



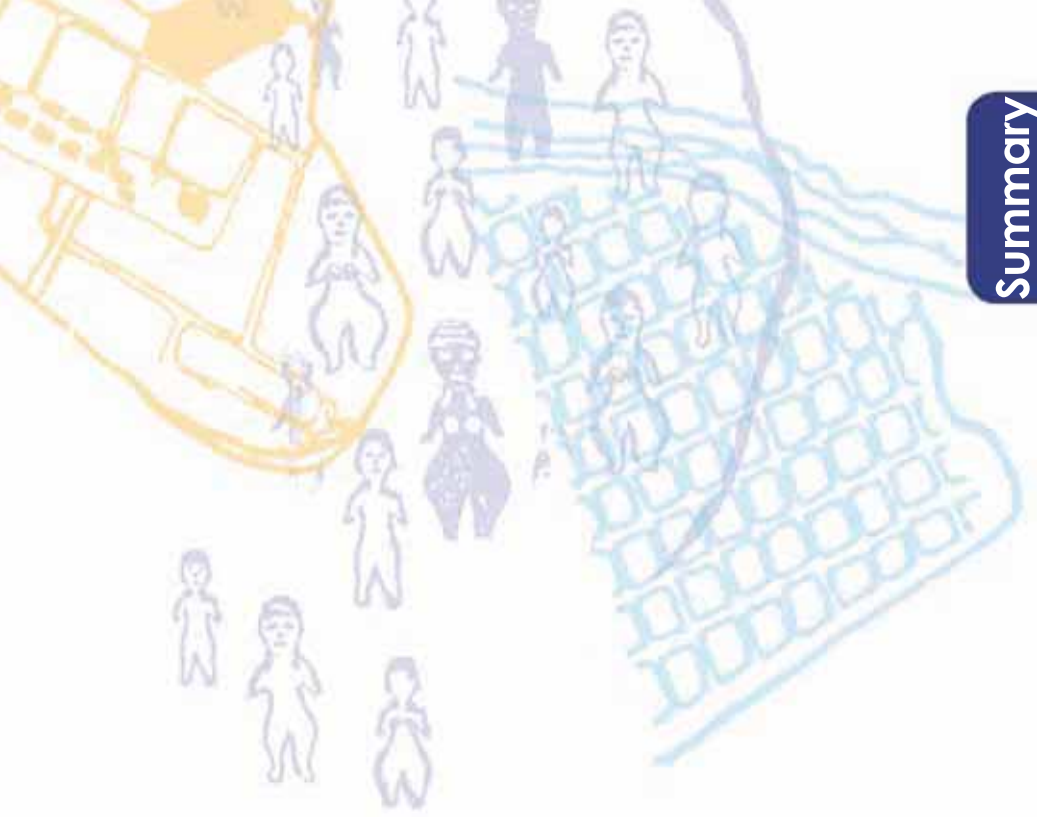
# Population, territory and sustainable development



UNITED NATIONS



ECLAC Ad Hoc Committee on  
Population and Development  
**ECUADOR 2012**



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## I. INTRODUCTION

The ECLAC Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development was established during the twenty-fifth session of ECLAC and met for the first time during the following session, held in San José in April 1996. Its objective is to ensure adequate implementation, follow-up and review of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Population and Development, and to examine the region's situation with respect to population and aspects related to the execution and institutionalization of population policies and programmes (ECLAC, 1996, paragraphs 78 and 99).

In fulfilling this responsibility, the Committee has periodically evaluated the execution of the Regional Action Programme and the ICPD Programme of Action, examining key aspects of the relationship between population and development. Among these are population, reproductive health and poverty (1998); population, youth and development (2000); sociodemographic vulnerability: old and new risks for communities, households and individuals (2002); population, ageing and development (2004); international migration, human rights and development (2006); demographic transformations and their influence on development in Latin America and the Caribbean (2008); and, more recently, population, development and health, including sexual and reproductive health (2010).

The thirty-third session of ECLAC, held in Brasilia from 30 May to 1 June 2010, approved resolution 657(XXXIII) entitled “Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development of the Economic Commission for Latin

America and the Caribbean”, which takes note of the “Agreements on population and development: priority issues for 2010-2012” adopted at the meeting of the ECLAC Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development held in Santiago from May 12 to 14 2010.

Point 24 of the agreements reads “Decides that, at its next ordinary meeting, to be held in 2012, the Ad Hoc Committee will analyse the issue of population, territorial dimensions and development” and “also requests the secretariat to prepare the corresponding substantive documents in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund”.

As requested by the countries, the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre (CELADE)-Population Division of ECLAC has drafted this document as a summary, with its own emphasis and approach, of a more extensive and detailed report to be presented and discussed at the 2012 meeting of the ECLAC Ad Hoc Committee on Population and Development.

The purpose hereof is to provide an overview of current trends, contexts and issues in the spheres of population, territory and sustainable development and examine their public policy implications. Three themes run through the report. The first two are laid out in the empirical chapters (III through X); the third is taken up in the closing chapter. Using the most recent data available (including censuses conducted in the 2010s), the first theme describes and tracks location and spatial mobility patterns for the population of Latin America, focusing on certain kinds of territory. The second explores the linkages between these patterns and sustainable development in different kinds of territory in Latin America and the Caribbean. The third offers considerations and policy proposals for fostering a consistent, synergistic relationship between population location and spatial mobility, on the one hand, and sustainable development, on the other, in the kinds of territory studied.

This document is therefore divided into 11 chapters, the first being this introduction.

Chapter II provides a frame of reference for the empirical analysis. The core concepts of population, territory and sustainable development are explained and discussed in the light of *Time for equality: closing gaps, opening trails* (ECLAC, 2010) and other prior studies on the matter by CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC and other ECLAC divisions. The general linkages between demographic dynamics and sustainable

development which will be looked at in detail later in the report are identified. An operationalization rationale is provided for the types of territory under study: minor and major administrative divisions, rural areas, low population density areas, border and cross-border areas, regions (such as major administrative divisions), urban areas and cities (localities with 20,000 or more inhabitants) as a system, plus big cities (1 million or more inhabitants). Reference is made to relevant territories that are not listed, including watersheds, environmentally threatened areas (especially those that are most vulnerable to climate change) and protected areas. And the proxies and scales used in the analysis are defined.

The empirical chapters (III through X) describe and analyse the trends and linkages between population, territory and sustainable development, with particular reference to the selected territories.

Chapter III uses an empirical proxy to provide a regional overview of changes in migration intensity and the population redistribution impact of migration, especially internal migration. The goal is an up-to-date understanding of what could be regarded as the most classical and, at the same time, most basic relationship between population and territory. Such an understanding will be useful for more extensive examinations of this relationship and for comprehensive studies of the linkages between population, territory and sustainable development.

Chapter IV looks at the demographic dynamics of rural Latin America and how they are linked to rural territory and rural development. Starting the thematic chapters with this subject does not mean that it is regarded as more important; indeed, one of the central messages of the report is the need to prepare for an increasingly urban future. But it is not by chance that the starting point is rural territory (after all, it accounts for most of the region's land mass). The idea is to raise awareness, because rural areas are usually overlooked or put on hold because of the growing population, socioeconomic, political, cultural and mass media influence of urban areas in Latin America.

Chapter V examines territories that have a unique relationship with population and population dynamics: these low population density territories are very sensitive to settlement by migration. They appear to be rural but really are not, because, among other things, most of their growing, albeit still sparse, population is classed as urban. In any case, the common thread running through the study has to do with the complex



relationships between inhabitants of these areas (for example, indigenous peoples, long-established residents, recent settlers and migrant workers), settlement intensity and modality, predominant types of economic activity and investment, and ecosystem balances. These are territories that have come into the political spotlight in recent years because of substantial shifts in international and national perceptions as growing value is attributed to their role in ecosystemic balances at the global, national and local levels. Nevertheless, they are still a setting for interests and practices that tend to clash with these new perceptions.

Chapter VI concerns border areas, where peoples, traditions, laws, ways of doing business and even languages and slang from two or more countries interact and mix. These are areas where movement, exchange and opportunities coexist, sometimes uneasily, with control, asymmetry and risks. Noteworthy among the risks are abuse, discrimination, exploitation and exposure to communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted infections. Migrants tend to be the most affected by these adversities. Dedicating a chapter to border areas is something of a wake-up call: these areas tend to be low in priority because of a double misunderstanding. For one, after a period of relatively heavy public investment driven by geopolitical considerations, it is now widely assumed that positive border externalities operate naturally, on the sheer thrust of market forces. However, evidence suggests that this is not a sturdy assumption. And then, fluid borders often constrain national State governance capabilities; weak public institutions are ill-prepared for coping with the specific risks of these areas. The upshot is that many border areas, far from being privileged and thriving as is sometimes thought, are actually neglected, unprotected and disorderly. This calls for rethinking how they are treated by States, both individually and in partnership as neighbours.

Chapter VII picks up the core theme of the landmark ECLAC (2010a) study *Time for equality: closing gaps, opening trails*, which is inequalities among regions within the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. These inequalities are acute and enduring, and in certain areas they entail risks in the form of poverty traps and infringement of rights. Chapter VII also probes the relationships between the regional demographic dynamic (especially migration between regions) and unequal development. It takes a fresh look at concepts and estimates from *Time for equality*, going more deeply into its demographic factors —especially dissimilar

population growth among regions and the impacts of migration on their sociodemographic makeup.

Chapters VIII, IX and X examine the population dynamics of urban areas and how it is related to economic and social development at the country level as well as in urban settings and for different kinds of cities. Chapter VIII focuses on urbanization. While primarily defining urbanization in strictly demographic terms (an increase in urban population percentage), it brings other dimensions (productive, sociocultural and political) into the picture because they are essential for understanding the relationship between urbanization and development. Chapter IX turns the spotlight on systems of cities, examining them in as much detail as the main source of information for the document (population censuses) allows. Because of its new approach, and since much of the data in it is so recent, this chapter homes in on population dynamics and migrant exchanges in systems of cities. To this end it takes a regional and national view and avoids studying specific cities. Any reference to a particular city is to illustrate a point, an interesting case, or an exception. Focusing on demographic and migration dynamics does not mean ignoring the other dimensions of city system development, which are examined above all in terms of living standards and how these relate to city size. Chapter X goes further into a special group of cities: large ones with more than 1 million inhabitants. There are specific studies of metropolises and megalopolises, operatively defined herein as cities with 5 million to 10 million inhabitants and cities with more than 10 million inhabitants, respectively. These studies centre on issues that are making their way onto the public and academic agenda. Among these are peripheral expansion, diffuse configuration, metropolitan sprawl and residential segregation. They are more pressing in metropolises and megalopolises, are closely tied to spatial mobility and are associated with the reproduction of inequalities, inefficiencies, eroding social cohesion and the breakdown of community life in metropolitan areas. These matters are emerging public policy challenges, especially for metropolitan areas.

Chapter XI summarizes the main findings of the report, sets out the most significant messages and policy considerations associated with them and puts forth options, suggestions and challenges for future action and research in the framework of the ECLAC approach to sustainable development and equality.



## II. CORE IDEAS AND KEY DEFINITIONS

Place matters. Over the past few years this assertion has been repeated on different occasions, in different settings and for different reasons. Chapter I cites documents that support this assertion. One of them is an ECLAC report that provides a frame of reference for this one. Chapter IV, entitled *Place does matter: territorial disparities and convergence*, shows that “territory matters and that it is subject to change, and that what is needed to characterize a territory is not a snapshot but a film of its evolution [...]. Territorial divides reinforce and are reinforced by national divides in economic and social development. It also argues for the importance of activating synergies using a spatial linkage criterion, and the need to formulate fiscal reforms that level the playing field between administrative and territorial units” (ECLAC, 2010a, p. 45).

Territory is defined following a multidisciplinary approach. First of all, it has a physical and geographical basis as a land area with boundaries, spatial coordinates and topological, geological, climatological and hydrological features. This combination of physical attributes defines a certain “natural vocation” for accommodating human activity, although in the end how territory is used depends on other factors. Second, there is an ecosystem component based on the resident flora and fauna. Just as important as the biotic assets, i.e., the number of different animal and plant species, are the relationships between life forms themselves and between them and their physical surroundings. Of particular interest is the relationship between ecosystems, which extends their reach far beyond their geographical boundaries. Third comes the human dimension of territory, with all of its facets: population (number, growth, structure, density and location and spatial mobility patterns); physical (infrastructure, production facilities), sociocultural (characteristics of the populace),

institutional (community organization and standards); and symbolic (subjective value for resident and outside communities).

The focus here is on the demographic dimension. The common thread is how territory (in practice, certain kinds of territory) is linked to the demographic features of population and to sustainable development in all its aspects: (i) economic, tied to a real increase in productivity; (ii) social, related to improving living standards for people and decreasing inequality; (iii) cultural, tied to enhancing community identity, valuing diversity and respecting indigenous peoples and people of African descent; (iv) political, having to do with democratic participation and the exercise of rights; and (v) environmental, related to the sustainable use of natural resources and the safeguarding of local and global ecosystem balances.

For the sake of systematic description and applied comparative analysis, territory must be defined in keeping with some kind of scale or parameter. An initial definition, which is useful for practical reasons (data availability) and for applied reasons (formal power and management structures), is based on political and administrative boundaries that define major administrative divisions (states, provinces, departments and regions, depending on the country) and minor administrative divisions (townships, communes, districts and cantons, depending on the country). A second definition (the main one herein) refers to specific, relevant linkages between population and sustainable development in a territory. In this case, it is important to have data sources and targeted public policies.

Using both criteria but giving more weight to the latter, the following types of territory have been defined: rural areas, low population density areas, border and cross-border areas, regions (major administrative divisions), urban areas, cities (localities with 20,000 or more inhabitants) as a system, and big cities (1 million or more inhabitants). This is not an exhaustive list because the potential inventory of relevant territories based on both criteria was long and there was a need to select those that seemed to have more bearing on public policy. Besides, many territories of interest do not meet the two requirements set out above and so do not lend themselves to examination in the scope of the report. This made it impossible to specifically cover certain types of territory that are indeed significant (such as watersheds, environmental risk areas—especially those most vulnerable to climate change—and protected areas), although an attempt was made to take them into account.

### **III. MIGRATION: INTENSITY AND IMPACT ON POPULATION REDISTRIBUTION AT THE MAJOR ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION AND MINOR ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION LEVELS**

Migration, especially internal migration, has direct impacts on the spatial distribution of a population that hinge on two factors. The first factor defines potential and is determined by net migration rates for subnational areas other than zero—in other words, exchanges between territories within a country that entail a population gain for some and a population loss for others. The second factor helps define magnitude and depends on overall net migration rates, i.e. migration intensity.

In Latin America, internal migration has been a powerful force in redistributing the population between regions (major administrative divisions) (ECLAC, 2007; ECLAC/UN-Habitat, 2001; ECLAC/CELADE, 1995; CELADE, 1984). Before the 1980s, this redistribution followed three main trends: (i) increasing relative importance of the regions where the main city of each country is located, owing to the drawing power of the city; (ii) increasing relative importance of low population density regions that were targeted by policies and programmes (including colonization) to encourage settlement; (iii) declining relative importance of old settlement areas (often with a strong indigenous or, in the case of Brazil, Afro-descendant presence) with chronic poverty, which saw a true exodus.

