



# **Left Behind Areas: Past, Present and Future of the municipality of Avis (Alentejo | Portugal)**

## **Left Behind for ever?**

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# Conclusion

For some time, disadvantaged territories were referred to as “low density” or “peripheral territories”.

**In particular, since 2008, the term “left behind”** has been used to encompass regions with long-term development delays (largely rural territories), which have suffered from relatively low levels of economic development for many decades.

# Conclusion

**This is the case of the municipality of Avis,** (located in the upper Alentejo - the northern part of southern Portugal) in whose past and present there is evidence that it is a territory “left behind”.

Nevertheless has strengths which have led to initiatives that, while not reversing the condition in which they find themselves, ...

are crucial to improving the living conditions of many of its inhabitants and maintaining some of the mental strength that is essential to encourage a community to fight for its livelihood and to obtain requirements that will guarantee better days.

# Conclusion

Examples of these initiatives are:

the **Avis Nautical Station** and

the **Municipal Strategic Plan for Education,**

Both designed according to the quintuple helix model.

# Conclusion

This brief and partial allusion to the reality currently experienced in the municipality of Avis raises the question of the **future of the territory in the 2040 horizon** (framed by scenarios for the European Union) could present three paths:

- i) more left behind, (worsening);
- ii) less left behind and, (slight improvement);
- iii) not left behind (Clear visible improvement).

**It is likely that one of the first two will occur, ...**

**which raises the question of whether these are territories left behind forever?**

# Conclusion

The challenge facing Avis, then, is:

- **to reinforce local action strategies,**
- **focusing on innovation,**
- **seeking to achieve an intelligent municipality,**

**So that it is possible to retain and attract a population that  
benefits from satisfactory living conditions.**

How did we get here?

# Structure of the presentation

**by taking the following steps:**

1. Problematization and objectives
2. Methodology
3. Meaning of Areas Left Behind
4. The panoramic view in Portugal
5. Characteristics common to Areas Left Behind
6. Local and multi-level strategies and measures identified to improve the situation
7. The case of Avis
8. Conclusion



# 1. Problematization and objectives

## 1.1. Problematization

- ...
- For at least six centuries there have been places where many of the inhabitants considered themselves to be left behind, so they usually left for other places, compromising the demographic and economic sustainability of some territories.
- However, in the territories left behind, there are wills and resources (means), that have made it possible to promote initiatives with favorable effects in sectors that are fundamental to local sustainability.

# 1. Problematization and objectives

## 1.2. Objectives

Will be explained below, one by one.

But first, a brief mention of the methodology adopted.

## 2. Methodology

- The research carried out to achieve the objectives set required a quantitative and qualitative methodological approach.
- Joint critical reflection between the authors of this communication.

*First objective: adapt a definition and specify types of areas left behind, applicable in this research*

## **3. Meaning of Areas Left Behind**

### **3.1. Concept**

**Places negatively affected by austerity, globalization and technological change.**

**It is used as a shorthand for places experiencing decline or stagnation on economic, demographic and social dimensions, relative to more dynamic and prosperous places.**

source: Velthuis et al. (2023)

**NOTE: however, this is not a consensual concept.**

*First objective: adapt a definition and specify types of areas left behind, applicable in this research*

## **3. Meaning of Areas Left Behind**

### **3.1. Concept - II**

The use of the notion 'left behind' in a societal **context is not in fact new.**

**It has been used for decades in social and political discourses as a way of invoking a collective moral responsibility for helping disadvantaged groups and families in society.**

It signals a commitment to ensure that those who are **disadvantaged or marginalised** in some ways are not abandoned or neglected.

Source: Fiorentino et al. (2024a)

*First objective ...*

*types of areas left behind*

### **3.2. According to different regional trajectories of growth and decline from the 1980s until 2017**

a) Post-industrial regions ...

**a) Long-term lagging regions that, compared to their country overall, have had relatively low levels of economic development for many decades. This group is largely composed of rural territories, including key 'left behind' areas.**

a) Regions at risk of falling behind, ... since the 2008 financial crisis.

