

On Diversity in the Periphery

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0. Introduction

Especially in the Dutch border regions specific demographic changes are likely to occur, with severe consequences for local economy and labour market (Coenen & Galjaard 2010, Euwals et al 2009, Verkade 2009). In our contribution we consider the specific context in Twente en Midden Limburg (Romeijn & Reulen 2010) and the consequences of demographic changes for businesses and municipalities in these regions. We argue for an explicit diversity policy and “talent management” approach towards the expected shrinking job market. Our argument is constructed in the following way.

We first provide an insight in the demographical changes in the regions, more specifically the situation in Enschede, Hof van Twente and Twenterand in Twente, and in Weert, Roermond and Leudal in Midden Limburg. In the less urban and more rural parts we show that the household composite is higher than the average in the Netherlands, with far less younger people and more elderly people. The cities themselves exhibit a high number of single person households (Enschede 40%). Demographic shrinkage is closely connected to shrinkage of local job markets.

Second, we consider three approaches that in general local businesses and municipalities put forward in dealing with a shrinking local job market.

- *On the level of organizations - Moving, partnerships, downsizing and upscaling*
- *On the level of employees - Promoting and recruiting from other regions*
- *On the level of local communities - Diversity and inclusion*

While any approach may appear promising in dealing with a shrinking local job market, we propose that the HRM approach on diversity and inclusion may be the best strategy to encounter economic shrinkage.

Finally, we show how such a HRM strategy based on diversity and inclusion might work in the cities under investigation.

1. Demographic changes and their influence on the labour markets

Demographic changes appear to vary along the periphery regions. Romeijn & Reulen (2010) have extensively examined all periphery regions within 20 kilometers of Germany and Belgium from the north of the province of Groningen to the west of the province of Zeeland. In these periphery regions we find almost 100 cities and towns, which naturally differ in population and in workforce (i.e. persons 20 to 65 year). For this article we focus on 6 cities/towns, 3 in the region of Twente and 3 in the region of Midden Limburg. These cities/towns are selected for their differences in population numbers and scale in hectares.

1.a. Population, scale and workforce

In Twente we contrast the large city of Enschede (14,275 hectare) with two rural towns, namely Twenterand (10,817 hectare) and Hof van Twente (with 21,544 hectare twice the scale of Twenterand).

The cities and town of Midden Limburg, Weert, Roermond and Leudal, are all smaller than those in Twente. The city of Roermond is 7,119 hectare, whereas Leudal is 16,486 hectare, thus even larger than the city of Enschede. The city of Weert (10,544 hectare) almost equals the town of Twenterand. The populations of Leudal, Twenterand and Hof van Twente are almost the same. Table 1 below shows area, population and workforce in 2010 and 2040, based on CBS prognoses. We also included the changes in population and workforce in percentage, i.e. growth or shrinkage.

City/town	Area hectare	Population		Workforce		Change	
		2010	2040	2010	2040	Population	Workforce
Enschede	14275	157265	156962	98501	82069	100%	83%
Roermond	7119	54383	47246	33497	24346	87%	73%
Weert	10544	48324	47621	28705	24128	99%	84%
Leudal	16486	36396	28639	21782	13843	79%	64%
Twenterand	10817	32815	30651	19245	15142	93%	79%
Hof van Twente	21544	35177	32763	19809	15905	93%	80%
total		364360	343882	213600	175433		
change total			94%		82%		
Region Twente		225257	98%	137555	82%		
Region Limburg		139103	89%	83984	74%		

Table 1 – data on areas, population and workforce in 6 cities/towns

During the next 30 years we find a significant change in population in these 6 cities and towns. In numbers the population declines 94%, mainly due to the shrinkage in the region of Midden Limburg. Although the city of Enschede is not expected to decline in population, the shrinkage of the workforce of Enschede is in line with the general declination of workforce.

