

A photograph of a wooden desk with several papers, a pen, and a computer mouse. A semi-transparent grey box with white text is overlaid on the papers.

Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development

Welcome to the third RELOCAL Newsletter

RELOCAL is now in its third year and some important milestones are coming up. The research on 33 case studies from 12 EU countries is ongoing and will be published in the next few months. The cross-case comparative analysis starts in April 2019. The research process takes a qualitative approach based on interviews with stakeholders from different territorial and policy levels, for their engagement with regards to the RELOCAL hypothesis; *processes of localisation and place-based public policy can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment of the localities*.

The second RELOCAL Project Conference called "The Role of the Local in Improving Cohesion and Spatial Justice: integrating place-based with top-down approaches to local development", will take place on 7th March 2019 in Lodz Agency for Regional Development and will be hosted by the Department of Regional and Social Geography, University of Lodz, Poland. Scholars, practitioners and policy makers are invited to share their conceptual or empirical findings as well as their practical experience on identifying policies promoting spatial justice and socio-economic well-being at various levels of governance.

Highlights from RELOCAL Case Studies

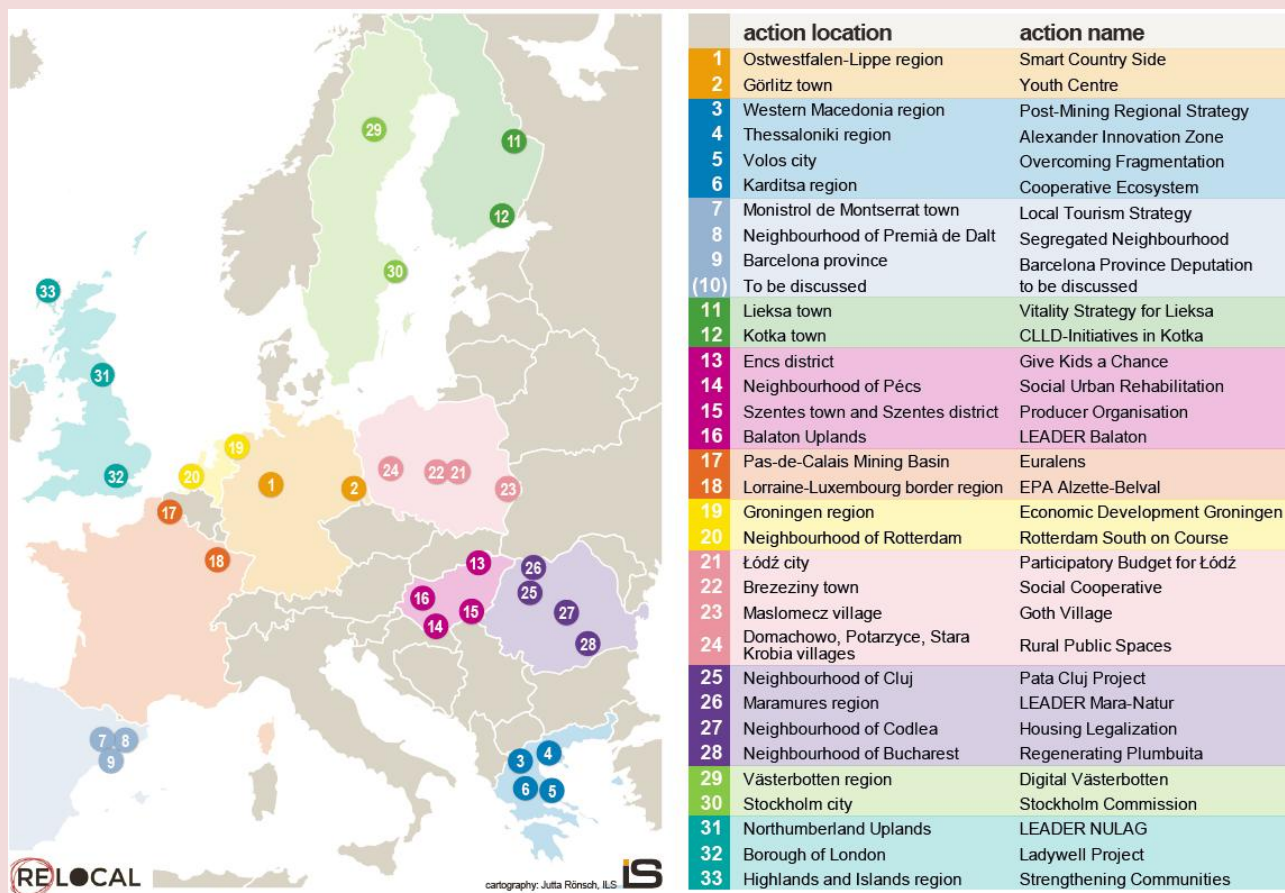
33 case studies, conducted in 12 EU countries, form the core component of empirical research in RELOCAL. Cases are actions, ranging from bottom-up civil society initiatives to the implementation of national development programmes, in localities presenting development challenges. They have been chosen as innovative, sometimes surprising, examples of efforts to combat spatial injustices as well as inter- and intraregional inequalities.

