



Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development



Case Study Report
The Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group
(NULAG)
LEADER in Sparsely Populated Northern England, United Kingdom

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Abbreviations

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic (-ity)
BAME	Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (-ity)
CLA	Country and Land Association
CRC	Commission for Rural Communities (Non-Departmental Public Body)
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK government)
EC	European Commission
EFRD	European Fund for Regional Development
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
ESF	European
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
SGI	Services of General Interest
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
LAU	Local Administrative Unit
LDS	Local Development Strategy
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale
NCC	Northumberland County Council
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body [formerly QUANGO]
NEFRAN	North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network
NNPA	Northumberland National Park Authority
NULAG	Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group (LEADER)
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
RDPE	Rural Development Programme for England
R&D	Research and Development
RPA	Rural Payments Agency (England)
SGI	Services of General Interest
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

Executive Summary

Background: NULAG (Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group) is a LEADER action group based in a self-defined upland territory within Northumberland, the northern-most county of England. It has operated in two phases between 2007 and the current period. It is largely volunteer-led and run, with, in the current phase, one paid programme officer who undertakes administration. NULAG manages a centrally-allocated grant pot which is distributed to local applicants through a competitive bid process. A central feature of LEADER funding is that it does not cover all costs, but requires significant match funding, the proportion depending on the category of project.

In common with the majority of UK LEADER groups, NULAG has a host body which provides office space and employs the programme officer; an accountable body, providing legal and financial backing to the project; and a managing body, a regional branch of a national agency which shapes the programme strategy, decides eligibility criteria and pays out grant monies. In the first phase, the host body was the Northumberland National Park Authority, representing only part of the NULAG territory; in the second phase, the Northumberland County Council, for which NULAG represents only a small part of its county-wide territory.

Findings: The action can be said to be unique in delivering locally-steered, small and medium-scale development funding to a remote and sparsely-inhabited uplands area. It has also leveraged considerable match-funding in the form of charitable trust grants, bank loans and personal contributions. This can be said to be timely in the Northumberland local government context where in 2009, six lower-level district authorities merged into one unitary authority, which is focused on the areas of denser population in the south east lowland areas of the county. Other development funding available within the county is mainly medium to large scale (such as RDPE Growth Programme), and mediated through regional bodies which for reasons of scale and outreach, focus on populous lowland areas.

The action is directed at mitigating rural-urban disparities, and furthering rural sustainability through environmental and social inclusion actions and amenity, services and job creation – though in the second phase, mainly the latter. The capacity of the action to decide its own focus, and in particular to further social justice in the rural area, have been constrained both by its structural inaccessibility to disadvantaged groups and by its framing through higher-level governance ultimately shaped in accordance with ministerial agendas.

Outlook: In both phases, the action has achieved impressive and sustainable flagship developments in the locality and levied considerable match-funding. These projects may broadly be said to improve the area's amenities to the benefit of local people, bring economic benefit to the area (helping it to retain jobs and population), improve its offer for tourism and to some extent raise its profile nationally. The action has also made numerous very small grant allocations, as low as £2,510, that have enabled rural micro-enterprises to develop and grow. There is however considerable regret among those involved with the first phase of the action that it is no longer able to support to any significant extent the kinds of projects that would further disadvantaged individuals' capabilities and build their social capital. The situation in particular of rural young people,

of unemployed or low paid people and of isolated older people and those in poor health, is both of increasing concern and decreasing visibility, due to a combination of welfare reform and cuts to local services.

1. Introduction

The action: The Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group (NULAG) is the action under investigation for this case study, dating from its inception in 2007, through to the time of writing, over which period it has gone through two LEADER funding phases.¹ The LEADER approach is intended to substitute hierarchical, sectoral intervention with (neo-) endogenous, territorial approaches based on network relationships and partnership governance. In the current phase it is described by the local authority (Northumberland County Council) as: “a bottom-up, community-led approach to delivering rural and community development through the Rural Development Programme for England [RDPE], which is managed by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs [DEFRA]” (NCC, 2014). It is currently on its fifth iteration in the UK, and its framing at each seven-year phase is shaped initially by the EU and subsequently by the UK’s sub-national governments, which means that there are different requirements for LEADER schemes in the four different UK administrations.

Main themes of the action. Up to its most recent iteration, LEADER has been an exclusively rural-directed fund and it remains a rural-focused fund: ² the focus of LEADER actions could thus be said to further spatial justice through reducing the disadvantage that accrues from living in a rural area compared to an urban one. Although open to argument, it is possible to define LEADER as a **territorial cohesion fund**, for example, in line with the Barca report’s definition of place-based development as a kind of territorial cohesion initiative (Barca, 2009). The action is shaped by the three EAFRD axes, with LEADER as the fourth axis that cross-cuts the other three. These are expressed at England (DEFRA) level, broadly in line with EAFRD categories, as: Making Agriculture and Forestry more Competitive and Sustainable (Axis 1); Enhancing the Environment and Countryside (Axis 2); Enhancing Opportunity in Rural Areas (Axis 3). The second and current phase of the action is unusual in that the focus of the action has been narrowed at sub-national (England) level to focus on mainly capital funding and economic growth/jobs.

Where does the action take place? The territorial scope of the action has expanded between NULAG’s two phases of funding (2007-13 and 2014-20), increasing the NULAG population by around 67% (while funding decreased from to c. £2.2 to £1.8 mill.). In the first phase it covered the area of the Kielder Forest (under the management of Forestry Commission England) and the National Park, under the authority of the Northumberland National Park Authority, with a population of approximately 33,000. In the second phase it included the towns and villages at their eastern and southern borders, which might be considered the district service centres (‘hub towns’) for many of the Uplands

¹ Prior to the development of the Northumberland Uplands catchment Local Action Group in 2007, the territory had been covered by the much larger, county-wide Northumberland Local Action Group (ONE North East, 2007).

² Prior to the most recent iteration, LEADER was a fund focused on the 2004 ODP rural classification and did not allow the inclusion of towns with populations of more than 10,000. The fifth iteration however, does include these, if categorised by DEFRA as ‘hub towns’; that is, they serve a rural population.

Communities; this expansion raised the NULAG population to 55,000 (See Annex, 7.3, Maps 1 and 2).

Main actors involved: In effect, two levels of local government are involved in the action: the Northumberland National Park Authority (NNPA) and Northumberland County Council (NCC). The latter was a two-tier local authority when the action was originally set up in 2007, consisting of six lower-level district councils, and the upper tier of Northumberland County Council, but these district councils were abolished in 2009 and a single-tier authority, retaining the name of the upper-tier body, assumed governance of the county.³ In the first iteration, the NNPA was the action's host body, providing office space and human resources input; while NCC was the accountable body providing legal and financial backing, technical appraisal and claims monitoring. Originally a level of regional government was also involved, in that the managing agency organising the bid, then setting eligibility criteria and effectively operating the grant through processing payments, was the Regional Development Agency (ONE North East). This was dissolved in 2012, along with all RDAs (representing all but metropolitan area regional governance) across England. The managing agency role was then taken up by a national body with regional branches, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). The RPA's main business is agricultural payments on behalf of the government's Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).⁴

Although it is no longer the formal host body, NNPA still provides some support to the action, including meeting rooms and NNPA officer input to support applicants (as long as they fall within the National Park boundaries). One NNPA member is on the board of NULAG; and one NULAG board member is also on the board of the NNPA. An NNPA member is also on the board of the Kielder Water and Forest Park charity, to which the Forestry Commission has devolved much responsibility for coordinating the tourist offer of the Forestry Commission territories that fall within the NULAG catchment.⁵ There is no Forestry Commission or Kielder WFP representation on the NULAG Board. Other Board Members' affiliations are described in Analytical Dimension 4 ('Transparency').

Beneficiaries of the action: In both phases of NULAG explored in this case study, the main beneficiaries are those who live and/or work in the Northumberland Uplands. Many of the schemes funded in the first phase were related to improving rural shops and services such as rural transport, so main beneficiaries might be described as Uplands residents and workers. However, some of the first phase projects also supported disadvantaged young and disabled people from outwith the area, including urban

³ The most recent administration has reinstated a degree of district governance in the form of five Local Area Councils; however, these deal almost exclusively with planning issues.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Councillors/Local-Area-Councils.aspx>

⁴ The RDA is the payments agency for the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) schemes in England, making payments to farmers, traders and land owners. RPA also makes payments on behalf of Natural England, and manages over 40 schemes supporting the rural economy and rural communities.

⁵ Confusingly, the Kielder Water and Forest Park has boundaries beyond the Forestry Commission land extending into considerable parts of the NNPA boundaries [Interview 23]

residents, through involving them in activities taking place within the Uplands.⁶ Due to the much more restricted framing of the second funding phase by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and by the Rural Payments Agency, it is mainly rural businesses, small and large, that have benefited from the action, in particular agricultural and forestry businesses, tourism businesses and rural food and drink manufacturers. Only a small number of projects in the second phase (village hall, youth group, activities for young and disabled people) have benefited groups perceived as disadvantaged in the Uplands (see Table 7 for all projects funded in each phase; with grants directly supporting disadvantaged groups in bold).

In both phases of NULAG, wider positive impacts may be supposed to affect those who may benefit from more tourism in the locality, or from the availability of more good quality local jobs, and of the increased opportunities for local contractors, funded by the grant, to carry out capital works. Interviewees generally agree that residents of the more remote Northumberland Uplands settlements are at greater disadvantage, due to factors such as depleting local services, distances to services centres and road conditions. They also noted the various challenges faced by disabled, older, younger, unemployed or low-paid people.

Links with national policy: Although the framing of LEADER in each seven-year phase is laid out by the EU, the national purpose has been defined at sub-national (England) scale, because rural development is a devolved area of government in the UK. Ultimately, the framing of LEADER takes place within DEFRA who have decided to limit the scheme to 5% of RDPE, (also the minimum proportion allowed by the EU), and is steered by ministerial priorities; most recently the financial-crisis driven Growth Agenda (Interview 17).

⁶ Projects benefitting urban youth and disabled people from beyond the Uplands catchment area in the first phase of the action were described in interviews 6 and 25 and include A20, A25 and A32 in Table 7.

2. Methodological Reflection

There were two main methodological considerations, the first was a question of language and the second related to anonymisation of transcripts. **Language.** The issue around language arose from the first contacts with the action's main members, the NULAG Board, when the information sheet produced by the project leadership was found difficult to understand. Our response was to rewrite the sheet using terms that are regionally and nationally understood and perceived to be neutral, thus substituting terms such as territorial cohesion and spatial justice for ideas such as “fostering cooperative relations between places” and “disparities in opportunities and resources” “between different places” (see Annex, 7.4.1). The semi-structured interview questionnaires were likewise developed using the language of disadvantaged people and communities (see Annex, 7.4.2).

Anonymisation. Regarding anonymisation of the interview transcripts and editing of digital recordings, it became clear that different degrees of anonymisation were required by different interviewees, depending on their role and the purpose of their organisation, including participants who wished to waive anonymisation. In some interviews, named colleagues were cited who had also been interviewed and it became clear that the citation of their name by another interviewee would remove their anonymity. Thus, proper names were removed from the transcripts and a system of numbers for the interviews developed, which is also used in referencing the interviews in this report. See Table 6 below.

3. The Locality

3.1 Territorial Context and Characteristics of the Locality

Name of Case Study Area	Northumberland Uplands
Size	3,232 km ²
Total population (2016)	55,271 (2014)
Population density (2016)	17 per km ²
Level of development in relation to wider socio-economic context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disadvantaged within a developed region/city? Disadvantaged within a wider underdeveloped region? 	Disadvantaged within a wider underdeveloped region
Name and Identification Code of the NUTS-3 area, in which the locality is situated (NUTS 3 Code(s) as of 2013)	UKC21 Northumberland
Name and Identification Code of the NUTS-2 area, in which the locality is situated (NUTS 2 Code(s) as of 2013)	UKC2 Northumberland and Tyne and Wear
Type of the region (NUTS3-Eurostat) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Predominantly urban? Intermediate? Predominantly rural? 	Predominantly rural

Table 1: Basic socio-economic characteristics of the area

Social history of the region

The North East Region of England. The case study of the Northumberland Uplands is located at the northernmost tip of the North East region of England. The North East is bordered by the southern regions of Scotland in the north, and in the west, the Pennine hills that divide it from North West region. At its eastern side is a long seacoast stretching 186 km.

Although the North East no longer has a regional level of government, (a short-lived period of regional governance in England was rescinded between 2009 and 2012), it remains a statistical region (ONS, 2017a). As such, it is the smallest region of England in terms of population (2.6 million people) and the second smallest (after London) in terms of geographical size. Since the 1980s, mainly due to the contraction in heavy industry that traditionally dominated its coastal belt, North East England has become associated with deprivation and low productivity (e.g. Batchler et al., 2013; Charles and Mitchie, 2013).

Inland from the industrial coastal area, two thirds of the North East region are rural, and of these, one half is made up of national parklands and conservation areas. The prime

agricultural land is in the lowland and coastal areas, while the region's upland areas support some arable crops but are mainly rough pasturage. The region comprises 12 local authorities including Northumberland.

The Northumberland Uplands. It is the Uplands area, falling in the Northumberland local authority area, that is the focus of the action under investigation in this case study. The Northumberland Uplands are part of the geological feature known as the 'Border uplands' that extends into the South of Scotland (where, confusingly it is also known as the Southern Uplands and extends across towards the west coast of Scotland). Possibly due to the historical conditions in this border area, large estates, whether owned by private individuals, voluntary organisations (such as the National Trust), or state agencies (such as the Forestry Commission) characterise the pattern of land ownership (see Lowe et al., 2003; NULAG, 2008). Most of the agricultural activities are therefore carried out by tenant farmers renting their land from estates. Uplands livestock farming runs on small profit margins and undergoes periods of low profit (for example, faced with pressure from dominant retailers such as UK supermarkets, and/or increased overseas competition). Periodically, therefore, large numbers of hill farms come up for sale, an eventuality which has led to extensive reforestation by the State. Current plans to reforest area to the south of Kielder Forest may also relate to this vulnerability.

Defensive castles and fortified farmsteads from the turbulent period preceding the Act of Union between England and Scotland in the early 17th century still pepper the Uplands and give them a distinctive aesthetic and historical appeal for tourism. The area's martial association was reinstated early in the twentieth century, when a large area of the Uplands was acquired by the British army as a training centre for troops. The Otterburn Training Range, as it is known, now makes up almost a quarter of the NNPA area.

This tripartite history in terms of sheep-farming, forestry and defence has shaped the Northumberland Uplands area and continues to influence the local economy and spawn spatial controversies in the NULAG region (for example, the recent contestation by the NNPA of Ministry of Defence plans to intensify use of the Otterburn ranges – see Doxford, 2010).

The general structure of the area is of sparsely-populated higher land towards the western and northern borders, while at the eastern and southern peripheries, there are a number of traditional market towns, which retain their role as district service centres. The location of the main service centres at the edge of the Uplands area is no accident, but relates to their origins as places for exchange between uplands and lowlands agricultural produce (Roberts, undated, cited in Green and Pollard, 2007:10). Several of these perimeter towns are well-located for major transport routes, so support a commuting population who travel to urban areas for work. This contributes towards a prosperous overall statistical picture, as is common in rural areas, that masks hidden pockets of deprivation among the less mobile – the young, older people, people in local, low-paid work, the unemployed and those in ill-health (e.g. CAN, 2016; Public Health England, LKIS, 2017). Because these

perimeter towns are the main areas of population, so they are also more likely to get involved in applications for funded projects. Conversely to this more densely populated band of market towns at the edge of the action, the western and northern areas have a lower population and are therefore less likely to be involved in grant applications. Residents of these areas who are, or have become, unable to access private transport, can be assumed to be particularly disadvantaged.

