“Shrinkage in the countryside” - Depopulation, peripheralisation and social innovation

June 12th 2018, Bettina Bock

What is rural shrinkage all about?

1. What are its main features?
2. What is causing rural shrinkage?
3. How to study and conceptualise it?
4. What can we do about it?

1. What is rural shrinkage?

a. Population decline

b. Concentration population
C. Changing composition of population

Deterioration material infrastructure

- Availability and accessibility of services
Accessibility of basic services

- Schools
- Hospitals & GDPs – health care
- Public transport
- Shops
- Church
- Police and fire fighters

.....

Important as services & employment

2. What is causing rural shrinkage?

- Rural outmigration
- Demographic transition

In combi with urbanisation

Trends in Urbanization, by Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Urban Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America/ Caribbean</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Developed Regions</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators
3. How to study and conceptualise it?

Traditional focus on geographical location
- At spatial distance from the centre
  - Weak infrastructure
  - Primary sector dominance,
  - Low education/income

Fixed position as remote and peripheral
Problematic in times of mobility

Relational definition of place

Focus on socio-political location
Instead of geographical location
- At relational distance from the centre
- A-spatial remoteness
Territorial position is not fixed but fluid
Not defined by geographical position
But socially constructed

And hence?

**Theory of peripheralisation**

- Roots in critical geography
- Developed in Germany
- Focus dynamic & political process
- Effects of material and discursive practices
- Relational development – in combi with centralisation
- As a social process, not a geographical fact

**Process of peripheralisation**

“Peripheralization should be viewed as a “multidimensional process of demotion or downgrading of a socio-spatial unit in relation to other socio-political units, one that can only be explained with reference to the interaction of economic social and political dimensions.” (Kühn 2014, 374)

Interaction of centralisation and peripheralisation
- Downgrading a region vis-à-vis other regions
- Centre and periphery emerging as "complementary and contradictory dialectic unit" (Kühn/Bernt 2013: 303)

**Antithetic socio-spatial processes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Centralization</th>
<th>Peripheralization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>Innovation dynamics - Growth of employment - High-qualified work</td>
<td>Lack of innovation - Decline of employment - Low-qualified work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>Wealth - In-migration - Hegemony</td>
<td>Poverty - Out-migration - Stigmatization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political</strong></td>
<td>Power - Autonomy (decision-making control) - Inclusion in networks</td>
<td>Powerlessness - Dependency - Disconnection - Exclusion from networks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Based on Kühn 2014: 274)
4. So, what then to do about it?

First – should we? What do you think?

And if – what and how?
- Rural marginalisation not locally produced
- RD as shared concern & responsibility
- Collaboration across space (e.g. rural-urban)
- From ‘born from within’ to ‘born through reconnection’

Inspiration from Japan

- Sato-yama
- Slow life (rural refuge)
- Arts based rural development

Laboratories of social innovation

Thank you for your attention
Mobility: novel definition of place

Massey: relational meaning of place
- De-fixing and de-essentialising places
- Places as points of social interaction
- Collectively/socially constructed

- No ‘essential’ territorial identity
- Dynamic and ‘in process’
- Open to change and contestation