



BRIGHT FUTURE WP III

**Joint report on alternative views of
(post)industrial development and stakeholder analysis**

Task 3.4: Joint report on alternative views of (post)industrial development and stakeholder analysis

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1. Introduction

This paper focus on five small and medium-sized industrial towns (Corby (UK), Fieni (Romania), Heerlen (Netherlands), Kajaani (Finland) and Velenje (Slovenia)). The aim is to analyse and describe 1) development trajectories, 2) dominant narratives, and 3) local narratives of these towns. Therefore, the aim is not only concentrate on the local industrial histories and their relationship to national and regional development but also point out the dominant and local narratives of the case study towns. The paper highlights the symbolic structure of the towns. The focus is not only on the visible but invisible symbols of industrial tradition. Therefore, the aim is to discuss on how industrial past is represented in townscape, and furthermore, what kind of narrative the towns sustain officially. The main task is to find out the dominant narrative of each case study town and its manifestation in the local townscape. Additionally, the report points out alternative views / interpretations on (post) industrial development. The purpose is to highlight the social, cultural specificities and characteristics of the case study towns. The local narratives can be interpreted as a part of dominant narratives, but equally they can be discussed on as a critique and alternative conceptualization.

Recently, the ‘urban age’ discourse has argued that ‘crucial transformation has taken place globally’ (Servillo, et al. 2017, 365). For instance, about 70 percent of Europe’s populations live in cities and about 56 percent of this urban population live in small and medium-sized towns (CEC 2011, 1, 14; Servillo et al. 2017, 365). However, the issue is not only on numbers nor statistical facts but recent debates in urban theory has connected to the question of ‘planetary urbanism’ (e.g. Brenner & Schmid 2015; Storper & Scott 2016; Peake et al. 2018; Ruddick et al. 2018; O’Callaghan 2018). The concept ‘planetary urbanism’ refers the ideas of Henri Lefebvre and especially his theorization in the book ‘The Urban Revolution’ (2003, originally published 1970). According to Lefebvre’s (2003, 1) hypothesis: ‘Society has been completely urbanized’. This proposition do not refer the size and density of population in certain area but it, however, deals with the urbanism as a process and relations between cities, towns, countryside, and human and non-human. Consequently, Lefebvre (2003, 3–4) highlights that ‘urban fabric does not narrowly define the built world of cities ... a vacation home, a highway, a supermarket in the countryside are all a part of the urban fabric’. Hence, planetary urbanization refers also the ways that people consume, behave, work, and act in society. Additionally, it points out what kind of relationships they create to work, leisure time, and other people. In this context, complete urbanization does not ask: where do you live, but how your life is shaped.

Following Lefebvre’s theoretical ideas, Brenner and Schmid (2015, 165–166) highlights that urban is a multiscalar process, not the bounded spatial unit (‘city’) nor settlement type. Furthermore, it is misleading to conceptualise urban as a counterpart of something that is outside of urban, such as suburban, rural, natural, or wilderness. As Brenner and Schmid points out, the process-based approach stress that ‘how urban configurations are churned and remade across the uneven landscapes of worldwide capitalism development’. However, the place and space still matters but how you conceptualise the towns and cities is different compared to ‘bounded unit’ –approach. Here, the small and medium-sized industrial towns, such as Corby, Fieni, Heerlen, Kajaani, and Velenje, should be interpreted as a part of global macro-scale processes. Nevertheless, the towns face the same global waves through geographically and historically specific struggles, institutions, representations, and strategies (Brenner & Schmid 2015, 175). Therefore, the same phenomena are manifested differently in different places.

However, process-based approach connected to planetary urbanism is not the only viewpoint through which small and medium-sized industrial towns can be studied. Another option would be territorialist approach (Servillo et al. 2017, 368–369; Brenner & Schmid 2015). As Servillo et al. (2017, 368) mention, in this relatively traditional understanding of space phenomena are interpreted as bounded and coherent spatial units. According to them, ‘it seeks to identify the appropriate spatial boundaries of the areas whose populations need to be measured’, and furthermore, interpret urban phenomena through typologies. As noted above, the territorialist approach is constructed as a counterpart of the process-based approach.

Moreover, Servillo et al. (2017, 369) highlights three other approaches, especially dealing with the concept of town: morphological, administrative and functional approach. According to them, the differences between criteria affects how research data are collected and how it relates to concrete reality. For example, as Servillo et al. notes, ‘the towns as settlement with its own built-up area ... differs from the town in terms of a territorial area as an administrative entity with functions, rights, and duties.’ However, in functional approach the aim is to focus on flows of population and structuring regional networks. Hence, the object is to concentrate people’s daily life (e.g. daily routines, travel-to-work area) and their commuting (Servillo et al. 2017, 372).

Recently, rise of the cities and city regions as sites of economic and social development has received lots of attention (Scott 2008; Glaeser 2012; Stroper 2013; Winther 2015). While city centers and metropolitan areas have accounted as a key drivers in economic development, many small and medium-sized towns have faced a serious problems and challenges (e.g. Fertner et al. 2015; Syssner 2016; Small & Syssner 2016). Fertner et al. (2015, 128) points out that development of small towns is influenced by many macro-scale changes, such as societies transition to knowledge economy. Consequently, small and medium-sized towns has to deal with new kinds of challenges. Because many of these kinds of towns are in transition, they have to think future in totally new way. As Brown et al. (2012, 1613, 1619) stress, the idea of transition is connected to future -thinking. According to them, the term transition as a governmental tool render the future populations governable. In other words, the philosophies, policies and practices connected to idea of transition aim to lump diverse groups, ideologies, and visions of future together. Additionally, Brown et al. highlights that transition hold the idea that future is risk-laden why there is a pressure to hold subjects together. As the case study towns in this report, point out, every town has a dominant view to look future. Despite the multiple local narratives, towns has the official alignments that binds, sometimes hidden or invisible ideas, together.

This leads to ask: how much there are space for divergent perceptions. Andrés Rodríguez-Pose (2018) underlines that traditional policies have failed in the declining areas. He discuss on ‘places that don’t matter’, such as old industrial areas in Europe and USA. Rodríguez-Pose (2018, 204–205) notices that many years applied development strategies have not worked in these kinds of places. Additionally, withdrawing intervention will inevitably increase rebelling and dissatisfaction. However, Rodríguez-Pose highlights that the answer would be a different type of intervention. In other words, the solutions need to be place-sensitive that is policies that respond to structural opportunities, potential and constraints of each place (Iammarino et al. 2017). Place-sensitive policies that are informed by theory and empirical evidence, as Rodríguez-Pose points out, however, has institutional challenges. Therefore, this requires enhancing the opportunities in declining territories and areas. At the same time, many old norms and

trajectories are not written in stone. (Rodriguez-Pose 2018, 206). For example, the role of big cities are changing and the urban growth as an unquestioned motivation of planning are challenged (Lehtinen 2018; Rodriguez-Pose 2018, 206). In this context, the old declining towns have new roles and opportunities.

The following chapters will concentrate on trajectories, dominant and local narratives of five small and medium-sized industrial towns in Europe. The results are based on the observation of the local townscape, interviews, local strategies and official documents, local media, the cultural products, and historical data. Each chapter will highlight the main points of the case study towns. The last chapter conclude the report and point out the common features of the towns.

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2. Corby

2.1 Postindustrial development of Corby

Corby is historically known as a significant steelworks town in England, attracting thousands of labour migrants mainly from Scotland in the post-war period. However, the town's post-industrial trajectory, since the closure of its nationalised steelworks in 1980, has diverged from that of 'typical' post-industrial towns in England. Corby can be considered a 'complex' SMIT (small to medium industrial town) as it combines the typical characteristics of a post-industrial town with a contemporary drive for regeneration where manufacturing continues to be a significant presence in the town's industrial landscape.

Corby is a town in Northamptonshire, in the East Midlands region. The population stands at 61,255¹ more than double the typical population size of a SMT. Corby has a chequered socio-economic history, with alternating periods of economic (and social) growth and decline. The town sees itself as undergoing a period of economic regeneration today, although multiple, often conflicting, narratives of the town exist in the national media and according to different social and economic metrics. This makes Corby a 'complex' example of a SMIT, despite sharing many common traits with medium English (post)-industrial towns.

Corby can be considered as an example of a town which problematises, if not wholly differs from, the idea of a 'typical' English SM(IT). The town's history in many ways aligns with that of typical post-industrial towns - a shift from mono-industrialism and dependence on heavy and extractive industries toward a period of deindustrialisation and subsequent economic decline. The immediate aftermath of the steelworks closure led to mass unemployment, and according to both qualitative accounts and media reports, a reputation for widespread crime and addiction.

Today's Corby also tends to fit the 'post-industrial town' typical narrative in terms of demographic and social trends. In line with the narrative of economic and social decline in post-industrial towns, Corby features in the bottom 10 percent of local authorities for social mobility, in line with SMT trends. Corby was also recorded as being among the lowest decile of towns ranked for social cohesion in England, with lower than 60 percent of people agreeing with the statement that 'people of different backgrounds get on well in their local area.' (2008).² The town fits SMIT trends of limited ethnic diversity: where 95 percent of the population identify as 'White' and 84 percent identify as 'White British'.³⁴ A large proportion of the town's population are without qualifications (29%) compared with the average of 24 percent among SMTs overall.

However, Corby complicates the 'ideal type' of a SMT both in the characteristics of the town itself and in its distinctive post-industrial trajectory. Unlike other industrial towns reliant on extractive and heavy industries, the town is located in the English midlands, relatively close to

¹ Census, 2011

² House of Commons, Communities and Local Government Committee (2008) 'Community Cohesion and Migration' Tenth Report of Session 2007-8 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcom-loc/369/369i.pdf>

³ English Census data on ethnic categories is self-reported and based on self-identification data

⁴ Census, 2011

the traditionally ‘non-industrial’ South. The town is also one of the most “visible and persistent” destinations for Scottish in-migration to England.⁵ Whilst Scottish migration is one of the most prominent aspects of Corby’s reputation as a ‘migrant town’, overall the town has seen waves of migration from Eastern Europe both in after WW2 and after the breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992⁶, and in 2014-2015, edged above the national average for rates of long-term international in-migration.⁷

Today, Corby ranks third among English SMTs with the highest proportion of residents who continue to work in the manufacturing industry (52%).⁸ Unlike other post-industrial towns who have seen a steep decline in employment in the manufacturing industry and the ‘hollowing out’ effects of the North-South drift.^{9 10} The town re-emerged as a manufacturing hub in the 2010s despite national economic changes and the recession and has become a distribution centre. Contrary to the narrative of ‘North-South’ drift from post-industrial towns, the population continues to grow¹¹, partly as a result of the council’s explicit decision to actively pursue regeneration through population growth.¹² Migration is being encouraged through housing development; one promotional campaign rebranded the town as ‘North Londonshire’ – a well located, affordable place for commuters.

The history of English industrial development has mainly been manifested in Corby through the development and eventual decline of its steelworks industry, representing national trends of deindustrialisation and policies fostering deregulation and privatisation of industry in a bid to promote the service industry. During the ‘second industrial revolution’ (in the twentieth century) where steel production expanded, different regions were linked to specific industrial sectors. Metal production was mainly active in the towns of Sheffield, Corby and the area of Teesside.¹³

Deindustrialisation across England began in the 1950s due to a combination of factors: the burden of post-war recovery, weakening of the colonial industries and, by the late 1970s, the emergence of the service and knowledge economy fostered by a political drive for privatisation and deregulation.¹⁴ In the period between 1970 and 1980, manufacturing jobs fell from 7.5 million to 4.3 million, and much of this was in the North and West¹⁵.

Steel production in Corby started in 1935, exploiting the area’s rich iron ore and dominating the town’s industry for decades. The town of Corby grew rapidly in the post-war period (1950s and 1960s) from a small village to a town, due in large part to labour migration from Scotland,

⁵ Marjory Harper (2013) ‘Come to Corby’: A Scottish Steel Town in the Heart of England, *Immigrants & Minorities*, 31:1, 27-47 (p.27)

⁶ Based on qualitative interviews with local key informants and long-term residents of Corby

⁷ Northamptonshire County Council (2016) Migration Update. Place Statistical Bulletin. Accessed here: <https://www.northamptonshireanalysis.co.uk/resource/view?resourceId=1548>

⁸ From WP2 Analysis preliminary and indicative results based on 644 towns identified in the study.

⁹ Refers to: the movement of people from Northern areas to the South to seek employment

¹⁰ Champion, T. (2005) ‘Population movement within the UK’ Focus on People and Migration

¹¹ North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit (2011) ‘Joint Core Strategy’. Accessed here: <http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/docs/Joint%20Core%20Strategy%202011-2031%20High%20Res%20version%20for%20website.pdf>

¹² See: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/northamptonshire/8504037.stm>

¹³ More, C. 2014. *Understanding the Industrial Revolution*. Routledge. Oxon.

¹⁴ Baker and Billinge, 2004: 5

¹⁵ Herbert, D. and Thomas, C. 2012. *Cities In Space: City as Place*. David Fulton. Oxon (p.104)

drawn by the town's thriving steelworks industry, as well as Ireland and Northern England. The steelworks were then owned by a private company, Stuart and Lloyds, which employed nearly 30 percent of the population in this period. However, steel production in the town ceased in 1980 and led to mass unemployment.

The history of Corby steelworks reflects the national industrial trajectory from private ownership, to nationalisation in the late 1960s and 1970s before leading to closure in the wake of deindustrialisation and privatisation of surviving industries. In 1967, the British steel industry became nationalised and Corby steelworks entered into British Steel ownership before ultimately closing in 1980, in line with the national landscape of industrial decline. Attempts were made to prolong the steelworks through EU funding and attempts to diversify the sector before its closure in 1980. Today, small-scale steel production continues (tube-works) at a much smaller scale, employing more than 1,000 people and owned by Indian company Tata, though it is currently threatened with closure.^{16 17}

While there has been an overall decline of mono-industrial towns¹⁸ in England, Corby in the 21st century has seen an increase in the manufacturing sector and has become a manufacturing hub and distribution centre. 23 percent of all jobs in the town are within the manufacturing centre and many more are generated by this sector. In England overall however, the GDP from manufacturing has fallen by half since 1990. Though multiple regeneration developments have been undertaken in the 2010s, Corby has seen the closure of several major employers; a yacht maker, textile manufacturer and food manufacturer. This is reflected in the experiences of many of the town's residents whose working lives have been dominated by alternating periods of employment, redundancy and re-employment.

The closure of Corby's main steelwork in 1980 resulted in the direct loss of approximately 8,000 jobs – a cataclysmic event in the history of the town. The threat of closure arrived in 1979, as Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government entered into power seeking to address industrial overcapacity at a time of recession, and develop a successful 'post-industrial' economy through privatisation and deregulation. Tackling overcapacity in the nationalised steel industry under the auspices of the British Steel Corporation became a target of government reforms. The steelworks at Corby were deemed unviable, in particular due to the high costs of extracting local iron ore for steel production. The tubeworks, a later stage of steel production, survived – saving several thousand jobs at the site. This pitted "tubeside" workers against their "steelside" colleagues in the fight against industrial closure¹⁹.

This period of closure, 1979-1980 was marked by tensions, both to the workers and the town overall. As the intention to close the works was made public, locals perceived an existential threat to the town. "The town of Corby, it now seems certain, has about three months to live. Or, more precisely, three months before it starts to die," cautioned one newspaper article from the time. The spectre of death loomed large in the messages of protestors, who urged the government to "Save Steel to Save Corby." The very basis of Corby as a town, populated largely by labour migrants beckoned by the steelworks, was threatened by the closure.

The threat of closure precipitated a process of struggle, protest and community action. A general steel strike was called across the industry, the first of its kind in over 50 years – to resist

¹⁶ See: <http://www.northantstelegraph.co.uk/news/tata-steel-confirm-corby-job-losses-1-7165656>

¹⁷ Harper (2012) *ibid*.

¹⁸ Where a maximum of 26 percent of economic contribution is made by any one industry in a town.

¹⁹ 'The Iron Lady's lethal legacy' New statesman, John Burnside (2010) <https://www.newstatesman.com/society/2010/03/corby-town-british-development>

both low pay and the threatened closures. The strike began in late December 1979, lasting 12 weeks. The strike still remains contentious for some in the town: it was called without a members' ballot, and for one former steelworker, a man now aged 79 and still living in Corby, it is "still a sore point" – which meant workers would have to forfeit some of their final pay checks. Many others supported the strike, joining picket lines and protests, and making the journey down to London to take their protest to the seat of government. The Retention of Steel at Corby (RoSAC) group was formed to organise resistance to the closure plans, marshalling academic support to set out the economic costs of closure for the town.

Many members of the wider community also mobilised to support the striking workers. Whole families took to the streets for the protests. A strikers' supermarket was created, providing low-cost food to workers and their families, soup kitchens were also set up. The events around the closure spurred many into collective action, and both the recollections of older residents of Corby and archival materials suggest a sense of camaraderie around this period.

The prospects for those facing unemployment were poor, with many already out of work and little in the town not linked to the steelworks. The steelworks closure took place against a backdrop of national recession and growing unemployment under the Thatcher government's deindustrialising policies. It is estimated that in addition to the 8,000 jobs lost directly through the steelworks closure, thousands more were lost in Corby as the toll of joblessness and severed supply chains generated further economic decline.