Photos of the locality. The images below give an impression of the typical features of the Northumberland Uplands. Figure 1, below, gives an impression of a long rock formation known as the Whin Sill-swarm, which is responsible for some of the area's most distinctive scenery: abrupt cliff-faces backed by gentle grassy slopes. These provided the Romans with a natural defensive site for the construction of Hadrian's wall, which has become one of area's the main tourist attractions, being a UNESCO World Heritage Site (shared with the county of Cumbria to the west). Figure 2 gives an impression of the combination of rough cliff faces and smooth grassy hills, interspersed by areas of farmed land, that are typical of the area's scenery.



Figure 2: Northumberland Uplands – view of Hadrian's Wall, showing the typical 'hoe' (wave-like) landform of the region.

Source: Northumberland National Park Authority



Figure 3: A typical panorama view of the Northumberland Uplands

Source: Visit Northumberland

3.2 The Locality with regards to Dimensions 1 & 2

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

An essential feature of LEADER actions is that they should pertain to rural areas that are

coherent and meaningful to local people;⁷ this is why some areas are not covered by LEADER actions, in spite of the intention of DEFRA to maximise coverage in the most recent phase (and thus reduce what are known officially as ‘white areas’, where there is no LEADER group, Interview 17). The Northumberland Uplands area has been defined in each phase by the team developing the Local Development Strategy, (which is the tool used to bid for LEADER grant in England), in negotiation with the other bordering LEADER groups, representing Northumberland’s Coast and Lowlands area and the North Pennines area. The NULAG border changed to include peripheral market towns following a change in LEADER regulations in the fifth iteration. Furthermore, the formal boundaries of lower-level governance areas, known as wards, have been changed over the last decade, resulting in statistical wards covering much greater geographical areas.⁸

The disadvantage of using a self-defined area is that the unique geographical territory defined by the project does not map onto statistical geographies. Although the Local Development Strategy (LDS) for the first phase of the action listed all the catchment’s statistical wards and parts of wards (in terms of named parishes) (NULAG, 2008, 30-34), in the second phase of the action, neither the Programme Officer nor the statistician employed by the NNPA were able to provide names for all the parishes in the partial wards at the borders of the action’s defined area (Map 4 in the Annex gives as much detail on statistical units as could be provided by NNPA - including two areas that cannot be reconciled with the catchment map in use by NULAG).⁹

This move away from the clearer boundaries of the first phase may be related to the increased use of an online resource, magic.gov.uk, upgraded and relaunched in 2013,¹⁰ which is the instrument generally used to determine if an application to the action is located within its boundaries, working at the level of postcode search (Interviews 10 and 11) – obviating the need to identify the boundary parishes. For the reasons above, statistical information on the levels of deprivation and disadvantage in the action area is patchy and must be drawn from several sources. Statistics on the NCC website do not differentiate between urban and rural parts of Northumberland. The NNPA creates demographic forecasts for the Park, a sub-area of the Northumberland Uplands, of which the most recent notes the Park population (as opposed to the total Uplands) area as being under 2,000 people (NNPA, 2016: 6), so these are of limited usefulness to this study, although they do indicate an ageing population in comparison with the County Council area, the North East and England as a whole (ibid: 7).

In this context the statistical information gathered for the Local Development Strategy, on

⁷ This implies a degree of homogeneity in the rural community and its conception of place that is unlikely to exist in practice – see Shucksmith, 2000.

⁸ See <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Northumberland-Knowledge-and-JSNA/Our-Community-and-Place/Map-library.aspx>

⁹ Parish 18 overlaps with Electoral District 5 (although it may not have done when the boundary was agreed). Also neither the Electoral Districts or Parishes around Corbridge fit with NULAG’s catchment map.

¹⁰ See: https://magic.defra.gov.uk/About_MAGIC.htm

which the LEADER grant allocation in each phase is based, will both shape, and be shaped by, LEADER member's perceptions of spatial injustice in the area. In the first LDS, understanding of the Uplands demography was based on analysis by Newcastle University's Centre for Rural Economy. This profile highlights somewhat higher proportions of people over 65 in the Uplands, and an exceptionally low proportion of young people – 13% compared to Northumberland County's 16.3% and England's 20.4% (NULAG, 2008: 34). Stated in terms of age balance:

In order for the population of the Northumberland Uplands to become as balanced as Northumberland County, the number of young adults would need to increase by 22%. To become as balanced as the rest of England, the percentage of the population aged between 20 and 34 years would need to increase by 50%. (Ibid., 33).

The LDS for the first phase of NULAG also focuses on diverse area challenges: economic underperformance, difficult conditions for agricultural businesses and challenges such as low levels of qualifications and high levels of fuel poverty (NULAG, 2008). Statistics on incidence of deprivation are presented in the LDS at the second phase of NULAG based on a resident survey for the entire area, which appear to have used a range of general-use deprivation indicators that are not particularly sensitive to rural disadvantage – distance from public transport stops or distance to key services and facilities, for example, are not included (NULAG, 2014). The general statistical profile of the Uplands presented in this LDS does not permit differentiation between the relative disadvantage pertaining to different degrees of settlement remoteness (for example, according to the Office of National Statistics' standard rural-urban categories); or to allow identification of the most and least deprived settlements.

How do stakeholders understand spatial justice? In some of the work for the Commission for Rural Communities, before this was abolished in 2013, a specific concept of 'rural disadvantage' was proposed, (CRC, 2006a, 2006b) as a term that can embrace the continuum of difficulties in living due to rural location, relating to remoteness and sparsity. This has the advantage of including those who do not fall under a statistical definition of deprivation (for example, older people on good pensions but who can no longer drive, given the dearth of rural transport options), as well as people who would be categorised as deprived in official statistics. This corresponds with the way many interviewees think about those in the rural area in need of support through programmes such as LEADER.

Process and disadvantage: In terms of the interviewees directly involved with the NULAG action, their responses mainly focused on whether the action is able to include and support disadvantaged project applicants and grant recipients, rather than whether it can involve them in its processes. This was in spite of a specific question in the interview guide (the NULAG-specific version, which is not identical with the guide reproduced in 7.4.2) about the inclusion of representatives of disadvantaged groups in NULAG processes.

Probing the issues of process further in the interviews, the view emerged that more could be done in terms of both inclusive recruitment to the board of NULAG and processes such as community consultation and reaching out to disadvantaged groups – were there greater resources to enable this to happen. In the second phase of NULAG, an expanded LEADER scheme in England had led to a lower grant allocation, which combined with the cap on the percentage of the grant that can be used for administration, meant funding could only stretch to a single Programme Officer responsible for administering the scheme as well as outreach. This might take the form, it was suggested, of visits to special interest groups, presentations at parish councils and attendance at other organisations' public meetings; or to issue calls for applicants through means other than the (council-hosted) NULAG website and local newspaper articles.

The exception to this has been the attempt to recruit young people to the NULAG board of members which has involved considerable efforts on the part of one of the Board Members (like all the Board Members, a volunteer) in his nearest hub town - although so far unsuccessful. The NULAG officer from the previous phase of funding described greater possibilities for outreach linked to a greater number of administrative personnel in this phase (support levels fluctuated between 2008 and 2013, but were mainly between two and three paid staff). He noted an event which with the local Young Farmer's group which had drawn in younger people's voice to inform the programme and also that the idea of a shadow board of young people was considered by the Board at that time as a means to increase the representation of disadvantaged groups. Review of the NPPA's minutes for the first phase of NULAG noted that a 'fairly young' member had been recruited to the Board in the course of this action; in ordinary usage, this would imply someone in their 30s. Other organisations interviewed for the study showed either a lack of awareness or achievement in terms of including disadvantaged people in their processes, but were nevertheless willing to consider the idea (Interviews 13, 14, 16).

Main categories of disadvantage. The main categories of disadvantage in the Uplands area identified across categories of interviewee are: Younger people; Older people; Disabled people; Low-paid people; Low-skilled people; People who cannot access consultancy support with the forms; Businesses with low financial resources and reserves. Interviewees from NGO organisations operating in the area further identified unemployed people and people with drug and alcohol or mental health problems as at a particular disadvantage (Interviews 13, 20).

The complex and entrenched disadvantage of young rural people was given colour and detail by a former NULAG member, a retired teacher, who described the decreasing opportunities for young people's self-development and self-knowledge across her several decades of residence in her Uplands village, relating to lack of mobility, amenities and growing cultural focus on digital presence (relevant parts of the interview are reproduced in the Annex, Section 7.4.3).

In terms of their capacity to benefit from NULAG funds, those who struggle with long complex forms and financial planning are agreed to be disadvantaged by many interviewees both internal and external to NULAG. This would typically include younger applicants, those with lower levels of education and those who cannot access consultancy support. Conversely those who can afford to pay for a consultant to develop their applications – or who can access free or in-kind consultancy from their networks – gain a great competitive advantage, according to some interviewees (Interviews 2, 3 and 5). The latter is likely to be the case for many well-resourced business applicants (Interview 26). This is not just an issue for applicants but for grant-holders too, as monitoring forms and processes are equally complex (Interview 26). Forms do not ask the question of whether consultancy support has been used, and it is not always clear from forms whether this is the case (Interview 5).

The complexity of forms also raises the issue of proportionate effort: the same financial detail is required for applications at the lowest level of funding (£2,500) to the higher levels of funding (around £70-80,000), meaning that only those with existing business accounts of the type required by Rural Payments Agency regulations will be making an investment of time proportionate to the smaller level of grant. For others, including not-for-profit ventures such as village halls or small community projects, the cost in terms of time and money of the requirement to generate detailed accounts - which they do not need for any other purpose - would in most cases be disproportionate to the potential benefit of the small grant (Interview 5). The fact that many small grant applicants do nevertheless go to this trouble implies the degree of need for access to the scheme's funds in the locality (see also Table 7, Column 3). A review of the minutes of NPPA has shown that a simplified form for smaller grants was, however, available in the first phase of NULAG, presumably facilitated by the managing agency at that time, the Regional Development Agency.

Finally, the LEADER scheme requires applicants to pay up front for project costs from their own resources and to claim for them retrospectively. This clearly disadvantages those without capital reserves (particularly with regard to the larger grant applications). In the latest round of NULAG, which is focused on economic growth, those in established and well-capitalised businesses are particularly advantaged, given the requirements of the Full Application for evidence of need and detailed financial planning (Interview 5).

What kinds of disadvantage is the action required to address? In terms of their own perception of the main kind of disadvantage (or spatial justice) that NULAG is required to address (remote location, older, younger and disabled people), it has become harder for NULAG to meet, or even recognise, this goal in its second phase. Overall, around 20 of 68 (approximately 30% of) listed projects in the first phase clearly addressed the latter three of these groups (remoteness is too vaguely defined to include in the count). In the second

phase, however, only 4 of 48 listed projects addressed one of these groups.¹¹ Part of the issue in phase two was said to be the quality of the projects that came forward, but in the main, the limiting factor was the way the funding priorities and criteria had been defined at a higher level: focused on job creation and with 70% of the funding allocation to be assigned to capital rather than revenue projects.

In terms of meeting the needs of another identified area of disadvantage, those in remote and sparse locations, Map 3 presented in Section 7.3 of the Annex suggests that those located in the more densely populated towns and villages may be at a relative advantage compared to those in remote areas such as the northern border of the Uplands with Scotland.

Analytical Dimension 2: Tools and policies for development and cohesion

The discourse of disadvantage in local policy

European Funds and the North East Region. EU regional or structural funds have benefited the North East Region since the 1970s, first in the form of funding for infrastructure projects, and then through ERDF (regional development), ESF (social fund) and EAFRD (agricultural fund for rural development). The first two were for a time combined as ESIF – European Structural Investment Funds – and allocated on a match-funding basis, over roughly seven-year periods, dating from 2000, although separated again in the 2014-2020 period. These programmes are analysed in a review of the region undertaken for the EU (Charles and Mitchie, 2013).

According to Charles and Mitchie, the programmes included a detailed analysis of the region's challenges and identified a series of priorities and actions intended to meet its needs. The 1989 to 1993 programme was focused on enterprise/underlying competitiveness, sectoral development and spatial development in the region's urban areas. The emphasis was on infrastructure, but both programmes also funded tourism development. The next programme, from 1994-1999, saw a shift away from infrastructure towards business support, thus while in the 1989-93 period, 90% expenditure had been on infrastructure, this reduced to 56% in 1994-96 and 41% in 1997-99. The new programme, reaching an all-time peak of €837, instead focused on sectors such as supply chains, knowledge-based industries, tourism and culture and brought in a variety of new participating organisations. In the 2000-2007 programme ERDF and ESF funding remained high, at €759 million, and was closely linked to the Regional Economic Strategy of the newly-established Regional Development Agency, ONE North East. The programme also at this time became a single regional programme which brought in the rural areas formerly encompassed by the Objective 5b programme. The ONE North East programme was particularly focused on job creation, and the period

¹¹ See Table 7: phase one projects were as follows: older (A52, A55, A66), younger (A9-21; A42; A56; A67), disabled (A6, A25, A32, A50; A66); phase two projects were as follows: younger (B15; B43; B44; B46).

between 2000 and 2005 saw a narrowing of the gap between the North East's economic indicators and the rest of the UK, (although the disparity has since increased again). Since 2008, employment has grown slightly, but with a significant shift from public to private sector employment. In 2007-13, the programme was a Regional Competitiveness and Employment programme, again covering the whole region and although disposing of a reduced funding allocation (€361 million), as a consequence of rebalancing across the EU. At this phase, when the future of the regional level of governance seemed assured, the structural funds were focused entirely on innovation and enterprise, and infrastructure and community aspects were set aside. This was based on the assumption that most of the region's infrastructure needs had been met and those that had not, could be addressed through private initiatives in a growing region. Funds increased in the next phase, 2014-2020, followed the financial crisis and recession, to €537 (although the actual amount will depend on uptake). This period followed the end of a 17-year long New Labour administration and the advent of a Conservative-led Coalition government in 2010 which rescinded the regional level of government introduced in 1999, (ONE North East) and replaced it with Local Enterprise Partnerships, primarily voluntary organisations with a more limited role. This period also saw EU funds reorganised according to the subnational administrations of the UK. Thus single operational programmes were introduced for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the North East became part of the England programme.

According to a forthcoming report shared with the authors, under the current programme, projects are relatively large in scale and there is a relatively limited set of partners leading projects, compared with previous programmes. This means that non-profit and voluntary sector actors may no longer be in a position to take a lead and organisations such as the local authorities are taking on the role of accounting bodies for a variety of smaller scale partners within their areas.¹²

Local authority policy. Rural policy and spatial strategy at Local Authority level in England can be said to be in state of relative disarray, and this affects the capacity of this section to present a clear picture of how disadvantage is expressed in local policy. Up to 2009 local government in the county was divided into a Unitary Authority (Northumberland County Council) and six district Local Authorities: Blyth Valley, Castle Morpeth, Wansbeck, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Alnwick and Tynedale (Elcock, Fenwick and McMillan, 2010). These lower level authorities had powers relating to local services, while strategic planning and development remained at county level. Detailed statistics were collected by these District Local Authorities which gave a clearer picture of the location of pockets of rural disadvantage in the areas, in a way which has now been lost in the aggregate statistics collected by the Unitary Authority [Interview 13]. The Office of National Statistics also collected detailed statistics of relevance to rural governance such

¹² Charles, D. and Liddle, J. (forthcoming) North East Future Finance Commission: Report on Funding for Regional Development in the North East. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University.

as access to services; and a NDPB called the Commission for Rural Communities published a series of 11 State of the Countryside reports, which gave a detailed overall picture of the many fragmentary issues contributing to rural difference and disadvantage, including some statistics at regional level. The last of these was published in 2010 (CRC, 2010). This has to some extent been replaced by The State of Rural Services report by the NGO Rural England, although this does not disaggregate data by region (RE, 2017). The general findings of its most recent report are likely to apply to the Northumberland Uplands:

As a rule the third sector or community volunteers are playing a growing role in service delivery and they are more likely to be found in rural than in urban areas. By contrast, as a rule those services which are delivered by the public and private sectors are less likely to be found in rural than in urban areas, and many of them have been contracting. [...] Whilst a number of services are struggling to maintain levels of provision in rural areas, two services currently at particular risk are rural bus services and rural bank branches. (RE, 2017:3).

