

Thirty years of urban regeneration in Britain, Germany and France: The importance of context and path dependency

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Abstract

It is a little over 30 years since Jim Callaghan's Labour Government passed the 1978 Inner Urban Areas Act. The following year marked a shift in power to Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government and a very different approach to urban regeneration. These developments established and shaped the approach to urban regeneration in England for a generation. The economic context and the urban changes of the 1970s and 1980s and the nature of these responses put England at the forefront of the evolution of this type of urban policy in Europe. It is therefore timely to reflect on 30 years of urban regeneration and to do so from a comparative perspective, setting the English experience alongside that of Germany and France. In this paper the authors compare the experiences of these three countries. The great benefit of international comparison is that it allows the observer to step outside their own institutions and context, to compare with other countries and to look back at their own country from a new, foreign, perspective. The emphasis of this paper is on the contingent and contextualised nature of actions designed to foster urban regeneration. This reinforces the rationale for studying the evolution of this policy field in different nation-state settings.

One of the commonly cited advantages of cross-national comparative research as a means of generating understanding and explanations of different social phenomena, is its ability to account for the influence of context in moulding societal responses to different issues. Accordingly, following an introduction, the second part of this paper provides an account of the different national socioeconomic and physical contexts which obtain in each country. This is in turn followed by an explanation of the evolution of urban regeneration policies in each country. Informed by this evidence the paper then offers a comparative discussion of the changing aims, mechanisms and achievements of urban regeneration, and the extent to which policy in each country is path dependent. Through this analysis the paper makes a qualitative contribution to the general theory of urban regeneration rather than offering precise advice on the details of policy and its implementation. Whilst the authors would claim some degree of internationality, there is no doubt that the strongest perspective brought to bear in this comparative study is a English perspective. The strongest conclusions compare English experiences with those of Germany and France, rather than between the latter two countries.

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1. Introduction

Across Western Europe urban policy after World War II was characterised by a period of reconstruction followed by a long phase of slum clearance and the ‘modernisation’ of urban centres and urban infrastructure. By the nineteen seventies, however, many countries were experiencing the combined effects of recession, economic restructuring and social reactions against the modernist planning agenda. Britain was in the vanguard of this movement as it experienced earlier and more rapid industrial change and deeper urban decline than many of its neighbours. However, other countries also experienced change, France too was soon to recognise and respond to emerging urban problems, particularly in relation to issues of housing and social exclusion. In the 1980’s even West was developing a

postmodern approach to urban policy that became known as ‘careful urban renewal’. It is now some 30 years since these shifts in urban policy began to manifest themselves across Western Europe and this raises some interesting questions about the extent to which countries experience similar or different urban problems and develop similar policy responses. Looking at three countries: Britain, France and Germany, this review seeks to explore how far the definition of urban problems and the development of solutions been influenced by the different socio-economic, institutional and cultural context of each country and to what extent the evolution of policy has been ‘path dependent’, i.e. to what extent does considering the evolution of policy in each country from the perspective of the theory of path dependence aid an understanding of this process?

1.1. Urban regeneration

But what is ‘urban regeneration’? Urban renewal is a term that many dictionaries define as the process of slum clearance physical redevelopment of an urban area. It has a particular resonance as a description of urban policy in many North American cities in the decades of the mid-20th century. The term was also used to refer to similar processes in British and European cities during this period.

But a series of studies and reports in the late 1960s and early 1970s drew attention to the plight of Britain’s inner urban areas and those who lived in them, in ways that had never previously been achieved. The post-1974 recession and the economic restructuring that followed provided a further catalyst for change. “A political reconceptualization of the inner city as a spatial coincidence of more fundamental social, economic and environmental problems began to occur in the 1970s” (Ward, 1994, p. 197). It became clear that the rising levels of deprivation affecting these areas had their causes well beyond the locality, in the workings of the wider national and international economy. It was clear that some new form of policy intervention in inner urban areas was required: one that went beyond the traditional and rather limited approach of slum clearance and physical redevelopment, to one that additionally addressed wider social and economic issues.

One of the earliest policy documents to use the term ‘regeneration’ was a report prepared for Merseyside County Council in 1975:

At times of decline or even low growth, market forces slacken and the least attractive areas (in terms of appearance, accessibility and other attributes) become under-populated and derelict. In such a situation of population decline there might come a point when market forces would commence the *regeneration* (authors’ italics) of areas of dereliction. Experience in some of the older industrial American cities suggests that even assuming this would happen, the process would be extremely lengthy and carry in its wake a multitude of environmental, economic and social problems which would be unacceptable (Merseyside County Council, 1975, p. 7).

Within the same document Merseyside County Council went on to outline a strategy ‘aimed at the regeneration of urban areas’. This strategy, which is summarised in two short sentences below, came to epitomise the British approach to this new field of policy: urban regeneration.

The proposed strategy would concentrate investment and development within the urban County and particularly in those areas with the most acute problems, enhancing the environment and encouraging housing and economic expansion on derelict and disused sites. It would restrict development on the edge of the built-up areas to a minimum (Merseyside County Council, 1975, p. 8).

The combination of emerging evidence as to the nature of the urban problem combined with the innovations in policy emanating from the major cities: Liverpool, Manchester and others, allowed the Government to develop its own policy response.

The White Paper *Policy for the Inner Cities* (Department of the Environment, 1977) upon which the Act was based was ‘the first serious attempt by a government in the post-war era...to understand the nature and causes of Britain’s urban problems’. It was ‘a watershed event in the development of urban policy’ (Atkinson & Moon, 1994, p. 66), recognising that a particular part of the urban fabric – the inner urban areas – required their own specific policies. According to the White Paper, “the absence of much spontaneous growth and *regeneration* (authors’ italics) is one of the hallmarks of the inner areas” (HMSO, 1977, p. 9 quoted in Atkinson & Moon, 1994, p. 70). The subsequent Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 together with a series of other related policy changes gave local authorities the powers and resources necessary for this new approach: *urban regeneration*.

Since then many definitions of urban regeneration have emerged but the following short selection shows a high degree of consistency between authors from different backgrounds, writing at different points in time:

(The process of urban regeneration is one in which) the state or local community is seeking to bring back investment, employment and consumption and enhance the quality of life within an urban area (Couch, 1990, pp. 2–3).

In 1994 the British Government’s priority for urban regeneration programmes in England was:

to enhance the quality of life of local people in areas of need by reducing the gap between deprived and other areas, and between different groups (DOE, 1994).

A more contemporary definition is provided by Chris Brown, Chief Executive of Igloo Regeneration Fund:

Urban regeneration is concerted social, economic and physical action to help people in neighbourhoods

experiencing multiple deprivation reverse decline and create sustainable communities (Brown, 2006).

In the same issue of *Building* Jon Ladd, Chief Executive of the British Urban Regeneration Association, suggested that:

Urban regeneration is a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area (Jon Ladd, *Building*, February, 2006).

1.2. Spatial and temporal context and the identification of path dependencies in international comparisons

The wider historical and political-economic context of the time was also significant. In the 1970s Britain was the first major Western European country to be plunged into recession and the process of restructuring into a post-industrial society, and by the end of the decade unemployment was significantly higher and GDP per capita significantly lower than either of its major European competitors, West Germany and France.

The economic context and the urban changes of the period combined with the response contained in the 1978 Act put Britain at the forefront of the evolution of this type of urban policy in Europe. It is therefore timely to reflect on 30 years of urban regeneration in Britain and to do so from a comparative perspective, setting the British experience alongside that of Germany and France. The great benefit of international comparison as an approach to policy analysis is that it allows the observer to step outside their own institutions and socio-economic context, to compare with other countries and to look back at their own country from a new, foreign, perspective. Writing in the mid-1970s, Richard Rose justified a comparative study of urban change in Britain and Germany by asking: “to what extent does the existence of a common problem result in a common political response? In so far as policies are different, to what extent can one country learn from the other, and how can citizens and urban specialists in other nations learn from the experience of Britain and Germany?” (Rose, 1974, ix).

At a time when the challenges of urban areas in both developed and developing countries have been high on the agenda as a majority of the world’s population is now living in urban areas (UN Habitat, 2009), a

reflection on the experiences of three advanced economies in dealing with the challenges of economic change and its impacts on urban areas is timely.

Within Europe and the EU, sustainable urban development and urban regeneration has been discussed in recent years. In 2007 the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (EU Ministers for Urban Development, 2007) committed member states to promote “balanced territorial organisation based upon a European polycentric urban structure” including strategies for upgrading the physical environment, providing sustainable transport, local economic development, education and training in deprived areas (Urbact, 2007). The momentum was sustained under the Spanish Presidency of the EU in 2010 when urban development ministers adopted the ‘Toledo Declaration’ (EU Ministers for Urban Development, 2010). This was adopted against the backdrop of a new overarching document outlining EU objectives entitled ‘Europe 2020 – A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth’ (European Commission, 2010). This set out three priorities in order to support a ‘vision of Europe’s social market economy for the 21st. century’ based on; Smart growth – developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; Sustainable growth – promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy; and, Inclusive growth – fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion. The Toledo Declaration considered how urban policy might contribute to such goals and highlighted the ‘need to promote a smarter, more sustainable and socially inclusive urban development in European urban areas, cities and towns’ and ‘consolidate an EU urban agenda in the future’. To achieve the latter objective the ministers pledged themselves to support joint actions to promote:

- strengthening of the urban dimension in EU cohesion policy (i.e. in structural fund programmes);
- greater coherence between territorial and urban issues and the fostering of the urban dimension in the context of territorial cohesion;
- research, comparative studies and statistics, exchange of best practices and dissemination of knowledge on urban topics, and strengthening coordination of them all.
- sustainable urban development and integrated approaches by reinforcing and developing instruments to implement the Leipzig Charter at all levels.
- consideration of the most important challenges that European cities will face in the future.

The Declaration is accompanied by a reference document on ‘Integrated Urban Regeneration and its strategic potential for a smarter, more sustainable and socially inclusive urban development in Europe’ (EU Ministers for Urban Development, 2010). This discusses moving towards a ‘common understanding of the integrated approach in urban regeneration in particular and in urban development in general’. The EU Ministers state that they understand ‘Integrated Urban Regeneration’ as:

a planned process that must transcend the partial ambits and approaches that have usually been the norm until now, in order to address the city as a functioning whole and its parts as components of the whole urban organism, with the objective of fully developing and balancing the complexity and diversity of social, economic and urban structures, while at the same time stimulating greater environmental eco-efficiency (EU Ministers for Urban Development, 2010, p. 6).

There is therefore an ongoing political debate on the nature and purposes of urban regeneration at the European level which seeks to draw upon and encourage comparative studies into the issue and exchanges of experience across the continent (e.g. through EU supported mechanisms such as the European Urban Knowledge Network – <http://www.eukn.org>).

Set within the wider context outlined above, the aim of the present paper is to review the nature of urban regeneration and what it has achieved in three large European states. Through a study of the United Kingdom (UK),¹ Germany and France we are seeking to explain and compare the nature and evolution of urban regeneration problems and policies that each country has faced over the past three decades. But is it appropriate, valid and useful to choose these three countries for comparison? The UK, Germany and France represent three of the four largest countries and economies in the European Union. The UK and France have similar populations, Germany a somewhat higher. The UK and Germany have similar population densities, France somewhat lower. All three countries contain numerous cities that have, in recent decades, experienced industrial restructuring and rapid urban

change and state intervention to ameliorate the effects of such changes. There is sufficient similarity in these problems and policy responses to make the comparison interesting and worthwhile. There are other countries, notably in Scandinavia and the Netherlands, with a wealth of highly regarded experience in urban regeneration. But the scale of these countries and their urban problems is different from the selected three. In southern Europe, Spain and Italy are countries with large urban populations, but differences in urban structure, culture and climate make it more difficult to compare their experiences with those of the UK.

International comparative urban research poses some difficult methodological problems. A key issue concerns the purpose of the study: is it intended to help the development of (urban regeneration) theory? Or to explain some aspects of urban change? Or to help in the development of policy? And for whom is the question being answered: is it from an international perspective or is the answer sought on behalf of one specific country? Many authors have sought explanation for urban change through international comparative study (for example: Andersson, 2001; Cheshire, 1995; Hall & Hay, 1980; Van den Berg, Drewett, & Klaassen, 1982). Others have examined the policy approaches adopted to certain issues in different countries, sometimes with a view to exploring the potential for ‘policy transfer’ to address similar challenges in other national, regional and local contexts (Booth, Breuillard, Fraser, & Paris, 2007; Hambleton, 2007; Marshall, 2009; Nathan & Marshall, 2006). It is not our intention to try and compete with the vast and erudite literature which has examined the overall responses of different national and regional social models to the economic, social and ecological challenges posed by urban development in different societies. Nor do we seek here to ‘read-off’ the urban phenomena and policy approaches revealed by the study of the three countries from an overtly theoretical and overarching political-economic, ‘state theory’, ‘regulationist’, ‘neo-liberal’ (Jones & Ward, 2004), or new economic geography narrative. The authors acknowledge the contribution that analyses provided by such perspectives can and do make; for example, in revealing and problematising wider structural influences on urban areas and interrogating the nature of state responses to the city in capitalist societies. In studying urban regeneration in different national, regional and local settings we do however tend to share Lovering’s (2007, 363) view of the role of wider global structural influences on the practice of regeneration that whilst:

The development of ‘urban regeneration’ projects by local politicians, planners, publicists, developers,

¹ In our discussion of context, most of the local data presented refers to the United Kingdom. However, in Section 3, the discussion of the local evolution of policy is confined to England. This is because policy in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has evolved along slightly different paths.

etc. certainly plays a key part in the construction of a ‘global’ trend towards NeoLiberalism” those “players are not mere agents of a Whiggish historical zeitgeist, or of global capitalist machinations. They are not playing out a pre-written script. They are making local, contingent choices as a result of particular struggles, and these tend on the whole to have liberalizing effects.

This emphasis on contingent and contextualised nature of actions designed to foster urban regeneration reinforces the rationale for studying the evolution of this policy field in different nation state settings. Recent work which has emphasised the importance of different ‘planning cultures’ (Healey & Upton, 2010; Knieling and Othengrafen, 2009a, 2009b; Sanyal, 2005; Sykes, Lord, & Jha-Thakur, 2010) in conditioning the nature of planning practices in different places – and also the nature of the issues or problems that urban regeneration policy and planning are called-upon by society to address, also reinforces the rationale for undertaking comparative study of regeneration policy and practice in different national settings.

One of the commonly cited advantages of cross-national comparative research as a means of generating understanding and explanations of different social phenomena, is its ability to account for the influence of context in moulding societal responses to different issues. The approach adopted and the material presented in the sections which follow recognise this and proceed from a general description of the conditions in the three states to a discussion of the evolution of urban regeneration policy and a more selective consideration of particular programmes and outcomes during the study period. In presenting this analysis an attempt is also made to take into account the fact that the ‘context’ for urban regeneration in the different national settings is not static but in constant evolution. The importance of accounting for the temporal as well as scalar (e.g. the impacts of structuring global forces on national, regional and local settings) and spatial (e.g. influence of different physical, economic or cultural geographical settings) dimensions of ‘place and process’ (Booth, 2011) has been noted in recent years. The concept of ‘path dependence’ has emerged in a number of disciplines to re-emphasise the importance of situating comparisons of current conditions and outcomes within a proper consideration of the historical evolution of particular places, problems and policy responses. For Booth (2011) there is clear potential for comparative studies of planning and urban policy to be enriched by an awareness of how past events contribute to sequences

of events which may reinforce or challenge patterns of behaviour and policy approaches leading to certain outcomes. This potentially allows comparative studies to offer more insightful and dynamic analyses and conclusions with greater explanatory potential, which can advance beyond the important but well-rehearsed conclusion that ‘context matters’ and different conditions and settings contribute to different planning cultures, urban problems and policy approaches.

A fuller awareness of the temporal dimension and the identification of path dependence may also help to reduce the danger of the history of localities being compared being “presented as no more than interesting contextual background, an embellishment of an otherwise utilitarian review of performance” (Booth, 2011). Path dependence emphasises the importance of ‘contingent’ events that may initiate ‘institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties’ (Mahoney, 2000, 507 cited in Booth, 2011). It has been argued that social structures and actors evolve in path dependent ways because certain sequences of events may generate increasing returns, though it has also been noted that a given sequence may also generate decreasing returns (Gains, John, & Stoker, 2005 cited in Booth, 2011) which may generate pressure for change (i.e. actions or behaviours which deviate from the established path). Sometimes events on different paths may ‘intersect’ – what Mahoney calls ‘conjunctural moments’ (2000 cited in Booth, 2011).

Recognising the emphasis placed in the literature on the importance of contextualised and temporally informed comparison, the paper provides a discussion of the evolving context in the three states under consideration. The inclusion of this is particularly important given the subject matter of the paper and the periodisation which it adopts in seeking to review ‘30 years of regeneration’ in the three states. The selection of this study period is itself informed by events in the evolution of perceptions of urban conditions and policy responses to these since the late 1970s – particularly the introduction of key pieces of legislation such as the Inner Urban Areas Act in the UK. Given that the selection of the study period derives largely from ‘within’ the field of planning and urban policy there is a need to situate the period – and the subject of the phenomenon of urban regeneration during the period, within a broader historical and spatial context. This is also important to avoid the possibility of lapsing into ‘presentism’ in the analysis, either in terms of interpreting past developments in urban regeneration in terms of perceptions too strongly coloured by current conditions or the ‘benefit of hindsight’, or viewing the

present 30-year ‘anniversary’ period as a particularly privileged moment at which to offer comparative reflections on the experiences of the three states with urban regeneration (i.e. simply because the researchers are considering the issue ‘in the present’).

Accordingly section 2 below provides a broad account of the different national socio-economic and physical contexts which have obtained in each country during the period under consideration here (i.e. from the late 1970s until the late 2000s). It is beyond the scope of the present paper to provide an all-encompassing social, economic, environmental and spatio-physical account of the evolution of the three states during this time period, however, the material presented below aims to provide a background for the subsequent discussion of the evolution of urban regeneration policy in each country. The section on policy allows consideration of the extent to which this evolution has, or has not, been ‘path dependent’ and developed according to previously established norms and priorities and limited by previous decisions. The conclusions of the paper draw on this where appropriate to selectively emphasise how specific significant (or ‘contingent’ – Booth, 2011) historical events and urban conditions (or perceptions of these) have shaped the evolution of urban regeneration policy and practice in the three states.

Informed by the discussion above, our ambition in this review is to describe, analyse and explain similarities and differences in approaches to urban regeneration in Germany, France and Britain, to explore the influence of context and the extent to which the evolution of policy has been ‘path dependent’. The goal is to make a qualitative contribution to the general theory of urban regeneration rather than to offer any precise advice on the details of policy and its implementation. It is also hoped that the review will be of benefit to scholars and students of planning and regeneration in providing a framework against which consideration of different regeneration policies and projects, either through desk-based study or visits to the field, can be situated. Whilst we as authors would claim some degree of internationality, there is no doubt that the strongest perspective brought to bear on this comparative study is a British perspective. Our strongest conclusions compare British experiences with those of Germany and France, rather than between the latter two countries.

A further issue concerns the comparability of quantitative data that might be used as indicators for similarities and differences and the measurement of trends. Even between countries as similar and closely connected as Germany, France and Britain there are immense problems of lack of comparability of data in

terms of availability, definition of terms, periodicity and methods of collection, level of aggregation, and questions of interpretation. Examination of data published for the European Commission by Eurostat quickly reveals how the quality and comparability of data deteriorates as one moves from the national to the regional and sub-regional scales of investigation, although the development of the Urban Audit is going some way to resolve these issues. Much data is gathered for policy related purposes. For example, in Britain it is possible to find excellent data on the selling prices of owner occupied dwellings but rather weak data on dwelling size. In contrast in Germany and France, where dwelling rents are usually expressed on a per square metre per month basis, there exists much more robust data on dwelling size but less precise data on capital values.

Another difficulty in international comparisons of urban problems and policies lies in understanding the importance of deeper contexts. Writing about the experience of an Anglo-German project, Herson (2001, p. 16) reminds us that “a comparison of Britain and Germany (and France) is not merely a question of economic indicators and low-level environmental policies. It relates to more basic questions of society, history and identity”. Each country has its own geography, history, economic and social structure, political institutions, culture and customs which must be appreciated before attempting any explanation of similarities or differences, or suggesting cross-national lessons that might be learned. Over the last 30 years or so all three countries have had to come to terms with the processes and consequences of economic change and urban restructuring, and all have pursued similar goals of urban renaissance and neighbourhood renewal. But whilst there are many similarities, there are also some intriguing differences between the experiences of each country. Whilst the goals of policy may be similar, especially in the context of growing European Union (EU) influence on urban policy, each country has started from a different point in terms of urban socio-economic and environmental conditions, and policy development has taken place in a different institutional and cultural context. Such differences have contributed to the distinctiveness of the approaches adopted for the resolution of urban problems.

