

RURALPLAN

Strategic and Innovative Planning for Rural Areas

About RURALPLAN

RURALPLAN is a Research-development and Innovation Project focusing on innovative planning in rural areas experiencing population decline.

RURALPLAN aims to facilitate and further develop democratic planning processes with broad participation, where a realistic understanding of the prerequisites for planning, including population development, will be the basis. Innovative planning (Hagen and Higdem, 2020) is useful for developing new and innovative goals, strategies, and measures that have not been part of traditional planning processes.

In innovative planning, emphasis is placed on a bottom-up and co-creative process between local residents, businesses, associations, politicians, and municipal administration. The broader the composition of actors, the greater the opportunity to find and realize new strategies and measures to meet challenges created by demographic development.

Project-owners: Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Linköpings Universitet, Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft für die Berggebiete

Stakeholders: Innlandet County Council, Länsstyrelsen Dalarnas län, Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, Euromontana

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Budget: € 249,994.00

Project-period: December 2023 - December 2024

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Read more about RURALPLAN on ESPONS website



Why RURALPLAN?

European rural areas are facing numerous challenges that span economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Many European rural regions are experiencing 'shrinking' - a phenomenon often characterized by decreasing population numbers and an aging demographic.

Shrinking often signals a weakened local economic status, which can adversely affect service provision and development activities. The labor market and housing sectors face challenges, while the cost of social services - including healthcare - tends to escalate. Shrinking can also lead to diminished tax revenues and a reduced birth rate, which subsequently results in fewer school-aged children and may lead to school closures. Ultimately, the loss of social capital is a significant concern.

RURALPLAN aims to develop strategies to respond to these demographic challenges. RURALPLAN's starting point is:

Population growth is not a prerequisite for development.

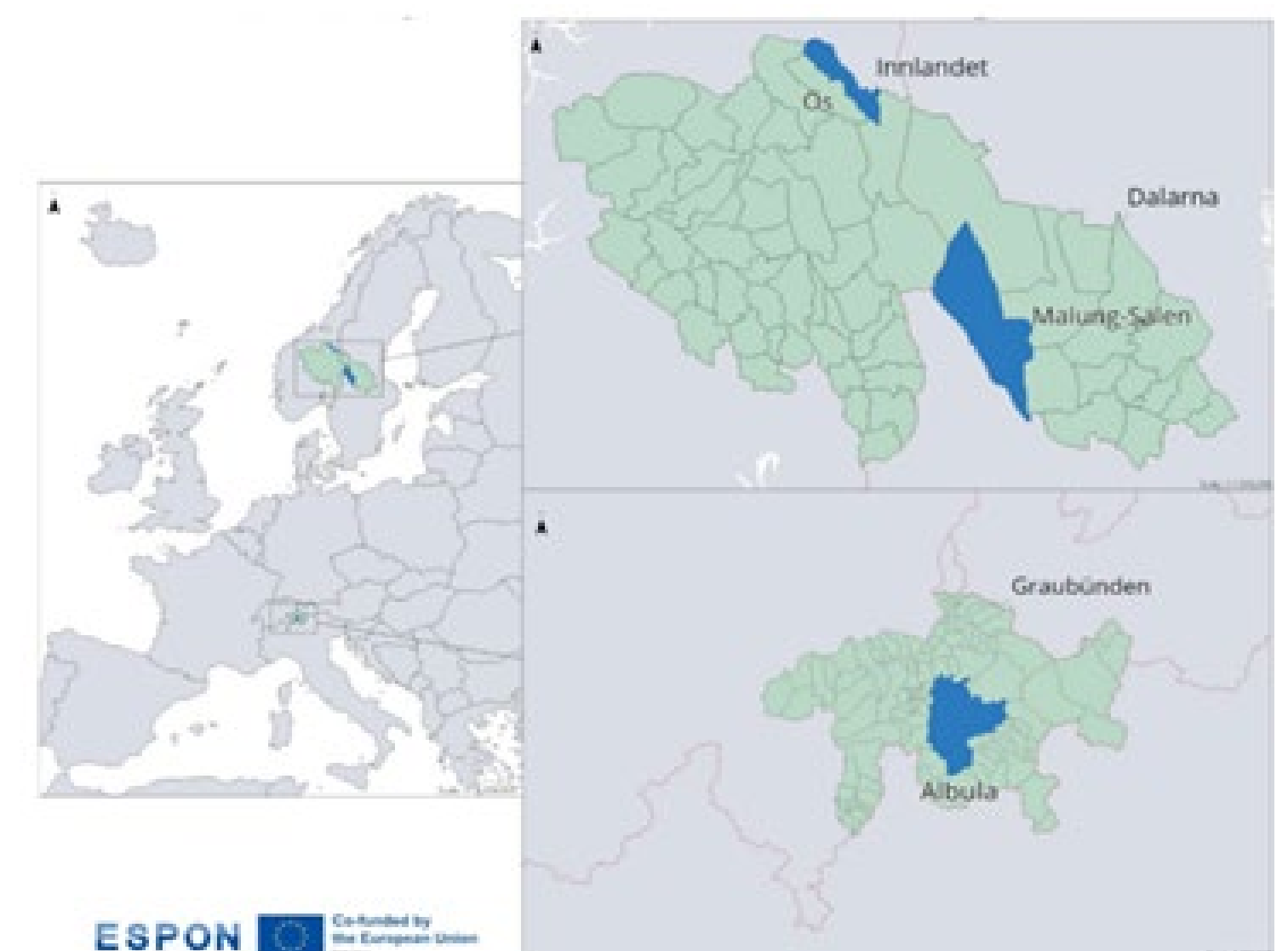
The RUPIL-model

The Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (INN) has developed a participation model for use in strategic planning and policy development in rural areas. The model is called RUPIL, the Rural Planning and Innovation Lab, and is a further development of "the iterative innovation process" (Eide & Wedum, 2023). Therefore, RUPIL is an innovative model adapted to and developed for local and regional strategies.

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

The RUPIL-model has 6 phases, each with their own quantitative and qualitative tools and methods. Ideally the RUPIL is conducted in three co-creation workshops spread out over three days.

The model and the tools are self-instructive and can empower planners in rural areas.



Kilde: Overvåg, K. Bern, A. Higdem, U. Næderer, P. & Sysner, J. (2024). RURALPLAN: Methodological framework and knowledge. Main report, March 2024



The cases in RURALPLAN

RURALPLAN has tested the RUPIL-model in three pilot-areas in Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. They represent different contexts and shrinkage situations. This increases the transferability of the planning model to other European regions. Further, the selected municipalities/region showed interest in co-creating new planning and policy responses to shrinkage, in cooperation with RURALPLAN.



Länsstyrelsen Dalarnas län



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Swiss Confederation
Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO



Innlandet County Council



EUROMONTANA
European association of mountain areas

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Expected results from RURALPLAN

- Territorial evidence (including maps/visualizations) on economic and demographic shrinking in the stakeholders' areas.
- Identification of planning practices in the stakeholders' areas.
- Assessment of effectiveness and gaps of planning practices for demographic change and shrinking in stakeholder areas.
- Proposal of strategies that can be used by local and regional policymakers to ensure that shrinking and/or ageing in rural areas become as inclusive, resilient and attractive as possible.
- Proposal of co-creation models that can support local master planning and strategic planning to create innovative responses for development in shrinking and/or ageing rural areas.
- Validated set of conclusions and policy recommendations for knowledge-based and innovative local strategic planning, improving the responses to shrinking and ageing in rural areas, including the approach to smart shrinking in general and how it could be applied in the cases studies.