An increasing number of cities worldwide are facing heavy population losses due to demographic shifts and economic changes. Youngstown, Ohio was the first city which pro-actively accepted shrinking and came up with an integrated plan to tackle arising problems in order to achieve a better quality of life for its citizens. This paper sheds light on the conditions emerging from Youngstowns planning culture that led to this unique paradigm shift from growth orientation to planning for shrinking. After looking at the American planning culture in general, it retraces all steps taken by Youngstown during the last half-century.

**Introduction**

For some decades the phenomenon of shrinking cities could be observed. In the 1990s more than a quarter of all major cities lost parts of their population (Oswalt and Rieniets 2006). The reasons vary: while in Germany the low fertility rate and consequences of the re-unification have been main triggers (Pallagst 2010), in the US suburbanisation has a significant influence on city shrinking (Hollander et al. 2009). In addition, globalisation, de-industrialisation and economic structural changes have been particularly challenging for many former industrial cities.

Against the background of a growth oriented culture, cities confronted with population decline often refuse to accept shrinking and the underlying trends. Furthermore, as comparative studies on shrinking cities are underrepresented in the international planning literature (Pallagst 2010), there is hardly any orientation for cities in similar situations (Hollander et al. 2009). However, Youngstown, Ohio, took a new and unique approach with the master plan Youngstown 2010 to tackle the effects of shrinking within planning. Instead of desperately focussing on re-growth, planners together with other stakeholders try to improve the life quality in a smaller city (Hollander 2009; cited in Hollander 2010, 131).

This paper describes how this paradigm shift was enabled in Youngstown with regards to factors determining the local planning culture on the wider societal level, the planning level and on concrete measures in the past and present. At the same time it starts to evaluate the change in planning strategies in the imple-
mentation stage and its influence on the planning culture. Most importantly, conclusions are drawn on what can be learned from Youngstown and applied to other shrinking cities. This aims at triggering a paradigm shift of planning cultures in an earlier stage of the process in order to make “shrinking smart” more successful.

At first the theoretical background will be framed by giving a brief overview on the background, definitions and the current state of research of both terms shrinking cities and planning culture. Then the interdependencies are discussed and introduced with two models that are later applied on Youngstown. After giving a short overview on the US planning culture, the planning history and past planning approaches are presented. In a last step, conclusions are drawn about the transferability of findings to other cities.

Apart from academic literature which was investigated for the theoretical background, public media and local websites were analysed to find out about recent changes in perceptions in the planning culture. Moreover, local key actors from all important stakeholder groups involved in the planning process (citizens, private practice, educational, politics and planning) were interviewed.

**Background, current state of research and definitions**

As both terms “Shrinking Cities” and “Planning Cultures” that are fundamental for this paper have not been addressed sufficiently by academic research yet (Hollander et al. 2009; Selle 2007) they are introduced rather comprehensively. Different attempts to define both terms are introduced in order to set a context for this paper.

**Shrinking Cities**

Between 1960 and 1990 one of every sixth city worldwide was shrinking (Rieniets 2004) and during the 1990s more than a quarter of all cities were losing population (Oswalt und Rieniets 2006). Today, population decline has almost become the rule in many post-industrial regions and their cities (Rieniets 2004).

Despite the omnipresence of this phenomenon, there have hardly been any major discussions neither in the political sphere nor in academia (Pallagst 2008). Due to experiences with urban decline in East Germany, where almost every city has experienced shrinking, there has been a first step towards a paradigm shift in Germany (Hollander et al. 2009). However, while shrinking is almost seen as a ‘trendy’ issue in Germany (Brandstetter, Lang and Pfeifer 2005; Hesse 2008) the debate is only in its early stages in the US (Pallagst 2010). Only through Articles in public media such as the Forbes Magazine (Zumbrun 2008) or the New York Times (Lanks 2006) the topic could gain more popularity in the US (Pallagst 2011). Nevertheless, the issues being debated today do not meet the growing needs for orientation required by affected cities (Hollander et al. 2009). From the lack of systematic research results
that the term “shrinking city” is not defined sufficiently (Brandstetter, Lang and Pfeifer 2005) and that there is currently no consent between planners, the public and scholars of what it embraces (Hollander et al. 2009).

Most existing attempts to define a shrinking city focus on population numbers, social and economic indicators, but not on the built area of a city. The fact that there is no universal definition of the term “city” regarding population numbers makes it even more difficult to find an internationally valid definition for a shrinking city (Owzar 2008). Another difficulty in finding a definition derives from causes for shrinkage that vary in different regional backgrounds (Hesse 2008).

Because Youngstown, as it will be demonstrated in the following part, can be classified as a shrinking city by all definitions that have been analysed for this paper (Oswalt and Rienits 2006; Gatzweiler, Meyer and Milbert 2003; Wiechmann 2006; CIRES 2010) no further discussion about attempts of definitions will be made in this paper.

