

# Building upon **the Future of Cities** – the new policy briefs

## Published in 2019:

- **Challenges:** affordable housing, mobility, provision of services, ageing, urban health, social segregation, environmental footprint, climate action
- **Perspectives:** space and the city, tech and the city, cities as innovation hubs, the citizen's city, urban governance, the resilient city

Some topics were left unexplored + new topics emerged...





## Cities fit for the digital age

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Digital technologies and innovative solutions can act as critical enablers in enhancing services and contribute to improving the urban environment and the overall quality of life of its citizens.
- Cities need to fully understand their needs before applying technology to solve them. The lack of a clear strategy can result in lower benefits to cities and their citizens. A successful use of technology also requires a shift in people's behaviour to ensure innovative solutions are adopted and used appropriately.
- Cities and communities should implement interoperable solutions, based on existing open standards and technical specifications, to avoid vendor-lock in, benefit from cross-domain, integrated services and infrastructures, reduce costs. Scaling up successful projects should also be considered.
- Without dedicated policy support, the largest municipalities and service providers tend to be favoured to the detriment of smaller cities and businesses. Medium-small cities that do not have dedicated financial and human resources should receive additional support to access and/or fund or appoint a digital transformation officer to help with the digital transformation process. Furthermore, they should partner with larger cities or regions in procuring Local Data Platforms, on which smart city services can be based.
- Efforts should be made to increase resources and improve capacity and skills around data management as well as in the use of innovation procurement. The introduction of new services and technology applications can create or increase disparities in terms of digital and social divides in relation to age, gender, economic status, etc. Public bodies at local, national and EU level need to introduce appropriate measures to prepare for the possible consequences of digital innovation in cities.

KL5B123NF - 2023-10001-UM00000003 ©



## Urban-rural interactions and their territorial disparities

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Cities are heavily reliant on their surrounding areas, especially for natural environment, resources and production of food, while peri-urban and rural areas are often highly dependent on urban centres for specialised services, amenities, education and employment.
- Megatrends such as globalisation, urbanisation, demographic change, digital and energy transitions, climate change and global crisis have been shaping and influencing our places over time.
- Using the lens of the degree of urbanisation to analyse issues such as the housing market, tourism, access to services and infrastructures, population and landscape dynamics has revealed important disparities across the urban-rural continuum.
- The existing disparities in quality of life across different types of settlements can be tackled through appropriate place-based policies, strategies, enhancing mutual benefits among urban peri-urban and rural hinterland areas.
- Analytical and spatial modelling techniques are crucial to efficiently assess current and future urban-rural challenges and to identify opportunities that are better addressed throughout the urban-rural continuum.

0000000000 - 2023-10001-UM00000003 ©



## Shrinking cities

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Shrinkage will become more important in the future – due to demographic change every country in Europe will be confronted with some level of shrinkage in cities.
- Shrinkage is not something cities can fix on their own: there is a need for further research into appropriate measures and large-scale policy incentives.
- Even currently stable or growing cities should anticipate and plan for possible shrinkage in the future.
- Shrinkage can be an opportunity to reshape urban spaces to be more sustainable and inclusive.

*Dealing with the results of demographic, economic and physical contraction processes and planning for the future of considerably smaller but nevertheless liveable cities is one of the most challenging tasks for urban Europe in the near future<sup>1</sup>*

Over the course of history, cities, influenced by various historical, social, economic, demographic or political factors, have gone through cycles of growth and decline. **While the world population has been increasing and is continuing to concentrate in cities, the idea that all cities are continuously growing is false.** As population ages and fertility rates fall or as the result of outmigration, an increasing number of cities are shrinking, particularly in the USA, Europe and Japan

but also in the developing world. In fact, shrinking may well become the new normal for many cities and the populations that inhabit them. Shrinking is a complex process that affects multiple aspects from the physical structure of the city to its social and demographic fabric. The definition of a shrinking city used in this brief is that formulated by the Shrinking Cities International Research Network (SCIRN): *'a densely populated urban area that has on the one hand faced a population loss in large parts of it (for at least 5 years, more than 0.15% annually), and is on the other hand undergoing economic transformation with some symptoms of a structural crisis<sup>2</sup>.* In what follows, trends are assessed for Functional Urban Areas (FUAs)<sup>3</sup>, corresponding to urban centres and their commuting area<sup>4</sup>.

