

TOWN

Small and medium sized towns in their functional territorial context

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This report summarizes the results of the research on small and medium-sized towns (SMSTs) in the French context, with a particular focus on SMSTs of the Centre region. The research aim has been to explore the complex territorial relations that characterise the SMSTs in France. Hence, a combination of qualitative and quantitative set of analyses ranging from literature review, data analysis, GIS presentation to in-depth interviews with stakeholders has been conducted. However, the major contribution of this report is the interpretation of results using the local knowledge on contextual specificities that reflect on the reality of SMSTs.

Through four sections, we present the settlement system and the definition of SMSTs in national and regional context as well as the territorial aspects of local government system (chapter 1); the results of the morphological administrative and functional analyses of SMSTs and their territorial arrangements within the settlement system (chapter 2); socio-economic characteristics and performance of SMSTs (chapter 3); and an insight to local development policies and practices concerning SMSTs that is the outcome of a fieldwork and interviews with local stakeholders (chapter 4). Based on key findings of French SMSTs, we conclude this report by providing policy recommendations to the European, national and local levels.

1. NATIONAL CONTEXT



Figure 1.1: Territorial composition of NUTS 2 (regions) and NUTS 3 (departments). (Source: L'Observatoire des Territoires, Datar 2012 – IGN GéoFla).

France is divided into 26 administrative regions (NUTS 2), of which 22 are in the mainland and four are overseas regions. The regions are further subdivided into 100 departments (NUTS 3) and 36,682 municipalities (LAU 2). Out of 65.4 million of inhabitants, 63.5 million lived in the mainland and 1.9 million lived in the overseas territories (INSEE, 2012).

As compared to other European countries like the UK, Belgium or Germany, France has a distinctive history of industrialisation and urbanisation (Farthing and Carrière, 2007). During the *Trente Glorieuses* (the “Golden Post-War Decades”), large cities, but also small and medium-sized towns enjoyed substantial growth in population and employment. Processes of suburbanisation gained momentum only during the last four decades, whereas in Britain, for instance, they were a particular feature of the inter-war period around all major cities. For this reason and because of the greater size and lower density of population in the country, urban sprawl has only comparatively recently become a significant issue in France. Nevertheless the issue is now on the policy agenda.

To study the urban phenomena, the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) has been referring to various geographical units. Besides the municipality (fr. *commune*), INSEE defined mainly (i) urban centres (fr. *unité urbaine*); and (ii) travel-to-work areas (fr. *aire urbaine*). Other territorial units, such as employment zones or living areas are also used (for more details, refer to the annex). Besides, as cooperation between municipalities has gained momentum, these last two decades, groups of municipalities (fr. *Etablissement Public de Coopération Intercommunale - EPCI*) are also a relevant level for analysing urban policy.

Municipality (fr. <i>commune</i>)	Urban centre (fr. <i>unité urbaine</i>)	Travel-to-work area (fr. <i>aire urbaine</i>)	Employment zone (fr. <i>zone d'emploi</i>)	Living area (fr. <i>bassin de vie</i>)
The smallest administrative subdivision	Continuous built-up area with at least 2,000 inhabitants and consisting of one municipality or a set of municipalities	Group of municipalities forming an urban centre with at least 1,500 jobs and attracting at least 40% of the population from the periphery	Geographical area within which the most of working population live and work and with most of the manpower needed to fill job offers	Geographical area within which the population have access to basic services

Table 1.1: Territorial statistical delimitations (geographical units)

The recognition of modern trends influencing the territory (urbanisation, suburbanisation, rebirth of the rural) has initiated several attempts to adapt the lenses to analyse the urban system. Since the French Revolution, the basic geographical unit was the municipality. However, with the introduction of urban centres in 1954, the INSEE divided towns between those that are isolated and those that are agglomerated (figure 1.2). The urban centre is based on the concept of built-up continuity. Since the 1960s, the increasing access to cars and house ownership have resulted in more and more citizens coming to live in rural municipalities, while at the same time maintaining the frequent contact with the city. Such an intertwining of rural areas and urban lifestyle has blurred the boundaries of the city. In

that sense, the INSEE proposed a new definition, in addition to that of urban centres: Areas of Industrial and Urban Settlement (fr. *Zones de Peuplement Industriel et Urbain*, ZPIU). The ZPIU were used to measure and describe the main features of the suburbanization phenomenon. However, the ZPIU have gradually been abandoned due to its gigantism (Le Jeannic, 1997). In the 1990s, the INSEE proposed a new spatial concept that enables the interpretation of territorial dynamics: the functional urban region (fr. *aire urbaine*). Such travel-to-work area takes into consideration suburbanization and migration trends, thus it encompasses a much larger area than urban centers, consisting of both rural and urban municipalities (figure 1.2).

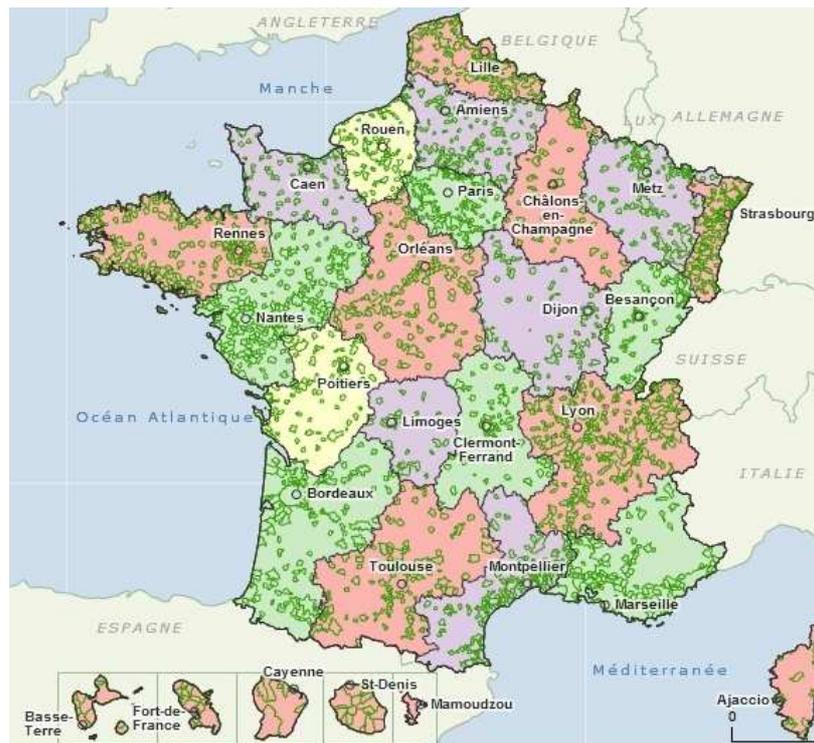


Figure 1.2: Territorial composition of NUTS 2 (regions) and urban centres (fr. *unités urbaines*). (Source: *L'Observatoire des Territoires, Datar, 2012 – IGN GéoFla*).

Each of these units represents an area with population and spatial sizes, administrative status and objects of interests for researchers, elected officials and city managers, thus leaving space for the critics to question the relevance of a scale for an analysis or an action.

Geographical units are subject to a constant public debate, especially the most recent ones such as clustering of municipalities based on inter-municipal cooperation (fr. *communauté de communes, communauté d'agglomération* or *communauté urbaine*) (Figure 1.4).

In France, the expansion of urban areas reached 6 900 km² between 1992 and 2004, which is an increase of 20%. At the same time, the population grew only 6%. These areas of 6,900 km² are larger than an average French department. Cities occupy 22% of the territory and are home to 47.9 million people, or 77.5% of the population. If we examine the 41 largest functional urban regions (fr. *aire urbaine*), 12 are metropolitan (they have each more than half a million inhabitants) and 29 are large urban regions (they have each more than 20,000 inhabitants). Paris metropolitan agglomeration with 12.1 million people spread over 412 municipalities is the largest, followed by metropolitan agglomerations of Lyon and Marseille each with more than 1.7 million inhabitants (Table 1.2). Urbanization is proceeding mainly along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, and in the Alpine regions. New small urban centres have emerged, while the scope of some major urban centres has widened. Nevertheless, during the last ten years, the population growth is the most important in rural and small urban areas (INSEE, 2013).

Functional urban regions	Population (2009)	Annual evolution 1999 – 2009 (in %)
Paris	12,161,542	0.7
Lyon	2,142,732	0.1
Marseille	1,714,828	0.7
Toulouse	1,218,166	1.8
Lille	1,154,861	0.2
Bordeaux	1,114,857	1.1
Nice	1,000,275	0,7
Nantes	862,111	1.0
Strasbourg	759,868	0.6
Grenoble	666,372	0.5
Rennes	663,214	1.4
Montpellier	542,867	1.3

Table 1.2: French metropolitan travel-to-work agglomerations (fr. *aires urbaines*). (Source: Insee - RP1999 RP2009 exploitations principales).

As a result of such complex territorial delimitations, what is considered to be a small town or a medium-sized town (SMST) stays insufficiently defined both in terms of population thresholds and their place in urban planning (Demazière, Serrano and Vye, 2012). Considering the clusters of urban centres (fr. *unités urbaines*), small towns (urban centres from 5,000 to 20,000 inhabitants) include nearly 2,000 towns and 6.6 million (11% of the French population). Likewise, the medium-sized towns (urban centres of 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants) contain 1 300 towns and more than 8 million inhabitants (13% of the population) (INSEE, 2011). Indeed, the concept of SMST comes directly from practitioners, elected officials and city managers, planners and promoters of development policies who identified SMST as a category facing challenges different from those of larger cities (Léo et al., 2012). Hence, SMST is more a category of urban planning policies, and less a stabilized

concept in human geography or regional economy (Béhar, 2009). Therefore, both at national and local levels it is acknowledged that research on SMSTs requires renewed theoretical and methodological approach (Demazière et al., 2012).

1.1 Definition of SMSTs in the national and regional context

SMSTs can be observed in two different ways: static approach and dynamic approach. These two perspectives do not exclude one another, but rather complement each other. The static approach considers the population size and thresholds as basic criteria for distinction, while the dynamic approach broadens the scope by using functional, morphological and socio-economic criteria to define of SMSTs. In other words, the static approach is more quantitative, while the dynamic approach is more qualitative.

1.1.1 Static approach to the definition of SMSTs

In France, it is generally considered that a small town is an urban centre that counts 5,000 to 20,000 inhabitants, while a medium-sized town from 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants (Taulelle, 2010). However, despite general agreement about these thresholds, there are differences between regional and national officials on one hand, and researchers and city officials on the other about the relevance of certain geographical units (Table 1.2).

	Perspective of associations of elected officials	Perspective of researchers	Perspective of the State (DATAR)	National institute for statistics and economic studies (INSEE)
Small town	<u>Municipalities</u> of 2,500 to 25,000 inhabitants (Association des Petites Villes de France)	<u>Urban centres</u> of 5,000 to 20,000 inhabitants (Laborie, 1979; CERAMAC, 2003)	-	<u>Urban centres</u> of 5,000 to 20,000 inhabitants
Medium-sized town	<u>Municipalities-</u> centres of 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants and united under EPCI (Fédération des Maires des Villes Moyennes)	<u>Urban centres</u> of 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants (Lajugie, 1974)	<u>Functional urban regions</u> of 30,000 to 200,000 inhabitants (<i>Programme Villes moyennes</i> , 2005-09)	<u>Urban centres</u> of 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants

Table 1.3: Different approaches to definitions of small and medium-sized towns (Author: Demazière, 2012)

These definitions are based on an analysis of the French urban system, where SMSTs contrast to large cities. If we want to identify the SMSTs in a regional context, then the thresholds defining may change, as there may be few or no large city. This is the case of the Centre region, where there are only two urban centres that go beyond the threshold of 100,000 inhabitants (Orléans and Tours). In 2007 there were 38 small towns (5,000 to

20,000 inhabitants) and 3 medium-sized towns (20,000 to 50,000 inhabitants) inhabitants were Orléans and Tours (Table 1.3).

	Urban centres	Population	Municipalities
Small town (5,000 – 20,000)	38	330.600 inhabitants (13% of total regional population)	93
Medium-sized town (20,000 – 50,000)	3 (Vendôme, Vierzon, Dreux)	103,253 inhabitants (4% of total regional population)	14

Table 1.4: Small and medium-sized urban centres in the Centre region. (Source: INSEE, 2007).

Overall, the size of population as the basic quantitative criterion has been established, but also it has been recognized that exclusive usage of size was not enough in dealing with urban issues (Demazière, 2012). T. Saint-Julien adds: “Besides the statistical parameter, the concept (of SMST) needs a model that combines economic, social and territorial function in these in-between towns” (Saint-Julien, 2011, p. 44; our translation). The size of cities will always be used as a basic indicator (Maturana and Terra, 2010), but very often, additional criteria are associated, such as urban density, surface, continuity of the built-up area or commuting of the population (Santamaria, 2000; Bolay et Rabinovich, 2004).

1.1.2 Dynamic approach to the definition of SMSTs

In France, the small and medium-sized towns have in common to represent urban centres in “non-metropolized area” (Kayser, 1969). Nevertheless, strong distinctions are needed, depending on the geographical location, history or economic specializations that make a particular town vulnerable or resilient. Territories and their roles differ. Forty years ago, J. Lajugie wrote: “A small town (...) should be in a sparsely populated and less urbanized area considered as medium-sized town, while a city two or three times bigger in size, embedded in the urban fabric of an densely populated area, does not necessarily play this role and does not always respond to that vocation” (Lajugie, 1974, p. 18). As a result, French SMSTs are observed through a set of additional qualitative criteria: demography, functions, urban equipment, connectivity and accessibility (Carrière, 2008) or centrality (Demazière, 2012). In fact, theories and concepts such as central places, territorial contexts or relevant spaces (fr. “*plaques territoriales*”, a notion coined by the economist Claude Lacour), urban networks, exogenous and endogenous development have been acknowledged and applied in the French context and by this on French SMSTs as well.

The vitality of discussions on territorial issues in France appears not only in scientific debates (Taulelle, 2010; Demazière, Serrano and Vye, 2012), but also in the policy domain. A State organisation was founded in 1963 (the Delegation for Regional Planning - DATAR) with the objective to create and implement national planning policies. It defines medium-sized towns as those that “play intermediary roles between various urban labels, between sociability and openness to the global, between heritage and new technology, between residential economy and the productive economy” (De Roo, 2007, p. 4; our translation). DATAR

commissioned numerous studies on small and medium sized towns, from the 1970s to the 2000s (Laborie, 1973; Julien and Pougard, 2004; Béhar, 2004), showing its interest for the topic.

To conclude, the approach to SMSTs in France has overcome the static focus on the population size and has become multifocal by observing networks and relations within territory, urban hierarchy and socio-economical intermediation. Just as in many other countries, the potential of SMSTs to generate growth and equilibrium between large metropolitan centres and rural areas within processes of decentralisation, enforcement of service sectors and local policies and actors, has been recognised in France as well (De Roo, 2007; Zuliani, 2004).

1.2 Literature overview of studies of settlement system and SMSTs

In France, there is a tradition of studying SMSTs through various social science disciplines: regional and urban economics, geography, political science, planning, sociology... (Lajugie, 1974; Laborie, 1979; Mabileau and Sorbets, 1989; Commerçon and George, 1999, CERAMAC, 2003). Studies of SMSTs in France have seen two phases: the first in the 1960s and the 1970s and the second in the 1990s and the 2000s. In the 1960s and with the creation of the DATAR, the State's objective was to establish "a hierarchical and balanced territory" where "the dynamism of one area should reduce the decline of the other" (Béhar and Estèbe, 2004, p. 268; our translation). During the 1960s, the state designated eight large conurbations as "métropoles d'équilibre". Through public investment, this policy aimed at raising the profile of these cities, to stimulate economic development in advanced services and eventually to reduce the gap with the Paris conurbations. Regarding medium-sized towns, concrete actions were initiated at the beginning of the 1970s. From 1973 to 1982, 73 medium-sized towns (defined as municipalities with 20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants) signed triennial contracts with the State. The main objectives were to improve the quality of urban life and to carry out equipping and economic development. These contracts defined the state will, the provision of technical expertise and the coordination with local elected representatives in the realization of projects considered as priorities (Carrier and Demazière, 2012). On one hand, by this policy, local municipalities were mobilized so as to define local strategies. "On the other hand, [the policy] looked more at the qualitative than quantitative effects, as it was to develop towns on a "human scale" where the congestion and social segregation related to large cities, would be avoided (Fabriès-Verfaillie et al., 1994, p. 176; our translation). The diversification of functions of an urban centre and the strengthening of its centrality were then considered as key foundations of a consolidated urban system that benefits the hinterland. This policy was, in financial terms, as important as the "métropoles d'équilibre" policy. Since then, associations of elected representatives of these cities (the Association of Small Towns of France, the Federation of Mayors of Medium-Sized Towns) were created to highlight the attributes of these territories and to recall issues of territorial cohesion of these areas that are less affected by *métropolisation* (Demazière, 2012).

Following the period of policy implementation that had to consolidate the urban system in the 1980s, the period after the 1990s, focused on the future of SMSTs in the new context of metropolisation and new division of labour among territories (Ferrerol, 2010). The actors of territorial development realized that planning could not be based solely on large cities, and that the balance between territories could not any longer be established on a global vision of the territory, but on the contrary - by placing ahead the context and the specificities of each territory (Demazière, 2011). This may imply high expectations towards research which aim to identify the role of SMSTs in the contemporary spatial, economic and social system prior to any public policies.

1.2.1 The national level

Since its creation, the DATAR has been one of the most relevant actors in developing territorial planning methods, experimentations and foresights. A pertinent study certainly was the “*Scenario of the unacceptable. Image of France in 2000*” from 1971, that served as a theoretical framework prior to the implementation of actions of the General planning scheme of France (fr. *Schéma général d’aménagement de la France*). As the objective, at that time, was to territorially re-balance the country, the DATAR came out with the vision of France as a highly polarized country in case of business-as-usual, which provoked a huge public discussion. Prospective programmes such as “*France in 2015. Reorganization of the national territory*” published in 1993, and “*France 2020. Moving territories*” from 1999, forced the DATAR to adapt its methods to be consistent with the changes in modes of public action which were triggered by decentralization. Since the 1990s hundreds of researchers and representatives from civil, economic and political spheres have been invited to share their expertise. The most recent one, “*Territories 2040, planning the change*” initiated in October 2009, tried to anticipate key actions and levers for long-term planning issues such as the climate, energy or technology that will impact the future of the territories. Concerning works on urban systems and metropolises after 2000, the DATAR commissioned two studies which were published in 2012: “*What metropolises in Europe? Comparative analysis*” and “*French urban systems*” (Halbert et al., 2012). Both studies highlight the importance of various types of urban networks (asymmetric, intensive, diverse, specialised, transversal, etc.). Nevertheless, in policy terms, more interest has been brought to large cities, and less to smaller scales such as SMSTs. Since the early 2000s, metropolitan areas are seen by the state as engines for national growth, whereas rural areas and SMSTs are supposed to have far less potential. The French state initiated an *Appel à coopération métropolitaine*, a national policy encouraging French large cities to develop cooperation within and across city-regions, sometimes including cross-border cooperation (Motte, 2007). This policy was short-lived, but in 2010, in an Act reforming local bodies, the French State decided to offer the possibility to create a new category of supramunicipal body (EPCI), the ‘métropole’. The ‘métropole’ gathers more than half a million inhabitants. It has the competencies of the ‘communauté urbaine’ but also some of the department and of the region.

As was mentioned before, when it comes to SMSTs, the DATAR initiated several important studies. From 2004 to 2006, in collaboration with the National Federation of Medium-Sized Towns (FMVM) and the Assembly of French Groupings of Municipalities (ADCF), a detailed work based on three axes (observation, analysis and recommendation) was conducted on

medium-sized towns and their TTWs agglomerations of 30,000 to 200,000 inhabitants. The final report *“French medium-sized towns, challenges and prospects”* was published in 2007 (De Roo, 2007). As a result of this report, the same year the Government launched a public call for medium-sized towns to experiment the implementation and the territorial impact of four major sectoral policies: higher education, healthcare, transport and urban renewal. This experimental project *“20 medium-sized towns as witnesses”* was based on the method of dialogue between three actors: local governments, the State and professionals. Ended in 2009, experiences coming from these towns were useful for detecting challenges and for planning future exchanges at vertical and horizontal levels of governing. As a result of these initiatives, the DATAR organized two annual national meetings (in 2009 and 2010) for SMSTs representatives in order to continue with the dialogue.

The National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) has been also conducting several studies on subjects such as centrality and urban structure. Concerning SMSTs, the INSEE published for FMVM an analysis *“Panorama of medium-sized towns”* (2011) that covers socio-economic aspects of development of medium-sized towns. In particular, through the functional analysis of employment, the analysis showed three dominating types of towns: agglomerated, administrative and industrial.

1.2.2 The regional level

The small and medium-sized towns are facing different conditions in terms of their demographics, productive or cultural influence at international, national or within a regional area. We illustrate this using the example of the situation in the Centre Region that will be presented in more detail in the Section 2. The Centre Region is the 4th French region in area and 10th by the number of inhabitants. With the density of 66 inhabitants per km², it is a sparsely populated region. At the national level, it is positioned between different development areas. Compared to the neighbouring Ile-de-France, the Centre Region is an area providing functions and populations. Besides Ile-de-France, it is the most populated region of the Paris Basin as well as the one of the fastest population growing regions (+0.4% per year on average between 1999 and 2009). To the west, the Centre Region has experienced the growing competition coming from the Atlantic area whose coastline and identity attract students or active population (cities such as Rennes, Nantes and Bordeaux, but also medium-sized towns such as Vannes or La Rochelle). Finally, the southern territories of the region have been experiencing the population decline and aging, showing the profiles close to those of the Limousin and Auvergne regions.

Since the 1970s, the role of the regional authorities (*fr. Conseil Régional du Centre*), as for other regions in France, has been to assure the territorial development by implementations of policy for provision of equipment and facilities to its municipalities. The reflections on territorial development continue to spread in the early 2000s, when the Council of the Centre region launched a policy called *“Medium-sized towns”*. However, with the creation of various forms of inter-municipal cooperation, regions broadened their approach to local territories by implementing contractual policy with these inter-municipal forms of cooperation. *“Contractual policy is one way to unite the territories for economic and social*

development - adapted to the potential of each territory within the regional space” (Demazière, 2011, p. 41).

Following a period of consultation and work that involved more than 4.000 people across 23 territorial forums, 6 thematic forums and 3 citizen panels, the Council of the Centre region adopted in 2011 the “*Regional Plan for Sustainable Development and Planning*” (SRADDT). The SRADDT gives a vision of the future development of the region based on three key priorities: knowledge society, networked territories and mobility. In the part “Geographic positioning and structure of the territory” the accent was put on dialogue of actors and on balanced urban structure, in particular between the two regional agglomerations Tours and Orléans and numerous SMSTs. Moreover, as part of the above mentioned Regional Plan, the Council of the Centre region published a study “Look on the employment zones of the Centre region” that covered the socio-economic aspects of all employment zones, both those belonging to medium-sized towns and to larger cities.

