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Anne-Marie d'Hauteserre

Department of Geography, Ball State University, USA

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The French mode of social regulation and sustainable tourism development: the case of Disneyland Paris

Anne-Marie d’Hauteserre
Department of Geography, Ball State University, USA

Abstract

The Walt Disney Company located its European resort in the French new town of Marne-La-Vallée because it is centrally located relative to a market of 310 million potential visitors. The French Government sought to anchor this circuit of cultural capital in Ile-de-France to sustain the economic growth of the region while capturing public amenities (jobs, tax revenues and increased foreign currency reserves) without sacrificing the environment. Its forward planning enabled it to offer the acreage the private company required and to sign with it a Convention to ensure that this urbanizing landscape would not become prematurely derelict. This large investment was regulated by both national and European norms for environmental impacts. These impacts are broadly interpreted to include jobs, demographic characteristics and built structures, not just the natural environment. Regulation theory provided the conceptual framework for this study. It is the particular mode of social regulation found in France which led to the settlement of the Walt Disney Company in the country and which ensured its durable insertion in the Francilian environment. Privatization and restrictions on governmental actions were not yet part of the French mode of social regulation. The Walt Disney Company is now negotiating for further developments that should sustain the economic growth of the eastern part of the region and enhance the quality of its environment.

Keywords: mode of social regulation, tourism management, Disney

Introduction

Policy-makers have attempted to capitalize on the growing service sector and real-estate development as they have sought to find a way of dealing
with otherwise intractable economic and social problems associated with
the decline of traditional manufacturing. The city in the western world has
undergone a transformation from being a site of production to being a site
of consumption. Because they differ in national and regional institutional
and social contexts, cities also vary in the relative advantages they possess
to respond to the forces of deindustrialization, reindustrialization and the
new global economy. A Disney resort, which combines leisure with real-
estate development, seemed a worthwhile economic opportunity for the
French Government, which needed a growth pole in the eastern part of the
Paris Basin, where it had already established a framework to attract and
to receive new economic activities and residents (Figure 1).

Most publications on Disneyland Paris denote how a capitalist cor-
poration dominated transactions with public authorities (Walker 1995)
and how the French Government bowed to Walt Disney Company’s
every demand (Lipietz 1987; Grover 1991; Lanquar 1992). Has the French
state opted for ‘glittering islands of structures’ (Fainstein 1994: 236)
rather than for a durable landscape? Do the subsidies that governments
direct towards the property sector represent a sell-out by politicians and
planners to capitalists? Or are these methods by which the public can
gain employment and public amenities as externalities of development?
Disneyland Paris, just by its size, would introduce major changes on an
environment that was almost entirely rural, even if it was destined to
become urban in the far future.

The debate we are concerned with, because it occurs in a space that
is urbanizing, is about the kind of development to be achieved. The French
authorities insisted that urban revitalization (or growth) could only
occur if it creates a quality environment that ensures sustainable devel-
opment (Roullier 1993; Comité National Français de Géographic 1996). Critics of the government responded that it is always easier to give the
environment high priority when there is no specification of the environ-
mental quality to be achieved or when no targets are set for environmental
impacts. In this paper, I describe how the French mode of social
regulation sought to ensure, or at least not sacrifice, socially equitable
and environmentally sustainable development on the altar of job creation
and capital accumulation. This happened even if it was also politically
imperative to show that the government was taking great effort to create
jobs and to increase tourist receipts (Lanquar 1992).

Why sustainable tourism?

Sustainable development, whatever its form, is necessary because ‘the indi-
vidual commodity is located in natural surroundings from which it has
been taken (transformation of raw materials and energy) and into which
its inconsumable remainder is discharged as waste' (Altvater 1993: 241; cf. Rees 1990). In other words, when aggregate economic growth becomes the sole criterion of success, it results in undesirable environmental effects, especially when there is a minimum of regulatory intervention (Sennett 1990). The conflict between the free market and government regulation is, however, a false paradigm. The free market is an indispensable component within the complex democratic system, which also includes regulation. Market mechanisms alone are inadequate to resolve the crises caused by production processes and consumer habits that lack institutionalized rules of ecological behaviour (Altvater 1993).
Regulation theory provides a conceptual framework that focuses on relationships at the macroeconomic level between the process of accumulation and the ensemble of institutional forms and practices. Together, they comprise a society's mode of social regulation. The mode of social regulation is a complex ensemble of social norms and habits, state forms, structures and practices, customs and networks, institutionalized compromises, rules of conduct and enforceable laws - 'the social context in which expanded economic reproduction occurs' (Jessop 1992: 50).

