

## Examining the Mega-city-Region hypothesis: evidence from the Paris city-region / Bassin parisien

Halbert, Ludovic

Postprint / Postprint

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

[www.peerproject.eu](http://www.peerproject.eu)

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Halbert, L. (2008). Examining the Mega-city-Region hypothesis: evidence from the Paris city-region / Bassin parisien. *Regional Studies*, 42(8), 1147-1160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343400701861328>

### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter dem "PEER Licence Agreement zur Verfügung" gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zum PEER-Projekt finden Sie hier: <http://www.peerproject.eu> Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

**gesis**  
Leibniz-Institut  
für Sozialwissenschaften

### Terms of use:

This document is made available under the "PEER Licence Agreement". For more information regarding the PEER-project see: <http://www.peerproject.eu> This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Mitglied der  
  
Leibniz-Gemeinschaft



**Examining the Mega-city-Region hypothesis: evidence from the Paris city-region / Bassin parisien**

Journal:	<i>Regional Studies</i>
Manuscript ID:	CRES-2006-0244.R1
Manuscript Type:	Main Section
JEL codes:	L2 - Firm Objectives, Organization, and Behavior < L - Industrial Organization, L8 - Industry Studies: Services < L - Industrial Organization, R1 - General Regional Economics < R - Urban, Rural, and Regional Economics, R3 - Production Analysis and Firm Location < R - Urban, Rural, and Regional Economics
Keywords:	Polycentricity, enlarged city-region, Advanced Producer Services, Abstract production, firms' phone calls, Paris/Ile-de-France/Bassin parisien

SCHOLARONE™  
Manuscripts

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

**Examining the Mega-city-Region hypothesis: evidence from the Paris city-  
region / *Bassin parisien***

1) **Ludovic Halbert** : Latts (UMR CNRS 8134), Université Paris Est

a) Private address : 8 rue Fabre d'Eglantine, 75012 Paris, France.

b) Professional address : LATTIS-ENPC, 6-8 Av. Blaise Pascal, Cité Descartes, 77455 Champs-Sur-Marne, France.

2) **Pierre Cornut**

Service de Valorisation de la recherche

Université de Mons-Hainaut

Place du Parc, 20

B-7000 Mons

[pierre.cornut@umh.ac.be](mailto:pierre.cornut@umh.ac.be)

[www.umh.ac.be](http://www.umh.ac.be)

tel: +32-(0)65-37.30.08

fax: +32-(0)65-37.30.54

Marcel Roelandts

IGEAT

Université libre de Bruxelles

Brussels

Belgium

[mroeland@ulb.ac.be](mailto:mroeland@ulb.ac.be)

First received: October 2006

Accepted: July 2007

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6 Abstract: Four dimensions of the concept of polycentricity (morphological,  
7  
8 functional, relational and political polycentricity) are discussed in this  
9  
10 paper based on the study of the Paris city-region / *Bassin parisien* system.  
11  
12 The concentration of 'abstract production' workers in the Paris  
13  
14 agglomeration and the fairly concentrated geography of firms' information  
15  
16 flows (as measured by their phone calls) prevent the formation of an  
17  
18 enlarged polycentric Mega-City-Region. Three explanations are proposed  
19  
20 based on the strategies of real estate developers, information-intensive  
21  
22 firms and policy-makers. In conclusion, I try to evaluate in the Paris city-  
23  
24 region and French context whether a limited polycentricity at *Bassin*  
25  
26 *parisien* level is prejudicial at different policy relevant scales.  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34

35 Key Words: Polycentricity, enlarged city-region, Advanced Producer  
36  
37 Services, Abstract production, firms' phone calls, Paris/Ile-de-  
38  
39 France/Bassin parisien  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 **Examen de l'hypothèse relative à la méga ville-région à partir de l'exemple du**  
49  
50 **Bassin parisien**  
51

52 Ludovic Halbert  
53  
54  
55  
56

57 Résumé : cet article traite de quatre dimensions du concept de  
58  
59 polycentricité (morphologique, fonctionnelle, relationnelle et politique) en  
60

1  
2  
3 s'appuyant sur l'étude relative au système ville-région de Paris/Bassin  
4  
5  
6 parisien. La concentration de travailleurs de production abstraite dans  
7  
8 l'agglomération parisienne et la concentration relativement importante de  
9  
10 flux d'information d'entreprise (mesurée par les appels téléphoniques)  
11  
12 empêchent la formation d'une méga ville-région polycentrique élargie.  
13  
14  
15 Trois explications sont proposées qui sont basées sur les stratégies des  
16  
17 promoteurs immobiliers, des entreprises basées sur l'information et des  
18  
19 décideurs politiques. En conclusion, j'essaie d'évaluer la ville-région de  
20  
21 Paris et le contexte français afin de savoir si une polycentricité limitée au  
22  
23 niveau du Bassin parisien est préjudiciable aux différentes échelles  
24  
25 politiques pertinentes.  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32

33  
34 Mots-clés : polycentricité, ville-région élargie, services de producteurs de  
35  
36 pointe, production abstraite, appels téléphoniques des entreprises,  
37  
38 Paris/Île-de-France/Bassin parisien  
39

40  
41 JEL : L2, L8, R1, R3  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 **Untersuchung der Hypothese der Megastadtregion: Belege aus der Stadtregion**  
49 **Paris bzw. dem *Bassin parisien***

50 Ludovic Halbert  
51

52  
53 **Abstract:**

54 In diesem Beitrag werden anhand einer Studie des *Bassin-parisien*-Systems bzw. der  
55 Stadtregion von Paris vier Dimensionen der Konzepts der Polyzentrität  
56 (morphologische, funktionale, relationale und politische Polyzentrität) erörtert. Die  
57 Konzentration von Arbeitern im Bereich der 'abstrakten Produktion' im Ballungsraum  
58 Paris und die recht konzentrierte Geografie der Informationsströme von Firmen  
59 (gemessen anhand ihrer Telefonate) verhindern die Bildung einer erweiterten,  
60 polyzentrischen Megastadtregion. Ausgehend von den Strategien von

1  
2  
3 Immobilienfirmen, informationsintensiven Firmen und politischen  
4 Entscheidungsträgern werden drei mögliche Erklärungen erörtert. Abschließend  
5 versuche ich im Kontext von der Pariser Stadtregion und von Frankreich zu  
6 bewerten, ob sich eine begrenzte Polyzentrität auf der Ebene des *Bassin parisien*  
7 in verschiedenen, politisch relevanten Maßstäben schädlich auswirken kann.  
8  
9

10 Key Words:

11 Polyzentrität

12 Erweiterte Stadtregion

13 Wirtschaftsdienstleistungen

14 Abstrakte Produktion

15 Firmentelefonate

16 Paris/Ile-de-France/Bassin parisien  
17  
18  
19

20 JEL: L2, L8, R1, R3  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

26 Análisis de la hipótesis de las regiones mega-ciudad: ejemplo de la región ciudad de  
27 París/*Bassin parisien*  
28

29 Ludovic Halbert  
30  
31

32 Abstract:

33 En este artículo se abordan cuatro dimensiones del concepto de policentralidad (morfológica,  
34 funcional, relacional y política) a partir de un estudio de la ciudad región de París y el sistema  
35 *Bassin parisien*. La concentración de los trabajadores en el sector de la 'producción abstracta'  
36 en la aglomeración de París y la geografía bastante concentrada de los flujos de información  
37 de las empresas (medidas según las llamadas telefónicas) impiden la creación de una región  
38 mega-ciudad policéntrica más amplia. Se proponen tres explicaciones en función de las  
39 estrategias de promotores inmobiliarios, las empresas con alto nivel de información y los  
40 responsables políticos. Para terminar, intento evaluar si una policentralidad a nivel del *Bassin*  
41 *parisien* en la ciudad-región de París y en un contexto francés es perjudicial en diferentes  
42 escalas relevantes a la política.  
43  
44  
45

46 Key Words:

47 Policentralidad

48 Región ciudad ampliada

49 Servicios avanzados de productores

50 Producción abstracta

51 Llamadas telefónicas de empresas

52 París/Ile-de-France/Bassin parisien  
53  
54

55 JEL: L2, L8, R1, R3  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6 The Paris city-region seems at odds with the EU spatial planning  
7  
8 agenda which is setting the enhancement of polycentricity at all levels,  
9  
10 from regional to European as a key priority (ESDP, 1999). First, being one  
11  
12 of the two leading European global cities, it might be depicted as one of  
13  
14 the city-regions responsible for the concentration of central economic  
15  
16 functions within the Pentagone region. Thus, after having faced the French  
17  
18 government's attempts to reduce its weight within the national territory  
19  
20 for the last forty years, the Paris city-region might have to deal with  
21  
22 adverse European policies favouring so-called 'peripheries' according to  
23  
24 territorial cohesion goals. Second, in spite of powerful deconcentration  
25  
26 dynamics at regional level, doubts are raised regarding the Paris city-  
27  
28 region's ability to become a truly polycentric city-region capable of  
29  
30 enhancing the development of its large regional hinterland – known as the  
31  
32 *Bassin parisien*. In this context, I aim to further develop the concept of  
33  
34 polycentricity by confronting it to the various dimensions of the enlarged  
35  
36 Paris city-region (what Polynet project calls the Mega-City-Region - MCR).  
37  
38 This article comes at the intersection of two debates on the spatial  
39  
40 organisation of metropolitan economic systems.  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52

53 *Third wave and the metropolis*. The first one refers to the relationship  
54  
55 between cities and their surrounding environment. During the 1990s, USA  
56  
57 scholars described the decentralisation of business services in terms of a  
58  
59 'third wave' of employment deconcentration which followed the two former  
60

