



Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development



D 6.2 National Report France

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[locales.insee.fr/#c=report&chapter=empopact&report=r03&selgeo1=epci.245701404&selgeo2=fe.1](https://statistiques-locales.insee.fr/#c=report&chapter=empopact&report=r03&selgeo1=epci.245701404&selgeo2=fe.1) Isabelle Pigeron-Piroth, University of Luxembourg

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Abbreviations

AMO	<i>Assistance à maîtrise d'ouvrage</i> (project management assistance)
CCPHVA	<i>Communauté de Communes du Pays Haut Val d'Alzette</i> (Community of municipalities)
CET	<i>Contribution Économique Territoriale</i> (Territorial Economic Contribution)
CVAE	<i>Cotisation sur la Valeur Ajoutée des Entreprises</i> (companies' value-added contribution)
DATAR	<i>Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale</i> [delegation for territorial planning and regional action]
DGF	<i>Dotation Globale de Fonctionnement</i> (general operating grant)
EC	European Commission
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EPA	<i>Établissement Public d'Aménagement</i> (public development agency)
EPCI	<i>Établissement Public de Coopération Intercommunale</i> (public body for intermunicipal cooperation)
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FPU	<i>Fiscalité Professionnelle Unique</i> (unique professional taxation)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IBA	International Architecture Exhibitions (<i>Internationale Bauausstellungen</i>)
IFER	<i>Imposition Forfaitaire sur les Entreprises de Réseaux</i> (flat-rate tax on network businesses)
LAU	Local Administrative Unit
MAPTAM	<i>Loi de modernisation de l'action publique territoriale et d'affirmation des métropoles</i> (law for modernising territorial public action and for strengthening metropolises)
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
PMA	<i>Pôle métropolitain de l'Artois</i> (metropole of Artois)
TASCOM	<i>Taxe sur les Surfaces Commerciales</i> (taxation on commercial premises)

Executive Summary

In France, spatial injustice is usually described as disadvantages related to place that result in the feeling that the local population is left out or unable to shape the locality's own future. It contrasts with a strong tradition of "*égalité des territoires*" ("equality between territories") which shapes the spatial planning policy.

Two contrasted case studies have been selected for the RELOCAL project in France. Located in peri-urban post-industrial contexts, they both need to reopen the path towards local development. The EPA Alzette-Belval (Lorraine) is a top-down initiative established through an on-site technical implementation, while Euralens is a more bottom-up, autonomous association in the Nord mining basin. Spatial injustices existed in both localities, and there were a number of similarities (e.g. access to and financing of public services, fair and equitable access to decision-making processes).

The national context goes beyond the individual findings for each case, to reflect on their significance in a national context shaped by successive waves of decentralisation and the recent launch of nationally led thematic initiatives to support local development.

We found that Euralens and the EPA Alzette-Belval make a direct contribution to greater spatial justice. The EPA Alzette-Belval specifically targets distributive justice, while Euralens targets procedural justice more. These two actions demonstrate that despite decentralisation, the state remains crucial in France. Like the place-based approach promoted at the EU level, France encourages localities to build up their own initiatives to foster local development, while the state provides timely support through dedicated schemes (e.g. ERBM, ÉcoCité, *EPA à la française*). In this context, regions facing steep challenges (e.g. economic regeneration following the fall of single industries, asymmetric border exchanges and interdependencies) are overwhelmed by the task of effectively mobilising the national tools at their disposal and initiating local development on their own.

Nationally led instruments therefore need to *be adapted to* local geographic, political and social specificities in order to be capable of deploying their full impact.

It therefore seems important – especially in a unitary country like France – to keep monitoring spatial disparities and social inequalities, have dedicated channels for territories to bring forward their respective problems, and as a consequence to keep redistributive measures that can be mobilised to address the deepest territorial divides.

Too often, potential beneficiaries of EU funding do not apply (i.e. due to the administrative burden, lack of information). Access to EU regional policy should be more open, simpler and based more on impact (including qualitative and quantitative indicators). Open European satellites with dedicated agents in territories facing structural challenges could contribute by enabling these regions and giving "Brussels" a more human and less bureaucratic face.

1. Introduction

This report provides the national context for the two French case studies of EPA Alzette-Belval and Euralens, which share a number of similarities. One is located in the north and one in the east of France. Post-industrial (i.e. mines and steel) and peri-urban (near but not included in a “*métropole*”), these territories are characterised today by a decline in the productive economy and a negative migration rate. In their well-known study, the two French specialists in territorial economy, Magali Talandier and Laurent Davezies, pointed out those two regions as the most dependent on transfers of social revenue in France (Davezies, 2012; Talandier, 2012). The main difference is contextual: whereas Luxembourg borders the EPA Alzette-Belval and drives most of its economic development on the one hand, for the Euralens case study on the other hand the proximity to Lille does not directly benefit the locality so much. In both situations, we investigated whether local development can be genuine, focusing in particular on the role of grassroots organisations and that of public institutions.

The context of France is particularly interesting to the RELOCAL research questions. Even though spatial justice does not explicitly appear in public policies, public discourses are deeply marked by the notion and value of equality. For Estèbe, France has a passion for the equality of and between territories (*L'égalité des territoires*, Estèbe, 2015). This is an important rationale for planning policies and for thinking of the territory as a nationwide grid that should be equipped with the same access to public services (distributive side of spatial justice). In this context, one of our research questions is therefore: do public policies – striving for equality – allow the pursuit of a greater degree of spatial justice? Are these mechanisms effectively ‘correcting’ uneven development? Ultimately, and on a more philosophical note, how do territorial equality and spatial justice coexist? Are they the same or do they contradict each other? Also, while several public policies are thought to rebalance territories and inequalities, the unitary state of France has gone through several waves of decentralisation within the last 40 years. An important aspect to elucidate is therefore whether this supposed greater autonomy allows greater spatial justice in its procedural dimension. In the traditionally egalitarian approach of France, how do the state and the decentralised authorities share responsibilities, and what room for manoeuvre does the local level effectively have?

To address these questions, we have selected two almost opposite actions in comparable localities.

Euralens defines itself as a “forum of actors of the Pas-de-Calais mining basin¹” (Euralens website, 2019). It covers a territory of 650,000 inhabitants situated in the north of France between Lille and Paris. In formal terms, it is an association that includes both politicians and public officers of institutions (1) and of public agencies (2), members of civil society (3) and business actors (4). The main originality of Euralens is indeed its very nature: not being an institution *per se*, it has no direct power of decision-making. Nevertheless, since it links all the main public and private actors in the territory, it constitutes itself as a crucial governance tool, attracting more and more local, national and international attention. Created in 2009, its objective was (and still is) to use the implementation of the Louvre satellite in Lens

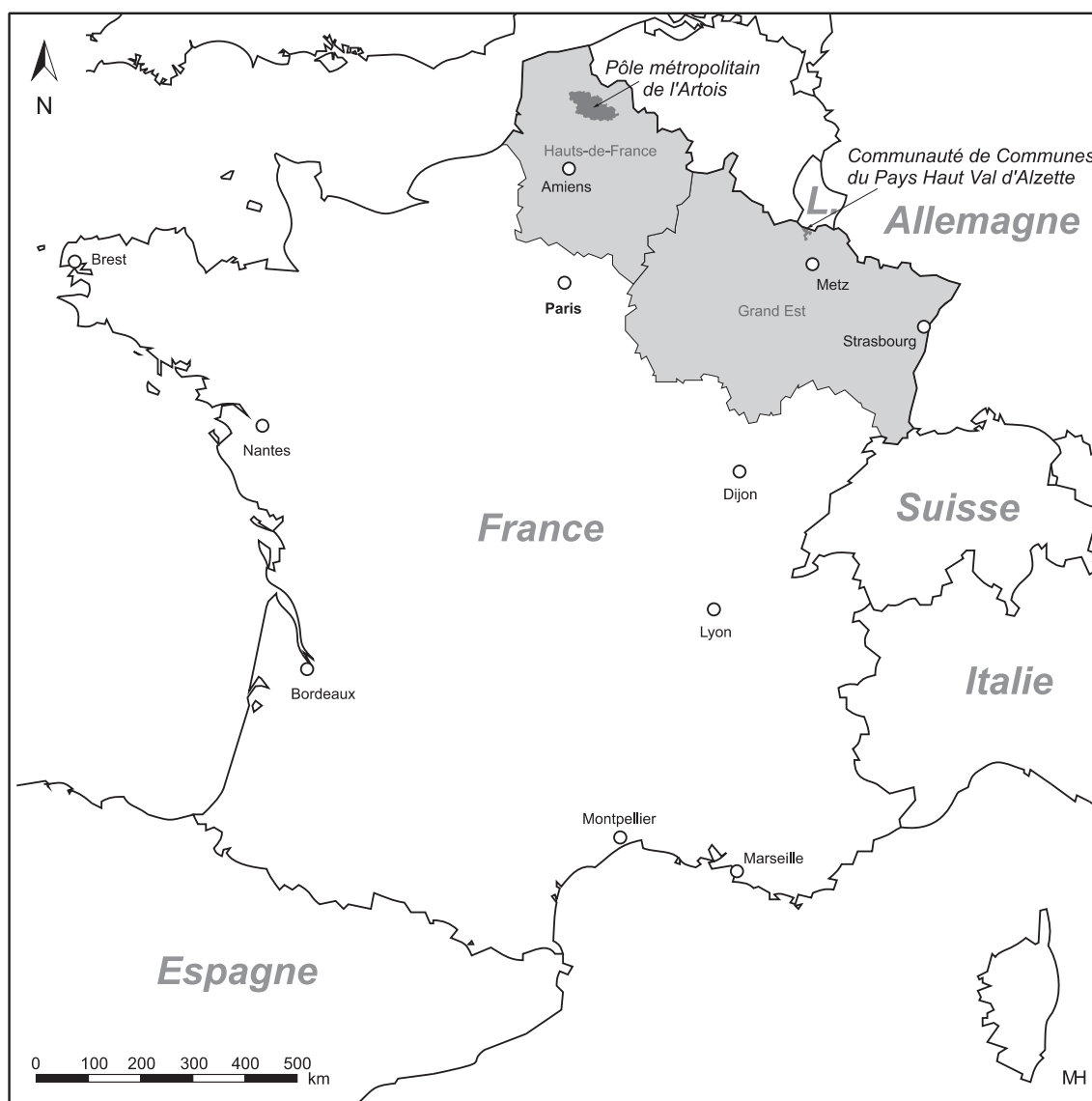
¹ In this report, when we refer to the mining basin, we mean the former Pas-de-Calais mining basin.

as a catalyst for territorial development: “We use a big project both to improve spatial planning and to change mentalities” (Jean-Louis Subileau, head of the urbanism agency assisting Euralens). To do so, Euralens presents itself as a “local projects incubator” (a) and a “metropolisation laboratory” (b) (Euralens website, 2019). To ‘incubate’ local projects (a), Euralens has set up a labelling process, reproducing the approach developed by the IBA² Emscher Park in the Ruhr area (Germany). Through this, Euralens seeks to identify, support and catalyse “example projects” that contribute to “the ecological and social transformation of the territory” (*ibid.*). The contribution of Euralens to the ‘metropolisation’ of the territory occurs mainly through two channels. Observing the high degree of fragmentation of the territory, Euralens constitutes itself as a large forum, crossing political divisions, in order to encourage cooperation. Furthermore, due to the relatively small size of the agglomeration communities, territorial engineering has remained weak. Not only did the territory not have a large and shared territorial strategy at that time, it was also incapable of communicating and valorising existing territorial initiatives. To tackle this issue, Euralens, supported by two private agencies involved in urbanism and landscape, has established a list of priorities, broken down into annual thematic forums. The aim of this was (and still is) to create new territorial dynamics, defined and put into action by the local actors together.

