

RUG1 / university of groningen

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 in the session Rural Careers: Labour Market Choices and Outcomes at the 3rd European Rural Geographies Conference, Groningen, June 27, 2023.

Jouke van Dijk, Stephan Brunow and Torben Dall Schmidt
 Professor of Regional Labour Market Analysis, University of Groningen, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, Department Economic Geography

Email: Jouke.van.dijk@rug.nl Website: www.joukevandijk.nl

university of groningen

Outline

- Academic paper on request of the European Commission for a Communication on brain drain and challenges associated with population decline
- 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?
- Conclusions and Policy issues

university of groningen

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'.

university of groningen

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 various regions in the Netherlands, with a legend for 'Krimpgebieden' (red) and 'Anticipieergebieden' (yellow). A green circle highlights the 'Study region' in the north-east. Specific regions labeled include: Friesland (Krimp: Noordoost-Friesland, Noordoost-Friesland, Zuidoost-Friesland; Anticipie: Kop van Noord-Holland, Schouwen-Duiveland, Welcheren, Zeeuws-Vlaanderen); Groningen (Krimp: Oost-Groningen, Oost-Drenthe); Limburg (Krimp: Achterhoek, Noord-Limburg, Midden-Limburg; Anticipie: Westelijke Mijnstreek); and Maastricht-Mergelland (Krimp: Parkstad).

university of groningen

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 level of education is lower.
- NEXT: What are the underlying spatial mobility processes like braindrain **within** the region and **with other** regions?

