

# RDD

Regional Development Dialogue

Vol. 33, No. 1, Spring 2012

## Evolving *Regionalismos*: Latin American Regions in the Twenty-first Century

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A Theory in Search of a Practice or a Practice in  
Search of a Theory?

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Contemporary Debates on Regionalization and  
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**Gilda Collet Bruna**

Regional Planning and Economic, Social, and  
Environmental Development



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Regional Development  
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## EVOLVING *REGIONALISMOS*: LATIN AMERICAN REGIONS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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## **Editorial Introduction**

# **Evolving *Regionalismos*: Latin American Regions in the Twenty-first Century**

Karen Chapple, Sergio Montero, and Oscar Sosa

This issue of *Regional Development Dialogue* (*RDD*) responds to an interest of the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Office of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) to better understand the different ways in which the idea of the region — as a subnational and yet supramunicipal space — is currently articulated in Latin America. We had two key questions in mind: (a) how are regions conceptualized in Latin America as the twenty-first century advances into its second decade? and (b) how do these conceptualizations compare to prevailing regional planning theory and practice in other regions of the world? The notion of the region is by no means a new concept. For decades, academics, policy-makers, and citizens across the globe have been interested in regions as key spaces for environmental resource management, economic development, and sociopolitical struggles. Yet, throughout this rich history, regional experiments have favoured specific sets of agendas, practices, and institutions. This issue of *RDD* analyses the opportunities and challenges facing current schemes of regional collaboration in Latin America by focusing on the actors, institutions, and agendas driving these initiatives. We begin from the assumption that Latin America has not been a mere spectator of regional planning debates or a passive adopter of foreign ideas. Instead, we seek to conceptualize twenty-first century Latin America as fertile ground for innovative regional arrangements and practices that arise from the tension between ideas from outside Latin America and established institutions, governance dynamics, and political contestations.

This *RDD* issue begins with an article by Sergio Boisier, a key commentator on regional planning in Latin America. In his article, Boisier gives us a historical introduction to the different regional approaches in the subcontinent since the 1940s. His reflection, however, goes beyond a mere historical account to ask a provocative question about the current state-of-the-art of Latin American regional planning: a theory in search of a practice or a practice in search of a theory? Boisier argues that while regional initiatives in Latin America during much of the twentieth century tried to replicate in practice a rigid theory of regional models originating in the US and Europe, often without success, in the twenty-first century we are witnessing a proliferation of novel regional practices in the subcontinent that

require a new and reconstructed regional theory to explain them. We take this idea seriously and we have gathered here a selection of articles that shows currently existing regional initiatives in Latin America. However, this issue does not take on the ambitious task of reconstructing regional theory and practice from a Latin American perspective. What we have prepared is better understood as a basis for a debate among planning practitioners, policymakers, civil society groups, and academics on the different articulations of the region emerging from contemporary Latin American experiences.

### **A Brief Review of Regional Planning in Latin America**

The origins of modern regional planning in Latin America can be traced back to efforts in the late 1940s to establish Keynesian river basin development initiatives based on the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) scheme, established by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, as a way to overcome the high unemployment rates resulting from the Great Depression. Both Boisier and Neira<sup>1</sup> point to the establishment of the *Comisión del Papaloapan* (Papaloapan River Commission) in 1947 in Mexico as one of the first regional planning efforts in Latin America. During the 1950s, other regional experiments, such as SUDENE in Brazil, were tried in Latin America based on cutting-edge regional science at that time emanating from the US and Europe. Underlying the new regional development paradigms was a shift from the idea of the territorial or river basin region to the functional, city-based region, as the appropriate foundation for development policy. As Friedmann<sup>2</sup> argued, the urban system constituted the structure within which economic development occurred.

By the end of the 1950s, debates about development were raising new questions about regional planning approaches and policies in Latin America. Dependency theory emerged in Latin America as a critical response to liberal ideas of free trade, modernization, and development. It gave scholars a particular understanding of how poverty and inequalities were maintained at the global level via the core-periphery duality. Drawing upon Marxist ideas and putting them to work in the uneven geography of Latin America, dependency theorists supported the idea that resources flowed from a periphery of poor states, including most Latin American countries, to a core of wealthy states, enriching the latter at the expense of the former.<sup>3</sup> Thus, according to dependency theorists, the ways in which developing countries were integrated into the world capitalist system maintained and reinforced their poverty and impeded any hope of development. In contrast, modernization theory, deeply influenced by the work of the US economist Walt Rostow,<sup>4</sup> interpreted development as a linear process, as a common path to development that happened in all countries and took place in consecutive stages. In his 1960 book, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, Rostow described the stages that a country needed to follow to reach the “high road to development”. An important tenet of the Rostovian model was that economic take-off was initially led by a few sectors. Rostow’s book deeply influenced US foreign policy towards the “underdeveloped” nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the 1960s, facilitating the ongoing shift from the previous Keynesian economics paradigm to one along the lines of neo-classical economics.