Economic appraisals of tourism policies typically omit the political and social contexts which shape such policies, focusing instead on jobs, incomes and revenue streams. In reaction, Pearce (1993) has called for more contextualization in assessing the impact of tourism development. The early regulationist school (1960s–1980s) hardly considered the harm that Fordist forms of capital accumulation might have inflicted on the environment (Lacroix & Mollard 1993). Theorists were more preoccupied by social conditions and their need for improvement than by the state of the environment. More recently, regulationist theory has raised questions about the ecological sustainability of different development options (Peck & Tickell 1994) and has provided a challenge to the social order. Supporters of sustainable development argue that resources should be exploited in such a way as to minimize entropy and that the functioning of the economic system should be regulated to reduce ecological damage (Altvater 1993).

Disney theme parks and resorts seldom promote or develop the natural environment as part of their attraction. Most are embedded in the urban landscape while contributing to the process of urbanization. It is, however, truly inconceivable to imagine that global ecological issues can be resolved without devoting major attention to urban areas. As Lipietz (1974) affirms, 'the built environment is the main kind of environment in which one lives in societies'. Urban areas contain the most productive units of society, as well as most of the consumers of society's output. They are also the sites of decision-making. In France, 75 percent of the population lives in urban areas, although one month out of the year they move en masse to many non-urban recreation and leisure sites where they again congregate. In addition, as the boundaries between the states of Europe are gradually erased by the strengthening of the European Union (EU), cities are regaining their primacy. Urban areas are the locus of new international economic activities whose development it is important to sustain. Slowing the growth of the Ile-de-France (Paris Basin) would not necessarily lead to greater wealth in other parts of France, as the competition is now global. And even within the Ile-de-France, economic development is not homogeneous.

According to Susan Owens (1994:6), urban sustainability is a contradiction. Her focus had been narrowly defined as the relationship between
energy consumption and urban form. The ‘compact city’ or high-density type of urban development, as endorsed by the EU, would make urban areas environmentally sustainable and improve their quality of life (Commission of the European Community 1990). Breheny (1992, 1995) has criticized this form of development because the EU did not mention that its implementation could cause increased congestion and property costs, nor had it proved its energy efficiency. One issue is the appropriate balance between increased densities and ecological ‘carrying capacity’. Urban containment is generally recommended in the form of ‘decentralized concentration’, where development would occur around the least flexible elements such as public transport nodes (Elkin et al. 1991). Mixed uses rather than homogeneous zoning would be encouraged, while necessary measures would be taken to discourage car travel (for example, improved public transport and facilities for walking or cycling).

Public transportation has been a major focus of urban sustainable development strategies. These strategies, however, do not do well in practice unless car-oriented development trends are curbed (Lowe 1990). It is often wise to redirect current practices rather than try to beat them back, as many have argued that the car has improved their quality of life and widened the opportunities available to them because of its flexibility and the independence it provides. Models reviewed by Banister (1992) suggest that while ‘decentralized concentration’ might be a fuel-efficient urban form, more recent modelling runs are less conclusive about appropriate spatial structures and density of land use (cf. Rickaby et al. 1992).

The definition of a ‘sustainable city’ needs to go beyond energy or transport efficiency. A sustainable city should be a place in which people want to live (Roullier 1993). French planners recognize that ‘it is very difficult to construct cities that are really pleasant to live in’ (EPA Marne/EPA France 1993: 65), especially since many advocate that in ‘the will to make room for all in the city ... we cannot pretend to proscribe any and all forms of marginality’ (ibid.: 97).

In contrast to the public transportation model of sustainable development, the ecological approach emphasizes the need for integration between human activities and nature (Örskog & Snickars 1992: 108). Sometimes, though, those who take this approach become too narrowly obsessed with protecting nature within urban areas. Barthes (1957) argued that the principle of ‘naturalization’ is too limiting when nature becomes the sole reference for truth, authenticity, justice and well-being, functioning as the meta-reference of order and harmony. Urban ecology needs to be concerned with the total urban scene, which includes social issues as much as environmental ones. As Redclift and Benton (1994: 1) remarked, ‘patterns of social relationships, cultural forms, political practices and economic institutions are all implicated in the production of environmental change’. This debate has led to a broadening of discussions on urban and
regional issues that were previously compartmentalized into separate topics, such as quality of life, counter-urbanization, environmental protection, strategic planning, scales and locations of growth and urban intensification.

From yet another perspective, it can be argued that a quality city life depends as much on our representations of it through our individual expectations and ideals, as on the management of the urban system. Most definitions of sustainable development include the importance of conforming to human needs and values. As such, sustainable development will be understood differently in different cultures and among different social groups within the same culture (Redclift 1993). Intra-urban inequities that are often associated with different social classes also become inextricably enmeshed with the external inequities between urban and non-urban places (Bullard 1990, 1993). Even if agreement were reached about the need to regulate environmental impacts, different social groups might not agree on the strategies or on the costs each must bear. Obtaining an inter-class and inter-generational institutionalized compromise on sustainable development might be too complex for even the most accomplished planners (Lipietz 1995: 355).

