

## 5.3

Grossmann, K. (2004) *Declining Cities - rising futures? The future prospects for declining cities in relation to development paradigms* (Germany)

## **Declining cities – rising futures?**

The future prospects for declining cities in relation to development paradigms.

---

### **Introduction**

Part of contemporary ideology and practice in many cities is the dominance of the growth paradigm and growth coalition in setting economic development policies. Nonetheless, many cities have lost population in recent decades, and more are projected to do so in the future. Changes in the global economy have altered regional economies. Urban sprawl left behind vast vacancies and distressed neighbourhoods in inner cities, while demographic shifts are changing population composition and population size. At present the growth paradigm is being questioned in different contexts.

This paper compares decline and shrinking in two cities, Pittsburgh in North America, and Chemnitz in Germany. Pittsburgh is long known for its economic restructuring in the face of the loss of its economic base in manufacturing and steel, meanwhile East Germany and parts of West Germany are new areas of decline, and for this paper, a focus on Chemnitz. Chemnitz was a manufacturing center of Germany, with specialties in tools and textiles and grew into the 1980s, with constant shortage of housing units. In 2000 the statistics show significant population decline and housing vacancies of 25 percent caused by suburbanization, declining birth rates, and net outmigration.

In the review of these two cases that follows, there are discussions how strategies join for the development of these cities with aim of sustainable urban development. The controversies appearing in the case studies show parallels. One parallel encompasses alternatives to the growth paradigm in the discussion is the development paradigm of sustainability.

In this article I would like to examine whether sustainable urban development in the orientation process of declining cities might form a new paradigmatic frame of social development, and also, look at the same issues regarding urban development. My approach is from an empirical perspective utilizing the discourse on urban development between civic groups, town leaders, and others involved in planning undertakings. In addition, I assume that the direction shrinking cities adopt, depends on the paradigmatic orientation of the discourse leaders.

In the following, I will first specify my approach and then, present the essential features of the discourses in question. I will then present two case studies, and focus on the virulent development paradigms of each. In conclusion, I will discuss the resulting consequences.

### **What is a shift of paradigms?**

A paradigm is a pre-theoretical model of reality (Reinhold 2000, p. 482) which is based upon actions, perceptions and future expectations. The idea of the paradigm or the shifts of paradigms became prominent through Thomas Kuhn's explanations regarding structures for scientific revolutions. In these explanations he analyses the change of pre-theoretical models on which research approaches are based. However, paradigms are not only found in science, but also elsewhere. For example society related paradigms are determined by a certain, temporary understanding of reality. In connection with a reorganization of the understanding of the general reality, they are replaced by new exemplary **basic conceptions**<sup>1</sup>. In turn, "Basic conceptions" reveals the difference between paradigms and other understandings of reality. Conceptually, paradigms are but only those, which – unquestioned and maybe not even consciously available - form the base of all understanding of reality.

In Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions a change of paradigms occurs when the results of scientific examinations in the context of the valid paradigm frequently produce anomalies that are not explainable. The relevant sciences are then set by a kind of revolution on new bases. The new bases aren't a counter-thesis to the old one but the establishment of a new logic which isn't translatable in the old one. (comp. Weingart 2003, p. 43f.)

Also theories of a social change follow a common pattern. These patterns demonstrate the processes of change and show that common ideas of reality might differ from changed real conditions. The innovation theory regards crises as an intrinsic element of the Processes of social innovation. Innovations are sudden changes of direction in social organization, lifestyles, norms and values, which are part of greater social processes of change.

Innovations are frequently accompanied by crises which either trigger an innovation or set in motion the framework for their onset. (eg. Gillwald 2000) Assessing a situation as crisis presupposes ideas of a good or normal

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.sociologicus.de/lexikon/lex\\_geb/begriffe/paradigm.htm](http://www.sociologicus.de/lexikon/lex_geb/begriffe/paradigm.htm), zuletzt aufgerufen am 20. 5. 2004

development. In other words: a development which is not critical fulfils the demands of the exiting paradigm.

The culture theory regards crises or events, as expressions of social developments which oppose currently valid cultural ideas. (eg. Geertz 1995 or Sahlins 1992). Events provoke interpretations of the situation and, according to Sahlins, offer reasons for a reformulation of the cultural structures which become apparent only because of the event. This reformulation is part of the process of change, the modification of cultural patterns. (Geertz 1995, Sahlins 1992).

Such theoretical considerations also exist in the discourse analysis. Particularly Schwab-Trapp characterizes conflicts as a starting point of discourses. In these conflicts legitimate positions for interpretation and action would become institutionalised and in turn cultural change results. (Schwab-Trapp 2001, p. 266).

These approaches contain a common thread, in which change is initiated by developments which are observed on the background of prevailing paradigms as a crisis. The paradigms, which in turn react upon the broader perception and arrangement of the process, are the result of the change among others. In this perspective, paradigm means a pattern of thought which characterizes the ruling orientation/world view of a time. From the mentioned approaches, it can be learned, that such a change of paradigm can be identified in the interplay of protagonists, discourse and behaviour during crisis situations.

There is little doubt for participants and observers of the German discourse on vacancies and city-rebuilding as well as the American discourse about declining cities, that both discourses are a reflection of critical events and look for action possibilities in this crisis. The answers to these questions are highly different.

## **Questioning the growth paradigm**

### ***- in the American context***

Even though rustbelt cities have faced economic decline as well as a decline in population for many decades, the growth paradigm remains in many places.

Ever since at least the mid-seventies, the growth strategy focus has been critiqued, and the development policies have been identified as variations on and the same topic: (economic) growth. Research has identified the constellation of actors as growth coalitions (Logan and Molotch 1996, Cox 1999). Shades of growth strategies have been questioned such as Gentrification and downtown renewal, high technology parks, sports arenas and elite culture districts as well as consumption retail zones (eg. Boyle 2003, Wilson and Wouters, 2003). After all Boyle states that:

“Unfortunately the power of the growth model has constrained intellectual or professional consideration of alternatives when growth is far from inevitable.” (Boyle 2003, p. 1)

According to Boyle, an alternative could be planned shrinkage. He highlights some suggestions towards a planned contraction or reduction of neighbourhoods, which have been made by Practitioners and scientists over the years, but finally concludes, “that planned shrinkage has significant political ramifications and will be extremely difficult to implement.” (Boyle 2003, p. 18) Yet, the fiscal need to reduce services and cost along with New Urbanist’s village-scale model of development might give life to the idea of planning for a smaller future.

### ***- in the German context***

Häußermann and Siebels (1987, 1988) call to treat shrinking cities as a possible new object of urban sociology faded away answerless at the end of the 1980s. Even in the 1990s, when the housing vacancies primarily in the new federal states rose and the housing market turned upside down, icy silence still chilled the public discussion. The taboo was finally broken by the “commission for structural change of housing economy in the new states” installed by the Federal Government, which was briefly called “vacancy-commission”.

