



Publication

Urban planning responses to population decline in Japan's shrinking cities: growth strategies vs. decline management

In a recent paper, Haley & Aldrich urban planner [Sarah Sieloff](#) and co-author Fernando Ortiz-Moya, Ph.D., discuss the implications of population decline for local governments, especially in small and rural communities

The paper, "[Urban planning responses to population decline in Japan's shrinking cities: growth strategies vs. decline management](#)," was published online in September 2025 by the journal *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*. It offers a more technical view of a topic that Sarah and Fernando previously explored in [an article](#) for the International City/County Management Association's *Public Management Magazine*.

The authors examine how three small Japanese municipalities have responded to shrinking and aging populations. Through a framework that measures municipal policy actions based on assessment, response, and capacity, Sarah and Fernando identify a range of approaches, "from outright resistance to proactive adaptation to depopulation."

Although some approaches do consider the needs of current aging populations, the authors find that "despite decades of depopulation, the conceptualization and application of smart shrinkage policies remains inconsistent." This finding, they argue, "indicates how challenging it may be to reimagine urban planning that does not centre population growth as a normative goal."

The full article [is available](#) for purchase.