

**POPSU 2 AND
THE WIDER
INTERNATIONAL
CONTEXT FOR
CITIES AND CITY-
REGIONS
(DRAFT)**

Olivier Sykes and Chris Couch,
University of Liverpool, England.

Contact: olivier.sykes@liv.ac.uk

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POPSU 2 and the wider international context for cities and city-regions

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1.0 Introduction

This paper sets out to place the findings of the POPSU 2 research programme into the context of wider European and international trends and debates about cities and city regionalism. It will firstly set out a brief overview of some of the key international trends and debates of recent decades surrounding cities and their position and role within national territories and economies. Secondly, drawing on the authors' knowledge of their 'home' research context, it will provide an overview of the changing position and perception of cities in the UK (with a principal focus on England) over recent decades. Thirdly, the paper will present an overview of where major French cities 'stand' in comparative terms when considered alongside cities in proximate EU nation states. Fourthly, it will introduce the POPSU 2 programme which ran from 2011 until 2014 in France and summarise some of the key findings and messages to emerge from it. Finally, a discussion and conclusion will draw together the different strands of the paper to offer a view on what the POPSU 2 findings can contribute to the international debate on cities and city regions; what the key challenges facing French cities are when viewed internationally; and, bringing these elements together, what useful research themes might inform a POPSU 3 research programme. Our aim is to consider the degree to which these French experiences are similar to or different from the wider European experience and thus to conclude what issues seem to be particularly specific to French cities and which may be given further consideration in future research programmes.

2.0 The International Debate on Cities and City Regions – from the 'problem children' to the 'superstars' of territorial development?

Recent years have seen a great deal of attention focussed on cities and city regions in many parts of the globe. In a rapidly urbanising world the 21st. Century is being seen as the 'urban century' with international debates and reflection on cities being reflected in political and policy agendas such as the UN's New Urban Agenda (UN HABITAT, 2016) and its EU equivalent the Urban Agenda for the EU (EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters, 2016). The Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All which accompanies the New Urban Agenda thus notes that:

By 2050, the world's urban population is expected to nearly double, making urbanization one of the twenty-first century's most transformative trends. Populations, economic activities, social and cultural interactions, as well as environmental and humanitarian impacts, are increasingly concentrated in cities, and this poses massive sustainability challenges in terms of housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources, among others.

Meanwhile amongst other objectives the Urban Agenda for the EU aims to “realise the full potential and contribution of Urban Areas towards achieving the objectives of the Union and related national priorities in full respect of subsidiarity and proportionality principles and competences” and “strives to establish a more effective integrated and coordinated approach to EU policies and legislation with a potential impact on Urban Areas and also to contribute to territorial cohesion by reducing the socioeconomic gaps observed in urban areas and regions”¹. Cities and urban regions are thus seen as being key sites of economic and social progress in the 21st. century but also as facing many challenges surrounding issues such as social equity and environmental pressures.

In many ‘western’ contexts such as Europe and North America, the past three decades have also witnessed a gradual but accelerating shift in the perception of cities. For much of the latter 20th. Century many countries witnessed some form of ‘urban crisis’ in which technological, economic and social changes created new challenges for cities. Through the latter half of the 20th century many western European cities suffered economic decline and restructuring. Often traditional industries, such as heavy engineering, textiles and manufacturing were becoming uncompetitive against international rivals. Changing technologies and the ever-present search for increases in productivity further reduced the demand for labour. The search for economies of scale led to greater vertical and horizontal integration of firms, even in the service sector, with the consequence that high-level jobs became increasingly centralised and concentrated in capital cities such as Paris and London. All of these trends reduced employment and the use of land for economic production in many regional cities. Decentralisation of population as a result of changing residential preferences and planned de-densification and re-housing allied with more ubiquitous private transport and massive state investment in road infrastructure led to many urban cores and ultimately urban regions losing population. Decentralisation of population on such a massive scale, contributed to a vicious circle of urban economic and physical decline which in itself encouraged more of those who could to leave the city. Many of the great industrial and wealth creating centres of the first and second industrial revolutions went from being magnets for people and investment to being viewed as the locus of most of society’s ills. The associated phenomenon of urban shrinkage in both economic and demographic terms has been much researched over recent decades (Couch et Al., 2005; Pallagst et Al. 2017; UN HABITAT, 2009).

Yet by the 1990s and 2000s however the perception of cities in many places was beginning to change and by the end of the first decade of the 21st century were some confidently heralding ‘The Triumph of the City’ (Glaeser, 2011). This shift was underpinned by the emergence of new economies based around knowledge, cultural and leisure-based consumption and advanced forms of manufacturing and service provision. The environmental and economic and social costs of physical sprawl and functional dispersal of urban functions was becoming increasingly apparent (Montgomery, 2013). The regeneration of urban cores and preference for the dense and diverse city became the new orthodoxy of many planners and urbanists echoing the urbanistic and economic arguments advanced decades earlier by writers such as Jacobs (1963).

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/content/what-urban-agenda>

More recently, often as a result of intensive policies of urban regeneration, some regional cities have seen a rise in service employment and the reuse of land for consumption purposes (such as housing and leisure developments). There has also been a strong desire in a number of different national contexts to pursue policies which seek to replicate the agglomeration effects and 'metropolisation' processes associated with major urban regions (often, though not exclusively capital regions). Many researchers have situated such policy ambitions (whether promoted through a national Urban Policy, or more bottom-up forms of governance and cooperation at the scale of cities, city regions, urban regions) within the wider context of inter-urban competition and 'neo-liberal' urbanisation and urban governance. Though the extent to which the neo-Liberal city 'thesis' can solely account for diverse forms of urban and territorial mobilisation in the pursuit of 'metropolisation' has been queried by some observers (Pinson and Morel Journal, 2016). It is not the primary goal in this paper to unpack the wider theoretical debate surrounding the rise of the city regional and 'metropolisation' agenda, but rather to more empirically reflect on the state of city regions and the state of research on city regions (notably the key themes of the POPSU 2) programme, but the existence of a wider debate should be acknowledged.

As regards the wider European picture, the 2011 CEC report *Cities of Tomorrow*² usefully summarises the general situation across the EU, identifying a number of issues. It suggests that cities play a crucial role as engines of the economy, as places of connectivity, creativity and innovation, and as centres of services for their surrounding areas. They are seen as being key to the sustainable development of the European Union a theme again present in the Urban Agenda for the EU. According to the CEC, this (European) model of sustainable urban development is under threat due to:

- I. Demographic change including: ageing population, immigration, suburbanisation, social segregation and 'societal dropouts' (or maybe more accurately 'pushed-outs');
- II. Europe is no longer in a situation of continuous economic growth, the links between growth, employment and social progress are weakening while income disparities are growing;
- III. Physical changes and threats including: urban sprawl and abandonment of brownfields, pressures on urban ecosystems, increasing risk of flooding and water scarcity.
- IV. [Frequently] the administrative boundaries/powers of cities no longer reflect the physical, social, economic, cultural or environmental reality of urban development.

The CEC report also goes on to suggest that there are opportunities to turn the threats into positive challenges.

The following section examines the changing perceptions and experiences of cities and city regions in one of France's neighbouring European countries the UK over recent decades (with a principal focus on England). This allows the paper to provide coverage of

² CEC, 2011, *Cities of Tomorrow: Challenges, visions, ways forward*. CEC, Brussels. http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/citiesoftomorrow/citiesoftomorrow_final.pdf

developments and policy orientations in another national context as well as the wider global and European context against which the French and POPSU 2 experience can be contextualised.

3.0 Cities and City Regions in the UK – from a problem to an opportunity?

The perception and experience of cities in the UK to a large extent mirrors the wider trends outlined in the preceding section. In the 1980s, in the UK economic turbulence, mass unemployment and urban unrest in a number of major cities, reinforced, the shift towards an urban focus to state spatial policy with the emergence 'urban regeneration' as a major policy field which sought to address urban 'problems', typically in what Margaret Thatcher famously described as "those inner cities" (*Guardian* 2014). A feature of this approach to urban regeneration was the overlaying of certain local government competences, notably for planning, and reliance on the so-called 'trickle down' effects of regeneration as a means of tackling social exclusion rather than more active forms of area-based interventions. The emphasis was rather on property and 'physically'-led project planning led through bodies such as Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) with arguably a lack of strategic overview at the urban scale. The Conservative governments of the time also had a predilection for liberal deregulation which contributed to continued outward dispersal of development activity away from urban cores.

The 1990s saw a growing recognition of the importance of 'sustainable urban development' and a more nuanced approach to urban problems. By the late 1990s the language in which cities and urban areas were represented also underwent a subtle shift. In the UK in the 1990s and 2000s a so-called 'Urban Renaissance' was pursued. This took its name from a report produced by an 'Urban Task Force' led by the architect Richard Rogers (Rogers, 1999). As part of this national and EU investment was made in regenerating the big cities (especially the centres), 'town centre first' policies for retail development, and targets to increase the amount of new housing built on 'brownfield' land to ensure reuse of previously developed land and limit sprawl. Such approaches have been seen as generally successful and contributing to a 'return of' and 'return to' the city (Rae, 2013). In a culture which has often been characterised as having anti-urban traits (Taylor, 1998), there has been a slow shift of perceptions about cities, from their being viewed as a source and locus of problems, to a recognition of their economic, social, cultural importance. Actions such as the 'Sustainable Communities Plan' of 2003 sought to deal with urban growth/congestion in the south (e.g. with the issue of housing development) and urban decline/surplus infrastructure in the north. But to an extent this initiative only represented a partial shift in perceptions notably as regarded aspects of its approach to dealing with less prosperous and slow growth areas (e.g. the highly controversial Housing Market Renewal initiative which sought to address perceptions of an oversupply of housing in some cities in the midland and north of England).

From the mid-2000s in the UK a renewed city-regional agenda gathered momentum in which city-regions were conceived as drivers of change in a more knowledge-based economy, where the roles of innovation and creativity are crucial. There was also renewed attention to the boundaries of 'functional' urban areas (e.g. Travel to Work Areas) and interest in city-regions which might be constituted of groupings of Local Authorities representing a coherent area larger than the 'local' to generate critical mass and positive agglomeration effects. New

economic geographies led to a search for new 'spatial fixes' and reanimated an awareness of and attention to the metropolitan 'supra-local' scale governance which had been brushed aside in the 1980s with the abolition of Metropolitan County Councils (Sykes and Nurse, 2017). However, though a focus on the city region was returning, the rationale(s) being advanced for acting at this level were expressed in terms which reflected the evolution of metropolitan and regional spaces and wider political-economic contexts in the intervening two decades.

Research emphasized the role of 'Core Cities' as drivers of regional economies, but it also suggested that England's core cities were not 'punching their weight' in comparison with the leading regional cities in other European countries (Parkinson et al., 2004). Partly in response there was a renewed emphasis on city regions in the North of England. These were seen as having a role in bridging the regional 'productivity gap' of the north with the rest of the UK (notably the English average) and a so-called Northern Way Growth Strategy (NWGS) was adopted to develop this.

