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Chinese district of Singaport - R.R. -Arne Keller

Reshaping economic geography

he World Development Report 2009 published by the World Bank and entitled "Reshaping Economic Geography", states that regions are successful when they encourage high densities — and urbanization contributes to this change by introducing shorter distances, increasing mobility and travel speeds, bringing individuals close to the centres of density and, finally, by reducing divisions and barriers, essentially of an economic nature. This is no doubt true in principle, but what do we observe in practice?

Competition between different areas is a constant feature in the North. In France, for example, where intercommunal cooperation has changed the scale of local competition but not removed it, the debate initiated by the publication of the "Balladur" report that dealt with metropolises, has even brought it back into the public eye, but we should stress that this metropolitization process has taken place in the framework of a national project that while definitely including competition between cities also encourages coherence and complementarity between them.

Although Europe it is one of the wealthiest areas of the planet, there are enormous disparities between regions with regard to incomes and potential. These disparities were further increased in 2004 when new Member States joined whose average incomes were far below those in the rest of the Union. In this context, the European Commission developed, and is still developing, policies to modify regional development with a view to improving cohesion between

regions, on the basis of a transfer of resources from prosperous regions to the poorest. This policy is presented as an instrument of solidarity and a powerful purveyor of economic integration.

In the South, aid policies are focused on the fight against poverty, which is central to the Millennium Development Goals which States are committed to achieving by 2015. This fight involves both growth and reducing inequalities, in an environment of decentralization that fosters the emergence of local initiatives throughout national territories. In a world that had been, until the current economic and financial crisis, in growth for a number of years, the unequal distribution of the fruits of growth were evident to everyone. The World Bank's 2006 report entitled "Equity and Development" considered inequalities as factors of poverty and, for the first time, brought the concept of equity into economic analysis.

So, while today the major challenges for development at local, national and international level all have a geographical basis, fortunately we can assume that political action via institutions, the use of various instruments of integration and intervention by means of infrastructure, will be able to preserve the social dimension of development and remedy the disparities and inequalities generated by growth.

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Cities in development: Making urbanization inclusive

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What are the core elements of an efficient and inclusive urbanization strategy? This article provides an answer to this question, based on the facts, analysis and policy experiences drawn from the 2009 World Development Report, Reshaping Economic Geography.

strategy for urbanization that maximizes the contribution of cities to economic and social development must be realistic, rigorous, and reasonable:

- For the approach to be realistic, it must recognize the following facts: (a) A large part of urbanization is generally over by the time a country reaches middleincome, viz., income levels of about \$3,700 per capita; (b) the relationship between countries' income levels and urbanization rates is not different for early and later developers; and (c) urban settlement patterns are similar between countries at different stages of development, and tend to remain stable over time.
- For the strategy to be rigorous, it must be grounded in analysis that identifies the role of urban settlements:
 (a) Towns enable firms and farms to exploit economies of scale; (b) cities allow firms in similar industries to localize and become efficient; and (c) metropolises encourage learning and innovation that comes from urban diversity.
- For a strategy to be reasonable, it must be prioritized and sequenced, and recognize capacity constraints: (a) During incipient urbanization, policymakers should not discriminate between urban and rural areas—they should instead provide basic social services everywhere,

and ensure functional land and labor markets; (b) at intermediate stages of urbanization, connective infrastructure is needed in addition; while (c) advanced urbanization also requires, in addition, place-based interventions such as slum development programs.

The Richer the Denser

The global development experience shows that the speed of urbanization is most rapid when countries are at low income levels.2 It also shows that the pace and pattern of urbanization is similar for early and later developers. It indicates that all nations have an urban hierarchy of metropolises, cities, and towns, and no country has grown to riches without a shift of populations from villages to urban settlements.

Urbanization's speed has precedents
Urbanization has always
happened early in development, when countries have
low levels of income and
institutional capacity. This
was the experience of early
developers such as Britain
and France; it happened
similarly in South Korea as
it grew from low to high income.

The changes are related to shifts in production from agriculture to industry to services. Without these sectoral transformations, nations do not develop. Without urbanization, these transformations are simply not possible. But appalled by conditions in the developing world's cities, many call for policies to slow down or reverse the flow of people from villages to cities.

