Urban Planning
2026 • Volume 11 • Article 10944
https://doi.org/10.17645/up.10944

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Open Access Journal

Planning Approaches Liaised With Justification and Relation to Growth: Missing Link in the Shrinkage Context?

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Submitted: 15 July 2025 **Accepted:** 6 February 2026 **Published:** 15 April 2026

Issue: This article is part of the issue "Left-behind Places or Spaces of Possibilities? Shrinking Cities as Foregrounds for Urban Transitions" edited by Bettina Knoop (TU Dresden) and Robert Knippschild (Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development / TU Dresden), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/up.i471

Abstract

This article seeks a framework applicable to analysing planning in the context of shrinkage. Our preliminary observation is that shrinking cities tend to lean toward pro-growth planning instead of actively planning for shrinkage. This seems to apply even in cities where shrinking is a politically accepted phenomenon, and even if growth-dependent planning approaches have been claimed to fit poorly in contexts of shrinkage. Could understanding the liaisons between planning justification and relation to growth help explain why planning tends to lead towards growth even in a context of shrinkage? This article links cultural theory-informed planning approaches with planning justification and their relation to growth. In the context of shrinkage, growth-dependent planning approaches easily become economically unviable and politically contested due to increased inequalities. Planning approaches that lack a clear connection to growth can provide nonmonetary benefits to the local community, help to accept the shrinking reality, and encourage awareness of unexpected opportunities. The suggested framework aims to deepen the understanding of polyrationality in planning approaches through the lenses of justification and growth. It is worth noting that when planning is justified in terms of growth, it can ultimately become growth-oriented, even if its stated objective is non-growth.

Keywords

cultural theory; planning approach; planning justification; shrinkage; urban growth

1. Introduction: Planning Paradoxes in the Context of Shrinkage

Our preliminary data collected from small and mid-sized shrinking cities in Finland suggest that they tend to lean towards pro-growth planning rather than actively planning for shrinkage. This has appeared to be the case also, for example, in the Rust Belt area of the US, even in cities where shrinking is a politically accepted phenomenon (Marjanović et al., 2024). The premise of this article is hence that urban planning has most often been portrayed as growth-dependent or growth-related (e.g., Rajaniemi, 2006; Savini et al., 2022; Sousa & Pinho, 2015; Wolff et al., 2017), and that in the context of shrinkage, the predominant task for urban planning has been to aim for new economic and demographic growth (e.g., Wiechmann & Bontje, 2015) even though growth-dependent urban planning is presented as challenging to fit into a context of shrinkage (Janssen-Jansen, 2013; Kosunen, 2021; Pallagst et al., 2021; Rajaniemi, 2006; Rydin, 2013; Sousa & Pinho, 2015). When viewed as a physical, demographic, and economic process (Dadashpoor & Etemadi, 2024), the concept of growth in urban planning can be linked to economic growth, demographic changes, and the expansion of the built environment.

Urban planning can be seen as part of a paradigm in society aiming for perpetual economic growth (Ferreira & von Schönfeld, 2020; Rajaniemi, 2006), and urban policies based on economic growth may be used without a critical examination of whether the approach is suitable for different market contexts (Janssen-Jansen, 2013; Kosunen, 2021; Rydin, 2013). Political agendas might harness urban planning to increase the competitiveness of cities and regions and boost economic development (Janssen-Jansen, 2013; Mäntysalo et al., 2011). Urban planning based on economic growth might be challenging in the context of shrinkage, as it is unable to steer development without economic growth and tends to base decision-making on competitiveness and economic perspectives rather than social perspectives or the long-term sustainability of the urban structure (e.g., Janssen-Jansen, 2013). Cities may also seek to respond to competition for potential investors by reducing land use control through the most attractive business sites possible (Mäntysalo et al., 2011; Rajaniemi, 2006), potentially leading to a shift away from the broader strategic goals of urban planning (e.g., Janssen-Jansen, 2013; Mäntysalo et al., 2011; Rajaniemi, 2006). Notably, an economic downturn can drive cities to make quick fixes for financial gain at the expense of the living environment (Rajaniemi, 2006).

Urban planning also has extensive experience with infill planning alongside population growth (Taylor, 1998). Demographic growth is discussed in the literature in the context of shrinkage, with plans to reverse the depopulation trend towards growth, and optimism about future growth (Heim LaFrombois et al., 2023; Rajaniemi, 2006; Sousa & Pinho, 2015). However, attracting residents through new neighbourhoods and plots, for example, has proven to be a challenge in the context of shrinkage and can lead not only to urban sprawl, but also to urban segregation, poor service levels, an unfinished-looking environment, and a vicious cycle in the planning of new attractive areas (Rajaniemi, 2006, pp. 146–147). In the competition between cities, environmental development can therefore be determined by the pursuit of growth.

Notably, urban planning focused on economic and/or demographic growth can lead to urban sprawl even in the context of shrinkage (e.g., Rajaniemi, 2006), and growth-dependent planning might prevent adaptation to a shrinking reality by clinging to past opportunities (Kosunen et al., 2020). This can lead to over-zoning and possibly underdeveloped areas within an urban structure, and shrinking cities might remain hoping for the overly optimistic population growth projections from the past (Rajaniemi, 2006).

