In March 1957, in the Treaty of Rome, Members-States acknowledged the necessity to "ensure an harmonious development within the EEC, by reducing development gaps between regions, as well as the relative backwardness of the less favoured ones" (EEC Treaty Preamble 1957). These gaps actually narrowed until the 1970's, in the context of steady growth, but subsequently tended to widen again afterwards, when West European countries faced a manifold crisis, the major consequence of which was the rise of mass unemployment. On the regional and industrial sides, this period was one of decline for the old industrial core of western Europe, but witnessed the rise of some former peripheral regions - e.g. central Italy, or Bavaria - whose dynamics are based on high-technology products, services and/or short-line products (Benko 1990).

The lack of traditional theories concerning the nature and origin of the crisis gave long cycle theories (such as Kondratieff's, and the Schumpeterian theory of creative destruction) a second birth. For other authors, including those of the regulation approach, the crisis is a period of transition between the Fordist and the post-Fordist accumulation regimes (Boyer, Durand 1993), or the end of a major cycle that began with the Industrial Revolution, the shift from a development model based on primary products and energy to a new one, based on services and information (Passet 1979; Giarini, Stahel 1989). Innovation capacity and information-related services become central factors of regional economic dynamics in changing environment, hit by the globalization process.

This is a period of rupture that deeply changes the nature of regional development in Western Europe and leads to an increasing gap between declining regions and dynamic ones. Former socialist countries were long kept apart from these processes, since they obeyed a "zone-autarchy" rule; regional development policies were also determined in the first place by political and strategic factors, linked to the importance of the military-industrial complex, removed from any economic considerations. Socialist combines were structured in networks, according to the various objectives of the State-Party. The situation dramatically changed after the opening of the political and economic system and the
implementation of the economic transformation process; violent supply and demand shocks were followed by strong differentiations within each national economic space, including at a regional level.³

The various regions of post-socialist countries, dotted with specific productive structures, are hence subject to the same moves as Western European countries, as well as to specific ones; transition is in fact double. In this paper, we will insist on the importance of regional aspects for the understanding of transformation/development processes. In the first part, the analysis model will be defined, that is to say, the socio-economics of development; we will then focus on urban polarization and questions of urban dynamics; in the third part, territorial dynamics will be studied closer.

Opening, Transition & Development in Post-Socialist Economies

The theoretical background which was chosen for this paper has been developed by Samson et alii (1995) and is based on an empirical observation that economic transformation within post-socialist countries cannot be fully understood by traditional economic – more precisely macro-economic – tools. Economic transformation is a “non-system”, where parts of several economic systems coexist, it is a process, for which the point of origin is known, but the arrival point not. The interest of socio-economics of development, defined by Perroux (1966) or Hirschmann (1958), is double-fold: it is adapted to complex processes and insists on some similarities between developing and transitional economies, such as opening shocks, or the coexistence of different elements of economic systems.

However, transitional economies are not developing economies: demographic regime, level of infrastructure, or of human resource education, degree of industrialization locate them as developed countries with an intermediate level of income. The contribution of socio-economics of development is hence mainly methodological, since this stream focuses on domination-dependency phenomenons, on de-articulation and re-articulation processes within heterogeneous and polarized spaces. It leads to a meso-economic approach, where sectoral and regional approaches prevail.

We can consider five different movements within the economic transformation process of post-socialist economies:

1) a shift from a command to a market economy;
2) from a closed to an open economy, involved in international economic relations;
3) from an over-industrialized to a service economy;
4) from a “poor” to a “rich” economy, where household consumption is determinant for growth;