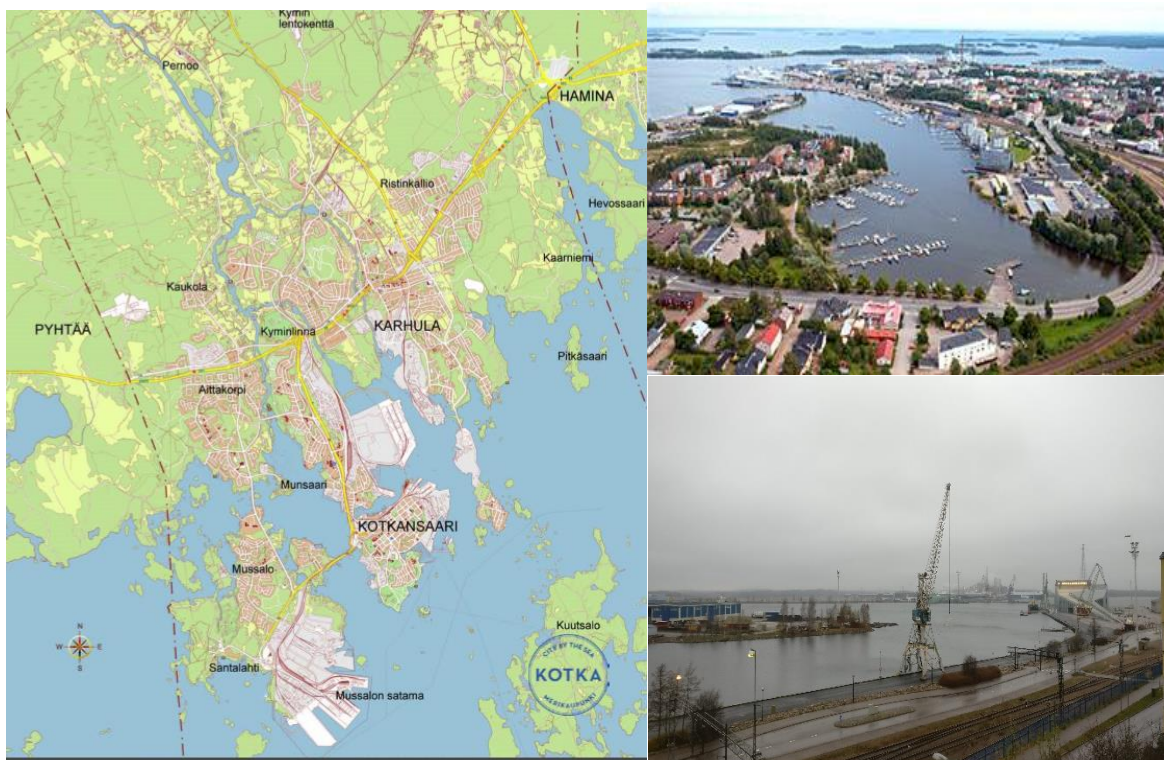




Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development



Case Study Report

Civil-Action-Based Local Initiative for the Activation of Youth in the City of Kotka

Finland

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Report Information

Title:	Case Study Report: Civil-Action-Based Local Initiative for the Activation of Youth in the City of Kotka, Finland (RELOCAL Deliverable 6.2)
Authors:	Matti Fritsch, Patrik Hämäläinen, Petri Kahila, Sarolta Németh (in alphabetical order)
Version:	Final
Date of Publication:	29.03.2019
Dissemination level:	Public

Project Information

Project Acronym	RELOCAL
Project Full title:	Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development
Grant Agreement:	727097
Project Duration:	48 months
Project coordinator:	UEF

Bibliographic Information

Fritsch M, Hämäläinen P, Kahila P and Németh S (2019) *Civil-Action-Based Local Initiative for the Activation of Youth in the City of Kotka, Finland*. RELOCAL Case Study N° 12/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

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Abbreviations

CLLD	community-led local development
EC	European Commission
EFRD	European Fund for Regional Development
ELARD	European LEADER Association for Rural Development
ELY Centre	Finnish Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. Carrying out central government tasks in the regions.
ENRD	The European Network for Rural Development
ESIF	European structural and investment funds
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LAG	Local Action Group (in LEADER)
LEADER	EU programme ' <i>Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale</i> ' (Links between actions for the development of the rural economy)
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OP	Operational Programme
SGI	Services of General Interest

Executive Summary

Background

Kotka is a medium-sized city located on the Gulf of Finland about 130 km east of the capital Helsinki. It is part of the NUTS3 region of Kymenlaakso. The key industries in the city have traditionally been the forest industry and the international port. Structural changes in those branches, amplified by recessions in the early 1990s and from 2008 onwards, have led to growing levels of unemployment, including increasing long-term and youth unemployment. This has led to challenges with regard to social and spatial justice in the city. In Finland, in a national comparison, Kotka shows significant levels of 'unwell-being' of groups of residents and neighbourhoods (social marginalisation). This 'unwell-being' includes higher levels of morbidity, substance abuse, mental health problems, which in turn have negative impacts on the overall atmosphere, self-esteem and external perception of Kotka and which also show spatial concentrations in the city.

Against this background, civil society organisations, with the backing of the City, decided to use the 'Community-led local development (CLLD) component' of the Finnish Structural Funds Operational Programme Priority 5, supported by European Social Fund (ESF), for strengthening their co-operation for the benefit of disadvantaged groups of society in Kotka. This initiative was led by the LEADER association in charge of the surrounding rural areas of southern Kymenlaakso. After preparing an Action Plan for Civil Society Based Development in Kymenlaakso 2014-2020, two consecutive ESF-funded projects have been carried out since 2015.

Findings

The thematic focus of the projects carried out overall responds well to a) local needs with regard to social inequalities (focusing on young unemployed) b) the expectations laid down in OP Finland Priority 5 funded by the ESF. An important value added by the action lies in its role as an additional platform for collaboration and co-ordination between different third sector organisations and stakeholders for the benefit of their respective target groups. As such, it functions as a sort of integrative force that brings together different fields of activities by the third sector and their target groups. This is important in terms of resource sharing and bringing together local knowledge. However, the activities appear to lack several elements of the CLLD approach as put forward by the European Union (Common Provisions Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013), especially that CLLD should be "carried out through integrated and multi-sectoral area-based local development strategies". The Action also does not, and does not aim to, utilise citizen participation for the enhancement of local decision-making for the purpose of making it more place-based. As such, it cannot serve as an example of a new mode of governance, something that itself empowers local government with local resources and expertise. However, we have to bear in mind that this Action, as other similar projects, appears to be embedded in the existing governance and management structures of the City of Kotka.

Outlook

With continued funding, the Action is likely to continue to have a positive impact on inter-organisational co-operation and learning between the third sector organisations active in the field of youth (unemployment), the disabled and integration of migrants. These collaborative structures are also likely to be sustained by the actors themselves following the current project's end.

However, the funding and implementation framework set especially by the national level significantly limit what can be done and achieved in urban CLLD actions in Finland with regard to a) the integration of sectors, b) new and broad-based forms of participation and c) using CLLD actions as a new and innovative input for local and regional decision-making. These constraints are aspects also visible in the examined Action at hand. The factors that limit and extend the Action's potential to increase the autonomy of the local level in addressing spatial injustice are to be sought not only in its own intervention logic, but also across the multiple levels that 'govern' the Action despite it being genuinely a 'bottom-up' initiative.

1 Introduction

The civil-action-based local development project (from here on, 'the Action') studied in this case study addresses spatial and social justice as its central theme is the engagement of the young, the unemployed, immigrants as well as other disadvantaged groups in Kotka.

'Participation' (*osallisuus*, *osallistuminen*) has been a key aspect in the joint activities and networks of the third-sector organisations and individual activists involved. Though there are some neighbourhoods with marked socio-economic problems, the Action is applied to the entire urban area of Kotka municipality.

Although it physically takes place in 'urban' Kotka, this Action has some important connections (exchanges, knowledge-transfer, joint activities) with surrounding rural areas. This is due to the fact that the organisation leading the Action, 'Leader Sepra ry' (from here on, Sepra) is also the association managing the activities of the LEADER LAG in the rural municipalities of Southern Kymenlaakso. According to the coordinator, the Action is actually the extension of their rural LEADER activities; therefore, they like to refer to it as 'city-leader'. Reflecting this philosophy, the Action is 'grassrooted' in the needs and interest of the local residents of Kotka city. The idea of 'kaupunkileaderi' (city-leader) is that Kotka (among some other cities in Finland) is a testing ground for the adoption of a 'community-led local development' approach, which in turn, follows LEADER's philosophy but is financed from the European Social Fund (ESF) in Finland.

The Action under investigation consists of two consecutive projects (2015-16, 2017-19). The first one was concerned with residents facing social/spatial injustice, i.e. the unemployed, youth, immigrants and other vulnerable groups with special needs. The second project more specifically focusses on disadvantaged youth. The key drivers of the action are some 5-10 third-sector organisations (including also local branches of nationwide associations/networks, as well as the local parish) who deal with various disadvantaged groups. In addition, organisations from the field of education participate in the project to some extent. While these organisations have their own specific foci and targets, their activities often overlap. Therefore, even before the launch of the studied action, many of these stakeholders had collaborated. The City of Kotka also participates in the Action with two representatives in the Urban Board of the Action (*kaupunkijaosto*), i.e. one from the department of youth and the Development Director of the City.

The City's involvement is motivated by previous cooperation with Sepra, and it is in line with the current 'participatory shift' in its own approach to local development, also reflecting the recently (May 2018) published new City Strategy of Kotka with a time frame until 2025. 'Doing things together', participation and giving residents the opportunity to influence decisions appear to be at the centre of this new strategy. However, the Action appears to be too small to be noticed and used by the local public authorities and decision makers as a good practice in implementing the 'participatory dimension' of the new development strategy of Kotka.

In addition to representing an experiment in participative and civil-action-based local development, embedding this small local initiative in wider national and EU policy developments heightens its relevance and value as a RELOCAL case. Various 'dimensions of the locality' come into play. The positive experience from LEADER (in rural parts of Kymenlaakso, Finland and the EU) has been a resource and motivation for the Action. It uses (small-scale) ESF funds, while one of its coordinators at Sepra is personally engaged in the national and European debates and fora on how the CLLD idea may in the future be implemented in Finland and the European Union. These link this tiny initiative into interactions across the multiple levels of cohesion policy governance in the EU.

2 Methodological Reflection

Research in Kotka started in November 2017 within the pilot phase of the empirical work in RELOCAL, following a few months of preparation (desk research). The researchers first arranged an initial group interview with representatives of key actor organisations behind the Action. This served mutual introduction (between the RELOCAL project and the Action) and included the invitation of local stakeholders to be engaged in the project, as well as the mapping of further relevant actors and stakeholders to include in the study. This group interview helped to develop the interview questions and the appropriate terminology in the Finnish language for the coming interviews. The latter was recognised as important regarding the translation of the term 'spatial justice'. The research team refrained from a direct translation, using instead the more practical and operational terms of *eriarvoisuus* (inequality or disparity among individuals and places), *eriarvoistuminen* (growing inequalities/disparities among individuals and places) and *segregaatio* (segregation) when talking to the interviewees.

In Kotka, altogether 25 individual interviews were carried out with representatives of stakeholders, mainly face-to-face, and a few via phone and Skype. This meant frequent visits to the location by the researchers (see more on the composition of research participants in Annex 8.1). Recruiting interviewees relied on the initial mapping results (from a dedicated initial group interview) as well as continuous 'snowballing'. Some observation walks with stakeholders in the neighbourhood of Karhuvuori took place. Photos were taken during these walks and the interviews were recorded to ease transcription, both with the consent of the research participants. Participant observation was carried out at one of the regular meetings of the Action's Urban Board (*kaupunkijaosto*) and Project Monitoring Group (Kotka, 29 May 2018). Participant observations were also made during a two-day, national 'CLLD Innovation Camp' that brought together representatives from Finnish Ministries, and various stakeholders involved in LEADER/CLLD (Sastamala, 2-3 Sept. 2018) as well as at a national event organised by Sepra on the implications of future EU policies for local development (Kotka, 30 Oct. 2018). A three-hour long focus-group discussion was held in Kotka (20 Nov. 2018) with selected key actors behind the Action, Kotka city, and regional-national stakeholders connected to the Action. Besides primary data, the study relies on statistical information and analyses of fine-grained spatial patterns in specific socio-economic indicators in Kotka (e.g. map by Work Package 5 of RELOCAL).

3 The Locality

3.1 Territorial Context and Characteristics of the Locality

This report presents a civil-action-based local development initiative organised through two consecutive projects in the urban parts of Kotka, which hence is the locality in focus. However, it has to be borne in mind that many activities, networks and relations of the Action also reach out to the sub-region of South Kymenlaakso (*Etelä-Kymenlaakso*) and the whole (NUTS3) region of Kymenlaakso as it is coordinated by the LEADER association for South Kymenlaakso (municipalities of Pyhtää, Miehikkälä, Virolahti, Hamina and Kotka, see Figure 1).

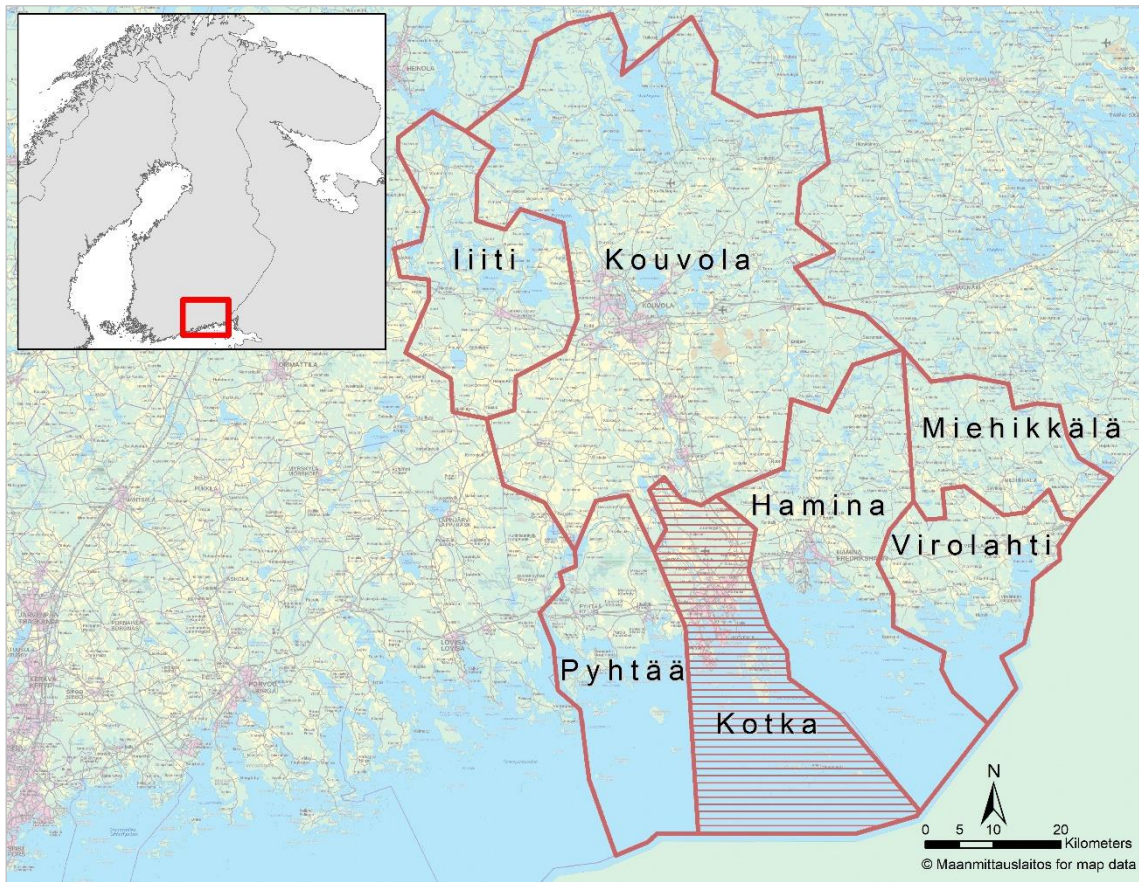


Figure 1. The location of the case study locality in South Finland and Kymenlaakso

Name of Case Study Area	Kotka (civil-society based activation in Kotka)
Size	272 km ² (land area)
Total population (2018)	52 930 (31.12.2018)
Population density (2018)	194,6 inhabitants/ km ²
Level of development regarding the wider socio-economic context	Disadvantaged, in relative proximity to the economic core of Finland
Type of the region (NUTS3-Eurostat)	Intermediate
Name and Identification Code of the NUTS3 area that includes the locality	Kymenlaakso FI1C4 (NUTS3, 2013)
Name and Identification Code of the NUTS2 area that includes the locality	South Finland FI1C (NUTS3, 2013)

Table 1. Basic socio-economic characteristics of the area (Source: *Statistics Finland, Eurostat*)

Basic information

Kotka is the 19th largest city (municipality) in Finland and the second largest city in the NUTS3 region of Kymenlaakso (following Kouvola, the regional capital). The city was founded in 1878 (when Finland was a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire) where the river Kymi flows into the Gulf of Finland. The forest industry and activities linked to the harbour quickly became the two main branches of economy in the city over time and the port of Kotka is today one of the largest cargo ports in Finland. In terms of road transportation, Kotka is located quite favourably on the main road between Helsinki (and Turku) and the metropolitan area of St. Petersburg in Russia (motorway E18¹). There also exists a passenger railway line between Kotka and Kouvola, from where there are onwards connections to western Finland (including the capital Helsinki) and eastern Finland, as well as to St. Petersburg with the Allegro high-speed train. Yet, there is no direct railway connection to Helsinki, which is a barrier to Kotka's integration, including daily commuting, into the wider conurbation of Helsinki (in a distance of 110km as the crow flies and 133km by road).