Growth is seen as a desirable aspect (e.g., Heim LaFrombois et al., 2023; Janssen-Jansen, 2013; Kosunen, 2021; Rajaniemi, 2006), while shrinkage has negative connotations and appears as a threat (Heim LaFrombois et al., 2023; Rajaniemi, 2006; Sousa & Pinho, 2015). While multiple scholars have questioned the concept of growth as a default in urban planning in general, for instance, because of environmental and social consequences (Durrant et al., 2025; Rydin, 2013; Savini et al., 2022), growth orientation is strongly present as a response to how to deal with urban shrinkage (e.g., Marjanović et al., 2024; Pallagst et al., 2021; Rajaniemi, 2006). Accepting shrinkage rather than growth is not obvious either (Marjanović et al., 2024; Pallagst et al., 2017), and shrinking cities tend to lean towards pro-growth planning rather than actively planning for shrinkage, even in cities where shrinking is a politically accepted phenomenon (Marjanović et al., 2024). The literature has also noted the limitations of shrinkage-acceptance policies, potentially constraining future growth opportunities (e.g., Hartt, 2019; Manville & Kuhlmann, 2018). Furthermore, examples of planning practices for shrinkage exist, such as the German programme Stadtumbau Ost (Bernt, 2019). Indeed, if growth-based planning policies are used as a one-size-fits-all solution, shrinking cities may end up adopting unsuitable planning approaches.

Since urban planning is seen as an activity that needs justification (e.g., Mäntysalo et al., 2015; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016; Weghorst et al., 2024), the tendency towards growth in urban planning raises a question about how planning is justified in relation to growth. Could understanding the relationship between justification and growth in urban planning help explain why planning tends to promote growth even in the context of shrinkage? In this article, we derive justification in planning from different concepts of justice from Hartmann (2012) and Schmitt and Hartmann (2016). By "justice" we refer to "the quality of being just. Cf. justness" (Justice, n.d., Sense III.7) where "justness" refers to "the quality or fact of being morally right or equitable, or of having valid or reasonable grounds; rightfulness, lawfulness; fairness; validity, soundness, justifiableness" (Justness, n.d., Sense 1). With "justification" we refer to the viewpoint where "*justice* should be conceived as a logic of justification that should always be a central and transparent, and thus explicit, element in the justifications of planning decisions" (Weghorst et al., 2024, p. 243, emphasis in the original). In general, by justification in planning we refer to the way in which planning is defended, as well as to the plan's legitimacy, by which we mean its acceptability in the eyes of the public. With "growth" in urban planning, we build on understanding the different aspects of urban growth as physical, demographic, and economic processes (Dadashpoor & Etemadi, 2024), with the focus in this article on economic and demographic growth. By the context of shrinkage, we refer to the context where demographic shrinkage is often combined with economic decline, and to which the most conventional planning theories and practices are complex to apply (e.g., Pallagst et al., 2017; Sousa & Pinho, 2015; Wolff et al., 2017). Notably, we perceive shrinkage as a complex phenomenon and "particular pattern of urban development, rather than a mere urban problem" (Sousa & Pinho, 2015, p. 26).

To understand planning in the context of shrinkage, this article seeks to answer the following research question:

> How is planning aligned with justification and the relation to growth, especially in the context of shrinkage?

In this article, we first introduced the need to explore the justification of urban planning in the context of shrinkage. As the key theoretical framework, we will apply planning approaches (e.g., Davy, 2012; Hartmann, 2012) derived from cultural theory (Davy, 2008, 2012; Douglas, 1978; Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020;

Mamadouh, 1999). The use of planning approaches as a theoretical framework is built on previous research on urban planning in different contexts (e.g., Hirvonen-Kantola, 2013; Kosunen, 2021; Rajaniemi, 2006; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). There is a call for plurality in planning since a "brutal plurality of truths" between people is present in everyday life, including in organisations, making it impossible to have a single monorational theory or approach (Davy et al., 2023). So far, cultural theory has provided a rough pluralist model that has been applied in urban planning research (e.g., Davy, 2008, 2012; Davy et al., 2023; Hartmann, 2012; Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016) allowing a reduction in "the pluralism to a manageable number of four without rejecting pluralism" (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 43). The planning approaches derived from cultural theory have been linked to different theories of justice used as logic to justify planning (e.g., Hartmann, 2012; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016) and to different contexts of growth (Kosunen, 2021; Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020), including the context of shrinkage. However, cultural theory-informed planning approaches have not yet been integrated with planning justification or its relation to growth, especially in the context of shrinkage. To address this research gap, we integrate planning approaches informed by cultural theory with the literature on planning justification, the relation to growth, and the context of shrinkage. This article is conceptual (Reese, 2023), presenting a novel perspective on urban planning justification and the relation to growth in diverse planning approaches, especially in the context of shrinkage.