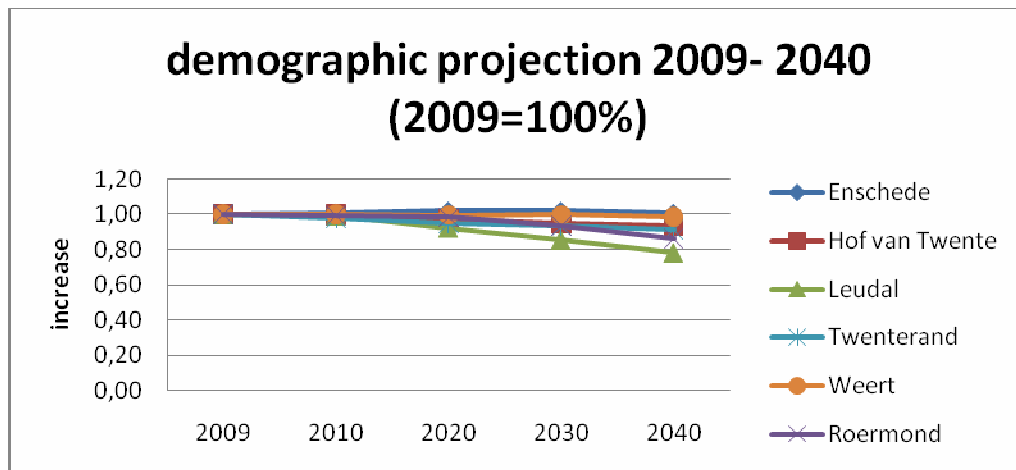


Figure 1 – Demographic projection 2009-2040 in 6 cities/towns

We observe a clear difference between the rural towns in Midden Limburg and Twente. For instance, Leudal is expected to decline in population (20%) and in workforce (35%) more strongly than average.

We also observe a distinction between the cities Weert and Roermond. Weert maintains in numbers a similar population and workforce, whereas Roermond shows a sharp decline both in population and workforce.

City/town	Area	Period		inhabitant/ hectare	
	hectare	2010	2040	2010	2040
Enschede	14275	157265	156962	11,02	11,00
Roermond	7119	54383	47246	7,64	6,64
Weert	10544	48324	47621	4,58	4,52
Leudal	16486	36396	28639	2,21	1,74
Twenterand	10817	32815	30651	3,03	2,83
Hof van Twente	21544	35177	32763	1,63	1,52

Table 2 – Data on area, population and density in 6 cities/towns

Due to the shrinkage of the population we can also observe a change in number of inhabitants/hectare. As the above table shows, this does not influence the relative ranking of the 6 cities and towns.

According to Verkade (2009) there is a strong correlation between regional demographic change and change in workforce. Our research seems to support this partly. The decline in workforce balances between 16% and 35%, whereas the decline in population is between 1% and 21%. The figure below gives an overview of changing population, workforce, migrants and native people for the 6 cities and towns. Notice the strong increase of migrant persons in Hof van Twente, Twenterand, Leudal and even Weert.

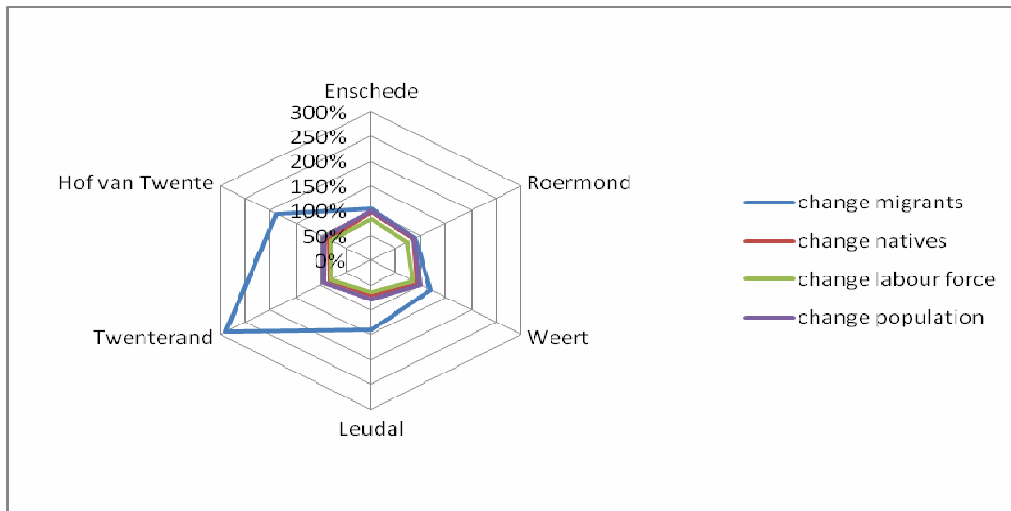


Figure 2 – Data on the change of population, workforce, migrants and natives in 6 cities/towns

Comparing the relative growth and shrinkage of the population in these cities between 2010 and 2040, with 2010 as index year (100%), we find shrinkage of the population (the purple line) in all 6 cities (based on CBS prognoses). A similar shrinkage is found with respect to the local workforce (the green line), if compared relatively. If we consider the relative percentage of migrants, both western and non-western, we observe a strong growth in rural cities such as Hof van Twente, Twenterand and Leudal. Such a relative growth of migrants will also occur in the city of Weert (on value of 140%). If we consider the prognoses on the local workforce the cities pattern as follows:

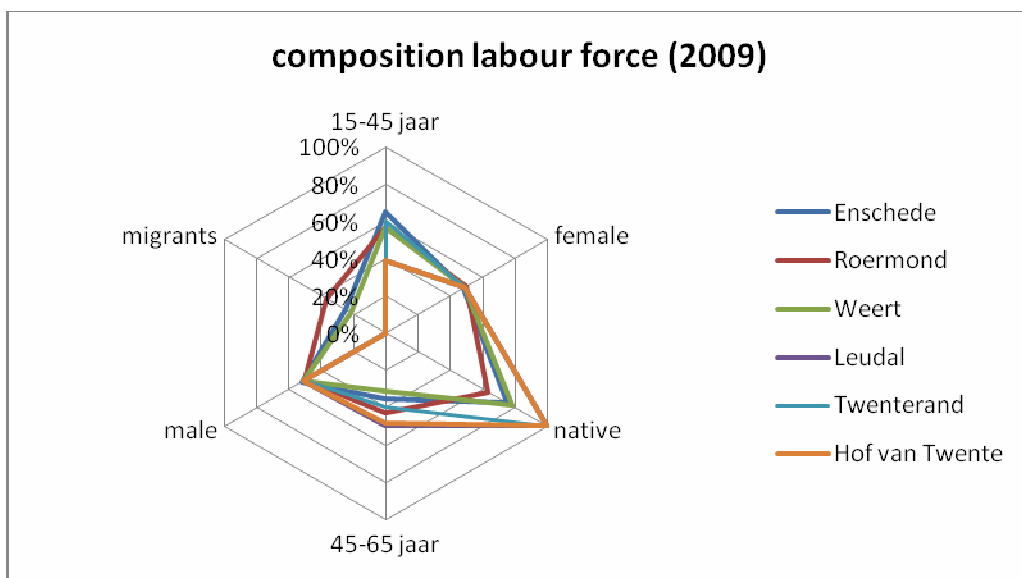


Figure 3 – Data on the composite labour force in 6 cities/towns

In the figure above we compare the workforces on gender, age and migrants in 2009. Local differences are found on age and migrants. Leudal, Twenterand, Hof van Twente prominently exhibit a non-migrant workforce. Roermond shows nearly 20% migrant workforce, whereas Enschede and Weert have more than 10% migrant workers. Age is another factor in which the workforces differ. Hof van Twente and Leudal have a relative aged workforce, whereas Enschede, Roermond and Weert have a large percentage younger workers.

1.b. Dutch household composite

In the figure below we give the prognoses on household composite, based on data of the past 50 years. The number of households will grow until 2040, then it will balance slightly negative. The number of multiple persons (m.p.) households tops in 2020 and then declines slightly. With respect to the number of one-person (o.p.) households, we expect these to extend in 2040.

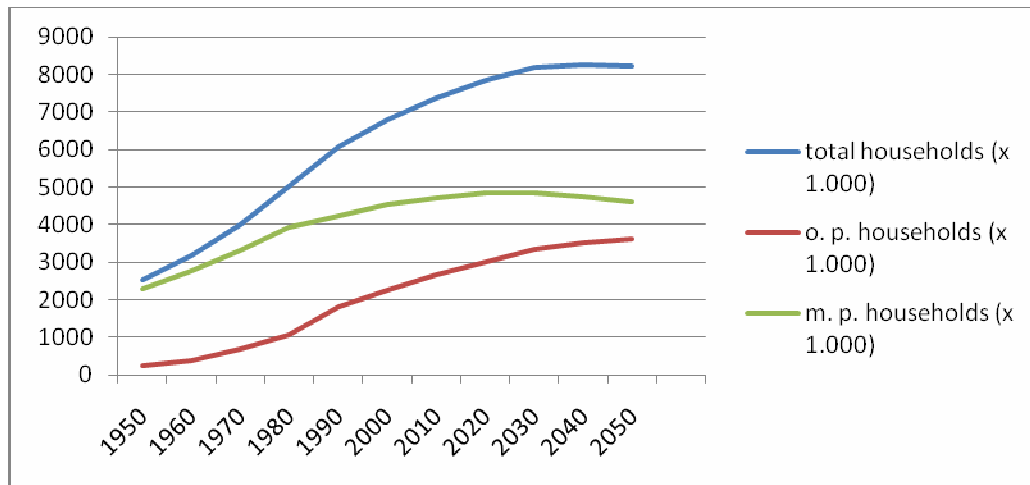


Figure 4 – Data on household composite in the Netherlands 1950-2050

1.c. Diversity in labour force

We find an increase in workforce of the Dutch people in the past 25 years, as can be seen in the CBS figure below with differentiation in gender and migrant/native workforce.