Thus key questions are:

- how far has the definition of urban problems and the development of solutions been influenced by the different socio-economic, institutional and cultural context of each country?

- to what extent has the evolution of policy in each country been ‘path dependent’ i.e. Is it reasonable to say that urban regeneration programmes in each country have developed and “operate according to the path-dependent institutional norms and priorities dictated by the nation-state” (Marshall, 2005). And, to what extent does considering the evolution of policy in each country from the perspective of the theory of path dependence aid an understanding of this process?

We therefore devote the next section to the study and comparison of national spatial and institutional contexts. The exploration of context continues with a discussion about the nature of urban areas and key regeneration and neighbourhood renewal issues facing each country. Having established this framework, Section 3 considers the evolution of urban regeneration policy in each country. Section 4 offers some comparative reflections, whilst in the final section conclusions are drawn and some lessons for policy makers are identified.

2. National socio-economic and physical contexts

Context is an extremely important dimension of international comparative urban studies. It seems likely that many advances in urban policy are path dependent. That is to say, faced with a new problem, policy makers in any country will have a strong tendency to use or adapt solutions that have been used in the past. Constraints on, and opportunities for, action are determined for policymakers by local socio-economic and political-institutional circumstances. Thus, in order to explain policy choices made in a particular country it is necessary to understand this context. Economic circumstances constrain and limit the scope for intervention, including the possibilities for indigenous growth or inward investment; population distribution and density similarly influence investments in housing, infrastructure and consumer services; patterns and traditions of urban structure and form affect choices in building design (for example, the prevalence of and desire for, single family housing in English inner urban areas seems to be a major factor determining future urban form in that country). The forms and values of urban governance are also likely to be key influences on processes of urban change and the nature of policy responses (for example, Parkinson, Hutchins, et al. (2004) suggest that “the greater the fiscal independence of cities – the greater their capacity to experiment and be proactive” (p. 56)). Thus a better understanding of

context helps to inform discourses seeking explanations for urban change and those exploring the transferability of urban policies tools and mechanisms between countries. This section explains the different context within which urban regeneration takes place in each state so as to allow discussion of the question how far has the definition of urban problems and the development of solutions been influenced by the different socio-economic, institutional and cultural context of each country?

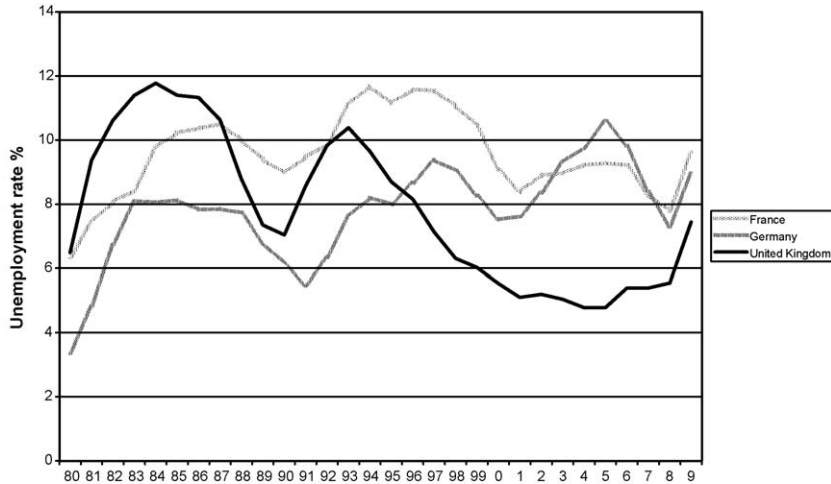
2.1. Economic circumstances

Thirty years ago the economic circumstances of each region were very different from the situation today. In 1978 the UK was in the midst of the economic restructuring that had begun in earnest after the 1973 oil crisis and was to continue through the Thatcher era. In contrast the French and West economies, less affected by the 1973 crisis, were still enjoying the post-war economic boom. They still had relatively low levels of unemployment and high levels of GDP per capita compared with the UK (see Figs. 1 and 2). But by the late 1980s all three countries were feeling the full force of economic restructuring accompanied by high levels of unemployment and social upheaval. However, in more recent times, it was the UK economy that emerged most strongly into the post-industrial sunshine, with currently the lowest unemployment and highest levels of GDP per capita of all three countries, at least until the post-2007 recession.

Thus at the start of this survey period the UK was plunging into the turmoil of economic change sooner and faster than France or Germany; it was relatively poorer, with higher levels of unemployment and more social unrest. The UK was the first major Western European country to start the process of restructuring into a post-industrial society. By the end of the 1970s unemployment was significantly higher and GDP per capita significantly lower than in France and West Germany.

Economic restructuring impacted particularly on those areas which had a high dependency on ‘traditional’ manufacturing sectors, including many towns and cities of northern and western Britain that bore a disproportionate part of the social, economic, environmental and cultural costs of the ‘Thatcherite’ economic ‘miracle’. The resultant urban problems were largely, although not exclusively, concentrated in the ‘inner city’ areas of such urban areas.

Whilst Margaret Thatcher sought to cure the UK economy with a dose of harsh (right-wing, monetarist)



Note: Data until 1990 refers to German federation only (West Germany). Data from 1991 refer to United Germany.
 Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2009

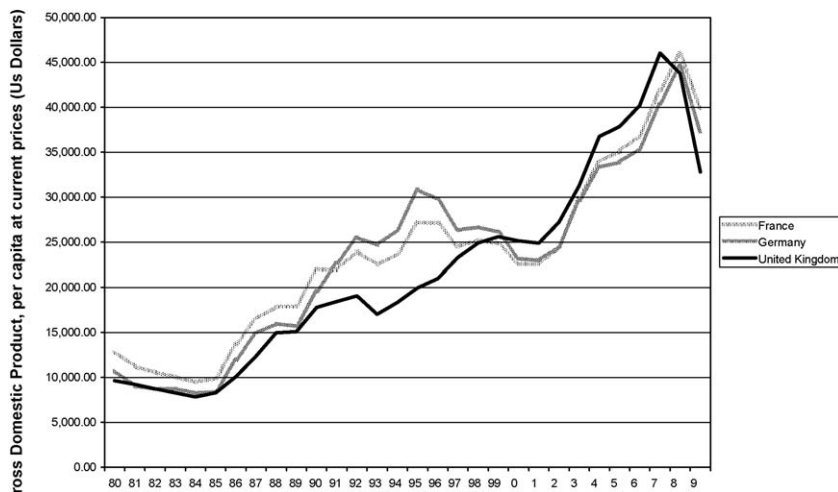
Fig. 1. Long term changes in unemployment rates: France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Note: Data until 1990 refers to German federation only (West Germany). Data from 1991 refer to United Germany. Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2009.

medicine, Germany under Helmut Schmidt’s social democrat government and France, under their new socialist president, Mitterrand, trod a more gradual and socially inclusive path towards economic reform. Thus as the UK experimented with property-led regeneration, privatisation and the marginalisation of local government, France and Germany had the time to learn from our experiences and the political inclination to seek solutions within their existing structures of local governance and economic relations.

There are differences in the structure of the economy of each country. Germany still has the largest

manufacturing sector (32% of employment) compared with about 25% in France and 23% in the UK, but the UK is most dependent upon the service sector (around 75% of employment) compared with 71% in France and only 66% in Germany. France has the biggest agricultural sector (Regional trends, 38: Table 2.3).

The relative economic strength and distribution of wealth between regions also varies. The map in Fig. 3 reveals some stark differences between the three countries. In France the highest output is concentrated around Paris and the Ile de France with secondary areas of activity in the south of the country around Toulouse,



Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2009

Fig. 2. Long term changes in Gross Domestic Product per capita: France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2009.

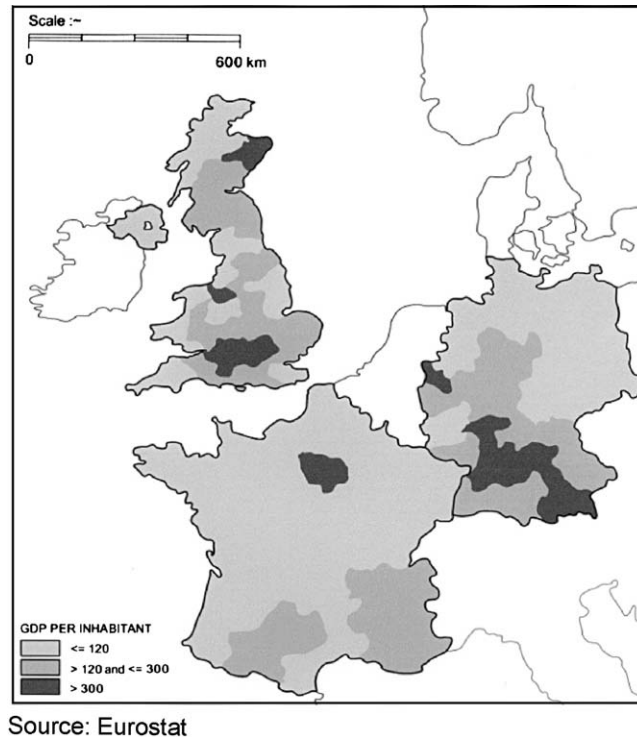


Fig. 3. GDP per inhabitant by NUTS 2 regions, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, 2006. Source: Eurostat.

the Rhone Alps and Mediterranean regions. Output is lowest in the rural centre of the country. In Germany the biggest difference is between the low-output east of the country and the high-output south and west, centred on the cities of Munich, Stuttgart and Frankfurt. Output is also lower in the rural north. Whilst in the UK the highest levels of output are, as might be expected, around London, the south and midlands, secondary areas of activity are spread through much of the rest of the country except for the rural north of Scotland, Northern Ireland and parts of Wales. This is probably a reflection of the more urbanised character and higher density of the UK relative to the other two countries.

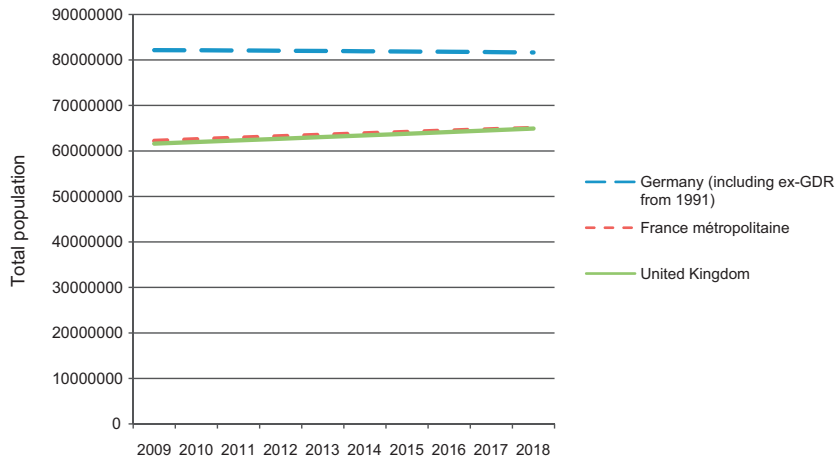
2.2. The distribution and density of population and the urban system

The total populations of the UK and France are virtually identical at around 62 m people whilst Germany has a population some 30% higher at 82 m. However, whereas the populations of the UK and France are each expected to rise by around 2% over the next decade, the German population is expected to fall by about 0.5% (see Fig. 4). Furthermore, the old-age dependency ratio (population over 65 as a proportion of

that aged 15–64) is already higher in Germany at around 31.1 compared with 25.8 in France and 24.7 in the UK, and set to rise by the end of the next decade to 35.3 in Germany, 32.8 in France and 28.6 in the UK. Thus Germany has a demographic situation significantly different from that of France or the UK.

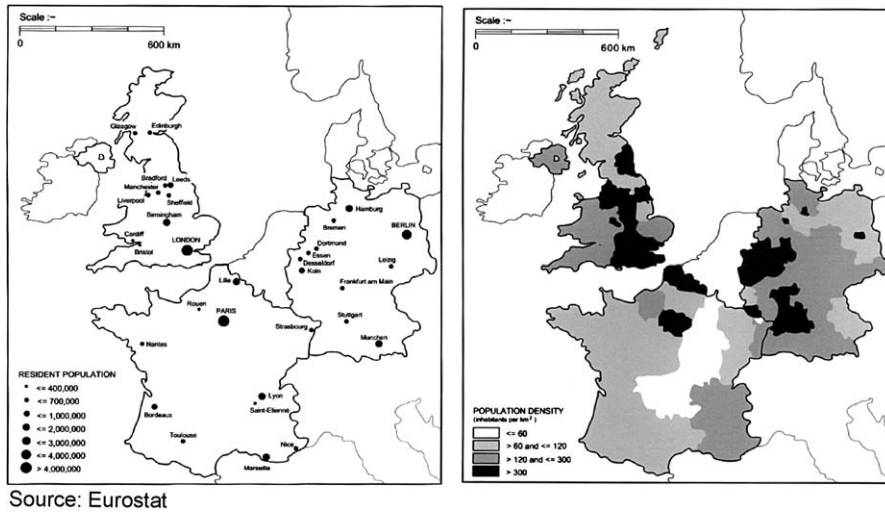
It must also be remembered that the geography of each country is very different. Fig. 5 illustrates the contrasting level of population density and patterns of urbanisation in each country.

Whilst the UK (especially England) and France are essentially monocentric countries dominated by a single capital city (London and Paris, each with around 16% of their country's population), Germany has a polycentric urban structure with no one dominant city (Berlin, the largest city contains only 4% of the German population) (see Fig. 5). Of the three, as shown in Table 1, the UK (especially England) has the highest population density and one dominant city: London, where most political-economic and cultural power is concentrated (although the emergence of Edinburgh/Glasgow, Cardiff and Belfast in the newly devolved administrations is acknowledged). France has the lowest density but like the UK, one city, Paris, is dominant. In both these countries this puts severe limitations on the nature and



Source: Eurostat, Population projections, Europop 2008 Convergence scenario

Fig. 4. Current and projected populations for the France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Source: Eurostat, Population projections, Europop 2008 Convergence scenario.



Source: Eurostat

Fig. 5. Urban structure and population density in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Source: Eurostat.

quantity of economic development that is possible outside of the capital city. Germany, in contrast, is a polycentric country with no one dominant city and substantially devolved political-economic and cultural power. This has the effect of broadening the nature and

scope of economic development to which any German city can aspire compared with many of their UK or French counterparts.

Whereas London is home to 77% of all UK company headquarters and Paris is home to 84% of company

Table 1
Population density and city size in France, Germany and the UK.

		Population (a)	Population density	Population of largest city (b)	(b) as a proportion of (a)
France	2001	82.3 m	113/km ²	Berlin (3.4 m)	4.1%
Germany	2002	61.5 m	230.9/km ²	Paris (9.6 m)	15.6%
UK (England)	2001	60.6 m (50.7 m)	246/km ² (388.7/km ²)	London (8.3 m)	13.7% (16.4%)

Source: Authors' calculations from Censuses of Population.

headquarters in France, in Germany the distribution is much more dispersed between a number of cities – Munich (17%), Hamburg (13%), Düsseldorf (12%) and Frankfurt (12%) (Bel & Fageda, 2007).

As noted above, this has the effect of broadening the nature and scope of economic development to which any German city can aspire compared with many cities in the UK or France. It also leads to a more even inter-regional distribution of professional and managerial employment, income and wealth. German (or at least West German) cities are amongst the most competitive in Europe and offer some of the highest standards of living and environmental quality and social conditions (Parkinson et al., 2004). Although there is only moderate variation in performance between West German regions, there are sharp contrasts between former East and West Germany. The new *Länder* lag behind in terms of economic performance and social and environmental conditions, and there is a concern with depopulation, including the phenomenon of ‘shrinking cities’ (Bontje, 2004; Kronthaler, 2005; Turok & Mykhnenko, 2007).

British cities tend to lag behind many of their European counterparts in terms of economic competitiveness, standards of living and quality of the environment and social conditions (Parkinson et al., 2004). There is a perception, as David Miliband, then the British Minister for Local Government and Communities, commented in 2006, that they are ‘*not up in the ‘Champions League’ of cities*’. A particular concern in Britain since the 1930s has been the persistence of differential rates of economic growth between different regions. Despite substantial falls in unemployment rates since the 1980s, there remain significant variations in performance between regions; something which continues to be a matter of some concern to policy makers.

In England, for example, the Northern Way Growth Strategy (NWGS) is an initiative developed by the three northern regional development agencies (RDAs) with the aim of bridging the £29 billion output gap between the North of England and the rest of the UK. The idea is to promote partnership working in the North and capitalise on the northern regions’ indigenous growth potential (North West Development Agency, 2005).

In France there has been a longstanding concern (similar to that in the UK) that cities other than the ‘global city’ capital lag behind those of comparable size in certain other European countries (for example, Germany and Italy) (Fraser & Lerique, 2007, p. 147). However, the 1990s saw generally strong population and economic growth in regional cities and investment

in new infrastructure such as tram systems in many. In 2002 the French Government affirmed its intention to build on these trends and (whilst strengthening the global role of Paris) to promote the development of Lyon, Lille and Marseille into premier European cities; and to support other key metropolitan cities and urban networks in attaining the same degree of ‘*rayonnement*’ (literally ‘radiance’, but used in the sense of a city’s European/international ‘reach’, significance, influence and standing) as regional capitals in Germany or Italy.

However structural economic arguments suggest that the fortunes of cities are so often beyond their control as to call into question the value and effectiveness of regional or local initiatives for economic regeneration. For example, in writing about the French city of Montpellier, Negrier (1993) points out that the rapid growth of that city and its emergence as the pre-eminent city of the Languedoc results from four factors: (1) the influx of repatriates from Algeria after 1962; (2) the process of governmental devolution through which Montpellier became the regional capital and was able to attract important tertiary functions, often at the expense of its neighbours (e.g. Nîmes, Beziers); (3) the decision by IBM to set up a major computer factory, leading to the creation of several thousand jobs and a change in to the social structure of employment; the growth of the university and ancillary research establishments (Negrier, 1993, pp. 135–136). Whilst it is possible to see how the local authorities might have played a proactive role in encouraging some of these developments, it is equally clear that many of key decisions have also been taken by central government (in Paris) or by private investors from elsewhere.

On the other hand, at the other end of the country, in the Lille conurbation, the 1950s and 1960s saw a decline in the textile industries. “However, this decline was only part of a general decline in the entire Nord region’s fortunes as the coal industry to the south and the steel complex in Valenciennes also declined rapidly. The decline in these traditional industries speeded up after 1970, and was particularly evident in that decade” (Fraser & Baert, 2003, p. 88). They go on to suggest that the reversal of this decline began with ‘the normal (central) state planning process’ through which the central government identified a number of regional growth poles across France (including Lille) (p. 89). But the key to recent economic success, which has been built upon the expansion of tertiary sector jobs, ‘was the realisation that whilst the Lille *métropole* may have been peripheral in France...it was a highly favoured location in relation to the major economic regions of north-west Europe” (p. 91). Thus the relaxation of

border controls with Belgium, the opening of the Channel Tunnel, Ligne à Grande Vitesse and motorway network were important developments supporting local initiatives and entrepreneurialism.

Looking at economic restructuring in the Ruhr, Bömer makes the point that “it is not possible to explain by purely regional factors the enormous rise in unemployment that took place between the end of the 1970s and the mid 1980s and which continued in the 1990s. The social and economic history of a region cannot be analysed without reference to international and national history and policies” (Bömer, 2001, p. 25). Nevertheless he concedes some role for regional and national differences pointing out that Germany, despite being faced with similar economic problems, did not follow the UK along the Thatcherite route of neo-liberal supply-side and monetarist policies “because of resistance from the majority of the Länder, parts of the Social Democrat Party (SPD), the Green Party and large parts of the trade union movement and welfare organisations” (Bömer, 2001, p. 25). The policy instruments that have been used to stimulate economic regeneration in the Ruhr have been a combination of Federal and Land government initiatives (founding five new universities in the 1960s and 1970s; investment in transport and communications) but there have been other developments resulting from more local initiatives such as the Dortmund Technology Park (now one of the most successful in Germany) and the Dortmund Project (a high-technology orientated local economic development strategy). Nevertheless, Bömer points out that, for a region like the Ruhr, there are limits to the extent to which the creation of service employment can fully replace the loss of manufacturing jobs. He cites Bade arguing “that the innovation potential for business-orientated services both within and outside the Ruhr’s traditional industries is relatively low in comparison with other regions... because science-based industries are traditionally located in other regions, for example in Munich, and because it is not possible to reproduce such

an environment in every old industrial area in the space of one or two decades” (Bömer, 2001, pp. 26–27).

2.3. Urban structure and form

The physical structure of urban areas, the disposition and mix of land uses, the nature of the housing stock, its form and tenure all have an influence on the nature of the urban problems facing the authorities and the range of possible solutions available to them.

