



# Small and medium-sized towns as un-identified real objects: opening the black box

Urban Policy - Challenges, Experiences, Ideas

26.06.2013, Warsaw



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# Consortium

## Partners

KU Leuven – Belgium (*Lead partner*)

University of the West of England – UK

Rovira i Virgili University – Spain

Charles University in Prague – Czech Republic

Université François-Rabelais de Tours - France

## Case study teams

Officina Territorio – Italy

Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden

Polytiamos – Cyprus

University of Ljubljana - Slovenia

Polish Academy of Sciences - Poland



# Project Framework

## TOWN research project

Focus on:

- **the role of Small and Medium-sized towns (SMSTs)** in their functional context  
(knowledge production)
- **their potentialities** for promoting territorial cohesion in Europe  
(evidence-based policy recommendations)





# TOWN?

Brunet's (1997) 'unidentified real objects'?



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**Mark Easton**

Home editor

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## The unbearable sadness of the Welsh valleys

COMMENTS (21)



WALES NEWS SERVICE

Many parts of the UK have suffered from the decline of heavy industry, but the Welsh valleys are a grim emblem of the of work can create, writes Mark Easton for

**More from Mark**

ews/correspondents/markeaston



## Where to start from?

ESPON tender (in line with DG Regio – OECD):

- Towns: settlements with 5-50,000 inhabitants

What do we know/suspect?

- differing **functional roles** (manufacturing, tourism, agriculture, service provisions, etc)
- **types of spatial organisation of settlements** (autonomous, networked, within metropolitan area/urban regions);
- **regional types** (urbanised, rural, island, mountain areas, coastal, etc.) and macro-regional / national characteristics;
- types of **local government systems** and **national policies** towards SMSTs





Terms	Definitions	Distinctive characteristics	Criteria
<b>Urban settlement (morphological definition)</b>	Built up area (area with urban physical characteristics) of a minimum population size	Concentration of buildings (distinction from open spaces) and population (above minimal threshold)	Compact build-up area Distance between settlements and buildings Population Density of urbanised area
<b>Urban municipality (administrative definition)</b>	Settlement with urban administrative status	Local government with urban administrative duties and responsibilities and territory / boundary containing urban settlements	Local government administrative functions Historical attribution
<b>Urban center / urban core (functional definition)</b>	Urban settlement (municipality) with concentration of jobs, services and other urban functions	Role of centre for region due to concentration of jobs and other urban functions attracting commuters and visitors	Population Jobs Other urban functions Commuting Centrality
<b>Urban functional region (functional definition)</b>	Larger area with functional relationship with one or more urban cores	Gravitational area of jobs, services and other functions located in urban core(s)	Access to jobs and services Home-work commuting Home-service commuting

