



The French urban planning agencies' assignments abroad

Recent references



September 2008

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From Local to Global: the International Activity of French City Planning Agencies

For thirty years now city planning agencies have been contributing to the development of France's cities in the fields of strategic planning, urban design, transportation plans, urban projects, public space development, local housing programmes, urban regeneration, retail development schemes – and much else. In this respect they have been consolidating the work France embarked on during the postwar "golden age", and responding to the urban revolution that has transformed the country. At the same time the agencies' activities have been very different in terms of both form and content.

The first notable aspect of the agencies' approach is partnership. Their system of governance brings together all the institutional bodies which, in one respect or another, are responsible for cities' urban policies: municipalities and intermunicipal groupings, and authorities in charge of transport, housing, the environment and economic development – not to mention the state itself. Each member of an agency's board of directors presents his projects and outlines his needs in terms of preliminary studies; the agency work programme thus reflects the shared requirements of all partners. In a decentralised context in which dispersion of skills is too often the rule, other bodies find this "model" of a mutualised tool worth adopting.

The agencies' second characteristic is their multidisciplinary. A French city planning agency is a consultancy in which all planning skills are available and which functions on all scales of development. Transversality is crucial to urbanism and the quality of a given project hinges first and foremost on the way it combines and optimises the sectorial activities involved in its implementation. Land use, transportation, environmental protection – everything is interconnected. As a meeting point for specialists in all disciplines with the habit of working in a team, the agencies come up with projects reflecting a truly transversal philosophy.

These two features – reinforced, naturally, by a high degree of professionalism – explain why the agencies have been called on so often to work in cities in other parts of the world. Many of these ventures have taken place in the context of individual agencies' "decentralised" cooperative foreign aid programmes, while others have been part of commissioned studies financed, in some cases, by international funding bodies. The diversity of projects France's planning agencies are involved in testifies to their responsiveness to the needs of national and local authorities abroad. This booklet provides illustrations of this responsiveness at work. Solidly embedded in their respective territories, the agencies are there to make their know-how available to the cities of the world. And FNAU is there to back them up.

André ROSSINOT
President FNAU
Mayor of Nancy

FRANCE'S URBAN PLANNING PUBLIC AGENCIES

One thing for sure, French urban planning agencies are unique in today's world. Tunisia and Cameroon are examples of other countries that have created this kind of tool – in Tunis and Douala respectively – but with a specific focus on the nation's political or economic capital. Only Morocco has created a true national network, but its agencies are backed and controlled by the state.

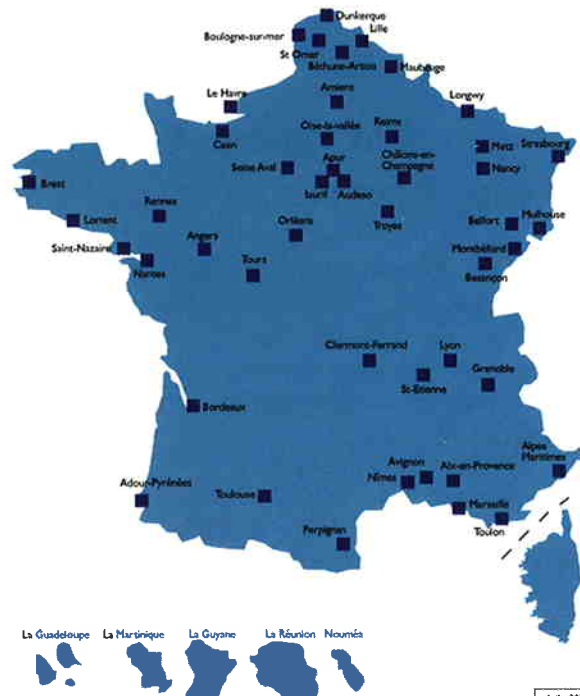
In France it is local authorities – municipalities and intermunicipal groupings, départements and regions – who decide together to create a planning agency, then ask for state approval and support. In some cases other bodies involved in territorial planning and development also participate in this decision: port authorities, universities, public planning organisations, hospitals, chambers of commerce, etc.

In 2008, France was home to **51 agencies** – 4 of them in the overseas territories – catering to areas with populations often of around 200,000 to 300,000, sometimes from 500,000 to over a million, and up to 11 million in the case of Paris-Ile de France.