All UK local authorities have been subject to considerable budgetary cuts over the last decade (National Audit Office, 2014) leading to a loss of staff and expertise. Many have struggled to stay on top of policy changes at national level with their local plans and strategies. NCC is no different in this respect, and in common with many other Local Authorities is operating through a mixture of retained sections of past policies, while the publication of new and refreshed policy documents, which may always be delayed by factors such as a change of political control of the authority, now struggle to keep pace with the developing situation of Brexit. In the meantime, parts of some quite old and largely redundant policies remain in place, distributed across different specialist sections of NCC's website, difficult to locate and summarise.¹³ Lynchpins of spatial strategy, such as an updated Local Plan for Northumberland, transit through a lengthy consultation and enquiry process which delays their implementation up to March 2020 at the earliest - although the Strategy actually ranges between 2018 and 2021 (NCC, 2018a).

Policy relating to disadvantage or deprivation in the county is likewise at the time of writing scattered across various NCC departments but appears to pertain mainly to the following three sections of the population: children and young people; older people; people with disabilities. While two interviewees (Interviews 16, 20) noted their hopes for a new Poverty Strategy for Northumberland County Council, this has not materialised at the time of writing.

Higher level policy. UK governance is perceived to have reduced explicit focus on rural policy in the last eight years. The stated intention was that rural matters should be 'mainstreamed' into policy, through tools such as 'rural-proofing' (e.g. Cameron of Dillington, 2015), but in practice this has meant an increased urban-centricity for most policy sectors – agriculture and food being the obvious exceptions. A presenter at a stakeholder event for local/regional authorities relating to cohesion policy attended by

¹³ Up to the publication by the council of a key to 'Saved Policies' (NCC, 2018b)

one of the research team on 17th September 2018 confirmed this trend.¹⁴ He noted the sparse mentions of the term ‘rural’ in government policy, which stands up to examination. While there were a broadly reasonable 14 mentions in the Industrial Strategy (HM Government 2017); there were only 4 in the key devolution plan for northern regions, the Northern Powerhouse Strategy (Northern Powerhouse, 2016) and only 2 in a publication on the Role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) (RTPI, 2015) – the latter being nevertheless put forward as the likely holders of a post-Brexit LEADER-style rural communities development fund. One of the working groups at the event proposed the reintroduction of a Rural Strategy for Northumberland as a way forward for the rural North of England, post-Brexit. The lack of relevance for rural Northumberland in the statistics collected by the Local Authority, as noted in the earlier section, seem to be of direct relevance to an understanding of the absence of a place for rural issues in both the information presented on the council’s website and in its current published policies.

Manifestations of spatial injustice in local policy. The policy documents which most inform the work of NULAG are their own Local Development Strategies (one prepared for the bid for each phase of the action), although the second of these was largely superseded by a Ministerial decision to frame the fifth iteration of LEADER in terms of the Growth Agenda, as noted in other sections. Also of influence in the first phase of LEADER, when it was hosted by the NNPA, was the Local Development Plan of the Northumberland National Park Authority.

The statistical picture in the NULAG LDS is backed up through a standard UK corporate approach used for institutional development: a SWOT analysis (the acronym stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). In 2008, for the first LDS, the SWOT exercise was carried out by NULAG board members, while for the second phase, the SWOT exercise was taken out to the Uplands community. In all, in this second phase, 22 Parishes completed SWOT analyses, along with five special interest groups, including the Young Northumberland Network (NULAG, 2014, p10). See Table 6 in the Annex for key points from the analyses in each NULAG phase.

The most useful section of the SWOT analysis for understanding the perception of disadvantage in NULAG policy is the Weaknesses section, followed by the Threats section. In Table 6 in the Annex, the two sections for each tranche are compared side by side, using the overall thematic categories deployed in the 2014 LDS (the 2008 LDS did not divide by category). The categories themselves are of relevance, showing the main areas where difficulties are perceived to exist in local LEADER strategy: transport and connecting people, community, young people, environment and local resources, managing the land, local economy. Comparing the account of threats to the Northumberland Uplands in the two LDSes highlights both the greater detail and range of the second, community-led

¹⁴ ‘Imagining a Smart and Productive Rural Future: How can the North of England thrive post-Brexit?’ Attendance took place in response to the requirement in the Stakeholder Inclusion Guidelines for RELOCAL, Section 4, Table, Phase Two, final row (RELOCAL document 9.1: Stakeholder Inclusion Guidelines).

exercise. There also appears to be more specific mention of declining services in the second exercise, which is likely to relate to the local impacts of post 2008 austerity measures.

If the main issues that arise from Northumberland County Council and Public Health England ward-level statistics¹⁵ are compared with threats identified in the LDS, it appears that some areas of potential disadvantage may have been undervalued. For example, according to County Council ward profiles, based on the 2011 Census data, a range of 30 to 245 people in each Uplands ward have described their ethnicity as Black and Minority Ethnic (or BME, used to refer to members of non-White communities in the UK¹⁶). Ward-by-ward, people who described themselves as having an ethnicity other than White UK range from 81 to 332 (based on those wards where data is available – not all wards have a working link to their profile). If issues connected with minorities appear at all in the communities' identified "Weaknesses", it is as 'travelling criminals', which probably refers to sections of the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities. This was not backed up by an interview with the Council's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Liaison Officer, who claimed that GRT crime is confined to the more concentrated (though relatively low density) south east corner of the county and does not trouble the rural areas, outside of one or two of the market towns at the Uplands periphery (Interview 21). This is an area that might merit further investigation, particularly as this interview highlighted the rising stigmatisation and persecution of this community in the region.

¹⁵ Northumberland National Park Authority also gathers and publishes statistics on its population, but as the most sparsely populated National Park in England, this is only a very small proportion of the NULAG overall population, so it has not been referred to here.

¹⁶ Black and Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) is claimed to be a more inclusive descriptor, but was not used in the statistics gathering process in this case.

4. The Action

4.1 Basic Characteristics of the Action

NULAG phase	Framing of LEADER in national policy	NULAG host body	NULAG accountable body	NULAG managing body	Social justice/deprivation focus
Phase 1 (2007-2013)	Fourth iteration of LEADER in England	Northumbria National Park Authority	Northumbria County Council (upper tier of two-tier body) up to 2009, after which Northumbria County Council (unitary Authority)	ONE North East, Regional Development Agency up to 2012, after which Rural Payments Agency.	One of five key themes laid out in first LDS (2008): Sustainable Communities To support rural communities in tackling social disadvantage by creating the conditions for growth to sustain viable communities.
Phase 2 (2014-19/20)	Fifth iteration of LEADER in England	Northumbria County Council (unitary authority)	Northumbria County Council (unitary authority)	Rural Payments Agency	One of the six key themes laid out in second LDS (2014): Provision of rural services

Table 2: NULAG over time

LEADER funding is an EU rural community development funding stream that forms part of Pillar 2 in the Common Agricultural Policy. Pillar 1 payments are those that provide direct income support to farmers, while Pillar 2 has four main purposes:

- fostering the competitiveness of agriculture
- ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources
- combating climate change
- achieving a balanced territorial development of rural economies and communities including the creation and maintenance of employment.

It is to the last of these that the LEADER programme is most relevant. LEADER was introduced in England in 1991 and is now on its fifth iteration (2014-20). The main concept behind the Leader approach is that:

given the diversity of European rural areas, development strategies are more effective and efficient if decided and implemented at local level by local actors, accompanied by clear and transparent procedures, the support of the relevant public administrations and the necessary technical assistance for the transfer of good practice. (EC, 2008: 8).

By contrast with conventional rural policy measures LEADER is intended to indicate 'how' to proceed rather than 'what' needs to be done – setting out a general method, rather than a strategy. Seven key features summarise the Leader approach, which are intended to be implemented in an integrated and interactive way:

- Area-based local development strategies
- Bottom-up elaboration and implementation of strategies
- Local public-private partnerships: local action groups
- Integrated and multisectoral actions
- Integration
- Cooperation
- Networking. (EC, 2008: 8).

The Northumberland Uplands has had its own LEADER group for the last two iterations, and prior to that LEADER funding was mainly held for a much larger, Northumberland-wide Local Action Group (LAG) (ONE NE, 2007), with part of the current catchment also covered by the still-extant North Pennines LAG. LEADER is a match-funding scheme, so part of the benefit is through the other kinds of funds it levers in (around 40-50% of the grant). It is aimed at spatial justice and territorial cohesion as trying to reduce rural disadvantages in general in relation to urban areas.

A Local Action Group (as in the Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group), is a collection of volunteers, living and/or working in a rural area whose boundaries have been developed in their Local Development Strategy, often in negotiation with neighbouring Local Action Groups, and are understood to be locally meaningful. The Local Development Strategy is developed by a host or managing body in advance of each funding cycle, often informed by local volunteers or former LAG members. It is used to bid to DEFRA for LEADER funds in multi-annual cycles of six to seven years, usually with a one-year gap in between cycles. It is developed by a local body in consultation with those within the identified rural area, and sets out the area's development needs along with strategies to meet them.

When the bid is successful, as it has been in the majority of applications for LEADER actions in England (Interview 17), funding is distributed on the basis of the total amount available for LEADER in England, divided by the number of the applicant areas, according to a formula that relates to local need. Given that in England the decision was made to cap the amount channelled to LEADER at the 5% minimum set by the EU for LEADER as a proportion of Rural Development Programme Funding (Interview 17), and as the coverage of England by LEADER groups has expanded considerably between the fourth and fifth iterations, so the funding available has reduced, between the first and second phases of NULAG, from around £2.2 million to around £1.8 million.

Having been awarded a LEADER grant through their Local Development Strategy, a Board of around 20 Members is then recruited to form the LEADER Local Action Group, who then meet on a regular basis to review applications for EU funding for small to medium-scale community development projects in their area. In this work they can expect to be supported by one or more paid programme officers employed by their host body, which in most cases is the local authority (Interview 17; Interview 27). In the Northumberland Uplands, this is Northumberland County Council, although the Northumberland National Park Authority took the role in the first phase of the project. The local authority will also usually act as the accountable body, whose role within LEADER is defined in Northumberland as follows:

- Enters into a funding contract with DEFRA
- Undertakes technical appraisals of project applications
- Issues grant offer letters
- Undertakes claims monitoring
- Reports to DEFRA and the LAG on programme performance. (NCC, 2014)

The accountable body also undertakes legal responsibility for the LEADER project and handles appeals against funding decisions and any other kinds of complaints.

However, it is not the accountable body, but the managing body, that disburses all monies for the project – including funding for the Programme Officer, funding for the appeals and complaints process, and funding for each element of their award as it arises, claimed by successful applicants. In England the Managing Body is the Rural Payments Agency (RPA). The RPA is an arm of DEFRA, with regional offices, including one in the North East, that manages all EU rural payments in England to the farming and food sector (over €2 billion each year). In Northumberland, delays in receiving funding from the RPA were in some cases covered by loans from the local authority (Interview 7).

Although LEADER is conceived of by the EU and by the Local Authority as a bottom-up action, in practice it is constrained by four to five higher levels of governance that shape the themes of each 7-year programme. At the highest level, the LEADER programme is shaped by the funder, the EU. In England, the government department that holds LEADER

funds, (DEFRA), sets themes and decides the proportion of programme funding that can be committed to LAG administration (DEFRA).¹⁷ DEFRA and the RPA have a role in determining the amount awarded to each LAG, while the RPA designs the application procedure and forms and the appraisal process (RPA), as well as the claims, monitoring and reporting processes, with some monitoring of claims by the accountable body NCC. These roles can shift between the multi-annual funding periods: in the case of NULAG, the host body in the first phase was the Northumberland National Park Authority, and the original managing body was the Regional Development Agency, although this role transferred, (along with the RDA personnel) to the RDP, when ONE North East was dissolved in 2012.

In Northumberland, the Board of Members were recruited in the first phase in a scrupulous attempt to cover as broad a sweep of the Uplands territory as possible, while including the LEADER approach- recommended range of public, private and voluntary sector members and paying attention to gender balance as far as possible (Interview 1). With Members leaving during the course of the funding period, it of course becomes harder to find replacements that replicate the initial balance. This was particularly the case in the second phase, due to the reduced resources available for administration and thus advertising and outreach (Interview 4 – see quote in Analytical Dimension 4).

In both phases of its existence, NULAG has helped to develop the capacities and capabilities of both applicants and beneficiaries of its funded projects, as well as creating new social capital for the region through volunteers, paid staff and public bodies collaborating together in Local Action Groups. Many of the projects funded in the first phase have endured and grown to gain regional, national, even international renown and have come to symbolise the special qualities of the region. These include Kielder Observatory, Kielder Community Fuel Pump, Humshaugh Community Shop and Kitchen (a non-profit that has generated enough surplus to become a local grant-making body in its own right), Wooler Youth Drop-In, and the Calvert Trust (a unique facility which provides challenging activity holidays for people along the spectrum of ability and disability, allowing them to holiday together as groups and families).

Projects funded in the second phase have been constrained by the restriction of the scheme to 70% capital funding and to a jobs-creation focus, so these are mainly in the small business sector, including agricultural and forestry businesses, with a few notable community projects, such as premises for the Young and Sweet youth group in a disadvantaged market town at the south west of NULAG's catchment; and the Chirdon Head Youth Project, an environmentally friendly cottage, which will be accessible to young people up to the age of 25 including those with disabilities and additional needs. It will

¹⁷ This can change during the course of a programme period: during the current programme period it has expanded from 18% to 22% and LAGs have the option of claiming the 4% shortfall for the whole funding period, although few have availed themselves of this option (Interview 27).

provide a retreat centre and many outdoor activities and learning opportunities in a remote and tranquil location.

4.2 The Action with regards to Dimensions 3-5

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

Distribution of power. As noted in the preceding section, several layers of governance constrain the freedom of action of the LAG in disposing of its allocated grant funds. The programme officer from the first phase of NULAG noted the tensions caused by the external control of the programme.

We were in a system where we were pushing back on mostly local authority, but also DEFRA, rules to say, "This is what we want to do. This is good development practice." And, they were pushing back on us saying, "The system has to conform to a national programme, the system has to be audit-proofed." And, we were unable to make the two of those things meet. [Interview 1].

The interviewee goes on to say that this was one of two factors that caused him to leave the post during the transition in 2014, although he had some funding to continue on a part-time basis.

An interview (Interview 7) with a member from the accountable body (in the second NULAG phase, also the host body) has been particularly helpful in understanding the way higher layers of governance are exercised over the action, and the degree to which these limit (even curtail) the autonomy of the board of NULAG in deciding how LEADER monies will be distributed locally.

This interview also raised various levels of contestation of local and central policy, which in the opinion of the accountable body officer who has over a decade of experience running rural development programmes, made LEADER the most difficult he has ever run:

[...the Rural Payments Agency] are people sitting in offices and elsewhere, different parts of the country, who don't know the LEADER programme because they don't deliver it. They see it in governance documents, they see a regulation framework, and it's written by people in RPA, not by people like me. So - they just didn't get it. [Interview 7].

