



How to respond to long term urban decline with limited resources

Municipalities and the Europe of Regions
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Dr Hans Schlappa

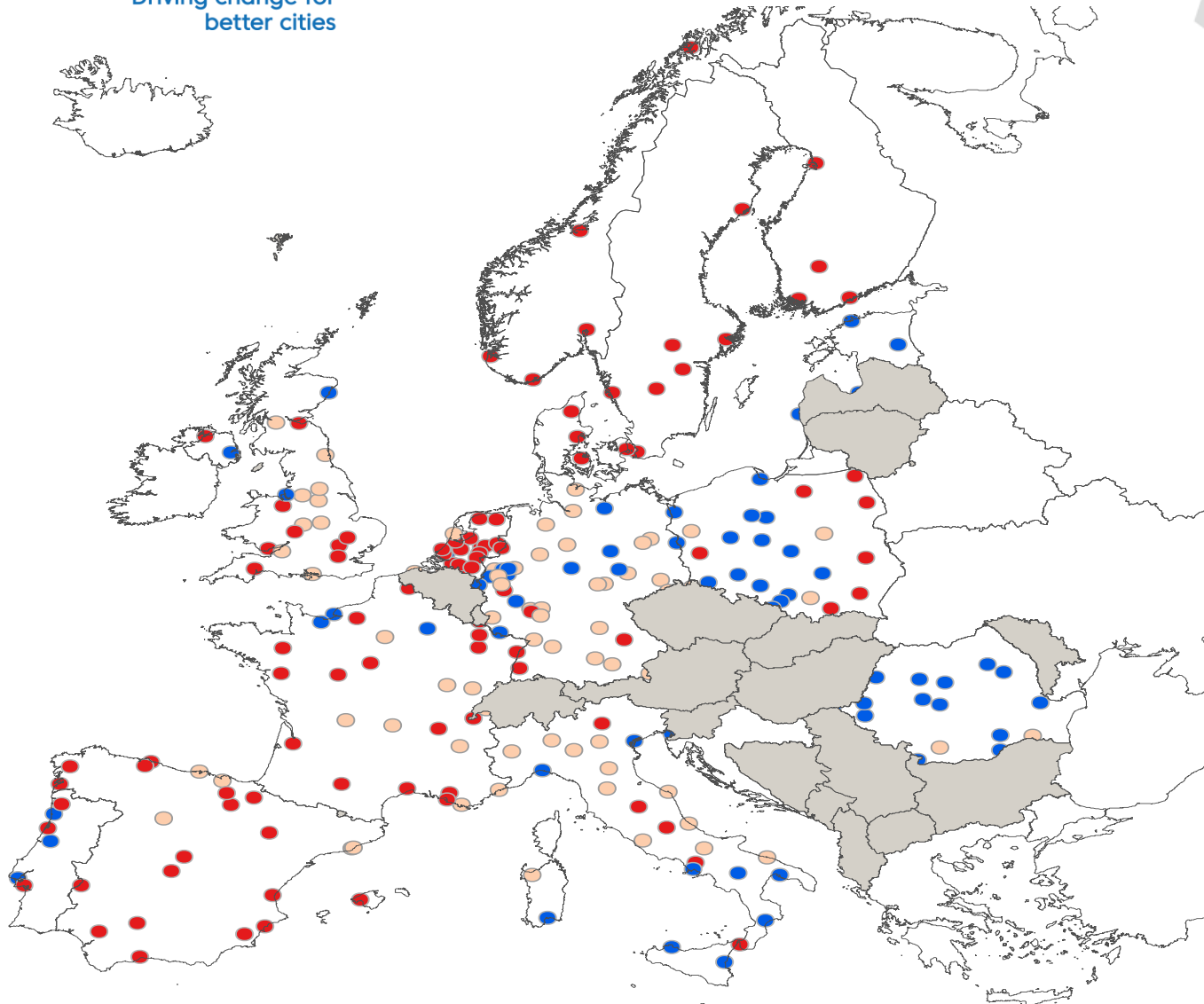
Background to the material presented here



- ◆ Cities of Tomorrow Report, European Commission, 2011
- ◆ URBACT study on shrinking cities and demographic change, 2013
- ◆ Future Directions for the European Shrinking City, 2016
- ◆ Altena selected for exemplary practice in tackling long term decline, 2017
- ◆ ReGrow City Network established, 2018

