

**UNCRD Expert Group Meeting  
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**Keynote Address**

**Planning for Sustainable Regional Development**

**Delivered by John Friedmann**

## Planning for Sustainable Regional Development

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Forty years ago, I worked with UNCRD to promote research on regional development planning across Asia, ranging from South Korea to India and Iran. At the time, Masahiko Honjo headed the Agency, and the Director of Research was Fu Chen Lo. My student, Mike Douglass, who is here with us today, was doing an extended internship with the Agency, and together we worked on a new approach to regional development that we called agropolitan.<sup>1</sup> I will return to speak of this later. What I want to say at this point is simply how immensely pleased I am to be standing here today, after a lapse of four decades, to join you in thinking about UNCRD's potential role in this second decade of the new millennium. Much has changed since the early 1970s; we are living in quite a different world today. Our job now is to help UNCRD think through how it might pursue its new mandate of sustainability planning in the decades ahead.

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<sup>1</sup> John Friedmann and Mike Douglass, "Agropolitan Development: Towards a New Strategy for Regional Planning in Asia," in *Growth Pole Strategy and Regional Development Planning in Asia*. Proceedings of a seminar organized by the United Nations Centre for Regional Development Planning, Nagoya, Japan, November 4-13, 1975, pp. 333-389. Also in Fu-chen Lo and Kamal Salih, eds., *Growth Pole Strategy and Regional Development Policy*. Oxford, New York, etc.: Pergamon Press, 1978, pp. 163-92. See also: John Friedmann, "Basic Needs, Agropolitan Development, and Planning from Below," paper presented at Seoul National University, Korea, June 1978. Revised version in *World Development*. 7: 6 (June 1979), 607-14, and "The Active Community: Towards a Political-Territorial Framework for Rural Development in Asia," International Forum, United Nations Centre for Regional Development. *Regional Development Dialogue* (UNCRD, Nagoya), 1, 2, (Autumn 1980), pp. 39-101, with comments. Also, in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 29: 2 (January 1981), 234-62.

My talk is divided into three parts. First, I will revisit some of the leading ideas of the last century concerning regional development planning. Second, I will attempt a brief overview of the geography of development in our own times to help us situate UNCRD in the contemporary era. Third, I will conclude with some thoughts about practical ways that I believe could help UNCRD to further its new mission of making comprehensive regional development more sustainable throughout the world.

### **The Past: Changing Understandings of Regional Development**

I began my studies of regional development planning at the University of Chicago in the late 1940s. On completing my Master's degree in 1952, I decided, together with a school mate, to go job hunting on the East Coast of the United States. Our last stop was Knoxville, Tennessee, the Headquarters of the Tennessee Valley Authority, that famous experiment in comprehensive river basin development that has become a model in many parts of the world. I was lucky and offered a job in the Division of Regional Studies under Steve Robock, an economist who had published a study entitled *Why Industry Moves South*. Over the next two years, I began collecting data for what was to become my doctoral dissertation.

At the time, comprehensive regional development was understood to mean a resource-based development of a major watershed. In the case of the TVA, it meant constructing a system of multi-purpose dams that would make the Tennessee River navigable, enable flood control, promote outdoor recreation, and produce low cost hydro-power for distribution throughout a power-service area that extended well beyond the boundaries of the watershed itself. It also meant devoting attention to upstream forestry and farming practices to ensure soil conservation and promote modern land use planning in the small riverine towns and cities along the Tennessee. The TVA had been started during the pre-war depression twenty years earlier as a means to bring economic progress to the region. It had been one of the great social experiments of the first Roosevelt administration, and I was thrilled to be a small part of it.

In my dissertation, however, published in 1955, I came to a conclusion that departed from conventional wisdom. Hydropower had come to dominate the TVA enterprise, and coal-burning power plants were just beginning to be built to supply electric energy not simply to backward rural communities in the southeastern United States but in increasing measure to the more dynamic cities of the region including Knoxville, Chattanooga, Memphis, and Nashville, enabling their pursuit of industrialization. Today, the TVA has grown into the largest public power utility in the United States. And the Southeast, once a rural backwater famous for its hillbilly music, has become a fully urbanized region. It was this shift from a resource-based economic development in a major fluvial system to a wider system of interconnected city-regions that was the theme of my doctoral dissertation.<sup>2</sup> Henceforth, the focus of my work would be centered on the role of cities in economic transformation.

