

Institutional Context, Industrial Culture, and Path Trajectories: the Cases of Biel/Bienne, Glarus, and Mendrisio.

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Tuesday 14 September 2021



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SNF Project Industrial Towns

Places that don't matter?

Socio-economic transformation of industrial towns in Switzerland and Slovenia

Timeline: 11/2020 to 11/2023

An international research team:



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- Small- and medium-sized towns (SMSTs) have largely been neglected due to an ‘urban bias’ in economic geography (Servillo et al., 2017).
- SMSTs in Europe are often highly specialized and highly industrial (Bole, 2012; Hamdouch, Demaziere, & Banovac, 2017; Meili & Mayer, 2017).
- SMSTs in Europe face multiple challenges, population decline, unemployment, industrial decline... becoming “places that don’t matter” (Rodríguez-Pose 2018).
- Main underlying research question: to explore how industrial and socio-institutional transformation plays out in SMSTs.

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Places that don't matter



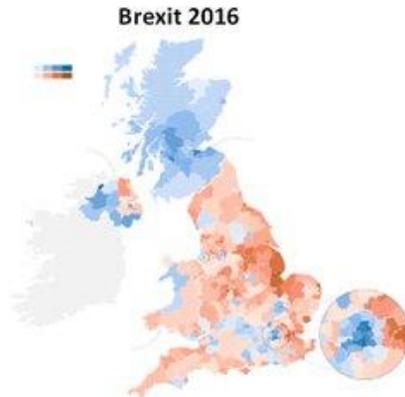
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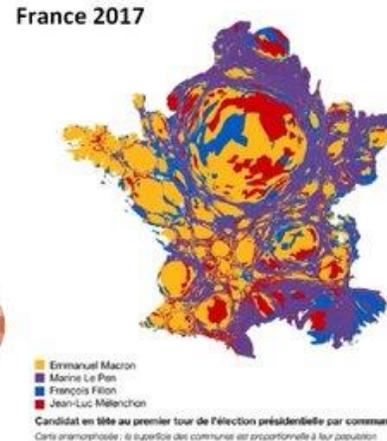
Thailand 2011