The municipality of Kotka in fact consists of two urban centres, Kotka Island and Karhula. Karhula is located on the mainland and is a formerly independent market town which was merged with the city of Kotka in 1976. The so-called Kotka Island (Kotkansaari) is what many consider the centre of town, which, as its name suggests, is located on an island that is very close to the mainland and connected by a causeway that provides road and rail connections. The fact that Karhula and Kotka were formerly independent administrative units is, according to some interviewees, still reflected in decision-making processes and overall attitude to urban development in the city. Karhula retains a strong identity; and a certain competitive setting among the two centres is clearly discernible, for instance, an integrated development perspective between the two centres is sometimes difficult to achieve. There is an overall concern that most attention is paid to and investments are made in, Kotka Island, neglecting needs in Karhula (Initial group interview, 12.2017).

Overall, the city is still grappling with its reputation of a 'smelly and untidy' industrial and somewhat 'rough' port city, which is remarkably sticky despite the decreasing significance of the pulp and paper industry and the increasingly high-tech working practices at the port (Initial group interview, 12.2017). A review of the local newspaper articles and relevant online fora also shows the negative reputation of different neighbourhoods (Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari) within the city that can also have an effect on the external image of the city as a whole. Having been a major industrial centre, the city has also been seen as a strongly politicised city and as a centre of labour movements and disputes with frequent strikes. At the same time, individual entrepreneurial spirit in the city is said to be less advanced than in other Finnish cities, particularly those in western Finland having many small and medium sized businesses. Some interviewees also pondered that – echoing the city's former reliance on large-scale industries and big businesses – the role of small and micro-business in the city is in fact not entirely appreciated by both the administration and population. Overall, Kotka is also often described as having been plagued by a negative atmosphere and a lack of future orientation in general, partly as a result of the downturn in terms of socio-economic development but also due to the

¹ Construction of the E18 motorway from Turku to the Finnish Russian border is nearly completed: the Hamina-Vaalima section in Kymenlaakso is the last development stage, to be finished by the end of 2018. The Vaalimaa border-crossing station is the busiest and most important frontier transit point between Finland and Russia. (ELY keskus)

inability of city officials and politicians to jointly and collaboratively work for the betterment of the city (Initial group interview, 12.2017).

Unfavourable socio-economic trends

Despite its relatively central location, both Kotka and Kymenlaakso have experienced population decline for a long time already. From 1975 to 2016, Kymenlaakso's population declined by 12 percent and Kotka's declined by 14 percent, whereas Finland as a whole has increased its population by about 17 per cent during the same period. It is interesting to note that amongst the 20 largest municipalities in Finland, two out three municipalities have that have experienced population decline from 2010 to 2016 are located in Kymenlaakso (Kouvola (-2766, -3%) and Kotka (-637, -1%)). Like in the rest of Finland, ageing of the population, i.e. a rise in the median age, is significant in the city. In addition, the young active cohorts have been overrepresented in the out-migrating population (for demographic indicators, see Annex 8.2). A relatively new variable in the population development of Kotka, and one somewhat cushioning overall population decline, has been immigration from abroad. The share of persons with a foreign background has increased in Kotka from a mere 0.7 percent in 1990 to 9.5 percent in 2016. From 2003, the increase in the share of persons with a foreign background was faster than in Kymenlaakso as a whole, as well as in Finland on average. It is interesting to note that in 2016, Kotka was one of the larger Finnish cities with the highest share of persons with a foreign background, only behind Vantaa (17%), Espoo (15%), Helsinki (15%), Turku (11%). Russian immigrants comprise the majority of foreign immigrants in the locality. In 2016, the number of refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, has increased more than fivefold compared to annual numbers of the previous years (source: Statistics Finland).

In terms of economic development, Kotka and the region of Kymenlaakso have been hit hard by structural change and loss of jobs in industry, above all in the pulp, paper, and basic metals branches. Kymenlaakso's contribution to the national economy in relative terms has been in decline for at least the last 15 years as its contribution to the Finnish GDP dropped from of 3.7 percent in 2000 to 2.8 percent in 2014 (source: Eurostat). This means that Kymenlaakso has fallen from the rank of the sixth largest regional contributor to the national economy in 2000 to the 11th in 2014. The structural change and resultant struggling economy in Kotka is also mirrored in the unemployment rate. As can be seen from Figure 9 (in Annex 8.2), Kotka has continuously and consistently had higher unemployment rates than Finland as a whole, and this gap currently appears to be widening. The gap has been particularly large since 2009 resulting in a situation where the unemployment rate of Kotka was 22.4 percent (back up to levels experienced during the recession after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s) as opposed to 14.2 percent in Finland as a whole. A particularly worrying trend in Kotka is the increase of the structurally unemployed, i.e. the share of those who are difficult to employ among persons aged 15-64. The percentage of the structurally unemployed has increased continuously from 2008 onwards to 10.1 percent in 2016 and the gap between the situation in Kotka and the national average appears to be widening.

Administration and Government/Governance

In terms of administration, Kotka is a municipality within the Finnish unitary system of government. Municipalities in Finland have a wide range of functions and responsibilities, delivering and implementing welfare services based on national legislation, such as education, social services, health care, cultural as well as technical services. They can also provide optional services such as business support services or engage in international co-operation activities. Municipal service provision has a strong legislative base and financed by municipal taxes, central government transfers as well as service charges (Association of

Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2018). The City Council (*kaupunginvaltuusto*) is the highest-level decision-making body within the city. It has 51 members and is elected during the municipal elections every four years. The other important organisation is the Executive Board, which is responsible for the administration and financial management of the municipality and for the preparation and execution of local council decisions. There is also a City Management Group, which is responsible for the day-to-day management and is headed by the Mayor. In Kotka, as in many other Finnish municipalities, the Mayor is not politically elected, but selected/appointed by the City Council. The Mayor in Kotka changed in early summer 2018.

There are no regional authorities in Finland directly elected and/or able to levy taxes. Rather, the Regional Councils, representing the regional level of government, are formed by joint municipal authorities. All municipalities have to be a member of a Regional Council, of which there are altogether 19 (18 on mainland Finland, and Åland Islands). Kotka and six other municipalities form the Regional Council of Kymenlaakso, which corresponds in terms of territory to a NUTS3 region. Today, Regional Councils are responsible for regional development, regional planning and the supervision of regional interests. Regional Councils date back to 1994, since then the central government has initiated several reforms.

The latest central government reform at regional level was implemented in 2010 as various central government organisations were reorganised under Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, or so-called ELY Centres. Currently, ELY Centres are linked mainly to the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, but they also manage duties under the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Transport and Communications. As a decentralised state-agency, an ELY Centre also has an important position for regional development as distributors of funding from all EU Cohesion Funds. Since the funding for different projects in the Cohesion Funds have to be always combined with national funding, ELY Centres have a significant role in improving the regional competitiveness and employment possibilities as well as in safeguarding that people have equal opportunities regardless their place of residence. Another important task of ELY Centres is to steer and control the activities of Employment and Economic Development Offices (TE Offices). There are today 15 ELY Centres in Finland and their operational areas, with a few exceptions, correspond to those of the Regional Councils.

There are also six Regional State Administrative Agencies (*Aluehallintovirasto* AVI) in Finland established during the above-mentioned reform in 2010. The Agencies operate in very close cooperation with municipalities as their tasks relate to basic public services, education and culture, environmental permits as well as rescue services and preparedness. Responsibilities of the Agencies stretch over eight different ministries. The Agencies as well as the ELY Centres prepare their strategies for the government period, which lay the bases for their work. Regional Councils influence the preparation of these strategic documents, which is probably the most important way for the Regional Councils to instil a 'regional influence' into the work of AVI Agencies and ELY Centres.

3.2 The Locality with regards to Dimensions 1 & 2

Analytical Dimension 1: Perception of spatial (in)justice within the locality

As can be seen from the brief description above and the statistical overview in Annex 8.2, Kotka's development during the last decades has suffered from demographic ageing and population decline, has gone through restructuring in its traditional industries leading to job losses and long-term as well as youth unemployment. The economic downturn in the city and its hinterland, the loss of its key industrial employers, but also the increasing

levels of external in-migration, have all led to a situation where aspects of inequality and segregation have increasingly become items of public and political discussion; although this increased attention is not only confined to Kotka only, but also Finland as a whole. Structural and long-term unemployment is an especially pressing problem in Kotka. Moreover, and in addition to being an economic burden for the city, these socio-economic difficulties faced by the city as a whole and by individual citizens are reflected in elevated levels of relative 'un-wellbeing' of groups of residents and neighbourhoods in the city. Kotka is, for example, the worst performer among all Finnish cities above 50 000 inhabitants in terms of the morbidity index produced by the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), which reflects the prevalence of the most common chronic diseases (Sipilä et al. 2014). Interviewees/experts have also stated that alcohol and drug abuse as well as mental health are prominent problems in the locality. A representative of the City stated that

"Oh yes, we have a clear alcohol and drug problem here, which maybe, one could think, is due to the legacy of being a port city, but it's a real problem and maybe more visible among the younger generations. Unemployment, which jumped as a result of the shutting down of traditional industries, is of course one clear factor in this, but there is also this inherited unemployment and lack of prospects". (Int. #2)

Kotka was also placed in the third worst position in a comparison of social marginalisation of youth in Finnish municipalities in a study carried out by journalists/experts of the leading Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS 2017). This comparison included municipal data on youth unemployment, the share of youth outside education, prevalence of use of depression medication, the share of youth receiving reimbursements for prescription drugs, the share of youth receiving long- or short-term income support, and the rate of incidence of youths being suspected of a crime.

The existence of social problems and injustices have marked spatial manifestations in the city of Kotka and have increasingly fuelled the debate on the differences between urban neighbourhoods in Kotka. Internal spatial disparities are overall perceived to be some of the worst in Finland, despite the relatively small size of the city (initial group interview, 12.2017). When confronted with the question of what areas of the city are affected the most by social problems and disadvantages, the interviewees have almost unanimously stated that particularly the Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari neighbourhoods are socially problematic ones. Typical comments include:

"And you can clearly see it among the youth, who comes from that area [Karhuvuori]" (Int. #14).

"Yes, the Karhuvuori is such an area [deprived]. There is a lot of that [social problems]. If you try to sell an apartment there, you don't get much for it. It has such a reputation" (Int. #7).

"When it comes to Karhuvuori, they often say that 'even the crows fly with their backs downwards, when they fly over'" (Int. #4).

However, frequently also a more nuanced picture of the situation in these neighbourhoods is provided:

"There [in Karhuvuori] the areas are very fragmented. Some buildings are quite ok, some are problematic" (Int. #5).

"I have lived there myself for 30 years and I think this is a positive direction. The City of Kotka puts effort into improving the quality of the urban environment, they have built parks and barbecue places for residents to use. I think that's extremely positive. It has changed the image of the place" (Int. #4).

With regard to this case study, it should, however, be borne in mind that the Action at hand does not focus on these areas, but on the activation and participation of

disadvantaged youth, including groups facing the risk of marginalisation (the unemployed, immigrants and other groups with special needs) in Kotka *as a whole*. The Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari neighbourhoods are places where residents with socio-economic problems and, more recently immigrants, tend to concentrate as a result of the availability of low-cost rental housing (initial group interview, 12.2017). Karhuvuori is, in fact, the postcode area with the 7th highest share of inhabitants with a foreign background (based on language spoken) in Finland (*Ilta-Sanomat* 2018). Karhuvuori is located in the western part of Karhula, whereas Hovinsaari is an area just north of Kotka Island (see Figure 2). It has to be borne in mind that the socio-economic problems among the residents in these areas are not a particularly new aspect, but have existed for a number of decades already. It is often argued that the situation in the area is actually already rooted in the planning doctrine of the 1970s, which aimed at providing affordable council housing in prefabricated housing blocs placed in suburban areas (see Figure 3).

Perhaps not surprisingly, Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari also have very low levels of voter turnout, which may indicate that residents of these neighbourhoods tend not to participate in democratic and social processes. For example, only 49.2 percent of eligible residents in Karhuvuori voted in the last presidential election (*Kymen Sanomat* 2018; 29.01.2018).

