

# Revitalization of shrinking small-town centres in Finland

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# What are we talking about...

- Many rural and small towns in more rural localities are declining
  - Various levels of de-population and shrinking characteristics
  - Often interlinked with decline of commercial downtowns
  - Finland: investment/maintenance depths in many small towns
  - Often related to local declines/transition in forest industries
- Down-town revitalizations a key approach to address decline

# “Smart shrinkage” & “right-sizing”

Concepts derive from urban context:

- Planning **along** depopulation/shrinkage trends not against
- Change in planning/planners paradigm required: *de-growth, locally embedded!?*
- Nordic countries: *Smart specialization* rather prominent; (re-)growth focused

So far: ***policy/planning experimentation***



# Small town revitalizations...

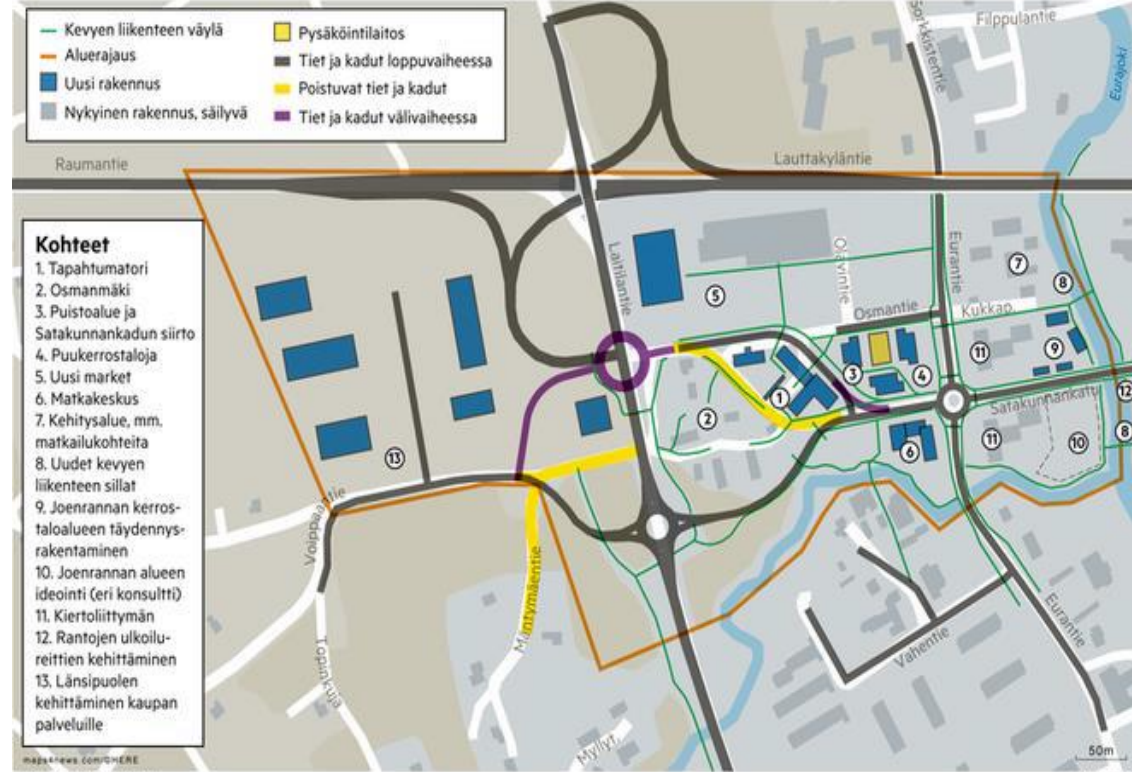
- (Re-) branding through centre revitalization
- Common approach: “*Compact city*” in the north:
  - 1) town centers as dynamic: need for flexible solutions
  - 2) town center developments vs. external (shopping) developments,
  - 3) densification with focus on increased housing
  - 4) challenges to balance the needs of different users;
  - 5) planners' reliance on hope for positive change
- Cooperation between communities of interest key
- Focus on public spaces & “communal living rooms”
- Planning criticism: *place-making vs. place-masking*

