Where not to build: Anti-city-region-III
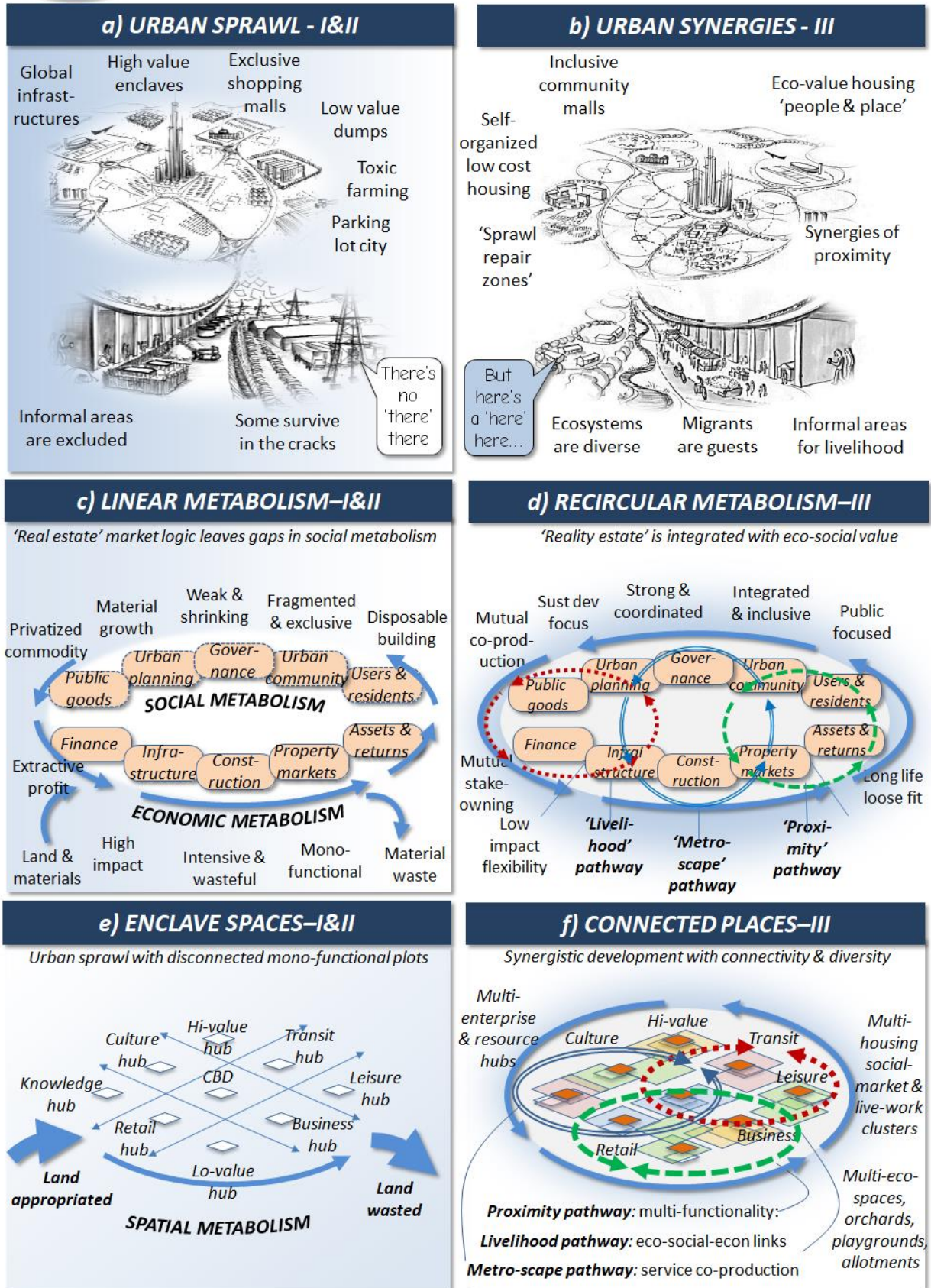
REVIEW DRAFT – NOT FOR CIRCULATION

The story of cities runs in parallel with 'anti-cities'. These are human settlements or clusters or installations which are different in fundamental ways. An airport terminal is a kind of transit anti-city, a hive of activity with thousands of passengers and workers, but lacking any deeper synergies. A refugee camp is another kind of anti-city, one of forced displacement from communities and livelihoods. A mining town or factory town lives or dies with its key industry; university towns or tourist resorts might be popular, but turnover is high and synergies are short-lived. The logical conclusion is a 'planetary urbanization' where every kind of human installation plays some part in the global urban system, from strip-mining to deep sea fishing.[1] But most of these are more like anti-cities, lacking one or more dimensions of cohesion and synergy.