I spent the next 5 years working on development questions in Brazil and the Republic of Korea and, in the Fall of 1961, joined MIT as a professor of regional planning. Soon I became involved in a project that would take me to Venezuela where the MIT-Harvard Joint Center for Urban Studies had undertaken a major consulting commitment with the Venezuelan Guayana Development Corporation to plan, design, and build a major new industrial “growth pole” at the confluence of the Caroní and Orinoco Rivers in the eastern part of the country. The new city that would emerge, once a sleepy river town, was to be based on hydro-power and steel production. Today, Ciudad Guayana is a city of about a million people. My own contribution to this collaborative effort was a book on regional policy based on the notion of growth poles or *pôles de croissance*, a term coined by the French economist François Perroux, and which I re-named “core regions,”

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<sup>2</sup> John Friedmann, *The Spatial Structure of Economic Development in the Tennessee Valley: A Study in Regional Planning*. The University of Chicago Program of Education and Research in Planning, Research Paper No. 1 and Department of Geography, Research Paper No. 39, March 1955.

defined as “metropolitan economies with a high potential for economic growth.”<sup>3</sup> The idea was that strategic investments in core regions would generate a process of self-sustained economic development with positive “spread effects” on the areas surrounding them.

The growth pole or core region idea was catching on in different parts of the world, not least in Latin America, where I had the privilege to advise the National Planning Office of Chile under President Eduardo Frei, from 1965 to 69. It was this experience that taught me the difference between theory and practice. Chile was and continues to be a mono-centric country, its secondary cities only a fraction of the size and attractiveness of its capital, Santiago. Once the government had declared that the principal industrial center in the provinces, the city of Concepción, would be designated the country’s priority “growth pole,” it wasn’t long before other cities and towns lined up to be awarded this new badge of distinction in hopes that investments would follow. This proliferation of growth poles, of course, defeated the main purpose of a strategy that was based not on the idea of spatial equilibrium but rather on promoting a policy of concentrating investments in one or two urban regions that would have to be diligently pursued for at least a decade before showing convincing results. Most of the world’s governments don’t have that kind of persistence, nor the ability to stave off insistent demands from provincial centers for equal treatment. As a result, the growth pole/core region strategy was soon abandoned and, after the mid-seventies, was no longer part of the policy discourse.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, the neo-liberal revolution was underway, and government policies for strategic interventions in promoting economic growth were demoted to secondary status. Talk in the new era was all about free enterprise, global trade, and export-promotion. In Asia, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—the “four

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<sup>3</sup> John Friedmann, *Regional Development Policy: A case study of Venezuela*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1966, xv.

<sup>4</sup> Its swan song was actually a conference held in 1985 to honor of François Perroux that was attended by a group of distinguished regionalists. See Benjamin Higgins and Donald J. Savoie, eds., *Regional Economic Development*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988.

little tigers”--were hailed as the models to be emulated. It was during this time that Mike Douglass and I decided to look at an alternative, with a focus on rural areas. Given the extraordinary population densities in Asia’s coastal regions, we thought that it might be possible to bring the city to the countryside in a process of *in situ* urbanization. We called it an “agropolitan” development strategy.<sup>5</sup>

Following a critique of “conditions of dualistic dependency,” we pleaded for a “thorough-going reassessment of national development strategies” that would look to agriculture as a “propulsive sector” and give priority to the production of wage goods chiefly for domestic consumption. To give this policy a spatial context, we imagined agropolitan districts of between 50 to 150 thousand people, most of whom would be engaged in farming but, once the policy was implanted, would find new work in rural industries and nearby cities.<sup>6</sup>

The initial version of agropolitan development was fiercely attacked by our peers in the international community as “retrogressive.” Critics thought that industrialization was an inherently urban process, and rural surplus labor would inevitably have to leave their villages, moving massively into a small number of rapidly industrializing cities. The idea of an “agropolis” conjured up for them an image of Gandhian spinning wheels. But to conclude this story: ironically, and independently of our proposal, the idea a “city in the fields” was actually realized in reform-era China during the 1980s and 90s, when so-called township and village industries flourished throughout coastal China, creating the foundation for lifting hundreds of millions of farmers out of poverty. Shantytowns were averted. And by the turn of the millennium, perhaps a third of China’s industrial product was being turned out by rural factories.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See footnote 1 for the relevant publications.

