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REPORT //

RURALPLAN - Methodological framework and knowledge

Basis for the pilot cases (Task 1)

Main report // April 2024

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Disclaimer

This document is an interim report.

The information contained herein is subject to change and does not commit the ESPON EGTC and the countries participating in the ESPON 2030 Cooperation Programme.

The final version of the report will be published as soon as approved.

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Abbreviations

ESPON EGTC	ESPON European Group on Territorial Cooperation
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
RUSTIK	Rural Sustainability Transitions through Integration of Knowledge for improved policy processes
CASPER	Citizen Activation in Shrinking rural areas for Place-based policies to Enhance Resilience
RUPIL	Rural Planning and Innovation Lab
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
IGP	Individual, Group, Plenary
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunity, and Threats
SSB	Statistics Norway
SCB	Statistics Sweden
FSO	Federal Statistical Office Switzerland
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
LAU	Local Administrative Units

1 Introduction

The Targeted Analysis RURALPLAN aims to produce evidence on how strategic planning regarding rural areas respond to shrinking (decreasing and/or ageing population), leading to a model for knowledge-based strategic planning and policymaking. We anticipate that the model, which is called RUPIL – Rural Planning and Innovation Lab, could be applied to European regions experiencing demographic challenges related to shrinking.

The RURALPLAN project is addressing the diverse challenges faced by three pilot-cases, which include Os municipality in Innlandet, Norway, Malung-Sälen municipality in Dalarna, Sweden and the Albula region in Switzerland (see map 2.1). The pilot-cases have been selected because they represent different contexts and shrinkage-situations, and thus increases the transferability of the planning model to other European regions. Further, the selected municipalities/region showed interest in co-creating new planning and policy responses to shrinkage, in cooperation with the stakeholders and service-providers (research-team) in RURALPLAN.

The implementation of RURALPLAN is divided into three main tasks:

- Task 1: Methodological framework and literature review on strategic local planning in shrinking rural areas
- Task 2: A model for innovative planning and policy making
- Task 3: A policy brief on innovative planning model for rural shrinking territories

In this report the outcomes of Task 1 are presented. Based on the knowledge this task provides, the report ends with a suggestion on what to focus on for RUPIL in general and for the three pilot-cases (chapter 5). The outcome from Task 1 provides a solid and valid basis for the rest of the RURALPLAN-project.

This task delivers the territorial evidence on shrinking in the stakeholders' areas, identifies planning practices, and includes an assessment of effectiveness and gaps in the current planning practices. Task 1 is broken into three-sub tasks as follows:

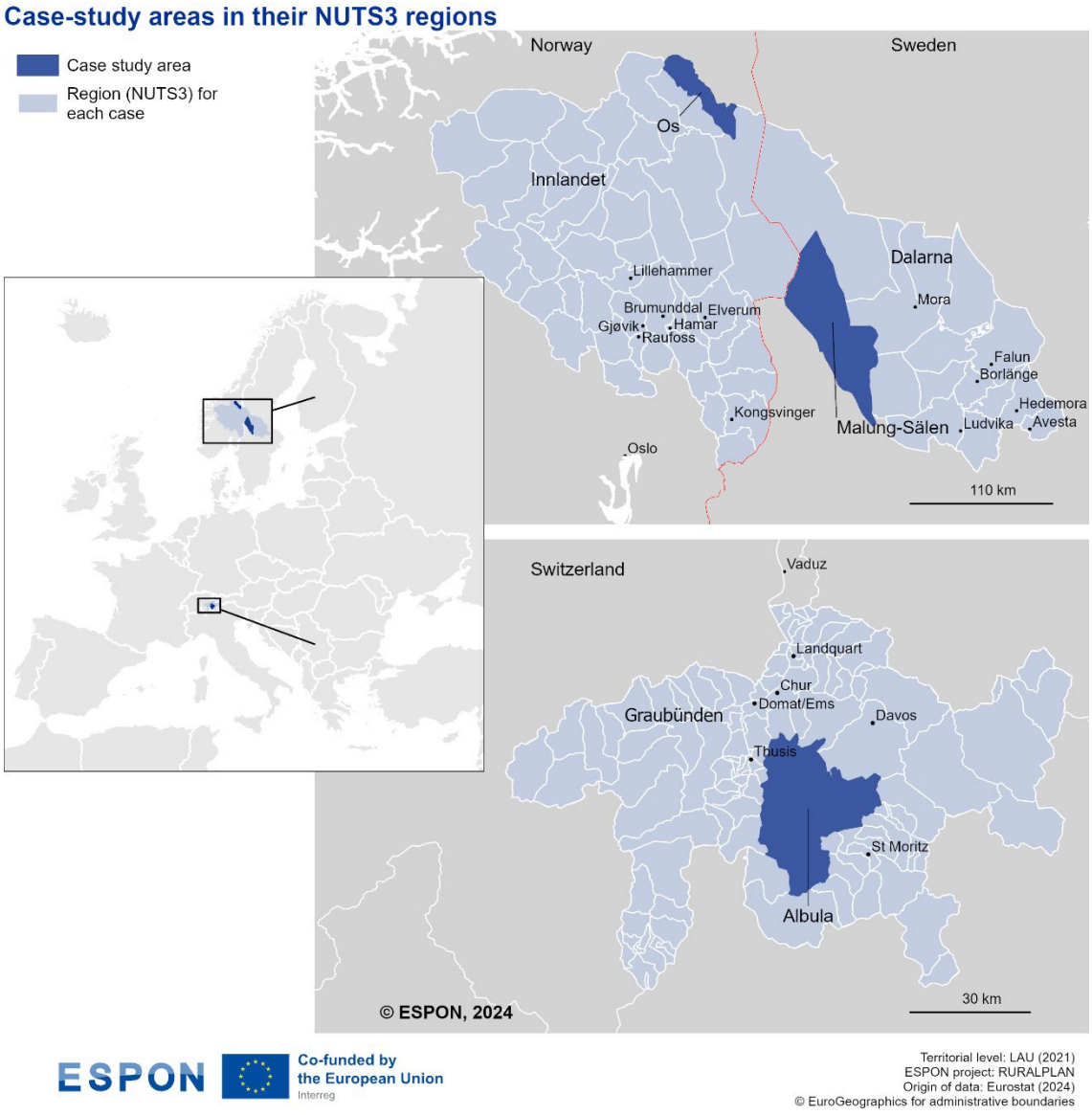
- Task 1.1 Data on shrinkage in the stakeholder's area. Here, statistical variables within geography, demography and economy were collected and analysed, and used to discuss what type of shrinking characterises each of the selected regions. The main results are presented in chapter 2. The detailed statistics and more maps are uploaded to databases at ESPON.
- Task 1.2 Literature review. Here, a literature review of policies and practices of local and regional planning and development in shrinking rural areas was performed. The review was based on scientific literature and on reports from projects, cases etc. It ends with suggestions on how shrinking can be approached, based on the findings in the review. The results are presented in chapter 3.

- Task 1.3 Existing planning practices in the pilot regions/municipalities. Here, planning and other relevant documents were studied, and key informants interviewed. On this basis, an analysis and assessment of current policy responses is made (chapter 4), and we offer suggestions for what strategies and detailed model/method (variants of the main method – RUPIL) can be applied in the three pilot-cases (chapter 5).

2 Analysis of shrinkage in the pilot-cases

Here we present and discuss the most relevant statistics and variables. This analysis uses regional data (Graubünden, Dalarna, Innlandet) and local data (Albula, Malung-Sälen, Os). The specific data presented depends on relevance and availability.

Map 2.1
Case study areas in Switzerland (Albula), Sweden (Malung-Sälen) and Norway (Os)



Source: Authors own elaboration

Map 2.1 shows the location of the three pilot-cases within their countries and regions.

2.1 Demography

Population changes over the last decades shows great variations between our case regions (table 2.1). Dalarna was the only region which shrank up to 2011, while it has stopped the last decade. Malung-Sälen exhibited the same development, although with severe shrinkage up until 2011 (as the only of the three pilot-cases). Sweden's population has grown steadily throughout the period. However, a national slow-down in growth means the disparity in population development between Malung-Sälen and the rest of the country is less pronounced than in previous decades. Graubünden and Albula had strong population growth up until 2011, but growth has slowed down the last decade. Albula's population has declined in recent years, contrasting sharply with the population growth experienced in both Graubünden and Switzerland. In Norway, both Innlandet and Os have historically had a low population growth, but since 2011 Os has had a significant decline, while Innlandet still shows minor growth. This is substantially different from the national population development which shows a continuous growth in the whole period. Compared to Europe, Switzerland, Sweden and Norway have had higher population growth. The development in our cases do however illustrates the large regional variations within countries, as they have a shrinking or stabilized population development. This, they have in common with several other regions in Europe (ESPON 2020a).

Table 2.1
Historic and recent total population change in percentage

	1961-2011	2011-2021	2022	2023
Europe / EU	22,5(1)	1,5 (1)	0,0(2)	0,4(2)
Norway	36,9	9,6	0,6	1,2
Sweden	25,6	10,2	0,7	0,3
Switzerland	46,2	9,0	0,8	0,9
Innlandet, NO	10,1	4,1	0,2	0,6
Dalarna, SE	-3,1	2,2	0,0	-0,4
Graubünden, CH	36,1	4,3	0,6	0,6
Os, NO	2,2	-8,6	-0,8	-0,6
Malungen-Sälen, SE	-21,1	-0,4	0,4	0,0
Albula, CH	29,5	0,8	-0,4	-0,8

(1): Based on data from World Bank Open Data, variable SP.POP.TOTL. (2)Eurostat 2024 (demo_gind)
Source: SSB, SCB, FSO, Eurostat

Projections for total population in 2050 show that a stable development of total population numbers is expected in all the three regions (Graubünden, Dalarna, Innlandet). However, for Os and Malung-Sälen, the situation is different, where a decrease of respectively 8% and 5% is expected. There is no specific projection for Albula.

Population in working age is an important variable for a balanced population distribution (table 2.2). In all three regions (Innlandet, Dalarna, Graubünden) this share has been decreasing. This also applies for Malung-Sälen and Albula. Os has had a slight increase from 2011, but the absolute share is the lowest of all, at 57%. Such a decrease occurs also at European and the national levels, but the absolute share of population in working age is significantly higher than in the pilot-cases.

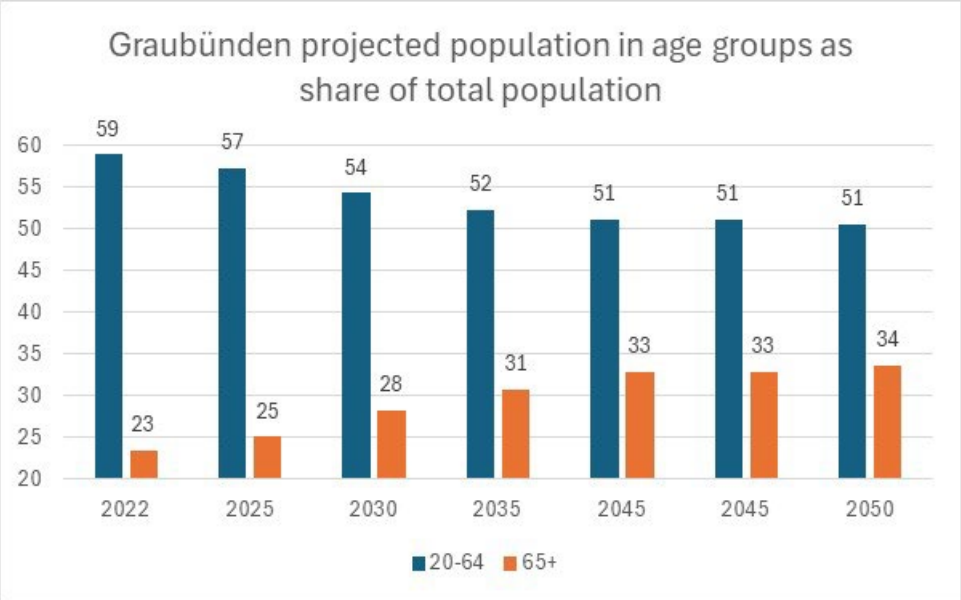
Table 2.2
Working age, share of population in percentage

	Total change in working age (15-64). Share of population (%)	Working age (15-64) share of total population (%)
	2011-2021	2021
European Union	-1.0	66,7
Norway	-1,8	64,9
Sweden	-4,2	62,2
Switzerland	-2,7	66,1
Innlandet, NO	-3,0	62,3
Dalarna, SE	-7,6	58,2
Graubünden, CH	-5,1	64,9
Os, NO	2,8	57,1
Malung-Sälen, SE	-5,0	59
Albula, CH	-7,9	62

Source: SSB, SCB, FSO, World Bank Open Data (for European Union aggregate)

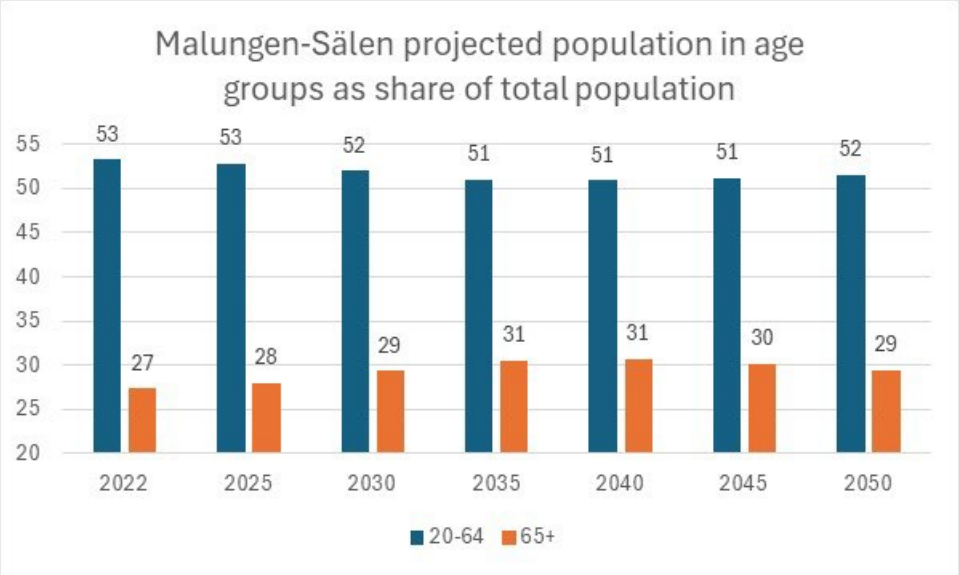
Projections for this variable show a significant decrease in people of working age and an increase in elderly people in Graubünden and Os (figure 2.1. and 2.3), while it is expected to be more stable in Malung-Sälen (figure 2.2). There is no specific projection for Albula for this variable.