At the same time as each country has had to deal with the problems of urban economic restructuring, each has also been obliged to deal with the renewal of run-down neighbourhoods, both in inner urban areas and in peripheral social housing estates, especially in the UK and particularly in France. To a degree the problems of neighbourhood deprivation find their causes in the structural economic changes mentioned above, but many of these neighbourhoods were deprived and excluded long before the period in question. Vauxhall and Everton in Liverpool, for example, have been amongst the poorest neighbourhoods in the city and indeed, the country, for generations.

But here too the experience of each country is very different, with each entering the period with its housing stock (especially in the inner urban areas) with different characteristics and different problems. The UK has continued to have a much high level of owner occupied housing than either of the other countries, especially Germany (see Table 2). The difference is most extreme in the inner urban areas. Whilst in the UK owner occupation is a common form of tenure even in the inner urban areas, this is less the case in France and even less so in Germany. As we shall see later, this has profound implications for the nature of inner urban housing problems and their solution.

In the UK only 20% of the population live in flats, this figure rises to 45% in France and 67% in Germany (Eurostat). Thus neighbourhood renewal in the UK has been typically faced with the problems found in

Table 2
Housing tenure in France, Germany and the UK (%).

	1980		1990		2000	
	Rented	Owner occupied	Rented	Owner occupied	Rented	Owner occupied
France	53	47	46	54	45	55
Germany	61	39	58	42	55	45
UK	42	58	34	66	31	69

Source: National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, Sweden (2005), Housing Statistics in the European Union (2004), Karlskrona, Bovoket, Table 3.5.

NB: Data for Germany relates to West Germany before 1989 and to reunited Germany after that date.

communities containing a large proportion of relatively old, single family dwellings, many of which are owner occupied. In France inner urban areas are more likely to comprise multi-family dwellings (flats) including a significant proportion of relatively modern high-rise accommodation with some what higher levels of renting than in the UK and it is in areas of high-rise housing, including the peripheral social housing estates that many French urban social problems are concentrated. One of the key urban challenges since the 1970s has been to address the social problems faced by large-scale high-rise suburban social housing estates (*'grands ensembles'*) constructed in the 1950s and 1960s to meet the housing needs of a nation experiencing population growth, migration from rural to urban areas, and rapid industrialisation.

It is in these areas of high-rise housing, including the peripheral social housing estates, that many social problems are concentrated. Over the years, many of the apartment buildings in many such areas started to deteriorate, and this, coupled with a frequent lack of facilities and good transport links to employment centres, led many better-off residents to move out to be closer to city centres or to seek accommodation in individual houses. The high youth unemployment (23% of 15–24 year olds in urban areas) is particularly acute in many of these areas, rising to 42% in *zones urbaines sensibles* (*'critical urban areas'*).

In 2005, a major wave of rioting swept the suburbs of many French cities, leading to a renewed national debate on the *'crise des banlieues'* (crisis in the suburbs). Yet strongly rising property prices in French cities in recent years have led to affordability also becoming an issue in big cities across France. There is also evidence of gentrification occurring, but this is mostly confined to inner urban areas. *'UK-style'* private housing market led regeneration does not seem as yet to

have had a big impact in the *banlieues* where there are the greatest concentrations of neighbourhoods *'en difficulté'* (in difficulty).

In German cities, rented multi-family dwellings are very much the norm. In German inner urban areas the degree of social mix tends to be greater than in the UK. Whilst there are social problems in the social housing estates of West cities, such estates tend to be fewer in number than in France or the UK, better built and better maintained, although the experience of cities in the new Länder (former East Germany) is different.

In the UK, and England in particular, inner urban residential area tend to comprise streets of terraced housing. This is a very flexible building type that is capable of sub-division, conversion or change of use as demand dictates. On the other hand, the plot size of each dwelling is too small to allow demolition and rebuilding without affecting its neighbours, hence public intervention is needed to facilitate the clearance and rebuilding of obsolete stock (Fig. 6).

In the inner urban areas of German cities the more common building type is the perimeter block tenement: individual buildings with a large footprint, containing separate apartments groups around communal central stairways (see Fig. 6). Typically up to six storeys high with a shared open area to the rear. The ground floor is often given over to some non-residential commercial or retail use. Problems include the size and amenities of apartments; car parking; use of courtyard area. Apartments are normally rented from a private landlord or housing association. Each individual building is large enough for decisions about refurbishment, renovation, conversion or demolition to be taken without affecting adjoining properties. Rents, reflecting the age and condition of apartments, can vary considerably within a single block or street. Consequently there can be a high degree of social mix within small neighbourhoods.



Source: Couch

Fig. 6. Contrasting housing environments in Liverpool and Leipzig. Source: Couch.

The rate of housing supply has also varied between countries and over time. As shown in [Table 3](#), the UK has lagged behind the other two countries in terms of housing construction throughout the study period. This partly explains the relatively older housing stock in the UK and its comparative housing shortage.

As a result, neighbourhood renewal in the UK has been typically faced with the problems found in inner city communities containing a large proportion of relatively old, single-family dwellings, many of which are owner-occupied. Nevertheless, over the past 30 years there has been a general improvement in living conditions, especially in many former council housing estates. Within cities, processes of gentrification have also proved to be endemic to private housing market led regeneration. There has also been a significant shift of investment towards inner urban areas, especially city centres, and away from the urban periphery.

As mentioned above, there are differences in housing tenure between the three countries. The UK has continued to have a much higher level of owner-occupied housing than either of the other countries, with over 70% of the stock owner-occupied, compared with about 55% in France and only 45% in Germany. The difference is most extreme in the inner urban areas. Whilst in the UK the rate of owner-occupation can reach 40% even in inner urban areas, in Germany owner-occupation in the inner urban areas is comparatively rare (below 10% in inner Dortmund, for example). This has profound implications for the nature of inner urban housing problems and their solution.

Housing market failure, with low demand and abandonment of housing in extreme cases, appeared as an acute problem in the inner areas of some northern English cities towards the end of the 1990s ([Mumford & Power, 1999](#)). The problem was that England has a much higher proportion of its housing stock in owner-occupied tenure, where dwellings have both a utility value and an investment value. As soon as existing owners or potential investors realised that dwellings in an area offered a lower financial return than those elsewhere, there emerged a tendency to withdraw investment from one area in order to invest in another,

more secure or more profitable area. In the rented tenures, where dwellings only have a utility value, this problem does not seem to occur to the same extent. Thus ‘housing market failure’ has not yet appeared to be as significant a problem in equivalent German or French inner urban areas, either as a verifiable phenomenon or a policy-maker construct.

The UK has an older housing stock and invests less in new housing supply than either France or Germany. Nearly 39% of the UK housing stock was built before 1945, compared with 33% in France and 27% in Germany ([National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, Sweden, 2005](#)). There are historical and policy explanations that partially explain these differences. In the early 1970s the UK moved earlier and more wholeheartedly to a policy of housing renovation than either of the other two countries – France was faced with a massive housing shortage in the 1950s after years of neglecting the issue, and Germany was faced with a large post-war reconstruction programme.

The nature of the housing stock and its average age also varies greatly between these three countries as shown in [Table 3](#). An older stock, if it is not modernised, might be less likely to be suited to modern housing needs and might be less efficient in terms of factors such as layout and energy consumption. In a country with internal migration rates as strong as in the UK, another issue is that much of the older housing stock is located in regions such as the North and North West of England which have experienced relatively weaker economic growth than regions such as London and the South East, which have experienced stronger growth and a shortage of available and affordable housing.

The UK has consistently built fewer dwellings per capita than either of the other two countries over a long period of time – in 1980 France built 7.0 dwellings per 1000 population, Germany 6.4, and the UK only 4.5; in 2000 the figures were 6.4, 5.1 and 3.1, respectively – see [Table 4](#), below. The cumulative effect is that the UK now has only 430 dwellings per 1000 inhabitants compared with 467 in Germany and 490 in France ([National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, Sweden, 2005](#)).

Table 3
Dwelling types and age in France, Germany and the UK.

	Year	Single family dwellings	Multi family dwellings	High rise (4 sty+)	<1919	1946–1970	>1971
France	2002	40.8	43.3	15.9	33.2	18.0	48.8
Germany	2002	40.1	53.9	6.0	27.2	47.2	25.5
UK	2001	78.9	18.7	2.4	38.5	21.2	40.3

Source: [National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, Sweden \(2005\)](#), [Housing Statistics in the European Union \(2004\)](#), Karlskrona, Bovoket, Tables 2.4 & 2.5.

Table 4

Dwellings completed per 1000 inhabitants and dwellings per 1000 inhabitants in France, Germany and the UK.

	Dwellings completed per 1000 inhabitants			Dwellings per 1000 inhabitants		
	1980	1990	2000	1980	1990	2000
France	7.0	5.9	6.4	436	464	490
Germany	6.4	4.0	5.1	412	425	467
UK	4.5	3.6	3.1	382	407	430

Source: National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, Sweden (2005), Housing Statistics in the European Union (2004), Karlskrona, Bovoket, Tables 3.2 & 3.9.

Taken together this data seems to suggest that the better the housing market works, the less need there is for state intervention. In the UK the combination of market conditions (including an older housing stock in regions experiencing relatively less economic growth), contested policies towards housing tenure, and many years of under-investment in new housing, have led to considerable problems of access to housing and price inflation in the expanding regions of the South and to housing market failure in some inner urban areas elsewhere. However, it should also be recognised that overall a greater proportion of the UK population compared with France and Germany live in single-family houses, and more households are owner-occupiers than in either of these. Whilst both of these features may present some challenges for policy-makers it cannot be disregarded that in all three countries they represent the aspirations of much of the population.

2.4. Governance

Governance is generally taken to be the process of governing an area or policy field. Hence an understanding of these processes is an essential element of any comparative policy analysis. The dimensions of governance include the institutions and actors involved (who has what powers and duties and how do they interact), the structural conditions (legal and managerial capacities and resources) and the normative conditions (values, ideologies and perceptions of institutions and actors) (after Kooiman, 2003). Governance clearly tends to be very place and subject specific in form and as suggested above the governance systems of today have evolved through historical processes that are themselves very path-dependent and place specific. Governance is often seen as being a more expansive term than government which encompasses not only the formal structures of the state (the constitution, representative and majoritarian institutions and tiers of government, the legal system and judiciary) but also the wider networks through which power flows and is exercised in

a given society (institutions of civil society and the private sector). At the local scale studying urban governance therefore involves considering not only the governing decisions and capacity of the formal institutions of the local state, but the ways in which these combine with the capacities to act and resources of other actors to deliver locally desired policy goals. Wegener thus suggests that the “traditional model of government setting the framework for private decisions has been replaced by a flexible system of communication and adjustment between public and private actors called governance” (Wegener, 2010, p. 1).² For others recent decades have seen a “shift from local authorities having a traditional “self sufficient” and “providing” role to play in service delivery to that of “enablers”, where local authorities, rather than provide all services themselves, facilitate and co-opt other organisations, often from the private sector, to act for them (Wilson and Game, 2002, p. 23) (cited in: Coaffee & Johnston, 2006). The latter view recognises that government retains an important role in regulating and setting the parameters for governance processes. As the present paper is concerned with analysing how a field of public policy (urban regeneration) has evolved in three European states it is important to provide an outline of the structures of government which provide a setting for the definition and delivery of policy objectives (through processes of urban/spatial governance which associate a and fuse the capacities of state and civil society actors). Thus our analysis now considers the institutions of government in the three states before going on to examine the evolution of urban regeneration policy.

² Wegener (2010, p. 8) goes on to argue that “From the point of view of sustainable spatial planning, this trend from government to governance must be put into question. In a situation in which long-term ecological challenges, such as climate change and energy scarcity, are likely to exceed the short-term problem solving capacity of democratic decision structures, these need to be strengthened rather than further weakened – more government, less governance”.

Table 5
Regional and local governance in France, Germany and the UK.

	Regional government	Sub-regional government	Local government	Population of the basic unit of local government
France	Elected regional councils (26)	Départments (98)	Communes (36,433)	1500
Germany	Lander (Regional Governments) (16)	Kreis (groups of gemeinden) (633)	Gemeinden (7240)	11,000
UK	Devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and NI. Appointed Regional Assemblies and RDAs in England	Shire counties in rural areas (56)	Unitary authorities elsewhere Shire Districts (482 inc. unitary)	127,000 (England)

Source: authors.

The system of government in each of the three countries is very different. France is a unitary state but one in which considerable powers (especially in the fields of planning and regeneration) were devolved to elected regional and *département* authorities and to the communes in the 1980s. Different tiers of government are co-dependent, and collaborative working is normal. Collaboration across space (between communes) is also common and has been encouraged by changes in legislative and funding initiatives over the past 10 years. Much of the implementation of development is devolved to publicly owned *sociétés d'économie mixte* (Trache, Green, & Menez, 2007).

In France, the decentralisation of 1982 created three tiers of elected government below the national level. The country is divided into regions with powers over regional planning and transportation. In 2004 a new law strengthened the role of regions in relation to economic development, infrastructure, professional training, and, on an experimental basis, the management of EU structural funds. Regions contain up to eight *départements*. These do not themselves have planning powers but often retain substantial planning staffs working on behalf of the smaller communes. Further, through their responsibilities for *équipement* (infrastructure), environmental protection, and economic and cultural development they are significant players in the regeneration process. At the most local level the communes, with their responsibility for local land use planning, ensure a strong measure of local democratic control over urban development.

The UK, too, is a unitary state with devolved powers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In contrast to France and Germany, however, there is no structure of elected regional government in England other than for the area covered by the Greater London Authority. Local authorities tend to be large by international standards and focused on service delivery rather than civic functions, although recent legislation and govern-

ment policy have sought to promote the strategic local leadership, or 'place-shaping', role of local authorities (Communities and Local Government, 2009).

Writing towards the beginning of our study period, David Eversley commented that:

the degree of local peculiarity associated with the decentralized German system of decision-making affects present day attitudes and problem-solving formulae as much as the London-orientated administrative framework does in Britain. . . For a very long time the dominant trends in Germany have been towards a decentralized system of administration, whereas in Britain the powers and responsibilities of Whitehall have increased. . . Germany has a potential regional planning system controlled by an elected government, something that Britain lacks and will probably never have. It is in this one crucial administrative fact that some of the most important differences in the nature and effectiveness of the planning process must lie, when we compare Britain and Germany (Eversley, 1974, pp. 234–265).

The average size of a local authority district in England is 127,000, in Germany the average Gemeinden has a population of 11,000 people, and in France the average commune contains only 1500 people (see Table 5).

Power in England is concentrated in the hands of central government, a number of 'quangos'³ and privatised service providers (for example public transport and energy and water utilities). The powers of local authorities are limited by central government control, and the attempt to establish elected regional assemblies in the English regions was abandoned following the rejection of the idea in a referendum in the North East region in 2004.

The issue of determining the correct scale for the pursuit of economic development and regeneration

³ Quasi Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations.

policy continues to exercise government and policy-makers. The Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration (HM Treasury, 2007) and debates surrounding the potential of city-regions as the pertinent scale at which to pursue economic development policies reflect this (Communities and Local Government, 2006). Despite such reflection, in comparison with the other two countries over recent years it has been possible to identify a degree of democratic deficit in the making of policy for the regeneration of regions and cities, particularly at the regional level, where significant policies for spatial planning and economic development are elaborated and pursued. The significance of the latter scale however has however been much reduced since the election of a new government in May 2010 which moved quickly to dismantle the instruments of regional spatial planning and to announce a schedule for the abolition of RDAs.

Much of this change is being presented as part of a move towards great localism in decision-making, with new reforms to deliver greater local authority autonomy and community influence on local development decisions being promised (HM Government, 2010). The RDAs are to be replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) which are to be constituted for functional economic territories (such as city regional areas) and be partnerships between local authorities, business interests, and other local and civil society groups (e.g. higher education institutions, voluntary sector organisations). They are intended to perform roles such as – setting out key investment priorities, including transport infrastructure and coordinating project delivery; supporting high growth businesses; making representations on the development of national planning policy; and, ensuring business is involved in the development and consideration of strategic planning applications. The LEPs will also consider issues relating to housing, tackling worklessness, bringing-in private investment, green energy projects, and the delivery of other ‘national priorities’. The extent to which they will address the democratic deficits in decision-making identified above or ‘rewrite the economic geography of the country’ (CLG, 2010) remains to be seen.

In contrast to the UK and France, Germany is a federal state in which the constitutive states – the *Länder* – hold a key position. The rights and duties and funding of local authorities is enshrined in the Basic Law (constitution) of the Federal Republic. With land use planning being the responsibility of local authorities, collaborative working between the different tiers of government (as equal partners) becomes essential. Furthermore, the nature of the electoral system makes

coalition governments a commonplace at all levels of the system, tending to lead to a continuity of policy over time.

Thus there are some clear differences in the context within which urban regeneration takes place in each country which are summarised below before section 3.0 traces the evolution of policy in the three states.

2.5. The contexts compared

2.5.1. France

Like Germany, France experienced a more gradual and prolonged period of economic restructuring than the UK in the 1970s and 1980s, though unemployment has been persistently high since the late 1980s and youth unemployment stubbornly so. The urbanisation of France occurred later than the other two states with significant rural-urban migration occurring in the decades following World War II. This created particular challenges notably in relation to housing with a pressing need to accommodate new urban populations rapidly. Currently, the population is rising on a trajectory very similar to that of the UK. Economically, politically and demographically the country is dominated by Paris and the Ile de France region, with secondary poles around Toulouse and the Rhone Alps/Mediterranean regions. Regional cities have experience growth in recent decades often accompanied by investments in urban infrastructure such as new rapid transit systems. Outside of Paris and the other main centres population density is very low in comparison with the other two states.

In character most urban areas fall between the UK and German patterns, with a high proportion of apartment dwellings but more owner occupation than in Germany. A particular feature is the presence of large high-rise peripheral social housing estates around Paris and other major cities – a legacy of the rapid urbanisation and migration of the post-WWII decades described above. Though inner city urban regeneration has been pursued in France, the focus of debate and the locus of the main challenges that regeneration has sought to address has often been the peripheral communes of urban areas characterised by areas of such housing. The ratio of dwellings to households is the best of all three countries.

Although France is a centralised unitary state, much power, especially in the field of urban policy, has been decentralised to the regions and cities and recent constitutional changes refer to France as a ‘decentralised republic’. The average size of communes is very small and there are consequently far more local authorities than in the UK and considerably less than in Germany. Over recent decades this has been

identified as a challenge to policy delivery by some observers, and legislation has been passed to promote inter-communal working which can generate critical mass to address certain issues of common concern (e.g. waste management and transport). The state still plays a big role in implementation through state sponsored quangos and state-owned private companies. There is a high level of institutionalised local democratic control partly reflecting the fine-grain geography of democratic representation.

2.5.2. *Germany*

The former West Germany started the period in an economically more buoyant condition than the UK and the process of economic restructuring began later and was more gradual. The biggest shock was the reunification of Germany in 1990 which exposed industries in the east to market competition which led to massive unemployment and out-migration from the region. The population of Germany is falling and ageing faster than the other two countries. Much of the urban population lives in rented apartments, often in tenement blocks (or *plattenbau* in the east). The ratio of dwellings to households is good generally but with a surplus of dwellings in the east.

The urban structure of Germany is polycentric with no one city dominating economic or political life. In this respect the situation is rather different to that in the UK and France whose capital cities continue to weigh more heavily in the national urban system than the German federal capital Berlin. Though the urban structure of Germany to some extent can be seen as a spatial outworking of the decentralised federal constitution developed for West Germany after the Second World War, the roots of polycentrism and the existence of multiple significant economic, political and cultural centres also lie much further back in history in the patchwork of ‘micro-states’, free cities, dukedoms and principalities that characterised the territory that became the united Germany in the 1870s (Winder, 2010). Whilst the urban system can be seen as being more balanced than in the UK and France there nevertheless differences in population density between different parts of Germany. Population density is highest in the West and South and lower in the declining eastern *Länder*.

Most cities appear to be very competitive against major indicators and frequently perform well in international league tables of urban liveability. Urban infrastructure is often extensive and of a high-quality particularly in western cities which have ploughed their wealth back into projects such as tram and underground

systems since the 1970s. Germany has a federal government reflecting the constitution that was adopted in 1949 and the roles of different administrative tiers are clearly demarcated. Whilst the central government has a substantial input into urban regeneration policy making, it is at the regional and local levels where the strongest powers are found and where responsibility for implementation lies. The structures of governance of urban regeneration are fairly traditional with relatively good local democratic control, few quangos and limited, controlled private sector involvement.

2.5.3. *England and the United Kingdom*

The UK started the period in a worse economic position than the other two countries but gradually came to overtake them in terms of GDP per capita and lower unemployment rates through the 1990s, although it has been hit relatively harder and taken longer to return to growth in the recent (post 2007) recession. The UK has the highest population density and a rising population, especially in the South East – a region that dominates the country economically, politically and some respects culturally. The argument that most cities outside London lag behind the best in Europe in terms of competitiveness is a common mantra amongst some policymakers and politicians. In terms of the structure of urban areas, even within inner areas dwellings are commonly in the form of houses, often in private owner occupation, but there is a relatively poor ratio of dwellings to households. The housing stock is also relatively older than in the other two states.

