

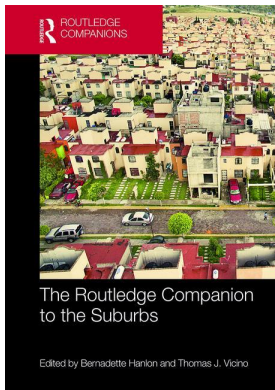
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Metropolitan governance in Paris

Theresa Enright

Introduction

Historically, Paris's urban development has been characterized by an intensive concentration of decision-making, productivity, amenities, services, and wealth. The iconic core of the monocentric city is highly valued by public and private institutions, while the *banlieue* or suburban areas are frequently ignored or maligned. Clear material and symbolic divides exist between Paris and its suburbs. Due to this structure, conflicts between the needs and interests of the city of Paris proper and its much larger regional territories have existed for centuries (Fourcaut et al., 2007). The spectacular urban uprisings of 2005 signaled the extreme unevenness of Paris's metropolitan development and the challenges of achieving an integrated and inclusive twenty-first century metropolis (Offner and Gilli, 2010).

While the political and social realities of a prosperous city walled off from its deprived peripheries should not be underestimated, processes of globalization and state decentralization have significantly eroded these dichotomous patterns. Indeed, today the city of Paris represents only a small fraction of the urbanized territory in the Île-de-France region, and the suburbs host diverse and essential networks of global financial, social, and cultural power. While Paris retains important political and tertiary economic functions (national ministries, publishing houses, universities, headquarters of major enterprises and banking institutions, and commercial spaces), in terms of demographics, employment, and productivity, the suburbs are “greater” than the urban core. La Défense, for example, located in the western *petit couronne* (inner suburbs), is France's principal business center and one of Europe's most powerful financial districts. In addition, new poles of the economy, such as Plaine-Saint-Denis in the north, have effectively captured highly competitive investments. Burgeoning research and technology clusters in Saclay, Évry, and Aubervilliers, and growing universities in Nanterre, Créteil, Villetaneuse, and Orsay, also suggest a centrifugal shift in informational and intellectual activity outside the walls of Paris. Even the largest commercial centers are located in the inner suburbs and not in Paris proper. The vast new Grand Paris Express “supermetro” (set to be operational in 2025) represents a €30 billion investment in the suburbs, and a recognition by the state and stakeholders of the metropolitan region's importance and vibrancy. Greater Paris is, for all intents and purposes, a large, complex, and multipolar space with an international presence.

Paris is functionally integrated with its *banlieue*, and there is now widespread recognition of the existence of an urban agglomeration beyond the walls of the *périphérique*. Yet, neither the attempted construction of a polycentric urban identity (Enright, 2014) nor the creation of a transit-connected region (Enright, 2013) has pointed toward a single scenario for how the metropolis should be managed and governed. The political space of the metropolis lags behind its speculative and technical correlates such that the experiential reality of Paris is “out of step with its political and administrative reality” (Sarkozy, 2010, p. 43). To complete the transformation from a monocentric city to a thriving multipolar urban region, Paris requires the construction of new governance arrangements and related transformations in urban authority, legitimacy, management, decision-making, citizenship, and democratic life.

This chapter considers the juridical and administrative supports on which Greater Paris is being founded. It begins with an overview of the often-deep-seated struggles between classes, territorial factions, political coalitions, and governmental agencies over Paris’s political role and how a metropolitan polity should be built. It then traces some shifts in institutional landscapes and authority relationships in the greater Paris region leading up to the construction of the new metropolitan government, the Métropole du Grand Paris, in 2016. With a focus on enduring historical rationalities of the state and new techniques of metropolitanization, it seeks to answer the question, through what mechanisms and processes are the political institutions of the Parisian metropolis being built?

The challenges of metropolitan governance

In large urban regions around the world today, there is increasingly a divide between administrative and jurisdictional borders and other kinds of functional organizations. That is, the political boundaries rarely align with “urbanized” settlements, and even less so with economic relationships, labor and commodity markets, residential units, collective identities, infrastructure networks, private and public service catchments, or natural ecosystems. Moreover, with increased mobility in all areas of life, and residents and stakeholders increasingly defined by their multiple and overlapping relationships to places, what constitutes a political community as such is in a constant state of flux. The territorial base of contemporary local governments has thus been overturned; authority itself is multiple, complex, and difficult to pin down; and local officials are unable to autonomously control the spaces over which they preside.