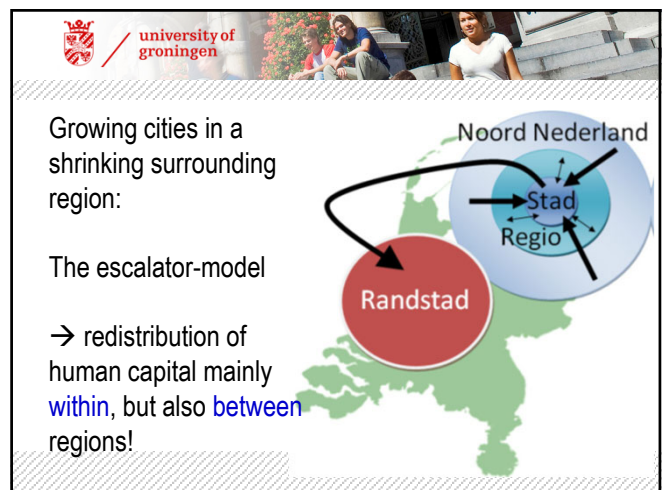
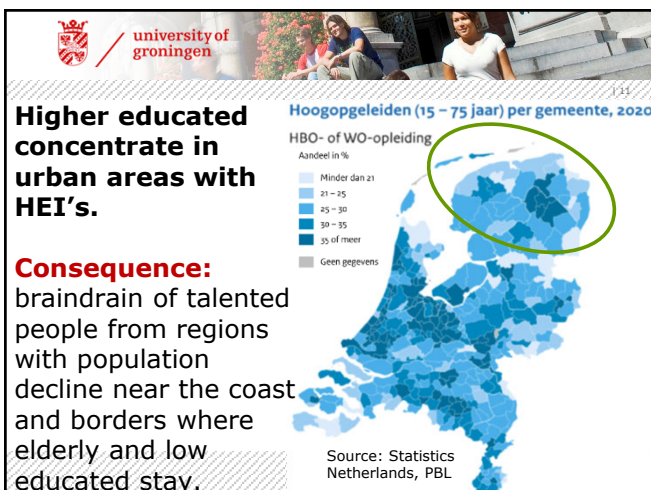
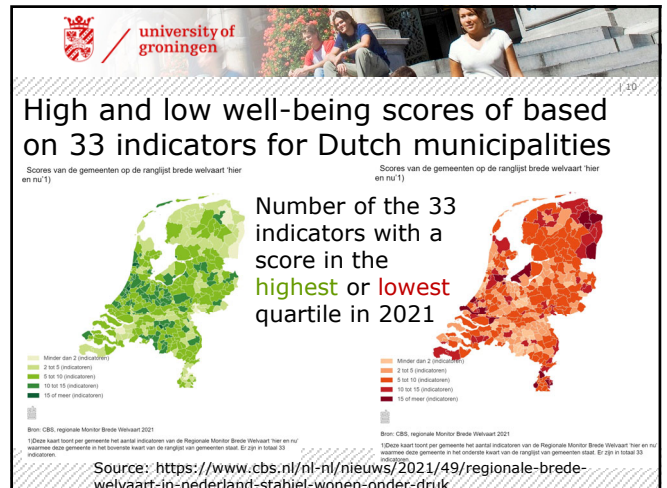
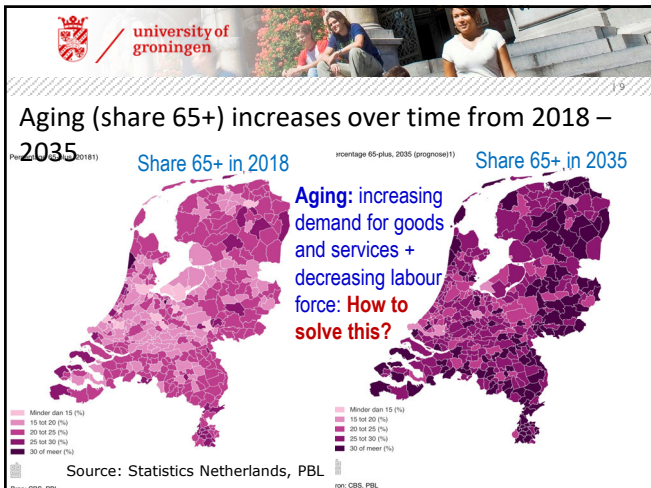
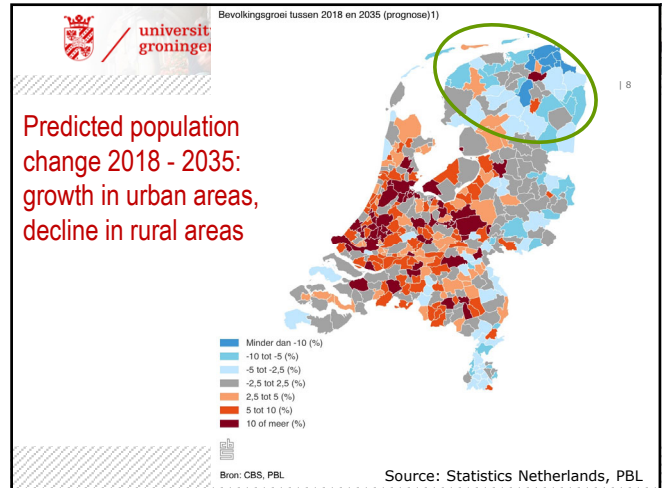
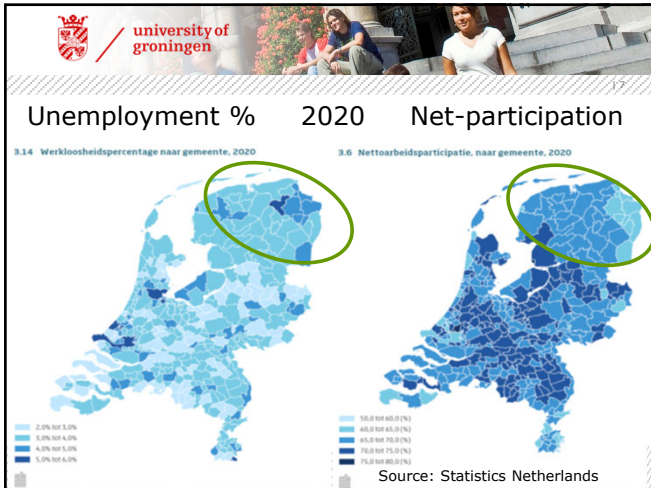
university of groningen