In England, Central Government is both strong and active in relation to the formulation and implementation of urban policies. Approaches adopted locally and investments in regeneration often take place within the parameters of nationally defined and funded programmes. Local authorities in England are very big in size compared with their French and German counterparts but paradoxically weaker in terms of political power. The British political system gives a good deal of power to the national government of the day to redefine and reform the institutional context within which regeneration activity occurs. This creates a more fluid and rapidly changing institutional setting for the delivery of regeneration policy than in the other two states whose constitutions generally establish more stable and clearly-differentiated roles for different levels of government. In the UK Quangos and the private sector (sometimes in partnership with the public sector) play a major role in urban regeneration, both in policy formulation and in implementation. Democratic controls over these processes are weak compared with

the other countries with the term ‘quangocracy’ sometimes being invoked to describe this mode of governance. However, government has recently stated that it wishes to see stronger scrutiny of decision-making by local elected politicians (Communities and Local Government, 2009), a trend continued by the new government which has promised to pursue greater localism and decentralisation in the definition and delivery of local development policy.

Despite such reflection, in comparison with the other two countries over recent years it has been possible to identify a degree of democratic deficit in the making of policy for the regeneration of regions and cities, particularly at the regional level, where significant policies for spatial planning and economic development are elaborated and pursued. The significance of the latter scale however has been much reduced since the election of a new government in May 2010 which moved quickly to dismantle the instruments of regional spatial planning and to announce a schedule for the abolition of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). Much of this change is being presented as part of a move towards greater localism in decision-making, with new reforms to deliver greater local authority autonomy and community influence on local development decisions being promised (HM Government, 2010). The RDAs are to be replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) which are to be constituted for functional economic territories (such as city regional areas) and be partnerships between local authorities, business interests, and other local and civil society groups (e.g. higher education institutions, voluntary sector organisations). They are intended to perform roles such as – setting out key investment priorities, including transport infrastructure and coordinating project delivery; supporting high growth businesses; making representations on the development of national planning policy; and, ensuring business is involved in the development and consideration of strategic planning applications. The LEPs will also consider issues relating to housing, tackling worklessness, bringing-in private investment, green energy projects, and the delivery of other ‘national priorities’. The extent to which they will address the democratic deficits in decision-making identified above or ‘rewrite the economic geography of the country’ (CLG, 2010) remains to be seen.

3. The evolution of policy

This section considers some of the key approaches to urban regeneration and urban renewal that have been adopted in the France, Germany and the UK (England)

over the past three decades. It considers evolving perceptions of the ‘problem’ that regeneration initiatives have sought to address; the aims of regeneration policy; the agencies and processes of regeneration; policy instruments; and the achievements of policy and the remaining challenges it faces. In the space available the coverage is inevitably selective (for example, we do not explicitly address the issue of urban transport). However, the aim is to give a flavour of different approaches that have been adopted in the three countries, and to offer some comparative reflections.

In each country two broad themes can be identified within urban regeneration activity: the first might be characterised as ‘urban renaissance and competitiveness’, and the second as ‘neighbourhood renewal’. Urban renaissance and competitiveness is concerned with responding to two separate but overlapping agendas: maintaining a city’s competitiveness in an increasingly globalised post-industrial economy, whilst simultaneously trying to achieve more compact and sustainable urban forms. Neighbourhood renewal is concerned with improving the physical, environmental, social and economic conditions of residential neighbourhoods, especially in inner urban areas, but increasingly also in peripheral social housing estates.

3.1. France

According to DgCID (2006, p. 60), central and local government’s policy towards urban areas can be divided into two key areas: policies that seek to address conurbations and urban areas as a whole, and those which address “needy neighbourhoods within cities”. It is the latter group of policies that collectively constitute France’s *politique de la ville* (city policy) but in order to gain a full appreciation of the context within which policy for urban areas sits, it is useful to consider the evolution of wider regional policy approaches in France which since the post-war period have been known collectively as the policy of *aménagement du territoire* (AT).

In France a number of periods can be identified in the evolution of policy since the 1970s:

- *From the mid-1970s*, there was a shift from more physical forms of *rénovation urbaine* towards a *politique de la ville* which primarily addresses the social, economic and physical issues facing more deprived urban areas. Following riots in suburban areas in 1981 an initial neighbourhood focus was adopted in early programmes such as *Developpement social des quartiers*. In the early 1980s, administrative decentralisation increased the planning powers of

the local level. Between 1989 and 1991 there were moves towards a wider city-regional focus, stressing ‘solidarity’ and linkages between the poorer *communes* of an urban area and other *communes* (under the *Loi d’orientation pour la ville* of 1991).

- In the mid-1990s, under a centre-right government the *Pacte de relance pour la ville* was launched. This placed a greater emphasis on fostering economic growth within specific areas and less on collaboration within city-regions to address issues such as social housing provision finance. In 1998, the ‘Sueur Report’ provided a sobering assessment of outcomes of 20 years of urban policy. In 1999 the left-wing Jospin Government passed new laws on planning and ‘inter-communal’ co-operation that sought to develop solidarity between areas and achieve greater social-mix in housing.
- From 2002, with a new centre-right government, there was a return to a more physical rather than social focus to regeneration, and an emphasis on the competitiveness of major urban areas. Renewed suburban rioting in November 2005 led to a period of reflection on regeneration policy and the introduction of new instruments aimed at fostering social cohesion. In 2008, after a period of consultation, a new strategy for the suburbs was launched, entitled *Espoirs Banlieues*.

3.1.1. National regional policy and policy concerned with national urban structure and competitiveness

In France, a spatially informed national regional policy approach known as *aménagement du territoire* (AT) was established in the post-war years, reflecting a concern to secure a better balance of development between the Paris region and the rest of France. The publication of Jean-François Gravier’s seminal, but to some extent controversial (Woessner, 2009), study ‘*Paris et le désert français*’ (Paris and the French desert – OS) in 1947 served to highlight imbalances of spatial development across France and the over-concentration of development in the Paris region (Gravier, 1947). Countering this tendency became the central principle which animated the emergence and prosecution of the policy of AT. The most emblematic initiative which reflected this goal in the formative years of AT policy, was the designation of twelve major urban centres outside the Paris region as ‘*métropoles d’équilibre*’ (balancing metropolises) (Josserand, 2001; Lacour, Delamarre, & Thoin, 2003). Informed by growth pole theory the idea was to develop alternative counterweights to the economic weight of Paris. An important

step in the gradual institutionalisation of the policy of *aménagement du territoire* was the creation of the *Délégation à l’Aménagement du Territoire et à l’Action Régionale* (DATAR): the national agency for spatial planning and regional action in 1963 (Mazet, 2000).

From the mid-1970s until the 1990s, economic crisis and restructuring, unemployment, challenges to the socio-democratic model of the state, state reform and ongoing European integration formed the wider context for the pursuit of *aménagement du territoire*. There was increased emphasis on intervention to support areas suffering the effects of economic restructuring. The goal was no longer to simply redistribute growth away from Paris, but also to address problems like unemployment caused by de-industrialisation and to attract inward investment to the most affected regions and to France as a whole.

Since the 1990s, in keeping with trends in many parts of Europe, France’s approach to regional policy has increasingly shifted from a ‘redistributive’ to an ‘endogenous’ model which seeks to foster the development of regions by encouraging them to draw on their attributes and ‘territorial capital’. Reflecting this, territorial ‘*projets*’ aimed at stimulating regeneration and innovation are encouraged. The latter are intended to federate the capacities of a range of territorial actors and encourage areas to develop a mobilising vision for their own development. The state still plays a supportive role, for example, through the use of territorial ‘contracts’, through which the partners in a particular territory set out the “objectives, actions and financing terms” of their strategy (DgCID, 2006, p. 53). Such contracts are typically signed between the state (central government) and regions, for example, in the form of *Contrats de plan Etat-region* (now titled *Contrats de projets Etat-Region* for the 2007–2013 funding period). These are signed for periods that correspond with those of European regional policy programmes creating potential for certainty and synergy of funding for territorial projects (and in theory the ready availability of domestic ‘match funding’ which can be used to ‘unlock’ sources such as EU structural fund monies). The regional planning contracts for the 2007–2013 incorporate a sub-regional dimension which addresses territories within a region. For example, the *contrat d’agglomération* (conurbation contract) which can be used to address issues in conurbations of over 50,000 inhabitants. These should take a strategic and long-term view of a conurbation’s development and can also include a *contrat de ville* (town contract) which may address the development needs and ‘social and territorial cohesion’ challenges of a particular district or neighbourhood.



Fig. 7. Euralille. Source: Couch.

France's metropolitan areas are viewed as being the "locomotives" of the national economy (DgCID, 2006, p. 60). However, there is a concern (similar to that often articulated in the UK, see Parkinson et al., 2004; Sykes, 2005), that France's metropolitan areas, other than Paris, do not compare favourably in terms of their competitiveness and European and global reach with similar cities in other EU member states (for example, Germany and Italy). In 2005 a competitive call for fifteen *projets métropolitains* was launched to encourage local authorities in major urban areas to co-operate and develop projects to enhance the international standing and competitiveness of their area. Fifteen areas, including the cross-border Lille metropolitan area (see Fig. 7), were successful and developed projects designed to foster growth and competitiveness and address issues such as urban sprawl and social and economic exclusion (DgCID, 2006, p. 61). The shifting emphasis in AT policy from a traditional 'redistributive' regional policy approach mainly concerned to achieve territorial cohesion and balanced regional development, to an enhanced focus on the competitiveness of different territories, was underlined in autumn 2005 when the name of DATAR was changed to *Délégation Interministérielle à l'aménagement et la compétitivité des territoires* (DIACT: Interministerial Agency for Spatial Planning and Competitiveness).

Since the late 1990s, within the conurbations communes have been encouraged to work together. The *loi chevenement* of 1999 was aimed at simplifying and encouraging intercommunal cooperation in such areas. There was central government support in the form of funding for those communes that constituted themselves as either a *communauté d'agglomération* (conurbation community) of a *communauté urbaine*

(urban community) on the condition that the communes introduced a uniform business rate. The idea behind this stipulation being that this would contribute to reducing the disparities in the resources available to rich and poor communes, and between those communes with a higher level of economic activity (e.g. central cities) and dormitory or commuter communes. Such groupings have also been encouraged to develop a *projet d'agglomération* (a conurbation project) which establishes strategic policy orientations with a 2015 time-horizon in areas such as "economic development and social cohesion, spatial and urban planning, transportation and housing, city policies, environmental policies and resource management" (DgCID, 2006, p. 62).

A partnership approach should be adopted in the development of such *projets* which associates local politicians, residents, and civil society groups. The projet is then embedded in contract between the central government and the *Communaute d'agglomération* or *Communauté urbaine* and included within the relevant *Contrat de plan Etat-Region* (CPER). Indeed, for Hall and Hickman (2002, p. 695), this integration of different *projets*, plans and interventions across different scales ranging from the local and neighbourhood level, through the conurbation, regional, and national levels is seen as particular feature of the French approaches to neighbourhood renewal and urban policy that are considered in more detail below.

Since its inception, AT policy has therefore continued to articulate enduring principles such as support for the development of all areas of the national territory and special action to assist those areas which are vulnerable in the face of particular economic, environmental and social challenges. The policy has been underpinned by republican notions of 'equalisation' of conditions across the national territory, which provided the rationale for measures aimed at ensuring a more balanced distribution of activity across regions. The emergence of AT was thus underpinned by the concept of "spatial solidarity", with the aim being to spread the "fruits of growth" (Mazet, 2000, p. 6) across the national territory. Census and other data tends to confirm the relative success of this approach to national urban policy with many of the regions and cities traditionally seen as being lagging or peripheral in France's spatial structure, having had growing populations and increasing economic weight over recent decades (see Section 4 below and Woessner, 2009). It also implied that the state should seek to guarantee equality of opportunity for different territories, for example, by maintaining equal regional access to essential services of 'general interest', such as transport

and telecommunications infrastructure, whilst continuing to take actions which support the most vulnerable urban and rural territories. The principle of ‘equalisation’ also justifies state action in those areas suffering from particular economic and social challenges, for example, parts of urban areas facing particular regeneration challenges through France’s national policy for action at the neighbourhood level – *la politique de la ville*.

3.1.2. The evolution of policy at the neighbourhood scale

The policy which addresses regeneration and development at the neighbourhood level is called the *politique de la ville* (literally ‘city policy’, but more accurately describing the policy for ‘disadvantaged’ neighbourhoods: European Urban Knowledge Network, 2010). Its origins can be traced back to the late 1970s and the period of the ‘shift to urban policy’ in the UK with the publication of the 1977 *White Paper Policy on the Inner Cities* and the 1978 ‘Inner Urban Areas Act’ (Hall, 2007, pp. 13–14). As in Britain, this was a period when persistent social, environmental and economic problems in specific urban areas began to be recognised. However, a contrast with the ‘inner city’ spatial focus which framed the debate in the UK was the concentration of urban problems in French cities in the large suburban housing estates and ‘*grands ensembles*’. These had been constructed between the 1950s and 1970s to meet the housing needs of a nation experiencing population growth, migration from rural to urban areas, and rapid industrialisation (EUKN, 2007; *Délégation Interministerielle à la Ville*, 2007).

Over the years, many of the apartment buildings in many such areas started to deteriorate and this, coupled with a frequent lack of facilities and good transport links to employment centres, led many better-off residents to move out to be closer to city centres or to seek accommodation in houses rather than flats (EUKN, 2007; DIV, 2007). The problems were exacerbated by the end of the 30-year period of post-WW2 economic growth (known in French as the ‘*trente glorieuses*’ – thirty glorious years), which meant that many of the remaining residents faced problems such as unemployment, poor access to services and poor estate management. Such conditions particularly affected many of the immigrant families who had come to France to help with post-war reconstruction, or those who had arrived more recently to provide a labour-force to sustain the country’s economic growth but now found themselves facing changing economic conditions and reduced employment opportunities.

3.1.2.1. *Developments through the 1980s and 1990s.* Although the *politique de la ville* was launched in the late 1970s with initial interventions such as the *Habitat et vie sociale* (HVS – housing and social life) programme which focused on refurbishing building facades, these “quickly revealed their limitations” (EUKN, 2007, p. 2), and it has been argued that urban policy “really took off in France in the early 1980’s” (DgCID, 2006, p. 63). In July 1981 the first officially recorded confrontations between disaffected youths, the majority of whom were unemployed and from an immigrant background, and the forces of law and order, occurred in Venissieux in the suburbs of Lyon (Ait-Omar & Mucchielli, 2006, p. 6). This provided a stimulus to the then Socialist government to launch a “large scale ‘policy for the city’ (*politique de la ville*) aimed at ending social exclusion amongst such groups and in such areas (Astier, 2005, p. 1). Since 1981 an array of policy innovations have sought to tackle the seemingly intractable problems of the suburbs.

In 1981 a *Commission nationale pour le développement social des quartiers* (national Commission for social development in urban neighbourhoods) was established. From 1982 until 1988 a programme called *Développement social des quartiers* (DSQ) (‘Social Development of Neighbourhoods’) was funded by central government, and implemented by individual *communes*. This period also marked the increased decentralisation of responsibilities from the central state to regions and communes following legislation passed in 1982 (including increased powers in the field of town planning for local communes). This was reflected in the responsibility that was handed to local mayors for the running of the DSQ programme which focussed on issues of education, social, economic and public order problems.

In 1988 a ‘*Délégation interministérielle à la ville*’ (DIV: inter-ministerial delegation for cities) was established to “mobilise the various city policy makers (central government staff, local governments, non-profit organisations)” (DgCID, 2006, p. 63). A ‘*Comité interministeriel des villes*’ (CIV: interministerial committee for urban affairs) and a ‘*Conseil national des villes*’ (CNV: National Council for cities and urban affairs), were also established at this time. The CIV is chaired by the Prime Minister, brings together ministers from sectors with an interest in and role to play in urban affairs, and takes decisions on policy, programmes and the allocation of resources. The CNV is an advisory body composed of elected politicians and representatives from wider society, and provides advice to the Minister for Urban Affairs. The first *contrats de ville*

were put in place in the 1988–1996 period and pursued a more global ‘conurbation’ approach, looking at wider economic and social issues and how disadvantaged neighbourhoods could be improved (this contractual approach at a conurbation level shares similarities with the multi-area agreements (MAAs) recently introduced in England). Local authorities and the state worked together to implement a pluriannual programme of integrated urban development (EUKN, 2007, p. 2).

The launch of 13 pilot *contrats de ville* (CDV) in 1988 was followed-up between 1994 and 1998 by a national programme of 214 CDVs integrated into the *Contrats de plan Etat-Région* (Hall & Hickman, 2002, p. 692). These were “conceived as a vehicle for reconciling the imperative to address social exclusion in an integrated manner with the fragmentation of local governance that was reinforced by the decentralisation programme” and chiefly sought to improve the “effectiveness of mainstream public investment and service provision” (Hall & Hickman, 2002, p. 692).

In 1990 in the wake of more serious urban riots in Lyon and Mantes (Ait-Omar & Mucchielli, 2006, p. 6) the Government established a *Ministère de la ville* (‘Ministry for Urban Affairs’), and in 1991 the *Loi d’orientation pour la ville* (‘Framework law for cities’) was passed. This sought to secure a greater social mix of housing tenures between the *communes* in urban areas by obliging agglomerations with more than 200,000 inhabitants to provide at least 20% social housing (The early 1990s also saw the establishment of the first *grands projets urbains* (‘major urban projects’), which included measures to tackle the problems of some of the most deprived and degraded neighbourhoods).

There was a feeling by the mid-1990s that the principles intended to inform CDVs were not always being applied in practice, and that in particular public interventions continued to be along sectoral lines rather than adopting an integrated approach to neighbourhoods (Lelèvrier, 1999 cited in Hall & Hickman, 2002, p. 693). The *Pacte de relance pour la ville* (PRV) (1996) launched in response by the right-of-centre Juppé government is seen by Hall and Hickman (2002, p. 693) as representing a return to the emphasis on “spatial positive discrimination” that had characterised the earlier DSQs. Dikeç (2006, p. 71) argues that the ‘main idea’ behind the PRV was to ‘foster economic activity and to increase employment through tax concessions and public subsidies in designated areas’. The new initiative designated 751 so-called *zones urbaines sensibles* (ZUS: sensitive/vulnerable/critical urban areas), areas facing problems such as poor housing and unemployment. The ZUSs cover a population of

4.67 million persons (representing about 8% of the French population); 25% of their residents are foreign or French by naturalisation (more than 2.5 times the national average); and, 32% of their residents are under 20 (compared with 25% in metropolitan France as a whole) (DIV, 2007, p. 1).

The introduction of *zones urbaines sensibles* was accompanied by the establishment within these areas of *zones de revitalisation urbaine* (ZRU: urban revitalisation zones) and *zones franches urbaines* (ZFU: economic opportunity zones). There are 416 ZRUs with a population of 3.2 million persons. The conditions in these areas are “even more acute as measured by their economic and social characteristics” and social and financial situation (DIV, 2007, p. 1). The ‘*Pacte de Relance Pour la Ville*’ also represented what Hall and Hickman (2002, p. 693) have described as A “brief flirtation on the part of the French authorities with ‘Anglo-Saxon’ style economic regeneration, based on fiscal deregulation, in the form of enterprise zones”. The French version of these, the *Zones franches Urbaines*, are intended to aid the economic development of poor neighbourhoods and give tax exemptions of 5 years to small businesses. Initially, ZFUs were created in 44 of the most disadvantaged ZUSs in 1996, and by 2007, 100 had been created (DIV, 2007, p. 1). The goal of the current ZFUs programme is to create 100,000 new jobs over a 5-year period, whilst also “expanding public policies for renovating housing, restructuring business districts and improving public services” (DgCID, 2006, p. 64). Overall, for Dikeç (2006, p. 71) ‘The PRV was arguably the closest French urban policy got to a neoliberal approach, with a shift in focus from solidarity between communes to economic success within strictly defined spaces of intervention’.

The later 1990s also saw the relaunch of *contrats d’agglomération* (CA: Urban area contracts) (1998–2002) which marked a return of the focus on the conurbation-scale and the encouragement of intercommunal working. The emphasis on the neighbourhood level continued too through a new round of *Grand projet de ville* (GPV: major urban projects) and 60 *Opérations de renouvellement urbain* (ORU) (EUKN, 2007, p. 3). An example of such a *Grand projet de ville* was that of Croix-Roubaix-Tourcoing and Wattrelos in the area of the *Communauté Urbaine de Lille* in the Nord Pas de Calais region. This covered 13 neighbourhoods and 70,000 residents and focussed on the regeneration of inner-urban areas, the integration of local people into the labour market, developing new economic activities, and encouraging the return of businesses and investment (Trache et al., 2007, p. 169).