Following the objectives of the *Regional Plan* to maximize the development potential of each territory and to reduce disparities in living conditions of its inhabitants, the Centre region very recently (in 2012) reintroduced a new territorial scale of action – living areas (fr. *bassin de vie*). Living areas are defined as territories of ‘everyday life’, whether it is about the area that is delimited based on job commuting or accessibility to services and equipment (consuming). Thus, the 23 living areas in the Centre region are seen as the most suitable for addressing the key issues of economic, social and environmental development of a territory (including employment, housing, transportation, services). Since 2012, the Centre region has been encouraging the dialogue between local actors at that particular scale, including: representatives of groups of municipalities (communities of agglomeration, communities of municipalities, unions of countries, medium-sized towns, etc.), important social and economic actors (CESER, chambers, firms, associations, development councils, etc.) and institutional partners (State, departments, agencies, etc.). As a result of these forums and public discussions, the needs and priorities for future actions were identified in a document named “Ambition 2020” for living areas. This document drafted a set of interventions of the Centre region for living areas, which include both intervention within the framework of its own competences (schools, training, regional transportation, economic development), and interventions based on the support of other territorial communities.

1.2.3 The local level

Since 1988 and grouped around the Federation of Medium-Sized Towns (FMVM), mayors and elected representatives of different municipal networks (fr. *intercommunalités*) such as community of municipalities, community of agglomerations, urban communities or unions of new agglomerations promote interests of medium-sized towns at the national level. In 2004, the FMVM and the State-owned Deposits Fund (fr. *Caisse des dépôts et Consignations*) published a study, “*Medium-sized towns: issues for territorial development*” that covered issues of regional policies in relation to medium-sized towns, development projects and urban renewal, heritage and economic development. In 2005, as a result of close dialogue with the government, the FMVM published “*22 measures for medium-sized towns*” through which the organization gave its recommendations for future actions concerning medium-

sized towns. In 2008, the FMVM re-confirmed its priorities and principles and announced its propositions for the action through the *“Manifest of FMVM for attractive medium-sized towns and inter-municipalities in France of solidarity”*. They demanded more power and resources for local institutions, decentralisation of public services and support for local development (habitat, transport, healthcare, education and services).

In the Centre Region, in order to establish an exchange network and/or to weigh the choices made by the state of the region, a group of elected officials was formed in the 1990s, including towns such as Chinon, Montlouis, Dreux, Salbris, etc. These were towns and cities of varying sizes and status. Since 2008s, the network has evolved into a forum of elected representatives of SMSTs, who meet twice a year in order to discuss topics such as participatory democracy, drivers of local economic development, etc. The resource centre *Villes au carré* has been engaged in the organization of the network.

SMSTs have also been studied by academics (Laborie, 1996; Roques, 2010; Ferrerol, 2010). In region Centre, the PhD work of Pasquet (1999) should be quoted. More recently, the University of Tours in partnership with the universities of Orléans, Poitiers and La Rochelle and with the resource center *Villes au carré*, and with the sponsorship of the Council of the Centre region, organised the international conference *“Small and medium-sized towns: a fresh look”* in 2010 in Tours. Attended by 200 researchers and professionals, the conference enabled an exchange between all involved actors, but also it received papers relating to major themes: (i) how to define a medium-sized town?; (ii) what is the place of a medium-sized town in the region?; (iii) productive or residential: which economy for a medium-sized town?; (iv) what are the implications of public policies?; (v) living in a medium-sized town. Later on, a selection of papers was published in academic journals (Carrier and Demazière, 2012; Demazière, Serrano and Vye, 2012) or for practitioners (*Villes au Carré*, 2011; *Urbanisme*, 2011).

In 2010 the Regional Directorate of Environment, Planning and Housing (DREAL) awarded the University of Tours, a study on the development of medium-sized towns in the Centre region (Demazière, 2011). In 2011, another project *“Observation of economic and strategic dynamics of SMSTs”* (ODES), has been initiated by the University of Tours. The project was supported and funded by the Council of the Centre region and it is still ongoing (Demazière, 2012).

1.3 Territorial aspects of the local government system

Since laws in 1871 and 1884, French municipalities and departments have had a limited autonomy. However, in 1982 and 1983 with the acts known as Gaston Deferre Laws, French parliament launched a policy of decentralisation. The process of decentralisation was conducted in two stages. During 1980s it meant the transfer of powers and responsibilities to newly created institutions and territorial governments (fr. *collectivités territoriales*). One of introduced innovations was the creation of regions with full powers and recognition. The second stage of decentralisation started in the early 2000s with the confirmation of the three vertical levels of local government: municipality, department and region. However,

what is particular for France is the existence of different horizontal forms of inter-municipal cooperation such as community of municipalities, community of agglomeration and urban community. Even though the municipalities and their groupings are autonomous from the department and the region, there exist strong relationships through the territorial contracts, which will be detailed in the case of region Centre, in chapter 4.

1.3.1 Vertical levels of governance

Regions

During the 1950s, the French State designed regional administrative bodies (fr. *Circonscriptions d'action régionale*), which organized regional development. The geographical limits of these administrative regions were kept when, in the early 1980s, French regions were awarded real powers and competences. The Prefect (representing the State at the regional level) transferred part of his powers to the elected President of the Regional Council. In 1986, the first direct public elections for regional councillors were held.

The regional administration has three bodies:

- Regional Council (elected assembly)
- President of the Regional Council (executive elected by the Council)
- Regional Economic, Social and Environmental Council (advisory body)

COMPETENCES OF REGIONS	
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - management of direct and indirect subsidies to businesses to encourage their settling in the departments and municipalities - major role in the development and implementation of the contract plan - management of regional transport, in particular railroads network (regional express trains, TER) and participation in the financing of infrastructure such as the construction of new TGV lines
Education and vocational training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implementation of actions for vocational training and life-long learning, which includes the integration of young people in difficulty and dual education system - construction, maintenance and operation of second level high schools (fr. <i>lycées</i>) and agricultural schools
New competences transferred by law in 2004, but still in their experimental phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - heritage protection - development of seaports and airports - implementation of a regional plan for air quality and classification of regional nature reserves

Source: Direction de l'Information Légale et Administrative

Departments

Created after the French Revolution, departments had to ease the administration of the government. The spatial delimitation of departments was made so that it was possible to arrive to a departmental capital in one day of riding. Despite many critics, department with its prefect (put by the State) became eventually essential for State administration at the local level. However, since the decentralisation laws, the executive function of the prefect was substantially downsized in favour of the elected president of the general council of the Department. Departments are divided into districts (fr. *cantons*) that elect councillors for departmental general councils.

COMPETENCES OF DEPARTMENTS	
Social action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - childhood: maternal and child healthcare, adoption, support for families in financial difficulty - people with disabilities: policies for accommodation and social inclusion, provision of disability compensation - the elderly: creation and management of retirement homes, policy of maintaining the elderly at home (personal autonomy allowance) - social assistance benefits: management of active solidarity income
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - construction, maintenance and equipment for first level secondary schools (fr. <i>24colleges</i>)
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rural infrastructure, land consolidation, land management, water management, rural roads taking into account the priorities identified by the municipalities - fishing seaports, non-urban road transport of persons - road extension and maintenance of all roads that do not fall into the national public domain
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - construction and managing departmental libraries, county archives, museums - heritage protection
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct or indirect support

Source: Direction de l'Information Légale et Administrative

Municipalities

A municipality is the basic and the oldest administrative unit. It was introduced by law in 1790 when at the time of the French Revolution all parishes, villages, towns and cities were converted to municipalities. This explains their large number (more than 36.700 municipalities in 2011). Since the Municipal Act in 1884, municipalities have their own administrative organization, regardless of their size:

- Municipal council (councillors are elected by direct universal suffrage)
- Mayor (elected by the council)

COMPETENCES OF MUNICIPALITIES	
Planning	- development of regulatory documents of planning (local development plans, PLU, development areas, ZAC)
Healthcare and social sector	- implementation of social actions through community centres (management of nurseries, homes for the elderly) - support to associations and social actors
Education	- pre-elementary and elementary schools (creation and implementation, management and financing)
Culture	- construction and managing of departmental libraries, museums, music schools, concert halls - cultural events
Sport and recreation	- management of sports facilities, subsidizes of sports including professional sports clubs - tourism development
Traditional competences	- marital status (registration of births, marriages and deaths) - electoral functions (organisation of elections) - maintenance of municipal roads - protection of public order (local police)

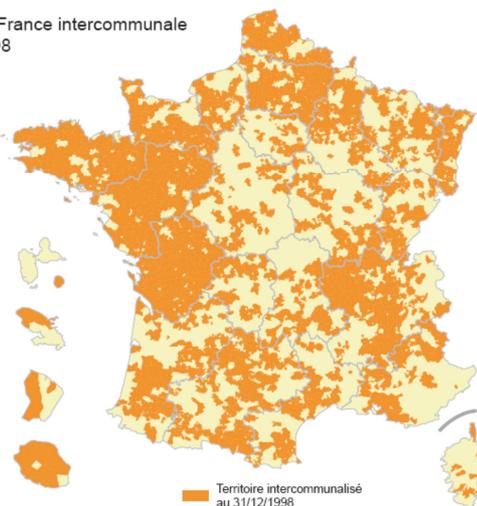
Source: Direction de l'Information Légale et Administrative

1.3.2 Horizontal levels of the governance

The expression "inter-municipality" (fr. *intercommunalité*) refers to the various forms of cooperation between municipalities. In spite of its existence for more than 120 years (municipal unions), the inter-municipal cooperation was strengthened and simplified during the 1990s and finally reviewed in 2010 with the territorial reform. The clustering of municipalities within public institutions of inter-municipal communities (EPCI) had initially two objectives:

- Joint management of certain local public services or facilities in order to better allocate costs and benefit from economies of scales. In this case, municipalities seek to form an inter-municipal community that is relatively flexible or associative.
- Collective management of local development projects. In this case, municipalities opt for a more integrated or federal form of cooperation.

La France intercommunale
1998



1998

Urban communities: 12

Communities of agglomeration: 0

Communities of municipalities: 1,347

La France intercommunale
2007



2012

Urban communities: 15

Communities of agglomeration: 202

Communities of municipalities: 2,360

Figure 1.5: Evolution of inter-municipality (1998 – 2007). (Source: INSEE, 2007)

The inter-municipality is in most cases voluntary and has several different forms created by acts:

- Unions of municipalities (since 1890)
- Communities of municipalities (since 1992)
- Urban communities (since 1966)
- Communities of agglomeration (since 1999)
- Unions of new agglomeration (1983)
- Metropolises (since 2010)

Inter-municipal arrangements are seen as a possible solution for municipal fragmentation and an instrument of rational organization of territories. France, with its large number of municipalities, represents 40% of all municipalities of the European Union. Municipalities in France have a long history and have been kept because local officials and citizens are attached to the municipal identity and proximity to legal and administrative services. In addition, the inter-municipality promotes local development that might respond to the challenges raised by problems in urban development or decay of rural areas. Nevertheless, it is still the object of public debates and undergoing changes.

Thus overall the complex territorial delimitations in France are an object of constant public debate. Both at national and local levels it is acknowledged that the renewed scientific and practical approach to territorial units is required. The most recent attempt is the territorial reform that encourages stronger inter-municipal cooperation and share of competences. In a context where SMSTs represent 10% of municipalities and more than 11 million people, their potential to generate growth and equilibrium between large metropolitan centres and

rural areas within processes of decentralisation, enforcement of service sectors and local policies and actors, has become a wider public interest.

EPCI	POPULATION	COMPETENCES
Community of municipalities	< 50,000 inhabitants	<u>2 compulsory competences:</u> - economic development - planning <u>1 optional competence (choice among):</u> - environment - housing - sports and cultural equipment - roads
Community of agglomeration	> 50,000 inhabitants Around a municipality of more than 15,000 inhabitants	<u>4 compulsory competences:</u> - economic development - planning - housing - urban renewal <u>3 optional competence (choice among):</u> - environment - water - sports and cultural equipment - roads
Urban communities	> 500,000 inhabitants	<u>6 compulsory competences:</u> - economic development - planning - housing - urban renewal - water - roads

Table 1.5: Competences of selected forms of inter-municipal communities. (Source Direction de l'Information Légale et Administrative)

2. TERRITORIAL IDENTIFICATION OF SMSTS

This chapter provides final results of the morphological-geomatic and functional-spatial analyses conducted on the case of the Centre region (NUTS 2) including a detailed observation of territorial relations between urban settlements. A special focus has been given to the relation of SMSTs with large urban centres and very small towns. Firstly, we present the observed territory: the Centre region. Secondly, we show results of the geomatic morphological analysis applied in the delimitation of SMSTs from other urban settlements in the case of study. Finally, we observe the job-commuting flow in order to identify the functional micro-regions and their centres as well as their type of territorial arrangement (autonomous, agglomerated or networked).

2.1 The observed territory: the Centre Region

The Centre Region is the 4th largest region with 39,000 km² and located around the Loire Valley, in between Paris and the Massif Central. With 2.6 million inhabitants in 2012 (about 4% of the metropolitan population) the region ranks 10th on the national scale. Characterized by a density of 66 inhabitants per km², it is a sparsely populated region with the highest population density on the Loire Valley. The Centre Region is composed of six departments (NUTS 3) and multi-polarised around two cities: Tours (475,600 inhabitants) and Orléans (416,978 inhabitants). Overall, there are 1,842 municipalities (LAU 2), 123 urban centres and 47 travel-to-work agglomerations of which 8 have more than 50 000 inhabitants (Tours, Orléans, Chartres, Bourges, Blois, Chateauroux, Montargis and Dreux) (INSEE, 2009).

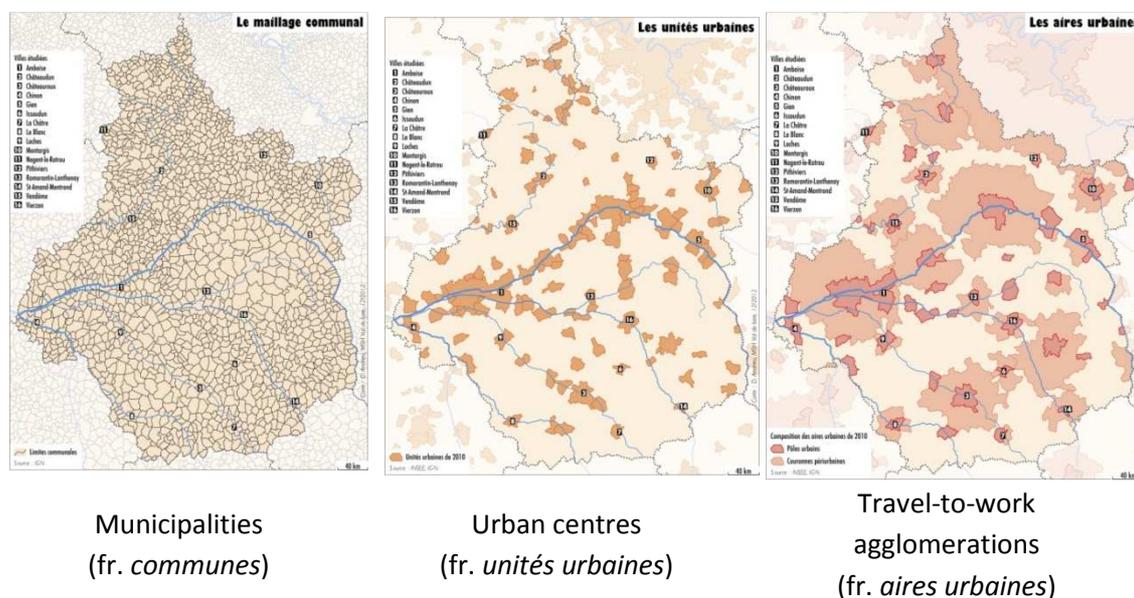


Figure 2.1.: Three different geographical units in the Centre region. (Source: INSEE, 2010; author: Dominique Andrieu, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Val de Loire, Tours).

The migration flows in the region are particularly high both in terms of arrivals and departures. When it comes to the residential migration, there are 200,000 new comers and

almost as many departures in five years. More precisely, the region is the final residence of Parisians who represent nearly half of all new arrivals.

The sub-regional mobility is also important. Over a period of five years, 370,000 inhabitants have changed their municipality for staying in another one within the region. Thus, one in eight inhabitants is a new comer either from another municipality of the Centre region or outside the region. In terms of the mobility of population towards outskirts of cities (urban sprawl) in order to benefit from a larger and/or financially more accessible housing, more than 60,000 economically active inhabitants do not live in the same area of their work. Thus, while jobs stay concentrated in large urban centres, the population growth is stronger in suburban areas.

Large urban centres such as Tours, Bourges, Chateauroux, Blois and Orléans attract economically active population with nearly three out of four new comers. They are also hosting a young population attracted by an offer of high education degrees. Nevertheless, a high proportion of the population has left to live in more accessible suburban areas.

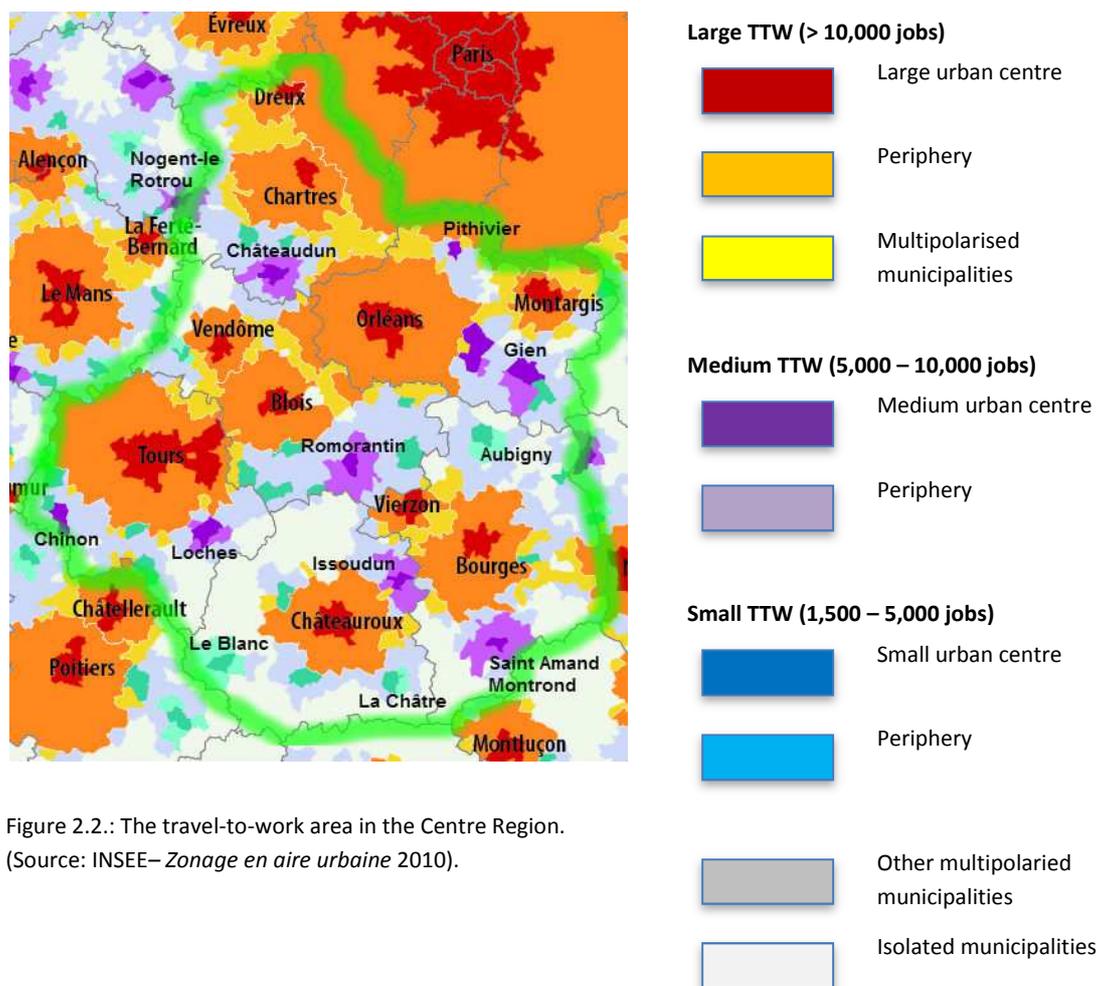


Figure 2.2.: The travel-to-work area in the Centre Region.
(Source: INSEE– *Zonage en aire urbaine* 2010).

Small and medium-sized urban centres located south of the Centre region such as Le Blanc, La Chatre, Argenton-sur-Creuse, Sancerre, Aubigny and Saint-Amand-Montrond have seen the growth in population mainly related to the suburbanization of larger urban centres (Bourges and Chateauroux) and the arrival of retired population. Nevertheless, these urban centres have shown less dynamism in terms of provision of jobs and services to its population.

On the other hand, small and medium-sized urban centres such as Montargis, Gien, Vendôme, Loches and Romorantin-Lanthenay, besides a positive net migration for economically active and retired categories of population, have seen more positive dynamics in employment as they benefit from the proximity to major economic centres of the Loire valley (Orléans and Tours) and the Ile-de-France Region.

Finally, urban centres such as Chinon, Chartres, Dunois, Perche and Pithiviers have had a strong out-commuting of the economically active population. More precisely, the out-commuting is characterized by a larger distance of the workplace (in large agglomerations of Paris, Tours and Orléans) from the place of living that is possible due to the existence of transport infrastructure.

2.2 Identification of SMSTs by means of morphological-geomatic analysis

Based on population and density criteria, the morphological-geomatic analysis has identified three types of polygons by aggregation of cell grids with given characteristics: SMSTs, high-density urban clusters (HDUC) and very small town (VST). The population and density thresholds used for the classification of urban settlements (represented through polygons) into SMST, HDUC, and VST are presented in the Table 2.1.

The analysis has been conducted on the NUTS 1 region of the Parisian Basin. This corresponds to 6 NUTS 2 regions (Champagne-Ardenne, Picardie, Haute-Normandie, Centre, Basse-Normandie and Bourgogne) and to 22 NUTS 3 regions (Table 2.1).

NUTS 1	Code	NUTS 2	Code	NUTS 3	Code	
Ile-de-France	FR1	Ile-de-France	FR10	Paris	FR101	
				Seine-et-Marne	FR102	
				Yvelines	FR103	
				Essonne	FR104	
				Hauts-de-Seine	FR105	
				Seine-Saint-Denis	FR106	
				Val-de-Marne	FR107	
Parisian Basin	FR2	Champagne-Ardenne	FR21	Ardennes	FR211	
				Aube	FR212	
				Marne	FR213	
				Haute-Marne	FR214	
		Picardie	FR22		Aisne	FR221
					Oise	FR222
					Somme	FR223
		Haute-Normandie	FR23		Eure	FR231
					Seine-Maritime	FR232
		Centre	FR24		Cher	FR241
					Eure-et-Loir	FR242
					Indre	FR243
					Indre-et-Loire	FR244
					Loir-et-Cher	FR245
					Loiret	FR246
		Basse-Normandie	FR25		Calvados	FR251
					Manche	FR252
					Orne	FR253
		Bourgogne	FR26		Côte-d'Or	FR261
					Nièvre	FR262
					Saône-et-Loire	FR263
Yonne	FR264					

Table 2.1: Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) codes used in the analysis

Defined this way (excluding the Ile-de-France core), the Parisian basin covers in total 146,689.6 km² and has 10,658,099 inhabitants (2006). The results point at the VST as the prevailing population settlement of the observed area. SMSTs and HDUCs cover almost the same percentage of area and the same percentage of population. 18.5% of the population lives in the SMSTs, while SMSTs occupy 1% of the observed area. Only one of 22 selected NUTS 3 regions has SMST as a prevailing population settlement. Concerning HDUCs, they do not differ from SMSTs. They occupy 0.5% of the observed area with 18.7% of the total population. In addition, there is no NUTS 3 region among those observed in the analysis that has HDUC as a prevailing population settlement.

