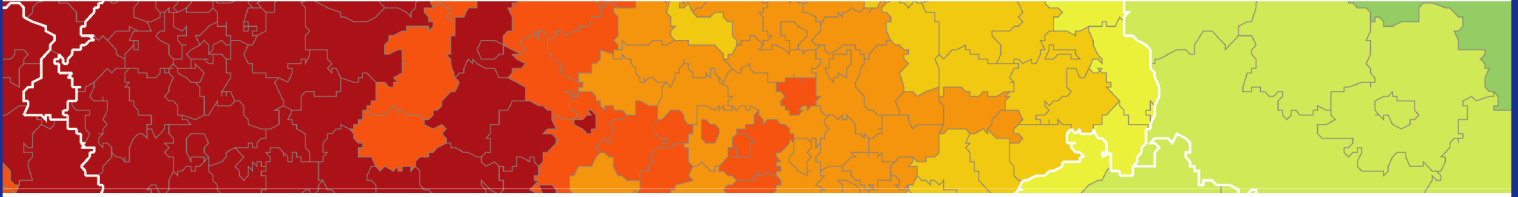




Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund



ESCAPE European **S**hrinking Rural Areas:

Challenges, **A**ctions and **P**erspectives for Territorial Governance

Applied Research

**Final Report– Annex 13
How to achieve a transformation framework for
Shrinking Rural Regions**

Annex 13

This applied research activity is conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme.

The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

This delivery does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members of the ESPON 2020 Monitoring Committee.

Authors

Thomas Dax, Bundesanstalt für Agrarwirtschaft und Bergbauernfragen (BAB) (AT)
Andrew Copus, University of Eastern Finland (Finland)

Advisory Group

Project Support Team: Benoit Esmanne, DG Agriculture and Rural Development (EU),
Izabela Ziatak, Ministry of Economic Development (Poland),
Jana Ilcikova, Ministry of Transport and Construction (Slovakia)
Amalia Virdol, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (Romania)
ESPON EGTC: Gavin Daly, Nicolas Rossignol, Andreea China, Johannes Kiersch

Information on ESPON and its projects can be found on www.espon.eu.

The web site provides the possibility to download and examine the most recent documents produced by finalised and ongoing ESPON projects.

© ESPON, 2020

Printing, reproduction or quotation is authorised provided the source is acknowledged and a copy is forwarded to the ESPON EGTC in Luxembourg.

Contact: info@espon.eu

ISBN: 978-2-919795-70-3

Final Report – Annex 13

**How to achieve a transformation framework for
Shrinking Rural Regions**

ESCAPE

European **S**hrinking Rural Areas:
Challenges, **A**ctions and **P**erspectives for
Territorial Governance

Version 21/12/2020

Table of contents

List of Figures	ii
List of Tables	ii
Abbreviations	iii
1 Introduction	1
2 Intervention Logics to achieve policy objectives	2
2.1 The Scope of Theory of Change	2
2.2 Diversity of narratives and drivers of change	5
2.3 Perspectives on intervention approaches from case study analysis	6
3 Generic Intervention Logics (Paradigms).....	23
3.1 Less Favoured Area Policy	25
3.2 CAP Pillar 2	25
3.3 Cohesion Policy	29
4 Tapping into the potential of good practice	29
4.1 Inspire change processes	30
4.2 Types of local and regional responses	32
4.3 What and how to learn from good practice	34
References	36

List of Figures

Figure 1: Generic Intervention Logic (Paradigm) for Less Favoured Area Policy.....	26
Figure 2: Generic Intervention Logic (Paradigm) for key elements of CAP Pillar 2 (2000-2020 period).....	27
Figure 3: Generic Intervention Logic (Paradigm) for key elements of Cohesion Policy (2000-2020 period).....	28

List of Tables

Table 1: Narrative and mitigation and adaptation policies in CS.....	8
Table 2: Main intervention aspects, derived from CS reports	23

Abbreviations

EC	European Commission
ESPON	European Territorial Observatory Network
ESPON EGTC	ESPON European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics

1 Introduction

Following the analysis of the nature and extent of Shrinking Rural Regions ESCAPE endeavours to explore strategies and pathways to cope with the emergent narratives on shrinking processes. Given the long-term failures to overcome the great challenges of regional and spatial development in areas profoundly characterized by population decline, and often caught in a spiralling-down perspective of “negative cycles”, this is a highly ambitious and difficult task. As we have outlined in the detailed analysis of spatial data and interaction of socio-economic drivers, this is a complex phenomenon which cannot be dealt with one-dimensional and clear-cut sector policies or programmes targeted just at one (or the main) triggers of demographic development.

As experts and local inhabitants in the case study analysis underpinned the local challenges, sensitivity to policy action (and non-action), and the expectations for an alternative intervention approach are wide-ranging and cannot be restricted to simple “recipes” of improving existing policy frameworks or adding singular instruments. The complex issue of regional development and spatial dynamics is particularly critical in a context of long-lasting population decline. As the term “shrinking” implies it carries meanings reaching far beyond the mere demographic dimension of population change.

By discussing an altered view on the predominating narrative of shrinkage, shifting from a primarily negative connotation, and negative labelling of the affected regions, to a much more sophisticated story which also captures the opportunities and alternative views and pathways for local action, consideration of how to realize transformations of policy frameworks and to achieve “change” in these shrinking rural regions come into the foreground. Hence this document focuses on the potential contribution of appropriate intervention logics to incite such change processes and enhance efforts of local and regional authorities and stakeholders to cope and adapt to the specific spatial challenges. It refers to theoretical work and studies pointing to crucial principles for designing interventions, learning from core preconditions and assumptions of policy contexts, and from practical experiences of “positive” examples in a shrinking context. It will also exemplify generic intervention logics on the three main policy domains related to shrinking rural regions, i.e. the Less-Favoured Area policy, the wider Rural Development policy, and the Cohesion Policy support (see Annex 1). All of these have a clear vocation of targeting population development and enhancing livelihood, well-being and social capital in rural regions to overcome the (rising) challenges inherent to these regions due to spatial concentration/ agglomeration, respectively peripheralization processes.

In a period in which interactions between people and places, as well as interrelated use of natural resources and its effects, are considered crucial, these “enhancing” policies are just part of the systems we live and act in. Paradoxes of our human-resource relationships are felt strongly in rural areas struggling with predominant global trends and often arguing to ‘be left behind’. As past crises, and particularly the current COVID-19 challenges, unveil so relentlessly, social and economic organisation might have to change very swiftly, and spatial

behaviour might alter abruptly in response to shifts in core features of our systems due to shock events. These changes should inspire our analysis to look for alternative pathways and more systemic views in transformation discourse.

2 Intervention Logics to achieve policy objectives

The history of EU's Rural Development policy presents an account of the understanding "rural" as a "problem category" that has to be dealt with by dedicated policy interventions that supplement agricultural policies. This interpretation concurs with regional (or territorial focused) policy that would place quite different priorities and a diverse rationale for arguing for policy support. Policy objectives of the two domains which can be seen as the main policy drivers have addressed economic performance and stabilizing functions for population development as main priorities, indicating the overlap and interconnectedness of the two policy fields. The call for an "integrated" approach towards rural and regional policy has led to trends of aligning the two policies, and, temporarily in the 1990s, even joint programmes.

From a distance, it might be argued the story of rural policy (Dax 2015) is shaped by the changing policy context and societal goals, but looking more closely the heavy influence of national discourses and powerful interest groups with arising policy "inertia" (Dwyer et al. 2007), large-scale spatial dynamics and "global" influences with adverse effects on rural/remote/sparsely-populated regions should not be neglected. The predominating "narrative" for Shrinking Rural Regions places them in a context of disadvantaged areas characterized by inter-related problems, and a future full of risks and threats of continuous shrinkage, peripheralization and even marginalisation of these places.

By looking at diverse perspectives towards shrinking rural regions ESCAPE focuses on a strategy to make use of the "narrative power" of alternative perspectives (Shiller 2017) that highlight a different set of values and of alternative pathways for these regions. This transformative approach is used in a host of studies that seek useful methods to enhance "community vitality" (Scott 2010), that take the high degree of problems as an incentive to drive appropriate local adjustment programmes (Matt 2015) and to realize the emerging transformative agency (Westley 2013). More and more, critical voices urge to question the presently still mainstreaming growth perspectives and unimaginative positions of concentration vs. depletion leaving hardly any room for manoeuvre for remote rural regions. This emerging discourse questioning the peripheralization dictates (Willet 2020) is referred to as inspiration in applying the Theory of Change approach and discussing its potential relevance for transforming strategic frameworks and taking account of the complex spheres of interaction in shrinking processes.

2.1 The Scope of Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) approach has been selected as it provides a practical framework to focus on a perspective on pathways for policy action and linking conceptual design on the

reflection of cause-effect relationships. At the same time, as the exemplary use of the approach and literature review on the principles and varying application reveals it enables to highlight the numerous influences and interlinkages between different policies, instruments, spaces and scales, and understanding of action and „change“ among stakeholders and actors. As a detailed review of theoretical and practical studies in the EU-project RELOCAL (Copus et al. 2019) underlined, numerous „grey literature“ resources are available, showing its practical value and support for policy understanding, evaluation and design (Taplin and Clark 2012, Blamey and MacKenzie 2012, Vogel 2012, Stein and Valters 2012, Connell and Kubuisch 1998). In particular, it seems crucial that the internal logic of interventions are conceived in the spirit of achieving long-term goals which include aspects of spatial justice following from concerns of shrinking regions contexts, and, simultaneously, address the complex web of interaction with the local and wider contexts.

The Theory of Change approach is a result of the rising interest from evaluation and informed social practice, and has turned to a mainstream discourse and widely used approach. One of its most relevant benefits is to make explicit a set of assumptions and contextual conditions in relation to a given change process. The intention is to reflect and question existing ‚programme theory‘ and engage in an adaptative understanding and process of change. In very general words James (2011) provides the following definition for this approach:

‘A Theory of Change is an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens – and what that means for the part we play in a particular context, sector and/or group of people.’

This rather broad definition underpins the dependence on the given context and the active role of individuals, institutions and policy programmes and their inter-relationships to achieve specific outcomes and change.

ToC approaches can be understood as part of a family of approaches to policy design and evaluation which aim at capturing the need to specify the intervention logic of any place-sensitive „action“ to facilitate understanding of policy implementation and effectiveness and specify relevant cause and effect linkages attached to respective policies. Other approaches of this kind would include „Realistic Evaluation“, „Logic Models“, „Theory-Based Evaluation“ and particularly „Results Based Management“ which is referred to in the monitoring and evaluation framework favoured by DG Regio (EC Community of Practice 2014). A collection of illustrative examples of ToC practical examples can be found on the Centre for Theory of Change (2019) Website.