Planning Cultures

Just like for shrinking cities, there is no internationally valid definition for the term planning cultures (Selle 2007). The meaning of planning cultures goes beyond planning systems and embraces cultural and regional aspects which influence specific ways of planning in different cultural areas.

The term planning cultures was first introduced in a European comparative study in the 1990s (Friedmann 2005) and has since then been brought up in various international studies (Sanyal 2005 cited in Steinhauer 2010). There seems to be consent about the fact that the cultural context of planning has a highly influential and to some extend impeding position on transnational collaborations. Against the background of globalisation and increasing international cooperation it is important that planners gain a better understanding of differences in planning cultures in order to improve the efficiency of their collaborations (Fürst 2009). Furthermore this field of research is particularly important for spatial planning as it is very strongly embedded in and dependant on political structures and decision making (Friedmann 2005).

The definition by Knieling and Othengrafen (2009) that will be used in the following is very detailed and includes further definitions by Friedmann (2005) or Sanyal (2005, cited in Steinhauer 2010) which will not be introduced.

According to this definition, the term planning cultures embraces the interpretation of planning tasks, the approach towards problems, the usage of specific regulations, processes, tools and methods of public participation. All of the factors result from opinions, values, convictions, requirements and beliefs that are shared by all participants from a particular planning culture. These in turn consist of both informal aspects such as traditions, customs, habits and conventions and of formal aspects such as the legal framework and constitutional
law (Knieling and Othengrafen 2009).

Setting a theoretical framework

In order to set a framework for the case study, both terms shrinking cities and planning cultures first have to be connected on a theoretical level. The Culturised Planning Model established by Knieling and Othengrafen (2009) classifies the mentioned factors influencing planning cultures into three levels. These levels will then be applied to a context of population decline and research questions will be derived that are directly applied to the US planning context and the local planning level in Youngstown.

Culturised Planning Model

The Culturised Planning Model consists of three levels that influence each other (see Fig. 1 on page 9). The fundamental level is called societal context and it describes the social background of a society and its relation to planning, generally the mentality or mindset of a society. Some of the research questions derived from this level and answered for the case study context later are:

- Which specific cultural or traditional aspects characterise Youngstown?
- What is the predominant atmosphere and mentality of Youngstown’s population and how has it changed over time?
- How close is the community and is there a collective memory about past changes in Youngstown?
- How do the media treat shrinking?

The second and more concrete level is the planning context. It consists of the planning related values of all stakeholders involved within the planning practice. These are normally expressed in planning models, principles and aims. Additionally political, administrative and economic constructs belong to this level. Potential research questions are:

- Are planners consciously aware of the declining population and do they accept that shrinking is unlikely to be reversed in the future?
- Is there an open discussion within the administrative level and with the public on shrinking?
- How flexible is the local planning system?

The third level, planning toolset, is the most detailed one. It describes the planning tools, concrete strategies and planning results that mostly take place on the local level. Other than the first two levels the differences in the planning toolset are mostly obvious and easy to differentiate (Knieling and Othengrafen 2009).

- What steps have been taken to address population decline?
- Which planning tools are used and have they changed over time?
- What significance has public participa-
• Who is involved in the decision-making process?

**Figure 1: The Culturised Planning Model**

![Societal Context
Planning Context
Planning Toolset](source: Knieling and Othegrafen 2009. Own design, Kaiserslautern 2011.

**Perception of shrinking in planning**

Two important factors to stress when it comes to planning for shrinking in contrast to growing are the lack of overall society precedents and the general negative connotation of shrinking.

On the one hand a tradition of growth exists which derives from the mercantilist economy. Due to expansive economic systems a “force to grow” has been established which determines thinking and acting of capitalist states (Oswalt 2004, 685-687). This pattern can also be seen in spatial planning: “Urban development has virtually become the same as growth” (Häußermann and Siebel 1987, 91). Furthermore, growth is thought of being implicit in planning, not only because it has its origin in organising growth in times of the industrialisation (Oswalt 2004). On the other hand there is almost a natural anxiety regarding shrinking. Just as quantitative growth is mostly equalised with qualitative success, shrinking is often interpreted as disappointment, failure or downfall (Owzar 2008).

When shrinking is approached with growth oriented strategies, in most cases measures fail to succeed and can even cause more negative consequences. Thus, time, resources and potentials that are needed to successfully plan shrinking are wasted (Killisch and Siedhoff 2005). For these reasons, academics have claimed a real paradigm shift (Glock 2002; Pallagst 2010) which does not address shrinking in order to re-grow but to gain a new aim and flexibility in planning when the future development is not predictable (Farke 2005).

**Categorisation of planning reactions**

From past experiences that various cities made, models have been established that shed light on typical reactions of cities when faced with population decline. The case of Youngstown will later be classified to draw conclusions about potential unique features.

