



# Shrinking Cities and Towns: Policy Responses to the Challenges, Urban Planning, and Development Strategies

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The special collection on Shrinking Cities and Towns: Policy Responses to the Challenges, Urban Planning, and Development Strategies is available in the ASCE Library ([https://ascelibrary.org/jupddm/shrinking\\_cities\\_town](https://ascelibrary.org/jupddm/shrinking_cities_town)).

Shrinking cities have increasingly become a notable phenomenon with negative consequences in Europe, North America, Asia, and many other parts of the world (Berglund 2020). The uneven spatial development leads to deprived localities and brings forward a significant global challenge. In the United Kingdom, *shrinking cities* once again hit the headlines in April 2021. For example, the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence reported more than 700,000 residents have left London in 2020 alone. On one hand, the nation's population is in the most serious decline since the World War II. On the other hand, millions of people have moved out of cities since the pandemic emerged in December 2019. In the United States, Decatur, Illinois, has been the third-fastest shrinking city, whose population fell by 7.1% between 2010 and 2019, and that change to 2021 by  $-0.68\%$ . Over the same period, Jackson, Mississippi, is the second with a population decline of 7.4%, and Charleston, West Virginia, as the fastest-shrinking city with a population loss of 9.4%. In Europe, an international project "Enhancing liveability of small shrinking cities through co-creation" was launched in January 2021 and implemented by an international consortium consisting of researchers from Finland, Russia, and Germany, focusing on the liveability and place-making in shrinking cities, as well as local, regional, and national planning strategies of dealing with urban shrinkage in Finland,

Russia, and Germany. More than 900 cities and towns (about one-third) are shrinking in China, most of which are in the northeast with an increasingly elderly population, falling birth rate, and rapid decline of the proportion of young people.

Since 2000, the Shrinking Cities International Research Network (SCIRN), sponsored by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, has emphasized shrinking cities as an international phenomenon. The recent impetus for urban planners, designers, geographers, sociologists, historians, and environmentalists across the world reflects the state of the art as well as the continuous struggle of planning and design scholars and practitioners, who are devoted to investigating urban shrinkage and its implications for planning policy (Ganning and Tighe 2021). A special collection, "Introductory review to the Special Issue: Shrinking Cities and Towns: Challenge and Responses" in *Urban Design International*, discovered what lay behind the plurality of shrinking cities and provided a glimpse of the complex interdependencies of growth and decline in Europe and North America (Luescher and Shetty 2013). A special collection, "Promoting Social Justice and Equity in Shrinking Cities" in the *Journal of Urban Affairs*, reframed the discourse on shrinking cities, emphasized social justice and equity, and critically examined urban policy and governance on shrinking cities across the globe (Silverman 2020). Special Issues "Understanding Shrinkage in European Regions" in *Built Environment* (Bontje and Musterd 2012), "Shrinking Cities: Urban Challenges of Globalization" in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012), "Introduction: Shrinking Cities from marginal to mainstream: Views from North America and Europe" in *Cities* (Audirac 2018), and "Shrinking Cities—Testing Ground for Sustainability" in *Sustainability* (Pallagst et al. 2020) altogether elicit reflections on practical experiences and theoretical grounds, bringing shrinking cities to the fore of urban planning.

This special collection of the *Journal of Urban Planning and Development* deals with "Shrinking Cities and Towns: Policy Responses to the Challenges, Urban Planning, and Development Strategies." The manuscripts included present original studies on how shrinking cities develop and inform stakeholders of urban planning, design and development, and research and practice. The special issue aims to address the challenges to the planning and development of shrinking cities. Not only does the collection represent an archival snapshot of the state of knowledge in the field, but also it aspires to offer international scholars an insight into future research and practices. Within its frame, this special issue selected its papers through a rigorous review process. It has managed to put together 16 papers by 55 authors from the United States, the United Kingdom, China, Poland, Russia, and so on. Their topics are interesting and well-connected to real-world problems pertaining to shrinking cities. The results and implications are of great importance to both the profession and academia.