What we can learn from the wide range of relevant practices is the concern of not merely analysing and conceiving the cause-effect relationship according to actual inter-relations and focused on the desired impacts with regard to policy objectives, but also an enhanced awareness on the pivotal aspect of “assumptions” in this concept and any intervention logic. Despite the elaborated Common Evaluation and Monitoring Framework (CEMF) applied to rural development policy evaluation a theory-based approach reveals deficiencies in addressing

social implications, policy trade-offs and actual, long-term policy effects. Even if evaluation studies tend to focus on specific instruments or parts of the whole set of measures a lack of active participation of actors in the evaluation process is perceived (Maye 2020), which has adverse effects on assessing implementation and regional effects, as well as to establish appropriate goals and success criteria (Dax et al. 2014). ToC hence might attain an important retrospective and predictive dimension.

As direct mitigation action to impact on demographic changes is more or less limited to support for in-migration or action to reduce the rate of out-migration, such policies are doomed to fail if they are not including analyses on other policy programmes, integrating more complex cause-effect relationships in their considerations. In particular, motives for migration, and any spatial movement depend upon a range of local/regional socio-economic characteristics and processes which are entwined within the “complex shrinkage” syndrome. Thus, within the intervention process a wide set of driving factors that might directly or indirectly influence spatial change is to be considered in search of fruitful programme activities. The strategy building process has not only to deal with a very comprehensive set of policy fields and related activities, but needs an encompassing commitment. The policy awareness on rural regions is visible through “rural policy declarations” since long (see e.g. the European Rural Development Conferences in Cork 1996, Salzburg 2003 and Cork 2016; as well as the Council of Europe’s Rural Development report in 2017, Leuba 2017), but overall assessment of territorial focus in a balanced way, is limited. However, critical reflections on spatial dynamics argue that rural regions are treated primarily as “left-overs” and remaining spatial category, with few specific theoretical concepts deriving from “spatially-blind” policies (Mießner and Naumann 2019).

Development planning has highlighted in its search for useful guidance to use the Theory of Change approach that it is “time for a radical approach to learning in development” (Valters 2015). He outlines that a meaningful and comprehensive application of the Theory of Change approach “can give practitioners the freedom to open up the ‚black box‘ of assumptions about change that are too often side-lined“, and that it might „encourage ongoing critical reflection on both the specific (changing) context and how programme rationales and strategies fit into this“ (Valters 2015, 6). Practitioners are used to reflect on the intended changes and practical effects of any policy instrument, development process, local and regional engagement or assessment of action responding to spatial socio-cultural challenges. Quite often deficiencies and shortcomings in such processes would be linked to invisibility of assets, or obstacles, and “hidden agendas” of institutions. Realizing effective ToC processes therefore might have to overcome aspects and arguments that are not visible at first sight (Ho et al. 2020). This points to the concern in development work for adaptive strategy processes and the crucial aspects of taking account of complexity and political context.

Intervention logics thus dispose of a wide scope of learning applications which could be summarized in the following guidelines presenting a four-step schedule (Valters 2015, 7-12):

- (i) **Focus on process:** ToC approaches are often presented and primarily viewed as 'products'. "Of course, writing Theories of Change down is important, but the process of uncovering and critically appraising assumptions will need to be ongoing precisely because, in the initial analysis, many assumptions are likely to be remain uncovered".
- (ii) **Prioritise learning:** Even if accountability is core for programme implementation and evaluation this principle shows the additional value of reflective approaches. Learning objectives should be built into the cycle of project design, implementation, completion, and evaluation. Such a continuous commitment on learning might help to „opening up the black box of causation between inputs and outcomes“ (Valters 2015, 8).
- (iii) **Be locally led:** The wide integration of actors and beneficiaries at the various stages of programme elaboration, design and implementation is required out of two main reasons: "First, it grounds causal assumptions in local realities". And „(s)econd, it helps ensure a Theory of Change approach contributes to development programmes being genuinely locally led, which is commonly a key factor in success“ (Valters 2015, 10).
- (iv) **Think compass, instead of roadmap:** For some leading Theory of Change advocates, the process involves developing a 'roadmap to get you from here to there' (Center for Theory of Change, 2015). However, such a way of thinking might recreate the fallacy of assuming linearity. Instead, the idea of a 'compass' is presented as a more compelling image as it would lead programme actors through „ the fog of complex systems, discovering a path as we go along“ (Green 2015). This focus on complexity should not lead to sacrificing and abandoning planning but rather prompt actors to „recognis(e) that plans often reflect best guesses about the future (and about the past too) and will likely shift over time“ (Hummelbrunner and Jones 2013).

These aspects are relevant throughout all steps of interventions, as these are thought of as iterative processes. They are suggested as guiding principles that should not suppress creativity in the reflection and design process. In particular, it is crucial to relate considerations at all steps to appropriate narratives, changing perspectives and divergent views with regard to objectives, influential drivers and intervention rationales.

2.2 Diversity of narratives and drivers of change

Views on demographic change are very different from region to region, and dependent on past experience, and cultural positions, including feelings like place attachment, as well as social capital and trust. These perspectives evolve and alter over time, and might also be quite distinct

between individuals, stakeholders, social groups etc. Explanatory frames of these positions are often captured in story-lines, often referred to as narratives.

Obviously, the referred diversity of narratives aggravates the search for “common” visions and strategies. While such a consensual approach is often desired in policy elaboration, an enhanced understanding of the complex relationships supports ToC approaches that investigate the specific role, relevance and evolution of underlying assumptions in the intervention process. In contrast, for many policy domains apart from different values, underlying worldviews are influential for conceiving interaction frameworks and action (Spangenberg 2016). This dependence on the way we “see” problems attaches a high importance to awareness process, and capacity building as a fundamental issue for policy conceptualization. Moreover, another aspect often neglected, and related to this issue, is the reference to informal strategies. Also in planning processes for shrinking rural and urban areas the priority (or sometimes the exclusive focus) is put on formal planning devices, largely neglecting the existence and pivotal role of informal strategies (Hospers and Syssner 2018, Meijer 2019).

In mainstream discourse rural areas are usually addressed as spaces being left behind (Eurofound 2019) and the respective literature on the negative feelings of rural inhabitants abound. The current expert and policy debate on the reasons for the increased disappointment of rural people, argues for a shift in policy commitment (at various levels) turning towards an enhanced focus on convergence and solidarity aspects (Jouen 2019). It has important relevance for the assessment of the existing policy regime, on-going reform discussions, needs for institutional changes (see “lack of institutional capacity”, “institutional thickness”, and networks and governance arrangements), as well as creative perspectives on alternative pathways and “paradigm shifts”.

Discussions are led primarily in “sectors” and thus relevant narratives on rural and regional developments, ecological performance, social equality, cultural connections etc. deploy separately and with limited mutual reference. As an example, considerations for future regional policy provide important aspects within that policy field (Garretsen et al. 2013). Increasingly, the reception of policy by citizens is analysed (Pegan et al. 2018, Capello 2020) and valued as a very useful indicator and corrective for policy appraisal. In relating to the ‘perceived’ needs of citizens this changes substantially previous assumptions on regional policy delivery.

2.3 Perspectives on intervention approaches from case study analysis

The empirical part of ESCAPE spent a strong effort in accessing information from case studies on relevant views of local and regional actors on policies, institutional setting and intervention logics. The particular parts of the semi-structured interviews were analysed in the following table. It reveals the diverse approaches with regard to narratives on rural shrinkage, of course, inspired from the respective regional context and (long-term) exposure to shrinking in most of them.

The comparison of the eight case study results underscores the diversity of views between the regions explored, and the internal diversity among local and regional actors. Albeit case-specific features solidify, the regional debate, its linkage to higher levels, and the reflection of the multi-level governance system acting on the capacity and options for future development, are full of detailed nuances and adaptation aspects that can only be referred very superficially here. Yet, it seems particularly important to highlight the concern for locally-shaped action and the urges of many actors for increased local/regional “autonomy” in enhancing their specific regional situation.

The scope of the empirical study was too small to investigate all the details of the various policy influencing shrinking trends. Particularly, as we are interested in an assessment of the complex framework impacting on the process of shrinking, experts addressed could only partially cover the details of policy functions and region-specific implementation. The presentation in the case study report primarily focuses therefore on the discussion of “strategic approaches”, aspects of scale, and power relations of actors and network structures.

The following table (Table 1) shows those arguments mentioned in the case study reports that highlight the specific position towards a regionally framed narrative, and policy responses of various domains towards mitigation and adaptation policies at the different administrative levels. In many regions the awareness of higher level policy strategies or programmes is less visible for local actors, and hence arguments on those activities are scarce. The inclusion of this information enables us to consider the views of regional and local actors more comprehensively than just relying on programme implementation and assessment studies. Interestingly, the views have circled around the local and regional commitment for improving quality of life through a range of strategies and detailed action. In Table 2 a synthesis of main intervention logics addressed by the case studies is attempted. It reveals that particularities of national integration, long-term legacy development and geographical specificities might impact considerably on the narrative and the type of intervention approach esteemed most promising. This links back to literature which is full of place-specific examples on large-scale situation impacting on development frames (e.g. Brad and Molodovan 2019) and topographical conditions limiting potential action and creativity (Giordano and Dubois 2019). This analysis is hence an important pointer to relevant drivers for local and regional strategies and considerations for alternative perspectives.

Table 1: Narrative and mitigation and adaptation policies in CS

BULGARIA					
NARRATIVES	Shrinkage is related to the quality of life and development of the municipality, with the educational, vocational, age and even ethnic structure of the population, not with the number of residents and natural growth				
POLICIES	general	EU polices	national policies	regional policies	local policies
	'hidden' policy to invest mainly in several big cities (43)	EU-projects: valuable financial resource, but hardly problem solving. Lack of sensitivity to local nuances, needs and capabilities (32); main guidance by European concepts and policy implementation at national, regional and local level (42)	no specific national or regional instruments, except social benefits (low income families with children, general health services, primary public education services, unemployment support, pensions and social aid for disabled) with significant amounts (38); Despite 5 strategic development plans for shrinking, no instruments for these policies (42)	lack of adequate regional policies (31); RDP with serious problems and delays (37). Importance of LAG. Main objectives: stimulate job creation and social innovation (53f)	Networking and private (business) initiative. High-level direct contacts; Networks include the establishment of LAG. All municipalities aim at good relationships with the local business (46). Other funding options: EU OP funds to create additional but temporary jobs
Mitigation					
<i>family policy</i>					
<i>migration</i>	attract tourists (spa, cultural), professionals (IT) and families (gentrification) (31)				municipality support: focus on youth, sports and cultural centres, schools and cultural activities; as well as tourists (tourist itineraries, renovating urban areas, developing festivals, local/"reinvented" resources) (47)
Adaptation					
<i>workforce activation</i>	scholarships for medical students with commitment to return for 5 years (31)			improving the qualification of unemployed people and creation of new jobs (53)	funds for business to adapt to shrinking work force, through technological and technical modernisation (52)
<i>support active ageing</i>	social care services for elderly people (31)				

