



Welcome to the second RELOCAL newsletter

RELOCAL has now been running for over half a year and some important milestones have been reached. The theoretical framework for the project has been developed, and based on this, the manual for our case study research is being drawn up. The case study selection process is also in full swing and the project teams will carry out eight pilot case studies in order to test the practices and processes laid down in the manual for case study research. The full set of 33 case studies will be launched in 2018. Concerning other preparatory work, Work Package 5, led by the Technical University of Delft, delivered a data inventory report on the availability of geocoded longitudinal, individual-level (micro) data with respect to social and spatial inequality. We also spoke with David Simons, director of the Mistra Urban Futures initiative at Chalmers University and an expert on spatiality and spatial justice - his impressions are now posted on our newly created YouTube gallery, along with the opinions of several more researchers and policy makers.

IN-DEPTH Release - RELOCAL Conceptual Framework

Aim of the research

RELOCAL began in late 2016 with the development of the project's conceptual framework. Work started with a critical review of the concepts and models of spatiality, territorial cohesion, spatial justice, sustainable development and solidarity. It evolved through an examination of the links and tensions between these concepts and the concepts and models of regionalism and localism in Europe, so providing a theoretical framework for the rest of the project.

The key questions that the project explores are:

a) *Can spatial justice – understood as a fair and equitable distribution of socially valued resources in space – and the opportunities to use these resources, be achieved through place-based strategies?*

and

b) *Are these achievements place-bound, or can they also be achieved across places and times?*



In other words, the Conceptual Framework is about the relationships within a locality, across localities, and relationships between a locality and higher level European institutions, both now and in the future. These relationships are essential in ensuring spatial justice, and in promoting inclusiveness and participation. Thus we will investigate whether place-based strategies can contribute to spatial justice and democratisation across the EU.

Two key concepts: Spatial justice and locality

The concept of spatial justice closely relates to, and overlaps with, the concepts of territorial cohesion, sustainable development, and the European Social Model. The European Social Model is one of the ways in which the EU pursues its interest in social justice, but the Model does not engage with spatial justice as such. The Territorial Cohesion Policy, with its focus on just distribution across space, would seem to be more closely related to the concept of spatial justice. Both address the more institutionalised forms of social and spatial justice through their emphases on improving some of the systems that could mitigate against oppression, vulnerability and disadvantage. As a distinguishing feature, the concept of spatial justice indicates an equity in social space, integrating five dimensions of justice: social, procedural, distributive, spatial and temporal.

The second key concept of RELOCAL, and one which provides the spatial focus in our empirical investigations, is locality as a nexus of a range of forces that contribute to spatial (in)justice and democratic legitimacy. Localities are not bounded 'containers', but rather porous and interlinked parts of wider contexts. Therefore, RELOCAL adopts a critical and relational approach, analysing the locality from a critical and open perspective through four interrelated dimensions: differential, vertical, horizontal and transversal.



A defining aspect for the definition of spatial justice, is the relationship between procedural and distributive justice. Distributive justice is about identifying the patterns and perceptions of spatial (in)justice, exclusion/inclusion and (in)equality, while procedural justice concentrates on actions and institutions that can combat spatial injustice.

To understand the complex relationships between the distributive and procedural elements of spatial justice, as well as implementing a relational approach to locality, the research framework will comprise a spatial ontology, a relational epistemology, and a mixed methodology.

Spatial ontology: the localities approach

By taking spatial justice as its starting point, the RELOCAL project's key assumption and focus of its empirical data are localities. Localities are the places in which challenges of spatial justice and democratic deficit will be analysed and understood. Such a spatial focus facilitates the investigation of various challenges and responses within given territories, and also in their relation to other places, particularly under conditions of crisis. This would respond to the European Commission call to 'explore the links and tensions between territorial cohesion, sustainable development and spatial justice in Europe in times of crises'.

