

# Regions

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## REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA



- Convergence and regional disparities
- Citizen knowledge in regional policymaking
- A new Chinese economy?

## REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN ARGENTINA: OLD AND EMERGING ISSUES

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### Introduction

Regional disparities may be loosely defined as persistent geographical differences in the distribution of growth and development.

Those disparities may

be expressed in a number of dimensions that involve absolute and relative differences, that is, for example, population distribution and growth but also the per capita distribution of income. Those disparities may be also associated with differences in unemployment and, generally, with access to public goods. Regional disparities are an old feature of Argentina's regional makeup. The most striking trait of those disparities has been, for a long time, not only the demographic and economic weight of Buenos Aires but also the differences between, for example, per capita income in Buenos Aires vis-à-vis other parts of the country.

The overwhelming presence of Buenos Aires in the urban and regional structure of the country was first noted in a systematic manner by Alejandro Bunge, in 1940,

but 18th and 19th century travellers and local essayists had already made plenty of comments about Buenos Aires' importance in the urban structure of this part of South America (Figure 1). Though today the city of Buenos Aires still holds an undisputed prominence in the regional and urban structure of the country, things have changed and are changing.

### Argentina and the constitution of regions

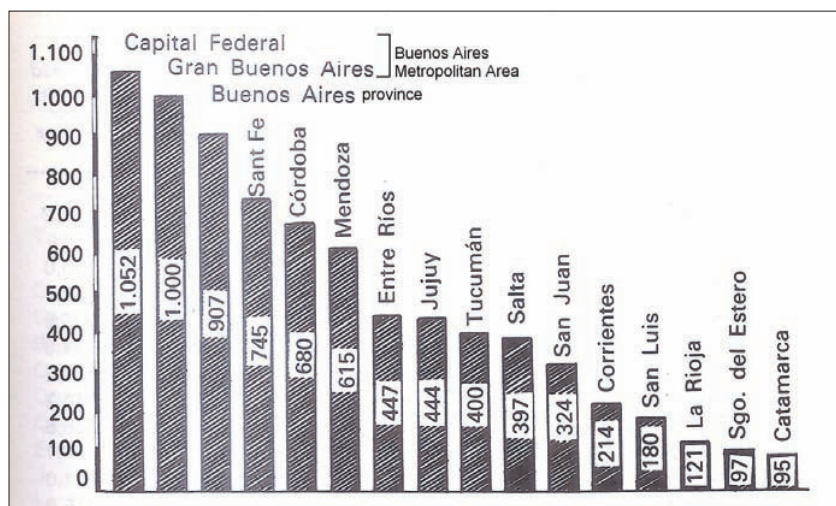
Argentina's continental land mass puts the country in eighth place in the world. From the northern border with Bolivia to the city of Ushuaia in the southern tip of Patagonia, the distance by road is about 4,300 km or the equivalent of London to Ankara, by road, plus 700 kilometers! Argentina is a country of continental size that contains a variety of landscapes and regions. A traditional regional division of Argentina such as that proposed by the National Census Bureau (INDEC) recognizes six regions: Patagonia, Northwest (Noroeste), Northeast (Nordeste), Cuyo, Pampeana, and Metropolitan Buenos Aires (Figure 2).<sup>i</sup>

Figure 2: Argentina. Regions according to the census bureau (INDEC)



Source: <http://geo2010sp.blogspot.com.ar/2010/04/mapa-de-regiones-segun-el-indec.html>

Figure 1: Index of economic potential, by province



Catamarca, Santiago del Estero, La Rioja, Corrientes, Salta, Tucumán and Jujuy are provinces located in the Northwest and Northeast regions. Catamarca's index is ten times smaller than Capital Federal (Buenos Aires city centre).

The index combines information on the value of industrial production, capital invested, value of goods produced (including mining and agricultural products) and number of vehicles registered per jurisdiction. Original figures were converted into individual indexes where Gran Buenos Aires (the suburbs of the city of Buenos Aires) equals 1000

Source: Bunge 1940.

Although huge stretches of Argentina are occupied by flat prairies—the famous *pampas*—a significant part of the nation is rugged. The highest peak in the Americas, the Aconcagua, is located in the Cuyo region, in the Andes, a continental mountain chain that marks the border that Argentina shares with its western neighbour, Chile. In Cuyo and in the Northwest and in most of central and eastern Patagonia, one finds a semiarid landscape dotted with a few oases. In Patagonia, the western valleys are covered with temperate forests.

The Northeast is a land of subtropical forests and large rivers that drain southwards, first into an interior delta and then into the enormous Río de la Plata estuary, which neatly divides the territories of Uruguay and Argentina. In the Northeast one finds the torrential Iguazú falls, which Argentina shares with Brazil, and the Chaco lowlands, a huge savanna shared with Argentina's northern neighbour, Paraguay.

