



Left-behindness contested

An ethnographic exhibition

www.exit-project.eu

Introducing "Left-behindness contested"

EXIT brings together seven universities and four civil society organizations from eight European countries to address socioeconomic inequalities within and between areas often referred to as 'left behind'—a term critically examined by the research. Working closely with communities on the ground, we capture the everyday experiences of people living and working in these areas through an intersectional and participatory approach, exploring how factors such as gender, age, and migration status shape their lived realities.

Using a place-based methodology focused on the local level, we examine seven thematic indicators: social services and health; education; employment; community and social life; housing and environment; mobility; and digital inclusiveness.

The following pictures and quotes provide an overview of the study areas and the data collected during the ethnographic fieldwork; they illustrate how territorial inequalities manifest in the lived experiences of these communities.

The 17 case study areas



Austria: Ternitz; Jennersdorf

Belgium: Marchienne-au-Pont; Couvin

Denmark: Morsø; Frederikshavn

Greece: Acharnai; Pyrgos

Italy: Murano; Gennargentu-Mandrolisai

Serbia: Golubac; Surdulica

Spain: Montcada i Reixac; Catalan Pyrenees; Carabanchel - San Isidro

United Kingdom: Stoke-on-Trent; Rochdale

Ternitz



«My grandpa [being Turkish] didn't speak a word of German, but he had colleagues from Semperit and Schöller Bleckmann [industrial companies] that always gave him a warm welcome. And I felt that as a child. That's why I never felt different as a child, because my family were very active [in the community]. But that has changed»
(Resident)

Golubac



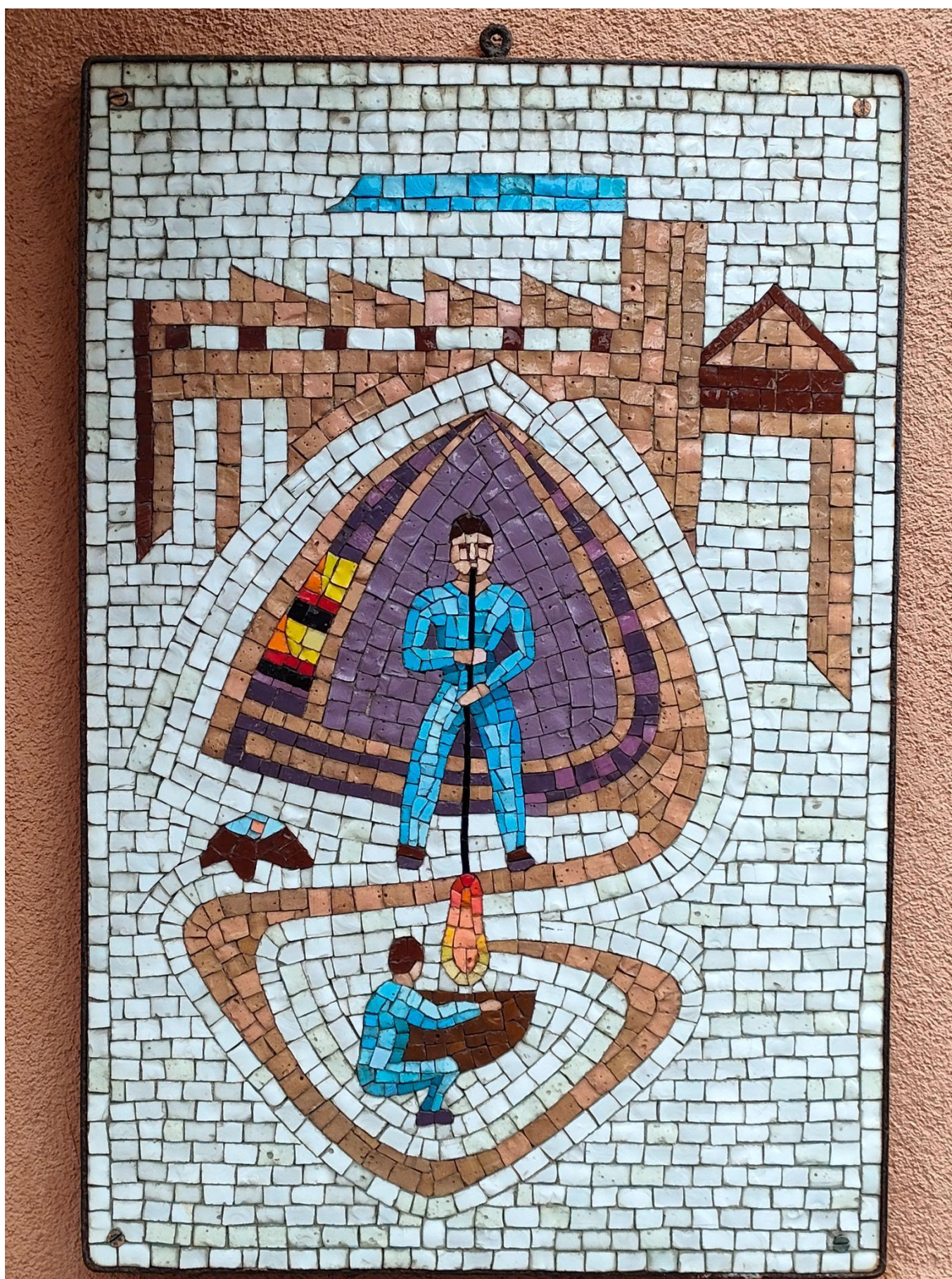
«The EU-funded restoration of the 14th century Golubac Fortress has transformed the area into a major tourist hub, catalyzing infrastructure development and new local income opportunities. However, this rapid commercialization and subsequent real estate boom have escalated living costs and strained the local rental market, per residents and stakeholders alike. Despite these economic gains, the community faces persistent challenges, including environmental degradation and a lack of professional diversification for young people»
(Stakeholder)