It published its report in November 2000 which for the first time documented the depressing number of 1 million empty housing units in Eastern Germany to the table, and then, recommended the “dismantling” of

housing units for the remedying of the problem as well as other policies. A high tide of discourse contributions, of urban development competitions, federal programs and forecasts under the headword "city-rebuilding" followed. As causes of the development the following complexes are listed in the literature:

1. Deindustrialization -- shrinking labor markets, migration to other states
2. Urban sprawl
3. Housing vacancies before 1989 as a result of the housing policies of the GDR
4. Demographic change triggered by drop in the birth rate for decades
5. Continuous new building and reintegration of older housing units into the market by rehabilitation

The term "paradigm" is used in the discourse, in order to refer to the drastic nature of the resulting situation and consequently, the expected development. Repeatedly a change of paradigm is announced on different levels. For example, in the politics and housing industry, a change of paradigm is described: from new building to reduction of housing stock. Particularly planners announce a paradigm change from organizing growth to a management of shrinkage. This concerns particularly the planning practice, its goals and instruments.

Based on the occurred development theoretically and on a historical level, the end of the growth paradigm is rung in.

The term paradigm has provoked a sense of dread since its introduction to literature. Each small change is suddenly a paradigm change. City-rebuilding is however a true change. It's all about that the borders of growth are exceeded, and then, our model of the "faster – higher - further" does not work anymore. Shrinkage becomes part of the future everyday life of our society." (Bohne 2003)

To envision new prospects and methods a "qualification of scientific thinking and common sense would be necessary: the decoupling of the idea of development from the idea of growth" (Weiske and Schmitt 2000, p. 163). What could be a new 'idea of development' remains open.

Related to the definition of "paradigm" given above, only the latter considerations which deal with the change of basic social development concepts describe an actual change of paradigm. The other changes are certainly made in conjunction with such a comprehensive change of paradigm. However, it describes only partial effects. So the search for new planning instruments is a search for new action routines and the

dismantling of housing units I would describe as a change of practice in one segment of urban development. Another segment would be traffic.

Large segments of the discourse refer to such concrete fields of action and problem solution strategies. One such highly discussed problem is the prevention of bankruptcies on a massive scale in the housing economy by dismantling, that is demolition. Other concepts deal with designing for neighbourhood-reduction, and the customization of the municipal infrastructure to declining population numbers.

Even other parts of the discourse deal with the constellation of actors in the process of city-rebuilding, and the possibilities of steering and implementation, legal and planning framework conditions, and questions of citizen participation, at the preparation of integrated development concepts for cities or neighborhoods. The concern becomes the cities (and regions) whose futures become blurred. Only few contributions devote themselves explicitly to the question of what a new paradigm could be. I would like to outline some positions from the literature briefly:

### ***Development alternatives for shrinking cities in Germany***

Schröer/Vogler/Lang refer to the level of city structure and wonder what an "alternative urbanity" could look like. They plead in their core argument for ecological upgrading as well as upgrading in design and function of the historic districts of the inner cities, as it is planned for the east of Leipzig, for example. City development objectives which have been on the agenda of planners for quite some time, such as an ecological upgrading and landscape design for waterways within cities, find new possibilities in shrinking cities, because they meet less opposition regarding land use in the inner cities. A temporary highlight of this debate is the Marienthal Resolution of the Institute for Ecological and Regional Development (IÖR), Dresden and the Institute for Development Planning and Structural Research at the University of Hanover (ies). The Marienthal Resolution is a call for a discussion on the effects of demographic change concerning the aim of an ecological settlement development. Risks and chances which the population decline brings for ecological aims are named, for example the chance to slow down land consumption or a possible weakening of public transport. These approaches remain in the logic of city planning as designing but shift, however, the priorities in the direction of ecological goals. At present, this position is forming the strongest interface in the city-rebuilding discourse to sustainable urban development. This approach is picked up in many planning documents referred to in keywords like "intermediate greening" (landbanking) or "renaturation".

The thesis of Doehler starts differently. She sees the end of the epoch of normative, rational planning to come and demands a change of the planning understanding to more description and playful consideration. Thereby she connects several levels of thought on which the change of paradigm is discussed, see above (Doehler 2003). Considerations regarding the far reaches of radical change are connected with changed planning and steering approaches. This theory is also advanced by Hannemann, Kabisch and Weiske. They hosted a conference on "communicative steering of the city-rebuilding " in February 2004.

Kil, who with his contributions emerges as the philosophical voice of the city-rebuilding discourse, also talks about a change of epoch, but starts, however, at another level. He combines the spatial demographic developments with the development of globalization and economic decline. Kil asks for positive concepts for people and their places on the other side of "conventional (industry-) labour". He refers to keywords like "alternative ways of life" and the "slow-city" movement, that are alternative drafts to the kind of development which currently simply turns its back to (primarily eastern) parts of Germany.

Hannemann (2002) sees a possibility for positive-development concepts especially for shrinking small towns in their social capital. Thereby they would no longer point to a lack of development, but to their local and regional obstinacy, their unusual features, and endogenous potential.

All approaches agree, however, in the point that Eastern Germany becomes a test panel, a laboratory for the proof-testing of designing, behavior and life. Phenomena will be investigated at that time for future developments of other regions of Germany and the formerly industrialized world (Hannemann/Kabisch/Weiske 2002, p. 263). It remains thrilling where this journey goes.

The parallels to the sustainability discourse impose themselves really: Renaturation and ecological development of cities, social capital and community building, alternative economic systems, horticulture, self-sufficiency and last but not least, participation. The combinations of both the sustainability discourse and the discourse on shrinking cities are nevertheless still sowed thinly. Before I mention existing approaches, I will first give an ascertainment of sustainability as a development paradigm and a short summary of goals of the aims of sustainable urban development.

## **Sustainability as a development paradigm**

Sustainability is understood mostly as a normative concept, as a model for a development to a better future. On the one hand, it reflects an intended condition of society, as it refers to the process of reaching this goal. (eg. Kuehn 1997). "Sustainable development" is without a question a development concept, but does it also embody a new basic conception of reality? I think, it does. I will discuss this with the background of the German sustainability -discourse, since it is simply more familiar to me.