In the late 1960s, “growth pole” and growth-centre strategies, influenced by the ideas of French economist François Perroux, emerged in Latin American countries.<sup>5</sup> A key assumption of this regional development paradigm was that the creation of a few growth poles in a country would eventually benefit the whole of the national territory through trickle-down effects. This, however, ignored the findings of economists like

Myrdal<sup>6</sup> and Hirschman<sup>7</sup> who had already shown in the late 1950s the limitations of polarized regional planning strategies in transmitting wealth from growth poles to poorer regions when the existence of agglomeration economies and imperfect mobility of factors of production were taken into account. In 1973, US economist Conroy urged the rejection of growth centre strategies in “underdeveloped” economies based on the experiences of three Latin American nations (Bolivia, Chile, and Colombia), showing how these countries had turned to alternative paradigms of regional planning after the evident trickle-down failure of growth pole strategies. During the 1980s, large-scale planning lost popularity and the local, rather than the regional, started to be seen as a more appropriate scale for planning and the promotion of economic development.<sup>8</sup> Latin America was not an exception and most of the decentralization reforms that took place in the 1980s and early 1990s consisted of the transfer of power from the central government to the local/municipal level rather than to intermediate levels such as the state or *departamento* governments. Following Falleti,<sup>9</sup> we interpret decentralization as a three-dimensional process that entails the transfer of authority (political decentralization), responsibilities (administrative decentralization) and resources (fiscal decentralization) from the national to subnational levels of government. Over the past three decades, Latin American countries have witnessed an unprecedented rise in the role of subnational scales of governance in the formulation and implementation of public policies and in the administration of public resources.<sup>10</sup> The novelty lay in the structural transformation of subnational governments from a mere administrative subdivision of the nation-state run by appointed mayors and governors, to a new and more sophisticated entity run by elected officials. Subnational governance structures have become capable of making decisions and administering resources with relative autonomy from national desires and interests although they are rarely given fiscal independence and often depend on fiscal transfers from the central government. In any case, the project of governing and planning in Latin America has become less grandiose; less about large-scale national plans, comprehensive planning, and macro-economic data, and more about local and regional concerns, participatory techniques, and strategic planning. At the same time, debates about globalization and cities have deeply affected modern regional planning theory and practice.

In the early 2000s, after the publication of Allen Scott’s influential volume *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*,<sup>11</sup> there was a resurgence of interest in regions in Latin America that linked regional development to accelerating globalization. Drawing from Jane Jacobs’ concept of the city-region,<sup>12</sup> Saskia Sassen’s global city thesis<sup>13</sup> and Paul Krugman’s work on agglomeration and economic geography,<sup>14</sup> a group of scholars situated the new dynamic of economic agglomeration in the region rather than the city.<sup>15</sup> They emphasized “the role of the *region* as a source of critical developmental assets” noting how economic growth rates are typically higher in large metropolitan regions than in non-metropolitan areas.<sup>16</sup> Global city-region theorists justified the need and legitimacy of political governance at the subnational level by the emergence of a new global and capitalist territorial restructuring wave that made the city-region emerge as a privileged scale for both economic agglomeration and governance.<sup>17</sup> The ideas on city-regional governance presented in Scott’s edited volume<sup>18</sup> have been influential in academic debates and in policy-making circles in Latin America and the wider world. However, there have also been critiques on some of the principal tenets on which this theory is based.<sup>19</sup> For instance, critiquing Scott’s and Storper’s argument of global