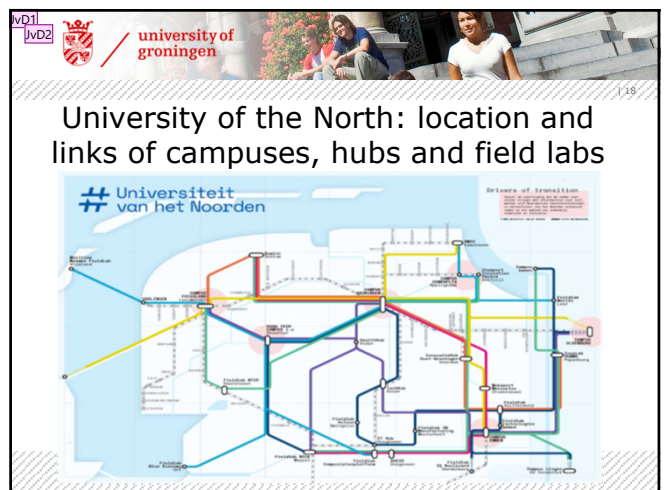
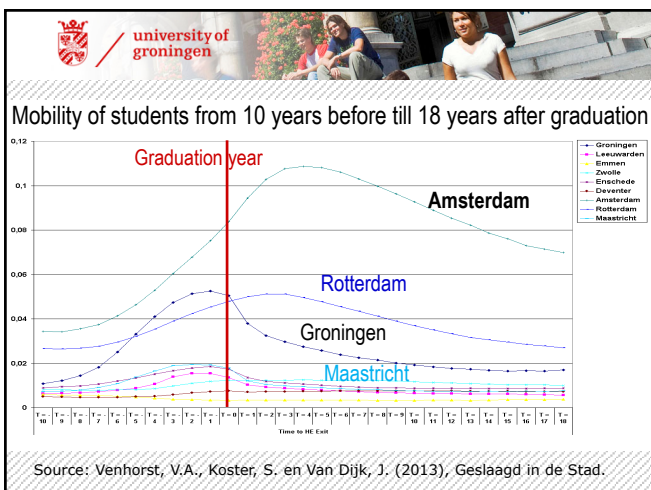
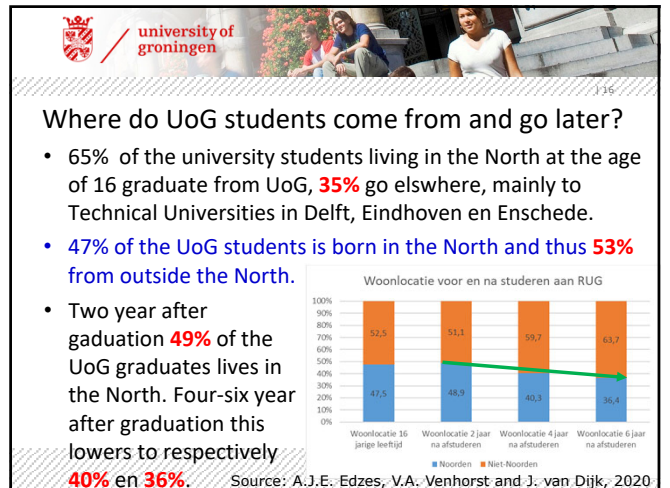
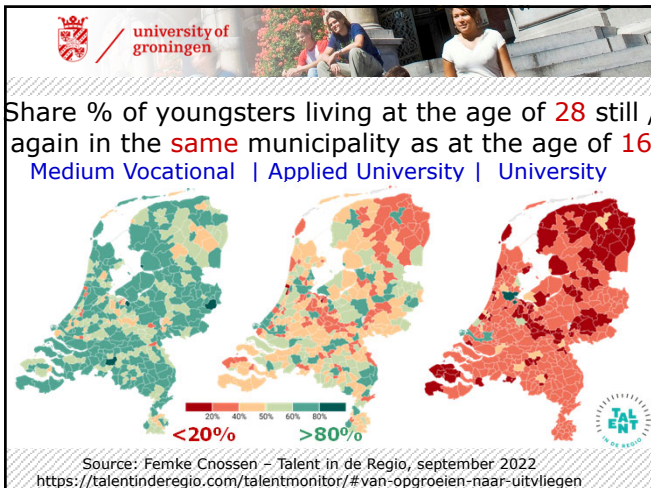
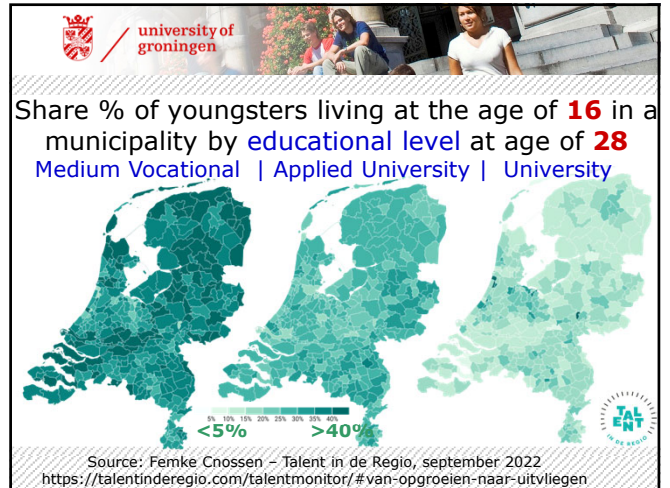
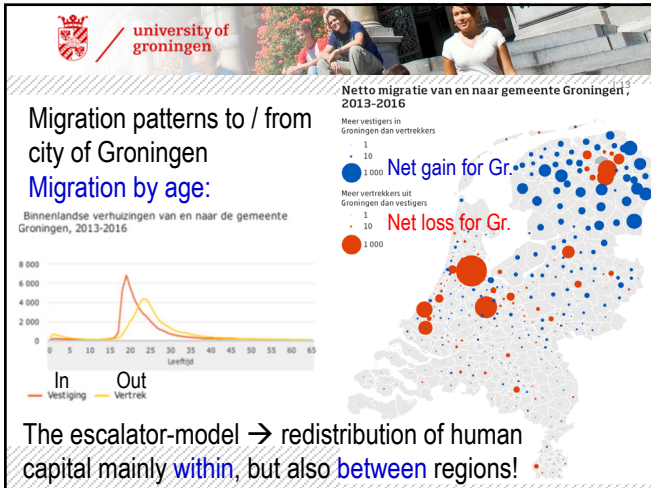
Change in employment by COROP region 1996-2020