1  
2  
3 waves of relocation both of inhabitants/services to households and of  
4 manufacturing activities to the peripheries of cities (CERVERO, 1989).  
5  
6 Traditional CBDs were believed to be inefficient in a 'post-industrial'  
7  
8 economy and were challenged by either large suburban areas as in  
9  
10 Californian metropolises (GORDON, RICHARDSON, 1996) or by 'secondary  
11  
12 economic centres', taking the forms of strips along highways or of  
13  
14 spatially limited poles of office spaces (CERVERO, 1989). This second  
15  
16 hypothesis, the 'concentrated deconcentration' (HALL, PAIN, 2006), was  
17  
18 developed in Garreau's famous '*edge cities*' work (GARREAU, 1991) which  
19  
20 depicts the triumph of a new 'American frontier' no longer related to the  
21  
22 conquest of the West but to the conquest of suburban peripheries on the  
23  
24 margins of would-be inefficient urban centres.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32

33 This reversed development (Soja uses the term 'inside out', SOJA, 1996)  
34  
35 has been first contested by some Canadian geographers. In spite of strong  
36  
37 deconcentration processes, or maybe thanks to them - Polèse and Coffey  
38  
39 (POLESE, COFFEY, 1996) have rejected the CBD decline hypothesis by  
40  
41 opposing them the vitality of central spaces: according to their  
42  
43 observations in Montréal and Toronto, the least productive functions of the  
44  
45 business services economy are forced to relocate in more remote places of  
46  
47 the city-region because they are unable to face the financial and  
48  
49 commercial competition for central spaces<sup>1</sup>.  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57

58 *Metropolis and globalisation*. A second and partly related debate  
59  
60 developed at the same time is central to understanding the spatial



1  
2  
3 reorganisations of large city-regions. It questions the relationship between  
4 economic globalisation and metropolisation. In spite of recurrent texts on  
5 the supposed 'death of distance' (CAIRNCROSS, 1997) or on the  
6 'flattening' of the world (FRIEDMAN, 2005), more or less closely following  
7 McLuhan's 'global village' theory (MCLUHAN, 1964), empirical studies have  
8 reduced the credit given to the thesis of a space-less global economy. On  
9 the contrary, a whole set of academic works link (re-)metropolisation  
10 dynamics and the advent of a global economy (SASSEN, 1991, VELTZ,  
11 1996, SCOTT, 2001). In this context, actors of the 'corporate complex'  
12 (head quarters and their many associated advanced producer services,  
13 Coffey, Polèse, 1996) are given the most prominent roles (Sassen, 1991).  
14 It is not our purpose in this paper to discuss what seems to us like a fairly  
15 restricted view of economic globalisation processes and actors which,  
16 because it focuses on the 'knowledge and information economy', tends to  
17 neglect other forms of globalisation – such as the globalisation from  
18 'below' involving 'global' low-skill low-paid workers probably as important  
19 in number as the knowledge economy workers themselves<sup>ii</sup>. In  
20 economically 'advanced' metropolitan regions – that is to say in city-  
21 regions that count among the 'spaces of flows' of a globalising economy  
22 (CASTELLS, 1996), the debate on the role and localisation of business  
23 services activities has partly joined the one on the 'third wave' of  
24 employment deconcentration – probably reflecting the growing confusion  
25 between the intra- and inter-metropolitan scales resulting both from the  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 deconcentration of inhabitants at an enlarged regional level and from the  
4 locational strategies of global firms.  
5  
6

7  
8 At the intersection of these two scientific debates, this paper aims to  
9 discuss the MCR hypothesis which states that a network of neighbouring  
10 but physically separated cities is becoming more integrated as Advanced  
11 Producer Services are deconcentrating from one or more central  
12 agglomerations (HALL, PAIN, 2006). According to this hypothesis,  
13 'concentrated deconcentration' dynamics rely on second rank cities that  
14 have reached a critical size, especially in terms of skilled labour force, to  
15 allow relocations emanating from the 'First Cities'. There are already  
16 polycentric-type deconcentration models proposed in the literature, at  
17 least at intra-metropolitan level (BOITEUX-ORAIN, HURIOT, 2002 for a  
18 survey). Case studies are now needed to measure the reality, forms and  
19 factors of such spatial trends as I propose to do in this paper with the  
20 Paris city-region and the *Bassin parisien*.  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42

43 First of all, what is the 'polycentric Mega-City-Region' (HALL, PAIN,  
44 2006)? One understands that it refers to an enlarged metropolitan region  
45 encompassing a number of coalescent urban areas which perimeters are  
46 always more overlapping as commuting distances increase and exchanges  
47 between urban centres develop thanks to transport infrastructures. The  
48 notion of polycentrism is more problematic because of its many definitions  
49 in the literature (KLOOSTERMAN, MUSTERD, 2001, PARR, 2004). Recent  
50 studies in Europe (ESPON 1.1.1 project; Interreg IIIb Polynet programme)  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 bring in fresh insights that I try to summarise in a four dimensions  
4  
5 classification of polycentricity, reflecting distinct realities and methods of  
6  
7 analyses.  
8  
9

10  
11  
12  
13 *Morphological, functional, relational and political polycentricity.*  
14

15  
16 In this paper I define **morphological** polycentricity as the ability of an  
17  
18 urban structure to i) possess homogeneously spread cities in a given  
19  
20 territory and ii) to follow a constant relation between the rank of these  
21  
22 cities and their size according to Zipf's rank-size 'law' (1949). In other  
23  
24 words, a region is all the more morphologically polycentric that no city is  
25  
26 so big as to dominate others and that cities are as evenly spread over the  
27  
28 territory as possible. By contrast, **functional polycentricity** refers to two  
29  
30 other characteristics of urban systems. In a first sense, it describes the  
31  
32 spatial repartition of *functions* – economic functions in this paper –  
33  
34 between the different cities or city-regions of a given territory. This  
35  
36 definition raises a first difficulty : should one consider an urban structure  
37  
38 functionally polycentric if i) some cities/city-regions share the *same*  
39  
40 function, for instance a specialisation in advanced producer services as it  
41  
42 is proposed in Polynet's polycentric Mega-City-Region hypothesis, or if ii)  
43  
44 cities/city-regions are specialised in different and potentially  
45  
46 complementary functions (the port city in logistics, a university city in the  
47  
48 research function, a 'First city' in control functions and Advanced Producer  
49  
50 Services, a town near a forest in the tourism function for instance). A  
51  
52 scientific evaluation of an urban system thus requires to clearly states  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 which one of these two forms of functional polycentricity is observed, if  
4  
5 any. To get things more complicated, in spite of the existence of simple  
6  
7 statistical indicators to measure the intensity of a city-region's functional  
8  
9 specialisation (the Location Quotient or the Isard Index to name but two),  
10  
11 the issue regarding the qualification of the specialisation remains difficult  
12  
13 for there might be strong functional differentiations within a city-region  
14  
15 itself: the traditional city-centre might be specialised in cultural and  
16  
17 tourism activities, the CBD and its modern extensions in business  
18  
19 services, secondary economic poles like shopping centres in services to  
20  
21 households/individuals, the airport in the logistic function, etc. Assessing  
22  
23 the functional, or any type of specialisation to a city-region, is a very  
24  
25 strong approximation of its complex internal differentiations. In this  
26  
27 regard, Advanced Producer Services' specialisation is very often much  
28  
29 more a characteristic of a city-region's CBD than, let's say, of its suburban  
30  
31 peripheries. A second and more dynamic definition may be proposed to  
32  
33 functional polycentricity even though to limit confusion I hereby propose  
34  
35 to name it differently. Following the growing interest for the 'spaces of  
36  
37 flows' (CASTELLS, 1996), functional polycentricity can be described as a  
38  
39 form of **relational polycentricity**. I insist here on the importance of  
40  
41 exchanges between the different spaces of a given regional system:  
42  
43 polycentricity would thus describe intense flows of people, ideas, capital  
44  
45 and/or goods during a normal working day. This even distribution does not  
46  
47 prevent some forms of hierarchy due to the differentiated weights of each  
48  
49 particular space within the city-region (a classical gravitational model  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 would suggest the intensity of such flows to be proportional to the  
4  
5 different spaces' demographic size and inversely proportional to their  
6  
7 distance). In this definition, a polycentric Mega-City-Region would be  
8  
9 made of several cities having day-to-day exchanges (of information,  
10  
11 workers, capital...) large enough in volume and spatially relatively 'well-  
12  
13 balanced'. A fourth description can be proposed when applying the  
14  
15 concept of polycentricity to spatial planning and economic development  
16  
17 strategies rather than to landscapes or economic functions. I understand  
18  
19 **political polycentricity** as a high degree of awareness to the existence  
20  
21 of a 'Mega-City-Region', as the existence of common institutions and/or  
22  
23 partnerships and as the political will to develop shared projects between  
24  
25 policy-makers at national, regional and local levels dealing with all or  
26  
27 parts of the Mega-City-Region's issues. In this sense, political  
28  
29 polycentricity might be an evaluation of a regional system's ability to go  
30  
31 with (or to go past) its institutional fragmentation.  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42

43 *Paris, the Ile-de-France region and the Bassin parisien.* Ile-de-France, the  
44  
45 administrative region of Paris, is interesting to test the emergence of a  
46  
47 global and polycentric Mega-City-Region in regard to these four  
48  
49 dimensions, for at least three reasons. First, the Paris functional urban  
50  
51 area (understood as the agglomeration and the commuters catchment's  
52  
53 area, which limits broadly coincide with the Ile-de-France regional  
54  
55 boundaries) offers a favourable ground for the development of a Mega-  
56  
57 City-Region according to the MCR hypothesis : it is highly affected by  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 globalisation processes being with London one of the two prominent global  
4 metropolises in Europe; it concentrates in an unchallenged proportion a  
5 large number of advanced producer services both at French and  
6 international levels (HALBERT, 2005). Second, the natural geological basin  
7 that surrounds the Paris city-region, known as the *Bassin parisien*, is  
8 large, disposes of a series of medium cities of reasonable size and  
9 constitutes a demographic reserve almost equivalent to the Ile-de-France  
10 region's own population. Last, on a more practical level, it is possible to  
11 collect data at a detailed spatial level (municipalities) that allow to partly  
12 analysing the four dimensions of polycentrism, including in a quite unique  
13 way *relational* polycentricity as indicated by phone calls flows emitted by  
14 Ile-de-France's firms.  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40