In short by the later 2000s an *economic* and *political* case was being made for city regions in which cities were again seen as motors of the national and regional economies. In England and the wider UK it was argued there was a need to depend on more than 'the London effect' if national economic growth was to be sustainable. The 'Core Cities Group'³ argued for the fullest possible devolution of public spending and tax raising powers to the UK's largest cities and city regions and a rebalancing of the relationship between central government and cities, as ways to address the interconnected challenges of local economic growth, public service reform and better governance. London is perceived to have benefited from having a devolved strategic authority comprising an elected executive Mayor and scrutinising Assembly. The competences of the mayor surrounding the production of the London Plan (most recently revised in 2015); the presence of other strategies including for Housing and Transport; and, a generously-funded transport authority, Transport for London, are all seen as having helped reinforce London's natural advantages as the UK capital.

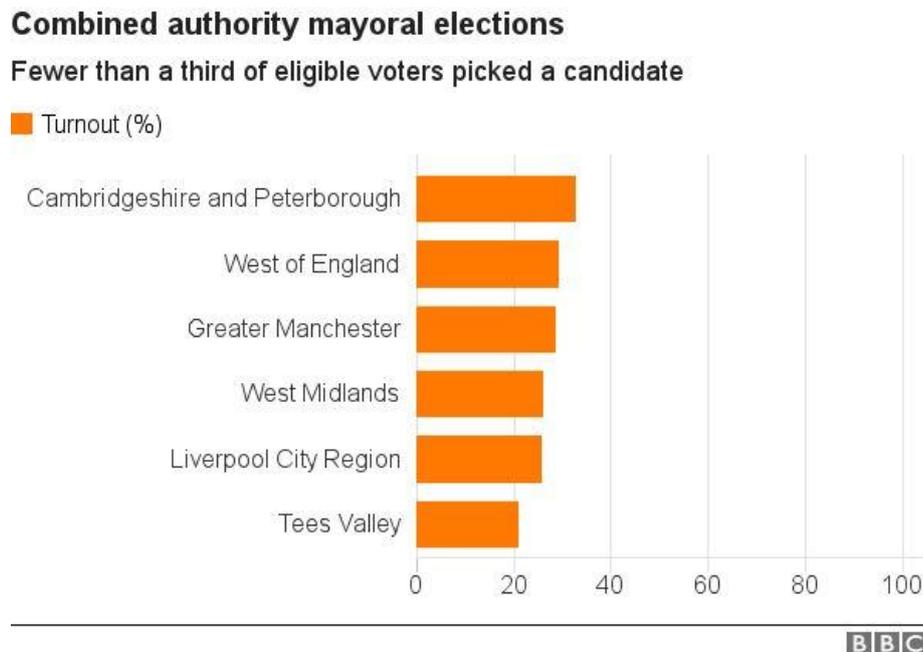
In the 2010s the city regional agenda developed rapidly. In 2011 of a series of 'city deals' were agreed (DCLG, 2011), initially with the English Core Cities. It should be noted that this had a lot to do with national population growth. Unlike the period of the Sustainable Communities plan of the early 2000s, by 2010 all major cities were growing and the geo-demographic context had thus changed dramatically. The new City Deals focussed mainly on an increase in economic planning powers in return for referenda on changing their mode of governance towards having a directly elected mayor. The idea of creating elected mayors (Sandford, 2015) was largely rejected in the referenda held in 2012 with only of the Core Cities (Bristol) voting to have an elected mayor.

Meanwhile inter-municipal cooperation is being facilitated and enshrined in the creation in a number of areas, initially based on city regions, of new Combined Authorities - with the first being created for Greater Manchester in 2011. These have acquired further devolved powers over economic and transport planning, and incorporated the elected leaders of each district as a means to restore accountability to economic decision making (Nurse, 2015). Elections for mayors to lead city region Combined Authorities such as those in the

³ This brings together the English cities of – Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield and Glasgow and Cardiff - <http://www.corecities.com/>

Liverpool and Greater Manchester city regions were held in May 2017 with a very low overall voter turnout (Fig. 1)

Figure 1 – Voter Turnout in Combined Authority Mayoral Elections, May 2017



Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-39817224>

But the drivers of the devolution agenda are not just democratic, but also economic. Again the experience of London and the perceived benefits of devolution to other UK nations and regions (Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales) has been a driver of these developments. In 2014 a plan for a so-called 'Northern Powerhouse' to boost the growth of the north of England and develop a counterbalance to the economic dominance of London and the South East was announced. The rationale for this largely resided in acceptance of notions of urban agglomeration and the initiative was to be realised through the negotiation of a series of 'devolution deals' between city region leaders and central government across the north of England.

Despite the activism surrounding, and 'faith' in, the city regional agenda the issue of what to do about the regions which have not fully shared the rising prosperity of recent decades, and which were badly affected by the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath remains. There are also big questions, about how far such structures will be able to reconcile the interests of complex and diverse territories, for example, 'core city' and wider 'city regional' agendas; with approaches to spatial planning (e.g. potential Greenbelt revisions), providing one possible area of tension. The truth is that there has been growing inequality in England - partly as a result of overheating the housing market, especially in London, but also because of public spending cuts - the cumulative effect of which have only begun to become clear in the last couple of years. Such issues have been thrown into stark relief by recent political and other events in the UK and continuing political instability means that local actors engaged in

territorial development are forced to work in a context of great uncertainty (Sykes and Schulze-Baeing, 2017)⁴.

3.0 Where do France's 'Core Cities' Stand in European terms?

This part of the paper uses Eurostat data from the European Union's Urban Audit to make comparisons between selected **large non-capital French cities** and equivalent cities in other adjacent European countries. The purpose of these comparisons is not to identify the problems faced by French cities but to identify where these problems are more or less severe than in comparable cities in other adjacent European countries. Below we consider with the aid of easily available secondary data⁵:

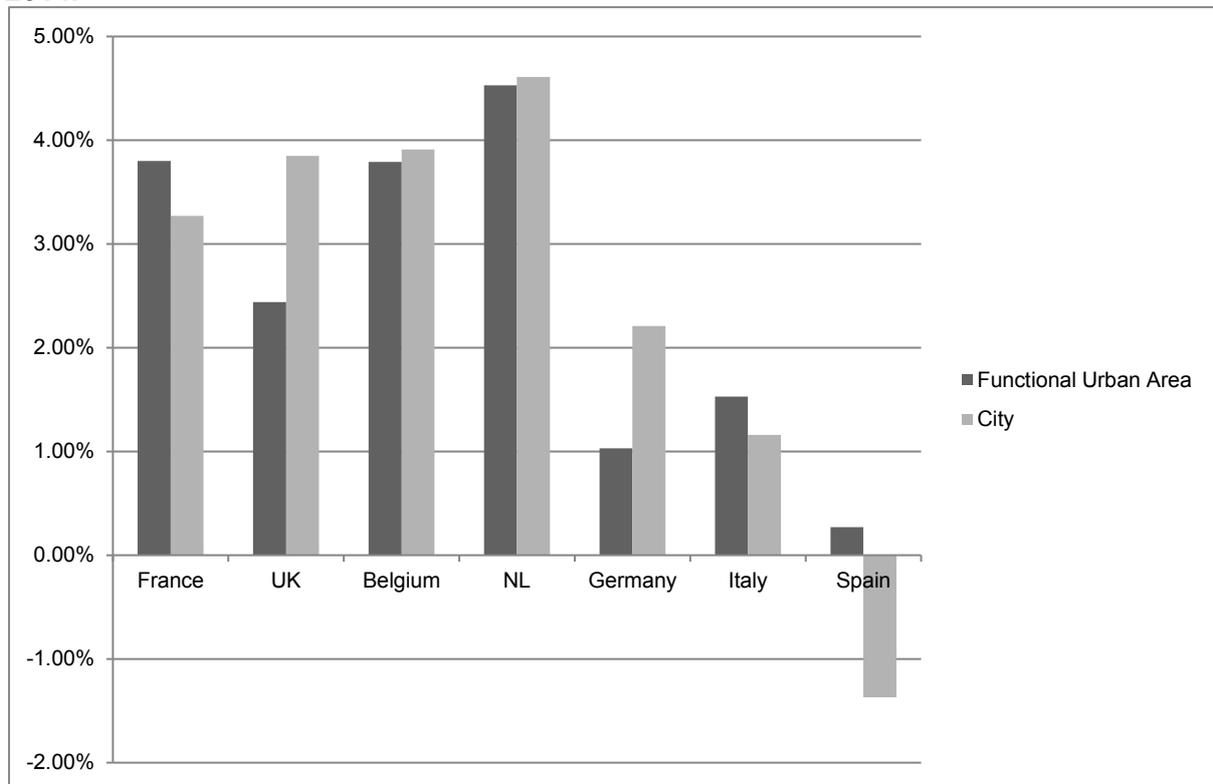
- Population change - urbanisation/sub- or dis-urbanisation (population growth/decline)
- Employment structure
- Economic activity rate
- Old-age dependency rate and young-age dependency rate
- Unemployment rate in large non-capital cities
- Immigration
- Perceptions of measures of quality of life

⁴ To get a sense of perspective on the potential significance of coming change, consider that the 2000-2006 EU Objective One programme invested £829 million into an area like Merseyside (the Liverpool City Region) which, with 'match funding' gave a total investment of over £1 billion over 6-7 years. Now compare this with the £900 million promised *over thirty years* under the present Liverpool City Region 'Devolution Deal' to get a sense of the monumental shift in public investment opportunities which may result from so called "Brexit" from the EU.

⁵ Much of this data is available through Eurostat or similar sources. The data must of course be interpreted with all the usual caution about the use of such general data which can offer reductionist accounts and perspectives if not used with great care.

3.1 Population change

Figure 1. Average population change in Major Functional Urban Areas and Cities, 2010-2014.



Source: Eurostat, Urban Audit, Population Tables, DE1001V, Population on 1st January, total, Data for Cities and Functional Urban Areas (i.e. the city-region). Accessed 1.3.2017.

NB: Data for French cities 2009-2013, for all other cities the time period is 2010-2014.

NB2: The data on which this table is based can be found in appendix 1.

NB3: The time period covered is rather short due to the restrictions imposed by the availability of comparable data. Nevertheless, it is thought that the data is likely to accurately represent current trends in the various countries.

As shown in Figure 1. the functional urban areas (FUA) of all the largest French cities are growing, as are the cities themselves. However, the FUA is, on average, growing faster than the city. This means that the urban periphery is growing faster than the urban core. In other words, in large French cities, the urban area is continuing to suburbanise or sprawl.

In contrast, whilst on average, the FUA and cities are both growing in the other northern European cities examined (UK, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany), in these countries the cities are growing faster than the FUA. This means that the urban periphery is growing slower than the urban core. In other words, in large cities across much of northern Europe, cities are reurbanising and densifying. Urban sprawl has more or less ceased.

The situation in southern Europe is different. Whilst large Italian FUA are growing they are doing so at only about half the rate of French cities. But, like French cities, the FUA is generally growing faster than the city. Sprawl is ongoing. In Spain the situation is different again. On average there is only modest growth in the largest FUA and all the cities are losing population. Table 2 summarises these trends.