city-regions as the most appropriate scale for governance, Mark Purcell has argued that “governance structures at the city-regional level may or may not be more democratic than smaller or larger-scale structures.”<sup>20</sup> Purcell further argues that, rather than a particular geographical scale of government, it is the “agenda of those empowered by a given scalar strategy” as well as the institutions and political engagement mechanisms at that scale that will lead to more or less democratic outcomes.<sup>21</sup> In their critique of both global city and global city-region theory, Ward and Jonas have argued that “the emphasis on competition for mobile capital hardly exhausts the full range of imperatives (fiscal, legitimation, social control, etc.) underpinning state intervention and territorial reorganization.”<sup>22</sup> As opposed to the narrow emphasis on global competitiveness and agglomeration economies of global-city region theory, they sought to promote an alternative approach that highlights “a politics of governance and state re-territorialization around the city-region; the role of democracy and citizenship in city-region politics; and tensions around social reproduction and sustainability across the city-region”.<sup>23</sup> Another provocative critique came from post-colonial scholars Jennifer Robinson and Ananya Roy, who urged urban scholars to move beyond the dominant EuroAmerican geographies of global city/city-region theories<sup>24</sup> towards the cities “off the [global city] map”.<sup>25</sup> This critique sought to problematize the universal applicability of concepts based on the experiences of cities in the North such as the global city/city-region. Robinson<sup>26</sup> further argued that, in urban theory, cities in poor countries are often portrayed as non-cities or chaotic megacities while the understanding of “city-ness” has come to rest in the theory and experience produced in a few model cities in the North.

### **Regionalization and Regional Governance in Latin America**

It is not possible to discuss regional planning and development today without referring to the idea of governance, which has become a buzzword worldwide particularly in urban and regional studies.<sup>27</sup> Despite its popularity in academic and policy-making circles, different authors and disciplines have advanced distinctive notions of what they mean by “governance.” The general agreement seems to be that there is a new way of governing space in which nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and other non-state actors are given a more significant and active role in public decisions, policy-making, and planning. Governance makes use of networks, public-private partnerships, and instruments such as strategic and participatory planning as opposed to top-down comprehensive planning and bureaucratic state institutions. Because governance theory emphasizes political decentralization and devolution as key features of contemporary forms of government, the term “governance” quickly permeated academic debates in fields concerned with the government of subnational spaces such as city and regional planning, urban politics, urban sociology, urban geography, and urban and regional studies. Governance theory has often been dominated, however, by the experience of the countries that key governance authors write about: Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, and the US. In other words, the so-called “shift from government to governance”<sup>28</sup> is dominated by the particular experience of the US and Northern European countries, particularly the UK. This stipulative definition, based on the British experience, constitutes the origins of what Marinetto<sup>29</sup> has called the Anglo-Governance School. Authors in this school are founded on two key assumptions: (a) the gradual “hollowing out of the state” due to the privatization trends of the 1980s; and (b) a consequent “shift from government to governance”, i.e., a shift from hierarchical



and bureaucratic forms of state organization and public goods provision to a fragmented, decentralized, and networked system. As noted by Marinetto,<sup>30</sup> during the 1990s, the Anglo-governance model became “an authoritative theory of how new methods of governing society have emerged”. The concept of governance, however, has proven to be a valuable analytical tool to move beyond the sort of binary categories such as public/private or state/society that have long dominated the study of government and policy decisions. In doing so, it has also been able to incorporate the increasing number of non-state actors and forces that are taking part in governing decisions and policy-making not only in the UK and the US but also in many countries including Latin America where the lines between state, civil society, and the private sector in the context of decentralization are becoming blurred. The fact that public-private collaborations and governing networks are present in an increasing number of countries however does not suggest that the UK and the US constitute the model towards which governing systems worldwide are converging, an idea that David Harvey<sup>31</sup> flirted with in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* and that this *RDD* issue questions.

The rising interest in urban and regional governance in Latin America can be explained, at least partially, by two key factors. First was the new state configuration brought about by decentralization processes, which empowered and opened up subnational governments throughout the subcontinent.<sup>32</sup> Empowered local governments in Latin America increasingly rely on the private sector and on the so-called *tercer sector* (third sector), a name often used to refer to civil society groups, organizations, and NGOs. Second was the new “good governance” consensus shared by many international development institutions that are active in the subcontinent, namely the World Bank<sup>33</sup> and the Inter-American Development Bank.<sup>34</sup> This good governance consensus relied on the key assumption that development depends not just on markets but also on the effective functioning of state institutions and civil society. This new consensus is influenced, on the one hand, by powerful critiques by economists such as Joseph Stiglitz<sup>35</sup> and others of structural adjustment and privatization strategies of the 1980s and 1990s and, on the other hand, by the New Institutional Economics and particularly Douglass North’s influential book *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, which emphasized that the formal and informal “rules of the game” were key in explaining long-term economic performance.<sup>36</sup> The New Institutional Economics also emphasized “path dependency,” i.e., the role of history in institutional change. The study of the interactions between state institutions, market, and civil society over time thus replaced attempts to find causal relations and development outcomes derived from a set of pre-defined variables in a particular moment of time.