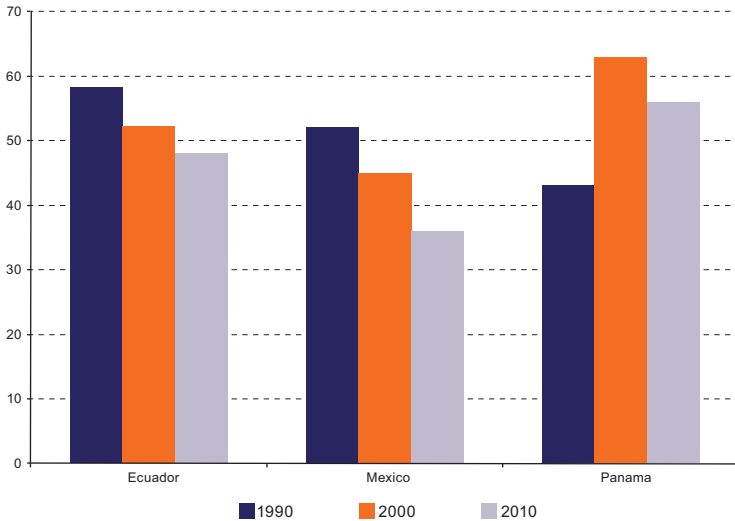
This stylized pattern of impacts subsequently shifted, as a direct outcome of the 1980s debt crisis and its economic, social and political

fallout. This was neither a reversal nor a radical change, but rather a process of diversification also shaped by varying national realities. To put it simply, over the past few decades some regions with major cities lost their pull and began to lose their relative importance in the national context. The same thing happened with some low population density areas. And in some cases (for different reasons) there has been movement back to former sending regions. In short, the marked disparities between pull and push regions have moderated, tempering the population redistribution effect of migration.

Migration intensity has fallen off, as well. Calculations show a marked decline in the region's gross mobility rate, with the weighted average for major administrative areas going from 5.1 to 4.0 between censuses taken in the 1990s and those taken in the 2000s and from 12.6 to 8.7 for minor administrative areas. Findings for the three countries with census data available for the 2010s (Ecuador, Mexico and Panama) confirm this downtrend during the 2000s. This is even seen in Panama, one of the few countries where internal migration gained in intensity during the 1990s (see figure III.1).

This decline in migration intensity was not anticipated by the prevailing conceptual frameworks, which tend to assume a positive correlation between economic development and territorial mobility. But the decline is part of a worldwide trend; recent global studies show the same movement in other continents (UNDP, 2009; Bell and Muhidin, 2009). In Latin America there are at least three main factors behind the falling intensity of internal migration (Rodríguez and Busso, 2009). The first is that the high rates seen prior to the mid-1980s involved migration from rural areas to urban ones and, to a lesser extent, the settlement of low population density areas. Both sources have become less quantitatively significant (settlement has practically come to a halt, although, overall, there is still migration towards low population density areas), as can be seen in declining net immigration rates for urban and low population density areas alike. The second contributing factor is rising international migration, which has, to a certain extent, become an alternative to internal migration. The third factor is an increase in commuting, i.e., daily or regular travel, particularly for shift and short-term jobs, instead of changing the place of residence, that is to say, instead of migrating.

**Figure III.1**  
**ECUADOR, MEXICO AND PANAMA: GROSS MOBILITY RATE,<sup>a</sup> 1990, 2000 AND 2010**  
*(Per 1,000 potential internal migrants)*



**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of special processing of census microdata.

<sup>a</sup> The gross mobility rate is the total number of internal migrants during the reference period (this total depends on the reference entity used, i.e., major administrative area or minor administrative area), divided by the population included in the census that is at risk of having been internal migrants during the reference period. The figures shown in the graph refer to internal migration between major administrative areas. Because this is an annual rate, the numerator is divided by the number of years in the reference period. It is expressed in per 1,000s. For further details, see: Rodríguez and Busso, 2009.

The decline in the population redistribution effect of migration is estimated by using two summary indicators<sup>1</sup> for all of the countries of the region with the requisite data. A noteworthy case is Ecuador, where the population redistribution effect between major administrative divisions went from 8.7% in 1977-1982 to 1.4% in 2005-2010. This downtrend (for Ecuador and the rest of the countries of the region) has a lot to do with the fact that the starting point for the comparison was the period during which internal migration intensity peaked in virtually all of the countries of the region, as did the quantitative balance of migration flows between

<sup>1</sup> Migration Effectiveness Index and Aggregate Net Migration Rate. For further detail see Bell and Muhidin, 2009.



sending and receiving regions. But this methodological consideration does not change the conclusion as to the declining relative weight of internal migration in Latin America emerging from 2010 census findings.

Internal migration might be declining in intensity, but it still has substantial qualitative impacts for sending and receiving areas and for the migrating populace (especially those who migrate, but also those who do not). These impacts warrant examination in a much more systematic and detailed manner than has been the case so far, and the other empirical chapters of this report proceed precisely in that direction.

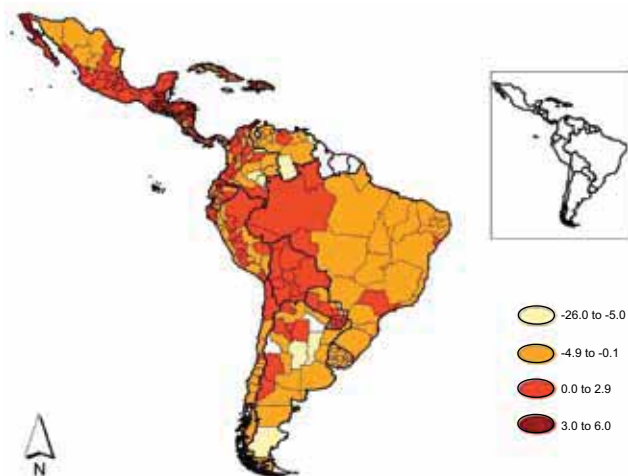
As internal migration has declined in intensity its patterns have become more diversified. Emerging migration modalities include those that grow with urbanization (like between cities and within large metropolises) and those with significant demographic and social repercussions. This greater diversification calls for updating theoretical approaches and rethinking policies related to internal migration. Such policy considerations are the subject of chapter XI.

## IV. RURAL AREAS: UNEVEN MODERNIZATION WITHOUT POPULATION RETENTION

Of the major world regions, Latin America and the Caribbean has one of the lowest rural population percentages (20%), second only to the United States and Canada at 18%. In absolute terms, the rural population has been trending down after peaking at some 130 million in the 1980s. Estimates are that in 2015 it will stand at roughly 118 million (CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, 2009). At the national level, rural growth in major administrative divisions has also been low; in 1950-2000 many of them actually saw their rural population shrink (map IV.1)

Rural areas consistently show natural growth rates that outstrip averages for the region as a whole and for urban areas, owing mainly to high fertility. While the mortality rates are also somewhat higher, they are more than offset by birth rates. The relative decline in rural population, as well as slow growth over the decades, may thus be attributed to net rural-urban transfers. These net shifts of population from the countryside to cities are far from negligible in terms of rural population size. They continue to have a significant impact in rural areas and explain both the absolute decline in and the premature ageing of the rural population in Latin America. The latter may be attributed to the fact that migration intensity varies considerably with age; because young people are more inclined to migrate, a large proportion of rural emigrants are young (Rodríguez and Busso, 2009).

**Map IV.1**  
**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: RURAL POPULATION**  
**INTERCENSAL GROWTH RATES. 1990-2000**  
*(Percentages)*



**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, "Urbanization prospects", *Demographic Observatory*, No. 8 (LC/G.2422-P). Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2009.

Defining rural population has been a challenge; combining a wide range of criteria (having to do with numbers, political and administrative issues, terrain and functional considerations, among others) is a complex task. How to define the term has been much debated by researchers. Even so, the definition of rural population provided by population censuses is still useful and can be complemented by other measures, such as density gradients, for more sophisticated studies.

Most of the rural population of Latin America is distributed in numerous small settlements or is fairly scattered. As a rule, rural connectivity is still a problem. The dispersion of rural settlements is associated with time and distance to large urban hubs, as well as between small settlements themselves, located in areas where geography and the size of the landholdings make access difficult. Localities that are closer to cities therefore tend to be part of a more diversified economic fabric, while those that are farthest away and have fewer territorial, economic and social linkages tend to be characterized by less productive holdings and a less developed local economy because distance and a scattered

population sometimes make it impossible to attract production factors or foster the accumulation of capacities (ECLAC, 2005).

Particular attention must be paid to spaces between urban and rural areas, where both worlds tend to coexist. These spaces appear in areas where cities (of differing sizes) and their environs include rural settlements, giving rise to reciprocal economic, social and cultural linkages. In terms of the regional economy, proximity to a city is good for the agricultural development of a rural area because of the functional integration between the two. This functional integration also creates links between the urban hub and the rural area through the supply of services and infrastructure. On the downside, rural areas are thus exposed to urban sprawl, the extraction of certain natural resources (typically, water) for the city and the eventual transfer of waste from the city. These risks must be weighed when seeking to capitalize on this potential.

Rural areas have seen significant changes in terms of production. Commodities are showing signs of growth, so much so that, according to recent studies, Latin America and the Caribbean “is the region that has shown the greatest growth in agricultural, livestock, forestry, and fishery production, and in its exports, over the past 15 years” (ECLAC/FAO/IICA, 2009). Expanded agriculture, which is primary agriculture plus directly linked activities (agribusiness, transport, inputs and services) is still one of the key sectors of the region's economy in terms of jobs and share of GDP and exports. The region can contribute to global food security; rising real prices for agricultural commodities provide a window of opportunity for agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially because of its substantial potential for agricultural output thanks to land availability in several countries and a relatively abundant supply of water and human resources (ECLAC/FAO/IICA, 2011). All told, agricultural output is soaring thanks to modern technology and, in many cases, to ties with large corporations, some of which are mainly financial in nature. But, despite its economic contribution, this sort of production often does little to retain the rural population and in some cases even hastens rural exodus.

Modern agriculture operations coexist with rural areas in which agriculture is still based on family farms. The latter are a significant factor in most of the countries of the region, as is the rural population without access to land. Despite support from governments and other actors, family farms usually have low levels of productivity and are at

a clear disadvantage compared with agribusiness. The unlanded rural population continues to be neglected, is usually poorly paid and can be complemented or even displaced by seasonal workers from urban areas in times of high labour demand.

Production diversity takes on other forms. One of them is the expansion of agribusiness and service activities, which drives non-agricultural rural job creation. Non-agricultural rural employment was already growing in the early 1990s; the 2000 population censuses showed that it continues to increase at a brisk pace, as have household survey findings over the past 10 years (Rodríguez and Meneses, 2011; Dirven, 2011; Schejtman, 1999). In addition, decision makers, analysts and researchers have become more aware of non-agricultural rural employment.

Heterogeneity and, above all, the inequalities described above explain why poverty is still prevalent in rural areas in the region despite growing aggregate output and new job options. Fifty-three percent of the rural population of Latin America lives in poverty. While poverty has receded over the past few decades, there are still poverty gaps between urban and rural areas in most of the countries of the region. A substantial share of people living in rural areas does not have enough income to meet basic needs; many do not even have enough for a basic food basket. Insufficient income is coupled with deficiencies in education, health, housing, basic services and access to information and communications technologies, as recent data in the report show.

Dispersion, poor infrastructure and greater poverty have held progress towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals to a slower pace in rural areas than in urban ones (ECLAC, 2010b). This slow pace has been a particular drag on poverty reduction in the poorest countries, which tend to have a higher rural population percentage. Even so, during the 2000s several countries managed to reduce rural poverty thanks to a growing economy (overall and, especially, the primary economy), public investment in expanding infrastructure and services, and conditional transfer programmes (Echeverri and Sotomayor, 2010).

The particularities of the rural environment and their multiple impacts on sustainable rural development, on top of the growing production, socioeconomic and cultural diversification of the rural world, call for a territorial approach to rural development and, in general, to all policies having to do with the rural population. Chapter XI takes a more detailed look at policy options in this direction.

## V. SETTLING LOW POPULATION DENSITY AREAS IN LATIN AMERICA

Historically, much of Latin America has been sparsely inhabited by people. These areas are generally inhospitable for human settlement but rich in natural resources, making them attractive for national and international actors. That is why the expression “to govern is to settle” was coined so early (mid-nineteenth century) in the region.

For a long time these areas were referred to using misnomers such as “empty spaces”. Doing so turned native (usually indigenous) populations and the complex ecosystem that was their home into a *tabula rasa* and naturally led to calls to settle these areas, with utter disregard for peoples and the ecosystem alike. Much of the twentieth century was therefore marked by drives to speed up settlement of some areas, particularly Amazonia.<sup>2</sup> The rationale for these campaigns ranged from geopolitical (establishing sovereignty) to developmental (drawing on this resource base to fuel State-led industrialization) and included, along the way, neoliberal (private domestic and foreign actors capitalizing on the region’s comparative advantages on a global scale) and reformist (giving the disadvantaged access to new lands and resources).

These ideas made their way onto government agendas. Almost all of the countries of Latin America that had low population density territories set in motion policies and programmes for settling these territories and fostering production, administrative devolution, public investment

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<sup>2</sup> A landmass of as much as 6 million square kilometres, spanning nine countries. The largest swathes of Amazonia lie in Brazil and Peru, followed by Colombia, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Suriname and French Guiana.

and connectivity there. Some of these programmes moved substantial investments and numbers of people and shifted population distribution patterns. In some countries, like Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia, these shifts were profound (CELADE, 2005 and 1984). As noted earlier, movement towards low-density areas contributed to the large impact of migration on population redistribution between 1960 and 1980. Table V.1 lists a selection of these territories (based on major administrative divisions) in several countries in the region, including settlement areas (such as Amazonia and Petén) and industrial and service promotion areas (the case of Quintana Roo, where the driver has been global tourism). The figures for population growth and migration pull are related, and they are striking.

Table V.1

**LATIN AMERICA (SELECTED LOW-DENSITY ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS):  
AVERAGE ANNUAL RATES OF POPULATION GROWTH, 1950-2000,  
AND INTERNAL MIGRATION, 1990**

Country	Major administrative division	Overall population growth rate (percentages)	Migration rate (per 1,000) (five years prior to census) (per 1,000)
		1950-2000	Census of the 1990s
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Santa Cruz	3.8	7.6
Brazil	Rondônia	7.2	6.8
Brazil	Roraima	5.8	33.1
Brazil	Amapá	5.1	14.0
Ecuador	Sucumbios	8.2	25.4
Guatemala	Petén	6.0	13.2
Mexico	Quintana Roo	7.0	39.9
Paraguay	Alto Paraná	7.8	18.2
Peru	Madre de Dios	4.6	18.7

**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC.

**Note:** Average annual rates. The growth rate is expressed in per 100; the migration rate is expressed in per 1,000.

The links between population and sustainable development in these territories turned out to be more complex than expected by proponents of mass settlement and designers and implementers of settlement programmes. The social, economic and environmental sustainability of

many of these territories often proved to be an impossible challenge. Utopian efforts at settlement based on “productive farmers” ran up against the limitations of the land itself, inexperience on the part of new settlers, the lack of follow-up and support from settlement programmes and burgeoning agribusiness operations (Rodríguez and Busso, 2009). Agribusiness is unquestionably productive, occupies large areas and can end up displacing rural populations. It comes as no surprise that time and again these programmes led to urban settlement of these areas instead of the spread of smallhold farming that was the idealized image (dating back to nineteenth century colonization in some countries). Some regions targeted for settlement to promote industry and services were attractive only as long as State support and subsidies were available.

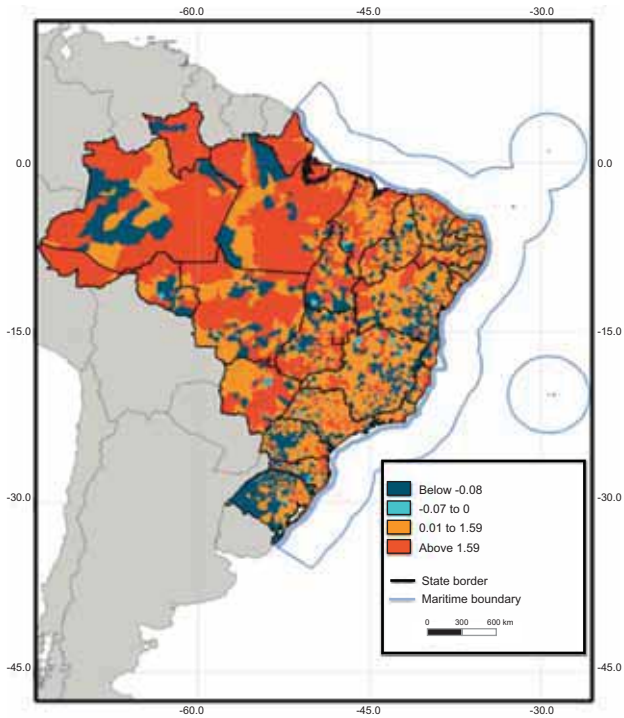
Growing evidence of the unexpected adverse impacts of such settlement campaigns (some with the *tabula rasa* rationale that did the most harm to indigenous peoples, the original ecosystem or both), along with a history of coercion that, to say the least, was not consistent with the free exercise of rights by the persons involved, set off a wave of misgivings about settlement programmes (Rodríguez and Busso, 2009).