© European Union 2022 - 2023-10001-UM00000003

# Cities fit for the digital age

Patrizia Sulis

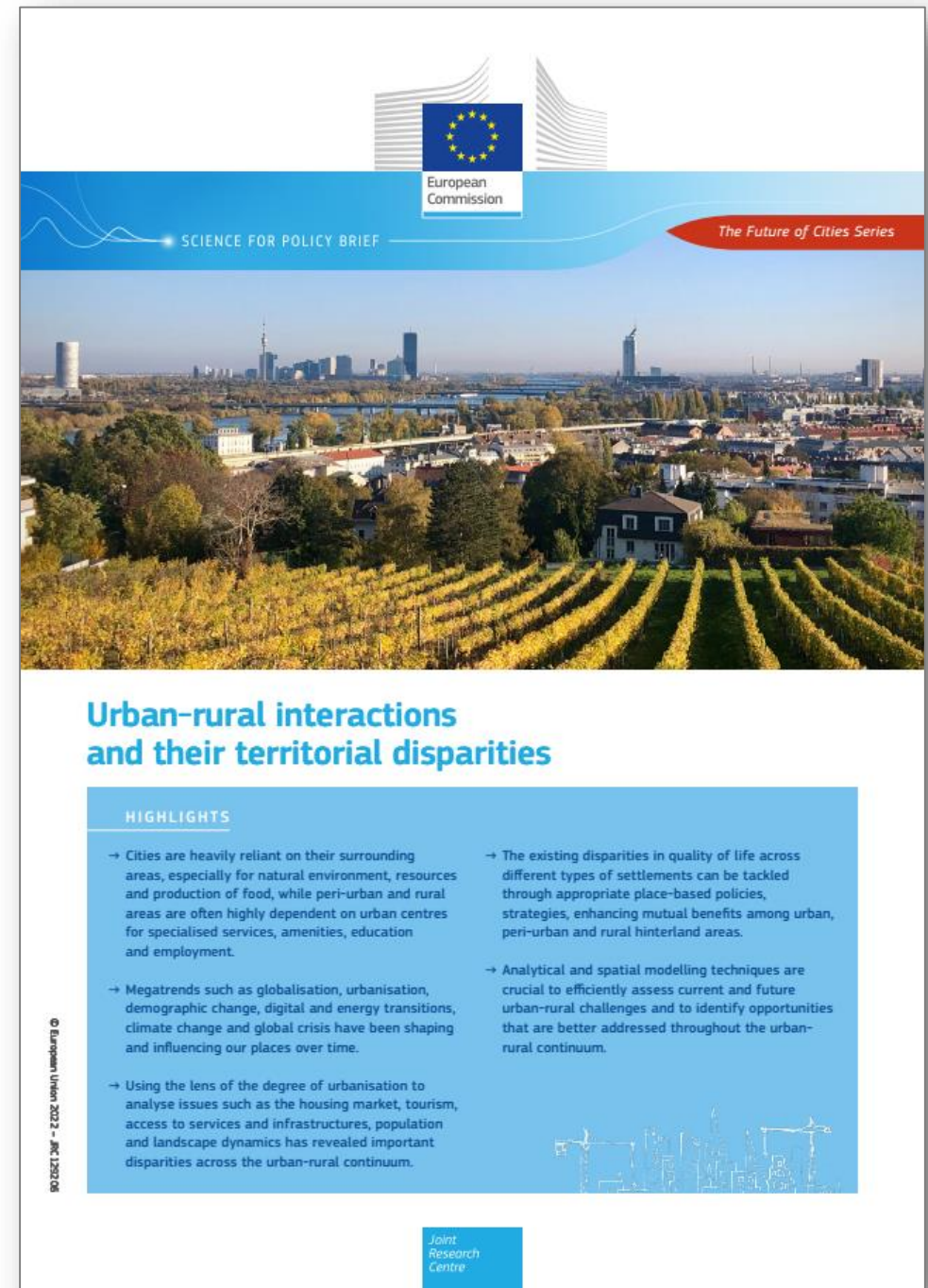
Sulis, P., Vandecasteele, I., Halmos, A., Ni Earcain, N., Maistrali, A., Aurambout, J. and Lavallo, C., Cities fit for the digital age, European Commission, 2022, JRC128724.