Scale of Urban Shrinkage in Europe

- ◆ **Approximately 40% of all urban settlements in Europe are shrinking**
 - Research talks about ‘islands of growth in a sea of shrinkage’
 - Two thirds of cities affected by shrinkage have less than 200,000 residents
 - Large cities accumulate growth opportunities
- ◆ **Strong regional and national variations**
 - Shrinkage most pronounced in eastern Europe
 - 33 out of 37 European countries have evidence on long term urban decline
- ◆ **Most research and analysis concerned with larger urban settlements**
 - Decline of smaller towns of around 50,000 inhabitants or less is the ‘black box’ of analysis and policy



Population development 1991-2008

- Growing cities
- Regaining cities
- Declining cities
- Country borders

Smallest city in sample: 50,000

UK Figures

Average size
declining/regaining:
188,000
Average size
growing: 502,000

Natural population development may not be driving factor of shrinkage

◆ Natural population development

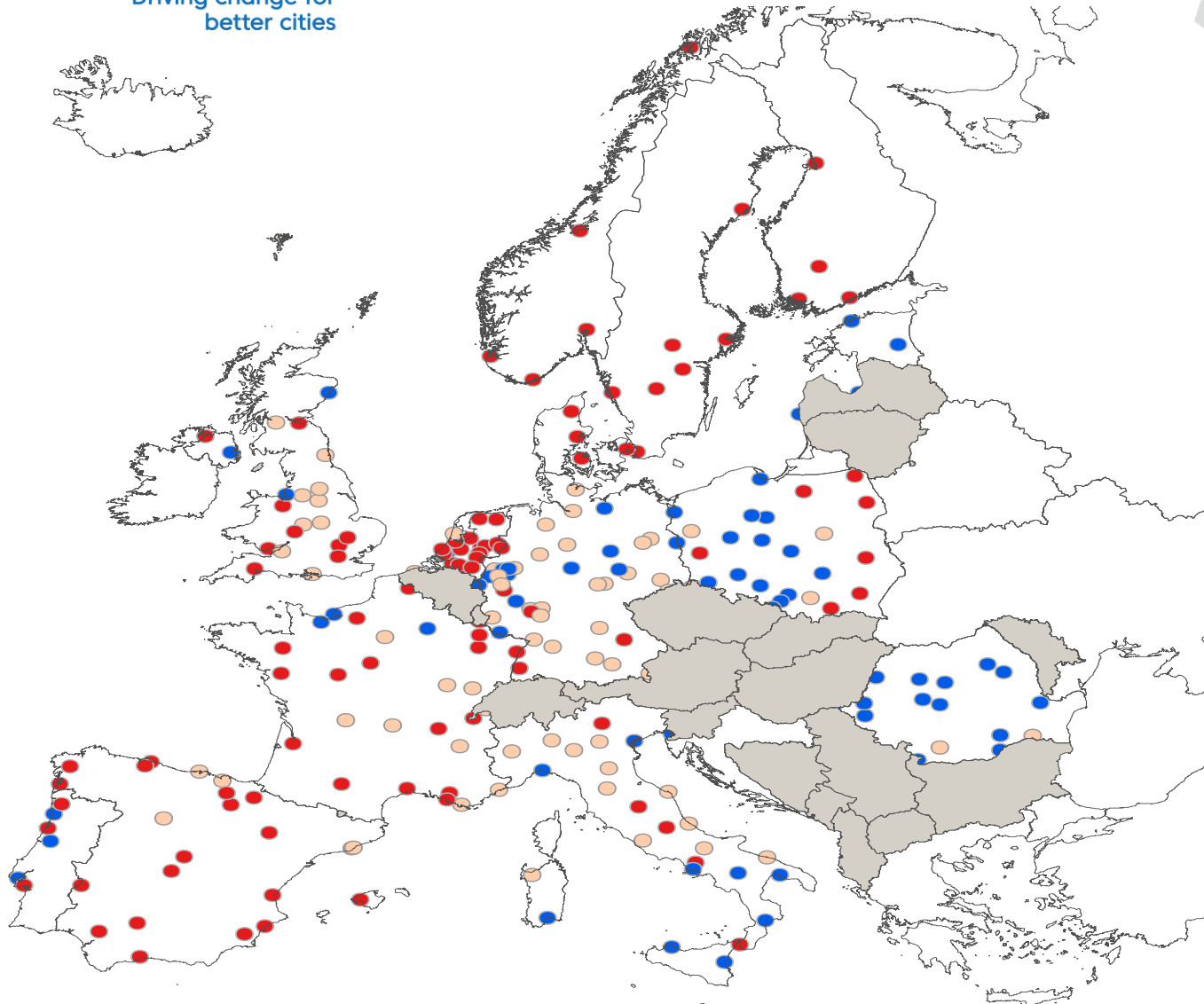
- Births minus deaths
- In many EU countries natural population development is at a standstill or negative
- Migration becomes the dominant population growth factor in urban development