Potential NUTS1 case	Population (2006)	Area sq.km (2006)	n. of NUTS3	% population living in SMST	% area occupied by SMST	n. of NUTS3 regions with SMST as prevailing population settlement	% population living in HDUC	% area occupied by HDUC	n. of NUTS3 regions with HDUC as prevailing population settlement
Parisian Basin (FR2)	10,658,099	146,689.6	22	18.5%	1%	1	18.7%	0.5%	0

Table 2.2: Characteristics of the Paris Basin (NUTS 1)

In order to compare morphological-geomatic results with the official data of the French institute for statistics and economic studies (fr. INSEE), and having in mind the complexity when it comes to the definition of a town (Chapter 1), we have used the urban centre (fr. *unité urbaine*)¹ as a territorial unit corresponding to the polygons derived from the morphological-geomatic analysis.

DENSITY/POPULATION	< 300 inh./km ²	300 – 1.500 inh./km ²	> 1.500 inh./km ²
< 5,000 inh.	Other settlements	VST	VST
5,000 – 50,000 inh.	Other settlements	SMST	SMST
> 50,000 inh.	Other settlements	SMST	HDUC

Table 2.3: Urban settlements typology of the morphological-geomatic analysis

Overall, the morphological-geomatic method has succeeded in identifying and covering urban settlements that correspond to the INSEE delimitation of urban centres. Nevertheless, the classification of polygons into three categories (VST, SMST, HDUC) has raised some doubts. Whereas the application of population thresholds has successfully identified VSTs (66 urban centres), SMSTs (41 urban centres) and HDUCs (7 urban centres), the density thresholds used in the classification are questionable. As shown in the Table 2.4., majority (89%) of the observed urban centres in the Centre region have less than 300 inhabitants per km² and have been classified as “other settlements”. At the same time, no urban centre in the region has been classified as HDUC (Table 2.2).

DENSITY/POPULATION	< 300 inh./km ²	300 – 1.500 inh./km ²	> 1.500 inh./km ²
< 5,000 inh.	66	0	0
5,000 – 50,000 inh.	35	6	0
> 50,000 inh.	0	7	0

Table 2.4: Urban settlements typology of the morphological-geomatic analysis applied on urban centres of the Centre region

Lower density thresholds while keeping the existing population thresholds seems to be an appropriate solution for French urban settlements. We would suggest up to 100 inh./km² for

¹ An urban centre (fr. *unité urbaine*) corresponds to the basic definition of a town. It is based on the continuity of built-up area and a number of inhabitants as the main defining criteria. An urban centre can consist of one municipality or a set of municipalities that has an area of continuous built-up area of less than 200 meters between two buildings and with at least 2 000 inhabitants. It comprises a city centre (LAU 2) and a suburb.

VST, 100 – 500 inh./km² for SMST and at least 500 inh./km² for HDUC (Table 2.5.). As a result, there would be 5 HDUC and 32 SMSTs in the Centre Region.

URBAN CENTRE	POPULATION	DENSITY (inh./km ²)
Le Blanc	6,926	35.7
La Châtre	7,129	146
Argenton-sur-Creuse	8,820	128.7
Chinon	9,887	139.1
Loches	10,327	130.3
Pithiviers	11,175	348.3
Nogent-le-Rotrou	12,608	374.4
Issoudun	13,627	368.2
Saint-Amand-Montrond	13,956	425.5
Gien	16,557	166.8
Châteaudun	17,532	271.5
Romorantin-Lanthenay	17,559	383.9
Vendôme	23,307	332.3
Vierzon	30,673	290.6
Montargis	55,081	449.7
Châteauroux	64,949	370.0
Blois	67,984	552.6
Bourges	86,769	658.3
Chartres	87,339	1,269.6
Orléans	268,468	928.9
Tours	344,739	520.7

Table 2.5: Selected urban centres (SMSTs and HDUCs) of the Centre region and their characteristics. (Source: INSEE, 2007).

2.3 Identification of SMSTs and the territorial arrangement by means of functional analysis

The functional analysis is based on job commuting between urban municipalities of the Centre region. In addition, as the Centre region is neighbouring eight regions, in our analysis we have included the significant cross-regional job commuting, especially the flow between the municipalities of the Centre region and the Ile-de-France.

The analysis has been conducted in four steps. First, we identify settlements that play the role of job centres. They are identified by using the criteria of the minimum number of jobs, and the status of the main commuting destination from at least one other town. Second, we delimit urban micro-regions by integrating municipalities around their micro-regional centres depending on their main flows. Third, we distinguish micro-regional centres (MRC) that are SMSTs or large cities by analysing their functional importance as centres. Finally, we observe the intensity and directionality of flows among identified micro-regional centres in order to detect territorial arrangements such as autonomous SMSTs, agglomerated to metropolitan areas or conurbations dominated by large city, and polycentric networks of SMSTs.

2.3.1 Identification of job centres, micro-regions and micro-regional centres

Based on the job-commuting data for the year 2009, we have identified 82 SMSTs and large cities that have at least 1,000 jobs. These job centres differ in number of jobs (from 1,017 to 152,642 jobs) and in size of population (2,586 to 345,575 inhabitants).

Likewise, we have identified 20 SMSTs and large cities (Paris included) that have a role of centres of their micro-regions (MRCs). They represent the main job-commuting destinations for their neighbouring municipalities and count at least 8 000 inhabitants and 3 000 jobs (Table 2.6.).

Code MRC	Name of the micro-regional centre	Population	Number of jobs
36203	Argenton-sur-Creuse	8,767	3,000
45302	Sully-sur-Loire	11,911	4,008
37111	Chinon	9,709	4,020
37301	Loches	10,459	4,108
28301	Nogent-le-Rotrou	12,312	4,617
45301	Pithiviers	11,309	4,678
36301	Issoudun	13,230	5,195
41301	Romorantin-Lanthenay	17,092	6,303
28302	Châteaudun	17,496	6,654
45303	Gien	16,294	7,486
41401	Vendôme	23,650	8,493
18401	Vierzon	30,051	9,630
28401	Dreux	47,693	18,035
45501	Montargis	54,754	19,868
36501	Châteauroux	64,122	28,675
41501	Blois	66,149	31,418
18501	Bourges	82,595	34,589
28501	Chartres	87,463	39,260
45701	Orléans	268,922	130,666
37701	Tours	345,575	152,642
00854	Paris	10,413,386	5,276,747

Table 2.6: Identified micro-regional centres and their characteristics. (Source: INSEE, 2009).

The towns that do not meet the criteria of: (i) having at least 3,000 jobs, or (ii) that are not significant commuting destination of another town, are assigned to neighbouring MRCs that meet those criteria. For example, SMSTs such as Saint-Amand-Montrond, Saint-Lubin-des-Joncheret-Nonancourt, Ezy-sur-Eure and Epernon meet the criterion of minimal number of jobs, but are not among significant flows of other towns/cities, thus they do not form their own micro-regions but are assigned to other MRCs. On the contrary, four SMSTs: Vierzon, Nogent-le-Rotrou, Issoudun and Sully-sur-Loire meet the criterion of minimal number of jobs and they are among significant flows of other towns/cities, so they form their own micro-regions consisting of their municipalities and are identified as MRCs.

Following such territorial consolidation, we have delimited 20 micro-regions (named after their MRCs) within the Centre region and one additional Paris micro-region that is important for our further analysis of territorial arrangements (Figure 2.3.).

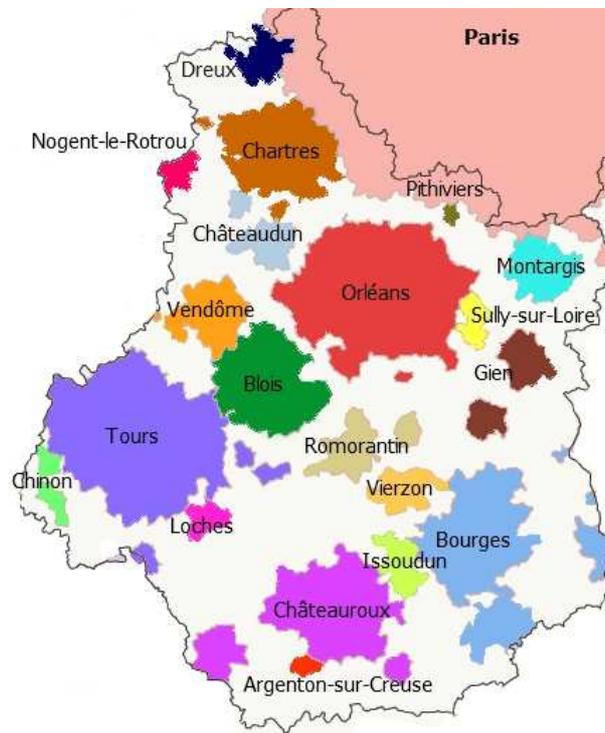


Figure 2.3: Micro-regions of the Centre region (micro-region of Paris included). (Source: L'Observatoire des Territoires, Datar 2012 – IGN GéoFla).

The largest micro-regions in terms of number of population and the number of jobs (besides Paris) are Tours, Orléans and Bourges. Their MRCs are at the same time the largest regional cities. Furthermore, the sprawl of the micro-regions of Orléans and Tours over the observed territory is far more important compared to other micro-regions. The Orléans micro-region includes 20 urban centres, and the Tours micro-region includes 18 urban centres, which points at the existence of strong dynamics of suburbanization. In contrast, micro-regions with SMSTs as their centres such as Issoudun, Vierzon or Argenton-sur-Creuse, are in general smaller in number of assigned urban centres. In other words, job commuting is happening between fewer urban centres. Nevertheless, Gien and Romorantin-Lanthenay seem to be exceptions as SMSTs that attract job-commuters from a larger surrounding territory (Table 2.7).

Micro-regions**	Population	Active population employed	Number of jobs	Number of assigned urban centres
Blois	91,284	36,519	37,766	7
Bourges	132,384	50,501	50,186	10
Chartres	114,628	48,489	47,802	9
Châteaudun	26,404	9,519	9,243	3
Châteauroux	106,370	42,206	41,890	10
Chinon	22,924	8,692	8,937	4
Dreux	62,718	22,601	22,941	3
Gien	42,661	16,678	17,754	8
Montargis	81,099	29,399	29,332	7
Orléans	359,487	156,770	157,871	20
Paris*	12,161,542	6,195,444	5,758,403	7*
Pithiviers	14,605	5,678	5,884	2
Romorantin-Lanthenay	35,471	12,456	11,839	6
Tours	431,696	179,065	177,019	18
Vendôme	30,897	11,098	11,051	3
Vierzon	30,051	9,917	9,630	1
Nogent-le-Rotrou	12,312	4,711	4,617	1
Issoudun	13,230	4,947	5,195	1
Sully-sur-Loire	11,911	4,670	4,008	1
Loches	13,292	4,874	4,936	2
Argenton-sur-Creuse	8,767	3,296	3,000	1

* The number represents only the UUs of the Centre region assigned to the macro-region of Paris

**The name of a micro-region corresponds to the name of its centre (micro-regional centre)

Table 2.7.: Micro-regions of the Centre region (micro-region of Paris included) and their characteristics. (Source: INSEE, 2009).

2.3.2 Identification of territorial arrangements and final typology

For the second phase of the functional analysis that explores relations between SMSTs and large cities, we refer to significant flows between MRCs and their characteristics: (i) share of out-commuters in active population of the MRC of source; (ii) share of out-commuters in number of jobs of the MRC of destination. The identification of territorial arrangements is made in two steps. We calculate the value of functional position of MRCs in the urban system based on the number of significant commuting. Then, we identify SMSTs and large cities that are autonomous, agglomerated or networked micro-regional centres based on the previously mentioned characteristics of out-commuters of MRCs.

Therefore, we have identified 16 SMSTs and 6 large cities that are centres of micro-regions. We have included the MRC of Paris due to the fact that it is a significant job-commuting destination for towns and cities of the Centre region. Since all MRCs have significant incoming and out-going flows, we observe that there is no autonomous (isolated) micro-regional centre in our case of study. Regarding the other types of territorial arrangements, the majority of MRCs that are SMSTs are agglomerated to larger MRCs (13 agglomerated MRCs). On the other hand, six MRCs that are SMSTs are networked with other MRCs (2 SMSTs are networked with larger cities, while 4 SMSTs are networked with other SMSTs) (Table 2.8.).

Type	Population	Active population employed	Number of jobs	Micro-regional centres
LC	11,264,090	5,807,845	5,665,322	Paris, Blois, Bourges, Chartres, Orléans, Tours
AGLO-LC*	192,735	69,638	72,291	Châteaudun (agglomerated to Chartres), Chinon (agglomerated to Tours), Dreux (agglomerated to Paris), Loches (agglomerated to Tours), Montargis (agglomerated to Paris), Nogent-le-Rotrou (agglomerated to Chartres), Pithiviers (agglomerated to Paris), Romorantin-Lanthenay (agglomerated to Blois), Sully-sur-Loire (agglomerated to Orléans)
NETW-LC**	53,701	18,428	18,123	Vendôme (networked with Blois), Vierzon (networked with Bourges)
NETW-SMST-S***	102,413	40,274	44,356	Châteauroux networked with Issoudun, Gien networked with Sully-sur-Loire, Issoudun networked with Châteauroux, Argenton-sur-Creuse networked with Châteauroux
AUTO	0	0	0	None

* in bold SMSTs are followed by the name of the large city they are agglomerated to.

** in bold SMSTs are followed by the name of the large city they are networked to.

*** in bold SMSTs are followed by the name of the SMST they are networked to.

Table 2.8: Final typology of micro-regional centres in the case of study. (Source: INSEE, 2009).

According to results presented in the tables 2.8. and 2.9. we observe that the regional large cities (Blois, Bourges, Chartres, Orléans and Tours) concentrate population and employment as twice as more than SMSTs and for most of them the main job-commuting destination is the Paris micro-region. The exception is Blois since its main job-commuting destination is the neighbouring Orléans micro-region.

When it comes to SMSTs, most of them (9 out of 15 SMSTs) are agglomerated to one of identified large cities. For example, three SMSTs (Dreux, Pithiviers and Montargis) in the north are the closest to the microregion of Paris, thus they are agglomerated to it. Other two northern SMSTs (Châteaudun and Nogent-le-Rotrou) do not touch directly the borders of Paris micro-region, so they are agglomerated to the closer micro-region of Chartres.

Only two SMSTs (Vendôme and Vierzon) whose job-commuters contribute significantly to the labour market of their destination cities are networked with the large cities of Blois and Bourges.

Final examples of territorial arrangement are Issoudun and Châteauroux that are networked SMSTs where each of them is at the same time the main and the only significant centre of source and centre of destination. Slightly different relation of network is between SMSTs of Gien and Sully-sur-Loire. In their case, both SMSTs have at least two significant commuting destinations. For Gien, the main commuting destination is Sully-sur-Loire with which it has a network relation, while with other cities such as Montargis and Orléans, Gien has an

agglomerated relation. On the side, Sully-sur-Loire's main significant commuting destination is the centre of Orléans with which it has an agglomerated relation. However, the second significant destination of Sully-sur-Loire is Gien with which it is networked.

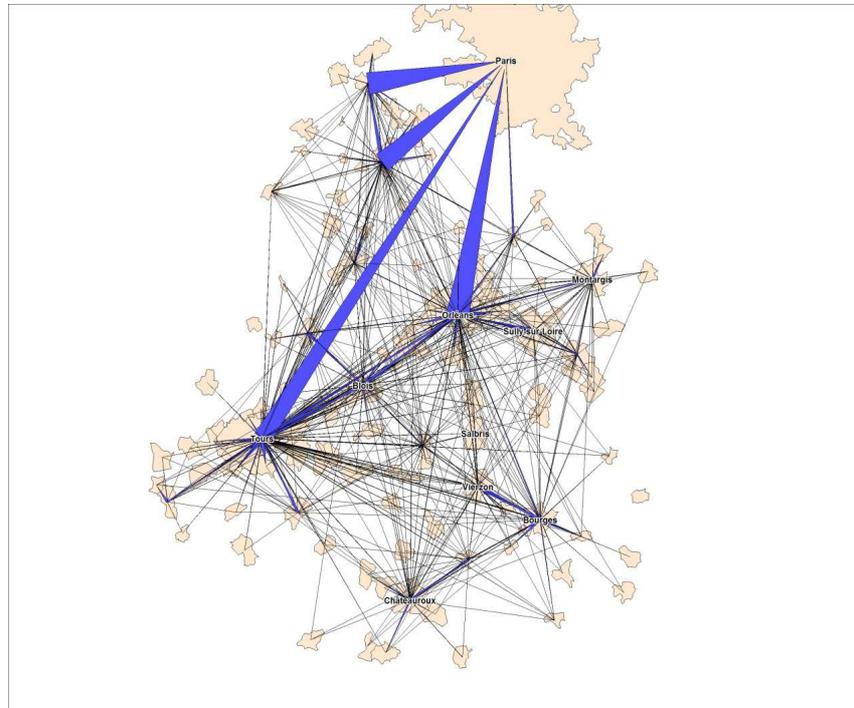


Figure 2.4: Significant job-commuting between urban centres in the Centre region. (Source: INSEE, 2009; author: Dominique Andrieu, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme Val de Loire, Tours).

Type	Population	Active population employed	Number of jobs	Number of towns
LC	11,264, 090	5,807,845	5,665,322	6
AGLO-LC	192,735	69,638	72,291	9
NETW-LC	53,701	18,428	18,123	2
NETW-SMST-S	102,413	40,274	44,356	4
AUTO	0	0	0	0

Table 2.9: Synthesis of the results of the functional analysis. (Source: INSEE, 2009).

The morphological-geomatic and functional-spatial analyses have succeeded in the morphological and functional identification of urban settlements in the Centre region. The geomatic methods of urban settlements point at the dominance of small and low density towns (less than 5,000 inhabitants and 300 inh./km²) as a population settlement. Only in the case of one NUTS 3 region, SMSTs have been detected as a prevailing population settlement. Regarding their position in the urban system, SMSTs not only provide workforce (economically active population) for other neighbouring SMSTs and large cities, but in fact some of them are job destinations for the surrounding territory. Finally, observation of territorial arrangement of SMSTs with other towns and cities shows the influence of large

cities over SMSTs. In most cases, commuters leaving SMSTs to work in large cities might be a significant in number for the labour market of SMSTs, but are not representing as significant percentage in the labour market of the large city. Two SMSTs (Vendôme and Vierzon) are exceptions to that rule: they provide jobs to active population from, respectively, Blois and Chateauroux. On the other side, when it comes to networks between towns and cities, in our case study we observe more networks between two SMSTs, and fewer networks between SMSTs and large cities.

3. TERRITORIAL PERFORMANCE OF SMSTs

The chapter provides results of the socio-economic analysis of the Centre region with a special focus on three selected SMSTs: Chinon, Issoudun and Vendôme. The aim is to explore the factors, dominant profiles and main development trends of SMSTs. The first subsection presents a general profile of the three SMSTs that were selected as the case of study. The second subsection explores the main socio-economic characteristics including the evolutionary trajectories of SMSTs *vis-à-vis* other types of settlements: very small towns (VST) and large urban areas (HDUC). Finally, in the last subsection we conclude by presenting some of the major development trends of SMSTs in the Centre Region.

3.1 The observed SMSTs: Vendôme, Chinon and Issoudun

Building on our earlier argument (section 1.1.2) that French SMSTs have been observed through a set of additional qualitative criteria (demography, functions, connectivity, centrality, etc.), we observe the relation of towns and cities' location within an area and their socio-economic dynamics. Indeed, SMSTs are conditioned by their context as they operate in conjunction with other settlements and are relying on networks with the surrounding territory. Such relationships and interrelation then form diverse territorial clusters under the term "*plaques territoriales*" or territorial contexts, proposed by the French economist Claude Lacour.

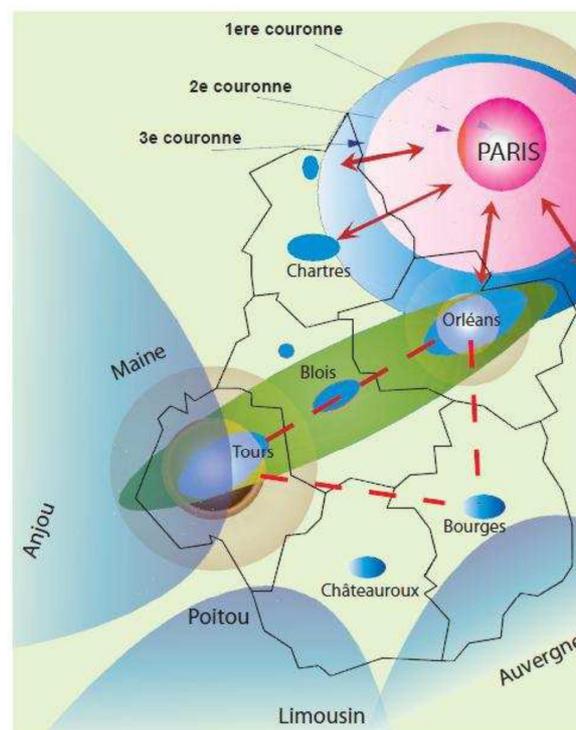


Figure 3.1: Three different territorial contexts with the Centre Region. (Source: Report CRCI, 2006, *Enjeux d'aménagement du territoire et d'infrastructure en région Centre*).

We can apply the notion to the case of the Centre Region, and thus observe three territorial contexts existing in the Region, each having its own social, economic and urban dynamics: the northern area, the Loire Valley and the southern area (Demazière and Boutet, 2001) (Figure 3.1).

The northern area of the Region covers two departments (Loiret and Eure-et-Loir) and is directly under the influence of the Ile-de-France Region. Proximity to Paris has resulted in tremendous economic benefits for the Region Centre as many companies relocated in search for neighbouring, cheaper and accessible regions. In 2008, the Region was ranked the 3rd in attracting companies from the Ile-de-France. In addition, the north of the region attracts households from the Ile-de-France who wish to change lifestyle and live in the province. A large part of them commutes daily to the various job poles in Ile-de-France. The lack of planning documents at the municipal or inter-municipal level results in urban sprawl.



Montargis



Pithiviers



Chartres

Source: Region Centre

The Loire Valley has also experienced firms' relocation and migrations. SMSTs as well as the two largest conurbations of the region, Orléans and Tours, have benefitted from it as much as they have enjoyed endogenous growth. Today, in economic, demographic, functional or cultural terms, the Loire Valley is considered to be the backbone of the Region. Moreover, it is the major geographic feature that characterises the Region and it spreads towards neighbouring regions of Anjou and Poitou, and more generally towards the Atlantic area. The Loire Valley is polarized around the two economically the largest and fast growing cities: Tours and Orléans and it is the most populated and the most urbanized area of the Region. In addition, it is the area that concentrates the regional employment, trade, agricultural specializations (horticulture, viticulture) and it is at the same time the main touristic destination (the Loire castles).



Chinon



Tours



Loches

Source: Region Centre

The southern part of the Centre Region located at the margins of the Massif Central is characterized by rural areas. It covers three départements of Indre, Cher and Indre-et-Loire which have profiles and features close to neighbouring regions Limousin and Auvergne: natural heritage, industry in difficulties, emigration and aging of the population, distance from the major roads or railway networks (especially the high-speed train). Without any leading city, the southern area is rich in SMSTs that are struggling to find a way for their economic development.