Then the crisis of the lost decade, which devastated public finances and programmes and, more lastingly, led to an about-face in the development model, marked the end of official initiatives to settle low population density territories.

A look back shows that national spaces with low population density have followed heterogeneous demographic trajectories. Areas that have continued to be attractive include those that have found a global trade niche, such as Quintana Roo with tourism, and other territories that are rich in natural resources. Map V.1 shows that, according to the most recent available data (from Brazil’s 2010 census), Amazonia still has the highest concentration of municipalities with the fastest-growing population in Brazil, almost surely due to continuing migration to them. By contrast, expansion dropped off sharply in some regions whose growth was based on government subsidies (such as Arica in Chile), settlement programmes (southern Amazonian provinces in Ecuador) or border trade (some of eastern Paraguay, recently).



**Map V.1**  
**BRAZIL: POPULATION GROWTH RATE AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL, 2000-2010**  
*(Percentage)*



**Source:** Antônio Tadeu Ribeiro de Oliveira, Leila Regina Ervatti and Maria Monica Vieira Caetano O'Neill, "O panorama dos deslocamentos populacionais no Brasil: PNADs e Censos Demográficos", *Reflexões sobre os Deslocamentos Populacionais no Brasil*, Estudos e Análises Informação Demográfica e Socioeconômica, No. 1, Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute (IBGE), map 1, 2011, p. 42.

These trajectories and current dissimilarities aside, low population density territories are, in general, still on the population and development agenda. Recent inter-agency documents (ECLAC, 2011) set out the interest, concern and challenges that these territories hold for governments and other national actors and for international and multinational bodies. The interest lies in the vast reserves of resources and space in these territories. The concern stems from the pressure, risks and harmful forces to which they are exposed. And the challenges have to do with the perennial conflict between anthropic activity, on the one hand, and resource base sustainability, ecosystem balance and respect for indigenous peoples, on the other. While this clash seems to

have been tempered in some cases (one example is controlling deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, and even this warrants ongoing monitoring because continuation of this effort is not guaranteed), it is still substantial, as is held in this recent statement: “The existence of forested areas rich in biodiversity and endemic species with no obvious economic value, combined with heavy anthropogenic pressure from economically profitable activities, has resulted in many ‘hot spots’ in the region [...]. One of the main forces driving this process has been land-use change, resulting from major growth in recent years in commercial crops for export (such as soy beans, biofuel crops, livestock, fruits, vegetables and flowers) [...]. The construction of roads without proper management of their surroundings or internalization of their social costs has been another major factor in deforestation processes, mainly in South America” (ECLAC, 2011, p. 103).

Demographic, socioeconomic and political conditions hold the key to addressing these concerns and anticipating the conflicts that can arise from the use and settlement of these territories. Conditions are changing quickly; four of these changes stand out and are discussed below.

First, the high rate of population growth in the countries of Latin America is slowing significantly, making it less urgent to expand the demographic frontier just to make room for and sustain new generations. Land needs for farmers are still immense but tend to be due, more than anything else, to unequal distribution and the expansion of extensive agribusiness crops for export.

Second, areas with low population density now have much larger resident populations than when the settlement programmes began,<sup>3</sup> and their ties to the territory are far stronger because they were born there or plan to stay for a long time. These populations participated in or have first-hand knowledge of the reason for the recent settlement of their territory and so actively defend or claim the preferential treatment that it receives—or received at some time in the past. In some extreme cases, maintaining special treatment is virtually the only way to ensure that the local population will stay, or even survive.

The third change is the increasingly urban profile of these areas. Their population growth has been based on a network of cities. Most of these are midsize, although big cities are sometimes involved, especially in the Brazilian Amazon (Manaus and Belem) but also in the Plurinational State

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<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, in almost all cases this population is still a small fraction of the total population of the country in question.

of Bolivia (Santa Cruz), Paraguay (Ciudad del Este) and Mexico (Ciudad Juárez, Tijuana and Mexicali on the northern border, and Cancún in Quintana Roo). So, as paradoxical as it may seem, sustainable development and the improvement of living conditions in these low-density areas depend to a large extent on urban policies, regulations and investment.

The fourth change is mobilization, awareness and recognition of a forgotten population: the indigenous peoples native to these areas. In several countries in the region the State has done an about-face on this issue. A good example of recognizing the heritage of indigenous peoples and their historical rights over their territories is Ecuador's 2008 constitution<sup>4</sup> and recent Basic Zoning, Autonomy and Decentralization Code. These changes are directly linked to policies, so they are taken up again and examined in more detail in chapter XI.

On the socioeconomic front, the imperatives of progress, economic growth and even improvement of living conditions in the countries are not reason enough for settling and exploiting these areas. There is now global value attached to these territories because of features that in the past were either unknown or undervalued, especially their role in Earth ecosystem balance and their endemic biodiversity. Preserving them has become an imperative as well, to the point of starting to assign economic value to them and recognize their direct profitability. Consistent with assigning a value to preservation is another emerging trend in some low-density areas: as a location for economic activities based on preserving their natural setting. Tourism is one of these activities, although types of tourism vary significantly. The business model for some projects is based on enjoyment of the natural ecosystem and can even have a positive environmental impact on the site. Other projects involve large-scale ecosystem intervention with potentially disastrous consequences absent appropriate control and supervision. Still others target massification and put extreme pressure on usually fragile ecosystems and should therefore be executed with many safeguards.

In short, there is still economic and social pressure for rapid, aggressive exploitation of these regions, but more barriers to their destruction or unsustainable exploitation are being put in place. Chapter XI on policies provides some examples of good practices in this regard and explains the policy challenges posed by the new demographic, socioeconomic and political scenario in these territories.

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<sup>4</sup> Article 57 in particular.

## VI. BORDERLANDS: TERRITORIES AT STAKE

Border areas deserve special treatment, not so much because of their settlement patterns but rather because fluid borders open opportunities and potential for conflict. In them, peoples, traditions, laws, ways of doing business and even languages and slang from two or more countries interact and mix. Movement, exchange and opportunities coexist, sometimes uneasily, with control, asymmetry and risks. Noteworthy among the risks are abuse, discrimination, exploitation and exposure to communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted infections. Migrants tend to be the most exposed, especially if they are undocumented.

Dedicating a chapter to border areas is something of a wake-up call; these areas are usually low in priority because of a double misunderstanding. For one, after a period of relatively heavy public investment driven by geopolitical considerations, it is now widely assumed that positive border externalities operate naturally, on the sheer thrust of market forces. But evidence suggests that this is not a sturdy assumption. And then, fluid borders usually constrain national State governance capabilities, leading to weak public institutions that are ill-prepared for coping with the specific risks of these areas.

The upshot is that many border areas, far from being privileged and thriving, are actually neglected, unprotected and disorderly. This calls for rethinking how they are treated by States, both individually and in partnership as neighbours.

An empirical study of five border areas pinpoints major differences between them, grouping them into three major categories on the basis of certain patterns of migration between the countries involved. The first

group comprises borders between Mexico and Guatemala and between Ecuador and Colombia, which make up true cross-border spaces that are highly interactive and where migration and population mobility are a mechanism for regional integration. In the second group are borders between Costa Rica and Nicaragua and between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, where migration transcends the regional context of each border area and becomes a national issue. The border area itself is more of a migrant crossing than a cross-border region. The border dynamic is subsumed by the national migration dynamic. In both cases, borders work, above all, to separate two countries instead of defining a cross-border space for regional integration. In the third group, the migration of Bolivians to Argentina, for example, combines features from the first two groups. There is a cross-border migration area comprising the provinces of Salta and Jujuy in Argentina and the departments of Tarija and Potosí in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. But over the past few years it has overflowed with Bolivians headed elsewhere in Argentina, especially the province and the city of Buenos Aires.

## VII. REGIONAL INEQUALITIES WITHIN COUNTRIES: THE ROLE OF INTERNAL MIGRATION

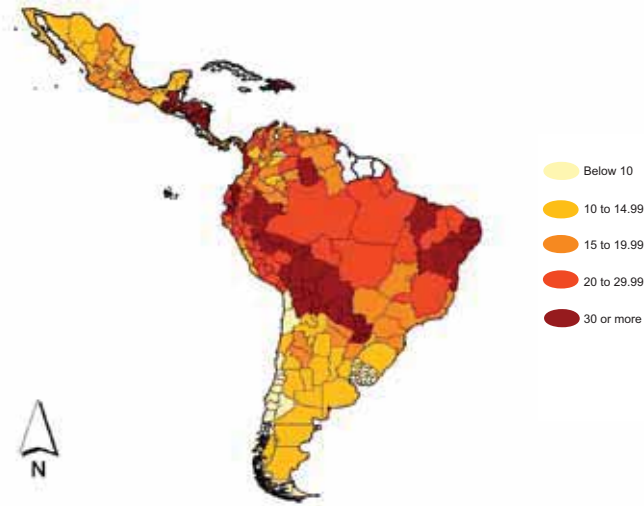
Inequalities among territories within the countries of the region are rooted in history and have been on the public and academic agenda for decades. Among the most obvious inequalities (and among the most frequently expected by policies and researchers) is found between regions with brisk economic and social development and those where development has lagged.<sup>5</sup> Many indices track regional differences at the level of major administrative divisions. Map VII.1 illustrates one of the most revealing and dramatic indicators of inequality: child mortality.

The most recent studies conducted by the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) (Ramírez, Silva and Cuervo, 2009) and cited in several sections of chapter IV of *Time for equality: closing gaps, opening trails* (ECLAC, 2010a) show that these inequalities persist 50 years after the region reached development policy milestones under what José Antonio Ocampo has called “State-driven industrialization.” Among these milestones were the building of Brasilia and the creation of Brazil’s Superintendency for the Development of the North-East (SUDENE); the “marches towards the east” in Paraguay and the Plurinational State of Bolivia; free trade and industrial promotion zones in “outlier and inland areas” of Argentina and Chile, industrial promotion policies on the northern border of Mexico and the “three Rs” (retention, relocation and reorientation) proposal put forth by Mexico’s National Population Council (CONAPO).

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<sup>5</sup> Major administrative divisions, for operational purposes hereof.

**Map VII.1**  
**LATIN AMERICA: CHILD MORTALITY RATE BY MAJOR**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION, AROUND 2010**  
*(Per 1,000 live births)*



**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of Argentina, Ministry of Health, Bureau of Health Statistics and Information (DEIS), 2008; Plurinational State of Bolivia, National Demographic and Health Survey (ENDSA), 2008; Brazil, IBGE/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) project (BRA/02/P02): População e Desenvolvimento: Sistematização das Medidas e Indicadores Sociodemográficos Oriundos da Projeção da População por Sexo e Idade, por Método Demográfico, das Grandes Regiões e Unidades da Federação para o Período 1991/2030; Brazilian Geographical and Statistical Institute (IBGE), Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios 2007; Chile, Estadísticas vitales, 2009; Colombia, National Demographic and Health Survey 2010; Costa Rica, Panorama demográfico, 2010; Cuba, Anuario demográfico, 2010; Ecuador, Ecuadoran Demographic and Maternal and Child Health Survey (ENDEMAIN), 2004; Guatemala, V National Maternal and Child Health Survey 2008-2009; Haiti, Enquête mortalité, morbidité et utilisation des services. EMMUS-IV, 2005-2006; Nicaragua, Nicaraguan Population and Health Survey (ENDESA) 2006-2007; Dominican Republic, Demographic and Health Survey 2007; Uruguay, Anuario demográfico, 2011.

And these inequalities remain 30 years after deployment of a development strategy based on trade opening, the rule of market forces, deregulation and the shrinking of the State. While quite unlike the thinking behind those other milestones, this strategy also sought overall development of the region but was, in this case, based on leveraging the region's comparative advantages in global trade, centred on the production of natural resources. These resources tend to be found in rural areas and in many regions that are lagging behind in development; more developed areas usually lack them. In the medium and long run, then,

the reprimarization of production under this new development strategy was supposed to spur development of the areas lagging farthest behind.<sup>6</sup> While evidence suggests that the expected economic boost did indeed take place in some territories, sustainable regional development was seen in only a few. The feeling, so widespread in the 1990s, that regional gaps were narrowing was due more to backsliding in the more developed areas (typically, metropolitan areas with a larger industrial and State footprint that were therefore hit harder by the debt crisis and weakened by the shift in development strategy) than to overall progress in less developed regions. The current perception is different, and there is a growing consensus that free market forces will not close the inequality gaps between regions within the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Public policy—particularly the “families of territorial policies” identified by ILPES (ECLAC, 2010a)—is the prime instrument for advancing towards greater regional equality in production and economic development. Social policy is essential for ensuring that all individuals, regardless of where they live, have access to rights and basic services. Accordingly, extending the reach of the State throughout the territory is crucial for enabling citizens to access the networks of social protection, justice and security that the State should provide.

Subnational economic inequalities are a complex issue; a detailed discussion of them is beyond the scope and purpose of the report. But the relationship between population dynamics and these inequalities is a more limited subject; it consists of three main links that, moreover, follow a stylized pattern.

The first link has to do with the relationship between the level of regional development and natural population growth. It is relatively common knowledge that, inside countries, natural population growth is slower in regions with higher levels of economic and social development and faster in less developed regions. Historically, faster natural population growth in poor regions has been one more adversity on top of others related to socioeconomic deprivation and is indeed a link in the chain of poverty reproduction because it is harder for production in these regions to absorb rapid natural population growth. In practice, this combination usually leads to a demographic response: emigration, which is at the

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<sup>6</sup> The reprimarization of production is more sophisticated and technologized than the original primary export model and, ultimately, has some value added—especially when built around clusters (ECLAC, 2005)—but it is still essentially reprimarization.



base of the two other links discussed below. The still fragmentary data on subnational birth and death rates from censuses in the 2010s, special surveys and, to a lesser extent, vital statistics, show that there are still differences in natural population growth (i.e., dissimilar progress along the demographic transition) but that these differences are narrowing, at least at the level of major administrative divisions.

The second link stems from the first and involves population age structure. The demographic transition changes that structure completely. First, it generates a dividend as the middle group (working-age population) widens, the base (children) narrows, and capacities and public and family investment accumulate. This subsequently gives way to a new, challenging scenario as the proportion of older persons increases (population ageing). At the subnational level, the poorest regions tend to miss out on much of their demographic dividend because the middle population group does not grow, and this becomes an additional adversity. This loss of the demographic dividend occurs mainly through emigration, which is typical of these areas and which, because it is highly age-selective, shrinks the working age population.

The third link is, precisely, migration. According to census data from the 2000s, less developed regions (especially those with chronic poverty, many of which are also marked by exclusion because much of the population is indigenous and rural) are, almost without exception, net senders of migrants. Population outflow might seem to be a rational choice on an individual level because people tend to seek the better living standards to be found in more developed areas of the country. This fits what is referred to as the neoclassical model of migration (White and Lindstrom, 2005). However, much other evidence suggests that this theory has many weaknesses. One of them, pinpointed by Latin American theoreticians focused on internal migration, concerns the importance of push factors: when actual conditions, not rational choices, drive migrants out in order to meet basic needs and aspirations (Rodríguez and Busso, 2009).<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, calculations based on census data from the 2000s and 2010s show that while more developed areas tend to have as much pull as sparsely populated ones do, they no longer stand out so much as net receivers of migrants.

