

Quietly Shrinking Cities

Canadian Urban Population Loss in an Age of Growth

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Introduction

We are living in an urban age. There is an enormous amount of space on the globe, yet people choose to live in dense agglomerations – cities – despite advances in telecommunication and relatively inexpensive long-distance travel. The rapid increase in both global population and urbanization over the past two centuries has resulted in extraordinary economic, social, and political evolution. The higher density of this relatively new form of living has the potential to lower resource use per capita, drive economic prosperity, and increase wellbeing (Mobaraki, Mohammadi, and Zarabi 2012). American economist Edward L. Glaeser’s *Triumph of the City* takes the argument further, contending that cities in the West are healthier, wealthier, and more attractive than ever and that in impoverished parts of the world, cities expand because urban density offers the clearest road from poverty to prosperity (Glaeser 2011b). Although not everyone buys into the idea of cities as humankind’s greatest invention (Gleeson 2012; Brenner and Schmid 2014), it is undeniable that around the world, cities are growing and changing at breakneck speeds. From the skyscrapers of Jakarta’s Golden Triangle to the towering condos of Toronto, the world is quickly transforming around us.

While it is easy to marvel at the sheer scale of Tokyo, at Moscow’s intricate and extensive subway system, or at the dense beauty of Paris, it is important to remember that cities are defined not only by their urban structures but also by their people. And whereas buildings may stand for centuries, populations are much more fluid. Demographic structures can shift in many ways, yet urban population change is generally discussed in

the context of growth. Almost every day, I hear or read reference to the fact that the majority of the global population now resides in some form of urban environment. Often the statement is followed by the United Nations' (2019) projection that by 2050 over two-thirds of the planet's roughly 9.7 billion people will inhabit urban areas. Similar narratives frequently pepper Canadian conversations and articles about urban change, such as the fact that although Canada is a vast country spanning almost 10 million square kilometres, 90 percent of Canadians live within 160 kilometres of the country's southern border with the United States (CBC 2009), or that more than one-third of Canadians live in the nation's three largest metropolitan areas: Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver (Statistics Canada 2020c).

These statements are (more or less) true. But they disguise the fact that not every city is growing. Far from it. From the ancient city of Angkor to modern-day Detroit, history demonstrates how dramatically population dynamics can shift over relatively short periods of time. Planning academics and urbanists have long tried to understand, and guide, the processes that drive urban growth and change. Understandably, population is an essential element of these discussions and debates.

This is a book about population loss in cities – shrinking cities. More specifically, this is a book about Canadian shrinking cities. It is about what causes people to leave cities and to have fewer children and about what we can and cannot or should and should not do about it. Being about Canada, it is also a book about immigration and identity. Even more than that, it is about shining a light on the other side of growth – on processes and places that many of us never think about. It is about our obsession with growth, about the conviction that bigger is better, and about how this notion is firmly entrenched in our society. In a world of neoliberalism and rabid consumerism – take Black Friday chaos, for example – shrinking is simply not politically, or socially, acceptable. When we talk about cities, we tend to talk about growth and the challenges of growth – the rising cost of housing, the ever-longer commutes, or the growing number of immigrants, brewpubs, and bike lanes. But not every city is growing. Cities like Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) in Nova Scotia have been shrinking for decades and will likely never return to their peak population. And maybe that is okay. Maybe less can be more. Maybe, to paraphrase economist E.F. Schumacher (1973), smaller can be beautiful.

Shrinking Cities: Challenges and Opportunities

Population and economic decline are not new processes. Yet they are always changing, as are the academic theories that try to explain them. In the first half of the twentieth century, English-language scholars argued that urban change could be viewed as a natural cyclical process (McKenzie 1924; Hoyt 1939; Hoover and Vernon 1959; P. Hall 1988b) – one that fluctuated between boom and bust, growth and decline. The process of an urban life cycle was principally identified by urban sociologists, but the concept also echoes the cycle theory of economics (Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012a). During the Fordist industrialization era, the cyclical trends of economic, social, and urban growth and decline were largely manifestations of the local economy and of local decision makers (Bontje 2004). However, globalization has altered both the spatial scale at which economic and social changes occur and their manifestation at the local level (Robertson 1992; Soja 2000; Berge 2012).