#### 41 AN URBAN STRUCTURE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF PARIS

42  
43 The spatial organisation of the *Bassin parisien* is dominated by the  
44 Paris agglomeration and its surrounding semi-rural peripheries (the whole  
45 of this constituting the Paris Urban Area or the Paris Functional Urban  
46 Area as explained above). This utterly monocentric pattern has not always  
47 been so. During the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century Rouen was the second biggest  
48 city in France and could compare to some degree to Paris. However, at  
49 least since the development of the French State which, both under the  
50 Monarchy and the various Republics promoted a concentration of  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 economic, political and cultural activities in the capital city, the weight of  
4 the Paris urban area has not been counterbalanced by any other  
5 agglomerations or system of secondary cities, not only in the *Bassin*  
6 *parisien* but also to some extent at the national level. In spite of major  
7 policies developed during the 1960s and following decades as we will see  
8 later, no secondary metropolitan region has ever managed to significantly  
9 gain over Paris FUA in terms of demographic and economic weight. Lyon,  
10 the second rank French city, is still eight times smaller than Paris, the  
11 ratio having not changed throughout the entire century. However, the rest  
12 of the urban structure in the *Bassin parisien* (considered here not in the  
13 wide geological basin perimeter but as the 11 *départements* around the  
14 Ile-de-France region, thus including most major cities within a 150 kms  
15 radius around Paris) follows a relatively polycentric pattern. Cities are  
16 located more or less at even distances from each other and constitute a  
17 quite homogenous but still hierarchical urban grid superimposed to the  
18 traditional rural landscapes, broadly following a Christaller-type  
19 organisation. A series of middle size cities circle Paris linked by what is  
20 now known as the *Route des cathédrales* (Orléans, Chartres, Rouen,  
21 Amiens, Reims) organising the *Bassin parisien's* demographic pattern.  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50

51  
52  
53 **Figure 1: FUAs' rank-size curve in the *Bassin parisien***  
54  
55

56  
57  
58 This inherited geography is only slightly modified by recent  
59 demographic changes. Growth is registered in many FUAs, including the  
60

1  
2  
3 Paris functional urban area, even though the *Bassin parisien* as a whole  
4 evolves at a slower pace than many parts of the national territory (the  
5 South and the West of France for example). This demographic  
6 development (+0.5 %/year in average in the last 30 years) benefits more  
7 to the FUAs located closer to the Ile-de-France region and, partly for this  
8 reason, more to northern and western FUAs, the eastern city of Reims  
9 being an exception. However, these general trends are in fact much more  
10 complex because of internal spatial reorganisations occurring within most  
11 large and middle size cities: inhabitants, and in a more limited proportion  
12 jobs, leave, or at least grow slower in the city-centre and sometimes in  
13 the agglomeration, while more distant suburbs and semi-rural  
14 municipalities register strong positive variation rates. The Paris FUA  
15 internal dynamics have unique consequences at a larger scale:  
16 deconcentration sweeps over rural interstitial spaces and reaches  
17 secondary cities of the *Bassin parisien*, thus contributing to what looks like  
18 the consolidation of an enlarged metropolitan region (see BERGER et al.,  
19 2006 on spatial spill-over effects and their limitations).  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

**Figure 2: The demography in the Bassin parisien (FUA level): in 1999 and 1982-99 variations**

It is largely because of internal deconcentration processes that an enlarged Parisian city-region<sup>iii</sup> - or Mega-City-Region under Polynet's terminology - seems to consolidate around the Paris functional urban area



1  
2  
3 within a set of ten to twenty medium and small surrounding cities that  
4 send a noticeable proportion of daily commuters to the Paris FUA and  
5 receive more and more francilian week-enders visiting their country  
6 house. A functional integration is at work within this enlarged area, - at  
7 least in terms of the *residential* function - , which fuels daily or weekly  
8 exchanges of people with all the social and economic consequences one  
9 can think of. Considerable financial transfers are observed from the (Paris  
10 FUA) place of work where wealth is generated to the place of living where  
11 it is given back in local taxes and spent in the local economy, thus fuelling  
12 local job creations (DAVEZIES, 2004). Some non-households-related  
13 activities may follow the same trend as firms move some of their functions  
14 closer to new sub-regional markets and to labour pools in secondary  
15 cities. During the 1960s and following decades of the fordist era, the  
16 *Bassin parisien* has become the manufacturing region where Parisian  
17 plants relocated thanks to incentives from the central government. In the  
18 1990s, some warehouses and call centres have followed. Thus MCR  
19 deconcentration affects not only manufacturing and services to households  
20 but also some business services (logistics, a limited number of back-  
21 offices activities) (THIARD, 2001).  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 BUSINESS SERVICES, ADVANCED PRODUCER SERVICES AND  
4  
5  
6 FUNCTIONAL SPECIALISATION IN THE PARIS MEGA-CITY-REGION  
7  
8  
9

10  
11 Yet, business services are still predominantly concentrated in the  
12 Paris FUA, and more specifically in the central part of its agglomeration:  
13 an economic core that I described elsewhere as the *central metropolitan*  
14 *triangle* links the three business hot spots of Paris' western districts, La  
15  
16 Défense and Boulogne-Billancourt/Issy-les-Moulineaux (HALBERT, 2004a).  
17  
18 It is fast developing all around the Parisian circular road (the  
19 *Périphérique*), in the neighbouring Southern, Eastern and Northern  
20 municipalities like the former industrial bastion of Saint-Denis which now  
21 hosts numerous movie studios, banking and insuring glass-type offices  
22 and the *Stade de France*.  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34

35 Yet current dynamics are more complex<sup>IV</sup>. If relative deconcentration from  
36 Paris municipality to closely located western municipalities has been  
37  
38 important between the two censuses of 1982 and 1999, around two thirds  
39 of the growth goes to other remaining départements, not only in the Ile-  
40 de-France administrative region but also in some surrounding *Bassin*  
41 *parisien* FUAs.  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52

53 **Table 1: Demographic and employment deconcentration in the**  
54 **Paris city-region/*Bassin parisien***  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 This is true both at intra-metropolitan level (from the central part of the  
4 Paris FUA to its fringes) but also at the Mega-City-Region level (from Paris  
5 FUA to secondary FUAs). The cartography of business services jobs  
6 variation at municipal level shows a growth following three logics: i) a  
7 proximity effect (the closer a FUA to Paris' FUA, the strongest the growth),  
8 ii) a western preference (Business services grow faster in western FUAs  
9 than in the eastern part of the *Bassin parisien*) and iii) a hierarchical  
10 diffusion (from the higher ranks of the urban hierarchy to the lower  
11 levels). In this sense, the 'third wave' of business services deconcentration  
12 is at work both within and between FUAs and tends to favour some form  
13 of functional polycentricity, even though in a very limited way as I will  
14 demonstrate in the rest of this paper.  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35

36 **Figure 3: Business services variation in the Paris/*Bassin Parisien***  
37 **region at municipal level (1982-99)**  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42

43 The definition of Business services as a statistical category is both too  
44 encompassing and too restrictive to grasp Advanced Producer Services  
45 and, maybe in a wider definition, what Reich calls the 'symbol  
46 manipulators' (1991) whom I consider in this paper central actors in the  
47 spatial and economic transformations of global city-regions. As a  
48 reminder, the business services sector ranges from Ernst & Young top  
49 accountants to Dentressangle's truck drivers, from Axa insurance  
50 company clerical staff to BCG international market analysts, from a trader  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 in one of Société Générale's floors to a low-skilled low-paid and often  
4  
5 immigrant cleaning worker for a local facility management firm. This  
6  
7 sector-based approach thus includes many not so 'advanced' jobs – in  
8  
9 terms of control power, skills, (some forms of) knowledge and, needless  
10  
11 to mention, purchasing power. Meantime, it excludes many workers that  
12  
13 are symbol manipulators but who work in firms that are registered in  
14  
15 industrial sectors. According to the French classification, a lawyer  
16  
17 employed by a car-maker is classified as part of the car industry sector  
18  
19 whereas a contracting lawyer hired by the same car-maker to do an  
20  
21 equivalent job is listed as a business services professional (Legal and  
22  
23 Accounting in the French statistical nomenclature). Yet they both do the  
24  
25 same task; they both play the same role in the productive system, the  
26  
27 same function for the business community, i.e. the justice or legal  
28  
29 function in this example. Because of sectoral data's limitations, I propose  
30  
31 in this part of the paper to focus on a functional approach – subsequently  
32  
33 allowing us to study *functional* polycentricity – based on the *Professions et*  
34  
35 *Catégories SocioProfessionnelles* classification of the French National  
36  
37 Census Bureau (INSEE). The Insee collects every 8 to 9 years the main  
38  
39 activity of all workers in France at the place of work according to a  
40  
41 typology of 455 jobs (teacher, researcher, manager, cleaner, blue collar  
42  
43 factory worker, truck driver, etc.) and this, regardless the economic sector  
44  
45 of their employer. Based on this category and revisiting empirical works  
46  
47 undertaken in the 1990s by the Paris-1 University *STRATES* laboratory  
48  
49 (BECKOUCHE, DAMETTE, 1993), I propose 14 major functions to describe  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 a given productive system of which 5 are of particular interest in this  
4  
5  
6 paper. These functions (R&D, Management, Marketing, Art & Culture and  
7  
8 Legal functions), when restricted to people working in the business  
9  
10 services and industrial sectors of a given productive system<sup>v</sup>, is a  
11  
12 reasonably effective proxy of Advanced Producer Services and other  
13  
14 'symbol manipulators' of the business world – workers that from now on I  
15  
16 will call *Abstract Production* workers because according to the economic  
17  
18 base theory they are involved on so-called 'productive' activities (hence  
19  
20 the 'Production' term) and, more specifically on handling information and  
21  
22 knowledge rather than material goods (hence the 'Abstract' term). As low-  
23  
24 skill jobs are believed not to be strategic actors of global city-regions in  
25  
26 the Polynet approach, I concentrate only on the so-called 'upper category'  
27  
28 of workers ('*Executives and Superior Intellectual Professions*' according to  
29  
30 Insee's classification) and which I call *High-level Abstract Production*  
31  
32 *workers*. By crossing sectoral, functional and social data, we manage to  
33  
34 give a relatively efficient approximation of the highly skilled knowledge  
35  
36 workers of the Paris Mega-City-Region<sup>vi</sup>, which should enable us to study  
37  
38 functional polycentricism.  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50