# What is a small and medium sized town?

Morphological  
interpretation



Functional  
interpretation

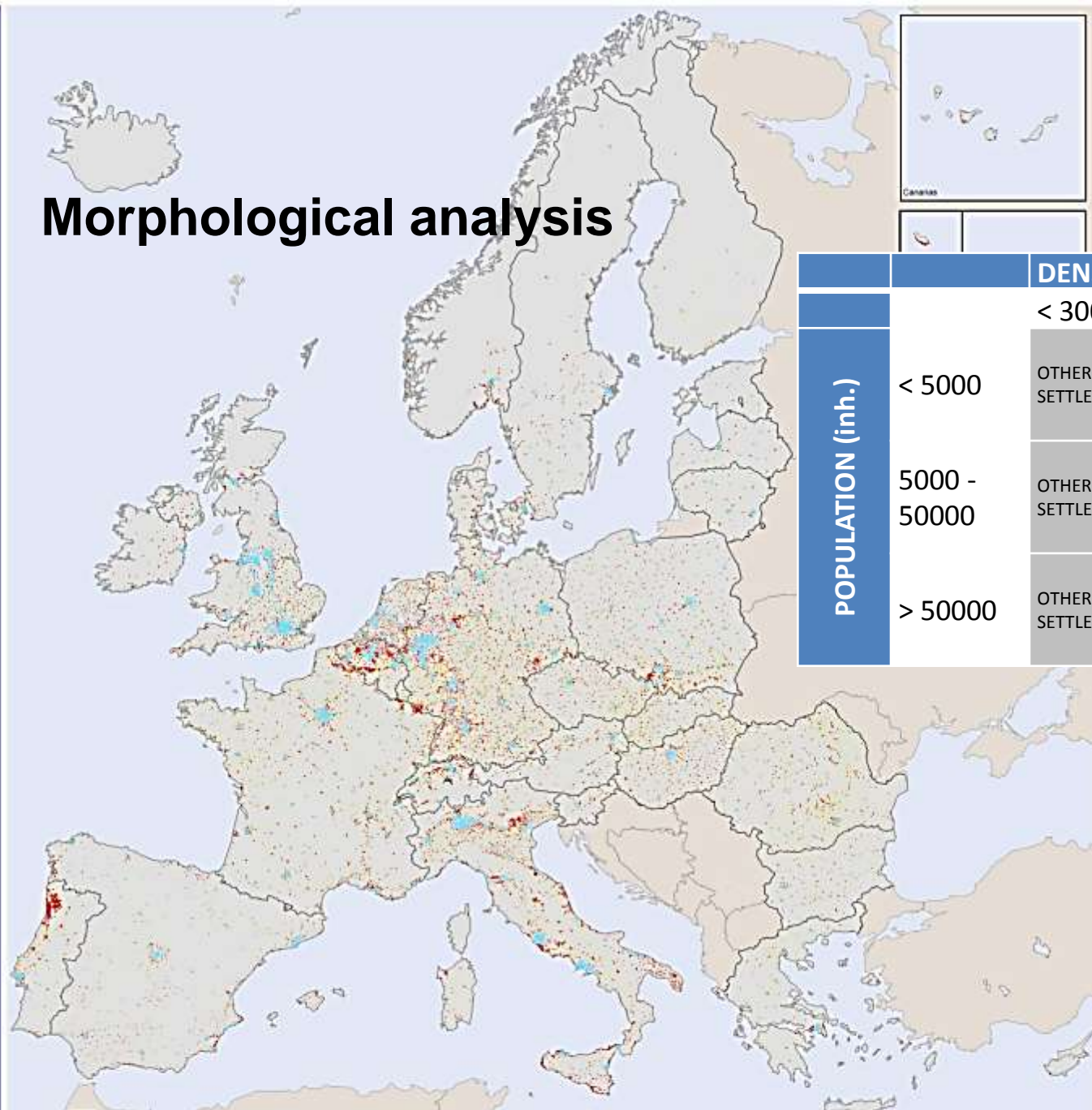


Administrative  
interpretation





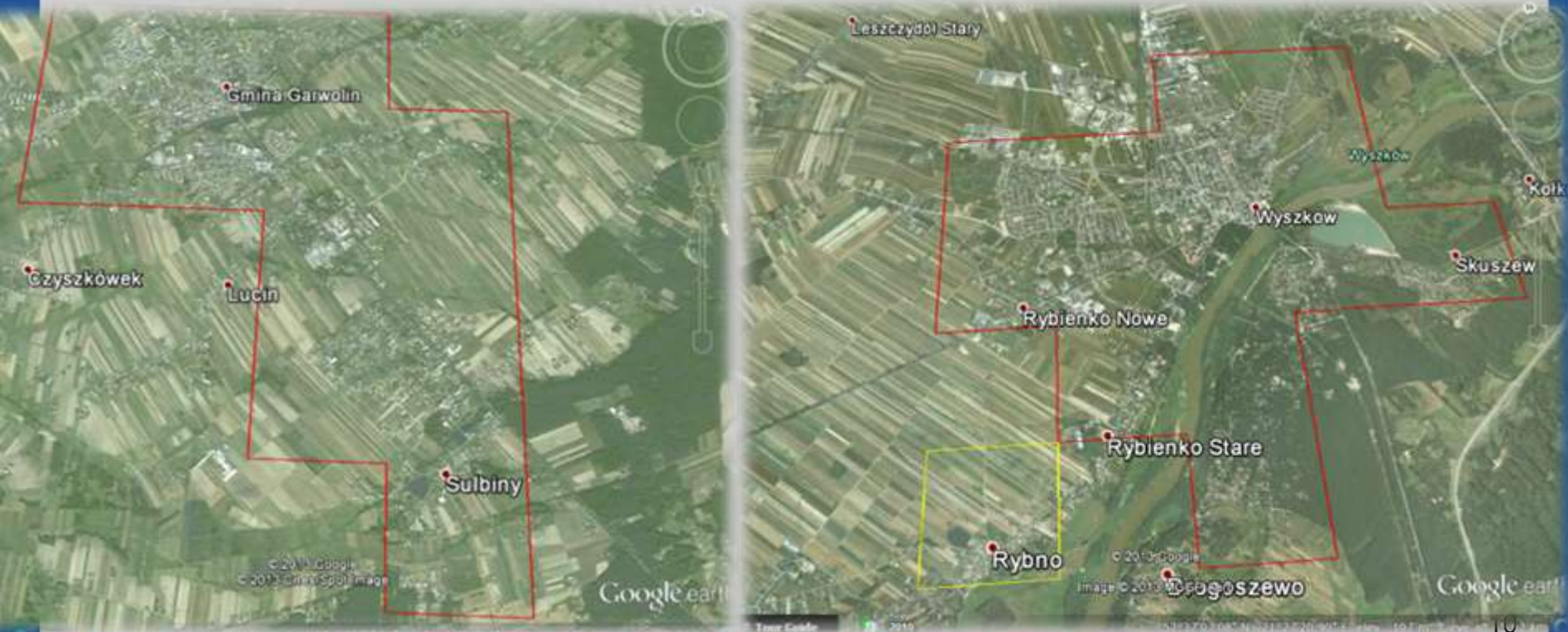
# Morphological analysis



		DENSITY (inh. / kmq)		
		< 300	300 - 1500	> 1500
POPULATION (inh.)	< 5000	OTHER SETTLEMENTS	VST	VST
	5000 - 50000	OTHER SETTLEMENTS	SMST	SMST
	> 50000	OTHER SETTLEMENTS	large SMST	HDUC



## Small and medium-sized towns



~8,350 urban settlements can be classified as SMSTs  
~70,000 urban settlements can be classified as Very  
Small Towns  
(below the 5.000 inhabitant threshold)

