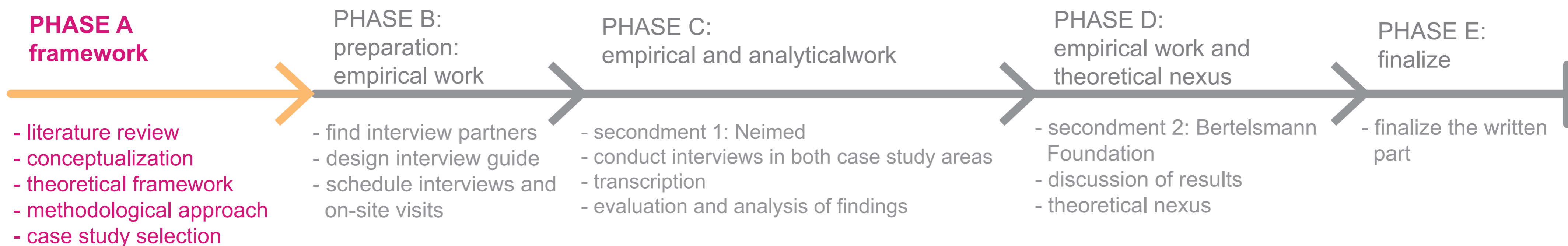


Actor constellations and uncertainties in decision-making for accommodating shrinkage



REVIVING SHRINKING CITIES
innovative paths and perspectives towards livability for shrinking cities in Europe



Guiding questions

- I) Who are the actors and stakeholders involved in regenerating shrinking cities?
- II) What are the overarching frameworks guiding regeneration strategies?
- III) To what extent are uncertainties included in the decision-making process for accommodating shrinkage and how do such uncertainties influence decision-making?

Governance in shrinking cities

Visual representation of actor constellations, governance structures and types of relations (idea)