**The French mode of social regulation**

The French Government's policy is to avoid the 'profit seeking adventurism of the private sector' (Amin & Malmberg 1994: 244). Jean Saglio (1992) argues that the state in France has a crucial role in mobilizing local productive resources. The French-style sheltered economic (or business) culture has its roots in a solid Colbertist tradition. Colbert, as finance minister under Louis XIV (the Sun King of the seventeenth century), maintained a healthy royal treasury by protecting French economic enterprises. The French economy is accustomed to a strong state that claims to be the motor of improvement (Body-Gendrot 1987; Derian 1992). This has led to a special regime of accumulation labelled 'State Fordism' (Tickell & Peck 1995).

State intervention within urban areas prepares the way for future restructuring that is not under the sole hegemonic whim of capitalism. In a country where the state is in the habit of regulating everything, it is not surprising that it should have taken charge of the Disney project located in Marne-La-Vallée. This was initially justified because Marne-La-Vallée was a new town and the development of all activities there were considered of national interest. Although the decentralization law was passed in 1982, Ile-de-France did not benefit from it until 1993 when the state finally relinquished its hold on the region.

As elsewhere, attitudes concerning land management in France have evolved over time. Originally, the French approach to problems of sustain-
ability was fragmented with many disjointed statutes governing rural and urban land-use activities. It was only recently that the French Government began to develop a more comprehensive mode of centring production and societal organization around natural bioregions. This came about, in part, due to the fiasco of the ‘Seine propre’ 1984 policy. That programme encouraged communities to concentrate their effluents using gravity without any thought for their consequences further downstream (SDAURP 1992; EPA Marne/EPA France 1993).

Regulatory fragmentation exists, however, because of the politics of geography. Boundaries are used to insulate politicians and other decision-makers from concerns over the external impacts of their decision-making (Ravetz 1994). It has barely been acknowledged that cities make major demands on the carrying capacity of both local and distant ecosystems. Close ties with the immediate hinterland have decreased over time as cities import resources and export their wastes at a global scale. The French Government is now treating urban areas as open systems that trade with their surroundings, thereby narrowing traditional concepts that split space between the rural and urban (Livre Blanc 1990; Comité National Français de Géographie 1996). It has, for example, demanded that the Disney resort purchase a large part of its supplies locally (Convention 1987: article 22). The company has responded beyond its obligations (EPA France 1994b, 1995, 1996), as it had for subcontracting work during the construction stage. These policies have made all of the decision-makers in the development process more aware of the linkages to the local economy. Most now seem to accept this balanced form of urban development (EPA Marne/EPA France 1993: 2).

Even though France might not harbour ecological radicalism, its residents are sensitive to their environment. They have reacted to increased pollution and biological endangerment by demanding solutions to remedy or prevent such occurrences. In fact, environmental laws have been on the books in France since the ninth century, when Charlemagne’s capitulary ‘of Willis’, signed in 812, limited the use of forests to protect them from further shrinkage. France today boasts the largest wooded area of Western Europe, covering 26 percent of the country (CNFG 1996). When Walt Disney Company agreed to preserve a small wood stand at the very edge of the Magic Kingdom, it was neither just an effort by Disney to look ‘green’, nor a token demand on the part of the French Government. Instead, it was a necessary requirement engendered in a long history of French environmental regulation.

Controls on industrial pollution have been legislated since 1810 (imperial decree of 15 October). Laws of 21 April 1906 and 2 May 1930 enabled landscapes to be preserved on a national basis. Protecting the environment was, however, neglected between 1914 and 1968. It was not until the 1967 stranding of the American oil tanker, Torrey Canyon (one of the first to cause a large,
damaging spill), on the southern coast of Brittany that the French finally responded to questions the American, English and German press had been raising for several years. The first Ministry of the Environment was set up in 1971, and the law of July 1975 defined France’s waste policy (although most of the country’s solid waste is incinerated). The pictures of birds cloaked in petroleum from the Torrey Canyon prompted the government into legislating environmental protection and impact studies in 1976 (Comité National Français de Géographie 1996). For the French, the environment is broadly interpreted to include jobs, demographic characteristics and other social conditions, not just nature (Commissariat Général au Plan 1993).