<i>boost local attractiveness</i>	improve quality of life: theatre, sports clubs for yp, social care services for children with disabilities (31)	projects on energy efficiency of existing housing (Trojan); regional social infrastructure: addressing the deinstitutionalisation of children and daily care social centres (36)	opposite effect: educational policies carry out closure of schools; privatisation of health care in 2000 (poor health care quantity and quality)	LAG-projects on social innovation (53); One on providing social care services for children and their parents.	Private focus on health services, cultural events and support for municipalities' initiatives. Private transport structures to cope with public transport weakness (46); emotional oriented local businesses; public cultural and social initiatives (47)
<i>valuation of natural resources</i>	development of organic farming (31)	energy efficiency of existing dwellings (Trojan)			
<i>activation of local capabilities (voluntary work, integration of immigrants...)</i>		regional social infrastructure (deinstitutionalisation of children and daily care social centres; services for parents, children and elderly people) (36)			
<i>support for vulnerable groups</i>	disabled people, unemployed people, Roma (31)	focus in ERDF (2014-2020) on families, children and elderly people. (36)			The municipality supports (EU funds) groups at risk – elderly people, people with disabilities, low income people to cover basic needs (food, heating, clothes) (47)
<i>economic development</i>	find large investor			LAG support for SMEs and farmers (in project applications). Improving the competitiveness of SMEs.	Cooperation of municipalities and local businesses (46f); The Public Procurement Act - the key obstacle to employ local enterprises in municipal projects. Local enterprises not competitive against large national enterprises (50)

SPAIN					
Narratives	Shrinking is perceived as a demographic, economic and cultural process (32), with rural shrinkage being influenced by national and regional policies that target primarily urban-industrial agglomerations, leaving rural areas to abandonment. Thus, legislation and policy ignore rural singularities (34) and engender negative images of rurality (35).				
Policies	general policies	EU policies	national policies	regional policies	local policies

	Adaptation pathways are considered more feasible, but preferred strategy includes mitigation or the combination of both. Core aspiration of local actors: establish tax and legal differentiation for rural areas, to support private sector to generate jobs and economic dynamism (57)	National and European RD policies lack integration of local perspectives and needs, disconnected from local particularities. LEADER is exception but with insignificant funding (55)	National Strategy against Demographic Challenge (2019) focuses on basic service provision, small villages, etc. Digitisation Agenda evolving, with shrinkage in rural areas as relevant topic (38ff and 48).	lack of cooperation between provincial government and regional governments regarding RD strategies (55, 65)	general demand of a place-based approach and participation of local stakeholders in planning and implementation of shrinking strategies (66)
Mitigation					
<i>family policy</i>					
<i>migration</i>	no local (or any other) initiatives to increase population size (52)				
Adaptation					
<i>workforce activation</i>		high impact: CEDES initiative (ERDF) focus on professional training, entrepreneurship etc, (51) other measures on EU level: low impact			
<i>support active ageing</i>					isolated projects in some municipalities with high demand (63)
<i>boost local attractiveness</i>				implementation of smart-technologies for public services in low density areas, e.g. water supply, lightening, waste collection; digitalization (57)	many projects (digitalisation, training for administration, cultural, etc.; 46), but locally unilateral or adhering to higher-level programmes. Lack of awareness of interdependence and 'county spirit' (52)
<i>valuation of natural resources</i>					promotion of organic farming, diversification and innovation in agri-food, combined with rural tourism; (62)

<i>activation of local capabilities</i>		"The Celtiberian Serrania" approach: civil society organizations work against depopulation and for recognition as sparsely populated mountainous region (63)			
<i>focus on vulnerable groups</i>					
<i>economic development</i>		ESF training and job policies, but short term, yearly renewed plans and programs (54)			Local actors perceive need to foster economic dynamism as pivotal (62)
Ideas on approaches to interventions	centralisation of education and training favours outmigration (young and skilled people). Re-thinking of strategy requested, shifting towards needs of labour market and options for newcomers.	LEADER as sole effective programme visible and functional in CS: increase LEADER funds and continuity	centralisation versus decentralisation - multi level governance: find the appropriate mix for place-based grounding of policies, transparent structures and cooperation mechanisms; sectoral policies versus an integrated one with a "rural lens".	inspire "county spirit" for common development to bundle capacities and abilities, linked to a change in perception of rurality and rural options.	

FINLAND					
Narratives	The general approach is seen in advancing living conditions and entrepreneurship in rural areas (38) through EU policy support supporting balanced 'growth' by creating employment opportunities in both densely populated and sparsely populated regions (55). National policy claims to the principle of "keeping the entire country inhabited" but has to accept centralisation of people and economic activity in larger urban centres (35, 56). Shrinking processes are widely acknowledged among the stakeholders in Juuka and accepted as something that the municipality must face (34). However, attracting new residents, is to spread a positive image of Juuka as a good place to live (34).				
Policies	general policies	EU policies	national policies	regional policies	local policies

	Main critique: failure to address population decline by central and regional government: financial distress of municipalities due to eroding tax base and increasing tasks (35)	<u>Project-led</u> development based on uptake of national and EU funding opportunities, however <u>variable</u> success for municipalities (50); Influence of EU legislation not always positive - abolishment of municipal guarantees (50); LEADER focus on local needs of villages, not municipal level (54).	Integration of sectoral policies in national rural policy agenda (38) but no financing measures in the National Rural Programme (39); No holistic, long-term strategy at national level to combat population decline (55), even if referenced in most policy interventions (35) (44); 95% of national expenditures directed to urban areas.	regionalization policy with regard to public employment with no effect (36); Anyhow, fear of losing power by municipalities due to centralisation (36).	focus on adaptation policies including attracting new residents (34); QoL and well-being of its residents (45); municipality reduces operating costs by downsizing its facilities and services to decreasing needs (47); Reduction of level of public services and infrastructure, but maintaining the QoL (53); strategy is adaptation (54).
Mitigation					
<i>family policy</i>					attract new residents and raise birth rates
<i>migration</i>		Demographic issues are not directly mentioned as objectives/measures in the ERDF, ESF or EARDF funds (40)			attract new families through new cheap homes and new school building; attract pensioners, returnees and second home owners not so successful, but aiming to attract employees, vocational students and high school students (48).
Adaptation					
<i>workforce activation</i>					
<i>support active ageing</i>					social entrepreneur for welfare services (to ageing people) (53)
<i>boost local attractiveness</i>		support for services, part. the support of village shops (39)	Severe decrease of village shops led to support by national government (39) to promote basic services	Bilateral co-operation between neighbouring municipalities (e.g. primary schools)	
<i>valuation of natural resources</i>					National park attracts increasing tourist numbers (49)

<i>activation of local capabilities</i>					local stakeholders encourage third sector, cultural and sport organisations and co-operatives; generally hope, that pensioner returnees be active citizens, volunteering (48f).
<i>vulnerable groups</i>					
<i>economic development</i>		ESI funds for developing entrepreneurship and advancing public and private investments (40)		Despite bilateral cooperation, competition between municipalities for investments and residents very strong (51, 57); support for more active economic life (57)	
Ideas on approaches to interventions		Access to reformed cohesion policy (Green Deal, CC, social innovation). If social cohesion will have more emphasis in future, <u>municipalities</u> might get more weight in intervention logic (54); Funding for shrinking not on project framework could f better tackle the reality of simple and complex shrinkage (55).			a shift away from 'moral support' to 'proactive measures' (smart shrinking) envisioned(55); important impetus and overall framework for place-based action by EU and national policies (55); municipalities <u>struggle with increasing tasks and declining financial resources</u> (55)

CROATIA	general	EU level	national level	regional level	local level
Narratives	Replacement migration is necessary to compensate for and lessen depopulation and aging, and to counterweigh for lost workforce (due to Homeland wars, economic transition difficulties, rural-urban migration etc.) (29); <u>lack of national strategy</u> in general (Croatia sees as Europe's amusement park (42f), responsibilities between ministries divided and cooperation need to address rural shrinkage at all levels (44; 42f).				
Policies	general policies	EU policies	national policies	regional polices	local policies

	Demographic policy measures currently rely on insufficient family policy. They need to be expanded and supported by migration policy and economic policies (e.g. taxation, incentives for entrepreneurs etc.). (55)	Strong dependence on EU funds, with positive impacts on rural shrinkage (despite of criticism) in all ESI funds (40); But lack of continuity of projects (46) - call policy synergies a systematic approach (job creation and service provision). Both top-down and bottom-up approaches required (45)		Counties least effective governance level, in terms of demographic and general development measures, not close enough to issues at the local level, and also not strong enough (44)	
Mitigation					
<i>family policies</i>		Incentives for Young Families – Support in Acquiring Building Land (42)	include maternity benefits, better working conditions for mothers, assistance with acquisition of real estate (42)		
<i>migration</i>			migration policy following labour market needs (43); immigration of returnees (new ideas, etc.) policy of diaspora is relevant (50)	importance of University of Osijek and formal and non-formal education (52), in particular considering high outmigration of yp	
Adaptation					
<i>workforce activation</i>		best practice: national project (MAKE A WISH): local employment of 6.000 women to support elderly and disadvantaged people (41, 49).			
<i>support active ageing</i>		see above			
<i>boost local attractiveness</i>		Completion of Traffic Corridor Vc (42)			
<i>valuation of natural resources</i>					
<i>activation of local capabilities</i>					
<i>focus on vulnerable groups</i>					

<i>economic development</i>		investment in IS: airport, river port, business incubator, distribution centre for fruits, Competence Centre (42)			
Ideas on approaches to interventions		Start from resources and needs and move towards programming (and not the other way around!), cooperating with the local level; recognising and responding to needs of LAU 2 level (financial and human capital) (54)		Slavonija, Baranja and Srijem Project (5 counties in Eastern Croatia) combines multilevel approach and strategic vision with <u>strong financial</u> support (47f)	Best practice of munic. of Antunovac: focus on communal infrastructure development incl. education and scholarships (46)

POLAND	general	EU level	national level	regional level	local level
Narratives	For the poorest region in Poland (38) two main narratives emerge: Severe shrinkage due to introduction of free market in 1989 led to collapse of local industry and small farms - high unemployment rate of peasant workers - high outmigration rates abroad; presently yp (part. women) <u>desire to leave</u> because of better living conditions (low public services, low wages in rural parts) in urban areas (28ff).				
Policies	general policies	EU policies	national policies	regional policies	local policies
		positive. Village renewal programs; High importance of EU funds (33); particularly RDP (First Pillar): increase profitability of food production by increasing subsidies, short food chains, diversification (50)	Diagnosis of shrinkage well developed, but lack of overall strategy. Cooperation between Ministries only at official level, but no translation into practice; measures are scattered (32) Marginalisation of local governments (31)	Strategic papers are seen as prerequisite for funding rather than as operational documents - development strategy of Podlaskie Voivodeship (30). New models of cooperation are needed (NUTs 3 is only statistical)	Strengthening the autonomy of local and regional authorities proposed, e.g. decentralise financial resources to local governments/LAGs, professional support for local government to enhance cooperation (31); "currently small finance and small power".
Mitigation					
<i>family policies</i>			Financial support for families with 2 or more children (Family 500+ programme) (37)		
<i>migration</i>					