All the agencies have the legal status of non-profit associations under the legislation of 1901 – the sole exception being the IAU in Ile-de-France, which is a public interest foundation – and are made up exclusively of public-sector authorities and other bodies. Half of them were set up in the 1960s–1970s; the 1980s–1990s were something of a down time, but recovery came along and a quarter of all today's agencies have been founded since 2000.

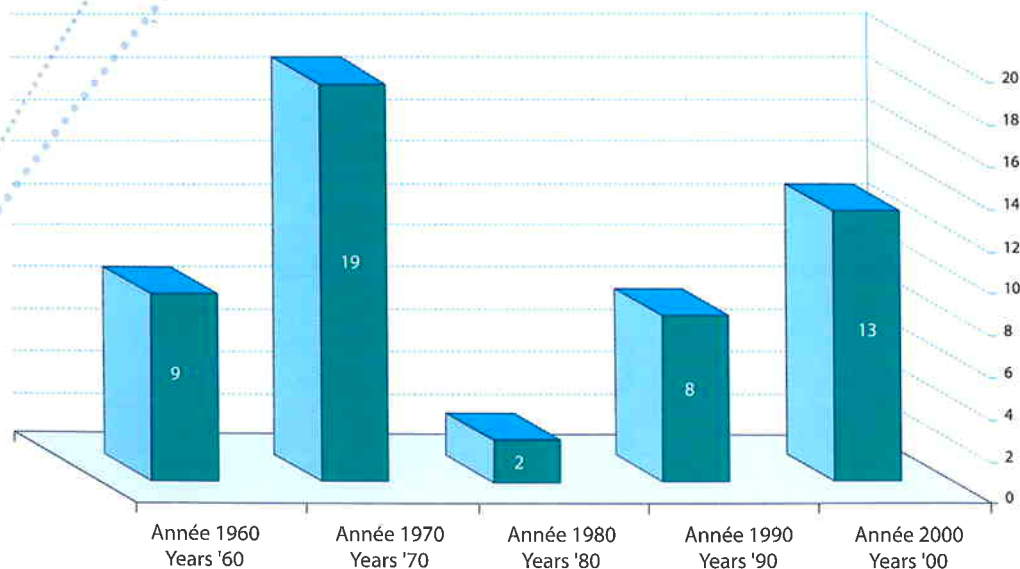
Finance is mainly ensured by subsidies from member authorities and the state. However, agencies can also complement their budgets with studies under contract and specific missions, some of them abroad.

La Fédération Nationale des Agences d'Urbanisme

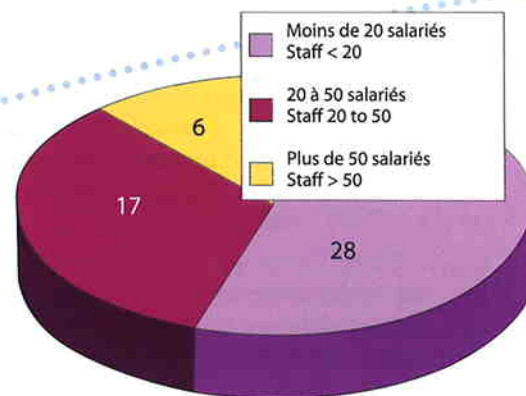


The French urban planning agencies' assignments abroad

Creation of the agencies



Taken together the agencies represent a consultancy potential of 1500 professionals, but they vary considerably in size. One staff member in four works in an agency of fewer than 20 people, while one in three is to be found in one of the biggest agencies: Bordeaux, Ile-de-France, Lyon, Marseille, Paris and Toulouse. It should be noted that agency staff are considered as working in the private sector, even if state and local authority personnel can be seconded to them on a temporary basis.