Relational epistemology

Justice is a comparative concept: it is a process of judgement on the quality of relations between two or more states of affairs. On their own, the number and composition of agents and material objects is not judged to be just or unjust. It is only when they mediate the relations between people and territories, and only in comparison with others, that they find such meanings. (In)justices are produced by power arrangements that make up spatial governance, and which influence the behaviour of actors, access to material goods and services, spatial and social relations, the composition of localities, and whether their relations with other localities subsequently become just or unjust. Relations are therefore the focus of analysis.

Mixed methodology

The local area under investigation does not need to be defined in a strict sense. We are not aiming to draw rigid and final boundaries around particular areas, but see them as flexible definition of a space with porous and potentially changing boundaries. To undertake this investigation, the project will use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods will be used for measuring the substantive dimensions of spatial exclusion/inclusion, and qualitative methods for analysing the experiences of stakeholders, relationships and processes, and the various ways of combating spatial injustice. Investigating the power relations, processes, and the experiences of spatial exclusion and injustice (and the associated responses) will be addressed in qualitative case studies.

The RELOCAL approach

The RELOCAL project will therefore examine the capacity of place-based approaches to deliver spatial justice. By focusing on a spatial ontology, through a relational epistemology and mixed methodology, we will investigate whether spatial justice (seen as fair and equitable distribution in a space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them) can be achieved through place-based strategies, and whether these can be achieved within as well as across places and times.



Through empirical investigations, we will test the implications of the strategic character of place-based approaches.



The conceptual approach to RELOCAL has been developed by University of Newcastle team and is fully reported in Deliverable D1.1, publically available, at www.relocal.eu.

Progressing towards the inception of Case Studies

Conducting fieldwork in 33 case studies forms the empirical core of the RELOCAL project. Thus, the last few months have been used for intensive discussions about how to select these 33 case studies to obtain insightful results – whether striking, surprising or innovative. These discussions were guided by asking: What are the precise research objectives and corresponding questions? How can they be answered consistently among the case studies in 12 European countries? Similarly, debates have arisen regarding the empirical case studies' contribution to the overarching goals of RELOCAL, and to what extent the contributions and their implications depend on the chosen cases.

Partners from the ILS – Research Institute for Regional and Urban Development from Germany, the University of Stockholm, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences/Research Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, and the University of Luxembourg have been working intensely to operationalise the research questions for the empirical work of the project. Intensive discussions among these partners about overlaps and synergies have helped to clarify the main research aims of the case study work. Firstly, with regard to territorial governance structures and practices, particular concerns for the case studies related to procedural justice within localities, and their multi-level and eventually inter-local and/or inter-regional linkages (WP3). Secondly, referring to aspects of the local spatial justice and cohesion policy, the focus is on the role and the potential of localities and their communities to promote social justice in general, as well as the implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy (WP4). Thirdly, considering regional autonomy and spatial justice, the aim is to support the consortium in exploring several dimensions for possible links between local/regional autonomy and spatial justice



(WP7). The upcoming weeks will be used to operationalize those ambitions into case study compatible items feasible for empirical examination, and to create a manual for all those in charge of field work.

In order to decide on 33 cases from among a large variety of intriguing localities across Europe, we have developed a two-step procedure. The first phase is the so-called 'pilot phase' where eight cases are analysed: these pilots have been suggested on the basis of the main ambitions of the project, as well as the local knowledge of the partners responsible for the empirical case study work. Further considerations of welfare regimes, social systems, as well as the larger region's socio-economic background will be included when the final choice is made. An internal workshop at the end of September is to be dedicated to the discussion the choice pilot cases, and similarly as important, the finalisation of the case study manual in regard to how issues are to be researched and documented, and what are the overarching goals and how are they operationalized? Finally, the field work in the pilot cases starts in October 2017 and we are looking forward to seeing the first results. The second phase begins in spring 2018 with the remaining 25 cases.

Alongside these content-wise considerations, further attention has been paid to the conceptual and methodological requirements of cross-national comparative research. We are working particularly on the theoretical and conceptual foundations for cross-national empirical case study work. Our main objective here is to derive scientifically sound minimum requirements for facilitating comparative analyses.

