

# The pattern of urbanization in Western Europe

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## Introduction

In 1989 the Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG XVI) of the European Commission launched a series of research projects to provide resource information for a Community document which aims at highlighting the trends and processes that are likely to shape the use of territory and regional policy within the Community at the beginning of the next century — "Europe 2000." One of these studies, titled *Urbanisation and the Function of Cities in the European Community*, was commissioned to an international consortium of research institutions led by the Centre for Urban Studies of the University of Liverpool.

This paper reports the results of a subtask of this study. It presents major trends and changes in the urban system in Europe over the last thirty years (1960-1990). It examines the present state of urbanization and considers the cycles and dynamics of urban development, urban growth and urban decline and describes current and future issues of urban development in the twelve countries of the European Community, including the united Germany, and in Austria and Switzerland. Its findings and conclusions, however, are generally valid for the whole of Europe.

The paper argues that the large cities and the many small towns of Europe play a vital role for the economic and social development of Europe as a whole. It highlights imbalances in the urban system in Europe which threaten to increase in the future. These imbalances, although rooted in the history of the countries of Europe, result from the growing internationalization of the economy. They will be further accelerated by the forthcoming Single European Market.

A number of urban issues which are raised in this paper require attention and continuous and careful monitoring and cushioning intervention at the national, regional and local levels of policy making and, within the constraints given by the subsidiarity principle, also at the Community level.

## Background trends 1960-1990 and beyond

Throughout human history cities have been pacemakers of change. History's great cultural achievements, technological innovations and political movements originated in cities. Cities are the incubators of new economic activities and life styles. Yet at the same time cities are also themselves subject to the secular and global trends they help to generate. The patterns of urbanization in Europe therefore cannot be understood without taking account of the dominant background trends (table 1) in fields such as population, migration, life styles, the economy, transport and communications, and environment and resources (see MASSER et al., forthcoming).

In summary, the future of the urban system in Europe will be co-determined by a multitude of powerful and partly contradictory trends. Given the stability of political structures and behavioral patterns but also the growing awareness for the need to protect the environment, it is useful to take account of these trends as a possible framework of urban development in Europe in the 1990s and beyond.

## Patterns of urbanization 1960-1990

The present urban system of Europe is the evolutionary outcome of more than two millennia of activities of people living in or migrating to Europe. They founded, built and expanded human settlements at suitable locations and made them into cities, centers of culture, trade and industry. Cities flourished because of their natural resources or agricultural hinterlands, the skills of their citizens or their strategic trade location or because they became political or ecclesiastical centers of power, information and communication.

**Table 1**  
**Europe — Background trends of urbanization and corresponding implications for cities, 1960-1990**

Field	Background trends	Implications for cities
Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Decline of birth rates</li> <li>— Ageing of the population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Unbalanced demand for public infrastructure</li> <li>— High demand for health and social services</li> <li>— Urban decline in the North and North-West</li> </ul>
Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Continuing rural-to-urban migration in peripheral countries</li> <li>— International migration South-North and East-West growing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Housing and employment problems in target and gateway cities in prosperous regions</li> </ul>
Households/Life styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Decreasing household size</li> <li>— Higher labor force participation of women</li> <li>— Reduction of work hours</li> <li>— New life styles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— New social networks, neighborhood relations, locations and mobility patterns</li> <li>— Need for new services and new housing, land and transport policies</li> </ul>
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Reorganization of production and distribution</li> <li>— Polarization of firm size</li> <li>— Liberalization, deregulation, privatization</li> <li>— Internationalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Increased competition between cities</li> <li>— Innovation-oriented local economic policy</li> <li>— Technology centers and parks</li> <li>— However, also intra- and inter-regional disparities, social tension and eroded public services</li> </ul>
Transport/Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Technological change stimulates personal mobility and goods movement</li> <li>— Road transport dominant</li> <li>— Growth of high speed rail, air transport, telecommunications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Dispersed urban development is further stimulated</li> <li>— Efficient public transport in small and medium-sized cities difficult</li> <li>— Polarization between European core and periphery continues</li> </ul>
Environment/Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Transport and industry-generated pollution, energy conservation, urban sprawl important</li> <li>— Industrial pollution in South European countries and East Germany urgent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Cities in all European countries are affected</li> <li>— Car restraint, antipollution, energy conservation, land use control policies are required</li> </ul>

### Urban Europe in a global perspective

According to UN estimates, towards the end of this century 50 percent of the world population and 80 percent of the population in industrialized countries will live in urban agglomerations. However, in the year 2000 only three of the 20 largest cities will be in industrialized countries and *none of them in Europe*. It is useful to be aware that compared with urban systems in other continents and nations the urban system in Europe is relatively balanced, and compared with the average African, Asian, or South American city even the most serious problems of the cities in the Community appear light. Worsening living conditions in Third World cities may encourage or even force people to migrate to the gateway cities of the continent. Consequently it is crucial for the future of the cities in Western Europe that the living conditions in the cities of the Third World are improved.

### European level

The state of the urban system in Europe in 1960 reflected the historical processes which had transformed Europe into its cultural, economic, physical and political shape. Overall, the urban system has not changed very much since then. However, during the last three decades — a relatively short time in the history of Europe — technological and political innovations have facilitated and accelerated the internationalization of regional economies in Europe. This in turn has strengthened or weakened the role and function of cities in Europe as well as in their national or regional contexts, depending upon a variety of factors.

### The urbanization process

After the decline of the cities of the Mediterranean in the wake

of the fall of the Roman Empire, the urban system of Europe re-emerged in the 10th century. From then on until modern times it remained relatively stable. Growth of cities was slow and, apart from devastations by wars, epidemic diseases or natural disasters, so was urban decline, e.g. when trade routes changed such as in the case of Venice, the port cities of Flanders or the Hanseatic League. However, starting in the second half of the 18th century, an unprecedented wave of urban growth swept over the continent.