Romorantin-Lanthenay



Le Blanc



Issoudun

Source: Region Centre

The three territorial contexts set trajectories for their towns and cities. The three SMSTs selected as case of study belong to different territorial contexts; hence their socio-economic dynamics are determined by their particular location in the Region. Vendôme and Chinon are located in the Loire Valley. However, due to its railway station along the Paris-Bordeaux TGV line (and also its northern position of the Valley), Vendôme is also under the influence of the Ile-de-France Region. On the contrary, Issoudun belongs to the southern territorial context of the Centre region.

3.1.1 Vendôme

The municipality of Vendôme (LAU 2) has 16,971 inhabitants, while the urban centre of Vendôme comprises 4 municipalities and has 23,650 inhabitants. The urban centre covers 70.1 km², hence the population density of 337.3 inhabitants per km². The travel-to-work area (TTW) encompasses 36 municipalities and population of 40,087 inhabitants (Census, 2009). The average annual demographic variation between 1969 and 2009 is positive: +0.1%.

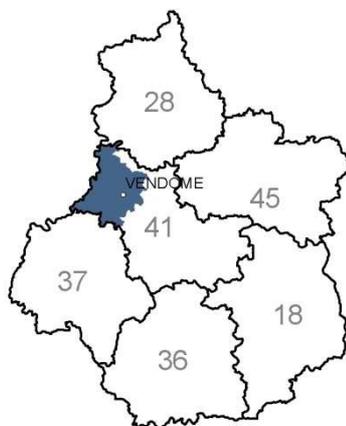


Figure 3.2: Location of Vendôme in the Centre Region. (Source: The Centre Region, 2010).

The functional role

Vendôme is networked with the large city of Blois (66,149 inhabitants in the urban centre; 124,760 inhabitants in TTW area), about 30 km of distance. Since the early 1990s, Vendôme has a TGV connection to Paris (40 minutes) and to Tours (10 minutes), due to the line that connects Paris and Bordeaux. As a result, many families have left the Ile-de-France Region and have settled down in the Vendôme area, where the land and housing costs are far lower, and the atmosphere more rural. Nevertheless, there are many job-commuters from Vendôme to Paris each day. Vendôme has also some important commuting dynamics between other neighbouring regions such as Normandy and Pays-de-la-Loire.

The geographical and morphological profile

As a low density small SMST, Vendôme has experienced the urban sprawl. Very small and sparse urban settlements are surrounding the town in almost all directions. Still, the rural area around the town is the dominant mark of the territory. Situated at the western border of the region, and once the capital of France, Vendôme has been traditionally oriented towards neighbouring regions Normandy, Pays de la Loire and Ile-de-France. The landscape is dominated by crops, groves and meadows, valleys of rivers Loir and Braye. Also, the area is marked by three major forestry entities in terms of size and ecological interest: forests of Montmiral, Freteval and Vendôme.

The socio-economic characteristics

Agricultural sector dominated the local economy for a long period. However, during the industrialisation before the WWII and due to proximity to the Paris region, the industrial sector (production and manufacture) gained an important role in the economy. It was especially the case after the WWII with the arrival of multinational companies such as Thales, Avionics and Bosch to Vendôme. However, the economy of Vendôme became vulnerable as some multinational companies decided to close down their industrial sites in the town and move to other locations. Nowadays, the economy of Vendôme is rather diversified, and oriented towards innovation and technological adaptation in industrial sector, provision of services and facilities to residents. Despite its recent decline in number of jobs, the printing sector has traditionally been the symbol of the town. Even so, Vendôme is one of the SMSTs with the strongest industrial employment at the regional level. Until 1990, the productive economy dominated over the residential economy, which is a rare phenomenon in the Region. Nowadays, Vendôme has a hybrid profile which combines the productive and residential types of local economy.

The policy interests

At the micro level, there are two municipal clusters which are rather incoherent and which divide the territory. As a result, there has been some disagreement at the municipal level on the common vision of the future of territory. Also, there is a conflict between the regional and municipal deputies that challenges the cooperation between different vertical scales. At the meso level, local policy considers building on advantages of proximity to Paris and the TGV line. Vendôme is seen as a town that can base its development on a close network with

the Paris metropolitan region. The increase of population's mobility and their search of quality of life at lower costs are seen as opportunities. Thus there has been important investment in provision of healthcare, social and cultural services and facilities.

3.1.2 Chinon

The municipality of Chinon (LAU 2) has 7,986 inhabitants, while the urban centre of Chinon comprises 3 municipalities and has 9,709 inhabitants. It covers 70.4 km², which results in density of population of 138 inhabitants per km² (Census, 2009). The average annual demographic variation between 1969 and 2009 is positive: + 0.11%.

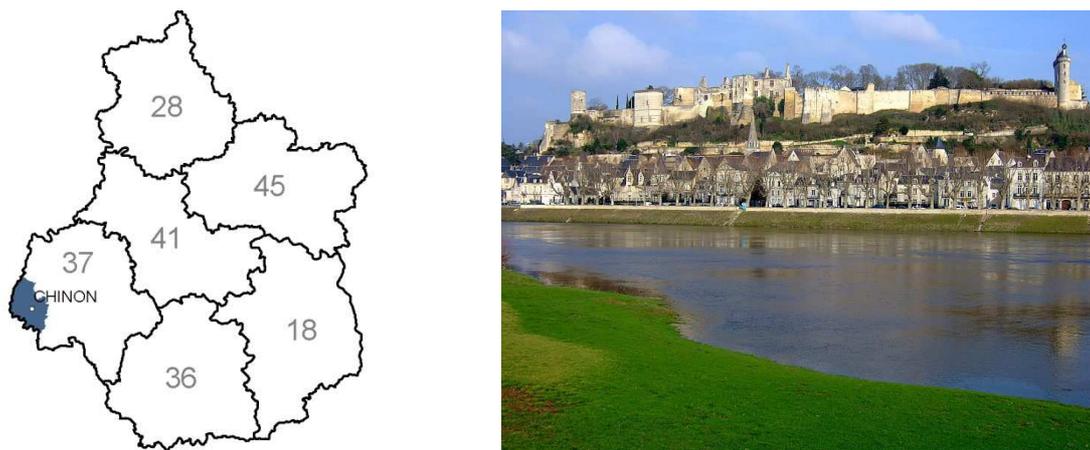


Figure 3.3.: Location of Chinon in the Centre Region. (Source: The Centre Region, 2010).

The functional role

The urban centre of Chinon is agglomerated to the largest city of the region (City of Tours), about 46 km of distance. Commuters between Tours and Chinon rely on train connections (50 min of travel) and motorway D751 (45 min of travel). Chinon is connected via motorways to other cities from neighbouring regions: Châtellerault (45 min), and Saumur (37 min), and large cities Angers (60 min) and Poitiers (45 min). Nevertheless, it is not so well connected to large cities, as compared to Loches or Amboise, which have close links with Tours. All actors we interviewed point at the "isolation" of Chinon, which in their view is a handicap to attract firms and qualified workforce. In addition, in spite of the large influence of Tours, Chinon is a job destination for population of nearby SMSTs such as Saumur, Loudun and Loches.

The geographical and morphological profile

As a low density small SMST, Chinon is rather compact in shape. It is surrounded by a larger rural area and by sparse very small towns in the north-west and south. The town is situated on the banks of river Vienne in southwest part of the Region at the border with two other regions, Poitou-Charentes and Pays de la Loire. In fact, the area is characterized by the river corridor 260 km long with three rivers Loire, Vienne and Indre that once formed the major trade routes joining the ports of Atlantic to the Ile-de-France Region. Away from rivers the rural landscape is characterized by forests, wine yards, valleys, hills, marshes, and sparse small villages. Chinon's territory as part of the Loire Valley is listed among the UNESCO world

heritage, which was the initiative of its former mayor Yves Dauge (also a co-founder of the Association of Small Towns of France). Since 1996, there is also the Natural Regional Park Loire-Anjou-Touraine, which extends to the neighbouring Pays de la Loire region.

The socio-economic characteristics

The town has seen the increase of services after the implantation of the nuclear plant in a neighbouring municipality of Avoine, which in turn has affected the development of other relating sectors. The nuclear plant is the most important generator of employment (providing directly about 1 300 jobs) Also, there is a strong touristic sector that relies on existing natural, cultural and built amenities of Chinon itself and of its wider territory. A branch of the University of Tours has been in Chinon since the 1990s and provides vocational training in water management. In addition, there is a significant percentage of agricultural space. It also has the reputation as cultural town rich in heritage, history and wine. Besides Tours, the employment zone of Chinon has been one of the most dynamic in terms of job creation in the Indre-et-Loire Department. More in particular, Chinon has a role of service provider for its territory. Regarding the profile of economy, it has a combination of all three types: productive, residential and creative.

The policy interests

At the micro level, Chinon faces challenges regarding the polarisation and competition between richer and poorer municipalities. Thus, the policy interest is to promote larger scale: life basin that would encompass more rural and urban municipalities. The current size of Chinon's cluster of municipalities is seen as too small and inefficient, thus under the framework of the ongoing territorial reform, it is planned to merge it with two other municipal clusters. At the meso level, Chinon is considered as a town open to other regions due to its particular location at the border of the region. Local dynamics, especially commuting flow as we showed in the previous chapter highlights the presence of networks between cities of different regions. Thus, there is an interest to reinforce the social, cultural and economic relations with neighbouring cities: Loudun, Thouars, Châtellerauld and Saumur. Local policies also are concentrated on provision of services and on improving the quality of life in order to face the demographic decline and to attract new residents. Even so, the town is not as accessible as other SMSTs under the same influence of Tours such as Amboise and Loches, hence the local authorities face greater challenges.

3.1.3 Issoudun

The municipality of Issoudun (LAU 2) has 13,230 inhabitants. It is also the only municipality within the urban centre of Issoudun. It covers 36.6 km² which results in density of population of 361.5 inhabitants per km², which is a rather high density compared to other SMSTs in the Region. The travel-to-work area encompasses 11 municipalities and has 17,750 inhabitants (Census, 2009). The average annual demographic variation between 1969 and 2009 is negative: - 0.27%. Issoudun is situated in the south of the Region, which in general faces the challenge of a decrease in population.

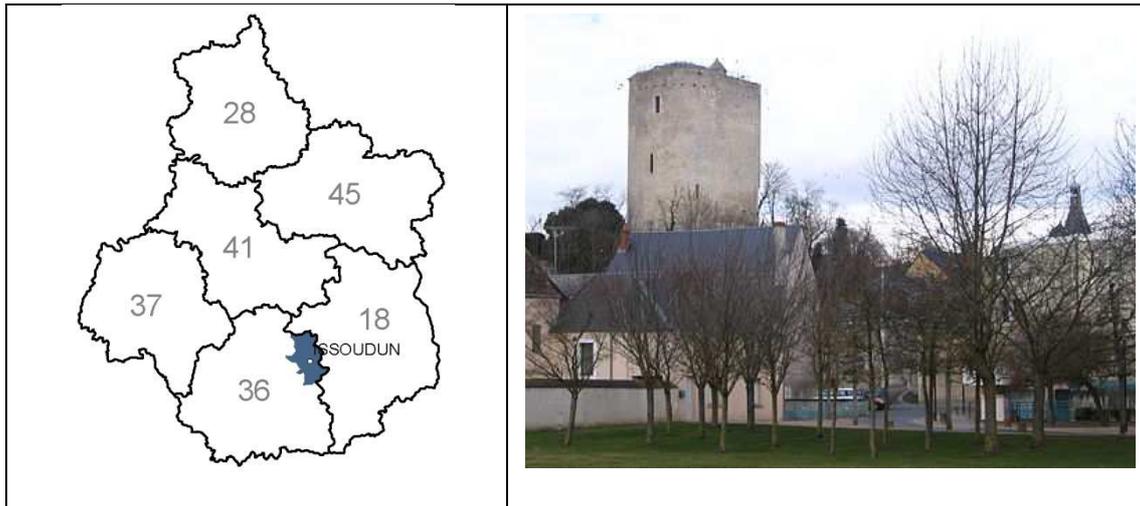


Figure 3.4.: Location of Issoudun in the Centre Region. (Source: The Centre Region, 2010).

The functional role

As shown by the results of functional analysis from the previous chapter, Issoudun is networked with a bigger in size town of Châteauroux (64,122 inhabitants in the urban centre; 94,315 inhabitants in the TTW area). In fact, due to its location right in between Châteauroux (28 km) and the large city of Bourges (40 km), Issoudun's job-commuting flows are the highest to those two cities. Nevertheless, there is also an important flow of labour workers of Issoudun and those of the neighbouring SMSTs such as Vierzon (35 km) and Romorantin-Lanthenay (72 km) due to their similar industrial background.

The geographical and morphological profile

Issoudun has a compact morphological form and is surrounded by a larger rural area with almost no urban settlement in the near proximity. The town is located in the southern-central part of the Region. The area is characterized by cereal farms, Théols and Arnon valleys and Cher, Renon, Nahon and Fouzon rivers. The nearby Northern Boischaud area is a forest region that was classified as an area of special ecological interest.

The socio-economic characteristics

The economy of Issoudun has traditionally been based on industry, especially on the know-how in leather treatment. During the industrialisation period before WWII and after it with the arrival of multinational companies such as Seats, Vuitton, and Vivarte, there was an industrial specialization in manufacture of plane seats and cloths. Today, the economy of Issoudun faces challenges of restructuring the industry and moving towards development based on new economic activities, services and facilities for its inhabitants (social housing, sport and cultural facilities and support for small local businesses). Also, there is the branch of the University of Orléans that offers two degrees in technology and in communication-trade. Here we can draw a parallel with the increase of employment in R&D (from 359 in 1993 to 1,220 in 2010 at the scale of employment zone). In addition, Issoudun is experimenting with new vocational training in art and new media and it has its own broadcasting centre. As regards to the profile of the local economy, the residential economy has been dominating over the productive one since 1990 after the closures of business in

industry and construction. Nowadays, the share in employment of the residential economy is one of the highest in the Region.

The policy interests

At the micro level, the size of Issoudun's cluster of municipalities is considered to be too small; hence it envisages to wider its scale of policy actions. At the meso level, it has an industrial heritage that faces challenges of deindustrialization. Policy is oriented towards resisting the decline by offering services to residents, for example pre-school, healthcare and culture. But also, it considers largely neighbouring large cities Bourges and Châteauroux. The policy priority is the improvement of accessibility (train service) in order to raise the visibility of Issoudun. Also, the support to agriculture and export of agricultural products has been the focus of the local policy.

3.2 The socio-economic characteristics of SMSTs and their position in the regional system

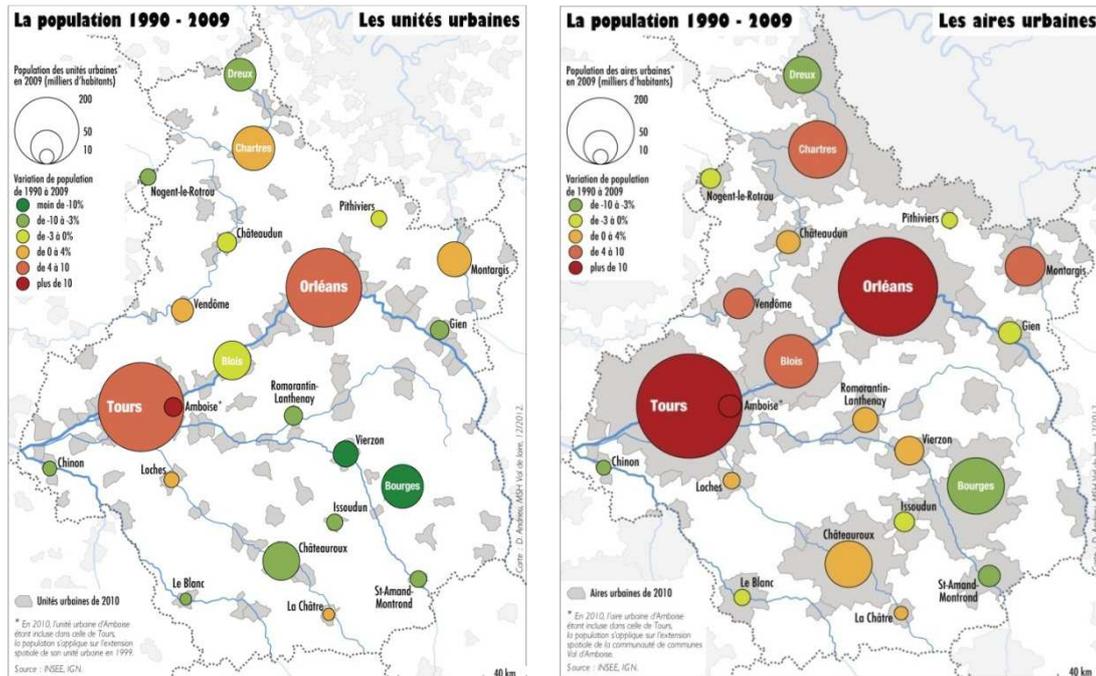
In the previous chapter by using the morphological-geomatic method, we identified and classified urban settlements into three categories: very small towns, small and medium-sized towns and high-density urban centres. Thus, we found VSTs (66 urban centres), SMSTs (41 urban centres) and HDUCs (7 urban centres) in the Centre Region. Further on, by means of functional analysis, we identified SMSTs and large cities that have a function of job centres in the regional system. Based on the job-commuting data for the year 2009, we have identified 82 SMSTs and large cities that have at least 1,000 jobs. However, these job centres differ in number of jobs and in size of population. Likewise, we distinguished 20 SMSTs and large cities (including Paris) that have a role of centres of their micro-regions (MRCs). These 20 SMSTs and large cities are drivers of the local economy as each of them represents the main job-commuting destinations for its neighbouring municipalities and each of them counts at least 8,000 inhabitants and 3,000 jobs (Table 2.6.).

In this subsection, we focus on the socio-economic differences and similarities between VSTs, SMSTs and HDUCs of the Centre Region and provide some examples from three selected SMSTs of Vendôme, Chinon and Issoudun.

3.2.1 Urban sprawl

The suburbanization is one of the major trends affecting French SMSTs. In general, the periphery of a town has become more attractive to population than the urban centre due to mainly lower price of housing, less taxation and the fact that land-use plans are made at the municipality level, not at the conurbation level. As a result, suburban municipalities are able to compete with established towns to attract firms and households. Almost all large cities and towns in the Centre Region experienced the urban sprawl. Besides their own urban sprawl towards one another, cities and towns in the northern regional area have in particular a situation of spreading influence of the Paris metropolitan area. The HDUCs (in particular Bourges, Orléans and Tours) spread in all directions, thus agglomerating some

neighbouring VSTs and SMSTs into their outer-rings (i.e. the case of Amboise that got agglomerated to Tours). Concerning SMSTs, they stabilised their outer-ring over the last 20 years and have been experiencing less intense urban sprawl. On the other side, after a long period of population decreased prior to the 1990s, VSTs and rural areas regained population, especially those located in the Loire valley.



Average growth rate of the population between 1990 and 2009

Municipal centre	Urban centre	Travel-to-work area
- 3.8%	- 2 %	+ 1.4 %

Figure 3.5: Average growth rate of the population between 1990 and 2009 in urban centres (*fr. unités urbaines*) and travel-to-work areas (*fr. aires urbaines*) in the Centre Region. (Source: INSEE, 2009).

Figure 3.5. shows the change in growth rate in population of large cities and SMSTs in the Centre Region by comparing different spatial scales. We observe the trend of average SMSTs and city centres losing the population in favour of peripheral areas. Nevertheless, there are some differences. Firstly, large cities such as Tours, Orléans and Chartres located in the Loire Valley and in the northern area of the Region continue to gain the population in both centre and periphery. However, they also experience the highest sprawl on their outer rings. On the other hand, SMSTs especially those located in the southern area such as Châteauroux, Vierzon and Romorantin-Lanthenay experience the negative movement of population from centres towards periphery.

Unlike Issoudun that shrank over the last 50 years by losing the population in both the centre and the periphery, Chinon and Vendôme saw an increase in population. The average population variation rate for the period 1968-2008 for Issoudun was negative (-0.27% for the urban centre; -0.11% for the TTW area). It was positive for Chinon (+0.26% for the urban

centre, +0.30% for the TTW area) and for Vendôme (+0.5% for the urban centre, +0.3% for the TTW area). As presented in the second chapter, the proximity of Tours has been particularly affecting Chinon for which large city of Tours is the main job-commuting destination. Due to its location in the northern part of the Region and the TGV line, Vendôme has been split under the influence of Paris metropolitan area and the large city of Blois.

3.2.2 Demographic structure

Population age

Over the last 10 years, France as well as the Centre Region has had an increase in population over 60 years old, and a decrease in number of population under 20 years old. In 2009, the population category of 65+ years old represented 25% of total regional population compared to 23% in 1999. Respectively, the population under 20 years old represented 24% of the total population in the Region compared to 26% in 1999. However, there are differences between types of settlements and their territorial context. Firstly, SMSTs and VSTs of the Centre Region had a higher average increase in population 65+ than HDUCs. As shown in Figure 3.5., the highest dependency ratio in 2005 was observed in the employment of SMSTs (more seniors per 100 youngsters). Secondly, SMSTs and VSTs located in the southern part of the Region saw the highest growth in number in population category 65+. The dependency ratio of southern SMSTs overpassed 150 seniors per 100 youngsters (Figure 3.6.).

Vendôme, Issoudun and Chinon are experiencing the same trend as other regional SMSTs. Their population over 65 years old has increased since 1999 by 2% per year in average, while the population category 15-29 years old has decreased by 2% per year in average. While in 2005, the regional average dependency ratio was 94, all three selected SMSTs had dependency ratio above regional average: Chinon had 111 seniors per 100 youngsters; Vendôme 124 seniors per 100 youngsters; and Issoudun 129 seniors per 100 youngsters.



Figure 3.6.: Dependency ratio in the Centre Region in 2005 at the level of employment zone. Number of persons above 65 years old per 100 persons under 20 years old. (Source: INSEE Omphale, 2005; Authors: Regional Council of the Centre region, 2010).

Occupational categories

Regarding occupational structure of the Region (in 2009), it was equally distributed among three categories: labour workers, employees and intermediate occupations. Other occupations such as farmers, craftsmen and higher professional occupations represented less than 7% in the regional occupational structure. At the regional level during the period from 1999 to 2009, the number of labour workers decreased in favour of higher professional occupations (labour workers: -1.9 points; higher professional occupations: +1.5 points).

