

ROUBAIX CASE STUDY

1. CONTEXT

1.1 Overview of the Regeneration Scheme

Roubaix is an industrial town in north-east France next to the border with Belgium. It has a population of nearly 100,000 and is about 15 kms from the centre of Lille, the established regional capital. Indeed the two built-up areas, plus Tourcoing and the new town of Villeneuve d'Ascq, now run directly into each other, and form the core of 'Metropolitan Lille', or the Lille city-region. Like many large industrial towns in Britain, Roubaix – and especially its town centre – experienced serious decline and deprivation following the collapse of its main industry. However it is now recovering due to a broadly-based, locally-driven regeneration programme which has focused primarily on the town centre.

Roubaix is situated in what was one of France's few truly industrial regions. Lille and Roubaix were textile towns (once second only in world importance to Manchester) and there were large coal mining and steel producing centres just to the south. Roubaix itself concentrated on woollen textiles, and grew explosively in the 19th century. Its population rose from 8,000 in 1806 to 125,000 in 1900. As is typical of textile towns, it contained a large number of separate factories surrounded by tightly packed housing. While both World Wars and the Depression hit the French textile industry hard, it was not until the 1970s, following thirty years of post-war economic boom, that it began to collapse in the face of foreign competition, along with the other heavy industries nearby.

During the boom years Roubaix had attracted in waves of immigrants, initially from other parts of Europe and later from North Africa, to live in the town and work in its mills. However employment in the textile industry fell from 54,000 in 1973 to 8,000 in 2000, and from the early 1970s unemployment rose sharply. The population of the town decreased and the proportion of foreign residents grew. The National Front gained a significant share of the vote. Shops as well as the factories closed, and the town centre became very run down. There was no new investment, and 30,000 sq m of commercial floorspace were lost in the 1990s, and the housing stock continued to decay. The residential and business property markets collapsed. Unlike other French cities, where problems often appeared in peripheral housing estates (*banlieues*), Roubaix suffered from the same sort of 'inner city decay' as was found in Britain. In the 1990s that was frequently called 'the worst town in France'.

Since then, however, the centre of Roubaix has been undergoing a manifest revival which has several aspects which may be relevant to the UK. While there is still a long way to go (unemployment, for example, although down from 33% in the late 1980s is still over 20%) it is widely agreed in France that Roubaix has turned the corner decisively and is making significant – and somewhat unexpected – progress as a *ville renouvelée*.

Roubaix, however, is joined to Lille in rather the same way that Bradford runs into Leeds. Its regeneration can only be understood in the context of Lille's regeneration as a whole.

1.2 Lille City-region and LMCU

Lille has a population of 200,000, but its wider conurbation has 1.1 million residents (and nearly 2 million if the adjoining towns in Belgium are included). As well as having to deal with the rise and fall of heavy industry, Lille also suffered in the past from being right at the edge of France. In spite of having a fine historic city centre, it too was in a very depressed state in the 1970s and 1980s. Its revival, which has been widely documented, is chiefly attributed to Pierre Mauroy who was Prime Minister of France from 1981 to 1984 and more importantly Mayor of Lille from 1973 to 2001. (The fact that in France key politicians hold important positions in both national and local government is seen as an important link between the two tiers which ensures that provincial centres have a strong influence over central policy – such as the decentralisation of power – and the allocation of central funds.)

Mauroy's strategy was based on the premise that while Lille was peripheral to France it could play a central role in the new economic heartland of the European Union. He successfully lobbied for the location of a high speed train station in Lille (opened in 1994) on the Paris–Brussels–Amsterdam and Cologne routes, and later ensured that the Channel Tunnel link with London also went through Lille. The new rail lines followed the old city defences on land owned by the city, which was also used to build a major new commercial and shopping centre (Euralille) to provide Lille with a business centre on the scale of other major cities. Further flagship projects were planned in order to re-orient the local economy towards growth sectors, such as ICT, business services, health and biotechnology, and with the aim of taking Lille into the 'premier league' of European cities. In 1994, for example, Lille launched a serious bid to host the 2004 Olympic Games, and it actually became European Capital of Culture that year.