<sup>6</sup> See John Friedmann and Mike Douglass, “Agropolitan Development: Towards a new strategy for regional planning in Asia,” in Lo and Salih, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 163-92.

<sup>7</sup> John Friedmann, *China’s Urban Transition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, chapter 3.

There is of course more to this story, but history rushes on (and time is short). While this controversy continued as a side show for some years, the neo-liberal project surged ahead. I won't dwell on the details, such as the Japanese discovery of "just-in-time" production, which was quickly adopted by automobile manufacturers everywhere to produce what they called a "world car," assembled from parts that could be manufactured anywhere and then brought together "on time" in gigantic assembly plants, with the finished vehicles shipped to global markets by enormous freighters. This model was so successful that it was soon adopted in other branches of manufacturing and led to the creation of Special Economic Zones (or SEZs) in the newly industrializing countries of Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere, connecting finance capital, entrepreneurs, labor, and consumers. The World Wide Web, which had its birth in 1982, created the miracle of instantaneous communication across the globe. Since then, globalization has become a by-word whose meaning is no longer questioned. It is simply understood to be the condition for what it means to be modern.

With deindustrialization in full swing, I started teaching regional development planning at UCLA. As I contemplated these new phenomena—the transplanting of industries to Asia, and especially to China in the post-Mao era—it occurred to me that if there could be a world car, couldn't there also be "world cities?" Together with a graduate student of mine, I put forward this notion under the title of "World City Formation: An Agenda for Research and Action."<sup>8</sup> This paper generated widespread interest in the scholarly community; three years later, I followed with a second, more deeply researched article,<sup>9</sup> that included a sketch map of a hierarchy of twenty-five world city regions that I referred to as platforms

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<sup>8</sup> John Friedmann and Goetz Wolff, "World City Formation: An agenda for research and action," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 6: 3 (September 1982), 309-44.

<sup>9</sup> John Friedmann, "The World City Hypothesis," *Development and Change*, 17: 1 (January 1986), 69-84. Both this and the earlier article were republished in Neil Brenner and Roger Keil, eds., *The Global Cities Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

of global capital.<sup>10</sup> Fired up by the hypothesis of a world city hierarchy, squadrons of scholars generated research on this question. In 1993, two geographers, Paul Knox and Peter Taylor, convened a major international conference to discuss these issues.<sup>11</sup> Criticisms were relatively subdued, and it wasn't until 2002 that another British geographer, Jennifer Robinson, published "Global and World Cities: A View off the Map," which eventually grew into a major critique of world city research under the title of *Ordinary Cities*.<sup>12</sup> Briefly stated, Robinson noted that world or global cities referred to but a handful of places mostly in the developed world; that the so-called hierarchy of cities wasn't engraved in stone; that by the dawn of the new millennium most cities in the Global South were already incorporated into the global economic system on terms that were different for each city; that urban hierarchies should be abandoned in favor of network analysis; and that urbanists, planners, and other interested scholars should devote more attention to "ordinary" cities in the Global South. For the most part, I now accept this critique as being valid. Gaining "world city status" has become an obsession of large metropolises throughout Asia, and is leading to the implementation of policies that, in my view, have had questionable results.<sup>13</sup> Following a world city strategy is no longer universally considered a sustainable option.

### **City Regions Today**

If the role of cities in economic development was still in question in the 1950s, and identifying their role was the keystone of my PhD dissertation, the question has been solved by "facts on the ground:" The world has passed the 50 percent

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<sup>10</sup> In a third paper, I expanded this hierarchy to thirty city regions, five of which were located in Asia. See John Friedmann, "World City Futures," in Yue-man Yeung, ed., *Urban Development in Asia: Retrospect and Prospect*. Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1998, ch. 2, 25-54.

<sup>11</sup> Paul L. Knox and Peter J. Taylor, eds., *World Cities in a World System*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Robinson, "Global and World Cities: A view off the map," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 26:3, 531-54. Also *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*, London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> I had originally thought of "world cities" as a call for research, not as some sort of model to be implemented. But once again, what I had thought of as theory, was widely and uncritically interpreted as a model for planning practice, with ambiguous results as noted above.

mark of the urban, the growth and management of mega-city regions dominates policy making in China, India, and Indonesia, and the emphasis in policy discourse has shifted from economic growth to ensuring ecological and social sustainability. More than 3.6 billion people are now living in cities, with another billion expecting somehow to be housed there within the next ten years. As a result, rural poverty has become an urban burden, the size of cities has attained gargantuan proportions, and the end is nowhere in sight. Given this prospect, what are some of the key issues that face us as regional planners today? My focus will be on cities in Asia.