Figure 2.1
Projected population in age groups, Graubünden, Switzerland



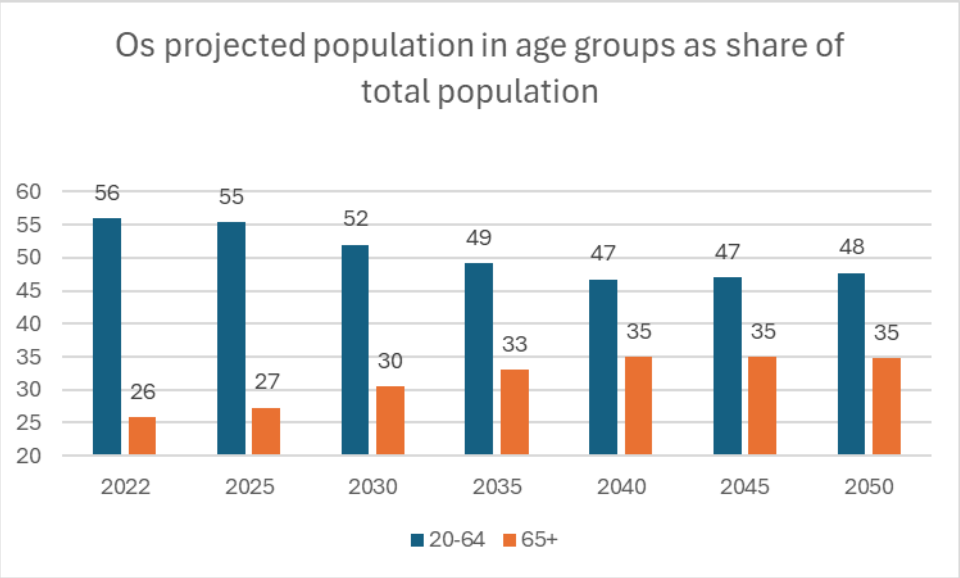
Source FSO

Figure 2.2
Projected population in age groups, Malung-Sälen, Dalarna, Sweden



Source: SCB

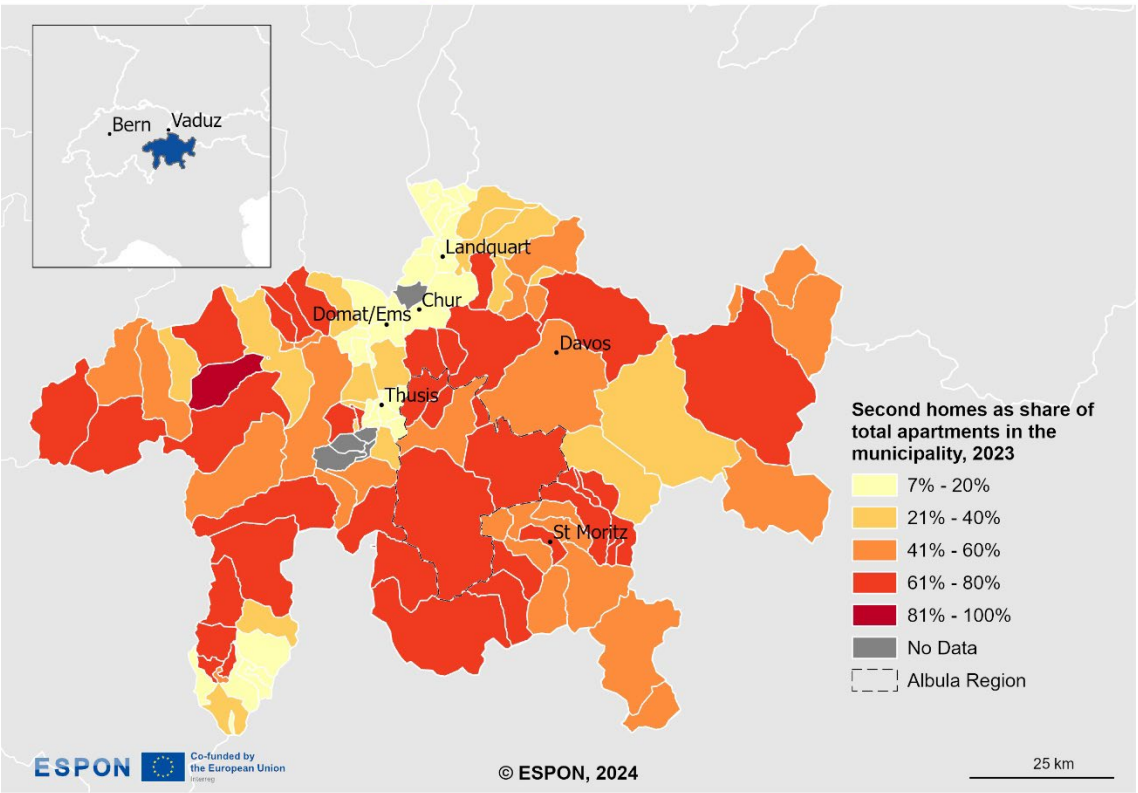
Figure 2.3
Projected population in age groups, Os, Innlandet, Norway



Source: SSB

The demographic statistics discussed above is related to the people who have their registered addresses in the regions and municipalities. For many rural municipalities in Europe the existence of second homes has a significant impact on how much people who live or stays in these regions in some periods of the year.

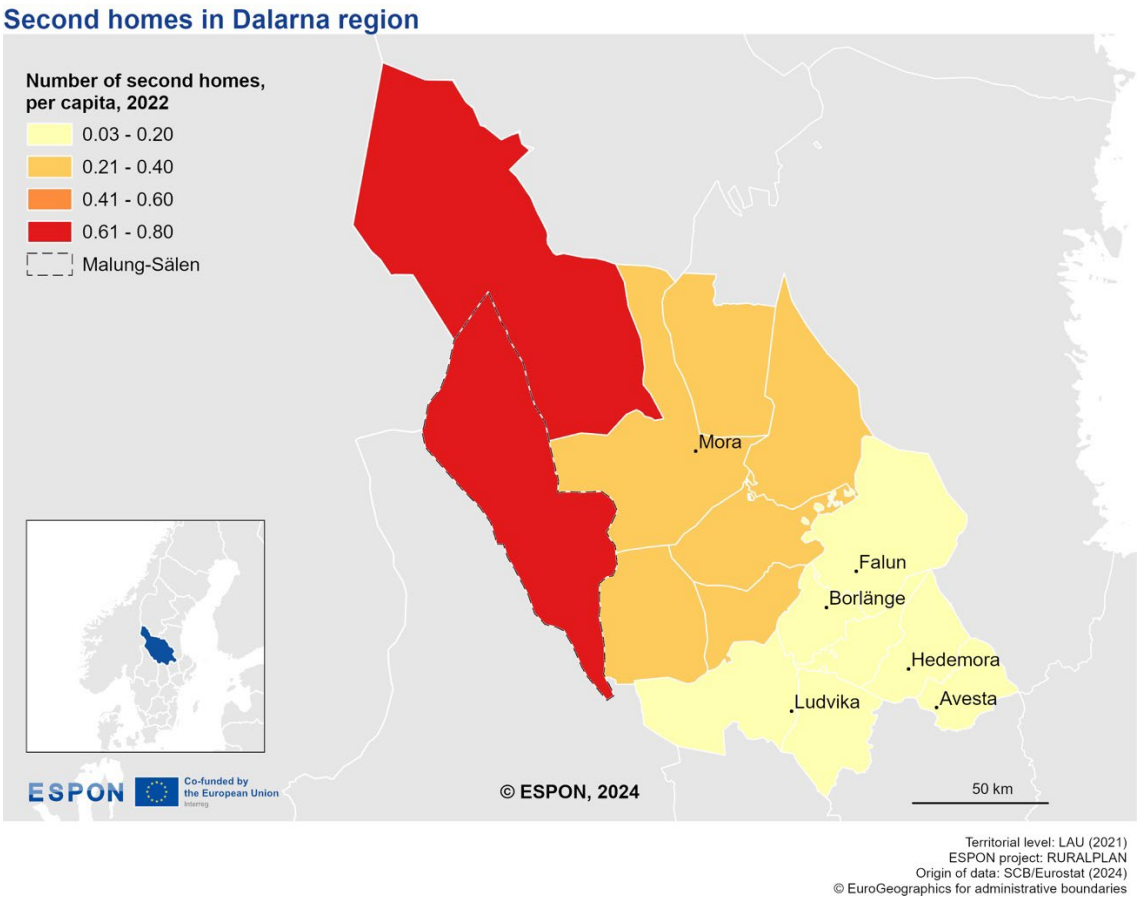
Map 2.2
Second homes, Graubünden, Switzerland



Source: Bundesamt für Raumentwicklund ARE/Swiss Topo/Eurostat (2024)

As map 2.2. shows, in many of the municipalities in Graubünden the share of second homes is high, especially in municipalities with no larger cities. This also applies for Albula, where in total 58,5% of all houses are used as second homes.

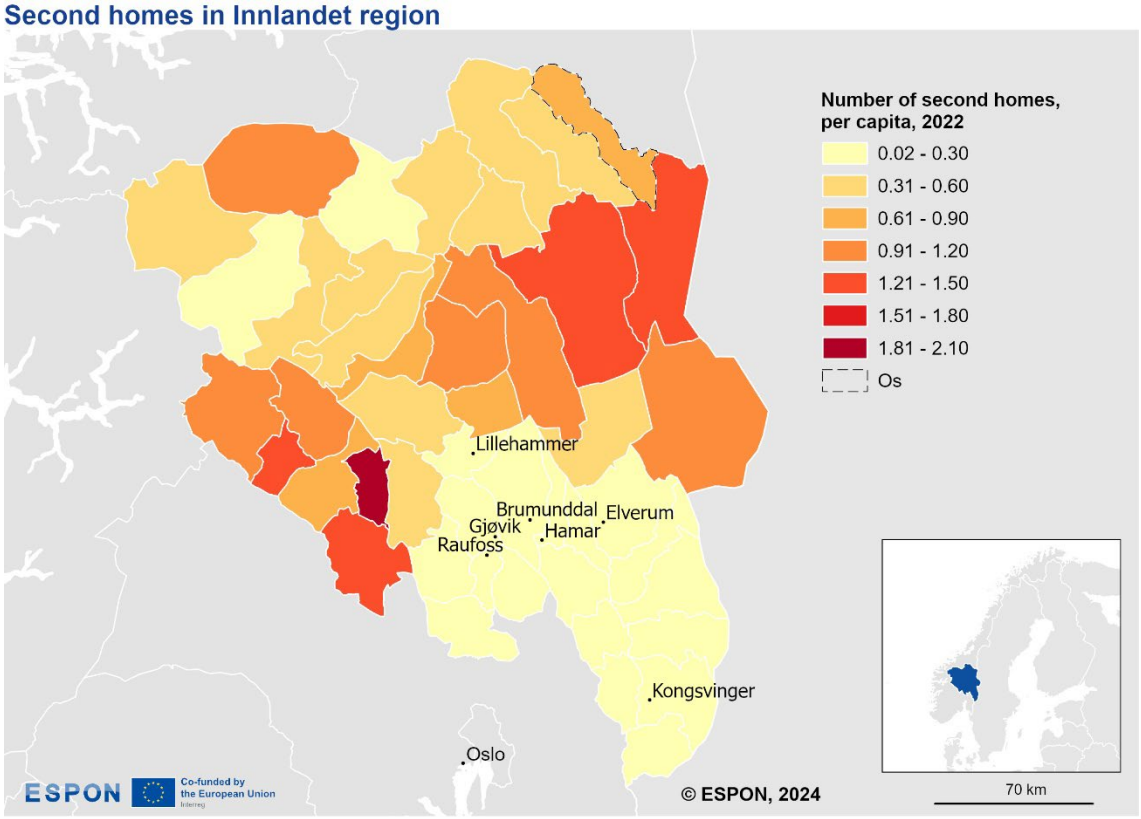
Map 2.3
Second homes, Dalarna, Sweden



Source: SCB/Eurostat (2024)

In Malung-Sälen there is 0,74 second homes per capita, which is significantly higher than most other municipalities in Dalarna (0,16 in Dalarna on average), especially the more populated areas west and south of Malung-Sälen. The high numbers in Malung-Sälen can among other be connected to the tourist destination Sälen, which are among the largest ski-destinations in the Nordic countries.

Map 2.4
Second homes, Innlandet, Norway



Source: Kartverket/SSB/Eurostat (2024)

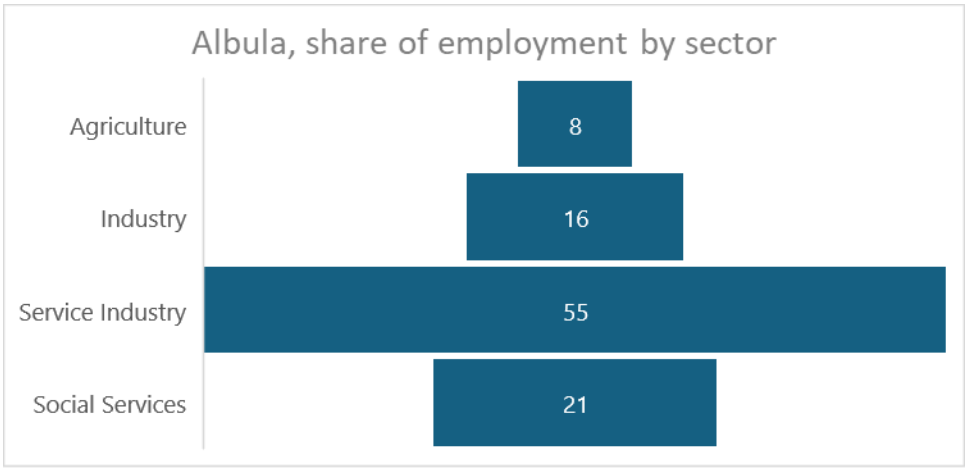
In Os there is 0,64 second homes per capita. This is relatively high compared to the average for Innlandet (0,24), while there are several other rural municipalities in Innlandet with more second homes per capita than in Os. This can among other be related to Os being further away from major urban areas in Norway than several other rural territories in Innlandet.