The **EPA Alzette-Belval** is a state-led public agency in charge of managing an operation of national interest (OIN). There are about a dozen such operations in France. Created under the impetus of the French President in 2012, the EPA Alzette-Belval’s long-term goal is to trigger local development and regain strategic room for manoeuvre in the context of the steady growth of Luxembourg, with the declared aim of ultimately attaining co-development. To do so, the EPA works on three main axes: 1) a planning strategy to reinforce local economic and social attractiveness, by improving local living conditions of the existing and future population and by developing public services in the fields of transport and housing in complementarity with other neighbouring territories; 2) establishing an example sustainable eco-agglomeration (renovation and construction of new buildings); 3) contributing to the economic strength of northern Lorraine by developing specific sectors (e.g. the green economy) in complementarity with Luxembourg’s economy (EPA Strategic Operational Plan). Under planning law, such a structure is equipped with the capacity to take over planning responsibilities from the municipalities in order to fulfil a specific set of goals. The perimeter of the action is defined in a decree; it covers 8 peri-urban/rural municipalities (about 28,000 inhabitants in total). **The action is convergent with that of others in Lorraine seeking to rebalance the Lorraine-Luxembourg cross-border interdependencies.** Besides the fact that the creation of enterprises is much less favourable and simple in France than in Luxembourg (e.g. tax system, employer costs, paperwork), localities close to the border are more dependent on Luxembourg’s economy, as their share of commuters can range between 50% and 80%. As commuters’ income tax is withheld at source in Luxembourg, these municipalities face a peculiar situation. A large part of the population *works* abroad (i.e. on the other side of the border) while they *live* in the locality. These municipalities need to maintain a number of **public services** (e.g. primary schools, facilities to host health care services, local transport infrastructure,

² *Internationale Bauausstellungen* (German), which means *International Architecture Exhibitions*.

support for facilities for sport and cultural activities) without being able to ‘tap into’ a large part of its resident population’s income tax. While in a number of other cross-border areas (e.g. Geneva), a bilateral state agreement organises fiscal redistribution (CPLR, 2019), Luxembourg co-finances such cross-border infrastructure on a case-by-case basis.



Map 1: The RELOCAL localities in their national context
Cartography: Malte Helfer, University of Luxembourg

2. The case studies in a national context

2.1 Unpacking spatial justice in the French context

In France, the term “spatial justice” is translated as “*justice spatiale*”. From our perspective, it seems that is not so commonly used in the policy discourse. Nevertheless, the recent events around the ‘yellow vests’ movement and the publication of a book on spatial justice by the relatively well-known geographer Jacques Levy have given the term a bit more exposure in the media³. Issues underlying spatial justice are mostly addressed in public debates under the heading of inequalities, for which numerous studies are regularly published. For instance, the “observatory of inequalities” publishes state-of-the-art studies every year⁴ – but this does not mean that the topic of spatial justice is prominent.

In most of our interviews, we chose to use the term of “spatial justice” because it was part of the description of the project. We did that at the beginning of most of the interviews. Nevertheless, in order to avoid any kind of misunderstanding, we decided to this term in conjunction with similar notions such as **social and spatial inequalities** (i.e. *inégalités sociales et spatiales*) and **territorial disparities** (i.e. *disparités territoriales*). These terms are more commonly used in the French context. In the Euralens Case Study (#18) and in the EPA Case Study (#17), we noticed that most of the interviewees were more comfortable with the term “**inequalities**”. **Most of the interviewees referred not only to the social dimensions of inequalities.** As described in the report, interviewees in the **Euralens Case Study** identified the spatial unevenness of the mining basin region in France and in Europe. Most of them pointed out the spatial and political dimensions of inequalities first by saying, for instance: “Our region has been abandoned by the French state” (A2, 2018) or, from a more technical point of view: “The mining basin is the poorest region in France and performs poorly in terms of any kind of social or economic indicators” (P3, 2018). At all levels, whatever their position, almost all interviewees seem to have embraced the term of spatial injustice as a term referring to the relatively difficult situation of the former Pas-de-Calais mining basin (in relation to poverty, economic and social development) in France and in Europe, explaining it by the absence of a political plan for the post-mining transition. Only the ‘green’ mayor of Loos-en-Gohelle pointed out the temporal dimension of inequalities:

“One of the major problems of the region is also the pollution of our soil and of our water. The intensive mining exploitation that lasted for centuries has left our territory in a terrible situation, not only because it ceased but also because it left to subsequent generations the responsibility to decontaminate the region and to make it liveable for the next generations.” (2018).

³ See for instance the article in *Libération*, “Justice is first spatial” published on the 6th December 2018 by Jacques Levy in relation to the yellow vests movement: https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2018/12/06/la-justice-d-abord-spatiale_1696443, accessed 20th May 2019.

⁴ <https://www.inegalites.fr/Publications>

Some of them (in particular inhabitants and civil society) also pointed out the social dimensions of inequalities, for example in terms of class: “Parisian elites know nothing about the problems of our everyday lives” (A1, 2018). This refers to the perception amongst several local actors of a high level of centralisation of power, namely in Paris and in Brussels. This centralisation is not seen as a guarantee of better territorial solidarity through the redistribution of wealth from the richest towards the poorest territories, as the political elite is, in the French case, often perceived by a part of the population as protecting its own interests more than the interests of the territory as a whole. Most of the ‘yellow vests’ movements refer to this (Confavreux, 2019). If some researchers such as Laurent Davezies have argued that the redistributive efforts in France towards the poorest regions and poorest population is still very significant (Davezies, 2016), its progressive erosion and the political discourse (in particular from the right-wing parties and from President Macron, targeting the poor as being responsible for their poverty⁵) have resulted in rising distrust in the mining basin population towards the elite. Here, spatial injustice seems to be viewed as a betrayal of the objective of territorial cohesion, not only in concrete terms but also in discursive and performative terms. This way, it seems that the local inhabitants see injustice not only in terms of means but also in terms of respect.

In **the EPA case study**, the national border with Luxembourg materialises most of the inequalities and disparities perceived by the interviewees. In this case study, where border crossings happen daily and for multiple practices, the border acts as a *marker* for disparities between different systems. *“The issue of territorial inequalities is very strong, it is palpable. When you go from France to Luxembourg, you are really in quite different worlds, which translates into socioeconomic realities that make us feel like we are in a colossal paradox: the French territory increases in population and decreases in absolute value in terms of employment, employment is literally attracted by Luxembourg, with all the disorders that can create”* (F2)⁶. Inequalities in this context are deeply related to international fiscal agreements, as summarised in a recent newspaper interview: *“In order to avoid double taxation, the OECD’s “Model Tax Convention on Income and Capital” provides that the country where the employment is carried out undertakes remuneration of the employee. This principle holds true for a Frenchman living and working in London, but not for a frontier worker who is dependent on his country of residence. With Luxembourg, we are dealing with a state that has focused its entire development model on fiscal underbidding and refuses to hear about balance. Of the 440,000 jobs in the country, 200,000 are held by cross-border workers. While two assets contribute to the state budget, only one is covered by the state. Thus, the more cross-border commuters in Luxembourg, the more tax revenue there is, and the more Luxembourg can lower its tax rates and increase its competitiveness”*⁷. Spatial justice seems to suit the specific

⁵ See for instance the text in the magazine *Diacritik*: “Macron, responsabiliser, culpabiliser, criminaliser les pauvres”. Available at: <https://diacritik.com/2018/06/14/macron-responsabiliser-culpabiliser-criminaliser-les-pauvres/>; accessed 3rd September 2019.

⁶ All the interviews for this report were conducted in French and translated into English by the authors.

⁷ Extract from newspaper interview conducted with Louis François Reitz, institutional cooperation delegate at Metz, 16.04.2019 <https://www.swissinfo.ch/fre/imposition-des-frontaliers--l-ue-a-échoué-à-créer-une-solidarité-dans-ses-régions-transfrontalières-/44882482>

fiscal dimension, as the debate has recently also taken an ethical turn (Evrard, 2018). At first, interviewees related more to the notions of disparities and inequalities. Spatial justice also appeared to be a very useful notion, especially to address the shortages in terms of access to public services (i.e. health care, transport and other common public infrastructure) and with the challenges that relatively small municipalities have had to face following deindustrialisation, population emigration and rather sudden and steady population increase: *"It is a territory that was very active with its industrial past, which has been marked by a rapid deindustrialisation of wasteland, etc., which is rather sad; we are on a reversal of the situation which benefits both from Luxembourg's attractiveness but which must regulate the effects of an attractiveness and a cross-border situation with an element of double standards in terms of taxation, which means that we have this imbalance"* (F2). Even though spatial justice is a notion that interviewees do not mobilise intuitively, it proves useful to address manifold issues and situations.

Even though the notion of spatial justice is rather well known in academic discourse, the way spatial and social justice are thought of relies on disciplinary anchorage. As summarised by Forsé and Galland (2011):

*"Social justice is not (...) a subject with a tradition of sociological studies and, in fact, it is now rather related disciplines that have taken up much of it. Philosophers have multiplied the debates around justice, particularly since the publication of John Rawls' book in 1971. Psychosociologists have conducted numerous experiments on this issue for several decades. Economists (bibliometric data prove it) devote an increasing number of studies to this subject, especially since the work of Amartya Sen (1992) has had global resonance. [One could add that the resonance of Thomas Piketty's book (2014) has also shed new light on these issues, including in France]. Sociologists are not disarmed on a theoretical level since, at the very moment their discipline was founded, Durkheim (1893) for example considered that social justice was at the heart of what could ensure the cohesion of a modern society (in his vocabulary he spoke of "organic" solidarity). Nevertheless, the question of "social cohesion", as it is now called, is often still being addressed today without even raising the question of justice. Inequalities are carefully dissected, but the empirical link with justice is absent"*⁸.