Urban growth and shrinkage are now increasingly disconnected from local actions and events. Modern globalization has resulted in an increasingly complex, interconnected world. Sociologist Manuel Castells (2004) advocates that we think of cities as nodes in a global network. He argues that the global economy has prompted capital and labour to converge in specific nodes of great importance while weakening nodes of lesser connectivity. This uneven flow of capital and information has perpetuated divergent economic and demographic urban trends. The global restructuring of production, distribution, and consumption in recent decades has resulted in the concentration of resources, key infrastructure, and intellectual assets in a small number of “global” cities (Soja 2000; Castells 2004; Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012a). Simultaneously, monetary and human capital are relocating from other cities to these global cities, leaving myriad social, economic, and environmental challenges in their wake (Audirac, Fol, and Martinez-Fernandez 2010). Cities experiencing these challenges, including population loss and economic restructuring, have been dubbed shrinking cities. Recent academic literature has consistently concluded that the emergent phenomenon of “urban shrinkage” – a term used interchangeably with “shrinking cities” – is a lasting symptom of globalization, not simply a step in an evolutionary cycle (Großmann et al. 2008; Pallagst 2010; Rink et al. 2012).

Shrinking cities often need to support increased urban services, maintain superfluous infrastructure, and manage growing blight and abandonment while economic activity and revenues wane. It is a uniquely difficult position, and many scholars have concluded that traditional growth strategies are often not applicable within the context of population loss and economic restructuring (Ehrenfeucht and Nelson 2011; Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012b; Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2016). As the role of planners has traditionally been to manage growth and its resultant issues, the planning profession and literature provide little guidance on how to address the challenges of shrinkage (Oswalt and Rieniets 2006a; Schatz 2010). There is agreement among planning academics and practitioners that planning, as it currently exists, is not equipped to manage shrinkage (Bernt et al. 2014). The tools available to planners, such as comprehensive planning, zoning, and urban growth boundaries, have been used predominantly to guide growth and new development (Dawkins and Nelson 2003). However, planning for shrinkage is fundamentally different from planning for growth (Rybczynski and Linneman 1999; Mallach 2011; Kempenaar et al. 2016). Unfortunately, the growth-oriented culture in which planners operate has produced an aversion to the very notion of shrinkage (Hollander et al. 2009), and planning education is overwhelmingly growth-focused (Hartt 2015). As a result, planners and decision makers in shrinking cities often attempt to reverse the depopulation trend through large-scale reimagining projects (Wisniewski 2013; Neill 2015), but this approach involves considerable financial risk for resource-strapped cities. Urban sociologist Katrin Großmann and colleagues (2008) contend that cities should concentrate on adapting to urban shrinkage rather than searching in vain for a “silver bullet” solution.

The increased economic and human mobility of our modern age, which has allowed many cities to prosper, has also led to an extremely growth-focused culture where expansion is not only sought but is also assumed (Rieniets 2006; Hackworth 2014). Population decline is generally viewed as a temporary issue, one that should endure for as short a time as possible, and economic revitalization is considered a precondition for population growth (Wiechmann and Pallagst 2012). However, studies have shown that population growth does not necessarily lead to economic growth (Glaeser and Resseger 2009) and that population shrinkage does not always

result in economic decline (Weaver et al. 2017). My own work on American shrinking cities has shown that economic and demographic changes do not always run in parallel (Hartt 2018) and that cities can shrink and prosper simultaneously (Hartt 2019). Although economic decline may often be a precursor to population decline, economic growth does not always require population growth.

The notion of a successful shrunken city has inspired the call for a paradigm shift away from growth-focused planning in shrinking cities (Blanco et al. 2009; Pallagst 2010; Hummel 2015b). An increasing number of academics have appealed to planners and decision makers in shrinking cities to accept their demographic reality and expand the scope of local strategies to include the possibility of planned shrinkage (Hollander et al. 2009; Pallagst et al. 2009; Rieniets 2009). Some shrinking cities may bounce back from demographic decline (Hartt, Zwick, and Revington 2020), but given the dependence of shrinking cities' fate on wider economic and demographic trends, it may be imprudent for decision makers solely to pursue growth strategies.