The significant presence of second homes in all the three pilot-cases means that in some periods of the year there are substantial more people living there, than what the demographic statistics indicates. This can have important impacts, for example on the economy with a larger marked for products and services, and on the use of public services and infrastructure, like roads, water/sewage and health care.

2.2 Economy

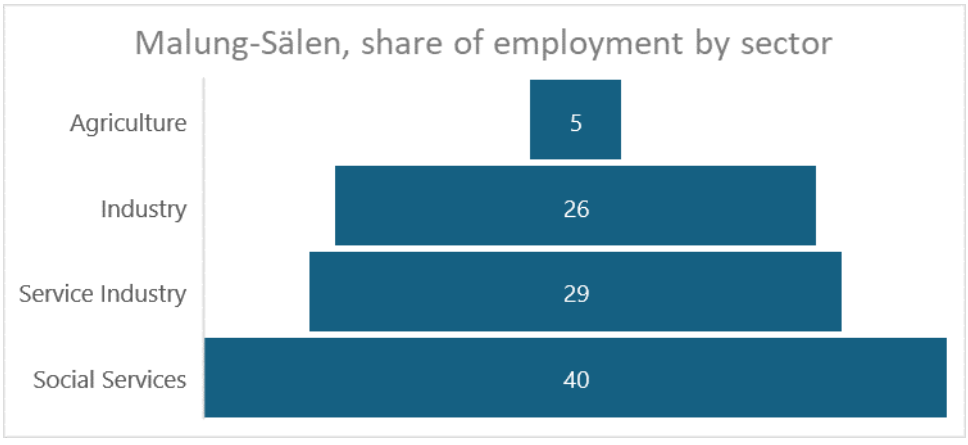
Statistics on the share of employment by sector (figure 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6) shows that Albula is characterised by a large share in services, with more than half the work force employed there. In Malung-Sälen the largest share is in health etc., which typically includes several public services. The service industry is significant, and tourism is important here as well. Os is different from the two other pilot-cases as industry is the largest sector. Agriculture is also relatively large, compared Malung-Sälen, but also to other municipalities in Innlandet.

Figure 2.4
Share of employment by sector in percentage, 2022, Albula, Graubünden, Switzerland



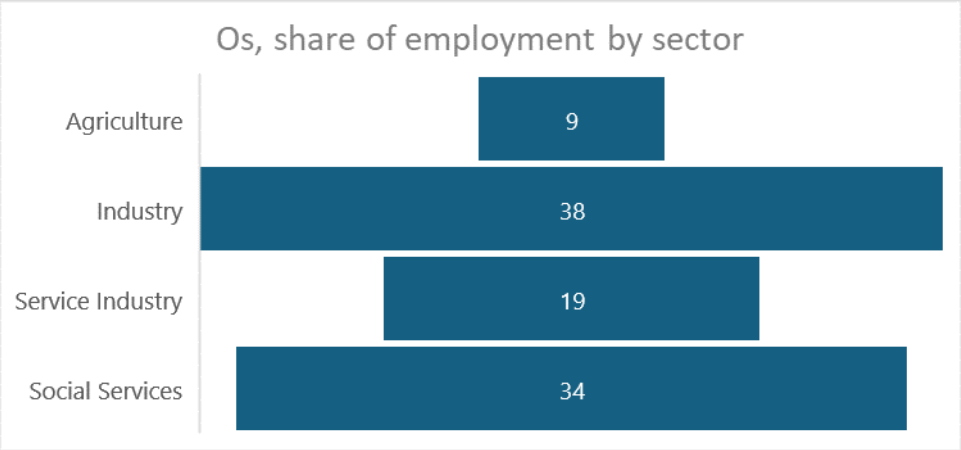
Source: FSO

Figure 2.5
Share of employment by sector in percentage, 2022, Malung-Sälen, Dalarna, Sweden



Source: SCB

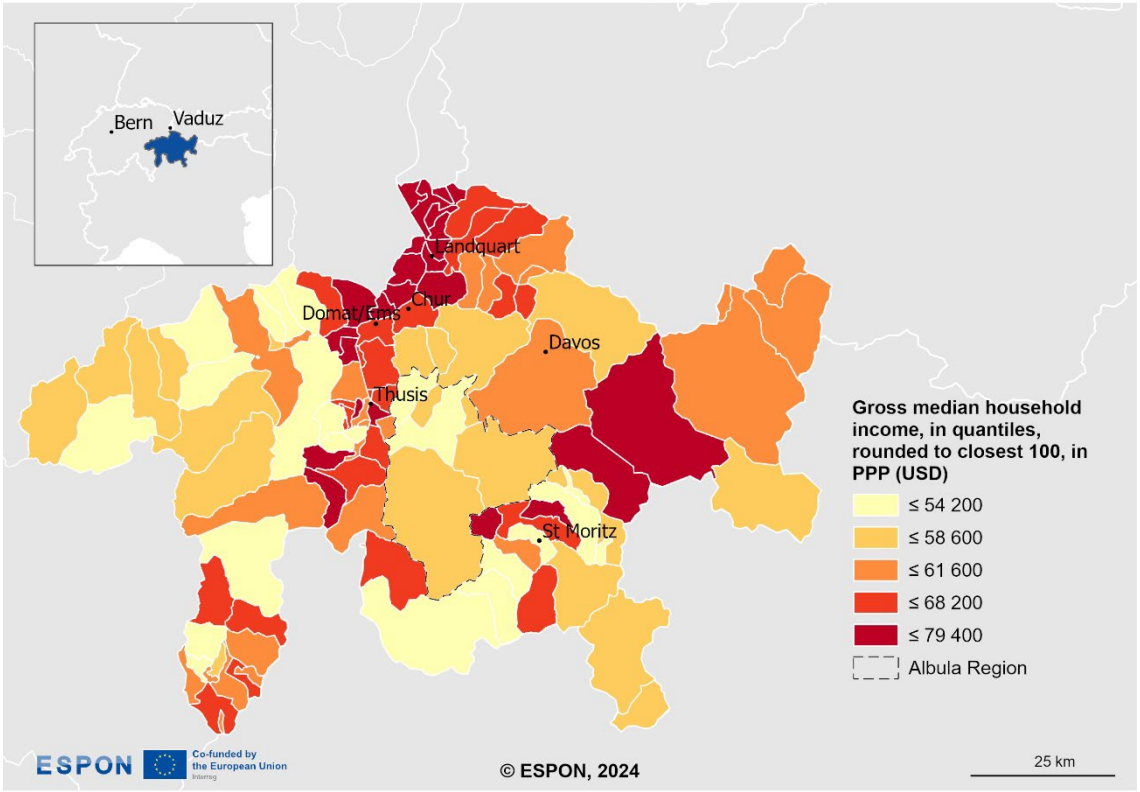
Figure 2.6
Share of employment by sector in percentage, 2022, Os, Innlandet, Norway



Source: SSB

Concerning income, all the three countries where the pilot-cases are located are high-income countries with household incomes above the average in the European Union. Map 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7 show income per household for the pilot-cases and the regions where they are located.

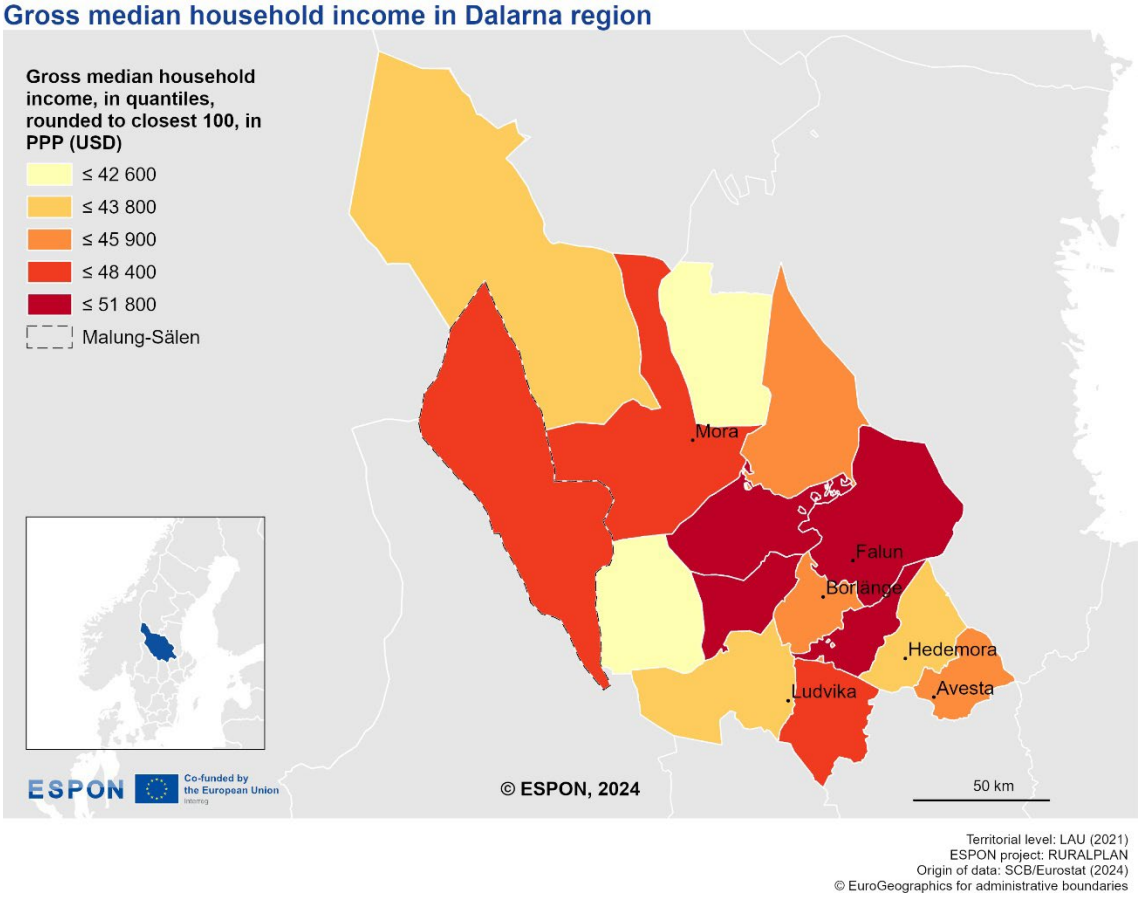
Map 2.5
Median gross Income per household 2022, Graubünden, Switzerland



Source: Swizz Topo/Eidgenössische Steuerverwaltung/Eurostat (2024)

The Albula region is among the municipalities in Graubünden with lowest household income. Albula is surrounded by several municipalities with considerable higher incomes, and which is easily accessible from Albula (will be showed later in this chapter). Households in Switzerland, including Albula, has however on average higher income than the EU average, and higher than Norway and Sweden. On the other hand, the difference between the municipalities is larger in Graubünden than in Dalarna and Innlandet (see Map 2.6 and 2.7)

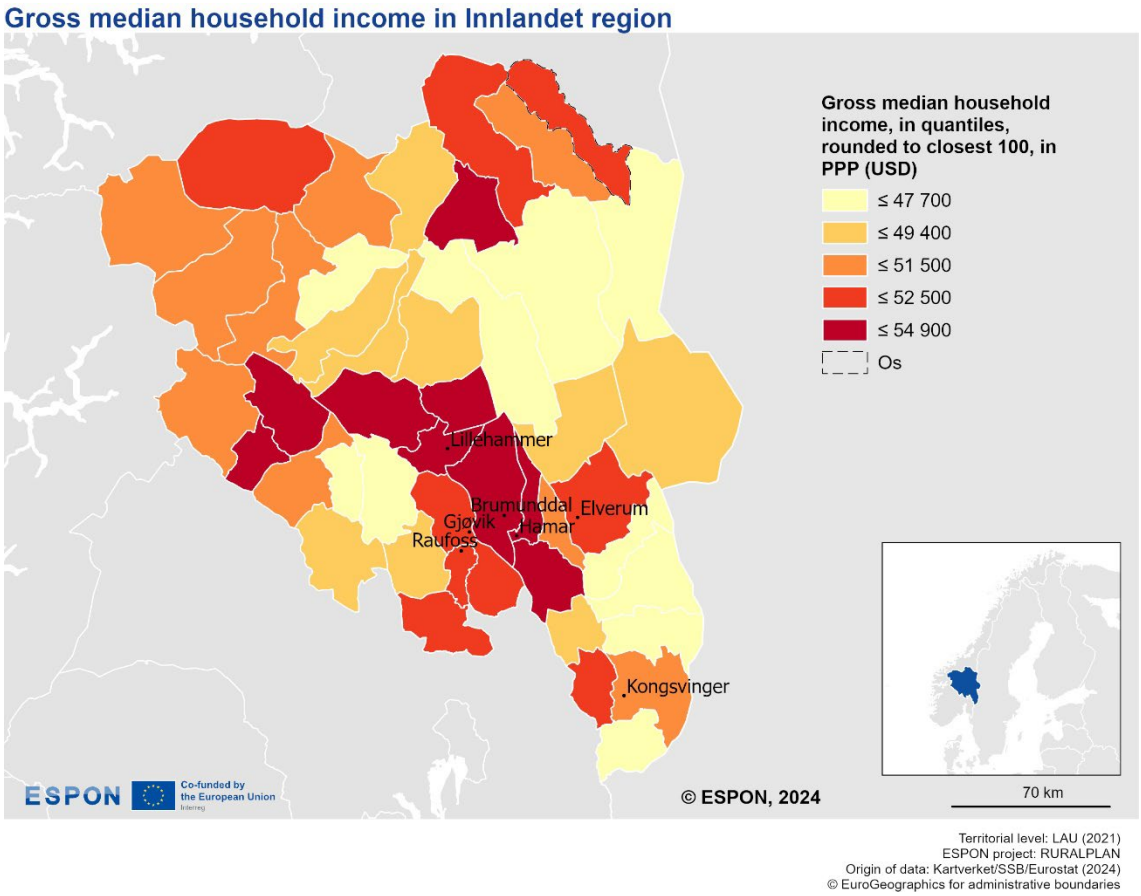
Map 2.6
Median gross Income per household 2022, Dalarna, Sweden



Source: SCB/Eurostat (2024)

In Malung-Sälen, the household income is slightly above the average for Dalarna County. All municipalities in Dalarna, except for one, have a lower average income than the national level. However, the differences in income between the municipalities are small, and significantly less than those in Graubünden. On average, household income in Sweden is somewhat higher than in the EU, but considerably lower than in Switzerland and Norway (see Maps 2.5 and 2.7).

