

CASE STUDY 6:

URBAN RENEWAL

ROUBAIX, FRANCE

THE IMPORTANCE OF GENERIC ‘PLACE-MAKING’ SKILLS – REGENERATION IN ROUBAIX

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Location | City of Roubaix, Lille Metropolitan Area, France |
| Initiative and Approach | <p>Multi-disciplinary urban renewal strategy, integrating spatial planning, transport, economic development, housing renewal, active labour market initiatives and a strong cultural policy.</p> <p>Demonstrates the role of strong leadership and commitment and necessitates brokerage and partnership working between many local players. Skills development occurred principally through a ‘learning by doing’ approach, within the context of a strong vision developed at the city region level.</p> |
| Skills Outcomes | <p>‘Generic skills’ proved to be of crucial importance and local expertise was developed in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement of strategic vision through close cooperation and a consensus-based approach; • Maximising engagement and involvement of the private sector, notably in employment development; • Coordination of multiple actions implemented in parallel; and • Local cluster development, based on existing strengths. • Experience has fed into local dissemination and capitalisation mechanisms. |
| Problems Encountered | <p>Building and maintaining consensus between different levels of government and managing changes in central government policy;</p> <p>Achieving and managing the balance between addressing immediate problems and longer term regeneration goals; and</p> <p>Overcoming the negative image of the city among those who had left.</p> |
| Lessons | <p>Strong leadership and commitment at the political level can be instrumental in developing a successful vision for regeneration. This needs to be combined with strong commitment at the officer level.</p> <p>A willingness to try new approaches to development and renewal is vital in finding the right solutions for a particular community or area.</p> <p>Cooperative approaches and partnership at the scale of the functional city region is fundamental to the development of a coherent approach. Beyond this, systematic exploration of funding opportunities and partnership working with regional and national players (requiring negotiating and compromise skills) is also crucial to maximising opportunities.</p> <p>‘Upstream’ engagement with the private sector, rather than a ‘trickle down’ approach, is vital to securing economic development.</p> <p>The Roubaix experience is particularly relevant for other towns and cities undergoing profound socio-economic changes.</p> |

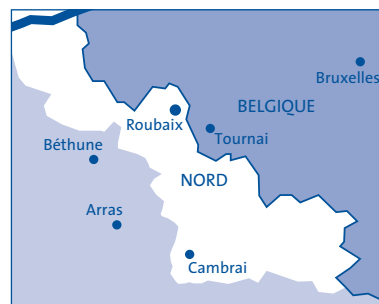
1. Background and Context

Roubaix is notable for being one of very few towns in France to have resulted from intensive and rapid industrialisation in the 19th century, leaving it with an urban fabric (and subsequent urban problems) more akin to those found in the UK, neighbouring Benelux countries and the German Ruhrgebiet than most French cities. The approach to urban regeneration in Roubaix over the last decade exhibits many of the key characteristics of the sustainable communities approach and has started to show promising signs of success. Based on a multi-disciplinary strategy (integrating spatial planning, transport, economic development, housing renewal, active labour market initiatives and a strong cultural policy), the approach adopted in Roubaix, and in the wider Lille metropolitan area more generally, has attracted considerable interest, both nationally and from elsewhere in Europe.

This case study analyses the role played by generic skills and knowledge, as advocated by the Egan Review, as a key ingredient in the success of Roubaix's regeneration efforts. By focusing on the skills and knowledge requirements of the built environment professionals, implementers and decision-makers¹ involved in implementing the urban regeneration strategy in Roubaix, the case study highlights new approaches and knowledge developed on the ground and presents a selection of skills development and knowledge 'capitalisation' initiatives in the Roubaix area.

Roubaix – the place

The city of Roubaix, with a population approaching 100,000², is located close to the Belgian border in northern France within the wider metropolitan area of Lille. Together with the neighbouring town of Tourcoing and the city of Lille, Roubaix forms part of a continuous, highly urbanised zone, having developed over the course of the 19th century, when Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing became the second largest textile region in the world³.