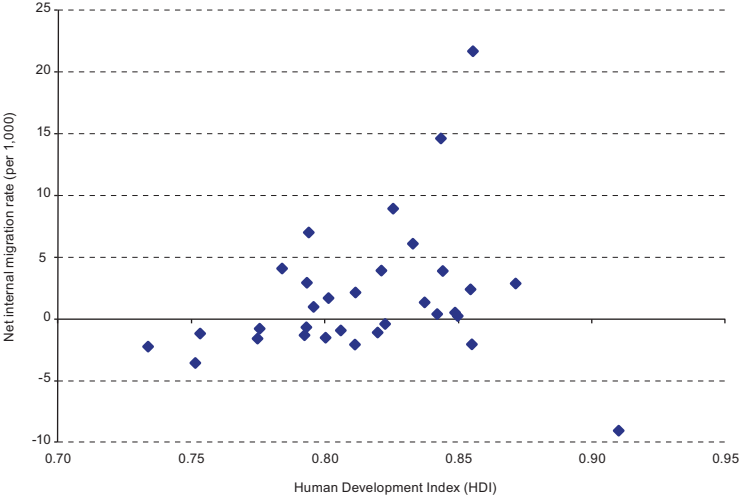
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<sup>7</sup> This does not refer to a maximizing, fully informed choice because such assumptions under the neoclassical model are not very realistic, at least not for internal migration in the countries of Latin America.

But the link between migration and sustainable development is not limited to migration volume and direction. Migration is selective, so it influences the sex, age and education (human capital) structure of a region. These impacts can be quantified using original methodologies developed and published by CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC (Rodríguez and Busso, 2009). These methodologies were applied to some 10 countries using census data from the 2000s and 3 countries with census data from the 2010s. Estimates confirm that most major administrative divisions with chronic poverty see exoduses, which raises the masculinity index and the dependency ratio, reducing or even cancelling out the demographic dividend and lowering average years of schooling. Since the effects on age structure and schooling years are adverse ones, the conclusion is that emigration has negative qualitative impacts for these areas and reinforces their precariousness and socioeconomic lag.

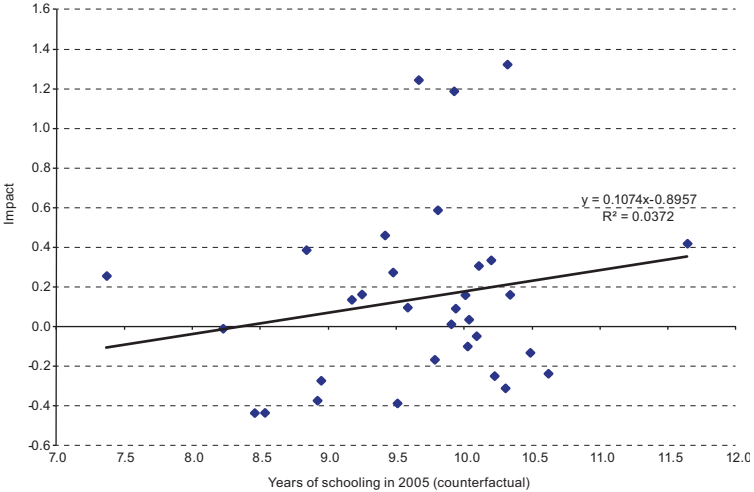
Figures VII.1 and VII.2 show findings from Mexico's 2010 census. Figure VII.1 illustrates the relationship between the internal migration rate in 2005-2010 and the Human Development Index (HDI) for the federal entities in 2006. The slope is positive, with the Federal District as the anomaly (with the highest HDI value and net emigration rate, not pushed by socioeconomic lag but due to intrametropolitan migration, i.e., suburbanization and peripheral expansion, which is discussed in chapter X). The five major administrative divisions with the lowest HDI values are at the same time the top five migrant-sending ones. As figure VII.2 shows, just one of these five poorer major administrative divisions gained in years of schooling because of migration. In the others, it declined, making the human resource base in these regions even more precarious. In short, the historical Latin American demographic approach to push factors in poorer territories is still valid. And there is a relevant new element: in these territories this push is a link in the poverty reproduction chain because it strips them of their most highly skilled human resources. This finding does not provide grounds for intervention geared towards restricting internal migration (as discussed in more detail in chapter XI), but it does justify palliative interventions aimed at encouraging people to remain as a productive presence or at promoting flows of skilled migrants who can put their skills and training to use there.

**Figure VII.1**  
**MEXICO: NET INTERNAL MIGRATION RATE, 2005-2010, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX IN THE FEDERATIVE ENTITIES, 2006**



**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of census microdata, 2010.

**Figure VII.2**  
**MEXICO: IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON YEARS OF SCHOOLING IN THE FEDERATIVE ENTITIES (POPULATION AGED 25-39), 2005-2010**  
*(Percentage change in years of schooling)*



**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of census microdata, 2010.

## VIII. CONTINUED URBANIZATION: IMPROVEMENTS AND SHORTCOMINGS

Latin America is the most urbanized region in the developing world. According to current estimates and projections, as well as initial findings from censuses conducted in the 2010s, this is an ongoing process and has driven the urban proportion of the region's population up to some 80%. Not even the profound crisis of the 1980s, which hit cities especially hard, halted the trend (CELADE, 2005). Projections suggest that the urban proportion of the population of the region will continue to rise, albeit at an ever slower pace. The fact that counterurbanization—a reversal of the process—still does not show up in the projections is due more to weaknesses and lags in rural areas (as explained in chapter IV) than to the strengths of urban ones. Even so, the possibility that living in rural areas in urban conditions could become more common cannot be dismissed. It could drive a sort of migration from cities to the countryside without being an outright “return to the countryside” to live and work. Issues related to this trend (which led to the coining of the term “rurban”) are on territorial research agendas. But where it might head in the future is still rather unclear. There is heterogeneity behind the regional averages; this is reflected in some countries where most of the population is still rural.

The rapid urbanization of the region has triggered controversy in the realms of methodology, theory and policy (policy issues are discussed in chapter XI). From the point of view of methodology, the use of national definitions to estimate urban population percentage in the region is being criticized because such definitions differ among the countries of the

region.<sup>8</sup> In the conceptual arena, one of the most intense debates has to do with the relationship between urbanization and economic and social development, seeing that in Latin America and the Caribbean the link has been weaker than in countries that are now regarded as developed.

As for the statistical validity of the urbanization indicators used to describe the process, chapter IV already touched on this issue from the rural viewpoint by examining different definitions of “rural.” If the focus is on urban areas, the CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC database on spatial distribution and urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean (DEPUALC), with population data for all localities in the region with 20,000 or more inhabitants, may be used (CELADE, 2009). Drawing on information in this database, it is estimated that, according to censuses conducted in the 2000s, two of every three Latin Americans live in cities with 20,000 or more inhabitants. While this is lower than the 78% urban population estimated for the region on the basis of census data from the 2000s, it is high on the global scale and confirms the marked predominance of urban areas in the region. What is more, as seen in table VIII.1 for Ecuador and Panama, the percentage of the population living in cities with 20,000 or more inhabitants continued to grow throughout the 2000s. This would seem to indicate that the region is becoming even more urban.

**Table VIII.1**  
**ECUADOR AND PANAMA: POPULATION IN CITIES WITH 20,000**  
**OR MORE INHABITANTS, 1950-2010**  
*(Percentage)*

Country	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Ecuador	18.0	27.7	35.3	42.5	48.0	54.7	56.3
Panama	28.2	34.6	39.1	43.8	47.0	56.3	60.1

**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, Spatial distribution and urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean (DEPUALC), and special processing of census microdata.

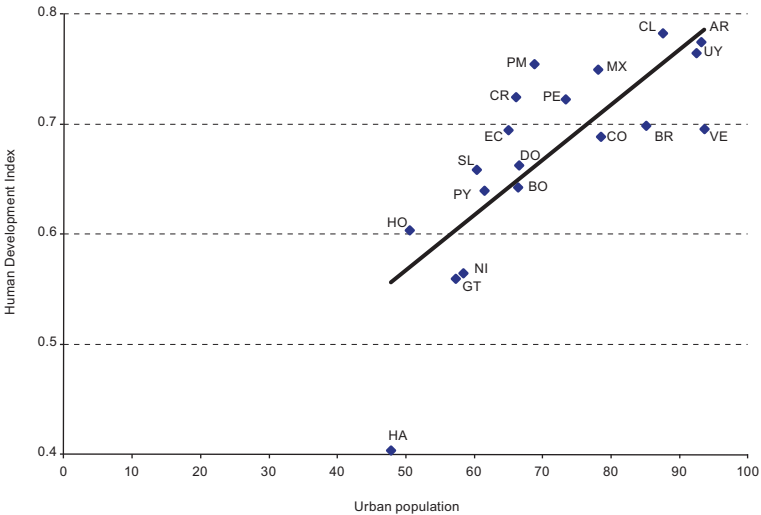
As for the debate on how to define urban and rural and the discussion as to dichotomy versus gradient for capturing settlement patterns, chapter IV set out the arguments that, in conceptual terms, favour more complex measures but in operative terms (censuses in particular) do not dismiss simpler proxies such as dichotomy. The fact that the urban-rural

<sup>8</sup> To be added to this discussion is the debate over how to define rural population, mentioned in chapter IV. There is no question that the dichotomous definition leaves out many relevant categories between the two extremes: a scattered population, and one concentrated in megalopolises.

dichotomy in censuses and surveys still yields persistent social inequalities is a powerful argument in favour of its currency.

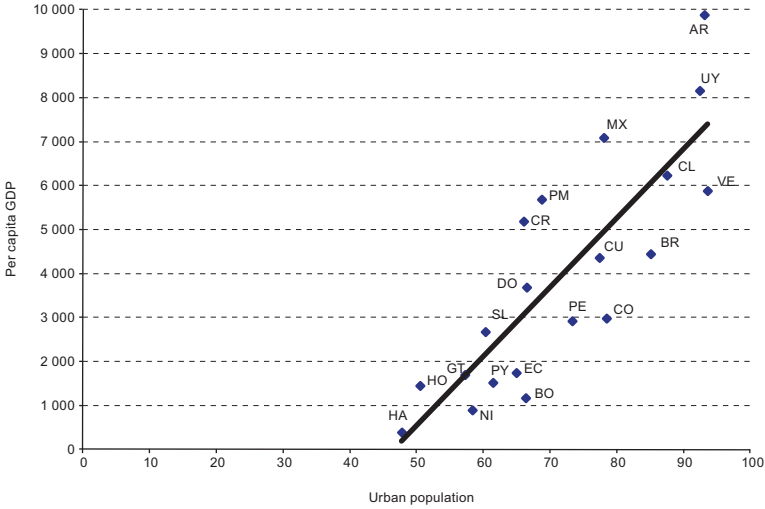
Concerning the conceptual debate, the available evidence is convincing: there is still a positive association between levels of urbanization in the countries and the summary indicators of economic and social development (Human Development Index and per capita GDP). This well-known relationship is now backed by recent data (see figure VIII.1 for the Human Development Index and figure VIII.2 for per capita GDP), providing more grounds for the view that urbanization is good for sustainable development. Several other positive impacts of urbanization for sustainable development are well documented (UNDP, 2009; World Bank, 2008; UNFPA, 2007), as seen, for example, in the levels and progress achieved towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. It is precisely the high population concentration in urban areas that has contributed to these achievements, by lowering the cost of providing services and basic care (ECLAC, 2010a y 2010b).

**Figure VIII.1**  
**LATIN AMERICA: URBAN POPULATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX, BY COUNTRY, 2010**  
*(Percentages and HDI scale: 0 -1)*



**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2010. The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development* [online] <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2010>; and Spatial distribution and urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean (DEPUALC) database.

**Figure VIII.2**  
**LATIN AMERICA: URBAN POPULATION AND PER CAPITA GDP,**  
**BY COUNTRY, 2010**  
*(Percentages and dollars)*



**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of CEPALSTAT and Spatial distribution and urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean (DEPUALC) databases, 2009.

Urbanization and, especially, migration from the countryside to the city, have territorial impacts. Calculations (particularly those based on census data from the 2010s) and available evidence yield at least three major conclusions. The first is that persistent rural-urban migration has a decreasing quantitative impact on urban population growth. That is why urban population expansion increasingly depends on natural growth. This trend is not irreversible, though, because if population growth rates in the urban areas of the region were to turn negative or flat, migration from the countryside to the city would again be the main (in this case, the only) driver of population growth. The second conclusion is that migration from the countryside to the city is still the engine of urbanization. Otherwise, the region would ruralize because natural population growth in rural areas is higher (see chapter IV). The third conclusion is that contrary to fairly widespread belief, the qualitative impacts of this migration tend to be positive for urban areas (but not for rural areas, as seen in chapter IV). Table VIII.2 provides a clearer example, with data from Panama’s

2010 census (one of the few censuses that can be used for such estimates). Net migration from rural areas to urban ones offsets population ageing in the latter and exacerbates it in the former.

In brief, the report finds a wealth of evidence supporting positive views of urbanization; its main conclusion then being that urbanization is essentially an opportunity for sustainable development. Subsequent chapters, including chapter XI on policy issues, provide further evidence.

**Table VIII.2**  
**PANAMA: ESTIMATED IMPACT OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION ON THE PROPORTION OF OLDER ADULTS IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS, 2005-2010<sup>a</sup>**  
*(Percentages)*

Habitual place of residence	Place of residence five years prior			Absolute migration impact <sup>b</sup>	Relative migration impact <sup>c</sup>
	Urban	Rural	Total		
Urban	11.48	6.75	11.28	-0.10627	-0.941953
Rural	6.54	12.44	12.23	0.22661	1.852441
Total	11.39	12.01	11.61		

**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC.

- <sup>a</sup> Population aged 60 or over as a percentage of the population aged 5 years and over in the migration matrix.
- <sup>b</sup> The absolute impact is the difference between the observed value and the counterfactual value (in the 'Place of residence five years prior' column). The relative impact is the quotient of the absolute impact to the counterfactual one. For further detail, see: Rodríguez and Busso, 2009.
- <sup>c</sup> For further detail, see: Rodríguez and Busso, 2009.

This conclusion notwithstanding, there are powerful arguments and abundant evidence as to problems, difficulties and challenges stemming from intense, rapid urbanization. Some of these issues are inherent to the socio-spatial changes involved and have been seen to a greater or lesser degree in all urbanized countries (World Bank, 2008; UN-Habitat, 2008). Others are more characteristic of Latin America and the Caribbean, due in part to the rapid pace of urbanization but above all to economic, institutional and political weaknesses and failings that have undercut the ability to conduct, control and plan the process (IDB, 2011; Linn, 2010). These problems have lasting consequences. Spontaneous, informal and deficient urbanization in the region is behind the disorganized, precarious workings of many of its cities (or of substantial sectors within them). And it is difficult to equip areas with solid urban pillars, including physical (networks of utilities, roads, community infrastructure and public and private facilities), social (complete, organized neighbourhoods, involved



communities) and institutional (formal mechanisms for local participation) when they sprung up without these elements. While many cities have overcome these obstacles and improved, the cost of doing so is far higher than that of urban planning from the outset (UNFPA, 2007).

The region is known for what is called “urban deficits”.<sup>9</sup> Noteworthy among them are poverty, informality and precarious housing (especially, improvised settlements and slums), basic services that are lacking or of poor quality, inadequate mass transit, problems with private transportation and the lack of community infrastructure and public spaces. An empirical analysis of these shortcomings shows that they are still substantial but tended to recede during the 2000s thanks to a favourable combination of a new appreciation of the urban setting especially after the crisis of the 1980s, economic resilience, more public resources, growing political will to take action in urban areas and an array of innovative policies that are more forceful, efficient and participatory. This favourable combination is taken up again in the following chapters and examined in greater detail, with a policy approach, in chapter XI.

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<sup>9</sup> This concept is in use in some countries of the region, like Chile, where the expression is “urban-housing deficit” (defined with the support of the Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC).