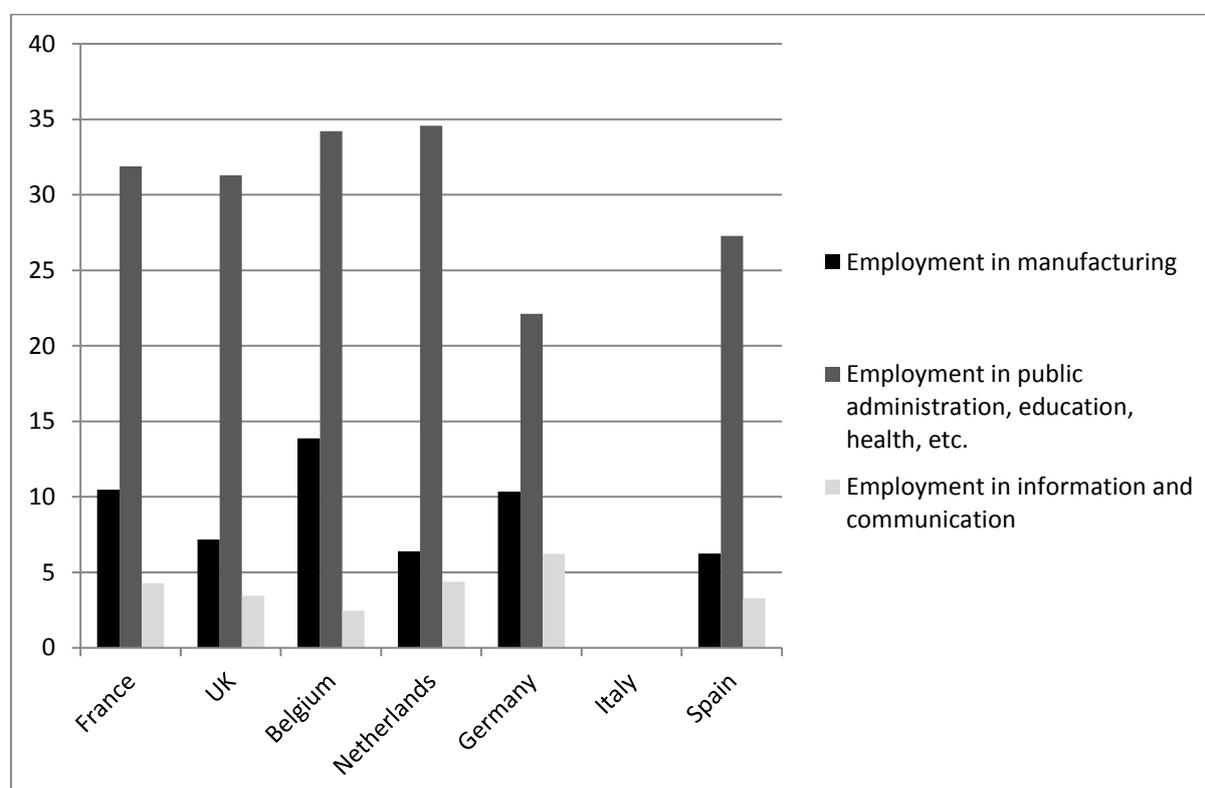
Table 2. Characterisation of urban population change in large non-capital cities in selected European countries.

	Character of urban change
France	Rapid growth with suburbanisation (sprawl)
UK	Rapid growth with significant reurbanisation
Belgium	Rapid growth with modest reurbanisation
Netherlands	Rapid growth with modest reurbanisation
Germany	Slow growth with significant reurbanisation
Italy	Slow growth with suburbanisation (sprawl)
Spain	Stagnation with rapid suburbanisation (sprawl)

Source: authors

3.2 Employment structure

Figure 2. Employment in manufacturing, public services and information & communications in large non-capital cities in selected European countries.



Source: Eurostat, Urban Audit, Labour Market, Table EC2032V, Employment (jobs) in mining, manufacturing, energy (NACE Rev. 2, B-E). Table EC2037V, Employment (jobs) in public administration, defence, education, human health and social work activities (NACE Rev. 2, O to Q). Table EC2032V, Employment (jobs) in information and communication (NACE Rev. 2, J) Accessed 10.3.2017.

There has been a long-run tendency for the employment structure of European cities to move away from manufacturing employment and towards service employment. The employment structure of large European cities varies according to the basic economic structure and evolution of the city: whether its origins lie in, for example, the extractive industries, manufacturing, transshipment, commerce or administration. Nevertheless, there is a general tendency for the employment structure of large European cities to move away from

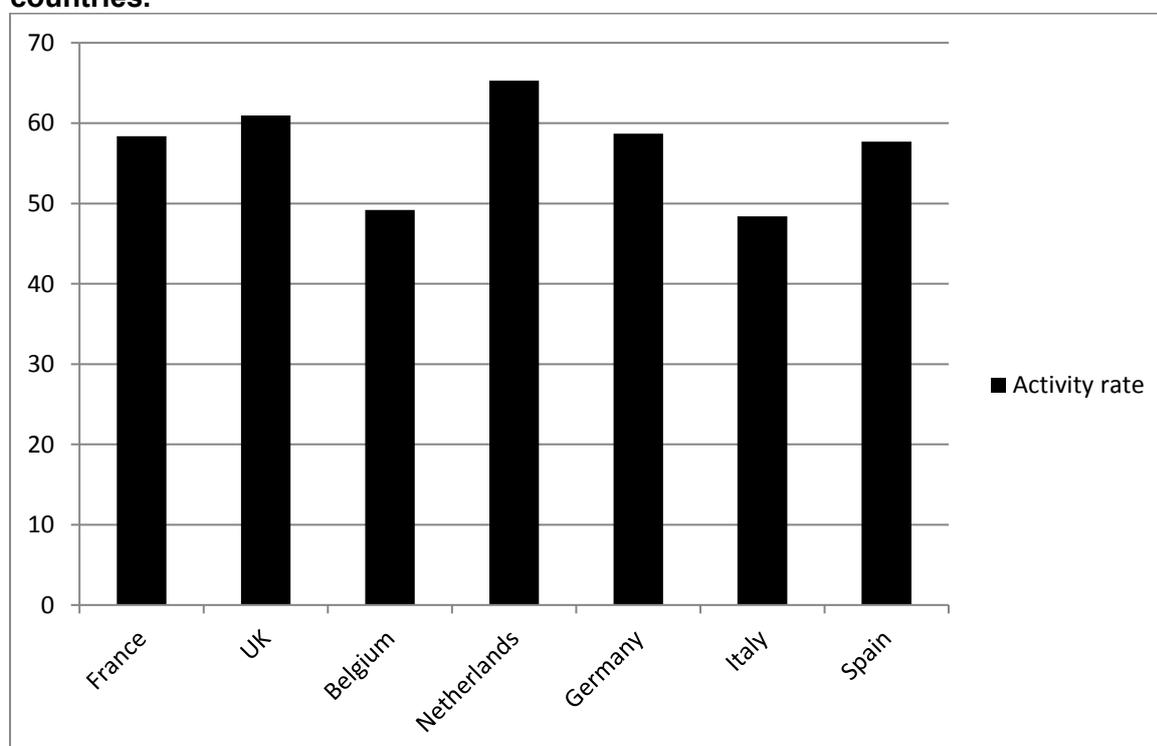
manufacturing (including extraction and energy production) towards the provision of services. The evidence from this chart suggests that the large cities of the countries studied fall into two groups: those that retain a substantial proportion (over 10%) of employment in manufacturing [France, Belgium and Germany] and those that rely more heavily on service employment [UK, Netherlands, Spain].

Within the service sector, cities within Belgium and the Netherlands appear to rely most heavily on the public administration, health and education, with German cities least reliant upon these sectors. German cities also take the lead in terms of the proportion of employment found in the information and communications sector, with Belgian and Spanish cities performing least well on this indicator.

It might be argued that heavy dependence on manufacturing leaves a city likely to be vulnerable to future employment loss from this sector as productivity increases or jobs are moved to cheaper locations elsewhere. Much employment in public administration, health, education etc. lies with, or is dependent upon, the public sector, and countries pursuing neo-liberal and/or austerity economic policies pose a threat to public sector employment. Thus cities that are highly dependent upon these sectors are potentially vulnerable to future job loss. Employment in information and communications technologies is seen as an indicator of modern, high-technology, creative employment, which many see as important in driving economic growth. Cities with a high proportion of jobs in this sector are in a strong position to grow in the future.

3.3 Economic Activity rate

Figure 3. The economic activity rate in large non-capital cities in selected European countries.



Source: Eurostat, Urban Audit, Labour Market, Table EC1001I. Activity rate. Accessed 10.3.2017.

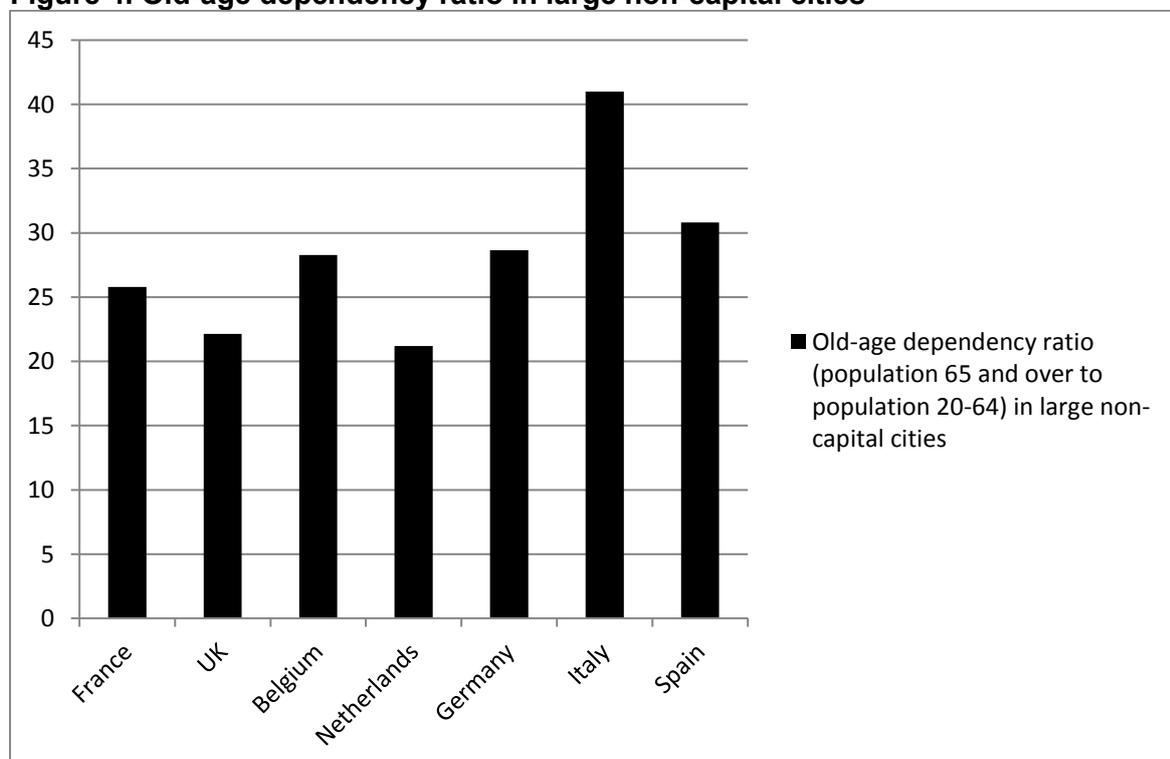
The economic activity rate shows the proportion of the whole population engaged in or seeking employment and is thus an indicator of the extent to which the economy is successful in involving the entire population in economic production of all types (i.e. including manufacturing, services and administration). The activity rate may vary with the amount of employment that the local economy can create, with demographic structure and with the nature of social welfare benefits including such things as the age of retirement. Thus a buoyant economy with a young population is likely to generate a high activity rate whilst an economy that has had to shed labour (e.g. through early retirement schemes and has an older population is likely to generate a low activity rate.

