

Final author version post peer reviewing of: Clarke N (2010) 'Town twinning in Cold-War Britain: (Dis)continuities in twentieth-century municipal internationalism', *Contemporary British History* 24(2): 173-91

This paper draws on research funded by the Nuffield Foundation. Data were provided by the Local Government Association. Thanks are due to these organisations, to Julian Greaves (an editor for *Contemporary British History*) and three anonymous referees who provided many helpful comments on an earlier version of the paper, and to the individuals who agreed to be interviewed about town twinning and the following organisations: the International Union of Local Authorities, the Council of European Municipalities, the Association of Municipal Corporations, the British Council, the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, Towns and Development, the United Kingdom One World Linking Association, Oxfam, the Local Government International Bureau, the United Nations Development Programme, World Associations of Cities and Local Authorities Coordination, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, and the Local Government Association. Responsibility for all content of the paper lies entirely with the author.

Abstract

This paper draws on correspondence and other material in the National Archives at Kew, London to provide an historical narrative of town twinning in Cold-War Britain. In doing so, it supplements a literature on town twinning that has little to say about international municipal partnerships involving British localities. It also supplements a literature on municipal internationalism that tends to focus on either municipal connections around the turn of the twentieth century or the perceived 'new localism' of the last few decades. The argument developed is that twentieth-century municipal internationalism was shaped in Britain by continuities of desire and interest at the local level, and discontinuities of opportunity at the national and international levels. Various models of town twinning became available to British localities after the Second World War. During the Cold War, the British Government intervened in the availability of some of these models, not least

because of fears about Communist penetration through town twinning. By the late 1970s, such intervention had ensured that town twinning in Britain was associated with civic and cultural exchanges within Western Europe.

Key words

Town twinning, sister cities, municipal internationalism, local government, Cold War.

1. Introduction

Town twinning describes the construction and practice, by various groups and to various ends, of relatively formal and long-term relationships between two towns or cities usually located in different nation-states. Twin towns are also known in some places as sister cities. Town twinning was invented as an organised phenomenon in Western Europe in the years immediately following the Second World War.¹ It drew on experiences of early twentieth-century municipal internationalism and the networks and organisations established during that period. In turn, it was built on by late twentieth-century municipal internationalism that sought to achieve local economic development after the economic crises of the 1970s; transition in post-socialist Europe and Asia after the Cold War; and international development after critiques of aid and related policies during the second half of the twentieth century. Despite these connections, only a small academic literature exists on town twinning, and little of that concerns town twinning involving British localities. This paper goes some way towards addressing this knowledge gap, while contributing to the broader literature on twentieth-century municipal internationalism.

The literature on twentieth-century municipal internationalism tends to focus on two main periods. The first began in the late nineteenth century and ended around the middle of the twentieth century.² Rapid industrialisation brought about problems identified as ‘urban’. New communication and transportation technologies allowed these problems to be discussed across distance. This was done by European and North American engineers, economists, and town council members and officers inspired by the pacifist and

Esperanto movements,³ and by socialism's concern for the housing, education and other needs of the proletarian masses.⁴ Discussion was organised and sustained through correspondence, conferences, exhibitions, new journals such as *Annales de la Regie Directe* (established in 1908), and new organisations such as the Union Internationale des Villes (established in 1913; known from 1928 as the International Union of Local Authorities).⁵ From these connections – this network or Urban Internationale⁶ – emerged new ways of apprehending and acting on the city, including new policies on poor relief, the unemployed, housing, town planning, and urban services such as water and sewerage.⁷

The second period began in the late 1970s and has yet to end. For internationalisation and globalisation scholars, it began with improvements in transportation and communication technologies, and continued with the internationalisation of production and the globalisation of financial markets.⁸ In this context, local authorities perceive that local welfare depends on decisions made elsewhere (by foreign governments or multinational corporations) and seek to influence these decisions by acting across local and national borders⁹ – via urban entrepreneurialism,¹⁰ local foreign policy,¹¹ and the Europeanisation or internationalisation of local government.¹² For regulation and state theorists, by contrast, this period began with the crisis of Fordism in the North-Atlantic area during the 1970s and associated falling profitability, deindustrialisation, unemployment, downward pressure on wages, and state fiscal problems.¹³ It continued with regulatory responses to this crisis that included deregulation of markets, attempted penetration of new markets, and promotion of new mechanisms such as telecommunications and flexible production processes.¹⁴ The institutional level was restructured from the national scale both upward to the supranational scale and downward to the scale of the city and region – a process termed ‘glocalisation’¹⁵ that gave rise to a ‘new localism’ of urban policies to attract mobile investment capital and interurban networking initiatives to manage the new problems generated by competitive urbanism.¹⁶ A third approach to late twentieth-century municipal internationalism is taken by students of international development and, specifically, city-to-city cooperation.¹⁷ They see rapid urbanisation and administrative decentralisation generating both needs and opportunities

in the so-called developing world.¹⁸ These opportunities have been recognised by development agencies that sponsor capacity-building partnerships between cities in the Global North and South. Such partnerships aim to improve governance in Southern cities while providing development education and professional development opportunities for Northern participants.¹⁹

