Shrinking (smart): comparative European perspectives and applicability
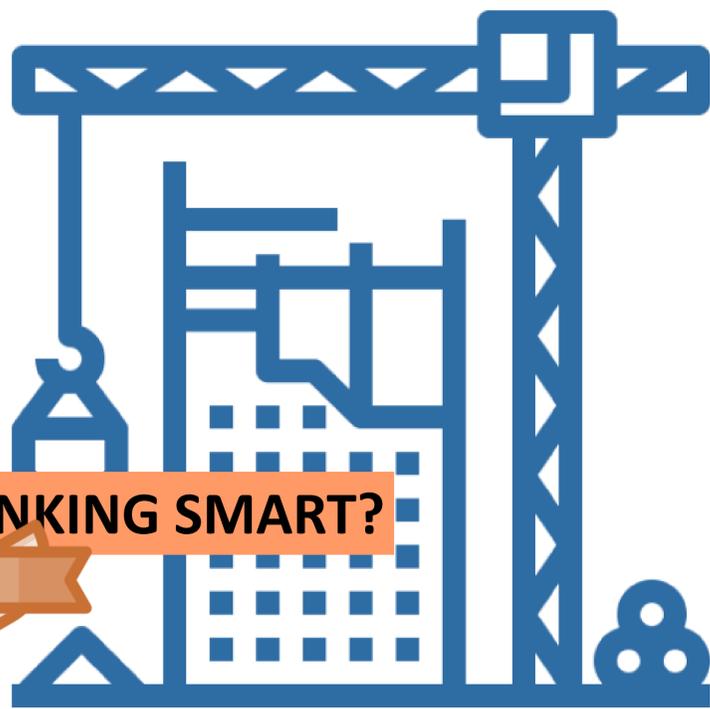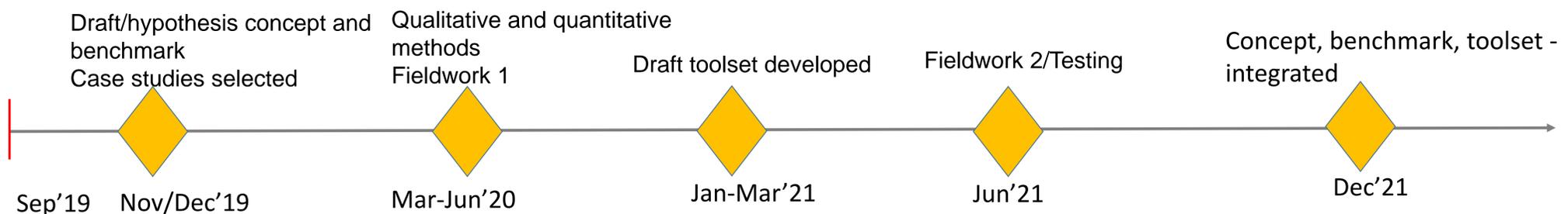
SHRINKING SMART?

Summary

'Shrinking smart' is an emerging and widely used term in shrinking cities research. Its definition, conceptual understanding and applicability, however, require further clarification.

This research attempts to develop a more in-depth understanding of 'shrinking smart' as a new planning concept and its potential practical applications in different shrinkage contexts. The research outlines a theoretical understanding of shrinking smart as a new planning concept and creates a benchmark of this approach. The concept and benchmark are verified through a comparative study of cities which have addressed shrinkage in a certain way. As a second step, a 'toolset' of solutions or interventions will be designed. The toolset will be applicable for cities currently experiencing shrinkage and will be verified through such cases.

Key research questions

- What is 'shrinkage' and how can it be conceptualized?
- How can a new planning concept of 'shrinking smart' be defined?
- What is a benchmark of 'shrinking smart'?
- How can the effects of 'shrinking smart' policies be evaluated?
- What possible applicable solutions exist for shrinking cities in the context of 'shrinking smart'?

Research timeline

Draft/hypothesis concept and benchmark Case studies selected	Qualitative and quantitative methods Fieldwork 1	Draft toolset developed	Fieldwork 2/Testing		Concept, benchmark, toolset - integrated
Sep'19 Nov/Dec'19	Mar-Jun'20	Jan-Mar'21	Jun'21		Dec'21

Approach and research logic

Define concept and benchmark

Theoretical concept and applicability-related benchmark for 'shrinking smart' will be defined based on existing works on the topic, trying to encompass the different manifestations of shrinkage, the reasons and triggers behind the issue in order to establish hypotheses for 'shrinking smart' as a new planning concept and a benchmark.

Verify through fieldwork

The hypotheses for 'shrinking smart' concept and 'shrinking smart' benchmark will be verified through a comparative study of 'successful cases' of shrinkage – cities that have implemented interventions or have taken action towards their shrinkage process. The study will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data with the intention to outline the effects of the different policies and the motivation behind them.

Develop 'solutions toolset"

After critical evaluation of the hypotheses for 'shrinking smart' concept and 'shrinking smart' benchmark, a 'solutions toolset' will be developed. It will consist of two main sections – evaluation and solutions. The evaluation section will allow for 'diagnosing' the condition of shrinkage, while the solutions section should propose specific interventions for the specific case of shrinkage.

Validate 'solutions toolset'

The solutions toolset will be validated with data and measurements from cities/areas currently experiencing shrinkage. Scenario building, forecasting and/or another round of field data will be used. This will allow for fine-tuning the toolset and respectively integrating concept, benchmark and applicability into a coherent approach.

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