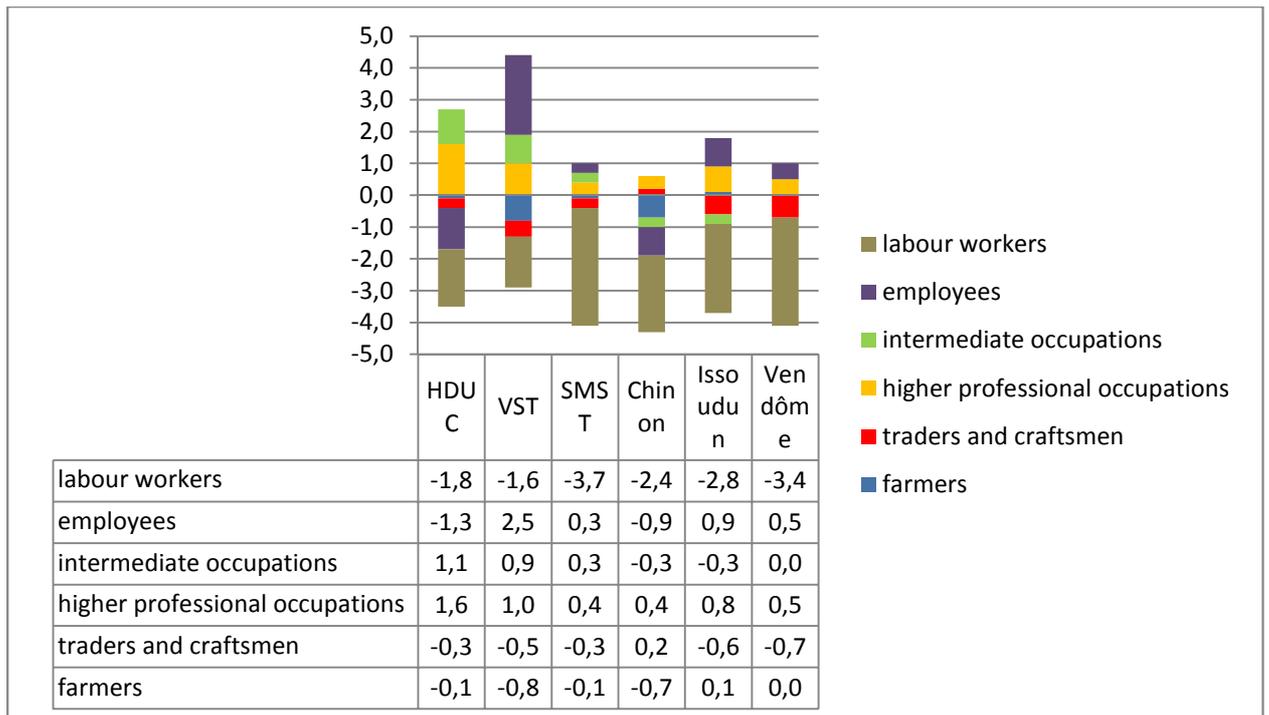


Figure 3.7.: Change in occupational categories for urban centres for years 1999 and 2009. (Source: INSEE, 2009).

Considering differences between HDUCs, SMSTs and VSTs, over that 10-year period, the HDUCs experienced a higher decrease in labour workers and a higher increase in higher professional occupations than SMSTs and VSTs. In addition, in large regional cities, the loss in number of employees, farmers, traders and labour workers was replaced by an increase in intermediate occupations and higher professional occupations. A slightly different situation is in VSTs. Over the same period from 1999 to 2009, it is the loss in occupations such as farmers, traders and craftsmen that was the highest in VSTs if compared to HDUCs and SMSTs. Also, the difference between SMSTs and VSTs compared to HDUCs was the number of employees, which was decreasing in HDUCs, but was increasing in VSTs and SMSTs.

Since 1990, SMSTs had a general decline in number of traders and craftsmen entrepreneurs (-31.7%) and labour workers (-29.6%) in favour of employees (+7.6%), intermediate occupations (+22.9%) and managerial and administrative occupations (+16.6%). As a result of aging population, the share of retirees increased during the same period and nowadays represents 40% in average in occupational structure of SMSTs. In some SMSTs there is a more pronounced change towards the tertiary vocations (managers and higher vocations) due to their connection to a larger city. Their administrative role for the surrounding area and the existence of services, infrastructure and local strategies help them to target a high-income population. In addition, some occupational categories such as managerial, administrative occupations and higher professional occupations are determined by the location of a SMST in the Region. In that respect, SMSTs of the Loire valley area have the highest rate of managers and professionals (5.1% in average) compared to SMSTs in other parts of the Region.

Despite the common increase of retirees over the period from 1999 to 2009 in Vendôme, Chinon and Issoudun, there were some differences between them when it comes to changes

in the overall occupational structure. Chinon and Vendôme saw the general decrease in number of labour workers, while they kept the number of other occupations on the labour market stable. However, Issoudun characterized by an industrial heritage, experienced some shifts in its labour market. During the period from 1990 to 2009, there was an increase in percentage of employees (+1.1 points) accompanied by a loss in percentage of labour workers (-2.6 points).

Graduate level

The Centre Region is characterized by a low percentage of population pursuing tertiary education. Compared to the national average (51.6%), in the Region there is 46.5% of persons between 18 and 24 years old with secondary degree diploma who continue their studies. Thus, youngsters of the Region are seeking to enter the labour market faster than in other regions. In 2007, the graduate level of the population in the Region was lower than the national average despite of slight improvement since 1999. During the period 1999-2007, the percentage of low-educated population (no or primary graduate degree) decreased (-8.8 points), whereas the percentage of population with secondary graduate degree increased (+3.3 points). On one hand, the HDUCs have the highest percentage of population with the tertiary graduate degree (19% in average). Standing as regional academic centres, the percentage of highly educated population (with tertiary graduate degree) in cities of Tours and Orléans has been for 6 points higher than the regional average. On the other hand, VSTs have the highest shares of persons with no graduate degree or just a primary graduate degree (40% in average) if compared to HDUCs and SMSTs. Moreover to SMSTs, their population is generally less educated than the regional average. In particular their percentage of persons with no degree (20% average) and primary graduate degree (15% average) are above the regional average. Partially it is due to the absence of vocational and higher educational institutions and an exodus of young population. Nevertheless, some SMSTs (i.e. Chinon, Amboise, Châteauroux) have a population with a higher graduate levels categories than the regional average.

Chinon's percentage of university-educated population has increased since 1999 and was superior to the regional average in 2009 (11.3% in Chinon compared to 10.8% of the Region). The reason behind is the fact that the nuclear power plant located in the area has attracted more educated population, but also has encouraged the local population to continue the studies in order to get employment. Needless to say that there is more than 1 400 professional and technological high schools in the town and surrounding area. In addition, other graduate levels categories are in the regional average, which also makes Chinon an exception among other SMSTs of the region.

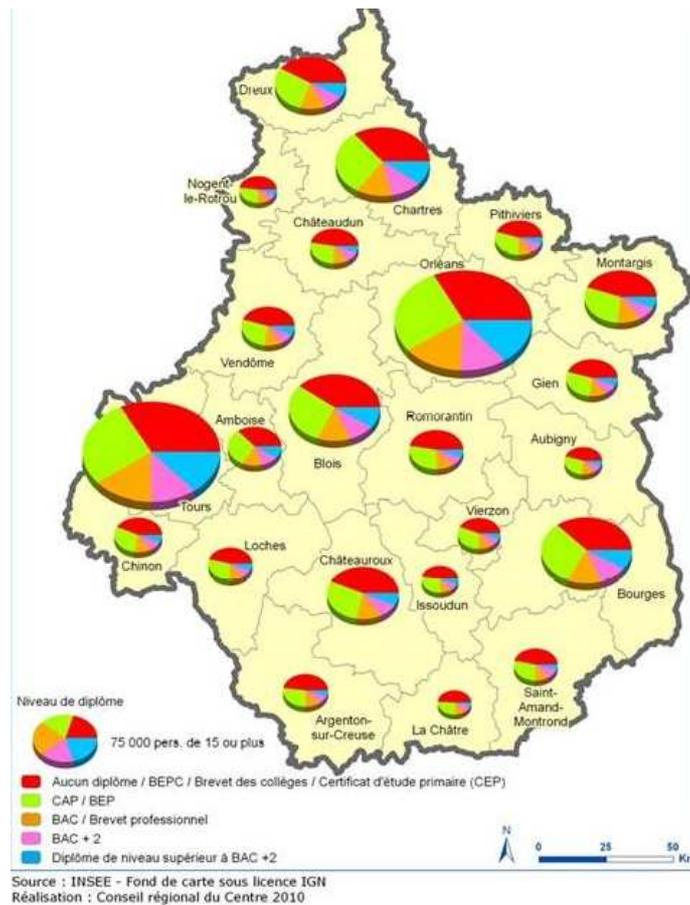


Figure 3.8: Graduate levels of the population 15+ years old in employment zones of the Centre Region in 2007. (Source: INSEE; Authors: Regional Council of the Centre region, 2010).

3.2.3 Housing

At the regional level, the housing stock increased by 8.6% from 1999 to 2009. Nevertheless, occupied dwellings decreased by 0.7 points in favour of unoccupied dwellings. The share of occupied dwellings in the housing stock differs depending on the type of urban settlements (but also in the territorial location of the urban centre in the Region). The HDUCs have less unoccupied dwellings than SMSTs and VSTs (7.6% in average). On the contrary, VSTs have the highest percentage of unoccupied dwellings in their housing stock, which is 11.9% in average. When it comes to SMSTs, their percentage of unoccupied dwellings is above the regional average (10.6% compared to regional 7.9%). Nevertheless, there are differences in occupations related to territorial contexts (fr. *plaques territoriales*). SMSTs located in the southern part of the Region record higher percentage of vacant dwellings.

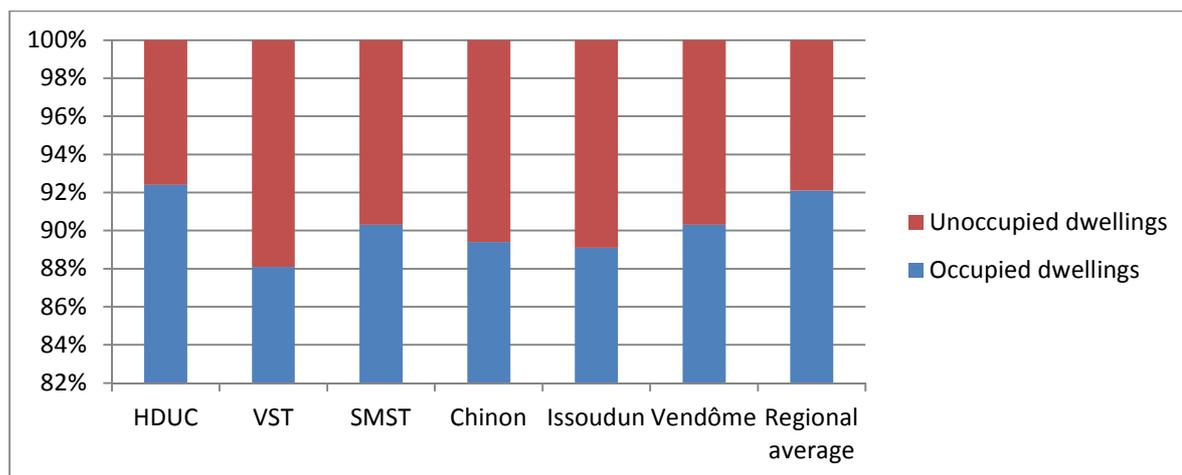


Figure 3.9: The housing stock in 2009 at the level of urban centre. (Source: INSEE, 2009).

The prices of land and real estate are also determined by the location within the Region, location in the urban centre or the suburbs as well as by the municipal property ownership tax and residence tax. The Loire valley due to its attractiveness to business and population has had the highest prices of square meter and the highest tax rates in the Region. On the contrary, the southern part of the Region is less attractive and thus the prices of land and real estate are lower.

Vendôme has high prices of land and real estate and tax rates compared to the average of other SMSTs in the Region. High prices are related to the direct access to Paris by TGV line. At the same time, Vendôme's urban centre vacant dwellings have been increasing by 4.1 points in since 1999. On the other hand, in the case of Chinon and Issoudun, their urban centres have recorded land and real estate prices below the regional average and the average of SMSTs. Thus, it is not surprising that the percentages of vacant dwellings in 2011 (10.6% in case of Chinon and 10.9% in the case of Issoudun) have been above the average of other SMSTs and the regional average.

3.2.4. The economic structure

Labour market

The effects of the current crisis have been also felt across the Region. The unemployment rate in the 4th trimester 2012 reached 9.7%, which was still below the national average of 10.2%. Nevertheless, the impact differs depending on towns' dynamics, diversification of local economy or re-specialization of economic activities, which in many cases were anticipated long before the crisis. During the period from 1999 to 2009, the number of jobs in HDUCs increased by 7.7% in average. As presented in the second chapter, in 2009 regional HDUCs (at the level of urban centre) counted together more than 388,500 jobs. Nevertheless, there are differences among them. The first rank of HDUCs (Tours and Orléans) had each about 141,000 jobs in average. The second rank of HDUCs (Blois, Bourges and Chartres) had each about 35,000 jobs. When it comes to VSTs, they kept the number of jobs at the same level over that 10-year period which was about 1 400 jobs in average.

Finally, the employment in majority of SMSTs increased from 1999 to 2009. However, such an increase was in some SMSTs higher than in others.

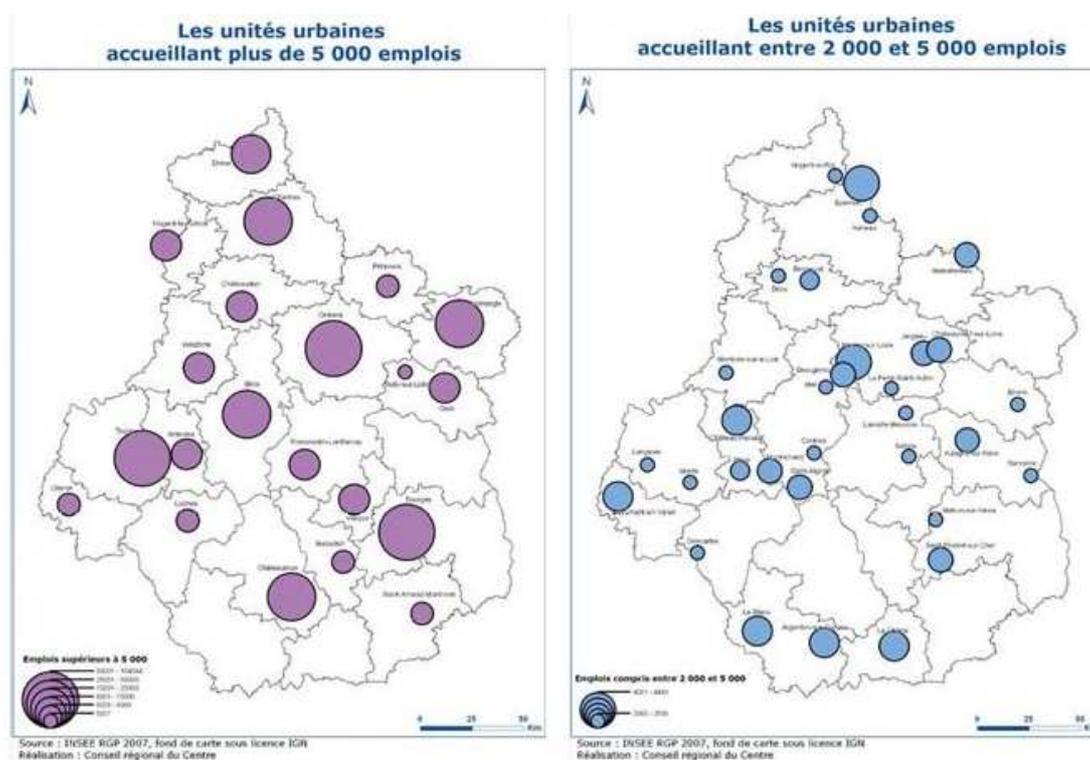


Figure 3.10: Urban centres with 5 000 jobs (left) and urban centres between 2 000 and 5 000 jobs (right). (Source: INSEE RGP 2007; Authors: Regional Council of the Centre Region, 2010).

On one hand, in case of Chinon at the level of urban centre, the number of jobs in 2009 compared to 1999 increased by 7.7% and counted about 5,400 jobs. Likewise, the continuous increase (15%) over the same period was also at the level of employment zone despite some losses in employment in 2008 (Figure 3.11.).

At the level of urban centre of Vendôme, the employment in 2009 increased by 6.2% compared to 1999 and counted more than 13,300 jobs. Nevertheless, during the 2000s there were significant job losses in industrial sectors (plastic, rubber and transport equipment). In fact, the employment zone of Vendôme experienced two relatively sudden periods of job losses due to business closures. From 2001 to 2005 it lost 500 jobs, and from 2007 to 2009, Vendôme lost 700 jobs (Figure 3.12.).

Unlike Vendôme and Chinon, the number of jobs in urban centre of Issoudun increased slowly by only 0.7% to 7,300 jobs in 2009 compared to 1999. The employment zone of Issoudun experienced many variations in number of jobs over the last 20 years (Figure 3.13.). Decrease in employment is related to the closure of many small businesses in industry, construction and trade.

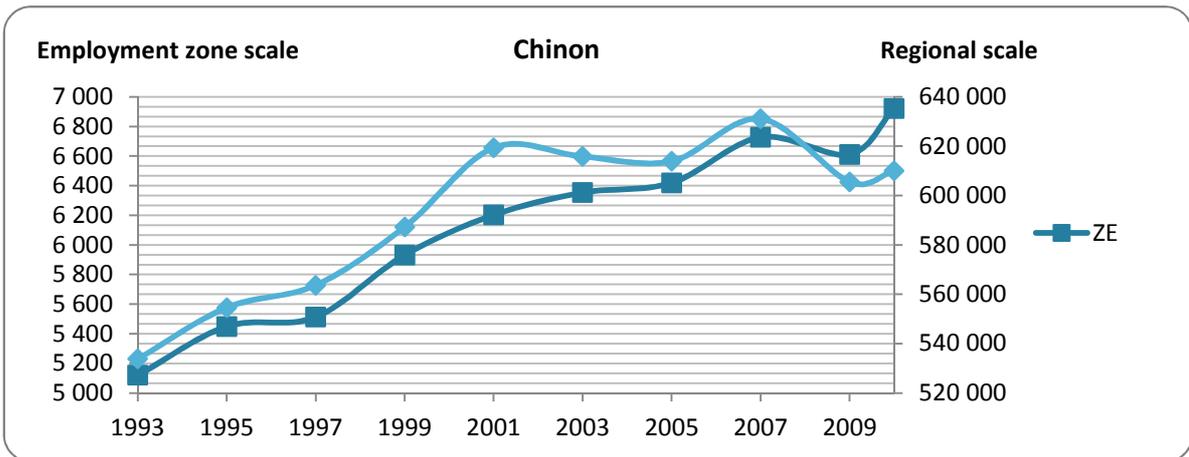


Figure 3.11: Evolution of private salaried employment in the employment area of Chinon compared to the average of the Centre Region over the period from 1993 to 2010. (Source: Pôle Emploi, 2010).

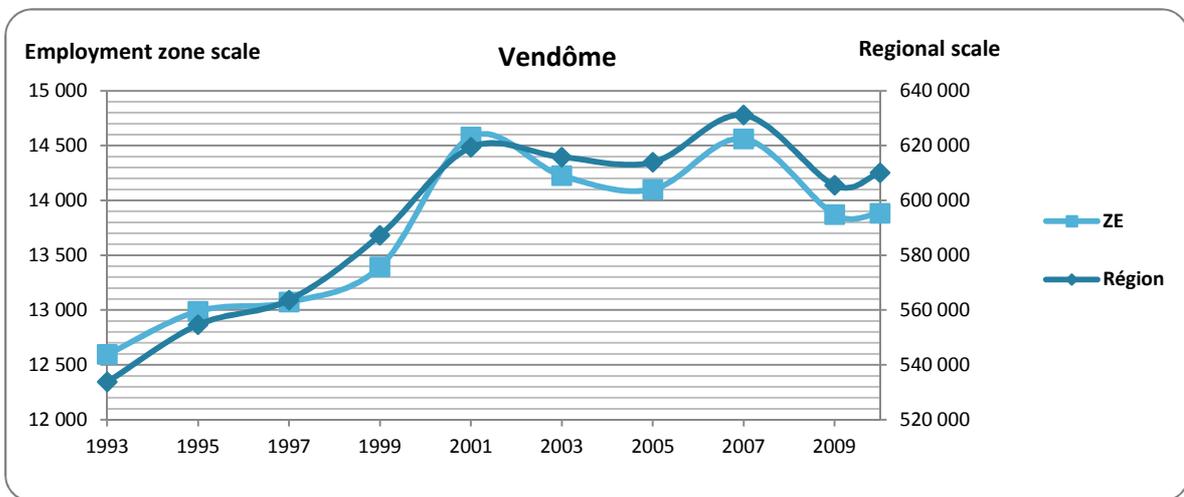


Figure 3.12: Evolution of private salaried employment in the employment area of Vendôme compared to the average of the Centre Region over the period from 1993 to 2010. (Source: Pôle Emploi, 2010)

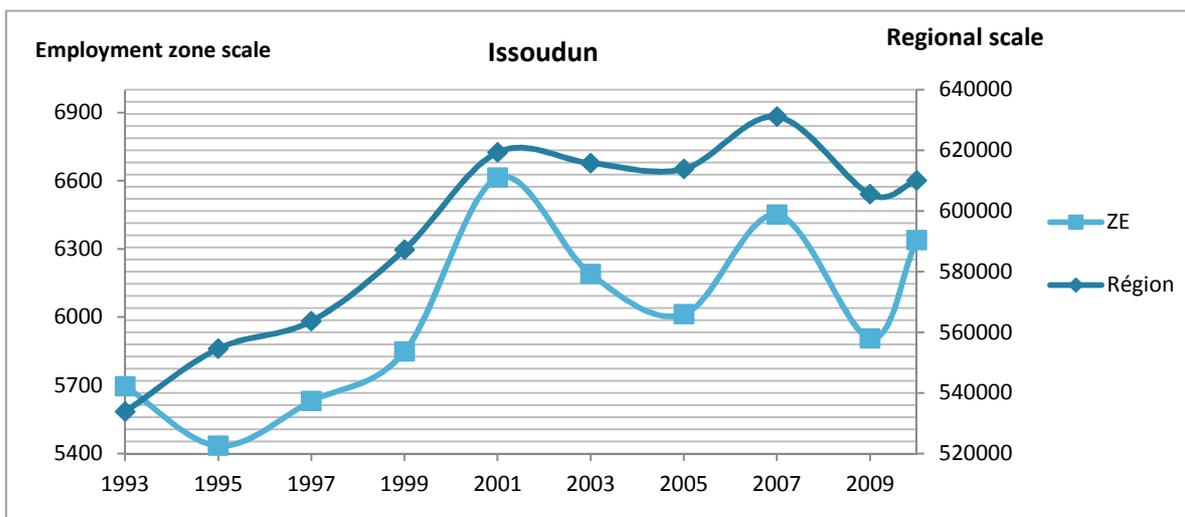


Figure 3.13: Evolution of private salaried employment in the employment area of Issoudun compared to the average of the Centre Region over the period from 1993 to 2010. (Source: Pôle Emploi, 2010)

Over the period from 1999 to 2009, the sectors of agriculture and industry had a decrease in jobs which was at the same time compensated by an increase in employment in trade and transport, public services and construction. Such shift on the labour market affected differently HDUCs, SMSTs and VSTs. On one hand, the job decrease from 1999 to 2009 in agriculture and industry (-0.5 points for agriculture; -4.3 points for industry) was below the regional average (-1.2 points for agriculture; -4.7 points for industry). Nevertheless, the change in employment in trade and transport services was above the regional average. On the other hand, VSTs and SMSTs felt the common intensity of the shift in the labour market. Once the strongest employment sector, industry saw a decline in number of jobs, which was above the regional average during the 10-year period. At the same time, new jobs appeared in the sectors of trade, transport and public services.

