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Governing Social Cohesion in Shrinking Cities: The Cases of Ostrava, Genoa and Leipzig

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ABSTRACT *Social cohesion always appears more frequently as a policy goal of the European strategy that promotes the integration of spatial, economic, and social dimensions of growth. This comprehensive approach also has to deal with the social consequences of demographic change, tackle urban poverty, and guarantee access to amenities in isolated neighbourhoods. Such objectives represent specific challenges for shrinking cities, where processes of population decline, job losses and economic constraints as well as financial restrictions create a much more complicated starting position and might make the achievement of the social cohesion even more difficult than in non-shrinking cities. Set against this background, this paper analyses the efforts of three shrinking cities (Ostrava, Genoa, Leipzig) to promote social cohesion under the condition of urban shrinkage, and examines which policies are being promoted to solve problems such as ethnic segregation, ageing, and socio-spatial inequalities. The results show that even though shrinkage does lead to increased challenges for social cohesion, the attempts of policies to tackle them still appear to be secondary priorities, sectoral rather than comprehensive, and involve a certain delay.*

1. Introduction

Social cohesion represents a core concern of EU policies, all the more in urban areas. Associated frequently with territorial and economic cohesion, it has become part of the sustainability strategy promoted by mainstream European thinking that encourages cities to reduce spatial differences and disparities between social groups, provide better

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and more inclusive jobs, and to favour innovative opportunities for equal growth in the regions (European Commission, 2010; European Union, 2011).

However, European cities differ in their developmental trajectories and their capacities to foster social cohesion. It seems that shrinking cities have more difficulties in achieving this goal than other cities. Often, shrinkage is caused by de-industrialization, which is accompanied by high unemployment rates and, thus, declining household incomes, increasing welfare dependence, accelerated ageing, and a lack of capacities and resources (Couch *et al.*, 2012). The loss of population changes the social composition of cities and their neighbourhoods and reinforces the socio-spatial segregation in cities (Fol, 2012; Grossmann *et al.*, in press; Petsimeris, 1998).

We take these aspects as the starting point of our paper and make use of our findings from three case studies (Ostrava, Czech Republic; Genoa, Italy; and Leipzig, Germany) of a recently finished EU 7 FP project entitled “Shrink Smart—The Governance of shrinkage within a European context” (2009–2012, no. 225193, www.shrinksmart.eu) to show in more detail how policies in shrinking cities do—or do not—respond to issues of social cohesion. On the one hand, in the classic urban research literature, segregation, social exclusion, and urban poverty—all phenomena that produce non-cohesive cities—were elaborated against the background of growing cities, such as the immigrant city of Chicago in the 1920s or today’s ever-growing metropolises. The latter provided the inspiration for the concepts of “dual cities” (Mollenkopf & Castells, 1991) or “quartered cities” (Marcuse & van Kempen, 1997), all pointing to the growing spatial separation of social groups in today’s cities. Much less is, however, known about the dynamics of socio-spatial differentiation in shrinking cities, where processes of population decline might reinforce the emergence of socially excluded neighbourhoods.

On the other hand, in sociological studies, social cohesion was long recognized as a “bottom up” process based on relationship, trust, and mutual cooperation between social groups of a community (Dubet, 2010). A recent definition describes social cohesion as the capacity of a society to ensure well-being for all and to avoid social polarization (Farrel & Thirion, 2011). Many scholars have re-explored the theme of social cohesion in relation to particular urban neighbourhoods in which a concentration of disadvantages (physical deterioration, segregation, and social isolation) led to a lack of social cohesion (Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Morrison, 2003; Musterd & Murie, 2002). The influence of population decline on the formation of deprived and non-cohesive neighbourhoods has been less explored empirically.

Our paper aims at contributing to a debate that is just emerging and still poorly addressed by both scholarly work and policy development: the debate on the specific inter-relation of urban shrinkage and social problems as well as on policies to strengthen social cohesion under the condition of population loss.

First, we explore the relationship between urban shrinkage and social cohesion issues, to contribute to closing the gap. We show that, in all three case studies, population decline constitutes an additional element in the emergence of urban decay and acts as a catalyst for socio-spatial segregation. Set against this background, we look at a variety of neighbourhood social impacts in three shrinking cities: Ostrava and the increasing exclusion of the Roma population, Genoa and the concentration of poor people in the shrunken areas of the historical city centre, and, lastly, Leipzig with the increase of residential vacancies and unemployed/ethnic minorities in older working-class neighbourhoods. Second, we investigate whether appropriate policy responses have been developed to

tackle social cohesion and how they were implemented. Third, we assess the results of such policies. In our conclusions, we pinpoint the position of social cohesion within the urban development strategy of cities, and how and why policy makers govern or “control” (or do not) social cohesion in a shrinkage context.

2. Urban Shrinkage and Social Cohesion: Interrelating Two Debates¹

There is an emerging debate on the relationship between urban shrinkage and social cohesion. Drawing on Fainstein’s work on the just city (Fainstein, 2010) or Harvey’s work on the justness of urban planning (Harvey, 1973, 1996, 2003), scholars are exploring the specific challenges for social cohesion in shrinking cities. What do they conclude? What does this mean for our research? Our paper is part of these studies.