That would be a mistake. Nowhere has successful urbanization progressed painlessly. "Between 1815 and 1851, for example, France's population grew from 29 to 36 million and it was the cities that absorbed the thousands of migrants unable to find work in the countryside. But there were simply not enough jobs. Unemployment and overcrowding created appalling living conditions. Only one in five houses had running water. In 1832 cholera wiped out some 20,000 Parisians." "Like so many other European cities, Paris suffered from chronic postwar housing shortages. Of the 17 slum areas designed for clearance, most were still intact in the 1950s." Pain-free progress is an unrealistic aim.

Urbanization's pattern is also not unprecedented. Policymakers are often concerned about the enormous size of today's cities. Mumbai is believed to be too overpopulated, Mexico City too poorly managed, and Bangkok grotesquely large for midsized Thailand. But rapid growth of large cities at early stages of development is not a new phenomenon, and urban primacy is a common—and often healthy—phenomenon.

But the scale of the rural-urban shift today is unprecedented. With the benefits of better medicine and greater prosperity, to-day's populations are bigger. While the world's largest 100 cities averaged 700,000 people in 1900, a century later this number was 6.3 million. In developing East Asia the scale of the rural-urban shift may be almost 2 million every month for the next two decades.

While these numbers are daunting, the experience of recent developers shows that they are not unmanageable. But they require a sequenced approach that is deliberate, founded on a careful diagnostic of the benefits and costs of settlements.

The benefits of economic density

The benefits of urbanization come from "agglomeration economies³". These can be classified into three types of scale economies that are facilitated by settlements of different sizes: internal, localization, and urbanization economies.

- Internal economies can be facilitated by towns and small cities. Towns facilitate internal cost savings for firms and farms to produce in scale. Such places do not have to be big. What is more important is that they provide basic social services such as schools, streets, security, and sanitation. The town of Sriperumbudur in southern India had fewer than 20,000 people when it was chosen by Hyundai to be the location for its plant in 1999, which had produced a million cars by 2006.

- Locationalization economies usually need medium-sized cities. Cities encourage firms in similar industries to localize and become more efficient. With a ready supply of skilled workers and access to an efficient port, the city of Shenzhen in southeast China has nurtured a bustling electronics industry,
- Urbanization economies require large cities. Metropolises promote learning and innovation from urban diversity. By providing a stable economic environment, livability, efficient finance and excellent transport links, Singapore provides services to all of Southeast Asia. These services are used by a wide range of activities from financial, educational, and medical services to shipping and manufacturing. Singapore's diversity facilitates sharing, matching and learning.
- Just as producers specialize, urban settlements specialize to help firms, farms, and families exploit the gains from specialization and trade. Most market economies require the services of villages, towns, cities and metropolises, at all stages of their development. And their growth is largely independent of their size. Indeed, these patterns are so stylized that they are almost considered laws in urban economics.4

Any sizeable nation or region needs a portfolio of places of different sizes, density, and function that facilitate particular types of scale economies. At the top of this hierarchy are a few large cities. They tend to have diverse industrial composition, and cultural and other amenities. Partly because of the attraction of skilled people to this diversity, these cities serve as incubators for new ideas and industries. These cities

deliver urbanisation economies, which are the productivity and cost benefits that come from great density and diversity.

Below these large cities are usually an even larger number of medium sized cities. These cities act as regional foci for the economy and society, serving as regional hubs of transportation, finance and commerce. They also act as regional centers of advanced public health, higher education and cultural facilities. They are typically more specialised, being focused on manufacturing and the production of traditional and standardised items. In these secondary cities, localisation economies dominate. These are the benefits from specialisation in a particular industry, such as the availability of a pool of labour whose skills are specially suited to that industry, or specialised firms which supply components and parts within the industry.

Finally, smaller towns are linked to the secondary tier of cities above and connected to a mass of rural areas at the base of the hierarchy. Towns are the connective tissue between rural and urban areas. They are facilitators of internal scale economies as seen in mills and market centers for agricultural and rural produce, and as stimulators of rural non-farm activities. Symbiosis is again the rule. Towns draw sustenance from the agricultural activity of rural areas, but their prosperity also spills over to villages.

Efficient and inclusive urbanization strategies

How can policymakers facilitate such a symbiosis? The experience of successful urbanizers such as the USA, France, Japan, and the Republic of Korea provides clues. Policy needs are simpler, and policy priorities fewer, at early stages of urbanization. They get progressively more numerous and complicated as urbanization picks up speed. Their experience also suggests that the sequencing of instruments should be correct.