In 1999, the centre-left Jospin Government passed a new planning law, the *loi relative à la solidarité et au renouvellement urbains* (law on urban solidarity and renewal – *loi SRU*) (Booth, 2003, Dikeç, 2006) alongside re-energised provisions for transport planning (*plans de déplacement urbains*) (PDUs). New legislation was also passed on the organisation of territorial governance at the local level in the form of the '*loi Chevènement*' which simplifies and strengthens the arrangements for intercommunal working. The new planning legislation introduced new planning instruments that can provide a spatial context for the territorial *projets*. For Booth (2003) the new planning legislation represented a broadening out of the focus of the *urbanisme* system of (land use) planning, whilst Mazet (2000, p. 159), argues that it sought to “organise urban development around a greater intercommunal solidarity by renewing planning instruments and trying to harmonise sectoral policies” (translation OS). The aim of the reforms was seen as being “the mobilisation of local politicians around a common urban development project encompassing housing, transport, the control of land use and economic activity” (Mazet, 2000, p. 159).

The law also aimed at enhancing '*solidarité*' (solidarity) within urban areas and achieving a more even distribution of social housing across urban areas in the interests of achieving greater "*mixité sociale*" (social-mix – OS). The law required that, within 20 years, in towns with more than 50,000 inhabitants, all *communes* with a population of more than 1500 should have at least 20% of social housing (the same as the average nationally) (Hall & Hickman, 2002, p. 695). Reviews every 3 years would monitor progress towards this target, and those *communes* failing to demonstrate progress would be fined for each housing unit which they were short of the target. At the strategic level the law introduced a new planning instrument the *schéma de cohérence territoriale* (SCOT: territorial coherence plan) which could be produced at the *agglomération* level. This aims to provide a forward looking framework and guidelines to frame development and sectoral policies in the area (Booth, 2003). The key sectoral policy documents for the area should be compatible with the SCOT including the *plan local d'habitat* (PLH: housing plan for a conurbation); *charte d'urbanisme commercial* (commercial development charter); and the *plan de déplacement urbain* (PDU: urban mobility plan). The SCOT together with a new binding land-use instrument the *plan local d'urbanisme* (PLU: local plan) provide the new regulatory framework for planning decisions (Booth, 2003; Mazet, 2000).

There was a feeling in 2002, following the election of a new government that the approaches of the previous 20 years to “improve the urban environment have shown their limitations” (EUKN, 2007, 3). For Fraser and Lérique (2007, p. 146) ‘French urban policy had undergone three cycles of legislative and governmental action followed by a lack of delivery of tangible socially acceptable results and by 2003 it had, in practice, returned to a more traditional and small-scale physical and economic focus, with little social dimension’. In 2003 a *Loi sur la rénovation urbaine* ('Law for the City and Urban Renovation') was passed which launched a 5-year programme to try and reduce the gap between the poorest neighbourhoods and the rest of the country strengthened the physical approach to urban regeneration (Fraser & Lérique, 2007). Approaches proposed under this included work on public spaces and services and significant interventions on the housing front in 150 neighbourhoods, with the demolition and reconstruction of 200,000 dwellings and the rehabilitation of a further 200,000. In 2003 an *Agence nationale pour la rénovation urbaine* (ANRU: National Urban Renewal Agency) was created with responsibility for urban renovation and overseeing the '*Programme national pour la rénovation urbaine*' (National urban renewal programme). The programme has the goal of renewing 530 neighbourhoods with almost 4 million inhabitants by 2013 through an investment of €40 billion, with the oversight of the ANRU being intended to simplify “measures taken by local authorities and social landlords interested in promoting complete renovation projects in their neighbourhoods” (DIV, 2007, pp. 5–6; ANRU, 2009). This approach has been seen as marking a shift to a more property-led or physical approach to regeneration.

A turn away from the more social focus of previous programmes has been blamed in some quarters for the wave of riots which swept many *banlieues* (suburbs) in November 2005 (Fraser & Lérique, 2007, p. 147). Yet a focus on social issues has not been absent. In 2003 an *Observatoire National des ZUS* (national observatory of sensitive urban areas) was established to monitor conditions in the ZUS areas and monitor their development in relation to that of the wider urban areas to which they belong. In 2005 in the wake of the 'Social Cohesion Programme Act' passed in January that year, a Plan for Social Cohesion was put into place for residents of the priority zones. This was allocated a budget of 12.8 billion Euros over 5 years to deal with issues surrounding jobs, housing and equal opportunities. Another objective of the plan was to “break down the divisions between sectoral policies and to deal

comprehensively with the major urban problems threatening social cohesion in a given neighbourhood” (DgCID, 2006, p. 64). Following the ‘Equal Opportunities Act’ passed in 2006, a ‘National agency for social cohesion and equal opportunities’ was established in 2007 (DgCID, p. 63). This implements the social aspects of ‘*la politique de la ville*’. In terms of resources for neighbourhood programmes, one response to the wave of rioting in autumn 2005 was the launch in 2007 of the first generation of *Contrats urbains de cohésion sociale* (CUCs: urban contracts for social cohesion) as a replacement for the previous *Contrats de villes* (CDV) which expired at the end of 2006. There are two key differences between the CDV and their successor documents: the new CUCs will be signed for shorter period of 3 years instead of the 6-year term of the CDVs, and they will have multi-year action plans unlike the CDVs which had 1-year financial programmes. The new CUCs are to focus on five key priorities: jobs and economic development; improving housing and the environment; education and equal opportunities; good citizenship and crime prevention; and access to healthcare (DgCID, 2006, pp. 65–66).

In French commentaries on the experiences of *la politique de la ville*, a distinction appears to be made *régénération urbaine* and *la politique de la ville*, with the former being more associated with a physical ‘bricks and mortar’ renewal of areas and the latter with interventions designed to address the social issues facing areas and populations “en difficulté” (in difficulty). Indeed, Claude Chaline Professor at the University of Val de Marne has produced two books in the ‘Que sais-je?’ text book series, one devoted to *La régénération urbaine* (Chaline, 1999) and one to *Les politiques de la ville* (Chaline, 1998 & 2010).

Another issue is the debate surrounding the relative success or failure of *la politique de la ville* following the dramatic public disorder which occurred in many suburbs of French cities in autumn 2005 with a more limited recrudescence in autumn 2007. Mucchielli and Ait-Omar (2006, p. 6) suggest that since the 1990–1991 period that urban riots have become a chronic feature of French society. Astier (2005) argues that, though billions of francs were spent on the regeneration of housing estates and extra resources for schools and youth schemes in the suburbs in the 1980s and 1990s, such actions ultimately proved ineffectual. The problem for Astier is not one of “neglect” but of “ineffectual” interventions. One of the aspects of this is the extent to which the problems experienced in the banlieues are the result of a failure of *la politique de la ville*, or whether these reflect wider social and economic structures in

France. For example, the high levels of youth unemployment which are a national issue but impact disproportionately on the young inhabitants of many suburbs. A document produced by the *Délégation interministérielle à la ville* in 2007 captures this issue in relation to assessing the impacts of 30 years of *politique de la ville*:

Since the late 1970s the resources mobilised for the *politique de la ville* have grown steadily and have helped counter the marginalisation of disadvantaged areas. In spite of these resources, however, these neighbourhoods continue to struggle with extensive structural difficulties which go beyond the scope of the *politique de la ville*: economic crisis, unemployment and the departure of the wealthier residents, followed by new arrivals living in precarious circumstances (DIV, 2007, p. 6).

The ‘*crise des banlieues*’ (crisis in the suburbs) continues to be an important political issue in France and one which attracts much attention from the media, assorted commentators and academics. A cursory survey of the shelves of one of the publisher l’Harmattan’s bookshops in Paris by one of the authors in early 2010 revealed a whole section simply entitled ‘banlieues’. This contained a range of different kinds of publications including academic studies, accounts and memoirs by those who have lived and worked in such areas. Following the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as President in 2007 there was an aspiration in some quarters to produce a ‘Marshall Plan’ for the *banlieues*. In early 2008 Fadela Amara, the Secretary of State for the *politique de la ville*, launched a new programme entitled ‘*Espoir banlieues*’ (‘Hope for the Suburbs’). This aimed to mobilise action to address the problems of the troubled suburbs and focuses on a number of themes:

- partnership, governance, the contractual approach, and financial solidarity with the poorest *communes*;
- ‘*désenclavement*’ (literally ‘dis-enclaving’), through actions to address the connectivity and accessibility of poorer areas;
- housing and the physical quality of neighbourhoods;
- security and crime;
- employment; and
- education.

In an article in *Le Monde*, in January 2008, Amara reflected on 30 years of the *politique de la ville*, alluding to the range of initiatives which have sought to combat all forms of social exclusion, the 18 ‘well-intentioned’

ministers, and the billions of Euros invested. Many approaches and plans have been tried to reverse the ‘dramatic’ consequences of ‘destructuring’ urban policies and the segregation, which over time has become a ‘relegation’ of “one part of our nation” (Amara, 2008, p. 1). Alluding to the pattern of rioting in French cities, and particularly the riots of 2005, she concluded that humility was the only option in the face of the facts. She called for an approach going beyond ‘*rénovation urbaine*’ to also include social renovation and for solidarity with the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Amara also argued that it is “vain to oppose populations to territories, social renovation and urban renovation” as “The two are linked” (Amara, 2008, p. 2: OS translation). Lévy-Vroelant (2007), notes that between 2004 and 2011 a total of 30 billion Euro has been earmarked to support the ‘upgrading of infrastructure’ of regeneration areas with a significant proportion of this being spent on housing. Yet reflecting on this latest urban renewal programme she also asks “what is the added value of the upgrading of the built environment when the underlying problems are social and economic relating to lack of schooling, low qualifications and unemployment?” and argues that ‘Urban renewal policies must be better-linked to other social integration policies; and they must better consider the resident practises and expectations’ (Lévy-Vroelant, 2007, p. 115).

3.2. Germany

According to the European Urban Knowledge Network, three periods can be identified in the development of urban regeneration policy in Germany:

- ‘urban renewal’ in the 1970s – re-orientation of urban policy against the background of the economic crisis, more intensive orientation towards existing housing, revitalisation of inner-city neighbourhoods in the old Federal states, and permanent construction of new housing and neglect of neighbourhoods with old buildings in East Germany (the German Democratic Republic);
- urban reconstruction in the 1980s – stagnation of demographic development, shifting the focus towards home ownership assistance in housing policy, and orientation towards inner-city development in urban policy; and
- integrated urban development since the 1990s – new challenges to urban development through increasing globalisation and German re-unification, and integrated urban development and urban reconstruction

as a response to social, economic and demographic challenges (European Urban Knowledge Network, 2008).

The first period, urban renewal in the 1970s, was largely concerned with the re-orientation of urban policy against the background of economic crises, more intense orientation towards existing housing, revitalisation of inner city neighbourhoods in the old federal states. But this has to be reviewed against the background of the immense criticism that was directed against the approach and results of the kind of planning, that had – after the period of reconstruction – dominated and moulded the late 60s and much of the 70s. That former period was characterised by meeting urgent needs in the housing sector mainly by construction on cleared sites in inner city areas. In the decade that followed the old housing stock of the same areas, that had survived the war and the air raids continued to be neglected in favour of new, large scale developments in the form of urban extension schemes or on previously cleared sites in the inner cities. This was a phase where the modernist ideas of the Charter of Athens had been the favoured unrivalled model of urban development resulting in the then dominant image of a car-based city representing the message of progress, growth and affluence available to every member of society. In reality these new quarters were not that far away from those in East Germany, where prefabricated high-rise and urban extension was representing the degree to which the housing sector could be industrialised.

Typical of the criticism of urban development approaches at this time was the work of the psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich with his book „The Bleakness of our Cities“/“*Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte*” (Mitscherlich, 1965). The subsequent public and professional debate resulted in a review of this design approach which resulted in a new planning process which incorporated public participation and interdisciplinary cooperation (Albers, 1993). Part of the outcome of this discussion was the foundation of the Department of Spatial Planning at the University of Dortmund, starting its first course – but not its last fundamental debate – on planning in autumn 1969.

Urban renewal too during those years, under the name of *Flächensanierung* (Comprehensive Redevelopment) had been dominated by large scale development and the demolishing of pre-war housing stock, which was seen as unsuitable to the times. Before renewal these quarters had been marked as *Rückständige Viertel* (forgotten areas) a view soon to be criticised for neglecting the positive aspects of these neighbour-

hoods, for example their social networks and the diversity and contribution of local formal and ‘informal’ economic activity.

3.2.1. From urban reconstruction to ‘careful’ urban renewal

After the 1971 *Städtebauförderungsgesetz* (roughly translated as Urban Renewal Act) local authorities received Federal and *Land* subsidies that were still mainly encouraging the physical approach to urban renewal, which is understandable considering the background of prevailing economic crises in that period. In this context this new act was also seen, if not mainly motivated, as an instrument for economic stimulation through the provision of contracts for the building industry.

On the other hand this law also contained the first aspects of a broader approach to urban renewal as it made it compulsory for every funded project to undertake and deliver an (also funded) “preparatory report” with the application for funding. In this report the possible negative affects on the living conditions, the personal and economic situation of those directly affected by the planned renewal strategy were to be outlined and to be kept in view during the process of implementation. Although this debate led to more adapted strategies, until the late 70s urban renewal projects in Germany still focused mainly upon clearance and reconstruction.

But parallel with this, especially in cities with a housing market under pressure, and (West) Berlin is the outstanding example, this approach of planning was more and more criticised as being to the advantage of speculative actors and the big building-societies, supporting their strategies to demolish the old, low priced, low rent housing stock. Within the planning profession this led to a debate on the future of the existing housing stock including strategies of tenant induced modernisation and new forms of ownership. On the ground this discussion led to tenement occupation (squatting) not only in single cases, but as a movement, especially in Berlin.

The example of Kreuzberg illustrates this period of change in regeneration philosophy in Berlin. Much of the area had been developed in the late 19th century as a dense, working class residential district. The area had been badly damaged in the Second World War, its structure was outdated, and after 1961 found itself on the edge of the western city adjoining the Berlin Wall. In consequence the area fell into sharp decline. Between 1965 and 1975 redevelopment corporations bought up property, dwellings were demolished and tenants

rehoused. Cleared sites were redeveloped in the manner of large housing estates on the edge of the city. However, by the mid-1970s there was growing resistance against the removal of this population from their familiar neighbourhoods. A new phase of renewal preserved the outward appearance of streets. Interior blocks were demolished and densities reduced. Some dwellings were refurbished to modern standards and where replacement building took place it was in sympathy with existing building lines and building form. By the early 1980s squatters started to renovate vacant dwellings to demonstrate an alternative future for the neighbourhoods. By the late 1980s, after political changes within the Berlin City Government, a new approach of ‘careful urban renewal’ was emerging ([International Building Exhibition Berlin, 1989](#))

These merging pressures and new ways of thinking led to a genuine “*change of perspective in urban renewal*” ([Börstinghaus, 1986](#)) in Germany. Against a background, where the effects of the economic crises of the 70s had hit traditional working class areas hard and the benefits of the following upswing did not arrive as expected or promised, there was an ongoing insecurity about the future of these areas, often leading to blight, which no longer encouraged inward investment and so inhibited their upgrading, even for gentrification.

This on the other hand this opened up the chance to focus on the consolidation of the existing housing stock and support for living and working in the same area to assist and retain the existing population and – mostly small – business and employers. More locally sensitive approaches to modernisation, self-help strategies, encouraging local people to invest in their housing stock, support for small businesses, reusing abandoned industrial and commercial facilities and buildings for local economic development, strategies for community participation including children and young people concerning the quality of green, open space and playgrounds, are all indicators of this change of perspective.

This change also included a fundamentally different view on the social structure of these areas. A high percentage of immigrants, of people receiving social and unemployment benefits as well as a high rate of elderly and young people were always regarded as typical for areas of this type. This social structure was thought to detract from the attractiveness of an area for new groups of occupants. Traditional concepts of intervention were aimed at a “balanced” social structure. However, this new approach of “careful” urban renewal sought to find different ways of renewal,



Source: Couch

Fig. 8. Housing in Cergy: a new town outside Paris. Source: Couch.

initiating a turn in the downward towards an upward, or at least stable development, securing existing structures, which include explicitly the existing social structures.

Some of the first projects using this approach appeared in the Ruhr in 1984 and are now regarded as predecessors of a programme introduced in the *Land* Northrhine-Westfalia in 1993. Under such headlines as “away from the drawing board and geometrical principles in favour of a stronger sense of reality for an urban quarter” (DASI, 1984) aims and objectives then included the prevention of forced mobility, the improvement of equal opportunities and integration of different groups of the population as well as the improvement of attractiveness of an area/quarter for all groups of society (Figs. 8 and 9).

Indispensable for such an approach was the idea of “competence for the area/quarter” from the phase of research to that of implementing a designed strategy. More than a mere symbol for this was the establishment of something like an area office or shop with the



Source: Börstinghaus

Fig. 9. Urban renewal in Dortmund. [On the right replacement housing from the sixties; on the left, the more humane scale of the seventies]. Source: Börstinghaus.

capacity to provide advice and coordination within a project area, a forerunner of what by the 1990s became known as “area management”. The Dortmunder Arbeitsgruppe für Soziale Infrastruktur (DASI, 1991) was an example of such an approach (see Fig. 10).

A milestone in the development of this new approach was the 1984/1987 Berlin Building Exhibition/*Internationale Bauausstellung* (IBA).⁴ In addition to promoting and demonstrating innovative new urban architecture (*Neubau*) including designs representing significant advances in reducing environmental impact, there was a programme of urban regeneration and renewal (*Altbau*) based in the Kreuzberg district. This programme introduced the concept of “careful urban renewal/*Behutsame Stadterneuerung*”. Projects were oriented towards the principles of construction self-help, co-operative self-administration, living and working in the same area as well as the rehabilitation of the existing buildings at affordable costs. The effect was not just local. The approach stimulated an international debate on the concept of “careful urban renewal” and had a significant influence on emerging policies in other countries (Bodenschatz, 2008).

3.2.2. *Integrated urban development, sustainability and the social city*

3.2.2.1. *Endogene potenziale (endogenous potential)*. The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the reunification of Germany in 1990 changed the landscape of planning. It changed the spatial structure of the country and changed the priorities for urban and regional development. A new set of instruments and programmes had to be devised.

The new spatial structure of the whole country and the new priorities for urban and regional development put new challenges to areas to discover the scope for indigenous growth: to define and exploit locally specific characteristics and strengths that could be used as a foundation for city marketing and local economic development. In this context historical and topographical characteristics gain a special meaning as starting points for made-to-measure marketing and development strategies. For example the town of Flensburg in Schleswig-Holstein has used its unique location and character to stimulate economic development [at the end of a 30 kilometres long fjord with its attractive

⁴ In the 20th century Germany established a tradition of occasional “Building Exhibitions”. These have been used to encourage and stimulate innovations in design, architecture and planning.



Source: Börstinghaus

Fig. 10. The DASI area management office in Dortmund. Source: Börstinghaus.

altstadt and legible scale of development] (Börstinghaus & Schröders, 1993).

Or the unique history of a whole region: launched in 1989, the IBA Emscher Park Project aimed to facilitate the ecological and economic renewal of the Emscher Zone, the northern part of the Ruhr region. Responsibility for the project was given to a specially created agency: IBA-Emscher Park Gesellschaft GmbH, wholly owned by the Land Government of Northrhine-Westfalia. Funded from a variety of Land Government sources, the task of the agency was to stimulate conceptual ideas and to provide practical support for ecological improvements and economic, social and cultural development (Schaal, 1998).

Amongst the projects grouped under seven headings the “protection, renovation and reuse of examples of the region’s industrial heritage” was one of the most prominent ones. More than 150 years of industrialisation had left their mark on the region with mines, blast furnaces and winding towers, impressive relicts of a former era. Today the buildings are architectural witnesses, explaining the history of the region (see Fig. 11). They can be seen from far away and serve as orientation points. To demolish them would have meant robbing the region of its most impressive and important landmarks. Historical pithead buildings have been reused for housing, workplaces and leisure activities. Former industrial spaces are filled with new life: art, culture as well as commerce and offices (Börstinghaus, 1988). Thus the unique character of the region was used as the basis for a culture-led regeneration programme, leading ultimately to the Ruhr winning the title “European Capital of Culture 2010” (<http://www.Ruhr2010.de>).

Other aims of the Emscher Park IBA included the ecological conversion of the 350 kilometre Emscher

sewerage system; Creation of a regional “Emscher Landscape Park”; reclamation and re-use of derelict land (under the Leitmotif ‘Working in the Park’; modernisation of former workers housing estates (such as mining settlements); development of new residential areas; and encouraging commercial and industrial development according to ecological principles). Whilst the IBA programme made a significant contribution to developing theory and practice in ‘sustainable’ regeneration it was not without criticism: some pointing to an ‘elitist’ emphasis on cultural regeneration and others questioning the ability to maintain the programme and the focus on sustainability into the future (Shaw, 2002).

