



ABITAZIONI SICURE E INCLUSIVE PER ANZIANI  
SAFE AND INCLUSIVE HOUSING FOR AN AGEING SOCIETY

2018

La condivisione, che sembra aver assunto il ruolo di zeitgeist di quest'inizio secolo, è generatrice di ricchezza e questo volume, che raccoglie gli atti della Giornata Internazionale di Studi "Abitazioni sicure e inclusive per anziani" tenutasi a Roma il 26 ottobre 2018, ne è un esempio concreto.

Il volume restituisce i contributi di studiosi, ricercatori, professionisti e operatori del terzo settore relativi al tema dell'abitare per una società che invecchia; questione ampia, complessa, centrale nelle politiche nazionali e internazionali.

"Abitazioni sicure e inclusive per anziani" è il risultato di un confronto divulgativo, uno strumento di condivisione che un gruppo di docenti e ricercatori del Dipartimento di Architettura dell'Università degli Studi Roma Tre ha deciso di mettere a disposizione di tutti coloro che sono interessati al tema e alla sua declinazione nelle sessioni "Interazione città - quartiere - abitazione" (Sessione A), "Vecchi e nuovi modelli abitativi" (Sessione B), "Accessibilità e spazi aperti" (Sessione C) e "Arredi, attrezzature, tecnologie evolute e servizi" (Sessione D).

*Sharing seems to have assumed the role of zeitgeist of this beginning of this early century; it generates wealth and this publication, which contains the proceedings of the International Conference "Safe and inclusive housing for an ageing society" held on 26 October 2018 in Rome, is a real example of this wealth.*

*The proceedings return the contributions of scholars, researchers, professionals and third sector operators concerning the theme of housing for an ageing society, a broad, complex and central issue in national and international policies.*

*"Safe and inclusive housing for an ageing society" is the result of a spread discussion, a sharing tool that a group of professors and researchers of the Department of Architecture of Roma Tre University make available to all those interested in the theme and in its declination in the sessions "from urban to architectural scale" (Session A), "housing models" (Session B), "open spaces and accessibility" (Session C) and "Furniture, facilities, and new technologies" (Session D).*

# Abitazioni Sicure e Inclusive per Anziani

## Safe and Inclusive Housing for an Ageing Society

a cura di | edited by

Adolfo F. L. Baratta, Milena Farina, Fabrizio Finucci  
Giovanni Formica, Alfonso Giancotti  
Luca Montuori, Valerio Palmieri

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Alfonso Giacotti, Luca Montuori, Valerio Palmieri



## **Abitazioni Sicure e Inclusive per Anziani**

*Safe and Inclusive Housing for an Ageing Society*

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Inclusive per Anziani**

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# Interazione Città - Quartiere - Abitazione

*From Urban to Architectural Scale*



## Difference in housing patterns in shrinking cities between in Western and Eastern Europe

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### **Abstract**

Comparing with Western Europe, shrinking cities in Eastern/post-socialist Europe are a relatively new phenomenon, documented from the early 1990s. This gap is not only related with timing.

Turbulent transition from a planned and centralised economy to a market and decentralised one has had a profound impact on the state of East-European cities since the collapse of socialism, leaving them with decimated industry production, weak local budget and impoverished and aged population.

The uniqueness of urban shrinkage in this region has mirrored into housing patterns, which also show distinct patterns. The aim of this research is to emphasise the differences in urban shrinkage relating housing between the West and the East of Europe.

The focus in the recognition of these patterns in the case of four main urban zones regarding housing in shrinking cities - in historic core, in mass-housing estates, suburbia, and in reurbanisation zones.

The explanation of the distinct patterns in housing in Eastern-European shrinking cities is a backbone to underline different approaches how to deal with housing in shrinking cities in this part of Europe.

