Urban Challenges in Europe

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Challenging the Contemporary European City

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INTRODUCTION

European cities exist in a continent bounded by the Atlantic, Asia and Africa, that is strategically significant in terms both of geopolitics and the global economy (Benevolo 1993). Given that the essence of current European Union (EU) strategy is to achieve growth that is smart, green, and inclusive, cities are seen as crusaders in this endeavor, since they pioneer innovation, connectivity, compact settlement, energy efficiency and redress of social polarization. This article explores this agenda in a wider urban context, first by outlining key features in demography, economy and equality, from which challenges and policy responses are identified. It concludes with analysis of dilemmas impeding progress.

KEY FEATURES

Over the last half century, pronounced urban makeover has occurred worldwide. Old categories like metropolis and conurbation, that sought to depict the diverse ways that urban built environments in mature economies have dispersed beyond original municipal boundaries, have become less useful. Instead, conceptual confusion reflects more messy formation, such as edge city (Garreau 1991), referring to urban perimeter settlement, and peri-urban (Cavailhes et al. 2004), that refers to that urban fringe belt, comprising hybrid city-rural, and post-metropolis, which designates this new city space as an irregular combination of dispersal and agglomeration (Soja 2006). As conveyed by Knapp (2006, 61): "old dichotomies between center and periphery, urban and rural, settlements and open space, are fading ... Cities, suburbs, towns and rural areas grow increasingly together into a new poly-nuclear and fragmented urban patchwork".

Since the 1950s, Europe's urban footprint has extended into countryside hinterland, evident in conglomerate developments such as that along the Rhone Valley down to the Mediterranean Coast. In such formations, "development is patchy, scattered and strung out, with a tendency for discontinuity" (European Environment Agency 2006, 6). Prompting this pattern has been a blend of factors including: income growth, low commuting costs, cheap agricultural land relative to brownfield, and enduring inner-city problems (European Environment Agency 2006, 10-11): "historical trends since the mid-1950s, show that European cities have expanded on average by 78 percent, whereas the population has grown by only 33 percent. A major consequence of this trend is that European cities have become less compact".

Given this spatial spread, individual cities have to be observed in their regional setting. Thus, many urban regions in Europe manifest a polycentric form, whereby assorted cities and towns cluster each other, a proximity that affords potential for economic agglomeration and synergy. The most urbanized area is the 'pentagon', roughly bordered by London, Paris, Milan, Munich and Hamburg. Alongside this, there can be reference to the 'blue banana' area that wraps a vast swathe of condensed urbanism, stretching from Birmingham to Milan, and including London, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Cologne, Frankfurt, Basel, Zurich and Turin. Other smaller socio-spatial configurations in Europe include: the Golden Banana, a coastal 'sun-belt' corridor from Valencia to Genoa; the Flemish Diamond, a linkage of 5.5-million inhabitants, drawing together Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp and Leuven; and the Randstad in the Netherlands, a mega 'corridor' extending from Amsterdam (finance, transport) to Utrecht (service sector), Hague (government) and Rotterdam (port) (Gaffikin and Morrissey 2011).

To a lesser extent, dispersed urban formations, marked by dotted or sprawling cities, are to be found in parts of northern Italy, southern Poland and in Belgium. Alongside this familiar pattern, principal cities – most obviously the largest capitals – hold paramount position, making their hinterland a monocentric urban region. Within this more globalized urbanism is increasing emergence of cities that

accommodate greater ethnic diversity linked mainly to migration patterns over decades. They presage either more contested politics of identity, or cultivation of cosmopolis, where pluralist engagement can create inter-culturalism within mutual citizenship.

Whatever classification is used to capture the urban metamorphosis and its greater scale and reach, the key point is that the spatial and the social intersect, according an intrinsic spatiality to social life. Within these new spatial forms, three main types of European urbanity are evident:

1. the dynamic city, mostly larger and West European, experiencing vibrant population increase, helped by inflow of both highly proficient and less qualified migrants, with inventive economy, appealing living conditions and global market reach;
2. the city with a tradition of robust economy, mostly small to medium size, but now with a dwindling population and more strained prospect of enhancing its share of higher value-added activities; and
3. the city caught in a spiral of economic and demographic decline, with related cumulative loss in property value, investment, jobs, tax base and services, most apparent in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in marginal areas of Western Europe (European Commission 2011).

