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Small towns and regions – some aspects of diversity and differentiated development in the Norwegian case

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Preface

This is one of the reports written as a part of the ongoing project *"Small city regions – development, resilience and sustainability"* (Smacreg 2023-26) led by NIBR and funded by the Research Council of Norway (NFR). Special thanks to Professor Emeritus *Rob Atkinson at* Department of Geography and Environmental Management in University of the West of England, and Professor *Jerzy Bański at* Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization in Polish Academy of Sciences, for their very fruitful and critical comments on an early draft of this report. The report is written by Knut Onsager and Marianne Tønnessen at NIBR.

In the ongoing SMACREG-project, of which this report is only a minor part, the main analysis include an in-depth study of social development and sustainability, governance and planning, in a representative sample of eight small towns and regions in “Distrikts-Norge”. The results from this main work of the project will be published in the first half of 2026.

Oslo, des 2024

Berit Nordahl
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Content

Tables

Figures

Summary

Small towns, and their regions, are the topic of this report. First, the report sheds light on some theoretical concepts and perspectives about small towns (ST) and small town regions (STR), their properties and development trends, as described in international research literature. This is followed by an empirical data analysis of some aspects of small towns and their functional regions (STR) in Norway, based on register data. Finally, the report concludes the empirical findings and discusses these in light of methodological choices and limitations, as well as concepts and perspectives from international literature discussed in the first part.

The international research literature underlines that small and medium sized towns constitute substantial parts of the urban structures and settlement patterns of most nations, but that these have been largely ignored in urban research and politics in general, and in particular compared to the huge attention that have been given larger cities and their regions. The rich mosaic that constitutes the urban structures has been neglected and, hence, much knowledge development and policy have failed to differentiate among urban areas and regions in the European context. The diversity of cities and towns, and the heterogeneity in their structural, geographical and institutional contexts, cast serious doubt about mainstream concepts for explaining urban and regional change and opportunities for action. The literature underlines that this knowledges gap hamper more efficient politics and planning for resilient and sustainable cities, towns and regions of different scales and contexts, and make it more difficult to achieve goals of sustainable development, territorial and social coherence.

However, international research on small towns and their regions has not been completely absent, and the attention seems to have been growing the last years - among researchers, planners and bureaucrats in European countries. It is claimed that this partly is fuelled by some renewal of regional policies with stronger spotlights on place-based development and decentralised decision-making, and increased attention to sustainable development and implementing of UN-SDG17 anchored in territorial specific advantages, challenges and potentials.

Some of the challenges for comparative studies, knowledge development and sharing across different countries have been the absence of a common terminology, and different access to and quality of data. Many concepts and criteria for urban settlements and regions have been used, and the various context-specific terminologies have often been somewhat unclearly defined, impeding cross-context comparisons. However, the European Commission (DG REGIO), OECD and UN have now reached an agreement on how they hereafter (Espon 2023) will use the term *town* (urban settlements with 5,000-50,000 inhabitants) in contrast to the term *city* (those above that level). Using such a common terminology related to scale may improve the possibilities to better compare studies and enhance learning about governance and politics in different local, regional and national contexts.

Leading European urban researchers claim that systematic, robust and up-dated knowledge about small and medium sizes towns and regions are very inadequate and fragmented, both for most countries and to a greater extent comparatively among nations (Mayer and Lazzeroni edt. 2022, Wagner and Grow 2021, Grossmann and Mallach 2021, Atkinson 2019). These authors underline that there is a need for greater illumination and updated examination of different types of towns and regions, demographic, social, economic and institutional development, governance and agency for sustainable development and innovation in different national contexts. This implies more systematic knowledge based on

comparative studies, including inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, both within and between countries.

Also in Norway, the state of knowledge in isfield here is fragmented and inadequate. This report does not intend to fill the entire knowledge gap, but it is a contribution to parts of the field.Based on some of the concepts and perspectives from the literature, the second part of this report presents an empirical analysis of some aspects of *small towns and small town regions (STRs*) in Norway, focusing on demographic and economic structures, development patterns and underlying processes which may explain some of the patterns and uneven development among the STRs. The STRs are in the report operationalized as functional living and working regions (TØI 2020), but limited only to those which have a small town (2.000-20.000 inhabitants) as their largest urban settlement. In Norway we have 65 such STR-units distributed across all parts of the country. Since our focus are on small town regions, we leave aside small towns located within functional larger city regions.

The analysis first highlights some general properties and development trends in total for this aggregated group of 65 STRs. Second, a more detailed analysis follows of a sample of 18 STRs categorized into three different subgroups: Growing STRs, Stable STRs and Shrinking STRs. This sample include maximum-variation-cases as well as a reference group (the Stable STRs).

In general, Norway is one of the countries in Europe with the lowest proportion of people living in cities and city regions, and with high shares living in towns and sparsely populated areas[1]. 36 percent of the population (2024) lives in one of the the 65 STRs that this report focuses on.

Over the last fifteen years there has been a significant growth in population and jobs in across the country, althoughmost of the growth has taken place in the larger city regions (with 62% av the population, they had as much as 80% of the population growth and 83 % av the job growth 2010-24). Historically high rates of immigration in combination with high economic activity in both private and public sector has driven most of this national growth.

Also the class of aggregated STRs – in total – grew in this period (again measured by population and jobs) after previous decades with some minor decline. The population *growth in the STR-class has also been due to high immigration* from abroad which counteracted a *substantial loss* of people to the larger city regions. The STR-class' growth of jobs came particularly within public services (70%, often within local health/care), the rest came in private sector (particularly within regional industries like building/construction and business services, while no (net) growth of jobs within their basic industries). This general picture of the STR-class veils of course large differences in location, structures and development among the 65 STRs in the country. Some of this is evident in tis report's analysis of the 18 STRs in the subgroups of Growing, Stable and Shrinking STRs.

The selected 18 STRs vary substantially in size and economic structures. We find that 13 of the 18 towns are "mixed towns", i.e. hybrids of "specialised production towns" and "central place towns" for services, i.e. what in international literature is described as "towns based on mixed local economies with substantial activities both within a productive economy and a residential economy". Only 4 of our 18 towns can be defined as more purely "specialised production towns", and these were specialized and dependent on different sectors, with one "industrial town" (metal manufacturing), two "state sector towns" (defence and administration)

[1] In Norway, 44% of the population lives in cities (>50.000 ihb), 34% in towns (1.000-49.999 ihb.), 5% in micro towns (200-999 ihb), and 17% in scattered settlements. Most of (56 of 95) towns with some size (5.000-49.000 ihb.) are localized within *functional town regions*, while the rest (39 towns) lie within *functional city regions* (SSB data 2024, NIBR's calculations).

og one combined version of these two types. Only 1 out of 18 towns is classified as a pure “central place town”.

For the subgroup of *Growing STRs,* consistently high growth has been powered by a substantial migration surplus and some excess of births together with substantial increase of jobs both in public and private sectors. Several mutually reinforcing demographic and economic structures and processes - favourable demographic and economic structures, attractivity for living, migration and birth surpluses, as well as job growth, stimulated both intra- and extra-regional, in different sectors like municipal services, regional industries and services (building/ construction, business service) and basic industries (seafood, extraction, tourism and state funded universities and hospitals) - have contributed to these STRs’ high demographic and economic growth. However, internally within each of these STRs the growth pattern has been uneven between the main town and centre municipality on the one hand, and the hinterland municipalities on the other. As such, it has been a centralised growth pattern mostly confined to their main town area.

In contrast, the *Shrinking STRs* have had several mutually reinforcing demographic and economic processes contributing to their shrinking; Substantially more out- than in-migration and (net) loss of many jobs. These regions have been severy affected by job losses both within basic sectors (mostly private sector, but also the state sector within hospitals and defence), regional industries and services as well as the local oriented public sectors (in particular municipal schools). These regions have in general had thinner population bases and industrial milieus, and they have been more vulnerable than the Growth STRs in a time of harsh national and international competition, and restructuring of diverse sectors, including efficiency improvements and relocation within state sectors. Additionally, demographic shrinking and aging more or less combined with somewhat squeezed municipality finances resulted in job losses also within local public services. Interestingly, within the Shrinking STRs, the centre municipalities shrunk more than the hinterland municipalities, in contrast to the pattern for the Growing STRs.

The last subgroup, *Stable STRs,* is our study’s reference group. This group, with minor total (net) changes in the number of inhabitants and jobs, is the most typical category in the sense that most of the 65 STRs in the country have such minor total (net) changes in these classical development indicators for the period 2010-24. However, the minor total (net) growth in population og jobs in these STRs covers substantial gross flows and structural changes. High in-migration from abroad barley offset high domestic out-migration and some birth deficit. These STRs also have more population ageing than the national levels and in the Growing STRs. Like in the other subgroups, the share of immigrants has increased substantially (and the share in the Stable STRs is slightly higher than in the Growing and Shrinking STRs) but the level is still substantially below the national level. The minor net growth of jobs covers structural labour market changes, with fewer jobs in private sector, which have been fully compensated for by a substantial growth in public sector, particularly within municipal health/care services and partly in the state sector (universities, administration, social insurance, defence). The only public service with a decrease in the number of jobs in the Stable STRs were primary and secondary school sector.

The Stable STRs have lower median income level for households than the Growing STRs (but approximately the same as in the Shrinking STRs and below the national median), but also a higher aggregated level of unemployment than the Growing STRs and the national level (but approximately the same levels as Shrinking STRs). The aggregated level of outsiderness is higher than in the two other subgroups of STRs. Within each of the Stable STRs, the development has only beenslightly uneven, with some long-term growth trend in the town municipalities and a decrease in the hinterland municipalities.

This report also shows that among the 18 selected STRs,the STRs with over 7000-8000 inhabitants and 4000-5000 jobs were the ones who avoided shrinkage in the period (2010-2024), while those below these levels tended to shrink. This may indicate the existence of some threshold above which functional town regions have some capabilities or advantages for generating growth, compared with those with less quantitative size. However, we also find some empirical exceptions from this "size-rule", which implies that there is no absolute determined relationship between quantitative size and growth of population and jobs in STRs.

The report documents systematic differences between Growing and Shrinking STRs regarding demographic and economic structures and components of changes. Moreover, there were some differences between these two STR groups when it comes some of the socio-economic variables. Both the levels of household median incomes and the shares of low-income households and outsiderness were generally most favourable in the Growing STRs (but housing cost levels were also higher there). However, the differences between our three STRs groups in these aspects were quite minor.

Taken together, this empirical study supports some of the findings in other European and American studies about the great diversity of small towns and regions with regard to their typologies, structures and functions, development, challenges and opportunities.

One striking feature in the Norwegian case, however, is how the development of a service economy and welfare society has made the labour markets of the small town regions much more similar to each other, i.e. with a large proportion of jobs in typical central place activities such as service jobs, and much fewer jobs directly within the typical basic export-oriented or internationally competition-exposed industries. In spite of the Norwegian small towns' low population size, they have often a multi-functionality as center places and huge varieties of services. This may have been influenced by national welfare policy and regional policies supporting a "decentralized-concentrated" settlement pattern – i.e. linked to many "autonomous" STRs.

It may be worth noting that compared to many other European countries, Norway has had a very high population growth over the past 10-15 years. Moreover, and also in contrast to several European countries and the US where many cities and towns are shrinking, in Norway shrinking cities or city regions is a rare phenomenon, and only a few shrinking towns and regions (STRs) have been shrinking the last decades. Towards the end of this report, some possible geographical, economic, and political conditions and reasons for this pattern of development in Norway are discussed.

Hence, in our study period (2010-24) we hardly find any "left behind places" among the STRs in Norway, understood as regions with considerably higher long-term unemployment, outsiderness or substantially lower than average median household incomes, compared with national average levels[2].

However, some of our findings of the STRs are also roughly in line with the evaluation of the "thinning society" hypothesis in Norway for years ago (Sørlie and Aasbrenn 2016). The "thinning society" has been a concept and hypothesis which refers to local communities and municipalities with an ageing and shrinking population without becoming completely depopulated (Aasbrenn 1989). Potential negative consequences were formulated in an "impoverishment hypothesis", which claimed that the population decline will lead to

[2] We would probably have found somewhat greater differences and variations if we had analyzed such things at an even lower geographical level, since analyses at the micro-region level mask what may be greater local variations.

economic, social, cultural and visual decline, detoriating welfare and an unravelment of the local society. However, in their evaluation of the “thinning society” concluded that although population in the least central municipalities did shrink and age, they did not find support for the “impoverishment hypothesis”. Hence, societal decline did not follow from population decline. The fact that the negative consequences of population decline have not been more dramatic for the least central municipalities was explained by a number of compensatory factors at play in Norway. Most emphasis was placed on the national development of the welfare state, i.e. welfare services and schemes that contribute to financial social security for individuals. Also mentioned are district policies, transport-infrastructure development, car use, the digital revolution and the ability of local actors to adapt to the situation and develop local solutions for service, transport etc.

The high (net) immigration to most of the country between 2008-24 has led to population growth in most of Norway’s municipalities, but also to some extent obscured the underlying ageing trend and a high out-migration of young adults from the STRs to the larger city regions. Expected future ageing may indicate that even more of the STRs may experience some demographic thinning and shrinking in the years to come. However, there is substantial uncertainty about further population trends for STRs in general, and individual STRs in particular. During the last years, many refugees have arrived from the war in Ukraine, and this may counteract demographic thinning or shrinkages of some STR-municipalities in the years to come. However, both an elderly population and more refugees may increase the needs for local welfare services related to health/care, integration and outsiderness, which again may increase the needs for municipal income support from the state, as well increased supply of labour to welfare services. Given forecasts which show increasing competition for labour throughout the country, ithis may lead to greater skill shortage and labour recruitment challenges in more of the STRs.

There is no simple solution as to how the STRs themselves can maintain welfare services and export industries in the years to come, with an increasing shortage of workers. The STRs compete in particular with large city regions for this and may also face harder competition with other STRs. Strategies to strengthen the residential attractiveness of the STRs, as well as more active external recruitment efforts directed towards students and other people in the larger city regions have been in focus for some STRs and municipalities for some time. Some of the STR-municipalities have had, and some still have, active recruitment strategies among workers abroad. However, it seems that reducing an increased outsiderness and assisting more of the local NEET people into the workforce, should be high on the agenda for many of STRs in the years to come. Smart shrinkages and measures to develop good local communities for living and thriving for all people, with less focus on traditional goals of growth in number of people and jobs, will probably have to be placed higher on the development agenda and for a realistic planning of resilient and sustainable STRs in the years to come.

1 Introduction

Small and medium-sized towns[3] with hinterlands constitute significant parts of settlement patterns and regional development in most nations. Despite this, the vast majority of contemporary urban research and policy development has been concentrated on larger cities and metropolitan regions within the context of globalizing forces and international competition (Atkinson 2019). Small and medium-sized cities, which are considered to be neither agglomerations/metropolitan areas nor located in remote rural areas, have been largely ignored in research (Wagner and Grow 2021, 106) and the attention afforded to them does not therefore reflect their scale in the urban system (Grossmann and Mallach 2021). In spite of the large number of towns and their high population shares, we know relatively little about their properties, roles and functions in different nations and regions (ibid.). This is somewhat ironic given that it has long been asserted that small towns are a key element of Europe's urban structure, both historically and in the modern era, and they are in fact considered an important part of the continent's urban fabric (Atkinson 2019, 1). The rich mosaic that constitutes the urban structures has been neglected and, hence, much knowledge development and policy have failed to differentiate among urban areas and regions in the European context (ibid.). The diversity of cities and towns and their geographical, institutional and structural conditions casts doubt about the relevance of mainstream concepts for explaining urban and regional change in diverse global settings (Pike et al. 2017).

With this said, research on towns and smaller cities has not been completely absent and attention to them has been growing over the last few years (Grossmann and Mallach 2021). This increased international interest among researchers and planners about towns' diversity and role in regional development is fuelled by newer regional policies in many countries that focus on local specificities and advantages, endogenous potential and decentralised decision-making (Banski et al. 2021).

The need to study and address the diversity and heterogeneity of towns more thoroughly has been underscored (Wagner and Growe 2021). Former studies and literature have been criticised for their tendency to view towns as mostly homogenous categories. They have been the subject of scholarly perceptions based on stereotypical ideas and generalisations about characteristics such as traditionalism, economic decline, loss of functions, brain drain, ineffective modes of governance, lack of agency, passive units, and poor integration in global networks, to name a few (Grossmann and Mallach 2021). Although such propositions may be true in some cases, they have tended to be generalised and widely accepted at face value without the scrutiny they deserve. Many former studies have contributed to veiling the great variation in the characteristics and development of smaller cities and towns within and between different countries (Atkinson 2019). Some newer studies, however, underpin this variation among towns (Banski et al. 2021; Mayer and Lazzeroni 2022; Mallach 2022). These studies convey the need for greater illumination and examination of the towns' economic, demographic and institutional conditions and changes in order to better understand their

[3]In accordance with the recent agreement on the use of common terms for towns and cities by the European Commission (DG REGIO), OECD and UN in 2023 (ESPON Policy Paper – "Small and medium-sized towns and cities"- Draft /November 2023), we use the term town for urban settlements with 5,000-50,000 inhabitants and city for urban settlements with more than 50,000 inhabitants. In much of the research literature, these terms are not consistently used, and size specifications have been different or not sufficiently specified. In the empirical parts and analyses from Norway in this report, we use the term "small town" with a somewhat lower limit, i.e. about urban settlements with 2,000-20,000 inhabitants, and the term "small town regions" (STR) about functional (housing and labour) regions where the largest urban settlement is a smaller town. It should be mentioned that in Norway, urban settlements with 1,000-5,000 inhabitants are mostly termed "bygdebyer", which can be translated to "villages" or "very small towns" similar in international terminology (ex. Espon 2014). See more details of the operationalization of functional region as unit in chapter 3.3.

diversity, dynamics, challenges and opportunities with respect to both policy and planning. This implies a need for more systematic comparative studies both within and between countries, as well as inter- and transdisciplinary approaches. It is maintained that improving this knowledge base is necessary to be able to develop more effective policies and development work that can contribute to visions and goals of territorial development and coherence, as well as more balanced development between regions.

Systematic research studies of towns and smaller cities, including the different types and their roles in the urban system, functional regions and regional development, are mostly absent in the context of Norway.[4] This is despite Norway being among the European countries with the largest population share living in towns and their hinterlands, playing a crucial role in the national settlement pattern, and leading to high value creation in export industries, well-distributed welfare services and attractive places to live in and visit (Onsager et al. 2021). How different town regions develop and cope with more challenges of ageing, service provision, skills and labour, outsiderness and green transition, is of crucial significance to be able to achieve inclusive and sustainable development across the country as well as avoid a to strong unbalanced regional development among country parts.

1.1 Issues in this report

As such, this article focuses on the following issues:

1. What does international research literature say about relevant *theoretical perspectives and concepts* relating to towns' and regions' properties, dynamism and development trends and reasons for their (uneven) development?
2. What characterises the *properties and development of small town regions (STR) compared to other main classes of urban-rural regions* in Norway?
3. What characterises the *growing, stable and shrinking STRs* with regard to types of towns and regions, demographic and economic structures, development paths and components of change? How can the uneven development among the three subgroups be explained?
4. In what sense do socioeconomic properties like income levels and outsiderness vary systematically for the three different subgroups of STRs?
5. Do *the empirical findings support or challenge current theories, concepts and understandings* from the international literature? How and in what way? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the analyses? Is there a need to adapt the concepts of town and cities to the Norwegian context?

1.2 Method, data and report structure

We start with reviewing international literature on the concepts, development paths and dynamism of urban and regional development with focus on towns and smaller cities and their regions, before we outline the results from a national study of small towns and regions in Norway mostly based on statistical register data and analysis. The empirical part firstly provides an overview of development trends for the main classes of urban-rural regions in Norway in the period 2010-2024, and secondly dives into a selection of 18 cases of small

[4]Norwegian studies that adopt a national perspective are Leknes, E. et al. (2016) and Onsager, K. et al. (2021).

town regions (STR) representing three main STR groups by development trend in the period 2010-2024 (Growing STRs, Stable STRs and Shrinking STRs). Here, we focus on similarities and differences within and between these groups with regard to their economic and demographic structures, development paths and factors of changes, and discuss some explaining factors behind their differentiated development. In the final part, we discuss the relevance of the results for theory development, policy debate concerning towns and regional development, limitations of the study and areas for further research.

2 Theoretical concepts and frameworks

The literature highlights certain aspects of towns as being particularly important to understanding their characteristics, development, roles and functions in regions. Beside population size, these factors have tended to include internal economic structures, roles and relations in functional and territorial systems and networks, as well as their location in various geographical contexts.

2.1 Towns – definitions and typologies

General definition and delimitation

The lack of common international terms and criteria for the concepts of *city* and *town* has been a challenge for comparative research, knowledge sharing and policy development across countries. However, the European Commission (DG REGIO), OECD and UN recently reached an agreement on establishing common terms and criteria, as well as associated subgroups (Espon 2023). Beside the criteria of density and compactness thresholds, the concept of *town* was defined as an urban settlement with a population of between 5,000 and 50,000, while *city* covers settlements above that level.[5] We use these definitions of towns and cities in this article, unless otherwise stated.

This terminology is also partly in line with the former ESPON TOWN project (2014, 68–73), where the role and position of small and medium-sized towns in some European countries was explored, including policy options addressing their various situations and contexts. The study sheds light on approaches to defining towns in different ways (administrative, morphological and functional perspectives), the relationship between towns, their hinterland and regional contexts of different types, and aspects of multi-scalar governance and policy needs. Besides the size of a town, its internal structures and functional roles are often interconnected. The ESPON TOWN project (2014, iii) also gave the following qualitative description of towns' roles within a socio-spatial system:

> "an urban settlement or urban municipality containing a concentration of jobs, services and other functions that serve other settlements in its hinterland, acting as the core of an urban (functional) region, which is a larger area that contains the urban centre and its hinterland, forming together a socio-spatial system integrated by functional interrelations."

A recent handbook of small towns with case studies from 24 countries in different parts of the world (Banski 2021) addresses small towns' socioeconomic development in regions and nations with different institutional economic and political systems. The book stresses that small towns have important economic, social and cultural characteristics that distinguish them from larger cities and rural areas. Furthermore, that small towns play specific roles in regional systems as links between large urban centres and rural areas, often acting as motors of local development and centres of public and cultural life, as well as performing a number of social and economic functions and relations vis-a-vis the countryside.

[5]They also distinguish between these two main categories in multiple subcategories. For towns, for example, this is as follows: *Small towns: 5,000 – 10,000 inhabitants, Medium towns: 10,000 – 25,000 inhabitants and Large towns: 25,000 – 50,000 inhabitants* (ESPON Policy Paper – "Small and medium-sized towns and cities" - Draft /November 2023). The ESPON TOWN project (2014) also identified identified another category – Very Small Towns, i.e. with a population of less than 5,000. These contain a significant % of the European population (op.cit).

Different types of towns

In the literature, properties of towns' economic structures and functional roles have been used to define different types of towns. The focus has often been on different kinds of historical emergence and the economic basis for growth and sustaining mechanisms, which, in turn, are linked to different types of internal structures and integration with the surroundings. This is largely based on elements of theory on agglomeration, economic basis and export-led growth, and spatial division of labour.

The classical theory literature features in particular *two main typologies of towns* (Helle 2006; Parr 2017; Mulligan et al. 2012). Firstly, the concept of *central places* sees centrality as the very core of the town's and city's being and development, and as functional unit serving and solving diverse needs and tasks for people and business at place and its hinterland (Christaller 1933). Principally different kinds of central places have been described in the literature, as economic centre places, steering and administrative centre places, cultural and religious centre places (Helle 2006). Historically one-functional central places have often developed into more multi-functional central places. Larger cities have often grown into more multi-functional central place towns, and in a service economy also town with a more diverse service sector of public and private administration, welfare and business services.

In human geography much attention has been given to the economic types of central places of different kinds, their emergence and growth as well as functional roles in regions and in developing urban hierarchies (Christaller 1933, 66; Løsch 1954). Concepts of economic thresholds and geographical reach[6] have been used to rank and classify different services and their location patterns as the basis also for the development of urban hierarchies.

Secondly, the other theoretical main type of economic base driven town emergence and growth are the *specialised production town* grown based on producing specific goods or services embedded in some kind of local advantages, and mainly directed towards national or global markets. These are also called *network towns* where their base of export-oriented industries are linked to extra regional value chains, and their main relations, markets and income sources is outside their own region. These may be associated with "industrial towns" (i.e. manufacturing towns) but this can also be "service towns" specialised in resort or tourist industries, but also towns with substantial state-funded activities like universities, hospitals or military bases. Such state-funded sectors may also function as basic sectors for towns as their funding come from outside the town region.

These two main typologies of towns have been established and developed in different ways, and are characterised by different kinds of embeddedness and ripple effects to nearby areas, including the development of more integrated labour and service regions. Other classical types of towns have also been described in the literature. One of these is port or station towns that have emerged and grown as trade, reload or transport nodes for goods and/or people along transport routes at land or sea. Such towns have emerged in different ways from the historical development of the various dominant modes of transport, such as shipping, railways and road transport. However, these towns may only be specific types of mixed central places and network towns with various kinds of embeddedness and ripple effects to nearby areas.

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[6] *Threshold requirements* relate to the size of the population base or the turnover of a given service in order to survive commercially. *Reach* has to do with the service's radius of action, basically defined as the distance potential customers are willing to travel to reach the service in question. In other words, if a service is to have a financial foothold, the threshold requirement must be met within the service's actual customer area.

In recent decades, much attention has been given to transition trends and theories related to different concepts of the knowledge economy, consumption economy, welfare economy and experience economy. In common these concepts is the focusing on more pronounced service economy, and an increasing emphasis on the role of human capital, living and leisure preferences, as well as place qualities for living, work and innovation. In general, these larger trends have often been assumed to benefit the growth of larger agglomerations and city regions, while towns and rural regions have been left more behind in spite of the fact that there has been a substantial relative growth also of services and related jobs in the small towns and their functional regions within modern economies.

One aspect that has got attention from somebody is how towns and regions increasingly have been founded on *residential economy* (Hamdouch and Banovac 2014) i.e. economic activities driven by their residents' diverse consumption (ex. cafes/restaurants, retailing, health/care, education, culture, personal services etc). The geographical context may be important for residential economies, since services in a town may face competition from other towns or cities in nearby regions. Towns in more "autonomous" locations og regions may be more able to provide an array of local services with absence of competition from nearby cities or regions. Som have underlined that *residential town is* kind of town where the population development is not linked to traditional job-related attractiveness on site, but more to the *attractive residential environments, and* shows that such towns may thrive and resist urban decay through exactly residential attractiveness (Fertner et al. 2015). Such towns may be found within larger city regions where they provide attractive residential areas in the region for people commuting to work into urban centres, and others such towns may also be found in more autonomous small town regions that are considered attractive for living and moving in from the other parts of a country or abroad (ibid).

Other parts of this have been many studies of *tourist towns* with an economic foundation based on attracting visitors and people with different leisure interests and affiliations, from their own country or abroad. The economy of towns in regions with scenic landscapes or qualities of nature and/or culture may be predominantly in the tourism sector (Meili and Mayer 2017). This may also be towns with more culture-led economic development, challenging previous assumptions that this was reserved for larger cities (Van Heur 2012). Several small towns have become recreational sites for people living in larger city regions and/or visitors from abroad. These towns are thus specialised service sites based on unique local qualities and demands from domestic and international visitors. Increasing dependence on global tourism and currency fluctuations have also increased the spotlight on sustainability challenges and have in some cases led to local resistance (Rabbiosi and Ioannides 2022).

The development of a more prominent global knowledge economy has impacts on almost all industries and sectors. However, much attention in this respect has been given to the extensive "new" growth sector *knowledge-intensive business services* (KIBS), which has been characterised by agglomerated growth within larger urban regions. However, all types of industries and sectors have become more knowledge intensive and demanding, including most manufacturing and service industries, and also in smaller cities and towns. Urban and regional research on this issue has most often looked at KIBS development in larger city regions, and some studies also on towns located within metropolitan regions, which may be attractive locations for KIBS. Here, the image and the functions of the metropolitan centre may be "borrowed" by towns and close connections and fast transportation linkages to the centre (Meijers and Burger 2015). Studies of KIBS in the context of rural districts and towns outside the larger city regions have been rare, but not entirely absent (Meili and Mayer 2017; Nielsen 2021).

Although much attention over the last decades has been given to the larger trends and transitional aspects of the service economy, this does not mean that the *industrial towns* are a thing of the past (Bole 2022; Wagner and Growe 2021). Industrial towns are very distinct from other types of towns and urban units (ibid.).[7] In spite of the globalisation challenge to many industrial locations, the industrial economy is still an important characteristic of many towns, and industrial towns are omnipresent in many parts of the world, including the Global North (Hamdouch et al. 2017; Bole 2022). Industrial towns are the economic engines of some European countries, and they have survived, evolved and remained an important part of certain national and regional urban systems (Bole et al., 2020). Their historical and current economic function as centres of manufacturing, natural resource extraction or energy production (all referred to as industry here) gives reason to place more on focus on them (op.cit). Mallach (2022) shows how several towns (i.e. mostly smaller cities) in the rustbelt of the United States have retained and developed strong manufacturing economies to the present day. However, he also describes some other towns that have lost their former economic basis in manufacturing without any new employment sectors emerging, and as such developed into "*transfer payment dependent" towns.* In these many people have become dependent on financial state transfers and together with lack local services, they got falling standards of living and more outsiderness (ibid.).

Evolutionary processes and path dependency play a key role in the industrial specialisation of towns. Hamdouch et al. (2017) found that most industrial towns hold on to their industrial specialisation and orient their development strategies towards those sectors. New and technologically-related industries are more likely to develop in areas with an already existing industrial basis. Besides historical trajectories, towns may offer location factors and advantages that differ from larger urban agglomerations. Cheap and available land, a suitable workforce and the availability of raw materials were often reasons why towns were chosen as a production location. Later on, a lack of employees with a tertiary degree who work and live in these areas has represented a challenge (Hamdouch and Banovac 2014).

The industrial town may be a somewhat imprecise term because "the industrial sector" is not a homogeneous sector. Some have distinguished *high tech* industries (ex. pharmaceutical manufacturing) and *low tech* industries (ex. textile manufacturing) based on criteria of research-intensity and/or innovation performance, but these categories are also coarse-grained. Towns with research-intensive high-tech industries may be important value creators and demand highly educated employees as well as knowledge and sales networks. These towns may have more challenges or vulnerabilities as they are the headquarters of the industries. A former study from Norway of four smaller "high-tech" towns showed how these locations in the outskirts of the capital region had been locations for several innovative high-tech firms within manufacturing and related KIBS (Onsager et al. 2007). The firms' innovation successes were partly due to their embeddedness in a national system of innovation combined with their own local and global knowledge and innovation networks.

One of the main conclusions of research on towns is that they are characterised by a diverse pattern of economic specialisation and related typologies (Hamdouch et al. 2017). Different endogenous potentials, regional contexts and positions of towns within an urban system entail great diversity. The ways in which towns are able to specialise economically and how

[7]According to Bole (2022), *industrial small and medium-sized towns* are smaller urban units within specific national urban systems that currently have, or previously had, an industrial economic basis. Being smaller, they tend to have a homogeneous sectoral structure based on either manufacturing, mining, coal extraction, oil, gas or other energy production. This inert sectoral structure and the importance of industry became a significant, if not decisive, factor in their urban development, making them very distinct from other types of urban units.

they form linkages with other parts of the urban system appear to be significant to their success (ibid.).

Although different economic specialisation and different profiles of local economies in towns is acknowledged, it seems that the literature presents some selective evidence and often lacks a broader and empirically grounded overview of the heterogeneity of towns and their economic situation and socioeconomic dynamics within different national contexts. Systematic studies of small and medium-sized cities (SMSCs) in individual European countries continue to represent a research gap (Wagner and Growe 2021). One exception is a study of the heterogeneity of towns in Switzerland (Meili and Mayer 2017), which presents *seven typologies* with different economic specialisations and socioeconomic dynamics. The seven typologies[8] inferred are: residential economy towns (44), prospering residential economy towns (16), business hub towns (31), knowledge intensive towns (10), high tech towns (18), low tech towns (25), alpine tourism towns (4) and outliers (4) as tax-friendly towns with dominant KIBS/KIFS high tech sectors.

Mixed types

Typologies of towns are often described in the literature as pure ideal forms linked to their economic specializations. In the real world, however, towns and cities often have diversified economy bases and are characterised as more mixed types or hybrids of the pure ones.

Beside the role specialisations of the economic base play, it may be important to consider the broader properties of the local economy of towns (Servillo et al. 2014, 32). In this respect have some looked at three different main profiles of these (Hamdouch et al. 2017[9]). One is characterised as a predominantly *"residential" economy* that primarily serves the needs of local residents, commuters or tourists. The second profile is a predominantly "*productive" economy* that focuses on producing goods and services primarily for export and consumption outside the local area. The third category is a *mixed type* that combines significant activity in both the productive and residential sectors, along with a complementary creative-knowledge dimension that is based on entrepreneurship, innovation and collaboration.

Bański (2021) underline that in the literature it is typical with three types of approach to the classification of different towns, i.e. the structural, the location-related, and mixed (Bański 2021). In general, the most "classical" versions of *structural* classifications identify the leading economic sector represented in an urban centre. More-complex structural classifications[10] allow for the grouping of towns and cities from the point of view of the functions they serve vis-à-vis local communities, and businesses operating in the given locality or its vicinity. The *location-related approach* draws on the idea of a centre-periphery continuum ex. considering the location of a small urban centre *vis-à-vis* the large centres. It may be said that the approach allows for the identification of satellite towns located in the zone of influence of large agglomerations and metropolises; urban centres representing

8Mainly based on the employment structures determining the economic specialisation of the towns, and share of employment (SOE) in the high tech/medium-high tech industry, low tech/medium-low tech industry, knowledge intensive business services (KIBS) & knowledge intensive financial service (KIFS), residential economy, and accommodation & food/beverage service activities.

9Hamdouch et al. (2017) (source: EU: Policy atlas of Sustainable Urban Development for Small Urban Areas. Joint Research Centre).

10 Such an approach might be exemplified by the classification from H. Elsasser (1998), which involved the author in proposing four functions of small urban centres, i.e. 1) related to supply (of both products and services), 2) residential, 3) labour-market-related, and 4) cultural. Similarly, it was a division into seven types of small and medium-sized urban centre that was carried out in Switzerland (Meili and Mayer 2017). In line with economic features and socio-economic dynamics it was there possible to identify types as follows: residential-economy towns, prospering residential-economy towns, business-hub towns, knowledge-intensive towns, high-tech towns, low-tech towns and Alpine-tourism towns.

traditional nodes in the settlement system; and centres that are isolated, given locations in peripheral areas (*ESPON SMESTO* Project 2006). However, location is rarely the only aspect used to draw a distinction between different urban centres of small size, but are more typical used in a classification or typology, for example alongside economic structure, urban-rural relations, or development.

A variety of criteria have gained application in mixed classifications, and these go beyond straightforward statistical renderings, often therefore requiring additional expert knowledge on a town's structure when it comes to physical development, its history, and its place in the structure as regards both size of population and sectors of the economy represented.

2.2 Towns' territorial contexts and multilevel relations

Towns are integrated in and affected by diverse relations to their *surroundings*. They are located in different regional contexts, as well as integrated in complex multilevel systems, networks, collaborations and flows. These spatial contexts, relations and roles are important to understanding towns and regions' economic and demographic development, challenges and opportunities.

Towns in different regional contexts

Besides the towns' internal characteristics (population size and composition, economic basis etc.) and territorial functions, their wider regional contexts have been afforded much attention in the literature as they are important to analysing their properties, development paths and opportunities (Atkinson 2019; Banski 2021; Mayer and Lazzeroni 2022).

Mayer and Lazzeroni (2022, 196) underline the importance of *relational perspectives* when analysing towns:

> "Small and medium-sized towns are not merely the smaller version of large cities. Depending on their context, position and networks, smaller cities can develop dynamics that are not expected given their size and locational context. Cities – both large and small are not only more and more connected within their functional region, but also through national and international networks."
>
> Hence, "the need to examine the benefits and drawbacks of their position within the urban system becomes obvious). It is therefore necessary to analyse the dynamics of small and medium-sized cities beyond just their opposition, dependence or marginality. This implies a relational approach and a multipolar and interdependent development perspective regarding large cities, which leads to the enhancement of distinctive local resources and new "alliances".

One of the key findings from the ESPON TOWN project (2014) was that the regional context matters. Along with national context, it is an important determinant of the situation of small towns in terms of "where they are today" and their "possible futures", albeit not to the extent that it excludes distinct locally driven responses and developments to their situation. The project maintains that it is important to differentiate, at a general level, what it calls the "typology of regions". The regional context shapes the situation of small towns and may create both opportunities but also problems for them, setting limits on possible development trajectories.

