

SHRINKING AND NON-GLOBAL CITIES: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

The concept of shrinking cities has become well-known among both scientists and practitioners in urban planning and design. Basically, shrinking cities experience many downturn trends due to structural problems in local economy. The most notorious trend is certainly population shrinkage, by which the concept got this name two decades ago. The other ones, such as a brain drain, limited employment opportunities or population ageing, are not less problematic for the future urban prospects, too.

Nevertheless, the focus in the current research on shrinking cities has changed last decade. The overall focus on the effects of deindustrialisation has slowly receded to other subtopics related to various socio-economic constraints, such as relation between regional and urban shrinkage, suburbanisation vs. central city development, spatial peripherality, etc. Many such new subtopics touch the huge theme of globalisation and global cities, as well as connected topics of spatial networking, centrality, and multi-layer connectivity. Interestingly, the opposite phenomenon – non-global cities – has not been adequately addressed within it despite the most of cities globally belongs to this group.

This research is dedicated to explain the term of non-global cities as a new paradigm in urban studies and tries to link it with the phenomenon of shrinking cities. The comparison of the tenets of shrinking cities are compared with the general elements of non-global cities to find the main similarities and differences between them, enshrining additionally the phenomenon of non-global cities. The conclusion of this research reveals that both of them, although present independent concepts, overlap in the certain regional and typological contexts.

KEYWORDS _ *Shrinking cities, non-global cities, spatial networks, connectivity*

INTRODUCTION: 'GLOBALISATION' DISCOURSE WITHIN THE RESEARCH OF SHRINKING CITIES

The process of urban shrinkage and shrinking cities as its consequence have become a 'new normalcy' last decades. Although urban shrinkage is old as cities, the widespread of this process in the late 20th century took the attention of both scientists and practitioners in urban affairs. Shrinking cities are especially frequent in the regions of early industrialisation and urbanisation, such as Europe. For example, 20% of bigger European cities witnessed population loss during the period 1990-2010 (Wolff & Wiechmann, 2017). In the eastern, post-socialist half of the continent, urban shrinkage is even more prevalent (Haase, Athanasopoulou & Rink, 2016).

Today, urban shrinkage is seen as a global phenomenon (Pallagst, Martinez-Fernandez & Wiechmann, 2014). This observation places shrinking cities under the strong influence of globalisation, i.e., the influence of the intensive and fast interaction, networking and integration among people, companies, and governments worldwide, enabled by technological development in communications last decades (Held et al, 1999).

The first interlink between these two theoretical fields can be found in shift in the economic research of the concept of shrinking cities 20 years ago. Previously dominant research discourse in the concept was the Theory of urban change, where the development of a city was seen as a cyclic, "growth/decline" process, where urban decline was just one phase (Fol & Cunningham-Sabot, 2010). The issue in this theoretical stance was that it had not taken in account enough external influences.

Hence, new theoretical approaches entered this research discourse, such as the Theory of creative destruction. Hall (1988) underpins that technological progress and innovations in economy reflect in urban space. First, they lead to the creation of new jobs, but, over time, they lead to stagnation and, finally, a decrease in their number and an increase in unemployment. Stagnation is a turning point; it is a moment when the production of a certain product is standardised due to technological progress in such a way that it can be produced conditionally everywhere, so a cheaper production process becomes the main imperative (Friedrichs, 1993). This theory therefore easily explains the deindustrialisation of the developed countries of the West, where the industrial production has become too expensive due to the cost of highly specialised labour. When production process itself has become sufficiently standardised, it can simply be moved to less developed countries with cheaper and less skilled workforce. A perfect example is the transfer of industrial production from the West to the (Far) East: previously South Korea and Taiwan, and today China, Indonesia, Indochina, and India. This industrial transfer is just one of the 'pure' examples of global processes (Sassen, 2001). Nevertheless, it has a huge importance for connecting two theoretical fields as deindustrialisation has been considered among the key factors of urban shrinkage (Oswalt & Rieniets, 2006).

This is a perfect introduction for this research, which is dedicated to both explain the term of non-global cities as a new paradigm in urban studies and to link it with the phenomenon of shrinking cities. The comparison of the tenets of shrinking cities are compared with the general elements of non-global cities to find the main similarities and differences between them, enshrining additionally the phenomenon of non-global cities. The conclusion of this research reveals that both of them, although present independent albeit close concepts with similarities and differences, overlap in the certain regional and typological contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is a research review. The main intention is to bridge two internationally well-known urban phenomena – shrinking cities and non-global cities – which have not been properly compared despite many obvious first-look similarities. This is the main research novelty that the paper reveals. In line with this intention, the paper is formed in a comparative manner. Both phenomena are first explained.

Being a more common research topic, shrinking cities are first explained, while non-global cities had to be first defined within the theories of globalisation and global cities to be further compared. The last step is their comparison, to underline similarities and differences between two phenomena in concluding remarks.