Couvin



«The feedback I've had from my uncles who used to work at the Donnay company is that they just closed down and sacked all the employees. Nothing was done to help people find new jobs, they just left them to fend for themselves»
(Resident)

Murano



«Less and less people, especially young people, feel motivated to come here to work with glass. Not only that, but many young people no longer recognise this island as their home. The fact that we're always in contact with the rest of the world makes this island feel more and more isolated every day.»
(Resident)

Carabanchel-San Isidro



«When I celebrated my birthday, I told my friends to park their cars in Marqués de Vadillo because here [in our neighborhood] they smash the windows... Deliveries won't come up here; so, friends leave their cars down there because this is a dangerous area»
(Resident)

Marchienne-au-Pont



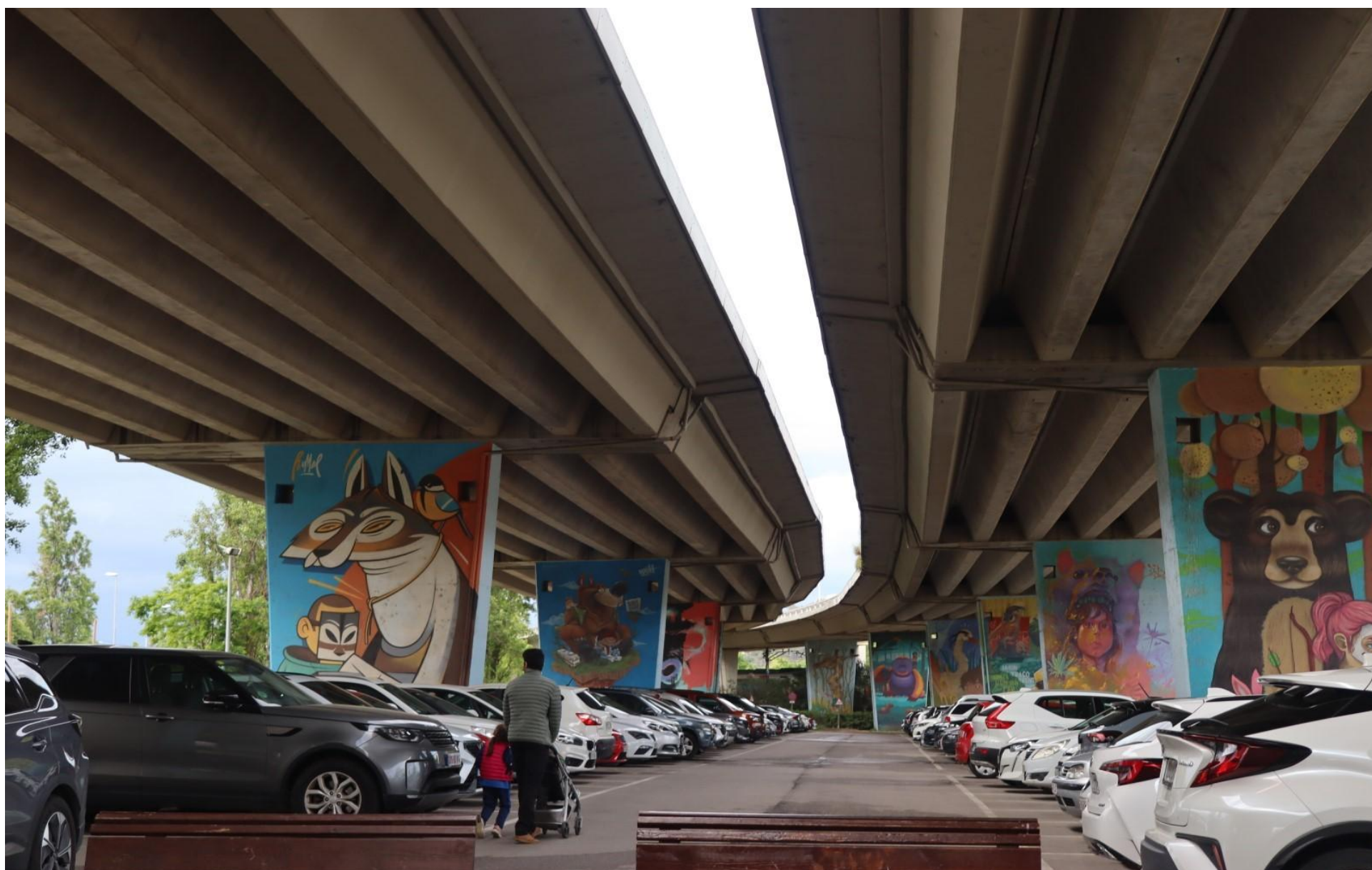
«We need to relocate employment in neglected areas according to the skills available to create local jobs. But it must be designed according to the strengths and specific features of each of the areas making up the metropolis»
(Social worker)