One aspect of the difficulties encountered has arisen when full applications, or aspects of them, which have been approved by the NULAG board, with the support of the accountable body, are then rejected by the Rural Payments Agency, on the basis of a new or revised eligibility criteria. The accountable body interviewee noted how frequently regulations and eligibility for different elements of a project were changed under the RPA. The RPA

vetoed on hitherto accepted applications and costs have resulted in strong contestation by grant applicants, which has led to contact with central government ministers (backed up by Interviews 7 and 17).

What seems to have been a watershed confrontation between the LAG, NCC and the RPA, was described by a former board member in both phases of NULAG, who had seen the appraisal process become more bureaucratic between the two phases:

R – And it became more ticky boxy?

P – Completely so, and I mean this whole business of two technical assessments is just ridiculous. It really was. People came to present their businesses in despair, and there is no other word for it. They despaired that here they were, and one particular person I can remember, who had the most brilliant project, had done all the work perfectly well, he had the same business idea as somebody who had already got funding, but wasn't geographically local, so there was no conflict. And he didn't get it on the technical assessment. [...]. The LAG went to appeal, and said this is absolutely - you've done it, as a precedent. You are not rejecting him on a viable rejection, you know, claim. You are rejecting him for some ticky box reason. They backed down, and he got it. (Interview 26, former NULAG Board Member, both phases).

Decision-making capacity. In response to this kind of conflict, the accountable body, NCC, has now succeeded, according to one interviewee, to gain back some local autonomy from the RPA in two ways. First, perhaps relating to the case described above, the council officer interviewed claimed that NCC overturned the RPA's ability to veto hitherto accepted applications, and vested most of the power to accept projects with NULAG. Secondly, this officer also claimed that NCC has managed to get the RPA to accept some local changes to the national eligibility criteria, on the basis that costs, in particular agricultural equipment costs, that would be unacceptable for wealthier or better funded rural areas (because they are easily met from other sources) should be admissible in the Northumberland Uplands, where lower resources in agricultural businesses mean that equipment elsewhere considered routine cannot be acquired except through grant support of the kind provided by LEADER (Interview 7).

Modes of leadership. These conflicts appear to show leadership being taken by the accountable body, NCC, to the benefit of the local-level control of the programme. Pulling in the opposite direction, however, are pressures arising from the unique situation of the UK in terms of withdrawal from the EU, tightening programme deadlines and introducing new monthly meetings between NCC and the RPA, to monitor NULAG funds committed. This was perceived as a process that aimed to rescind unallocated funds and reallocate them out of the area (Interview 7; Interviews 17 and 27 paint this process in a more neutral, that is, less threatening, light). Nevertheless, it is likely to have increased pressure to allocate funds to low-risk candidates.

A further higher-level influence on the action is provided by the interpretation and application of EU State Aid regulations in the UK, which are framed in such a way that even very small and marginally profitable projects and schemes can fall under their provisions. The classification of an organisation for purposes of State Aid affects both the proportion of the project costs that can be provided through LEADER and the eligibility of organisations that have received EU funding from other sources, given that the upper threshold of such support ('de minimis') is capped for a three-year period (DBIS, 2015: 8).

Structures of coordination. At the national level, around 25 or so representatives of LEADER groups form the LEADER Exchange group, which liaises between LEADER and DEFRA on the running of and future of the programme (Interview 27). At a regional level, the action is networked with other EU, rural and business grant-giving bodies in the region including the Rural Growth Network, Coast and Lowlands LAG, business support service, and RPA which meet on a six-weekly basis to discuss issues such as raising the profile of calls for applications, grants allocated, and which kinds of applicants are most appropriate for which kinds of grants. This was mentioned by several interviewees in relation to the question about whether NULAG provides something unique in the area, or whether there are overlaps with other grant programmes. Collating together the responses suggests that while in the current phase this coordination is the mechanism through which applicants are directed to the most appropriate funder, the criteria of appropriateness have changed with alterations to the funding and grants 'eco-system' over the past decade. One interviewee (26), a local business-owner, noted that the business support service link was not effective in practice.

The Rural Growth Network, coordinated by an officer who is placed in ARCH, the arms-length development company for NCC, which distributes various larger EU grants for rural business, is only one of several professional networks that were mentioned by interviewees including NEFRAN and CLA. However, meetings between NULAG and other LEADER groups in the area that used to take place in the first tranche of the action are no longer held regularly, due to lower levels of personnel and pressures on time (Interview 5).

Analytical Dimension 4: Autonomy, participation and engagement

Accountability and legitimacy.

The low profile of the action, due to the lack of funds for awareness raising and outreach, has minimised pressures on the group for accountability, apart from cases where grant applicants were disappointed, and challenged the decision, which have gone as high as ministerial level (Interviews 7 and 17).

Several NULAG insiders considered that one or two poor-quality or otherwise dubious applications had slipped through the net during their tenure, something which continued to concern them; although it was also noted that on the whole the NULAG process was

quite effective in weeding out applications in bad faith (Interview 12, Interview 15). An example of this was a major application that failed to get through because disproportionate amounts of grant would be allocated to a telecoms business rather than to the benefit of the ostensible beneficiaries, broadband users (Interview 22). In this regard it should be noted that a somewhat different account of the failure of this application relating to State Aid regulations, was given by the (then) host body (Interview 12), suggesting a complex story requiring more investigation.

A loophole in the NULAG regulations was raised as a concern by several. The loophole is that a Board Member who wishes to put in an application is permitted to do as long as they have first resigned from the Board. While it can be argued that in some cases, experience gained as a Board Member allowed participants to identify a pressing urgent need and develop a project to fill it, in other cases, the interviewee considered personal gain to be a motivation. The small number of prominent actors in rural communities and the pressure to maintain good relationships was one of the reasons why it was difficult to contest applications of this kind (Interview 9). The people who mentioned these instances felt compromised by their involvement (Interviews 12 and 22).

Scope of participation and engagement. The limitation of non-capital funding to 30% of the grant and the jobs-creation focus of the current phase, alongside the low resources available to the action for animation and administration¹⁸ have narrowly limited the degree of engagement and participation from local and lower-level stakeholders that it has been possible to solicit, particularly in its second phase. For example, it has emerged from the interviews, that in the current phase of the action, when a position falls vacant on the Board of Members, it is largely through the networks and initiatives of existing board members that new candidates are identified and contacted. This was seen as inevitable, given the lack of resources for putting out a wider call for members, but nevertheless gives rise to some concerns, as in the following reflection by the current Chair:

What I would like to think would happen, is, each of the LAG members could tap into their own networks and identify suitable people. There is a sort of worry that this very informal, very personal approach to assembling your LAG group, how acceptable is that to the rural population generally? Is that a representative group? Who are they accountable to? [Interview 4].

The exception to this, as noted in an earlier section, has been the effort of one Board Member in the current phase to recruit a younger person to the board of members – three young employees in his nearest market town were approached to this end, but none has so far agreed to join. Likely reasons are the time and travel commitments on parents of young families and the isolated position that could be experienced by a single young person at the early stages of their working life sitting on a board of 11-12 experienced - and some

¹⁸ Set initially at 18% of the grant though rising to 22% in the course of the latest phase – Interview 27.

locally or regionally eminent - retired people.

In terms of the Calls to grant applicants issued by the action, these are mainly transmitted through the local press or through local networks, although an advantage in having the local council, NCC, as the accountable body, is that Calls can also be disseminated through the Council's funding digest circulated on a monthly basis to local organisations.

Several interviewees noted the lack of reliable and deep-reaching communications methods with which to solicit new grant applications. The traditional means of advertising in local newspapers is said to be in decline for two reasons: the contraction in rural shops which means fewer retail outlets for newspapers; and a decline in readership of local papers, which is thought by one NULAG member to relate to the increase in relative expense of papers for lower-income rural dwellers (rather than the more conventional twenty-first century explanation of the rise of digital news, which may not be applicable in rural areas with poor broadband connectivity).

The deficiencies and expense of rural broadband mean that many rural residents lack internet access. This also makes website dissemination of Calls for applicants less effective than in an urban area. Furthermore, the NULAG website is hosted and controlled by the accountable body, NCC, which has a long turnaround for changes and amendments (presumably carried out by a single team for the whole council), meaning it is a largely static and unresponsive website, changes to which incur long time delays. It is highly likely, that under such constraints excluded and marginalised groups will be difficult to reach with Calls for grant applications, but as noted by action members, this is largely an academic question. The reason is that such groups would require a degree of support and input to develop an acceptable application that cannot be guaranteed under the present dispensation of a single funded full-time officer for the action. Interviewees have suggested that there is little point in targeting outreach to these groups and thereby risk raising expectations that cannot be met. Nevertheless, several instances where applicants without internet or who struggled with the forms, had been given long-term and hands-on support by either the Programme Officer or the NNPA Community Liaison Officers were noted by Interviewees (Interviews 5, 9 and 12).

In spite of the lack of clear statistical information on this issue (see Policy section), there appears to be a growing level of need and deprivation in the locality, in relation to services cuts since the 2008 financial crisis, and a stringent programme of welfare reform taking place in the UK since 2013. Welfare reform and the way it has been implemented in England has had a clear negative impact on protected groups under EU legislation (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018). According to some interpretations of LEADER, it has a governance structure particularly well-suited to serve the needs of those at risk of poverty and social exclusion (Talbot et al., 2015: 860). Interviews took place with two voluntary sector organisations who represent these groups – a Foodbank and a charity working for vulnerable people in Rural Northumberland. In the main, the nature of phase 2 NULAG as a dispenser of capital grants reduced its relevance to the former, which

depends on a through-flow of financial and in-kind donations to be able to supply the high volumes of comestibles required by its client group. The other charity had formerly been represented on the Board of NULAG but did not find its grant programme relevant in the current phase, where the major emphasis is on applications that can create jobs (Interviews 13 and 20).

Finally, it seems possible from some accounts of the interviewees that it has been extremely difficult to get the message out to applicants about the narrowing in focus between the two phases of NULAG (e.g. Interview 5). Although 30% of the action's grant may be committed to non-job creating projects, many more of such projects have continued to come forward than could be considered for funding by the action. It appears another consequence of the major shift in focus between the two phases of NULAG is that the benefits of a locally-based programme over time, in terms of word-of-mouth learning about the availability of the grant, have been very much reduced.

Transparency. Included in NULAG's Board of members, besides the NNPA representative, is an elected member of Northumberland County Council (at the time of this study, the Civic Head of Northumberland County Council, responsible for chairing meetings). Two members of NULAG share the representation of the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University. Other board members represent different parts of the Northumberland Uplands in terms of place of residence, as well as different sectors of professional expertise, including business, management, youth and community development. It should be noted that most members in practice hold multiple public and voluntary positions in the local area and contribute experience and networks from all their various roles to the benefit of the action. There has been an attempt at both phases of the action to recruit members from across the Uplands territory, although with varying success. It is not simple to give a clear account of Board Membership as this has changed considerably both within and between phases.

In the first phase of funding, there was greater involvement from government bodies such as the LEP (sub-regional business partnership), from local NGOs such as Community Action Northumberland, and other regional Local Action Groups, such as the (neighbouring) Northumberland Coast and Lowlands LAG; in the second phase, factors including fewer staff and greater financial pressures on organisations have weakened these connections.

In the first phase of NULAG, evaluation of grants was through completion of forms with no requirement for a presentation. Examination of NNPA minutes showed that a simplified form was available for smaller grants in the first phase. In the second phase, however, applicants must make one presentation of their case before the NULAG Board – this is either at the Expression of Interest phase or at the Full Application phase. Evaluation of projects takes place in the closed part of the meeting, after applicants have left. Criteria for evaluating projects are clear and publicly available but non-participant observation at three LEADER grant application meetings has suggested that criteria for prioritising

applications may be to some degree consensually weighted in order to meet other aims beyond project quality – thus, as noted in an earlier section, projects from under-represented areas are looked upon more favourably; and Board Members’ background knowledge of candidates outside of their NULAG role is admissible for discussion. For example, one of the Board Members, a land agent, with several other public service roles, seemed to know personally or through other family members, many of the applicants for agricultural project grants, as well as being familiar with the history and layout of their land holdings.

It was on several occasions noted by Interviewees and when attending NULAG meetings that where there is a conflict of interest, such as a professional or social link with the applicant, Board Members will voluntarily absent themselves from the room while the discussion of the application takes place. But it was observed that this was not strictly observed by all Board Members, and the rules were not applied by the Chair in a hard-and-fast way – although making clear and firm interventions in cases where Members’ comments appeared to be immoderate or unjustifiable. Undeniably an element of ‘parochialism’ (see Davoudi and Madanipour, 2015) was brought into play through the airing of personal views on the plausibility of the candidate by some Board Members; although to some extent a counterbalance for this was the practice of the current Programme Officer of developing an independent relationship with applicants through phone conversations and home visits. On two of the three occasions when the researcher attended a NULAG meeting (see Annex, Table 4), it was observed that the Programme Officer was able to use this knowledge to correct or moderate Board Members’ expressed assumptions and partial knowledge.

Another aspect of transparency is transparent accounting, and this appears to have been less evident in NULAG’s first phase, in terms of the fact that only 68 out of 77 projects are reported in the summative report of phase 1 (NULAG, 2013). A later evaluation of phase 1 undertaken by Rose Regeneration (undated) reports the total of projects funded as 79, although one of these projects was the overall LEADER animation, in other words, the costs to the host body, NNPA of staffing and accommodating the project. There are further inconsistencies between the two documents including the total grant allocated in Phase 1 and the amount and proportion of match-funding obtained. This may link to the auditing problems with this iteration of LEADER in England as a whole (see later sections) but also raises questions around transparency in accounting for the use of public funds at this phase of the action. At the second phase of the action, a different transparency issue was noted by one interviewee (Interview 26), relating to the amount charged to the LEADER budget by the Local Authority for dealing with complaints and appeals; the potential for disproportionate charges being levied for this function did not, however, appear to be countenanced at the national level responsible for LEADER (Interview 27); this may indicate that it is not possible or that it has not been raised.

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

Place-based knowledge. As has emerged from the account in Analytical Dimension 1, much place-based knowledge is gathered and systematised in the Local Development Strategies on which the NULAG theme in each phase is based. In the first phase of NULAG, there was more resource available to go out to local communities in the course of the action and update and develop views about community needs. The interview with the Programme Officer from the first action (Interview 1) raised several examples where he had solicited local opinion in the course of the action, including from groups of young people and Upland farmers.

This phase also had funding to send applicants on study visits to develop their ideas through contact with beacon projects in other parts of the country; and to engage in knowledge exchanges with various rural projects in other European countries, for example with the LEADER Linne area in Sweden, a component greatly valued, seemingly by all involved in the action (e.g. Interviews 1, 2 and 3, 15). To the regret of many, actions outwith the Uplands area ended in the second phase of NULAG, due to the lower amount of grant available in an expanded scheme and due to restrictions put on the scheme by DEFRA in light of austerity priorities (Interviews 2 and 3; Interview 4; Interview 17).

In the second phase, three of the action's monthly application evaluation meetings have been attended by the researcher (see Table 4 in the Annex for details). These meetings are held in the evenings, to accommodate the employed organisational representatives who are part of the Board of Members, and last from two to three hours. Here a considerable breadth and depth of local knowledge has been observed in operation as it is used to support applicants to improve their explanation of a project, and/or increase the viability of the project design and likelihood of its acceptance for funding. Candidates are given one opportunity to attend in person to present their project to the Board, and can do so either at the Expression of Interest stage, or at the Full Application Stage.