The research process takes a qualitative approach with the main focus being on interviews with stakeholders from different territorial and policy levels. The main aim of stakeholder engagement is to discuss the central RELOCAL hypothesis, stating that *processes of localisation and place-based public policy can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment*.

After a careful selection of cases in Barcelona, in February 2018, research in all 33 cases has started and will last until March 2019. At the project meeting in Budapest in October 2018, the preliminary results of 18 cases have been reviewed and discussed in more detail. Hence, while it is still too early to make definite statements on research outcomes, the exchange between



research teams has shown that there exists a variety of common themes and inputs for discussion. These will be taken up and investigated in-depth in the next project phase, the cross-case comparative analysis starting in April 2019.



The cases show that spatial justice relates to different central policy areas and is thus regarded from different angles. For example, in the Greek case 'Post-Mining Regional Strategy' and the French-Luxembourgish case 'Alzette-Belval', spatial justice is closely related to finding new paths for sustainable local development. Particularly in post-industrial regions, the challenge remains to set-up framework conditions allowing the emergence of local initiative in capacity to tackle territorial inequalities while preserving industrial heritage and local identity. In the Hungarian and Romanian cases, on the other hand, the role and relevance of housing policies in the chosen localities on processes of segregation and spatial (in)justice is of critical importance.

A major emphasis in the analysis will be to question how communities organise themselves in order to 'make a difference' in the locality. Many cases point towards the value of networking and collaboration, both vertically and horizontally: whether already existing projects join efforts to strengthen their region as in the Greek 'Cooperative Ecosystem' or one organization assembles a variety of small-scale projects under its lead to enhance their impact as in the German 'Youth Centre'. Furthermore, with respect to the procedural component of spatial justice, new ways of local governance and the question of how policy makers perceive spatial justice to be best achieved in a locality are of importance. Such 'experimental local governance' is amongst others the subject of the 'Stockholm Commission'. Policy coordination, conceptualised as horizontal or vertical coordination, is regarded as a relevant asset in having a substantial impact on the long-term spatially just development of a locality.

At the same time, one of the key questions in the RELOCAL project, to which case study analysis seeks to provide answers, is: in how far can the researched actions go beyond small-scale and short-term improvements and prevent increasing spatial injustice? Observations from the cases point to several aspects here, which call for further analysis. Often, actions are restricted to a funding period and not continued due to the lack of financial resources, elections, or other political changes. Many of the studied cases have been initiated as part of a particular political agenda. The question here is how successful actions can sustain and potentially grow independent from changing political interests and rationalities. At the same time, this discussion relates to a broader question about the coordination of the action in the locality between different local stakeholders. In one of the Hungarian cases, for example, a non-governmental organization has been taking over municipal tasks. While the organization might serve as an important intermediary between the citizens and the municipality, this arrangement also brings about issues of legitimacy.

With regards to the implementation of actions, researchers indicate that they are often limited by higher level structures and requirements. These might range from overly bureaucratic structures to a lack of place-based knowledge. Particularly EU funded projects deal with complex administration, which, as the case of LEADER in the UK indicates, might prevent already marginalized people from applying for funding.