Leading party



Brexit 2016

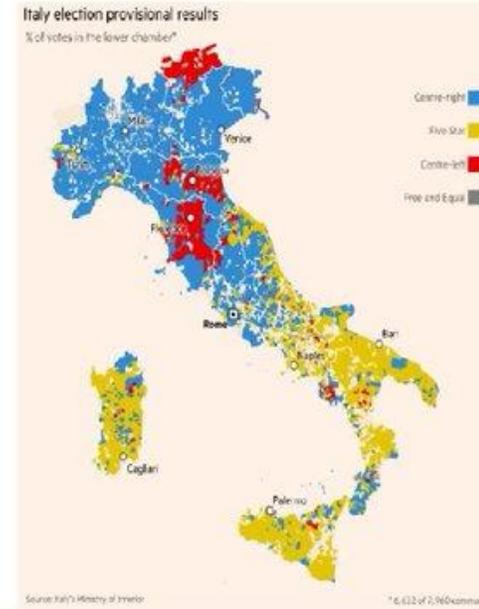
Share of Brexit and Remain vote



France 2017

Leading candidate after the first round of the elections

Italy 2018



Italy election provisional results
% of votes in the lower chamber*

Centre-right
Five Star
Centre-left
Free and Equal

Source: Italy's Ministry of Interior

*6,632 of 2,960 communes



Germany 2017

AfD

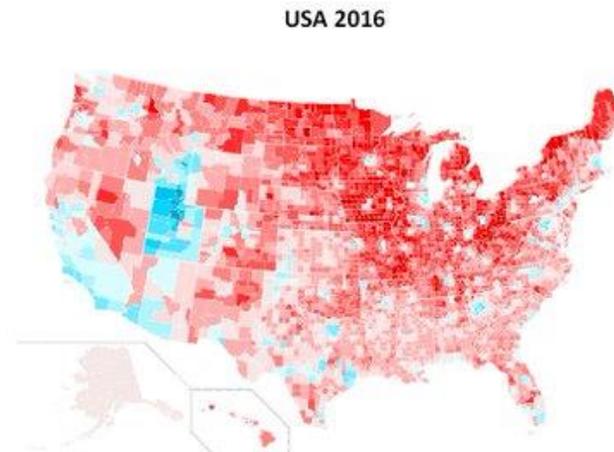
Left

2 5 10 15 22 27 36

2 5 10 15 22 27 36

Source: Federal Returning Officer. Graphic: Steven Bernard CFT

Extreme right- and left-wing populist vote in national election



USA 2016

County vote swing from 2012 to 2016



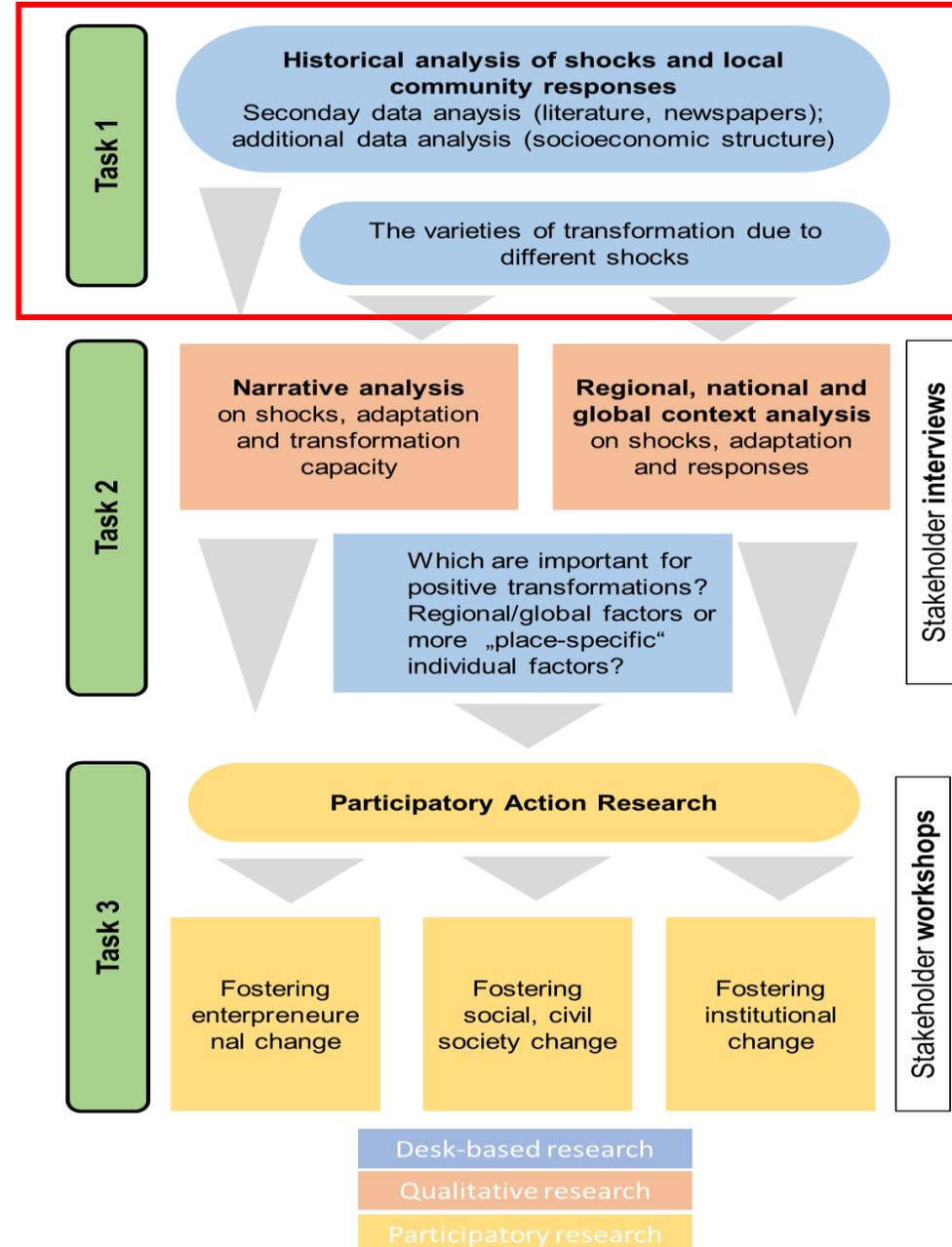
Hungary 2018

<https://voxeu.org/article/revenge-places-dont-matter>

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Research Strategy

- **Comparative multiple case-study approach**
- A focus on the **institutional and industrial context**
- A focus on **shocks**
- **Methodology:** desk research, interviews with key informants and community-based participatory research.
- **Community-based participatory research:** “The art of doing research with people, rather than on or for them” Chevalier, Buckles 2013