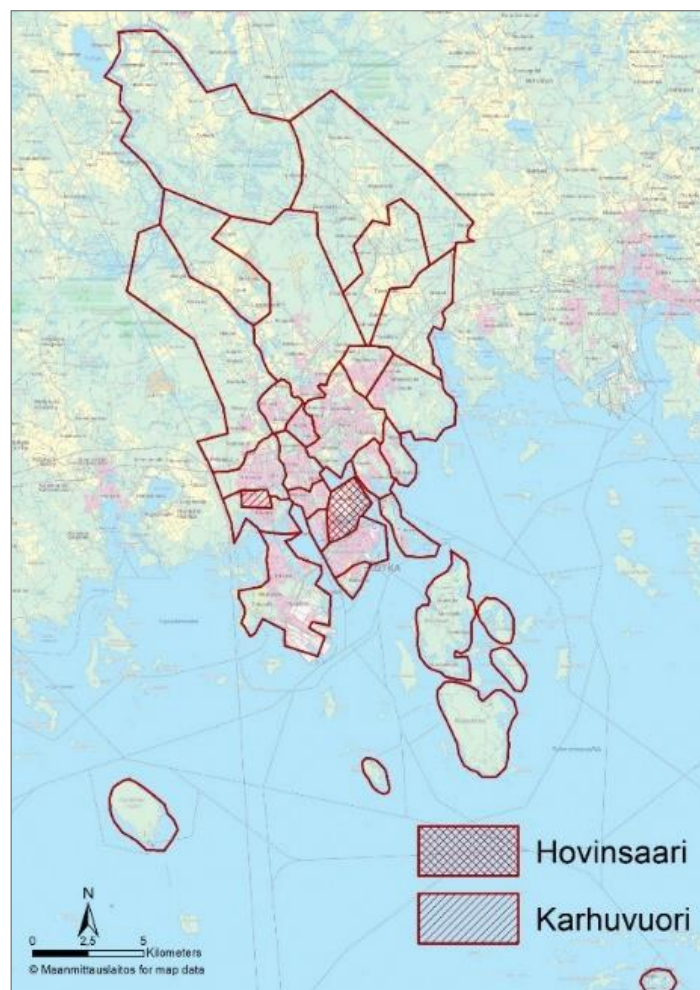


Figure 2. The locations of the Hovinsaari and Karhuvuori neighbourhoods within the city of Kotka



Figure 3. Typical Street Scene in Karhuvuori
(Source: Google Maps Street view)

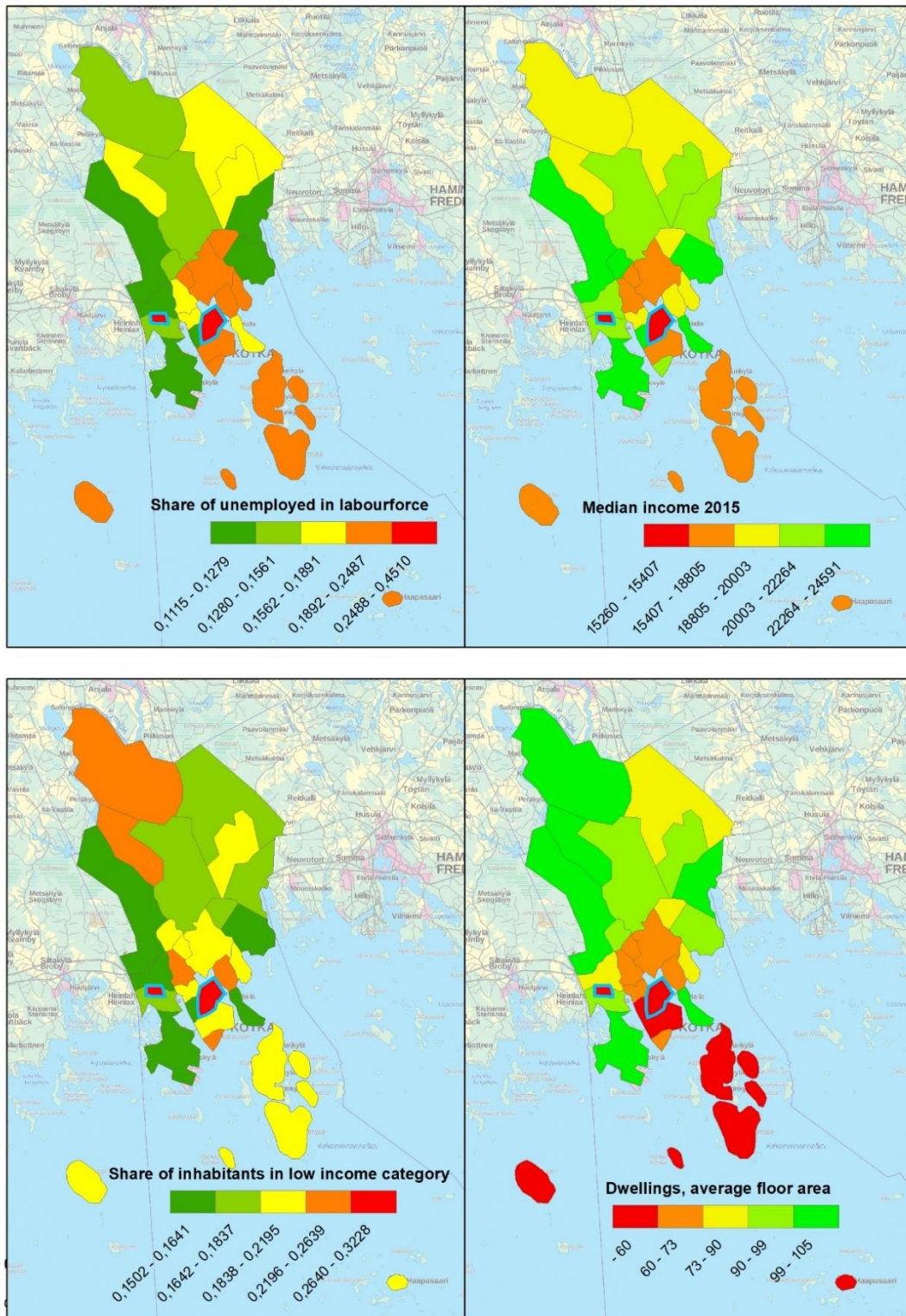


Figure 4. Spatial patterns of socio-economic inequalities within the city of Kotka, by postal districts
(Source of data: Statistics Finland, Paavo database, data from 2014/15)

The above accounts on the perception of spatial patterns in socio-economic problems in Kotka is corroborated by statistical data at the level of postcode areas. As can be seen from Figure 4, the neighbourhoods of Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari (marked with a blue border) are sticking out as the worst performers in the municipality in terms of a number of basic

indicators, which can be used as proxies for socio-economic disadvantage. These indicators include the share of unemployed in the labour force, the individual median income as well as the share of inhabitants in the low-income category. The two areas also are endowed with low average floor space in dwellings. Karhuvuori also tops the list of postcode areas with the highest amount of missed payments among its population, being evidence of significant financial distress (*Kymen Sanomat* 2018; 09.01.2018). A particularly interesting aspect with regard to spatial justice is the socio-economic situation vis-à-vis the location of Karhuvuori, which can be described as an island of relative deprivation surrounded by areas of relative wealth (see Figure 4). Indeed, Karhuvuori consists of blocks of flats built mostly in the 1970s, but is surrounded by well-off neighbourhoods mainly with single-family dwellings. However, it has to be borne in mind that Map 3 above illustrates a relative situation, so compared to disadvantaged areas elsewhere in Europe and beyond, even the worst neighbourhoods of Kotka are relatively better off and safe environments to live in.

Nevertheless, a particular problem identified by the interviewees with regard to the spatial concentration of disadvantaged people is that its main underlying cause, unemployment, appears to be often inherited through the generations in areas such as Karhuvuori. Having been exposed to a lack of prospects in what comes to job opportunities within their families, young people have become used to a situation where employment is out of reach and resources are scarce, and where resorting to social support provided by the welfare system is commonly accepted (Int. #11). This trajectory results in an immense need for the activation of unemployed youth to take their fate into their own hands. Interviewees have also mentioned the need to stimulate the (self)entrepreneurial spirit in young people especially in places such as Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari in order to build up a sustainable industry beyond the large industrial companies.

External perceptions add another layer to processes of marginalisation. Although it cannot be denied that the general self-esteem of the residents and the self-perception of the locality has been very low mainly due to their socio-economic realities, the negative 'atmosphere' in these neighbourhoods is reinforced by external perceptions (see Box 1). From the interviews, particularly Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari have emerged as being synonymous with 'unwell-being' and social challenges in Kotka and their position has been more difficult by processes of stigmatisation. To quote an example:

"If something happens in Karhuvuori or Hovinsaari, the public discussion is immediately like 'oh, what a surprise!' If somewhere else happens something, then it's an immediate cause for astonishment. It also affects whether people want to move or visit there." (Int. #5)

Stigmatisation also appears to be an item of concern for local residents. 'Softer' and community-led initiatives have aimed at improving both the internal and external image of Karhuvuori. For example, joining the Finnish Gutsy Go movement, 70 students of the Karhuvuori school engaged with their neighbourhood by, for instance, cleaning up the parks and public spaces as well as spending time with local elderly people and kindergarten children. These activities were filmed and published online on YouTube².

² www.youtube.com/watch?v=630535KbXrQ

Two articles published in the regional newspaper report on an interesting story on how the bad reputation of a place can potentially lead to increased spatial injustice – which fortunately was recognised in time by local decision makers in our concrete example, invoking spatial justice as an argument. Heated public debate on a dedicated page of a Finnish online forum (Suomi24) about this particular BBQ incident also indicates that Karhuvuori has indeed much negative external perceptions to dispose of.

The article “Hot BBQ topic in Karhuvuori: police intervention cancels plans for new public BBQ place” describes how the city department responsible for parks had installed around 30 public BBQ places in Kotka, which have got positive feedback. However, when a public BBQ-place was planned for Karhuvuori, the conversation about it heated up, and the plans for the BBQ-place *had been eventually dropped*. (Kymen Sanomat 16.4.18.)

The event that led to this decision was that the police had to drop by because of a disturbance in Karhuvuori and then expressed their opinion that the area would be better off without the public BBQ.

The situation was incomprehensible to a city councillor. The people of Karhuvuori had *wished for this BBQ place themselves*, and he was thus confident that they would take good care of it. He also clarified that the police were called there just because of a single person causing a disturbance. Referring to the conversation around it, he pointed out that it was wrong to condemn the plan just because some people happened to think that it will be used by the ‘wrong clients’.

Eventually, the municipal board for urban planning unanimously decided that the BBQ place *would be installed*. The board argued that the different neighbourhoods should not be treated *unequally*: Karhuvuori should be treated just like any other area in Kotka. The BBQ place was deemed to have social significance and be capable of strengthening a sense of community. (Kymen Sanomat 18.4.2018)

Box 1. Karhuvuori and the public BBQ-place (Spring 2018)

Analytical Dimension 2: Tools and policies for development and cohesion

The European and national policy context

There are various national programmes and initiatives in Finland targeted at improving labour markets and employability of various groups, some of which are co-funded by the European Union structural funds (ESF). As regards the marginalisation of youth in particular, it should be noted that as all EU countries, Finland has also committed to the implementation of the EU initiative “Youth Guarantee” (Council Recommendation of April 2013). The objective is “to support young people in gaining a place in education and employment, to prevent prolonged youth unemployment, to identify factors contributing to the risk of social exclusion and to offer support at an early age, in order to prevent social exclusion and marginalisation of young people” (Nuorisotakuu). In carrying out Youth Guarantee, the ESF-supported project ‘Kohtaamo’ (Meeting Site) is organising low-threshold guidance services for young people. Kotka hosts also one of the local service points, a One-Stop Guidance Center (*Ohjaamo*, see more in Annex 8.3).

The ‘Action’ under investigation itself, is building on the wider EU initiative to develop a CLLD instrument “for involving citizens at the local level in developing responses to the social, environmental and economic challenges” in urban areas, enshrined in the European Commission under Articles 32-35 of the Common Provisions Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (EC 2013). Inspired by the community-led development practices in rural areas of the EU eligible for the LEADER programme, this approach is expected to raise the effectiveness of EU policies (funding) by providing a route for local communities to take part in shaping the implementation thereof (European Commission 2014). It appears that the EU’s ultimate aim is to implement the CLLD approach in all four European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) funds for their deployment in local development and thereby

to empower the local level in Cohesion Policy and encourage integrated local development strategies drawn up in a participatory manner.

The responsible ministry (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment) decided against the initial idea of the Commission to use the CLLD approach in all regions (both rural and urban) and in all ESIFs, but instead agreed on a partial experiment with CLLD (Åström 2015). For this purpose, in the present programming period, Finland's structural funds programme "Sustainable growth and jobs 2014-2020" (a single programme for both ERDF and ESF funds) includes in its 5th Priority Axis the aims of "Social inclusion and combating poverty", to "improve the working and functional capacity of people outside working life" (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, Structural Funds, 2014). This Priority serves the incorporation of (some of the) principles of CLLD, though it is funded by ESF alone. As such, the CLLD approach taken in Finland focuses specifically on the prevention and treatment of social/spatial injustices. This is clearly reflected by the objectives of the Priority Axis:

- the strengthening of social inclusion and working life skills of the most disadvantaged as well as developing measures to prevent social exclusion, particularly where the young, ageing persons and people with partial working capacity are concerned;
- the development of co-operation between various actors and cross-sectoral services as well as the development of related skills;
- the development of communal and citizen-centric approaches and services that enhance social inclusion. (Structural Funds Finland)

A local participatory approach – a narrower interpretation of the European idea of CLLD – has thus been infused into ESF in Finland for urban areas not eligible for the LEADER programme (i.e. urban centres having more than 23 000 inhabitants). The Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment emphasised the limited nature of this CLLD experiment by calling it "civil-action-based local development in urban areas" (*kansalaistoimijalähtöinen kehittäminen kaupungeissa*) (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, Structural Funds, 2014). These civil-action-based local development experiments create room for activities of the Action we focus on in Kotka. It has to be borne in mind that such experiments have not been organised in all Finnish regions. In Finland in general, there is a well-established and well-working system of municipal governments that has significant resources and established tools/mechanisms to 'fight spatial injustices'. This system works already in a relatively open, inclusionary and participatory fashion, allowing for hybrid institutions and interfaces between the public sector and private/civil society organisations.

The Local Policy Context

Kotka is one of the most problematic cases among Finnish municipalities in terms of spatial inequalities. It is a city of disparities, containing areas, such as Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari, which are some of the worst performers but also affluent neighbourhoods, that are significantly above national averages in terms of socio-economic indicators. The socio-economic challenges in Kotka obviously call for policy responses that aim at reducing injustices and increasing levels of cohesion in the city. As a result of the Finnish system of government, assigning a strong and resourceful role to municipalities, the municipal government (City of Kotka) plays a key role in implementing policies mitigating socio-economic problems. This is being done by addressing social injustices and marginalisation directly through local policies, programmes and projects underpinned by a number of city-wide strategies (see Annex 8.3). However, these local strategies have sectoral rather than spatial approaches, and refrain from targeting specific neighbourhoods (Int. #2). Nevertheless, through investments into the development of

place-bound infrastructure and services, the City acknowledges the particular needs of specific areas (e.g. Karhuvuori) and improves their situation. The city has invested in a new school combined with a library and sports facilities as well as a small shopping centre in central Karhuvuori. The area also has excellent public transport connections to the main city centres in Karhula and Kotkansaari. The City has provided tailor-made support services in form of placing a number of professionals from the health and social sector in more deprived neighbourhoods in order to establish direct links to the resident population in need of such services.

There is also a visible 'participatory shift' in the City's overall approach to local development, which is indicated by the recently (May 2018) published new City Strategy of Kotka with a timeframe until 2025. 'Doing things together', participation and giving residents the opportunity to influence decisions appears to be at the centre of this new strategy. In fact, one of the Strategy's four pillars is 'Our shared Kotka – A City of doing things together and jolly encounters'. The following citation from a city employee working with local communities refers to this:

"Absolutely, I can say that the change has been noticeable and particularly positive into a more community-based and participative Kotka. Now this new City Strategy that has been accepted emphasises the fact that these are the things we want to put effort into in Kotka." (Int. #20)

In this spirit, the City acknowledges even more than before the role of third-sector organisations in tackling social marginalisation, and is open to co-operation with them in activities that mitigate the effects of socio-spatial injustices in the city. There are active associations such as a multicultural centre, non-profit resident associations providing support and space for neighbourhood communities and the local parish. Cooperating with the educational sector is also seen as important in the prevention of social marginalisation and its effects.

4 The Action

4.1 Basic Characteristics of the Action

Against the above detailed socio-economic and policy background, civil society organisations, with the backing of the City of Kotka, decided to use the 'CLLD component' of the Finnish Structural Funds Operational Programme Priority 5, supported by ESF, for strengthening their co-operation for the benefit of disadvantaged groups of society in Kotka. This initiative was led by the LEADER association in charge of the surrounding rural areas of southern Kymenlaakso. After preparing an Action Plan for Civil Society Based Development in Kymenlaakso 2014-2020, two consecutive ESF-funded projects have been carried out since 2015 (see Box 2 and Figure 5).

Soon after the principles of CLLD were introduced by the EU in the Common Provisions Regulations and the responsible Finnish Ministry decided on the overall approach, the two associations operating as the LEADER 'local action groups' (LAGs) in the rural areas of Kymenlaakso since the 1990s, became interested in the opportunities provided by urban CLLD as part of ESF in Finland to expand their activities to the urban centres of their areas: *Sepra* in the south of Kymenlaakso, to include Kotka, and *Pohjois-Kymen Kasvu* in the north, to work in Kouvola. These LAGs were driven by the realisation that through their work with people 'on the ground' of the potential advantages from resolving the disconnectedness of their activities with regard to the inherently linked rural-urban systems of their respective regions.