These observations would strongly support the aforementioned RELOCAL hypothesis that an increased attention towards place-based policy would lead towards greater spatial justice. At the same time, the abovementioned French-Luxembourgish case shows that some actions might actually benefit from proactive intervention from the state (e.g. 'taking back' planning competences while bringing know-how and funding in a specific area). Most probably, in the analysis a differentiated picture will eventually emerge, taking into account the specific context and nature of the actions under study.

We are looking forward to provide you with insights into the final results of our case studies in the next Newsletter!

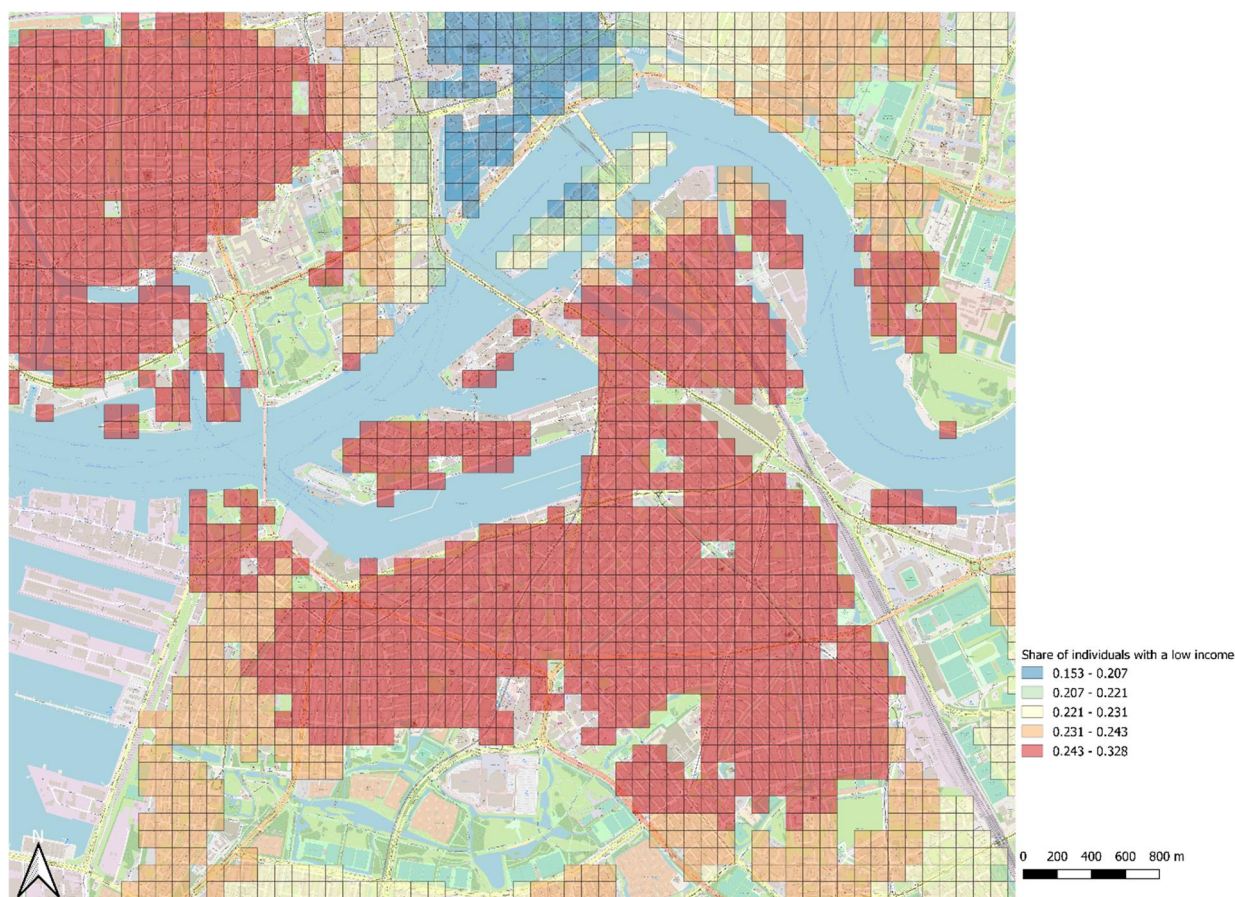
Egohoods – Multi-scalar Patterns of Inequality