Farke (2005) classifies perceptions and acceptance of shrinking into chronological phases. The basic criterion for the different categories is the internal and external communication. The first phase is named “negation” and means that a population loss is not taken seriously by officials and estimated as coincidental. The development is not perceived as a complex problem and gets repressed. Growth remains the aim of political action and so do short-term
strategies and re-election gains. The following phase is the “perception without acceptance”, where population losses are seen as a medium or long term trend but are not genuinely accepted. For fear of negative connotations the step to appear before the public is not made and at the same time the hope for growth remains. Due to the lack of seriously examining the issue, shrinking is perceived as negative. This changes in the phase “certain acceptance without or with limited communication”. Individual stakeholders start to consider new measures and communicate with each other. This phase is primarily coined by in internal debate and the public is not integrated at this stage but the process is considered. The final phase “acceptance” is entered with informing and communicating with the public. There is consent that future action can no longer be oriented towards the growth paradigm and a willingness to accept that planning must adjust to shrinking is established. These cities have given up on gaining new growth. Detailed plans to meet the requirements of population decline are developed and implemented, and the public is involved in the process (Farke 2005).

Another approach to classify planning reactions by Danielzyk, Mielke and Zimmer-Hegmann (2002) categorises phases on the basis of measures and aims formulated by the city. In contrast to Farke’s model, the phases can occur simultaneously. The first and only passive phase “shrinking as a vicious circle” describes cities that are unable to act due to austerity. These cities apprehend the change but cannot implement appropriate measures for financial reasons. A more active approach is the “expansive strategy” where cities notice decreasing population numbers but cling to their strong growth orientation. Typical reactions are land use planning, major infrastructure projects, or attracting new companies. The third approach is “maintenance” and is mostly pursued by cities which are not strongly affected by shrinking yet. The only phase which has achieved the paradigm shift is “planning for decline and develop qualities” where the aim is to establish new qualities for the remaining population through conversion, flexible land uses and greening.

The next paragraphs will specify the planning culture in the USA to set a context for the situation in Youngstown.

**Planning Culture USA**

In order to understand the planning culture and reasons for changes in Youngstown, at first the national planning system and culture in which it is embedded needs to be studied. This will help answering the questions raised earlier in this paper through the Culturised Planning Model in pointing out main characteristics of the American planning culture. The “planning toolset”, the most detailed level of the culturised planning model, will directly be shown with the example of Youngstown.

**Societal Context**

The basis for the US planning culture is
the understanding of democracy which embraces the self-government and autonomy of the people. As interventions by the state are seen contrary to this notion, any kind of regulation tends to be refused or regarded sceptically (Cullingworth 1997). Because freedom of the individual is prioritised, a decentralised and local planning autonomy has been established ensuring a large scope of actions for cities (Schneider-Sliwa 1995).

This structure is emphasised by the tradition of “privatism” which describes the central role that private actors and enterprises have. The psychological and social aspect of the original idea of privatism is the belief that the pursuit of happiness of the individual results in wealth for the overall local community (Warner 1968). From this follows, that the role of politics is only regarded as creating a secure framework which enables individual freedom. Tasks that are seen as welfare duties in most European states are transferred to the private sector believing that the market can achieve aims in a fairer, faster and more efficient way. Therefore, welfare tasks are transferred from state to local level and from there transferred to the private practice (Schneider-Sliwa 1995).

Another factor that describes the general context in the US is expansive land use. Urban sprawl and suburbanisation are symptoms that derive from two notions that are routed in American mentality. On the one hand land has always been perceived as an unlimited resource (Pallagst and Wiechmann 2005) as in “There was always another valley over the next hill” (Cullingworth 1997, 18). Due to the oversupply of land it is cheap and because there have hardly been any regulations concerning land usage suburban land remains affordable while there is generally a lack of financial incentives for people to move into cities (Daniels 2001). On the other hand the intangible and financial value of owning property is a reason for many to move into suburbia. The inviolability of property is a basic right and other than for example in Germany does not oblige for social responsibility (Schneider-Sliwa 1995) but is in fact an expression of personal freedom. Additionally, life in city centres is often stigmatised and associated with crime while suburban life is expected to offer a safe environment and higher quality facilities (Pallagst and Wiechmann 2005). Hence, the market orientation of the population resulting in sprawl is contrary to contemporary sustainable planning aims (Pallagst 2007).

Planning Context

There is no competence for planning at the federal level with a few exceptions in the US, thus land use planning is a local task (Cullingworth 1997). Only if an issue is seen as nationally relevant the federal level can step in as a “crisis management” (Schneider-Sliwa 1995, 427; Pallagst and Wiechmann 2005). The local autonomy means that planning aims and administrative structures can vary greatly in different states and cities (Cullingworth 1997).