The chart shows that the activity rate in large French non-capital cities is just above the average for the countries examined. Whereas Italian and Belgium cities engage less than half their inhabitants in economic activity which (notwithstanding the impact of national subsidies and welfare payments) places a heavier economic burden for local service provision upon those who are economically engaged. By contrast, Dutch and British cities on average engage over 60% of their populations in economic activity and (notwithstanding the impact of national subsidies and welfare payments) are able to spread the economic burden of local service provision across a greater proportion of the population.

A linked notion is that of dependency ratios: the proportion of non-economically active population (typically the elderly and the young) who are economically and socially dependent upon the adult or economically active population.

3.4 Old and young age dependency ratios

Figure 4. Old-age dependency ratio in large non-capital cities

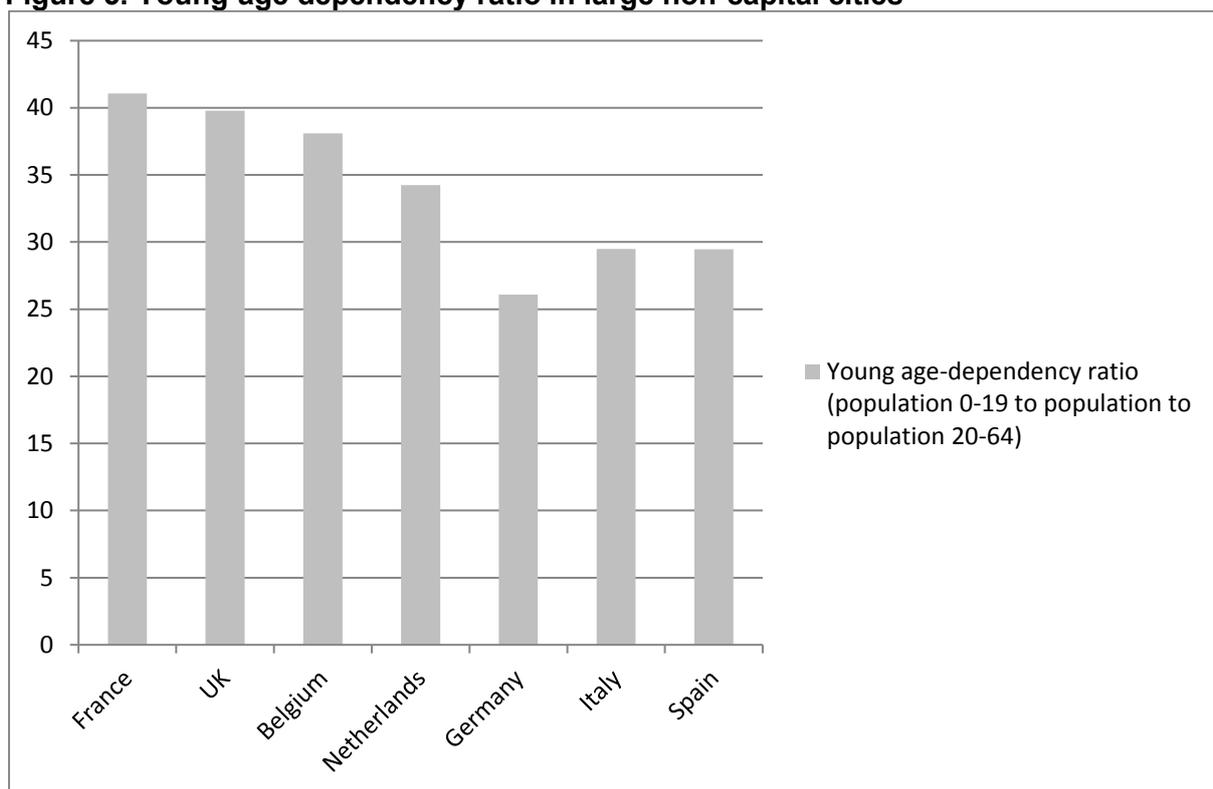


Source: Eurostat, Urban Audit, Population Structure. Table DE1060I. Old age dependency ratio (population 65 and over to population 20 to 64 years). Accessed 10.3.2017.

Old-age dependency in the French cities examined is around the average for similar cities in other nearby countries. The problem is most severe in Italian and Spanish cities where a combination of large elderly populations combine with a paucity of job-opportunities for the working-age population represent a severe social issue. In contrast the British and Dutch cities tend to contain relatively younger populations and better job-opportunities and so in theory have a stronger ability to support the retired elderly, though this is clearly not an issue which plays out solely at city scale given the nature of many support mechanisms and policies (e.g. pension policies, and depending on national structures health and care policies) which may be organise and funded at other levels.

Of all the large non-capital cities in the countries examined, large French non-capital cities have the highest proportion of young inhabitants relative to the working-age population. British cities show a similar pattern. In contrast German cities (and to a lesser extent Italian and Spanish cities) have the lowest proportion. Built into population projections this suggests that in future, the old-age dependency ratio will ease in French cities but worsen in German cities. On the other hand such a trend will increase the pressure to generate employment (and reduce unemployment) in French and British cities whilst easing the pressure to do so in German and southern European cities.

Figure 5. Young-age dependency ratio in large non-capital cities

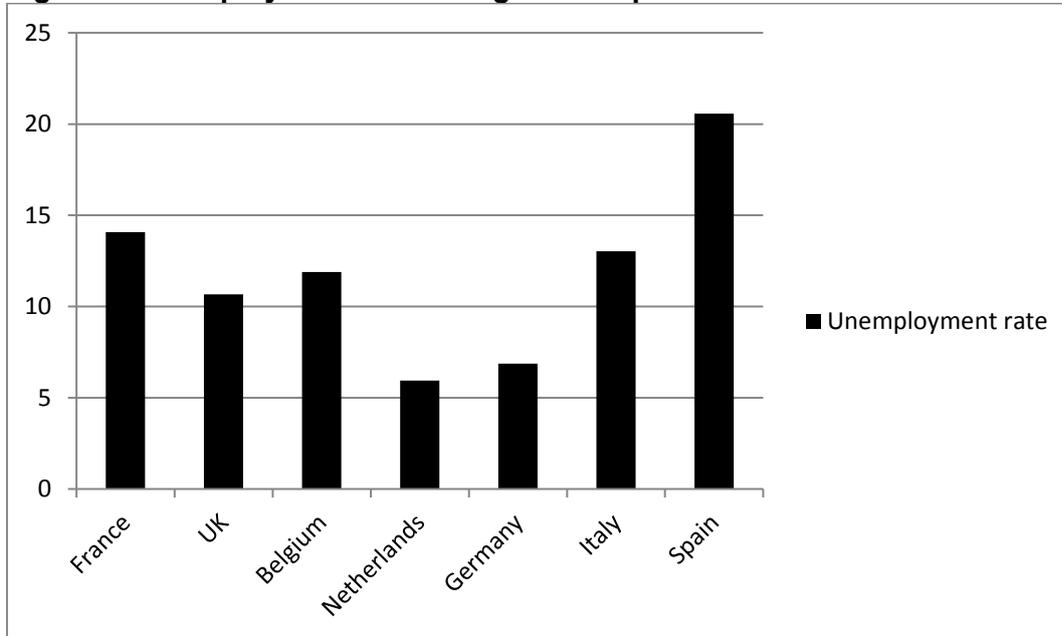


Source: Eurostat, Urban Audit, Population Structure. Table DE1059I. Young-age dependency ratio (population aged 0-19 to population 20-64 years). Accessed 10.3.2017.

3.5 Unemployment rate in large non-capital cities

A further indicator of the success of a local economy is the unemployment rate: the ability to find employment for all those who are economically active.

Figure 6. Unemployment rate in large non-capital cities

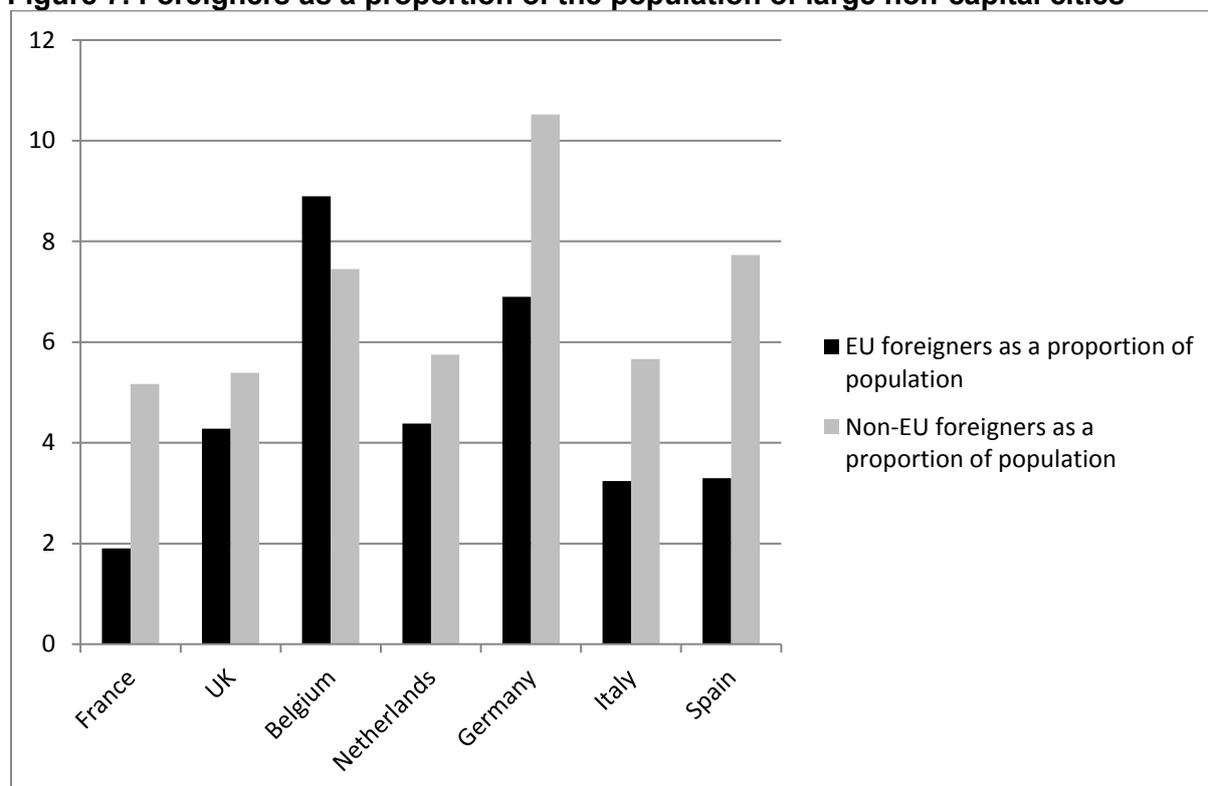


Source: Eurostat, Urban Audit, Labour Market, Table EC1020I. Unemployment rate. Accessed 10.3.2017.