The present paper focuses on the years between these two well-attended periods of municipal internationalism; the period between the end of the Second World War and the economic crises of the 1970s that was characterised by the Cold War and is often depicted as a golden age for nation-states and their welfare form.²⁰ As such, little attention has been paid to municipal internationalism during this period. The exception here is Ewen and Hebbert's research on interurban networking during the long twentieth century²¹ – to which we return below – and a small literature on town twinning in post-war Europe. This literature dates town twinning to the end of the Second World War when, independently, towns and cities from recently hostile nation-states established student and other exchanges with each other in hope of: cooperation that could survive disagreements between national governments; communal security from the advance of personal liberties on the one hand and totalitarian Communism on the other; and a return to an imagined European past of regional peoples united under Catholicism, the Hapsburgs, and the shared value of humanism.²² Town twinning became organised during the late 1940s and early 1950s through new municipal internationalist bodies including: the Union Internationale des Maires, founded in 1947 by French and German mayors interested in reconciliation through exchange visits of workers; the Council of European Municipalities, established in 1951 by campaigners interested in European community through municipal exchanges and projects between European municipalities; and Le Monde Bilingue (known in Britain as the United Towns Organisation), also founded in 1951 by campaigners interested in global understanding and world peace – and, perhaps less idealistically, preservation of the French language – through French-English bilingualism and town twinning between towns and cities throughout the world.²³

It has been noted how the United Towns Organisation promoted links between towns and cities on either side of the emerging Cold-War divide and, for this, was accused of communist connections by the Council of European Municipalities which was itself connected to the Catholic Church and, in particular, the Congress for Peace and Christian Civilisation which sought to defend an imagined Christian Europe from Communism.²⁴ In the literature, town twinning from this period is described as involving standardised contracts (provided by the Council of European Municipalities), official ceremonies, religious services, feasts and festivals, exchanges and competitions between schools, sports clubs, cultural institutions and so on.²⁵ It has also been noted that practices of town twinning diffused from Western Europe to North America and beyond during the 1950s,²⁶ while Franco-German town twinning peaked during the 1960s when it stood on the twin pillars of youth exchanges, for which there was much central government funding, and municipal exchanges, through which urban policy was elaborated and reformed.²⁷

If one starting point for the present paper is that studies of municipal internationalism have paid little attention to the period between 1945 and 1979, then another starting point is that studies of town twinning have paid little attention to British localities and their involvement in town twinning. This is surprising given records at the Local Government Association of over 2500 twinning relationships involving almost 1500 British localities and overseas partners in 90 countries across much of the world.²⁸ This paper mobilises research on town twinning in Britain since 1945 to address these gaps in the literatures on town twinning and municipal internationalism. The research analysed: data collected by the Local Government Association; letters and other documents held in the National Archives at Kew, London; interviews with representatives of national and international organisations with an interest in town twinning; interviews with representatives of local authorities and town twinning associations; and material archived in local record offices.²⁹

The argument of the paper comes in two parts. Firstly, more continuities can be found in twentieth-century municipal internationalism than is often acknowledged. We will see

how the International Union of Local Authorities remained active after the Second World War, supporting the Council of European Municipalities, for example, in its efforts to persuade the Association of Municipal Corporations to establish an alternative clearing house for town twinning in Britain to that offered by the United Towns Organisation. We will see how the idea of Europe was promoted through the Council of European Municipalities from the early 1950s. And we will see how something very similar to what is now known as city-to-city cooperation was promoted by the United Towns Organisation from around the same time. The first part of the argument, then, is that not all contemporary municipal internationalism should be thought of as radically new and thus straightforwardly connected to globalisation, or state-spatial restructuring, or a combination of urbanisation and administrative decentralisation in the Global South. A related point is that municipal internationalism should not be thought of as something that simply follows from structural changes (as suggested by phrases like ‘the Europeanisation of local government’)³⁰ but also as something that provides conditions for those very changes (suggesting alternative phrases like ‘the localisation of European government’).³¹ In this respect, the first part of the argument presented in this paper supplements that of Ewen and Hebbert when they place contemporary municipal internationalism in the context of the long twentieth century and view this historical experience as an ‘essential prerequisite’ of today’s multilevel networking.³²

The second part of the argument is that, while more continuities can be found in twentieth-century municipal internationalism than is often acknowledged – including a desire on the part of local authority members and officers for peace, understanding, knowledge, know-how, and local welfare – significant discontinuities can also be found in twentieth-century municipal internationalism that relate to national and international politics which provide an opportunity structure for local desires, interests, and practices. This is often assumed by a literature that focuses on municipal internationalism either before or after the Cold War. What this paper contributes is an empirically rich demonstration of precisely how national and international politics shaped town twinning in Britain immediately after the Second World War, when a variety of town twinning

models emerged and circulated across Europe, and during the Cold War, when these different models were received in Britain by different agencies in different ways.

The next three sections develop an historical narrative of town twinning in Britain from 1945 to the late 1970s. Town twinning arose from below and took many forms in the years immediately following the Second World War. As fear of Communism grew over the next two decades, the British Government increasingly supported some forms of town twinning over others. By the 1970s, support for the Council of European Municipalities model had ensured that town twinning in Britain was associated with civic and cultural exchanges within Western Europe. This association has been reinforced over the last 20 or so years by various European Community and European Union programmes. The historical narrative is summarised in the concluding section of the paper, before developments since the late 1970s in town twinning and municipal internationalism more broadly are discussed and connected back to the two-part argument introduced above.