# Urban-rural interactions and their territorial disparities

Carolina Perpiña Castillo

Perpiña Castillo, C., Vandecasteele, I., Aurambout, J.P., Van Heerden, S., Barranco, R., Bosco, C., Jacobs-Crisioni, C., Martínez-Ruiz, I., Esparcia, J., Pertoldi, M., Kompil, M, Fioretti, C., Ghio, D., Natale, F., Loeschner, J., Batista e Silva, F. and Lavalle, C. (2022). Urban-rural interactions and their territorial disparities. Policy Brief. European Commission – Joint Research Centre, JRC129206.



# Shrinking cities

Jean-Philippe Aurambout

Aurambout, J.P., Schiavina, M., Melchiori, M., Fioretti, C., Guzzo, F., Vandecasteele, I., Proietti, P., Kavalov, B., Panella, F. and Koukoufikis, G., Shrinking Cities, European Commission, 2021, JRC126011.



European Commission  
SCIENCE FOR POLICY BRIEF  
The Future of Cities Series

## Shrinking cities

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Shrinkage will become more important in the future – due to demographic change every country in Europe will be confronted with some level of shrinkage in cities.
- Shrinkage can be an opportunity to reshape urban spaces to be more sustainable and inclusive.
- Shrinkage is not something cities can fix on their own: there is a need for further research into appropriate measures and large-scale policy incentives.
- Even currently stable or growing cities should anticipate and plan for possible shrinkage in the future.

*Dealing with the results of demographic, economic and physical contraction processes and planning for the future of considerably smaller but nevertheless liveable cities is one of the most challenging tasks for urban Europe in the near future.*<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of history, cities, influenced by various historical, social, economic, demographic or political factors, have gone through cycles of growth and decline. **While the world population has been increasing and is continuing to concentrate in cities, the idea that all cities are continuously growing is false.** As population ages and fertility rates fall or as the result of outmigration, an increasing number of cities are shrinking, particularly in the USA, Europe and Japan

but also in the developing world. In fact, shrinking may well become the new normal for many cities and the populations that inhabit them. Shrinking is a complex process that affects multiple aspects from the physical structure of the city to its social and demographic fabric. The definition of a shrinking city used in this brief is that formulated by the Shrinking Cities International Research Network (SCIRN): 'a densely populated urban area that has on the one hand faced a population loss in large parts of it (for at least 5 years, more than 0.15% annually), and is on the other hand undergoing economic transformation with some symptoms of a structural crisis'.<sup>2</sup> In what follows, trends are assessed for Functional Urban Areas (FUA)<sup>3</sup>, corresponding to urban centres and their commuting area<sup>4</sup>.