- First, institutions. Spatially blind "institutions" such as functional land markets and basic social services in both rural and urban areas are a large part of an economic integration strategy, and the role of central governments is primary.
- Then, infrastructure as well. In areas that are rapidly urbanizing, some towns become cities. In addition to the institutional foundation, investments in connective infrastructure to prevent early congestion are now important so that the benefits of rising density are more widely shared. Coordination between central and provincial governments is necessary to deliver these services.
- Finally, interventions where necessary. Policymaking is hardest for advanced urbanizers, requiring in addition to institutions and infrastructure, well-designed and targeted interventions such as slum upgrading programs

or formal housing schemes to reduce within-city divisions. The role of local governments becomes pivotal as urbanization reaches an advanced stage.

Even when strictly prioritized and sequenced, this seems like a tall order for a developing country. The experience of successful countries shows that it can be done. But the policy debates on urbanization are too often narrowly focused on places that are being left behind by growing cities and urban enclaves. The emphasis then turns to targeted interventions such as rural development programs and slum upgrading schemes. World Development Report 2009 proposes instead to focus on the interactions between lagging and prospering places, which are pulled together by the market forces of agglomeration, migration, and specialization.

When seen in this context, places of different sizes not as substitutes but complements, and urban agglomerations are no longer seen as a necessary evil. Migration from rural areas is seen not as a failure of development policy, but as a sign of the desire of people to prosper. And the social and environmental stresses that come with geographic transformations are no longer seen sep-

The Republic of Korea's portfolio of places



Source: World Development Report 2009.

arately from the enormous benefits that come from spatial specialization.

And what are the implications for policy? Spatially targeted interventions should not be seen as the main instrument for helping people who have been left behind in the rush to cities. Governments have far more potent policy instruments for helping people in villages and slums: they

can build the common institutions that unify all places, and put in place infrastructure to connect some places to others. Spatially targeted interventions should only be used sparingly, and always in conjunction with—never instead of—unifying institutions and connective infrastructure.

- Indermit Gill is the Director and Chor-ching Goh a principal author of the World Development Report 2009
 Reshaping Economic Geography. This article summarizes chapters 1, 4 and 7 of the report.
- 2. See Chapter 1 "Density" in World Development Report 2009.
- 3. See Chapter 4 "Scale Economies and Agglomeration" in

- World Development Report
- 4. The first regularity is the "rank-size rule"—the rank of a city in the hierarchy and its population are linearly related. The second regularity is the Gibrat's law—a city's rate of population growth tends to be independent of its size

The search for balanced regional development

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The 2009 World Development Report has been universally hailed as a step forward in the thinking of the World Bank. It represents a break with the Bank's traditional approach in which space is considered as neutral for economic development, and provides irrefutable proof of the importance of economies of localization and scale for the start, growth, development and maintenance of economic activities in a given area.

The report starts from the principle that the concentration of economic activity is inevitable and desirable for economic development. This concentration generally goes hand in hand with wealth inequality within the country. This means that leaders are tempted to adopt strong policies to counter such spatial inequalities with regard to development. The report suggests that before implementing active regional planning policies of this type we need a good understanding of the mechanisms at work. Regional changes are caused by three factors (the "3D s"): (1) the increase in the density of economic activity; (2) the reduction in the distances between economic agents and markets; and (3) the creation of divisions that act as barriers to the mobility of factors within a given country or between countries.

The report stresses the need to concentrate decisions around three questions (a) how should we manage the transition from a rural to an urban economy, and the disparities between the rural poor and the economic opportuni-

ties offered by cities? (b) how should we organize regional development within a country and what should we do for the least developed regions – deliberately bring economic activities into them, or encourage ties between the populations of less developed regions and those of the country's most



Road between Yaoundé and Doualan Cameroon

dynamic regions? (c) how should we improve the access of the world's poorest countries to global markets?

The report puts forward three types of response to spatial development disparities (the "3 I's"): (1) set up "spatially neutral" institutions to encourage eco-

nomic density; (2) develop connective infrastructure to reduce transaction costs; (3) implement integration policies to increase mobility and reduce social, economic and spatial divisions.