Such questions are most acute with informal settlements – *slums, shanty towns, barriadas, bidonvilles* and others. Are these the proto-cities of the future, of enterprise and collaboration – or the anti-cities of the future, places of insecurity, pollution, segregation, bypassing of livelihoods and corrupt government?[2] Global megatrends suggest that informal settlements could house half the global population in the coming decades: but they also suggest a rethink of what is informal. While slum dwellers in many countries are taking steps towards some level of security, new kinds of informality are emerging. There are 'radical cities' experiments in co-housing or cooperative models, and in peri-urban-rural food systems.[3] The AirBnB and WeWork platforms are potential game-changers for ownership or rental structures, opening the door to fully transient and multi-local cities (more in *Smart-Services-III, Fig.7-3*). It may be the future is one of anti-cities, impossible mixtures of rich and poor, static or transient, housing and industry, dense clusters or extended sprawl.[4]

ANTI-CITY-REGION–III

Figure 4-6

Peri-urbanization & 'cities but not as we know them', from sprawl to synergies

a) URBAN SPRAWL - I&II

Global infrast-ructures

High value enclaves

Exclusive shopping malls

Low value dumps

Toxic farming

Parking lot city

Informal areas are excluded

Some survive in the cracks

There's no 'there' there

b) URBAN SYNERGIES - III

Inclusive community malls

Eco-value housing 'people & place'

Self-organized low cost housing

'Sprawl repair zones'

Synergies of proximity

But here's a 'here' here...

Ecosystems are diverse

Migrants are guests

Informal areas for livelihood

c) LINEAR METABOLISM–I&II

'Real estate' market logic leaves gaps in social metabolism

Privatized commodity

Material growth

Weak & shrinking

Fragmented & exclusive

Disposable building

Public goods — Urban planning — Gover-nance — Urban community — Users & residents

SOCIAL METABOLISM

Finance — Infra-structure — Const-ruction — Property markets — Assets & returns

Extractive profit

ECONOMIC METABOLISM

Land & materials

High impact

Intensive & wasteful

Mono-functional

Material waste

d) RECIRCULAR METABOLISM–III

'Reality estate' is integrated with eco-social value

Mutual co-prod-uction

Sust dev focus

Strong & coordinated

Integrated & inclusive

Public focused

Public goods — Urban planning — Gover-nance — Urban community — Users & residents

Finance — Infra-structure — Const-ruction — Property markets — Assets & returns

Mutual stake-owning

Low impact flexibility

Long life loose fit

'Liveli-hood' pathway

'Metro-scape' pathway

'Proxi-mity' pathway

e) ENCLAVE SPACES–I&II

Urban sprawl with disconnected mono-functional plots

Culture hub

Hi-value hub

Transit hub

Knowledge hub

CBD

Leisure hub

Retail hub

Business hub

Lo-value hub

Land appropriated

Land wasted

SPATIAL METABOLISM

f) CONNECTED PLACES–III

Synergistic development with connectivity & diversity

Multi-enterprise & resource hubs

Culture

Hi-value

Transit

Leisure

Multi-housing social-market & live-work clusters

Retail

Business

Multi-eco-spaces, orchards, playgrounds, allotments

Proximity pathway: multi-functionality:

Livelihood pathway: eco-social-econ links

Metro-scape pathway: service co-production

And for the difference: it seems a city-region is a 'system' of inter-connected parts, with layer upon layer of interactions, positive and negative. By contrast an anti-city-region is a 'non-system' of gaps and conflicts, where nothing makes sense, where the concept of 'system' isn't very relevant or useful. The question is what can be done?

Peri-urban anti-city-regions

A typical anti-city-region in the urban North developed world, seems to imprison its inhabitants in the name of freedom: anonymous sprawl where motorways and power lines cross wasteland, polluted rivers and soil amid disconnected enclaves of housing or business.[5] The connectivity and structure of the urban grain, the local proximity value, is lacking or wasted, or as Gertrude Stein observed, 'when you get *there*, there isn't any *there, there'*.[6] Such areas are easily polarized into rich versus poor, ecosystems versus pollution, incomers versus migrants.