The initial Spanish conquest

(1500's) focused in the north, where most of the aboriginal population concentrated. Yet, already in 1810--the year of independence from Spanish rule--the city of Buenos Aires had acquired a pivotal role in the urban structure of the emerging country. Despite the war of independence and the civil wars that followed it, the city continued to enlarge its economic and political clout. Much of Patagonia and large portions of the Northeast region remained in the hands of aboriginal groups who resisted territorial occupation until the mid-1800's. By 1869, the population of Buenos Aires and its suburbs was 242,215 inhabitants, the equivalent of almost 13% of the national population and over eight times the size of Córdoba, then the second largest city (Gutman and Hardoy, with Caride, 1992).

Already at the time of the Colony, a process of regional economic specialization had emerged. Northern Argentina grew mules used in the Potosí mines (Bolivia). In the Pampas, wild cattle were hunted to make beef jerky for the slaves working in Brazilian plantations. In and around Asunción (today the capital of Paraguay) *mate* tea was grown and consumed in much of today's Southern Cone. Legal and illegal trade fuelled the growth of Buenos Aires.

Yet, the transformation of Argentina from a limited number of mostly sleepy towns loosely commanded by Buenos Aires into a modern country with an enormous railway network, an educated workforce, and solid urban infrastructure had to wait until the end of the 1800's. This transformation began around the 1870's, was very rapid and was regionally uneven.

### The primacy of Buenos Aires

The modernization of Argentina came at the expense of the development of a more balanced regional structure. Thus, ports, railway lines, and the industrial infrastructure needed for the export of meat and grains (wheat) favoured mostly the *Pampeana* region and Buenos Aires and left behind most of the Northeast, the Northwest and Patagonia (Figure 3). In the rest of the 20th century, the North of the country became the poorest region in the country; while much of Patagonia

continued to be a sparsely populated frontier-land.

### Figure 3: Argentina. Main railway lines, 1870, 1914, 1947

Source: <http://campus.almagro.ort.edu.ar/>



[cienciassociales/clases/articulo/391797/el-estado-y-la-economia-el-tendido-de-la-red-ferroviaria-](http://cienciassociales/clases/articulo/391797/el-estado-y-la-economia-el-tendido-de-la-red-ferroviaria-)

At the turn of the 19th century, vertiginous population growth in Buenos Aires and in a number of smaller cities mostly located in the fertile pampas and the needs of an expanding infrastructure to enable exports led to an unintended growth of industries geared to local consumption of basic products but also to an incipient knowledge accumulation in more technically complex industries such as machinery and equipment. Most of that growth took place in and around Buenos Aires and in selected cities of the fluvial eastern side of the country.

Thus, some decades before the end of the 19th century, Argentina joined a small group of countries outside of northern Europe and North America that had started an industrialization process. This process was initially the unexpected by-product of the rapid modernization of the country through

the influx of foreign investments (most of them British) and the arrival of millions of immigrants from southern Europe. Most of those investments helped to integrate the *Pampeana* region while most European immigrants--with a few exceptions such as the province of Mendoza--remained in this region.

By 1914, the emerging metropolitan area of Buenos Aires had 27% of the national population. The relative importance of this metropolis in the urban structure of Argentina continued to grow reaching over 34% in 1960. After the 1930's, the Buenos Aires metropolis and other cities in the eastern side of the country received thousands of migrants from the Northeast and Northwest regions.

Between 1950 and 1960, the relative growth of Buenos Aires stopped. Yet, the Buenos Aires metropolitan area and its surrounding region continued to change. Albeit at a slower pace, in absolute terms, in the subsequent decades, the metropolis continued to grow at the same time that its internal morphology was transformed. The city proper first but then also the first ring of suburbs stagnated in their population growth. Physically, the city expanded outwards absorbing small urban centres in the periphery. Economic activities such as heavy manufacturing tended to deconcentrate moving into locations in the outer suburbs and-- in some cases, and lured by fiscal incentives--into distant provinces, in Patagonia and in the Northwest and Northeast.

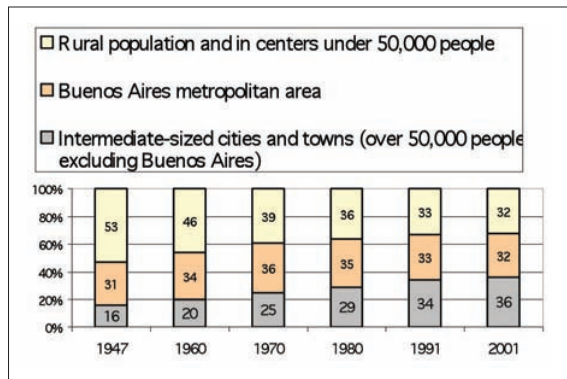
### New trends

Starting in 1950, the most significant emerging feature in the urban and regional structure of Argentina has been the expansion of intermediate-sized cities (Vapñarsky, 1995). Most of these cities are located outside of the *Pampeana* region. Their population growth has taken place at the expense of smaller urban centres and the rural population. In this period, the Buenos Aires metropolitan area continued growing while, at the same time, reduced its relative participation in the total population of the country (Figure 4). The number of intermediate-sized cities went from 15, in 1947, to 63, in 2001; while their weight in the total population increased from 16% to 36%.