The Action in Kotka started when *Sepra* contacted the City of Kotka and the Regional Council of Kymenlaakso with the aim to launch this initiative for the urban centre. The City voiced its support and saw *Sepra*, its long-time collaborator with regard to the rural surroundings, as a knowledgeable actor behind the project and its activities. The Regional Council, though supportive of the idea, would have rather opted for setting up a specific working group for the entire region of Kymenlaakso instead of just focusing on Kotka. Nevertheless, after negotiations, two Actions for Kotka and Kouvola were established, with *Sepra* and *Kasvu* being in charge of first producing the action plan at the end of 2014 and then, implementing it in their cities.

The Regional Council provided preparatory funding. In Kotka, *Sepra*, using the preparatory funds from the Council of Kymenlaakso and assistance from the City, organised a number of workshops with local residents and drew on the results of an online platform/survey enabling residents to voice their opinions and partake in decision-making processes, which has been organised by the City of Kotka from 2013 onwards. The contents of the regional development plans for Kymenlaakso and Kotka's city strategy were also taken into account.

For the purpose of running the Action in Kotka, *Sepra* established, based on their existing network, the Urban Board (*kaupunkijaosto*) composed of representative of local NGOs, city officials, the parish and the educational sector. The Action is currently in its implementation phase, running two ESF projects from May 2015 to December 2016 ("Residents-led local development in Kotka") and from March 2017 to December 2019 ("Youth- and civil society-led local development in southern Kymenlaakso"). The thematic focus of these activities in Kotka had initially been, for the first project, the mobilisation of residents with regard to the development of their areas and residential satisfaction, as well as the strengthening of various avenues for employment. For the second project, since 2017, there has been special focus on the mobilisation of the young by supporting their employability and bringing together migrants and Finnish youth in a variety of activities.

Box 2. The Kotka Action in a nutshell

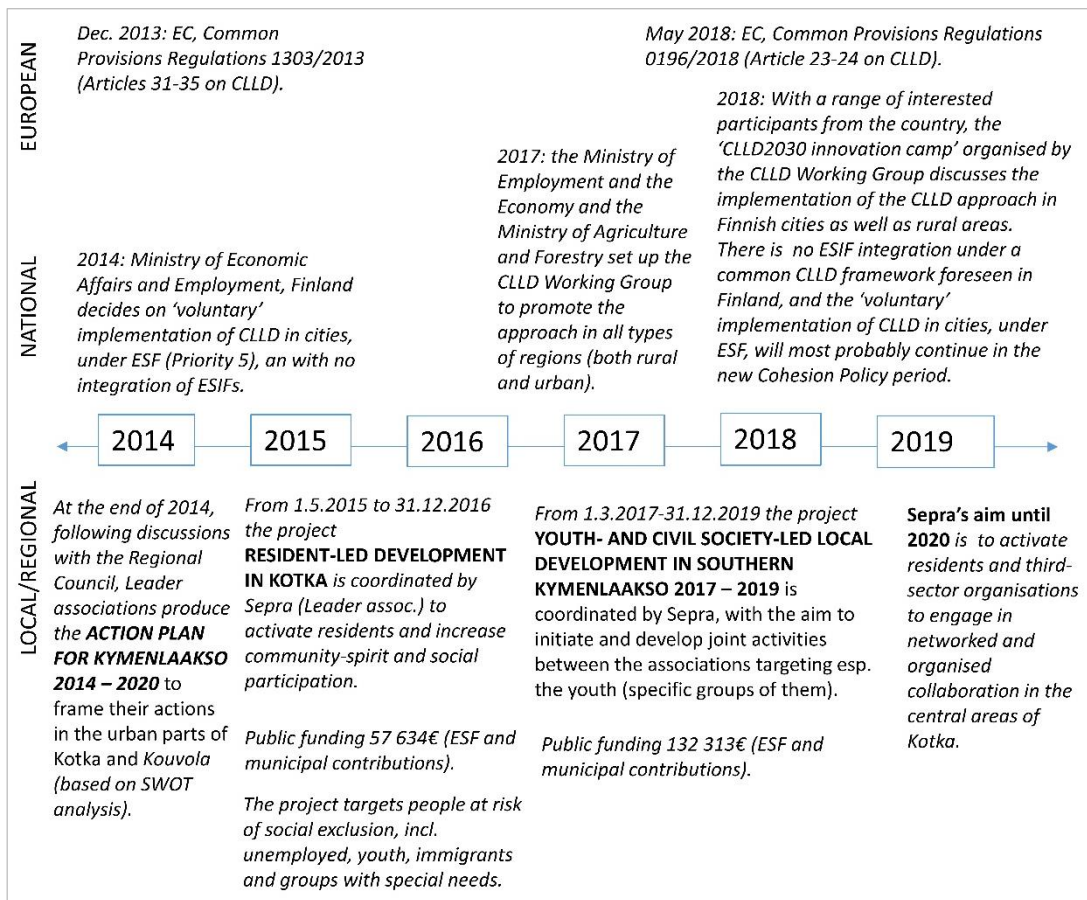


Figure 5. Timeline of evolution of the 'Action'

4.2 The Action with regards to Dimensions 3-5

Analytical Dimension 3: Coordination and implementation of the Action in the locality under consideration

Co-ordination and leadership of the action as a project

The co-ordination and implementation of the Action is to a large extent centred around the co-ordinator of the two ESF-funded projects in Kotka, that is, the association named 'Leader Sepra ry', as well as on the Urban Board and the funder in form of the ELY Centre Häme, which is responsible for the distribution of European Union ESF in southern Finland.

As the co-ordinator of the Action, Sepra monitors to which extent its activities contribute to the initial goals set out in the Action Plan and provides a long-term perspective on collaborative measures and activities. Sepra is well suited to steer the Action despite it being 'geographically' external to the strictly defined space of the Action, that is, *urban* Kotka. Firstly, being in charge of the LEADER LAG, it has already acquired the know-how of running community-led activities. Secondly, it is a node in an extensive network of actors also extending into urban Kotka. Thirdly, working within the LEADER network, Sepra has strong connections to national and European-level actors working on CLLD and its principles, e.g. including the Rural Policy Committee as well as the Urban Policy Committee of the Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and European networks ELARD and ENRD.

The Action in Kotka is coordinated by the Urban Board (*kaupunkijaosto*) that has been set up by Sepra. It consists of 14 representatives (see Annex 8.4 for details on its composition). The makeup of the Urban Board loosely follows the tripartite principle of LEADER (public, private and the third sector). However, it is dominated by third-sector representatives (associations, clubs, and a local parish) whose work relates to questions of social injustices and the needs of groups with special needs. Three members represent the public sector, coming from the City and a vocational school. The private sector, in the form of business representatives, is absent from this body. The Action has strong connections also to the rural LEADER through Sepra's co-ordination of both and common members in their boards. The practical, day-to-day work regarding project activities is clearly dominated by Sepra, but it draws on the expertise, input and ideas of the members of the Urban Board who meet at least four times a year.

As the regional funding organisation, ELY Centre Häme follows progress and finances of the two projects under the Action, its representative regularly visits the meetings of the Project Monitoring Group, the membership of which is largely overlapping that of the Urban Board. This is necessary as the funding framework (decided on the national level) as such prescribes the objectives of the projects and frames the conditions within which those have the possibilities and limitations in becoming an Action.

Cooperation platform within the third-sector, between policy levels and with other sectors

Based on the interviews, an important added value of the studied Action in general and the Urban Board in particular lies in their role as an additional platform for collaboration and co-ordination between different third sector organisations and stakeholders for the benefit of their respective target groups. As such, it functions as a sort of integrative force that brings together different fields of activities by the third sector and their target groups in a network-like fashion:

"We form a really strong network, when we are all together... It [Sepra] is a binding force." (Int. #4).

It has to be borne in mind that co-operation between third-sector organisations has existed before the Action. As a representative of the City of Kotka comments:

"If you are critical, they [the Action led by Sepra] have entered a field with a number of pre-existing actors. Of course, it supports the work that is being done, but it is not a ground-breaking idea and it's nothing that new, in my opinion" (Int. #21)

The City had also supported collaborative processes between third sector organisations previously by, for example, the development and setting up, through the "Under One Sail" project (2012-2016), of community houses, such as Viikari, that accommodate third-sector organisations under one roof providing also physical proximity for collaboration and co-ordination as well as alleviating a sometimes already existing competitive setting between them. (Int. #11)

In light of the added value mentioned above, several interviewees indicated that without the Action (or its continuation in a similar fashion), current activities and their impact would decline (Int. #4, Int. #8, Int. #11). The partnership is very much based on particular individuals' commitment and connections, so the sustainability of the Action (its two projects) is also sensitive to potential changes in the composition of the partnership on the personal level.

In the inception phase of the projects in Kymenlaakso (2014), the regional mode of leadership in the CLLD component was not clearly defined. Thus, a significant amount of vertical co-ordination between different policy levels took place at this stage. In practice, this included negotiations between various parties interested in the funding and

implementation of the ESF projects in both North and South Kymenlaakso: the Regional Council of Kymenlaakso, the Cities of Kotka and Kouvola, and Sepra and Pohjois-Kymen Kasvu. These negotiations paved the way for an agreement on the mode of operation, in principle assigning a lead role to the LEADER groups Pohjois-Kymen Kasvu and Sepra. The Regional Council then continued to support the projects by providing preparatory funding (see Box 2) for the development of the Action Plan from ERDF funds.

As regards horizontal, cross-sectoral co-operation, 11 out of 14 members of the Urban Board implementing the action are more or less clearly civil society representatives from Kotka (associations, local parishes and individual citizens). The private sector is not involved, neither individual businesses nor the local development company. The presence of an (active and committed) representative of the City in the Urban Board is important to both decision-making and co-ordination of the Action. This representative of the City, at least in terms of youth work and policy-making, is actively involved in the Action and appears to be an important link between the Urban Board and the local administration, thereby providing formal support and a certain degree of legitimacy to a basically civil society driven project (seal of approval). It is stressed by many interviewees that the personal commitment of this particular individual ensures a link to the city administration. It can be assumed that the action's narrower focus in its second project (from residents-led local development to a focus on youth) is connected to her specific area of work. Despite the intensity of this link, it was mentioned by interviewees that not enough has been done to link the Action more to higher levels of decision/policy-making at the City and that it has consequently not been integrated sufficiently into the working practices of the municipal government (Int. #8). As interviewees put it, when asked how the project was received among city officials and councillors:

"It has not appeared very strongly, neither in the talks nor in the decisions. To me it shows that the project is not well enough known among the city officials" [which originates in weak communication as] "you cannot recognize it [the Action] in any decision-making nor clearly in any actions [by the city]. Probably it 'floats' there somewhere in many instances, but it does not have a visible role". (Int. #8)

"Probably in this strategy-work [i.e. the new strategy of Kotka] it [CLLD] will be brought up better than before, but in fact it has been fairly distant and vague in my opinion." (Int. #2)

This is despite the CLLD Action Plan's stated goal that:

"the objective of the civil-action-based activities is also to bridge the gap between residents and the City for the purpose of supporting local democracy and thus the target group also includes municipal decision-makers and elected officials of the City" (Kymenlaakso Action Plan, 2014; 4, *own translation*).

In order to achieve a genuine CLLD approach, following the European Union ideal, the Action should bring together actors from different levels in a setting of multi-level governance. Despite the above-described instances of shared coordination, according to some interviewees, the Kotka Action has not succeeded in this. Apart from providing an additional platform for city to third sector and third sector to third sector collaboration, the Action has, at least so far, not resulted in new modes of governance and decision making with and on higher levels of government. This is also reflected in the fact that the work of the Urban Board appears to focus on the day-to-day running and monitoring of the project and the creation of collaborative linkages between its members and third sector organisations rather than engaging in a more strategic discussion on what community-led development could be in Kotka. When asked about what could have been done differently, a member of the Urban Board stated that:

“...but more of such philosophical or principled discussion about the nature of the project. Often it just was about concrete actions, which is of course is important, as things have to happen.” (Int. #21)

In a similar vein, the co-ordinator of the Action states that “the board as a whole still has to understand what is their role in this urban Leader activity” (Int. #22). However, it must be kept in mind that, the action is relatively young and, being essentially an ESF project that includes a CLLD element, the action in question has neither the institutional preconditions nor the financial resources for delivering both vertically and horizontally integrative action. Being a project under the ESF funding structure, the projects under the Action are limited in time and scope and restricted by pre-set project obligations.

Analytical Dimension 4: Autonomy, participation and engagement

For the purpose of analysis, we can distinguish between

- the autonomy or empowerment of third sector organisations representing specific interest groups in dealing with social/spatial injustices;
- the autonomy of the ‘local level’ or locality, including the municipality, and Kotka as a whole; and
- participation/engagement of individual residents.

Autonomy of the third sector

As to strengthening the autonomy of the third sector, firstly, the Action contributed with a platform/network for exchanging ideas and good practices between different third-sector organisations, including also some from the rural surroundings. Secondly, it has offered the possibility for pooling dispersed resources for greater efficiency. Thirdly, with two representatives of the municipal administration in its Urban Board, the Action could give the third-sector actors more opportunity to articulate their interests and viewpoints towards local decision-making bodies, as well as it could provide an avenue for a more direct access to information about governance processes particularly related to their fields of interest. The co-operation with the City throughout this Action entails also increased credibility of the participant associations towards their respective target groups, the people whose interest they represent. Finally, it strengthened the role of Sepra as a well-established ‘expert node’ with significant potential to integrate European, national and local perspectives on local and community development. All things considered, the Action seems to have *increased the autonomy of the local/sub-regional civil society organisations involved in it, strengthening them both in their resources (financial, knowledge, network capital) and capacities to act*, and thus offering them *greater leverage* in treating social-economic problems and thus promote social/spatial justice in Kotka.

Autonomy of the Locality

Regarding the autonomy of the local level as a whole, the independence of Kotka has been reinforced in terms of the utilisation of EU funding to launch a place-based Action dealing with local social challenges the way they see fits best. An example demonstrating such local autonomy was when despite the Regional Council’s original idea of a regionally-deployed action (for the entire region of Kymenlaakso), Sepra with Kotka (and Kymen-Kasvu with Kouvola) could, through negotiations, insist on and achieve a more local and more third sector-based implementation, maintaining their roles as coordinators and taking ownership of their respective projects. The presence of an especially motivated, active and respected representative of the City is the key to facilitating exchanges and mutual learning between the local public and third sectors. However, the Action during its implementation has not sought out more direct ways of influencing the (planning of) local

decisions by the City administration (e.g. the preparation and deployment of the new City Strategy), which still limits its capacity to increase local autonomy in this particular sense.

Engagement and participation of residents

The third aspect of local autonomy is the engagement/participation of residents. The participation of individual citizens in decisions related to the action (its objectives, scope) was ensured during the preparation phase, i.e. the development of the Kotka-relevant aspects of the Action Plan for Kymenlaakso, by incorporating the results from resident fora organised by the coordinating associations and from citizen opinion polls arranged by Kotka City. Formal participation processes (hearings, polls) and direct interaction with residents on local needs and potential solutions, however, appear to have been lop-sided towards the beginning of the Action.

An analysis of the types of activities that were organised during the second project of the Action (2017-2019) indicates that the majority of the activities have engaged those associations that have connections to either Sepra or the Urban Board. In fact, nearly half of the activities served the gatherings of the representatives of organisations to discuss about upcoming events, etc. (including the official meetings of the Urban Board.) This confirms the notion of Sepra working as a binding force between the various third-sector actors in Kotka (see above). When the project activities target individual residents more directly, it was predominantly the youth (see Table 2).

