

## **Planning the World's New Towns – A Tale of Two Countries, 1975-2013**

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### *Abstract*

Reflecting their extensive domestic programmes, the UK and France became major exporters of New Town planning expertise during the later twentieth century. Yet each country delivered its expertise in markedly different ways. Drawing on the UK's own New Towns programme begun in 1946, a public sector international New Town planning agency, the British Urban Development Services Unit, was created in 1975. However it quickly proved unsuccessful and was abandoned in 1978. Instead national expertise was exported by UK private planning consultants, with strong government encouragement. By contrast France, whose own *Villes Nouvelles* programme started in 1969, created a single public sector international planning agency, the *Groupement d'intérêt économique Villes Nouvelles de France*, in 1984 that operated successfully (latterly under a different name) until 2013. The chapter briefly considers the international efforts of the two countries, targeting oil-exporting countries, their respective former colonial Empires and elsewhere. It also interprets their different approaches in light of their different political histories. Thus the UK was much

earlier affected by neo-liberal, pro-market political ideologies that instinctively favoured private rather than public sector approaches. This was especially so given the already established position of its private planning consultancies both in international work and in preparing the original master plans of many UK New Towns. In France, by contrast, the public sector remained strong and structured the export of planning expertise while private planning consultancies were much less important. The chapter ends by briefly considering the wider impacts of the two countries' different approaches.

KEY WORDS:

New towns - United Kingdom – New towns – France -- International planning consultancy

### *Introduction*

The new towns created in both advanced capitalist and communist countries during the post-war decades quickly became planned showpieces of their respective nations. They embodied the most advanced contemporary thinking about planning so that international interest in them soon grew. Many attracted planners, designers, development corporations and other experts and decision-makers from other countries, eager to learn what was being done. Soon there was a growing demand for the expertise that had created them from countries adopting or considering their own programmes.

The UK and France became two of the biggest players in this emergent export trade in new towns planning expertise. Their programmes stemmed from national government decisions, with each town developed by its own public development corporation. By the early 1970s, the UK had thirty-two such New Towns substantially built or underway, in three successive waves. France had begun only in 1969 (compared to 1946 in the UK) and had just

nine *Villes Nouvelles*. Yet most, especially around Paris, were on a much larger scale and their construction has continued much longer than most UK examples. Their planning was more closely integrated into comprehensive regional growth plans, compared to the metropolitan decentralist mind-set that shaped most UK examples. Another important difference was how the two countries marketed and delivered their respective new town planning expertise to international clients.

In 1975, the British government formed an international new town planning agency. Yet although it began with high hopes, it was abandoned after only three years. New Town development corporations, sometimes working together, briefly continued to give international planning advice. But it was largely private planning consultants that were the main exporters of British new town expertise. Sometimes these competed with each other and with the New Town development corporations while at others they co-operated. In a changing political climate, however, no acceptable way of integrating their separate efforts into a single agency was ever found.

This contrasted sharply with the pattern in France, where the *Groupe Central des Villes Nouvelles* (GCVN), the government body coordinating *Villes Nouvelles* policy, established in 1984 exactly the kind of single public sector international new towns planning consultancy that had so recently failed across the Channel. Accessing growing international demand, it soon became successful and lasted for almost three decades. However, it was only a part of the complex network of French public bodies variously involved in international planning and development consultancy that had originated in the 1950s. This chapter probes these national contrasts, finding important reasons in how and when the two nations adopted and implemented their own new towns programmes. It also highlights deeper contrasts in respective national attitudes to state intervention as compared to private initiative and the different pace at which these attitudes shifted.

## **The British Urban Development Services Unit**

There was never any false modesty about the international potential of the UK's New Towns. Launching the programme at Stevenage in May 1946, Lewis Silkin, Minister of Town and Country Planning in the Attlee Labour Government, asserted that soon “[p]eople from all over the world will come to Stevenage to see how we here in this country are building for the new way of life” (TNA, HLG 91/77). At the time his less-than-sympathetic audience thought the idea preposterous. Yet it was not long before international visitors did come, and in large numbers, not just to Stevenage but all the other New Towns that followed. The Central Office of Information and individual New Town development corporations produced much attractive publicity for international circulation promoting the UK's New Towns. They were widely reported on and studied around the world.