There is a sharp contrast between the success of large Dutch and German non-capital cities in maintaining employment and the experience in other countries. Large French non-capital cities are only second to Spanish cities in their high levels of unemployment. NB: This data is 2011 and much has changed since - e.g. the success of UK cities in creating jobs.

3.6 Immigration

Figure 7. Foreigners as a proportion of the population of large non-capital cities



Source: Eurostat, Urban Audit, Population by citizenship and country of birth. Tables DE2002I EU foreigners as a proportion of population and DE2003I Non-EU foreigners as a proportion of population. Accessed 10.3.2017.

The data in figure 7 divides non-nationals into two groups: those from EU countries and those from non-EU countries. The experience of large non-capital French cities is that they have (perhaps surprisingly) on average the lowest proportion of foreigners from EU nations and the lowest proportion of foreigners from non-EU nations compared with large non-capital cities in any other the other countries examined. Belgian cities accommodate the highest proportion of foreigners from EU nations, followed by Germany. German cities, followed by those in Spain and Belgium accommodate the largest proportion of foreigners from non-EU nations.

3.7 Inhabitants' Perceptions

The most recently available data from the EU Urban Audit survey of inhabitants' perceptions of urban areas is from 2015. Selected responses have been reproduced in table 3. below. In general the large non-capital French cities for which data is available (Marseille, Lille, Bordeaux) perform less well than the average across many of the indicators, although this is skewed by the poor performance of Marseille on several indicators. Lille and Bordeaux perform above the European average on satisfaction with public transport, provision of green space and the state of neighbourhood streets and buildings. Only Bordeaux performs above the European average on the integration of foreigners and feelings of personal safety. While all three French cities perform below the European average in terms of the ease of finding a good job or of finding good housing at a reasonable price.

Table 3. Perception survey results for selected indicators and non-capital cities

Satisfaction survey 2015 (unless stated)									
	%								
	Public transport	Green space	Job opportunities	Integration of foreigners	Housing access	State of neighbourhood	Feel safe		
Marseille	20	16	3	8	6	15	13		
Lille	28	30	4	10	5	21	12		
Bordeaux	38	42	5	13	6	28	35		
Manchester	47	40	13	21	17	22	31		
Antwerpen	24	40	15	7	7	28	25		
Liège	14	19	3	7	6	15	7		
Rotterdam	54	36	7	6	6	24	29		
Hamburg	44	49	11	9	2	16	36		
München	51	60	19	13		34	59		
Leipzig	39	56	7	5	16	14	25		
Napoli	5	6	1	10	14	5	12		
Torino	18	38		5	7	10	11		
Palermo	1	5		10	10	3	12		
Barcelona	24	17	2	12	6	16	31		
Málaga	26	20	3	27	27	18	43		
Average	28.87	31.60	7.15	10.87	8.31	17.93	25.4		0

Source: Eurostat, Urban Audit, Perception Survey Results, 2015, Tables PS1012V, PS1052V, PS2012V, PS2022V, PS2032V, PS3230V, PS3290.

Note: the full questions are as follows and the figures presented tally the responses in the stated category:

- 1 Public transport in the city, for example bus, tram or metro: very satisfied
- 2 Green spaces such as public parks or gardens: very satisfied
- 3 In this city it is easy to find a good job: strongly agree
- 4 Foreigners who live in this city are well integrated: strongly agree
- 5 In this city, it is easy to find good housing at a reasonable price: strongly agree
- 6 State of streets and buildings in my neighbourhood: very satisfied
- 7 You feel safe in this city: strongly agree

3.8 Summary

To summarise, most large non-capital French cities are growing faster than most equivalent cities in adjoining countries. Only in the Netherlands are cities currently growing faster. However, in most of the French cities considered, the urban periphery is growing faster than the urban core, i.e. French cities are continuing to suburbanise / sprawl.

Apart from Belgian cities, large non-capital French cities retain the largest proportion of manufacturing employment, making them vulnerable to future job losses in this sector, while in terms of creative industries (indicated by the proportion of jobs in information and communications) French cities lag slightly behind the Netherlands and considerably behind German cities. In terms of activity rates the French cities are similarly third behind the Netherlands and Germany but the French cities perform poorly in terms of unemployment with only Spanish cities being worse.

Old-age dependency in the French cities is around average but young-age dependency is very high - this suggests that there will be future pressures to supply more jobs within these urban areas.

French cities have a low proportion of foreign EU nationals (and average in terms of non-EU foreigners) amongst their populations, perhaps reflecting the lack of job opportunities.

In terms of perceptions, according to the EU's Urban Audit (2015) the three French cities considered perform below the European average in terms of the ease of finding a good job, or of finding good housing at a reasonable price and Marseille performs below average on every indicator. The Urban Audit survey is of perceptions only however, so its findings need to be treated with caution and triangulated with other sources to enhance reliability in interpretation⁶.

To sum up, the key threat to large non-capital French cities in comparison with many similar cities in adjacent European countries appears to lie in their inability to create sufficient employment for their populations both now and in the future. The following section now presents a summary of the key themes and findings of the POPSU 2 programme, which as will be seen echo some of the issues discussed in this section.

⁶ NB - Whilst some of the perceptions may seem to be correlated with other indicators (e.g. employment data with perceptions of the ease of finding a good job) it should be remembered that the survey is of perceptions which can be very strongly context-dependent and specific in terms of culture, lifestyle and expectations. This means that great care is needed when interpreting and particularly in making any kind of comparison between the cities in different European national contexts. For example, a question on public transport or housing asked in such a general manner, cannot account for expectations in terms of quality of service, cost, or frequency in the former, or aspirations in terms of space, tenure, affordability etc. in the latter.

4.0 A summary of some of the key themes and findings of POPSU 2⁷

4.1. Introducing the POPSU programme

The first POPSU Programme ended in 2009 and POPSU2 was launched in 2011 with a focus on 10 French conurbations seen as having emerging metropolitan territorial dynamics. These areas are also amongst those which have acquired the status of “métropole” under the laws passed in the 2010s on the territorial organisation of the Republic (NOTRe law of 2015) and on the modernisation of public action and the strengthening of “métropoles” (the MAPTAM law of 2014). The goal of the POPSU 2 programme was to develop an understanding of the urban dynamics at work in such areas to strengthen knowledge at the local and national levels. Its ambition was to develop this understanding from an interdisciplinary and “inter-cognitive” perspective (Bathellier, 2014) through the commissioning of research projects on individual cities. The themes of POPSU 2 were developed through dialogue between the PUCA⁸ and local territorial authorities. Five key research themes were selected:

- The knowledge economy (l'économie de la connaissance)
- Urban 'fragilities' and in particular the 'fragile metropolis' (la métropole fragile)
- Territorial regulation (régulations territoriales)
- Stations, transport hubs and neighbourhoods (les gares, pôles d'échanges et leur quartiers)
- Sustainable development at neighbourhood, city and métropole level (la durabilité à l'échelle du quartier, de la ville et de la métropole)

Consortia of researchers and local authorities and agencies in ten metropolitan areas – Marseille; Toulon; Toulouse; Grenoble; Nantes; Lille; Bordeaux; Lyon; Rennes ; and, Strasbourg, then worked to produce reports exploring these themes. The different areas were free to focus on the themes and related issues most relevant to their circumstances.

The Knowledge Economy was addressed across all the areas, reflecting the close synergies perceived by many actors between this theme and metropolisation processes. There were however differences and refinements in terms of how this phenomena was explored with sub-themes of innovative economies, creative economies and a knowledge-based economy emerging. These were explored in more depth in the different areas depending on the local circumstances.

The theme of Urban/Metropolitan 'fragility' was put to the fore in three of the areas: Toulon, Marseille and Toulouse. Again the specificities of the different areas influenced the focus which was adopted. In Marseille an inner city and city centre focus was adopted; in

⁷ This section is based on readings of publications from the POPSU 2 and hopefully provides a useful summary and translation of some of these for an English language audience. This being the case the authors fully acknowledge that it is based on the work undertaken by the POPSU 2 teams.

⁸ PUCA stands for le Plan Urbanisme Construction Architecture (Planning Construction Architecture) and is an interministerial agency created in 1998 to advance knowledge about territories and cities and to inform public action.

Toulon citizens representations and perceptions of urban fragilities at the metropolitan level were one of the things investigated; whilst in Toulouse a geographical focus on a peripheral zone to the north of the urban core which is undergoing transformation due to a number of metropolitan trends and projects was adopted.

The theme of territorial regulation formed the main focus in four of the métropoles studied, namely Bordeaux, Grenoble, Nantes and Strasbourg. 'Regulation' was interpreted widely as allowing attention to be paid to more technical aspects of planning and project delivery and more political or procedural aspects of 'regulation'. Under the latter interpretation of 'regulation' most of the project investigated arrangements for and experience of participatory process.

The theme examining stations, transport hubs and their surrounding neighbourhoods attracted particular attention in some of the areas, notably Bordeaux, Lyon, Lille and Rennes. Depending on the situation of the different places the main focus varied. In some places the arrival of high speed rail at central stations was the focus, sometimes with a consideration of effects on secondary stations too. But this theme was not limited to considering such projects as purely infrastructure or transport interventions, but also considered the urban and metropolitan strategies which accompanied them and how far they had an impact in stimulating wider area development.

The Sustainable development theme was explored in Grenoble, Marseille, Strasbourg and Toulouse. Here again a diversity of issues, strategies, interventions and tools was studied in terms of how they provided a local response to wider global sustainable development challenges. Planning initiatives such as "EcoCités" and green and blue corridors and infrastructure plans and investments were studied.

4.2 The knowledge economy

The theme of the knowledge economy was explored critically by a number of the POPSU 2 research teams. It was one of the areas of work which revealed interesting dynamics in the contrasting use of concepts by practitioners and researchers. Without oversimplifying, it seemed that practitioners and decision-makers were more enthusiastic about the idea that the knowledge economy was an extant and powerful phenomenon that could drive the future strategic development of city regions, whereas researchers were more circumspect in this regard. Campagnac (2014, 19) attributes this to the influence of certain researchers on metropolitan and municipal thinking (notably Richard Florida) and also the sense amongst territorial actors that through locally implemented measures to enhance education, training and knowledge diffusion they can influence and generate growth.

