Nothing but Growth for Shrinking Cities?

Development and Planning Ideas in Poland illustrated by the Old Industrial Cities of Ruda Śląska and Wałbrzych

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I THEORETICAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORK
WHAT IS A “SHRINKING CITY“?

• Diverging terminology:
  Urban Shrinkage; Urban Decline
  Right-Sizing Cities; Shrinking Cities
  …Degrowing Cities?

• Diverging definitions of urban shrinkage:
  ➢ Multidimensional process connected with every aspect of urban life (ERDMANN 2014)
  ➢ Solely population development (SCHATZ 2010)
CURRENT SITUATION

TUROK, MYKHLENKO (2006)
(2) Poland: Urban Development and Planning
(Post-)Socialist (De-)Industrialization

- **Industrialization** as cornerstone of socialist progress
- Heavy industry

- **After 1989**: transformation to market economy with neoliberal shock therapy
- Positive economic developments based on service economy
- Deep crisis in steel and mining sector
**DEMOGRAPHY**

- "Half of the municipalities in Poland are losing population." (OECD 2011)

→ "shock of urban shrinkage" (CIESIOLKA et al. 2012, 80)

Source: Own diagram according to WORLD BANK (2014); ZAHLEN UND DATEN AKTUELL: BEVÖLKERUNG (2013)
**Spatial and Urban Planning**

- Limited capacity for action at local level
- Lack of nationwide urban planning direction \(\text{(ERDMANN 2014)}\)
- Share of planned municipal areas: 25% \(\text{(nationwide average in 2008)} \rightarrow \text{fosters uncontrolled, economy-driven developments} \) \(\text{(ERDMANN 2014)}\)
II Empirical Research and Results
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

(1) How are urban shrinking processes being perceived and evaluated by local decision-makers?

(2) What are responses to the shrinkage?

(3) What attitude do local decision-makers have towards the possibilities of planning with the shrinkage?
Location of Ruda Śląska and Wałbrzych

Source: Own map, designed with STEPMap (2014)
Population Development in **Ruda Śląska** and **Wałbrzych**

Source: Own diagram based on BDL (2014)
Ruda Śląska

Source: Own photograph (2014)
Location of Ruda Śląska within the Katowice Conurbation

Source: Pawel Grzywocz (2007); Licence: GNU Free Documentation License; own marking
STRENGTH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

“In Ruda Śląska we have a problem with the strength. Because weaknesses, I know, we have, but strength…” (RZ)

• Location and transport infrastructure
• Vacant land for investments
• Spatial development plan for entire city area → simplifies realization of investments
• Experienced industrial workforce

Focus on economy
WEAKNESSES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

- Competition between cities
- Monofunctional economic structure
- Environmental degradation
- Scattered cityscape
- Lack of local participation
PERCEPTION OF THE SHRINKAGE

Questioner: “Almost every city in the Katowice conurbation is shrinking.”

RZ: “Each city?”

Questioner: “Yes.”

RZ: “I don’t know if Katowice…”

→ Lack of sensitization for supraregional demographic and urban developments
**PERCEPTION OF THE SHRINKAGE**

“sickness” (GR)

“depopulation problem” (RY)

“I don't believe that in longer term [...] this level of quality of life could be maintained [with a declining population], I don't believe that.“ (MR)

→ Shrinkage as a threat
REACTION TO THE SHRINKAGE

“If you attract more people to invest here, the town will have more money […]. For investment and for new ideas and for new things. So we need to attract people […] because everyone works [for] a better life here.” (DR)
“European Union says we have to cooperate, and this is good for us. [...] We don’t receive money from national government, so we have to focus on European.” (RZ)

→ Focus on quantitative growth and exogenous ressources
PLANNING WITH THE SHRINKAGE?

“They [western industrial cities] were dealing with it [deindustrialization and its consequences] a few decades before, we should learn more from those experiences.” (GR)
WEAKNESSES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

• Image:

“In Poland, I think, every person knows this city. […] When they hear this name, they know suddenly coal mines, poverty and problems. I think the opinion is much, much worse than the real situation.” (UW)

• Dilapidated buildings
• Unemployment
• Low level of local participation
PERCEPTION OF THE SHRINKAGE

“There are not very many empty flats, in fact. [...] So rather it’s that you have to wait for a flat, if you have a bad situation.” (UW)

→ Certain ignorance, but more profound understanding than in Ruda Śląska

→ Shrinkage as a threat
“The target here is to attract 150.000 people. Per year. And Wałbrzych is only 90.000 people, so this is not the target group, because everyone will come once, and that's it. And I have to fill it longer than a year.” (BW)
CONCLUSION
Perceptions

• Lack of supraregional (demographic) contextualization of urban shrinkage

• Urban growth is possible if the cities try hard enough

Planning Framework

• Limited capacity for action $\rightarrow$ reactionary planning

$\rightarrow$ External ressources to achieve goals of quantitative urban growth

$\rightarrow$ Necessity and possibilites of planning with the shrinkage are not being perceived
Growth →
Response of Planning to Urban Shrinkage
Thank You for Your Attention.


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