### **Keywords**

*Shrinking cities, housing, urban planning, post-socialism, zoning*

### **Introduction: post-socialist shrinking city**

The post-socialist type of shrinking cities has become one of the prominent modalities of shrinking cities globally. Its main uniqueness and a key element to be considered as a type is their (post-)socialist character [Haase et al, 2016]. This means that the features of urbanisation during and after socialist era have left an immense trace on the recently showing shrinking patterns. The most important of them is certainly the overall transition of these societies from a planned and centralised economy to a market-driven and decentralised one, which was caused the problems in city governance and a very fast urban shrinkage by all well-documented aspects [Stryjakiewicz, Ciesiółka & Jaroszewska, n.d.]. This is mainly pointed as a divisive point to the “classical” urban shrinkage of western cities, which have never passed through socialist phase.

This research is focused on the post-socialist shrinking cities in Central, South-eastern and Eastern Europe. Cities in the other post-socialist regions have had the different patterns of urbanisation since the fall of socialism; cities in Central Asia are still growing, while cities in Caucasia have been weighted by war issues. This includes the area of the former East Germany as a sub-national albeit internationally known case. This aim of the research is to emphasise the differences in urban shrinkage relating housing zoning between cities in always capitalist/Western and post-socialist/Eastern Europe. Its focus is in the identification of the diverse shrinking patterns in the case of four main urban zones regarding housing in shrinking cities - in historic core, in mass-housing estates, suburbia, and in reurbanisation zones. The explanation of these distinct patterns in housing in East-European shrinking cities is a backbone to underline different approaches how to deal with housing in shrinking cities in this part of Europe, as well as with the other related issues, such as economic regression or the ageing of population.

### **Different historic trajectories of western and eastern shrinking cities**

**PRE-SOCIALIST CITY:** Although the concept of a post-socialist city is mainly based on the studies of urbanisation in 20th century, this is a pretty limited approach. The divergent evolution between cities in Western and Eastern Europe was evident much before the rise of socialism. The main European powers emerged at European west [Hamilton et al., 2005]. In early modernity, Eastern European cities had a lesser role in the appearance of capitalism and democracy comparing with their Western counterparts [Bodnar, 2001]. Thus, European east has lagged behind the west for centuries, having a postponed economic and social development and, thereby, delayed urbanisation [Musil, 2005].

The underdevelopment of Eastern European cities was also noticeable during the era

of industrialisation. This era started at the end of 18th century in England, causing immediately rural exodus to the cities and towns with a galloping economic and demographic growth, but also with a sharp economic stratification and spatial segregation [Mamford, 1961]. Industrialisation reached Eastern Europe one century after its start in England, in the last third of 19th century. During this period, the most of European east was divided between Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empire. Comparing with Western Europe, both empires witnessed a postponed albeit very fast industrialisation during the decades before the WWI; the economy of Austro-Hungarian Empire grew by 1.76% during its existence (1867-1918), mainly because industrial boom; similarly, the growth of industry in Russian Empire was above 5% during in the period between the abolition of serfdom (1861) and the WWI [Auty & Obolensky, 1976].

Cities in Eastern Europe were the main 'protagonists' of industrialisation and the rise of modern capitalism in this region. However, they were also places with increasing socio-economic inequalities, which were easily observable in bad housing conditions. For example, new urban dwellers in booming Austro-Hungarian cities occupied very small and hygienically under-standard dwellings with a high rent [Berenger, 1997]. Similar situation was also in Russian Empire. Fast industrialisation and less-developed social awareness in this part of Europe could not sustain the increasing social divisions in cities, which eventually become a 'ground' for socialist revolutions after the WWI and WWII.

**SOCIALIST CITY:** Socialist revolution brought a totally new approach to urban development. The conditions for novelties were extraordinary, because the entire Eastern Europe was still predominantly rural. Then, many cities in the post-war Europe were damaged in the WWII. Therefore, mass-reconstruction of European cities was an imperative across the continent. Nevertheless, in line with their political ideology, socialist cities were planned to be transformed with respect of a mass-industrialisation and the needs of proletariat [Musil, 2005]. Urbanisation is even considered as the "indirect product of industrialisation and modernisation" [Makhrova & Molodikova, 2007, p. 53]. In contrast, the majority of western countries in Europe implemented a less- ideologically influenced welfare-state policy, which also enabled the mass-reconstruction of their cities [Edgerton, 2011].

