

Strengthening local economy: An example of universities supporting sustainable transformation of urban neighbourhoods

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3. A scientific approach to strengthen local economy
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1. Introduction

- **Societal challenges force regions to think about sustainable development**
 - energy efficiency/climate change
 - migration
 - change in urban development
 - ...
- **Universities can play different roles in regional sustainable transitions**
- **Pflitsch and Radinger-Peer (2018): two dimensions can be used**
 - **depth: As to depth universities' roles can be “comprehensive, involving diverse actors and approaching sustainability with a holistic perspective”**
 - **autonomy: the roles can be “autonomous, the university defining its own focus and priorities through interacting with a broad range of regional actors”**

2. The problematic of local economy (1/2)

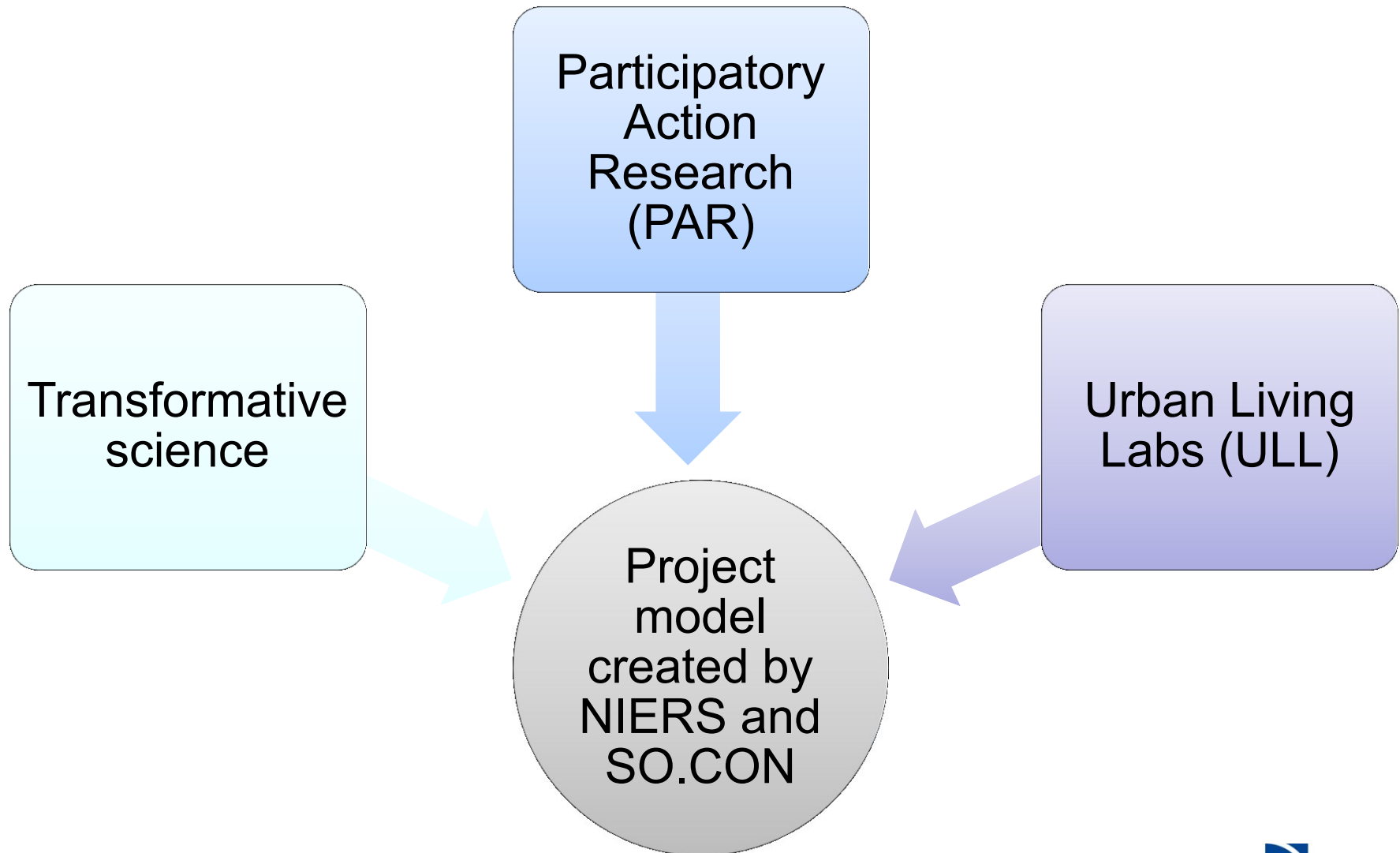
- **All economic activities related to the development of a certain urban district (Birkhölzer 2000:24)**
 - **Small or very small firms: retail services, bars and restaurants, handicraft, social and householdoriented services**
 - **Placed in and are highly connected to local neighbourhoods**
 - **Upgrade the neighbourhoods` living conditions**
- **Fulfil functions: supply people with everyday commodities, offer opportunities for work, be a place for communication**
- **If local economie works well it upgrades the neighbourhood and there is a sustainable positive transformation on economic and social level**