In the period of 2004–2014, the EU28 population residing in predominantly urban regions increased by 6 percent, from 203.6 million to 215.7 million (European Union 2016). All told, the EU28 comprises over 800 towns and cities, containing over 50,000 residents, with nearly 700 of these urban areas being small to medium size and comprising between 50,000–250,000 people (European Commission 2016a). While 345 cities contain more than 100,000 residents, only 23 cities have more than 1 million inhabitants. London (12.5 million) and Paris (11.8 million) are the only two European megacities with over 10 milliom inhabitants, whereas globally, megacities have nearly tripled from 10 to 28 in the last quarter of century, with the largest, Tokyo, at 38 million more than three times the size of London or Paris (European Commission 2016b). Approximately eight percent of the EU28's people live in cities of over five million compared to the US figure of 25 percent. Expressed differently, only 16 percent of European urban residents dwell in large cities, compared to 30 percent in Asia, and 28 percent in North America (European Union 2016).

Of the EU28 population, almost three quarters (72.6 percent) live in urban areas, with 41.6 percent in cities and 31 percent in towns and suburbs. By 2050, it is estimated that the urban share will be just over 80 percent, a similar share to what exists presently in both Latin and North America (European Union 2016). Over half (56 percent) of the European urban population reside in small and medium-sized cities and towns of between 5,000 and 100,000 people. It is in large capital cities, particularly in Western Europe, where 'capital magnetism' generally makes for higher population growth, and share of working age people and foreign-born residents. In terms of age distribution, a high share of the EU28 ageing citizens live in relatively small cities and towns, with a penchant for coastal location, whereas younger people are more likely to reside in suburbs that offer access to large cities.

Global South cities – in Africa, Asia and Latin America – exhibit high urban density, varying from 4,000 to 8,000 inhabitants per km², whereas median density in North America is a mere 1,600 residents. Europe comes in between, with average city density of 3,000 residents per km² (European Commission 2016b). But this can vary considerably, with the Netherlands being high and the Nordic countries low. In 2014, EU urban areas made up 22.5 percent of total area, whereas cities alone made up a mere 3.9 percent (European Union 2016).

The key role of 'thick' urbanism in the EU's economy, in terms of critical mass and diversity of production capacity and 'anchor institutions' like universities, is evident from the fact that 67 percent of its GDP is created in metropolitan regions, that is those urban districts with over 250,000 inhabitants. Indeed, generally speaking, the larger cities perform better economically, as measured in conventional metrics. However, they can be also responsible for certain negative externalities: congestion, fumes, sprawl, deficiency in affordable housing, and such like. Moreover, the important complementary role of small and medium-size cities can be under appreciated not only for their accessibility, genial ambience, human scale, distinctive charm and tradition, but also for their innovation, as with Cambridge and Eindhoven.

Europe has seen growth in the economic influence of its cities. London and Paris metro regions generate nearly one third of their national GDP, while their population share is closer to one fifth (European Union 2016). More generally: "between 2000 and 2013, GDP growth in cities was 50 percent higher than in the rest of the EU and employment in cities grew by 7 percent while it declined slightly in the remainder of the EU" (European Commission 2016b, 11). Such success has been linked to educational advancement – for example, in 2015, European cities had 48 percent of their 30 to 34-year old population obtaining tertiary education (European Commission 2016b). However, this job success contains a paradox. In 2014, the unemployment rate in the EU28 stood at 10.9 percent for those in cities, compared to 9.8 percent for those in towns, suburbs or rural areas, a disparity largely explained by the role of commuters (European Union 2016).

But whatever the significance of Europe-wide economic frameworks, prosperity of particular cities is still most tied to the performance of, and redistribution within, their national economies: “seventy-four percent of the differences in growth (GDP) between individual cities in Europe is accounted for by differences between the growth rates of different countries, and just twenty-six percent by the differences between growth rates of cities in the same country” (European Commission 2011, 19). In recent times, the biggest rises in GDP per capita have been in metropolitan regions of Germany’s Heilbronn and Ingolstadt; Ireland’s Cork; Luxembourg; Sweden’s Stockholm, Goteborg and Uppsala; and UK’s Aberdeen, Derby and Reading. With regard to economic innovation, places like Eindhoven, Dusseldorf and Grenoble, with their high-tech enterprises clustered in science parks and the like, have high propensity to patent.