Chen et al. (2020) used the synthetic control method and analyzed the economic growth effect and mechanism of the county-to-district conversion (CTDC) in China and explored the dialectical relationship between CTDC and city shrinkage from the perspective of administrative division adjustment. Du et al. (2021) studied Dongguan city in China and elaborated on how

the local state reacted to and coped with crisis-induced shrinkage and explored the dynamic evolution of shrinkage and resurgence in the context of globalization. Chen et al. (2021) employed nighttime light (NTL) imagery. They identified the pattern and process of growth and shrinkage in the Guangzhou–Foshan cross-border areas in China. Since the 2008 financial crisis, growing and shrinking areas coexist. Gao and Ryan (2021) examined a specific state-led shantytown redevelopment policy designed and implemented in state-owned forestry areas to construct affordable housing and compensate residents adversely impacted by the logging ban and analyzed the implementation of this policy in Yichun in Northeast China.

Gao et al. (2021) measured economic activity, identified urban shrinkage at a regional scale in Wuhan, China, and explored the mechanisms and causality of shrinkage from the perspectives of antiglobalization, industrial transformation, and capital circuits. Jaroszewska and Stryjakiewicz (2020) identified and analyzed the drivers and scale of the process of urban shrinkage in Poland and its geographical distribution and assessed different policies adopted to mitigate the adverse effects of urban shrinkage. Lang et al. (2020) analyzed cities' growth and shrinkage regarding urban construction and economic vitality in the pearl river delta (PRD) region in a spatial term, defined land-use changes in urban construction for characterizing growth, and characterized economic activities for vitality. Barasheva et al. (2021) elaborated a growth-shrinkage typology of Russian cities, outlined major shrinkage features, and answered the question of what might have initiated shrinking processes in the Russian Federation. They applied cluster analysis to 883 cities to study their growth trajectories and decline over the last 30 years.

Li and Feng (2021) selected Nine *Jiedao* (subdistricts), including 14 historic conservation areas in old Liwan, investigated urban shrinkage through the population growth rate, population aging, economic growth, and vitality of public life, and explored the relationships between old Liwan, changes in the city's development strategy, conservation policies, and urban renewal operations. Yin et al. (2020) examined the impact of neighborhood walkability concerning property values of single-family and duplex homes in three rust belt shrinking cities—Buffalo (New York), Pittsburgh, and Detroit. Liu et al. (2020) took a typical shrinking city, Yichun, as an example, and quantitatively assessed the impact of urban shrinkage on residents' objective and subjective quality of life by using the statistical data and microblog data with a multiindex comprehensive evaluation method. Jiang et al. (2020) redefined what constitutes a city, compared the adjusted nightlight intensity of NPP-VIIRS data between 2013 and 2016, identifying shrinking cities throughout China.

Using multiple big data, such as NTL data, patent data, and land transaction data, Shan et al. (2020) drew on the Cobb–Douglas production function, measured city shrinkage in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River and explored the influencing factors of city shrinkage. Wang et al. (2020b) found that the contraction of land finance has heterogeneous impacts on shrinking cities and non-shrinking cities, which, in turn, has a significant catalytic effect on population loss in shrinking cities. Wang et al. (2020a) investigated the city shrinkage of 96 cities along the Yellow River based on the regionalization perspective and conducted a coupling analysis on land-use efficiency and accessibility by simulating land use with spatial relations. Wu and Wang (2020), using multisource spatial data, identified and analyzed urban growth and shrinkage in a case study of Yiwu, within an analytical framework.

This collection of 16 articles, at its very best, has covered a range of issues on shrinking cities and towns. Its shared experiences, variations in the causes, spatial patterns, and planning responses will be of interest to readers in academia and practice. We hope the wisdom

hereby given can help stakeholders for better utilization of resources pertaining to the shrinking city phenomenon. As the guest editors of this special issue, we would like to show our gratitude to Professor Gang-Len Chang, Editor in Chief of *Journal of Urban Planning and Development*, for his unfailing support. We also want to thank all contributors for sharing their valuable knowledge. Particularly, credit goes to anonymous reviewers from all over the world. Thanks to their time and expertise, thereby improving the quality of the papers in this collection. We hope this special issue draws forth the significant insights into urban shrinkage and possible planning challenges while providing scientific responses to address the problems arising from shrinking cities worldwide.

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