

Monitoring social and geographic conditions of growth and decline in cities

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

Why investigating social and geographic factors ?

In France and the Netherlands, which might have been less affected by urban shrinkage, or in a less spectacular way, than the American Rust Belt or eastern Germany for example, urban shrinkage has been an emergent theme from the end of the 2000s (Wolff, 2017).

Urban shrinkage in medium sized cities

The decline of former industrial regions, and especially important cities, has been well documented. Less is known about the processes encountered by medium sized cities, sometimes located in rural regions. Yet, in France and the Netherlands, these are particularly affected by shrinkage (Guérout, 2018). It is thus relevant to deepen our understanding of how shrinkage occurs, with which logics and outcomes, in this kind of space.

The social dimension of shrinkage

The topic has been tackled mainly by economic geographers and planners, with a focus on demography, policy making and governance. The social dimension of shrinkage – social drivers and social impact of the phenomenon – has been less analysed. Yet, this phenomenon does affect the social structure as a whole and the residents at the individual level. The social dimension, both as a factor and an outcome, needs to be better considered and analysed.

1. What is the impact of **life course events** on the residents' **mobility**?

2. How can one's **social ties** be an incentive to stay or to leave?

3. How do **place attachment** and **sense of belonging** influence the residents' migrations ?

How do the residents' sociospatial ties influence their migration patterns in and out of shrinking cities?

4. What is the role of **social and localized capital** in the stay or leave decision?

5. Why **coming back** to the hometown after a period of outmigration?

6. What is the role of **social capital** in the successful installation of newcomers ?

Research design

- **Mixed-methods approach:** quantitative analysis (survey?), qualitative analysis (interviews)
- **Comparative approach:** France & the Netherlands
- **Possible case studies:** Nevers in France (34 000 inhabitants), and Terneuzen, Winschoten, Den Helder, Delfzijl, or the Achterhoek region (Gelderland) in the Netherlands

Comments? Suggestions?

Write it down!

Conceptual problems and methodology questions

- Focus: are we looking at the social drivers, or the social impact of shrinkage, or both?
- How to integrate a quantitative analysis to the qualitative approach, in order to answer the main research question?



Photos:
Left: Nevers, location (Google Earth, screenshot)
Right: Nevers (credits: Daniel Villafruela)