Generally, municipalities prepare comprehensive and master plans that are valid for
20 years with reviews every five years. The tools that are commonly used are zoning and subdivision. Despite their official aim which is to safeguard a healthy environment for all people living and working in an area, comprehensive plans have frequently been used to increase property values and induce racial segregation (Pallagst 2007).

Both in terms of population numbers and land development the US are oriented towards growth. Just like the general economy, cities are expected to develop in a successful mode which can only be achieved by growing (Pallagst 2008). According to Molotch (1976) cities are perceived as “growth machines” with growth being a political and economic strategy. In the past, spatial planning was only focused on either manage growth or turn decline into growth (Pallagst 2011). In contrast, planning for shrinking is equated with accepting decline (Hollander et al. 2009). As the stigma that comes with shrinking population numbers does not fit into the ideal of planners (Beauregard 2003) shrinking is commonly seen as a taboo subject or threat (Pallagst 2008). It becomes clear that the American planning culture contradicts the acceptance of planning for shrinkage, which makes the Youngstown case even more eminent.

**Background and Challenges in Youngstown**

Youngstown, located between Cleveland and Pittsburgh, was founded as a small settlement in the early 19th century but population numbers increased quickly when eleven blast furnaces were built between 1846 and 1872 to produce steel (Linkon and Russo 2002; Buss and Redburn 1983). Youngstown was seen as the capital city of the industrial empire in the 1930s and in the 1950s 90% of the local economy could be traced back to the steel industry (Linkon and Russo 2002). Therefore, steel production dominated the life of all citizens and Youngstown has always depended on it (Aley 1950, cited in Linkon and Russo 2002).

In 1977 with which has gone down in history as the “Black Monday” the closure of the steel mills in and around Youngstown was announced. It caused the unemployment of 50,000 people in the region within a few years (Buss and Redburn 1983; Linkon and Russo 2002). This in turn caused so many people to leave Youngstown that population losses in the 1970s cannot solely be explained by suburbanisation (Linkon and Russo 2002). Today less than 65,000 people live in Youngstown (US Census Bureau 2010).

The consequences of losing more than half of the population within fifty years are obvious: Youngstown is perforated with vacant residential and commercial buildings and lots of land. Youngstown has the highest vacancy rate in the USA with more than 40% of lots underused and 4,500 vacant buildings in 2009 (Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative 2009). The actual problem is not the amount but the allocation of vacant sites throughout the built area which means that infrastructure provision
is less efficient and more expensive. A solution could be to relocate inhabitants into dense areas and leaving other neighbourhoods with no public supply but despite financial incentives the majority of inhabitants refuses to move (Christie 2008). The situation is exacerbated by a declining tax base and a decreasing financial support from state and federal levels which are allocated on the basis of population numbers (Swope 2006).

Furthermore, social problems have increased during the last decades. Due to “white flight” which describes that many white middle-class people have relocated to areas with better job opportunities, the majority of Youngstown’s population is from an African-American and Hispanic background (Mock 2008). Other demographic challenges for Youngstown are the Brain Drain of particularly young and highly-qualified people which leads to a percentage of graduates below US average (Mock 2008; US Census Bureau 2010). Due to the low density of Youngstown combined with the low average household income there is a lack of retail demand in the city centre. This leads to an unattractive city core and forces people to drive to other locations to buy convenience goods (Christie 2008). The mix of a deprived community and urban appearance lead to Youngstown’s criminal rate being far above national average (Area Connect 2011). All factors mentioned strengthen the negative image so that less people are willing to move to Youngstown and a bad reputation can just be as hindering for the future development as the hard facts (Kidd 2007).

Table 1: Population development in Youngstown 1900-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>30,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>132,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>167,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>168,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>166,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>139,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>115,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>95,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>66,9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Planning approaches before 2000 and Youngstown 2010

Just like most other de-industrialising cities Youngstown has solely focused on growth strategies in the second half of the 20th century. Some random examples for growth-oriented projects are a NASCAR racetrack, a buoyant casino and an airship factory. Additionally the relocation of a branch of the Department of Defense to Youngstown was considered but none of these projects have been realised (Christie
2008; Joffe-Walt 2011). Other less popular developments proved to be more successful like the Brownfield Reclamation Program with which contaminate vacant sites have been treated to convert them into new commercial land usage. Companies that have emerged from this program together with the Youngstown State University today form the economic backbone of the city (Interview Finnerty 2011; Swope 2006).

The formation phase for the plan Youngstown 2010 started in the late 1990s when both the Youngstown State University and the City of Youngstown independently decided to prepare a new campus plan and a new master plan respectively (Sweet 2004). The effective master plan at the time had last been revised in 1974 when the city expected an increase of population up to 250,000 inhabitants (City of Youngstown 2011). University and the City decided to cooperate on a new plan to optimise the outcome (Sweet 2004). Key people in this process were Jay Williams who was Youngstown’s chief planner and Hunter Morrison, the director of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies at the university (Interview Kidd 2011).

