An ideology of metropolitanisation?
Gérard-François Dumont

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An ideology of metropolitanisation?

By Gérard-François Dumont

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...have no automatic effect on attractiveness and innovation

However, the objective factors which might be beneficial to the most populated agglomerations do not automatically generate better results in terms of attractiveness and innovation. These also depend on local governance and on a climate more or less favourable to business. Moreover, because of their high density of population and activities, large urban areas also suffer from diseconomies of scale: higher property prices, time lost in transports, etc. The combination of these positive and negative factors plays in favour of some areas and against others, such as Paris, which lost a number of decision centres during these last few years. And it can be observed, in France as in Europe and in the rest of the world, that, far from trying at all costs to settle within a large city, many firms with an international market remain, or chose to locate, in a medium-sized town, even sometimes in a small one.

As for innovation, even if it is true that synergies linked to the proximity between universities, firms and research centres are of interest, they are in no way exclusive. It is entrepreneurial drive rather than localisation in a big city that nurtures innovation, which explains the many innovative products developed outside metropolitan areas.

A country must add value to all its territories. It is a delusion to believe, as the French Parliament seems to do, that in order to make some territories more dynamic it is enough to call them “metropolises” and to redistribute a few competences between territorial collectivities, while effecting a recentralisation. As the size of a territory is in no way an indispensable factor of attractiveness and innovation, it would make more sense to develop the conditions that give access to better territorial governance everywhere.

(Translation: Sylvie Vanston)

7. The status of a metropolis as a public organisation of inter-communal cooperation was created by law on 16 December 2010, and then enlarged on 27 January 2014 with the law of modernisation of territorial public action and affirmation of metropolises (MAPAM).