◆ Net migration

- In-migration minus out-migration at regional, national, local levels

◆ Larger towns have the ‘pull factors’ that foster in-migration

- Economic opportunities
- Social, cultural, transport amenities
- University or market towns with historic core also respond to 21st century lifestyle preferences



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Complex causes of urban shrinkage

◆ Economic factors

- De-industrialisation and globalisation

◆ Demographic factors

- Old people remain young people move away

◆ Suburbanisation

- De-populating urban cores and poor quality neighbourhoods

◆ Regionalisation

- Large metropolitan regions draw in population, esp. young and highly educated people

◆ Social factors

- Smaller household sizes, second homes, home working

◆ Political factors

- Tax, planning and economic policy
- Country's economic position and stance on immigration

Shrinkage is a contested topic

- ◆ **National policies to tackle urban shrinkage are lacking**
 - Actions wrapped in growth orientated economic and regeneration policies
 - Stadtumbau Germany the exception and focused on larger cities
- ◆ **There is no European policy instrument that explicitly addresses urban shrinkage**
 - The focus is on jobs and growth
 - Shrinkage cast as a positive process: ‘gesund schrumpfen’
- ◆ **Resistance by professions and institutions**
 - Education and promotion of decision makers rewards abilities to facilitate economic and population growth
 - Researchers call for a paradigm shift away from growth oriented planning to ‘smart shrinking’

Key Characteristics of Shrinking Cities





It's cool to be a 21st century urban gardener

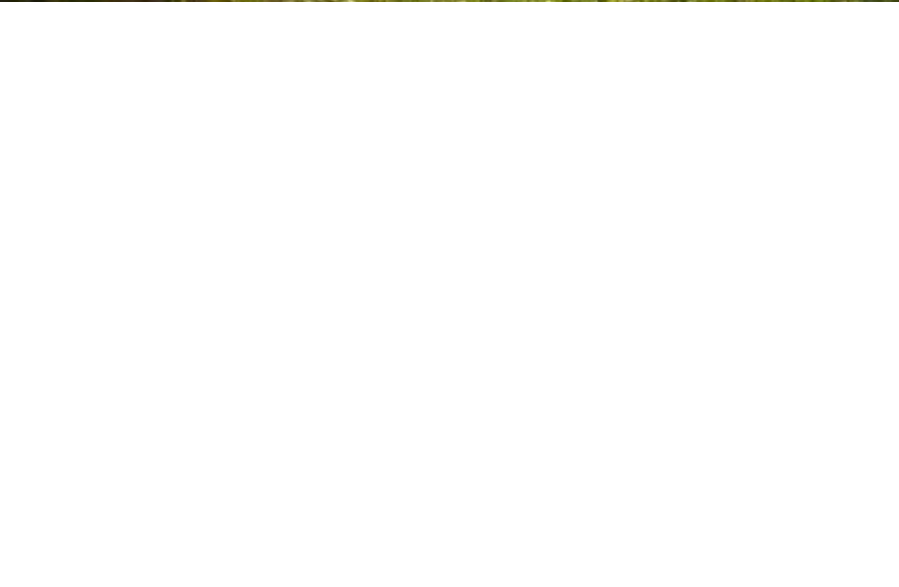
Interim land use at former airfield Berlin Tempelhof



Utilising surplus land and reducing municipal maintenance liabilities in Dessau, Germany







Urbane Farm Dessau
Die Beete wurden bepflanzt von Kindern der Kleinen Arche, gemeinsam mit einer Gärtnergruppe, die sich regelmäßig darum kümmert. Bitte die Pflanzen stehen lassen!
Nach der Ernte laden wir zu einem Fest ein. Eintritte frei für alle Nachbarn.
Nachbarn, die Nachbarn oder im Quartier selbst etwas pflanzen wollen, sollen sich melden unter 0171-4214 912. Wir unterstützen Sie gern dabei!