In the EU, spatial inequality is often conceptualised as regional inequality, and as a consequence it is measured at the level of NUTS-2 or NUTS-3 EU regions. Such measures show a large variation in income between European countries and also within countries. At the same time, measuring inequality at this large geographical scale hides variations prevailing at lower levels from metropolitan areas and cities to neighbourhoods and even streets. The within-region scales of inequality can be much more pronounced than between-region scales, and they can be crucial in understanding the socio-economic outcomes of individuals. To get a closer insight into the exposure of individuals to concentrations of poverty and their experiences of inequality, it is important to measure spatial inequality at multiple geographical scales, using methods that do not depend on predetermined regions. The latter is important because the efficiency of specific policy interventions directed towards spatial inequalities is scale-dependent and hence it should be based on well-defined and meaningful measures of spatial variation in living conditions.

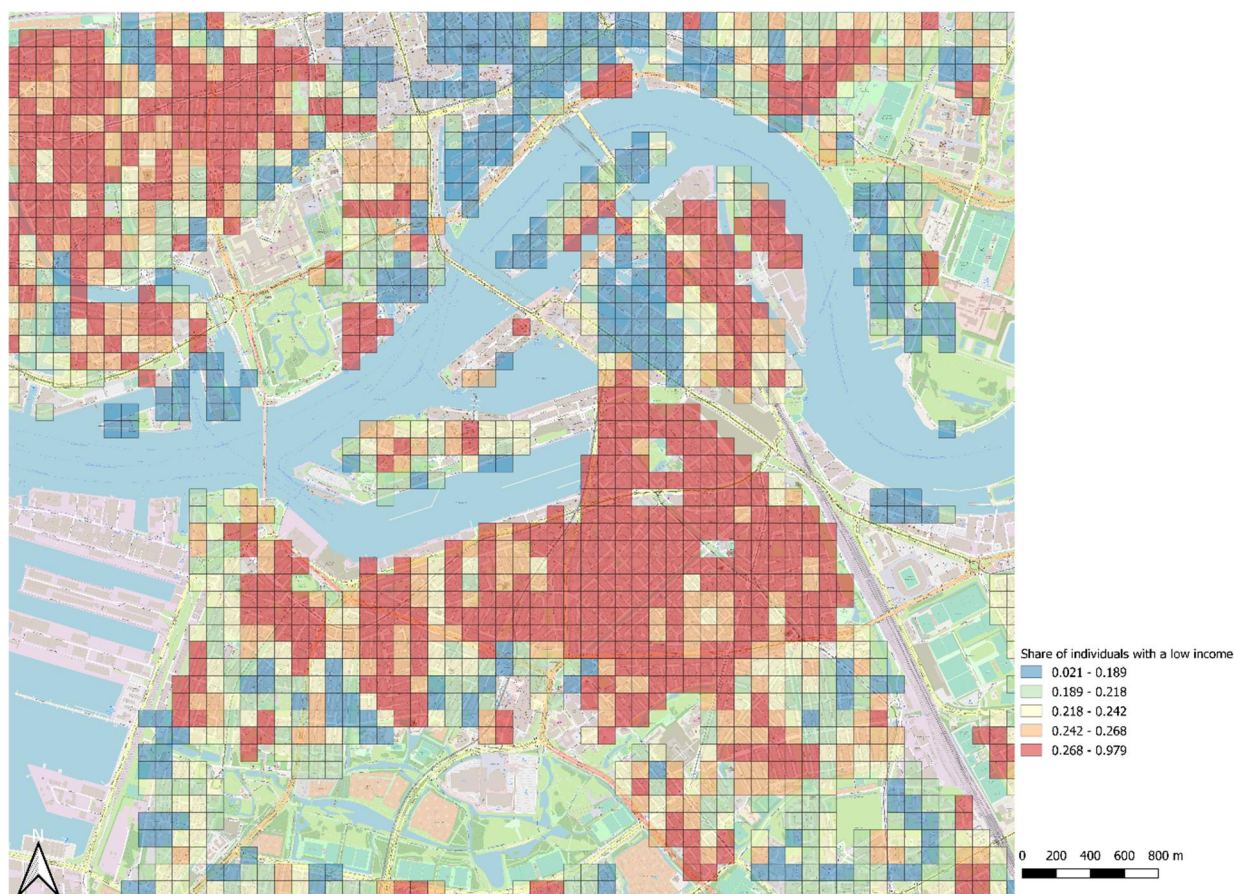
One of the objectives of RELOCAL project, through the *Report on multi-scalar patterns of inequalities (by TU Delft)*, is to demonstrate how standardized tools can be used for the analysis of patterns of spatial inequality, and how such tools can be applied to different types