The research gap was confirmed through an integrative literature review (Snyder, 2019) that addressed justification and growth in urban planning in the context of shrinkage. When reviewing the literature, the observation was that the alignment between planning justification and relation to growth, particularly in the context of shrinkage, is not yet a well-researched topic. Based on preliminary searches, an integrative approach was needed to combine perspectives and insights from diverse scientific discussions in urban planning. Thus we complemented the search results (from Scopus and Web of Science) with "a citation pearl growing strategy" (Oulu University Library, 2025; see also University of Toronto Libraries, 2025) by using a meaningful document found in the original search as a core document to search the databases for documents that cite the core document, looking into the core documents' reference list (cited references), making a new search with new search terms found in the core document, and/or making a new search again using the core documents' authors' names. The selected literature has been manually reviewed to look for intersections between justification, growth, and/or shrinkage. The findings are structured through the lens of planning approaches, as well as insights into growth tendencies in urban planning, especially in the context of shrinkage.

2. Planning Approaches Aligned With Planning Justification and Relation To Growth

Cultural theory is a social constructivist theory that was initially developed in the 1970s and has its roots in cultural anthropology (Douglas, 1978; Mamadouh, 1999). It is based on the analysis of social interactions; each perception delivers a way to understand a problem and propose a solution (Thompson et al., 1990). At the heart of cultural theory are four rationalities—hierarchism, egalitarianism, individualism, and fatalism—which "describe different rational ways to perceive and act in certain situations" (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 45). These four rationalities do not offer a single solution to planning but provide "a variety of strategies and a number of possible spatial outcomes" (Davy et al., 2023, p. 2270). Cultural theory does not claim there to be only four rationalities (Douglas, 1999), but that these four are present in all social situations (Davy et al., 2023; Hartmann, 2012).

In cultural theory, it is proposed that the perception of reality depends on two dimensions, called "grids" and "groups" (Douglas, 1978; Mamadouh, 1999), in which a "grid" is the dimension of individuation and a "group" refers to the dimension of social incorporation (Douglas, 1982). Kosunen and Hirvonen-Kantola refer to Douglas (1978) and Mamadouh (1999) when illustrating this two-dimensional view of reality: "The grid dimension denotes how individuals position themselves in relation to externally-imposed control, whereas the group dimension denotes their willingness to belong to a group or act on their own" (Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020, p. 253). Often, this two-dimensional concept is illustrated with a diagram, in which the two dimensions are independent of each other, forming two axes and four quadrants (Douglas, 1999; Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). This two-dimensional conception of reality is illustrated in Figure 1.

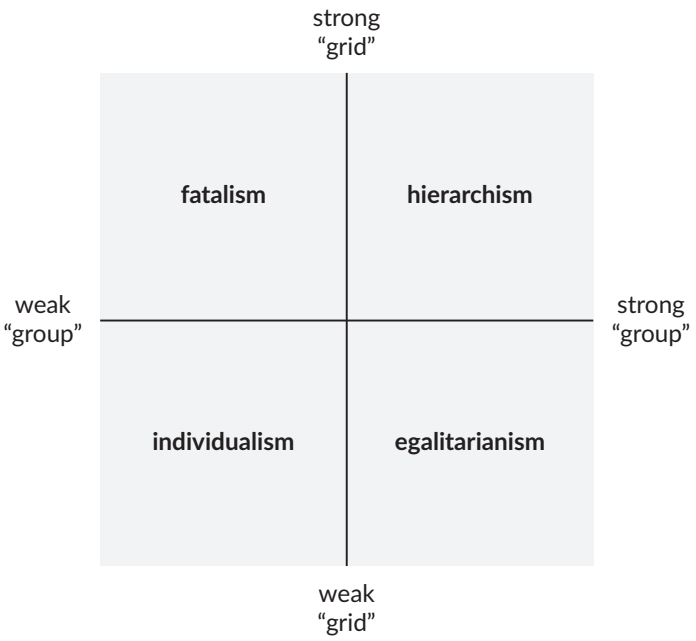

Figure 1. The rationalities of cultural theory according to the two-dimensional conception of reality. Source: Adapted from Kosunen (2021) and Schmitt and Hartmann (2016).

In urban planning, cultural theory has been proposed to conceptualise the polyrationality of planning situations (Davy, 2008, 2012), and manage expectations (Hartmann, 2012). For the matter of justification and growth in planning, the four-field approach of cultural theory offers a manageable pluralistic model to reflect the addressed growth tendencies in planning. It is a more polyrational view, compared, for instance, to dividing planning into dichotomies. Planning debates have been described as having "a tendency to become entrenched in dichotomies, typically between pro- and anti-development positions or between pro- and anti-regulation positions" (Rydin, 2013, p. 13) or historically to strive for clean monorational planning theories (Davy et al., 2023). Dichotomies have been used in urban planning, for example, to describe the change in planning practices with terms such as "plan-led" and "development-led" (e.g., Valtonen et al., 2017), "hierarchical planning" and "project-oriented planning" (Mäntysalo et al., 2011), or "market-critical" and "market-led" (Brindley et al., 1996). In the context of a shrinking city, dichotomies can appear when dividing planning into "de-growth" and "pro-growth" strategies (Marjanović et al., 2024) or "smart decline" and "pro-growth" strategies (Heim LaFrombois et al., 2023), for instance. Dichotomies can be criticised, but they can be relevant perspectives when considering the justification for planning and parallel

growth relations. This is why the four fields of cultural theory are complemented in this article with additional dichotomous planning approaches found in literature, such as "market-critical" and "market-led" (Brindley et al., 1996), which have also been linked to some planning approaches derived from cultural theory (Kosunen, 2021). Furthermore, cultural theory-informed planning approaches only partially capture reality, and they should eventually be combined with each other to address complex situations (Thompson et al., 1990; Verweij et al., 2006).