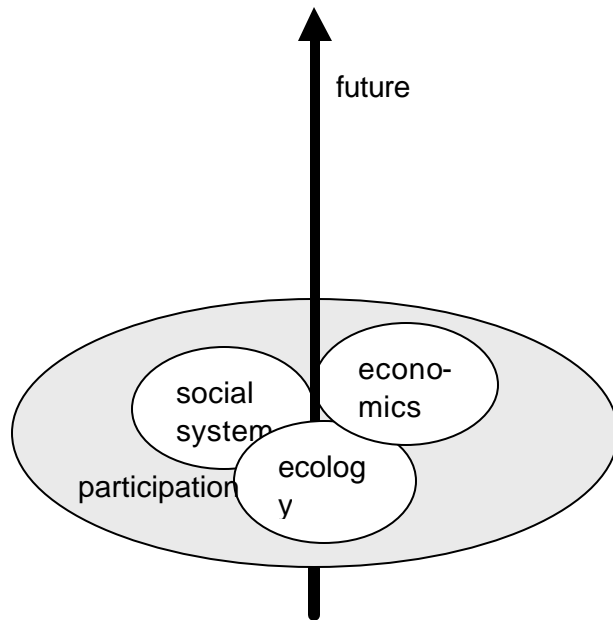
From the history of the sustainability discourse and within different definitions, sustainability represents a new ideal design of society that incorporates central demands of the environment movement, the one-world -movement and, but by no means least importantly, the peace movement. It is claimed in the concept of sustainability namely that a common basic acceptance regarding social development processes is wrong: the assumption that any social development is determined by the development of the economy. This is a widely accepted belief that which determines the Marxist as well as the neo-classical theory, runs through political programs and dinner table discussions.

Conversely, the definition of a sustainable development claims the interdependence of different sections of the society. Economy is just one among (mostly) three sections, namely economy, ecology and social sphere. This definition circulates as a magical triangle or as the three-column-model. According to Tremmel (2003) this version has by now the greatest consensus which considers these three areas equal. A different version would be a priority of ecology. (eg. Kuehn 1997, p. 15 pp., Berger 2003, S.18f. or [www.lexikon-nachhaltigkeit.de](http://www.lexikon-nachhaltigkeit.de).)

A change of the temporal horizon of a social development is moreover common for all approaches. With the often-cited definition of the Brundtland report (Hauff 1987, p.46) and its focus on intergenerational equity, particularly long-term periods are taken into consideration. Thus, sustainability claims that a social development takes place within long-term and complex cause effect relations. The three classical dimensions of sustainability, ecology/economy and the social sphere, are already accompanied by a fourth dimension, namely the demand for a cooperative, consensus -oriented and participatory politics.

It doesn't appear in the magical triangle because it is projected to the process for the attainment of the goals. (Brand 2000, Tremmel 2003)

I treat sustainable urban development analogously as a strategy about the development in and of cities.



The concept of sustainable (city-) development, in my opinion, is also just a cultural pattern, a concept which will be very probably subject to further modification in the future. The core in the development paradigm sustainability however, is the thought of the interdependence of different parts of the society. The society is a whole after all. None of the sections may develop at the expense of others, and gain in an area may not cause any costs in other areas. In this respect the so-called "win-win approaches" are the best of all possible projects.

### *discours connections*

The Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning (IRS) already before the discourse on planned shrinkage began published a reflection on special features of sustainable urban development in the new federal states (Kuehn 1997). However, there were several unique circumstances regarding potential as well as restrictions for a sustainable urban development in Eastern Germany. As potential they point out the promising, compact historical city centers with mixed functions. In addition they point to the high number of housing units in the inner cities, a still-moderate suburbanisation, the dense structures of the high rise housing estates, and their good connection to public transit as well as the variety of available inner city brown fields that can be reused for alternative purposes instead of exploiting new land.

Structural hindrances and problems would stand contrary to the use of these potentials. Governmental subsidies spurred the suburbanisation of retail. The revitalisation of the centers would be aggravated by complicated property conditions and restitution laws. In 1997, the high rise housing

estates showed a tendency toward social segregation, in which vacancies could lead to devaluation of this housing inventory. That was 1997.

In 2003 the Federal office for Building and Regional Planning concluded that:

"No matter on what level – whether concerning single objects, blocks, neighbourhoods or the entire city, the rebuilding of cities represents a challenge if also not completely new, so substantial for a sustainable urban development." (Informations from the research of the BBR 6/ 2003, dezember 6/2003)

That is it, no more explanation were given. At this observation The challenges seem to be so insurmountable, that only a few dare to explore the possibilities. Only the current work of Kabisch/Berndt represents an exception (2002, 2003) here. Although no answers are given, several good questions are formulated in this account. Their contributions are established by the sense that for many protagonists a more structured research for a sustainable development of shrinking cities could flank a dynamic, almost hectic and precarious process and could steer them in the direction of a sustainable development.

Surprisingly even the documentations of federal programs and competitions don't mention a sustainable development of shrinking cities explicitly unless they use "sustainable" as an adjective meaning "effective in the long run".

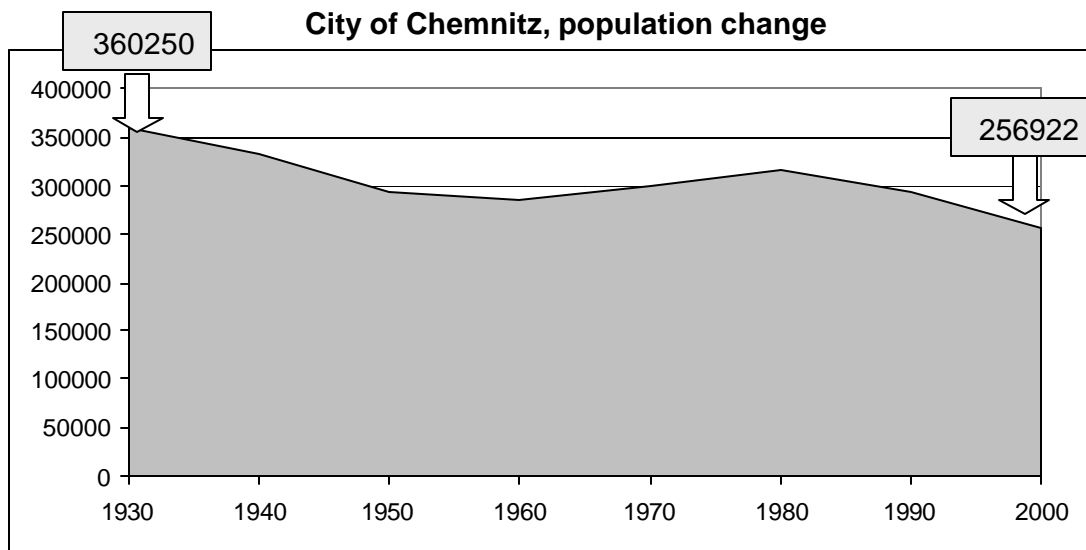
Contrarily, the combination of sustainability and shrinkage has already become a kind of tradition, and that is the critique of the growth paradigm in general. This critique has its origins in the Club of Rome' report "Limits to growth" (Meadows 1972). In the report and since then, a discussion was initiated that considers development without (quantitative) growth. Answers emerge from the idea of qualitative growth to the demand on renunciation and planned shrinkage (cf. Hager/Schenkel 2000).