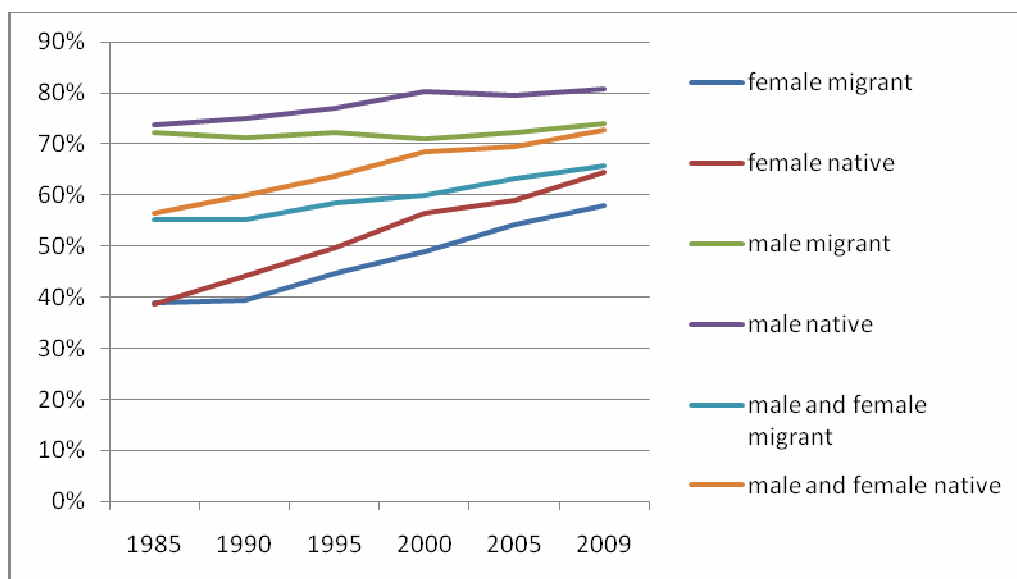


Figure 5 – Data on diversity in the Dutch workforce

Between 1985 and 2009 native males form the largest part of the Dutch workforce (3.300.000 persons). Job participation among females has increased with 39% in this periode. Native women account now for a participation of 66% (2.765.000 persons in 2009) and migrant women for 58% (676.000 persons in 2009). Thus it appears that women, both native and migrant, have found their way into the labour market, a trend that seem to continue into the near future.

In the figure below we show the relative change of the Dutch workforce in the periode 1985-2009. Again the decrease of native male workers is significant, as is the increase of migrants and native women into the workforce. These data show more diversity in the Dutch workforce, which we assume will continue.

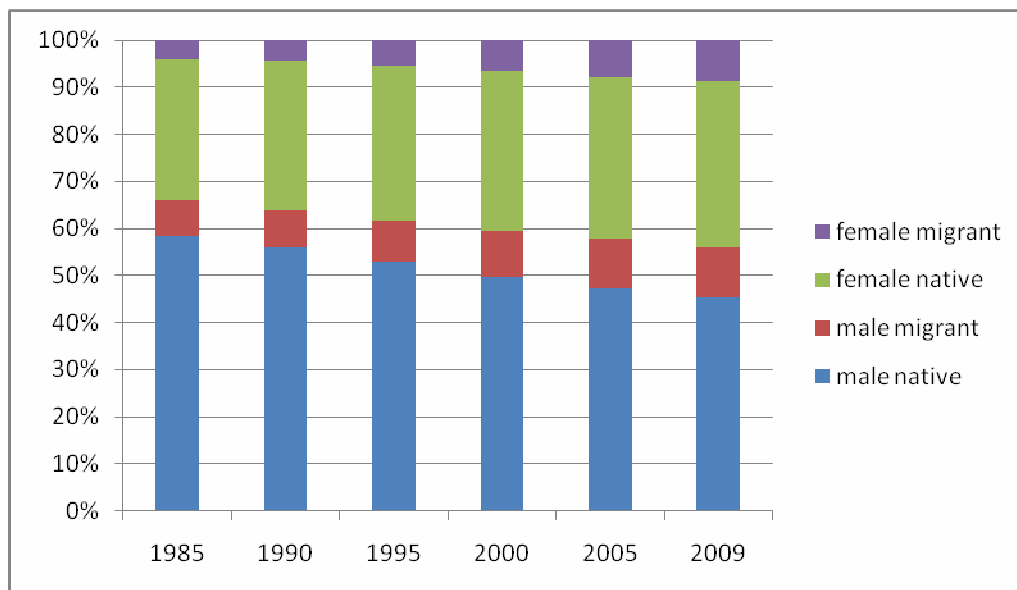


Figure 6 – Data on the relative change in the Dutch workforce

Isik (2011) makes a similar observation for the regions in Gelderland, with a growth percentage of non-western migrants of 46% (as opposed to 27% nationally). Especially the rural cities will contribute to the population shift, mainly due to a strong shrinkage of the original Dutch population.

