

ERA-NET Cofund Smart Urban Futures - Bright future for black towns:
reinventing European industrial towns and challenging dominant post-industrial discourses



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Strategic guide for developing urban policies in industrial towns



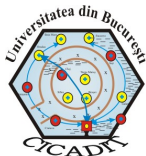
Editors:
Andreea-Loreta Cercleux
David Bole



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Editors:
Andreea-Loreta Cercleux
David Bole

Strategic guide for developing urban policies in industrial towns

Authors:

Eve Avdoulos (*The Young Foundation*)
David Bole (*Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts*)
Marco Bontje (*University of Amsterdam*)
Andreea-Loreta Cercleux (*University of Bucharest, CICADIT*)
Irina Florea-Saghin (*University of Bucharest, CICADIT*)
Claire Gordon (*Social Life*)
Simo Häyrynen (*University of Eastern Finland*)
Mary Hodgson (*The Young Foundation*)
Ioan Ianoş (*University of Bucharest, CICADIT*)
Jani Kozina (*Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts*)
Florentina-Cristina Merciu (*University of Bucharest, CICADIT*)
Mirela Paraschiv (*University of Bucharest, CICADIT*)
Juha Seppä (*University of Eastern Finland*)
Jernej Tiran (*Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts*)
Katherine Vanhooose (*University of Amsterdam*)



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Redactor: Gheorghe Iovan

Tehnoredactor: Ameluța Vișan

Coperta: Monica Balaban

Foto copertă: stânga sus (Corby, Marea Britanie), dreapta sus (Heerlen, Olanda), centru (Fieni, România), stânga jos (Velenje, Slovenia), dreapta jos (Kajaani, Finlanda)

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B-dul. N. Bălcescu nr. 27-33, Sector 1, București

Tel.: 021.315.32.47

www.editurauniversitara.ro

e-mail: redactia@editurauniversitara.ro

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Introduction

The present guide is part of the ERA-NET Cofund Smart Urban Futures project *Bright future for black towns: reinventing European industrial towns and challenging dominant post-industrial discourses (BRIGHT FUTURE)*, conducted by Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, *Anton Melik Geographical Institute* of Slovenia, with project partners from Finland, Netherlands, United Kingdom and Romania.

Elaborated by a European consortium coordinated by the University of Bucharest (Interdisciplinary Centre of Advanced Research on Territorial Dynamics - CICADIT), this guide presents the results obtained in WP5 - Recommendations for alternative urban development of industrial towns. Structured in three parts, it includes recommendations of strategic policies for the rapid reinsertion of small and medium-sized towns, formerly industrial, within the national settlements' systems and the urban European system.

Given the reality that small and medium-sized towns have been generally neglected within European policies in relation to large cities and their metropolitan areas, researchers from several research and higher education institutions, NGOs, local authorities and other representative stakeholders have participated to project specific activities within 5 towns representing the research case studies (Kajaani, FIN; Corby, UK; Heerlen, NL; Velenje, SI; Fieni, RO). The main target was the defining of the major issues faced by these small and medium-sized towns, as former industrial centres, and the outlining of several sets of general policies for the further formulation of specific European policies, but also the establishing of some local policies for solving the difficulties registered within the urban dynamics of these towns. As the case studies evidence different stages of the post-industrial evolution, the analysis' conclusions may be extrapolated with important limits, even at continental level.

The first part of this guide is dedicated to the analysis of European urban and industrial policies, based on the results obtained within the different projects of URBACT, ESPON, and INTERREG programs or being synthetised in many other European research reports on the topic and including references to small and medium-sized industrial towns (SMITs). Also, the best practice models at European

level were selected, following the case of France, Italy and Germany. The general conclusion is that SMITs lack the capacity to be redeveloped through their own resources, especially in Eastern European countries, strongly affected by deindustrialisation, outmigration and the degradation of the regional economic environment. In opposition, the SMITs from Western European countries benefit from an innovative regional economic environment, which creates new opportunities for their rapid transformation into smart and creative towns. This clear differentiation between the two large areas is reflected by the five case studies, with different nuances of new developments inside of each (for example between Velenje and Fieni, respectively between Corby, Heerlen and Kajaani). The conclusions of analysing the case studies highlight the necessity of elaborating European policies that are differentiated in relation to the development state of their regional economic environments, and, so that, through the stimulation of small formerly industrial towns, territorial cohesion to be realised, both at intraregional level.

The second part of the guide is focused on the identification of development problems and objectives for each of the five analysed towns by referring to the current development level of each respective country. So that, the major issues of Kajaani include: the unfavourable demographic and social development, the decline of public spaces and infrastructures, the legacy and mentality of the industrial past which limit the development. By consequence, the strategic objective is to create an inclusive, diverse and resilient town. Corby faces important issues in relation to the quality of the workforce, the lack of youth opportunities, the lack of economic resilience, while its strategic objective is represented by the reduction of economic risks and by defining an adequate answer to social challenges. The main problem of Heerlen is related to the negative effects of deindustrialisation, including a stage of socio-economic degradation. Its current strategic objective may be: higher socio-economic opportunities for an attractive town through social innovation. Velenje is confronting a possible problem due to its monostructural economy depending on two large companies which could be negatively influenced by globalisation. The strategic objective is to promote specific policies for a socially just town, including a diversified economy which attracts the youth, a multicultural society and the transformation of the urban environment into a garden town. For Fieni, the major issue is related to

deindustrialisation and its negative effects on the social-economic and cultural life. So that, its strategic objective is to improve the local socio-economic context for a more resilient town.

The identification of the development problems and the definition of the development objectives are the results of an intense field research activity carried out in the previous phases of the project, and of a scientific approach during their formulation. These concrete analysis and connected proposals can be useful for the local authorities and communities to find and to implement the best measures for solving the main urban problems and to transform their towns into resilient urban areas.

The third part of the guide is focused on the role of social innovations in the effort to define the most appropriate local policies. The detailed study shows a different state of the art of social innovation in the five towns. For example, the Finnish researchers appreciate that Kajaani is in the medium phase of the social innovations' development. The involvement degree of the local population is a moderate one, and it is necessary to work more in the field to increase the accessibility of the people and to improve the procedures for the acceleration of the social innovation development. In Corby, the concept and the practice of social innovation is well supported by many institutions, and they have a variety of funding resources. The research suggests that the people of Corby are well placed in order to adopt innovative social actions, having a tradition of working together and developing bold initiatives. In the meantime, there is uncertainty regarding the capacity of the local authorities to support innovative approaches in the next transition period as a consequence of the administrative changes. The local environment in Heerlen enables the development of social innovations in connection with ownership and responsibility. The analysis confirms the idea that this SMIT is advanced in terms of social innovations. Trying to classify Velenje on a scale of social innovations' development phases, the Slovenian researchers appreciate that it occupies a middle position. They demonstrate that social innovations have a solid basis: tradition of innovations, collaboration and tacit knowledge connected with the industrial culture and values. For the residents of Fieni, social innovation, as a concept, is a new one, but, given its real historical evolution, researchers depicted the existence of different innovations especially in the field of local resources valorisation. The general appreciation is that the town is in the position

to discover and to implement social innovations as a good direction for its future urban redevelopment.

The present strategic guide offers, to European, national, regional and local decision-makers, to analysts and researchers, important political recommendations and analyses in order to rethink the role of social innovations in the transformation and restructuring processes of SMITs. The diverse experiences and state-of-the-art in this field, at European scale, ask for new and appropriate tools in using social innovations as the main direction to achieve territorial cohesion, not only at macro-territorial level, but at intraregional and local levels, too.

PART 1

European policies on small and medium-sized industrial towns

At the European Union level, there is a preoccupation regarding the assessment and solving the specific problems of small and medium-sized towns (SMSTs), especially given the large share of population (75% of the total EU's urban population) living in these urban areas (European Cities in a Global Era Urban Identities and Regional Development Report, 2002), but the vast majority of policies has focused on large cities and on metropolitan regions, while SMSTs remain less visible (Servillo et al., 2017). As SMSTs face different challenges (JPI Urban Europe, 2015), these issues need to be prioritized while employing a strategic approach of the redevelopment process (Elisei, 2014).

1.1. Territorial cohesion and the role of small and medium-sized towns

SMSTs play a significant role within the polycentric urban network of the EU as they support territorial cohesion and the balanced economic and social development at national levels as they represent urban areas working as equilibrium elements between large urban centres and rural areas. Also, SMSTs play a key role in ensuring complex connections between metropolitan and rural areas. The EU documents mention that the elaboration of specific policies for SMSTs represents the responsibility of member states' governments given their particular social, economic and geographic environment.

The perspective that tackles our area is linked first to the fact that cities and towns are “both the source of and solution to today's economic, environmental and social challenges” (European Commission, 2019a) while urban development, with its multiple facets, is central to the EU's Regional policy. The main focus of the Cohesion policy, especially after 2020, is to continue to invest in all regions and to accomplish the 5 policy objectives for a “smarter, greener, connected, and social Europe, and a new cross-cutting objective to

bring Europe closer to citizens by supporting locally developed investment strategies across the EU” (European Commission, 2019a).

What is to be underlined is that the policy supports the empowerment of the urban authorities in the management of the funds, also by encouraging the strengthening of the local partnerships with the relevant stakeholders. Also, the urban dimension is supported by the allocation of 6% of the European Development Fund for the sustainable urban development strategies. So that, it is justified that governments, together with regional and local public administrations, are responsible for developing economic and social development policies for SMITs as these decision makers are generally managing the development of urban areas. The representatives of governments and of regional and local public administrations know the potential niches of competition that these urban centres could integrate in and develop (Kauffman, Arnold, 2015). Also, the defining of location policies (Kauffman, Arnold, 2015) is significant as they use the characteristics and specific needs of places (Giffinger et al., 2007).

Local policies are allowing SMSTs to be competitive and to successfully participate in the interurban competition through emphasizing the place-based resources and assets. In this context, place-based or place-sensitive policies are necessary in order to explain the various factors which influence the local and regional development while avoiding the simple application of similar solutions of other case studies (Harrison et al., 2019: 6). Location policies contribute to building strategies for regional attractiveness (Andrew, Doloreux, 2012, as cited in Kauffman, Arnold, 2015) and for the identification of tailored solutions in the case of place specific needs (Van der Heiden, 2010; Inteli project, 2011; Selada et al., 2012; Harrison et al., 2019), taking into account the valorisation of industrial culture through the urban regeneration process (Cercleux et al., 2018; Görmär, Harfst, 2019).

SMSTs have certain advantages in front of large cities as certain urban issues (traffic congestion, housing prices, segregation, pollution etc.) are managed better at lower scales (Giffinger et al., 2007; Green Growth in Cities, 2013). The functional specialization of small towns favours an efficient spatial organisation while supporting their economic and social stability especially in the case of towns where “factors like historical experiences can determine opportunities for a competitive and sustainable future development in a more efficient

way” (Giffinger et al., 2007: 4). Also, small towns, but also medium-sized towns with a long history, present a strong local sense of identity and cultural heritage, including industrial heritage, both tangible and intangible, which can be used as a development asset. In these towns, the long history of industry has brought about a particular cultural setting made up of certain intangible assets, such as skills, attitudes, traditions, tangible monuments, and artefacts (Harfst et al., 2018 as cited in Görmar, Harfst, 2019). Cultural heritage gives the uniqueness attribute and it places SMSTs in the category of urban centres with high potential for the valorisation of cultural heritage.

Within the process of integrated urban development, certain measures proposed by the urban policies of the European Cohesion Policy (2014-2020) may be applicable to SMSTs too as they are related to local development. These measures include innovation initiatives and for increasing the number of jobs, such as: the rehabilitation of the physical environment, including brownfield redevelopment; the preservation and development of natural and cultural heritage; the promotion of entrepreneurship, local employment and community development; regeneration of housing and social infrastructure; and the provision of services to the population taking account the changing demographic structures (Leipzig Charter, 2007; European Cities in a Global Era Urban Identities and Regional development report, 2002; Elisei, 2014; Promoting Inclusive Growth in Cities, 2018; Regional Strategies for Industrial Areas Report, 2013; European White Paper Revitalising European Town Centres Report, 2019).

1.2. European industrial policy impacting the small and medium-sized industrial towns

In opposition with SMSTs, SMITs are less reflected in the European strategies and policies, although Central and Eastern Europe was strongly affected by an abrupt deindustrialisation. When analysing small and medium-sized industrial towns, the policy areas that have to be taken into account, from a European perspective, are the Development and Competition policies, together with the Digital Economy and Society area, Employment and Social affairs, Environment, Research and Innovation integrated in the Cohesion policy. The Industrial policy of the European Union and the concept of

reindustrialisation applied in certain urban areas could be defined as important tools for the revitalization of SMITs.

SMITs represent a special category of urban areas given the social and economic issues they are confronting with because of the decline or reduction of the traditional industrial activity. The reduction or closure of the industrial activity has generated multiple negative effects for these towns, both from a socio-demographic (population decrease, emigration) (Cercleux et al., 2018; Power, 2018; Weaver, Knight, 2018; Görmär, Harfst, 2019) and economic point of view (unemployment increase, decrease of taxes and fees for the local budgets) (Atkinson, 2017; Servillo et al., 2017), and even at the administrative level (weak institutional capacity due to insufficient local funding for new development measures, such as: brownfield regeneration, urban space management and local economy revitalization through attracting new investments, supporting local entrepreneurship initiatives, new opportunities and urban attractiveness for the local young population, highly attracted by the offer of large cities and other European states).

The Industrial Policy of the European Union is also an important pillar when analysing SMITs. At the level of the European Union, after 2007, the industrial policy was adapted to the new territorial context generated by the extension of its limits to the East. The inclusion of new member states determined the necessity to manage once again certain similar issues that Western and Central European countries already experienced together with the economic decline generated by the reduction of industrial activities. The most difficult situations were registered in the case of regions where towns are dependent on a single industrial sector so that making them more vulnerable to economic shocks (Regional Strategies for Industrial Areas Report, 2013). In the same time, the issue of SMITs is that they do not own an entrepreneurship tradition, in correlation with the fact that the largest part of the workforce has only industrial competences while the process of professional requalification is slow and it is taking long time. The economically unfavourable context is also completed by the insufficient and poorly adapted political interventions, resulting in high long-term unemployment, especially in the case of the male population, accentuating the existing social problems. Other issues include the dependency on a small number of industries, the lack of adequate

human and technological capital, and environmental degradation because of industrial pollution.

Due to the current debate, on the issue of delocalisation, deinternalisation and reshoring of industrial activities (Mlody, 2016), as well as the experience after the economic crisis period, the European Union has defined a reindustrialisation policy as a unique chance of strengthening the European industrial potential. The policy aims to turn the European Union into a leader in innovation, digitisation and decarbonisation and to make industry stronger and more competitive as part of the European economic recovery. The Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) is one of the tools for implementing the policy and it tries to simplify the entire legislation in order to allow more business to perform better and not to be a burden by the bureaucracy.

The industrial policy at the European Union level recommends to increase the innovative industrial sectors based on new technology and technical changes, the knowledge-based and services-linked activities, together with promoting new professions and accomplishing new customer needs and preferences (The Future of industry in Europe report, 2017: 27).

Many principles in the policy are relevant to SMITs, especially for their future perspective and development, but, unfortunately, there is no specific mention on them and their particular approach. But member states could integrate these principles in their own legislation and they could concentrate specific funding for the revitalisation and the reintegration of industry into local and regional development planning (EU, For a European Industrial Renaissance, 2014).

The vision of a new industrial policy (2030) is focused on the decarbonised circular economy and the renewable energy production and consumption, while relying more on innovation and digitization (the pivotal role of machine intelligence) (Industry 2030 report, 2019). Digital technology will have a growing role in all aspects of life (work, health, mobility, defense, private sector). Thus, it is necessary to create new opportunities for the whole economy by enabling all enterprises, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to access new technologies (Industry 2030 report, 2019).

1.2.1. Industrial policies at regional level

At regional level, we can find various policies and documents that address specific sectorial issues of SMITs. For example, *The Regional Strategies for Industrial Areas* (2013) addresses all the former industrial areas/regions in the European Union and it tries to explain that the Integrated Territorial Investments would be one of the best tools from which the industrial towns could benefit (European Parliament, 2013). The strategy includes also some recommendations that member states may apply especially in the case of regions where traditional industrial activities played an important role. These new measures envisage the increase of regional resilience in the case of additional crises through supporting more diversified urban and regional economic structures, especially for areas formerly developed through traditional industries.

The Strategy is completed by the new initiative of the European Union – *Regions in industrial transition: No region left behind* (European Commission, 2017) – in which it is stated that the former industrial regions face also a reluctance towards innovation and change in their areas. Besides the job losses, they also face a difficulty to fully benefit from the technological change in order to manage to get out from their situation. The new policy and the new category of funds tries to solve this situation through various tools, especially using the smart specialisation ones, and also by choosing some pilot areas where to test these tools. As a weak point of the new initiative, the entire scheme seems to focus very much on the former carbon industry areas, and it does not take into account the fact that all former industrial regions would benefit from this situation, while also requiring different measures, according to the specific of each case.

The regional industrial policy of the European Union includes certain measures such as: the physical regeneration of the land; the renewal of infrastructure and its adaptation for new industries; the adaptation of existing skills and the development of new forms of human capital that are not focused on old industries; building up of RTDI activities; changes in institutional networks and cultural factors in order to allow the mobilisation of local resources and their use to develop new industries (Regional Strategies for Industrial Areas Report, 2013); crossovers between manufacturing and service industries and

between manufacturing and new technologies (Harrison et al., 2018: 8). Also, the development of new industries is recommended to be realised at local scale through SMEs developed through micro-financing.

All these measures should be implemented based on the approach of regional innovation systems facilitated by the collaboration of key actors from science, business and policy, as well as the implication of institutions for innovation processes. The transformation processes within regional innovation systems may take the following forms: the rejuvenation of existing clusters or industries with possible severe changes in products, processes and organisations (e.g. through the application of new technologies in existing industries); the diversification of new industries.

The Cohesion policy ensured the policy and financial framework for funding a range of interventions targeting industrial regeneration and it supported business innovation and investment for the 2007-2013 programming period while it changed to “smart specialisation” strategies for the 2014-2020 programming period.

1.2.2. Industrial policies at urban level

At urban level, the investment priorities of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) are focused the most on sustainable urban mobility, regeneration of deprived communities and improved research and innovation capacity. 5% of the fund is directed to urban integrated development, where, in some cases, the financial support, together with additional independent resources, could be used for creative industries.

Other tools that are available at the level of European urban policies are: the Urban Development Network (UDN), the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) and the URBACT III Programme.

Through the first steps of the current URBACT programme, it can be mentioned the URBAN Community Initiative (Partnership with the cities) which represents the initial policy for helping cities to face societal challenges (urbact.eu/integrated-urban-development). URBAN was a policy that tried to make Europe a strong and competitive area while maintaining the social cohesion at all its levels. The policy gave tools and funds to solve the existing issues, but at that time referring

only to the 15 member states. It addressed such issues as deindustrialisation, unemployment, migration, though, at that time, there was a less interest in towns and a more focus on cities, while the involvement of the stakeholders was concentrated mainly on the European, regional and local authorities, without involving too much the private stakeholders.

The URBACT and the current Urban Integrated Development promote the sustainable development of EU urban areas. It showcases 97 Good Practices for sustainable urban development. Coming from 25 European countries, they cover a wide variety of topics that a city might work on: from climate adaptation to city transport plans; and from inclusion of migrants to digital innovation. It is more of a practical tool for all urban areas to use in order to develop and to solve the issues they are facing. The main idea is to improve the quality of life for the citizens. It does not address SMITs directly as it is an analysis at a broader scale, but it tackles all the issues faced by these areas.

To complete the broad set of tools for the European policies, there are two more programmes conceived by the European Union, more precisely the Urban Development Network (UDN) and the International Urban Cooperation (IUC). The first one includes more than 500 urban areas and it funds activities based on the sustainable urban development strategies through the ERDF Fund, and the second one promotes the international urban cooperation. All these tools are starting points that could be used by SMITs to solve a part of the issues they are facing today.

