

# International Journal of Urban and Regional Research

## Authors Meet Critics

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### Participants

Barnum, Anthony Justin  
Caselli, Davide  
Coppola, Alessandro  
Field, James  
He, Huang  
Kadi, Justin  
Lederman, Jacob  
Lonergan, Gwyneth  
Marzorati, Roberta  
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Rousseau, Max  
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Tanulku, Basak  
Theodosios Lefteris  
Thompson, James  
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Vianello, Michele  
Wachsmuth, David  
Wieditz, Thorben

### Moderators

Giovanni Torrasi  
Yuri Kazepov

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Welcome to everybody. Today we are going to discuss with Ivonne Audirac (University of Texas at Arlington, USA) and Sylvie Fol (University of Paris, FR) their article: "Shrinking Cities: Urban Challenges of Globalization". Other co-authors – who could not attend – are Cristina Martinez-Fernandez (University of Western Sydney, AUS), and Emmanuele Cunningham-Sabot (Rennes 2 university, FR). It's 14.00 GMT and I think we can officially open our discussion today. I leave the floor to Audirac and Fol for a short introduction about their article.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Good afternoon / morning everybody.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Hello everyone and thanks for reading our paper! Our paper on Shrinking Cities (SC for short) has as thesis that SCs must be seen as a global phenomenon. Shrinkage and growth are not parallel but rather one feeds on the other, a kind of symbiosis, if you will.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** I see that we have already many questions. I begin with the first one by Gwyneth Lonergan:

**<Lonergan, Gwyneth>** What about cities who simply cannot 'reconnect' to global networks, who tend to permanent decline? I'm thinking particularly of some of the small cities, like Doncaster, in the North of England. I mean, what do you do when there are no viable strategies for revitalisation?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** It is a very important question indeed. Small cities, and there are plenty of them in most parts of Europe that are shrinking, are too peripheral to connect to the global networks. So there is a need for specific policies in these small cities, not necessarily toward re-growth but related to the well being of their population.

Of course there is a need for strong public involvement, which is not the main trend nowadays. The issue of small shrinking cities is probably one of the most difficult to solve because they don't weigh much in national economies and are often neglected by national policies.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Very good. James Field for the next question:

**<Field, James>** I was interested in what role you see the state playing in attempting to mitigate against urban shrinkage? For example, in the UK, successive governments have moved central government departments from London to 'the regions' (typically areas that have suffered large job losses from deindustrialisation), and we are now seeing areas where the public sector is the largest local employer and the population decline has stalled or even reversed.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** So maybe there is no problem anymore. Public employment plays indeed a very important role in declining cities but it might not be seen a problem per se. Except in a period of scarce public funding of course! What do you think James? .

**<Field, James>** I agree, it's interesting looking at what the government have done in the past as it has tended to replicate the former problems, e.g., they moved part of the Department of Health out of London then made a huge number of people unemployed and are now rehiring.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** In France we have the same problem with the so called "rationalization" of public services. Some regions and cities (rural regions and small cities, to come back to the previous question) are really affected.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Shrinking cities and neo-Keynesianism. Let us go on with a new question by Anthony Justin.

**<Barnum, Anthony Justin>** I don't think it makes logical sense to have a shrinking model when the population is growing along with the world population. Instead, I believe that what is more relevant would be a consolidation model as people, goods, services, etc. move to global cities at the expense of de-globalized cities. In addition, the idea of a shrinking city seems to be solely an economic model. The physical space of cities is growing, even though dead zones may be developing in the centre forming a type of doughnut. Are there any

alternative models to the shrinking city?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** I am not sure I understand what you mean by "shrinking model" ?

**<Barnum, Anthony Justin>** The basic idea you offer is that cities are shrinking. I am referring to this.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** What do you see?

**<Barnum, Anthony Justin>** I see cities consolidating, goods, people, and services into global cities at the expense of de-globalized cities. Instead of shrinking, global cities are becoming extremely concentrated places of people, goods, and services, while other cities are being dissolved.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Yes, you are absolutely right.

**<Barnum, Anthony Justin>** So the city is not shrinking?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Well, the result is not really balanced: there are winners and losers in the process (see Max Rousseau's paper on Roubaix in IJURR). I guess we agree on that(?)

**<Barnum, Anthony Justin>** Yes, definitely winners and losers. If the result is not balanced, then there should be no shrinking cities or growing cities, which leaves us not identifying anything. Instead of shrinking it seems we are falling back to Wallerstein and everything moving to the center.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Maybe there should not be, but there are and in terms of social consequences it is not neutral.

**<Barnum, Anthony Justin>** Definitely not. It's very politicized and directed towards global capitalism leaving a majority of the world's people forced to move to the growing global cities.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** So we agree!