The potential permanence of urban shrinkage gives credence to professor of urban planning Karina Pallagst's (2010) call to rethink planning in shrinking cities, investigate the principles on which planning has traditionally been based, and move away from the necessity of population growth as a precondition for prosperity. Local decision makers in shrinking cities may need to prepare for the possibility that their population may never surpass or even return to historic highpoints. Proponents of smart decline (Popper and Popper 2002; Schilling and Logan 2008; Hollander and Németh 2011) recommend that shrinking cities adopt strategies to adapt infrastructure and services for a smaller population.

Modern economic globalization has transformed urban development and in doing so has diminished the ability of local decision makers in shrinking cities to shape and guide their economic and demographic trajectories (Sassen 2001; Castells 2004). While broadening the scope of local strategies to include planned shrinkage is advisable, decision makers may also need to recognize their position within larger shifting economic systems. By acting in concert with other cities within an economic region, a shrinking city can amplify its presence within the global economic market. Multi-level initiatives have been shown to play a pivotal role in

the stabilization of urban shrinkage (Rink et al. 2012). Additional cooperation and communication between cities and higher levels of government could be instrumental in stabilizing declining economies, especially given that many cities shrink within a wider context of growth.

Although the planning toolbox remains dominated by growth-centric approaches (Hollander and Popper 2007; Ehrenfeucht and Nelson 2011; Olsen 2013), alternative strategies that do not target or rely on population growth have begun to garner attention. Demolition and rightsizing strategies aimed at reducing a city's physical size have been discussed, debated, and implemented in many areas (Bernt 2009; Bertron 2013; Brachman and Mallach 2013; Hackworth 2015; Yin and Silverman 2015). But strategies for shrinking cities are not limited to contraction; rather, a whole range of nongrowth ideas have been proposed, including strategies to incorporate green infrastructure (Schilling 2009), urban agriculture (Draus, Roddy, and McDuffie 2013; Delgado 2015), temporary use (Németh and Langhorst 2014), and even a zombie apocalypse theme park (Schindler 2016).

Although the literature on planning and planning strategies for shrinking cities has increased, there remains a gap in our understanding of how practitioners perceive these strategies, their applicability, and their feasibility. Some research has explored practitioners' perceptions of urban shrinkage (Warkentin 2012; Schatz 2013; Hollstein 2014), but there is very little literature that examines their assessments and opinions of strategies to move forward. Accordingly, a better and more nuanced understanding of local actors and practitioner perception is needed to advance and facilitate the development and application of alternative planning approaches in shrinking cities (Großmann et al. 2013; Bernt et al. 2014). Such research could help to explain the mentality motivating decision makers and, ultimately, help shrinking communities to cope with the challenges, and maybe even to accrue the benefits, of urban shrinkage.

Therein lies the overarching objective of this book. I aim to advance our understanding of the evolution of urban shrinkage as a process of urban change and to examine the opportunities and barriers that exist when planning in shrinking cities. In the following chapters, I establish and advance current thinking about how shrinking cities are perceived, defined, and categorized, analyzing the Canadian urban landscape on this basis. I synthesize strategies available to decision makers in shrinking cities

in order to explore the applicability and feasibility of a nongrowth strategy in Canadian shrinking cities. This book establishes a nationwide empirical foundation for Canadian shrinking cities research and provides insight into how practitioners perceive and respond to population loss. In doing so, it not only advances our understanding of the processes and implications of urban shrinkage but also expands our perceptions of urban resilience and growth.

Why Canada?

When I talk about my research, few people question my choice of subject area. Shrinking cities appear to have become generally regarded as an important, interesting, and timely area of research. But many are perplexed by my decision to study *Canadian* shrinking cities. During my doctoral research, one prominent American academic even went so far as to strongly recommend that I switch my geographic focus to the United States or Europe, insisting that I would have trouble finding an audience, international journal interest, and even a job if I did not. This advice failed to take into account that I was interested in Canadian shrinking cities precisely because they were an overlooked and unpopular choice. Born and raised in Nova Scotia, I was all too aware that an entire world existed outside of the bright lights of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montréal. Plenty of urban scholarship was already focused on Canada's big cities, and I felt that it was important to shed light on what sociologist Glenn V. Fuguitt (1971) might think of as the places left behind.

