tackled through the local Agenda 21 campaign

<sup>5</sup> Urban ecology is the scientific study of the relation of living organisms with each other and their surroundings in the context of the proposed urban environment. See further details in [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_ecology).

promoting a sustainable strategy for urban development, set up in 2008 by the Seine-Saint-Denis council.

### *Integrated governance*

Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in a context of stiff international competition and internal socio-economic and environmental pressures, green growth has been considered to be an appropriate approach for revitalising the regional economy and improving environmental outcomes for the Greater Paris Metropolitan Council. Governance issues of Greater Paris and the region of Île-de-France are explained well in a 2012 working paper from the OECD.<sup>6</sup>

In March 2008, the President of the Republic established a junior minister's office for the development of the region round the capital, which was made responsible for implementing a project centred on the economic competitiveness of Île-de-France. The Société du Grand Paris (Greater Paris Company) established by law in June 2010, is responsible for devising and developing the Greater Paris public transport network. The new network provides opportunities for the redesign and urban upgrading of certain neighbourhoods and industrial sites undergoing change, as well as for opening up land and generally enhancing the environment.

The overall plan for the **Greater Paris Scheme** views development of the metropolis as a matter of national concern and is promoting 'sustainable economic development, which is socially committed and creates jobs'. It very expressly includes the aim of economic growth in its Greater Paris Scheme, and seeks competitiveness and attractiveness by means of a strategy for place-based economic development centred on a public transport network, while redressing the backlog in house building with 70 000 homes a year and establishing territorial development contracts (CDT). The CDTs are the reflection in local development terms of the aims of greater Paris as regards city planning, transport, travel, action to combat social exclusion, economic, sports and cultural development, and the conservation of agricultural and wooded areas as well as landscapes. These are comprehensive development strategies devised by local authorities in consultation with government regional departments. The CDTs set out quantitative and qualitative aims in order to provide in particular for varied urban commitments, greater social mix in the residential environment, and more rational balanced use of land with due regard for the aims of sustainable development.

However, territorial alliances between local authorities around the multi-dimensional challenges of integrated sustainable development were unfolding in slow motion, because of the multiplicity of opinions and vested interests, especially in the context of such a fragmented urban conurbation as the Ourcq Territories. When the 'In'Europe' call for proposals on integrated urban development was launched in 2008, territorial alliances through inter-municipal cooperation had started but as yet had no legal basis. In fact, the branding of 'Ourcq Territories' was created *ex nihilo*, in as much as the canal had been totally forgotten or ignored by its inhabitants, considered only as a derelict zone full of pollution and waste.

In order to coordinate and implement the IUP, the partners formed an inter-municipal public interest group (GIP in French) called 'Ourcq Territories' (GIP Territoires de l'Ourcq). The idea was to facilitate networking between all stakeholders involved in urban economic, social and cultural development at local level, to identify sustainable innovative projects and to build common expertise and knowledge in the various fields of intervention such as job creation, training and economic development, land planning and environment, research and innovation, participative democracy, education and creative media. The GIP Ourcq Territories has been in charge of managing the €6 million ERDF programme since September 2009 with technical staff seconded by each of the four cities and one full-time project coordinator.

<sup>6</sup> Kamal-Chaoui, L. and M. Plouin (2012), "[Cities and Green Growth: Case study of the Paris/Île-de-France region](#)", *OECD Regional Development – Working Papers*, 2012/02, OECD Publishing, Paris.

During the design phase of the programme, several other stakeholders were involved so as to foster public-private partnerships, including the Regional Council, the green technologies and sustainable cities cluster Advancity and the Seine-Saint-Denis economic development agency Comex 93.

In January 2010, the four members of the GIP joined the Est Ensemble Metropolitan Council, a larger body comprising nine municipalities<sup>7</sup> which delegate to it their powers in the fields of urban policy, spatial planning, waste management, economic development, employment and social inclusion, social affairs, leisure, cultural and sport amenities and environmental preservation. The GIP kept the management of the IUP, but the main office moved to the Est Ensemble premises in Romainville.