In the 6 cities and towns in the regions of Midden Limburg and Twente we find data that seem to confirm the observations of Isik (2011). Extended diversity in the local workforce is also combined with shrinking of those labour markets. This begs the question how businesses and municipalities are adressing these issues. In the next section we demonstrate three approaches towards shrinking job markets in general.

2. Approaches towards shrinking job markets

What do these prognoses tell us about the local job markets and their consequences for businesses and municipalities? Three approaches towards shrinking job markets usually are taken.

2.a. On the level of organizations - Moving, partnerships, downsizing and upscaling

Businesses depend on local or regional labour (job) markets, as for instance Reverda (2010) shows. He provides a fine overview of motivations and opinions of businesses and governmental organizations in the southern part of Limburg. Faced with a declining job market, businesses may choose to abandon the shrinking region due to lack of qualified employees or local consumers. Stores that rely solely on local consumer market go bankrupt, firms that depend on qualified employees are forced to move towards areas that provide a more robust workforce. Another approach for businesses and organizations is to find strategic partners outside the shrinking region. For example, a number of social housing corporations in shrinking regions opt to cooperation with similar firms outside the regions.

Whereas businesses may choose to move or find strategic partners, these options are not available for municipalities. With respect to services municipalities may choose for outsourcing, e.g. the city of Putten has outsourced projectmanagement services to the city of Apeldoorn. Combining services at a regional level or provincial level is also in order. On the regional level of netwerkstad Twente local tax administration and services is clustered on a single location. Recruitment and other HRM services are combined on a regional or provincial level, e.g. job sites such as www.werkeningelderland.nl.

In the economic climate of 2011 most municipalities also face dramatic budget cuts. Although each municipality is free to solve its own financial problems, many opt for restricting the number of services or projects on the one hand, and minimize the number of employees on the other. These choices are also found for municipalities in shrinking regions. Downsizing the organization and abandoning activities and services is in our view another approach towards dealing with shortages on the job market.

Finally, municipalities may choose to cooperate more intensely with each other, up to the point of enlarging politically at the regional level. However, upscaling in itself does not encounter shrinkage (on demographic or economic level), as the newly formed municipality of Bronkhorst in Gelderland shows (more than 30% population shrinkage between 2010 and 2040, with dramatic consequences for the local job market).

The options of moving, partnerships, downsizing and upscaling are basic reflexes for organizations, whether or not connected to a shrinking local job market. The question is whether or not these approaches are effective for the missions and goals of businesses and municipalities. To maintain their goals businesses and municipalities usually also aim on the level of employees themselves, largely by recruiting from abroad.

2.b. On the level of employees - Promoting and recruiting from other regions

Businesses aim to attract qualified employees by offering better payment and other labour-related issues. This approach is likely to fail in shrinking regions, because regional job payment is easily balanced in other regions without shrinkage. Municipalities in shrinking regions face the problem of lower wages for similar jobs, if compared to non-shrinking regions. The loss of qualified employees is also solved by making use of temporary and interim services from abroad. Needless to say, these services are more expensive and do not attribute to continuity of businesses and municipalities. Given the economic situation with less budget to spend for organizations, offering better payment is not going to work.

Municipalities also propose to attract the necessary personnel by combining job opportunities with more quality of life and living, which include housing, opportunities for recreation, shopping, schools and care, and better career chances within the region or cities. However, precisely in shrinking regions these aspects are likely to deteriorate, with schools closing and fewer job opportunities due to fewer businesses and firms. Demographic shrinkage may appear to result in cheaper housing and more space for the residents, with no further economic opportunities potential employees from outside the region will fail to be attracted.

More fundamentally, businesses and municipalities in shrinking regions face the challenge of attracting employees from abroad that belong to the same small group of qualified workers. In addition, the requirements of many businesses and municipalities are based on a model-employee, that is, the young, high-skilled and white male, which shortens the list of available candidates even more. [refs.] The obvious outcome of this approach of dealing with a shrinking job market is that many vacancies cannot be filled, thus weakening organizations up to the point that the first approach (of moving, etc.) is the only way out.

2.c. On the level of local communities - Diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion as HR policy is becoming more important in the near future (cf. SER 2009). As an alternative way of dealing with a shrinking economic market we propose that businesses and organizations optimize the use of people already available in the regions, that is a specific HR policy of diversity and inclusion. This approach of enhancing the existing and future local workforce is a relative new strategy in the Netherlands, and often seen as a nice side-effect of other society-driven and economic impulses. For example, in urban renewal processes we find “Sociale Stijging” (‘social advancement’) as a way to improve the quality of life and living of residents in deprived neighbourhoods. Sociale stijging is seen as a tool in which persons may improve their situation in four ways: in housing, in education, in work and in social contacts. To tackle unemployment many projects and activities are set up which help persons to gain a steady working situation. For young people the focus is on graduating and learning skills necessary for obtaining a job. Although there are some positive results the main focus is solving or preventing unemployment, sociale stijging does not explicitly make a match between the needs and expectations of local businesses and the (obtained) skills of persons.