Adaptation				see Nuts2 regional strategy paper (30)	
<i>workforce activation</i>			contrary: lowering statutory retirement age in 2017 (37)		
<i>support active ageing</i>		green care (50)			
<i>boost local attractiveness</i>			very low level of public services (health care, nurseries, geriatric services) (4) due to low access to services - process of shrinking most visible (19) adverse school regulations: leading to larger schools at greater distances (37)	Quality of life - reduction of negative effects of demographic problems, improvement of social cohesion (assistance for the poorest), improvement of health condition of the society, environmental protection	
<i>valuation of natural resources</i>					local vision of resource use (return to agriculture as development; small, organic farming, ecological management)(46)
<i>activation of local capabilities</i>					
<i>focus on vulnerable groups</i>					
<i>economic development</i>		most funds for road infrastructure (national and regional level, not local) (19) aim: professionalisation and diversification of multifunctional and sustainable agriculture (50);		development of entrepreneurship, support of professional activity, increase in innovativeness of enterprises	
Ideas on approaches to interventions	vertical cooperation strongly needed (multi-level governance); empowerment of local level; respect for needs on local level				

HUNGARY	general	EU level	national level	regional level	local level
---------	---------	----------	----------------	----------------	-------------

Narratives	Accumulation of critical mass for local development was hindered to a large extent by the comparative advantage of agricultural production (43); consensus among local stakeholders on interrelated causes of population decline: low fertility rate, ageing of the local societies and outmigration of young, qualified people because of limited opportunities, not only a local but a nation-wide phenomenon (52); peripheral location - unfavourable road IS; high priced real estate market (54).				
Policies	general policies	EU policies	national policies	regional policies	local policies
	Seventh Cohesion Report mentions Hungary as an example for extreme centralisation "where the share of expenditure managed at the local level was reduced by half between 2001 and 2016." (My Region ... 2017: 168) (38)	RDP priority 6 including LEADER/CLLD: poorly funded and poorly governed (LEADER) (see 67)	"Hungarian National Development and Territorial Development Concept" with 5 targets, one of them is "social exclusion and demographic shrinkage" (56) besides EU partnership agreement	county councils (NUTS 3) played secondary roles in territorial development, supported by EU funds and co-financed by the Hungarian government (65). Recent centralisation tendencies and extreme concentration of power at the centre. Still county councils important actors for territorial development.	Very limited room of manoeuvre at local level. Shrinkage a nationwide problem, should be addressed by national government primarily (69); "Reluctance" of municipalities to give innovative responses to shrinkage: 1) lack of stakeholder consensus (political divisions) 2) strong political impact of the ruling party on local levels 3) support to establish local and regional clientele 4) centralisation results in constrained autonomy of municipalities.
Mitigation					
<i>family policies</i>		ERDF (in case of kindergarten developments), equally available for urban and rural settlements (68)	encourage young couples to reach children. Includes housing issues, tax policies and daily childcare services. with recent amendments (62)		
<i>migration</i>	No positive expect on newcomers (69); no support for migrants at all.				No means for municipalities developed to attract (urban) people. Imbalances/inequalities of the property market determine spatial patterns, rather than local policies. However, plans how to retain local youth (favourable housing conditions) (69).
Adaptation					
<i>workforce activation</i>					
<i>support active ageing</i>					

<i>boost local attractiveness</i>		Human Resources designed for tackling social and demographic challenges. Intervention logic is based on stronger local community and better public services to reduce motivation to leave (57f); Territorial development and employment-related measures. (68)	Hungarian Village Programme (announced 2018 prolonged 2020): assumes slowing demographic decline through better service-provision), enhanced connectivity and significant financial support for housing. Programme tailored to needs of rural areas (63f).		
<i>valuation of natural resources</i>					
<i>activation of local capabilities</i>					
<i>focus on vulnerable groups</i>					
<i>economic development</i>		Shrinking regions are target, but low take up rates (57). The intervention logic is that economic development increases capability of rural areas to retain population.			
Ideas on approaches to interventions			Despite of Hungarian Village Programme: municipalities underfinanced, in need of increased long-term basic funding (64)		small scale offer of employment opportunities (part. in service sector, eg. Tourism) (54)

GREECE	general	EU level	national level	regional level	local level
--------	---------	----------	----------------	----------------	-------------

Narratives	Shrinking is based on a vicious circle: Poverty, unemployment, lack of educational IS etc. forces the rural population to leave the countryside and look for better living conditions elsewhere. This reduction of the population causes income and employment decline, increases poverty and reduces availability of social/educational services and IS (27). EU policy does not take in consideration the needs and specific characteristics of each particular region or municipality which leads to failures at the implementation level (23f). A massive urbanisation was the consequence (from 1920 to 2000 the proportion of the urban population increased from 23% to 73%) (17). Main driver for shrinking: agricultural restructuring with lack of investment in agricultural infrastructure, crisis of fur industry; decrease of schools (18). Lack or extremely low power of the local both public and private actors. Absence of structures, initiatives or networks for community development (16)				
Policies	general policies	EU policies	national policies	regional policies	local policies
	All the economic activities in the CS are directly or indirectly related to the primary sector. Hardly opportunities in other sectors, although the primary sector is highly uncompetitive (small scales, mountainous, low IS supply, etc.) (19) No strategies specially designed to mitigate shrinkage or adaptation provisions in Greece (22).	Policies not well designed at both EU and national level. E.g., co-financing rate for the investment programmes funded by the EU is fluctuating according to regional economic and financial indicators (19) with internal regional differences (23); European SF part. important in Greek economic crisis period when national investment funds are close to zero (20).	All economic activities, services, administration and main infrastructures concentrated in the capital. Most decisions concerning the countryside are taken in Athens, some activities concentrated and executed only in Athens (17). Local opinions/suggestions not taken into consideration in policy design or strategies - only implementation of policies (26).	regional and local policies applied in the country and CS is implemented mainly through LEADER/CLLD (21)	The regional and local authorities are trying to improve the living conditions in the case study area. New infrastructures are built and old ones repaired in order to make the farmers' job easier, however bureaucracy, delays in funding and payments, and other reasons restrict initiatives, e.g. reforestation, dam construction, museum of fossil forest, new roads etc. (23).
Mitigation					
<i>family policies</i>			Lack of motivation schemes for birth increase. Only marginal support, e.g. a subsidy of 1000 euro for every new-born child (14, 21))		
<i>migration</i>					
Adaptation					
<i>workforce activation</i>					
<i>support active ageing</i>					

<i>boost local attractiveness</i>		Egnatia Motorway connection Asia Minor with EU countries, (financed by EU SF) close to case study area (20)			on the contrary: closure of schools and primary education in most villages (27)
<i>valuation of natural resources</i>					
<i>activation of local capabilities</i>					
<i>focus on vulnerable groups</i>				CLLD/LEADER: day-care center for autists (21)	
<i>economic development</i>		The European structural and investment funds are mainly used for boosting economic growth (20)		CLLD/LEADER positive effects on local economic development, focusing on agricultural tradition and tourism; investments for rural transformation and local needs (22).	
<i>Ideas on approaches to interventions</i>		Scientific research could provide an input on the policy design at national level. Some departments of University of Western Macedonia located in the city of Kastoria (26).	Strategies based on regional (social, historical and morphological) knowledge and needs. In general need of psycho-social support and motivation, confronted with general lack of human resources, knowledge and capacities (25).	Alternatives to fur industries (tourism, logging, exploitation of fur-byproducts), improvement of marketing strategies and local agricultural branding; enhance collaboration, bottom-up approach and less bureaucracy (24).	

GERMANY	general	EU level	national level	regional level	local level
Narratives	Wide-spread narrative of regional decline following the Communist collapse (institutional weakness, reduced attractiveness of the area). Common explanation patterns of "limited choices" depicted a psychological effect and sentiments of inferiority. Supports outmigration and pop decline (27). EU SF support has been pulled back and regressed in the region too early or effectiveness of "big" support schemes and the typical "project" support model is doubted. Complexity of funding opportunities, complicated rules and preconditions for receiving support are limiting accessibility of funds - policy fatigue (38). Common narrative of East-Germany: specific historic and political situation; policy response through "adaptation" to safeguard living conditions (37); however, adaptations of SGIs led to losses at regional level (38). "Large-scale policy change of unification of Germany" and "limited integration ability", almost complete de-industrialization main trigger for pop decline (28); shrinking in the area is an on-going process				

	with a large legacy effects (30) economic narrative is still prevalent (Master plan) (45). still ongoing vicious circle strong impact on economic development and self-esteem of locals (29) "consolidated negative self-conception" of local actors (31).				
Policies	general policies	EU policies	national policies	regional polices	local policies
	policy lost its linkage to the electorate, now a predominantly egoistic and materialistic profession (30): need for (adequate) financial resources, appropriate legal frameworks, human resources and expertise (31).	Regional development policies not really adapted to small rural regions (30); early shift to transition region disappointing for local actors (33), LEADER/CLLD is applied throughout the CS, with range of projects and particularly raising awareness and cooperation (37).	Integrative approaches since long (39); including action plan for "equal living conditions everywhere" (2019); how "equal", or better just, living conditions might be achieved throughout Germany (35); MORO model regions on regional service provision.	With population decline, size and professionalism of admin decreases and suffers from reduced administrative capacities, vs. increasing tasks of local and regional authorities and lack of available resources (29)	Insufficient financial distribution to meet tasks (31) "gap" between formal tasks and limited actual "power" (49), policy fatigue (31, 38); substantial financial resources for small communities more relevant than project support (38).
Mitigation					
<i>family policy</i>				Social services for all steps of life course (e.g. new parents, family nurses, child-care, social workers in schools, advice for yp, free public services for pupils, transition management for young adults, cooperation with universities)	
<i>migration</i>					Local example (Hettstedt) addressing immigration as reasonable chance to attract new inhabitants/ change the discourse. Altered view with positive influence, but endorsement (48).
Adaptation					
<i>workforce activation</i>				qualification for young adults, offers for long-term unemployed people. Range of programmes to reach yp	

				in challenging conditions (40).	
<i>support active ageing</i>					“multi-generation houses” as gateways for many social aspects and demands (e.g. deprived children) (40).
<i>boost local attractiveness</i>			MORO-programme for service provision and prevention strategies against out-migration. Taking up lessons from predecessor programme (35).	improvement of individual mobility through highway A38 (40)	locally oriented approaches: revitalization in town centres (vacancy); initiatives to secure social exchange and retain high quality of life in villages (41).
<i>valuation of natural resources</i>				Biosphere reserve and LEADER: potential of nat. resources, high quality env and open space for tourism (41).	
<i>activation of local capabilities</i>					pivotal role of voluntary work for public (38), local retail shop (36).
<i>vulnerable groups</i>				Focus on long-term unemployment	
<i>economic development</i>			Master Plan 2018 distinct to other policy support: “opportunity for resources for sustainable economic development of the region” (44).		“Integrated Concept for Municipal Development” in 4 towns.
Ideas on approaches to interventions		intensified linkages to other LEADER groups through trans-national cooperation might nurture new ideas and contribute to deliver new approaches (43)	Necessary to find differentiated policy response to address the place-based problems of the affected areas (43)	Innovative solutions for regions: endogenous development, cooperation, interaction with other regions and external input (31); Skills to cope with shortages. Create a climate for young people to stay/ move into region (43); focus on practical issues (45).	Elaboration of “Master Plan” to deal with the national phase-out of brown coal mining. Impetus to revert strategies and find opportunities. Chance to achieve more widespread and long-lasting “persistence” in high-level commitment (31).