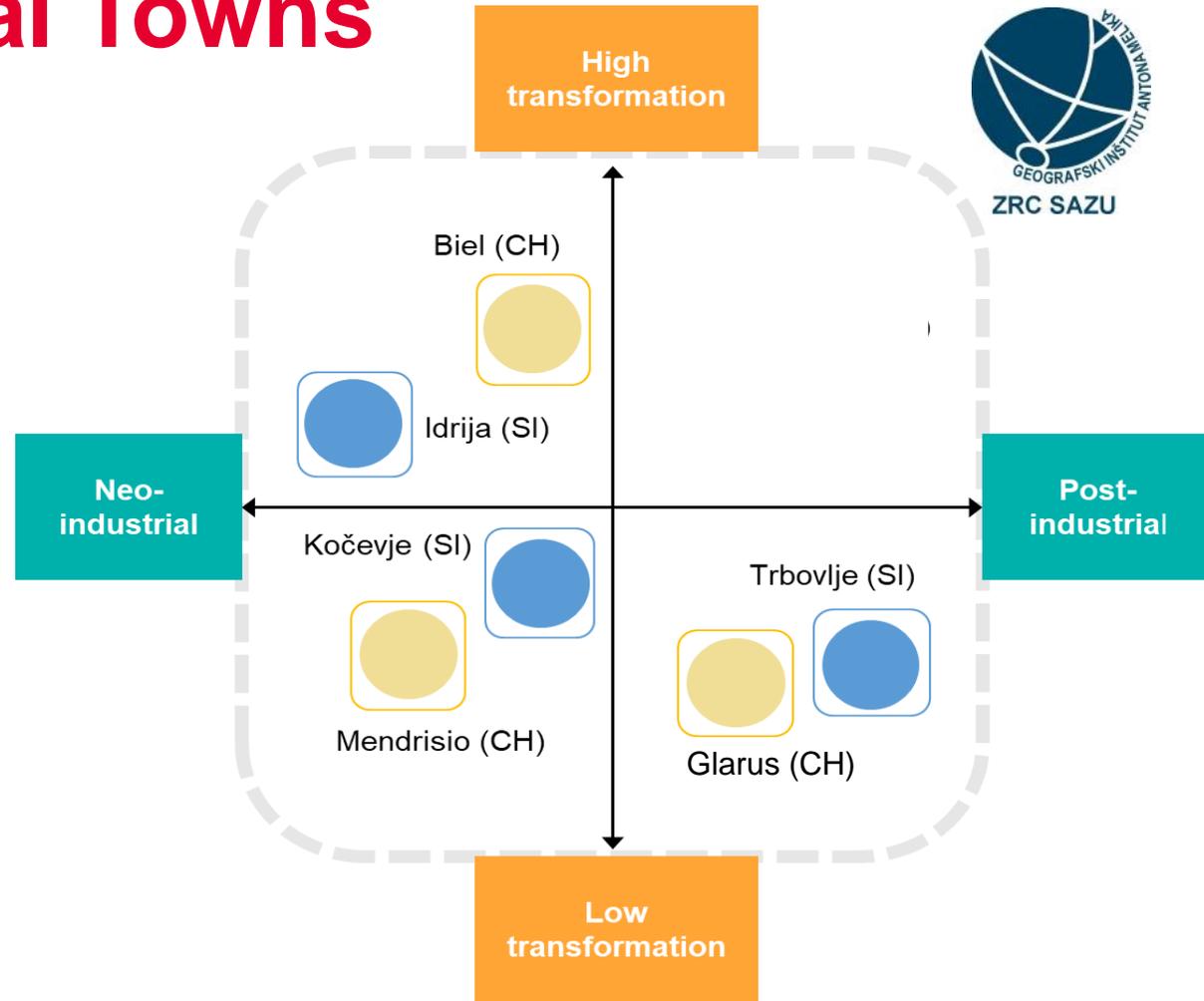


We are here!
Writing a report

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Case-Studies

- 3 cases in Switzerland
- 3 cases in Slovenia



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SNF Project Industrial Towns report – Case-Study Towns