Despite this obvious potential, it was not until summer 1975 that a single expert organisation to exploit this international interest was proposed (TNA, T 341/723a). Already individual New Town Development Corporations and the New Towns Association (NTA - the common interest body for all these corporations) were receiving international approaches. Milton Keynes, designated in 1967, soon proved to be a magnet for this interest. Its dynamic General Manager, Fred Lloyd Roche (who was also then chairing the key NTA General Managers' Committee) had recently visited Saudi Arabia following up the most promising lead. Roche, his Chairman, Lord 'Jock' Campbell and their equivalents in other Development Corporations, particularly Aycliffe-Peterlee, Peterborough, Northampton, Washington and Harlow, were eager to market their organisations' planning, design and development expertise.

Well aware of these developments, the Departments of Trade (DoT) and of Environment (DoE - then responsible for New Towns) were thinking on the same lines.

Matters were brought to a head in early September 1975 by an imminent Saudi trade delegation. The DoT believed there was high-level Saudi interest in creating an Anglo-Saudi Trade Commission to promote joint ventures. Saudi Arabia's rapid economic development, great wealth as a major oil producer and national development programme including five new towns all seemed to augur well for a UK approach.

It fell to DoE Minister, John Silkin, son of Lewis, to take the new initiative forward (TNA, T 341/723b). He took personal pride in realising his father's 1946 predictions. The DoE's Deputy Secretary, Peter Scott-Baldwin, largely gave the idea practicable form. The Treasury was worried about using public funds as risk capital but responded very positively. They welcomed this opportunity to boost export earnings during increasingly troubled economic times. It was ironic that Saudi Arabia, as *de facto* leader of OPEC, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, had recently played a key part in precipitating these same economic woes by quadrupling the world price of oil in 1973-4.

By October 1975, the name, form and scope of the new body, the British Urban Development Services Unit (BUDSU), had been determined. It was very small and initially funded by and responsible to the DoE. The general understanding was that this might change as it won lucrative consultancy commissions. As a state body, however, it gained authority and 'clout' in dealing with other governments. Unlike private consultancy firms, it was also untroubled by the need for surety bonds in international contracts or as threatened by delayed client payments. Appropriate expertise would come largely from development corporations but UK private consultants might sometimes be hired by BUDSU for particular jobs.

BUDSU's overall role was, as required, to provide expertise in the planning, design, development and governance of new towns and to arrange training for local professional staff ("Selling New Towns –The Elliott way", 1976). Saudi Arabia continued to be reckoned the

most likely client but other Middle Eastern countries and Nigeria were soon mentioned.

George Elliott, a quantity surveyor from private practice, was appointed to head BUDSU. In mid-December 1975, Silkin announced BUDSU's existence in Parliament.

It was always recognised that there would be serious competition to sell expertise to these oil-rich countries. DoE officials considered France's *Villes Nouvelles* programme would be BUDSU's main rival (TNA, FJ 2/15). Yet their comparative assessment of organisation, planning and development concluded that the UK's more centralist approach to New Towns would be advantageous dealing with highly centralised countries such as Saudi Arabia. The French programme was also centralised but funded by more diverse public stakeholders than in UK. Indeed, it was thought that France might perform better in less centralised countries, seeking more diversely governed and funded programmes.

### **Decline, Fall and Afterlife**

These concerns soon proved correct and others surfaced. Despite BUDSU being born amidst high hopes, frustrations and disappointments quickly followed. Saudi Arabia proved an exceptionally difficult market because the political will that first favoured Britain in 1975 soon shifted. By June 1978, it became clear that the contract to plan the new town at Jizan, coveted since BUDSU's inception, had gone to a French engineering consultancy, SERETE (TNA, FJ 2/20a). The other major Saudi project being pursued, Yanbu, went to the American firm Bechtel. There had been minor successes in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and a few other places but generating very little income. What had seemed promising leads in Qatar, Egypt, Iran, Greece, Jordan and elsewhere came to very little, at least as far as BUDSU was concerned (TNA. OD 68/48).

Already, in April 1977 the DoE Executive Group realised BUDSU had reached a crisis point (TNA, FJ 2/18a). Its administrative location left it hidebound by Civil Service

rules about pay and conditions from which it could only be freed by becoming an autonomous state agency. Yet this would have needed primary legislation which an always weak (and by then minority) Labour Government was unwilling to attempt. Private consultants meanwhile were deeply resentful of and reluctant to work with what they saw as featherbedded competition (TNA, FJ 2/18b). Additionally, there was the opacity of decision-making within the foreign governments involved and a palpably more fleet-footed competition (often including British consultants). Things did not look good.