Urbane Farm Dessau
Produziert von
"Blaue Kartoffel"
Nächster Treff: **11.27.14**



Responses to shrinkage by smaller towns often look more like this...







33

33

33

PEIXATERIA
PEPI

Llobet

- Alberg de Sant Joan
- Estacion
- Plaça de Sant Joan
- Plaça de Sant Joan Major
- Plaça de Sant Joan
- Plaça de Sant Joan



Entrada de
5-11 (del 10-11)
Els Seguros (any)
L'Esplanada

PLAÇA
SANT
JOAN

BHH RIO

PEPI



B
E



Can this town have a problem with shrinkage?





136

134

ANA SOUSA

ALUGA-SE
TEL. 22 50 00 00
BARRALTOUR

Handwritten graffiti on the grey wall, appearing to be the letters 'AK'.

AGÊNCIA DE VIAGENS
RUMO

191





210

EXCEPTO CARGAS
E DESCARGAS
DAS 8 AS 19 H

Correios →

AVISO



CORREIOS



Altena

The Lead Partner for the ReGrow City Network



The main shopping street in the town centre





stantinidou

ANTINIDOU
AD 86
CERT

ONPLO

POP
UP
AUTENA

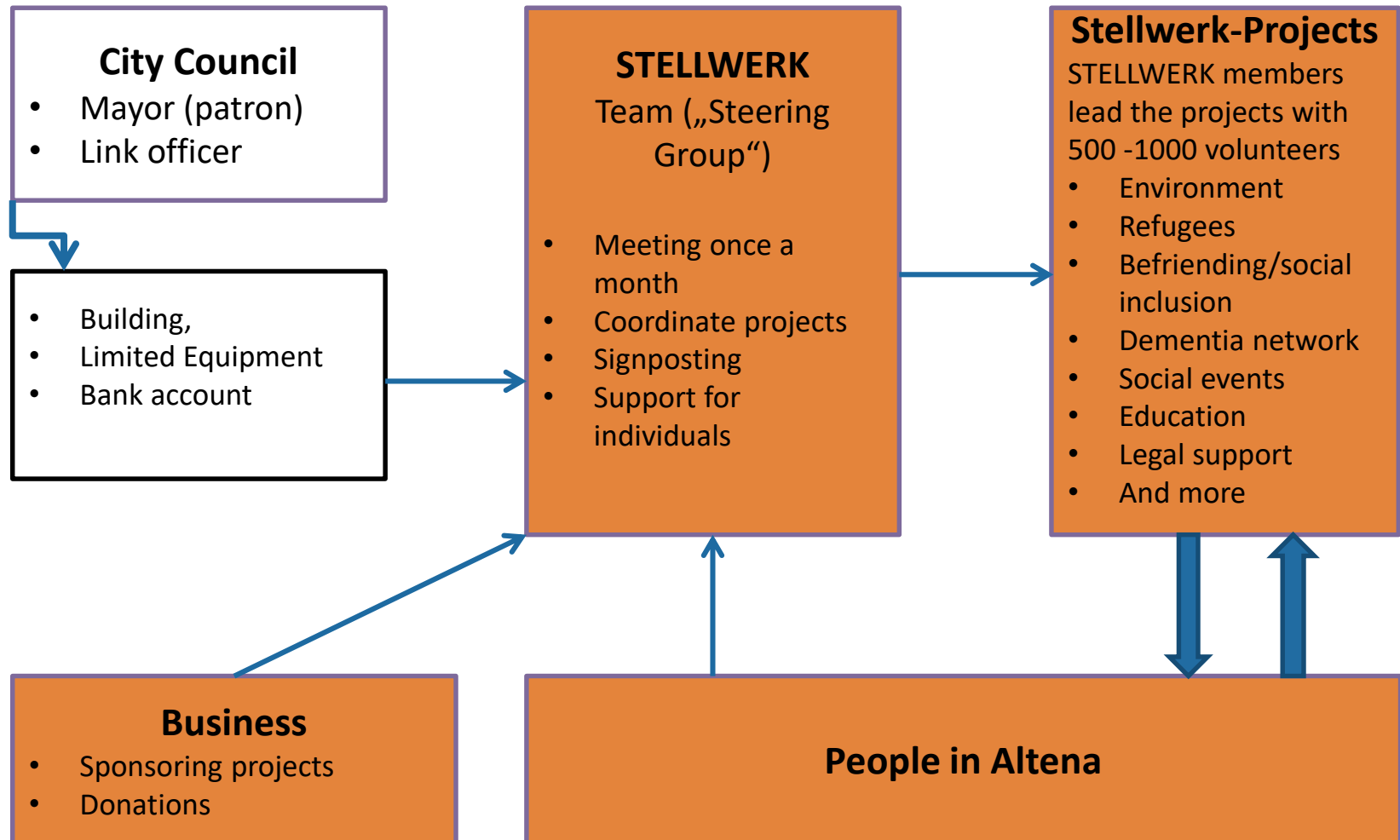


Launching the pop-up initiative and animating the town centre



- ◆ **STELLWERK** was founded 2008 following a two year strategy development process with the local population. This started with a focus on demographic change and resulted in a 10 year strategy with 317 actions to tackle decline
- ◆ One thing was agreed as a top priority: strengthening civic engagement





Eight principles that underpin responses to shrinkage in small towns

- ◆ Reduce financial liabilities
- ◆ Consolidate and improve essential services
- ◆ Collaborate with your neighbouring municipalities
- ◆ Do new things only with little or no money
- ◆ Bend the rules, change the game
- ◆ Set an example
- ◆ Citizens are setting out a vision for the future of their town
- ◆ Citizens have control over how they contribute to the achievement of the vision

In a town struggling with long term decline your most valuable asset may be the citizens. Trouble is...

- ◆ **You will have to make very unpopular decisions**
 - Closing schools, childcare and sports facilities, libraries
 - Maintaining public spaces at minimum standards