The ESPON TOWN project (2014) developed the following three-fold regional typology and internal differentiations:

1. Small towns in metropolitan regions (divided into either thriving or declining metropolitan regions)
2. Small towns in remote/rural or peripheral regions; and
3. Small towns in intermediate regions (divided into either those close to metropolitan/urban regions or to rural/peripheral regions).

It is maintained that these three types of regional contexts give towns very different development conditions, challenges and opportunities. These vignettes also indicate that both endogenous and exogenous factors can present new opportunities and threats to their development. The ESPON TOWN project findings also showed that it is difficult to come up with overarching prescriptions for small towns, even within a broadly similar regional context and that even small towns in apparently unpromising locations can be successful (ibid.).

It is within these categories of "intermediate regions" and "peripheral regions" we find most of the "autonomous" functional small town regions. This is in contrast to the towns located within metropolitan regions where they are subordinate centres to the larger city and its functional region[11]. These towns are more directly affected by shadow effects and/or borrowing effects to the larger city. However, the "autonomous" small towns and their functional regions may also be affected by other factors that characterise their own regional context, i.e. both by neighbourhood effects through some geographical proximity to larger city regions and by migration and mobility flows to and from larger city regions located further away.

Towns within functional regions

In some of the classical economic geography literature, towns/cities were referred to as "growth machines of regions and nations", "regional engines",[12] "growth poles" and "innovation poles", with both "trickle-down" and "backwash" effects to their hinterland or lower levels in the place hierarchies. These concepts were in different ways linked to economic flows, innovation diffusion, movement and mobility flows. Service economy, mobility and infrastructure development have integrated central place towns and larger hinterlands constituting functional regions involving daily commutes and travels to the largest job and service centres, and with extensive interactions between the town and its hinterland.

As illustrated above often the typologies of towns has focused on their economic bases og growth mechanisms. Such structures say also in principle something about their different roles in the formation of socio-spatial systems. For example, in a service economy, many central place towns are developing as growth poles of jobs and services within regions of expanding daily commuting systems. Towns that are mostly established and developed as specialised export places will often not have the same role in creating such functional commuting and service regions, although their basic industries may provide economic ripple effects with different spatial patterns.

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[11] «Thoug, the ESPON TOWN 2024 find also that the greatest concentration of small towns was in the European Pentagon – the economic and urban heartland of Europe. There was also a second concentration in East Central Europe (former 'socialist countries' and these were very different to those in the Pentagon facing very different challenges). Obviously this is a very broad categorization but still worth bearing in mind" (according to Atkinson comments by jan. 2025)

[12] Hauge et al. (2023) recently analysed whether smaller cities (no size indicator) are regional motors or sponges in a case study of Innlandet County in Norway, and shows empirically the presence of "motors" (positively affect the hinterland with well-balanced commuting and migration patterns), "sponges" (soak up people from surrounding areas through migration), "local mobilisers" (seem to have the potential to positively influence the growth of adjacent areas) and "moderate attractors" (moderately positive external commuting and migration flows).

A main perspective in the era of the service economy is that towns and cities are the main centres in functional daily commuting and service regions. These regions have an internal complexity of most basic functions needed in the daily life of a population, and their functions are strongly mutually related via the daily activities of inhabitants within the territory of the region, and there are functional division and interdependencies that links the town as central places to their hinterlands.

With regard to the above mentioned three main types of locations in “regional contexts”, it is within the “intermediate regions” and “rural/peripheral regions” we find the more “autonomous” functional town regions, i.e. towns not directly integrated in large city regions. These consist of town and hinterland, which are characterised as interdependent complementary units integrated in a kind of functional territorial system.

However. the criteria to be used to describe and delimit functional regional systems and the spatial organisation of settlements vary in the literature as well as with different contexts. Some have in this regard distinguished between functional urban areas (FUAs) and complex micro regions (CMRs), as two basic views on the spatial organisation of settlements and regional systems that are somewhat different, yet closely interrelated (Sykora and Mulicek 2009).[13]

This is partly in line with how the ESPON Town project (2014, iii) describes towns and their roles in regional systems, mentioned in chapter 2.1. And the development of service economies along with higher transport mobility have stimulated the growth and enlargement of such functional urban regions. However, new technology and streamlining of some services have also contributed to centralisation and weakening of some central place functions of small towns, but simultaneously opened up new possibilities for the decentralisation of certain types of services and work.

Organisational regions are established top-down for specific purposes, such as political-administrative regions (e.g. municipalities and counties) and cooperation regions (e.g. inter-municipality). In general, such formal cooperation regions are established to coordinate assets of common interests to national and international competition, central authorities or society at large, and/or to coordinate common goals, means and planning, service and industry development of different kinds. Organisational regions may consist of several municipalities, but also functional urban-rural regions. Geographical mismatch between functional regional systems and organisational regions, however, can entail some challenges with regard to policy and sustainable development of towns and regions.

Towns and regions in national and global systems

Towns and functional regions are naturally also affected by their positions and role within national and global structures, systems and networks. They are most often parts of different kind of multilevel systems of value creation, services, knowledge and innovation, migration and governance.

The term *urban system* in particular has been defined as networks of economic and political relationships between cities, towns and regions within a nation or cluster of nation states

[13]Sykora and Mulicek (2009) maintain that while FUAs have a strong integration of urban cores with their immediate hinterland, they mostly only cover the most urbanised and intensively used areas of a country. CMRs are formed through the socioeconomic links of each settlement to urban cores, containing not only the intensively linked town/city and hinterland but also more remote and loosely related peripheral areas. FUA is in fact a subset of a CMR, with which it shares a common centre and suburban hinterland, but not the peripheral areas. Therefore, in each complex micro-region (CMR), we can distinguish between three basic zones: core (town/city), functional urban area (FUA) and periphery (areas outside FUA but within CMR).

linked by shared political or economic relations (Grossmann and Mallach 2021). But while much attention has been afforded to *economic* relationships, the *political* dimension has received less attention yet may nonetheless be of great importance. In this respect, the evidence of political subordination of small towns and cities is compelling, and the fact that urban systems are often referred to as urban hierarchies is not a trivial consideration (ibid.).

Urban systems and hierarchies may vary substantially within different countries and national contexts, as well as the regional division of labour, knowledge and innovation systems, government and governance affecting urban and regional development. Additionally, the specific national (uneven) flows of people between different parts and regions of a country are of huge importance for small town regions' demographical development. Such flows are affected by, among other things, nations' specific sector policies, urban structures, demographic structures, migration and preferences for living and work.

Towns and regions are naturally also affected by diverse global conditions and driving forces. In particular, small towns and regions rooted within export industries, global value chains or foreign ownership are highly exposed to global competition and economic cycles as well as decision-makers far away. Many other global factors will also affect developments in small towns and regions, such as immigration, technology diffusion (digitalisation), climate effects and various trade and environmental agreements.

2.3 General processes of change affecting towns and regions - contemporary and beyond

Much of the international literature about urban and regional development focuses on economic and demographic trajectories and changes, underlying processes and causes, challenges and opportunities.

Economic and demographic trends

Economic aspects have long been in the foreground in the literature when analysing the characteristics and development of cities and regions. All towns have had, and continue to have, some form of economic foundation and roles that sustain them; otherwise, they would not exist. However, economic, demographic and political changes have over many decades unsettled the economic functions of most towns and cities (Grossmann and Mallach 2021).

It is widely recognised that new economic functions, particularly those associated with the knowledge economy, and which have been designated as the knowledge urbanism economy (Florida 2017), have generally benefited larger cities, with smaller ones left behind. The vocabulary of urban winners and losers has emerged, addressing factors such as agglomeration, which favours larger over smaller cities and towns[14]. However, such general claims and assessments veil the substantial heterogeneity of cities and towns with regard to

[14] This has often been linked to theories of unbalanced urban and regional growth, and prominent has the theory of circular and cumulative causation been, partly building on the Keynesian emphasis on disequilibrium and instability. The theory of circular and cumulative causation emphasises increasing returns to scale, agglomeration or external economies and the positive growth implications for localities and regions that were first to develop new industries. Initial economic stimuli such as a private or public investment in a new factory, office or infrastructure item generate positive benefits and multipliers that work their way through to expand and grow the local and regional economy, creating virtuous circles of growth and development. In reverse, an economic shock such as a factory or office closure, loss in the competitiveness of the region's exports or price rises in factor inputs can turn relationships negative and unleash multipliers that contract and shrink the local and regional economy, creating vicious circles of decline. The way in which the economic growth process feeds on itself and generates unbalanced regional growth is central to Myrdal's (1957: 13, 26) theory of circular and cumulative causation, and was also building on the Keynesian emphasis on disequilibrium and instability (Pike et.al.2017).

their different economic foundations, growth and decline, relative successes or failures, challenges and opportunities. Only a little bit of this variation of small towns has been discussed in Section 2.1. In general, recent research has merely scratched the surface of this rich, complex, economic heterogeneity of smaller cities and towns (Grossmann and Mallach 2021). This also applies to studies of what role factors other than economic structures and actors play in the economic outcomes of small town regions. These include the attractiveness for living and work, institutional capabilities for entrepreneurship and innovation, government and governance at various geographical levels. Among European countries, the role of the EU seems to be particularly relevant, both in terms of setting priorities and allocating resources, especially in Eastern Europe (Atkinson 2019; Trubina 2020). In light of the recognised economic disadvantages of towns vis-a-vis the metropolis, research that identifies pathways to greater economic success is needed not only from a scholarly perspective but also as a means of informing public policy to better support territorial cohesion and counteract increasing regional imbalances (op.cit).

Demographic aspects and trends have also for long been in focus in some parts of the literature, and to some extent also got greater attention in the last decade in many studies of urban and regional development. However, here it has been claimed that the larger global demographic trends appear to be working against small towns and cities (Grossmann and Mallach 2021). The combined effects of overall declines in fertility rates and population growth, on the one hand, and both intra- and inter- national migration patterns, work to render towns particularly vulnerable to population loss and related demographic changes, notably aging, in Europe, the US and East Asia (ibid.). Though, these processes have also affected many larger cities.

The research on, and documentation of, *shrinking cities and towns* associated with declining populations and increasing ageing, are not entirely new.[15] Shrinking towns and cities of all scales are no longer anomalies, but occur in many parts of the world (Mallach 2023), and are even the new “normal” across Europe, where a large number of urban areas find themselves among the cities losing population (Haase et.al. 2016) (Bański et.al. (2022). Shrinking as a considerable and constant loss of population says little about the nature of the process, its causes and consequences, and its role as a multifaceted issue of interrelated aspects.

A somewhat related field of study is related to “*left behind places”* (Pike et al. 2023). Small towns and rural areas suffering from a declining population, low skills and poverty have often been interpreted as “left behind places”. Today, this term encompasses numerous, typically related, characteristics such as: relative economic decline and lower productivity, employment and wages; lower levels of educational attainment and skills; higher levels of disadvantage and poverty; population shrinkage, outmigration, and ageing; poor health and wellbeing; limited social and economic assets, infrastructure, and underinvestment; lower public and private goods and services provision; and political neglect, disengagement and discontent (ibid.).

In the Nordic context, and Norway in particularly, related issues have been associated with the concept of *“the thinning society”* (Aasbrenn 1989). Based on a “consolidation hypothesis” claiming that the settlement pattern of Norway was consolidated due to increased commuting and decentralised public employment (Brox 1980*) and a* population projection from Statistics Norway indicating population decline for half of the country’s municipalities between 1987 and 2015, the term “thinning society” was launched (Aasbrenn 1989). It refers to local

[15]Oswalt P. (ed.) (2005): Shrinking Cities: International Research, vol. 1. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Publishers. However, Haase et al. (2016) have more recently shed light on this for 10 larger cities (180,000-1,000,000 inh.) in Europe, a continent where almost 42% of the large cities are shrinking.

communities and municipalities which have an ageing and declining population without becoming completely depopulated. It was assumed that the process may lead to a social and cultural impoverishment of the local community that undermines the basis for service functions, clubs and associations, informal social and cultural life. The potential negative consequences were formulated in an “impoverishment hypothesis”, which claimed that the population decline and ageing will leave its mark on everyday life, challenge visual, economic, social and cultural qualities of the communities, and lead to a detoriating welfare and unravelment of local society.

In a recent evaluation of the “thinning society” hypothesis in Norway after the projection period (1987-2015), the projections were found to underestimate the population growth for the country (due to immigration), while the population in the most remote areas continued to thin, with half of the municipalities experiencing a decline in population during the period (Sørlie and Aasbrenn 2016). The largest decline was seen in the least central municipalities, as indicated in the projection. The thinning society hypothesis was therefore supported, while the “impoverishment hypothesis” was not, following a review of several other indicators. The fact that the negative consequences of population decline have not been more dramatic was explained by a number of compensatory factors in play in Norway. Most emphasis was placed on the national development of the welfare state, i.e. welfare services and schemes that contribute to financial social security for individuals. Also mentioned are district policy, transport-infrastructure development, car use, the digital revolution and the ability of local actors to adapt to the situation and develop locally adapted solutions for service, transport etc.

Grossmann and Mallach (2021) claim that stories of the small towns that have lost all but a handful of residents and are now populated by older people are common journalistic fodder, but the validity of these themes and the underlying forces driving them is in many cases not in question. These authors maintain that a somewhat selective attention given to decline constructs a stereotypical picture of these places and also overlooks growing towns and small cities of different kinds. The picture is complex, and the population trends in towns and smaller cities shows considerable variation, and the level of variation is such that it may be clear that many different demographic and migratory processes, which may or may not be linked to patterns of economic growth or decline, are in play. These may include in-migration of distinct demographic subgroups such as elderly retirees (Steinführer and Grossmann 2021), the group referred to as “Millennials” (Farmer 2019), or more recently, refugees. Wolff, Haase, and Leibert (2021) demonstrate in a quantitative analysis the variety of demographic pathways and the complexity of factors influencing them. There is evidence that reverse migration from some large cities to smaller ones increased to some extent a few years under the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Tønnessen 2021). Though, this may seems to have been a specific and short-lived effect. However, some of these trends may be linked to the larger phenomenon known as amenity migration, but there are likely to also be other factors in play (Grossmann and Mallach 2021). In other words, the literature indicates many demographic pathways that result in widely varying outcomes for towns, even within the same country or sub-national region. Amenities and location relative to major metropolitan centres are likely to be significant factors, but systematic comparative research may well uncover other mechanisms and thereby add useful complexity to the often-oversimplified migration narrative (Steinführer and Grossmann 2021).

Going forward, as global population growth is on course to slow down and more countries will experience negative growth, the number of shrinking towns and cities will also increase substantially (Mallach 2023). A declining population and economic growth, coupled with other forces, in particular climate change, will influence the fate of the world’s cities, particularly

smaller cities and towns, over the coming decades (ibid.). Mallach claims that not only will cities' populations decline along with everyplace else, but powerful migration trends will make declines highly uneven. Many cities and towns will decline faster than their nations, while a smaller number of cities, mainly the largest ones, may keep growing, even when their nation's population as a whole is in decline. Models and strategies that assume continued population growth must as such be reconsidered. Fewer children will entail older populations and more radical changes in the demand for goods and services. Although declining populations may make it easier to tackle some of our pressing environmental issues, they may also make it harder if decline means an increasing scarcity of financial resources and intensified struggles over a shrinking pie (ibid.). With this said, Mallach also suggests a path by which many smaller, shrinking cities may thrive in the future, despite population decline and its attendant challenges.

Summing up; In contrast to the vast urban literature on major cities, their global roles and inter-connections, it has been asserted that the research about towns barely has scratched the surface of the rich and complex heterogeneity characterizing these smaller urban settlements, with regard to demographic, economic, social and cultural properties and regional contexts, as well as what kind of politics, governance and agencies that influence their development. Some underline a need for research that identifies pathways to greater economic and demographic success of towns and their regions not only from a scholarly perspective but also as a means of informing public policy (Grossmann and Mallach 2021).

Pressures, goals and efforts for attractiveness and sustainability

Competition of labour and capital between urban and rural regions of different kind is an old phenomenon. Economic and demographic cycles affect relations and flows between areas over time. The uneven employment and education opportunities are still key factors behind the uneven urban and regional development in population and employment, as well as it seems that centralization processes of people and jobs are amplified during economic booms (Johansen et.al.2009).

The last decades have the concept of *attractiveness* received more attention in urban and regional politics and planning in many countries. One reason may be a more pronounced knowledge economy and welfare society where human capital is the main resource for development, general declining population growth and increasing competition among cities. towns and regions for access to these resources and inhabitants. Representatives for cities, towns and regions have also become more active "actors" to strengthen their places reputation and attractiveness. (see so further discussion in chapter 2.4)

Additionally, over the last decade towns and regions have faced increasing demands for policies on sustainable development (environmental, social, economic) through local adapted measures and implement tool to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The idea is that the UN SDGs should serve as superior guidelines for local and regional planning. This may give challenges (ex. lack of knowledge/competence) but also new opportunities (ex. green shift and attractivity for living) to many small towns and regions in different countries. However, the general pressures, goals and efforts for both *attractiveness and sustainability* may also have some conflicting processes and results with regard to resilient development of tows and regions (see some further discussion in chapter 2.4)

2.4 Endogenous and exogenous approaches

The local and regional development literature is extensive, but put simply they have often had two different main focuses; on the one hand those dominated by theories and perspectives with much emphasis on the *extra*-local/regional (exogenous) structures, relations, impulses and driving forces, and on the other hand those with more emphasis to the *intra*-local/regional (endogenous[16]) resources, capabilities, agency and driving forces on the other. These two main perspectives and approaches have traditionally been linked to different subject disciplines and issues in question, but they are today most used in more holistic approaches and integrated analysis of interactions and dependencies between territorial internal and external conditions, driving forces and steering systems.

It is then a commonality that the economic and demographic development of towns and regions, their challenges and opportunities, are influenced by both intra-town/regional conditions and capabilities, and extra-town/regional structures, relations and impulses, and the specific interplay and sum effects of these within towns and regions. However, the concrete significance of respectively internal and external factors, and interplay, for the development of concrete towns and regions, varies immensely with historical and geographical contexts (Pike et al. 2017).

Regional determinism vs. territorial autonomy

Some has in the literature proposed two theoretical assumptions of development referred to as “regional determinism” contra “territorial autonomy”, respectively, regarding whether the larger regional context operates in a deterministic manner for a town’s development or still leaves space for independent action of towns and their hinterland (Servillo et al. 2017; Atkinson 2019).

The “*regional determinist”* approach assumes that the socioeconomic dynamics and performance of towns and their hinterland (micro-regions) are solely determined by the more structural and dynamic properties of the larger (meso-) regional contexts they are located within. Here, the larger region is conceived as being relatively homogeneous and the matrix of relational forces between territorial features and driving forces operate in a mostly deterministic manner, leaving minimal room for manoeuvre by small towns and settlements. Servillo and Russo (2017) provide some evidence that the regional context has a major influence on the general socioeconomic factors affecting the developmental trends of towns as smaller settlements in their studies. Macro dynamics seem to be dominant, particularly in regions strongly characterised by small towns and settlements, they claim.

The *“territorial autonomy”* approach on the other hand, views the town and hinterland as more independent territorial systems and elements whose socioeconomic dynamics can be understood in situ, and that, to some extent, are possible to influence by local and regional agency and policy. This has implications for policy focus, supposed capacities and opportunities available to towns and nearby areas. Here, towns and their nearby areas are conceived as “territorial forms” that have a kind of independent capacity to affect and to greater extent develop their own socio-spatial trajectory. In this approach, the regional

[16] Endogenous factors include natural resources, human capital and knowledge bases, industrial structures, socio-cultural properties, institutional set-up, tradition of cooperation etc. Exogenous factors include international and national economic, political and institutional frameworks and structures, migrations, technological innovations and other driving forces. One of the classical exogenous oriented regional economic theories have been export base theory where differences in regional growth have been explained by regional variations in the growth of the region’s exports – the goods and services sold outside the region. i.e. external demand for the region’s output determines the region’s growth rate. Contrasting to different endogenous oriented theories where regions are seen to develop from within rather than from without.

context operates as a more neutral context. This approach has influenced studies focusing on specific issues as “sustainable development practices” (Knox and Mayer 2009), “strategic agendas for urban municipalities” (Elisei 2014), the “role of innovation and the creative class” (Lorentzen and van Heur 2012), the role of “local leadership”, “inclusive growth allied with place-based development that crosses administrative boundaries” (Atkinson et.al. 2023)[17]. Such aspects only become clear through case studies. In such studies, smaller urban areas appear as autonomous territorial elements and the focus is on how they create a policy agenda and seek to manage their socioeconomic development, more sustainable development etc. In such studies may often the larger regional scale, and its role in creating a general framework for action, fades often more into the background.

Hamdouch et al. (2017) writes also that towns have a certain, albeit variable, strategic capacity to “autonomously” steer their own development trajectory. This is related to their particular circumstances and, among other factors, is influenced, non-deterministically, by their *institutional context,* which frames their capacity to act in terms of policy development to address those circumstances. [18]

Most of the research in urban and regional studies is located between the two main positions mentioned above and herein lies the complexity of this research topic, i.e. the need to understand the complex multi-scalar relationships that characterise towns’ territorial contexts (ibid.).

Uneven urban and regional development is a fundamental characteristic of the dynamics of the capitalist economy characterised by both continuity and change in patterns. Agglomeration economies and forces of attraction have given larger city regions advantages for growth in a more knowledge-based economy, compared to small town regions and sparsely populated areas. However, the phenomenon of shrinking settlements are by no means only something that applies to more small towns and scattered populated areas nowadays, but also a number of larger and medium sized cities have also been shrinking in Europe and USA over the last decades.

However, when looking at urban hierarchies (by population size) with regard to cities’ and towns’ relative positions in a nation urban structure, the main hierarchies seem to be fairly stable over quite long time. Though, one prominent feature among many of the small towns in the Global North is a differentiated and substantial uneven demographic and economic development, both within and between nations. It is likely that this results in a lot of changes in internal positions among small- and medium sized towns and cities without affecting so much the main urban structures and hierarchies within the countries.

Urban qualities, attractiveness and sustainable development

[17] Atkinson (2025) «underline that something that is missing from much of the literature is the role of ‘local leadership’ – which may be both overestimed and underestimated. It only becomes clear through ‘case studies’. Also the role of different stategies used – e.g. inclusive growth allied with place-based development that crosses administrative boundaries. This last point also raises another issue – the degree of cooperation between small towns in close proximity. Do they ‘share’ their ‘strengths’. In ESPON TOWN 2014 they also found that historically embedded competion hintered this in some cases. In other cases cooperation was limited to things like waste/water management and transport but did not include cooperation on economic development».

[18] Hamdouch et al. (2017) writs that by combining the analyses of socioeconomic profiles, economic performance and functional roles of towns within regions, the authors were able to develop a typology of towns, which demonstrates, on the one hand, the way in which towns take on particular roles within a region (centres of administration, residential services, tourism, R&D, manufacturing etc.) and, on the other, why towns are what they are due to the impact of contextual (regional) factors. A multi-scalar analysis of the phenomenon in which local and non-local dynamics are articulated is therefore necessary. At the same time, it requires specific choices to be made concerning the relevant interpretative categories and the understanding of the functional regional relationships between urban nodes and their consequent structuring effects.

Competition of labour and capital between urban and rural regions of different kind is an old phenomenon. Economic and demographic cycles affect relation and flows between areas over time. The uneven employment and education opportunities are still key factors behind the uneven urban and regional development in population and employment, as well as it seems that centralization processes of people and jobs are amplified during economic booms (Johansen et.al.2009).

Though, in much international literature, *urban qualities* have been highlighted as something that has become more important for peoples' choices of living places, and for more companies' choices of location (e.g. Florida 2007, Glaeser 2011). Here urban qualities are often linked the larger cities diversity of labour markets, services and cultural offerings, social meeting places, public transport etc. Some national studies of residence preferences and motives emphasis also that place qualities, environment and social conditions seems to have become more important for moving and housing choices than before, and in relation to the more commonly referred factors of labour market and job opportunities (Sørlie et al. 2011)[19].

The last decades have the concept of *attractiveness* received more attention in urban and regional politics and planning in many countries. One reason may be a more pronounced knowledge economy and welfare society where human capital as the main resource for development, general declining population growth and increasing competition among cities. towns and regions for access to these resources and inhabitants. Representatives for cities, towns and regions have also become more active "actors" to strengthen their places reputation and attractiveness.

In the program theory of attractiveness has the focus been on the three dimensions of places' attractiveness for living, visit and doing business respectively, and how these three dimensions, both individually and collectively, interact and affect the development of places (Vareide et al. 2018). Here, attractiveness has been defined as "the attractiveness of a place for settlements, businesses and visitors beyond what can be expected based on structural conditions" (op.cit). The four structural conditions referred to here are; (i) population size, (ii) labour market integration, (iii) neighbour growth (job growth in commuting areas affects net migration to commuting areas) and (iv) industry structures (places with a high proportion of jobs in growth industries systematically have stronger job growth). Furthermore, it is stated that the three main dimensions of attractiveness "interact and are also influenced" to some extent by the following four factors *on site*:

- amenities (local goods, offers, services),
- buildings/area,
- identity and culture
- reputation.

These last four factors here are claimed to be the only ones the municipalities themselves can do something about, while the structural conditions mentioned above have "an independent and systematic effect on either relocation or workplace development that the individual municipality can do little about" (op. cit.).

This delimitation of options for action may seem somewhat limited in the sense that the broad term of «structural conditions» may include some aspects which to some extent could be influenced by municipal authorities and/or private actors for example trough inter-municipal cooperation coordinate efforts and mitigations influence important elements in the

[19] Compared with what was found in the previous nationwide migration motive survey in 1972 (Statistics Norway's migration motive survey).

local housing or labour markets. Apart from this, it is reasonable that the structural conditions mentioned are something that can only be influenced to a certain extent, and then primarily through national policies and instruments and to a modest extent at the county level. Otherwise, the list of attractiveness factors discussed here can hardly be perceived as a complete list of what creates attractiveness unless one has a very broad definition of local goods. Otherwise, this "theory" that treats the population as a homogeneous group is somewhat blind to different groups. That is, for example, which social groups are talked about when describing the attractiveness of places. Place qualities are perceived differently among different groups.

Developing attractive centres with urban qualities is relevant for many regions without major cities. Based on various literature on urban place qualities and attractiveness, it can be argued from a policy perspective on attractive regional centres that it is particularly important to have comprehensive strategies for developing (NIBR 2021:2):

- Varied services and services adapted to all groups
- Physical attractiveness (compact site development, building qualities, good accessibility, safeguarding cultural heritage, natural and environmental qualities)
- varied social and cultural meeting places, activities and offers
- Varied labour market and competence environments

It is precisely when it comes to the whole here – i.e. the presence of a wide range of favourable attractiveness factors and synergies between them – that one can speak of attractive cities/centres and their regions. This also means that centres that are only attractive to specialised companies, but not very attractive for settlement and visits, can rarely be described as attractive regional centres or places. It is when several of these elements of attractiveness are present and reinforce each other that one can talk about attractive cities, regional centres and regions.

Good urban qualities can strengthen the attractiveness of small towns and regions as places to live, visit and place for business. Not in the sense that such urban qualities alone give small towns in rural areas attractiveness and attractiveness in competition with, for example, the big cities. Some studies have highlighted the close combination of certain rural and urban qualities as important for many people's perceived residential attractiveness in small towns in rural areas. These have also been referred to as rurban qualities.

It may also be relevant here to recall previous national housing and migration motive surveys, which show that place and environment have become more important compared to work when moving to regions other than metropolitan regions (Sørlie et al., 2012). The study points to a shift towards family orientation, where place, local environment, place affiliation, social conditions and identification with the place are important motives for moving. It is pointed out that the work motive, on the other hand, seems to be more important in the younger phase, before the housing and family motives become more important in a somewhat later phase. Thus, the survey in 2008 (Sørlie et al.) did not indicate that access to a number of «urban qualities» such as diversity of services and offers, good public transport etc. were in themselves pronounced motives for moving, while physical and social conditions in the local environment as well as belonging and place identity were highlighted more. The physical aspect included environmental factors, child-friendliness, buildings and neighbourhoods, while social factors included friendship and neighbourliness, tolerance, traffic safety and crime levels. Belonging and place identity included, among other things, family properties, experiences and experiences with the place, nature and identity related to the place or region. This type of factor was highlighted as important for many people's motivation to move to, return but also stay somewhere (desire to live and stay).

Attractiveness and sustainability are two terms that are often used by municipalities and county authorities in their perspectives, goals and strategies for local and regional community development. These can be goals, strategies and interests that support each other, but can also be goals, strategies and interests that are in conflict with each other. It depends on what you put into conceptual understandings and strategies in different areas. For example, goals and strategies to increase visitor attractiveness for certain types of tourism and development may conflict with considerations of environmental and social sustainability both locally, regionally and nationally. In general, there are a number of lines of conflict latent in the relationship between visitor attractiveness and sustainable local community development in some regions.

If the attractiveness of places is to be sustainable in the long term, it cannot be in strong conflict with environmental and social sustainability locally, regionally or nationally. At the same time, it is the case that if the environmental, social and economic sustainability of places and regions is to be ensured in the long term, it is necessary that the sustainability goals and measures are designed so that they can contribute to supporting the development of the specific areas' residential, visitor and business attractiveness in a sustainable and future-oriented manner. This requires a clearer focus on development goals and aspects rather than traditional goals related to (net) growth in population and jobs.

The *compact city* is often held up as the symbol of sustainable urban development, because it seeks to balance economic, social and environmental development. The concept has its roots in the idea that a dense, functionally mixed city or town ensures a vibrant and more diverse place. Mixed-use cities mean that areas are developed as a mixture of residential purposes and other purposes for commercial activities, public and private services, etc. The idea is that co-location of housing and services will help reduce the need for transport. The goal is also to create arenas for social meetings and activities where different people can live and thrive. Furthermore, a more concentrated population can provide a larger customer base to local businesses. Concentration of several functions such as housing, workplaces, services and cultural offerings can contribute to the revitalisation of the urban space and the saving of space. This also provides the basis for sustainable mobility, which in turn can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The urban development model has already had a major impact in Europe. It has possibly best development conditions for urban settlements of some size, but the perspective should also to some extent be relevant for small and medium sized towns.

The attractiveness and sustainability of many towns and regional centres can be strengthened by developing a better balance between trade and services, jobs and housing for different groups. A challenge in some places is the death of shops and reduced downtown trade, and that the most attractive downtown areas are filled with housing at the expense of jobs. This can weaken cities' compactness and potential for creating vibrant cities and attractive regional centres.

Through good transformation, revitalisation and diversity, may towns and regional centres be made more attractive for living and/or visiting. Special assets that have been used for this have often been historical buildings and cultural heritage, develop water-close connections, some modern urban structures, good meeting places and activity rooms, and facilitation for workplaces and entrepreneurs in the urban centre. The latter is often more important for vibrant urban centres than facilitation for trade. For some small towns may densification through increased development of housing push jobs out of the urban centre which may weaken the basis for some sales of goods and services because of fewer people in urban centre throughout the day. Skilled jobs in public or private sector may contribute positively to the opposite. Often when administrative functions are moved or expanded outside the urban

center, these areas often are transformed into housing. It provides the best price for the owner, but at the same time helps to move jobs out of the urban center. Such transformation may provide a poorer starting point for good centre development because it weakens the circulation of people in the urban center and thus reduces the basis for the sale of different kinds of goods, services and experiences. It gives often towns and cities a great advantage to have jobs in the urban centres. In many medium-sized towns, the urban centre is currently filled with housing at the expense of jobs because it provides the most profitable projects. This development reduces the compactness and weakens the potential for urban attractiveness and some growth.

In parallel with the prevalence, the discussion about the costs of compact urban development, including for natural and environmental values and for those who live and work in the town – how social and environmental sustainability is safeguarded, has become stronger. In the field of tension between economic, social and environmental sustainability, there may be conflicting interests in compact urban development. If a compact urban development is to be sustainable socially, environmentally and economically, this requires good participatory processes in which civil society, business and authorities at various levels are involved.

2.5 Issues from the literature, in short

Small and medium-sized towns and their hinterlands constitute significant parts of settlement patterns and urban systems in most nations. Some of the literature claim that in spite of this, the attention to them in urban research and policy have been largely ignored, overshadowed by research and policy focus on the larger cities and their regions. Improving the knowledge base of small towns and regions may in general be important for developing better national policies and adapted capabilities for place-based sustainable development of small towns and regions, which also has an impact on the goals of territorial and social cohesion within nations.

With this said, research on small towns has not been completely absent and parts of the literature indicates that the attention has been growing over the last years. It has been claimed that this increased interest among researchers and planners in European countries have been stimulated by regional policies with enhanced focus on endogenous potential and in territorial capital and advantages, place-based leadership and decentralised decision-making (Banski et al 2021).

Beyond the recognition that small towns are a very heterogenous group, systematic knowledge about them are still very inadequate and fragmented in many countries regarding their properties and development, challenges and options for innovation, resilience and sustainability (Mayer and Lazzeroni edt. 2022, Wagner and Grow 2021, Grossmann and Mallach 2021, Atkinson 2019), underpinning a need for greater illumination and updated examination of different types of towns' economic, demographic and institutional conditions and development, as well as challenges, opportunities og experiences with respect to sustainable development and governance. A need for more systematic comparative studies both within and between countries, and more inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, have also been noted.

Based on the literature, we can summarise the following issues in need for further research on small towns and regions within and between countries, including holistic and integrated synthesis of more of them:

- National settlement patterns and development patterns (urban/rural systems)

- Town types and regional contexts
- Demographic structures, development paths and processes of change
- Economic structures, development paths and processes of change
- Attractiveness and changes (living, visit and business)
- Multi-level governance and place based leadership for sustainable development
- Politics, spatial and strategic urban and regional planning

3 Small towns and their regions (STR) in Norway

In this chapter, we shed light on some properties and development patterns of small towns, their municipalities and regions (STR) in Norway. We have chosen to illuminate these with analyses of demographic and economic variables in addition to a few other socio-economic variables.

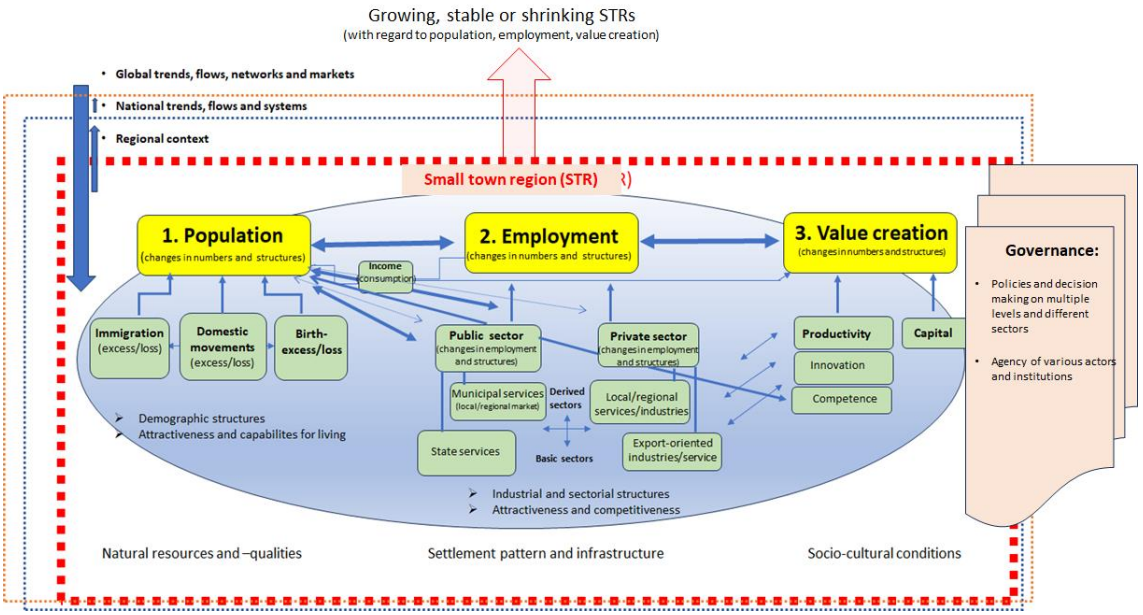
First, the chapter (3.1) presenters a delineated general model of local and regional development as an approach for empirical analysis of some main output variables, followed by a section (3.2) that gives an empirical overview of main development trends for the five regional classes of Norway 2010-24, one of which is the STR-class. The next sections (3.3 and 3.4) describe and analyze 18 selected STR-cases in more detail. These represent cases from three different "development groups". These are analysed comparatively, and we highlight similarities and dissimilarities among them that may explain their very uneven development. The last section (3.5) summarizes and discusses the previous empirical sections (3.1-3.4).

3.1 Analytic approach

Based on urban and regional theory we can set up an analytical framework for analysis of uneven development of towns/regions (see Figure 1). In the limited comparative analysis of uneven development among regions in this report, we will focus on regional context[20], structural factors[21] and components of change[22] as kinds of “independent variables” in explaining their uneven (regional) development in population and employment/jobs (“dependent variables”).