From the 1960s onwards, the wool and textile industry in Roubaix entered into a period of decline. From the early 1970s onwards, the initial difficulties developed into a crisis, in the wake of sharp oil price rises, the resulting economic slowdown and increasing competition from low cost producers in other parts of the world. Between 1973 and 2000, roughly 46,000 jobs were lost in the textile industry in Roubaix-Tourcoing⁴, leading to mass unemployment in the surrounding area. Although Roubaix today remains a key location for textile production in France (employing 7,000 people in Roubaix-Tourcoing), with a number of highly successful international firms specialising in

mail order (La Redoute, Damart), the collapse of large-scale textile manufacturing had a devastating effect on the economic, physical and social wellbeing of the city. However, the concerted programme of urban renewal and economic development that has been implemented since the 1990s is now beginning to bear fruit.

2. Key Issues

By the early 1990s, in the wake of the collapse of its traditional manufacturing base, Roubaix was confronted with a threefold set of challenges, familiar to many post-industrial cities in Europe:

- An economic crisis, resulting from the partial collapse of the traditional industrial base, manifested most strikingly in large-scale unemployment, the withdrawal of retail businesses from the town centre and a decline in property prices;
- A physical and environmental crisis, as de-industrialisation, economic stagnation, poverty and population shifts led to widespread urban decay and dereliction in many parts of the city. Unlike most other French cities, the crisis was not associated with large-scale post-war suburban housing estates⁵ but instead expansive areas of poor quality, 19th century housing in the city centre, largely in private ownership;
- A social crisis, resulting from a combination of increased poverty, social exclusion, heightened racial tension and significant population decline caused by outward migration.

¹ See Academy for Sustainable Communities Guidance Note on Core Occupations

² 96,959 in 1999 (INSEE)

³ After Manchester and South Lancashire (Colomb/URBED 2006, p.6)

⁴ Colomb, p.9

⁵ Although a number of so-called grands ensembles (large, medium to high-rise housing estates) were built in Roubaix from the 1950s to the 1970s and have also experienced the range of physical and social problems present elsewhere.

Roubaix's economic problems were exacerbated by a spatial trend of counter-urbanisation, which had been ongoing in the Lille metropolitan area since the 1960s. Wealthier residents gradually deserted the old industrial core of the city, often to be replaced by poorer populations from outside the city, attracted by the relatively good public services available. In parallel, large out-of-town retail outlets gradually attracted trade away from town centre locations, which combined with the general economic crisis, resulted in an almost complete collapse of retail activity in Roubaix town centre by the mid-1990s. The combination of these factors had a disastrous effect on the image of Roubaix in the rest of France and beyond, which hampered efforts to attract inward investment.

Although the decline of the textile industry had dramatic implications for Roubaix's economy, a number of large firms successfully diversified, notably into distribution and mail order. La Redoute, one of Europe's market leaders in mail order clothing, is based in Roubaix. However, this structural shift towards the service sector occurred at the expense of large-scale, largely unskilled, manufacturing employment. Many of those previously employed in the textile sector lacked the skills necessary to transfer to service sector jobs. Even today, after a comparatively successful economic transition has taken place, Roubaix remains a paradox where there are more jobs than there are people of working age, but the local unemployment rate (22.5% in June 2005) remains considerably above the metropolitan average. Addressing the skills mismatch between supply (local,

unemployed residents) and demand (local employers) remains a key priority.

Overall, the key objectives for Roubaix in the early 1990s were:

1. To recreate an economic base for the city following massive de-industrialisation;
2. To tackle severe urban decay in the city centre, aiming to attract and retain retail activity;
3. To address problems relating to sub-standard housing stock and attract new residents;
4. To link economic development and investments in the city with employment and training opportunities for unemployed locals.

3. Description of Approach

Organisation

The City of Roubaix is a municipality within the Lille metropolitan area, itself governed by a metropolitan authority – the Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine (LMCU). The Communauté Urbaine and Roubaix City Council share responsibility for local development, with the metropolitan authority playing a key role in strategic planning and urban development on the scale of the city region, in addition to the management of core urban services, such as transport and waste management. The regeneration approach developed and deployed in Roubaix was guided by a metropolitan master plan, which was adapted to the local level by officers in Roubaix City Council working in close partnership with other public, semi-public and private sector actors.