No doubt because of a concern for clarity, a number of the report's recommendation's run the risk of seeming simplistic: to propose a "simple framework" for dealing with policies for organizing and managing urbanization is a serious oversimplification. With regard to the dynamic of urbanization, the world probably does not contain any really genuine examples of the situations that provide the basis for the report's recommendations (incipient urbanization, intermediate urbanization advanced urbanization). This oversimplification is typical of the report's generalizations. excessive This is typical of the World Bank, and paradoxically totally negates the concern for places that is essential to take account of spatial systems in development strategies. The realities are more complex, and to cope with them, decision-makers must on the contrary make the attempt to understand the constraints, whether local or of other kinds, that different regions must overcome tin order to develop. This concern should have given rise to a major recommendation which is absent:

the pressing need to monitor population levels in different areas by conducting regular censuses, and also that to promote the production of localized data on the growth and development of economic activities. The current state of affairs as regards decentralization and the increasingly important role played by local authorities in creating the initial conditions required for local development should also have featured more in the analysis and recommendations.

The report demonstrates admirably that economic activities have a tendency to become concentrated. It also recognizes that this concentration leads to inequalities in the development of different regions, but the authors nevertheless recommend that institutions should remain neutral with respect to the development of regional systems, on the grounds that historically development has always led to a period of disparities between different areas which is generally followed by a period of convergence, once a certain level of economic development has been attained (author's italics). This recommendation is far from meeting universal approval, particularly in Africa, where the distinction, dating from the colonial period, between economic zones that are deemed to be "useful" and the rest of the country has had devastating effects on national cohesion and civil peace, and in many countries delayed progress towards sustainable development. This is wrong. Our goal must remain to achieve balanced development between different zones. The report describes ways of bringing about the balanced development of different zones without sacrificing economic efficiency and social cohesion and integration, and this is one of its qualities.

The report rightly takes a positive view of mobility and migration. It is surprising that it stops short of justly stigmatizing the counterproductive impacts for world development of the restrictive policies with regard to the mobility of persons implemented by the countries of the North towards persons from the South. Here the report leaves the realms of science for those of ideology, which is a real shame.

It is understandable that the report was unable to take account of the geographic effects of the current financial crisis. It is less easy to see why it did not give more coverage to the effects of climate change. It is likely that mobility due to climate change is already having a significant influence on the location of human beings and their economic activities. The report would have gained from an attempt at spatial forecasting in this area and if it had provided some ideas about the geographical effects of climate change and energy constraints.

On the desirable form of cities: Economic geography and sustainable development

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While the urban population numbered one billion in 1960, it had risen to 2 in 1985 and now stands at three, accounting for half the world's population. This urban explosion, together with demographic growth, is destined to continue. The urban population could exceed 4 billion in 2020 and pass the 5 figure mark in 2030, as urban growth is very fast in the countries of the South. This process is often a source of concern, the fear being that we will be unable to deal with transport congestion, the technological or social risks present in major conurbations, and, obviously, the resulting environmental damage.

The World Bank report that tackles the issues of economic geography has therefore appeared at just the right time. It describes the advances that have been made in the discipline, which has received striking recognition in the form of Paul Krugman's Nobel Prize for economics. Above all, the report opens up the debate on the desirable form of cities, while the

difference in opinion with that expressed in the European Commission's Green Book shows the need for indepth analysis in this area. The first supports "unbalanced" growth, encouraging concentration, while the second takes the view that the relatively dense European structure with few major cities is beneficial for quality of life and tends to avoid diseconomies of

scale. At the very least, this debate requires us to make a distinction between urban densification and urban sprawl and not confuse densification with certain type of architecture such as skyscrapers. Beyond this, it requires us to re-examine the fundamental determinants of urban dynamics.

The economics of integration

Put simply, the report's principal messages are that development cannot be uniform as economic production tends to become concentrated, population mobility is desirable because the desire to migrate reflects a desire for improvement, and standards of living diverge before they converge. Consequently, policies should be prioritized, the most important being the setting up of appropriate spatially neutral "institutions", in particular to assist the operation of land markets. Infrastructure comes next, to permit the movement of goods, services and people. However, the report advocates prudence with regard to spatially targeted interventions such as relocation aid for companies.