## **IX. SYSTEM OF CITIES: AN EXPANDING UNIVERSE WITH PERSISTENT ASYMMETRIES**

Urbanization can happen in very different systems of cities, ranging from a single metropolis (a highly concentrated system for which there is a wealth of technical jargon, be it a city-State or a single large city in an otherwise rural country) to the myriad of different-sized cities.

While city pre-eminence (i.e., concentration of the population in one or two main cities) is still the rule in the region (as discussed in chapter X), available evidence points to a significant increase in the number of cities in Latin America. As table IX.1 shows, according to 1950s censuses there were some 320 cities (localities with 20,000 or more inhabitants). Censuses from the 2000s show 1,963 cities. Census data from the 2010s show that the number of cities continues to grow: in Ecuador from 46 in 2001 to 55 in 2010, while there were just 5 in 1950 (see table IX.2). In Panama the jump during the same period was from 7 to 10, while in 1950 there were only 2 (see table IX.3).

A sizeable, diverse system of cities is generally regarded as an asset for sustainable development, because it counteracts city pre-eminence (which, as explained in chapter X, seems to work against sustainable development) and means more options for people and productive activities to locate in cities (Ramírez, Silva and Cuervo, 2009). But number is not enough for this potential to materialize; other elements are needed, too. Among them are connectivity and enough baseline equality to ensure cooperation and complementarity, as well as innovative competition, shared institutions and a certain sense of community.

**Table IX.1**  
**LATIN AMERICA: NUMBER OF CITIES, BY SIZE RANGE, 1950-2000**

	1950		1960		1970		1980		1990		2000	
	Number	Population	Number	Population	Number	Population	Number	Population	Number	Population	Number	Population
1,000,000 or more	6	16 121 704	10	30 159 270	19	58 202 286	26	89 629 921	37	119 340 999	47	156 219 434
500,000 to 999,999	5	3 209 130	13	9 124 459	17	11 491 650	26	18 049 868	33	22 210 323	44	30 328 031
100,000 to 499,999	51	11 215 663	75	14 939 296	133	26 546 840	191	38 144 478	226	47 659 577	299	62 841 816
50,000 to 99,999	65	4 416 455	106	7 128 145	154	10 772 495	198	13 489 067	292	20 530 868	398	28 165 024
20,000 to 49,999	193	5 816 115	293	8 936 450	450	13 635 695	634	19 423 954	835	25 879 080	1 175	35 874 277
Total, 20,000 or more	320	40 779 067	497	70 287 620	773	120 648 966	1 075	178 737 308	1 423	235 620 847	1 963	313 428 582

**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, Spatial distribution and urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean (DEPUALC), 2009.

**Table IX.2**  
**ECUADOR: EVOLUTION OF THE URBAN SYSTEM, BY SIZE RANGE, 1950-2010**  
(Percentages)

	1950		1960		1970		1980		1990		2000		2010	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1,000,000 or more	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.4	27.8	0.0	0.0	29.5	28.8	0.0	0.0
500,000 to 999,999	0.0	0.0	11.5	22.2	22.2	10.6	10.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
100,000 to 499,999	14.8	7.8	7.8	1.6	1.6	6.9	8.6	6.9	8.6	14.7	14.7	15.9	4.2	4.2
50,000 to 99,999	0.0	2.5	2.5	6.8	6.8	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.7	3.7	3.7	4.2	7.3	7.3
20,000 to 49,999	3.2	5.9	5.9	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.5	4.9	4.9	6.9	6.9	7.3	56.3	56.3
Total, 20,000 or more	18.0	27.7	27.7	35.3	35.3	42.5	48.0	48.0	48.0	54.7	54.7	56.3	56.3	56.3

**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, Spatial distribution and urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean (DEPUALC), 2012.

**Table IX.3**  
**PANAMA: EVOLUTION OF THE URBAN SYSTEM, BY SIZE RANGE, 1950-2010**

	1950		1960		1970		1980		1990		2000		2010	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1,000,000 or more	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	42.7	44.0	0.0	0.0
500,000 to 999,999	0.0	0.0	0.0	31.7	31.7	33.8	36.3	36.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
100,000 to 499,999	21.7	26.9	26.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.5	8.5	8.5	1.6	1.6
50,000 to 99,999	6.5	5.5	5.5	4.9	4.9	7.2	7.9	7.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.9	5.9
20,000 to 49,999	0.0	2.1	2.1	2.5	2.5	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	5.0	5.0	5.9	60.1	60.1
Total, 20,000 or more	28.2	34.6	34.6	39.1	39.1	43.8	47.0	47.0	47.0	56.3	56.3	60.1	60.1	60.1

**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, Spatial distribution and urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean (DEPUALC), 2011.

Three aspects of systems of cities<sup>10</sup> link the demographic dynamic to sustainable development. The first is how the system is structured, depending on city size and the underlying demographic trends. The second is levels of inequality as shown by basic social indicators. And the third has to do with migration patterns between cities and between cities and other human settlements; the latter is studied infrequently due to a lack of specific information.

As for structure, figure IX.1 is clear. Based on grouping cities by population size as follows: 1 million or more (big cities); 500,000 to 999,999; 100,000 to 499,999; 50,000 to 99,999; 20,000 to 49,999; and 2,000 to 19,999, between 1950 and 2000 all segments of the system of cities grew as a proportion of total population. However, the largest gains were posted by big cities during the first decades of the period and by middle-sized cities (100,000 to 999,999 inhabitants) in the closing two decades. In contrast, the population percentage in smaller urban localities (2,000 to 19,999 inhabitants) and small cities (20,000 to 49,999 inhabitants) barely increased at all and held more or less steady in the closing decades. These findings back a recurring theme in the literature on systems of cities in the region: medium-sized cities are the most dynamic segment in demographic terms (Jordán and Simioni, 1998).

Nevertheless, a few considerations emerging from figure IX.1 qualify this assertion. Big cities account for an ever-larger proportion of total population, with the percentage for small cities and smaller urban localities growing at a much slower pace. Burgeoning middle-size cities thus stand in contrast to slow-growing smaller ones, which make up most of the cities of the region.

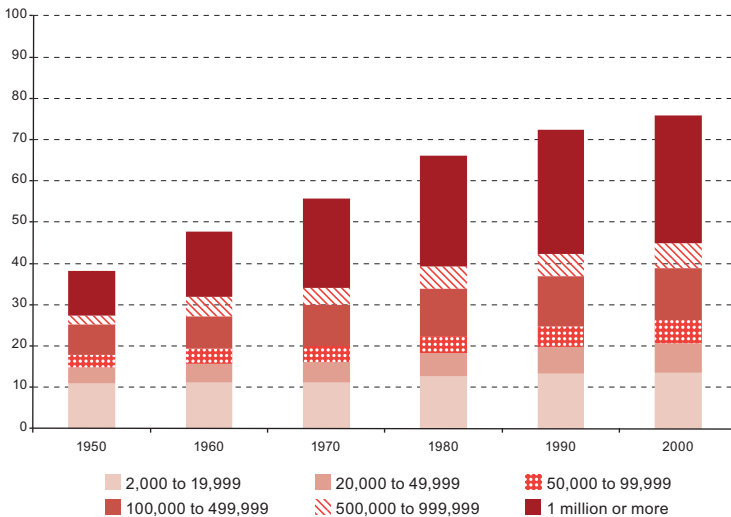
These measurements come with a few caveats. One is that the data for Latin America in figure IX.1 are from censuses conducted in different years, and not all of the countries are included in the reference dates. Data on a country-by-country basis are therefore more reliable. And, while findings are available for all of the countries with censuses, a country-by-country breakdown would be unhelpful and is beyond the scope of this study. Besides, heterogeneity among the countries makes it hard to identify

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<sup>10</sup> The term "system of cities" is used in its strictly formal sense, that is, the set or group of all localities with 20,000 or more inhabitants. The grouping sometimes includes the set of all smaller urban localities, i.e., between 2,000 and 19,999 inhabitants. More elaborate, complex definitions of systems of cities are beyond the scope hereof, although there are national researchers working along these lines (Sobrinho, 2011).

a dominant pattern. Indeed, just taking the two countries with census data from the 2010 round reveals dissimilar trajectories. In Ecuador, the top of the system (the two big cities Quito and Guayaquil) has declined for the first time in terms of percentage of total population while that of the other categories has grown. In Panama, on the other hand, the main city continues to grow as a percentage of the total population, the medium-sized segment has flatlined and the share of smaller cities is growing.

**Figure IX.1**  
**LATIN AMERICA: EVOLUTION OF THE URBAN SYSTEM,**  
**BY SIZE RANGE, 1950-2000**  
*(Percentages)*



**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, Spatial distribution and urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean (DEPUALC), 2010.

As for social inequalities based on population size, living standards are, generally speaking, positively correlated to city size. The most stylized pattern is that small cities lag the farthest behind in average indicators. This provides clues as to the potential determinants of sluggish growth in the lower ranks of the system of cities.

Findings on migration between cities tend to confirm the conclusions set out above. While megalopolises and some metropolitan areas lost their migration pull in the 1980s and 1990s (chapter X provides preliminary

data on the 2010s from the censuses conducted in the 2000s), big cities as a whole did not and are still drawing people. By contrast, the base of the system –cities with 20,000 to 49,999 inhabitants, accounting for roughly 60% of all urban areas but just 10% of the city-system population –has a negative migration balance (see table IX.3). Although this finding might have been influenced by the methodology used, it is unlikely that the overall amounts and trends would change substantially.<sup>11</sup> These findings are surprising, because as seen in table IX.4 they lead to the conclusion that most cities in Latin America are migrant senders, which is inconsistent with the enduring pull of urban areas documented in the report. Explanations of this contradiction are, one, that the finding is a number-of-cities effect because almost all of the sending cities are small and, as explained above, this group accounts for the largest percentage of cities but a much smaller fraction of the city-system population. The second reason is that this net emigration is not due to a “return to the countryside” (indeed, this group of cities has a net immigration balance in its exchange with rural areas) but rather to a flow towards larger cities, chiefly middle-sized ones with 100,000 to 999,999 inhabitants.

Summing up, these findings and conclusions temper the expectations generated by the increasing number of cities: it is clear that a small group of cities is accounting for most of the expansion of the urban population, stands out in terms of living standards and is a pull for migrants. It would seem that nearly 60% of the cities (those referred to as small for the purposes hereof) are in a state of permanent transition in which some will become dynamic hubs but most will tend to stagnate and become a source of migrants to the rest of the urban system. As explained earlier in this section, this is good news but it is not enough. If the goal is a robust system of cities of all sizes, there is a bigger challenge in store: transforming and consolidating small cities.

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<sup>11</sup> This assertion is based on calculations in the report for Panama and Brazil, where the census base allows for the same methodology but with a higher degree of sophistication that yields more exact findings. The conclusion emerging from this exercise is that while the methodology overestimates emigration for some cities, especially those in the lower segment, the aggregate effect on the balance for each size category is secondary.

Table IX.4

**LATIN AMERICA (14 COUNTRIES): 1,439 CITIES WITH MORE THAN 20,000 INHABITANTS, GROUPED BY POPULATION SIZE AND TOTAL NET MIGRATION WITH THE REST OF THE SYSTEM OF CITIES AND THE REST OF THE MUNICIPALITIES**  
(Number of persons and percentages)

City size	Balance (population)			Net migration to total population (ad hoc relative measure)		
	Population	Total net migration	Net migration balance with the rest of the system of cities	Total net migration	Net migration balance with the rest of the system of cities	Net migration balance with the rest of the municipalities
1,000,000 or more (34)	115 527 363	1 106 606	205 319	901 287	9.6	1.8
500,000 to 999,999 (32)	21 256 131	230 211	23 193	207 018	10.8	1.1
100,000 to 499,999 (215)	43 884 324	691 925	145 148	546 777	15.8	3.3
50,000 to 99,999 (295)	20 754 659	234 686	19 214	215 472	11.3	0.9
20,000 to 49,999 (863)	26 2506 384	-241 309	-392 873	151 564	-9.1	-14.8
Total (1,439)	227 928 861	2 022 118	0	2 022 118	8.9	0.0

Source: CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of Database on Internal Migration in Latin America and the Caribbean (MIALC).

Table IX.5

**LATIN AMERICA (14 COUNTRIES): 1,439 CITIES WITH MORE THAN 20,000 INHABITANTS, GROUPED BY POPULATION SIZE AND BY TOTAL NET MIGRATION WITH THE REST OF THE URBAN SYSTEM**  
(Number of cities and positive net migration percentage)

City size	Total net migration		Internal migration within the urban system		Per cent
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	
1,000,000 or more (34)	25	9	22	14	58.8
500,000 to 999,999 (32)	24	8	18	14	56.3
100,000 to 499,999 (215)	137	78	101	112	47.4
50,000 to 99,999 (295)	146	149	126	102	55.3
20,000 to 49,999 (863)	360	503	305	475	39.1
Total (1,439)	692	747	570	717	44.3

Source: CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of Database on Internal Migration in Latin America and the Caribbean (MIALC).

## X. BIG CITIES: TRENDS, TRANSITIONS AND CHALLENGES

Just one piece of information is enough to illustrate the demographic importance of metropolises and big cities (1 million or more inhabitants) in Latin America and the Caribbean: one out of every three people in the region lives in a city of that size.<sup>12</sup> This is linked to the historical pre-eminence of urban systems in the region, with one or two main cities in each country concentrating much of the urban population.<sup>13</sup> And in other spheres (production, education and politics) main cities are even more at the hub.

This predominance has recently come under discussion in studies showing the high cost of this settlement pattern in terms of development (Ramírez, Silva and Cuervo, 2009). This issue was sidelined for quite some time because the dominant theory (actually, hypothesis) is that the contribution of big cities to development will follow an inverted U-curve pattern, with that predominance falling off naturally after a certain development threshold has been passed. Nevertheless, the historical series on predominance set out in the report paints a picture that differs from the one predicted by theory. Specifically, when concentration is measured in terms of the percentage of total population living in the major administrative division where the main city is located, it follows

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<sup>12</sup> Fifty-six in 2010, according to the United Nations (2007 and 2008). Some of the tables in the report show fewer cities with 1 million or more inhabitants than estimated by CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC for other years in the past. The main reason is that these tables are based on census data, and in each census round there was a country that did not conduct a census.

<sup>13</sup> Pre-eminence refers to population concentration in the main city or the two largest cities. There is an ad hoc index and a few other ways to quantify it, as explained in the report.



a sustained upward path in nearly half of the countries. In this group there are countries like Chile, which are among the most developed in the region, and Panama, where 2010 census data show that population concentration in the province of Panama increased during the 2000s. When what is referred to as the predominance index is used to track population concentration in the main city of each country, there does seem to be a general downtrend since the 1980s, but there are recurrent exceptions to this pattern that are relevant for the theory because they involve the more developed countries in the region. And when looking at the most direct expression of population concentration in big cities, there is, clearly, sustained, substantial growth. Big cities went from 11% of the population of the region in 1950 to 32% in 2010 (30.6% in 2000). So, while most urban growth models and the evidence in developed countries point to population deconcentration as the supposedly predominant trend, the future pattern of concentration in the region's big cities is still uncertain.

Sustainable development depends a great deal on what happens in big cities (Jordán, Rehner and Samaniego, 2011). Their demographic weight gives them significant influence, which is compounded by their even greater weight in other spheres. In addition, over the past 15 years globalization has boosted the role of big cities in the development process. Indeed, the concept of global city put forth by Sassen (1991), sometimes rather loosely applied, is useful in this regard because it highlights key drivers of economic and social development operating in these cities. In Latin America and the Caribbean, this new appreciation came after a terrible period when big cities were even called apocalyptic because of all their problems, the fairly widespread perception that they were decadent, and frequent outbreaks of social unrest. The region's big cities are still the setting for many problems and risks, but they weathered a crisis that seemed terminal at the time and many of them are now generating much brighter expectations than in the 1990s.

The role of big cities in sustainable development is changing inasmuch as the policies aimed at making them more functional and pleasant for their inhabitants are concerned.