But, the uneven distribution of economic improvement is evident in stark regional disparity. For instance in the UK, in 2013, Inner London West, with the highest level of GDP per inhabitant, enjoyed average per person wealth at 5.7 times the national average. By contrast, among the lowest GDP per inhabitant were the once industrial regions of the Welsh Central Valleys and Gwent Valleys, the Wirral, Sefton, Greater Manchester North and Blackpool (European Union 2016). Some of this is reflected in wider EU28 labour market patterns. In the eastern part, higher employment and earning rates and lower poverty levels are typical of cities, whereas in some western areas, city dwellers often deal with lower employment and income rates and higher deprivation levels than those residing in towns, suburbs and rural areas.

In 2014, almost a quarter (24.4 percent) of the EU28 population – 122 million people – were deemed at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Relatively, this translated as 24.3 percent in cities, 22.3 percent in towns and suburbs, and 27.1 percent in rural areas. The highest share of low work intensity (under 20 percent of potential) households are those in cities (12.5 percent), with 10.1 percent in towns and suburbs and 10.3 percent in rural areas. With regard to those at risk of severe material deprivation, while this was minimal in Nordic member states, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, it was evident in the east and south, with for example just over a quarter of the population being impacted in Bulgarian cities, and just over one fifth in Romanian and Greek cities. In general terms (European Commission 2011, 14): “the distribution of income and wealth in the EU has, particularly in recent years, become increasingly concentrated in the hands of global business and the very rich and these developments are particularly evident in urban areas ... While (western) cities were often characterized by higher standards of living – as measured by GDP per inhabitant – they also recorded a high degree of income inequality”.

Spatial reflection of this inequality is evident most starkly in segmented residential patterns that are multi-factor outcomes of income differential, housing policy, and welfare provision (Tammaru et al. 2016, 6): “retrenchment of the welfare state, the promotion of home ownership together with social and economic change (professionalization) and spatial change (gentrification, suburbanization) thus potentially contribute to increasing levels of socio-economic segregation”.[1]

Class-based residential segregation could become increasingly complicated by separatism based on ethnicity. In 2015, 52.8 million people living in the EU28, nearly 10 percent of total population, were born in a foreign country. Among EU28 cities, London has the highest number of foreign-born citizens, nearly 3 million (European Union 2016, 225): “during the period 2009–14, two patterns were apparent regarding inflows: a relatively high number of migrants arrived in several of the metropolitan regions covering EU capital cities, while there were high numbers of migrant inflows across a range of large German metropolitan regions”. Diversity is a challenge and opportunity. Interestingly, reservation about the contribution of migrants in EU28 cities does not rise as the migrant share increases. Indeed, in the most cosmopolitan European cities like London and Amsterdam, cultural diversity is mostly viewed positively by residents.

With regard to urban housing pattern and composition, while some 70.1 percent of the EU28 population are in owner-occupation, home ownership is less customary in capital cities. In 2014, highest levels of severe housing deprivation were in rural areas (6.6 percent), followed by cities (5.0 percent) and towns and suburbs (3.9 percent). In that year, 39.7 percent lived in an apartment, 33.7 percent in a detached house, and 25.8 percent in a semi-detached or terraced dwelling. The smallest urban residences were in Baltic member states and Romania, while the largest were in Cyprus, Belgium, Luxembourg and Portugal. Household composition varies considerably across cities. For example, in Berlin, nearly half (49 percent) of households were single person (European Union 2016).

With regard to crime and anti-social behavior, the share of the EU28 population living in neighborhoods with problems connected with crime, vandalism and violence was notably higher in cities (19.9 percent) than it was for towns and suburbs (11.8 percent) and rural areas (7.3 percent) (European Union 2016). Such data reflects again the persistent urban paradox. Cities can offer opportunities of employment and lifestyle choice. But they can be places with greater than national average of unemployment, poverty, conges-

[1] This study of twelve EU capitals concluded that, between 2001-2011, socio-economic segregation increased in most of them.