In the majority world, the urban South, there's the added dimension of informal slums lacking basic infrastructure, gross levels of pollution, political corruption and the 'bypassing' of livelihoods and communities. In a classic bypass effect near Chennai in south India, indigenous villagers were displaced by new automotive branch plants, so they retrained as production workers. After a while the branch plants replaced the locals (unionized) with migrant workers (non-unionized): the villagers then turned to horticulture, until their water supply was knocked out by nearby urbanization, so by now half the young people are unemployed and disconnected.[7] There are many forces behind this and countless other stories. The easy place to start is the spatial dynamic of transport, a classic story of urban evolution.

(Box 4d) Overview: evolution of the peri-urban

Planners and engineers supplied land and tarmac to the growing demand for roads and parking while dismantling transit systems and 'paving paradise'. In the UK the physical limits to this process emerged in the 1960s, but the lessons took decades to filter through, by which time many inner cities and towns had been turned inside-out by road schemes.[8] Meanwhile the outer suburbs and peri-urban self-organized around the automobile and the highway, in a powerful 'adaptive-extractive' model. This is 'adaptive' in that the automobile system can generate feedback, so if one road is blocked drivers can quickly find another (in contrast to railways). It's 'extractive' of energy and concrete, and also of social life: residents overlooking a fast highway tend to have less community compared to those on a quiet residential street.[9] The result is a landscape of 'non-places': transient, artificial, anonymous and alienated.[10] 'Fast logic' generates 'auto-areo-mobility', mono-functional nodes expand at road interchanges, and the main pedestrian areas are now found in hyper-malls and airport terminals.[11]

Charting transport energy demand against urban density shows a huge spectrum, from hyper-dense Hong Kong at 300pph (persons per hectare), to Atlanta or Phoenix, with just 6pph. [12] On this measure there are long-running questions on urban density, accessibility, energy/carbon and the ideal shape of a (so-called) sustainable city. One practical method is the 'Urban Fabrics', which maps three types of urban form and accessibility:[13]

- 'Walking city': population densities of over 100pph (persons per hectare); generally up to 2km radius from the city centre or main transit hub;
- 'Transit city': densities in the region of 50pph, and a typical 8km radius from the city centre;
- 'Automobile city': densities of less than 20 pph, more often spread out across large areas.

Countless policies and plans push for walking/transit cities, dense liveable spaces with mixed uses, but powerful forces push in the opposite direction. European cities of slow or zero growth, even with the best urban planning anywhere, seem to spread sideways, with peri-urban areas doubling in size in 30 years.[14] The default pattern for this peri-urban expansion is sprawl, defined as 'unplanned incremental urban development, characterised by a low density mix of land uses on the urban fringe'.[15] However, a different view of the same landscape might see dynamic *aerotropolis* hubs, sunrise edge cities, 'metro-scapes', leisure parks and tourist resorts.[16] This suggests that basic measures of land-use and density are one layer, to be linked with others in the anti-city-region.

Spatial dynamics and pathways

We can sketch a *Mode-I* type urban expansion, pushing development outwards to a fragmented metro-scape of pieces scattered at random. Then, the *Mode-II* evolutionary dynamics bring new niches and habitats, urban-rural linkages and global-local connections, along with negative effects: bypassing of livelihoods, land-grabs, polarization and inequality. Peri-urban growth coalitions compete with urban, capitalizing on land values, segregating out 'desirable' residents from undesirable, or sunrise business parks from sunset zones of obsolescence. This is then overlaid with global links and digital disruption, with 'multi-local' nomad-network platform-economies in live-work-leisure complexes for real-time rent.[17] On the other side of the table, the resettlement colonies of India, the townships of post-apartheid South Africa or the peripheral estates around Manchester are each fragmented in spatial terms, by displacement and disruption and bypassing of livelihoods and community structures.

Mapping all this is a challenge, so here is work in progress, on the left (*c* & *e*) of ANTI-CITY-REGION-III *(Fig.4-6)*. The metabolism or 'factor mapping' shows the real estate development process, where profits often come at the cost of social and community qualities. The development logic is for greenfield sites in a sprawling landscape, of

disconnected enclaves of high-income housing, retail or leisure or logistics (the 'post-metropolis carceral city' of the USA)[18] aided by an expanding road network, where land is consumed rapidly and much is wasted.