THE PHENOMENON OF SHRINKING CITIES

It is already said that weak economic performance at urban level presents one of key factors for urban shrinkage. For most of shrinking cities, structural problems in transferring urban economy from industrial phase to post-industrial phase caused the loss of jobs and population decline thereof (Bontje, 2005). On the other side, by far the most visible consequence of urban shrinkage is the decline of urban population (Pallagst et al, 2014). It was the element that practically established the concept of shrinking cities.

However, the process of urban shrinkage can not be scrutinised through the dichotomy 'weak industrial performance vs. population decline'. There many involved factors which even can be easily determined if they are (just) causes or consequences (Pallagst et al, 2014). For instance, the first wave of population loss in the initial phase of the shrinkage of a certain city relates to 'brain drain', which limits the prospects of urban economy in the next phases. Moreover, there are many other factors critical for urban shrinkage, such as suburbanisation (Guimarães et al, 2015), weak urban governance (Rink et al, 2009), bad transport connections (Hollande, 2010) or borderland position (Antonić et al, 2020). All these factors make urban shrinkage more visible in urban space (Fig. 1), which is also among the characteristics of the entire phenomenon. Finally, some of them refer to the issues directly related to globalisation, such as an (underperformed) urban transition in the mobility of people, goods and capital (Oswalt & Rieniets, 2006).



Figure 1: Vidin, Bulgaria: the effects of urban shrinkage are visible in urban space (Author: D. Siljanović Kozoderović); **Figure 2:** Hong Kong is one of the main global cities (Author: B. AntoniĆ)

All given factors and premises make defining shrinking cities more challenging. There have been many discussions on how to appropriately define shrinking cities (Fol & Cunningham-Sabot, 2010). Imperatives in these efforts are (1) to incorporate all regional features and peculiarities to one general definition, (2) to make it as simple as possible and (3) to include a suitable measurements and thresholds. Considering all previous characteristics and factors, a shrinking city is that one with:

1. a continuously built-up urban area, including core city with suburbs (if they exist);
2. more than 10,000 inhabitants before urban shrinkage;
3. currently decreasing population numbers;
4. the structural problems of local economic activities, in transition from manufacturing to service economy;

- all previous processes observed during minimum one intercensal period (usually 10 years for the national censuses of population and households).

THE PHENOMENON OF NON-GLOBAL CITIES

The impact of globalisation on regional (de)industrialisation and job markets was explained in the introductory part. Nevertheless, this is only one of the global processes (Sassen, 2001). The essence of globalization is much broader – it includes the comprehensive integration of the whole world in the field of exchange of goods, ideas, opinions, culture and jobs through technological and communicational innovations (Soja, 2000). In addition to the aforementioned dynamics in industrial sector, transportation has also positioned itself as a factor in urban development in a global age, wherein certain cities become the centres of logistics, data flow and a new technological revolution (Martinez-Fernandez et al, 2012). As a consequence, such cities have attracted talents, who create innovations, thereby focusing the creative potential of the world in these cities (Florida 2005). Many megalopolises across the world represent global cities with such development (Fig. 2).

The previous statement is true only in the case of some cities, so-called GLOBAL CITIES, which have managed to concentrate this potential. Globalisation was made possible partly due to the strengthening of neoliberalism in the global economy, which to a certain extent deregulated the system of social welfare (Harvey, 2005). This process indirectly reduced the importance of the measures of spatial uniformity in urban development and the network of cities. The consequence is the increasing concentration of the main globalisation factors (capital, goods, executive positions, creative jobs) in a relatively small number of super-interconnected cities (Martinez-Fernandez et al, 2012).

Most of shrinking cities fall into another, much larger group of the cities that do not meet these conditions (Schlappa & Neill, 2013). The characteristics of these cities are following:

- Most of them are old industrial centres (Fig. 3), where the predominant industrial character of a city was a significant obstacle to adapt to the new reality of the globalised world (Sassen, 2001);
- Most of them are poorly connected with other/more important cities, i.e., they are quite disconnected to a global communication network (Martinez-Fernandez et al, 2012);
- Small and medium-sized cities predominate in this group (Fig. 4), where their (insufficient) size is a limitation for the capacities needed to 'pin' on global development flows (Renn, 2011; Restrepo Cadavid et al, 2017).



Figure 3: Ruma, Serbia: the former industrial character of many cities slows its further urban transformation (Author: B. Antonić); **Figure 4:** Golubac in Eastern Serbia is an example of a town which has significantly slowed its shrinkage due to fast tourism development last years, but limited municipal capacities (financial, organisational, professional) are still preventing broad socio-economic benefits for local community (Author: D. Miletić / source: TO Golubac)

This opposite case to global cities does not have a specific, well-known name. They are sometimes named as NON-GLOBAL CITIES (Ren, 2011), but this term is still not internationally widespread. There

are three interlinked questions to be checked in their definition. First, are the mentioned terms – global cities and non-global cities – opposing ones or they are just extremes in a wider global system, with intermediate types? Second, if non-global cities are opposing ones to global cities, is just the opposite/negative interpretation of the main characteristics of global cities enough to define non-global cities? Third, if no, which are the directions to define them?