The job loss for Corby steelworkers was 'mitigated' with a redundancy package, a sum described by one woman whose husband lost his job at the steelworks as "a lot of money for that time." According to one former steelworker, David²⁰, some chose to spend this money at the pubs. Local pubs are recounted as being at full capacity throughout the day, a period of near revelry described as the 'Wild West.' This phrase was also used by another resident of the town at the time to describe the survival strategies used by those suffering from unemployment, which included criminal activities and significant levels of drug and alcohol addiction. What emerged was described as a "hangover feeling," a slow dawning of the new jobless reality of life and a hollowing out of Corby's commerce. Some also migrated elsewhere to find work in the UK or overseas. During the 1980s the town became notorious for roughness and social decline. In neighbouring towns, stories of criminality and prostitution became heavily associated with Corby and are still shared by some today.

The enduring emotional toll of the closure is evoked in the accounts of those working in the steelworks at the time. "When you see these big coils coming in at the railway station, it breaks your heart, we used to do them" said one former steelworker of the supplies brought in for the still-functioning but now threatened tubeworks. This account speaks to more than a material loss for many of those who lost their jobs and, along with it, some of the sense of the town and home they had known.

²⁰ All participant names here and henceforth have been changed to protect identity and in accordance with research ethics

2.2 The dominant narratives of Corby

Corby's dominant industrial narrative is one of industrial productivity, decline, then rebirth. Like many British SMITs with a history of heavy or extractive industry, there was a period of industrial strength which shaped the town, met by an equally significant and abrupt decline in its industrial character in the late 20th century. However, subsequently, there has also been a resurgence of the town's industrial and manufacturing base, through which the town has moved from a mono-industrial to a more fragmented economic landscape. The fortunes of industry appear to have had an effect on the narrative of the town, its people and their way of being. For example, decline turned the ordered productive social world created by work 'upside down', so that the town became a 'wild west'²¹, a place of social problems and addictions, before modern-day resurgence, described as a 'phoenix rising', experienced today. In narrative terms resurgence has been stop-start rather than linear. Many of the town's new enterprises have come and gone, creating smaller periods of decline and resurgence within a larger momentum of re-growth.

Corby has a long history of extractive industries, having been worked for iron ore since Roman times. However, in narrative terms, it has one dominant industrial epoch: the 20th century steel industry (1934-1980). For example, a new housing development describes Corby as having a "rich heritage as the heart of the UK's steel industry". Steelworking is a focal point which is considered to have created significant changes in the town's demographic makeup, socio-cultural characteristics and identity.

Narratives about the steelworks often make its role in the Second World War central. During this period, the works were used to manufacture a steel pipeline to supply Allied troops following the D-Day landings. This 'Pipeline Under the Ocean' (PLUTO) has been the focus of arts projects which explore 'How Corby men and women helped win World War II' here, the town's industrial narrative is knitted into and draws on national narratives of resilience and victory.

Migration has been a central feature of Corby's industrial history forming an important part of the steelwork narrative. The narrative of the arrival of skilled labour to 'build the town' is particularly dominant here: with two main migration waves. The first Scottish, Irish and Welsh migrants who came to the town in large numbers from the 1930s onwards. They were also joined by Eastern European migrants post WWII. The vast majority of the UK migrants were Scottish. Approximately 3000 men relocated to Corby after a sudden downturn in Scottish steel industry and by 1961 a third of Corby's population were born in Scotland. This migration created changes to the townscape and sociocultural fabric still evident today. The town is referred to as 'Little Scotland'.

²¹ An unruly, lawless and predominantly male trope in popular culture.

Corby also has a history of migration of skilled men from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the former Yugoslavia who resettled after WWII as Displaced Persons or under the European Volunteer Workers scheme to help post-war reconstruction²². Today in Corby there has been a resurgence of migration from Eastern Europe²³.

The decline of the steelworks is also a significant feature of Corby's narrative. In 1967 the British steel industry was nationalised and Stewart and Lloyds became a part of the British Steel Corporation²⁴. Given Corby's inland location, the Government decided to concentrate the steel manufacturing in coastal areas but maintained its tubeworks which still employs around 500 people today. By the end of 1981 over 5,000 jobs had been lost and subsequent redundancies meant there was a loss of a further 6,000 jobs, unemployment rose to 30 per cent²⁵. Not only were jobs lost, but since much of the social and cultural fabric of the town was supported by the steelworks, many events and social spaces also suffered.

Out-migration and social problems characterised this post-closure period. Some residents left for other parts of the UK, or to find similar work further afield, including in Australia. The legacy of alcohol abuse and addiction has continued to today. Poverty, debt and intergenerational unemployment are continuing features of Corby life. Corby also gained a reputation for being one of the worst places to live in the UK²⁶.

Aligned with the closure of the steelworks, there were impacts on gender roles in the town. Notably many, if not most, of those who lost their jobs were men. The steelworks was central to so many that when it collapsed, so did a certain idea of masculinity. Meanwhile, women began working in low-paid and low-skilled factory jobs to support the family, and men, in turn, took on more of the domestic roles, such as collecting children from school, shopping and cooking.

There is a narrative of frustration during this period with stop-start development which followed the closing of the steelworks. There were several attempts to reinvigorate Corby's economic basis by developing 'enterprise zones'. These were successful for some time, but companies left soon after the incentives expired. People felt that "they were always getting false promises" from different stop-start initiatives.

The modern-day trajectory of Corby's industrial narrative can be described as a 'phoenix'. It finds iteration in descriptions of present-day economic and townscape changes. Traditionally the phoenix is a long-living bird, which rises from flames to create something new. It is associated with renewal. Corby has had consistent industrial production (ironworks, steel, and now light manufacturing), but this has all taken different forms. The narrative of the phoenix is perhaps a way local people can make sense of the industrial growth, decline, and growth, and

²² McDowell, L. 2005. *Hard Labour: The Forgotten Voices of Latvian Migrant 'Volunteer' Workers*. UCL Press, London.

²³ Davies, R. 2016. How the town of Corby dusted off the ashes of post-industrial decay. Found at, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/may/27/corby-northamptonshire-twin-shijiazhuang-china-fastest-growing>. Accessed 15.01.2018

²⁴ BFI. 2016. Corby: steel town. Found at, <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/corby-steel-town>. Accessed 19.01.2018.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Northamptonshire Telegraph. 2012. Rebirth of Corby since book on worst towns. Found at, <https://www.northantstelegraph.co.uk/news/rebirth-of-corby-since-book-on-worst-towns-1-3963348>. Accessed 20.01.2018

to motivate and galvanise support for new developments. It also speaks of fundamental resilience and adaptability. This phoenix narrative is also invoked in recent marketing for a new housing development which contains frequent references to the identity and history of Corby: “Corby is a place of constant reinvention, adaptation and modernisation”²⁷

Corby has actively pursued a strategy of growth and regeneration which speak of resilience. Government funding in 2007 and the European Regional Development Fund in recognition of levels of deprivation catalysed Corby’s modern perspective. With this funding, the railway was also reopened in 2009, previously Corby was said to be the largest town in Western Europe without a rail link. The reopening of the railway and connecting Corby to key regional hubs play a significant part in manifesting this phoenix narrative, as well as indirectly driving forward other manifestations. These funds supported the building of the Corby Cube, arts centre and library, and a swimming pool. In addition, the town centre has seen significant development. While some of the older buildings from the 1960s and 1970s the industrial era remain, there has been an attempt to modernise the centre. This is seen as fundamental to the town’s regeneration, appearing to invoke hope and a sense of renewal, demonstrating the town’s attempt to change itself into a different kind of place. People now enjoy visiting Corby centre from neighbouring towns.

Growth through housing and migration are distinct strategies in the town. Corby is the fastest growing borough outside London and the council aims to reach a population of 100,000 residents by 2030. Related to this, the council and housing developers are branding Corby as a place of growth: a place for individuals, families and businesses to ‘grow’.

Corby’s industrial profile moved from relying on one heavy manufacturing industry to a diverse portfolio of light manufacturing and packaging industries, for example food processing. In alignment with this Corby is an emerging economic regional hub. It is described in the plans of the town (Corby Council, 2018) as a centre for distribution and manufacturing and a place which connects to the North and the South²⁸. While the rising phoenix is positive, the extent to which growth has benefited everyone is debated; Corby was named the ‘personal loans capital’ of the UK, where many of these loans are being used to cover the cost of living²⁹. Much of the employment in the manufacturing industries is contracted through employment agencies where the pay is low and hours are not guaranteed.

2.3 Local narratives of Corby

The participants largely talked about town’s history and industrial development in three clear time periods which describe corresponding ‘highs and lows’ in Corby’s development. The first describes its steelwork phase from 1933 to 1980, the second Corby’s ‘decline’ and ‘wild west’ years after the steelworks closed, and the third ‘the phoenix rising’ the town’s regeneration from the mid 2000’s to the present day.

²⁷Oakley Vale. 2018. Found at, <https://www.oakleyvale.com/welcome-to-corby/>. Accessed 29.01.2018

²⁸More in Corby. 2018. The Economic Heartland of England. Found at, <https://moreincorby.co.uk/about-corby/location/>. Accessed 24.01.2018

²⁹Allen, K. 2017. ‘I wonder if it’s worth getting up’: life in Corby, the debt capital of Britain. Found at, <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2017/jul/29/corby-debt-capital-britain-wonder-if-worth-getting-up-bor-rowing>. Accessed 24.01.2018

Alternative accounts in the first era (1930-1980) are not shared as often as they are about other eras, which may be because many of Corby's current citizens do not have a direct experience of it. When shared, however, they can weigh up and question the role of the steelworks in Corby and problematize some aspects of it or contest various understandings of it. It is important to note that to make sense of this we must consider it in a balanced way as nuancing the dominant narrative, rather than out rightly contesting it.

People generally do consider the steelworks very important to the town. However, one interesting question that rises through a more nuanced or alternative viewpoint is whether the steelworks, and the migration which turned it from a village to a town, was as wholly celebrated as suggested and whether it was the only industry in the town.

However, another interesting insight suggests perhaps the opposite, that actually the steelworks was not the only workplace of industrial character in the town at this time. Corby's industrial portfolio included manufacturing and textiles, alongside secondary industries dependent on the steelworks for trade. Participants suggest that although the focus is on the steelworks, Corby has always had a diversified industrial character offering varied employment.

Alternative accounts also revealed gendered differences in the nature of work. These accounts suggested many women worked too, mostly in other factories and in manufacturing. Interestingly, despite steelworkers mostly being described as men, women are also said to have worked in the steelworks themselves at the time, during the war too on Operation PLUTO, which is rarely noted in general accounts of the steelworks.

Participants also described a challenging patriarchal culture within the steelworks, where older men dominated. Younger men who started at the steelworks were referred to as 'boys', working in dangerous and difficult roles as they trained and later becoming 'men' in more 'comfortable' roles. Many participants spoke about the industrial injuries caused by the steelworks. In addition to the precarious working conditions inside the steelworks, people also describe how the blast furnaces polluted the town.

The migration of Scottish, Irish, Welsh and East Europeans to Corby to work in the steelworks is also often described as a positive and foundational aspect of the town, central to its identity and self-conception as a 'new town'. However, we also found that it was not always looked upon as favorably, particularly that some negatively describe the Scottish and Irish migrants as 'clannish' and 'close knit'. They were also blamed for bringing violence and alcoholism to Corby as well as transferring sectarian rivalries to Corby life.

Dominant descriptions of the second era (1980-2000) are of an existential crisis for the town, as it became a 'ghost town' left in despair and without resources. Many accounts highlight how the town became socially troubled, high unemployment led to further issues including alcohol abuse and crime, creating a period described as a 'wild west.' A lack of productivity also characterised descriptions of the period, a feeling that the town and its residents 'gave up'.

However, alternative accounts suggest that people also demonstrated resilience and mobilised to bolster the town against losses, supporting each other, and trying to adapt by finding or making alternative forms of employment or choices. While people do not challenge the idea that the closure of the steelworks was a shock event with consequences to this day, it is important to recognise that there were various responses to the closure.

Alternative narratives suggest a focus on ‘agency’ and resilience rather than the apathy often described. They describe how people supported each other, and their coping strategies through this time of change. During this challenging time participants describe how people tried to bolster the town against its losses.

People think it is important to understand that people supported each other before and after the steelworks eventually closed. Likewise, while the dominant viewpoint describes a ‘wild west’ time of non-productivity, unemployment and redundancy, other accounts again provide nuance by describing coping strategies and preparation, especially around employment and work. There were several descriptions describing a continued effort to find work. Rather than ‘drinking away’ their redundancy money, as the dominant narrative suggests, many people describe walking around the industrial estates of Corby looking for work. Other accounts also describe how if men were not in work or could not find it, women entered the formal labour market to ensure continued household income when their husbands were made redundant.

Third era (2000–present), ‘the phoenix rising’, is associated with economic growth, an increasing diversification of businesses and industries. The diversity is often looked upon positively, as a sign of resilience in the national economy which has more broadly been seen as struggling in recent years. One of the main characteristics of growth – both in population and in industry – is considered to be an improvement in the look and feel of the town centre via regeneration. People generally expressed pride in Corby and were pleased with areas which have undergone redevelopment. People were often keen to describe Corby’s positive elements and most took the time to ensure that these features were described. The town was described as “friendly”, “cosmopolitan”, “generous”, “being surrounded by green” and a “growing sense of pride in the community”.

Yet, descriptions, statistics and opinions of Corby in the media and by people living in surrounding areas were often at odds with how the residents themselves felt about the town. Depictions of Corby by the national media (rather than the local media) can be experienced as stigmatising by residents. Recently, Corby has made the national headlines for being Britain’s debt capital, for having the highest rates of suicide and being one of Britain’s worst places to live. Residents were aware of these depictions in the media and some emphasised the differences between their perceptions and those in the media.

However, participants felt the negative trend in depiction had started to change at least regionally, if not in the media, and a key part of their feeling of pride was how well Corby was faring in the regional economy compared to the trajectory of adjacent towns. Corby was felt to be on an upward cycle, a place of regional interest. Participants described people from neighbouring towns now coming to Corby to shop or for a day out, which they said was very different to how things used to be. People considered that today, Corby is a modern and cosmopolitan place, and attribute this to the impacts of growth and development.

Participants spoke about how issues with intergenerational unemployment, debt, poverty, mental health, suicide and addiction, as well as gaming amongst young people, and the interconnection of these issues, are impeding people’s ability to flourish. Another focus of accounts is how increasing industrial diversification and economic growth are having other social and economic repercussions: a perceived set of changes in the types, patterns and conditions of work people are required to do in Corby. Wages and changes in income were considered to have dropped and not just by measures of inflation or relatively.

The changes that this has meant creates some ambivalence and often negativity. Many participants were uncertain about whether the changes in the nature of work available in Corby were

positive, most expressing some negativity if they discussed work. While some said Corby remained a place of opportunity and highlighted the ease of finding work, concerns were largely around changes in the nature of work, a lack of company loyalty to place and poor conditions and remuneration. Low paid and low-skilled work was felt to characterise many of the opportunities available in Corby's warehousing and distribution economy.

Participants recounted the impact of low-paid work on residents. In order to afford the basics, families were said to need two full-time parents in work. One participant described how parents would take alternate shifts, one working from 6am to 2pm, another from 2pm to 9pm. They also described children sleeping in cars while, unable to afford childcare, their parents worked. For others, the incentives to work were considered too low, particularly given the anti-social nature of the shift work on offer, with early start times or late finishes. Participants also described a shift in the nature of work, from skilled manufacturing towards automated manufacturing processes and the change in skillsets required.

This lack of identity and pride in modern modes of work can also be linked to the new employment patterns presented by Corby's present-day economy. Several participants described regularly changing jobs, as short-term contracts expired, or companies relocated or reduced their workforce. These frequent moves from one workplace to another were often enabled by employment agencies, who have increasingly taken on the role of recruitment in the town. Participants expressed concerns about the impacts of employment agencies on job security, working conditions, and opportunities for redress.

3. Fieni

3.1 Postindustrial development of Fieni

Fieni is included in the category of medium-high economic performance towns that represent 13.51% of total SMITs in Romania. From a demographic point of view, Fieni town is showing a slight decrease in the population, mostly due to the reduction of the importance of the industrial sector in the local economy, especially after 2000 (in 1992, Fieni registered the highest proportion of active population in industry from all the towns and cities in Romania – 81.17%). Although it underwent economic difficulties related to its main economic activity, Fieni remained a strongly industrialized town in Romania, surpassing the national averages in terms of employment in industry (25.56% in 2011). The negative effects of the transformation processes of the transition period, mostly in relation to deindustrialization, are strongly reflected in the unemployment levels of Fieni. The town population in 2017 is of 7614 inhabitants, decreasing in comparison to 2014 (7782 people). The population decrease is continuous since 1995 when the town registered 8486 inhabitants.

Fieni is located in the northern part of Dâmbovița County, in the sub-Carpathian hills, more precisely in the Subcarpathians of Ialomita, next to Bucegi and Leaota mountains. The geographical location of Fieni is marked by the convergence of two valleys: Ialomita and Ialomicioara (Loghin V., 1999). The altitude of the area in the range of 400-470 m and the surrounding hills exceed 650m. The location in the hilly area offers the resources that led to the development of the settlements (gypsums, marls, agricultural lands, forests) and the Ialomita corridor has ensured the accessibility and the development of connections in the north-south direction (Mitroi M., 2010, p. 244).

The surface of the town, including Berivoești and Costești neighbourhoods (former villages) is of 1831 ha. The act of Fieni attestation is represented by a royal charter dated on 14 July 1532. In the period 1641-1863, Fieni becomes a monastery village destined to serve the Căldărușani monastery. Between 1865-1923 Fieni represents a village of Moțăeni commune and between 1923-1950 it becomes a commune with its own town hall (1923 being the first year of production for the cement factory). In 1950, Fieni becomes a workers' centre and in 1968 it is declared as town.

