
RESEARCH

02/07/2020



Removing Paris' périphérique ring road: towards more sustainable and desirable lifestyles?

Finished research

Begin: 01 October 2019

End: 01 September
2020

For the 2020 Paris municipal elections, many proposals and claims were made on the future of the périphérique, the 35 km ring road around Paris: removing it, redesigning it as a main road with traffic lights, creating green spaces, making several dedicated lanes to promote different modes of transport, etc. The Mobile Lives Forum wanted to explore the option of totally removing it. What consequences would this have on the Parisian, metropolitan and regional scale? Under what conditions could this removal be part of a transition towards more desired and sustainable lifestyles?

Research participants

PROFESSIONAL WORKSHOP URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

JEAN DEBRIE

Contact : Anne Fuzier

Illustration : Caroline Delmotte – Forum Vies Mobiles

There are many reasons for putting the removal of the ring road on the political agenda: environmental problems, noise, visual pollution; urban divide; questioning the legitimacy

of such a big highway that symbolizes an all-car ideology that is now obsolete, etc. Yet, the Postcar study revealed how people in the Ile-de-France region are heavily dependent on cars, and unevenly so depending on whether they live in Paris, the suburbs, or periurban and rural areas. While we see an increasing dualization of public policies that strongly question the place of cars within Paris all the while neglecting the other areas of Ile-de-France, the Forum entrusted a group of students from the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne with a research project on the current uses of the périphérique, the problems that would arise from its removal and the redistribution of its uses on the scale of the various affected territories (Paris, suburbs, metropolis, Ile-de-France) and the conditions under which its removal could be part of the transition to desired and sustainable lifestyles.

Methodology

At first, the students established an overview of the different proposals for the périphérique's future; they questioned the representations underlying these proposals, in particular regarding the place of **mobility** in people's lifestyles and of cars in their travel habits.

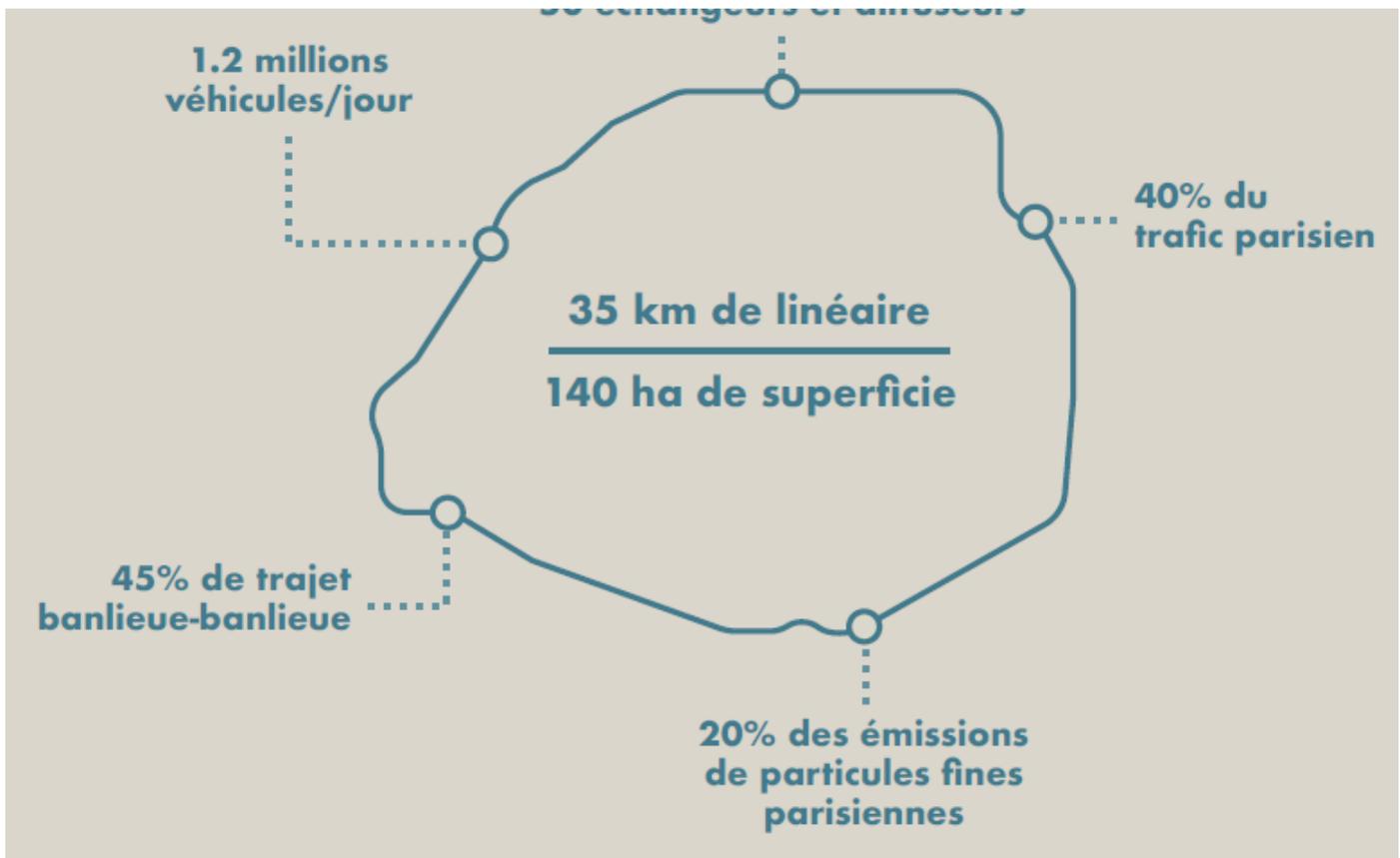
Then, the students examined the périphérique and its uses using three methods: first, they analyzed data from the 2010 Global Transport Survey (EGT, Enquête Globale Transports), second they ran route simulations on Google Maps to identify alternatives to the périphérique for various itineraries, and third they conducted interviews with users.