Preliminary work in Nord-Pas-de-Calais

The University of Luxembourg team undertook a one-week exploratory fieldwork in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region in France in June 2017, featuring interviews with local and regional stakeholders around Dunkerque, Lille and the former Mining Basin. The objective was to identify interesting local initiatives, and this will be followed-up more intensively in 2018. UniLux is planning further exploratory fieldwork on the Luxembourg-Lorraine border in September 2017.



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Assembling data for measuring social and spatial inequality

Social and spatial inequality is high on the agenda of policymakers across Europe. Spatial inequality generally refers to differences between geographical locations with respect to characteristics such as income, deprivation, educational attainment, employment and labour force participation. In order to



come to a more complete understanding of patterns of spatial inequality, different geographical scales need to be analysed. This is important because the effectiveness of specific policy interventions directed towards spatial inequality is scale-dependent. Comparing different geographical scales will provide more insight into the extent to which contextual influences of spatial inequality operate on various scales.

Supported with input from all of the participating country teams in RELOCAL, the TU Delft team (The Netherlands) has recently completed an inventory of data that can be used to measure spatial inequality on multiple spatial scales, preferably at the level of individuals.

Since RELOCAL is an international comparative project, the data inventory aimed to assess to what extent international comparisons are possible on the basis of available data. This inventory has revealed large differences in the nature, scale and accessibility of data across various participating countries, which in turn, strongly affects the opportunities for conducting an in-depth analysis of the (changing) patterns of spatial inequality.

In order to be able to reduce spatial inequalities, it is important to understand the relative importance of both individual ('people') and contextual ('place') effects. Individual socio-economic outcomes (such as employment or wages) may result from differences in the characteristics of individuals (such as their education or skills), as well as from differences in contextual/geographical characteristics (e.g. city or rural area, deprived or flourishing neighbourhoods, poor connectivity, etc.). In a selected number of countries participating in RELOCAL, innovative statistical models will be developed and applied, thus allowing for a separation of 'people' and 'place' effects when examining individual socio-economic outcomes over the life course.

Towards the Barcelona Policy Conference

The first of three RELOCAL Project Conferences will be organised in Barcelona in February 2018. The aim of the conference is to discuss the achievements of the RELOCAL project up to that point. This event will also facilitate exchanges with representatives of other research projects funded by the Horizon 2020 Programme. Lastly, this Project Conference will mark the launch of the entire set of 33 case studies, and will be open to interested researchers and policy makers.

Please visit our project website <https://relocal.eu/> for further information.

Interview with David Simon - Mistra Urban Futures

David Simon is director of Mistra Urban Futures at Chalmers University and Professor of Development Geography at Royal Holloway – University of London. His research focuses on development theory, policy and practice; the development-environment interface; cities, urbanization and urban-rural interaction; transport and regional and national development planning.

Professor Simon shared with us his reflections on how processes of place-making can contribute to spatial justice. He pointed out that the main challenge in the effective integration of policies defined at a European level is to coordinate the ways that national, regional and local governments operate on a



local scale. This means compromises that are often difficult for local actors to take on; however, when they manage to do so, then funds can be used more productively. The presence of a 'charismatic' local leader is also crucial, often requiring a person who has the power to organize and coordinate municipal institutions, groups of stakeholders and financial institutions. The purpose is to achieve spatial justice, i.e. that different regions, city neighbourhoods and their inhabitants feel that their needs are being met. Local actors therefore need to ensure an accessibility of services, infrastructure and quality housing that is distributed equally across the territory.

This is the first in a series of interviews with key experts in Europe that RELOCAL is looking to undertake. You can listen to the interview at: [Interview David Simon. RELOCAL H2020](#)



[David Simon at the Barcelona Contemporary Culture Center CCCB discussing Spatial Justice for RELOCAL H2020](#)

RELOCAL meeting in Volos in March 2017

RELOCAL held its second project workshop on 7th - 9th March 2017 in Volos, a coastal port city in the region of Thessaly, Greece. Hosted by the South and Eastern European Development Centre of the University of Thessaly, the two-day workshop with the entire consortium focussed on the contents of the different deliverables. Particular attention was paid to the development of main selection criteria, and to issues of comparability and diversity in the sample RELOCAL cases. The challenge involves dealing with 33 case studies on a multi-scalar basis, aimed at assessing the state of spatial justice across Europe for different territories, and examining how different governance setups facilitate or hamper the improvement of social justice. Altogether, 36 researchers participated in lively discussions from thirteen partner institutions representing thirteen European countries.





