European Shrinking Rural Areas: Challenges, Actions and Perspectives for Territorial Governance

ESCAPE

Andrew Copus (James Hutton Institute), Julien Grunfelder (Nordregio) and Gergely Tagai (Hungarian Academy of Sciences)

ENRD Workshop:

Combatting Rural Depopulation:
Creating new opportunities for vibrant rural areas
Brussels - 21 May 2019

Inspire policy making by territorial evidence
"a region that is ‘shrinking’ is a region that is losing a significant proportion of its population over a period greater than or equal to one generation"


“Regional shrinkage is a simultaneously demographic and economic process – demography and economy in combination are potential drivers of shrinking”.

Sepp, V., and Veemaa, J. (2017) Shrinking regions and innovative solutions: entrepreneurship, employment and the accessibility of services. Study report was commissioned by the Estonian Ministry of Finance, Department of Regional Development, Tartu.
Where is Rural Shrinking taking place?

“Rural” = NUTS 3 PR+Intermediate

64% of rural regions are, have been, or will be shrinking.
59% of rural population in shrinking regions.
60% of rural area in shrinking regions.

LAU 2 map shows many smaller “enclaves” of shrinkage.

Intermediate and rural regions with population decrease in the period 1993-2033
- Experiencing population decrease in both periods 1993-2013 and 2013-2033 at important annual average shrinking rates (>1)
- Experiencing population decrease in both periods 1993-2013 and 2013-2033 at moderate annual average shrinking rate (1 to -0.5)
- Experiencing most of the population decrease in the period 1993-2015 at modest shrinking rate (-0.5)
- Experiencing population decrease in the period 2013-2033 at slow shrinking rates (<-0.5)

Intermediate and rural regions with population increase in the period 1993-2033
- Experiencing population increase in the period 1993-2013
- Experiencing population increase in the period 2013-2033

Other regions
- Growing intermediate and rural regions in the period 1993-2033 without any 20-year period of population decrease
- Urban regions
- No data
What are the prospects for the future?

Projections based on past trends...
Continuity in Baltics and SE Europe
Intensifying in Poland E Germany, Iberia, Greece etc...

At worst pop. halved within 20 or 50 yrs...
But much diversity between rural areas...
Many rural areas growing, especially in FR, UK, NL, DE (W/N), IT (N)...

What drives rural shrinking?

**Natural Change:**
- **Total fert. Rate** <2.1 unsustainable
- <1.5 “point of no return”

**Fert./mort. rates per 1,000**
(affected by age structure)

**Migration flows**
- **Urbanisation** – long established in NW, more recent in S
- **Accession adjustments** – CEECs since 2004 enlargement
- **Counter-urbanisation** – last 20 years in N/W
Active Shrinking – driven by migration - typical of CEECs and Southern Europe

Legacy shrinking – driven by distorted age structures which reflect migration processes of the past – more typical of the fringes of Western Europe

Most shrinking rural areas of Europe (including the N Periphery, lie somewhere between these extremes – shrinking is driven both by legacy age structure effects and by continuing out-migration
What are the effects of shrinking?

Many feed-back loops → vicious cycles/cumulative causation (Complex shrinking)

- Contracting Economy
- Reduced Fiscal Returns
- Reduced service provision
- Critical mass of human and social capital
- Local Development
- Governance capacity
Different responses....

Mitigation Policy

- In-Migration → GROWTH

- Place based policy valorising Territorial Assets
- Enhanced Territorial Governance

Adaptation Policy

- Fertility and Mortality rates
- Managing effects of shrinkage
- Increasing wellbeing

Selective Out Migration

Age Structure

SHRINKAGE

Shrinkage Process
Thank you for your attention...

andrew.copus@hutton.ac.uk