**<Barnum, Anthony Justin>** Instead of seeing shrinking cities we are seeing a consolidation of the world to the global cities. Yes :)

**<Fol, Sylvie>** We speak of the same process with different words: there are growing global cities AND shrinking cities: the 2 sides of the same phenomenon.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** I think I agree as well. Let us go with the next question now, by David Wachsmuth:

**<Wachsmuth, David>** I would like you to clarify the claim that "today urban shrinkage, rather than being an exception or aberration, could be analysed as a global and structural phenomenon" (p. 218). As you discuss at a different point in the article, urban disinvestment and shrinkage have long been a basic feature of capitalist uneven development, including in the "pre-globalization" Fordist-Keynesian era. This is what Smith called the "locational seesaw". So what is it that's different about urban shrinkage today as compared with the past? Is it that the scale on which the uneven development is occurring has grown (from the metropolitan to the global)? Or are there other dimensions as well?

**<Audirac Ivonne>** The difference today as compared to the past is that we live in a smaller world (compressed) through ICTs that have brought about global connectivity among individuals and organizations.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** David, you are quite right. The post-fordist explanation (see our paper on suburban shrinkage in the issue) is still valid of course. But the scale and the rhythm of the processes are increasing: there is no part of the world that is now really protected from the phenomenon of urban shrinkage.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Yes, I agree with Sylvie. Shrinking cities are occurring in the Global North and Global South and the question to David is whether you think there is a certain level of convergence through global capitalism.

**<Wachsmuth, David>** I guess I think that shrinking has always been a fundamental component of urban growth in both the North and South--rural-to-urban migration is one community shrinking and another growing--but arguably the linkages are larger scale now than they used to be.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Yes, I agree that the scale, or our awareness of scale has become global and instantaneous. Our social consciousness and inter-subjectivity have become global as well as our spatio-temporal notions of growth and decline.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** David Wachsmuth. Would you like to intervene?

**<Wachsmuth, David>** My only additional question is whether there are other dimensions to urban shrinkage than simply an up scaling. E.g. are the forces driving shrinkage fundamentally the same as always, even if expressed globally?

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** The forces are more complex, partly due to the fast availability of knowledge about almost anything and about any place in the world. The new planetary consciousness is also reflexive at the level of firms and individuals, making national and international migration of people and capital increasingly more dynamic.

**<Wachsmuth, David>** In other words, does your intervention confirm the traditional story of uneven development (cycles of devalorization and revalorization), or force us to reconsider that story?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** I would say that the demographic aspects are growing in importance. Take the examples of Japan or Russia: the "global" causes of shrinkage are reinforced by the demographic situation, which is not quite new but really serious nowadays.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** As you point out, shrinkage and growth have always co-existed. However, "uneven development" is a story of the modern planning paradigm, The "modern" state's responsibility was to even out uneven development and compensate shrinking cities for the spoils of growth. In the "post modern" (post Keynesian) globalized world, uneven development becomes the "geography of opportunity" and of comparative advantage, and shrinking cities must fend for themselves.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Next is Jacob Lederman with a very long question indeed. Let us read it:

**<Lederman, Jacob>** Thanks very much for this piece. My question has to do with the conceptions of globalization, Fordism, and post-Fordism cited in the article. Your argument points to the fact that globalization has sped up the process of creative destruction, or what Harvey refers to as a "spatial fix" to problems of accumulation. I wonder how we might grapple more systematically with the ontology of globalization itself. What mechanisms (institutional, supranational etc.) have allowed for the increased mobility of capital in ways that speed up these processes of creative destruction? Are there ways to bring in more agentive perspectives to the question of globalization? Here I am thinking of multi-lateral institutions such as the ICSID (International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes), which is essentially a mechanism to ensure greater mobility of international capital (foreign direct investment etc.), but also the impact of bilateral trade/investment treaties that have proliferated in the last 3+ decades. Is there a possible research agenda that further integrates urban processes with global financial flows and the political agendas that have transformed the nature of these flows?

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** We have totally different levels of production that did not exist 40 years ago. These systems of production (e.g. global value chains) did not exist until after the 1980s and they are changing the way production is organized around the world.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** To Jacob: We have not investigated in this direction yet but it is probably very important. The deregulation process that is increasingly taking place has probably dramatic effects on the mobility of capital.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** I think that the World Economic Forum is the place where these questions are debated, Jacob, and decided every year.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** To Jacob: we definitely need to look more precisely at these trends and include them in the discussion .

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** As Sylvie, pointed out, WTO and deregulation in favor of the larger countries may still be the deciding factor or driver. China has begun to play a very important role in geopolitical and international development terms.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Jacob, what do you think about it?