2. Post-war possibilities

After the Second World War, a number of new municipal internationalist organisations were established through which town twinning was invented as an organised phenomenon. One of the first was the International Mayors' Union for Franco-German Understanding and European Cooperation. The relationships established under the auspices of this organisation tended to involve student exchanges, lectures, language courses, and family-to-family exchanges.³³ Participants tended to romanticise a peaceful European past of autonomous regions unified through Christianity.³⁴

More important for the future development of town twinning in Britain were the Council of European Municipalities (CEM) and the United Towns Organisation (UTO) – both established in 1951. The CEM was born out of campaigning by an earlier organisation, La Federation, for European exchanges, projects, and institutions. It was allied to the Vatican and certain large corporations.³⁵ The town twinning it promoted reflected this position and initially involved religious services, messages from the Pope, and a view of

Europe as essentially Christian and under threat from Communism.³⁶ The CEM viewed town twinning as a means of bonding Christian Europe together. The UTO was also born out of campaigning by an earlier organisation, *Le Monde Bilingue*, for links between towns and cities in France and elsewhere that would build international understanding and peace while preserving the French language.³⁷ The UTO, in contrast to the CEM, was keen to promote town twinning between French localities and localities in the USA and USSR. It was keen to use town twinning to bridge the emerging Cold War divide and also the emerging divide between the so-called developed and developing worlds.³⁸ This willingness to countenance friendship with Soviet people in particular invited animosity from the CEM. Relations between these two organisations would deteriorate over the next two decades.

In Britain, localities became involved in town twinning during the immediate post-war years sometimes through these various organisations and sometimes independently and on their own initiative. The British Government was fairly relaxed at this stage about the involvement of British localities in town twinning. In 1949, the Foreign Office asked the British Council to approach municipalities for information on their involvement in 'town to town links'. The British Council did this and produced a memorandum through which municipalities were allowed to question the Government's position:

The enquiries have provided a considerable volume of information and revealed a great deal of interest [...] The approach has given rise to a flow of enquiries along the following lines: In which countries may we establish links? May we choose a foreign town ourselves? Will there be any official machinery for putting us into touch with an interested foreign town? Can we be told the type of link that is recommended and exactly what is involved? Will such links be accorded official Foreign Office backing? Will any official financial or administrative help be given us? [...] It now seems necessary to decide whether the growth of link schemes should be left to spontaneous action, or whether there should be some form of official sponsorship.³⁹

These questions were discussed at a meeting attended by representatives of the British Council, the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Commonwealth Relations Office. The outcome of this meeting was communicated in a letter from J P G Finch at the Foreign Office to N V Parkinson at the British Council:

The general feeling of the meeting was that, while the formation of town-to-town links was a thing that should be looked upon with favour, any official sponsorship or participation has been shown by the enquiries made to be open to at least two disadvantages: a) [...] the prospect of official encouragement was apt to raise expectations of financial support from official funds which do not in fact exist for such purposes; whereas at the present time it is hoped that local government authorities as well as central authorities, will be able to effect economies; b) it has in certain instances been found that towns in the UK have been much less enthusiastic about the idea than towns overseas [...] where this occurred, it would mean that some of the responsibility for failures caused at this end would be attributed to the sponsors [...] In general, we feel that it would be better to adopt a benevolent attitude towards links for which there was a sufficient demand for them to grow up spontaneously.⁴⁰

In this response, the Government provided no guidance on the substance of town twinning and no promise of financial or other support. This was because Government finances were tight in the immediate post-war period. It was also because town twinning relationships would succeed on the basis of local enthusiasm and energy, which the Government had little control over and little evidence of at this stage. The official position, then, was of no position. No particular model of town twinning was favoured – neither the CEM model of bonding within Western Europe nor the UTO model of bridging across ideological and economic divides. No Government programme for town twinning was forthcoming. But there was a ‘benevolent attitude towards links for which there was a sufficient demand’, and this did translate into legislation over the next two

decades. In 1956, the Local Authorities (Expenses) Act was passed to allow councils to pay the expenses of members and officers making official and courtesy visits to twin towns, and to receive and entertain visitors from twin towns (providing they were representative of or connected to local government or other public services). The Local Government (Financial Provisions) Act was passed in 1963. This enabled local authorities to spend up to the product of a penny rate for any purpose considered to be in the interests of the local area and its inhabitants. It was passed with town twinning in mind. It marked the end of a period in which the future of town twinning in Britain was relatively open. Through the next two decades, British authorities would become less and less relaxed about town twinning and more and more active in the promotion of certain forms of town twinning over others.

3. Cold War Suspicions

In 1961, the President of the British Section of the CEM wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Association of Municipal Corporations (AMC). In this letter, the UTO was described as ‘the subject of much political controversy’ and the AMC was asked to accept responsibility for ‘coordinating and assisting’ town twinning in Britain.⁴¹ The CEM wished to influence proceedings by associating with the AMC and excluding the UTO from such an arrangement. A similar request was made of the AMC around the same time by the British Section of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA). The AMC responded positively to these requests in 1962 and established the Joint Twinning Committee which oversaw town twinning in Britain until 1989 and on which sat, initially, representatives of the County Councils’ Association, the Rural District Councils’ Association, the Urban District Councils’ Association, the Association of County Councils in Scotland, the Convention of Royal Burghs, the British Section of the CEM, the British Section of the IULA, the British Council, the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges, the Educational Exchange Council, the Ministry of Overseas Development, and the Foreign Office. Like the CEM, the Foreign Office suspected the UTO of ‘communist exploitation’. An intelligence report from September 1961 noted how:

The first Congress of the organisation [UTO] was held in Aix-les-Bains in 1957 [...] Several Satellite mayors attended the Congress. In 1958, the second Congress took place at Harrogate. Again, mayors from the Satellites attended, and one from Russia – the Mayor of Leningrad [...] In 1960, a Congress was held at Acosta and a British communist, resident in Italy, is known to have been appointed as a temporary clerk on preparatory work [...] Town-linking associations are always potential targets for exploitation by the communists; and we believe that to some extent the UTO is already the victim of such exploitation. The June 1960 issue of the monthly review of the French Communist Party, *Cahiers du Comunisme*, carried on p981 an article by Lucienne Maertens entitled ‘Le Jumelage des Villes et la Detante Internationale’. Several pages were devoted to the UTO and its French and British associations. It proves beyond doubt that the Communist Party is alive to the possibility of turning town links to their own ends.⁴²

The Foreign Office thus suspected ‘town-linking associations’ of ‘communist exploitation’ but had no evidence at this stage of actual ‘penetration’ of the UTO by communists. A second intelligence report produced the following year noted how there was ‘no reason to believe that the UTO is communist penetrated’.⁴³

The Government’s position on the UTO hardened during the mid-1960s in response to events at the United Nations (UN). On 13 August 1964, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted Resolution 1028 (XXXVII) – Town Twinning: Means of International Cooperation. The resolution had been proposed by France and a number of French-speaking African countries where the UTO was influential. The text of the resolution reflected these origins:

The ECOSOC, considering that experience in recent years has shown the great value of town twinning practised without any discrimination and

especially between States Members of the United Nations, considering that many town twinnings arranged under the auspices of the UTO and other similar organisations promote the realisation of the lofty ideas enshrined in the United Nations Charter of the Constitution of UNESCO [the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation] and the resolution of the great international conferences, considering that the General Assembly of the United Nations decided in Resolution 1907 (XVIII), dated 21 November 1963, to designate 1965 as International Cooperation Year [...] 1) Considers town twinning as one of the means of cooperation that should be encouraged by the International Organisation both in connection with International Cooperation Year and on a permanent basis; 2) Recommends the United Nations and UNESCO to encourage during 1965, within the limits of their resources, the largest possible number of town twinnings with the collaboration of competent NGOs [Non-Governmental Organisations]; 3) Invites the Council Committee on NGOs to give all due consideration, as soon as possible and in accord with established procedures, to the request that the UTO should be given category A status.⁴⁴

The resolution advocated the UTO model of town twinning ('practised without any discrimination') and mentioned no other town twinning organisation by name. Shortly after this resolution was adopted, Jean-Marie Bressand, a founder of the UTO, wrote a letter to Douglas Smith of the UK Executive Committee of International Cooperation Year 1965. The letter sought to defend the UTO from attacks by the IULA and CEM:

Until 1957, the movement in Great Britain grew, spread, and we soon had 100 twinnings, nearly all Anglo-French, under our care [...] All was going well when politics and jealousy arrived to complicate matters. The jealousy was personified by the IULA which, as far back as 1955, issued a statement of policy concerning *Le Monde Bilingue*. IULA, instead of cooperating on twinning matters, acted as if twinning was a threat to its

clientele. Politics was represented by the appearance of the CEM whose avowed and permanent aim was and is to impose restrictive views concerning twinning on the municipalities by forbidding all relations between the towns of the 'free world' and the 'other one'. The two movements joined voice to make accusations against our movement which was suspected of favouring Communism because there were among its members towns belonging to all blocs and ideologies.⁴⁵

How Bressand's claims were received by the UK Executive Committee can be seen in a letter sent by J P Gaukroger of the Committee to H Nield at the Ministry of Overseas Development. Gaukroger expressed sympathy with the UTO model of town twinning, but not with the tone of Bressand's letter:

My conviction is that the prime obstacle to world understanding and world development is the psychological gulf between peoples. I am persuaded that by means of a comprehensive system of town-or-district-wide links, between groups of people in different parts of the world, understanding-in-depth can be developed [...] At present, there is an acute dilemma which poses itself for many people: including, I imagine, the Ministry of Overseas Development, in the form of the rivalry between the UTO and other organisations such as the IULA. It is hard to resist the importunings of the UTO if one is a believer in the potential of a network of links, but there are aspects of the organisation that repel many of us: not least the fact that it seems to be dominated by one or two people with a polemical attitude to others and a persecution mania that have put up the backs of many perfectly reasonable and enlightened individuals.⁴⁶

At least three points can be taken from this letter. The first is that Gaukroger was persuaded of the potential of town twinning for international development. The second is that he had been reluctant to engage with town twinning prior to 1965 because of the rivalry between the UTO and other organisations (the IULA and CEM). The third point

is that he had found the tone of previous UTO correspondence repellent. It is unlikely that Gaukroger was alone in holding these views of the UTO. Civil servants were not only suspicious of the organisation's communist associations. They were also disturbed by its tone of engagement with British officials. The UTO often approached local authorities without acknowledging the existence of gatekeeper bodies such as the IULA and AMC. UTO correspondence rarely took place in the diplomatic register. The UTO was treated rather coldly by British officials, therefore, because of the demands it made of them and the tone in which they were made. This was in addition to its 'suspect connections'.