Slovenia



Switzerland

Theoretical background

- **National institutional framework**, Hall and Soskice (2001) provide a conceptual framework for understanding the diversity of economic systems, building on organization and relational theories. The “varieties of capitalism” (VoC) as a concept explores variations on economic performance and related spheres of policymaking, such as macroeconomic policy, social policy, vocational training and inter-firm collaboration.
- **Industrial culture**, which comprises of tangible and intangible localised assets that might enable or constrain towns’ socioeconomic transformation.
 - **Evolutionary Economic Geography (EEG)**: path-dependency, past industrial development continues/persists in shaping organisational, social, economic and other aspects of communities (lock-ins, agency perspective)
 - **Institutional Perspective**: formal and informal institutions influence development (habits, motivations, political context)
- **Human agency**, the “ability of people to act, usually regarded as emerging from consciously held intentions, and as resulting in observable effects in the human world” (Gregory et al. 2009; p. 347). Agents of change are “entrepreneurs” who do not only affect new industrial path development but also institutional changes.

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	Administrative region				
	Bern	Biel/Bienne District	Glarus	Ticino	Mendrisio District
Population (2019)	1,039,474	102,156	40,590	351,491	50,342
Population growth (2010-2019)	6.1	8.8	5.1	5.3	3.3
0-19 years old	19	19.7	19.2	18	17.4
20-64 years old	59.9	60.1	60.5	59.1	58.4
>64 years old	21.1	20.2	20.4	23	24.2
Foreigners in %	16.6	27.2	24.2	27.6	24.6
GDP per capita in CHF (2018)	79,115	n/a	69,860	87,612	n/a
Employment per sector in 2018 (in % of total employed)					
Primary (in %)	32,529 (5.1%)	635 (1.2%)	1,042 (4.7%)	3,351 (1.4%)	525 (1.1%)
Secondary (in %)	13,1387 (20.5%)	15,438 (27.2%)	7,946 (36.1%)	51,616 (21.9%)	14,602 (31.9%)
Tertiary (in %)	478,232 (74.5%)	40,635 (71.6%)	13,015 (59.2%)	180,736 (76.7%)	30,689 (67%)
Total	642,148	56,708	22,003	235,703	45,816



Switzerland

Regional administrative jurisdictions, statistical overview.
Source : BFS.

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Switzerland and
the Canton of Bern

