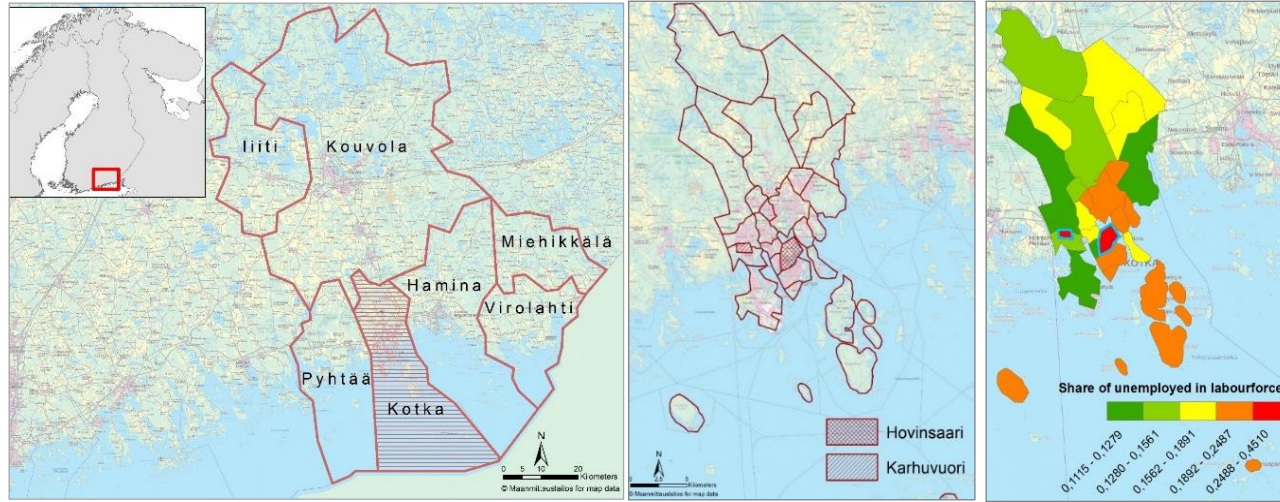


***SP27.01 THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL
IN IMPROVING COHESION AND SPATIAL JUSTICE – 11.7.2019***

**POWERS AND LIMITS OF THE LOCAL:
BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVE MEETING TOP-DOWN POLICIES FOR SPATIAL JUSTICE**

