

## **Growth versus Shrinkage**

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**Growth and shrinkage were processes of almost matching importance until the beginning of the modern age. An exceptional phase of urban growth, set in since the 19th century, caused unparalleled urban population growth. Long past the industrial revolution, at the end of the 21st century, this era is expected to come to a close. An increasing number of cities and regions are declining, or rather shrinking, since the middle of the 20th century. Planners and decision makers will be confronted with urban shrinkage as commonly as in earlier periods. This transition will not be done without commotion. In the future, the processes of growth and shrinkage will coexist with climbing inequality, and this will entail reconsideration of the established doctrine of growth. Theoretical debate on urban and regional planning has generally been about successful regions, cities or particular urban areas or alternatively about bringing success, and by this it is usually meant growth, to the least fortunate, unprivileged shrinking territories. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there are disadvantages as well as advantages related with urban growth. Through a literature review, we critically compare both concepts – growth and shrinkage – as phases or patterns of urban development, identifying opportunities and threats associated with each one of them. We conclude that urban shrinkage can be a window of opportunity to tackle various prevailing urban problems.**

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