In order to understand the post-industrial evolution of Fieni, it is necessary to know the evolution context of the town economy until the 20th century, period corresponding to the development of local industrial production. Until the development of industry in the 20th century, the town functioned based on commercial and agricultural activities. In 1546, the merchants of Fieni are mentioned in the customs registers of Brașov (Stancu D., 2002, p. 774). In the 16th century, crafts have little importance and they are related to agricultural activities. The local workers include: millers, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, furriers, coopers, masons etc. The cloth industry is supported by the large number of mill machines. Later on, the inhabitants were producing lime (Stancu D., 2002, p. 81). The number of slaughterhouses for large cattle is increasing in the 19th-20th centuries. In the 19th century, the town develops commercial activities with Transylvania, in Fieni being imported and exported cattle, fruits and merchandises.

At the end of the 19th century, the population of the entire commune is of about 2000 inhabitants; the commune had two churches, two schools and three water mills, while the inhabitants had cows, horses, sheep and goats (Lahovari G. I. et al., 1901, p. 402). The locals (moțăenii) grow plums for producing țuică, the local brandy (Condurățeanu D. P., 1890, p. 87). The first water mill was attested in 1595 (Stancu D., 2002, p. 774). In 1912, Fieni had 907 inhabitants, a postal and a phone office (100 Years of Cement at Fieni, 2014, p. 17).

The industrial economic development started in the third decade of the 20th century, leading to the continuous changing of the economic structure and occupations of the inhabitants, most of them becoming workers. The development of industry in Fieni was possible due to the progress of the railway transport: in 1908, Dealu Frumos-Fieni narrow railway line is built, and in 1912, București-Pietroșita railway line passes through Fieni and the Runcu-Fieni narrow railway line is also constructed (Stancu D., 2002, p. 777). The use of Târgoviște-Pietroșița railway line influences the later construction of the two large town factories. In the 1930s, the railway line of Fieni is used for the transport of materials for the pavement of streets in Bucharest. Also, for the development of industry in Fieni, the communist development of road infrastructure had a significant role: Fieni-Costești bridge was built in 1976, followed by other bridges over Ialomița in the 1980s.

The industry of cement was legally supported at national level. In 1912, the Romanian Parliament adopted a new law for the encouragement of the national industry through which entrepreneurs received tax exemptions for a period of 30 years, having in the same time the obligation to pay for each of the three periods of ten years an industrial tax of 3%, 4% and then of 5%, from the net profit (if it surpassed 5.5%). Also, the law gave an exemption regarding the custom duties payment for the industrial machinery and accessories, and also fee reductions for their railway transport. During that time, the cement industry was considered “one of the little independent industries in relation to the foreign countries, both regarding the origin of the used materials and for the competition of products” (Popp A., 1916, p. 3 apud 100 Years of Cement at Fieni, 2014, pp. 18-19).

In Fieni, the history of the cement factory started in 1914, being in direct relation to the Lespezi stone quarry. The local cement factory was named the Romanian Anonymous Society „Dâmbovița” – for the manufacture of Portland cement („Dâmbovița” Societatea Anonimă Română – pentru fabricarea cimentului Portland). The local cement industry was influenced by the presence of gypsum reserves in the Cucuteni-Fieni area. The rocks used as construction material include common clays in the area of Pucioasa, sandstones at Buciumeni, marls in the reserves of Sima-Fieni, sand and gravel.

In the first year of functioning – 1923 (the First World War and its economic consequences hindered the earlier starting of the production), the production of the factory registered 15 500 tons of cement, quantity which situated it on the 4th place among the 11 Romanian factories – 1 472 wagons of a total production of 19 008 wagons at national level (Almanach Argus, 1924, p. 203).

Since the launching of production, the Fieni cement factory surpassed the older neighbouring factories from Comarnic and Azuga (100 Years of Cement at Fieni, 2014, pp. 28-29). In 1940, the factory of Fieni became the largest producer of cement in Romania. The factory of Fieni produced also cement tiles and glazed cement plates. In 1942, there was installed a limekiln and it started the production of „lime balls”.

Since its beginning, the factory was connected to the railway lines which were used to bring the machinery, the machinery parts and motors within the factory and the products were also delivered. For the transport of raw materials from the quarries of Runcului Valley, the narrow railway lines were also used, having a length of over 22 km, for the circulation of two locomotives, two draisines and tens of wagons. The exhaustion of limestone from the neighbouring area resulted in the construction of a funicular railway, put into use in 1928 in order to use the Piatra Ursului quarry. In 1936, the length of the funicular railway increased, reaching the Sălătruc quarry, while the third sector of the funicular railway reached Lespezi in 1940 (100 Years of Cement at Fieni, 2014, p. 37).

The biggest development of the factory was in the communist period, when it was named: Fieni Cement and Asbestos Plant (Combinatul de Lianți și Azbociment Fieni), and it represented one of the largest factories at national level. In 1975, the transport band Lespezi-Gilma is opened. After 1990, the factory was named Romcif Fieni. After its privatization in 1996, its name was changed into Tagrimpex Romcif Fieni. In 2002, the factory was taken by the German concern SC Heidelberg SA and the name of the factory changed into Carpatcement Fieni. A series of premiers in the cement industry in Romania were taking place in Fieni, among which also the combustion of clinker with gas probe. Currently, Fieni has the oldest functioning cement factory in Romania.

Electrostar light bulbs factory was founded in 1936 by German and Romanian entrepreneurs, working at that time as the largest light bulbs factory in the country. During the communist period, the factory was named Electric Star (Steaua Electrică), and Selum after that. Nowadays, the activity reduced significantly, being almost non-existent in comparison to its period of glory. During the communist period, the factory was producing different light bulbs for airplanes and tanks, while 70%-80% of the production was exported. At that time, the factory represented the biggest producer of lighting objects for Eastern Europe.

In 1936, out of the 139 employees, 70 were workers and the factory was producing 5 000 light bulbs/day. In 1941, the factory reached the second place as industrial production at national level, after the Tungstram Bucharest factory (Gazeta municipală, 1941, year X, no. 498, p. 3). In 1948, the factory was nationalized and it got the name Electric Star (Steaua Electrică). During 1976-1980, there were important investments for the modernization of glass melting furnaces and of mixing towers. In 1975, the manufacture of normal light bulbs moved to the ROMLUX Târgoviște factory, while the Electric Star factory continued to produce special light bulbs. The production was exported in many countries (60 countries of 5 continents): Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Singapore etc., and, less within the communist block of countries. The factory was producing a wide range of ornamental, car, signalling lamps, and of projection lamps for the water, air and road transport. The main period of development for the light bulbs factory was within the end of the 1970s and the first part of the 1980s. In 1980, the production reached 10 million of light bulbs/month, gathering 2 200 types of light bulbs. Excepting the filament material, the entire light bulbs materials were produced in Fieni, including the glass. In 1997, the factory was privatized, but this first process represented a failure as the investing company was from South Korea, country affected by the Asian economic crisis at that time. In 1999, the privatization process is repeated and the winning company is from the Netherlands. The production was slowly decreased, while the company is currently in insolvency. In 2016, the factory had only 157 employees out of the over 6

000 employees it registered before 1990. Furthermore, the lime factory and agricultural activities exist in Fieni. In 2004, the acquisition of the lime plant owned by the German group Heidelberg by the Belgian group Carmeuse begins.

The two industries were emblematic for the development of the settlement until 1990, the cement factory offering jobs for the male workforce, and the light bulbs factory for the female one. The deindustrialisation started in 1990 in Romania also affecting the town of Fieni. At present, the light bulbs industry is no longer active, the cement industry activities being the basis of the local industry. The cement plant currently has 255 employees in the production process. After the takeover of the enterprise in 2002 by the HeidelbergCement Group, the equipment has been upgraded and new facilities have been set into operation; at the same time, under the new leadership, an apprenticeship program has started to be implemented with its goal of attracting new employees. In the lime plant, are working about 50 employees.

Fieni switched from the most industrialized town in Romania at the beginning of the transition period (1992) in terms of the share of active people in industry (81.17%) to a gradual development of service activities. Currently, the tertiary sector has registered the largest number for occupied population. The process of tertiarisation, developed especially after 2000, is characterized by the lack of basic and varied basic services, often in terms of supply, medical system, transport and / or cultural environment.

The evolution of Fieni's industry is part of the big picture of industry development at national level: the diminish of production mainly within the mining industry (due to the abolition of state subsidies), but also for the construction materials industry, siderurgy and petrochemistry industry, followed by the chemical, food, textile, woodworking and machine building industries; the work units of large enterprises are either liquidated, usually only the production headquarters remaining in operation, either industrial units - important for the national economy - disappear completely or foreign investors take over some of them.

The economic restructuring process was characterized by a faulty management policy, which generated: high production costs, diminishing resources and a low level of productivity. These causes have generated consequences not only on the economic sector (unfair competition and no action to implement development projects, the low income level which influences the population's purchasing power), but also socially (unemployment), environmentally (abandoned industrial landscape, pollution) or in terms of demographics (decrease of birth rate, aging, emigration).

Deindustrialisation manifested itself through the increase in the number of unemployed people in Fieni. Population goes back, in a first stage, to agriculture and breeding for increasing their lost income. The year 2001 represents a turning point in the evolution of the settlement, due to the dismissal of a high number of people which led to other processes. They had an important negative impact in a small community of about 8 300 inhabitants, in which the two local industries had a major role in ensuring employment: high unemployment, low purchasing power, emigration, population aging, school abandonment etc. The emigration produced in a first stage in the nearby rural area, where part of the population, namely those on the verge of the retirement age or those who are already retired, went back to the rural communities, in most of the cases in their native villages. We are witnesses of a process of population return to a rural lifestyle. There are cases of young people that also professionally shifted to agriculture. Once that Romania joined the European Union in 2007, the number of persons that immigrated

abroad increased, especially the population of a working age. Also, the population that went for higher education studies in different universities in the country never came back into the community.

The multifamily housing blocks in which the rural population arrived (the rural exodus was accentuated between 1970-1985) transform from modernized and well-equipped buildings in living spaces less attractive: the number of inhabited apartments increases from one year to another and the quality of life decreases in these buildings as a result of the lower investments for maintenance and modernisation, disconnection of utilities and gradual installation of abandonment. For the new entrepreneurs, they build new single-family buildings at the edges of the town, buildings which contrast with the old traditional ones.

3.2 The dominant narratives of Fieni

In Fieni, the dominant industrial narrative is the narrative of shrinking. If in the past the two factories have had an essential contribution not only to the local industrial development, but also to the general economic evolution of the town, including a wide range of services in education, medicine or culture, nowadays only a few projects of the cement factory are noticed in the area. The local population is decreasing, being polarized by bigger cities in Romania. In general, young people go for tertiary education in the university centers and do not come back. In the last years, the phenomenon of going abroad for work has increased.

The industrial landscape in Fieni is still very expressive today, being rich in buildings that support the current industry, but also symbols who just remember how the industry was in the past and how participated to the town's development. Three categories have been established: visible symbols – edifices and areas related to the industrial activities, the town's coat of arms or the names of some streets and unions; indivisible symbols – meaning artistic groups or sports no longer encountered nowadays in the local community, but which have played an important role in bringing together the locals; "hidden" symbols – in the sense that some edifices or informations about the town could be better known, preserved and capitalized.

If in the past the two factories have had an essential contribution not only to the local industrial development, but also to the general economic evolution of the town (including a wide range of services in education, medicine or culture) nowadays only a few projects of the cement factory are noticed in the area. The natural resources of Fieni as gypsums, common clays, sandstones, marls, sand and gravel, agricultural lands and forests indicate a favourable economic development.

Fieni is still an industrial town, one of the traditional industry, the cement plant, being in activity. The functionality of the cement plant still supports the economy of the town, but provides a lower share of employees compared to the previous period when the industry has known a great development. The cement factory is the town's largest economic employer, but industry in general, although present in the local landscape, is no longer a major professional option for the local workforce over the past two decades.

In Fieni there is the same picture as in many small and medium-sized industrial towns from Romania. The local population is decreasing, being polarized by bigger cities in Romania. In

general, young people go for tertiary education in the university centers and do not come back. In the last years, the phenomenon of going abroad for work has increased.

3.3. Local narratives of Fieni

If the dominant industrial narrative in Fieni was one of shrinking, following other two narratives have come to light. The nostalgia and pride for the past industrial development is very common at the town level. In Fieni, the feeling of industrial nostalgia is dominant especially among the elderly population that is strongly related to the past, both in terms of economic and social life. The economic stability provided by the industrial activity had also generated positive socio-cultural effects and facilitated the social relations within the community: the stadium, the bowling arena or the building that is today the Cultural Center.

The cement and bulb industrial units were representing the major development support of this locality. At the same time, the employee's social status as workers in industry was a reason of local pride for the inhabitants of Fieni. An in-depth analysis of the respondents' answers in the street interviews highlights the general regret of the population expressed in relation to the reduction of the industrial activity, regret experienced both by those who perceive a positive image of the town and also by those who think that Fieni has a negative image. But, this feeling of regret is stronger among the elderly who worked in one of the two industrial branches of the town. Regret is generated by the nostalgia for the time when the industry of Fieni was much better developed and it provided stable and well-paid jobs both for the local population and for the population of the adjacent rural and urban areas.

The question about the past economic situation of Fieni in comparison with its current economic situation reached a sensitive point for the respondents, especially as most of them worked in the local industry, and the story of the evolution of this economic activity reactivated their regret of the fact that in the present period the industrial activity has somehow narrowed. Their feeling of regret and nostalgia can be also be decoded from the analysis of the non-verbal language of interviewees: a slight increase in the intensity of the voice during the description of the industrial activity evolution, especially when the respondents stated that the industrial production had decreased, and the lowering of their sight from time to time, as a sign of regret.

It can be appreciated that, by addressing the current situation of industry in Fieni, the local population marked the most important problem that Fieni currently faces, and the regret that this economic activity was restricting its production affects several categories of population, both the middle aged and the young people, who complain that they do not have enough opportunities to work in the town. The nostalgia of the local population for the industrial past is also related to the fact that industry contributed the most to the development of Fieni and it provided both a positive image of the town and the ability of the community to have good services and a boosted social status.

The nostalgia for the past is revealed also in the question about the industrial buildings, as symbol of the town. The persons who have mentioned the bulb factory building as symbol of the town live the feeling of nostalgia as a result of observing its state of partially abandoned industrial building. The feeling of nostalgia is in relation with the attachment for the town, many respondents, especially former workers, manifesting a strong nostalgia for the former industrial development and life within the town.

In the planned interviews the perception of authorities, local entrepreneurs and NGOs related to Fieni economic development highlighted also feelings of nostalgia and pride for the glorious industrial past when the town was renowned by its national and even international industries through the bulb factory, accompanied by *hope* for the future. Thus, we find that the feeling of pride goes beyond the level of the generation that has worked in the industry, becoming "*home*" for many people of Fieni. The responses generally reflect the growing difficulties or challenges of the local economy today to respond to the market and the competitive environment, but it can be noticed in many cases the confidence for the future.

The skepticism for the town's future was the second narrative of industrial development. As industrial town, Fieni has had a favourable socio-economic development since the cement factory was opened and it continued while the production of light bulbs was later added. The post-socialist changes in political and socioeconomic terms since 1990 negatively marked after that the evolution of the town and its population. The privatization of the traditional industrial units of the town facilitated the opportunity for private management, which proved to be well thought out and capitalized only in the case of the cement factory, while it represented a less favourable decision in the case of the bulb factory. The post-socialist stage is marked by the high costs of the transition in the context of the lowering of incomes and the generation of associated social issues as effect of reducing the industrial activity. Generally, as a derivative of the current economic situation, both at local and national level, there was registered a deterioration of the local living conditions in the post-industrial period.

The structural problems of development in Romania impact especially the young population of Fieni who prefers building their professional and personal life outside the country. Families with children in Fieni are found of it, but they are skeptical for their future life within the town and they have plans for giving support to their children to follow their high school and university studies in another urban area in Romania or outside the country.

In many cases, the skepticism is linked also to the lack of interest to participate in different actions for the common goal of the community that is its economic and social growth. This segment of population is not interested in knowing information about the town's development strategy as they are not confident in the forthcoming development of the town, and of the country in general.

A large number of respondents are skeptical about the town's development potential, noting that over the last few years small businesses have grown to trade and small public alimentation units that do not generate many jobs. They are aware that Fieni is a small town and that the local budget for investments in the socio-educational and public infrastructure is low. The skepticism may come also from the idea that small towns mean fewer possibilities for development which is not always true.

Skepticism can also be explained by the large number of future projects that respondents provided as an answer to the development directions: industry, handicrafts and tourism, socio-cultural activities, education, medical system and transports. It was found a low interest of the locals in involving in the projects at urban level. In general, at the national level the involvement culture is not very visible. Analysing the answers obtained in the planned interviews it can be noticed that sometimes the skepticism is encountered also at the elders: for example, they are more reticent/more pessimistic towards agriculture and its development. Maybe this could be linked to what happened with the agriculture's organisation in the past and this is why they are reluctant to associate and market their products.

Not least, the skepticism is reinforced by the waves of young adults leaving and working abroad. In Fieni, the collective heartbeat of the local community needs to be heard. The associative life is required in all the fields. The feeling of cohesion is fragile and it gets more visible with events in the town when people participate and socialize. The citizens have too high expectations, starting from the idea that the local authorities need to get involved in the solving of all urban and population needs. There is a lack of population participation in town's projects.