These interviews also allowed them to understand the relationship that users have to the périphérique and identify six typical user profiles, based on their uses, social profile and place of residence: a senior executive living in the outer suburbs; a senior executive living in the inner suburbs; a worker/employee; and a student living near the périphérique.

The students then conducted a forecasting workshop with about 20 participants who put themselves in the shoes of the different user-profiles identified, to think about scenarios in which the périphérique's removal could be part of the transition to desired and sustainable lifestyles. Two levers in particular were considered: modal shift and avoidance.

The results

The périphérique - the 35-kilometer-long ring road around Paris - is the busiest urban road in Europe, with 1.2 million vehicles per day, or 40% of Paris' traffic.



Key features of the périphérique

- 1.2 million vehicles/day
- 156 access ramps
- 50 interchanges
- 40% of Paris' traffic
- 45% of trips are suburb-to-suburb
- 35 km long
- 140 ha of surface area
- 20% of all emissions of fine particles in Paris

The périphérique is a disruptive element between Paris and the neighboring cities. This disruption is more or less important depending on how the gates (called portes) are designed, especially whether they have multimodal transport options, easy access for pedestrians and bicycles and are coherent in terms of landscape, architecture and functionality.

For example, in the north of Paris, the périphérique between Porte de la Chapelle and Porte de Clignancourt constitutes a strong division between Paris and the suburbs, which has seen a growth of informal settlements since the 2010s. Conversely, Porte Dorée, with the Bois de Vincennes forest, enjoys important continuity between the spaces located on either side of the ring road, thanks to the infrastructure being underground and a gradual transition from city to green spaces.