Researchers were inclined to work on defining and refining what exactly was understood by the term knowledge economy identifying three key components – the *knowledge economy* as conceived of by economists with a focus on evolutions in modes of production and the rising importance of relationships between science and technology and production; the *innovative and creative economy* perceived as being about innovation processes and the production of value through the sharing of knowledge through collaborative approaches (including cultural and artistic activities); and, the *knowledge society* seen as encompassing processes of knowledge production, dissemination and sharing including

Higher Education teaching, research, training and initiatives that foster the circulation of knowledge. The POPSU 2 teams explored the interrelationships between these elements – including in the city regions covered by the programme, and processes of metropolisation. The particular contribution of the POPSU research was to give a territorial inflexion to the investigation of the issues and processes surrounding the knowledge economy. By drawing upon available statistics the impact of the knowledge economy on economic growth and the development of the studied métropoles was considered. This “lecture territorialisée” (territorial reading) allowed a much more nuanced picture of the relationship between the knowledge economy and territorial development to emerge. As regards the innovative and creative economy the work explored the relationships between actors associated with “poles de compétitivité” (competitiveness poles/clusters). The picture to emerge reemphasised the importance of the links between such “innovation systems” and their local context and of the quality of “synergy” degree of complementarity which existed within them. The multi-scalar nature of partnerships and networks that drive innovation were also stressed with it being noted that local contexts and factors alone did not fully account for their functioning and effectiveness.

The POPSU findings thus served to emphasise the importance of place-based innovative networks, whilst cautioning against assuming mechanistic links between physical proximity, development and the quality of synergies achieved. In terms of the knowledge society the findings pointed to the structuring importance of the local Higher Education and research infrastructure for metropolitan development. Notions such as the ‘learning city’ with accompanying initiatives to support links between the cultural, research and science and technology sectors were seen as helping to nurture the emergence of “éco-systèmes créatif” (creative eco-systems). Such initiatives included actions around further training to complement school based learning and to encourage innovation.

Some of the themes around innovation, the creative economy and knowledge society also coalesced physically in projects such as ‘fab-labs’, learning centres and co-working spaces.

Overall the work conducted by the POPSU 2 teams pointed to the need for caution around assuming a ‘deterministic’ link between the rise of the knowledge economy and metropolisation, or imagining that a refined ‘territorial offer’ would necessarily lead to the emergence of a knowledge economy locally. This was not to say that the work contradicted at a general level the links between ‘cognitive capitalism’ (Moullier Boutang, 2011) and the phenomenon of metropolisation, but rather emphasised that these play out differentially across different places.

Similarly, the researchers argued that the territorial offer of places was indeed important, notably in relation to more equal access of certain regions and populations to knowledge. Their work also underlined the inherent tensions within metropolisation processes in the context of the knowledge economy. These included those between ‘rootedness’ and ‘mobility’, for example, the increasingly footloose nature of those more directly involved in the knowledge economy (e.g. students, researchers, those occupying higher order metropolitan functions). There was also a spatial dimension at the intra-metropolitan scale with an increasing emphasis on the role of city centres which might contribute to a deterioration of certain social conditions. It was also noted that the local population was sometimes not

considered as a factor of the attractiveness of city regions. Issues about the distributional impacts of metropolisation through exposure to, and action to foster, the knowledge economy therefore also came to the fore and linked to the second key theme of POPSU 2.

4.3 Urban ‘fragilities’ and the ‘fragile metropolis’ (la métropole fragile)

This theme explored some of the wider socio-spatial issues and consequences of the pursuit of metropolisation as a strategy. It started by recognising that many claims are advanced for the benefits of metropolisation and the importance of major city regions (métropoles) as ‘motors’ of the economy. These have been the focus of administrative reform and various public policies and investments designed to develop their capacity to concentrate higher order metropolitan functions and employment in fields such as research and innovation. Métropoles are seen as being the urban areas best adapted to attract and retain the ‘creative classes’ who play such a key role in the knowledge economy explored by theme one of the POPSU 2 programme.

Yet métropoles are not simply promoted due to their own economic potential, but area also perceived as being the key to driving wider territorial development and in fostering a better distribution of opportunities, services and infrastructure capable of meeting the needs and aspirations of their inhabitants (Jaillet and Escaffre, 2014: 34). In the allegedly dominant discourse surrounding métropoles in France therefore, it might even be said there is ‘no urban salvation outside the métropole’ (Jaillet and Escaffre, 2014: 34 – “En dehors de la métropole, point de salut urbain”). Yet the work on the ‘fragile metropolis’ theme stated from the premise that this discourse did not adequately recognise that processes of metropolisation can also increase a number of existing social and territorial ‘fragilities’ and even cause new ones to emerge. Social polarisation and segregation process, which are well documented in existing global metropolises such as London and Paris, may also emerge more strongly in other smaller and emergent metropolises as processes of metropolisation develop more powerfully there. In many ways these trends are the other side of the coin (Jaillet and Escaffre, 2014: 34) of enhanced metropolitan attractiveness – for example, increasing property prices can accelerate processes of ‘social sorting’ of the metropolitan population (Jaillet and Escaffre, 2014: 34).

The metropolitan reality means different things for different social groups and this manifests itself in spatial terms. The mobile metropolitan ‘elites’ may find their use of the metropolitan space (notably choice of residential location) is generally free from constraint, but working and middle class ‘metropolitans’ may not have the same range of choices. The former may find themselves confined residentially to certain areas (e.g. due to affordability or allocation to social housing), whilst the latter who may harbour desires to become property owners can only realise this aspiration in the more peripheral areas of the metropolitan territory. The city centre, or depending on local context, the wider central city, may thus become the preserve of the more affluent members of metropolitan society. Another feature of metropolisation may be a social fragmentation at a more local or infra-local scale where individuals construct groupings and belongings to counter the hyper-individuation of society (a process termed “clubbisation” by Charmes cited in Jaillet and Escaffre, 2014: 34). Such processes can weaken metropolitan society by undermining the conditions for solidarity be exercised.

But a focus on the fragile metropolis does not solely imply attention to growing socio-spatial differentiation and unequal access to metropolitan resources and opportunities (e.g. employment, services, amenities), but also to the vulnerability of whole 'urban ensembles'. Their level of complexity and 'artificialisation', and the high level of population, wealth, services and infrastructure they concentrate, makes them vulnerable and requires the development of protection and security measures. They can, for example, face many natural, climatic, industrial, or public health risks. The sophisticated supply systems on which metropolitan areas depend can also be susceptible to failure with consequences for their economies and inhabitants – they can also be attacked deliberately.

There has been a growing recognition in recent years of the vulnerability of metropolitan areas in the wake of a number of events and disasters which have emerged from social challenges within the metropolis, or ecological challenges at a global scale. It is concluded therefore that the metropole is not a 'robust construction' (Jaillet and Escaffre, 2014: 35 – "une construction robuste") and that metropolitan areas contain in their own dynamics the seeds of their own 'fragility'. Yet fragility was not only that of the kind exposed by dramatic events or disasters, but could also be of the slow-onset or 'ordinary kind'.

One of the conclusions of the team that investigated metropolisation as a factor of 'ordinary fragility' in the context of the northern sector of Toulouse was that "fragility is consubstantial to the attractiveness which characterises the metropolitan process" (Jaillet and Escaffre, 2014: 35 – "Elle est consubstantielle à l'attractivité qui caractérise le processus métropolitain"). In other words that which makes metropolitan areas powerful and attractive can also be closely related to that which makes them fragile.

4.4 Territorial regulation

The territorial regulation theme explored the systems for structuring public action at the metropolitan scale in four French city regions: Bordeaux, Grenoble, Nantes and Strasbourg. The emphasis was on how these areas were working within the context of new rules for metropolitan areas and how they promulgated new 'rules' themselves. Attention was focussed on a number of issues: the local politico-administrative system; urban public action; competition around political leadership; and, any extant or potential citizen involvement in decision-making processes. Interestingly it was argued that the theme was 'taking a side step' (un pas de coté) (Lefeuvre, 2015: 10) in relation to debates around governance. One of the concerns of the researchers was to consider not only the inter-communal structures for working at the metropolitan scale which have been strengthened and given new status by the territorial reforms of the 2010s (important those these may be), but also to acknowledge that métropoles were not the only structured around these. It was argued that a wider range of public policies and projects contribute to creating cooperation at the metropolitan scale drawing in networks or 'communities' of actors. The emergence of metropolitan political spaces was also noted with the question of how far citizen participation at this level could contribute to their democratisation. The key question addressed by this theme was – "How are métropoles regulated?"

A collectively authored book drawing together the experience of the four city regions studied was published in 2015 (Lefeuvre, 2015). This reflected on the notion of the “métropole” in the French context noting that the creation of this status in the mid-2010s was marked by a certain continuity rather than a “voluntarist big bang” (Lefeuvre 2015: 11 citing Cadiou, 2012). The focus of the researchers was very much on how actors involved in metropolitan decision-making perceived and employed the term and understood related concepts such as “métropolisation”. Actions deemed as being ‘metropolitan’ were seen as having certain characteristics, notably an aspiration to change the scale and reach of public action leading to existing politico-administrative boundaries being transcended. In all cases this implied going beyond communal boundaries and sometimes even beyond existing inter-communal boundaries. The metropolitan level has been perceived as one at which action can generate new ‘inter-territorialities’, either through formal instruments (e.g. spatial plans such as the Schéma de Cohérence Territoriale [SCOT]), or more informal arrangements designed to get things done (“faire avancer l’action”) (Lefeuvre, 2015: 11). The latter mode of cooperation was often associated with the delivery of ‘strategic objectives’ through specific projects of metropolitan importance including research and HE facilities and clusters, major sporting and cultural facilities, city regional transport networks, and major international events. Such projects had a practical use but were also seen as having significant symbolic power in helping to forge and structure identities. Thus political leaders sought to use such projects to build-up their political legitimacy with varying degrees of success. There were some cases where a strong identity and network might emerge around a metropolitan project, but is not supported by a wider intercommunal organisation.

It was also argued that there was a mutually constitutive relationship between accession to the formal politico-administrative and legal status of métropole, and the more symbolic aspects of the métropolisation process. All these elements – the legal constitution as a métropole, the construction of new inter-territorialities, and development of metropolitan objectives, were seen as contributing to the emergence of a metropolitan ‘game’.

A large part of the work under the theme focussed on the emergence of metropolitan ‘games’ and ‘regulation’. The former were seen as pursuing the emergence of the latter either through integration of different metropolitan sub-systems (e.g. communal and intercommunal structures; certain sectors; or political and technical spheres), or through mobilisation around specific issues which led to the production of new rules and ways of doing things. The research undertaken focused more on the second mode of rule production rather than investigating more formal institutional aspects of métropolisation. An emphasis was placed on inductively studying mobilisation around certain issues which produced new regulation. This approach though did have parallels with more theoretical notions of social regulation which see rules as emerging from the interaction of actors. Therefore the use of the term ‘jeu’ (game) sought to metaphorically capture the notion that the rules which ostensibly structure the game are not fixed in advance, but are constantly being remade.