2. The problematic of local economy (2/2)



Own Illustration

3. A scientific approach to strengthen local economy (1/3)

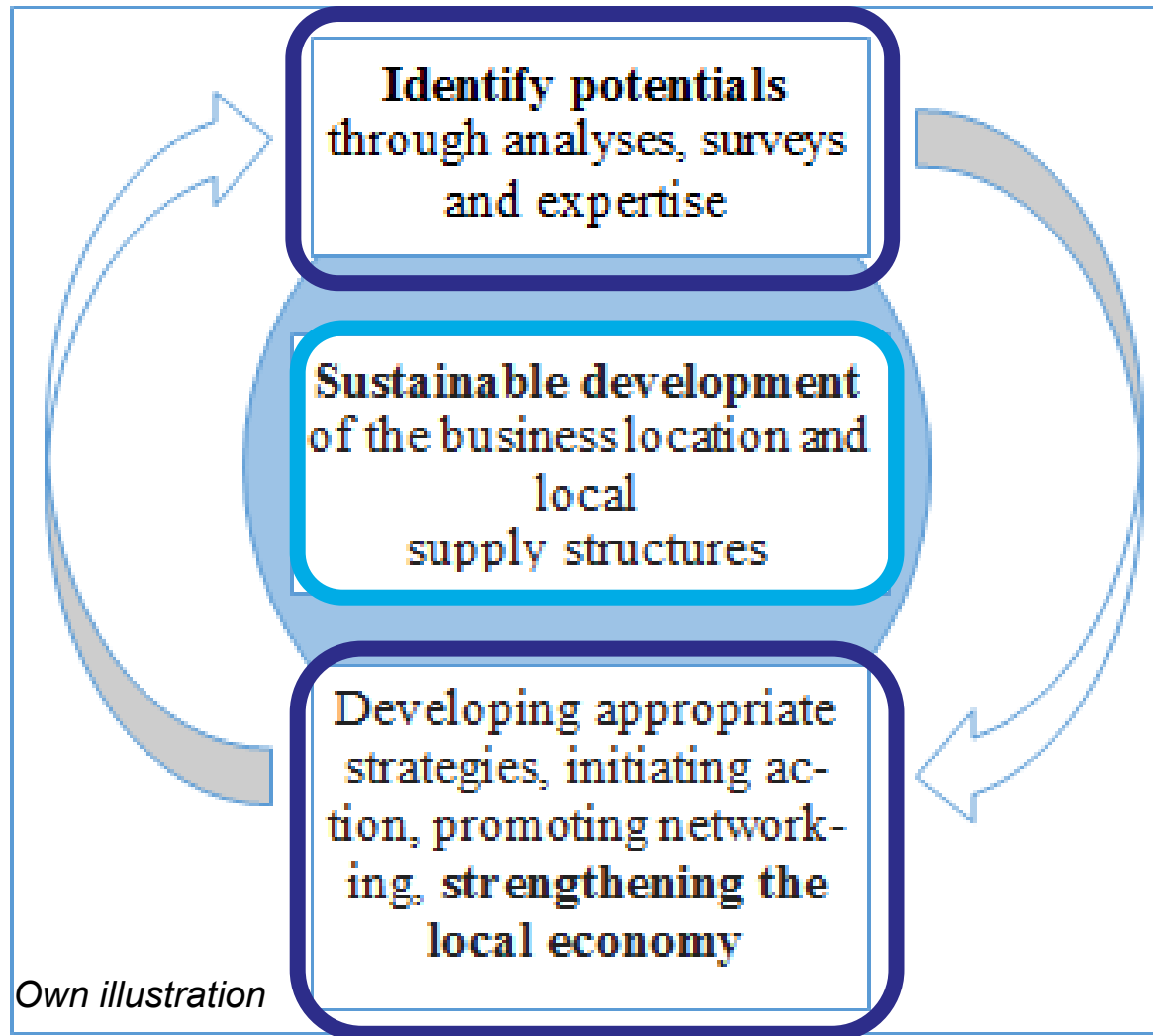


3. A scientific approach to strengthen local economy (2/3)

1. **Interdisciplinarity: deprived neighbourhoods often are „multiple burdend“**
2. **Analysis before action: necessary conditions for initiating concrete measures**
3. **Practice-oriented approach: research should get it´s questions from local actors**
4. **Participation-oriented approach: Measures should be developed in participatory processes and effects should be discussed with local „experts“**