**The economic transition:** This primary phase of urbanization first took place in the industrial cities of the British North-West in the second half of the 18th century, and during the following one hundred years spread to the continent, first to the countries of North-West Europe, to the Netherlands, to Belgium, North-West France and to Germany. It took well into this century before massive industrialization started in Northern Italy and, after World War II, in Southern Germany and Southern France. Large regions in the Mediterranean countries of the Community are only now passing through this primary phase of the economic transition.

**The demographic transition:** Growing affluence and advances in medicine and hygiene in the early 19th century reduced mortality, in particular infant mortality with the effect that population growth accelerated and more people moved into the cities to find jobs in the growing industry. The sequence of declining mortality and subsequent declining fertility, the demographic transition, ended the period of urban growth, and where there was no international immigration, cities started to decline in population.

**The urban transition:** The wave-like diffusion of the economic and demographic transitions from the North-West of Europe to its South-West, South and South-East helps to explain the different phases of urbanization co-existing in Europe at one particular point in time. In the North-West, where both the economic and demographic transition have almost been completed, deindustrialization and deurbanization is found, except where the next phase of the economic transition, the shift from manufacturing to services, has already been achieved. In the regions of the third wave of industrialization, the South-East of England, the South of Germany, the North of Italy and Southern France, the post-industrial city is emerging. At the same time in parts of Spain, Portugal, Southern Italy and Greece some cities still replicate the growth period of early industrialization and urbanization (cf. HALL and HAY, 1980; van den BERG et al., 1982; and CHESHIRE and HAY, 1989).

**Urbanization levels**

By 1965, only Greece, Ireland and Portugal had a level of urbanization below 60 percent. Belgium and the United Kingdom had the highest level at 93 and 87 percent. By 1988, Greece had exceeded the 60 percent mark with Ireland just behind at 58 percent. The most significant rate of growth of the urban population between 1980 and 1988 was observed in Portugal, Spain and Greece (fig. 1).

**City sizes**

In the mid-1980s, 90 cities in the European Community had a population of more than 250,000. However, eight out of ten Europeans live in smaller communities (fig. 2). During the last three decades cities in Europe have continuously grown beyond their administrative boundaries. Thus it has become more difficult to define the actual boundary between city and countryside. Efforts to capture the sphere of influence of an urban economy by the concept of *functional urban region* give a different picture of the urban system: four out of ten Europeans live in urban agglomerations; if major metropolitan areas with a population of 330,000 are taken into account, every second. What general urbanization figures do not show is the degree of balance of the urban system. In 1960, for example, in Austria, Greece and Ireland more than half of the urban population lived in the largest city, i.e. in Vienna, Athens or Dublin, whereas in the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Germany and Spain the primacy rate is below 20 percent. There is a trend away from the large cities except in the former GDR, Greece, Italy and Spain where the capital city has continued to increase its dominance. A similar picture emerges if all cities with a population of over 500,000 are taken into account.

**City hierarchies**

At present the actual hierarchy of cities in Western Europe is as follows (fig. 3):

- There are Paris and London, undoubtedly the only two global cities of Western Europe at the top of the hierarchy.
- They are followed by conurbations such as Rhein-Main (Frankfurt), Copenhagen/Malmö, Manchester/Leeds/ Liverpool, the Randstad (Amsterdam/Rotterdam), the Ruhrgebiet (Dortmund/Essen/Duisburg) and Rhein (Bonn/Cologne/Düsseldorf). Of similar importance on the European scale are a number of larger European cities (Euro-Metropolises) such as Athens, Brussels, Birmingham, Vienna, Lyon, Milan, Rome, Madrid, Barcelona, Hamburg, Munich

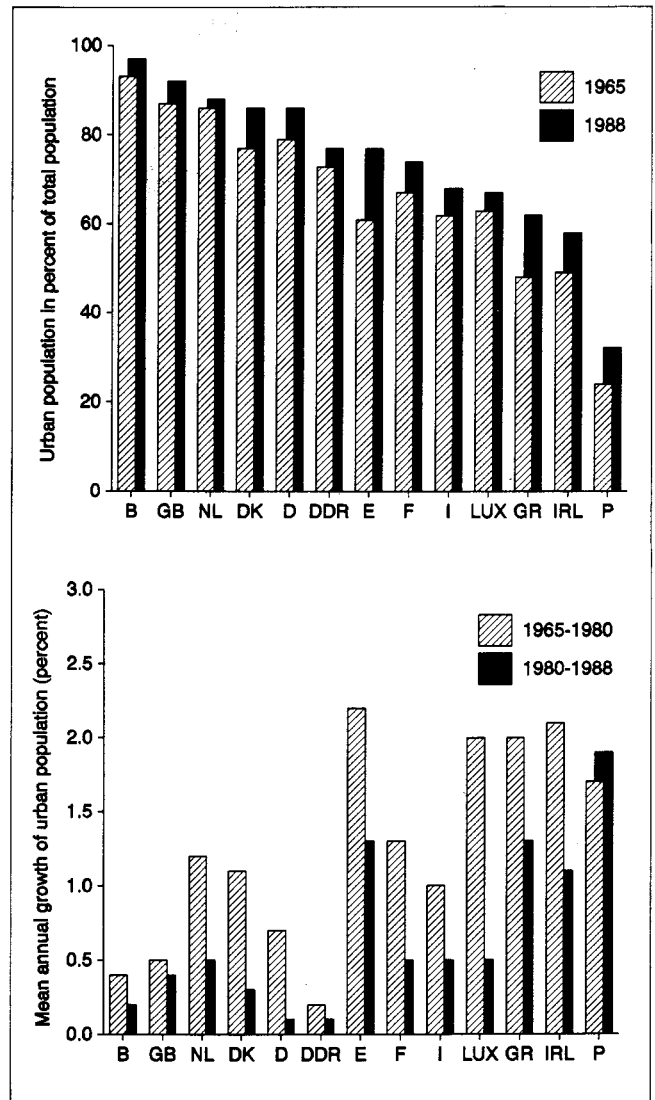


Fig. 1: Europe — Degree of urbanization (top) and urban growth (bottom), 1965-1988. (Sources: World Bank, 1990; United Nations, 1987; Statistisches Bundesamt, 1990).

