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*"By writing, we build the future"**

* Quote from one of the participants.

citadins, citadines 2050

Citizens and civil servants imagine their city's climate futures

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Citadins, Citadines 2050 is a project of the Plurality University Network (U+), with the support of Ademe (French Agency for Ecological Transition), the Seine-Saint-Denis department, the City of Marseilles and the City of Paris.

Team: Juliette Grossmann, Daniel Kaplan, Ketty Steward and Violette Louis-Mathieu.

Graphic design: Juliette Lépineau.

Video documentary about the project: Sara Olaciregui, Steeve Fidol.

Thanks to our local partners: Hélène Clémente (La Petite Ruche, Noisy-le-Sec); Johann Abiola, Sekouba Doucouré, Jérome Sitruk (Association Plus Loin / Labec); Mathieu Glaymann, Marie Valcke, Manoy Tardiveau, Elena Gantzer (Noailles-Belsunce Neighborhood Center).

Thanks to Chloé Luchs, who helped imagine this project.

https://www.plurality-university.org/fr/projets/citadins-citadines-2050

2025

THE INTENTION

The Citadins-Citadines project is an experiment in “creative foresight” which took place in 2024, in three urban areas (Marseilles, Paris and the Seine-Saint-Denis department), based on the following intention:

> **Mobilize art and fiction**
> to explore **how urban territories might adapt in the face of climate change,** involving **populations whose voice is usually not heard on these subjects:** socially disadvantaged and/or vulnerable residents (“Citizens”), local authority field agents (“Agents”).

From April to May 2024, five cycles of workshops were organized with groups of 10 to 30 participants: citizens in Noisy-le-Sec (93) and Paris, agents in Paris and across the Seine-Saint-Denis department, citizens and agents together in the Noailles-Belsunce districts of Marseilles. With the help of eight artists, the participants produced striking descriptions of life in their territories in 2050.

ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

Ketty Steward, writer (Noisy/Citizens and Paris/Agents, consultant on the method)
Alex Nikolavitch, writer (93/Agents)
Juliette Guérin, visual artist and Aurore Valade, photographer (Marseille)
Johann Abiola, artistic director and Apolline Delagarde, Maëlle Grech, Néva Bonachera, playwrights (Paris/Citizens)



Photos from the Marseilles 2050 workshop

WHAT WE LEARNED

This project, which was also documented on video, provided valuable lessons on two points:

- The topic itself, i.e. adaptation and resilience in the face of climate change: What did the participants tell us? What ideas, aspirations, and concerns emerged from their shared work, both creative and reflective?
- The approach: what have we learned about the conditions for including communities often (albeit involuntarily) marginalized in foresight and participatory democracy processes? Or, on the use of fiction to help those concerned explore alternative futures? Or, on awareness and knowledge of climate change within these communities?

The report provides detailed answers to these questions, enriched with insights into the creations, and quotes from participants. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the project's main findings.

1. A more inclusive participation is possible

The Citadins, Citadines 2050 project sought to involve, in work on the future and climate change, participants that are very rarely encountered in such initiatives: people in precarious or fragile social situations, and field workers employed by local authorities. The result is unambiguous: these two audiences have an essential contribution to make, and it doesn't take much to get them talking about climate change and/or the future. On the other hand, they do not always feel concerned, or welcomed, by participatory approaches that are supposed to be open to all. Inclusivity requires work, and special attention to audiences who are not used to having their voices taken into account.

2. Build on shared awareness of upcoming changes

All participants in the five groups were acutely aware of the ongoing ecological upheavals and have a fairly detailed understanding of their causes and consequences. They understand that these upheavals will lead to very profound changes in their territories, their lifestyles, their activities, etc. It does not seem necessary to convince them of this, but rather to engage in a dialogue now on how to anticipate these transformations, prepare for them, adapt to them, and turn them into an opportunity as much as an obligation.

3. Link ecological and social issues

The stories produced by the participants express a shared feeling that ecological degradation could accentuate, even radicalize, social inequalities, thus constituting a perfect dystopian scenario. On the other hand, addressing both issues head-on allows more positive adaptation scenarios to emerge, notably through concrete and horizontal solidarity.

4. Resilience is a social matter, rather than a technical one

There are certainly technical measures that can be put in place to avoid the worst consequences of climate change, but, as the participants' creations tell us, the real key to resilience lies in social connection: the ability to act together, to help each other, to trust each other, to live powerful experiences together despite the harsh times – and to compensate the probable (according to our participants) inadequacy of technical and institutional systems. Any territorial resilience strategy should undoubtedly make strengthening social ties, at micro-local scales, one of its very first priorities.

5. Reviving a hyperlocal economy?

In most of our stories, a «hyperlocal» economy is taking on a growing role in coexistence (or confrontation) with the global economy. The ability to produce things (food, energy, fabrics…) and services, as well as to repair, recycle and share stuff locally, appears to be a key to the adaptation of territories. To the extent that it goes against the dominant trend of economic globalization, it is not too early to initiate reflections and experiments in this direction.

6. Institutions alone will not be able to achieve much

As a corollary to the above, the narratives anticipate that the capacity of public institutions to respond to the real situations experienced by residents will be even more limited than today. This does not express a rejection of institutions, but rather a call for them to intervene in collaboration with initiatives (associative, entrepreneurial, informal) on the ground: as support, unifiers, organizers of dialogue or cooperation, etc.

7. Food and celebration at the heart of an attractive adaptation story

Adapting to climate change doesn't have to be sad. This is what almost all of our participants' creations tell us, drawing on three elements: local solidarity (see above), food, and the emergence of new festive rituals (or revisited old ones). By imagining recipes using ingredients available in our climate futures, but also more collective ways of cooking and eating, the participants make food a symbol of positive adaptation, beyond the (also present) regret for disappearing foods. The same goes for celebrations and rituals: banquets, local concerts, etc. Why not start working on these two dimensions now?

Selected quotes from participants

"I never talk about the climate with people I hang out with, yet I realized it was present in my mind and that I knew a lot about it." (Paris)

"We learned a lot, it's so different from school." (Seine-Saint-Denis)

"We never have the time to be that inventive" (Seine-Saint-Denis)

"We should always think about the future. Prepare for it. Most people have forgotten about the past and don't give a damn about the future." (Noisy-le-Sec)

"I feel more confident. By writing, we build the future" (Seine-Saint-Denis)



Marseilles: A collective banquet in 2050

Find (in French only!) all the project's lessons and the participants' creations here:

https://www.plurality-university.org/fr/projets/citadins-citadines-2050