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Parallel Activities

Presentation of results regarding data assessment during the 17th Nordic Geographers Meeting

Nordregio presented some preliminary results regarding data assessment & collection, and mapping & spatial analysis of socio-economic disparities at a regional level in a session during the 17th Nordic Geographers Meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden, 18th – 21st June 2017. The presentation's title was "Detecting and visualizing the territorial inequalities across Europe over time" and took place in session "B4:2 Territorial inequalities and territorial cohesion - European dimension". The session was organized by IMAJINE (another project funded by EU Horizon 2020), which provided an opportunity for interaction between the two project teams. IMAJINE adopts a relatively similar approach, with its objective of formulating new integrative policy mechanisms to enable European, national and regional government agencies to more effectively address territorial inequalities within the European Union. However, the IMAJINE project proposes to address the problem of territorial inequalities through an inter-disciplinary and multi-scalar approach integrating perspectives from economics, human geography, political science and sociology, and combining macro-scale econometric analysis and the generation and assessment of new quantitative survey data. This primarily quantitative approach is combined with regionally-focused qualitative empirical case studies from 11 EU member states.

Organizing and participating in a round-table session at the AESOP Annual Congress in Lisbon, Portugal

On Friday 14th July, Estelle Evrard (UniLux team) and Franziska Sielker (University of Cambridge) organized a round-table entitled "Taking stock: does the place-based approach make a difference for regional policy?" at the AESOP Annual Congress 2017 in Lisbon, Portugal. The discussions focused on territorial evidence of positive impacts from place-based policy, as well as interchanging perspectives between researchers and policy-makers (Tobias Chilla, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany; Peter Schmitt, University of Stockholm; Ilona Rauze, ESPON; Nathalie Verschelde, European Commission, DG Regio).





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Presentation of RELOCAL's comparative framework during the AESOP Annual Congress in Lisbon, Portugal.

ILS presented the preliminary comparative framework to generate insights into promoting cohesion and spatial justice in Europe during a session of the AESOP Annual Congress 2017 in Lisbon, Portugal. The presentation on "Comparative Case Study Research in the RELOCAL Project" in the track on "Territorial Cohesion: A multi-scale approach" was well received and prompted discussions on the "minimum requirements" for a sound approach to comparative research.

Creating bridges with Estonia's University of Tartu

Martiene Grootens, Marie-Curie research fellow at the University of Tartu, Estonia, visited the Department of Geography at the University of Luxembourg from 25th - 28th of July 2017. Her research deals with the role of local public leaders in peripheral regions in both Estonia and the Netherlands. This meeting enabled bridges to be established between RELOCAL and a research project on new patterns of regional disparities in Central and Eastern Europe (FP7 ITN RegPol2, <http://www.regpol2.eu/>).

RELOCAL multimedia stream channel

The [RELOCAL H2020 YouTube channel](#) is a compilation of multimedia resources dealing with spatial justice actions both in Europe and across the world. The main purpose of the channel is the identification of interesting initiatives, discussion groups and opinion-forming institutions. The researchers mostly deal with how European Funds (such as ESF, ERDF) are deployed and how they impact on communities across Europe, and enable things such as bottom-up governance initiatives, peer-to-peer creation mechanisms, multi- and trans-disciplinarity, open innovation, capitalising big data for the common good, and emerging city models.



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Interview David Simon
44 visualizaciones · Hace 2 meses

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Follow up activities

- 21st - 22nd September 2017 – *Kick-off meeting Pilot Case Studies in Dortmund*: Internal meeting to present the manual to guide empirical case study research in the RELOCAL project.
- Winter 2018 – Project Conference in Barcelona

Who's RELOCAL?



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