Associations	Youth	Disabled	Roma	Elderly	Immigrants	Other	
35	16	5	2	3	4	15	77 events in total
45%	21%	6%	3%	4%	5%	19%	

Notes: The above is based on 77 activities of the 'Youth- and civil society-led local development in southern Kymenlaakso 2017-2019' project. Some overlaps between the different categories exist. Events that involved only coordinators of a specific group – heads of organisations – are put under the 'associations' category. Only those events are classified under a 'theme of disadvantage' where the target groups (residents) themselves were directly engaged.

Table 2. Number and share of events or activities of the action involving particular targets/groups

Events directly engaging residents (esp. the youth, and disabled, immigrant and elderly people) most often took the form of meeting them at youth centres, community houses or at different associations' premises with the purpose of informing them about the possibilities offered by the project. Other types of activities included, for instance, educational events and helping the youth with finding summer jobs, or connecting them with young people in the countryside. Sepra has also organized some bigger events in cooperation with its third-sector partners that brought together people from multiple target groups. (See also photos and additional information in Annex 8.5, Figures 13-19.)

This allows one to conclude that – via enhanced and joint capacities of various actors from the local civil society – those individuals are represented or even directly reached, informed and activated to take part in the life of the local community that need such representation/stimulation the most. Although this activation does not imply *de facto* engagement in municipal decision making, this provides good foundations for such participation, and has the potential to generate local exchanges, fresh ideas, increased trust and new cooperation between the locals.

As a final note, it is interesting to mention that as those forums that have served communication and information on the Action concentrated also on third-sector organisations, and not surprisingly, it is basically Sepra's immediate partner associations

who are aware that the above described activities are actually part of an 'urban LEADER' experiment supported by the EU. Local residents at large or public administration are little, if at all, conscious of this. This is confirmed by several interviews with experts outside the Action's core group, too, and it is also signified by the fact that neither on a symbolic level (logo, title) nor as direct explanation do the notions of EU funding or CLLD appear, for instance, on information sheets and brochures advertising its events. Parts of the Action that have been more visible is a result of promotion by certain committed and capable individuals (Int. #8), yet the events and activities organised in its framework are generally associated with the participant associations, and *not* 'branded' by the project, not least by the EU-(co)funded tool for civil-action-based local development. There is low attention by media or politics to the action (Int. #8), and by those who know of it, it is seen as "one of the many other small projects" that have been led by the civil society (Int. #13) to support disadvantaged groups in Kotka. Therefore, there is almost no public awareness of the potential a more grassroots-initiated (or 'community-led') method could bring (esp. if/when implemented in a full-fledged, multi-fund way), neither of the EU's intention to support such place-based solutions. This limits the Action's effect as a source of innovation in local governance.

Analytical Dimension 5: Expression and mobilisation of place-based knowledge and adaptability

Forms of place-based knowledge: common understanding of problems, joint learning and shared network capital

Although the funding and overall framework for CLLD provided by the EU, as it is being filtered through national and regional institutions (see section 3.2.2) provides an overall framework for top-down mobilization, the availability of local and place-based knowledge in and for, the Action is almost inherent to it, 'built in' by default. Both the LEADER Local Action Group set up by Sepra for rural CLLD and the Urban Board established for civil-action-based local development in Kotka consist mostly of Kotka-residents representing local organisations, and have been part of the respective boards and the associated activities for several years. Their knowledge of the locality and its social/spatial injustices is robust, based on long personal experience of working mainly at the grassroots level. The platform provided by Sepra and the Urban Board means that the understanding of particular (social) problems and their solutions by the different organizations involved (e.g. about youth, immigrants or disabled) are brought together in a setting designed for joint actions, contributing to the joint solving of particular spatial injustices.

In addition, the different associations and the individual stakeholders representing them have benefitted from the increased cooperation and the networking during planning and participating in various activities. The participant associations and activists now have stronger links between themselves and others in the relevant fields, and they have gained more experience on organizing community-based activities as well as on carrying out ESF-supported projects. Stakeholders involved have been introduced to new methods of solving social problems and the establishing of additional personal contacts (expanding networks of co-operation) is something that all the interviewees agreed on being useful. Nevertheless, the extent of possible organizational or institutional learning appears to be more or less limited to the third-sector organizations involved in the project. Therefore, it is a matter of speculation how this place-based knowledge capital would be enriched and capitalised on if its production and use engaged, for instance, local businesses and more actors from the education sector.

Spatial scope of intervention and the mobilisation/adaptability of knowledge

The spatial scope of the Action in Kotka is not defined clearly in the (regional) Action Plan and the descriptions for the two consecutive projects carried out. The “central areas of Kotka” is the most used spatial reference, which includes Kotka Island and Karhula (see 3.1), which is predefined by the Finnish approach to deploy CLLD in urban centres having more than 23 000 inhabitants. In principle, that includes those areas of Kotka municipality that are not part of the LEADER programme in southern Kymenlaakso. With regards to the central areas of Kotka, no specific references to the problematic areas (identified in 3.2 above, i.e. Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari), are made in the Action- and project-related documents. As such, within the context of Kotka, the Action defines itself more through sectoral interventions, i.e. youth unemployment, integration of migrants, etc., rather than spatial ones. Nevertheless, the interviews among the CLLD action stakeholders clearly reflect a pronounced concern with social hotspots such as Karhuvuori and a number of third sector organisation involved in the Action have a significant share of their activities in these places.

Strength of the Action can actually be coming from this fluid approach to spatiality and ‘boundaries’. It is often cited in the interviews that it has much potential in integrating similar activities carried out in the central areas of Kotka and the surrounding rural areas (due to cross-coordination of the Kotka Action and the LEADER work by Sepra). This also involves possible adoption and adaptation of rural community-led practices to the urban context. This form of adaptability happens in the opposite direction, too. According to the Sepra representatives, some approaches and lessons learned deployed in the urban context through the two ESF-supported projects have been subsequently introduced in the more rural contexts of the surrounding LEADER areas, targeting similar, previously not addressed ‘social justice’ problems (Initial group interview, 12.2017 and Int. #22). These connections and interactions support a relatively seamless implementation of a local/sub-regional approach to promote social/spatial justice across the urban and the rural contexts in South Kymenlaakso.

Flexibility and adaptability of the Action in changing contexts is related to all the above. Stakeholders involved in it are aware of its nature of being a ‘fixed-term’ project, yet most interviewees expect the continuation of activities under different (funding) frameworks, with similar goals and ‘soft’ tools, based on the same networks, partnerships and personal connections that helped the Action emerge in the first place. Yet, being a civil society initiative also means that it is highly dependent on key personages who keep the spirit of cooperation up, have a vision and ability to supply new strategies for sustainability/adaptability.

5 Final Assessment: Capacities for Change

5.1 Synthesising Dimension A: Assessment of promoters and inhibitors

The promoters/inhibitors of the Action (the sequence of two projects led by Sepra in Kotka) can be regarded to be among promoters/inhibitors of its strength to reduce social/spatial justice in this city, too.

5.1.1 Promoters

- Local resources coming from various dimensions of the locality

Place-based and community-led local development cannot do without harnessing important local resources. These resources originate from the multi-dimensionality of the 'locality'. Firstly, Sepra, the association that had initiated the civil-action-based projects in Kotka has a good understanding of the main principles of what CLLD implies in their implementation of the LEADER programme in rural surroundings of Kotka. Also, linked to this experience, Sepra has significant local-regional as well as national and even European relational/social capital to rely on as a resource (building its competence, gaining up-to-date information about higher-level processes, and learning innovative practices, etc.). Its representative regularly participates in relevant forums at both the national and European levels, using the opportunity to learn about new ideas and trends, decisions-in-the-make as well as to share their experience with other interested parties. The Action thus is connected into a network of organisations, stakeholders, practitioners, experts and decision-making bodies not only within but also beyond urban Kotka, and as such improves distributive aspects of spatial justice.

- Place-based and up-to-date knowledge from the third sector

Regarding the issues of social/spatial injustice (within the urban core of Kotka), the dominance of locally relevant and active civil-society organisations within the Urban Board behind the Action (and among the core participants) is an important promoter of place-based and even 'community-led' developments. These are the stakeholders closest to the target groups and the socio-economically problematic neighbourhoods. As such, they enjoy residents' trust and understand well their emergent needs and problems, and they have the highest potential and most effective means to engage and activate them for local development. By strengthening these local actors (with additional resources such as a joint platform for cooperation and some funding) the Action delivers enhanced procedural justice to them and the locality.

- Participatory shift in city management to fairer procedures

In Kotka, as in many other cities in Finland (Int. #25), there has lately been some shift in terms of local policy making (e.g. Kotka's new City Strategy) towards more recognition of the importance of citizen participation/engagement and the mobilisation of communities. This has created a favourable atmosphere for the Action to unfold and, potentially, develop further. The notably active role a representative of the city has played in the project's Urban Board and Monitoring Group is attributable not only to former successful personal collaborations between her and Sepra (and others in the core groups of Action participants) but, presumably, also to this change.

- Supportive vertical coordination and funding 'from above'

Looking at the regional level, the Action has received the initial impetus from Kymenlaakso region. It is one of those regions in Finland that had found it important to support community-led (or more accurately, civil-action-based) local development at least

by providing some (ERDF) 'seed funding' for the preparation of a relevant (regional) Action Plan in the urban context of Kotka by the Sepra association (as well as regarding Kouvola, by the Pohjois-Kymen Kasvu association). The existence of such elaborate Action Plan had proved to be a key to receiving project funding from the regional ELY centre from the ESF. Finally, no one can deny the 'empowering' importance, to this small Action even, of the Structural Funds Operational Programme and the EU's cohesion policy in promoting (financially and otherwise) participatory and place-based approaches in Finland and in Europe.

5.1.2 Inhibitors

- A policy tool in-the-make causing inconsistency between governance levels

Notwithstanding the above, the national 'filter' in deploying the EU's 'ideal' of CLLD in Finland has meant a major limitation for the Action to be 'genuine CLLD': in Finland it is mono-funded, sector-specific and voluntary projects. 'Urban CLLD' in Finland can use only ESF, and does not have the conditions for cross-sectoral and integrated way of CLLD. Some discussion on the national level started on a potential implementation of a multi-fund approach around 2017 (e.g. inter-ministerial 'CLLD Working Group'), but it is difficult to anticipate whether it will be realised. Clearer, more thoughtful and targeted recommendations or guidelines from the EU would also be required to help find optimal ways of implementing the still quite vague concept of CLLD, in particular national contexts.

- Exclusion of a part of the 'community': local businesses and some other relevant actors

The Action largely excluded local enterprises from its activities. This is unfortunate as local small and medium-sized businesses, start-up mentors, incubators and similar organisations would be an important resource to mobilise. This is particularly so that one of the key aspects of social/spatial inequalities in the city is insufficient levels of employability and equal opportunity for jobs (of youth, immigrants, disabled). Local businesses would have been useful particularly in the planning (as co-designers) of the Action, together with third sector and public sector. Interviewees also suggested that small and micro-sized enterprises are not entirely appreciated in Kotka; and entrepreneurial spirit, especially among youth is also rather low in this city. All these observations underline the need for cross-sectoral and integrated place-based approach to correcting social/spatial injustice. Besides, assumedly, the weak presence of (vocational) education institutions as a partner in the Action can be also the result of it having failed to attract private sector stakeholders into cross-sectoral cooperation. Lacking real access to these significant and relevant local resources, the Action's cannot have full capacity of procedural empowerment.

- Low visibility

Furthermore, as mentioned above (in 4.2.2), real participation and inclusion of the residents is lop-sided towards the beginning of the Action. The implementation of the 'projects' has a relatively low visibility in Kotka, which may be attributable to several reasons (partly justifiable by the small-scale funding the projects receive). One is an apparent lack of a wider scale deliberate 'marketing' by its owners. The Action being limited to the third sector, and within that, mainly to the disadvantaged groups themselves also makes it less noticeable to the local society at large. These somewhat reduce its otherwise high potential to deliver important messages to and activate positive energies, synergies, cooperation's etc. across, the wider society of Kotka.

5.2 Synthesising Dimension B: Competences and capacities of stakeholders

5.2.1 Organisations and residents as stakeholders

The organisations involved in the Action each has distinctive knowledge and accountability to deal with certain kinds of social/spatial injustice, but their scope of action is limited by a scarcity of financial and human resources. In light of this, key mechanisms of both distributive and procedural empowerment can be detected in and by the Action. These third-sector actors receive small additional financial resource what they use mainly for capacity building, which in turn creates clear procedural advantages, i.e. an extended collaborative platform as well as effective leadership and coordination of joint activities. As a result, participants in the Action can pool their resources and ideas more broadly and more frequently, exert joint influence on their target communities and to some extent, local decisions, and can represent better the interest of vulnerable groups in Kotka, the final beneficiaries.

5.2.2 The City as a stakeholder

Considering the fact that the City (public sector) directly is a stakeholder, it is important to see the relation between its capacities/competences and the Action. There are elements in the deployment of the Action that indicate complementarity between the public sector and the grassroots in terms of resources, capacities and competences. On the one hand, Kotka city administration can benefit from working together with this (and similar) civil-sector-driven initiatives. The third sector is more likely to own the 'soft' and more nuanced perception and knowledge of processes behind social/spatial injustice and a more intricate 'procedural' understanding of local problems as these tend to arise from everyday contact with specific vulnerable groups. On the other hand, the municipality has financial resources backing up a more straightforward, maybe more conventional 'distributive' intervention approach, e.g. infrastructural investments to problem neighbourhoods, social aid and subsidies. These two perceptions and ways of intervention can be well combined; for instance, the community houses at various locations in urban Kotka provided by the City offer the physical space for third-sector activities, including some arranged by the Action at hand. Cross-sector cooperation in the Action also provides space for the interaction between the formal/municipal and informal/grassroots understandings of ('soft' and 'hard' ways of solving) social/spatial injustice in urban Kotka. As such develops capacities of Kotka as a whole to treat social/spatial injustice.

5.3 Synthesising Dimension C: Connecting the action to procedural and distributive justice

5.3.1 Achievements in terms of distributive and procedural justice

The Action certainly responds to many needs of the city of Kotka, as it has managed to strengthen civil society in areas where the most substantial social/spatial injustices are perceived both by the third-sector and public decision makers. This has been achieved through small additional funding channelled more-or-less directly to local third-sector organisations, genuine 'grassroots' actors that directly engage with vulnerable groups and their needs, to facilitate more effective coordination and cooperation between them. Using ESF, and in it the Priority 5 of the Finnish OP, is appropriate for such aims (and has been used to support similar initiatives in other Finnish cities), regardless of the fact that it represents a rather restricted version of the EU's CLLD tool. It enhances social/spatial justice in both its distributive and procedural aspects.

Yet, the Action excluded an important group of local stakeholders and beneficiaries, (esp. small and medium-sized) businesses. Thus, on top of missing out a key place-based resource and stakeholdership mobilizable for the empowerment of certain social groups (as well as specific neighbourhoods and urban Kotka as a whole), some aspects of social/spatial injustice are reinforced.

Kotka, in a Finnish context, is a city of disparities with pockets of deprivation particularly visible in Karhuvuori and Hovinsaari – indicating inequalities in terms of both the distributive and the procedural aspects of social/spatial justice. This is perceived more-or-less in the same way by the third sector and city officials, as well as in public opinion. However, the Action does not depart from a more-or-less ‘aspatial’ or universalist approach typical of welfare states, and thus generally pursued by the City of Kotka as regards tackling social-economic marginalisation (at least in its social aid system). In other words, the Action does not directly differentiate between neighbourhoods when implementing its activities; it wishes to stay inclusive in its supportive work of all youth, unemployed, immigrant etc. – regardless of place of residence within urban Kotka. It is also true, however, that a member-association in the Urban Board ‘platform’ has a distinct neighbourhood approach to the activation of unemployed youth, and at the end of the day, residents from the problematic parts of the city are overrepresented among people reached by the Action.

