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# Deciphering French Decentralization Efforts and Economic Attractivity Through the Evaluation of France's Lyonnaise Region

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**Deciphering French decentralization efforts and economic attractiveness  
through the evaluation of France's Lyonnaise region**

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## Introduction

France has long been a country politically and economically dominated by its largest city: Paris. The larger Parisian urban area has a population of 10.8 million while Lyon takes second place at just 1.7 million inhabitants (INSEE, 2023). In terms of wealth, the Île-de-France region (consisting of Paris and its neighboring cities) produced 30.8% of French GDP despite containing less than a fifth of the national population (INSEE, 2021). This dynamic seemed natural for an absolute monarchy and a subsequent empire that sought centralized administration, but in the second half of the twentieth century there were increasing calls for regional solidarity and a more active industrial policy to develop metropolitan France beyond the Paris basin.

The creation of a new system of subnational government in the form of regions (*régions*) took place in the 1960s but they were initially quite toothless institutions. It wasn't until the arrival of a new socialist government in the 1980s that large-scale decentralization efforts began in earnest. The “Defferes” laws, named for the Minister of the Interior at the time, spurred this development through the creation of regionally elected councils with concrete governing capabilities. Since then, French regions have progressively been given more and more responsibilities and development funds.

In November of 2022, President Macron surprised many by announcing his intention to introduce legislation funding the creation of a system of rapid commuter trains in the image of the famous Parisian RER's (*réseau express régional*) in the 10 largest French cities, an investment long sought after by many Lyonnais public interest organizations and public officials (Trippenbach & Fay, 2022). At the same time, the Île-de-France region as well as the French

state and European Union are investing a staggering 42 billion euros in the Grand Paris Express: a project aiming to elevate Paris to the status of an international hub capable of rivaling New York and London through the creation of four new automated metro lines and the complete renovation of two existing ones (Grand Paris Express, 2023).

The objectives of the French government seem two-fold: to lean on and expand the economic strength of the Paris region while increasing the economic dynamism of the various other large agglomerations. But in an economy already so dominated by the capital city and an approaching 2024 Olympic Games only reinforcing this paradigm, the question of how effective these decentralization efforts have been thus far naturally arises. The purpose of this article will be to evaluate the Lyonnaise region, primarily known as the Métropole de Lyon, in order to respond to the question: to what extent is the Lyonnaise region an attractive economic region in the context of the French economy and European integration? Answering this question will subsequently provide insightful reflections on the success of the decentralization efforts of previous decades and on the ability of metropolitan France to host multiple attractive regions outside of Paris.

### **Why Lyon?**

Lyon is the natural selection to evaluate whether France can successfully mobilize its regions for a multitude of reasons:

First of all, it shares a similar climate and geography as Paris. Both cities are landlocked, have similar mean temperatures and access to navigable waterways. Although it may seem



arbitrary, many argue that mean temperatures can strongly influence the productivity of a city (Somanathan et al., 2021). Even putting mean temperature aside, most agree that geography plays an important role in a city's economic development. Both cities being landlocked, serving as rail transit hubs and having navigable waterways renders comparisons much easier.

Secondly, Lyon was the very first city connected to Paris by TGV, France's high speed train network, in 1981 and inaugurated by President Mitterand himself (Arduin & Ni, 2005). Given that one of the expressly stated goals of the high speed network was an improved integration of the French regions in Europe and into the world economy, Lyon being the earliest beneficiary of the TGV suggests that it would be the most mature and well-integrated region. Furthermore, high speed train networks generally stimulate new investments, increase geographic mobility, expand labor market pools, boost tourism, and serve as potent marketing devices for the attractiveness of a locality.

Thirdly, Lyon is either the second or third largest city in France depending on how you measure it. If size counts, then Lyon should, under normal conditions, be an important node in the French economy.

Lastly, Lyon has its own independent political and economic history: having served as an important administrative capital during the Roman period and as an important commercial city throughout the middle ages and modern period, if the Lyonnaise region is suffering, it would spell trouble for the rest of France.