The Urban Agenda for the European Union is a main initiative at the European Union level. It addresses all European countries; it seeks to improve the quality of life in the urban areas, and it aims to promote the cooperation between various stakeholders (EU, transnational, national, regional and local level). It sets-up 12 priority themes and it aims for a better regulation, better funding and better knowledge at local level. The tool is a recommended one from a legal point of view and it tries to integrate both the funding opportunities and the other challenges that also small and medium-sized industrial towns are dealing with. There is no specific reference for our case, but it could be a good recommendation to create a specific priority for this type of urban areas (European Commission, 2019b).

1.2.3. Strategic research – documents and projects

At the level of specific European analysis documents on the SMITs level, the ESPON Projects are currently addressing the issue by analysing their current situation and by trying to offer some territorial solutions for the problems these urban areas are facing. The ESPON Project on the Role of Small and Medium-Sized Towns (SMESTO) states that SMSTs are often neglected in the national policy that targets big cities or rural affairs. It tries to identify how these areas can overcome the obstacles and become a valuable territorial asset. There is no direct link to SMITs, but the existing analysis offers a proper framework for analysing this type of industrial areas (ESPON SMESTO, 2006).

SMITs have a specific identity and elements of cultural heritage, including buildings which currently have a social, cultural or commercial functionality. Heritage buildings are easily accessible both for the local population and tourists given their localization in the historical central area. This town model is specific to small and medium-sized urban centres of Europe (European White Paper Revitalising European Town Centres, 2019) which are now facing the effects of economic and social changes. The changes include the decrease of social vitality in the case of commercial streets and historic centres due to population shrinking and to the opening of commercial centres within large cities, offering diversified products and having a higher attraction for the local population (European White Paper Revitalising European Town Centres, 2019). The revitalisation of historic centres of SMSTs is another action that has to be implemented by the local and national public authorities, involving a partnership between the representatives of the local governance, town-centre management experts and the members of the civil society.

For SMSTs without a tradition or former examples of multiple cooperation between the local decision makers, business men and community members, this issue may represent a barrier in the implementation of development projects. Also, local decision makers need to employ transparent policies in relation to their investment decisions. Investment projects need to be assessed both from the perspective of their economic and financial efficacy and also regarding their effects at social and environmental level and on the quality of life (De Roo, 2014).

The development of SMITs needs to look also at activities for reducing the negative impact on the environment, including the

historical pollution as effect of traditional industrial activities. The developing of renewable energy generation or household and industrial waste recycling may ensure the sustainable development of SMITs while bringing new jobs and investment companies (Green Growth in Cities, 2013). Also, SMITs representing heavy industry centres may prioritise measures to reduce the energy consumption in the industrial sector in order to remain competitive on the global market.

1.2.4. Best practice models of European urban policies in small and medium-sized industrial towns

In the case of **France**, even if for many years the deindustrialisation process has been the main focus of the existing debates (Luxembourg, 2011), starting from 2013, the country has been the leader of an ambitious project called “Friends of Industry” which wants to make a strategic vision of Europe concerning industry and the actions that need to be taken. What they want is to invest in four key domains, such as industrial innovation, low-carbon technologies for facing the climate change issue, developing common European projects and reinforcing industry through the European commercial policy (www.electroniques.biz, 2019). In this respect, France has created a list of 124 “industrial territories” with strong industrial identity which will receive financial aid to develop. The policy benefits from three main tools: Industrial Commercial Plan, Investments Plan for the Future and The Bank of Territories, and it totalises a funding of 1.4 billion euros (cner-france.com, 2019). The policy involves many stakeholders, especially the regional ones, helped by the local actors, such as mayors or industry representatives. The policy can be a very good model for the entire policy concerning SMITs in Europe.

Italy has been drastically affected by the crisis in 2008. The only solution for the country and its SMITs is to create a new industrial policy by combining the local needs with the European initiatives (Pianta et al., 2016; Pianta, Zanfei, 2016). The focus in Italy is on such tools as the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and the country has retreated for many of the industries that have been successful after the post-war decade. They have created a new public investment bank (Cassa Depositi e Prestiti) which “can acquire shares of private firms operating as ‘market oriented’ investors; intervention with public resources (through ‘contratti di sviluppo’ or ‘accordi di programma’) when a major firm, a whole district or an industry are hit

by the crisis, with the goal of returning to competitive performances”. The more precise link to SMITs is that the national and regional governments will be able to control the industrial markets and certain towns will develop more if there is a public will independent of the international companies’ desire. In the same register, the country offers subsidies for research and innovations in order to produce also local and territorial urban development (Pianta et al., 2016).

Germany, nevertheless, is experiencing a policy shift as it seems to understand the need for a revival of the industry, after many specialists have argued that the country is losing ground in front of other world countries (Bofinger, 2019). In this respect, Germany has launched a new strategy for industry (Germany Industrial Strategy 2030, 2019). The strategy takes into consideration the European Industrial Strategy, but it considers it too limited and it tries to expand the perspective through different financial and legislative incentives, especially by setting a goal for the German industry to be 25% of the total in Europe. The strategy is less descriptive concerning the effects on urban areas in the country in comparison to the other two mentioned before, but it sets a starting point that could be good for the development of former industrial communities that had switched during the last years on such activities as industrial tourism.

* * *

Looking to the strategies and policies at European level, we observe that there are very few ones defining the deindustrialisation and redevelopment of former industrial small towns. The majority of policies treat the dynamics of SMSTs in the new era of changes, and very few regard on the specific of SMITs. The same situation is observed at national or regional level, highlighting the absence of a coherent strategy to define and implement specific policies for this category of towns devastated by deindustrialisation.

SMITs lack the capacity to be developed through their own resources, as being strongly impacted, especially in Eastern Europe, by the negative effects of qualified people’s (out) migration and by the degradation of the regional economic environment. In these cases, defining a specific policy on SMITs is essential to facilitate their redevelopment. Only consistent incentives could encourage the development of creative industry, social innovations and traditional manufacturing activities, under the general framework of sustainable development.

In opposition to Eastern Europe, the small former industrial towns of Western European countries have benefitted from a prosperous regional economic environment which pushed such towns to new ways of redevelopment. So that, some European former mining or metal industry small towns have successfully transformed into creative industrial centres while keeping their territorial role at regional level.

Our case studies demonstrate a huge diversity of redevelopment directions for the former European SMITs, starting from the different stages of societal dynamics they faced. In some towns as Corby (UK) and Heerlen (NL), less in the case of Kajaani (FIN), the “creative industry has moved from industry-based definitions towards market- and network-based conceptualizations” (Potts et al., 2008 as cited in Taffel-Viia et al., 2015), with positive effects on improving the quality of urban life. In other cases, either the former industrial activity became very competitive on the global market (Velenje, SI), or the town continuously supported the search of new ways of economic redevelopment, as the current industrial activities are still very vulnerable on the international market (Fieni, RO). The European countries’ experience on the re-urbanisation of former SMITs evidences creative industry as a top-down territorial innovation, involving specific development policies adopted at national and regional levels.

1.3. Analysis of urban policies regarding small and medium-sized industrial towns – European case studies

1.3.1. Finland

National, regional and local documents, in general, do not mention SMITs directly, but some guidelines or recommendations could be applied to these towns.

The main document of state-led and of regulatory regional development is the *Regional Development Decision* that is composed every four years by each new Government. The *Regional Development Decision*, from the National Priorities of Regional Development 2016–2019 (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2016), sets the outlines for the regional developmental policy in Finland during the respective term of government. The Regional Councils have the duty to take the regional development decision into account and to promote its implementation. The decision is general by its nature and it doesn’t mention developmental measures specifically targeting SMITs. The

reigning Government is currently preparing a new regional development decision and there is no information on the content or the focus of its urban policies.

The legal basis of the contents of the regional development decision is laid down into the regional development act (Laki alueiden kehittämisestä 7/2014) and the government decree on regional development (Valtioneuvoston asetus alueiden kehittämisestä 356/2014). The legislation lists the following objectives of regional development: 1). to promote the balanced development and national and international competitiveness of the regions; 2). to sustainably support and diversify the business structure of the regions and to promote economic balance; 3). to promote sustainable employment as well as the competences, equal opportunities and social inclusion of the population; 4). to narrow development gaps between and within regions and to encourage the full use of the available resources in a sustainable manner; 5). to enhance regional strengths and specialisation as well as to promote regional culture; 6). to enhance the quality of the living environment and a sustainable regional and urban structure.

The *Regional Development Decision* contains the outlines of the Finnish regional policy, establishing the priorities of the regional development measures and it relies on three priorities of regional development: growth through renewal, vitality through well-networked regions and well-being through partnerships. Being a very general policy document, it does not mention SMITs directly (for urban issues, only larger city regions are mentioned), but, anyhow, SMITs could potentially benefit from ideas and guidelines that are promoted in the decision (e.g. polycentricity, place-based approach and promoting regional networks). Phenomena like battling shortage of labour and brain drain in peripheral areas, collaboration between higher education and businesses, and promoting biotechnology have been central issues for Kajaani.

The *Anticipated structural change funding (AIKO)* is an example of financial instrument in regional development implemented by the Regional Councils with the support of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. As measure of the Finnish Government's flagship project "Strengthening competitiveness through better conditions for business and entrepreneurship", AIKO funding is used to support the swift launch of important development initiatives (small, rapid, experimental and new innovations and projects) and to implement extensive development processes.

Though there are also other financial regional developmental instruments, AIKO is probably the funding source that is the most relevant from the SMITs' perspective. The policy may influence reindustrialisation and the promotion of social innovations. Funding have been granted directly to various projects in education, business and the cultural sector of Kajaani and this instrument can therefore advance the vitality of Kajaani and Kainuu region, since sectors like bio/high technology or tourism are already relatively successful and fundable fields of business.

In Finland, there is a relatively wide base of research on developing methods and knowledge for better urban and regional planning and development. This sort of R&D activity can be considered as a significant category of policies that regard the SMITs' development in Finland. The research projects usually involve multiple partners (organisations, institutions, officials). Although bigger cities and especially the Helsinki region are heavily focused on the research of urban issues, there is a significant amount of study that includes also smaller towns and their typical issues.

The *Good practices and Experiments of Urban Structure and Functional areas and growth zones in Finland* are typical examples of recent Finnish urban and regional R&D orientation which examine some SMITs. Anyhow, while there is a research activity on SMITs, it is usually targeting cities and towns in Southern and Western Finland and/or urban areas that are near growth centres or part of growth areas. Peripheral small towns tend to be missed out of this kind of research and the resources and results of the projects' activity are therefore geographically unbalanced.

Although the research in the field can be multidisciplinary and covering various topics, the interest is often centred on the quantitative examination of issues such as jobs, demographics, employment rates, housing, commuting etc. One must point out that aspects like cultural history or cultural sustainability are not so much in the mainstream of this type of research.

The *Good practices and Experiments of Urban Structure* is a project implemented by the Finnish Environmental Institute in cooperation with the Ministry of the Environment, the Finnish Road Administration and Housing Finance and Development Centre. Case studies are carried out in Tampere, Kuopio region, Mikkeli region, Kajaani, Vihti, Lappeenranta, Turku, Oulu region and North

Ostrobothnia. This two-year research project (2018-2020) contributes to the implementation of a sustainable community structure in urban areas. Nine target areas are joined to discuss solutions to practical design issues and to explore phenomena affecting the community structure development. The research is carried out in cooperation with local designers and actors. The main objective of the project is to convey information on good design solutions to the ongoing Land Use and Building Act reform. The project examines, for example, combating climate change through the development of urban structures, housing, jobs, trade, planning for depopulated areas and reconciling transport and land use. Case studies in several SMITs with specific issues are carried out. The aim is to provide results for the development of urban areas, including SMITs. The project includes an on-going case study on Kajaani, through which the developmental paths and dynamics in and between residential areas are analysed.

The *Functional areas and growth zones in Finland*, a document assigned and funded by the Prime Minister's Office and realised by the Finnish Environmental Institute, in consulting with the MDI Public Office, concerns with functional areas and growth zones that are independent of administrative borders. Functional areas are delineated from the viewpoint of daily or weekly mobility at local and regional scale. Delineations are based on geographic data on the location of home and workplace of every employee and the survey data on trips to different services. The result is an easily replicable method to produce delineations.

Growth zones, which are located between urban centres, are classified according to the existing spatial interaction. The spatial interaction is examined particularly in terms of commuting, traffic flows and connections of enterprises. The potential for interaction is based on the transport system and accessibility. The development of the growth zones is approached through studying the changes in population, migration, employment, jobs, construction activities and the outlook of enterprises. The significance of growth zones is analysed also through interviewing regional developers, carrying out a web-based survey targeted to enterprises and by comparing the growth zones' development in six other countries.

On the basis of the study, the main recommendations include the knowledge base strengthening, enhancing regional planning, developing impact assessments, increasing interaction and discussions

on regional development, long-term development of growth zones, and promoting sustainable mobility.

The analysis of functional areas and growth zones could be beneficial from the SMITs point of view, nevertheless, because some functional areas can be SMITs centred.

Perhaps the most significant SMITs regarding policy is centred around the network of regional cities. A regional city network consists of 56 SMITs/SMSTs between around 5 000 and 50 000 inhabitants that are not provincial centres. They hold a notable part of Finland's population, jobs and economic activities. Like Kajaani, many of them have a long history with forest industry; they have gone through identical economical transitions, and they are struggling with many similar challenges. Anyhow, Kajaani is not a part of this network due to its position as Kainuu provincial centre. Instead, in the urban functional hierarchy, Kajaani is part of the so called C21-group that consists of the 21 largest cities and provincial centre cities of Finland, Kajaani being the smallest town in this group.

Within other four programmes and analyses, SMITs represent the main target. The main policy document regarding the network is represented by the *Regional cities program – Independent development and multilateral partnerships*. It is one of three government's urban development agendas, next to the *Sustainable Cities Agenda* and *Urban Agenda*. The document considers Finnish regional cities, e.g. towns with 5000-50000 inhabitants that are not provincial centres, and SMITs constitute the primary target of this policy. Economical/industrial transition, brain drain/outmigration, and the shortage of workforce are addressed as major issues for SMITs, in general.

The Regional Cities Programme is a toolkit, implemented by the Ministry of Finance, which relies on the effective cooperation between regional cities, sub-regions, regions and the state. Although the Programme highlights the importance of agreements and contracts, its primary focus is on partnerships, cooperation and the utilisation of existing tools, that is to say, independent development. The Regional Cities Programme offers the opportunity to build closer, more networked and thematic cooperation between the different kinds of cities and areas, and cooperation that transcends regional boundaries. But social issues such as social sustainability and participation are not very much visible.

There is a lot of research and assessment carried out concerning SMITs. Another example is the *Regional City Network Analysis*

(implemented by the regional development consultancy MDI Public Office) that examines some features of regional cities for the basis of planning concrete developmental measures: strength and weaknesses, key features of regional cities, such as employment, economic structure etc. As in the Regional Cities Programme, problems linked to industrial changes, outmigration and, consequently, the shortage of workforce are addressed as major issues for SMITs, in general.

SEUTU-ohjelma is a partnership-based development programme which includes 24 cities of the network. It is independently coordinated (Suupohja Municipal Federation), and not implemented by government. The program includes 24 regional cities around Finland. Cities included in the programme are mainly located in Southern and Western Finland and many of them lie near a growth centre, so that SMITs from peripheral areas in the east and the north are underrepresented in the programme. Each participating city integrates its stakeholders with program themes, such as educational institutions and companies. In addition, the program enables the effects and benefits to the sub-region beyond its municipal borders. Some of the programme measures are targeted at the entire regional cities network. The strategic focus of the SEUTU programme is the upgrading of the business ecosystem, which is being approached in particular through service design and evolving internationalization.

The program operates on three levels:

1. A level of cooperation that establishes a regular link between ministries and suburbs. The SEUTU programme supports work at this level on the programme themes in cooperation with the sub-regional network.

2. A networking level to co-ordinate cooperation, development of expertise and development of local sub-pilots and experiments in sub-urban development and business services.

3. At the local level, each area is responsible for the actions, but the program supports the launch of local sub-pilots and experiments, by providing expert services. Local sub-pilots are mainly implemented through separate funding.

After the SEUTU programme ended, the work with regional cities development is continuing in a complex of projects that aim to tackle the shortage of skilled workforce (*Advancing Availability of Skilled Workforce for Regional Cities*). As the regional city network and developmental methods built upon it illustrates, it can be stated that

the urban development policy concerning SMITs is strongly emphasized towards informal, network/agreement-based orientation of governance.

Overall, it can be noted that regional development policies, in general and those regarding SMITs, are continuing the trend of moving further away from endorsing formal, statutory policies. Instead, SMITs related policies are containing less and less strict, top-down settings and definite and linear set of rules that could be applied similarly from the start to the end everywhere. Furthermore, they count more on flexible and general ideas and principles such as place-basedness, programmes, agreements, partnerships and networks. It is also noteworthy that the described developmental orientation is rather business and entrepreneurship-heavy by its overall focus, lacking an equal emphasis on social and cultural aspects.

1.3.2. United Kingdom

The industrial strategies promoted by the government in the UK have particular trends in common. However, they do not focus in detail on towns and there is very little available government policy that deals with towns. The analysis of different policies that might impact industrial towns, as well as building an understanding of alternative development strategies, is important for developing supportive policy for SMITs.

Industrial strategy policies rely on the idea of economic growth and a focus on city-region based growth. Since the 2011 Localism Act¹, policy direction has moved towards an assessment that place-based needs and regional development should be taken into account by the local government and organisations. This means that the Localism Act and a focus on place or regions making decisions and working in partnership *locally* has been part of the policy environment in the last few years.

Recent government policies also recognise the “top-down approach” undertaken by many past administrations, which did not work in partnership with local areas. These policies promote local

¹ The 2011 Localism Act gave power in a range of areas to the lowest practical level (local government) away from the central government, making the “assumption of general competence”. Local authorities are now able to do anything individuals can do which does not break other laws.

partnerships, and devolve control to places, meaning that, in practice, every region has its own developing Local Industrial Strategy.

However, despite having noted the focus on locality, the policies, in fact, work at a regional level and focus on emphasising city-region growth led by cities. What is lacking here is the recognition that industrial development has been largely place-specific for certain industries and sectors, often at a lower level than regions. In doing so, these strategies assume commonalities between different towns and locations in the same city regions (which may not always be the case), and that productivity naturally stems from cities, rather than being a result of the policy focus given to cities in recent decades. In particular, a focus on Northern city-regions (the Northern Powerhouse) is a strong feature of regional industrial strategy in the UK. Some commentary and influencing work carried out by major institutions critiques the idea of city-region agglomeration, calling this as much a result of policy-making as reflective of market-based forces.

The Industrial Strategy looks at how the UK must develop its capacity to innovate and it identifies future challenges and areas of development: AI development, innovating for an ageing society and leading the development of clean growth and continuing to work on R&D investment. The Strategy references invention, engineering, and digital technology as the future of Britain's industry.

For this, many policies also emphasise the importance of skills development. Such policies recognise that some places in the UK have people living in them who do not have the skills to compete globally with the higher skills market. Rather than to redress this retrospectively by retraining the established or older workers, they focus on the ability of Higher Education to provide STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) training to overcome this skills gap, creating innovation, invention and engineering know-how. The Post-16 Skills Plan also addresses the loss of quality technical training, arguing that it has been neglected and it is therefore not respected.

Policies relating to social innovation focus on locality and recognise that places should make decisions about their own needs, strengths and strategic direction. These types of strategies and policies explicitly welcome socially innovative ideas and strategies and social entrepreneurship. Focusing on broadening the skills levels and strengthening the quality of technical training may also prevent out-migration and ageing demographics. Alternatives shared by

organisations tend to be socially innovative in scope, particularly emphasising sustainability and challenging inequality.