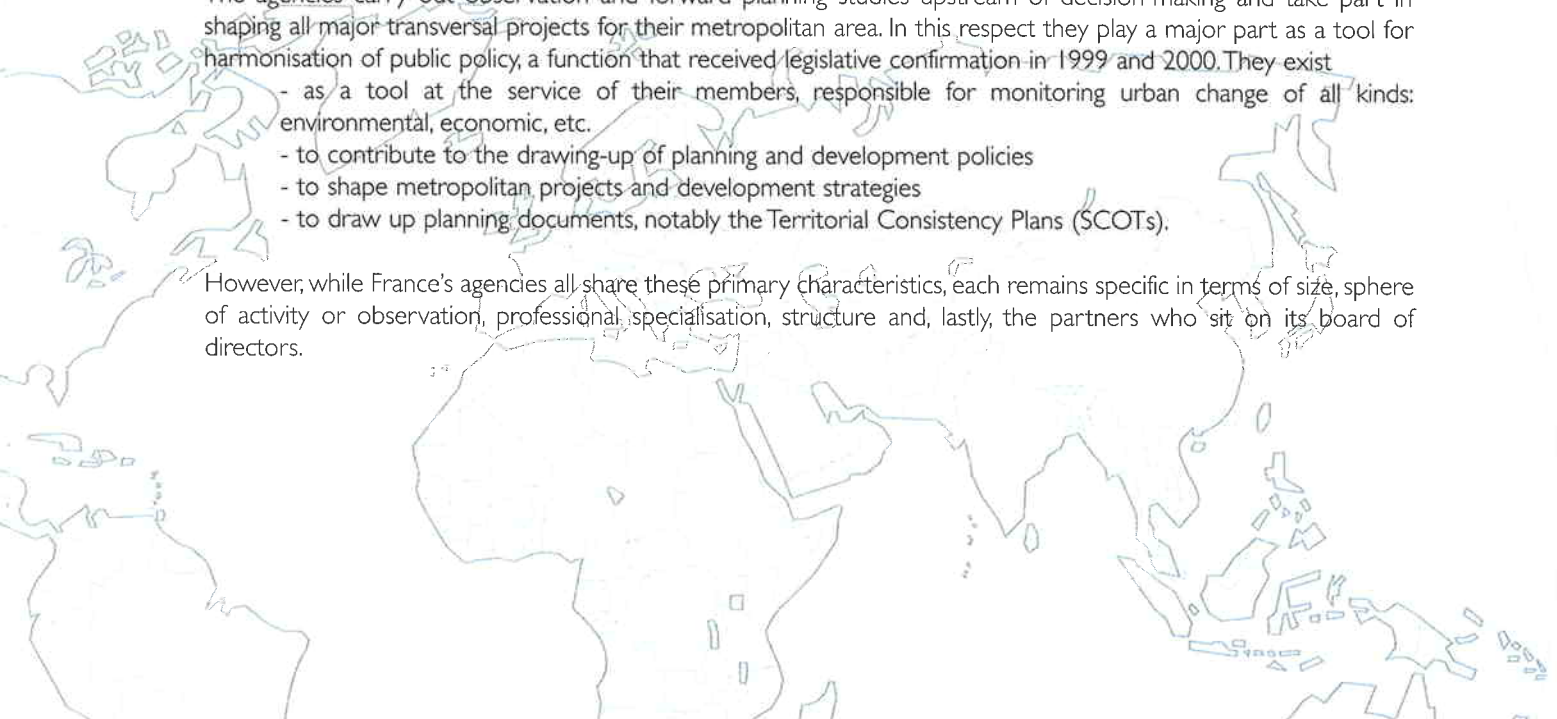


Size of the agencies

The agencies carry out observation and forward planning studies upstream of decision-making and take part in shaping all major transversal projects for their metropolitan area. In this respect they play a major part as a tool for harmonisation of public policy, a function that received legislative confirmation in 1999 and 2000. They exist

- as a tool at the service of their members, responsible for monitoring urban change of all kinds: environmental, economic, etc.
- to contribute to the drawing-up of planning and development policies
- to shape metropolitan projects and development strategies
- to draw up planning documents, notably the Territorial Consistency Plans (SCOTs).

However, while France's agencies all share these primary characteristics, each remains specific in terms of size, sphere of activity or observation, professional specialisation, structure and, lastly, the partners who sit on its board of directors.



The five main missions of France's city planning agencies

Observation

Knowing the territory in detail – demographics, socioeconomics, environment, etc. – is a fundamental part of the agency's *raison d'être*. To this end agencies build up multiple partnerships with bodies like INSEE (France's National Statistics Institute), players from the economic and social fields and from housing and urban services, and together they create urban, real estate, environmental and other observatories. Once collected and processed, the data are published in atlases, thus becoming part of the systems of geographical information most agencies are currently developing.



