ESPON 2013 SEMINAR
Territories Acting for Economic Growth:
Using territorial evidence to meet challenges towards 2020

TOWNs in Europe
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Outline

1. SMSTs in the EU territory
2. General vs specific trends?
3. Evidences for more appropriated policies - do we need to go beyond the large-city bias in (EU) urban policy?
Morphological interpretation

- ‘Urban polygons’ identified as separate built-up areas with population size and density consistently with criteria set by DG Regio / OECD
- Focus on Small and Medium sized towns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POPULATION (inh.)</th>
<th>DENSITY (inh. / km²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5000</td>
<td>VST (Very Small Towns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 5000 and &lt; 25000</td>
<td>Small SMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 25000 and &lt; 50000</td>
<td>Medium SMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 50000</td>
<td>HDUC (high-density urban clusters)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This map does not necessarily reflect the EU cohesion policy Monitoring Committee.
### Dimension of population in smaller settlements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Delimitation criteria</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Av. Pop</th>
<th>Av. Sq.km</th>
<th>Av. Density</th>
<th>Total pop. in this class</th>
<th>as % of ESPON space*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-density Urban Clusters (HDUC)</td>
<td>Pop. &gt; 50,000, Pop. Density &gt; 1,500 inh/km²</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>275,476</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>2,927.10</td>
<td>234,154,670</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large SMST</td>
<td>Pop &gt; 50,000, Pop. Density &lt; 1,500 inh/km²</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>132,331</td>
<td>101.8</td>
<td>1,299.6</td>
<td>13,233,142</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium SMST</td>
<td>25,000 &lt; Pop &lt; 50,000, Pop. Density &gt; 300 inh/km²</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>35,163</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>2,060.59</td>
<td>33,967,357</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small SMST</td>
<td>5,000 &lt; Pop &lt; 25,000, Pop. Density &gt; 300 inh/km²</td>
<td>7348</td>
<td>10,242</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>1,470.09</td>
<td>75,254,510</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Small Towns (VST)</td>
<td>Pop. &lt; 5,000, Pop. Density &gt; 300 inh./km²</td>
<td>69,043</td>
<td>1,193</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>699.3</td>
<td>82,376,586</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* including EU 27, Iceland, Norway, Lichtenstein, Switzerland
EU perspective

Settlement polygons

NUTS3 with prevailing settlements

Largest share of pop. lives in HDUC
Largest share of pop. lives in SMST
Largest share of pop. lives in VST
Largest share of pop. lives in other settlements

Typology based on degree of urbanisation
- Population (2006) living in HDUC < 30%
- Population (2006) living in HDUC 30%-70%
- Population (2006) living in HDUC > 70%
- NO DATA
Regional typology based on population change rates 2001-2011 as a difference from the EU-27 average

Regional typology based on population change rates 2001-2011 as a difference from the national average
Regional typology based on **p.c. GDP change rates 2001-2011 as a difference from the EU-27 average**

Regional typology based on **p.c. GDP change rates 2001-2011 as a difference from the national average**
General reflections – trends in Europe

- Do SMSTs across Europe present ‘common trends’?

Importance of macro spatial trends
- Regions with smaller settlements may have less inertial capacity to bounce them back

Combination of macro/meso dynamics and local trajectories
- Socio-spatial configurations with a specific regional dependency (e.g. surrounding larger urban regions)
- High variety of socio-economic performances (much higher than larger urban areas)

- EU/National policies matter?

Towns vs large cities?

Functional identification of urban systems and their cores

Criteria:
- Travel-to-work patterns
- Location of services

Agglomerated
Networked
Isolated
Towns vs large cities?

- networked
- large cities
- agglomerated
- autonomous

Diagram showing the distribution of networked, large cities, agglomerated, and autonomous areas with metrics on EMP and POP.
Do SMSTs across Europe face ‘common problems’?

- Social and economic problems for SMSTs are only ‘common’ in an abstract sense
- In practice the ‘problems’ of towns are mainly framed by:
  - their national/regional context
  - spatial type (coastal, mountain, post-industrial, etc.)

(clusters of ‘problem-sets’)

Clusters of problem sets
Residential economy:
- Centre of the Westhoek (commercial, services of general interest)
- Tourism and recreation – war → peace tourism and rural tourism

Productive economy (> Flemish avg):
- Agriculture + processing industries
- Some multinational companies (Picanol, McBright)

Knowledge economy
- Flanders Language Valley (Lernaut & Hauspie) went bankrupt in 2001 → search for new functions

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Residential economy: Aarschot (B)

Residential economy:
- Central function within the arrondissement: schools, commercial centre

Productive economy:
- Strongly shrunk

Knowledge Economy:
- Shrunk, but ongoing strategies to capitalize on proximity to Leuven
Socioeconomic profiling of SMSTs: Dendermonde (B)

Residential economy:
- Centrum function within the arrondissement: schools, juridical functions, commercial centre

Productive economy:
- Strongly shrunk

Knowledge Economy:
- very important downfall between 2001 and 2011

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Some evidence:
- **Settlements agglomerated in larger metropolitan areas are destabilised**
  - on the one hand by suburbanisation, and
  - on the other hand by a re-concentration of jobs and services in cities

- Successful cases are those one strategically working on diversification and innovation

- Evidence suggest the presence of integrated territorial systems, in which urban areas are tightly integrated and complementing each others

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Summing up
On average, SMSTs (in database) are different from large cities on a range of socio-economic issues:

- greater proportion of industrial employment;
- A significantly smaller proportion of jobs (on average) in private marketed services and in public services in comparison to HDUCs;
- more self-employment, less diverse in sectorial mix.

Warning message?

Typeology based on degree of urbanisation and ESPON typology of regions in industrial transition:

- Population (2006) living in HDUC > 30% and regions with industrial branches having importance
- Population (2006) living in HDUC < 30% and regions with industrial branches having importance
- Population (2006) living in HDUC < 30% and regions with industrial structural change
- Other regions with Population (2006) living in HDUC < 30%
- Population (2006) living in HDUC 20%-30%
- Population (2006) living in HDUC < 20%
Considerations

- Importance of supporting diversification of economic profiles
- Taking in consideration higher number of self-employment and specific socially-bound dynamics

(> tailored policies and territorial tacit knowledge)

But:
- is the local administrative level the right one?
- Does it have the right capacities?
- Is the appropriate territory?

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Administrative mismatch

(> coordination and micro-regionalism)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N (SMST polygons in database)</th>
<th>Mean number of intersections between SMST polygons and:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>local authority units (LAU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium (BE)</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic (CZ)</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain (ES)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France (FR)</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy (IT)</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>2.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland (PL)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (SE)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia (SI)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England &amp; Wales (UK)</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2304</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.05</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policy message
3. Policy reflections

- Understanding town needs and opportunities
  - Giving SMSTs a voice in regional debates
  - Tailored measures (place-based approach?)
  - Tacit knowledge and socially-bound dynamics
  - Supporting alternative visions of the local economy

- Supporting the definition of micro-regionalism processes
  - Building synergies through cooperation
  - Territorial governance:
    - Multilevel and horizontal cooperation
    - Policies tailoring functional territory

- Working on town administrative capacity
  - Increasing local leadership
  - Knowledge/ access to different funding opportunities
Accept the challenge of “thinking big about thinking small”!
(Bell and Jayne, 2009)

THANK YOU

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