Economic impulses on the level of the neighbourhoods (wijk economie) are primarily seen as tools for urban renewal, and only secondarily as ways to stimulate small businesses and entrepreneurship. Wijk economie could be interpreted as a approach towards enhancing the local workforce and the personal skills of people, that is, as a way of talent development that meets the expectations and requirements of local businesses.

Businesses and municipalities in shrinking regions may consider to enhance the existing local workforce as a strategy of human resource management. Such an approach focusses on issues of diversity and inclusion, of women, of young and elderly people, of migrants, of persons with handicaps, of single-persons households, and of low-skilled persons in the region or cities. HRM of talents of the local workforce specifically aims at both the potential of workers (and their personal situations), and at the expectations and requirements of the employers and firms.

If approaches towards a shrinking job market on the level of organizations (2.a.) and on the level of employees from abroad (2.b.) do not appear to work, then an alternative approach on the level of the local communities may well be the only option left, that is, if this route proves viable. In the next section we present examples and research results that support an HRM approach of diversity and inclusion for businesses and municipalities that have to deal with a shrinking job market.

3. On diversity and inclusion as a HRM tool

The effects of declining population and its consequences for the labour market in Hodgkinson (1996) form the starting point for our argument in favor of diversity and inclusion as a HRM tool. His article reports the findings of a three-country comparative study, conducted in The Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom, designed to investigate the extent to which employers are aware of current demographic trends in the labour market and what HRM policies they are instituting, given this context. The findings reveal considerable levels of ignorance across all three countries, suggesting that attempts by various Government bodies, employers' organizations, professional associations and academics to draw attention to the potentially serious consequences of inadequate planning and future skill provision have largely failed. The results indicate that many organizations are engaging in human resource strategies which are not well suited to meet the challenges of the 1990s. The conclusion of Hodgkinson (1996) is that changes in the demographic structures of industrialized nations pose a potentially serious threat to work organizations in terms of their ability to attract and retain high calibre personnel.

More recently, the Dutch Rabobank argues in favor of increasing labour participation to avoid a tremendous financial burden and workload for the future workforce of the Netherlands (cf. Oevering 2010 p.10). It implies that more people should participate in the workforce, among others women, migrants and elderly people.

According to SER (2011) the social economic council of the Dutch government assume that the biggest challenge for shrinking regions is only starting now. The adjustments on the labour market for the future are known, but will be more sharp in regions of shrinkage. Especially in the branches of care and techniques there will be harsh competition. There are a number of ideas useful to those managers that want to make a different approach in human resources. Diversity and inclusion make

important themes for an organization for reconsidering its HR policy. Knowing your own job market starts with asking who the people are that are interested in working at your organisation. What are their lives about? What education do they have, what experience, what other knowledge do they carry with them? The Dutch company Philips Electric started a social HR policy in the 1910s purely on basis of practising good business. Only by providing their employees with the necessary circumstances as in housing, food, clothing and education the company was able to grow in the market. Before Philips adapted this HR policy, inspired by General Electric, they had been looking carefully what was needed. And they distanced themselves from Stork, Hengelo and the Gist en Spritusfabrieken in Delft with their much more paternalistic approach (Haas, 1995). In fact, The Netherlands has a long term experience with social HR policies and only needs to reinvent this experiences and make it future prove for times to come.

3.a. Inclusion of elderly

Coenen & Galjaard (2010) discuss different kinds of capital that play a role in regional economies, based on the idea that regions may strive for sustainable development. Their focus is on human capital, that is, “the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attributes, embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being”. They mention the DC Noise demonstration project of the partner region Knutepunkt Sørlandet, in the town of Venesla. Here the problem with a shrinking work force not just lies in too few people but also in the loss of senior knowledge due to retirement. The demonstration project focuses on keeping senior staff (and their knowledge) in the municipal organizations by motivating and facilitating people that run towards their retirement to keep longer in the organization. As Coenen & Galjaard point out, to keep older people in the workforce is not just a matter of motivating the employees but also about the need to have an age-conscious human resource policy firmly implemented in organizations, particular towards elderly workers. The DC Noise demonstration project in the province of West Flanders aims at “sensitizing” the [local] labour market for the particular abilities and problems of elderly employees, thus reinforcing their position. In the region Hamburg the DC Noise demonstration project is about the integration of long term unemployed elderly into the labour market through extensive processes of matching, education and coaching of people.