However, it is important to note that most of these more recent policies and government strategies have some level of uncertainty in relation to the UK's planned exit from the European Union, and they seem to make less commitment to tangible outcomes than those policies written at the turn of the decade before the EU referendum in 2016 (e.g. 2010-2014). Major civil servants have commented that the UK is arguably in a holding period where major policy shifts are not realisable while the government negotiates an exit.

The *Industrial Strategy UK White Paper* is a national governmental document that flags the awareness that some areas do not have the productivity which others have in terms of industry and targeting unequal growth across different regions, but it does not refer in particular to SMITs. The creation of "good employment", which relates to a priority in Corby, and targeting productivity gaps are given consideration. Reindustrialisation, transport infrastructure, tackling an ageing society, training people (technical education), improving digital access, ensuring that jobs are "good jobs" and well paid, including a "retraining" scheme, are the strategy approaches. The document specifies that places will have local industrial strategies, but it focuses on city regions transformation.

Local Industrial Strategies, implemented by the government in regions and counties, are focusing on specific regional areas – cities and not towns, which follow from an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of different regional areas from the industrial and knowledge economy point of view. Reindustrialisation, clusters and networks, education and training are the main approaches of these strategies, which aim to increase productivity and the regional share of productivity. The stakeholders are represented by the local businesses and the borough and local authorities.

Building our Industrial Strategy – Green Paper, edited by the Government, outlines the UK industrial strategy after consultation, and inviting consultation. It relies on a concept of growth and need for productivity, but in city regions, of which towns are one part. While this strategy targets good jobs for all, productivity, and support for businesses, it appears to focus less on education (limited to supporting the development of skillsets aimed at producing innovation in technical and STEM education) and shared prosperity. This policy also describes

the ways in which automation is more advanced in other parts of Western Europe and that there are big differences in productivity across the UK. It also notes that there are many uncertainties around the Brexit and on what will happen, predicting a few years of uncertainty post withdrawal from the EU. The policy sets out ten pillars that are considered important to drive forward the industrial strategy across the economy: 1). investments in science, research and innovation; 2). developing skills; 3). upgrading infrastructure; 4). supporting businesses to start and grow; 5). improving procurement; 6). encouraging trade and inward investment; 7). delivering affordable energy and clean growth; 8). cultivating world leading sectors; 9). driving growth across the whole country; 10). creating the right institutions.

The *Post-16 Skills Plan*, implemented by the government, places the responsibility for provision on to individual organisations, and it also seeks to raise employment standards. This plan addresses a productivity gap in the UK and it aims to prepare the young people to be ready for working in industry. It targets the technical training which was gradually withdrawn post 1970s. This, in turn, might target youth outmigration in specific towns and also support innovation. It also aims to ensure well-paid employment and it targets gender differences with skilled employment. Bringing together different types of stakeholders (from business, industry, technical training colleges and young people), this plan emphasizes the importance of reindustrialisation and of technical education.

The *Localism Act 2011*, a governmental instrument, seeks to decentralise power away from the Whitehall (national government) and to give it to the local government. It enables the local government to do anything within their power that is not prevented by another act to make changes. It focuses particularly on planning, housing, and community empowerment with the participation of local authorities and communities.

The *People and Places First – An Industrial Strategy to Rebalance the Economy*, is an analysis that argues for an industrial strategy in the UK and it targets the development of place-based industrial development, suggesting that prosperity should be aligned with regional development and framed by the collaboration between the national government and the local stakeholders. In doing so, it tackles place-based inequalities and development strategies. The document

recommends sustainable jobs (an issue in Corby), and it is targeting skills development to place-based needs. This approach responds to the government industrial strategy, working within the pre-existing principles and strategies for industrial towns. It is a call to reset some of those principles, in particular to address the impacts of inequality on the economy, and to focus on the environmental goals, such as ecological sustainability.

Powerful Communities, Strong Economies. Keep it Local for Economic Resilience, a report of the Friends Provident Foundation research, suggests that industrial regions would fare better if they were able to develop funded consortiums of local people and partnerships which would develop local strategies tailored to local needs. The report suggests that a focus on place-based economic resilience is important. Community empowerment and involvement in developing strategies and partnerships, and the power and ability of local councils to make changes in order to meet the local needs are very important. While it is not specific to industrial towns, it looks at places which have similar experiences. It suggests that anybody living in an area should be involved in planning its future because the best people to make decisions are the local residents.

The *Journeys of Understanding: Domestic twinning as an approach to improving town capacity and wellbeing* is a report of an experimental project helping to the improvement of the local economy and the environment of small towns, defined as having between 1 900 - over 80 000 population, among which some will be industrial. The report is focused on how towns with similar and differing characteristics can work together to build resilience and sustainability in the face of mutual challenges. It emphasises what communities within towns can do to improve them, with the support of a community asset transfer and social innovations. The document highlights the town twinning project, noting that towns share much and have much in common (environment, economy, sustainability, ageing populations), but they rarely have the opportunity to work together to share learning or to strategize about common challenges.

A number of policies, strategies and programmes were identified as addressing the challenges which are particular to many SMITs. So that, the *Stronger Towns Fund* is a programme which is being implemented by the government and dedicated to small and medium-sized towns, some of which will be industrial towns. It is targeting

overlooked towns and problems like unemployment, training and stimulating the economic activity, many of which are characteristic of Corby. Local communities are consulted on the planned projects.

High Streets at the Heart of our Communities: The Government's Response to the Mary Portas Review is a government response to the czar's report (the UK government deploys independent advisors on specific issues called "czars") on how to revitalise high streets, which is an issue faced by many town centres and which are declining due to internet shopping and out of town shopping centres. This is also associated with issues such as civic pride, meeting places and anti-social behaviour. The focus is on community-led/local business backed change and partnerships. It is not specifically aimed at industrial towns but, given the number of industrial towns in the UK, it is relevant for SMITs too. It promotes community initiatives, investments in infrastructure, clean energy and public spaces, in the framework of cooperatives and social enterprises and it is supporting the use of empty properties in town centres.

The *Northern Powerhouse*, as part of the government's industrial strategy, is acknowledging and responding to the fact that the North has often been overlooked in policy and development. It is the government's vision for "a super-connected, highly competitive northern economy with a flourishing private sector, a highly skilled population, and world renowned civic and business leadership". It targets the industrial redevelopment of a part of England in which there are many SMSTs/SMITs and it focuses on trade and investment, industrial skills development and partnership. Also, reindustrialisation, skills development, transport, communications, medical systems, local governance and business support are the general approaches of the strategy.

City Systems: The Role of Small to Medium-sized Towns and Cities in Growing the Northern Powerhouse is a think tank review that challenges the idea that cities are seen as the engine of economic growth and the most important sites of productivity. It argues that core-periphery relationships are as much a result of policymaking as they are a result of market disequilibrium and that different places can play diverse and complementary roles within an urban hierarchy. It makes the case that connectivity is more important than size or concentration.

Places with Purpose: The Future of Industrial Cities, Towns and Communities is focused on towns and industrial communities and it

defines how a successful town looks like, as it challenges the idea of growth based on city-regions, saying that smaller places can make a contribution and that we should not ignore the social consequences of inequality within regions. The document also challenges the UK model of economic growth, wherein manufacturing, which has stagnated while there is an increasing reliance on the financial services sector. It argues that London's growth is not sustainable or healthy. It flags the contribution to wellbeing, community identity and safety which towns make, as well as the environmental gains from living in small towns. The document shares some policy ideas that could provide meaningful regeneration and development directions for the whole country, not just for London. It focuses on incentivising new technologies and finance availability, as well as ensuring that current funding is used across the country more evenly. It also focuses on the idea that local places have locally specific needs and this local focus should be a part of policymaking or of funding and infrastructural development.

1.3.3. Netherlands

The Netherlands features a three-tier urban planning system (national, provincial and local) with a focus on decentralization. Unlike many other countries, the Netherlands has no policy directed at SMITs. Instead, many of the policies from the past decades and current policies are or have been directed at housing, agricultural policy and the economic climate.

The presented policies are at different scale levels (national, regional and local) and deal with the “side effects” of closing industries which primarily concern shrinkage, the issue of housing, and the outmigration of young people.

In recent years, the national spatial planning system of the Netherlands has witnessed a restructuring with a shift in control at the centralized level to a more discretion at the local and regional levels. Up until this time, a national plan set the urban planning stage across the country. For fear of a transplantation of economic entities to cities outside of the Randstad, the *Vierde Nota over de Ruimtelijke Ordening* (Fourth Report on Spatial Planning), published in 1988, aimed at strengthening the international position of the Randstad, reflecting larger global trends towards growth and international competition (VROM, 1988).

While a national spatial strategy still exists, outlined in the *Structuurvisie Infrastructuur en Ruimte* (Structural Vision on Infrastructure and Space, 2013), the former top-down hierarchical planning system wherein local plans and provincial plans complied with the larger national strategy has since been removed (LSE Cities, 2011).

As of next year, a national *Omgevingswet* (Environmental Law) which bundles guidelines concerning development with room to customize spatial development at a local level will go into effect. This law, perhaps the most interestingly, brings all parts of the physical living environment together under one umbrella. Municipalities and provinces are asked to create an *Omgevingsvisie* (Environmental Vision) detailing the issues that need the most attention while offering concrete and simple solutions to local problems.

The national government has designated areas of focus in the national policy, with the purpose of giving local authorities greater flexibility. One of these areas of focus includes “shrinking” regions, such as the province of Limburg, in which Heerlen falls. The *Action Plan for Population Decline* (Actieplan Bevolkingsdaling, 2016), implemented by the government, is a policy at the national level targeting regions in the Netherlands that are dealing with a shrinking population and the “side effects” of this phenomenon, including unemployment and youth outmigration. It does not highlight the post-industrial aspect of the region of Limburg directly. This report was produced by the national government as a “plan of action” and as a collaboration agreement between shrinking regions and anticipated shrinking regions in the Netherlands. Nine focus regions are named, under which five are in the Province of Limburg and one in which our case study of Heerlen falls, the Eastern mining regions (de oostelijke mijnstreek). It aims to offer an overview of the mentioned parties and their role in this issue, as well as concrete points that should be addressed in the coming years. This plan does not highlight the post-industrial aspect of the region of Limburg directly and it does not offer any direct solution for the issues faced by Heerlen. But this document recognizes the fact that some rules and laws get in the way of innovative solutions in the case study areas. This is a point that was also brought up during the workshops in Heerlen by those who either started or were involved in bottom-up initiatives.

The stakeholders are the “shrinking regions” and the “anticipated shrinking regions”, including the local municipalities and

the provincial governments. Further, the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) acts as a knowledge sharing network while the national government also plays the role of coordinator.

The regional level is perhaps the most influential and active in regards to the case study of Heerlen. This is most likely due to the fact that the mining activity was begun as a regional activity, and it ended with regional consequences. In 1977, an economic restructuring policy was introduced in order to reduce the effects of the mine closures, to tackle unemployment and to stimulate new industries. In 1982, the provincial government drew up a plan to stimulate tourism in South Limburg. Since then, tourism has been one of the top priorities of the provincial government and Parkstad Limburg.

The current Retail Structure Vision Parkstad Limburg (*Retailstructuurvisie 2010-2020 Parkstad Limburg*) dates from 2011 and it provides the main strategy of the desired retail structure. It directly deals with the issue of the outmigration of young people and the ageing population, which is strengthened and more visible through consumer patterns. The population decline and the ageing population, with which the Netherlands is increasingly confronted, is now manifesting itself the strongest in Parkstad Limburg. For a healthy retail structure, it is important to adequately anticipate the consequences of these trends. This document aims to arrive at a sustainable retail structure for Parkstad Limburg that is resistant to demographic developments, and to arrive at a regional agreement framework and methodology. The government, entrepreneurs and property owners in the Parkstad Region are the main stakeholders.

At a local level, the *Regional Housing Vision Parkstad Limburg – Local Housing Vision for the Municipality of Heerlen* is a document from 2017 that addresses the need for innovative housing forms, presenting different scenarios in which this is achieved. This housing vision gives direction to the current developments in the housing market, balancing the supply and the demand (both qualitatively and quantitatively), and taking into account the population decline and the changing housing requirements. In addition, the housing vision gives substance to the new cooperation between municipality, corporations, tenants associations, rental agencies, developers and real estate agents, and healthcare organizations. In terms of innovation, the document specifically addresses the areas within the municipality that deserve the greatest attention.

While Heerlen is considered a post-SMIT, the industrial heritage is mentioned because of its relevance to the current housing situation in the town: “Due to the rapid growth around the mine seats, Heerlen has a special spatial structure, with space between the neighbourhoods so that the greenery penetrates deep into the city. The most important identity carriers are the miners’ neighborhoods/mining colonies. But a large part of the houses is outdated and no longer meets the standards of today”.

1.3.4. Slovenia

On a regional and national level, the economic aspect is more distinct. It seems that traditional industry plays a little role, as only one document (the regional development plan) mentions traditional industry (plastics, raw materials, etc.) as having a role in the future. The emphasis is on specialization, highly specialized services, digital industries (Industry 4.0), farming, and tourism. Social aspects are also quite elaborated, also mentioning social and institutional innovations. From an infrastructural point of view, industry is mentioned more in the scope of brownfield and environmental revitalization.

SMITs are specifically mentioned in only one document, again from the environmental revitalization and brownfield management point of view. Most documents are sectorial and they deal either with the economic aspects (especially regional and national level policies) or the social aspects, important for industrial towns.

Considering the issues identified in our case study of Velenje, we find that they are addressed differently: local social-based strategies are quite involved and concrete in tackling certain issues, which we identified in previous activities of the project (ageing, youth out-migration, welfare). From the economic point of view, most strategies on all levels are very generic. Only one mentions traditional (existing) industries, and most are quite generic in terms of solutions or future activities. Tourism strategy stands out since it is the most tailored and concrete. Those strategies navigate somewhere between re-/neo-industrialisation (upgrading the existing manufacturing from medium to higher tech) and post-industrial future (tourism, cultural and creative industries, etc.).

The general impression is that, on the local level, the social field seems the most elaborated and concrete. Strategies concerning social aspects, such as the youth or the elderly, are very detailed and they also enable or create social innovations. This might be because Velenje has

a strong socialist legacy transitioning to the omnipresent present-day cultural values based on solidarity and the welfare state. Surprisingly, economic development is less concrete and mentioned. It seems that older strategies, which were adopted more than 30 years ago (the spatial development plan) are orientated more towards emphasizing the traditional large-scale manufacturing and reindustrialisation efforts. The newer strategies have adopted a more contemporary perspective, referring to a more high-tech transition that is being based on the circular and/or greener economy and on the mix of specialized services and industry (via the creative and cultural industries). Tourism seems to play important part in the future economy-based strategies. However, those strategies are much less concrete in comparison to the socially-based strategies while being universal in nature.

On the national level, the only document dedicated to SMITs is entitled *The National urban development report Habitat III* [Nacionalno poročilo o urbanem razvoju Habitat III], from 2016, and it is implemented by the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. In general, the document is a state-of-the-art of the Slovene urban settlements, outlining their general characteristics from the following points of view: demography, spatial development, environment, governance, economy and housing. It does not provide solutions, but it does give examples of good practices and successful projects for the identified urban problems. SMITs are mentioned but more in the context of their importance without a clear definition. The document is not focusing on problems, common in SMITs and in Velenje, but more on the current state of urban development in Slovenia. However, some challenges like youth outmigration and the better youth employment opportunities are mentioned.

Deindustrialisation is frequently mentioned as a general process in Slovenia. Many policies and instruments focus on the industrial analysis in general, not necessarily inside SMITs. At national level, *The Spatial development strategy of Slovenia* [Strategija prostorskega razvoja Slovenije], from 2004, is implemented by the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, and it proposes how spatial development should be directed in the future, emphasizing the roads, energy, waste and land use planning. It is important since it contains the typology of towns on regarding their importance and the services of general interest and public services they should offer. The strategy addresses only degraded urban areas (brownfields) and the

revitalisation strategies for them. It explicitly mentions the “degraded industrial and mining settlements”. This strategy is a basis for the public services distribution. As Velenje is defined as a “centre of national importance” (above 10 000 of population), the document stipulates that the tertiary education (universities) and the regional-level public functions (e.g. hospitals) should be located in Velenje. Secondly, new economic areas with high-tech industries should be prioritized around towns such as Velenje.

The *Slovenian industrial policy* [Slovenska industrijska politika] encompasses the development of the industrial sector for the period 2014-2020. The policy takes into consideration societal challenges such as the protection of environment, sustainable mobility, ageing population, transformation of companies and sectors, etc. Social innovations are also represented, especially in relation to social entrepreneurship, the social responsibility of companies, social inclusion and social dialogue with social partners. The infrastructure to support industrial activities (research, innovation, entrepreneurship, communication, and transport) is considered of a great importance.

In *Slovenia's Smart Specialisation Strategy* [Slovenska strategija pametne specializacije], a governmental strategy from 2015, industry is mentioned as a core issue in relation to the diversification of the existing economic base and boosting growth. The document focuses mainly on Industry 4.0, but it sees a comparative advantage in knowledge, the existing economic base in manufacturing and the tradition/heritage. The policy places great emphasis on non-technological and social aspects at various levels (individual, social groups, organisations), e.g. in terms of identifying, defining and evaluating the individual thematic areas and future societal needs, joint co-decision, etc. It explicitly supports the growth and development of SMEs through mechanisms of social entrepreneurship, social responsibility and social innovation. The main stakeholders are the Government, the ministries, the executing agencies and the National Innovation Platform.

The *Slovenian Development Strategy 2030* [Strategija razvoja Slovenije 2030], also a governmental strategy from 2017, is the most general strategic document in Slovenia that pursues the achievement of various objectives proposed to meet the country's commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While traditional industry is not mentioned, there is a focus on the 4th industrial revolution and the

corresponding digital potentials and CCIs. The focus is on post-industrial development by favouring creativity, innovation, knowledge, entrepreneurship and services. The policy puts an emphasis on social innovation in relation to fostering cooperation (and also in relation to institutional innovation), solidarity and volunteering.

The *Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014–2020* [Operativni program za izvajanje evropske kohezijske politike v obdobju 2014–2020] is a very general document, mentioning some industrial aspects, but without including the traditional activities. The programme focuses on unemployment, ageing and the need of a more diversified economy. The case of Velenje is not described. The policy promotes the post-industrial development by favouring knowledge, education, CCIs, start-ups, services and the quality of the environment. The social innovation is also emphasized through measures in order to increase the added values of the programmes, such as: social entrepreneurship, community-led local development actions and life-long learning. The policy also promotes the development of infrastructure in order to support: 1). research, technological development and innovation; 2). energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use; 3). ICT applications; 4). green environments; 5). urban environments; 6). transport; 7). the health and social sector; 8). education. The main programme's role is to encourage economic development and to ensure prosperity for all citizens in Slovenia while taking into account the specific characteristics of the two less developed regions – Western Slovenia and Eastern Slovenia. It will significantly contribute to the achievement of the national and Europe 2020 targets for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

At regional level, only the *Regional development programme of the Savinjska region (2014–2020)* [Regionalni razvojni program 2014–2020 Savinjske regije] mentions industry in its four key aspects: manufacturing (metal, wood, plastics, glass), tourism, agriculture and energy. The policy targets the diversification of the economy and a more high-tech production. It only marginally targets other more social aspects in Velenje. Emphasis is made on neo-/reindustrialisation, again with more R&D, more innovative and higher technology in existing industries (food industry, manufacturing, etc.) in incubators, technological parks, SME's, etc. Cultural and creative industries are also mentioned. Social innovations are poorly mentioned, mostly to

develop social entrepreneurship and the social inclusion of different vulnerable groups (the elderly, youth, etc.). The infrastructure is mentioned mostly dealing with educational facilities and less with the physical equipment. The document is agreed by all municipalities in the region, as it can implement projects in partnership with the Regional development agency. The document addresses some issues identified in SMITs, but it is orientated towards the existing activities (in terms of economic companies or on what will happen after the coal mine closure, etc.).