To start with, what do we mean when we speak of the city?<sup>14</sup> Is it still what we imagine it to be? In some sense, one could argue that the “city” is everywhere today; wherever we are, it is city air we breathe. Think of the acid rain that falls in even the remotest parts of the world. The acid is generated by industries and by the power that keeps them humming, especially when generated by coal-burning plants.<sup>15</sup> But it is true also in another sense, for there is hardly a human settlement anywhere that is not already flooded with urban imagery and the desires these images evoke. Concurrently, as the urban impinges on what we still imagine as being a profoundly rural society is undergoing a major transformation.

That may well be the case, you might say, but aren't cities simply high-density settlements above a certain threshold population engaged in economic activities that we commonly consider to be typically “urban?” And so they are. But it is also

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<sup>14</sup> John Friedmann, *The Prospect of Cities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. For a more recent inquiry, see Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, “The Urban Question.” Unpublished paper, Harvard Graduate School of Design, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> According to Wikipedia, “Acid rain is a rain or any other form of precipitation that is unusually acidic, meaning that it possesses elevated levels of hydrogen ions (low pH). It can have harmful effects on plants, aquatic animals, and infrastructure. Acid rain is caused by emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide, which react with the water molecules in the atmosphere to produce acids.... The principal cause of acid rain is sulfur and nitrogen compounds from human sources, such as electricity generation, factories, and motor vehicles. Electrical power complexes utilising coal are among the greatest contributors to gaseous pollutions that are responsible for acidic rain. The gases can be carried hundreds of kilometers in the atmosphere before they are converted to acids and deposited.

the case that surrounding such settlements, which may have a population of multiple millions, are the *periurban areas* to which the central city lays claim in the course of its expansion. This extension of the urban into the periurban is not just physical but has also economic, socio-cultural, and political-institutional dimensions.<sup>16</sup> Except for the physical that can be both continuous and discontinuous with the already built-up area of the urban core, the remaining dimensions penetrate the still largely non-urban spaces of the periurban long before they become physically incorporated into the urban grid.

The problem is that in Asia, the periurban is an already densely populated, highly productive agricultural area dotted with villages, towns and medium-sized cities. It is not a *tabula rasa*. And yet, the core city, voracious in its hunger for land, is determined to colonize the periurban to meet its own requirements.<sup>17</sup> The periurban thus plays a critical role in enabling central cities to meet their multiple needs for water, fresh produce, waste disposal, transportation, airports, outdoor recreation, “green belts,” special industrial zones, new towns and other residential habitats, etc., all of which require physical space. The colonizing core thus encounters fierce resistance, because the villages, towns, and urban areas of the periurban have already staked out prior claims to the desired land.<sup>18</sup> The struggle over conflicting land claims has thus become the central drama (and dilemma!) of periurban colonization.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> **Physical dimension:** adoption of urban architecture; paved roadways; connection to urban power and water grids; urban facilities such as airports and amusement parks; satellite cities; industrial/office parks. **Economic dimension:** shift of employment from primary to other productive sectors; density of invested capital. **Socio-cultural dimension:** forms of living that mimic urban behavior; decline in fertility rate; adoption of urban technologies such as refrigerators, TV, trucks, motorcycles. **Political-institutional dimension:** municipal incorporation; in China, agricultural *hukou* converted to urban resident permits; urban forms of taxation.

<sup>17</sup> Shlomo Angel, *A Planet of Cities*, Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2012

<sup>18</sup> You-tien Hsing, *The Great Urban Transformation: Politics of Land and Property in China*. Oxford University Press, 2010. See also John Friedmann, ed., “Becoming Urban: Periurban Dynamics in Vietnam and China,” *Pacific Affairs*, 84:3 (September 2011) and Douglas Webster, “An Overdue Agenda: Systematizing East Asian Peri-urban Research: A Review Essay,” *Pacific Affairs*, 84:4, 631-43.

