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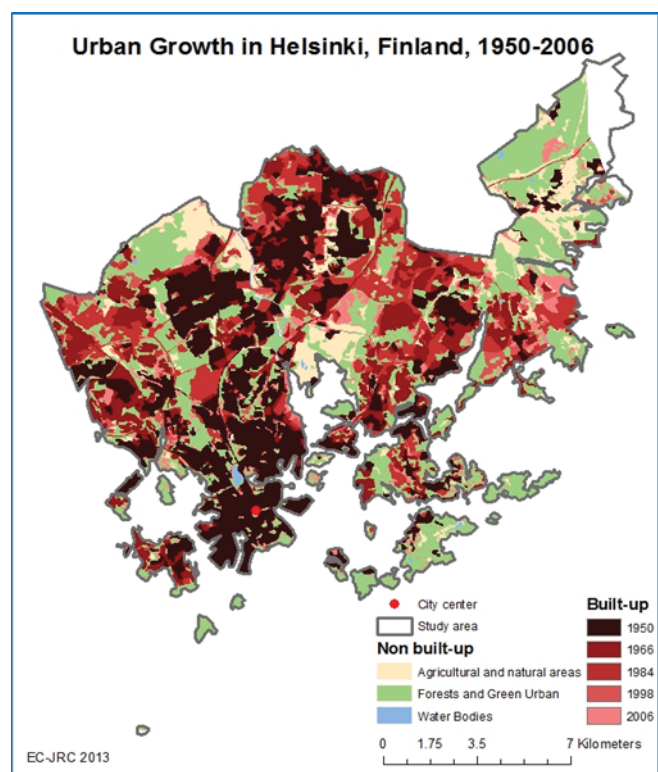
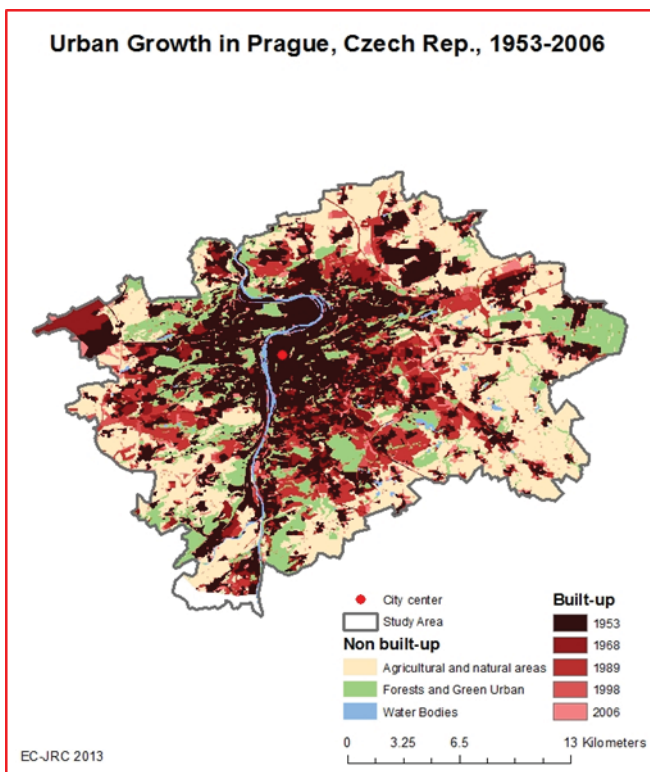
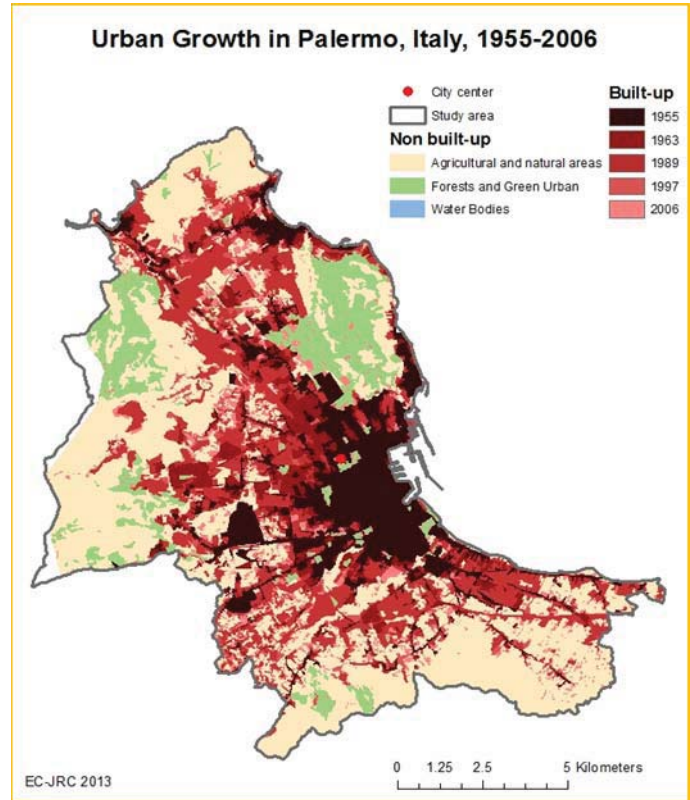
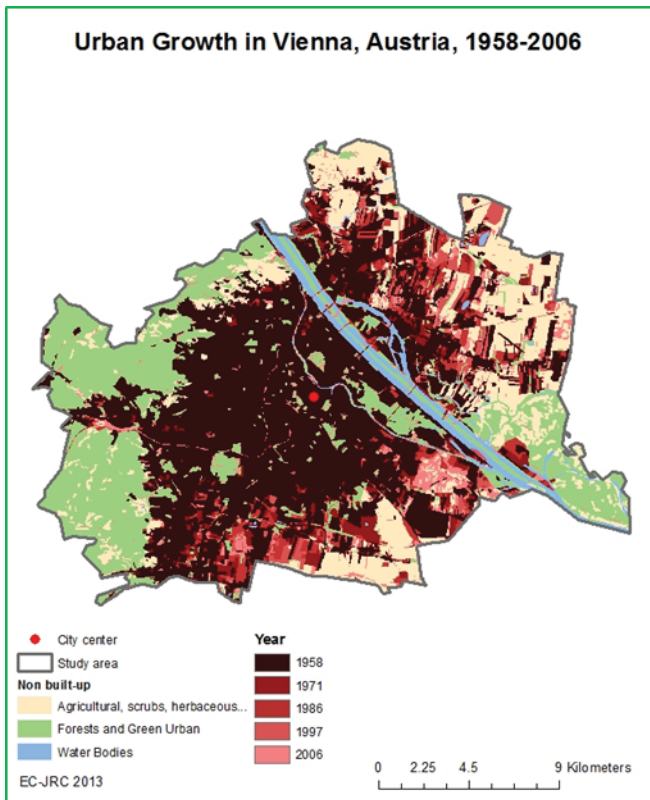
COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
Accompanying the document