In the case of Latin America, the role of the United Nations (UN) organizations such as Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Latin American and Caribbean Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), and the UNCRD’s LAC Office have been key in promoting regional and territorial visions of planning and development in the past decades. ECLAC and ILPES have been influential in developing new concepts and approaches to territorial development based on the Latin American experience.<sup>37</sup> UNCRD, on the other hand, has promoted the discussion of regional development in Latin America, particularly since the establishment of the LAC Office in Bogotá in 1997. In the past fifteen years, UNCRD has facilitated the collaboration between academics and practitioners interested in regional planning by organizing different forums and events,<sup>38</sup> it has built capacity among Latin American local, regional, and

national policymakers to promote integrated regional/territorial development planning strategies and it has also focused on South-to-South diffusion of positive regional experiences and best practices. A central emphasis of UNCRD in Latin America has also been the inclusion of the needs of vulnerable populations in the regional planning process through strategies such as the “human security” approach to regional development.

Under decentralization, the increasing number of non-state actors that are now participating in policy-making and planning has proven to be a double-edged sword in Latin America. Nonprofit and government agencies began using strategic planning in the 1980s and since then it has become a guiding framework for the majority of city governments in Latin America.<sup>39</sup> Strategic planning is the process of determining the vision, mission, and goals of an organization in order to take strategic decisions for achieving those goals. One of the main advantages of strategic planning is the possibility of designing a common strategy through participatory decision-making in order to include the interests of different actors. These actors, usually denominated stakeholders, often include representatives of local/regional/central governments, civil society groups, the private sector and, in the case of Latin America, international institutions such as the UN or the World Bank. However, the issue of who is represented and who is not presents a key shortcoming of strategic planning. The lack of presence of certain sectors of the population, either directly or indirectly (e.g., people not familiarized with the language and dynamics of participatory planning), and the over-representation of others may lead to the reproduction of social hierarchies and the designing of harmful policies for the poor or under-represented.<sup>40</sup> For instance, Caldeira and Holston<sup>41</sup> have argued that, while the new participatory planning mechanisms have facilitated the democratization of the previous authoritarian and expert-led planning paradigm in Brazil, these new mechanisms have also opened local governments to the private sector as, under the new paradigm, “the process of urbanization should entail a balanced cooperation, or partnership, between public and private interests.”<sup>42</sup> As noted by Teresa Caldeira, during the past decades, initiatives of democratization and neo-liberalization in Latin America have not only coincided in time but they have actually “coalesced into a single entangled process of change”.<sup>43</sup>

### **Contemporary Regional Initiatives in Latin America**

This guest editorial introduction seeks to reflect on some of the critical issues that are emerging in regional practice in contemporary Latin America. We follow the relational understanding of space and policy of recent planning<sup>44</sup> and urban and regional studies debates,<sup>45</sup> and thus understand regional policies and planning paradigms to be co-constituted by a complex interplay among circulating models and territorial path-dependent political contestations and institutions. Similarly, while Latin America is interpreted here as a whole in order to identify some general trends, we certainly acknowledge different pathways of regional development approaches and practices within the subcontinent. In this section, we highlight four recurring themes that have become increasingly present in contemporary regional planning practice in Latin America: the relevance of territorial (versus “spatially blind”) planning and development; the growing diversity of actors involved in regional initiatives; the emergence of voluntary regional associations; and the re-emergence of environmental values as a framework for regional initiatives. For each theme, we provide a short overview and reflect on how the empirical evidence presented in the eight articles in this issue relates to these themes. In some cases some

of the articles touch on only one of the themes while, in others, they touch on two, three or all them.

### **Territorial Visions of Planning and Development**

After several decades of regional planning and development experiments in Latin America, debate continues around the question of what it means to adopt a regional or territorial vision of planning and development. This debate now goes, however, beyond the simple question of whether regionalization is necessary or the prescription of particular regional models. The central concern relates to the practical question of **how** to materialize a territorial or regional vision for the promotion of development. A common pattern in most articles in this issue is the use of “regional” and “territorial” as similar terms, although some authors prefer the term “territorial” to “regional” for being able to include the importance of the relationship between space, planning, and development in a more comprehensive way.