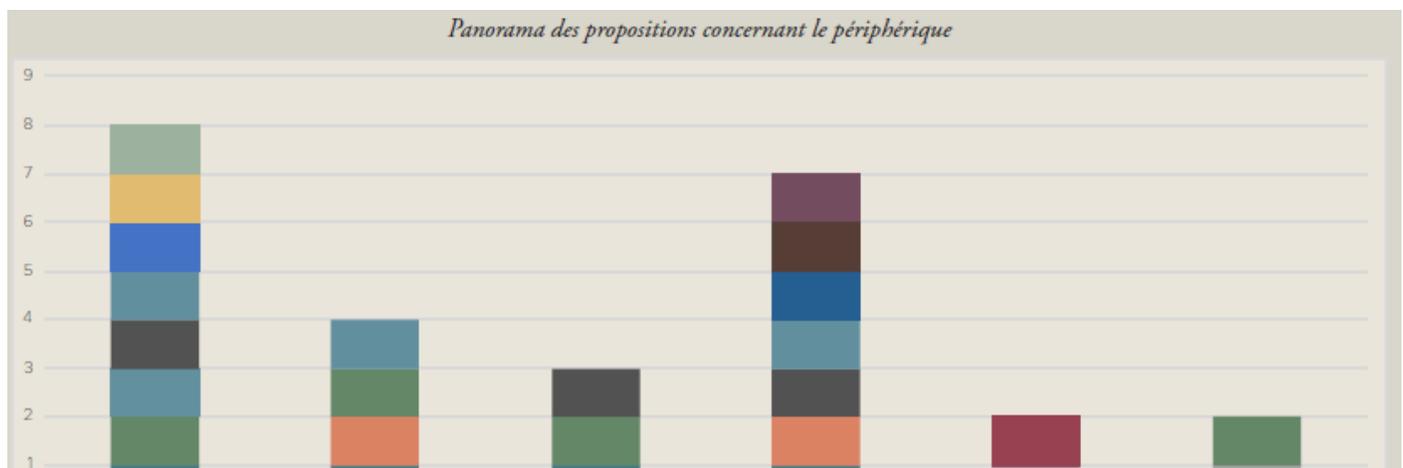
Proposals for the future of the périphérique

In recent years, several works have been published about the future of the périphérique. In a 2016 report, the Paris Urbanism Workshop (APUR, Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme) proposed measures to reduce the division caused by the périphérique by building crossings and green spaces that would create some landscape continuity. In 2018, the Metropolitan Forum of Greater Paris (FMGP, Forum Métropolitain du Grand Paris) worked on the future of mobility in Ile-de-France and proposed that the périphérique be transformed into an urban boulevard. The proposed measures aim to reduce car dependence and promote public transport and soft mobility, as part of a thought-process that isn't limited to Paris but that instead includes the périphérique in the wider metropolitan area. Finally, the Paris Region Institute (IPR, Institut Paris Région, formerly IAU) claims that turning the périphérique into an urban boulevard is too complex in the short term, for economic (cost of works) and logistical reasons (managing the transfer of traffic). The Institute instead proposed measures aimed at reducing speed on the boulevard, reducing the number of lone drivers and promoting public transport.

As part of the municipal campaign, political actors also addressed these issues. The City of Paris proposed to requalify the périphérique as an urban boulevard by 2050, with quieter traffic, reserved lanes for carpooling, public transport and clean vehicles. The green party made similar proposals.

Meanwhile, the presidential majority proposed modulating the speed according to the time of day. While right-wing politicians overwhelmingly support the project of covering up the périphérique in order to mitigate the urban disruption created by the infrastructure and to allow the construction of housing, some elected officials from the MODEM party have called for a closure of some of the périphérique's gates.

Gaspard Gantzer is the only candidate to call for totally removing the périphérique, in addition to developing bike lanes all across the Greater Paris area.





Panorama of proposals for the périphérique

- Create reserved lanes and/or limit the number of lanes
- Reduce the speed limit to 50 km/h
- Install road signs and traffic lights
- Limit flows and put a tax on the transport of goods
- Remove the périphérique or some portions
- Convert the infrastructure or some portions

The périphérique: a diagnosis

Three types of trips

After analyzing the data from the 2010 Global Transport Survey (EGT, Enquête Globale Transport), three main type of trips on the périphérique were identified.

Short journeys that allow people to reach neighboring or nearby municipalities; the main areas in this regard are the north-east of Paris, between Montreuil, Pantin, Le Pré-Saint-Gervais and the 20th arrondissement. These are the least numerous overall due to the presence of alternate roads or modal alternatives (tramway, RER). The second type of trip is the most common: the "bypass trip" which people make to reach a destination on the opposite side of Paris; for example, it can be a journey between the 15th and 17th arrondissements. Finally, long trips, which connect urban poles located on the outskirts (Roissy-en-France, Versailles, Chessy, Nanterre, etc.).

Places next to the périphérique are the most dependent

In 2010, only 20% of people using the périphérique lived in Paris. Nearly 80% live in the other departments of Ile-de-France. Half of all users of the périphérique live in the inner suburbs (called petite couronne, i.e. the first ring of suburbs around Paris). They constitute the main starting point (47%) and main destination (48%) of all trips using the périphérique. Furthermore, a quarter of all trips using the périphérique start and end within these inner suburbs.

