Abstract
Although shrinkage has recently been presented as a new challenge for policymakers, there have always been shrinking and growing cities and regions. Especially in the period 1980-2000 many Belgian cities experienced population decline. Nonetheless, Belgium as a whole is characterized as a growing country in comparison to other, mainly Eastern European countries. Nonetheless, shrinkage and growth go hand in hand. As cities shrink, the surrounding areas may grow and vise versa. The many faces of growth and shrinkage display a divers spatial pattern in demographic dynamics. Until now, only in very rural areas shrinkage was persistent, as the major cities revitalized as reaction to renewed infrastructural investments (into renewal of railway stations, city centers, new shopping malls, etc.). The question if shrinkage will occur in Belgium on a broader scale is still unanswered. Therefore we will look at future demographic developments on a districts basis (Belgium) and a municipality level (Flanders).

Demographic forecasts
In general, population growth in Belgium is forecasted at 1.8 million inhabitants in the period 2015-2060, with a total population of 13 million in 2060. On the level of districts, only in Flanders will shrinkage be noticeable in the long term. In Flanders Fields (a very rural area) knows the greatest relative shrinkage, but is surpassed in numbers by the district of Bruges, which is much more urbanized.

The many faces of growth and shrinkage
When we investigate trends on the municipal level, we can pinpoint those which know a population decline and a household decline (shrinking municipalities). In some cases the number of households can still increase. A few of these municipalities knew already a population decline in the past (2004-2014). Even more municipalities will know a shift from growth to shrinkage in the near future. Also the opposite trend occurs: a shift from shrinkage to growth in the future.

Trends and predominant types
Municipalities differ by the prevalence of shrinkage (i.e., the number of times the city has experienced population decline), the persistence (how long population decline lasts) and severity (i.e. the number of inhabitants involved). Overall there are two main trends and seven predominant types.

Spatial dynamics
When we zoom to Flanders, the norther part of Belgium, and look at the population and household forecasts on the level of municipalities and for the midterm (2015-2030), a less distinctive but more fine-grained pattern occurs. This shows that shrinkage and growth are as well rural as urban phenomenon. Four cases occur. First, there are the cities which grow with their shrinking fringes (e.g. Antwerp), second, there are cities that grow like their fringes doe, third, there are cities which shrink like their fringes, and forth, there are shrinking cities with their growing fringes (e.g. Kortrijk – doughnut effect).

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