**<Lederman, Jacob>** I suppose what I am grappling with a bit is the institutional and actor-based level of the changes you mention since the 1980's. It seems to me that we as urbanists have sometimes left these questions to others, and perhaps in the future this might be something that further animates our conceptions of uneven development.

**<Lederman, Jacob>** It seems my follow-up just got lost. But to summarize, I think we agree that perhaps there is more actor-based work that urbanists can do to further integrate "urban" analysis with the functioning of global economic institutions and flows and the politics that define them.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Jacob, I couldn't agree more: that kind of topic needs a multidisciplinary approach.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Yes, Jacob, I agree. I think that Anthony Giddens suggests that, for urbanists, the room for agency in these matters is found at the local level, at the level of the city. Do you agree?

**<Lederman, Jacob>** I think a number of scales are important but I think my initial thoughts pointed more in the direction of taking "globalization" apart a bit. How, exactly have global institutions instantiated the mobility of capital in ways that impacts the development of cities. But I agree the local level of politics and policy is extremely important as well.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** While we type, Michele Vianello follows up on the issue:

**<Vianello, Michele>** I was quite puzzled to read about Sao Paulo as a case of shrinkage (p. 216). You refer to it in the category of "suburban industrial shrinkage", so I presume you are referring to some specific areas of the city. On more general terms I am quite curious about the Brazilian case. I would presume that in Brazil less cities are shrinking due to the strong protectionism in the economy and heavy taxations on imported commodities: these policies often protect jobs. Am I right about Brazil? In case I am, do you think that a connection can be drawn between protectionism, or openness of the market on one side, and shrinking cities on the other? Shouldn't we seek an answer to shrinkage in economic policies as well?

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Michele, this is a very interesting question you pose. Sao Paulo is shrinking at the centre, like many other cities in Latin America and the Global North. The reasons are related to demographic, economic and great socioeconomic inequality...

**<Fol, Sylvie>** In addition to Ivonne's answer: yes our colleague Sergio Moraes was referring to specific parts of the city, which were industrialized in an early stage, but became obsolete in terms of transportation networks, etc.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Brazil is booming due to oil revenues and because FDI is flowing into Sao Paulo. The super-rich (very few), are staying in the centre but the real estate boom is making Sao Paulo very unaffordable and pushing people out into the periphery. Like the rest of Latin America, with the exception of Venezuela and Bolivia, Brazil joined the neoliberal wave knocking down import substitution industrialization (ISI) policies (market protectionism) since the 1990s, and bringing about deep industrial restructuring with urban shrinkage consequences to parts of the metropolis (as described in our suburbs article).

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Michele, any feedback?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Your point is quite similar to Jacob's and once again, I agree: economic policies (in terms of openness, deregulation, etc.) definitely matter!

**<Vianello, Michele>** So in general terms, my assumption that Brazilian cities are shrinking less is possibly right in your opinion?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Yes of course Michele.

**<Vianello, Michele>** And similarly to Jacob, I wonder whether economic policies are to be investigated to draw conclusions and eventually hint at solutions.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Possibly... the next census will tell. The last census showed more districts losing population at the centre of Sao Paulo for example. However, it is too early to tell if Brazil's latest re-kindling of ISI type policies will protect jobs and ultimately reduce or prevent further urban shrinkage in Sao Paulo.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** But still there are (according to our colleagues) small cities in rural areas that are shrinking, and some industrial parts of the metropolises that are declining as well.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** However, our thesis would be that some of the shrinkage in Sao Paulo and other Latin American cities is actually driven by new growth.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Let us go on. Davide Caselli poses two intertwined questions:

**<Caselli, Davide >** HI, and thanks for your interesting article! I have two intertwined questions: 1) I am interested in knowing more about specific features of gentrification processes in shrinking cities: do they follow different paths? And 2) "abandoned city centre to revitalize through green areas or by attracting investments" are typical settings for gentrification but also typical goals of the neoliberal model that led us to the bubble and the crisis (very much about city growth!). Have you found in your research political and planning strategies looking at different model of economy and social relation from the neoliberal ones?

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Gentrification is the Achilles heel of planning for regeneration anywhere. In Detroit and other cities there is the formal approach with city and planning interventions, the other is more bottom up, grass roots and informal (like the better block movement). The problem is that if the second one brings growth, the first one co-opts it. See for example: <http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/TEDxOU-Jason-Roberts-How-To-Bui>

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Gentrification doesn't necessarily "work" in all shrinking cities. Sometimes it is a lost cause. However I agree with Ivonne: it is indeed a "standard" strategy, which comes with various fantasies about the creative class and so on.

**<Caselli, Davide>** Could you find alternative strategies of well being if not for growth in shrinking cities?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Alternatives strategies: yes in the most desperate cases, you can find some very interesting policies.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Davide, in the US and other countries the informal regeneration goes by "guerilla urbanism" or "tactical" or "do it yourself" urbanism. Where these tactics have been successful, the private sector and municipalities are often interested in promoting them, by "sanitizing them" and "formalizing them".