# Case Studies

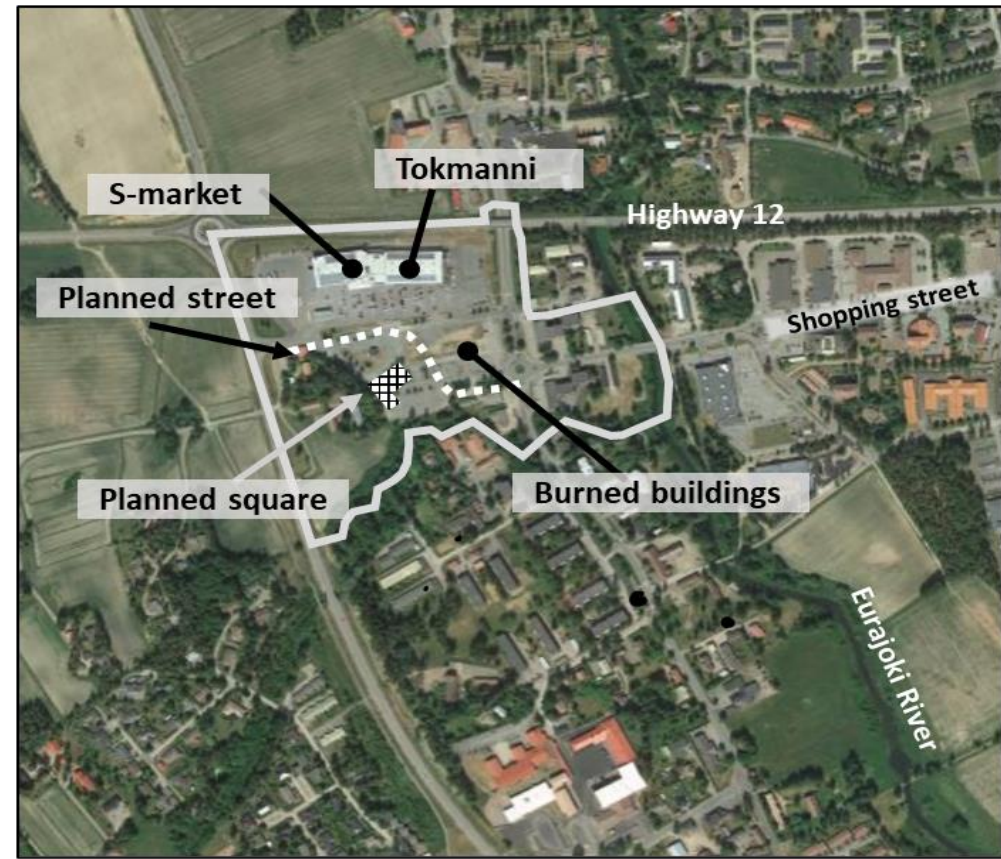
	Population: municipality 2020	Pop. change 2000 – 20	Population: town center 2020	Change 2000-20	Jobs in municip. 2019	Jobs change 2007-19	Unemp. rate 2019	Primar/ Indust./ Services %	Popul. over 64 years
Eura	11 483	- 11 %	6 257	- 6 %	4 208	- 24 %	8 %	8/41/50	28 %
Kitee	9 933	- 25 %	4 459	- 18 %	3 372	- 29 %	15 %	11/25/62	37 %
Kuusamo	15 213	- 14 %	8 340	- 10 %	5 993	- 9 %	10 %	6/16/77	28 %
Raahe	24 353	- 9 %	18 645	- 6 %	10 056	- 15 %	13 %	2/40/56	26 %
Saarijärvi	9 208	- 21 %	4 926	- 10 %	2 888	- 20 %	17 %	12/20/66	33 %
Sastamala	24 052	- 8 %	9 931	- 4 %	8 303	- 14 %	8 %	7/28/62	30 %
Finland						+ 1 %	10 %	3/21/75	23 %