“Urban shrinkage” has been a challenge for European cities for a long time. Post-World War II shrinkage relates mainly to population losses as a consequence of the closure of industries and concomitant job losses, as well as suburbanization in old industrial cities in western and, later, southern Europe (Bontje & Musterd, 2012; Oswalt & Rieniets, 2006; Rieniets, 2005; Haase *et al.*, in press; thematic issues of *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research and Built Environment*, 2012) and, more recently, to population losses brought about by the post-socialist transition in eastern Europe, including steep declines in birth rates and progressive ageing of the population (Mykhnenko & Turok, 2008). Comparative studies have shown that approximately 40% of all large cities across Europe (with a pop. >200,000) are currently shrinking, whereas, in eastern Europe, the percentage is much higher (75%, see Mykhnenko & Turok, 2008). Shrinkage impacts on cities in various ways and affects many different policy fields, such as housing and infrastructure, local economy and the job market, the municipal budget, and also the social sphere, including population, age and household structure, wealth/income, and socio-spatial differentiation of the population across the city (Haase *et al.*, in press).

Since population losses of cities are almost always selective with respect to the age and socio-economic as well as the educational status of those out-migrating, losses leave behind a modified socio-demographic and socio-economic structure of the population, especially in those parts of the city most affected by the losses (Kabisch *et al.*, 2008). Subsequently, shrinking cities are confronted with two major problems concerning their social development, or, to put it differently, the social cohesion of their populations. First, at the overall city level, they mostly face problems related to ageing and brain-drain. Second, as we also show for our three cases, shrinking cities undergo specific dynamics with respect to their socio-spatial differentiation and to concentrations of disadvantaged people in those areas of the city that are most affected by shrinkage, dilapidation, abandonment, and vacancies. Housing market dynamics and segregation are, in most cases, closely inter-related, but a general causal pattern is difficult to detect (Grossmann *et al.*, in press).

“Social cohesion” is a concept not easily definable in a unique way. Due to its very nature, it is a “fuzzy” term (Maloutas & Pantelidou Malouta, 2004; Novy *et al.*, 2012) and it is difficult to establish a consensus about its content and measurement. With the contribution of Forrest and Kearns (2001), the research community has accepted that social cohesion is a multi-dimensional concept, including dimensions such as common values and a civic culture; social order and social control; social solidarity and reduction in wealth disparities; place attachment and identity; or social networks and social capital.

It can be delivered from “bottom up processes”, through relationship, trust, recognition among citizen, and participation (this approach recalls the sociological meaning of social integration in rural communities), as well as from “top down processes”, becoming a social policy goal which national and local governments implement to promote equal opportunities, counteract urban isolation and spatial disparities, improve the distribution of welfare services, etc.

This last reading is being increasingly used within European policy recommendations to encourage cities to contribute to inclusive growth and job creation in the regions, through an integration of economic goals with social objectives (European Commission, 2006, 2010).

But European cities are undergoing many changes in the political, social, and economic spheres that have implications for their capacities to foster this ideal equilibrium between growth and equality. Therefore social cohesion is threatened by disintegrative processes (social exclusion, heterogeneity, ecological contradictions, conflict, and insufficient political consensus) that affect several dimensions of urban life (Miciukiewicz *et al.*, 2012, p. 1858). For this reason, scholars have recently termed social cohesion as “problématique”, that is, “a specific concern and a specific perspective for examining social issues in the city” (Novy *et al.*, 2012, p. 1874) and “that reflects pertaining social tensions and conflictive, rather than integrative, nature of the cities” (Miciukiewicz *et al.*, 2012, p. 1866). In conformity with the above-mentioned scholars, our paper understands social cohesion as a specific issue for studying dynamics, processes and impacts that societal challenges produce in today’s cities on social integration between diverse social groups or between different places.

Regarding the “interrelation between urban shrinkage and social cohesion”, we state in agreement with Hollander and Németh (2011) that shrinkage represents an additional challenge for achieving social justice and that urban social cohesion is threatened by the long-term social consequences of shrinkage.

Numerous case studies in shrinking European and US cities support this statement. Shrinkage impacts in a very specific and highly dynamic way on residential segregation patterns of cities. When the pressure on housing markets decreases, patterns can change faster. Typically, concentrations of minorities and/or marginalized groups are occurring in districts with poorer housing conditions and/or high vacancy or abandonment rates (Grossmann *et al.*, in press). Scholars conclude that social cohesion is even more difficult to achieve in shrinking cities than in other cities because of structural deficits and financial austerity, that is, shrinking cities are overburdened with challenges but left with few(er) resources at hand (Maes *et al.*, 2012 for the case of Ostrava).