The planned interviews highlighted the fact that young people between 25 and 35 years old could involve more within the community as they have new and innovative ideas and perspective, more energy for action and they are in search of new urban experiences. But, unfortunately for the community of Fieni, a large share of the young population has already left the town or it is planning to move to a more developed city in Romania or to work abroad in the near future. It is possible that many of the people who left Fieni would like to return back home but they usually think that Fieni does not offer them the possibility to be well paid at their work. Regrettably, the phenomenon of leavings is more accentuated than the one of returning, the youth graduating from high school representing the first category of population to leave the town. The population of over 50 years old would also want to leave the town but they are too tied to their families and they consider that it is difficult after a certain age to start a new life and to get integrated into a new society from another city or country.

These two narratives, nostalgia and pride for the industrial past and skepticism for the town's future are not in conflict with the dominant (post)industrial narrative, the one of shrinking. On the contrary, the two narratives help to a better understanding of the dominant one, namely of its conditions of evolution and future expectations.

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4. Heerlen

4.1 Postindustrial development of Heerlen

Until the late 19th century, Heerlen and its surroundings were a quiet and mostly rural area. The history of human settlement and development goes back to at least the Roman Age, when a Roman fortress was located where Heerlen is now situated. Mining history in the region actually also goes back several centuries already, but for long it remained a small-scale and unprofitable industry. The industrialisation and urbanisation of Heerlen and its region took off only at the end of the 19th century. Two decisive events for this were (Hermans, 2016):

- 1894: start of construction of the first coal mine: the Oranje Nassau mine, opened in 1899. This was a private investment. Several other privately owned mines followed, and later also state-owned mines. The Dutch government intervened with a law in 1901, because it was concerned that the mining industry would be dominated too much by foreign companies; all still remaining mining concessions after then would be state-owned, while the earlier private initiatives could remain (Deen, 2003)

- 1896: first railway to Heerlen: Sittard-Herzogenrath, connecting the region to the Ruhr area. This new rail connection made Heerlen and its region much more attractive and profitable for coal mining, since the rapidly industrialising Ruhr area had a large and rapidly growing need for coal as its main source of energy.

For six decades, coal mining remained the dominant industry, the main source of jobs and income, and the main driving force of urbanisation and modernization of Heerlen and its region. World War I gave an additional impetus to the mining industry, since it forced the Netherlands to replace imported coal by home-produced coal. After a temporary setback during the 1930s crisis years and World War II, the mining industry flourished in the late 1940s and the 1950s. However, the region's future perspective changed radically after a large gas field was discovered in Groningen (Northeast Netherlands) in 1959. The Dutch government soon realised that gas would be a better alternative for future energy provision and that the gas field even contained more gas than necessary for the Netherlands alone, so it could also be a profitable export product. Therefore, in only a few years, the Netherlands switched from coal to gas as the prime source of energy provision (Hermans, 2016). Another reason for the loss of attractiveness of coal was the increasing international competition: the Dutch mines were unable to compete with coal from elsewhere in Europe or from other parts of the globe.

In 1965, the Dutch minister of Economic Affairs announced the closing of the state mines. He connected this to the promise to fully compensate job loss: 'no mine closed without replacement employment'. But in practice (partly because of political changes, partly because of economic events like the oil crisis in 1973) job loss went faster and creating replacement jobs went slower than initially planned. Initially, the government decision was only about the state mines, but only a few years later, the national government decided that all coal mining activities including the privately owned mines had to be stopped (Hermans, 2016). In December 1974, the last coal mine closed. The socio-economic impacts of the closing of the mines on the region were huge, because it had become a single-sector economy. Mining was not only by far the largest regional employer, but the state mining company and the private companies, in close

collaboration with then still dominant Catholic church, also had an important role in housing production, spatial planning, education, and social organisations and activities for their workers (Bontje, 2013; Elzerman & Bontje, 2015).

Despite initiatives to restructure and modernise the regional economy, the wealth and productivity of the heydays of mining have never returned. Furthermore, the closure of the mines ushered in a period of physical and social decline, as Heerlen was faced with a heroin epidemic (according to some sources, the drug was introduced by American Vietnam veterans stationed in nearby Brunssum) and associated problems such as crime and prostitution. While its reputation has improved, especially since the mid-2000s, Heerlen is according to recent (CBS, 2016) data still the 6th most criminal city in the Netherlands and the 5th in terms of drug-related nuisance (the latter can also be explained through its proximity to the German border).

A selective out-migration of higher educated people as well as youth aspiring such higher education already set in during the 1960s and 1970s. A first period of population decline in the 1970s and early 1980s was followed by a period of stabilization and slight growth in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, population decline returned in the late 1990s. Since then, population decline seems to be a more structural and longer-lasting development (Elzerman & Bontje, 2015; Hoekveld, 2012; Latten & Musterd, 2009), although recently there seem to be some signs of stabilisation.

Recent interventions from local and regional policy-makers as well as from civil society initiatives may influence the further development of Heerlen in the coming years; some of these interventions may even already have an impact. Two of them are highlighted here. First, Heerlen and 7 neighbouring municipalities intensified their regional collaboration and founded the Parkstad Limburg region. For some years, this regional collaboration initiative was funded and supported by the Dutch national government; unfortunately, the national programme for city-regions that made this possible has ceased to exist. Nevertheless, the Parkstad region decided to continue its regional collaboration programme. Several regional policy programmes were developed including programmes for economic development, spatial development and the regional housing market. Housing market measures focus on developing Heerlen as a regional urban centre. Low-quality housing stock should be demolished, while there are also ambitious plans for the development of luxury apartments and shops in the area surrounding the train station.

Second, local and regional governance organisations together with regional civil society actors took the initiative to start IBA Parkstad Limburg. Back then this was the first IBA (Internationale Bauausstellung) outside of Germany. Inspired by the German examples, IBA is seen as a potentially powerful incentive for spatial and economic transformation of the Parkstad region. The decision to organise the IBA was taken in 2013; in 2014 a company to realise this was founded. The IBA should end in 2020 with an exhibition of all projects realised (Elzerman & Bontje, 2015; <http://www.iba-parkstad.nl/>).

In Heerlen and its immediate surroundings (the former ‘eastern mining region’, the region we now know as ‘Parkstad Limburg’), the economic and societal transformation was different from other parts of the former mining area. Mining and industrial employment were replaced by non-commercial and commercial services mostly. In the Sittard-Geleen region (the former ‘western mining region’) new industrial companies and jobs were created, especially in

chemical industry and automobile industry. This may have meant that the impact of the economic and societal changes was different in Heerlen / Parkstad than in the Sittard-Geleen region; while the Heerlen-Parkstad redevelopment trajectory was mostly post-industrial, the Sittard-Geleen redevelopment trajectory was still partly industrial. As far as we know this has not yet been researched comparatively though.

The closing of the mines meant much more than just job loss for many people. In many families, several generations worked in the mines, and the local society was largely built around the mines. New jobs were created, but the former miners did not always have the right qualifications for these new jobs. So for many of these new jobs, people from elsewhere had to be attracted, either from other Dutch regions or from abroad. Moreover, parallel to the loss of the mining companies as key players in local society, also the Catholic church rapidly lost influence in the daily life of Heerlen and its region.

The rapid demolition of most of the former mining buildings and infrastructure also contributed to a loss of regional identity. Despite several efforts of local and regional government actors to create a new regional identity, so far nothing managed to replace what was lost after the closing of the mines. In retrospect this ‘starting again from scratch’ may have been a wrong choice; several other mining regions successfully managed to redevelop the old mining buildings and infrastructure as industrial heritage and/or cultural or leisure venues for tourists and residents. This has happened in Heerlen / Parkstad too, but only to a very modest extent compared to neighbouring former mining areas like the Ruhr area and Belgian Limburg. Only two former mining buildings have remained in the region; one of them is now the Dutch Mining Museum. Another example of successful redevelopment is the Wilhelminaberg, a former mine waste dump now redeveloped as leisure area, with amongst others an indoor ski centre.

4.2 The dominant narratives of Heerlen

Three time periods can be discerned in the dominant narrative of the Heerlen’s history: the period before the advent of large-scale mining, in which Heerlen is depicted as a relatively backwards, rural area, the industrial period during which Heerlen was one of the richest cities in the Netherlands, and the post-mining era where the city had to reinvent itself whilst coping with severe social and economic problems.

While Heerlen before the advent of large-scale mining was a sparsely populated and predominantly rural area, there are notable examples of early habitation. At the location of contemporary Heerlen there was a Roman settlement (one of the oldest in the Netherlands), and the wider area also has some remains of mediaeval architecture (e.g. castles, abbeys). However, most descriptions of the region start at or just before the advent of large-scale mining – the construction of the first privately owned coal mine in 1899 (Oranje Nassau I) and in particular the operation of state-owned mines (Staatsmijn Wilhelmina was the first) from 1906 onwards – and highlight the relative ‘backwardness’ of the region at the beginning of large-scale coal mining, compared to the rest of the Netherlands. For example, the IBA handbook (2015, pp. 70-71) distinguishes five periods in the region’s history, of which the first one covers the period

up till 1890 (the start of the construction of the first coal mine) and is called ‘period 0’. Similarly, journalist and author Joep Dohmen begins the chronicle of his birthplace Heerlen by describing the beautiful countryside but also the lack of infrastructure and waterworks and the widespread illiteracy and low life expectancy of the population. The residents of Heerlen did not speak Dutch but German or a German-influenced dialect (2013, pp. 21-23), further underscoring their physical and symbolic distance from the Dutch nation-state. The advent of large-scale mining is thus described as pushing the region into modernity.

Large-scale mining rapidly changed the physical and social structure of what became known as the eastern mining region. Whereas in 1895, 424 men were employed in the mines, in 1913 this had grown to 17,000. These were mostly foreign workers (from Germany, Poland, and Czech Republic) who had prior experience with mining that the local population lacked (www.historischnieuwsblad.nl). This changed during WWI, when foreign coals became hard to come by, resulting in the further intensification of mining in Limburg and the attraction of workers from other parts of the Netherlands. In order to house the workers, so-called mine colonies (villages close to a mine, designed based on the English garden city model that was in vogue at the time) were built by local housing associations in close collaboration with the roman catholic church. Consequently, church and mine together achieved a nearly complete dominance over the lives of the miners and their families. For example, being allowed to live in a colony was dependent on employment at the mine, which in turned depended on one’s standing with the local pastor.

In total, 13 mines were constructed in the Netherlands, of which 11 were located in the eastern mining region (state mine Maurits was located in Geleen or the western mining region, and state mine Beatrix further to the north near Roermond and the German border, which has never been operative). Of the 11 mines located in the eastern mining region, three were state mines (Wilhelmine, Emma, and Hendrik) and 8 were privately owned, of which 3 were located in Heerlen proper (Oranje-Nassau I, III, and IV). The mines brought great wealth to the region: in 1955, four municipalities in the eastern mining region were among the top 25 of municipalities with the largest number of high-income residents in the Netherlands (Heerlen was the 20th highest-income municipality in 1955, 437th in 1975 after the closing of the mines, and 555th in 1994) (www.demijnstreek.net, CBS data).

Heerlen was one of the richest cities in the country, and known as the city for shopping. Working in the mines, especially underground, was a relatively well-paying job compared to others available in the region, and particularly in the state mines the work was relatively safe (e.g. compared to Belgian mines). However, the work in the mines was still hard and unhealthy labour. Retired miners often died of silicosis due to breathing in coal dust. It took a long time before silicosis was recognized as a work-related disease, and it took until 1994 for 700 former miners to receive a financial settlement from the Dutch government (www.anderetijden.nl). In addition, due the single-sector economy of the region young people had no other choice than to work at the mines, and higher education was discouraged. The dependence on the mines resulted in massive unemployment and severe social problems once the mines closed.

After the rapid closing of the coal mines (1965-1974), Heerlen entered a period of physical and social decline, with widespread unemployment and high crime levels. Heroin was introduced – and became a very popular drug – into the nightlife of Heerlen due to the city’s proximity to the NATO military base in Brunssum, a nearby village. US soldiers who had become addicted

to heroin during their deployment in Vietnam could opt to be stationed in Brunssum in order to avoid mandatory drug testing upon their return to the US (Hermans, 2016). As a result, Heerlen quickly became known as one of the centres of the heroin epidemic in the Netherlands (next to Amsterdam). In particular the train station was known internationally as a place to buy or sell drugs due to its convenient location close to Germany and France. In tandem with widespread heroin use, prostitution became a major problem for the city (Hermans, 2016). In 2001, the municipal government started ‘Operation Heartbeat’ (*Operatie Hartslag*), which aimed to reduce drug use and associated crime in the city centre through a combination of repression, prevention, and treatment for drug addicts. This approach is widely seen as very successful as it has resulted in a normalization of the levels of drug use and (petty) crime, which are now comparable to other mid-sized Dutch cities.

However, the memory of decline is never far away. Even though the current (2014-2018) policy plans of the municipal government radiate self-confidence and optimism, this is predicated on the knowledge that the city has come a long way. References to the past serve to justify prompt action and also function as a justification for an optimistic outlook: Heerlen is good at reinventing itself and surviving against the odds: “As a city we have had difficult times before and we of all places have always been able to recover (...) maybe because of the fact that we as a city have always survived” (Heerlen municipality, 2014, p. 1). The focus of current policy is not so much on remembering or repurposing the mining past, but rather the aim is a more wholesale reinvention which honours the less recent past, in particular the Roman heritage, and develops a new focus on nature, culture, and creative industry. The municipality explicitly aims to erase the city’s negative image stemming from the period of decline after the mine closings.

Central to the municipal vision – as expressed in its bid book *Urban Heerlen* – is the branding of Heerlen as ‘urban’³⁰ and the partition of the city centre into four parts, labelled ‘urban experience’ (retail and fashion), ‘urban heritage’ (Roman excavations), ‘urban culture’ (restaurants and cafes, cultural events), and ‘urban living’ (city apartments, offices). Notably, while the Roman heritage is embraced as an asset to the city, industrial heritage is not mentioned. Culture here mainly refers to activities that would be appreciated by young people (whose presence is seen as vital to the greying city) rather than high-brow art forms. Similarly to the municipality’s vision, IBA Parkstad expresses a wish to get away from the mining past and the associated period of decline. While many of its projects focus on the area’s history before the advent of mining, only two deal directly with the industrial past³¹.

One of the most notable features of the representation of Heerlen’s industrial past is the relative lack thereof: most of the architecture associated with the mines has disappeared, and industrial symbols are very rarely used. This coincides with a rather ambiguous approach to the town’s mining history, where the mines function as a source of stigma but also – increasingly – as a source of pride. However, this pride is arguably more related to the city’s wish to leave the past behind and reinvent itself with a new, ‘urban’ image than to being proud of the industrial past

³⁰ The designation of ‘urban’ as Heerlen’s city brand, as well as the somewhat strange claim that this brand will distinguish it from other cities in the region, also speaks to the inferiority complex of the city and the South Limburg region as a whole. Urban identity is claimed defiantly, against the rest of the country but also and especially in relation to neighbouring city and provincial capital Maastricht, which is described (in the bid book, but referencing widely known stereotypes) as posh and stuffy, while Heerlen is portrayed as gritty and ‘real’.

³¹ These are the projects “Laura/Julia”, which uses a modern reinvention of the concessions given to mining entrepreneurs to develop industrial areas in order to stimulate green energy and recycling, and the project “urban mining” which aims for the sustainable recycling of material from demolished buildings.

itself. Finally, local identity, in particular the notion of being an ‘underdog’ and being undervalued, also relates to a broader regional identity.

4.3 Local narratives of Heerlen

The city of Heerlen has an ambivalent relationship to its industrial past. Material remains are scarce, as most industrial sites were demolished immediately after the closing of the mines. In the same period, many non-industrial buildings in Heerlen’s city centre were also demolished, many at the initiative of alderman Hub Savelsbergh, also known as ‘Hub the demolisher’. The closing of the mines can be described as a regional trauma, as what followed was a period of economic downfall and degradation from which the region is still recovering today. Recently, there have been some attempts to commemorate the mining past. Notably, in 2015 the Year of the Mines was organized to commemorate fifty years after the closing of the mines, and there are plans to revamp the local mining museum.

The interviewed residents also display an ambivalent relationship to the industrial past. When asked if they feel a connection to the mining past, many respondents first state that they do not, yet then go on to remember family members who have worked in the mines, or personal memories and experiences. For those who have worked in the mines themselves or who come from mining families, the link to the industrial past is most obvious. For others, whose family members worked as mining officials or who have no direct connection to the mines, the memory of the industrial past is mostly connected to the architecture of the mines, such as mine shafts and train tracks.

Respondents explain how the presence of the mines structured everyday life in Heerlen and shaped the material environment of the city. Several respondents mention the soot coming from the mines, which used to cover the buildings in the city. On the one hand, the mines are remembered fondly as they created a lot of relatively well-paid jobs and turned Heerlen from a village into a real city. Respondents frequently mention with obvious pride that Heerlen was at one point in time the wealthiest or the second-wealthiest city in the Netherlands. This wealth was visible in the city centre as well, which was well known for its shops. On the other hand, the work in the mines was hard, unhealthy, and dangerous (one former miner described it as ‘slave labour’). Respondents also describe the class divisions that structured life in industrial Heerlen. Officials of the mine and their children often came from outside of the province of Limburg, spoke Dutch instead of the local dialect, lived apart from ‘ordinary’ miners, and shopped and socialized separately. As a result, children of these officials feel less connected to the industrial past and somewhat excluded from commemorations of this past, which focus primarily on miners. Miners and their children in turn recount their lower status within the hierarchies created by the mining company and connect this to a lack of interest in their perspectives on the past, even today. For example, a former miner argues that current books and movies about the mining period fail to accurately represent the strict class divisions that were in place at the time and thereby romanticize the past.