Along with these institutional evolutions between municipalities, the Seine-Saint-Denis Council at *Département*<sup>8</sup> level also launched the 'Ourcq in Movement' initiative within the 2011 call for projects of the Greater Paris Metropolitan Council, aiming to federate all sustainable development projects on its territory (13 municipalities including the four involved in the IUP). This initiative, funded as a inter-municipality campaign by the Seine-Saint-Denis Council, resulted in the signing of a charter by all the mayors in June 2012.

These evolutions and institutional changes in and around the programme governance demonstrate the intense institutional dynamics as well as the development potential of the area.

### ***Integrated infrastructures: T Zen***

The main structuring element of the Ourcq Territories programme is the redesign of the RN3 national road to include a reserved lane for a bus rapid transit service (*bus à haut niveau de service – BHNS*). This is the common denominator for the success of the integrated approach, as it reinforces the area's attractiveness in terms of job creation and new inhabitants, by linking it to amenities in the metropolis. The aim is to solve traffic congestion in this part of Paris, and to reduce nuisance.

ERDF support amounting to €1.1 million brought added value to the project by combining the traditional planning approach with further detailed analysis of environmental impact, a crucial element in redeveloping the nearby canal into a natural and leisure circuit.



**Fig. 2. The future T Zen 3 bus route will have a capacity of 2 000 passengers/hour.**



**Fig. 3. T Zen – the 'quality bus' model**

Two complementary studies started in 2010, for a period of two and four years respectively. They will lead to the pre-programme document for the implementation of the work by the end of 2013. Consultation was organised in 2011, with several public meetings and a blog<sup>9</sup> to

<sup>7</sup> Bagnolet, Bobigny, Bondy, Le Pré Saint-Gervais, Les Lilas, Montreuil, Noisy-le-Sec, Pantin, Romainville.

<sup>8</sup> In France, the *département* is a sub-regional level corresponding to NUTS 3, similar to the *Kreis* in Germany or the *län* in Sweden. There are 96 *départements* in mainland France and five overseas.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.tzen3.com/>

allow citizens to contribute. A public enquiry is under preparation on this basis, and will consider the first outline of the new bus line and various scenarios for the Bondy interchange.

### ***Integrated socio-economic development***

As regards integrated socio-economic development, the focus is on innovative business creation. Two examples, Bond'innov and Ecocité Bobigny, are most representative of the Article 8 integrated sustainable approach and are relatively advanced.

- ***Bond'innov***

Strategic sectors of health and eco-development highlighted in the Ourcq Territories IUP rely upon endogenous resources located in the area, such as the Biocitech business park, the laboratories of Paris XIII University, two university hospital centres and the IRD (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement)<sup>10</sup> for the health strand.

Seine-Saint-Denis already had seven business incubators, but none that dealt specifically with innovative start-ups. ERDF support was provided during the feasibility phase (2009-2011). Innovative fields were identified in relation to the research priorities of the public and private partners, namely the environment and sustainable development, the social economy, life sciences and innovation linked to sub-Saharan countries.

The offer is tempting: a loan, offices on the IRD campus in Bondy or the Biocitech business park in Romainville, two years of personal mentoring, including training, expert advice, and guidance towards risk capital and entrepreneurship support platforms.

Bond'innov officially opened in November 2011 and two calls for proposals were immediately launched, each receiving a dozen applications. In the first round, two projects were selected in the field of biotechnologies, and in the second round three projects were selected in the field of innovation linked to sub-Saharan countries



(e.g. tropical micro-seaweed processes for waste management). The place is busy, with five start-ups now installed, and more expected by the end of 2012.

