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Vancouver.

Xavier Crépin

Vancouver 2006 : moving ideas into action

The third session of World Urban Forum was of special significance because it coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver in 1976, which led to the founding of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

Vancouver 2006 drew some 10,000 participants from over 150 countries. Just as the Habitat I Conference placed local community concerns on the international agenda and highlighted the critical importance of inclusiveness, the Forum in Vancouver, 30 years later, lived up to its promise of moving ideas to action.

This time, it was from Vancouver that a new message resonated : the urban population of developing countries is set to double from 2 to 4 billion in the next 30 years. In the same time span, the developed world's urban population is projected to rise by only 11 percent.

This means that the magnitude of urban population growth confronting developing countries is about ten times that of the developed world. In short, these 2 billion new urban inhabitants will require the equivalent of planning, financing, and servicing facilities for a

new city of 1 million people, every week for the next 30 years.

How we manage this situation is arguably the biggest problem confronting humanity in the 21st century. As more and more governments recognise this, the United Nations needs to galvanise its strength as never before in the quest for sustainable urbanisation.

The work of UN-Habitat, as the UN body responsible for implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Declaration on Cities and other Human Settlements in the New Millennium and the MDG targets 10 and 11, has drawn the agency and its partners in government, regional and local authorities, and civil society increasingly closer to the lives of the urban poor. Those who joined us in Vancouver from nearly every corner of the world are only too aware that we are now living in an urban era, a period in which for the first time, more than half of humanity lives in towns and cities. That is expected to rise to two-thirds in another generation. That is one of the subjects, which the fourth of these forums will discuss in Nanjing, China in 2008. ■

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The future of cities

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The aim of the World Urban Forum (WUF) is to promote discussion between partners from the public, private and non-governmental sectors from all over the world about the management and planning of cities. In Vancouver, the discussions were intended to deal with the sustainability of cities perceived as a complex objective that must mobilize all stakeholders in order to meet the four-fold challenge of achieving economic productivity, social integration, environmental quality and political democracy in urban areas.

The third session of the WUF was held in Vancouver in June 2006, thirty years after the first Habitat Conference of June 1976. The WUF is a United Nations consultative body on urbanization which was set up by UN-Habitat in 2001 by merging the Urban Environment Forum and the International Forum on Urban Poverty. Its first session was held in Nairobi in April 2002 and its second in Barcelona in September 2004.

More than 10,000 participants, including 5,000 non-Canadians, attended the Vancouver Forum. Emerging countries like Mexico, Brazil, China, India and South Africa had a strong presence, as did a large number of less advanced countries. Kenya alone accounted for 156 participants.

The breakdown of the participants reflects the variety and balance of the partners present at the Forum: Governments 15.7%, Local Authorities 15.9%, NGOs 25.2%, the Private Sector 13.4%, Research and Academic Institutes 12.5%. The Forum laid emphasis on the exchange of new ideas through numerous

discussions, round tables and networking sessions. Media coverage was on a large scale (200 journalists attended) and stimulating.

As might have been expected, a consensus again emerged concerning the central importance of good governance in any urban policy. Another consensus was also built, strengthened by the publication of The State of the World Cities Report 2006/2007, on the essential role of cities in socio-economic development as long as the problems of social exclusion and spatial segregation are tackled head-on by national and municipal decision-makers. Nevertheless, there was no shortage of criticism, particularly about the lack of genuine political commitment and the discrepancy between public statements (such as the Millennium Declaration) and concrete action in the field. The failure to take adequate account of urban poverty in national strategies was emphasized by many participants who did not hesitate to question international aid, in particular the Bretton Woods institutions.

The progress made at Vancouver includes the noteworthy commitments of a

certain number of government delegations to providing increased support to civil society organizations and popular districts. Some mayors have also been active in this area. Renewed attention was also given to the issues of financing housing and services, with a systematic emphasis on a better use of local resources. The dialogue on municipal finance recommended innovative approaches, particularly the raising of funds by municipalities on capital markets. However, there was little interest in the improvement of land and property taxation. The repayment of loans could therefore pose a problem in some cities.

It will be regretted that few convincing large-scale slum improvement programmes were presented and that the "cities without slums" objective still seems unattainable, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. However, the issues of forced evictions and the right to housing were tackled, under the impetus of very active NGOs. The French idea of an opposable right to housing seems likely to gain ground in the near future as do the ideas of a partnership between NGOs that represent the

poor and local authorities in the framework of a more "participatory" democracy.