- ◆ **You cannot promise that things will improve**
 - Lack of resources for investment
 - Shrinkage dynamic is progressive
- ◆ **Citizens may have developed a profoundly negative attitude about the municipality**
 - Lack of trust and co-operation
 - A culture of resignation and negativity

What needs to change

- ◆ **Regional and national funding policy**
 - Dedicated investment programmes to respond to problems arising from long term decline
 - Explicit support for small towns
- ◆ **Spatial and service planning policy**
 - Smart shrinking, not continuous growth
 - Welfare policy for an ageing population
- ◆ **Professional practice and governance**



Co-commission



Co-design



Co-deliver



Co-assess

How to promote collaborative instead of paternalistic relationships



Co-commission

Professionals and politicians work with citizens to decide *what* needs to be done



Co-design

Professionals and citizens decide *how* things should be done



Co-deliver

Citizens are *active contributors* to service delivery, alongside or instead of professionals



Co-assess

Citizens, professionals and politicians explore how *public value* is being created

Lesson 1: Tackle the denial of shrinkage head on; it is not going to stop anytime soon



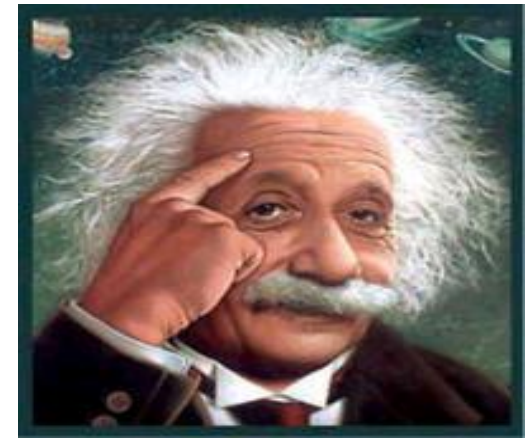
- ◆ Those left behind in your town do not want to hear that they are the ‘losers’
- ◆ Residents who have lived in your town for a long time want to be proud of their town’s history – you must help them to accept that it will never come back
- ◆ Citizens need to understand that ‘less’ can mean ‘more’
- ◆ A realistic vision for the town’s future is essential to overcome denial. It needs to be inclusive, comprehensive and *comprehensible*



Lesson 2: Understand where madness lies: *“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, expecting a different result.”*



- ◆ New business parks
- ◆ New shopping centres
- ◆ New leisure facilities
- ◆ New housing and retail premises