In particular, the first three articles, by Sergio Boisier, Roberto Camagni, and Carlos Riojas all analyse the current challenges of regional planning in Latin America and reflect on the motivations and intended goals of such initiatives as well as on possible avenues of future action and practice. Reflecting on the historical trajectory of regional planning paradigms in Latin America, Sergio Boisier presents a critique of the rationality behind the different territorial policies and regional planning models that have been applied in the subcontinent. Assessing the issues and problems (e.g., inequality, lack of administrative autonomy, and disproportionate metropolization) that stem from — and might be addressed by — territorial policies, Boisier concludes that in Latin America regionalization initiatives have often failed. The logic behind his conclusion is exactly the kind of exercise that we sought to conduct with this issue: he is concerned with the quality and outcomes of territorial policies, not just with promoting the need for decentralization and territorial visions of development.

Camagni mirrors this concern in his reflection on the two regional development paradigms that currently predominate: the “territorial cohesion” approach followed by the European Union (EU) and the “spatially blind” approach recently advocated by the World Bank. Camagni critiques the 2009 *World Bank Development Report* because it focuses on the relationship between economy and territory, and is indeed entitled *Reshaping Economic Geography*, yet it emphasizes the benefits of having “spatially blind” institutions for certain policies. Camagni also reflects on the ideological dimension of regional planning and asks the question: why should regional policies be implemented and what is the role that the state should play? For Camagni, avoiding regional inequalities entails pursuing territorial policies that promote endogenous territorial capital and territorial cohesion in a bottom-up fashion. He argues that the notions of territorial capital and cohesion, as used currently for regional development in the EU, can provide a way to understand sustainable and balanced development in territorial terms. Since regional planning in Latin America has historically been influenced by debates originating outside the region, this piece is crucial to understanding future regional policy mobilizations, transformations, and contestations in the subcontinent.

Carlos Riojas continues the theoretical discussion that the two previous articles have set up, looking at the complex relationships among physical, social, and cultural factors that converge and evolve across time in territories. Riojas, as an economic historian, reflects on different regionalization experiences in western-central Mexico and in Central

America in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, highlighting the different consequences — both intended and unintended — that result from regionalization schemes. For Riojas, path dependency matters, but also the nature of the process of regionalization implies a reflection and deep understanding of the factors — endogenous and exogenous — that can bring about economic development.

These three articles engage in the regional/territorial debate using a historical perspective but closely following the actors and discourses that are shaping regional planning in Latin America today. They analyse past regional experiences as a first step in the construction of new parameters through which to evaluate the quality and outcomes of regionalization and future territorial policies in relationship with globally circulating discourses and models.

### **The Increasing Role of Non-State Actors in Regional Initiatives**

While regional planning powers in Latin America were traditionally reserved for central governments seeking to establish a rational territorial organization for modernization and economic development purposes, today non-state actors such as NGOs and civil society groups are becoming more active in promoting new or existing regional initiatives. The parallel processes of neo-liberalization and democratization that took place during the 1980s and 1990s in Latin America have resulted in situations in which civil society groups and NGOs have been empowered while, in other cases, it has benefited mostly private interests. The articles included in this *RDD* issue expand the analysis of these phenomena by analysing the very diverse set of actors involved in the promotion and construction of regions and in the decisions regarding regional planning.

For instance, Sergio Boisier shows in his article how organized civil society groups in the province of Valdivia have challenged the Chilean traditional top-down strategy of regionalization. Chile undertook a process of regionalization in the late 1960s that, with the advice and technical support of the central planning agency (ODEPLAN), divided the country into twelve regions, with the idea of promoting economic growth and development. However, Boisier notes how, during the first decade of the twenty-first century and in the Latin American country “most tightly bound to the political model of a unitary, centralist, and presidential state,” the mobilization of different civil society groups in the region of Los Ríos were successful in pushing the central government to create a new region out of the provinces of Valdivia and Ranco.