Map 2.7
Median gross Income per household 2022, Innlandet, Norway



Source: Kartverket/SSB/Eurostat (2024)

In Os household income is among the highest in Innlandet. As in Dalarna, the differences in income between the municipalities in Innlandet are however relatively small, and much less than in Graubünden. Household income in Norway is significantly higher than EU average, but slightly lower than in Switzerland.

2.3 Geography

All three regions and pilot-cases in RURALPLAN are characterised with a low urbanisation degree and thus are rural. Mostly in Dalarna and Innlandet, where respectively 85 and 87% of the municipalities are rural (according to "degree of urbanisation" used by Eurostat. Defined by a combination of geographical contiguity and population density. Rural areas are also referred to as "thinly populated areas"). In Graubünden 67% of the municipalities are rural, and a third is urban. Especially in Graubünden and Albula, but also in Innlandet an increasing part of the population lives in shrinking municipalities (table 2.3). In Dalarna the situation is opposite, with a strongly decreasing share who lives in shrinking municipalities.

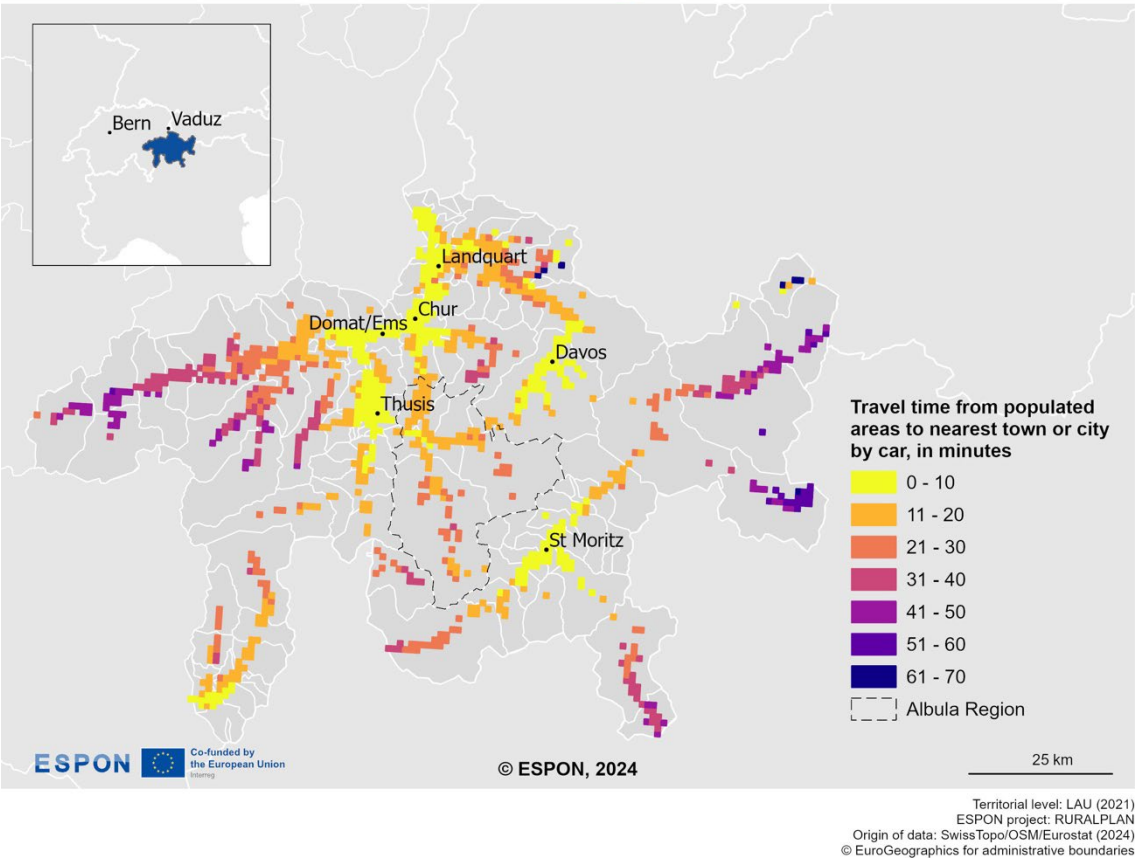
Table 2.3
Share of population in shrinking LAUs in percentage (based on LAU units for 2021)

Region	1961-2011, %	2011-2021, %
Innlandet, Norway	26	30
Dalarna, Sweden	42	11
Graubünden, Switzerland	14	34
Albula region, Switzerland	20	59

Concerning accessibility, travel time by car to nearest town with a minimum of 5000 inhabitants is calculated for our regions, including the pilot-cases. Such towns represents both a labour market of a relatively significant size, and normally also agglomerations of a variety of services. Also, the travel time to nearest train station is presented, as is a relevant indication of the accessibility for the population and for goods, both for inward and outward transport. The calculations also include towns and train stations also outside of the regions, although they are not showed in the maps.

Map 2.8

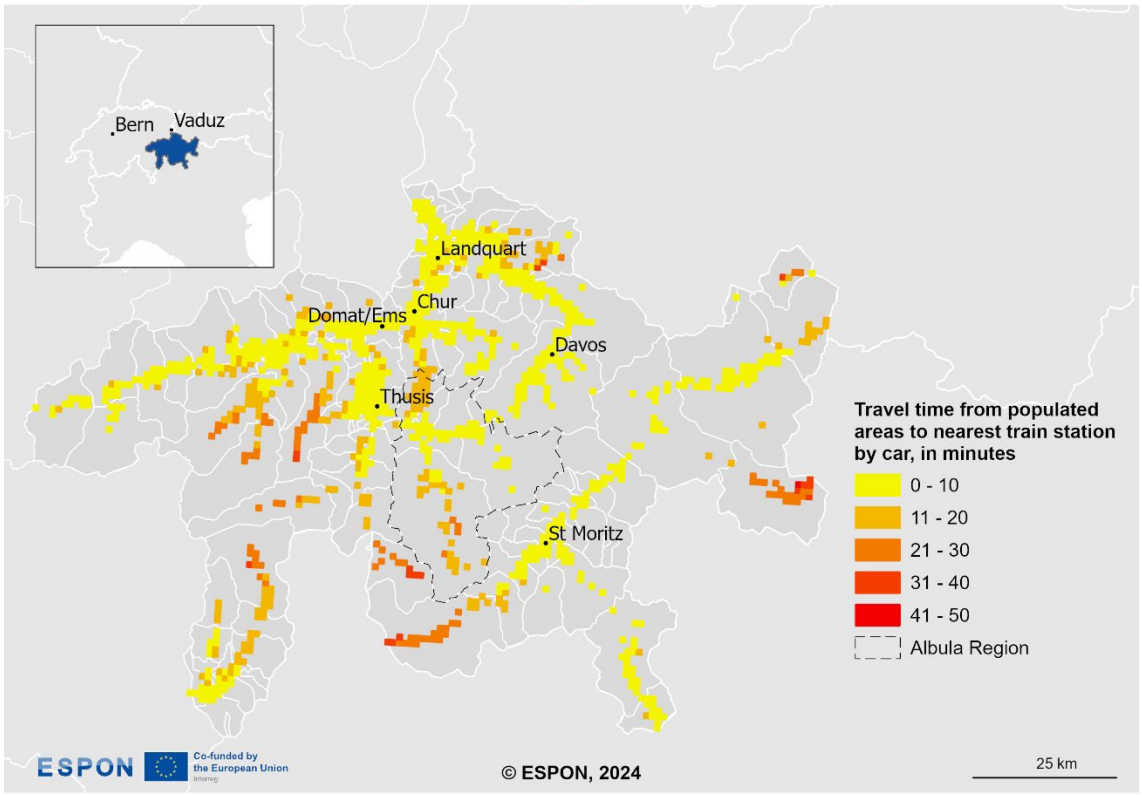
Average travel time by car to nearest urban morphological zone, Graubünden, Switzerland



Source: Swiss Topo/OSM/Eurostat 2024

Map 2.9

Average travel time by car to nearest train station, Graubünden, Switzerland

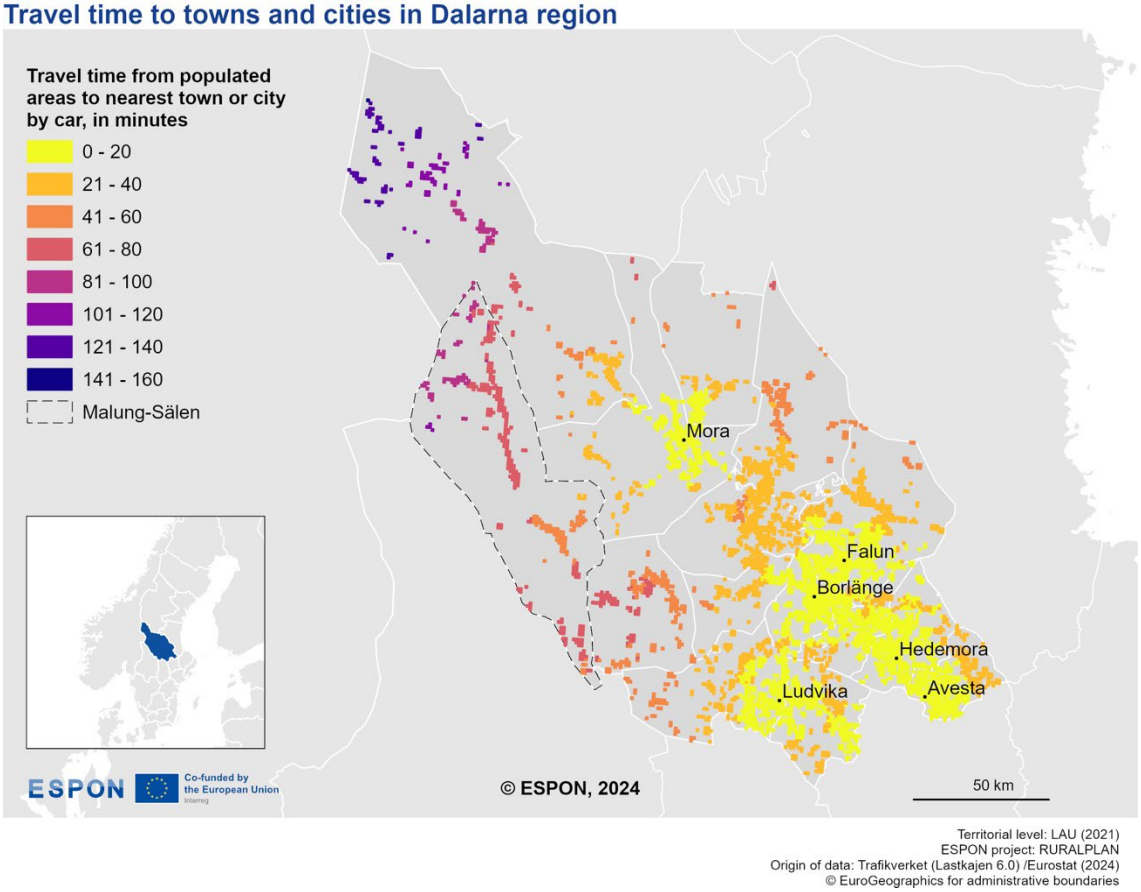


Territorial level: LAU (2021)
ESPON project: RURALPLAN
Origin of data: SwissTopo/OSM/Eurostat (2024)
© EuroGeographics for administrative boundaries

Source: Swiss Topo/OSM/Eurostat (2024)

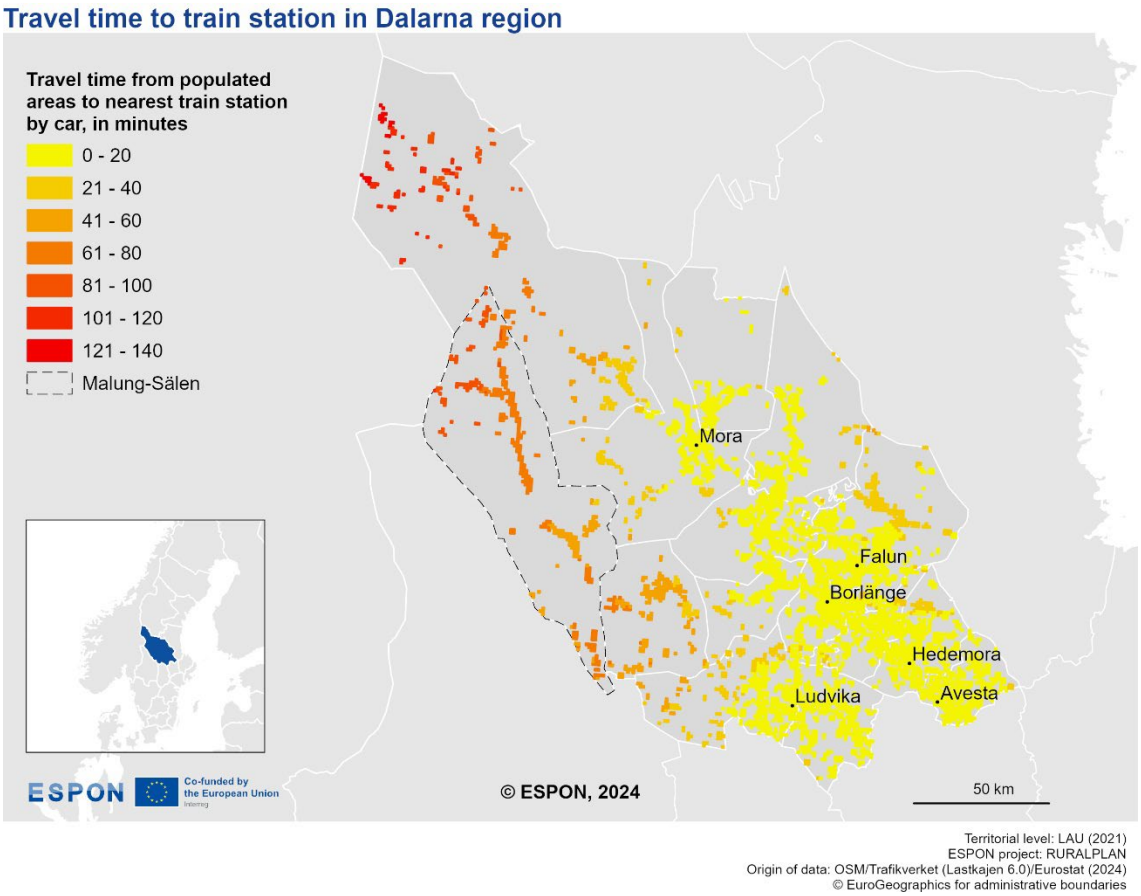
For Albula the maps shows that the accessibility to nearest town is in general good compared to many other rural areas in Graubünden, with less than 20 minutes travel time for a large part of the population. In the southern and eastern part of Albula, travel times are up to 30-40 minutes in some areas. Accessibility to a train station is very good in most of Graubünden, including Albula. Most people have 20 minutes or less to nearest station.