and Zürich. These cities perform essential economic, financial or political and cultural functions for Europe as a whole. After the re-unification of Germany, Berlin too will

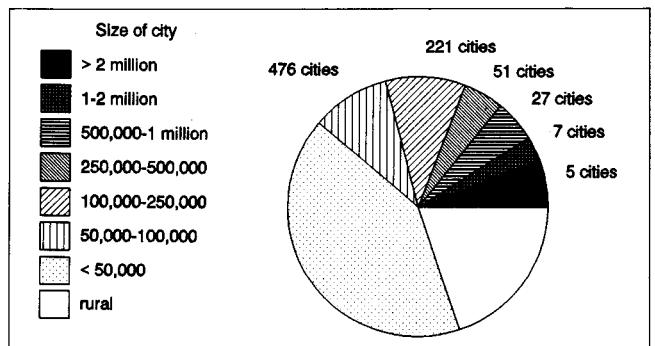


Fig. 2: Urban population in the EC by city size in the 1980s. (Sources: Census data; Statistisches Bundesamt, 1988).

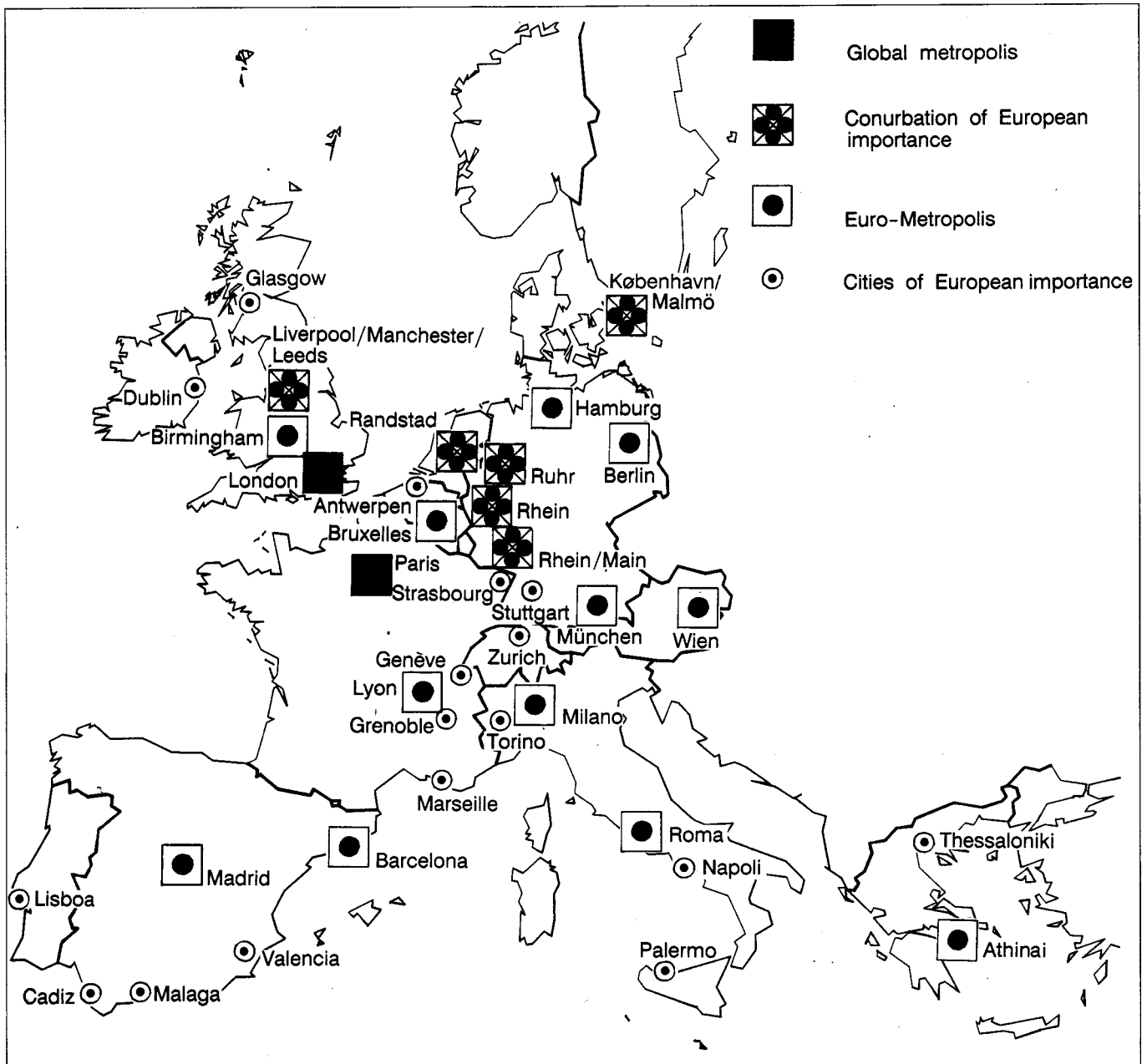


Fig. 3: The urban system in Western Europe. (Source: IRPUD, 1990).

undoubtedly become again a city of major European importance and, in the long run, may even become a candidate for a global city.

- A third category are national capitals and other cities of European importance such as Dublin, Glasgow, Lisbon, Strasbourg, Stuttgart, Palermo, Turin, and Naples. These cities are completing the network of cities of European importance although their function is mainly a national one.

- Below this level, and depending on national definitions of central places which exist in a few European states (e.g. Denmark, Netherlands, Austria or Germany), various levels of lower urban hierarchies follow.