The Jizan announcement in mid-1978 triggered a cut back of BUDSU's operations. Since these had always been very small scale, this effectively spelled the end (TNA, FJ 2/20b). At the time, political arguments against an overblown and inefficient state sector compared to the supposed enterprise of an unfettered private sector were gathering strength. In July, the *Daily Mail* reported critically that the 'golden goose' of BUDSU had become a 'lame duck', spending over half a million pounds of public funds and earning only £30,000 (Bevins, 1978). It was also a sitting duck. By September Elliott had gone and the organisation briefly continued in vestigial form based at the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC). Foreign approaches continued, mainly seeking short-term advice. These were coordinated at Milton Keynes with appropriate specialist teams assembled from its and other development corporations.

By early 1979 even the façade of BUDSU had gone, now formally replaced by the Milton Keynes-based consortium arrangement, known ironically as 'son of BUDSU'. Its most significant engagement was between MKDC and the Federal Capital Development Authority of Abuja, the new Nigerian capital (CBS, D-MKDC 7/10/9; Elleh, 2017). Through Roche, the MKDC assisted its master plan review, oversaw implementation and planned two districts. A few members of MKDC staff were based in Abuja from 1978-81 (until payment became erratic). The Nigerian work brought further consortium links elsewhere, including

Egypt, Venezuela, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago and, most promisingly of all, Algeria (Ortolano, 2019).

The future of 'son of BUDSU' became increasingly doubtful after the Thatcher Conservative government, eager to 'roll back the frontiers of the state', came to power in 1979. The new government saw the export potential of the New Towns but did not want external income and status bolstering the very development corporations it hoped soon to abolish. Instead it favoured private consultants and effectively blocked the consortium and development corporations striking further international agreements. Yet some foreign governments (notably Algeria) did not fully trust private firms and insisted on dealing with state agencies. Despite this, the DoE still refused in February 1982 to budge enough to allow the MKDC to assist the Algerians, who finally lost patience and withdrew (CBS, D-MKDC 10/11/8). There was one later approach, when the Oman government similarly insisted on MKDC advice. The DoE grudgingly approved this smaller engagement, but only under its strict supervision (CBS, D-MKDC 3/2/1).

In November 1983 the DoE launched 'Planning and Building New Towns: The British Experience', a marketing campaign on behalf of private consultants and construction firms. A video and brochure in English, French and Spanish were distributed via British embassies, high commissions and consulates in over 70 countries in Africa, the Middle East, South and East Asia and Latin America. The brochure assured potential clients that development corporation staff might be used 'where appropriate'. In practice this largely occurred as leading figures left development corporations (most notably Roche in 1980) and moved into private consultancy. The idea of a British international new towns public sector planning consultancy had finally died.



## **The *Villes Nouvelles* Programme**

Across the Channel, meanwhile, the French government had started its own policy of *Villes Nouvelles*. In 1965, the administration in charge of Paris Region, the *District*, and its public agency in charge of planning, the *Institut d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région parisienne* (IAURP), proposed concentrating urban growth into several new towns. These were reduced to five in 1969 although the planning agency in charge of the rest of the country, the *Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale* (DATAR), proposed four more for the Lille, Lyon, Marseille and Rouen regions.

When the first *établissements publics d'aménagement* (EPAs), i.e. development corporations, were founded in 1969, the government decided to establish an overarching body to coordinate them with the different ministries and administrations: the GCVN. Its staff was housed by the ministry in charge of planning, the *Ministère de l'Équipement* (Vadelorge, 2014). Compared to the UK, this later French policy began with much greater international awareness. Since 1965, the IAURP planners had studied new town building elsewhere, including the first British New Towns and their equivalents in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Hungary, Poland and, later, the USSR and Japan (Cahiers de l'IAURP, 1967 May; 1967, June; 1969; 1970; 1975; 1976). The GCVN also played a key role in the creation of the International New Towns Association (INTA) in 1976.

Moreover, some civil servants working on the *Villes Nouvelles* programme had colonial experience. With decolonisation, these professionals returned to France in the early 1960s. They brought valuable expertise, not found among their counterparts at home, and entered national planning administration and agencies (Claude & Frédénucci, 2003, 33). Beyond this, the implementation of the *Villes Nouvelles* programme itself attracted international interest, as in the UK two decades earlier. The EPAs soon received foreign

professional and governmental groups. However, the public nature of the EPAs, with powers limited to their respective new town, made undertaking consulting commissions abroad a complex issue.

