Contact

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Education

2019-2024 **Ph.D. in City and Regional Planning,** *Cornell University*, Ithaca, NY, USA

Dissertation: Polycentric Spatial Development—Measures, Explanations, and Performance
Committee: Stephan Schmidt, Department of City and Regional Planning
John I. Carruthers, Field of Regional Science
Shanjun Li, Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management

Nomination: Barclay Gibbs Jones Award 2025—the highest dissertation award in the field of city and regional planning in North America

Funding: This research was supported by the Sage Fellowship awarded by the Graduate School of Cornell University; the C.V. Starr Fellowship awarded by The East Asian Program of the Einaudi Center.

2016-2018 **Master of Regional Planning (MRP)**, *Cornell University*, Ithaca, NY, USA

2012-2016 **Bachelor of Science in Remote Sensing,** *China University of Geosciences,* Wuhan, China

Fields of Interest

Topics Land-use planning and regional governance; housing studies; regional science and urban economics; economic development; climate change and sustainable development; community engagement

Methods urban spatial data analytics; AI; GIS & remote sensing; applied econometrics

Study Area North America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, China

Employment

Current Position

2025.8-present Postdoctoral Research Fellow in quantitative housing research, School of Community and Regional Planning, The University of British Columbia

- Develop an AI–human expert workflow to analyze public comments and examine how planning institutions and public engagement shape housing approval outcomes (this position is funded by the Canada Postdoctoral Research Award)

Previous Positions

2024.8-2025.6 Lecturer, Dept. of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University (90% Teaching, 10% Service)

Spring 2025 CRP 1200: Intro to Statistics for Urban Studies
CRP 4680/5680: Introduction to Urban Data Science

Fall 2024 CRP 4080: Introduction to Geographic information system,
CRP 2100: Neighborhood Change in the City: Quantitative Methods (co-taught),
CRP 3280/4280: Mapping and Counter-Mapping (co-taught)

Summer 2024 CRP 3850/5850 Urban Spatial Data Analytics

2021-2024 Teaching Assistant, Dept. of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University

CRP 1200 Introduction to Statistics for Urban Studies
CRP 5040 Urban Economics
CRP 4080 Introduction to GIS
CRP 5080 Introduction to GIS for Planners
CRP/DESIGN 4680/5680 Urban Spatial Data Analytics
CRP 6290 Advanced Topics in GIS
AEM Big Data & Business Analytics

2018.10-2019.6 Project Assistant, Tompkins County Department of Social Services, Ithaca, NY

- Developed business model to facilitate the Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) pilot project.
- Coordinated transportation planning in the southern tier NYS.
- Assisted with grant application from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Shared-Use Mobility Center (SUMC).

Publications (* Corresponding authors)

2026 **Li, Wenzheng**, Stephan Schmidt*, Jintao Guo. "Regional polycentric spatial patterns and air pollution: An empirical study of German metropolitan regions" *Cities*, *170*, 106676. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.106676

2026 Schmidt, Stephan, and **Wenzheng Li**. "Municipal Fragmentation and Metropolitan Open Space Patterns." *Urban Affairs Review*: https://doi.org /10.1177/10780874261468958.

2025 Schmidt, Stephan, Yucheng Zhang, **Wenzheng Li**, and Houpu Li. "Urban Morphology and the heat island effect in African cities: evidence from Ghana, Togo, and Tanzania." *Remote Sensing Applications: Society and Environment* (2026): 102005. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rsase.2026.102005

2024 **Li, Wenzheng***, Stephan Schmidt. "Can spatial patterns mitigate the urban heat island effect? Evidence from German metropolitan regions." *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science*. https://doi.org/10.1177/23998083241227500
Media coverage: Multiple city hubs, dispersed parks keep metro areas cooler, Cornell Chronicle

2024 **Li, Wenzheng***, and Stephan Schmidt. "The spatial-temporal evolution of urban development patterns in Chinese cities: Dynamics and interpretations." *Growth and Change* 55, no. 2: e12722. https://doi.org/10.1111/grow.12722

2024 **Li, Wenzheng***, Stephan Schmidt, and Stefan Siedentop. "Can polycentric urban development simultaneously achieve both economic growth and regional equity? A multi-scale analysis of German regions." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*: 56(2), 525-545. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X2311919

2024 Schmidt, Stephan*, **Wenzheng Li**, John Carruthers, and Stefan Siedentop. "Planning institutions and urban spatial patterns: Evidence from a cross-national analysis." *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X211044203