Writing about sustainable transportation strategies in Guadalajara, Mexico, Eugenio Arriaga Cordero and Mario Ramón Silva Rodríguez show how new civil society groups and NGOs have emerged to push for alternative visions of metropolitan transportation taking advantage of the more participatory and decentralized planning institutions in Mexico. Yet, despite this new role of civil society groups in pushing for a participatory vision of sustainable metropolitan transportation, it was eventually the political-electoral interest of local officials, in alliance with transportation company operators, which has prevailed in Guadalajara’s urban transportation politics. Gilda Collet Bruna’s article analyses two dimensions of regional planning in São Paulo, Brazil. In her article, Bruna highlights important transformations in urban and regional governance since the enactment of the 1998 *Constitution*, which emphasized the decentralization and democratization of the political system. For Bruna, one of the most important elements of Brazil’s decentralization is that it seeks to include both economic efficiency and citizen engagement. In São Paulo, this has meant new possibilities for both economic develop-

ment and democratic participation.

Finally, Gema Sánchez Emeterio, David Sánchez Ramos, and Valentín Villaruel Ortega show in their article how, after the decentralization and democratization processes in Peru since the mid-2000s, NGOs have become key players in promoting and strengthening processes of local and regional governance. In other words, not only are NGOs new and empowered actors in local and regional decisions but they have also taken the responsibility of promoting the communication and collaboration of the different actors and institutions that take part in policy-making and public services provision. It is through this approach that ONGAWA, the NGO they study, seeks to strengthen institutions at the subnational level. Prominent difficulties remain however. The authors argue that the high rotation of public and elected officials makes the sustainability of the information technology (IT) training that ONGAWA provides to improve local and regional governance difficult over time.

Together, these articles which are also discussed further in this guest editorial introduction illustrate one of the paradoxes of the decentralization and democratization processes in Latin America: while more actors are now involved in policy-making and governing decisions at the subnational level, an effective coordination of all actors does not follow automatically and the continual turnover of locally-elected officials, NGOs, and other actors (and their agendas) makes long-term strategies and shared visions of the territory difficult to agree on and implement over time.

### **Voluntary Regional Associations**

An important regional planning debate in Latin America is taking place around voluntary schemes to create regional associations between neighbouring or adjacent territories. In the past two decades this new regionalization strategy has emerged in many Latin American countries including Argentina, Colombia, and Peru. The novelty here is that the definition of regional borders is left to subnational entities as opposed to the central government level. In this context, the central governments change their role from deciding *ex ante* what the regions are, to establishing the general guiding framework through which these voluntary associations of neighbouring departments, provinces or cities will occur and how they will be funded. Many authors in this issue, particularly Sergio Boisier and Javier Medina Vásquez, welcome this way of creating regions as a more flexible strategy than that previously imposed by the central government. For instance, Medina looks at regional planning initiatives in Colombia from 1986 to 2011 along two dimensions: planning approach (top-down versus bottom-up) and scope (comprehensive versus sectoral). Medina argues that Colombia's regional experience has followed a non-linear path and that, even if this experience has not been that successful, it constitutes a rich basis from which to learn and reflect on regional planning practice. He concludes by arguing that, in recent years, the country has witnessed a "recentralization" in which regional planning initiatives are once again dominated by the top-down desires and agendas of the central government.

We believe these new regionalization strategies open up two interesting new sets of research questions in Latin American regional studies. The first one is on the relationship between the idea of bottom-up and the creation of regions: is a regional initiative or an agenda that has been started by a powerful mayor and/or local elites legitimately bottom-up? Does the bottom-up moniker reside with the level of government that starts the initiative or the type of actors? These are not easy questions but are issues we need

to seriously consider when granting certain regional initiatives with the legitimacy that the idea of bottom-up often confers. The second set of questions is related to the criteria around which regional associations are articulated. Should these be economic development, regional identities, environmental similarities, and/or shared environmental risks? And, more importantly, will these voluntary associations promote the strategic alignment of rich territories or will these rich territories abuse their power to absorb poorer territories? An interesting and related issue is the source of funding of these new regional associations. In Colombia, the recently passed *Ley de Regalías* establishes that part of the tax received from mineral extracting companies will be transferred to subnational entities where the resource exploitation takes place. In Peru, a similar funding situation happens through the *Canon Minero* scheme by which the central government has to transfer 50 per cent of the income tax that mineral extraction companies pay to the subnational entities where their extractive activity is located. Given the increased mineral extraction activity in many Latin American countries in recent years, fueled by Chinese demand, these tax schemes make subnational territories rich in minerals and oil attractive candidates for regional associations. However, it is still not clear how this funding mechanism will contribute to increased or decreased regional disparities. Paradoxically, many of the richer territories in mineral resources are also the poorer ones in economic terms so this should, in theory, improve the situation in lagging regions. However, it will all eventually depend on how funds are transferred and the kind of projects and agendas that are pursued. Again, these are not easy questions to answer but they are certainly new research areas and questions that will become more important as some Latin American regional initiatives continue advancing in this direction.