Facing a housing and transportation crisis in its major urban areas and concerned with the environmental consequences of unplanned urban sprawl, the French Government embarked on a New Towns project in 1964. A network of extraordinary legal, technological and financial arrangements supported this programme, as part of its mode of social regulation. New towns were built through a partnership between the public and the private sectors. Extremely rigorous and detailed methodologies, procedures and work methods governed these partnerships. The public entity, represented and coordinated by an Etablissement Public d’Aménagement (EPA) created by legislative decree, imposed or defined standards, as well as a calendar of obligations. An EPA also has the power of pre-emptive and compulsory purchases. EPA France was thus decreed into existence, on the basis of article L321–1 of French urban statutes, to oversee the development of the Disney resort project on 28 March 1987. It was created specifically to protect the public and the local governments who would be heavily impacted by the project.

Marne-La-Vallée is such a large new town that it was divided into sectors for ease of management (Figure 2). EPA Marne had been created to direct the growth of Marne-La-Vallée and is responsible for sectors I, II and III of the new town. EPA France is the sole developer and guarantor of the development of sector IV and its periphery. It is the master builder of the area’s secondary infrastructure and its work is defined by the revenue it raises from the improved lots that it sells to Eurodisney SCA. It shares the responsibility for forging a development plan with the private Eurodisney company.

The statute of new towns and of EPAs was established on 10 July 1970 (Loi Boscher), and modified by laws of 13 July 1983 and of 17 December 1991. Eight new towns have been in existence for approximately 30 years and altogether they house more than a million people. The programme had originally created ten new towns, five of which are in Ile-de-France. One was so successful that it has become an integral part of the Lille urban area. Another (Le Vaudreuil, in the Rouen area) was such a failure that it was completely abandoned.

The new towns not only represent more than three decades of town planning in France, but are part of a long and often chaotic current of ideas
and projects going back to the last century (Choay 1965). New towns are only a special case of a general land resource policy. At the same time that the new towns programme was initiated, a plan for the Ile-de-France, the Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement de l'Urbanisme de la Région de Paris (SDAURP 1965), proposed to channel the growth of Paris along a limited number of pre-planned axes defined by the new towns and impose limited urban growth in the areas between the axes (Figure 3). One objective was, and remains in its 1992 version (SDAURP 1992), to encourage development of the eastern part of Ile-de-France to counterbalance the concentration of previous efforts in the western section. Another objective of the master plan for the Paris Region was that it would be dynamic and able to adapt to variable rates of growth. This quality was to be its salvation.

To control urban sprawl, the Ile-de-France master plan (SDAURP 1965, revised in 1969, 1975, 1980) adopted a form of urban compaction within a decentralizing framework. It has been continued by the Schéma Directeur (or the new regional plan) of 1992 which confirms the desire of the state to limit uncontrolled sprawl in rural areas. Urban development was to be densified where it already existed, thanks in part to public transport provisions (SDAURP 1965, 1992).
The construction of the new towns was to be based around solid town centres that would become growth poles for the area surrounding them. The plan clearly defined their functions as more than mere shopping centres and required that employment co-exist with housing. It avoided the trap of spatial formalism, that is, irrationally predefining a symbolic architectural container to which the socio-economic ‘content’ has to adapt as best it can. The new towns were all designed to fit into the topography of their intended sites and developed according to local requirements, rather than being the expression of a global concept that compromises the landscape (Roullier 1993).

New towns were also designed to use the environment to promote a high-quality urban life. They were required to maintain 20 percent of their area as open space in the form of parks, rather than just greenery. They were also required to manage precipitation run-off in association with water bodies and areas of vegetation (including regenerated wetlands) that maintain the permeability of soils. In the new town of Marne-La-Vallée (where Disneyland Paris is located), catchment basins for run-off were created so as to structure leisure space. They have been integrated into parks and made easily accessible to the public. The state had previously, from 1845 until this time, forbidden public access to all riverbanks to allow commercial exploitation of the rivers. The towpaths on the river-

![Figure 3](attachment:figure3.png)  
*Figure 3 Extract from the Paris master plan, 1965.*
banks were reserved for the upstream movement of barges but no changes were introduced when motors rendered towing obsolete. The River Marne was also so polluted it could not be consumed, even visually.

An attempt is being made to reconcile two seemingly opposite elements: nature and urban growth. The idea of continuity, of history, from agrarian exploitation to new town living, from ancient castles to city halls, from open or rural spaces to urban landscapes, has been pursued so that a positive synergy would arise from combinations of these various elements. Every one of these activities is taken into account, not just from an economic standpoint, but also for its role as space manager. The law of July 1976 (application decree of October 1977) for the protection of nature has been the guiding text for this new rapport among agriculture, urban growth and the environment. As a member of the EU, France must also adhere to its Environmental Action Programme, even if the means to achieve that commitment were not clearly spelt out. The EU's fifth Environmental Action Programme started in 1993 and combines legislation with greater encouragement in the use of economic instruments while making more funding available.