Table 2: Main intervention aspects, derived from CS reports

Case study	Main intervention approach raised by CS	Further aspects of Intervention Logic
BG	differentiated perspectives; aiming at nurturing (mountain) assets	internal diversity; improve connectivity and attractiveness; awareness of local conflicts
ES	mixed approach of mitigation and adaptation	territorial strategy; focus on returnees; improve image of regions
FI	change from economic focus to adaptation underway	local vs. national concerns; social Entrepreneurship; communication of adaptation process
HR	focus on use of existing programmes, and enhancing knowledge and exchange	vertical/horizontal partnerships; functional approach; knowledge and cooperation focus
PL	regional institutions core influence, to address internal divergent opportunities	role of state forest and environmental agencies; solve delimitation/definition of region; release potential of local level
HU	mix of mitigation and adaptation (enhance agr. value-chains)	improve QoL; target young people; apply indirect approaches (place attachment and foundations for QoL)
GR	raise administrative capacity and improve multi-level governance	regional characteristics (mountain) decisive; psycho-social aspects; limited scope of funding schemes
DE	local and regional views focused on practice	mission statement; intensive discourse and discontent; limitations of "classical" investment /growth approach

3 Generic Intervention Logics (Paradigms)

The discussion of the application of the Theory of Change approach in the previous section is intended to reveal the specific contribution a clear conceptual design of intervention logics might provide for action towards shrinking rural regions. In particular, this seems necessary to initiate the shift towards an in-depth understanding of the complex process underlying long-term shrinking and its place-specific features. Here, it is the ESCAPE project's aim to illustrate the need for iterative reviews of the intervention design, interim results and obstacles to final outcomes to increasingly adapt to sustainable and resilient local and regional pathways. It should be noted that intervention in this conceptual view cannot be planned/foreseen beforehand as a "mechanical" follow-up of activities, but is largely shaped by local and regional participation and its interaction with "external" forces. Such a perspective is different to (still prevailing) notions of growth, efficiency and one-directional cause-effect relationships. The shift in the "paradigm" calls therefore for an intensive deliberation on the linkages between instruments supporting the appropriate intervention logics framework.

A standard diagram format, developed by the RELOCAL project (Copus et al 2019) has been found to be an effective way of exploring and communicating the complexities of intervention

logics associated with policy addressing the issue of demographic change in rural areas. Already Figure 8 in the main report has used this convention to illustrate the two main generic policy responses – mitigation and adaptation. In this section we will use the same diagram format to compare the approaches of Less Favoured Area (LFA) policy, CAP Pillar 2 and Cohesion Policy. Whilst the first of these was a “horizontal” policy, applied in a standard way to participating MS, the other two vary considerably in terms of practical implementation between MS and even between regional programme areas. Therefore, in the case of the latter the diagrams are inevitably more generalised, with the aim of representing “typical” implementations.

The three diagrams share the following components:

1. One or more **long term goals**. In the case of Cohesion Policy (Figure 3) in particular the goal with regard to shrinking rural areas is implicit. This goal is rarely clearly stated in policy documents, but may be inferred from the policy itself, from explanatory notes supporting the decision-making process, and from the “grey literature”.
2. A single policy cannot be held fully responsible for rural demographic trends. In other words, it is subject to an **accountability ceiling**.
3. There is a wide scope of separate single **interventions** and of types of interventions – these, again, are more specific in the case of LFA policy. The flexibility afforded within Pillar 2 and Cohesion policy means that the interventions shown on the diagram are selective and representative.
4. Between the two elements of cause and effect (the design of interventions and the outcomes) lie one or more causal pathways of **intermediate outcomes**. These are formulated to show what the policy maker seems to have assumed or would happen *if the policy were fully effective*.
5. Similarly **Baseline Assumptions** are characteristics associated with the intermediate outcomes which would need to hold true in order for the causal pathway to function as expected, and for the policy to deliver the long-term goal(s). Clearly *many of these assumptions do not hold good in practice*, and this tells us a lot about why policies may or may not be successful (and what alternative, supplementary action might be required to increase desired outcomes).
6. Around the edge of the diagram **Contextual Conditions and Drivers** are recorded. These may be geographical, societal, related to the market, or to policy and governance. In the real world all of these affect the validity (or otherwise) of the intervention logic and its constituent causal pathways. In many cases, these conditions are realized only to a limited extent and/or place-specific so that in the actual implementation process very different pathways between regions might evolve.

3.1 Less Favoured Area Policy

This is a relatively simple intervention logic (Figure 1). LFA policy (and its successor ANC) have been relatively ineffective in stemming the tide of rural depopulation. The diagrammatic representation of the intervention logic reveals the explanation. Almost without exception the baseline assumptions do not hold good, and most of the contextual conditions and drivers are not, in reality, conducive to the policy delivering on its demographic goals. The tension of the policy has been the subject of the research and policy analysis since long, pointing to the need to account more convincingly on the environmental implications (Dax and Hellegers 2000) and the bio-physical nature of the production constraints (Van Orshoven et al. 2014) leading to changes in the definition of the less-favoured areas, and its relabelling into Areas of Natural Constraints (ANC).

3.2 CAP Pillar 2

The CAP Pillar 2 intervention logic (Figure 2) shows the goals and causal pathways for two types of measure which are generally assessed as the main instruments impacting on demographic development in rural regions; (a) Village Renewal/LEADER community development (EC 1305/2013, art. 20 and art. 42-45), and (b) measures which aim to improve basic services in rural areas (EC 1305/2013, art. 20). The first of these is assumed to have mitigation as its goal, through revitalising the local economy, creating jobs which reduce out-migration, or maybe even stimulate in-migration. The second may create a few jobs, but maybe is principally aimed at improving the well-being of rural residents (i.e. adaptation). There are a number of interlinkages between the causal pathways of the two types of measure. Once again, however, a careful review of the baseline assumptions and contextual conditions and drivers reveals the fragility of this paradigm. There are many points at which the chains of intermediate outcomes may break down.

Such restrictions in the assumptions and contextual conditions are reflected in modelling studies which aim at estimating the combined outcome of implementation of Pillar 2 measures. In the EU-project TOP-MARD the POMMARD model assessed the regional policy implementation and model design achieved a high degree of complexity, by just referring to the most important influential elements of differentiating rural development measures. It also revealed the limited effect on demographical change due to the current levels of Pillar 2 and diverse scenarios with alternating priorities on various instruments and/or scale of budget resources (Bryden et al. 2011).

Figure 1: Generic Intervention Logic (Paradigm) for Less Favoured Area Policy

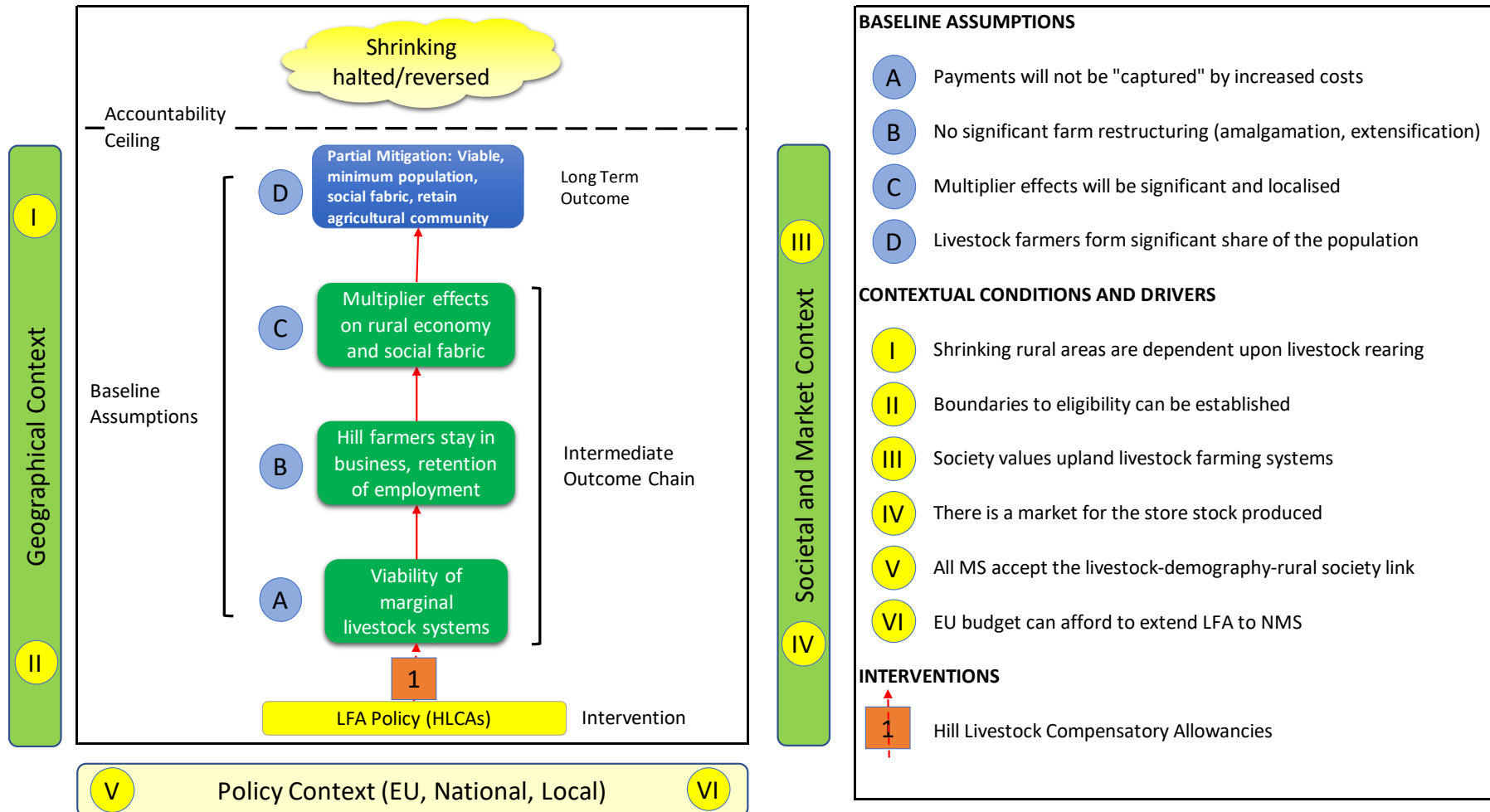


Figure 2: Generic Intervention Logic (Paradigm) for key elements of CAP Pillar 2 (2000-2020 period)