3. A scientific approach to strengthen local economy (3/3)

The Project model used by NIERS and SO.CON



4. Examples (1/3)

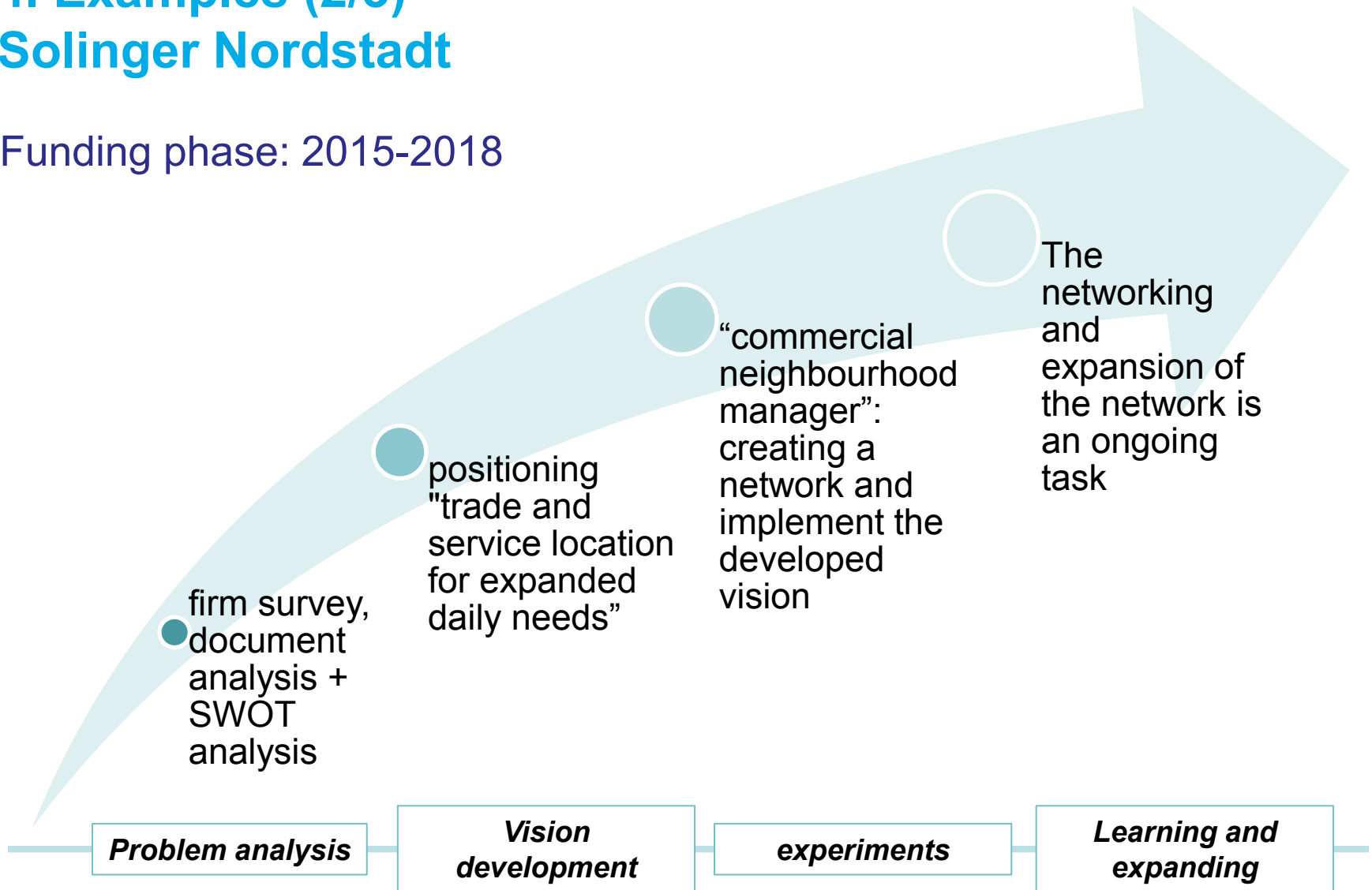


Wikipedia

4. Examples (2/3)

Solinger Nordstadt

Funding phase: 2015-2018



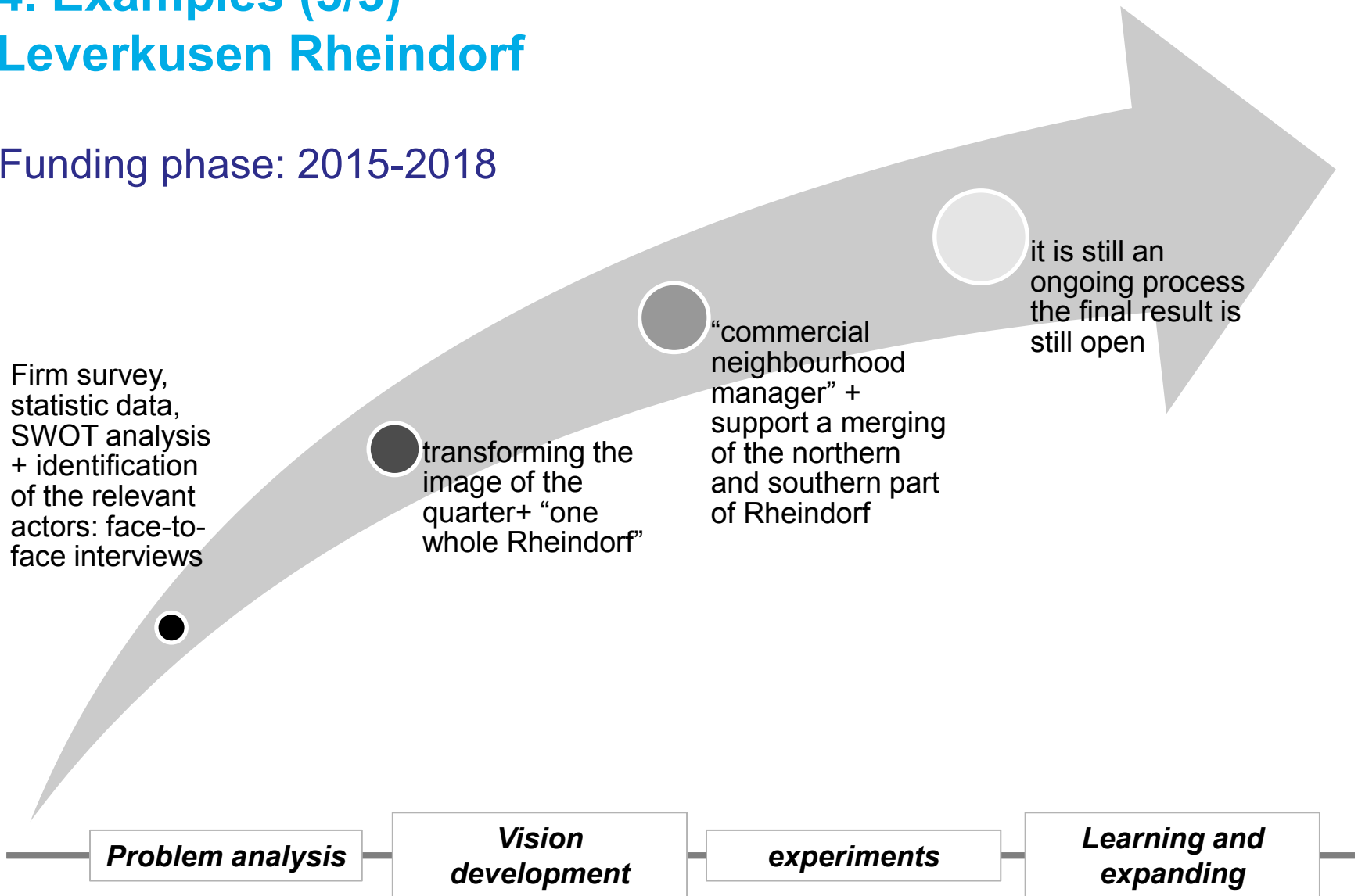
Own Illustration

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4. Examples (3/3)

Leverkusen Rheindorf

Funding phase: 2015-2018



Own Illustration

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5. General Conclusion

- **General trends force structural adaption processes**
- **Neighbourhoods lose their previous functions in city structures and the process of finding new functions usually is a long-lasting and difficult one**
- **This process is accompanied by economic and social problems, ecological and health problems often come on top**