Map 2.10
Average travel time by car to nearest urban morphological zone, Dalarna, Sweden.



Source: Trafikverket (Lastkajen 6.0)/Eurostat (2024)

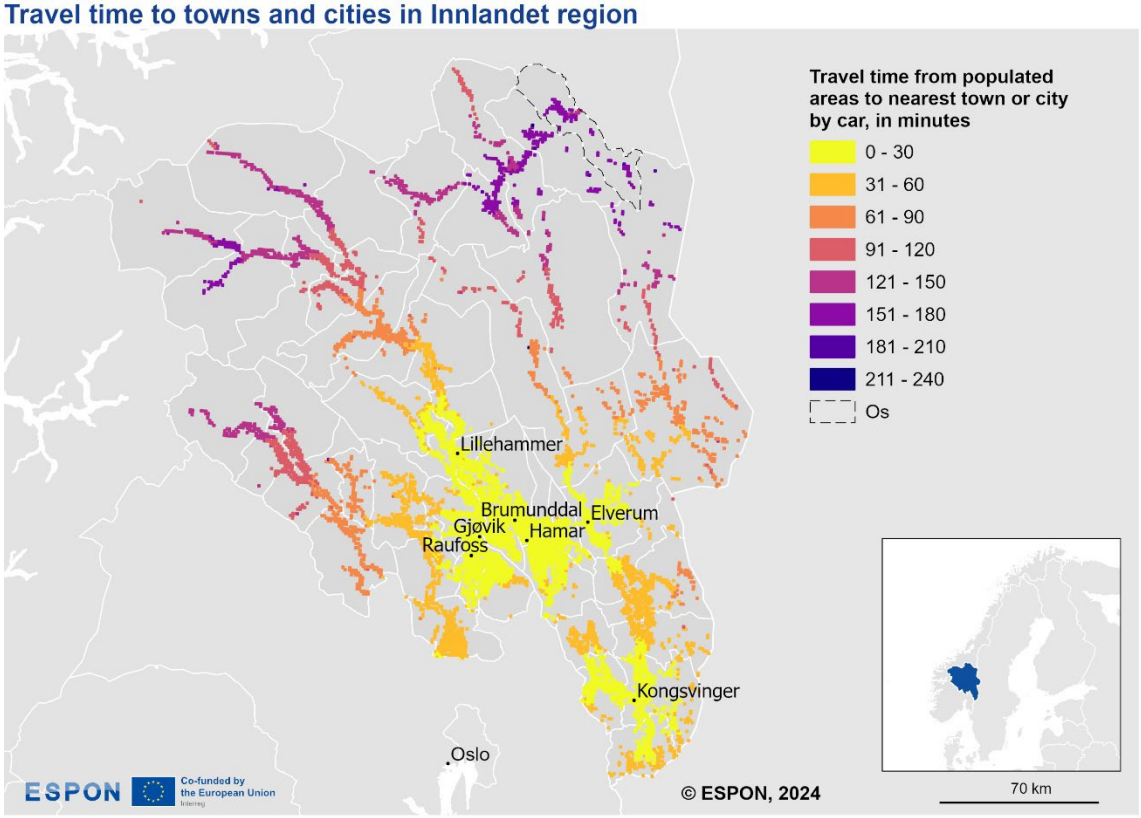
Map 2.11
Average travel time by car to nearest train station, Dalarna, Sweden.



Source: Trafikverket (Lastkajen 6.0)/Eurostat (2024)

In Malung-Sälen travel times to nearest town is more than 40 minutes for the most central part of the municipality, while more than one hour for most of the other parts of the municipality. Access to a train station is slightly better, but still more than 40 and 60 minutes for people in most of the municipality.

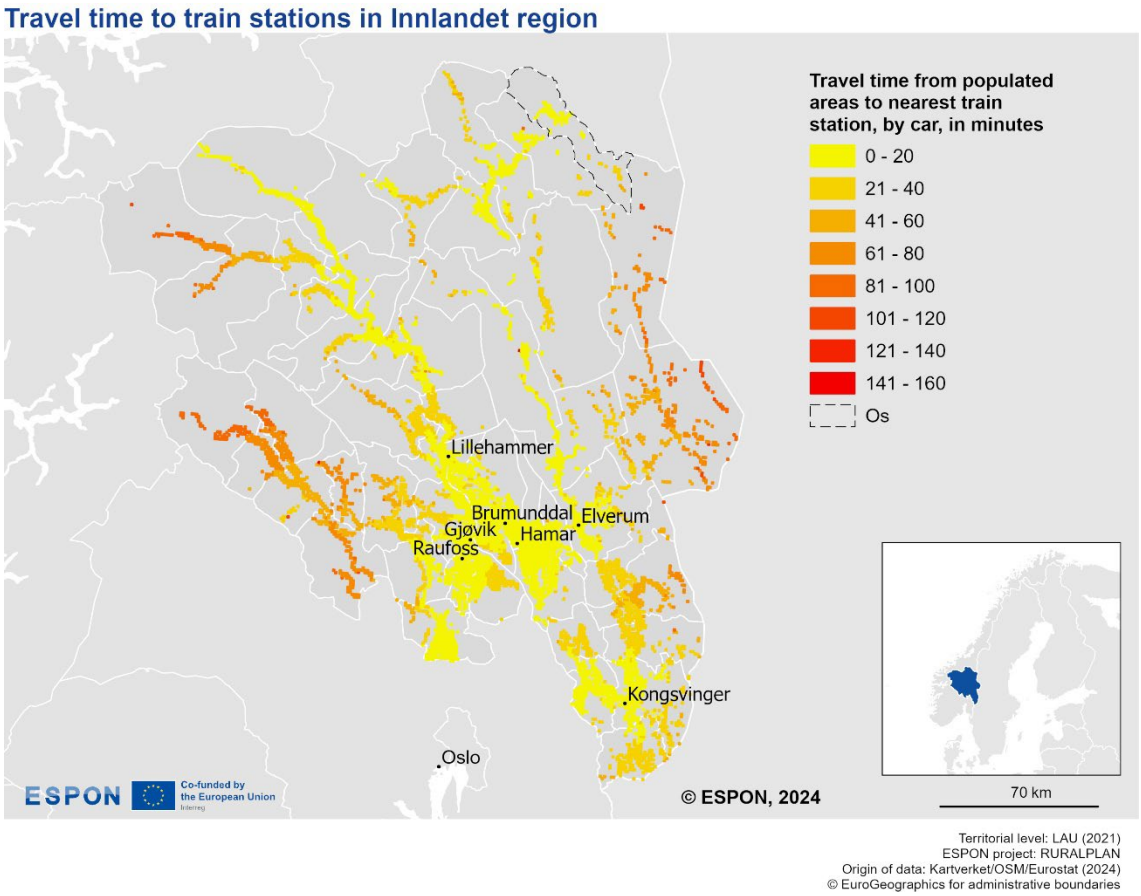
Map 2.12
Average travel time by car to nearest urban morphological zone, Innlandet, Norway



Source: Kartverket/OSM/Eurostat (2024)

Map 2.13

Average travel time by car to nearest train station, Innlandet, Norway



Source: Kartverket/OSM/Eurostat (2024)

In Os, travel times to nearest town of more than 5000 inhabitants are well over 2 hours for people in the whole municipality. It is thus longer than most people would accept for daily commuting to work. The situation is the same in several of the northern parts of Innlandet, while people in the southern part of Innlandet have substantial shorter travel times. Nearest train station is significantly more accessible, with less than 20 minutes travel time for parts of the municipality, and between 21 and 40 minutes for the areas in east. Os is among the municipalities in Innlandet with shortest travel times to a train station.

The accessibility to nearest town varies considerably between the three pilot-cases, with much shorter travel times in Albula, Malung-Sälen is in a middle position, while the travel times for the population in Os is substantially longer. Regarding access to train stations, it is quite good in Albula and Os, while most people in Malung-Sälen must drive more than 40 and 60 minutes to nearest station.

2.4 Type of shrinking in the three pilot-cases

Here the processes of shrinking in the three pilot-cases will be summarised and discussed in relation to a typology of rural shrinking region in Europe, which was developed in the ESPON ESCAPE project, see table 2.4 (ESPON 2020a).

As the data in this chapter shows, Albula has a stabilised population development. The most significant demographic change is the projected decrease in population in working age, and the expected increase in elderly people. Economically the region has a large service sector and relatively low income compared to the average for Graubünden. Accessibility to urban centres and transport is good. According to the typology of shrinking from ESPON ESCAPE Albula do not fit into one specific category but has most common features with category 4 and 5.

Malung-Sälen, Sweden, has a severe legacy of shrinking of the population, but the shrinkage has stopped the last years. The economy is to a high degree within services (public and private). Household income is somewhat higher than in the EU, but quite low compared to the two other pilot-cases. Accessibility to urban centres is quite poor. Just like Albula, Malung-Sälen does not fit directly into one of the categories of shrinking. Due to the severe legacy of shrinking and high income it has similarities with category 2, while its servitized economy means several similarities with category 5.

Os, Norway, has a moderate legacy of shrinking, but currently and expectations for the future indicates active shrinking. Great changes are expected in the demographic composition. Besides having a large public service sector, which characterise all Norwegian municipalities, the industrial sector is dominating, and agriculture is relatively important. Accessibility to urban centres is poor, but better to train stations. Os can be seen as a combination of category 2 and 3, as it is agro-industrial with moderate legacy shrinking (category 3), with middle-income and active shrinking (category 2)

The three pilot-cases have, of course, several similarities as they are rural, shrinking, and/or significant demographic changes characterise them. When it comes to legacy of shrinking, economy, and geography there are, however, significant differences. The pilot-cases have similarities with most of the categories of complex shrinking, except category 1 as none of them is agricultural low-income regions. This is a strength for RURALPLAN as the RUPIL will be tested in different contexts and shrinkage-situations.

Table 2.4
Typology of complex shrinking and intermediate regions (5 classes)

Category	Label
1	Agricultural, very low-income regions with severe legacy and active shrinking
2	Industrial, mid-income regions with severe legacy and active shrinking
3	Agro-industrial, low-income regions with moderate, mostly legacy shrinking
4	Servitised, mid-low-income regions with moderate legacy shrinking
5	Industrial or servitised, mid-income regions with moderate, mostly legacy shrinking

Source: ESPON, 2020 a)

3 Literature review

In this chapter we report on the literature review (task 1.2) which was conducted on papers, policies and projects dealing with rural depopulation, as well as the planning and process aspects of population decline. The review includes academic literature as well as reports on projects, cases, etc. Wherever possible, we have focussed on publications that contain evaluations of actual planning and development processes.

In the review, we have focussed on papers published in the last 10 years. The research considered focusses mainly but not exclusively on Europe as this is the most relevant context. We have also considered papers that deal with urban depopulation, if the paper refers to a small town in a larger rural region. However, rurality is difficult to define, and rural areas in the Netherlands are very different from rural areas in northern Sweden.

The following review is organised according to the following themes: (a) Methods and strategies reported in the papers, (b) Current policy responses to shrinkage, in general local /regional planning and in different sectors, and (c) discussions on the effectiveness and impact of current policy responses and planning practises. Finally, in (d), we summarise what we consider to be the most appropriate ways (recommendations) to address shrinkage. This general overview will also contribute to suggestions and recommendations on how to approach planning in the three pilot cases in Sweden, Switzerland, and Norway.

3.1 Methodologies, strategies and policies reported in papers

Several papers call for theoretical frameworks that help understand how to plan for shrinkage and manage population decline. Hence, to cope with population decline, there is a need for clearer theoretical understanding and comprehensive debate on planning for shrinkage (Sousa & Pinho 2015).

The papers explore various approaches that planning, and policy actors have used to deal with population decline. Efforts to reduce or counteract shrinkage are frequently observed responses. It is, as Hospers pinpoints, rather common to try to counteract shrinkage through growth-oriented planning strategies (Hospers 2013). Thus, Hospers provides a categorization of policy responses to shrinkage in which he distinguishes between efforts to reverse shrinkage on the one hand and policy actions based on acceptance on the other (Hospers 2013).

During the last decade, right-sizing and smart-shrinkage have been mentioned as possible responses to shrinkage challenges (Coppola 2019). However, some are critical to these concepts, stressing that rightsizing policies must be understood as part of a broader context of neoliberal urbanization (Aalbers & Bernt 2019).

More recent papers provide cases of how local agents cope with population shrinkage and how planning strategies are employed to cope with population decline in various contexts (Beunen, Meijer, & De Vries 2020). One example is regional design competitions used in attempts to plan for shrinkage (Kempenaar, van Lierop,

Westerink, Valk, & van den Brink 2016). Another example finds that municipalities have an incoherent response to shrinkage, where it is accepted in some sectors/plans but ignored or counteracted in the master plan or other sectors (Hagen, Higdem & Overvåg 2022). Rather than providing single examples of methods, however, several authors stress the need for integrating various policy fields in planning for shrinkage (Camarda, Rotondo, & Selicato 2015) and for adjusting governance culture to achieve synergy between local actors (Leetmaa et al. 2015).

