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The long-term consequences of brain drain related to depopulation and social and territorial cohesion with a focus on the North of the Netherlands and a short comparison with Germany and Denmark

Presentation for the Discuss & Debate Session – Skill Gaps and Depopulation: A threat for Less Developed Regions? At the RSA Winter Conference, London, November 11, 2022.

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Outline

- Location of areas with population decline
- Focus on the Netherlands with comparison to Germany (Stephan Brunow) and Denmark (Torben Dall Schmidt)
- Demographic, social and economic characteristics of the Dutch study region
- How is brain drain related to depopulation and social and territorial cohesion?
- Policy issues
- Conclusions

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Trilateral Wadden Sea Region (WSR)

The map shows the Wadden Sea region along the coast of the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. Labels indicate 'The Netherlands', 'Denmark', and 'Germany'.

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Regions facing population decline subject to policy since 2014:

- a. **Krimpgebieden:** 9 areas with expected strong decline of > 12,5% till 2040
- b. **Anticipieergebieden:** 11 areas with moderate expected decline of > 2,5% till 2040

→ Policy on local facilities, not on braindrain

The map shows the Netherlands with various regions highlighted. A green circle highlights the 'Study region' in the north. Red areas represent 'Krimpgebieden' and yellow areas represent 'Anticipieergebieden'. Specific regions labeled include: Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe, Overijssel, Gelderland, Utrecht, Noord-Holland, Zeeland, Limburg, and Midden-Limburg.

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Characteristics of the Dutch study region

- Areas in the North and East near the coast and near the German border face population decline + aging in the past and predicted for the future especially till 2035, but also for 2050.
- Study region shows lower employment growth, lower participation rate, higher unemployment rate and lower levels of well-being, happiness and health and lower level of education is lower.
- NEXT: What are the underlying spatial mobility processes like braindrain **within** the region and **with other** regions?

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Higher educated concentrate in urban areas with HEI's.

Consequence: braindrain of talented people from regions with population decline near the coast and borders where elderly and low educated stay.

Hoogopgeleiden (15 – 75 jaar) per gemeente, 2020

HBO- of WO-opleiding
Aandeel in %

- Minder dan 21
- 21 – 25
- 25 – 30
- 30 – 35
- 35 of meer
- Geen gegevens

The map shows the Netherlands with a color scale representing the percentage of higher educated individuals (HBO- or WO-opleiding) in each municipality in 2020. A green circle highlights the study region in the north, which shows a lower percentage of higher educated individuals compared to urban areas.

Source: Statistics Netherlands, PBL

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Growing cities in a shrinking surrounding region:

The escalator-model

→ redistribution of human capital mainly within, but also between regions!

Noord Nederland

Stad Regio

Randstad

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Migration patterns to / from city of Groningen

Migration by age:

Netto migratie van en naar gemeente Groningen, 2013-2016

Meer vestigers in Groningen dan vertrekkers

Meer vertrekkers uit Groningen dan vestigers

Net gain for Gr.

Net loss for Gr.

Binnenlandse verhuizingen van en naar de gemeente Groningen, 2013-2016

The escalator-model → redistribution of human capital mainly within, but also between regions!

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Share % of youngsters living at the age of 16 in a municipality by educational level at age of 28

Medium Vocational | Applied University | University

Source: Femke Cossen - Talent in de Regio, september 2022
<https://talentinderegio.com/talentmonitor/#van-opgroeien-naar-uitvliegen>

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Share % of youngsters living at the age of 28 still in the same municipality as at the age of 16

Medium Vocational | Applied University | University

Source: Femke Cossen - Talent in de Regio, september 2022
<https://talentinderegio.com/talentmonitor/#van-opgroeien-naar-uitvliegen>

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Where do UoG students come from and go later?

- 65% of the university students living in the North at the age of 16 graduate from UoG, 35% goes elsewhere, mainly to Technical Universities in Delft, Eindhoven en Enschede.
- 47% of the UoG students is born in the North and thus 53% from outside the North.
- Two year after graduation 49% of the UoG graduates lives in the North. Four-six year after graduation this lowers to respectively 40% en 36%.

Woonlocatie voor en na studeren aan RUG

Source: A.J.E. Edzes, V.A. Venhorst and J. van Dijk, 2020

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Mobility of students from 10 years before till 18 years after graduation

Source: Venhorst, V.A., Koster, S. en Van Dijk, J. (2013), Geslaagd in de Stad.

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University of the North: location and links of campuses, hubs and field labs

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Conclusions (1)

- **Regions with population decline** are located near the coast and the German border and have a long history of a lagging regional economy and show lower scores on employment growth, participation and well-being and higher unemployment and aging.
- **Brain drain occurs within the North:** the share of youngsters in the areas with population decline that obtain a degree in higher education is substantially lower and if they do a high share (up to 80%!) leaves the area and move to the urban areas in the North with HEI's and stay there or move on to the rest of the country. Those with roots in the North stay more.
- Similar patterns in Germany and Denmark

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Conclusions (2)

- The University of Groningen attracts more than 50% from outside the area, but in the years after graduation more and more leave the region → **brain drain to other regions (or clean export product?)**
- Policies to keep graduates or let them return to area of origin are not successful. The result is less economic activity, well-being and innovation in declining areas.
- **Netherlands: new policy University of Groningen:** establishing of campuses, hubs and field labs in declining areas connecting staff/students to SME's.
- **Denmark:** relocating or downsizing of higher education programs from the main urban and education centers.
- **Germany:** no clear policy.

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Thank you for your attention

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