Lieux de résidence des usagers du périphérique (EGT, 2010)

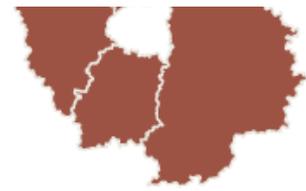




Paris | 22%



Petite Couronne | 48 %
 Seine-Saint-Denis | 17%
 Hauts-de-Seine | 17%
 Val-de-Marne | 14%



Grande Couronne | 30%
 Essonne | 9%
 Yvelines | 8%
 Val-d'Oise | 7%
 Seine et Marne | 7%

Place of residence of the users of the périphérique (EGT, 210)

The most dependent areas on the périphérique are the those that border it, both inside or outside Paris' city limits; this is particularly the case for the north-east of Paris (19th arrondissement, Montreuil, Bagnolet, Romainville): most journeys using the périphérique originate from one of these areas. The périphérique is however far less important for trips originating in the outer suburbs (less than 1% of trips that originate in the outer suburbs use it).

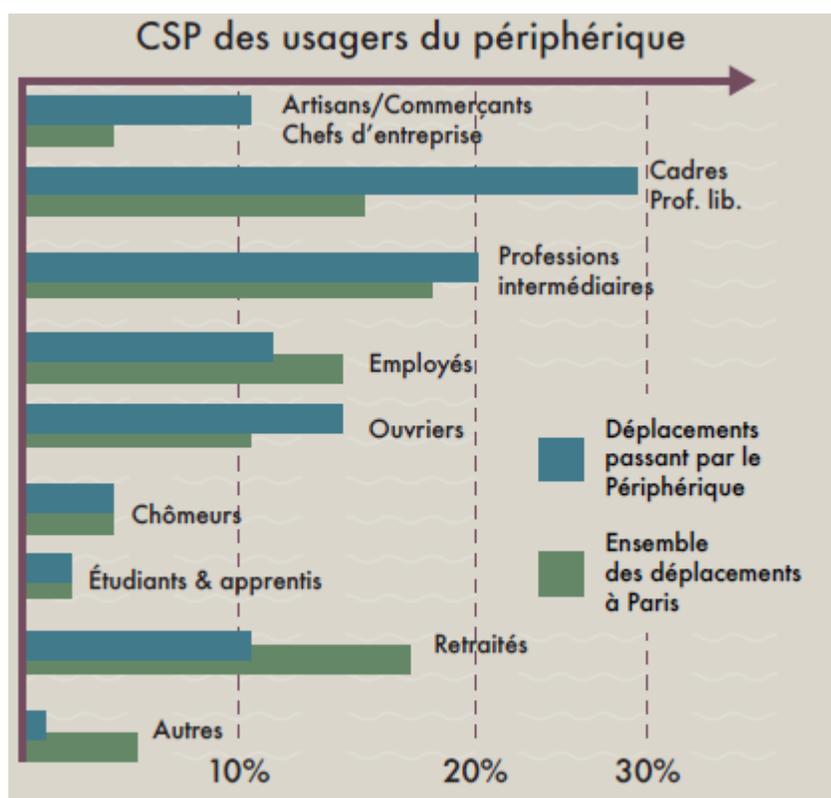


Proportion of trips using the périphérique, starting in a town or arrondissement

In addition to analyzing the Global Transport Survey data, the students developed a tool for modeling journeys in Ile-de-France using Google Maps. When requesting from Google Maps an itinerary originating or ending in Paris or neighboring towns, the app overwhelmingly suggests taking the périphérique, confirming that Paris and its inner suburbs depend most heavily on it.

Users of the périphérique

Three-quarters of all drivers on the périphérique are men. Furthermore, the most advantaged socio-professional categories (executives and higher intellectual professions) and intermediate occupations (artisans/traders/business leaders) are over-represented among users. This is also the case for manual workers who make longer journeys (67 minutes on average) than executives (51 minutes on average), with the latter tending to make short trips (sometimes bypass trips) between arrondissements in Paris and/or the neighboring suburbs; indeed, analyzing their trips reveals a clear triangle linking the 15th and 16th arrondissements in the south, La Défense in the west and the 17th arrondissement in the north. Meanwhile, manual workers make trips that are more spatially spread out, originating mainly in northern and eastern suburbs and going to more distant poles (Créteil, the 16th arrondissement, Clichy, etc.). These results confirm the overall dynamics of Paris' metropolitan area, with workers residing in the north and east and executives living in the west closer to their workplace.