One of the novel features of the third session of the WUF was the rehabilitation of urban planning. Under pressure from planners, spatial and environmental planning seem to be reappearing as the preferred means of slum prevention. It remains to be seen if this approach will be more successful than it was in the 1970s. Conscious of the previous problems, the participants recommended inclusive and participatory planning, but they may have underestimated the issues of property speculation and the fierce competition for access to urban land.

Although Vancouver is perceived as a relatively pleasant city, its mayor emphasized the adverse impacts and costs of urban sprawl and the need to increase the density of the agglomeration. This problem is present throughout North America, where land use laws are known for their laxity.

One aspect of urban planning came up again and again in the discussions, namely the energy consumption of cities amid growing concerns about global warming. Policies that favour public transport were given pride of place, for example that implemented in the city of Bogotá. The practice of conducting local referendums on increasing road taxation of private vehicles was recommended. Fairly theoretical discussions took place about the

potential role of public-private partnerships in providing urban services, including investment. Many participants highlighted the importance of involving communities in the area of water and sanitation, as is already done in many countries. In fact, the key principle remains coordinated action between the four categories of actors: government, municipality, service provider and population. There was nothing radically new concerning this millennium goal (Number 10).

Perhaps the fundamental discussion in Vancouver was about the future of cities. Several UN-Habitat reports clearly show that urban development presents both risks and opportunities. But in many conurbations in the South and the North, the negative aspects, of a social nature (inequalities, poverty and insecurity) and an environmental nature (pollution) outweigh the positive aspects, which are essentially



Daniel Bitau, UN-Habitat

WUF urban forum, Vancouver, 2006.

economic. Some countries manage their urbanization more effectively by implementing the WUF recommendations, i.e. by investing more in infrastructure and urban institutions, by decentralizing responsibilities and supporting social and economic dynamics. The participants at Vancouver

have thus sent out a message of hope, diversity and freedom, but with a high degree of realism.

Although it is impossible to ignore the impact of economic and financial globalization on urban development, the cities of the future will, like those of the

past, be what human societies wish to make of them, providing the setting for solidarity, exchange and innovation or for tension, egoism and waste. The role of the United Nations (and of the WUF) is to analyze these changes and to attempt to influence them. ■

Sustainable cities and urban governance

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The central theme of the forum, "Our future: Sustainable Cities – Moving Ideas into Action" and its sub-themes "Urban Growth and the Environment" "Partnership and Finance, and "Social inclusion and cohesion", have taken the issue of urban governance to the heart of a debate which was dominated by the following topics: the emergence of the private sector in the fight against poverty, the need to strengthen the resources of local authorities and participation as an essential component in urban local governance processes.

The forum first of all provided an opportunity to conduct a fresh survey of the situation as

regards human settlements and poverty in the world. In spite of the resources that have been deployed since

the creation of UN-Habitat, most of the discussions were informed by the inadequacy of the policies that have

been implemented: the living conditions of the most vulnerable social groups have deteriorated, the millennium development goals have not been attained, and both urbanization and the rural exodus are massive and irreversible processes.

Poverty is becoming an increasingly urban phenomenon. Cities are the driving force behind economic development, and major cen-

tres for culture, innovation and wealth creation. When they expend they become dualistic: inequalities and social segregation become more accentuated. Rural poverty and urban poverty have become one and it has become apparent from this forum that rural development on its own can no longer provide a response to the problems of urban development.

While some of the problems that emerged in the course of the forum involve several areas of concern (the issues of gender and public health, the impact of the AIDS epidemic, for example, appear to be particularly acute in the urban context), some of the many topics seem to dominate: the emergence of the private sector in the fight against poverty, the need to strengthen the resources of local authorities and participation as an essential component in local and urban governance processes.

The emergence of the private sector

One thing the forum revealed forcefully is the role of the private sector, acting independently or within public private partnerships, in strategies and programmes in favour of the most disadvantaged social groups, and in development and poverty reduction projects and policies. It has been called upon to play an increasing supporting role with respect to the public authorities.