The crucial step for Roubaix was Mauroy's realisation that Lille could not attract in the people and investment that it needed to become a leading European city if it was still associated with major areas of deprivation such as those found in Roubaix and Tourcoing. Lille's new image might be jeopardised, for example, if Roubaix's problems reached a point where there was potential for rioting. In spite of historic rivalries, the benefits of the strategy needed to be spread out to, and shared with, the rest of the conurbation. The mechanism for doing this was already in existence, the Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine (LMCU – previously also known as CUDL), although it had not played such a pivotal role before [*see box*].

Initially LMCU was regarded principally as a mechanism for providing services more efficiently. In 1989, after a great deal of political and administrative effort a 'metropolitan compromise' was reached between the mayors of the 85 municipalities, and especially the four main ones, as part of the negotiations with the French government over a new *Contrat de Ville* for the Lille city-region. The compromise was enshrined in a signed agreement under which Roubaix, Tourcoing and the other municipalities gave their support to the massive public investment in Euralille and agreed that the city-region should be marketed under the *Lille Metropole* banner, while LMCU agreed to extend the metro out to Roubaix and Tourcoing, to undertake extensive and broad-based urban renewal in both centres and to the principle that the flagship projects would be spread throughout the city-

region. This compromise became the foundation for the *Ville Renouvelée* concept which reflects the integrated view of urban regeneration – economic, social, environmental, social and cultural, not just physical – that is now an accepted part of French urban policy. In Lille in practice this translates into an overall economic-led development strategy for the city-region together with a range of specific projects supported by LMCU in ‘priority neighbourhoods’, including Roubaix town centre. In the words of Michel David, the Director of Roubaix’s *Ville Renouvelée* programme: “Lille acknowledged that it was in the interests of Lille to save Roubaix, and Roubaix accepted that Lille was the capital of the city-region.” The compromise recognised that Metropolitan Lille was a polycentric city, and that urban regeneration is about people as well as places. It is about both creating benefits and spreading benefits.

Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine (LMCU)

France was traditionally a highly centralised state with a powerful national government and local government in the hands of over 36,000 separate ‘municipalities’ (or ‘communes’) each with its own elected council and mayor. Roubaix and Lille are large municipalities, but most other municipalities in the city-region are very small (the smallest has just 178 inhabitants.) Since 1967, as part of a move to decentralise power from Paris, municipalities have been encouraged to group together so as to be able to provide better local services and to develop infrastructure. In 1967, too, 14 Metropolitan Authorities, including LMCU, were established. LMCU is made up of 85 municipalities whose councils appoint an assembly with 170 members. The initial objective of LMCU was to plan and co-ordinate key public services at the metropolitan scale. A number of (investment-related) responsibilities previously in the hands of the individual municipalities were thus transferred to LMCU.

LMCU is now also responsible for strategic planning and investment, including public transport, economic development, environmental services and urban regeneration (which it shares with the individual cities). It has a much bigger investment capacity than individual municipalities, with resources coming from local taxes and central government grants. It now has an annual budget of almost £1 billion and a staff of over 2,000. It is the body with the mission to take Lille (including the Belgian part of the conurbation) up to the top league. Its president is Pierre Mauroy. The individual municipalities retain their traditional responsibilities in areas such as land use planning, street management, primary schools etc.

There were financial benefits too for Roubaix which, partly because of its tight boundaries, had a weak tax base. Most of a local authority’s income in France comes from the *taxe professionnelle* (the French business tax levied on payroll, business premises and fixed assets – at the same rate across LMCU) as well as from property taxes, which did not favour Roubaix during its decline. However through LMCU it was possible to share tax revenues to help offset this disadvantage. Furthermore LMCU was also able to channel resources into the agreed projects in Roubaix from central government and other public agencies, and from financial institutions including the state (not government) run investment bank the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*, which draws its funds from savings by the general public and from public sector pensions. The fact that so much of a local authority’s income depends on the success of the business in its area provides a strong incentive to pay attention to the health of the local economy. Central government funding to area-based urban policy programmes in French cities has been channelled, since the late 1980s, through a system of *Contrats*, or Contractual Agreements.