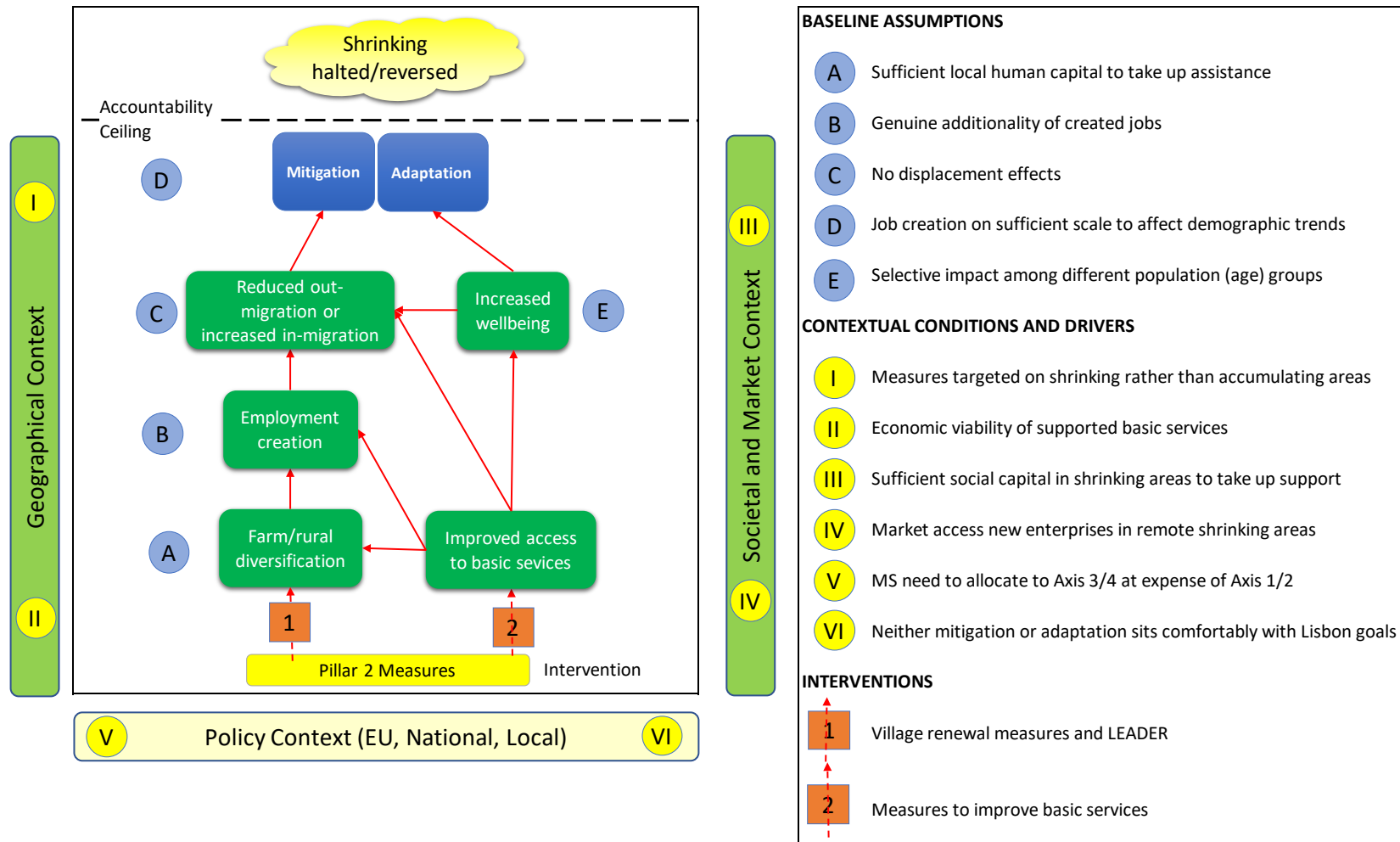
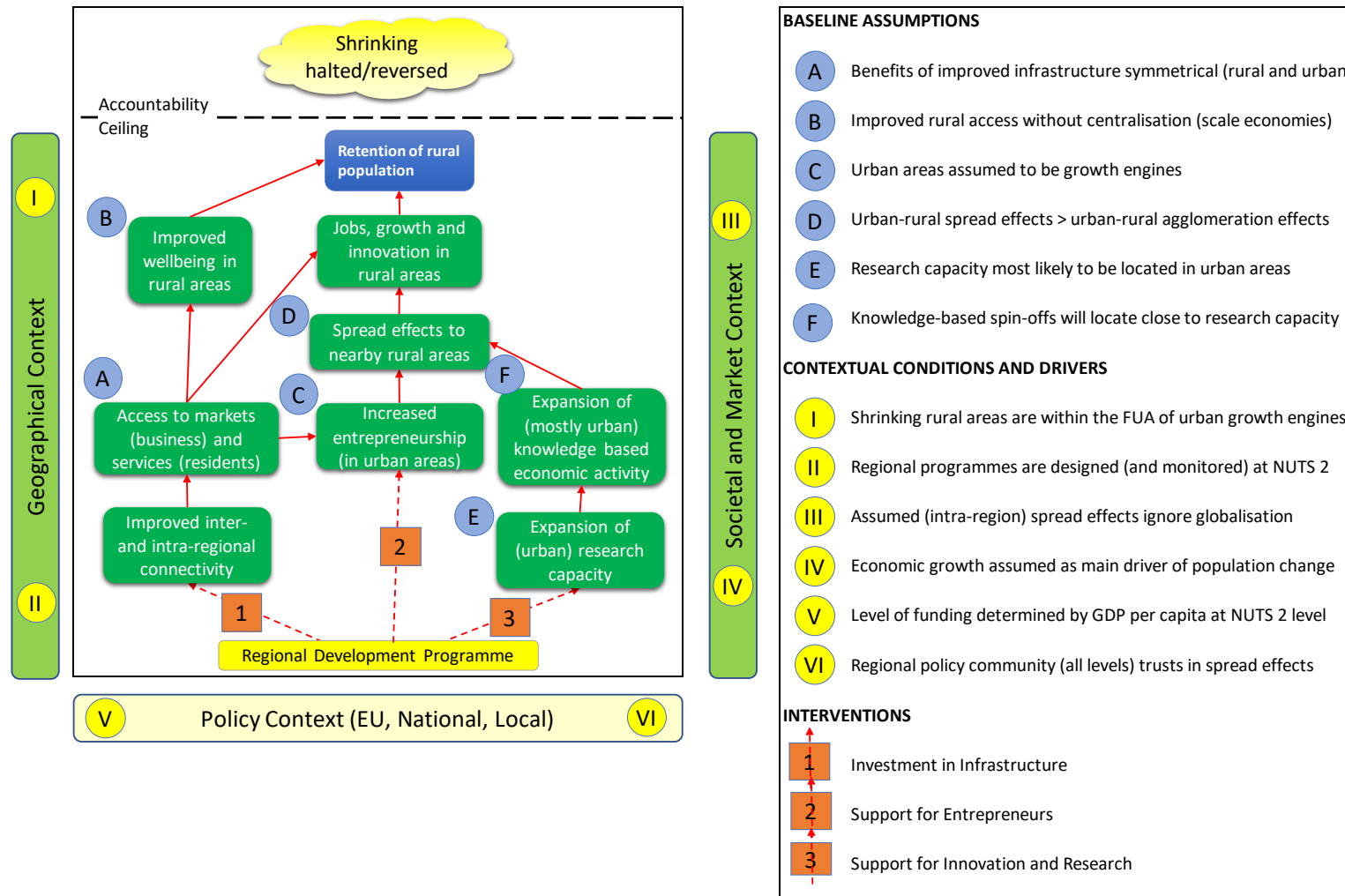


Figure 3: Generic Intervention Logic (Paradigm) for key elements of Cohesion Policy (2000-2020 period)



3.3 Cohesion Policy

Figure 3 presents a picture of the intervention logic which we assume would be used to support any assertion of the effectiveness of Cohesion Policy in addressing rural shrinkage. In many ways, and for obvious reasons, this is a greater stretch of the imagination. We have shown causal pathways for three “popular” types of Cohesion Policy intervention; (a) investments in infrastructure, (b) support for entrepreneurship, and (c) support for the research and innovation infrastructure. These three pathways interact considerably, but all three have a degree of conventional bias towards urban areas within the programme area (built from Nuts 2 regions), and are therefore heavily dependent upon “spread effects” to deliver benefits in terms of rural demography. From the point of view of shrinking rural areas this is the main weakness in this paradigm, as can be understood from a review of the baseline assumptions and contextual conditions and drivers, few of which, in reality hold good.

There is no lack of research on the assessment of the effects of Cohesion Policy. Yet, paradoxically as Bachtler et al. (2016, 2) note “one of the curious features of the policy is that there is surprisingly little consensus on how well it works, how effective it has been in reducing regional disparities and improving the performance of supported regional economies, and how useful it has been in fulfilling the goals set for it”. Although that study does not focus on the weaknesses in implementation Cohesion Policy in remote rural regions it clearly points to the lack in addressing goals for shrinking rural regions and impacting on uneven demographic processes. The need for an enhanced differentiation in policy assessment, with important lessons for future intervention designs for shrinking rural regions, is seen as one of the crucial deficiencies in mainstream regional development assessment, remaining at a rather superficial level of general policy reviews without detailing issues for whom, “when, where and how it has been (effective)” (Fratesi 2016, 443).

4 Tapping into the potential of good practice

The interest of studies on informing policy strategies for shrinking rural regions is often referring to emerging examples of innovative approaches to tackle shrinking processes. Relevant cases of good practice, analysis of local initiatives and recommendations for pro-active engagement in specific supporting topics and territorial approaches have been addressed in the literature review of the four European Macro Regions in the initial stage of the project (see Inception Report, Copus et al. 2019a, 16f., 31f., 49 and 65). The literature review indicated a rising interest in local initiatives that seek to overcome the persistent view on “shrinking” as a challenge framed in a downward spiral. This view was widely supported through empirical work in the eight subsequently carried out case studies (Annex 4-12). Throughout this work it appears necessary that a shift towards a more progressive attitude to reveal and uncover opportunities and innovative organizational ideas is sustained. On a scale from „hard“ to „soft“ interactions, we could distinguish the following three spheres for action: (i) rebuilding structures

of settlement, infrastructure and economy (ii) enhance capacities and scope of action for regional actors and (iii) initiate cooperation and participation processes (Küpper et al. 2013, 19).

The increasing scope of studies investigating the contributions to overcome shrinking, mostly at small-scale level, have also been referred to in the case studies to a substantial extent. The resulting discussions are a relevant basis for the specific assessment of actors and changing views on appropriate regional strategies. Although no complete survey on respective local responses can be provided here, it is the intention to summarize illustrative and compelling action that is (i) inspiring for the change process envisioned, (ii) representing a specific type of local or regional response to shrinking challenges, and (iii) providing specific aspects how to learn from those cases. The remainder of the presentation of good practice findings is organized in a way to respond to these three aspects.

4.1 Inspire change processes

Projects that deal with the shrinking phenomenon are wide-spread, yet often of a primarily anecdotal nature. They are therefore quite often the object of story-lines building on „success“ stories on a very local basis. Hence, we have to ask ourselves if they constitute an emerging evidence of a demographic turnaround, signifying „green shoots or chimera“? (Copus et al. 2019c).