All of these factors demonstrate the fundamental reason for my selection: as the second largest city in France, a high-income 21st century nation, with a similar climate and geography as the hyper productive capital and a history of economic activity, the economy of Lyon should fill an important role in both the French and European economy. Any less should indicate to us trouble with the French model and trouble with regional development outside of Paris.

### **What makes a region economically competitive and why is it important?**

Regional economic competitiveness is extremely important for the continued prosperity of a region's inhabitants. Certainly there are other metrics that are enormously important: quality of life, access to health services, and net carbon emissions, to name a few. However, if a region is not well adapted to the national and, more and more, the global economy, its inhabitants and businesses will gradually gravitate towards other regions with greater attractivity. This entails decreased tax revenues which in turn degrades the quality of public services and social mobility. The loss of businesses or decrease in new ventures reduces employment opportunities and pushes residents to explore other cities.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development reminds us that “a competitive region is one that can attract and maintain successful firms and maintain or increase standards of living for the region's inhabitants. Skilled labor and investment gravitate away from ‘uncompetitive’ regions towards more competitive ones” (OECD, 2023). Interestingly, the OECD notes that the traditional emphasis of regional development has shifted away from the

ability to attract international firms to the ability of the region to reinforce the strength of their own domestic (local) firms.

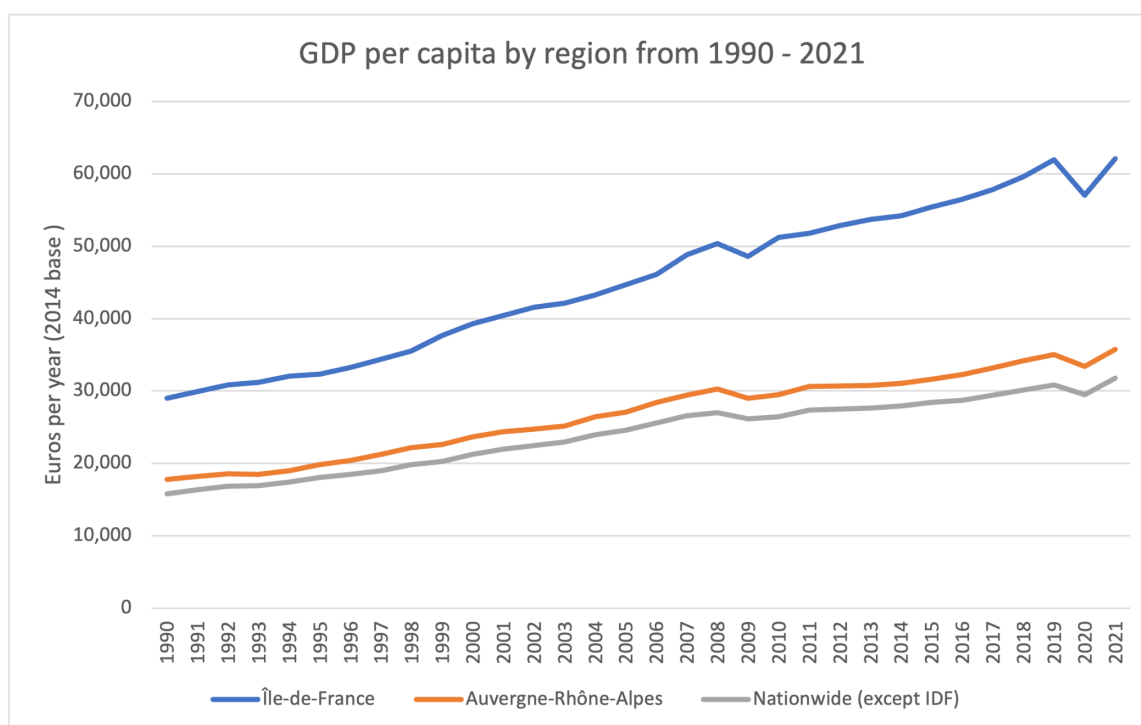
To summarize, regional economic attractiveness is important to ensure the continued prosperity of its inhabitants. In the context of this article, the Lyonnaise region being economically competitive would indicate a healthy ability of the French regions to prosper, while an economically unattractiveness would be a worrying sign for the French state and its ability to maintain a high quality of life for its citizens in the long-term outside of Paris.