# Eura: building a new compact centre

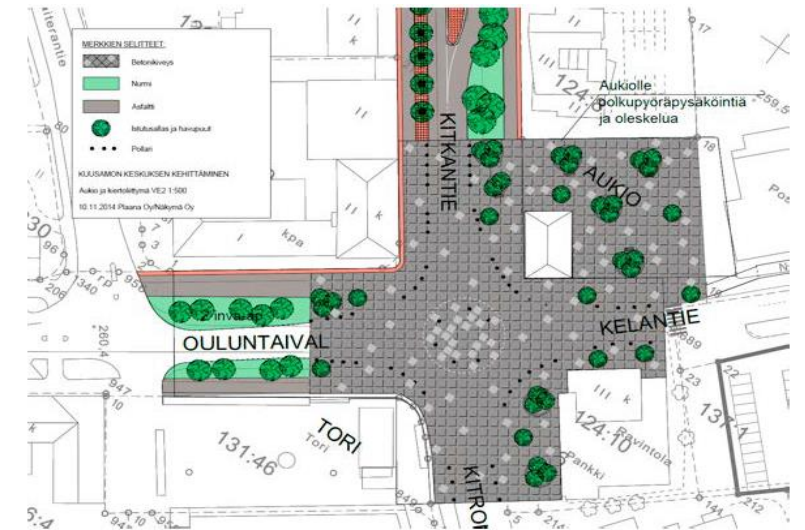
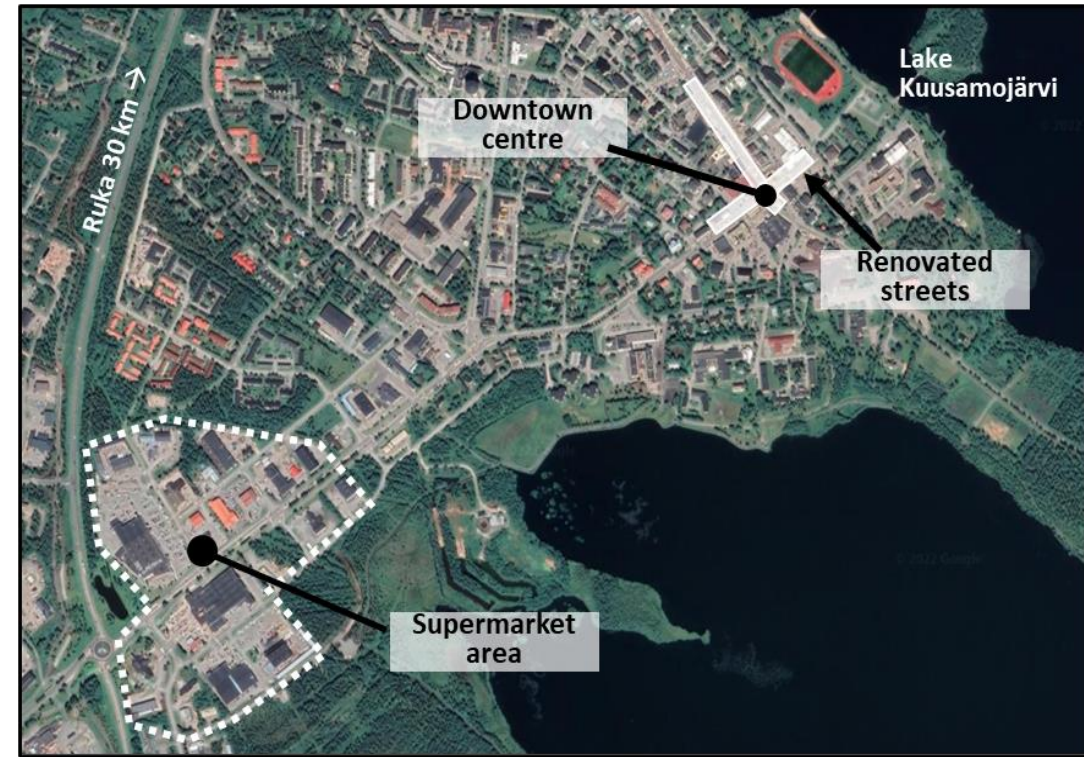
## Euran keskustan kehittämisen idealuonnos



