Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development

**Deliverable D3.3**

# Exploring the role of place-based knowledge: insights from local governance practices

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# Executive summary

This report is part of work package 3 (WP 3) of the RELOCAL project and focuses on the role of local knowledge and on place-based knowledge in local governance practices. Besides the empirical grounds to devote a report to the knowledge factor in local governance practices there are also theoretical arguments. That is, in order to understand place-based development, the role of place-based knowledge plays an important part. The concept of place-based development is moreover underpinned by a growing discussion in policy research regarding the importance to widen the knowledge base for policy interventions, especially concerning place-based development strategies.

The present report is an empirical analyses of a number of key case studies in the RELOCAL project. Using a comparative perspective, the report analyses a) the forms, expressions and way of mobilizing local and place-based knowledge; b) the learning loops involved and c) and discusses the flexibility and adaptability of the actions in relation to what role local and place-based knowledge has. The main findings include:

1) Place-based development should benefit from a more thorough conceptualization of place-based knowledge. For the purposes of this report, the concepts of local knowledge on the one hand, and place-based knowledge on the other have provided substantial precision for the empirical analyses.

2) The actions analysed differ substantially in how they relate to knowledge. Most cases score high in both local knowledge and place-based knowledge. From this follows that many projects do have the organization in place for harboring learning. A number of projects, however, have not organized capacities to be prepared for continuous learning from all relevant actors.

3) The forms of mobilizing knowledge in the actions range from actions that have an explicit approach to including knowledge, to those that do it in forms that are implicit. Most likely, the explicit approach is the most cost effective in the long term, but the implicit approach includes the important aspect of the professional to independently find the knowledge needed for project implementation. The study of the forms of mobilizing also assesses the categories of inclusion and exclusion as important. Inclusion is a way to include knowledge that is tacit and not possible to codify or measure and this form is therefore important when intangible learnings are involved. Exclusion is important as not all knowledge may or can be represented in all projects. However, exclusion have to be handled carefully and consciously and in a way that do not feed existing lines of conflict. The study can moreover conclude that in relation to knowledge mobilization, informality plays a role and suggests that it is better to embrace informality in order to control it, than to try to mitigate informal relations.

4) Organisational learning is directly connected to communicative reasoning in the form of learning loops that engage with the knowledge of various actors. The organization of learning loops is central to flexibility and adaptability of development projects. There are also regional variations in the underpinning of the social organization of knowledge relations across Europe, the strengths of which should be recognized and potentially promoted also to other settings. The analysed actions draw upon knowledge both vertically (across scale-levels) and horizontally (across space). Media and digital media, including social media are used, but is not a general remedy for engagement.

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# 1. Introduction

This report is part of work package 3 (WP 3) of the RELOCAL project and focuses on the role of local knowledge and on place-based knowledge in local governance practices. The overall task of WP 3 relates to:

> Work package 3 explores policy frameworks and coordination mechanisms that aim at territorial cohesion, spatial justice and solidarity across Europe. To that end, European typologies will be developed to focus on the prevailing territorial governance arrangements. This means that the first task is to look at how public policies, programmes and projects are formulated and implemented with regards to the co-ordination of actions of actors and institutions, the integration of policy sectors, how stakeholder participation is mobilised, how adaptive to changing contexts the governance arrangements are and to what extent place-based/territorial specificities are realised (such as local/regional cultures/identities). A specific focus will be laid on the multi-level interplay of various policy levels in order to understand the scope for re-scaling (i.e. power shifts among these levels)." (From the amendments of wp3 Nov 2019)

The RELOCAL project has been running since October 2016 and during our empirical research the importance of knowledge in local settings surfaced as an important factor. It was consequently decided to devote a report to this aspect alone. Below is a quote from the motivation for the changes made:

> As such, the role of place-based knowledge will also help us to understand how local capabilities are linked (or not) to wider governance structures. (From the motivation for changing the title of deliverable 3.3, Nov 2019)