Planning

This traditional agency activity was given a new lease of life some ten years ago with the advent of the Local Urbanism Plans and Territorial Consistency Plans. Agencies provide advice on procedure and conformity with regulations; assistance with decision making; and monitoring of city-planning documents within their territory. In this way they help their partners through preparation and programming of various public policies: environmental issues, natural hazards, transport, business planning, housing; economic development, etc.



French city planning agencies are independent, multidisciplinary bodies. Having no legal or regulatory responsibilities – they issue no building permits, for example – they exist first and foremost to assess and ensure the consistency of the public-sector policies implemented on their territory. Against this backdrop the "**City Planning Agencies Manifesto**", adopted in Grenoble in December 2005, foregrounded six main principles.

1 - A tool for responding to shared problems in territorial development

As a rule an agency's territory coincides with one (or more) metropolitan areas rather than the exact perimeter of a specific local authority. The agency is there primarily to examine shared problems as they arise and to look for collective solutions allowing for the resolution of those problems.

2 - A partnership-led tool that brings the territory's actors together.

The agency differs from other local bodies in its partnership-led, intermunicipal character. As the voluntary creation of its members, it offers them an interdisciplinary resources centre, while its receptivity towards civil society makes it a leading contributor to local territorial debate.





Drawing up urban projects

The urban project is a key aspect of agency activity. It can involve very varied territories: a facility (such as a railway station), a neighbourhood, a city, or all or part of a metropolitan area. It is not the agency's function to take a direct hand in implementing urban projects. Its primary role is to mobilise all the relevant technical and institutional partners needed for an authentic shared project serving the interests of the local population and actors.



Anticipation

Agency involvement is not restricted to short or medium-term ventures. Looking beyond the obvious requirements of sustainable development, the agencies must also focus on forward planning: strategic monitoring of urban change, of social and demographic shifts such as population ageing, and of technological, climatic and energy fluctuations. Their observation capacity and the tools at their disposal mean that in this respect they play a key role with their partner authorities.

Communication

Studies and reports are, obviously, the major parts of agency output, and often give rise to publications or articles in the press. In this way agencies disseminate their savoir-faire, observations and proposals. They also contribute to local dialogue on development issues and urbanism by conducting investigations, organising public debate and putting on exhibitions for the public.

3 - A tool functioning mainly in the context of a partnership-led programme of activities

Monitoring change, contributing to policy definition and planning documents, preparing metropolitan area projects: these major agency missions are part of a partnership-led programme of activities laid down and financed by the partners as a whole. In addition to the main programme, specific studies can also be carried out under contract, both for members and for outside bodies, sometimes abroad.

4 - A multidisciplinary technical tool

An agency is home to professionals with very varied skills (town planning, transportation, environment, housing, economics, geomatics, local development, etc.) because it works in all these fields as part of its responsibility towards its partners. However it also works in new areas not yet the responsibility of any specific institution, such as security, sustainable development and metropolitan projects.

5 - A tool backed by an ethics of freedom and responsibility

A given agency's activities spring solely from decisions taken in agreement with its members, in a spirit of intellectual freedom and public service. Its partnership-led programme of activities results from the overall demands of its members; the studies carried out in this context are agency property and can be accessed by each member.

6 - A network tool

Each agency works with its neighbours within the framework of a regional network, while also being part of the National Federation of City Planning Agencies (FNAU). These networks allow agency teams to improve their skills and mutualise their experience.

THE AGENCY NETWORK: FNAU

The National Federation of Urban Planning Agencies (FNAU) is the network that brings together all France's agencies. Created in 1979 and with its day-to-day running handled by a small office in Paris, FNAU is above all an association of elected political representatives who appreciate the opportunity it provides for dialogue and information on urban issues.

FNAU brings together all France's agencies and conducts a host of different activities.

Informing the agency network

The main tool for circulating information is the website www.fnau.org. The site provides all sorts of information on what's happening in the network, and on club activity, publications, jobs available in agencies, etc.

Agency heads get together for a monthly meeting where they recap shared projects, current issues and the running of their agencies.

In the interests of improved international information on the agencies and the network, a second site in English has been running since October 2005: www.fnau-international.org. It notably includes a free quarterly newsletter.



www.fnau-international.org



www.fnau.org

Defending the agencies' professional interests

Aware of the financial, legal and human resources difficulties agencies can experience, FNAU sometimes makes representations to the authorities via its committee, and gives agencies access to its expertise. In addition to helping solve problems, it also takes a stand in colloquiums and the press on issues relevant to city planning in France and, by extension, to the role of the agencies.