Next, we present and reflect on the planning approaches derived from cultural theory, from the perspectives of justification and growth. Three fundamental concepts of justice serve as a basis for examining justification in planning (Hartmann, 2012; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). Schmitt and Hartmann address justification as a crucial matter in urban planning, highlighting the contradiction between different conceptions of justice, which inevitably leads to injustice. According to Schmitt and Hartmann, designers should therefore be aware of various concepts of justice. Notably, none of the presented concepts of justice is better than the others, as they all have their own logic and problems (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). We are linking these three concepts of justice to growth by reflecting on the suitability of different planning approaches to different growth contexts based on Kosunen (2021) and Kosunen and Hirvonen-Kantola (2020), complemented by other literature based on the reviewed literature and the definition of urban growth as a physical, demographic, and economic process (Dadashpoor & Etemadi, 2024).

2.1. Hierarchical Planning Approach With Utilitarian Justice and Liaison to Growth Through History

The hierarchical planning approach is based on hierarchism, which, as a rationality, has both a strong grid and group dimension (Figure 1). This connects hierarchism to externally imposed control and to the willingness to function as a group. Hierarchism is linked with "strongly incorporated groups with complex structures" (Douglas, 1999, p. 412) and can be seen supporting tradition and order with a hierarchical form of organisation (Douglas, 1999). With a hierarchical planning approach, "planning problems are best solved with coordination and control" (Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020, p. 254). Hierarchical planning is linked to top-down planning guided by the expertise of a technocratic planner (Hartmann, 2012), in which the city can be described as a "well-ordered city" (Davy, 2008, p. 308). Still, it has been suggested that it appears rigid or despotic from the perspective of other rationales (Davy, 2008, p. 308). When examining land use, this rationality has been connected to Hobbesian property ideals (Davy, 2012, p. 87), where the emphasis lies on public property, and where "the government either owns the land or controls the use of the land through regulation" (Davy, 2012, p. 16).

The concept of justice that the hierarchical planning approach refers to is "utilitarian justice" (Hartmann, 2012; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). This is an effort to maximise happiness based on the ideas of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Central to this concept of justice is "utility," which focuses on weighing the effects of different solutions in terms of whether they produce happiness or suffering, benefits or disadvantages, and balancing the decisions based on this evaluation. This is why this planning approach accepts sacrifices in planning, such as expropriation of landowners and disadvantages for some, if the planning choices bring benefits for more land users (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). Connected to the ideas of Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, in a hierarchical planning approach, this evaluation of justice is given to an institution whose integrity is essential (Hartmann, 2012). With the utilitarian concept of justice, planning choices can be seen as benefiting the general public (Davy, 2012, p. 24), which we understand as possibly

overlooking the needs of minorities and possible structural inequalities in society, or seen as aiming for the "public interest." This is why a city based on utilitarian justice has been described as a "city for the greatest happiness of the greatest number" (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 44). Utilitarian justice has been criticised because of the difficulty of thoroughly assessing all the benefits and disadvantages (Davy, 2012, p. 103; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016) and whether it is possible to succeed in forming fair and unanimous evaluation methods (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 44; see also Davy, 2012, pp. 110–111). Another aspect is that the rights of the individual can be claimed to be a value in themselves, which is not the focus of the utilitarian conception (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 44). A hierarchical planning approach can be perceived with the idea that "a comprehensive plan of what is needed in society can be formulated," with the assumption that there is "a single true world that can be fully understood when carefully analysed with a scientific method" (Kosunen, 2021, p. 46).

When reflecting on the connection between growth and planning, Kosunen (2021) links the hierarchical planning approach to "market-critical planning styles," referencing Brindley et al. (1996). These planning styles are "redressing imbalances and inequalities created by the market" (Brindley et al., 1996, p. 9). Similarly, a utilitarian plan can be seen as protecting land uses from potential sacrifices that landowners and developers might make in pursuit of short-term profits (Davy, 2012, p. 107). According to Schmitt and Hartmann (2016), hierarchism is characterised by prioritising the common good over market-orientation or community projects. Simply put, "hierarchist planning trusts expert knowledge, distrusts markets and communities and issues spatial plans to control land uses and urban developments" (Davy et al., 2023, p. 2270). However, Kosunen (2021, p. 58) also couples a hierarchical planning approach with "the state-led approach" historically associated with postwar economic growth in Europe, when growth was assumed to be continuous and public planning became responsible for "the social redistribution of the economic surplus." In this context, land markets were supposed to act and invest in accordance with urban plans (Healey, 2006, p. 146; see also Kosunen, 2021, p. 58). This means that, without the capacity to implement its plans, a planning institution might not have much influence (Kosunen, 2021). When planning aims to improve social and economic conditions, urban development can be justified by "predictive models of economic and demographic growth and by the marketability of the real estate" (Savini et al., 2015, pp. 306–307; see also Sousa & Pinho, 2015, p. 26). If we link this to utilitarian justice—weighing the pros and cons—we can propose that highly rated outcomes depend on a society's general values. This can mean that economic and demographic growth are seen as "public interest" in planning (Rajaniemi, 2006; see also Valtonen et al., 2017).