of geographical data in different countries. By using the 'nearest neighbours' method, it is showed patterns of spatial inequality at different spatial scales in a cross national comparison for Finland, Sweden, The Netherlands, England and Scotland, and how these patterns differ by geographical scale. Comparing the patterns of spatial inequality at the lowest spatial scale across Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands, it is found the highest level of segregation can be observed in Finland, and the lowest level of segregation can be observed in the Netherlands. A possible explanation for this is the large social housing sector in the Netherlands, with social housing available in a large proportion of neighbourhoods. This indicates that even more affluent people are likely to live in relative close proximity of low income households in social housing.



Share of individuals with a low income in Rotterdam Zuid for $k=51,200$



Share of individuals with a low income in Rotterdam Zuid for $k=200$

With regard to the case studies, these 'social frontiers' might be particularly interesting as these are the areas in which individuals most likely experience spatial inequality in their direct residential environments.

This article is based on Janssen, H. J., & Van Ham, M. (2018). D5.2 Report on multi-scalar patterns of inequalities. Read complete report [here](#).

Key Messages from Special Session "Disparities & Sustainability in Europe"

RELOCAL's researcher Patricia Melo (ISEG-UL) co-organized a special session on "Disparities and Sustainability in Europe" to promote discussion of recent work on the topic. There were two parallel sessions and eight presentations, including RELOCAL-based work and other work beyond the RELOCAL project.

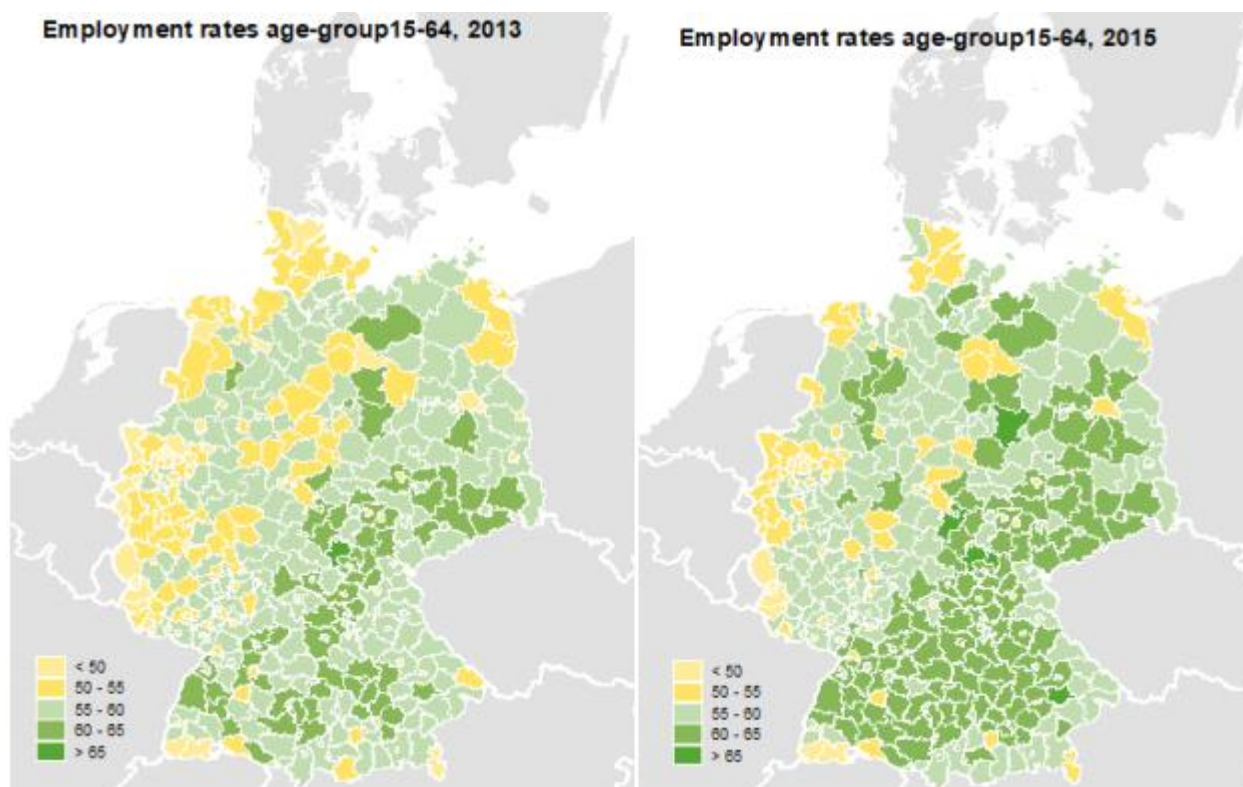
The work presented at the two sessions addressed issues of regional convergence and spatial justice taking EU's Cohesion Policy as a political and social background to the analyses and discussions.