From a demographic point of view, one of the cardinal changes in big cities has been in migration pull. In the 1980s and 1990s, coinciding with the city crisis mentioned above, some metropolises and megalopolises went from their traditional role as net receivers of migrants to being net

senders. This finding had such an impact at the time that it was even interpreted as a widespread trend. But as seen in the foregoing chapter, that was not the case. Within the system of cities, big cities posted net immigration flows between 1950 and 2000. Census data from 2010 point to a mixed trend in terms of migration pull; this cannot be regarded as representative because the number of countries for which data are available is very small. Table X.1 shows that the pull of Panama City is felt in its close environs and in the rest of the Panama, while Mexico City has been losing population to the rest of the country since the 1990s. Quito has a net migration loss to its close environs (likely due to suburbanization) but a positive and even larger overall balance with the rest of the country. Guayaquil has a net migration loss to its environs and a smaller net migration gain from the rest of the country, so its overall net migration balance is negative.

**Table X.1**  
**LATIN AMERICA (SELECTED COUNTRIES): METROPOLITAN CITIES,**  
**BY TOTAL NET MIGRATION, NEAR AND FAR, ABSOLUTE**  
**BALANCES, CENSUSES CONDUCTED IN THE 2010<sup>a</sup>**

	Net migration (number of persons)		
	Total	Near	Far
Panama City	70 789	2 553	68 236
Mexico City <sup>b</sup>	-200 201	-24 386	-175 815
Quito <sup>c</sup>	23 284	-6 992	30 276
Guayaquil <sup>d</sup>	-7 487	-11 388	3 901

**Source:** CELADE-Population Division of ECLAC, on the basis of REDATAM processing of census microdata on Ecuador, Mexico and Panama, 2010.

- <sup>a</sup> Total migration refers to population exchange between the city and the other minor administrative divisions of a country. Near migration refers to population exchange between the city and the minor administrative divisions that are part of the major administrative division where the city is located. Far migration refers to population exchange between the city and minor administrative divisions outside the major administrative division where the city is located.
- <sup>b</sup> Includes 44 municipalities and delegations. Using the current definition of 76 municipalities and delegations, the total net migration balance would be -149,018.
- <sup>c</sup> Quito comprises the city of Quito and the parishes of Alagansi, Amaguaña, Atahualpa (Habaspamba), Calacali, Calderón, Carapungo, Conocoto and Cumbayá, which belong to the canton of Quito.
- <sup>d</sup> Guayaquil comprises the city of Guayaquil and the parishes of Juan Gómez Rendón, Morro, Posorja, Puna and Tenguel, which belong to the canton of Guayaquil, and The parish of Eloy Alfaro in the canton of Durán.

Regardless of how the pull of big cities is evolving, the overall trend is towards lower net migration rates to them. In this context, two emerging types of migration stand out. One is intrametropolitan migration, with

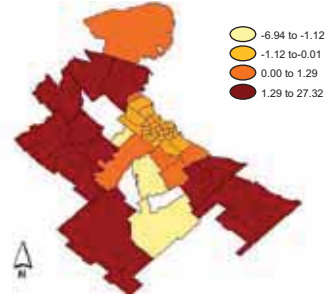
determining factors that differ from those of classical migration (rural-urban, interregional); the other is “near” migration.

Intrametropolitan migration is still the driving force behind expanding cities, and it is outpacing population growth. It is driving the peripheral growth of Latin American cities seen in map X.1 and, unlike the suburban expansion of cities in the United States, it has historically consisted of low-income groups moving into unurbanized peripheries (Linn, 2010). Rather than coming from outside the city, these new inhabitants tend to come from inside it. In addition to expanding the periphery (which tends to have adverse consequences on the workings of the city, living standards and environmental sustainability), this migration also has a direct impact on several issues that are currently on the city agenda. Among these issues are two developments that would seem to be contradictory: socioeconomic residential segregation, and social diversification of the periphery. These trends can coexist, and they can arise from intrametropolitan migration patterns that are differentiated according to socioeconomic group. Intrametropolitan migration must be taken into consideration when planning for inner city population recovery, which has all kinds of positive impacts for cities. After some unsuccessful experiences, these programmes have begun to show results in cases such as Santiago (Chile) and Mexico City. Even so, such plans can send the real estate market into an upward spiral that outpaces population growth as outsiders buy properties for seasonal use or short stays rather than as a permanent residence.

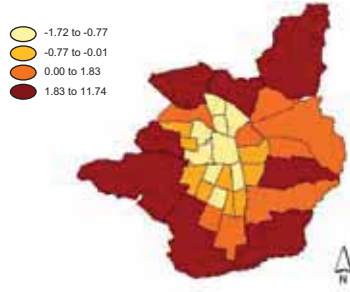
Structural and functional changes already seen in cities in developed countries are now emerging in the big cities in the region. These include urban reconfiguration as cities become less compact and more spread out, metropolitan areas grow to hundreds of kilometres across, and cities transition from monocentric to polycentric. These emerging developments are open to different interpretations; the powerful policy implications are taken up again in chapter XI.

**Map X.1**  
**LATIN AMERICA (SELECTED COUNTRIES): INTERCENSAL GROWTH RATES OF METROPOLITAN AREAS, BY MINOR ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION. 1990-2000**  
*(Per 100 inhabitants)*

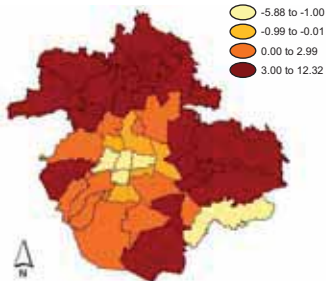
A. Greater Buenos Aires



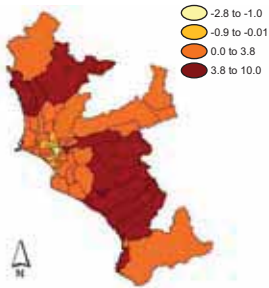
B. Greater Santiago



C. Mexico City



D. Lima



**Source:** CELADE–Population Division of ECLAC, "Urbanization prospects", *Demographic Observatory*, No. 8 (LC/G.2422-P), Santiago, Chile, 2009, p. 45.



## XI. FINDINGS, MESSAGES AND POLICY DISCUSSION

The main finding of the report is that place does indeed matter, as asserted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in *Time for equality: closing gaps, opening trails* (ECLAC, 2010a), and that population location and mobility are key, bidirectional components of the relationship between territory and sustainable development.

Two main policy messages emerge from this. One message has to do with the need for national and subnational sustainable development policy to take population location and mobility into consideration, thereby boosting policy relevance and effectiveness. Among the ways to do this are updated diagnostic reviews at the national and subnational level, estimates of the impacts of current conditions for different territories, and future population scenarios that are disaggregated geographically to show direct territorial impacts and the various effects of sustainable development. This consideration is also relevant for policies aimed at improving living standards and protecting the exercise of rights by the population. Where people live affects their lives through many channels, but public policies should guarantee their rights regardless of place. The same is true of mobility, which, in all its forms (international migration, internal migration, seasonal and temporary migration and commuting) can be a tool and even a necessity for individuals and can shape their life trajectory and even their daily lives.

The second message concerns the rationale for public policies in the realm of population location and mobility. Such initiatives should, in any event, be grounded in basic tenets such as respecting individual rights,

recognizing social diversity (especially, ethnic diversity) and biodiversity, promoting equality and valuing citizen participation. These criteria were either sidestepped or only partially applied during the massive deployment of official programmes that actively sought the spatial redistribution of the population (1950s to 1980s). Such programmes contributed to significant changes in territory settlement patterns in several countries, but overall they did not establish sustainable linkages with national and subnational development. Because they did not follow these principles, failed to spur sustainable national and subnational development, and were costly, such redistribution programmes are no longer being applied in the region. Nor are the natural workings of market forces helping to ensure that these principles are followed. The market encourages location and mobility patterns that yield private profits in the short run and as such can contribute to aggregate efficiency and higher average incomes. But their impact at the subnational level for communities, families and individuals is so contingent on initial inequalities that they can feed the reproduction of these inequalities and the creation of poverty traps. Moreover, market forces usually ignore the externalities of territorial redistribution of the population that they trigger. This can have a decisive impact on social profitability and environmental sustainability in some cases. And market forces typically disregard issues such as ethnicity.

In short, public intervention in the area of population location and mobility will still be necessary, relevant and useful because States and governments will continue to try to promote certain subnational areas and spaces in keeping with long-term goals, political priorities and citizen involvement or pressure. But intervention should steer clear of actions involving coercion, biased information and limits on movement, and it should favour indirect action through incentives that guide location and movement of the population (and of economic agents). The potential offered by intersectoral coordination should be capitalized on because of the powerful impacts (often indirect and unnoticed by the sectors) that sector-based policy has on spatial location and movement of the population. And the integral economic value, social function, and symbolic importance of a territory for its inhabitants should be acknowledged; this is usually intuitively related with indigenous peoples but is relevant for the population as a whole. For example, social networks and familiarity with surroundings are economic assets that have meaning

for people and are lost in other territorial contexts because they are not transferable. For this very reason they should be protected by public policies –and compensated if public policies lead to their loss.

These new population location and mobility policy criteria are beginning to be formally set into national law, and they are closely associated with widespread public policy approaches (like the rights approach) and with concepts (like “good living”) that are in vogue in several countries in the region. As an illustration, box XI.1 shows the constitutional ranking of these criteria in the case of Ecuador.

#### Box XI.1

#### **ECUADOR: ARTICLES OF THE 2008 CONSTITUTION CONCERNING DEVELOPMENT AND TERRITORIAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE CONCEPT OF “GOOD LIVING”**

Article 3. The State's prime duties are

6. Promoting equitable and mutually supportive development throughout the territory by building up the process of autonomies and decentralization.

Article 238. Decentralized autonomous governments shall have political, administrative and financial autonomy and shall be governed by the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, inter-territorial equity, integration and public participation. Under no circumstances shall the exercise of autonomy allow for secession from the national territory. Decentralized autonomous governments encompass rural parish boards, municipal councils, metropolitan councils, provincial councils and regional councils.

Article 239. The system of decentralized autonomous governments shall be governed by the respective law, which shall set forth a national system of competencies, of a mandatory and progressive nature, and shall define the policies and mechanisms for compensating territorial disparities in the development process.

Article 259. With the aim of safeguarding the biodiversity of the Amazon ecosystem, the central State and decentralized autonomous governments shall adopt sustainable development policies which shall also offset disparities in their development and consolidate sovereignty.

Article 275. The development structure is the organized, sustainable and dynamic group of economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental systems which underpin the achievement of the good way of living (*sumak kawsay*). The State shall plan the development of the country to assure the exercise of rights, the achievement of the objectives of the development structure and the principles enshrined in the Constitution. Planning shall aspire to social and territorial equity,



## Box XI.1 (concluded)

promote cooperation, and be participatory, decentralized, deconcentrated and transparent. The good way of living shall require persons, communities, peoples and nationalities to effectively exercise their rights and fulfill their responsibilities within the framework of interculturalism, respect for their diversity, and harmonious coexistence with nature.

Article 276. The development structure shall have the following objectives:

6. To promote balanced, equitable land use planning, integrating and coordinating socio-cultural, administrative, economic and management activities and bolstering the unity of the State.

Article 284. The economic policy shall have the following objectives:

5. To achieve a balanced development of the national territory, integration among regions, in the rural sector, and between the countryside and the city, in economic, social and cultural terms.

**Source:** L. Cuervo, "Ética y política económica. Discusión de sus relaciones fundamentales a la luz de las políticas de desarrollo territorial", presentation at the X Economic Policy Conference, entitled "Propuestas de política económica ante los desafíos actuales", Málaga, Spain, 20 and 21 October 2011; and Government of Ecuador, Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008.

The main finding concerning rural areas, their demographic dynamic and their relationship with sustainable development is persistent flight from the countryside that runs contrary to optimistic predictions of agricultural revitalization and new value attached to rural areas, along with macroeconomic evidence of soaring output in many primary sectors –most of which are in rural areas. A similar paradox was seen in the 1950s to 1970s, during the big government push for land reform and agricultural modernization in the region. Against original expectations that both processes would increase retention, emigration from the countryside continued, if not escalated.

Both this finding and the recurrent paradox suggest that public policy faces serious constraints in boosting population retention in rural areas. This is not reason to avoid action, because net rural emigration has consequences in terms of population makeup that can lead to poverty traps. But rather than retention policies (which, besides, could infringe on the right to free movement within the national territory), what rural areas need is interventions that simultaneously tackle reasons for leaving and asymmetries with urban areas, so that rural ones also have population pull. Disjointed action in one direction or the other winds up encouraging migration towards urban areas. One emerging

policy alternative is non-agricultural rural employment (in a way, the flip side of primary-sector workers living in cities), which is on the rise and can be an attractive option for the rural population and even for entire communities. Much research remains to be done in this regard, but encouraging non-agricultural rural employment can diversify the production base, help keep skilled workers in rural areas and even draw them from urban areas as is the case with non-agricultural employment linked to the green economy, rural tourism and information and communications technologies, among other sectors. It can also spur training for residents of rural areas.

In any event, the concomitancy between production growth and sustained emigration is an argument in favour of policies aimed at adapting rural areas to future scenarios with a shrinking population and labour shortages. Such shortages, already seen in some countries of the region but not in most, are neither general nor permanent but seasonal or concentrated in some, more highly trained, groups. They are therefore resolved by migration or by seasonal or daily commuting on the part of workers living in urban areas (or even other countries) but working in rural ones. In such conditions, location and mobility policies for the countryside can no longer target the rural population alone. Specific measures focus on operative aspects (maintaining, housing and circulating this moving workforce) as well as issues in the sphere of social protection and migrant rights, including access to health services and child care, formalization of contracts, trade unions and the prevention of abuse and discrimination.

Diversity in rural areas is crucial because homogenous policies usually fail in the face of heterogeneous situations, just as unequal conditions between rural areas call for actions that at least acknowledge and take account of the peculiarities of different territories. Rural areas that are close to cities or to regional or national transit corridors have production and social advantages and can be both a springboard and a benchmark for public action (especially, services) in rural areas. By contrast, outlying areas usually lack physical connectivity; this leads to isolation. With some exceptions, isolation is not a barrier to emigration because information about the rest of the world circulates even in the remotest places. However, isolation does significantly hamper the provision of basic services and access to opportunities that are available elsewhere. Among the ways to counteract isolation are (i) promote greater concentration of the rural

population, typically in small nucleated settlements with good services and transit connections; (ii) identify the population hubs (urban or rural) most accessible to a scattered populace and concentrate the supply of basic services there; (iii) use various procedures to serve a scattered population in situ; (iv) reach the population directly even if it is scattered —one example, while not free from problems or debate, is the conditional transfer programmes that started in rural areas and whose poverty reduction impact has been substantial; (v) facilitate commuting (daily or for longer periods) from urban centers for an array of reasons (employment, education, health and administrative, to name a few); (vi) improve connectivity via placement of roads and railways and other connection infrastructure; and (vii) facilitate virtual connectivity using information and communications technologies. In any event, all these measures speak to the core tenet that, regardless of place of residence, the population has rights, including access to basic services, and that the State should guarantee fulfilment of these rights.

Last, this “new rurality” calls for rural policies that take a territory-based approach rather than focusing just on agriculture or farmers. Box XI.2 looks at the experience of Brazil, Guatemala and Mexico in implementing rural development policies with a territorial approach. More time is needed before taking more thorough stock of these policies, but evidence points to their being a better match with the current production and sociocultural dynamic in rural areas than traditional rural development programmes.

**Box XI.2**  
**RECENT EXPERIENCES WITH TERRITORY-BASED RURAL**  
**DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

Over the past decade several countries in the region have tried this new, territory-based approach, either in their constitutions, in new legislation or in rural development policies.