Inclusion strategies for elderly and/or unemployed persons are also found in the regions of Twente and Midden Limburg. For instance, POWER! is an initiative of housing corporation De Woonplaats and the municipality of Enschede and aims at empowering unemployed tenants towards jobs. Again, inclusive management is in part about potential employees, but mainly about the attitude, culture and leadership of the organizations involved. An inclusive organization supports diversity.

3.b. Inclusion of women

Van Gils, W. (2008) studies on the longitudinal effects of demographic changes concerning full-time working couples in The Netherlands with respect to young children and educational level. As a starting point, it is clear that full-time working couples are mostly found among those with a higher educational level and without any children. For this composition, the authors' analyses show that over time and cohorts the educational level of full-time working couples increases more than that of male single-earners or combination households. Most important is that the negative effect of having young children for full-time working couples became more negative over cohorts, indicating that combining children and full-time work as a couple has become less attractive in recent cohorts. More recently the network MamaWil has put forward the proposition that for mothers the most adequate labour market is to be self employed (cf. website www.mamawil.nl 21 jan. 2011).

Federation4Women exemplifies this attitude. The purpose of F4W is a cooperation that supports female entrepreneurs and their services in Groningen, Drenthe and Leer (Germany). While initiated with European funding (Intereg IV A) F4W aims at to be a real business in the near future (Ministerie van Economische Zaken 2010).

Needless to say that entrepreneurship stands a long way from a HR policy of women inclusion of businesses and municipalities, especially in shrinking regions. Already in the 90s of the last century Geurtjens (1993) concluded that women are mostly leaving governmental jobs due to dullness (!) and lack of opportunities, as many employers still think women do not have the ambition to work longer or in high(er) positions. This appears to be a false assumption over and over again (e.g. Pas, 2008).

3.c. Inclusion of youth

Niko Zentveld stimulates meaningful ("betekenisvol") learning and working in the Praktijkschool Heerlen Parkstad. Young persons that for some reason do not make it to VMBO and higher forms of Parkstad educations end up in his Praktijkschool. Van Donselaar & Feenstra (2005) describe the fundamental changes that meaningful learning and working has, on the teachers, on the environment (parents, friends), but especially on the young persons themselves. The Praktijkschool makes them ready for the society, makes them proud on what they can do and in the meantime they learn the skills necessary for job obtaining and holding.

The issue of educational migration of young people plays an important role in all shrinking regions, including Twente en Midden Limburg. As councilor Lex Smeets of the municipality of Heerlen pointed out, young people should leave and explore the world, but at the same time they should come back and settle (personal interview januari 2011). Unfortunately, research on the educational migration of young people of the region Eastern Zeeuws Vlaanderen shows that 9 out of 10 persons do not expect to return to their hometown(s) in the near future, which accounts for the so-called braindrain phenomenon. More significantly, young persons that choose other regions than Zeeuws Vlaanderen for settling after study frequently mention economic aspects (i.e. job opportunities) (Van den Berg 2010). In shrinking regions with a declining job market young people tend to leave rather than settle or return. For businesses and municipalities to attract or hold young persons a balanced HR policy is in order.

3.d. Inclusion of migrants

Surprisingly, the document of Ministerie van Economische Zaken (2010) does not mention the importance of migrants in the job markets of shrinking regions. However, the population percentage of both western and non-western migrants in shrinking regions will increase drastically in the future (PBL & CBS 2010). Apart from the consequences of housing we assume that the fact more migrants are available for the job market must play an important role for businesses and municipalities. There are some examples of organizations that deliver services on care that use diversity in their HR policies. For instance, in Enschede both De Posten and SGE have implemented diversity as standard in their HRM. We do not know examples of HR policies of businesses that explicitly address the issue of migrant workers, that is, those businesses and municipalities in shrinking regions.¹ But there are lots of opportunities that can be used; with the help of specialized bureaus that help refugees with their studies (UAF foundation) or with developing a HR policy suitable for working with different cultures. As the Dutch always have been travelling the world, having the world in the Netherlands should be a challenging development in the regions dealing with shrinkage.

3.e. One-person households, workforce and communities

As we have shown in section 1, between 2010 and 2040 there will be an enormous growth of one-person households in the cities of regions with declining population. For example in Enschede there will be a growth up to 40 %. What will be the effect of this? Fortunately, there are regions that already have experienced such a change in structure of households. In Ogden (2005) the effects of the growing number of one-person households in the City of Paris between the 1980s and 1990s is considered. Although part of a longer-term historical process of declining household size, the growth of one-person households was rapid in this period. Over 50% of all households were one-person in 1999 in the City of Paris, and four-fifths consisted of just one or two people. The greatest increase was in the pre-retirement age groups, the effects of previous demographic change on the size of generations points to a sharp increase in older adults in their forties and fifties during the 1990s. Ogden (2005): "More and more people are spending at least a part of their life course living alone. The trend towards individualization, where the interests and wishes of the individual are paramount is matched, by a pluralisation of household structures and lifestyles as social norms have relaxed and as patterns of partnership and living arrangements have become more fluid." (p.265)