Even if in the scientific discussion the connection between the discourses on sustainability and shrinking doesn't figure prominently, it takes place at a local level. This is most likely due to the participation of the civic community in the local urban development discourses that follow the sustainability agenda anyway.

Subsequently, I will present the discursive connections between decline and sustainable urban development in Chemnitz and Pittsburgh. I carried out case studies in both cities with a different empirical base which does not allow a categorical comparison. The case studies function as contrast instead for each other, and illuminate special features of the respective discourse.

## The Chemnitz case

Chemnitz was a manufacturing center in Germany until World War II, with specialties in tools and textiles. Before reunification, Chemnitz grew into the 1980s, with constant shortages of housing units. Chemnitz was the fifth largest city of former GDR and has a vacancy rate of about 24% today (City of Chemnitz 2000). It is one of the centers of the city-rebuilding-efforts in the new federal states.



source: „Statistisches Jahrbuch“, City of Chemnitz 2002

I will now describe the connections and controversies within the local discourse about the shrinking of the city and sustainable development.

### ***City-Rebuilding - the administrations policies:***

Alike other German cities the discourse and the planning in Chemnitz is very strongly dominated by the administration - unlike Pittsburgh where the discourse mainly takes place between economy protagonists, politicians and the civic community. Within the administration the essential documents for the city-rebuilding are produced. This is the so-called “Spatial Action Concept Housing (RACH) and - building upon the RACH is the Integrated Urban Development Program (IUDP).

A central planning goal of these concepts is to shrink the city from the outside in. The periphery shall be thinned out instead; the compact city shall be conserved. 'Compact city' here is not used as a guiding principle for city development (see above) but describes a concrete area, namely the inner city including the extensions up to the 1960s. The preservation

priorities within the so-called compact city focus on the "Gründerzeitgebiete" from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These districts shall serve as attraction and identity focuses which enhance the city of Chemnitz. The opponent which shall be reduced instead, are the high rise housing districts from the 1970s and 80s. "City-rebuilding-areas" (demolition areas) were established here. Other demolition areas are to be found along main roads open to traffic and in inner city industrial areas with lots of brown fields. Broader goals of the policies are the upgrading of riverbanks and green zones as well as the break-up of competitive uses in housing and production for example. In other peripheral districts with village-like settlement cores there are no plans on reduction. Planned new locations for single family homes are reduced due to the declining demand. (cf. ICDP, city of Chemnitz 2001)

A hot discussion followed the publication of the ICUD in October 2001 which at least lasted until the passing of the program in the town council in May 2002. Originally the passing in the town council was planned for November 2001, however, it was deferred by half a year due to the multitude of (highly emotional) reactions and statements.

This hot discussion phase fell together with the writing of the Local Agenda 21 document and also as a part of the Agenda document of the principles for urban development in Chemnitz. The Local Agenda 21 is a civic group with formal connections to the administration working for sustainable development in Chemnitz. Apparently, there are such working groups all over Germany and Europe. In the discussion about guiding principles for urban development within this group, general goals of sustainable development were sharpened and adopted to the declining reality. Below, I will explain the core arguments.

### ***Goals of city-rebuilding from the perspective of the Local Agenda 21***

The main starting-point is a consequential stop of any further land consumption. In the statement of the Local Agenda advisory board within the city council on the IUDP it is argued, that land consumption cannot be justified within a population on decline. A statement presented by an affiliated group states:

"The Spatial action concept verbally announces a reasonable goal like saving resources, town planning that is oriented on inner city development, and prevention of further landscape consumption. However, the concrete plans stand contrary to these declared beliefs. So approx. 3100 possible

new housing units are to be built in rural communities meanwhile in existing housing areas extensive demolition is planned." (Kassner 2002)

The topics of cityscape and city boundaries are included in this argument. The clear transition from city to village-like outskirts and further to wide open landscape shall be conserved/re-established. To locate building sites in the incorporated municipal areas would be contrary to this. Creative and ecologically progressive unobtrusive dealings with the existing housing areas are demanded instead. Brownfields are supposed to be rehabilitated by residual wastes and reused as retail or production places, if necessary with federal or municipal subsidies. Using this approach the city's urban features could be conserved, the area consumption reduced, and the identity strengthened at the same time.

Of course, it will be necessary to differentiate between existing housing areas and the classic position of historical preservation which is committed to saving structures it believes should be classified as valuably historical. In this case the preservation of existing housing stock supports less historical conservation in lieu of ecological responsibility combined with a focus on preserving identity of place.

Also demands on the traffic policy become adapted to the shrinking development. Calls for a turn in the Chemnitz traffic policy have been made for years. Now, in a shrinking city:

"the chance should be used for a development different from creating a city suitable for cars but instead to a city with a sustainable mobility. Therefore we recommend a revision of the ICDP to the effect that the persons affected by the traffic policy aren't resettled but the bad effects of individual traffic are reduced." (Scherzberg 2002, p. 4 p.)

Here a classic position of the sustainability and Agenda 21 movement is consulted to dissolve one of the until-now not solved contradictions in the city rebuilding strategies - at least a solution exists in the vision. Quite a number of the "Gründerzeitgebiete" (see above) are situated along the main roads. There is a concentration of housing vacancies due to traffic noise. At the same time, this area is considered particularly valuable and is to be conserved. The Gründerzeit -districts are considered to be core elements of the urban fabric and due to their history increase the identity of the city. The attempt of the agenda advisory board is to take the individual traffic out of these areas and establish a comfortable and reasonably priced system of public transportation and bicycle accessibility instead. This way some parts of the Gründerzeit-d istricts will be saved. Their preservation will not exist with a reduction in public transport but instead by making

their development consistent with radical improvements of the public transport system. This would be an adequate answer to the shrinking reality.

The criticism of the administration regarding demolition concepts is tied into these orientation on the existing housing stock. For the high rise housing estates, where emotional discussions were led around the urban development program, it is suggested that one should not focus on the reduction of the apartment stock but strive for a creative redesign of the high rise housing estates primarily. Almost playfully, a quality improvement tactic is sought whose side-effect can also be a reduction of the housing stock. A member of the Agenda 21 advisory board put it like this:

"Don't we have enough creative imagination to promote architecturally fascinating projects, to turn the prefabricated cement-plate high rises into terrace-buildings and split-level houses, to convert unused housing and industrial buildings through conscious concepts aligned in the idea of sustainability. The high rise district was an expression of unbroken technocracy in the GDR, but has a remarkable and ecologically sensible density. Shouldn't we use this potential?" (Dietel 2001)

The administration also suggests a strategy that would connect the reduction and upgrading, but accentuates each differently. In the IPUD is written:

"The object of action within these redevelopment areas "city-rebuilding" besides dismantling of housing areas is also the stabilization and modernization of neighbourhoods that are to be kept."