Partly due to the lack of material remains, many residents mentioned not knowing much about the industrial past. For this reason, they think it is important that for example children learn about the mining past in school, and that the mining museum and events like the Year of the

Mines continue to get funded. However, others stress the need to move forward, and not dwell in the past. These respondents describe events such as the Year of the Mines as overly romantic and offering only false nostalgia. In particular, respondents mention that the obedience and passivity cultivated in people by the mines and the catholic church still influences current residents' demeanour in a negative way, and holds the city back from achieving its full potential. Like with class divisions, this is tied to the position of Limburg as a peripheral province characterized by a sense of inferiority³². Older residents in particular are believed to dwell too much in the past and to look to the government to take care of them, while younger people are thought to be less burdened by the past and more willing to take initiative and shape the city according to their needs.

Today's Heerlen strives to be an 'urban' city. The aims of this branding strategy are twofold: it should offer the residents of Heerlen a sense of pride and identity, and it should improve the city's reputation to the outside world. This reputation is believed to be still very much based on the image of Heerlen as 'drug city', and as having not much to offer in terms of culture or entertainment. While large-scale problems relating to drug use and homelessness have been largely solved in the city centre since the intensive campaign Operation Heartbeat (Operatie Hartslag) in the beginning of the 2000s, traces of this unruly past can still be found. This can be seen for example in the fences around many homes in the city centre and the only recent placing of benches in public space – which had all been removed in the past to prevent sleeping rough. Residents as well are still confronted with this negative reputation, which is changing rather slowly.

Professionals from the municipality and related organization stress that the urban branding has been developed in consultation with residents and that 'urban' is something that describes Heerlen as it currently is, rather than something it should strive to become. Thus, it is meant to reaffirm rather than reshape the city's identity. By choosing an English word rather than the Dutch translation of urban, policy-makers aim to appeal to young people and to a particular flavour of culture that includes street art and a large variety of festivals and events.

Residents were by and large aware of the existence of the 'urban' brand, often bringing it up unprompted. Opinions differ on whether urban is an accurate description of contemporary or future Heerlen. On the one hand, some say that it accurately captures not so much what Heerlen is but what it is not: it is not really a city in the traditional Dutch sense, with an old and picturesque city centre. Residents are highly appreciative of the activities and events that are organized under the 'urban' umbrella. Even if they do not like these events themselves, respondents are enthusiastic about the amount of effort put in by the municipality to turn Heerlen into a livelier place. Many also note that the city centre and the restaurants and cafes around the centrally located Pancratius-square have become much more lively in recent years, and they themselves also visit the city centre more often. On the other hand, residents also criticized the 'urban' framing. Some believe that it displays 'out of context urban ambitions' that do not fit a medium-sized provincial town. Policy-makers like to compare Heerlen to large American former industrial cities such as Detroit. Another point of critique is the use of urban as an overarching framing that should cover everything that is organized in the city. One example that is

³² Respondents often describe this as a 'calimerocomplex', a Dutch term which refers to the feeling of being sold short and not taken seriously on account of being small (physically or symbolically). The term is derived from a cartoon featuring a little chick called Calimero, who often exclaims 'They are big and I is [sic] small, and that's not fair'.

mentioned a lot is the winter festival ‘Holy Moly’, which was meant as a modern twist on more classical Christmas markets, including food trucks, Swedish-style tents, and containers. Especially the containers were not received well by many respondents, who pointed out that a Christmas event does not need to be ‘urban’.

‘Alternative’ or ‘hidden’ narratives exist to some extent next to, or in opposition to, the dominant narrative. However, some aspects of these narratives are also present in official policies and they are therefore not completely different from official narrative(s). The first alternative narrative is that of Heerlen as a city which is fighting to regain its former standing during the heyday of the mining industry. Residents appreciate the ‘fighting spirit’ of the city and its willingness to reinvent itself.

A second alternative narrative is that of Heerlen as not a highly urban city, but a pleasant, green, medium-sized city. In particular respondents who are originally from Heerlen and have moved back after spending some time in other parts of the country state that Heerlen is a nice place to raise kids as it’s quiet and green and close to family and friends.

A third alternative narrative discusses the need for increased political power of the local government in order to tackle large-scale and structural problems, in particular population shrinkage and ageing and a lack of employment opportunities, in particular for highly educated people. While several respondents moved back to Heerlen after having first moved away, they were in some cases reluctant to do so because of the (perceived) difficulty to find suitable employment for one and ideally both partners. Employment is seen as the one thing that Heerlen lacks to truly become a desirable city to live.

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5. Kajaani

5.1 Postindustrial development of Kajaani

Kajaani is the regional centre of Kainuu. Per Brahe the Younger established the town in 1651. During the 17th century, growth was fuelled by tar industry. The development of town was slow until begin of the 20th century. The railroad, teacher training college and timber company (later Kajaani PLC (Kajaani Oy) and after corporate acquisition UPM) spurred on the growth of the town. At that time, Ämmäkoski power plant was built on the river in 1917 by the Kajaani Timber Company. The town grew in the 1960s to 14 600 inhabitants. Because of industrial development in the 1970s and the merger of the separate rural municipality of Kajaani, Kajaanin maalaiskunta, and the town in 1977, the population jump to 34 574 by 1980. Today Kajaani has 37 304 inhabitants and it is 30th biggest town in Finland.

Paper industry was long the remarkable industrial employer. However, the big paper mill was closed in 2008. New jobs have been provided both by traditional sectors and by new ones, such as a call centre, IT companies and a pilot plant for bioethanol. Still, the town and region are suffering from depopulation and low attractiveness, mainly due to their distant location, high unemployment, thin economic base and restricted educational options. However, the region has some strong and promising economic segments, such as outdoor tourism, wood industry, mining, renewable energy, transport industry (Transtech), automation and IT industry (focused on measurement technologies and computer games).

Kajaani as an inland town is located close to the transport routes that have been affected the growth of the forest industry. Although industry has focused on the forestry, the other sectors such as electronics has had a minor role. Hence, Kajaani has been combination of forest, machinery, and electronics industry but it has not been able to diversify its economic base. Kajaani is and has been the regional centre why many administrative units are located in the town. For instance, the teacher training college was located in Kajaani until its closure 2012 and it gave to the town as university town status. Additionally, Kajaani has a strong relationship to whole Kainuu region. Hence, it has been argued that the image of Kajaani has close relationship to whole Kainuu region that has been conceptualised as area of backwardness and slow progress. Even though there has been many efforts to improve on the image of Kajaani, the identity and the image is conceptualised through the region. However, Kajaani try to create its identity as a small-town where the good services and dynamic economic life are locate. Overall, Kajaani has been conceptualised as a promoter of Kainuu.

National industrial development at the local level can be conceptualised through three epochs of state spaces³³. First epoch, the era from 1920 to 1945, are defined as an areal state. During this period, cultural, governmental, and economic activity were concentrated in urban and core areas, especially in Helsinki. Regions outside the southern core areas were conceptualised mainly as a fascinating hinterland, nationalistic-cultural phenomena, and an unknown periphery. Overall, the economy were based on agriculture and forestry. Hence, the governance of

³³ Moision, Sami & Vasanan, Antti (2008). Alueellistuminen valtiomuutoksen tutkimuskohteena [Regionalisation as object of study of state transformation]. *Tieteessä tapahtuu* 3-4/2008, 20–31; Moision, Sami (2015). Towards transnational spatial polices in Finland. *Nordia Geographical Publications* 44:4, 87–93.

the natural resources and land owning were in a crucial point in social policy. State were relatively absent in the peripheries why the social relationships were founded on the local level.

At the local level, however, many small towns grew due to industrialisation and new railways. As new factories and houses were built, people moved from the countryside to towns. During that time, Kajaani was lively town where educational opportunities were located. Kajaani timber company had a crucial role in the town. For instance, third of the tax payers of Kajaani worked in company in 1920s. Furthermore, the same company paid almost one fourth of municipal tax of Kajaani in 1930s. However, the company was more than tax payer or employer in Kajaani. It paid for the houses, schools, kindergartens, and health care of workers. At the same time, Timber Company affected the local cultural life arranging sport events and house-keeping courses.³⁴

After the Second World War, Finnish public policy changed. State's attempt was to generate loyal state citizen who would be capable of participating industrial processes and consumption. The second period that lasted until 1990 can be defined as epoch of the decentralised welfare state. During the epoch, the aim of state was to foster unity of the nation and rooting out the political radicalism. The political alliance, which was formed between Agrarian Party (later Central Party) and the Social Democrats, accepted massive social redistribution system as national investments and infrastructural investments across state space.³⁵

The main goal was to populate the whole of Finland. The idea was that every citizen should have the feeling that they belong to Finland and they have the same opportunities as people in southern core areas. Hence, the question was not only of industrialisation nor of regional policy as such, but also of the development of the welfare state. One of the main actors was long-term former president Urho Kekkonen who highlighted that state should invest in peripheries by establishing infrastructure and industry. The objective was to establish factories that would embed economic activity.

One of the main aims in regional policy was to locate industry to the peripheral regions and especially to their central towns. The state gave financial support mainly to large industrial plants to create vacancies. At the same time, not only plants were founded but universities and state offices were also established. Regional policy created a strong public sector, explaining why the workforce in the service and industrial sector increased simultaneously. This decentralisation diffused the middle-class to the whole country.

During the epoch, Kajaani was largely supported by the state. For example, University of Oulu established the pedagogical unit to Kajaani where teachers, kindergarten teachers, and Master in Pedagogy were educated. Furthermore, state invested industry and infrastructure in Kajaani and Kainuu. It has been argued that without state the region would not been able to progress as fast as it did. At the same time, new kinds of industry started to develop besides the forestry.

³⁴ Virtanen, Sakari (1982). Kajaani Oy 1907-1982: 1, Kainuuseen sijoitettu: kuvaus Kajaani Oy:n vaiheista vuoteen 1945 [Kajaani PLC 1907-1982: 1, located to Kainuu: description of the phases of Kajaani PLC until 1945], Kajaani Oy.; Virtanen, Sakari (1985). Kajaani Oy 1907-1982: 2, Puusta elävä: Kajaani Oy:n vaiheita vuodesta 1946. [Kajaani PLC 1907-1982: 2, Wood as a source of livinghood: phases of Kajaani PLC since 1946], Kajaani, Kajaani Oy.

³⁵ Moisio, Sami & Vasanen, Antti (2008). Alueellistuminen valtiomuutoksen tutkimuskohteena [Regionalisation as object of study of state transformation]. *Tieteessä tapahtuu* 3-4/2008, 20-31; Moisio, Sami (2015). Towards transnational spatial polices in Finland. *Nordia Geographical Publications* 44:4, 87-93.

The company launched electronics industry in 1970s. Even though the company was still remarkable employer, the service sector grew rapidly during the period. Due to rise of service sector and the establishment of university level education, the amount of middle-class people increased. As a result, the cultural and free time facilities diversified. Overall, the company was not only employer in the town but it also affected indirectly to local politics. Furthermore, the local newspaper, *Kainuun Sanomat*, supported actively timber company and thus legitimized discursively the company's role in Kajaani.

Third epoch, from the begin of 1990s until present, are defined as the decentralized competition state. During the period, the alliance between the Social Democrats and the Center Party withered away. In the early 1990s, there was a deep economic recession and Finland entry into the EU in 1995. Moreover, the collapse of Soviet Union affected the Finnish society. The planning system of state was criticized as outdated and economically inefficient. This period was conceptualized as the end of 'closed Finland'. At the same time, the knowledge-based economy and internationally oriented citizen became in central point. The new ideas of networks and networking created the decentralized 'national urban network'. It has been argued that the decentralized competition state was constituted through city-regionalism from above as a geopolitical project of late capitalism.³⁶

Whereas regional policy was closed and regulated in the 1970s and the 1980s, it became based on markets. Therefore, state-led governance and regulation were conceptualised in a negative way. Now, the state role was to create conditions for markets in which regions and the SMITs could compete and operate. The idea was that towns and regions should be competitive, open and attractive for international investments. Regions and towns are expected to create their own strategies that are based on their endogenous strengths. Consequently, regions are conceptualized as units that should have opportunities to compete in international markets. In Kajaani, the metal industry, mining and ICT has come significant role. Especially, game industry has formed the sector that has been loaded lots of expectations. The University of Applied Sciences of Kajaani, for example, offers game development studies.

5.2 The dominant narratives of Kajaani

Kajaani is more than industrial town. It is and has been the regional centre of Kainuu where many administrative units are located. For instance, the teacher training college was in Kajaani until its closure 2012 and it gave to the town as university town status. Furthermore, the Kainuu Brigade, one of the biggest army units in Finland, are located near of Kajaani's town centre.

The dominant narrative of Kajaani is narrative of decentralization. The narrative of decentralization had two distinctive paths. Here, the features of decentralization (e.g. state's strong presence in Kajaani, state's positive impact to the local development) are connected to mining, especially Talvivaara. The mine is located in Sotkamo about 40 kilometres from Kajaani. Nowadays, the mine is owned by government-established Terrafame which bought it from the bank-

³⁶ Moisio, Sami & Vasanen, Antti (2008). *Alueellistuminen valtiomuutoksen tutkimuskohteena* [Regionalisation as object of study of state transformation]. *Tieteessä tapahtuu* 3-4/2008, 20–31; Moisio, Sami (2015). *Towards transnational spatial polices in Finland*. *Nordia Geographical Publications* 44:4, 87–93.

ruptcy-bound Talvivaara Mining Company. The company was established in 2004 when it acquired the rights to mine sites. The appropriate permits to commence mining were obtained in 2007 and metals production started late in 2008. In 2010, the company announced the commencement of uranium production as a by-product from its normal mining operations in Sotkamo. In November 2012, the largest environmental disaster in the history of Finnish mining took place when a gypsum waste pond of Talvivaara mine leaked into the surrounding environment with the result that the neighbouring waterways acidified and the levels of toxic metals rose. During the spring of 2013, Talvivaara Mining Company ran a sizeable amount of excess wastewaters into the environment. The company went bankrupt in 2014. The newly established government-owned corporation Terrafame PLC bought the mining business of Talvivaara in 2015. Since February 2017 Terrafame, operating the Talvivaara Mine, have new owners from Singapore Trafigura and its Galena Asset Management. State of Finland has had a big interest to mine. The Government of Finland has been the largest single owner through their investment company Solidium. Furthermore, the government supported the mine project by building 60 million euros worth of infrastructure (see Ahtium 2018; Talvivaara/Terrafame mine 2018).

At the moment, Terrafame employs directly 600 people and indirectly almost 1000 people. Half of the mine workers are from Kajaani. When UPM Group paper mill was closed in 2008, Talvivaara Mining Company was interpreted as a substitute to factory and rescuer of Kajaani and the whole Kainuu region. The mining as a part of narrative of decentralization highlights two essential features. First is connected to the mentality of big actors. The research material pointed out that Kajaani needs at least one big company that could afford enough workplaces. Here, it was Talvivaara or Terrafame that could be a leading actor and company which would have positive multiplier impacts to whole society. Because UPM paper mill was closed and there was not any big company in Kajaani or Kainuu region, it was interpreted that the area needs at least one big firm.

Secondly, mining is a national question and therefore Finnish state should be concerned on the future of mine. The research material highlighted that Talvivaara was interpreted a significant in the national level. Therefore, many official actor pointed out that if states want to sustain regional equity, the remote towns and areas should have at least one big company that would bring the well-being to whole region. Hence, the state have still crucial role in remote towns, such as Kajaani. The research material highlighted that state should have an active role not only in mining but also the development of the whole region. State was interpreted as rescuer that would save the town and its surrounding areas. This kind of mentality was a reflection from the period when state-owned companies had a significant role. During that time, the aim was to locate industry to the peripheral regions and especially to their central towns. The state gave financial support mainly to large industrial plants to create vacancies. Still, the dominant belief is that state will support the big actors and industry in Kajaani.

Second path in the narrative of decentralization is the new forms of industry that are part of the knowledge-based economy. The concept refers the advanced economies that 'are directly based on the production, distribution and the use of knowledge and information' (OECD 1996, 7). However, as Luukkonen and Moisio (2016, 1456–1457) mention, the knowledge-based economy refers 'a combination of discourses and institutional as well as administrative mechanisms and structures of knowledge which render the social reality of the EU thinkable in a particular way'. Therefore, it is more than European economic system or occupational structure.

The research material highlighted three kinds of activities. First was the St1 bioethanol plant in Kajaani in the former UPM paper mill factory buildings that was reached its full potential in early 2017. The plant produce advanced renewable ethanol from sawdust which is a process residue from sawmills. It has been estimated that the plant has a great direct and indirect impact to Kainuu's region. Although the bioethanol plant has the high level of degree of processing and contains much of innovative research, it is closely connected to the industrial history of Kajaani. Not only because of the location but also because of the natural resources that plant uses, the bioethanol factory is interpreted as a continuum to former paper mill. The research material highlighted that the plant continues the legacy that UPM paper mill left behind. However, the question is not anymore on the basic industry but the expertise why it has close connection to knowledge-economy. Second project was related to Transtech that is major domestic manufacturer of railway and trams rolling stock. It specializes in building railway vehicles and trams for extreme climatic conditions. The company's office is located in Oulu but its main manufacturing base is in Otanmäki, Kajaani. Transtech employs over 600 people in Kainuu why it is remarkable employer in the region.