The paper builds on this existing body of scholarly work and tries to improve general arguments through a comparative view of three (rather disparate) shrinking cities in three countries: Ostrava, Czech Republic; Genoa, Italy; and Leipzig, Germany. Furthermore we wish to highlight the question of how social cohesion policy matters within the urban development strategy of shrinking cities, because the concern that policies tend to set priorities for economic issues and competitiveness seems to be especially relevant for shrinking cities, and has been raised repeatedly in the debate on social cohesion (Novy *et al.*, 2012). To respond to this concern, we analyse, first, whether shrinking cities are, despite all their problems and constraints, able to deal with urban social cohesion by using a comprehensive approach. Second, we wish to answer the question whether social cohesion issues are considered to be of “secondary relevance” for policy-making, in

contrast to problems of high relevance such as unemployment, economic decline/disinvestment or balancing the housing market. We detect, third, policy responses for fostering social cohesion in three shrinking cities and assess their impacts with respect to the overall context of shrinkage.

3. Case Studies and the Empirical Background

The three case studies and their respective national contexts represent typical, and at the same time differing, settings for urban shrinkage in Europe. “Genoa” represents a former western European industrial hub that experienced economic restructuring. It is a western Italian harbour city that has faced population decline constantly during the last decades because of negative natural increase, deindustrialization, and suburbanization until it recently reached stabilization. Post-socialist “Leipzig”, in eastern Germany, also represents an old industrialized city that had already lost population before the political changes in 1989 and experienced massive losses after the transition, due to deindustrialization, collapse of birth rates, and out-migration. This development has now been halted and, in recent years, evolved towards stabilization and re-growth of the population (Rink *et al.*, 2012); last but not least, post-socialist “Ostrava” (Czech Republic), centre of the Czech coal mining and steel industry, which grew until 1989 but began to shrink after the transition, as a consequence of industrial decline, lowest-low birth rates, and out-migration, a development that endures until the present.

Empirically, the case studies used secondary analysis of statistical data, document analysis, and expert interviews conducted in all cities. Interviews were conducted with key local decision-makers and with stakeholders involved in policy-making that directly or indirectly addressed urban shrinkage and social cohesion. Our arguments are the results of *post hoc* discussions of the trajectories of shrinking cities and the respective governance responses as well as of issues of social integration under the conditions of shrinkage. Our paper uses the three cases as contrasting examples, without undertaking a systematic comparison. The cases share a common basic characteristic (i.e. they are shrinking/shrunk cities) and were analysed with the same methods and research design. They serve as the empirical background for detecting a new question that is different from the one that originally structured and guided the empirical analysis. Being aware of the limitations of our approach, in terms of a truly comparative analysis, we see our paper first and foremost as an empirically based offer for discussion. The chosen examples from the three cases address topics that are of specific relevance for the respective city.

All case studies have experienced population decline over the last decades (see Table 1); and in all cases, urban shrinkage impacted on the social composition of the cities (see Table 2): “Common characteristics are” the change of the population’s age structure, social decay, and spatial segregation.

“Ostrava” is the third largest city in the Czech Republic, located at the Polish border in the old industrial region of Silesia. Following the political changes of 1989 and the massive deindustrialization of the heavy industries, Ostrava entered into a phase of population decline that led to job-related out-migration. Additionally, a drop in birth rates during 1990s has led to continuous ageing (the share of residents aged 65+ years increased from 11.3% in 1991 to 15.8% in 2010; Czech statistical office, 2012). Finally, residential suburbanization contributed to population losses in Ostrava (Ivan & Horák, 2011). The high unemployment rate, the large number of households living in relative

Table 1. The case studies Leipzig, Genoa and Ostrava: population development

	Period of shrinkage (max. – min.)	Population peak (max.)	Population nadir ^b (min.)	Population change (min. – max.)	Current population numbers (2010)
Leipzig	1933–1998	713,470	437,101	– 38.7%	522,883 ^a
Genoa	1970–2003	842,114	601,338	– 28.6%	608,019
Ostrava	1990–2010	331,219	303,609	– 8.3%	303,609

Note: population numbers for 2010 refer to 31 December 2010.

^aLeipzig's population number of 2010 includes districts that were incorporated into the administrative boundaries in 1998. Today, approximately 60,000 residents live in these new districts.

^bNadir means the point in time at which the city's population was at its lowest level.

Source: Authors' calculation and compilation, based on city of Leipzig, Statistical yearbooks, CZSO, 2012, Municipality of Genoa, Municipal Register.

poverty (Lux, *et al.*, 2004), the stagnation of the local economy, and socially selective out-migration to suburban areas thus resulted in growing socio-spatial segregation. Some devastated parts of Ostrava provide niches for concentrations of Roma, particularly those who have been relocated from other areas that experienced upgrading or spot-like gentrification. An example of such a concentration is the district of Ostrava-Hrušov, a former working-class district that experienced long-term decline and also flooding, exposing parts of it to further decay. These parts have today become destinations for Roma families. Furthermore, impacts of urban shrinkage on the social infrastructure are also beginning to appear. Kindergartens, as well as primary and secondary schools, are closing down, and services and retail enterprises in the inner city are experiencing stagnation (Bartíková, 2011; Rumpel *et al.*, 2011).