The importance of proletariat in socialist agenda emphasised the role of housing in socialist cities [Petrović, 2009]. The legacy of academic architecture and urbanism of the pre-revolutionary era and the old urban quarters developed in this style were rejected as obsolete and unwanted. Thus, modernist urbanism and architecture were adopted for socialist cities. Indeed, they were strictly implemented in entirely new cities, usually developed as mono-functional settlements, dependent on a newly-built factory [Kopp, 1970].

However, the majority of cities in socialist countries had an opposite development, strongly influenced by rural exodus, making a pressure to housing sector. Since the 1960s, socialist elite understood that it could not implement all postulates of a socialist city. Therefore, the radical transformation of already formed cities and neighbourhoods was abandoned, to preserve enough dwelling space for the rising number of inhabitants [Djukić, 2011]. Even with these measures, the deficiency of new flats was evident. The solution was pragmatic - the mass-construction of new multi-family housing estates in the form of a modernist open block at the edge of urban zones, on previously unbuilt land [Musil, 2005; Tsenkova, 2009]. These mass-housing estates were built just to fill out basic residential needs due to financial savings. As a consequence, they have had underdeveloped communal and public services. Finally, their construction was often led by prefabrication and in a rational design concept thereof. Due to this rationalisation and standardisation, mass-housing estates in the post-socialist Europe look pretty simple and monotone [Medvedkov & Medvedkov, 2005].

POST-SOCIALIST CITY: The political and economic transition of the former socialist societies since the early 1990s has presented deep challenges for cities in Eastern Europe [Hamilton et al., 2005]. Many of them have begun to show the multiple symptoms of a sudden and fast shrinkage [Haase, Rink, & Grossmann, 2016]. Just after the first decade of the post-socialist transition, 82% of bigger Eastern-European cities were shrinking. In contrast, less than ½ of Western-European cities were shrinking and some of them even entered the process of reurbanisation [Turok & Mykhnenko, 2007]. Even the biggest cities in Eastern Europe were affected by urban shrinkage; many capitals have shrunk since the fall of socialism [Oswalt & Rieniets, 2006].

### **Four shrinking residential zones in contemporary city**

Post-socialist urban shrinkage has differently reflected on the particular zones of cities [Fuhrich & Kaltenbrunner, 2005]. However, their impact was even different than in the case of western, always capitalist cities. Hirt and Stanilov [2009] noticed that there are four main urban zones in post-socialist cities to be differentiated. They also differ mutually by the period of their formation; inner core from pre-socialist (early capitalist) period, mass-housing estates and industrial zones from socialist period, and suburban zones during the post-socialist transition. Due to the nature of the presented research (housing), industrial zones are excluded from the further examination. However, some of them have been transformed into new residential zones as reurbanisation projects. This process has been appreciated as positive due to multiple benefits: rational use of resources, urban recultivation, the reduction of pollution [Panagopoulos, 2009]. Therefore, the fourth selected urban-residential zone, which

was recently established, is a reurbanisation zone.

**SHRINKING INNER CORE** – This is the oldest, historic part of a city where urban shrinkage almost always occurs. In Western Europe, population flight from inner cores of the cities to their outer parts and suburbia was a common phenomenon in post-war decades [Audirac, 2009]. The decline of population is usually followed the other negative consequences: ageing, poverty, crime rate, etc. [Haase et al, 2016b]. The most visible confirmation of the urban shrinkage of inner cores is empty flats in historic buildings and semi-abandoned streets and urban blocks [Sousa & Pinho, 2012].