Source: Mackinnon et al. (2023)

### 3.3. Potential dimensions of Areas Left Behind

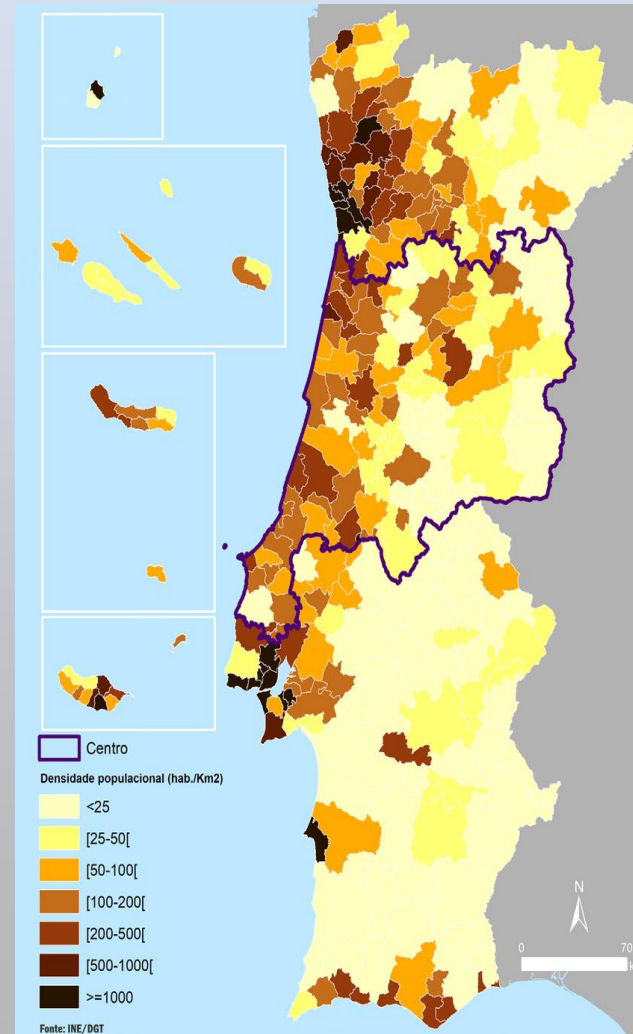
(Seven)

*To be displayed if necessary*

*Second objective: explain where these areas are located in Portugal*

## 4. The panoramic view in Portugal

### 4.1. Spatial configuration (around 60% of the country – light yellow)



Source: Chamusca & Bento-Gonçalves (2023, p. 36)



*Third objective: point out the most significant data that makes it possible to explain the current situation*

## 4. The panoramic view in Portugal

### 4.2. Quantitative and qualitative evidence

**Population density - inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (2021)**

- Portugal: 115,4
- Alentejo: 22;
- Avis: 6,3.

**Ageing index** - number of the elderly aged 65 years and over per 100 individuals younger than 14 years (2021)

- Portugal n.º 182;
- Alentejo: 219;
- Avis: 304,6

**Rate of change in the resident population (2011- 2021)**

- Portugal -2,07%
- Alentejo: -6,97;
- Avis -16,60%

*Third objective: point out the most significant data that makes it possible to explain the current situation*

## 4. The panoramic view in Portugal

### 4.2. Quantitative and qualitative evidence

*To be displayed if necessary*

**Employment rate (2021)**

...

**Unemployment rate (2021)**

....

**Unemployment rate (%) of active resident population aged between 15 and 24 years old (2021)**

...

**Highest completed level of education:**

...

**Illiteracy rate (%)**

...

**Proportion of resident population of foreign nationality (2021):**

...

## 4. The panoramic view in Portugal

### 4.2. Quantitative and qualitative evidence

*To be displayed if necessary*

- Resident population (Portuguese foreign-born) Birthplace (Country):
- ...
- Resident population entering Portugal after 2010 (No.) by Place of residence at Census date [2021] (NUTS - 2013), Reason for entry into Portugal
  - ...