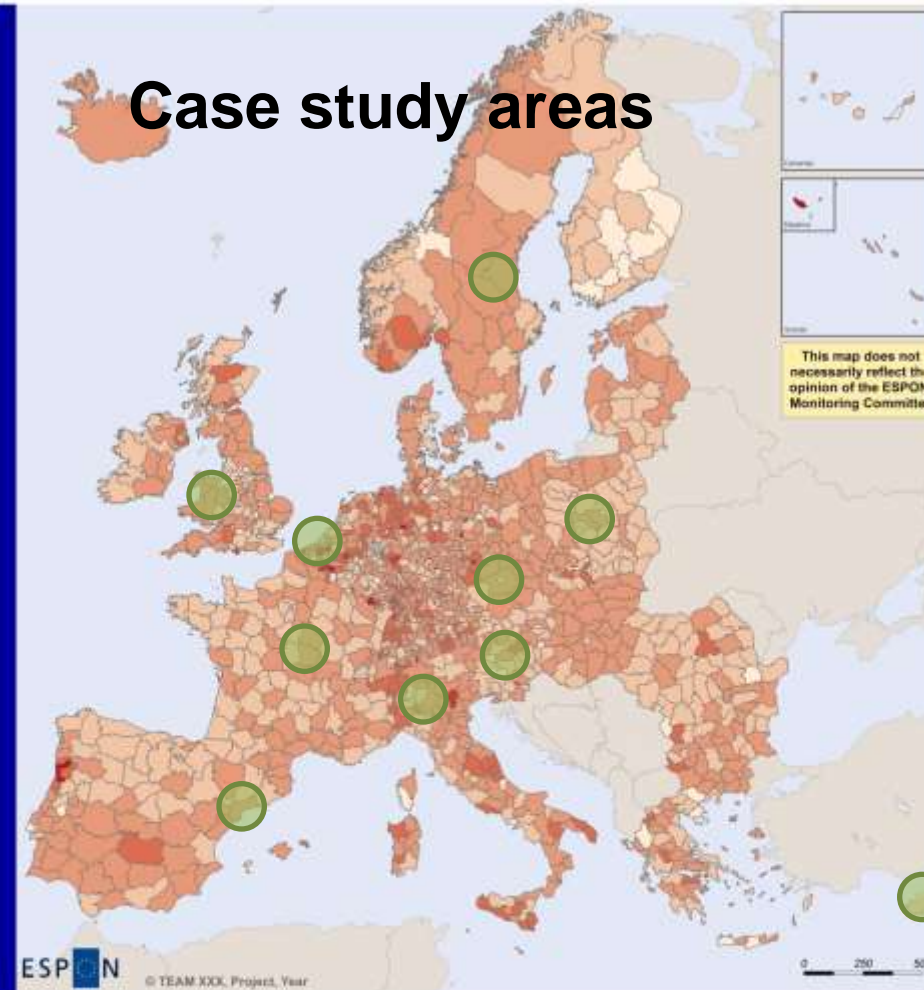
SMST: about 27% of EU population

Very Small Towns: 19% of EU population





## Case study areas

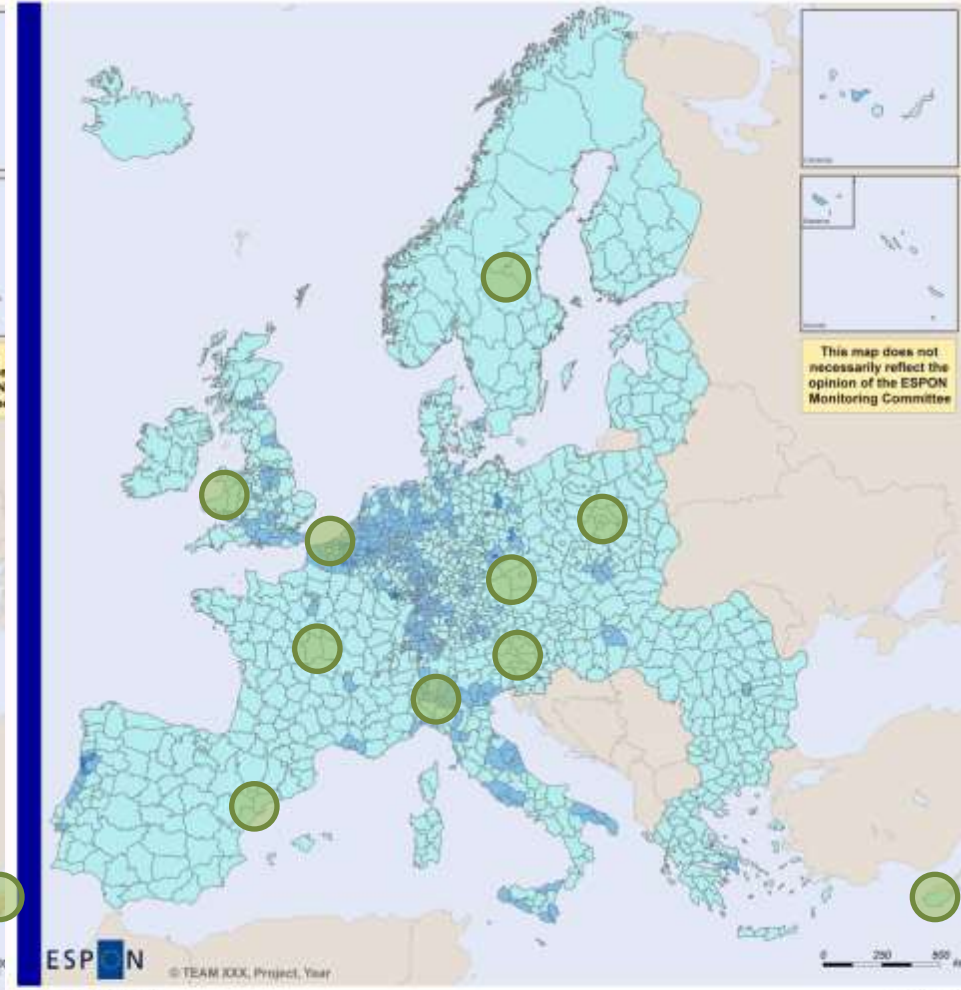


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Population living in SMSTs/population NUTS3

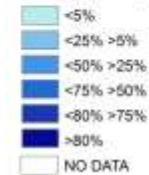


Regional level: NUTS3  
Source: Own elaboration on EUROSTAT data  
Origin of data: EUROSTAT  
Authors: F. Brandstetter, A. P. Russo, D. Serrano Gini  
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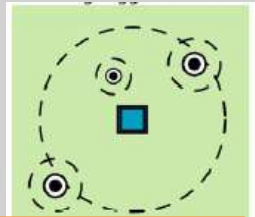
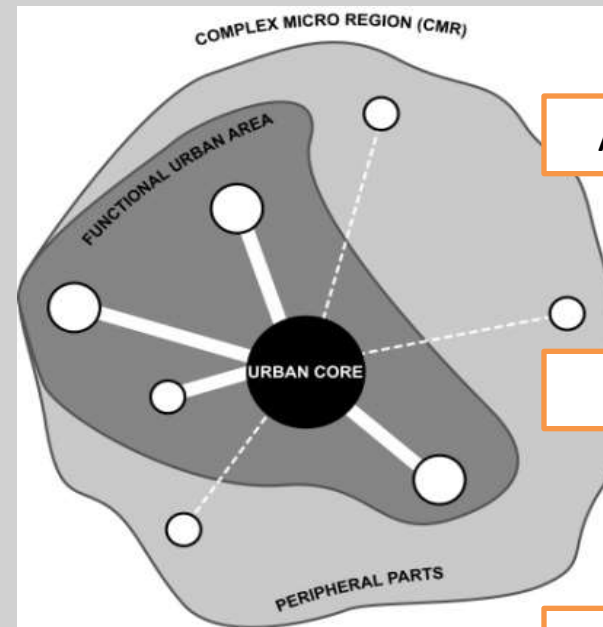
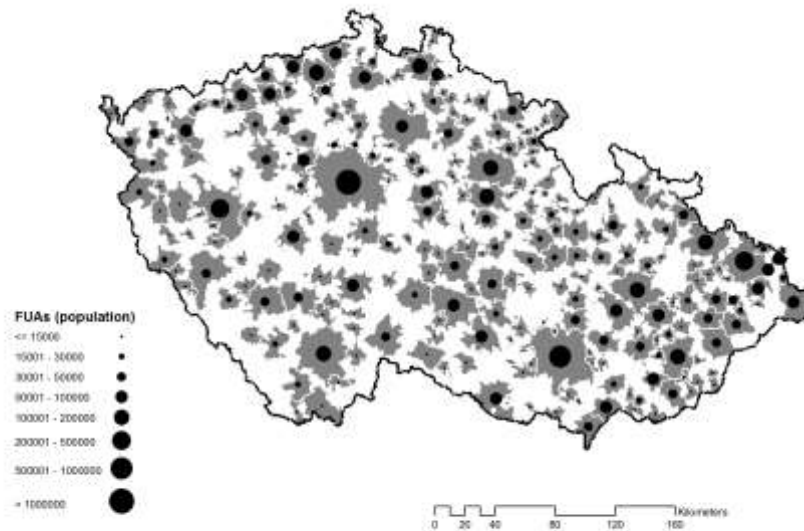
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Area occupied by SMSTs/area NUTS3