Key changes in regional disparities

### Figure 4: Argentina. The growth of intermediate-sized cities, 1947-2001

(Share of Argentina's population, and number of intermediate-sized cities, per year)



#### Number of Intermediate-sized cities, per year

Year	1947	1960	1970	1980	1991	2001
Number of cities	15	23	31	41	54	63

Source: Velazquez, 2006; based in Vapñarsky, 1995 and INDEC (Census Bureau)

include the following. Widespread intra-regional heterogeneity (for example, within the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, income disparities have worsened and the same can be observed in other regions; but there are also signs of wider differences amongst enterprises). We observe a very rapid and continuous growth of many cities in regions beyond the Pampeana region. In particular, in Northern Patagonia, a polycentric urban system is emerging. A number of processes present in many regions (including further mechanization and changes in markets) are accelerating rural depopulation. At the same time, in the periphery of many cities, infrastructure improvements, improved real

banks, training centres, fibre optics).

Some time back, a meticulous observer of Argentina's urban and regional change predicted that a more balanced urban and regional structure with wider economic opportunities for a larger proportion of the population in peripheral regions would be the result of sustained national policies of "crecimiento hacia adentro", inward growth (Vapñarsky, 1995). On a number of occasions in the recent past (and particularly since 2003) the country has taken that road. Yet, regional dynamics and more so regional structures take a long time to change: thus the new is emerging amidst the old.

Endnote

incomes, and lifestyle changes are modifying the nature of rurality (Gorenstein, Landriscini and Hernández, 2012).

In the last 15 years and in the context of a large expansion of the economy (registered employment nationally 50% between 2004 and 2012), new jobs opportunities in new activities (such as mining and tourism, for example) have pushed median incomes in traditionally poor provinces close to the national average (albeit they remain below national averages). The growth of intermediate-sized cities has also meant greater physical accessibility of services in a larger number of urban locations (universities,

<sup>1</sup>A little behind India and after Russia, Canada, China, the United States, Brazil, and Australia. This excludes claims by Argentina on Malvinas/Falkland Islands and on a number of smaller islands (some of which have been recognized by other countries) and on Antarctica.

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## RECONCEPTUALIZED SECURITY: CORE MEXICAN CHALLENGES

Serena Eréndira Serrano Oswald, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico



Reflecting on the challenges posed by inequality and regional inequality in Mexico demands a systemic, multidisciplinary and multilevel approach.

The reconceptualization of security provides a useful starting point. The reconceptualization of security results from the transatlantic security dispute. On the one hand, we find the 'narrow security' standpoint, centred on military and political security, typical of Cold War geopolitics; which has been

re-enforced, once again, following the war on terrorism since 09-11. On the other hand, we find the reconceptualised security outlook typical of the post-Cold War Era of globalization and risk society in the Anthropocene, and embraced by European and Asian countries, putting forward the widening, deepening,

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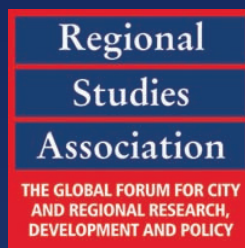
THE VOICE OF THE MEMBERSHIP

This volume of *Regions* celebrates the launch of the Regional Studies Association – Latin America Division last year. In this issue, current regional problems faced by countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are discussed, focusing on barriers to regional integration within and between countries. The articles, edited by Pedro Amaral, present experiences of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico, in addition to a summary of the challenges to regional integration of the region as a whole.

Latin America and the Caribbean as a region is better-integrated and less unequal than it was 20 years ago. However, given its strong reliance on commodities' exports, the recent economic crisis, followed by a significant fall in raw materials' prices may compromise further development in the region. As the articles in this issue seek to demonstrate, the path to resilience and development is based on increased integration, social justice and environmental sustainability.

In our *In Depth*, Paul Benneworth and Willem-Jan Velderman examine citizen engagement in smart city-region strategy development using the case study of waste water injection into depleted gas fields in Twente, the Netherlands.

In the *Research Notes* section, the region of Apulia, Italy is used to examine the potential conflict between the EU Cohesion Policy objective of reducing regional disparities and that of investments in research and innovation to enhance growth. Chiara Pancotti, Emanuela Sirtori and Silvia Vignetti discuss the extent to which this "Innovation Paradox" can be addressed by adopting the "smart specialisation" approach to regional development.



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