*Fourth objective: describe common characteristics that over several decades contribute to clarifying the situation in which these territories find themselves*

## **5. Characteristics common to Areas Left Behind**

(Six)

*To be displayed if necessary*

*Fifth objective: strategies and measures implemented and, those that should be strengthened in multilevel and local governance, to improve the unfavorable situation exposed*

## **6.1. Local and multi-level strategies and measures identified to improve the situation (EU, Portugal, Regional e Sub regional)**

European Union	Portugal	Regional & subregional
Cohesion policy (delivered through specific funds)	Community Support Frameworks	Regional Operational Programs  Integrated Territorial Development Strategies

*Sixth objective: strategies and measures implemented and, those that should be strengthened in multilevel governance, to improve the unfavorable situation exposed*

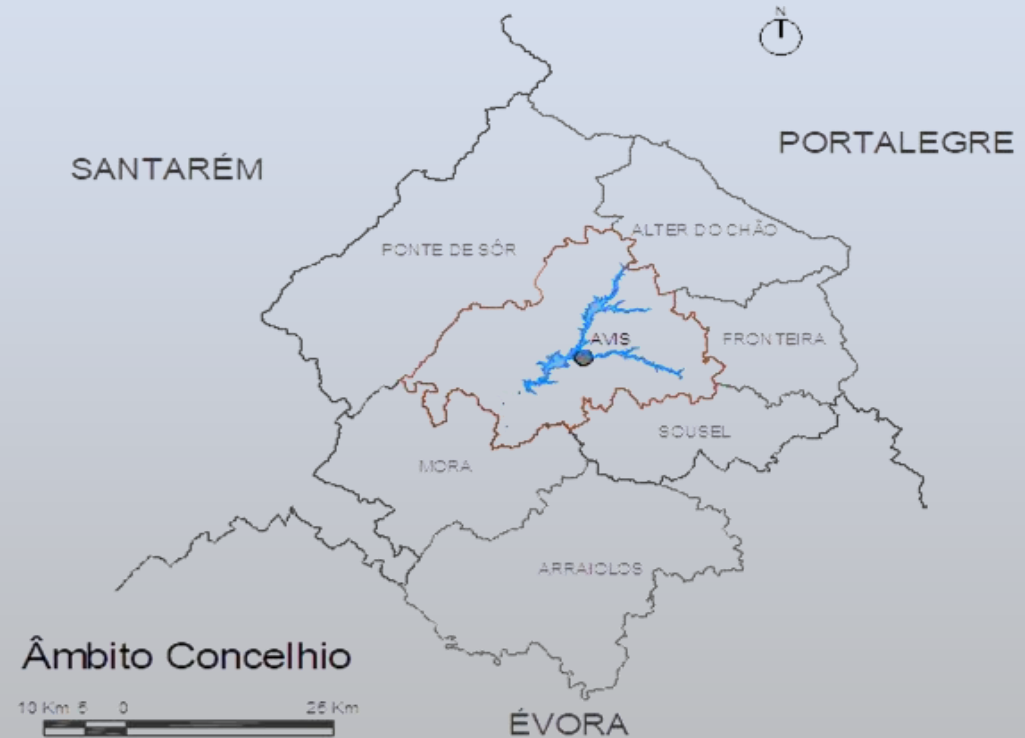
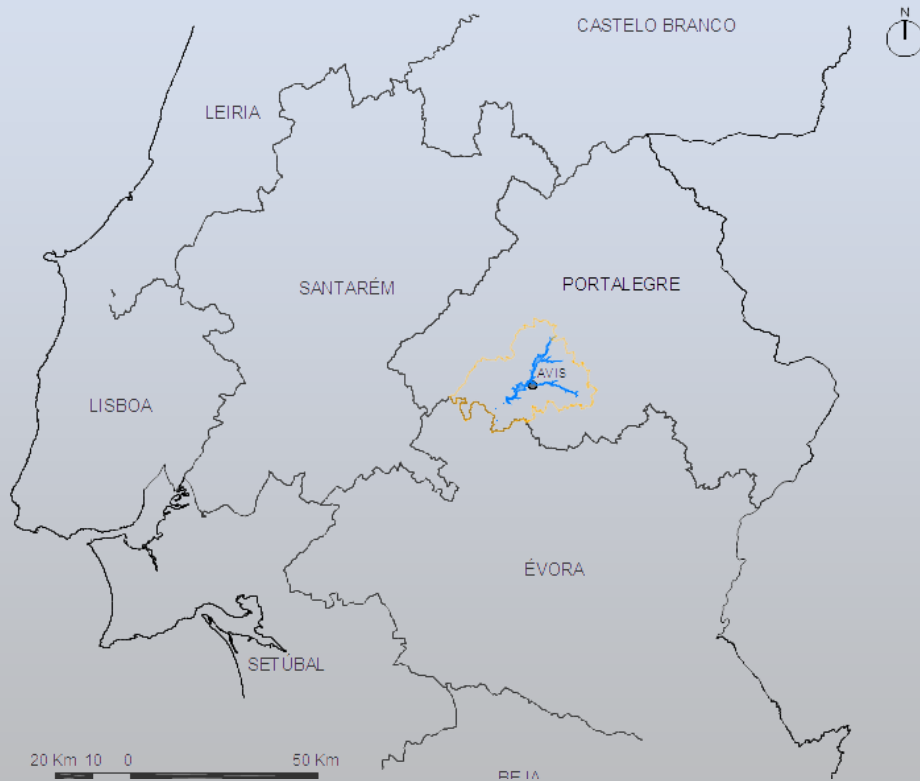
## **6.2. Local and multi-level strategies and measures identified to improve the situation (local)**