51 **Figure 4: High-level Abstract Production workers: a sectoral,**  
52 **functional and socio-professional definition**  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 The geography of *high-level Abstract production* jobs is spatially  
4 more selective than the ones of employment in general and of business  
5 services in particular. Not only does the Paris FUA concentrate these  
6 functions well above what could be expected based on its sole weight in  
7 terms of inhabitants or jobs but also does this concentration remains  
8 unchallenged between 1982 and 1999.  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

21 **Table 2: Location quotient in Business Services, Abstraction**  
22 **Production and High-level Abstract production workers in the**  
23 **Paris/Bassin parisien MCR**  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30

31 The Paris FUA growth rate is higher than in most surrounding FUAs. Thus,  
32 if there is a relative deconcentration process, it occurs only at intra-  
33 metropolitan level, within the Paris FUA, not at the *Bassin parisien* level.  
34 But even at this intra-regional scale, it is a much more spatially limited  
35 process compared to other indicators (inhabitants, employment and  
36 business services deconcentration). It is restricted to i) the central  
37 metropolitan triangle and ii) to a limited set of secondary economic  
38 centres, i.e. some municipalities in some New Towns (Cergy, Noisy-le-  
39 Grand, Guyancourt) and along some corridors, especially in the South-  
40 Western technopolitan quadrant. In other words, if business services  
41 deconcentration – that results from job losses in Parisian districts and high  
42 growth rates both in more peripheral Ile-de-France municipalities *and* in  
43 the *Bassin parisien* FUAs – is one of the engines of the changes of the  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 geography of employment over the last thirty years, the trend is utterly  
4  
5 different for Abstract Production-related functions which remained strongly  
6  
7 concentrated.  
8  
9

10  
11  
12  
13 **Figure 5: High-level Abstract Production workers: a dynamic**  
14 **geography in the Paris/Bassin parisien MCR**  
15

16  
17  
18  
19  
20 Thus the functional polycentrism described by the MCR hypothesis as the  
21 development of knowledge and information related jobs in secondary FUAs  
22 is not confirmed. Results suggest on the contrary a reinforcement of their  
23 concentration within the Paris FUA, and more specifically in its triangle-  
24 shaped central economic core and in the neighbouring municipalities,  
25 following what I call a 'peri-central deconcentration' trend. Does it mean  
26 that functional polycentrism is irrelevant in grasping the transformation of  
27 the Parisian Mega-City-Region? Yes, if this is understood as equivalent to  
28 a more balanced location of Abstract Production functions both in the Paris  
29 FUA and in the secondary FUAs. No, if one considers functional  
30 polycentrism as a regional division of a given productive system's  
31 functions. Following other works on intra-regional division of labour under  
32 the fordist production era (DAMETTE, SCHEIBLING, 1995), I demonstrate  
33 elsewhere that the *Bassin parisien*'s urban system shows a clear functional  
34 *division* of labour: Paris FUA is specialised in Abstract Production functions  
35 (R&D, management, marketing, culture and the arts); second rank cities  
36 in public services and some basic production activities (manufacturing,  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 logistics); small cities in basic services to population and some production  
4  
5 activities (partly linked to the local agricultural economy), etc. If this is  
6  
7 not sufficient to qualify a fully polycentric economic geography because it  
8  
9 is still utterly hierarchical due to the Ile-de-France region's weight, this  
10  
11 hints towards the existence of some *complementarities* between the  
12  
13 different urban areas of the Paris/*Bassin Parisien* urban system. Functional  
14  
15 specialisation is therefore more efficient a term to describe current  
16  
17 changes, much more than the functionally polycentric Mega-City-Region  
18  
19 concept defined as a potentially equal specialisation of primary and  
20  
21 secondary cities in Advanced Producer Services.  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34

### 35 INFORMATION FLOWS AND THE HIERARCHICAL INTRA-METROPOLITAN 36 37 POLYCENTRISM IN THE PARIS FUA 38 39 40 41 42

43 What employment data can reveal is the location of activities within a  
44  
45 given regional economy. What it does not is to show how the regional  
46  
47 productive system works in its day-to-day functioning. To understand  
48  
49 urban *systems* – and not only urban structures – one has to observe the  
50  
51 *relational* geography which can be apprehended not so much in terms of  
52  
53 flows of commuters going to and coming back from work, but *via*  
54  
55 exchanges happening during a normal working day. As the information  
56  
57 and knowledge economy develops, a geography of information flows  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 within and between FUAs becomes urgent (CASTELLS, 1996). However,  
4 data are lacking. Authors, like Taylor (TAYLOR, 2003) have proposed  
5 indirect indicators to grasp *potential* intra-firms' flows and often at inter-  
6 metropolitan rather than intra-regional levels.  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11

12  
13 Phone calls exchanged *between firms* are one way to approaching  
14 more directly the geography of information flows. Thanks to a research  
15 partnership with the national operator France Télécom, I have been able  
16 to create a database collecting at municipal level all phone calls emanating  
17 from firms located in the Ile-de-France region to i) other firms in the  
18 region and ii) to all types of respondents (both firms and individuals) in  
19 the rest of the world (at *départementale* level in France, at country level  
20 elsewhere). The data collection that went for six weeks in March and April  
21 2003 was based on a survey method which rate varied accordingly to  
22 traffic intensity. France Télécom had at the time of the data collection the  
23 lion's share in the market of firms' phone calls (over three quarter) which  
24 makes this dataset relatively efficient to grasp voice information  
25 exchanges via telecommunications. They are limits to this dataset. First,  
26 exchanges outside the Ile-de-France region are incompletely informed: we  
27 do not have phone calls exchanged between FUAs of the *Bassin parisien*,  
28 but only exchanges between Paris municipalities and the surrounding  
29 administrative *départements*. Second, the use of this data presupposes  
30 that phone calls are considered as efficient proxies of information  
31 exchanges in an economic system. One should bear in mind at all times  
32 that it is one among many other ways of exchanging information even  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 though empirical surveys have testified its use as a crucial one in business  
4 relationships (HALBERT, 2004b). Last, the influence of distance on  
5 increasing prices is to be taken into account although empirical surveys  
6 tend to confirm that costs have a fairly small impact on the geography of  
7 information flows at both global and regional levels (HALBERT, 2004b).  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17

18 Yet, the results bring insights on how the regional productive system  
19 works in its day-to-day exchanges, and why *relational* polycentrism is of  
20 very restricted intensity at Mega-City-Region level in the Paris/*Bassin*  
21 *parisien* case. *Bassin parisien* départements accounted for 4.2 % of all  
22 phone calls emitted by Ile-de-France's firms during the survey period.  
23 Compared to the number of workers, it is more than could be expected  
24 (emission index<sup>vii</sup> of 1.37 against the French average at 1.0). At the  
25 *département* level, an East-West imbalance appears clearly within the  
26 *Bassin Parisien*: Oise valley cities, Chartres, Rouen and Orléans  
27 *départements* account for almost two thirds of the total exchanges from  
28 the Ile-de-France to the *Bassin parisien*.  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44

45 However, these day-to-day interactions between the Paris region and its  
46 neighbouring *départements* are quite limited. First because a large share  
47 of telecommunication flows bypasses the *Bassin parisien* cities due to  
48 strong exchanges between the Paris Region and other areas in France or  
49 abroad. The administrative regions of Rhône-Alpes and PACA – that is to  
50 say Lyon, Grenoble, Marseille and Nice city-regions - receives for example  
51 more phone calls than the entire *Bassin parisien*. At international level,  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 the Paris/Ile-de-France firms call Africa as much as the *Bassin parisien*  
4 while the Oise *département* receives fewer phone calls than Germany.  
5  
6

7  
8 Second, exchanges are polarised within the Paris FUA, and especially  
9 within its agglomeration. Two thirds of all phone calls remain *within* the  
10 Ile-de-France region. Moreover, the pattern in this case is one a very  
11 hierarchical polycentrism. The economic core, made here of the western  
12 Paris districts and of La Défense municipalities, is information-intensive  
13 and plays the role of the global gateway. The rest of the metropolitan  
14 centre and the south-western quadrant is more intensely specialised in  
15 exchanges at national level. Last, the rest of the Ile-de-France territories  
16 have a local profile (inner suburbs looking inward, outer suburbs looking  
17 outward to the *Bassin parisien*). In conclusion, the intensity of centripetal  
18 information flows within the Paris FUA dominates over the polycentric  
19 pattern. Such a concentration of information flows within the Paris  
20 agglomeration prevents further relational polycentricity with surrounding  
21 FUAs of the *Bassin parisien*. Therefore, one does not see evidence of a  
22 polycentric Mega-City-Region functioning.  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47

48 **Figure 6: Phone calls flows from Ile-de-France firms to *Bassin***  
49 ***parisien départements***  
50  
51

52  
53  
54  
55 **Table 3: Phone calls exchanges emanating from Ile-de-France**  
56 **firms in volume**  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11 THE LIMITS TO MCR DECONCENTRATION  
12  
13  
14  
15

16 In this last part of the paper, I propose three explanations to explain  
17 the still relatively concentrated economic geography observed within the  
18 Paris agglomeration and which I describe above as the main factors for  
19 the very limited economic deconcentration of abstract production jobs at  
20 the enlarged Paris/*Bassin parisien* region.  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29

