

PORTFOLIO

The inhabited bridge, designed by Marc Mimram in Saint-Denis Pleyel symbolizes the desire to forge the links inherent in the Grand Paris Express concept - spanning the outer ring road, the railway sidings (as seen here at the Pleyel junction) or the historic orbital railway. Now the time has come to stop making a distinction between Paris proper, its inner and outer suburbs and to breathe life into Grand Paris, a project rooted in the 21st century.



AN OPEN, FUTURISTIC STATION

The Saint-Denis Pleyel station will be a strategic crossroads, comparable in size to the Châtelet and La Défense stations. Hopefully more functional, though, since 75% of the passengers will be there simply to take a connection. By Loïc Toussaint

A multi-story horizontal building made of glass and steel, the Saint-Denis Pleyel station was designed by the Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, who was responsible for the Tokyo stadium for the 2020 Olympics. Partially underground, the building will only be 28 meters above ground. The future station was designed as an extension of the 9,000-square meter public square, a welcoming place that the inhabitants will be able to claim for themselves. Indeed, the agency Kengo Kuma & Associates has a reputation for creating "airy, open spaces with plenty of natural light".

AN AREA FULL OF CONTRASTS

Located in the city of Saint-Denis, the Saint-Denis Pleyel station will serve one of the most dynamic and youngest areas in France. It is an area full of stark contrasts with the Saint-Denis Stade de France district which is the third

largest tertiary cluster in Ile de France after Paris and La Défense and includes namely the Le Landy office zone whose success continues unabated. Some of the emblematic companies with offices there include Generali, French Railways, Orange, SFR, Arcelor, Xerox, Capgemini. On the other side of the tracks, which are an impressive 287 meters wide, is Saint-Denis Pleyel, an area undergoing extensive changes that remains marked by its industrial past. At the foot of the 125-m Pleyel tower, which dominates the Saint Denis skyline, the buildings are extremely diverse: freight spaces, warehouses containing construction materials and a few discrete audiovisual production companies stand alongside the automobile equipment manufacturer, Valeo's, ultra-modern campus. Saint-Denis Pleyel is young (30% of the inhabitants are



SOUND BITE

KENGO KUMA,
ARCHITECT OF THE SAINT-DENIS PLEYEL STATION

"I want to create a meeting point for the people who live in this district. This place is very interesting due to the diversity of the people who come here and who live here, with a wide variety of activities. I want to create the focal point for all these activities and the gateway for all these people. This meeting place is based on the idea of a spiral that will gather not only the people, but will capture the activities and the energy of the crowd. Since this station is below ground, we designed it around a large void that will allow natural light to come in from the sky and reach the bottom of the building. When the station is completed, the people will be able to take advantage of an outside space that is also part of the building. The station will not be simply an infrastructure. It will be a meeting place and every kind of cultural event will naturally find its place there."



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The bridge that spans the 287 meters of railway tracks will link the Pleyel and Stade de France districts.

less than 18 years old) and mostly composed of manual and clerical workers like the whole of Saint Denis. More than 40% of its 5,000 housing units have been built since 2000 and 44% of them are social housing units.

THE LARGEST HABITABLE BRIDGE IN EUROPE

To link the Pleyel and Stade de France districts, the Établissement Public Territorial Plaine Commune, which brings together the nine surrounding towns,

Bathed in natural light, the station is designed to be a meeting place.

is developing an ambitious project with Société du Grand Paris and French railways: to cross the railway tracks that cut the city of Saint-Denis in two. In addition to the distance of the crossing and its cost, estimated to be around 200 million euros, what makes the project unique is that the bridge will actually be a habitable building that housing restaurants and offices in addition to serving road and pedestrian traffic. The four support pillars will be home to between 15,000-20,000 square meters of offices. The French architect, Marc Mimram, known worldwide for his footbridges, was appointed to design it. Famous works include the footbridge between Strasbourg and the German city of Kehl on the Rhine. In Paris, the architect, who designed the Solferino footbridge in 1995 (which received the French architecture award "Prix d'Architecture de l'Équerre d'Argent" in 1999), was chosen to design the future Roland-Garros stadium.



SOUND BITE

MARC MIMRAM,
ARCHITECT AND ENGINEER, DESIGNER OF THE HABITABLE BRIDGE

"What interests me in the Carrefour Pleyel habitable bridge project is the possibility to transform an infrastructure seen as a necessary evil into a special public space, for the common good of the inhabitants of Saint-Denis and the passengers of the future station designed by Kengo Kuma. To take something negative and transform it into something positive. From this 300-meter space, it will be possible to see the immense sky above the tracks, which is rare in Paris. Not only will the bridge be habitable, it will also be brimming with life. It will house a café with live entertainment, and a food truck will also be a possibility. I would like to make it a place where people want to stay, not just pass through. The bridge will not be just a link between two parts of the city, it will be an integral part of it."

The habitable bridge spans the mass of railway tracks.



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