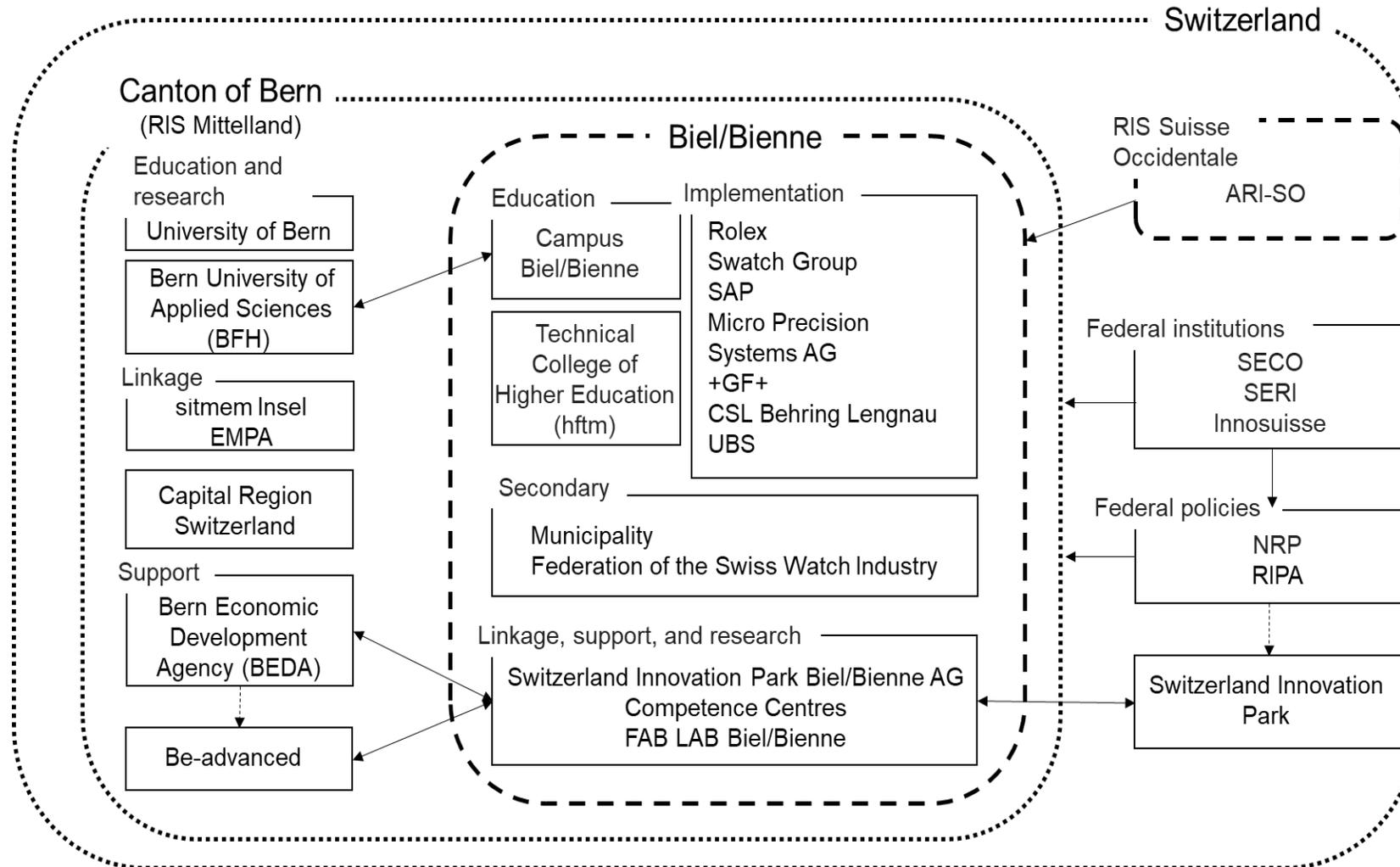


The Canton of Bern and
Biel/Bienne district



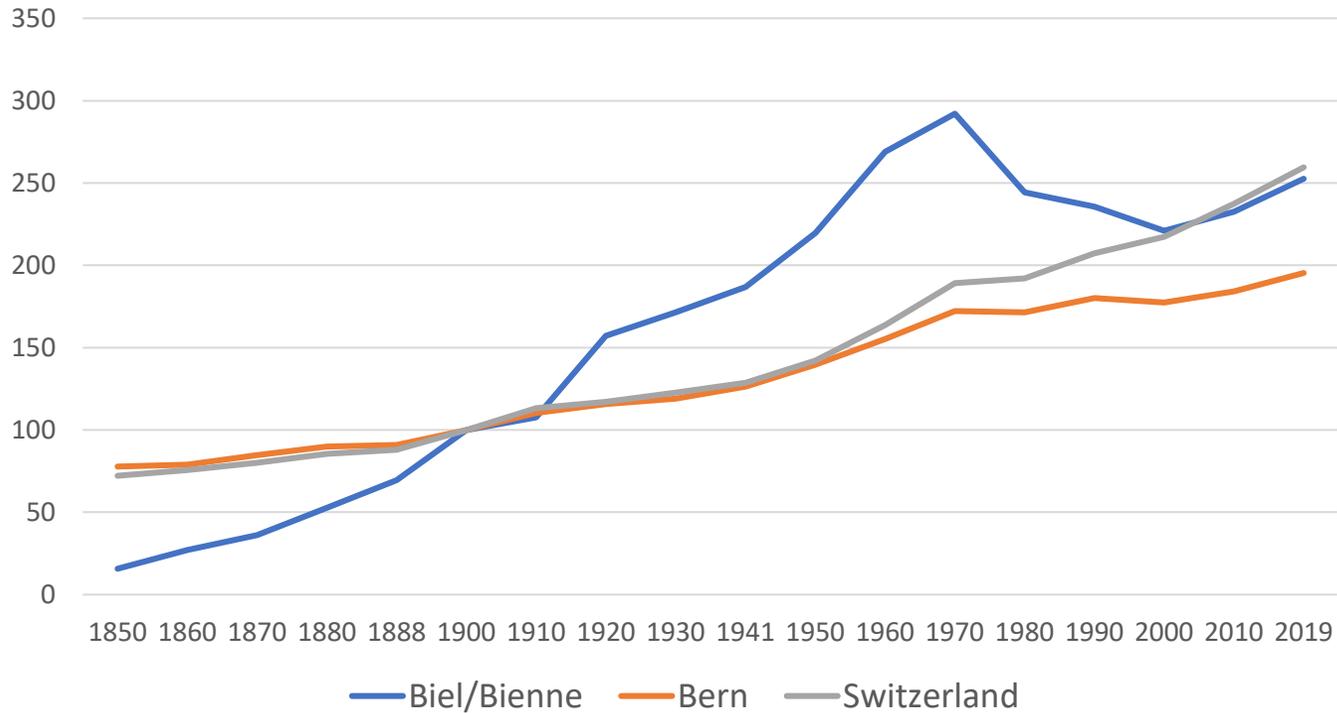
Biel/Bienne district
and communes

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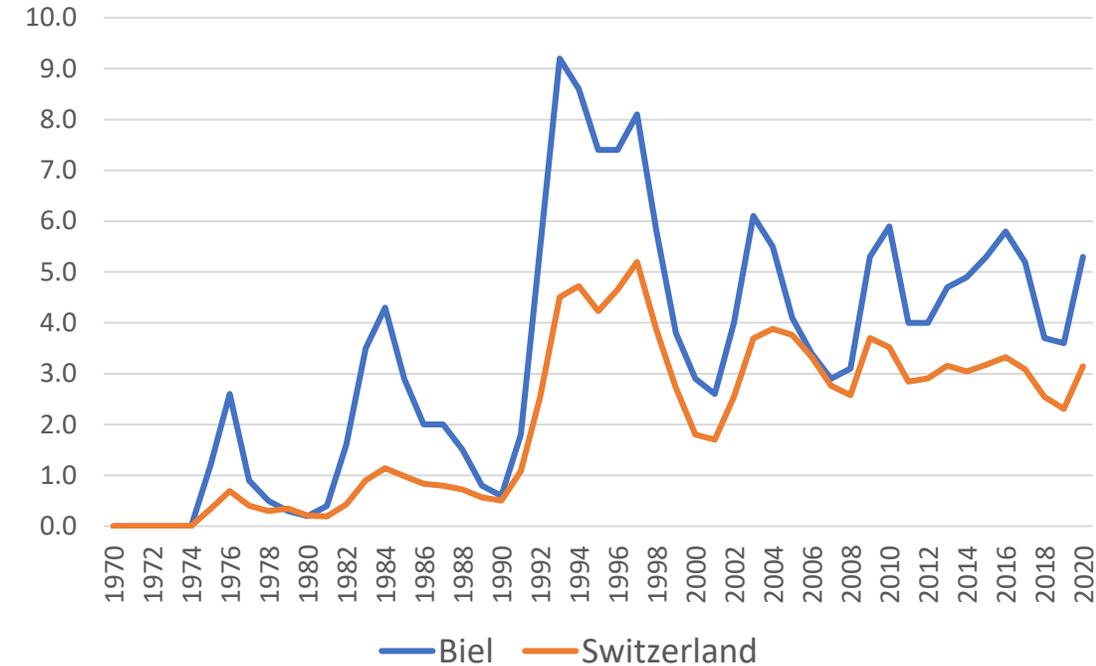


Biel/Bienne's regional innovation system. Source : the authors

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Population growth (base 100 in 1900).
Source: BFS.



Unemployment rate in Biel/Bienne
and Switzerland. Source: BFS.