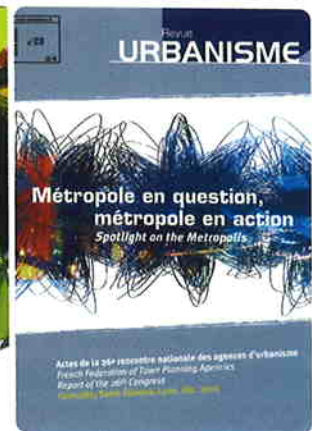
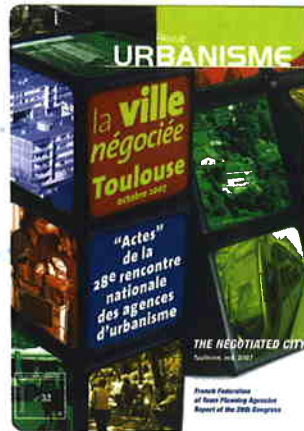
Exchanging experiences and improving know-how

For an agency, belonging to FNAU also means the chance to keep its staff well informed, mainly through the activity of 14 theme clubs. At present over 400 people – 30% of the network's personnel – take part annually in club reunions. Each club meets about four times a year to work on topics of common interest, discuss working methods, capitalise projects nationally, listen to guest speakers talk about the problems arising in their special fields, provide updates on the latest changes to the regulations, etc.

Thus the clubs are the network's major activity.

Producing and publishing

FNAU provides regular updates on topical matters in its "FNAU Dossiers", its quarterly "Traits d'agences" supplement to the magazine Traits Urbains, and in the special numbers of the reviews Urbanisme and Technicités devoted to the annual national congress. On its own initiative, or sometimes via various national partnerships, FNAU regularly publishes overviews of transversal questions: housing and urban forms, urban areas in France, population ageing, the environment, office furniture, etc.



The 14 FNAU clubs

- Communication
- Documentation
- Economics
- Environment
- Geomatics
- Computer resources organisation and management
- Housing
- International
- Planning
- Urban projects
- Censuses
- Research
- Retail city planning
- Transportation



The network's annual congress

A national congress is organised each year in response to a proposal from a local planning agency, sometimes in association with one or two neighbouring agencies. The themes are topical ones: major territories, the negotiated city, creativity and territorial innovation, the metropolis under challenge and in action, territorial disparities, the city and business, etc. A high point in the life of the network, the congress is also an important annual get-together for planning professionals from the private and public sectors, and for political representatives.

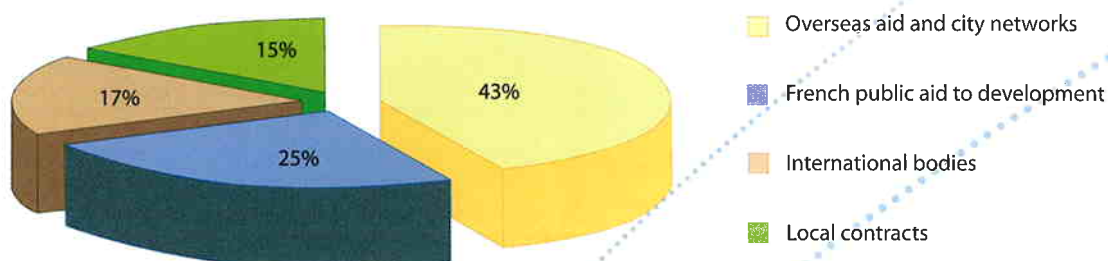
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AGENCIES WITH A HIGH INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

Since 1990 sixteen French urban planning public agencies – a third of all members of the FNAU network – have been involved in international ventures in a wide range of contexts. In many cases their assignments take place as part of overseas aid or urban network projects (43%), the latter including European programmes (Med-Urbs, Asia-Urbs, Meda) and Cités Unies. They sometimes result from local contracts (15%), but more often from commissions from the French public aid to development body APD (25%) or such international bodies (17%) as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the United Nations Programme, UNESCO, etc.

Missions by the Agencies: the framework



What themes?