ECOSOC Resolution 1028 went to the UN General Assembly in 1965. The British Government's view of this resolution was outlined in a briefing paper on the UTO prepared some years later (April 1972) by the Cultural Exchange Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

At the 26th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, a Resolution was tabled by France, Senegal and certain other countries which sought *inter alia* a more effective form of cooperation between the UN and the UTO. The Resolution also called on the UN to recognise the UTO as an agency for world cooperation between communities and invited the UNDP [the UN Development Programme] to participate in the UTO programme. Our brief to the UK mission in New York at that time was to the effect that we believed twinning should be left to the respective civic authorities themselves in different countries and that, inasmuch as the proposal would involve the use of aid funds for projects promoted under links between civic authorities, we could not support diversion of aid in this manner [...] When the Resolution was put to the vote, the UK voted against in the company of the USA, Canada and New Zealand [...] We consider: a) it is undesirable for political reasons that this organisation should obtain any greater degree of authority; b) that cooperation of the kind envisaged by UTO is more effective when left in the hands of the civic authorities

concerned; c) that any attempt by UTO to gain further recognition and control of funds should be resisted.⁴⁷

As a result of this opposition, the resolution adopted in 1965 – UN General Assembly Resolution 2058 (XX): ‘Town twinning as a means of international cooperation’ – made no mention of the UTO. Rather, it contained a series of general statements about how ‘town twinning should be encouraged, both in connection with International Cooperation Year 1965 and on a permanent basis’, and ‘ECOSOC should prepare a programme of measures through which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation might take concrete steps to encourage the achievement of the largest possible number of twinned towns’.⁴⁸

Aware of ECOSOC’s new remit, the UTO intensified its lobbying activity over the next two years. In November 1966, Mali, Senegal and Tunisia submitted a draft resolution to UNESCO requesting Category A status for the UTO and an annual grant of \$300,000 to develop its activities. In March 1967, Jean-Marie Bressand wrote to Lord Caradon, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Permanent British Representative to the UN:

I do not believe that anyone can doubt that the UTO is the sole organisation of twinned towns whose principle goal is to make twinning a means of international cooperation. It alone has codified and organised this new kind of international relationship through giving it: an ideological basis: the principles of its Charter; its own methods and organisation: the twinning committee open to all; a goal: the setting up of a current of exchanges and friendship between all twinned towns in order to involve the masses, and youth in particular, in a united action for international education and the creation of a climate of peace and cooperation.⁴⁹

Once again, Bressand made his case for the UTO model of town twinning. But, once again, he also identified the UTO as ‘the sole organisation of twinned towns’, a position the British Government was unable to support, given the involvement of local authorities

with both the IULA and CEM. Later that month, town twinning was discussed at the 42nd Session of ECOSOC. The UTO submitted a statement making a similar case to that made by Bressand some days earlier to Caradon. The statement continued with a request:

It is unthinkable that municipal budgets can alone bear the weight of financing twinings, especially cooperation twinings [...] What do we request from the United Nations? [...] to consider the UTO as the auxiliary of the United Nations in the field of cooperation on the municipal and popular masses level [...] We therefore request ECOSOC to make the following recommendations to the 22nd General Assembly of the United Nations: a) To create a World-Wide Town-to-Town Cooperation Fund to finance a permanent programme which, for 1967 to 1968, would call for 100 cooperation twinings (of \$3,000,000, based on the average cost of such twinings) [...] b) To entrust the UTO with the carrying out of this programme [...] and to assure, for this purpose, with the possible collaboration of UNESCO, an annual optional subsidy of \$300,000; c) To create, within the United Nations, a World-Wide Town-to-Town Cooperation Committee.⁵⁰

The UTO was claiming that town twinning requires significant funds and coordination. It was requesting these funds from the UN, and offering itself as sole coordinator of town twinning across the world. This submission was very different to that submitted by the IULA to the same session of ECOSOC:

Several of IULA's member associations cooperate in twinning not only with IULA members but with municipalities affiliated to other non-governmental organisations, such as the UTO, the CEM, the Union International des Maires, and the Foreningen Norden. It should, however, be mentioned that many, if not most, twinings are arranged directly between the cities concerned without the agency of any national or international bodies [...] It is the considered view of the IULA that

twinning is best conducted as a voluntary bilateral action [...] In our judgement, the objectives to be achieved by these bilateral contacts will not be furthered by action by intergovernmental organisations unless, of course, these were to decide to put considerable funds at the disposal of cities engaged in twinning activities.⁵¹

The IULA maintained a committee on town twinning and sought to facilitate twinning contacts through its national secretariats. But it did not claim to be the only international organisation involved in the process. Moreover, it argued that twinning relationships are best arranged directly between cities and not through international organisations such as the IULA, CEM or UTO. As we have seen, this was a view shared by the British Government – not only because at least one of these international organisations had ‘doubtful connections’, but also because this was the view of many independently-minded local authorities in Britain. The Government’s position at this time (May 1967) was outlined in a note from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

UTO has some doubtful connections and it is by no means the only international non-governmental organisation in this field. Consequently, we cannot give our support to any proposals which do not take account of this fact and which aim at securing a special position for UTO. Nor do we favour the UTO’s objective of creating a special international fund for town twinning, as this would divert the funds of the United Nations from more urgent objectives [...] The UTO is supported by very few municipal authorities in the UK and by none of our local authority associations, which support an older and, in their view, more reliable organisation, the IULA [...] The IULA statement coincides with HMG’s [Her Majesty’s Government’s] view of town twinning [...] HMG regard town twinning as a useful means of international cooperation but do not consider it a field in which governments should take the lead. They think that exchanges can best be left to the discretion of local authorities.⁵²

Opposition to the UTO was multi-dimensional. The UTO was suspected of Communism. It claimed to be the only organisation in the field when clearly it was not. It favoured national and international intervention in town twinning to stimulate and organise activity. Neither the British Government nor representatives of local authorities in Britain favoured such an interventionist approach.