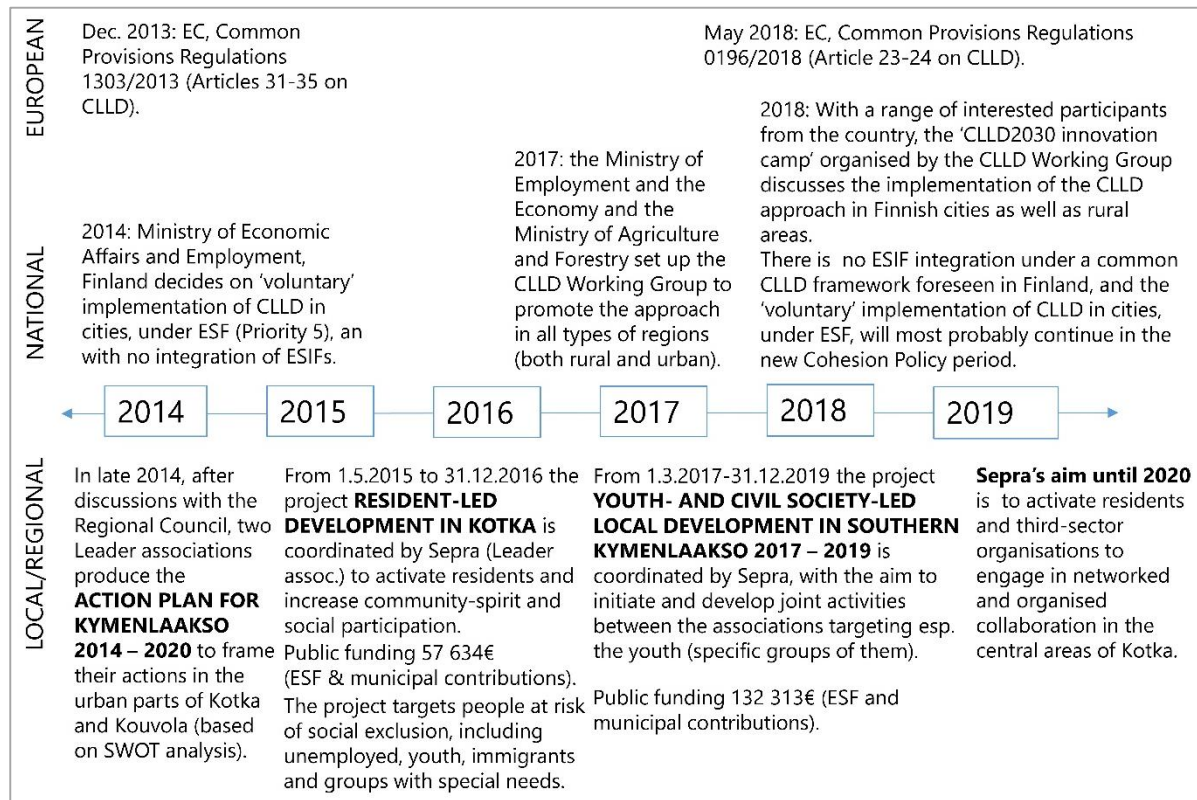
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The location of Kotka in Finland and Kymenlaakso region; the locations of the Hovinsaari and Karhuvuori neighbourhoods within the city of Kotka, spatial patterns in the share of unemployment in labour force within the city of Kotka (by postal districts)

Source of data: Statistics Finland, Paavo database, data from 2014/15.

(Based on Fritsch et al. 2019.)



Timeline of the initiative: simultaneous and interconnected developments and processes at various levels of governance (own elaboration)

a civil-society based local action in Kotka intriguingly embedded in multi-level cohesion policies

European Union Cohesion Policy
and funding;
EU's 'community-led local development' concept

Finland's
OP Priority 5 facilitating
'civil-society based' local development';
national debates on the CLLD approach

Kymenlaakso region volunteering
to support local civil-society projects
(regional Action Plan)

Sepra's LEADER
work in South
Kymenlaakso

**The Action
in urban
Kotka**

*The embeddedness
of the initiative and
its multidimensional
locality
(own elaboration)*

- 1) **What factors limit and extend the potential of the studied initiative to increase the autonomy of the local level in terms of its power to deal with social/spatial injustices?**
- 2) **What dimensions and definitions of the 'local' emerge in the initiative's intervention logic?**

Combining three theoretical starting points:

- 1 ***multidimensional*** approach to socio-spatial relations and the notion of the 'local' (Jessop 2016 etc.)
- 2 ***spatial justice*** and the connection between its distributive and procedural aspects (Harvey 1973/2009 inspired by Rawls 1971, Soja 2010)
- 3 two ***sources of power and autonomy***: power of initiative and power of immunity (Clark 1984, Pratchett 2004, Ladner et al. 2016)

1 Not only a multiscale but a **multidimensional approach to socio-spatial relations** (Jessop et al. 2008, Jessop 2016), this helps to achieve the ambition to link the framing of spatial justice dynamics with theories about the sources of power and different types of autonomy of the local level within a multi-level governance setting.