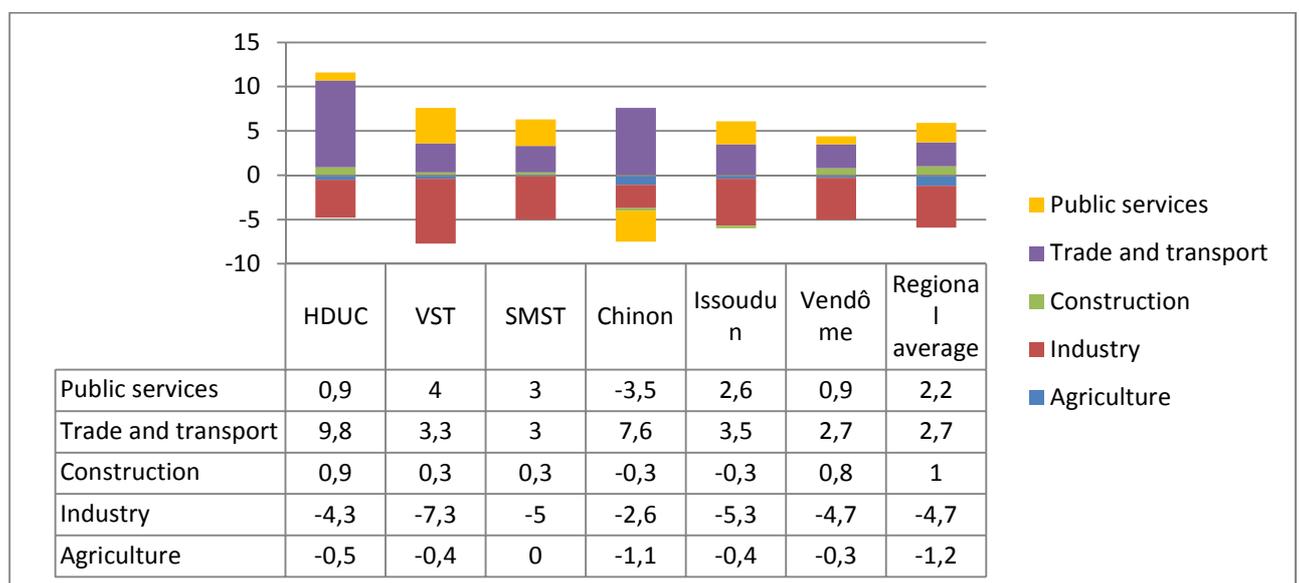


Figure 3.14: The change in employment by sectors in urban centres for years 1999 and 2009. (Source: INSEE, 2009).

When it comes to employment in services to population, the employment zones of Chinon and Vendôme are characterized by above-regional share of employment in healthcare and social action services. Such a high concentration of jobs in those particular sectors in the case of Chinon is due to the presence of the Chinon Hospital Centre that employs around 1,000 people. Likewise, in the case of Vendôme, the reason is that the Vendôme Subregional Community (fr. Communauté du Pays) supports social and solidarity economy and integration projects through the Intermunicipal Social Action Centre. Besides, Vendôme is the centre of the International Cooperation and Solidarity Association of the Centre Region (Centraider). In spite of the share in employment in administrative and support services is below the regional average, the social care activities are an important issue in Issoudun. For example, the Centre for persons with disabilities (Polyhandicapé) accommodates more than 100 persons. In addition, Issoudun has more than 28% of social housing in its centre and free public transport.

Type of services	Vendôme (%)	Chinon (%)	Issoudun (%)	Regional average (%)
Administrative and support services	5.2%	10.3%	10.2%	10.5
Education	0.8%	0.9%	0.8%	1.6%
Public administration	0.1%	0.1%	0%	1.7%
Public health	3.2%	3.3%	1.6%	2.7%
Medical and social care	3%	5.2%	1.3%	2.7%
Social work	2.4%	4.2%	0.2%	3.6%
TOTAL	14.7%	24%	14.1%	22.8%

Table 3.1: Employment (in %) in services to population in employment zones of Vendôme, Chinon and Issoudun compared to the regional average in 2009. (Source: Pôle Emploi, 2009).

Industrial sector

While at the regional level, the industry represented 22.1% of jobs in 1999, over the period of 10 years, those jobs diminished to 17.4% in 2009. Such trend is common to all French regions as at the national scale the percentage of jobs in the industry decreased by -4 points from 1999 to 2009. The traditional industries (textiles, clothing and weapons) of the Centre Region were particularly affected by modern technological development and competitiveness. Since the 1960s, there have been many textile businesses closures in the Region as well as the restructuring of defence industries (i.e. Giat and MBDA), which resulted in significant job losses. The most recent closures due to changes in the global economy happened in SMSTs: Dreux (Philips), Châteaudun (Flextronic, Paulstra) and Vendôme (Thyssenkrupp).

Nevertheless, the industry retains a leading role in the development of the regional economy. The share of industry in employment is significantly higher than at the national level (17.4% in total employment in the Centre Region compared to 13.9% in France). In terms of employment, the top five industrial sectors are: mechanics, food industry, metallurgy, chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Their weight in the total industrial workforce ranges from 8.7% for pharmaceuticals to 14.1% for mechanical equipment sector. In cases of Chinon, Vendôme and Issoudun, companies operating in the sector of industry and energy are among the top three employers (Table 3.2.).

In recent years, the dynamic partnership between companies, research centres and training organizations has resulted in the labelling by the State of four prominent clusters (fr. *pôles de compétitivité*): Cosmetic Valley (cosmetics), S2E2 (electric power systems), Elastopole (rubber and pneumatics) and DREAM (water treatment). Besides these clusters which are part of a national policy to foster the relationship between firms and public research, in the Centre Region there are several smaller (not based on research) clusters such as: Pharma Valley (pharmaceuticals), Pôle automobile (automotive), Aérocentre (aeronautics), Shop expert Valley (trade), Nékoé (services of innovation), PICF (precision mechanics), Agrodynamics and sustainable development (bio-products), ARIAC (food). Even though, clusters have been in favour of HDUCs, there are examples of businesses from SMSTs that

benefit from clusters in their development. For example, some firms from Vendôme are part of Shop Expert Valley and Agrodynamic and sustainable development clusters. In Chinon, there is an intention to develop an excellence centre on environmental technologies related to water management that would eventually be integrated into the DREAM cluster.

Although the share of industrial jobs decreases in almost all employment areas in the Centre Region, the industry is still very important. More precisely, in some SMSTs the industrial jobs represent more than 30% in all jobs in their employment zones (i.e. Gien, Issoudun, Aubigny, Vendôme and Nogent-le-Rotrou). Also, certain industries have been able to generate jobs and growth not only for local economy of SMSTs, but also for the regional one. For example, the food industry has been particularly developed in Châteauroux and Argenton-sur-Creuse, printing industry around Pithiviers, or aeronautics in Issoudun. On the contrary, the industrial jobs in employment zones of HDUCs have not reached more than 17% in total employment, due to the massive growth of public and private services in various fields (trade, health, administration, transport, etc.).

SMST	Top employer	Employee number	Activity sector	Headquarters
Chinon	1. EDF – CNP Chinon	1,300 employees	Electricity production	Paris
	2. Chinon Hospital Centre	950 employees	Healthcare	Chinon
	3. Techman Industrie	500-749 employees	Technical testing and analysis	Marseille
Vendôme	1. ZF systèmes de direction NACAM, S.A.S.	659 employees	Transport equipment	Schwäbisch Gmünd (Germany)
	2. Thales Avionics S.A	520 employees	Repair and installation of machinery and equipment	Meudon-la-Forêt (France)
	3. Vendôme Hospital	420 employees	Healthcare	Vendôme
Issoudun	1. Sicma Aero Seat	950 employees	Manufacture of aircraft seats	Issoudun
	2. Ateliers Louis Vuitton	500 employees	Leather	Paris
	3. Hospital Centre La Tour Blanche	500 employees	Healthcare	Issoudun

Table 3.2: Top employers in the employment zones of Chinon, Vendôme and Issoudun. (Source: INSEE – CLAP, 2008).

Creation of new businesses

In 2009, the new businesses in the Region increased by 87% which was more than 18 000 businesses created in one single year. The reason for such an exceptional increase is the “auto-entrepreneurship” status which became a very attractive form of running business. Six out of ten new businesses created in 2009 were auto-entrepreneurs, which was also above the national average. On the contrary, due to emergence of auto-entrepreneurship, the

creation rate of “classical forms” of businesses decreased by 27% in 2009 compared to the previous year. When it comes to businesses closures, they were increased by 2.6% or 1 600 businesses closures at the regional level in 2009. This was especially the case of businesses in two sectors: services and construction. Counting 111 200 businesses in 2008, the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are an important driver of the regional economy, especially having in mind that very small business represents 91% of SMEs in the Region.

As regards to the differences between types of urban settlements, in 2011 the highest creation of new businesses was in HDUCs (15.3%), followed by SMSTs (13.4%) and VST (9.2%). Nevertheless, as much as new but at the same time “classical forms” of businesses are rather related to HDUCs, the auto-entrepreneurship was the highest in VSTs (Figure 3.10). At the level of urban centre of Chinon, 79 new businesses were open in 2011, which is increase of 14.7% compared to the previous year. Majority of those businesses were in the service sector. At the same time, it is one of the highest increases in business creation rates among regional SMSTs. On the other hand, at the level of urban centre Issoudun registered 68 new businesses in 2011 out of which 60.3% were auto-entrepreneurships. Such rate of auto-entrepreneurship is one of the highest in the Region.

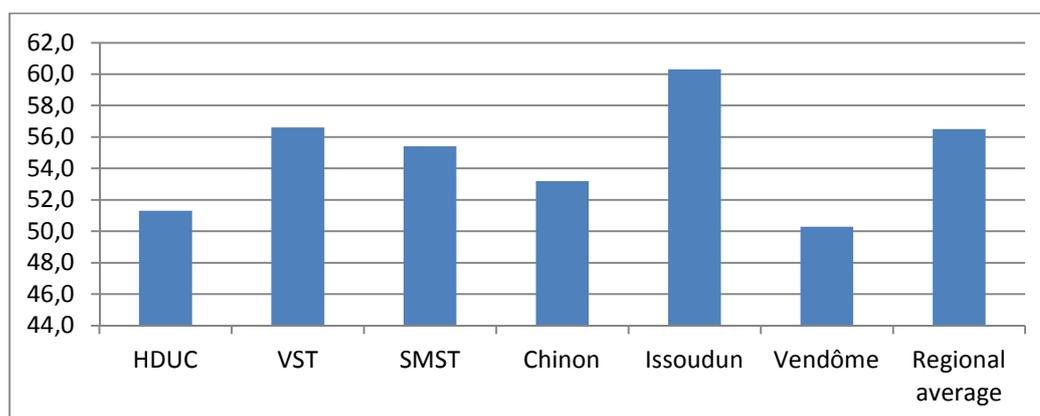


Figure 3.15: The creation rate of auto-entrepreneurships at the level of urban centre in 2011 (in %). (Source: INSEE, 2011).

Tourism sector

Listed as the UNESCO’s heritage site, the Loire valley with its castles and nature attracts tourists from all over the world. In 2009, regional monuments, sites and museums attracted more than 8.2 millions of visitors, which was an increase of 2% compared to 2008. In the same year, tourism sector generated 26,000 jobs (mostly in sectors of foodservice and accommodation), which represented 3% of the regional employment. In addition to the cultural heritage, the natural heritage and landscape are one of key-factors of regional attractiveness. The most famous one is “The Loire by bike” which is a bikeway interregional project that extends over 600 km and enables visits to castles, gardens and green areas across the Loire Valley. Only in 2009, it recorded more than 300,000 cyclists’ passes, which is an average of 827 passes per day, while the project revenue was estimated at 5 million Euros.

Overall, benefits from tourism are related to the location in the Region. Regardless their size, cities and towns located in the Loire valley are more likely to attract tourists than those situated in other areas of the Region. In that respect, Chinon's area has become a well-known tourist destination with more than 157,500 visitors each year (four times its population). Compared to other regional SMSTs, Chinon is ranked on the top in number of nights in hotel and camping per year. At the level of employment zone, jobs directly generated from the tourism sector have increased by 9.5% since 2003.

3.3 The socio-economic and demographic performance of SMSTs

Based on results of the functional analysis presented in the previous subsection, we list some major development characteristics and trajectories followed by SMSTs in the Centre Region.

- **The pressure of urban sprawl:** the population growth in the peripheral and sub-urban area generally raises challenges for the environment (biodiversity destruction, loss of agricultural land, air pollution due to multiplication of commuters, etc.). In the case of SMST, additional challenges appear: the possible suburbanization of the local economy as services tend to follow population; and the costs of provision of public services (including leisure, sports and culture) for the rural municipalities.
- **Facing vacant housing stock:** the share of unoccupied dwellings in housing stock of urban centres of SMSTs has been above the regional average. Moreover, it seems to continue to increase. On the other hand, prices of land and real estate are determined by location in the Region, location in the urban centre or the suburbs and by the municipal property ownership tax and residence tax. Therefore, SMSTs located in the southern part of the Region record higher percentage of vacant dwellings than other regional SMSTs.
- **The aging population** is a general phenomenon. It is more pronounced in SMSTs that provide a high quality services and quality of life that suits their needs (case of Vendôme). On the other side, the young population is attracted to larger cities to pursue their studies and the first working experience. Thus, the exodus of young people to larger urban areas is a challenging phenomenon in front of SMSTs.
- **The shift in labour market:** SMSTs have had the highest decrease in industrial employment. Due to technological changes and global competitiveness, once the strongest employment sector in SMSTs, the industry was replaced by trade, transport and public services. The recent economic crisis accompanied by the closures of manufacturing sites only accelerated the ongoing shift on the labour market. In addition, SMSTs have seen a decline in the number of traders and craftsmen entrepreneurs and labour workers in favour of more professional occupations such as employees, managerial and administrative occupation. In some SMSTs such the shift is more pronounced due to (i) their position in close proximity (and accessibility) to a larger city or a metropolitan area, like the Ile de France

region, (ii) the administrative role they have for their surrounding area and the existence of services, infrastructure and/or (iii) local strategies to target a high-income and more educated population.

- **Attracting more educated population:** overall, the population of SMSTs is less educated than at the regional average. Partially it is due to general absence of vocational and higher educational institutions accompanied by exodus of young population. Towns such as Issoudun and Chinon are exceptional as they are home to branches of the Tours University and the Orléans University. Nevertheless, some SMSTs have succeeded to attract highly educated population by offering better and accessible living conditions as compared to large cities (cases of Amboise and Chinon vs. Tours).
- **Drawing lessons from the economic crisis:** in a region with an industrial heritage and the presence of SMEs as well as neo-fordist branchplants, such as the Centre Region, SMSTs are particularly concerned by the dynamics of deindustrialization. The creation of new businesses in services in SMSTs cannot compensate the job losses in the industrial sector.

4. POLICY ANALYSIS

As presented in the previous chapter, French SMSTs experience important socio-economic and demographic changes such as aging population, exodus of young, shift in labour market and deindustrialization, which are all addressed differently in terms of local policies and practices. In this chapter we explore how SMSTs are viewed within policy discourses and their functions understood both within the wider context (European, national and regional) and in terms of their specific characteristics (demonstrated on three selected SMSTs). In the first section we give an overview of EU, national and regional policies that impact directly and indirectly French SMSTs in the case of the Centre region. The second section focuses on local development policies and practices presented via the cases of Vendôme, Chinon and Issoudun. In that respect, we synthesize research findings of the fieldwork and interviews with relevant local actors. In the last section, we draw out wider policy recommendations based on the comparative analysis of case studies.

4.1 The impact of EU, national and regional policies on SMSTs

In chapter 1, we presented the complexity of the French local government system. Since the 1980s and the decentralization process, more powers and responsibility have been given to already existing institutions (e.g. *municipalities, départements*) and new ones have been established (*regions, inter-municipal communities, sub-regional areas*) so as to address the challenges set by the economic crisis. Even though the decentralization is still an ongoing process, we can observe a multiplication of vertical and horizontal levels of governance that constitute unique and complex French governance system.

Along with the State, regions at the vertical level of governance create and exercise policies in two main domains of competences: economic development and education-training. Since 2004, additional competences in heritage, nature and seaports and airports infrastructure are transferred to some of them as experimental phase. Furthermore, since the French Revolution departments have been essential for the State administration. They exercise power in five domains: economic development, social action, education, culture and planning. Finally, municipality is the basic and the oldest administrative unit. It develops local policies in planning, health, education, culture and sport.

The horizontal level of governance, on the contrary, was addressed more eagerly with the territorial reform in 2010. From the 1990s, the inter-municipal communities (EPCI) gained vigour as an institutionalized form of cooperation between municipalities. From the point of view of the State, they were introduced as a solution to the fragmentation of the territorial organization. The joint management of local public services or local development policies (housing, economic development...) are the core objectives of municipalities' clusters. Nevertheless, forms and scales of municipalities' clusters differ depending on the context and in some cases not all municipalities have the same enthusiasm to share their powers with neighbouring municipalities of the same EPCI.

4.1.1 The European level

In France, the implementation of the Cohesion policy is coordinated by the Government Delegation for Planning and Territorial Competitiveness (DATAR). Regional prefects are responsible for the review of eligible projects, while funds are managed by the General Secretariats for Regional Affairs Prefectures². The latter, composed of administrative-technical units and with different competences (i.e. sub-prefectures, civil engineers, specialists in water and forests, university professors, etc.), work with local communities in order to access the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

Overall, there were more than 93,000 projects for economic and social development across France financed by both funds (66% from ESF; 34% from ERDF) in 2013. Out of the total of 41 billion of Euros, 17% were allocated to innovation and technologies and 18% to employment and business creation. At the regional level, the Centre Region had 3,010 projects funded from ESF and ERDF which makes it the 15th region in France when it comes to the number of projects funded from the EU funds. In 2013, the total amount allocated to the Centre Region was 936 million Euros.

More precisely, the Loiret Department had the highest number of funded projects due to the presence of the Regional Council in Orléans (also a prefecture of the Loiret Department) which is the major recipient (and distributor) of the EU funds (Figure 4.1). Besides the Regional Council, other recipients of funds in many cases are departmental agencies such as chambers of trades and crafts, chamber of agriculture or chamber of commerce and industry that concern their departmental territory.

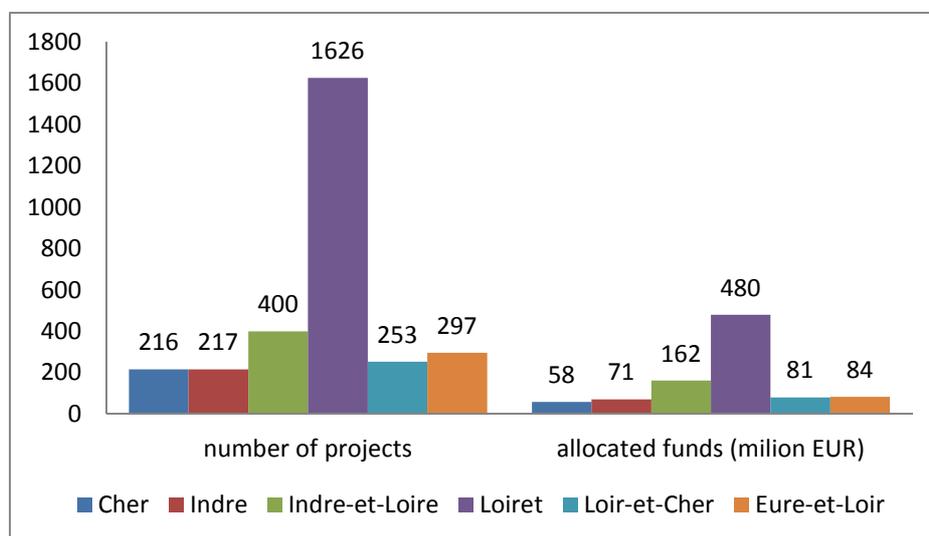


Figure 4.1: Number of projects and allocated funds from EDRF and ESF by department in the Centre Region in 2013. (Source: Les bénéficiaires de Fonds Européens, online [URL]: <http://cartobenef.asp-public.fr>)

² From 2014, they should be managed directly by the regional councils.

Regarding projects that target in particular large cities and SMSTs in the Centre Region, out of 3,010 regional projects, there were 1,574 projects (52%) financed by the EU funds in cities and SMSTs in 2013. In fact, 1,081 (36%) projects considered large cities, compared to 492 projects (16%) that considered SMSTs (Figure 4.2.). Among the three selected SMSTs, Chinon seems to have the most benefits from the EU funding. Majority of fund recipients were local associations active in the field of professional integration and social housing, and private firms active in the field of energy and heritage restoration. In the case of Vendôme, the application for the most of projects came from the local government and it focused on professional integration and support to business. Issoudun had only five projects funded by the EU funds and initiated by the Region itself, mostly in the field of professional integration.

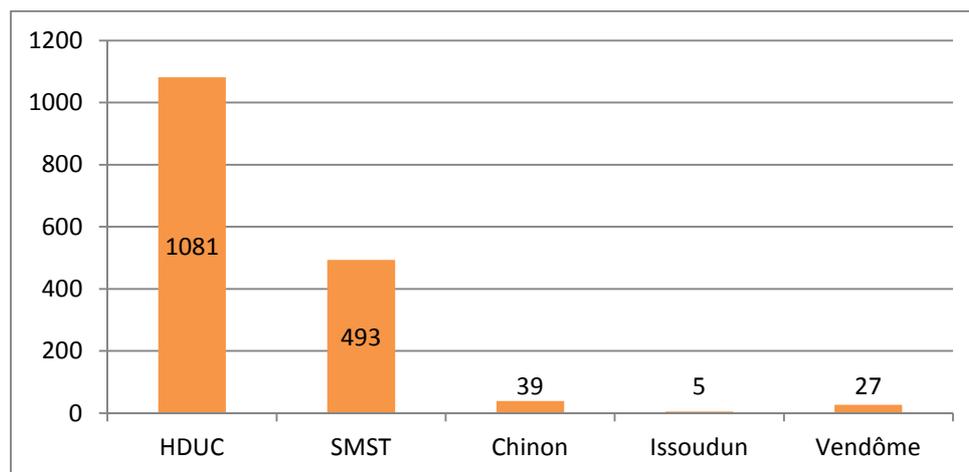


Figure 4.2: Number of projects and allocated funds from EDRF and ESF in large cities and SMSTs in the Centre Region in 2013. (Source: Les bénéficiaires de Fonds Européens, online [URL]: <http://cartobenef.asp-public.fr>)

Overall, the Regional Council is the local receiver of the most of EU funding, far ahead of municipalities. Yet, clusters of municipalities get a significant number of grants for their projects from the Region. The EU does not appear as a direct contributor to the development of the territory, but more as an indirect financial support for municipal projects. Thus, we argue that there is no direct connection between the EU and French municipalities. It is, in fact, the responsibility of the State and regions to detect and submit the eligible projects which means that some municipalities may benefit more than the others. According to municipalities' representatives we interviewed, the application for the EU funding seems to be difficult to submit since in many cases municipalities lack in personnel and competence: "That is too complicated, at least to say. If it was less complicated, we would benefit more. We are not very good in that" (mayor of Vendôme).

