



**INTERNATIONAL IDEAS COMPETITION 2004**  
***SHRINKING CITIES: REINVENTING URBANISM***

**Subject**

Whether in the USA, Russia or China, whether in South Africa, Germany or Kazakhstan: shrinking cities are everywhere. Shrinkage calls into question our previous understanding of the city and of urban planning. Urban neighbourhoods, cities and entire regions are being drained of their population and jobs, leaving those who have lost out in the process of transformation from an era of Fordist industrial production to a society governed by globalized service industries. The dramatic developments in eastern Germany since 1989 – resulting in over 1 million vacant apartments, the abandonment of countless industrial facilities, and the loss of any number of social and cultural institutions – exemplify a general pattern of contemporary civilisation. Underlying the phenomenon of shrinkage are multiple processes of social transformation. In the older industrialised societies, the decisive ones are deindustrialisation, suburbanisation, peripheralisation and demographic aging.

While international debates tend to focus on the expanding megalopolises, parallel zones of negative growth are forming, characterised by population losses numbering in the millions and by high rates of unemployment. Negative population growth in many countries will heighten this polarisation in coming decades. The existence of shrinking cities contradicts the image of the “boomtown”, so familiar since the industrial revolution, of the metropolis characterised by perpetual economic and demographic growth. Shrinking cities provoke a revision in thinking, both regarding traditional notions of the city, as well as in light of future developments in urban reality.

As expressions of our society and as platforms for cultural production, cities are central to our self-image. The decisive transformations induced by shrinkage represent not just economic and social challenges, but cultural ones as well.

**Urban Practice – Reinventing Urbanism**

The shrinking of cities is an involuntary process. It is an unplanned side effect, the indirect consequence of social decisions, general conditions and processes occurring beyond the spheres of architecture and urban planning. To date, attempts designed to shape these processes have been inadequate. They have failed so often because the inherited instruments of city planning and urban development are for the most part ineffectual – assuming they are even available.

Urban designers are accustomed to shaping cities by means of built interventions: infrastructures, neighbourhoods, buildings. Shrinkage, on the other hand, is a type of urban transformation that takes place, to begin with, in a radical manner without appreciably altering the physical space located in the zones of shrinkage. This raises the question, first, whether it might be necessary to re-evaluate the relationship between space and its use, whether both space and use themselves must not be reconceived. And secondly, whether other forms of structural interventions exist alongside the classical ones that are capable of influencing the development of a city. In order to pursue this possibility while tapping into new areas of action, representatives from various disciplines and cultural practices are called on to participate in this competition. How can we rethink urban practice?







Shrinkage does not only imply loss; it can be the point of departure for cultural renewal. The restructuring of cities offers the opportunity to realise new urban strategies, artistic concepts and spatial networks, while calling into question previously valid cultural values and modes of thought and action.

The objective of the competition is to identify new modes of action capable of shaping and qualifying the urban transformation resulting from shrinkage. Such approaches would not merely confront shrinkage with the customary aspirations to renewed growth, but instead see in it an independent mode of urban development, developing concepts of the city based on its specific attributes. This means, for instance, conceiving of little-used or unutilised spaces as parts of the city, or posing the question of how people are to live once the traditional labour market has collapsed. Which potentials – even Utopian ones – might be discovered in the un-designed or unplanned? Precisely such a coming-to-terms with a difficult question promises to provide fundamental impulses for rethinking the city and reinventing urbanism.

Projects can respond to questions concerning spatial, structural, cultural, medial, communicative, social or economic questions of urban transformation. When developing new modes of action, however, it hardly suffices to formulate what is deemed desirable. In the absence of some concrete conception of the means and instruments to be employed and of the actors involved, such exercises remain meaningless. Once their inadequacy stands revealed, numerous existing social values and patterns of behaviour need to be questioned. In this context, we would do well to recall the history of the modern movement in architecture and urban planning: in responding to the housing question, it did in fact develop new models affecting the status of the client and of ownership – in fact, the entire constellation of actors and planning methods.

Project proposals are not expected being exhaustive. Rather, they should give an impulse for the debate on urbanism. Projects should be both concrete and readable as prototypes, should be simultaneously pragmatic and Utopian.

Possible directions of inquiry are among others:

-  De-densification: Is a city without density conceivable? How can the process of de-densification be shaped? Can gradualness be a quality? How can de-urbanisation be shaped? What are the consequences of processes of selective migration? How is public space shaped in shrinking cities? In the absence of any continuum of built space, what constitutes the cohesiveness of a city? How can infrastructure be provided in increasingly sparsely settled areas?
-  Amplification: Are there informal practices that can be read as positive models of action? How might they be amplified? How might they have an impact on urban development?
-  Adaptation: How have patterns of spatial action changed? How can existing spaces be adapted to new types of use with minimal investment? What might be the effects on cities of such new phenomena as the obsolescence of neighbourhoods, shuttle migration or temporary employment?
-  Crossing: How do mentalities and crises of identity affect urban space? How can these be influenced positively? What role is played by the space of media in terms of the perceptions and uses of the city? How can communicative media be exploited?
-  Abuse: How might unutilised spaces and materials be used differently? Can de-cultivation be shaped in a positive fashion?
-  Changing the rules: How might rule changes have positive impacts on urban development? Which social values must be conceived afresh? What other models are thinkable, for example, concerning property ownership?