As negative experiences, and unfavourable perspectives of local actors, in general, are no supportive framework for „new“ and often strongly demanding initiatives, negative „spiralling-down“ processes are an inherent obstacle in many local and regional development efforts. In addition, local interests and weak or inappropriate institutional structures might be substantial obstacles to engage in innovative action. In contrast to the widely shared perception by large parts of our societies that technological change and catching-up as well as problems of accessibility and lack of critical mass are the main challenges for achieving successful initiatives and development pathways in these remote/shrinking areas, the fundamental problem is often rooted in deeply negative future perspectives of actors (and visitors/„observers“). „(R)ural is largely ‚invisible, or ‚off the radar‘ (and) „(t)his ‚invisibility‘ is also experienced in relation to how the ‚general public‘ value rural communities“ (Skeratt et al. 2018, 9). Even if a minority fully values the landscapes and scenery, the various functions and quality in relation to natural resources of remote rural places, quite often it is not fully appreciated. All the more, strategic processes involving new perspectives and value positions depend on inspiring examples which demonstrate the capability to achieve change under adverse conditions or „against all odds“.

The policy framework and local institutions might provide some guidance and a conducive environment to increase the probability for inspiring action. The following aspects might be seen as main features for such a strategy, mainly supported from local governance, but importantly to be endorsed and integrated into higher levels policy frameworks as well:

- It is important to understand local change processes in remote regions, which are particularly relevant for long-term shrinking rural regions, as long-term tasks. The focus

is hence on a „slow innovation process“ to act under adverse conditions and convince stakeholders and society at large of the previously not observed opportunities. An example is the analysis of these „slow innovations“ in Europe’s peripheries, in particular the mountain regions of the Alps (Mayer 2020).

- Endogenous approaches might run out of ideas or lose momentum if not exposed and challenged by other positions and thinking. It is a crucial element, hence, to enable new entrants into the local society and build on fertilizing ideas from externals, outsiders or audacious actors and entrepreneurs. Many individuals have contributed to strategy building, particularly as „new arrivals“, by contributing diverse approaches and solutions. Examples are numerous on entrepreneurs engaging in specific activities (see entrepreneur in Saalfelden, AT, Copus et al. 2019) or young people moving to very remote places in search of new life-styles (e.g. Northern Italy).
- A further aspect is the role of communities. In particular it is essential to enhance community development to build on cooperation activities, both within and beyond the local community. A visionary collaboration might contribute to stabilize population development, even in a context of remote mountain area, like in the case of Valle Maira in the Western Alps (Brugger 2011). In many contexts such community-led, informal approaches are predominant, but government-led action might also induce valuable action and starting points (Meijer 2019).
- Taking a step further from informal strategies, inspiration could be derived from in-depth local discussion fostering scenario development and outlining long-term development trajectories. These approaches often evolve at a later stage in development processes and can be seen as results of an intensive capacity building process, long-term efforts of local and regional core actors and scattered initiatives demonstrating the chances and potential „hidden“ in the regions. The following box on the current activities in the Alpine region of East-Tyrol in Austria highlights one example of such a region-wide turn towards reframing local and regional views.

Box 1: Overcoming symptoms of peripherization in East-Tyrol (Austria)

The region of East-Tyrol is one of the most remote parts of the Alps in Austria. As an area limited to mountain farming it was traditionally characterized as a deprived area which for a long time did not lose population because of the very high fertility rates. When these started to drop substantially in the 1990s, population decline was seen a big threat to regional development.

Albeit tourism is an important sector in the area, regional performance was persistently below the national average. However, a series of new aspirations contributed to a significant turn in the perspectives of local people and raised confidence for future development. This shift was supported by a regional process, labelled „Planning ahead for the region of East-Tyrol“

which involved a series of thematic lectures (since 2013). Moreover, an „innovation broker“ was installed to carry on this process.

The focus of deliberations is particularly on regional assets and natural resources aiming to achieve a halt to „shrinkage“, population loss and strengthen the local economy. It applied an integrated economic perspective and built activities on the method of „regional cycles“, addressing attractive elements of local places and quality of life development. But it also considered educational activities and skills development as crucial parts of its strategy. With an open view on technological changes it engaged in trans-regional cooperation (with neighbouring regions in Italy) and discussed long-term scenarios to prepare for future challenges.

These wide ranging activities were carried out under the headline „Coping with emptiness of space“ and arguing with the assets of low-density spaces (against mainstream views of its problems).

4.2 Types of local and regional responses

Surprisingly, local and regional responses with positive examples can be found in many places. Due to their local relevance the bulk of them is not visible at first hand, and these “good practice” cases don’t achieve to revert the general impression of decline attached to shrinking rural regions. Nevertheless, from time to time discussions on “return” to rural areas appear in various parts of the world (e.g. currently in many European countries, see below, but also the USA etc.). The observations cover very diverse activities and are located throughout all Macro Regions of Europe. A more comprehensive overview is going to reveal the specificities of examples and local relatedness of initiatives. The following ones already reveal the extent of cases and indicate the wide potential to build upon (reference to EU-projects):

- Eastern Europe: forum synergies (Rural Europe on the Move, RO, PL, LV); Agroecology-initiative; RELOCAL (HU, PL, RO); RURITAGE (SLO, TR); Southern Europe: ex. From Spain (e.g. “pueblos vivos”); forum synergies (PT, IT-Sicily, GR); EMBLEMATIC (throughout Mediterranean Areas);
- Central Europe: smart specialisation (IT-Aosta etc.); smart villages (all Macro-regions; ENRD; CIPRA); PADIMA (Euromontana); Future concept (East Tyrol-AT); “rifugisti di città” (IT);
- Northwest Europe: Islands revival (Scotland); SRUC-report (Glass et al. 2020); Recharging Rural (Skeratt 2018); Nordregio report (14 attractive municipalities, Kull et al. 2020);
- and many on all 4 Macro-regions: RURALIZATION, RELOCAL, SIMRA; Rural inspiration award (ENRD), Europe’s new farmers, smart villages; some ex. from CAN and USA; etc.

Box 2: Islands Revival Project: The beginning of a turnaround

In the Highlands and Islands of Scotland population decline is a long-term feature since many decades. The project engaged in seeking evidence on the “revival of some of the most remote islands, a turnaround hardly anyone felt possible some time ago. In particular, the report indicates the high rate of returnees among young people:

“Out of the 469 young people, 138 are returners, 225 have stayed, and 92 are new to the community ...

Three out of 10 of the young people identified ... are returners.

... Returnees to the islands and their partners who are newcomers make up 35% of the young people identified in the study”.

These sparsely-populated areas hence achieved to attract in-migrants which makes up at least partly with the negative natural change of the area. This new movements also raised interest in the “Islands revival” and led to a respective declaration (in 2019) which formulated the recognition of the complex drivers to population trends and core aspects of a facilitating policy framework, i.e.: community ownership of the process, place-based approach, active and inclusive local community, effective partnership arrangements, and capacity support to communities.

These local activities are reflecting context-specific aspects, but also refer to specific perspectives in regard to conceptualizing shrinking rural regions. A first attempt to group the various types involved is provided through the following list:

- ❖ Return movement and repopulation: Activities deriving from the concern for bringing back people, retaining or attaining again a certain population level mark an approach of mitigation. This is very sensible and intelligible for many local actors, characterized by a (traditional) mind-set of stabilizing population developments. Return migration has yet been „neglected“ for some time and still raises concerns about local „upheaval“ due to external views (Schmitt-Wilson et al. 2019).
- ❖ Approaches to achieve „territorial justice“ and a rights-based perspective: Consideration on convergence was strong several years ago but at present is superseded by discussions on territorial just developments. It links well to the current European discourse on establishing the „Just Transition Fund“ providing a local reflection of providing appropriate living conditions and access to services in all areas of the EU. Notions of solidarity (Jouen 2017) are at the core of considerations to address shrinking spaces and conceive future development pathways and living conditions.
- ❖ Other initiatives take their inspiration from new views on place-based opportunities and realizing specific functions of rural places. Sometimes these reflect activities and

views that have been „forgotten“, but which constitute interesting and appealing approaches to present societal demands. These might involve sector developments and shifting to „quality“ production (e.g. nature-related production, organic farming, local and regional labels etc.) and a consideration of the need and option to highlight and valorize common goods and „public goods“ provision (Murtagh and Farrell 2019).

- ❖ More recently, the potential of digital accessibility for remote areas has acquired increased attention and credibility, and in the course of COVID-19 adaptation actions has shown outstanding short-term acceptance. As this long-term discussion was lingering around for some time it had received increased impetus by regional strategy approaches, summarized in the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) approach, and for local development in rural areas through the elaboration of the „smart villages“ concept. Both place a significant confidence in realizing the advantages of „smart“ technology development and its assumed effect of overcoming the obstacles of distance, but also address the need of involving local inhabitants and the reliance of place-based and nature resources priorities if the strategy should actually provide significant changes for remote rural regions (Dax 2019).
- ❖ A further access point might be the focus on shaping local contexts in their living contexts and specific conditions. Providing attractive municipalities would be a widely shared objective but effective policies demand a series of aspects to be taken into account (Kull et al. 2020), particularly in remote places where local action has to cope with additional obstacles.

4.3 What and how to learn from good practice

As shown through these examples, anecdotal evidence for green shoots is not hard to find. However, so far there is no assessment available on the extent and the local and regional impacts of these actions. Many questions following from the presentation of exemplary action point to the interest how the discourse of “new” narratives of spatial adaptation might affect rural and urban regions, and their interaction.

The innovative nature of the presented activities also indicates that a substantial change in viewing and understanding shrinkage is involved with such approaches. Are we prepared for such an altered understanding and shift in policy orientation?

Innovative initiatives are supported by local and regional cooperation frameworks. These might help to secure success of individual's ideas and action. And, on the other hand, activities are an expression of (socially) innovative exploitation of territorial assets. In the first phase of elaborating local initiatives it is usually individuals who play a decisive role in „seeing“ and starting an activity (that is considered by most other local people as insecure, not promising or too difficult to engage in it). These dynamic individuals are crucial as inciting others to „follow“

action or inspire similar activities. Further phases would imply a stronger reference to capacity building, identity reflection and local strategy building, a dedicated period to raise consciousness about place-based assets, internal and external views on regional opportunities, and focus on developing local collaboration practices. Subsequent steps would consider critically knowledge constraints and seek to overcome these and extend local knowledge through linking to external actors and engaging in trans-regional exchanges and networks. While this sounds trivial and models of LEADER/CLLD and smart local initiatives, learning regions and innovation networks have integrated substantial aspects of these activity steps in their development principles, it is far from trivial to establish respective actor groups in an inclusive participatory way over long periods, sectors and actor groups. As referred above piecemeal success in orientating such processes towards the needs of shrinking rural regions is rather the rule.

At present, and with the European data analysis in mind, we have to acknowledge that successful mitigation of demographic shrinking would require substantial scaling up/out. It is particularly around questions how to influence and achieve frameworks that enhance this process of disseminating positive examples where we need further commitment and research-policy exchange.