With increasing global interdependence and national devolution, the presumed responsibilities of local collectivities are frequently at odds with the constitutional and legal spaces in which they are expected to operate. With increased responsibilities but diminished capacities and resources, large cities frequently lack the key political instruments to control their foundations. Local power rests in complex collaborative networks of public and private authorities at multiple scales. This is captured in the shift from municipal *government* to metropolitan *governance*, marking the widening realm of influential political actors “beyond the city” and “beyond the state.”

Intensified connectivity, interdependencies, and externalities (both negative and positive) between administrative units pose problems for public service delivery and spatial and economic planning. For Michael Storper (2014), the permanent divide between functional and administrative territories results in a “principal-actor mismatch” whereby responsible institutions are misaligned with the problems they must solve. As a result, in large metropolises there is a continual cycle in which new public agencies and institutions are created, only to quickly become ill adapted to the changing realities they must address. Moreover, insofar as different policy sectors

and planning endeavors will inevitably have their own geographic terms, it is nearly impossible to coordinate all of the service delivery, infrastructure, and policy-making on the metropolitan scale within a single fixed territorial unit.

The global city-region and its unwieldy tangle of flexible institutions have thus generated many new issues of governability (Jouve and Lefèvre, 2002; Kantor et al., 2012; Le Galès and Vitale, 2013). While the devolution of power means that the viability of cities is now dependent on new forms of inter-administrative cooperation and public-private partnerships, the fragmentation of authority also causes conflict. Vertically, this has resulted in problems of multi-level governance over jurisdictional authority, administrative competency, fiscal responsibility, and political legitimacy. Horizontally, it has led to cross-border competition between localities for power and resources, and between public and private coalitions over accountability, risk-bearing, and the distribution of surplus.

The matrix of political relations that constitutes the Paris metropolitan region is notoriously complex, and the administrative landscape of the Île-de-France is infamous for its multitudinous, competing, and overlapping governmental and nongovernmental structures. Described colloquially as a “*mille-feuille*,” a pastry consisting of a “thousand layers” of dough, governance in the capital region of France is multi-layered and fragile. This configuration has been criticized for impeding policy formation and implementation, and for making the functions of regional governance – the organization of production, the provision of social services, the regulation of activity – inefficient, ineffective, and undemocratic. According to local officials,

The urban area of Paris is faced with all the challenges of a twenty-first-century metropolis, but like the majority of worldwide metropolises, still has to cope with the tools of the twentieth century government and with the administrative limits of the nineteenth century.

(*Mairie de Paris, 2013*)

The political metropolis, as an entity with strong legitimacy, autonomy from other levels of government, wide-ranging jurisdiction, and appropriate territorial borders, is not yet present (Lefèvre, 1998, p. 2004).

In the last 15 years, however, there has been a series of local and national initiatives to restructure administrative territories, to streamline services, to implement interlocal regulatory policies, and to promote formal and informal collaborations, with the goal of metropolitanization. A farsighted institution at the metropolitan scale is a widely shared desire of diverse actors within the Île-de-France – indeed, “the metropolis” has taken on new life as a metanarrative of urbanization in Paris today – yet there remain significant conflicts over what form that institution should take, who should make up its ranks, and what the scope of its mandate should be.

The politics of metropolitanization

There are four main axes along which the conflicts over contemporary transformations in metropolitan governance are currently taking place: central and territorial authorities, Paris and the provinces, Paris and its *banlieue*, and left-right ideologies. Each of these represents a long-standing terrain of antagonism and negotiation over the shape of the metropolis and its techniques of authority. Indeed, to understand the eventual creation of the Métropole du Grand Paris, it is necessary to first sketch the context out of which it emerged.

Central and territorial authorities

The first dimension of metropolitan transformation concerns the political tension within French republicanism between a unitary and universal authority, and more disparate and diverse territorial arrangements. Debates between Jacobinism (a system founded on a highly ordered and powerful central command) and Girondism (in which power is decentralized into diffuse factions) have existed since the time of the Revolution. France is known for prioritizing the former but is equally defined by the latter. Under the Fifth Republic the central government has retained a prominent role in organizing national affairs, coordinating everything from universal educational curricula, to nativist cultural policy, to territorial and industrial production. Since the 1970s, however, there have also been significant devolutions of authority to subnational levels of government that have threatened the centralization of national power.