By the end of the decade this approach promoted another dimension of change in perspective in urban regeneration. The discovery of culture as an important stimulant for regeneration, development and change, the re-evaluation of the historical dimension (as



Source: Börstinghaus

Fig. 11. Zeche Zollern II/IV in the Emscher Park. Source: Börstinghaus.

reflected in funding for the urban heritage programme, for example), and the growing awareness of environmental and ecological issues represent an important advance in the theory of regeneration in Germany.

3.2.2.2. The issue of sustainability. After the Agenda 21 was passed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and World Habitat II by the UN in Istanbul June 1996 it became clear, that the politics of spatial and urban planning did not only have a national and European, but a global dimension. Important steps towards a sustainable spatial and urban development had to be made by the industrialised states of the west (Gatzweiler, 2008). This led to a “National Plan for Action towards Sustainable Development of Settlements” by the Ministry of Spatial Development, Building Affairs and Urban Planning in 1996 (BMRBS, 1996). Whilst this plan led to sustainable development strategies becoming the subject of a “Local Agenda 21” process in many towns and cities, for the planning discussion in Germany, especially in the new Länder, it created a tension between dealing with the consequences of the reunification on one hand and the very demanding aims and challenges on the way to a sustainable spatial and urban development strategy on the other.

According to the National Plan for Action towards Sustainable Development of Settlements:

The requirement of sustainable development is not just adjusting all economies according to and within the limits of our natural resources, but at the same time planning with and considering the ecological and social dimensions. Ecology, economy and social structures should not anymore be separately dealt with or worse, be managed as rival sectors. The protection and conservation of the natural resources as the basis of life, economic productivity and social responsibility belongs together as one entity – as well as and for reason of the welfare of future generations (BMRBS, 1996, p. 2).

Some of the aims of the plan included sustainable economic strategies for cities; the preservation and development of favourable settlement structures; mixed land uses and social integration; higher development densities and the protection of open space; strengthened inner cities and local centres; the protection of urban heritage; sustainable urban infrastructure and urban and regional transportation systems. A key aim was to limit the national rate of urbanisation of previously undeveloped land (landtake) to 30 hectares a day. This was a very demanding ambition when compared with contemporary experience: from 1996 to 2006 landtake averaged 120

hectares a day (Bundesregierung, 2008, p. 46) and subject to continuing planning discourse ever since (Klemme/Selle, 2010; Altrock, 2010; Börstinghaus, 2010). Additionally, “With the research programme “Experimental Housing and Urban Development” (ExWoSt), the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning has supported innovative planning and measures in the areas housing and urban development for 15 years.” (Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR), 2010)

Another significant feature are the Transfer Agencies (Bundes-Transfer-Stellen) which document and accompany major German urban regeneration programmes (*Die Soziale Stadt, Stadtumbau Ost & West, etc.*). They are commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Transportation, Building and Urban Development (BMVBS) and the Federal Institute for Building, Urban and Spatial Development Research (BBSR) and provide good practice examples together with additional information about related topics.

3.2.2.3. Die Soziale Stadt (the social city). In the meantime it took some time before the full impact of reunification was understood and the need for new instruments for planning and regeneration fully appreciated. In the early years directly after the new Länder had become part of the Federal Republic, the challenges in the east were to be met with those measures, representing the state of the art and experience in the west, in addition to redirecting most of the central government money, that had been available for urban regeneration to the Länder, almost exclusively towards the east.

So federal subsidies for urban regeneration in the western Länder almost came to a halt, whilst in the new Länder federal subsidies were combined with additional tax revenues (the so-called solidarity charge) together with money from the EU to fund extensive programmes for the rehabilitation of historic city centres; the refurbishment of housing estates; the reuse of vacant and derelict land; the modernisation of infrastructure; and the stimulation of economic development.

What also became clear during these years was that the promise (by the Federal Chancellor of that time, Helmut Kohl) that the new Länder would soon become “blooming landscapes”, despite massive promotion, support and subsidy, was not going to be easy to attain. Apart from some “lighthouses” like Dresden and Leipzig, large areas of East Germany began to suffer a severe loss of employment and population. Many urban areas in the East have continued to lose population: they have become ‘shrinking cities’ (Gatzweiler, 2008).

Similar economic and social problems were also apparent in the older industrial areas in the west. Substantial inter- and intra-regional disparities were emerging.

As a consequence in 1999 the Federal and Länder governments extended urban development support by jointly adopting the programme “Districts with Special Development Needs: the Social Integrative City” (*Die Soziale Stadt*) programme. Its goal was to counteract the widening socio-spatial rifts in cities. The programme fosters participation and co-operation and is a new integrative political approach to urban development in Germany as a whole (<http://www.sozialestadt.de>).

Soziale Städte integrative approach leads to projects and interventions being developed across several policy fields at the same time (e.g. housing improvement, community development and environmental improvements). This also has required management and co-ordination across the public sector and other agencies. The approach focuses on a wide range of people-based and place-based issues, including employment; training and education; sport; the local environment; integration of different social and ethnic groups, and housing.

3.2.2.4. *Stadtumbau (urban conversion)*. In the former East Germany much of the housing stock built in the post-war period comprised *Plattenbau* (pre-fabricated public sector multi-storey housing). By the end of the 1990s many people had moved westward or sought better choices within the local housing market. A major policy effort was required to deal with this situation, which represented a new challenge to a housing sector whose actors for decades were used to ongoing and rising demand. For the first time, and in a dimension never experienced before, there were vacancies particularly in the large peripheral housing schemes but also in some of the inner urban developments. With the new millennium the situation, particularly in the East, continued to be dominated by the loss of industrial jobs, migration from the city-centres to the periphery, from towns to suburbia and from regions on the fringe of the new republic to the dynamic core regions.

Against this background a debate began about the future of this vacant housing stock in the East. The problem represented a big risk for the housing companies to whom it belonged. In the year 2000 a commission “Structural change of the housing sector in the new *Länder*” suggested the removal of 300,000–400,000 empty flats/dwellings from the market. As a consequence of this proposal in 2002 the Federal government in Berlin started a programme for “*Stadtumbau Ost*” (Urban Conversion East) ([http://](http://www.stadtumbau-ost.de)

www.stadtumbau-ost.de), which aimed to reduce the housing-stock in centres and regions in the new *Länder*. A planning competition in 2001 with 260 local authorities participating sought integrated development solutions that would include: concepts for the reduction of existing urban textures (from the fringe to the core?); consideration of the consequences for urban spatial structure; outline the benefits for the remaining quarters of traditional urban housing; and the consequences for technical infrastructure.

As these growing spatial inequalities and structural economic changes were not limited to the East of Germany, but also applied to other areas including older industrial regions in the West and because of the growing awareness of demographic changes (an ageing population), in 2004 the Federal Government started an additional programme “*Stadtumbau West*” (Urban Conversion West). In a pilot phase (2004–2007) 16 communities were the pioneers of this programme for the old *Länder* (<http://www.stadtumbauwest.de>). The wide range of areas of action supported by this programme included: urban restructuring and the reuse of derelict land; improvement of public space; adaptation of urban/rural, technical and cultural infrastructure; improvement and conversion of public buildings; and the removal of long-term redundant buildings and infrastructure. Implementation of the programme illustrates the difficulties and complexity of this urban conversion process, which, according to some authors, will eventually lead to something even more complex: “the critical reconstruction of the city” (Bodenschatz, 2008). However, *Stadtumbau* was not entirely successful in integrating the various actors and fields of urban policy. “The dominance of housing market problems and actors in the *Stadtumbau (Ost)* process has...presented a barrier to finding a more complex approach to regeneration” (Kuhn & Liebmann, 2007, p. 135).

3.2.3. *2000 and beyond: rethinking spatial and urban development*

The adoption of new approaches to planning in the eastern *Neue Länder* also had a fundamental impact on the planning discourse in Germany as a whole (Hannemann et al., 2002). The philosophy and reason for federal government intervention in regional and urban development has always been the aim of bringing equality of opportunity in all parts of the republic. But the lesson of the 1990s seemed to be that only economically strong regions were able to carry an overall spatial modernisation. Some rethinking of spatial planning was required. In consequence, in

2006 the Federal Government and the Land Governments adopted a new overarching development framework entitled “Concepts and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany” (BMVBS/MKRO, 2006).

The framework identifies three key principles: “growth and innovation”, “ensuring services of public interest” and “conservation of resources, shaping of cultural landscapes”. The first of these stresses the role of 22 “European metropolitan regions” as “engines” contributing to balanced growth and building “partnerships of responsibility” with disadvantaged and peripheral regions. This reflects an awareness that the future spatial development of the country will be moulded by trends such as globalisation and European integration. This did not go through unchallenged in that sense that its critics asked (“unfriendly”) questions such as: “are we moulded or do we still act?”, “is this new philosophy the end of the old principle to provide “equal opportunity” in a spatial sense and context (Hahne, 2005) and “whether these principles are to be discarded in favour of the neo-liberal school of the economy now dominating spatial policy in Germany”?

As a consequence of this change in paradigm, new instruments and programmes underline the necessity of an integrated, holistic approach to urban development. Both the Social City and the Urban Conversion programmes require integrated concepts as a condition for funding (Aehnelt, Häußermann, Jaedicke, Kahl, & Toepel, 2004; Aehnelt, Beckmann, Jaedicke, Reimann, & Vesper, 2008). These programmes have served as training grounds for this approach and represent the state of the art of urban regeneration in Germany today.

The framework for planning is defined by global conditions that are highlighted by the economic, social and spatial imbalances made visible and underlined by the effects of reunification, and are a challenge for more than one policy field. But interventions in different fields are interdependent. Therefore it becomes even more necessary to realise and focus on the spatial dimensions of all these policy fields, particularly at the urban and regional levels, where sectoral policies need to be integrated. This effort needs to be supported through the integration of sectoral aspects on the different levels of administration, not only with the local but also with the Länder and federal administrative structures. And last but not least, the actors outside the public sector have to be addressed to take part in the dialogue on and for urban and regional development and regeneration. There has been a general shift from public investment towards activating the private sector and transferring more responsibilities to it. This is reflected, for example, the innovation of ‘Neighbourhood-based

owner cooperation in urban regeneration’, which, whilst a small programme, has tested the principles of a new kind of ‘property-led’ urban regeneration in 15 towns & cities.

All these are vital conditions for the next conceptual step that sees the European City in the centre and as motor for development and modernisation. But this is not a role for which every town and city is equally fit from the start because of the immense disparities in socio-economic and environmental conditions and the fact that they are all at different stages of development in the urban life-cycle. Therefore it is a primary task and duty of politics to make town and cities fit for the role that they shall play, in a very competitive global economy, whilst at the same time responding to the need to maintain equality of opportunities regardless of location, both at the regional and local scale. This is a topic of great concern and debate in Germany at the present time. There are growing inequalities and growing social polarisation in society: between regions, cities and urban quarters. In cities like Hamburg young couples typically leave the city to realise their dream of an owner occupied small family home. Some elderly people return to the city where they find single young people who remain in the city for reasons of employment or lifestyle. Some areas become gentrified, some do not, some fall back into deprivation. Each trend increases social-spatial segregation.

In response to this latter point the EU Leipzig Charter for the Sustainable European City (EU Ministers for Urban Development, 2007) highlights a special awareness of disadvantaged quarters in the overall urban context and calls for this integrated approach at the EU level, aiming not only at the improvement of the built environment as the basis for economic development (infrastructure improvements, energy efficiency, innovation and education) but also local economic development, training and education, and strong accessible public transport systems particularly for the benefit of problem areas. The Charter calls for such policies to be included as part of national policy for urban development in every member state.

Following on the heels of this, implementing the Leipzig Charter the German government launched a memorandum “Towards a National Urban Development Policy in Germany” (BMVBS, 2008; <http://www.nationale-stadtentwicklungspolitik.de>) which is informed by the same philosophy. On one hand there is the aim of making the cities fit to be the motor of progress and modernisation and to be strong contenders in the global, national and regional economic competition. On the other hand it cannot be denied that this

competition leads to economic and social polarisation within the city between urban quarters, between cities and their regions, and between regions, within a country and worldwide. To tackle these problems the memorandum identifies integration as a central issue: sectoral policies have to be thought through spatially and coordinated accordingly. They have to be focused on the level of the region, the city and the urban quarter/district.

Another topic extending this agenda is the permanent evaluation of the programmes through which the memorandum is being implemented. These include programmes such as: “Active centres for towns and urban quarters”; “CO₂ reduction through building modernisation”; and a series of pilot-projects under the headline “For the City and Urbanity”. The reason is that the exogenous environment within which these programmes are developed and implemented is subject to continuous change which can affect and modify the impacts, often in an unpredictable way.

The main component parts of this emerging national strategy include:

- Spatial integration of policies. In this context the *Social City/Die Soziale Stadt* is cited as “best practice” in this field, because here the actors on different levels of the administration and those on the local level including those outside the public sector, have learned the benefits of cooperation.
- Demographic Change. Adjusting cities to changed demands, family-orientated development as well as cohabitation of different generations in urban quarters; development of new urban forms of living for the elderly but also for more than one generation.
- Identity and Individuality of the European City. As an asset must be realised and further developed.
- Climate Change and Urban Conversion. Towards an energy-saving architecture, refurbishment of buildings, reduction of land take and of CO₂ emission through mobility management in a “city of short distances”.
- Building Culture. The quality of architecture and urban design must be improved and become a subject of a public discourse.
- Regional Cooperation and Urban Networks. Are to be improved, especially where shrinking and redistribution are the issues.
- To achieve these aims a closer cooperation between Federal state, Länder and local communities is required; together with a better understanding between the public and the private sector to pool ideas and resources in partnerships for action.

All these aims are to be promoted through new programmes, in addition to the ones already mentioned above, pilot projects and competitions, and be subject of a broad campaign for a public discussion of the subject “The Future of the City”. This discourse is to be conducted on the basis of best-practice projects dealing with the objectives listed above. A call for participation within a number of these themes was launched in 2007. About 330 declarations of interest were received out of which 40 pilot projects were chosen according to feasibility, innovation, and partnership orientation. Whilst in 2008 there was the second call for pilot projects and in February 2009 a call for participation in a national competition “Building and Living the City”. Thus the whole debate around “A National Urban Development Policy in Germany”, continues to gain momentum.

Finally, although urban regeneration in Germany is very much concerned with the issue of equal opportunity, in reality it reflects what is defining the whole society: the lack of social justice, a topic very much dominating the political debate in Germany for the last decade.

3.3. England

This section refers specifically to England as the evolution of policy has been somewhat different in each of the other countries of the United Kingdom: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Between 1979 and the present day, three main periods of urban regeneration policy can be identified, more or less coinciding with three periods of government:

- *After the election of the Conservative Government in 1979* there followed a decade of what many commentators refer to as ‘property-led’ urban regeneration. Central government sought to tackle acute problems of urban dereliction by joining forces with the private sector – but at the expense of marginalising local authorities in the process.
- In the second period, *from 1990, John Major’s Conservative Government* sought to simplify and decentralise the regeneration process, by bringing back local authority involvement in a new role as facilitators and introducing the notion of competitive bidding for public funding.
- In the third period, *after the election of the ‘New Labour’ Government in 1997*, policy attempted to tackle urban regeneration problems on a more holistic basis, increasing the available resources by bending mainstream spending programmes to achieve a series

of regeneration targets. At the same time, the Government developed a new urban agenda intended to foster an urban renaissance and create sustainable communities.

3.3.1. *The evolution of policies from the 1970s to the 1990s*

Following a series of studies and experiments in the early 1970s the then Labour Government realised the seriousness, scale and structural causes of the urban crisis. Its response was a considered, comprehensive and co-ordinated approach that included the setting up of partnerships between central and local government under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978, a quadrupling of funding for urban regeneration through the Urban Programme, and bending mainstream funding and policies in favour of the inner areas. But much of the policy died in infancy.

On winning the 1979 general election, the new Conservative Government favoured a different approach, with more central government intervention and partnership, not between government and local authorities but between government and the private sector. Under this ‘property-led’ approach to urban regeneration, new central government agencies – urban development corporations (UDCs) – were established to bring vast tracts of derelict urban land back into economically beneficial use. A parallel ‘enterprise zone’ experiment sought to establish areas of low taxation and limited planning controls in the expectation of stimulating rapid capital investment. Neither of these initiatives was subject to much in the way of local democratic control, and little heed was paid to pre-existing development plans or longstanding policies for the control of development. Furthermore, national planning policy stressed that “*The planning system should play a helpful part in re-building the economy. Development control must avoid placing unjustified obstacles in the way of any development especially if it is for industry, commerce, housing or any other purpose relevant to the economic regeneration of the country*” (Circular 22/80).

The approach successfully attracted property development back to urban wastelands, but at the cost of an absence of sound urban planning. Developments included the massive Canary Wharf commercial centre in London: a development so big and so poorly integrated into the transport system of the capital that the necessary infrastructure was still being retro-fitted 20 years later. The Gateshead Metro Centre, Meadowhall and Merry Hill regional shopping centres were also unplanned products of this regime.

The previous approach of supporting declining regions through redistributive regional policies was thus replaced by place-specific incentives designed to encourage indigenous growth wherever it might occur. At the same time, it might be said that national economic recovery became a more important goal than the equalisation of conditions between regions.

Riots in several major cities in 1981 led to some rethinking and new initiatives, including ‘gap-funding’. Imported from North America, the idea was to encourage property investment in marginal areas by subsidising the gap between the cost and value of socially useful (i.e. almost any) development. Local authorities became marginalised as the regeneration process became more and more the province of central government and private investment (including the privatised utilities). The result was less and less local democratic control over development. But the end of the decade saw the Government criticised for this approach: for the complexity of its funding regimes, and for its failure to include local authorities sufficiently in the regeneration process.

In Britain great faith has been put in the notion of the private sector devising novel solutions to urban problems, and in the notion of competition. Thus in 1991 Michael Heseltine, as Secretary of State for the Environment, launched a new initiative called City Challenge, which introduced competitive bidding for regeneration funds and gave local authorities a new role as ‘facilitators’. For 2 years, substantial capital funds were distributed to cities, not on the basis of need, but on their ability to put together a bid that was attractive to central government. The idea was that the competitive process would force local authorities to develop a clear and innovative ‘vision’ for regeneration, supported by a costed strategy, delivery mechanism and implementation programme. There is little doubt that this regime did force sharper and more creative thinking about urban regeneration, but the idea of competition for resources was anathema to many.

In 1994 John Major’s administration simplified funding arrangements into a ‘Single Regeneration Budget’; continued competitive bidding in a new form, with local authorities in a ‘facilitating’ role; established a national regeneration agency for England (English Partnerships); set up regional offices of government to better co-ordinate programme delivery; and began to wind down the UDCs. This regime lasted until the late 1990s, and despite difficult economic circumstances, especially in the early period, produced significant levels of investment and development in many inner urban areas. Reflecting upon the contribution of the

Single Regeneration Budget programme, Tyler and Rhodes comment that:

Overall, it is encouraging that there was a close association between the net outputs achieved by SRB and changes in net outcomes and the evidence is thus consistent with SRB having an impact. The most successful activities were improvements to the physical fabric of the area, building the community and enhancing social cohesion. Whilst the evidence on outcomes in the SRB areas examined is encouraging, the real challenge across England remains to turn deprived areas around so that they can become the thriving locations that many once were. Over the last thirty years there has been no dramatic change in the relative ranking of the most deprived areas in England (Tyler & Rhodes, 2007, pp. 2–4).

3.3.2. *Urban renaissance after 1997*

After 1997, the new Labour Government sought to encourage economic development through the use of regional development agencies (RDAs) working alongside urban regeneration companies (URCs – a more locally accountable model of the urban development corporation idea) and a revamped English Partnerships. Coinciding with a decade of national economic growth, this regime has seen major successes in physical regeneration (some may say an ‘urban renaissance’) across the urban areas of England. Indeed, one of the most successful elements of planning policy has been the control of residential urban sprawl and the redirection of investment back towards existing urban areas, and particularly the city centres.

Over the past decade most English cities have been able to report the emergence of substantial markets for housing in central areas, combined with new investment in city centre employment, retailing, entertainment, culture and services. There is now a clear trend towards reurbanisation in many English cities with some quite dramatic population growth in the revitalised city centres. The key seems to be that urban policies, economic development trends and housing market forces were pulling in a similar direction over the decade after 1997 (Couch, Fowles, & Karecha, 2009). At a broader scale – and operating at the interface between the urban renaissance and competitiveness agenda, and the traditional regional policy concerns of securing regionally balanced development – the Northern Way Growth Strategy, developed by the three northern RDAs in England, aims to bridge the £29 billion output gap between the North of England and the

rest of the UK. The idea is to promote partnership working in the North, capitalise on the northern regions’ indigenous growth potential, and foster the urban renaissance and competitiveness of its main city-regions (NWDA, 2005).