“Genoa” is a western European port-city located in the north of Italy. Over the last three decades, it lost a quarter of its population (see Table 1) (Caselli, 1994; Palumbo *et al.*, 2007), due to historically low fertility rates, suburbanization, and de-industrialization, which has resulted in out-migration to stronger job markets (Petsimeris, 1998). Shrinkage has impacted on the population structure: very premature ageing is the main direct impact. The share of residents aged 65+ years grew from 18.3% in 1985 to 26.7% in 2010 (Statistical Office of Genoa, 2010). Population loss is spatially selective and some neighbourhoods—the inner city and former industrial areas—have experienced higher losses

Table 2. Causes and social impacts of shrinkage in the three case studies

	Causes of shrinkage	Social impacts
Leipzig	Economic decline Job-related out-migration Suburbanization	Vacant properties Urban poverty Socio-spatial segregation
Genoa	Low fertility rate Out-migration Deindustrialization	Ageing Social and urban decay Ethnic segregation
Ostrava	Suburbanization Change of the settlement system	Ageing Social polarization (<i>ghettoization</i> of Roma people)

than others (Calza Bini *et al.*, 2010; Carlini, 2005), losing between 20% and 39% of their population (Statistical Office of Genoa, 2010). Furthermore, the progressive abandonment of these urban areas and the decline of their attractiveness affected the housing market. From the 1990s onwards, new flows of people (job seekers, former port workers, low income families, and international migrants) moved there because flats were available and cheap. This led to a concentration of households of lower status in the area, and to an increase in ethnic segregation.

“Leipzig” is a shrunken city that lost population more or less continuously between the 1930s and the late 1990s. After 1990, the city lost some 100,000 residents, or 20%, of its population, in only a decade. Recently, it has stabilized and is even seeing population growth. Factors that have contributed to the population decrease are the political turnaround and German reunification in 1989–1990, which led to massive job losses; the birth rate has fallen to an all-time low of 0.77, and, finally, in the second half of the 1990s, suburbanization added to these population losses. At the same time, old built-up stock was renovated in many parts of the inner city. As a result, a massive supply surplus, even of renovated housing, emerged and reached its peak in 2000, with a total of 69,000 vacant apartments (26% of the total housing stock, City of Leipzig 2011, p. 24). In-migration and—to a lesser extent—a demolition programme nearly halved this oversupply; in 2011, only 34,000 apartments were vacant. A specific feature in Leipzig is the speed of the change in socio-demographic patterns. Oversupply and housing mobility developed simultaneously. Massive relocations led to a “high-speed” development of new segregation patterns during the 1990s. Districts with strong concentrations of simultaneous high vacancies, unemployment, and a large share of migrant households emerged, especially in Leipzig’s inner east (see also Grossmann *et al.*, in press).

The three shrinking cities analysed have different stories and trajectories of shrinkage but, in all cases, the population decline has had impacts on the social structure and on the shape of certain neighbourhoods².

4. Policy Responses: Governing Social Cohesion in Shrinking Cities

Against the background of these consequences, which policies address social problems in shrinking cities? Are they different from those for growing cities? And which factors influence them?

On a general level, two issues have to be considered: First, problems of poverty, exclusion, etc., as well as the challenges resulting from them, because social cohesion is not an exclusive characteristic of shrinking cities only; these problems also occur in cities that are not shrinking. However, shrinking cities show specifics in this respect: On the one hand, the scale and dynamics of emerging social problems are much larger (scale) or higher (dynamics) than in other cities. And, on the other hand, the cities lack many more of the capacities to cope with these problems than do non-shrinking cities. Consequently, it is much more difficult for them to achieve social cohesion under these circumstances. Because of this nexus of potentially larger problems and fewer opportunities to resolve them, social cohesion represents a specific challenge for shrinking cities. Second, it has to be stated that a consensus between researchers dealing with the impact of policies on shrinking cities is still lacking. Some conclude that policies make things even worse (as Fol argues for the case of France; see Fol, 2012). This is not the case in our cities. Policies

applied there might have been not successful, but we will see that they have not worsened the situation. Our article highlights another general aspect of policy-making related to social issues in shrinking cities. Often, and independently of national or local contexts, questions of social cohesion have remained in the shadow of other, seemingly more pressing questions, such as the economic revitalization of cities, urban renewal in housing markets or, more recently, the question of planning for decline, a rightsizing of the cities (Rink *et al.*, 2012) considering rising of social problems as “secondary issue”. This observation seems, to us, to be important for the understanding of what happens in the three cases that are described in more detail below.

In each case, policy responses are framed by the national welfare system (our case studies represent three different social patterns: western European welfare state, post-socialist welfare state, post-socialist neoliberal system with less welfare). Thus, in general, policies that are planned and implemented at the local level are often closely related to programmes and funding schemes at upper levels (from regional to EU). This makes policy formulation with respect to social cohesion being a multileveled policy issue which is influenced through the welfare state and social protection system, national political objectives, European mainstream thinking, resources and capacities of the cities, and local governance arrangements. In this way, the three shrinking cities analysed in this paper have identified different strategies to solve social and urban questions related to population decline.

In “Ostrava”, policies addressing social cohesion are related to ageing and ethnic issues. In the Czech Republic, these issues are addressed mainly at the level of the State, in the form of preparation of strategic documents (National Action Plan). With some exceptions, the situation is similar on the regional level. Nevertheless, the Statutory City of Ostrava, and its districts, also deal with decision-making and prepare strategic documents (Municipal plans of development of social services, Strategic plan of development of Ostrava City, Quality of life of the elderly). Lastly, NGOs receive funding to provide social services.

