

Redevelopment of Gare du Nord and Urban Regeneration Strategy in Northern Paris

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Abstract. The direction of France's urban regeneration policy can be divided into the followings: reconstruction of the recently decrepit extensive clustered houses (Grands Ensembles), recycle of the abandoned industrial facilities and relevant land, and regeneration of the worn-out old downtown area. Especially, the 10th district in Paris, where Gare du Nord is located, is a downtown area preserving Paris' typical traditional urban structure. Due to such aspect, the Gare du Nord transfer station project plan has more importance than a simple reconstruction or modernization of a decrepit railway station. Thus, as a part of the intercity plan (SDRIF), by connecting the public traffic network in the metropolitan's isolated and falling behind city, the plan includes urban regeneration and balanced development among the cities.

Keywords: Paris, Railway Station, Urban Regeneration, Gare du Paris-Nord

1 Introduction

France's intercity plan had a goal of connecting the traffic network between northern Paris and the metropolitan area and bringing the country a balanced development. Thus, this study attempts to understand what kind of strategy was adopted through the redevelopment of Gare du Nord, which is the key area that connects the decrepit metropolitan Northern area and Paris, and the neighboring urban regeneration plan and how each strategy was linked to the actual urban regeneration.

2 The History of Gare du Nord and its Locational Characteristic



Fig.1. The façade and square of the extended station (Source: Research Report on Paris' Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est Area, APUR)

There are total 11 railway stations in France's metropolitan around Paris, eight in Paris' downtown and three in the suburb France's metropolitan around Paris. Among the 11 railway stations, Paris' Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est are both located close to each other and play the role of an international gateway through the high-speed railway connecting France, United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, Netherland, and Switzerland.

Especially, Paris' Gare du Nord, as the terminus of EURO STAR, has the spatial significance of being an intermediating area between mainland Europe and United Kingdom.

Observing Paris' North station in the aspect of being within the city of Paris, Paris' Gare du Nord, located in the 10th district, has the characteristic of keeping Paris' typical traditional urban structure of the old downtown area. In this district, Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est are adjacent to each other and various public transportation facilities are concentrated. Due to such reason, the railway district and the infra-facilities, separating East and West, have brought difficulty in organizing the city. Especially, the Northern area of Gare du Nord was where the industrial facilities were located in the past, but since its function has declined at present, relevant facility's reuse and regeneration is needed under this situation.

3 The Relationship between France's Urban regeneration Policy and Gare du Nord's Influence Area Redevelopment

According to the research report (Droit et politiques de renouvellement urbain) about the regulations and policy of urban regeneration published in 2003 by GRIDAUH, France's urban regeneration policy has the following three core directions: 1) reconstruction of the recently decrepit extensive clustered houses(Grands Ensembles), 2) reuse of the abandoned industrial facilities and relevant land, and 3) regeneration of the worn-out old downtown area. Accordingly, the nearby area of Paris' Gare du Nord, mentioned earlier, can be identified that it corresponds with the two directions, 'reuse of the abandoned industrial facilities' and 'relevant land and regeneration of the worn-out old downtown area'.

Especially, when considering the current usage status of Gare du Nord, there are 20,000,000 annual users of the metropolitan line(Grandes lignes) and 80,000,000 annual users of the regional line(Transilien + RER), which is the most visited station among France and Europe. Therefore, although the station was partly extended or improved since the construction in 1846, the need of not only modernizing, but also extending the worn-out station became urgent. In other words, improvement of the Gare du Nord's station facility due such inevitable reason being related with the nearby worn-out industrial land's regeneration business plan, means that not only the remodeling of the railway station as a traffic facility, but also the balanced development of the henceforth metropolitan area can be promoted in an integrated manner since the two factors are closely related.

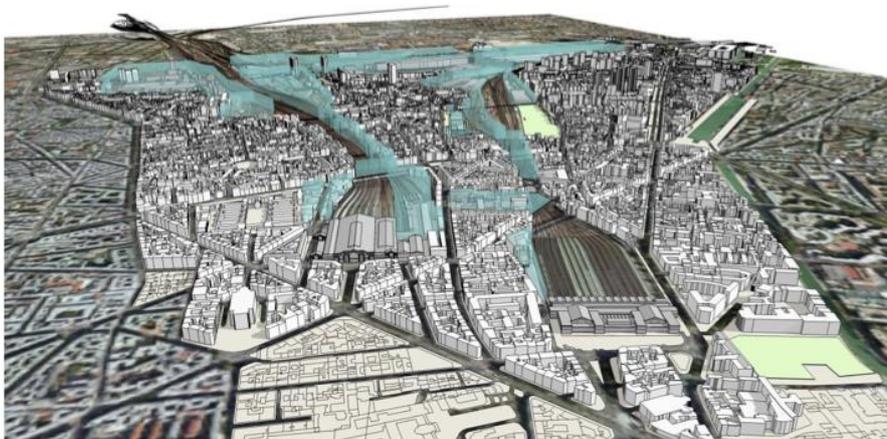


Fig.2. Paris' Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est Area's Redevelopment Zone (Source: Research Report on Paris' Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est Area, APUR)

4 Conclusion

Through the combined regeneration business of extending and modernizing the railway station in Paris' decrepit old downtown area and the urban regeneration plan of Paris' Northern area of Gare du Nord, the following spatial changes could be identified.

First, the improvement and modernization of the previous confusing transfer system, change in the image of the station Gare du Nord itself was given.

Second, along with the change of the station's image, the newly built commercial facilities and their success within Gare du Nord and increased hotels in the neighboring area are breaking the perception of being a decrepit and dangerous area. Accordingly, the factors result in the effect of commercial facilities' expansion within the station influencing area.

Lastly, this business is not simply a project of redeveloping or modernizing the worn-out railway station. The project is significantly a part of connecting Paris' metropolitan Northern area, Northern France, and the neighboring countries' major cities, which leads to both accommodating the tourists from all across the country and systematizing the transfer system among the public transportations.

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