tion, homelessness, and crime. Moreover, how urban dwellers perceive their satisfaction and quality of life can complicate this paradox further. For instance, while it is unsurprising that high earners in the EU28 register a higher level of life satisfaction than do lowest earners, a high share of capital cities have their residents reporting relatively low satisfaction levels on issues such as health, education, and trust. Also, wider geographical differentials apply, seeming to contradict the positive relationship between high income and life satisfaction. A lower share of western EU city residents conveyed satisfaction with life compared to relatively high levels of satisfaction expressed by those living in cities in eastern EU28 member states.[2]

URBAN CHALLENGES AND POLICY

Importantly within the EU, there has been no specific legal basis for urban policies, and this lack of authoritative 'competence' has helped ensure provision deficit. But, it has not hindered a plethora of urban schemes and policies, going back to the Urban Pilot Programs in the late 1980s through to URBAN projects in the 1990s, geared to sustainable integrated development, followed by initiatives like the URBACT program (2002-2013) to promote city networking and exchange. Recent intervention has been aligned with Europe 2020 and the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, that extol cities as concentrations of human, social, cultural and economic capital, while also recognizing them as places whose very density manifests most clearly current contests and challenges: environmental degradation; ageing populations; urban shrinkage; intensive suburbanization that compromises benefits of urban compression; fragile association between economic growth, employment, and general welfare; increasing income disparity and linked social exclusion; culture wars; decreasing supply of suitably located and priced housing; insecurity related to crime/anti-social behavior; and political disenchantment, with its potential for corroding active citizenship.

But for all the plans and policies over the last quarter of century, progress has been slow. Resource, delivery and evaluation instruments have been weak. Mostly, incremental policy development has come from informal ministerial meetings. In 1997, the European Commission adopted a Communication: 'Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union (COM 1997, 197, final)'. In 2004, Urban Acquis, establishing key principles of good urban development, was followed in 2005 by the Bristol Accord on sustainability, which prioritized place-making through leadership, civic engagement, and interdisciplinary teamwork. Then came the Leipzig charter, emphasizing how making cities more sustainable and livable implied particular attentiveness to dispossessed neighborhoods. This was followed by a European Parliament report (2008/2130, INI), on developing a distinctive urban dimension to cohesion strategy. Then, there was the 2010 Toledo declaration for a common framework that would achieve greater coordination of EU initiatives to promote a comprehensive linkage between knowledge-based urban economies and more sustainable and socially inclusive urban development. It highlighted citizen participation in integrated urban regeneration, combining a territorial perspective on economic growth, compact city planning, eco efficiency and social cohesion, using instruments such as URBAN NET to enhance transnational urban research and knowledge exchange.

By this stage, the outline of EU urban strategy was clear and familiar, involving cities' pivotal role in: tackling climate change; deploying a greater share of renewable energy sources; advancing less pollutant transport, including improved accessibility through mixed use development; recycling land, while regulating its supply and speculative development; limiting urban sprawl; reversing social polarization and related spatial segregation; promoting inter-culturalism and public space; protecting heritage while integrating immigrants; improving service access and affordability; providing socially balanced housing; championing quality design; modernizing soft and hard infrastructure; diversifying local production systems based on low carbon, innovation and creativity; upgrading labor skills and education – this and more, undertaken within a holistic and long-term framework by new cross sector partnership platforms, that extract more outcome through synergy, and are informed by agile, multilevel and coordinated governance.

But this ambitious agenda was emerging most comprehensively at the very time a world financial crisis was restricting fiscal scope for proactive expansive government. A 2011 European Commission report noted (European Commission 2011, 18): "with increasing immigration and mobility, pressures on national welfare systems and more vulnerable labor markets, European cities face increasing social and economic polarization, both within and between them". Looking to the future European city, the report advocated strong metropolitan regions framed within polycentric development as the optimum model for: a resilient, balanced and inclusive economy; social, cultural, generational and ethnic diversity; territorial cohesion; and governance appropriate to the scope and scale of challenges addressed. To promote inter-urban dialogue further, the European Commission held a stakeholder forum in 2014, called: CITIES – cities of tomorrow, investing in Europe. Three years later, a European Commission Communication produced an urban agenda to amplify the urban dimension to all EU28 intervention (COM 2014, 490, final),

[2] These findings come largely from the June 2015 Perception Survey on Quality of Life in 79 European cities; see Eurostat (online data code: urb_percep).