Third activity was linked to the rise of gaming industry. The research material stressed that promising developments in Kajaani are taking place in the area of computer gaming. The local gaming cluster is growing with particular emphasis coming from the local university. The Kajaani University of Applied Sciences offers an international program to train games programmers and provides entrepreneurial support for games students. Some of the games developed within the program have been successful in game competitions. Many students are interested to establish companies related to game development. Furthermore, the computer gaming knowledge and expertise is combined with locally available biomechanical expertise in sport. Expertise from the sport sector can be used in the concept of computer gaming (e.g. virtual training (for sport)), but also for entertainment and medical research (see InvestInKainuu 2018).

Although the game industry was represented as a new and innovative field, it has a linkage to industrial past of the town. The current measurement technology, that the game industry is partly based on, was developed from the basis of electronics industry which Kajaani PLC (later UPM paper mill) established 40 years ago. For that reason, the game industry in Kajaani has not been originated from scratch but it has connection to the former dominant economic field of the town.

5.3 Local narratives of Kajaani

The main local narrative was the narrative of knowledge-based economy. It consisted of four interrelated local narratives. The first was the narrative of small town. It was connected to the identity of Kajaani and sense of place. Here, the question was not only on Kajaani but also on Kainuu region. The interviewees spoke on mentality of Kainuu ('kainutlaatuisuus'=unique of Kainuu) which referred to the uniqueness and originality of the Kainuu region. Many interviewees felt that the regional identity was particularly strong in Kainuu compared to the other areas. In practice, this was also reflected in Kajaani, whose identity filtered heavily through the region. Hence, Kajaani and its identity was linked strongly to Kainuu region why the town itself did not have peculiar character.

The narrative of small town contained three themes. The first was the pride of home region. It was not represented as a strong justification of the town but rather a silent emphasis of the strengths of the locality. The question was also on making the distinction between Kajaani and the larger growth centers such as Helsinki, Turku and Tampere. Consequently, the interviewees sought to demonstrate the uniqueness and superiority of Kajaani and Kainuu region why the larger cities were represented as places that are 'not good for human beings'. It was stressed that Kajaani has 'something' which you can not find anywhere else. Often, the 'something' that interviewees pointed out was nature and closeness of nature.

Furthermore, interviewees used the concept of easiness. In other words, everyday life was interpreted easy and additionally, moving to the town was conceptualized effortlessly. In particular, the interviewees saw the people of Kajaani open-minded and easily approachable why it was straightforward for the outsiders to stay in the town. The pride of the home region included a certain kind of shyness. Some of the interviewees interpreted that there is uncertainty in the background of silent pride. Even though one's own regional identity is strongly emphasized, it is significant to ask why this is done. Is it a question of disparity between Kajaani and the great cities of Southern Finland or just cultural uncertainty?

Second theme in the narrative of small town was the phase related to the closure of paper mill. When the plant was closed in 2008, the former paper mill facilities were quickly found to be a substitute. Thus, many of the unemployed found a new work albeit there were people who did not get a job. Overall, the interviewees highlighted that the transformation process went well. As one of the key reasons, they saw that the town did not 'stuck in a rut' but were able to look to the future. Although the support of UPM and its management was central in the process, the interviewees pointed out that the small town identity and spontaneity had a significant impact on survival. Moreover, the people were proud that there was not a significant opposition as was the case in many other areas where the factories were closed.

The third theme in the narrative of small town was the emphasis of smallness. According to the interviewees, people in Kajaani pull together more than before and at the same time they are rejoiced in the successes of others. In addition, the smallness was seen as an advantage as all actors are close in the small town and there are not thresholds. Therefore, if they so wish, everyone have easy access to decision-makers and are able to influence local policy with their own activity. The smallness was thus interpreted as an equality and 'being on the same boat'.

Second local narrative was the narrative of closure. The narrative was dealing with closure of the paper mill and the teacher training school. The first of these, the closure of the paper factory, was interpreted as a positive issue for the whole town. Although the decision to close to the plant was dramatic, it was not a surprise. Now, ten years later, the interviewees interpreted the closure as a positive event³⁷. They highlighted three issues that supported the opinion. The first was the plant as a recession and a deterrent. As the paper mill was in operation, the new economic activity was not developed actively by town. The paper mill created an illusion where one big actor can create prosperity endlessly. Consequently, the new business was not born in the town because of the strong belief of the factory. The factory was an obstacle for the new,

³⁷ However, YLE Kainuu reported that the closure of the plant was not positive event for everyone. Some of the workers did not employed nor retired. According to the head of local paperworkers union, those who are the worst situation do not talk. Hence, there are people who are silent and bitter on what happened.

fresh perspectives. Because the dominant narrative believed in the plant's omnipotence, other kinds of activities were interpreted as a 'dappling'.

Secondly, the factory was conceptualised as a golden cage. In practice, the paper mill was manifested as an own separate unit in the town. Although the plant was an employer of many inhabitants, its activities remained remote. For example, the physical and architectural nature of the factory with its guards, surveillance equipment, and the gates created an image of the closed space that operates outside the town. Despite the fact that a number of companies have replaced the paper mill and works in the factory building, the area is still starkly guarded space. For many new entrants, the site is conceptualised not only as a restrictive but also as an oppressing space.

The factory was not represented as a golden cage only through the physical and architectural framework but also by people working there. In addition to relatively large pay, factory workers had many benefits that others did not have. The factory was not only a workplace but it took care of the employees' families, from the free time activities to healthcare. In all, these two factors created an image of the factory as closed golden cage where the other townspeople did not have a tangible touch.

Third, the plant was defined as an enabler of new. Although the operations of the paper mill ceased, the new companies located in the factory buildings were able to use the physical, immaterial and infrastructural settings. The cheap heat, water, and steam, the same as the paper mill produced and utilized, had a major impact on the location of the existing companies in the paper mill's buildings. Although UPM ceased its operations in Kajaani, the legacy of the factory had a major impact on the town's current corporate structure. Equally, the gaming companies Critical Force and CSE are also involved in the electronics industry, which was developed in the 1970s as part of the paper mill's operations.

Altogether, the closure of the factory cleared the path for new forms of economy, such as the gaming and film industry. Because of the transformation process, Kajaani lost its industrial character. Nonetheless, the heritage of the paper mill is still visible in the town. As some of the interviewees criticized, town still favours the big actors in their policy. According to them, Kajaani also has an old-fashioned view of the 'right kind' of work. Only industrial work is seen as 'real' work why the new kind of approach to work and well-being is lacking in the whole Kainuu region. In practice, this was also manifested in the official attitude towards forests and nature. According to critics, Kainuu is only conceptualised as a resource offerer, which the forestry and mining industry try to exploit. Based on the interviews, the paper mill was represented in the negative light. Although it had a significant role in Kajaani for a long time, it is not missed anymore. Especially for younger generations, the plant is a very distant and strange.

The narrative of closure contained the closedown of Department of Kajaani's Teacher Education. Compared to paper mill, the closure of teacher training unit was more dramatic event. The closure of the paper factory was connected to economic life whereas the end of teacher training unit was a part of state policy. Therefore, it was explicitly interpreted as a regional policy decision and the opposite trajectory that Kajaani had previously been accustomed to. The question was not only on the closure of the unit but it had significant impacts on the atmosphere of the whole town. Besides the death of education and new ideas, as some of the interviewees dramatically highlighted, one of the outcomes was the disappearance of university students, which affected the image of the town. Consequently, many events and 'stunts' that were organized by

teacher education students ended up. According to the research material, the withdrawal of one unit affected in the long run the whole town and its attractiveness.

Third local narrative was the narrative of traction. It was linked to the availability of new residents and, above all, the skilled workforce. Additionally, the narrative highlighted the question of how to keep new inhabitants and experts in Kajaani. This was dealing with the attractiveness and the marketing and branding of the town. This local narrative contained two overlapping themes. The first was the availability of experts. According to the interviewees, the main problem of Kajaani is the decline of the population and the ageing. They noticed that Kajaani did not have enough skilled persons for their needs. This is a big challenge for many companies and at the same time, it affects the growth and activity of firms.

Additionally, the interviewees discussed on the prospects of Kajaani's future. They connected the issue to the difficulties of the availability of skilled persons and the labour force. The interviewees spoke that if skilled persons came to Kajaani only seasons, they have difficulties to root to the town. Without a proper bond to place, Kajaani will always be a foreign locality. In addition, people do not have an interest to participate in the daily life and to develop town. In this prospect, the gap between local and foreign people may become even bigger than before. As a result, Kajaani will be experienced even more cliquey by foreign and thus the negative features of the small town will be pronounced.

The second theme was the question of how skilled people would stay in Kajaani. The interviewees mentioned that it is not just a job as such which will be the essential feature of traction. In other words, workplace is no longer the only thing that would attract people to the town and make them to stay there. In contrast, Kajaani should offer something more. The 'something' was the urban environment and social relationships. The urban environment must be attractive and it should offer leisure opportunities for people. Moreover, the new inhabitants are attached to the city through social relations. If they do not have these, and for this reason, they feel themselves as constantly outside, they will easily move elsewhere. The availability of skilled workforce and commitment them to the Kajaani is not just a problem for a particular workplace or company but in the long run it will affect the whole town.

Third theme was connected to young people's removal from Kajaani. This was a part of the lack of educational choices. When the youth go to study elsewhere after high school, only a few of them return to their home town. Although Finnish media have occasionally highlighted on returnees, and many regional councils have invested for them, the interviewees pointed out that the remigration has been exaggerated. At the same time, they stressed the main role of the University of Applied Sciences of Kajaani (Polytechnic). Without it, many companies would have big difficulties. Particularly in the gaming industry, the significance of the University of Applied Sciences was conceptualized as a key factor in maintaining the game industry in Kajaani.

Fourth local narrative was the narrative of the development of the urban environment. The interviewees and comments for the town strategy highlighted this issue. The key point here was the view that the attractiveness of Kajaani was connected to the urban environment as such. Two key themes emerged from the narrative. The first was affect. In this context, the affectivity of the town space was shaped as capacity to raise emotions and affect the subject. The research material highlighted that town and its environment should be developed through its users. In other words, Kajaani and especially its center area should be planned the way that

people enjoy to be there. Hence, the town center should offer amusement that affect the people's economic behaviour. As people spend time more into the town center, they also consume more. Second theme in this local narrative was aesthetic. The research material highlighted that the urban environment should be developed through aesthetics values. Hence, the urban environment should contain beauty, which, in turn, can be interpreted as a part previously mentioned affectivity. Aesthetic values were not related only to local town space and its physical features but was used as recruiting technique.

The dominant and local narratives contained four contradictions and conflicts. The first was connected to the small size of Kajaani. The city representatives emphasized that Kajaani was 'a typical small town where everyone knows each other and that decision-makers are easy to get in contact.' Officially, Kajaani was interpreted as a town where it is easy to affect local decision-making if you only have enough will. On the other hand, there was also other side of the coin. Kajaani was explicated a clannish town with small circles. Therefore, the town was defined as a place where it was difficult to attach and the decision-making was in the hand of certain quarters.

Second contradiction was formed between big and small actors. When the dominant narrative pointed out the role of big actors as the guarantor of the town's economic vitality and prosperity, the local narratives emphasized the role of small actors. Some of the interviewees highlighted that big, massive, and rigid actors represent past while small and medium-sized companies are present and future. Although the impact of the big companies for the local employment was accepted, the local alternative narratives saw that the future of Kajaani could not be based solely on big firms. If the economic life is based only on big actors, it lead easily to partiality. For that reason, it was also possible to conclude that Kajaani does not want be in the situation where one big actor would dominate the town and its economic life.

The third contradiction was connected to the development of the town center. The local narrative pointed out the need to develop the center area. However, the view was in conflict with the dominant narrative in which the role of the urban environment was not highly esteemed. The narrative of the development of urban environment highlighted the town space and its places into a completely new role. They were not just the background nor the arena of events but the essential factor of the town's vitality. In this context, there were differences between generations. When the young people spoke about urban culture and its contribution, the members of the older generation interpreted it as a 'just a nice dabbling'.

The fourth contradiction was the relationship between well-being and work. As the dominant narrative separated these two concepts, some of the local discourses attached them together. Consequently, the essential issue was how the work is connected to leisure time and how the everyday life is shaped. The local narratives highlighted that the productivity of work is linked to the people's leisure time activities, such as social life. The viewpoint is socially pervasive as it combines both the production of the town space and the government of the private life of people.

Altogether, the four contradictions mentioned above pointed to a widespread social transformation that has not occurred only on Kajaani but also in the whole of Finnish society. Certainly, similar flows and changes have been appeared in other parts of Western Europe when the old rigid structures have been substituted by new, flexible formations. Even though the transparency is pointed out and highlighted as a significant feature, openness becomes easily

as a mask where the social evils are hid. When social discourse begins to favor independent initiatives, social structures leaves people on their own. In this context, many disadvantaged become marginalized from the society.

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6. Velenje

6.1 Postindustrial development of Velenje

Velenje's industrial development began in the late 19th century, when Slovenia was part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Feudalism had been abolished by then and liberal capitalism was on the rise. This was the period of the first wave of industrialisation and the construction of the road and rail network. After the monarchy collapsed in 1918, Velenje joined the other towns in the Slovenian industrial crescent, however, it did not constitute its nucleus. The first intense industrial development of Velenje began after 1945, during the socialist period. In this regard, the town followed the national economic policy's principal motif: industrialization with an emphasis on heavy industry and processing industry. The crucial drivers for the post-war development were the discovery of large lignite (brown coal) deposits and Yugoslavia's industrially-oriented policies. The increased demand for coal accelerated the mining efforts, which caused Velenje to grow in size and number of inhabitants. During the period after Slovenia's independence, a slight deindustrialization followed, but the prevailing industrial character of Velenje persists. In addition to environmental rehabilitation projects, the country largely funded the construction of the 6th block of the Šoštanj Thermal Power Plant, which was completed in 2016.

Velenje's economic development directly correlated with the development of coal mining, energy and industry. The leading industry is metalworking. More than half of all the active inhabitants of Velenje are employed in industry and mining. Since lignite does not have a high heat value and contains fair amounts of ash and moisture, it is not economically viable to be transported on long distances. For this reason, a thermal power plant was built next to the mine in 1905, with a much larger one being constructed after World War II in the neighbouring town of Šoštanj that is regularly upgraded and expanded. Today, the Šoštanj Thermal Power Plant is the largest complex of its kind in Slovenia and can produce up to about 1300 MW of electricity, which covers roughly a third of the country power needs.

Velenje's formation is directly linked to the progress of coal mining and later the metalworking industry. The main layer of lignite (brown coal) was detected in 1875. At first, the coal mining affected the market development only indirectly, because the town had not been a mining settlement up to that point. The lignite mine started expanding its operations in 1887. Since then, the amounts of mined coal grew steadily for the next hundred years. It was later determined that the Velenje mine was excavating on the largest Slovenian coal reserve and one of the thickest detected layers of coal in the world. The lignite layers are about 170 meters thick and more than 220 million tons of lignite have been excavated so far, which amounted to over three quarters of all Slovenian coal at the peak of the operations.

Up to 1945, Velenje was not seen as the service centre for the wider surroundings and was merely a market town. It had only 566 inhabitants as late as in 1910; today, its 25,000 inhabitants rank it the sixth largest town in Slovenia. Prior to these developments, the more centrally located Šoštanj with its strong trade and craft tradition was seen as more important, especially

its tanning and wood processing industries. Today, the two towns are connected with an industrial zone, which also connects them into a kind of industrial and urban complex or a conurbation. The coal from Velenje and leather from Šoštanj also attracted the railway to the valley. The road and railway grid construction in the late 19th century brought Velenje closer to the main traffic routes and opened the door to the world.

After World War II, Velenje was a small mining settlement at first. That started to change after 1954 when the amounts of lignite mining increased and experienced a rapid growth spurt in the mid-fifties. The coal digging reached its peak in 1985 and has been slowly decreasing since. The lignite is intended primarily for electricity production at the Šoštanj power plant.

In the early 1960s, Velenje became a municipal centre, as well as the employment and economic centre of the area. The developing coal mining and industry opened many employment opportunities and the number of inhabitants grew drastically. The rate of inhabitant growth exceeded the average growth in other Slovenian towns. The number of inhabitants almost tripled from 1961 to 1991. The main reason for this expansion was immigration, which was most intense during the 1970s; almost 40% of all apartment buildings in the town were built during this time. Today, only 4 out of 10 people have lived in Velenje all their lives. In terms of the rest, a third emigrated from countries of the former Yugoslavia and half moved here from other places in Slovenia.

In 1959, a common modern urban plan was set, which set the foundation for the modernist garden city with bright and sunny apartments among greenery (utopian socialist town). The city centre unveiling was symbolically attributed to the 40th anniversary of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia. The memory of that period is still present in the city centre in the form of the largest stature of Josip Broz Tito.

Immediately following 1991, Velenje experienced a decline in heavy industry and coal mining and increased unemployment that was also typical for other Slovenian towns. The once heavy immigration of people, including those from other republics of the former Yugoslavia, ceased. However, since immigrants were young at the time, the natural increase remains high. Despite the deindustrialization, Velenje's economy still rests on two larger industrial systems: the Velenje Coal Mine group and the Gorenje business system, which employ almost half of the active citizens in the City Municipality of Velenje. The Velenje Coal Mine mines coal for the purposes of the Šoštanj power plant, where a third of Slovenia's electricity is generated. Between 1996 and 2005, the mine was operating at a loss, however it has recovered due to the regular coal supply to the Šoštanj power plant. Gorenje is one of the largest economic entities and the largest Slovenian net exporter with a 3% share of the EU appliance market. Similar to the rest of the Slovenian industry, it was heavily affected by the loss of the former Yugoslav markets due to wars, but with time managed to shift to the European market. Aside from both "giants", a few other successful and innovative small and medium-sized companies managed to establish themselves after 1991 that also contribute to the city's development.