<sup>19</sup> Periurban areas may constitute an interstitial space between large cities that set limits to their respective physical expansion. Highly interdependent clusters of such cities, together with their respective periurban zones, form what I have called an “urban super-organism” (USO), which is

So far, I've focused on the periurban as an integral part of the urban in Asia, and have identified conflicts over land as a key issue. I cannot leave this topic, however, without at least acknowledging another salient aspect of life in Asia's cities. I refer to the very large proportion of the urban population, even a majority in cities such as Dakha, that lives precariously in what may be called the "informal city" or, as German analysts would have it, *die Schattenstadt*, or city of shadows. Globally, half the world's urban population is living in insalubrious, irregular settlements on the inner margins of the periurban. They are engaged in gaining their meager livelihoods in ways that are not registered on official maps or in statistics, but surely have a presence throughout the urban, so that "informal cities" is not an inappropriate term for them.<sup>20</sup>

I cannot hope here to do justice to this topic, yet the informal is so prevalent and multifarious, it cannot be ignored. Roughly speaking, the city of shadows results from an imbalance between supply and demand: the supply of well-paying jobs and consolidated housing in well-equipped neighborhoods on the one hand and the massive and growing demand for these seemingly utopian unreachables that nevertheless hold out the promise of the city. Most Asian cities have thus a dual character: a huge sub-proletariat living at subsistence levels and denied their rights to the city by a rising middle class of perhaps 30 or 40 percent of urban population who have already laid claim to these rights.

The question can now be posed: *On whose terms should the city and its ring of periurban communities be planned? Whose rights should have priority: the rights*

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an immense and largely self-organizing urban system. Leading characteristics of USOs include: multicentricity, high population density, high interconnectivity, and total populations ranging from 50 to over 150 million. Asian examples include the Jakarta conurbation, the Mumbai – Pune - Nasik region, the Pearl River Delta, the Lower Yangzi Delta, and the Tokaido megalopolis from Tokyo to Osaka.

<sup>20</sup> Key literature include: Ananya Roy and Nezar AlSayaad, eds., *Urban Informality*. Lanham, MA: Lexington Books, 2004; Ananya Roy, "Urban Informality: the Production of Space and the Practice of Planning," in Rachel Webber and Randall Crane, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Urban Planning*. Oxford UP, 2011; Janice Perlman, *Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro*. Oxford UP, 2010; David Sims, *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City Out of Control*. The American University in Cairo Press, 2012.

of the shadow city or of the shining city on the hill? Allow me to rephrase this question in terms relevant for us today: *can the two cities be reconciled through planning?*<sup>21</sup> I suspect that the answer hinges more on political commitment than on technical know-how. And yet, if the present age demands that development must become more socially and ecologically sustainable, planners cannot wait for politicians to signal their priorities. We must declare our own values, state our own position. Failing to do so, we become complicit in the unsustainable and irresponsible politics of global accumulation. Does this mean we should return to the spinning wheel? No, it does not. But it does mean that we will have to acknowledge and work within a wider spectrum of values than we have done in the past, including above all the rootedness of urban life in the natural world that perforce sets limits to perennial greed for more material possessions, while acknowledging the rightful claims of those who live in the city of shadows for a measure of the happiness that is their due.

### **The future of integrated regional development**

Let me now sum up some of the things I have learned from my decades of practical experience and research about regional development planning, and the lessons that can be drawn for UNCRD in the new era.

I began my story with the comprehensive resource-based development of the Tennessee Valley Authority, a story that goes back to the Great Depression of the 1930s. Its initial focus was on the watershed of a great river, the Tennessee. But my research showed that economic development was only marginally affected by this strategy, and that the leading role in promoting economic development was played by the dynamics of urbanization beyond the confines of the River. Initially, the TVA had enabled this development through relatively low-cost electric energy, and it was the energy sector—hydro, coal, and nuclear—that

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<sup>21</sup> John Friedmann, "Becoming Urban: On Whose Terms?" Unpublished paper, 2011. Also Solomon Benjamin, "Occupancy Urbanism: Ten Theses," *Sarai Readers: Frontiers*, 2007, 538-63. See also footnote 25.

came to dominate in the Agency which grew to be the largest power utility in the United States.

