

Mobility in Europe: choosing the right regional models



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What lessons can we draw from the approach to mobility in regional development models in major metropolises and from the dynamic forces at play?

Firstly, we must accept the fact that towns are no longer relevant indicators to understand and analyse regional dynamics and their trends. Spatial organisations must now be conceived in keeping with a relational approach which goes beyond geographical distribution and locations, an approach that regards regions as being inter dependent and articulated. Only this type of approach can reconcile two fundamentals in our regional dynamics to quote Manuel Castells: *“the space of flows and the space of place”*. Only this type of approach can go beyond a conception of regional development that is rooted in the need to rebalance the entities involved where only size and scale are over-valued. In this accepted view of regional development, achieving a critical mass becomes an essential objective.

I propose an alternative: to reflect on future regional models within an urban system based approach founded on relationships and on links. In terms of public policies, this leads us to reflect on partnerships, on cooperation between regions, on the historical links between our regions, deeply rooted in the past and their dynamic forces.

The emergence of complex spatial organisations

The regions are today undergoing major changes in terms of life styles, mobility and travel as well as production and this is resulting in the emergence of more complex spatial organisations and new forms of territorial integration. In this change process urban systems are both vectors and receptors of the dynamic forces at play.

Today we are witnessing a relative weakening of the links and relationships between places at different levels as well as tensions between polarisation processes which strengthen the role of major metropolises on the one hand and forces that disperse and dilute communities and undermine jobs over wider areas on the other hand. However, very little is known about the territorial structures which accompany these changes. While extensive research has been conducted in this field, as we saw in the few examples presented this morning, research is rare and is always segmented depending on the type of links between towns and cities – sole consideration given to shuttle (commuter) travel at local level, company subsidiaries or air transport on a broader scale, or else the approach taken is sector-based according to the mode of transport (road, rail or air).