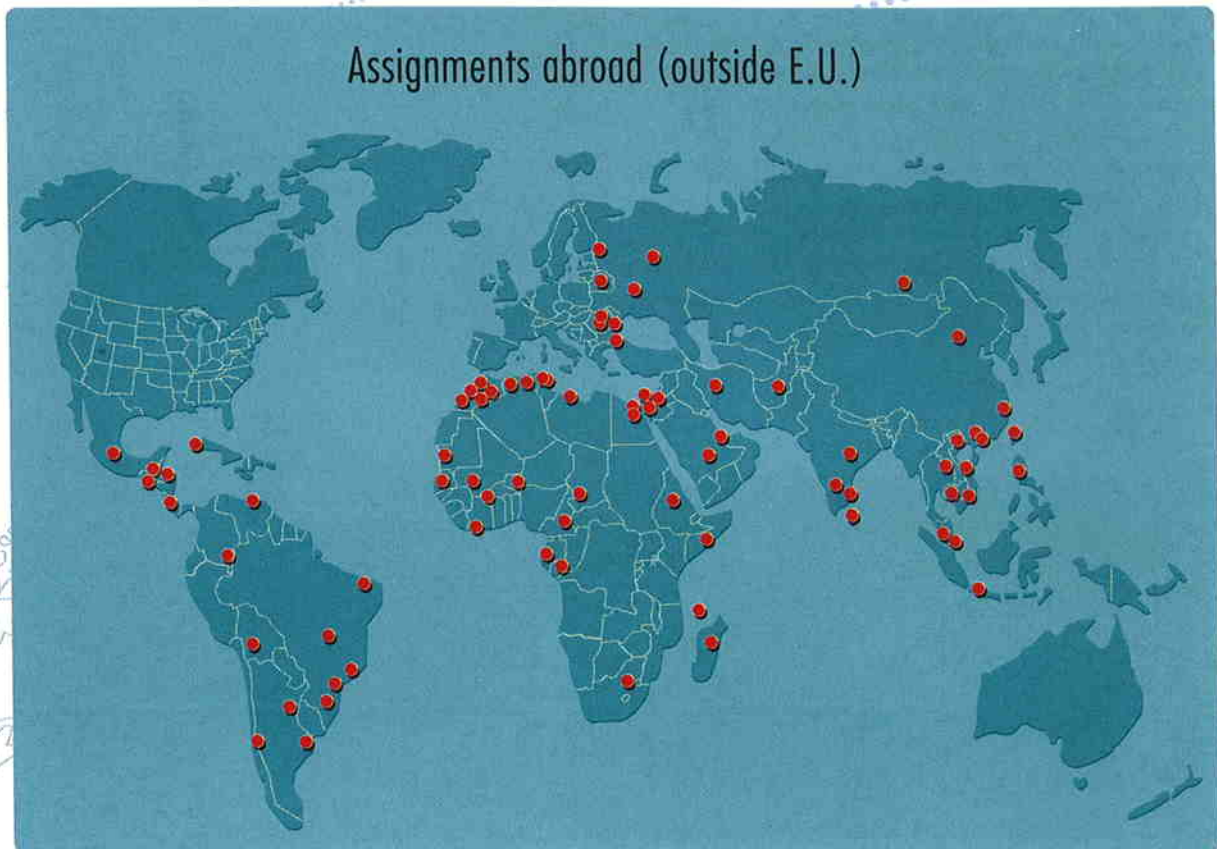
The French agencies' assignments abroad cover three main themes:

- **planning** (master plans, land law, etc.) and development: preparing the terms of reference for a city-planning document, drawing up the document in full or in part, or evaluating a document with a view to revising it.
- **public policy backup**: input for such sectors as transportation, land, housing, the environment, heritage, tourism, etc.; assistance in setting up urban management bodies (agencies, intermunicipal groupings) and management tools (urban observatories, geographic information systems and satellite observation).
- preparation of **urban projects** (including local participation ventures): major facilities, projects for neighbourhoods and even entire districts, management of international competitions and technical assistance with transformation of old city-centres.



What geographical sectors?

In half the cases, agency assignments are carried out in sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb and the Middle East. Asia is currently a strong growth zone, with 23% of assignments. The remainder is divided between Latin America (11%) and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.



Why French agencies?