The Defferre Laws of 1982 (known as Act I of decentralization) began the far-reaching transformations of intergovernmental relations, and the movement of substantial decision-making power and policy responsibilities to subnational levels of government. Most important, the laws established the three official tiers (regional, departmental, municipal [communal]) of subnational government and their competencies. They also established new norms for how these institutions would interact. The three levels of government are arranged horizontally based on the principles of shared functions and non-subsidiarity. Many important policy issues (e.g., economic development, spatial planning) are under the control of several levels at once, and while each level may have the lead responsibility over particular issues, there is no domination exercised by one level over those under it.

Decentralization changed the character of local governance and its scope of operations. On the one hand, it confirmed the autonomy of local governments to direct their own affairs. On the other hand, with new responsibilities at the local level but inadequate capacity, new contractual arrangements, collaboration, and public-private arrangements proliferated throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Bernier, 1991; Cerny, 1989). Thus, while the state itself became oriented to regional and municipal scales (Brenner, 2004; Keating, 1983), local governments also began to alter their spatial policies, implementing new infrastructure and amenities, and pursuing place-based rebranding campaigns to attract economic investment and drive up financial assets.

In the wake of *dirigisme* emerged new regulatory arrangements of “negotiation, partnership, voluntary participation and flexibility” (Lefèvre, 1998, p. 18). Local councils in the Paris region had significant responsibilities but were too small and had insufficient resources to address the devastating urban impacts of deindustrialization such as unemployment, lack of affordable housing, and growing socio-spatial marginality. At the same time, the region of Île-de-France was better situated to deal with these broader urban policy geographies, but its powers were weak and its competencies minimal. Cross-border coalitions became necessary. In many sectors of local service delivery, from healthcare and education to welfare, policing, and basic infrastructural services (e.g., water, sewage), there are ongoing vertical and horizontal conflicts over who is responsible for issues, how power should be shared, and how the costs and benefits of policies should be distributed.

Even though significant planning, land use, and economic development capacities were transferred to the region in the Raffarin reforms of the 2000s (Act II of decentralization), the state reasserted its power in 2007 with the launch of the Grand Paris initiative. An umbrella term for new design, planning, and policy orientations, this centrally organized program saw the state take back the reins of power over Paris from more local authorities. The Grand Paris Act of 2010, for example, harnessed the energy of metropolitan reform. It established the Society for Grand Paris and endowed it with unprecedented powers in terms of land use and transportation – two

essential areas of policy that were unsettled at the regional and local levels. In the early days of Grand Paris, the new Ministry of Development for the Capital Region and the Ministry of Cities assured the state's presence. Alongside these reforms, President Sarkozy's plan for metropolitan governance, outlined in the Balladur Report, was met with virulent criticism, from the left in the Île-de-France (which had just recently solidified its hold on power) and from local officials across the political spectrum, who were wary of losing autonomy and being structured out of existence.

Paris and the provinces

Decentralization is compounded by the second axis of governance reform, the asymmetries between Paris and the provinces resulting from the capital region's preeminence. The national "macrocephaly" refers to Paris's exceptional weight with respect to population, economic productivity, infrastructure, and political control in relation to the rest of the country. This condition results in two main contradictory discourses of the capital: Paris as national flagship and Paris as a drain on national resources.

The former is the belief that the Paris is the bellwether of national success (or failure) and that the city should be prioritized in any national growth agenda. While typically a national narrative, this is also the mantra of many local elites, for whom the grandeur of Paris is justification for exceptional resources and investment demands. The latter depiction is best expressed through Jean-François Gravier's (1947) famous thesis, "Paris and the French desert." Gravier denounces the extreme concentration of political and economic activity within the Paris region, and condemns the capital's monopoly of national resources as pathological. According to this perspective, which largely guided Keynesian distributive policies, the growth of Paris needs to be limited and territorial investment widespread to ensure more balanced national planning.

Against the constitutional principle of nonhierarchization among local collectivities, Paris clearly has more clout and receives more national attention in terms of investment than other communes and departments on the same formal footing. In 2007 the state confirmed the importance of Paris by identifying several key National Interest Operations (OINs) in the region (half of these national priority sites are in the Île-de-France) and by giving new support to powerful pro-growth development institutions to guide their creation. Most notably, however, the state's emphasis on Paris's national importance was marked by the launch of Grand Paris. Not only does Grand Paris seek special metropolitan status for Paris to strengthen its development capacities and to attract priority investments, but also the Grand Paris Act (2010) names the Parisian metropolis as *the* flagship territory of national development.