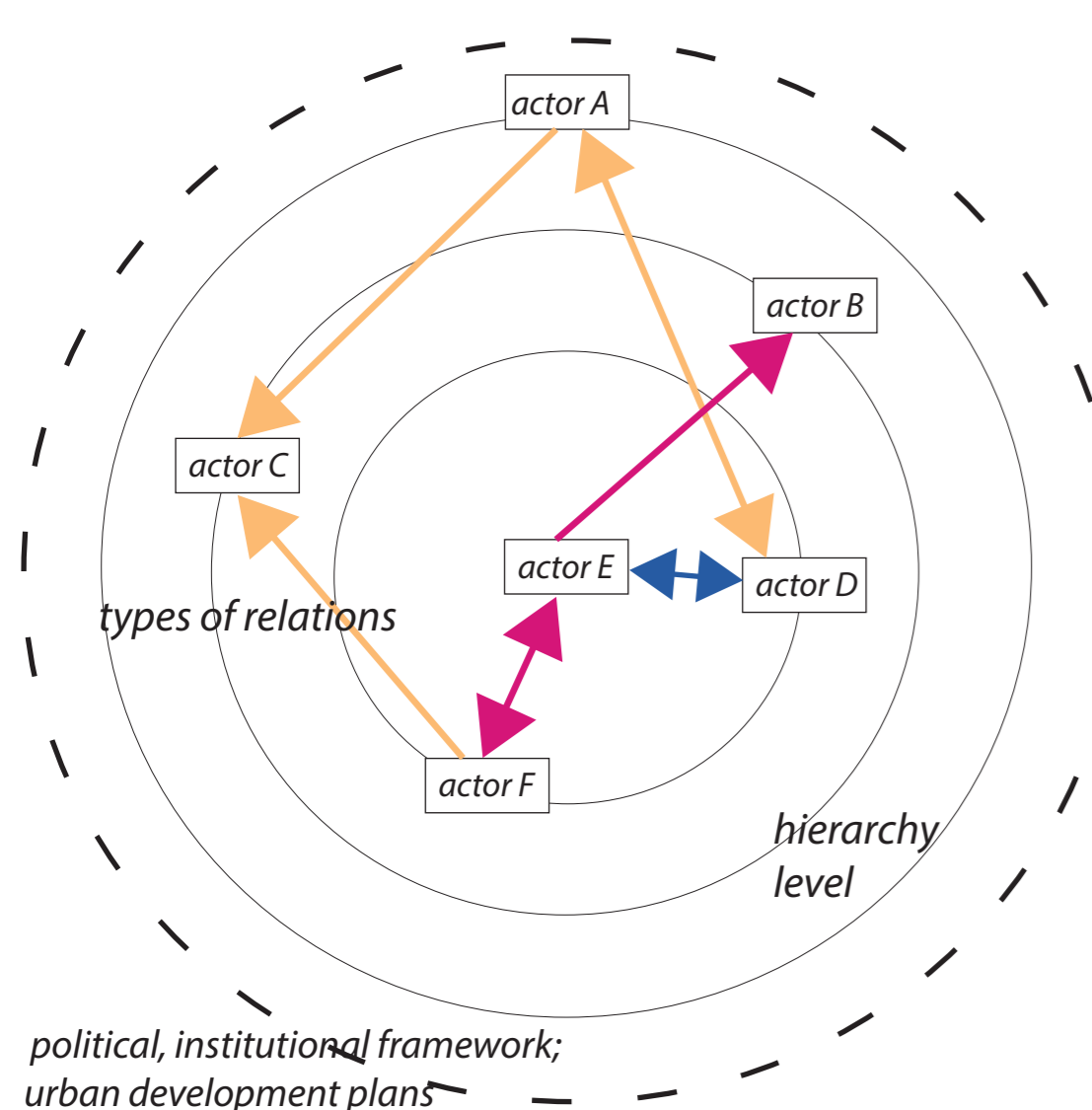


Fig. 1.: own illustration

The challenge of shrinkage is a **'complex urban governance process'** (Hospers, 2014: 1514). This means that addressing shrinkage requires the involvement of many stakeholders, as these processes transform and affect all parts of people's lives (ibid). Administrative barriers and rigid bureaucraties can be hindering, also, leaving specific actors out of the planning process can cause a loss of sense of belonging and identity. The question of **power relations** within governance structures in shrinking cities therefore arises and needs to be discussed.

Simultaneously, national and/or local **policy frameworks and urban development plans** set the necessary formal foundation for actions. From an actor-network perspective, such broad frameworks need to be analyzed in order to discuss to what extent actors on the local level are affected by those.

Uncertainties in decision-making

As planners we are confronted with specific uncertainties that can affect urban development in an **unpredictable** way; such are climate change, technological innovations, political turnovers and/or demographic changes. They particularly affect decision-making when trying to influence future developments (Rauws, 2017). Uncertainties can have many faces: from **unexpected and rapid events** (natural disasters, political or social upheavals) to **more gradual processes of change** which contributed to overarching transformations of an area or society. They occur in many domains and on different levels of scale, which adds to the unpredictability of the the future and people's responses to specific policies that aim to address such uncertainties (see Rauws, 2017). But the importance of addressing and dealing with uncertainties is especially important when **planning for longer time periods** (Zandvoort et al., 2019), which is inherent to the planning practice.

Case Studies

For this research, Germany and Netherlands were selected. In each of the countries two regions have been found suitable and need to be deeper looked into. In Germany, the federal state of Saarland as well as North Rhine-Westphalia constitute possible cases. Parts in these two areas are predicted of being „at risk“ considering economy, demographic development and infrastructure. (Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft, 2019). In the Netherlands the Limburg Region in the south and the Northeast-Groningen region are expecting a „strong decline (10% and over)“ in population development (PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency).