Before the final master plan was worked on, a visioning process in cooperation with the public was carried out from 2002 onwards. In regular meetings the public was first informed about the meaning of planning itself and then fully engaged to work on concrete topics. The level of response was high and the Youngstown Vision 2010 was decided unanimously by the City Council in February 2003 (City of Youngstown 2005a). It contained the following four major issues:

- Accept that Youngstown is a smaller city
- Defining Youngstown’s role in the new regional economy
- Improving Youngstown’s image and enhancing quality of life
- A call for action

To achieve better acceptance of the plan and due to a lack of financial and personal resources the process for the master plan which started in 2003 was based on community involvement. Volunteering citizens and companies carried out site analysis and worked on various topics. The main goals of the plan are to establish a green network, competitive industrial clusters, lively residential neighbourhoods and establish a vibrant urban city centre. In terms of land usage this means that there will be no further designation of land for development and existing land will be converted to more appropriate uses concentrating business activities in the centre and establishing green industries instead of heavy industry. Residential areas are reduced by 30% (City of Youngstown 2005b).

Stakeholders from the public community, administration, private economy and education were consciously involved in the process. An impressive number of 5,000 citizens participated during the planning phase, which was enabled through active regional and local media (print, radio and TV) cooperating with the
City Council to inform about the process and the plan. Consequently, a majority of Youngstown's inhabitants became aware of the plan which is extraordinary for planning documents.

However, because of financial austerity the implementation phase is progressing slowly (Interview Kidd 2011). Since 2009 no trained planner has been employed at the City Council and the planning team shrank from five employees in 2002 to only two. Against the background of further budget cuts Youngstown has to decide whether to spend the remaining resources on the long-term planning strategy or on public safety such as the police and the fire department as the budget is not sufficient for both (Livingston 2011).

Youngstown in Culturised Planning Model

In order to understand the factors that have influenced Youngstown's unique and revolutionary approach to accept and plan for shrinking, distinctive features characterising the planning culture of Youngstown from 1977 through today are described. They are classified based on the Culturised Planning Model in the following.

Societal Context in Youngstown

The mentality of the citizens of Youngstown has changed dramatically over the last decades. During the industrially prosperous years the people were filled with pride because railroads that facilitated America's expansion towards the west and weapons with which the country won its wars had been produced in the Steel Town (Rowlatt 2011). The working class of Youngstown had negotiated the best wages in their sector nationwide and the city flourished and could offer various cultural facilities resulting in loyalty with the citizens' home. The image of the working class was glorified and connected with virtue, productivity, strength and a strong sense of community. The steel industry was not only a means to make a living but was equalised with patriotism and solidarity (Linkon and Russo 2002).

When the steel industry began to decline in the 1950s and 1960s, Youngstown's steel mills were sold to the Lykes Corporation who had promised to modernise the facilities in order to keep them competitive. However, the promise was not kept and both productivity and working conditions in the factories decreased dramatically. The loyalty of the workers towards their new employer fell to a minimum but due to a lack of alternative jobs they stayed. The series of announcements of closures still came as a shock to most people. They hit Youngstown's society as a whole as almost every citizen was a part of the steel industry either as a family member or being employed in a job which was intertwined with dependent on the steel industry. The closures in the late 1970s and the unavoidable unemployment left the people disoriented and worried (Linkon and Russo 2002). However, soon after the closures steel workers and representatives of the pub-
lic and the church formed a coalition to release their anger, frustration and disappointment and fight for their jobs. An attempt to buy and run the steel mills themselves and an accusal against the U.S. Steel remained unsuccessful (Greenwald and Krauss 1984). In this pro-active opposition phase the people of Youngstown proved a strong sense of community and established a strong “us versus them” culture blaming the government, steel companies and local decision-makers (Linkon and Russo 2002).

In the 1980s the fierce atmosphere changed into a more passive one fixated on the past and searching for a new identity. Youngstown was trying to define and keep a common memory of its glorious days. At the same time parts of the community developed a “get over it” spirit and tried to focus on future projects that would bring success back to Youngstown (Linkon and Russo 2002). The strong sense of community increasingly fell apart. The generation which had worked in the steel mills themselves were split into three parts: one group had left the city, another had stayed and naively waited for the steel industry to come back and the third group waited for an external saviour (Interview Finnerty 2011). Additionally to this passive attitude of the citizens, cases of corruption in the judiciary and political spheres led to even more distrust towards authorities (Finnerty 2003). Youngstown had recovered its strengths that had been lost during the steel crisis and at the end of the Youngstown 2010 planning process looked into the future optimistically (Interview Kidd 2011).