In fact, the tendency towards "disequilibrium" and urban concentration is caused by mechanisms for exploiting economies of scale, agglomeration or location. This highlights the structuring role of infrastructure, particularly at the interurban level. But the role of public transport networks, for example urban trams, is also important.

The report goes so far as to state that ".... The rush to cities in developing countries seems chaotic, but it is necessary ... because the move to density that is manifest in urbanization is closely related to the transformation

of an economy from agrarian to industrial...". This almost seems to suggest that what we are concerned with here is market optimality. However, no such theoretical result has been obtained. as spatial interventions usually involve second best decisions. Urban dynamics should therefore be considered on a case by case basis. Likewise, we must emphasize that dismantling the obstacles to market unification bears a cost when it is not artificial obstacles such as customs tariffs that are at issue but natural boundaries (with regard to transport infrastructure) or cultural factors. Consequently, policies or projects that aim to dismantle them should be the subject of cost-benefit analyses.

The World Bank Report nevertheless makes some valuable points:

- We are taking risks by attempting to thwart the mechanisms of agglomeration and specialization and the mobility which determines them as they reflect very deep economic realities,
- Spatially targeted interventions can only be effective if it has been verified beforehand that the institutions and infrastructures are in place.
- We need to think in terms of "spatial integration". In this context integration within markets is primordial. This means we must pay special attention to dismantling the obstacles in its way. With reference to the European Union, this reinforces, for example, the priority given to bottlenecks at borders in the transEuropean networks. To find support for this policy we need only think of the disadvantage at



Shinjuku district, Tokyo, Japan

which French cities that "refused" the railway in the 19th century placed themselves.

Sustainability

However, we also need to think about social integration, and internalize environmental costs. In this context, the World Bank's new transport strategy highlights the role played by infrastructure in providing access to health services and education. Above all, transport and housing emissions mean that cities are responsible for a major proportion of greenhouse gas emissions. These can partly be avoided. With regard to this, Newman and Kenworthy (1989) have shown that the energy consumption of cities depends on their form and the importance of the role played by private transport in their operation, which means that efforts are required in the area of both land and transport to control urban growth.

Apart from the issues highlighted by the report, we also need to evaluate the risks and costs of congestion, the costs of transition, the value of certain items of local cultural heritage, or the irreversible problems caused by the creation of slums. Beyond this, it must be stressed that recommendations in these areas cannot simply be formulated as a result of a good understanding of the past without considering the future impact of emerging pressures on the scarcity of natural resources or environmental quality.

This suggests that the optimal configuration of cities in fact depends on a set of parameters, on the different types of costs and scarcities and the preferences of the population, which may of course change but which must not be ignored. This diversity of results is however

matched by a very strong hierarchy of instruments that must be put in place in order to generate urban organizations that are able to meet the challenge of climate change. First of all, nothing is possible without full internalization of the social costs associated with car use, in particular the greenhouse gas emissions it causes.

The primary role of land policy is to avoid blocking

the mobilization of land in zones which are destined to be densely populated, by permitting this densification without which these is no point in building sophisticated public transport networks. Land taxation is also an irreplaceable instrument for financing the construction of new facilities.

The strategy proposed by the World Bank would therefore

benefit from the addition of the Bank's "sustainable impact assessment", which would probably not cast doubt on the basic data – as nondensification is costly in terms of energy and the climate – but would doubtless lead to a refinement of some of the conditions for implementation at city level. Indirectly, this would provide an opportunity to examine in greater depth the large

number of jursisdictions involved in implementing these policies, and better see how the ranking proposed by politicians (which is certainly valid at government level) changes when one considers the "project" level, where, by its nature, synergies play a role.

An examination of the geographical issues involved in economic development

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The most recent World Development Report (WDR2009) by the World Bank¹ "Reshaping economic geography" deals with the geographical and urban dimensions of economic development, a topic which thus far has been neglected in the literature on development. Based on theoretical advances in the field of economic geography and empirical observations made in their wake, the WDR2009 demonstrates a desire to draw lessons from the discipline with regard for the implementation of public development policies.

t the risk of caricaturing the World Bank's position, the WDR's general message is that the pursuit of the goal of economic development requires an increase in human and economic density. What needs to be done is to encourage densification of this type in countries with low levels of urbanization and combat its harmful effects (congestion, slums, etc.) in countries that are already urbanized in order for its benefits to appear. In this context, the role of public action is to make spatially neutral interventions (creation of public services and infrastructure, organization of the land market, etc.), in order to assist the forces of agglomeration by

strengthening those conditions which improve efficiency (mobility, human capital, etc.) without considering the spatial distribution of growth.