Socioprofessional category of périphérique users

The périphérique: an essential infrastructure for its users

Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with people who use or live near the périphérique. Several user-profiles emerged: a mobile worker who depends on the périphérique; an executive living in the outer suburbs; an executive living in the inner suburbs; a worker/employee; and a student living near the périphérique. The majority of surveyed users take the périphérique to commute or for work trips. While they are aware of the nuisances associated with the use of the périphérique they are rather against

the nuisances associated with the use of the périphérique, they are rather against removing it as this would force some to give up using their car or, for others, to take longer routes. Only those living near the périphérique but who don't use it are in favor of removing it. Most respondents stressed the need to strengthen the public transport system before thinking about closing the périphérique.

Towards an Ile-de-France without the périphérique

The students organized a workshop bringing together about twenty participants who put themselves in the shoes of typical users of the périphérique, to imagine how lifestyles would be reconfigured if it was removed, by mobilizing three models of action: increased accessibility, proximity and reinventing car-use. In the first model, the accessibility and performance of public transport was improved to encourage a massive shift from cars to public transport. In the second model, the participants imagined a reconfiguration of the urban landscape allowing for greater proximity between homes and workplaces and, consequently, a reduced use of cars. The third model – reinventing cars – imagined more **car sharing** to reduce the number of vehicles in circulation and allow a phasing out of the périphérique by curbing the resulting congestion that would happen in the surrounding areas.

To reach the point of closing the périphérique, the workshop participants imagined the gradual implementation of various measures. In the short term, they proposed measures such as lowering the authorized speed on the périphérique or encouraging carpooling, pending the generalization of telework through greater pressure on companies to be responsible. Meanwhile, they imagined a network of bicycle lanes across the Ile-de-France region, the RER-Vélo, to promote modal shift and provide a comfortable alternative to cars for users who don't travel very long distances. In the medium term, considering that most trips on the périphérique are between locations in the inner suburbs, such trips could be transferred to public transport by optimizing the existing network or by resorting to the future Grand Paris Express; public transport would be fully automated and free. In the long term, the workshop participants imagined an urban exodus from Paris itself to the rest of the territory; they drew up a territorial model based on bioregions where the inhabitants carry out their activities within a 15-minute radius, calling for an evolution of the prevailing land planning model in order to promote more localized lifestyles.

Conclusion

Although the users of the périphérique who were interviewed by the students were initially reluctant to see the périphérique being removed, the study allowed us to imagine a future without the périphérique that meets the aspirations of people living in and around Paris for more localized and slower-paced lives. For such a radical measure to be accepted,

however, would require a gradual implementation, over a long period of time and in consultation with the inhabitants, of ambitious policies that aim to get away from an all-car model and promote a land-use planning that enables the transition to more sustainable and desirable lifestyles.

To go further (available in French only)

[Download the diagnosis](#)

[Download the synthesis](#)

[Download the full report](#)

Mobility

For the Mobile Lives Forum, mobility is understood as the process of how individuals travel across distances in order to deploy through time and space the activities that make up their lifestyles. These travel practices are embedded in socio-technical systems, produced by transport and communication industries and techniques, and by normative discourses on these practices, with considerable social, environmental and spatial impacts.

[More](#)

Car sharing

Car sharing is the pooling of one or several vehicles for different trips at different times. Three types of car sharing exist: commercial car sharing, peer-to-peer car sharing and "informal" sharing between individuals.

[More](#)

¹ <mailto:anne.fuzier@sncf.fr>

² https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/sites/default/files/editor/diagnostic_peripherique_-_vf.pdf

³ <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/sites/default/files/editor/peripherique-synthese.pdf>

⁴ https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/sites/default/files/editor/renduv2cartes_compressed_vf.pdf

⁵ <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/mobility-450>

⁶ <https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/car-sharing-2137>