The exterior image of Youngstown has changed from the proud steel capital of the USA to the loser of deindustrialisation. Being underestimated from the outside, Youngstown tried even more to become successful again in desperately trying to attract new companies. Offering very high economic incentives, Youngstown fell into a weak position and was not taken seriously anymore. Self-confidence with a change of generations in the public and the administrative personnel. Citizens who had only experienced the Black Monday as children saw Youngstown differently and had a more open relation with its past and present and saw a realistic potential for Youngstown's future (Interview Finnerty 2011). The majority of people were aware of the fact that Youngstown would never become what it had been as a steel town but they needed someone to speak it out and admit it (Interview Slanina 2011). The planning process for Youngstown 2010 almost had a therapeutic effect on the community as the people were given time, space and attention to exchange their frustration and later in the process to share their ideas (Rugare 2004; Interview Kidd 2011). When a new and young mayor, Jay Williams was elected, trust into the authorities slowly returned (Interview Kidd 2011). The response to the planning process were positive and its goals were supported enthusiastically (Finnerty 2003).
and self-reflection to own values were lost (Lincon and Russo 2002). Around 20 years after the Black Monday Youngstown was not primarily connected with deindustrialisation or the city’s fight against its fate anymore, but it was perceived as city that had resigned itself to the situation. The former Steel Capital became known as Crime Town, Murder Capital and Homicide City (Linkon and Russo 2002).

Youngstown’s representation in the media during the last decade is contradictory. On the one hand it has been labelled as one of the “fastest-dying cities” (Zumbrun 2008) and “most miserable cities” (Badenhausen 2011). On the other hand the city region is seen as one of the “fastest growing industrial areas” (Kotkin 2011) and the technology sector together with the Youngstown Business Incubator which supports start-ups are mentioned as positive developments (Samavati 2010; BBC 2010). More objective articles on Youngstown like “Creative Shrinkage” (Lanks 2006) are rare but at the same time one-sided articles about the tragic fate of Youngstown have decreased (Interview Morrison 2011). It seems like the citizens of Youngstown have reached a point where they do not let strangers decide on their image but want to define it themselves (Libecco 2007). Youngstown sees itself as a “City with a Plan” and as a pioneer for a new and revolutionary planning approach (Interview Slanina 2011).

Planning Context in Youngstown

In the mid 1990s the perception of planners towards shrinking changed. Both the City and the Youngstown State University started to realise that without a radical change both would go down (Finnerty 2003). Planners were aware of the recent development and realised that population losses were not a medium term trend but chronic and irreversible (Interview Morrison 2011). Additionally, many influential politicians and managers from the private sector who had witnessed the Black Monday retired, moved away or deceased and a younger generation came to power. With a more objective matter of fact attitude towards their hometown and without having to justify their actions they could tackle issues that nobody would have dared to even mention a decade earlier (Swope 2006; Daley 2009). Furthermore the positions of the University director and the director of the Center for Urban and Regional Studies were occupied by David Sweet and Hunter Morrison who had both worked in Cleveland before and therefore had a more neutral perception of the city and brought in new ideas (Finnerty 2003).

The process of accepting shrinking mainly took place outside politics (Interview Morrison 2011) until Jay Williams, an African American, independent and only 35 years old at the time, was elected mayor. He had supported the Youngstown 2010 planning process as an employee of the Community Development Agency and as a citizen and made the implementation one of his political main tasks (Skolnick 2005). In electing Williams Youngstown’s citizens voted for the core strategy of Youngstown’s...
town 2010 which is to accept shrinking (Interview Morrison 2011). A “No-Growth” strategy and the aim of stabilising the current situation became the political aims and negation would not have been possible anymore. The reality of Youngstown has changed completely so that not those who talked about shrinking but those who concealed it had to fear not to be (re-)elected (Interview Kidd 2011). To talk openly about shrinking was not a burden but a relief and it was the precondition to create a better future (Interview Slanina 2011).

The perception of the planning profession changed as well. It was crucial for the Youngstown 2010 process that planning did not purely operate from the top to the bottom but acted as a partner, coordinator and motivator. Scarce financial resources had to be allocated in a more flexible and goal-oriented (Interview D’Avignon 2011). In order to save money administrative processes and structures were adjusted and the overall personnel reduced which in turn impedes the implementation of the plan. As Youngstown 2010 is widely regarded as the last chance for Youngstown there are high expectancies and pressure for it to succeed which often leads to frustration because as a matter of fact it takes time to see planning successes (Johnson 2006; Interview Kidd 2011). Since the implementation phase has begun it has lost dynamics and there is a threat of the citizens feeling disappointed again after a phase of strong enthusiasm (Livingston 2011).

**Planning Toolset**

The most important tools used by the planners in Youngstown to address shrinking were public participation and conscious involvement of the media.