The rise of the small household and more flexible living arrangements may lead to revitalization of the city centre(s), as in the article is argued for Paris, but we believe in Twente and Midden-Limburg it also effects on the living in the more rural areas as the growing of small households is not just happening in the city. While there is certainly a strong spatial dimension to the impact of this transition, the changes in human relationships are profoundly influencing the experiences of both children and adults during the life course. For Paris Ogden found that younger women and men were increasingly living alone and large numbers were in higher socio-economic groups. This leads to a shift from renting their houses to owner-occupation. "The aging of the post-war generations means

¹ But there have been municipalities acting on short term actions for keeping up the number of inhabitants before 'counting day' by inviting asylum seekers: getting under a certain number would mean less income for the municipality, as for the aldermen themselves. So they've shown some creativity.

that older adults under 60 are also of increasing importance, providing a well-heeled population attracted to the cultural and social life of the central city” (p.266).

The men and women living alone in the city are certainly not all in threat of social isolation, as they choose to live independently, but matched with a wide circle of friends, Ogden argues. But as the baby-boomers are growing older, will they still be able to manage this circle? Will it still be there? Elderly people are at risk after they’ve lost their lifelong partner, but it is a wide spread misunderstanding though that isolation is increasing and in particular under elderly people. But there certainly is a need to rebuild the social network in the city. How are municipalities and businesses going to anticipate on this demographic changes? Are they anticipating?

Stuifbergen, M.C. (2008) did research on the topic of support arrangements for elderly people and found which socio-demographic characteristics of adult children and their elderly parents, and which motivations of the adult children, correlate with children giving practical and social support to their parents. The findings indicate that the strongest socio-demographic correlates of a higher likelihood of giving support were: having few siblings, having a widowed parent without a new partner and, for practical support, a short geographical distance between the parent's and child's homes. Insofar as demographic and cultural changes in family structures predict a lower likelihood of support from children to elderly parents, this applies to practical support, and derives mainly from increased geographical separation distances and from the growing trend for parents to take new partners. Social support is unlikely to be affected by these changes if parents and children maintain good relationships. But what about the younger people living alone? As we found that more men and women between 40 and 60 years live alone, this must have impact on the way they combine work and their social life.

We propose that organizations in shrinking regions should consider offering their employees the possibility to take on responsibilities in the village they live in, to make the community survive the demographic change. Like driving the school bus before going to one’s work. Or having a small grocery shop in the village combined with other community services in one shop, run by someone paid by the local government. It makes the village more appealing to live in for other people whose children may be your new employees someday. And according to the CPB organizations benefit from the cultural environment they are settled (CPB, 2010). The province of Gelderland has started a pilot that is focussing on elderly people driving a bus in a group of smaller villages, although there has been -and still is- considerable opposition against it, as it might be severe competition to the regular bus company – in fact also subsidised by the province (Gelderland 2011).

More elderly people and more one-person households demand more flexibility in working hours. Less people will have somebody at home taking care of their children, parents and/or household. Working part time is attractive for people that also need to take care. For the parents that live in the country side and work in the city, it is crucial to be able to travel up and down. In the Netherlands people find it more important to live in the right environment than to be close to their jobs. Travelling to their jobs is for the Dutch no problem as they appear to travel more time in average than Americans and English people do, for example.

4. Consequences for Twente and Midden Limburg and conclusions

In this article we have shown that both population and workforce are under stress of declining in the regions Twente and Midden Limburg. We also pointed out that the composition of the workforce is changing in the next 30 years, with more labour participation of women and migrants, especially in the towns. Next we have argued that businesses and municipalities face severe challenges with respect to the shrinking and changing workforce. We discussed three general approaches towards a shrinking job market and argued that the most promising approach concerns a clear HR policy of diversity and inclusion. However, diversity and inclusion does not happen overnight, it takes concrete action and a realistic point of view, both of workers and of businesses and municipalities to make this work. As TNO (Van de Ven 2004) argues in 'Diversity at work' diversity leads to a bigger customer base; higher sales; more innovation and a better image. All of those business strategies are very necessary in shrinking regions. We presented examples on inclusion of elderly people, of women, of youth and of migrants, that may help organizations in Twente and Midden Limburg to handle their shrinking job market. Finally, we presented a picture of the consequences of the rise of one-person households in cities and towns and pointed out in which way HR policies may be helpful for inclusion of those persons in the local workforce. But the biggest challenge of all may be to formulate one HR policy in which all people are included! And that, by the way, is not just a good idea for shrinking regions.

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