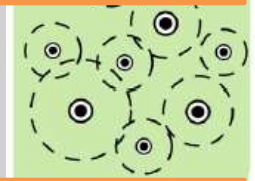


Regional level: NUTS3  
Source: Own elaboration on EUROSTAT data  
Origin of data: EUROSTAT/LFS data  
Authors: F. Brandstetter, A. P. Russo, D. Serrano Gini  
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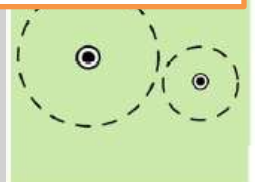
# Functional analysis



Agglomerated

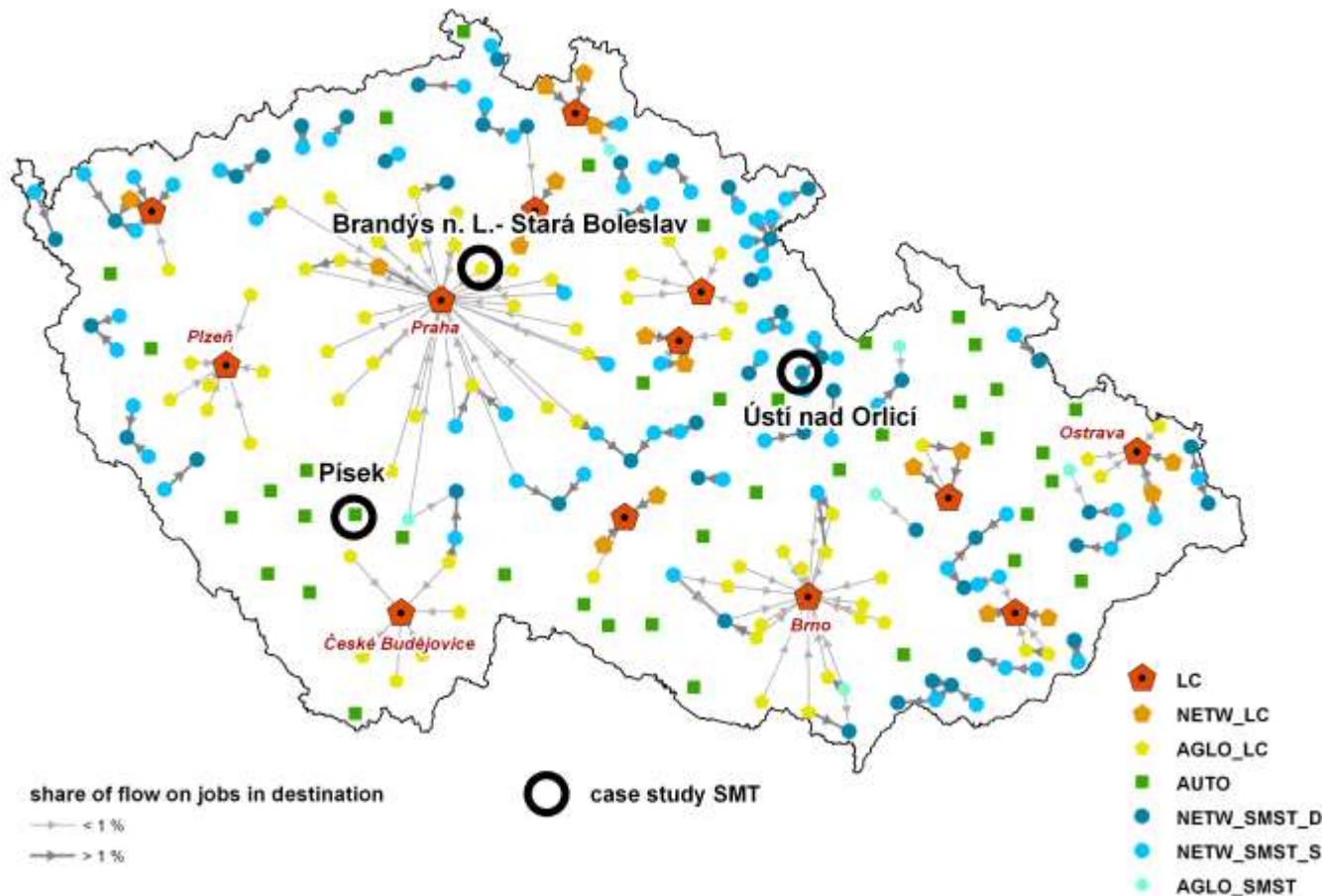


Networked



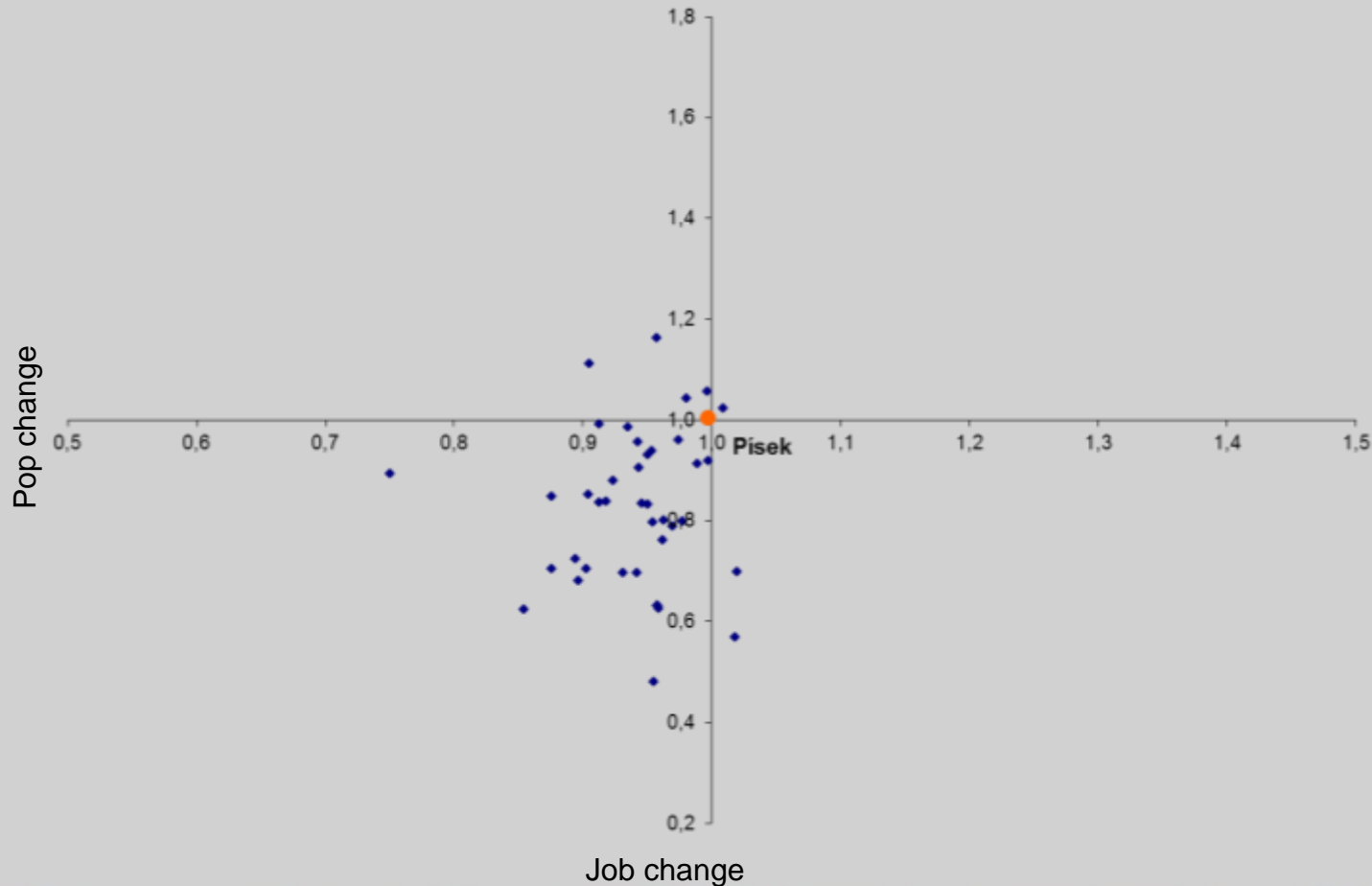