[20]E.g. centrality, type of neighbouring regions (ex. large city regions).
[21]E.g. size and composition of population, economy and labour market (different levels of agglomeration advantages).
[22]These may indicate relative competitive-/attractiveness: e.g. level of (net) migration (indicator of attractiveness) and relative changes of jobs in vs. the country in i) private sector and ii) state dominated sectors.

Figure 1: Illustration of some of the main output-variables, underlying structures and components of changes, resulting in differentiated socio-economic development of STRs.



The term “region” is in the empirical analysis here used about living- and labour-regions, of which we have 159 of in Norway (BA/TØI 2020). These are functional micro-regions around towns and cities of different sizes, and which we have divided into five main regional classes. Of these are 65 *small town regions (STR)* where their largest urban settlement is a town with between 2000-20000 inhabitants. These most commonly have roles as regional (service-) centres located within the centre municipality of the STR which often also consists of 1-4 hinterland municipalities (some STRs consist only of one municipality and is referred to as ‘one-municipality regions’).

In the following we first give a limited description of uneven development among the five main *regional classes*[23] of Norway. Then we will go into a comparative analysis of a selected group of 18 STRs within three different “development”-groups. All the empirical analyses, tables and figures that follows are based on official register data published and derived from Statistics Norway.

3.2 Urban and rural regions in the national context

In a European context, Norway is a country with a large area and small population,[24] and among the countries with the smallest share of the population living in the large city regions but the largest share in town areas and scattered settlement regions (Onsager et al. 2021).[25] The small town regions (including micro-town, small and medium-sized town regions) have 35 percent of the inhabitants in Norway. The towns and their (functional) regions is

[23]These regional classes of functional regions are divided in 1) Largest city regions (largest city>150.000 ihb.), 2) City-regions others (largest city 50.000-150.000 ihb.), 3) Medium-sized and larger town regions (largest town 20.000-50.000 ihb.), 4) Small town regions (2.000-20.000 ihb.) and 5) Regions without towns (i.e. not urban settlements>2.000 ihb.). In some parts of the report (as in figure 3) we split class 4 in the two sub-classes: 4a) “small town regions” (largest town 5.000-20.000 ihb) and 4b) micro town regions (largest town 2.000-5.000 ihb.).

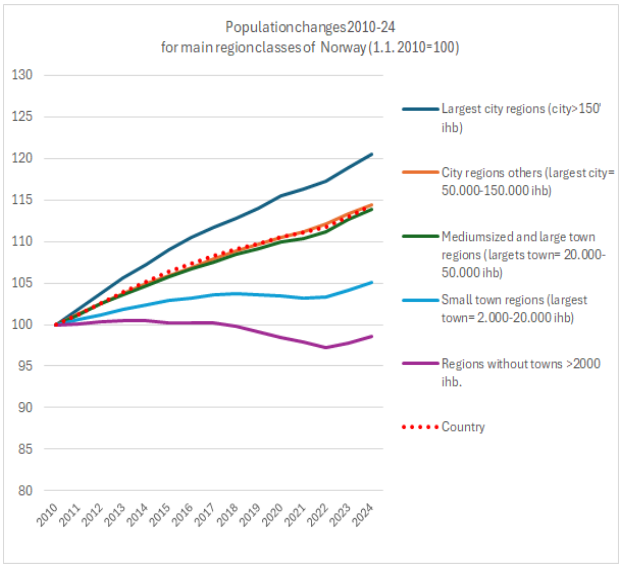
[24]Area of 385,000 km2 (fourth largest country in Europe) and a population of 5.5 million (25th largest country in Europe) (SSB 2023).

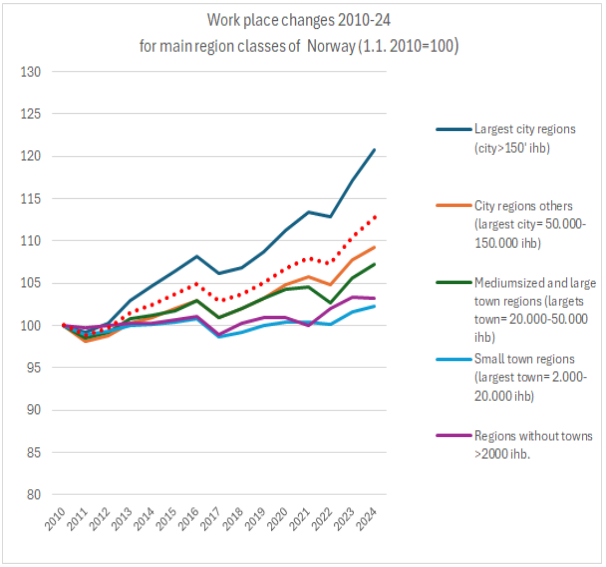
[25]The inhabitantes are such distrubuted: Larger cityregions: 47%, City regions others: 16%, Small- and mediumsized town regions: 27 % (13/13/6%), Micro-town regions: 6% and Regions without towns: 4% (Statistics Norway 2024).

decentralised localized in most parts of the country, though mostly along the widely coastline but also to some extent quite many around some of the largest city regions.

Norway has had a significant growth in population and jobs in the period 2010-2024 (14% and 12%, respectively; see Figure 2). This is due, historically speaking, to a high rate of immigration and high activity levels in the private and public sectors during most of the years, despite of a couple of short-term setbacks. Most of the growth has been in the metropolitan regions (19% and 21%, respectively) but also the medium-sized city regions have seen a substantial growth in the population (14% and 8%). The small town regions (2'-20') have in this respect had weak (net) growth but maintained their levels (5% and 2%), while the regions without towns have had somewhat weaker development, but mostly maintained their level (-1% and 1%). However, such net numbers for aggregated groups obscure both wide-scale structural changes and uneven development among regions within these groups. This differentiated development among the main regional classes in Norway has been a long-term trend over many decades[26].

Figure 2: Development (%) in population and jobs in the five main regional classes in Norway 2010-2024 (2010=100).

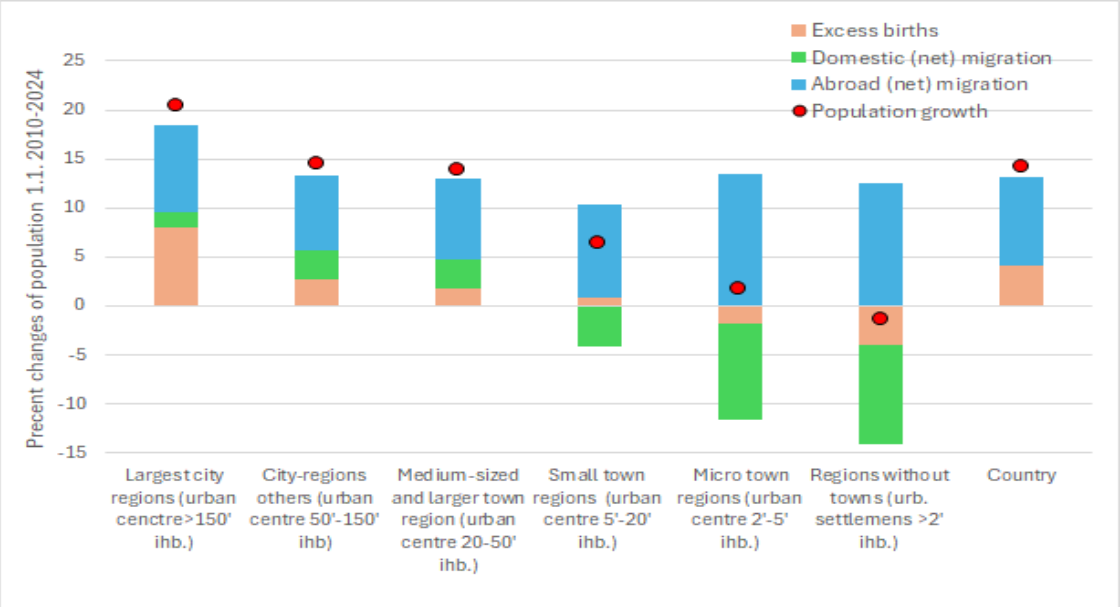




When we look at more details of the components behind the population changes in the five regional classes 2010-24 (figure 3), we note that the (net) immigration from abroad has been the largest contribution to population growth in all classes. The larger city regions have got substantial additional growth impulses also from high birth surplus and some positive (net)

[26]This is a total result of divers economic and demographic processes as well as diverse sector policies. However, during much of the same period, the national explicit regional and rural ('district'-) policies has aimed to support balanced development between and within different parts of the country. This has entailed a number of instruments directed particularly to strengthen settlement and employment in rural areas characterized by low centrality and thin population bases (the main variables in the yellow boxes in the model illustrated in Figure 1 above). Most of the economic instruments have been directed towards supporting employment, job creation and business development with geographically differentiated support levels increasing with decreasing centrality. But the national policy has been absent when it comes to supporting the functional town regions in rural Norway, in spite of their potentially important roles as units to strengthen the development capacity, innovation, attractiveness and sustainability of the micro regions throughout the country, and as a foundation for balanced regional development within and between parts of the country.

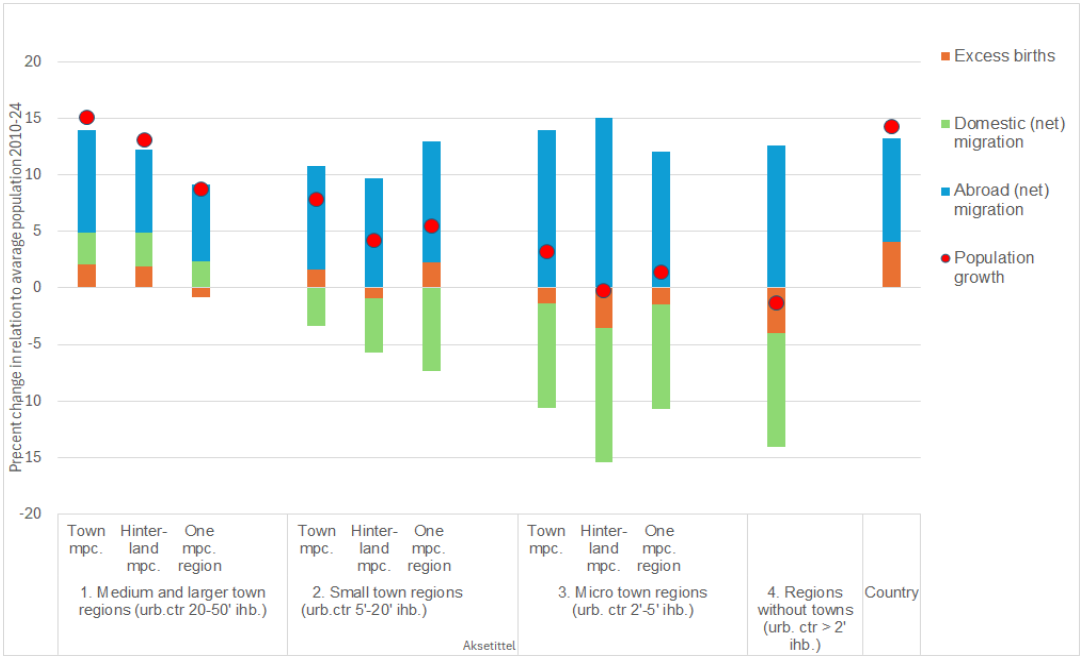
Figure 3: Components behind population changes 1.1.2010-2024 in the main regional classes in Norway (change components in % of average population level 2010-24).



domestic migraton. The small town regions had also some excess of births but (net) out-migration domestically, while the smallest town regions had both substantial birth deficit and (net) out-migration domestically.

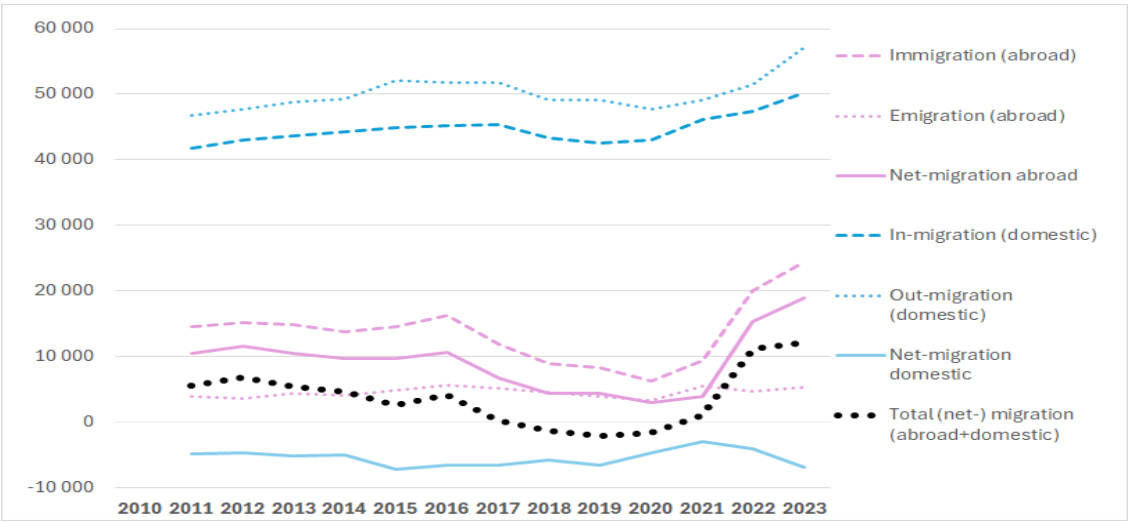
When looking at the population changes and components of changes of centre and hinterland municipalities of medium-sized and small town regions (see figure 4), we see for all classes that the centre municipalities (including the largest town) have a more favorable development pattern than the hinterland municipalities. This is due to excess of births/less in deficit and at the same time less net out-migration domestically.

Figure 4: Components of change behind the population development 1.1.2010-2024 of center/town municipalities and hinterland municipalities within the three subgroups of town regions. .



At last, we take also a short look at the migration flows into and out of the small town regions over the last thirteen years (figure 5, below). It shows that a (net) immigration has contributed substantial to the movement balance in all the years 2010-23, but after a declining trend 2010-2020, we notice a greatly improved (net) immigration in the last couple of years which is due to increased settlement of refugees from Ukraine.

Figure 5: Movement flows into and out of small towns regions, 2010-23.



3.3 The class of small town regions (STR)

In the previous section, we described some of the main development patterns in 6 classes of urban-rural regions in Norway over the last fifteen years. Such aggregated patterns will of course veil most of the internal diversity within and between these classes.

In the following, we firstly highlight some aspects of the diversity of development among the 65 small town regions (STR) in Norway, before emphasising in more depth a strategic sample of 18 STRs sorted into three different "development groups" of Growing, Stable and Shrinking STRs. We then shed light on their properties with regard to typologies, structures, development trends and underlying processes. We will have a comparative perspective on the similarities and differences within and between STRs in these three development groups with regard to structures and components of changes resulting in their differentiated and uneven development in population and jobs.

The term "small town region" (STR) is operationalised as the functional labour market regions where a small town with 2,000-20,000 inhabitants is the largest urban settlement. These towns most commonly have roles as regional (service) centres located within the centre municipalities of the STR, which often also encompasses 1-4 hinterland municipalities (some STRs also only consist of one municipality, these we call 'one-municipality regions'). The STRs may be denoted as "autonomous" functional regions in the sense that they are not directly integrated in the large and medium-sized city regions, although they may be influenced by these in other ways.

In Norway we have 65 STRs as "autonomous" functional (labour market) regions, located in areas that, in some international literature, are termed as both "intermediate urban regions" and "peripheral rural regions", but not "metropolitan regions" (Atkinson 2019; Korelcelli-Olejniczak 2021). The 65 STRs in Norway are scattered across both coastal and inland areas in 10 of 11 counties, and as such they are located in the large area often popular termed Distrikts-Norge ("District-Norway").

The ranking of all the 65 STR according to a statistical "development"- indicator[27] (see table V1 in appendix) shows a fairly uneven development in 2011-23 (see table V1 and Figure V1 in appendix). The 65 STRs can be placed into four main categories[28]:

- *32 Growing STRs - with* growth in both population and jobs, of which *20 with substantial growth of* more than 4% in both population and jobs (4-13% in population and 4-18% in jobs).

- *20 Shrinking STRs* – with shrinking in both population and jobs, of which *9 with substantially shrinking more than* 3% in both population and jobs (minus 3-7% and 4-15%).

- *23 Stable STRs* - with minor changes in both population and jobs (plus/minus 3%) (including some minor growing/shrinking STRs from the groups above)

- *13 STRs with weak correlation* of changes within population and jobs, respectively (7 STRs with some growth in population and decrease in jobs, and 6 STRs with a reduction in population but growth in jobs).

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[27]I.e. sum of net change rates (%) in the population and jobs respectively between 2011-2023, i.e. between the *average number per* 1.1.2010/11/12 to *average number* 1.1. 2022/23/24. We used these moving averages to avoid more random effects in one single year. We have checked the change rates and rankings of the STR for the period 2011-2020 (before effects from covid-19 and refugees from Ukraine) and the shorter period 2015–2023, but found only a few deviations from the rankings of all the 65 STRs 2011-23 and no one among our 18 selected cases in this period.

[28]Some of the 65 STRs are placed in two of these categories due to some overlap and not very clear boundaries.

From this, we can summarise the following main distribution of the 65 STRs:

- 20 pronounced growing STRs in both population and jobs
- 9 pronounced shrinking STRs in both population and jobs
- 23 stable (net zero changes) STRs in both population and jobs
- 13 STRs with weak correlation in the development of population and jobs[29]

3.4 Growing, Stable and Shrinking Small Town Regions

3.4.1 Main characteristics of the three subgroups

In the following, we take a closer look at a selection of 18 STRs distributed by six in each of the three subgroups "Growing", "Stable" and "Shrinking" STRs according to a statistical "development"- indicator of all the 65 STRs' in Norway (see table V1 in appendix)

This selection of 18 STRs include 12 maximum variation cases in terms of outcome variables in that period, i.e. 6 named Growing STRs and 6 named Shrinking STRs). The 6 last ones belong to the median group named "Stable STRs" (se tabell V" in Appendix). The following chapters will describe and compare the three subgroups, i.e. similarities and differences in structures and change components of population and jobs, and also for some other socio-economic variables (household income levels, employment rates, outsiderness). The main focus in the comparation is between the highest ranked Growing STRs and the lowest ranked Shrinking STRs. The six zero-growth STRs termed Stable STRs are used as a reference group for the two others (some more details in Table V2 in appendix).

Some of the overarching characteristics of the selected 18 STRs in the three main groups are:

The 6 Growing STRs had a substantial growth in both population (8-13%, 2011-2023) and jobs (4-18%). In general, their growth rate was somewhat higher for jobs than for population with one exception (Alver is the other way around due to its proximity to the large city region of Bergen). All of the Growing STRs are in the centrality classes[30] 4 and 5 but vary substantially in size with regard to the largest town (2,400-16,000 inh.) and the number of inhabitants (9,800-33,300 inhabitants, average of 19,200) and jobs (4,800-12,600 jobs, average of 8,800).

However, the Growing STRs have had a very uneven development within their regions (see Figure 4), where almost all of their growth (in both population and jobs) has come in the town municipality (centre municipality), while the development in the hinterland communities has been much weaker. In these STRs, there has thus been a centralised growth pattern where the towns have functioned as growth centres in the regions.

The 6 Stable STRs had small (net) changes in population (0-3%) and jobs (+2/-2%) in the period 2011-2023. The STRs have centre municipalities in the centrality classes 3, 4 or 5 in the national hierarchical system (SSB), but vary substantially in size with regard their largest towns (2,505 -18,100 inh.), and the STRs' number of inhabitants (7,200-41,700 inhabitants, average of 19,800) and jobs (3,800-16,700, average of 8,900). Internally, the Stable STRs'

[29] At the extremes here are Indre Østfold and Nordkapp, both of which have zero growth in jobs, and at the same time very strong growth vs. sharp decline in population, respectively.
[30] Statistics Norway's (SSB) hierarchical grouping of municipalities into six classes based on an index including variables on population, accessibility to services and workplaces (daily commuting distance).

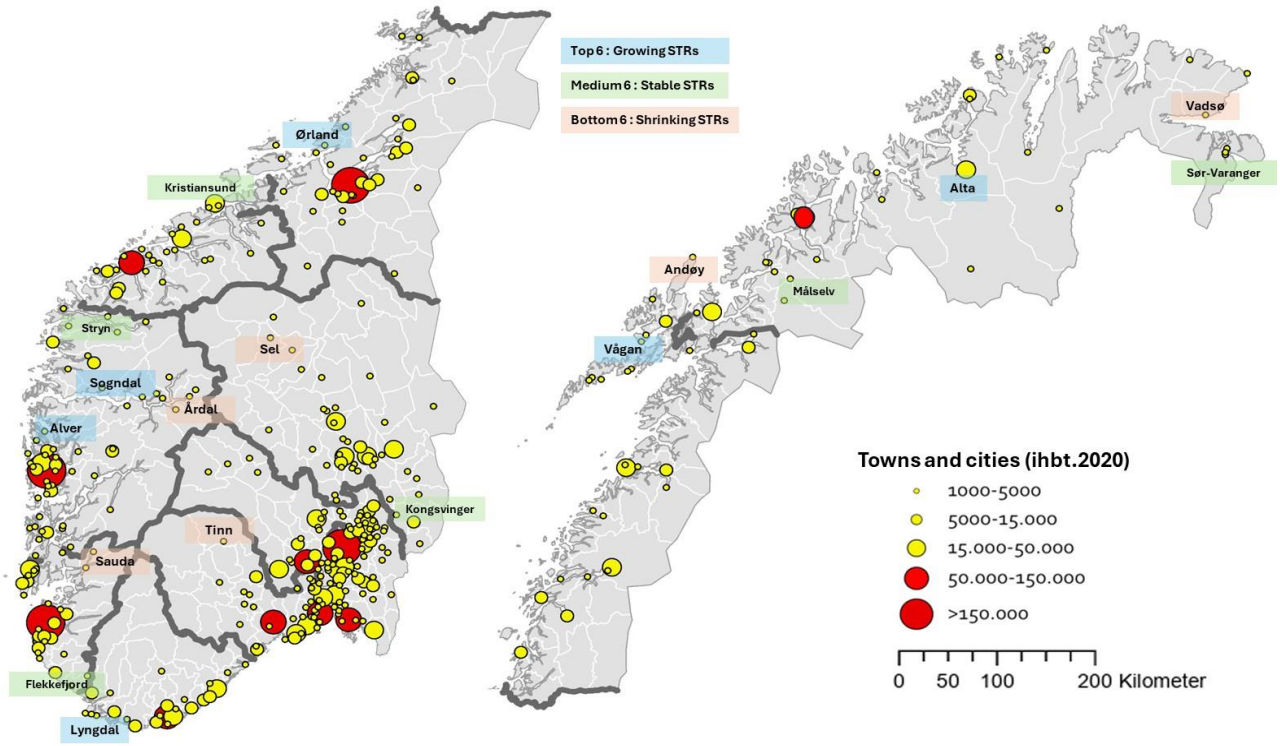
development overall has been slightly uneven where the centre municipalities have had long-term growth but the hinterland municipalities have had a long-term decrease (Figure 4).

The 6 Shrinking STRs had a substantial reduction in population (minus 4-9%) and jobs (minus 8-15%) in the period 2011-2023. The decline rates are somewhat higher here for jobs than for population. These STRs only have municipalities at the lowest centrality classes (5 and 6) in the national hierarchical system (SSB), though the size of their largest town varies (2,300-4,700 inh.) as does the number of inhabitants (4,600-9,300 inhabitants, average 6,400) and jobs (2,000-4,200 jobs, average 2,200) in their region.

In the Shrinking STRs, there has also been an uneven development overall within their regions (see Figure 4), but in a different way than in the Growing STRs. The Shrinking STRs have seen a substantially larger reduction rate in the town municipalities compared to the hinterland municipalities. In these STRs, there has thus been a centralised shrinking, and the towns have not in any way functioned as growth centres, but rather as shrinking centres.

Summing up, the Growing and Shrinking STRs show substantial contrasts with regard to centrality levels (national index), number of inhabitants and jobs in their towns and regions (STR), i.e. including scales of regional dwelling and labour markets. The Shrinking STRs have lower centrality and scales than the Growing STRs. On the other hand, the Growing

Figure 5: Map of towns and cities in Norway, and the 18 STRs in the case sample



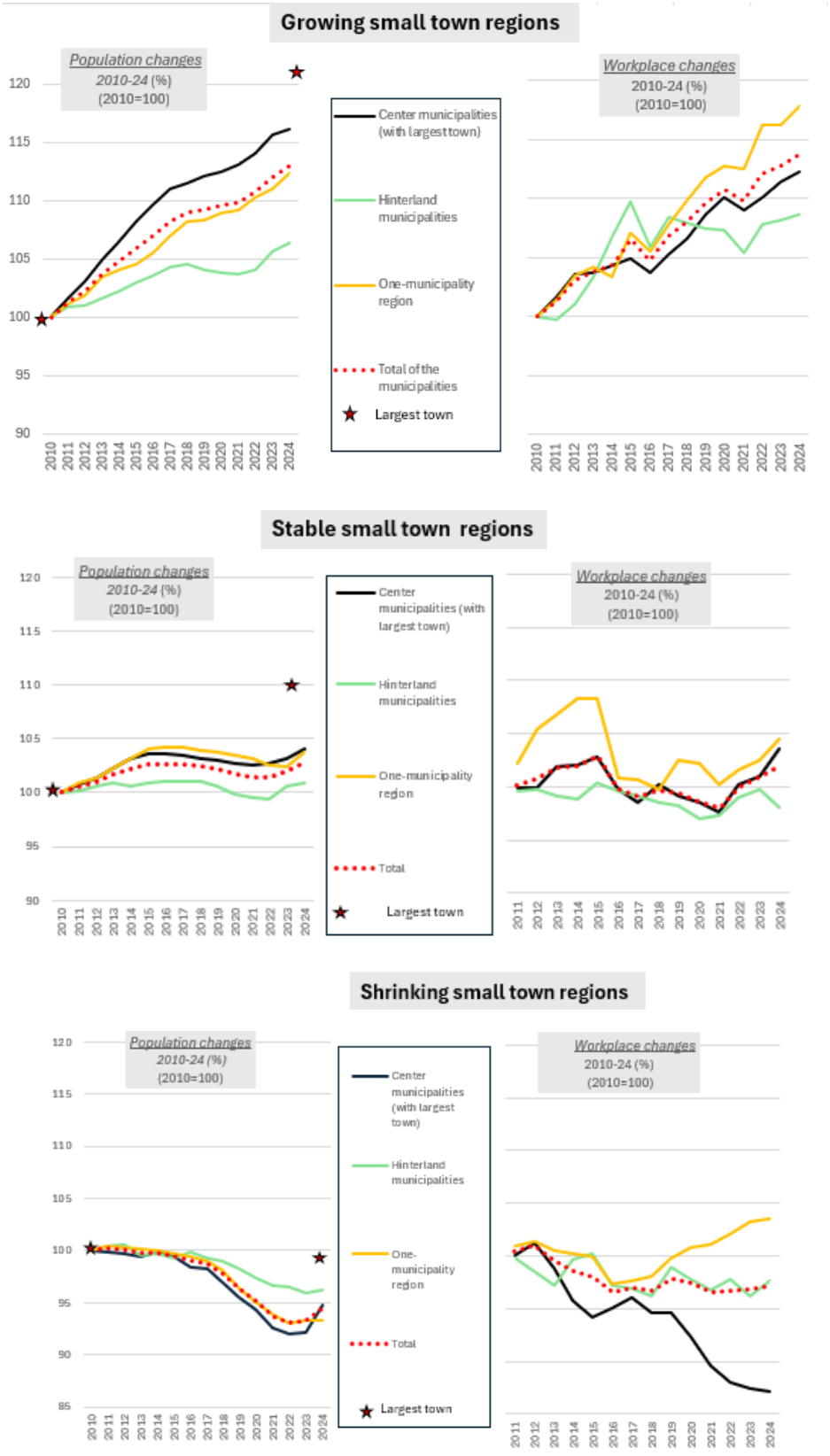
and Stable STRs have much in common with regard to centrality and scales. However, these main patterns are not without exceptions; although four out of six Growing STRs are much larger than the six Shrinking STRs, two of the Growing STRs are only slightly larger than the largest of the Shrinking STRs.

This indicates that less central and smaller STRs more often have challenges with shrinking population and job opportunities than more central and larger STRs. This is in no way very surprising because difference in quantitative size and centrality tendentially will give uneven endogenous capabilities and attractiveness of regions. STRs with low centrality, small

population bases, thin business environments and service markets, have limited growth capabilities and attractiveness and vulnerable communities for external shocks. On the other hand, centrality, size and then also diversity, gives larger agglomeration and growth advantages and some kinds of attractiveness. Larger towns and regions may to a greater extent benefit from agglomeration advantages and attractiveness as a place of residence. The smallest towns and regions have poorer opportunities to exploit such agglomeration advantages, though they may have other advantages related to some deagglomerated (resource-based) production and for people who like scattered settlement.

However, as indicated by some empirical exceptions, there is no automatic or determined relationship between the scale of the town regions and the changes in their number of people and jobs in a given period. Empirically, however, based on our 18 selected STRs for the period 2010-2024, we see that STRs with over 7,000-8,000 inhabitants and 4,000-5,000 jobs have avoided shrinkage, while those below this level have shrunk.

Figure 6: Changes in population size and workplaces (occupied jobs) in the towns, center-municipalities and hinterland municipalities in the 18 Growing, Stable and Shrinking STRs 2010-2024 (%, 2010=100).



3.4.2 Types of towns and regions

As mentioned above, some of the international literature has placed great emphasis on different town and regional contexts when analysing and explaining some of the diversities of socioeconomic development. The two main types of towns that have received much attention in this literature are variants of central place towns and specialised production towns, respectively, which have different economic dynamics and territorial roles. Typologies are ideal forms that are seldom found in pure forms. Many previous studies have been based on cases that include a few selected types of towns and lack any attempt to shed light on the variation of all towns and cities throughout a country. One exception is the aforementioned study in Switzerland, which describes seven subgroups of these main types, broken down into residential economy towns, business hub towns, knowledge intensive towns, high tech towns, low tech towns, tourism towns and outliers (Meili and Mayer 2017).

In the following, we take a brief look at what characterises our selected 18 towns with regard to the two main types of towns mentioned above. We do this in line with their main sectoral structures, based on occupied jobs in the town municipality (1.1.2024), respectively within the following basic sectors[31]: “export”-oriented industries and/or state services (sector 1); regional oriented industries and services (sector 2); and local services (sector 3), which mainly comprise municipal welfare services. We then classify the towns as either specialised production towns (SPT), which mainly comprise sector 1; central place towns (CPT), which are dominated by sectors 2-3; or mixed towns (MT), which have a substantial SPT sector (1) alongside a large CPT sector (2-3) (see also the table and figures below). This is partly in line with scholars who have categorised towns based on three distinct profiles of their local economies, characterised as predominantly a productive economy, residential economy or a mixed type of economy, respectively (Hamadouch et al. 2017), as mentioned above in Section 2.1. In general, we see firstly that within the “average town” (municipality) of the STRs, about 32% of jobs are within the basic sectors, 41% in regional industries and services, and 28% in local services (Table 1). The basic sector and local sector are relatively more important for employment in the STRs “average town” than the national level. Looking at the “average town” for each of the three groups, we see that the “average town” of the Growing STRs have to some extent a smaller basic sector and larger regional sector than the “average towns” of Stable and Shrinking STRs. In the “average town” of Shrinking STRs, the private basic sector is largest, while the “average town” of the Stable STRs has the largest share of state entities in the basic sector. However, there is of course no “average town” in reality, and we see great variation in town types within all three main STR groups.

[31]The basic sector gets its market or income from outside the region, and thus also includes state-funded activities (defence, university/college, hospitals etc.).

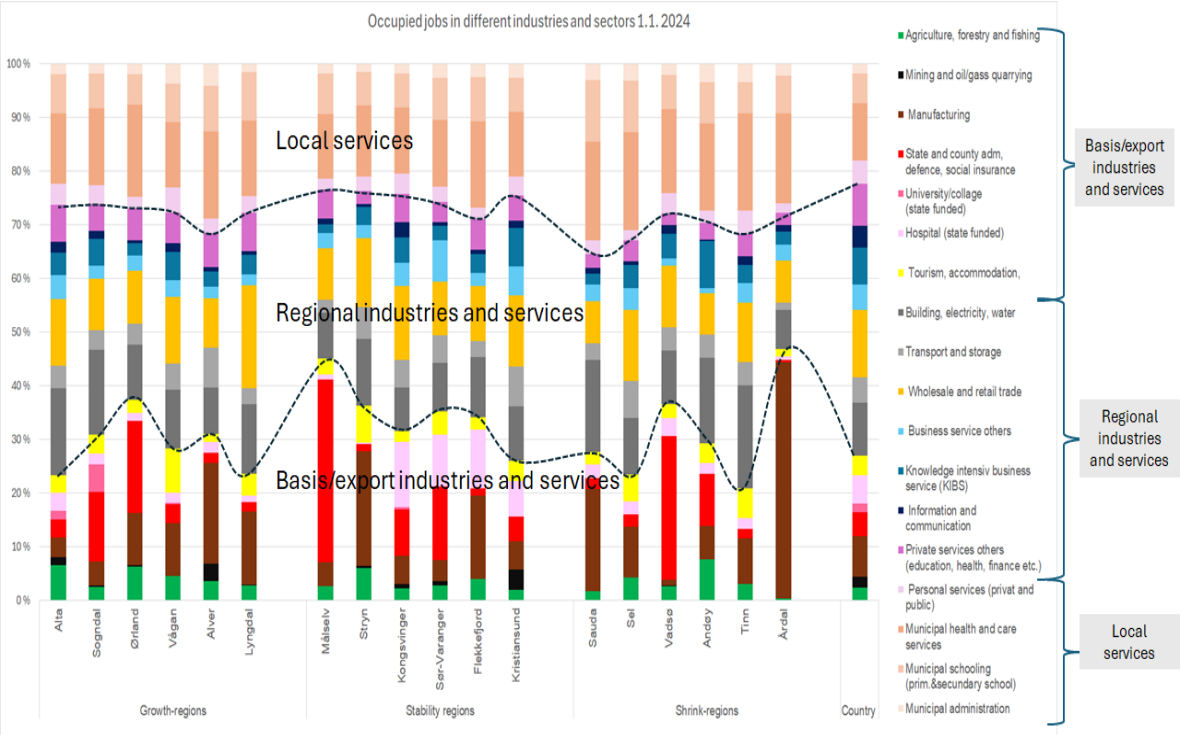
Table 1: Types of towns in Growing, Stable and Shrinking regions (based on share of occupied jobs in main sectors in town municipality 1.1.2024). Red cells have proportions higher than the national average.