In fact, these discussions can give the impression of overlooking the spatial dimension of social justice. This might relate to the important legacy of major twentieth century thinkers such as Bourdieu, Foucault or Derrida. Or are they just the trees that hide the forest? The so-called 'spatial turn' has not only happened in Anglo-Saxon academia. As Backouche *et al.* (2016) recall: sociologists have developed localised surveys (Esprits des lieux, 1986; Chamboredon *et al.*, 1984; Bozon, 1984), sociologists and historians have emphasised the need not to consider space as the support or the container for social relations any longer (Perrot, 1974). In fact, to avoid dissociating the social from the spatial, they call for the spatial to be thought of not as the context of but rather as a constraint, a resource, a component

⁸ Translation from French to English by the authors.

of the social (Backouche *et al.*, 2016: 10). Next to this approach, the journal *Justice spatiale / Spatial Justice* (JSSJ) relies on “*the conviction that space is a fundamental dimension of human societies and that social justice is embedded in space. The understanding of interactions between space and societies is essential to understand social injustices and to reflect on the planning policies that aim to reduce them*” (Dufaux *et al.*, 2009:1). The creation of this scientific peer-reviewed bilingual (French/English) academic journal in 2009 illustrates the ambition to deal first and foremost with spatial justice. Open-source and open to non-academics (i.e. public space section), it exemplifies the willingness to better expand academic thought on spatial justice internationally and to facilitate exchange between disciplines. It refers largely to Harvey and Soja’s initial texts when identifying the rising importance given to social and then to spatial justice in geography (Morange and Quentin, 2018). Even the critical work of Henry Lefebvre (*Right to the City*) had to be somehow re-legitimised by American critical urban theory in the 1990s (Kerr, Brenner or Marcuse, for instance) before coming back into the French academic world in recent years (Fall, 2007). Whereas this intellectual debate plays an important role among academics and scholars, it has very little input into policies and politics. It can partly be explained by the difference in academic *curricula* and traditions. While geography is traditionally more critical (e.g. mobilising more the concept of spatial justice), spatial planning is more normative, oriented towards the implementation of the *aménagement du territoire* in all administrations. This also impacts their respective relationships with the science-policy interface, which is of deep concern for planning and less of a consideration for geography. These disciplines therefore have a different approach towards their own implication and visibility in society.

2.2 Capturing policies promoting spatial justice in a national context

- **From the “equality of territories” (Estèbe, 2015) to the “competitive regulation of territorial cooperation” (Epstein, 2015)**

“What is specific about this country [France], is the unique interweaving of the local and the central, which is marked both by the presence of state agents in the capitals of the cantons, and the presence of mayors of the most rural municipalities at the heart of the national legislative process” (Estèbe, 2015:11).

This quotation illustrates well the constant discussion - and power struggle - between the local and the national in the attempt to homogenise development between territories. This is what Estèbe calls “**the equality of territories: a French passion**” (2015). Here, policy, politics and polities are highly intertwined. In the following paragraphs, we outline a few aspects that seem to be crucial for understanding how France promotes spatial justice.

Firstly, Estèbe (2015: 11-12) recalls three geographical characteristics of the French territory that contribute to shaping a number of policy choices and constraints for policy implementation. In comparison with other European countries of similar size,

- 1) *“France is a sparsely populated country, but there are people living everywhere.*
- 2) *France is a country where large cities are weak, not because of the overwhelming weight of Paris, but because of the weight of medium-sized and small cities*
- 3) *France is a country that has not made its rural area disappear politically.”*

As a consequence, in relation to 1) it is relatively costly to administer a country providing similar services in pretty much all points of the territory. 2) Medium-sized and small cities have, for a long time, played an important role in daily life for services of proximity, and have been instrumental for the state to deploy its own public services locally (e.g. prefectures, high schools, courts, chambers of commerce and industry, health care). 3) In contrast to other large European countries, small municipalities have remained independent until very recently. The Senate is the most iconic example of the representation of rural territories in the legislative authority. For Estèbe, the equality of territories is a central question undermining the way space is administered. Republican equality means multiplying small communities while integration into the country is undertaken via the grid formed by small and medium-sized towns. **The principal of equality is deeply anchored in the way territory is conceived and administered.** For Estèbe, it has been implemented in three main steps over the years:

- 1) **Equality between territories means equality in rights.** In the 19th and 20th centuries, the state ensured that its sovereign functions (i.e. justice, policing, social affairs, cultural infrastructure, agriculture, and the environment) would be evenly available at the local level (what now is LAU2). This is both a form of control over the territory and a service to the population. Also, a complex system of **financial equalisation** was set up in the 1960s. This has constitutional underpinnings: “*The law provides for financial equalisation schemes to promote equality between local and regional authorities*” (article 72.2). As we will show later, this system is key in reducing territorial disparities. At the same time, municipalities benefit from the right to free administration (i.e. right to set the level of local tax). Also, until the liberalisation of the market for postal services, water supply, telephone, gas, electricity, these services were highly influenced by state-driven enterprises that hold monopolies on the networks and supply, thus ensuring access to these in these services all over the territory.
- 2) After the Second World War, **equality between territories was articulated through the attempt to facilitate economic and industrial specialisation of territories.** This ambition aims to support economic expansion. A hierarchic spatial planning scheme defines the urban structure upon which functions (e.g. transport, health, education and innovation) are anchored. In this strategic spatial vision, the relation with territories changes; they are allocated a function that is intended to support the broader economic, social and technological development of the country. This strategy is implemented by an inter-ministerial agency, DATAR⁹. This system relies on several state monopolies and therefore needed to be rethought in the 1980s when those latter were progressively open to the private market.
- 3) In 1980s, decentralisation was initiated, towards *départements* and regions¹⁰. The latter, like municipalities, benefit from the “general clause of competence”, i.e. a right to act in the fields that they consider to be of interest to their respective perimeters and objectives. As Epstein recalls, the law however does not organise how the decentralised authorities shall cooperate (2015:462). For Estèbe, to some extent this leads to **competition between levels of governance, as authorities of the**

⁹ *Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale*, created in 1963. It has long influenced EU regional policy, not only way in the conception of policy but also through its ‘egalitarian’ approach (see Peyrony, 2007 and Faludi, 2004).

¹⁰ Table 4, p. 40, presents an overview of the current division of competencies.

same level aim to attract production factors (assets and capital)¹¹. This competition allows some localities to catch up in terms of infrastructure (e.g. schools, transport). However, public spending rises. In the 1990s, territories were encouraged to outline their **development project** ("*projet de territoire*") that needs to link economic and social actors in the territory before being agreed with the state in form of a 'contract' to be implemented. These projects are thought to spread across the territory in a non-conflicting manner, and the talk is therefore of "cooperative equality of opportunities".

In the 2000s, the **equality of opportunities becomes competitive** as territories are encouraged to answer "calls for projects" to receive the state's financial support, while a number of calls for projects target the larger cities. Financial support then concentrates on the most strategic areas as decided by the state. This corresponds to globalisation and liberalisation, and to the way the EU cohesion policy also shifts slowly from programme-based support to local development, to encouraging the development of "place-based" development strategies (Barca, 2009; Evrard, 2015). Other territories benefit from financial equalisation and other timely safety nets. This more 'liberal' turn is reflected in DATAR's new name: "Inter-ministerial delegation for territorial planning and competitiveness" ("*Direction interministérielle à l'aménagement et à la compétitivité des territoires*") in 2005¹².

Following the far-reaching technological changes (e.g. internet, telephone, post), inhabitants being more mobile (e.g. individual cars), changes in the market regulation (e.g. EU single market and EU competition law), French politicians then called for the idea of the "equality of the territories" to be rethought. From the 2010s onwards, for instance, the state started to support France's biggest *métropoles*, invoking rising global competition, by supporting the concentration of factors of production, assets and wealth at the expense of smaller towns and cities. For Estèbe, they do contribute to overspill and gushing out: they draw in workers and businesses from surrounding areas, displacing residents, tourists, the retired population, support functions and consumers (Estèbe, 2015: 45), while other pieces of research underline the weak redistribution of *métropoles'* accumulation of wealth to other territories (see for instance Davezies, 2012).

Estèbe identifies **three recent changes affecting the equality of rights between territories**. In 2010, the state reformed the way its devolved services are operated locally. Civil servants who used to support rural municipalities with a number of services (e.g. equipment, technical services) have been fully restructured, so that municipalities have to rely on the department or on the private sector (Estèbe, 2015:51). Secondly, an institutional reform (MAPTAM law) allows metropolitan areas to benefit from a dedicated status and legal personality, thus creating a **form of differentiation between local authorities** that is well known in other countries (e.g. Italy, UK, Germany) but was new to France. Over the years, *métropoles* are

¹¹ Governance is the appropriate notion, as it reflects a situation where "Government institutions have lost the monopoly on the conduct of public action, which is complexly constructed through the behaviour of a multiplicity of public and private actors structured at multiple scales, from local to global" (Epstein, 2015: 463).

¹² In 2009, the name changed back to DATAR, standing for "Interministerial Delegation for Territorial Development and Regional Attractiveness" ("*Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale*"). In comparison with its original name, the end has changed from "for regional action" to "regional attractiveness".

encouraged to gain and receive the most strategic competencies, leaving few competencies to the *départements*. This situation has been reinforced with the last territorial reform (2015), which regroups regions (moving from 22 to 13 regions) and confirms their strategic competencies (e.g. economy, spatial planning, innovation, higher education, professional training). Thirdly, while municipalities were used to regular increases in state grants that mostly simply corresponded to inflation, these have constantly decreased from 2014 onwards, showing a clear intention on the part of the state to cut public expenses at all levels (Figure 1: Level of the general operating grant (*Dotation Globale de Fonctionnement*) allocated yearly by the state to the municipalities).

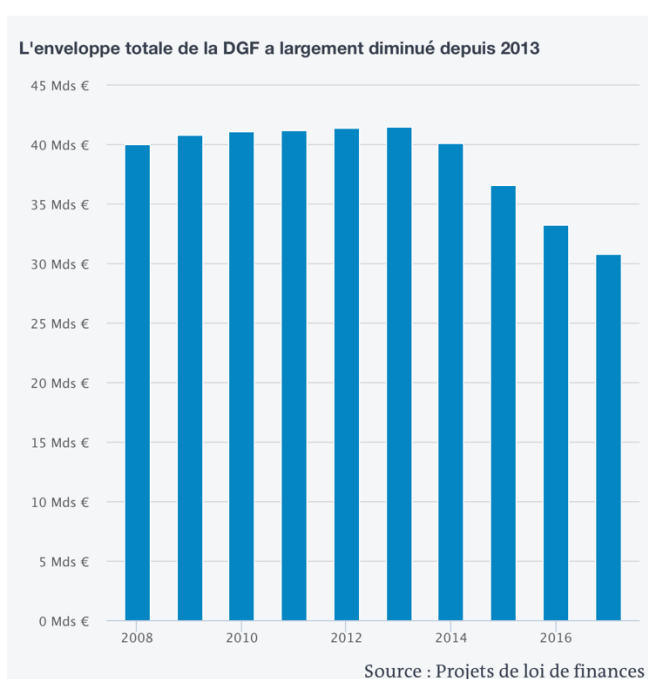


Figure 1: Level of the general operating grant (*Dotation Globale de Fonctionnement*) allocated yearly by the state to the municipalities

Source: *Le Monde*, 17.07.2018¹³

All these aspects could lead to the conclusion that the state no longer plays a role in territorial governance. Recent research demonstrates however that the situation is much more complex: there is a mix of state withdrawal combined with reengagement in managing specific initiatives. This can be observed in metropolitan areas in particular, but also more broadly for all territories (Epstein, 2015: 465). For the latter, Epstein identifies 3 main forms of territorial governance: calls for projects, labels and awards, and performance indicators. We shall not address the details of those mechanisms, but these are precisely the form of support which localities under scrutiny in the case studies try to mobilise. These “remote steering instruments” contribute to reshuffling the vertical dimension of the construction of collective actions locally (Epstein, 2015: 476).