This exporting of French agencies' savoir-faire hinges on a number of factors:

- The various territorial authorities – regions, départements, municipalities – and intermunicipal groupings in charge of development and urbanism in their territories are becoming more and more frequently involved in cooperative overseas ventures
- The agencies have extensive experience in the everyday business of planning for big metropolitan areas, and as a result are more and more sought after by city authorities in developing countries. They provide multidisciplinary teams made up of urbanists, economists, geomatics experts, jurists, etc., who in most cases combine experience in technical production with communication at all levels.
- The local context of agencies' work in France means they have a real capacity to mobilise partners in all skill areas and to ensure coordination of public policies. This role as "overall service coordinator" is especially appreciated abroad, where the context is often marked by rigid compartmentalisation of administrative sectors, official bodies and local authorities.
- Lastly, French agencies are able to hand on their savoir-faire not only with a relative certainty of continuity over time, but also – and above all – in fairly diverse forms: assistance for contracting authorities, assessments, training, seminars and reception of delegations.

As much instruments of "urban mediation" as of practical expertise, the agencies now enjoy their own special, growing place in French urban engineering on the international scene.

MALI: A MASTER PLAN FOR SOFARA

The municipality of Sofara was looking to implement a well thought out urban development plan involving firstly a 100-hectare housing estate set away from the village but close to the new city hall and school; secondly, drinking water for the present village and its new neighbourhoods; and thirdly, flood prevention measures. The agency drew up a programme based on a set of priorities: consolidation of the banks of the river Yamé; a study of the potential of the water table; and refuse collection and disposal.

A full-time overseer was appointed by IRCOD (Regional Institute for Cooperation and Development) to implement the measures, with technical backing from the agency.

Finance: Decentralised cooperation Mulhouse & IRCOD
Agency: AURM, Mulhouse



CASABLANCA: PLANS FOR THE CITY AND THE COAST

After ten years of expertise/training backup for the planning agencies in Rabat and Agadir, 2005 saw the signing of the contract for drawing up the master plan for Greater Casablanca, in association with the agency there. The plan includes a detailed diagnosis, followed by three scenarios involving extensibility variations on a "common core" of proposals relating to the transport network and major upgrading operations: for the city centre, absorption of shantytowns, and environmental improvements.

The Casablanca agency also financed a reference plan for development of the coastline, revolving around 21 measures including major development operations for connecting the port to the city, building a convention centre and creating a park and an archaeological museum. Additional measures notably focus on redevelopment of the old Anfa airport in the heart of the city.

Agency: IAU île-de-France
Financing: Local contract



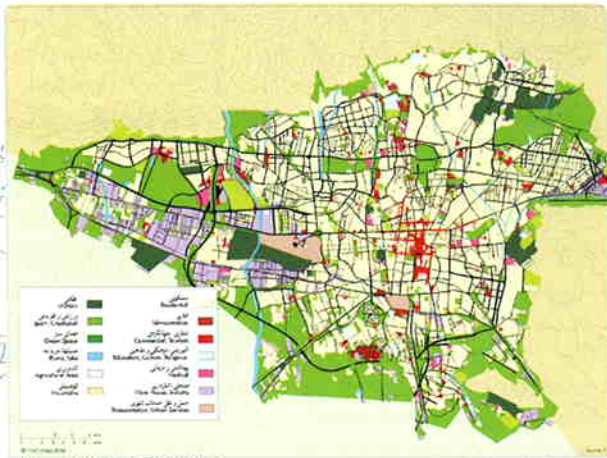
TEHERAN: ASSISTANCE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Uncontrolled growth during the 1980s left Tehran with serious problems, notably in respect of transportation: inadequate public transport had combined with dense car traffic to produce heavy pollution and rundown public spaces. No master plan had ever been applied to the city and random sales of hyperdense buildings had produced a fragmented urban landscape.

In 2005 the agency provided the City of Tehran with the technical assistance needed for preparing its master plan: the proposals included reinforcement of the link between city planning and transport; and methodological advice in the interests of a sounder approach to such problems as housing for the very poor and creation of urban projects.

Finance: contract & Decentralised cooperation
Agency: APUR, Paris



ASSISTANCE WITH THE REVISION OF THE ADDIS ABABA MASTER PLAN

In this cooperative venture begun almost ten years ago, Addis Ababa requested technical support for a local team with a view to revision of the existing master plan. The joint planning process was based on a simplified cartographic approach and enabled the city to validate the revision in 2002.