### Projects

Projects should be conceived as interventions into the physical or media spaces of the city. These interventions may assume the most diverse of forms: they may range from small physical interventions to plans for large-scale regional development, they may entail the recasting of legal norms or embrace novel forms of urban communication, they may take the form of social critique or of political Utopias.

### Location and Scale

The territories of the competition comprise a group of four urban regions: Detroit (USA), Halle/Leipzig (D), Ivanovo (RUS) and Liverpool/Manchester (GB). These exemplify various types of shrinkage. The project idea must pertain to at least one of these four locales; information on all four regions is available at the Shrinking Cities project website.

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### Procedure

*Application:* Project idea. April 2004. From the pool of submitted project ideas, up to 40 entries will be admitted to the competition.

*Competition phase:* Concept development. June to September 2004. The competition entry should consist of the project idea, now developed and presented in detail. Entries should take the form of a two-dimensional presentation, measuring up to 4 m<sup>2</sup>; a presentation using a time-based medium, lasting up to 8 minutes in length; or a three-dimensional presentation, measuring up to 1 m<sup>3</sup>. Twelve works will be selected from the submitted entries and awarded with Euro 10,000 each in prize money/elaboration fee (Euro 120,000 altogether). The competition submissions will be published in detail in a special edition of the journal *archplus*, as well as in the journal *domus*.

*Development phase:* Concretisation and communication. October 2004 to April 2005. The award-winning projects are to be elaborated and developed as contributions to an exhibition. The exhibition will first be shown in Leipzig in summer 2005, and accompanied by a catalogue.

### Applications

Your application should present a project idea. It should be submitted as a portfolio measuring A3 (29,7 cm x 42 cm) across and containing a maximum of seven loose sheets, printed on one side only with text and images. The portfolio must be submitted in two copies, and also as a PDF data file on a digital CD. No additional documentation is admissible. The text may be written in either German or English.

The following should be included, with one item per sheet:

1. A brief summary of the project idea in English.
2. Subject: What is your subject? What do you perceive your task to be?
3. Mode of action: What is the idea of your planned intervention, the hypothesis underlying your proposed action? Which protagonists would be involved in your action model? Which resources would be necessary to carry it out? How do you see your own role? What aims would your project idea pursue?

4. Methodology: What is your intended working approach? What form/format would your project assume in its elaboration?

5. Prototype: Which conception of the city/of urban development does your idea represent?

Your application may be accompanied by two additional sheets measuring A3, whose contents are not prescribed, as well as a statement of intent from a local player who is prepared to cooperate with the development of the project and is committed to its realisation, or is the co-author of the project. Project partners may be the most diverse actors, for example property owners, citizen initiatives, social institutions, town councils or journalistic media. Certification of such co-operations will be a positive factor affecting evaluations. Statements of intent should bear both the author's registration number and the project title, but to insure anonymity, project authors may not be named.

Applications must reach the organisers by April 30, 2004, at 5:00 pm. The mailing address is:  
*archplus* Verlag GmbH, Charlottenstr. 14, D-52070 Aachen (Germany)

### **Eligibility**

Eligible to participate are interdisciplinary teams composed of at least one professional in the fields of art and/or science (anthropology, art, economics, film, graphic design, law, media, music, political science, set design, sociology, ...) as well as one professional in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, or urban planning. Students are excluded from the competition, as are the staff of the project Shrinking Cities and authors who at the time of the application filing have already been commissioned by the project Shrinking Cities to develop their own exhibition contributions.

### **Jury**

Azra Aksamija, architect/artist, Princeton; Ruedi Baur, graphic designer, Paris; Regina Bittner, cultural theoretician, Bauhaus Foundation Dessau; Stefano Boeri, architect/urban researcher, editor-in-chief *domus*, Milan; Anne Lacaton, architect, Paris; Georg Schöllhammer, art theoretician, editor-in-chief, *Springerin*, Vienna

Other members of the jury (lacking voting rights) include the members of the curatorial team of the project Shrinking Cities: Nikolaus Kuhnert, editor *archplus*; Philipp Oswalt, chief curator of the project Shrinking Cities; Walter Prigge, urban sociologist, Bauhaus Foundation Dessau; Barbara Steiner, Director, Gallery for Contemporary Art, Leipzig.

### **Registration**

Competition participants must register online by April 15, 2004, at: [www.shrinkingcities.com/competition.html](http://www.shrinkingcities.com/competition.html). During registration, an author's registration number will be assigned. This information will remain anonymous until the conclusion of the jury process.

At the public platform of the project website those interested in taking part in the competition may attempt to establish contact with project partners from other disciplines: [www.shrinkingcities.com/partner.html](http://www.shrinkingcities.com/partner.html)

### **Identification**

Applications are anonymous. Each sheet of the portfolio presenting the project idea must bear on the upper right hand corner the author's registration number, which is assigned during registration. The cover should bear the title of the work, the author's registration number and the name of the selected urban region. The PDF data on the CD is to be identified exclusively by means of the author's registration number and suffix (XXXX.pdf), as is the CD.

The declaration of authorship must be submitted in a separate, sealed envelope that is labelled with the author's registration number: It contains particulars issued during electronic registration, as well as copies of the qualifications of the team members (final degree or professional license).

### **Rights to Ownership and Use**

All documents submitted shall remain in the possession of the organisers and will not be returned. Ownership of the work itself remains with the authors. Through their participation in the competition, the authors give their agreement for the organisers to publish the works after the conclusion of the competition as a part of the project Shrinking Cities. Authors will be mentioned by name, but will not receive further compensation.

Subsequent legal action is precluded.

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