One attempt at international consultancy was done by Michel Colot director of the EPA of Evry in Paris region. Colot, an élite *Ponts et Chaussées* engineer, was a former DATAR officer in its early years. He became involved in the *Villes Nouvelles* policy in 1973, becoming director of the EPA of Lille Est (later renamed Villeneuve d'Ascq) before moving to Evry in 1980. Under Colot, this latter EPA won in particular a commission to study a new town in Venezuela in 1982. However, despite its key role providing expertise, team leadership was left to another public body supplying engineering and planning expertise overseas: the *Bureau central d'études pour les équipements d'outre mer* (BCEOM) (Bugat, 1982).

Meanwhile, alongside the *Villes Nouvelles* programme, the French government was consciously expanding its soft power through *coopération*, involving bilateral agreements with Third World countries that brought technical aid funding. Beginning with former African colonies, *coopération* soon extended to Latin America. Numerous planning contracts followed, including IAURP's first international study in the late 1960s (Orillard, 2017). The wave of globalisation after the oil crisis and election of socialist François Mitterand as President in 1981 also saw expansion of the *coopération* policy into Asia. The *Ministère de l'Équipement*, in charge of planning, and its specialised department, the *Direction des affaires économiques et internationales*, helped coordinate different public and private bodies to undertake the planning studies, both under these agreements and elsewhere.

### **The *Groupement d'intérêt économique Villes Nouvelles de France***

In 1984, the *Groupement d'intérêt économique (GIE) Villes Nouvelles de France* (VNF), was created as to respond to international requests to tap EPA planning expertise more directly (Interviews A & B). The early 1980s thus opened a new chapter in the development of French international public planning consultancy. Yet the GIEVNF's actual creation seems to have grown from the work of three key persons leading French *Villes Nouvelles* policy at that time.

The first was Claude Guary, a trained planner, who began as a private consultant in south-east France before joining the EPA for the Rives de l'Etang de Berre *Ville Nouvelle* near Marseille. Moving to the GCVN in 1983, he became INTA treasurer but also soon faced the failure of the Vaudreuil *Ville Nouvelle* (later renamed Val-de-Reuil) near Rouen (Études normandes, 2004). The potential closure of its EPA highlighted the need for new employment possibilities, ultimately for all EPAs' officers. With this in mind, Guary proposed that the GCVN found a sister body, a GIE focused on commercial work.

The second person was Michel Dresch, an élite *Ecole nationale d'administration* graduate, who became *secrétaire général* (chief executive) of the GCVN shortly after Guary had joined. Dresch already had major international experience with five years as a policy advisor in economic affairs for Senegal. In this he had followed his father, a celebrated geographer of Africa. Dresch immediately welcomed Guary's proposal and the opportunity of a planning study in Senegal prompted the foundation of the GIE. The third was Michel Colot. Although initially afraid this new body would stymie his own EPA's international ambitions, he soon enthusiastically joined the venture.

Formally, each *Ville Nouvelle* EPA was a member of the new GIEVNF and one EPA director became president. The GCVN organised a rather 'lean' administration, supplying

one of its officers as *secrétaire general* (chief executive) and other staffing as needed. For the planning studies, the EPAs provided personnel from their staff on a temporary basis. Each EPA director was expected to participate actively in GIEVNF's administration, selecting planning studies to be undertaken and finding appropriate staff to send abroad. With some changes, this organisation lasted three decades but its story was one of contrasts.

### **The GIEVNF/ADEFRANCE in Practice 1984-2013**

When the GIEVNF was created, Colot became president and Guary *secrétaire général*. One permanent staff member, Chantal Guillet, trained in construction economics and law, was recruited from the EPA of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines near Paris. The GIE did some consultancy in continental France but the overseas *départements* and territories (DOM-TOMs), mainly French Guyana, Polynesia and New Caledonia, offered a captive market, guaranteeing part of its income. From 1984 to 1988, the GIEVNF won nine commissions in former French colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali) (GIE ADEFRANCE, 2009). Elsewhere, following bilateral relationships on the return of democracy, it undertook a planning study in Argentina, linked to the project to move the federal capital from Buenos Aires to Patagonia.

Guary left the GIEVNF in 1988 and was replaced by Jacques Gally, administrative and financial director of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines' EPA (Interview C). The number and geographical scope of studies rapidly grew. During the 1990s, the GIEVNF had between eight and fifteen commissions annually. Yet many were only short studies involving, for instance, planners for only one or two weeks. Actually, the GIEVNF's success was only relative compared with other French public bodies such as the IAURP, (renamed in 1976 *Institut d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région d'Île de France* [IAURIF]) (IAURIF 1984; IAU Île-de-France, 2015). In general, the GIEVNF worked alone on its own

commissions but also regularly assisted by other French public bodies. Only one fifth of the GIEVNF's studies were explicitly about new towns, although the others dealt with subjects handled by the EPAs, from urban management to logistics studies.