The assessment of the high rise districts follows different premises. The administration starts out from the observation of the housing market and from the design of the entire city. For peripheral areas low rise and low density are favored. The agenda group argues according to a sustainable urban development and therefore demands a social and ecological strategy for these areas. Such a strategy is justified by identification of the residents within the district, by carefulness not to destroy existing social and capital values, and demands a principle stock orientation along with quality ameliorative modification. This position is young and was developed in the process.

Quite an essential piece of the puzzle that contributed to the development of this position, is participation. Besides the discussion about the demolition plans, lacking citizen participation was the main criticism point in the Chemnitz discussion about IUDP. Civic actors shook their heads

about the plan to open the document for a public hearing for only four weeks initially. In their opinion, an improvement of the document has two necessary prerequisites: time and citizen participation. Only in a cooperative environment, which includes all interested social groups, can a concept be improved and implemented. This stands contrary to the self-understanding of the Chemnitz administration as a sovereign planning institution. The administration holds an understanding of citizen participation which is based on information and hearing.

The discussion around city-rebuilding has left its mark in the guiding principles for urban development in the Chemnitz Agenda 21 document as well. In the draft of the original Agenda document the administration's vision of shrinking the city from outside in is adopted and sharpened. The city shall put the principle of centrality as well as decentrality into effect. This formula reflects the problem of the infrastructure thinning out, the problem of rivalry between the districts, and between districts and the city center for investments and supply structures. There has been a discussion about how a city of short routes can be developed under shrinking conditions. An unbiased vision is set against the negative scenarios that appear in the discourse under keywords such as “perforation” or “dissolving of cities”: a city with a bigger and several smaller cores. The city itself does not contract but is reduced to district centers. Free areas determined in this process shall - similarly to what the administration suggests - be used for the connection and expansion of green spaces and with that comes improvement in the microclimate.

In the demand for equipment in the district centers with a social and cultural infrastructure, a contraposition to the administration also hides whose center concept concentrates on retail and commercial services. The vision of the Agenda 21 – document rather represents a conglomeration of small towns, which hand over only a few central functions to the city center, such as culture, politics or administration. By this delegation of power the paths of every day life are reduced while the social relationships within the districts are strengthened. The model of the compact city with short paths is maintained in modified form at the end.

### ***The administrations responses to the critique***

The statements went through a formal hearing procedure and found a split echo. With the general goals there is hardly any disagreement but concrete strategies are not so fortunate. So the demand "development of the existing housing stock instead of new building activities" was partly defeated and partly taken into account. This arises from the actual agreement at the level

of the general goal of inner city development instead of outer development and also from the different consequences which are derived from it. So the objection was accepted that new building in the outer districts draws new vacancies in other districts. The administration also agrees that a more intensive redevelopment of and improvement in the quality of housing of those districts, "from which at present people still move out of", would be more sensible. They point out similar wordings in the IUCP. Nevertheless, the demand for an absolute priority of development in existing housing areas was turned down by the administration and at long last also by the city council for the following reasons:

"Decisions regarding use, reuse or demolition are subject to as a matter of priority economic compulsions and can be influenced by the city only conditionally. There will exist the demand for self-use residential property in the future, too. Therefore the city must hold corresponding location offers up, if it doesn't want to accept additional loss of inhabitants." (resolution on the public hearing, part A and C, City of Chemnitz 2002)

This argument for further conversion of green land to building sites was formulated in public discussions repeatedly: Young families who demand this kind of land, are the foundation of the city and its economic potential. Therefore one needs to comply with their conditions for living or they will find these conditions offered elsewhere.

The demand to use the shrinking development as an opportunity for a change of direction in the development of the traffic was declined completely. In the hearing documentation the administration points out valid decisions which are referenced from 1994 publication. The change of paradigm announced in the urban development program doesn't seem give any reason for a change of direction in the traffic policy. The conflicting goals contained in the IUDP for Gründerzeit-districts, addressed traffic issues versus conservation of the built structures, and formed a kind of Gordian knot. The solution suggested for how to cut the knot gained little acceptance from the administration. In turn, restrictions for the customers of the inner city were forbidden. (City of Chemnitz 2002)

The demands for alternatives to the demolition concepts in the high rise districts and the heavy pressure of the citizens' action groups led at least to a reduction of the expelled "dismantling potentials". Also here the administration refers to the market and repeats, that the economic bases of this process are not steerable by the city and that the administrations influence is limited. This seems paradoxical to me because all efforts of the administration have made obvious attempts to intrude on the housing market and attempt to develop suitable instruments to alter the effects of the market in the city-rebuilding process.

The time lines of the state government and the high participation factors are mentioned concerning objections regarding a lack of citizen participation. Considering 400 statements were received, citizen participation was quite significant. The conception of participation as information and hearing is not questioned.

On the other hand, a far-reaching agreement can be noticed at the use of vacant space. Whether intermediate or durable: greening is the adequate design for all involved. The positive ecological effects are pronounced and pursued everywhere. There is a difference also here: while the administration is steering primarily for an aesthetic upgrading of the city, the agenda protagonists emphasizes the ecological effects on water quality and microclimate. The strategies are nevertheless shared.

### ***Summary of the Chemnitz case***

In summary, discussion around the sustainable development of the city of Chemnitz finds drive and opportunity stemming from the population decline and the concepts for a systematic reduction of the city. At the same time, a common sustainability strategy for Chemnitz doesn't take place under the conditions of decline. The similarities are particularly striking in the goal-oriented statements for very different strategies. The strategic considerations and models for the development of the city are adapted by the two dominant players on the declining development. The differences are determined by different development paradigms. The administration holds an urban development concept, in which the foundation is a potent economy and the goal is the perfection of the built structure of the city. In turn the design of the city steers wider areas like identity, attractiveness or social relationships. A sustainable development of shrinking cities appears as virtue from the need. Where the economic utilization pressure disappears, other aims can be put into effect.

The administration prioritises economy and aesthetics which is visible in their arguments and actions. On the other hand, the strategies of the Local Agenda 21 rather follow a priority of ecology. Historical preservation and a consequent housing area preservation have primarily ecological and social goals instead of aesthetic ones. The demand for a sustainable urban development obtains an air of "when if not now" by the shrinking process. One surely can discuss infinitely the restrictions of implementation of all these visions and models. Nevertheless it remains undisputed, that these concepts offer affirmative answers and visions which are missed in other places.