**Strategies that local territorial systems need to develop in order to assert themselves in the context that surrounds them:**

1. Place identity (Identity strategy);
2. Place basic improvement (Strategy for basic local improvements);
3. Place product (Local product strategy);
4. Place brain (Strategy to locate “gray matter”);
5. Place synergy (Total synergy strategy);
6. Place buyers (Strategy towards investors and external decision-makers).

# 7. The case of Avis

## 7.1. Brief characterization of the municipality (I)



Avis is a council in Portalegre district. A Municipality with 606 km<sup>2</sup> that is located in the south of the district of Portalegre and borders with Ponte de Sor, Alter do chão, Mora, Fronteira e Sousel.

# 7. The case of Avis

## 7.1. Brief characterization of the municipality (II)

The county has been losing population constantly like the rest of Alentejo. There are six parishes.

Only Avis and 3 rural parishes have school. This has motivated the concentration of people in these places and the abandonment of the rest.

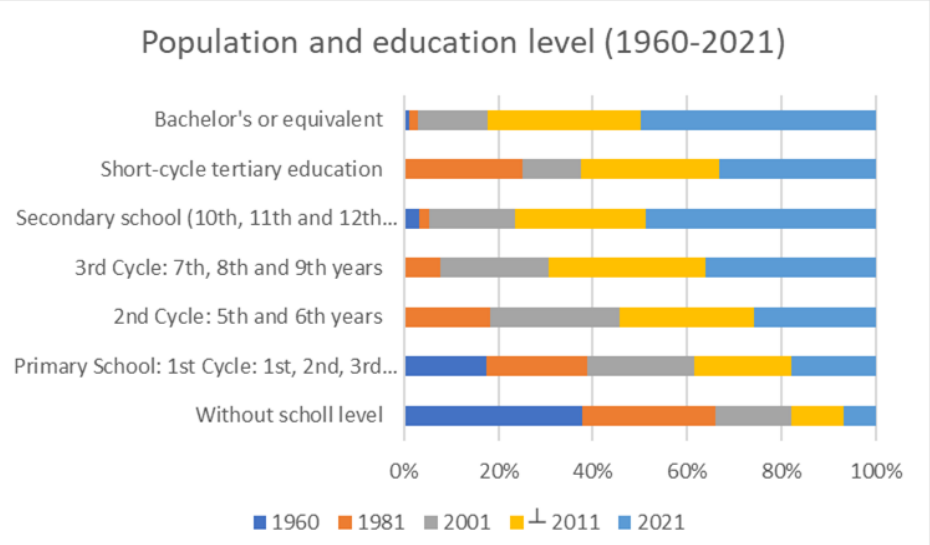


- Since 1970, the **population has fallen successively**
- In 50 years the municipality of Avis has **lost 40% of its population**
- Today, only **20% of the population is under the age of 25**
- The **population aged 65 or over represents 33% (1/3) of the population**
- Between the last census periods (2011/2021), **the population aged 85 and over increased by 1%**
