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# France's Green City

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France is ahead of the game with eco-projects and green cities – Reims is a leading example.

The mayor of Reims, Arnaud Robinet, has launched a series of eco-projects promoting sustainable development, making the town a leading example of a green 15-minute city.

Robinet has launched the idea of 'ma ville en vert' - 'green' means more than beautifying the city's green spaces but entails a better understanding of durable solutions to today's environmental crises.

Parcels of land with shared gardens have been marked out for individuals and associations to grow, harvest, and share their produce of vegetables and fruits of the different seasons.

## **Chopped**

The famous stretch along the canal of the river Vesle, called 'la coulée verte' or 'green belt', with its picnic spots, bike tracks and rambling walks will witness a new plan of a reconquest of green spaces called 'A la reconquête des berges' or, 'reclaiming the shores.' The City Hall aims to transform this 24-km-long bank and link the city to its water spaces.

The 2.5m base of a Paulownia tree that was cut down after it fell prey to heart rot has been made into a huge public bookshelf for the city's inhabitants.

The old-empress tree was planted in the 1920s near the Halles Freyssinet building at Boulingrin, a historic landmark of the city of Reims, but had to be chopped down in 2019 after it contracted the fungal disease.

Reims in France's wine-growing region bordered by the prestigious sloping vineyards of the Montagne de Reims and is known as "the City of Coronations and Champagne".

## **Absurd**

Perhaps France is ahead in terms of greening urban spaces. For example, there are no-motor zones, cleaner transport, eco-friendly accommodation, restaurants that use local produce, organic food markets, and plenty of green spaces.

Paris is currently ranked as number one on the Essential Living's Green City Index and is often praised for finding green, locally-based solutions.

Professor Carlos Moreno, of the University of Sorbonne, is calling for the creation of '15-minute cities'. This means we can meet our needs for housing, work, education, care, shopping, socialising within 15 minutes of walking or cycling.

He says we have put up with 'absurd city planning' - where long journeys or transport using fossil fuels is necessary - for far too long.

## **Ancient**

The air we breathe in Reims is clean and pure as the city has a Low Emissions Zone (ZFEm), that enforces a limitation of traffic in certain areas of the city. Reims also possesses 265 hectares of green spaces with a hundred parks and squares that are accessible to all.

Reims's Gallo-Roman remains - UNESCO-protected monuments and Promenades dating back to 1733 - are being brought to life with an ambitious project called 'Reims Nature'.

Robinet has called for an eco-project by drawing on the city's ancient history, appealing to Reims's citizens as 'rémois' and 'rémoises'.

## **Fruits**

The Green Spaces department of the City Hall encourages the idea of giving new life to the old.

The mayor's appeal for individual ideas of Reims's citizens on how to transform the ecological landscape plans to reward 5000 euros during the European Sustainable Week in September 2022.

France is ahead of the game in 15-minute cities. Reims is a charming example of urban meets rural, new meets old, and organic Champagne, alongside fresh, locally grown produce – are the fruits of a budding Green City.

## **This Author**

Suhasini Vincent is an Associate Professor (maître de conférences) of Legal English at the University of Paris Panthéon Assas. Her research focusses on the legal scope of environmental laws in postcolonial countries and on the relationship between Law and Literature in the countries of the Commonwealth, with an emphasis on India. She has lived in Reims since 1999.