Shrinking inner cores in post-socialist cities are a relatively new phenomenon, developed from the early 1990s. Apart of the timing, the physical reflection of derelict housing stock has many similarities with the older examples from Western Europe (Fig 1a). However, there is one significant distinction - it was already mentioned that urban politics from socialist era intentionally neglected the historic core and buildings, because they were the legacy of the previous political systems. Thus, the investments in them were lesser that in Western Europe, which has left these quarters and buildings in worse state [Haase et al, 2016b].

**SHRINKING MASS-HOUSING** – Mass-housing is by far the specificity of (post-)socialist Europe, where it is very frequent [Czepczynski, 2008]. It is estimated that the dwellings in mass-housing estates make 20-40% all housing stock in post-socialist cities. This ratio outnumbers the share of such dwellings in Western Europe several times, where it makes up to 7% in 'extreme cases' [Dimitrovska Andrews, 2005]. Nevertheless, both regional cases are notorious by negative image. In Western Europe, these estates are the symbol of the unsuccessful assimilation of immigrants, poverty, crime, etc. In Eastern Europe, they refer to urban shrinkage due to the poor state of both residential buildings and urban services, as well as due to the dominance of el-



Figure 1. Physical reflection of urban shrinkage in post-socialist cities: (a) an abandoned residential building in the historic core of Kaunas, Lithuania, and (b) a semi-abandoned residential building belonging to socialist mass-housing estate in Eisenhüttenstadt, (East) Germany [Author: B. Antonic].

derly population. In some parts (e.g. Eastern Germany), public stigmatisation of these estates as the relicts of communist part further downgraded their status in urban fabric [Cieśła, 2012]. In these examples, many buildings have become semi-abandoned, which has caused the further pressure on the functioning of the whole blocks and estates (Figure 1b). At contrary, in Russia, they have preserved their status in many cities, even becoming a desirable place to live.

Two common albeit contrasting approaches to shrinking socialist mass-housing estates have been implemented across post-socialist space. Examples in eastern Germany usually demolished superfluous buildings for new green areas. The aim is a quality of life instead of physical quantity (Figure 2a) [Cieśła, 2012]. In the other, more common cases, such estates were renewed and their buildings were refurbished, intending to stop their further degradation.

**SHRINKING SUBURBIA** - The shrinkage of suburban zones with detached single-family houses and with low population density is still new globally. It has been noticed in the west since the start of economic crisis in 2008, which was a 'trigger' of much bigger problem of suburbia regarding demographic shift and ageing [Köhler & Leyser-Droste, 2015]. However, post-socialist cities have recently witnessed the boom of suburbia. Suburban residential development was prevented during socialism; since its fall, the aforementioned boom has happened, similarly as in the west after the WWII [Kovács, 1999]. Nevertheless, there are examples of suburban shrinkage, such as the eastern suburbs of Berlin [Zakirova, 2010] or around secondary Serbian cities [Antonić & Djukić, 2018].

**REURBANISATION ZONES** - Similarly to the modern suburbia, reurbanisation is a new urban phenomenon in Eastern Europe. Most of reurbanised cities are major ones. Considering micro/intra-urban level, regrowth or shrinkage patterns of certain quarters and neighbourhoods are not easy to be understood [Hirse et al, 2017]. However,

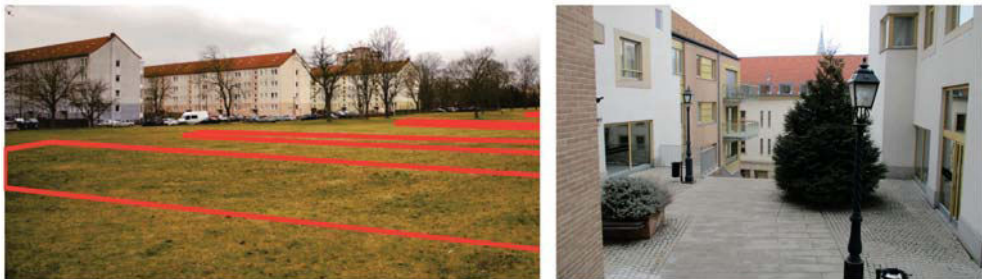


Figure 2. Actions to cope with urban shrinkage in post-socialist cities: (a) new green areas formed at the space of the former mass-housing buildings in Eisenhüttenstadt, (East) Germany; (b) reurbanisation area as a new neighbourhood in central Budapest, Hungary [Author: B. AntoniĆ].