Not opting to bring together citizens, local businesses, schools, associations, politicians from a single, particularly deprived neighbourhood, the projects supported by ESF create synergies *within* a single sector across Kotka and link it to some extent to municipal decision makers. In light of the above, the question remains whether, from the perspective of *spatial* justice, it would be more effective to focus specifically on a disadvantaged neighbourhood with an integrated, cross-sector approach.

This latest merit, i.e. bringing third-sector actors together with City representatives is important regarding changing perceptions of ‘poverty’. As mentioned earlier, the voluntary sector has a ‘soft’, more contextual interpretation of socio-economic problems, understanding the processes leading to marginalisation in more complex ways, and therefore, is able to come up with alternative and complementary solutions to social/spatial injustices to those generally deployed by the public sector. Opportunities for ‘cross-sectoral- debates and joint thinking such as those offered by the Urban Board and the Action itself may help to better understand and overcome the observable reluctance in Finland to talk about the existence of poverty and its spatial manifestations in the country (Focus Group Discussion, 20.11.2018).

5.3.2 *The link between just procedures and just outcomes*

Drawing the link between just procedures and fair outcomes requires us to answer the question whether the Action, through its procedural practices and innovations, has been able to positively influence spatial justice in Kotka. The small funds provided through the Action are utilised by a group of third-sector organisations and activists to deepen their cooperation, develop their capacities via increased exchanges as well as to facilitate effective coordination of their activities – all for the ultimate benefit of their respective target groups, i.e. those at risk of marginalisation in Kotka. The Action’s outcomes therefore start with the channelling of ‘seed money’ to empower *organisations* that are the most pertinent to dealing with social/spatial injustice on the ground and in most need of such empowerment. This is a ‘first-level’ outcome, or an immediate ‘output’ of the civil-society initiative in focus, the emergence of which itself indicates fair opportunity structures (procedural justice) in place (OP Priority 5): i.e. ‘fair procedures’ resulting in (re)distribution of some financial resources for empowering the very local level.

The second step in realising positive outcome is the activation of local residents, especially those belonging to the vulnerable target groups – the unemployed youth and immigrants, youth in general, and the disabled. As it is presented above in Table 2 and explained in 4.2.2, the Action (especially in the preparation phase, but also in implementing activities), has triggered more direct and frequent interactions with these target groups, which certainly has a stimulating impact on these people in greatest need of such engagement. This is the second-level outcome, and the final aim of the projects under the Action themselves.

Considering social/spatial justice, this activation of members of marginalised and vulnerable groups represents in itself a fair outcome in terms of its effect in delivering better social inclusion. Here again, it can be pointed out, that being marginalised, either due to unemployment, impairment or immigration, results in social isolation and passivity, so the significance of participation in joint events and activities should not be underestimated. So, the Action can be assumed to have at least this positive ‘ultimate’ impact on the distributive aspect of social/spatial justice. Regarding this final level of outcomes, referring back to the scale of the funding and the short, project-based (non-institutional) nature of the Action, no other or more direct (re-) distributive effects can be detected as to, e.g. improving employability of youth or migrants.

5.3.3 The link between the achieved impact and a place-based approach

ESF funding (under the OP Priority 5) comes from both the national and European levels. Current processes indicate that the experience from the projects implemented within this framework since 2015 is being shared and exchanged between various parties involved, changing perceptions. In Finland, the idea of CLLD has recently attracted the attention also of policy fields other than that of rural development. An inter-ministerial ‘CLLD Working Group’ was established in 2017 as part of the preparation for the next EU programming period. This offers a possibility for ‘uploading’ ideas from local practices into national and European policy-making. Only time will tell whether this will lead to the expansion of ‘civil-action-based’ to an integrated and multi-fund ‘community-led’ local development approach, or whether European policy will promote more flexible and diverse arrangements in its member states. Meanwhile, several parallel but also connected horizontal processes (within Finland, within and beyond the LEADER network, and in EU policy making) affect the capacities of the ‘local actors’ and their localities. Hence, the Action, embedded in the vertical and horizontal dimensions of its locality, signifies the pursuit in Europe (and Finland) of procedural innovations that encourage more place-based development.

The Action in focus of this study, simply due to its scope and project-based nature, cannot be expected to bring about a major positive turn in the trends that influence levels of social/spatial inequalities in Kotka. There are a range of more powerful external and internal factors and institutions/organisations that have been creating or relieving such injustices. Also, the Action is not implemented under the original ‘CLLD framework’ as it is proposed as a Cohesion Policy tool by the EU, so it falls short of some important principles (integrated local development) that would offer it higher capacity to promote place-based development via addressing procedural aspect of social/spatial justice. As such, the ‘civil-action-based local development’ initiative has naturally no capacity to introduce an institutional change or a new ‘mode of governance’ to its locality. Still, the Action has an intrinsic place-basedness as it is rooted in the fact that it is formulated and initiated by civil society, and performed by individuals and organisations who have for long lived/worked in Kotka for the support of various vulnerable groups, and is also linked to local decision making.

6 Conclusions

The ‘Action’ studied in Kotka, embodied by two consecutive grassroots projects targeting the activation of residents and particularly those at risk of marginalisation, is clearly a local and ‘bottom-up’ initiative aiming at improving spatial justice. The concept of spatial justice – understood as a “fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them” (Madanipour et al. 2017: 18) – translates best for the Action in terms of the activation and empowerment of vulnerable groups in the city. This is achieved via strengthening the partnership and capacity building of a set of third-sector organisations using the ‘distribution’ of a very small amount of external funding granted by the EU and channelled through Finland’s Structural Funds Programme, and ultimately, by including people in various social interactions who are disadvantaged in some ways and susceptible to social isolation. Being a grassroots initiative, the Action by nature is using a ‘soft’ approach to alleviating socio-economic problems and exclusion, which complements pertinent municipal duties and tools, the City’s and the State’s formal public policies and supportive structures for people at risk of marginalisation in Kotka.

Despite its ties to ‘urban Kotka’, the spatiality of the Action is difficult to define in a straightforward way. Practically being an extension to the rural ‘Leader LAG’ work that the coordinating association Sepra carries out in Southern Kymenlaakso, the Action is able to utilise experiences and networks thereof, and it promotes connections and joint activities between people living in urban Kotka and its surrounding countryside. Though acknowledging the existence of clear spatial clusters of socio-economic problems within urban Kotka, the leaders of the Action choose to deal with certain social groups across the whole urban area, maybe in order to avoid reinforcing existing negative reputation of particular neighbourhoods, or simply due to Sepra’s sub-regional orientation and networks, which does not really correspond to such ‘sub-local’ spatial focus. Finally, this local Action is able to draw on ideas, practices, network capital as well as financial resources coming from European, national and regional levels by being embedded in the multilevel delivery of cohesion policies, and especially by Sepra’s commitment and active engagement in European and national networks on CLLD. The Action, hence, with regards to the resources and capacities it uses to act upon spatial injustice as well as considering its actual impacts, reflects well that “(l)ocalities are not bound enclaves, but porous and interlinked parts of wider contexts” (Madanipour et al. 2017: 18). This relational approach adopted in this Report – as well as in the RELOCAL project in general – to the space of a local Action and the concept of ‘locality’ has helped to better understand the sources of capacities and directions of power relations that give rise to patterns and processes of spatial (in)justice concerning the local level and its stakeholders.

Due to its reliance on external resources, this local, civil-society initiative has been both enabled and controlled ‘from above’ by European, national and regional interests, priorities and structures. The Action represents a community-led local development type of initiative, and as such fulfils some of the elements of the single ‘CLLD-methodology’ outlined by the EU (EC 2013, 2014), such as a focus on sub-regional areas, place-based strategic thinking (production of an action plan), engagement of residents, networking and partnership between the local civil society and the public sector. The two consecutive grassroots projects themselves do not (and cannot), however, deliver an integrated, multi-sectoral local development strategy and connect or integrate various European funds (ESIF). Some integration of interventions promoting balanced socio-economic development in Kotka happens via the the Action’s relationships to other levels and stakeholders, e.g. via Kymenlaakso Region’s early support offered from ERDF (for the Action Plan), and indirect influences on the municipal strategy’s participatory dimension.

It is also true, that some choices by the project's coordinator could be assessed as some opportunities missed regarding a more integrated, intersectoral approach to helping e.g. unemployed and immigrant youth. Local businesses, or their representation by trade unions or job centres, could have been invited to be co-designers of the Action, joining the third and public sectors in order to achieve more innovative and synergetic solutions and steer target groups closest to 'real life' jobs. A more pronounced focus on neighbourhoods could also have triggered a more integrated, 'community-based' Action.

The rationale for the research conducted in Kotka was to investigate the general assumption that cohesion policies – policies by the EU and/or individual countries that aim at spatially balanced and sustainable economic development and improved quality of life across their territory – are more effective if their deployment is brought closer to the local level and the citizens. The Action analysed also indicates that such 'autonomy' of the local level depends both on its powers granted by law and procedures as well as on its own (its stakeholders') capacities to formulate and pursue a place-based strategy for local development. Various instances of 'empowerment' occur in relation to the civil-society-initiated Action in Kotka, linking multi-level structures, processes, interests and resources with stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in reducing social/spatial justice within the city. The factors that limit and extend the Action's potential to increase the autonomy of the local level in addressing spatial injustice are to be sought not only in its own intervention logic, but also across the multiple levels that 'govern' the Action despite it being genuinely a 'bottom-up' initiative.

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8 Annexes

8.1 Research methods, participants and stakeholder interaction

Initial group interview for 'mapping' the action

Participants: Two representatives of the Sepra association in charge of the studied CLLD action (interviewed also separately: int. #20), and two further members of the Urban Board (*kaupunkijaosto*).

Place: Kotka

Date and time: 9:00 – 13:00, 1.12.2017

Semi-structured expert interviews

(White indicates local-level; light grey shading regional-level, dark grey shading national stakeholders; in italics: public-sector organisations.)

#	organisation/type of organisation represented	way/place of the interview	date
1	Local third-sector organisation (association of social psychiatry and improving mental health), Kotka	Skype	23.1.2018
2	<i>Kotka city (social care)</i>	Skype	23.1.2018
3	<i>Local public organisations (member of national network, services for job seekers under 30 years of age), Kotka</i>	Skype	26.1.2018
4	Local third-sector organisation (multicultural centre), Kotka	face-to-face, Kotka	17.5.2018
5	Local third-sector organisation (foundation, for improving employability), Kotka	face-to-face, Kotka	17.5.2018
6	<i>Kotka city (immigration)</i>	<i>face-to-face, Kotka</i>	17.5.2018
7	Local third-sector organisation (association, member of international NGO supporting children), Kotka	face-to-face, Kotka	17.5.2018
8	<i>Kotka city (city council member)</i>	<i>face-to-face, Kotka</i>	18.5.2018
9	Local third-sector organisations (association serving interests of disabled people), Kotka	face-to-face, Kotka	18.5.2018
10	Individual, member of the Urban Board, Kotka	face-to-face, Kotka	18.5.2018
11	Local third-sector organisation (association of community service centres), Kotka	face-to-face, Kotka incl. short walk in a neighbourhood	18.5.2018
12	<i>Kotka city (welfare services)</i>	Phone	22.5.2018
13	Regional third-sector organisation (regional association, supporting families with children, children's shelter), Kymenlaakso regions	Phone	23.5.2018
14	Teacher in Kotka-based vocational college, member in the Urban Board	Phone	23.5.2018
15	<i>Kotka city (development manager)</i>	<i>face-to-face, Kotka</i>	29.5.2018
16	Local parish, Kotka	face-to-face, Kotka	29.5.2018
17	<i>National-level expert from the Ministry of Agriculture, member of the CLLD Working Group of Finland</i>	Skype	07.9.2018
18	<i>Regional public agency (ELY centre) responsible for ESF</i>	Skype	19.9.2018
19	<i>Kymenlaakso Regional Council, Dept. of Regional Dev.</i>	Skype	19.9.2018
20	<i>Kotka city (youth, volunteer work)</i>	Skype	02.11.2018
21	<i>Kotka city (youth)</i>	Skype	06.11.2018

			8
22	Local-regional third-sector organisation (Sepra) in charge of the urban CLLD projects in Kotka (also a member association for South Kymenlaakso within the Finnish LEADER network)	Skype	13.11.2018
23	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	face-to-face, Helsinki	07.11.2018
24	Ministry of Employment and the Economy	face-to-face, Helsinki	07.11.2018
25	Ministry of Employment and the Economy	Skype	05.12.2018

Table 3. Expert interviews carried out between 1.12.2017 and 24. 9.2018

Focus Group Discussion

A three-hour Focus Group Workshop was carried out in Kotka on 20 November 2018. It included representatives of various levels from the local to the national related to the Action. The focus topic of the discussion was “*Civil-action-based local development in the city of Kotka*”. The Focus Group was composed of seven research participants, who were previous interviewees in the project. Two people came from the LEADER association Sepra, and two further members of the ‘urban board’ of the Action were present besides them, one of whom represented also the City of Kotka. From the regional level, a representative of the Regional Council of Kymenlaakso and one from the ELY Centre of Häme participated, while a representative of a national-level stakeholder, the Rural Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (which, via its involvement with LEADER, is a key actor in CLLD-related national policy debates) joined via Skype-conferencing. Professor Emeritus Heikki Eskelinen was the moderator of the discussions, and three researchers from the UEF Team were present, taking notes and making small interventions.

Observation of official events linked to the local action

- 1) Meeting of the Urban Board / kaupunkijaosto (ten participants), 29.5.2018, Multicultural Centre ‘Mylly’, Kotka. 12:00-14:00 participants? (Method: observation.)
- 2) Meeting of the Project Monitoring Group (seven participants), 29.5.2018, Multicultural Centre ‘Mylly’, Kotka. 14:15-16:00 (Method: observation.)
- 3) CLLD2030 Innovation Camp: a two-day workshop engaging CLLD stakeholders across Finland, representing various sectors and a range of levels from local actions to Ministries in Finland (incl. some of the case study’s expert interviewees, too). 2-3.10.2018, Sastamala. (Method: participant observation; representing scientific research and contributing with the approach and questions of the RELOCAL project.)
- 4) Kasvun Karavaani, Kotka 30.10.2018. A researcher was observing this one-day event in Kotka, which was organised by Leader Sepra. Kasvun Karavaani (“*Caravan of Growth*”) is made of series of similar events taking place at different cities. The topics vary, but are focused on issues like regional development, vitality and the future of the EU. In Kotka, Leader Sepra was showcasing its activities, there were talks about the future of the EU and discussions on different aspects of regional development.

Stakeholder Interaction

Type of Stakeholders	#	Stakeholders' ways of involvement in the project
Local politicians	1	interviewee
Local administration	7	interviewees
Non-profit/civil society organisations representing vulnerable groups	6	interviewees, participants at observed events
Other local community stakeholders	1	interviewees, participants at observed events and the focus group discussion, receiving draft for comments
Local state offices/representations	1	interviewee
Regional state offices/representations	2	interviewees, participants at observed events and the focus group discussion
Ministries involved in (national or EU) cohesion policy deployment	4	interviewee, focus group participant
Colleges and universities	1	interviewee
Cultural institutions & associations (local)	1	interviewee, participant at observed events
Church (local)	1	interviewee

Table 4. Stakeholder interactions during empirical work

8.2 Detailed Statistical Information on the Locality of Kotka

As indicated in Figure 6, Kymenlaakso and Kotka have followed the same trajectory from 1975 until 2000, when the decline in Kotka levelled out but continued in Kymenlaakso as a whole. From around 2010 onwards, population decline in the city of Kotka accelerated again during the last couple of years. From 1975 to 2016, Kymenlaakso lost 12 percent and Kotka 14 percent of their population, whereas Finland as a whole has increased its population by about 17 per cent during the same period. It is interesting to note that among the 20 largest municipalities in Finland, two out three municipalities have that have experienced negative population development from 2010 to 2016 are located in Kymenlaakso (Kouvola (-2766, -3%) and Kotka (-637, -1%)). Overall, the situation in terms of population development is hence rather negative in the case study region.