### **Demographics & Macroeconomic indicators of Lyon & the AURA region**

Lyon is the administrative capital and largest city of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region (AURA) with a city population of 528,633 in 2020; a positive growth of 8.3% since 2009 (INSEE, 2022). The city of Paris, on the other hand, was about four times larger in 2019 with a population of 2.16 million. However, this represents a population *decrease* of about 4.2% since 2009. In terms of the wider urban area, the population of Paris counts roughly 10.8 million inhabitants versus 1.7 million for the Lyonnais urban area (INSEE, 2023).

Region-wide, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region has been in demographic expansion with a growth of 16.3% in the period 1999-2020 whereas the Île-de-France region also grew yet slightly slower at 12.9% over the same period. In terms of GDP, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes progressed from 118.7 billion euros in 1990 to 290.9 billion euros in 2021, an incredible growth of nearly 2.5x in 31 years, with a base reference of 2014 euros, (INSEE, 2023). A GDP of nearly

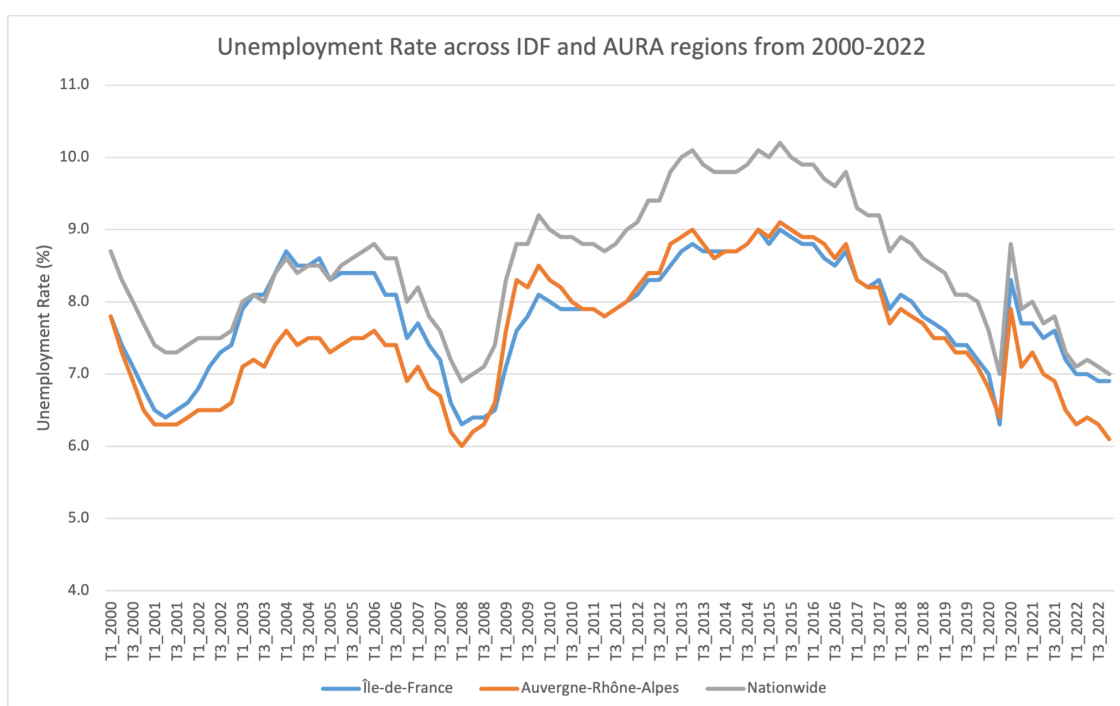
291 billion euros still trails the Île-de-France region by quite a bit, however, with the capital region hosting a GDP of around 764.84 billion euros in 2021 and a nearly equivalent expansion of nearly 2.5x since 1990. Both regions perform strongly in unemployment figures with the Rhône department (*département du Rhône*) where a large part of the Métropole de Lyon is situated having an unemployment rate of 6.2% in the fourth trimester of 2022 versus 5.6% for the city of Paris (which functions as its own department); both of which compare favorably to a national unemployment rate of 7.2% (INSEE, 2023). Interestingly, when expanded to regions, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes hosts an unemployment rate of 6.1% whereas Île-de-France augments to 6.9% in the fourth trimester of 2022.