As habitat policies necessarily involve partnership, this forum witnessed a marked North American action in support of private sector involvement in this area and access to home ownership for the poor as a means of stimulating socioeconomic development at local level. Following the attack by

the American Secretary of State for Housing and Urban Development on the failure of public policy to assist problem districts in the USA, property developers and investors have taken advantage of the operations that were set up and implemented with a market forces approach and guided by the need for a return on investment. In this framework, questions remain concerning the role of resident participation in creating projects, the sharing of financial risks and the final cost of these operations to the beneficiaries.

Discussion also covered private sector involvement in the essential services sector. Examples of “pro-poor” PPPs and “good practice”, particularly for the collection and processing of waste by the residents themselves, illustrated the setting up of informal PPPs that create jobs and resources. Could “pro-poor” activities represent a new economic niche?

Decentralization and the strengthening of powers

The mayors mentioned the essential nature of decentralization with adequate legal, financial and human resources capabilities. The role of local finance in the effective implementation of both decentralization and local governance that aim to achieve the participation of all actors was restated a number of times, and the use of international money markets in order to raise additional resources and achieve a degree of fiscal autonomy was also mentioned; the representatives of the local authorities called for the adoption of guidelines in this area.

Participation

The participation of the inhabitants of informal dis-

tricts and slums in decision-making and the projects that affect them, organized by the public authorities that ensure access to comprehensible information to all, is an essential means of democratic monitoring and a necessary condition for the success of poverty reduction programmes.

Fundamentally, participation is a process of power sharing, and it is an issue of major importance for the poor who demand visibility and the economic potential of the informal sector, secure land rights, a halt to evictions and financial integration. Development players, international organizations and development agencies have now integrated these concerns with an “inclusive” vision of the city and it has become apparent from discussions that slum dwellers are best placed to express their needs and help finding innovative ways of improving their living conditions.

The success of the Vancouver forum has considerably exceeded the expectations of the organizers. It highlights the awareness prompted by the unprecedented scale of urbanization at global level and the increasing importance given to urban issues and concerns by national and local governments and civil society. Without any doubt it has placed the World Urban Forums at the forefront of international events. Anti-urban stances have now become untenable and many donors will certainly need to re-assess and reconsider their priorities.

Strengthening the French presence

French participation in this third urban forum, whether by elected officials, professionals or experts working in the field of international

cooperation and development, was on a very small scale. Their points of view, expertise and experience on issues such as decentralization, the growing power of municipal authorities, the fight against poverty and the funding of local authorities would have made a valuable contribution to many debates.

French development aid, which adopted its governance strategy in December 2006, and which is currently preparing an urban governance strategy, should be better equipped and more mobilized to play a part in the international debate on these issues at the 4th World Urban Forum to be held in Nanjing in 2008. ■

Can the New Urban Planning solve the urban problem in poor countries?

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In June 2006, Vancouver hosted two important events, both related to cities and the urban problem: the World Planners Congress (WPC) and the World Urban Forum (WUF). The planners who attended the WPC asserted forcefully that answers must be local, adapted to the resources of the society and implemented by its own government.

The World Planners Congress, which coincided with the annual meeting of Canadian Urban Planners, brought together a thousand or so planners from forty, predominantly English-speaking, countries. Apart from Canada, the Commonwealth (via the Commonwealth Association of Planners, CAP) and the United States, were particularly well represented. The Congress endorsed the so-called "Vancouver Declaration" which was presented and discussed during the proceedings of the World Urban Forum which took place in Western Canada's major metropolis at the same time. The "Vancouver declaration" is in continuity with the Millennium Goals that were proposed in 2003 at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, in particular as regards the eradication of slums and shanty towns. Under the name of the New Urban Planning, the Declaration proposes to reinvent the practices, methods and practices of urban development professionals in third world cities. The New Urban Planning is based on the following 10 key principles: sustainability, integrated planning, integration

with budgets, planning with partners, subsidiarity, market responsiveness, access to land, appropriate tools, pro-poor and inclusive action, and cultural variation. Observing that, in poor third world countries, slums are growing much faster than districts which comply with western standards (water, sanitation, lighting, roads, facilities, etc.) it proposes to reverse the perspective and start afresh from the "local level".