### **Green Regionalism**

The fourth and final dimension of contemporary regional planning in Latin America that we want to highlight in this editorial introduction is the re-emergence of environmental ideas and values as a powerful discourse to articulate regional initiatives. While many regional planning initiatives in the early twentieth century grew out of concerns about natural resource management, river basin schemes, and bio-regionalism, now increasing concerns over climate change, sustainable development, and environmental risk are providing new rationales for “green” regional initiatives. In this *RDD* issue, the discussion on regional planning as a tool that can address environmental challenges focuses on food sovereignty, metropolitan sustainable transportation, and sustainable rural development. In line with the environmental justice and livability debates in urban and regional studies,<sup>46</sup> the authors included in this issue begin from the assumption that sustainability concerns are not just a matter of biological diversity or environmental conservation, but that social equity and spatial issues must be key components. As such, the articles also argue that regional planning must integrate environmental, social, and economic components, whether the plans and initiatives affect rural forests or urban dwellers.

For example, Margaret W. Pasquini’s article expands the discussion of regional governance schemes by looking at the case of Bogotá-Cundinamarca region from the point of view of agroecology and food sovereignty. She analyses the programme “Bogotá without Hunger,” which has the goal of instituting regional food governance by local and regional public sectors, civil society, and private actors that reconnects urban consumers with rural producers. Pasquini concludes that socially — equitable and environmentally — sustainable food systems require a complex array of market approaches,

state intervention, and agreements between the different civil society actors and interests involved. Similarly, Arriaga and Silva reflect on transportation problems in the metropolitan area of Guadalajara. By comparing the political struggles during the implementation process of the four proposed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines, of which only one was eventually built, they show how transportation projects have become highly contested and politicized arenas. They argue that the lack of a regional transportation planning agency makes it impossible to overcome the political fragmentation and lack of agreement among the different actors involved. The novelty here resides in the emphasis on sustainability and emission reduction as a rationale to creating a regional transportation agency. Finally, Gilda Collet Bruna completes this compilation of articles with a piece that explores the experience of the watershed management committees in Brazil, which for decades have promoted citizen participation in the design of water supply governance, as an example of regional sustainable development. Among the successes of these committees, the author highlights the efficient provision of water to poor and peripheral neighbourhoods.

These articles show how sustainable development can operate as a new discourse to advocate for regional planning. However, the meaning, goals, and consequences of what is meant by “sustainable” are highly contested. The articles also illustrate that although sustainable development and “green” concerns are useful notions to mobilize resources and interest in regional planning, they also require the design and implementation of sophisticated governance structures that address the needs of multiple actors at different scales of government.

### **Final Thoughts**

By sketching out the importance of relational and territorial specificities among the different actors, institutions, and agendas behind regional initiatives in Latin America, the articles in this *RDD* issue seek to set the stage for a productive conversation between theoretical and empirically-based analyses. We identify a clear intention from these scholars to reframe the discussion of regional planning and development and to open up space for the inclusion of elements such as social equity, sustainability, and territorial cohesion in territorial visions of planning and development. We also find that what makes this collection of articles especially interesting is the way in which the diverse cases and approaches used allow for a comprehensive analysis of territorial practices that span different time periods and different geographies. This allows us to situate current Latin American regionalization initiatives both in a historical path-dependent perspective and in relationship with circulating models. Regional initiatives are emerging and quickly evolving in Latin America. We can interpret them using regional theory accumulated for over a hundred years in the European and American contexts. Or we can try to identify and understand the dynamics behind currently existing regional practices in the subcontinent. In this guest editorial introduction, we have chosen the latter.