The city's administration then requested help with implementation of the plan: public transport; urban planning; land and housing operations for low-income groups; markets; and solid waste management. The agency provided evaluations and training for local capacity enhancement and the achieving of concrete results: setting aside of land for a future Rapid Transit Bus, and siting and financing a new controlled garbage dump.

Finance: Decentralised cooperation & contracts
Agency: Urban Agency, Lyon



AMMAN: DEVELOPING THE EASTERN CORRIDOR

Since 2007 Paris and Amman have been reinforcing their exchanges of experiences in the fields of city planning and operational urbanism, transport and mobility, and urban heritage, with financial backing from the French Development Agency (AFD) in Amman. This assistance is notably intended to finance plans for sectors along "urban densification corridors". In order to respond to increasing demand for building permits on vacant or little-used plots, Amman has launched studies involving a range of such corridors corresponding to the Jordan capital's expressways. Thus the agency has drawn up an urban strategy for the Eastern Corridor, covering development potential, programming and the measures needed to highlight the corridor as part of a landscaped and designed urban ensemble. The agency trains personnel in the fields of urban regulations, procedures and consultations, site analysis techniques and urban project approaches.



Finance: Decentralised cooperation
Agency: APUR, Paris

ALGERIA: TOWARDS A METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CONSTANTINE



In collaboration with a French consultancy the local Algerian body "Urbaco", whose duties are similar to those of a city planning agency, requested assistance from the Marseille agency in the drawing up of two development documents for Constantine and Annaba. Work on the development plan for the metropolitan area bore on establishing the zone to be studied and producing a diagnosis – urban growth and hierarchy, economics, transport, social equity and the environment – which was then presented in the course of three workshops. Assistance with an urban consistency plan focused on diagnosis, emphases and scenarios.

This partnership with the French agency covered the training of local consultants and could later be extended to include group responses to calls for tenders.

Finance: Decentralised cooperation
Agency: AGAM, Marseille

URBAN AND SOCIAL REGENERATION IN MARRAKECH, MOROCCO



In 2002 the agency carried out an assignment bearing on an overall project for transformation of Hay-Essalam, an underprivileged neighbourhood in the Medina in Marrakech.

Two phases have been implemented:

a strategy for improved coordination of measures in the local development field: technical diagnosis (slum accommodation, types of facilities required); in-the-field demographic and employment diagnoses; and skills exchanges between French and Moroccan planning professionals and politicians.

project implementation: city planning works including cleansing and road networks; slum rehabilitation; neighbourhood facilities (social service centre, school for

apprentices).

Finance: Decentralised cooperation
Agency: AUDCM, Clermont-Métropole

ANNABA: A CITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

As part of its partnership with the Urban Community of Dunkerque, the city of Annaba, in Algeria, has requested technical support for the creation of a wilaya-scale city planning and development agency: the future body will provide territorial observation and assessment, strategic input, and help with the designing of public sustainable urban development policies.

Extended at the request of the European Commission to Bizerte in Tunisia – Annaba's twin city for some years now – this decentralised cooperation project is intended to unfold in five phases:

- assistance with the creation of the Annaba city planning agency
- practical training of Algerian and Tunisian technical specialists
- assistance with the setting-up of observation tools (GIS, etc.) in Annaba and Bizerte
- carrying out of an initial, shared territorial diagnostic in both cities
- rehabilitation projects for traditional urban structures and heritage in Annaba.

Finance: Decentralised cooperation and EU funding
Agency: AGUR, Dunkerque



TERRITORIAL PLANNING AND URBAN POLICY IN LEBANON

Proof that the contract system can be a long-term affair: in Lebanon the agency has been working almost without interruption for over 25 years – fine-tuning of the Beirut master plan (1985), Spot satellite observation of development in the centre of the country (1990), a reconstruction plan for the battle-line sector of Beirut (1995) and a transport plan (1995). The socio-economic redevelopment studies in the south of the country and the environmental assessment of the shoreline in 1999 led to the obtaining of the contract for the national territorial development plan, completed in 2004. Measures taken since 2008 have supported the Municipality of Beirut in projects covering parks and transport, as well as a nature reserve in the countryside.

Finance: local contracts (Decentralised cooperation), World Bank, UNDP, etc.
Agency: IAU, ile-de-France