Besides the empirical grounds to devote a report to the knowledge factor in local government practice there are also theoretical arguments. That is, in order to understand place-based development (Barca 2009, Barca et al. 2012) the role of place-based knowledge plays an important part. The concept of place-based development is moreover underpinned by a growing discussion in policy research regarding the importance to widen the knowledge base for policy interventions, especially concerning place-based development strategies (Barca 2009, Barca et al. 2012, cf. World Bank 2009). Place-based knowledge also plays an important role in the concept of spatial justice, especially concerning procedural fairness and just governance processes (Madanipour et al. 2017), which are key aspects of the RELOCAL approach. Nevertheless, these and related debates are primarily based on literature and theoretical reasoning and to a large extent lack the empirical groundings of in-depth case studies of local governance practices. The state of the art in the literature on place-based development is thus that there are considerable research gaps on the role of local and place-based knowledge when assessing local actions that are supposed to achieve spatial justice in different European localities.

Therefore, the purpose of this report is to empirically and comparatively explore the role of place-based knowledge in local governance practices and discuss the results of an investigation of 22 case studies across Europe. Ultimately, the purpose of this exercise is to provide a robust and widened

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knowledge-base for policy recommendations. More specifically, the purpose of the present report is to:

1) typologize the forms, expressions and mobilisations of place-based knowledge,

2) analyse the learning loops involved, and

3) discuss place-based knowledge and learning loops in relation to flexibility and adaptability of policy interventions.

It can already noted here that the conceptual apparatus is not very well developed in relation to the problems at hand. Although there is a considerable literature on 'knowledge' in the social sciences, there is still not sufficient clarity as to what 'place-based knowledge' is. This have both ontological and epistemological repercussions for research into the concept and related practices as it comes through as a 'fuzzy concept' in which even the core meaning could be contested. The concept sometimes, for example, forefronts the experiences of the lived reality of local people, whereas sometimes this aspect is downplayed. In this report, therefore, we differentiate between 'local knowledge' primarily stemming from the lived experiences of people a place on the one hand, and 'place-based knowledge', which relates to the professional and institutional experiences of (local) governance practices on the other. Both concepts are broad, but satisfactory for the tasks at hand in order to understand actions that are expected to promote spatial justice, and especially the knowledge-related components regarding the procedural aspects.

The present report is based on a comparative analyses of a number of case studies carried out in the RELOCAL project between 2017-2019, and the main research questions are:

-How are local and place-based knowledge mobilized and expressed?

-To what extent are local and place-based knowledge included in the analysed actions that are supposed to promote spatial justice?

-How do knowledge flow between local actors and between local and extra-local actors within these analysed actions?

In order to illustrate the empirical side of the arguments of what role local and place-based knowledge has, quotes and examples from case studies are used. In doing so, these case studies are referred to with their case study number and country abbreviation (e.g. "28 RO") and often also with the place of the case study (e.g. London 32 UK) to facilitate the reading. The full references, with authors, to the case studies are to be found in appendix A. Apart from this deviation from conventional ways of referring, the references are handled according to the Harvard system.

The report unfolds in five chapters in which the second chapter is concerned with theory and method. The third, fourth and fifth chapters account for the empirical findings. In the final chapter, conclusions are drawn and further discussion initiated on the role of knowledge in place-based development.

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## 2. Theoretical and methodological concerns

Within the social sciences there are a number of prominent reflections and theorizations of knowledge, power and (local) society, and also a number of distinctions between various types of knowledge on which local communities operate and reproduce themselves (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Scott 1998; Foucault 2012). However, this is not the place for a comprehensive discussion on various approaches to knowledge, what it is, how it is produced or its role in society in general. Rather the approach here proceeds from a particular approach to knowledge and the role it plays in local development projects of various kind (Schmitt and Borén 2017). The approach also draw at large on 'the theory of communicative action' (Habermas 1984 and 1987) concerning what knowledge may flow among various actors and or groups of actors engaged in local development projects of various kind.