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Alternative strategies: the case of Youngstown has been very well studied and is an example of all the efforts that can be made to involve the residents (community organizations). There are other examples in West Germany and in Japan as well, where local policies really take into account residents (their action and well-being).

**<Caselli, Davide>** Ok, thanks. So I really have to read Alessandro Coppola's book!

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** We have already discussed the issue raised by James Thompson. Any further

thoughts? I am posting his question again.

**<Thompson, James>** I can see how the various historical attempts of theorizing urban processes that you outline (natural/ecological, urban decline, neoliberal/globalization, etc.) correspond with changing public perceptions of particular shrinking cities (reification, pity, romanticization, etc.). For example, over the last few decades, in the United States at least, shrinking cities have shifted from being viewed as dystopian to utopian, becoming the objects of "ruin porn", havens for urban farming enthusiasts, and so on. Because you focus on discourse and paradigm classification as an important meta-issue of the larger topic, I'm curious if you see any hope in the public escaping these wide, oscillating patterns of perceptions towards shrinking cities and reaching more complex, nuanced views. What is the ethical role of the researcher related to this process? Thank you!

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** You ask a very complex question and one that I ask myself often. The ethical researcher or the ethics of planning for SCs? Shrinking Cities is a loaded term that can stigmatize residents; no mayor in the US wants to hear that his city is shrinking. So, part of the issue is whether we develop theories that shed light on growth and "shrinkage" or we re-theorize the problem and use another term for describing the "phenomenon."

**<Fol, Sylvie>** James, you're quite right. This romanticization of Shrinking Cities can be very disruptive. I agree that we need to give a realistic, therefore complex, view of shrinking cities. It is not easy to do.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** The ethical issue of research is what is the audience that we want to reach: other academics or the people making decisions and affecting the day to day world? This is an important dilemma for academics and researchers.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Local actors and residents don't often agree with the negative image that we as researchers can display. I realize that I am repeating what Ivonne said!

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** There are academics that believe in advocacy and are in the trenches working with the people and spend less time publishing books or articles that speak to other academics.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Back to James: What we can at least do is try to support and publicize community organizations' initiatives.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Tanulki Basak with a super-long question!

**<Tanulku, Basak>** Thank you very much for the very interesting article. I was reading books/articles with similar concerns on the need for planning and/or the need for transcending a growth-based paradigm and the problems related to shrinking cities. Cities are shrinking due to different reasons, as you argued in the article: due to transfer the industrial production to another site; transition to post-socialism (experienced in Eastern Europe), and transition from Fordism to Post-Fordism, which is strengthened by the power of global networks. While reading the article, I thought that there might be two forms of urban shrinkage. The first is as you mentioned, the urban shrinkage due to lack of economic activity causing the decay in urban infrastructure and community. The second is urban shrinkage due to the over-grown cities (over urbanization) like Istanbul Turkey, which are regarded as economic engines with different sectors (tourism, service, industrial as well as creative/knowledge sectors). However, these cities are in decline in terms of urban infrastructure (housing quality, roads) as well as historic city centres and heritage, urban culture as well as facing increasing social polarization (despite economic growth). Related to planning, or the return of planning, another major theme is to use planning to reduce urban shrinkage. Related to that, another important is the focus on the relation between planning and knowledge/creative sectors which can lead to the over-reliance on these sectors by still neglecting the heavy industry (which has already been transferred to developing countries due to low wages and smaller welfare provisions and small amount of membership to workers' unions) which is an important issue in Western European countries. So it is important that shrinkage is not due to the lack of growing economies, but sometimes too much which kills the city (in terms of its sustainability, community, culture, heritage, environmental resources). Planning is also needed here.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Yes I agree! Sometimes the political choices that are made by local (or national) public actors are the cause of decline in some parts of the economic structure of a city. By trying to support growth, those kind

of strategies can induce decline and shrinkage.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Basak, thanks for this question. What you describe for cities in Turkey can be also observed in Latin America, where growth and urban sprawl of megacities is the norm, however, cities are losing agglomerative force in the center and in some parts in their periphery. One of the factors is, as you point out, the aging of housing and infrastructure, but the other is that jobs and people are migrating to the periphery of the metro area and to smaller cities. So you have de-concentration and decentralization operating at the same pace as centrifugal forces. In other words, these are growth forces related to multinucleation of the metropolis (e.g., growth of sub-centres).