(Data taken from INSEE, 2023)

In 2018, GDP per capita in the capital region was 59,635€ versus 30,141€ for the rest of France (not including IDF) indicating a capital region vastly more productive than the other

regions. If we include the capital region, metropolitan France's GDP per capita rises to 35,682€ per capita. For Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes in 2018, the GDP per capita was 34,210€ indicating a region more productive than elsewhere but still lagging well behind the capital region. Notably, in the period of 2008-2018, the GDP per salaried position (*PIB par emploi*) progressed 70,748€ to 78,852€ in AURA and from 97,882€ to 112,547€ in Île-de France. A growth of 11.4% for AURA and 15% for the capital region (INSEE, 2023).



(Data taken from INSEE, 2023)

Based on macroeconomic figures, we can begin to capture the general picture of these two regional economies with the capital region IDF clearly outperforming the rest of the country in terms of employment figures and productivity as expressed in GDP per job and GDP per capita. Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, on the other hand outperforms other regions but is still far from the level of productivity performance reached in the capital region.

## Composition of the Lyonnais economy

Lyon has a long commercial history that includes many changes and mutations over time. Key to the Lyonnais identity is the city's historic tradition as a textile producer and important node in the European silk trade. Starting as early as the reign of Louis XIV and reaching its apogee during the 19th century, the silk trade cultivated the lyonnais identity as an industrial, working-class city (*ville ouvrière*) as well as stimulating the development of related industries such as the chemical industry (Belambra, 2013).

The 20th century brought on globalized competition and the loss of the textile industry; apart from smaller ateliers focused on haute couture and reparation of garments. However, the economic development achieved in Lyon did not disappear; with several industries having arisen in tandem with the textile industry and remaining after its decline. The chemical industry being the most obvious example.

### *La Vallée de la Chimie*

The Lyonnaise region is home to “chemical valley” or “the corridor of the chemical industry” (*la vallée de la chimie / le couloir de la chimie*) where, to the south of the city, a large concentration of refineries and chemical processing plants can be found. The most famous of

which is the Feyzin Refinery (*Raffinerie de Feyzin*) currently owned and operated by the French multinational *TotalEnergies*. It is one of the seven remaining oil refineries in France. The site boasts of 600 permanent full-time jobs and of providing over 50% of the fuel consumed in the region, although these figures come from TotalEnergies itself and so should be taken with a grain of salt (TotalEnergies, 2021).



(Feyzin Refinery, Sebleouf 2019)

The Feyzin Refinery is just one of many chemical-processing facilities and TotalEnergies is just one of many actors implanted in the region. Other notable companies implanted in the region include Air Liquide, Engie, Arkema, SNCF, CRN and more.

Lyon's Chemical Valley has its own regional development and interest group called "Mission Vallée de la Chimie" and federated under the "Association for the Sustainable Development of Chemical Valley" (*l'Association pour le Développement Durable de la Vallée de*

*la Chimie*). This group brings together the 30 largest employers in the valley as well as public institutions such as the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region and the département du Rhône to promote development of the region. Notably, there is a sustained effort to turn the valley into a regional hub of research and innovation with a new pact being signed in March of 2023 between the Association and the Métropole de Lyon (2023) entitled the “Pact for impact” (*Pacte pour l’Impact*). This pact calls for a “new governance to renew the public-private dialogue” in the framework of supporting the decarbonisation of the region’s industries, boosting renewable energies, stimulating new research activities and increasing the quality of life for the workers and residents of the region by increasing liveability and reducing workplace risks.

