Human capital in European peripheral regions: Brain - Drain and Brain - Gain

Problem perspectives on brain drain
Initial analyses in the three regions show that brain drain is a multi-faceted problem. Stakeholders in different regions experience brain drain (the exodus of highly educated inhabitants to other regions,) problematic for a variety of reasons.

Brain drain as part of a larger problem
Brain drain is related to at least three larger problems. Some stakeholders view brain drain as one part of larger problems. In the first place brain drain relates to unemployment. We found that some stakeholders feel that unemployment is actually the problem. In this perspective, attracting people to the region would than seem to be contrary to solving unemployment whereas people leaving the region would seem to benefit the unemployment rate.

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In the second place brain drain is related to the problem of emigration and depopulation. These stakeholders think that the problem is only that people move resulting in smaller populations. Also related to depopulation is the problem of regional population aging. Studies in the peripheral region of West Palz region show that they will be hit very hard by the aging of the population. In the year 2050 more than 1/3 of all inhabitants of the West Palz will be older than 60. Some stakeholders would argue that the problem is to keep young people in the region. Problems with the aging of the population will be an even tougher battle regarding highly educated persons, like doctors, who will leave to more central regions.

Empirical illustration of different brain drain problem aspects

The size of brain drain
A recent Swiss study shows how sizable brain drain can be. In the mountain areas, with the exception of the Canton Kanton Nidwalden, brain drain is exceptionally high. In particular the Canton Uri is hit very hard, were the brain drain is between 42%-75%.

The problem of lack of human capital
A data analysis of the Dutch team shows that the population of the region is relatively low educated compared with other regions of similar size and education facilities. Only 18% has a higher education (university or high professional education) compared to 30% elsewhere. Even more shocking is the difference on the city level were the university city Enschede ranks very low and only leaves one city behind without much education facilities. On the other hand employers in the Twente region seek more than the average in the Netherlands for highly educated personnel and have more vacancies.

Problem of a negative student input-output balance
Figures of the Dutch team show that more than 50% of the university of Twente students come from the east part of the country, though after graduation only about one thirds returns to the east. There is a clear net export of educated people to other regions.

A regional institute for higher education is not enough
An online survey from the German project team among students in the West Palz region showed that three quarters of the students say they want to leave the region after they have graduated. Although the image of Technical University of Kaiserslautern contributed according to the students (36,47%) significantly to choosing to study in Kaiserslautern, only 7,06% are positive about the image of the city and the region. Only 5,29% of the students assess the job situation in the region as positive when in fact there are many more opportunities than students realize.

Analyzing motives to move
A survey in the Twente region among people leaving and entering the region shows that the main motive to leave the region is labor. The housing possibilities are an argument to move to the region.

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<tr>
<th>Emigrants</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Labor (52%)</td>
<td>• Labor (40%)</td>
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<td>• Marriage (13%)</td>
<td>• Family (22%)</td>
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<td>• Education (12%)</td>
<td>• Housing (13%)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Marriage (11%)</td>
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