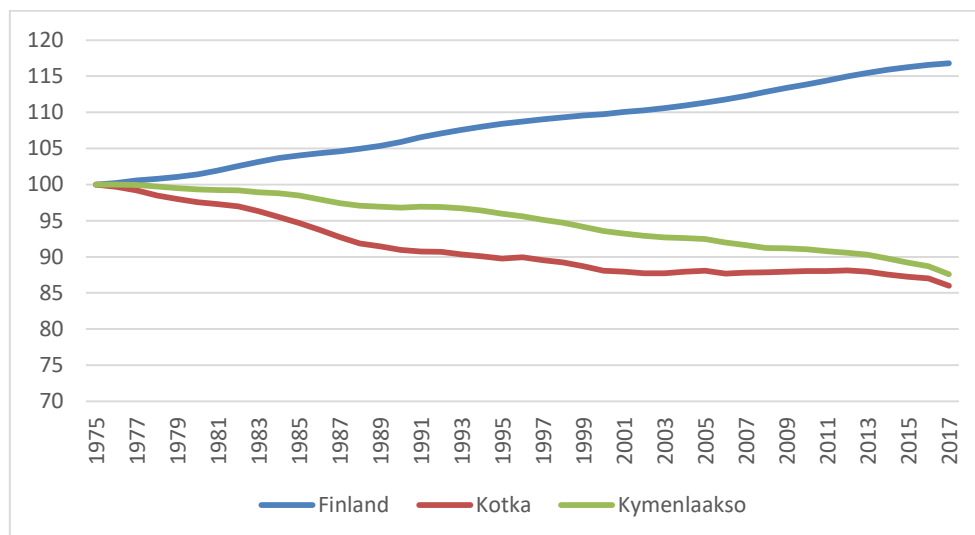


Figure 6. Population development in Kotka and its wider regional contexts, 1975-2016 (1975=100)
(Source: Statistics Finland)

The demographic situation in the case study area is also signified by processes of ageing. Ageing is a concern for Finland as a whole, but the process is more advanced in Kymenlaakso and Kotka. As can be seen from Figure 7, the trajectory is similar for all three

territories in question: average age has increased by 5-6 years from 1990 to 2016. However, the average age in Kymenlaakso in Kotka has continuously been approximately 2-3 years higher than the national average.

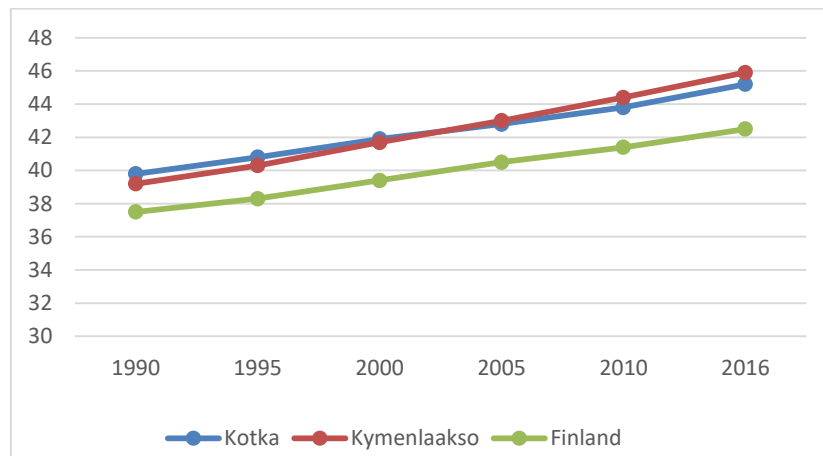


Figure 7. Changes in the average age in Kotka and its wider regional contexts, 1990-2016
(Source: Statistics Finland)

The development of the age structure in Kotka is congruent with the increase in average age. As shown in Figure 8 below, the share of persons aged 65 or over has increased particularly from 2010 onwards. At the same time, the shares of young people and those at working age have decreased. In 2016, the age structure of Kotka and Kymenlaakso was almost identical.

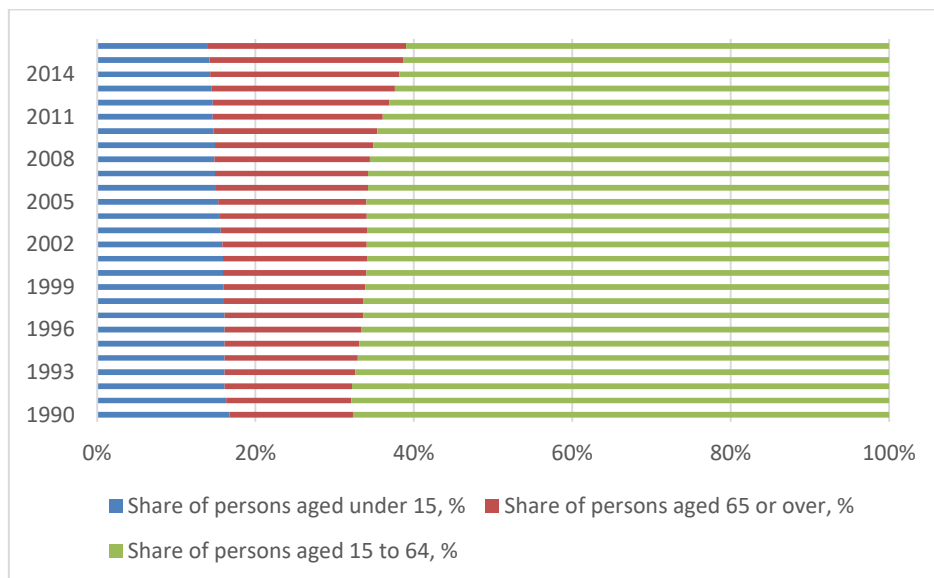


Figure 8. Age structure of the population of Kotka, 2016
(Source: Statistics Finland)

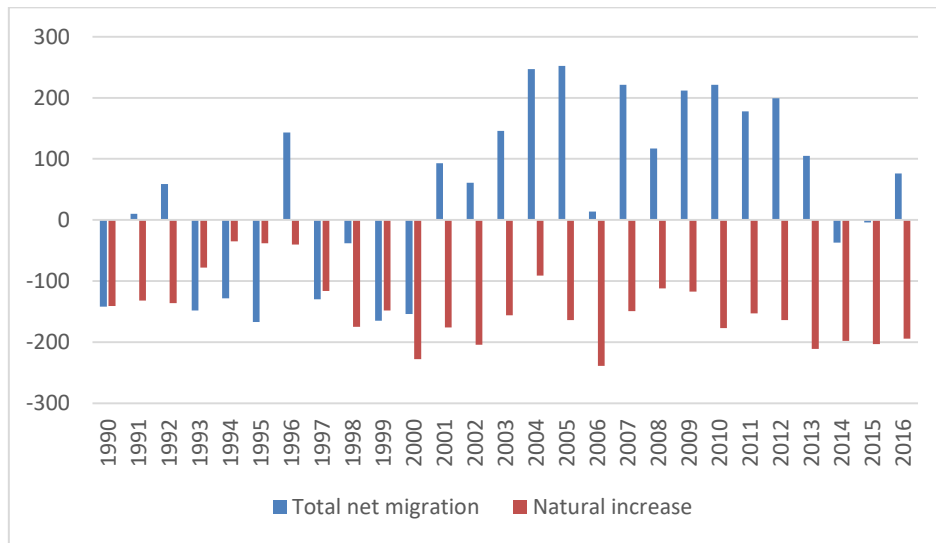


Figure 9. Development of total net migration and natural increase values in Kotka, 1990-2016
(Source: Statistics Finland)

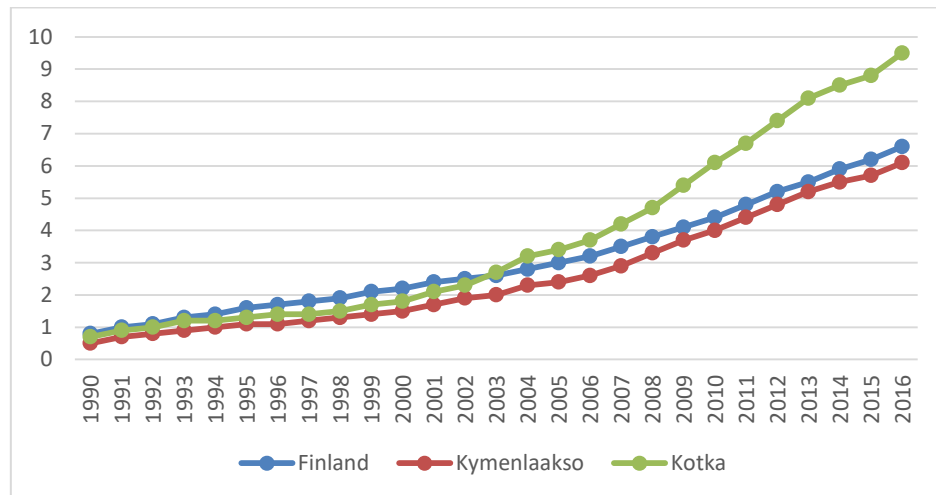


Figure 10. Changes in the share of population with a foreign background³ in Kotka, 1990-2016
(Source: Statistics Finland)

As to the components of population development, natural increase has been continuously negative in Kotka since 1990. This means that the number of births was not able to compensate for the number of deaths. In addition, total net migration in Kotka (Figure 9 above) was mostly negative between 1990 and 2000 but generally positive between 2001 and 2013. From 2014 onwards, it appears that Kotka has again entered a situation where more people leave the city than move to it, although total net migration in 2016 had again been on the positive side, which is due to external in-migration. A relatively new variable

³ "Persons whose both parents or the only known parent have been born abroad are considered to be persons with foreign background. Persons who have been born abroad and whose parents' data are not included in the Population Information System are also considered to be persons with foreign background." From Statistics Finland (stat.fi).

in the population development of Kotka, and one cushioning population decline, has been immigration from abroad. As can be seen from Figure 10 above, the share of persons with a foreign background has increased in Kotka from a mere 0.7 percent in 1990 to 9.5 percent in 2016. From 2003, onwards the process of internationalisation was faster than in Kymenlaakso as a whole, as well as in Finland on average. It is in fact interesting to note that in 2016 Kotka was one of the larger Finnish cities with the highest share of persons with a foreign background, only behind Vantaa (17%), Espoo (15.3%), Helsinki (15%), and Turku (10.9%).

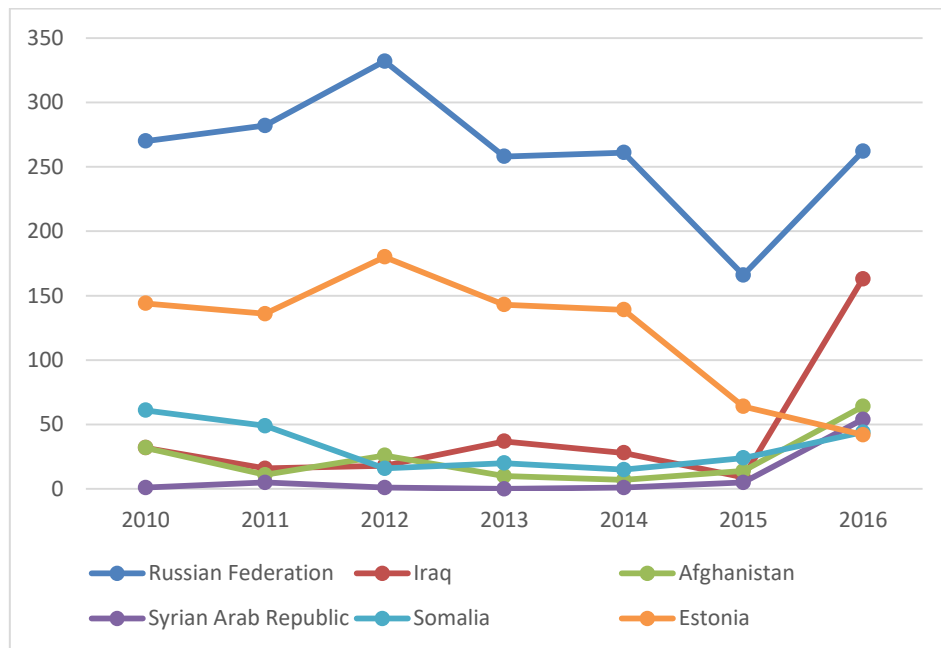


Figure 11. Changes in the composition of immigration by origin to Kotka, 2010-2016
(Source: Statistics Finland)

Figure 11 above shows the largest groups of immigrants by origin (2016) and their development over time. The exit country with highest number of immigrants to Kotka is the Russian Federation. The numbers of Russian immigrants have remained remarkably stable at about 270 persons per year, with a drop to 160 in 2015. Estonians had been the second largest group until 2015, but their numbers have dropped continuously from 2012 onwards and they were only the 6th largest group in 2016. As a relatively new phenomenon, refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq have arrived, and the Iraqis represent the second largest group of immigrant population in 2016 with 163 persons.

In terms of economic development, Kotka and the region of Kymenlaakso have been hit hard by structural change and loss of jobs in industry, above all in the pulp, paper, and basic metals branches. Kymenlaakso's contribution to the national economy in relative terms has been in decline for at least the last 15 years as its contribution to the Finnish GDP dropped from of 3.7 percent in 2000 to 2.8 percent in 2014 (Source: Eurostat). This means that Kymenlaakso has fallen from the rank of the 6th largest regional contributor to the national economy in 2000 to the 11th in 2014. The structural change and resultant struggling economy in Kotka are also mirrored in the unemployment rate: as indicated in Figure 12 below, Kotka has continuously had higher unemployment rates than Kymenlaakso region and Finland as a whole. The gap has been particularly large from 2009 onwards resulting in a situation where the unemployment rate of Kotka was 22.4 percent, bringing unemployment back up to levels experienced during the recession after

the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, as opposed to 14.2 percent in Finland as a whole.

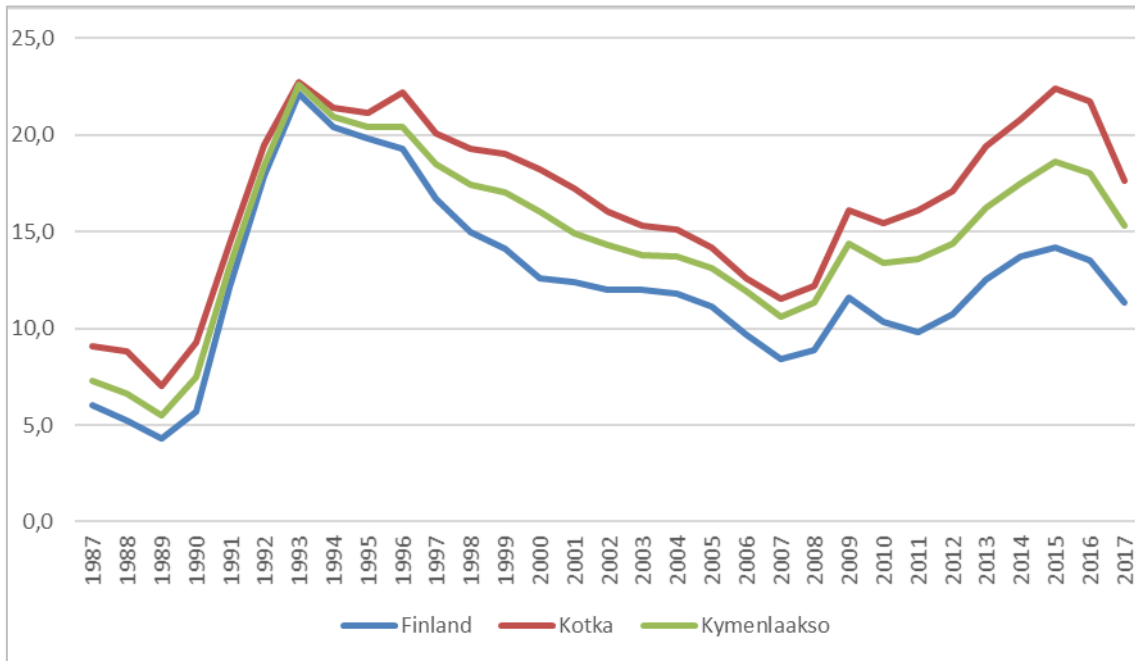


Figure 12. Change in unemployment, Finland, Kotka and Kymenlaakson 1987-2017 (%)
(Share of unemployed among population aged 18-74. Source of data: Statistics Finland)

Often going hand in hand with the decline of employment opportunities in traditional industries, a particularly worrying trend in Kotka is the increase of the structurally unemployed, i.e. persons who are difficult to employ as the percentage of persons aged 15 - 64. As can be seen in Figure 13 below, the percentage of the structurally unemployed has increased continuously from 2008 onwards to 10.1 percent in 2016 and the gap between the situation in Kotka and the national average appears to be widening.