In many ways the Urban Regeneration Companies (URCs) can be seen as the children, or grandchildren, of the Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) of the 1980s. More locally accountable than the previous organisations they were intended to promote local economic development and ‘urban renaissance’ – most were located in city centres. Unlike the former UDCs, URCs do not have powers to acquire or hold land or to directly engage in development, instead their function was to facilitate and coordinate development by bringing partners together and using the powers and resources of individual partners to mutual benefit. Liverpool Vision was one such URC, operating through the early 2000s it played a major role in bringing about a number of key city centre redevelopment projects, including the £1 billion Liverpool One shopping centre, the Kings Dock Arena and Convention Centre and the remodelling of the Pier Head area.

Following on from the findings of the ‘State of the English Cities’ report (Parkinson et al., 2006) the Government decided that a broader approach would bring further benefits. It was proposed to replace URCs with city-wide or city-region-wide economic development organisations to drive forward economic growth and regeneration: these were to be known as City Development Companies. In Liverpool for example, Liverpool Vision evolved into a city-wide economic development agency and in another example the Sheffield One URC became the Creative Sheffield CDC.

Summing up recent trends, Parkinson notes that:

there has been growing recognition by national government that cities...are the drivers of national and regional economies and a growing concern to increase their economic competitiveness, especially outside the globally successful city of London... However despite their relative improvement (in recent years), English cities do still lag behind their European counterparts in terms of wealth, levels of innovation, educational standards, connectivity and attractiveness to international investors (Parkinson, 2007).

3.3.3. *Neighbourhood renewal*

In all three countries the origins of neighbourhood renewal can be traced back to the sanitary reforms of the 19th century. In England, mass slum clearance was the

main form of intervention from the 1870s until the early 1970s. From the mid-1970s until the end of the 1980s policy switched to concentrate on housing refurbishment and area improvement. The driving force behind these policies was always the aim of improving the quality of the housing stock and the residential environment.

However, following the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act grants in support of this policy became means tested for the first time. The former general improvement areas (GIAs) and housing action areas (HAAs) were replaced by a new and broader concept: renewal areas. These were to be larger and incorporate a more comprehensive, holistic approach to area regeneration. This was to be achieved by bringing a range of social, economic and environmental considerations into the decision-making process and through the co-ordination of a number of private and public sector actions into an integrated programme of area renewal.

The late 1980s and much of the 1990s also saw attention being paid to the renovation of run-down social housing estates. In an era of emerging housing surplus in many cities outside London, dwellings on some of these estates were becoming increasingly hard to let. Criticism was levelled at estate and dwelling form, the poor quality of construction, and maintenance and management. Remedial action, undertaken under the Estate Action programme or, in a few cases, through housing action trusts (HATs), often saw widespread demolition of unpopular housing, especially multi-storey apartments, and the installation of new management regimes, combined with tenure change and the insertion of pockets of new private housing. The Liverpool Housing Action Trust (LHAT) was such an example. By 1993 many of Liverpool's tower blocks were obsolete. LHAT took over responsibility for 67 of the 71 tower blocks in the city. There was little demand for the idea of renovated tower blocks thus in most cases renovation was uneconomic and demolition the only solution. Tenant participation played a major role in LHAT decision making processes, from strategy to detailed design and project management. Falling demand and changing household structures meant that less replacement housing was needed. In consequence most rebuilding was in lower density, low-rise accommodation.

The New Deal for Communities (NDC) was set up by the Labour Government in 1998, with the aim of tackling multiple deprivation in the most deprived neighbourhoods by providing the resources to tackle problems in an intensive and co-ordinated way. The target was to achieve convergence between these

neighbourhoods and the rest of the country. Thirty-nine partnerships were identified, and some £2 billion of central government funding was allocated to the problem. Policies were aimed at five key themes:

- creating jobs;
- reducing crime;
- improving educational attainment;
- improving health; and
- tackling problems with housing and the physical environment.

The key, and novel, characteristics of the policy were said to be a (10-year) long-term commitment to deliver real change; community involvement and partnership with key agencies; and 'joined-up thinking'.

A recent evaluation concluded that the NDC has been more successful in improving 'place-based' outcomes such as area satisfaction and reducing crime than in delivering 'people-based' outcomes such as worklessness, education and health (Beatty, Foden, Lawless, & Wilson, 2008). It has also been suggested that interventions focused on one area, such as housing and the physical environment, could lead to benefits in other areas, such as reductions in crime, and health improvements.

Overlapping with the NDC, in 2001 the Government published a national strategy – *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* – led by the overarching principle that within 10–20 years no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live (ODPM, 2001). The idea was to combine the activities of relevant agencies in a 'joined-up' holistic approach to solving the inter-related problems of unemployment, crime, low educational attainment, poor health, and housing and the local physical environment. New 'local strategic partnerships' (LSPs) were to bring together all the major agencies concerned with regeneration – including local authorities, housing providers, public utilities, development and community organisations – to formulate agreed strategies and oversee their implementation. Thus, under the Labour Government, housing regeneration has become firmly placed within a much broader regeneration policy context.

This linking of housing with wider regeneration objectives is clearly reflected by one of the most controversial programmes of the Government's regeneration agenda. A problem of 'housing market failure' was emerging in some inner urban areas, with low demand and in extreme cases, abandonment of private housing (Mumford & Power, 1999). In response the Government established the Housing Market Renewal

(HMR) programme, designed to bring housing demand and supply into better balance (mainly through the demolition of obsolete stock and the construction of new housing) in order to stabilise dwelling prices in a local area. This problem is so far unique to Britain, particularly England.

In 2002 the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder programme was launched, which was designed to renew housing markets in twenty-five local authority areas across the midlands and north of England. Housing market weakness in such areas was seen as being reflected in the presence of “neighbourhoods with high vacancy rates, high population turnover, low demand for social rented housing, low sales values and in extreme cases, housing abandonment and failure of the market for owner occupation” (Communities and Local Government, 2007, p. 3).

The HMR initiative can be seen as part of an implicit national spatial agenda for England which was articulated through the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan (ODPM, 2003) with its proposals for growth areas in the South of England and housing market renewal in the north and midlands. To some extent this agenda can be seen as being one of the latest reactions to the longstanding trends of economic and population growth in the south of England and relative decline in the north – tendencies that have preoccupied Governments in the UK since the 1930s (Hennessy, 2006) and been the focus of successive waves of regional and urban policy and initiatives that have sought to address this issue with mixed success.

The perception of obsolete and derelict housing and badly-functioning housing markets in the north and midlands which the HMR programme sought to draw-upon as a justification for its objectives can be situated within this broader context. Though extensive research into housing markets was conducted in order to provide an ‘evidence base’ for HMR and other programmes during the later 1990s and early 2000s (Nevin et al., 2001; Cole & Nevin, 2004), the rationale for the HMR programme was also bolstered through the media and political processes by the circulation of images of abandoned and derelict (usually terraced) housing and true and apocryphal stories of homes being ‘gambled away’ in pubs over a ‘game of pool’ in places such as Salford.

The political composition of the New Labour ‘coalition’ also played a role. In particular, the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, who during his tenure performed the symbolic role of the residual ‘old Labour’ northern politician, seemed inspired and

motivated to ‘do something’ for his wider northern constituency. When in 2004 the Government encouraged a grouping of northern development agencies to collaborate together in an initiative entitled the ‘Northern Way’ (Northern Way Steering Group, 2004) in order to boost the productivity of the northern regions to the English average, one of the key issues to emerge was the issue of housing and its relationship with regional competitiveness. In fact one of the first policy pronouncements of the Northern Way Steering group was to call for the demolition of up to 400,000 houses in the north of England as part of a wider interregional growth agenda, on the basis that the northern regions needed to offer a larger diversity of housing stock in order to maintain and enhance their attractiveness and competitiveness. The HMR programme therefore reflects an intermingling of the urban competitiveness/renaissance and neighbourhood focussed concerns of the UK regeneration agenda under the Labour government.

In February 2003 the Government made available £500 million to support the actions of the nine HMR ‘Pathfinders’ until March 2006 and further funding was made available for the April 2006 to March 2008 period. The programmes have pursued a range of approaches in seeking to revive housing markets and ‘reconnect pathfinder areas with neighbouring functioning housing markets’ (DCLG, 2009, p. 4). These have included the refurbishment of housing stock to improve its condition, building new properties in partnership with social housing providers and/or private developers, addressing issues of neighbourhood management, and demolition of properties (see Fig. 12). The latter element of the HMR programmes has proved to be the most controversial, and whilst overall it is reported that local residents have supported places for “neighbourhood remodelling”, in a number of places, including East Lancashire and Merseyside, there has been strong resistance to clearance proposals from local residents and heritage groups (Allen, 2008).

An emerging body of academic writing on the HMR programme has offered a critical interpretation of its goals and speculated on its possible effects on the places and communities affected (Cameron, 2006; Cameron & Coaffee, 2006; Allen, 2008). Cameron has discussed the role of HMR in contributing to wider economic objectives in English regions, and sees notions of “rising aspirations” (2006, p. 14) as underpinning the programmes. Housing ‘offer’ is seen as a factor in aiding regional economic growth and competitiveness. Others have seen the HMR programme as being a ‘revanchist’ exercise designed to ‘retake’ areas of cities



Source: Couch, Sykes

Fig. 12. Development land and new housing in Liverpool's housing market renewal area. Source: Couch, Sykes.

and urbanised areas for the more affluent, who in recent decades have rediscovered the attractions of living in an urban environment (Cameron & Coaffee, 2006).

It seems that neighbourhood renewal in England is more challenging and has shown less obvious signs of success when compared with the urban renaissance agenda. Whilst there continue to be improvements to the housing stock and local physical environments, socio-economic problems appear to remain immutable. Indices of deprivation remain high in many inner urban neighbourhoods with little evidence of convergence towards national norms. Colomb writing in 2007 reflects on some of the key themes which underpin the urban renaissance agenda – ‘social mix’, ‘local communities’ and the emphasis on ‘urban design’, and asks whether it ‘might be too early to judge the overall impacts of New Labour urban policies on the welfare of urban dwellers across the UK’ (pp. 17–18).

4. Comparative reflections

It will have become evident from section 3 that there are significant similarities between the issues facing governments in each of the three countries and that there are close parallels in many of the policy responses, not only in substance but also in timing. However, there are also some differences, partly as a result of context and partly as a result of political preferences and policy

conventions in each country. It can be argued that most advances in urban policy are path dependent. That is to say, faced with a new problem, policy makers will have a strong tendency to use or adapt solutions that have been used in the past. The question is: to what extent has the evolution of policy in each country been path dependent? This section provides a comparative discussion of these issues, firstly outlining the outcomes and remaining issues that characterise the regeneration field today in the three countries and second, by reflecting on the evolution of urban regeneration policy in each state.

4.1. Achievements and remaining issues

An essential measure of the success of regeneration policies and programmes is the extent to which they have achieved convergence between the area being the subject of regeneration policies and the rest of the country (Couch, 2003, p. 190). There are very few indicators that can represent the regeneration process and available on a comparable basis between different countries and over a sufficiently long time period to be useful in this analysis. Two key indicators that can be used are Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and population change. The former gives an indication of the degree of convergence or divergence between the local economy and the national average over the study



Source: Authors' calculation from Eurostat data.

Fig. 13. Variation in GDP per capita between the most and least prosperous regions. Source: Authors' calculation from Eurostat data.

period. The latter, population change, also tells us something about the relative fortunes of different areas. The more prosperous the economy, the more likely is population growth. Hence, if the rate of population change moves towards the national average, this is another measure of convergence (Figs. 13 and 14).

Fig. 13 shows the difference between the highest and lowest performing regions in each country over the period 1996–2006. There are two clear facts that emerge from this figure. Firstly the regional variation in prosperity is substantially less in Germany than in France or the UK. Secondly, whilst in Germany and France the gap between the most and least prosperous regions has stayed relatively constant over the decade, in the UK the difference has widened considerably. This suggests that at the inter-regional level of analysis, in comparison with Germany and France, regeneration policies in the UK have been quite unsuccessful when using convergence of GDP per capita as an indicator of success.

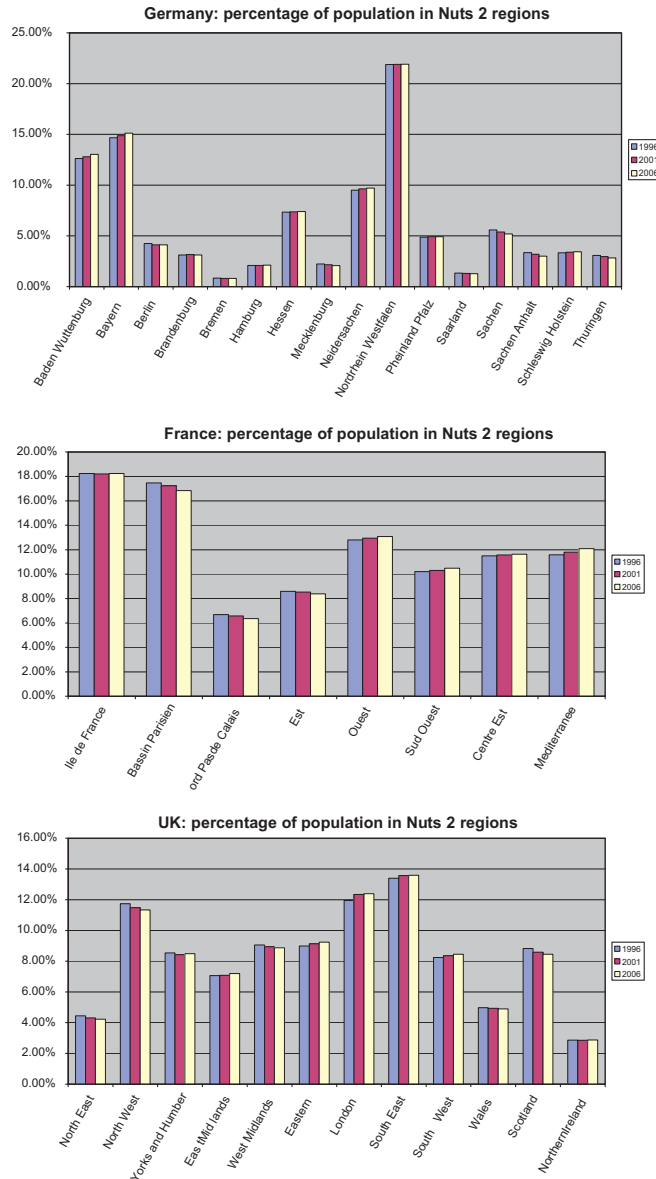
Fig. 14 shows regional population trends in the three countries. The difference in trends between the three countries is clear. In Germany, prosperous Baden Württemberg and Bayern have experienced the highest percentage growth in population. In contrast and unsurprisingly, it is some of the new länder that have performed least well: Mecklenburg, Sachsen, Sachsen

Anhalt and Thuringen. Thus, whilst German policy has prevented significant divergences in regional GDP per capita, it has not yet succeeded in stemming the net outflow of population from these eastern regions.

In France the situation is different. Whilst the Ile de France has maintained its share of population, the north-east generally has lost population. France has seen something of a drift to the south: to the conurbations around Lyon, Toulouse and along the Mediterranean, and to some prosperous cities in the west and southwest. It is the north and north east, including the former industrial heartlands of Nord and Lorraine that continue to lose population.

The picture in the UK is not unlike that in France. Scotland, the northern regions and the West Midlands continue to lose their share of population whilst London, the South East and surrounding regions continue to grow. This coincides with trends in GDP per capita and again suggests that UK policy has some way to go if a balanced rate of population growth between the regions is the aim.

A similar picture emerges when looking at the ten largest cities (excluding the capitals) in each country (see Fig. 15). In Germany only Hamburg and Köln show any increase in population share. All the other cities, regardless of location, show signs of 'shrinkage'. Intuitively this seems to be an unexpected trend.

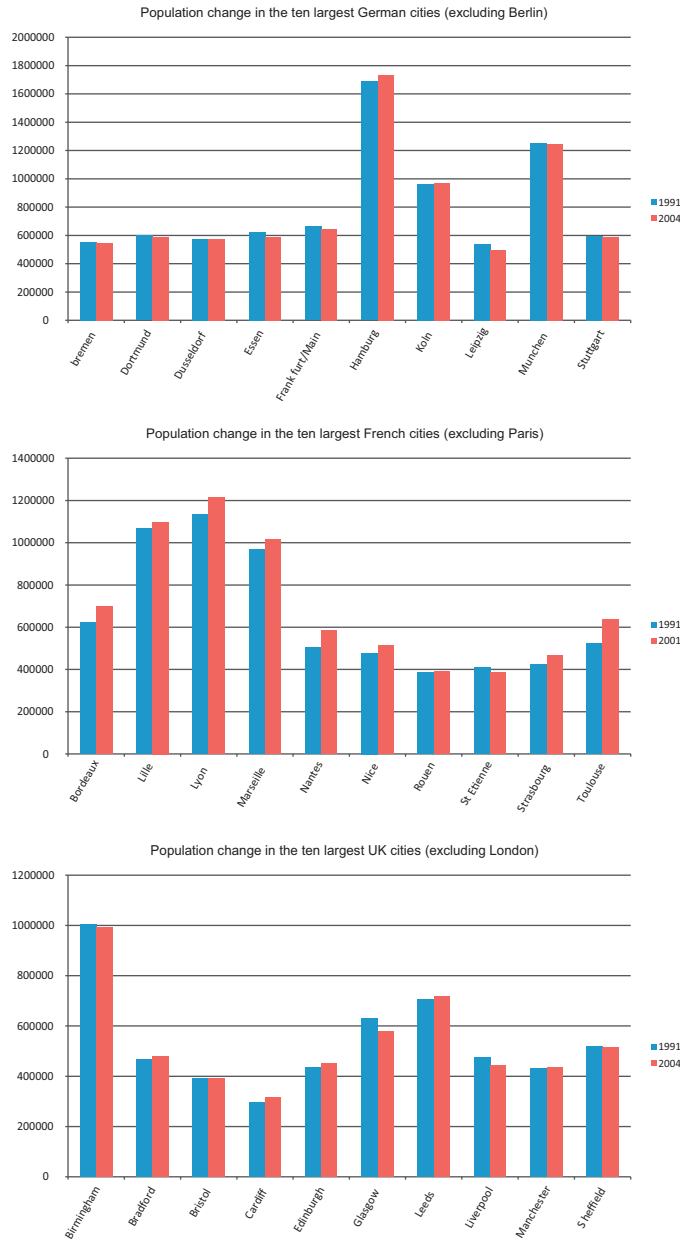


Source: Eurostat

Fig. 14. Regional population trends in Germany, France and the United Kingdom. Source: Eurostat.

However, it might be hypothesised that the explanation lies in a combination of the steadily increasing average wealth of German citizens and the consequent increased demand for owner occupied housing: and houses in particular. The typical housing stock found in German cities comprises rented apartments. The greatest proportions of new houses for owner occupation are constructed in the suburbs and small towns and villages beyond the boundaries of the major cities. In contrast all of the top ten cities in France, except St Etienne, are increasing their share of population.

In the UK the picture is more mixed. The dominant trend affecting UK cities in the latter part of the 20th century was disurbanisation. Over the last decade many have begun to experience an increase in their share of population: they are reurbanising. This shows UK urban regeneration policy in a positive light. Whatever its failings, the effect of 30 years of subsidising and facilitating investment in inner urban areas whilst restricting peripheral growth seems to be that many UK cities have moved from a period of disurbanisation to a period of reurbanisation.



Source: Eurostat

Fig. 15. Population change in the ten largest cities in each country. Source: Eurostat.

There is little doubt that all three countries have seen an improvement in urban living conditions over the period. Few urban dwellings in any UK, German or French cities lack basic amenities, although quite high levels of unfitness can still be found in the relatively older housing stock of the UK. In a number of northern English towns and cities a problem of low demand for housing emerged at the end of the 1990s resulting from the acute regional spatial imbalances

in economic performance, together with the particular (owner occupied) tenure structure found in English cities. This problem has emerged in different forms in each country: over supply of housing (especially plattenbau) in former East Germany, where it is also associated with regional economic underperformance; and in some French cities, where the problem tends to be concentrated in the peripheral social housing stock.

Local urban environments have improved in most cities. Industrial pollution has declined substantially, although pollution from the transport system remains an issue in some places. Cities in all three countries have invested in traffic management and traffic calming measures that have improved the environmental quality of urban neighbourhoods and centres.

The increasingly competitive relationship between cities has led to physical infrastructure and environmental improvements in town and city centres in all three countries. Writing in 1997, Couch found that French cities were somewhat less concerned than their English counterparts to attract new employment and retailing to central areas but more concerned to increase public open space and maintain housing provision (Couch, 1997). In other words French planners saw the city centre a something broader than a concentration of employment and retailing: more a ‘civic’ centre. That is less true today. Over the last decade British cities have invested heavily in city centre housing and in cultural and leisure developments that have broadened activity base and increased the mix of uses. In German city centres too, where retail hours are tightly controlled and shops are shut on Sundays, town and city centres have a function that is broader than just being places of intense employment and retail activity.