which, following a consultation period, was adopted in June 2016, at an informal meeting of the Council of European Affairs ministers of the EU.[3]

Much of this urban agenda speaks the same language as the EU's overall 'territorial' strategy that includes connectivity for people and enterprises and development corridors spanning cross-border and transnational functional regions. As serious intent, this can be traced to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) in 1999, and its policy kin over the last two decades, culminating in the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 (TA2020). Yet at some simple levels, connectivity remains very differentiated. For instance, the digital divide is real, with under two thirds (62 percent) of the EU28 rural population exercising daily online activity in 2016, compared to 72 percent for urban dwellers, a share that reached three quarters in 2018.[4]

LEARNING LESSONS

It used to be claimed that European and American urbanism were very different, with the latter being decidedly more marked by socio-spatial segregation, ethnic diversity and tension, minimalist welfarism and sprawl that helped to hollow out the central city. The extent to which European urban development has become more market-driven and privatized can be argued. Some see a significant turn from a redistributive focus on socially allocated capital to an investment focus on more deregulated private wealth creation, making the policy landscape more akin to that of American urbanism. However, analysis of EU policy does not confirm the demise of social Europe or fundamental retreat from the Keynesian-welfarist model, for all the hegemony attributed to neoliberalism.

At the same time, the urban regeneration challenge in mature economies worldwide is premised on persistent marginalization of traditional manufacturing, a related shift to knowledge-based industrialism, higher dependence on services and potential for a disaffected urban underclass discarded as surplus to the needs of modern production. Given this structural change, urban problems are considered part of a pervasive urban predicament rather than largely exclusive to the inner city. Indeed, these changes are global in origin and reach, and caught within what some see as an increasingly discordant geo-politics of identity, sovereignty and governance (Norris and Inglehart 2019). Europe has not been immune to this identity politics, whereby the fault line in an increasingly populist discourse is between those who see themselves in globalist terms, as social liberals tolerant of diversity, and those who see themselves in terms of social conservatism, nativism, and narrow nationalism. In turn, this is linked to global economic change. For instance, the massively increased numbers in the capitalist labor market, from the entrance by Russia, Eastern Europe, and China, has contributed to a surplus labor supply that has helped reduce the price of labor. Of course, other complicating factors lie behind the 'wealth swing' from labor to capital, including deregulation, lower corporation taxation, and emasculation of organized labor.

Given this disruption in polity and economy, European urbanism faces formidable challenge. At the very least, response has to start with learning lessons from past practice. Europe has suffered from an overload of urban plans, policies and related funding streams for at least three decades. Much of the policy text is repetitive generalization that confirms the old saying that when all is said and done, there is a lot more said than done. Delivery has not lived up to the grand ambition of policy statement, and this shortfall is related to the following lessons:

1. The process tends to be based on insubstantial evaluation. A series of pilots, programs and policies track one another without robustly testing outcomes of the previous initiative, or indeed schemes from elsewhere, and resourcing effective interventions to the scale and duration the problem demands. Such confusing array of plans and policies invites a law of diminishing returns. In this circuitous policymaking, central concepts vary over time, giving delusionary impression of more insightful understanding: *participation* becomes *partnership*; *poverty* becomes *social exclusion; multiple deprivation* becomes *multidimensionality; coordination* becomes *connectedness; piloting* becomes *prototyping,* etc. Moreover, new dimensions are simply added to others in something of a diagnostic dump. *Integration* is complemented with *inclusion* and later with *cohesion*, and subsequently with *sustainability* and *resilience*. It seems that since we cannot change the problems, we settle for changing the terms of engagement. With turnover of policymakers, institutional amnesia grips, and thereby wheels are unintentionally re-invented, because no basis exists for building on best precedent.
2. The spatial scale and model of intervention keeps changing. No clear and consistent decision has been reached about appropriate government level or territorial focus. Is the 'new localism' about genuine subsidiarity designed to enhance local empowerment, or a means of national governments depoliticizing their responsibility for private affluence and public austerity? Since the magnitude of something like climate change demands cross national action, how is this translated in forms of shared sovereignty for resourcing and monitoring progress, and penalizing missed

[3] For further information, see http://urbanagenda.nl/pactofamsterdam; and http://cor.europa.eu/euurbanagenda/.
[4] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics.../Statistics_on_rural_areas_in_the_EU.

targets? Why is the nesting of more locally-based community planning within wider spatial planning not tied within stricter legal obligation?