Place-based knowledge observed at these meetings has included a detailed understanding of how a project fits into the 'business ecosystem' of the locality where it is based, suggestions of how links could be made between the applicant and complementary local projects and initiatives, both those that are already funded by NULAG or are known to Board Members from their various networks and roles in the locality. Knowledge of elements that introduce significant delays to projects has enabled firm advice from the Board on plausible time-scales and on the kinds of costs that, although eligible, may raise problems and delays. These include the costs of any kind of electrical installation, due to the virtual monopoly exercised by contractors that enables them to work to their own timescales. The potential delays for certain kinds of planning application are also highlighted by the Board, in particular where a historic building or neighbourhood is concerned. Finally, using their place-based knowledge of which grants are available to the locality, gained through local networks such as RGN, the accountable body officer, and to a lesser degree, other board members, are in a good position to signpost applicants for whom NULAG may not be an appropriate source of funding, to other funders in the area.

Organisational learning. There has clearly been a great deal of mutual learning between Board members, between the Board members and the three accountable body officers, and between the accountable body, NCC, and the Rural Payments Agency, as outlined in an earlier section. Equally, however, due to the delay between the two phases of the action, and the centrally-driven change of focus in the second phase, there has been an almost complete change in Board membership (bar one member). The loss of the highly-valued Programme Officer from the first phase with a unique and appropriate skill-set, seems to have related to a number of reasons some of which may relate to tensions around the constraining modus operandi of the accountable body as noted earlier, some of which were not shared with the study, probably due to sensitivity. Both factors together have resulted in a great deal of learning from the first phase of the action being lost to the current phase – although in some cases, it may be put to good use in former members’ new roles. As the action entered its conclusion phase at the Stakeholder Feedback event in December 2019, one formerly retired Board Member has departed to take up an opportunity for paid employment but the others remain engaged in the work of the action.

At a higher level, interview with the DEFRA lead for LEADER indicated an organisational willingness and ability to solicit and integrate organisational learning from across the scheme, as far as time would allow. This took place both through the higher-level LEADER Exchange group, consisting of representatives of around 25 actions across England, meeting regularly with DEFRA to give feedback and recommendations about the scheme, as well as through DEFRA staff visits to LEADER schemes:

P – We went to a couple of visits to rural Surrey this summer. We are going to do some more, but [...] those visits really, really were very valuable indeed. A real sense of what LEADER delivers, what the animation element of LEADER is all about. Because sitting in an ivory tower here, running cost and animation looks like a very expensive luxury. When you actually meet the people whose projects have been developed by the animation work that the LEADER groups do, then you realise that there is a real value in that service. So, what I get from LEADER, in terms of a real understanding has come through seeing what’s on the ground; less so in terms of actually dealing with the policy issues arising from LEADER, because most of that is about how much money LEADER groups can have, the exchange rate they can use etcetera. So it’s a complex version of any other EU programme. [Interview 27].

Scope of flexibility and adaptability. The gradual decrease in flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances in the action, both between the two phases, and within its most recent phase, was noted by a number of interviewees, although the reasons for this were subject to various misinterpretations and false assumptions.

At the time of writing there appear to four main reasons why an action whose uniqueness lay in its locally-based and mainly voluntary membership fell further and further under

the direction and control of its managing body and the central government department responsible for the funds, DEFRA.

- A major expansion of LEADER groups in England in the fifth phase, leading to smaller grants for each, but more administration at a central governance level.
- The abolition of the regional level of government in England led to central government taking back control of the regulations and conditions for applications and payments, through its agency the RPA.
- An adverse national audit of the fourth phase of LEADER (thus the first phase of NULAG) resulted in a marginal disallowance (see below), which led to the introduction of a standardized application and payment process across England – for the smallest to the largest amount of grant applied for.
- The financial crisis and change of political control at national level led to a ministerial direction to focus LEADER nationally on economic growth in its fifth phase, overriding the locally-determined goals presented in each LEADER LDS.

In the first phase of NULAG, the Regional Development Agencies set the application procedure and payment conditions and due to their relative autonomy, this had led to a set of very disparate accounting formats presented to the EU auditor in between the fourth and fifth iterations of LEADER. A marginal penalty was applied (around £1 or £2 million, in a £138 million scheme) and the government was required to develop a more standardised process in order to avoid further penalisation in future.

5. Final Assessment: Capacities for Change

Synthesising Dimension A: Assessment of promoters and inhibitors

Promoters. The factors that promote procedural and distributive justice within the locality can be summarised as follows:

- The involvement of local people, who volunteer, work and live in the Northumberland Uplands area, on the NULAG Board of Members contributes place-based and contemporary local knowledge to the local development process.
- Although more in the first than second phase, Board Members have been recruited to represent a good coverage of Uplands locations as well as a range of fields of expertise across the public and private sectors.
- The spatial disadvantage of the NULAG locality is understood internally to relate in particular to: younger, older and disabled people and those in remote rural locations.
- Some members of the NULAG board have encouraged applications from projects that meet the needs of these groups, even within the limited framing of the current phase.
- In-kind support in the first and second phases from both the Programme Officers and the NNPA has helped less skilled and experienced applicants to obtain grants.
- The role of the local Council in acting as the accountable body for the action supports a knowledge exchange between some council officers and the rural Uplands area.
- This body of expertise in the needs and challenges of the Northumberland Uplands, can enhance external grants support offered by Council for other kinds of grant.
- The intermediation of the Council officers (NCC) with the managing agency (RPA) has enabled increased decision-making power for NULAG members over grant allocation.

Constraints: The factors that constrain procedural and distributive justice within the locality can be summarised as follows:

- Four to five layers of top-down governance: accountable body, host body, managing body, national government, EU governance
- For a number of structural and higher-level governance reasons, considerable rural governance knowledge and expertise has been lost to local government.
- NCC's consequent lack of attention to rural spatial disadvantage has led to an increasing loss of visibility of disadvantaged communities in its Uplands area.
- External actors highlight in particular the rising disadvantage of the rural unemployed and low-paid, those with drug and alcohol problems and those with mental illness, relating to services cuts and welfare reform since 2013.

- These, along with small but rising rural minority issues, such as rural BAME groups, appear to be absent from local governance discourse on rural Northumberland.
- There is increased control over the LEADER programme by higher-level governance (in the current phase NCC, RPA, DEFRA and, ultimately, the EU).
- Due to the expansion of the LEADER programme in terms of England coverage and number of groups in its fifth phase, there is less resource available to each LAG.
- This affects staffing levels and thus capacity to encourage applications from disadvantaged groups and support less advantaged applicants through to grant award.
- The requirement for applicant organisations to meet all project costs upfront and to make retrospective claims to the RPA, rules out low-capitalised NGOs and businesses.
- The requirement for full, audited accounts to be included with the grant application for even the smallest organisation may discourage smaller/ non-profit(able) organisations.
- The complexity of the application process favours those who can afford to hire consultancy support with form completion, or can call on networks for in-kind support.
- While the Programme Officer and National Park Officers give considerable support to applicants who ask for it, the former has limited time and the latter is limited to the NPPA catchment (representing around 2,000 out of a total Uplands population of 32,000).
- In the second phase of the action (although not the first phase) the same two-stage application process, with a highly complex and demanding full application form, applies to all grant applications from £2,500 up to the maximum grant.

Synthesising Dimension B: Competences and capacities of stakeholders

Formal and Informal Empowerment. The main mechanisms that produce or reproduce spatial injustice in the locality are as follows:

- As noted in the previous section, the move towards a Unitary Authority for Northumberland in 2009 removed the close relationship between NCC and its rural areas.
- At a higher level, the decline in agencies such as the Commission for Rural Communities, collating and reporting rural-related statistics as well as recourse at local authority level to urban-related statistics has led to a decrease in the visibility of rural issues.
- At local authority level, there is currently no policy for rural areas, although potentially the new regional devolved funding streams including North of Tyne Combined Authority and the Borderlands Initiative may contribute to raising the profile of rural Northumberland.
- Wider governance trends towards mainstreaming rural policy into sectoral areas

have led to a loss of knowledge and understanding of the concealed and fragmented nature of rural poverty and disadvantage.

- An ideological climate that has politicised services such as Foodbanks has up until recently led the latter to prefer a low profile and to operate independently, so the extent of Foodbank dependency across the area remains unclear.
- The Local Authority does not appear to have a current picture of numbers of people of minority ethnicity in its rural area - although relevant statistics are likely to be collected by rural Schools.
- As the local council is the accountable body for the action, and has taken this role in both phases of the action, its framing of rural disadvantage is likely to influence the focus of community development taking place in the catchment.

Potential for localised action

- Up to the present, the picture of potential for localised action has been deteriorating, in that public sectors and actions such as NULAG have lost staff and thus networking and exchange between organisations has been reduced.
- In the voluntary sector, the withdrawal of government funding streams since 2010 has led to increased competition between NGOs for funds, and may have impacted likelihood to cooperate in joint actions.
- Intolerance of outsider groups appears to be increasing and issues such as the rights of gypsy, Roma and travellers, and of drug and alcohol dependent people and those with mental health problems may have become divisive in some communities.
- Some current higher-level regional initiatives such as the Borderlands Initiative and North of Tyne Combined Authority appear to be bringing higher level actors together in the aim to take the maximum benefit from central government investment on offer through these.

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

Achievements over time and place.

Processes. Processes may be particularly important in the implementation of rural LEADER, to ensure that it builds social capital among the disadvantaged and excluded, rather than simply entrenching existing power and resource disparities (Shucksmith 2000). In its processes, the action has in both phases to some degree managed to reach two out of four of the main areas of local disadvantage it has identified, namely remote rural dwellers (through a number of Board Members located in the north and north west of the catchment area) and older people (through Board Members in retirement). Younger people were to some extent included through outreach activities and projects gathering their views and input in the first phase (Interview 2 and 15). Somewhat ambiguously, a 'fairly young person' was seconded to Board Membership mid-way through the first phase

and stayed until the end of that phase (Interview 12). Although clearly the inclusion of younger people (i.e. in their 20s) on the Board has been high on the agenda in the current phase (Interview 2 and 3) and has been pursued by some members committing time and effort to attracting a young Board Member, this has not been successful. Older people are implicitly represented on the Board as most of its members are retired. There does not seem to have been an attempt to recruit disabled members, even though this is a group that has been identified as disadvantaged in the locality.

Outcomes. In terms of grant distribution (or outcomes) there has been success in distributing grant to groups representing younger people, particularly in the first phase of the funding (see Footnote 8, listing projects for young people in both phases). To a lesser extent, older and disabled people's interests have also been represented in successful grant applications.

Spatial justice is not just about evening out large disparities of wealth and opportunity between regions, but can address the disparities of wealth and opportunity within regions. Various groups such as people in social or temporary housing, minorities in terms of ethnicity or sexual orientation, and those in politicised categories such as food bank users and people with drug and alcohol dependencies, do not seem to have been considered for inclusion in the kinds of community development initiative supported by LEADER. This is likely to relate in the first instance to scheme's (increasing) economic focus, as well as the highly demanding nature of the application process. The lack of statistical information on disadvantaged groups and the lack of direction regarding unmet need in the locality from the local authority may also be factors.

Evaluation of impact on the locality. In both phases of the action, it is likely to have had some impact on improving the kind of rural disadvantage that is connected with remoteness and sparsity, by supporting small, locality-based organisations and businesses to maintain, improve or expand their operations, thus increasing the quality and range of Uplands based services and amenities (and jobs). Furthermore, it has undoubtedly raised social capital and brought into positions of responsibility and connection people who might otherwise have remained isolated in a single location or sector. Both Board Members and those interacting through them in other local networks will have benefitted from the increased place-related knowledge generated by the action, to the benefit of future joint-working and general area development.

Arguments can be made for which phase of the action has had the greater overall impact on spatial justice. On the one hand, the first phase explicitly refers to tackling social disadvantage as one of its themes and as seen in Table 7 and described in the text, several projects address the needs of disabled and older people, while more than a third are directed explicitly to the benefit of the young. In the second phase, the only theme that relates to spatial justice is that of 'provision of rural services'; yet as we can see from the four projects funded under this theme in NULAG's phase 2, only four specifically address a group identified as disadvantaged (see Annex, Table 7). In the second phase, the freedom

of NULAG to distribute resources according to its different themes has been considerably curtailed by the requirement that 70% of the grant allocated should go towards (value-for-money) job creation, while only 30% can be allocated to other purposes. In the first phase, as has emerged in the discussion on the subsection on Transparency, there is a lack of clarity regarding how NNPA funded its hosting of the action. Various interviews described a separately funded, but failed side project that brought extra staff into NULAG but did not actually function as a project (Interviews 12 and 22). The fact that the figures and numbers of projects in the NULAG summary of funded projects in the first phase (NULAG, 2013) and those in the Rose Regeneration (undated) review of funded projects do not tally and that further funding streams noted by interviewees are not listed in either account may imply that a deficiency in the level of transparency required in disposing of public funds. In both phases, it is difficult to reconcile the NNPA's focus on supporting projects within its own catchment area, representing only part of the Northumberland Uplands catchment with the demands of spatial justice; whereas the Local Authority has a clearer interest in supporting applications from across the Uplands.

Having said that, moving the host body function to the accountable body, NCC, in the second NULAG phase, seems to have embedded the action in a more regulation-focused and risk-averse regime that is less compatible in some respects with the innovative and responsive nature of a bottom-up community development group. Besides the compliance-orientation of local authority culture in the UK, however, another, more empirical factor is likely to have played a role in a more cautious hosting of the action. This is that the second phase of NULAG has experienced a series of time constraints that were not an issue in phase 1. These have included the loss of time through suspension of the programme during three electoral processes (including the 2016 Referendum on membership of the European Union), an earlier-than-expected end date due to Brexit. Latterly there has arisen some pressure to commit the action's remaining allocation with the greatest efficiency and least risk, due to the RPA's powers to divert unallocated funds to other LEADER groups out of the locality.

6. Conclusions

What is being achieved in terms of delivering greater spatial justice?

It emerges from our case study that localisation and place-based public policy in the form of a LEADER Local Action Group can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment. NULAG has been unique over both phases in drawing in local volunteers who take part in grant distribution for area development. While in the first phase of the action, Northumberland National Park Authority (the host of the action at this phase) was also able to offer small grants in its part of the Uplands area, in the second phase, their grant-giving resources have been greatly reduced and NULAG is one of only three main local providers of such grants (£2,500 to £30,000) to local applicants, along with the National Park and an EU-funded business development organisation (NBSL) offering very small grants of up to £2,800.¹⁹ Furthermore, due to the nature of LEADER as a match-funding scheme, NULAG has been able to leverage in considerable funds for the area from other sources – figures are not yet available for the second phase, but in the first phase this was almost £2 million, or 97% of the LEADER disposable grant for this period (Rose Regeneration, undated).

Many projects funded by NULAG moreover have created beacons of good practice in remote areas, spreading innovation, such as digital livestock control, micro-hydro pilots, or community-run shops and services (see Table 7, Grants A55 and A64). NULAG-funded projects have also featured on regional and national television reports, thus helping to disseminate good ideas nationally. This kind of impact is particularly relevant in light of the EU's "Smart Villages" concept and actions (ENRD, 2018).

On the other hand, factors that limit the scheme's impact on spatial justice, include:

- the absence of good quality information about deprivation and disadvantage in the local area, due partly to the scheme's self-defined boundaries, partly to Local Authority statistical indicator choice and focus on its densely populated areas;
- in-kind support from a local governance body for a subsection of the Uplands (the Northumberland National Park) exercising influence on grant allocation;
- particularly in the second phase, inadequate resources for outreach both internal and external to NULAG, affecting capacity to engage and support excluded places and groups, as well as to network with other regional LAGs;
- application, claims and monitoring systems whose complexity discourages or excludes less well-resourced and not-for-profit organisations and applicants.