Canadian urban shrinkage is unique, although it may not seem to be at first glance. All over the world, communities and cities reliant on primary resource extraction and advanced manufacturing have struggled. Canada is no exception. What makes Canada unique are how and where population loss has occurred and the wider context of fast-paced national growth. As we will see in [Chapter 2](#), Canadian depopulation predominantly occurs in small and midsized cities, is relatively spatially distributed across the country, and tends not to be as severe as in other countries. Whereas “rust belts” in the United States, northern England, and the German Ruhr Valley experienced industrial collapse on a grand scale (Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2016), Canada's equivalent regions have only stagnated in comparison. Whereas cities in Japan, Russia, and Spain shrink within a context of

national population loss (Ortiz-Moya and Moreno 2016; Batunova and Gunko 2018), Canada's shrinking cities do so within one of the fastest-growing developed nations in the world (Press 2017).

Within a context of consistent, considerable national growth and widespread municipal amalgamation, Canadian urban shrinkage is a mostly silent process. The silent process of shrinkage, first conceptualized by spatial planning professors Emmanuèle Cunningham-Sabot and Sylvie Fol (2009) in the European context, refers to particular geographic patterns of shrinkage that explain the relative lack of interest in decline and depopulation. As we will see throughout this book, Canadian shrinking cities do not demand, or receive, much attention in the Canadian urban discourse. Even local responses are generally quite muted – hence the title *Quietly Shrinking Cities*. In this way, the persistent yet overlooked nature of Canadian shrinking cities is more in line with the French or Spanish contexts (Wolff et al. 2017).

Yet no one would mistake Canadian cities or Canadian culture for southern Europe. In the imagination of the world, Canada is first and foremost a North American nation. I have had the good fortune to travel outside of Canada quite extensively and have consistently encountered people who believe that Canada is part of the United States. Even those who do recognize Canada as an independent political entity often view North America as a single cultural identity. As a result, I often find myself explaining our differences rather than our similarities. From free health-care and the metric system, conversations gradually make their way to buying milk in bags and all-dressed chips. Yet when I begin to explain that in Canada urban shrinkage is quieter than in America, regardless of their nationality, people tend to nod emphatically. When I first noticed this response, it was a pleasant surprise, and I congratulated myself on my communication skills. However, I quickly realized that my audience was simply equating quiet with polite. And even though Canadians may not literally be quieter than Americans – take the Toronto Raptors' championship celebrations, for example – the stereotype of the polite Canadian persists.¹ In many ways, Canada is a moderate (or quieter) version of the

1 Recent research has shown that, at least on social media, Canadians are in fact more courteous than Americans (Sneffjella, Schmidtke, and Kuperman 2018).

United States. Canada's population and global voice are much smaller, its income inequality is lower (Islam and Safavi 2018), its communities are less segregated (Walks and Bourne 2006), and its political parties are less polarized (Jesuit and Williams 2018). The difference is even reflected in its national aspirations: the powerful American ideal of "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" versus the gentle, unassuming Canadian ideal of "Peace, Order, and Good Government."

Good or not, the government plays an important role in the evolution of cities in both countries. Both Canada and the United States are "spatially sprawling, federalist systems, with regional differences that generate considerable economic and political competition between cities for investment and resources" (Hackworth 2016, 279). One key difference is that the relationship between cities and higher levels of government – Canadian provinces and American states – tends to be considerably less hostile in Canada (Weir 1995; Sancton 2000). As a result, suburban fragmentation prevails across the United States, whereas municipal amalgamations, often forced by provincial governments, are common in Canada (Sancton 2011). Amalgamation has helped to provide Canadian shrinking cities with a wider property tax base from which to draw revenue, whereas regional restructuring has not been possible for American shrinking cities due to both the stronger insistence on local control and racial tensions within metropolitan regions (Darden 2004).

Urban designer Patrick Condon (2004) argues that the only truly significant difference between American and Canadian cities is the enormous disparity in per capita expenditure on highways. Condon asserts that American and Canadian cities were virtually identical until the US Highway Act of 1956 allowed freeways to rip through the American urban landscape. He argues that although racial tensions have contributed to urban shrinkage and decline, it was the dramatic highway investment in cities like St. Louis, Missouri, that initiated the suburbanization of the urban periphery and the economic and demographic decline of the central city.

