

“Make No Little Plans”

One century ago, Daniel Burnham, the man responsible for the modern plan of Chicago, offered a type of policy recommendation that is all too rare today:

“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and our grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty.”

Rapid development requires successful urbanization. Successful urbanization requires a government plan. Urban plans vary on two very different dimensions: complexity and scale. Plans that are not very complex can be very valuable. The many plans that are far too small to meet the demand for urban area are worthless, even harmful. Rapid development requires urban plans that are simple enough to be big. We know what make big simple plans. When a nation implements one, the net cost is small. No lack of knowledge, nor any fiscal constraint, prevents successful urbanization.

If governments in the developing world followed this advice and used the cities that it would make possible to attract the jobs that foreign multinationals can provide, they would be more likely to achieve rapid economic growth.

Paul Romer has pioneered endogenous growth theory. The former Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank is currently Professor of Economics at the Stern School of Business at New York University. His recent work includes the Concept of Charter Cities, and “Mathiness”, a Critique of the Use and Misuse of Mathematics in Economics.

Public Lecture
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Department of Economics
Spandauer Strasse 1, 10178 Berlin
Room 202

There will be a reception afterwards.

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung





Public Lecture
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Paul Romer (NYU)

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