Local development projects typically relate to complex phenomena and involves many actors who most often are positioned in different sectors – development projects transgress disciplinary boundaries and requires the active engagement of actors with different backgrounds, interests, professions, capacities and resources, and potentially also with different loyalties. Ultimately, all actors should work towards the same goals. The knowledge that is demanded in development projects are thus much centered at creating a common understanding as it is about knowing the details of processes, persons and practices in a number of fields. As Kooiman points out:

> no single actor, public or private, has all the knowledge and information required to solve complex, dynamic, and diversified problems; no actor has sufficient overview to make the application of needed instruments effective; no single actor has sufficient action potential to dominate unilaterally in a particular governing model (Kooiman 1993: 4, quoted in Schmitt and Borén 2017:7)

Rather than thinking in terms of single actors, and of knowledge as something static, there is a need to continuously create the knowledge that is needed in development projects through interactions of concerned actors. The required knowledge would then be formed in-between the actors that have a stake in the project, ranging from the knowledge of the end-users to centrally positioned decision-makers. Knowledge and knowledge production is thus better understood as a collective, interactive and processual undertaking. It includes individual reflection but also collective reflection meaning that changes in context, rules, regulations and the like are required to be assessed carefully in terms of what these may mean in regard to the local action and the development task at hand.

Knowledge within local actions thus also relate closely to governing, i.e. the administrative and institutional structures and arrangements that are put in place, at various scales. The leading actors, i.e. those that are in charge of coordinating and implementing local actions are supposed to make sure that all actors involved (including themselves) develop their abilities to learn and reflect on changing circumstances. In relation to economic development of a place, Storper (1997) has argued that local or regional economy should be 'reflexive' and strive for maximized learning in order to keep its competitive position vis-a-vis other places and regions. In Storper's analyses, the collective and relational element of learning is at the forefront, and should include all relevant actors of a place (i.e. large and small companies, public authorities, schools and educational facilities, NGOs and civil society, and households).

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Madanipour et al. (2017) argue for localism and regionalism and takes this argument further by asserting that where power and governance arrangements are diffused among different policy levels, the support of the local level is key. They further explain that:

> [i]t is a decentralisation of power to lower levels, so as to benefit from local knowledge of the local problems and capacities, to mobilise and draw on the local assets and resources, to ensure higher levels of efficiency, and to have better democratic accountability to the local population. It is considered to be a counterweight to the centralising processes at national and EU levels, as well to the global economic and cultural forces. (Madanipour et al. 2017: 70)

The inclusion of actors and 'activating' their knowledge is thus important for the democratic development of a place, which is generally regarded as part of 'good governance' (see RELOCAL Deliverable 3.2 by Schmitt 2020a, see also Schmitt and Borén 2017: 10; Christopoulos et al. 2012; Gilardi and Radaelli 2012, see also Council of Europe 1985). It could also be noted that in order to join the European Council, countries must have a democratic system on the local level, which also should mean that local knowledge is represented in decision-making regarding local affairs and development.

Activating local knowledge is however important not only for the economy, or for democractic empowerment as such, but also when discussing more socially oriented development (Barca 2009). One aspect of local social development is that places 'compete' for redistributed resources from central governments and the EU, and in doing so drawing upon the collective learning processes of a range of actors from decisions makers to households. Yet another, equally important issue is that reflexive and collective learning practices are also important for places and regions in order to be able to make the best use of the local development resources that are already at their disposal. In short, the sensible handling of collective knowledge processes is a key feature of local 'good' governance.

In the developmentalist tradition of local development the latter argument is fundamental (cf. Barca et al. 2012); places and regions should not depend on the redistribution of resources to manage their commitments, rather through place-based development strategies, which include the mobilisation and coordination of their own local resources (Barca 2009). In this, local knowledge plays a key role:

> The starting point of a place-based development policy is the idea that most of the knowledge needed to fully exploit the growth potential of a place and to design tailor-made institutions and investments is not readily available—whether held by the state, large corporations, or local agents—and must be produced anew through a participatory and deliberative process involving all local and external actors. (Barca et al. 2012: 147)

The external actors would provide new ideas but when implementing them, local knowledge is needed. Barca et al. (2012) continues:

> The place-based approach is therefore designed specifically to identify and build on the embedded local knowledge. At the same time, a place-based approach builds on local values and the "sense of community," while it also requires openness to values from outside /…/ Openness to outside values prevents the sense of community from degenerating into communitarian confinement. (Barca et al. 2012: 147)

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It could also be noted that whereas Barca et al. (2012, see also Barca 2009) strongly promote the role of external actors for the supply of ideas, models and programmes, and to some extent also management, external means should by way of redistribution of resources from other regions, not take place. At least not as a measure to level out differences (economic convergence) between regions. To put it a bit crudely, Barca et al. (2012: 146) argue that local elites who have failed to bring development should not be given more money (to waste), but rather should local elites be replaced by 'external elites', so that their capacities and knowledge can be utilised instead. The developmentalist approach, moreover, includes the view that all places can and may develop (to become more equal to other places) based on their own resources, and local knowledge is seen as one of such resources.