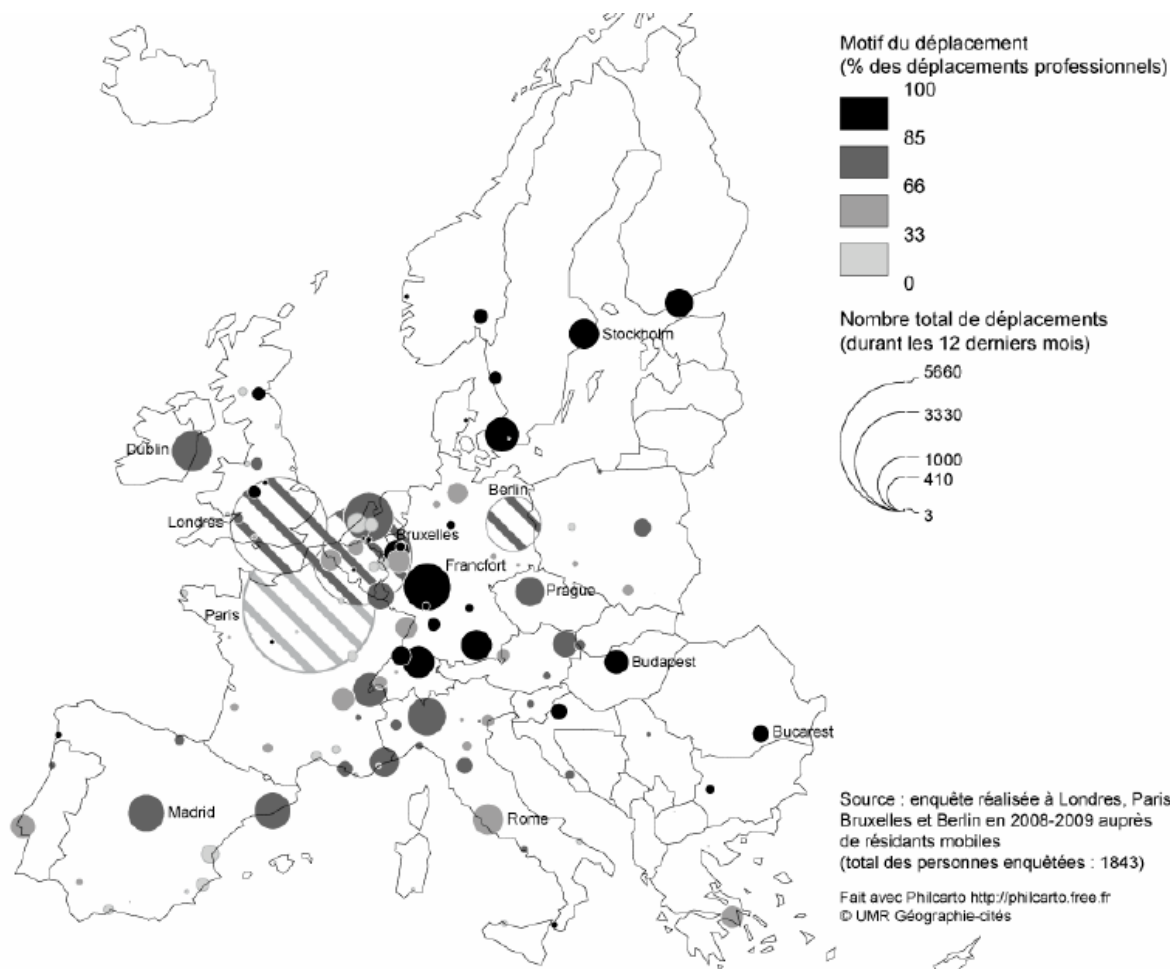
In the approaches adopted and research conducted, the conclusions and findings invariably reveal forms of integration in European regions that are limited to two standard models: the centre-periphery model and the hierarchical model based on networking between urban systems. However, these two models systematically lock up regional and spatial integration in dual categories with, on the one hand, dominating hubs and, on the other, peripheral spaces with low visibility. These models are real but, by virtue of their simplicity, their huge symbolic scope distorts our view. We need to change our perspective towards regions and regional development to demonstrate that there are other forms of regional development that can feed on these special dynamic forces.

The approach based on urban system is salutary provided we meet two requirements:

Firstly, we must stop thinking in terms of territorial dynamics from the perspective of strategic flows alone since these flows continually reproduce our two dual models (centre-periphery and hierarchical flows).

Secondly, we must systematically undertake integrated analyses which at the same time take account of the diversity of exchanges.

Map 1 Mobility reasons



Three facets which incorporate the plurality of flows

I propose an analytical framework which covers three key facets of our contemporary societies. These three facets include the plurality of flows that crisscross our regions and the planet.