#### Urban decline and urban growth

In recent years cities in North-West and Central Europe have lost population through out-migration either because as a consequence of economic decline no jobs were available or,

in the case of economic success, because households were driven out of the city by more profitable land uses. Most cities in Southern Europe, on the other hand, have continued to grow. There the informal labor market has absorbed the migrants still arriving from the countryside. However, several large cities have not followed this simple pattern. London has lost population, while Paris has shown moderate growth. Düsseldorf, Copenhagen and Frankfurt have declined, whereas Munich and Bonn have gained.

#### Recent spatial trends

The development of the urban system in Europe during the last three decades has been determined by the simultaneous existence of cities in different phases of the urbanization process. Under the influence of the demographic, economic and technological trends summarized in table 1, this has resulted in three distinct spatial trends: the growing disparity between

cities in the core and at the periphery of Europe, the divergence between the North and South of Europe and an emerging East-West divide.

● **Core vs. periphery in Europe:** The rapidly growing internationalization of regional and national economies has tended to favor cities in the European core (Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Central and Northern France, South-East England) over those at the periphery (Scotland, Ireland, Greece, Portugal). Cities in the core of Europe have comparative advantages in terms of accessibility, available services and diversity of communication and culture.

● **North vs. South in Europe:** There is a clear divide between the "North" and the "South" of Europe. Population growth in the cities and urban regions of the affluent North — which also includes parts of Central Europe (Germany, Austria and Switzerland) — has virtually come to a halt, whereas the cities in the South continue to grow as they are still in an earlier phase of industrialization and urbanization.

● **West vs. East in Europe:** The unexpected opening of Eastern Europe has recalled an old spatial dichotomy, the East-West divide. It may well supersede the North-South divide and become the dominant political issue of the next decades. Some German cities (Berlin, Hamburg, Hanover) will benefit from the new geopolitical situation but also cities in Denmark, Austria and North Italy. In a few years from now the future development of Berlin may make a reassessment of spatial trends in Europe necessary.

There is little evidence that urban polarization between center and periphery, North and South, and East and West in Europe can be easily reduced. In the past, regional policy efforts at the European and national level to narrow the gap between center and periphery, between North and South have only partially been successful (e.g. in Spain), although by creating jobs, providing public services and improving living conditions in assisted areas they have contributed much to stop the further widening of regional disparities.

### City networks

Alarmed by increasing world competition more and more cities in Europe respond to initiatives of forming transnational urban networks. Through networking, cities are able to establish beneficial connections, improve flows of information, develop best practice, pool financial resources and share development costs of innovative projects. Whereas traditional city networks have operated on a national basis only (as the influential *Deutscher Städtetag* in Germany), or with very general objectives (such as the Union of Local Authorities in the UK, the Union of Capitals of the European Community or the Council of Local Authorities and Regions in Europe), the emerging new transnational urban networks (such as the Eurocities Group, POLIS, the Automobile Cities Group or the *Commission des Villes* or the recently established Network of Small and Medium-sized cities) are more action-oriented. The European Commission assists such networks by supporting their efforts of communication and mutual information, of identifying and realizing joint projects and of transferring knowledge and experience among each other.

### National regional level

The pattern of urbanization in Western Europe differs from country to country. Some distinct features of the urban system in Europe in 1990 after more than three decades of economic growth and political continuity are sketched and illustrated below.

● **National urbanization patterns:** As on the European level, both a core periphery and a North-South dichotomy exist in many of the countries of the Community, albeit sometimes under a different perspective:

● **Center vs. periphery in individual countries:** In five of the countries under review (France, United Kingdom, Ireland, Greece and Austria) one large metropolis dominates the national urban system. The historical centralization of power in Paris is well known, but London, Dublin, Athens and Vienna exert a similar dominance. The dominance of the metropolis has also shaped the transport network which links the whole country to the banks, public and private institutions of national importance and to the court or central government, but tends to neglect links between other cities and regions across the country.

● **South vs. North in individual countries:** In contrast to the divergence between the industrial North and the developing South of Europe, in a number of European countries a divide between the prosperous South and the declining North became a national issue during the last decade. The term "South-North" divide indicates uneven economic development and growing spatial regional disparities within a country. Recent developments such as growing agglomeration dis-economies in the "South" and first signs of successful restructuring in the "North" seem to have stopped the deepening of the gap between South and North, at least in Britain, France and Germany. The "success stories" of Leeds, Lille, Dortmund and Glasgow have improved some of the previously negative images of "Northern" cities. Whether their economic success is sustainable and can be replicated in other smaller and less favored cities remains to be seen.

● **Functions of cities:** Cities perform a multitude of service and industrial or political and cultural functions. Cities internationally known as financial or cultural cities may in general still have a considerable number of industrial jobs. And most industrial or port cities also have regional and national service functions. Therefore any functional categorization of cities in Europe can only be an effort to describe the *dominant* function of cities in the European urban system (table 2). On the other hand, there is a new trend that requires careful monitoring: there is growing evidence that certain modern industries prefer certain types of cities.

● **Intra-regional/Urban level:** The polarization and spatial restructuring has affected not only whole urban regions, but also the relationship between cities and their hinterlands and the spatial organization of human activities *within* urban regions:

● **Urbanization, suburbanization and deurbanization:** The urbanization process is a sequence of phases: in the *urbanization* phase urban growth occurs predominantly in the core. In Central Europe this is the pre-war city. The reconstruction period after the war more or less replicated the pre-war pattern. Urbanization still continues in Southern and Eastern Europe. In the *suburbanization* phase the suburbs grow faster than the core. Residential development in the core declines for lack of space, jobs are still in the center but gradually follow people. In the *deurbanization* phase development further shifts to the urban periphery and beyond to the small and medium-sized towns at the less urbanized fringe. The core city loses more people and jobs than the suburbs gain, i.e. the total urban region declines. Counter- or deurbanization tendencies can be found primarily in the highly urbanized countries in North-West and Central Europe including Northern Italy, whereas in the Mediterranean basin the urbanization phase is still sustained by higher birth rates and rural-to-urban migration. Deurbanization must not be confused with lack of success as some of the most successful cities in Europe, e.g.