¹³ See: https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2017/07/17/les-reformes-qui-ont-bouleverse-les-collectivites-territoriales-en-dix-ans_5161711_823448.html

This sub-section has allowed us to better understand the evolution of the French state conception of development. In the next part, we concentrate our attention on the effects of those policies on territorial disparities in France.

- **Assessing the effectiveness of redistributive policies in France**

Laurent Davezies (2008, 2012) and Magali Talandier (2008) underline the limits of GDP in measuring territorial inequalities. Instead, they suggest measuring the variation of four types of incomes: 1) income on production; 2) pensions and welfare benefits; 3) consumption-based income; 4) tourism. This typology allows the identification of four different territories in France:

- **Dynamic productive territories.** These are the main *métropoles*, in particular Paris and to a lesser extent Lyon, Aix-Marseille, Toulouse or Nantes, for instance. In short, those territories are rich because they produce wealth.
- **Dynamic residential territories**, for which incomes are more dependent on tourism and the residency of a rich, retired population. These territories are mostly the western and southern coasts.
- **Declining former industrial basins**, with the north of France (declining but still with a consumption-based economy) being distinguished from eastern France (declining and welfare benefits-based economy).

Davezies (2008, 2012) emphasises the role played by centralisation and the redistributive policies in comparison with other European countries. Despite the complaints expressed in the 'yellow vests' movement, France remains one of the most redistributive systems in the world. He outlines three key redistributive mechanisms. Firstly, the **mobility of the population** contributes to spreading the wealth created in the metropolises to elsewhere. The state influences the way this wealth is redistributed, as it defines a high number of school holidays (in comparison with the rest of Europe). Yet not all categories of the population are mobile. The creation of jobs in *métropoles* does not necessarily mean that the population in declining regions (eastern and northern France) will access them. On the contrary, this 'poor' population is not mobile precisely because of territorial stigmatisation, a lack of trust (i.e. the perception that mobility is not for them, that they do not deserve it) and the existing solidarity networks.

Secondly, **welfare benefits and pensions** represent one of the most powerful redistributive policies. They are collected by the state through taxes (mostly from the richest populations and businesses through incomes, businesses and added-value taxes), again reflecting the structural role that centralisation still has.

Thirdly, **public employment** (i.e. employees in the police, education and health sectors are national civil servants) continues to play an important role in rural areas and small cities that have lost most of their productive economy (as a consequence of the closing down of small industries) in the last 2 decades (Davezies, 2008, 2012; Talandier, 2008).

Last but not least, as outlined earlier, state grants continue to play an important role for all levels of governance (e.g. municipalities, *départements*, regions) and contribute to redistribution of wealth. Their decline represents a risk for the most fragile local authorities.

2.3 Framing the cases

The case studies have been selected to respond to each other. They are part of the category identified by Davezies and Talandier as declining former industrial basins. Policymakers have been managing deindustrialisation and outmigration from the 1970s to the present day. **Both localities face the need to redefine their respective economic positioning.** Former industrial basins are not necessarily those benefiting from the recent, still limited, economic redevelopment (map). Currently, the industry plays a limited role in the localities' economies. The question therefore for these territories, in line with the RELOCAL questions, is how these territories define local development strategies.

In addition, important differences have to be noticed. On the one hand, the Euralens case study represents an extreme case of poverty, low education and unemployment, which makes an area where several forms of spatial injustice can be observed. On the other hand, the EPA Alzette-Belval represents another form of extreme (inter)dependency towards the neighbouring economy of Luxembourg (e.g. employment, low economic activity and extreme differences in income in the population). In this case, the state border not only marks disparities but also amplifies them, as one state system is designed in such a way that it benefits from the labour force from neighbouring regions without supporting its cost. Annex 6.1 in this report provides comparative data on the cases. As such, these two cases present different forms of spatial injustice.

Also, two different trajectories can be identified. On the one hand, the EPA Alzette-Belval and the CCPHVA accepted a reliance on Luxembourg's economic development. The main ambition is to structure spatial development in a coordinated manner, welcoming new populations of cross-border workers and, in doing so, developing first the residential economy and shared cross-border infrastructure (e.g. transport). This pathway is thought of as a lever for initiating co-development; it is coordinated by a state-led planning agency (top-down). On the other hand, the Euralens case study has put emphasis on the Rifkin strategy towards a 3rd industrial revolution, while it has also launched (from a social and cultural point of view) a process of reconsidering its mining heritage to better shape its own future development. By contrast to the EPA, Euralens is a forum of actors led by local politicians (supposedly more bottom-up). These two cases are therefore also two different forms of territorial governance. They allow us to carefully analyse the question of local autonomy in two ways: 1) the effective room for manoeuvre for local and regional public authorities to shape local development, and 2) the autonomy of civil society in shaping local development.

3. The studied cases in a comparative perspective

3.1 Characterising the cases

Table 1 outlines the main characteristics of the selected case studies.

	Euralens (Nord-Pas de Calais)	EPA Alzette-Belval (Lorraine)
What is it?	An inter-scalar forum of actors led by local politicians whose ambitions are self-defined	A state-led planning intervention whose ambitions are defined by the ministries in charge, legal obligations are defined in law
How did it emerge?	Supposedly bottom-up (decision by the Pas-de-Calais region, accompanying the Louvre-Lens opening)	Supposedly top-down (willingness of the French state to steer co-development with Luxembourg)
When and for how long?	Since 2009 and indefinite duration	Since 2012 and for 20 years
What does it aim at?	1/ Metropolitan governance laboratory 2/ Support to local development initiatives	1/ (Cross-border) territorial governance 2/ Developing the locality, mainly with housing
Socioeconomic context?	Former coal mining basin - the poorest region of France today / benefits very little from the proximity to Lille	Former iron mining and steel industry region - severe economic and demographic decline, but redevelopment driven by Luxembourg recently
Who is leading the action?	Association led by local politicians in association with regional and state actors and supposedly with civil society (though absent from the decision-making). Euralens also has a small team of dedicated employees (4) but also relies on local authorities' administrations for most of its actions.	State-led agency mandated by the council of ministers. Steering is <i>de facto</i> undertaken by a board of directors, linking the competent ministries, Grand-Est region, the <i>départements</i> of Moselle and Meurthe-et-Moselle, and the CCPHVA. Considerable room for manoeuvre is left to the appointed Director, accountable to the Board.

What do they do in practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Incubator for local development projects. Support for local initiative is mainly qualitative (e.g. labelling, advice from external experts) and in terms of visibility within the locality * Structures territorial governance in the locality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Based on its strategic planning scheme, it buys plots of land (i.e. industrial brownfield land or mining estate) to either renovate it or develop new housing estates in line with highest ecological standards (ÉcoCité label) * Structures territorial governance in the locality
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Table 1: Key characteristics of the selected case studies

From Table 1, one can gain the impression that the EPA Alzette-Belval and Euralens have about the same maturity. This is partly the case, as they were initiated within 4 years of one another. In fact, the nature of their respective activities and the rationale for their action give more longevity to Euralens. Euralens has been conceived by the Region Nord-Pas-de-Calais as the tool to help local actors to connect, to enable better embedding of Le Louvre Lens and thus to stimulate local development. As WP7 local workshop has demonstrated (see document “Operationalising WP7 Guidelines”), Euralens’s 10th anniversary celebration in June 2019 was seen, especially by its new director, as an opportunity to rethink 1) the way Euralens acts as leverage for local development in the region, and 2) its role within the broader territorial governance of the locality. The EPA Alzette-Belval, by contrast, can be seen as “a newcomer” in the locality, that needed first to establish and concretise its planning strategy, acquire land and property before conducting operations of decontamination, restoration, renovation and redevelopment. The later development projects started while fieldwork was being conducted in 2018. More generally, there are important differences to be pointed out as to how local development unfolds in the localities under scrutiny. The mining basin appears more advanced in supporting local initiatives (at least at the institutional level) than the CCPHVA. Our understanding is that the interviewed inhabitants and political representatives in the mining basin represent a quite inward-looking locality, aware of the locality’s own challenges and affected by a deep feeling of having been abandoned and deprived of public support. The members of civil society (as well as the private sector) interviewed seem to rely more on their own capacity to initiate local development. The mining basin is also a politicised locality. A number of local initiatives are voluntarily anchored in a logic of solidarity which is often related to the leftist and unionist heritage in inhabitants’ and politicians’ discourses. The actual battle between left-wing and far-right politicians at the scale of the locality is partly based on who is better situated to defend the (national) solidarity with the local population, which is portrayed as deprived.

The governance model initiated by Euralens is considered to be innovative by the ministry in charge, as it supposedly represents a form of “IBA¹⁴ à la française”. This

¹⁴ *Internationale Bauausstellungen* (German), which means *International Architecture Exhibitions*.

assertion is quite accurate, as Euralens's policy (in particular through labelling of local initiatives) is precisely a reproduction of the policy developed in the context of the *IBA Emscher Park* in Germany. As such, it is one of the first translations of this policy to the French context. Since spring 2019, a ministry-led group of urbanists, architects and researchers have analysed it as one possible model for a bottom-up organisation capable of initiating local development.

The supposedly most significant contribution of such an IBA-like approach to local development is on procedural justice. Indeed, in the case of Euralens, non-public actors such as NGOs, businesses and even inhabitants are invited to participate in general assemblies, and can contribute through dedicated workshops and deliverables to express their recommendations in a particular domain in which they appear as legitimate or simply willing to give their opinion. To that extent, it represents, in the very institutionalised French environment, a quite remarkably flexible way of doing local politics of development.

Another significant contribution of Euralens is its capacity to attract international urbanists to produce reflections, advice and urban action on a territory usually off the radar. Yet it does not represent a rupture in terms of governance practices. Decision-making capacity remains in the hands of local politicians, mainly old, white, male civil servants, who insufficiently represent the diversity of the needs expressed by the local population and, more problematically, reproduce forms of patriarchal government.