The "local level" in the cities of the third world, as elsewhere, means the population not only with its economic and financial constraints but also with its human and cultural resources. The "local level" is to be found in the community solidarity which provides a basis for local governance and the vitality of the informal private sector much more than in the recommendations of international donors, "minister's offices" or "foreign consultants". The success of an urban policy in poor third world cities must be assessed on the basis of its ability to foster self-development and economic social and environmental sustainability much more than in the passive and

mechanical use of planning methods and tools that were designed in another context and for different actors.

Massive urbanization is the major phenomenon of the last century. In 1950, 730 million people, less than 30 % of the world's population, lived in cities. There are now 3 billion city dwellers (50 %) and the figure will rise to almost 5 billion in 2030 (60%). These figures make one feel dizzy... especially in the light of the fact that, in 2030, 4 billion city dwellers will be in the least developed regions of the globe. This is a problem facing the whole world with major consequences for the planet's social, economic and environmental equilibrium: what cities should we create and how should we make them grow?

The planners who gathered together in Vancouver in 2006 stated forcefully that responses must be local, matching the resources of the society and implemented by its own governance. The "Vancouver Declaration" invites professionals from all over the world to come together to form a global network and discuss, without preconceptions, their concepts, their prac-

tices and above all the way they apply them in their respective areas. Only intelligent exploitation of local factors will make it possible to achieve the Global Millennium Goals. A meeting was fixed for 2008 in order to draw lessons from the initiative launched in Vancouver, during the next WUF in Nanjing (China) which will coincide with another World Planners Congress.

Between now and then, the "Global Planners Network" (www.globalplanningnetwork.org) will attempt, through regional events and national meetings, to make these ideas known, to mobilize local urban planners and persuade decision-makers. Surveys have been launched in a number of countries to assess the ability of the local professional community to meet the needs of cities. Networking activities have been set up with associations or organizations that were not present in Vancouver. The British Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP) were active in April 2007 in Nairobi during the Annual UN-Habitat Conference. Regional planning workshops were organized in 2006 and 2007 in several African and Caribbean countries. Cliff Hague, the main promoter of the "Vancouver Declaration" and former Chair of the CAP raised the issue of the "reinvention of planning" at the 2007 New Zealand Annual Planning Congress.

French speaking planners (from Europe and Africa) have so far remained aloof from this global professional dynamic. An opportunity to

put this right and widen the circle of participants will be provided by the "Planning Africa Conference" to be held in Johannesburg in

April 2008. Prior to Nanjing, this may be a step towards the international mobilization of planners for more sustainable cities. ■

1 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2004

Visions for the future. One year after the Vancouver World Urban Forum

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*One year after the Vancouver UN Habitat III World Urban Forum (WUF III) and the World Planners' Congress which coincided with it, the debate on the future of cities was revived on the international scene, but to only a minor extent in France. Have we really "missed out on" Vancouver as stated by the Revue Urbanisme last autumn?*¹

The world lives in cities

A meeting organized in Québec in June 2007 a few weeks before the start of the celebration of Québec's 400th anniversary and entitled Visions for the future reminded us that the global cycle of conferences and debate initiated around urban issues during WUF III had been effectively launched. The theme of "sustainable cities" made it necessary to link the issues of urban development with those of the environment. The major cities of North America, and with them powerful groupings of planners, are gradually redrawing the outlines of the urban issue, by connecting the habitat, urban growth and planning.

At the Habitat I Forum in 1976 most of the discussion was between official representatives of the central governments. The urban phenomenon was far from having attained its present-day importance. "Habitat I"

was a platform which served to condemn the negative impact of cities on rural areas, particularly in the countries of the South, and at this Forum cities were still perceived rather as problems to be managed than solutions to the problems of development. While it is true that the informal Jericho Bay forum remained strongly printed in our memories, as Peter Oberlander highlighted in a study of Habitat I, the issues of urban planning and urbanization also remained in the background².

Thirty years on, the situation has changed markedly. Habitat III was no longer a government summit but a genuine forum open to the world which brought together almost 11,000 delegates. The host was not the Canadian Government, but the City of Vancouver whose mayor was present throughout the Forum, especially at the World Mayors' Forum. Last, the world is no longer

rural, but urban. The decisive turning point where more than half the world's population lives in cities can be dated from 2006-2007.³ This is a profound change. In particular, because world urban growth is taking place mainly in medium-sized cities, i.e. those with 500,000 inhabitants, and it is also these which are the most numerous⁴.

Towards a renewal of planning based on habitat issues?