Many papers explore how civil society relates to shrinkage. One paper discusses variants of civic action and its relationship with urban shrinkage (Ročak, Hospers, & Reverda 2016). Another stresses the importance of utilization of social capital and informal planning practices in depopulating rural areas (Meijer & Syssner 2017). This discussion also emphasises the importance of communication strategies employed by local governments in addressing demographic decline (Syssner & Siebert 2020).

Some papers discuss the interlinked challenges of depopulation and migration. One study is reported to have observed the evolution of local governance networks for hosting non-EU migrants in shrinking areas (Meijer, Popławska, & Szytniewski, 2023). In these spaces where migration was framed as a solution to decline, non-formal alternative governance networks were formed to host migrants.

3.2 Methodologies, strategies and policies reported in policies/projects

Demographic changes and shrinking in rural areas have ranked high on policy agendas over the last few years. In 2023, the EU launched a "Report on the impact of demographic change – in a changing environment" (European Commission 2023a) in which the European Commission advances the following solutions to these challenges (among others):

- Development of the Silver Economy, to both improve the quality of life for older rural people and create economic opportunities.
- Rural revitalization to address loss of attractiveness in such areas.
- A "talent booster mechanism" to address the lack of qualified workforce in some regions.

Regarding the third point, the EU has launched an initiative called "Smart adaptation of regions to demographic transition" which aims to help regions at risk of a talent development trap adapt their strategies and policies through reforms and investments. This issue is followed up in the most recent report from the EU Commission on the state of cohesion in the union (European Commission 2024). In this report a separate chapter is dedicated to the demographic transition. It is discussed how the population decline and ageing is driven by natural decline and how already 40% of the population in the EU live in a shrinking region. This especially impacts rural regions, and where a continued urbanisation is expected to accelerate shrinking and ageing in rural areas even more. Policy challenges in terms of labour market shortages, fiscal sustainability, infrastructure provision and access to services, follows by this development. Concerning the labour market, the report highlights how some

regions are in a "talent development trap", which is a combination of a shrinking workforce and a small share of the population with tertiary education. Targeted policy responses are needed, such as the Harnessing Talent Initiative and the Talent Booster Mechanism.

A Horizon Europe project called RUSTIK ("Rural Sustainability Transitions through Integration of Knowledge for improved policy processes", project period 2022-2026), has as its theme transitions in rural areas, connected to socio-economic changes, climate change & environment and digitalisation. Living Labs in 14 European Pilot Regions in 10 European countries are central to the project. With regard to socio-economic changes, 8 of the 14 regions have shrinking and ageing as a main theme. Most of them seem to have implemented a traditional approach of trying to counteract and mitigate shrinking. North Karelia in Finland, however, emphasises that they will apply the concept of smart shrinking. This includes place-based solutions, economic balancing and renewal, creating development independent of population growth. They will develop new strategies, plans and policies to develop sustainable livelihoods, emphasising residents' inclusion, well-being and quality of life.

The focus of the Interreg-Europe project CASPER ("Citizen Activation in Shrinking rural areas for Place-based policies to Enhance Resilience", project period 2023-2027), is to involve citizens directly in finding solutions to depopulation challenges. Through local strategies, CASPER aims to boost community resilience, combining actions to mitigate and adapt to shrinking. The goal is to approach the "shrinking" issue holistically, mobilising citizens and adopting a cross-sectoral, place-based perspective. 'Well-being' is defined as nurturing what they see as the most valuable resource: the people in the rural areas. They arrange workshops with a broad range of stakeholders and local people, in a way that is quite similar to RURALPLAN.

In 2023, the OECD launched a programme called "Policies for depopulation and service delivery in rural regions" with a focus on preparing regions for demographic change. The focus of this programme is on the delivery of services (health care, education, etc.) (OECD n.d.). Their approach is defined by three themes: (1) *Shrinking Smartly and Sustainably,* which is about adapting infrastructure, housing and services to depopulation and ageing whereby some needs decrease while others increase, (2) *Settlement Networks and Links between Population, Services and Connectivity,* and (3) *Understanding present and future public service delivery costs.* Several ongoing projects in rural areas in various European countries are part of this program. For example, in Galicia an action plan has been made on the following themes: quality service provision, digitalisation, entrepreneurship and social innovation and multi-level governance. Also, the ESPON Profecy project (ESPON 2022) is about access to services in the inner peripheries in Europe (which largely overlaps geographically with shrinking regions). The need for innovative and collaborative solutions for service provision, and to prioritize access to services of general interest is highlighted. There is a need of strengthening the ties between evidence and policy to find successful ways of dealing with service development processes, as there is no one-size fits all solutions. Administrative capacities need to be strengthened to be able to implement European policies that can be beneficial for the service provisions. And further they also emphasise the need for moving to a focus on

development understood as improvement of quality of life, and not in the sense of quantitative growth.

Through ESPON ESCAPE (ESPON 2020a), significant knowledge and experiences on shrinkage in rural areas has been developed. The project contributes to a deeper and broader understanding of shrinking. Further, it is discussed how four socio-economic processes are causing shrinking: economic restructuring, locational disadvantage, peripherisation and disruptive events and political/systematic transitions. Based on thorough analysis of diverse statistics, they identify a typology of what they call "complex shrinking".

Case studies show that since full "repopulation" is often impractical, and abandonment is politically unacceptable, most policy approaches will be hybrids of mitigation and adaptation. Three mitigation strategies are identified: compensation (subsidies etc.), re-localisation (endogenous growth) and global reconnection (distance working, hyper mobility etc). This adaption strategy is called "Smart Shrinking", and where it is implemented, wellbeing of the residual population continues despite continued depopulation. Strategies for adapting services as well as activities that exploit sparsity and extensification have been central in this approach. A baseline here is community acceptance and buy-in.

The Alpine Convention (2022) has as part of its work with "spatial planning for climate action" collected some good practices for growth and shrinking strategies. Their focus is on physical issues like land-use, infrastructure, and housing/settlements. They seek strategies that decouple economic growth from the use of resources to achieve carbon neutrality. This means that land take is decoupled from economic and population growth. In terms of growth, qualitative growth is prioritised over quantitative growth.

In two examples (one in Germany and one in Switzerland) the need and possibility of a retreat (eviction) of small and peripheral settlements "without sufficient development perspective" was discussed. Structural change should not be hindered by the preservation of outdated structures but must also involve "creative destruction". In other cases, there was more focus on how the existing infrastructure and housing could be adapted to shrinking, for example by using ageing as an opportunity to upgrade and adapt the housing stock.

EU has discussed challenges for small urban areas, and where a decreasing and ageing population is central (European Commission 2023b). The need for inter-municipal cooperation and multi-level governance is emphasized in the efforts to meet these challenges. In such cooperation the small municipalities need to be positioned as equal partners to larger centres, rather than as mere appendices to them. Otherwise, an asymmetry in power and representation could undermine the potential of such arrangements. Further, there is a need for participatory approaches, among other to foster the collective intelligence of different local actors. The engagement must not however be limited to information and consultation procedures, but also include joint decision-making.

To focus on wellbeing and quality of life is a common thread in several of the policies and projects for shrinking rural areas discussed above. In the ESPON project QoL, it

is discussed how quality of life can be integrated in territorial development strategies (ESPON 2020c). Sparsely populated peripheral regions have low scores on quality-of-life indicators compared to other territories, especially related to socio-economic indicators and low provision of services. They however perform well on environmental factors and in subjective perceptions of life-quality, like interpersonal trust and self-esteem. It is recommended that it can be valuable to link the UN sustainability goals and quality of life in development strategies. A good balance between objective and subjective indicators for quality of life should be used, as the latter is needed to understand the populations own assessments. It is further advised to involve the citizens to define what quality of life means for them, and how this can be measured. This would improve the relevance of the indicators for both the authorities and the citizens.

3.3 Effects and impacts of current policy responses

There is little research that directly assesses or evaluates the effects of various policy and planning reactions to shrinkage. However, there are valuable experiences from several completed projects and some general insights can be derived from both research and policies/projects on a broader level.

A first important and initial step is to accept shrinkage and make it a central part of the process. Acceptance should come with a focus on citizen engagement and a desire to enhance residents' quality of life (Hospers 2013). This doesn't mean hiding the challenges that come with population decline, such as the contradictions inherent in planning for shrinkage, negative connotations and stigma associated with "rural shrinking", and in some instances, the topic being such a taboo-subject that it is hardly possible to have a fact-based debate on shrinking processes (Sousa & Pinho 2015, ESPON 2020, Alpine Convention 2022). There are and will continue to be tensions between various responsibilities and challenges in shrinking municipalities (Grundel & Magnusson 2022). Economic strains caused by population decline and difficulties in providing infrastructure services to dispersed populations are important to consider (Grundel & Magnusson 2022). The focus needs to be on developing innovative and collaborative ways to plan and provide services within this context of demographic challenges (ESPON 2022, Hagen et al. 2022).

A second point is that although shrinking must be accepted, it needs to be disassociated from failure. The inability to plan for depopulation can be seen as a policy failure, and the failure is here not about failure to grow, but failure to develop local adaption strategies (Syssner 2020c). Planning and strategies should rather be built around positive notions like "transition", "restructuring", "qualitative growth", "renewal" etc. Further, "success" or development should be decoupled from demographic and economic growth. Policies need to have broader societal objectives like wellbeing, quality of life and inclusion, and the transition processes should be just and sustainable (ESPON 2022, 2020a, 2020c, Rustik n.d., CASPER 2024, Alpine Convention 2022). A part of this is to explore the potential opportunities connected to demographic change, for example the "silver economy"/facilitation of housing and infrastructure for older generations, "slow living", improved environmental

sustainability, re-connecting with nature, etc. (ESPON 2020b, European Union 2023, Alpine Convention 2022).

A third point is the importance of citizen engagement in managing shrinkage effectively (Hospers 2013, CASPER 2024, ESPON 2020c). In some papers, collaboration with local governments, residents and entrepreneurs is referred to as crucial (Kempenaar et al. 2016). Where positive outcomes have been observed, it is due to the importance of new alliances as well as strategic timing in planning for shrinkage (Kempenaar et al. 2016). The collaborative aspect is touched upon in several papers, stressing the need for using social capital and informal planning practices to address population decline (Meijer & Syssner 2017). One paper refers to this in terms of adjusting governance culture to local forms of social capital to achieve synergy between local actors (Leetmaa et al. 2015). The role of non-governmental organizations and volunteers in addressing demographic decline is also explicitly discussed (Meijer, Popławska, & Szytniewski, 2023). The CASPER project (2024) aims to involve citizens directly in finding solutions to depopulation challenges. They view it as necessary to be able to put shrinking honestly on the agenda, and to get acceptance for required changes to services. Such participatory processes should include joint decision making, and not only information and consultation (European Commission 2023b).

A fourth point is to consider shrinkage planning as something that needs cross-sectoral and inter-municipal cooperation and well-functioning multi-level governance structures. One paper suggests that different policy areas must work together to deal with urban shrinkage well (Camarda et al., 2015). In the CASPER project (2024), their approach is to address the shrinking issue holistically, by mobilising citizens and adopting a cross-sectoral and place-based perspective. ESPON (2020a) claims that the local and regional governance are the key levels, and that devolution of strategy-making and implementation capacity is crucial. This is due to the observation that "...there is no one-size-fits-all policy approach to solving the issue of rural shrinkage, since rural areas are so heterogeneous in terms of land structure, geographical position, socio-economic position and demographic profile." (p. 42). The strengthening of local capacity and that there is no one-size-fits-all policy is in a similar way emphasised by ESPON Profecy for the inner peripheries in Europe (ESPON 2022). Shrinking regions must be seen as equal partners towards larger centres in such collaborations (European Commission 2023b)

3.4 Suggestions and recommendations to the pilot cases

The analysis of the outcomes and implications of the present research and policy actions above gives valuable inputs for the further work in RURALPLAN, and we especially want to highlight the following issues:

- The pilot cases must emphasize the need for accepting shrinkage and make shrinkage a key part of the process. This doesn't mean ignoring the difficulties that population decline brings, and there will still be conflict between different obligations in shrinking districts, especially significant regarding economic pressures and choices between services and infrastructures.

- Dissociating shrinking from failure. The processes in the pilot-cases must be framed with positive terminology directed at other and broader societal goals. Development goals may very well be framed in terms of environmental, social and economic sustainability.
- The pilot cases should also emphasize the importance of citizen participation in dealing with shrinkage effectively. Working together with local governments, non-governmental organizations, residents, volunteers, entrepreneurs to create new partnerships and achieve acceptance/legitimacy between local actors is essential.
- The pilot cases also need to recognize that dealing with decline involves cross-sectoral, inter-municipal and multi-level governmental collaboration, which means that various segments of the local or regional government or authority need to participate in the process.
- Ongoing projects should be continually followed since they have potential to give valuable insights for RURALPLAN.

4 Planning-status in the pilot-cases

Here we make an analysis and assessment of how current planning strategies and responses, and future planning needs and approaches, in the three pilot-cases treats and relates to shrinking and demographic changes. It builds on relevant planning documents, both at local and regional levels, and interviews with key actors locally. The analysis shows how current planning in the three pilot-cases are directed at countering shrinking, which is the most common response to shrinking in Europe. All are however interested in changing their approach in future planning, with more weight on adaption to shrinking and focusing on a "good life" for the existing population. At the same time there is a variety between the cases in what issues which is emphasises as important in planning, due to their different contexts and shrinking-situation. For example, the importance of binding people from different villages more socially together in Os, development of the labour market in Malung-Sälen, and cooperation between regional centres in Albula. This lays a good foundation for testing the RUPIL-model in different planning contexts, and thus increases the transferability of the model to other shrinking rural areas in Europe.

4.1 Os municipality, Innlandet, Norway

4.1.1 Existing planning practices

Os currently has an overarching Master plan for societal development for the whole municipality for the period 2015-2025 (approved in 2015). Decrease in population numbers, and especially in the number of children is described as the main challenge for the whole municipality, as in the following:

> *Decreasing population numbers and the development of agriculture with fewer units create challenges for maintaining settlements and important functions in the villages. Large distances and changed demographic (age and gender) composition make our local communities vulnerable and it becomes difficult to balance the expectations and demands the citizens have of both the public and voluntary provision and what can actually be offered.*
>
> **Os kommune (2015), page 8**

To meet these challenges, the overall vision of the plan is to counteract this development, as the stated goal is: *"Population growth in Os through business development and the development of culture and activities".* Several strategies are connected to this goal, such as making Os more widely known, developing the Os Festival into a national festival, and promoting more tourism.