In the context of shrinkage, a hierarchical planning approach might have little influence without growth prospects, if it depends on markets to drive urban development, and if the planning institution lacks the means to implement its plans. Still, when looking at planning in a context of shrinkage, attention has been given to the importance of public authority protecting general welfare (Walling et al., 2021, p. 478), and possibilities with a hierarchical approach to "direct the benefits of wider urban growth to non-growing areas or control how these areas respond to shrinkage" (Kosunen, 2021, p. 64).

2.2. Individualistic Planning Approach With Libertarian Justice and Its Alignment With Economic Growth

The individualistic planning approach is based on individualism, which, as a rationality, has both a weak grid and group dimension (Figure 1). This connects individualism to a high degree of self-determination and

willingness to act alone. With this rationality, individual liberty is seen as valuable (Hartmann, 2012). Individualism is described as having "weak structure, weak incorporation" (Douglas, 1999, p. 412), and organisationally, it is competitive with dominant positions open to merit and no support for tradition "for its own sake" (Douglas, 1999, p. 411). With an individualistic planning approach, "planning problems are best solved by experimentation and innovation in competitive environments" (Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020, p. 254). The individualistic planning approach is linked to neoliberal schemes, emphasising openness to experimental planning, while focusing on efficiency and serving economic welfare with respect to individual property rights (Hartmann, 2012). The ideal city can be described as a "bold city," but has been suggested to appear careless from the perspectives of other rationales (Davy, 2008, p. 308). When examining land use, this rationality has been connected to Lockean property ideals (Davy, 2012, p. 87) with an emphasis on individualism and private property where "the purpose of government is to establish general respect for private property and to promote its best use" (Davy, 2012, pp. 17).

An individualistic planning approach can be linked to "libertarian justice" (Davy, 2012; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016) or to "elitist justice" (Davy, 1997, as cited in Hartmann, 2012, p. 247). With libertarian justice, "everyone should have equal basic freedoms and rights which are institutionally secured; there should be no direct influence on distribution" (Weghorst et al., 2024, p. 248). With a politically libertarian worldview, a government or centralised institution should not have "coercive power to redistribute income and wealth, but should respect people's rights to exercise their talents as they choose, and to reap their rewards as defined by the market economy" (Sandel, 1998, p. 205). This is connected to the ideals of Robert Nozick, Milton Friedman, and Friedrich A. Hayek (Sandel, 1998). Libertarian justice can be seen as emphasising individual rights and the liberty to pursue one's happiness, and a city based on libertarian justice has been described as a "city of freedom and opportunity" (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 44). When it comes to elitist justice, the benefits from planning choices go to the future high-end users (Davy, 2012, p. 24), which has a link to the criticism of libertarian justice: It has been connected to privatisation and gentrification processes as well as the inherent increase of inequality (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). It can be stated that property rights are initially unequally distributed and hence undermine "the very principle of the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 45).

When reflecting on the connection to growth, Kosunen (2021) links the individualistic planning approach to "market-led planning styles," citing Brindley et al. (1996). These planning styles are aimed at correcting "inefficiencies while supporting market processes" (Brindley et al., 1996, p. 9). Libertarian justice and individualistic planning approaches can be associated with ties to the market economy and avoidance of external control by centralised institutions (Davy, 2012; Davy et al., 2023; Kosunen, 2021; Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020), which can be seen as linking this planning approach initially to economic growth and to private property. Simply put, "individualist planning relies on market forces; a spatial plan must offer economic incentives to private actors who can contribute to desirable spatial changes" (Davy et al., 2023, p. 2270) with an emphasis on private property (Davy, 2012). Urban planning with libertarian justice emphasises freedom and opportunity by minimising rules, leading to development characterised by "large plots of individually owned land and minimal public spaces" (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 45). When an individualistic planning approach is coupled with Lockean ideals, planners are left to control only "the adverse effects of individual land use" and not to make decisions on behalf of individuals on how they use their land, expecting "individual owners to use land most efficiently and equitably" (Davy, 2012, pp. 34–35).

Because of its strong link to market processes, this planning approach is growth-dependent: It requires some prospects for economic growth to function correctly and to drive urban development (Kosunen, 2021). In the context of shrinkage, planning that aims to correct market inefficiencies by offering economic incentives to private actors can easily become politically contentious due to the increased inequality.