Lähde: Sweco Ympäristö Oy Pasi Juhola



# Kuusamo



# Saarijärvi

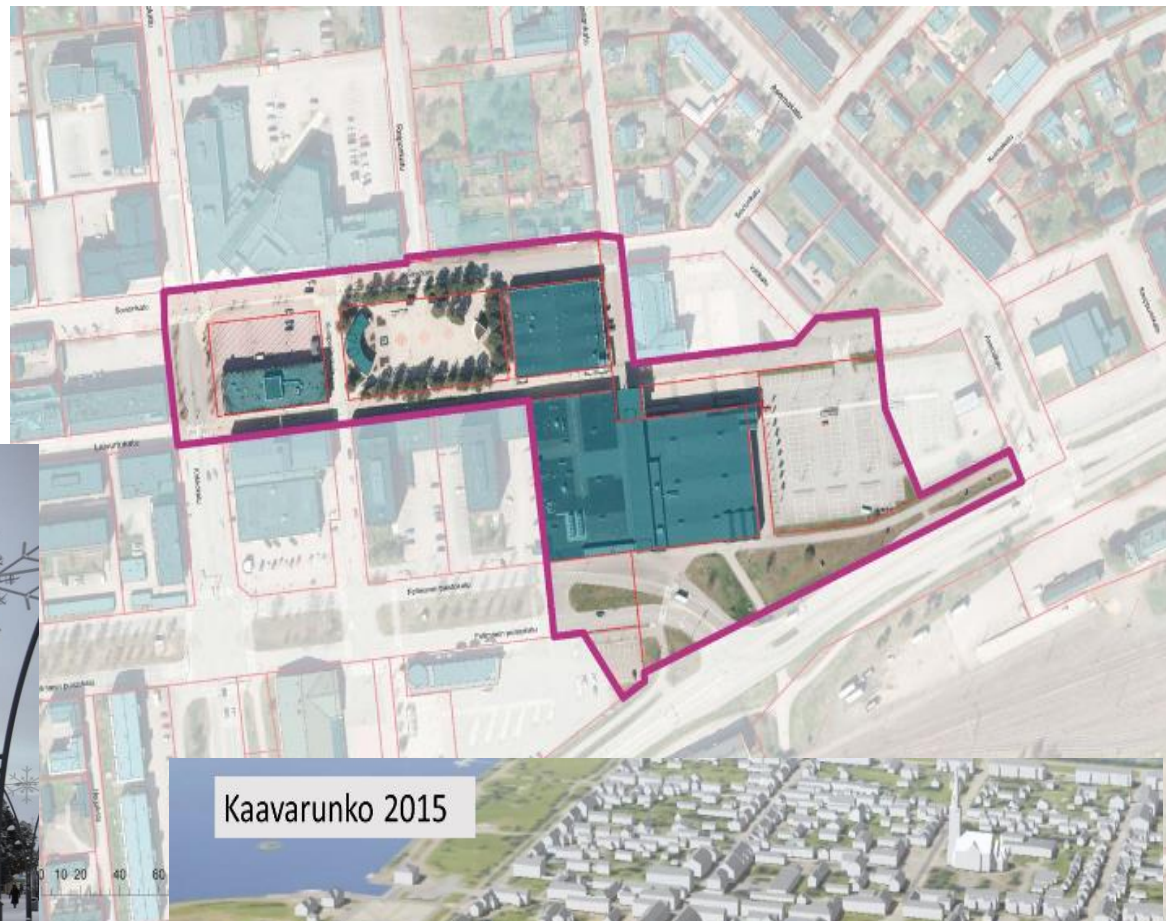


S = S-Market  
K = K-Market  
T = Tokmanni

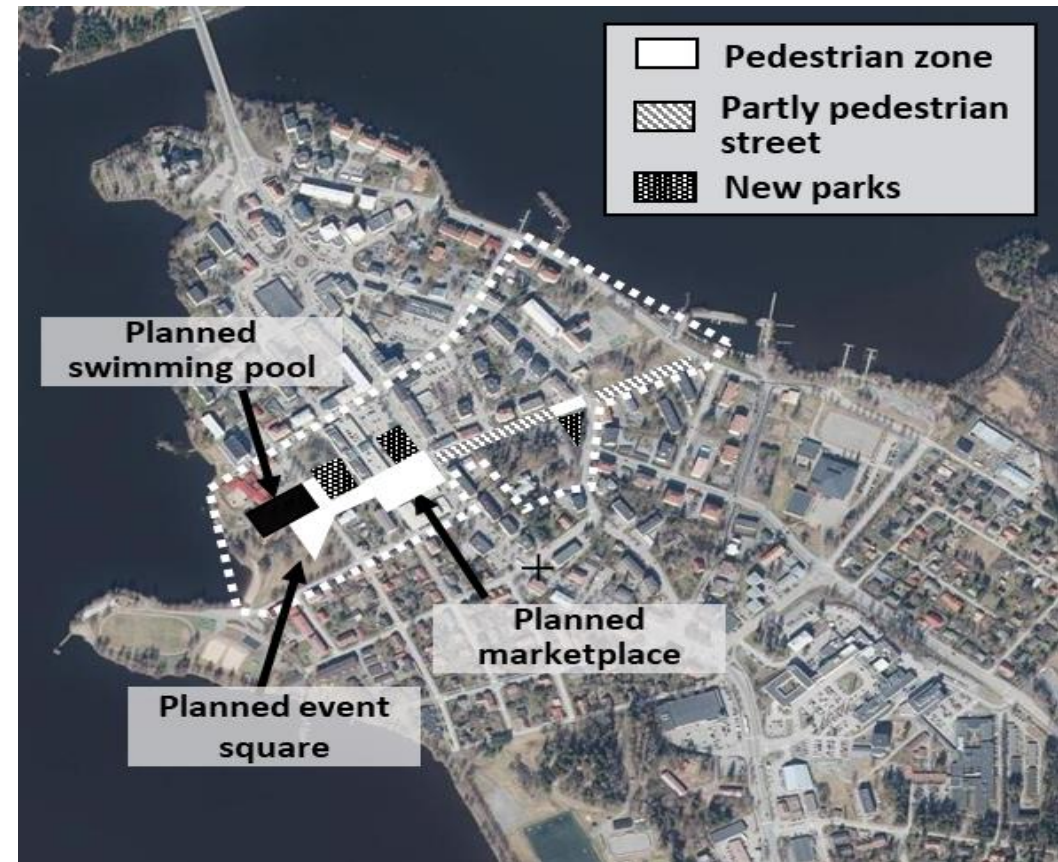




# Raahe



# Sastamala



# Paper in a nutshell

- Analysis:
  - General aspects:
    - Tackling (reversing/stopping) shrinkage as motivator for downtown revitalization
    - Smart shrinkage components mixed with urbanization attempts: compact, flexible (public) spaces
    - planning as “place-masking” rather than to align with assembling of place (unrealistic/unsuitable?)
    - Influence of large commercial actors & planning firms
    - Flexibility rather pragmatic then in relation to provide an alternative to growth oriented traditional planning paradigm
  - Challenges:
    - External shopping centers
    - Lack of attractiveness for investment
    - Car “lobby”

# References...

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