	Town region		Town		Type of town: Central Place Town (CPT) - Spesialized Production Town (SPT)		Basis (export) industries and services (SPT-basis)			Local and reg. industries and services (CPT-basis)			
	Name	Inhabitants 2024	Name	Inhabitants 2024	Short name	Some detailes of industries and services	Total	Private sector	State sector (adm, defence, univ, hospital)	Total	Regional industries and services	Local services (mainly municpality)	
Growth-regions	Alta	21 708	Alta	16 269	CPT	CPT (construction, el.prod., retailing, business services)	23,3	14,9	8,4	76,7	50,4	26,3	100
	Sogndal	17 690	Sogndalsfjøra	4 388	SPT & CPT	SPT (state/county adm, university) + CPT (construction, retailing, business services)	30,9	10,7	20,2	69,1	42,9	26,1	100
	Ørland	10 522	Brekstad	2 437	SPT	SPT (defence and manufacturing)	37,3	18,7	18,6	62,7	35,8	26,9	100
	Vågan	9 793	Svolvær	4 775	SPT & CPT	SPT (manufacturing/maritime and tourism) +CPT (construction, retailing, private services)	28,3	22,6	5,7	71,7	44,0	27,7	100
	Alver	33 251	Knarvik	6 690	SPT & CPT	SPT (manufacturing/petrochemical)+ CPT (transport, retail)	31,0	27,0	4,0	69,0	37,5	31,6	100
	Lyngdal	22 487	Lyngdal	5 602	SPT & CPT	CPT (construction, retailing)+ some SPT (manufacturing/metall, agrofood)	23,6	20,5	3,1	76,4	48,7	27,7	100
	Avarege numbers (ihbt)	19 242				Avarege shares (jobs in sectors)	29,1	19,1	10,0	70,9	43,2	27,7	100
Stabile regions	Målselv	10 700	Andselv	2 771	SPT	SPT (defence)	45,0	10,1	35,0	55,0	31,5	23,5	100
	Stryn	7 271	Stryn	2 712	SPT & CPT	SPT (manufacturing/agrofood etc) + some CPT (construction, retailing))	36,3	34,6	1,6	63,7	40,1	23,7	100
	Kongsvinger	41 734	Kongsvinger	12 443	SPT & CPT	SPT (defence, hospital, stat.adm)+ CPT (construction, el.production, retailing, privat services)	31,5	10,3	21,2	68,5	44,3	24,2	100
	Sør-Varanger	10 063	Kirkenes	5 182	SPT & CPT	SPT (defence) + CPT (retailing, business services)	35,2	11,7	23,5	64,8	39,1	25,7	100
	Flekkefjord	15 471	Flekkefjord	6 231	SPT & CPT	SPT (manufacturing/maritime, hospital) + CPT (construction, retailing)	34,1	21,9	12,2	65,9	37,0	28,9	100
	Kristiansund	33 400	Kristiansund	18 337	SPT & CPT	CPT (retailing, business services, construction)+ some SPT (hospital)	26,1	14,7	11,3	73,9	49,5	24,5	100
	Avarege numbers (ihbt)	19 773				Avarege shares (jobs in sectors)	34,7	17,2	17,5	65,3	40,2	25,1	100
Shrink-regions	Sauda	4 572	Sauda	4 190	SPT & CPT	CPT (construction etc)+ some SPT (manufacturing/metal)	27,6	23,1	4,5	72,4	36,8	35,5	100
	Sel	9 287	Otta	2 322	SPT & CPT	CPT (retailing, construction , transport) + some SPT (manufacturing and tourism)	23,4	18,7	4,7	76,6	43,7	32,8	100
	Vadsø	6 666	Vadsø	4 867	SPT	SPT (stat adm, defence)	36,6	6,4	30,2	63,4	35,6	27,8	100
	Andøy	5 533	Andenes	2 499	SPT & CPT	SPT (defence) + some CPT (construction , business service)	29,2	17,4	11,8	70,8	41,2	29,6	100
	Tinn	7 399	Rjukan	3 005	SPT & CPT	CPT (construction, el.prod.,retailing) + some SPT (manufacturing and tourism)	20,8	17,1	3,7	79,2	47,4	31,7	100
	Årdal	4 553	Øvre Årdal	3 122	SPT	SPT (manufacturing/metal)	46,9	45,7	1,2	53,1	25,4	27,7	100
	Avarege numbers (ihbt)	6335				Avarege shares (jobs in sectors)	30,8	21,4	9,3	69,2	38,4	30,9	100
Avarege shares of all 18 towns							31,5	19,2	12,3	68,5	40,6	27,9	100
COUNTRY							27,0	15,6	11,4	73,0	50,7	22,3	100

There are no objective criteria for what proportion of jobs in different sectors a town should have in order to be defined as a *central place town* (CPT) or *specialised production town* (SPT). We see that the basic sector accounts for 21-47% of the jobs in our 18 cities, and, in general, we can say that where the basic sector accounts for over 30%, its importance to the characteristics and dynamics of the city and region becomes substantial. This is because the basic industries in the town will usually have significant ripple effects to derived sectors in the city and region, i.e. also affect the number of jobs in local and regional industries and services.

This implies classifying 4 of 18 towns as mostly SPT types, only 1 as a mostly CPT type, but as many as 13 towns as combined SPT and CPT types. The growth regions have 1 SPT, 1 CPT and 4 combined SPTs/CPTs, while the shrinking regions have 2 SPTs, 1 CPT and 4 combined SPTs/CPTs. The stable regions have 1 SPT, 1 CPT and 4 combined SPTs/CPTs. Hence, we do not find a clear correlation between the different town types and growth in jobs and population. However, the cities in the growth regions have much larger regional industries than the cities in the shrinking regions, which are more dependent on basic industries in industry and defence. The basic industries of the towns in the growth regions are more closely linked to central and county administration and education, in addition to marine/maritime industries and tourism – all of which are national growth sectors.

Figure 6: Share of occupied jobs in main sectors in town municipalities (i.e. centre municipalities) of the Growing, Stable and Shrinking regions (1.1.2024).



3.4.3 Demographic structures and changes

Population structures are the result of historical processes, yet they also set important conditions for further development. We see substantial differences between the Growing and Shrinking STRs, particularly when it comes to the age composition of the population (in 2010 and 2024).

The Growing STRs had a clearly younger population (both in 2010 and 2024) than the two other main groups of STRs, and to some extent also compared to the national average (see Table 2 below, and for more details Table V4 in appendix). The shrinking STRs, in contrast, clearly have a much older population than the national average and the other STRs groups. These differentiated patterns among the STR groups have been reinforced from 2010 to 2024, as well as the general overall tendency towards increased ageing.

The gender distribution is reasonably even in all regions and groups, i.e. no clear geographically differentiated gender profile (it should be noted that the growth regions do not have a higher proportion of women than the shrinking regions, in fact the opposite). The share of immigrants in the population does not differ systematically between Growing and Shrinking regions. This share is increasing in all three STR groups and their regions, but to varying degrees (the lowest increase from 4 % to 10%, the highest was from 8% to 19%).

Development patterns and changing components. Over the last fifteen years, Norway has had a total population growth of 14.2% (from 1.1.2010 to 1.1.2024 - see Table V3A and V3B in the appendix). The growth has been high the last two decades, mainly due to high immigration in the period 2005-2015 of both labour immigrants from the EU and refugees and family migrants. This supported a stronger population development in much of the country, due to high economic activity and demand for labour, as well as a decentralised

settlement policy for refugees and asylum seekers. There has also been an increase in the migration of refugees from Ukraine over the last two years (2022-2024).

Table 2: Population structures, trends and components of change 2010-24 in the growth, stability and shrinking regions.

			Population 1.1.2024	Population structures								Population changes and components of changes (1.1.2010-1.1.2024)									
												Percentage:					Numbers:				
				% young (0-19 years)		% elderly (65+)		% women		% immigrants		Population	Excess births	Net migration:			Population	Excess births	Net migration:		
				2010	2024	2010	2024	2010	2024	2010	2024			Total	Dom-estic	Abroad			Total	Dom-estic	Abroad
The whole country	TOTAL		5 550 203	25,5	22,4	14,9	18,7	50,0	49,6	9,4	16,8	14,2	4,4	9,8	0,0	9,8	692 004	214 140	477 030	154	476 876
	1.Large city regions (the urban centre >50' ihb.)		3 466 422	25,6	22,6	13,5	16,8	50,2	49,8	11,6	18,8	16,7	7,1	11,5	2,1	9,4	545 469	208 422	336 929	61 154	275 776
	2.Medium-sized urban regions (the urban centre 20-50' ihb.)		801 496	25,5	22,3	15,8	20,3	50,1	49,6	7,0	14,5	13,9	2,0	12,0	3,1	8,9	97 963	13 670	83 922	21 655	62 267
	3.Small-town regions (the urban centre 5-20' ihb.)		731 125	26,0	22,5	16,4	21,7	49,8	49,5	5,9	12,4	6,7	1,0	5,7	-4,2	9,9	45 680	6 523	38 796	-28 686	67 482
	4.Rural town/small centre regions (the urban centre 2'-5 inb)		323 010	25,1	21,4	18,5	23,4	49,7	49,3	5,6	13,1	1,7	-1,8	3,6	-9,7	13,3	5 425	-5 991	11 537	-31 609	43 146
	5.Regions without urban settlements >2000 ihb.		200 477	24,3	20,5	19,7	25,1	49,2	48,6	5,2	13,5	-1,4	-3,6	2,2	-9,0	11,2	-2 748	-8 047	4 994	-20 354	25 348
	3+4. Small town and rural town regions (urban centre 2'-20'inh		1 054 135	25,7	22,1	17,1	22,2	49,8	49,4	5,8	12,6	5,10	0,05	5,04	-6,04	11,08	51 105	532	50 333	-60 295	110 628
18 Selected small town and rural town regions (A+B+C)			272 100	25,8	22,1	16,7	21,9	49,8	49,4	6,1	12,2	5,54	0,40	5,14	-6,97	12,11	14 277	1 022	13 301	-18 025	31 326
A.Growth regions (GRR)	1	Alta	21 708	29,9	24,9	11,0	15,5	49,1	49,4	5,7	11,6	16,21	9,60	6,61	-5,78	12,38	3 028	1 791	1 232	-1 077	2 309
	2	Sogndal	17 690	26,7	23,8	16,6	20,0	50,1	49,3	4,7	12,0	14,08	4,13	9,95	-1,71	11,66	2 184	673	1 621	-278	1 899
	3	Ørland	10 522	25,6	22,5	18,7	22,1	49,8	49,2	3,1	8,3	8,82	0,66	8,16	2,80	5,36	853	64	787	270	517
	4	Vågan	9 793	25,1	21,1	17,0	21,3	50,0	49,1	6,6	17,0	8,53	-0,45	8,99	-9,26	18,25	770	-41	814	-839	1 653
	5	Alver	33 251	28,0	24,8	13,8	20,3	49,0	49,0	5,9	10,2	15,36	6,45	8,91	4,16	4,75	4 427	1 861	2 570	1 201	1 369
	6	Lyngdal	22 487	28,6	25,2	15,6	20,2	49,9	49,5	6,6	12,9	10,00	3,64	6,36	-18,43	24,78	2 044	740	1 291	-3 743	5 034
	Total A (1-6)		115 451	27,8	24,2	14,8	19,6	49,5	49,2	5,6	11,7	13,03	4,95	8,08	-4,34	12,42	13 306	5 088	8 315	-4 466	12 781
B. Stability regions (STR)	7	Målselv	10 700	25,6	21,0	16,5	21,5	48,6	47,8	3,9	9,7	2,30	1,89	0,42	-26,43	26,85	241	195	43	-2 730	2 773
	8	Stryn	7 271	27,5	23,4	16,6	20,7	48,1	48,9	10,5	18,5	4,36	1,93	2,43	-11,44	13,88	304	128	161	-758	919
	9	Kongsvinger	41 734	22,8	18,7	19,1	26,0	50,8	50,1	5,6	10,9	0,10	-6,71	6,81	1,06	5,75	43	-2 733	2 775	432	2 343
	10	Sør-Varanger	10 063	25,8	20,0	14,8	20,1	50,3	50,2	9,1	16,8	3,34	1,20	2,14	-13,34	15,48	325	115	206	-1 283	1 489
	11	Flekkefjord	15 471	26,4	23,9	17,6	21,2	49,6	49,6	7,4	13,9	4,88	0,45	4,23	-7,91	12,14	892	65	612	-1 143	1 755
	12	Kristiansund	33 400	24,6	21,0	16,4	22,7	49,7	49,4	6,5	13,1	5,08	-0,26	5,33	-5,42	10,75	1 614	-81	1 690	-1 717	3 407
	Total B (7-12)		118 639	24,5	20,8	17,4	23,2	49,9	49,6	6,5	12,8	2,79	-2,03	4,82	-6,32	11,14	3 219	-2 311	5 487	-7 199	12 686
C.Shrink regions (SHR)	13	Sauda	4 572	24,5	23,4	20,4	22,4	50,6	50,0	4,3	11,8	-2,62	-6,00	3,38	-5,54	8,93	-123	-259	146	-239	385
	14	Sel	9 287	23,6	20,0	20,6	26,3	49,7	50,0	2,9	9,7	-4,46	-5,05	0,59	-14,27	14,86	-434	-489	57	-1 381	1 438
	15	Vadsø	6 666	26,5	20,1	14,8	22,1	49,2	49,8	10,6	14,2	-4,57	-0,27	-4,30	-29,84	25,54	-319	-19	-305	-2 117	1 812
	16	Andøy	4 553	24,5	19,3	20,9	26,9	49,9	48,6	3,7	12,6	-8,98	-4,63	-4,35	-14,39	10,04	-449	-234	-220	-728	508
	17	Tinn	5 533	22,7	18,0	19,9	27,1	51,9	50,0	7,5	13,6	-8,12	-7,60	-0,52	-16,04	15,52	-489	-465	-32	-982	950
	18	Ardal	7 399	23,3	20,4	19,4	24,1	48,8	48,6	7,1	12,7	-5,54	-3,67	-1,87	-11,60	9,73	-434	-289	-147	-913	766
	Total C (13-17)		38 010	24,1	20,1	19,3	24,9	49,9	49,5	6,0	12,2	-5,58	-4,34	-1,24	-15,74	14,50	-2 248	-1 755	-501	-6 360	5 859

Immigration to Norway over the last fifteen years has also supported the population development in most of the 65 STRs.[32] However, in spite of this, the population development among them has been quite uneven.

Aggregated, our 18 selected STRs have had a medium growth of inhabitants (5.5%, 1.1.2010 to 1.1.2024) compared to the high growth level nationally in this period (+14.2%). However, there has been a very uneven population development among them (from +16.2% to -9.0 %).

Looking at the changes and the components of these changes among our three main groups, we see firstly that the high population growth (plus 9-16%) in the Growing STRs stems from a combination of excess of births (5 of 6 STRs) and contemporary high (net) migration from abroad (all 6 STRs). Only two of these Growing STRs (Alver and Ørlandet) also had some (net) in-movement from the rest of the country (as well as Kongsvinger, as the only Stable STR). Two of these STRs benefit partly from their characteristics as attractive settlement regions nearby growing larger metropolitan regions (Alver to Bergen, Kongsvinger to Oslo-Ullensaker, respectively), while the third (Ørlandet) has been influenced by a large relocation and construction of the main national military air base.

The Shrinking STRs' reduction of inhabitants (minus 3-9%) is a result of substantial birth deficits and strong net out-migration to the rest of the country, with the latter in these STRs being clearly higher than contemporary significant immigration flows from abroad. In general, it seems that those of the 18 STRs in our selection that had among the highest (net) migration rates from abroad also had high (net) migration loss to the rest of the country. This

[32]In the years 2010-2021, total (net) immigration to STRs was 10,000-15,000 a year, while in 2022-2023, it increased to 20,000-25,000 a year, an increase mainly due to refugees from Ukraine (Source: SSB, Own estimates: NIBR)

may have something to do with a more centralising moving pattern among refugees some years after entry into Norway compared to the rest of the population (Tønnessen 2022).

The uneven development in the population (relative and absolute) between the Growing and Shrinking STRs is due to their substantial differences in both structural properties and relative attractiveness for living and working. Most often and when aggregated, the Growing STRs have (in 2008 and 2024) more favourable structural components (i.e. a younger population and thus excess of births) than all of the Shrinking STRs. At the same time, the Growing STRs have also benefited from a stronger relative competition component (attractiveness for residence) indicated by their substantial (net) in-migration compared to the Shrinking STRs' (net) out-migration.

3.4.4 Economic structures and changes

The *economic structures* of towns and regions are the result of long-term development processes and most often represent inertia to fast and radical changes, setting important preconditions for further innovation and development processes. The research literature indicates that STRs often are characterised by industrial path dependence where industrial innovation and development processes mostly take place within their historical developed strongest industries and knowledge bases (path extension). But the literature also shows that many STRs have developed quite new industries often related to their historical strong industries, knowledge bases or natural resources (path renewals). More seldom are developments of entirely new paths of completely new industries or knowledge bases without any anchoring to competence bases or business environments embedded in the region (path creation). This is somewhat more common in regions with research institutions and extensive entrepreneurship.

When looking at the STR class in Norway in total (65 STRs) we see that they are specialised in primary industries, manufacturing and infrastructure (see Table 3 below, more details in Table V4 in appendix). These industries have about 35 percent of all the jobs in the STRs (compared to 25 percent in the whole country) and is a main part of their private sector. The privately dominated services, on the other hand, are substantially underrepresented in the STRs, with only 27 percent of all jobs (compared to 39% in the whole country). But the public dominated services (particularly health/care, education) instead are some overrepresented with approximately 40 percent of all the jobs in the STRs (compared to 36 percent in the whole country). This public-private-divide with STRs and national levels is of course mainly due to the STRs relatively smaller population bases and highly dispersed settlement pattern (which hampers economies of scale in services), combined with national welfare and district policies supporting equal welfare services throughout the country etc.

Seen as a whole, our 18 STRs show much of the same main pattern as the STR class nationally with regard to specialisations in primary industries, manufacturing and infrastructure industries. This is mostly goods-producing industries consisting of many different sub-branches[33] and value chains, and which appear in various combinations among the individual STRs' various historical paths, advantages and regional contexts. Our selected STRs also have some overrepresentation of public dominated services of different kinds (particularly health, care and education services) while most of the private dominated services are underrepresented.

[33]Mainly some form of agriculture and related industries, seafood industries, metal industries, shipbuilding, mechanical industries, and machinery/equipment industries.

The Growing STR group as a whole has a somewhat larger share and higher number of STRs specialised in the seafood industries and education sector, as well as a larger private service sector than the Shrinking STRs. The Shrinking STRs have, in turn, a slightly larger share specialised in "manufacturing others"[34]. The Stable STRs have the most varied specialisation within different primary industries and manufacturing industries. They are also somewhat overrepresented in various types of public dominated services (administration, defence, health care/hospitals) and in general, have a larger private service sector than the Shrinking and Growing STRs.

Table 3: Share of jobs distributed (%) by different industries and sectors in 2024 for the different regions, blue boxes indicate regional specialisation (over-representation vs. distribution in the country).

			TOTAL (avarage 1.1.2022/23/24)	Primary industries and manufacturing				Infra-structure	Private dominated services					Public dominated services				
				Agriculture and processing industry	Seafood and processing industry	Manufacturing industries others	Total	Building, construction, trans-port, power and water	Experience services	Retailing	Business services	Other priv. services	Total	Public administr., defence, social insurance	Education	Health care	Nursing and care services	Total
			Abs. numbers	Shares in procent														
	TOTAL		2 766 922	100	3,5	1,2	6,1	10,8	14,6	8,1	12,7	13,0	5,3	39,2	6,3	8,3	9,0	11,9	35,5
The country (reg. classes)	1. City regions (largest city >50.000 ihb.)		1 834 801	100	2,3	0,4	5,3	8,0	13,6	9,1	13,1	16,0	6,3	44,3	6,2	8,2	9,0	10,7	34,1
	2. Medium town regions (largest town 20.000-50.000 ihb.)		364 860	100	4,3	0,6	7,9	12,7	16,0	6,9	13,3	8,3	4,0	32,5	7,1	8,6	10,0	13,1	38,8
	3. Small town regions (laregst town 5.000-20.000 ihb.)		321 849	100	6,0	2,5	8,6	17,1	16,4	5,4	11,9	7,1	3,4	27,8	5,8	8,8	9,3	14,7	38,7
	4.Rural town/village regions (largest town 2.000-5.000 ihb)		152 957	100	7,3	4,0	7,3	18,6	17,3	7,1	11,0	5,8	2,8	26,6	7,6	8,3	6,6	14,9	37,4
	5. Regions without towns (urban settlements >2000 ihb.)		92 454	100	8,8	9,5	5,1	23,4	17,7	5,7	9,1	6,0	2,7	23,4	5,1	8,6	5,8	16,1	35,6
The 18th selected small town regions (A+B+C)			121 896	100	5,6	2,1	7,6	15,4	16,9	6,1	11,2	6,7	3,3	27,3	8,9	8,7	7,6	15,1	40,4
A.Growing regions	1	Alta	11 212	100	2,1	5,6	3,9	11,6	20,9	7,5	12,5	7,2	3,5	30,6	5,4	9,6	7,9	13,9	36,9
	2	Sogndal	9 422	100	7,3	0,1	3,6	11,0	18,8	6,8	9,4	6,4	2,5	25,1	11,9	11,6	4,0	17,6	45,1
	3	Ørland	4 760	100	8,1	4,9	4,2	17,2	15,2	4,7	10,4	4,1	3,8	23,0	17,9	6,2	6,3	14,1	44,6
	4	Vågan	4 808	100	1,7	7,5	5,0	14,3	16,4	12,7	12,6	6,7	3,6	35,7	6,7	8,8	5,9	12,2	33,7
	5	Alver	12 392	100	3,6	1,1	16,4	21,1	18,0	3,3	9,1	6,6	2,7	21,7	5,9	10,5	6,3	16,6	39,2
	6	Lyngdal	9 430	100	11,2	0,4	9,6	21,2	16,0	5,7	14,9	4,4	2,9	27,9	3,2	9,7	5,5	16,4	34,9
	Total A (1-6)		52 023	100	5,6	2,7	8,0	16,3	18,0	6,3	11,4	6,1	3,0	26,8	7,6	9,8	6,0	15,5	39,0
B. Stable regions	7	Målselv	5 752	100	5,0	0,2	2,1	7,2	11,2	5,7	9,9	4,5	1,0	21,1	34,3	8,2	5,7	12,3	60,6
	8	Stryn	3 791	100	20,5	0,3	6,5	27,2	18,9	9,7	12,8	4,9	1,7	29,0	2,8	6,6	2,8	12,6	24,8
	9	Kongsvinger	16 495	100	7,8	0,1	6,6	14,5	15,2	5,0	12,3	6,7	4,5	28,4	7,4	7,4	9,9	17,2	41,9
	10	Sør-Varanger	5 206	100	1,4	2,1	3,4	7,0	14,3	6,7	10,6	6,1	5,0	28,4	16,2	9,0	14,6	10,5	50,3
	11	Flekkefjord	6 518	100	3,4	2,6	13,0	19,0	14,5	4,6	10,3	5,5	3,2	23,6	4,0	8,6	12,0	18,3	42,9
	12	Kristiansund	14 641	100	3,0	3,9	5,6	12,5	17,9	6,3	11,7	11,5	4,7	34,2	5,7	7,5	9,0	13,2	35,5
	Total B (7-12)		52 403	100	5,9	1,7	6,3	13,9	15,6	5,9	11,5	7,5	3,8	28,7	10,0	7,8	9,4	14,7	41,9
C.Shrinking regions	13	Sauda	1 935	100	2,1	0,0	18,5	20,7	20,4	4,5	8,6	4,4	1,7	19,3	5,1	11,4	3,8	19,4	39,7
	14	Sel	4 140	100	11,0	0,0	2,9	14,0	19,5	7,6	12,6	7,5	2,2	29,9	5,1	9,1	8,5	13,9	36,6
	15	Vadsø	3 160	100	2,5	2,6	0,3	5,3	14,7	6,1	10,9	5,5	2,8	25,4	26,7	7,3	5,7	14,8	54,6
	16	Andøy	2 139	100	5,4	7,3	1,5	14,2	18,7	5,1	7,6	7,5	2,0	22,2	15,6	9,6	4,8	15,0	45,0
	17	Tinn	2 569	100	3,6	0,2	8,3	12,1	23,1	10,0	11,1	6,9	3,1	31,1	5,0	7,1	5,6	16,1	33,7
	18	Årdal	3 527	100	2,8	0,1	32,3	35,2	12,9	3,1	7,8	6,3	1,7	19,0	3,0	6,4	8,6	15,0	33,0
	Total C (13-17)		17 469	100	5,1	1,4	10,7	17,2	17,8	6,1	10,1	6,5	2,3	24,9	9,8	8,2	6,6	15,4	40,1

In other words, the three STR groups have some differences in their structures, but not very substantial divides in their specialisation patterns. They do, however, have substantial differences in size. The Growing, and to some extent Stable STRs, have on average about twice as many inhabitants and jobs as the Shrinking STRs. This gives the Growing and Stable STRs some relative advantages compared to the Shrinking STRs, with regard to growth in jobs, particularly within the service sector, as well as the development of larger diversities of services and business milieus. A challenge that is particularly relevant for many of the Shrinking STRs is their small private service sector (measured in number of jobs), which also decreased further in the period 2010-2014. The smallest STRs have had a particularly strong reduction in retailing and banking in this period. Another feature, which is not apparent from the table but found by certain other studies, is that many of the small town regions have also seen a sharp decline in jobs in state sectors (e.g. defence, education, admin./social insurance) (Onsager et al. 2021).

[34]In particular metal industries, metal product industries, shipbuilding, mechanical industries, machinery/equipment industries.

Development patterns and changing components. There has been a (net) national growth of jobs at 12.3% in 2010-2022 (+302,132 jobs, i.e. on average 1.03% per year[35]) (see Table 4 below, and more details in Table V5 in appendix). This net growth veils substantial cyclical

Table 4: Developments in jobs in different industries and sectors –relative and absolute changes 2010-22 (31.12 2009/10/11 - 31.12 2021/22/23).

			TOTAL	Primary industries and manufacturing				Infra-structure	Private dominated services					Public dominated services				
				Agriculture industries	Seafood industries	Manufacturing industries others	Total	Construction, transport, power/water	Experience services	Retailing	Business services	Other priv. services	Total	Public administration, defence, social insurance	Education	Health care	Nursing and care services	Total
Absolute changes :																		
	TOTAL		302 132	-16 449	8 116	-10 995	-19 328	49 782	39 657	-9 613	92 771	8 689	131 504	24 492	33 131	57 525	25 026	140 174
The country (reg. classes)	1. City regions (largest city >50.000 ihb.)		264 344	-5 423	2 345	-6 007	-9 086	38 234	34 493	-805	82 097	9 644	125 429	19 339	27 716	40 833	21 878	109 767
	2. Medium town regions (largest town 20.000-50.000 ihb.)		25 299	-2 076	293	-2 218	-4 001	4 699	3 796	-2 056	4 668	-267	6 141	3 730	4 597	6 726	3 408	18 461
	3. Small town regions (laregst town 5.000-20.000 ihb.)		8 912	-4 042	1 145	-1 396	-4 293	3 671	548	-3 764	3 762	-455	91	1 179	1 055	6 798	411	9 443
	4.Rural town/village regions (largest town 2.000-5.000 ihb)		926	-2 855	1 338	-830	-2 347	1 955	739	-2 176	886	-358	-910	735	-210	2 133	-431	2 227
	5. Regions without towns (urban settlements >2000 ihb.)		2 650	-2 052	2 995	-544	399	1 223	82	-812	1 358	124	752	-492	-28	1 036	-240	276
18 Selected small town and rural town regions (A+B+C)			3 358	-1 008	287	-1 417	-2 138	1 618	367	-1 562	750	-183	-629	1 229	251	2 365	662	4 506
A.Growing regions	1	Alta	1 511	-10	249	-26	213	405	164	-40	89	72	284	104	-17	289	232	608
	2	Sogndal	1 295	-152	1	122	-30	495	7	21	196	-103	120	80	90	65	474	710
	3	Ørland	705	-12	130	48	167	47	71	-56	40	51	106	163	-8	199	31	385
	4	Vågan	483	8	-57	39	-10	62	204	-39	5	22	191	100	57	9	73	240
	5	Alver	498	-1	-12	-392	-406	340	-71	-135	55	-15	-166	254	119	411	-55	729
	6	Lyngdal	750	-38	1	-10	-48	258	-20	168	107	-9	246	-19	132	48	133	293
	Total A (1-6)		5 241	-206	312	-220	-113	1 607	355	-82	492	17	782	683	373	1 021	888	2 965
B. Stable regions	7	Målselv	125	-64	0	-2	-66	51	-24	-71	5	-53	-143	366	-17	73	-140	282
	8	Stryn	-16	-19	4	-130	-145	101	29	-56	73	-25	22	4	-28	-4	34	7
	9	Kongsvinger	403	-236	-35	-90	-361	204	98	-283	72	-141	-253	-93	51	505	352	814
	10	Sør-Varanger	39	-19	-23	-253	-296	28	-2	-121	25	115	17	141	-16	171	-6	290
	11	Flekkefjord	-30	-19	53	-92	-58	56	-64	-204	41	7	-220	1	-9	163	38	192
	12	Kristiansund	-253	-131	11	-263	-383	-141	27	-346	199	15	-105	228	6	319	-177	376
	Total B (7-12)		268	-489	9	-830	-1 310	299	65	-1 080	414	-81	-682	647	-14	1 227	101	1 962
C.Shrinking regions	13	Sauda	-210	-30	0	-22	-53	8	-34	-27	-10	-0	-72	-1	-6	-41	-45	-94
	14	Sel	-363	-163	-2	-104	-269	-10	12	-147	36	-29	-128	-32	0	141	-66	43
	15	Vadsø	-378	-31	25	-2	-9	10	-54	-107	-90	-33	-284	7	-83	74	-92	-94
	16	Andøy	-392	-36	-50	-17	-102	-256	20	-31	54	-15	29	-75	31	1	-20	-63
	17	Tinn	-287	-11	3	-82	-89	15	21	-36	-28	1	-42	16	-31	-39	-117	-170
	18	Årdal	-522	-43	-11	-141	-194	-55	-18	-52	-119	-43	-231	-16	-19	-19	12	-42
	Total C (13-17)		-2 152	-313	-34	-368	-715	-287	-53	-400	-156	-120	-729	-101	-108	117	-328	-420
Relative changes (%):																		
	TOTAL		12,3	-14,6	33,6	-6,1	-6,1	14,0	21,4	-2,7	34,6	6,3	13,8	16,3	16,8	30,2	8,3	16,7
The country (reg. classes)	1. City regions (largest city >50.000 ihb.)		16,8	-11,5	47,6	-5,8	-5,9	18,0	26,2	-0,3	38,9	9,2	18,2	20,6	22,6	32,7	12,6	21,3
	2. Medium town regions (largest town 20.000-50.000 ihb.)		7,5	-11,7	15,4	-7,2	-7,9	8,8	17,8	-4,1	18,2	-1,8	5,5	16,8	17,2	22,5	7,7	15,0
	3. Small town regions (laregst town 5.000-20.000 ihb.)		2,8	-17,3	17,0	-4,8	-7,2	7,5	3,2	-9,0	19,7	-4,0	0,1	6,8	3,9	29,2	0,9	8,2
	4.Rural town/village regions (largest town 2.000-5.000 ihb)		0,6	-20,3	28,1	-6,9	-7,6	8,0	7,3	-11,5	11,1	-7,7	-2,2	6,8	-1,6	26,8	-1,9	4,0
	5. Regions without towns (urban settlements >2000 ihb.)		3,0	-20,2	51,4	-10,4	1,9	8,1	1,6	-8,8	32,4	5,3	3,6	-9,4	-0,4	23,9	-1,6	0,8
18 Selected small town and rural town regions (A+B+C)			2,8	-12,8	12,8	-13,2	-10,3	8,5	5,2	-10,2	10,1	-4,4	-1,9	12,7	2,4	34,5	3,7	10,1
A.Growing regions	1	Alta	15,6	-3,9	66,5	-5,7	19,7	20,9	24,2	-2,8	12,4	22,7	9,0	20,6	-1,5	48,7	17,5	17,3
	2	Sogndal	15,9	-18,1	6,9	56,8	-2,8	38,8	1,1	2,4	48,2	-30,3	5,4	7,7	9,0	21,3	40,1	20,0
	3	Ørland	17,4	-3,0	124,5	31,7	25,5	6,9	46,6	-10,1	26,1	39,0	10,8	23,7	-2,7	194,5	4,8	22,1
	4	Vågan	11,2	10,0	-13,7	19,2	-1,5	8,6	50,0	-6,1	1,5	14,6	12,6	44,8	15,6	3,4	14,2	17,4
	5	Alver	4,2	-0,3	-8,0	-16,2	-13,4	18,0	-14,8	-10,7	7,1	-4,3	-5,8	53,4	10,1	112,5	-2,6	17,7
	6	Lyngdal	8,6	-3,5	1,8	-1,1	-2,3	20,6	-3,5	13,5	34,8	-3,3	10,3	-6,0	16,7	10,3	9,4	9,8
	Total A (1-6)		11,2	-6,6	28,5	-5,0	-1,3	20,7	12,2	-1,4	18,4	1,1	5,9	21,0	7,9	48,3	12,3	17,1
B. Stable regions	7	Målselv	2,2	-18,3	3,8	-1,6	-13,7	8,7	-6,7	-11,1	1,8	-48,8	-10,6	22,8	-3,5	28,5	-16,6	8,8
	8	Stryn	-0,4	-2,4	52,4	-34,6	-12,3	16,4	8,7	-10,3	65,3	-27,7	2,0	4,2	-10,1	-3,3	7,8	0,7
	9	Kongsvinger	2,5	-15,6	-68,8	-7,6	-13,1	8,8	13,6	-12,3	6,9	-16,0	-5,1	-7,1	4,3	44,9	14,2	13,4
	10	Sør-Varanger	0,8	-20,4	-17,4	-58,8	-44,9	3,9	-0,6	-18,0	8,6	79,4	1,2	20,0	-3,3	29,0	-1,0	12,4
	11	Flekkefjord	-0,5	-8,0	46,0	-9,8	-4,5	6,3	-17,5	-23,2	12,9	3,7	-12,5	0,3	-1,6	26,2	3,3	7,4
	12	Kristiansund	-1,7	-23,1	1,9	-24,3	-17,4	-5,1	3,0	-16,8	13,4	2,2	-2,1	37,5	0,5	31,7	-8,4	7,8
	Total B (7-12)		0,5	-13,7	1,1	-20,1	-15,3	3,8	2,1	-15,2	11,8	-3,9	-4,3	14,1	-0,3	33,1	1,3	9,8
C.Shrinking regions	13	Sauda	-9,8	-42,3	.	-5,9	-11,6	2,2	-28,3	-14,1	-10,4	-1,0	-16,1	-1,3	-2,8	-36,0	-10,8	-10,9
	14	Sel	-8,1	-26,4	-66,7	-46,0	-31,7	-1,2	4,0	-22,0	13,2	-24,2	-9,4	-13,2	0,1	66,7	-10,3	2,9
	15	Vadsø	-10,7	-28,5	44,0	-20,0	-4,9	2,1	-21,8	-23,8	-33,9	-27,2	-26,2	0,8	-26,4	69,4	-16,4	-5,2
	16	Andøy	-15,5	-23,5	-24,2	-34,0	-25,1	-39,0	22,6	-15,9	50,8	-25,9	6,5	-18,3	17,5	0,7	-5,8	-6,1
	17	Tinn	-10,1	-10,3	333,3	-27,8	-22,3	2,5	9,0	-11,3	-13,8	1,3	-5,0	14,3	-14,4	-21,4	-22,1	-16,4
	18	Årdal	-12,9	-30,1	-84,2	-11,0	-13,5	-10,7	-14,0	-15,8	-34,8	-41,6	-25,7	-13,1	-7,9	-5,9	2,3	-3,5
	Total C (13-17)		-11,0	-26,2	-12,4	-16,4	-19,3	-8,4	-4,7	-18,6	-12,1	-23,1	-14,3	-5,6	-7,0	11,2	-10,9	-5,7

fluctuations (see Figure 2) and structural changes. The major growth sectors were public dominated services (+17%, i.e. 140,174 jobs, mostly in health and care services) and private dominated services (+14%, i.e. 131,504 jobs, mostly in business services and experience services). Additionally, there has been a substantial growth in infrastructure industries (+14%, 49,782 jobs, mostly in building and construction), oil/gas/mining (+84%, i.e. 25,714 jobs[36]) and to some extent seafood industries (+34%, 8,116 jobs) (see Table 2). The major

[35]Here we use these measurement points for changes in jobs and industrial structures as an abbreviation for the moving average in the number of jobs from 31.12 2009/10/11 to 31.12 2021/22/23.

[36] This growth is probably somewhat overestimated due to a change in Statistics Norway's method for registering oil/gas activities on land and on the shelf, respectively.

shrinking sectors have been the primary industries and manufacturing, with the exception of seafood and oil/gas/petrochemicals (-9%, i.e. -27,444 jobs, mostly in agro industries and manufacturing), but there has also been a reduction in wholesale/retailing (-3%, i.e. -9,613 jobs).

These national trends are also reflected within the STRs. Our 18 selected STRs had in total a minimal (net) growth of jobs (+2,8 % in 2010-2022, i.e. on average 0.23% per year) compared to the national level. However, the growth rates among our 18 STRs have been very uneven (from +17 to -16 %, 2010-2022).

The substantial job growth in *Growing STRs* (+11%, i.e. 5,241 jobs in 2010-2022) was linked to a wide range of industries and sectors, but most substantially within "public dominated services" (55% of the total net growth of jobs), ahead of infrastructure industries (30%) and private dominated services (15%). These STRs also had some (net) decline of jobs in primary industries and manufacturing, but this only led to a minor down pull (-2%) of the total growth.[37] The substantial growth in public dominated services was mostly in health and care services, but also a great deal in education and public administration (municipal, county and state-funded). The private sector stands for the remaining 45% of the (net) growth of jobs in the growing STRs. A large share of this growth was due to regionally-oriented industries, in particularly building/construction and business services. Additionally, these STRs had some (net) growth of jobs in experience services and seafood industries.

As such, the substantial growth of jobs in the Growing STRs is a result of a substantial growth in public and private dominated services and industries directed towards local and regional needs and markets. This has been stimulated both by (i) growth in value creation and increased employment within some of their resource-based export-industries (seafood, experience, oil/gas/petro) with diverse regional ripple effects, and by (ii) increasing population and changing population structures contributing to higher demand for diverse services and investments.