For several years, the EPA Alzette-Belval has been reflecting on the possibility of adapting the IBA methodology to the needs of its locality (Chevallier, 2015). A preparatory mission coordinated by the EGTC Alzette-Belval will kick off in winter 2019 in cooperation with the competent public authorities in Luxembourg; the ambition is to implement a *"development strategy with a cross-border operational dimension that includes joint projects, particularly architectural and urban planning projects. (...) (interviews, Euralens, 2018).* The project is therefore to use architectural projects integrated in a spatial vision to *"position the Alzette-Belval territory on the international scene as a model of a European cross-border region, in terms of project management and in the field of shared land development. (...) Also, the IBA's prefiguration mission will have to define how the inhabitants or future users will be one of the decision-making forces for the future of this common ground"* (EGTC Alzette-Belval, 2019). The project anchorage is therefore architecture and planning, and would be an opportunity to mobilise the full potential of the EGTC Alzette-Belval as a platform of governance and expertise, whereas past projects have been rather modest due to limited political ambition.

So far, the EPA has not targeted dimensions of procedural justice. As a state-led initiative, it does not really foster the participation of local authorities (and even less, that of non-institutional actors) in the elaboration and in the implementation of local development, limiting itself to the usual legal participation policy that has been demonstrated to be quite limited (Blondiaux and Fourniau, 2001; Blondiaux, 2008).

3.2 Findings: Analytical dimensions 1-5

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

In the mining basin, the sense of injustice is very strong, a sense of having been left behind by the French state and Europe in the aftermath of deindustrialisation and despite the contribution made by the region to French economic “grandeur” in twentieth-century history. Economic, social and education characteristics of the locality (Table 3, p. 36) objectify this feeling. The former mining basin of the Pas-de-Calais possesses a strong but double-edged ‘social image’ in France: an ancient “hard-working” “land of solidarity” that is connected to its “mining mythology”, that turned into a “racist”, “uneducated”, “no jobs, no future” “periphery” (RELOCAL interviews, 2018). This mostly external stereotype of the region has had an impact on the way the inhabitants describe themselves, simultaneously showing their pride and their low self-esteem.

In the CCPHVA, the feeling of injustice, especially among formal stakeholders, is that of not mastering its own fate. In the aftermath of deindustrialisation, local decision-makers have felt helpless to manage the decline of the locality and of the population. Currently, most of the decision-makers’ agenda is set by the need to handle the consequences of the strength of Luxembourg’s economy in localities that are split between an elderly population that used to work in industry and a population of newcomers working in Luxembourg. This feeling of not being able to set the path of one’s own development is increased in some localities by the intense development of housing led by the EPA Alzette-Belval (e.g. doubling of the population in the next 15 years). This feeling is corroborated for local decision-makers by one of being bypassed or not being informed by Luxembourg’s state, which is perceived as too arrogant to discuss with small French municipalities.

Some voices in the locality criticise the current policy delivered by several municipalities and the EPA for not giving sufficient consideration to the specificities of the local heritage (e.g. fauna and flora in post-industrial areas), for wishing to develop the locality too rapidly (i.e. large-scale construction of housing), whereas they wished more attention would be paid to public transport, soft mobility and the adaptation of public services (interviews, RELOCAL, 2018). There is a concern that the significant rise in population that is foreseen would mean expenditure would be shouldered by the already overwhelmed municipalities. The participant observation during the field work has demonstrated that another part of the population is either disillusioned, considering that the choices made by local politicians and the EPA do not meet their needs, or they give the impression of not knowing the locality well enough to contribute, as they are newcomers to the region and spend a lot of time commuting between their work and home.

Dimension 2: Tools and policies for development and cohesion

Public politicians were active in the **mining basin** in the 2000s, benefiting from the fact that the leader of the Region Pas-de-Calais was from the territory. Even today, most of the actual development policy (Louvre-Lens, Euralens) is the consequence of decisions taken during that period. Nowadays, the territory is increasingly the

focus of state attention, because of the rise in voting for the far right, who argue that little has been done to tackle the worrying economic and social situation of the locality, well documented in statistics (Table 3, p. 336).

A large part of this policy has been for years oriented towards architecture, culture and the implementation of the Rifkin strategy. Even though the mining basin appears now on the French and probably also the European map as a laboratory for green, cultural and energy transition (e.g. building thermal isolation), the effects of this new positioning for the population remain sparse. If actual policy tries to target territorial stigmatisation at the external level, little has been accomplished so far to challenge the negative self-perception of the region amongst its own inhabitants.

Public policies in the **CCPHVA** have been marked by several institutional challenges: the need to cope with the French state urge to group municipalities, the constitution of the EPA Alzette-Belval and the cooperation with other Luxembourg municipalities in the framework of the EGTC Alzette-Belval. All in all, the municipalities keep having divergent views on how to cope with functional interdependencies with Luxembourg, and of how much competence should be handed over to their association, the CCPHVA. The CCPHVA has tried over the years to receive as much competence – and therefore allocated budget – from the associated municipalities (e.g. transport, childcare) as possible. The constitution of the EPA Alzette-Belval reshuffles the political agenda for all, as this mandate from the French state, its competencies and financial capacity provide it with great powers. Development and housing planning are high on the agenda. The limited financial and technical resources of the municipalities, and to some extent also of the CCPHVA itself, represent a real challenge for supporting and implementing the EPA's strategy in terms of public services, communicating with the population and forecasting the financial impacts of these developments for the locality. As a result, there is growing concern on the side of the population towards the strategy of the EPA Alzette-Belval.

Public services (e.g. childcare, health care) are mostly handled by the municipalities individually, which face important funding problems (see section 3).

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

Euralens and the EPA Alzette-Belval are institutions that have emerged in localities facing substantial structural challenges, especially:

- deindustrialisation and therefore a need to define a new economic and social profile for the region, and to coordinate this new development,
- relatively low leadership of local decision-makers due to the historical pre-eminence of industry.

Even though Euralens and the EPA Alzette-Belval differ in their nature, object and governance, they both act as leverage for local development. They provide the locality with technical expertise and assistance in project development and support the design of territorial governance. They provide leadership and coordination. Either by building their own network (e.g. Euralens's *Cercle de Qualité*) or by benefiting from national networks (e.g. network of ÉcoCité, of EPAs in France), they contribute to bringing outside expertise and knowledge into the locality, and they

also capitalise on these networks to change the locality's positioning and image inside and outside the region and the country.

In terms of structures, Euralens's strength is the EPA Alzette-Belval's weakness, and vice versa. As it is an association, Euralens is a low-institutionalised structure, adaptive to policy needs and to the evolution of the territory's needs. On the other hand, it has very limited financial capacities. It therefore remains mostly operational on the procedural side of spatial justice, and operates very weakly, if at all, on the distributive side. As a public institution whose status is regulated in planning law, the EPA Alzette-Belval benefits from an important number of planning rights to implement its mission. It is a planning tool bringing technical (i.e. know-how) and administrative expertise, financial means and the capacity to attract private investment. It also benefits from the support of several ministries and has direct access to any other French public institution. It is part of several networks that allow cross-fertilisation of ideas and experience. In fact, in French planning law, it is the strongest institution, as it holds the sole competency for planning over a designated perimeter. However, it is less flexible than Euralens. It is well equipped to undertake spatial planning, yet it requires a strong partnership with the municipalities to ensure this development is integrated into existing settlements (e.g. connection to and with existing infrastructure). This exemplifies the paradoxical weakness of the structure. In addition, the EPA Alzette-Belval relies on an association of municipalities and on municipalities that are particularly weak, financially and politically, due to their size and history. It relies on them not only to implement its strategy in practice, but also to liaise with and involve the population. To address this main governance challenge, the EPA uses its own capacities to not only act as planner but also to structure local development, in particular with authorities in Luxembourg.

Despite these differences, Euralens and the EPA Alzette-Belval share the fact that the localities (meaning the municipalities among them, but also regional, departmental or agglomeration institutions towards one another) of the two structures think of their relation to one another as competition rather than cooperation. The multiplication of low-funded labels (led by institutions in all parts of the Euralens association) to support local development is only one example in the mining basin, while the decision to open a quarry in Audun-le-Tiche despite the protests of neighbouring municipalities and citizens' groups is an example in CCPHVA.

In this context and against the backdrop of section 2.2, the French state appears to act differently in the case of CCPHVA. As mentioned before, the context and challenges of the localities are rather different, yet these localities' pathways are similar. On the other hand, the French state is initiating an Operation of National Interest and is creating the highest possible planning instrument in France to face the competitive economy of a neighbouring state.

Dimension 4: Autonomy, participation and engagement

Euralens and the EPA Alzette-Belval have established themselves as cornerstones among the public authorities in their respective localities. Yet they have not managed to build equitable decision-making processes with citizens and both of them remain quite unknown amongst the local population.

The **EPA Alzette-Belval** for instance implements the consultation processes as they are set in planning regulations (e.g. public meetings prior to concretising planning projects). It also goes beyond what the law requires, with hands-on initiatives (e.g. landscape studies and walks with inhabitants). The way consultation is undertaken demonstrates that the project is rather *developed for* the municipalities and possibly also *for* the (future) inhabitants than *developed with* the municipalities and its actual inhabitants. It is even more challenging that the earliest development phases of the strategy – recommendations outlined by the prefiguration mission – have been barely discussed publicly with the inhabitants. The way such major planning projects are designed and implemented does not provide citizens with a dedicated role and voice. As a consequence, even if the EPA Alzette-Belval wanted to set up a system providing citizens with equitable access to the decision-making process, this would probably go beyond the EPA's own structure and capabilities. As the municipalities involved are rather small, having only few municipal employees to manage everything, they are challenged in building effective participation processes with the inhabitants affected by their development policy. In fact, as a tool that was conceived for major development projects, either to build up new cities (e.g. Marne-La-Vallée) or to build up new neighbourhoods (e.g. La Défense), the EPA structure appears both oversized and ill-equipped to liaise with the local population and Luxembourg.

Despite the fact that **Euralens** emerged as a regional initiative, it also faces challenges in building transparent and equitable decision-making processes. During the last decade, at the national, European and regional elections, the FN (National Front) was the leading political party in terms of votes cast in the locality. Nevertheless, because local elections are still to come next year, the territory is still mostly in the hands of the left-wing parties. What appears surprising for several of the inhabitants and members of civil society interviewed is that, despite this strong discontent shown to leftist politics, the left-wing politicians actually in charge at the local level do not try to reopen the dialogue with the local population by listening to them or by integrating them into the making of public policy. They seem still trapped in an old-fashioned conception of politics, that they embody the population and they know better what is good for them (Euralens RELOCAL report, 2019). On this, they are not very much challenged by local administration, who mostly seem to have a similar idea of their own role for the locality (*ibid.*).