- **Strengthening local economy is an important part of a positive transformation**

5. Conclusion of research/work (1/2)

- **Same model for different quarters leads to a successful approach to strengthen the local economy**
- **The continuous interaction of local participants with an interdisciplinary research team has proven to be a promising concept**
- **Local actors could be motivated to engage and participate in the activities**
- **Measures were a result of co-design and co-production: "bottom-up procedure"**
- **Information and knowledge about the neighbourhood could be improved by the continuous combination of analysis and activity**
- **Neighbourhood differ from each other and so do their problems.**
- **Continuous reflection of scientific methods and selected measures**
- **Finally the individual situation**
 - **could be improved**
 - **their potentials could be identified and strengthened**
 - **an image improving process could be started**

5. Conclusion of research/work (2/2)

- **universities can give impulses for sustainable development**
- **can be seen as a side product of research**
- **In this case universities do not play the role of a change agent for sustainable regional development but they give pinpricks, the higher the number of these pinpricks the higher the effects for regional sustainability.**

BUT:

- **long-term external evaluation would be necessary to properly assess the success of the projects.**
- **it remains open which factors were decisive for the (previous) success in the three projects.**
- **further research is necessary for a better understanding of the determinants for success or failure**
- **Is the improvement for the neighbourhood durable even if funding ended?**

Thank you for your attention!