Within the political debate in the Czech Republic, ageing is not considered alarming and it does not affect the development of cities (Rumpel *et al.*, 2011). After 1990, the permanent increase in the numbers of the elderly led, first of all, to an expansion of social services, mainly targeting housing assistance (residence, care homes, day care centres). In fact, the local government in the post-socialist period did not change its attitude to ageing: the elderly are a large group who need to be provided with good-quality services. The care system for the elderly has improved significantly, mainly through the increased availability of outpatient services. The issue of older people is now seen as a nationwide problem related to the retirement age and to the size of pensions.

The second issue, related to ethnic polarization, has recently evoked policy actions on the part of the local government. During the state socialist period 1948–1989, the Roma people were not directly threatened by social exclusion, because their welfare in the socialist redistributive model was generally secured (Kalvoda, 1991; Ulč, 1969). Furthermore, they were forced to have a job, because this was a legal obligation. With the end of the state socialist era, the legal obligation to work ceased to exist and, gradually, a relatively large group of “inadaptable” citizens living on welfare benefits has emerged. In the early 2000s, the handling of social problems through the City of Ostrava (not only with respect to social exclusion) changed in order to (re-)stimulate economic growth and adapt administrative and governance structures to EU standards in preparation of the Czech Republic’s joining the EU in 2004: a first Community Plan was elaborated and adopted. Based on the cooperation

of many participants (the so-called community planning method), new priorities in the social area were formulated: subsidized flats, integrating Roma children into the main educational stream, support of social field work, and financial support for NGOs.

In “Genoa”, policies for the elderly and against urban decay are part of a strategy for social cohesion located within the framework of the entire national system. First, the “National Fund for Social Policies” and the “National Fund for non-independent people” (e.g. old people) provide support for social services arrangements at the regional and local levels. Following the Constitutional reform (2001), numerous issues, including social assistance, health, jobs and training, as well as housing and urban infrastructures, became the responsibility of the Regional administrations. The central government provides them with an annual part-funding to carry out projects for territorial issues. However, in Italy, the “family-based welfare model” traditionally attributes several care functions to the family (women as care-givers for children and the elderly), based on the principles of solidarity and assistance, rather than on universal social rights. Over the last 30 years, many changes in social demands have brought about the reorganization of the welfare system, which now supports local programmes and promotes principles such as social inclusion, empowerment, and urban regeneration.

With respect to ageing (one of main impacts of shrinkage), in Genoa the elderly represent a target group which receives care from public actors, private actors (e.g. Banking Foundation), and NGOs. Over the past decades, the governance arrangements have changed from traditional forms of assistance (nursing homes, allowances) to more innovative initiatives based on assistance in the homes of the elderly (i.e. support from social workers for shopping and purchase of medicines) and active ageing projects (the elderly as voluntary workers, facilities for cultural activities, public transport, and assisted holidays).

With respect to social polarization, other specific national funds were provided to address problems of social cohesion and urban restructuring simultaneously: Urban renewal programme, Programmi di Recupero Urbano, Programme for Urban Requalification and Sustainable Territorial Development and Neighbourhood Agreements (CdQ). In addition to these projects, the European Programme URBAN I and II (funded by European Fund for Regional Development) for renewal and for social inclusion was managed directly by the local government. Since the 1990s in Genoa, many of these programmes were managed by the Department of Urbanity and were deployed primarily in working class neighbourhoods. Increasingly, urban decline was recognized as a priority by local government and the programmes were also deployed in shrunken neighbourhoods afflicted by multiple problems: bad housing quality, dilapidated infrastructures, depopulation, and concentrations of “new poor residents” who depend on welfare benefits. The political objectives were also multi-faceted: to reduce the decline through renovation of the artistic and historical heritage, re-use of old buildings for social aims (schools, aid-stations, kindergartens), creation of comfort and green places, promoting the local economy (small and multi-cultural shops), all favouring ethnic and social inclusion.

This approach was based on joint planning between various actors (social cooperatives, the religious community, NGOs, civil society, health workers, planners, street educators, cultural mediators, and architects), and represents an effort to combine public entrepreneurialism for urban regeneration with social policies against an increase in social problems.

In “Leipzig”, policy responses to foster social cohesion are strongly framed within national policies addressing urban restructuring, on the one hand and, after 1990, socio-spatial differentiation, on the other. The response to shrinkage was mainly focused on

the housing market. As a consequence of the enormous population losses in many of its districts, Leipzig set up an urban restructuring programme at the beginning of the 2000s to re-balance the housing market in the areas mainly affected by vacancies and thus to hinder further decline and decay. An exception was Leipzig's inner east where, since 1999, the stabilization of the housing market was linked, at an early stage, with social policies, namely the federal programme "Social City" ("Soziale Stadt", www.staedtebaufoerderung.info). This is an integrative and complex approach to support disadvantaged neighbourhoods and to support cities lacking the money to cope successfully with these problems. The programme focuses on the improvement of the residential environment and streetscapes, public and green spaces, social and technical infrastructures, quality of housing, and tries to support family- and child-friendly conditions. Until the end of 2011, 603 neighbourhoods in 375 cities participated in the programme. The instruments were neighbourhood management, participation of inhabitants, and project-based actions (incremental approach). In shrinking cities, this programme has been often applied together with another federal initiative to support the demolition of surplus housing ("Stadtumbau Ost", <http://www.stadtumbau-ost.info>), also with European Union funding through European Fund for the Regional Development (EFRE) (with a focus on the built and technical environment) or European Social Fund (with a focus on the social environment).