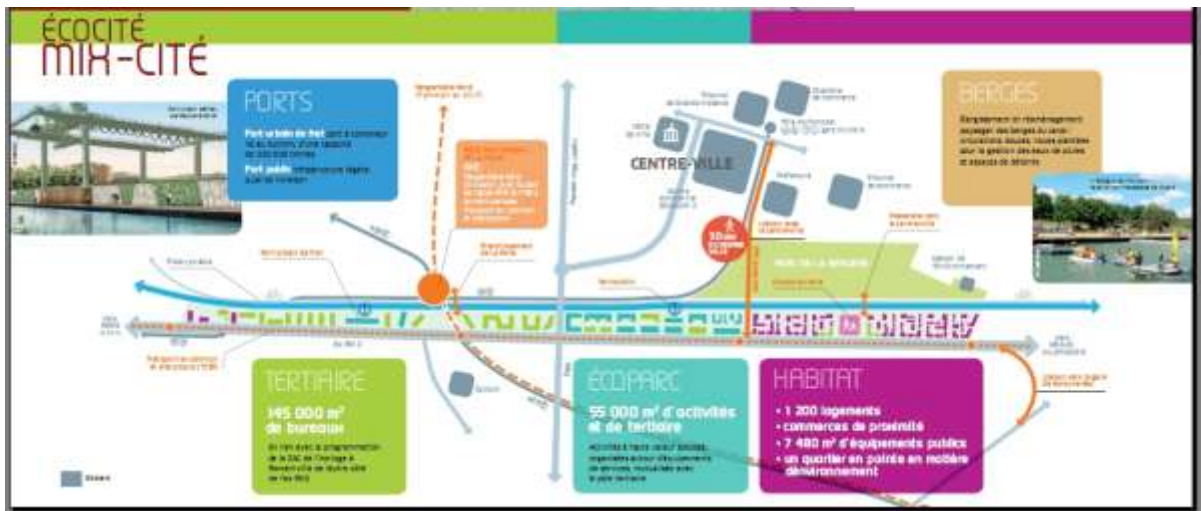
The 'place-based' approach of the Bond'innov incubator, mixing the endogenous knowledge base of high-tech business with the north-south demographic component of the local communities (many inhabitants are of African extraction) is a promising social innovation, although it is still too early to assess its performance.

- ***Ecocité Bobigny***

The area concerned is located on the left bank of the canal, close to the centre of Bobigny. With its 20 hectares spread between the canal and the future T Zen bus route, the Ecocité is destined to become a mixed area with a business centre, shops and housing. Environmental principles are at the core of its design and aim to radically renew Bobigny's image. Energy efficiency is built into the new buildings, including solar energy and ecological insulation to keep heating costs low, rainwater recycling and organic waste management.

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<sup>10</sup> See [en.ird.fr](http://en.ird.fr). Emphasising interdisciplinary research, the IRD has focused its research for over 65 years on the relationship between mankind and the environment, in Africa, the Mediterranean, Latin America, Asia and the French tropical overseas territories.



Three pathways will cross over the canal and the banks are to be fully renovated for cycling and walking. These landscape improvements are closely linked to the metropolitan strategy of Est Ensemble and comply with the master plan of the Île-de-France region. The conversion of the banks calls for complex technical studies to assess issues such as safety, accessibility, green spaces, signage and cycling circuits. Special provisions are also needed to comply with the management of the canal waters (e.g. access by emergency vehicles in case of danger). Improvement work has started and the full operation should be finalised by 2014-15. The ERDF is supporting the feasibility phase of the project.

### Citizen input

In terms of policy design and delivery, integrated and sustainable urban development ideally calls for a variable geometry of horizontal and vertical partnerships, involving civil society and public authorities in manifold ways and complementary roles, without being dominated by any of the stakeholders. This system of multi-level governance needs to be anticipated and catered for to meet different local requirements.

In the four municipalities of Ourcq Territoires, cooperation with local community representatives and citizen participation in urban development is well anchored in the project planning. One illustration is the recent debates during which citizen committees blocked a major industrial project, fearing the stink of organic waste treatment. In the initial programming document of Ourcq Territoires back in 2008, the city of Romainville included a feasibility study for the creation of an industrial-scale waste-processing plant using a mechanical biological treatment system,<sup>11</sup> able to manage waste from 900 000 Parisian households. The plant aimed to produce 80 000 tons of compost a year and heat 6 800 households with biogas. At the public enquiry in February 2012, despite the high environmental quality features of the project, the planning authorities declared a six-month moratorium and the launch of an independent audit. In May 2012, the first steering committee meeting of the audit was held, chaired by the Est Ensemble metropolitan council (made up of nine municipalities, including those of Ourcq Territoires). The committee includes representatives of the municipalities neighbouring the plant's location, the Waste Management Agency SYCTOM, the Seine-Saint-Denis *Département*, the Regional Council, the Environmental Agency ADEME, the regional waste observatory ORDIF, and environmental NGOs.<sup>12</sup> The steering committee decided to also include one district representative (*conseil de quartier*) for each of the four municipalities impacted by the

<sup>11</sup> A mechanical biological treatment (MBT) system is a type of waste processing facility that combines a sorting facility with a form of biological treatment such as composting or anaerobic digestion. MBT plants are designed to process mixed household waste as well as commercial and industrial wastes ([Wikipedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mechanical_biological_treatment)).