30 First, even though our understanding of their locational strategy still  
31 lacks a deeper analysis, real estate actors (promoters *and* investors) tend  
32 to play a growing role in the geography of offices, and indirectly on the  
33 locations of abstract production activities (MALEZIEUX, 1999, CROUZET,  
34 2003). It is observed that investors are reluctant to develop real estate  
35 offices in the *Bassin parisien's* secondary cities where the existing office  
36 market is small and assets are more difficult to sell. As most investors  
37 now apply financial management techniques that require liquid markets in  
38 which buying and selling can be done quickly, they prefer to concentrate  
39 their investments on larger markets either in more important provincial  
40 metropolises (like Lyon) or in the Paris FUA itself. Over the last twenty  
41 years, around 90% of all offices developed in the *Bassin parisien* where  
42 thus created in the Ile-de-France region (Diziain, Halbert, 2006).  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Moreover, to balance risk and profits, most investors prefer to follow the  
4 same locational patterns and therefore develop large office districts, in  
5  
6 same locational patterns and therefore develop large office districts, in  
7  
8 already well established parts of the city (where profit but also risk are  
9  
10 reduced) or in promising places often closed to the central area (for  
11  
12 instance in industrial districts adjacent to CBDs) or in already important  
13  
14 secondary economic centres. In this context, the Paris agglomeration,  
15  
16 whether in the new towns located on its outskirts or more likely during the  
17  
18 last ten years in peri-central municipalities, has been favoured against  
19  
20 more remote second rank cities of the *Bassin parisien*.  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

26 Second, advanced producer services professionals tend to follow a  
27  
28 concentrated locational pattern. Around 40 interviews achieved in the  
29  
30 enlarged Paris region perimeter during the Polynet research have shown  
31  
32 that because of the increasing volume of information flows circulating  
33  
34 thanks to ICTs, the need for face-to-face contact is higher. Emails and  
35  
36 video-conferencing are not sufficient to exchange strategic and often tacit  
37  
38 knowledge via formal meetings or thanks to more informal exchanges  
39  
40 (over lunch, with friends, etc.). This empirically confirms more theoretical  
41  
42 proposals highlighting the importance of extra-economic exchanges that  
43  
44 ensures today's economic efficiency (VELTZ, 1996, GRAHAM, MARVIN,  
45  
46 1996). The central Parisian core is the first location where these  
47  
48 exchanges occur. It constitutes a dense and dynamic '*city milieu*' where  
49  
50 information circulates and is interpreted. One can go as far as to describe  
51  
52 the central metropolitan triangle of Paris, La Défense and Boulogne / Issy-  
53  
54 les Moulinaux as one example of the neo-marshallian information  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 districts described by Graham and Marvin (1996) in which the "buzz" is  
4  
5 essential (STORPER, VENABLES, 2004).  
6  
7  
8  
9

10  
11 Third, the lack of more polycentric development between Paris city-  
12 region and other secondary cities of the *Bassin parisien* is linked to spatial  
13 planning policies. Since the 1960's at least, two competing strategies are  
14  
15 observed in the national spatial planning strategy (WELLHOFF, 1995,  
16  
17 HALL, 1995, HALBERT, 2006a). First, the central State has developed a  
18  
19 strong reluctance to supporting demographic and economic development  
20  
21 in the Paris region because of what was perceived since the 1940s like the  
22  
23 excessive weight of Paris in the French territory. In his famous book,  
24  
25 Gravier summarised the national geography in a short and impressive  
26  
27 title: 'Paris and the French desert' (GRAVIER, 1947). In this context, a  
28  
29 policy to support 'equilibrium metropolises' has been favoured by the  
30  
31 central government in the 1960s at national level which because of the  
32  
33 attraction of Paris very soon ended in supporting secondary cities in the  
34  
35 *Bassin parisien*. In the 1990s, this planning strategy was still a priority:  
36  
37 the central spatial planning agency (the Datar, created in the 1960s by de  
38  
39 Gaulle and which has been one of the most vigorous promoter of  
40  
41 decentralisation policies) and the different administrative regions of the  
42  
43 *Bassin parisien* agreed to favour demographic and economic development  
44  
45 around the Ile-de-France region to prevent more concentration in the  
46  
47 Paris FUA. Among the different scenarios proposed at that time, two were  
48  
49 opposed: the first was one of strong integration between Paris and its  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 surrounding secondary cities (evolving towards what would be a Mega-  
4 city-Region under Polynet's terminology); the second opposed the Paris  
5 agglomeration to emergent polycentric metropolises in the peripheries of  
6 the *Bassin parisien*, the latter scenario being favoured by most regions  
7 and the Datar. This led to the development of a strategic cooperation  
8 between the national government and the 8 administrative regions (1994-  
9 99 *Contrat de Plan Interrégional du Bassin Parisien*), probably the only  
10 formal attempt to develop a Mega-City-Region scale governance (what in  
11 the outset of this paper I refer to as 'political polycentricity'). Since then, no  
12 more trans-regional - that is to say at MCR level - strategies and  
13 partnerships have been proposed, probably because of the successfully  
14 competing spatial planning strategies developed within the Ile-de-France  
15 region at the same time.

16  
17  
18 Indeed, the development of spatial planning in the *Bassin parisien* has  
19 been challenged by a parallel policy emanating from the central  
20 government in order to support - in a quite schizophrenic way - the Paris  
21 city-region. As early as de Gaulle's government, the '*grandeur de la*  
22 *France*' policy required that regardless the numerous attempts to reduce  
23 the weight of Paris in the national territory, it was equally important to  
24 keep the French economic engine of that time roaring. Investments in  
25 infrastructures proposed in the three successive Regional Master Plans  
26 (1965, 1976 and 1994 *Schémas directeurs*) aimed to reinforce the  
27 international attractiveness and the economic efficiency of the first French  
28 FUA. From La Défense business district to the *Villes Nouvelles* policy, from  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Roissy airport to the RER network (*regional express railway system*) and  
4  
5 expressways, all these investments proved to be crucial in the  
6  
7 development of the agglomeration as we know it today. In this context,  
8  
9 the leading principle was the enhancement of polycentricity, *but* within a  
10  
11 very small radius. Even though inspired by the British New Towns, the Ile-  
12  
13 de-France *villes nouvelles* were located no further than 30 kms away from  
14  
15 Notre-Dame cathedral while English *New Towns* are often found at  
16  
17 100 kms from St-Paul. This is crucial in understanding the limited  
18  
19 deconcentration processes happening in the *Bassin parisien* as firms have  
20  
21 found secondary cities in the *vicinity* of the Paris central area without  
22  
23 having to move further outside the Ile-de-France region. The success of  
24  
25 regional planning infrastructures might be the most important reason for  
26  
27 the lack of a Mega-City-Region in the Paris case study (HALBERT, 2006a).  
28  
29 The 40 years long opposition between these two policies (limitation of  
30  
31 Paris development vs. reinforcement of its attractiveness) has prevented  
32  
33 the development of a MCR level governance. The current focus given to  
34  
35 the regional level in terms of spatial planning strategies will probably  
36  
37 reduce any potential developments of a MCR level political polycentricity,  
38  
39 both in terms of a common strategy and of formal/informal partnerships.  
40  
41 The current revision of the Ile-de-France master plan seems to eagerly  
42  
43 forget the surrounding cities and *départements* which however are  
44  
45 functionally linked to the Paris city-region, not so much in terms of  
46  
47 Advanced Producer Services but in more basic production and services  
48  
49 activities (HALBERT, 2006b).  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



## ELEMENTS OF CONCLUSION:

This paper highlights some limitations of the global polycentric Mega-City-Region formation hypothesis when applied to the Paris city-region/*Bassin parisien*. If a network of secondary cities exist around the dominant Paris FUA, thus slightly counter-balancing a predominantly monocentric morphological pattern, specialisation in Advanced Producer Services and in Abstract Production functions is still restricted to Paris FUA's central area and to some secondary economic centres *within* the Paris agglomeration. Business services deconcentration follows a hierarchical functional division of labour between Paris FUA and the *Bassin parisien*, the latter concentrating basic production and 'basic' services to firms and households rather than highly skilled 'global' workers. In this context, relational polycentricity measured by firms phone calls exchanges is strictly polarised by the Parisian FUA, excluding in so the advent of a fully polycentric network of cities at Mega-City-Region level.

The intensity of global functions' polarisation by the Paris FUA, and more specifically within its agglomeration, is the result of at least three processes: i) the concentration of real estate developments in large central poles to reduce investors' risks, especially since the mid-1990s, ii) the need for many knowledge and information economy-related firms to share spatial proximity in order to favour face-to-face contact, iii) the spatial planning policies which supported the development of well-connected urban centres within the Paris agglomeration and thus limited

1  
2  
3 the opportunities of relocation in further secondary cities at *Bassin*  
4 *parisien* level unlike in the London/South-East England case.  
5  
6

7  
8 Last, maybe because of the spatially limited deconcentration process,  
9  
10 political polycentrism at MCR level, that is to say the ability to develop a  
11 strategy and partnerships at the enlarged metropolitan scale, has been  
12  
13 unsuccessful but maybe for a very short and controversial period of time  
14  
15 in the mid-1990s.  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

23 In conclusion, one should ask whether the lack of polycentricity in  
24 the Paris city-region / *Bassin parisien* is a positive or a negative outcome  
25 according to the four main policy objectives prevalent in contemporary  
26 urban and regional planning (i.e. economic efficiency, social equity,  
27 environmental sustainability, territorial cohesion) and this at the various  
28 spatial levels (from local to European).  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37