Elites outside of Paris, especially those in other large metropolitan regions, resent the special treatment of the capital. Local representatives of all political stripes, in fact, claim the opposite, that the state has not adequately prioritized the Île-de-France and that in order for the metropolitan region to flourish, even more targeted investments are needed.

Urban-suburban divides

The third axis of institutional reform concerns the over-determined relationship between Paris and its suburbs. Because of the history of regional centralization and their antagonistic historical development, it is difficult to achieve a shared agenda between the city of Paris and the surrounding suburbs. Mistrust and ignorance on both sides are legacies of an asymmetrical history, and conflicts persist over where to locate developments, who should pay for the externalities of growth, and who should decide on regional priorities. Officials in the city of Paris are hesitant

to relinquish their long-held power in metropolitan power structures, while suburban representatives are skeptical of regional relations repeating historical patterns of annexation and exploitation.

Yet, one of the central developments driving the political processes of metropolitanization is a shift in the balance of power toward the periphery. Over the past decade there has been a “revenge of the suburbs” (Gilli and Gonguet, 2015), bolstered by changes in the demographic and economic influence of the *banlieue* and the assertion of a uniquely suburban power bloc. While obstacles to metropolitan government remain, and interterritorial disputes between Paris and its suburbs or between the suburbs themselves (especially the *petit* and *grand couronne*, inner and outer territories) are not likely to be resolved, metropolitanization has seen a more concerted effort by local officials to organize and cooperate across boundaries, and to transcend parochial concerns in pursuit of common goals and projects.

This dynamic also builds on patterns of intermunicipal cooperation developed over the past 30 years. Initially intercommunal bodies were created for service provisions, such as water distribution and waste collection, but these institutions, especially in the form of public authorities for intercommunal cooperation with fiscal capacities, have been clamoring to direct larger initiatives, such as regional economic development, social welfare, and physical infrastructure, including public transportation.

The period from 1999 to 2007 was marked by a general intensification of local coordination. In 2000 one of the most powerful local intermunicipal institutions, Plaine Commune, was formed with five municipalities of the northern Parisian suburbs. Arising out of a long history of working-class organizing and shared socialist and communist leadership, Plaine Commune has become a coherent stage for territorial planning with significant influence over urban planning, transportation, economic development, urban policy, and facilities. Organizations such as Plaine Commune thus have a significant geopolitical function: to weigh in on debates on governance in the face of the state, the region, the departments, and the city of Paris, and to push for a more confederate style of coordination at the scale of the metropolis (Subra, 2012).

The emergence of intermunicipal partnerships between Paris and its cross-border suburbs was another key development in local affairs. In particular, Bertrand Delanoë, elected as mayor of Paris in March 2001, played a key role in improving relations between Paris and the *banlieue*. Delanoë and his team launched a proactive “process of atonement” (Mansat, 2012, p. 12) to establish better regional relations. Through this leadership, Paris showed its commitment to cooperation agreements, common projects with neighboring municipalities, and metropolis-wide policies. Delanoë was also instrumental in the creation of the powerful joint authority Paris Métropole, which aimed to “put a definitive end to the traditional relationship between Paris and the suburbs” (Mansat, 2012, p. 13). Paris Métropole brings together more than 100 local authorities to cooperate in pursuit of shared interests. While Paris Métropole is deeply legitimate and has a high public profile, it has no formal competence to put in place new metropolitan policies. Rather, it acts primarily as a forum for deliberation and an agency for agenda setting. In a departure from the decades-long taboo among regional representatives of collaborating with Paris, today a new consensus is emerging regarding the need for some metropolitan institutions.

Partisan ideologies

The final dimension in the ongoing process of building metropolitan Paris is that of ideological cleavages. The city of Paris has traditionally been a stronghold of the right surrounded by the so-called “red belt” of the *petit couronne*, but the 2001 mayoral victory of Socialist Delanoë marked a watershed leftward shift in the city at both the local and national levels. The regional

council also reflected this change, with a left alliance in power since 1998. The path to the making of the metropolis has been forged in this highly politicized atmosphere. Among local officials, divergent visions of the goals of metropolitan life and growth have prevented, for example, a clear agreement on entrepreneurial spatial policies, on the one hand, and fiscal redistribution to address social, environmental, and economic disparities on the other. This partisan impasse was amplified under Sarkozy, when conservative state-led urban policies conflicted with the center-left plans of Jean-Paul Huchon and the Regional Council, and the more progressive agenda of Paris Métropole.