Leipzig benefitted since around 2000 from all of these funding sources, especially those shrinking neighbourhoods such as its inner East and a large housing estate at its western periphery. Here, the programme "Social City" was implemented in 2005, in order to upgrade the built structures and to support local civic society initiatives through a district management set-up.

With the help of a comprehensive approach, social challenges, such as the concentration of low-income households, the unemployed, and migrants were tackled; a range of integration measures for public open spaces, local businesses and jobs, communication, and participatory activities were employed (Henn & Behling, 2010). The main goal of this approach was to hinder further social decline of the areas and to keep opportunities available for more social mixing by making the areas more attractive and their advantages (inner-city location, old built-up stock, amenities) more visible.

The three shrinking cities have had different causes and trajectories of shrinkage and have also launched different policy responses (Table 3).

Table 3. Social impacts of shrinkage and policy responses in the three case studies

	Social impacts fostered by shrinkage	Policy responses
Leipzig	Vacant properties	Demolition and replacement with new housing
	Urban poverty	Social inclusion and investments in social facilities
Genoa	Socio-spatial segregation	Active ageing
	Ageing	Social territorial system
	Social and urban decay	Social inclusion and placement for ethnic minority
	Ethnic segregation	Active ageing
Ostrava	Ageing	Integration of Roma children into schools
	Social polarization (<i>ghettoization</i> of Roma people)	

5. Impact of Policies

Using empirical evidence from the three cities, we analysed the impacts of specific pro-social cohesion practices carried out by local governments with regard to:

- ethnic segregation in Ostrava (Czech Republic),
- urban regeneration and social inclusion in Genoa (Italy), and
- the housing question and social spatial segregation in Leipzig (Germany).

For each case study, we present policy responses related to the integration of specific social groups (the Roma people) or the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods affected by shrinkage impacts (Genoa and Leipzig).

In the case of “Ostrava”, a project was carried out by national and local governments, with the relevant support of NGOs and Diocesan Caritas, which aimed to contrast the social exclusion of disadvantaged people with ethnic minorities (Roma). The problem of social exclusion in Ostrava is primarily connected to the Roma population. This population is concentrated mainly in the older parts of the city (old buildings) and in urban districts such as Silesian Ostrava, Vítkovice, Moravian Ostrava, Přívoz and Radvanice Bartovice, where there has been (and still is) a very low level of investment in housing stock. Since the 1990s, projects to improve the situation of socially excluded areas began to develop. In most cases, these projects were not successful. But two of the projects that were viable were “Pitter’s Elementary School” and “Coexistence Village” (see below).

Against ethnic segregation in Ostrava:

(a) Pitter’s Elementary School

The primary school named after Premysl Pitter was intended to be a multicultural (multi-ethnic) institution for children and parents (not only Roma). The school was successful in obtaining education for Roma children and organized many activities for their parents.

At present, more than 99% of the school’s pupils are Roma. This makes the situation of the school really special. The goal of this school is to reach the level of education and children’s behaviour comparable to regular primary schools and the long-term option is to open the school for the entry of children from mainstream society. This school was one of the first in which the activity of Roma assistants was tested and successfully developed in first and second grades and which also became an example for a similar organization of education at other schools in Ostrava with a majority of Roma children. The educational concept of the school lies in the individual approach to children, which is implemented in smaller groups than pupils have in regular elementary schools and by teachers and teaching assistants. The aim is multicultural education.

(b) Coexistence Village

The Coexistence Village was established in 2002 for underprivileged families—victims of the floods of 1997—and became a successful pilot project of the Social Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which implements a functional model for the coexistence of Roma and non-Roma populations in Ostrava. The Coexistence Village consists of 30 family houses and community centres: ten of them for Roma, ten for non-Roma, and ten mixed. The residents of the Coexistence Village and its surroundings (in particular in the localities of Liščina, Slezská Ostrava) are facing an acute threat of social exclusion, due to long-term unemployment and related existential issues, debt, and welfare dependency.

The target groups are: children and youths aged 3 to 18 years at risk of socially undesirable phenomena ethnic minorities, persons in crisis, persons living in socially excluded communities, persons engaging in risky ways of life or whose way of life is threatened, and families with children. The selection is based on social investigations in cooperation with Roma advisers and the social affairs department of the municipal district. The Coexistence Village project not only addresses the housing issue but also focuses on the people and their basic needs.

Prominent figures in the development of this project include the Czech political activist, educator, and social worker of Indian origin, *Kumar Vishawanathan*. In 2006, the diocesan charity Ostrava (Opava diocese) unexpectedly ended its cooperation with the association that was managing the Coexistence Village, arguing that the association did not fulfil the agreement.