In 2001 Mexico enacted a law on sustainable rural development, using the territory-based approach as a conceptual and programmatic framework to guide development strategy for municipalities. This law is grounded in an array of decentralization, municipalization and federalization processes arising from the modernization of the State, and it has yielded significant institutional achievements such as the Special Concerted Rural Development Programme, systems and services for policy priority areas, territorial consortia, participatory territory-based planning and municipalization of territory management. Mexico’s territory-based approach seeks common strategies for programming, planning and managing

## Box XI.2 (continued)

public investment in a coordinated, concurrent manner that fosters a functional, synergistic relationship between forms of public intervention at the territory level. A good example is how the Special Concerted Rural Development Programme is being used to apply federal, sector-based policies in municipalities, especially rural ones, with concurrent budgeting and an inter-institutional structure consisting of the Intersecretarial Commission comprising 13 state secretariats coordinated by the Office of the Undersecretary for Rural Development and structures for coordination at the state level. The territorial consortia proposed by the law provide an institutional structure for management, participation, negotiation and planning across the territories. The basic unit of these consortia are the municipal councils for sustainable rural development and the products system committees supporting production policy. The consortia gave rise to a robust process of participatory territorial planning aimed at channeling the demands of producers, organizations and communities through rural development plans that set prospective visions, strategic axes and territorial development projects based on local capacities. Mexico's experience puts the municipalization of territorial management front and centre by fostering agreements between the federal government and local governments and coordinating with state governments. These mechanisms have yielded streamlined programmes and decentralized rules of operation.

Brazil is taking a territory-based approach to rural development in order to fight poverty and reduce social inequality. It is doing so through the Citizen Territories programme rolled out in 2008. It is expected that by the end of 2009 the programme (which covers 120 areas) had invested US\$ 10 billion benefiting millions of poor families. The programme is the largest of its kind in Latin America; one of its main successes has been raising the profile of the rural world at the federal and municipal government level in Brazil. The core objective was to increase income and improve living standards for the most disadvantaged population segments in Brazil, those who face the greatest inequalities in the country's rural areas. Strategies for strengthening social networks for cooperation within territories, enhancing social management and capacity building are coupled with productive inclusion of recipient families. At least 7 million Brazilians were involved in the public policy development programme in 120 rural areas. In its second year, the programme drew in the private business sector; this was an important milestone because the Brazilian Government does not envision integral development without the contribution of all actors in society.

Guatemala has set up several mechanisms for promoting rural development with a territory-based approach. The country's management strategy is geared towards robust territorial planning, with rules grounded in decentralization as the guiding principle for policies aimed at devolving central State competencies

## Box XI.2 (concluded)

to municipalities and intermediate territorial bodies. This institutional framework is based on the principle of autonomy, the creation of a system of development councils, a Rural Development Cabinet and the National System of Strategic Territorial Planning (SINPET). There is also a Rural Development Cabinet coordinated by the Secretariat of Planning and Programming (SEGEPLAN) under the direct leadership of the Vice President of the Republic and involving national agencies responsible for sector policies. Having such a cabinet puts responsibility for rural development (and the rural development plan) in the hands of a national agency instead of a sectoral one, as can be seen in the new power structure. The National System of Strategic Territorial Planning encompasses regional and territorial planning as a framework for the strategic territorial plans designed, agreed and managed with a high degree of participation in the territorial council model. These are integral, multisector long-term plans. The National Comprehensive Rural Development Policy put in place in 2009 was designed with feedback from spaces for dialogue between government and social organizations on integral rural development and the resolution of agricultural labour and environmental conflicts. The core policy goal is to steadily advance towards permanently improving the quality of life for policy subjects and for inhabitants of rural areas as a whole by ensuring equitable access to and sustainable use of productive resources, means of production, natural resources and environmental services to achieve sustainable integral human development in rural areas.

**Source:** Rafael Echeverri and Octavio Sotomayor, 2010; <http://www.reflejosocial.com/politicas-sociales/territorios-de-ciudadania-una-apuesta-de-brasil-por-el-desarrollo-rural>.

Low-density territories, which make up a large part of the region and are crucial for sustainable global development, still account for a small part of the population at the national level. But they are taking on a more important role as they gain in population and the network of human settlements becomes larger and more diverse (with metropolises and medium-sized cities), building their own, complex identity as melting pots of cultures that have a special relationship with the State, which long encouraged people to move to these territories.

Sustainable development policies inevitably turn on the peculiarities of individual territories. But there are overarching factors to bear in mind in low-population-density territories. One of them is continuing dependency on State support. Even those whose pull is based on private investment and profitable industries (such as tourism) need active State involvement to address environmental, public safety and other externalities and provide public goods and services that are vital

for industry. Central power attempts to unilaterally cut off dependence have triggered not inconsiderable conflicts. It is therefore unlikely that support policies targeting these areas could be dropped any time soon. For States, the policy and financial challenge might no longer be how to keep peopling these territories but rather how to maintain this process sustainably—a proposition that in some cases can be complex and require considerable investment and innovation.

Also to be borne in mind is the original populace, typically indigenous, that has become an agent in redefining options for settlement and demanding specific rights and attention from the nation-State. These communities were ignored and looked down on during State-driven settlement processes. Often, they were at the receiving end of violence and deception at the hands of actors interested in the natural riches of their territories. Now, the mere organization of these peoples makes them relevant stakeholders. And treatment by the State is changing, driven by actors and mechanisms at the international level, such as International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In Latin America, good examples of the new stance taken by States in recognizing the heritage and historical rights of indigenous peoples vis-à-vis their territories are Ecuador's new constitution<sup>14</sup> and recent Basic Zoning, Autonomy and Decentralization Code acknowledging the collective rights of Amazonian peoples over the Amazon ecosystem. Since this is being done in the framework of yet-to-be-drafted legislation, the scope of such recognition cannot be gauged until the final wording is in place. In several territories there are conflicts between outside actors and original indigenous peoples. The reasons for these conflicts are varied (dams, power plants, mines, dump sites, plantations, roads and other facilities), but they are all driven by reaction at the local community level when people feel they are not being heard or that their rights are being violated. This is key, because such operations often mean jobs and resources for the local population (except for compensations paid, which usually do not feed back into community development) and so might be welcomed by the inhabitants and work in favour of sustainable development in these areas. However, experience to date has been of disturbing arrogance on the part of

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<sup>14</sup> Article 57 in particular.

investors and central decision makers clinging to abstract discourse on huge profits and the needs of the country to justify projects, forgetting that the local populace suffers the consequences and often does not share in the benefits. Rather than skipping over the importance of the central power in designing and implementing policies and programmes for sustainable development at a country level, these examples and case studies seek to spotlight an emerging scenario that rejects measures that do not take account of the opinion, interests and worldview of communities in low-density areas.

The new approach to these territories attaches considerable importance to preserving them, citing their role in biodiversity and global ecosystem balance, as seen in box XI.3. This means that at least at the formal level there is specific concern as to the environmental effects of settling and exploiting these areas—a far cry from previous settlement programmes that ran roughshod over these issues.

#### Box XI.3

#### AMAZONIA: PROTECTING THE ECOSYSTEM AND ETHNICITY IN AMAZONIA: THE EXAMPLE OF ECUADOR'S BASIC ZONING, AUTONOMY AND DECENTRALIZATION CODE

**Article 11.- Amazon ecosystem.-** The territory of the Amazonian provinces is part of an ecosystem that is necessary for the environmental equilibrium of the planet. Said territory shall be a special territorial district governed by a special law in keeping with integral, participatory planning that shall group social, education, economic, environmental and cultural issues in a territorial code safeguarding the conservation and protection of its ecosystems and the principle of *sumak kawsay*.

Persons, communities, peoples, nationalities and urban and rural groups shall participate in the drafting of the ad hoc law on Amazonia. The territories of Amazonian communities, peoples and nationalities, their collective rights and international instruments shall be respected in their entirety.

**Article 12.- Amazon biodiversity.-** In order to safeguard the biodiversity of the Amazonian territory, the central government and the decentralized autonomous governments shall concurrently adopt policies for sustainable development and compensation to redress inequalities. Environmental management shall be governed by preservation, conservation and remediation policies in accordance with the ecological diversity of the territory.

**Source:** Government of Ecuador, Código orgánico de organización territorial, autonomías y descentralización [online] <http://asambleanacional.gob.ec/leyes-asamblea-nacional.html>.

It thus comes as no surprise that the institutions created and the programmes and policies deployed for safeguarding, compensating and restoring ecosystems are high on the list of good practices in the region identified during national and international discussions leading up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Rio+20 (see box XI.4). The fact that in the Brazilian Amazon these achievements coexist with situations where environmental damage and expulsion or exclusion of the local population is the norm is proof of the fractal nature of the relationship between population and development. Government initiatives that have been successful at the national level should therefore be enhanced locally where for a variety of reasons they have fallen short.

Policy recommendations for border areas are directly related to the spaces examined. There are significant differences between these spaces, ranging from those where there is a true cross-border space and migration and population mobility are a mechanism for regional integration (between Ecuador and Colombia, for example) to those where the border marks off and separates two nations between which the migrant exchange (typically, asymmetric) has national impacts (as with Haiti and the Dominican Republic). Despite this diversity, though, there is a common set of problems and deficits calling for targeted policies.

Policies concerning health (particularly, sexual and reproductive health) are crucial, because health services in border areas fall so short of meeting demand, even of the local population. The main policy recommendation is to bring local governments into the effort to match supply to the real needs of the border-area population, both local and migrant. And it is crucial to involve civil society organizations; they can contribute a wealth of experience in migrant health services.

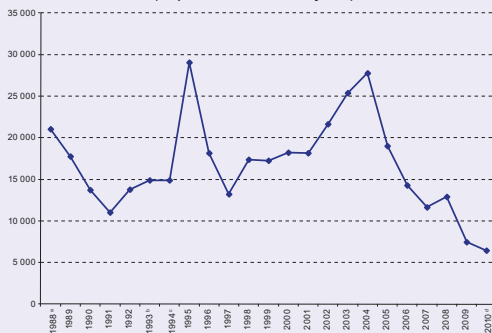
Policies targeting inequalities among regions are better known, but that does not ensure their success. From a population perspective, the priority is to recognize the right to migrate and the benefits that migration from poor areas to rich ones yields for migrants, for the national economy and for growing regions. It must be recognized, too, that population redistribution also generates adversities for people and territories: for people, above all, when push factors predominate and there are fewer options for planned, informed choices, and for territories when migration drains skilled human resources away from traditionally poor areas and feeds poverty traps. These impacts call for action along the lines set out at the beginning of this section.



### Box XI.4 ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF DEFORESTATION IN THE LEGAL AMAZON REGION OF BRAZIL

Beyond its contribution to emissions and its potential for mitigation, the Amazon rainforest plays a key role in the region's climate system. High deforestation rates in the Amazon led the Government of Brazil to establish the Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Legal Amazon (PPCDAM) in 2003. This action plan is an unprecedented initiative in terms of institutional coordination between government sectors (ministries) and levels (federal, state, municipal). The complexity of the deforestation issue required the plan to be implemented jointly by 13 ministries, under the coordination of the Civil House of the Presidency of the Republic. PPCDAM has three main components: land use and issues relating to land ownership; environmental monitoring and control; and promotion of production activities. Since 2005, there has been a marked decline in deforestation rates (see the following figure).

**BRAZIL: ANNUAL DEFORESTATION RATE IN THE LEGAL AMAZON, 2000-2010**  
(Square kilometres/year)



**Source:** Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais (INPE), "Taxas anuais do desmatamento - 1988 até 2010" [online] [www.obt.inpe.br/prodes/prodes\\_1988\\_2010.htm](http://www.obt.inpe.br/prodes/prodes_1988_2010.htm).

<sup>a</sup> Average, 1977 to 1988.

<sup>b</sup> Average, 1993 to 1994.

<sup>c</sup> Consolidated annual rate.

<sup>d</sup> Estimate.

Some of the key measures have been audits, the dissemination of lists of municipalities where deforestation has reached critical levels and a decree barring public-sector financial institutions from lending to economic agents with activities in deforested areas. Added to this has been growing market pressure to obtain guarantees concerning the legal provenance of products (such as meat) and action by the private sector and civil society (such as a moratorium on buying soy produced in deforested areas). The action plan has been re-evaluated and readjusted periodically in response to lessons learned and changes in deforestation patterns and causal factors. Despite all these efforts, cumulative deforestation in Brazilian Amazonia is substantial, at more than 17% of the original forest area.

**Source:** Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean 20 years on from the Earth Summit: progress, gaps and strategic guidelines (preliminary version)* (LC/L.3346), 2011.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, through the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES), has stressed the need for retooled regional development policies aimed at narrowing gaps between territories by enforcing people's rights in all subnational spaces and promoting sustainable competitiveness based on the region's potential, appropriate distribution of the benefits of economic activity and strategic leadership that is strong technically but also democratic and participatory (Ramírez, Silva and Cuervo, 2009). Among the instruments proposed for implementing such policies are (i) regional sustainable development strategies crafted under democratically elected local leaders with the participation of stakeholders in the region; (ii) funds for redistributing resources among regions; (iii) models for multiple actors to partner in local production activities (referred to as “clusters” in the technical literature; (iv) building infrastructure and establishing channels for physical and virtual connectivity within and among regions and with the rest of the country (or even with the rest of the world); and (v) effective decentralization, i.e., decentralization that empowers local governments and communities and offsets the underlying inequalities among municipalities. There are so many components (production, social and political) and regional policy instruments that the focus is now on families of regional policies rather than a single regional policy (see box XI.5).

Continuing urbanization (despite urban booms sparking calls for action to halt it) and evidence of its benefits, potentialities and gradual moderation indicate that policies aimed at curbing urbanization are debatable not only on technical and rights-based grounds but on practical ones as well because they would almost certainly fail. A key policy implication of advancing urbanization is that social demands and needs will not only concentrate in cities but will also raise their urban profile.

Slowing urban population growth during the 2000s joined in a virtuous combination with greater fiscal resources, a new appreciation of the urban setting and of cities in general and growing political will to take action on urban issues. This was seen in public policies targeting the “urban deficits” that had been accumulating for many decades (owing, among other reasons, to the urban population explosion between the 1940s and 1970s) in spheres such as housing, basic services, mass transit and community facilities. These initiatives have produced results; some of the deficits are receding, albeit at a modest pace and with variations among

countries and at the subnational level. They are starting to incorporate new approaches to recognizing the rights of the population, the social function of urban property, integrated building and operating of a city, environmental sustainability and stewardship, citizen involvement in decision-making (including budgeting) and valuing diversity. A clear expression of this emerging urban policy spirit was The City Statute and the subsequent creation of the Ministry of Cities. Article 2, paragraph I of the Statute provides that the purpose of urban policy shall be as set out in the following paragraph.

**Box XI.5**  
**FOCUSING ON THE FAMILY OF TERRITORIAL POLICIES**

Territorial issues are now so heterogeneous and broad (unlike the strategies deployed in the twentieth century) that discussion centres on a “family of territorial policies” encompassing, “in addition to decentralization/federalism, local development and territorial competitiveness, land-use planning and the regionalization of cross-cutting and sector-based policies (promoting production and business development)” (LPES, 2007, pages 106-107). Although these policies are diverse, they may be grouped according to the common denominator of the challenges they involve: the need to make strides towards greater, more consolidated decentralization that amplifies the positive impacts and seeks to extend them beyond a sector-based, functional perspective in a participatory process that brings all relevant local actors together.

This new concept (families of territorial policies in Latin America) has, moreover, shown that rising regional exports have not necessarily boosted regional development. Hence the need for sound political and institutional coordination between central and regional levels to consolidate and boost the benefits of economic growth on several scales. Such coordination has been enhanced recently by the new strategies for fighting poverty, with national programmes that also have decentralized functions and local programmes with national functions as well. The challenge then becomes how to coordinate different levels of government.

There is, therefore, renewed emphasis on regional development policy design and implementation –undertaken by the State but aimed at goals on several scales– and their coordination with social, decentralization and land-use planning policies.

**Source:** J.C. Ramírez, I. Silva and L.M. Cuervo, “Economía y territorio en América Latina y el Caribe: Desigualdades y políticas”, *Libros de la CEPAL*, No. 99 (LC/G.2385-P), Santiago, Chile, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2009.