Isolated

# Czech case studies - overview

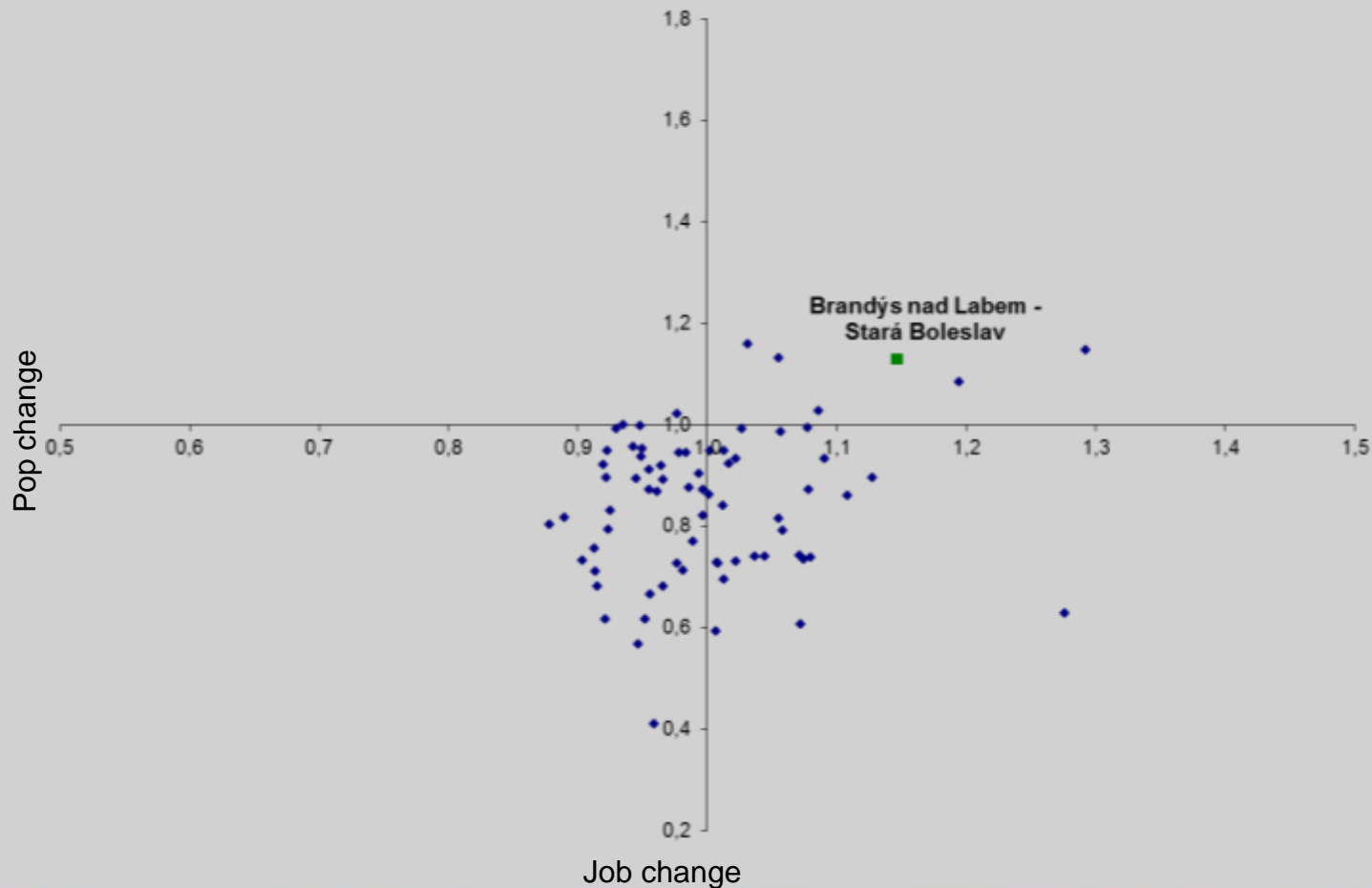




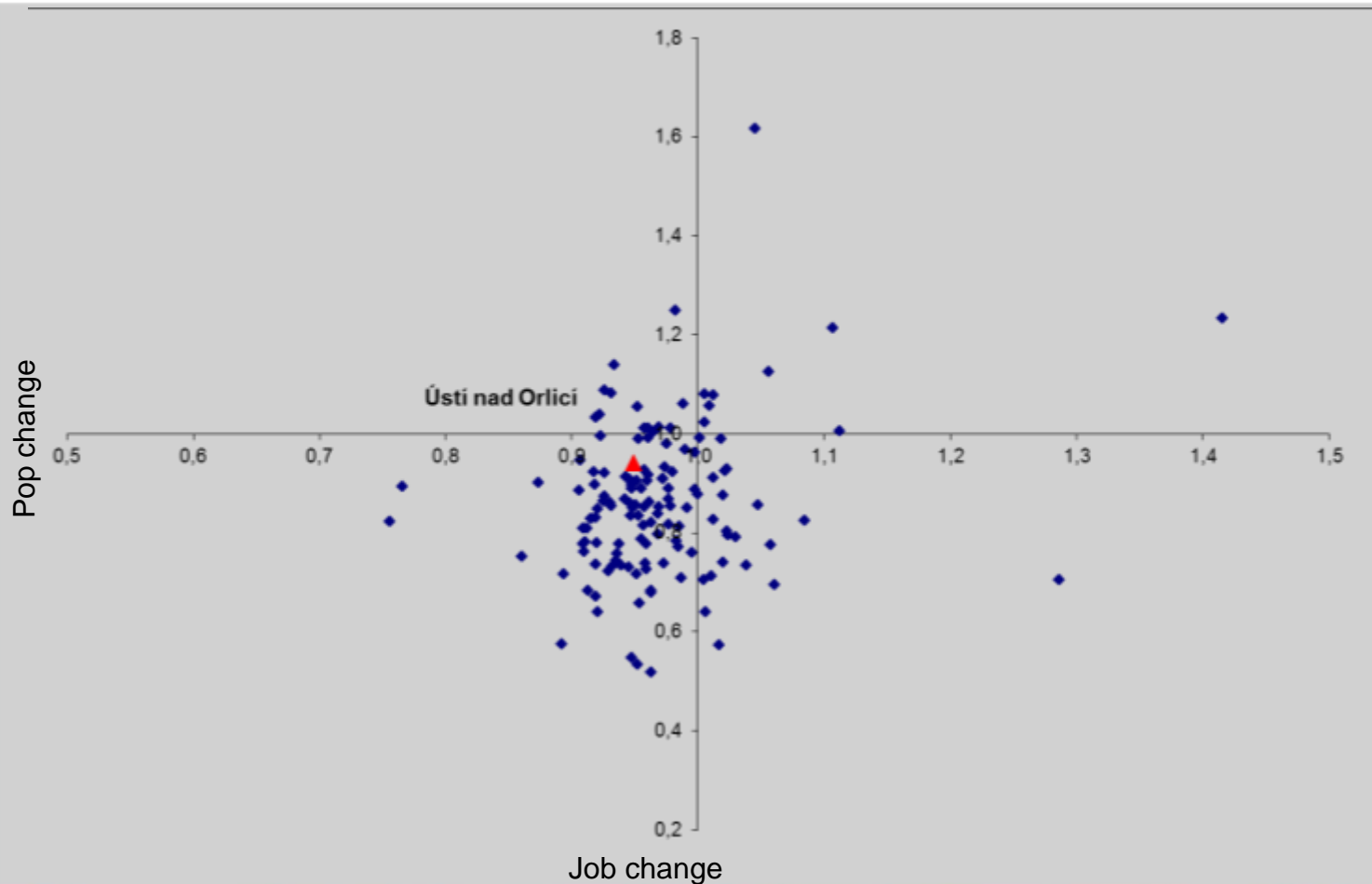
# Autonomous towns 2001-2011



# Agglomerated towns 2001-2011



# Networked towns 2001-2011





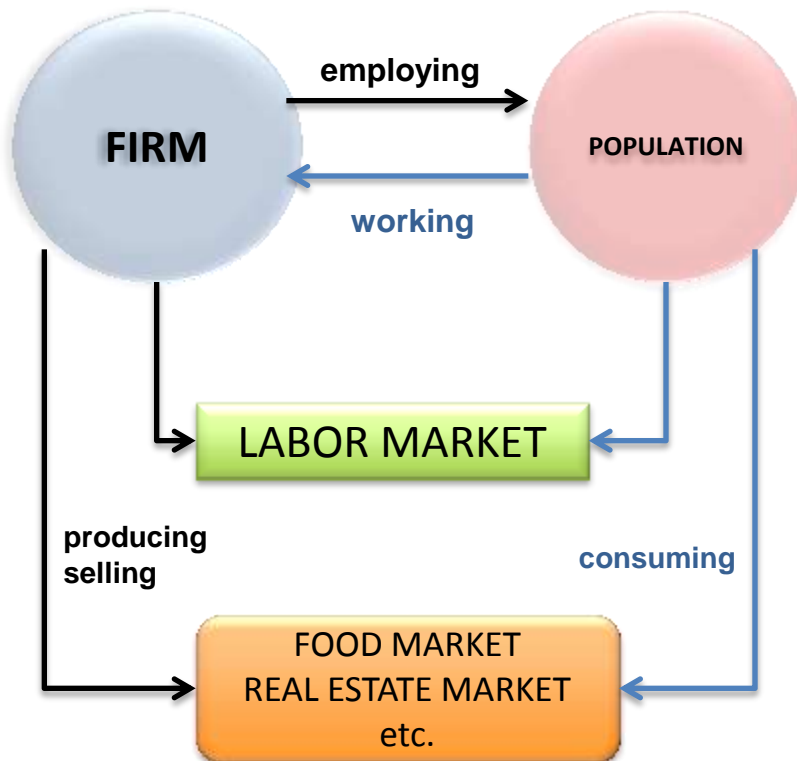
# Trends and observations

- Among the variety of cases, some early trends about SMST:
  - **Agglomerated towns**  
gain importance (borrowing-size effects) vs. attraction of metropolitan systems (lending-size effects)
  - **Isolated towns**  
Important role for the rural area. They rely on (public) services and are more vulnerable to global effects
  - **Networked towns**  
When connected, better performances through differentiation of roles and critical mass at wider scale (network) - they may lose importance due to internal redistributions or competition among networked towns