At local level, two policies are dedicated to the industrial activities of Velenje. One is the *Long-term spatial plan of Velenje Municipality 2009* [Dolgoročni prostorski plan Mestne občine Velenje 2009], a local policy that mentions industry and it problematizes low skilled workforce and its low education. It mentions high-tech industry and export-oriented industry as future goals. In part, the document mentions especially the strengthening of social care and social aspects. It also emphasizes: technologic development, physical infrastructure, re-education of the workforce, development of the higher education system – better qualifications of the future workforce, health issues and social welfare programmes, a closer cooperation between industry and R&D. It seems that reindustrialisation is the main theme, with upgrading companies to a higher technological level. Social innovations are not mentioned. The document is the most fundamental policy for the local authorities to implement local planning. The document does not address all the issues identified in the town: out-migration of youth, perceived problems of immigration, the vulnerability of the economy, etc. The document is very elaborate regarding the spatial planning of infrastructure and less in other aspects, such as the economy or the social aspect. Also, the document is an updated version from 1986 and it contains a lot of outdated concepts and data.

The second document is entitled *Sustainable urban strategy for smart, environmental and friendly Velenje 2025* [Trajnostna urbana strategija za pametno, podjetno in prijazno Velenje 2025]. Industry is mentioned several times in relation to the revitalization of industrial areas (e.g. lakes) and buildings (e.g. Klasirnica) and the diversification of jobs (SMEs, CCIs). The detailed SWOT analysis mentions most of the problems related to the bipolar and vulnerable economy, tourism, transport, quality of life and education. The policy largely stresses the diversification of the economy towards strengthening the SMEs and

entrepreneurship, as representing the 2nd pillar of Velenje's economy in order to stimulate economic growth and to improve the quality of life in the city. The development of infrastructure – in transports, social or education – should participate to the achievement of the goals. New jobs should be established in the green sector, circular economy, high-tech and smart industries and CCI. Tourism should be developed based on the abandoned industrial sites (lakes) and/or buildings. Social aspects are mentioned in relation to the quality of life, well-being and inclusive society. There are many social innovations included in relation to health-care, social security, culture, and sport. Some interesting concrete examples: 1). a program to promote the social inclusion of older people over 50 – third-country nationals; 2). the volunteer of the year award; 3). intergenerational school and events. The traditional industry, as current economic base, is barely mentioned.

The other policies conducted by the Velenje municipality are visible in the framework of some strategies and programmes which focus on issues such as transport, social security, old and young generations' issues, cultural aspects or tourism. In general, the stakeholders are represented by the municipality, the relevant national institutions, by those operating on regional and local level and by the relevant NGOs.

The *Sustainable urban mobility plan of Velenje* [Celostna prometna strategija Velenja], is a recommended document from 2017 which focuses on how transport should be organised in order to be more sustainable. It is a strategy with concrete goals and actions which targets one of the weaknesses identified in the social sustainability analysis of Velenje, meaning that the transport system is based on the car instead of on walking, cycling and public transportation.

The *Social security strategy in the Municipality of Velenje for the period 2014–2020* [Strategija razvoja socialnega varstva v Mestni občini Velenje za obdobje od 2014 do 2020], is a mandatory and comprehensive local policy document in the field of social welfare. The strategy targets the social exclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups, at risk of poverty, the ageing population and other issues related to social sustainability. The main emphasis is on social welfare programmes and measures. Its aim is to improve the quality of life, to tackle the social exclusion of vulnerable groups and at risk of poverty. Social innovations are not mentioned.

The *Strategy for decent ageing in the Municipality of Velenje of Velenje until 2020* [Strategija za starosti prijazne usmeritve in aktivnosti v Mestni občini Velenje do leta 2020], a mandatory local policy document from 2013, targets population ageing which could be one of the most pressing issues in the town in the future: the share of population above 65 is rapidly increasing, although it is still below the national average. The values of the town's friendliness towards older people are defined. Based on these values, goals are defined on eight fields, including social services, employment, leisure possibilities and social inclusion.

The *Local youth strategy in the Municipality of Velenje 2016–2020* [2. Lokalni program razvoja delovanja mladih v Mestni občini Velenje 2016–2020], is a local mandatory development program from 2015 that tackles with the high unemployment rate among the youth and the decrease of the share of youth in the general population with many specific measures on the field of entrepreneurship. However, it does not address the outmigration of highly educated young people, in particular. A focus is on tertiarisation, with a great emphasis on services for youth. Social innovation is not specifically addressed. But there is a huge emphasis on other potentially innovative social activities, programmes and measures in the fields of education, leisure, communal spaces, international mobility, entrepreneurship, participation and engagement, arts and culture, sports and people with disabilities. The strategy mentions many infrastructural measures, e.g. free spaces for youth activities, picnic places or cycling paths. The strategy aims to help, engage and activate youth in order to enable them a high quality of life. The strategy, made entirely through a participatory approach, is twofold: it contains tasks to be implemented by the municipality, and goals with concrete financial support to be implemented by the youth, as coordinated by the local youth centre.

The *Local programme of culture in Municipality of Velenje 2014–2020* [Lokalni program kulture Mestne Občine Velenje 2014–2020] understands culture as a basic pillar for achieving quality of life, sustainability, social cohesion etc. A “mix” between tertiarisation and reindustrialisation can be noticed. The strategy promotes creative and cultural industries as a link between creativity, cultural programmes, tourism and industry (as one of the most important economic branches) in a post-industrial society. Still, no goals are proposed regarding the

immaterial cultural heritage (values, habits, and norms developed around industrial development).

The *Tourism Development and Marketing Strategy in the Municipality of Velenje 2017–2021* [Strategija razvoja in trženja turizma v Mestni občini Velenje 2017–2021], is a sectorial policy relying more on the tourist potential and the good practices from other industrial towns/regions in Europe (Germany, Poland, Austria). The industrial culture and the utilization of industrial remnants from the past (lakes, buildings, stories, etc.) occupy a central place in the strategy. Social aspects are covered by providing mechanisms for new employment and by the upgrading of skills for the workers in tourism.

The *Local development strategy for municipalities of Velenje, Šoštanj and Šmartno ob paki* [Lokalna razvojna strategija za Mestno občino Velenje, Občino Šoštanj in Občino Šmartno ob Paki] is a strategic document from 2008, including the rural areas in Velenje and two neighbouring municipalities. It targets areas relevant for the development of modern farming and foresting approaches, for tourism and the living environment.

1.3.5. Romania

National and regional development policies in Romania acknowledge the fact that small towns, and especially single-industry SMSTs, have a low level of urban attractiveness as they face social and environmental issues associated with deindustrialisation and economic decline, so that they are confronting with larger shares of people exposed to the risk of poverty and social exclusion, poor housing, high unemployment and human capital development issues (increased school dropout, high delinquency), low wages, poor economy, lack of major investors, poor public infrastructure and services, limited urban accessibility and mobility, air and noise pollution, degraded and deficient educational and medical infrastructure (Ministry of Industry and Resources et al., 2002; 2007; Centre Agency for Regional Development, 2013; Ministry of European Funding, 2013; Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2013; South-East Agency for Regional Development, 2014; North-East Agency for Regional Development, 2014; South-Muntenia Agency for Regional Development, 2015; Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2016; Ministry of Economy, 2017). Also, small towns from Romania are confronting with high population migration,

demographic ageing and depopulation, lack of jobs, lack of educated workforce, economic dependency of the population on the public local system of social benefits, high rates of mono-parental families, high rates of Roma population, and a negative social image (Ministry of Industry and Resources et al., 2002; 2007; Centre Agency for Regional Development, 2013; Ministry of European Funding, 2013; North-East Agency for Regional Development, 2014; Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2016). The causes of poverty for SMITs include the industrial restructuring, bringing a difficult process of economic diversification and limited reemployment opportunities for the former industrial personnel, and the poor state of the urban physical infrastructure (transport, health, education), together with the difficult management of the industrial infrastructure, while the former financial support of the government heavily decreased (Ministry of Industry and Resources et al., 2002; 2007; Ministry of Economy, 2017).

In this context, European funding programmes in Romania envisage the development of SMSTs, in general, while addressing some of the particular issues of SMITs too. So that, the Human Capital Operational Programme (POCU) supports the strategies of local development under the responsibility of the community with the target of reducing the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion living in marginalized communities (Roma and non-Roma) within towns of over or less than 20 000 inhabitants (Ministry of European Funding, 2013).

The main investment actions of POCU include: improving the access and participation to education, quality increase of the educational system, increasing the participation on the working market and improving professional competences in the field of social and health services (Ministry of European Funding, 2013). Additionally, the Regional Operational Programme (POR) finances the required infrastructure (social, health, educational, social housing) for implementing the POCU measures. Also, the Competitiveness Operational Programme (POC) supports the digital alphabetization of vulnerable communities and the development of digital competences as instrument to reduce social exclusion (Ministry of European Funding, 2013).

Referring to social innovation, the supported POCU activities of integrated community development include the solving of community problems through social participation, increasing social responsibility

and the promotion of active inclusion (Ministry of European Funding, 2013). Within POCU, integrated community centres of medical and social services are financed especially in order to have an innovative approach, employing: vouchers, the use of the local community workforce, multifunctional mobile teams, public-private partnerships, and the voluntary work of local community members (Ministry of European Funding, 2013). Also, POCU supports the entrepreneurship with grants, counselling and professional formation before and after the business implementation (Ministry of European Funding, 2013). Another target is the employment of people from vulnerable groups within social enterprises of insertion (Ministry of European Funding, 2013).

The currently open call of the Regional Operational Programme (POR) envisages improving the quality of urban life for the population of SMSTs, defined as towns and cities under 100 000 inhabitants, including all urban localities in Romania with the exception of cities with administrative county roles (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2018). POR is envisaging investments in the educational offer, the urban social services, the cultural and recreational possibilities and the urban public infrastructure, emphasizing the role of SMSTs for the development of surrounding rural areas (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2018).

The Large Infrastructure Operational Programme indirectly targets SMITs through the conservation and protection of the environment objective together with the promotion of the efficient use of resources (Ministry of European Funding, 2013b). The associated actions involve the improvement of the urban environment, the revitalization of towns, the decontamination of brownfield sites (including reconversion areas), the reduction of air pollution and the promotion of noise reduction measures (Ministry of European Funding, 2013b).

Small towns (those urban areas with less than 20 000 inhabitants) represent a special target for the social policies and area-based interventions to reduce poverty and to promote social inclusion in Romania. The intervention domains are: incomes, employment, education, health, housing and social participation (Ministry of Work and Social Justice, 2015). The National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction shows that vulnerable groups should be empowered and actively involved in the society by increasing their

access to information and their participation in the decision-making processes especially related to the development of new social services and infrastructure, which should also be based on social innovation through the use of new technologies, ICT, and innovative services (Ministry of Work and Social Justice, 2015).

The National Sustainable Development Strategy tangentially mentions SMITs as cases of post-socialist decline areas after the economic restructuring of Romania. Especially single-industry towns and brownfields are targeted for general policies of physical rehabilitation and economic revitalization through the development of business structures of regional and local importance (industrial parks, business areas, logistics platforms) and the development of microenterprises for the use of the endogenous regional potential (natural resources, raw materials, human resources) and of modern technologies and innovation (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2008). Additional intervention areas which envisage also SMITs are: the rehabilitation of urban infrastructure and improvement of municipal services; the development of the business environment; and the modernization of the social infrastructure (Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, 2008).

Within the Strategy for the Territorial Development of Romania, SMITs are defined through the case of single-industry towns which represent urban areas with a single-industry productive structure, concentrating over 25% of the town's jobs and over 50% of jobs in industry. The closing of the main industrial unit transformed them into structurally fragile areas and it generated critical social and economic issues (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2016). The general local and regional development directions of SMITs, included also in the National Strategy for Regional Development, require: the functional reconversion of brownfields; coordinated development and cooperation between urban-rural and urban-urban areas (increased urban-rural and urban-urban connectivity; optimal use of the surrounding rural material and human resources); large infrastructure works; increased accessibility and mobility; ecologic protection of polluted areas; optimal basic urban services (housing, public spaces, public transport); increased quality of urban life; involving marginalized and minority groups as active groups of population for the local economic growth (Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2013; North-East Agency for

Regional Development, 2014; South-Muntenia Agency for Regional Development, 2015; Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, 2016).

The development needs of SMITs in Romania include: better connectivity and accessibility, complex transport infrastructure, better energetic efficiency, brownfields' reuse, social inclusion (education, professional formation, integration on the workforce market, access to social and medical services), better employability, local entrepreneurship, integrated territorial investments, better urban-rural connection and collaboration, better infrastructure of public utilities, better educational services and infrastructure, social economy and social enterprises; inclusive growth and partnerships (Centre Agency for Regional Development, 2013; North-East Agency for Regional Development, 2014; South-Muntenia Agency for Regional Development, 2015).

The Mining Strategy of Romania targets the development of SMITs through a participative and collaborative process through the common involvement of both mining companies and the mining communities for supporting safe, resilient and sustainable towns by: developing the local infrastructure; planning the use of cultural heritage while including the former mining sites as cultural attractions; reusing certain former mining sites as green spaces; waste reduction and materials and technology reuse; urban development planning; closing the non-viable mines; ecologic reconstruction for the affected mining sites; environmental protection; professional reconversion; equitable distribution of economic benefits; socioeconomic regeneration programs for the areas with closed mining activities – alternative sustainable mining, participative communities (mining and urban development decisions), community welfare, transparent communication platform; harmonising mining areas with the natural and cultural environment: increased awareness on the influence of cultural and natural environments on developing mining and tourism, and, so that, the development of mining together with additional activities like tourism (industrial, cultural and natural tourist objectives) (Ministry of Economy, 2017).

In this context, the targeted regional development strategies for the Jiului Valley coal basin envisage to increase the attractiveness of included SMITs for the development of private economy by relying on their collaboration as a urban network and the process involves:

supporting SMEs, investing in business incubators, opening a business park; a promotion campaign and using World Bank grants; supporting the development of tourism (promotion, infrastructure, workforce qualification); increasing the quality of urban life through housing and public services improvement, including also public social assistance services for the former mining workers and their families; environment and infrastructure rehabilitation through dealing with industrial pollution and ensuring the networks of roads, water, sewage, electricity, gas and telecommunications; workforce training for developing the business sector (civil servants, entrepreneurs, professional requalification); youth programs – adapted high school and university study programs (new economic development, IT, communications, environmental issues) (Ministry of Industry and Resources et al., 2002; 2007).

Respecting the general approach of national and regional policies in Romania which support the development of SMITs in connection with the surrounding rural area, the specific strategy for a sustainable urban mobility within Jiului Valley targets the increased connectivity of the six regional towns together with their surrounding rural areas while the most important project is the implementation of a green public bus line (electric buses) connecting the whole region (Hunedoara County Council and Local councils of Jiului Valley municipalities, 2018). The projected system of sustainable mobility envisages the support of a better quality of urban life, an active economy and the protection of the quality of the environment. The main development directions include measures in relation to improving the road infrastructure, the public transport, the transport of goods and the alternative mobility means, the traffic management, the creation of intermodal mobility structures and the planning of public spaces for pedestrian, bicycle and people with disabilities transportation (Hunedoara County Council and Local councils of Jiului Valley municipalities, 2018).

The county (Dâmbovița) and local strategies of sustainable development confirm the territorial context of Fieni, as highlighted within the national and regional development policies of Romania and the economic, demographic, social, infrastructure and environmental challenges that the town is facing as a SMIT (Dâmbovița County Council, 2015; Fieni Municipality, 2016; S.C. Elhaz Construct S.R.L. Târgoviște, 2019). So that, the development objectives and directions of

Fieni enter the general development framework of SMITs established at regional and national level in Romania. The municipality of Fieni envisages to increase its urban attractiveness through: the development of public (transport, basic utilities, leisure facilities), social (including the diversification and improvement of social services) and educational (together with increasing the accessibility to education through public-private partnerships for trainings) infrastructure; economic diversification (SMEs, entrepreneurship, associative forms); marketing for local products and services (agro-tourism); the development of cultural heritage (and better cultural services); improving the quality of urban life (green spaces, energetic efficiency, noise reduction, air and water quality monitoring system); increasing the social responsibility of community members (local initiatives, ecological education); and the rehabilitation and reuse of improper land (“Bucegi-Leaota” Local Action Group Association, 2019; Dâmbovița County Council, 2013; 2015; 2017; 2019; Fieni Municipality, 2016; S.C. Elhaz Construct S.R.L. Târgoviște, 2019). The better valorisation of local natural, material and human resources together with a better connection with the rural surroundings represent the main axes of development for Fieni (Fieni Municipality, 2016; “Bucegi-Leaota” Local Action Group Association, 2019).

In the same time, Fieni Municipality took measures in order to improve the administrative services and the citizen satisfaction in relation to the quality of public services by: organising qualification and training activities for the public workers responsible with the quality, environment, occupational health and safety, information security, sustainable development and equal opportunities domains; organising and increasing the efficiency of administrative activity and documents, data and information flows within the town hall (Fieni Local Council and Fieni Municipality, 2009).

The diagram below summarizes the main approaches of policies at different levels (European, national and local, in the case studies towns from Bright Future) with reference to SMITs (fig. no. 1).

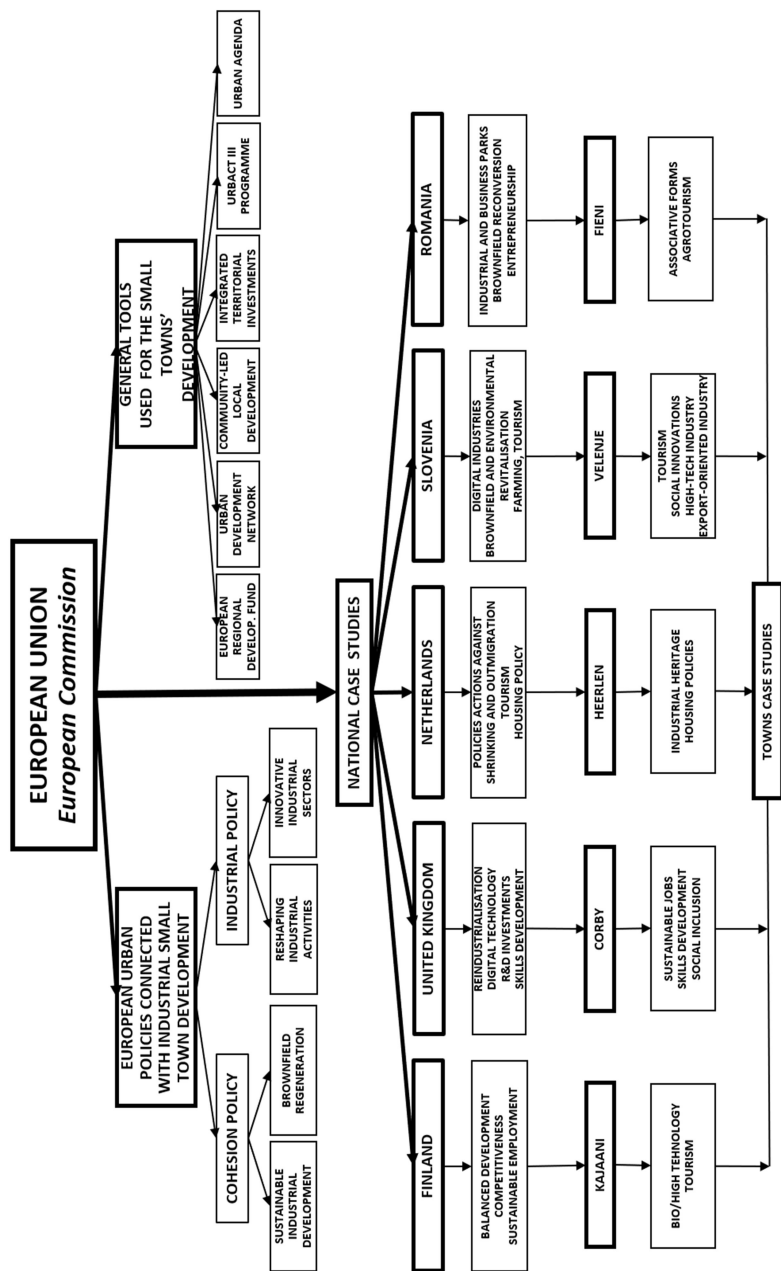


Fig. no. 1 Policies on SMTTs at different levels

PART 2

Overview of the problems and objectives of the European small post-industrial towns

Most of the reported problems and objectives identified in the case study towns are extensive, complex and interconnected with each other and other more considerable national and global dynamics. At the same time, to correctly understand the problems and objectives, it's compulsory to take into account the national referential on the development scale of each country.