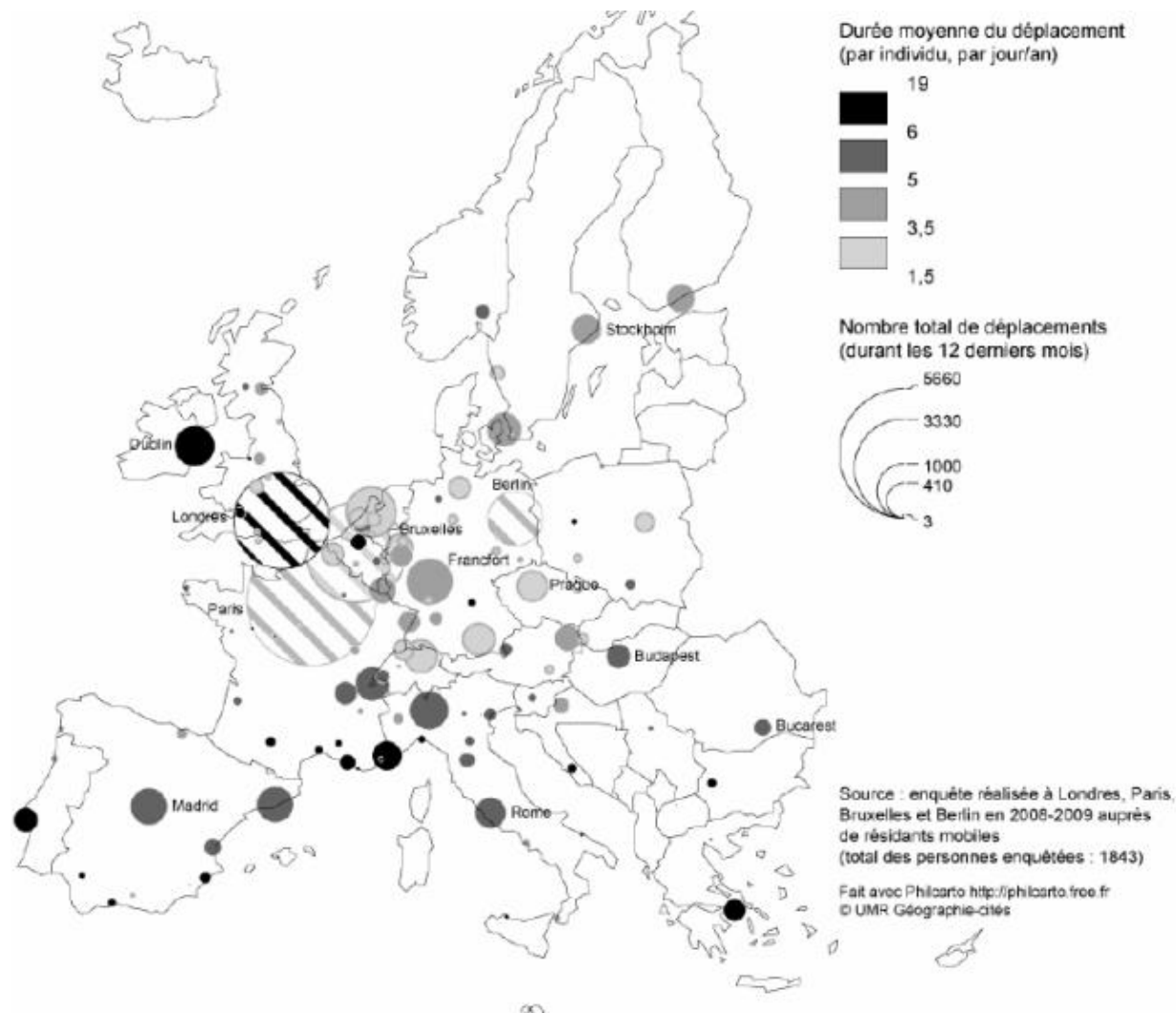
Mobility and time spent

The first facet is our mobile and leisure society. It is related to the reorganisation of the way social groups spend their time and to the raising of living standards in Europe in particular. It refers to a very large number of flows such as commuting between home and work as well as urban tourism, population migration and numerous informal exchanges

This study derives from surveys we conducted in four European airports. We interviewed 2,000 people, 500 in London, Paris, Berlin and Brussels and asked them where they travelled to and for what reasons in the last twelve months. The map shows that European integration is alive outside the standard visions dominated by economic relations. It reveals a very large number of southern European towns and cities which acts as integration hubs.

These new indicators are useful in that they take into account the time people spend in given locations. Most of the studies focus on frequency.

Map 2 : Destinations and time spent



We observe that on average the respondents stated that they spent more time in Southern European towns and cities, perhaps for leisure and recreational purposes. The responses were: 9 days in Athens and less than 1 day in Paris and in a large number of Germany metropolitan regions as a result of frequent transport links. But the questions we need to ask is: why prioritise frequency over - or contrary to - duration?