Disneyland's environment

Tourism is considered an ‘engine of growth’ even in developed countries (Williams & Shaw 1991). The EU declared 1990 the ‘European year of tourism’; among other goals, to improve the exchange of information among EU countries and communities. In 1991, the EU proposed a Community Action Plan to assist tourism and in 1992 the first annual European Cultural Festival was held. The EU consumer protection policy also extends to tourist consumers (Barnes & Barnes 1993). The French Government takes a broad perspective on tourism, focusing more on social and cultural aspects and less on economic issues (OCDE 1992). It offers financial help, for example, to enable the poor to take vacations. This amounted to FF887 million (US$177.4 million) in 1994 through the Allocations Familiales and FF1.92 billion (US$384 million) in 1995 in the form of travel stamps for the benefit of 5 million people (Py 1996).

Tourism in France has been based more on the 3Ds concept (développement, délassement, divertissement – culture, relaxation, entertainment) than on the 3Ss (sun, sand, sea) (Dumazedier 1962). Tourism has been closely linked to planning and development (CREDOC 1992; Py 1996). Planning the configuring of space is considered crucial by the French state since, unlike other economic goods, space is not indefinitely producible and it exists to be lived in by people (Lefebvre 1991: 143). The French Government was not interested in a temporary speculative investment disruptive of its surroundings, and with this attitude it
refused Walt Disney Company's initial approaches in 1976. Through planning, the French Government attempts to offer customized spaces that investors will desire above whatever distaste they have for existing regulations. Such customization includes 'the use of multiple policy levers such as pricing, regulation and taxation' (Banister 1992: 179).

The Walt Disney Company found a site that had (1) a central location relative to the European market, (2) the 1940 ha it required to build a total resort, (3) a transport network that could support bringing millions of visitors (Figure 4), and (4) an administrative organization and institutional governance that could adapt to the company's needs (cf. d'Hauteserre 1997: 18-23). To fulfil its goal of 'entrainement' (economic growth pole) for the eastern part of the Paris Basin, Marne-La-Vallee needed more than the memory of its role in the Middle Ages of a privileged commercial crossroads. That role, even then, depended in great part on the mode of social regulation of the reigning Counts of Champagne, although it only lasted into the 1300s. The area then suffered from isolation due to the absence of major transport arteries (Elissalde 1991). The commitment of a major private investor would boost its credibility as an economic growth pole.

The insertion of Disneyland in the Francilian landscape was regulated first by its location in a new town, which enabled the resort to take advantage of policies that guaranteed the provision of infrastructure and supported economic development, and second by the Convention (1987) between the company and the state government. This agreement established the relationship between the company and the state and other public authorities and their laws.

The Walt Disney Company insisted on the partnership with French authorities and on a binding contract (EPA France 1994a). Once the French Government fulfilled its responsibilities, the company tried to renge on the contract, but French authorities pointed out that the contract set a calendar. The contract, or Convention, determines the time and the order in which each party fulfils its obligations. The obligations it refers to are laws and they remain applicable whether a contract is signed or not. The Walt Disney Company had to accept rules that discouraged speculative hoarding of the land acquired at low cost through eminent domain. It could not buy more land than it could offer detailed development plans for, and such plans could only be created together with the French authorities, represented by EPA France, and according to the calendar set in the Convention. The contract scheduled the development of the 1940 ha over 30 years, at the rate of one-third of the land per decade. The company also had to follow French urban and architectural directives, including mixed residential areas, job opportunities located close to housing developments, and diversity in architectural styles.

Although started under the policies of the 1965 Schéma Directeur and the environmental laws in existence at the time of the signing of the
Figure 4 Major components of Marne-La-Vallée (Source: EPA Marne 1994).

Convention on 28 March 1987, much of the coming construction was governed by the new Schéma Directeur and by new, stricter laws promulgated for the protection of the environment. The law of 13 July 1992 governing garbage collection, for example, requires the recycling of glass and paper products, the separation of toxic elements (motor oil) and the composting of natural waste (Comité National Français de Géographie 1996: 279). These actions were designed to reduce the volume of waste that goes to landfills and incinerators. Existing legislation, however, does not adequately address the environmental pollution problems of France, as was demonstrated in early January 1997 when residents of Lyon were asked to remain indoors for 2 days in a row because air pollution levels were detrimental to their health.