### ***The case study Pittsburgh***

Pittsburgh is a shrinking city in the old industrial rust belt of the USA. For half a century the population has been declining there. The population loss in Pittsburgh has two essential causes: the economic development which is most like that of the Ruhr district: Collapse of an economic monoculture, the steel industry in Pittsburgh. Also the population of the complete region declines starting in the seventies (US Bureau of The Census). The second cause is urban sprawl. The sprawl of the American cities is fundamentally more radical in comparison with German suburbanisation and leaves inner cities deserted, and poor even in growing regions and cities. (eg. Burnett & Brophy 2003)

The local decision makers still back (economic) growth strategies with the goal of helping the region regain prosperity thus, downplaying the population loss. These efforts are flanked by the revitalisation of the CDB and by the elimination of ecological damages, which were caused by the steel industry, and gave Pittsburgh the image of a grey and dirty steel city. An active, planned management of the decline was not envisioned for decades and not pursued to this day despite suggestions to the contrary by the administration. Likewise, there is no such discourse about managed shrinkage nor is there anything comparable. Realizing the populations were no longer growing and even declining, Giarratani suggested approx. 15 years ago, that the city of Pittsburgh should accept that it would be a declining city or region for several decades to come. In his point of view it was not realistic to assume a "Silver bullet" would suddenly bring back economic prosperity and innumerable jobs. Re-population of the formerly 676,806 inhabitants (as of 1950), now down to 334,563 (2000), is highly unlikely. His negative views became unpopular and gained the reputation of a kill-joy. A former employee of the legislature in the 1980s summed up in the interview with me that Giarratani has proved an enormous foresight and was far ahead of his time. Even then it would have been right to start planning for decline and to reduce municipal services. It is the background of this reflection that the city of Pittsburgh upheld in fall 2003 facing municipal bankruptcy.

### ***Strategies of the decision makers***

For decades in 'large politics' it has been all about pushing the region economically forward to be competitive again. The analyses concentrated on chances and restrictions for economic growth. The newly elected County Executive, said at his swearing in:

"During the next four years, I will work for a prosperity that is shared by all of southwestern Pennsylvania ... If we confront these challenges, we can celebrate a new era of growth," (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 3.1.2004)

Chances are seen in endogenous potentials, first of all in the innovatory potential of the three large universities. Pittsburgh has achieved highly noticed successes with the diversification of the local economy. The unemployed quota was 4.9% in September 2003<sup>2</sup>. Questions of vacancies (17% in 2000, Bureau of the Census) and primarily the strong social segregation remain unsolved. Driven by the shrinking process, segregation leaves so-called "distressed neighbourhoods" in the inner city.

### *Strategies of the civic community*

While the classic growth coalition is backing traditional growth strategies (Logan & Molotch 1996) there is an enormous range of engagement at a civilian social level - seen from the German point of view. Among these groups are those who don't pursue the classic growth strategies. Here are four examples:

The Vacant Property Working Group tries to cluster vacant land to open it to further use. In addition, they try to promote residential property for the stabilization of communities and try to have influence legislation for laws concerning the process of property recycling.

Devotion to the recycling of vacancies is also the work of the Cool Space Locator which arranges the accommodation of small start up companies into unusual business premises in urban (unlike suburban) contexts: in vacant properties, where in turn it would be hard to find tenants. Economic support gets connected to an upgrading of urban neighborhoods and social stabilization on a small scale.

The Nine Mile Run Watershed Association involves itself with the renaturalization of the course of a river. Just one aspect of its activities involves neighbourhood gardens which are laid out on vacant properties. These gardens slow down storm water and give flora and fauna a chance in and around the stream. Ecological goals are being connected to social effects and self-sufficiency strategies.

Community Development corporations are socially, economically, ecologically, culturally and denominationally engaged and unusual aims are very often combined. New housing increases the market rates for the neighbourhood and protects owners from a loss in property value. Middle class households move in and then support the local retailers.

---

<sup>2</sup> homepage of the city

It is striking that the fields of activity of all these civic groups frequently cover more sectors than that of Germany's. Ideas not based in growth, a sustainable development of the city are reflected in such approaches. Sustainable Pittsburgh, an organization analogous to the German Agenda 21 groups, promoted new strategies and absolved them of the old economic model of attracting investments for growth and demanded the qualitative improvement in the city, quality of life, social justice, the school system etc. The director concluded in an interview: "So, this Region in this definition, doesn't need growth, it needs development. It needs sustainable development."

The vision of the director of the Watershed Association mentioned above reached even further. Raised in New York she found Pittsburgh attractive simply because it shrinks. When considering economic utilization pressure on land and the chance to re-green the city in a real way, she puts it like this:

"Pittsburgh has the potential to redefine, what an American city is. ... If you could create a city where people can be around green but can still relatively easily go to a small store, where someone knows them and helps them ... those are quality of life-issues that makes a fantastic place to live. A place that is a cultural center, that offers green space that offers recreation, but that also offers the amenities that only come from living near people. ... The American city then has to satisfy the things that people are looking for in that rural areas: being able to commune with nature in some way, and a feeling of community which is hard to achieve in large cities, that's why Pittsburgh has this incredible potential." (Interview in Dezember 2003)

Some of these groups became familiar with the theory of Richard Florida, professor for Economic Development at one of the three Pittsburgh universities who landed a national best seller in 2003 with his book "The rise of The creative class". It is his thesis that, within the last decades, has spurred a new social class into being. The creative class which will be the decisive economic engine of the 21st century developed. According to this thesis the traditional economy's strategies of attracting investment are outdated. Instead cities which want to operate a successful economy support must make themselves attractive for this creative class. The thesis of Florida is capable of connecting both the growth endeavours and the strategies of sustainable development.

### ***The administration***

Finally, I'd like to make a comment regarding the City planning department. Here I learned a little about demolition plans at the end of my research visit. Besides the demolition of dilapidated houses which has been occurring for years, the city planning department of Pittsburgh has begun to de-invest in areas and relocate its residents. This strategy was described as a

coincidental discovery. A national program offered subsidies for the resettlement of high tide victims. At the same time a regional traffic study pointed to areas in which the municipal services could not be profitably operated any more. One of these areas was a high tide area and the planning department decided to de-invest and relocate the residents.

"and that is actually what got us thinking about that whole policy of de-investing into parts of the city where we really shouldn't be, and returning them into passive open spaces. And that was about three years ago, and that is when there was a major shift in our approach."

Retreat areas were determined by two criteria: ecological and fiscal criteria. However, this strategy is still discussed privately because some regard the topic as politically sensitive. No politician wanted to suffer the repercussions of writing a retreat strategy.