The *Shrinking STRs'* substantial decrease in jobs (-11%, i.e. -2,152 jobs, from -8 to -16% among the STRs) has been due to substantial reductions in several industries and sectors. In all, 80% of the (net) reduction was in the private sector, of which a main component was in primary and manufacturing industries (33% of the net reduction), another major part was within private dominated services (34% of the net reduction, mostly retailing and private services others) and a minor part in infrastructure industries (13% of the net reduction, building and transport). The remaining 20% of the total (net) reduction was within public dominated services (mostly care services, education and administration/defence).[38]

As such, the Shrinking STRs' substantial declines in the private dominated sector came both within the basic sectors of good-producing industries (primary industries and manufacturing) but also within private dominated services for the local and regional markets (retailing, business services, building/ construction). Additionally, reductions in parts of the public

[37] To specify, the large growth sectors aggregated for the Growing STRs have been the public dominated services (+17%, 2,965 jobs, 2010-2022), and particularly in health, nursing and care services (1,909), public administration (683) and education (373). This is followed by infrastructure industries (1,607 jobs, mostly within building/construction) and then private dominated services (+6%, 782 jobs – mostly in business services with +18% and 492 jobs, and experience industries +12% and 355 jobs) followed by seafood industries (+29%, 312 jobs). The Growing STRs also saw some contemporary decreases within agriculture and related industries (-7%, -206 jobs), manufacturing other (-5%,-220) and retailing (-1%, -82).

[38] To specify, most of the reduction has come within private dominant sectors and many industries, but most substantially in retail services (-400), manufacturing other (-368), agriculture with related industries (-313 jobs), private services other (-329) and infrastructure (-287), but also some reduction in experience industries (-53) and seafood (-34). The substantial national growth sector, public dominated services, has also had fewer jobs in these STRs, mostly in care services (-328 jobs), but also in education (-108) and public administration and defence (-101). The only sector with some (net) growth here was health services (+117 jobs).

dominated sectors were seen in both state sectors (administration, defence, higher education) and municipal sectors (care services). The only public sector with some (net) growth of jobs was the health service. The declines in several of the services seen here are probably amplified by a simultaneous population reduction during the period, and not only due to reduced employment and spin-off effects from the basic industries.

The Shrinking STRs have some disadvantages in terms of their size compared to the Growing STRs, i.e. a smaller labour market and business environment, and fewer or more one-sided specialisations in a basic industry. The Shrinking STRs are as such more vulnerable to external shocks and international competition when these impact their basic industries. At the same time, streamlining, relocation and centralisation within both the state sector and wholesale/retailing sector have hit these regions particularly hard.[39]

The *uneven development* of jobs between the Growing and Shrinking STRs is thus due to a combination of geographical differences in their (i) industrial structures, (ii) relative competitiveness or ability to grow within several of the same sectors and (iii) some rest-factors [40]. From tables (table 3 and 4 på previous pages, and Table V4 and V5 in appendix) we saw that the Growing STRs have slightly more *favourable economic structures* than the Shrinking STRs, that is both some larger shares of national job-growth sectors[41] (and lower shares of national decreasing sectors), as well as larger versatile regional markets (consumers, customers, labour). This also means that the Growing STRs have an industrial structure that is relatively more dominated by domestically oriented labour-intensive (service-) sectors than the Shrinking STRs, which in turn have a relatively larger capital-intensive goods-producing sector with a significant share of export-oriented and international competition exposed sectors. Additionally, the Growing STRs also get some advantage from stronger relative competitiveness/ability to grow in most of the national growth branches, as well as less relative reduction in the national shrinking branches. In addition to this we saw also a couple of rest-factors supporting an uneven development of jobs in some of the STR-cases, i.e. uneven local effects from “state sector changes/restructuring/relocation” (amplifying decline in a couple of Shrinking STRs) and from spillovers from nearby larger city region (amplifying growth in one of the Growing STR cases).

3.4.5 Income levels and shares of low-income households

Up to this point, we have only looked at similarities and differences between Growing, Stable and Shrinking STRs with regard to their population and industry structures and underlying change components. We have linked their uneven development to differences in these structures and changing components for the two mentioned main socio-economic variables of development. However, growth or decline of inhabitants or jobs are not good criteria in themselves for measuring local or regional success or failure with regard to broader aspects of development, for example, the degree of vigorous or sustainable development. It is beyond the scope of this report to elucidate these aspects, but in the following, we will take a short look at some other kinds of indicators that are often related to economic and social

[39]Both retailing and parts of the state sector have undergone a strong geographical centralization in Norway over the last decade, which has particularly affected municipalities in centrality classes 5 and 6 in the country. Our 6 Shrinking STRs belong to these classes.
[40]I.e. in particular geographically differentiated (i) state sectors changes and effects (growth and decline patterns from investments, streamlining, restructuring, relocation), and (ii) neighbourhood effects (ex. from nearby larger city regions).
[41]National job-growth sectors (2010-2022) have in particular been the regional industries (especially private services, building/construction, experience services) and public dominated services (especially health/care, education).
The main decreasing sectors nationally have been agriculture with related processing industries, manufacturing other and retailing.

development of towns and regions. Firstly, we will in this chapter (3.3.5) look at the median income level of households, share of low-income households and levels of housing costs, in our STRs and ask whether there is any substantial differentiation between og within the three STRs-groups on the one hand, and the levels at national levels and large city regions on the other hand. Secondly, we will in the next chapter (3.3.6) also look at the same geographical aspects with regard to employment rates, unemployment and attachment to welfare benefits.

In general, the *median level of income for households* (see Table V6 in appendix) varies a lot among our selected 18 STRs (total income from 802,500 NOK 2022 in Alver, to 655,200 NOK in Kongsvinger) and falls on both sides of the national level (756,000 NOK). However, most of our 18 STRs have lower medians, measured in both total income and after-tax income for households, than the national level. The differences between our STRs and the national level are relatively smaller for after-tax income than for total income, which may reflect that the tax system also has a certain redistributive effect between regions.

The average household income level is somewhat higher for the Growing STRs than the Stable and Shrinking STRs, and the majority of the Growing STRs have a clearly higher median income than the majority of the Stable and Shrinking STRs. Yet it is worth noting that the geographical pattern is not entirely clear, since one of the Shrinking STRs (Årdal) has a higher median income level than two of the Growing STRs and higher than the average of the Growing STRs. This Shrinking STR (Årdal) is one of the most pronounced specialists in manufacturing (metal) among our 18 STR cases. In contrast, it appears that the STRs that are most typically specialised in agriculture and related industries and visiting industries (tourism and retailing) have the lowest median income levels among our 18 STRs.

In summary, although most of the STRs with the highest median household income levels are among the Growing STRs, which is also the group with the highest average level of income, there is no absolute and definite correlation between levels of growth (in population and jobs) and the median income levels of households.

Looking at the changes, we see that most of the 18 STRs have somewhat less growth in their median household income levels compared to the national changes (2008-2022) measured in percentage change, but we do not see any substantial uneven development between the three STR groups (see Table V7 in appendix).

When we look at the proportion of people *in low-income households* in our cases compared to the national level (see table V7 in appendix), one third of our STRs municipalities (i.e. 9 municipalities out of 33 STR municipalities) have a higher proportion of people (both of all ages and for young people 0-17 years) in persistent low-income households than the level on a national basis (see table V6b in appendix). Most of these municipalities (8) are located in the stable and shrinking STRs, while only one in the growing STRs. The same applies to the trends from 2015-17 to 2020-22, where about half of the municipalities have got a higher share of low-income households, while the rest have got fewer low-income households. Since many immigrants are in this low-income group, there is reason to believe that this share of at-risk-of-poverty is strongly influenced by differences in immigration and emigration, as well as domestic migration and settlement among immigrants in this period.

3.4.6 Housing cost levels

The *level of housing costs* in the centre municipalities within the three STR groups is significantly below the average for all municipalities in the country (20-40% lower) and about half of the level in the most central and largest urban municipality in the country (Oslo) (see

table V8 in appendix)[42]. Further, the differences in level are not great for the centre municipalities in Growing, Stable and Shrinking STRs, respectively.

There has been a sharp growth in housing costs 2010-2024 both nationally (104%, current prices) and clearly less for our centre municipalities in all three STR groups (65-80%). The largest increase in housing costs has been related to increased interest costs and municipal fees.

In general, the differences in housing cost levels between the STR groups and the country are much greater than the differences in income levels between the STR groups and the country. This is an indication that the relationship between income and housing expenses.

Nationwide, housing costs account for 27% of total income, in the largest city municipality 43% Oslo) while in Growing and Stable STRs it accounts for 22% and 21% in Shrinking STRs. This indicates some kind of substantial living cost advantages in the smaller urban regions compared to the bigger city regions in Norway.

3.4.7 Outsiderness

To what extent is there a geographical pattern of outsiderness, measured here by proportion of people aged 20-66 who are not in work or education, but depend on public welfare support like work assessment or allowance/disability benefits?

In Norway, 77.7% of residents (aged 20-66) were employed in 2022, a 1.5 percentage point decrease from 79.2% in 2008 (see Table V9 in appendix). The aggregate level of our 18 STRs was 76.8% (2022), down 1.9 percentage points from 78.7 (2008). This is quite a high national level in a European context. Though the somewhat reduced employment level has been a national trend in Norway these years and also applies to most of our selected 18 STRs, although there is substantial variation within the group (from 82.5% in 2022 in Stryn to 71.3 % in Kongsvinger, both categorised as Stable STRs).

As regards outsiderness (i.e. the proportion of people aged 20-66 who are not in work or education, but depend on work assessment or allowance/disability benefits), there has been a substantial increase in the share of recipients and number of people on work assessment or disability support (“attførings- og uføretrygd”) (from 8.9 to 9.9% nationally, and from 10.7 to 12.0% for the 18 STRs), but no increase in the share of registered unemployed (“registrerte arbeidsledige”) plus persons in labour marked measures (“på arbeidsmarkeds-tiltak”) (total 2.3% nationally in 2008 and 2022, and 2.3 and 2.4% for the 18 STRs).

This can hardly be described as a very dramatic increase seen in percentages, although in terms of the number of people it concerns, it is a significant increase at the national level (+27%, 70,000 persons from 2008 to 2022). The largest increase has been in the largest city regions (+36%, 32,000 persons), with a lesser increase in the 65 STRs nationally (+21%, 12,472 persons) as well as for our aggregate of 18 STRs (+16%, 2,550 persons) (see Table V7 in the appendix). The level of outsiderness is still somewhat higher in STRs nationally compared to the largest city regions. However, it is the class of medium town/city regions (largest urban centre between 20,000 and 150,000) that has the highest rates of outsiderness of all the regional town/city region classes in the country. The reason for this requires closer investigation, but it may be due to specific properties relating to the regions’

[42] *The data source is ”The housing cost index” published by Samfunnsøkonomisk analyse 2024. This index is based on the average household in Norway which is a detached house of 120 square meters.*

demographic structures, labour and housing markets compared to both the large city regions and the peripheral regions.

Looking only at our 18 STRs, we see that the Growing STRs overall have a lower proportion of people in outsiderness than the other two groups, but especially in relation to the Stable group, which has the highest levels of outsiderness (both in 2008 and 2022), though here it is one STR (Kongsvinger) in particular that pulls the average up. However, we see no systematic pattern in the proportion of people in outsiderness that covaries systematically with the STRs' group affiliation to growth rates in population and jobs. On the contrary, there are large variations within each of the groups – for example, within Growing STRs from 6 to 14% in outsiderness in 2022 (Sogndal and Ørlandet), within Stable STRs from 6 to 17% (Stryn and Kongsvinger), and Shrinking STRs from 10 to 13% (Årdal and Sel).

This underlines that the reason for inequalities in outsiderness (as measured here in work and education) among the different STRs must be sought in other factors than differences in regional scale (number of inhabitants and jobs) and performance in relative (net) growth /decline in the number of people and jobs. Further insight into this therefore requires a more context-sensitive analysis.

3.4.8 Empirical synthesis - development patterns and causal factors among three different subgroups of STRs in Norway

General trends and causes

Norway has seen a significant growth in population and jobs over the last fifteen years. This is due to a historically high rate of immigration and high activity levels in the private and public sectors in most parts of the country in the period despite a couple of short-term setbacks. The highest (net) growth have been in the city regions, and in particularly the larger ones. Also most of the medium-sized town regions have had substantial growth, while the small town regions had minor growth and the class of regions without towns have shrunken. However, these aggregated figures obscure large differences within each of these main classes.

In Norway 34 percent of the population live in small og medium sized town regions (largest towns between 2.000-50.000 inhabitants) distributed all over the huge area called "Distrikts-Norge" (areas without any larger city region). The focus of this report has been directed towards the *small town regions (STR),* here operationalized to functional labor market regions whose largest town has between 2.000-20.000 inhabitants. The report analyses both all 65 STRs as a class (aggregate), and in particular a selection of 18 STRs in more detail.

The 65 STRs as a class are specialised (overrepresented) nationally within primary and secondary industries, though it is ordinary services that dominate the number of jobs within their labour markets.

The STRs as a class (and most of the STRs) have maintained the numbers of inhabitants and jobs the last fifteen years. Most of them have also an evident correlation between their changing rates of respectively inhabitants and jobs (52 STRs, i.e. 80%), however this has not been a definite rule (13 STRs, i.e. 20 % did not have this correlation). The following main components of change have contributed to the STR-class's maintaining of their (net) number of inhabitants and jobs (2010-24):

- *a high (net) in-migration* from abroad (mostly labour immigration, but also refugees and family migrants) together with a minor birth excess, has in total *counterbalanced the substantial migration loss* to the larger city regions of the country, and

- *high growth of jobs* in local public services (health/care) and regional industries (building/construction, business services) together with a minor growth in some resource-industries (seafood, tourism), have in sum more than *compensated a contemporary substantial loss of jobs* in agriculture, manufacturing (metal, mechanical, shipbuilding etc), retailing, transport and military defence.

The private sector's total number of jobs in the STRs has shrunk over the period (2010-24), while the public sector compensated this and accounted for total (net) growth of jobs and hence prevented a shrinking of STRs' total number of jobs. The substantial growth in the public sector has in general been supported by the national welfare policy and some reforms, demographic ageing and increased influx of immigrants which has increased the need of public welfare support and services. Much has been distributed through a national municipal income system with substantial redistribution towards less central municipalities to ensure equal welfare services for a decentralised settlement pattern. Ageing and increased influx of refugees have also increased the need of public welfare support and services in these regions.

Additionally, the Norwegian Governments have pursued a kind of counter-cyclical expansionary fiscal policies in periods of external shocks and 'crises' (finance, oil-price, covid-19) in this period. This has partly been done by use of petroleum revenues and returns from the "pension fund" (oil fund). Together with low loan interest rates and increasing purchasing power of individuals and firms, this also gave high investments and consumption levels, which spurred high growth of jobs in parts of private sector (ex. building/construction, business services) in most STRs and other regions in the country.

However, this general picture also veils substantial differences in development among individual STRs. The main part of this report sheds more light on this by analysing a selection of 18 STRs distributed among the three groups of Growing, Stable and Shrinking STRs. This sample include maximum variation cases (of growth and decline among the country's 65 STRs) as well as median reference cases (with minor net-changes of inhabitants and jobs. The report shed lights on similarities and dissimilarities between these three STR groups with regard to town and regional typologies and structures (demographic and economic) and main components of change. Additionally, the report also describes similarities and dissimilarities between and within the STRs groups with regard to some socio-economic aspects.

Type of towns and regions

Our 18 selected STRs demonstrate very large variation in their sizes of main towns (from 2,322 to 18,337 inhabitants) and regions (from 4 553 to 41 734 inhabitants), but also in the economic structures of the town municipality and region. Based on this, we defined most of these towns (13 out of 18 towns) as “mixed towns”, which means a hybrid of the typical “specialised production towns” (SPT) and regional “central service towns” (SCT). This is partly in line with what also international authors have called “mixed types of local economies, with substantial activities both within a productive economy and a residential economy” (Hamdouch et al. 2017). Only 4 of our 18 STR towns were classified as specialised production towns (SPT). These were various types of “industrial towns” or “state sector towns”. However, only 1 out of 18 towns was classified as a pure central service town (SCT). The town municipalities have, in general, a larger proportion of service industries than their hinterland municipalities, which generally have a larger proportion of jobs within diverse primary industries and manufacturing. Due to the different sizes, the STRs’ industrial structures and specialisations are generally more often dominated by the characteristics of the town municipality rather than the hinterland municipalities.

Growing vs. Shrinking vs. Stable regions

Some of the main points are summarized comparatively in table5 on the next page.

The *Growing STRs’ have six regions* associated with the medium to low centrality in the national context (classes 4 and 5 in the range from 1-6). But they vary substantially with regard to their largest towns (2,400-16,000 inh.), regional population base (9,800-33,300 inhabitants) and number of jobs (4,800-12,600 jobs).

Their consistently high population growth (13% 2010-24) has been powered by a substantial migration surplus (high in-migration from abroad together with moderate out-migration to rest of the country) and only minor excess of births caused by some more favourable demographic structures than the two other STRs subgroups. However, the ageing of the Growing STRs has been slightly stronger than in the country the last decade and is now slightly above the average of the country. The share of immigrants has increased (from 6 to 12 per cent 2010-24), but is below national level (17%,2024).

This STR group’s substantial (net) growth of jobs have been supported by a broad set of industries and public services. However, most of the growth in numbers have come in some regional industries (i.e. building/construction, business services, other private services) and municipal local services (health/care, education). Additionally, this STR-group are also the only one which also has benefited from (net) growth of jobs also within some “basic industries” such as seafood, tourism, extracting (mining/oil/gas) and certain state sectors (universities, hospitals etc.). And at the same time this STR group also underwent minor losses of jobs in shrinking sectors like primary industries and wholesale/retailing, which have got large reductions in the two others STR-group as well as at the national level in general.

In other words, there have been several mutually reinforcing growth processes internally in these regions of growing STRs, and they also have got a favourable development in their basic industries (both private and state) and additionally attracted more people to move in than out. Though, internally of the functional regional level of the STR-group, there have been a very uneven growth of inhabitants between the town, the center municipality and the hinterland municipalities. It has internally been a centralised growth pattern where the main town has function as a substantial growth centre og then partly also their center municipality.

When looking at some of the other socio-economic variables, the Growing STRs had, not very surprisingly, somewhat higher median household income levels, and some lower rates of unemployment and outsiderness (residents of 20-66 years out of work and education) than most of the regions in subgroups of Stable and Shrinking STRs. However, the increase in outsiderness in the Growing STRs has been more pronounced than the increase at national level, but from a lower level.

The *Shrinking STRs'* have six regions associated with the lowest national centrality classes (5 and 6). Though their size varies so some extent with regard to their largest urban settlement (2,300-4,700 inhabitants), regional population base (4,600-9,300 inhabitants) and number of jobs (2,000-4,200 jobs).

Their consistently substantial reductions of inhabitants were due to very negative migration balance (high losses to the rest of the country exceeded a substantial positive in-migration from abroad) together with some birth deficit. The last indicator is mainly due to some "unfavourable" age structures in these regions (compared to the national average, and the two STR groups others). The share of older people has also increased substantially in this period (persons aged 65+ exceeds those under 19 years). The share of immigrants has also increased in this period (from 6 to 12%, 2010-2024, i.e.in line with the Growing STRs), but is still somewhat below the national level.

Table 5: Summing up some of the main structural conditions and components of changes behind the uneven developments in population and jobs between the three STRs-groups, and some (output-) variables of employment rates, outsiderness, household income levels and levels of housing costs.

	Growing STRs	Stable STRs	Shrinking STRs
Average size of the STRs (and main towns) (inhabitants)	**19 242 (6 694)**	**19 773 (7 946)**	**6 336 (3 334)**
Range of sizes of the STRs (and main towns) (inhabitants)	**9 793 - 33 251 (2 437 - 16 269)**	**7 271 - 41 734 (2 712 - 18 337)**	**4 553 - 9 287 (2 322 - 4 867)**
Changing population levels : components of changes (2010-24)	***High total (net-) growt (13%) due to:*** ***(1)*** *High (net) in-migration,* mostly *from* abroad but also some domestically, and *in addition to* **(2)** some *excess of births.*	***Stable total (net-) level (3%) due to:*** ***(1)*** *High (net) in-migration from* abroad, which counterbalance **(2)** some (net-) *out-migration domestically* and *deficits of births.*	***Decreasing total(net-) level (-6%)dueto :*** ***(1)*** *Substantial (net-) domestic out-migration and deficits of births, which in sum surpass* ***(2)*** *high (net-) in-migration from abroad.*
Changing numbers of jobs : components of change (2010-24)	***High total (net-) growth (11%) due to :*** **(1)** *High growht within public sector (welfare) and parts of privat sector* (building/construction,seafood,tourism, business serv) which *surpass* **(2)** *a minor decrease in private sector others* (agriculture, manufacturing, retailing).	***Stable total (net-) level (1%) due to*** : **(1)** *Subtantial growth within public sector (welfare) and some parts of private sector* (building/construction, business serv), which *counterbalance* **(2)** a *substantial decrease within private sectors others* (agriculture, manufacturing,retailing).	***Substantial total (net-) decreasing (-11%) due to*** : **(1)** Substantial decrease *in privat sector* (partic. retailing, manufacturing, agriculture) and additionally also some *decrease in public sector* (within administration, defence, education, nurse/care).
Employment and outsiderness (2008-2022)	***Low unemployment*** (2,2 %, 2022). ***Lowest share of outsiderness*** (19,1% 2022, below national level), but ***higher relative increases*** than national.	***Medium-low unemployment*** (2,6 %, 2022). ***Highest share of outsiderness*** (22,5% 2022, above national level), and ***higher relative increases*** than national.	***Medium-low unemployment*** (2,5 %, 2022). ***Medium shares of outsiderness*** (20,5% 2022, slightly above country), and ***higher relative increases*** than national.
Household income levels and changes (2008-2022)	***High income levels over time*** (a litle bit above the national median over time).	***From medium to lower income levels over time*** (well below national median).	***Lower income levels over time*** (below national median) and *some falling* levels (one STR exception).
Housing cost levels of center municipality (2010-24)	***Substantial lower housing costs*** than national level (81 of 100)	***Substantial lower housing costs*** than national level (72 of 100)	***Substantial lower housing costs*** than national level (70 of 100)
Internal development patterns of STRs *(changes in population and jobs in the center/town municpality and the hinterland municipalities - 2010-24)*	***Substantial growth in center muncipality*** *and partly in* ***the hinterland*** *municipalities*	***Some growth in the center municipaliy and some decline in hinterland*** *municipalities*	***Most substantial decline in center municipality*** and ***lesser decline in hinterland*** municipalities

Their additional substantial loss of jobs came within a broad spectre of industries and services, however mostly in private sector (83% of the total net reduction) and large amounts in wholesale/retailing, manufacturing and primary industries, and to some extent also in business services. But these also in parts of public sector jobs (17% of the total net reduction) and there in particularly within some state sectors (military defence and hospitals) and municipal education sector (primary/secondary schools).

The shrinking supply of jobs in these STRs have then been a sum effect of weak population bases and vulnerability for agglomeration forces and effects of international competition, new technology and restructuring in diverse sectors, and with minor supply of jobs from new growth industries. This includes also reductions in some state sectors (defence and hospitals), but also municipal schools mainly partly due to the demographic changes.

The Shrinking STRs had also the opposite development pattern than the Growing STRs with larger reduction rates of inhabitants and jobs within the town municipality compared to their shrinking hinterland municipalities. In other words, we can talk about centralised shrinking or shrinking centres in these STRs.

Looking at the socio-economic variables the Shrinking STRs had some lower income levels than the Growing STRs (and approximately the same as the Stable STRs, well below the national level), and minor higher unemployment rates and shares of people in outsiderness.

The*Stable STRs' have six regions* associated with the medium of national centrality classes (3, 4 and 5). However, they vary substantially with regard largest towns (2,505 -18,100 inh.), and regional population bases (7,200-41,700 inhabitants) and number of jobs (3,800-16,700.

Their minor (net) population growth is the (net) result of the combination of high gains from in-migration from abroad and substantial domestic move losses together with some birth deficit. The last component is related to unfavourable age structure and also more substantial increasing of ageing than the Growing STRs and at the national level. The share of immigrants has also increased in the period (from 7 to 13%), to a slightly higher level than the Growing and Shrinking STRs, but still below the national level.

The Stable STRs' minor (net) changes in the number of jobs obstructs substantial structural changes within their labour markets. There has been a huge reduction of jobs in private sector due to several branches (particularly within retailing, manufacturing, agriculture, transport), and in spite of some growth within business services, tourism and private welfare. The large loss of jobs in the private sector in this STR-group has been fully compensated by a substantial growth in public sector, i.e. particularly municipal health/care services but also to some extent in some state sectors (universities, administration, social insurance, defence). The only public sector with reduction of jobs has been primary/secondary school sector.

The Stable STRs have only shown a slightly uneven development within the regions, although with a slight long-term growth trend in the town municipalities and decrease in the hinterland municipalities.

When looking at some of the socio-economic variables we documented that the Stable STRs had a lower median income level for households than the Growing STRs, but proximately the same level as the Shrinking STRs (though well below the national median). Furthermore, this group had the highest levels of outsiderness of our three STR-groups and minor higher unemployment rate (this only minor over Shrinking STR).

Additional it should be underlined that the main characteristics of the three subgroups of STRs of course covers varieties and nuances among the individual STRs and across each subgroup. And while the demographic and economic structures and changing components

behind growth and shrinking varied quite systematically between most of the individual STRs dependent on whether they were a part of the subgroup of Growing or Shrinking STRs, we did not find the same substantial divide between the individual STRs of these subgroups with regard to unemployment and outsiderness.

It may also be worth noting that when we look at our 18 selected STRs we find that STRs with over 7000-8000 inhabitants and 4000-5000 jobs have avoided shrinkage in the period (2010-2024), while those below these levels have shrunk. This may indicate that some size (of population and labour market) of the functional region tendentially give advantages for growth. However, we also find some empirical exceptions from this “size-rule” which imply that there is no absolute determined relationship between such size and growth of people and jobs in STRs.

4 Discussion and conclusion

This last chapter summarizes some of the main points from previous chapters and discusses some aspects of the empirical study in relation to terminology, methods/data and some of the international literature.

4.1 Literature, perspectives and concepts

Initially, we started with referring to to international urban research literature which underlines that while small and medium-sized towns constitute substantial parts of the urban structure and settlement patterns of most nations, they have been largely ignored in urban research and politics, in particular compared to the huge attention given to larger cities (Grossman & Mallach 2021). The rich mosaic that constitutes the urban structures has been neglected and, hence, much knowledge development and policy have failed to differentiate among urban areas and regions in the European context (Atkinson 2019). The diversity of cities and towns and their geographical, institutional and structural conditions casts doubt about the relevance of mainstream concepts for explaining urban and regional change in diverse global settings (Pike et al. 2017). The literature underline that this knowledge gap hampers more efficient politics and planning for resilient and sustainable cities, towns and regions of different scales and contexts, and makes it more difficult to achieve goals not only of sustainable development but also territorial and social coherence, which are highlighted as overarching objectives of regional policies within EU.

This said, the international research on small towns and regions has not been completely absent, and it seems that the attention has been growing the last years, not only among researchers, but also among planners, bureaucrats and politicians. It is claimed that this partly is fuelled by regional policies with stronger spotlights on place-based development and decentralised decision-making anchored to territorial specificities, advantages and potentials.

One challenge for comparative studies and knowledge sharing across different nations has for long been some different concepts and criteria, as well as available data, related to urban settlements and regions. Here, too, various context-specific terminologies have been used, often combined with unclear definitions of their scales, which have created challenges for retrospective comparisons. Recently, to meet some of these challenges, the European Commission (DG REGIO), OECD and UN reached an agreement they will follow hereafter (Espon 2023), in which the main term *town* is an urban settlements with 5,000-50,000 inhabitants, while the term *city* is used for settlements above that level (both categories have several subgroups). Using such a simple common terminology related to scale may facilitate studies in different contexts and countries in the years ahead.

This recently agreement of terminology is much in line with the term used in the first major European study of small towns (ESPON TOWN 2014). In addition to towns' quantitative size this study also gave this general description of towns' properties and roles within a socio-spatial system:

"a town is an urban settlement or urban municipality containing a concentration of jobs, services and other functions that serve other settlements in its hinterland, acting as the core of an urban (functional) region, which is a larger area that contains the urban centre and its hinterland, forming together a socio-spatial system integrated by functional interrelations."

The Espon study also shed important lights on different town concepts and delimitations (morphological, administrative, functional), types of towns, their roles and functions in

regions, the importance of different regional contexts for their development, multi-scalar governance, policy needs and options in various situations and contexts.

The different regional concepts and criteria, as well as available data, have also for long been a challenge for comparisons between different countries, in particular with regard to functional micro-regions (NUT3 and lower levels). Some have in this regard distinguished between functional urban areas (FUAs) and complex micro regions (CMRs), as two basic views on the spatial organisation of settlements and regional systems that are somewhat different but also may be interrelated (Sykora and Mulicek 2009). Both types exist and dependent on issues and context may be relevant for analysing towns within FUAs (ex. smaller urban centres in larger urban areas) or as urban cores and centres in CMRs.

Later research has confirmed that small towns have important economic, social and cultural characteristics that distinguish them substantial from larger cities and rural areas. They play specific roles as links between larger urban centres and rural areas, performing a number of social and economic functions and relations vis-a-vis the countryside, as well as important centres and drivers of development of services and cultural life within regions (Banski 2021). The literature also shows that small towns are a very heterogenous group with regard to different typologies of towns, their historical emergence and recent socio-economic, political and cultural properties and development, challenges and opportunities – both within single nations and between different nations in Europe. However, many small towns and regions in the Global North have over the last decade been characterised by shrinking populations, economic restructuring and increasing social challenges, partly as effects of increased globalisation and national tightening of public budgets. At the same time, it is also documented that a good number of small towns are doing well and have a much better demographic, economic and social development, not only compared to other small towns and regions, but also compared to an increasing share of large cities og regions which the last decade also have been characterized by shrinkage and social decay.

Summing up the recent literature, systematic, robust and up-dated knowledge about small and medium sizes towns and regions are very inadequate and fragmented, both for many countries and to a greater extent comparatively among nations (Mayer and Lazzeroni edt. 2022, Wagner and Grow 2021, Grossmann and Mallach 2021, Atkinson 2019). There is a need for greater illumination and updated examination of different types of towns' and regions' demographic, economic and institutional dynamics and development, factors that promote and inhibit sustainable governance and development in different regional and national contexts. For this, a need for more systematic comparative studies, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, both within and between countries, has been noted.

Based on elements from the literature, we have developed an analytical framework for a comparative analysis of uneven development of population and jobs among small town regions (STRs), with towns, municipalities and functional regions (living and working regions) as the main geographical units for the analysis. We focus on demographic and economic structures, development patterns and underlying processes, in describing and explaining uneven development among STRs of different "development"-subgroups.

4.2 Summary of some empirical findings

The empirical analysis have been based on register data from Statistics Norway, and the geographical units have been *small towns and small town regions (STR),* operationalized as functional living and working regions (BA, TØI 2020). These are but only those which have a town with between 2000-20000 inhabitants as their largest urban settlement. These are

functional micro-regions with their largest town located within the centre municipality and most often surrounded by 1-4 hinterland municipalities in the Norwegian context. The towns most often function as the regional service-centre for inhabitants and producers in these regions, with fairly integrated housing and labour markets across the administrative municipal boundaries.

Ffirstly we presented a national overview of the five main classes of functional micro-regions, their structures and development patterns over the last decade, and with specific comments to the position and role of the class of small-town regions (STR) in this context. Then a comparative analysis was presented, based on a selection of 18 STR in three different subgroups of ”development”, based on a “development”- indicator (sum of percentage changes in inhabitants and jobs 2010-24) used for ranking all the 65 STRs in the country. The selection includes maximum variation cases (6 Growing and 6 Shrinking STRs) plus median ranked cases as reference group (6 Stable STRs). With these subgroups, we described and analyzed demographic, economic and socio-economic structures and development patterns, and highlighted some of the underlying conditions and processes which have contributed to and partly explain the substantially uneven development between the subgroups. In the following, some of the main findings are presented.

National structures, trends and contexts

Norway is one of the countries in Europe with the lowest proportion of people living in metropolitan regions, and then highest proportion living in smaller urban areas and sparsely populated areas. The small town regions are also scattered throughout the country, although a substantial part of the small towns in the country are located within the functional larger city regions.

36 percent of the population in Norway live in *micro-, small- and medium town regions*[43]*. The small town regions,*[44] the main unit of study in this report, have 20 percent of the population in the country distributed over 65 STRs. The STRs are functional regions distributed all over the country, in fourteen of the country's fifteen counties, and cover most of “Distrikts-Norge” which is an unprecise term for all areas except of the larger city regions. The STR-class (aggregate of all 65 STRs) are further characterized in the national context, by their economic specialisation within primary and secondary industries, in contrast to larger city regions’ specialisation in different private services. Private service is under-represented in the STRs, while public service is overrepresented, both compared to national levels and larger city regions. But in spite of STRs specialization in typical goods-producing sectors, it is nevertheless their service sector which dominates their labour markets, measured by the number of jobs.

Over the last fifteen years there has been a significant growth in population (+14%) and jobs (+16%) in the country.Although most of the (net) growth came in the larger city regions, there has been some growth in most regions and parts of the country. This national growth has been due to a historically high rate of immigration in combination with high economic activity both in private and public sector.

The class of STRs also had some (net) growth in this period after some previous decades with some decline. The last fifteen years the population *growth (+5%) in these regions has been caused by a very high (net) in-migration* from abroad, which has outnumbered a *substantial migration loss* to larger city regions in the country.

[43]Here used as the collective term for functional regions with largest urban settlement between 2 000-50 000 ihb.
[44]Used in the report for functional regions with largest towns between 2 000-20 000 ihb.

The (net) growth of jobs in the STR class (+6%) was due to a substantial increasing of jobs within public services (particularly local health/care) and regional private industries (particularly building/construction and business services). Additionally, the STRs also got a minor (net) growth of jobs within some export-oriented resource industries (i.e. seafood, tourism). The (net) growth within these parts of public and private sectors has outnumbered the *substantial loss of jobs in the STR-class w*ithin agriculture, manufacturing, retailing, transport and military defence.

In total, the public sector had as much as 70 percent of the total growth of jobs in the STRs 2009-23, while private sector supported the rest. A third sector, publicly owned enterprises, was the only one that shrunk and this reduced the total (net) growth of jobs in the STRs with 14 percent[45]. It is obvious that the public sector' substantial (net) growth of jobs in this period prevented job losses in total for the STRs. This growth in public sector may be seen as result of a combination of increased needs of welfare support and services from ageing and influx of refugees, supported and stimulated by the part of national welfare policy and some reforms. Additionally, it should be mentioned that different national governments in this period have pursued a kind of counter-cyclical fiscal policy in the periods with economic shocs and 'crises' (finance, oil-price, covid-19). At the same time low loan interest rates and increasing purchasing power, investments and consumption levels have spurred high demand and activity with job growth also in parts of private sector (building/construction, business services).

This general picture of the STR-class as an aggregated group veils large differences in properties and development paths among the 65 STRs in the country. Some of this is evident in our analysis of the 18 STR-cases within the subgroups of Growing, Stable and Shrinking STRs.

Mostly "mixed towns" as urban centres in all the three subgroups

The selected 18 STRs each had one main town. These 18 towns varied much in size and economic structures. We found that 13 of the 18 towns were "mixed towns", i.e. hybrids of "specialized production towns" and "central place towns" for services. This is also in line with research that has characterized many towns as based on "mixed types of local economies, with substantial activities both within a productive economy and a residential economy" (Hamdouch et al. 2017). Only 4 of our 18 towns in our cases were defined as more purely "specialized production towns", and these were specialized and dependent on different sectors, where only one was an "industrial town" (metal manufacturing), two were "state sector towns" (defense and administration) and one was a combined version of these two types. Only 1 out of 18 towns was classified as a pure "central place town".

Growing and Shrinking STRs – substantial differences in demographic and economic development – minor divides in unemployment and outsiderness

The six *Growing STRs are a*ll in centrality classes 4 and 5 (range from 1-6), and these STRs are in average more than twice the population size compared to the Shrinking STRs. However, the growing STRs vary substantially with regard to their size of largest towns (2 400-16 000 inhabitants), regional population bases (9 800-33 300) and number of jobs (4 800-12 600).

Their consistently high population growth have been powered by a substantial migration surplus and some excess of births. They have younger demographic age structures than the

[45]The same number at national level was public sector 41% av total (net) growth, private sector with 59 percent and public owned enterprises shrunk and reduced the total (net) growth of jobs in the STRs with 5 percent.

two other STRs subgroups, however the ageing in the Growing STRs has been slightly stronger than at the national level the last decade and is now slightly above the average of the country. The share of immigrants has increased (from 6 to 12 per cent 2010-24), but is below national level (17%,2024).