These point towards system level processes, of 'sprawl repair', spatial renewal or transformation.[19] The first call is for a co-evolution of 'real estate' towards something like *'reality estate',* a market for land and property which builds in social and ecological values. Then we look for stronger systems of spatial planning, but that raises many questions, as in ***MULTI-LEVEL-III*** *(Fig.8-2)* and ***ORGANIZATION-III*** *(Fig.8-3)*: a functional *Mode-I* type regulation might not work well for complex *Mode-II* problems, or for *Mode-III* aspirations. Meanwhile there are newly emerging paradigms, for instance the 'Beyond' themes from Chapter 2: *'beyond urban'* peri-metro-villages, *'beyond smart'* live-work-learn-play combinations, or *'beyond mobile'* hyper-localities, where global city-dwellers are also rural villagers, with multiple parallel lives.

In response, a ***peri-urban multiplicity pathway*** *(with urban-spatial systems synergies),* starts with the spatial potential for multi-functionality and multi-locality, and looks for value through local proximity. Pictured in ***ANTI-CITY-REGION-III*** *(Fig.4-6)****,*** lower right ***f),*** we see a the previously car-dependent sprawl, now growing clusters of multi-functional, multi-modal hubs/home-zone/walk-cycle/civic spaces, with combinations of co-housing and live-work metro-villages. Economic proximities revolve around enterprise hubs and resource spaces: ecosystems proximities see a diversity of orchards, school gardens, allotments and green-blue-spaces in health and education.

Similar principles work for a ***peri-urban livelihood pathway*** *(socio-economic synergies):* new platform economies can help with urban-rural exchanges, integrated food chains, knowledge/skills transfer between generations. A senior citizen community can add social value and reduce health costs; a declining area can add enterprise value in local ecosystems (see ***LOCAL-ONOMICS-III*** *(Fig.5-2)*).

In parallel, the ***peri-urban metro-scape pathway*** *(based on urban-political synergies)*aims for decentralized, networked, multi-level forms of organization and planning, which can balance local and regional and global forces. And if strategic planning isn't practical with a formal top-down approach, then we look for lateral thinking with associational, deliberative and collaborative kinds of 'co-governance' (see ***MULTI-LEVEL-III*** *(Fig.8-2)*).

In practice, we need *Mode-I* regulation to work with *Mode-II* markets and *Mode-III* co-governance. For a Mode-I functional response, the first option is the Green Belt, as in the UK and elsewhere. These are the default backstop to urban sprawl, but many are grey or brown more than green: simple regulation often brings dereliction and land speculation, gentrification and exclusion, housing shortage and local unemployment. So there is an agenda for a *Mode-III* version, a *Green-Belt-III,* on the principles of spatial synergies.[20] A *Green-Belt-III* aims for multi-functional and temporary uses in diverse areas, rather than large mono-functional parcels, with social finance and participative governance. It aims at eco-diversity, combining public access with natural networks, linked to local horticulture and aquaculture. For housing, the *Green-Belt-III* aims for self-organizing village growth, with mutual

ownership, clustered with local services and resources (rather than finance-driven mass housing estates). It defends against predatory speculators and rentiers by mobilizing the local asset base in land and housing. Such potential is shown by inspirational peri-urban experiments, from Canada to Europe, Southeast Asia or Australia.[21] But to scale up to the mainstream and transform finance-driven real estate to socially focused 'reality estate', we need to build the *collective urban intelligence*. So the next call is how to run this as a process, the art of city-making or 'civic design'…

Notes

[1] Brenner 2013
[2] Rajan 2019
[3] McGuirk 2014:
[4] Ravetz, Fertner & Nielsen 2013
[5] Soja 2000
[6] Stein 1971
[7] Rajan 2019
[8] Tetlow & Goss 1965
[9] Rapoport 1977
[10] Augé 1999
[11] Kasarda & Lindsay 2011
[12] Newman & Kenworthy 1999
[13] Newman, Kosonen & Kenworthy 2016
[14] Piorr, Ravetz & Tosics 2011
[15] EEA 2006
[16] Garreau 1991; Henderson 2005
[17] De Marino & Lapintie 2017
[18] Soja 2000
[19] Tachieva 2010
[20] CPRE 2011. See: www.greenbelt.ca
[21] Piorr, Ravetz & Tosics 2011; Low Choy 2010