Professor of planning and geography Jason Hackworth (2016) contends that differences between Canadian and American urban deindustrialization and suburbanization are marginal and do not account for the much more severe shrinkage and abandonment seen in American cities like Buffalo, Cleveland, and Detroit. As we will see later in this book, many Canadian

cities have lost population, but the extent of population loss pales in comparison to that of their American counterparts. According to former Canadian minister of immigration, refugees, and citizenship Chris Alexander, “the biggest contrast between the US and Canada is that we have reformed our immigration system continuously [and] intensively” (quoted in Peñaloza and Burnett 2017). Hackworth (2016) agrees that Canada’s immigration policies have led to reduced levels of population loss and abandonment in Canadian shrinking cities – but this outcome has nothing to do with Canada’s famed tolerance and multicultural identity. Rather, institutional racism in both Canada and the United States has contributed directly to the resilience (or lack thereof) of industrial regions. Whereas American policies have focused on containing and undermining African American cities, neighbourhoods, and people, Canadian immigration policies prior to 1967 simply excluded visible minorities from the country. During the period of mass suburbanization and urban deindustrialization, no Canadian city had a demographically or politically dominant nonwhite group to trigger white flight. A major difference between shrinking cities in Canada and the United States is that the American model of institutional racism reinforced urban shrinkage, whereas the Canadian one did not.

If the urban shrinkage phenomenon has been quieter in Canada than in the United States, so too have post-industrial transformations. As urban historian Tracy Neumann (2016) explains, Canadian and American shrinking cities have followed many of the same strategies, shared ideas, and even hired many of the same consulting firms in their quest for prosperity. However, Canadian cities like Hamilton, Ontario, have failed to match the economic success and transformation of American cities like Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Neumann argues that the difference is due to the commitment of American growth coalitions of local political and business elites. But post-industrial transformation has come at a cost. Discarding social democratic goals, industrial cities on both sides of the border have sought to attract young, educated, middle-class professionals. In doing so, they have recklessly widened and deepened economic inequality – especially the American cities that have succeeded.

Stepping back, we can clearly see that Canadian shrinking cities do share similarities with their American and European counterparts. But

Canada's shrinking cities are not colder, more affable clones of US cities. And they certainly do not resemble European cities. Simply put, there is no Detroit in Canada. There is not even a Leipzig. But that is precisely why Canadian shrinking cities require more attention. Research is needed on Canadian shrinking cities not only to spark local and domestic discussion but also to offer a different perspective on the wider shrinking cities discourse (Jakar and Dunn 2019).

Whereas urban shrinkage research is well established in Europe and the United States (Audirac 2018b), Canadian academics and professionals continue to be reluctant to explore urban shrinkage (Schatz 2010; Hartt 2020). Despite acknowledgment of a countrywide pattern of uneven growth and emphatic calls for more research by the Canadian urban geography and planning literature (Polèse and Shearmur 2006b; Filion 2010), continuous growth is considered normal, and declining urban areas are neglected (H.M. Hall and Hall 2008; Hartt and Hollander 2018). Canadian urban practitioners tend to ignore and/or fail to accept the realities of urban shrinkage (Hartt and Warkentin 2017). Being a quiet process, Canadian urban shrinkage can be overlooked. Others have argued that Canadian planning legislation and policy tools are ill-equipped to manage decline (Hollander and Popper 2007; Donald and Hall 2015). Economist David Leadbeater (2009) identifies Canada as especially vulnerable to shrinking processes because it has both a high level of urbanization and many communities reliant on natural resources. The continuing rural-urban migration, declining birth rates, and societal aging of the population magnify this vulnerability further (Christensen et al. 2009). Given the dearth of research on Canadian shrinking cities, the fixation of Canadian urban research on large urban areas, and the tendency to ignore or discount depopulation and the associated costs (H.M. Hall 2009), there is plenty of reason to focus on Canadian shrinking cities.

Conceptual Framework

Shrinking cities are the product of hugely complex, intricate, and context-dependent forces. Even within the Canadian landscape, urban shrinkage has a diverse range of causes and effects. Despite its multifaceted nature, there are key concepts that underpin the phenomenon of shrinking cities. My conceptual approach in this book is built on the notion that there are

three complementary forces that drive the interconnected processes of urban shrinkage. I view urban shrinkage as a manifestation of (1) external – regional, national, and global – shifts, (2) local changes, and (3) governance interventions.