Contrats de Plan Etat-Région, Contrats de Ville and Contrats d'Agglomération
(Contractual Agreements between the State and Local Authorities)

The regional authorities (*régions*), created in 1982, are responsible for developing '*contrats de plans*' with the State in co-operation with the *départements* and with the principal cities of the *région*. The *contrats de plans* set out a 6-year programme of investments in the economy, social welfare, transport, the environment etc. This system was tried out at the urban level between 1988 and 1996. The first generation of *Contrats de Ville* aimed at including specific help for disadvantaged neighbourhoods in a broader, city-wide approach to urban development. Under these contracts local authorities and the State decide together to implement a long-term programme of integrated urban development. In the Lille metropolitan area, the pilot *Contrat de Ville* was signed in January 1992 for a total value of 1.5 billion francs over 3 years, of which 40% was contributed by the State. The first generation of *Contrats de Ville* represented a new form of relationship between central and local government, which enabled central government to secure its wider national urban policy objectives while still respecting the increased local autonomy that came with decentralisation.

These contracts were re-launched in 1998 and 2000, with the intention of linking urban policy to other national policies on social inclusion, inter-communal cooperation, sustainable development, housing etc. The current *Contrat de Ville* for Metropolitan Lille was signed between the Central Government, the Region, the Department, LMCU within the wider framework of the *Contrat de Plan Etat-Région* for 2000-2006. It aims at implementing targeted urban programmes in the most disadvantaged parts of the city-region. The metropolitan authority, LMCU, is the key partner, as it is recognised that the regeneration of such areas cannot be dealt with in isolation from the rest of the metropolitan economy. Funding is provided by the State for up to 50% of total costs, with the remainder coming mainly from LMCU and the municipalities. The incentive for local partners lies in the additional funding from central government and the long-term nature of the commitment. (For further information see:

http://www.eukn.org/eukn/themes/Urban_Policy/French-Urban-Policy_1050.html)

In addition to LMCU, another informal unifying body, the *Comité Grand Lille*, was set up in 1993 by a prominent local businessman. It brings together the key people in the Lille area from the business, cultural and political worlds, and has been influential in ensuring that all sectors feel involved in and committed to the renewal of the fortunes of the city-region, and are working together.

The *Comité Grand Lille*

The *Comité Grand Lille* is an informal body created in 1993 on the initiative of Bruno Bonduelle, a leading local industrialist. The idea was to provide an opportunity for civic and business to think strategically about the future of the city-region. The Committee now brings together 600 business and industrial leaders, academics, NGO representatives and some elected politicians. (The Mayor of Lille often joins the debates). The group discusses and recommends possible actions to improve the area's image and position as a major European centre – actions in such fields as culture, tourism, education and international partnerships.

The Committee creates a link between business leaders (traditionally Christian democrats) and local politicians (mostly socialists) on strategic ideas for the promotion of the city-region, focusing on common goals and not on political differences or the rivalries between individual municipalities. The Committee also helps secure business support of for various flagship events. One of the Committee's first actions was to put forward Lille's bid to be the official French candidate city for the 2004 Olympic Games.. The bid had a powerful effect in bringing local leaders together around a common goal. Lille's selection as the French candidate greatly boosted local pride and reinforced the role of the Committee, even though Athens was eventually selected as the host city. For example, the *Comité Grand Lille* went on to promote Lille's successful bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2004.

2. REGENERATION OF ROUBAIX TOWN CENTRE

2.1 Aims and Scope of the Scheme

Roubaix town centre is a densely built-up area with a mixture of factory buildings, brownfield sites, 19th century residential streets – some of which were once highly fashionable, but many were not – and commercial and civic buildings. By the early 1990s it had become an area that lacked value. It had a very poor image, poor housing, high unemployment, low purchasing power and few opportunities. It was an area of multiple deprivation, which required a multi-faceted or ‘integrated’ regeneration strategy to tackle its problems. The overall scheme, which has been led by the Roubaix Municipality and its Mayor since 1994, René Vandierendonk, has focused on:

- rebuilding the town’s economic base
- bringing retailing back to the town centre and making it a shopping destination
- creating a safe and attractive public realm and promoting the town’s architectural heritage
- developing a cultural programme to promote local pride and social cohesion and attract visitors
- improving the housing stock, to benefit the existing residents and to attract in active newcomers
- linking employment and training opportunities for local people to all new investments.