2.1. Kajaani

Founded in 1651 by Swedish Count Per Brahe the Younger, Kajaani remained a small town with few hundred residents and some tar production until the 1900s. From the beginning of the 1900s and the start of Finland's independence, forestry rose to the towns leading branch of industry. The increase of forestry and paper production was particularly strong after the World War II reconstruction era. Similarly, the population expanded rapidly. Kajaani Oy paper mill became the principal employer in town and continued as such through decades until millennial changes in the global market influenced the Finnish paper industry, leading to a series of layoffs and the eventual closing of the paper plant in 2008. Kajaani has recovered from the closing of the paper plant with the demand of labour force of the nearby Terrafame nickel mine and new activity on fields like biotech, ITC and gaming.

Between the 1960s to 1980s the state's decentralization regional policy has massively influenced Kajaani, as domains such as education, infrastructure and industry received substantial investments. From the 1990s onwards, a new developmental paradigm replaced the decentralization policy, while peripheral areas experienced a reduction in state funding. Diminished public funding left Kajaani with a still ongoing battle with declining services and infrastructure. As a final seal for the era of decentralization, university-level education was shut

down in Kajaani in 2012. Kajaani University Centre, with over 100 years of history behind it and meant to separate Kajaani from other small industrial towns, was essential to the towns' uniqueness and closing it generated an unfilled void.

The specific problems to Kajaani are related to the challenges of industrial towns. Although progress has been registered in the last years in the local socio-economic context, the mentality of the population can act as a barrier in ensuring a balanced and equitable development.

One problem is linked to the *unfavourable demographic and social development*: exclusion, poverty, decline and the distorted age structure of the population, outmigration of the young and women, social segregation and polarization, lack of interaction and communication between people. *The lack of diversity and equality in decision making and participation* is connected to many sub-themes, such as racism and discrimination, structural inequality, passivity and *I-don't-care* -attitude of individuals but also broader, sometimes rigid views concerning participation policies.

The decline between public space and infrastructure reveals issues such as unbalanced development between the town centre and suburbs, inadequate quality regarding urban and communal areas, poor road maintenance and low quality of public transport.

The attraction and holding power problem refer to the ability to hold on to the already existing residents, students and other temporary migrants, smallness and remoteness, narrow educational possibilities, overall poor image of Kainuu and Kajaani ("the land of hunger") and dubious attitude towards newcomers. *The legacy and mentality of the industrial past limiting the development* highlights, drawing on the earlier study on local dominant narratives, the challenges and issues connected specifically on the town's unique history with industrial/decentralization era and the ways they are manifested in local social, economic and cultural dimensions: traditional industry with manual labour perceived as the only real work, longing and feeling nostalgia towards the old times with strong state presence and funding, promotion of industries with negative impact on environment,

perceiving Kainuu solely as a resource periphery. This is sort of an umbrella issue that is somehow concerning every sector of life thus issues in other categories as well.

The challenges creating balanced economic-industrial structure describe some central problems in the fields of economic development and business. Problems vary from practical issues (suitable working environments, shortage of workforce, cost of premises) to more general questions dealing with attitudes and mentalities. This category has an exceptionally strong connection to the mentioned concept of the dominant narrative. It can be interpreted here as oversized expectations of the “next paper factory”, emergence of a global growth company that will support the families and bring back the steadiness of old times. Among mining, these expectations are generally directed towards high tech companies. But this unbalanced support might be unfavourable to companies or fields with less uplift and no goals to conquer the global market.

The global megatrends labelling the town as a place that doesn't matter concern wider, current global megatrends and challenges that have a distinct effect on Kajaani and that are also central to peripheral areas and towns in general. The question at stake is the outlook that suggests that current mainstream of economic thought stressing the necessity of metropolis's in a global competition labels towns and areas outside metropolitan areas and growth zones as places that have no future, or “places that don't matter” (Rodríguez-Pose, 2017). Even though Kajaani, due to its provincial centre status and polycentrism emphasis on national regional policy, is for the moment on the surviving side of development, it is hardly considered a winner on a long-term global competition. In a national context, special characteristic on this issue is the gradual decline of Nordic welfare state political ideal before neoliberal thought and its consequences that hit especially hard on peripheral areas. This progression fertilizes the local problems like social inequality, the decline of basic services and one-sided industrial structure that relies heavily on unsustainable use of natural resources. One of the notable local issues is also the rise of the right-wing populism and far-right support groups, which partly emerges

from social discontent and inequality, but which is also connected to international trends and organization of various right-wing groups both in and outside the parliamentary system.

For the objective-tree, different objectives have been found to diminish the negative impact of the problems and to boost socio-economic development. These objectives mostly consider basic social policy issues such as comprehensive social services to help and prevent exclusion and social problems in general (fig. no. 2).

To guarantee *a sustainable demographic and social development*, the idea of open meeting space, that could also reduce solitude and strengthen the sense of involvement for individuals, was brought up in a workshop organized previously on the topic of social innovations, but so far, the idea hasn't come into practice. The feminist approach deals with the issue of declining population and unbalanced demographics that is not only connected to young adults moving away from the town but also the removal of women. There is also tradition and history with the forest industry that is in many senses very male-centred. The current discourse on economic development and business also revolves mainly around male-dominant fields (mining, gaming, high tech). All these observations indicate that the socio-economic area of the town might be perceived as a "man's world" and therefore generating gendered outmigration. For this reason, we suggest a feminist and gender-sensitive policy for assessing the regional and urban developmental trajectories and creating tools for more balanced development. Issues of male-dominance and gendered migration are concerning many small towns and peripheral areas in general and could be worth a further discussion.

Creating equal, diverse and active civic urban community becomes very important. Firstly, it is essential to assess the inclusivity and diversity of participation processes. If they gather only or most people with secure status in society, they're not inclusive. Secondly, the concept of political participation should be reassessed and broadened. This means not only considering conventional forms of participation but looking towards neglected forums of public opinion expression. The visibility of the excluded ones and minorities can be

advanced in concrete measures, for example, by creating inclusive spaces for safe interaction, training officials and engaging professionals specialized in inequality issues. In the big picture, a crucial role in this objective is on the intersectional approach that helps to identify not only structurally disadvantaged groups but to recognize also the groups with privileged positions.

A safe, modern and accessible public space and infrastructure implies, in general, investing in the foundation as a fundamental issue. The considerable development potential is held on investing in walking and cycling infrastructure. It is financed with valid reasons from economic, social and ecological perspectives. Anyhow, a car-centred paradigm still controls urban planning, thus it could be hard to drive forward initiatives for this objective.

Developing original, welcoming and attractive socio-spatial urban environment, as well as reinforcing belonging and attachment, both represent a complex objective and there is no single solution for reaching it. Both the urban attraction and holding power consist of several factors and not one thing that is over the others. Hard factors, such as jobs and education possibilities are essential, but so are so-called “soft” factors such as image, atmosphere and easiness of everyday life. As the study on this issue suggests, for small-town Kajaani reducing outmigration (i.e. holding on existing residents) might weigh more in the current situation than attracting completely new residents strange to town. Considering this approach for the strategy, perhaps the brand work and representation are not as significant, as the overall features and purposes for comfortable and secured ordinary and dependable necessary services are needed. This objective has also a connection to the previously discussed feminist approach discussed. One of the essential questions on this is how to reduce outmigration of (young) women.

Making visible and challenging the structures upholding the dominant beliefs and mentality. Although having wide-ranging material consequences, this is rather a theoretical issue and the focus for this objective is to make it visible and acknowledged. The solutions for this objective could, therefore, be interpreted relying on research and

cognitive-pedagogic approach. In many cases, this comes down to context-specific situations and, hence, accordingly assessed strategy and analysis are needed. One concrete way is engaging professionals/researchers familiar with the issue.

Supporting sustainable transformation to the diverse and resilient economic structure is an objective that needs concrete measures to tackle the lack of a skilled workforce. This requires collaboration with actors from the education, business and public sector. Cost of premises could be eased with targeted financial instruments. More considerable arguments with the valuation of several fields or industries in the expense of others require working with recognition of biased views. In the current climate context perception, it is also highly essential to support the transformation to industries that are not energy-intensive and not dependent on the exploitation of natural resources.

Pioneer in ethical, sustainable and resilient local post-industrial community building is an objective that brings up Kajaani/Kainuu potential for a pioneer that can offer solutions for preparing to the future strained with climate change crisis. Firstly, this objective may need a change of scope and ways of thinking. This means stepping back from the compulsive following of global contest of investments and finances by developing independent identity and creating bold and original openings even if they don't comply with current political and economic mainstream. Secondly, concrete measures that utilize rich local tradition, knowledge, skills and material factors such as infrastructure, natural environment and geographical features are pivotal issues on attaining this objective. These can concern increasing self-sufficiency on food and energy production and experimental projects on building new models of social organization and civic activity based on autonomy and horizontal hierarchies.

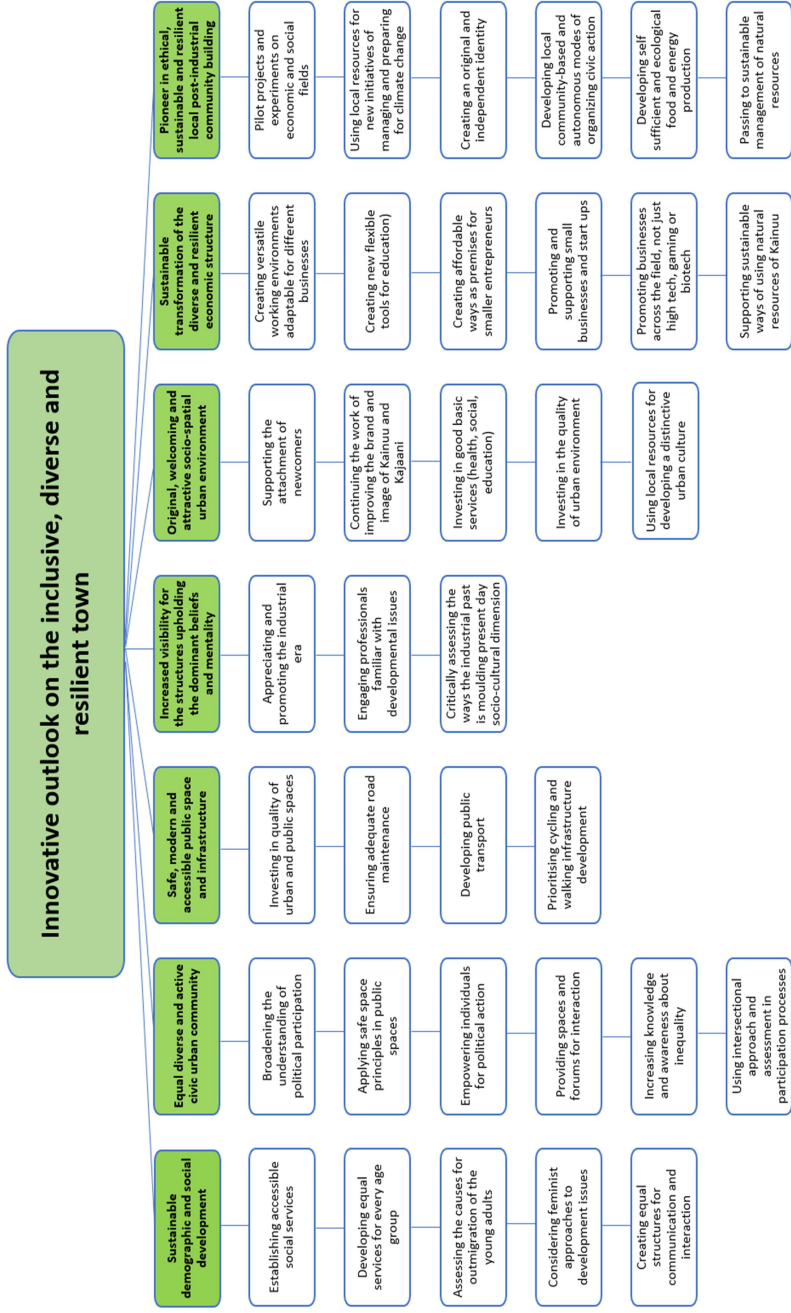


Fig. no. 2 Kajaani – Objective tree analysis

The proposal for the practical solution is developing an *open participation platform*. It aims to tackle the eminent disparity within political participation in Kajaani by making participation more accessible to residents. The project for developing the platform utilizes collaborative/co-learning approach and experimental practices and the final product is shared participation platform. The project is participatory itself, bringing different groups to the planning from the beginning. Strong emphasis in planning the platform is on investing in minorities and socially excluded people. Crucial goal is to avoid the usual flaws of top-down setting, where professionals and institutions bring up prestigious models and solutions with limited or one-sided knowledge and involvement of the target group. Important emphasis is also to mobilize unrepresented and inactive people and overrepresentation of already active individuals and groups. Various tools of social accountability can be applied to monitor the results and functioning of the platform.

The project can begin with research part which deepens the understanding on issues concerning participation. The aim is to analyse and recognize mechanisms and elements of exclusion and inclusion in participatory processes and policy making for the basis of developing the platform. The central goal is to find the groups that are not reached with usual, formal participation policies. Generally, the approach should be intersectional, taking account of multiple and intersecting identities and social positions (gender, class, ethnicity, age ability) and examining the diverse influence they have on potential of individuals. Additionally, the role of previously examined dominant narratives should be studied in the context of participation. Intersectional scope can be a tool to broaden the analysis to the social structures rooted in the era of industrialization and decentralization and their effect on contemporary participation and policy making.

Key element is engaging professionals with expertise in the field of equality, participation and cultural/industrial history. There is a pool of professionals with competency on these issues nationally. Utilizing local human and cultural resources can have significant role in the project. There is a broad range of local NGOs', especially on the fields of drama, theatre and kids' culture, and long history with grassroots activity in various fields. Hence, there exists solid ground for building innovations and collaborations for achieving the objective.

Expected immediate results are improved equality, inclusion of minorities and overall social cohesion and new understanding of the effects of the social structures rooted in the era of industrialization and decentralization and their impact on contemporary participation and policy making. In the long term, it can have inherent positive effect on attaining other objectives and the overall objective as well.

A project with a described approach and objective could shed the image of declining and conservative town that is usually associated with peripheral SMITs and that is also burdening Kajaani.

Possible challenges can be winning the true committing of local people (authorities, residents, NGOs') as well as overall negative and conservative atmosphere. A sensitive approach should be applied to prevent local's doubtful respond and the impression of 'elitist university people telling locals what to do' -setting.

2.2. Corby

Corby is a town located in the East Midlands region of the UK. It was once the centre of Britain's steel industry, however the closure of the steelworks in the early 1980s led to significant economic and population decline. A more recent housing driven growth strategy has transformed the town into the fastest-growing borough outside of London, with a population of 68 000. Today the town has a significant light manufacturing industry, while business growth centres on the distribution and logistics sector.

Recent industrial policies concerning towns and relating to decision-making in the UK focus on how policy has been shaped in the capital city and has not as a result always met the needs of populations outside London. Patterns of austerity and post-industrialisation have resulted in some places having fewer facilities, services and opportunities than others, arguably impacting their development. While these industrial policies focus on city-region development as a proposed strategy, they often focus on "local" needs and decision-making as opposed to larger scale regional development. As a way to influence this, the 2011 Localism Act built on earlier legislation and government policy with its intention to devolve greater decision-making power to local communities and individuals.

While Corby currently performs well economically with other SMITs within the UK, it has complex socioeconomic challenges and

faces political and economic uncertainty due to a variety of factors including, for example, the dissolution of the local borough council which has formerly convened partnerships and developed and successfully implemented a town strategy. In 2021 Corby will be governed by a unitary authority bringing together several towns and adjacent rural areas in North Northamptonshire. While the governance of the town will be merged with others in the area, Corby is fairly well-defined from these nearby settlements socially, organisationally and economically, raising questions about how the town will meet its challenges and develop in the future.

The challenges facing Corby are complex: *lack of quality employment opportunities* (caused by poor practices by employment agencies in the town, poorly paid local jobs, and few high skilled employment opportunities.); *diminishing voice and influence* (local authority considered less approachable than before with fewer resources to undertake engagement and consultation, unitary authority plans may weaken residents' influence, unitary authority may weaken political representation, lack of youth voice in decisions, lack of resources to engage people, loss of pre-existing strong partnerships); *lack of youth opportunity* (unequal provision of educational offer with some schools struggling, post-16 technical training offer limited, pre and post -16 results do not meet national average, low skills levels and aspirations for young people, young people leave for higher education and don't return, poor night time economy for youth); *weak provision of amenities and services* (limited public transport in spatially dispersed town; pressure of population growth on services; no local hospital; lack of affordable childcare; closure of youth facilities in town / threat of other closures); *lack of economic resilience* (threat of automation; less local engagement and attachment by businesses; Brexit risk to some employers; impact of shift to online shopping on town centre; public funding cuts to social enterprise and SMEs support); *social integration challenges* (new housing developments not integrated with existing town; social isolation of older residents; lack of integration among newer and longstanding residents; hostility to migrants); *social challenges and poor wellbeing* (high levels of poverty in town; health inequity is prevalent across diverse groups; poor housing conditions and poor treatment of tenants; lifestyle related risk factors higher than average; low levels of physical activity; mental health problems and high levels of self-harm); *poor reputation associated with the town* (low

visitor numbers and interest; reputation for anti-social behaviour in certain areas; negative portrayals in the media mask its good news stories; historic perception of Corby doesn't match present reality for many residents; low awareness of town's history and heritage).

A key mechanism for tackling the social and economic challenges facing the town would be to help Corby *improve its voice and influence over its development trajectory*. Developing regional-based decision-making and collaboration mechanisms would assist Corby to collectively explore ways that work for the local community. In doing so Corby could address several existing challenges (e.g. wellbeing, poor working conditions, lack of community integration) and also bolster its resilience, for example, in organizing to meet the risks of the potential closure of facilities or social and organisational infrastructure/assets which are arguably a solution to (a) preventing decline and (b) developing a place positively. This would increase rather than lose the strong partnerships and co-operation, which have been a crucial town feature to date (fig. no. 3).

A *social innovation solution* such as a participatory forum or Citizens' Assembly would improve Corby's voice and influence over its development trajectory, strengthening and supporting the town's ecosystem at a challenging time, also addressing some of its main challenges. A Citizens' Assembly approach (or similar model) is a participatory forum that would allow citizens to proactively engage in challenges and articulate creative responses to them, thus meeting their needs. A Citizens' Assembly considers a range of issues emerging from economic challenges such as low working wages, social exclusion, or a lack of physical facilities for example, and works to advise joint responses to them mandated by a representative group of people. During the process, participants are presented with evidence on a topic to inform their decision-making.

The Citizens' Assembly model is increasingly used by government institutions, large foundations and publicly funded organisations to make decisions which inform policy, illustrating how this has become a respected model which can achieve broad influence. The practice of a Citizens' Assembly allows people who are impacted by issues to have a say in solving them and play a part in challenging the inequalities they are experiencing. This model also helps to maintain the pre-existing partnerships in the town by keeping them active and strengthening them. It would also allow those people and

groups which have previously been under-represented in Corby, in particular, young people and ethnic minority groups, to participate in decision making and needs assessment processes, and in doing so, create bridges across different communities and focus on co-operative working structures.