### ***Summary of the Pittsburgh case***

Hesitantly, Pittsburgh emerges with a decline in population fields of action open to a re-greening of the city and for the minimization of her "ecological foot print". Scarce financial resources are a trigger or catalyst for changes in thinking again. Different from (Eastern) Germany this change of direction is not spread and discussed in public. Although in the strategies of the administration already a "major shift" is announced, the official withdrawal from growth strategies is politically classified as sensitive.

Also in Pittsburgh some civilian protagonists develop visions which connect the process of decline and sustainability strategies. These protagonists are those who independently of the discourse on decline set their development priorities independent from growth. The utopian energy of these visions seems even greater to me. What also stands out in contrast to Chemnitz is a certain ease in the integration of economic aims in the work of the civic groups. Sector overlapping strategies seem to spontaneously offer themselves in straight dealings with the consequences of the population loss. The still-plentiful availability of capital from foundations of local industry and finance giants like Heinz and Mellon promote such strategies and activities and make them happen in the first place.

## **Discussion**

### ***perception of a crisis on the background of the growth paradigm***

No matter how structured the process is at theoretical chances, it is experienced as a crisis. This crisis refers to losses: Loss of inhabitants, loss of jobs, loss of property value, loss of livelihood and social bonds, loss of attractiveness to investment and, with that, a loss of design potential. The losses may be real or emotionally loaded – at the level of perception this does not matter, a crisis is a crisis. The growth paradigm as a cultural pattern has translated into routines of perception and action. Such a routine of action is the town planning which sees itself as designing by means of steering growth. Another routine of perception is the measuring of successes in the competition of cities by spectacular construction projects, economic benchmarks and not least by great events. According to a change of paradigm in the direction of the sustainability these categories could be replaced by categories of quality of life. Pittsburgh already had a success here: 1985 Pittsburgh was chosen "America's most livable city" by Rand McNally, shortly after the collapse of the steel industry.

### ***- differentiations of the growth paradigm***

There are differences between the two cases and their contexts concerning the perception of the crisis and strategies of action. In the American context declining cities are also called "weak market cities" (Burnett & Brophy 2003), This wording strengthens the focus on an economic weakness. In Germany wordings circulate which pick out the crumbling city structure as a central theme, for example the "perforated city" (cf. Stadtbauwelt 24, 2001). The city becomes a subject, a body, that fears "gaps between the teeth" and amputations. The German discourse is dominated by the search for possibilities to regain control of the development of the city structure. Such a perception of the built structure is unusual to the American context. Perception here focuses on the economics and also on social inequalities resulting from the economic development. Strategies are invented to reduce these inequalities.

These phenomena are based on differences in the development concepts. The dominant discourse equates urban development with market development in Pittsburgh. Like low tide and high tide the economic tides influence the social structure of the city and produce either general prosperity or serious social disparities. The city structure is seen as a result of the market development.

In Chemnitz (thesis: in Germany) the economic power forms the foundation for urban development. The aim of planned urban development consists in the steady perfection of the (built) city structure. In turn, the structural design steers other sections like identity, social relations, ecological development etc. The growth paradigm is accompanied by a (sovereign) design paradigm which is based on norms. At present some of these norms are social integration, aesthetics with focus on history etc. The city-building in this perspective is a continuation of this development concept under changed conditions. In this sense a change of paradigm would actually be participatory, playful and experimental planning as Doehler (2003) demands it.

### ***- sustainability as virtue from the need***

In my analysis the discourses and the strategies are split. The discourse in the two cities is indicated by conflicts of goals, triggered by a quarrel of the paradigms. The protagonists cannot be assigned to two rival parties but some protagonists follow weight both paradigms at the same time. Such tendencies are apparent in the administration of both cities. Protagonists who have devoted themselves primarily to the sustainability paradigm formulate programs which call in strong changes in direction, develop positive images and solve specific problems of the shrinking processes -- in theory at least -- more easily. The shrinking processes sharpens conflicts on the one hand, and make them highly visible. On the other hand they also offer fields of action. The most important field of action that is highlighted in the literature is the fading economic pressure on land use. Simply stated, the quarrel of the paradigms is superfluous on areas for which there is no more economic interest.

It is common for both processes that spontaneous strategies make use of the sinking utilization pressure on land use to pursue ecological aims, but also consider economic and social aims. These strategies are credited with the increase in the quality of life in the two cities. A top priority regarding change in urban development politics may not be readily noticeable here: should economic utilization interest come again, the land would be available. The concepts "intermediate use" or "land banking" make it apparent.

### ***- mediation between the paradigms***

The mediation between strategies for economic growth and strategies for sustainability is difficult in both cities. An absolute priority is granted to economic goals particularly by protagonists of the economy and economy

support. In Pittsburgh through Florida's prominent thesis a strategic compromise between economic and social or ecological aims seems possible and is picked up by some civic protagonists. In Chemnitz an approach is instead carried out via the conceptual level. In the opinion of Göschel (2003) this has systematic reasons. Conceivably, without doubt the society could also exist well in a smaller scale, however, the process of shrinking is difficult and painful.

As long as in the cultural specification the economic development is considered a base of urban development or even is equated with it, double-track positions are formulated. Such a position in my point of view is one that must "manage shrinking and organize growth". It is written in the IUDP of Chemnitz:

"This simultaneity of contrary developments, removal and growth, aggravates the municipal political discussion and impedes the wording of simple solutions on the way to a sustainable city of Chemnitz. (City of Chemnitz 2002, p.3)

### ***Outlook***

At this point, any further discussion about the decline or rise of these cities is not about different goals and sets of norms anymore, but about social theory, about basic assumptions on the mechanisms of city-development. Whether any urban development is determined by the economy and whether therefore, strategies of sustainable development for shrinking cities are a business of pure luxury, isn't the decisive question. This is a question about the basic concepts of social development. In times of growth it is possible to go for the sustainability business whether one regards it as primary or secondary. Today, the shrinking cities are, however, at a point at which they must decide which theory they should follow. The quotation cited above refers specifically to this conflict. In the evaluation of the federal competition program for "city-rebuilding East" the following appeared at the end:

"Decisions will be demanded from the shrinking cities in future, which must be sustainable with respect to the structural development, social and health related aspects and in the political process communicable. The low utilization pressure in these cities on the other hand gives room for experiments. In connection with this, both the necessity and the chance of conscious priority and direction decisions arise." (BMVBW 2003, p. 70)

Florida's thesis of the creative class, which is the economic engine of the 21st century, takes an unexpected diversion. It unintentionally solves the controversy around luxury business or necessary business. If one follows Florida's thesis, it is actually possible to think (and do) both at the same

time. The location decisions of the creative class are based on criteria that meet the action fields of sustainable urban development: Variety and tolerance, fields for professional experimenting, places of informal social interaction, authenticity and identity as well as an ecologically charming and healthy cityscape (Florida 2003). This theory unites the goals for social development not in terms of general aims but in terms of strategies. This explains the enormous success of the book among planners. All the civilian social protagonists mentioned above in Pittsburgh could follow both the principle of economic growth and the principle of sustainability with their projects: the strategies remain the same and the uniting element is called "quality of life". In the criteria for an attractive city we are apparently moving away from the representation of vibrating machines, which show prosperity and of smoking chimneys which express an economic potential. The ideas of the "good life" have moved in with the sustainability agenda.