The following are some of the additional messages emerging from the Northumberland Uplands LEADER group analysis:

¹⁹ Another EU programme operates in the region and offers larger grants for rural initiatives, of which the smallest is around £35,000.

- 1) A Ministerial intervention shaping the second phase of NULAG (equivalent to the fifth iteration of LEADER in England) has reduced the autonomy of the action and its capacity to address social exclusion and sustainable development goals by narrowing the focus of the action mainly to economic growth. This is not to say that focus on economic growth in the current phase is without spatial justice benefits. For example, the contributions of the action to businesses that attract visitors to the area, such as self-catering accommodation, pubs, breweries and sports amenities, can be anticipated to maintain and create good quality local jobs, that in particular may be attractive to those unwilling or unable to commute long distances to urban jobs. The current phase has also been able to support three projects directly aimed at young people, while several of the SME and Farming grants have gone to young rural-based recipients.
- 2) However much the above kinds of inputs can support spatial justice in the Uplands, as identified earlier, there are other local funding streams available for the above, including EU funds (although mostly for moderate to large scale projects). Narrowing the focus of programmes such as LEADER to economic growth targets, even though they may be the sole or main source of small-scale funds remaining to rural areas for other important goals such as sustainability and social inclusion, effectively means abandoning the latter. Thus, in a climate when local NGOs, businesses and communities under economic pressure would most benefit from working together, most of the funding stream that could support this has been rescinded – at least in England. It should be possible to design the potential for such diversion of LEADER funds out of the programme, for example by limiting the proportion of the funds that can be devoted to private business and job creation – and making sure that social justice is fully integrated into the idea of spatial justice (evening up disparities of opportunity between rural and urban areas).

What are the policy changes ahead for bigger impact?

Brexit is likely to alter the way rural development is funded, due to the withdrawal of EU farming and development subsidy. In particular, there is a danger that post-Brexit rural funding will be focused mainly on agricultural productivity and environmental management, to the detriment of rural business and community needs (Dwyer, 2018). But it may be, as expressed by one interviewee (Interview 22), that in the predicted times of instability ahead, investment to develop rural social capital and networking - the foundation stone of rural resilience and adaptive capacity – will be needed as never before to keep rural areas up and running. In such a context, embedding any successor national programme for rural community development with a host institution that understands and is sympathetic to rural needs and issues will be of central importance.

7. References

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8. Annexes

8.1 List of Interviewed Experts

Interview Number	Date	Role of expert	M/F	Duration of interview
1	24 Nov, 2017	Former NULAG programme officer, first phase	M	2 hours, 5 minutes
2 & 3	30 Nov, 2017	Second phase NULAG vice chair NULAG phases 1 and 2 Executive Board member	M, M	2 hours, 3 minutes
4	30 Nov, 2017	Second phase NULAG chair	M	2 hours, 15 minutes
5	8 Dec, 2017	Second phase NULAG programme officer	F	1 hour, 28 minutes
6	15 Dec, 2017	Second phase NULAG Executive Board member	F	1 hour, 7 minutes
7	23 Jan, 2018	Second phase accountable and host body officer (NCC)	M	1 hour, 27 minutes
8	1 Feb, 2018	One of the Chairs of NULAG in its first phase	F	53 minutes
9	7 Feb, 2018	Former host body officer now second phase community liaison officer (NPPA)	F	55 minutes
10 and 11	17 April 2018	Managing body officers (RPA) – two officers representing RPA liaison with first and second NULAG phase.	F, F	31 minutes
12	19 April 2018	Former co-Programme Officer and second phase community liaison officer (NPPA)	F	1 hour 21 minutes
13	3 May 2018	CEO of Northumberland charity concerned with rural deprivation; first phase NULAG Board Member.	M	1hour 20 minutes
14	16 May 2018	Rural Growth Network Implementation Officer	F	1 hour and 2 minutes
15	5 July 2018	First phase NULAG Board Member	F	1 hour and 36 minutes
16	9 July 2018	Rural Economic Development Officer, NCC	F	1 hour and 15

				minutes
17	13 July 2018	RPA England Coordinator	M	2 hours and 28 minutes
18	17 July 2018	CLA Director for North of England	F	55 minutes
19	18 July 2018	Programme Manager, LEP	F	33 minutes
20	19 July 2018	Project Coordinator, a Northumberland-located Foodbank NGO	F	1 hour and 3 minutes
21	2 August 2018	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Liaison Officer, NCC	M	1 hour and 25 minutes
22	6 August 2018	One of the Chairs of NULAG in first phase (Handnoted as digital recording failed)	M	1 hour and 30 minutes approx..
23	13 August 2018	CEO of Northumberland charity focused on disabled people and former NULAG beneficiary	M	52 minutes
24	14 August 2018	Advice line manager with Northumberland branch of national older people's charity	F	52 minutes
25	16 August	Director of Kielder Water and Forest Park Trust	F	55 minutes
26	25 October	CEO of Northumberland business; on NULAG Phase 1 and Phase 2 Boards	F	54 minutes
27	30 October	Head of England Rural Development Programme, DEFRA	M	1 hour and 5 minutes

Table 3: List of interviewed experts

Date	Nature of meeting	Approximate duration
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25 October, 2017, 3pm Meeting room, NNPA	Presentation of the RELOCAL study to NULAG chair and programme officer, request to investigate NULAG for the rural case study	1 hour
7 November, 2017 5.30 – 8.30pm, Twice Brewed Inn (grant recipient), Bardon Mill, Hexham	NULAG Application Evaluation meeting (full NULAG Board)	3 hours
23 November, 9.30am – 11.30am, Hadrian House, Hexham.	First Stakeholder Meeting with NULAG Executive Board	2 hours
6 December 2017 5pm – 9pm, Powburn, Alnwick	NULAG Application Evaluation Meeting (full NULAG Board)	4 hours
11 January 2018 5.30pm-8.45 pm, Longframlington Memorial Hall, Longframlington, Morpeth	NULAG Application Evaluation Meeting (full NULAG board)	3 hours 15 minutes
17 September 2018, 12.30-4.30pm, The Sill, Bardon Mill, Northumberland	Imagining a Smart and Productive Rural Future: How can the rural north thrive post Brexit. Stakeholder involvement event organised by Northumberland County Council with Northumberland County Council, Newcastle University, Northumbria University, University of Cumbria	4 hours
17 October 2018, 9.30am-3.30pm, Kirkharle Courtyard, Kirkharle, Northumberland	A review of LEADER in Northumberland Uplands and Future Prospects	6 hours
13 December 2018 13.00 to 17.00, Tynedale Farmers' Function Suite, Hexham Mart	Second RELOCAL Stakeholder Meeting – 19 attendees. Presentation of the action and the findings, rural development workshop.	4 hours

Table 4: NULAG meetings attended and Stakeholder Involvement Events

8.2 Stakeholder Interaction Table

<i>Type of Stakeholders as defined in Case Study Manual</i>	<i>Invitee and most relevant 'territorial' level they operate at</i>	<i>Ways of involvement with the project)</i>
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<i>Local politicians x 0</i>	<i>Northumberland Uplands</i> -MP, Hexham Ward -MP, Berwick-upon-Tweed Ward	0 - Contacted for interview and participation in stakeholder feedback event.
<i>Local administration x 3</i>	<i>Northumberland</i> - Northumberland National Park Authority - Kielder Water and Forest Park	3 interviewees and 3 participants at stakeholder feedback event.
<i>Associations representing private businesses x 2</i>	<i>North East Region</i> -North East Business Support Fund; -North East Local Enterprise Partnership -NE Chamber of Commerce -Federation of Small Businesses in the North East	2 interviews and several contacted for participation in stakeholder feedback event, but no attendance at latter.
<i>Local development companies/agencies x 1</i>	<i>Northumberland</i> ARCH Northumberland	1 interview and one attendance at stakeholder feedback event.
<i>Municipal associations x 2</i>	<i>Subregions</i> - Borderlands Initiative - National Rural Services Network	1 interview
<i>Non-profit/civil society organisations representing vulnerable groups x3</i>	<i>Rural Northumberland</i> Calvert Trust, Northumberland; Glendale Gateway Trust Age-UK Northumberland; West Northumberland Foodbank; Community Action Northumberland	4 interviewees and two attendances at stakeholder feedback event.
<i>Other local community stakeholders x5</i>	<i>Northumberland Upland Executive:</i>	5 interviewees and 5 attendances at stakeholder feedback event
<i>Local state offices/representations</i>	<i>Northumberland</i> - External Funding, Northumberland County Council - Public Health Officers, Northumberland County Council.	1 interviewee and 1 attendee at Stakeholder Feedback event
<i>Regional state offices/representations x 2</i>	<i>North East/UK</i> North East Rural Payments Agency	2 interviewees, 4 contacted for participation in Stakeholder Feedback Event.
<i>Ministries involved in (national or EU) cohesion policy deployment</i>	<i>England/UK</i> England Rural Development Programme, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	1 interviewee, 2 contacted for participation at Stakeholder Feedback Event.
<i>Cohesion Policy think tanks (national/EU-level) x2</i>	<i>England/UK</i> -Civitas [recent links through Neal Powe report] - IPPR North [report on rural North East] - Joseph Rowntree Foundation -Local Government Association Safer and Stronger Communities Board; - Communities and Localities, New Economics	Several contacted for participation in Stakeholder Feedback Event

	Foundation ResPublica [which has community cohesion as part of its remit]	
<i>Primary and secondary educational institutions x1</i>	<i>Northumberland</i> Education and Skills, Northumberland County Council People from first phase of NULAG	1 contacted for participation in Stakeholder Feedback Event
<i>Colleges and universities x23</i>	<i>North East Region</i> Institute for Local Governance (Durham University); Centre for Rural Economy; Northumbria University	1 attendance at Stakeholder Feedback Event
<i>Social and health care institutions x1</i>	<i>Northumberland</i> -Representative of Public Health at Northumberland County Council – -Drugs, alcohol, obesity, self-harm specialis -Representative of Health and Social Care in Northumberland County Council; -or of Empowering Communities Project at Northumberland County Council	1 attendance at Stakeholder feedback event
<i>Cultural institutions and associations x1</i>	<i>Northumberland</i> - National Trust - Active Northumberland - Great Northumberland event organiser	Several contacted for participation in stakeholder feedback event
<i>Media x 2</i>	<i>Northumberland Uplands</i> General staff invitation, Hexham Courant, Berwick Advertiser, Northumberland Gazette	

Table 5: Stakeholder Interaction Table

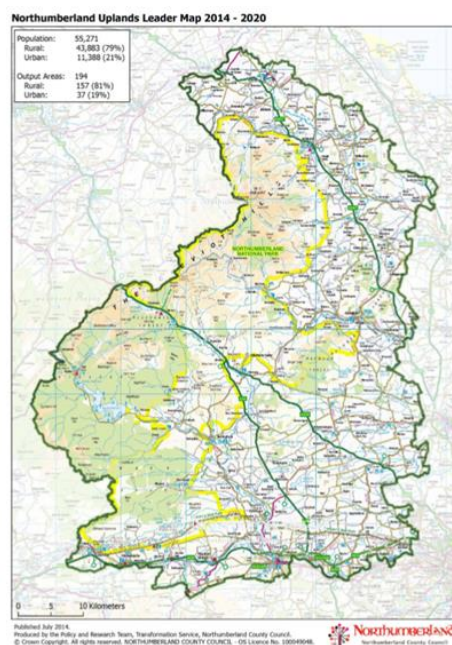
8.3 Map(s) and Photos

Northumberland Uplands



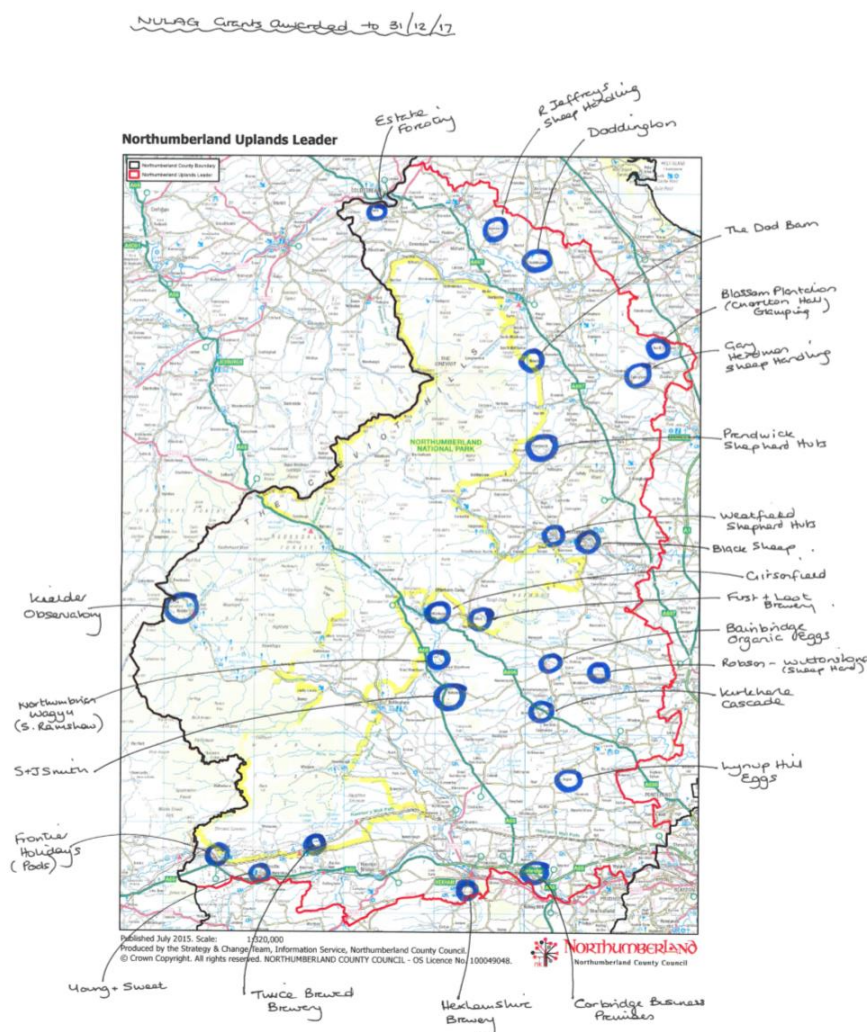
Map 1: Borders of the NULAG action area, 2007-13