Their substantial total growth of jobs (+14%, 2010-24) were a result of significant growth in both public sector (+22% and +3209 jobs) and private sector (+10% and +3153 jobs), and as such the growth volume was quite evenly distributed between these two main sectors. The growth came withing a broad set of industries and services: but mostly in (i) municipal services (health/care, education) and (ii) private regional industries (building/construction, business services, private services others), and to some smaller extent within (iii) basic industries like seafood, tourism, extracting and state sector (universities, hospitals etc.). The Growing STR had also some (net) losses of jobs within primary industries, manufacturing and retailing (i.e. the most typical national shrinking sectors), but the total losses in these industries were much smaller than the total additions from the growth sectors.

Several mutually reinforcing processes within these regions have enhanced their growth, stimulated by an influx of inhabitants and visitors. Additionally, several external impulses from international markets and national funded state institutions have stimulated some job growth also in the basic sectors (private and state sectors), which have given some economic ripple effects within these STR-regions.

The Growing STRs had, not very surprisingly, somewhat higher median household income levels, and some lower rates of unemployment and outsiderness (residents of 20-66 years out of work and education) than most of the regions in subgroups of Stable and Shrinking STRs. However, the increase in outsiderness in the Growing STRs has been more pronounced than the increase at national level, but from a lower level.

The geographical pattern of growth of inhabitants within the Growing STRs has been characterized by substantial uneven development between, respectively, (i) the (main-) town, (ii) centre municipality and (iii) hinterland municipalities. The main town had much higher growth of population (in percent and numbers) has been a functionally growth centre both within its own centre municipality and the region as a unit.

The six *Shrinking STRs are all in lowest centrality* classes 5 and 6 (range from 1-6) and the STRs have on average half the number of inhabitants than the average among the Growing STRs. However, the Shrinking STRs varies also to some extent with regard to the size of the largest town (from 2,300-4,700 inhabitants) and regional population bases (4,600-9,300 inhabitants) and number of jobs (2,000-4,200 jobs).

Their substantial reductions of inhabitants can mainly be attributed to substantial migration losses (due to high losses to the rest of the country outnumbering substantial migration surplus from abroad), but also some birth deficits (mostly due to aging and an older population than in the country, and in the Growing and Stable STRs). The ageing trend the last decade has also been stronger in the Shrinking STRs than in the Growing and Stable subgroups, as well as at the national level.The share of immigrants has also increased in this period but is still somewhat below the national level.

The Shrinking STRs' substantial losses of jobs (-11%, 2010-24) has been a result of large losses in private sector (-14% and -1795 jobs) and some losses within public sector (-5% and -308 jobs), i.e. the private sector accounts for 83% of the total net reduction. The reduction came among several industries and services, however mostly in retailing, manufacturing and primary industries, and partly in business services. The loss in public sector was 17% of the total (net) loss of jobs, and this was in particularly due to reductions in the municipal

education sector (primary/secondary schools) in most of the Shrinking STRs and additionally in some state sectors (military defence, hospitals) in a couple of these STRs.

All in all, the Shrinking STRs has been subject to several mutually reinforcing demographic and economic changes and shrinking processes in the measurement period. Their low centrality, small population bases, thin industrial milieus and large share of international exposed industries, have given limited endogenous capabilities for growth of new industries and jobs, and more vulnerability to external shocks and pressures compared to many of the Growing STRs. The Shrinking STRs have also compared to many of the Growing STRs have been more vulnerable to, and more negative affected by, increased competition for inhabitants and movers, and agglomeration and restructuring within diverse industries and services. Their substantial reduction also in primary/secondary school sector may be a result of demographic change (fewer children and adolescents) and/or weakened municipal/county finances and/or changing political priorities.

It is not surprising that most Shrinking STRs have somewhat lower median household income levels, higher unemployment and outsiderness, than the Growing STRs. However, it could be mentioned that the Stable STRs have somewhat higher levels of unemployment and outsiderness than these Shrinking STRs, although the differences in median household income, unemployment and exclusion between the three subgroups of STRs in this study are not very large.

When looking at the Shrinking STRs' internal pattern of decline/growth, they had interestingly the opposite pattern than the Growing STRs, i.e. with larger reduction rates (of inhabitants) within the town municipality compared to the hinterland municipalities. In other words, we can talk about centralised shrinking or shrinking centres in these STRs.

The Stable STRs – minor differences in demographic and economic development – substantial differencesin unemployment and outsiderness

The six *Stable STRs' varies from medium to low* centrality (class 3, 4 or 5). Their average population size resembles that of the Growing STRs, which means about twice the numbers of inhabitants compared to the Shrinking STRs. However, also the Stable STRs vary substantially in size with regard their largest towns (2 500 -18 100 inhabitants), and regional population bases (7 200-41 700 inhabitants) and number of jobs (3 800 -16 700 jobs).

While the Growing and Shrinking STRs represent 12 STR cases evenly distributed at each extreme of a "growth" scale, the Stable STRs 6 cases represent those ranked in the middle of the country's 65 STRs, with a "growth rate" close to many of the country's 65 STRs, and hencea more typical development course for more STRs than the two subgroups of extreme-cases.

The minor (net) population growth in the Stable STRs is a combination of high gains from in-migration from abroad, high domestic losses and some birth deficit. The last component is related to an old age structure and increased ageing compared to the national levels and the Growing STRs. The share of immigrants has also increased substantially in the period (from 7 to 13%, 2008-22), and slightly higher than in the Growing and Shrinking STRs, but the level is still substantially below the national level (17%).

The minor total (net) growth (+2%, 2010-24) of jobs in the six Stable STRs covers some structural changes within their regional labour markets with losses in number of jobs in private sector (total -4%, 1319 jobs) and substantial growth in public sector (total 12%, 2236 jobs). Private sector of the Stable STR lost jobs particularly in "mature industries" like retailing, agriculture, manufacturing and transport, but also got a little job-growth within

somewhat “newer industries” like business services, tourism and private welfare services. However, the somewhat shrinking total numbers of jobs in private sector was fully compensated for by a substantial growth in public sector, particularly within municipal health/care services but also to some extent by parts of the state sector (universities, administration, social insurance, defence). The only public service which got fewer jobs in the Stable STRs was primary and secondary school sector.

The Stable STRs have lower median income levels for households than the Growing STRs (but approximately the same as the Shrinking STRs and below the national median), but also higher aggregated level of unemployment than the Growing STRs and the national level (but approximately same levels as Shrinking STRs) and higher aggregate level of outsiderness compared with the two other subgroups of STRs. However, the higher total level of outsiderness in the Stable STRs as a group is strongly affected by one single STR in this group (Kongsvinger).

The Stable STRs have only shown a slightly uneven internal development within these regions, although with a slight long-term growth trend in the town municipalities and decrease in the hinterland municipalities.

Some additional comments

It should be underlined that the main characteristics of the three subgroups of course covers larger varieties and nuances among the individual STRs within and across each subgroup. However, while the demographic and economic structures and changing components which causes the uneven development varied quite systematically between most of the individual STRs, dependent on whether they were a part of the Growing or Shrinking subgroup, we did not find the same systematically geographical patterns with regard to variables like unemployment and outsiderness.

It was within the Growing STRs that we found the largest range in unemployment rates among the individual STR (1,6-3,2 % total unemployment) including the STR with the highest level of all 18 STRs. However, while the group of Growing STRs had two STRs above the national unemployment level, the Shrinking STRs had three STRs above the national level, but the Stable STR had five STRs above this national level.

It may be worth noting that among our 18 selected STRs, the STRs with over 7000-8000 inhabitants and 4000-5000 jobs were the ones to avoid shrinkage in the period (2010-2024), while those below these levels more often shrunk. This may indicate that functional town regions above some quantitative size on these levels tendentially have some capabilities or advantages for generating growth compared to those with less quantitative size. However, we also find some empirical exceptions from this “size-rule” which imply that there is no absolute determined relationship between quantitative size and growth rates of population and jobs in STRs.

4.3 Concepts, indicators and sampling

The report shed light on some patterns and causes of diversity and differentiated development among STRs in Norway, and with particular focus on three different development groups with 18 STRs selected among a national ranking of 65 STR, by rate of changes in population and jobs (2011-2023). Seen in isolation, *these traditional and simple outcome measures alone are not good indicators neither for “success” or “failure” of*

development to the STRs, nor of important aspects of sustainable development (socially, environmentally, economically)[46].

The point of selecting these three development groups according to changes in total population and jobs was to analyse and clarify similarities and inequalities between the three groups with regard to structures and components behind their (uneven) development, before attempting to distinguish the general and specific conditions and causal factors that lie behind their development.

We used the three main terms “growing”, “stable” and “shrinking” STRs in this report (in the tables we also provide the proper names of the regions in question). However, the first and last of these terms may give associations to something positive and negative, respectively, with regard to traditional “development”-indicators and policy perspectives. But to set such labels on specific towns and regions may exacerbate challenges for local and regional policymaking, including in reputation building. However, in this report we have not found an appropriate replacement for the short term of ‘shrinking’ STR that may give less negative connotations. Certainlyit can be said that shrinking populations and labor markets may contribute to weakening of STR's services, attractiveness for living and viable communities, but this is not a necessity. Changes in external conditions, living and relocation patterns, as well as local development work and actions can affect and to some extent prevent further shrinkage, and some of the shrinking STRs may also have some advantages with regard to attractiveness for living and/or visiting for some groups. With policies and measures for smart shrinkage and development of good living and visiting communities, many of these may thrive in the years ahead without growth of jobs and people.

It should also be underlined that when you select cases associated with different rankings after simple development indicators, the sample may be affected by the specific periodisation. We used the 2011-2023 (i.e. moving averages for three years at both ends, see note 25) as our main period for the indicator and the ranking of the 65 STRs, and selected 18 cases in our sample. We also checked two shorter periods (2015–2023 and 2011-2020, the last one ended before the effects of covid-19 and the inflow of refugees from Ukraine), but found no significant changes in the ranking of the STRs (with the exception of just 3-4 STRs who were anyway not among our selected). In principle, it could be appropriate to have a longer periodisation than 12 years, maybe at least 20 years, and also include annual figures to uncover fluctuations and look at specific and general patterns over time. This is done in figure V6 in the appendix, which displays annual population changes 2010-24, and this shows a clear shift from 2022 to today compared to the main trend between 2010-22. This applies to all our three subgroups of STRs as well as each of the 18 STRs. It may be worth noting that 4 of our 6 shrinking STRs go from shrinking in 2010-22 to a marked growth in the population 2022-24. This is most probably due to the influx of war refugees from Ukraine and Norway’s settlement policy for refugees. However, this indicate the substantial uncertainty that exists about further population trends, complicating policy and planning in several STRs in Norway.

4.4 The Norwegian case in the international context

Our empirical study is limited to small town regions (STR), operationalized as labor market regions where the largest towns has between 2,000 and 20,000 inhabitants. This is of course

[46]In another part of the SMACREG project a broader development analysis of sustainable development in eight STR-cases gets done.

a large span in the town size itself. International studies and recent common terminology for small towns have somewhat higher lowest limit (5,000-20,000 inhabitants). Of our selected 18 STRs, 6 STRs belong to the most populous STR category (i.e. with towns of 5 000-20 000 inhabitants in regions with 15 000-42 000 inhabitants) and 12 STRs belong to the middle category(with small towns of 2 000-5 000 inhabitants within regions with 4 500-10 000 inhabitants). This means that most of our small towns are somewhat smaller than the standard concept and categorisations of small towns in international studies. However, the difference is not large and we believe that our findings still may be relevant also for some international studies and comparisons, and that the results can illuminate certain aspects of patterns and causes of uneven development among small towns and their regions in general.

The study supports in general European and American studies that show a great diversity of small towns and their regions in terms of typologies, structures and functions, development paths, challenges and opportunities. Besides the towns' internal structures and external networks and relations, regional and national contexts also seem to be particularly important for their development, challenges and opportunities.

One striking feature in the Norwegian case is how the development of a service economy and welfare society has made the labour markets of the small town regions much more similar to each other, i.e. with a large proportion of jobs in typical central place activities such as service jobs, and much fewer jobs directly within the typical basic export-oriented or internationally competition-exposed industries. This is true even though most of the small town regions are specialised (overrepresented in a national context) in some basic industries – which may be export industries (seafood, metal manufacturing, maritime industries, tourism) and/or state-funded activities (defence, universities, hospitals). Although such basic industries often, but not always, have important local and regional economic ripple effects to other sectors and derived industries, their direct employment in make up a relatively small share of the total labour market of the STRs, which as such are dominated by private service industries (building/construction, transport, trade, business services) and municipal welfare services directed towards the local and regional markets and needs. This naturally affects the characteristics and dynamics of the small towns and their regions, which have thus been characterised by increasing service and welfare activity for their own populations and businesses.

It seems that in spite of that each of the small towns' low population base, in Norway they very often seems to have roles as multi-functionality center places with substantial varieties of services and offers. But are Norwegian small town regions more functional complete than similar small towns at the European continent or small towns within larger city regions in Norway? If so, what are the causes and trends? There is no research-based knowledge that can say anything robust about this today. But if so, one hypothesis could be that this may be due to national welfare policy and regional policies, but also a decentralized settlement pattern within many "autonomous" STRs , that is, many small and medium sized towns located far from each other and metropolitan regions with their service offerings.

It may be worth noting that compared to many other European countries, Norway has had a very high population growth over the past 10-15 years, and also in contrast to several European countries and the US, no shrinking ***city*** regions and only a few shrinking town regions (STRs) in this period.

Furthermore, the general retention of the number of jobs in the STR classes of Norway 2010-24 has been due to high economic activity and substantial demand for labour (and hence low unemployment rates). Besides high international demand and prices that have stimulated growth in some export industries (seafood, oil/gas-support industries, tourism), the job

growth in Norway has also been highly stimulated by expansionary public budgets and welfare policies and countercyclical policies independent of what party that has dominated the government. Increasing private and public consumption and investments in Norway in this period has also been stimulated by very low interest rates on capital.

The somewhat Keynesian kind of policy which have been at work in Norway 2010-22, may stand in some contrast to several EU-countries which in the same period was more characterized by more neo-liberalism austerity policies. In Norway there was very little political controversy about the conducting of counter-cyclical and expansionary economic policies. However, this was probably much easier than on many other countries, because of the solid state finances and budgets supported by tax-incomes from the oil/gas sector and returns from the oil/gas-fund (Government Pension Fund of Norway).

In all, this has resulted in relatively few Shrinking STRs in Distrikts-Norge and it may explain why we in our empirical analyses hardly find any “left behind” STRs with much higher unemployment, outsiderness or substantial lower than average median household incomes, than the national levels. This is true even though we would probably have found greater differences and variations if we had analyzed such things at an even lower geographical level, because analyses at the micro-region level mask what may be greater local variations and differences.

Our findings here correspond quite well with the evaluation of the “thinning society” hypothesis in Norway conducted some years ago (Sørlie and Aasbrenn 2016). The authors not only found that the thinning society hypothesis still was supported, they also found that “impoverishment hypothesis” was not, following a review of several indicators. The fact that the negative consequences of population decline have not been more dramatic was explained by a number of compensatory factors in play in Norway. Most emphasis was placed on the national development of the welfare state, i.e. welfare services and schemes that contribute to financial social security for individuals. Also mentioned were district policy, transport-infrastructure development, car use, the digital revolution and the ability of local actors to adapt to the situation and develop locally adapted solutions for service, transport etc.

On the other hand, we have not analysed whether the development of service provision and availability in some of the STRs contributes to a type of weathering or “left behind places” among more of them. There has currently been a strong debate in Norway about the school structures in rural (and some urban) areas. Several municipal and county management proposals and/or councils’ decisions to centralise primary and secondary schools due to declining numbers of pupils and forecasts of the quantity of young people, has met strong resistance from the locals in many of the municipalities. Many of the locals’ arguments against centralisation have been, among others, that social consequences are not sufficiently mapped, and that closures may undermine the communities’ attractiveness for young adults and families to live and move in to.

The high (net) immigration to most of the country in this period has had some obscuring effects on the underlying ageing trend and the high out-migration of young adults from the STRs to Norway’s metropolitan regions. The ageing trend in the STRs over many years indicates that even more of the STRs may experience “shrinkage” in the form of demographic thinning processes in the years to come. However, over the last years many refugees have arrived from Ukraine, which according to forecasts will help prevent a population decline in many of the STRs and rural municipalities in the near future. Both the ageing trend and more refugees will, however, increase the need for welfare services and municipal income support from the state. At the same time, most forecasts show that the

competition for labour will increase throughout the country and could lead to a greater shortage of labour in many STRs. There is no simple solution as to how the STRs themselves can maintain welfare services and export industries in the years to come with an increasing shortage of labour. The STRs compete with big city regions for this and will also face harder competition with each other. Strategies to strengthen the STRs' residential attractiveness and recruit more people from the big city regions have been in focus in many of the STRs for some time. Some of the STRs have also actively recruited workers from abroad. Reducing outsiderness and assisting more NEET people into the workforce is generally launched as part of a possible package of political measures at both regional and national level in Norway. However, smart shrinkages and measures to develop good local communities for living and thriving without growth should be placed higher on the agenda for many more Norwegian STRs in the years to come.

4.5 Some further research needs

Research on small towns and small-town regions is fragmented and inadequate in Norway as well as in many other European countries. Beyond the recognition that small towns are a very heterogenous group, systematic knowledge about them are still very inadequate and fragmented in many countries regarding their properties and development, challenges and options for innovation, resilience and sustainability (Mayer and Lazzeroni edt. 2022, Wagner and Grow 2021, Grossmann and Mallach 2021, Atkinson 2019). This include a need for more updated examination of smaller towns and regions' challenges, opportunities og experiences with respect to sustainable development and governance. It is an need for more systematic comparative studies both within and between countries, and more inter- and transdisciplinary approaches.

Some knowledge needs may include:

- Comparative analyses of small and medium-sized towns and regions (STR) types, socio-economic trends and determinants, innovation processes, institutional conditions and challenges, in Norway and the Nordic countries
- Comparative analyses of STRs' broader societal development and innovation, attractiveness and sustainability, challenges and opportunities for government and governance in different countries
- Develop increased knowledge about possible development scenarios in the perspectives of 2-3 decades, and recommendations for urban policy and strategic planning for a sustainable and robust development of small town regions in different contexts

It can also be mentioned here that in the ongoing SMACREG-project, of which this report is a part, a broader analysis of social development, sustainability and attractiveness is carried out by a representative sample of eight small-town regions in rural Norway ("Distrikts-Norge"). A majority of the results from this work will be published in the first half of 2026, but while this is the first of this kind in Norway, it does not fill the broader knowledge gaps mentioned above.

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Appendix

Table V 1: All 65 STRs in Norway (%) ranked after changes of inhabitants and jobs % in period 2011-22 (based on the average for the years 1.1. 2010/11/12 and 1.1. 2022/23/24).

		2011-23			
			1. Population change (%) 2011-2023	2. Work place changes (%) 2011-2023		
	Development groups of selected STR cases	Small Town Region (STR)	(2011-23 means from the avarage of 31.12.2009/10/11 to the avarage of 31.12.2021/22/23)		SUM 1+2	Rank 1
Country			*11,6*	*12,4*	*24,0*	
All Small Town Regions (STR) Cat.1 (largest town 5000-20000 iht).			*4,9*	*3,0*	*8,0*	
All Small Town Regions (STR) Cat.2 (largest town 2000-5000 iht)			*0,2*	*1,8*	*2,0*	
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')	The selected top 6 Growing STR	Alta	12,5	15,5	28,0	**1**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Sogndal	11,3	16,0	27,3	**2**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Ørland	7,9	17,8	25,7	**3**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Vågan	7,8	11,0	18,8	**4**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Alver	12,8	4,3	17,1	**5**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Lyngdal	8,1	8,7	16,8	**6**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Volda	8,1	7,5	15,6	**7**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Voss	7,7	6,4	14,0	**8**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Levanger	6,8	6,8	13,6	**9**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Nærøysund	4,3	8,9	13,3	**10**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Indre Østfold	11,5	1,5	12,9	**11**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Ringerike	8,0	4,3	12,4	**12**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Notodden	5,9	6,2	12,2	**13**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Vestnes	8,1	4,0	12,1	**14**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Vestvågøy	5,5	6,0	11,5	**15**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Stord	7,2	3,5	10,7	**16**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Gol	4,9	5,3	10,3	**17**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Sunnfjord	4,3	4,7	9,0	**18**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Båtsfjord	2,6	6,2	8,8	**19**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Sortland	4,3	4,3	8,6	**20**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Oppdal	4,5	3,5	8,0	**21**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Senja	0,6	7,3	7,9	**22**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Gloppen	3,6	4,2	7,8	**23**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Rana	1,4	5,6	6,9	**24**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Evje og Hornnes	5,5	1,1	6,7	**25**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Elverum	4,5	1,7	6,2	**26**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Ulstein	6,3	-0,4	5,9	**27**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Hammerfest	4,0	1,7	5,8	**28**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Eigersund	4,1	0,6	4,7	**29**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")	The selected 6 Stable STRs	Målselv	1,9	2,2	4,1	**30**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Stryn	3,2	-0,2	3,0	**31**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Kongsvinger	-0,2	2,6	2,4	**32**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Sør-Varanger	1,4	0,8	2,2	**33**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Flekkefjord	2,6	-0,5	2,1	**34**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Kristiansund	2,9	-1,5	1,4	**35**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Brønnøy	-0,3	1,4	1,1	**36**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Steinkjer	0,8	0,1	0,9	**37**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Stranda	-3,4	4,0	0,6	**38**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Vefsn	-1,1	1,6	0,5	**39**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Alstahaug	1,6	-1,2	0,5	**40**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Fauske	0,2	0,3	0,4	**41**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Namsos	-0,1	0,4	0,3	**42**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Kinn	-0,1	-0,5	-0,7	**43**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Risør	-1,6	0,7	-1,0	**44**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Hol	1,3	-2,5	-1,2	**45**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Kvam	0,8	-3,7	-2,9	**46**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Surnadal	-1,8	-1,5	-3,3	**47**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Tynset	-2,1	-1,9	-4,0	**48**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Røros	-2,0	-2,5	-4,5	**49**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Skjervøy	-3,0	-1,6	-4,6	**50**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Trysil	-3,3	-1,5	-4,8	**51**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Ullensvang	-3,4	-1,9	-5,4	**52**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Sunndal	-2,2	-4,3	-6,5	**53**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Kvinnherad	-1,5	-5,3	-6,8	**54**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Nord-Fron	-3,1	-3,8	-6,9	**55**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Porsanger	-2,2	-6,5	-8,7	**56**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Nordkapp	-8,4	-0,4	-8,8	**57**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Rauma	-3,9	-7,0	-10,9	**58**
Small Town Region Cat 1 (lt.5'-20')		Kragerø	-2,5	-8,5	-11,1	**59**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")	The selected 6 most Shrinking STRs	Sauda	-3,6	-9,7	-13,3	**60**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Sel	-5,7	-7,8	-13,5	**61**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Vadsø	-6,9	-10,6	-17,6	**62**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Tinn	-8,0	-9,7	-17,7	**63**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Årdal	-6,0	-12,8	-18,8	**64**
Small Town Region Cat 2 (lt.2'-5")		Andøy	-9,1	-15,3	-24,4	**65**

Table V2: Key numbers and indicators for the sample of the three subgroups of growing, stable and shrinkage small town regions (STR) (inhabitants and jobs are based on changes from 2011-2023 based on the average for the years 1.1.2010/11/12 and 1.1.

Regionklasse (BA)	Sentralitets-indeks (SSB) til senterkommune n (i BA)	Fylke (til BA-regionen)	Utvalgs-gruppene:	Bo- og arbeidsmarkedsregionene (BA):						ENDRING FOLKETALL i BA (1.1. 2010/11/12 - 1.1. 2022/23/24)			ENDRING I ARB. PLASSER i BA - (31.12.20209/10/11 - 31.12.2021/22/23)			SUM endringsrater (%) folketall + arb.plasser		
				Navn (BA)	Folketall (BA) 1.1.2024	Største by (folketall 1.1.23)		Andre byer/tettsteder (folketall 1.1.23)	Arbeids-plasser (BA) 1.1.2024	PROSENT	RANG i utvalgsgruppe (N=18)	RANG nasjonalt (N=65)	PROSENT	RANG i utvalgsgruppe (N=18)	RANG nasjonalt (N=65)	Prosentratene : folk + arbeid	RANG i utvalgsgruppe (N=18)	RANG nasjonalt (N=65)
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	04	Finnmark	Vekst- regioner (6 BA)	Alta	21 708	Alta	15 931		11 369	12,5	2	2	15,5	3	3	28,0	1	1
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	05	Vestland		Sogndal	17 690	Sogndalfjøra	4 324	Hornamsvik/Kaupanger(2208)	9 593	11,3	3	4	16,0	2	2	27,3	2	2
7. Bygdeby/sms.reg	05	Trøndelag		Ørland	10 522	Brekstad	2 391	Bjugn (1369)	4 932	7,9	5	9	17,8	1	1	25,7	3	3
8. Bygdeby/sms.reg	05	Nordland		Vågan	9 793	Svolvær	4 736	Kabelvåg (2291)	4 832	7,8	6	10	11,0	4	4	18,8	4	4
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	04	Vestland		Alver	33 251	Knarvik	6 590		12 559	12,8	1	1	4,3	6	18	17,1	5	5
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	04	Agder		Lyngdal	22 487	Lyngdal	5 558	Farsund (3472), Vanse (2059)	9 542	8,1	4	5	8,7	5	6	16,8	6	6
			Totalt		115 451		39 530		52 827	60,4			73,3			133,7		
			Gjennomsnitt		19 242		6 588		8 805	10,1			12,2			22,3		
(største tettsted 2'-5')	05	Troms	Stabilitets- regioner (6 BA)	Målselv	10 700	Setermoen	2 505	Andselv (1233)	5 842	1,9	10	31	2,2	8	26	4,1	7	30
(største tettsted 2'-5')	05	Vestland		Stryn	7 271	Stryn	2 662		3 822	3,2	7	27	-0,2	10	39	3,0	8	31
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	03	Innlandet		Kongsvinger	41 734	Kongssvinger	12 338		16 667	-0,2	12	42	2,6	7	25	2,4	9	32
(største tettsted 2'-5')	05	Finnmark		Sør-Varanger	10 063	Kirkenes	3 404	Bjørnevatn (2535), Hesseng (1838)	5 363	1,4	11	33	0,8	9	33	2,2	10	33
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	04	Agder		Flekkefjord	15 471	Flekkefjord	6 204		6 649	2,6	9	30	-0,5	11	43	2,1	11	34
6. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	04	Agder		Kristiansund	33 400	Kristiansund	18 103		14 901	2,9	8	28	-1,5	12	47	1,4	12	35
			Totalt		118 639		45 216		53 244	11,7			3,4			15,2		
			Gjennomsnitt		19 773		7 536		8 874	2,0			0,6			2,5		
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	05	Rogaland	Krympende regioner (6 BA)	Sauda	4 572	Sauda	4 134		1 948	-3,6	13	58	-9,7	15	62	-13,3	13	60
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	05	Innlandet		Sel	9 287	Otta	2 302	Vågåmo (1482)	4 206	-5,7	14	60	-7,8	13	59	-13,5	14	61
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	05	Finnmark		Vadsø	6 666	Vadsø	4 654		3 156	-6,9	16	62	-10,6	16	63	-17,6	15	62
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	05	Telemark		Tinn	5 533	Rjukan	3 022		2 592	-8,0	17	63	-9,7	14	61	-17,7	16	63
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	06	Vestland		Årdal	7 399	Årdal	3 082	Arbeidergjen(1388), Lærdalsøyri(1154)	3 515	-6,0	15	61	-12,8	17	64	-18,8	17	64
5. Småbyreg.(stl.5'-20')	06	Nordland		Andøy	4 553	Andenes	2 535		2 191	-9,1	18	65	-15,3	18	65	-24,4	18	65
			Totalt		38 010		19 729		17 608	-39,4			-65,9			-105,2		
			Gjennomsnitt		6 335		3 288		2 935	-6,6			-11,0			-17,5		

Figure V 1: Population and workplace changes 2010-23 (%) of the 65 STRs (lt.2.000-20.000 inhabitants) of Norway.

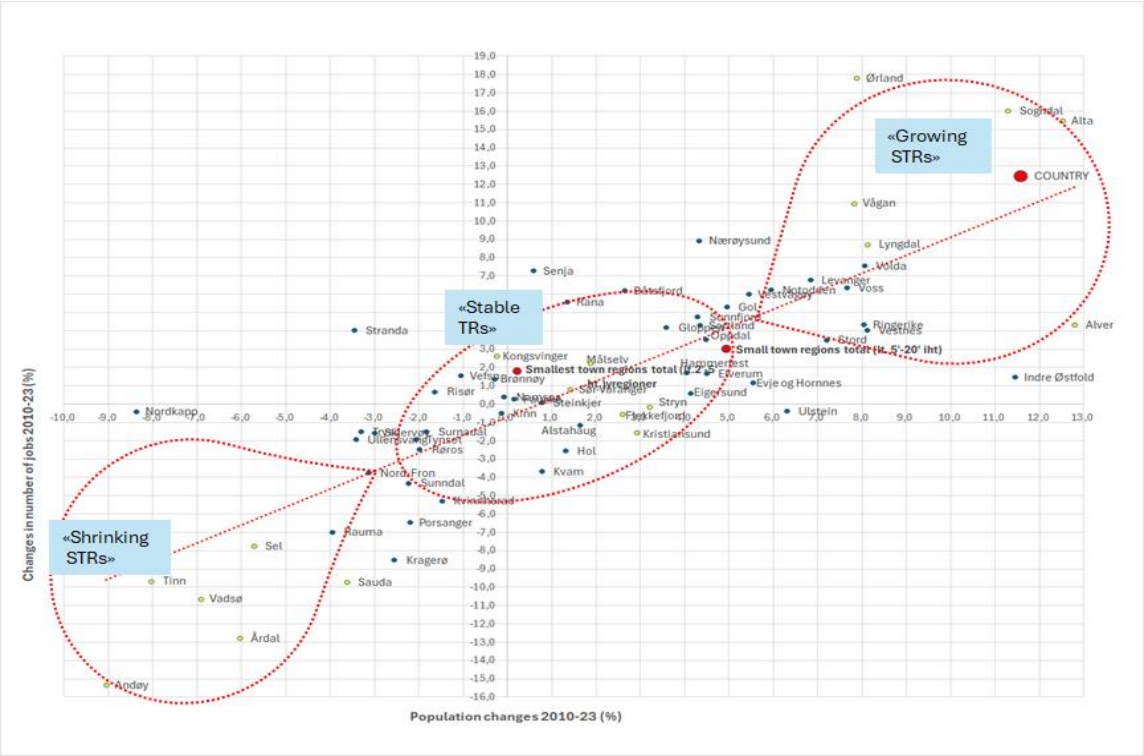


Figure V 2: Size of the labor market (number of jobs) and growth rates (per cent change in number of jobs 2010-24) for small town and rural town regions (2,000-20,000)

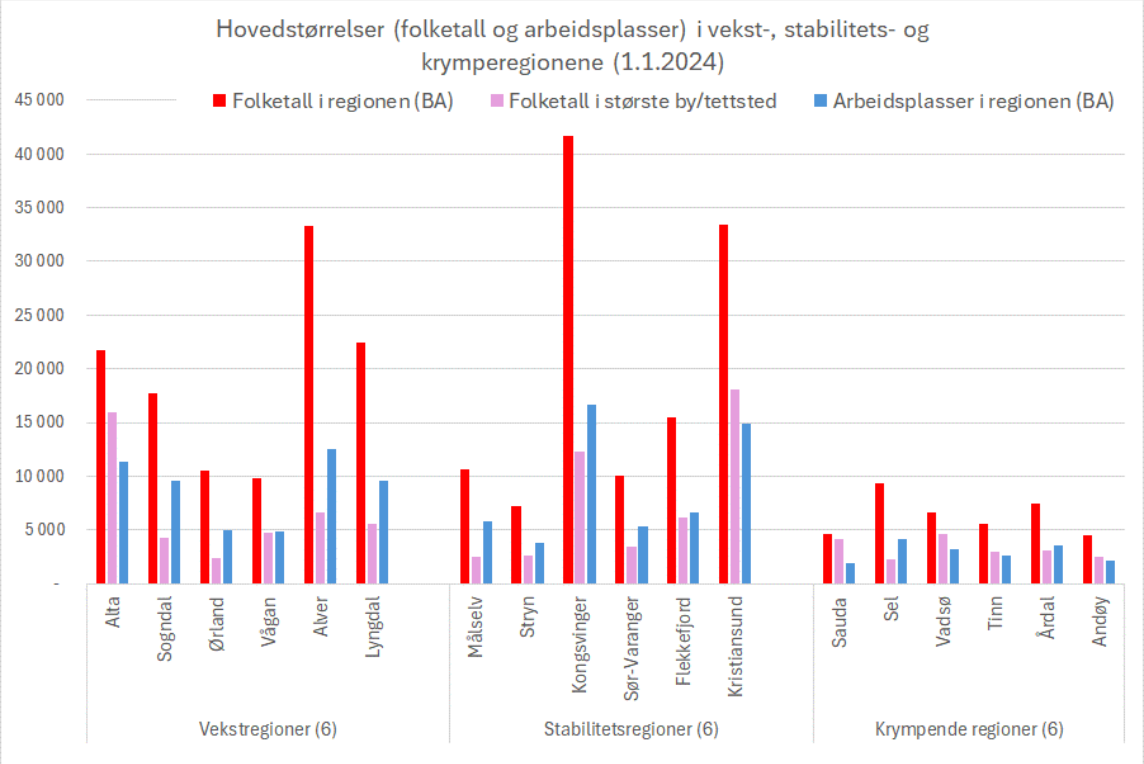
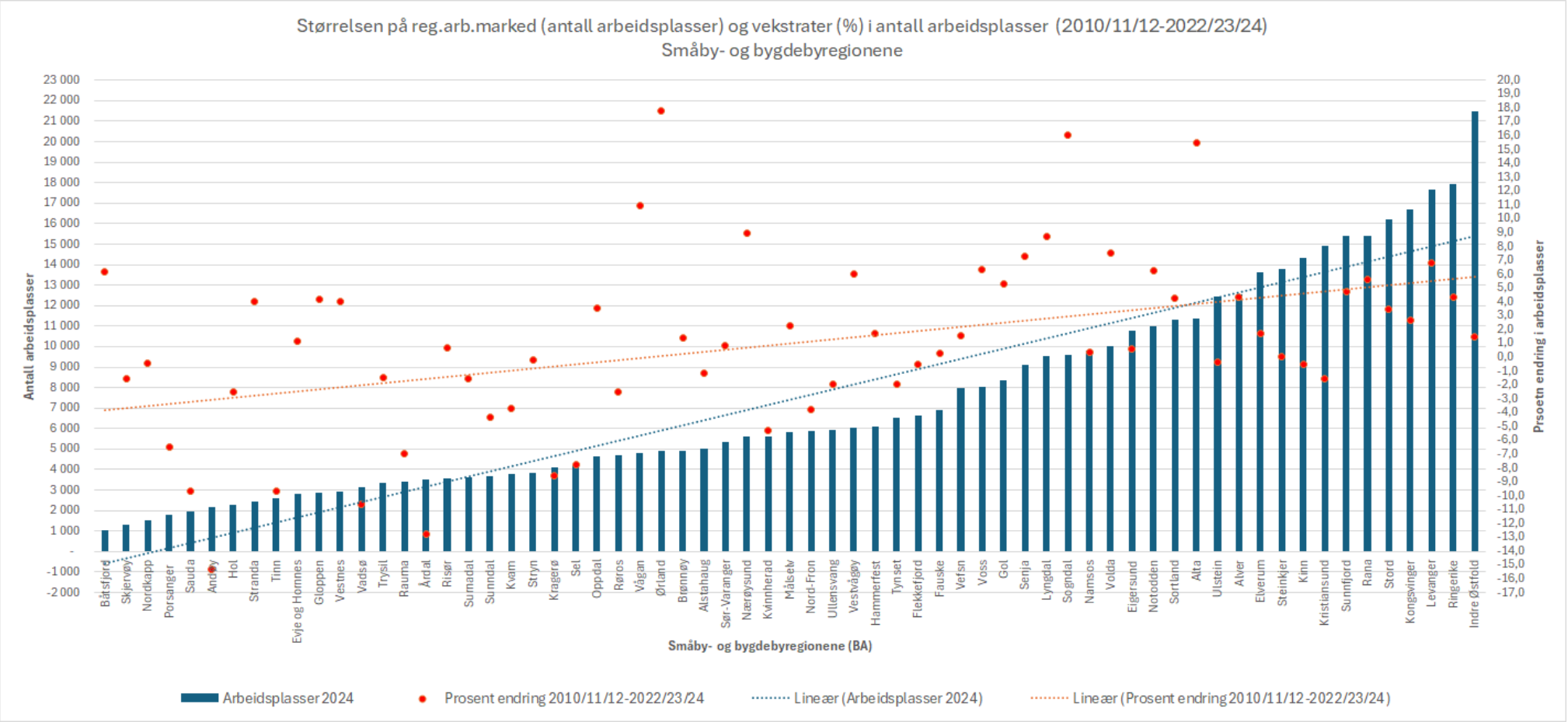


Figure V 3: The sizes of the STRs' labor markets (number of jobs 2011) and growth rates (%) of jobs 2011-23.