I then had an opportunity to participate in the planning of a new urban-industrial “growth pole” in eastern Venezuela, Ciudad Guayana, which was supposed to relieve the pressure on the country’s capital region around Caracas. The project turned out to be a success in building a new city; its effect on growth in and around Caracas, however, was minimal. Subsequently, when I worked in Chile as advisor to the Chilean government on regional planning, we tried to regionalize the country administratively and, more importantly, identify a hierarchy of “growth poles” that was meant to reflect priorities for public investments. Again, the object was to encourage the growth of lagging peripheral regions vis-à-vis the country’s primate city of Santiago. But the very notion of an urban hierarchy of multiple “poles” made it impossible to actually initiate a policy that at least initially would favor the leading city-region beyond the nation’s capital itself. At the time, the city of Concepción, like Ciudad Guayana, had the country’s only steel plant, but unlike the latter, Concepción had a 500-year history. Its economy continued to flourish as a university town, and its population was growing steadily to its present size of about a quarter million. In the intervening decades, the drawing power of Santiago was simply too great: a secondary growth pole had failed to materialize. By the mid-seventies, the growth pole theorem which had seemed so attractive a decade earlier, had all but disappeared from the scene.

As the neo-liberal revolution was getting underway, and Keynesian development economics fell out of favor, the Chilean government was militarized to push through the reforms inspired by Milton Friedman and his “Chicago Boys,” and private entrepreneurship which had lain dormant during the preceding era awoke to participate in what the new era demanded. Cities themselves became entrepreneurial and started competing against each other in an increasingly globalized economy.

These new facts called for a new theory, and in the early eighties, I launched my world city hypothesis, which argued for a global hierarchy of cities. Intended as a theoretical model for research, it soon gave way to energetic big-city mayors in Asia who dreamed of a race to the top: each wanted their city to become “world-class” in the image of Tokyo or London and aspired to become a platform for global headquarters. Places like Seoul, Taipei, Hong Kong, and Singapore were in the lead.

World-class fever is still with us, but as theory it has no longer any traction. Meanwhile, the academy was busy in two ways, one looking backward, the other forward. In 1999, Allen J. Scott of UCLA organized an international conference, to review the now familiar notion of global city-regions.<sup>22</sup> The resulting volume concluded with a coda on the environment written by Theodore Panayotou of Harvard.<sup>23</sup> On the cusp of the new millennium, he saw unparalleled challenges and opportunities for developing global city-regions, arguing for the privatization of public services. His essay accomplished little more than reiterate the neo-liberal litany of “[d]emand management, full-cost pricing, competitive bidding, targeted assistance to low-income groups, and independent regulatory oversight [to] replace subsidized state monopoly provision” (446-47). But the millennial Washington Consensus which had been backing these views was already breaking down.

The second initiative came from a few geographers and planners who wanted to pay closer attention to the dramas that were unfolding in some of Asia’s periurban areas. The rapid expansion of large cities across Asia was leading to the colonization of periurban zones and had given rise to the frequently repeated phrase, “accumulation by dispossession.” To the disappointment of some, the

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<sup>22</sup> Allen J. Scott, ed., *Global City Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*. Oxford University Press 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Theodore Papanyotou, “Environmental Sustainability and Services in Developing City-Regions,” in Scott, 2001, 419-50.

periurban has not been adequately theorized so far, but empirical data from case studies is becoming available, providing clues to what lies ahead.<sup>24</sup>

The multiple processes of periurban colonization are ongoing and changing Asia's urban landscape forever. The critical question for us is this: How can planners intervene, if at all, and do so with consideration for the value questions I mentioned earlier: "the rootedness of urban life in the natural world that perforce sets limits to perennial greed for more material possessions, while acknowledging the rightful claims of those who live in the city of shadows for a measure of the happiness that is their due?"

In light of this history and where we are today, I would like to suggest three strategies that UNCRD may want to consider as it contemplates how to embrace its new mission of sustainability planning at the regional scale.

The first strategy is the *integration of periurban areas with the central city*. On one hand, large cities cannot function without their peripheries. On the other, proximity to the city leads to their urbanization by providing off-farm work and access to the city's many attractions. This process of integration should be encouraged and planning institutions extended to include the periurban in a way that will accommodate the multiple interests at play. This process that brings periurban areas into the wider urban field involves all aspects of sustainability, economic, socio-cultural, and ecological. What we look for is a resource-conserving urbanism that minimizes pollution, offers new economic opportunities, and preserves agricultural work and open space.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> One example from India will have to stand in for the rest: Michael Levien, "The Land Question: Special Economic Zones and the Political Economy of Dispossession in India," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2012, 39:3-4, 933-69. See also the earlier literature cited in footnote 18.