The right to sustainable cities is understood as the right to urban land, housing, environmental sanitation, urban infrastructure,

transportation and public services, to work and leisure for current and future generations.<sup>15</sup>

All in all, this experience shows that moving from intent to effective change in how things are done is complicated, especially when there are many interests at stake (see box XI.6).

**Box XI.6**  
**BRAZIL'S CITY STATUTE: CONTRIBUTIONS, LIMITATIONS**  
**AND CHALLENGES**

The City Statute (Law 10.257 enacted by the Federative Republic of Brazil on 10 July 2001) was a ground-breaking legal, institutional, policy and urban planning development in Latin America in the 2000s. It was preceded by a broader social movement culminating in the 1988 constitution. This new magna carta, called the “citizen’s constitution” because of its focus on individual rights, contains a section on urban policy (articles 182 and 183) that gives constitutional ranking to local land-use codes.

The core objective of the City Statute was to lay out general urban policy guidelines and issue regulations fleshing out articles 182 and 183 of the Constitution concerning, broadly speaking, mandatory master plans for cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, the belief that urban property has a social function, and procedures for preventing speculation and promoting access to urban land (Urani, 2010).

Noteworthy among the urban policy guidelines are those providing for democratic management based on public participation, cooperation between Government, private initiative and other sectors to consolidate urbanization, establishing the master plan as the basic tool for urban planning, development and expansion, and planning for metropolitan areas, built-up areas and microregions. In addition to master plans and formal arrangements for community participation, it established mechanisms such as special social interest zones (ZEIS) for regularizing irregular settlements and making it viable to build social-interest housing (VIS) through instruments such as minimum fees for each project (Rodrigues, 2011; Urani, 2010). Other measures and instruments were put in place to prevent real estate speculation and regularize tenure. From an institutional viewpoint, the statute was enhanced by the creation of the Ministry of Cities in 2003 and the validation of “the right to the city” and “the right to housing” as enshrined in the citizens’ constitution.

Despite its formal contributions and concrete achievements, which included widespread use of master plans, spaces and mechanisms for participation, networks of basic services, programmes for situating, regularizing and improving informal settlements and building social-interest housing (Rodrigues, 2011), its material

<sup>15</sup> See [online] [www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/leis/LEIS\\_2001/L10257.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/LEIS_2001/L10257.htm).

## Box XI.6 (concluded)

impact was less than expected and varies depending, inter alia, on the type of city (generally speaking, smaller cities have lagged farther behind in implementing the statute) and will and capacity on the part of governments at the local and state level. Some researchers hold that Brazil's urban development model has not been steered in a fully sustainable and inclusive direction. Criticism concerning this last point includes the persistence of modalities for expanding and building in cities that are short-term, not very transparent, speculative and informal, and emphasis on housing as a commodity instead of on the right to adequate housing. In the words of one of the main proponents of the statute who is now critical of its implementation and results:

“From the viewpoint of territorial management, despite approval, in 2001, of a new regulatory framework –The City Statute– that would, in theory, give municipalities greater power over urbanization, the prevailing forms of regulation —land division and zoning— did not change much, and political consensus as to the social function of tenure did not take shape. The same can be said regarding mechanisms for participating in urban development —even where institutions were set up for this purpose, they did not take hold to the point of reversing the trend in urban development decision-making in the country. It is beyond the scope of this article to analyse the obstacles to implementing this agenda, or its innovations and the resistance they sparked. For the purpose of our hypothesis, instead of the supposed “political will” to implement participatory master plans or strengthen mechanisms for participation, governments clearly lack incentives for doing so since, as we shall see below, decision-making on the future of cities or investing in them is, under Brazil's current federative model and political system, based on another rationale” (Rolnik and Klink, 2011, p. 14). Further along, it reads: “What prevails is the idea that housing is a commodity or even a financial asset in a context in which the most important thing is to mass-produce houses. Obviously, this does not necessarily have any direct relationship with adequate housing” (Rolnik, 2011, p. 41).

**Source:** André Urani, “O papel do setor privado e da sociedade civil nas novas governanças metropolitanas brasileiras”, *Regiões metropolitanas no Brasil. Um paradoxo de desafios e oportunidades*, Fernanda Magalhães (ed.), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), 2010; Fabíola Rodrigues, “Os novos desafios da urbanização brasileira: uma avaliação do direito à cidade na década de 2000”, *RELAP*, year 5, No. 8, January-June 2011; R. Rolnik and Jeroen Klink, “Crescimento econômico e desenvolvimento urbano: por que nossas cidades continuam tão precárias?”, paper presented at the XIV Encuentro nacional de la ANPUR, Rio de Janeiro, 2011 [online] [www.observatoriodasmetropoles.net/download/raquel\\_rolnik.pdf](http://www.observatoriodasmetropoles.net/download/raquel_rolnik.pdf); and R. Rolnik, “Entrevista, Moradia é mais que um objeto físico de quatro paredes”, *Revista electrónica e-metropolis*, No. 5, year 2, June 2011.

When looking at cities (localities with 20,000 or more inhabitants), there are two reasons that make it hard to extract policy conclusions. First, there are more than 2,000 cities (the tables in chapter IX of this report show between 950 and 1,950 cities, approximately, depending on the census round and the indicators used). Second, there are striking differences between cities: some are posting population growth rates in excess of 5% while in others the population is shrinking. This is why studies refer to groups of cities based on the number of inhabitants.

The empirical analysis of the region's system of cities (a system in the most basic sense of the term) leads to three relevant findings for policy purposes.

The first finding, which is a surprising one, is that more than half of the cities show net emigration. This is because small cities (20,000 to 50,000 inhabitants) are migrant senders in the urban system (in their exchange with localities with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants they gain population). This situation is concomitant with living standards (measured with indicators that approximate those used to track the Millennium Development Goals), which are consistently lower in these cities than in larger ones. Such findings would seem to contradict the idealization of the lifestyle and workings of small cities. With the caveat that small cities are a heterogeneous group, it can be concluded that their potential for competing with the rest hinges on policies and programmes geared towards enhancing their infrastructure and basic services, connectivity and functional integration with other cities, and their availability of human and financial resources.

The second finding is that middle-sized cities (roughly, those with 50,000 to less than 1 million inhabitants) do tend to have social indicators that match or better the urban average for the country involved. Moreover, they are a population pull, which is indicative of economic growth and boosts the demographic dividend. That is why this group of cities accounts for a growing share within the system of cities. Once again, any generalization is limited by heterogeneity, but there seem to be solid grounds for regarding this component of the system of cities as being on a functional par with larger ones and even rivaling them in certain spheres. There is considerable policy space for guiding efforts at deconcentration and diversification for governments that are interested in this while encouraging economic growth on a national scale.

Policies for strengthening the network of middle-sized cities should make it a priority to avoid reproducing the complications and problems found in larger cities. Unlike in the past, the main reason will not be rapid population growth. Other factors will be responsible, including lack of planning; technical weaknesses in management; lack of or insufficient public investment; lack of resources because of insufficient central transfers or limited local funding; outmoded or sloppy environmental protection regulations; complications in forging public-private partnerships or attracting private investment; and inability to face the new challenges posed by growing citizen participation. Scenarios with increases in built-up area and population growth are a city-planning must for designing policies and programmes at the local level and for medium- and long-term decision-making. These are familiar exercises for big cities, which have more resources and technical capacity for conducting them. But they are not yet widespread in middle-sized and smaller cities, and they are even harder to implement in the latter for technical and financial reasons. That said, technological advances and the growing availability of information at the local level are making it easier to design such scenarios and thus target public and local investment, lay out central and local transport grids and estimate future demand for private actors (Martine and others, 2008).

The third finding is that the balance of strengths and weaknesses in the big cities of the region is, compared with a few decades ago, promising albeit still challenging and no less uncertain. The demographic dynamic has been a contributing factor because migrants are no longer arriving in big cities in waves. Nevertheless, most of the big cities are still net migrant receivers; this amplifies and extends their demographic dividend and delays the inevitable process of population ageing. Policies and programmes for forcefully addressing urban deficits have been rolled out in big cities, and in some cases there are significant signs of progress.

Of the policy challenges facing metropolitan areas, two stand out. One is the lack of metropolitan governments with political legitimacy that are financially solvent and well-equipped technically and administratively. The intuitive solution for this lack is to have elected metropolitan authorities within the formal power structure of the countries. But there is powerful resistance to such a proposition, warranting alternative approaches and plans for reaching wielders of

formal and technical power that can provide leadership and have the authority for integral city planning as discussed in box XI.7. The second challenge involves addressing deficits where metropolitan interventions tend to falter in the face of structural determinants that should be dealt with by sweeping national policies. One of these is the matter of public safety, rooted in, among other factors, poverty, inequality and mistrust of the institutions charged with this issue. The same is true of traffic congestion, where infrastructure constraints and complex geography and topography work against certain solutions in many big cities while the market pushes and consolidates the automobile culture to the detriment, at least in part, of efforts to improve mass transit and increase ridership. It is also difficult to tackle issues like residential segregation, where the countries of the region have little policy experience and few operative instruments for intervention. But the difficulty of addressing these issues does not make them intractable. By the same token, sharing relevant policy experiences with agencies in other countries —better yet, other Latin American countries (South-South cooperation)— can be very useful even though in the end each country or city will need to tailor interventions to its own circumstances.

ECLAC has made policy recommendations in this regard, leveraging international experience and pioneering initiatives in the region. While aware of the obstacles to taking action on these issues, ECLAC has laid out an array of interventions that include (a) reducing inequality in basic city services, strengthening the finances of poor local governments by means of territorial tax redistribution funds, central government offsets, zoning and special programmes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods; (b) facilitating access to urbanized land on the part of poor people in areas other than their traditional location (periphery, or depressed areas in the city centre or pericentre), using special subsidies, standards for locating social housing and measures to prevent cornering and speculating in scarce land resources; (c) promoting participation by and the formation of groups of poor families in need of housing so they are in a better position to negotiate with housing providers (the State and private actors), especially when it comes to location; (d) act concomitantly on other fronts where segregation is a factor, such as in schools; this involves restoring social diversity in public schools and improving their quality.



**Box XI.7****METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENTS: NEED, CHALLENGES AND OPTIONS**

Metropolitan areas are usually home to a mix of governments of different sorts and jurisdictions. They tend to be made up of several minor political and administrative divisions (typically, municipalities), each with its own local government. The result is layer upon layer of governments with different interests, political orientation, financial resources and environmental conditions. These areas are often part of a major political and administrative division whose government has a broader jurisdiction but not enough authority to run the metropolitan area as a whole. Exceptionally, there may be a consolidated mayor's office or metropolitan government. This group does not include cities that are wholly or partially contained in a special jurisdiction (like the Capital District of Bogotá, which is both the capital of Colombia and the capital of the Department of Cundinamarca). These are run by a kind of metropolitan government.

The uncommonness of metropolitan governments might seem paradoxical in the face of the need for an overarching vision and integral management in any metropolitan area. The literature identifies several factors that contribute to this apparent inconsistency. Among them are reluctance at higher levels of government to transfer competencies and, at lower levels, rejection of new governments as too far removed from the citizens and fear of the power that such a metropolitan government would acquire. A recent study concludes that:

Although good governance of metropolitan areas is crucial for the economy and for the well-being of much of the population, most central and state governments in Latin America are reluctant to set up single- or supra-metropolitan entities. Governments prefer dualistic, voluntary cooperation structures aimed at improving management of the metropolitan area. Ironically, if the need for better governance is rooted in the economic and political importance of metropolitan areas, that very economic and political weight will keep the higher levels of government from setting up single supra-municipal entities (Magalhães, 2010, p.14).

Given this difficulty in installing metropolitan governments per se, there are alternatives that, while they might be inferior in terms of theoretical governance, could perhaps be more viable politically. One involves functional technocratic arrangements for managing sector-based issues with a single jurisdiction and a metropolitan approach. Some examples would be metropolitan transit and utilities authorities. Another example is technocratic bodies charged with the integral running of the city as city managers. But technocracy does not address the main issue of government, which is political and has to do with representativeness and the capacity to negotiate with higher and lower (geographically speaking) elected authorities. Along these lines, a recent study based on comparative analysis holds that:

## Box XI.7 (concluded)

Case studies show that the best medium-and long-term option is to set up functional arrangements for city governance involving all levels of government (local, state and central). This necessitates governance structures that offset the economic, demographic and fiscal dominance of central city councils while maintaining enough influence to ensure participation. Governance arrangements with voting powers based on qualified shares can do this, and they can also be used to create public enterprises, boards or commissions to operate infrastructures and essential services such as water and sanitation, health, education, transport, land-use management, environmental protection and affordable housing. These structures should provide for involvement by all stakeholders in the decision-making process; being sector-based, they should even prevent the concentration of fiscal and decision-making power that is inherent to a single supra-national entity.

Another recent study drawing on experience in six federal countries in America (including Canada and the United States), reaches the following conclusions.

When we started the study we thought that the future lay in acknowledging that a third or fourth level of metropolitan federal government would be the solution providing the planning and vision needed for the integrated, equitable development of large urban hubs spanning several jurisdictions and cities... To a certain extent, we were hostage to one of the views of “metropolitan” that we began to question from the outset, i.e., that metropolitan invariably means more centralized, larger-scale organization built around a hub despite our preference for local over regional. Along the way we began to think that metropolitan governance can (and should) be built from the bottom up and from the inside out instead of being based on an umbrella structure imposed, top down, on an existing political and socioeconomic reality... In short, the cases we have examined suggest that the solution does not lie in waiting for action on the part of federal leadership, constitutional amendments or just expecting that the goal will be achieved without much coordination but rather by supporting or enhancing metropolitan governance based on federations of local entities. This finding is, clearly, not limited to federal arrangements but can also apply to single governments and to areas where there are several levels of state and regional administrative jurisdictions. All of our case studies, except for one country, highlight the role that state governments can and often do play ... We conclude that (i) it is regional governments that provide the best basis for starting to build a metropolitan administration that is capable of efficiently providing urban services, but this is not the only route; (ii) some level of participatory governance structure for metropolitan areas is necessary for designing appropriate policies that will improve the quality of life in an equitable fashion (Wilson, Spink and Ward, 2011, p. 40 and 41).

**Source:** A. Orellana, “La gobernabilidad metropolitana de Santiago: la dispar relación de poder de los municipios”, *Revista Eure*, vol. XXXV, No. 104, April 2009; R. Wilson, P. Spink and P. Ward, “Governança metropolitana nas Américas”, *Cadernos Metrópole*, vol. 13, No. 25, January-June 2011.

Urban environment stewardship and protection policies will be high on the Latin American agenda in the coming decades. Internationally, some of the rural areas of the region are taking a leading role in global ecosystem balance. But in international forums the cities of Latin America are also mentioned as glaring examples of environmental degradation. The evidence set out in the report and in other recent studies substantially tempers this perception: initiatives deployed in recent years have curbed environmental degradation in several cities in the region. The vast network of basic services affords some degree of control over the management of water resources and waste disposal. In any event, there is no question that the cities of the region need stricter environmental protection standards. Waste treatment and recycling is a priority if cities are to be kept from becoming vectors of environmental damage as they transfer waste to other ecosystems. Eco-efficiency should be a guiding principle for city growth and renewal, and it should be promoted by laws and regulations and encouraged by mechanisms such as subsidies, tax benefits and soft loans. But this is not enough. Ultimately, urban production and consumption patterns determine much of the environmental impact of cities, so households and individuals alike should build the idea of sustainability and environmental stewardship into their behaviour. Advocacy, awareness and education are essential for this change in behaviour. Citizen involvement is usually a good tool for monitoring, reporting, tracking and even punishing companies and individuals doing environmental damage. Institutional frameworks play a key role, too, as a source of standards and sanctions as well as initiatives. Promoting environmentally responsible behaviour, penalizing offenders and internalizing the cost of overconsumption is a powerful policy threesome for fostering sustainable urban development in Latin America.

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