WUF III highlighted three themes. The combination of planning and habitat was present in each of them.

The first theme, "urban growth and the environment", related to the renewal of planning theories and practices at global level, the issues of land regulation and the participation of the population in the definition of urban standards.

The second theme "partnership and finance", dealt with the sources of funding for urban development

and issues linked with partnerships between local authorities and private sector planning actors, major urban services and banking services.

The third theme, "social inclusion and cohesion"⁵ dealt with two issues which are central to UN-Habitat's policy goals, the slum upgrading programme, launched in 2000, and research into affordable housing.

The resulting renewed links between urban development, the habitat and habitat policies, and urban planning are now a focal point for international action in the areas of planning and urban development. We shall now therefore examine some concrete examples of this and also explain who are the principal actors on this new scene.

During the WUF, a large number of workshops were devoted to the management of habitat problems in a context of very high urban growth. The official opening session of the Forum thus showed the virtuous link which exists between the level of urbanization and the improvement of living conditions (Human Development Indicator – HDI).

But informal habitats, that is to say both slums and vulnerable habitats, are paradoxically one of the main forms of contemporary urbanism.

At the same time as the struggle to upgrade informal habitats and improve the living conditions of 100 million inhabitants is one of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the explosion of urban growth is leading to an explosion in the number of people exposed to insecure urban living conditions and habitats. Today the world has an estimated one billion slum dwellers and this figure is expected to reach 1.3 billion by 2020.

In the face of the quantitative scale of the phenomena which have been described until now in essentially qualitative terms, the investigation methods and the proposals for action must necessarily change. Two major tendencies have become apparent. On the one hand, the growing openness of institutional actors to the private sector, both on a global and a local scale. This is illustrated, for example, by the official meeting with actors from the private sector at Vancouver,⁶ or the publication in 2007 by UN-Habitat of a report entitled "Business for sustainable urbanization, challenges and opportunities", which had the following subtitle "making cities better places to live, work and do business".⁷ This new direction is stimulating an unprecedented amount of research and highlighting many concrete initiatives.

In the Philippines for example, one mortgage lender, the Mindanao Land Foundation, has demonstrated the viability of large-scale urban renewal projects using the community mortgage tool.⁸ The implementa-



Ustadja Maimona Bala, president of women sector in Barangay Natutungan facilitates CAP meeting, Philippines

tion of subsidized housing programmes for low income households in Brazil, where more than 80% of the population is now urban, provides another example of committed urban planning policies.⁹

The special responsibility of planners

Habitat challenges are not new. Those present at Habitat II (Istanbul, 1996) were well aware of them, as they put forward the idea of a general "right to adequate housing" and even a "right to the city". These foundations have today revolutionized urban planning methods and theories, as witnessed by the launching of the Vancouver Declaration on the state of cities and the international publication of the position paper Reinventing Planning.¹⁰

Tomorrow, it must be possible for "problem cities" to be able to become "solution cities".¹¹

For this to occur, there must be an encounter between the actors involved in the

habitat and those involved in urban planning. This is already taking place, and illustrates the advent of new possibilities for understanding and action. The work that preceded the organization of the World Urban Forum IV which will take place in Nanjing in China in 2008 confirms this trend. For planners, it represents a new opportunity, a special responsibility and a collective challenge to be taken up in association with central governments, networks of local authorities, international organizations and public and private sector urban actors. ■

1. *Revue Urbanisme*. Septembre-octobre 2006. "Etranges absences françaises". Nicolas Buchoud
2. *Towards sustainable urbanization. Canada/ UN Habitat initiatives 1976-2006*. Peter Oberlander (Dir). 103p. CD ROM. June 2006
3. *There is a very good description of contemporary urban phenomena in the reference document published by UN-Habitat at the WUF III under*

the direction of E.L. Moreno and entitled the State of the World's cities.