Knowledge and communication purposes

The second facet concerns our knowledge and information based society. It reveals emblematic flows that represent new practices and life styles in our contemporary societies in communication and research. Examples include scientific partnerships and student mobility in Europe.

Map 3 : Number of Erasmus students in 2000



Versus the maps 1 and 2 on air traffic flows, map 3 shows the exchanges between European towns and cities; these are movements of students under the European Erasmus programme

The facts speak for themselves. We have as many outgoing flows as incoming flows between towns and cities of very different sizes.

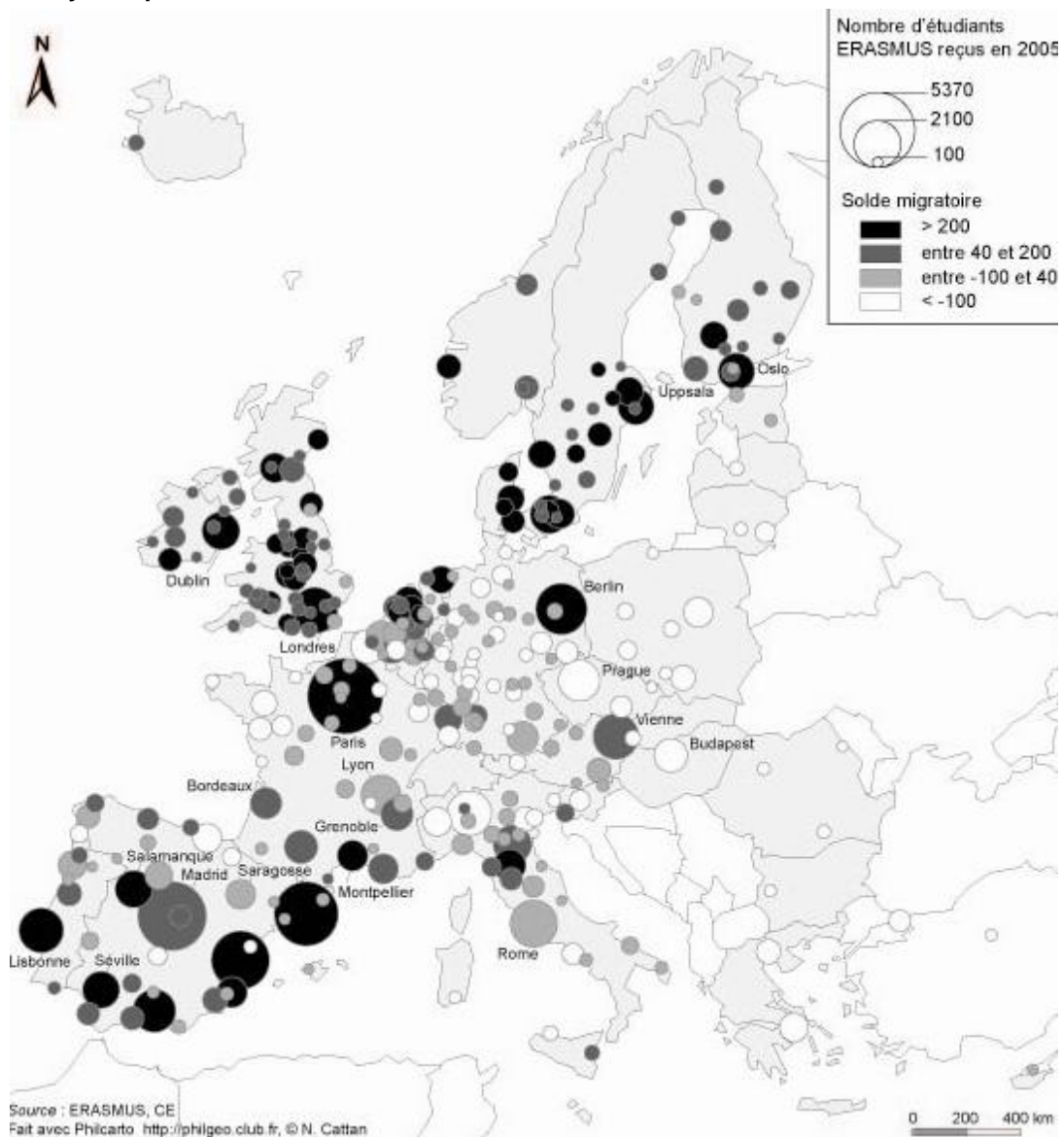
We can see that migrating students are spread quite evenly within the European urban system between capitals and peripheral capitals. This may be imposed by institutions but it is a fact that Paris emits as many flows to Dublin as it receives from Dublin.