The first issue about the mutual relation between global and non-global cities can be resolved by the literature research which deals with and/or contains the relatively rare term “non-global”. It is always put in contrast to ‘global’ opposite, such as: global and non-global zones, global and non-global locations, global and non-global city locations, global and non-global regions, globalisation vs. non-global cities, etc. For instance, Rasel and Kalfadellis (2021) follow this ‘dual’ narrative by comparing global and non-global city locations by other dichotomies, such connectivity vs. isolation, concentration vs. dispersion or positive vs. negative performance. The same authors directly underline this duality – “... choice between global and non-global city locations” (p. 89). Similarly, Sassen (2010) compares both types of cities with digital and non-digital urban development. Obviously, global and non-global cities figure as two opposites, i.e., they are not just extremes in urban studies related to globalisation.

Taking in account previous conclusion, the definition of a non-global city can be derived by contrasting to the key elements of the definition of global city. This means that the definition of a global city as a widespread term in urban studies is a pre-condition to form the other one. Many crucial elements of global cities have been already underlined, such as an excellent connectivity, network-ness, the concentration of global companies, size, creative potential, etc. In this research, American sociologist Saskia Sassen, the founder of the term of a global city, is a reference for it. She defines a global city through seven hypotheses (Sassen, 2005), which are oppositely given here as indicators for a non-global city. Thus, a non-global city is that one which:

1. Is not the location of central corporate functions;
2. Is not characterised by networked and interconnected firms;
3. Does not present a large urban environment with the mix of firms, talents, and expertise (‘an extremely intense and dense information loop’);
4. Does not have an internationally leading business centre(s);
5. Does not have transnational means of fast communication and transport, such as international airports, multiple highways or high-speed rail;
6. Have the low concentration of high-level professionals, talents and creative class vs. workers in manufactory; and
7. Have a relatively underdeveloped service sector.

COMPARISON OF NON-GLOBAL AND SHRINKING CITIES

Comparative approach is used to seek evidence to investigate similarities and differences between different objects of study by their general characteristics. In this research, the following table is settled to compare the afore explained general characteristics of a shrinking city and a non-global city.

Table 1: The comparison of the main characteristics of non-global and shrinking cities

Indicator	Shrinking cities	Non-global cities
Physical character	Continuously built-up urban area	N/A
Population size	More than 10,000 inhabitants, but usually small and medium-sized cities	• Not a large and ‘mix-based’ urban environment
Population trends	Current population decline, especially due to outmigration and ‘brain drain’	• low concentration of high-level professionals, talents and creative class

Economic performance	Structural problems in local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No central corporate functions • No many networked and interconnected firms. • No leading internationally business centres. • No means for fast communication and transport • Underdeveloped service sector
Duration of urban trends	All are long-term issues (>10 years)	N/A

The main findings are:

1. The characteristics of a (non-)global city are predominantly located in the economic aspect of urban development. In contrast, this aspect is the only one which insufficiently defined by the concept of shrinking cities, as 'structural problems in local economy' have pretty vague interpretation;
2. Two general characteristics of shrinking cities – their physical character and the duration of ongoing urban trends – do not have their pairs in the definition of non-global cities. Obviously, these two fields are not important in globalisation studies, as the physical character of a certain city is compensated by interconnectivity and networking between cities, while the duration of urban trends (such as a demographic growth/decline) are not under the question in fast changing global perspective;
3. Shrinking cities and global cities are best concur in the demographic aspect, as both of them are usually smaller cities with problems of emigration and 'brain drain'. The only difference is that this processes unconditionally led to demographic decline in the former ones, while this depends on other factors in the later ones. For example, general demographic trends on national and regional levels.

CONCLUSIONS

This comparative research of two terms in urban studies – shrinking cities as well-known one and non-global cities as emerging term – shows that there are similarities and differences between them, especially in certain regional and typological contexts. Final remarks about these conclusions are extracted from the previous findings.

First, there are similarities between two term by the problems in demographic sense. Both shrinking and non-global cities are pressed by emigration and 'brain drain'. In the part of the world where there is a general problem with low birth and fertility rates, such as Europe, North America, Japan and China, both terms can be considered as synonyms in the case of small and medium-sized cities by general urban development.

Second, there are also differences, particularly noticeable in the parts of the world with fast growing population, such as Africa, India, Middle East and (still) Latin America. Non-global cities in these regions, despite economic constraints, are still growing, while many recently developed large cities are non-global ones due to weak local economies. Simply speaking, their underdeveloped governance, social isolation and unfunctional economic system the strong corruption are important obstacles for their transformation into global centres (Bourdeau-Lepage & Huriot, 2007).

Third, the comparison also reveals where both phenomena deserve additional research in the future. In the case of shrinking cities, this is certainly economic aspect, which is not adequately defined and connected with concrete indicators and thresholds. In the other side, it seems that (non-)global city are not studied enough regarding to their size, physical character and the duration of dominant urban trends. Although these factors are obviously not of a crucial importance, they are present and unquestionably significant for research, at least as the consequences of globalisation.

Last, one of side-results of the whole research is that urban densities and zoning patterns, despite their mentions in both concepts, are also insufficiently covered by the current research. Therefore, the urban studies based on them and connected to spatially-related urban typologies are also welcomed to be done in the future.

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