Source: NULAG, 2008



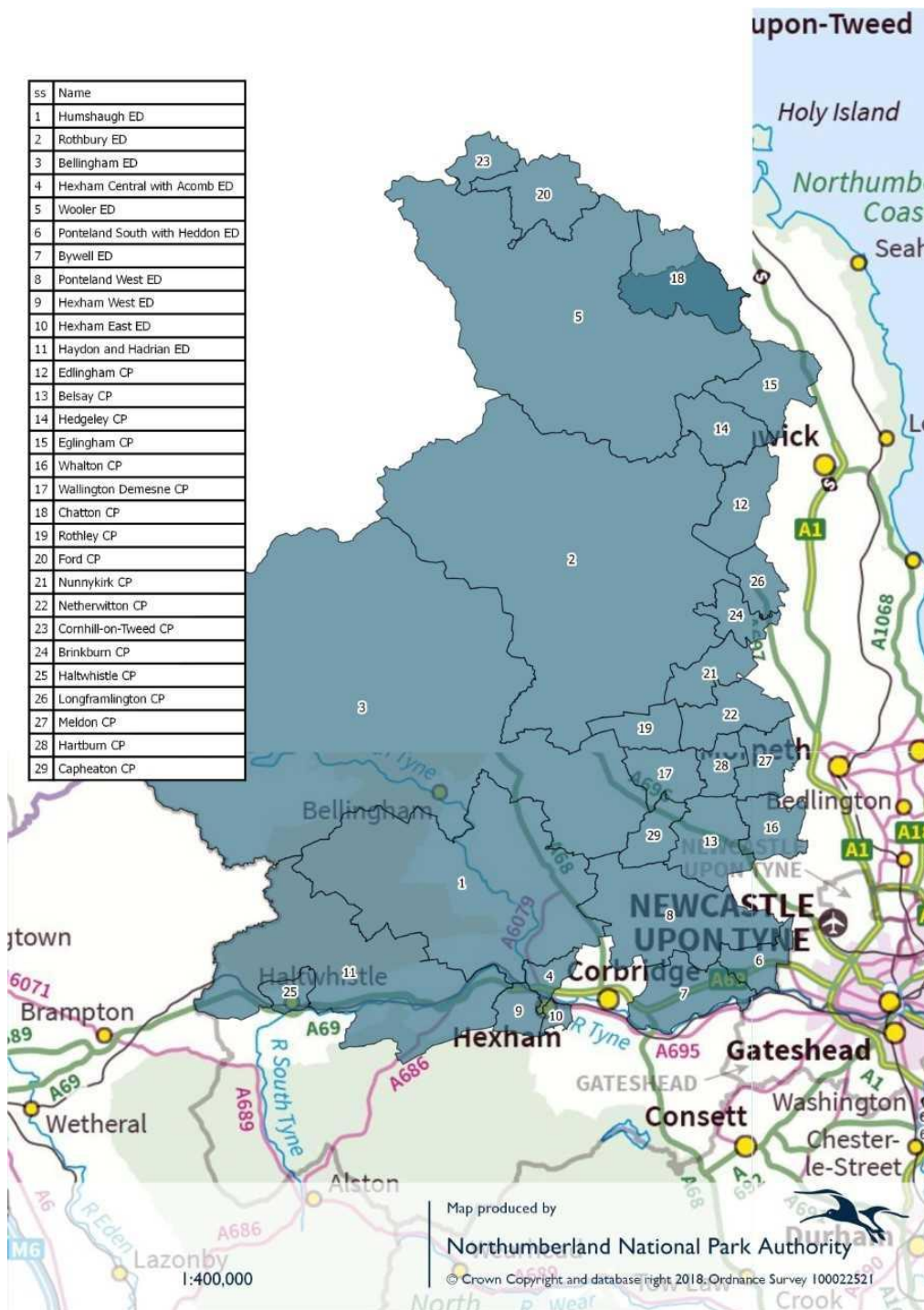
Map 2: Borders of the NULAG action area 2014-2020

Source: NULAG 2014



Map 3: Spatial distribution of grants for Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group as of 11 January 2018

Source: by kind permission of NULAG



Map 4 Parishes and Electoral Districts of the 2014-20 NULAG phase as defined by the NNPA.

Source: NNPA.

8.4 Additional Information

8.4.1 RELOCAL Case Study Information Sheet – UK version



Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development

<https://relocal.eu/>

Why this Project?

Because places differ from each other, and it because it is very easy for those differences to result in disparities in opportunities and resources, there has been a Europe-wide move to encourage people to become involved in the development of their local area and to support initiatives which specifically address local challenges and disadvantage.

This project is concerned with the achievements and impacts of community-level development throughout Europe. Development which comes from the level of the community is sometimes described as “bottom-up”, in contrast with “top-down” initiatives from government bodies. This project explores this bottom-up development, in particular how it might mitigate disadvantage in local areas and how this might have a wider influence on reducing disparities between places and thus increase their capacities to cooperate and align at a regional, national and international level. (The latter is known in the parlance of EU policy as “territorial cohesion”).

What is the Purpose of the Study?

The RELOCAL project aims to:

- Contribute to developing theories that support understanding of community participation in development, and its impacts on fostering cooperative relations between places.
- Increase the profile of opportunities to engage not only in community participation itself, but in the methods of carrying it out and evaluating it, so that it can be improved and made more effective.
- Spread understanding of good practice and “what works” to those responsible for community development at local and regional levels.

Methods

To better understand the achievements and impacts of community development on mitigating local disadvantage, this project is undertaking **33 case studies** in 13 different European countries. These case studies will then be **compared** to draw out the factors that influence their positive impacts. Later in the study, the possible impacts of specific factors on the performance of community development will be explored through **scenarios**, to enable a better understanding of what can help or hinder their effectiveness. The results are intended to feed into the development of more responsive policies for local communities.

Case Studies

Northumberland Uplands LEADER, Northumberland

PLACE/Ladywell, London Borough of Lewisham

Taking Part in the Project

This information sheet is being sent out to all those with interest or expertise in the issues that the project is seeking to explore. We would be pleased to welcome you as a participant to the project and appreciate your contribution. Moreover, we would be happy to receive recommendations for relevant contacts that may have an interest in this project. All information that is collected through interviews during the course of the study will be kept confidential and anonymised.

For further information on how to take part please contact:

Ali Madanipour, Professor of Urban Design, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University

Email: ali.madani@newcastle.ac.uk

Project Coordinator

University of Eastern Finland

Contact: Dr. Petri Kahila (petri.kahila@uef.fi)

8.4.2 NULAG Case Study, questions for non-NULAG members

Sections and Main Issues	Subsidiary Issues/ prompts	Explanation / Comment
A The nature of participation in study		
Explaining the study and consent procedure, how the interview data will be stored and how they can access it; and signing of consent form.	<i>Note that interviewee will be understood to speak on behalf of their organisation. If they wish to also express personal views and opinions, these will not be included in study unless with interviewee's explicit agreement</i>	Ethical dimensions of the study
B Your work in the local area	<i>Understanding the interviewee's background and involvement; introducing the topic of local disadvantage</i>	The interviewee's background and work
1 You and your role in the Northumberland Uplands	<i>Any other roles you may hold.</i>	We are interested in the last 10 years
2 How would you describe the main issues in the Northumberland Uplands (NU) area?	<i>Has this changed over time, do you see further changes in the next few years?</i>	We are interested in how you understand the NU's main challenges
3 What do you see as the main types of disadvantaged communities, or types of individual, in the Northumberland Uplands	<i>Do you have any views about why these communities/people are disadvantaged?</i>	The focus of inquiry is the impact of community development initiatives on local disadvantage
4 To what extent do you consider that you need to take disadvantaged people and communities in the local area into account in your work?	<i>Do you see reducing inequalities as part of your role? Has this changed over time?</i>	We are also interested in whether this has changed over the last 10 years.
5 How (if at all) are you involved with the Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group (local Leader group)?	<i>Has this changed over time?</i>	The case study centres on a particular community development initiative, the Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group (NULAG).
C Addressing disadvantage in community development		We are interested in NULAG, if you are familiar with their work, and also other community development initiatives
6 Do you know of any examples where disadvantaged people, or their representatives, have been involved in community development processes (in particular NULAG processes, if you know of these)?	<i>What helps or hinders this? Has this changed over the last 10 years?</i>	Who is engaged in the processes...
7 Can you think of any examples where community development/NULAG processes have had a positive impact on disadvantage in the area?	<i>How has this changed over the last 10 years?</i>	As well as who benefits from the outcomes...

Sections and Main Issues	Subsidiary Issues/ prompts	Explanation / Comment
8 Are there any kinds of people	<i>How does this work? How does it</i>	Who is hard to engage?

or places/communities who tend to get involved in/benefit from community development initiatives?	<i>relate to support available for applications/ networking/ type of match funding available etc?</i>	
9 Are there any people or places/communities who tend to get left out of/ draw less benefit from community development initiatives	<i>How would you explain this? Has there been an attempt been made to get them involved, in the past or currently? How does the size of grant applied for affect outcomes for less advantaged groups (if at all)?</i>	Who is difficult to benefit?
10 Can you think of any examples where a (justice-related) conflict arose in carrying out community development initiatives?	<i>Could it be explored? What procedures, if any, were in place to deal with it?</i>	Have any conflicts arisen in particular about fairness in terms of who is included, who benefits?
D The landscape of community development initiatives in the Northumberland Uplands		We want to understand how NULAG works with other local organisations and also other layers and levels of government.
11 If you are familiar with NULAG's work, to what extent is NULAG providing something unique in the local area?	<i>As regards other organisations, to what extent is there cooperation and to what extent potential for duplication?</i>	How does NULAG's work fit with that of other local government and voluntary organisations?
12 Can you think of any individuals and organisations that represent particular interests seeking to influence community development processes or interventions?	<i>Is there a pro-active attitude from local people towards community development initiatives, that might include lobbying on behalf of disadvantaged people (or powerful people)?</i>	
13 How would you describe the relationships between community development initiatives in the Northumberland Uplands and other levels of local management and government?	<i>How do you connect? How do you manage differences of opinion and priority? To what extent are relationships positive, or less so?</i>	Other LAGs (e.g. Northumberland Coast), other community development groups, Forestry Commission, National Park, Local Authority, Combined Authority, DEFRA, UK gov
14 How, if at all, do you think that these local authorities, and higher-level government organisations influence local community development in its approach to disadvantage and deprivation?	<i>Policies, directives, monitoring, meetings and training programmes etc? How do other organisations hinder or support community development kind?</i>	To what extent can community-level efforts to mitigate social injustice/disadvantage influenced by other levels of government?
E Concluding the interview		Ethics and further contact
Reiteration of interviewee's rights to access and review their interview data; data security;	asking for option of follow up questions; date for outcomes; how results to be disseminated.	

8.4.3 Kinds of disadvantage faced by young people in rural areas – Extract from Interview 15

Audio File Name: Relocal 15
Date: 24th July 2018
Comments:
Duration: 1:36:07

KEY:

Cannot decipher = (unclear + time code)

Sounds like = [s.l + time code]

I: = Interviewer (Interviewer in bold)

R: = Respondent

I: Yes. So, you were typical, in a sense, of Northumberland Uplands, of gradually losing these services and seeing how that impacts on people.

R: Absolutely, yes. Employment is, it's not just impacting on people who want a job, it impacts terribly on the children. Because in order for the parents to get married and have a roof over their heads, they each have to have a car to be able to go to work. Which means there's very little money left for absolutely anything else. Nor is there any time for either parent [sound of a train interrupts] – there are trains, but no stations! --- to take their children anywhere, do things with their children.

I: After school and things.

R: Yes. So even if we, in the village hall, put on Highlights Theatre productions designed for children, nobody brought their children to them because they collapsed for the day when they got home. Unless they're working nights, of course, they could have been working nights. And with all the stuff on television about children not being safe unless they're being stared at by an adult all day long, your village child rarely gets out to play, explores the river, climbs trees, gets lost, falls over and gets drenched in the river, or whatever. Knows where the birds nest, knows one bird from another. The old folk know that you can eat hazelnuts and they will still go nutting, the really old ladies, as they used to as children. And they are staggered that children have no idea that you can eat a hazelnut.

So, the deprivation for children is extraordinary. And now it's stopped them going to, well, they can go to the Middle school, but they're supposed to go to the First school and stay there until they're 11. Which means they're denied all the sporting facilities that they had when they went to the Middle school. They're denied the science lab in the Middle school. They're denied the domestic science rooms in the Middle school. They're denied all the music that they could have had. Live music is unknown to the children now. Cinema is unknown to the children. I've been to the cinema in [nearby town] in my early days here, but there's no cinema now.

We once put on a children's film in the village hall, because we'd got all the equipment, got every penny we could get from anywhere and spent it, so we'd got the equipment. But rarely did the children get to see anything. But we had films. And the children were absolutely staggered with the experience of live cinema, where everybody in the room was laughing their heads off at the same time as they were. They had never done that, never experienced that.

I: When was this?

R: It must have been in the early 2000s.

I: Wow.

R: So, their experiences are so limited. Which means it's no wonder that practically every teenager in the area is a cannabis smoker, and the little girls all wear hideous tee shirts with stupid sexy messages on them and things. And they're clean and polished and never dirty [Laughter], don't go out and roll down a field of grass, you know. It's... I think they are the most deprived children in... The school is trying very hard and it feels itself it's doing wonders, but I'm sorry – no.

My kids were able to go, the Middle school system started as my kids were ready for it, and it was marvellous. They were in plays on a proper stage, with curtains and lighting and everything. The children in [this village] will only go on a little platform in the back room of the pub, you know, surrounded by their parents. And there's just no comparison between a rural Primary school with two classrooms, two classrooms only, from 4 to 11, and what they had at the Middle school. Of course, in those days they had some money to play with as well, with probably a range of teachers.

But if you're teaching in the rural area you can have one teacher staying there for decades, more than decades, for generations. Every generation in [town name] who's been through [town name's] Middle school, doesn't know how to do an apostrophe, because Mrs [Name] taught them the wrong thing. Yes, every generation. I still have to correct my children's work, and they're all over 50. [Laughter]. So that's really kind of new.

I: So they [young people] are a big area of disadvantage and their parents, because they don't have time. Are there any other areas that you think you've really noticed?

R: Oh. Right. Well, sport, you know, we might have a really good sportsperson. They're entirely dependent on their parents and their parents' interest in the things. So, the parents, well, what have they got? They haven't got a cinema either. They've got the pub and the telly. Well, I call that distinct deprivation. I mean, I've not seen anything worth watching on television for months.

I: Yes. And what about places to socialise, like the village hall?

R: Well, village halls, I mean, we're lucky to have a village hall, and we were lucky at the beginning of the village hall to have a team of people who were excited by the idea, and who pulled finger and worked hard at it. And the teenagers were

absolutely over the moon with the village hall and its facilities, and they just loved its kitchen, and they loved its toilets. And they said, “Miss, can we come and clean for you?” [Laughter]. And they would join in everything that was happening, and to begin with we had lots and lots of things happening.

It took four years for most of the residents to actually believe that it would happen, and would exist and would continue to exist. And we sent out every month, I think, we sent out a newsletter with what was on, a programme of what was on, and what had been happening, to every house in the village. And some of the kids did it on horseback, went round with it to distant places as well. And we posted them, and they were delivered around the streets. And after four years of that, somebody came up to me and said, “Well, I’ve been getting these notices, so I thought I’d better come and see.”

Genuinely, I reckon if you're starting something in a rural area nowadays, they're so convinced that life has nothing for them and nobody will do anything except take things away from them, that they don't..., it takes four years to convince them that something is worth doing. So, you've got to hang on for four years. Which is quite difficult with funding, you know? If people give funding for something for eighteen months [Laughter], it needs four years, in my experience, for people to accept it and decide to go along with it.

Now, the village hall is something that people are accustomed to, and they're accustomed to other people doing it. And there's a tremendous sense of, “Leave it to other people to do.” Just as they leave the parish council to other people and are not remotely interested in what the parish council is up to, because the parish council is dedicated to doing nothing, in case it would cost any money and put anything on the rates.

So, at the moment we have a committee and a village hall that is dedicated to just keeping the accounts to balance. So, what's happening now is, it's not the village hall committee running anything, or starting things. But what is happening – this is good – is that people, young women, obviously, are wanting to, getting themselves trained as Pilates and Yoga teachers and things, and hiring the village hall to run things. So those two are new events, and fully booked, and there's loads of people who can't get in.

For men – nothing. And for young men... you see, the demographic in the village is always changing really fast.

I: Really?

R: Children grow up so fast, come and go. I remember somebody saying to me once, at one stage her daughter was the only child in the village. Now, your parish councillors, just like your district councillors and your county councillors, are all car drivers, so they're not interested in anybody else being able to move. And on the whole, if they've got grandchildren they're miles away, so they're not worried about what the children might be wanting to do.