Different types of mobility according to gender perspective

Among the cities that have the most appeal in Europe today in terms of student exchanges, Paris heads the list closely followed by Madrid and three other much smaller Spanish towns. Whatever the rankings, it is significant that peripheries and especially average-size towns whether in Sweden, Spain or France, exert as much appeal, if not more, ratio wise, than large metropolises. The map stems from my recent studies and reflects my interest in mobility from a gender perspective:

Where do males and females students go? Females' preferences in terms of mobility compile a very original map (map 4) which may represent a future European region: they follow no urban or spatial logic. Some studies refer to a new migration model described as "post modern", excluding conventional metropolitanisation categories, which follow more cross-linked logics.

Map 4 : Number of Erasmus female students received by European cities



Economic and financial flows

The third facet is our economic and financial society as the political process becomes increasingly specialised and segmented. It gives meaning to the flows in a tertiary and globalised industrial society. It refers to links between and within multinationals and to the trading of goods.

An all-encompassing approach with seven types of links

When we think out-of-the-box, we realise how the integration of other systems can change our view of networking modalities between locations and their dynamic forces in Europe. We have taken this approach a stage further by proposing a more embracing approach to exchange.

In a study performed for the DATAR, we identified seven types of links between French towns and cities (map 5): each link is the aggregate of at least 4 types of links. The links selected between the towns and cities are highly robust. So, 26 local