In the European context, a strength of the developmentalist approach is that it acknowledges that places and regions are different, by taking into account the diverse set of cultures, economies, resources, institutions, knowledge capacities and geographical contexts. Consequently, it is argued that these differences are to be taken into account within local development strategies, specifically when applying ideas from outside.

**Methodology**

The empirical underpinning of this report is based on the case studies carried out in WP6 of the RELOCAL project in the time span 2017-2019. This means that this report could be seen as a meta-analyses of different cases concerning the role of place-based knowledge in the respective actions. These cases stem from eleven European countries and are related to different geographic, institutional and political contexts (see Weck et al. 2020). The analyses started with a deep reading of twelve of the 33 cases in order to develop and test the method of analyses of the present report. The tentative results, together with an account of the theoretical direction and of the methodology, were presented and discussed at the RELOCAL workshop in Stockholm early December 2019. After that the analyses proceeded according to the initial outline with additional eleven cases. All case studies are freely available in full text (Open Access) at https://relocal.eu (see also Appendix A).

In the RELOCAL project, specific care was taken as to what cases to include (see Weck and Kamuf 2020) in order to allow for comparisons. Although the case studies are different with respect to the local context, and among other things what topic the local actions are concerned with, who the leading actors are, and how the actions were carried out (see Weck et al. 2020, Schmitt 2020a), the methodological considerations had anticipated this from the beginning (see Weck et al. 2018). Moreover, all case study authors followed the same methodology and importantly used the same concept of place-based knowledge, as both the methods and concepts for case study research were described in the case study manual of the project (ibid.). Important to note is that although every case is localized within its own particular context, we are in the present report not comparing places or territories as such, but instead formal and informal governance practices related to place based knowledge and from which it may be possible to learn, irrespective of the context they originate from (Robinson 2016, Borén and Young 2020). Following Barca et al. (2012), regional differences represent place-based assets and the local context is important to understand the cases and the various institutional cultures, but on the other hand when the governance practices are analysed in an unmitigated form, the question is not what role context plays, but rather how the local governance practices relating to place based-knowledge may vary.

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The case study manual (Weck et al. 2018) was as mentioned developed with the explicit aim to make the case studies comparable. From the readings of the case study reports it stands out that with some exceptions, this manual was also followed by the case study authors to a significant extent. Furthermore, all case studies also responded to the same research questions regarding place-based knowledge.

The most relevant questions for the present report, answered by all research teams relate to the role of place-based knowledge. Concerning place-based knowledge the questions in the manual were:

> What forms of place-based knowledge have been expressed and taken into account in regard to the action at hand (i.e. top-down mobilization, local self-organisation, across levels)? What forms of available knowledge have been neglected and why?
>
> To what extent has any sort of organisational learning occurred (e.g. vertical and horizontal, top-down and bottom-up) within e.g. organised groups (NGOs), local planning and development departments involved throughout the process? To what extent has it been used or utilised and for what purpose?