It was recognised from the start that the regeneration of the town would take a long time and that perseverance with all aspects of the strategy would be required before results showed. This has been helped not only by the fact that many of the key players in Roubaix have remained in post over many years, but also through the active support of the city-region, which as described above is undergoing its own renaissance, and backing from the French government which has used Metropolitan Lille, and Roubaix in particular, as a test bed for a succession of urban policies.

While the breadth – economic, physical, social and cultural – of the regeneration scheme is fundamental, it has been clearly understood all along that an over-riding aim is to make Roubaix town centre a place where private investors want to invest once more. The scheme is therefore economy-led, but (as in Gothenburg) with the firm intention that economic progress should be harnessed to produce wider local benefits. Great importance has been attached to changing the image of the town (by giving outsiders good reasons to visit it and see its new developments) and to seeing culture as a central part of regeneration, not just as a luxury add-on, for culture is the essence of a living city. In general, too, the strategy for Roubaix, like the strategy for the city-region as a whole, is based on identifying and building on the potential strengths – physical, social, economic – of the town in ways that will help bring it sustainable success in the future, within the context of a flourishing city-region.

3. ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past 20 years or so, a great deal has been done in all aspects of the scheme. A more detailed account is given in the full Roubaix Case Study. The principal achievements are summarised below.

3.1 Rebuilding the town's economy

Responsibility for Roubaix's economic development is shared between the Municipality and LMCU. Flagship projects have included:

- **Eurotéléport.** A teleport is a telecommunications centre which provides links to satellites, and fibre optic and other data networks (e.g. for digital TV and radio, video transmission, telemarketing etc) and often also provides premises for firms involved in the processing and transmission of such data. The Roubaix teleport, opened in 1993, now contains 25,000 sq m of office space housing 50 firms. It covers 14 ha around the Motte-Bossut mill (closed in 1981) which itself now houses the National Archive of the History of the Labour Movement.
- **Tax-free Zone (Enterprise Zone)** The whole of Roubaix's town centre was declared a tax-free zone in 1997. The main advantages for firms in such an area are exemptions, or partial exemptions, for 5 years from Business Tax (mainly a payroll tax), Corporation Tax and Property Tax, particularly for small businesses. To obtain these benefits however at least one-third of all new employees must come from within a specified local area.
- **Speciality Textiles Cluster** Roubaix has not turned its back on textiles. While large-scale manufacturing is no longer feasible, there are many opportunities for 'innovative' or 'technical' textiles and there has been strong support for the idea of retaining research, education, design, production and marketing facilities in the town to support these niche areas. Roubaix is considered to be a 'pole of excellence' in textiles. The Municipality and LMCU have supported several initiatives to encourage speciality textile businesses, including a 'cluster-management' organisation which provides premises for selected small firms, encourages collaboration, training, marketing and even the pooling of resources (e.g. specialist machinery) where appropriate. Again participating firms are encouraged to employ local people, including those from vulnerable groups.

3.2 Bringing retailing back to the town centre

A healthy town requires a healthy town centre. An immediate effort was therefore made not only to revive the High Street (*Grand Rue*), especially through policies to encourage small shops, enhance the public realm to improve public transport (metro, tram and bus), but also to start to develop the centre into a shopping destination that would draw people in from outside. In addition to the 'enterprise zone' tax breaks and grants to small firms, the larger developments were financed by a public-private partnership with support from the state-owned bank the *Caisse de Dépôts et Consignations*.