Findings from RELOCAL's WP2 (Mapping patterns of inequality and change) were presented by our colleagues from Nordregio, and covered a wide range of data on inequality patterns across Europe's NUTS2 and NUTS3 regions. Other work presented included the analysis of the spatial effects of EU cohesion policy in Bulgaria, the relation between fiscal decentralization and inequality for Romanian regions, and the evolution of convergence in the EU using NUTS3-level data. For more details on the programme and the presentations, please follow the link:



<https://relocal.eu/special-session-on-disparities-and-sustainability-in-europe-in-the-58th-ersa-congress/>

Overall, the findings from the presentations painted a mixed picture of patterns of convergence across space and over time, with considerable progress observed for Eastern European regions. There was also an interesting discussion on the relation between fiscal decentralization and regional inequality, and how this agenda strengthened after the financial and economic crisis of 2008.



Employment rate age-group 15-64, by NUTS3 region, 2013 and 2015, Germany. NORDREGIO, 2018

Coming up, RELOCAL Conference on the “Role of the Local in Improving Cohesion and Spatial Justice”, in Lodz, Poland. March 7th 2019

The second RELOCAL Project Conference “**The Role of the Local in Improving Cohesion and Spatial Justice: Integrating place-based with top-down approaches to local development**” will take place on 7th March 2019 in Lodz Agency for Regional Development and will be hosted by the Department of Regional and Social Geography, University of Lodz, Poland.

The conference intends to provide the debate on contemporary approaches to local development addressing the challenge of socio-economic and territorial cohesion by emphasizing the role of place and territory, and their specific assets. One of the main aims of the conference is to make a room for joint discussion of representatives of related, ongoing or already finalized projects funded by European Commission Programs. Results of this discussion will be taken forward to shape the further work of the RELOCAL Project.

Scholars, practitioners and policy makers are invited to share their conceptual or empirical findings as well as practical experience on identifying policies promoting spatial justice and socio-economic well-being at various levels of governance.



Updated information about the Project Conference will be published on relocal.eu



From Schengen to Schengen: Art-research dialogues around a performance on the Luxembourg border

For some, borders are easily crossed, for others they are symbols of exclusion. By physically exploring the border, one questions it...

These prerequisites have laid the ground for the performance of the artist Clio Van Aerde who has been exploring on foot the exact layout of the border between Luxembourg and Germany, Belgium and France in June and July 2018, starting from and arriving to Schengen. While conducting her artistic research, she also developed a partnership with Estelle Evrard and Cyril Blondel, geographers at the University of Luxembourg. They have accompanied the artist on her walk at several occasions. Together, they have held two public talks before (at the Mudam, Museum of Modern Art in Luxembourg) and after the performance (in the Café l'entr'pot in Audun-le-Tiche, France).