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Very good. Now a question by Theodosios Leftesis, which is related to the issue at stake:

**<Leftesis, Theodosios>** Since you comment that "the urban growth model is no longer valid for the sustainable development of cities and regions", I would like to bring to the discussion planning at the scale of the megalopolis or the mega region. In a recent study, Saskia Sassen argues that the specific advantages of the mega regional scale consist of and arise from the coexistence within one regional space of multiple types of agglomeration economies. She suggests that strategic regional planning could aim at maximizing the combination of different locational logics, and harbour both the dispersed operations of a given firm and its central headquarter. Could this global perspective be an answer to shrinking cities?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Strategic regional planning is useful indeed. However I doubt it could be a panacea.

**<Leftesis, Theodosios>** Still it could be a way to engage with the globalizing forces of the market. .

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Theodosios, this is a great question too. Mega-regions have emerged as a model for encompassing growing and shrinking cities within one large multi metropolitan territory. There is research that shows that some of it is already happening in Northern and Southern California related to the logistics industries sector and environmental justice issues. However, there is scepticism that social equity issues can be really tackled at a mega-regional level, at least in the U.S.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** In some cases as the ones we just discussed (Sao Paulo, etc.) where growth and shrinkage occur in the same region, it is true that regional planning could be a solution. In other cases where shrinkage is occurring at the regional scale, it is still important in terms of mitigating the socio-spatial effects of shrinkage but it will not solve the problem in itself.

**<Leftesis, Theodosios>** I agree. Planning should take in consideration different scales + logics. Thanks.

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Alessandro Coppola:

**<Coppola, Alessandro>** Good evening, I very much appreciated your article. I've a question on the policy side more than on the analytical one. I've been conducting research on planning strategies in US Rustbelt cities and have come to the conclusion that in some of these cities we can truly appreciate a paradigm shift in urban policy. The framework of growth is still there, but there are new themes such as new "localist" economic development strategies and some sort of "post-commodification" land-use strategies. Do you agree with this view?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Alessandro: Ivonne may have more answers on that one. From what I know, you're quite right. The question is whether these strategies are "last hope strategies" and where they can lead without a strong support from the State.

What I mean is that sometimes these strategies are choices by default and desperately need some "real funding" by the State, which doesn't seem to really happen in the US.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Alessandro, yes I agree with your view. Some of these cities are even trying to attract migrants (minority) despite being so controversial in the U.S. (e.g., migration debate), they see it as a way for revitalizing cities. One case is Detroit's Global Detroit, which is a coalition of NGOs universities and business

groups that promote immigration. Some of their immigrants, including Mexican immigrants, are changing the demographics of the U.S. Would you call post-commodification this sort of policy or strategy?

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Thanks a lot! Now a reflection about scale and simultaneity by Wieditz Thorben:

**<Wieditz, Thorben>** I thought the article provides an excellent and very helpful overview of the state of the debate on shrinking cities. Many thanks for this. I haven't read the subsequent articles that were part of this symposium, so some of my questions might be answered already. The question that came to my mind, however, is one of scale and simultaneity, that is, what about those places that show some, if not all the dimensions associated with shrinking cities. I am thinking of declining sectors of a regional economy, disinvested neighbourhoods, and so on, within an overall growing city? I am referring here to Toronto, where I work, live and do my research.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Thorben, I like your question very much, although I'm not familiar with Toronto's degree of "shrinkage". Here in the US, and in DFW, where I live, there are various levels of very palpable shrinkage some in the downtowns and inner suburbs, other in peripheral small cities. For example the very vibrant small towns that thrived during the railroad era, are shrinking after the interstate era. The growth has moved to areas close to the Hwy...

**<Fol, Sylvie>** I guess that all metropolises display that kind of interrelation between growth and decline. If the metropolis is opulent as a whole, it is more a question of better sharing the resources, which leads us back to the regional planning debate.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** This is possible because the next municipality or county or even the same county is competing for that growth. So, there are different levels of degrees of shrinkage in the same metro region, especially in inner suburbs.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** You should read our paper on shrinking suburbs ;-)

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Justin Kadi:

**<Kadi, Justin>** I would like to throw in a question about the concept of "shrinkage". I've the feeling that generally in the debate there tends to be a bit of an undifferentiated view of what constitutes shrinkage. This blends with a certain fetish of decline in the media (I very much like the term ruin porn for these photo series of cities consisting only of empty streets and vacant houses.). What I mean is that by labelling cities as declining based on economic or demographic indicators like GDP or population number, much is left out of the picture that is actually happening - and growing if you want - in these places. I'm thinking of the many urban gardening initiatives in Detroit, or the alternative shrinking cities tours that are offered in such places. So actually shrinking cities may be places where - in small parts - some forms of alternative models of development are realized. These are however left out of the picture by just labelling the city as a whole as being "shrinking". I'd be curious to hear what you think of that.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Justin, Thanks for your question... I agree that demographic change and GDP change is just one dimension, although they are good indicators of change/decline of growth that are widely used. The physical deterioration of the SC is quite impressive in the eyes of international audiences who see the Global North glamorized through the media and never expect the decay found in some cities. I know that there have been proposals for turning SCs in the Rustbelt into living museums of the SC, of American deindustrialization, or of what uneven development looks like in the so called most powerful and rich country. It just needs an investor and perhaps the theme-park media to publicize it for international tourism and to compete with Disneyworld.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Justin, we really agree on that. Ivonne already underlined this problem of the homogeneous negative image of shrinking cities. This image doesn't reflect the local initiatives and all models that are experienced in SC. I agree that some of the next urban strategies are probably currently invented in SC! A bit scary isn't it?