In the part of the plan, which is about public services, however, the focus is more on the need to adapt to demographic changes. Regarding schools, it is said that smaller cohorts of children demand new ways of organising schools, and regarding the growing elderly population, it is stated that while the number of older people

increases, the number of people to provide them services is decreasing. The municipality thus needs to find new ways to solve these service problems.

Os also has a plan for public health, as all Norwegian municipalities are obliged to have. This plan has the attention of the existing population, and its main goals are 1) safe and active lives, 2) inclusive environments, 3) good upbringing and learning environment, and 4) fight child poverty (Os commune, 2021).

Despite an overall decrease in population numbers, Os also has some domestic and international in-migration. This has a positive impact on the number of children. At the same time, they see that many of the refugees face the challenge of learning Norwegian, thus impeding their access to the labour-market, as well as facing social challenges due to the lack of family and social networks.

In addition to the Master plan for societal development, Os has several thematic plans. This includes a business plan, where the goal is to increase the number of jobs by 8 per year, 4 in tourism/private services, and 4 in other businesses (especially agriculture). In the plan for health, the need for adaption is emphasised as follows:

> *It is important that Os municipality use the period for this plan to make organizational and structural measures that make us best possible prepared when the large increase in the number of older people comes from the middle of the 2020ies.*
>
> **Os kommune (2017), page 6**

At the sub-regional level, Os is part of the "Mountain region", consisting of 7 municipalities in Innlandet and Trøndelag. Demographic challenges are not a central issue in their plan, although they have on their agenda a point on *"new measures to get more youth to move back home and increase the attractiveness for settlement and establishments"* (Regionrådet for fjellregionen, 2020).

4.1.2 Future planning needs and approaches

Os is currently (March 2024) in a process of deciding which plans they need to have or renew in the coming four years. This work will lead to a planning strategy for the period 2024-2027. In a draft of this strategy, it is stated that new plans must be economically realistic. Concerning future planning needs, it is suggested that the superior societal plan for the whole municipality needs to be renewed. A reason for this is that:

> *The societal plan should clarify strategies for how Os municipality will contribute to the goal of a sustainable society in line with the adopted climate and energy plan. How to bring about more business development, attract young people and how to interact even better with volunteering?*
>
> **Os kommune, page 5**

In an interview, key informants from Os did, however, emphasize that the new societal plan should focus on realistic goals, and they thought that objectives should be about "a good life in Os", where the demographic development is not in focus. They think it is important to have an approach where the development of Os as a local society/community gets the attention, and where it is necessary that local NGOs, sports teams and civil society in general participates in planning, development and implementation. In Os, inhabitants are primarily attached to their hamlets and villages, and not to the whole territory of Os municipality. This leads to some frictions between places. The new plan should contribute to more common efforts for the whole municipality.

Os will also renew their health and care plan. There is a need to update it in line with today's challenges, as more old people and dementia patients necessitate greater recruitment and competence requirements.

At the regional level, Innlandet County is also in a process of developing a new planning strategy. Here it is stated that:

> *Demographic changes, with more elderly and a lower proportion of the population in working-age, demands though priorities and better use of resources in the public sector. The supply of labor will decrease, and a greater proportion of resources will be tied up in covering the need for services."*
>
> **Innlandet fylkeskommune (2023), page 8**

The other parts of this strategy mainly emphasise plans and strategies that can increase population numbers and improve the demographic composition.

Shrinking and demographic changes are seen as a very basic and central challenge in Os and Innlandet. The main overall strategy has so far mostly been to counteract shrinking. However, at the local level the response is hybrid, as plans for services like schools and elderly care have a more adaptive approach. There is, however, a need in Os to have a more realistic and adaptive approach in their holistic Master plan and plans connected to economic development. It seems like this is the goal for their current process for a new societal plan, and that RUPIL can support their efforts in this direction.

4.2 Malung-Sälen municipality, Dalarna, Sweden

4.2.1 Existing planning practices

Existing plans in Malung-Sälen have in general little focus on demographic changes, challenges and how to meet them in the future. The municipality has three thematic areas with objectives connected to each of them (Malung-Sälens kommun, n.d.):

- Care and security, including services of good quality that meets current and future needs.
- Learning and quality of life, including education, innovation, and culture, which contributes to identity and being an attractive municipality.
- Sustainable growth

In the plan for the municipality for the period 2024-2027, it is stated that an economy in balance is the main goal for this period, but *"at the same time the municipality needs to develop for a continued growth".* Also, in the program for business development, it is said that *"Malung-Sälen shall grow with new inhabitants, businesses and jobs*" Concerning demography, the plan for 2024-2027, mentions population forecasts where there will be an increase in the old population, a decrease in people of working age, but also expected growth in the number of children. These changes are *"...the basis for planning next year's activities and priorities".* It is important that jobs in elderly care are made more attractive, and that more and better adapted housing is developed for the old people, as well as care for dementia patients. Regarding education, the plan emphasizes the need for what they call "strategic supply of competence". This means developing education both for adults (life-long learning) and youths, which are adapted to the needs of the municipality and the businesses in Malung-Sälen (Malung-Sälens kommun, 2023)

Tourism and second homes are important in Malung-Sälen, and in the societal plan it said that this means that in parts of the year there are 50 000 – 90 000 "inhabitants" there, which implies totally different prerequisites for the societal development of the municipality than what the registered population makes it seem (Malung-Sälens kommun, 2009).

In the regional development strategy for Dalarna, it is stated that a shrinking population is one main challenge in parts of the region, as it gives problems in sustaining local services and gives increasing differences between peripheral and urban territories. At an overall level they will work to strengthen the geographical cohesion in Dalarna, amongst other by increase the accessibility to basic services, culture, education and labor markets by amongst other strengthen the physical and digital infrastructure. The plan emphasizes that with an ageing population there is a need for new solutions concerning needs for competence and labor. A better match between needs and supply and lifelong learning is among the strategies. In-migration from outside Sweden is also seen as part of the solution, as many of them are relatively young. (Region Dalarna 2021). The councilor for regional development in Dalarna has further stated that in order to meet the future need for elderly care they:

> Must develop new ways for working and invest in innovative welfare technology, such as digital aids for self-care and smarter products in the elderly's homes. Here we have a long, but exciting, way to go."
>
> **Region Dalarna (2024)**

The development strategy for Dalarna is developed and is implemented by a range of public, private and civic actors, including Malung-Sälen and the other municipalities.

4.2.2 Future planning needs and approaches

Malung-Sälen is currently working on a new societal plan for the municipality. So far, it has not said anything about what this plan will focus on. The municipality's website is open for people to give their input on what they think the plan should deal with. In connection with this work, two workshops have been held, both on housing. Here future needs were discussed, related to expected population development and the needs of elderly people. Also, a report has been made as part of the knowledge-basis for this planning process (Kairos Future, 2023). It shows that the municipality has weak relations to larger centers/cities (related to commuting, migration etc.), and that their labor market has good potential to attract middle aged people, but a great challenge in attracting younger people to the tourism business.

In a report ordered by the Boarder-region Innlandet-Dalarna from Nordregio, of which Malung-Sälen is a part, (Norèn & Penje, 2023), demographic changes are said to be the most tangible trend in this region. The prognosis shows that the number of people between 20-64 years (working age) will decrease by 4700 people in the region in the next two decades. At the same time, the number of old people will increase. This means that more people are needed to work in elderly care. The report points to the possibility of including those who currently are outside the labor market by matching them to the local needs.

Key informants interviewed in Malung-Sälen underscored an increased understanding of the necessity of a realistic approach to the demographic changes, which needs to be addressed. Malung-Sälen experiences challenges of attracting necessary competence in its workforce, and the situation today is described as "75% of the workforce are to handle 125% of the tasks". Malung-Sälen is a member of a regional network in which future competence needs are addressed. The municipality is aware of the challenges the demographic change makes, when the number of children is in decrease and the share of elderly is increasing. In the short term, the population is not shrinking. Another challenge is the differing development in the north (the tourist destinations) versus the south of this big municipality (approximately 4300 km2). The north is growing, thanks to a growing number of high-standard settlements in the mountain-area (second homes), whilst the south is in decline. The municipality has for a while been working on increasing the region's attractiveness to tourists, especially Malung-Sälen's. The municipality has also initiated a discussion

on the necessity of a financial budget-shift between sectors, “from children to the elderly”.

Thus far, the municipal plans of Malung-Sälen are not directly addressing the demographic changes in their overall planning, as the municipality has growth ambitions. However, there are demographic challenges concerning adaptive strategies related to the labour market and necessarily changes in the municipal budget towards increased financing for elderly care. Importantly, the municipality focuses on the future quality of life, and good environments for people and businesses as well as the natural environment itself. Malung-Sälen may profit from using the RUPIL process to increase the understanding of the demographic challenges in society and amongst vital societal actors, as well as using the RUPIL-process to mobilise resources and co-create concrete suggestions of solutions and strategic elements related to their future vision.

4.3 Albula region, Graubünden, Switzerland

4.3.1 Existing planning practices

At the end of 2021, the region elaborated a participatory “regional spatial concept (regionales Raumkonzept)” that involved political authorities, the population as well as related institutions. The “regional spatial concept” serves as a compass for the spatial development of the region up to the year 2040. This concept not only deals with spatial planning issues in the narrow sense, but also addresses social, economic and environmental issues. These are the areas that significantly control and influence the development of the region. The concept reveals strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the region and formulates objectives to be achieved over the next 20 years. Finally, measures are defined in order to achieve the objectives mainly focusing on services of general interest, whose availability and accessibility are very often sparsened first when it comes to a decrease in population, triggering a circle of decline. The endeavors are multiplied by the ongoing demographic change, and the acceleration of shrinking in all scenarios. In the high scenario, the cantonal population outlook predicts a population decline in all sub-regions of Albula region by 2045 (Surses: -20%, Albula Valley: -12%, Lenzerheide: -6%). This tendency might be too pessimistic and not inclusive of newest trends, and it may also be influenced by the Corona health crisis during and after which living in rural areas has become more attractive. However, the future tendency is characterized by a population decrease. The “regional spatial concept” stipulates the following main goals for the horizon 2040:

- The region offers a high quality of life and an attractive living, economic and recreational space for people of all ages.
- The population in the region can at least be kept stable.

Further goals are defined in the fields of population and society, economy and tourism, services of general interest, mobility and the utilization of natural and cultural resources. The results of the spatial concept provide orientation for a sustainable spatial development. They should be incorporated into as many plans as possible, for example in the ongoing revision of the "regional structure plan (Regionaler Richtplan)", which is a plan that focusses on determining spatial development principles and coordinating spatially relevant activities according to the cantonal structure plan. It addresses topics such as the development of settlements, transport and infrastructure and the protection of nature and landscape, showing how regional spatial planning is intended to progress towards the desired spatial development. Now the region is working on the settlement part of the "regional structure plan".

Since the share of elderly people is constantly growing, the region has initiated in 2020 a broadly anchored "Model for housing (Modellvorhaben Wohnraumstrategie)", based on a series of regional workshops and a survey that aimed to react on demographic changes and create affordable living spaces. The final report that has been published by the end of 2023 contains practice-orientated guidelines for municipalities as well as policy recommendations.

4.3.2 Future planning needs and approaches

The most recent project on strategic planning that the region is involved in is the revision of the "regional location development strategy (Standortentwicklungsstrategie)" last updated in 2019. This is an initiative that amends the above-mentioned "regional, spatial concept" with institutional, organizational or financial issues, and builds on the results of all the previous strategies mentioned above. The regional authorities want to have our RURALPLAN coupled with the "regional location development strategy" which means taking up defined measures and achieved results of preceding strategic activities as a common ground and then, as a new element, searching for synergies and potentials between the Albula region and the surrounding regional centres in terms of services of general interest. This way the intrinsic assumption of the new regional policy – one of the main Swiss instruments for reducing territorial disparities – is that regional centre's serving as engines of local and regional development can be checked and better put into practice. The output of this activity will be recommendations in which fields and in which manner the region will cooperate with the surrounding regional centres and will be an amendment of the "regional location development strategy".

Demographic changes, and shrinking, is given much attention in plans in Albula. The main approach and objectives are on a "good life" for all people and ages and on sustainability. However, the plans also focus to some degree on counteracting shrinkage by at least keeping the population numbers stable, and to adapt housing for the coming demographic changes (thus, a type of hybrid approach to shrinking).

There is a need in Albula to see several existing sectoral strategies towards shrinking simultaneously and in a holistic manner, to see how they can be implemented in practice, and to focus on the relationships between Albula and surrounding regional centers.

5 Suggestions for methodology in the pilot-cases

This chapter introduces the Rural Planning and Innovation Lab, RUPIL, -methodology developed for the three cases, bearing in mind the possibilities of necessary adjustments between the contexts of Sweden, Switzerland, and Norway.

Figure 5.1
The RUPIL-model

The RUPIL methodology consists of how to facilitate a creative, yet systematic, innovative process with six phases of the model:

1. Thematic/contextual orientation
2. Exploring the problem
3. Gathering insights
4. Developing and creating ideas
5. Implementing solutions
6. Scaling and dissemination

In the implementation we will also be responsive to the findings and recommendations from the literature review as well as the introductory analysis of the quantitative data.

The framing of RUPIL is to accept and make shrinkage a part of the process. We seek to advance a positive notion of development without population increase, in order to lift or ease the stigma attached to shrinking and demographic change. It will therefore be an important task of the initial phase of RUPIL, to establish such positive connotations, while also realistically framing the further process and disassociating shrinking from failure. The process seeks to involve a diverse set of actors in close cooperation with local governments. Actors such as non-governmental organizations, residents, volunteers, entrepreneurs, and businesses will be involved in the RUPIL-process, which aims to co-create concrete strategic means and measures related to complex issues caused by demographic change. These suggestions will feed into a more formal planning process at local and/or regional level. Such bottom-up innovative processes contribute to mobilizing local or regional resources and may

create new partnerships for achieving acceptance and legitimacy between local and/or regional actors.