The figure illustrates that the size of the BA regions' labour market (i.e. measured in the number of jobs) does not in any way determine the growth rate in jobs, although there is a slight increasing tendency (the orang line) (i.e. quantitative size seems to contribute only a little/co-vary slightly with increasing growth rates). Most striking are the large variations regardless of quantitative size (the fact that the variations increase with decreasing sizes is, as we know, natural with % figures).

FigureV4 _ The sector structures of regional classes 2009 and 2023 (% share of jobs)

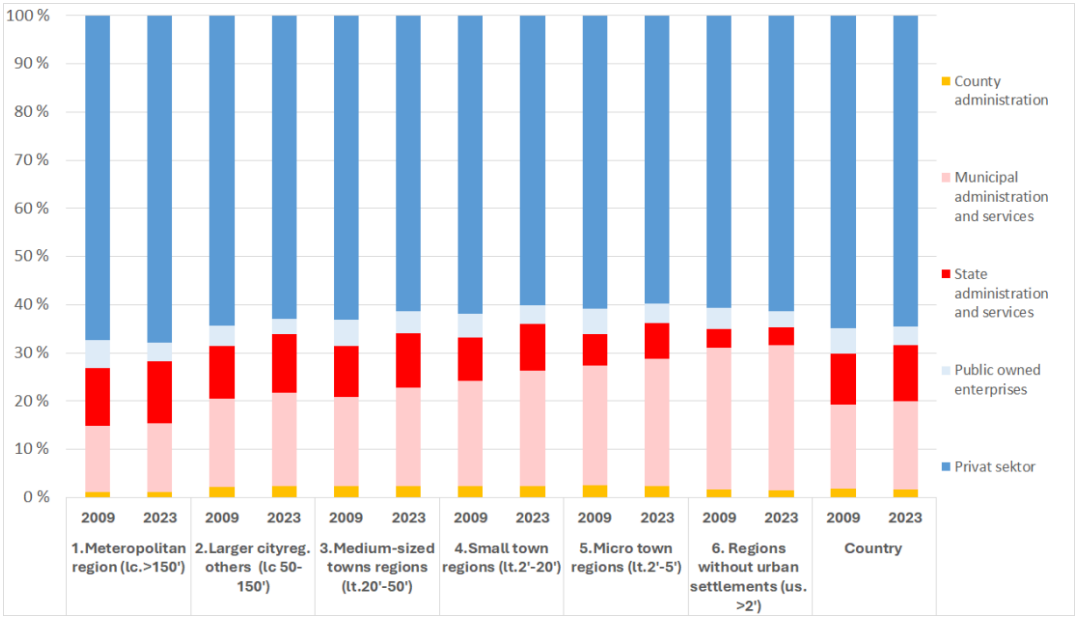
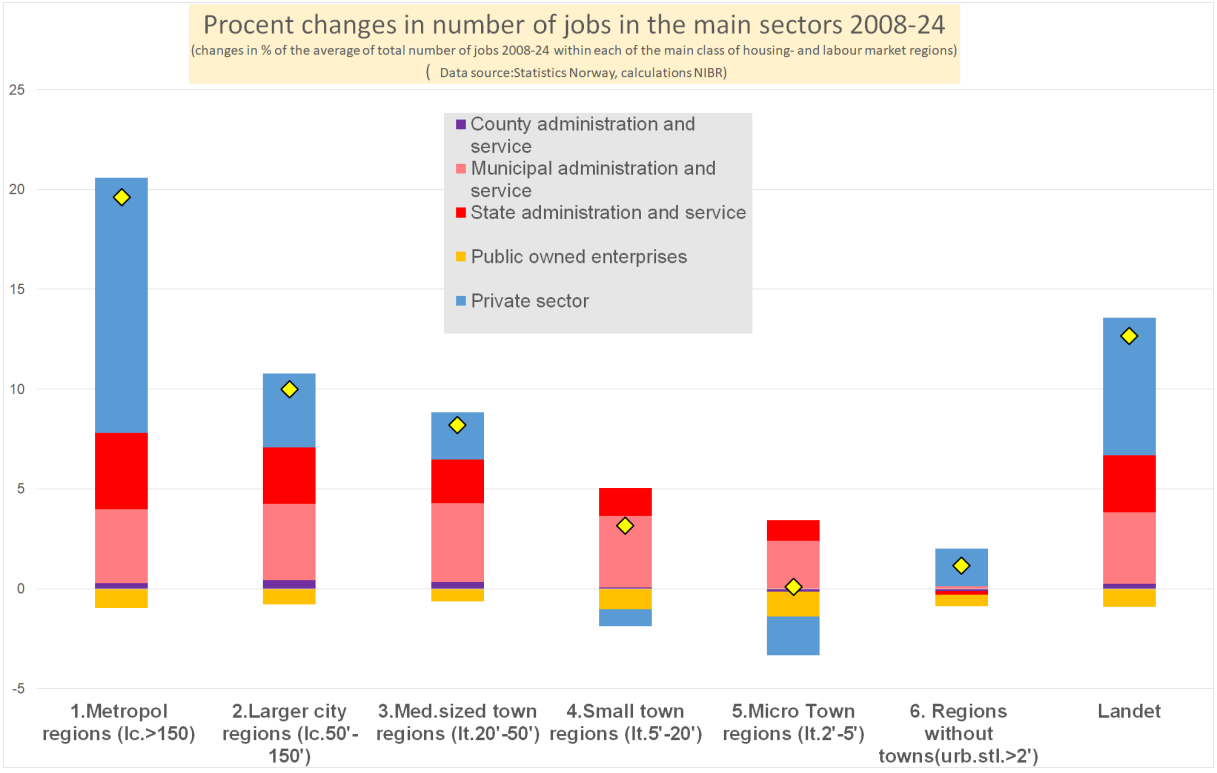
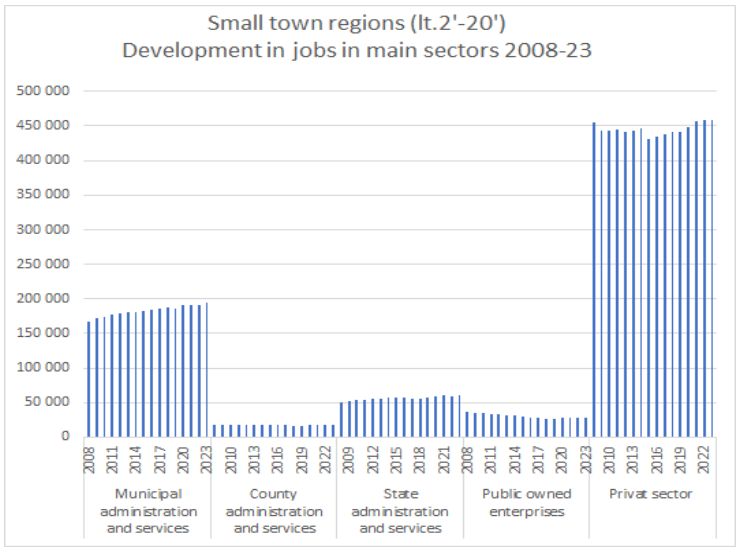
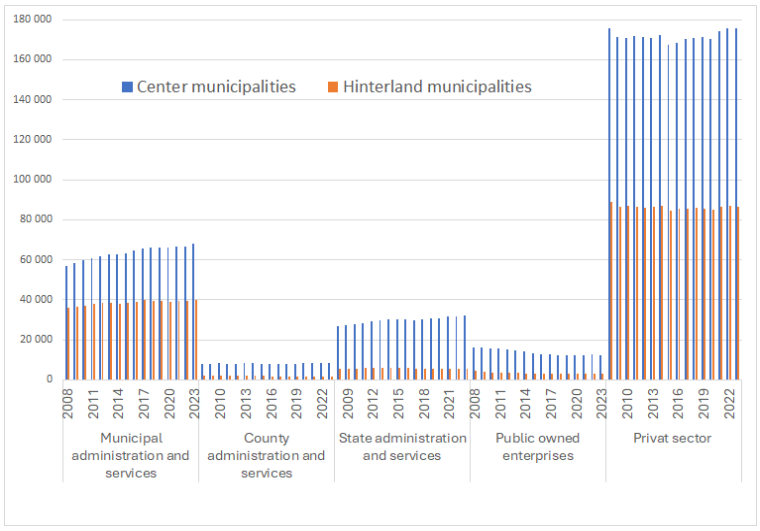
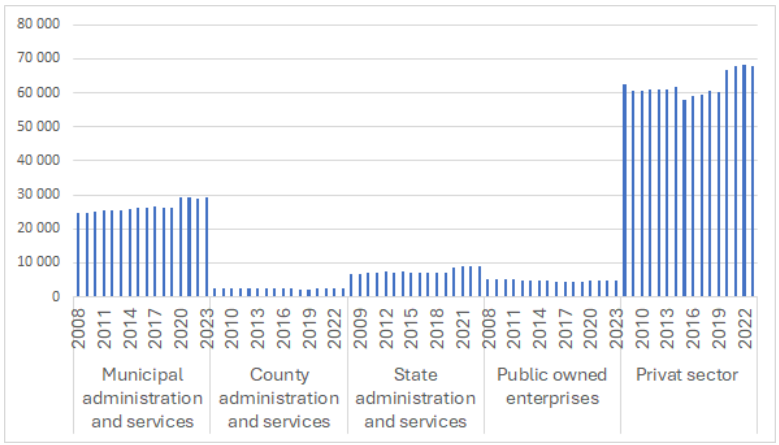


Figure V5 The development (%) in jobs in different sectors and regional classes 2010-24. (changes in % of the average of total number of jobs 2008-24 within each of the main class of housing- and labour market regions).

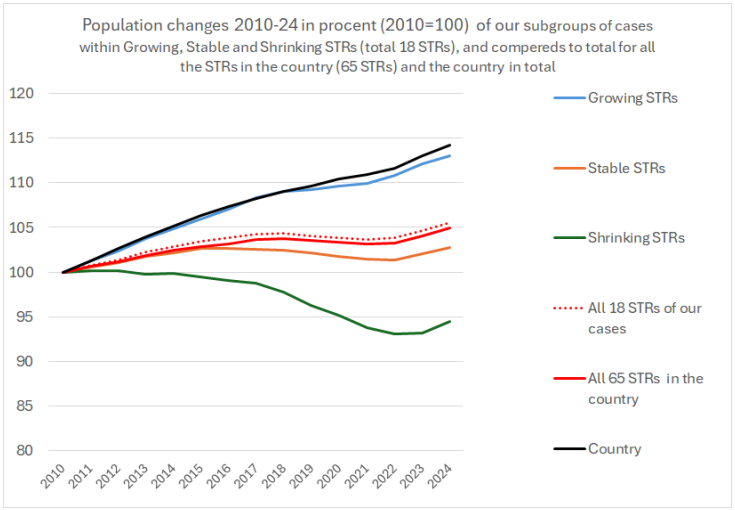


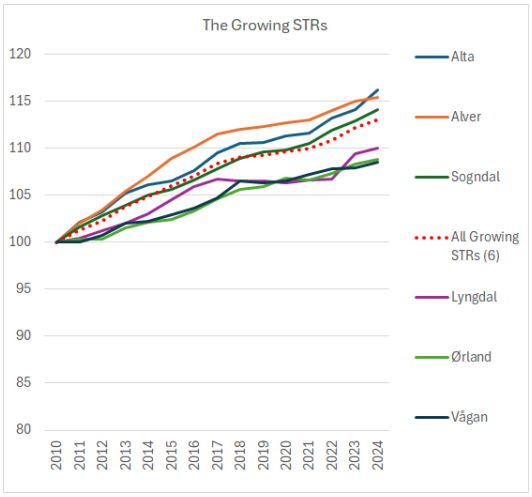

Small town regions (lt.2'-20')
Development in jobs in main sectors 2008-23
500 000
450 000
400 000
350 000
300 000
250 000
200 000
150 000
100 000
50 000
0
Municipal administration and services
County administration and services
State administration and services
Public owned enterprises
Privat sector

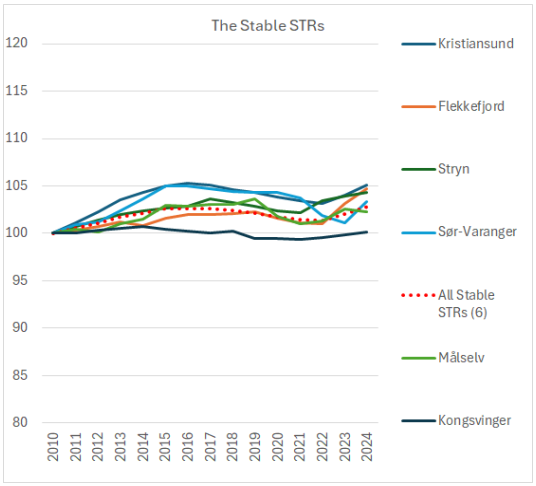

180 000
160 000
140 000
120 000
100 000
80 000
60 000
40 000
20 000
0
Center municipalities
Hinterland municipalities
Municipal administration and services
County administration and services
State administration and services
Public owned enterprises
Privat sector


80 000
70 000
60 000
50 000
40 000
30 000
20 000
10 000
0
Municipal administration and services
County administration and services
State administration and services
Public owned enterprises
Privat sector

Figur V6 Population changes 2010-24 in procent (2010=100) in within the subgroups of Growing, Stable and Shrinking STRs (total 18 STRs) and individual STR-cases within these groups.







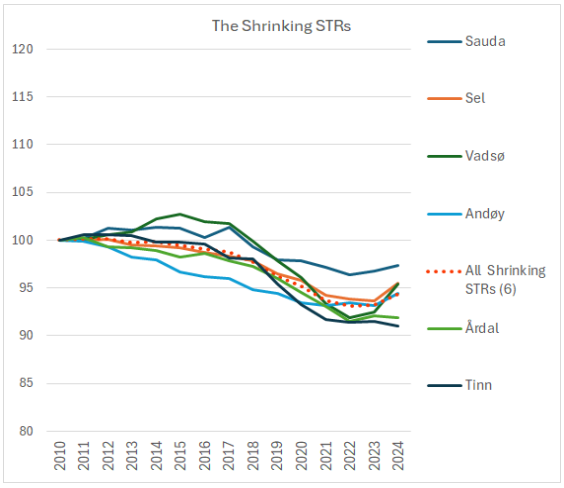


Table V 1: Population levels and changes within the three subgroups of STRs, their largest towns (main town), center municipalities and hinterland municipalities

The region (STR)	The main town	Population 2024					Absolute changes 2010-24					Procent changes 2010-24				
		Region (STR)	1. Center municipality		2. Hinter-land munici-pality	The main towns % of STR	Region (STR)	1. Center municipality			2. Hinter-land munici-pality	Region (STR)	1. Center municipality			2. Hinter-land munici-pality
Name	Name		Main town	Outside of main town (internal hinterland)			Total	Total	Main town	Outside of main town (internal hinterland)		Total	Total	Main town	Outside of main town (internal hinterland)	
Alta	**Alta**	21 708	16 269	5 439	0	75	3 028	3 028	2 494	534	no one	16,2	16,2	18,1	10,9	no one
Sogndal	**Sogndalsfjøra**	17 690	4 388	7 931	5 371	25	2 184	1 758	1 096	662	426	14,1	16,6	33,3	9,1	8,6
Ørland	**Brekstad**	10 522	2 437	8 085	0	23	853	853	510	343	no one	8,8	8,8	26,5	4,4	no one
Vågan	**Svolvær**	9 793	4 775	5 018	0	49	770	770	565	205	no one	8,5	8,5	13,4	4,3	no one
Alver	**Knarvik**	33 251	6 690	23 296	3 265	20	4 427	4 244	1 710	2 535	183	15,4	16,5	34,3	12,2	5,9
Lyngdal	**Lyngdal**	22 487	5 602	5 233	0	25	2 044	1 426	1 317	109	no one	10,0	15,2	30,7	2,1	no one
Målselv	**Andselv**	10 700	2 771	1 215	6 714	26	241	37	496	-459	204	2,3	0,9	21,8	-27,4	3,1
Stryn	**Stryn**	7 271	2 712	4 559	0	37	304	304	497	-193	no one	4,4	4,4	22,4	-4,1	no one
Kongsvinger	**Kongsvinger**	41 734	12 443	5 615	23 676	30	43	681	1 006	-325	-638	0,1	3,9	8,8	-5,5	-2,6
Sør-Varanger	**Kirkenes**	10 063	5 182	4 881	0	51	325	325	242	83	no one	3,3	3,3	4,9	1,7	no one
Flekkefjord	**Flekkefjord**	15 471	6 231	3 048	6 192	40	692	276	366	-90	416	4,7	3,1	6,2	-2,9	7,2
Kristiansund	**Kristiansund**	33 400	18 337	6 067	8 996	55	1 614	1 166	1 240	-74	448	5,1	5,0	7,3	-1,2	5,2
Sauda	**Sauda**	4 572	4 190	382	0	92	-123	-123	-63	-60	no one	-2,6	-2,6	-1,5	-13,5	no one
Sel	**Otta (inkl. Dale)**	9 287	2 322	3 434	3 531	25	-434	-243	-101	-142	-191	-4,5	-4,1	-4,5	-3,9	-5,1
Vadsø	**Vadsø**	6 666	4 867	940	859	73	-319	-294	-176	-118	-25	-4,6	-4,8	-3,5	-11,1	-2,8
Tinn	**Rjukan**	5 533	3 005	2 528	0	54	-489	-489	-337	-152	no one	-8,1	-8,1	-10,1	-5,7	no one
Årdal	**Øvre Årdal**	7 399	3 122	2 117	2 160	42	-434	-395	-310	-85	-39	-5,5	-7,0	-9,0	-3,9	-1,8
Andøy	**Andenes**	4 553	2 499	2 054	0	55	-449	-449	-96	-353	no one	-9,0	-9,0	-3,7	-14,7	no one

The region (STR)	The main town	Population 2024					Absolute changes 2010-24					Procent changes 2010-24				
		Region (STR)	1. Center municipality		2. Hinter-land munici-pality	The main towns % of STR	Region (STR)	1. Center municipality			2. Hinter-land munici-pality	Region (STR)	1. Center municipality			2. Hinter-land munici-pality
Name	Name		Main town	Outside of main town (internal hinterland)			Total	Total	Main town	Outside of main town (internal hinterland)		Total	Total	Main town	Outside of main town (internal hinterland)	
Alta	**Alta**	21 708	16 269	5 439	0	75	3 028	3 028	2 494	534	no one	16,2	16,2	18,1	10,9	no one
Sogndal	**Sogndalsfjøra**	17 690	4 388	7 931	5 371	25	2 184	1 758	1 096	662	426	14,1	16,6	33,3	9,1	8,6
Ørland	**Brekstad**	10 522	2 437	8 085	0	23	853	853	510	343	no one	8,8	8,8	26,5	4,4	no one
Vågan	**Svolvær**	9 793	4 775	5 018	0	49	770	770	565	205	no one	8,5	8,5	13,4	4,3	no one
Alver	**Knarvik**	33 251	6 690	23 296	3 265	20	4 427	4 244	1 710	2 535	183	15,4	16,5	34,3	12,2	5,9
Lyngdal	**Lyngdal**	22 487	5 602	5 233	0	25	2 044	1 426	1 317	109	no one	10,0	15,2	30,7	2,1	no one
Målselv	**Andselv**	10 700	2 771	1 215	6 714	26	241	37	496	-459	204	2,3	0,9	21,8	-27,4	3,1
Stryn	**Stryn**	7 271	2 712	4 559	0	37	304	304	497	-193	no one	4,4	4,4	22,4	-4,1	no one
Kongsvinger	**Kongsvinger**	41 734	12 443	5 615	23 676	30	43	681	1 006	-325	-638	0,1	3,9	8,8	-5,5	-2,6
Sør-Varanger	**Kirkenes**	10 063	5 182	4 881	0	51	325	325	242	83	no one	3,3	3,3	4,9	1,7	no one
Flekkefjord	**Flekkefjord**	15 471	6 231	3 048	6 192	40	692	276	366	-90	416	4,7	3,1	6,2	-2,9	7,2
Kristiansund	**Kristiansund**	33 400	18 337	6 067	8 996	55	1 614	1 166	1 240	-74	448	5,1	5,0	7,3	-1,2	5,2
Sauda	**Sauda**	4 572	4 190	382	0	92	-123	-123	-63	-60	no one	-2,6	-2,6	-1,5	-13,5	no one
Sel	**Otta**	9 287	2 322	3 434	3 531	25	-434	-243	616	-859	-191	-4,5	-4,1	36,1	-20,0	-5,1
Vadsø	**Vadsø**	6 666	4 867	940	859	73	-319	-294	-176	-118	-25	-4,6	-4,8	-3,5	-11,1	-2,8
Tinn	**Rjukan**	5 533	3 005	2 528	0	54	-489	-489	-337	-152	no one	-8,1	-8,1	-10,1	-5,7	no one
Årdal	**Øvre Årdal**	7 399	3 122	2 117	2 160	42	-434	-395	-310	-85	-39	-5,5	-7,0	-9,0	-3,9	-1,8
Andøy	**Andenes**	4 553	2 499	2 054	0	55	-449	-449	-96	-353	no one	-9,0	-9,0	-3,7	-14,7	no one

Table V 2: Detail of industrial and sector structures (% in occupied jobs) and specializations (colored cells with bokseroverrepresentastion compared to shares at national level) of the town municipalites (the center municipality) of growing, stable and shrinking regions 1.1. 2024

		Base/export industries and services								Regional industries and services								Local services					All sectors	Main sectors			
		Agri-culture, forestry and fishing	Oil/gass extraction , mining	Manufact uring	Tourism, accommod ation,	State and county adm, defence, social insurance	University/ collage (state funded)	Hospital (state funded)	Total	Building and constructi on, electricity and water	Transport and storage	Wholesal e and retail trade	Business service others	Know-ledge intensiv business service (KIBS)	Informati on and communi cation	Private services others (educatio n, health, finance etc.)	Total	Personal services (privat and public)	Muni-cipal health and care services	Muni-cipal schooling (prim.&s ecundary school)	Muni-cipal administr ation	Total		Private sector	Public sector total	State sector	Muni-cipal sector
Town municipality																											
Growth-regions	Alta	6,6	1,5	3,7	3,2	3,3	1,7	3,4	23,3	16,2	4,2	12,5	4,4	4,1	2,1	6,8	50,4	4,0	13,1	7,2	1,9	26,3	100	69,4	30,6	8,4	22,3
	Sogndal	2,4	0,3	4,5	3,5	13,0	5,1	2,1	30,9	15,7	3,6	9,7	2,5	5,0	1,4	5,0	42,9	3,5	14,3	6,5	1,7	26,1	100	57,2	42,8	20,2	22,6
	Ørland	6,3	0,2	9,8	2,4	17,2	0,0	1,4	37,3	10,3	4,0	9,9	2,8	2,3	0,4	6,0	35,8	2,2	17,2	5,7	1,9	26,9	100	56,7	43,3	18,6	24,7
	Vågan	4,5	0,0	9,8	8,3	3,6	0,3	1,9	28,3	11,0	4,8	12,6	3,0	5,3	1,6	5,7	44,0	4,7	12,2	7,1	3,7	27,7	100	71,3	28,7	5,7	23,0
	Alver	3,6	3,3	18,8	1,4	1,9	0,0	2,0	31,0	8,6	7,4	9,3	2,2	2,8	0,8	6,3	37,5	2,7	16,2	8,5	4,1	31,6	100	67,2	32,8	4,0	28,8
	Lyngdal	2,8	0,1	13,6	4,0	1,8	0,0	1,3	23,6	13,0	2,9	19,2	2,1	3,6	0,7	7,1	48,7	3,2	13,9	9,1	1,5	27,7	100	72,4	27,6	3,1	24,6
	Avarage shares	4,4	0,9	10,0	3,8	6,8	1,2	2,0	29,1	12,5	4,5	12,2	2,8	3,9	1,2	6,2	43,2	3,4	14,5	7,4	2,5	27,7	100	65,7	34,3	10,0	24,3
Stabile regions	Målselv	2,6	0,0	4,5	3,0	34,1	0,0	0,8	45,0	8,6	2,4	9,6	2,8	1,6	1,1	5,4	31,5	2,0	12,1	7,5	1,8	23,5	100	43,6	56,4	35,0	21,4
	Stryn	6,0	0,3	21,4	6,9	1,3	0,0	0,3	36,3	12,4	6,0	12,9	2,4	3,3	0,5	2,5	40,1	2,7	13,3	6,2	1,5	23,7	100	77,4	22,6	1,6	21,0
	Kongsvinger	2,2	0,8	5,3	2,0	8,7	0,5	12,1	31,5	8,2	5,1	13,8	4,4	4,7	2,9	5,2	44,3	3,7	12,3	6,4	1,7	24,2	100	58,3	41,7	21,2	20,5
	Sør-Varanger	2,8	0,8	3,9	4,3	13,7	0,2	9,6	35,2	9,0	5,1	10,1	7,7	2,8	0,7	3,8	39,1	2,8	12,5	7,9	2,6	25,7	100	53,6	46,4	23,5	22,9
	Flekkefjord	3,9	0,1	15,6	2,4	1,4	0,0	10,9	34,1	11,2	2,9	10,3	2,5	3,5	0,8	5,8	37,0	2,1	16,1	8,2	2,5	28,9	100	61,0	39,0	12,2	26,8
	Kristiansund	2,0	3,7	5,3	3,8	4,6	0,1	6,7	26,1	10,1	7,4	13,3	5,3	7,2	1,4	4,7	49,5	3,5	12,0	6,4	2,5	24,5	100	67,7	32,3	11,3	21,0
	Avarage shares	3,2	0,9	9,3	3,7	10,6	0,1	6,7	34,7	9,9	4,8	11,6	4,2	3,8	1,2	4,6	40,2	2,8	13,1	7,1	2,1	25,1	100	60,3	39,7	17,5	22,3
Shrink-regions	Sauda	1,7	0,0	19,0	2,4	2,1	0,0	2,5	27,6	17,2	3,0	7,9	3,2	2,1	1,0	2,5	36,8	2,6	18,4	11,4	3,0	35,5	100	62,5	37,5	4,5	32,9
	Sel	4,2	0,1	9,4	5,0	2,3	0,0	2,4	23,4	10,5	7,0	13,3	4,0	4,3	0,7	3,9	43,7	1,8	18,3	9,7	3,1	32,8	100	64,3	35,7	4,7	31,0
	Vadsø	2,6	0,1	1,2	2,5	26,8	0,0	3,4	36,6	10,0	4,4	11,4	1,3	4,6	1,6	2,2	35,6	3,8	15,6	6,4	2,0	27,8	100	45,8	54,2	30,2	24,1
	Andøy	7,6	0,0	6,3	3,5	9,7	0,0	2,0	29,2	16,0	4,3	7,8	0,9	8,8	0,2	3,2	41,2	2,3	16,3	7,6	3,4	29,6	100	60,9	39,1	11,8	27,3
	Tinn	3,1	0,0	8,5	5,6	1,7	0,0	2,0	20,8	19,2	4,4	11,1	3,7	3,4	1,6	4,2	47,4	4,3	18,2	5,8	3,4	31,7	100	68,9	31,1	3,7	27,4
	Årdal	0,2	0,0	44,1	1,3	0,5	0,0	0,7	46,9	7,2	1,3	7,9	3,1	2,3	1,3	2,4	25,4	1,6	16,8	7,0	2,2	27,7	100	72,8	27,2	1,2	26,0
	Avarage shares	3,2	0,0	14,7	3,4	7,2	0,0	2,2	30,8	13,4	4,1	9,9	2,7	4,2	1,1	3,1	38,4	2,7	17,3	8,0	2,9	30,9	100	62,5	37,5	9,3	28,1
Average all 18 STR		3,6	0,6	11,4	3,6	8,2	0,4	3,6	31,5	11,9	4,5	11,2	3,2	4,0	1,2	4,6	40,6	3,0	14,9	7,5	2,5	27,9	100	62,8	37,2	12,3	24,9
Country		2,3	2,0	7,6	3,6	4,5	1,7	5,3	27,0	9,9	4,8	12,6	4,6	6,9	4,2	7,8	50,7	4,2	10,7	5,5	1,8	22,3	100	70,6	29,4	11,4	18,0
Town region:																											
Growth-regions	Alta	6,6	1,5	3,7	3,2	3,3	1,7	3,4	23,3	16,2	4,2	12,5	4,4	4,1	2,1	6,8	50,4	4,0	13,1	7,2	1,9	26,3	100,0	69,4	30,6	8,4	22,3
	Sogndal	3,8	0,2	6,8	3,5	10,1	3,9	1,7	30,1	15,5	3,5	9,2	2,3	4,3	1,1	5,6	41,5	3,3	16,3	6,8	2,0	28,4	100,0	59,2	40,8	15,7	25,1
	Ørland	6,3	0,2	9,8	2,4	17,2	0,0	1,4	37,3	10,3	4,0	9,9	2,8	2,3	0,4	6,0	35,8	2,2	17,2	5,7	1,9	26,9	100,0	56,7	43,3	18,6	24,7
	Vågan	4,5	0,0	9,8	8,3	3,6	0,3	1,9	28,3	11,0	4,8	12,6	3,0	5,3	1,6	5,7	44,0	4,7	12,2	7,1	3,7	27,7	100,0	71,3	28,7	5,7	23,0
	Alver	3,4	2,9	17,7	1,3	1,8	0,0	1,8	29,0	10,3	7,3	9,0	2,3	2,7	0,9	6,0	38,5	3,0	16,6	8,8	4,1	32,5	100,0	66,8	33,2	3,6	29,5
	Lyngdal	3,6	0,1	16,6	3,6	1,5	0,0	1,3	26,7	12,7	3,1	14,8	2,3	3,5	0,7	7,2	44,2	3,0	16,1	8,5	1,6	29,1	100,0	71,1	28,9	2,8	26,1
	Avarage shares	4,7	0,8	10,7	3,7	6,2	1,0	1,9	29,1	12,6	4,5	11,3	2,9	3,7	1,2	6,2	42,4	3,4	15,2	7,4	2,5	28,5	100,0	66,2	33,8	8,3	25,5
Stability regions	Målselv	2,6	0,0	4,5	3,0	33,6	0,3	1,1	45,0	8,6	2,4	9,6	2,8	1,6	1,1	4,0	30,1	2,0	13,6	6,8	2,4	24,9	100,0	42,2	57,8	35,0	22,9
	Stryn	6,0	0,3	21,4	6,9	1,3	0,0	0,3	36,3	12,4	6,0	12,9	2,4	3,3	0,5	2,5	40,1	2,7	13,3	6,2	1,5	23,7	100,0	77,4	22,6	1,6	21,0
	Kongsvinger	4,0	0,5	10,0	2,3	5,1	0,2	7,4	29,6	10,3	5,0	12,1	3,4	3,9	1,9	5,0	41,7	3,5	16,6	6,3	2,2	28,7	100,0	62,1	37,9	12,7	25,2
	Sør-Varanger	2,8	0,8	3,9	4,3	13,7	0,2	9,6	35,2	9,0	5,1	10,1	7,7	2,8	0,7	3,8	39,1	2,8	12,5	7,9	2,6	25,7	100,0	53,6	46,4	23,5	22,9
	Flekkefjord	4,0	0,0	15,5	2,6	1,2	0,0	8,7	32,0	11,6	2,5	10,1	2,7	3,0	0,9	4,8	35,5	2,7	18,8	8,3	2,7	32,5	100,0	60,4	39,6	9,8	29,8
	Kristiansund	3,6	2,9	7,3	3,4	3,8	0,1	5,6	26,7	10,5	7,2	11,8	5,0	6,7	1,3	4,6	47,3	3,3	13,5	6,7	2,5	26,0	100,0	67,8	32,2	9,5	22,7
	Avarage shares	3,9	0,8	10,4	3,7	9,8	0,1	5,5	34,1	10,4	4,7	11,1	4,0	3,5	1,1	4,1	39,0	2,8	14,7	7,0	2,3	26,9	100,0	61,5	38,5	14,2	24,3
Shrink-regions	Sauda	1,7	0,0	19,0	2,4	2,1	0,0	2,5	27,6	17,2	3,0	7,9	3,2	2,1	1,0	2,5	36,8	2,6	18,4	11,4	3,0	35,5	100,0	62,5	37,5	4,5	32,9
	Sel	7,0	0,1	7,2	5,6	2,1	0,0	2,0	23,9	14,2	5,1	12,3	3,6	4,7	0,6	3,4	43,9	2,8	18,2	8,2	3,1	32,2	100,0	66,5	33,5	4,1	29,5
	Vadsø	4,3	0,1	1,1	2,4	24,8	0,0	3,0	35,6	10,1	4,2	10,6	1,5	4,4	1,5	2,1	34,3	3,9	16,6	6,9	2,7	30,1	100,0	46,1	53,9	27,8	26,1
	Andøy	7,6	0,0	6,3	3,5	9,7	1,1	2,0	30,3	16,0	4,3	7,8	0,9	8,8	0,2	2,9	41,0	2,3	16,3	6,7	3,4	28,7	100,0	60,7	39,3	12,9	26,4
	Tinn	3,1	0,0	8,5	5,6	1,7	0,0	2,0	20,8	19,2	4,4	11,1	3,7	3,4	1,6	4,2	47,4	4,3	18,2	5,8	3,4	31,7	100,0	68,9	31,1	3,7	27,4
	Årdal	2,2	0,0	31,5	1,6	0,6	0,0	5,9	41,8	10,4	2,9	8,1	2,8	3,2	1,1	1,9	30,3	1,7	17,5	6,4	2,4	27,9	100,0	67,2	32,8	6,5	26,2
	Avarage shares	4,3	0,0	12,2	3,5	6,8	0,2	2,9	30,0	14,5	4,0	9,6	2,6	4,4	1,0	2,8	38,9	2,9	17,5	7,6	3,0	31,0	100,0	62,2	37,8	9,9	27,9
Average all 18 STR		4,3	0,5	11,1	3,7	7,6	0,4	3,4	31,1	12,5	4,4	10,7	3,2	3,9	1,1	4,4	40,1	3,0	15,8	7,3	2,6	28,8	100,0	62,8	37,2	11,5	25,8
Country		2,3	2,0	7,6	3,6	4,5	1,7	5,3	27,0	9,9	4,8	12,6	4,6	6,9	4,2	7,8	50,7	4,2	10,7	5,5	1,8	22,3	100,0	70,6	29,4	11,4	18,0

Table V 3: Absolute and relative changes in occupied jobs in different industries and sectors between 1.1.2010-1.1.2024 in growth-, stabile and shrink small town regions.