The table provides a broad overview of the key organisations responsible for regeneration in Roubaix, distinguishing between public sector actors and private and semi-public actors. The semi-public sector plays a particularly important role in regeneration in France, for example the Société d'Economie Mixte (SEM). Organisations of this type have the legal status of a private entity and employ staff on private sector terms, but typically receive a large proportion of their income from public funds.

| Spatial Level | Public Sector | Semi-Public, Private or Voluntary Sector |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Metropolitan Area | Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine (LMCU) – both assembly and services (including planning and transport) | Agence de Développement et d'Urbanisme de Lille Métropole – Metropolitan development agency SEM Ville Renouvelée – the primary agency responsible for day to day implementation and the commissioning of individual projects |
| City Level | Ville de Roubaix (Roubaix City Council) – elected council and council services (including economic development and employment) | Plan Roubaisien d'Insertion – managed by the not for profit association 'Gagner' |
| Local Level | Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi (ANPE) – national employment agency Mission Locale pour l'Emploi – training and employment support centre for young people | Numerous associations and third sector organisations which have contributed to various aspects of the regeneration process. |

Approach

In recognition of the scale of the challenge, Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine and the City of Roubaix have spearheaded an integrated, multi-disciplinary regeneration strategy, which emphasises the need to maximise the benefits from urban renewal for local residents. The approach used in Roubaix was part of a wider strategy called Ville Renouvelée, founded on the basis of a new local political consensus and incorporated into a 1997 master plan⁶ developed for the wider metropolitan area. The Ville Renouvelée policy takes the form of an economic development strategy on the scale of the city-region and a series of specific (but coordinated) projects in the most

deprived neighbourhoods⁷. The key features of the project have been the concerted focus on engagement with the private sector (investors and existing businesses) to build on existing local assets, combined with sustained efforts to help local residents benefit from the new (employment) opportunities created.

In Roubaix, the Ville Renouvelée has focused on five key areas, with actions and projects coordinated in parallel, in what some have described as a “commando offensive”⁸, while maintaining employment for local residents as a core horizontal objective. The core elements of the integrated approach adopted are summarised in Annex 1.

⁶ Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme (SDAU)

⁷ Baert (2006)

⁸ Colomb/URBED (2006), p.41

In all of these actions, there has been a concerted effort to maximise the employment benefits for local residents at an early stage (an 'upstream' approach), rather than leaving these to materialise through 'trickle-down' processes⁹. This has involved the use of a range of instruments, including direct employment in public or semi-public establishments (such as new cultural institutions), inserting local employment conditions in development deals negotiated with the private sector (in the McArthurGlen development, for example), as well as a range of training and re-skilling initiatives. The housing renewal process has also been used systematically as an opportunity to engage with local families and residents by offering support and information on training and employment development opportunities.

Approach to skills

The regeneration approach adopted in Roubaix has necessitated the development of generic 'place-making' skills, as identified in the Egan Review. Local actors consulted for this research have stressed the importance of committed political leadership and the importance of highly competent staff in the various public authorities, agencies and semi-public organisations charged with implementing the regeneration strategy. However, there was no over-arching strategy for practitioner skills development in Roubaix or Lille, and the strategy and projects implemented have been developed and implemented mainly on the basis of 'existing' skills. It is nevertheless possible to identify a number of skills, knowledge and

competence factors which have contributed to the regeneration process:

- The presence of experienced local politicians (some of whom, such as Pierre Mauroy, had held high office at national level) with a clear vision and a clear personal commitment to the local area. These individuals were able to play a considerable leadership role in driving forward the regeneration approach and mobilise other actors;
- The existence and active recruitment of a young generation of staff inside the key local authority departments and related bodies, who were keen to test new solutions in planning, social policy and economic development and whose unusual level of commitment to their city has been stressed¹⁰;
- A focus on individual skills, competence and commitment in recruiting for positions in local authorities and semi-public bodies, rather than on conventional 'civil servant' backgrounds and (possible) political allegiance¹¹;
- Encouragement and requirements to engage in cross-departmental work within the local authorities, in some cases overcoming traditional rivalries. In Roubaix City Council itself, this was facilitated by the integration of the regeneration, culture and education departments;
- Maximising efforts to engage actively with the local representatives of central government (the prefecture and regional prefecture¹²), central

government itself and other funding bodies to lobby for and secure the funding necessary to implement the schemes proposed.