Furthermore, Roubaix had a history of selling its textile and other products through mail order and through local factory outlets. Mail order businesses have been encouraged and several large firms (La Redoute, 3 Suisses, Blanche Porte, Damart etc) have their main operations in the town. There are now also two major 'factory outlets' in Roubaix – L'Usine, a large disused factory that houses 70 sales units including those of the main mail order companies, and McArthur Glen which is in the form of a new 'street' with over 50 top-brand stores, right in the heart of the town. The latter was assisted by the municipality which owned the site and transferred it free of charge to the company, and which ensured it was well served by public transport and with car parking. These outlets draw over 2 million visitors per year, and the town centre shops as a whole have over 5 million visits annually.

3.3 Creating a safe and attractive public realm

An important aspect of making the town centre a place which people wish to visit, and where investors wish to invest, has been to change its image. The main square and its fine civic buildings have been restored. The main streets have been refurbished with particular respect for their architectural heritage. In some places the facades of buildings have been coloured, so as to show Roubaix in a different light. Increased security has been provided, with extra policing and the presence of street wardens (called 'street mediators') to discourage anti-social behaviour. In addition the neglected canal has been turned into a 'green way' through the town and the parks have been upgraded. Industrial and other buildings of merit in the town centre have been listed (such as the spectacular Motte-Bossut mill) and grants made to help restore them. Most of the money for these improvements has come from LMCU, and what was once seen as a forbidding part of the city-region is taking on a new lease of life.

3.4 Developing a cultural strategy

Reviving the cultural life of the town is seen as equally important as reviving its physical appearance. It is seen as a key element in the regeneration strategy, which will help to improve the image and identity of the town (both internally and externally), and encourage cohesion and participation, in addition to bringing economic benefits. It also provides opportunities for celebrating the town's industrial part and for reducing social and ethnic divisions.

Flagship cultural projects include La Piscine (the art-deco former public baths which is now a nationally acclaimed museum of art and industry) and La Condition Publique (a fine building originally used for storing and testing textiles which was converted, in preparation for Lille's year as European Capital of Culture in 2004, into a 'culture factory' with a theatre/concert hall, exhibition space, and recording and artists' studios as well as workspace for small firms in creative industries). These have played a key role in attracting new people to visit Roubaix and in changing the way that the town is portrayed in the national media. It is now officially classified as a Historic Town. Furthermore emphasis has been given to local participation, both in major events and in street theatre and local performances. The flagship projects have also had local spin-offs. There has been a noticeable increase in demand for housing around both La Condition Publique and La Piscine and more local shops are opening up in those areas. A 'fashion quarter' for young designers is developing around La Piscine linked to the local college, and 15% of new jobs in Roubaix are in the cultural industries.

3.5 Improving the housing stock

There has been a long history of housing renewal in Roubaix, which has been a stronghold of 'municipal socialism' since it became the first socialist municipality in France in 1892. However, the economic decline of the area, and the loss of population, meant that the housing continued to deteriorate, in spite of large-scale slum clearance in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Many of the town's houses were built around *courées* (narrow alleys running back from the main streets). These were seen as fit only for demolition in spite of the strong sense of community that existed in them. It was only after local resistance at the end of the 1970s that the emphasis changed to renovation and community engagement. And it was only in the 1990s that it was realised that housing renewal by itself was not enough; it had to be linked in with wider regeneration, particularly economic regeneration, so that

those who lived in the renovated housing had incomes – otherwise the housing would just decline again, which in turn would reinforce social exclusion.

Housing renewal in Roubaix is focused on:

- continuing to upgrade the social housing stock (35% of Roubaix's housing is social housing) with central government funding
- supporting the renewal of the private housing stock, much of which dates from the time of the industrial revolution (and 25% of which is owned by registered social landlords) with funding from the region and LMCU
- encouraging new private sector housing – as is starting to happen around La Piscine.

The aim is both to improve the quality of life of existing residents and to attract in new, enterprising people to the town. Roubaix's overall housing policy is governed by LMCU's Housing Plan for the city-region, which seeks to balance the proportion of investment in different types of housing in different parts of the city-region, and stresses the need to accelerate housing renewal in deprived areas.

