

Capturing the Spatial Dimensions of Decline: Metrics for Characterizing Population Loss

Although the United States continues to experience robust population growth overall, increases have for years been unevenly distributed across regions, cities, and neighborhoods. Those areas with ongoing population decline face a range of challenges, from demographic to economic to health-related. Focusing primarily on the 2000 to 2010 period, this presentation explores how space—in particular scale and context—shapes both counties' and cities' experience of depopulation. At the county level, a cluster analysis technique that accounts for self and neighbor population change over time is employed to develop a typology of population change that distinguishes different kinds of loss. For urban areas, measures are proposed that characterize the spatial manifestation of loss within shrinking cities. Together, these two scales of analysis expand our basic understanding of the geography of depopulation and provide a set of metrics for assessing how and where loss is occurring.