JEAN-PHILIPPE AURAMBOU'T
The Future of Cities policy briefs:
a webinar series

Shrinking cities

WEDNESDAY 31 MAY 2023
Continuation of Future of cities


Its main aim is to raise open questions and steer discussions on what the future of cities can, and should be, both within the scientific and policymaker communities.
The work of many…

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• Italy
• Lithuania
• Czech Republic
Outline

• Global trends
• Why are cities shrinking?
• How does shrinkage affect cities?
• What are cities doing about it?
• Common needs and opportunities
• Conclusions and way forward
Increasingly more population is moving from rural areas to cities.

- 75% of the world population currently live in urban areas

Perception that all cities are growing… False

An increasing number of cities are now losing people in the USA, EU and Japan but also other countries.
Globally increasingly more population is moving from rural areas to cities. Perceptions that all cities are growing… False

An increasing number of cities are now losing people in the EU, USA, and Japan but also in other countries.

**A global perspective**

- **2000-2015**
- 1/6 cities lost population

Annual rate of population change between 2000 and 2015 at FUA level at the global scale
At the European scale

**2001-2011** and **2011-2018**

~ ¼ cities lost population

- Continuous shrinking
- Shrinking and growing
- Growing and shrinking

~12% of EU population in shrinking cities

Shrinkage could affect 45% of FUA by 2050…
Why are cities shrinking?

Percentage of cases mentioning as driver factor behind urban shrinkage:

- De-industrialisation: 28%
- Suburbanisation: 19%
- Ageing: 16%
- Outmigration: 16%
- Low fertility: 13%
- Post socialist transformation: 8%
- Others: 5%
- Environmental factors: 5%
Why are cities shrinking?

- De-industrialisation
- Suburbanisation
- Ageing
- Outmigration
- Low fertility
- Post socialist transformation
- Others
- Environmental factors

"even currently stable or growing cities should anticipate and plan for possible shrinkage in the future"
What are the effects of shrinkage on cities?

**Hardware**
- Housing supply exceeding demand. ↓ property value ↑ vacant properties (abandonment & urban blight)
- Closure of local businesses and services
- Less income for city administration

**Software**
- Population loss not homogenous: young skills workers
- Higher proportion of older and lower income population

**Mindware**
- Negative image lead to stigmatisation
- Lower attractiveness
Examples of measures taken

- **Urban renewal**: renovate and/or repurpose vacant downtown housing or buildings.

- **City Branding**: change the image of the city and make it more attractive
Examples of measures taken

- **Rightsizing**: buy off and demolish abandoned buildings, converting to other purposes such as green space.

Consolidation of infrastructure and services + incitement for people to relocate to more central locations.

$$$ + mostly focused on visible symptoms...
Examples of measures taken

- **Economic diversification**: reorientation of the economic base, focusing on emerging economic sectors such as technology, creative industries and/or tourism.

- **Culture led regeneration**: promote cultural and artistic creative activities to attract and retain talents and residents and tourists.
Examples of measures taken

New governance, bottom-up initiatives: active engagement of local citizens (community projects) to increase quality of life, social capital, adapt services to local needs (retirees, families), rejuvenate public spaces…
Common needs

- **Database of vacant or abandoned building**: identifying abandoned buildings and contacting their owners is a common issue.

- **Social housing**: building renewal or demolition may lead to gentrification. Need for measures to promote affordable housing,
Opportunities

- **New jobs and technologies**: need for technologies and businesses in the areas of building material recycling and re-use as well as in brownfield remediation and conversion to green spaces.

- **Post growth laboratories**: unique environments for empirical observations and experimentation to identify alternative systems focused on well-being and cohesion.
Tools, programmes & funding opportunities

- Targeted urban strategies (promoting social inclusion) in shrinking FUAs were supported **European Structural and Investment Funds** + upcoming (ERDF CF) regulation to support areas which suffered from severe demographic handicaps and for which some shrinking cities may be eligible.

- Activities under the **URBACT** programme: transfer networks of good practices to activate unused and decaying housing stock, revitalise public services and the economy, regenerate the urban fabric and develop civil society, etc.
Conclusions and way forward

Shrinking cities will become more important in the future.

Shrinking is poorly understood and we don’t yet know how to plan for it:

- Effectiveness of measures unknown.
- Unintended consequences

Not all shrinkage is necessarily associated with a decline in happiness or quality of life of residents. Opportunity for cities to select a development path centered around quality of life, environmental protection, social equity and sustainability
“Dealing with the results of demographic, economic and physical contraction processes and planning for the future of considerably smaller but nevertheless liveable cities is one of the most challenging tasks for urban Europe in the near future”

Martinez-Fernandez et al. (2016)
Keep in touch

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Thank you