Relative to American development regimes or British locational policies, the multi-scalar urban governance arrangements in Paris were able to prioritize social concerns, even in a neo-liberal climate. However, in general, these collaborative forms of governance still remained, even under socialist governments, more conducive to nationally steered collective growth strategies. Wealth distribution, environmental regulation, and socio-spatial marginality remained sticking points in the Île-de-France that could not be adequately addressed through voluntary collaboration. Debates about solidarity, territorial inequalities, and the power balance between the central state and local collectivities came to the fore in 1994 over the regional master plan for the Île-de-France, which pitted environmental concerns against competitive strategies for economic development. In general, since the 1990s, more right-wing factions have sought a viable metropolitan platform to organize economic development activities and enhance global competitiveness. Left networks, on the other hand, favor a more democratic municipalism and the institution of concerted social welfare measures, as well as measures for regional fiscal redistribution.

While ideological cleavages are an impediment to institutional reform, there is new momentum for compromise. Elements of the left and right seem to favor the construction of a metropolitan government and policies. At the same time, however, the national collapse of the Socialist Party and the rise of other parties, such as the Front Nationale, En Marche!, La France Insoumise, and Europe Écologie (the Green Party), complicate these partisan relations and have the potential to recast the traditional ideological groundwork for or against the construction of metropolitan institutions.

The metropolitics of Grand Paris

The *mille-feuille* of governance that defines metropolitan Paris today is a product of all four of these constitutive tensions. Together these dynamics combine in a process of “unregulated competitive decentralization” (Kantor et al., 2012, p. 171) the outcome of which is a fragmented political landscape where neither the state nor local actors have sufficient capacity or legitimacy to govern unitarily. A brief sketch of recent changes in this fragmented landscape will clarify the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the official Métropole du Grand Paris.

The Métropole du Grand Paris

In 2012, Paris Métropole released a green paper on metropolitan governance to establish a new direction for discussions and action, especially in the key issue areas of housing, mobility, revenues, and attractiveness. On the specific question of a new institutional authority, Paris Métropole proposed three main figures of metropolitan governance. The first aimed to unify governance and to simplify the institutional map through an “integrated metropolis.” This proposition emphasized the need for streamlined institutions, a reduction in collectivities, clear decision-making procedures, and unitary and strong leadership. The second, a “concerted metropolis,” suggested an evolved institutional system arranged through existing structures. This metropolitan scenario

was founded on the constitutional principle of collectivities' free administration and valued the communes' capacity to create their own development. It aimed not at dismantling existing arrangements, but at the development of a sharing culture of negotiated metropolitanization through exchange, interconnection, and dynamic collaboration. The third scenario, that of a "confederated metropolis," sought the creation of a metropolitan institution through the coordination of existing collectivities. This middle ground proposal maintained the polycentrism of the concerted version but within a unified and integrated government capable of more binding decisions (Paris Métropole, 2013). These options thus represented different means of balancing institutional flexibility and local autonomy with coordinating capability.

The green paper set in motion a national legislative bill (Law on the Modernization of Territorial Public Action and the Affirmation of Metropolitan Areas, or MAPTAM) by Prime Minister Ayrault on the creation of new metropolitan government structures nationally, with special provisions for Paris. Through the opposition it identifies between the integrated and concerted metropolitan figures (the confederated version largely collapsed into the latter in subsequent discussions), the green paper also set the terms of the legislative debate and public discourse. Leading up to the law, the battles over the institutional form of the metropolis were oriented around these two main competing visions, each corresponding to authority's different principles and modalities.

On one side, proponents called for the dismantling of existing administrative organizations and the obligatory regrouping of all territorial arrangements into a united metropolitan institution with significant powers that would be located at a scale between departmental and regional governments. This streamlined and simplified version of the metropolis would, they said, be better situated to manage the "big" problems of housing, territorial inequality, unemployment, and environmental policy that have thus far eluded decision-makers. A coherent single-tier institutional arrangement would also be effective in bringing economic stakeholders (development agencies, transportation authorities, and city boosters) into metropolitan development initiatives. Here supporters, including national and local Socialist Party representatives, claimed that ad hoc collaborations that had thus far defined metropolitan governance were insufficient. They argued that a high degree of centralization and obligatory integration was necessary for ambitious policy, lasting decisions, and political legitimacy, and that parochialism had to be checked by formal interdependencies. Many Front de Gauche representatives opposed such a strong metropolis on ideological grounds for its dismissal of local autonomy. At the same time, many municipal UMP officials who gained in the previous election and would risk losing power back to the left if a metropolitan authority were created also opposed the integrated institution on strategic grounds.