It is important to consider the context in which shrinking cities evolve. Urban shrinkage has been shown to result from wider economic and demographic changes at the regional, federal, and global levels (Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2012a). Large-scale external shifts, such as declining birth rates, economic recessions, and migration patterns, have a direct influence on urban development at the local level. City, regional, and even national boundaries are becoming increasingly permeable and ill-defined as the flow of populations, goods, and knowledge are now components of global economies and cultures (Soja 2000). Although external forces play a significant role, urban shrinkage is also a product of economic, demographic, migratory, and built environment changes at the local level. Whether independent processes or the manifestation of larger trends, urban shrinkage is principally visible and felt locally. The local effects of urban shrinkage, such as blight, vacant buildings, and increased socio-economic segregation, can become, in turn, drivers of further urban shrinkage (A. Haase et al. 2016).

Both systematic shifts in the global economy and the subsequent local manifestations are key components of the development of urban shrinkage, but the role of governance also needs to be considered. The decisions of policy makers, planners, politicians, and nongovernment actors at all levels influence the development of shrinkage. Although many of the drivers of urban shrinkage are beyond the control of local decision makers, the policy response to the subsequent challenges plays an enormous role in the future of a city. Government and private interventions can help to shape or break a city's resilience. However, many cities around the world have actually perpetuated their demographic and economic decline through poor policy choices (Gordon 2009).

Exploring each of the three forces responsible for shrinkage is imperative to advancing our understanding of why and how shrinking cities develop and evolve. Individually, they allow us to provide insight into a distinct subset of the phenomenon of urban shrinkage. However, the processes of external and local shifts as well as the governance decisions

that stimulate change are inextricably intertwined. By exploring the three forces together, a much more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of urban shrinkage can be realized.

Book Structure

Chapter 1 introduces the conceptual underpinnings of the book through a review of the literature on growth and decline. The chapter explains the idea of a shrinking city and the associated debates regarding its definition and operationalization. **Chapter 2** presents empirical research examining the growth, decline, and movement of Canadian urban populations over the past four decades. The prevalence, severity, and persistence of Canadian urban shrinkage and slow growth are demonstrated through maps and empirical analysis. Building on that research, **Chapter 3** explores how industrial changes have contributed to Canada's urban population geography. Specifically, the chapter examines the shift away from primary resource-extraction and manufacturing industries and how post-industrial transformations have permanently changed the Canadian urban landscape.

Chapters 4 and **5** offer two Canadian shrinking city case studies. First, **Chapter 4** examines the history and current conditions of Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) in Nova Scotia, highlighting the pitfalls, challenges, and possibilities of planning for decline. Drawing on academic publications, news media, and government documents and archives, this chapter paints a portrait of Canada's most persistent and severe case of urban shrinkage. In contrast to **Chapter 4's** description of long-term decline in a resource-extraction community, **Chapter 5** shifts focus to Ontario in order to tell a tale of recent decline in the centrally located manufacturing community of Chatham-Kent. Along with the long-term history that has led to the current decline, the chapter looks at the impact of the Great Recession of 2008.

Chapter 6 introduces the idea that decision makers in shrinking cities should not exclusively concentrate on regrowing their population. Many scholars have argued for a paradigm shift in how we think about "success" in cities, taking the position that shrinking cities need to focus on adapting their physical and service footprint in order to better represent their new-found smaller population. The chapter provides a summary of the relevant literature, theories, and ongoing debates, drawing on real life examples in

the American Rust Belt. [Chapter 7](#) examines perceptions of urban shrinkage and the applicability and feasibility of rightsizing strategies through an analysis of semi-structured interviews with planning, economic development, and social housing professionals in the two case study cities of CBRM and Chatham-Kent. This chapter argues that time and space have a direct influence on local perceptions of shrinkage and that these perceptions can result in the adoption of overly optimistic growth strategies in newly shrinking areas or, when coupled with geographic isolation, a reluctance to change the status quo in areas with long-term shrinkage.

The Conclusion brings the strands of the story together by synthesizing the empirical findings and returning to the original objectives of the book. I speculate on future demographic changes across Canada and on the emergence of new shrinking cities, and I delve into the deeper questions of whether cities can successfully shrink and whether population loss is inherently bad.

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