Acharnai



«As soon as we turned 18, we all looked for a way to get our driver's licenses and get a car so we could move around more easily»
(NGO worker)

Montcada-i-Reixac



«Montcada is skewered by infrastructure serving Barcelona [...] and we don't want to be condemned to being a permanent periphery»
(Local journalist)

Gennargentu-Mandrolisai



«Now they call it ‘the green train,’ but it used to be a daily rail line for people and goods. It was suspended because the pool of users shrank and there were no funds for maintenance. The regional transport agency tricked us into believing road transport would replace it, but that never happened»
(Resident)

Pyrgos



«If you see [the city] in the winter, after ten o'clock not even a dog comes out. It's a bit extreme. You say 'I'm in a city, I'm fine' but this is a ghost town»
(Resident)

Morsø



«When I first moved here, I wrote a column about how boring the countryside was. I was a bit provocative because I wrote that ‘nothing happens’ and since it was during COVID, the only excitement was the mail arriving or watching sprouts grow in the field. A local man wrote back: ‘Here in Morsø, we don’t watch the grass grow. We make it grow.’ It hit me because it’s so true.

Since then, I’ve made so much grow; I’ve started a community center and a playground with the help of other parents. We really do make things happen here»
(Resident)

Catalan Pyrenees



«But in a small-town council, there's nothing—you have to fight for it, and nobody gives it to you»
(Social worker)

Frederikshavn



«To counteract the lack of medical staff in town, years ago an independent local builder started knocking on doors and asking, 'If I build a medical house, would you use it?' and everyone said they would. He is the one who built such a house. It started as a private initiative.»
(Resident)

Carabanchel-San Isidro



«I was born here, and I consider this place my home. I see it as a village where you know everyone and where everyone tries to help each other. We have many activities at the neighbourhood association: an urban garden with the participation of about 40 to 50 people, drawing classes, and a food collective to buy local vegetables»
(Resident)

Jennersdorf



«People come here every day just to socialize; there is always someone available for a chat. Our secondhand store is very informal and we all get along. Everyone does everything, so if someone is absent, others simply step in. Our goal is to be economically successful while contributing to society and the environment. Since times are difficult right now, we are trying to bring together the various small associations around us so we can work together to survive»
(Resident)

Catalan Pyrenees



«Behind the discourse of rewilding, there's a huge environmental impoverishment»
(Local government worker and resident)

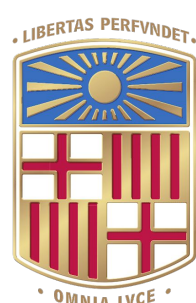
Surdulica



«Many residents see Lake Vlasina as a key chance to revitalize our economy and create jobs. The region's natural assets are incredible but mostly untapped. Investing in eco-tourism, like better sewage systems and promotion, could attract environmentally conscious visitors. However, corruption and political instability deter investors, which limits our ability to diversify. There is also a real fear that new tourism initiatives could accidentally endanger the lake's fragile ecosystem»
(Local government worker)

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