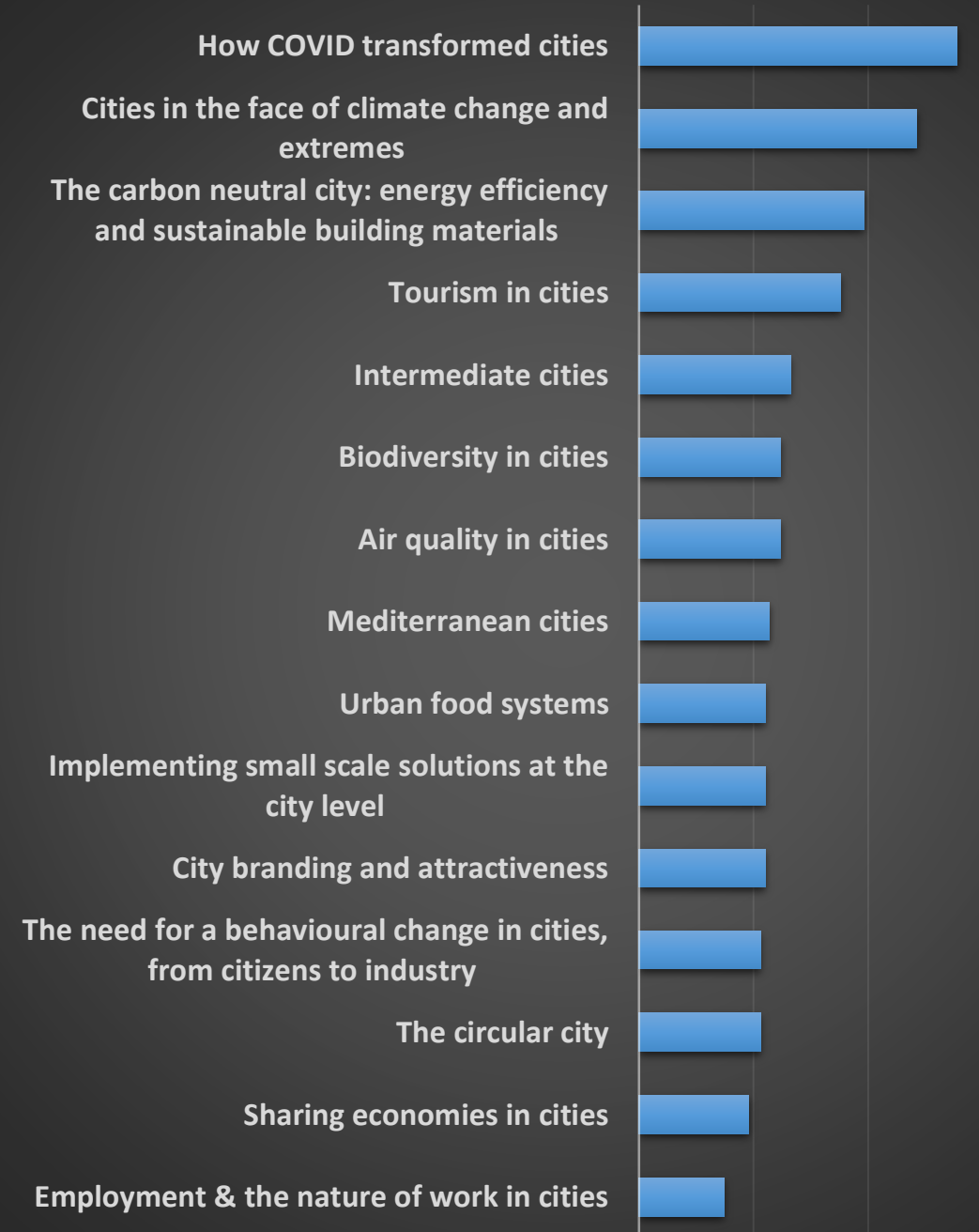
© European Union 2022 - JRC126011  
Joint Research Centre

# Next steps

Finalised **consultation** (survey) in exploration of additional Policy briefs.

Coordination of “interested parties” into sub-groups

Linkages with JRC / external experts: data availability and briefs viability



# Join us!

If you have data / case studies  
Or are interested to cooperate...

Contact us!

[JRC-KCTP@ec.europa.eu](mailto:JRC-KCTP@ec.europa.eu)