From the start of Youngstown 2010 public participation was a key component of the process to (Interview D’Avignon 2011). While other shrinking cities in the US used either top-down or bottom-up approaches Youngstown based its planning approach of a combination of both (Kidd 2010). Community empowerment was seen as crucial for both the planning and the implementation phase for various reasons. First, Youngstown was convinced that its citizens knew best what the challenges and potentials of Youngstown were. Second, with agreement on the planning steps a wider acceptance of the planning outcomes could be achieved. Furthermore the expectations and hopes would become more realistic when people were actively involved in the planning process (Interview Kidd 2011).

For the implementation phase the Neighbourhood Activity Local Foundation was founded. Integrating the public as a partner in order to implement planning strengthens the sense of community and team spirit. Additionally it helps the citizens to identify with the plan and to respect and appreciate implemented projects. Not least it is expected to facilitate the implementation process as the city does not have a sufficient budget to carry out projects on its own (Interview Kidd 2011). Above all, the
planning process was very transparent and not based on election pledges. The process was characterised by trial-and-error as there were no role models for Youngstown’s approach to shrinking. However, when mistakes or failures were made they were admitted openly.

To reach as many people as possible and integrate them in the planning process an offensive marketing strategy was adopted. Local print media, radio stations and TV channels featured Youngstown 2010 regularly to inform about planning meetings and progress (Interview Kidd 2011). Additionally, billboards, posters, balloons and t-shirts with the Youngstown 2010 logo were produced so that it became ubiquitous and a majority of people became aware that something was happening. For this strategy Youngstown was awarded with the Public Outreach prize by the American Planning Association (Johnson 2006).

Youngstown received the attention from national and international media due to its role as a pioneer with its new and “revolutionary” approach towards shrinking (Interview Kidd 2011). However, the opinions on the overwhelming media attention are divided. On the one hand the description of Youngstown as a changing city is appreciated because it improves the image from a depressed to a forward-moving city (Interview Morrison 2011). On the other hand due to inaccurate articles many citizens developed unrealistic expectations although planners and politicians had never actually promised a quick implementation. This led to distraction and cynicism which was exploited by politicians who were against Youngstown 2010 in the first place (Interview Finnerty 2011). The relation from the plan and the media can be summarised as the following: “The media attention has been good for Youngstown but has not been good for the Youngstown 2010 plan” (Interview D’Avignon 2011).

**Acceptance of shrinking in Youngstown based on the phase model**

To draw conclusions about the conditions that led to an acceptance of shrinking in Youngstown, different phases in the development of Youngstown are categorised based on the phase model of Farke (2005).

**Negotiation**

The phase of negotiation ranges from the first evidence of a turning economy until 1979. Although Youngstown could have recognised from global trends that a steel crisis would hit, political strategies were not changed towards establishing an alternative economic sector. Both politics and planning seemed to be highly unprepared when Black Monday arrived. An article from 1978 shows the naivety of Youngstown at the time stating that it would take “at least six months” until a new political strategy would be decided which would address population losses (Finnerty 2003). It ended up taking over 20 years. Although the citizens were very active fighting for their jobs in this phase both groups were fare from ac-
cepting the inevitable trend. No mutual debate over a realistic future strategy took place. When the Ecumenical Coalition’s plan to buy the steel mills was refused, the majority gave up the fight.

**Perception without acceptance**

This phase took place from 1980 until the late 1990s. In 1980 Youngstown had lost 50,000 inhabitants within 20 years so the trend was clear. Both the population and politicians were aware of this trend, but no communication among the groups took place. Everyone seemed to be focussed only on their individual issues. A series of politicians tried to attract projects to turn Youngstown into a growing city again in efforts to be re-elected. The more of these projects failed, the more disappointed the public was by the expansive strategy. The society was split into some focussing on the past and others focussing on the future, while neither of the groups tried to analyse the original reasons of the situation. The image had changed from the commiserated loser of de-industrialisation to the even more unattractive crime capital. This phase is characterised by either passive, desperate or expansive behaviour.

**Certain acceptance without or with limited communication**

This was a relatively short phase from the late 1990s until 2002 starting with negotiations between the University and the City of Youngstown and the preparations of the Youngstown 2010 planning process. Additionally, a generational change was signalled in both institutions. The new generation had not witnessed the Black Monday because they were too young or because they came from other cities and therefore had an impartial view on the situation. It was recognised that population loss was irreversible and that no improvement could be made without fundamentally changing the planning strategy.

**Acceptance**

The start of the acceptance phase in Youngstown was marked by the first public meeting in the context of Youngstown 2010 where shrinking was first addressed in the presence of citizens. Before actual contents of the plan were discussed the citizens were given a forum to talk about their experiences and problems they faced. Then they were informed about planning in general so that they really had a chance to contribute to the plan as equal partners. The main goal of the plan, which is to accept that Youngstown is a smaller city, originally came from the citizens, but the overall process to get there had to be initiated by the planners. Additionally through realistic planning strategies the process brought about a recovered solidarity within the community and improved trust towards the authorities. The phase had its peak when Jay Williams was elected the new mayor, not in despite of but because his political manifesto was to plan for
shrinking.