In relation to that, what is also problematic is that the Euralens association does not pay attention to women and minority representations in local institutions. The consequence of that is that very little attention and very little credit are given to the part of the populations that does not consist of white males, nor to the lower classes. The latter are still governed as an object of development policy rather than a possible subject that would be legitimate agents to reflect upon, build and implement public policy on development.

Euralens and the EPA Alzette-Belval are two major structures acting *de facto* as leverage for local development in their respective localities. Yet they make little effort to raise the interest of the population and to integrate it into public policy-making. This is partly a consequence of their own policies, but more broadly of the policy in general, that views public participation as a problem (or a legal obligation) rather than as a solution for project building, implementation and – in the long run

– *ownership* of the project as a whole. This relates largely to the fact that there is currently a lack of consideration of place knowledge and local democracy in local development policies.

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

The EPA Alzette-Belval and Euralens leave inhabitants with mixed feelings. For instance, in the case of the EPA Alzette-Belval, the newest inhabitants tend to interpret the strategy as adequately fitting the locality's needs, whilst the inhabitants whose properties are affected are rather opposed to it. Inhabitants who have lived in the locality most of their lives express their disappointment, remarking how the project seems “disconnected from the ground”, conceived “in an abstract manner”, or that participation processes are not effective as projects are already designed and decided. All in all, the field work demonstrates that methods and processes for documenting, analysing and building on place knowledge are currently beyond the scope of local public development policies. By place knowledge, we mean an experience-based understanding of the locality by living there, knowing the environment, having an intimate, personal relation with a locality, all that drives and animates feelings of attachment and a sense of belonging to a place. This form of knowledge receives less consideration than technical and scientific knowledge; methods of mobilising it are not part of formal planning procedures. As such, therefore, this form of knowledge is very marginally mobilised by the EPA Alzette-Belval.

Yet in the case of Euralens, some initiatives developed by local associations point the way towards greater inclusion of the local population. They usually direct their work towards the immediate neighbours of the building in which they have set up their activity. The choice of their location is anything but a coincidence. What we witnessed there is that those four associations observed have managed to create a dialogue with some highly marginalised inhabitants, through a wide but regular range of activities. During our successive periods of residence, we often met the same group of inhabitants, composed essentially of unemployed middle-aged women. Undeniably, those people belong to groups that are at the centre of the development policies. And undeniably, only a small proportion of the neighbouring inhabitants regularly come to the activities organised for them. Larger groups come for more exceptional and larger events.

Nevertheless, all four initiatives seem to us to be of great significance in a locality such as that of Euralens. The comments of social and cultural workers (N2b, P3, P4, P6, P7, 2018), whether or not they are associated directly with those events, are that the breaking of isolation is the first and probably the most difficult step towards a reconnection to active life: “What we hope is that they will regain trust; trust in themselves because they know things, they are able to do things... but also trust in their neighbours. Because this is the absence of trust, the fear cultivated by TV that makes the National Front so strong here.” (N2c, 2008).

3.3 Findings: Synthesising dimensions A-C

Synthesising dimension A: Assessment of promoters and inhibitors

All in all, the EPA Alzette-Belval acts more on the distributive side, while Euralens acts rather on the procedural side of spatial justice. Their respective objectives and governance settings are very different. Yet while pursuing their respective objectives, their actions tend to raise similar issues (e.g. transparency, accountability, participation, territorial governance).

Promoters	Inhibitors
The EPA Alzette-Belval and Euralens act as leverage tools for local development and greater spatial justice.	Development is often conceived and applied <i>in</i> the locality instead of being conceived and implemented <i>with</i> and <i>for</i> the locality. Accountability and transparency are underestimated in the actions under scrutiny. Attention (of public policies and research) is often focused on the outcome, while the process itself may (re)produce injustices.
The EPA Alzette-Belval (through the OIN) and Euralens (through ERBM) exemplify the continuous attempt by the French state to rethink how it should support local development. It tries to find a middle way between decentralisation (autonomy) and the need to support localities facing genuine development challenges. These initiatives support distributive and procedural justice in principle.	This policy is not applied coherently and consistently over the territory. This confers an impression of scattered policy that contrasts with the traditional egalitarian approach supported in France, and which beneficiaries are challenged to understand.
The EPA Alzette-Belval and Euralens have established themselves as strong formal stakeholders that contribute to structuring territorial governance. In doing so, they provide greater outward visibility to both localities, which contributes to increasing their attractiveness.	The EPA Alzette-Belval's and Euralens's contribution to the locality does not sufficiently involve the local population. Decision-making processes are unclear to those not part of the EPA Alzette-Belval and Euralens and for the inhabitants. Participation in and accountability for the decisions taken are not effective. In general, integrating the perspective of the beneficiaries is not a priority to them.

Table 2: Assessment of promoters and inhibitors

Synthesising dimension B: Competences and capacities of stakeholders

Despite their differences, all in all, the EPA Alzette-Belval and Euralens face similar challenges in terms of participation, accountability and transparency. These are summarised in the graph below, which was prepared for Euralens. It appears just as relevant for the EPA Alzette-Belval. One important difference is to be noted though: “external advisors” in the EPA Alzette-Belval case study are external advisors with technical expertise (i.e. commissioned to conduct specific planning projects).

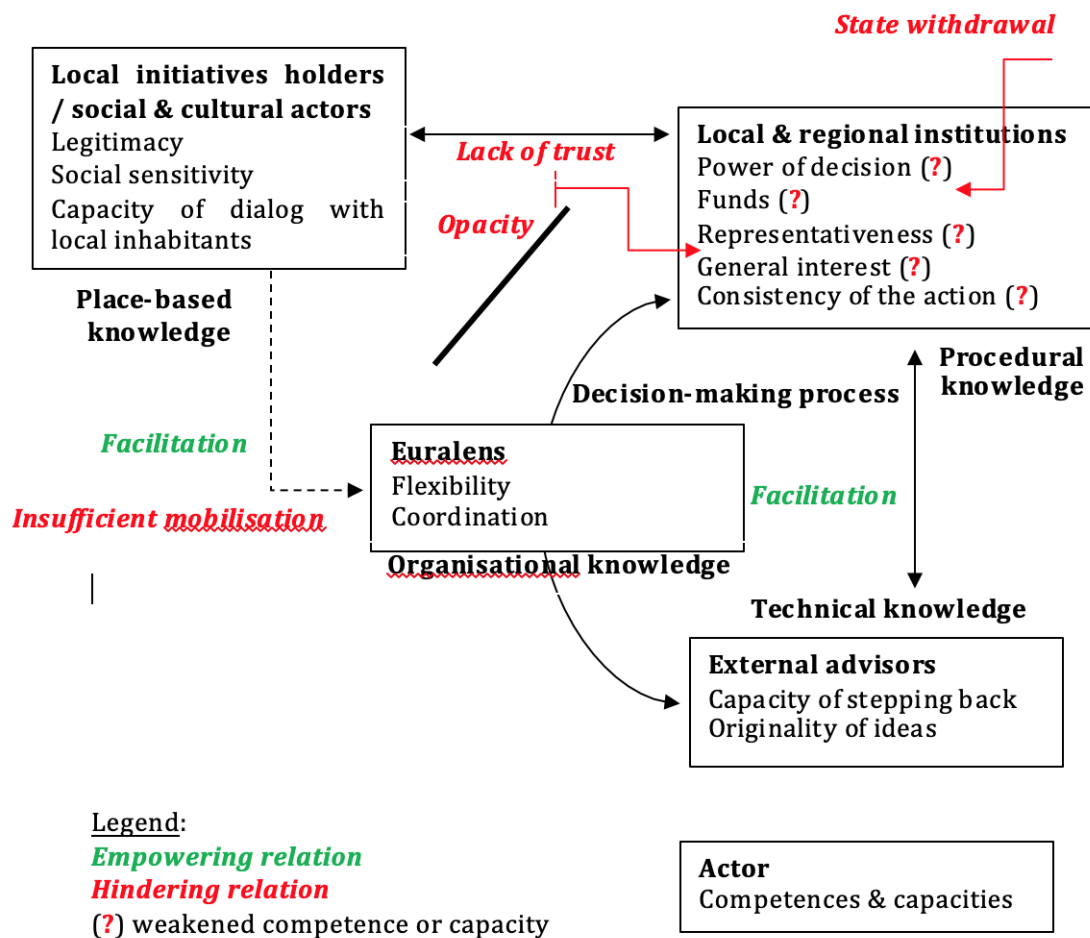


Figure 2: Euralens, an incomplete justice-maker? Source: Cyril Blondel, 2019

In addition, the empirical research has demonstrated the importance of individuals whose individual vision contributes to influencing the locality's strategic vision, the course of a policy, an action or a local initiative.

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

The EPA Alzette-Belval and Euralens make substantial contributions in terms of spatial justice within their respective localities. The main contribution of the EPA is on the side of planning in a coordinated manner, considerate of sustainable development, limited use of agricultural land, thus avoiding scattered urbanism and sprawl. Euralens has developed a local development policy and territorial governance which not only facilitated the emergence of local initiatives but also contributed to changing the image of the region, both internally and outwardly.

Achievements over time and place

With their respective actions, the EPA Alzette-Belval and Euralens provide the locality with leverage tools (e.g. organisational and technical knowledge, know-how) to better structure its own development. They act as tools for empowerment, helping the localities to define new opportunities for their own local development.

In doing so, they ought to contribute to changing the locality's own image, both internally and outwardly.

The EPA Alzette-Belval does so primarily as it is an agency equipped with financial and legal means, as well as with technical knowledge, which are at the service of the locality. Euralens does so as it has established hands-on support for local development initiatives.

Yet both fall short of achieving greater results in fighting spatial injustices. On the one hand, OINs and EPAs are structures whose effectiveness depends largely on the municipalities where the activities are implemented. The EPA Alzette-Belval works on a rather small perimeter (i.e. 8 small peri-urban and rural municipalities that are politically divided on the strategic goals of the locality). In addition, due to the structural imbalances with Luxembourg, their financial situation is insecure, thus calling into question their long-term capacity to sustain the maintenance of the installations planned by the EPA Alzette-Belval. In addition, their capacities (e.g. technical, know-how, administrative) are insufficient compared to the level of ambition raised by the EPA Alzette-Belval. As a consequence, it is difficult for these municipalities to adequately support its action, and therefore to effectively tackle spatial injustice as it could have if the municipalities had adequate financial resources and technical know-how.

Euralens, on the other hand, has established a local development policy that effectively supports local initiatives. Yet the existence of competing structures and policies tend to blur the picture for project leaders. More importantly, even though it might contribute to changing the locality's image outside the region, lack of transparency and accountability in decision-making processes impede its capacity to build fairer procedural justice.