Beyond the DOM-TOMs, Francophone Africa remained an important market but the GIEVNF gained numerous commissions elsewhere. The Middle-East and Europe were not major markets although did see some important studies, including a proposal for a new town for Istanbul or another in Russia to relocate, after the independence of Ukraine, the Russian part of the population evacuated from Chernobyl. Latin America became particularly important in the mid-1980s with six commissions in Brazil, three in Argentina, and others in Uruguay, Chile, Mexico, and Ecuador. In 1988, the commissions in Asia began, following a bilateral agreement with the Indonesian government. The GIEVNF continued the studies about a new town for Greater Djakarta started by Colot's EPA of Evry and provided general assistance to the local Department of Public Works. There were other commissions in China, Taiwan, India, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (GIE ADEFrance, 2009).

However, this growth diminished during the 1990s. To develop the Asian market, the GIEVNF acted as a private international consultancy to secure a big commission far beyond the “*cooperation*” agreements. It partnered a Korean architectural firm and a Thai engineering consultancy to develop the University of Chulalongkorn's neighbourhood in Bangkok. This venture abruptly stopped when the Asian economic crisis arrived in 1997, leaving a serious budget deficit for the GIEVNF. In parallel to these wider economic troubles, the ending of the *Villes Nouvelles* policy around 2000 meant all but two *Ville Nouvelle* EPAs were closed.

The GCVN was changed into an organisation coordinating many public bodies handling different types of urban developments. Consequently, Gally's successor, Chantal

Guillet, renamed the GIE *Amenageurs et développeurs en France* (ADEFrance), participating organisations no longer limited to the *Ville Nouvelle* EPAs (Interview D). However, the end of the New Towns policy left the GIE without a backbone and core support in the government administration. The number of commissions decreased although they still came from several continents. Growing governmental austerity finally led to the GIE ADEFrance's closure in 2013.

### **Why were the Two Stories Different?**

It is never straightforward understanding why things occur differently, with different outcomes, in different countries. Here, however, several things stand out. The first relates to the different national political and ideological climates during the relevant periods. BUDSU's short life was played out when a pro-interventionist but weak Labour government was losing ground to emergent neo-liberal thinking. Yet this unfavourable context might perhaps have been transcended by ministerial patronage. BUDSU did indeed begin with such a champion in John Silkin, but in September 1976, just as problems started to appear, he became Minister of Agriculture. Subsequently there was no longer equivalent enthusiastic support at the top.

In France by contrast there was both broad commitment across the political spectrum to state intervention and very strong support from key individuals in the government machine. Public and private interests were closely related thanks to a common elite in both spheres and the use of mixed public and private capital. After the oil crisis, France did not endure the same economic troubles as the UK and there was no real equivalent in the 1970s or 1980s to the impending and actual Thatcherite ascendancy. Instead, state intervention in France supported economic expansion overseas during the first years of the Mitterrand presidency after 1981. The GIEVNF therefore avoided the kind of sniping soon directed at BUDSU.

How the policies were organised in both countries was also important. The UK New Town development corporations were created as relatively autonomous individual bodies, therefore making it less easy for a new central agency to establish itself. By contrast, the French *Villes Nouvelles* were, from the beginning, closely related to the government administrations through the GCVN. Even when the socialist government began to devolve planning to local authorities in 1983, it kept control of the *Villes Nouvelles*, reviving their development when it wished to influence economic and social outcomes.

Nevertheless, the relative timing of these international initiatives in relation to the respective national new town programmes that spawned them was also significant. 1973 marked the peak of the UK New Towns programme. By the time BUDSU began, the programme was beginning to be run down. By contrast (despite the Vaudreuil failure), the *Villes Nouvelles* programme was very active when GIEVNF began and the EPAs had large staffs. From the EPAs' point of view, overseas secondments represented effective staff development.

### **Private consultancies: Britain's success story?**

Perhaps the biggest single difference was, however, the position of private consultancies in the two countries. Already, long before the 1970s, UK private planning consultancies were well established and used to standing on their own feet. The post-war planning system had brought professionally-staffed departments for all local planning authorities. UK-based work formerly available to private consultancies abruptly declined. Many therefore looked to international work, especially in the wider British imperial world and newly independent states. The result was that private consultants had been accumulating overseas experience since the later 1940s (Town Planning Institute, 1956).