2.3. Egalitarian Planning Approach With Social Justice and no Alignment With Growth

The egalitarian planning approach is based on egalitarianism, which, as a rationality, has a weak grid dimension and a strong group dimension (Figure 1). This connects egalitarianism to a high degree of self-determination and to a willingness to function as a group. Egalitarianism is linked with "strongly incorporated groups with a weak structure" (Douglas, 1999, p. 412), and organisationally, it can be associated with a closed community with rules aiming for equality, where ambitious leaders are not tolerated (Douglas, 1999). Equality, democracy, and community are seen as valuable rather than individual liberty, while community is seen as valuable rather than personal liberty or institutional integrity, and reasons for taking action are driven by concern or moral responsibility (Hartmann, 2012, p. 247). With an egalitarian planning approach, "planning problems are best solved by achieving mutual agreement at the local level" (Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020, p. 254). An egalitarian planning approach is linked to participative and collaborative planning (Hartmann, 2012), where the ideal city can be described as a "sharing city" (Davy, 2008, p. 308). Still, it has been suggested to appear exclusive from the perspective of other rationales (Davy, 2008, pp. 308–309). When looking at land use, this rationality has been connected to Rosseau's property ideals (Davy, 2012, p. 87) with an emphasis on community and its general will where the community uses discretion deciding whether "land should be used 'in common' or divided up between the citizens" (Davy, 2012, p. 18; see also Rousseau, 2017, Book 1, Chapter 9).

An egalitarian planning approach can be linked to "the concept of social justice" (Hartmann, 2012; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). Social justice concerns the socially fair distribution of well-being in society (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016), focusing on justice "at the level of a society or state as regards the possession of wealth, commodities, opportunities, and privileges" (Social Justice, n.d.). With egalitarianism, the emphasis is on the concept of "egalitarian justice," where "the right distribution or allocation is the one that causes the most equal distribution or allocation among everyone" (Weghorst et al., 2024, p. 248). The social justice concept is strongly associated with John Rawls and the social contract theory, including the concept of a so-called "veil of ignorance," where in decision-making one is unaware of their rank or status in society making it possible to make decisions regardless the socio-economic background (Rawls, 1971, pp. 12–13; see also Davy, 2012, p. 24; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). This is why planning according to social justice aims to include all groups in society, giving "space for bankers and beggars, children and elderly, citizens and refugees" (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 45). With social justice planning, choices can be seen as guided by the threat of gentrification (Davy, 2012, p. 24). A city based on social justice has been described as a "city of fairness and equality" (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 45). Social justice can be questioned as to whether it is possible or too costly to implement, even though it is often seen as inherently morally preferable compared to other concepts of justice (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). From a libertarian point of view, a purely socially just world would lack innovation and performance (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). In contrast, a utilitarian viewpoint would require strong planning to implement redistribution and resource allocation (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 45).

When reflecting on the connection with growth, Kosunen (2021) does not link the egalitarian planning approach to market-critical or market-led planning styles but frames it as community-led without any link to growth. In a community-led approach, local communities and groups can be seen as urban development actors (Kosunen et al., 2020, p. 62). In cultural theory, egalitarianism has been presented as a rationality that does not fit within the contrasting, dichotomous distinction between bureaucracies and markets that has been used in the social sciences and to which hierarchism and individualism are often linked (Douglas, 1999). Egalitarianism implemented in planning can be described as pursued through consensus and cooperation, aiming for social spaces to assemble and collaborate, rather than through law and regulations as in hierarchical planning or through the maximisation of private property as in individualistic planning (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016, p. 46). A downside with the egalitarian planning approach is that "it might benefit only those who are involved in the community or group that makes the planning initiative" (Kosunen, 2021, p. 52), and that local communities might not have "the prerequisites to organize for collective action" (Kosunen, 2021, p. 65). Similarly, social justice has been criticised in planning regarding how participation processes can truly be made just and equal, preventing the most resourceful actors from having more footing in the process, as referenced by Kosunen (2021, p. 51). Simply put, "egalitarian planning seeks to build trust within the local community; a spatial plan helps the community to protect itself and to exclude outsiders" (Davy et al., 2023, p. 2270). Considering communities' preferences for economic growth (e.g., Panagopoulos et al., 2015), community-led approaches have been deemed suitable for situations where growth is not a realistic prospect. Egalitarian planning focuses on the local needs and "aims to support urban development activities that directly bring nonmonetary benefits for the locality" (Kosunen, 2021, p. 65).

The emphasis on local needs and nonmonetary benefits makes this approach potentially valuable for the shrinking context. This planning approach aims to foster collaboration and participatory planning processes in which local communities and groups can function as actors in urban development. However, planning must be sensitive to be truly socially just, so that it does not benefit only those who engage in the process or exclude participants with fewer resources. Social justice has been linked to shrinkage in the planning literature with an emphasis on the justice of planning processes that should, for instance, be inclusive and explicitly recognise multiple voices, as well as be deliberative and transparent, with an understanding of power imbalances and structures of domination (Hollander & Németh, 2011). Similar to the egalitarian approach, in the shrinking related literature, there is also attention given to engagement in planning with "genuine citizen and resident participation" as well as "setting social and economic equity goals on equal footing with conventional community and economic development purposes" (Walling et al., 2021, p. 478).