- **Territorial rules and multiscale deployment** of policy (e.g. CLLD) and the administrative jurisdiction of places (e.g. of Kotka) closely intertwine with the **“soft spaces” of various, flexible and negotiated spatial imaginaries** (Servillo 2019, Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009) and scale-jumping networks constructed and pursued by different actors (on local and other levels) in the story of the studied initiative.
- Localities are **“porous and interlinked parts of wider contexts”**, and “the nexus of a range of forces that contribute to spatial (in)justice and democratic legitimacy”, and thus are to be analysed “from a critical and open perspective” (Madanipour et al. (2017: 77).
- **Territory, place, scales and networks are interconnected, and localities are not fixed neither self-contained.** Consequently, the assessment of resources, capacities and powers of the locality to pursue its own ends in achieving improved social and spatial justice needs the recognition of all these dimensions.

2 The local initiative presented in this paper revolves around **the relationship between society, space and exclusion that is, interactions expressed by the concept of spatial justice** (Lefebvre 1974, Harvey 1973/2009 inspired by Rawls 1971, Soja 2010), the “**ensemble of relations between spatial dynamics and justice**” (Morange and Quentin 2018: 2).

- Since the experience and definition of the existence and the patterns of (distributive) spatial injustices motivate and direct the formulation of the actual responses (corrective processes) to those, the **relativity and normativity of justice** (ibid.) lie certainly at the heart of the interconnectedness of the distributive and procedural aspects of justice.
- The idea of spatial justice is opened up in terms of the **connections between the distributive and procedural aspects of justice** (based on e.g. Rawls 1971): the inseparability of the elements in the process-outcome-process chain behind spatial injustice.

3 Local autonomy is conceptualised in terms of **the two principles of power**, elaborated first in relation to (a narrower, more constitutional/legal understanding of) local autonomy by Clark (1984), but also evoked in more recent work on the subject (e.g. Pratchett 2004, Ladner et al. 2016).

- One is the ways how the '**power of initiative**' is expressed and exercised locally. These evoke ideas of place-based knowledge, capacities and perceptions, as well as participation and local partnerships.
- The other is the ways higher levels grant or limit the locality's '**power of immunity**' (and how the local level may strive to enhance such power). This regards the degree of freedom to act without (too much) control of higher tiers of government..

Reflections and conclusions about the 'initiative'

- ... relating spatial justice to empowerment, and through that, to a broader understanding of local autonomy, it is revealed how processes and the sources of empowerment are tightly intertwined with the dynamic relationship between the distributive and procedural aspects of spatial justice, and how their interactions are complicated further by the fact that they occur on and across multiple levels and operate with an indefinite, fluid concept of 'locality'....
- ... the local autonomy to act upon social/spatial injustice, is undeniably compromised and overseen by higher tiers of governance, but is also taking advantage from funding and ideas channelled through the same vertical structure 'from above', as well as from other dimensions and connections that cut across scales. Moreover, this local autonomy is used, expressed and improved through multidimensional interactions...

In response to the initial research questions:

1. The interactions of the distributive and procedural aspects of spatial justice interweave with cross-scale dynamics of empowerment,

The factors that expand and limit this action's potential to increase the autonomy of the local level in addressing these problems are to be sought not only in its own intervention logic, but also across the multiple levels and relations that 'govern' the intervention – which relations represent the multidimensionality of locality when it comes to assessing its sources (powers) of autonomy.

2. ... and (hence) the definition of the 'local' by the intervention and its various actors is very flexible, but actually, it needs to be.

The vagueness of the notion of 'locality': ... neighbourhoods, urban Kotka?

Local stakeholder building its own multi-fund portfolio for carrying out community-led local development type of activities across South Kymenlaakso from three different EU funds (the rural development fund, ESF, and ERDF)? Work on the ground indicates a functional area-based integration driven by a third sector partnership and facilitated, though not so intentionally, by upper tiers of governance.

In conclusion, there are various spatialities and localities present in the story of ‘local autonomy meeting spatial justice’ in Kotka. However, instead of being incongruous or disturbing, these allow for flexible and productive interpretations by and cooperation across diverse levels and actors of governance and policy-making.



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Thank you for your attention!

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