On the other side, supporters of the federated version emphasized the importance of existing intercommunal structures and the culture of grassroots partnership. The federated metropolis, a "Metropolitan G20," would respect the powers of local collectivities, they said, while organizing them into a larger administration with capacities for planning at the metropolitan scale. The federated and multi-tiered arrangement sought to maintain local policy-making and deliberation within existing municipal structures while enabling cooperation and administrative functions at the metropolitan scale. Plaine Commune in particular mobilized in support of a radically federated institution that would maintain local power, claiming that intermunicipality was the pertinent scale at which to articulate metropolitan strategies and urban projects. These forces feared that a centralized metropolitan strategy – presumably with Paris at its core – would worsen territorial inequalities and prevent a truly polycentric emergence. More conservative politicians also maintained that communal autonomy and identity would be sacrificed in the face of a top-down mandate.

After prolonged debates, MAPTAM was adopted and ratified on January 27, 2015 (Act III of decentralization). The final act was a compromise in terms of both the structures it proposed for the new authority and the ends of metropolitanization at which it aimed. The MGP came in existence in January 2016.

The new MGP covers an administrative area that includes Paris, the three departments of the *petit couronne*, and several additional municipalities of the *grand couronne*. The law thus establishes for the first-time an institution capable of governing the roughly seven million inhabitants who make up the urban core of the Île-de-France. Administratively, the MGP takes over several functions “in the metropolitan interest” from member municipalities, particularly in metropolitan development, housing, urban and environmental policy, crime prevention, and economic and social development. The MGP is responsible, for example, for the development of a Metropolitan Master Plan, a metropolitan housing policy, economic development, participation in mega-event applications and planning, and devising a climate and energy plan. The MGP will also have tax-raising capacities to fulfill these activities, and MAPTAM permits tax harmonization and revenue sharing among members.

The MGP thus outlines significant new functions for metropolitan management but also raises new concerns. For Lacoste (2013), in privileging the urban but not the wider suburban and exurban region (the *grand couronne*), the MGP excludes vital parts of the territory and prevents truly metropolitan coordination. The MGP risks, in other words, widening the gap between the most urbanized areas of the Île-de-France, where jobs and enterprises are concentrated, and the periphery, thus extending existing spatial segregation (IAU-IDF, 2014). This is especially troubling, as the political space of the MGP does not sit neatly atop the much broader poly-centric economic area envisioned by the Grand Paris Express’s new transit scheme. Many questions about urban-regional governance also remain. These questions include how competencies should be transferred from local to metropolitan levels, how to ensure a balance between the new responsibilities of the MGP and the resources at its disposal, how to ensure cooperation and equity between the demarcated territory of the MGP and the rest of the Île-de-France, and how to arbitrate divergent interests and territorial relations. Crucially, it is also unclear what buy-in exists among the restive citizens of Greater Paris, to see themselves as part of a shared political community with common goals and bonds.

The MAPTAM law is also significant for what it excludes. In terms of urban planning, the new metropolis must elaborate a Metropolitan Plan for Sustainable Development that is compatible with local and regional master plans; however, it does not alter the public development agencies’ functions, which constitute the most powerful levers of urbanization within the region. In addition, the national legislature was clear that even though the new MGP has responsibilities for spatial planning and economic development, it will not have power over transportation, calling into question the extent to which transport and development would be integrated at the metropolitan scale (Enright, 2016).

Conclusion

Historically, Paris has been essential to French statecraft. Today Paris suggests a new order, that of the global city metropolis, as a novel form of political organization. In a globalized world the nature of the city and the nature of the nation are changing in concert, and the creation of the Parisian metropolis provides a unique window into this incipient reality. The political conflicts constitutive of the Métropole du Grand Paris certainly concern the uniquely French processes of contractualization, negotiation, and partnership that increasingly define decision-making at the metropolitan scale. They also concern the more general nature of territorial autonomy, the

prospects of local democracy, the legitimacy of the state, and the pragmatic ability to address big issues that threaten the future of the planet. The contemporary questions surrounding the governance of the Paris metropolis are about Paris's relationship to France and the world at large (Veltz, 2012). They are also questions about the kind of politics that will organize collective life in the twenty-first century.

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