2.4. Fatalistic Planning Approach With no Connected Concept of Justice and no Alignment With Growth

The fatalistic planning approach is based on fatalism, which, as a rationality, has a strong grid dimension and a weak group dimension (Figure 1). This connects hierarchism to externally imposed control and to the willingness to act alone. With fatalism, this could also be described as an externally determined world beyond reach or impossible to influence (Hartmann, 2012). Fatalism is linked to being "literally alone or isolated in complex structures" (Douglas, 1999, p. 412), and when it comes to organisation, a person with a fatalistic rationality can be described as avoiding alignment with no expectation or intention to lead, follow, persuade, or organise (Douglas, 1999). With an egalitarian planning approach, "planning problems cannot always be solved, reality must be taken as is" (Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020, p. 254). A fatalistic

planning approach is said to neglect planning or be sceptical of it since it believes the world to be too complex and wicked (Hartmann, 2012). The ideal city can be described as a "relaxed city," but it can seem indifferent to other rationales (Davy, 2008, p. 308). When examining land use, this rationality does not connect to any property ideals. Still, it could be described as a form of land use heavily influenced by external forces with little relation to other uses where users have little influence or responsibility (Davy, 2012, pp. 87–88).

The fatalistic planning approach has not been linked to any concept of justice but just to luck and fate, without believing in justice. This is also why planning based on fatalistic rationality is described as a highly planning-hostile rationality: Every planning intervention depends on luck and fate (Hartmann, 2012; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). It could be described as accepting reality as it is (Hartmann, 2012; Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020), without any specific connection to growth in planning, either.

The fatalistic planning approach is seen as passive, whereas planning approaches based on other rationales are seen as active or proactive (Hartmann, 2012; Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020; Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). Simply put, "fatalist planning has come to terms with the fact that planners have very little influence, but that plans are what politicians and other powerful stakeholders demand" (Davy et al., 2023, p. 2270). However, for example, Kosunen and Hirvonen-Kantola (2020) propose that, when combined with other active planning approaches, the fatalistic approach could help accept uncertainty about the future and situations in which proactive, forward-looking planning does not lead to the desired results. Thus, there can be benefits in a fatalistic approach, which suggests that planning problems cannot always be solved and that reality must be accepted as it is.

This approach can be helpful in a context of shrinkage because it might help accept the shrinking reality and uncertainty about the future, as well as encourage awareness of unexpected opportunities (Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020). It may be that the shrinkage could mean "first and foremost a relief in pressures for growth" and "an opportunity to deconstruct created situations, otherwise unthinkable" (Sousa & Pinho, 2015, p. 27). This could, for instance, provide opportunities to test urban degrowth practices through citizen experimentation (Hermans et al., 2024) or strategic planning that might allow for re-adjustments when needed and which would be open to multiple futures (Oittinen & Mäntysalo, 2024).

3. Concluding Discussion: Planning Approaches Justified in Relation to Growth

Shrinking cities as a planning phenomenon have been said to manifest "the inability of most of the current policies, instruments and tools to deal with them" because they assume growth and no flexibility to adapt (Sousa & Pinho, 2015, p. 26). For a long time, in planning, the focus has been on reversing shrinkage and resuming growth, which can be seen as a reaction to shrinkage rather than much of an adaptation to the consequences (Sousa & Pinho, 2015; see also Wolff et al., 2017). Using planning approaches derived from cultural theory, we next summarise our understanding of the alignment between cultural theory-informed planning approaches, planning justification, and the growth context (Table 1). This resulting framework offers a new perspective on planning in the context of shrinkage. The theoretical framework enables the examination of planning justification and relation to growth in diverse planning approaches in the context of shrinkage. In the future, this framework will be evaluated and further developed through empirical case studies.

Table 1. Planning justification and relation to growth in diverse planning approaches, especially in the context of shrinkage.

Planning approach	Planning justification	Relation to growth	Context of shrinkage
Hierarchical planning approach Top-down planning through a centralised institution Coordination, control, and regulation	**Utilitarian justice** Maximising happiness based on the concept of utility Assessing pros and cons, striving for solutions that have more benefits than disadvantages for most land users and the public Connected to the idea of "public interest" Difficulties in fully assessing all benefits and disadvantages for the stakeholders, in a fair way Protecting the common good	**Seen as market-critical, and aligned with growth-related planning** Protecting and controlling land uses from unwanted impacts created by the market, but can be linked to periods of economic growth in Europe with growth-related planning Can see economic and demographic growth as "public interest" and as justification	The approach can have only little influence without growth prospects, if planning depends on markets to drive urban development, or if the planning institution lacks the means to implement its plans
Individualistic planning approach Efficiency and economic welfare through market-led planning Neglect of externally imposed control over land use Experimentation and innovation in a competitive setting	**Libertarian justice** Focusing on the individual's right to pursue happiness through self-determination, with rewards according to the market economy Trusting the market economy to lead planning for fair outcomes without considering individuals' inherently unequal starting points in society Connected to privatisation and gentrification	**Seen as market-led, with emphasis on economic growth** Correcting inefficiencies by relying on market forces, where a spatial plan must offer economic incentives to private actors who contribute to desirable spatial changes Perceives planning as economically growth-dependent	The approach can easily become economically unviable and politically contested due to the increased inequalities
Egalitarian planning approach Participative and collaborative Local consensus Emphasis on the community	**Socially fair justice** Focusing on the socially just distribution of well-being in society, where decisions do not favour anyone based on their social status Connected to inclusiveness in planning	**Seen as community-led, without a specific relation to growth**	The approach can provide nonmonetary benefits to the local community
Fatalistic planning approach Neglects planning Passive	**No concept of justification** Luck and fate No belief in justice	**Seen as passive without a specific relation to growth**	The approach can help to accept the reality of shrinkage, and to be aware of unexpected opportunities