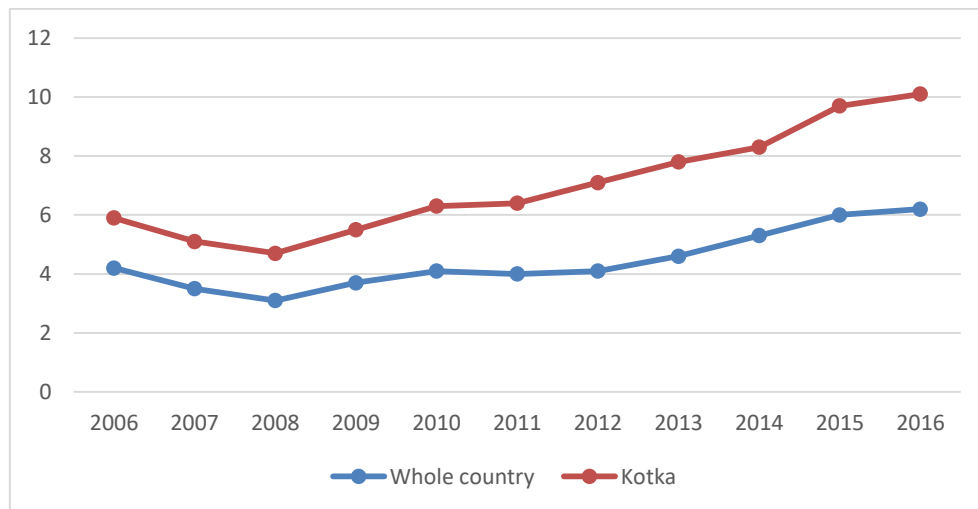


Figure 13. Share of persons difficult to employ (structural unemployment), pop. aged 15-64 (%)
(Source: Statistics Finland)

8.3 Further information on wider policy context of the Action

The strategies and guiding documents of the City of Kotka

- The overall City Strategy 2018 - 2025
- The economic strategy for the Kotka-Hamina region 2016 – 2019
- Welfare report 2016
- Strategy for the disabled 2013 – 2016
- The strategy for elderly care 2008 – 2015
- The welfare plan for the children and the youth 2014 – 2017
- The mental health and substance abuse strategy for southern Kymenlaakso 2012 – 2016
- Services of general interest strategy 2020
- The service strategy for the children and the youth in Kotka 2011 – 2016
- The service network report and service strategy 2020
- The population policy programme 2008 – 2030
- The personnel strategy 2013 – 2016
- The environment and energy programme for Kotka

One-Stop Guidance Centres across Finland to support youth

The One-Stop Guidance Centres are an initiative where services are brought together under integrated support centres to shorten the service provision processes. These centres have received exceptionally wide support. Several ministries, The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres), the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela), the public employment and business services (TE Centres), local authorities, NGOs and businesses have joined in to develop the multi-agency concept, on-the-ground leadership and, most importantly, to challenge conventional practices and operational cultures. In all this development work, our customers, the young people, have remained at the core.

The number of customer visits and level of service participation have both increased. What is more important, however, is that the feedback from the young themselves is more positive than we had ever hoped for. Despite all the positive experiences, more needs to be done and many issues must still be addressed. One of the highest priority development targets are the necessary follow-up practices and how NGOs and businesses could participate in the operations. (Määttä, 2018:3)

The administrative structure of the City of Kotka

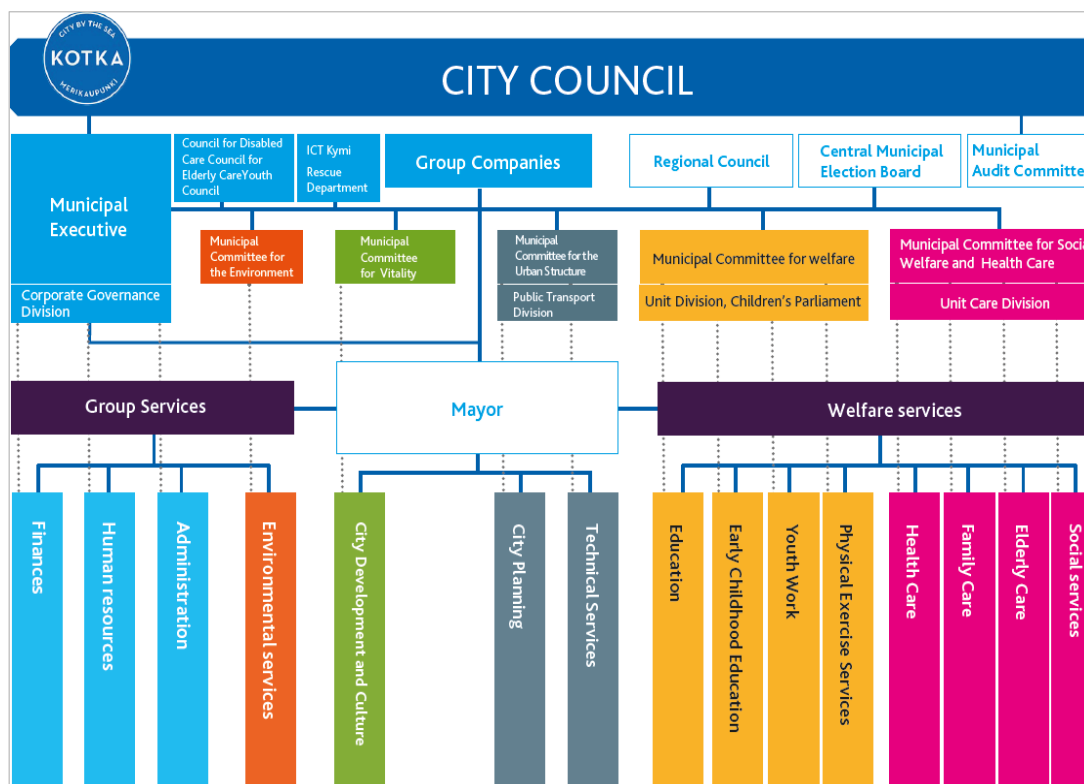


Figure 14. The administrative structure of the City of Kotka
(Source: Kotka municipal website)

8.4 The Action's Urban Board 2018

Member	Organisation
Leena Ruotsalainen	City of Kotka
Terhi Lindholm	City of Kotka
Elina Virmakoski	Langinkoski Local Parish
Anne Heimola	Association 'Kotkan Korttelikotiyhdistys' with community centres in Kotka
Matti Erävala	Pohjola-Norden association (cultural activities)
Raimo Hynninen	Leader association Sepra
Teija Iivari	Ekami - vocational school
Johanna Hasu	Multicultural Centre 'Mylly'
Sirpa Ollikainen	Haapasaari Club promoting the local island culture and heritage
Ville Laakso	Leader association Sepra
Antti Remus	Individual activist
Heidi Nevalainen	Individual activist

Eva Pukkila	Individual activist, links to 'Me Itse' group for the disabled and member of Kotka's advisory board on those issues
Anssi Karhu	Individual activist

(Source: Sepra's website)

8.5 Photo Gallery



Figure 15. 'Maailma Kymissä' and Kymi Fest –events, 25th August 2018
Images from the regional cultural event organised by the Action inspired by a larger multicultural event 'World Village Festival', held in Helsinki every summer
(Sources: Sepra ry. and Ohjaamo website)

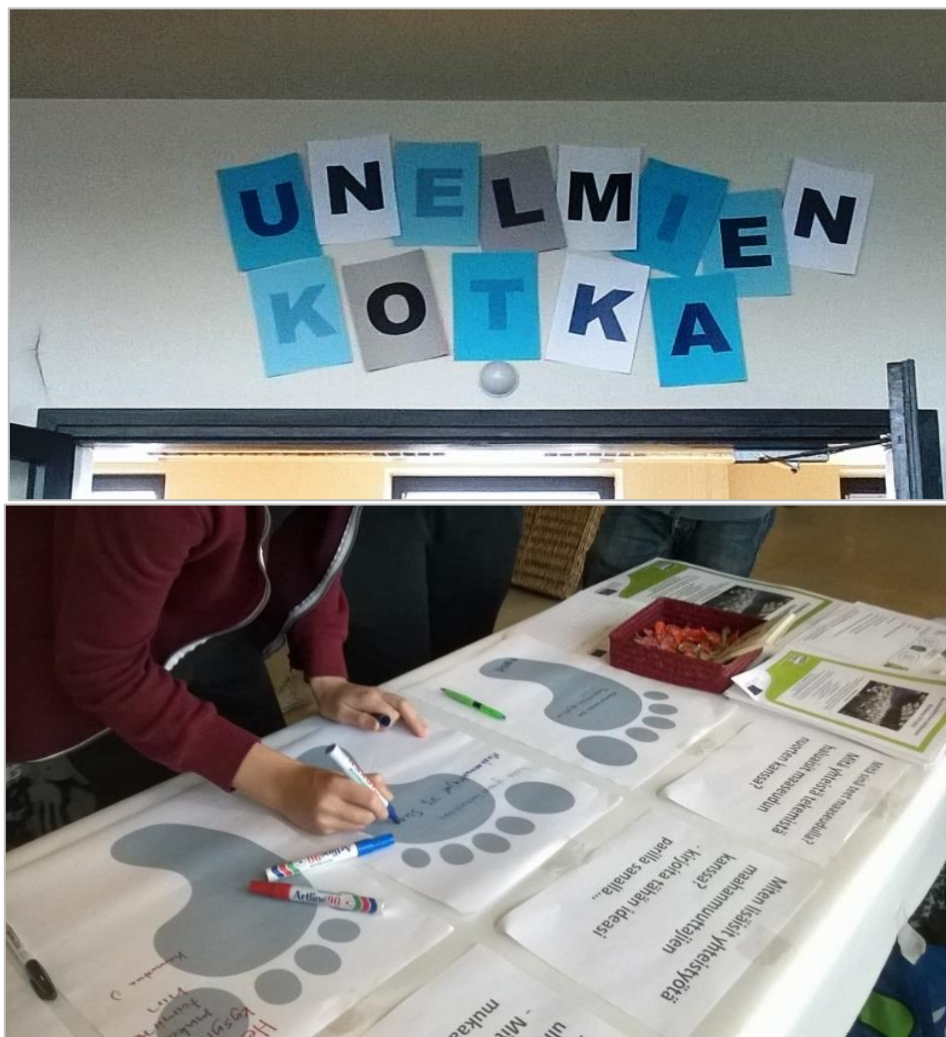


Figure 16. ‘Conquering the City Hall’ –event, 12th October 2016

Youth meets City administration (transl. of poster on upper photo: ‘*Kotka of my dreams*’; transl. of texts on papers on the lower photo: ‘*What do you do in the countryside? What joint activities what would you like to have with young people in the countryside? How would you increase cooperation with immigrants?*’)
(Source: Sepra ry.)



Figure 17. Study trip to Ireland, March 2018
'CLLD trip' for learning about social entrepreneurship in St. Munchin's Community House in Limerick (Source: Sepra ry, photo by Hannu Lehtinen)



Figure 18. Playful Olympics -event for the youth, 22nd Sept. 2016
Targeting immigrant and disabled youth (Source: Sepra ry.)



Figure 19. 'Eat good' –event, 10th March 2016

Women from the countryside telling the elderly about sources of a healthy diet
(Source: Sepra ry.)



Figure 20. 'Kohtaamisia Kotkassa' (Meetings in Kotka) –event, October 2017

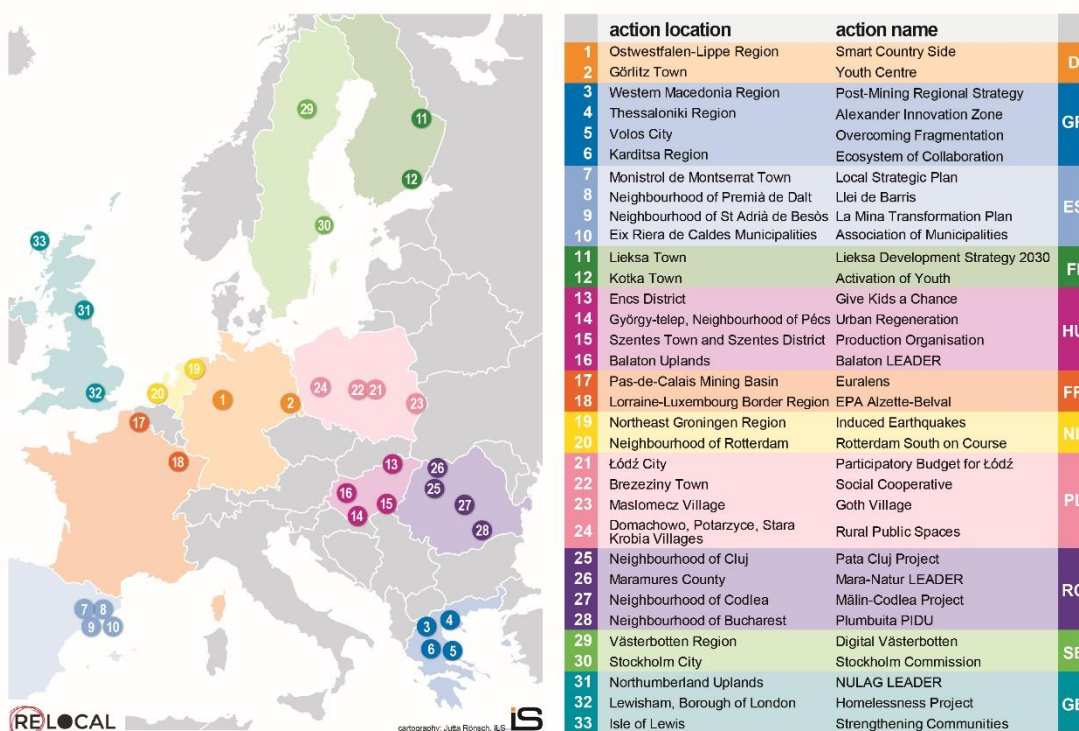
Bringing together various vulnerable groups, the aim of the event was to combat loneliness and encourage socialisation and solidarity
(Source: Sepra ry.)

The RELOCAL Project

EU Horizon 2020 research project '**Resituating the local in cohesion and territorial development**' –**RELOCAL** aims to identify factors that condition local accessibility of European policies, local abilities to articulate needs and equality claims and local capacities for exploiting European opportunity structures.

In the past, especially since the economic and financial crisis, the European Social Model has proven to be challenged by the emergence of spatially unjust results. The RELOCAL hypothesis is that **processes of localisation and place-based public policy** can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment.

The research is based on **33 case studies** in **13 different European** countries that exemplify development challenges in terms of spatial justice. The cases were chosen to allow for a balanced representation of different institutional contexts. Based on case study findings, project partners will draw out the factors that influence the impact of place-based approaches or actions from a comparative perspective. The results are intended to facilitate a greater local orientation of cohesion, territorial development and other EU policies.



The RELOCAL project runs from October 2016 until September 2020.

Read more at <https://relocal.eu>

Project Coordinator:



University of Eastern Finland

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