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Yes, it is! When we have 10 minutes left. Rui Santos:

**<Santos, Rui>** Thank you for your enlightening paper, and for giving us the chance to discuss it with you! I'd like to ask you a question, then, concerning the political responses and planning approaches to shrinkage. Aside the traditional political strategies to boost economic recovery, with its well-known ambivalent results, some literature on shrinkage underlines the importance of mutualist and communalisation strategies, on the one hand, and of channelling investment to (social) structures rather than infrastructures, on the other, to foster local (socioeconomic) development. That, I guess, is a claim for the deepening of decentralisation policies and participatory planning approaches. Would you consider these strategies to be recommendable/viable?

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Rui Santos, Thanks for your question...

**<Fol, Sylvie>** It is funny because many of your questions point at those kind of strategies. Actually I really agree with you on the new perspectives offered by that kind of policy. However decentralization and local economic development should not be a pretext for the State for not intervening anymore!

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Frankly, I do not see the return to the more welfare state oriented type of policies that are pro-social, at least in the U.S. The notion of government has given way to the notion of governance i.e. increasingly the local government needs the help of the private and non-profit sectors (e.g., public-private partnerships), because it has also shrunk. The state in the US has shrunk and needs the help of the private sector and the non-profit sector to take over some of the urban regeneration and social policy roles that used to be funded by the federal government.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Unfortunately I agree with Ivonne.

**<Santos, Rui>** Thank you :)

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Roberta asking about a comparison between the USA and Europe:

**<Marzorati, Roberta>** Hello and thank you for your article. I was wondering if we can really consider "urban shrinkage" as a global phenomenon or differences between different contexts (such as US vs European cities) would require other, different categories. Moreover, the phenomenon in Europe seems to be less visible in the public debate if compared with US or other contexts. Do you agree? What would be the reasons for this?

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Roberta, this a very interesting question. When we launched our research group we planned to do a typology of SC, which is not done yet.

Urban shrinkage takes indeed very different forms in US and Europe. There are many reasons: economic, demographic, public policies. However it doesn't mean that because shrinkage is less discussed in Europe (it is in Germany and in Eastern European countries) it is not occurring.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Roberta, to continue with the notion of governance in the US that may be different to that in Europe... The non profit sector is gaining importance in every strategy or intervention for regeneration of SCs. due to the void left by the retrenchment of the welfare state in the US since the 1980s. This is more peculiar or typical in the US than in W. Europe, I believe.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** "Less visible in the public debate" is probably the good way of expressing the difference!

**<Marzorati, Roberta>** Thank you!

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Thorben Wieditz:

**<Wieditz, Thorben>** Another question I had while reading your piece relates to the state and planning. You provide an overview of different theoretical approaches that we have available to analyse and make sense of urban growth and decline, however, I was hoping to see an equally critical overview of the different theories we have with regards to planning, particularly with regards to planning as profession that is linked to the state on the one hand and capital on the other. There seems to be an underlying assumption that planning and policy

somehow can address spatial justice issues, while others might say that state-led development (planning) and urban policies are part and parcel of processes of uneven development "paving the way" (quite literally), in historically and geographically specific forms, for new rounds of capital accumulation. I am a little sceptical that just by taking shrinking cities serious, planners and policy makers will then somehow come up with a regulatory land use and policy framework that addresses these issues in socio-economically just ways.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Thorben, this question is great but I am not sure that we will have time to answer it because it is a difficult one!

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Thorben, I agree with your view... there are however, as I said, planners and architects that have worked in the US (since Alinsky and Davidoff) with NGOs (like CDCs Community Design Centers) that advocate for poor communities to be empowered to fight for the right to the city... this began in the US in the 1960s as a response to urban renewal programs of the time.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Our paper doesn't really deal with policies because it is a big piece! The question of justice in planning is indeed a serious one. I think it is difficult to see public policies and planning only as instruments for paving the way to accumulation but they need to be always debated and object to counter-powers to ensure social and spatial justice

Thank you so much for the questions ! It was great talking to you all! Sorry Max for your non answered question: to be continued !!!