**Table 2**  
**Europe — Functional types of cities**

City type	Characteristics	Examples
Global cities	Accumulation of financial, economic, political and cultural headquarters of global importance	London, Paris
Growing high-tech/services cities	Modern industrial base, national center of R&D, production-oriented services of international importance	Bristol, Reading, Munich
Declining industrial cities	Traditional (monostructured) industrial base, obsolete physical infrastructure, structural employment.	Metz, Oberhausen, Mons, Sheffield
Port cities	Declining shipbuilding and ship repair industries, environmental legacies (e.g. in oil ports), in the South burdened by additional gateway functions	Liverpool, Genoa, Marseilles, Antwerp
Growing cities without modern industrialization	Large informal economy and marginalized underclass, uncontrolled development and deteriorating environment	Palermo, Thessaloniki, Naples
Company towns	Local economy depending to high degree on single corporation	Leverkusen, Eindhoven
New towns	New self-contained cities with overspill population in the hinterland of large urban agglomerations	Milton Keynes, Runcorn, Evry
Monofunctional satellites	New urban schemes within large agglomerations with focus on one function only (e.g. technopoles, airport cities)	Sophia Antipolis, Roissy, Euro-Disneyland
Small towns, rural centers, rural belts	Smaller cities and semi-urbanized areas in rural regions, along coasts or transport corridors with weak economic potential	All over Europe
Tourism and culture cities	Local economic base depending on international tourism and cultural events of European importance	Salzburg, Venice, Avignon
Border and gateway cities	Hinterland divided by national border; gateways for economic migrants and political refugees	Aachen, Thessaloniki, Basel

Amsterdam, Lyon and Milan are in the phase of deurbanization. Obviously cities in countries with declining overall population are more liable to become deurbanizing.

• **Reurbanization:** The results of the deconcentration process are both positive and negative. Certainly suburban living represents the preferences of large parts of the population. However, the consequences of urban dispersal are less desirable: longer work and shopping trips, high energy consumption, pollution and accidents, excessive land consumption and problems of public transport provision in low density areas. This makes access to car travel a prerequisite for taking advantage of employment and service opportunities and thus contributes to social segregation. Moreover, the counterpart of suburbanization is inner city decline. All over Europe therefore cities have undertaken efforts to revitalize their inner cities through restoration programs, pedestrianization schemes or new public transport systems. In some cases these efforts have been remarkably successful. Besides cities in the Netherlands, Germany and Scandinavia, Italian cities such as Bologna and Florence are examples of this trend. Recent figures indicate that the exodus from the inner city may have passed its peak and that there may be a reurbanization phase, which is, however, more a qualitative phenomenon.

• **Inter-regional disparities:** Under market conditions both suburbanization and reurbanization aggravate existing social differences within urban regions. In the global cities London and Paris, but also in cities like Brussels, Frankfurt, Munich and Milan, this process has led to massive real estate spec-

ulation and exorbitant increases of land prices and building rents which threaten to make the central areas of these cities unaffordable as places to live for the vast majority of the population. There is a real danger that this will be the dominant pattern of urban development for big cities in Europe in the 1990s.

The description of the pattern of urbanization in Western Europe during the last three decades has shown a great diversity of developments of cities in different national and regional contexts. Yet on the basis of long-term social and economic trends, a few cautious predictions about the future of the urban system in Europe in the next decade can be made.

The growing division of labor in the West European economy is paralleled by a growing division of labor between cities and regions. This results in two powerful trends which currently dominate the development of the urban system in Europe.

- **Spatial polarization:** The internationalization and integration of the European economy, the emerging high speed transport infrastructure and the ongoing transformation of economic activities through technological shifts in the production and distribution systems increase the relative advantage of cities in the European core over cities at the European periphery.
- **Functional specialization:** More and more cities in Europe have become specialized centers for particular industries, be it for special types of manufacturing (e.g. car production, mechanical engineering), for specialized services (e.g. financing) or for industries that comprise both produc-

tion and services (e.g. cultural industries) or which are linked to historical endogenous potentials (e.g. tourism). With growing specialization, the city develops a unique "label" or image and this helps to attract further specialized economic activities and skilled labor force, which in turn stimulates the expansion of the particular specialized functions.

## Cities in Europe in the 1990s

The last decade of the 20th century will not stop these two dominant trends. On the European as well as the national level, the few prosperous, successful cities will continue to flourish economically while the large number of small and medium-sized cities will struggle to attract more public and private capital and investment for promoting their economic development. Assuming that the Single European Market will be fully completed by the end of 1992 and that no energy or environmental crisis, no war and no major political disturbances will occur, the present urban pattern in Europe will not fundamentally change but will become even more pronounced under the influence of the two trends. Table 3 summarizes the most likely consequences of this development and the key issues arising from them.

### European level

During the forthcoming decade the urban system in Europe will continue to be affected by technological and structural economic change, which is likely to be reinforced and accelerated by the Single European Market. In particular the new advanced long-distance transport networks for moving people and goods across Europe will have considerable impacts on the urban system in Europe. Also the repercussions of the recent geopolitical changes on the continent will substantially alter the sociopolitical context of regional and urban development in Europe. The most relevant urban issues resulting from these changes which have to be considered by urban policy making at the European level are the following:

- **Dominance of large cities:** The dominance of the larger cities in Europe will further increase. The need to compete with other cities in Europe for European and non-European capital investment will continue to favor the larger high-tech industrial and service cities. These cities will continue to grow, often far beyond their administrative boundaries as they offer attractive jobs for skilled workers and provide the high quality services and cultural and leisure facilities the post-modern society wishes to have within easy reach.
- **Polarization through high speed transport infrastructure:** The emerging European high speed rail network complemented by the existing rail networks linking the medium-sized cities to the larger metropolitan areas will reinforce the dominance of large cities. The urbanized and semi-urbanized hinterland of large cities will continue to expand beyond the one-hour commuting distance. Smaller and medium-sized cities in the hinterland of the metropolises will benefit from the international accessibility of their cores. The accessibility to international airports will continue to be a key factor for regional and urban development. Economic development of small and medium-sized cities in the "grey" or traffic shadow zones between the future high speed transport and communication corridors is likely to fall behind unless they can offer attractive local resources or non-ubiquitous potentials and are assisted under national or international programs.
- **No borders, new hierarchies?** Some of the cities at inner-European borders may benefit from the Single European Mar-

**Table 3**  
**Europe — Key urban issues in the 1990s**

Level	Key urban issues
European	Dominance of large cities Polarization through high speed transport infrastructure No borders, new hierarchies? East-West or North-South? Pressure on European gateway cities Cities in the European periphery: Forgotten?
National/Regional	Further decline of industrial cities? Port cities under pressure? High-tech and garrison cities: Victims of disarmament? Just-in-time urban regions? Rurban belts: The ubiquitous city Unguided growth: Large cities in the South Cities at the national periphery: Tourism and second homes?
Intra-regional/Urban	The future of urban form Declining urban infrastructure and services Urban poverty Urban land markets: A time bomb Urban transport: The reappearing problem Urban environmental problems

ket (e.g. Aachen, Strasbourg, Nice, Liège, Arnhem). They can expand their hinterland and increase their trade, if local decision makers take up the new challenge. The recent political development in Eastern Europe will in the long run improve the position of cities which before the war had traditional links to East European markets (e.g. Hamburg, Copenhagen, Nürnberg). This may weaken the position of other, mainly peripheral, cities in North-West and South Europe which may become further peripheralized. The unification of Germany will bring new impetus to some cities in that country (e.g. Hanover or Braunschweig) which in the past three decades have stagnated because of their peripheral location in Western Europe. Also cities bordering East European countries will benefit economically from the new geopolitical situation in Europe. They may regain traditional links and markets and widen their regional hinterland. Cities in East European countries (e.g. Prague, Budapest) may in the long run regain their pre-war position in the league of European cities.

- **Pressure on European gateway cities:** Gateway cities will experience increasing pressure by immigration flows from Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Existing facilities (e.g. schools, hospitals) will not be able to absorb the additional people and the local economy will be burdened by the growing number of unskilled or semi-skilled workers coming into the city. The transitional character of gateway cities will worsen their international image. Social and political tensions in these cities are bound to increase. Also cities with large international airports (e.g. Paris, Amsterdam, Frankfurt) and cities bordering Eastern Europe (e.g. Thessaloniki, Frankfurt/Oder or Trieste) or North Africa (e.g. Malaga, Cadiz or Palermo) may function as European gateway cities.
- **East-West or South-North?** The greatest challenge of the next decade will be to overcome the wide gap in economic prosperity between the cities in Western and Eastern Europe. The extent of the problems of East European cities has only become apparent after the political change in East Germany. Their local and regional labor markets offer few opportunities, their public infrastructure is obsolete, their environmental con-

ditions are desolate, their housing stock is far below West European standards and, due to decades of central planning, local governments are almost incapable of managing their own development. This East-West divide of Europe will gradually gain political importance over the North-South divide. This may bring about a shift in investment priorities and trade flows as there is evidence that East Germany or Hungary for example are as attractive to international investors as the peripheral regions in Southern Europe.

• **Cities at the European periphery: Forgotten?** With the increasing importance of the accessibility to the large cities in the core of Europe, cities at the periphery of the continent will have a difficult stand. They will have to offer additional attractions to promote themselves as locations for capital investment and industrial development or for international conferences and conventions.

### National/Regional level

Also the urban systems in individual European countries will be affected. First, the traditional national urban networks will change. Previously dominant large cities may lose their national importance. Cities in border regions may gain new importance and more peripheral cities in declining rural regions may continue to decline. New types of urban regions and networks of cities will evolve. Semi-urbanized regions ("rurban belts") tend to further expand along national transport corridors. Lastly, changes of national defence policy in the wake of the East-West détente will have economic impacts on some cities. More specifically, national and regional governments will be confronted with the following key urban issues:

• **Cities at the national periphery: Tourism and second homes?** Cities at the national periphery will struggle to keep their relative position in the national urban system. Smaller and secondary cities outside the large urban agglomerations will feel the widening gap between center and periphery unless their regional environment offers attractive alternatives to living in the crowded larger cities. Particularly cities in the more peripheral regions of Italy, Greece, Portugal, Ireland or Scotland can expect to benefit from growing national and international tourism and second-home development but only if they succeed in preserving their environmental quality and refrain from offering sites to industries searching for cheap labor and less strict environmental standards. This, however, requires prudent policies to avoid negative financial, economic and infrastructural implications for the resident population.

• **Further decline of industrial cities?** Unemployment will continue to be a major problem in declining industrial cities. Despite the success of some cities in restructuring their local economies and modernizing their urban structure, many others will still struggle. Although increasing environmental awareness has brought about public and private support for environmental regeneration measures, much still remains to be done. The simultaneous existence of economic decline and a poor environment and a bad image makes it difficult for such cities to escape from the vicious circle of disinvestment and physical degradation. Small and medium-sized industrial cities at unfavorable locations or depending on coal mining or steel production will have particular difficulties meeting the requirements of the international investors. They are likely to remain among the most disadvantaged among the European cities.

• **Port cities under pressure?** Port cities that have been unsuccessful in modernizing and specializing their infrastructure will be in danger of further decline. They will be affected

by the growing competition of the large European ports and their attractive services and efficient transport links to the continental hinterland. If such cities have to carry the additional burden of being gateway cities for economic migrants (e.g. from North Africa or South-East Europe) the arising problems may easily exceed their problem-solving capacity.