		Basis/export industries ans services								Regional industries and services								Local services					All sectors	Main sectors			
	Town regions	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Mining and oil/gass quarrying	Manufacturing	Tourism, accommodation,	State and county adm, defence, social insurance	University/collage (state funded)	Hospital (state funded)	Total	Building and construction, electricity and water	Transport and storage	Whole-sale and retail trade	Business service others	Know-ledge intensiv business service (KIBS)	Information and communication	Private services others (education, health, finance etc.)	Total	Personal services (privat and public)	Muni-cipal health and care services	Muni-cipal schooling (prim.&secundary school)	Muni-cipal administration	Total		Private sector	Public sector	State sector	Municipal sector
		Absolute changes in occupied jobs (1.1.2010-1.1.2024)																									
Growth-regions	Alta	205	-22	33	38	64	-82	82	319	499	-109	12	24	111	77	106	720	203	455	54	14	727	1 765	1 177	588	65	524
	Sogndal	-189	19	132	73	135	131	-44	257	682	-99	26	0	110	-54	182	847	64	481	22	33	599	1 703	946	757	222	535
	Ørland	-56	9	165	59	313	0	26	516	62	-7	-61	60	-6	-12	68	104	36	287	-11	-49	263	883	317	566	339	227
	Vågan	-119	0	88	130	36	13	-48	99	32	27	-27	-38	62	31	68	155	87	77	44	82	290	545	341	204	0	203
	Alver	12	100	-444	-79	48	0	26	-336	160	275	-149	-27	-46	3	123	339	64	388	26	220	697	700	-8	708	75	633
	Lyngdal	-34	-1	-107	-20	16	3	-21	-164	271	-70	157	124	-9	10	-10	473	69	301	126	-39	457	766	380	386	-2	388
	TOTAL	**-181**	**105**	**-133**	**201**	**612**	**65**	**20**	**690**	**1 706**	**17**	**-42**	**143**	**222**	**55**	**537**	**2 638**	**523**	**1 988**	**262**	**261**	**3 034**	**6 362**	3 153	3 209	698	2 511
Stability regions	Målselv	-51	-36	-10	-32	562	17	-11	439	61	2	-85	7	-31	-44	-47	-137	-1	-10	-81	-30	-122	180	-267	447	568	-121
	Stryn	-114	2	-57	9	-2	0	-4	-166	160	-48	-16	56	11	5	6	174	23	39	-51	2	13	21	37	-16	-6	-10
	Kongsvinger	-305	1	-210	59	-122	7	320	-249	164	35	-277	-183	64	3	169	-25	88	494	9	4	595	320	-392	712	206	507
	Sør-Varanger	-22	-175	27	78	218	9	92	226	58	-22	-137	189	-8	-13	72	139	23	50	-43	-40	-10	355	70	285	318	-33
	Flekkefjord	17	0	-70	-20	-11	0	55	-29	128	-110	-246	48	-36	8	56	-152	8	191	46	-1	244	63	-217	280	44	236
	Kristiansund	-84	244	-413	10	230	12	-31	-32	233	-342	-342	46	-5	16	14	-380	74	250	-37	103	390	-22	-549	527	211	316
	TOTAL	**-559**	**36**	**-733**	**104**	**875**	**45**	**421**	**188**	**804**	**-485**	**-1 103**	**163**	**-5**	**-25**	**269**	**-382**	**215**	**1 014**	**-157**	**38**	**1 110**	**917**	-1 319	2 236	1 340	895
Shrink-regions	Sauda	-8	0	-62	-5	-4	0	-1	-80	31	-21	-37	-12	14	2	-29	-52	-28	-77	3	7	-95	-227	-155	-72	-5	-67
	Sel	-114	0	-167	47	-19	0	4	-249	15	-4	-196	17	34	9	-4	-129	-24	114	-22	-17	51	-327	-387	60	-15	75
	Vadsø	25	4	-36	5	54	0	20	72	0	-19	-110	-96	-18	-38	-29	-310	4	-11	-82	6	-83	-321	-308	-13	74	-87
	Andøy	-70	-5	-16	30	-147	17	-1	-193	-182	-35	-19	-3	87	-14	-4	-170	0	-5	-7	9	-3	-366	-231	-135	-132	-3
	Tinn	-19	-4	-117	13	9	0	-115	-233	58	-25	-35	-52	-3	14	23	-20	25	-31	-64	10	-60	-312	-122	-190	-106	-85
	Årdal	-28	0	-250	-11	-13	0	-26	-328	-48	-18	-38	-102	-79	10	1	-274	-29	13	-10	6	-20	-622	-592	-30	-39	9
	TOTAL	**-214**	**-5**	**-648**	**79**	**-120**	**17**	**-119**	**-1 011**	**-126**	**-122**	**-435**	**-248**	**35**	**-17**	**-42**	**-955**	**-52**	**3**	**-182**	**21**	**-210**	**-2 175**	-1 795	-380	-223	-158
ALL 18 STRs		**-954**	**136**	**-1 514**	**384**	**1 367**	**127**	**322**	**-132**	**2 384**	**-590**	**-1 580**	**58**	**252**	**13**	**765**	**1 302**	**686**	**3 006**	**-78**	**320**	**3 934**	**5 104**	40	5 064	1 816	3 248
Country		-9 845	25 714	-23 141	26 142	20 907	10 712	21 425	71 914	65 534	-7 196	-10 425	11 696	46 900	31 827	39 499	177 835	28 315	50 370	15 821	6 279	100 785	350 534	225 020	125 514	53 044	72 470
		Relative changes (%) of occupied jobs between 1.1.2020-1.1.2024																									
Growth-regions	Alta	38,1	-11,8	8,7	11,6	20,8	-30,1	27,5	13,8	37,5	-18,5	0,9	5,1	31,2	46,7	16,0	14,5	81,2	44,5	7,1	6,9	32,4	18,5	18	21	7	26
	Sogndal	-34,2	633,3	25,4	27,7	16,3	54,6	-21,3	9,8	86,0	-22,7	3,1	0,0	36,7	-33,8	51,4	27,2	25,6	44,6	3,5	21,5	28,5	21,7	20	24	17	29
	Ørland	-15,3	#DIV/0!	52,7	100,0	59,0	#DIV/0!	59,4	39,3	14,0	-3,5	-11,2	76,9	-5,0	-35,3	29,9	6,3	50,7	51,8	-3,8	-34,4	25,0	22,0	13	36	59	23
	Vågan	-35,4	#DIV/0!	23,0	48,7	26,5	#DIV/0!	-34,5	7,9	6,5	13,3	-4,3	-20,7	32,1	70,5	32,9	7,9	61,7	15,2	14,8	87,6	27,9	12,8	11	17	0	23
	Alver	2,9	37,6	-16,8	-32,0	27,4	#DIV/0!	12,9	-8,5	14,3	43,4	-11,7	-8,5	-11,9	2,7	19,9	7,6	20,5	23,0	2,4	75,4	20,7	5,9	-0	21	20	21
	Lyngdal	-9,0	-14,3	-6,4	-5,6	13,2	#DIV/0!	-15,1	-6,1	29,2	-19,3	12,6	134,8	-2,7	16,9	-1,4	12,8	32,4	24,7	18,7	-20,5	19,9	8,8	6	16	-1	19
	TOTAL	**-7,0**	**22,7**	**-2,2**	**13,2**	**29,1**	**12,8**	**2,0**	**4,9**	**33,4**	**0,7**	**-0,7**	**10,4**	**13,1**	**9,6**	**19,5**	**13,3**	**42,3**	**32,8**	**7,0**	**24,2**	**25,1**	**13,8**	**10**	**22**	**19**	**23**
Stability regions	Målselv	-25,2	-100,0	-3,7	-15,5	40,3	#DIV/0!	-14,9	20,1	13,9	1,4	-13,2	4,5	-24,4	-41,5	-17,0	-7,3	-0,8	-1,2	-16,9	-17,7	-7,7	3,2	-10	15	39	-8
	Stryn	-33,2	22,2	-6,6	3,6	-3,9	#DIV/0!	-23,8	-10,8	51,6	-17,4	-3,2	155,6	9,6	33,3	6,6	12,9	29,5	8,4	-17,9	3,6	1,5	0,6	1	-2	-9	-1
	Kongsvinger	-31,3	1,2	-11,3	18,1	-12,7	22,1	35,4	-4,9	10,7	4,4	-12,1	-24,4	11,1	0,9	25,5	-0,4	17,9	21,9	0,9	1,1	14,3	2,0	-4	13	11	14
	Sør-Varanger	-12,8	-80,6	15,1	52,0	42,4	#DIV/0!	21,7	13,7	13,6	-7,4	-20,2	85,9	-5,2	-27,1	54,5	7,1	18,4	8,0	-9,3	-22,5	-0,7	7,1	3	13	34	-3
	Flekkefjord	6,8	0,0	-6,4	-10,4	-12,2	#DIV/0!	10,6	-1,4	20,1	-40,1	-26,9	37,5	-15,6	15,1	21,4	-6,1	4,7	18,2	9,1	-0,7	12,8	1,0	-5	12	7	14
	Kristiansund	-13,4	130,5	-27,5	2,1	68,9	#DIV/0!	-3,6	-0,8	17,6	-24,3	-16,3	6,6	-0,5	9,0	2,1	-5,1	17,7	14,2	-3,6	38,6	11,2	-0,1	-5	12	18	10
	TOTAL	**-21,8**	**6,7**	**-12,7**	**6,4**	**26,2**	**141,4**	**15,0**	**1,1**	**17,2**	**-15,2**	**-15,5**	**8,2**	**-0,2**	**-3,5**	**12,9**	**-1,7**	**15,3**	**14,6**	**-4,2**	**3,2**	**8,3**	**1,8**	**-4**	**12**	**22**	**7**
Shrink-regions	Sauda	-19,5	#DIV/0!	-14,4	-9,8	-10,0	#DIV/0!	-1,7	-13,0	10,3	-26,3	-19,6	-16,4	53,8	11,1	-37,0	-6,8	-35,9	-17,8	1,4	14,5	-12,1	-10,5	-11	-9	-6	-10
	Sel	-28,1	0,0	-35,9	25,3	-17,9	#DIV/0!	5,0	-20,0	2,6	-1,8	-27,7	12,9	21,3	52,9	-2,7	-6,6	-17,3	17,7	-6,1	-11,8	3,9	-7,3	-12	4	-8	6
	Vadsø	22,9	#DIV/0!	-52,2	7,1	7,4	#DIV/0!	26,1	6,8	0,0	-12,6	-24,8	-67,6	-11,5	-45,2	-30,6	-22,3	3,4	-2,0	-27,4	7,8	-8,0	-9,3	-18	-1	9	-10
	Andøy	-29,7	-100,0	-10,5	63,8	-41,0	212,5	-3,1	-22,6	-34,3	-27,3	-10,1	-13,0	83,7	-73,7	-6,4	-16,1	0,0	-1,5	-4,6	14,3	-0,5	-14,4	-15	-14	-32	-1
	Tinn	-19,4	-100,0	-35,0	10,0	25,7	#DIV/0!	-69,1	-30,3	13,4	-18,2	-11,0	-35,6	-3,3	53,8	27,7	-1,6	29,1	-6,2	-30,0	12,8	-6,8	-10,8	-6	-19	-53	-11
	Årdal	-26,9	#DIV/0!	-18,5	-16,2	-35,9	#DIV/0!	-11,3	-18,3	-11,7	-15,0	-11,8	-51,3	-41,6	37,0	1,5	-20,5	-33,3	2,2	-4,3	7,2	-2,0	-15,1	-20	-3	-15	1
	TOTAL	**-21,5**	**-41,7**	**-23,1**	**14,3**	**-9,2**	**212,5**	**-18,4**	**-16,0**	**-4,9**	**-14,6**	**-20,1**	**-34,7**	**4,8**	**-8,9**	**-7,8**	**-12,3**	**-9,3**	**0,1**	**-12,3**	**4,3**	**-3,7**	**-11,1**	**-14**	**-5**	**-11**	**-3**
ALL 18 STRs		**-15,5**	**13,5**	**-10,4**	**10,4**	**20,3**	**23,2**	**7,2**	**-0,4**	**19,3**	**-9,1**	**-10,4**	**1,4**	**5,4**	**0,9**	**14,2**	**2,6**	**21,4**	**18,7**	**-0,9**	**11,5**	**12,7**	**4,3**	**0**	**13**	**15**	**12**
Country		-13,1	84,1	-9,7	34,2	19,9	29,6	16,9	10,4	30,8	-5,1	-2,9	9,8	31,9	37,3	21,8	14,2	31,1	19,9	11,4	14,3	19,1	14,2	13	18	20	17

Table V 4: Median for total income and after-tax income (medians) for households 2008 and 2022 for the growth, stability and shrink STRs (Datasource: Statistics Norway)

			Total income, median				After-tax income, median			
			Abs (NOK)		Share of national level	% change	Abs (NOK)		Share of national level	% change
			2008	2022	2022	2008-22	2008	2022	2022	2008-22
The country			502 000	756 000	100	51	392 000	590 000	100	51
The 18 selected STRs (A+B+C): average medians			493 616	728 628	96	48	389 715	581 257	99	49
A.Growth regions (GRR)	1	Alta	520 000	792 000	105	52	430 000	638 000	108	48
	2	Sogndal	555 500	790 000	104	42	427 500	626 000	106	46
	3	Ørland	454 500	715 000	95	57	361 000	564 000	96	56
	4	Vågan	458 000	678 000	90	48	365 000	541 000	92	48
	5	Alver	536 667	802 500	106	50	404 333	627 000	106	55
	6	Lyngdal	524 333	783 667	104	49	413 333	613 333	104	48
The average of medians (1-6)			508 167	760 194	101	50	400 194	601 556	102	50
B. Stability regions (STR)	7	Målselv	516 500	750 000	99	45	397 500	584 500	99	47
	8	Stryn	519 000	728 000	96	40	405 000	586 000	99	45
	9	Kongsvinger	441 000	655 200	87	49	355 800	533 200	90	50
	10	Sør-Varanger	496 000	719 000	95	45	402 000	580 000	98	44
	11	Flekkefjord	468 500	687 100	91	47	378 900	556 600	94	47
	12	Kristiansund	500 333	744 333	98	49	392 000	591 000	100	51
The average of medians (7-12)			490 222	713 939	94	46	388 533	571 883	97	47
C.Shrink regions (SHR)	13	Sauda	502 000	746 000	99	49	387 000	594 000	101	53
	14	Sel	453 250	669 500	89	48	359 500	545 500	92	52
	15	Vadsø	493 000	731 000	97	48	402 000	583 000	99	45
	16	Andøy	473 000	697 000	92	47	375 000	559 000	95	49
	17	Tinn	441 000	662 000	88	50	346 000	531 000	90	53
	18	Årdal	532 500	765 000	101	44	413 000	609 500	103	48
The average of medians (13-18)			482 458	711 750	94	48	380 417	570 333	97	50

Table V 5: Share of people living in Persistent low-income households 2015-17 and 2020-22. (Data source: Norwegian Institute of Public Health/NIPH

			SHARE (%) OF PEOPLE IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS								SHARE (%) OF PEOPLE IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS IN RELATION TO NATIONAL AND MUNICIPAL LEVELS							
			ALL AGES				YOUNG PEOPLE (0-17 år)				ALL AGES				YOUNG PEOPLE (0-17 år)			
			Vs. national median income*		Vs. municipal median income**		Vs. national median income*		Vs. municipal median income**		Vs. national median income*		Vs. municipal median income**		Vs. national median income*		Vs. municipal median income**	
	STR	Center-Hinterland	2015-2017	2020-2022	2015-2017	2020-2022	2015-2017	2020-2022	2015-2017	2020-2022	2015-2017	2020-2022	2015-2017	2020-2022	2015-2017	2020-2022	2015-2017	2020-2022
Country			9,8	9,8	9,8	9,8	11	10,9	11	10,8	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Oslo		Center mcp	14,6	13,5	15,3	14,9	18,1	15,6	18,9	17,1	149	138	156	152	165	143	172	158
Growing STRs	**Alta**	One mcp	5,9	6,2	6,7	7,6	5,9	6,4	6,8	8	60	63	68	78	54	59	62	74
	Sogndal	Center mcp	8	8,3	7,9	8,4	7,9	9,1	7,8	9,2	82	85	81	86	72	83	71	85
		Hinterland mcp	7,7	8,2	6,8	6,4	8,3	9,5	7,4	6,8	79	84	69	65	75	87	67	63
	Ørland	One mcp	9,4	8,8	7,1	7,6	9,2	8,5	6,7	7,7	96	90	72	78	84	78	61	71
	Vågan	One mcp	9	8,8	8,1	7,2	10,3	10,5	9,5	8,3	92	90	83	73	94	96	86	77
	Alver	Center mcp	7,2	7,4	7,3	7,3	8,1	8,4	8,2	8,3	73	76	74	74	74	77	75	77
		Hinterland mcp	6,8	6,7	8,9	8,7	7,1	8,1	10,1	10,5	69	68	91	89	65	74	92	97
		Hinterland mcp	7,7	9,4	6,9	9,4	4,9	11,7	:	:	79	96	70	96	45	107	#VERDI!	#VERDI!
	Lyngdal	Center mcp	9,7	11,2	7,5	8,3	11,7	15	9	12	99	114	77	85	106	138	82	111
		Hinterland mcp	8,7	8,5	7,7	7,4	10,6	9,5	9,6	8,8	89	87	79	76	96	87	87	81
		Hinterland mcp	8,7	9,4	8,2	9,4	9,3	11,4	8,7	11,4	89	96	84	96	85	105	79	106
Stable STRs	**Målselv**	Center mcp	5,7	6,2	6,1	6	5,8	6,9	6,4	6,7	58	63	62	61	53	63	58	62
		Hinterland mcp	6,5	5,7	7,3	7,7	6,9	7,7	7,7	10,3	66	58	74	79	63	71	70	95
	Stryn	One mcp	8,9	8,9	7,6	7	10,6	10	9,5	7,9	91	91	78	71	96	92	86	73
	Kongsvinger	Center mcp	12,2	12,5	8,6	8,1	15,8	16,7	12,1	11,5	124	128	88	83	144	153	110	106
		Hinterland mcp	14	12,5	8	7,3	16,3	14,8	10,3	10,1	143	128	82	74	148	136	94	94
		Hinterland mcp	12,7	13,5	7,7	7,4	13,6	19	9,8	12,5	130	138	79	76	124	174	89	116
		Hinterland mcp	9,8	10,5	5,9	6,3	12,5	12,3	7,2	8	100	107	60	64	114	113	65	74
		Hinterland mcp	9,4	7,9	7,2	6,3	12,1	8,8	9,1	7,3	96	81	73	64	110	81	83	68
	Sør-Varanger	One mcp	6,8	7	7,8	7,9	7,5	8,8	8,6	9,5	69	71	80	81	68	81	78	88
	Flekkefjord	Center mcp	8,3	9,4	7,5	7,8	7,3	11,8	6,7	10,3	85	96	77	80	66	108	61	95
		Hinterland mcp	9,3	9,1	7,9	7,5	9,8	9,8	8,8	8,6	95	93	81	77	89	90	80	80
	Kristiansund	Center mcp	9,9	10	9,2	8,6	10,2	11,4	9,5	10,2	101	102	94	88	93	105	86	94
		Hinterland mcp	7	7,5	7,6	8,4	6,4	6,7	6,7	7,6	71	77	78	86	58	61	61	70
		Hinterland mcp	9,5	8,5	8,4	7,3	11,5	9,9	10,8	8,1	97	87	86	74	105	91	98	75
Shrinking STRs	**Sauda**	Center mcp	8,2	7,4	7,8	7,7	9,7	8,7	9,3	8,7	84	76	80	79	88	80	85	81
	Sel	Center mcp	11,9	11,5	6,8	6,3	14,2	12,3	8,5	5,6	121	117	69	64	129	113	77	52
		Hinterland mcp	10,5	9,5	6,9	6	10,7	9,7	7,4	5	107	97	70	61	97	89	67	46
	Vadsø	Center mcp	10,8	7,8	11,7	9,8	15,5	11,2	16,7	13	110	80	119	100	141	103	152	120
		Hinterland mcp	11,4	10	10,8	9	16,1	5,2	16,1	3,4	116	102	110	92	146	48	146	31
	Andøy	One mcp	9,6	8,4	8,5	8,9	12,9	8,2	11,5	8,3	98	86	87	91	117	75	105	77
	Tinn	One mcp	9,7	10,3	8,6	8,2	12,9	15,7	11,9	13	99	105	88	84	117	144	108	120
	Årdal	One mcp	3,7	4,8	5,2	6,2	3	5,1	4	6,3	38	49	53	63	27	47	36	58

* Persons living in households with income below 50% and 60% of **national median income** over a three-year period, calculated by EU scale.

** Persons living in households with an income below 50% and 60% of **the municipal median income** over a three-year period, calculated according to the EU scale.

Table V 6: Intervals of housing cost index for the central municipalities within each STR group (total 18 central municipalities in all three groups) compared with all municipalities of the country and the largest center municipality I the country (Oslo) (Datakilde: Bokostnadsindeksen - Samfunnsøkonomisk analyse 2024)

		2010	2024	Share of national level	Abs.change	Rel. change (%)
Country (average of all municipalities)		100 000	204 000	100	104 000	104
	Largest city municipality (Oslo)	122 000	317 000	155	195 000	160
Growth STRs	The center municipalities	85 000-100 000	150 000-180 000	69-83	65 000- 80 000	76-80
Stable STRs	The center municipalities	85 000-98 000	140 000-170 000	65-78	55 000- 72 000	65-73
Shrinking STRS	The center municipalities	80 000-90 000	140 000-160 000	65-74	60 000-70 000	75-78

Table V 7: Labour force status (incl. NEET – not in employment, education and training) for residents 20-66 years, 2008 – 2022.

		2008 (% share residents beteween 20-66 years)											2022 (% share residents beteween 20-66 years)											Precent points changes 2008-22 (in % share of residents between 20-66 years)										
		TOTAL	Employment or education			Not in employment or education							TOTAL	Employment or education			Not in employment or education							Employment or education			Not in employment or education							
			Total (1-2)	1. Emplo-yed persons	2.Ordinary education	Total (3-7)	3.Un-employed (reg.)	4.In labour marked measures	5.Work assessment allowance or disability benefits	6.Retire-ment pension	7.Other	Total un-employed (3-4)		Total (1-2)	1. Emplo-yed persons	2.Ordinary education	Total (3-7)	3.Un-employed (reg.)	4.In labour marked measures	5.Work assessment allowance or disability benefits	6.Retire-ment pension	7.Other	Total un-employed (3-4)	Total (1-2)	1. Emplo-yed persons	2.Ordinary education	Total (3-7)	3.Un-employed (reg.)	4.In labour marked measures	5.Work assessment allowance or disability benefits	6.Retire-ment pension	7.Other	Total un-employed (3-4)
The whole country	TOTAL	100	81,5	79,2	2,3	18,5	1,2	1,1	8,9	1,2	6,1	2,3	100	80,7	77,7	3,0	19,3	1,0	1,3	9,9	1,4	5,7	2,3	-0,8	-1,5	0,7	0,8	-0,2	0,1	1,0	0,3	-0,4	0,0
	Metropolitan city regions (urb.centre >500' ihb.)	100	81,8	79,3	2,4	18,2	1,3	1,2	6,7	1,0	8,1	2,4	100	82,5	79,4	3,2	17,5	1,1	1,0	7,2	1,1	7,0	2,2	0,8	0,0	0,7	-0,8	-0,1	-0,1	0,5	0,1	-1,1	-0,3
	Large city regions (urb. centre 150'- 500' ihb.)	100	83,6	80,9	2,7	16,4	1,1	1,0	7,3	1,1	5,9	2,1	100	82,4	78,8	3,6	17,6	1,0	1,1	8,5	1,4	5,6	2,1	-1,2	-2,1	0,9	1,2	-0,1	0,1	1,2	0,3	-0,4	0,0
	City regions others (urb. centre 50'-150' ihb.)	100	79,8	77,6	2,2	20,2	1,4	1,3	10,4	1,2	5,9	2,7	100	78,7	75,6	3,0	21,3	1,2	1,4	11,8	1,5	5,4	2,6	-1,2	-2,0	0,8	1,2	-0,2	0,1	1,3	0,3	-0,5	0,0
	Medium town regions (urb. centre 20'-50' ihb.)	100	80,6	78,5	2,1	19,4	1,2	1,1	10,4	1,4	5,4	2,3	100	79,0	76,2	2,8	21,0	1,0	1,4	12,0	1,6	5,0	2,4	-1,6	-2,2	0,7	1,6	-0,2	0,3	1,6	0,3	-0,4	0,1
	Small town regions (urb.centre 5-20' ihb.)	100	81,0	78,9	2,1	19,0	1,2	1,2	10,5	1,3	4,8	2,4	100	79,2	76,6	2,6	20,8	0,9	1,5	12,2	1,6	4,5	2,4	-1,8	-2,3	0,5	1,8	-0,3	0,3	1,7	0,3	-0,3	0,0
	Rural town/small centre regions (urb. centre 1'-5 ihb)	100	82,6	80,5	2,0	17,4	1,1	1,0	9,7	1,3	4,4	2,1	100	80,5	78,3	2,3	19,5	0,8	1,5	10,6	1,7	4,9	2,3	-2,0	-2,3	0,2	2,0	-0,3	0,5	1,0	0,4	0,5	0,2
	Regions without urban settlements >1000 ihb.	100	81,4	79,6	1,8	18,6	1,1	0,9	10,7	1,1	4,7	2,1	100	79,8	77,8	2,0	20,2	0,7	1,4	11,4	1,8	4,9	2,1	-1,6	-1,8	0,2	1,6	-0,4	0,5	0,6	0,7	0,2	0,1
Small town and rural town regions (urban centre 2'-20'inhabitants)		100	81,5	79,4	2,1	18,5	1,2	1,1	10,2	1,3	4,7	2,3	100	79,7	77,1	2,5	20,3	0,9	1,5	11,7	1,7	4,6	2,4	-1,8	-2,3	0,4	1,8	-0,3	0,4	1,5	0,4	-0,1	0,1
18 Selected small town and rural town regions (A+B+C)		100	80,7	78,7	2,1	19,3	1,2	1,1	10,7	1,3	5,0	2,3	100	79,2	76,8	2,4	20,8	0,9	1,5	12,0	1,7	4,7	2,4	-1,5	-1,9	0,4	1,5	-0,3	0,4	1,3	0,5	-0,3	0,1
A.Growing regions (GRR)	1 Alta	100	81,3	77,8	3,5	18,7	1,6	1,1	11,1	0,6	4,3	2,7	100	80,5	77,4	3,1	19,5	0,8	1,4	12,0	0,9	4,4	2,2	-0,8	-0,4	-0,5	0,8	-0,8	0,3	0,9	0,4	0,1	-0,5
	2 Sogndal	100	87,5	84,7	2,8	12,5	0,5	0,5	6,5	1,2	3,7	1,0	100	86,1	82,0	4,1	13,9	0,6	1,4	6,0	1,8	4,0	2,1	-1,5	-2,7	1,2	1,5	0,1	1,0	-0,5	0,6	0,3	1,1
	3 Ørland	100	78,7	77,2	1,5	21,3	1,5	1,0	12,0	1,2	5,6	2,5	100	78,5	76,8	1,7	21,5	0,8	1,2	13,5	1,5	4,6	2,0	-0,2	-0,4	0,2	0,2	-0,7	0,1	1,5	0,3	-1,1	-0,6
	4 Vågan	100	79,4	76,5	2,9	20,6	1,9	1,7	11,6	0,7	4,8	3,6	100	80,1	78,0	2,1	19,9	1,1	1,5	10,6	1,0	5,7	2,6	0,7	1,5	-0,8	-0,7	-0,8	-0,2	-1,0	0,3	0,9	-1,0
	5 Alver	100	83,4	81,6	1,8	16,6	1,0	0,8	7,7	1,4	5,7	1,8	100	81,6	79,3	2,3	18,4	0,7	1,0	10,5	1,8	4,5	1,6	-1,9	-2,3	0,5	1,9	-0,3	0,1	2,8	0,5	-1,2	-0,2
	6 Lyngdal	100	79,9	78,1	1,8	20,1	1,3	1,6	10,5	1,2	5,6	2,9	100	77,9	75,6	2,3	22,1	1,2	2,0	12,0	1,2	5,6	3,2	-2,0	-2,5	0,5	2,0	-0,1	0,4	1,5	0,1	0,0	0,4
	Total A (1-6)	100	82,1	79,8	2,4	17,9	1,2	1,1	9,5	1,1	5,0	2,3	100	80,9	78,3	2,6	19,1	0,8	1,4	10,7	1,4	4,7	1,7	-1,2	-1,5	0,3	1,2	-0,4	0,3	1,2	0,3	-0,3	-0,6
B. Stable regions (STR)	7 Målselv	100	84,9	82,8	2,1	15,1	0,8	0,5	8,5	0,9	4,4	1,3	100	82,0	79,9	2,2	18,0	0,3	1,4	9,0	1,6	5,7	2,4	-2,9	-3,0	0,1	2,9	-0,5	0,9	0,4	0,7	1,4	1,1
	8 Stryn	100	87,8	85,8	2,1	12,2	0,8	0,9	5,4	1,0	4,1	1,7	100	85,3	82,5	2,8	14,7	0,8	1,6	6,0	1,3	5,0	2,8	-2,5	-3,3	0,7	2,5	0,1	0,7	0,6	0,2	0,9	1,1
	9 Kongsvinger	100	75,7	74,2	1,5	24,3	1,5	1,2	14,6	1,6	5,5	2,7	100	73,3	71,3	2,0	26,7	1,1	1,7	16,9	2,1	4,9	2,5	-2,4	-2,9	0,5	2,4	-0,4	0,6	2,2	0,6	-0,6	-0,2
	10 Sør-Varanger	100	81,2	79,2	2,0	18,8	0,9	0,6	12,7	0,9	3,7	1,5	100	81,2	78,6	2,6	18,8	0,7	1,7	11,0	1,3	4,1	2,8	0,0	-0,7	0,7	0,0	-0,2	1,1	-1,7	0,4	0,3	1,3
	11 Flekkefjord	100	80,9	79,3	1,6	19,1	0,9	1,5	11,0	1,4	4,3	2,5	100	78,7	76,2	2,4	21,3	1,3	1,5	12,5	1,7	4,3	2,4	-2,2	-3,1	0,9	2,2	0,4	0,0	1,5	0,3	0,0	-0,1
	12 Kristiansund	100	79,2	77,2	2,0	20,8	1,4	1,3	11,5	1,0	5,7	2,6	100	77,8	75,2	2,6	22,2	1,0	1,4	13,4	1,6	4,9	2,0	-1,4	-2,0	0,6	1,4	-0,4	0,1	1,8	0,6	-0,8	-0,6
	Total B (7-12)	100	79,3	77,5	1,8	20,7	1,2	1,1	12,1	1,2	5,0	2,3	100	77,5	75,1	2,3	22,5	1,0	1,6	13,4	1,7	4,8	2,9	-1,8	-2,4	0,6	1,8	-0,3	0,5	1,3	0,5	-0,2	0,5
C.Shrinking regions (SHR)	13 Sauda	100	83,8	81,4	2,4	16,2	1,0	0,6	7,9	2,5	4,2	1,5	100	79,7	77,7	2,0	20,3	0,7	1,3	10,6	4,0	3,6	2,9	-4,1	-3,7	-0,5	4,1	-0,2	0,7	2,7	1,5	-0,6	1,4
	14 Sel	100	80,9	79,0	1,9	19,1	1,3	1,2	10,1	1,8	4,8	2,4	100	78,2	76,2	2,0	21,8	0,8	2,1	12,9	1,8	4,2	2,8	-2,8	-2,8	0,0	2,8	-0,5	0,9	2,8	0,1	-0,6	0,4
	15 Vadsø	100	81,4	78,5	3,0	18,6	1,5	2,0	9,1	1,3	4,6	3,6	100	79,3	76,9	2,4	20,7	1,0	1,9	10,9	2,1	4,9	2,1	-2,1	-1,6	-0,5	2,1	-0,5	-0,2	1,8	0,8	0,3	-1,5
	16 Andøy	100	76,6	75,2	1,4	23,4	1,4	0,9	12,1	1,3	7,6	2,3	100	79,5	77,5	1,9	20,5	0,6	2,2	10,6	2,2	4,9	2,1	2,8	2,3	0,5	-2,8	-0,8	1,3	-1,5	0,9	-2,7	-0,3
	17 Tinn	100	79,5	77,8	1,7	20,5	0,9	2,1	12,4	1,6	3,6	3,0	100	79,7	77,0	2,7	20,3	1,0	1,1	12,3	2,1	3,8	2,2	0,3	-0,8	1,1	-0,3	0,1	-1,0	0,0	0,5	0,2	-0,8
	18 Årdal	100	84,6	82,4	2,2	15,4	0,7	0,3	7,6	2,6	4,2	1,0	100	81,0	79,0	2,0	19,0	0,9	1,2	9,8	3,4	3,7	2,5	-3,6	-3,4	-0,2	3,6	0,1	0,9	2,2	0,8	-0,5	1,5
	Total C (13-17)	100	81,3	79,2	2,1	18,7	1,1	1,2	9,8	1,8	4,7	2,3	100	79,5	77,3	2,2	20,5	0,9	1,6	11,3	2,5	4,2	2,5	-1,8	-1,9	0,1	1,8	-0,3	0,5	1,5	0,7	-0,5	0,2

Table V 8: Summery table 1.

		Population and changes of components			Work places (employd jobs) and change			Total income levels households, median		Percent persons of all 20-66 years (=100) with regard to attachment to employment, education and welfare benefits														
										2008							2022							
			Changes 1.1. 2010-24			Changes 1.1. 2010-24		2008	2022			3. Not employed or in education							3. Not employed or in education					
		Inhabitants (2024) in total and average of STR	%	Changing factors	Work places (2023) in total and average STR	%	Changing factors			1. Employed	2. In education	Total	Un-employed or in labor marked measures	Work assess-ment or disability benefits	Early retire-ment pension	Other	1. Employed	2. In education	Total	Un-employed or in labor marked measures	Work assess-ment or disability benefits	Early retire-ment pension	Other
	The country	5 550 203	14,2	Due to high immigration (70%) and excess of births (30%)	2 766 922	12,3	High growth: due to strong growth of jobs in public and private services and infrastructure-industries	100	100	79,2	2,3	18,5	2,3	8,9	1,2	6,1	77,7	3,0	19,3	2,3	9,9	1,4	5,7
Small town regions (STR)	**Growing regions**	115.451 (19.242)	13,0	High increasing level of inhabitants due to a combination of high (net-) immigration and some domestic surplus migration and excess of births.	52.023 (8.671)	11,2	High increasing level of jobs: due to (i) high absolute growth in within public services and infrastructure-industries, (ii) some additional (net-) growth of jobs in seafood and private services (experience industries, business services), combined with (iii) only a stight decline in number og jobs in agriculture and manufacturing.	101	101	79,8	2,4	17,9	2,3	9,5	1,1	5,0	78,3	2,6	19,1	2,2	10,7	1,4	4,7
	Stable regions	118.639 (19.773)	2,8	Stable level (minor growth) of inhabitants due to high (net) immigration and some deficit in domestic migration and births at aggregated group level, but some differencies among the 6 STRs with regard to growt/decline du to the two last main variables (domestic migration and births)	52.403 (8.734)	0,5	Stable level of jobs (net-zero-growth) : due to (i) a strong growth of jobs in public services, infrastructure-industries and parts of private services (business services), which have compensated the simultaneous (ii) a huge decline of jobs within in retailing, manufacturing and agriculture in these regions.	98	94	77,5	1,8	20,7	2,3	12,1	1,2	5,0	75,1	2,3	22,5	2,5	13,4	1,7	4,8
	Shrinking regions	38.010 (6.355)	-5,6	Decreasing level of inhabitants due to high domestic out-migration and deficits of births, which exceeds a simultaneous high (net-) immigration from abroad.	17.469 (2.912)	-11,0	Strong decreasing levels in number of jobs: due to substantial decline both within private sector (in particular retailing, manufacturing and agriculture) and public sector (both municipal services and state/defence). Though among these 6 STRs there have been very differentiated development (growth/decline) among them witinh some branches (as seafood,manufacturing, infrastructure, exceprience industries, business services, health care).	96	94	79,2	2,1	18,7	2,3	9,8	1,8	4,7	77,3	2,2	20,5	2,5	11,3	2,5	4,2

Table V 9: Summery table 2.

		Population and changes of components							Work places (employd) and change								Total income levels households, median			Attachment to employment, education and welfare benefits.														
																				2022 (% of residents between 20-66 years)							% points changes2008-22								
		Inhabitants 1.1. 2024 in total (average sizes of STRs)	Changes 1.1. 2010-24						Work places 2022 (average sizes of STRs)	Changes 2010-22								Abs (NOK)		% change	1. Employed persons	2. Ordinary education	3. Not in employment or education					1. Employed persons	2. Ordinary education	3. Not in employment or education					
			Total abs	Total %	Excess births	Net migration:	Dom-estic	Abroad		Total abs	Total %	Agriculture and processing industry	Seafood and processing industry	Manu-facturing industries others	Infra-structure	Private dominated services	Public dominated services	2008	2022	2008-22			Total	Un-employed (reg.)	Work assessment allowa	Early retire-ment pensio	Other			Total	Un-employed (reg.)	Work assessment allowa	Early retire-ment pensio	Other
	The country	5 550 203	692 004	14,2	4,4	9,8	0,0	9,8	2 766 922	302 132	12,3	-14,6	33,6	-6,1	14,0	13,8	16,7	502 000	756 000	51	77,69	3,0	19,30	2,3	9,9	1,4	5,7	-1,5	0,7	0,8	0,0	1,0	0,3	-0,4
Small town regions (STR)	Growth regions	115.451 (19.242)	13 306	13,0	4,9	8,1	-4,3	12,4	52.023 (8.671)	5 241	11,2	-6,6	28,5	-5,0	20,7	5,9	17,1	508 167	760 194	50	78,3	2,6	19,1	2,2	10,7	1,4	4,7	-1,5	0,3	1,2	-0,1	1,2	0,3	-0,3
	Stability regions	118.639 (19.773)	3 219	2,8	-2,0	4,8	-6,3	11,1	52.403 (8.734)	268	0,5	-13,7	1,1	-20,1	3,8	-4,3	9,8	490 222	713 939	46	75,1	2,3	22,5	2,5	13,4	1,7	4,8	-2,4	0,6	1,8	0,2	1,3	0,5	-0,2
	Shrink regions	38.010 (6.355)	-2 248	-5,6	-4,3	-1,2	-15,7	14,5	17.469 (2.912)	-2 152	-11,0	-26,2	-12,4	-16,4	-8,4	-14,3	-5,7	482 458	711 750	48	77,3	2,2	20,5	2,5	11,3	2,5	4,2	-1,9	0,1	1,8	0,2	1,5	0,7	-0,5