British policy has been quite successful in tackling the huge problems of urban dereliction and brown fields that existed in the 1980s. Many of these areas have been redeveloped: for example in the former docklands of London, Liverpool and elsewhere. In France, although dereliction has been less of a problem, good progress has been made. In Germany, despite the success of high profile initiatives such as the Emscher Park IBA, urban dereliction remains a serious problem in the older industrial areas. Associated with the reuse of derelict land is the control of peripheral ‘green field’ development. Here the UK has been particularly successful. Over the past decade in England approximately 16 hectares per day that was not previously developed has been developed (i.e. urbanised) (Author’s calculation from DCLG Land Use Statistics). Whereas, “around 100 hectares...of undeveloped land are being transformed into urban land in Germany every day” (Couch, Karecha, Nuissl, & Rink, 2005). The reduction in unemployment has also been greater in many UK cities compared with their German and French equivalents.

4.2. *The evolution, aims and mechanisms of policy*

The discussions above have demonstrated that urban regeneration policy developed at different speeds and on different trajectories in each country.

In England the priority in the 1980s was to stimulate economic development within cities and to reuse what was perceived as ‘valuable’ vacant and derelict urban land and buildings. The Conservative government had a natural predilection for stimulating private sector investment as part of the solution. They also felt that the problems were, to some extent, beyond the capabilities of local government and developed a number of central government interventions. However, the process of neighbourhood renewal also continued quietly with ongoing programmes of housing refurbishment and area improvement. In contrast, in West at this time the full force of the economic crisis was yet to be felt and the emphasis of urban regeneration policy was on the reconstruction of older urban areas with emerging ideas about ‘careful urban renewal’ and growing concern for environmental issues and social inclusion. In contrast to England, in France the decade saw a major decentralisation of powers towards the regions and local municipalities. There was a continuing programme of physical urban regeneration (through the Zones d’Aménagement Concerté (ZAC)) and for example, Mitterrand’s *Grands Projets* complemented by some new programmes with a more social emphasis, e.g. *Developpement Social des Quartiers (DSQ)*.

In England the 1990s saw a simplification of what had become a very complex web of urban regeneration agencies and funding mechanisms. Local authorities re-emerged as important players in a new role as facilitators and coordinators of activity. Competitive bidding became a significant way of allocating regeneration funds. Emerging concern for sustainable development began to be recognised in Government policy and increasingly permeated regeneration thinking and policy. In Germany the shock of reunification led to dramatic changes in the urban regeneration situation. The first priority of concern shifted from the older industrial areas of former West Germany to the rapidly de-industrialising towns and cities in the new Länder. Whilst the development of sustainable approaches to regeneration continued in the west, notably in the famous Emscher Park IBA, a major concern in the east was shrinking cities and the physical regeneration of peripheral social housing estates. In France also the problems of social housing estates and questions of social mix and spatial ‘solidarity’ were becoming a major focus for discourse and policy development.

Over the last decade in England there has been considerable effort put into urban renaissance (developing and maintaining sustainable, competitive cities), whilst taking a more holistic approach to neighbour-

hood renewal, moving away from competitive funding to an approach that bends mainstream funding (e.g. education, health) towards areas in most need. Differences in the approach to urban policy have emerged between the economically buoyant and congested South and South East and the economically stagnant northern regions. English town and city centres have seen a significant recovery in their fortunes and competitive position in recent years and peripheral development (urban sprawl) has been brought under much better control. However, there remain severe problems in some older inner urban neighbourhoods, especially in the cities of the Midlands and North, and in some peripheral social housing estates. There are still worryingly high levels of unemployment in some former industrial areas, especially those that are remote from zones of post-industrial economic growth.

In Germany there are striking differences in needs and policy responses between the shrinking towns and cities of the east, older industrial areas in the west and more buoyant regional cities. Some cities in West have become amongst the most successful in Europe against many conventional indicators of quality of life and in urban competitiveness. Great progress has been made towards environmental sustainability, although the rate of urbanisation is still an issue. In many cities social segregation and exclusion remain major concerns.

Urban competitiveness also emerges as an issue of concern in France, although social concerns still dominate the agenda with new partnerships between tiers of government to provide solutions. These problems are particularly concentrated in the peripheral social housing estates and some older inner urban neighbourhoods, especially in former industrial cities. Whilst most French cities are economically competitive, it is in some rural areas that economic decline and depopulation continues, in contrast to the English experience. There has been good progress towards environmental sustainability in many urban areas.

The priorities of policy in England appear to be mainly concerned with local economic development. Physical environmental improvements also represent an important aim, especially in urban centres. Within neighbourhood renewal priorities include housing market renewal, especially in northern cities, and concern for community empowerment, participation and social inclusion. In France the priorities are similar except that the main area of housing system malfunction is found in the peripheral social housing estates rather than in the inner urban areas as in England. In Germany there are similar concerns for local economic development and the provision of social and cultural infrastructure.

Concern for the housing system centres mainly around issues of oversupply in some parts of former East Germany.

There are contrasting approaches to policy development and implementation and each country has evolved along its own well established paths within its own historical and institutional context. Thus in England it has been necessary to establish Local Strategic Partnerships to coordinate the many functions that had been stripped out from local authorities in earlier decades (e.g. housing, transport, utility services). Local government is seen to have an important role in facilitating regeneration but authorities operate within a context of strong central control of policy direction and funding. Implementation is fragmented amongst many agencies. Although local democratic controls over policy are weak there is a strong commitment to local community participation. In Germany there has been relatively little divergence from traditional governance structures and paths. But here too local authorities have a facilitating role; there are few quangos and strong local democratic controls over policy development. Partnership between land and municipal governments are an important feature of urban policy. In France too partnership is a very important characteristic of urban governance, together with strong democratic controls and a commitment to community participation. Central, regional and local municipal resources are brought together through contractual arrangements. Much of the implementation of physical development is undertaken by *Sociétés d'économie mixte*, publicly owned private companies with access to private finance but accountable to their public sector owners.

5. Conclusion

5.1. European models or persistent differences?

Falk (2008) notes it is hard to identify a single 'European model' for successful urban regeneration policy. However, from the account presented above it is clear that there are also some common underlying principles and drivers that characterise the commitment to regenerate cities and regions in the three countries. In essence there seems to be a common concern to ensure that territories and certain social groups within the population do not become marginalised or excluded from the mainstream of national, regional and city life. The idea of 'territorial cohesion' articulated in EU cohesion policy, which holds that 'people should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union', finds an echo in the justifications for

regeneration policy in all the three countries. It is clear, for example, that concerns in Germany about equivalent living conditions across territories, concerns in France that *quartiers sensibles* should not become disconnected from and exist ‘beyond the republic’, or the goal of national neighbourhood renewal in England that ‘no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live’, all draw on core values which provide a rationale for forms of regeneration policy that pursue what Hall and Hickman (2002) term ‘spatial positive discrimination’.

This European notion of society and territory is echoed in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, adopted by EU member states in 2007, which recommends that in pursuing urban development policy ‘special attention is paid to deprived neighbourhoods within the context of the city as a whole’ (EU Ministers for Urban Development, 2007) and it has again been emphasised in the Toledo Declaration of 2010. Yet, even within the context of some shared fundamental values which define a certain European model of societal engagement with, and response to, the urban, it is clear that the concerns and trajectories of regeneration policy in the three countries considered here also reflect the old axiom of comparative planning research that ‘context matters’. It is apparent that much of the evolution of policy is path dependent and has developed according to previously established norms and priorities and been limited to varying degrees by previous decisions.

The remainder of the conclusion seeks to unpack this general observation by reflecting on the questions identified at the start of this paper:

- how far has the definition of urban problems and the development of solutions been influenced by the different socio-economic, institutional and cultural context of each country?
- to what extent has the evolution of policy in each country been ‘path dependent’, and how far does considering the evolution of policy in each country from the perspective of the theory of path dependence aid an understanding of this process?

5.2. Context dependency and urban regeneration policy

The analysis presented above points to the influence that the economic, demographic, land use and governance contexts exert on the form that urban regeneration takes in each state. This influence is apparent both in shaping the issues that policy is called-upon to respond

to (and the perception of these) and on the form that collective policy responses to those issues take. The wider macro-economic trajectory of each state during the study period outlined in Section 2.0 thus indicates that 30 years ago the economic circumstances of each state were very different from the situation today. The UK experienced economic restructuring away from a Fordist industrial economy earlier than the other two states for whom the post-war economic boom lasted longer.

This context, and the effect of such wider changes on urban economies, contributed to the UK’s early engagement with, and definition of, the emerging notion and policy field of urban regeneration. The continuing influence of the wider economy on the focus and patterns of regeneration policy is evident throughout the period. For example, the regeneration challenges experienced and policy responses developed in industrial regions in Germany when these in their turn faced the full impact of economic restructuring, or the persistent problems of low employment and social exclusion faced by residents of suburban areas of many French cities from the 1980s onwards and the various initiatives of the *politique de la ville* designed to try and address these. The relationship between the spatial economy, population distribution and urban system of each state and the nature and locus of the challenges that policy has been called-upon to respond to provides another illustration of the context-dependency that shapes urban regeneration policy. Thus in the UK economic restructuring impacted particularly on those areas which had a high dependency on ‘traditional’ manufacturing sectors, including many towns and cities of northern and western Britain.

The contrasting level of population density and patterns of urbanisation in each country also constitute an influential setting for the development and pursuit of regeneration policy. The UK (especially England) and France are more monocentric countries dominated by a single capital city than Germany which has a polycentric urban structure with no one dominant city. As policymaker attention during the study period has turned to the ‘performance’ or competitiveness of national urban systems and the need to diversify and rebuild regional economies following industrial restructuring this differing context has provided a fundamental background to the development of what has been termed above the ‘urban renaissance’ dimension of regeneration policy.

In the UK and France there has been a concern to achieve greater balance between regions in terms of their contribution to national economic growth, and

cities and urban areas have been seen as being important sites for policy intervention in the pursuit of this goal. The perception in both countries that their cities and urban areas are less well-equipped than non-capital cities in certain other EU states (with Germany, Italy and Spain being frequently cited as examples) has inspired initiatives which seek to address this issue, for example, through the promotion of networking of cities and urban areas to achieve internationally-significant critical mass. The more even inter-regional distribution of professional and managerial employment, income and wealth in West has created a different context for the development of policy. Western German cities are amongst the most competitive in Europe and offer some of the highest standards of living, environmental quality and social conditions and there is moderate variation in performance between West German regions. However, there are sharp contrasts between former East and West German regions in terms of economic performance and social and environmental conditions, and a concern with depopulation of eastern regions. Cities and urban areas in the former East have experienced urban shrinkage which has led to a particular German debate and the development of policy measures in relation to this issue.

The data analysed above also illustrates how, at a more discrete spatial scale, the physical structure of urban areas, the disposition and mix of land uses, the nature of the housing stock, its form and tenure all have an influence on the nature of the urban problems facing the authorities and the range of possible solutions available to them. Thus the differences in patterns and periods of urbanisation, housing types and tenure between the three countries also exert a strong influence on the spatial focus of both the ‘problem’ that regeneration policy seeks to address and the policy approaches that are adopted. Thus, for example, the rapid construction of large peripheral estates in France in the 1960s and 1970s generated different physical and social legacies and policy issues from those which exist in England, where urban policy has typically sought to address issues facing inner urban areas with a relatively older housing stock, or from those in the East, where it is the physical quality and limited demand for social housing estates that provides the focus of attention.

The patterns of governance which characterise the field of urban regeneration are also it seems strongly conditioned by contextual factors. An important dimension of this is the nature of central government/local government relationships and the degree of ‘top-down’ or ‘bottom-up’ direction that is given to regeneration policy. The importance of strong local authorities and leadership in achieving successful

regeneration is a theme that emerges from much research on city development in Europe, and this is an area where there are clear differences between the three countries considered here. It is apparent that the institutional structures in the UK are subject to more frequent and rapid change and are more fluid than those in either France or Germany. The geography of local representative government is generally finer in the latter two states than in the UK where local authority areas generally have a larger population, but conversely less political and financial autonomy in relation to centrally-defined policy goals, than their French or German counterparts. Policymaking in relation to regeneration in the UK has been subject to more frequent rescaling than in the other two states and there has also been a horizontal shift of some general service delivery and more specifically regeneration related functions to private, civil society or ‘quasi-state’ bodies.

5.3. Path dependency and urban regeneration policy

The data analysed above and the discussion in the preceding section make a case for considering that the nature and perceptions of the problems that urban regeneration policy seeks to address, and the approaches adopted in pursuing their resolution, are strongly conditioned by contextual factors. The concept of ‘path dependence’ directs our attention to the temporal dimension of context-dependency and a consideration of the historical evolution of particular places, problems and policy responses. In the present case the questions of concern are the (i) extent to which the evolution of policy in each country has been ‘path dependent’ and, (ii) how far considering the evolution of policy in each country from the perspective of the theory of path dependence aids an understanding of this process?

In relation to the first question it will already be apparent from the discussions of context-dependency above, that urban regeneration programmes in each country have developed and “operate according to the path-dependent institutional norms and priorities dictated by the nation-state” (Marshall, 2005). Therefore based on the evidence reviewed here it is reasonable to conclude that the evolution of urban regeneration policy in each country has been path dependent in these terms. However, the degree to which this is equally the case in the three states warrants further comment. Of the three countries it is perhaps Germany that has shown the strongest tendency to follow a well trodden path within fairly conventional

and long-standing institutional structures. This contrasts with France and England which have both shown considerable capacity for institutional innovation and new ways of thinking. This is especially true of the UK with such innovations as urban development corporations (direct central government action); the privatisation of much policy implementation in the 1980s; the introduction of competitive bidding for regeneration funds in the 1990s; and the creation of urban regeneration companies and Local Strategic Partnerships to co-ordinate local policy making and implementation in the 2000s. In contrast, Germany might be said to demonstrate path dependency in terms of structures but some flexibility in terms of content or substance of policy. Indeed the country has shown a remarkable ability for policy innovation, especially through the Berlin and Emscher Park IBA and other local policy responses to specific problems. It might be suggested that policy innovation is more localised and ‘bottom-up’ in Germany than in either of the other two countries and that this is path dependent in being a reflection of contingent past events and conditions (e.g. the traditionally dispersed and localised patterns of power in Germany, or, more immediately, the Federal Constitution and its principles adopted in 1949).

This leads us to consider the second question of whether considering the evolution of policy in each country from the perspective of the theory of path dependence aids an understanding of these processes. Here one is faced by an issue identified by Booth (2011, 47) in that “The theory of path dependence offers little help in the choice of the contingent event” which may initiate a sequence of events and behaviours with increasing or diminishing returns. Thus it is apparent that, as part of the context dependency of urban regeneration policy which has been demonstrated above, that there have been contingent events in the past that have been at the root of event sequences which have led to the adoption of particular initiatives and approaches.

Perhaps a challenge here is to distinguish between gradual and broader shifts in historical conditions and more punctual events which may initiate a sequence of, for example, institutional and policy innovation. Thus as regards the former, it emerges from the evidence above that the UK’s earlier experience of the historical process of industrial restructuring in a broad sense contributed to the emergence of the urban regeneration field in this state. Similarly, the historical context of France’s post World War II urbanisation and the pressing need for new housing to meet the needs of rural-urban and international migrants has created

socio-spatial legacies in the form of the grands ensembles and high rise estates of the banlieues that form the focus of much urban policy intervention. Yet one might also point to more specific events during the study period, for example, urban disturbances in the UK and France in the early 1980s, which can be seen as being at the root of certain event sequences leading to the adoption of particular urban regeneration policy initiatives.

The notion of ‘conjectural events’ discussed on p. 5, which may arise when two paths meet and generate a new path, might be applied to major events that were non-path dependent in Marshall’s (2005) sense of being within path-dependent institutional norms and priorities dictated by the nation-state. This might apply to an event such as German reunification, which led to modification of the kinds of issues that urban regeneration policy in Germany and the West institutional structures (as the Federal Republic effectively integrated the DDR) have had to face. Yet the extent to which in such cases the notion of path-dependence adds explanatory value – notably in terms of unpacking issues of ‘causality and temporality’ (Booth, 2011), beyond that achievable through the ‘historian’s method’ of comprehensively researched and tightly argued historical narration is perhaps open to debate.

The challenge in a review of the kind presented here is how to account for what sometimes appears to be the irreducibility of context and the difficulty of separating out a phenomenon such as urban regeneration from the settings in which it takes place (and identifying in time and ranking in causal importance the full gamut of significant contingent events). In a more narrowly focussed comparison of specific instances of regeneration policies of projects, however, the concept would have the potential to direct the researcher’s attention towards important contextual factors and events which may not be contemporaneous but important to consider in building-up a full explanatory rather than descriptive account.

One aspect of the theory which does seem to have potential to produce enhanced understandings of causal mechanisms in the field of urban regeneration when considering why certain initiatives or approaches have been adopted is the notion of increasing or diminishing returns within a given sequence of path dependent events or behaviours. An exploration of the evolution of modes of governance in the case of UK urban regeneration policy could for example be couched in these terms. Thus the institutional innovation which occurred in the delivery of regeneration policy from the 1980s might be seen as a result of a perception held by

some in government that reproducing existing approaches based predominantly around local and national government ownership and delivery of regeneration, would increasingly deliver diminishing returns in comparison with new modes of governance which sought to associate a wider-range of private and civil society partners with this policy field (and would offer increasing returns on the state's input of coordination and investment).

5.4. *Urban regeneration an open or closed policy system?*

This review of urban regeneration in the UK, Germany and France has identified common issues and themes within this policy field in the three states such as the scale of intervention necessary, particularly the balance to be struck between neighbourhood-based initiatives and strategies which aim to secure the development or 'renaissance' of wider city-regions (whilst fulfilling an aspiration to re-connect excluded areas and populations with the functional dynamics of the urban areas to which they belong). The notion of the city as an 'engine for economic development' and the increasing recognition of the importance of 'competitive cities' are key drivers of urban policy in each country. Yet this view of cities does not necessarily resolve tensions between the frequently incompatible goals of maximising economic development on the one hand and minimising social and environmental deprivation on the other. Governments in each country have to constantly maintain a careful balance of what is politically acceptable, or tolerable, against these different measures of success.

The evidence and discussions above also point strongly to the context and path dependency that have shaped the fundamentals of urban regeneration in the states considered, both in terms of the issues that the policy has to address and the ways in which it addresses them. Thus in France it is the difficult question of social exclusion, particularly in peripheral social housing estates that has driven much of the thinking and policy innovation. In Germany it is the question of regional imbalance and demographic challenges that have been dominant in shaping policy. And it is perhaps no accident that Germany has been the most successful of the three countries in minimising spatial inequalities. In the UK (especially England with its very high population density) the agenda was set by the Thatcher government to reuse and revalorise 'wasted' and underused urban economic resources. Thus tackling derelict land, redu-

cing urban sprawl and the gentrification of urban neighbourhoods have been hallmarks of English regeneration policy.

None of this is to say that these issues and solutions do not exist in each country; simply that these appear to be the dominant context-driven characteristics: social exclusion in France; spatial inequalities in Germany and land-use efficiency in the UK. It is apparent that urban regeneration programmes in each country have developed and "operate according to the path-dependent institutional norms and priorities dictated by the nation-state" (Marshall, 2005). Therefore based on the evidence reviewed here it is reasonable to conclude that the evolution of urban regeneration policy in each country has been path dependent though to varying degrees in each state and at different times and places (e.g. innovations such as Urban Development Corporations are often initially introduced in a limited number of places).

The account presented above therefore points to the continuing influence of territorial specificity at the national, regional, local, neighbourhood scales during a period when policy-making in nation states has often been described as being increasingly open to, and influenced by, trends and systems operating at scales beyond that of the nation state (i.e. the European and global). Even if the analysis identifies the influence of wider trends such as neoliberalization and state restructuring in the urban regeneration challenges faced by, and policy approaches adopted in, the three states; for example, in the emphasis on competitiveness and the role of urban areas as 'motors' of regional and national economies which emerges as a theme in each country, it also reinforces the arguments of those who have suggested that 'accounts of neoliberalization should be sensitive to established political traditions for they affect processes of neoliberalization and state restructuring' (Dikeç, 2006, p. 78). For Dikeç 'This implies giving due attention to different political rationalities guiding policy-making, inherited institutional structures and practices, and the role of dominant political traditions in shaping both state actions and public response to them' (2006, p. 78). The findings of this review of the experiences of three states suggest that comparative cross-national research into the evolution of urban regeneration policy in different countries has the potential to make a significant contribution to the ongoing investigating of such issues, particularly if grounded in a full appreciation of the context and path dependencies that shape the counters of this policy field in different territorial settings.

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