On 15 May 1967, a draft resolution similar to the one submitted to UNESCO the previous year was submitted to ECOSOC. Having been opposed by Britain and its allies, the resolution was sent away to be revised. A new version was submitted one week later that made no mention of the UTO and no mention of UNDP funds for town twinning. This revised version was adopted as ECOSOC Resolution 1217 (XLII): 'Town twinning as a means of international cooperation'. It called on governments 'to seek the participation of NGOs in assisting in the formation and implementation of UNDP projects in which town twinning or other forms of inter-municipal cooperation may place an important role'. It invited NGOs 'to request towns which have prepared plans for town twinning cooperation or other forms of inter-municipal cooperation to forward their plans to their governments for them to consider when submitting requests to the UNDP for assistance'. It also advised the UNDP 'to bear in mind the experience of such NGOs when arranging for the implementation of such projects'.⁵³ This resolution marked the end point of discussions about town twinning at the UN – at least until the 1990s, when the issue returned to the UN under the sign of city-to-city cooperation. The adopted resolution contained warm words about town twinning. But this content was clearly different from what it might have been had the British Government and its allies not suspected the UTO of Communism, and had the UTO been more diplomatic in its approach.

4. European Programmes

In 1972, the British Government finally reached a firm and active position on the UTO and, by extension, town twinning. Lobbying from the UTO had continued through the late 1960s. In 1968, Bressand wrote to Prime Minister Harold Wilson making the case for the UTO model of town twinning. In the letter, Bressand compared it to existing

forms of development cooperation and argued that such forms were more costly, less efficient and less effective.⁵⁴ This comparison would be made again by international development professionals towards the end of the twentieth century.⁵⁵ We do not know how the Prime Minister received this argument at the time, or even that it registered with him. But we do know that British authorities became increasingly suspicious of the UTO during the late 1960s and early 1970s. One reason for this was the proposed programme for United Towns Day, described in a letter from C C B Stewart of the Foreign Office to J C Swaffield of the AMC:

One of the forms which it is suggested celebration of United Towns Day might take is an item in the programme recommending participants to demand that 'bombings in Vietnam cease immediately, that the destruction of towns and villages be stopped, that the Vietnamese people be given the right to govern themselves'. This is clearly a highly controversial item to inject into what is ostensibly intended to be an internationally organised municipal occasion.⁵⁶

Further reasons for these suspicions were outlined in a briefing paper prepared by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in April 1972:

The degree of communist manipulation and infiltration has increased substantially. UTO has set up a centre in Sofia and, despite its claims to be non-political, a number of its pronouncements are indistinguishable from current communist propaganda. For example, the most active promoter of the organisation, M Bressand, has described the main task of the organisation as 'the fight against all forms of fascism, neo-colonialism and imperialism'. It has in the past adopted political programmes expressing the familiar clichés of international revolution and class struggle.⁵⁷

In 1972, two decades after first taking an interest in the UTO, British officials had finally categorised the organisation as ‘manipulated and infiltrated by communists’. That very same year, the Government launched its first and only programme of funding and support for town twinning. This was the Rippon Programme to improve cultural relations between Britain and existing members of the European Economic Community (in preparation for Britain’s entry in 1973). Under the programme, £3.5 million were allocated to the British Council, including £75,000 for town twinning. This was not a lot of money but it demonstrated Government support for the twinning principle and commitment to the model associated with the CEM oriented towards bonding between localities in Western Europe (as opposed to the UTO model oriented towards bridging between East and West as well as North and South). This demonstration, and the money that was committed, had a significant effect on town twinning activities in Britain. According to LGA data, new relationships involving British localities almost doubled from 184 during the 1960s to 365 during the 1970s. The number of overseas countries represented in these relationships actually declined from 26 during the 1960s to 19 during the 1970s. The Rippon Programme period correlates with a significant rise in town twinning activity in Britain and the focusing of this activity rather narrowly on localities in Western Europe. Indeed, of the 365 relationships established during the 1970s, 202 were between British and French localities, and 101 between British and German localities. It was from this time that town twinning in Britain became associated with Europe, the European Community, and civic and cultural exchanges between Western European localities.

This association has survived into the twenty-first century at least in part because of other more recent programmes sponsoring the CEM or bonding model of town twinning within Europe. One of these programmes was Community Aid for Twinings, launched by the Secretariat General of the European Commission in 1989. Much discussion had taken place during the 1980s about the extent to which expanding European institutions required a concept, understanding, and practice of European citizenship in order to function. In 1984, a meeting of the European Council at Fontainebleau established the Adonnino Committee to consider the profile of the European Community among citizens

of its member states. When the Committee reported, it recommended a number of actions to strengthen and promote this profile, including Community support for town twinning. In 1988, on the initiative of Nicole Fontaine MEP, the European Parliament adopted a report on town twinning and its contribution to European awareness. One outcome of these two reports was Community Aid for Twinning. Another programme sponsoring the CEM or bonding model of town twinning within Europe is the European Commission's Citizens for Europe programme which has funding from 2007 to 2013. Town twinning is meant to achieve a number of things in this programme. It is meant to foster friendship, cooperation, mutual understanding, a European identity, and a sense of ownership of the European Union among citizens of member states.⁵⁸ The context for these aims and objectives is failure to ratify the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands during 2005 and a perceived dwindling of support for the European Union among ordinary Europeans.

5. Conclusion

The last three sections have developed an historical narrative of town twinning in Britain for the middle period of the twentieth century. Town twinning was invented as an organised phenomenon in Western Europe after the Second World War. In the immediate post-war period, a variety of town twinning organisations and models appeared, of which the two most prominent were the CEM with its bonding model and the UTO with its bridging model. At this time, British localities were relatively free to engage with these different organisations and models, or independently to establish their own town twinning relationships. This was not least because the British Government was supportive of town twinning in principle, while refusing direct involvement – aware that it could neither afford to fund town twinning nor ensure the success of particular relationships. In these early years, the future of town twinning in Britain was relatively open. Over the next two decades, however, the CEM and UTO competed more and more actively and acrimoniously for British localities both directly and through the UN. Because of this, the Government was pushed, rather reluctantly, into taking a firmer

position. By the early 1970s, the position reached involved active support for the CEM and its use of town twinning for bonding within Western Europe.