3.6 Linking employment and training for local people to all investment projects

In Roubaix there has been a strong political will 'to use every possible investment opportunity – public or private – that arises in the town to create local employment opportunities', and this policy has been pursued with great determination. It includes the Enterprise Zone tax breaks. In projects led by public bodies (such as La Piscine and La Condition Publique) there can be formal clauses (*clauses d'insertion*) in construction contracts and in contracts for the funding of on-going operations which require local people to be offered certain jobs. In the late 1990s there were objections to these types of contract on the grounds that they breached EU employment law. However in 2001 the French government revised the National Code for Public Procurement so as to enable the practice to be reinstated, as criteria other than price can be used in the selection of tenders. In the case of La Condition Publique for example the works contract was divided into many parts so that small local companies, and even individual craftsmen, could bid. Furthermore special parts of the project, such as creating a garden on the roof (using unusual plants whose seeds used to be brought in with the wool and other raw materials that were imported into Roubaix), were sub-contracted to non-profit organisations that specialised in providing jobs and training for the unemployed. And since the building opened in 2004, many of the bar and restaurant staff have been recruited from the local, highly deprived, neighbourhood.

At present *clauses d'insertion* can only be made mandatory in public sector contracts. However the Municipality systematically negotiates with all major private investors to try to create specific employment for local people. The Mayor and his team take a proactive approach in searching out potential investors and in establishing the potential for local employment early on in this process. They then follow through to ensure that suitable training and other mechanisms are established to ensure that local people (where possible from target areas or target groups) are prepared for these jobs. For each major project there is a dedicated team in the Municipality which works with the investor to provide any necessary support, e.g. sites, subsidies, services, tax-breaks etc, in return for certain levels of employment of local people.

4. BENEFITS FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

In Roubaix it is recognised that multiple deprivation can only be overcome by bringing the most vulnerable groups – unemployed former industrial workers, residents with immigrant backgrounds, unqualified school leavers etc – into employment. It is also recognised that even though the city-region, and the town, are undergoing a renaissance, employment and prosperity will not just automatically ‘trickle down’ to the most disadvantaged groups. Positive actions are required.

While much of the regeneration strategy is about encouraging investment and promoting new employment in the town, a particular effort has also been made to ensure that as many of the new jobs as possible are taken by local people. Because the new jobs are almost always very different from the old industrial jobs, requiring new skills and often new attitudes to work, there has been a great emphasis on training and the development of practical skills. In part this has been necessary because of the highly academic nature of traditional French education and the lack of prospects for those without qualifications. In the past there have been a bewildering number of agencies and initiatives at national, regional and local levels, but a ‘one-stop-shop’ is being created in Roubaix which will not only co-ordinate training and job-seeking services, but will also be directly involved in local economic development and in support for new businesses.

Since 1991 the Municipality has also operated the *Plan Roubaisien pour l'Insertion* (PRI) which aims to ‘re-integrate’ the long-term unemployed, and other vulnerable groups in defined areas, into the labour market. It is partly financed through ESF Objective 3, and is operated by a non-profit association which not only organises training and employment advice but also arranges fixed-term employment contracts with local employers, including those in such fields as catering, cleaning, childcare, building maintenance etc. It has been effective in helping many people back into work even though unemployment in the area remains high. Officers of the Municipality and others also emphasised the important role that the improved public transport system has had in increasing the range of employment opportunities that are available to local people. (One third of households in Roubaix have no car.) But it was also stressed that good transport by itself this was not enough; people’s mindsets had to be widened too.

Through these proactive policies Roubaix has retained some big companies (La Redoute etc) which have a long association with the town, and attracted in others (e.g. McArthur Glen), which do feel a sense of loyalty to it. While competition means that such firms have less room for manoeuvre than in the past, they and their senior managers do try to support the town – and indeed the wider city-region – in its efforts to create a place that is attractive for businesses to invest in and to reduce multiple deprivation.