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Maybe the other two authors could answer to it off line, and let it appear in the final chat transcription.

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Good idea Giovanni!

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Thanks. Also because we are out of time now, the same logic can apply to our last question by Rousseau Max.

I need to thank very much Ivonne and Sylvie for their availability and patience. This is not an easy way of interacting at all, and this is your first time! I thank as well all our participants for the interesting questions. We have a very good and high level of participation this year. I take this opportunity to wish to all a very good day/night and see you online for the next meeting!

**<Fol, Sylvie>** Thank you very much Giovanni: you are a great moderator (and teacher!)

**<Torrise, Giovanni>** Thanks again! (I am also a legal sociologist)

### **Questions answered by the other authors off-line:**

**<Wieditz, Thorben>** Another question I had while reading your piece relates to the state and planning. You provide an overview of different theoretical approaches that we have available to analyse and make sense of urban growth and decline, however, I was hoping to see an equally critical overview of the different theories we have with regards to planning, particularly with regards to planning as profession that is linked to the state on the one hand and capital on the other. There seems to be an underlying assumption that planning and policy somehow can address spatial justice issues, while others might say that state-led development (planning) and urban policies are part and parcel of processes of uneven development "paving the way" (quite literally), in historically and geographically specific forms, for new rounds of capital accumulation. I am a little sceptical that just by taking shrinking cities serious, planners and policy makers will then somehow come up with a regulatory land use and policy framework that addresses these issues in socio-economically just ways.

**<Cuninham-Sabot, Emmanuèle >** Thorben, I think you will find some answers (and nuanced points of view) from Ivonne and me, just below. I'm sorry that I started with the question of my French colleague, but you will find some scepticism (like yourself) and also some hope (regarding social innovations within shrinking cities) in my answer below. Your question and Max's question leads me to think of the same conclusion.

**<Rousseau, Max>** Many thanks to the authors for their wonderful paper on such an important and fascinating topic. I would like to build on Rui Santos' question. I have the feeling that in some shrinking cities, the local policymakers are gradually accepting the idea that the decline is irreversible after more than three decades of unsuccessful, mostly entrepreneurial pro-growth "regeneration" strategies. So I was wondering if urban shrinkage could not constitute a favourable context to implement "alternative" urban policies, i.e. bottom-up policies emerging from the grassroots such as de-growth strategies, the support to urban agriculture (see the case of Detroit) and so on. My questions to the authors are: have you seen such strategies emerge in the shrinking cities of the Western world and if so, could you speak a little bit about them? Do you think the shrinking cities could constitute in a near future the site of an alternative urban model which could oppose to the more neoliberal strategies implemented in the so-called "global cities" or in the emerging cities of the global South?

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Max, With the advent of smartphones, social media, and the internet, the ability to energize and mobilize grass-roots community projects that are informal or illegal (not permitted by local ordinances) has become an important vehicle for raising public awareness and interest in grass-roots urban regeneration at the neighbourhood level. Again, this has been called "tactical urbanism," and has been successful in areas where residents care about protecting their neighbourhoods from further deterioration, decay or abandonment (see for instance: [http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical\\_urbanism\\_vol\\_2\\_final](http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final)). However, few of these interventions involve squatting projects of empty buildings such as the housing-activist group Jeudi Noir in France or Land Action and the Occupy movement in the US (after the housing foreclosure crisis). These grass-roots tactics are not new, they have existed for a long time, especially in the Global South where the housing deficit is huge and illegal occupation of buildings, land, and the street rights of way is part of a different kind of extremely politically contested growth machine. Undoubtedly, as you point out, SCs are the site where these "anti-globalization" alternative models are occurring both in the global cities of the North and in the megacities of the South. Urban renewal/recovery projects of shrinking historic centres in Latin American cities (SC's "doughnut" effect) have been the site of right-to-the-city struggles between neoliberal schemes for high-end global tourism and street vendors and poor tenants fighting forceful evictions.

