(1) The origins of this programme

This fact-finding and research programme was launched by the Prime Minister, who defined its goals, in his letter of 30 July 1999 assigning this task to M. Jean-Eudes ROULLIER, a former senior Finance Ministry official (honorary senior auditor). He entrusted him with the responsibility for this within the framework of an inter-ministerial assignment, reporting to the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Housing.

The programme runs for four years and involves all the Ministries and other institutions concerned. It has received initial funding from the Ministry of Public Works of 765 000 Euros, which enables it to negotiate support from other partners.

The programme committee (see further below) was set up by M. Jean-Claude GAYSSOT, Minister for Public Works, Transport and Housing, on 28 February 2001.

(2) The objectives of the programme

Thirty-five years after the adoption of the founding instruments (Paul Delouvrier’s 1965 Greater Paris Master Plan; definition of the role of the Délégation à l’aménagement du territoire et à l’action régionale1 - DATAR), the programme has two primary objectives: first, to bring together the descriptive elements of the history of the new towns and, second, to gain a better understanding of the progress of the work that has been undertaken to date and the results it has achieved, with the main emphasis on shedding light on three questions:

• How was a project as ambitious as this conceived, managed and modified over time?
• What urban development, with whom and for whom? What have been the successes, problems and failures?
• What lessons can be drawn for urban development and town planning policy?

The programme must have a dimension that enables comparisons to be drawn with other contemporary developments in France - and abroad.

In this spirit, among the objectives the programme has been set, the following are particularly worth mentioning:

• to establish the initial elements of a record or memory of the new towns;
• to produce an analytical and critical interpretation of the new towns;

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1 = Town and Country Planning and Regional Development Agency
• to assess what contribution the creation of the new towns has made to the controlled
development of the large urban areas;
• to highlight what lessons may be drawn from them in terms of innovation, and what they
retain that is still innovative, with particular regard to possible changes in the way in which
relationships between central government and local governments operate;
• to bring out their particular distinguishing features by comparing them to other territories;
• beyond that, to encourage the writing of a history of contemporary urban development.

The programme covers the nine French new towns:
• the five new towns in the Ile-de-France (greater Paris) region: Cergy-Pontoise, Evry,
Marne-la-Vallée, Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines and Sénart;
• the four new towns in the provinces: Etang-de-Berre (to the west of Marseille) and l’Isle
d’Abeau (to the east of Lyon), which are still classified as "new towns"; and Villeneuve
d’Ascq (to the east of Lille) and Le Vaudreuil (between Paris and Rouen), which left the
new town legal regime several years ago.

(3) The members of the Committee

To see the programme through and ensure that it is organised and monitored properly, a
Committee has been formed (by Order of J.C. Gayssot, Minister for Public Works, Transport
and Housing, dated 20 February 2001). It consists of the following members:

(a) Chairman: Jean-Eudes ROULLIER

(b) The representatives of eight Ministries: Francis AMPE (DATAR), André BRUSTON (Délegation
Interministérielle à la Ville²), Alain CHARRAUD (INSEE statistical office), Jean-Richard CYTERMANN
(Education), Guy FAURE (Public Works), Francis GODARD (Research), François LUCAS (Interior),
Christian PATTYN (Culture)

(c) Eight representatives of the sciences: Francis BEAUCIRE, Jean-Louis COHEN, Armand
FREMONT, Maurice GARDEN, Catherine GREMION, Antoine PICON, Antoine PROST, Jean-Pierre
PUIG

(d) Four councillors: Jacques GUYARD, Jean-Philippe LACHENAUD, Jocelyne RIOU, Jean-Michel
STIEVENARD

(e) Five individuals with expertise in the field of urban development: Jean-Pierre DUPORT, Michel
MACARY, Claude MARTINAND, Roland PEYLET, Michel ROUSSELOT

The Chairman of the Groupe Central des Grandes Opérations d’Urbanisme³, the Secretary
General of the Groupe Central des Grandes Opérations d’Urbanisme² and the Permanent
Secretary for Town Planning, Construction and Architecture attend meetings of the
Committee on an ex-officio basis.

(4) How the work is organised

The work is structured around four main subject areas, each of which is monitored by a
separate scientific workshop.
• "The players, ideas, methods, means and choices": predominantly an historical and
socio-political approach.
• "Towns and people": predominantly a social science approach.
• "Towns in their local and regional context": predominantly an economic approach.

² = Inter-ministerial Town Planning Agency
³ = Central Group for Major Town Planning Operations
• "What urban development? The forms it can take and the living environment": predominantly a physical planning and material approach.

At the same time, four major projects are either already under way or under consideration:
• new town public records (for identification and listing/indexing purposes - with the support of the Direction des Archives de France);
• a new town statistical atlas (with the support of the INSEE national statistical office);
• a geographical and historical atlas (with the support of the IGN);
• a survey into the ways of life, practices and aspirations of the people who live in the new towns.

The programme also endeavours to encourage local initiatives that will contribute to its objectives in each of the new towns.

(5) Seeking assistance from research circles

The programme calls for work in numerous disciplines and different forms of contribution from research circles.

The sort of involvement that is being looked for includes:
• work adding to existing knowledge and research on the new towns;
• research work by the teams and researchers themselves;
• active participation in the programme’s theme-based workshops;
• organising doctoral theses on the new towns (or comparing them with other territories). Thesis supervisors should, if necessary, indicate their interest to the persons responsible at doctoral colleges, to ensure that the new towns are mentioned in the applications for research grants;
• running student workshops for students coming towards the end of their studies.


An internet site dedicated to the history and evaluation of the new towns programme is already online (www.villes-nouvelles.equipement.gouv.fr). It has two main purposes:
• to provide information on the programme (objectives, membership of the Committee, invitations to tender, projects currently running etc);
• to offer a large collection of documents on the new towns (bibliography, texts, statistics, maps, photographs), held in a document base.

(7) Contact persons

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4 = French Public Records Office
5 = National Geographical Institute