References

- Bachtler, J., Begg, I., Charles, D. and Polverari, L. (2016) *Cohesion Policy What does it achieve?* London: Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Brad, A. and Moldovan, A. (2019) Development frames in peripheralized areas of Romania. *Regional Studies, Regional Science* 7(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2019.1701542>
- Bryden, J.M., Efstratoglou, S., Ferenczi, T., Johnson, T.G., Knickel, K., Refsgaard, K. and Thomson, K.J. (eds) (2011) *Towards Sustainable Rural Regions in Europe, Exploring Inter-Relationships Between Rural Policies, Farming, Environment, Demographics, Regional Economies and Quality of Life Using System Dynamics*. Studies in development and society, New York: Routledge.
- Capello, R. and Perucca, G. (2020) Citizens' perception of Cohesion Policy: from theory to empirical Evidence. *Regional Studies* 53(11), 1520–1530 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2019.1587398>
- Centre for Theory of Change (2019) Setting Standards for Theory of Change. Toc Examples. <https://www.theoryofchange.org/library/toc-examples/>
- Copus, A., Dax, T., Machold, I., Mantino, F., Forcina, B., Weck, S. and Beißwenger, S. (2017) PROFECY – Processes, Features and Cycles of Inner Peripheries in Europe. Inner Peripheries: national territories facing challenges of access to basic services of general interest, Strategies for Inner Peripheries Annex 19, Version 07/12/2017. ESPON Project EE/SO1/013/2016. ESPON EGTC, Luxembourg, 52pp.
- Copus, A., Dax, T., Grunfelder, J., Kovacs, K., Taggai, G., Meredith, D., Scardaccione, G., Riera Spiegelhalder, M., Ferrandis Martinez, A., Weber, R., Kahila, P., Pósfai, I., Wilson, R., Piras, S., Machold, I. and Tammé, O. (2019a) Inception Report (Appendices). European Shrinking Rural Areas: Challenges, Actions and Perspectives for Territorial Governance, ESPON 2020 project ESCAPE. Version 13/05/2019. ESPON EGTC, Luxembourg, 104pp.
- Copus, A., Piras, S., Tobiasz-Lis, P., Dmochowska-Dudek, K., Wójcik, M., Tomasz Napierała, T. (2019b) Synthesis Report: Towards an Operational Concept of Spatial Justice. Deliverable 8.2. EU-project Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development (RELOCAL). Aberdeen: The James Hutton Institute.
- Dax, T. (2015), The evolution of European Rural Policy, chapter 3. In: Copus, A.K. and De Lima, P. (eds.) *Territorial Cohesion in Rural Europe, The relational turn in rural development*, Series Regions and Cities 76, Abingdon: Routledge, 35-52.
- Dax, T. (2019) Development of mountainous regions: smart specialization approaches as a means to overcoming peripheralization, in: Kristensen, I., Dubois, A. and Teräs, J. (eds) *Strategic Approaches to Regional Development, Smart Experimentation in Less-Favoured Regions*. Series Regions and Cities, Abingdon: Routledge, 52-67.
- Dax, T. and Hellegers, P. (2000) Policies for Less-Favoured Areas, in: Brouwer, F. and P. Lowe (eds.), *CAP Regimes and the European Countryside, Prospects for Integration between Agricultural, Regional and Environmental Policies*, CAB International, Wallingford, p.179-197.
- Dax, T., and Copus, A., (2016) The Future of Rural Development, Chapter 3, p221-303, in *Reflections on the Agricultural Challenges Post 2020 in the EU: Preparing the Next CAP Reform*, European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, Agriculture and Rural Development. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU\(2016\)585898](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=IPOL_STU(2016)585898)
- Copus, A., Wilson, R. and Dax, T. (2019c) Green shoots or chimera? Emerging evidence of a demographic turnaround in the Scottish Islands and Austrian Alps. Presentation at the RSA Annual Conference, 5-7 June 2019, Santiago de Compostela.
- Dwyer, J., Ward, N., Lowe, P. and Baldock, D. (2007) European Rural Development under the Common Agricultural Policy's 'Second Pillar': Institutional Conservatism and Innovation. *Regional Studies*, 41(7), 873-887. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0034340060114279>
- Eurofound (2019), *Is rural Europe being left behind?* European Quality of Life Survey 2016, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- Fratesi, U. (2016) Impact assessment of EU Cohesion policy: theoretical and empirical issues. In: Piattoni, S. and Polverari, L. (eds.) *Handbook on Cohesion Policy in the EU*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 443-460.
- Garretsen, H., McCann, P., Martin, R. and Tyler, P. (2013) The future of regional policy. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 6, 179-186. Doi:10.1093/cjres/rst013

- Giordano, B. and Dubois, A. (2019) Combining territory and Competitiveness in EU Regional Policy? Analyzing ERDF investment profiles in regions with specific geographical features. *Regional Studies* 53(8), 1221-1230. DOI: 10.1080/00343404.2018.1495323
- Green, D. (2015) 'Where Have We Got to on Theories of Change? Passing Fad or Paradigm Shift?' From Poverty to Power Blog, 16 April, <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/where-have-we-got-to-on-theories-of-change-passingfad-or-paradigm-shift/>
- Green, D. (2016) *How change happens*. Oxford: Oxfam and Oxford University Press.
- Ho, W., Van Wessel, M. and Tamas, P. (2020) The Hidden Life of Theories of Change. Policy Brief. Wageningen University and Research.
- Hospers, G.J. and Sysner, J. (eds.) (2018) *Dealing with Urban and Rural Shrinkage*. Berlin et al.: LIT Verlag.
- Hummelbrunner, R. and Jones, H. (2013) 'A Guide for Planning and Strategy Development in the Face of Complexity'. Background Note. London: ODI.
- James, C. (2011) 'Theory of Change Review: A Report Commissioned by Comic Relief'. London: Comic Relief.
- Jouen M. (2017) *Solidarité 2.0, Propositions pour la future politique de cohesion*. Etude pour la DG REGIO. Paris: Institut Jacques Delors. <https://institutdelors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/solidarit2.0.-marjoriejouen-juin2017.pdf>
- Kull, M., Refsgaard, K., Sigurjonsdottir, H.R., Bogason, A., Meijer, M.W., Sanchez-Gassen, N. and Turunen, E. (2020) Attractive rural municipalities in the Nordic countries. Jobs, people and reasons for success from 14 case studies. *Nordregio Report 2020:1*. Stockholm: Nordregio.
- Leach M et al (2018) Equity and sustainability in the Anthropocene: a social–ecological systems perspective on their intertwined futures. *Global Sustainability* 1,e13, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2018.12>
- Leuba, P. (2017) A better future for Europe's rural areas. Governance Committee, 33rd Session Report. CG33(2017)16final. Strasbourg: Congress of Regional and Local Authorities.
- Matt, A., Pritchett, L. and Woolcock, M. (2015) Doing Problem Driven Work. CID Working Paper No. 307, Center for International development at Harvard University.
- Mayer, H. (2020) Slow Innovation in Europe's Peripheral Regions: Innovation beyond Acceleration. In: Döringer, S. and Eder, J. (eds.) *Schlüsselakteure der Regionalentwicklung*, Report ISR 51. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 9-22.
- Meijer, M. (2019). Community-led and government-fed: Comparing informal planning practices in depopulating regions across Europe. *The Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 14(4), 1–26.
- Mießner, M. and Naumann, M. (eds.) (2019) *Kritische Geographien ländlicher Entwicklung Globale Transformationen und lokale Herausforderungen*. Bonn: Westfälisches Dampfboot.
- Murtagh, A. and Farrell, M. (2019) Ruralization: Finding Frontiers for Rural Regeneration. EU-project RURALIZATION. <http://www.arc2020.eu/rural-dialogues-ruralisation/>
- OECD (2019) Beyond Growth: Towards a New Economic Approach. Report of the Secretary General's Advisory Group on a New Growth Narrative. 17-18 September 2019, OECD Conference Centre. Document SG/NAEC(2019)3. Paris.
- Pegan, A., Mendez, C. and Triga, V. (2018) What do citizens think of Cohesion Policy and does it matter for European identity? A comparative focus group analysis. Cohesify Research Paper 13. EU-project „The Impact of EU Cohesion Policy and European Identification“ (COHESIFY). Dublin: Trinity College.
- Schmitt-Wilson, S., Reynolds Hanson, M., & Vaterlaus, M. (2019). Young, educated and choosing rural: An exploration of the factors related to young adults choosing to move to remote rural communities. *The Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 14(4), 94–113.
- Scott K. (2010) Community Vitality. A report of the Canadian index of well-being. Waterloo (CAN): University of Waterloo.
- Shiller, R.J. (2017) Narrative Economics. Working Paper 23075. Cambridge (MA): National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w23075>
- Skeratt, S. (2018) Recharging Rural, Report to The Prince's Countryside Fund, London: The Prince's Countryside Fund.

Spangenberg, J.H. (2016) The world we see shapes the world we create: how the underlying worldviews lead to different recommendations from environmental and ecological economics – the green economy example. *Int. J. Sustainable Development*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 127-146.

United Nations Development Group – UNDG (2018) Theory of Change. UNDAF Companion Guidance. www.undg.org .

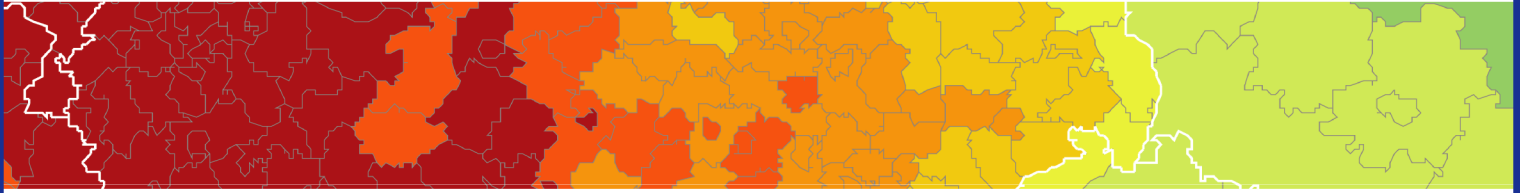
Valters, C. (2015) Theories of Change. Time for a radical approach to learning in development. London: Overseas Development Institute. www.odi.org

Van Orshoven, J., Terres, J.-M. and Tóth, T. (2014) *Updated common bio-physical criteria to define natural constraints for agriculture in Europe, Definition and scientific justification for the common biophysical criteria*. Ispra: European Commission Joint Research Centre Institute for Environment and Sustainability.

Vogel, I. (2012) Review of the use of 'Theory of Change' in international development. London: UK Department for International Development (DFID).

Westley, F.R., Tjornbo, O., Schultz, L., Olsson, P., Folke, C., Crona, B. and Bodin, Ö. (2013) A Theory of Transformative Agency in Linked Social-Ecological Systems. *Ecology and Society* 18(3), 27. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-05072-180327>

Willett, J. (2020) Challenging peripheralising discourses: Using evolutionary economic geography and, complex systems theory to connect new regional knowledges within the periphery. *Journal of Rural Studies* 73, 87-96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2019.11.016>



ESPON 2020 – More information

ESPON EGTC

4 rue Erasme, L-1468 Luxembourg - Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Phone: +352 20 600 280

Email: info@espon.eu

www.espon.eu, [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#)

The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.