How post-war planning unfolded was also important in another way. The only major exception to the evaporation of UK work for private consultants lay in the New Towns themselves. Thus the founding master plans of most New Towns were directly commissioned from private consultants, before the permanent planning teams of the respective development corporations were fully established. Each plan prominently carried the name of the consultancy that had prepared it. These consultancies could thus very plausibly claim New Town planning expertise equal or superior to that of the development corporations.

Certainly private consultancies achieved striking international successes in this field during the 1960s and 1970s. Shankland Cox were even hired in 1968 to assist planning the Parisian *Ville Nouvelle* of Cergy-Pontoise (Portnoi, 2019) before the establishment of its EPA. They drew on Graeme Shankland's own experience preparing the 1961 plan for the unbuilt new town at Hook and for major expansion at Ipswich (1966, also unbuilt). Llewelyn-Davies and Partners, master planners of Washington and Milton Keynes New Towns, gained several notable international commissions. In the USA, under the (largely abortive) New Communities program, the firm prepared initial plans for two never-built ventures, Audubon and Shenendoah in 1969-71. With Australian partners, it produced the plan to expand Albury-Wodonga as a new town in 1975. They also planned New Zealand's short-lived new town project to relieve Christchurch's growth at Rolleston.

By late 1977, UK planning consultants were (or had recently been) working in the Middle East, parts of Africa and South East Asia (TNA, FJ 2/18c). Thus Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall and Partners were well placed in Saudi Arabia and active in Nigeria. John R. Harris was the 'go-to' planning consultant in the United Arab Emirates. Llewelyn-Davies were active in Qatar, Iran, Philippines, Nigeria and Venezuela and Shankland Cox in Iran, Indonesia, Thailand and Nigeria. So it also was for Colin Buchanan and Partners in Kuwait, Kenya and Algeria and Nathaniel Lichfield in Nigeria and Thailand. And there were many



others. The additional privileging of private consultancy by the Thatcher administration further confirmed this trend.

A rather different narrative prevailed in France. Private planning consultancies existed and were important immediately after World War II. However, they declined in the 1960s when the government of the new 5<sup>th</sup> Republic created new public organisations, including the IAURP and the EPAs, to facilitate its expanding planning policy. It was directly EPA-employed planning teams which prepared the founding master plans for the *Villes Nouvelles*, so authorship lay unequivocally with the EPAs. Beyond the EPAs, several new public agencies were also founded in the main urban areas to co-author master plans with *Ministère de l'Équipement*'s local administration.

Even the two main bodies delivering technical expertise for planning and construction overseas were public: the BCEOM founded during the colonial period and the *SCET-Coopération*, later *SCET-International*, founded after decolonisation as a subsidiary of the national *Société centrale pour l'équipement du territoire* which led most urban developments in France excluding the *Villes Nouvelles*. The national policy for international *coopération*, made the national State a key actor, bringing in both public bodies and private consultancies for overseas work. With their own large planning staffs and direct links with the national administration, the EPAs would obviously be ready to participate in overseas studies when an appropriate organisational vehicle was created. EPA involvement seems to have exceeded that of their UK equivalents, the development corporations – and certainly that of BUDSU.

### Conclusions

This export of national 'know-how' did not result in 'clones' of British New Towns or French *Villes Nouvelles* appearing around the world. The process was altogether more subtle, exporting and re-applying national expertise and experience in very varied settings. Some

degree of French or British ‘badging’ did, however, occur, creating subsequent opportunities for lucrative construction and other links. France appears the more successful in projecting a clear national ‘brand’ for its expertise compared to the more fragmented, private consultant-led UK approach. It may also have been the more successful on simple monetary export value of planning contracts undertaken (though is very difficult to measure).

But the different ways that expertise was delivered were also important. Thus the international strength of UK private consultancies and successes (when permitted) of development corporations, particularly Milton Keynes, were undeniable. An important related question is how far these exports of expertise simply returned bilateral aid funds to their country of origin. In this the GIEVNF/ADEFrance’s work does seem more aid-reliant than its UK equivalents. UK consultants and development corporations apparently relied less on aid funds, mainly exploiting wealth their clients had accumulated commercially from oil revenues. In their different ways, therefore, the two countries capitalised on their domestic new town programmes by exporting ‘know-how’ in this field, as important and subtle ways to project British or French ‘soft power’.

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