2024 Schmidt, Stephan*, Said Nuhu, Ryan Thomas, **Wenzheng Li**. "Place attachment, regional identity and perceptions of urbanization in Moshi, Tanzania." *Habitat International* 150 (2024): 103132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2024.103132

2021 Matuke, Samantha, Stephan Schmidt*, and **Wenzheng Li**. "The rise and fall of the American pedestrian mall." *Journal of Urbanism* 14, no. 2: 129-144.
https://doi.org/10.1080/17549175.2020.1793804.
Media coverage: Lessons From the Rise and Fall of the Pedestrian Mall, Bloomberg CityLab

Articles in Progress

Journal Articles: Under Review

2026 **Li, Wenzheng,** Ziye Zhang, and Yan Wu*****. "Vertical housing price gradients, elevators, and ageing communities: evidence from Beijing." *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*.

2026 John I. Carruthers, **Li, Wenzheng**. "Population and Employment Dynamics in a Fast-Growing Economy: Evidence from Chinese Prefectural Regions" *Papers in Regional Science*. R1

Working Projects

Julia Gabriele Harten, **Wenzheng Li**, Andrew Yan, Christos Thrampoulidis. Who Wants What Where and Why? Leveraging AI and City Council Records to Analyze Housing Supply Narratives in Vancouver, Canada. Presented at the 2026 ICUA Annual Conference.

Li, Wenzheng, Julia Harten, Andrew Yan, Christos Thrampoulidis. "Human in the Loop or Out? Evaluating Human Involvement in Housing Approval Process in Vancouver using a Hybrid AI-Expert Pipeline" Presented at the 2026 ACSP Annual Conference.

Julia Gabriele Harten, **Wenzheng Li**, Christos Thrampoulidis. Who Speaks for the Neighborhood? Localism and Opposition to Housing in Public Hearings and Online Comments

Li, Wenzheng, Stephan Schmidt. Polycentricity and Dispersion in Sub-Saharan African Cities: Spatial-Temporal Change of Urban Spatial Structure in 482 Cities, 2004–2024.

Li, Wenzheng, Yucheng Zhang, and Stephan Schmidt. The Dirtier Fringe: Seasonal Reversal of the Core-Periphery PM2.5 Gradient in Sub-Saharan African Cities. (tentative project)

Li, Wenzheng, Stephan Schmidt. From Polycentricity to Policy: substantive attention, legal traction, and Implementation Pathways in German Regional Spatial Plans

Li, Wenzheng. Reorganizing Agglomeration: Urban Scaling and the Rise of Polycentric Regions

Invited Talks, Presentations, Seminars

Conference presentation: When and How Should Humans Intervene? Trade-offs Among Time, Interpretability, and Accuracy in Housing Engagement Data using AI
Presented at
2026 Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) conference in Pittsburgh, PA.

Conference presentation: How do People Talk about New Housing? Leveraging Large Language Models and City Council Records to Analyze Housing Supply Narratives in Vancouver, CA.
Presented at
2026 International Conference on Urban Affairs (UAA) in Chicago

Conference presentation: Regional polycentric urban spatial patterns and air quality—Evidence from German metropolitan regions.
Presented at
2025 International Conference on Urban Affairs (UAA) in Vancouver, BC;
2024 Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) conference in Seattle, WA.

Conference presentation: Can polycentric urban development simultaneously achieve both economic growth and regional equity? A multi-scale analysis of German regions.
Presented at
2025 The 7th Economic Geography Conference (EGC) in Worcester, MA;
2024 International Association for China Planning (IACP) Conference in Hangzhou;
2023 North America Regional Science Council (NARSC) Conference in San Diego, CA;
2022 ACSP Conference in Toronto, ON.