• **High-tech and garrison cities: Victims of disarmament?** Due to new geopolitical conditions in Europe (and despite the recent Gulf war) the growth of cities which are the locations of heavily subsidized defence industries and defence-related R&D facilities may stagnate. This may be similarly true for cities with large military installations, which threaten to lose their economic base.

• **Just-in-time urban regions?** Just-in-time production complexes will affect the spatial structure particularly in regions where car production is concentrated. Such regions in Germany, Italy, Spain or England are already now gradually being dominated by the infrastructural requirements of the automobile industry and their forward and backward linkages. Although these regions may flourish in times of economic prosperity, they may become heavily affected in times of recession. To a lesser extent just-in-time production is also affecting other industrial regions.

• **Rurban belts: The ubiquitous city.** Rurban belts along national transport corridors and between the economically prosperous urban regions will grow further and become more densely settled. They will become favorite locations for spillover industries and population driven out from the inner cities or attracted by lower land prices and better natural environment. Rurban belts will also be prime locations for national transport interchanges and goods handling and distribution centers. This development will negatively affect the regional environment and often exceed the capacity of public utilities and social facilities.

• **Unguided growth: Large cities in the South.** Unguided urban development will continue to be characteristic for growing large cities in the South. Because of financial constraints, shortage of skilled manpower and opposition to state intervention into land development, local governments in these cities will not be able to cope with the complex urban management tasks rapid growth will bring about. The simultaneous existence of the formal and a large informal economy makes it difficult for these cities to control their expansion, so squatting and strip development are the rule.

### Intra-regional/Urban level

Many urban problems originate from a city's overall economic performance and hence position in the European or national urban hierarchy, but are actually felt on the intra-regional or urban level. Prosperous cities will be better able to cope with rapid change by renewing their physical stock, technical and social infrastructure and services than declining cities or cities that grow in population without economic growth. Affluent cities will have the resources to provide housing and resources for immigrants and to cushion unemployment and other adjustment problems arising from economic change. Rapid change, however, has its price. In particular in the economically most successful cities, market-driven urban development today can, without prudent and effective public control, mean land speculation, segregation or displacement of social groups, physical decay of inner-city residential neighborhoods with or without eventual gentrification, increasing spatial division of labor, congestion, pollution, noise and waste of energy, natural resources and land by excessive mobility and urban sprawl.



Therefore, the key issues for local policy making and planning on the intra-regional/urban scale will be the following:

- **The future of urban form:** The two European global cities, London and Paris, will continue their "megaprojects" such as the Docklands and *les grands travaux*. Cities like Brussels, Frankfurt and Barcelona, and possibly Berlin, will make efforts to live up to their growing European importance by creating a skyline of high-rise buildings, by glamorous convention and cultural facilities and by expanding their networks of urban motorways and metros. In most other cities the pace of change is likely to be slower.
- **Declining urban infrastructure and services:** Whereas affluent cities will be able to generously improve their infrastructure and expand their services, the less affluent cities in Europe will be faced with growing problems of ageing infrastructure. The reasons for this likely development are the growing squeeze on cities to reduce their taxes for enterprises and the widespread tendency of national governments to cut public subsidies and to promote economic deregulation and privatization of formerly public services.
- **Urban poverty:** Another mounting burden of local government finances will be the costs of urban poverty. The common tendency in almost all European countries to reduce government involvement in social security and to restrict the eligibility for welfare benefits to those in extreme need will further increase the number of households below the poverty line, and they will concentrate in cities. In large cities urban poverty often turns into homelessness.
- **Urban land markets — A time bomb:** In particular for successful cities with growing economies, increasing land values will be a dominant issue of the 1990s. Inflated land prices that are no longer related to the value that can be generated on land render the provision of land for public infrastructure practically impossible and lead to the displacement of less affluent segments of the population. They make the inner city unaffordable as a place to live for local people with low incomes. First signs of this harmful process can be observed in London, Paris and Madrid, but also in Munich and an increasing number of other European cities.
- **Urban transport — The reappearing problem:** In the face of seemingly ceaselessly growing car ownership, urban transport is reappearing as another fundamental urban question. The available road space in urban areas has become the ultimate constraint to the apparently insatiable demand for more and more mobility. In the short run it is necessary to apply a complex mix of synergetic policies encompassing traffic management and regulation, taxation, and pricing, street design and pedestrianization. In the long run, however, only a reversal, or at least a halt of the trend to ever expanding urban areas and increasing spatial separation of homes and workplaces will reduce the need for further growth of urban mobility.
- **Urban environmental problems:** The quality of the urban environment will continue to rise as one of the core issues of urban development in the 1990s, not only because it is becoming more and more important as a locational factor for industry. In particular in prospering, successful cities, growing traffic volumes, uncontrolled land use development and negligence of environmental concerns by private enterprises and households may seriously endanger the quality of the urban environment. In the fast growing cities of the South, lack of public finances seems to be a prime bottleneck for a thorough improvement of the deficient infrastructure in the fields of sewerage, waste disposal and energy generation. In East Germany, years of neglect have created environmental problems of yet unknown magnitude. However, there are also encouraging examples that through civic pride and local commitment

and through intra-regional cooperation and exchange of experience a balance between ecological objectives and economic interests can be achieved.

## Conclusions

The emerging overall picture of the future of cities in the Community is one of great hopes but also of large risks.

On the one hand, there are the positive impacts of continued economic growth, the removal of barriers through further advances in European integration, the emerging new European infrastructure and the opening of the borders to Eastern Europe. Always under the proviso that the next decade will not be overshadowed by major military conflicts or economic turbulences, London and Paris, the Euro-Metropolises and the major European conurbations and cities of European importance in the European core and the smaller and medium-sized cities in their hinterland can look forward to a bright prospect of prosperity fuelled by unprecedented levels of exchange of people and goods.