The CEM was favoured over the UTO for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the UTO was suspected of Communism. Evidence for this consisted of attendance at UTO conferences by mayors from towns in Russia and its Satellites, an article about the work of the UTO in the monthly review of the French Communist Party, and statements made by UTO officials in opposition to the Vietnam War. British officials also disagreed with the UTO position that town twinning should be subject to intervention (and that such intervention should proceed through the UTO and no other organisation), and perceived UTO correspondence to be polemical in tone. Support for the CEM and its model of town twinning was provided via membership of the Joint Twinning Committee, opposition to various UN resolutions, and funding for the Rippon Programme. It was during the Rippon Programme period (1970s) that town twinning became associated in Britain with civic and cultural exchanges within Western Europe. This association has survived into the twenty-first century assisted by more recent programmes such as Community Aid for Twinning.

This final part of the paper considers developments in town twinning and municipal internationalism since the end of the 1970s, before returning to the main arguments. At the end of the 1970s, with the CEM model of town twinning dominant in Britain, the context of municipal internationalism began to change as the fear of Communism began to recede. Other concerns took its place, including: a concern about the economic crises of the 1970s and accelerating deindustrialisation in the North Atlantic area; a concern about growing socio-economic inequality between the (roughly-mapped) northern and southern hemispheres; and a desire to influence the transition of post-socialist Europe and Asia after the events of 1989. Alternative models of municipal internationalism emerged or, better, resurfaced during the 1980s and 90s. Entrepreneurial partnerships and networks were established to attract increasingly mobile investment capital to British localities hit by deindustrialisation and the fiscal austerity policies of Thatcher's Conservative Government.⁵⁹ These included new town twinning relationships with

localities in the USA (30) and China (19).⁶⁰ Technical assistance partnerships were established between municipalities on either side of the so-called North-South and West-East divides. North-South partnerships, reminiscent of the UTO model of town twinning, were established initially by local groups who came together in 1984 as the United Kingdom One World Linking Association. By the end of the century, such partnerships were receiving support from the Department for International Development via the Commonwealth Local Government Forum's Good Practice Scheme. West-East partnerships were also often established by local groups in the first instance, much as peace and reconciliation partnerships had been after the Second World War. After 1989, these partnerships benefited from both European and British programmes designed to influence transition in the former Soviet Union. These included the TACIS City Twinning Programme of the European Commission's Directorate General for External Relations, and the Know How Fund Technical Links Scheme of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with the Overseas Development Administration.

These recent developments should be understood within the historical context of twentieth-century municipal internationalism, and within the main argument of this paper. Local desires for peace, understanding, knowledge, know-how, and local welfare provided municipal internationalism with many continuities through the twentieth century. These continuities can be seen in, among other places, the biography of organisations like the IULA (which lived in one form or another from 1913 to 2004),⁶¹ and the biography of models like the UTO model of town twinning (which was promoted, suppressed and rediscovered at various points through the second half of the twentieth century). Discontinuities, however, also formed an important characteristic of twentieth-century municipal internationalism. These discontinuities related to movements in national and international politics. Town twinning emerged from the debris of the Second World War only to be shaped by the politics and anxieties of the Cold War and its aftermath. As with other modes of municipal internationalism, it advanced, receded, and changed course as funding and other opportunities were offered, withdrawn, and offered once more by national and international bodies.

Notes

1. There are town twinning relationships that claim to predate 1945. The existence and age of these relationships is not in dispute. Town twinning as an organised phenomenon, however, using the name 'town twinning' (or equivalents in languages other than English), emerged during the period following the Second World War.
2. For a collection of research on municipal internationalism during this period, see *Contemporary European History*, Volume 11, Issue 4.
3. Ewen and Hebbert, 'European Cities in a Networked World during the Long 20th Century'.
4. Dogliani, 'European Municipalism in the First Half of the Twentieth Century'.
5. Saunier, 'Sketches from the Urban Internationale, 1910-50'; Saunier, 'Taking Up the Bet on Connections'.
6. Saunier, 'Taking Up the Bet on Connections'.
7. Saunier, 'Sketches from the Urban Internationale, 1910-50'; Saunier, 'Taking Up the Bet on Connections'.
8. For collections of research using the internationalisation or globalisation approach, see Fry et al, *The New International Cities Era*, and *Environment and Planning C*, Volume 25, Issue 3.
9. Fry et al, *The New International Cities Era*.

10. Urban entrepreneurialism describes the competitive pursuit by cities of trading partners, markets, and inward investment – see John, *Local Governance in Western Europe*.
11. Hocking, *Localising Foreign Policy*.
12. The Europeanisation or internationalisation of local government describes a response to funding and career opportunities originating in Brussels that includes interurban lobbying networks – see: Goldsmith, ‘The Europeanisation of Local Government’; Church and Reid, ‘Local Democracy, Cross-Border Collaboration and the Internationalisation of Local Government’.
13. Swyngedouw, ‘The Heart of Place’.
14. Ibid.
15. Swyngedouw, ‘Neither Global nor Local’.
16. Brenner, *New State Spaces*.
17. For a collection of research on city-to-city cooperation, see *Habitat International*, Volume 33, Issue 2.
18. Bontenbal and Lindert, ‘Transnational City-to-City Cooperation’; Nitschke et al, ‘Challenges of German City2city Cooperation and the Way Forward to a Quality Debate’.
19. Bontenbal and Lindert, ‘Transnational City-to-City Cooperation’; Evans, ‘A Framework for Development?’.
20. Swyngedouw, ‘Neither Global nor Local’.