The reference to ‘rules’ in the plural also sought to capture the notion that diverse orders of rules structure territorial organisation at the metropolitan scale through different processes. These include the formal rules governing the legal and administrative bases of the intercommunal structures that constitute the ‘métropoles’, but also the full range of other formal and informal rules that structure and are created by the pursuit of metropolitan projects and actions. One conclusion was that ‘on the face of it there are as many regulations as there are

metropolitan actions' (Lefeuve, 2015: 13 – “*A priori*, il existe donc autant de régulations que d’actions “métropolitaines””). Yet the idea that regulation is also necessary for systems to work well and with a certain degree of stability was not ignored. This led to the question – ‘can the metropole be regulated’? Two visions were articulated here – that of a systemic system of regulation based on a more decentred approach and mutual-adjustment, or a more monocentric and hierarchical approach. The latter may conform to version of metropolitan regulation where a powerful political figure sits at the centre of the metropolitan system and orchestrates the intercommunal and metropolitan process. Yet this vision was not seen as corresponding to the reality of metropolitan construction by the authors. Rather they shared the view that systems and actors co-produce one another – i.e. key actors cannot operate without a system of rules which creates and they help create through their actions.

In the collective publication on the ‘regulation’ theme, the findings of the reseach teams were organised into four key areas of regulation and metropolitan ‘games’.

- *Regulation in the political field* paying attention to issues of leadership and the interaction between elected representatives and social contexts, networks and groups
- The *regulation of sectoral intercommunal cooperation* (around technical and politico-technical issues). This concerns local authority officers and technicians, joint communal structures, some local public or public-private companies, and politicians with and oversight role.
- *Regulations relating to projects that bring together key actors in territorial development*. This included for example, investigation of the variable links between actors like universities and businesses and the local politico-administrative structures.
- *Regulations that aim at ensuring citizen participation in decision-making processes at a metropolitan scale*. These could include initiatives led by elected representatives to mobilise citizen enjoyment around specific issues such as transport or development.

In certain city regions (Bordeaux, Grenoble and Strasbourg) attention was also given to what was termed the ‘historicity’ of rules. This was intended to acknowledge that the configuration of the current rules of the game are also rooted in past experiences (e.g. the ‘participation culture’ in Grenoble can be better understood against the context of past experiences of citizen mobilisation around mobility policy). It is concluded that an understanding of metropolitan actions can often be found through research into the “dépendence du sentier” (path dependency) and that “metropolitan organisations are in the process of being structured, but also result from actions with a historical ‘thickness’” (Lefeuve, 2015: 15 – “On retiendra que les organisations métropolitaines sont en cours de structuration mai résultent d’actions qui ont une épaisseur historique”).

4.5 Stations, transport hubs and neighbourhoods

Four of the POPSU 2 city regions explored the theme of stations, transport hubs and neighbourhoods – Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon and Rennes. This had the particularity amongst the themes of being focused on physically situated objects (Meneralut and Verhage, 2014: 54) - i.e. actual “tangible projects” (Novarina and Seigneuret, 2014) within the metropolitan dynamic in terms of their location, the mobilisation of actors, measures put in place and the type of project. The theme raised questions about the links between such projects and other major urban projects in the wider development of metropolitan strategies. This was also a theme which had been researched previously allowing some potentially interesting insights and comparisons to emerge between earlier major urban projects based around stations and transport hubs (e.g. Euralille in the 1990s) and more recent and ongoing examples of such interventions (e.g. EuroRennes or Euratlantique). Discussions between the researchers and actors from the different metropolitan areas highlighted some key themes.

The central high speed train (TGV) station remains a key site of intervention in the context of French metropolitan areas. This is a reflection of a number of factors. Firstly, the continued expansion of the TGV network (two new lines were opened on the same day in 2017), but also the expansion of services such as the regional TGV in the north of France which makes the Lille-Europe station a node in the regional transport network as well as the national one. Secondly, the ongoing and planned development of regional express train services (‘TER’) both in terms of offer and a rising number of users, is a driver of attention to central stations and their surrounding areas as the receiving points for increased flows of regional travellers. Then there is the issue of how multi-modal interchanges are re-thought and re-designed. Such developments and initiatives bring into play a range of different actors and partnership arrangements to set goals, define responsibilities and perimeters of action, address financing issues, and agree the tools of coordination. This very heavy emphasis on inter and intra urban transport is arguably a very significant characteristic of French policy.

The work undertaken also served to emphasise that there were distinctive approaches and issues depending on the context of the different cities studied. In Bordeaux the development of the tramway and TER regional rail services had led to an emphasis being placed on the area to the west of the central station in the 2005-2010 period, but with the arrival of the TGV and an extension of the central station to accommodate it attention was subsequently focused on the area to the east where a major redevelopment project covering 738 hectares was pursued. In Rennes the arrival of the new TGV line has preceded the completion of the second metro line determining the phasing of the transformation of the multi-modal interchange and that of the work on the wider EuroRennes development area. In other places like Lille attention to the areas surrounding central stations may also be about regenerating, or refreshing, projects completed in an earlier period (e.g. the 1980s and 1990s) but maintaining their original principles.

Elsewhere new projects may be conceived as delivering a step-change from past approaches deemed not to have worked (e.g. in Rennes), or as interventions on areas which had not previously been the object of major urban projects (e.g. the area to the east of the central station in Bordeaux). The research thus pointed to the fact that the station-city interface in different cities would vary in light of their different and specific urban contexts. This also

applied to how movement within, between and around transport nodes and interchanges was organised in terms of whether paths and routes were designed to optimise speed of transfer, opportunities for consumption, or relaxation/"flânerie". A shared ambition of the different cities researched was to make station quarters into more than just spaces of transition and transfer but also into destinations in their own right, user-friendly for visitors and residents, and showcases of a dense, "intense" but liveable, city.

The relationship between stations, station quarters, and surrounding areas also raised issues around their respective offers of retail and other consumer opportunities (are there complementary or in competition?), and how their public space/design is approached. In Lille for example the design of the shopping centre than interconnects the two main stations was principally turned inwards and did not deliver active frontages to the wider area. Then there was the issue of who transport nodes and station quarters are designed to 'serve'. Should they be conceived and constructed primarily as business quarters that meet the mobility, working, and consumption needs of the 'higher-order' urban professionals, or also be more embedded in their host cities? Here there was a link between these tangible urban projects and spaces and the wider reflection on the internationalisation of métropoles within which the quarter of the TGV station could be a focal point/concern. Another issue that was distinctive depending on local circumstances was the availability and control/ownership of land around stations. In some places local authorities or local public companies had the most significant landholdings in such areas, but in others the rail operator controls much of the land.

The research also considered the role of secondary stations in Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon and Rennes. In the Lyon area research undertaken by Verhage (cited in Marie, 2014: 59) suggested that there were few urban projects developed in the vicinity of secondary stations, even though these have seen a constant increase in services since the 1960s and local strategies such as the SCOT for the Lyon conurbation promote the restructuring of urban space around rail, tram and metro stops. Sometimes there was a misalignment of goals between the strategic level of the métropole and more local projects (e.g. at the strategic level there was desire to see projects around nodal points in rail networks, but locally other zones may have been given greater priority for development). Yet this does not mean that secondary stations cannot play a role in future, notably in aiding the restricting of metropolitan mobility away from road based transport. In Bordeaux work by Godier (cited in Marie, 2014: 59-60) showed how the third phase of the tram and plans to build 50,000 homes had led to action to densify development around transport networks and nodes. A number of secondary stations were subsequently developed across the metropolitan area.

There is also general political support for the idea that secondary stations can have a strategic role to play in the development of metropolitan territories, but issues remain around how networks serve inter-suburban and inter-regional connections. The findings from POPSU 2 also point to a need to consider how networks are established and cover the metropolitan territory. Again as Verhage's work showed, the location of secondary stations does not always correspond well with existing centres/nodes of activity. This may explain why they are not always able to generate development effects on their surroundings. There was also a need not to conflate and compare central and TGV stations with secondary stations. Their roles are different, with secondary stations being part of the functional territory of the métropole and part of its 'infrastructure of proximity' (Marie, 2015: 60 -"équipement de proximité"), and central/TGV stations being functionally part of urban networks at the national or international

levels. Major TGV and central stations may also concentrate a range of tertiary, cultural, service and retail functions. Such clusters could also be gathered around secondary stations if appropriately adapted to local circumstances, but often defining new uses and services around secondary stations is a task that remains to be addressed.

4.6 Sustainable development at neighbourhood, city and métropole level

The POPSU 2 programme also considered sustainable development which was a theme explored in four of the city regions – Grenoble, Marseille, Strasbourg and Toulouse. The extent to which sustainability was taken into account in projects and urban strategies was considered. The research revealed a range of actions which sought to operate at the interface between innovation and new technologies and behavioural change, to meet the challenges of energy, climate and environmental constraints and challenges. Many projects were observed in relation to issues including mobility, energy and natural resources, servicing the city and waste management, and economic development based on valorising local strengths and addressing local weaknesses through experimentation.

Attention was given to the emergence of the sustainable city around actions such as Agenda 21, land use planning documents, projects such as Ecoquartiers (EcoQuarters), and EcoCités and demonstration projects, with conclusions being drawn on the resilience of the four city regions. The work undertaken included the holding of seminars in the four participating city regions around different themes and projects. In Toulouse the focus was on the Plan Climat Energie Territorial (climate and energy territorial plan) as a process of sustainable development dedicated specifically to combatting climate change.

In Marseille attention focused on the national interest initiative of Euroméditerranée which is seen as an accelerator of metropolisation and part developing an EcoCité based around economic development and regeneration of the city's waterfront. In Grenoble the project of the Presqu'île scientifique (science peninsula) seen as a foundation stone of the Grenoble EcoCité and as an opportunity to develop a strategic economic and innovation site and demonstration quarter for the metropolitan territory was the focus. In Strasbourg attention was given to the networks of green and blue infrastructure and as in Toulouse on the evolving Plan Climat Energie Territorial (climate and energy territorial plan). This served to highlight some of the tensions inherent to sustainable development itself, notably between local and global scales.

The researchers also drew attention to the development of eco-citizenship and an "acculturation" to the sustainable city, with two-way exchanges being observed between planning and projects, notably between the production of Plan Locaux d'Urbanisme (PLU – local urbanism plans) and concrete advances in the development of EcoQuartiers, the dissemination of the Plan Climat Energie Territorial (climate and energy territorial plan), and the laying of the first stones of the EcoCités (Seigneuret, n.d.: 2).

The work completed across the four city regions allowed the range of projects and strategies targeted at promoting the sustainable city to be identified and analysed comparatively. Key amongst these were a number of demonstrator projects being developed for implementation from a quarter (neighbourhood) to a metropolitan/conurbation scale. Such

projects took into account environmental issues and energy constraints and adopted new technologies to promote the energy transition of urban territories. They were underpinned by some key principles of city regional development notably – mobility and accessibility for all, energy efficiency and use of renewable energies, density and urban compactness and the preservation of natural and agricultural space, eco-citizenship, social mix and cohesion (Seigneuret, n.d: 13).

In each city the local context also provided a context for reflections on sustainability. In Strasbourg climate change was being considered in a context where valorisation of natural spaces and heritage preservation were seen being linked in the achievement of a sustainable city. In Grenoble the diversity and multiple-origins of the local population were seen as key to the city's creative energy and identity. Here the extension of the notion of sustainable development to the whole conurbation took place in the context of a democratic debate through which the metropolitan governance of Grenoble was affirmed. Consultation had taken place with the population through local consultation councils, associations, neighbourhood groups, urbanism workshops and the information centre on urban projects⁹.

