

**Nothing but Growth for Shrinking Cities?
Urban Planning and its Influencing Factors in Poland.**

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Many European countries are predicted to be affected by a population decline in the upcoming decades. Countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) will be especially hit by this dimension of demographic change. At the same time, the downfall of state socialism led to a structural socio-economic change in those CEE countries. Both demographic and economic change bring about far-reaching effects on city development. Many former industrial urban centers – the previous winners of socialist urbanization – have been affected by population decline already two decades ago. According to Haase, Polish cities over 100.000 inhabitants have been losing 4% of their inhabitants on average between 1990 and 2009 (HAASE 2011). Hollander estimates that every 4th city over 100.000 inhabitants worldwide is affected by population decline (HOLLANDER 2011).

Despite a preference for processes of growth in politics and general society, as well as in science, the causes and effects of urban shrinkage have been examined by scientists to a certain extend. In a next step, the question on the reaction of cities affected by urban shrinkage has to be asked. Individual studies revealed that shrinking cities around the globe are dominated by a quantitative growth paradigm. Attempts to overcome this growth orientation have only been made in individual cases (e.g. Leipzig/Germany; Youngstown/USA). Critical promoters of urban shrinkage noticed that in most of these cases, either stagnation or growth remain the ultimate goal of the shrinking concepts applied. This disqualifies them from a possible adaptation to long-term economic and population decline (HOLLANDER et al. 2009; POPPER u. POPPER 2002; HÄUßERMANN u. SIEBEL 1985; RHODES u. RUSSO 2013).

With their explicit growth orientation, urban planning strategies of shrinking cities in CEE even distinguish themselves from those of other shrinking cities throughout Europe (BERNT et al. 2012). The situation seems paradox: While the experience of many cities has shown that growth strategies barely prove to be successful in a macro-regional context of population decline, most cities continue to venture on growth as the seemingly only possible answer to urban shrinkage. Alternative ideas exploiting the potential of shrinkage and urban restructuring are being blocked out this way. Demographic change and spatial polarization tendencies in Europe will contribute to an increasing number of cities affected by shrinking processes in the near future, though, which makes it ever more necessary to search for and exploit the chances of urban shrinkage, instead of continuing to fight against this process.

The question which comes up is *why* so many cities, especially in Poland and all CEE, keep relying on the rules of the market and keep aiming at future quantitative growth. Valuable, and usually scarce, financial and human resources are being devoted to the attraction of potential investors and inhabitants instead of paving the path for sustainable restructuring and reduction concepts. Which are the influence factors behind the barely questioned quantitative growth paradigm in urban planning? What has to be done in order to enable a high quality of urban life under conditions of (economic and population) decline?

The research project is searching for answers to these questions and for the possibilities of smart urban shrinkage at the example of two Polish cities which have been heavily affected by population decline after the downfall of state socialism: Wałbrzych in Lower Silesia and Ruda Śląska in Silesia. Both cities have been voted among the three most repellant cities in Poland in a nationwide survey conducted in 2009 (KRZYSZTOFIK et al. 2012). Among other factors, the scattered cityscape of these two cities and the presence of blight and brownfields contribute to their negative image and make it difficult for local inhabitants to identify with their hometowns.

The first case study has been undertaken on the former mining city of Wałbrzych. Expert interviews with local players involved with urban planning and development as well as local and national spatial planning documents constituted a database for this case study. The findings confirm the dominance of a quantitative growth paradigm in urban planning. While the improvement of the local quality of life has been mentioned as a development objective, the majority of measures actually undertaken stress the city's focus on quantitative growth. This focus is, inter alia, related to strong inter- and intra-regional competition between cities.

A second case study is currently being undertaken on the city of Ruda Śląska in the Katowice conurbation. The city also has a mining tradition, but, in contrast to Wałbrzych, the mining sector is a major branch of industry to this day. Despite a comparably low unemployment rate of 9%, Ruda Śląska has been losing over 17% of its inhabitants since 1991 and counts a population of 142.000 today. The city is currently working on its urban development strategy for the years 2014 to 2030. While the urban quality of life is mentioned as one focal point of future development, a limitation of the population decline and a rise of the attractiveness for investments are also aimed at (URZĄD MIASTA RUDA ŚLĄSKA 2013). The database for this case study will once again be constituted of expert interviews and scientific literature on the topics of planning in shrinking cities and city development in Poland. The previous case study on Wałbrzych led to the assumption that national and European Union directives on financial support have a significant share in the orientation of local urban development projects. Consequently, an analysis of national urban and regional development guidelines in Poland and of European Union regional policy will help to replenish the data and hopefully allow for conclusions on the every-day urban planning practice in shrinking cities in Poland.

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