

About the Validity of the Urban Monocentric Model in the Netherlands

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The critical assumption of the urban monocentric model is that employment location is exogenous to population location. Unfortunately, several empirical studies indicate that this assumption is heavily violated. Moreover, Dutch spatial planning policy implicitly assumes that employment is endogenous to population by focusing on and stimulating population growth, without paying the same amount of attention to employment growth. At the moment, this had led to large municipal areas without ample employment opportunities and thus with – on average – increasing commuting times with its associated congestion effects. Therefore, this study focuses on the issue whether employment in the Netherlands causes population growth or vice versa, its corresponding implications for spatial planning policy and, hence, the consequences for land use. It does so by applying spatial econometric techniques on a panel dataset covering all four digit postal codes in the Netherlands. When employment growth is caused by lagged population growth, spatial planning policies do not have to be altered. However, if the causality relation is more complex, different planning policies are called for to avoid ever-increasing commuting times and the emergence of cities where workers only eat and sleep.