Farmers don't generally, apart from the ones who are devoted to rugby, are not interested in sport for their children, and they're the most stable community around.

I: Yes.

R: But I think it's absolutely wicked that, I mean, we might have some really good sportspeople, and they've never... And how do we ever keep down obesity if the kids aren't running out and playing and haven't got sport?

The men have absolutely nothing, and young men it's really quite a torment for them, I think, how to fill their days. But we don't, I mean, very few people sit around being idle. It's an urban thing to sit around without a job, but I wouldn't say... the young, as soon as they get through secondary school and if they go off to university, they never come back. Although, [Village X] has a much better young population than [Village Y], but I don't think it will for long, since the buses were taken away.

8.4.4 Table 6 Comparing Themes from SWOT Analyses in Phase 1 and 2 of NULAG

WEAKNESSES		
Dimension	1 st NULAG (2008-13)	2 nd NULAG (2014-20)
Transport and Connecting People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor infrastructure and accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolation due to high fuel prices and no nearby petrol stations. • Lack of high-speed broadband and mobile connection in certain areas – makes working from home impossible for some people • A lack of parking in the villages is a deterrent for tourists • Prolonged road closures e.g. the closure of B6341 • Public transport is poor and expensive to use. Especially lacking in the evening. • Lack of communication about local opportunities, training, support and guidance • Distances across rural areas make it difficult to move products to marketing opportunities • Traffic speeding in the villages
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scarce / Remote / Marginalised / Isolated Population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divided community with an ageing population • Lack of care homes for the elderly • Lack of activities/facilities for disabled • Isolation and loneliness • Underperforming shops and village halls • Lack of employment opportunities • Small and inward looking population • Invisible men folk (many have to work away from home) • Lack of a weekly doctor's surgery locally and a lack of defibrillators • Lack of police presence
Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor levels of academic attainment • Out Migration of Young People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of jobs for young people • Lack of social activities for children & young teens
Environment and Local Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Affordable Housing • Lack of Good Rural Services • High Service Costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor road maintenance e.g. potholes • No mains gas in some areas • Lack of affordable housing • Lack of community toilets • Large lorries drive on verges and spoil drainage
Managing the land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of rural diversification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of affordable housing, especially for younger people • Poor drainage • Large housing developments on Greenfield sites without improved infrastructure • Lack of affordable/social housing to buy or rent • Lack of space to expand industrial facilities
Local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few Job Opportunities • Low Wage Economy • High Cost of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel Poverty • Impoverished councils withdrawing services • Lack of cash points/banks • Lack of good quality hotels/beds is bad for tourism

	Living • Limited Funding Opportunities Available	
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THREATS		
Dimension	1 st NULAG (2008-13) ¹ .	2 nd NULAG (2014-20) ² .
Transport and connecting people	[none]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of mobile phone signal and removal of phone boxes • Poor broadband
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to Reverse the Aging Population • Continued Out Migration of Young People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime from travelling criminals • Social isolation • Lack of venues to sell crafts • Ageing population • Westminster has no concept of rural life up here • Health risks to teenagers who smoke • Job Centre is far away and gives no help and has no consideration for its clients. • Volunteering fatigue • Economic migration
Young People	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of employment forcing young people to move away from the area
Environment and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of Natural Assets due to SocioEconomic Development • External Influences (Foot and Mouth Disease, Blue Tongue, [...] etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterioration of roads i.e. pot holes • Environmental threats, e.g. grey squirrels, litter, alien species, habitat loss, drainage problems • Flooding • Falling trees • Poor weather affects tourism and small businesses
Managing the Land		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large wind farms with no community benefit • Second home culture is destroying communities, lots of empty properties turns places into 'ghost' towns • No investment in infrastructure • Inappropriate developments in the countryside • Lack of affordable housing • Digging & building restricted on archaeological grounds • Use of agriculture land for housing
Local Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Levels of Bureaucracy in the Grant Making Process • External Influences ([...] Global Credit Crunch, Affordable Housing, High Fuel Prices etc.) • Restrictive Rural Legislation • Continued High Cost of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased fuel costs • Public sector cutbacks & closure of local shops, businesses, health services (doctors surgeries) • Lack of support for voluntary organisations • Lack of core funding for organisations/charities/voluntary groups/SME's • Road closures affecting tourism • Too much tourism • Supermarkets threaten smaller businesses • Seasonal and 0 hour contracts

	Living <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition for Limited Funding • Loss of Focus on Deprived Areas 	
Other	LAG Governance Structure has to be Efficient and Effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asda/Tesco/Sainsbury deliveries • Scottish independence

Table 6 Comparing Themes from SWOT Analyses in Phase 1 and 2 of NULAG

1. "The SWOT analysis for the Northumberland Uplands was produced by a facilitated workshop of the NULAG members in April 2008" (NULAG, 2008, p50).
2. "22 Parishes completed SWOT analyses, along with five special interest groups, including the Young Northumberland Network" (NULAG, 2014, p10)

8.4.5 NULAG Actions in Phase 1 and 2 of NULAG

Phase and LDS Theme	Action	Amount £s
Phase 1	<i>[list incomplete in published documents by around 11 projects]</i>	
1.1 Land Management, Farming and Forestry	A1. Automatic Wildfire Detection System	59,230
	A2. Shepherd's Hut and Alpacas	9,000
	A3. Home Grown Protein Groups	34,820
	A4. Northumberland Uplands Collaborative Wood Fuel Support	32,125
	A5. Cheviot Futures	140,357
	A6. Moss Peteral Farm Diversification – care farming for vulnerable adults with social and care needs	9,867
	A7. Micro-Hydro on Upland Farms	11,625
	A8. NU-Logs	63,943
	A9. Traditional Boundaries, Traditional Skills (trained young people in management and repair of gates, styles fences etc)	45,000
1.2 Young People	A10. YELP: Young Enterprising LEADER project (supporting young people to gain enterprise skills through training and business open days)	26,928
	A11. YERN: Young Entrepreneurs of Rural Northumberland (training events to get young people to consider entrepreneurial opportunities, other career and FE options)	30,388
	A12. Environmental Scouts (land-based businesses encouraging Scouts' environmental involvement and environmental learning trip to Lesotho, South Africa)	10,229
	A13. Transitional Youth Engagement Project (young people exchange experience, skills and knowledge with young people in Smaland, South Sweden).	38,062
	A14. Kielder Observatory Advanced Instrumentation Programme (New telescope for Observatory, allowing existing telescope to be taken around schools and groups)	16,000
	A15. "Selling the Soil".	6,000
	A16. Northumberland Young Firefighters – help to establish three new Uplands branches in Rothbury, Wooler and Haltwhistle	26,770
	A17. Greenhead Youth Club – recruiting two youth workers	2,510
	A18. Young Farmers Officer Training (Training for Young Farmers Clubs to run their own committees)	4,310
	A19. Wooler Youth Drop In (information, activities and advice for local young people)	20,000
	A20. Children's Countryside Day (open to all first schools in Northumberland and some in Tyneside –	40,000

Young People/cont.	adjacent urban area)	
	A21. Haltwhistle Music and Arts Festival	32,775
	A22. Hesleyside Shepherd's Huts	30,000
	A23. Kielder Observatory Development Project	50,000
	A24. Greystead Church Conversion	25,000
	A25. Calvert Trust Lodge	119,976
	A26. Visual Arts in Rural Communities: Walk On	33,347
	A27. Wooler Youth Hostel	42,056
	A28. Railway Carriage Exhibition and Tea room	39,486
	A29. Short Walks on St Cuthbert's Way	10,500
	A30. Flodden Eco Museum	24,265
	A31. Kielder Astronomy Village Feasibility Study	7,000
	A32. Calvert Trust – Realising Potential – installation of High Ropes Course and Laser Clay Shooting – can be used by disabled people and all levels of ability, thus furthering inclusion.	82,092
	A33. Bellingham Equestrian Events	4,870
	A34. Eastbanks Eco Bothy	20,000
	A35. Hooked-up Hotspots	9,000
	A36. Kielder Camping and Caravan Site	14,295
	A37. Bellingham All Acoustic Festival (BAA Fest)	20,000
	A38. Heatherslaw Light Railway	42,530
	A39. Haydon Bridge Tourism Gateway Initiative	72,839
	A40. Heritage Walks in North Northumberland	2,797
1.4 Micro Enterprise	A41. Claire's Newsagents	3,028
	A42. Kirkharle Play Area	6,721
	A43. Northern Wilds	5,077
	A44. Coquetdale Brewery	5,000
	A45. Scarlett and the Spotty Dog – bakery start up	10,285
	A46. Rocky Road Café	60,803
	A47. Umbrella Project – study visits for potential NULAG applicants across UK and EU	8,702
	A48. Revitalisation and Regeneration of Bellingham	9,500
	A49. Equestrian Pilates	8,984
	A50. Horse Power for Ability – helping people with mobility difficulties through equestrian activities	8,389
	A51. Slate and Nature	47,650
1.5 Communities	A52. Gilsland Railway Station Feasibility Study	4,600
	A53. Tillside Cricket Club Pavillion	24,188
	A54. Bellingham Show and Country Festival	14,970
	A55. Humshaugh Community Shop	22,500
	A56. Ford and Etal Scout Bunkhouse – new activities centre at Ford and Etal scout campsite	40,550
	A57. Opening Doors Community Project	26,328
	A58. Kielder Fuel Pumps	23,628
	A59. Hartburn Church	15,000
	A60. Bardon Mill Village Hall	15,000
	A61. Gilsland Village Hall	18,500
	A62. Bellingham Library	4,240

	A63. Northumbria Basketry Group Development	17,100
Communities/cont.	A64. Humshaugh Community Kitchen	17,340
	A65. Glendale Charities Cooperative	4,900
	A66. ADAPT – Extra Miles - Minibuses upgraded to be fully disabled accessible, and allow new routes and services to be extended to rurally isolated communities around Bellingham and Haltwhistle.	105,250
	A67. Tynedale Women's Training Group – Training Opportunities for women in five villages, creche facilities to allow young mothers to take part.	34,945
	A68. River Till Resource Appraisal	3,000

Phase 2	<i>[list incomplete by around 3 projects of which details unavailable]</i>	
2.1 SME Support/Farm Diversification	B1.Expansion of Doddington Cheese business	30,710
	B2.Girsonfield Stud and Racing expansion	9,066
	B3.Twice Brewed - microbrewery	69,507
	B4.West Monkridge Farm – Meat Storage Unit	3,996
	B5.Hexhamshire Brewery Building and Brew Plant	12,196
	B6.First and Last Brewery, Elsdon	16,447
	B7. S&J Smith Timber Haulage	2,672
	B8. Corbridge Business Premises	43,186
	B9. Colin White Tree Surgery	17,058
	B10. Northumberland Mead	3,945
	B11. Black Bull at Etal	11,618
	B12. Extreme Equine Agility Course (Pegasus)	12,111
	B13. West Moneylaws Workshop	79,685
	B14. Redesdale Equestrian	51,126
	B15. Jack's Fast Track Gym	5,695
	B16. Fire and Dough	15,488
	B17. Black Sheep Farm Veterinary Service	58,898
2.2 Farm Productivity	B18. G D Herdman – Mobile Sheep Handling	6,044
	B19. R Jeffreys – improving farm productivity	3,998
	B20. JT Goodfellow and Son Lynup Hill – egg packing machine	9,760
	B21. Organic Free Range Egg Production – Bainbridge Farms	52,394
	B22. Wittonstone Mobile Sheep Handling	3,247
	B23. John Goodfellow Mobile Sheep Handling	3,643
	B24. JT Murray	6,993
	B25. Arcusin Bale Packer – Grindon Farm	26,420
	B26. Wilson Bros – Ingram Venison	25,044
	B27. Bays Leap Dairy	11,551
	B28. JRG Johnstone – zero tillage and mobile	16,645
	B29. Livestock Handling Equipment - Ant Robinson	3,034
2.3 Forestry	B30. Estate Forestry Services – James Petty	6,915
	B31. Redeswood Forest Services	40,460
	B32. Woodland Thinnings	21,000
2.4 Tourism	B33. Establishing Hadrian Holidays – Four Wynds Guest House	20,134
	B34. Kielder Imaging Observatory	86,934

	B35. Westfield Shepherd Huts	71,946
	B36. Blossom Plantation Pods – nr Charlton Hall	72,905
	B37. Prendwick Farm Shepherd Huts	32,797
	B38. The Dod Barns	23,585
	B39. Ravenscleugh	17,084
	B40. Langley Dam Glamping	54,652
	B41. Glampods Northumberland -Troughend West Tofts	45,863
	B42. East Todholes Barn	28,768
	B43. Chirdon Head Youth Project	56,268
2.5 Rural Services	B44. Young and Sweet	14,383
	B45. Haltwhistle Pool Upgrading of Plant Room	82,732
	B46. Falstone Play Park	14,405
	B47. Elsdon Village Hall	19,538
2.6 Culture and Heritage	B48. Kirkharle Creative – Cascade	5,548

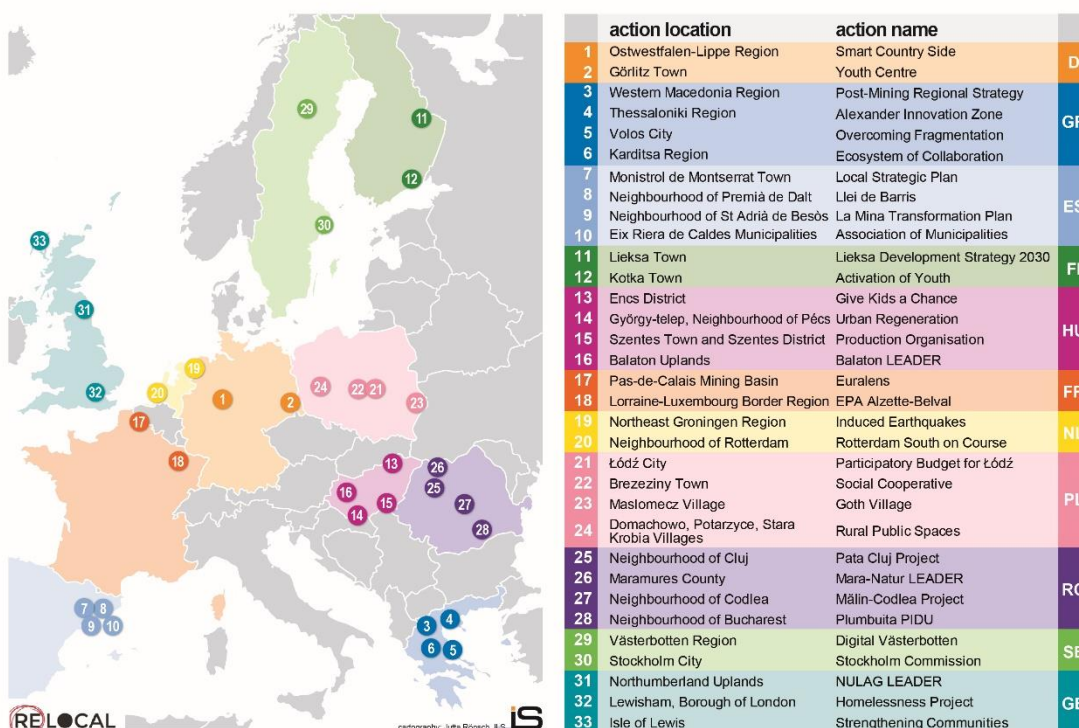
Table 7: Actions supported in each of the two phases of NULAG by category and funding (those directly supporting disadvantaged groups/social justice in bold)

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:



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