5.1 Developing and preparing the Rural Planning and Innovation Lab, RUPIL

Design recommendations for RUPIL have been deliberated with project collaborators during a facilitator's workshop held in Lillehammer, Norway, on February 28th and 29th, 2024. The design has been further developed in March before testing and evaluating the model for innovative planning and policymaking in shrinking peripheral areas through a series of three workshops in each case area.

5.1.1 The aim of the model

The model aspires to function as a democratic participatory instrument, providing support to local authorities in their master planning endeavours. Our objective is to facilitate planning based on more realistic assumptions about how regions are shrinking, as well as on the population's own interests, preferences, needs and wishes for what constitutes a 'good life' in the context of their local community. The result will be ideas on innovative strategies or strategic elements and measures developed into co-created and visualized solutions.

At the Rural Planning and Innovation Lab (RUPIL) we will facilitate a creative, yet systematic, innovative process with six phases:

1. Thematic/contextual orientation
2. Exploring the problem
3. Gathering insights
4. Developing and creating ideas
5. Implementing solutions
6. Scaling and dissemination

We facilitate processes with conscious choices about pace and progression and alternation between opening and closing techniques to discover, define, develop, and deliver solutions to wicked problems concerning demographic change. The process is iterative with room for several rounds of creativity, development, and circling back when necessary. This ensures solutions are tailored and adjusted to the real challenges of the case societies.

As mentioned, the RUPIL will take place during three workshops in each case municipality/region. The overall workshop design is illustrated below in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2
The content of the three workshops

5.1.2 The workshops

The three workshops will be arranged in the period between April and June/July 2024. The first workshop will have a time frame of six hours and will focus on phases 1, 2 and 3 and start on phase 4 in the innovation process. The following two workshops will have a time frame of three hours each. At workshop 2, we focus on phase 4 and at the third workshop, we focus on phase 5 in the innovation process. Phase 6 in the innovation process will be completed after the workshops.

We have developed a written guide for the workshops that the facilitators can use both in the planning and in carrying out the workshops. The material presents the aim of each phase and provides facilitators with suggestions that serve as a toolbox with relevant methods to reach the planned results of each innovation phase.

All material from the workshops like invitations, lists of attendants, ppt's, written material, audio-visual material, and so on will be gathered and systematized, see also the assessment strategy in section 5.3.

METHOD

First workshop: Phase 1, 2, 3 and 4

We start the contextual/thematical orientation (Phase 1) with the invitation to the workshop by sharing with participants both practical information about the workshop and a brief introduction to the main challenges for case municipality/region. During the first workshop, we will continue to work with phase 1.

Phase 1 is about presenting the case municipality/region, current planning processes and the framework for the processes.

What should be done in phase 1:
The host (the case municipality/region) welcomes the participants and talks about current planning processes and the framework for the processes. The RURALPLAN team introduces the ESPON Targeted analysis RURALPLAN, and the framework of RUPIL. Phase 1 is crucial for localizing the innovation process as well as for establishing a common understanding of the realistic planning approach based on the facts presented by the case municipality/region. This will be further elaborated in phase 2.

Phase 2 is about exploring the problem: What does it consist of? For whom is this a problem? What do we know about the consequences of this problem? We will explore the problem so that we eventually have a unified understanding of the challenges we are dealing with.

What should be done in phase 2:
Our knowledge about the case municipality/region is presented (statistics and other relevant documentation) The workshop facilitator will have identified the most important statistical findings, as well as other relevant documents, and prepared a presentation of the material. The realistic planning approach will be further explained. Our starting point is the status of the case municipality/region and realistic expectations for future development. Growth should not be the premise for development, but rather a focus on quality of life. When we have finished phase 1 and 2, we will start working more with gaining insight in phase 3.

Phase 3: Gaining insight is about establishing a thorough understanding of a problem and seeing connections you have not seen before. Therefore, it is important to engage a broad selection of citizens, business actors, volunteers, politicians etc. to contribute with different perspectives and understanding of the problem(s), and to share how they want to participate and contribute to solving the problem(s).

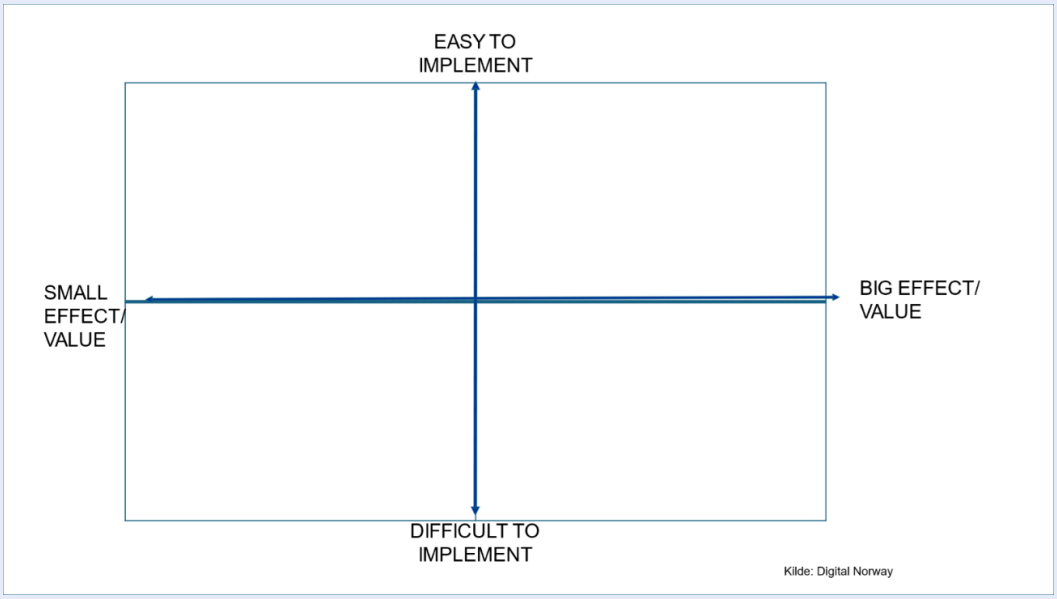
What should be done in phase 3:
Gain insight from the participants who are present at the workshop, by leading them through a three-step activity where they will describe their insights before they define and choose one main finding that they will pursue further in the process. After finishing phase 3, we will move from problem exploration to idea development in phase 4. This phase consists of several elements, the first of which is developing ideas.

Phase 4: Idea development is central to innovation work. Creativity is conceiving, creating and being able to describe a new idea (Lerdahl 2007). In this phase, we will open up possibilities and ideas that can contribute to solving the problem. We are therefore dependent on bringing out many ideas. Those involved in the process must be open and build on each other's input.

What should be done in phase 4:
Many different methods and approaches can be of help in developing ideas. Repeated in the various methods is that you set up a working method that combines working individually, in

groups, and finally in plenary. Creating trust amongst participants, putting together multidisciplinary teams, having a person to facilitate the process, and using a set of different methods that contribute to creativity are useful for producing many ideas.

Figure 5.3
Example of one way to assess ideas in RUPIL



Source: Digital Norway

METHOD

Second workshop: Phase 4

In addition to developing ideas, phase 4 also consists of conceptualization, prototyping, and testing. This is the focus for day 2 of the workshop.

Phase 4: Central in this phase is to make a description of our solution (conceptualization) before we create a prototype of the concept to get feedback and validation. The last step is to test whether the concept works as intended. An important part of this phase is the testing of the prototype. It is through testing that we improve and further develop the concept.

What should be done in phase 4:
The participants are led from making a concept of their solution, to prototyping it and testing it on the other participants. They may discover that there is a need to make changes along the way. Phase 4 clearly shows how iteration works in innovation processes. There may be different types of prototyping, for example physical (mock-ups), role-playing theatre, storyboard, and digital versions.

METHOD

Third workshop: Phase 5

At the third and final workshop, we focus on the implementation of the developed ideas and solutions.

Phase 5 is about the implementation of co-created solutions and ideas in the local context. The solution and ideas are to be fed into the local and/or regional strategic planning process and the frame of realistic planning.

What should be done in phase 5:
Presentation of the project's goals and the frame of realistic planning (10 min). The participants consider Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT analysis) in connection to the implementation of their solution, idea or strategy for realistic planning. The participants consider roles and responsibilities in the implementation process. The final ideas are presented to the other workshop participants and the planning authorities.

5.2 Detailed approach and methods for each pilot-case

The facilitator's workshop was held February 28 and 29 at HINN, Lillehammer, where the RUPIL-team and stakeholders from Dalarna and Innlandet met. The workshop resulted in an adjusted and revised RUPIL-methodology, where the aim was to facilitate workshops sufficiently adjusted to the different contexts.

For all three cases, see the developed RUPIL -method.

CASE STUDY

Os municipality, Innlandet, Norway

Context

Os municipality is about to revise their Master plan – the societal-development part, where RUPIL is incorporated as a part of the process. Os municipality aims to develop Os municipality as a whole society, where the local community in the different valleys are mobilized to contribute to this aim. It is also important to mobilize NGO and small-scale businesses including farmers and other resources. Os municipality is eager to use the RUPIL process to enhance innovation for societal development even without population growth. In March, Os municipality is informing the municipal council on the management and process of the planning, including RUPIL. What parts of and how Os municipality will implement the RUPIL results into their masterplan, or other plans, will be discussed after the RUPIL-process is finished, and will be left to the municipality to decide. As part of this project, Os municipality contributes to the RUPIL- discussion on, for example, legitimation and implementation.

Workshops

In collaboration with Os municipality, these dates for the three workshops are set:

- workshop 1: April 18th
- workshop 2: April 29th
- workshop 3: June 10th or 11th

Os municipality will host, invite participants to the workshops and provide meeting-arenas, food, and beverages. When inviting participants, they will also include the youth council (which is allowed to participate), and the council of the elderly and disabled. Politicians will also be invited. Conclusion: there will be a broad and inhomogeneous body of participants invited to the RUPIL-process, which is productive from an innovation perspective.

Facilitators

Line Tholstrup and Trude Hella Eide are in charge of the facilitation of the RUPIL in Os. Also, Nils Håvard D. Høgseth from Innlandet County will participate as a facilitator in all three sessions and Ulla Higdem will participate as facilitator in workshop 3.

CASE STUDY

Malung-Sälen municipality, Dalarna, Sweden

Context

The municipality of Malung - Sälen has developed a planning framework for their societal development where the vision is a sustainable society that provides a good living environment. Malung-Sälen discussed how the RUPIL-process could contribute concrete suggestions on the challenges faced by their society, taking their overall vision into account. The overall vision will be achieved by focusing on three main areas:

- Care and security, including services of good quality that meet current and future needs.
- Learning and quality of life, including education, innovation, and culture, which contributes to identity and being an attractive municipality.
- Sustainable growth

The municipality has developed goals, indicators, and an action plan for each area. Malung Sälen municipality is now discussing which themes to focus on in the RUPIL-process, and which participants to invite.

Workshops

The dates of the three workshops will be determined in collaboration with Malung-Sälen municipality and the RUPIL team and will start in May. Malung- Sälen municipality will host the workshops and invite participants to these, also providing meeting arenas, food and beverages. There will be a broad and unhomogeneous body of participants invited to the RUPIL process, which is productive from an innovation perspective.

The preliminary dates for the workshops are:

- workshop 1: May 22. or 23.,
- workshop 2: June 3. or 13., and
- workshop 3: within the range of June 24 to 27.

Facilitators

Line Tholstrup and Trude Hella Eide are in charge of the facilitation of the RUPIL in Malung- Sälen.

CASE STUDY

Albula region, Graubünden, Switzerland

Context

In the Albula region, an entity comprised of 6 municipalities, many strategies on various sectors of regional development have been already developed in a participatory manner in recent years (Housing, services of general interest delivery, Energy production etc.). Furthermore, an intrinsic assumption of the New regional policy – the main Swiss instrument for reducing territorial disparity – is that regional centers serve as engines of local and regional development and when doing well have a positive economic and social impact on neighboring municipalities. These two aspects indicate that the RURALPLAN project shall build on defined measures and achieved results of preceding strategic activities as well as search for synergies and potentials between the Albula region and the surrounding regional centers in terms of services of general interest. The result should help the Albula region in defining and organizing their interactions with the neighboring regional centers and optimize their use of resources to improve quality of life even without population growth. The planned workshops will bring planners, service providers, and decision-makers of the region and its surrounding regional centers together to work on the measures defined in recently elaborated strategies and lay the groundwork for new forms of cooperation. The Albula region, together with the Schweitzeriche Arbeitsgeimeinschft für die Berggebiete, SAB, is identifying workshop participants and will invite them to the workshops.

Workshops

The 3 workshops will include a presentation of the results at the end and will start not earlier than May for practical reasons of stakeholder mobilization and will end before the summer break (beginning of July). Workshops will be characterized by 1) contextualization 2) Insights and prioritisation/amendment of measures 3) Brainstorming for solutions and evaluation 4) conceptualization and prototyping 5) Implementation. The participants will include representatives from the Albula region, from neighbouring regions/centers and the county (cantonal level).

The preliminary dates for the workshops are:

- workshop 1: June 3.
- workshop 2: June 24. and
- workshop 3: in July

Facilitators

Peter Niederer, Vera Ambühl, and Thomas Egger will be in charge of the RUPIL workshops.

5.3 Scaling and dissemination, phase 6

As shown in Figure 5, the RUPIL model consists of 6 phases, where the final is Scaling and Dissemination, and this phase is twofold. Firstly, it concerns scaling and disseminating of innovative strategies, policies, or measures developed through the work. The co-created results may, if needed, include establishing a connection to democratic anchoring in the local planning system, in cooperation with the stakeholders and local or regional authorities.

Innovative and good co-created results, ideas, and suggestions from phase 5 are also to be disseminated to similar planning authorities and societies in Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and other countries with shrinking peripheral areas. Secondly, the scaling and dissemination process will also be applied to the RUPIL concept and innovation model.

We therefore develop the assessment strategy of RUPIL. The assessment strategy is discussed and anchored at the Facilitator's workshop. The assessment consists of the following elements:

a) The pilot case: summing up sessions with key staff.
b) The participants in the workshops; digital questionnaire.
c) Facilitator group: log.
d) Work-shop documentation- Pictures, maps, summings-up.
e) Finally, the research group sums up and assesses the results, and presents results for discussion together with the stakeholders.

The summing up with key staff (a) will also include a discussion about implementation within the case's own planning, and strategy development.

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