In the case of “Genoa”, as mentioned above, a new generation of policy tools has come into use since the 1990s; these tools focus on urban regeneration and social inclusion. This integrated approach is not able to resolve everything but, as in the case of the CdQ, it has been useful in terms of “qualitative” improvement in living conditions, cultural integration between ethnic groups and, in particular, it has contributed to counteracting further depopulation and isolation of the area (Cortese, 2012).

Urban and social regeneration in Genoa:

Contratto di Quartiere “Ghetto” (CdQ) (*Neighbourhood Agreement “Ghetto”*)

This Neighbourhood Agreement (started in 2007) was set up in one of the most critical areas of the historic city centre and it represents a good example of policy response in which welfare benefits could be included in the urban regeneration programme. This neighbourhood has historically “accumulated” poverty, destitution, and isolation from the rest of the city³. There are no shops, business activities, or other types of services. It is only recently that, through the CdQ, the Municipality has initiated a process of citizen participation (talks, focus groups, interviews with citizens, a survey conducted by the university), and, above all, for the participation of NGOs, in a social regeneration process. The composition of the population here is mixed: there are elderly Italian people, regular and illegal foreigners, students, artists and, recently, professionals such as architects and painters. It is a young neighbourhood (75% of the inhabitants are 19–64 years old) in which migrants predominate (64% of the total population comes from Africa, Latin America, and South-East Asia) (Statistical Office of Genoa, 2010). This policy tool provided two lines of strategy: urban and social actions. In the first action, there has been refurbishing of buildings and apartments, which will become social housing (a *Casa della Giovine*, for young women, and a *Nursery School*, both forthcoming). Other apartments have been restructured through contributions paid by the Municipality to private landlords; renovation of streets, buildings and gas, power, water supplies has also been undertaken. Concurrently with these actions, five social actions have now been partly concluded; the most successful is the *Casa di quartiere “GhettUp”* (Neighbourhood House). It is a sort of headquarters for associations, citizens, and residents of the Ghetto to carry out various activities related to social inclusion, and to host cultural events such as elementary language courses for migrants, a legal help desk, a Video Lab providing Ghetto News, a day reception and information service about the city’s social services. A further, completed project is *Cittadinanza attiva* (active citizenship). It is a typical bottom up project based on participation, because, after a University survey, many proposals to improve living conditions came directly from citizens or their associations. Other actions are still in progress: a *First aid station*, support for *enterprise* to improve attractiveness, an *artist’s urban area* to provide some flats for young artists engaged in innovative projects to embellish the Ghetto.

These projects have been able to improve both the quality of building stock and quality of living conditions of many citizens, thanks to the creation of real opportunities to access social and public services. However, social and urban decline are still visible.

In the case of “Leipzig”, physical decline and housing vacancies were the starting points for a more comprehensive approach to restructuring and improving the affected areas through a federal programme. Although the approach claimed to be comprehensive, its

focus was on housing and physical environment projects, as well as on introducing short-term or incremental policies.

**Against multi-dimensional exclusion in Leipzig:
the “Soziale Stadt” (“Social City”) programme**

The federal programme “Soziale Stadt” was introduced in 1999 with the objective of halting the decline of disadvantaged neighbourhoods characterized by sharp segregation and related problems, such as poor housing conditions, lack of infrastructure, lack of local jobs, and poor social integration. In 2010, 603 neighbourhoods in 375 municipalities were supported by the programme, based on an integrated approach of “comprehensive neighbourhood development”.

Two target areas

The programme was already implemented in Leipzig’s inner east some time ago. It started almost simultaneously with the urban restructuring master plan addressing shrinkage and vacancies in 2000 (www.leipzig-osten.de). To provide additional money for the improvement of infrastructure and local economy and retail activities, funding was also dedicated to the area via the European programme EFRE. The “Social City” approach in Leipzig’s inner east was established as an explicitly integrative one and comprises various policy fields, including local economy and employment, urban restructuring and refurbishment, social cohesion, and cooperation and participation. A forum, in the form of an information and discussion platform, was established to foster participation; an information centre was opened in 2002 to facilitate contact between the local population and the programme employees. In 2011, the goals of the programme were adapted and re-formulated according to the results achieved since 2000 and to new financial constraints. A new development strategy is currently being developed <http://www.leipzig-osten.de/nc/content/aktuelles/news/newsdetails/archive/2013/july/12/article/280/>.

In the large Leipzig-Grünau housing estate, the programme was established as an approach to foster social cohesion and to strengthen district assets between 2000 and 2010. It served to strengthen local networks by establishing a neighbourhood management framework that integrated decisive actors for the estate into strategic action. One such strand of action has been to combat the negative, largely unjustified image of the estate and to promote a more realistic image, based on its core assets—the success of this effort can be hardly “exactly” assessed or measured. Through the funding of a district management, the programme achieved an integration of actors involved in the area, such as the housing companies, the administration, and civil groups and thus established a committed platform which was engaged in project-based upgrading, including a skater’s hall, a youth theatre, and a local bus-line. It helped to prevent decay, but certainly was less able to tackle population loss or to steer new, affluent households to the area.

