A perspective of New Towns

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The motives of launching New Towns vary from country to country and from time to time. By simplifying one can describe three groups of reasons.

- A first group consists of the creation of new towns as a response to a spiral of development difficulties encountered in large cities: rapid population growth, rural-to-town migrations, lack of planning, emergence of informal constructions and slums, uncontrollable expansion of the perimeter of the agglomeration. We can mention England after World War II until 1990, France under development since the 70s, Jakarta in Indonesia since the 90s ... These New Towns projects are based on the concept of "satellite town", at varying distances from major cities.

- A second group is linked to problems of conquest of territories; these are the case of large countries (Russia, China, Indonesia for example) which have large uninhabited areas but whose geographical richness is of interest. These new cities are very often based on the development of an industry (agroindustry) and / or a mining operation (coal, oil, iron ores...). For example, INTA has been working for several years with Peru, which is developing several New Towns in Andean territories, newly irrigated and open to agriculture.

- A third group is based on a "product" policy in the marketing sense of the term. This category is very sensitive to fashion and it is regularly renewed. For example, over the past 100 years several new concepts were used to market real estate products: garden city, radiant city, new administrative capital, "secure" city reserved for a well-to-do population category, etc. Currently the concepts of Ecocity and smart city are in fashion.

We will not speak of the cities of the second group above (conquest of the territory), nor of the third group (marketing concept of a particular fashion or social group).

The experience of INTA has identified some constant factors for a viable future of large urban projects of the first group: response to an urban policy issue and territorial organization.
First constant: "New Towns" scales matter: size of the project, duration, and complexity.

- The population objective must exceed 60,000 inhabitants. Below these are new neighbourhoods that cannot do without an existing city close by. The risk is to not reach an optimal mass in terms of equipment, businesses and jobs.

- The development of a new city is of a very long duration (beyond 20 years) and entails several constraints. The first constraint is the time scale of the project that goes beyond the mode of operation of private companies and we cannot hope that these companies take full responsibility for the development of a large community; the public sector is the only one who can keep control of the project in the long term. Second constraint, the public sector itself (State, local authorities mainly) must organize itself to face a changing environment: national and international economic constraints, evolution of the social and technological environment, for example ...

- The complexity of the new city project is a necessary feature. A city without jobs is a dormitory city, a city without facilities and without the entire social body is a construction site... Programming and management of this complexity cannot be done without coordination of all actors: for the public authorities it means the coordination of the national and regional government levels of each new city, for the economic actors it is the cooperation between public and private financing.

Second constant: programming the objectives and the development plan of a New Town must be able to evolve over time. The New Town must be able to follow the fashions and the latest technical advances (currently, a new city must be able to be ecological or intelligent; the new city of Marne la Vallée launched in the 70s in France for example, is evolving in this direction).

Third constant: the existence of a development company covering the perimeter of each new city (possibly with public and private participation) is the best way to manage the first two constants.