

The Vital City

EURA Conference, 12-14 September 2007, Glasgow

An emerging conventional wisdom about European cities argues that they are vital to the future of our societies and are undergoing revitalisation. Cities are engines of regional and national development in advanced economies dependent on innovation, knowledge, human capital and connectivity. In an era of low communication costs and high mobility, cities can offer high quality environments, vibrant amenities and sustainable patterns of development. They can also provide social and cultural vitality in a context of increasing population diversity and fluidity.

Yet many questions and ambiguities remain for urban policy and research. Is the new thinking consistent with the challenges of social inclusion? Are consumption-oriented urban strategies sustainable in economic and ecological terms? Are there losers as well as winners among cities in the more competitive environment? What are the roles of national governments and the EU in balancing territorial cohesion and globalisation? Can the fuzzy concepts of cohesion, competitiveness and sustainability be sharpened, and can the propositions linking these processes be validated empirically?

Sub-themes

Resurgent European cities:

- Innovation, clusters and productivity
- Connectivity and communication
- Creativity, technology and universities
- Cities as engines of regional economies
- Second tier cities in globalisation

Branding the distinctive city:

- Signature buildings and landmark projects
- Heritage, arts and cultural events
- Place marketing and boosterism
- Competition for tourism and consumer spending

The urban environment and 'quality of place':

- Neighbourhood environmental quality and 'liveability'
- Dereliction & contaminated land: impacts and prospects
- Public realm, green spaces and civic health
- Surveillance, safety and exclusion

Real estate development and city planning:

- Challenges of mixed-use development
- Re-use and redevelopment of land and buildings
- Waterfront regeneration and mega-projects
- Masterplanning and risk management

Urban form, transport and sustainability:

- Compact cities and densification
- Public versus private transport, managing congestion
- Sustainable communities & sustainable cities
- City-regions – form and functions

Diversity, cohesion and the richness of cities:

- Immigration: patterns, contributions and refugee integration
- Social inequality and interaction
- Multi-culturalism and integration
- Citizenship, identity and place attachment

Neighbourhood dynamics and urban vitality:

- Mobility and migration
- Neighbourhood change and neighbourhood effects
- Socio-spatial segregation: processes, patterns and consequences
- Alternative models of city living: social mixing & urban villages
- Homelessness and resettlement processes

Strategies for viable and vital neighbourhoods:

- People policy versus place policy
- Neighbourhood initiatives versus city-wide initiatives
- Urban services, neighbourhood management and neighbourhood improvement
- Experiences of cross-national policy transfer

Community activism and civic innovation:

- Community-based organisations and urban change
- Community leadership, citizen participation & neighbourhood governance
- The role of the voluntary sector and social economy
- Community capacity and social capital
- Reform of public services

Labour markets in the new Europe:

- Unemployment and worklessness
- International migration
- Labour market flexibility, regulation & welfare reform
- The informal/underground economy, poverty and exclusion
- The impact of higher education students and graduates

Housing organisation and finance:

- Changing local housing markets and tenure structures
- Innovations in housing finance
- Reform of social housing

Health and public policy:

- Health, well-being and regeneration
- Health inequalities and access to health care
- Unhealthy urban environments, air quality, noise
- Consumption, lifestyle and health outcomes

Urban governance

- Urban leadership and strategy
- Urban politics and participation
- City-wide and neighbourhood partnerships
- Metropolitan and multi-level governance

For further details contact:

Professor Ivan Turok
Department of Urban Studies
University of Glasgow
25 Bute Gardens
Glasgow G12 8RS
Scotland, UK
Email: I.Turok@socsci.gla.ac.uk