3. Insufficient distinction is drawn between development *in* a place, and development *of* a place. The former tends to concentrate on physical-led development, while the latter on people-centered development, such as upgrading residents' skills and capacities. Both are essential. But, the latter is the more complicated and long-term. Erecting a building is relatively easy. But, building community is a greater challenge when seen as part of sustainable place-making. Fostering civic values such as sociability, solidarity, trust, empathy and resilience is critical to strong urban neighborhoods.
4. Linkage between urban compensatory programs for deprived areas and wider city regeneration is often underdeveloped. Many European cities have experienced anti-poverty urban schemes since the 1970s, leading to programs for integrated development in the 1980s. Often, these focused on city centers and waterfronts, in imitation of American public-private partnerships designed mostly to facilitate renewed private development. But, instead of treating the city in a holistic way, the general propensity has been to *parcel* the city into discrete development zones; *parse* the multiple publics that are thus stratified: corporate personnel, commuters, the deprived, the professional class, the tourist, etc.; and *portion* the outlay in ways that can privilege the already advantaged. In the context of the urban arena, already splintered by socio-spatial polarization caused by social inequality, this 3P tendency to *parcel, parse,* and *portion* needs to be swapped for a 3S approach of *stitch, scale,* and *scope*:[5] *stitching* the city together as one coherent unit for comprehensive planning; *scaling* investment of time and money commensurate with the size of the challenge, while broadening geographies of 'local community' to include pluralist populations; and *scoping* development plans to cover both social needs and assets, while magnetizing cross-sectoral funding behind common purpose for the city.
5. Negligible attention has been given to quality. Targeting has its merits. But, it tends to concentrate on the readily calculable, thereby trimming appraisal to tick-box inspection. In such quantifiable emphasis, quality can be relegated. Rather than benefitting from a coherent quality design framework for the whole urban area, many European cities manifest quality design in the central core, but less so in surrounding neighborhoods.
6. Despite useful data from Eurostat and multiple reports and agencies, European urban strategy merits more meticulous analysis. Challenges for contemporary urbanism stem from considerable and long-standing structural and cultural adjustment, including: deindustrialization; urban-rural shifts; growing migration and diversity; accentuated social inequality and segregation; and reconstitution of 'community' in the circumstance of new family patterns, demographic re-composition, social media, secularization and such like. Development agendas that acknowledge these complexities are not facilitated by old-style rational planning, based on the 'predict and provide' model.
7. Deployment of international urban consultants can bring comparative perspective and best practice. Conversely, such firms can simply 'clone' routine urban regeneration strategies, often influenced by neo-liberal assumption, while transplanting them with scant regard to particularity of place. Good city planning demands singular customization, not bland uniformity.
8. In Europe, numerous agencies and networks have proliferated, with special responsibilities for urban, regional, territorial and sustainable development: CIVITAS, Covenant of Mayors, Euro Cities, Energy Cities, METREX, Local & Regional Europe, etc. Yet within this labyrinth, bewilderment prevails about what hierarchy of authority is accorded various plans, how exactly they nest with each other, and how they fit within Europe's overall spatial planning. European urban strategy could benefit from less platitude about vision and more precision about delivery: when is it to happen, what agencies are responsible, what funding source, outcome targets, beneficiaries, penalty for non-delivery and such like? Fine rhetoric needs pinned down to plausible action plans.
9. A persistent quandary is captured in the Einstein maxim: not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts. Measuring success of EU objectives of smart, green and inclusive cities will involve different calculus for each of these three dimensions. Smart cities are those that deploy digital technologies, pool resources and involve multi-stakeholders to find urban solutions. But how can that mix of social and economic innovation be captured in conventional concepts like GDP? New agendas around quality of life and happiness necessarily demand new metrics, but how are we to arbitrate the relative significance of all these different measurements when it is like adding apples and oranges?
10. Finally, fixing a problem may often involve redefining it as opportunity. For instance, some suggest that for those many areas undergoing urban shrinkage, the best strategy may be to accept it, and exploit its benefits for improved quality of living (Hospers 2014).

[5] These three concepts are taken from the work of the Alternative Forum for Belfast.

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