In common with local authorities and agencies elsewhere in France, the majority of staff involved in the Roubaix regeneration process have traditional public service and urban regeneration backgrounds (a mixture of lawyers, economists, architects, planners, aménageurs and those with more generalist (and highly regarded) training in administration and management). While the people on the ground in Lille-Roubaix thus had/have broadly the same profiles as in other cities in France, a combination of good luck and active recruitment meant that a particularly dynamic team of people was in place.

Formal university training for urban practitioners in France focuses mainly on urban and regional development ('aménagement'), in multi-disciplinary courses in regional and urban development¹³. Such courses are designed to provide graduates with a good multi-disciplinary understanding of regeneration processes, techniques and best practice. Graduates of Lille's Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme have taken up posts within the different regeneration bodies highlighted earlier.

⁹ Colomb/URBED (2006) p.67

¹⁰ Colomb (2006), p.85

¹¹ Staff in local authorities are usually civil servants (fonctionnaires) with particular legal status. However, contractual appointments can also be made for more senior posts. In Roubaix and Lille, observers note that in contrast to common practice, the political allegiance of employees was not an issue (for example, the left-wing authorities in Lille-Roubaix recruited at least one senior official who had previously worked for a right-wing authority elsewhere in France).

¹² Comparable in some ways with Regional Government Offices in the UK or Governors' offices in some other Member States.

¹³ In Lille, the Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de Lille, part of the University of Lille and the largest such institute in northern France, offers undergraduate courses in 'Local development (aménagement) and geography' and a series of masters courses for the coming academic year with possible specialisations in 'urban development and project management', 'design of eco-development projects' and 'sustainable construction and development'. A bilingual French-English Masters programme is also planned for 2006-07.

4. Outcomes

Regeneration outcomes to date

The process of regeneration over the last decade, centring on the Ville Renouvelée has been relatively successful, although much remains to be done. In particular:

- Unemployment has fallen substantially from 33% in the late 1980s to 22% in 2005, owing to an improved local economic climate, successful economic development measures and local employment initiatives;
- The cultural strategy adopted has provided the city with a recognised set of cultural amenities of national /international significance, while 15% of new jobs created in the city have been in cultural industries;
- The wider image of the city, particularly that presented in the media, has become positive, with emphasis frequently placed on the achievements made;
- There is clear evidence of inward investment from both businesses and individuals, as companies have moved in and people unable to afford houses in Lille have started moving to Roubaix. The city is gradually attracting back middle class populations, who had largely deserted the town¹⁴;
- The town centre has been successfully regenerated, with high levels of retail activity and visitors.

Overall, there is clear acceptance that the spiral of decline in Roubaix has been halted and that additional progress can be made in addressing the still high level of unemployment, now that private sector investors have started to return to the town. However, it is clear that a sustained effort is still required to improve the urban environment to keep skilled people and investors in the city and ensure that even more local people feel the benefits of improved economic performance.

Skills and expertise developed

The implementation of the regeneration strategy in Roubaix has not been easy and significant challenges remain.

The regeneration process has nevertheless involved a great deal of 'learning by doing', which has in turn created a wealth of experience and expertise among local actors,

which may be of value to a wider audience. Notably, there have been innovative features of the Roubaix approach, where considerable local expertise of relevance to other cities exists, including:

- The development and agreement of a strategic approach to regeneration at the level of the city-region, through close cooperation and a consensus-based approach;
- The design and implementation of an urban development strategy which seeks to maximise economic benefits for disadvantaged local residents wherever possible;
- The coordination of multiple actions, being implemented in parallel, all aiming to contribute to a shared overall objective (the economic and social renewal of the city);

- A clearly structured approach to local cluster development, based on existing areas of economic strength and local assets, while exploiting local employment development opportunities;
- Innovative approaches to housing renewal, whereby the renewal and re-housing process is used as an opportunity to stimulate dialogue with families regarding their employment situation, inform people about training and re-skilling opportunities and put people in contact with relevant organisations.