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

Sixth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion: Investing in Europe's Future

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Map 1 Change in land use in Vienna, Palermo, Prague and Helsinki, 1950s-2006



Box The urban atlas shows faster changes in Central and Eastern cities

The Urban Atlas provides reliable, comparable, high resolution land use maps for 408 European cities and their surroundings for the reference years of 2006 and 2012¹. It was created to fill a gap in knowledge of land use in European cities. It uses images from satellites transformed to detailed land use maps to allow land use comparisons not only between cities but also over time and to enable analysis of land use changes to be made so increasing understanding of urbanisation trends.

The latest analysis of the Urban Atlas comprises a sample of land use maps (2012) for five European cities with their respective changes in land use over the period 2006-2012. The results for 2012 demonstrate a variation in the intensity of between the five cities, as a result of different spatial patterns, urban forms and development potential. Bratislava seems to use land most intensively, followed by Edinburgh and Prague, while Munich and Bucharest use land least intensively. In most of the cities, industrial, commercial, public and military units consume half as much land or less as residential areas. This is not the case, however, in Bratislava, where the use of land by the two is much the same.

Over the period examined, in most of these cities, built-up areas tended to expand while at the same time there was growth of population, except in Bratislava (Map 67). The most significant changes in land use during 2006-2012 were in cities in Central and Easter Europe, like Prague and Bucharest, where their rapid growth was associated with a similarly rapid increase in built-up areas. Both faced a marked rise in population and in both, agricultural, forest and other natural areas were reduced to accommodate housing and economic activities.

Hotspots of change in land use are more evident than in Bratislava, where new built-up areas were developed close to major transport routes, despite a decline in population. On the other hand, in Munich and Edinburgh, there were only limited changes in land use between 2006 and 2012 and both can be more compact and sustainable. In both cities, wetlands and areas of water were expanded in contrast to the other cities which lost natural environment areas under the pressure of economic activities. Understanding trends in urbanisation and their effects across Europe is therefore crucial for maintaining economic and social cohesion and sustainable development. Urban Atlas is a significant contribution in this regard.

¹ The Urban Atlas is a joint initiative between ESA, DG ENTR (Copernicus), DG REGIO and EEA