As a collaborative way of making decisions and power-sharing, through participants' involvement, Citizens' Assemblies can help address participants' psychosocial needs which can help strengthen the town's civic fabric and develop a sense of collective efficacy. It can also enable a town-led response to challenges which ensure a broader buy-in to the solutions, thereby strengthening Corby's voice within the new Unitary Authority structure and the town's resilience and preparedness in general.

In terms of required resources, this approach rests on the availability of time and commitment by a cross-section of the Corby community. Many people are left out of decision-making processes for a variety of reasons, one of which being that they cannot afford to be involved. Therefore, this model needs financial support to ensure that diverse groups are represented in decision making. Each person would require an incentive or compensation for their time to participate. This would necessitate funding which would likely come from a Trust and Foundation or major donor (philanthropic) support.

Importantly, studies show that physical or community assets are essential to the success of this process. Corby Borough Council or the Unitary Authority would also need to grant space to the forum or assembly for it to meet and congregate.

Additionally, the assembly would require a range of approaches to guarantee socio-political buy-in and participation, including political support and advocacy, to ensure that it is taken seriously by those who are usually engaged in planning and decision-making and that the recommendations of the civic decision-making process were respected and would be acted on. Moreover, there needs to be a shared belief that this broadly social process could produce tangible results. It would also require a social approach working with the current community and charitable organisations in Corby to identify under-represented and under-served groups and enable and advocate for their participation while removing those institutional barriers (economic, cultural, social) which prevent access.

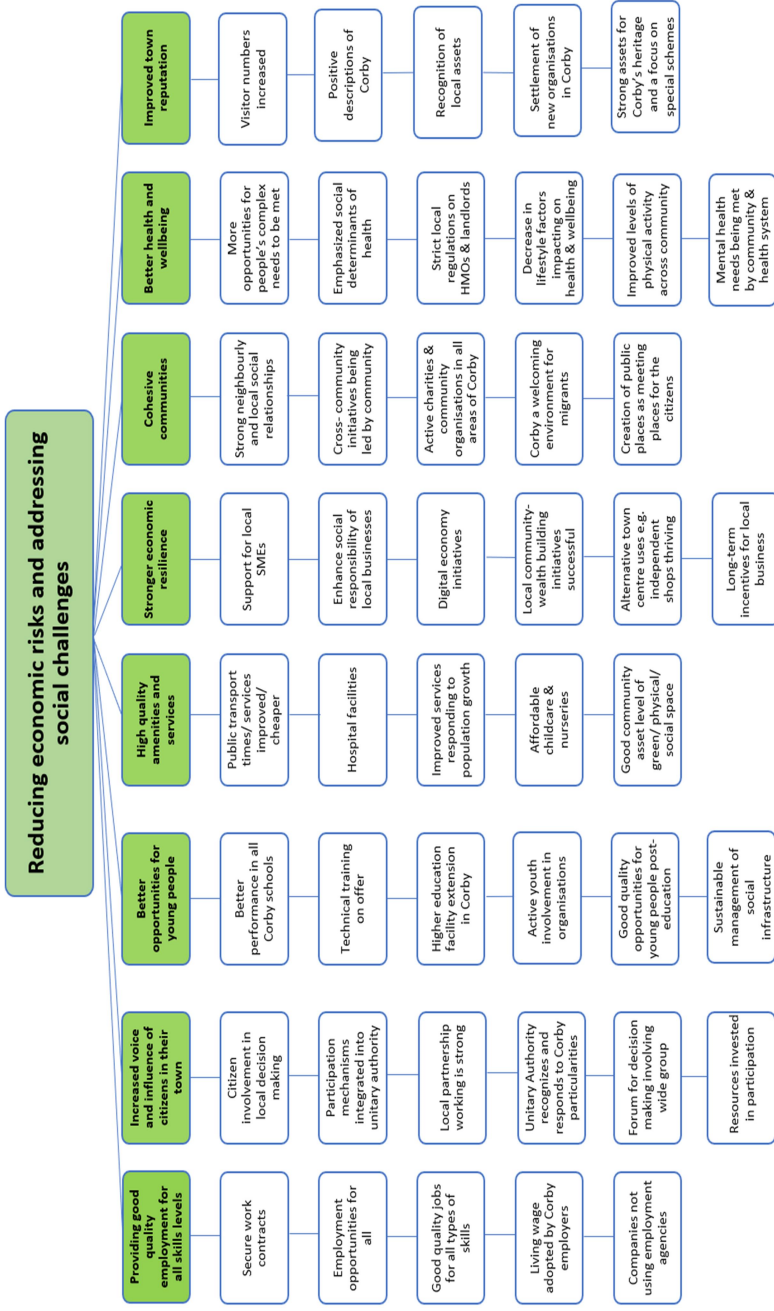


Fig. no. 3 Corby – Objective tree analysis

Socially innovative responses based on broad participation from those in local government, the third sector, businesses, developers, and residents themselves among others, can enable a range of social capital: they can develop skills, efficacy in practising democratic involvement, the bonding and bridging capital between communities, and the sense and confidence of being involved in the town's future. In prioritising a socially innovative and inclusive approach to helping people make decisions, many objectives or aims can be met. They also provide an agreed-upon course of action and share the mandate for improvement.

There are, however, inevitable *risks*. Each issue the forum seeks to address could undermine its success, for example, the lack of felt community integration provides the risk that people cannot communicate well with each other to enable a broad cross-section of the community to work together. Citizens' Assemblies also face challenges in ensuring a representative sample of the population is recruited and retained through the process – payments for participants and careful selection processes informed by local demographic data and drawing on the expertise of community groups could help mitigate this.

The very uncertainty this town forum seeks to address could undermine it as political structures and economic fortunes change. It could face a lack of long-term resources and the inability to attract enough funding to enable it to run. Although Corby has a strong-voiced sense of solidarity, which has underpinned its history of socially innovative activity, people would have to believe it was in the common interest to engage in this and that it would make a difference. The impact of the Brexit process could lead to businesses withdrawing from Corby, more challenging times economically, or a change in manufacturing before the process can take shape.

Another risk facing Citizens' Assemblies is that their recommendations are ignored or not properly implemented. This can be linked to a lack of political buy-in to the process. It can also stem from unrealistic proposals being developed, which do not take into account resource constraints or the complexity of implementation. These risks can be mitigated by ensuring broad cross-party political buy-in at the outset of the process. Ensuring the participants are well-informed and take into consideration the resourcing implications of proposals and understand the parameters of the process could also help alleviate these risks.

In thinking about indicators and observable results for this approach, it would be necessary to conceive a process where noticeable quantitative results would cohere with qualitative results about how people feel about the place they live and their involvement in it. The results would depend on what topics the Citizens' Assembly wanted to focus on and the solutions developed as a result. For example, if the Assembly sets a goal of general progress, towards better working and living conditions in Corby, some indicators might be a reduction in the number of employment agencies in Corby, or the local adoption of a living wage meaning a rise in local wages across skill levels.

If the Assembly helped people feel more engaged in local decision making, perhaps this would also help them get more involved in democratic mechanisms such as voting as a result. Qualitatively, the observable results of success might be the progress that people taking part in the Citizens' Assembly felt they and their social network had made towards identifying the town's needs, and the impacts of working together or being consulted in their personal lives. Perhaps participants might see a stronger sense of belonging or shared control over Corby's decision making.

Short-term response to this solution would be the supply, in the first year, of a town-based assessment of needs/ issues by the Citizens' Assembly. This organisation or collective response would involve a more comprehensive cross-section of the community and gain broader support from members of the community. In the third year (medium-term), local resilience could be bolstered through co-operative working and decision making, depending on the focus taken by the Citizens' Assembly, this might include facilities and spaces used by the community for differing purposes, and an increasing number of new charitable community organisations and partnerships working together on bids or initiatives to meet those needs. The impact in the fifth year (towards the long-term), we would expect to be continued a partnership working around different aims and objectives, as established by the Citizens' Assembly.

In the end, it is expected that the initiatives would have dispersal throughout the community and be led by a cross-section of the Corby community and that social-economic solutions work in tandem with each other with an approach that helps Corby residents allocate resources to address their fundamental issues and strategic vision.

2.3. Heerlen

The problems of Heerlen are related to a *swift deindustrialisation followed by a period of socio-economic degradation*. These transformations generated: *a lack of a prospective strategy for new industries* (mismatch between available skills and labour market, lack of jobs - primarily for highly-skilled persons, ageing population and high percentage of welfare benefit users); *poor/unattractive public space* (empty buildings, unwelcoming city centre - presence of fences and gates-, few meeting places and activities for young people, underused public spaces, underused public spaces, damaged buildings as a result of digging during mining period, physical segregation between wealthier and poorer neighbourhoods); *lingering negative reputation* (residents harbour defensive self-image, lack of pride and social cohesion between different social groups).

The secondary problems linked to a lack of a prospective strategy for new industries are exacerbated by population reduction, which is projected to continue in the future. Also, the current financial state of the local government limits any further investment in projects for more and various jobs and local skills development, as well as against poverty.

The poor/unattractive public space problem can be explained as it follows. While Heerlen boasts a great deal of green space, the city centre lacks attractiveness. This is primarily a result of the number of empty commercial buildings in the old city centre. Shrinkage is perhaps most visible in the number of vacant storefronts, both in the inner city and suburban malls. While in 2017, the vacancy rate of dwellings stood at 5.4 per cent, the vacancy rate of shops stood at 15.9 per cent (7.1 per cent in the Netherlands). Coupled with this lack of occupancy, the city centre misses a certain livelihood. This, however, is already changing with the very recent opening of the Maankwartier, the new mixed-use development around the train station.

Despite vacancies, low house prices, and a relatively extended rental sector, residents in Heerlen and surrounding municipalities still experience a lack of in particular affordable social rental dwellings. This is partly because of the housing policies designed to combat shrinkage, that has prioritized the annihilation of cheap low-quality social rental housing (Hoekstra et al., 2018). Because the housing stock in the city centre is mostly privately owned, the local government has fewer means to induce property owners to accept cheaper rents or even

demolish the property, even if it would be in the greater interest of the city to do so. At a national level, the restrictive zoning system characterizing the Dutch planning makes the changing of property zones difficult (i.e. from retail to housing). Lastly, suburban neighbourhoods also show lower liveability and concentrations of poverty, revealing increasing segregation between the city centre and relatively affluent neighbourhoods and the less wealthy suburbs.

Notwithstanding the efforts from the local government to promote and further a positive image of the city, the negative perception of Heerlen remains the leading narrative as understood by outsiders. Following the closure of the mines, the socio-economic fabric of Heerlen dramatically declined, characterized by widespread unemployment, high crime levels and rampant drug use. This image is, to this day, still internalized by residents, who defensively articulate any display of local pride (“Heerlen isn’t that bad of a place”, “it really is getting better”). Other responses focused on civic pride ((Heerlen needs) “to believe in itself”, “movement”, “pride”), and references to more specific improvements (“a livelier city centre”, “smart energy meters”). Although influential local networks exist amongst both residents and entrepreneurs, participants noted a lack of social cohesion between certain community groups, notably between residents, with a migrant background, and those without. Furthermore, progress in Heerlen has historically occurred when external factors led to an inevitable change (one participant described this as “passive adaptability”), rather than actively tackling challenges head-on. Moreover, Heerlen and its residents still suffer from a lack of self-confidence as a result of its negative reputation.

One objective that can respond to these problems is linked to the *emergence of new opportunities for economic development* (fig. no. 4). A growing number of new innovative organizations, such as the city lab (currently being set up at the time of writing) and the smart services campus represent a steady increase in prospective new industries. Another quite radical innovation, which was proposed during a workshop with residents, concerned the legalization of cannabis cultivation. Through legalization, several benefits could be achieved including increased tax incomes for local government, less spending on police force, and a safer and higher quality product. Linkages can be made with strong regional economic sectors: chemical industry, medical industry (research), agriculture (use of hemp, a by-product). Arguably, the skills needed to carry out the cultivation of marijuana are

already present in the population – due to its positioning as a poor border region, many residents already illegally grow and/or deal in the marijuana business.

Another social innovation concerns a basic income for residents as a replacement for the current social welfare benefits system. This innovation would also aim to improve the disadvantaged position of residents in terms of health and job satisfaction. This idea is not new; the responsibility for the welfare benefits system has recently been devolved from the national government to the municipal level, perhaps in preparation for such a system to take ground, and other Dutch municipalities have run pilot projects with benefit claimants.

To transform Heerlen into *a more lively area*, one possible solution could be the forcing of real estate developers and private property owners by the local government to actively find tenants for their housing stock, rather than allowing it unoccupied. This could occur, for example, by automatically changing zoning after a period of two years of vacancy. If necessary, the local government might employ coercive measures.

The new and available properties should then be used for resident initiatives and start-ups. Importantly, there should be space for enterprises that are not primarily oriented towards consumption, as Heerlen boasts enough shops and restaurants. As a result, residents' involvement within the city will increase as well as liveliness in the city centre. The local government should be more reactive and provide space for bottom-up ideas to take root, such as the “Gebrookerbos” method, which consists of low-threshold support for transformations of (empty) public spaces into initiatives.

Regarding the continued outmigration of young people, the “story of Heerlen” and its positive attributes should be conveyed more clearly to residents and outsiders. According to participants of a workshop organized in the project, this is the primary reason why young people do not want to stay in the city, in combination with the lack of amenities aimed at this target audience.

The suggested innovation focused on creating a youthful, positive image of Heerlen and further promoting the town along these lines. The use of social media could be maximized in the context of (famous and common) residents acting as “ambassadors” of the town, organizing more activities and events for students, such as a student association and a sports club.

Heerlen already features a strong sense of community as seen in the number of clubs, associations and resident's initiatives often present at the neighbourhood level. Policies such as Operatie Hartslog ("Operation Heartbeat") from the 1990s and the week-long event Cultura Nova have paved the way for an increased liveliness in the otherwise struggling city centre.

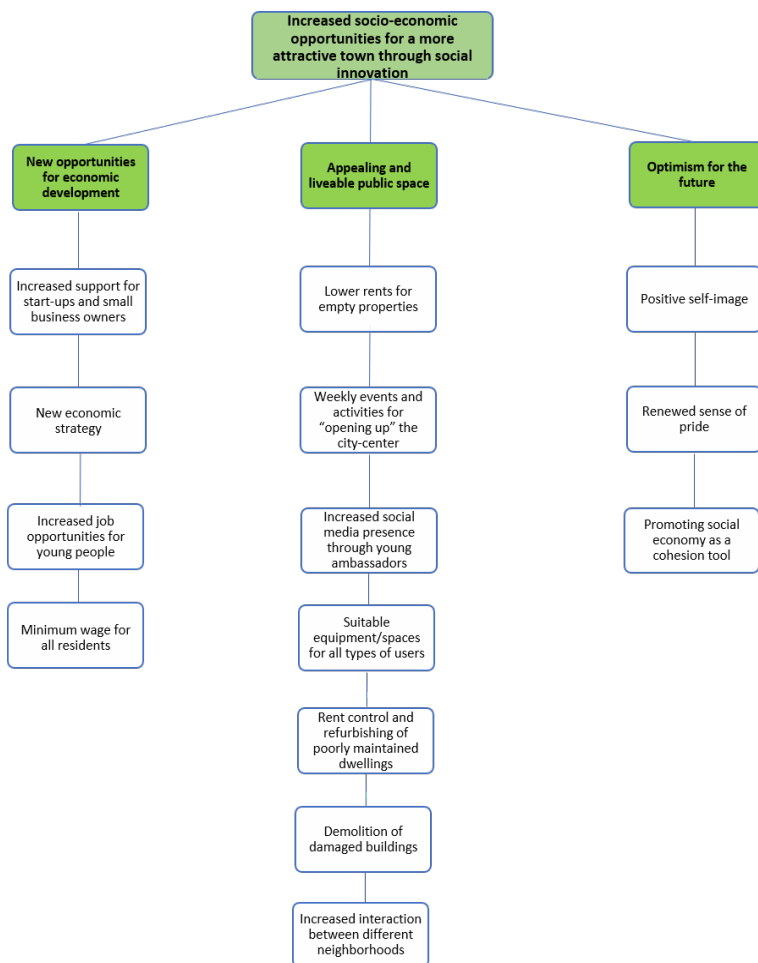


Fig. no. 4. Heerlen – Objective tree analysis

Objective and perceived security have considerably improved in the city centre as a result of intensive policing and investments in addiction treatment. However, security in other suburban neighbourhoods continues to generate difficulties.

If one thing is clear, there is no shortage of creativity and initiative from those living in Heerlen. Many of the aforementioned challenges are already being worked on in some way or another, be it from the position of the local government or active residents. For this reason, it can be assumed that achieving increased socio-economic opportunities for a more attractive town is not only possible, but many of the elements needed for this social innovation are already present in Heerlen. Therefore, as *social innovation*, a *Neighbourhood ThinkTank* would serve as a central meeting place where residents, the government are welcome to communicate with each other, exchange ideas and thereby improve social activity and the realization of more bottom-up initiatives and cooperations. Currently, active residents meet in different public locations, including the old Royal Theater in order to discuss their plans of action. This location could be transformed into a functioning Neighbourhood ThinkTank, immediately restoring one of the larger empty buildings in the centre, providing a temporary solution to the vacancy issue. A small café (which is already present) could act as a source of financial support and a few jobs at the same time. Employees of the local government, especially those working on the issues outlined previously, would be encouraged to work remotely in this location to be instantly aware of plans as they occur. Rather than spontaneous meetings, the doors of the Thinktank would always be open (figuratively speaking, of course).

The Neighbourhood ThinkTank would be the physical representation of a new governance model based upon a participatory network of bottom-up initiatives that could work as a solution to the more considerable problem of achieving increased socio-economic opportunities. The Netherlands already offers a suitable environment for such an innovation, as more and more local governments are reorganising their internal structures to make resident initiatives and participation more possible. Since the 1970s, spatial planning in the Netherlands has allowed for citizen participation in government plans through cooperation. Increasingly the roles are being reversed: it is no longer the citizens who are allowed to participate in government plans, but the government is asked to adapt to the wishes and initiatives of

citizens. This is happening, particularly at the municipal level. As such, Heerlen could benefit from the success of this new model and the Think Tank construction, becoming a new type of SMIT that is highly advanced in terms of social innovations, could serve as an example for similar areas.

2.4. Velenje

Velenje is an industrial town, prosperous, with a notable export-orientated economy and large variation output (quantified in the number of patents). Velenje was a market town before 1945 and is considered a new city. Its rapid growth started in the 1950s when the technological improvements enabled increased excavation of coal and together with the emerging industry of household appliances opened many employment opportunities. Immediately following 1991, Velenje experienced a slight decline in industry and coal mining. The once-massive immigration of people, including those from other republics of the former Yugoslavia, ceased. Despite the deindustrialisation, Velenje's economy still rests on two larger industrial systems: the Velenje Coal Mine group and the Gorenje Business System, employing almost half of the town's working population.

The overall problem is the fragile socio-economic structure of the town: it is true that currently, this is a prosperous town, with internationally orientated companies and low unemployment and with no major social problems. Yet, due to the imminent closure of the coal mine shortly and the distrust towards the new Chinese owners of the town's major employer (Gorenje, household appliance manufacturer), there is a feeling of unease and fear. Not just for the urban economy, but also potential social problems such as unemployment, lowering of wages, youth outmigration, depopulation.

The first problem is the vulnerable economy: a monostructural economy (energy and manufacturing), economic dependence on two major companies, a rigid structure of a major one and the fear of globalization (taking into account that the two businesses have international owners). The reliance upon only several major factories based in manufacturing and mining is a notable problem. The rigid structure of those organisations and the necessity of a broader economic development vision, conceived by the major stakeholders backed up by the small-town mentality resulting in several lock-in effects, were pointed out during the interviews.