Marne-La-Vallée can be viewed as an illustration of a modern urban and economically sustainable space as envisioned by the French mode of social regulation. The mix of cultural, environmental and recreational amenities has reinforced economic growth and development. It has attracted tourism and the jobs it brings. It has served as the catalyst for the wholesale regeneration of the area. In total, 78,039 jobs had been created by 1990, 66.6 percent of which were in the tertiary sector (Ministère de l'Equipement 1996). Although Disneyland Paris targets middle-class customers, it has created many jobs for unskilled and low-skilled employees (Lanquar 1992).
Marne-La-Vallée is a space for communication, due in large part to the quality of its transport and communication links created through the Schéma Directeur plan of 1965 (Figure 1). Transportation extensions that had been built expressly, it seemed, for the Walt Disney Company had already been included in the earlier plan, although their exact location had not yet been fixed. The TGV (fast train) routing through the Disney resort, for example, had already been considered in the 1975 revision of the 1965 Schéma Directeur. Its exact path was determined by the French Government's request that a station be built within the resort. The facility was designed to divert suburban and Disneyland-bound travellers from stations within Paris and reduce their congestion. Direct access by rail and by highways puts the region's major airports, Orly and Roissy, within 30 minutes of the resort. An electronic service, ASPASIE, has been put in place to facilitate contact within the new town between residents and local businesses, and between voluntary associations and public or private services and their clientele (Dieudonné 1992). All new towns are also fully wired for cable television.

The wise use of space not only saves the environment, it reduces pollution (SDAURP 1992). Recognizing that transport routes facilitate individual mobility, the French Government used their expansion to define the axes of urban growth in Île-de-France and thereby reinforce the competitiveness of this European centre. It was particularly important that the 11 million people expected to visit Disneyland did not contribute to, or create, local congestion. In 1973, in reaction to the oil shock, the French Government had decided not to reduce speed limits (as in the United States) or to curb driving (as in Italy, where driving on Sundays was prohibited). It chose, instead, to increase the tax on petroleum products and to assign the proceeds to expand public transit throughout the country, not just in the capital. Priority was given to public transportation in both existing densely urbanized areas and where urbanization was planned to be further densified (SDAURP 1965, 1992; Livre Blanc 1990).

Disneyland Paris was required to encourage the use of public transportation through advertisements and by charging a parking fee separate from the admission price (Convention 1987: article 11). It was also liable if ridership fell below 9.1 million one-way trips per year on the RER A line (part of the regional metro network) between Paris and the park. The French state has not ignored other modes of transportation and continually looks for complementarity and interchangeability. It has scheduled major upgrades for highways A86 and the Francilian connector, parts of an exterior beltway. In addition, the layout of the RER line and A4 highway was intentionally curved to hug the topographic edge of the plateau and thereby preserve the environment and its vistas (Elissalde 1991).

Marne-La-Vallée offers flexibly diversified spaces. It contains 4000 ha of protected woods and forests, 15 urban parks, various waterbodies and
waterways, and 30 km of manicured banks on the River Marne. Historic landmarks abound, including castles such as Guermantes, which Proust used as the site for his famous novel, *Remembrance of Things Past*. The Walt Disney Company, which is meticulous about the landscaping of its theme parks, fits perfectly within the kind of environmental policy that predominates here. The company planted more than 250,000 trees and bushes, making Disneyland Paris one of the most wooded areas in France. From inside the park, views have been carefully arranged that show interesting vistas of the surrounding landscape.

EPA Marne had already fostered quality architecture and landscaping in the rest of the new town. Urban nodes had been created around the RER rail stops with rest areas and open spaces between them. These include: ‘Porte de Paris’, which is 12 km from Paris; Cité Descartes, which is further east along the RER line and is devoted to scientific research; Val Maubuée, which includes a high-tech park; Val de Bussy, which is a ‘countrified’ city with historical monuments and protected parks; and, finally, Val d’Europe, where the Disney resort is located, the number one tourist destination in Europe (Figure 2).

How successful is the sustainable development of Disney resort?

While the Disney project was much criticized by French intellectuals, its environmental impacts were barely mentioned (Finkielraut 1987; Lipietz 1987; Smadja 1988; Bakerooot 1992). Most critics voiced their concerns about the cultural impact of the resort, in two outbursts: at the time of the signing of the Convention and when the resort opened. French and European residents were not deterred, as 6.4 million visited the resort within the first 6 months, and 19.5 million within 2 years. Concerns about the financial arrangements were quieted when they were restructured in April 1994 to avoid bankruptcy. The creation of the park required the movement of 4 million cubic metres of land, the moulding of 68,000 cubic metres of rocks, and the construction of the equivalent of 17 large buildings. In addition, 85,000 trees were planted shortly after the signing of the Convention, and the sanitation and drainage work was equivalent to that required by a town of 50,000 to 60,000 inhabitants (*Le Nouveau Courrier* 1992).