As mentioned above, also the concept of place-based knowledge was explained in the manual. In short, the concept used in the case study research followed the work from Barca, McCann and Rodríguez-Pose (2012) and their discussion of place-based and place-neutral development policy approaches, and is explained in the case study manual as:

> Place-based knowledge is about utilizing multiple sources of knowledge, including local knowledge about the specific locality that is required to deal with the (potential) impacts (here with regards to mitigating spatial injustice) of the action under consideration. There are two main ideas in the place-based approach: 1. It assumes that geographical context - its social, cultural, and institutional characteristics - really matters (Barca et al., 2012). 2. It focuses on "the issue of knowledge in policy intervention. Who knows what to do where and when?" (Ibid.) Barca discusses, whether "underdevelopment traps […] are the result of a failure of local elites to act and can only be tackled by new knowledge and ideas: the purpose of development policy is to promote them through the interaction of those local groups and the external elites involved in the policy" (Ibid.). (Weck et al. 2018, page 57)

Based on these questions, methods and concepts, the case studies analyse how place-based knowledge is taken into account in the individual local actions in the various contexts. Since the cases are based on the same research questions concerning place based knowledge, and it was investigated with similar and well-established social science methods (interviews, document analyses, observations etc.), we can assume them to be a valid base for transversal comparisons but that they, taken together, nevertheless include enough variations across cases to also show interesting variations in practice.

The concept of place-base knowledge, as used by the RELOCAL case study research teams, thus includes not only "local knowledge", but also a rather broad understanding of what place-based knowledge means. This is also visible in the case studies since they in general discuss a number of different types or sources of knowledge, how these were mobilized and eventually utilized. Nevertheless, the role of "local knowledge" is addressed as something which is primarily concerned with the local context at hand and which resides with people or actors in the studied localities in the form of lived experiences that are so to speak bounded to these particular places.

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**Concepts of local knowledge and place-based knowledge in the present report**

It should be noted that Barca et al. (2012) do not use the concept of "place-based knowledge". Instead they use "local knowledge" and do not make any distinction between the two related concepts. They also relate local knowledge to the local community and the 'sense of place' (p.147) and in some passages they also make a distinction between local 'knowledge' and local 'institutions'. Therefore, in this report 'local knowledge' is used to address the knowledge inherent and available of the people of a particular place, those that use these places and their lived experiences including their 'senses of place'. In contrast to this "place-based knowledge" is referring to knowledge of the place that various institutions have, often residing at the managerial or expert level of various kind of administrations or other agencies. This kind of knowledge is not enriched by 'lived experiences' of the place and as such rather rely on 'professional experiences', which also include educational backgrounds, routines and traditions to assess local problems, for instance. At the local level, it would not be uncommon that place-based knowledge also include an element of the 'sense of place', although one is not necessary part of the local community in one's private life. Nevertheless, the two variants of knowledge do not exclude one another: a person may have both lived and professional experiences of a place, e.g. a local shop-keeper living in the place of his/her shop that also has business relations locally and beyond, or maybe even more typical a person living in a place that is also an un-salaried trustee in local politics. Thus, the same person, group or organization may possess both local knowledge and place-based knowledge at the same time.

There is moreover a clear understanding in the case studies of the relational character of knowledge, i.e. that it can be shared, developed over time, subject to interactions of various kind (e.g. between "local groups" and "external elites"), and that it is neither static, nor an essensialized, intrinsic characteristic of a person, people or place. However, what is not that clear in the case studies is the role of producing new knowledge when engaging in local development actions. In the present report, therefore, interactions of various kind between different actors are taken as a proxy for knowledge sharing, i.e. learning in the sense that the person or organization is getting new knowledge based on these interactions. The interactions are thus seen as a way to produce new knowledge when actors are learning from each other.

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# 3. Mobilizing local and place-based knowledge: Typology

As expected, the case studies differ on the role given to local and place-based knowledge. However, as will be seen, there are a number of ways for a project or action to relate to local and place-based knowledge. Therefore, a first question is to try to understand to what extent the analysed actions have considered, mobilised and included local knowledge on the one hand, and place-based knowledge on the other. The analyses thus proceeds from an assessment, based on a deep reading of the cases, whether the actions to a high or low degree included local and place-based knowledge. The forms of mobilisation will be discussed afterwards.

When assessing whether local and place-based knowledge in a particular action was high or low, particular emphasis was put on the authors' way of describing how knowledge was handled in the project. The author of the case study often stated in a clear way if and how place-based and local knowledge were included (as this was part of the task, see methodology section). Nevertheless, further information on how knowledge were handled in the actions were often provided in other sections of the case study reports, for example those focused on 'participation'. From these accounts, one could in many cases understand that there were flows of knowledge included as well.