- The **population under the age of 15 has fallen by around 17,5%** in the last 10 years and 50% in the last 30 years



# 7. The case of Avis

## 7.1. Brief characterization of the municipality (III)



In terms of **education**, there was a structural change in the population. In 1960, a significant proportion of the population - 71.2 percent - had no level of schooling, as a result of the living conditions experienced during the Salazar dictatorship.

With the establishment of democracy in Portugal, the population's education level rose and **in the latest censuses, 20.7 percent of the population had secondary education and 9.8 per cent had higher education.** However, **the majority of the municipality's population has only completed the 1st cycle of basic education (primary school).**

The **salary** in this territory is **much lower** than in the country.

Most of the **companies are micro and small enterprises.** There is only one large (foreign-owned) company.

The majority of **workers are employees.**

**Avis has a lower employment rate than Portugal and the Alentejo region.**

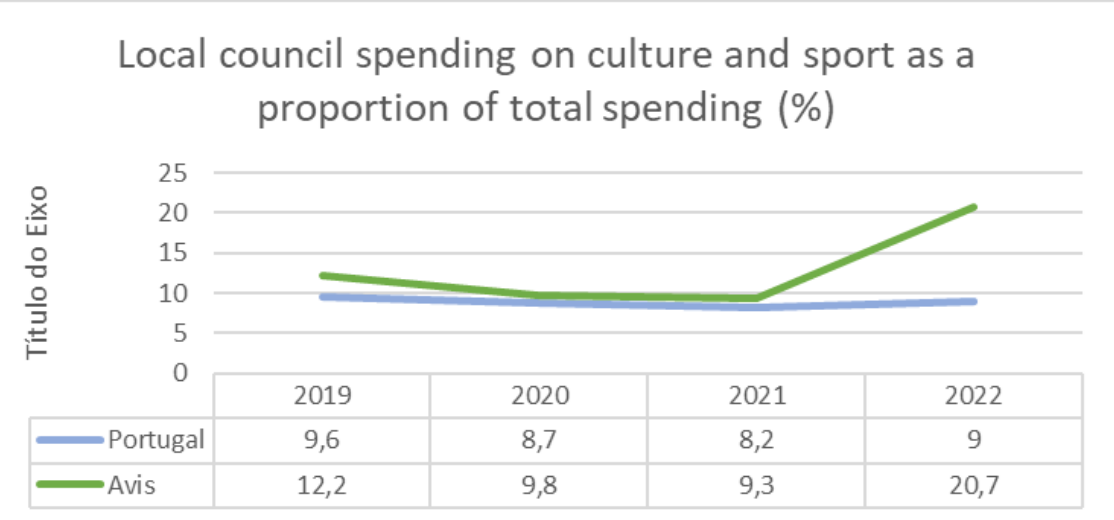
**The unemployment rate is higher than in Portugal and the Alentejo region.**

Territory	Average monthly salary (€)	
	2011	2021
	€	€
Portugal		1289,5
Continental Portugal	1084,6	1294,1
Avis	870,3	1039,7

Source: INE, 2024

# 7. The case of Avis

## 7.1. Brief characterization of the municipality (IV)



Local resources and identity are important assets for boosting the territory, especially in the tourism sector.