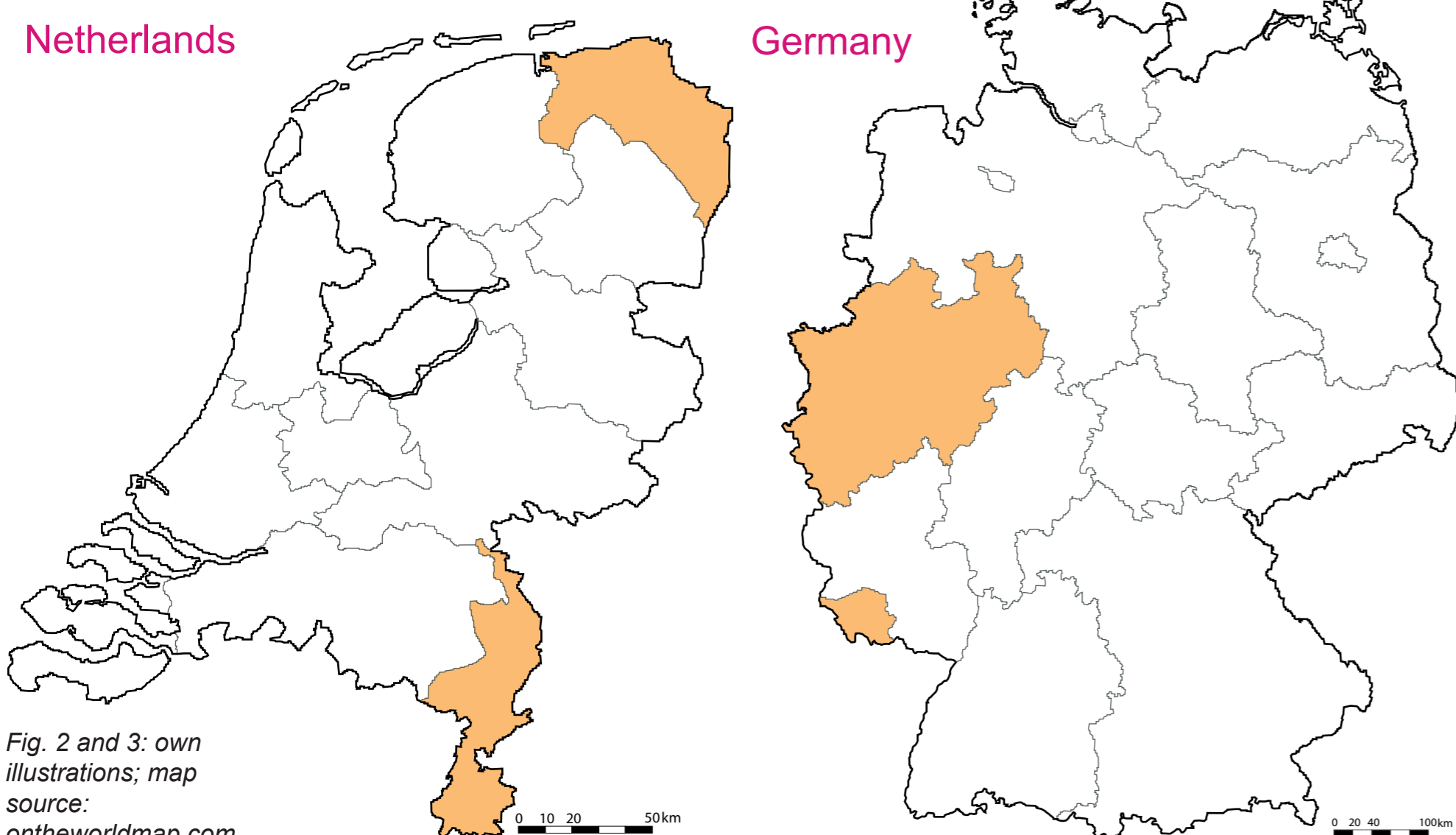


Fig. 2 and 3: own illustrations; map source: ontheworldmap.com

These countries have been selected based on initial literature review on already existing research on shrinkage. The fact that both countries have (had) national strategies which serve(d) as overarching frameworks for action and for the overall governance, was particularly interesting. In Germany, the *Stadtumbau West* program came into action in 2004 as regions in these federal states were struggling with the consequences of economic restructuring and demographic changes (BMI, n.d.). In the Netherlands, the Dutch „national shrinkage strategy“ and the inter-administrative action plan „Krimpen met kwaliteit“ have been adopted in 2009 (Elzerman & Bontje, 2015). In terms of analyzing governance structures in these countries and possibly compare them, the criterion of having a national framework for dealing with shrinking cities is particularly interesting.

For this research, qualitative methods will be used. In particular, in-depth guided interviews with actors and stakeholders are imagined.

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