38 First at Ile-de-France scale, in spite of recent difficulties in terms of  
39 economic development and job creations, Paris city-region is still one of  
40 the two leading global cities in the European system. It still contributes  
41 importantly to the national wealth, and remains its major economic  
42 engine. Moreover its relatively compact geography might prove to be a  
43 key asset in satisfying firms that are always more eager to access to high-  
44 skill workers in a global and knowledge-demanding economy. However,  
45 because of i) important public and social transfers at national level, ii) a  
46 decreasing perceived quality of life leading to a negative migration  
47 balance, iii) increasing long distance commuters leaving outside the Ile-  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 de-France region and iv) a higher proportion of high-paid workers that  
4  
5  
6 tend to spend their money outside the region (week-ends, holidays,  
7  
8 business tourism), a part of the wealth created in the Paris city-region is  
9  
10 not reinvested locally, thus strongly limiting job creation (DAVEZIES,  
11  
12 2004). In other words, if agglomeration and urban economies favour an  
13  
14 extremely high productivity for firms, the economic outcomes are  
15  
16 counterbalanced by external and more societal trends that limit the overall  
17  
18 economic success of the region measured for instance in revenues per  
19  
20 inhabitants or in job creations. Second, globalisation trends seem to  
21  
22 sharpen social inequities in the Paris Ile-de-France region as it does in  
23  
24 many other cities, especially as land prices are peaking in the central part  
25  
26 of the agglomeration, forcing out lower income households which in  
27  
28 consequences see their potential employment basin reduced (ORFEUIL,  
29  
30 WENGLANSKY, 2004). Last, the efficiency of the public transport system  
31  
32 and the limited extent of the agglomeration is seen by many as a valuable  
33  
34 asset to limit unsustainable development. If the *Villes nouvelles* have not  
35  
36 managed to polarise all deconcentration processes and have soon be  
37  
38 swept by a wave of urban sprawl, density remains a key element to  
39  
40 reduce car dependency and to limit long distance commuting. In this  
41  
42 context, it seems that for economic, social and environmental reasons,  
43  
44 concentration should prove more beneficial to the overall Paris city-region  
45  
46 than a further deconcentrated polycentricity at Mega-City-Region scale, if  
47  
48 only the redistribution of wealth within the region was to be improved.  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 Yet, this does not mean that functional and/or political integration or  
4  
5 complementarities should not be pursued to address issues that link the  
6  
7 Paris City-region and the rest of the *Bassin parisien*. Spill-overs from the  
8  
9 Paris city-region can affect positively secondary cities that benefit from  
10  
11 new revenues spent locally, develop local service economies and host  
12  
13 deconcentrated functions (basic manufacturing, logistics and services).  
14  
15 Some cities have been more successful than others like Orléans or  
16  
17 Chartres which have found sectoral and functional specialisations that  
18  
19 complement the economic profile of the Paris city-region. Their strategies  
20  
21 to strengthen niche specialisations may seem unacceptably risky if too  
22  
23 narrowly defined in one sub-segment of a particular sector but can be  
24  
25 very effective if correctly positioned in complementarity with the Ile-de-  
26  
27 France market where customers and investors are numerous. There are  
28  
29 no evidences in this context of an insurmountable 'shadow effect' where  
30  
31 Paris would be the sole city to get all the benefits of globalisation  
32  
33 processes.  
34  
35

36  
37 At national level, contrasting with the now old policy aiming at limiting the  
38  
39 growth of the Paris city-region – and which has still numerous supporters  
40  
41 – studies demonstrate that the Ile-de-France success benefits probably  
42  
43 more to the rest of the national territory because of the important  
44  
45 redistribution of wealth (DAVEZIES, 2005).  
46  
47

48  
49 Last, at European level, Paris city-region, and more largely the different  
50  
51 First Cities of the Pentagon are the key gateways that link EU to the  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 globalising economy and probably should not be downplayed by EU policy-  
4  
5 makers (HALL, PAIN, 2006).  
6  
7  
8  
9

10  
11 The Paris case study not only shows that in spite of deconcentration  
12 trends affecting business services (third wave hypothesis), polycentric  
13 MCR formation process is not such a universal a trend among European  
14 cities. It also demonstrates that less polycentric development can be at  
15 least as efficient according to the different objectives followed by policy-  
16 makers. But most of all, it underlines the importance of *specific histories*,  
17 both regional and national, in the shaping of city-regions, no matter how  
18 intensely integrated in the globalisation of the economy they are.  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

## References:

- BECKOUCHE, P., DAMETTE, F., (1993), Une grille d'analyse globale de l'emploi, *Economie et Statistiques*, 270 (10), pp. 37-50.
- BERGER M., DIZIAIN R., HALBERT L., ROUSSET-DESCHAMPS, M., THIARD P., 2006, *Effets de débordement, polarisations économiques et stratégies d'acteurs en Île-de-France et dans le Bassin Parisien*, Rapport pour le PUCA.
- BOITEUX-ORAIN, C., HURIOT, J., (2002), Modéliser la suburbanisation, succès et limites de la micro-économie urbaine, *Revue d'Economie Régionale et Urbaine*, 1, pp. 73-104.
- CAIRNCROSS, F., (1997), *The Death of Distance : How the Communications Revolution Will Change Our Lives*, New York, McGraw-Hill.
- CASTELLS, M., (1996), *The Information Age, Volume 1 : The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- COFFEY, W., POLESE, M., (1996), Examining the thesis of CBD decline: evidence from Montreal metropolitan area, *Environment & Planning A*, 28, pp. 1765-1814.
- CERVERO, R., (1989), *America's suburban centers*, Boston, Unwin Hyman, 232 p.
- CHRISTALLER W. (1933, trad. 1966), *Central Places in Southern Germany*, trad. Baskin C.W., New Jersey, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall.

- 1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60
- CROUZET, E., (2003), "Le marché de bureau et les territoires métropolitains; vers un renforcement de la discrimination territoriale", *L'Espace Géographique*, 32(2), 141-154
  - DAMETTE, F., SCHEIBLING, J., (1995), *La France, permanences et mutations*, Paris, Hachette.
  - DAVEZIES L., (2004), "Temps de la production et temps de la consommation, les nouveaux aménageurs des territoires ?", *Futuribles*, 295
  - DAVEZIES L., (2005), *Vers une macro-économie locale. Le développement local entre économie productive et présenteielle*, Rapport pour la Datar.
  - DIZIAIN, R., HALBERT, L., 2006, *Débordement et immobilier d'entreprise*, in Berger, M. et al., *Effets de débordement, polarisations économiques et stratégies d'acteurs en Ile-de-France et dans le Bassin parisien*, Rapport final, Programme Organisation de l'espace urbain et dynamiques économiques, PUCA.
  - FRIEDMAN, T. (2005): *The World is Flat. A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux
  - GARREAU, J., (1991), *The edge city : life on a new frontier*, New York, Doubleday.
  - GORDON, P., RICHARDSON, H., (1996), *Employment decentralization in US metropolitan areas: is Los Angeles an outlier or the norm?*, *Environment & Planning A*, 28, pp. 1727-1743.
  - GRAVIER, J.-F., (1947) *Paris et le désert français*, Paris, Le Portulan.

- 1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60
- HALBERT, L., (2004a), The intrametropolitan decentralization of Business Services in the Paris Region: Patterns, Interpretation, Consequences, *Economic Geography*, 80, n°4, pp. 381-405.
  - HALBERT, L., (2004b), *Densité, desserrement, polycentrisme et transformation économique des aires métropolitaines. Interpréter la concentration des activités d'intermédiation dans la zone centrale de la région francilienne*. Ph. D. thesis, Université Paris-I, P. Beckouche (dir.), 342 p.
  - HALBERT L., (2005), Les métropoles, moteurs de la dématérialisation du système productif urbain français : une lecture sectorielle et fonctionnelle (1982-1999), *Bulletin de l'Association des Géographes Français*, n°3, pp. 279-297.
  - HALBERT L., (2006a), The polycentric city-region that never was: Paris agglomeration, Bassin parisien and spatial planning strategies in France, *Built Environment Special Issue*,
  - HALBERT L., (2006b), Job deconcentration and functional specialisation in the Paris city-region, Paper presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> EURA bi-annual Conference Cities in City-Regions, Warsaw.
  - HALL, P. (1995), Planifier les bassins métropolitains, *Metropolis*, 104/105, pp.6-8.
  - HALL P., PAIN K. (eds.), (2006), *The Polycentric Metropolis*, London, Earthscan.
  - KLOOSTERMAN, R., MUSTERD, S, (2001), The Polycentric Urban Region: Towards a research agenda, *Urban Studies*, 38, 4, 623-33



- 1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60
- MALEZIEUX, J., (1999), "Nouvel immobilier d'entreprise et division sociale de l'espace", in MALEZIEUX, J, FISCHER, A., (1999), *Industrie et aménagement*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 246 p.
  - McLUHAN, M., (1964), *Understanding media*, New York, McGraw-Hill.
  - ORFEUIL, J.-P., WENGLANSKI S., (2004), The differences in the accessibility to the job market according to the social status and the place of residence in the Paris area, *Built Environment*, Volume 30, no 2 "Transport, Inequalities and Poverty"
  - PARR, J., (2004), The Polycentric Urban Region: a closer inspection, *Regional Studies*, 38, 3, 231-240
  - SASSEN, S., (1991), *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, New York, Princetown University Press.
  - SCOTT, A., SOJA, E., AGNEW, J., (2001), *Global City-regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
  - SOJA, E., (1996), *Postmetropolis : critical studies of cities and regions*, Oxford, Blackwell, 440 p.
  - STROPER, M., VENABLES, A., (2004), "Buzz: face-to-face contact and the urban economy", *The Journal of Economic Geography*, 4(4)
  - TAYLOR, P., (2003), *World city Networks: a global urban analysis*, London, Routledge.
  - THIARD, P., (2001), *Les dynamiques spatiales du Bassin parisien (1975-1990). Un système spatial entre mutations du système*

1  
2  
3 *productif et impact des politiques publiques*, Ph. D. Thesis,  
4  
5  
6 Université Paris 1

- 7  
8 - VELTZ, P., (1996), *Mondialisation, Villes et Territoires. L'économie*  
9  
10 *d'archipel*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 262 p.  
11  
12 - WELLHOFF, F. (1995) Petite histoire de l'aménagement du bassin  
13  
14 parisien, *Metropolis*, 104/105, pp.9-12.  
15  
16 - ZIPF G.K. (1949), *Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort*,  
17  
18 Reading, Addison-Wesley.  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Table 1:

Ring	Inhabitants		Employment		Business Services	
	Total in 1999	%/yr (1982- 99)	Total in 1999	%/yr (1982- 99)	Total in 1999	%/yr (1982- 99)
Paris	2,125,250	-0.17	1,600,820	-0.61	666,440	-0.26
Inner départements	4,038,570	0.2	1,771,920	0.58	729,730	4.20
Outer départements	4,688,350	1.16	1,659,890	1.95	517,530	5.48
Surrounding Départements	3,943,990	0.44	2,160,480	0.31	407,370	2.07
Total	14,796,160	0.48	7,193,110	0.44	2,321,070	2.19

Table 2

Ring	Business Services		Abstract Production		High-skill Abst. Prod	
	1982	1999	1982	1999	1982	1999
Paris	155	129	140	119	152	132
Inner suburbs	104	128	115	129	129	152
Outer suburbs	85	97	87	99	86	95
Surrounding Cities	58	58	61	63	41	38

Table 3

Main destination	Départements	Volumes in million of seconds
Bassin Parisien		<b>1,861</b>
	Oise	360
	Seine-	
	Maritime	330
	Loiret	267
	Eure-et-Loir	185
	Eure-et-Loir	169
	Marne	142
	Aisne	116
	Somme	112
	Yonne	107
	Aube	73
Rest of France		<b>8,819</b>
Ile-de-France		<b>28,700</b>
International		<b>4,931</b>
Total		<b>44,311</b>

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

For Peer Review Only

Figure 1

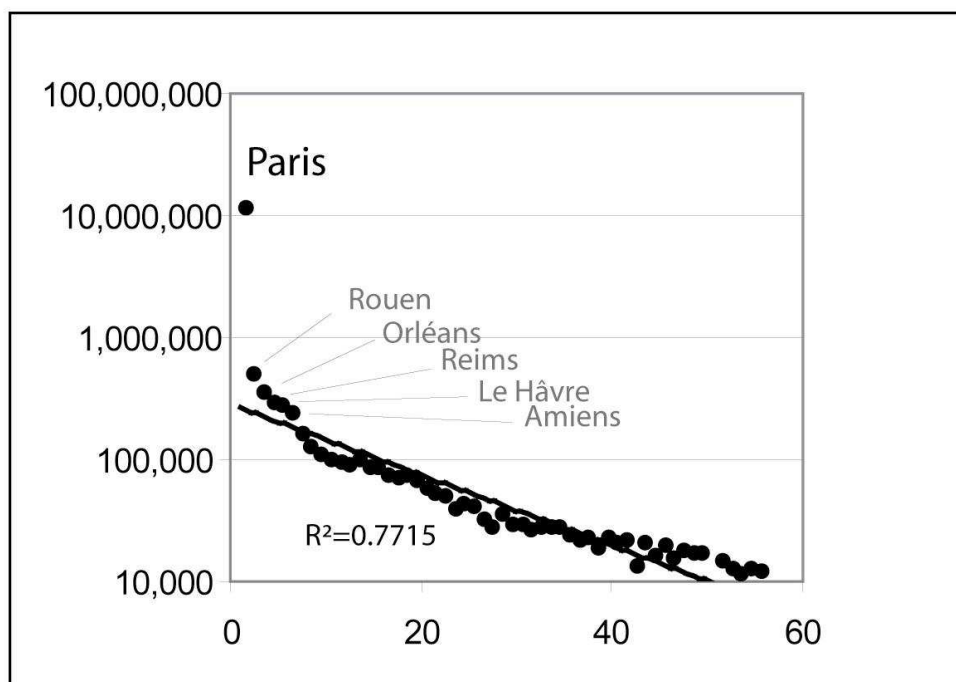
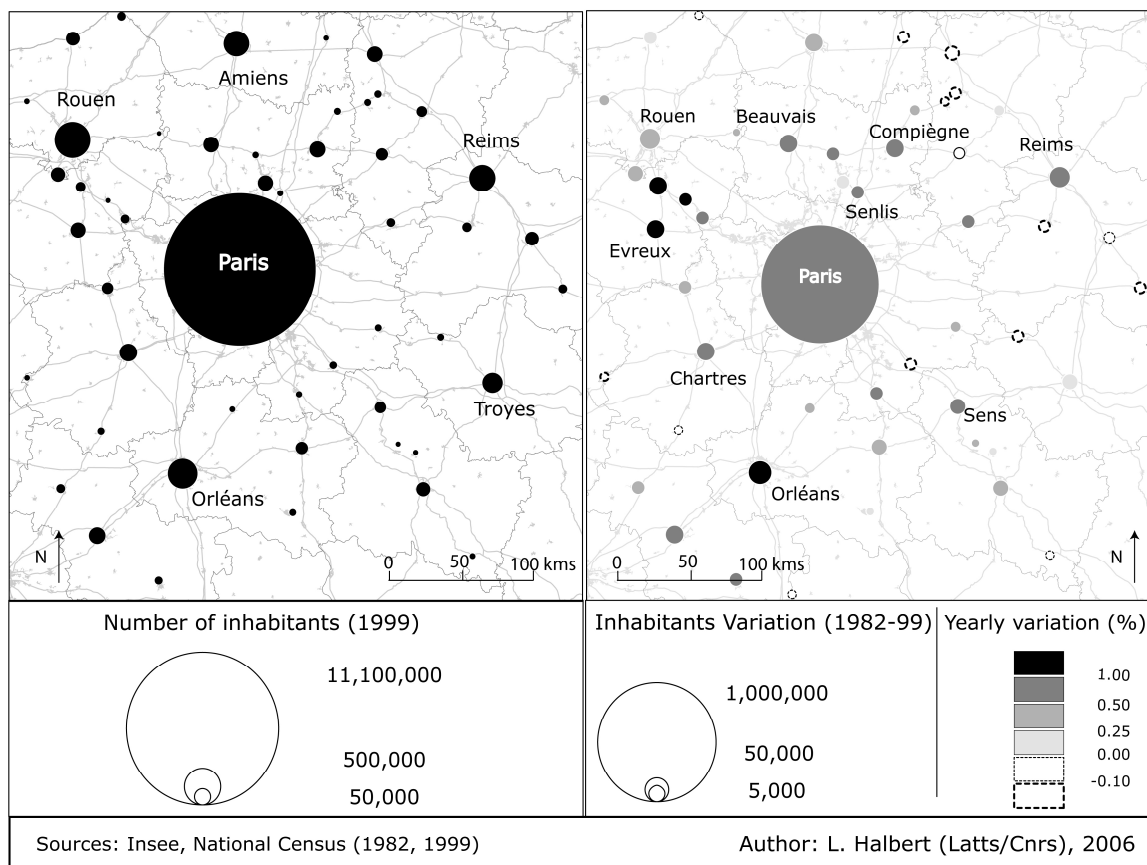