¹⁴ Baert (interview)

Problems encountered

Despite the comparative success of the regeneration process in Roubaix, developing and implementing the Ville Renouvelée approach was far from simple. At a strategic level, two main obstacles were encountered and eventually overcome. First, the key challenge was to achieve consensus on the regeneration approach to be adopted, notably because of the number of public sector actors with competence in the regeneration field (municipality, Communauté Urbaine, region, central government). The multiple roles (cumul des mandats) of the Mayor of Roubaix (who was also Vice Chair of the Communauté Urbaine and the regional council) – a common feature of French politics – was an important factor in overcoming this. Second, central government urban policies in France (as in other countries) have also changed more rapidly than regeneration processes can progress. The Ville Renouvelée approach was developed specifically to provide continuity at the local level, while using the different funding mechanisms available at the national level.

On a more operational level, alongside the numerous day to day implementation problems that are to be expected in any complex, large-scale project, two major difficulties have been faced, both of which continue to have an impact on the regeneration process in Roubaix. First, it has been difficult for practitioners and local politicians to manage the political fallout of the choice to invest in long-term projects (notably in the cultural field), which do not have immediate tangible benefits. In particular, it is

not always easy to explain these strategic choices to residents who may be without work and living in substandard accommodation. Now that some of the initial long-term investments are bearing fruit, in terms of regeneration and economic development, this task is easier, although still challenging.

Second, an ongoing problem remains changing perceptions of the city of Roubaix amongst those who knew the city at the worst point of the crisis – in particular those individuals and businesses who left the city. Attracting investors with little or no past connection to the city has proved possible once the opportunities available have been presented. Local residents have seen the tangible benefits of regeneration materialise. However, those who left the city in the past are very difficult to convince and tend to be among the most sceptical about the long-term sustainability of the city's turnaround in fortunes.

Dissemination, learning and 'capitalisation'

Some of the experience gained on the ground in Roubaix is being disseminated to other actors working in urban development, both locally and beyond. The most notable institutionalised mechanism for this in the Roubaix area is the Institut Régional de la Ville (IREV),¹⁵ a semi-public organisation and part of a national network of similar bodies – whose main vocation is to support the local regeneration process by providing continuing training/information to local urban practitioners ('qualification') and to disseminate local expertise and experience ('capitalisation'). Monthly seminars ('Jeudis de la

Ville' – 'Urban Thursdays'), are used to bring together local urban practitioners around particular urban policy questions and are subsequently written up in a seminar report¹⁶.

Researchers have also used local regeneration experience to inform national urban research programmes. A Lille-based team has produced a systematic methodology for incorporating environmental considerations into the urban planning process as part of a research programme financed by the French Ministry of Public Works¹⁷.

¹⁵ The IREV, established in 1999 by central government, is run at a regional level government, with support from the national Caisse des dépôts et consignations, the region of Nord-Pas de Calais and the départements of Nord and Pas de Calais.

¹⁶ Examples of recent topics covered range from the general 'Quel développement territorial? La politique de la ville... demain' ('Whither regional development?: The urban policy of tomorrow') to the more specific 'Comment établir un diagnostic des discriminations en entreprise? Mesurer : Quoi? pour quoi? Comment?' ('How to identify discrimination in the business sector: measuring: what, for what and how?').