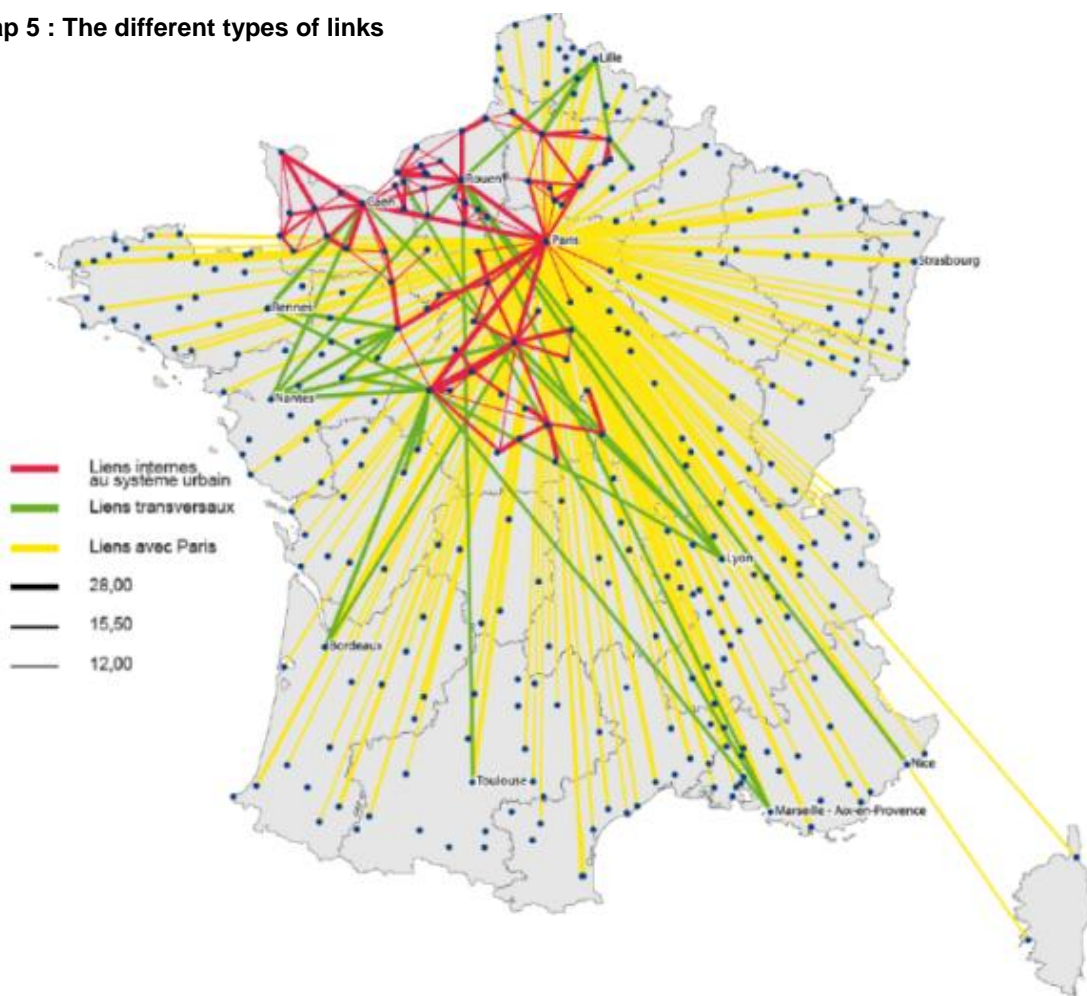
urban systems were identified outside the city of Paris and 22 when including the city of Paris. Significantly, our study showed that these urban systems cannot be conceived on a purely local scale.

Our study also highlighted the strength of cross-cutting links between metropolises which other research studies have rarely demonstrated.

The third dimension we need to bear in mind to understand the multi-scale and multi-function organisation of regions is that these urban systems must be weighed up in the context of a national polarisation process. Contrary to the cross-cutting links which join network centres or hubs in almost all these systems, i.e. exchanges occur between the major cities, it is noteworthy with the polarisation process in Paris that Paris is often centered around several local urban systems or hubs, not just around one. While strong interactions exist between major towns and Paris, these close interconnections must not conceal the links with the smallest towns within urban systems.

Map 5 : The different types of links

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The need for an archipelago type system of network governance

By adding an all-encompassing and relation-based approach to our regions and systems of exchange, the modes of regional structuring are far more diversified and call into question our theories on regional urban planning. In my opinion, the archipelago concept reflects the changes that are occurring at different spatial levels. This concept entails changing the very nature of our towns and cities which, far from concentrating within a single pole, have spread to the extent of forming several interconnected urban poles and urban systems. On a global or European scale, the archipelago concept underlines the fact that centrality is declined in the plural. The centre of our world economy is a series of interconnected hubs, a kind of network of networks.

However, the view that an archipelago embodies a regional system based on hubs and flows, locations and links, frightens some people because it questions our ability to manage networks and more

particularly discontinued areas. For researchers, the underlying fluidity removes the traditional pillars on which most of their theories rest: distance.

Developers and planners are frightened by this fluidity because it removes one of the key principles on which regional management is based, viz. clearly ordered structures and administrative boundaries. In my view, through this relation-based approach, the main challenge facing our decision-makers is to propose new frameworks which take into account the new dimensions of our habitat: mobility, inter-links, flows, transitory and temporary movements and life styles.

The difficulty will be to invent spatial and regional control mechanisms in which fluidity will prevail. In terms of strategy and public policies, the emphasis must be on inventing a system of network governance, not government within a network but network governance. This is an important distinction. There is still a long way ahead of us!