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Oil and quartz crisis

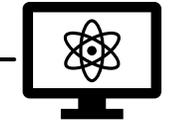
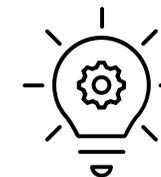
Real-estate crisis

1840s

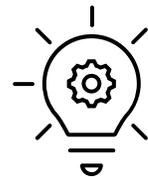
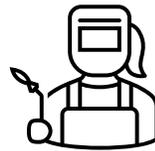
1920s

1973-1984

1991-1997



No local tax for watchmakers

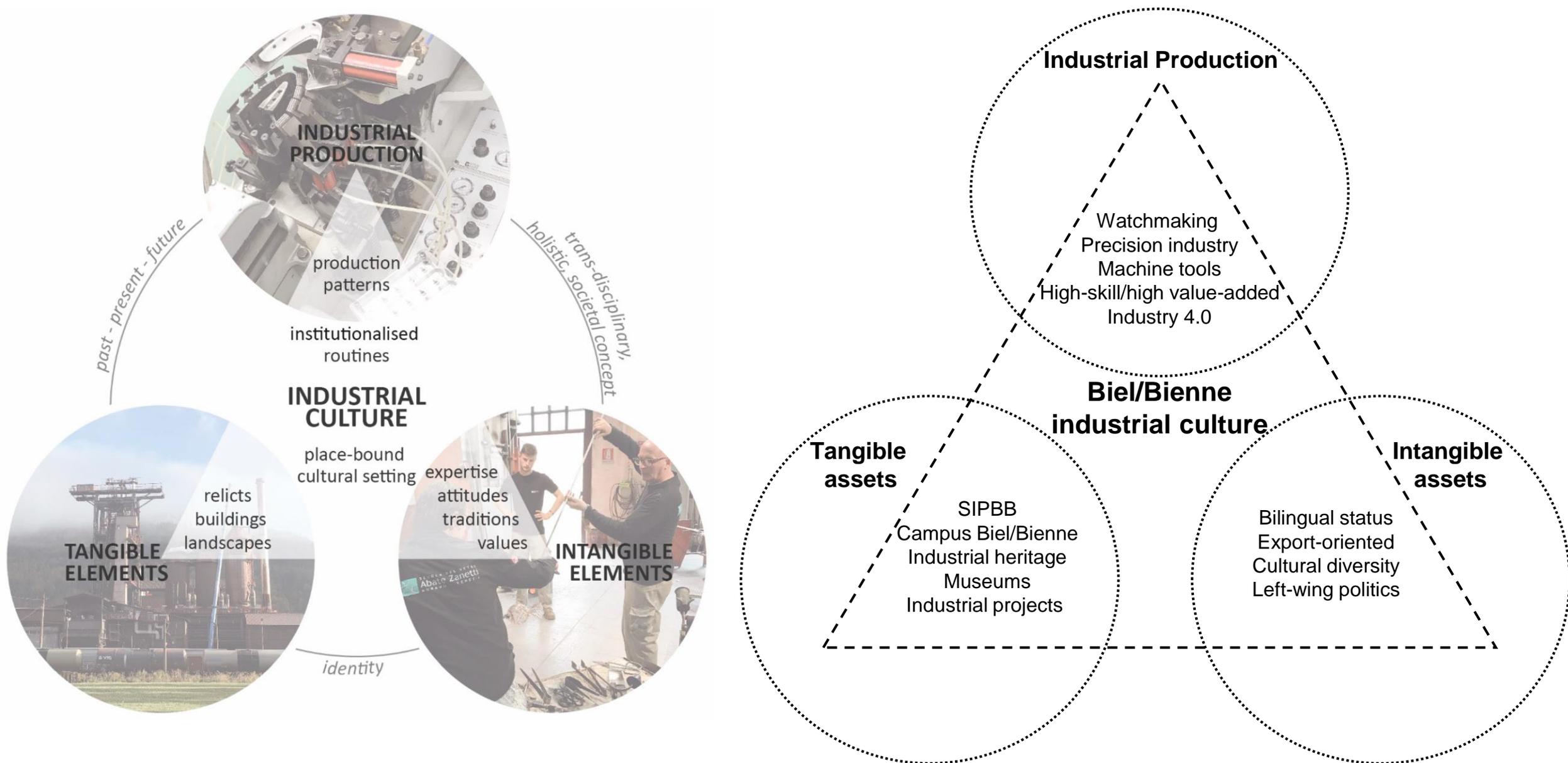


General Motors

OFCOM

SIPBB

SNF Project Industrial Towns – Biel/Bienne



What is next?

Biel/Bienne

Swiss Innovation Park and Campus Biel/Bienne



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