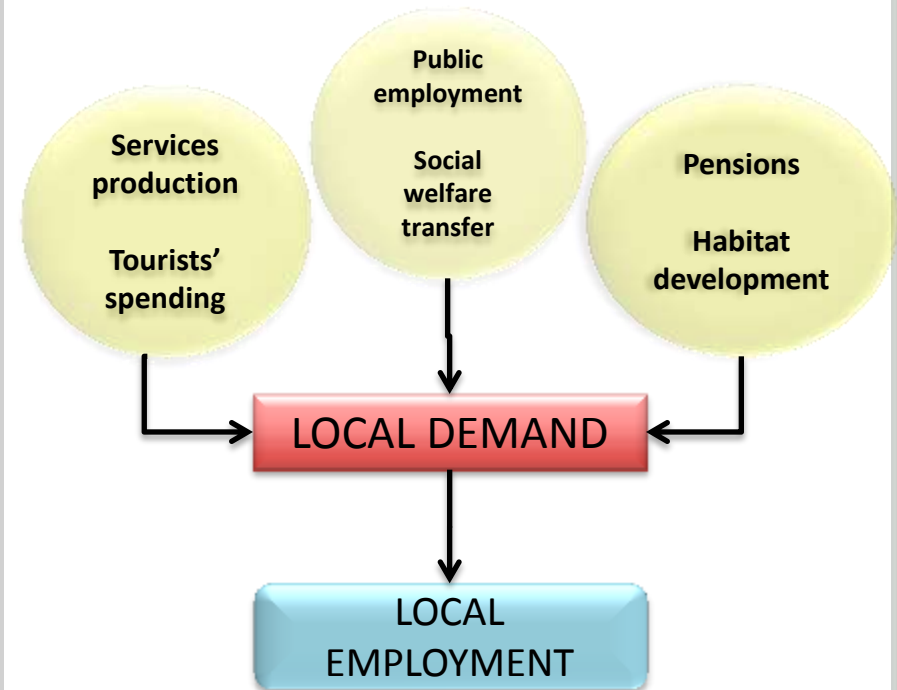


# Socio-economic profiles

## PRODUCTIVE ECONOMY



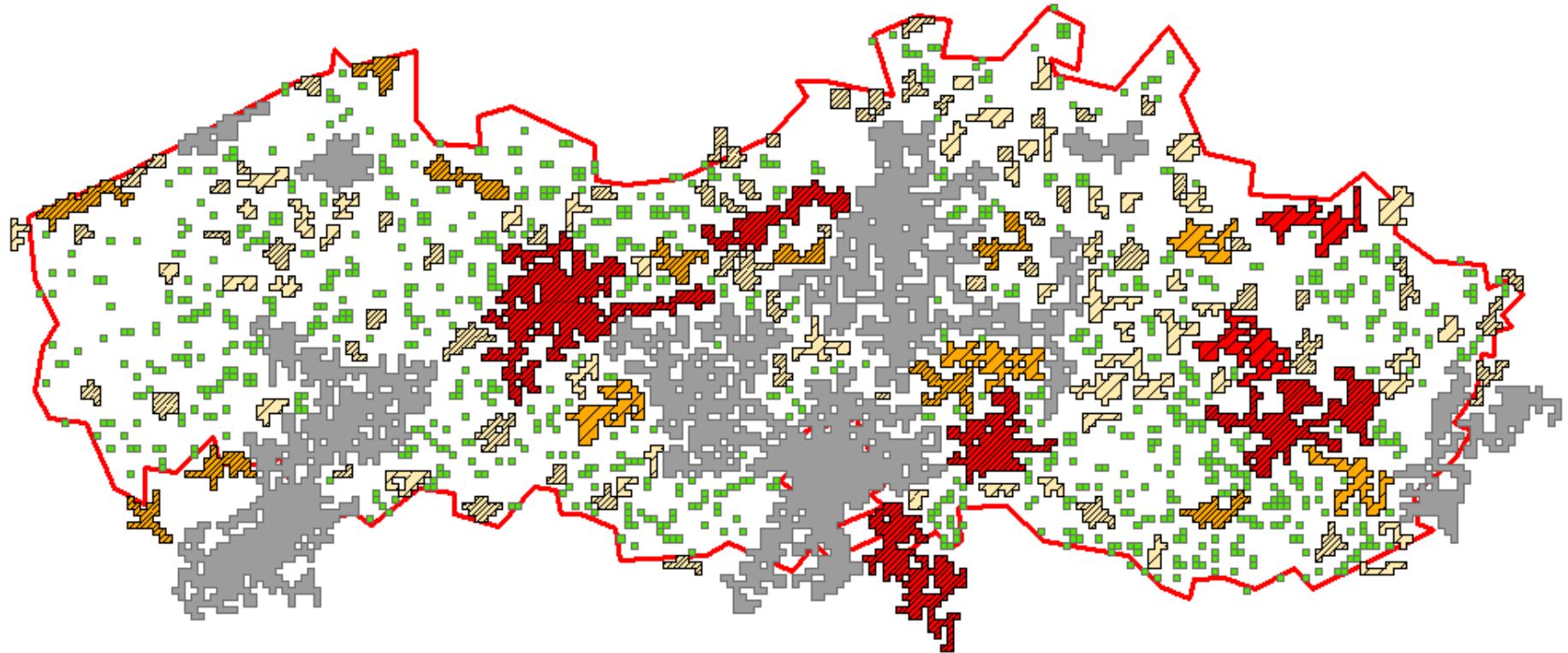
## RESIDENTIAL ECONOMY



Attract the investment and spend locally



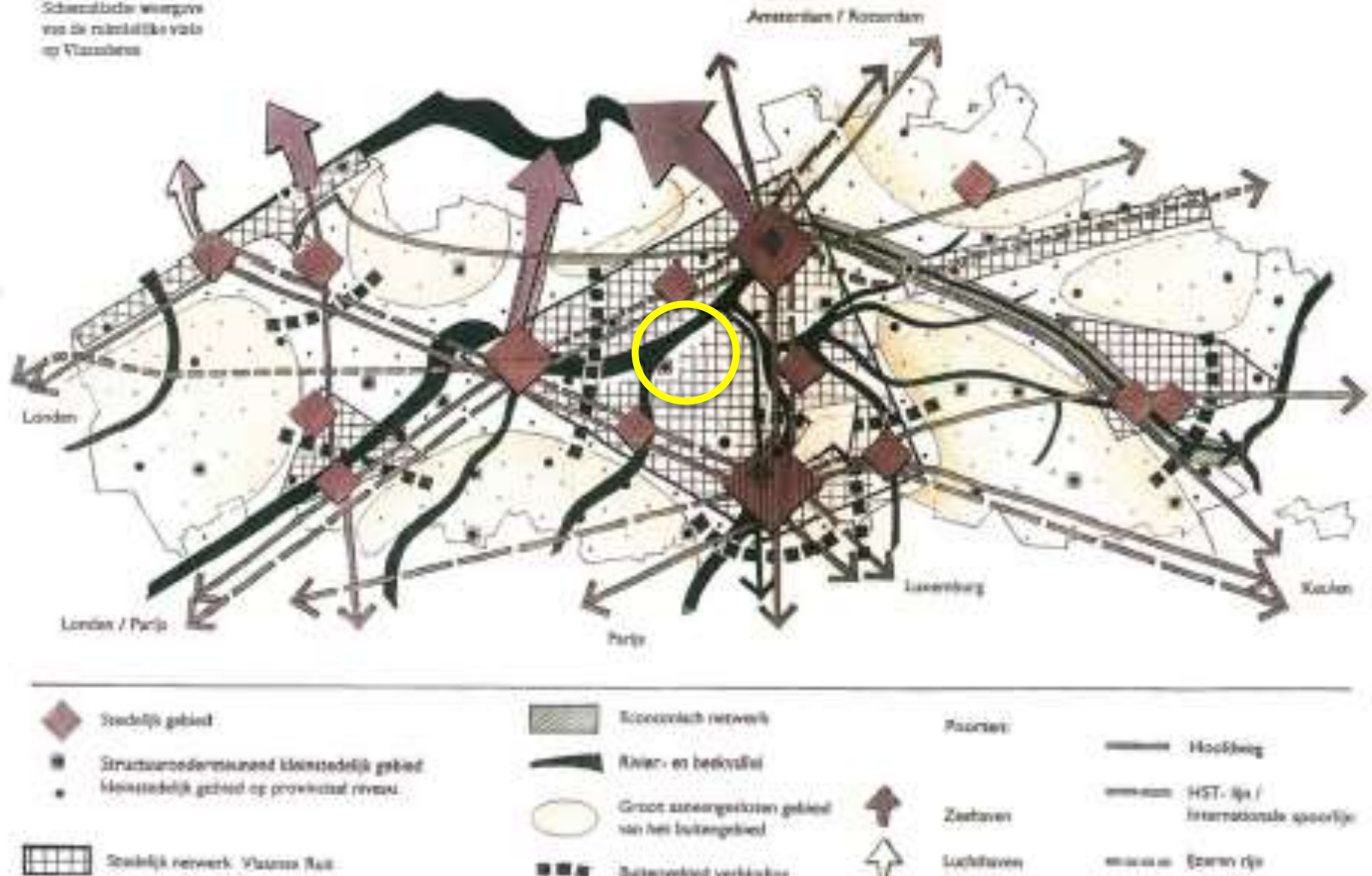
# Flanders - Belgium



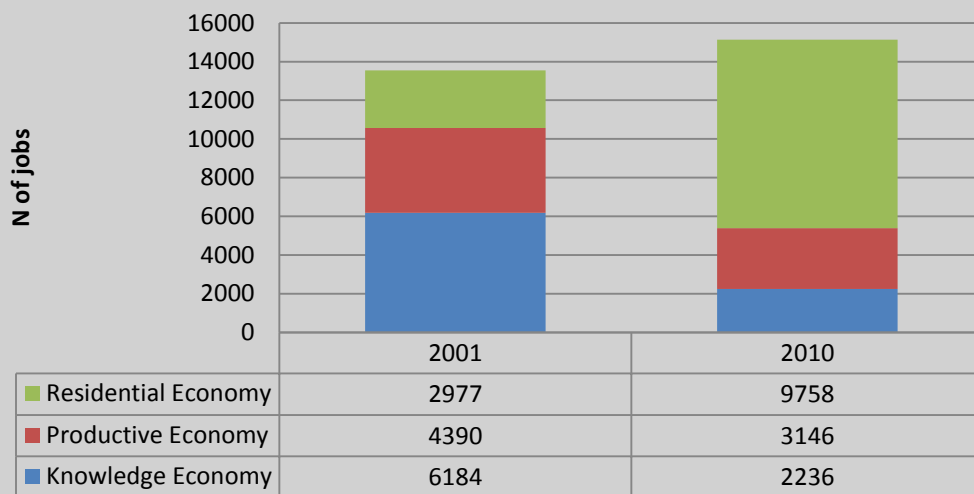


Kaart 1

Schematische weergave van de ruimtelijke visie op Vlaanderen



## Dendermonde: Number of jobs by economic profile



### Functional roles:

#### Residential economy:

Centrum function within the arrondissement: schools, juridical functions, commercial centre

#### Productive economy:

has diminished very strongly

#### Knowledge Economy:

very important downfall between 2001 and 2010

## Residential profile

- Importance of retail structure (Market town initiatives)
- (sustainable) tourism
- agro-gastronomic sector
- Services

## Productive economy

- Threat of having big enterprises
- SME structure
- Local capacities/knowledge
- Sustainable-innovative practices
- Wider scale

## Knowledge base economy

- Everywhere vs. specific-assets requirement
- Accessibility and borrowing-size effects
- Focus on services and favourable environment







# Trends and observations

- SMSTs are different from cities/rural areas (of very small towns) / SMSTs are **more diverse** than cities/rural areas
- SMSTs (on average) suffer under current economic conditions (especially when depend on market allocation of resources) – **Institutional settings matter**
- **Demographic dynamics** make them vulnerable – but strong cohesive structure



# Trends and observations

- POTENTIALITIES
  - Importance of '**residential economy**'
  - **Attractiveness** of place toward specific **target groups**
  - **Territorial assets** and **tourisms**