5. KEY ELEMENTS OF THE SCHEME

5.1 Approach to Urban Regeneration

- Sustainable urban regeneration requires co-ordinated action at both city-region and local levels. It is about both people and places, but it is just as much about creation benefits (through a flourishing economy) as it is to spreading them out to local places and people.
- Lille city-region is seen as polycentric with interdependent centres. The core needs to flourish, but the other need to be successful too.
- While regenerating Roubaix is a broadly-based effort it too is underpinned by a strategy to regenerate its economy and to change its image to potential investors and new residents.
- Promoting culture is an integral part of urban regeneration, not an add-on, which can be used to build up confidence and encourage social cohesion.

5.2 Strategy, Organisation and Funding

- There is a clear strategy for turning Metropolitan Lille into a top-ranking European city, building on its location in the heart of the EU's 'golden triangle'
- There is a formal, signed agreement between all the municipalities in the city-region which commits them to supporting co-ordinated regeneration in all the main centres
- LMCU acts as the strategic body for planning and co-ordinating urban regeneration. It is controlled by an assembly of members appointed by each municipality (with the larger municipalities appointing more members). It is not a directly elected body.
- Roubaix's regeneration strategy aims to build on its residual strengths (e.g. mail order, speciality textiles,) and to create a centre which people wish to visit and investors wish to invest in.
- LMCU enables local tax revenues to be shared between the municipalities, thus helping to offset Roubaix's weak tax base.
- LMCU is also active in channelling funding from public and private sources, including the state run investment bank, to projects in Roubaix.

5.3 Mechanisms for Overcoming Obstacles

- Lille (and Roubaix) like several cities in France has long-serving, high-profile, local politicians (e.g. Pierre Mauroy, Rene Vandierendonk) who provide strong local leadership. In part this is because local politicians in big cities have real power.
- In Roubaix and Lille many key players (officers as well as politicians) have been in post for many years, and are used to working together.
- In addition to LMCU, the *Comité Grand Lille* provides a forum for local leaders from all sectors, including businesses.
- The Municipality of Roubaix has shown determination and tenacity in its efforts to revive the town and improve its residents' prospects. Officers refer to it as 'warfare'.

- All possible fiscal and other measures (e.g. Enterprise Zone, EU programmes, European Capital of Culture, *Grands Projets Urbain*) have been harnessed to support Roubaix's strategy where feasible.
- Strong political will to use every investment opportunity to create employment for local people (through *clauses d'insertion* etc).

5.4 Spreading Benefits

- Early in the regeneration process, Lille city-region invested in a modern, integrated public transport system which links the main centres together – and enables residents of Roubaix to reach a wider range of opportunities.
- The efforts to ensure that as many of the new jobs created go to local people have particularly targeted 'vulnerable groups' (long-term unemployed, ethnic minorities, people without formal qualifications etc) and people from 'priority neighbourhoods' (areas of multiple deprivation).
- Particular emphasis has been put on providing practical training for new job opportunities.
- One of the main aims of the cultural strategy has been to provide access for local people to a range of cultural facilities, as well as creating opportunities for local participation and for local jobs.

5.5 Future Proofing

- The sustainability of Roubaix's regeneration depends to a large extent on the success of Metropolitan Lille's regeneration strategy. Since this is based on taking full advantage of its location at the heart of a prosperous and dynamic region of Europe, Roubaix's future as a major centre in a confident and co-ordinated city-region is much brighter than if it were operating on its own.

6. UK PARTNER CITY'S REACTION

The UK Partner City for the Roubaix case study is Bradford, and officers and a member from that city took part in the Workshop in Roubaix. Bradford's industrial past, like Roubaix's, was based on textiles. Bradford was once the largest producers of woollen textiles in the world and was notorious in the 19th century for poor housing and working conditions. Like Roubaix, too, it is the second largest centre in a much bigger conurbation which also includes the regional capital. Bradford, however is much bigger than Roubaix. The city itself has a population of nearly 300,000, and the West Yorkshire conurbation has a population of 2 million. Like Roubaix, Bradford contains areas with multiple deprivation. Economic activity is low, and the city is now home to a large immigrant population.