Due to the subterranean coal excavation in the Velenje Basin, four artificial lakes formed in the early years of the mine and consequently, some people had to be relocated from seven smaller settlements. The largest among them, Velenje Lake, was used as a reservoir for the ash from the power plant until 1983. The strongly alkaline water that seeped from the ash deposits into the lake and into a nearby river caused the lake water to have a pH of just 2 until 1993. Coal mining and other industry activities have therefore heavily influenced the image of the

Velenje Basin. It created a lake landscape that is very vulnerable to the harmful influences of human activities. In 1987, an ecological protest was held in Velenje, which marked the start of the community's sustainable development strategy. The largest industry employers and polluters, the coal mine, the power plant and Gorenje founded the joint ERICo institute, which is in charge of environmental monitoring, research, as well as rehabilitation and development programs.

Consequently to the environmental rehabilitation, the lakes formed in the area of the coal mining have become bodies of water suitable for swimming and an important recreation area for the citizens and even from tourists in recent years. Velenje has been focusing more on the tourism sectors. The considerable environmental improvements in Velenje are a good model of environmental rehabilitation of degraded industrial areas, even though a perception of a polluted and degraded environment remains.

6.2 The dominant narratives of Velenje

Two main types of narratives can be distinguished. Firstly, the main one is connected with the time of its construction and can be called the 'socialist nostalgia'. Second narrative is the industrial one, but in reality it is inseparable from the first one. The foundation of this 'socialist wonder' is rooted in creating the ideal industrial (proletariat) society.

The symbols of the industrial and coal mining heritage are found in the built environment. Sculptures, residential buildings, public buildings, industrial sites, public open spaces (children's playground, park, and square), a wall mural, garden settlement, railroad track and anthropogenous lakes have varyingly close ties to industry and coal mining: the connection is evident with the sculptures and industrial sites, while the significance of other symbols is broader and the connection more indirect. The construction of the town and the town centre, especially in the 1950–1959 period, reflects a predominant tendency of building the "ideal" socialist town and ensuring a better residential quality for miners as a contrast to the dark mining shafts and former worker colonies. In that time, the town builders consistently followed the principles of modernism and functionalism, with the two prevailing paradigms in architecture and urban planning at the time. They wanted to prove that it was possible to design a modern industrial town in a socialist rule.

Most of the symbols were created in the first few decades after World War II and are well-placed, preserved or restored. Some are recent: one of the roundabouts at the town entrance boasts a sculpture, erected in honour of coal mining and the town's 50th anniversary, the tallest of its kind in Slovenia. Another special feature is the coal mine-themed children's playground Miner's Village, which was built in 2014 and is designed around the story of energy efficiency and the meaning of the local energy source. This points to a sustained, expressly positive, partly idealized image of the industrial past and present. Symbols in the built environment reflect the collective awareness that the town is inextricably linked to coal mining, industry and shock

work³⁸. The monuments to coal mining are somewhat idealized, especially those that depict continuity and the town's growth.

It is interesting to notice how the industrial architecture is being changed: One such example are the coal miners' colonies and "*provizoriji*" (buildings of a temporary nature with substandard living conditions). Some of them have been torn down due to the sinking ground that followed coal excavation and have been replaced by modern more spacious apartments. Some buildings that had been directly linked to mining (e.g. coal mine's administrative building, tower block for mining school students, industrial-mining high school) serve a different purpose now, but the memory of its original use has been well preserved with informative signs.

The coal mining history is also symbolized by three anthropogenous lakes that were formed after the ground sank due to coal excavation. Today, numerous sporting and leisure activities are centred on the lakes and the memory of the darker side of the coal mining history had attempted to be preserved by the temporary exhibition about sunken villages in the Coal Mining Museum in 2012.

From the built environment point of view, industrial past is well visible and is being conveyed to visitors. It is obvious that the dominant narrative is closely connected with the 'socialist' past, which is in turn inevitably associated with mining and industry. In the town we can thus find recurring symbols of monuments dedicated to Tito (Yugoslav leader) and miners. Most of the buildings and monuments are well-preserved, many have been renovated.

Despite the prevailing trends of the post-industrial era, Velenje remains firmly rooted in industrial flows, which is manifested also by cultural heritage institutions. The town's industrial tradition is intensely present in museums in the number of collections, materials, individual exhibitions and events. However, there seems to be a constant imbalance between the contents, as they favour coal mining over power production and other industry sectors, presently existing in the town. For example: the company Gorenje is a global market player and headquarters to a number of cutting-edge technologies, but its industrial heritage has received significantly less attention in terms of museum programs and exhibitions than coal mining.

The coal mining and industrial heritage are most represented in the Coal Mining Museum of Slovenia and in individual exhibitions in the Velenje Museum. It tries to excite visitors with its descend into the darkness with the oldest mining elevator in the world, visiting the original mine shafts and eating a coal miner's lunch in the deepest dining room in Slovenia.

Occasionally, exhibitions feature industrial heritage. One of the nine permanent exhibitions is dedicated to the history of Velenje and of the 150 temporary exhibitions put on from 2001 to 2014, a handful have been dedicated to coal mining and industry. The Coal Mining Museum of Slovenia in Velenje primarily focuses on presenting the history of coal mining; of the 40 temporary exhibitions in the museum from 2010 to 2017, every fourth exhibition has been dedicated to coal mining.

The most extensive and renowned institutions in terms of museums, cultural and exhibition symbols are Velenje Museum and Velenje Culture Hall, both public institutions. Industrial

³⁸ Shock work (*šudarniki*) is a specific kind of communist-era type of work where (younger) workers influenced by heavy propaganda went above and beyond the call of duty. So-called shock brigades were formed where people worked enthusiastically and 'voluntarily' usually in big infrastructural projects (roads, towns ...) and were granted certain benefits.

heritage is only indirectly reflected in the Culture Hall and other non-museum public spaces; in the museums, it is expressed through individual exhibitions. The condition and recognisability of the symbols are abundant. Since they are an important part of the territorial identity, not only of heritage, the past industrial symbols are going strong. They are a point of pride for most citizens and many visitors from elsewhere study individual aspects as examples of good practice. The dominant opinion is that the most common reasons for visiting Velenje are the Coal Mining Museum (museum, significance for the town) and the socialist era heritage (monuments, architecture).

In general, the attitude of the citizens of Velenje is very positive towards the town's industrial and 'socialist' symbols and a sense of pride is noticeable. The use, purpose and meaning of these symbols, however, have changed slightly throughout the decades, which is most apparent among the younger generation due to the lessened ideological stance in them. The residents' attitude is extremely positive to the coal mining tradition, mostly positive to socialist heritage and somewhat negative reactions can be detected about certain environmental and political topics.

One of the slogans used to promote the Slovenian town is "The Socialist Wonder". Velenje has two main tourist attractions: the tallest statue of Tito in the world and the deepest dining room in Slovenia. Above-mentioned cultural heritage institutions are also important, with Velenje Museum having 22,000 and Coal Mining Museum having 18,000 visitors yearly. It is interesting to note that two major tourism companies have their roots in industry: one being Gorenje Gostinstvo that manages all the major catering facilities (subsidiary of Gorenje factory producing household appliances) and Premogovnik Velenje that manages the coal museum (subsidiary of the Velenje Coal mines company).

Dominant narratives are well-seen even through the lens of tourist packages. The names of those for example are: *Socialist Experience in Velenje*, *A Retro Walk in Velenje*, *In the Miners' Footsteps*, *Stories of Lost Villages*, and the "Walk Through a Town of Modernism" architectural route. The most purchased souvenir in TIC Velenje is a T-shirt bearing the sign "Tito's Velenje" and a red star. Other socialist mementos include a shirt with a socialist-era limerick "It's Nice to be Young in our Homeland³⁹", postcards with a commemorative image of Tito and Tito's monument in Velenje, along with a magnet of Tito Square in Velenje. The most popular mining souvenirs include: a candle holder made of coal, a mining lamp atop a lump of coal, a mining lamp atop a lump of coal in a box and a piece of coal in a box. The kids' game "Nine Times Velenje" introduces also coal mining heritage and urban development in Velenje.

Socialist 'nostalgia' is the main theme with which the city is trying to attract visitors, closely followed by topics from the mining and industrial past. The Municipality of Velenje is going to enable access to Tito's monument and visitors will be able to take their photo next to the monument. For some visitors, Tito's statue is namely the main reason for visiting Velenje. Even in gastronomy the dominant socialist industrial narrative is visible: visitors are served "the miner's skewer" and in restaurants, decorated with Yugoslav iconography, one can get the "Lignite Burger" (named by a type of coal) or the "Marshal Burger" (named by Marshal Josip Broz Tito). For desert one can indulge in "Tito's ice cream", which has become the best-selling flavour by far.

³⁹ A slogan of the popular socialist youth anthem.

Citizens of Velenje are known to be nostalgic toward socialist era which is related to city's industrial past. What is even more surprising is that the generation of millennials (who are too young to have concrete memories of state socialism) practice socialist-era nostalgia. Several aspects of the cultural practice related to city's industrial heritage have been identified. Many abandoned old industrial buildings around Velenje have been repurposed and subject to creative placemaking. Industrial past in Velenje is inevitably related to its socialist era. Besides Tito's monument there are testaments related to socialist past or Velenje's coal mining (the statue of Yugoslav politicians, the statue of Velenje city planner and coal mine director and the statue of the miners). Some local musicians have promoted Velenje's industrial heritage in their work, most notably rap musician 6Pack Čukur. In Velenje, socialist-era nostalgia is also practiced through exhibiting of everyday life of the socialist class. An aura of "pastness" can be found in retro names of coffee shops and diners. Such example is the popular socialist-era-themed burger restaurant called Nostalgija (Nostalgia) where Yugoslav semiology is used. This type of symbols are widely used across Velenje's consumption places: red stars, flags, names such as 'The youth' referencing Tito's slogans. As Velenje was mainly built by shock workers (Udarniki), their legacy is promoted and reflected in voluntary work of the youth. Udarnik MC Velenje is a group of volunteers who help disadvantaged families and individuals with household chores. There are also numerous other organisations in Velenje with highly enthusiastic and engaged members (biggest Scout Association in Slovenia, brass bands, etc.). Solidarity is a common narrative among the local population. Another example is open-air cinema built in 1950s next to the lake that was abandoned and overgrown by weeds and covered in dirt. In 2009 a group of volunteers with the financial help of local firms restored the cinema's amphitheatre and since then - apart from open-air cinema - the place is used for sports activities (running competitions, ice-skating).

In general, the modern town was built on ideological basis, as a socialist utopia in a typical modernist form. Townscape is full of well-preserved architectural modernistic buildings and monuments. This 'nostalgia' is conveyed to younger generations with popular cultural symbols (in cafes, restaurants, clubs ...), through slogans and glorification of signs of the socialist past. Even at the immaterial level there are signs that the ideals originating from the socialist past such as solidarity, volunteer (shock) work and community-building are being put in the forefront. Industrial past is heavily represented by monuments, architecture and pop-culture, moderately in museums and exhibitions, and partly in geographical names as-well. But again, it is tightly connected with the socialist era, when the modern town was constructed. Former industrial sites are being used mostly for creative industries and art activities (former bakery) or tourist activities (old coal mine or lakes), so the community is not ashamed of their industrial past and wishes to convey this to outsiders.

6.3 Local narratives of Velenje

The respondents expressed a mostly positive attitude towards socialism. A nostalgia for the 'good old days' could be felt among many of the interviewees. Positive connotations referred to solidarity, shock work, equality, social rights, access to jobs and housing and culture and education. Local people see socialism as inseparably connected with the creation and development of the town. The negative attitudes can be associated with dictatorship and a restriction

of freedom of speech. However, most of the respondents were very protective when the word turned to ruining or eliminating the monuments, sculptures and other visible signs of socialism. They see all the socialist symbols as an expression of their history and tradition that cannot be denied but should be a source of pride. The visible expressions of socialism are not problematic, as long as they are not abused as a means of opening up ideological issues and aggravating political polarization. Some interviewees also expressed the opinion that socialism in any form is an obsolete concept and therefore no longer relevant. Many of them see the socialist idea, politics and way of work as unsuitable for the present time.

Similarly, as in the case of socialism, industrialism was generally positively evaluated by the passers-by. They were completely aware that there would be no Velenje in the current extent and shape without big industrial companies. Many of the respondents pointed to the importance of the industry not only for the development of the town, but also for the country as a whole. In their opinion, the industrial heritage is an important part of the history, design and identity of the town and as such, it should be at least partially preserved. The negative aspects can be associated with environmental concerns and abandoned industrial buildings. Some interviewees also mentioned the negative implications of the transition from public to private ownership, which has strengthened the economic, but lessened the social role of industrial companies. Although industry has left behind some significant environmental burdens, it has also brought new opportunities for the development of tourism by utilizing the mining lakes and revitalizing old industrial buildings.

When it comes to future development strategies, the respondents admitted a lack of exact knowledge and information, which was also reflected in a sort of 'passivity' to these questions. After being briefly acquainted with the main urban development priorities (quality of living environment, tourism, SMEs, services, etc.), they mostly agreed with municipal plans to develop tourism (especially around mining lakes, which lack the proper infrastructure) as one of the substitutes for the forthcoming industrial/mining decline. Simultaneously, they do not see tourism as a panacea for all the economic challenges. In their opinion, industry should be preserved and transformed to be able to address the current needs. Dependence on big companies should be tackled by developing SMEs and education. Too harsh break with the past industrial development is not deemed welcome. Many respondents also mentioned the need to develop social programs and housing schemes for young people.

Among other hidden narratives that became important ingredients for the planned semi-structured interviews, the passers-by most often mentioned ethnic conflicts, especially with the newly emerged and growing Albanian minority. One respondent said: "... they [Albanians] are not accustomed to cleaning up after themselves and they leave rubbish behind after their picnics in parks ... and they are squeezed in overcrowded dwellings ..." It seems that the embedded multicultural and tolerant spirit faces some serious challenges in future urban development. The interviewees also mentioned injustices caused by land expropriation when the city expanded. These processes are still relevant today with the subsidence of the lake area.

Velenje is aware of the recency of its origins, but is also proud of the rich history and values of socialism on which the city was founded. These are values of shock work, comradeship, equality, multi-culturalism, mutual respect and solidarity, which the interviewees believe have an ideological background in work being a fundamental value and cultural element of the past period. They think that the unifying note of work and mutual help and "having each other's

back” was transferred from the mines to the surface and seeped in all the other pores of socio-economic life.

The socialist values are built into the structures of the town and its inhabitants and are manifested in social practices in many different ways. Even though socialism is no longer formally practiced in Slovenia, it seems Velenje continues to adopt the system. It appears the socialist values are idealized and manifested through socialist Yugo-nostalgia. The town’s administration gets a lot of credit in this by providing various free social services that have a positive effect on the quality of life, all in the spirit of the former times. One such example is supporting the well-established concept of societies and associations by providing the free use of municipal spaces.

All the social sectors are very interconnected, purposefully managed and each has their own vision and ambitious plans they successfully achieve. Many fields also thrive through the idea of networking and community building. The city council strives to unanimously pass legislation. Even interviewees from the economic field testify that the town is open to various suggestions from the inhabitants and perceive its activities as being very participative and inclusive in relation to various social groups and interests.

Velenje is widely recognized for its multi-culturalism, wherein such an “amalgam” or melting pot is difficult to find elsewhere in Slovenia. According to interviewees in the field of the civil society, immigrants from the southern republics of the former Yugoslavia constitute the core of society in Velenje and are deserving for Velenje’s current state.

The youth is an important protagonist in preserving socialist values; they are very socially engaged in Velenje. Young people are especially active in the area of volunteering as the heritage of shock work. For example, a volunteer work event was organized on the 50th anniversary of the construction of the city centre to renovate the city outdoor cinema; organizers at the Youth Centre are considering resurrecting shock work brigades for the upcoming 60th anniversary. Younger interviewees coming from start-up companies stress that Velenje is one of the few towns in Slovenia that has passed a Youth Policy Strategy. The town supports them through the SAŠA Incubator and other spaces such as the Youth Centre, which manages the hotel, daily centre and house for bands. In this way, the town makes sure young people can participate in the economic, social and cultural life in different ways.

During the era of socialism, Velenje not only nurtured social development, but also managed to establish an effective and innovative economy. The driving force of development were mostly the coal mine and Gorenje, which continue to assume the role to this day. A while ago, another important “player” was the Vegrad construction company, which did not manage to withstand the recent global economic crisis. The coal mine was the testing grounds for trying the most recent techniques of lignite excavation in Europe. It had close ties with foreign companies and constantly invested in improvements and development.

Despite the prevailing positive attitude to the socialist past and many positive manifestations in the present, the interviews also revealed some hidden/alternative aspects that shine a different light on socialism. Two of the hidden or under-represented narratives in Velenje’s public discourse relate to its formation and town construction. The first has to do with the shock work and the collective work actions and the other relates to the injustices that happened due to the

loss of land due to the ground sinking and/or the town expansion. The third narrative has to do with the (potential) political ideologization.