<sup>12</sup> ARIVEM, Mouvement National de Lutte pour l'Environnement 93, Environnement 93

project. A dedicated blog<sup>13</sup> is available for public consultation and ongoing contributions during the audit period, which is to close in November 2012. Besides the audit, the mayor of Romainville has proposed to explore new solutions involving the contributions of the local biotech start-ups working on micro-seaweed processes, which could improve the plant's waste-treatment performance.<sup>14</sup>

The participative strand is mostly implemented through the Seine-Saint-Denis Agenda 21 and the 'Ourcq in Movement' initiative supported by the Greater Paris Metropolitan Council. The Seine-Saint-Denis Agenda 21<sup>15</sup> is a genuine urban programme in itself, with five strands:

1. Strengthening equalities and social inclusion; reinforcing the balance of 'living together' to promote successful professional pathways;
2. Promoting a new urban model which is environmental-friendly, meets its population's needs and makes the city more pleasant and exemplary in terms of urban ecology;
3. Allowing Seine-Saint-Denis to become a motor of development of the Greater Paris metropolitan area; relying upon endogenous resources to build an economic development strategy, as well as a research and education strategy open to the world at large;
4. Renewing governance, in particular by strengthening citizens' participation as well as partnerships with local authorities;
5. Becoming an exemplary government body for sustainable development.

The Agenda 21 programme – a 60-page document containing a comprehensive situation analysis of all dimensions of sustainable development, and a set of 136 measures defined as its action plan – was prepared in 2008 and got under way during the summer of 2009. A first assessment was published in 2010.<sup>16</sup> The 23 priority measures of the Climate Plan adopted by the Council assembly were incorporated into the Agenda 21 during the same period.

Every year, the Seine-Saint-Denis council publishes its progress report on sustainable development, and organises specific thematic events such as a children's drawing contest and walking tours of urban renewal sites. It has also introduced social and environmental clauses in its public procurement procedures.

### *Learning from the post-industrial legacy*

New models of eco-development in this disadvantaged area show a clear break with the post-Fordist model.<sup>17</sup> The post-industrial legacy of the Seine-Saint-Denis conurbation is used as a lever to turn towards the service economy model with the principles of sustainable development promoted by Agenda 21 and the planning methods of urban ecology, as an investment in green growth.

As a trigger to implement and deliver such metropolitan green growth and place-based policy, the ERDF created the momentum to accelerate cooperation among local stakeholders, even though budgetary restrictions had to be taken on board during the implementation cycle. The multi-level governance system proved to be able to overcome such difficulties, and the whole programme succeeded in keeping its integrated nature despite the position of the managing authorities which pushed the projects in more thematic directions. However the job creation target remains an issue.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://projet-romainville.syctom-paris.fr/un-audit-pilote-collegialement/>

<sup>14</sup> Source: [Territoires.fr](http://territoires.fr) 10 February 2012

<sup>15</sup> Source: [http://www.agenda21france.org/agenda-21-de-territoire/fiche.html?r\\_id=664&list](http://www.agenda21france.org/agenda-21-de-territoire/fiche.html?r_id=664&list)

<sup>16</sup> [http://cooperation-territoriale.seine-saint-denis.fr/IMG/pdf/449\\_DSO\\_A21\\_1rBilan.pdf](http://cooperation-territoriale.seine-saint-denis.fr/IMG/pdf/449_DSO_A21_1rBilan.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> As this concept is subject to academic debates, we understand post-Fordism here as 'a means to enhance competitiveness and profitability through flexibility and diversity' (Mitchell B., 2000)



This Integrated Urban Programme illustrates the relation between the regeneration of a deprived urban area, Agenda 21 and inter-municipal cooperation, in the frame of regional and sub-regional master plans. Dedicated partnerships based upon endogenous resources are fed by a thriving civic tradition of participative democracy, all geared towards the service economy and green growth.

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