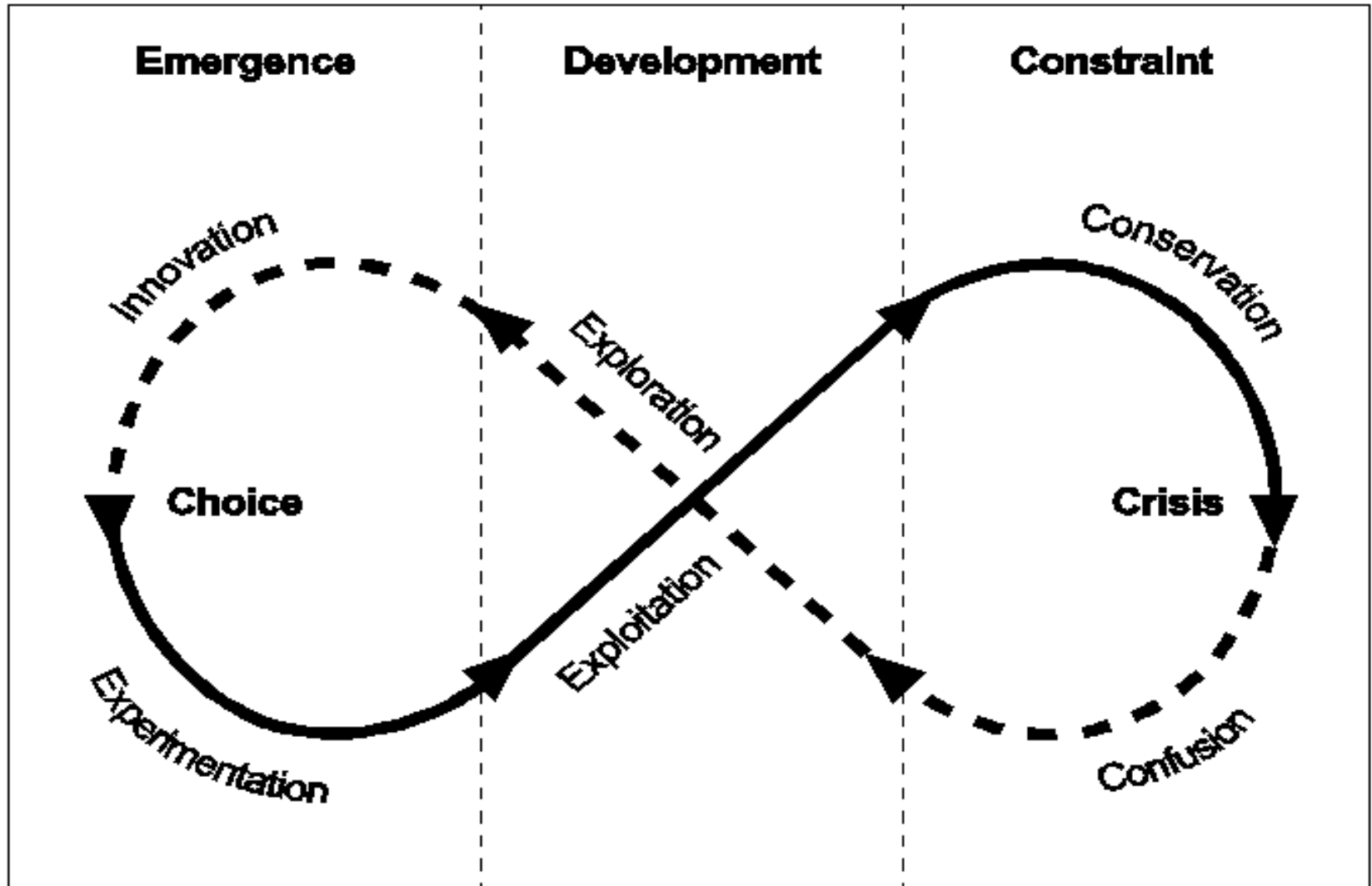


Lesson 3: You are on your own; nobody is coming to the rescue



- ◆ Your town is shrinking because it is no longer attractive to people or businesses
- ◆ Governmental or European investments go to areas with good growth potential
- ◆ You need to come up with ideas to improve the situation with minimum external support
- ◆ Your citizens are the most important resource in the fight against shrinkage

Concluding thoughts on cyclical development





Thank you!