The science and culture representative believes that shock work undoubtedly served the role of a social connector that people were proud and glad to do. However, we must be aware that, according to many testimonies, this kind of work was a sort of “volunteering must”, as it helped people qualify for workers’ and social benefits (for example, qualifying for an apartment). The interviewee also stresses that Velenje was “built” mostly by miners by digging for coal and not just by Nestl Žgank (one of the founders of the post-war town, coal mine director and later mayor, while also a prominent member of the communist party) and other political big-wigs who often brag about this. They state that the celebrations, like the one when the city centre was opened in 1959, have been idealized today. The interviews with people who attended them revealed that they remember them very briefly and have therefore not been particularly imprinted into the collective memory. The processes of land expropriation after the ground started sinking due to mining activities and/or town expansion were jointly headed by the coal mine and the municipality. According to the representative of science and culture, one of the greater mistakes of the town’s authorities is that history has always been placed in the service of politics and ideology. The political elite was said to be truly and honestly building socialism and was very proud of it. However, there was also a lot of succumbing to ideological schemes and political blindness. The interviewee believed that one of the greatest obstacles that can threaten the future development model is the intertwining of politics with ideology or political ideologization stemming from the socialist period. The political elite in Velenje is also said to be fearful of intelligentsia, especially those who are critical about the authority’s activities, and is said to surround itself with obedient people. Interviewees from the economic area are mostly politically neutral, but confess that the right political affiliation (the Social Democrats party, the legal successor of the League of Communists of Slovenia, which has successively won the majority in the city council since 1993) can expedite certain interests more efficiently.

The period after Slovenia’s independence was marked by two milestones that affected the changed developmental model of the city. The first relates to the collapse of communism and introduction of neoliberalism, which affected the gradual shift in values. There is the danger that the principles of tolerance, multiculturalism, solidarity and social equality on which the town was founded and developed are fading due to the increasing stressing of individualism, competitiveness, decentralized authority, as well as a shrinking public administration and deregulation, liberalization and privatization of the economy. The other milestone, stemming from the late 1980s, is represented by the ecological revolts as the consequence of the environmental degradation. The latter caused a shift in mentality and the realization that the Velenje’s environment has limited capabilities and affects the quality of life. The milestone also has to do with looking for alternative economic opportunities with the increasingly rapid decline of coal mining.

The increasingly stronger flow of a capitalist mentality after the collapse of socialism was confirmed by a representative of the city authorities. Representatives of civil society were sure people in Velenje used to be more connected and prone to solidarity. Despite this, they believe there is still a lot of connectedness and collaboration, which they believe is the consequence of past socialism. They elaborate, saying the “common man” was taken care of in socialist times by receiving large, spacious and bright apartments, holidays and jobs. Apartments from the socialist era greatly exceed the standards of miners’ apartments from before and soon after

World War II in size, brightness and equipment. A quality living environment was already an important developmental paradigm in socialism; the focus was placed mostly on residential construction, as well as health facilities, education and recreation. This was the authorities' way of improving the miners' living conditions, who would spend a lot of time underground. After heavy pollution and mass public demonstrations in the late 1980s, these kinds of efforts were increased until they reached a very high level, which is a special source of pride in the town. In terms of its title as a green town, Velenje no longer aims to attract environmentally questionable companies and the majority of the most important municipal projects are directed on the environment and achieving a higher quality of life. In this way, the main municipal projects are directed towards improving the air quality, energy restoration of buildings, remote heating, providing free public transport, renovating the old town centre, communal infrastructure, managing the lakes and their surrounding areas and establishing cycling infrastructure. Improving the quality of living environment not only has a positive impact on the well-being of the inhabitants, but also on the development of tourism, which can help to diversify economic activities. Many interviewees are very much in favour of tourism development with a beach and lake-side activities and a rich cultural life.

According to interviewee testimonies, the loss of fundamental socialist values in the transitional period has been most obvious in the fracturing of once strong ties between 1) indigenous inhabitants and newcomers, 2) the older and younger sections of the population and 3) between foreign/non-local owners or managers of companies and the local community. According to some interviewees, the tensions between the indigenous inhabitants and newcomers largely stem from the formers' perception that the newcomers are privy to a disproportionate share of social benefits. Most interviewees believe the problem relates mostly to the modern integration of an increasing number of Albanian-speaking immigrants, who also speak a "different" language. According to the representative of science and culture, the newly immigrated Albanians seem inaccessible, unorganized, operate as closed groups, do not speak Slovenian and are a burden to their fellow pupils and teachers. The blame for this seemingly lies with the state that does not have any implemented integration policy and puts the responsibility on the shoulders of the municipalities and non-governmental organizations. Despite numerous negative and worried views on this topic, the representative of the civil society presented a more encouraging view by presenting a successful project that integrated Albanian women about which the local inhabitants foster quite a few stereotypes. Certain social tensions have recently also been arising between the older and the younger population, which threatens the traditionally strong intergenerational dialogue. According to city officials, older people who have helped build the town and also gotten workers' and social rights with shock work are very sensitive if these won rights are tried to be in any way trampled or they believe the structure or contents in the town are handled inappropriately. Older people believe the younger generations often have not had the right attitude about it, especially those who are not that well educated about the founding and history of the town. The final recognized social tension relates to foreign/non-local owners or managers of larger industrial companies and the local community. This conflict did not exist in the past, as the connection between the economy and the local community was once very strong. Until recently, the helm of industrial giants was always held by locals who would manage companies while also caring for the quality of life in the town. With the arrival of new owners or managers from other parts of Slovenia or even abroad, the role and importance of the companies' social responsibility is diminished, especially when it comes to environment

restoration and education development. In terms of environment restoration, municipal officials miss companies' compensation for the environmental degradation, which could be used to preserve and increase the inhabitants' quality of life. This is them perceiving a "stepmotherly attitude of the state to our community." The same goes for the development of educational programs.

The town is aware that after the coal mine has been closed in about 50 years, the conditions will be significantly different. There have also been developmental changes in the operations of Gorenje, which was bought by the Chinese company Hisense in 2018. The interviewees stress that Velenje must prepare for long-term restructuring, industry modernization (industry 4.0) and the arrival of other companies that will in time become the main employer in the Šalek Valley. The municipality is trying different ways of setting up developmental models to diversify the economic foundations. This is being done primarily by establishing the appropriate conditions to strengthen the economy, especially by encouraging small and medium-sized companies and attracting foreign investments. The SAŠA Incubator plays a major role in establishing the right conditions for further economic development, as they have been supporting the activities of numerous small and medium-sized companies. Interviewees from the economy in general believe that the municipal administration is in favour of creating new jobs in these new companies, which would decrease the dependence on the existing old companies, such as the coal mine and Gorenje. Despite this, most of the interviewees think all of this is about 10–15 years too late. Among the practical developmental limitations of economy restructuring, the entrepreneurs most often mentioned the lack of space for economic activities and lots for building new industrial facilities. Some small developing companies are said to have moved from Velenje elsewhere due to this. In terms of the contents, the interviewees' answers give the impression that Velenje's future is somewhere in green energy and industry, which indicates a desire to move away from the developmental model that led to this "environmental bomb" in the late 1980s. This also corresponds with the founding of the town itself, which has been designated "a town in a park", "garden city" and "green town". In connection to that, Velenje is aware of the meaning of preserving and developing the engineering knowledge that has accumulated in the town over the decades. Representatives in science and culture believe this knowledge should be developed in close collaboration with the educational institutions. This would be a good way to refocus from the classical processing industry with a small added value to high technology. Among the new opportunities of future economic development, the only branch expressly mentioned by the interviewees was tourism, of which they are largely in favour. In addition to the right staff, the future development of tourism will require constructing the right tourist infrastructure. An environmentally sustainable economic development and constructing the right infrastructure are in accordance with the town's main wish to create a more high-quality living environment. Aside from the municipal officials, the biggest proponents here were economists, who stress that Velenje is not a typical mining town and that the town may have the wrong reputation. They stress that Velenje is probably the best maintained mining town in Europe; it is not dirty, it is clean; it is not dark, but bright. They believe the town is distinguished by a good quality and low service prices. They also stress the safety, proximity to nature, good accessibility inside the town and options for free exercise, as well as the free public transportation. The interviewees from small, especially start-up companies stress that the good quality of the living environment is what makes them want to live in Velenje on a permanent basis and not move elsewhere, especially not abroad.

Despite the high awareness of the limited options regarding the existing industry and the increasingly pressing need for restructuring the economy, there is a certain noticeable lack of a more specific developmental vision in the town. The town authorities are aware that the transformation process for establishing the town's identity in the 21st century is far from complete. Interviewees from small companies think that the municipality isn't active enough in attracting international companies from branches other than Gorenje. A concrete example was the chemical industry. Some economists also mention that the management of large companies, such as Gorenje, is more interested in saving their current positions and high salaries than focusing on long-term restructuring.

The miners' mentality is also partly connected with the lack of appropriate institutions of higher education, a fact, particularly stressed by the economists. Many of the interviewees often mentioned Velenje's poor reputation among the important negative factors impacting future urban development, which is preventing the town from being very recognizable in the general mind set of Slovenians despite its special features and successful projects. Interviewees from science and culture attribute this characteristic to a lack of knowledge, ignorance, negative media reporting, environmental strains, as well as the poor image of coal mining towns in general. In addition to the tourist infrastructure, another obstacle in the development of Velenje is the construction of a motorway, the so-called 3rd developmental axis, which would connect the Šalek Valley with the highway network. The interviewees think this would have positive effects on the economy, tourism, as well as the quality of life for the locals. This will also represent a big challenge in itself. With this issue in mind, the opinion of an interviewee from a small company is very telling, who said that the projected route of the motorway through Velenje is harmful for the planned lake-side sustainable tourism, which is said to be the main topic in the municipality, entrepreneurs and locals. The motorway will run along the only undeveloped area near the Velenje Lake, immediately along Šalek Lake, cutting the town off from the lakes. It will have a negative effect on the natural environment and encourage the development of daily mass tourism, which is based on individual mobility with cars instead of multi-day tourism.

The results show that the collective memory is what is keeping socialism in a positive light, especially from the viewpoint of the values that once strengthened social cohesion and built an effective and innovative economy. These are values of shock work, comradeship, equality, multiculturalism, mutual respect and solidarity. These values continue to persist to a large degree today and have been transferred to modern sociocultural practices, such as the institutionalization of certain volunteering activities and the non-governmental sector and municipal support to services and social activities. Especially the older generation that experienced socialism to a greater degree in their youth exhibit a nostalgic propensity to times gone by, while the youth carry on in the culture of a very active social engagement. The hidden narratives relate to the founding of the town itself, when injustice occurred to certain sectors of the population and as the ground sunk and/or the town spread and to the interpretation that the shock work was not entirely of a volunteer nature. These stories can be related to the totalitarian style of ruling at the time. One of the hidden narratives includes political ideologization, rooted in an undemocratic past and still present in the entanglement of politics with ideological questions and an overpoliticization of social life, as well as a fear or intelligentsia.

In addition to the changes in socioeconomic arrangements, the demise of socialism also brought challenges in environmentalism, as the intense industrialization had caused a degradation of the environment and negative effects on the quality of the living environment. The transition

period was therefore characterized by the introduction of the Western capitalist mentality, which had numerous positive effects on the economy and the environment, but it also affected the disintegration of once stronger social ties. The challenges in this area are illustrated in the tensions between various social groups, such as the indigenous inhabitants versus newcomers (especially newer Albanian-speaking immigrants), the older versus the younger generation (weakening of intergenerational dialogue) and foreign/non-local industrialists versus the local community. These challenges point to weakened socialist values on which the town was founded. The conflicts are mainly triggered by the increasing intolerance to the immigrants and a lack of social responsibility from the companies.

Velenje's future development is focused mainly on restructuring of economy, industry modernization and the arrival of other companies, strengthening green energy and industry, tourism development and a continued establishment of a quality living environment. This could be significantly aided by the establishment of higher education institutions and attracting a more qualified work force, which would affect changing/expelling of the "miners" mentality and improving the town's reputation. Another important contribution to urban development would also be the improvement of the traffic accessibility, which is supposed to bring the town closer to national and international developmental currents.

The social-cultural specifics of Velenje that could be used to generate social and institutional innovations are undoubtedly the aforementioned positive values of socialism and industrialism. The results of the interviews show that the inhabitants are proud of the achievements of socialism and industrial tradition. They are aware of the positive aspects of past development that they continue to preserve and develop to this day, albeit in an adapted form. They are also aware of its frailty, which is influenced by neoliberalism and tends to lose significance in some cases and represents the main challenge for the future development of the town.

7. Conclusion

How are the above-mentioned case study towns, their trajectories, and narratives connected to a broader social context? What are the common features of the towns? Although histories and geographical and cultural contexts differ significantly, three essential themes can be conceptualize. The first is representing past as positive and successful era. Each case study town and its residents interpreted certain period in history good and prosperous. On the other hand, however, the significant differences between the residents exists. Especially, the older age groups who had personal memories often saw the past better compared to present. In contrast, many younger residents interpreted towns' histories differently. From the point of view of the social distinction, the past events and places are present for the younger generations only through stories, whereas for the older generations they are subjectively experienced (Paasi 1991, 239). Positive highlighting of the past can also be interpreted through urban landscapes. In other words, on what symbols, monuments and buildings each town emphasize, they also point out certain periods of the history and positive features that the eras contain, while leaving some others invisible. Thus, certain symbols, monuments, and buildings can be interpreted as sites of memory. In this context, they are a channel through which one can find the 'real' and authentic past. Because there is only one 'real' past, remembering is also political.

Pierre Nora (1989) was conscious of the political aspect of memory. For him, monuments, memorials, and commemorative rituals were the sites through which memory narratives were articulated (Drozdowski 2014, 67). Therefore, he focused his attention on the national side of lieux de mémoire, asking how certain sites became 'landmarks of a remembered geography and history' (cf. Johnson 2002, 294). Danielle Drozdowski has emphasised that the nation's past is always someone's version of it. The (geo)politics of memory therefore relates to the question of who gets what and how, and in what circumstances the interpretation of history is the most perceptible. Therefore, as Drozdowski (2014, 67) pointed out, 'memory is a tool for those in power, used to decide what is represented materially, determine how such material culture is portrayed, and influence which memories are deemed acceptable for public discussion'. Consequently, when people remember and commemorate, they do it selectively, so only certain fixed issues are brought into light. This occurs through those in power, because they decide what and how to remember (Said 2000, 179; Lehtonen 2005, 51–52).

Second issue that highlighted the case study towns was history of decay. Every town has more or less faced the problems. Although the dominant narratives often describe the towns' transition period in negative shades, development is not straightforward. Positive layers are found in every town, which is why the transition phase of the towns is not structured solely as a decadence, crime, high unemployment or social problems. As the local narratives described, transition of the towns has also indicated a remarkable clean-up of the environment, the emergence of new industries and the replacement of old rigid structures with new flexible formations. In addition, local narratives highlighted the positive aspects of the towns, such as smallness, spaciousness, environmental cleanliness and friendliness for the families with children. These descriptions create a completely different description of the case study towns than the official, dominant narratives suggest. Similarly, Rodriguez-Pose's (2018) has pointed out the significance of the small and medium-sized towns. According to him, many old European industrial territories have been subject to dramatic changes. Not only in Europe, but also in the United States, such areas have been called 'flyover country' or 'rustbelts'. These shrinking areas have

been seen as ‘places that don’t matter’, as Rodriguez-Pose (2018, 192-196) has stated. But unlike the prevailing viewpoint, according to him such places have played a significant role in the rise of populism and the challenge of the dominant policy. Thus, it is essential in this context to understand the role of local, alternative narratives in relation with the current developmental path and the decay. Although it is undoubtedly clear that the towns discussed in this report have encountered significant problems, their development has not been exclusively negative. Following the remarks of Rodriguez-Pose (2018), the official policy has been generally blind ‘places that don’t matter’.

The third feature that is common the case study towns is the fear of changes and growth. Although there have been significant positive changes in many towns, the former practices are often preferred. In particular, the official viewpoint is based on old conventions, and as a result, experimenting with new practices is halfway. The question is on towns’ culture and their history. The fear of growth and changes in this context can be interpreted through the concept of provincialism. As Ari Lehtinen (2006, 201–210) has highlighted, referring the geographer J. Nicholas Entrikin, provincialism is strongly connected to local community place that counters mobile tendencies of modern society. Additionally, provincialism works on the terms of the centers why the provinces are seen as backward and lagging the general development. Following this perspective, the provinces not only hang on the past but also admit and submit to the development that has been defined by the centers. At the same time, provincialism appears to be wishful thinking in which it is firmly hoped that macro-scale negative changes would not affect the provinces (Lehtinen 2006, 201–210; Lehtinen 2013).

In practice, this is reflected in the fact that the experiments are not in the same proportion in small towns as in the large cities. It is not just a lack of courage but also resources. Fear of change is often represented as a resistance to change that has recently been linked to the rise of populism. Recently, populism has concentrated on territories that have been suffered long-term declines. This has been appeared on the old, shrinking industrial areas (McCann 2016; Rodriguez-Pose 2018, 196–199). Rodriguez-Pose (2018, 199-200) points out four reason why the rise of populism has not been noticed: ‘1) looking at the wrong types of negative externalities, 2) ignoring one important form of inequality, 3) overestimating the capacity and willingness of individuals to move, and 4) overlooking or dismissing the economic potential of many lagging-behind areas.’ In general, according to him, the rapid rise of populism reflects problems in the current political and economic system.

In all, the above-mentioned observations are linked to the identities and development efforts of small and medium-sized industrial towns. Who, and under what conditions, is defining the future of these kinds of towns? At the same time, one should also consider the relationship between local and dominant narratives. The marketing of towns and place branding is connected to the creation of new kinds of identity that is not always linked with the histories of towns and their development. Many towns has to act within the frames that has been produced by external actors.

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