The youth outmigration is another problem, due to a lack of higher education, particularly outside of the main economic sector (manufacturing): fragmented higher education, problems retaining trained youth, lack of skilful (humanities and social sciences) jobs, intergenerational gap/tensions.

Populism, paired with small-town coal miner mentality, was also mentioned frequently as something we could call “cognitive lock-in effect” (Grabher, 1993): intolerance towards recent immigrants, lack of integration of some ethnic communities, fear of intelligentsia, clientelism - miners’ mentality, excessive role of political affiliations in everyday decisions, decreased influence of local community on global economic forces, diminishing social corporate responsibility. Environmental and spatial issues connected with the industrial past and specific geography of the area represent another significant problem: poor transport accessibility, unsustainable mobility (car dependency), underutilised lakeside activities, lack of tourist infrastructure.

The main objective is “forward-looking and socially just town” and is connected to the main narrative in the town of solidarity, the importance of welfare and general positive idealism in the town. Analog to main problems are four main objectives (fig. no. 5):

- Economic diversification is the objective to tackle the problem of a vulnerable economy. Surprisingly, many subordinate objectives such as green industry correspond to reindustrialisation and further specialization of the urban economy, which would diversify the existing economy and make it more resilient.

- Closely connected to the above objective is also the objective of youth attraction and intergenerational dialogue; especially the well-educated youth is considered to bring-in new workplaces and contribute to a more socially sustainable future.

- To tackle the problem of growing populism we noticed that social programs are appropriate: for the reintegration of vulnerable social and ethnic groups but also social responsibility of private (foreign-owned) companies.

- Objectives for tackling spatial/environmental issues are connected with fostering the idea of the “garden town” (green areas, urban agriculture, sustainable mobility) and utilization of industrial heritage in tourism (lake-side tourism, cultural tourism etc.).

The sub-objectives are not just vertically but also horizontally interconnected. For instance, the sub-objective of “attracting young

entrepreneurs with the high-quality environment” is horizontally connected with economic diversification objective (strengthening incubators, start-ups) and “the garden town” objective (fostering the garden city), but is vertically in the realm of the objective “attracting the youth and intergenerational dialogue”.

In terms of possible solutions, how to achieve those objectives is not a simple task. Certain means for achieving those objectives became clearer during the workshops carried out on social innovation in the previous research activity. For instance, for accomplishing the goal of economic diversification, the locals proposed two activities: one is to establish a fish farm in the Lake Šalek area. The farm would be based on a public-private partnership and could employ up to 80 people. This activity could also tackle the last objective of “the garden town” since it requires regeneration of the local environment. The second social innovation was to strengthen (or upgrade) the NGO sector, making it less dependent on voluntary work, with a higher number of professional staff. A stronger NGO sector would be able to develop innovative programs for the social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups (objective 3 – just and multicultural society) and employ young people with a background in social sciences and humanities (objective 2 – attracting the youth and intergenerational dialogue).

The programs would also include volunteers (youth, elderly), not as the central pillar, but rather as support and opportunity for gaining skills, additional income and social inclusion. The third innovation is the mentoring scheme: older workers would guide new, younger workers for a few years until they retire. This would provide them with an additional financial incentive in exchange for not extending their retirement age. Such a mechanism, managed by a business incubator or employment office, would help young, educated people to capitalize on their expertise and stay in their hometown (objective 2), help employers to recognize the potential and ideas of young people, and bridge the gap between the economy and educational institutions (objectives 1 and 2).

Above-mentioned possible solutions cannot be directly placed in one distinct category. The objective of economic diversification is based both on reindustrialisation by relevant variety (upgrading present manufacturing to a higher level, green energy, start-ups etc.) and simultaneously by introducing new economic activities in services (unrelated variety) for instance by tourism, the professionalization of the NGO sector by adding new social services or by creative industries.

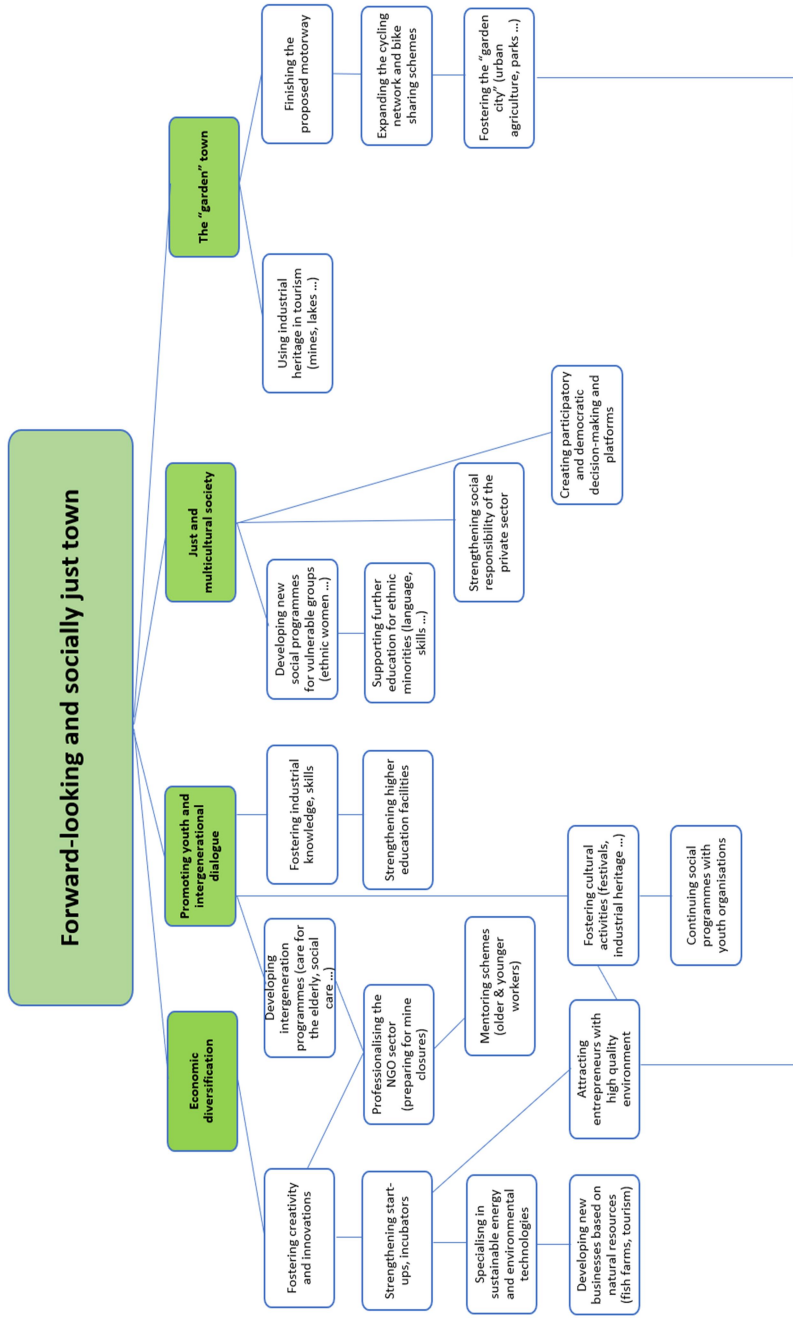


Fig. no. 5 Velenje – Objective tree analysis

If we are “forced” to put Velenje and its development objectives it is most evident that it is a neo-industrial town, meaning that manufacturing and mining are slowly being upgraded to continue with the economic, social and environmental prosperity of the area. The goal is to bypass negative lock-in effects by diversifying its economic base in the industrial and non-industrial sector (digital industries, industry 4.0). This implies variations in the social and education structure (improved education, attracting the skilled workforce back to town). Interestingly, more emphasis is put on the social programs in the town, probably because local institutions truly can easily shape and steer them than economic programs, where they have less influence.

2.5. Fieni

Fieni was declared a town in 1968, during the intense urbanization and industrialization process in Romania and experienced a similar socio-economic evolution to other small industrial towns. Even if, in contrast to the big mass of small towns evolution context, the settlement started the industrial development in the third decade of the XXth century being encouraged by the progress in the railway transport, the two emblematic industries, cement and light bulb industries, developed after 1950.

Since the 1970s, new attitudes, opinions, mentalities, behaviours and in the end, new social relations, started to shape Fieni, while others are dissipating. Today, with a population of 7 614 inhabitants, Fieni has several similarities to the evolution of numerous industrial towns in Romania after 1990: slight decrease in the number of people, but continue since 1995, mostly due to the reduction of the importance of the industrial sector in the local economy after 2000; ageing; unemployment etc.

In post-industrial times, the town is facing various problems linked especially to the *strong deindustrialisation*, due to failure of privatization in business, distortions in regional industry cooperation, lack of investors in alternative industries, increased of industrial specialization, lack of entrepreneurial initiatives in the market and lack of a prospective strategy for new enterprises. This triggered other problems in different services, such as *services and medical assistance partially insured* (low accessibility to medical services, hospital closing, emergency services with reduced skills, insufficient medical

staff, lack of specific medical services for the elderly, outdated medical infrastructure), *deficiencies in educational services* (high school dropout, lack of lifelong learning, low communication between teachers and parents - many emigrated for work, large number of pupils from low-budget families, wrong understanding of pupils' rights, outdated teaching methods and techniques), *poor physical infrastructure and public transport* (high weight of unmodernised streets, lack of local public transport, deficient offer of railway traffic concerning the needs, incomplete water and gas supply network, telecommunications in expansion, insufficient sewerage network), *non-attractive cultural infrastructure and services* (insufficiency of spaces with cultural destination, incomplete endowments with means of cultural dissemination, few initiatives with specific cultural targets, reduced financial resources for cultural actions, unequal access, due to distance, to cultural activities, poor advertising of cultural events).

Other malfunctions intensified the problems: *inadequate public spaces* (few public locations, partially suitable equipment, unbalanced distribution, supporting the centre, less meeting places for young generation, insufficient locations for older generations, lack of a day centre of activities for all ages, lack of a communication and civic education centre), *weak cooperation of territorial actors* (budgetary and legislative limits, inertia of the communication system, reduced initiatives of cooperation from entrepreneurs, lack of NGOs to mobilize the population and entrepreneurs, strong individualism as the reverse of the collectivist past, low interest in volunteering) and *air pollution* (indirect air pollution with asbestos, high number of buildings and fences using asbestos, transport of products and materials from and to the cement plant, ash pollution from waste burning).

The lack of concern for agriculture's development meant the deepening of socio-economic problems because of a *subsistence agriculture*: strong fragmentation of land, lack of associations of agricultural producers and animal breeders, non-existence of an online platform for the promotion of horticultural products, lack of an information/documentation centre for farmers and absence of interest of young people in agriculture.

Under these circumstances, the *decreasing demographic and workforce potential* was obvious: low share of the young and working-age population, divided families due to work emigration, social relations disturbed, poor communication between generations, low

support between peers and lack of any forms of collective debate on local issues.

To solve these problems, which are, to some extent, interconnected, the general objective is to *improve the socio-economic local context to achieve the stage of a more resilient town* (fig. no. 6). The socio-economic revival of the municipality implies, first of all, an increase in the activity of production, because Fieni owns a strong community around the industry. This must be done in a permissive and encouraging context to attract new investors in the area, including setting up advantages from the local authorities. At the same time, traditional industry (mass production: e.g. - in textiles or food) should be developed in collaboration with new businesses based on advanced technologies and creativity. Local resources should not be left behind, like agricultural products that could be encouraged by developing different industrial specialisations in alimentation sector. In conclusion, economic sustainability can be ensured only by developing the still existing industry and new specializations or in connection with the one already in operation, along with the services that will flourish. Thus, basic services such as education, health, culture or transport will be enhanced and the inequality in accessing them will be diminished. Moreover, by reducing the number of definitive departures from the town, social cohesion will be improved and will allow through new established and equipped public spaces in Fieni to increase the degree of cooperation between generations, while their involvement in various actions committed to increasing the quality of life in this small community will also be visible.

Developing industry and services, of different categories, but mainly relying on local resources and identity and including social innovations as a form of implementation represent a solution for Fieni future economic “recovery”. This economic launch will create prerequisites for the next stage of economic growth, which could be achieved in agriculture in association with tourism: fruit growing or a cheesemaking factory as there are livestock farmers in the area; but the farmers need an association of local producers and a digital platform where they can promote and sell their products; the adjacent area of Fieni has a great potential for developing various types of tourism (not only agritourism, but adventure and industrial tourism). The nowadays cement investor in Fieni has already set up a climbing route in another part of Romania, so there is a precedent in tourism of adventure.

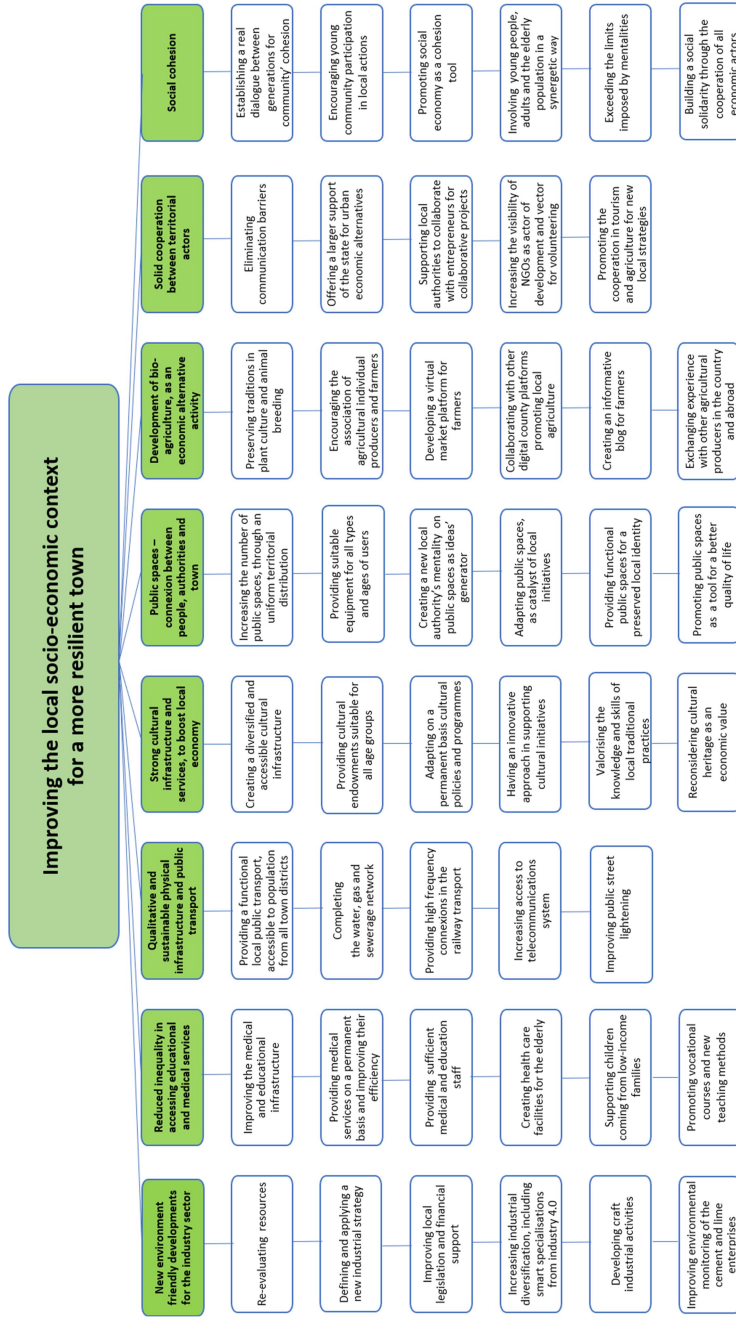


Fig. no. 6 Fieni – Objective tree analysis

Certain factors can turn into blocking various projects in relaunching and developing industry and services in the future. On the one hand, these can be linked to the limits imposed by the local territorial development: Fieni is a transit locality between the low area of the county, with predominantly industrial specialisation, and the mountain area, with increasing importance of the tourist function that imposes a series of limits on the development of tourism activities; the local infrastructure – transport and technical equipment – needs investments to encourage new investors in industry, tourism or agriculture to come in the area. There is no culture of industrial tourism or an agricultural brand of the area. On the other hand, organizational limits are very significant: e.g. legislative changes, administrative obstacles or no logistic and financial support from local authorities. Nevertheless, social barriers can have a decisive influence in guaranteeing a brighter future for the town: population passivity, conservatism or reticence in association for different purposes.

The analysis of the problems faced by the five industrial towns, case studies in Bright Future project, and of the objectives identified to ensure a socio-economic recovery and a development in the coming years is the result of an intense field research activity carried out in the previous projects, doubled by living lab research. Regular meetings and workshops with local territorial actors (local authorities, entrepreneurs, NGOs and population) have contributed to the identification of the main problems that these towns are confronting with, as well as to the formulation of solutions to diminish their impact on the future development.

As a result of this analysis, it was found that the towns are facing different problems, although at large scale these may appear to be similar. Consequently, the approaches are different. In Kajaani, Corby and Heerlen the participatory process is of foremost importance from both the inclusivity and diversity points of view. This is reflected directly in the solutions proposed: participation platform in Kajaani, a participatory forum in Corby and participatory network in Heerlen.

In Kajaani, the traditional industry seems to occupy a vital place in the coming years (nostalgia for old industrial times, common to Velenje and Fieni), but in association with the 4.0 type industries. The

community remains conservative to the industry but at the same time open to new technologies. However, multiculturalism can bring not only problems of social integration but also in the field of work because the locals are not skilled for some specialisations. In Corby, as well, the low skills of the local population could be an obstacle for future development, many of them coming from different waves of immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe. But, the relatively small distance from London could positively influence the future development of this community. It was noticed that in Corby and Heerlen the poor reputation associated with the town can be crucial when building socially sustainable urban communities. Problems of social nature deriving from identity issues occupy a central place in Kajaani, Corby and Heerlen. In Velenje and Fieni the economic aspects are more emphasized. The transformations in the capitalist era brought a new way of life and broken social relations within the community (ageing, departures of the skilled and highly educated population, shrinking, changes in the socio-professional structures and no dialogue between generations). In these conditions, the investments in different activities related to the traditional industry or new technologies and services occupy a central place in the approaches regarding solutions for future development. Once implemented and generating positive economic effects, social benefits will be the next step. However, at this stage, the focus on social programs is more evident in Velenje than in Fieni.

The situations described above demonstrate that the five case study towns are different in terms of interpretation of reindustrialisation and social innovations approach.

PART 3

Different state-of-the-art of social innovations in investigated industrial towns

Social innovation is a concept that has gained more and more attention in the last two decades in the context in which the idea of innovation was until then often associated with economic reasons. Over time, innovations have progressed (Mulgan et al., 2007) and it became a challenge to use innovation to obtain social benefits (Bridgstock et al., 2011 quoted by Gordon, 2019, p. 10). In several studies, social innovation appears as a result of a new social problem, as the unsatisfying solution to a social problem or it is a way to improve the existing solutions (Phills et al., 2008 quoted by Ionescu, 2015, p. 55).

In general, social innovations are conceived as new approaches which promote the social good. Beyond this, many definitions stress the complexity of social innovation, the centrality of cooperation and the relationship between the different actors (BEPA 2011: 33, quoted by Gordon 2019: 10). In order to obtain effective solutions, the involvement of the local community is of particular importance (Ayob et al., 2016).

Social innovation is also understood to be context specific: particular solutions arise out of specific geographic, political, cultural and historical context and they are therefore not always scalable or replicable. A review of the European Union social innovation policy by NESTA, the UK's dedicated social innovation institution, highlighted the particular salience of context-specific approaches given the regional disparities found across European member states (Reynolds et al. 2017 quoted by Gordon, 2019, p. 10).

A broad range of models and approaches are understood to be encompassed within the field of social innovation, from changes in regulation to new services or products. Hence, many social innovations are not recognised as such by the individuals taking them forward, while they may be instead understood as solutions to particular problems or new ways of acting which promote the social good.