Evaluation of the impact on the locality

The positive impact of both actions should not be underestimated, even though it needs to be differentiated.

In the EPA Alzette-Belval case, the impact is that of structuring local planning in a coordinated manner and creating new room for manoeuvre for the locality, which would otherwise probably have faced unstructured planning. As the effectiveness of the action is, however, dependent on the effective capacity of the CCPHVA and the associated municipalities to support it, it makes the question of a reform of taxation of cross-border workers (i.e. tax return to the localities hosting a large proportion of commuters) even more prominent for the French state. The number of municipalities concerned is greater than that of the members of the CCPHVA. This question therefore goes beyond merely the interests of the locality. It is a broader geopolitical/local development question, addressing more broadly the inequitable dynamism that can unfold in a border area. This situation also illustrates how governance levels can be dependent on one another when attempting to address spatial injustice adequately.

In the Euralens case, one of the main suggestions of our fieldwork would be to reverse the logic behind the local development policy, to base it less on the institutions' short-term political gains (probably illusory) and more on the experiences of the local initiative holders. The long-term objective is what we can assume to be the common goal of both the institutions and the local initiative

holders: to allow the latter to develop an economically viable and, as importantly, a socially and environmentally sustainable project that contributes to the territory's transition. This starting point would then probably lead to a complete rethink not so much of each policy and the goals, but certainly of their coordination, their focus and their efficiency.

4. Conclusions

In the RELOCAL project, two case studies were selected in France, both in peri-urban post-industrial contexts in need of reopening the path to local development. The actions under consideration have been deliberately chosen as almost opposite cases (i.e. top-down initiative developed through on-site technical implementation – EPA Alzette-Belval – versus bottom-up, autonomous association – Euralens). Spatial injustices existed in both localities. Although a number of differences have been noted (e.g. temporal, spatial injustice fostered by national border), a number of similarities have been observed in the cases (e.g. access to and financing of public services, fair and equitable access to decision-making processes). In France, spatial injustice was usually described as disadvantages related to place that resulted in the feeling that the local population had been left out, or that they were incapable of shaping the locality's own future.

This national report has been written to reflect on the impact of successive waves of decentralisation and the recent launch of nationally led thematic initiatives to support local development. We found that there are complex interactions of policies at different scales as well as multiple layers of governance. Despite the unitary character of France, the rationale for applying one policy rather than another can be more circumstantial than rational, thus emphasising the driving role of individuals and of strategic visions for a territory. In this section, we attempt to draw out synthetic conclusions.

What is being achieved in terms of delivering greater spatial justice to the respective localities?

Euralens and the EPA Alzette-Belval act as instruments of leverage in their respective localities. Euralens stimulates and empowers local initiatives. The EPA Alzette-Belval coordinates the development of planning and, as such, it will offer new opportunities for the economic development of the locality and more facilities for the current and future inhabitants. They also contribute directly to structuring territorial governance in localities that otherwise might have acted in a dispersed manner. They therefore both make a direct contribution to greater spatial justice. The EPA Alzette-Belval targets specifically distributive justice, while Euralens rather targets procedural justice.

These two actions demonstrate that despite decentralisation, the state remains crucial in France: in the case of EPA, when it comes to stimulating local development in a small locality, and in the case of Euralens, to support and follow local initiative as the state is repeatedly taken to ask. These cases demonstrate the use of two policies – culture and then planning (i.e. Le Louvre Lens) and planning and then culture (i.e. EPA Alzette-Belval) – to empower localities labelled as “lagging behind”. In a traditionally state-centralised country, this move towards the local is a real change in the practice of public policy.

However, Euralens and EPA illustrate quite opposite results in terms of achieving greater justice. While Euralens's action is a step towards procedural justice that is insufficiently founded to make the difference in terms of distributive justice, the EPA case is a clear, strong action towards the redistribution of wealth and opportunities to a small, post-industrial locality trying to benefit from

proximity to Luxembourg. However, results in terms of procedural justice are still limited, as the local actors (namely institutions, inhabitants and civil society) are given very little space to shape the development plan of the locality.

In both cases, participation remains more a rhetorical gimmick than a real objective for changing how public policy is made, whereas in a time when the traditional way of doing politics is called into question, such a renewal in the “social contract” appears very necessary to regain the population’s trust in public policy-making.

What are the policy changes ahead that would achieve greater impact?

In the mining basin, there is a need to rethink the different policies in place to support local initiatives so that they are in line with the long-term strategic development strategy of the region. Establishing a “*guichet unique*” system could facilitate access to information and procedures of project carriers. Also, integrating representatives of civil society and citizens in the decision-making processes and ensuring that transparency and accountability are integrated would facilitate greater trust in local development policies.

In the EPA Alzette-Belval, the action would have greater effectiveness if the municipalities and the CCPHVA were to receive greater technical and financial support to accompany the EPA activities, and in the long run support the management of the new facilities in place. More broadly, this involves stronger positioning of France in respect to a return of tax revenue to the municipalities affected by having a high proportion of commuters. As for the mining basin, the EPA Alzette-Belval action would meet with greater acceptance if decision-making processes were more inclusive (i.e. municipalities and civil society) and made more transparent to the public as a whole.

In both cases, place knowledge remains ignored, despite its importance for developing projects that suit the locality’s needs and specificities, thus building ownership by the public.

Implications for national policies

These two actions demonstrate that despite decentralisation, the state remains crucial in France. This analysis demonstrates that – like the place-based approach promoted at the EU level – France encourages localities to develop their own initiatives to foster local development, while the state provides timely support through dedicated schemes (e.g. ERBM, ÉcoCité, *EPA à la française*). In this context, the analysis demonstrates that regions facing steep challenges (e.g. economic regeneration following the fall of single industries, asymmetric border exchanges and interdependencies) are overwhelmed. Even when the state develops a dedicated instrument with dedicated financial means (i.e. EPA Alzette-Belval), they are ill-equipped (e.g. financially, technical expertise, know-how, capabilities) to effectively mobilise these tools and initiate local development on their own. Therefore, even in such cases, nationally led instruments need to *be adapted to* local geographic, political and social specificities to be capable of deploying their full impact.

Bottom-up or top-down approaches should not be thought as such. They should rather be mobilised *for* a locality, depending on its needs. It therefore seems important – especially in a unitary country like France – to 1) keep monitoring spatial disparities and social inequalities (e.g. *Observatoire des territoires*); 2) have dedicated channels for territories to bring forward their respective problems (e.g. *préfet*); and as a consequence of all this, to 3) keep redistributive measures that can be mobilised to address the deepest territorial divides. And overall, this form of redistributive justice cannot be considered in isolation from procedural justice. There is a great need to theorise and develop methodologies capable of capturing place knowledge in order to build decision-making processes that not only involve citizens and civil society but also build upon it. This form of knowledge can be mobilised in complementarity with to other forms of knowledge (e.g. technical and scientific knowledge) as drivers of local development. In short, it is a matter of developing the process and procedures that allow the development of place-sensitive projects. This seems crucial to us to develop projects appropriate to the place specificities and needs, so that once realised, projects fit the locality. Ultimately, it is a matter of building *ownership* of the projects.

Relationship with and implications for EU policies on territorial cohesion

Too often, potential beneficiaries of EU funding do not apply because of the administrative burden, lack of knowledge of the conditions, or simply because they do not have a project officer dedicated to such tasks. A lot of funding benefits those who have already had experience of it. Access to EU regional policy should be more open, simpler and based more on impact (including qualitative and quantitative indicators).

A simple way to do so can be to open European satellites with dedicated agents in territories facing structural challenges (e.g. less developed and transitional regions). In doing so, the objective would be to give “Brussels” a more human and less bureaucratic face and 1) to benefit from direct feedback on the territorial development strategies *as* it is developed by policy-makers (operational programme). This would be a way to operationalise the place-based approach more concretely. 2) This would also provide any potential beneficiary with direct feedback on project ideas. All in all, this could ultimately improve the quality of projects and programmes that have been submitted.

Finally, this European antenna could integrate a form of *guichet unique* that coordinates the policies supporting local development in a specific locality.

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6. Annexes

6.1 List of indicators

The list of indicators below is identical to the one provided by NORDREGIO for the data availability on NUTS 2 and NUTS 3 level (see also D 2.1) and helps us to contextualise the case study both within the country and across countries. As most cases will be below NUTS 2 and also below NUTS 3 level, we ask all partners to provide the information below at the spatial level of the particular case. If the case does not match an administrative or statistical entity, please provide the most fine-grained data that you can get (e.g. LAU-1, LAU-2 or a national classification which then needs to be explained).

Indicators that should be provided in the national case study reports¹⁵

Indicator 1_1		Pôle métropolitain Artois	CCPHVA
Name	Income of households (median standard of living)	CA Lens-Liévin: 16,656 CA Hénin Carvin: 16,979 CA de Béthune-Bruay, Artois-Lys Romane: 17,991	21,680
Indicator 4			
Name	Economic activity rates	68.6%	72.4%
Indicator 5			
Name	Employment rates	55.3%	62.6%
Indicator 6			
Name	Unemployment rates	19.3%	13.6%
Indicator 7			
Name	Youth unemployment rates	41.7%	26.5%
Indicator 8			

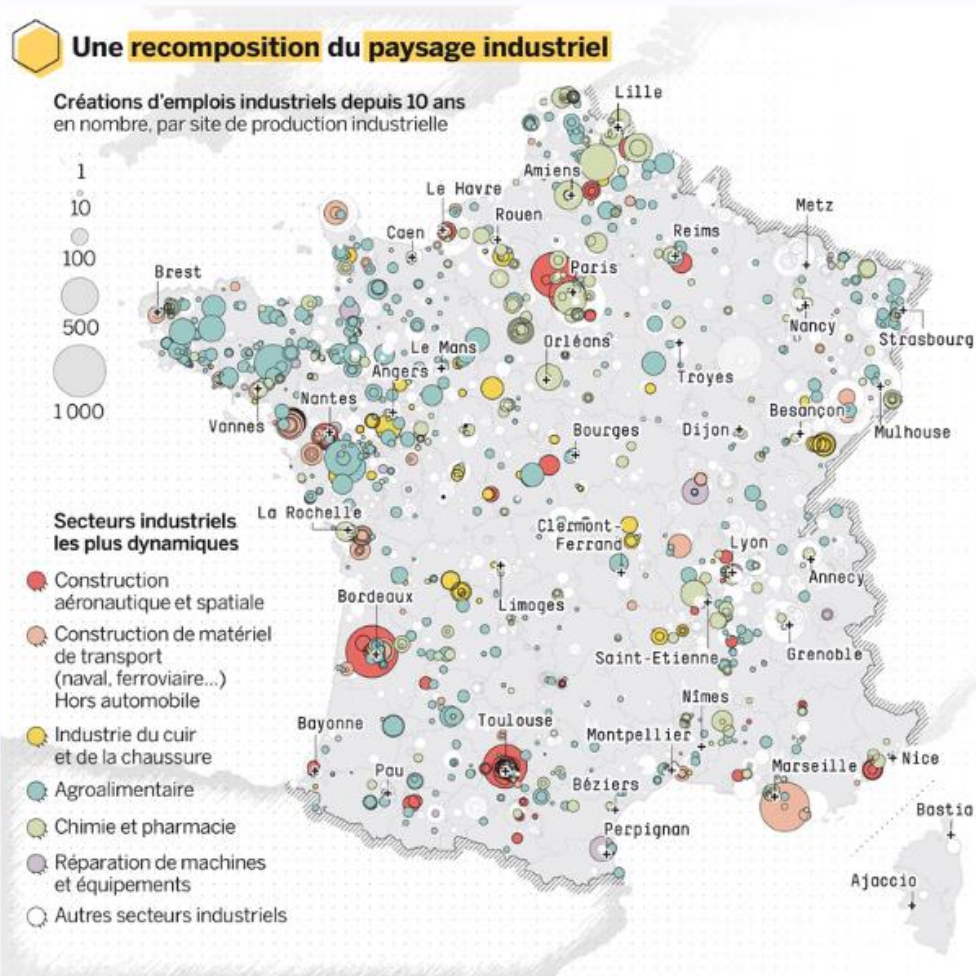
¹⁵ The precise definitions of all indicators can be found in RELOCAL D 2.1. (including year)