**<Cuninham-Sabot, Emmanuèle>** Max, your comments and question are very pertinent. The first step is indeed the recognition of "shrinkage", which is not an easy task in some countries (France is certainly one of them, even after the "3 decades of unsuccessful, mostly entrepreneurial pro-growth regeneration strategies" you mentioned). Once the denial is lifted, it really allows for alternative routes to new solutions outside the growth paradigm. "Smart growth" was a motto; "smart shrinkage" could be the one for shrinking cities and this is probably our task (scholars like yourself and ourselves) to work and elaborate on the content of smart shrinkage. These "alternative" ways of thinking, "bottom-up policies emerging from the grassroots" you mentioned, are indeed deeply rooted into a "de-growth" paradigm (Latouche - a term which has much more meaning in French than in any other language). Never the less the de-growth paradigm is not specially focused on "urban planning" or urban shrinkage. It leads more to an economic way of life, which has indeed some effects on the cities, and could be translated into "tactical urbanism," as Ivonne mentioned above. At a city scale, there are some more "formalised" brother & sister movements like "citta-slow" or the "cities in transition" movements which could be part of this de-growth reflexion. However, in the two previous cases these "strategies" did not stem from "shrinking cities" specifically. Regarding your questions about emerging strategies specifically within shrinking cities, the cases of Youngstown, Detroit, and numerous cities in the eastern part of Germany (Dessau, for ex) involving grassroots movements, communities involvement, ways of "planning shrinkage", making the city more viable, liveable and at every scale of the city are definitively a way to explore. I am thinking particularly of the German concept and planning tool of *Zwischennutzungen*, and also the community land ownership movement (in Scotland), which are tackling at various scales the problems of shrinking (spaces and communities). So, Yes, I definitively agree that "shrinking cities", or "shrinking communities", after playing their part in this new urban order, or new urban disorder, these particular shrinking cities may also be "laboratories" or pioneers for some new urban spirit, or a new "urbanity" within a new urban model where de-growth is bound to be central. However what worries me is that leaving the future of shrinking cities in the sole hands of their communities seems like the magical solution which pleases everyone: the communities who feel in control (at last), and the neoliberals for whom it is an easy way to wash their hands of the problem, especially in the UK with the setting of the "Big Society". I believe grassroots and communities are crucial in the process of social innovations especially within shrinking cities. They show that density is not solely a question of buildings but can also be about social interactions. Shrinking cities may be able to teach lessons to other cities (regarding urban planning, empowerment, resilience, and social density, etc.) but I am afraid that this "social fix" cannot work without some

form of solidarity from other “growing places” bringing funding, which is crucial, and will necessarily come from the outside.

**<Tanulku, Basak>** More comments which can complete the previous question: I would like to question the importance given to growth by neglecting planning, the heritage because they are seen as "leftists" things which do not bring profit. In Turkey, all heritage sites are under threat due to giving too much importance to money. All over Istanbul, we see high rises, shopping malls in the same avenue, and the debate on the third airport in the North of the city leading to the eradication of all native forests. This is the cooperation between the real estate and finance. Being against this, is usually regarded by being against growth (this is very right wing- when someone tries to bring forward an environmental issue, they tell that this is against growth). So cities like Istanbul despite the growth are shrinking due to neglecting planning, heritage, conservation which are not only about the physical environment of the city, but also its community.

**<Audirac, Ivonne>** Basak, Emmanuèle has asked me to address your question, and given my very limited knowledge of Istanbul, I have very little to say other than I agree with the point you raise about the ecological destruction that unfettered urban growth brings to cities. Ecological damage in connection with SCs is very clear in terms of pollution and contaminated sites like in the old industrial cities of the US and Europe. However, the connection to SCs related to deforestation and loss of agricultural land, as a result of urban encroachment, is not so readily apparent and Istanbul's globalization may be a good illustrative case. As Emmanuèle said, responding to Max's question, shrinking cities have lessons for other cities in terms of planning, empowerment, resilience, social innovation, etc. and as Sylvie pointed out, our group began with the production of a comprehensive typology of shrinking cities that included demographic (ageing, emigration), economic (deindustrialization, technological restructuring, financial industrialization, resource-based production), suburbanization and ex-urbanization, globalization, and natural disasters (etc.) as urban shrinkage factors. Many of these factors seem to be present in modern day Istanbul. In the present era of global flows, Istanbul's legendary strategic role, as a gateway city between Europe and Asia, has become paramount in its bid for global-city status—witnessed by the mega infrastructural projects in transportation and logistics (submerged railway across the Bosphorous Strait, a new bridge over the strait, two new international airports) and high-end real-estate development—and the highly controversial new “urban renewal” policies of the central government that have razed poor historic neighbourhoods deemed risk prone to earthquakes (natural disaster) to make way for the high-end high rises and shopping malls that you described. Some lessons, as Thorben suggests above, are that state-led planning and urban policies “in historically and geographically specific forms” are often one more factor behind SCs. In the case of Istanbul, tower development in the periphery built to house the urban-renewal displaced population (typically from the shrinking central districts) does not only seem to be contributing to urban sprawl and concomitant deforestation, but also to homelessness and overcrowding as poor displaced people cannot afford to live in apartments in the outer edges or in their old central city communities, which have been now razed and gentrified. So I would agree with you that a different kind of planning is needed. It is emerging in the non-profit sector outside the state and outside the private sector, in “localism” initiatives and other forms of resistance (as Alessandro Coppola's book, reports on). But that, as Emmanuèle suggests, needs funding to be sustainable in the long run.

**-END-**