3.1. Kajaani – Contextualized perspectives on solution building and social innovations

The concept of social innovation has a strong foothold in the field of business and public administration in Finland. The concept of social innovation has been around since the 1990s and it is largely accepted as one of the key elements of the public sector's focus areas since the early 2000s. In recent years, microlevel social innovation development has been on a rise with the promotion of the so-called culture of experimentation, that is strongly supported by public organizations, businesses and various actors in between (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). Among common citizens, this has appeared in a form of various small experimental projects that aim to enhance sustainability, livability and communality of everyday life. Experimentation projects and activity are, however, concentrated mainly on larger cities and urban areas, and despite the governmental push, advancing the experimentation culture has not been effortless (Lukkarinen et al., 2018).

In Finland, there has been a historically strong civil society from the XIXth century onwards. This legacy has laid the foundation to the current situation where the role and involvement of NGOs is remarkably high in many sectors. Similarly, connected to the described phenomenon, there is also a notably high respect and trust in the authorities and formal organizations in Finland. This can hold true even more in a town like Kajaani, where there are still echoes, trajectories and conventions from the past. In the light of these remarks, it is important to weigh the question about the possibilities of social innovations in Kajaani with respect to NGOs.

As generally in Finland, Kajaani's NGO scene is strong. NGOs are a common cooperative actor with officials in the form of project work and arranging services, especially in the field of social affairs. The solid base of NGOs and structured policies and networks with officials can work as a good starting point for creating new social innovations. While the collaboration with the public sector and NGOs has for long been common and an established way of working, brainstorming new ideas and planning solutions multilaterally can be relatively effortless. On the other hand, this may have created a certain culture of formality and even a strictness that comes forth in some situations, causing unnecessary bureaucracy and transaction costs. It can also alienate and

exclude people who are not associated in the organization. Finland is a highly digitalized society, and digital applications and social media has become more popular in recent years in the participation and mobilization of the citizens. There is some web-based activity in Kajaani with successful outcomes, and digital platforms can be a useful tool in creating new innovations. However, many people are not accustomed to using the internet or smartphones, and therefore these tools may have an unbalanced reach concerning the age and socio-economic position. What comes to the recent push of the culture of experimentation in the context of Kajaani, some of its features (smallness, isolated location, insider-outsider social division) can be either an asset or a challenge. The short (social and geographical) distance between the actors may enable horizontal flexibility and agility that are needed in experimentation based social innovation. On the other hand, some of the “ordinary people” who are not familiar with the public development projects may not be interested or they can feel that it is not their business to involve.

To recap some of the results of the earlier study and assessing further some views on social innovation in the context of our case study town, we may look at some of the issues that pose the main challenges to Kajaani. Despite the fact that there are also some other issues (industrial-economic transition, attraction and underlying beliefs in self-conception), we concentrate here on: 1). general social problems and demographics, such as solitude, segregation and outmigration, and 2). the lack of participation and the sense of community. The social innovation workshop held in Kajaani in spring 2019 resulted to the idea of an open pop-up meeting space that would be a low threshold meeting place for everyone and hence it would help to ease solitude and strengthen the sense of involvement and community of individuals. Despite that the idea was well received by the town authorities, it hasn't come to practice yet because of no actual resources (funding, planning, coordination, premises). Therefore, the further planning and implementation of the idea should be carried out by other actors, such as NGOs and volunteers. The problem at this point is that NGOs are typically already overworked and there is only so much that can get done with volunteer work. The other proposal for tackling social challenges and particularly the issues in participation – a shared participation platform – consists of a research part and as a developmental component, creating an open platform for participation

as a final product of the project. The project emphasizes equality, diversity and large participation from the beginning. Predicting the possible outcome of this proposal is difficult, but it can be assumed that some challenges may arise in a similar phase of the process as described above.

In the light of our observations, we estimate that *Kajaani is in the medium phase of social innovations*. The structures and culture of collaboration is stable and mutual trust with the stakeholders is usually strong, but this may leave some individuals out of the social innovation process. There could also be some unnecessary strictness and bureaucracy that is somewhat ingrained in the mentioned structures. Building a low threshold and agile procedures to ease the accessibility on these processes could be a way to broaden the scope of participation and to gain a more fruitful outcome on the local social innovations' development. Some sort of low cost informal rewarding system (meal, diploma, tickets) could be one way to lower the threshold of involvement.

3.2. Corby – Can the suggested social innovation solution be achieved in our town?

In concept and in practice, social innovation is well-established in the UK. There is a strong history of socially innovative activities, charities and activism, particularly around the establishment of organisations or citizen-led protests which have focused on sharing resources, such as the National Trust, the co-operatives movement, allotments, community development trusts and public libraries (Mulgan et al., 2007, p. 13). Many institutions are supporting social innovation in practice and funding is available through a variety of routes (Heales, 2018, p. 98). As a result, the UK is considered a world-leader in purposeful Social Innovation, scoring 2nd in the 2016 OECD index (Oeji et al., 2018, p. 96).

Place-based social innovation also has a long history in the UK, and it includes, for example, philanthropists who established model towns to explore better living and working conditions, such as Robert Owen's "Villages of Co-operation". In practice, co-operatives have also tended to be place-based. Community Asset Transfer is a principle which has deep roots, while being formalised as a practice in the early 1990s and then in law in the early 2000s through community

development corporations and other bodies (for examples and history see Wyler, 2009).

How should places seek to innovate collectively? Literature on this area focusing on towns specifically is sparse, however there have been recommendations for place-based innovation recommending that small to medium towns should socially innovate “bottom up” rather than using “top down” methods. Knox and Myer (2013), for example, suggest that peer-to-peer networks work best, as do a range of intersecting place-based innovations which are mutually supportive and they were shown to have success by the Mondragon town-based model of intersecting social innovations (Heales et al., 2017).

In the UK, we can learn from the recent examples of small place-based social innovation initiatives. For instance, universities and other educational institutions have led some place-based regeneration schemes in towns by establishing campuses in satellite locations; Durham’s campus in Stockton, Teeside is one such example. One of the best-known current place-based models of social innovation is the “Preston model”, a place-based partnership focusing on community wealth-building, which promotes the use of anchor institutions and socially innovative value chains, to encourage procurement which increases local spending (CLES, 2017). Transition Towns is another model promoted by the Transitions Network, which aims to create community-led change for a sustainable and just future and suggesting also to engage with issues such as energy-supply (Transitions Network Team, 2016).

Another example of place-based social innovation is the Participatory City model working in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham in partnership with funders and the local authority. It provides an opportunity for the citizens to explore co-operating with each other and skills building through practice – emphasising the use of physical spaces. Participatory City reports that 1 200 people alone signed up to undertake an activity in the first year (Made to Measure, 2018).

We can learn from these successful models which have enabled social innovation to occur through the acts of civic participation and decision making. These models can be subject based, focusing for example on climate change or social care, but they can also be run locally as place-based examples of participatory decision-making forums such as Citizens’ Assemblies. For example, Wales has run a

Citizens' Assembly which has recently invited a representative group of citizens from across Wales to establish shared agendas; Oxford is running a citizens' assembly on climate change; Leeds undertook a Poverty Truth Commission, a place-based subject specific Citizens' Assembly reviewing poverty in the city; and Lewisham Council in London has followed suit, holding a place-based forum on local poverty.

The question then becomes – could a citizens' assembly work in Corby? *In Corby, social innovation is well-established following certain historical trends and themes.* For example, during the era of the steelworks, social innovation was focused on the celebration of heritage and providing places for people to come together. Around the time of the steelworks closure, the town witnessed an age of social activism and solidarity in the form of strikes, soup kitchens and other activities. During the early 2000s, partnership working began the process of revitalising the town centre, and since then a number of citizen-led initiatives have developed new models of social action, such as preserving the urgent care centre facilities through online crowd-funding and campaigning, or establishing a participatory arts programme in the town which draws on the input of residents and a range of groups to develop programming which is inclusive (Gordon et al., 2019b).

This suggests that the residents of Corby, with their history of working together and developing bold initiatives, are well placed to adopt a town-wide socially innovative venture that seeks to preserve these practices and to create a forum for people to continue to work together in order to socially innovate, as well as inviting new people to take part. The involvement of a cross-section of residents will need to be carefully planned and delivered, as there have been difficulties in the past around engaging with certain groups, in particular migrants and young people (Gordon et al., 2019a).

A Citizens' Assembly will also require broader institutional backing. Corby Borough Council has, in the past, been a pro-active agency, successful in developing and implementing ambitious strategies for the town and drawing in external funding sources. The Catalyst Corby regeneration programme initiated in the early 2000s was built on an extensive consultation process. Yet, in recent years, this engagement has diminished and the borough council is considered less approachable than before, and this was partly attributed to budget cuts (Gordon et al.

2019b). If external funds can be accessed to create a Citizens' Assembly, this barrier may be overcome.

The changing political context also presents significant uncertainty which may impact the implementation of local social innovations, particularly those – such as a Citizens' Assembly – which require political buy-in. In 2021, Corby Borough Council will be subsumed in a unitary authority structure for North Northamptonshire. This authority will likely change the political make-up of the council (adjoining areas are traditionally Conservative while Corby has a stronger Labour tradition). With this change, there is uncertainty about the receptiveness of the local authority to support innovative approaches. The new structure may also limit the ability of decision-makers to enact programmes at a local level, in which case it may struggle to implement recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly. Yet, there is also an opportunity for the Citizens' Assembly to act as a key support mechanism during this transition to highlight and to strengthen the voice of Corby residents allowing them to set their priorities with the new administration.

3.3. Heerlen - The solutions should rely on the experience already gained

It can be stated that socially innovative practices in the Netherlands hit their peak around 2012 (Oeij et al., 2012). Social innovation refers to innovative forms of organization (flexible organization), to the development of new management skills (dynamic management), to the achievement of high-quality work relationships (working smarter) and co-creation (innovating together with others) (Volberda, Heij, 2018). The current urgency of social innovation is network-driven, focusing on the innovative power of all corners of society. Its power, at least in the Dutch context, has relied on all society players, including the business community, knowledge institutions, government and civilians working together to reach solutions.

Although on a national scale the number of social innovations has steadied over the last few years (Oeij et al., 2012), the presence of creativity and innovative ideas has not, especially in the town of Heerlen. Past examples of social innovations in Heerlen were considered successful when they featured some type of connecting factor: contributing to a sense of community and bringing residents, the

local government and other parties into contact with each other. These innovations were also considered successful in the way they present Heerlen to the outside world as an offering and worth visiting place. Such innovations contributed to a growing self-confidence, self-consciousness, courage and entrepreneurial spirit for the residents of Heerlen, eliciting a “do-it-yourself” culture. Only one successful initiative or event is needed in order to create a positive spiral in which Heerlen residents dare to be inspired and take actions into their own hands. Ideas for initiatives and activities generally sprout from residents themselves. These innovations are long-term processes; especially those that have already proven their added value should be able to rely on multi-year structural financing. In this case, the local government’s role was mainly described as facilitating (for example taking away bureaucratic obstacles) and providing financial support. Key figures with persuasiveness power and broad networks are crucial to the social innovations ‘success.

The greatest finding related to the burgeoning social innovations is related to ownership and responsibility. Active residents initiated all current initiatives in Heerlen and their continued success was dependent on the collaboration between local partners. Rather than citizens being asked to participate in long-term visions from planning “experts”, local governments across the Netherlands are now hoping for a continued and intensified role from active residents. While this broader shift in roles and responsibility poses a fortunate opportunity for the addressing of urgent challenges and the realization of their solutions in the town of Heerlen, determining exactly how this process works in practice remains the eminent question.

For this reason, it can be assumed that the proposed solution of “achieving increased socio-economic opportunities for a more attractive town by way of social innovation” is possible to achieve. With this in mind, *Heerlen can be considered a SMIT that is advanced in terms of social innovations.*

3.4. Velenje - Diversification of development alternatives forms relying on innovative social and institutional solutions

The main challenge in Velenje is the fragile socio-economic structure due to the imminent coal mine closure and the internationalisation of main industry. The overall goal in the town is to

create a “forward looking and socially just town” and is connected to the narratives of solidarity, the importance of welfare and general optimism in the town. Four main objectives (economic diversification, youth attraction and intergenerational dialogue, tackling populism, fostering the “garden town” idea) can be partly resolved by social and organisational innovations in town. However, social innovations do not address economic development and business-orientated innovations directly, so we do not believe that they are an overall solution for all the above-mentioned objectives. They do, however, play a bigger role in the more socially, politically and spatially orientated objectives that the town wishes to implement.

From the historical perspective, social innovations were always present in the town’s modern history and helped shape today’s favourable conditions – especially from the social cohesiveness point of view. During the project, at least 14 practices were recognised that could be considered as social innovations. It was determined that all the innovations have the common trait of extremely close and fruitful collaboration among everyone involved, especially between the civil society and the local authorities, something that has not changed despite the changes to the socio-political system in 1991 and the current threat of neoliberalism. The local “climate” is therefore positively inclined to creative ideas, finding solutions to common problems, and lastly, creating social innovation, which is certainly a good forecast for reacting to any possible shocks and crisis situations in the future. Past social innovations have helped the town especially from two perspectives. First, the social perspective, since various festivals, youth initiatives, support for the vulnerable social groups contribute to a better social and cultural life in the community. Second, other innovations such as the ecological movement in the 1980s, free public transport and bike sharing scheme contribute to a better and greener environment, despite the town’s industrial legacy.

During the workshops, it has been observed how proposed social innovations are created, negotiated and developed within the community. All of them address the four objectives previously identified, but from different aspects. The first innovation is a fish farm, to be created in one of the lakes formed during the coal mining process. This sounds promising, as it would provide new jobs to the low-skilled workforce designed around the founding of a company, closely associated with individual entrepreneurship and market solutions, which could potentially tackle the first objective of a more diversified

economy. If such an idea would be realized, it would have many benefits for the local community: new jobs (also for the low-skilled population), efficient use of natural resources (also as a compensation for lost arable land), and an incentive for strengthening new economic branches that were being slowed down due to the predominant role of two major companies. The second social innovation proposal was to strengthen and professionalize the NGO sector in the community. A stronger NGO sector would be able to develop innovative programs for the social inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups and employ young people with a background in social sciences and humanities. This innovation could help achieve various objectives, mostly those connected to the attraction of young people back to town, fostering intergenerational and intercultural dialogue to prevent the rising of populism and xenophobia. The last innovation proposal is the mentoring scheme, managed by a business incubator or employment office, that would help young educated people capitalize on their knowledge and stay in their hometown. Additionally, it would help employers to recognize the potential and ideas of young people, secure the tacit knowledge and bridge the gap between the economy and educational institutions.

As we see from the above-mentioned ideas, social innovations are abundant in town and may be the result of a long-standing tradition of innovation, collaboration and tacit knowledge connected with the town's industrial history (industrial culture and values). Of course, those innovations can help make the town more resilient in the future and prepare it for future inevitable changes. Although the process of social innovations is not "institutionalised", we believe that *Velenje is in the medium phase of social innovations*, where the local authorities and the NGOs create conditions for innovation. The local community is however aware that social innovations alone can "prepare" the town for future shocks only to a certain degree and that they hold no influence over global processes, such as the out-sourcing of production or economic crises.

3.5. Fieni - If you want to be part of the community, you must give something in return

Social innovations are a relatively new concept for Romania and especially for small towns. However, it cannot be said that innovations are new, in the sense that there has been none so far. The social and

economic adaptation of the population, throughout history, to different existential contexts that imposed certain conditions and ways of living, created the premises for new products or activities that replaced some that had disappeared or that had limited access. Nowadays in Romania, social innovations have a very high potential for capitalizing on the many challenges related to social issues. The most common social innovation projects, carried out mostly in large and medium-sized urban centres, are projects which provide social services for elderly people, therapy centres for persons with disabilities or integrated community centres. Attention is therefore directed mainly towards tackling social exclusion, from the perspective in which social economy is important to increase the insertion of the people with disabilities on the labour market (Buzducea – coord., 2013, p. 102). These are largely public investments, often with the support of European funds. In addition to these, attention is also paid to leisure and tourism initiatives, sometimes involving the population willing to help (volunteers or remunerated people, from young and elderly generations).

The social innovations developed in time in Fieni relied on the experience gained in agriculture, the main activity in the rural environment for centuries: e.g. vine growers in the XVIIth century, the wine weighing at that time in the commercial balance with the mountain area (activity completely disappeared from the local landscape nowadays); in the XXth century - the most important was the state cooperative of cattle breeding and dairy, but other cooperatives existed: e.g. of forest exploitation, mineral waters sale or diligent pupils. These activities were considered as social innovations because of their association to something new in the territory, relying on local resources and products and bringing socio-economic benefits. The cooperative movement in Romania, appeared spontaneously like in other European countries, was in the XXth century in continuous development, responding to the growing needs of capitalization of the peasant households (Larionescu, 2013, p. 88). In socialist times, agricultural cooperation has evolved in a new context, dictated by the eradication of private property.

At present, social innovations in Fieni should address the problems that the settlement faces in the post-industrial era: small number of jobs, decrease in the number of young people in town, poor medical and transport services, insufficient public/meeting places for young and old people and poor communication between generations

and deficiencies in participatory actions (limited resources, few NGOs, low involvement of locals).

Today's social innovations identified during the workshops can be found both in private projects (taxi sharing, a family business focused on preparation of food products using local resources, three tailor centres, one shoemaker centre, two woodworking centres and some catering companies) and in the initiatives of the local authorities to respond to the current issues (a tourist information centre, an ambulance service, a park and a library). All together, these ideas have helped to change things for the better, but they are not enough to ensure a comfortable living for the community.

The biggest obstacle in the achievement of future social innovations, although the proposals exist in three directions (agriculture and entrepreneurship, culture – a museum of the town and management – re-organisation of the owners' associations in the residential areas), is the absence of a tradition in social innovation. This fact comes together with the insignificant number of participatory actions due to deficiencies in the local involvement in doing sustainable projects for the community. The weak community cohesion imposes difficult conditions for the implementation of large social innovation projects. At the same time, being an industrial community with a strong sense of nostalgia for the glorious past of the town, it can turn into an asset in the outline of proposals that consider the local industrial culture. The industrial footprint and the touristic importance of the nearby area would create the premises for the development of social innovations in different types of tourism, non-existent in the area. Other obstacles can occur and slow down the implementation of projects relying on social innovation: institutional, legislative, financial, technical or cultural ones.

All these statements lead us to the conclusion that *Fieni is passing through an early stage of discovery and easy-going development of social innovations*, in which social entrepreneurship should be focused on the social mission and its impact – the social benefit (Vlăsceanu, 2010, p. 177). This can be translated through the assertion that the town begins to understand the importance of getting out of inertia through internal forces that should consider not only economic, but social entrepreneurship too. If the hope remains now mainly in the production process for which the town started already to prepare, by training qualified graduates in different fields of activities

(industry, tourism, driving), the social “profits” brought by these activities will be the cornerstone for more tangible social innovations, with an obvious involvement of more NGOs and groups of people activist in different directions (including craft art, an advantage for these types of communities). In the meantime, public debates with interested people will support future social innovation emergence in Fieni. These debates should include local resources and values in relation to socio-cultural economies, which would have to be supported by small entrepreneurs and the population, thanks to a gradual implementation of the necessary institutional policies and tools.

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The analysis of social innovations in various types of industrial towns in Europe led to the conclusion that their phases of evolution are in connexion with the deindustrialisation process. Thus, towns that were deindustrialised in the 1980s, are today in an advanced phase of social innovation development: Corby and Heerlen. In these towns, with already a solid culture of social innovations, a diversity of initiatives implemented in this sector can be noticed. Kajaani and Velenje are in medium phase of social innovations, a stage synonymous to efforts to improve the implementation tools for social and institutional innovations. Fieni can be situated as passing an emerging phase of social innovations, in which the awareness of the importance of the social economy becomes visible and where different challenges can determine opportunities of development.

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