reurbanisation projects tend to be located in inner city zones, on brownfield sites (Fig. 2b) [Panagopoulos, 2009]. For shrinking cities, the main problems are their reduced capacity to initiate and monitor the redevelopment of brownfield sites in new zones of reurbanisation [Ferber & Schlappa, 2016].

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to compare the shrinkage of cities in Western and Eastern Europe through the differentiation of urban housing zones. Four zones are recognised for this examination. Their comparison can be highlighted in the following customised urban transect of housing in shrinking cities:

The diagram clearly presents the differences and similarities, as well as different temporal paces in two selected cases. Western-European cities shrinking cities are certainly 'mature' comparing to those in Eastern Europe. Therefore, Eastern-European cities should be prepared for ongoing tendencies relating in urban shrinkage in the west:

- The prominence of shrinking suburbia is still a rarity in Eastern Europe, but it is an arising trend in the west. The coping with all related obstacles, such as population ageing or the underuse of infrastructure and services, in this urban zone is quite distinctive then in already studies zones (inner core and mass-housing) due to its low density, low accessibility, the prevalence of single-family housing as an urban function, and the (pre)dominance of private ownership and private interests. Therefore, the future research must adapt specific procedures and solutions for this zone;
- The previous observation is related to the proposal to better connect urban and regional planning, because the extensive spatial sprawl of urban shrinkage and

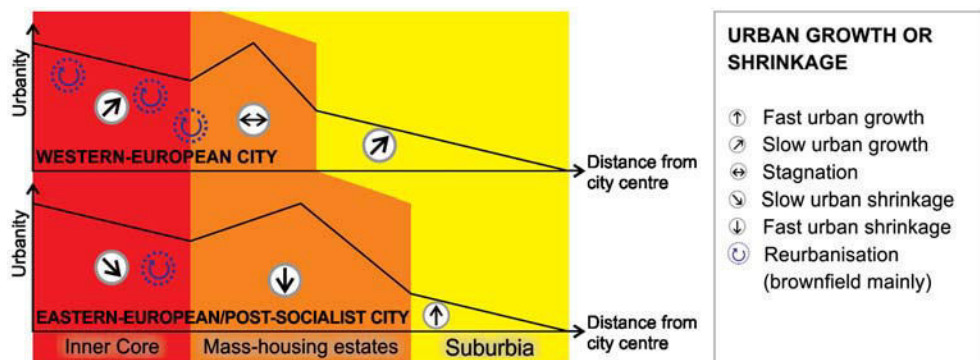


Figure 3. The urban transect of housing for shrinking cities in Western and Eastern Europe [Author: B. Antonić].

the loosening of the 'border' between it and rural shrinkage demand an integrative, i.e. inter-level approach in dealing with shrinking patterns;

- The final recommendation regards the conclusion that the future spatial development of urban shrinkage within an urban structure will not be limited to its inner parts; it can occur in any urban quarter, neighbourhood and urban zone today. This unpredictability requires flexible urban policies towards urban shrinkage, which will encompass temporary solutions and different scenarios for the future.

Regarding the process of population ageing, it was pointed that shrinking cities are known by the high percentage of elderly population. Dealing with the problems caused by urban shrinkage almost means dealing with population-ageing related problems. However, the format is different, because urban shrinkage, as it was explained, is usually examined as a challenge that had to be integrally considered in a certain space – town, urban zone or quarter. Knowing this, measures and approaches included in the concept of shrinking cities can be useful to integrally treat ageing population at larger spatial level, in more rational way.

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