Name	Long-term unemployment rates	NA	NA
Indicator 10_1			
Name	Life expectancy	Département Pas-de-Calais: 75.8 (men) 83.2(women)	Département Moselle 78.3 (men) 83.7 (women) Département Meurthe-et-Moselle 78.8 (men) 84.2 (women)
Indicator 14			
Name	NEET	NA	NA
Indicator 24_1			
Name	Total population	242,386	28,273
Indicator 28			
Name	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	CA Lens-Liévin: 25.9% CA Hénin Carvin: 23.5% CA de Béthune-Bruay, Artois-Lys Romane: 20.2%	16.1%

Table 3: Indicators that should be provided in the national case study reports. Source: INSEE Recensement 2016, exploitation principale, issues de <https://statistiques-locales.insee.fr/#c=report&chapter=empopact&report=r03&selgeo1=epci.245701404&selgeo2=fe.1> Isabelle Pigeron-Piroth, University of Luxembourg

6.2 Additional information

Géopolitique de la France. Après quatre décennies de désindustrialisation continue, les premiers signes de reprise de l'activité se font sentir. Une nouvelle carte de la production industrielle se dessine.



Map 2: The reshaping of the French industrial landscape: most dynamic industrial sectors and creation of industrial employment for 10 years. **Source:** https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2019/03/30/les-zones-periurbaines-viviers-de-creations-d-emplois-industriels_5443511_3234.html

Authority	Competencies	Main taxes & sources of revenues
State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — State obligations: constitution, justice, security, defence, foreign policy, fiscal policy — Economy, trade and industry — Education — Transport — Strategic orientation: spatial planning, housing — Environment and energy — Immigration — Agriculture, fisheries and forestry — Culture, tourism, sport — Media and communication — Equal opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Income tax — VAT (revenues and rates) — Corporate tax — Social security, health care services — Fuel and broadcast media tax
Region (13 since the territorial reform in 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Economic development — Spatial planning — Environment and sustainable land-use planning — Transport, mobility and communication networks — Management of ERDF and INTERREG programmes — Education (high schools, universities, vocational training etc.) — Culture, social life, youth, sports, leisure — Tourism, heritage protection — Financing housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — General operating grant (DGF)
Département (95 for metropolitan France, 101 including Corsica and outermost regions and territories)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Solidarity, social affairs (management of social assistance including allocation in case of unemployment and support for housing) — Social and medical-social action (childhood protection, adoption, retirement homes, homes for the disabled, disability compensation) — Management of EU Social Fund — Education (e.g. colleges) — Culture, social life, youth, sports, leisure — Regional tourism, heritage protection, libraries, museums etc. — Land planning, infrastructure, transport (rural facilities, land development, rural waterways and roads, secondary roads, fishing & commercial seaports) — Environment (waste, water) — Large infrastructure items (aerodromes) — Indirect economic development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — General operating grant (DGF) — Local taxation (property tax on buildings, companies' value-added contribution (CVAE), flat-rate tax on network businesses); — Transferred taxation (property transfer tax, share of tax on insurance contracts, share of domestic consumption tax on energy products); — State grants.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Security: traffic, delinquency, fire and rescue services 	
<p>ÉPCI (<i>Établissement Public de Coopération Intercommunale</i>)¹⁶ (1,258 with their own taxation on 01.01.2019, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — 21 <i>métropoles</i>; — 13 urban communities; — 223 agglomeration communities; — and 1,001 associations of municipalities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Municipal competences in terms of water and sanitation from 01.01.2020 onwards — Development and management of local public services; — Collective heading of local development projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — General operating grant (DGF); — Depending on their members' choice, ÉPCI may have their own taxation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For ÉPCI without their own taxation: budgetary contribution from municipalities or from taxed contribution; ÉPCI with own taxation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ FPU, CET, IFER, TASCOT ✓ Additional taxation: local direct taxes on households, rates voted by the ÉPCI; and, shared with the municipalities: tax on companies' added value + IFER + TASCOT
<p><i>Métropole</i> or urban agglomeration (urban context)¹⁷ (with more than 400K inhabitants) (21 on 01.01.2019, incl. 2 with a particular status: Paris and Marseille)¹⁸</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Economic development and attractiveness — Transport, esp. public transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — General operating grant (DGF)
<p>Association of municipalities (rural to peri-urban context) (with minimum 15K inhabitants, except in mountain areas: 5K inhabitants)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Local urbanism plans — Internet network — Management of public facilities (e.g. sport, culture) — Economic development — Promotion of tourism — Reception areas for travellers — Aquatic environment management, flood prevention (GEMAPI) — Water, sanitation, collection & treatment of household waste (as from 2020 onwards). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — General operating grant (DGF) — Contribution from associated municipalities
<p>Municipality (or <i>arrondissement</i> in urban context) (34,970 on 01.01.2019)¹⁹</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — General competence clause (<i>clause générale de compétence</i>)²⁰ — Social action (e.g. childcare facilities, homes for the elderly) — Training (e.g. school workers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Local business tax — Local taxes: housing tax, property tax on built properties, on undeveloped properties, territorial

¹⁶ This table focuses on associations of municipalities and of agglomeration; it does not address urban communities (i.e. more than 250K inhabitants).

¹⁷ This table focuses on metropolitan France (i.e. excluding outermost regions and territories as well as communities with special status. i.e. Corsica since 2018. It does not address the specific situation of large cities either (i.e. Paris/*métropole du Grand Paris*, Lyon, and Marseille).

¹⁸ The *métropole* of Lyon is a territorial community, and not a *métropole* strictly speaking.

¹⁹ <https://www.amf.asso.fr/page-communes-nouvelles-une-dynamique-confortee-d'avenir/39009>

²⁰ The general competence clause allows public authorities to act in areas that are not primarily within their field of competence, meaning that the list of competences in it is not limited.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Infrastructure management (e.g. schools, sport and culture facilities) and local transportation — Civil registry — Gas, electricity networks (can be managed at the level of the association of municipalities) — Municipal roads — Culture, social life, youth, sports — Spatial planning (e.g. local urbanism plans (PLU), joint planning zones (ZAC), construction work permits) — Local habitat plan (PLH) — Indirect aids to economic development — Security: traffic and parking, delinquency, city police — Organisation of elections 	<p>economic contribution (companies' territorial contribution + companies' value-added contribution)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Council tax — Depending on municipalities' characteristics, the general operating grant (DGF) is allocated under specific funds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Urban Solidarity and Social Cohesion Grant (DSUCS) (10K+ inhabitants); — The Rural Solidarity Grant (RSD) (small municipalities); — National Equalisation Grant (DNP).
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Table 4: Distribution of competences in France

Realisation: Tom Royer, University of Luxembourg;

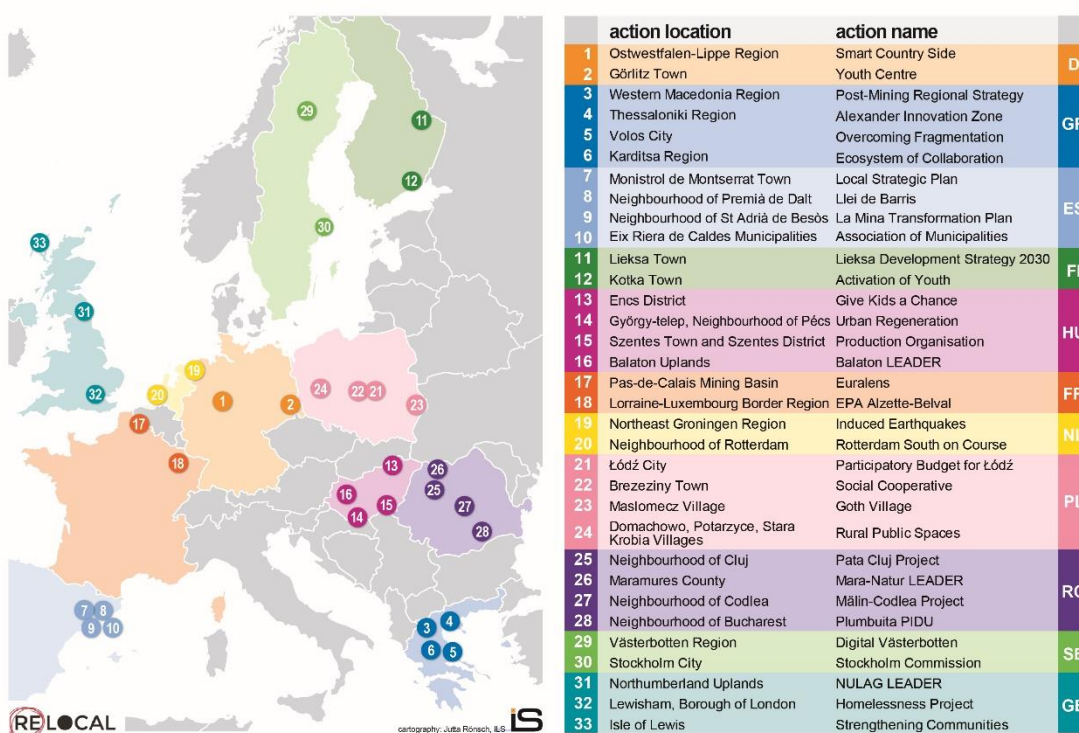
Sources: Assemblée nationale, 2019; Comersis, 2019; Direction de l'information légale et administrative, 2019; Assemblée des départements de France, 2019; MOT, 2019.

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>

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