The “Social City” programme represents a serious approach for tackling multi-faceted socio-spatial problems in some districts or parts of Leipzig. It offers space and opportunities for integration, active participation, and involvement for the residents in various policy fields (similar to the example of Genoa described above). The main success of policies and activities linked to the programme in Leipzig’s inner east is, probably, that the area has not seen further decline in recent years. The programme’s funding and time limitation, however, mean that structures will not be sustained and changes will not be long-term. Additionally, some of the area’s main problems—unemployment and concentration of the poor and migrants—cannot be resolved by a social cohesion policy at the municipal level only.

To summarize: In “Ostrava”, with respect to the social exclusion issue, these projects are positively evaluated by experts from outside, but, in the view of Ostrava’s inhabitants and some local experts (Vaishar *et al.*, 2009), they are ineffective. In “Genoa”, the impacts of social policy as well as urban regeneration programmes can still be finally assessed, not only in the “Ghetto” neighbourhood, but also across other isolated urban areas. The first reason might simply be that social issues arise more quickly than the policy makers can solve them. Demographic decline and changes in social composition continue to

produce non-cohesive impacts. However, furnishing the territory with primary services for disadvantaged social groups, promoting active ageing, favouring social inclusion with new facilities in older urban zones, are all producing good results. The problems of social cohesion in Leipzig's inner east and Grünau are long-term in nature and, consequently, cannot be resolved by measures limited in time and with a focus only on housing, the built environment, and open public spaces. The most pressing problems, i.e. the concentration of low-income groups and the unemployed in the area, demand integrated, long-term solutions and an involvement of national policy-makers, to avoid a disconnection of this area from the city's development as a whole. Leipzig is currently experiencing in-migration, price rises and changes in the housing market. This will impact on the further development of segregation, as well, and definitely represents a challenge for social cohesion.

6. Conclusion

This paper has analysed the social impacts of shrinkage in three European cities and the respective policy responses of urban governments to tackle the related challenges for social cohesion.

We found that, in our three cases, shrinkage adds societal challenges for social cohesion in terms of an imbalance in the age structure of the population (rapid ageing), concentration of poor people in shrunk neighbourhoods (ethnic and social polarization), and housing issues (vacancies). These impacts are not alarming for the urban development of our case studies, but they overlap other structural conditions, thus definitively changing the social composition of some neighbourhoods and leading to disintegration. In all cities, some positive results could be achieved, but the problems seem to grow faster than the solutions.

This scenario would suggest that adopting a comprehensive approach to meet challenges in various spheres of shrinking cities is even more important than in growing cities. However, the policies analysed in our case studies do not respond in a shrinkage-specific way, which would be, ideally, to try to address the complex interdependencies of population decline, intra-urban mobility, social inequalities, etc. based on a non-growth scenario. While social cohesion is entering the political agenda more frequently than in the past, it is not a policy priority in shrinking cities. Policies tend to address the problems in a "selective and sectoral manner", rather than addressing the emerging complex phenomena: policy actions are more concentrated on the physical consequences of shrinkage (Leipzig), providing good-quality services for the elderly (Ostrava), and promoting urban regeneration (Genoa). The national political context is certainly crucial, either in terms of regulations existing in western European welfare state cities (to which, e.g. Genoa and Leipzig belong) or in terms of the absence of such regulations in the more neoliberally oriented states in post-socialist eastern Europe (for which Ostrava represents an example). In parallel with this path-dependent system, the focus of policies differs in the three cases with respect to addressed population groups and policy fields. In Ostrava and Genoa, older people enjoy support from the national welfare system (pension system) and, at the local level, receive attention from a variety of actors. In Leipzig, e.g. the local government gives priority to the re-balancing of the housing market through demolition and renewal, even though social programmes were applied in Leipzig's inner east.

We conclude that dealing with such problems is already difficult in growing cities, and it is even more difficult in shrinking cities, for the following reasons: societal challenges grow rapidly and need conspicuous social spending rather than the current line of austerity; long-term consequences of shrinkage overlap other social problems, resulting in a complex amalgam of urban challenges.

Finally, it has become clear that social cohesion under conditions of shrinkage remains a challenge, not only in the cities investigated in this study. In the current socio-economic crisis in Europe, which could lead to new shrinkage hotspots, it is crucial to pay more attention to the social dimension of today's and tomorrow's fates of the continent's cities, in order to avoid the formation and/or consolidation of vicious circles, where unequal development, urban isolation, and social decay continue to produce negative impacts and lack of social cohesion. The three cities analysed show that the integrated approach is difficult but not impossible.

Notes

1. We admit that linking segregation to urban shrinkage is not an easy task, because it is easy to end up in a vicious circle, e.g. asking whether shrinkage led to specific patterns of segregation or whether existing patterns of socio-spatial differences, segregation, and cohesion affected how and where population losses occurred. We decided to focus on the first type of relationship, because shrinkage is the common condition (independent variable) for our case studies and we are interested in exploring different social impacts on cities (dependent variable) and how policy-making governs social cohesion in a shrinkage context.
2. For further details, see the official web site www.shrinksmart.eu.
3. The name "Ghetto" derives from the fact that Genoa's Jewish community had settled in this area in the seventeenth century.

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