There is some evidence to suggest that this call to action is bearing fruit. For a brief moment, let’s turn our attention to *ICTYOS*, a start-up launched in 2020 in *Saint-Fons* at the heart of the Chemical Valley. This small business was created by two friends freshly graduated with their diplomas in chemical engineering. Wishing to create a company contributing to the circular economy and green transition, they launched *ICTYOS*: the first new French tannery in over 40 years specializing in the creation of high quality fabric out of fish skins. The duo recuperate over 5 tons of fish skins from sushi restaurants in Lyon each year that would’ve otherwise gone directly in the trash and put them through a roughly two week long chemical process that turns them into high quality sellable fabrics (Conseil National du Cuir, 2019). *ICTYOS* is an excellent example of a new start-up that leans on the traditional industries of Lyon, in this case of textiles and chemicals, while contributing to a new economic model of eco-responsibility.



Although a complete evaluation of this novel pact and the array of public-private partnerships are beyond the scope of this paper, I would highlight the longevity of this industrial region as a strength to the Lyonnaise economy and welcome the efforts to diversify the corridor by investing in research and renewable energies although we should be wary of attempts to greenwash what still remains the fossil fuel industry.

### *The Tourism & Cultural Industry in Lyon*

Besides the chemical industry, Lyon leans on its reputation as a culinary and cultural capital to generate a vibrant tourism & cultural industry. Although nowhere near the levels of Paris, Lyon boasts of 20 Michelin-starred restaurants versus 130 in the capital (Michelin Guide, 2023). In addition, Lyon has the prestigious Opéra national de Lyon and the Théâtre des Célestins as well as over 70 conservatoires and music schools supported by the Métropole de Lyon.



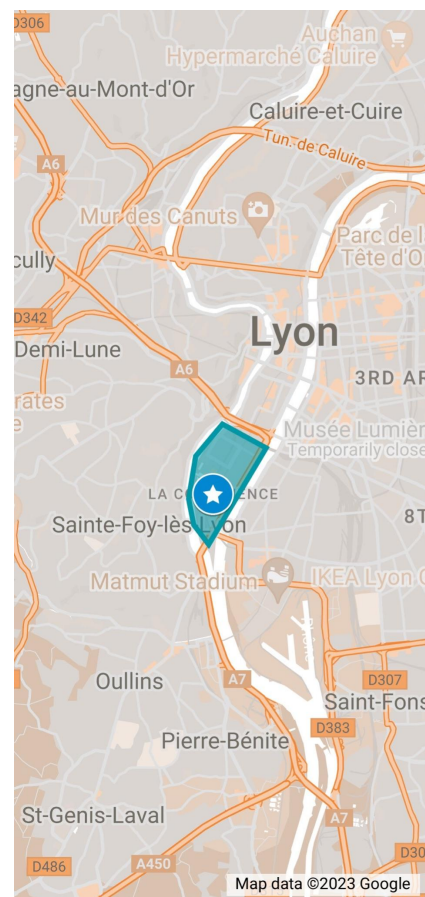
(Théâtre des Célestins. Dormet, 2006.)

Indeed, OnlyLyon cites over 250 hotels operating in the city and over 34,000 jobs that the tourism industry in Lyon supports as well as over 21,000 jobs for the cultural and artistic industries (OnlyLyon Business, 2022). Keeping with the theme of sustainable development, the Metropole de Lyon expresses its desire to not just increase raw tourist numbers but to “make Lyon a reference in sustainable tourism” through such policies as the promotion of local goods and increased attractivity of public transportation (OnlyLyon Business, 2021). Lyon equally hosts several annual festivals that are a major draw for tourists in Europe such as the Festival of Lights (*Fête des Lumières*) and the Lumière Cinema Festival (*Festival Lumière*) both of which draw upon Lyon’s rich cultural tradition and heritage. In terms of conferences, the French capital led the world in 2019 with 237 meetings in 2019 while Lyon hosted 59, ahead of Istanbul at 58 according to the International Congress and Convention Association (2019).