In recent years, the municipality of Avis has spent more on culture and sport than the rest of the country.

The construction and maintenance of infrastructures, as well as the development and support for the promotion of cultural and sporting activities (by civil society organisations) are the main reasons for expenditure in these areas.

Year	Avis Expenditure on sports activities and equipment (€)			
	Sports Activities	Sports organisations	Construction and maintenance of venues (including halls and indoor pavilions)	Construction and maintenance of other sports equipment (open-air or with a simple roof)
2013	67.503 €	48.796 €	0 €	0 €
2021	118.422 €	51.937 €	662 €	150.077 €
2022	166.409 €	46.650 €	0 €	1.016.908 €

## 7.2. Structuring initiatives, based on the quintuple helix model - Meaning of quintuple helix

The **Quintuple Helix** can be proposed as a framework for transdisciplinary (and interdisciplinary) analysis, driven by the following **five propellers**, that drive **entrepreneurship**, **fuel innovation and promote development in a territory** that values knowledge as a driving force:

- i) **local governments** that provide the regulatory framework;
- ii) **companies** that transform ideas into tangible products;
- iii) **academic institutions** that provide the knowledge base;
- iv) **civil society** that promotes change and,
- v) **the environment** that provides the essential resources.

Sources: adapted from Carayannis et al. (2012) and Donati et al. (2023)

## 7.2. Structuring initiatives, based on the quintuple helix model



In the last 20 years the municipality has built a set of infrastructures that have **supported the private sector in setting up new businesses.** Currently, the Municipality is carrying out another project that aims to make the place even more attractive and comfortable, allowing use by people with reduced mobility.

## 7.2. Structuring initiatives, based on the quintuple helix model - The Avis Nautical Station

**Avis Nautical Station** is a quality tourism supply network made up of 33 partner organizations and structured into **four working groups**, with the mission of providing:

- **Leisure activities and non-motorized water sports** (to safeguard tranquility) to enjoy the **quality of the environment** and the local culture;
- **Adding value to the region** in order to attract people inland;
- **Ensuring environmental and cultural preservation;**
- **Sustainable economic development;**
- **Attracting people for vacations or short visits.**

Source: Municipality of Avis



## 7.2. Structuring initiatives, based on the quintuple helix model

### - The Municipal Strategic Plan for Avis Education| 2030 (I)

**A model for the Knowledge Society Education for the 21st century - Education for all, Education about everything:**

- In tune with the spirit and letter of fundamental reference texts (supranational and national);
- Based on six founding values;
- Proposed to achieve a mobilizing vision;
- Focused on a clear mission;
- Structured (Operationalized) in three strategic domains and three strategic areas;
- Implemented by a partnership coordinated by Avis City Council (Governance);
- To be implemented through multi-annual Action Plans and annual Action Plans with a light structure and which observe the primacy of vertical coherence (articulated with supra-municipal planning instruments) and observe horizontal congruence (synergies with local intervention instruments).

Source: Municipality of Avis

## 7.2. Structuring initiatives, based on the quintuple helix model

### - The Municipal Strategic Plan for Avis Education| 2030 (II)

#### Vision

- To be an inclusive, innovative and sustainable educational territory, with the capacity and knowledge to respond creatively and responsibly to the challenges of the common good, guaranteeing access and participation for individuals, institutions and other actors.

#### Objectives

- To strengthen interaction and collaborative work between stakeholders in order to promote knowledge of the educational context and facilitate the definition and implementation of common strategies;
- Promote a vision of the future: an inclusive, innovative and sustainable educational territory;
- Strengthen qualifications and training in the region, to meet the challenges of the local/regional economy and the need to attract and retain people;
- Create and develop synergies to boost and consolidate local and regional economic dynamics, in the interests of sustainable development;
- Give visibility to the municipality of Avis as an inclusive, innovative and sustainable educational territory.