### **NOTES**

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- and the Caribbean (UNCRD Proceedings Series; no. 33) (Nagoya: UNCRD, 1998), pp. 85-101. (in Spanish)
- <sup>2</sup> John Friedmann, *The Spatial Structure of Economic Development in the Tennessee Valley: A Study in Regional Planning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).
- <sup>3</sup> Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979)
- <sup>4</sup> Walt Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: a Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960 and 2002).
- <sup>5</sup> Michael Conroy, "On the Rejection of 'Growth Center' Policy in Latin American Regional Development Planning," *Land Economics* 49 (4:1973):371-80; and John Parr, "Growth-pole Strategies in Regional Economic Planning: A Retrospective View Part 2. Implementation and Outcome," *Urban Studies* 36 (8:1999):1247-68.
- <sup>6</sup> Gunnar Myrdal, *Economic Theory and Under-developed Regions* (London: University Paperbacks, 1957).
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- <sup>8</sup> Jordi Borja and Manuel Castells, *Local y Global: La Gestión de las Ciudades en la Era Informática (Local and Global: City Management in the Information Age)* (Madrid: Taurus, 1997) (in Spanish); and Francisco Uribe Echevarria, "El Desarrollo Regional en los Años Noventa. Tendencias y Perspectivas en Latinoamérica" ("Regional Development in the 1990s. Trends and Perspectives in Latin America"), *EURE* 16 (47:1989):35-60. (in Spanish)
- <sup>9</sup> Tullia Falleti, "A Sequential Theory of Decentralization: Latin American Cases in Comparative Perspective," *American Political Science Review* 99 (3:2005):327-46.
- <sup>10</sup> Jordi Borja, "El gobierno del territorio de las ciudades latinoamericanas" ("Governing territory in Latin American cities"), *Revista Instituciones y desarrollo (Institutions and Development Journal)* 8-9 (2001):83-142 (in Spanish); Tim Campbell, *The Quiet Revolution: Decentralization and the Rise of Political Participation in Latin American Cities* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003); Alfred Montero and David Samuels, *Decentralization and Democracy in Latin America* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004); Tullia Falleti, *Decentralization and Subnational Politics in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Merilee Grindle, *Going Local: Decentralization, Democratization, and the Promise of Good Governance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- <sup>11</sup> Allen J. Scott, *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
- <sup>12</sup> Jane Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations: Principles of Economic Life* (New York: Random House, 1984).
- <sup>13</sup> Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- <sup>14</sup> Paul Krugman, *Increasing Returns and Economic Geography* (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1990).
- <sup>15</sup> Allen J. Scott and Michael Storper, "Regions, Globalization, Development," *Regional Studies* 37 (6-7:2003):579-93.
- <sup>16</sup> Scott and Storper, "Regions, Globalization, Development":81.
- <sup>17</sup> Scott, *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> Victor Ramiro Fernandez, "Estrategia(s) de desarrollo regional bajo el nuevo escenario global-local: revisión crítica sobre su(s) potencialidad(es) y límites" ("Strategy(ies) of regional development under the new global-local scenario: A critical revision about potentiality(ies) and limit(s)"), *EURE* 28 (82:2001):43-63. (in Spanish)
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- <sup>25</sup> Jennifer Robinson, "Global and World Cities: A View from off the Map," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26 (3:2002):531-54.
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- <sup>31</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2005).
- <sup>32</sup> Jordi Borja, "El gobierno del territorio de las ciudades latinoamericanas" ("Governing territory in Latin American cities"); Montero and Samuels, *Decentralization and Democracy in Latin America*; Falleti, *Decentralization and Subnational Politics in Latin America*.
- <sup>33</sup> International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), *Governance: The World Bank Experience* (Washington DC: World Bank, 1994); and IBRD, *Governance and Development* (Washington DC: World Bank, 1992).
- <sup>34</sup> Eduardo Rojas, Juan Cuadrado-Roura, and Jose Miguel Fernandez Guell, eds., *Gobernar las Metrópolis (Governing the Metropolis)* (New York, Inter-american Development Bank, 2005). (in Spanish)
- <sup>35</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 2002).
- <sup>36</sup> Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 107.
- <sup>37</sup> Boisier, "A Theory in Search of a Practice or a Practice in Search of Theory?" (in this RDD issue); Egon Montecinos, "Los Estudios de Descentralización En América Latina: Una Revisión Sobre El Estado Actual De La Temática" ("Decentralization Studies in Latin America: A Review of the State-of-the-Art"), *EURE* 93 (31:2005):73-88. (in Spanish)
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- <sup>39</sup> Jordi Borja, "El gobierno del territorio de las ciudades latinoamericanas".
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- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407.
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