Conference presentation: Can spatial patterns mitigate the urban heat island effect? Evidence from German metropolitan regions.
Presented at
2023 ACSP Conference in Chicago;
2023 AAG Conference in Denver, Colorado

Conference presentation: The spatial-temporal evolution of urban development patterns in Chinese cities: dynamics and interpretation.
Presented at
2023 NARSC Conference in San Diego;
2022 IACP Conference in Wuhan (Virtual);
2021 ACSP Conference (virtual)

May'24 **Invited Talk:** The performance and governance of polycentric urban regions—Evidence from Germany. at the East China Normal University, Shanghai

Nov'22 **Conference presentation:** The determinants and Outcomes of Chinese regional growth 2000 to 2020. **Presented at** NARSC Conference in Montreal, QC

Nov'21 **Conference presentation:** Vertical housing gradients: evidence from Beijing. **Presented at** NARSC Conference (virtual), Denver, Colorado

Nov'20 **Conference presentation:** Housing prices and Air Quality in Beijing, **Presented at** NARSC Conference (Virtual)

May'20 **Workshop presentation:** Developing Mobility-as-a-Service Serving Small Urban & Rural Communities, Tompkins County, NY, MOD On-Ramp Lessons Learned webinar 2020.

Nov'18 **Conference presentation:** Housing Prices and Time-varying NDVI, **Presented at** NARSC Conference, San Antonio, TX

Awards and Grants

2026-2028 Canada Postdoctoral Research Award (CPRA), The Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) ($140,000 CAD, funding rate: 18%)

2026 Postdoctoral Research Fellow Travel Awards (Q3 2026), University of British Columbia ($500 CAD)

2023, 2019 Sage Research and Dissertation Writing Fellowship, Cornell University ($130,000 USD)

2023 C.V. Starr Fellowship, The East Asian Program of the Einaudi Center, Cornell University (competitive fellowship, $35,000 USD)

2019 Tompkins County Mobility-as-a-Service (Maas) Pilot Program, funded by the FTA Mobility on-demand On-Ramp Program (Collaborator, contributed to drafting the initial proposal, $820,000 USD)

2018 Alan Black Transportation Planning Grant, Cornell University ($1,700)

2024 Graduate School Travel Grant, Cornell University ($700)

2023 Graduate School Travel Grant, Cornell University ($500)

2023 Department of City and Regional Planning (CRP) Travel Grant, Cornell University ($500)

2022 Graduate School Travel Grant, Cornell University ($600)

2022 Department of City and Regional Planning (CRP) Travel Grant, Cornell University ($500)

2021 Department of City and Regional Planning (CRP) Travel Grant for virtual conference ($120)

Academic Service

Editorial Board: Growth and Change

Journal Reviewer:
Applied Geography
Growth and Change
Scientific Report
Cities
Journal of Regional Science
Asian-Pacific Journal of Regional Science
The Annals of Regional Science
Sustainable Cities and Society
Nature: Cities
Spatial Network and Economics
Applied Spatial Analysis and Policy
Environment and Planning A
Environment and Planning B
Urban Climate
npj Urban Sustainability
Journal of Housing and the Built Environment

Mentorship: Mentoring and advising first-year undergraduate students on academic topics

Session Chair: Regional Challenges and Regional Planning. International Association for China Planning (IACP) Conference 2023

Land-use and territorial spatial planning. International Association for China Planning (IACP) Conference 2021

Discussant: NARSC Conference in 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2018

Other Professional Positions

Sep'15-May'16 GIS/Remote Sensing Analyst—ToolGeo Technology, Wuhan, China
- Developed software platform for automatic evaluation of urban public space coverage.
- Developed computer version algorithms for feature extraction.

July 18-Sept 19 Volunteer, Tompkins County Department of Social Services, Ithaca, NY
- Developed visualizations of inter-municipal commuting flows to support mobility coordination in Southern Tier of NYS.

Media Coverage

Feb'24 Multiple city hubs, dispersed parks keep metro areas cooler: "Polycentric" development patterns can lessen the urban heat island effect by distributing urban density and curbing the sprawl of impervious surfaces," Cornell Chronicle.

Datasets Published

Mar'20 *The Rise and Fall of the American Pedestrian Mall* (2020) available at https://osf.io/ybdev/.
This dataset contains 125 American Pedestrian Mall records with mall properties (e.g., open/removed year) and the demographic and socio-economic factors in the associated cities.

Affiliations/Memberships

Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP)
American Association of Geographers (AAG)
Cornell Institute for China Economic Research (CICER)
Cornell East Asian Program (EAP)
Regional Science Association International (RSAI)
International Association for China Planning (IACP)
Urban Affairs Association (UAA)

Language Skills & Technical Competencies

Software ArcGIS; QGIS; Mapbox; ENVI; Google Earth Engine (GEE), IMPLAN; Microsoft Office
Coding Python; R, Stata, MATLAB, C++, C#, Java, IDL
Languages English, Mandarin