So it isn't only normatively desirable that sustainability - understood as a development of overlapping sectors, integrating the goals in different dimensions of society – overcomes the growth paradigm, it seems also analytically possible. The shrinking cities offer an unexpected field of action here. In addition, the discourse on shrinking cities can already build on an older social discourse that calls for a change of direction on a broader level. It all moves towards the questions, how and whether this room to move is filled out, and which priorities will be set.

## ***References***

### *books and articles*

Boyle, Robin (2003): *Imagining the impossible. Planning for central city decline, # 2*, unpublished draft.

Burnett, Kim & Brophy, Paul C. (2003): *Building a new framework for community development in weak market cities*. Denver. download unter <http://www.cdpm.org>.

Cox (1999)

Doehler, Martha (2003): *Die perforierte Stadt - Chaos oder Methode?* in: *Deutsches Architektenblatt* dab 04/2003.

Geertz, C. (1995): *Dichte Beschreibung: Beiträge zum Verstehen kultureller Systeme*. Frankfurt am Main. (1. Auflage 1987)

- Gillwald, Katrin (2000): Konzepte sozialer Innovation, Berlin (WZB-Discussion Paper P00-516)
- Hager, Friethjof; Schenkel, Werner (Hrsg.) (2000): Schrumpfung. Chancen für ein anderes Wachstum. Ein Diskurs der Natur- und Sozialwissenschaften, Berlin.
- Häußermann, H. (1997): Stadtentwicklung in Ostdeutschland. In: Friedrichs, J. (Ed.): Die Städte in den 90er Jahren: demographische, ökonomische und soziale Entwicklungen, Opladen, p. 91-108.
- Häußermann, H. und Siebel, W. (1988): Die schrumpfende Stadt und die Stadtsoziologie. In: Friedrichs, J. (Ed.): Soziologische Stadtforschung. Sonderheft der Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie, Opladen, p. 78-94.
- Häußermann, H. und Siebel, W. (1987): Neue Urbanität. Frankfurt/Main.
- Kabisch, Sigrun; Berndt, Matthias (2002): Nachhaltige Stadtentwicklung - Integrierte Strategien zum Umgang mit dem Wohnungsleerstand. Dokumentation des Workshops am 5.6.2002 am UFZ, Leipzig.
- Bernt, M.; Kabisch, S. (2003): Praxis ohne Theorie – Wissenslücken im Stadtumbau, In: PlanerIn 1\_03, S. 42-44
- Kuehn, Manfred: Grundzüge einer nachhaltigen Siedlungsstruktur- und Stadtentwicklung in den neuen Ländern, IRS Graue Reihe No. 13, Erkner 1997
- Logan, John R. u. Molotch, Harvey L.(1996): The City as a Growth Machine. in: Fainstein, Susan u. Campbell, Scott: Readings in Urban Theorie. Massachusetts, Oxford.
- Meaows, Donella H.: Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind.
- Reinhold, Gerd; Lamnek, Siegfried; Recker, Helga (2000): Soziologie - Lexikon. München, Wien. 4.Aufl.
- Sahlins, Marshall D. (1992): Inseln der Geschichte. Hamburg.
- Achim Schröer/Sascha Vogler/Thilo Lang: Geordneter Rückzug oder less is more? Ostdeutschland als Laboratorium für eine alternative Urbanität, in: vorgänge Nr. 161, Heft 1/2003.
- Schwab-Trapp, Michael (2001): Diskurs als soziologisches Konzept. Bausteine für eine soziologisch orientierte Diskursanalyse. in: Keller, Reiner u.a. : Handbuch sozialwissenschaftliche Diskursanalyse. Bd. 1: Theorien und Methoden. Opladen.

SRU (Der Rat der Sachverständigen für Umweltfragen) 1994:  
Umweltgutachten 1994, Stuttgart

Stadtbauwelt, 92. Jahrgang, Heft 24, Die perforierte Stadt, Gütersloh, 2001

Weiske, C. and Schmitt, J. (2000): Metamorphosen der Stadt: Cities on the move. Thesen zur Diskussion um das städtische Wachstum. In: Raumplanung nr. 91. Dortmund, S. 161-163.

*documents:*

Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD) (1984): A Strategy for Growth. Pittsburgh.

Allegheny Conference on Community Development (ACCD)2003:  
Advancing 3 rivers: one future. A Progress Report. Pittsburgh.

Rainer Bohne Erstelldatum: 24. Februar 2003 [www.schrumpfende-stadt.de](http://www.schrumpfende-stadt.de)  
<http://www.thilolang.de/projekte/sdz/magazin/0303bohne.htm>

Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau- und Wohnungswesen (BMVBS) (Hrsg.) (2000): Wohnungswirtschaftlicher Strukturwandel in den neuen Bundesländern. Bericht der Kommission. Deutscher Mieterbund (DMB) (Hrsg.) (2004):

Dietel, Claus (2001): Lernt Chemnitz aus seiner Geschichte? veröff. unter: [www.schrittmacherchemnitz.de](http://www.schrittmacherchemnitz.de), zuletzt überprüft am 11.04.2002

Kassner, Jens (2001): Programm zur Stadtentwicklung. Stellungnahme, veröff. unter: [www.schrittmacherchemnitz.de](http://www.schrittmacherchemnitz.de), zuletzt überprüft am 11.04.2002

Scherzberg, Thomas (2002): Stellungnahme zum Integrierten Stadtentwicklungsprogramm (InSEP). in: Agenda-Büro (Hrsg.) Chemnitzer Lokaler Agenda Report (CLAR), 01/02, S. 4-5. Chemnitz.

Stadt Chemnitz (2000): Räumliches Handlungskonzept Wohnen (RHKW). Beschlussvorlage an den Stadtrat 11/2000.

Stadt Chemnitz (2001): Entwurf zum integrierten Stadtentwicklungsprogramm. Beschlussvorlage an den Stadtrat 09/2001

Stadt Chemnitz (2002): Abwägungsbeschluss zum Integrierten Stadtentwicklungsprogramm der Stadt Chemnitz. Beschlussvorlage an den Stadtrat 05/2002.