### *The special neighborhood of the Confluence*

The neighborhood of the Confluence (le quartier de la Confluence, dit *la Confluence*) stretches on for a significant length of Lyon’s famous *Presqu’île* (the peninsula that forms the heart of the city). One could be forgiven, however, for thinking that this famous district, and even the peninsula itself, ends at *la gare de Perrache*. Indeed, although having lived in Lyon for nearly two years, I and those I’ve talked to agree that in the popular imagination, the Confluence is a neighborhood much less familiar than those further north.

Formerly an industrial neighborhood in decline, the Métropole de Lyon created a special district here, a *zone d'aménagement concerté* (ZAC), near the end of the 1990's in order to reinvigorate the neighborhood and make it a shining example of the new, cosmopolitan future of Lyon. This special zoning designation (ZAC) allows local planners and urban developers to more easily and more directly take charge of the neighborhood and develop it with the metropole's modernization efforts in mind. Objectives include the creation of France's first *ecoquartier*, with carbon neutrality being reached between 2025-30 as well as growing the residential population to 30,000 by 2030, up from 6000 in 2003 (Lyon Confluence, 2022).



(*La Confluence* district. Taken from Google Maps.)

Quickly after the declaration of this special zone, several projects were announced:

1. The Muséum of Lyon, then located in the 6th arrondissement of Lyon next to the *Parc de la Tête d'or*, was quite dilapidated and a commission was formed in July of 1999 with the objective of creating a new museum at the Confluence to transfer its collections and contribute to the revitalization of the neighborhood (Archives du Département du Rhône et de La Métropole de Lyon). Although several years behind schedule and several

echelons above its initial budget, the new Musée des Confluences opened its doors in 2014 with a modernist and deconstructionist design. It is now a potent symbol of the metropole's determination to modernize the district and a commercial success with the highest annual visitor rate of any French museum outside of the Île-de-France region (Ministère de la Culture, 2022).



(Le musée des Confluences, crown jewel of the Confluence re-urbanization project.

Monster4711, 2018.)

2. The 90's and early 2000's marked the return of the system of tramways in Lyon and ensuring urban mobility throughout the Confluence was a priority for the city. A new tramline, the T1, initially opened in 2001 and operated from *Perrache* going north to *IUT Feysine* but was quickly extended to *Montrochet*, the center of the Confluence district in 2005. Looking still to increase the connectivity of the district, the construction of a new



bridge linking the Confluence to the adjacent Gerland neighborhood was completed in 2013, permitting the extension of the T1 line. The bridge, *Pont Raymond-Barre*, is a modern bridge permitting only trams, pedestrians, and cyclists to traverse it; yet another symbol of the desired impression of modernity for the district. Recently, a second tram line, the T2, extended its terminus to the renamed *Hôtel de Région - Montrochet* at Confluence adding another transport option for the residents of the district in 2021. Still, a lack of a metro stop (the metro's A line stops at *Gare de Perrache*) enforces the feeling of separation between the district and the rest of the *Presqu'île* which is otherwise all connected through a singular metro line.



(Pont Raymond-Barre, similar to Tilikum Crossing in Portland, inaugurated in 2013. Babsy, 2014.)

3. The master plan looking to develop the neighborhood, called *le plan Confluence*, equally sought to organize the construction of new housing projects and economic activities. To this end, a modern shopping mall named *le pôle de commerces et de loisirs Confluence* began construction in 2007 and opened its doors in 2012. The new shopping center contains around 75 stores, including reputed brands such as an Apple store, as well as nearly 30 restaurants and a cinema (Adam, 2020). The targeted shopping demographic is decidedly upper-income. It's claimed that this new shopping center will create 800 new jobs in the district (Huissel, 2011). More concretely, the flagship project enforces the Confluence as a desired leisure destination in its own right.