4.1.2 The national / regional level

In France, the urban and rural development policies are articulated through contracts. In the 1980s, at the time of decentralization, the State and local communities faced the challenges of renewed territorial disparities which had a strong social and political impact. The national policy towards deprived urban areas (fr. *politique de la ville*), or the elaboration of local development strategies in rural areas (fr. *politique des pays*) are responses to the growing

public concerns that the traditional method of sectoral subsidies was inconsistent (Donzelot and Estèbe, 1994). Developed policies were expected to be multidimensional, based on context and on “partnership”. The creation of territorial contracts (such as town, agglomeration or sub-regional contracts) aims to create a synergy between actors in the fields of urban planning, housing, employment, school, recreation, public services, etc. These contracts allow a broad mobilization of actors and resources.

Given the fact that the Centre Region is heterogeneous (the northern part under the influence of the Ile-de-France Region, the Loire Valley polarized between two large agglomerations, the southern part facing demographic and industrial decline for several decades), the aim of the Regional Council has been to enable the territorial development through implementations of policy that ensure services and facilities to municipalities. In order to organize a fundamentally heterogeneous regional territory, the Regional Council created segmented contracts, first for rural areas. Later it supported the development of the eight largest conurbations and more recently medium-sized towns (Demazière, 2005).

In the early 1980s, the Region launched its policy of structuring sub-regional areas (fr. *pays*) by means of the Regional and Rural Development Contracts (fr. *Contrats Régionaux d'Aménagement Rural*, CRAR). In 1987, the Regional Council confirmed its commitment to structuring rural areas by launching the Regional Contracts of Local Initiative (fr. *Contrats Régionaux d'Initiative Locale*, CRIL). The objective was to encourage the development of rural areas by creating inter-municipal communities, through intersectoral approach and on the initiative of local actors. In 1991, forty Regional Contracts of the Local Initiative were set up, comprising 1,200 municipalities. Since 1994, Regional Contracts were replaced by Sub-regional Contracts (fr. *Contrats de Pays*) that kept the same bottom-up approach. Such regional policy and contracts are based on a three steps: (i) the nomination, (ii) the elaboration of a development chart with diagnosis and short-term project (10-15 years) and (iii) the implementation of a 4-year action plan. Such an approach was successful since 30 sub-regional areas that cover the Region have been identified between 1995 and 2000. In the recent period, the Regional Council devotes 185 million euros to the *contrats de pays*, over a period of 5 years. Nevertheless, the analysis at the level of individual cases reveals a frequent lack of structured development plan and actions' objectives that lack in originality (opening up the territory, promoting employment and integration, preserving the environment, etc.). There is also the absence of spatial coherence of sub-regional areas that are formed around large cities of Orléans, Tours, Blois or Montargis. In these cases, there is no effort to improve the interdependence between rural (often suburban) and urban areas (Demazière, 2005).

Moreover, in 1998, the Centre Region launched the Agglomeration Contracts (fr. *Contrats d'agglomération*) targeting large cities. Even though the signing procedure was the same as for the Sub-regional Contracts, the policy intentions for the Agglomeration Contracts were higher: “to organize the major urban functions at the regional level” and “to promote the implementation of development programs as part of regional planning”. However, while the Regional Council originally intended to support two or three flagship projects in each city, the final approved programs included a high number of actions in various domains (housing, transport infrastructure, economic development, public services, quality of life, etc.) (Boutet, 2003). Contractual relations between the Region and the 8 signatory cities are essentially

formal and financial by nature. In the recent period, the regional council devotes 155 million euros to such contracts, which last five years.

Finally, in 2000, the Centre Region initiated a reflection on “poles of centrality” which led to creation of the Medium-Sized Town Contracts (fr. *Contrats de Villes Moyennes*). The definition of the medium-sized town was not only the demographic criterion, but also the INSEE’s distinction between urban and rural centres based on job commuting (but also on provision of services). In order to be eligible, medium-sized towns had to satisfy several conditions:

- at least 3,000 inhabitants
- not belonging to any agglomeration
- having:
 - at least 5,000 jobs if a municipality or an urban centre is big enough to be classified as travel-to-work area (fr. *aire urbaine*)
 - from 2,000 to 5,000 jobs or a number of jobs at least equal to the number of active residents if a municipality or an urban centre is located in rural areas. (In case that urban centre meets these conditions, only its central municipality is eligible).
 - or, more than 7,000 inhabitants

The contract is signed with the town centre (its central municipality). In order to benefit from this policy, a town that is considered to be medium-sized needs to draft an urban project and to propose a clearly defined development strategy that enables it to carry out the centrality functions and to enhance its attractiveness. In that respect, three intervention areas are highlighted: urban renewal, improvement of reception capacities for population and improvement of quality of life. The municipality needs to prepare an action plan that defines operations and financing modes for the Region over a 4-year time period. Hence, a contract is based on a program of actions and urban development project. Therefore, the Policy of medium-sized towns does not imply the economic development, but mainly the financial support of projects related in many cases to construction of cultural and sports facilities. After the adoption of the Policy of medium-sized towns, out of 40 potential towns, 22 towns have expressed their intentions to sign the Medium-Sized Town Contract. In the end, 20 contracts were signed. The total amount of this policy was 14 million Euros.

Département	Municipality	Selection of contracts	Eligibility for the contract of the 1st generation (2001)	Eligibility for the contract of the 2nd generation (2006)
Cher (18)	Aubigny	/	√	√
	Mehun/Yèvre	2003	√	√
	St-Amand-Montrond	2007	√	√
	St-Florent/Cher	/	√	√
	Vierzon	2004	√	√
Eure-et-Loir (28)	Auneau	2003	√	√
	Bonneval	Refused	√	√
	Brou	Hesitation	√	√
	Châteaudun	2009	√	√
	Maintenon	/	-	√
	Epernon	/	-	√
	Nogent-le-Roi	/	-	√
	Nogent-le-Rotrou	2005	√	√
Indre (36)	Argenton/Creuse	2003 and 2007	√	√
	Buzancais	/	√	√
	Le Blanc	2006 and 2d contract in process	√	√
	La Châtre	/	√	√
	Issoudun	2002 and 2006	√	√
Indre-et-Loire (37)	Amboise	2006	√	√
	Château-Renault	2006	√	√
	Langeais	Hesitation	√	√
	Descartes	/	√	√
	Ballan-Miré	/	-	√
	Chinon	2003	√	√
	Loches	2003	√	√
	Montlouis sur Loire	2004 and 2009	√	√
Loir-et-Cher (41)	Romorantin-Lanthenay	2004	√	√
	Lamotte Beuvron	/	√	√
	St-Aignan	Intention	√	√
	Salbris	Refused	√	√
	Montrichard	/	√	√
	Montoire	Refused	√	√
	Vendôme	2006	√	√
Loiret (45)	Beaugency	2003	√	√
	Châteauneuf/Loire	/	√	√
	Malesherbes	2004	√	√
	Briare	Intention	√	√
	Gien	2009	√	√
	Pithiviers	2003	√	√
	Sully/Loire	Refused	√	√

	Towns that refused the medium-sized towns contract
	Towns that signed the 1st generation of the medium-sized towns contract
	Towns that signed the 1st and the 2d generation of the medium-sized towns contract

Table 4.1: Selection of contracts of medium-sized towns eligible for the Policy of medium-sized towns in the Centre Region (Source: Région Centre)

According to the Region, the policy for medium-sized towns needs to be improved. In addition, the relation between policies for sub-regional areas (fr. *pays*) and medium-sized towns can be complex. In fact, it may cause tensions.

4.2 Local development and practices of SMSTs

In order to provide an understanding of local dynamics of SMSTs within the wider context while bearing in mind the importance of their specific characteristics, we conducted a set of interviews with policy makers and other local stakeholders in three selected SMSTs. The subsection 4.2. presents the results of analysis of local strategies and practices in Chinon, Issoudun and Vendôme.

4.2.1. Vendôme

Located in north-western department of Loir-et-Cher, Vendôme is the central municipality of Intermunicipal community (fr. *Communauté du Pays de Vendôme*). The territory is characterized by diversified industry, residential economy and proximity to the Ile-de-France Region (the high-speed train between Paris and Tours makes the train station of Vendôme 42 minutes from Paris Montparnasse train station). Due to proximity to Paris, the industrial sector has been an important driver of Vendôme economy since the WWII. Likewise, Vendôme has been experiencing a decrease in population in favour of neighbouring towns such as Azé or Saint-Ouen. In addition, unlike Chinon and Issoudun, Vendôme has an area classified as Sensitive Urban Zone (fr. *Zone Urbaine Sensible, ZUS*).

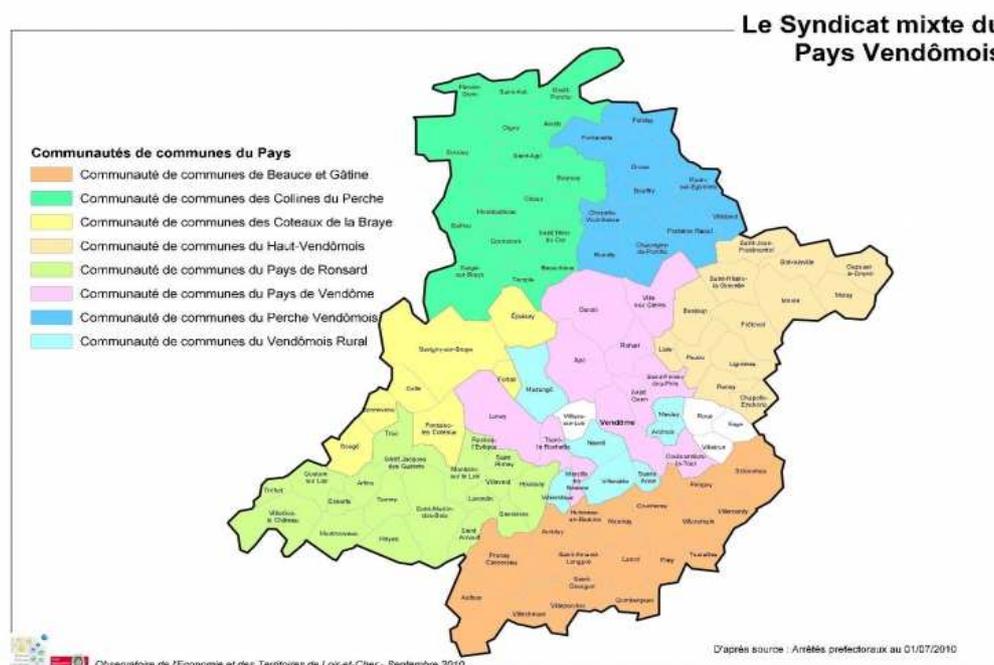


Figure 4.3: Sub-regional area of Vendôme. (Source: <http://pays-vendomois.org/carte-du-pays.html>)

Improvement in quality of life

The municipality has launched various initiatives in rehabilitation of public spaces, roads and infrastructure so to attract and keep the population. Indeed, facing challenges of an aging population, job loss, raising unemployment, Vendôme decided to renew its services and facilities. To give an example, for the renovation of its historic and natural heritage, nearly 1.3 million Euros were invested in different operations from 2010 to 2012.

One way to improve the quality of life (seen by Vendôme) was the restoration of social housing in order to create a social mix in neighbourhoods. Concerning social housing, the town started with the construction in new urban areas (north, centre and south). *“Such spatial distribution will facilitate access to housing and will allow those with difficulties, to choose their neighbourhoods”*. When it comes to private housing, through the elaboration of the Local Development Plan (fr. *PLU*), Vendôme detected the area in the centre that needed to be denser. *“We are trying to densify instead of extending into the countryside and forest. In order words, a habitat, that Vendôme does not have, could correspond to needs of young families which ultimately will prefer to find services in the town”* (mayor of Vendôme). These operations of rehabilitation are heavy for the municipal budget. Over the period of 4 years (2010-2013), 12.6 million Euros has been spent.

When it comes to environment, in 2009, Vendôme launched a Zero Pesticide Plan that refrained from using pesticides in public spaces. The Plan was accompanied by activities in educating and raising awareness among people on pesticide impacts. This policy led to the creation of the Local Agenda 21 entitled *“The Future is Now”* prepared in 2010.

In this sense, the Green and the Blue Frame (TVB) have been created in order to allow the identification of ecological corridors. Also, the Architecture and Heritage Area (AVAP) was set to protect historical monuments.

Likewise, a new wastewater treatment unit (WWTP) is planned to be constructed in 2014 for three municipalities: Vendôme, Saint-Ouen, Meslay Areines. It will replace the current station that does not meet the regulatory requirements for protection of the environment.

Solidarity

Vendôme has an impressive base of associations organised in conjunction with the social sector, sport and culture. They have been created with the aim to help people with difficulties in finding a job, to train for a career transition or to encourage employment. When it comes to aid to individuals such as delivering meals to the elderly, Vendôme associations are numerous. To support them, Vendôme has provided subsidies of approximately 440,000 Euros per year and it has organized the *“Associations’ Day”*. In addition, town has also built the Jules Ferry community centre, the Solidarity and Health voluntary centre and the Medical and Educational Institute.

Accessibility to services and facilities

Vendôme has several cultural facilities: the Minotaur auditorium, the music school, the library, a museum and many heritage sites. New facilities have been under construction: the

new cinema CinéVendôme, the conversion of the Ronsart cinema into a youth centre, a new site for the music school and a new pool. Town also has the Nursery Centre and the Elderly Home managed by the Inter-municipal Centre for Social Action.

In order to facilitate administrative procedure, Vendôme has launched innovative initiative to improve availability and accessibility of services and to reduce public spending. The municipality of Vendôme and the Inter-municipal community have unified and harmonized service for families by creating a single administrative procedure for families (registration procedures, childcare, services rates, etc.).

Attracting businesses

The municipality seeks to revitalize its business fabric (including innovative SMEs) to regain in people and skills, and to reduce unemployment. Nevertheless, as economic development is one of competences of the Intermunicipal community, all policy decisions are taken by that body which sometimes causes conflicts between municipalities, especially rural and urban municipalities. In that respect, the example of commercial planning is interesting to present. In 2005, Vendôme created the Commercial Planning Chart that had to bring together all local actors in trade sector and to establish rules in evaluation of all commercial projects. Such an initiative allowed Vendôme to control installation of shops and to intervene if the balance in commercial offer was threatened. Nevertheless, already in the same year, the Department imposed the so-called Plan on Business Development which denied the town the right to decide in this issue and to regulate the commercial offer any longer.

As another measure to enable business and job creation in Vendôme, has been the investment in real estate by renting out the space for businesses and artisans. In 2007, the Inter-municipal community initiated a workshop to facilitate new start-ups and to provide conditions for economic actors. Private initiatives also seek to help businesses in the area. For example, a group of employers formed an organization called “Shared Trades” that has antennas in Vendôme and Romorantin-Lanthenay (the headquarters of the organization are in Blois).

Conclusion

Vendôme is an example of SMST facing challenges of mobile society. The arrival of TGV in the early 1990s was seen as a huge opportunity for the local development of Vendôme. The commuting time between Vendôme and Paris was drastically improved and the frequency of trains on a daily basis increased. Nevertheless, even after 20 years of its presence, the so-called “TGV effect” still raises doubts about sustainability of jobs and income for Vendôme. The reason is the high commuting between Vendôme and Ile-de-France which seems not to be in favour of a small town.

On one hand, entrepreneurs travel daily to Vendôme to work, but they continue to live in Paris. As a result, qualifications of workforce and employment in R&D sector have increased in Vendôme. Thus, there is a very strong link between big infrastructures such as TGV and evolution of the area. In addition, neighbouring municipalities may have more benefits from

TGV than Vendôme itself. The less expensive land in neighbouring municipalities compared the one in Vendôme, with TGV station in the near proximity, have raised competition between municipalities.

On the other hand, taken from the other perspective, majority of Parisians stay unaware that Vendôme is within 45 minutes from Paris by TGV. No wonder that Vendôme has been considering a partnership project with SNCF that would attract Parisians by offering them tourist weekend packages to visit the town.

Finally, another issue that marks Vendôme is the inconsistent intermunicipal cooperation. The Rural Inter-municipal community (fr. *Communauté de Communes du Vendômois Rural*) which represents 5,500 inhabitants in 7 municipalities is fragmented and entangled with the Inter-municipal community of Vendôme (fr. *Communauté du Pays de Vendôme*). The merger of these two inter-municipal communities in conflict is difficult to envisage. In fact, the difficulty lies in contrast between “rural” and “urban” that restrains the cooperation for common territorial development. Rural communities have a certain distrust of town centre and fear of being suffocated by it.

4.2.2. Chinon

Chinon is the central municipality of the Inter-municipal community Rivière, Chinon, Saint-Benoît la Forêt and a member of the Chinon subregional area (fr. *Syndicat Mixte du Pays du Chinonais*). The prestigious past and attractive landscape have provided a rich heritage to Chinon. As “*Town of Art and History*” with two Natura 2000 sites, the Regional Natural Park “Loire-Anjou-Touraine”, gastronomy with controlled designation of origin for wine (Chinon, Bourgueil and Saint-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil), the hospital centre on the former military site, nuclear power plant in the nearby town of Avoine, Chinon has diverse assets for local development.

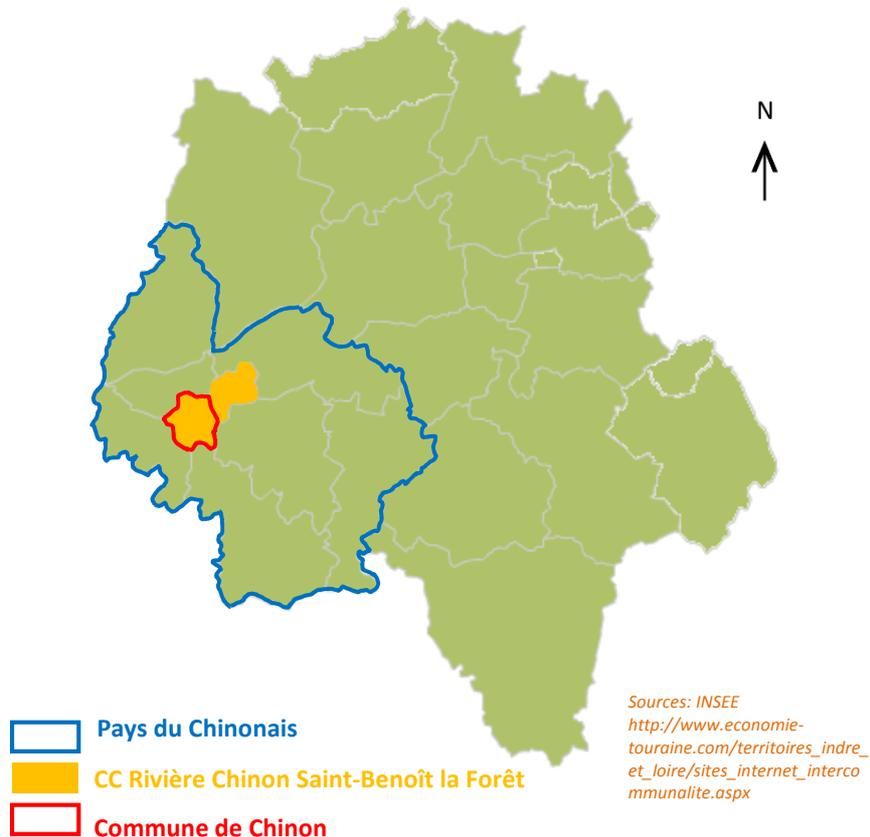


Figure 4.4: Sub-regional area (fr. *Pays du Chinonais*), Inter-municipal community (fr. *CC Rivière, Chinon, Saint-Benoît la Forêt*) and municipality of Chinon. (Source: INSEE, online (URL): http://www.economie-touraine.com/territoires_indre_et_loire/sites_internet_intercommunalite.aspx)

Objective of the local development

From 1989 to 2006, the local policy was largely influenced by its mayor who was considered to be one of the most iconic in the history of Chinon. “*He contributed so much to the development of the town, that it is really he himself who made Chinon a tourist town as it is today*” (communications officer at the Inter-municipal community). Nowadays, the former mayor is still engaged as one of mayors’ deputies in charge of planning, heritage, decentralized cooperation and international relations.

The Planning and Sustainable Development Project (fr. *Projet d’Aménagement et de Développement Durable, PADD*) is a document that identifies general guidelines for urban planning and local development of the municipality for the period until 2015:

- **Population: 10,000 inhabitants by 2015.**
The municipality set up to construct 675 dwellings that would be offered under various modes of arrangements (rental, accession, collective, individual).
- **Urban space: renovation of existing buildings in the old centre, reconstruction of obsolete buildings and infill.**
In that respect, Chinon and Inter-municipal community opted for a special approach to preservation of the historical centre. A Programmed Operation for Improvement of Housing (fr. *Opération Programmée d’Amélioration de l’Habitat, OPAH*) was

launched at the level of Inter-municipal community between 2006 and 2009. Also, Chinon created several plans for protection of architectural heritage and urban landscape and for prevention of flood risk of Vienna River.

- **Economy: good conditions for business and quick response to project needs.**
By 2015 about 20 hectares will be available for business. When it comes to agriculture, Chinon wishes to maintain and strengthen wine production.
- **Environment: recreational areas, new river walks and forest preservation.**
By relying on the Inter-municipal community, Chinon plans to create new green spaces, i.e. on the Ile-de-Tours.
- **Mobility: parking in the town centre, parking reservoir during events and incentive to non-motorized travel.**
Chinon encourages diverse modes of travel (i.e. new lines for bicycles). Speed in some downtown streets was limited to 20km per hour. Four bus lines promote public transport. The town's Commission for public space has proposed to close the historical centre and the hillside area for all motorized travels.

Cooperation and partnership

Chinon has been promoting international relations since the 1960s. Town is twinned with three European cities: Hofheim in Germany (since 1967), Tiverton in UK (since 1973) and Certaldo in Italy (since 2010). Moreover, Chinon has been active in aid cooperation for Luang Prabang in Laos (since 1995) and the city of Tenkodogo in Burkina Faso (since 2006). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Centre Region and private partners have supported Chinon's initiative as well. In 2011, a new partnership was created with the Xiangsi Region in China.

For Chinon's Mayor *"the opening to the world is a factor for international visibility, but also a tool for economic development and tourism"*. The economic impact of these partnerships is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, the officer in charge of international cooperation and twinning highlighted the spillover effects: *"First, from a human point of view, we help, which is already a good reason to be engaged. Second, there are concrete and long-term benefits for which the Loire Valley is a world heritage site. The link does not seem obvious, but when Luang Prabang, the former capital of Laos was classified the world heritage in 1995, Chinon's mayor was part of the UNESCO group of experts who helped Laos getting the label. That has been the goal of this partnership for 20 yea now, acquiring experience so to classify the Loire Valley for the UNESCO world heritage"*.

In terms of inter-territorial cooperation, three inter-municipal communities (Pays d'Azay-le-Rideau, Pays du Bourgueillois and Rivière-Chinon-Saint-Benoît la Forêt) grouped in the network called "Undertake Chinon" (fr. *Entreprendre en Chinonais*) that promotes sharing of resources and know-how in order to support business. The network coordinator who is also in charge of economic development of one inter-municipal community involved argued that *"a company that cannot find its location on our territory will go next door and become a competition. As we work together now, the inter-municipal rivalry is broken"*.

Building image of the territory

Tourism and businesses are key priorities of Chinon. The number of undertaken projects confirms the commitment of Chinon to preserve its resources so to benefit from the touristic potentials. Besides the natural heritage, Chinon has a rich historical heritage as well: the Castle of Chinon, the Royal Fortress, the Church of St. Maximin and the Chapter of Ste. Radegonde. Their maintenance is a significant financial cost for Chinon.