Most of the environmental evaluations that did surface were rather positive (Lanquar 1992). This is surprising in light of the fact that Walt Disney Company’s environmental record is not as sterling as its theme park expertise (Flower 1991; Wilson 1994). Will Marne-La-Vallée suffer the same ills as Orange County, Florida? For one, in France, the Walt Disney Company cannot create a separate political entity within which it can behave as it wishes, as is the case in Disney World in Florida. Inside the
resort, the company will maintain civic decorum and there is no visible pollution to speak of as maintenance in all the Disney parks is performed so promptly that nothing is dirty or in disrepair. French authorities will manage the exterior with the company’s required cooperation.

An environmental impact study of the Disney resort was commissioned by EPA France. The report concluded that, although a total of 486 ha of flora and fauna would be affected by the resort’s development, outright destruction would be minimal. While 11.8 ha of woods were scheduled to be razed, the company planned to plant the equivalent of 38 ha. Of the remaining woodlands, 58.4 ha would be disturbed (some of the trees would be culled for camping spaces) and 84.6 ha would remain untouched. Untouched woodlands would suffer, though, from their proximity to the resort. Many new water bodies, covering 32 ha, were also part of the development. These might be used by the local fauna and would absorb some of the run-off created by the new construction. This run-off (from 225 ha of constructed and paved land) was calculated to increase from 620,000 to 1,800,000 cubic metres a year. Facilities were designed to channel the run-off and a station was to be built to clean it of toxic discharges from the resort’s parking lots and other impermeable surfaces (IAURIF 1988).

Since urban development already existed in the area, the resort would contribute only marginally as a barrier to north–south migratory movements of animals (IAURIF 1988). The land figures used for the impact study were defined by the Convention. Walt Disney Company cannot make unilateral modifications to them. Even minor modifications must be compatible with the letter of the specific project they belong to.

The disappearance of agricultural land was the most publicly debated aspect of the resort’s development, together with the inevitable lifestyle change that it would bring to the villages included in sector IV of Marne-La-Vallée (SDAURP 1965, 1992; Dieudonné 1992). The Disney resort project has resulted in the withdrawal of 385 ha of agricultural land. A total of 600,000 ha remain under agricultural use in Île-de-France, all of which the 1992 Schéma Directeur plan for the Paris Region seeks to preserve. These 600,000 ha represent barely 2.5 percent of the total agricultural acreage of France, a country that is always struggling with agricultural surpluses.

Historically, the Brie area benefited from quality soils and a major nearby market (Paris), which have helped to maintain high incomes for its farmers. However, large farm properties have led to a continued loss of population. In 1960, some 60 percent of the townships in Brie had smaller populations than in 1806 (Elissalde 1991). The number of farmers who lost their land to the Disney resort was small in comparison to the long-term trend. The French Government recognized the legitimate concerns of the farmers to find equivalent working conditions elsewhere
and it was ready to respond on a case by case basis. They received monetary compensation and very few complained (EPA Marne/EPA France 1992).

Agricultural land has been transformed since 1979 in many parts of France (Comité National Français de Géographie 1996). France lost 250,000 farms between 1979 and 1988. Another 413,000 will disappear by 2000 due to the ageing population of farmers, 56 percent of whom are more than 50 years old (in 1990) and three-quarters of whom have no known successor. At the same time, rural areas have witnessed a spectacular increase in the settlement of non-farmers and in the frequency of visits by urban residents. Between 1975 and 1985, there were 235,000 individual structures built each year in rural France. The continuation of this trend contributed to the transformation of 1.4 million ha of farmland to urban space between 1982 and 1992 (Comité National Français de Géographie 1996).

The loss of agricultural land in France has been deplored more for its effect on the landscape (paysage) than its impact on agricultural production. In fact, 110,000 of the 600,000 ha that are being preserved in the Paris Region Plan mentioned above (SDAURP 1992) are designated as such due to their high landscape value. These losses, along with more environmentally aggressive forms of agriculture, have led to increased restrictions on agricultural practices and rural land use. European Union policies have reinforced such decisions (cf. European Parliament edict of 12 February 1986). How society defines space and its uses is at the root of contemporary transformations in the French agricultural landscape.

Conclusion

Disneyland Paris has given French society positive returns for its public investment since the day it was opened, even when the company was registering losses (d’Hauteserre 1997: 29–31). The French mode of social regulation helped to anchor that circuit of capital that the Disneyland project generated, so that its economic benefits were more directly translated into social benefits. Its incorporation in the French mode of social regulation stabilized its future, as it rescheduled its economic crisis (Tickell & Peck 1995). The result has been a more stable and permanent addition to the landscape. The ‘new town’ concept presented a close to ideal situation in which to build a resort project on the scale of Disneyland Paris. The institutional structures that the new towns engendered helped to ensure a more sustainable development. Urban growth has thus proceeded through decentralized concentration and the adoption of new technology in construction, energy, transport and communications (Van der Falk & Faludi 1992).
The French mode of social regulation has sought to reform the 'cultural compulsions and institutional imperatives' (Levine 1990: 24) that underpin non-sustainable urban development. The role of the government was to act as designer, coordinator and leader, creating an environment, defining an urban context and stimulating initiatives. A regional economy is not based just on the development of a productive apparatus but also on a 'politics of place' – the social and institutional structures that secure economic order and continuity (Storper & Scott 1992: 15). Continuity, in turn, depends on sustainability. As Storper and Scott (1992: 16) state, 'It would seem that the viability of contemporary flexible production agglomerations depends on effective institution building and policy-making'.