A major regeneration programme is underway in Bradford City Centre, and the borough as a whole is associated with some innovative regeneration projects. Manufacturing still remains an important part of the local economy, but – unlike Roubaix – many of the larger businesses have their headquarters elsewhere. The two principal mail order firms in Bradford (Damart and La Redoute) are actually subsidiaries of companies which have their headquarters (and their decision makers) in Roubaix.

In the past 20 years Bradford has suffered from being overshadowed by Leeds which has attracted much of the investment in offices and in fashionable city centre apartments that has taken place in West Yorkshire, as large organisations have centralised their operations in the regional capital. There is not the same collaboration between Leeds and Bradford as there is within Metropolitan Lille, and there is no 'city-region of West Yorkshire'. However, now that property values have increased so greatly in Leeds, developers and investors are starting to consider Bradford. There is growing confidence that the city is starting to turn around. Recent research * has concluded that West Yorkshire is performing badly in comparison with other British regions, and put forward recommendations for inter-city collaboration as a means of making the whole region more productive and competitive. It suggested that Bradford could be the creative capital of the region.

The regeneration of Bradford City Centre is being promoted by an Urban Regeneration Company (a joint venture between the local authority and the Regional Development Agency with English Partnerships also in the Board of Directors). The URC's role is to establish an accepted vision and masterplan for Bradford city centre (within established regional frameworks), promote key physical development projects and secure private sector investment in them. The URC, however, is a single purpose, short-life organisation which focuses only on two square kilometres in the centre of the city and is expected to last for only eight years. In contrast Metropolitan Lille's Development and Urbanism Agency is a permanent part of the authority, as urban development is seen to be a permanent activity within the city-region.

The observers from Bradford noted certain similarities between Roubaix/Tourcoing /Lille and Bradford/Leeds. Both 'cities' had a population of about 1.1 million, and were undergoing a similar process of revival and re-orientation (although they would not refer to it as 'the Art of War' as they did in Roubaix). However it was felt that the decline of Roubaix town centre had been more dramatic than what had occurred in Bradford. The factors that they considered had contributed most to Roubaix's revival were:

- Making political links at different levels of government e.g. Pierre Mauroy, and having a tenacious long standing champion provides for better communications, ability to take advantage of opportunities and a 'uniting' public figure (cf. lack of high profile figure to champion the Leeds city region)
- Securing a high profile investment with Eurostar, and negotiating a subsequent city region agenda to enable Roubaix (and Tourcoing) to also benefit by working closely in a win-win situation with Lille (cf. resistance to the Leeds city region concept and the strength of civic pride in Bradford)
- Achieving European Capital of Culture 2004 helped Lille to raise its profile and attract additional resources (cf. Bradford losing out to Liverpool as UK nominee for 2008)
- Promoting culture as a focus for economic regeneration, and not regarding it as a luxury 'add on'. 10-15% of new jobs created were in this sector (cf. Bradford culture viewed as providing low value/seasonal jobs). Culture can also improve the image of an area and liveability which may bring in higher paid jobs and affect place as a location of choice. The emphasis on 'popular' culture in Roubaix has helped to promote an 'alongside' method of living together as a starting point in reducing tensions.

7. POTENTIAL MESSAGES FOR UK POLICY

The problems which Roubaix has had to tackle are on a similar scale to those once found in the most depressed industrial towns in Britain. Indeed many of the initiatives taken are similar to those taken that have been taken in equivalent British regeneration schemes, and there is much effort that is still required in Roubaix, particularly in tackling the very high level of unemployment that persists. Even so there are several aspects of the approach taken in Roubaix and Lille that would seem highly relevant to current UK policy debates, especially:

- The leading role taken by the **city-region** in developing and taking responsibility for urban regeneration
 - Economic regeneration must be the underlying driver of broadly-based, integrated urban regeneration, which is about both creating and spreading benefits
 - Secondary centres benefit by acting as part of a co-ordinated city-region rather than acting on their own. Urban regeneration needs to be seen as a shared responsibility between the city-region and the municipality
- Long-term persistence, and **collaborative working** across sectors and across centres within a city-region, are needed to make sure that urban regeneration succeeds
- **Culture** is an important aspect of urban regeneration even in the most deprived areas – and not a luxury add-on.