21. Ewen and Hebbert, 'European Cities in a Networked World During the Long 20th Century'.
22. Campbell, 'The Ideals and Origins of the Franco-German Sister Cities Movement, 1945-70'.
23. Vion, 'Europe from the Bottom Up'.
24. Ibid.
25. Vion, 'Europe from the Bottom Up'; Weyreter, 'Germany and the Town Twinning Movement'; Vion, 'The Institutionalisation of International Friendship'.
26. Zelinsky, 'The Twinning of the World'.
27. Campbell, 'The Ideals and Origins of the Franco-German Sister Cities Movement, 1945-70'.
28. The Local Government Association maintains a database of town twinning relationships involving British localities. The author was given access to this database in June 2007.
29. Interviews were completed with representatives of the following national and international organisations: the International Union of Local Authorities; the Council of European Municipalities; the Association of Municipal Corporations; the British Council; the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign; Towns and Development; the United Kingdom One World Linking Association; Oxfam; the Local Government International Bureau; the United Nations Development Programme; World Association of Cities and Local Authorities Coordination; the Commonwealth Local Government Forum; and the Local Government Association. They were also

completed with local authority members and officers, and town twinning association officers and members in twelve British localities.

30. Goldsmith, 'The Europeanisation of Local Government'.

31. For an extended discussion of this point, see Clarke, 'In What Sense "Spaces of Neoliberalism"?'.

32. Ewen and Hebbert, 'European Cities in a Networked World during the Long 20th Century'.

33. Campbell, 'The Ideals and Origins of the Franco-German Sister Cities Movement, 1945-70'.

34. Ibid.

35. Vion, 'Europe from the Bottom Up'.

36. Ibid.

37. United Towns Organisation, *A Short Guide to Town Twinning*, 1965, file OD10/159, National Archives.

38. Ibid.

39. Memorandum on Town to Town Links prepared by the British Council at the request of the Foreign Office, dated 19 March 1949, NA, HLG52/1632.

40. Letter from J P G Finch of the Foreign Office to N B Parkinson of the British Council, dated 26 April 1949, NA, HLG52/1632.

41. Details of this letter and events surrounding it were reported in a speech by Harold Banwell, Secretary of the Association of Municipal Corporations, given on 24 October 1961 to a conference organised by the British Section of the Council of European Municipalities and the UK Council of the European Movement, NA, HLG52/1632.
42. Foreign Office INTEL no. 117, dated 7 September 1961, NA, FCO13/185.
43. Foreign Office INTEL no. 153, dated 11 September 1962, NA, FCO13/185.
44. ECOSOC Resolution 1028 (XXXVII): 'Town Twinning as a Means of International Cooperation', adopted 13 August 1964, NA, OD10/159.
45. Letter from J-M Bressand of the United Towns Organisation to D Smith of the UK Executive Committee, International Cooperation Year 1965, dated 3 May 1965, NA, OD10/159.
46. Letter from J P Gaukroger of International Cooperation Year 1965 to H Nield of the Ministry of Overseas Development, dated 12 October 1965, NA, OD10/159.
47. Briefing paper on the United Towns Organisation, prepared by the Cultural Exchange Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated April 1972, NA, FCO34/156.
48. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2058 (XX): 'Town Twinning as a Means of International Cooperation', adopted 16 December 1965, NA, OD11/282.
49. Letter from J-M Bressand of the United Towns Organisation to Lord Caradon, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Permanent British Representative to the United Nations, dated 10 March 1967, NA, FCO13/183.

50. Statement from the United Towns Organisation, Annex 1 of a note from the Secretary General of the United Nations, agenda of the 42nd Session of ECOSOC, 16 March 1967, NA, FCO13/185.
51. Statement from the International Union of Local Authorities, Annex 2 of a note from the Secretary General of the United Nations, agenda of the 42nd Session of ECOSOC, 16 March 1967, NA, FCO13/185.
52. Briefing note on the agenda of the 42nd Session of ECOSOC, prepared by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 3 May 1967, NA, FCO13/185.
53. ECOSOC Resolution 1217 (XLII): 'Town Twinning as a Means of International Cooperation', adopted 8 June 1967, NA, FCO13/183.
54. Letter from J-M Bressand of the United Towns Organisation to Prime Minister Harold Wilson, dated 17 January 1968, NA, FCO/183.
55. See Bongers, *City-to-City Cooperation*, and Ringrose, *The Challenges of Linking*.
56. Letter from C C B Stewart, State Secretary to the Foreign Office, to J C Swaffield of the Association of Municipal Corporations, dated 5 April 1968, NA, FCO13/184.
57. Briefing paper on the United Towns Organisation, prepared by the Cultural Exchange Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated April 1972, NA, FCO34/156.
58. See http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/guide_en.html (accessed 10 October 2007)
59. Harvey, 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism'; Cochrane, *Whatever Happened to Local Government*; Hall and Hubbard, *The Entrepreneurial City*.

60. Local Government Association Database of Twinning Towns.

61. The International Union of Local Authorities was founded in 1913 as the Union Internationale des Villes. In 2004, it merged with a number of organisations to form United Cities and Local Governments.

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