Particular localities and cities are drawn into the logic of transnational networks as they compete to anchor new circuits of capital. The viability of regional economies becomes a product of their ability to articulate a coherent organizational presence within a global milieu, while not sacrificing social equity or jeopardizing environmental resources. The French Government ensured the global competitiveness of the Île-de-France region by means of product differentiation, offering spaces enhanced through design that multinational corporations found desirable, while promoting social and environmental community goals.

References


**Biographical note**

Anne-Marie d’Hauteserre obtained her doctorate d’état in urban geography at the University of Paris, France. She is an Assistant Professor at Ball State University. Her research focuses on the consequences of tourism, a form of economic globalization, on regional development, urban revitalization and cultural evolution in different parts of the world.

(Department of Geography, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306)

**Résumé: Le mode français de régulation sociale et de développement touristique durable: le cas de Disneyland Paris**

Plus de trois cent millions de visiteurs potentiels peuvent facilement accéder à Marne-La-Vallée, à l’intérieur du périmètre de laquelle la compagnie Walt Disney a installé son projet. Le gouvernement français souhaitait ancrer ce circuit de capital culturel en Île-de-France pour soutenir sa croissance économique et capturer des avantages sociaux (emplois, revenus fiscaux, augmentation des réserves de devises étrangères) sans, cependant, leur sacrifier la qualité de vie de la région. Ses plans d’aménagement anticipé ont permis au gouvernement d’offrir la superficie requise par cette société privée et de signer avec elle une *Convention* qui assure que ce nouveau paysage urbain ne se transforme pas prématurément en friche abandonnée. Des normes européennes et nationales concernant l’environnement gouvernent ce large investissement. L’environnement comprend ici les emplois, les caractéristiques démographiques, le bâti . . . pas seulement les aspects naturels. La théorie de la régulation a servi de schéma conceptuel. C’est le mode de régulation sociale (MSR dans le texte)) qui a entraîné l’installation en France de la société Disney et garantit son insertion durable en Île-de-France. La privatisation et autres entraves aux actions du gouvernement ne faisaient pas encore partie du MSR français. La société Walt Disney est en pourparler pour de nouveaux développements à l’intérieur de son périmètre qui soutiendront la croissance économique de l’Île-de-France orientale tout en mettant en valeur son cadre de vie.

*Mots-clés:* mode de régulation sociale, aménagement touristique, Disney
Inhaltsangabe: Der französische Modus von sozialer Reglementierung und anhaltender Tourismusförderung: der Fall Disneyland Paris


Schlüsselwörter: MSR, Touristenmanagement, Disney

Resumen: El modo francés de regulación social y el desarrollo sostenible del turismo: el caso de Disneyland Paris

La compañía Walt Disney situó su parque en Europa en el nuevo pueblo de Marne-La-Vallée porque este pueblo está situado centralmente relativo al mercado de 310 millones de posible visitantes. El gobierno francés buscó situar esta capital cultural en Ile-de-France para sostener el incremento económico de la región mientras se pueden capturar entradas públicas (empleos, impuestos, reserva de moneda internacional) sin sacrificar el medio ambiente. La planificación por adelantado dejó que pueda ofrecer el terreno que la compañía necesitaba y firmar un convenio (Convention) que aseguraría que esta región que se está urbanizando no decaería prematuramente. Esta gran inversión de dinero fue regularizada por las normas del impacto al medio ambiente nacionales y europeas. Estos impactos fueron interpretados para incluir no sólo el ambiente físico y natural, pero también esos puntos relacionados al empleo, características demográficas, y construcciones estructurales. Es la particular manera de la regulación social (MSR en el texto) que existe en Francia que creo que la compañía Walt Disney construyera en el país y que se asegure que dure por mucho tiempo la estadía de esta compañía en el ambiente francés. La privatización y las restricciones de las acciones del gobierno aún no eran parte de la regulación social (MSR). Walt Disney está negociando ahora para continuar el desarrollo que debería de sostener el incremento económico de la parte oriental de Ile-de-France y que mejore la calidad del medio ambiente.

Palabras importantes: modo de regulación social, manejo del turismo, Disney