<sup>25</sup> In China, this process of incorporating the periurban into the urban is already underway. Prefectural municipalities are mandated to plan for the urban integration of their periurban counties, which are administratively subordinated to the central city. See Ye Yumin, Richard LeGates, and Qin Bu, "Coordinate Urban-Rural Development Planning in China: The Chengdu Model," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, forthcoming. A volume based on this experience will be published towards the end of 2013.

The second strategy aims at the *coordinated development of multi-centered urban regions*. This strategy has been around for a long time and has taken various forms in different countries.<sup>26</sup> It must be admitted, however, given the present climate of competition among cities, that the obstacles to coordination will be difficult to overcome. The arguments for a more collaborative development particularly with regard to sustainability issues (including income inequalities) are nonetheless powerful, and the strategy should be pursued. It has particular merit with respect to smaller, secondary cities especially those located in each others' vicinity, forming urban clusters.

The third strategy has special relevance for UNCRD. Much has been made of so-called mega-cities or metropolitan regions whose population exceeds 10 million. Many have become household names, but they comprise only 10 percent of the world's urban population.<sup>27</sup> At the other end of the spectrum, are cities with less than 500 thousand inhabitants that make up 51 percent of global urban population. Add to them cities with populations of between 500 thousand and one million, and the proportion rises to 61 percent. In a global context, these are now perceived as relatively small cities.

I live in one of them, Vancouver, British Columbia, and can vouch that despite its modest size, it is not only an interesting city but globally one of the most livable.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> One of the best examples comes from Germany. See Klaus Kunzmann, "The Ruhr in Germany: A Laboratory for Regional Governance," in L. Albrechts et al., eds., *The Changing Institutional Landscape of Planning*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001, 181-208. For another European perspective, see Patsy Healey, *Urban Complexity and Spatial Strategies: Towards a Relational Planning for Our Times*. London: Routledge, 2007. Another European perspective can be found in the special issue of *disP: The Planning Review* on "Differential Europe: Domestic Actors and their Role in Shaping Spatial Planning Systems" edited by Dominic Stead and Giancarlo Cotella, *disP* 186, 3/2011, 12-83. And for a critical analysis of an Asian experience, Cecelia Wong, et al., "In Search of Regional Planning in China: the Case of Jiangsu and the Yangtse Delta," *Town Planning Review* 79:2, 2008, 295-330.

<sup>27</sup> All data are from United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: the 2011 Revision*.

<sup>28</sup> The City of Vancouver has a little over 600,000 population at present. Most future demographic growth will take place in the periurban region beyond it, with a current population of 1.7 million.

The strategy I would therefore suggest is that *UNCRD concentrate its work on these smaller, often obscure and relatively neglected cities throughout Asia and in other parts of the world*. On one hand, smaller, “ordinary” cities are the places where the majority of the world’s urban population is living today. Considerably less complex than the urban mega-monsters, they are also more readily studied and understood, and though neglected by the international bureaucracy, are most in need of the types of services that UNCRD is in position to provide. At the same time, their problems of sustainability, periurban expansion, and economic growth are certainly as severe as they are in larger places. The number of such cities is large, their population will continue to grow, their problems of periurban expansion are similar, and solutions to them can be attempted experimentally and where successful, scaled up. Moreover, clusters of smaller cities may be able to learn to work collaboratively in the solution of common problems, and the politics at this scale is easier to grasp than in the largest global agglomerations.

This last point perhaps deserves emphasis. Development, and more to the point, sustainability planning, requires above all learning on the part of both experts and those whom they advise. The world we know is in perpetual movement, and the problems with which we are confronted are unprecedented in both scale and kind. The fact is, there are no genuine experts on the future of city-regions. In policy work, we only learn by doing. Addressing problems on a relatively small scale will facilitate mutual learning. While it may be the case that in many Asian countries, though not in all, many “ordinary” cities are located primarily within the periurban zones of mega-cities, it is their relatively small size that allows problems to become more readily apparent than at the larger scale. Moreover, solutions are often local where they can be applied experimentally before they are scaled up.

It is my hope, then, that over the coming days we can discuss these strategies for integrated regional development planning, which is the linchpin and legacy of the UNCRD.