The General Council of Indre-et-Loire Département is the owner of Chinon's Royal Fortress and is also the second largest land owner of historical heritage in France (right after the Ile-de-France Region). The Council has recently engaged in one of the greatest restoration projects in Europe - the Royal Fortress with its 500m long fortification. Having for the aim to attract 200,000 visitors per year, the preservation works on the Fortress lasted for 7 years (from 2003 to 2010). More than 17 million euros, including 12 million euros from the General Council Indre-et-Loire were invested in that restoration. *"Clearly, there is a reason. The restoration of the Fortress and the town's centre reinforces the image of the town; so obviously, it helps us to be more economically attractive"* (coordinator of the Undertake Chinon Network).

In 2009, the rehabilitation of Saint-Michel Hospices took place. As the cloister in the 17th century, the Saint-Michel Hospices hosted a branch of the University Hospital reserved for the elderly. After the rehabilitation of 3,200 m², a total of 46 dwellings were constructed, including 15 social housing units, public and private parks and parking. The investment was estimate on 6.9 million Euros. The Saint-Michel Hospices rehabilitation got even the National Award "Gesture of gold" as exemplary work in heritage preservation.

For March 2014, a construction of 84 new tourist residences is planned. With the potential to host 10,000 overnight stays per year, Chinon plans to increase the capacity of accommodation of tourists, which would generate impact on trade. The Regional Council participates in this project with the investment of 300,000 Euros, while the Department and Inter-municipal community plan to invest 50,000 Euros each.

Innovations and entrepreneurship

The Tours University branch located in Chinon offers licence in engineering aquatic environments and river transport corridors. This unique training is accompanied by the Centre of Expertise and University Transfer (CETU) established by the University of Tours. The CETU promotes public-private partnerships (laboratories, research organizations and/or companies) in order to provide expertise on ecological functioning and management of rivers and wetlands. Moreover, the DREAM cluster located in Orléans is also involved in cooperation between university research and business in town. The Chinon business incubator has been established with the goal to support professionals in their work on river corridors. The Incubator was supported by laboratory LCA and the SARL Rive Research and Engineering Office specialized in management and restoration of rivers and wetlands.

In addition, a new project of rehabilitation of Danton dock is estimated on 2.5 million Euros. The aim of the project is to popularize scientific research on water and the river, and at the

same time to have investment returns to the Intermunicipal community. The ground floor of the Danton dock would present works of students and entrepreneurs, while upstairs would be used as a student residence. The Intermunicipal community is currently looking for funding for that project.

Conclusion

The town of Chinon and its hinterland have important touristic assets (landscape, cultural heritage, vineyards, woods, urban and rural atmospheres) which have been preserved and valorized, thanks to local actors. In parallel, Chinon has reasserted its role of service providers to its inhabitants and to a larger territory. Here, one may mention the hospital which added private resources to public ones, the institute for autonomy and social insertion or the residence for old and dependent persons. The municipality also shows a strong will to react to the deficit of young people, by developing a project of a home for students or apprentices. This initiative is supported by the General Council of Indre-et-Loire.

Tourism is a key sector for the local economy, but many actors stress the lack of connections between the Fortress and the town centre. This may be due of a lack of communication on the other remarkable monuments, and place-branding should be recommended. The weaknesses of some economic actors themselves should be noted, especially hotels and restaurants. For instance, most of the restaurants in the city center do not serve any meal after 9 pm and do not propose any menus in a foreign language.

The three inter-municipal communities covering the territory of Chinon will merge in January 2014 (*Communauté de Communes Rivière Chinon Saint-Benoît la Forêt, Communauté de Communes du Véron, Communauté de Communes Rive Gauche de la Vienne*) into a single entity, the *Communauté de Communes Chinon Val-de-Loire* (CCCVL). This will gather 16 communes and more than 20,000 inhabitants and at the same time it may constitute a positive change for the municipality of Chinon, as it is indebted. The financial and human resources are to increase, even though the global economic context is uncertain. If this union works, the town and the territory of Chinon may become more ambitious.

4.2.3. Issoudun

Issoudun is located in the centre of Champagne Berrichonne area that got the name after the land that covers the southern part of the Region. Issoudun is also the central municipality of the Inter-municipal community (fr. *Communauté de Communes du Pays d'Issoudun*). Affected largely by global changes and recent economic crisis, Issoudun is receiving the State aid (fr. *Aides à Finalité Régionale*) for support jobs creation and new investments (mostly in industry). Issoudun is also classified as Area of Rural Revitalization (fr. *Zones de Revitalisation Rurales, ZRR*) which allows local firms to get some tax benefits such as exemption from contributions to social insurance, family allowances, transport tax and they have housing assistance benefits for their employees.

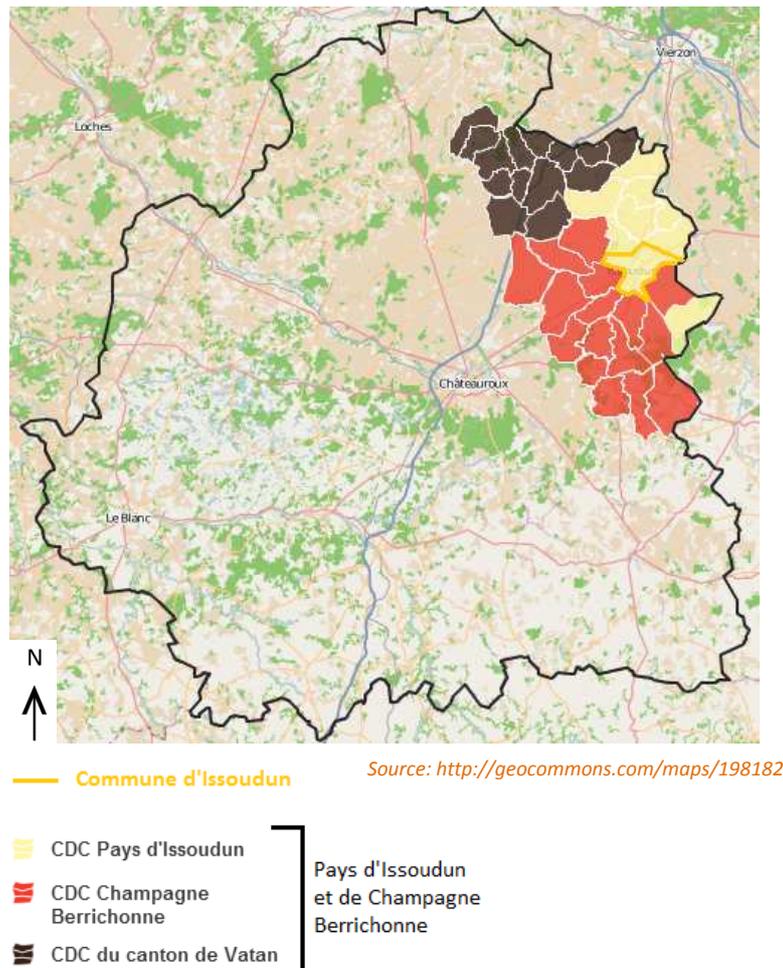


Figure 4.5: Sub-regional area of Issoudun and Champagne Berrichonne (fr. *Pays d'Issoudun et de Champagne Berrichonne*), inter-municipal communities (fr. *CDC Pays d'Issoudun, CDC Champagne Berrichonne and CDC du canton de Vatan*). (Source: *Source: <http://geocommons.com/maps/198182>*)

Planning dynamism for the New Issoudun

The mayor has been on this position since 1977 and has also been the president of the Inter-municipal community of Issoudun since its creation in 1994. In addition to those function, he is the chairman of the Joint Union of Sub-regional Issoudun Area and Champagne Berrichonne (fr. *Syndicat mixte du Pays d'Issoudun and de Champagne Berrichonne*). His long political career gave him an important influence on the territory. Moreover, his first Deputy Mayor in charge of solidarity and security in Issoudun, is also the 7th vice-president of the Regional Council in charge for planning and the Regional Development Plan (SRADDT).

During the municipal elections in 2008, the mayor presented a program “New Issoudun” that in 75 proposals seeks to boost a “new economic, social, educational, cultural, environmental dynamism”. The program identifies development priorities for both municipality and inter-municipal community.

Local business stimulation

As one of the measures for economic development based on trade, industry, crafts and services, housing stock and business support, 40 hectares are available at the price per square meter that below average price in the Centre Region. *“We have prices between 5 and 10 Euros per square meter in industrial areas and between 15 and 16 Euros in commercial areas which is all relatively low, but still quite reasonable”* (General Services Director of Issoudun and Inter-municipal Community). Nevertheless, the Chamber of Trade and Crafts (fr. CMA) that works directly with local companies points at the lack of adequate space which in turn pushes away companies that wanted to settle in Issoudun.

Furthermore, the Business Village was created with the help of the State and the Region: *“Firms located in Issoudun were obsolete, non-functional, cramped and poorly accessible. The Business Village is our answer to provide better quality, working conditions and lower energy expenditure”*.

Likewise, in 2010, the Intermunicipal Community founded the Society for Renewable Energy (SEMER) as a public-private partnership. Together with Nordex Company, 15 million Euros were invested in the wind farm located in the Intermunicipal community. Indeed, the energy self-sufficiency is seen as important goal for Issoudun: *“Wind energy would assure self-sufficiency of Issoudun. When it comes to the potential of the wind farm energy production, the whole subregional area of Issoudun and Champagne Berrichonne with their 32,000 residents would be autonomous in energy”*. Today, Issoudun considers diversifying the Society’s activities by investing in other types of renewable energy such as solar farms that would be located on a former nearby landfill. A biomass boiler is also one of the projects envisaged. 3.5 million Euros is planned be invested in heating network for public facilities in the business zone Champs d’Amour.

Improving the training offer

In partnership with the Centre for Image Art and Education established in Issoudun in 1989, the municipal Institute for vocational training provides courses in art and show production. Such trainings are innovative and unique even at the regional level. The town also has the University branch of Technology that offers professional licence in communication and marketing of cultural products, and two university degrees in marketing techniques and logistics and transportation. These trainings are unique in the southern part of the Region (others are located in Tours and Chartres). The reason for organization of special training is to increase the number of students and to keep them from moving to Tours, Orléans or Limoges to pursue their studies. *“We do not have sufficient critical mass, so it is more of a strategic positioning. There are some courses that may be of local importance to attractiveness”*.

Densification of town centre and social housing

In terms of housing stock, Issoudun offers a variety from suburban dwellings to social housing units. The mayor has been committed to the construction of social housing units and their maintenance in partnership with social landlords. Usually such operations are

carried out by the National Agency for Urban Renewal (ANRU). However, in case of Issoudun, it has been at the initiative of the town in close collaboration with Scalis Company. To give some example from the budget, the Habitat project is estimated on 1.715 million Euros for the construction of suburban dwellings, 1.215 million Euros for the rehabilitation of buildings and 600,000 Euros for landscaping and waste disposal. Facing the problem of vacant private housing, the undertaken initiative called Operation Programme on Habitat (fr. *Opération Programmée sur l'Habitat, OPH*) aims to put 250 to 300 new dwellings on the market over the next five years.

Over the last 20 years, about 500 dwellings have been constructed in the town centre. This initiative lasted too long due to difficulties in buying small dilapidated houses. Besides, the image of the town centre was deteriorated as *"many traders did not consider reopening their business and they never renovated their shops. We have the idea of connection of treating urban aesthetic including facades and a better image of the town"* (General Services Director of Issoudun and inter-municipal community).

Accessibility to services and quality of life

For the majority of interviewed local stakeholders, the accessibility to services and facilities is of a great importance. Culture, education and youth are key priorities of local policy. *"Besides economic development, there is the choice to have culture and the choice to have sports facilities for everyone"* (Chairman of the Development Council of the Inter-municipal Community). In that respect, a wave pool was constructed in the 1980s, followed by the water sports centre, the ELF leisure centre and the bowling centre. Issoudun also has the Exhibition and Sports Hall (PEPSI), several gymnastic halls, a skating rink and an athletics stadium which hosts international competitions. At the level of inter-municipal community, there is the Fay Airfield which is also known as the European gliding centre. The Expression and Recreation House of Issoudun (MELI) offers to residents more than 50 activities such as fitness training, babysitting training, hiking, vintage motorcycles, etc..

Besides renewal of facilities and services offered to its population, Issoudun has established the first cultural cooperation between different institutions: the Museum of the Hospice Saint-Roch, the Cité de la musique, the congress centre and local television Berry Issoudun Première (Bip TV). The latter represents an innovation for a town of that size. The Bip TV was created in 2007 and broadcasts across the Indre Département. Recently it upgraded its website so the chain is now available on tablets and smartphones.

Finally, in order to ease access to services, the public transport is free of charge. There are two bus lines that operate several half-days per week and that connect urban and rural municipalities. *"This is a service that we mastered well because we really wanted to calibrate a service according to needs. In other words, we have not multiplied nor made bus network dense as did some towns. They ended up with huge operating costs"*.

Conclusion

Considering its small size and its insertion in a depressed sub-regional part of the Centre region, Issoudun seems to have been quite successful in developing local projects. For

instance, the good supply in equipments and services was not obvious, regarding the relative proximity of other SMST (like Vierzon) or the larger cities of Bourges and Châteauroux. Furthermore, the industrial base is still solid and globally this territory seems to be resilient.

However, the active population is low qualified, which means that the local policy did not succeed to attract new, more qualified population. Furthermore, the local authorities have no weight in the hypothetical project of a new high-speed train line Paris-Orléans-Clermont-Lyon. As a result, Issoudun is only networked to other SMSTs or larger cities which are not dynamic in social, cultural or economic terms.

According to many actors, the success of the town is clearly linked to the leadership of its mayor, in power since 1977 and minister in several governments throughout the 1980s. This exceptional political stability made possible to develop projects with no immediate financial return, and more globally to develop a local development strategy which seems to be lacking in many other SMSTs.

4.3 Policy recommendations

While being recognized a key component of the French urban landscape, small and medium-sized towns continue to suffer from several difficulties and insufficiencies that lower their potential in terms of local development, adaptation and contribution to the regional and national economic growth and competitiveness. Besides various contextual and recent factors (especially the effects of economic and financial crisis, and the increasing competitive pressure exerted by the combination of globalization and metropolisation dynamics), the fragile situation of French SMSTs is mostly related to structural factors, mainly institutional and organizational.

At least three sources of structural weaknesses impacting French SMSTs' socioeconomic potential can be identified, which call for radical policy changes as regarding the organization and the functioning of the French territorial system as a whole, and of the role and action capabilities of SMSTs in particular. As illustrated in the three case studies analysed in Chapters 2 and 3, these weaknesses take various forms depending on the context and profile of the SMST considered, but they are obviously common features of most French SMSTs.

- Vertical coordination

As emphasized in Chapter 1, the French territorial system is characterized by an extreme administrative fragmentation and various layers of vertical organization: the national state, 'régions', départements', 'communes'... and various intermediate layers of decision-making and action levels. As it stands, this territorial scheme is creating complexity and weak visibility as regarding decision-making processes and the allocation of resources. In this context, SMST's have few means for drawing the relevant 'boundaries' of their policies and development strategies, not speaking of the difficulties they must face when trying to identify the "degrees of freedom" they can have in designing their strategies and action

plans for local socio-economic development. As a result, most French SMST's are trapped in an institutional system they don't really understand while at the same time coping with a bundle of economic, financial and societal uncertainties which blur their action horizon and their "workable" socioeconomic orientation.

Obviously, while multiscalarity in administrative territorial organization is not specific to France, French SMST's probably more than others suffer from a rigid territorial vertical organization which does not help for an efficient territorial coordination where SMST's could find their specific place and role. Moreover, in the recurrent debates in France about the need for a "territorial reform" (especially as regarding a vertical simplification and a more compact territorial scheme), only few attention is devoted to the specific situation of SMSTs per se and to their role in economic development. Rather, the reflection is concentrating on more classical issues (suburbanization in general, fiscal and financial problems, etc.). Only very recently some voices have pointed out the critical situation of many SMSTs. This new 'eye' open on the 'reality' of SMSTs is due to a combination of contextual factors, particularly: the loss of jobs following the closing down of many factories located in SMSTs; the education system reform just implemented which creates a lot of problems to small municipalities; and the financial restriction of resources devoted to some key public services operated at the local level.

- Horizontal cooperation and inter-municipal coherence

At the horizontal level, the fragmentation of the French territorial system in over than 36,000 municipalities creates an inefficient situation resulting in a huge dispersion of resources, a weak capacity of action and an inter-municipal exacerbated competition for attracting businesses and residents, for capturing fiscal resources.

The creation of a variety of inter-communal cooperation tools (see above Chapter 1) was precisely directed toward facilitating the coordination among municipalities and constituting a 'critical mass' of resources and capacity of action. Unfortunately, these coordination devices are structurally complex and open new doors for territorial competition (this time, between neighbouring inter-communal arrangements) while the competition between municipalities within the same inter-municipal community is far from being attenuated or 'domesticated'. In fact, while SMSTs are particularly interested (and, in fact, constrained) in (to) cooperate because of their limited resources and action capacities, the reality resembles in many cases just to a more 'civilized battle among churches', where every municipality cooperates to the extent that it can 'earn something' from the collective arrangement while preserving its specific sources of economic advantage ('free rider game').

At the same time, the recognition of the need to move toward merging neighbouring inter-municipalities and the encouraging results of some pioneer experiences are good steps for better pooling the local resources in certain domains and better valorising the complementarities among spatially interdependent territories. But, here again, 'political games' are remaining the rule due especially to the non-binding character of the territorial arrangements that are implemented, not to speak of the vast room for institutional interpretation that such arrangements offer.

All in all, horizontal cooperation is suffered (or felt as painful or inefficient) by many SMSTs while their socioeconomic difficult situation is collectively worsened by a lack of efficient cooperation and coordination.

Taken together, the inefficiencies in vertical and horizontal territorial coordination in France place many SMSTs in precarious situation which mainly illustrates the uncertainties beard by rather incoherent decentralization and devolution policies in France over the last three decades. Therefore, French SMSTs are deemed to 'navigate' without clear institutional direction and landmarks while at the same time most of them are confronting severe problems of deindustrialization and job losses that require the design and engagement in adapted strategies of economic reconversion and redevelopment.

Still, the strategic move that is needed is itself challenging as many French SMSTs suffer from of a lack of competences in strategic planning and in the coordination of local actors

- Local competences in strategic planning, in actors' coordination and in territorial marketing

As demonstrated in the three towns from the region Centre analyzed above (but also documented in several other ones studied in another research project at the regional level (Demazière, 2012), the lack of technical and strategic competences for development and adaptation planning appear to be one key difficulty for SMSTs. Neither the municipal representatives, nor the local technical services are equipped with the knowledge, capabilities and experience that can help them make an accurate diagnosis of their socioeconomic situation, identify new potential opportunities and drivers for redevelopment, and design and implement plans for long term economic and social sustained development. One pitfall illustrating such lack is the absence of awareness as regarding the dangers of a too strong specialization in a certain industry or service sector.

The same lack appears when we come to local actors' coordination competences. Indeed, while some SMSTs have the chance to benefit from the location in their territory of some key economic, social or academic actors, they often underestimate or even ignore the potentialities that could be valorised through the identification and the mobilization of the complementarities among the actors and through their networking for imagining and pushing ahead new economic projects.

In France, one explanation of such lack in local planning and coordination competences lies probably in the fact that graduates from planning school target in priority jobs offered by large cities or urban agglomerations thanks to higher financial conditions and also more diversified conditions of life they propose. Still, SMSTs could become more attractive for some graduates if they better market some differentiated advantages they can offer (e.g. better quality of life, a nice environment, lower prices for land and real estate, etc.). But here again, improving such attractiveness requires another bunch of local competences in territorial marketing and communication that are also usually weak or inexistent in many SMSTs.

In sum, the structural difficulties of SMSTs in France derive both from an efficient territorial organisational and institutional system at the national (and partly the regional) level and from inherent factors to SMSTs in terms of coordination competences and planning capabilities. Therefore, one can predict that the situation of many French SMSTs cannot improve much in the future without: 1. The recognition by all the institutional actors (starting with the national state and its agencies like DATAR) of the key role of SMSTs in contributing to the ongoing framing of the national territory under the pressure of globalized competition, and also the need to control for large cities' environmental negative externalities (pollutions, congestion, etc.), urban sprawl and farm-land over-consumption; 2. A better recognition and a stronger expressed will by SMSTs representatives for a stronger professionalization of their teams through attracting competent planners, urban designers, organizers and economic strategists.

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Appendix

Different spatial delimitations used for purposes of statistics and economic analysis:

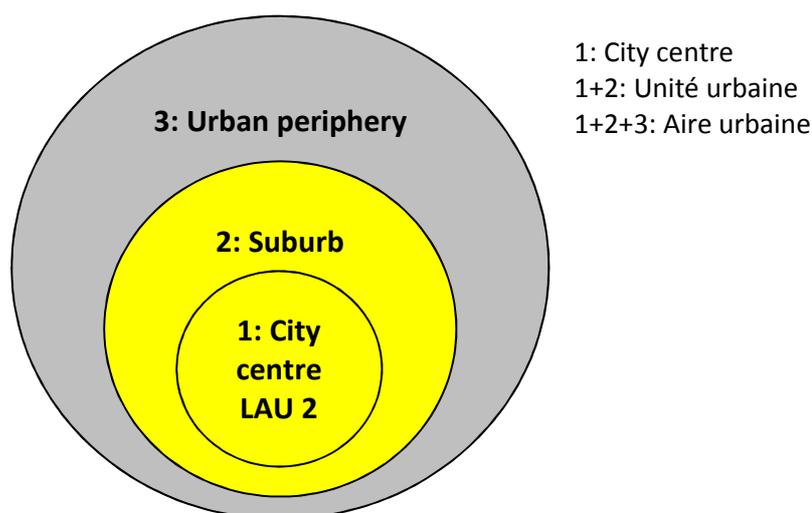
A municipality (fr. *commune*) is the smallest administrative subdivision, but it is also the oldest one that in fact succeeded the towns and parishes of the Middle Age. Municipalities were established in 1789 and their independence was granted by law in 1884.

An urban centre (fr. *unité urbaine*) corresponds to the basic definition of a town. It is based on the continuity of built-up area and a number of inhabitants as the main defining criteria. An urban centre can consist of one municipality or a set of municipalities that has an area of continuous built-up area of less than 200 meters between two buildings and with at least 2.000 inhabitants. It comprises a city centre (LAU 2) and a suburb.

A travel-to-work agglomeration (fr. *aire urbaine*) is a territorial unit defined according to the criteria of number of jobs in its urban centre and job commuting. Thus, TTW is a group of municipalities forming an urban centre (called fr. *pôle urbain*) with at least 1,500 jobs, but also it is consisting of rural municipalities and/or urban centres from its urban periphery of which at least 40% of the population is working in the *pôle urbain*. According the number of jobs in its *pôle urbain*, TTW areas are divided into 3 groups: (i) small TTW with 1,500 – 5,000 jobs, (ii) medium TTW with 5,000 – 10,000 jobs, and (iii) large TTW with more than 10.000 jobs.

There are also **other territorial delimitations** that are the result of different spatial which enable to analyse different urban scales and parameters, i.e. employment zones (fr. *zones d'emplois*), living areas (fr. *bassin de vie*) or groups of municipalities based on intermunicipal cooperation and common interests (fr. *EPCI*).

Figure 02: Relevant units of analysis



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