The French Development Agency (AFD) which is constantly increasing its activities that aim to benefit cities, has decided to examine the policies recommended by the World Bank. To this end it has entrusted the running of a working group consisting of economists and geographers and the drafting of a report² to two experts in the field — Jean-Claude Prager et Jacques-François Thisse.

The aim of this work is not, of course, to bring into question the progress that has been made in economic geography, or to contest historical events that are now universally agreed on, but to consider the way the World Bank interprets them in terms of economic policy. From this standpoint, Jean-Claude Prager and Jacques-François Thisse are more cautious in their interpretation of the concepts developed in Economic Geography. Economic Geography is a relatively abstract field, that has been developed on the basis of historical experience of development in advanced countries. While it is true that the approaches it advocates/uses have a basis in historical events, they produce descriptive rather than prescriptive models and therefore do not provide us with keys to enable us to reproduce all the conditions that are required to foster the forms of development observed in advanced economies. It is true that in the past the existence of cities and the economies of agglomeration associated with them enabled developed countries to increase production in the industrial sector and even in the service sector, and that it would not have been possible to attain such a level of efficiency with a dispersed population. But does this mean that we can see urbanization as a general driving force for development?

Rather than studying processes of national development in order to find paradigms to reproduce, Jean-Claude Prager and Jacques-François Thisse encourage us to think of development as a complex dynamic system of interactions between a large number of actors. This influences the nature of their recommendations. These no longer involve applying general principles de-

rived from a normative approach (encouraging density while combating its harmful effects), but rather primarily stressing the need to identify the potential of urbanization for a given area, before making any recommendation.

Consequently, the lessons of economic geography no longer provide answers, but a set of questions. We know, for example, that all sectors of activity are not equally sensitive to economies of scale and agglomeration. What are the activities in a given area that could benefit from them? What are its strengths and weaknesses in terms of human and financial resources and infrastructure (factors which, while we cannot affirm that their presence provides growth, certainly work against growth when they are absent)? How do

the different players interact with each other in a given area? Can we coordinate their activities in order to set up a virtuous circle?

Naturally, the path to development is full of pitfalls. A detailed knowledge of geographical areas and the strengths and weaknesses is only a first step, admittedly necessary but not sufficient to develop public policies. When applying these policies the public authorities come up against many other questions which are quite as fundamental. For example, the budgetary constraints to which both the public authorities and donors are subject force them to decide between different areas and, in the case of each area, between priorities for public action - more education or more public transport?

It is nevertheless the case, and here the authors we are concerned with agree with the WDR, that when defining public policies it is not possible, except at grave risk, to ignore the knowledge from economic geography. It is simply that drawing on this knowledge, Jean-Claude Prager and Jacques-François Thisse prefer to put the emphasis on the pitfalls to be avoided rather than to adopt a "one size fits all" approach.

www.worldbank.org/wdr2009
 Jean-Claude Prager and Jacques
François Thisse "Les enjeux géographique du développement
économique" Note and Document N° 46, AFD, juin 2009.
http://recherche.afd.fr

the authors we erned with agree WDR, that when public policies it

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Publications

Introduction à l'économie du développement. Jacques Brasseul, Armand Colin, 2008, 3rd Edition.

This new edition of this book represents a complete reworking of the previous one in the light of the



extension of the globalization of economies and current economic theories, in particular those that highlight the role of institutions. The previous edition described the disruptions on the global economy that would arise from the faster growth of the economies of the South. This growth is now apparent in the explosion in production that is taking place in China and India in particular.

www.armand-colin.com

Régir le territoire et gouverner les territoires.

Décentralisation et territorialisation des politiques publiques en Colombie.

Jean-François Jolly. L'Harmattan, 2008 This publication is derived from a doctoral thesis that was based on field work and completed



It deals with the transformations in the relationships between power and territories in Latin America. It considers the links between public policies of decentralization and the territorialization of public action in Colombia and tackles the topic of governance and the way those in power approach the national and local dimensions of the territorial issue as a stake and as the location of power.

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