This continuous art-research dialogue appears as a fruitful tool to reflect on each other's research object. First, the discussions dealt with questions such as: how borders are enacted, how are they perpetuated? Then, the dialogue helped comparing the ways the border is thought and investigated in art and research. Currently, the trio understands this cooperation as a way to reflect on their respective research and artistic approach. A common article is currently under preparation.

This cooperation takes place in the framework of the RELOCAL case study at the Lorraine-Luxembourg border that explores the underlying mechanisms shaping disparities in this borderland. The research investigates in particular whether initiatives of local development represent a leverage for tackling disparities and spatial injustice in border areas.





JSSJ – Justice Spatiale / Spatial Justice Call of Papers

The RELOCAL members, Cyril Blondel & Estelle Evrard, from University of Luxembourg, coordinate the JSSJ issue about local autonomy and spatial justice, directly connected to RELOCAL project. They have launched a Call for Papers **“Territorial development + local autonomy = spatial (in)justice?”**, open to everyone who wants to submit an article by mid-February 2019 in English or in French about this topic. JSSJ – Justice Spatiale / Spatial Justice is a peer-reviewed, open access and bilingual journal of critical geography (www.jssj.org). The articles are published both in English and French.

This call for papers intends to critically question the links between local autonomy and spatial justice in the context of territorial development policies that aim to strengthen the room for manoeuvre conferred on the local. In particular, this call invites contributions presenting concrete examples of application of or resistance to these policies. The envisaged policies and programmes are, in particular, those set up since 2000 by large international, supra-regional and/or national organisations targeting peripheral, semi-peripheral (but also their inner peripheries) territories and/or for the benefit of minorities.

The objective is to focus on what policies that could be described as development policies empowering the local produce in terms of spatial justice from the point of view of social sciences (geography, sociology, anthropology) and from the local (i.e. based on field work, not only urban).

Budapest workshop on Case Study cross-analysis

The RELOCAL consortium met on the 9th – 10th of October in Budapest for a two day workshop aimed at discussing insights and key messages of the first 18 Case Studies already available. The activity was organised so that discussions would cross-fertilise partners in the elaboration of other case studies and simultaneously, they would assist the group in identifying common findings and concerns that will represent a departing point for prospective thinking in scenario elaboration during 2019.





First RELOCAL Project Conference 2018

The first **RELOCAL** Project Conference was on 15th February in Barcelona. The University of Barcelona hosted our first conference, where twin projects as **IMAJINE** "Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe" and **COHSMO** "Inequality, urbanization and Territorial Cohesion: Developing the European Social Model of economic growth and democratic capacity" participated explaining their own experiences about the conceptual framework, methodological background and the dissemination processes of the projects.



Firstly, each project presented the conceptual framework developed at first stage of the project and the connections of them with the definition of spatial justice. Ali Madanipour (RELOCAL), Michael Woods (IMAJINE) and Hans Andersen (COHSMO) described the concepts identified for the development of each project.





The second panel discussion was about methodologies and data used for the analyses of spatial justice across Europe. Sabine Weck from RELOCAL explained the cases study approach of the project (download PPT), meanwhile Ana Viñuela from IMAJINE presented the methodology used for the analyses of territorial inequalities in Europe. Heleen Janssen finalised this slot of discussion with the presentation of an “Egohoods” approach for dealing with scale barriers in the analysis of territorial inequalities in the RELOCAL project.

Finally, there was a debate among all projects about how the projects deal with “impact” and how “measuring this impact”, explaining the main tools used in the dissemination process for maximizing its impact. The open debate among projects let to create new synergies for future works.



Follow up activities

- 5-6th March 2019 – RELOCAL Project Workshop in Lodz, Poland
- 7th March 2019 – 2nd RELOCAL Project Conference in Lodz, Poland
- 9th-13th July 2019 – RELOCAL Special Session on “The role of the local in improving cohesion and spatial justice “ at the AESOP Annual Congress 2019 in Venice, Italy

Who's RELOCAL?



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Project Coordinator	University of Eastern Finland
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