When examining the framework (Table 1), both hierarchical and individualistic planning approaches, with the associated concepts of justice, show growth tendencies. An individualistic approach with libertarian justice has the strongest link to growth, as it can be presented as interdependent with it. As growth-dependent, it needs economic growth prospects to function correctly and to drive urban development. Since the context of shrinkage might not be the most conducive to economic growth, growth-dependent planning easily becomes economically unviable. Hierarchical planning, on the other hand, can justify planning based on financial and/or demographic growth since utilitarian justice can be seen as dependent on society's values. However, as a planning approach, it is not dependent on growth. Even though the hierarchical planning approach can be seen as market-critical, the history of planning binds it to some extent to growth-related planning approaches, where the justification has been derived.

From the framework (Table 1), egalitarian and fatalistic planning approaches, with (or lacking) the connected concept of justice, have no alignment with the context of growth or shrinkage. When it comes to an egalitarian planning approach with social justice, it has no ties to growth. It can be seen as community-led, emphasising local needs and nonmonetary benefits, making this approach potentially valuable for the shrinking context. Lastly, the fatalistic planning approach, unlike other approaches, lacks links to any concept of justice or growth. Nevertheless, this approach can be helpful in a context of shrinkage because it might help accept the shrinking reality and uncertainty about the future, as well as encourage awareness of unexpected possibilities (Kosunen & Hirvonen-Kantola, 2020).

In cultural theory, the premise is that rationalities are present in all social situations, and thus, there should be plurality in planning (Davy et al., 2023). This means that if planning is based solely on one rationality, other rationalities neglect it (Schmitt & Hartmann, 2016). At the same time, some approaches might fit better into the context of shrinkage, as presented. We propose that awareness of different planning rationalities and their links to justification and growth can help to understand growth tendencies and inconsistencies in planning, especially in the context of shrinkage.

This can have valuable managerial implications since there are notions that that even if shrinkage is an accepted phenomenon with a vision of a smaller city, planning might end up with pro-growth strategies, highlighting that the mere political awareness of shrinkage is inadequate to evoke planning outside the growth paradigm (Marjanović et al., 2024), and that planning is heterogenous and more diverse than the dichotomy between growth and non-growth (Heim LaFrombois et al., 2023; Ivanov, 2021). Additionally, when it comes to inconsistencies in planning, for example, right-sizing strategies are portrayed as "patchy" and inconsistent within planning processes, where there can be various autonomous urban policies that even have different spatial perimeters and contradictory goals (Béal et al., 2019). Right-sizing strategies or other strategies like smart decline and degrowth can have pro-growth agendas and links to expansion or austerity (Béal et al., 2019; Kërçuku, 2024), and can lead to the "shrinking of rights for the local population and weakening of the city's public space" (Kërçuku, 2024). Interestingly, actors involved in right-sizing strategies are portrayed as diverse, evolving, and unstable in their interests, logics, and rationalities (Béal et al., 2019). Hence, the added value of the suggested framework is that it enables us to understand the polyrationality and different views needed to approach planning through justification and growth. We argue that if planning is justified through growth, it can end up being growth-focused, regardless of whether it aims at non-growth. In such cases, it might be challenging to achieve a form of planning that is not related to growth. With the theoretical framework, it could be possible to identify suitable planning approaches that fit the shrinking context as well as evaluate plans and their justification in relation to growth.

We have offered insights into planning in the context of shrinkage by aligning planning approaches with justifications and the relation to growth. Our article can also be seen as a response to the need for a more relational perspective on the dimensions of shrinkage in urban studies (Döringer et al., 2020). Notably, justification could be approached through more than four distinct concepts of justice (Weghorst et al., 2024), or through varying views on democracy coupled with contrasting forms of governance leading to different aspects of legitimation (Mäntysalo et al., 2011, 2015). We conclude that this is an opening for further studies and empirical validation of the developed framework, through case studies illustrating diverse planning approaches and stages of shrinkage.

Funding

The lead author has received funding from the North Ostrobothnia Regional Fund of the Finnish Cultural Foundation and the University of Oulu.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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