Figure 2



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Figure 3

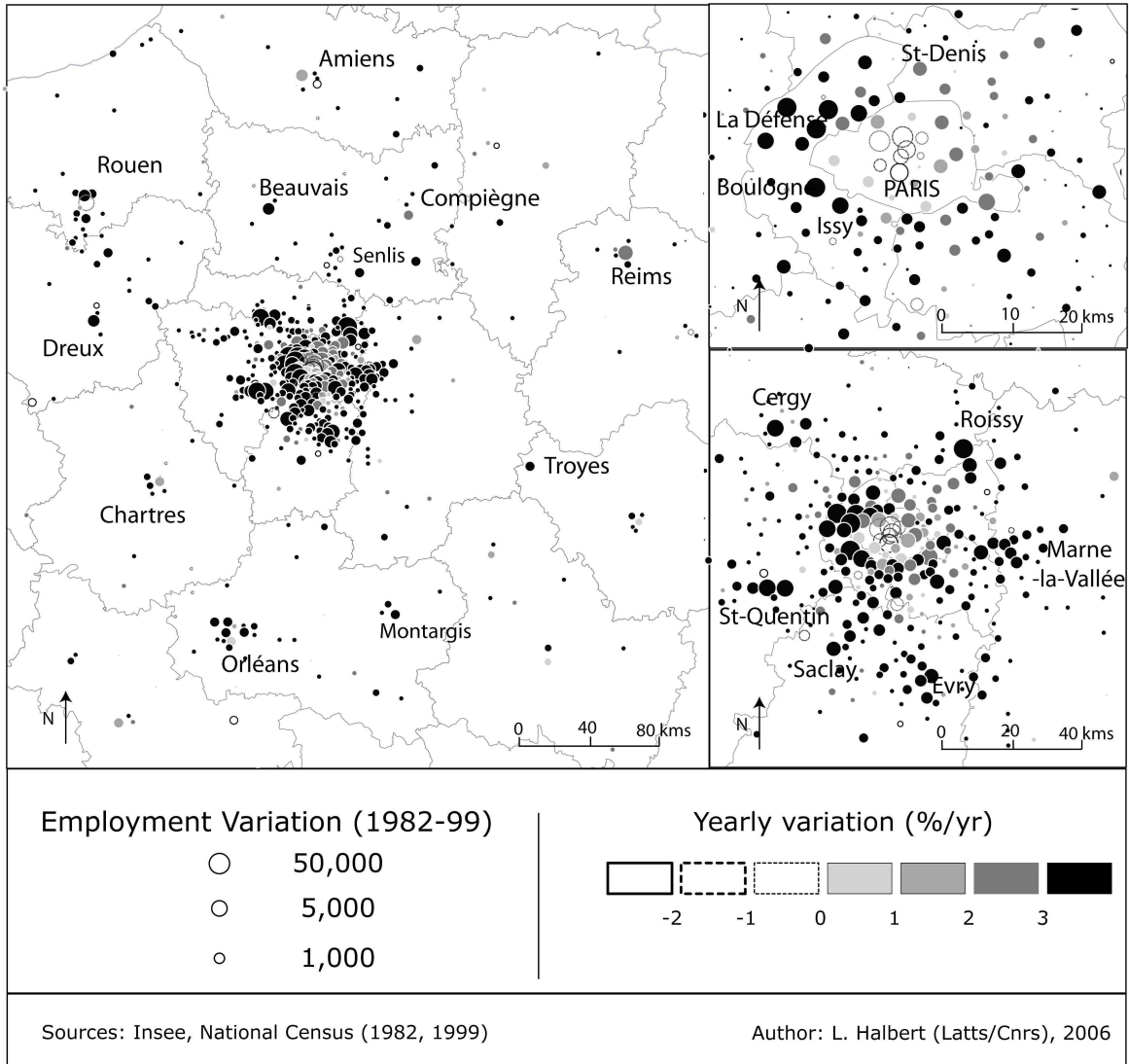


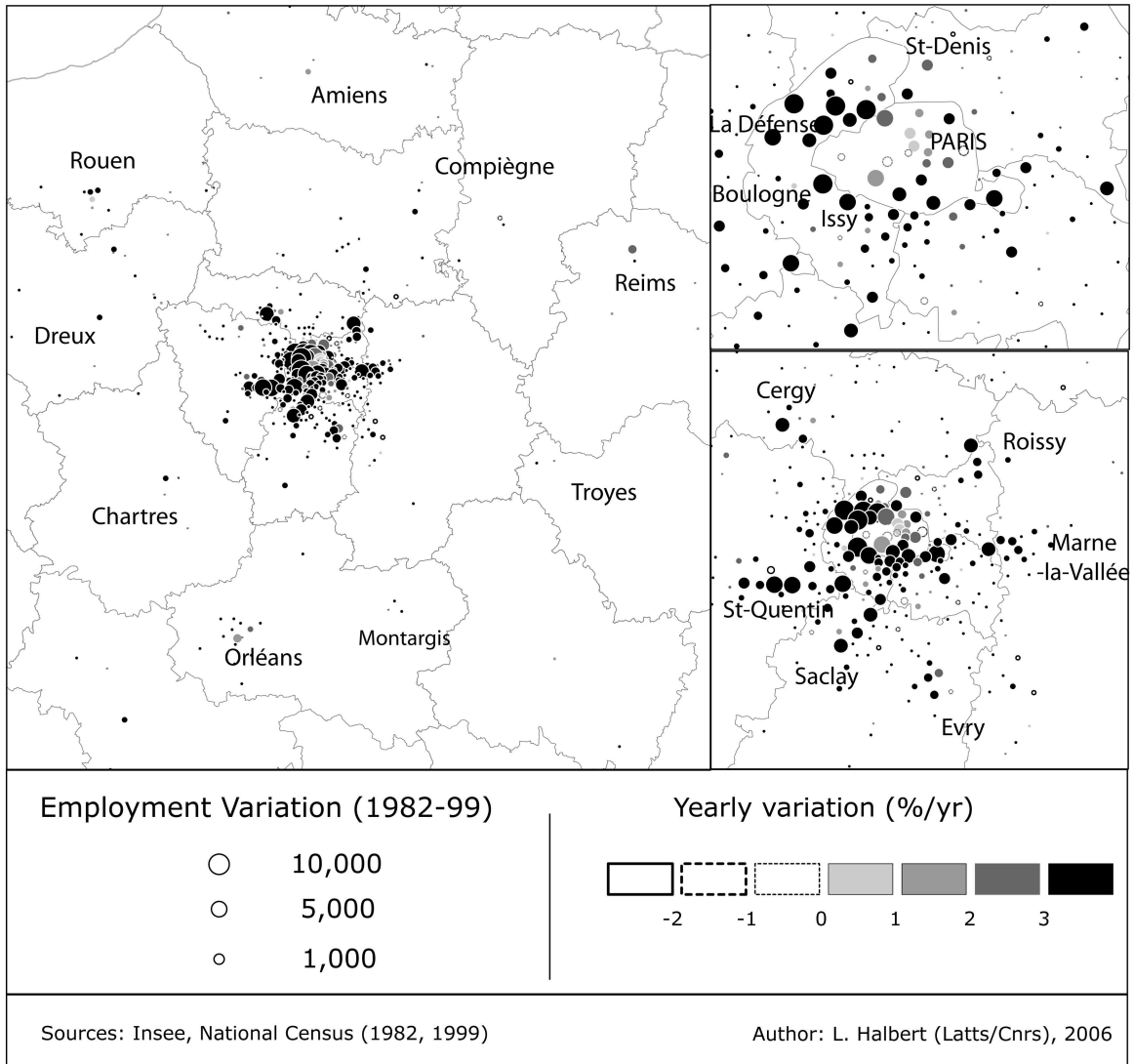
Figure 4

SECTORS	FUNCTIONS	SOCIAL Categories
Business Services	Abstract Production	High-skill workers
Real Estate	R&D, Design	
Telecoms	Management	
Banking & Insurance	Marketing	
IT		
Transport	Material Production	Intermediary Professions
Engineering, Architecture	Manufacturing	Clearical staff
Accounting, Legal Affairs	Logistics	
Advertising	Cleaning, Maintenance	
Industrial sectors	Basic Services	Blue collars
Agri-business	Catering, Accomodation	Artisans
Mining	Retail	
Heavy ind.		
Equipment goods ind.	Authority	
Crafts ind.	Public Administration	
Building ind.	Justice	
Services to households	Safety	
Education	Authority	
Health & Social Aid	Teaching	
Culture & Leisure	Health & Social	
Retail activities	Culture	
Domestic Services		

Only



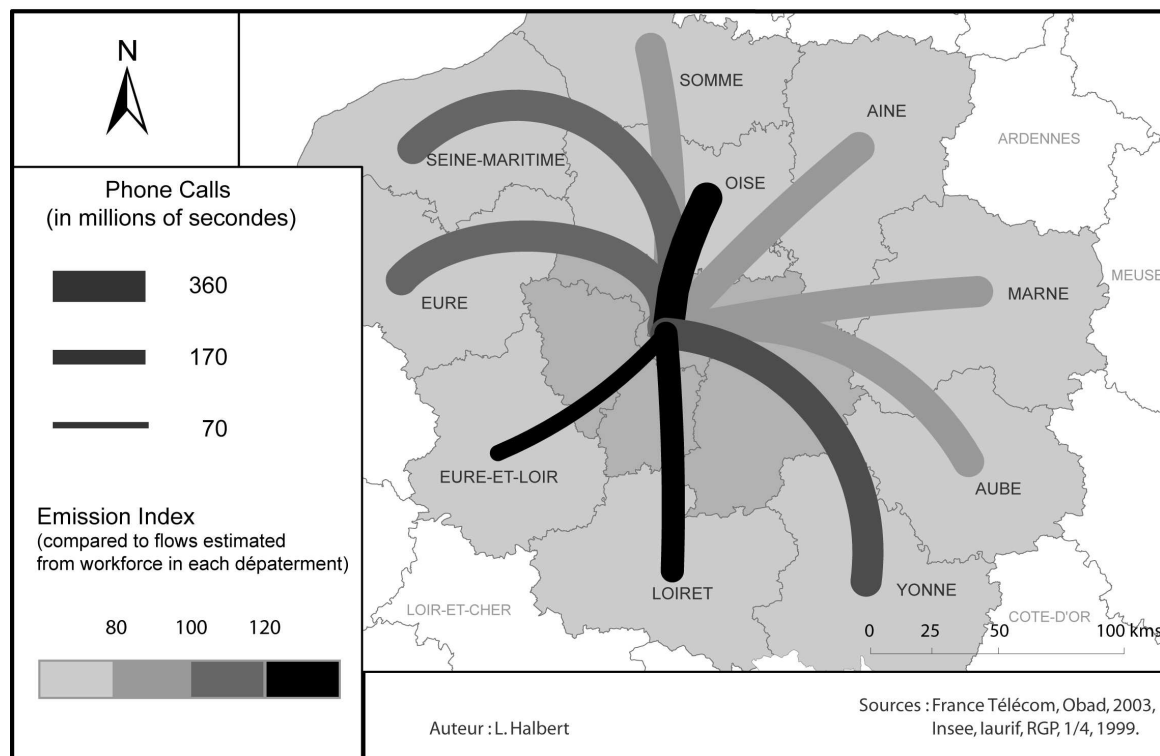
Figure 5



Only

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Figure 6



Review Only

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7 <sup>i</sup> It is in direct reference to their article "Examining the CBD decline hypothesis: evidence from Montreal  
8 metropolitan area" that I titled this paper.

9 <sup>ii</sup> They are many non knowledge-related workers affected by globalisation (blue collar workers in the low-cost  
10 manufacturing regions, workers serving middle class tourists in low-cost destinations, migrants in charge of  
11 under-paid jobs in European cities, ethnic or family related import/export activities contributing to the circulation  
12 of low-technology goods). All these jobs are directly linked to the global economy and insure crucial financial  
13 flows (remittances for instance) that sustain economic development in many parts of the world. In this context,  
14 the 'knowledge economy' is but one dimension of globalisation.

15 <sup>iii</sup> Term which we will use in this paper as well but in a critical approach for we will demonstrate how the Paris  
16 case study differs from the Polynet Polycentric Global MCR hypothesis.

17 <sup>iv</sup> Note that employment data used in this paper do not give a direct evaluation of firms' location and moves for  
18 example from the Paris municipality to the rest of the FUA or to the enlarged functional region. What we  
19 observe is rather the result of job creation versus job destruction over a given period of time (1982-99) in the  
20 different parts of the region and for a given sector (i.e. business services), thus indicating potential  
21 deconcentration trends and relative differences in growth rates.

22 <sup>v</sup> To exclude jobs servicing households and individuals which are not of our concern in this paper.

23 <sup>vi</sup> Needless to mention this definition needs to be taken with extreme care for it is based on very strong postulates  
24 such as the central role credited to *some* forms of knowledge in the economy.

25 <sup>vii</sup> This index is the ratio of the share of a given territory in the total number of phone calls divided by the share  
26 of this territory's workforce in the total national workforce. A value above 1.0 indicates that a territory receives  
27 more phone calls than one could expect if all workers were receiving the same number of phone calls in France.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60