  - successful towns with large enterprises but possibly threatened in case of their collapse – necessity of **diversification of enterprises** and their **size**
  - Diversified role of **universities** and knowledge-based activities: importance of **accessibility**
  - **(Public) services** are often crucial
- SPATIAL POLICIES MATTER



# Opportunities and challenges

- Possibilities to benefit from **UE funds**:
  - Not always accessible because of the very good performance of the region where the town is located
  - *Ad hoc* projects (lack of more general and long-term visions)
  - Skepticism and lack of wider picture (and opportunities)
- More **locally driven and bottom-up initiatives**, working on the important **social capital** of towns:
  - formal and informal cooperation with different actors (NGO's and enterprises) in order to improve town's potential
  - Local initiatives as crucial drivers in particular in occasion of lack of particular upper-scale policy supporting SMSTs
  - Dismissal of 'business park' obsession
  - Investment in culture and innovative way of providing services



# Policy aspects

- **Governance (who)**
  - Need for a coherent vision/strategy based on real potentials of the town shared across levels
  - Local government in multi-agency partnerships (wider geographical positioning)
- **Process (how)**
  - systematic analysis of local potentials/assets > local entrepreneurial capacity
  - Requires working across silos and sharing of information – ‘thinking outside the box’ (depends on ‘who’)
- **Projects/programmes (what)**
  - Public realm/heritage projects – quality of places
  - Service of General Interests as key factors
  - Limited ‘levers’ that can be pulled – requires additional finance/resources
  - Policy packages and cross-sectorial approaches









Thank you for the attention  
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