On the other hand, there is the risk that the success of these favored cities might go at the expense of the much larger number of more peripheral cities. The most likely groups of losers are cities that will not be linked to the new high speed transport infrastructure, cities at the European or national periphery or cities that do not succeed in liberating themselves from their industrial past and finding their own particular niche in the wider European market. This is the negative side of the polarization and specialization *mega-trends* and it is in direct conflict with the stated equity goals of the Community regional policy.

And there are the negative side effects of growth itself. Even the apparent winner cities may become losers if they do not manage to cope with the undesirable consequences of economic success such as exploding land prices, traffic congestion, environmental degradation and urban sprawl. The spread of urban poverty even in otherwise prosperous cities should be taken as a warning that the "success" of some cities may have come about by relying too much on principles of efficiency and competition without concern for the less able that need protection and support.

Some lessons can be drawn from the analysis as to what are the most important factors that make some cities prosperous and some lagging behind. Clearly two groups of factors can be identified: tangible and intangible.

- **Tangible factors** such as "location" itself as well as transport and communications infrastructure clearly remain important. Other tangible factors are tautological as they are themselves synonyms for success: the availability of modern industries and services, efficient public facilities and urban management, a diversified housing market, good educational opportunities, a rich cultural life, and an intact urban environment.

- **Intangible factors** have to do with local attitudes, spirit, and people. Wherever a group of creative people (or a charismatic individual) succeeded to bring together the relevant private and public actors in a city, innovative solutions were found, barriers for progress overcome and an atmosphere of optimism and confidence created that spread over the whole city and stimulated the kind of future-oriented decisions that are the secret of self-reinforcing success and the progressive image a city needs to present itself on the market place. If there is any single factor of urban prosperity that really counts it is this entrepreneurial, competitive spirit.

But before taking this home as the final conclusion, it is good to note that this kind of success is entirely built on the principle of *competition*. Prosperous, i.e. economically successful, cities are those that have survived better in the

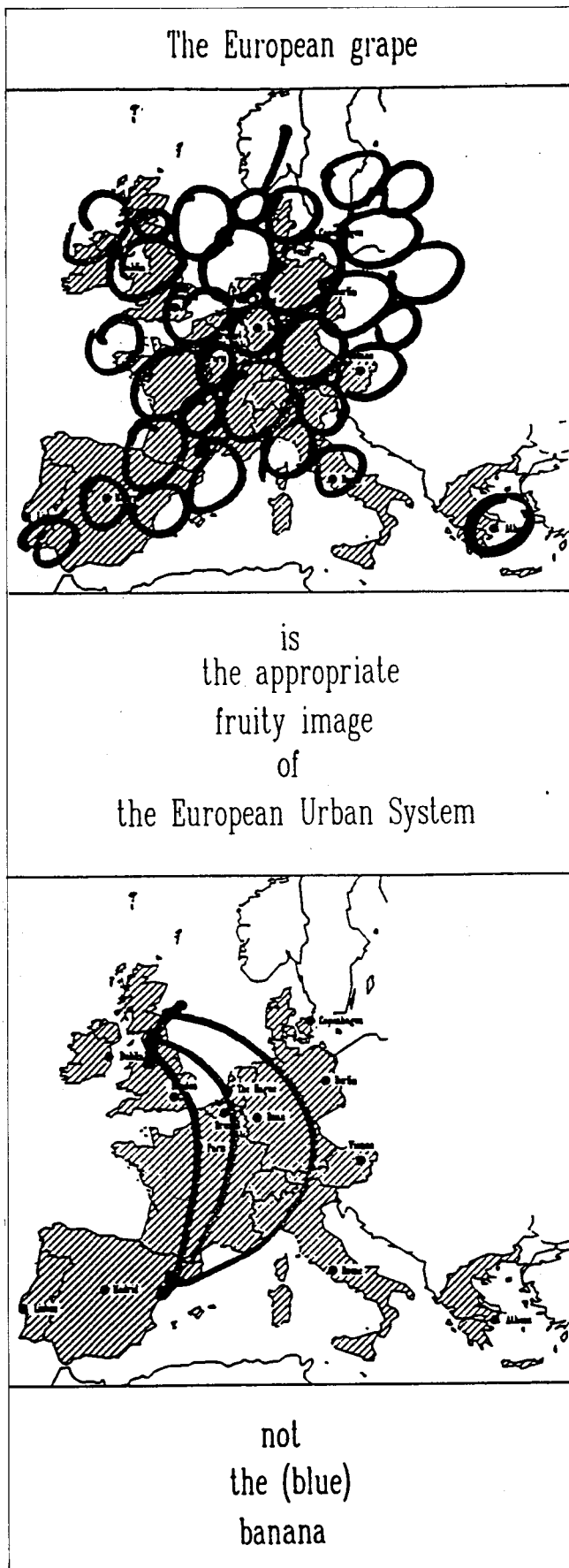


Fig. 4: The European grape.

nation-wide, and more and more European-wide, competition between cities. To be sure, the hope is that this competition is *not* a zero-sum game where any gain is a loss elsewhere, but that at the end of the day *every* city will be better off. Yet in reality some cities gain only very little and some gain a lot, and these winner cities are called successful.

So what makes cities successful? From the point of view of a Community regional policy the question may need to be rephrased. If a reduction of disparities between the regions, and hence also cities, in the Community, is the primary goal of regional policy, it may be necessary to study how the — in general indispensable and desirable — competition between regions and cities in Europe can be complemented by an element of *cooperation* and mutual help among regions and cities. The support of cooperation between border regions and city networks by the Community are steps in that direction.

These considerations may also suggest a different and more "cooperative" *Leitbild* for urban development in Europe than the "Blue Banana" (RECLUS, 1989) which is the pure expression of the competition between the regions in Europe. The "European Grape" (fig. 4) may be more suited to represent the polycentric structure of the urban system in Europe and the fundamental *similarity in diversity* of the interests and concerns of its member cities.

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