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¹⁷ Financed by the Plan Urbanisme Construction Architecture (PUCA) research programme. The outputs can be found here: <http://www.lille-metropole-2015.org/ADU/puca.htm>

5. Lessons

The example of active deployment of 'place-making' skills on the ground in Roubaix highlights a number of lessons relevant to the sustainable communities skills agenda:

- Strong and committed leadership at the political level is instrumental in developing a successful vision for regeneration, economic development and renewal. Commitment and leadership from local politicians is particularly important because they alone are able to give a clear democratic mandate to local officials to design and implement radical policies. Without this democratic legitimacy, officers are more restricted in the options that can pursue, irrespective of their own skills and abilities.
- It is important to overcome political differences and unite behind a coherent local strategy. The consensus achieved in Lille and Roubaix on the Ville Renouvelée was achieved through political consensus and compromise after years of local rivalry.
- Strong institutional structures and cooperation mechanisms between local authorities can be an important factor in the success of redevelopment processes. Through cooperation and coordination in the Communauté Urbaine, Roubaix was able to benefit directly from the parallel processes of regeneration in Lille (the accepted capital of the city region) and the wider metropolitan area.

- Strong political leadership and vision can also help attract and maintain committed and competent staff. A focus on skills and commitment to the overall shared vision is important in recruitment and should override petty political or individual considerations.

...Strong and committed leadership at the political level is instrumental in developing a successful vision for regeneration, economic development and renewal...

- Experience and detailed knowledge of national structures and funding mechanisms on the part of local officials, combined with political weight and skills on the part of local politicians can be crucial in securing external public financing and thus maximising resources available to the regeneration process.

6. References and Further Information

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Lille Métropole Communauté Urbaine
<http://www.lillemetropole.fr/index.php>

Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Lille Métropole
<http://www.lille.cci.fr/>

Agence de Développement et d'Urbanisme de Lille Métropole
<http://www.lille-metropole-2015.org>

SEM Ville Renouvelée
<http://www.semvr.fr/>

Institut d'Aménagement & Urbanisme de Lille (IAUL)
<http://www.univ-lille1.fr/geographie/iaul.htm>

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Annex 1 – Elements of the Regeneration Strategy in Roubaix

| Objective | Actions | Notable Examples |
|--|---|--|
| 1. Attractive public spaces and architectural heritage | <p>Actions to improve public realm in city centre</p> <p>Development of green space through 'greenway strategy'</p> <p>Support for renovation of industrial buildings of high architectural value and building façades through grants and loans</p> | <p>Canal de Roubaix – urban park centred on restored canal</p> <p>Parc de Cassel – urban park</p> |
| 2. Bring back retail to the city centre | <p>Financial and technical support for small business creation (including refurbishment grants, tax exemptions (see below))</p> <p>Build on tradition of 'factory outlet' shops (selling reduced price ex factory goods) linked to textile and textile-related businesses</p> | <p>L'Usine – outlet centre in former velvet factory (developed since 1984)</p> <p>McArthurGlen Roubaix - outlet centre (opened 1999)</p> |
| 3. Targeted economic development | <p>Building on existing business centre initiative (providing office space and ICT facilities), managed by semi-public company</p> <p>Creating a partial tax-exempt zone (Zone Franche Urbaine) in city centre, as part of national programme</p> <p>Supporting 'Cluster' in high technology textile industry through provision of buildings and sites</p> <p>Subsidised retail space for young fashion designers</p> | <p>Eurotéléport- business telecommunication centre (opened 1993)</p> <p>Zone Franche Urbaine – tax exempt zone</p> <p>Cité de l'Initiative – textile cluster, linked to new, large-scale brown-field development outside Roubaix – L'Union</p> |
| 4. Proactive cultural and tourism policy Improve existing cultural facilities | <p>Develop new 'flagship' cultural project to raise the city's profile</p> <p>Foster access to cultural events and activities for local population</p> | <p>La Piscine – Museum of Art and Industry in former swimming pool building</p> <p>La Condition Publique – exhibition space, studios</p> |
| 5. Housing renewal | <p>Renewal of social housing stock (owned by semi-public organisations) – 35% of housing in Roubaix – as part of national housing plan</p> <p>Support refurbishment of privately-owned housing stock (of which some classified as social housing)</p> <p>Foster private house building</p> | <p>SEM Ville Renouvelée is targeting 800 privately owned units with EURO 41 million</p> |

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