→ growing regions are everywhere!

The map shows the Netherlands divided into COROP regions, color-coded by employment change: dark blue (more than 60%), medium blue (40% to 60%), light blue (20% to 40%), and white (less than 20%). A green circle highlights the study region in the north-east.

Source: Lisa Nieuws, November 2021
 Kaart 1. Groei banen per COROP-regio tussen 1996 en 2020







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, well-being, health and higher unemployment rates 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

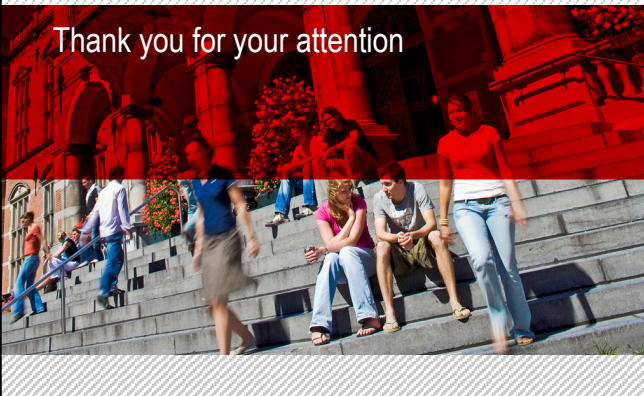


Conclusions (2)

- The University of Groningen attracts more than 50% from outside the area, but in 5-6 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.



Thank you for your attention



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.

Jouke van Dijk

Professor of Regional Labour Market Analysis, University of Groningen, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, Department Economic Geography

Email: Jouke.van.dijk@rug.nl

Website: www.joukevandijk.nl