In concluding an overview of the four city regions' Seigneuret (n.d.: 13) argues that the approaches adopted in each could be qualified as resilient but that this term does not figure much in the language of practitioners in France. She notes that the four cities are pursuing a pragmatic approach to developing the sustainable city which through (implicitly?) drawing on resilience principles is allowing them to respond to global challenges through local actions. Wider challenges such as greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, and rising energy prices, thus find a local response in actions around mobility, energy efficiency, and an urbanism that aims at social cohesion and mix. Overall, Seigneuret conclude that the four city regions “are seeking to identify their weaknesses and their internal strengths, the threats likely to affect their existence and purpose, and their opportunities to evolve in the long term into post-carbon cities”, and that “each in its way has chosen to be a resilient city” (n.d.: 14 – author translation).

4.7 Conclusion

The sections above give a glimpse into the rich diversity of work undertaken under the auspices of the POPSU 2 research programme. Without seeking to repeat in this summary the thematic findings outlined above, it does seem that the POPSU 2 themes of the knowledge economy, the ‘fragile metropolis’, territorial regulation, stations, transport hubs and neighbourhoods, sustainable development at neighbourhood, city and métropole level echo those present in the international debate on city regionalism and metropolisation. There are also some (perhaps!) particularly ‘French’ angles and viewpoints which emerge from the programme in terms of use of language and emphasis which will be explored in the conclusions below.

⁹ See: <https://www.grenoble.fr/lieu/731/137-la-plateforme.htm>

5.0 Conclusion

This conclusion seeks to bring together the findings of the sections above to offer a perspective on general trends in the debate surrounding world, European, UK and French cities; reflects on the POPSU 2 programme; and, make some tentative suggestions for future research themes for a POPSU 3 or similar research programme.

It is clear from the discussions in sections 2, 3 and 5 above that there are strong similarities between the themes of the international, European, UK and French debates (and POPSU 2 research themes) on cities and city regionalism. Table 4 below presents a tentative summary of themes and issues at the European level and in the UK and France.

Table 4 – A tentative comparison of key themes and issues in the European, UK and French city and city regional debates and agendas

European cities: key debates and issues	Major UK non-capital cities: key debates and issues	Major French non-capital cities: key debates and issues
Population growth	Rapid reurbanisation	Rapid urban growth with continued suburbanisation
Ageing population	Spatial segregation of ages/household types	Old-age dependency around average but young-age dependency very high.
Immigration	Socio-political concerns about Immigration	Low proportion of foreign EU nationals (and average in terms of non-EU foreigners). Perhaps reflecting the lack of job opportunities?
Social deprivation	Rising social and spatial inequality	Spatial social segregation within urban areas. Perceived urban-rural differences in opportunities and access to services
Costs of housing and transport	Excessive housing costs and problems of access, especially in London and larger cities.	Housing costs in regenerating city centres sometimes forcing out certain populations to the peripheries. Impacts on transport costs and access to metropolitan employment opportunities.
Structure of urban economies	Good supply of jobs but employment market segregation and inequality between stable/well paid and unstable/low paid.	High levels of unemployment. Urban economies have difficulties in creating jobs.

Physical structure and density of cities	Generally low and relatively poor quality of public infrastructure/public realm.	Generally good quality public infrastructure and public realm
Environmental quality	No more than average by European standards	Variable. Perceptions important.
Current Issues Ongoing austerity in the wake, of financial crisis but signs of stronger growth (2017).	Current Issues Austerity/public spending cuts leading to poor quality public, welfare and health services. Political instability, falling growth rates, inflation. Current and potential effects of disengagement from EU. Impacts on project funding in future.	Current Issues Mixed picture regarding cities. Proposed increases to <i>Politique de la ville</i> budgets, but cuts to wider local authority budgets. Stability in structures following a period of territorial reforms in the early 2010s. Signs of return to stronger economic growth (2017). But unemployment remains high and is a key challenge for new Presidency.

Moving on to consider POPSU 2 themes and findings in relation to the knowledge economy, the ‘fragile metropolis’, territorial regulation, stations, transport hubs and neighbourhoods, sustainable development at neighbourhood, city and métropole level, it is clear that these speak strongly to those also present in the international debate on city regionalism and metropolisation. However, accepting this there are also some specificities of the French debate in general and the POPSU work in particular which seem to offer a distinctive contribution.

One might start by noting the employment and reflection on the term of ‘métropolisation’ which exists in English but in most usages arguably does not quite convey the normative sense of a voluntarist process to be pursued by public action which it has acquired in French over recent decades.¹⁰ In the UK for example most of the debate around the ‘return of the city’ is couched in terms of ‘city regions’ and city regionalism (as a variant of the various ‘new’ regionalisms which have risen and fallen from fashion over recent decades – Keating 1997; Perrin, 2017; Sykes and Nurse, 2017). Indeed there is even perhaps an interesting debate as to how to translate ‘métropolisation’ as understood in French and

¹⁰ See definition and citation of relevant literatures here - http://www.grincoh.eu/media/serie_6_spaces_territories_and_regions/grincoh_wp6.06_smetkowski.pdf

employed by many of the POPSU 2 researcher teams into English. The closest direct translation might be ‘metropolisation’ (which is used and features in the writings of authors who seek described and account for this process, often in the context of globalisation), but one might also consider the term ‘metropolitanization’¹¹ which the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online defines as “to make metropolitan in character; to give (a person) the manners, outlook, etc., of a city dweller; to urbanize (a place)”, or “The process of giving a metropolitan character to a person or area”¹². In this context it is interesting to note that the terms ‘metropolisation’, or ‘metropolization’, do not even feature in the OED online¹³.

There could be some interesting potential here for French conceptual development, practical experience, and research to make the contribution to wider international debates which Kunzmann (2014) feels it currently struggles to do as effectively as it might. At a recent seminar of the French and British Planning Studies group¹⁴, mentioned by Kunzmann (2014: 78) on the theme of ‘Metropolisation’ in France and the United Kingdom, at which British and German reviewers of POPUS 2 findings were present, the term was debated (with some English speakers even finding its unfamiliarity made it a little difficult to pronounce at first!). The attention to language and the definition concepts and their use in different settings which featured in the POPSU 2 work (e.g. around the theme of the knowledge society) could perhaps be carried forward into such debates. Métropolisation has taken on a distinctive meaning in France in light of recent experience and territorial trends and reforms – the POPSU 2 researchers seem well placed to act as the “passeurs” mentioned by Kunzmann (2014: 78) who might disseminate this experience and their work in investigating it to a wider international audience.

Another feature of the work undertaken under the POPSU 2 programme which strikes the reviewer is the degree of reflectivity and reflexivity on display (see for example Bourdin et Al., 2014) and the willingness to problematise the discourse through which the debate on métropoles in France is conveyed. This, coupled with the clear practice-research interface that the POPSU model has facilitated, seems to have enriched the work of the programme. It is for example, acknowledged in a number of the works produced that the expectations of the practice partners (urbanism agencies, territorial authorities) and researchers were sometimes rather different. This emerged around different approaches to invoking terms and concepts, or perhaps different perceptions of the ‘scales’, or levels of abstraction, at which ‘useful’ knowledge might be produced from the programme (e.g. should this be more thematic or place specific; project specific or strategic?) . The relationship between ‘knowledge’ and ‘action’ which is a common theme in debates on planning theory (and in other professional disciplines) seems to have been a strong theme to emerge from the experience of the programme. There would seem to be much potential for the POPSU 2 experience here to inform publications on this issue in relevant international journals.

¹¹ <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/252537?redirectedFrom=metropolitanisation+#eid>

¹² <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/metropolitanization>

¹³

<http://www.oed.com/noresults?browseType=sortAlpha&noresults=true&page=1&pageSize=20&q=metropolisation+&scope=ENTRY&sort=entry&type=dictionarysearch/>

<http://www.oed.com/noresults?browseType=sortAlpha&noresults=true&page=1&pageSize=20&q=metropolization+&scope=ENTRY&sort=entry&type=dictionarysearch>

¹⁴ http://www.aesop-planning.eu/blogs/en_GB/french-and-british-planning-studies

Similarly, though - as noted earlier there is a strong coherence between the 'substantive' POPSU 2 themes and wider themes in the international debate on cities and city regions, there were also some distinctive inflexions and conceptualisations. One thinks here of the issues explored around the 'fragile metropolis' theme (Bourdin, 2015), which may have individually been considered elsewhere under other headings, but which seem to be given a distinctive focus by the invocation of the term 'fragility/fragile' (which in its noun and adjective forms constructs a new way of viewing the metropolis to set alongside other perspectives such as the sustainable, resilient, smart city etc.). Focussing on the 'fragility' of the city, also provide a new 'lens' for reflecting on international concerns about threats to the 'European model' of sustainable urban development. The notion of territorial regulation (Lefeuvre, 2015) too seems to offer an interesting potential to perhaps complement (and reinvigorate?) debates around urban governance and institutionalism. Finally, the attention to the environs and impacts of railway station development perhaps also reflect a certain French specificity – which may also be developed in other European countries, but seems less explicitly addressed in the present authors' English context. That is not to say there have not been major station redevelopments which might merit reflection and study - cf. St. Pancras, Manchester Piccadilly, Birmingham New Street, but that the POPSU 2 work on this theme raises some interesting perspective and issues to be considered.

Finally, another significant feature and opportunity of the POPSU 2 programme was that it enabled research to take place across 10 of France's largest city regions over similar themes and the same time period. This provided an opportunity for a major national reflection on the issues facing city regions and for comparative reflection. Perhaps the latter dimension could have been developed more fully in some cases and an overall synthesis report to complement the excellent individual research reports and co-authored 'Le Moniteur' volumes might also have been useful. But these are just observations rather than criticisms of an impressive research programme that marries conceptual insights with practically orientated knowledge. So, considering the issues facing French métropoles as explored and reported on by POPSU 2 and in light of the review of the global debate on cities and city regions, general European experience, and that of the UK experience, above we conclude by suggesting the following as a tentative list of issues/questions that a research programme comparable to POPSU may considering focussing on in future:

- Does national economic policy, aimed at competitiveness in the global economy, allow/facilitate sustainable local urban economies?
- Does local urban economic policy facilitate a resilient and inclusive [local] economy that exploits the potential of socio-economic, cultural, generational and ethnic diversity?
- Does urban policy combat spatial exclusion in all its forms? (métropole fragile;
- Is there a holistic approach to sustainable development, environmental and energy issues?
- Are governance systems adapted to evolving circumstances and take into account various territorial (e.g. supra-urban as well as infra-urban) and temporal scales?

- Are modes of governance in French cities based on citizens' empowerment, participation of all relevant stakeholders and innovative use of social capital are needed as well as opportunities to widen the public space for civic engagement, creativity, innovation and cohesion?

So future work could explore how far governance and policy in French cities reflects the generalities of EU ambitions for the future of urban governance and policy and addresses the specific issues above in the French context. The issues above could be explored through a continuation and refinement of POPSU 2 themes and findings in relation to the knowledge economy, the 'fragile metropolis', territorial regulation, stations, transport hubs and neighbourhoods, sustainable development at neighbourhood, city and métropole level, placing the deliberations within the context of the wider international debate on city regionalism and metropolisation.