Source: Municipality of Avis

## 7.2. Structuring initiatives, based on the quintuple helix model



### **Strategic Documents to the development of the territory**

Municipal Master Plan (PDM)  
Avis Municipal Strategic Education Plan  
Municipal Plan for Equality and Non-Discrimination  
Urban Solid Waste Strategic Plan  
Avis Municipal Climate Action Plan



### **Sports and Culture - strategic goals - material conditions**

Rowing track  
Municipal gymnasium  
Pedestrian circuits  
2 galleries of contemporary art (Partnership)  
1 museum, 2 historical interpretive centres



### **Development the social capital**

Network Nautical Station (Local and regional Government, university, enterprises, local school, civil organizations)  
Sports Training Centres (School, Municipality, Community)  
Avis tem Sabor - gastronomic event (partnership)  
PoesiaAvis - cultural event (partnership)





## 7.3. Actions taken by citizens



**Civil society actors** develop initiatives that promote the territory. Arts, stories and travel have been the driving force behind the city's cultural enrichment, bringing together residents and others in projects with local impact.

**Traveler's Event**  
**Officina Mundi** from artist Joana Villaverde  
**Poesia Avis** with the musician Rodrigo Leão

## 7.4. Medium-term perspectives for the municipality (I)

### Reference Foresight Scenarios of the Global Standing of the European Union in 2040

STORMS	END GAME	STRUGGLING SYNERGIES	OPPOSING VIEWS
This is a world where... societies became more self-centered and retreated inwards, strengthening the role of nations and regional blocs.	This is a world where... economic growth and competitiveness trump well-being and social equality.	This is a world where... there is a strong multilateral determination to fight climate change while sidelining other aspects of sustainability.	This is a world where... society is divided into a regenerative and an exploitative alliance and both try to impose their paradigm.

Source: Vesnic-Alujevic et al. (2023)

## 7.4. Medium-term perspectives for the municipality (II)

**Foresight Scenarios for Avis in 2040 (especially considering the scenarios proposed for the European Union )**

Scenarios	Local responsibilities
<b>More left behind</b> Worsening	Reinforcing local action strategies, focusing on innovation, seeking to make Avis an intelligent municipality, so that it is possible to retain and attract a population that benefits from satisfactory living conditions.
<b>Fewer left behind</b> Slight improvement	
<b>Not left behind</b> Clear visible improvement	

# Conclusion

For some time, disadvantaged territories were referred to as “low density” or “peripheral territories”. **In particular, since 2008, the term “left behind”** has been used to encompass regions with long-term development delays (largely rural territories), which have suffered from relatively low levels of economic development for many decades.

**This is the case of the municipality of Avis**, in whose past and present there is evidence that it **is a territory “left behind”**, which nevertheless has strengths that have led to initiatives that, while not reversing the condition in which they find themselves, are crucial to improving the living conditions of many of its inhabitants and maintaining some of the mental strength that is essential to encourage a community to fight for its livelihood and to obtain requirements that will guarantee better days.

# Conclusion

Examples of these initiatives are the **Avis Nautical Station and the Municipal Strategic Plan for Education**, designed according to the quintuple helix model.

This brief and partial allusion to the reality currently experienced in the municipality of Avis raises the question of the **future of the territory in the 2040 horizon** (framed by scenarios for the European Union) could present three paths:

- i) more left behind,
- ii) less left behind and,
- iii) not left behind.

**It is likely that one of the first two will occur, which raises the question of whether these are territories left behind forever?**

# Conclusion

## ● For ever Left Behind?

The challenge facing Avis, then, is

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- focusing on innovation,
- seeking to achieve an intelligent municipality,

**So that it is possible to retain and attract a population that benefits from satisfactory living conditions.**





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**Thank you for your attention!**

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