**Disillusion?**

Due to the financial situation in Youngstown an additional phase begins to show. Youngstown has a well-known and recognised plan which is complimented by its citizens, the media and international experts. However, since the implementation phase started in 2006 hardly any changes have been observed and there is an increasing pressure of expectations from the people and the local media. Although the City of Youngstown repeatedly mentions that there are no time limits or indicators to measure the success of the implementation it would be crucial to realise impulse projects to prevent losing the contact to the citizens.

This development would mean a step back not only for Youngstown but for international research on shrinking, because Youngstown is regarded as a model approach. A disillusion in Youngstown would show that even with accepting shrinking and an innovative plan cannot work without sufficient financial resources and automatically lead to “shrinking as a vicious circle” (Danielzyk, Mielke and Zimmer-Hegmann 2002).

**Conclusions**

This paper has shown how important the acceptance of shrinking is in order to develop an effective planning strategy given that growth strategies do not function in cities with long-term shrinking trends. In Youngstown the paradigm shift was influenced by a generational change both within the citizens and within politics/planning which enabled a neutral and less emotional view on Youngstown’s future. Additionally, a constellation of key persons in planning, academic and political positions cooperated and were able to initiate an integrated planning process. Hereby the active involvement of the public and other important stakeholders proved to be crucial. A broad marketing campaign which informed a wide range of people seemed to be helpful to make clear that Youngstown 2010 was not only a sectoral planning topic but had the potential of a holistic political and economic strategy for the future of the city and its people.

While it might be difficult for other shrinking cities to strategically position key persons, which more or less happened naturally in Youngstown, affected cities still have to analyse reasons why they are shrinking and accept if these trends are not reversible. This way they do not have to wait for a generational change to come but can start to develop a realistic strategy for a smaller city immediately and at the same time save time and important resources. It seems like the current planning practice of shrinking cities takes the second step - the formulation of concrete strategies to reverse shrinking - before the actual first step - the acceptance of and communication about shrinking and setting new and realistic goals. To reverse this approach, more cities have to become aware of the fact that there are best...
practice examples from cities in similar situations. Youngstown itself has taken the first step first and very successfully but now struggles with the implementation phase. The example of Youngstown shows that there is potential for research on the topic on how planning for shrinking can be achieved on the basis of a declining budget.

About the author:

After finishing her undergraduate degree in spatial planning at the University of Kaiserslautern, Viktoria Röschlau is currently studying Real Estate, Planning and Regeneration (M.Sc.) in the University of Glasgow’s Urban Studies Department.

The research presented here is part of the EU project PlanShrinking, carried out by the Department International Planning Systems.
Bibliography


im Umgang mit Schrumpfung exemplarisch erläu-
tert an einer Pilotstadt des Stadtumbau West. In:
Hannemann, C., S. Kabiasch and C. Weiske (eds.):
Kommunikative Steuerung des Stadtumbaus. In-
teressensgegensätze, Koalitionen und Entschei-}
dungsstrukturen in schrumpfenden Städten. Wies-
baden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Finnerty Jr., T. A. 2003. „Youngstown Embraces ist Fu-
ture“. American Planning Association. Last accessed:
12 August 2011.

Finnerty Jr., T. A. 2011. Interview from 30 August
zwischen Schrumpfung und Planungskultur am
Beispiel der Stadt Youngstown, USA. Bachelor the-
isis. Kaiserslautern.

Friedmann, J. 2005. „Globalization and the emer-
ging culture of planning“. Progress in Planning 64: 3,
183-234.

Fürst, D. 2009. Planning Cultures en Route to a Better
Comprehension of „Planning Processes“? In: Knieling,
J. and F. Othengrafen (eds.): Planning Cultures in Eu-
 rope. Decoding Cultural Phenomena in Urban and
Regional Planning. Farnham: Ashgate.

„Schrumpfende Städte in Deutschland? Fak-
ten und Trends“. BBR: Informationen zur Raum-
entwicklung. Vol. 10/11, 2003. 557–574. Last ac-
de/nn_23470/BBSR/DE/Veroeffentlichungen/
lzR/2003/Downloads/10_11GatzweilerMeyerMi-
lbert,templateId=raw.property=publicationFile.
pdf/10_11GatzweilerMeyerMilbert.pdf.

Häußermann, H. and W. Siebel. 1987. Neue Urbani-
tät. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Hollander, J. B., K. M. Pallagst, T. Schwarz and F. J.
Popper. 2009. “Planning Shrinking Cities“. Progress

schrumpfender Städte“. Geographische Rundschau
westermann-fin.de/suche/nach/keyworth/OD
200030009865?PHPSESSID=c272ec77a4b45b65c0