4. *See: State of the World's cities.*
5. http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/3039_15851_eng.pdf
6. *Private sector roundtable*
7. *UN-Habitat. Business for sustainable urbanisation*. 2007. p6 www.unhabitat.org
8. *Mindanao Land Foundation. www.minland.ph Mr Dam C. Vertido, President. "The community mortgage program of the Philippines: providing housing credit to communities of poor informal settlers". Vancouver, June 22th, 2006*
9. *Cidades sustentaveis para todos. Implementado a reforma urbana no Brasil. Ministerio das Cidades. Junho 2006 36 p. www.cidades.gov.br*
10. *Réinventer l'urbanisme. Pour une nouvelle gouvernance urbaine. Original document in English Novembre 2006. French translation and adaptation, February 2007. Nicolas Buchoud and Lan-Phuong Phan*
11. *Jean Paul l'Allier. Le défi de l'urbanisme, villes problèmes ou villes-solutions. Session de clôture du colloque Visions d'avenir. Québec, juin 2007.*

News on cooperation

ISTED

ADP Study Day
7 September 2007

MOBILITY AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Mobility is a large concept which takes in all the individual and collective strategies that are employed in order to access opportunities and services. It involves both freedom of choice and competition. It generates trips whose frequencies and lengths vary considerably. It includes local mobility (school and shops), mobility within the city (work and services) and between the city and its hinterland, and long distance mobility (holidays, family visits).

Mobility has a cost, in terms of time and/or money, which are partially exchangeable. Mankind has always tried to limit cost by modifying means of mobility and the organization of activities. The impact of mobility on a city's development relates simultaneously to its economic competitiveness, its social structure and its environment.

The task for professionals goes far beyond the integration of a policy

for the transport sector, within an integrated and sustainable approach to urban development. Each city has its own identity and dynamic. The interaction between appropriate mobility and harmonious urban growth will be central to our discussions.

This study day will take place at the ENPC, 28 Rue des Saints Pères 75007, Paris - France

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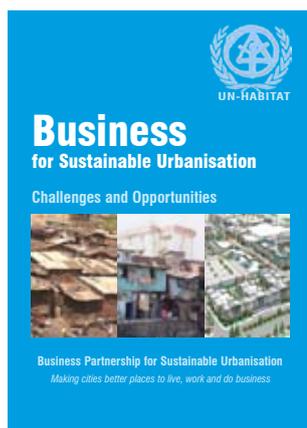
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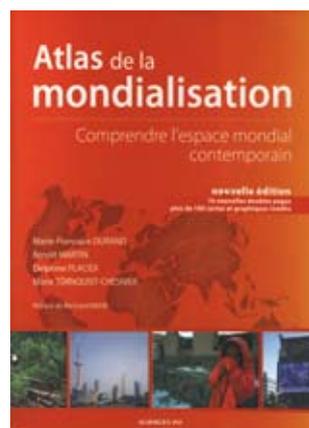
Publications



Business for Sustainable Urbanisation
Challenges and Opportunities
Un-Habitat, 2007

Un-Habitat has embarked on a process of opening to non-state actors including business and civil society. In a world that has become predominantly urban where slums are growing more rapidly than other neighbourhoods, the involvement of the private sector is vital in order to achieve the Millennium Sustainable Development Goals. This publication provides an overview of the challenges, opportunities and best practices to encourage private sector involvement, investment and partnerships in the different urban sectors.

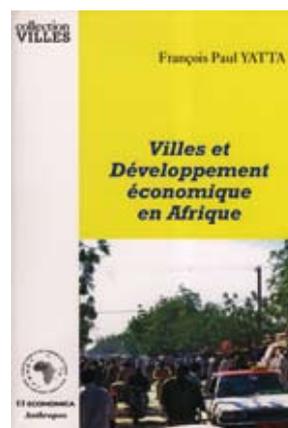
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Atlas of Globalization 2007
*Comprendre l'espace mondial
contemporain*
158 pp. - 23 Euros

After the success of the first edition, the Presses de Sciences Po have published the new edition of the Atlas of Globalization. This is not merely an atlas, more a tool box: created by a cartographer, a geographer and two political scientists, it is the fruit of the work of a team in the context of what is a flagship course at Science Po (Institut d'Études Politiques). The maps and graphics were created by the Sciences Po mapping workshop which has reference status in this field.

www.pressesdesciencespo.fr/livre



**Villes et développement
économique en Afrique**
François Paul YATTA
Ed. Economica, 2006
310 pp. - 29 Euros

This publication presents a survey of theories about the city and its economic role, gives a historical account of urban policies, presents the method for the development of local economic accounts, conducts a detailed analysis of local development issues in Africa and makes proposals for central governments and local authorities.

François Paul Yatta has been regional adviser on "local economics and finance" at the PMD since 1998.

www.economica.fr