(Example of new, ecological housing development at the Confluence. Tibidibtido, 2014)

An important aspect of this urban revitalization project is the emphasis placed on the redevelopment in order to create an innovative new *ecoquartier*. That is to say, new buildings with the latest energy efficiency technology, a focus on urban green spaces and biodiversity, rooftop solar technology, community gardens and a commitment to net zero carbon emissions in the neighborhood by 2030. Some new constructions are even net-positive energy producers; a first in France (Batiadvisor, 2022). Although admirable in its aims, it must be noted that the major sustainability initiatives brought on by the project are also potent marketing devices for the district as demonstrated by the recent implantations of decidedly younger and wealthier residents.

In her article titled “La lente naissance d’une vie de quartier,” Jennifer Simoes (2018) succinctly describes the Confluence as the “former cul-de-sac” of the Presqu’île that has taken a long time to develop but is finally bearing fruit. She notes the increasing annual visits of both the Musée des Confluences and the shopping center and the installation of over 1000 private businesses, although noting that the majority of these businesses were already in Lyon and simply moved offices to the new district. The clear gentrification of the neighborhood is also an important subject in her article; she notes that the Métropole de Lyon is attempting to show that the revitalization of the district will not be reserved for solely the upper-income echelons of the population through the construction of several new subsidized public housing units but that important tensions exist. For example, residents of the lower-income northern section of Sainte-Blandine have long prioritized using their personal vehicles which they have historically parked free of charge on the street; a phenomena that certain new residents and occasional visitors find counterintuitive to the mission of building a new, innovative ecological district. Still,

many longtime residents have welcomed the influx of public investment and increased foot traffic to their businesses.

The Confluence Project has known several successes such as the 2011 decision to move the headquarters of the Regional Council (*Le Conseil régional d'Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes*) to the neighborhood, the opening of a university (*l'Université Catholique de Lyon*), the 2003 renovation of an old warehouse and sugar factory (*La Sucrière*) where many art expositions and cultural events are now hosted, as well as the gradual growth in frequentation of the Confluence shopping center which reaches over 9 million annual visitors. More recently, the opening of a new health center fulfills the needs of a neighborhood in demographic expansion and responds to the complaints of residents of a lack of medical access (Micholin, 2023).

### **The institution of OnlyLyon**

Launched in 2007 and consolidating the responsibilities of numerous prior agencies, *OnlyLyon* is the marketing branch of the Métropole de Lyon tasked with promoting Lyon at the international level in order to attract new business, students and increasing tourism.

Noticing that Lyon lacked standing internationally save for perhaps in the culinary world, the metropole of Lyon decided an entire agency was needed to develop the reputation of Lyon in Europe and beyond. Lionel Flasseur, the director of OnlyLyon notes that 15 years ago, before the start of the agency, “There was a huge gap between its geographical, economic, and tourist assets and its lack of recognition” (Rouden, 2014). Observing the success of marketing campaigns of



European cities such as Berlin and Amsterdam, a symbol with a red lion and the slogan of OnlyLyon is launched. A fundamental part of OnlyLyon’s strategy, however, is not to sell Lyon on traditional merits of low taxes or ease of doing business, but rather to attract talent based on the quality of life and its ecological credentials. Some at the Métropole even qualify this as a new economic “model” for cities.



(Bohyunlee, 2014)

The President of the Métropole de Lyon, Bruno Bernard defines the strategy as “Welcome more, welcome better” going on to explain that: “Thanks to all our partners, companies, elected officials, residents, we can offer a living environment that flourishes and cares about its impact on the environment. I am happy and proud of the broad support for this program, which allows us to promote a welcoming and responsible metropolis” (Brière, 2022).

For Phillipe Valentin, President of the Lyon-Saint-Etienne-Roanne Chamber of Commerce, OnlyLyon is “a great success! This unique voice of the Lyon collective has really won the hearts of many entrepreneurs, investors, tourists, researchers, athletes, students... French and foreign. The new global situation and the challenges of our companies, in particular the scarcity of talent and the transitions in progress, lead us to adjust the strategy of the OnlyLyon approach, for a more sustainable attractiveness, extended to neighboring territories and integrating new players” (Brière, 2022).

Although full of marketing buzzwords, the evidence to suggest a giant leap forward in international recognition is scarce. An analysis of European cities’ attractiveness rating gives Lyon little credit. For example, Lyon ranked #7 of on the list of “Large European Cities of the Future 2022/23” in the category of “Human Capital & Lifestyle” published by FDI Intelligence, a branch of the financial times but is outranked in all other categories such as economic potential, cost effectiveness, and connectivity by cities such as Belgrade, Antwerp, Valencia, and Manchester (Detonni, 2022). This is a surprising result for the second largest city in France, a country that has topped foreign investment attractivity rankings for several years now much to the joy of the governing administration (EY Attractiveness Survey Europe, 2022).

Still an analysis from Arthur Loyd, a French commercial real estate and consulting firm that pulls from over thirty data sources and then gives French cities over 75 indicators before evaluating the attractivity of these agglomerations put Lyon at the top of its ranking for very large metropolitan areas (*très grandes métropoles*). Important to note that Lyon is followed by

Toulouse and then Bordeaux but that this ranking list does not evaluate Paris. This ranking uses four large categories for constituting its ranking: economic performance, commercial real estate & business friendliness, connectivity & human capital, and lastly quality of life. Lyon ranks particularly high (#1) in the category of business friendliness and urban amenities but the report warns that Lyon may hit a glass ceiling due to increasing housing costs and the increasing frequency of heat waves which tends to degrade quality of life (Baromètre Arthur Loyd 2022, 2022). It is important to underline that this list ranks solely French cities, so while it is informative it does not indicate to us their performance compared to similarly sized cities in say, Germany or Canada.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I have attempted to construct a general picture of the economy of the Métropole de Lyon and how it compares to the capital of Paris in order to speculate on the success of French decentralization efforts. Although hosting a high quality of life as well as several vibrant industries, very clear and large inequalities exist between the two metropolises as a consequence of history as well as public policy. These inequalities are notably more entrenched than in neighboring countries such as Germany where numerous economic poles exist outside of the capital of Berlin. The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region where Lyon is found outcompetes other French regions and the national average but has maintained similar gaps in productivity with the capital since at least the 1990s.

However, this is not to say that the Métropole de Lyon is not economically competitive. The métropole and the region continue to make progress on improving regional connectivity and increasing attractiveness, commonly with the help of the French state and the European Union, such as the recent addition of a 12th railway platform at the Gare de Lyon-Part-Dieu (Lyon Mag, 2022). Indeed, several industries such as the chemical industry have proved to be resilient assets that provide long-lasting jobs both to the region and to the nation. However, these efforts have all served to maintain similar growth rates as the capital; not permit large leaps forward to make up for historic inequalities. However, the continuing inequalities between Lyon and the capital are not due to a lack of trying on the part of the Métropole and the AURA region. The Metropole has organized wide ranging development efforts such as the revitalization of the Part-Dieu business district, redevelopment of the Confluence neighborhood, participation in the Chemical Valley public-private partnership, creation of the OnlyLyon marketing & business development agency and much more. Admirably, these efforts have been made with the express goal of promoting Lyon as a destination for those who value high quality of life and who are ecologically-minded, not simply by cutting taxes and luring businesses by slashing red tape.

That said, France remains a country economically dominated by its capital region. The CAC40, for example, is an index of the 40 most high performing French companies such as LVMH, Airbus, L’Oreal, Schneider Electric and Crédit agricole. 29 of these 40 top performing French companies are headquartered in the Parisian capital region. Nine others are headquartered elsewhere within the European Union while just two are headquartered in France outside of Paris: Michelin in Clermont-Ferrand and Legrand in Limoges. Not one of the top 40 French companies are headquartered in Lyon nor in Marseille, the country's next biggest cities. These

observations lead us to the conclusion that, while Lyon is succeeding in its development efforts by maintaining a high quality of life for its inhabitants, closing the gap with the capital will require much more support from the French state and the European Union.

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