In the following typology the focus is thus on the extent to which local knowledge and place-based knowledge are included. High and low are relative terms and are viewed here in each case relative to the overall description of the action. This might mean that what is assessed as high is not necessarily high enough for what some might claim to be a meaningful element for the success of the action under consideration in contributing to spatial justice (see Weck et al. 2018). Low is also not by necessity something bad for the particular action. But, in each case high and low is regarded in relation to the action at hand and is as such subject to assessments based on the descriptions in the case studies. The terms high and low are further defined here as:

> Low in local knowledge means that local knowledge plays no or only a minor role for the action under consideration. An important distinction here is regarding the difference between information and knowledge. Information needs to be processed to become knowledge. Local knowledge is not searched for in the action, or if so, it is not necessarily informing the action.
>
> High in local knowledge means that local knowledge is engaged with in the action in a sincere way, which means that the action draws upon the available local knowledge capacities and that it in various ways informs the implementation of the action. The forms of engagement could vary (e.g. dialogues, inclusion of local representatives). Local knowledge has actively been searched for, or included in other ways.
>
> High in place-based knowledge is similar in the sense that the action is carried out by partners, external or not, who know and try to adapt the implementation to the local context.
>
> Low in place-based knowledge would mean that the action is not much informed of, or adapted to, the local context. This is particularly relevant to ask, since the place-based approach assigns a key role to external elites.

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The analyses is presented in the form of a diagram (Figure 1), and with a few illustrative and representative examples from each of the resulting four types. The four types are:

Type 1: In these actions, both local knowledge and place-based knowledge are included to a high degree.

Type 2: These are the actions, which are high in place-based knowledge, but are assessed to only include local knowledge to a low degree.

Type 3: These are the cases that were assessed low on both local and place-based knowledge.

Type 4: These are cases that would be high on local knowledge, but low on place-based knowledge.

As shown in the diagram below there are relatively few case studies placed on the left side, these are those actions that score low on place-based knowledge. This is, however, not surprising given the fact that the role of the locality played an important part when choosing which case studies to include in the RELOCAL project in the first place (see further Weck and Kamuf (2020) on the selection process and the comparative method employed in RELOCAL). A further comment to the typology is that not all case studies provide analyses with the information needed to assess whether local and place-based knowledge is high or low in the particular action. In the case of Volos (5 EL), for instance, the study is about the consequences of an action (a large and country-wide municipal territorial reform), rather than about a specific action per se. In the Hungarian case of Szentes (15 HU), the study is about a producer organization and it is clear that the organization is high in local knowledge but it is not described how place based knowledge is at work in and for the organization, or at various levels of scale. Most likely it is high, since the leadership of the organization seems to be well connected in general, but this is neither described nor are the relations and knowledge flows made explicit. In the case of Encs (13 HU) the knowledge situation is too complex to fit with the typology. Therefore, these and some other cases are difficult to include in the typology, and have therefore been left out. Some of them nevertheless provide insights that are pertinent and thus referred to in later parts of this report.

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Local knowledge | High | **Type 4:** | **Type 1:**<br>Görlitz 2 DE<br>Monistrol 7 ES<br>Barcelona 8 ES<br>Lieksa 11 FI<br>Kotka 12 FI<br>György-telep 14 HU<br>Balatan uplands 16 HU<br>Euralens 17 LU<br>Lodz 21 PL<br>Goth village 23 PO<br>Pata-Cluj 25 RO<br>Northumberland 31 UK |
| | Low | **Type 3:**<br>Western Macedonia 3<br>EL Groningen 19 NL<br>Plumbuita 28 RO | **Type 2:**<br>La Mina 9 ES<br>Rotterdam 20 NL<br>Mălin-Codlea 27 RO<br>Stockholm 30 SE<br>London 32 UK |
| | | Low | High |
| | | Place-based knowledge | |

*Figure 1. Typology of the role of local knowledge and place-based knowledge in European local actions*

**Type 1**

As seen in the diagram a significant number of the RELCAL case studies included both local knowledge and place-based knowledge to a high extent. The LEADER project Kotka (12 FI), as well as the other studied LEADER projects (e.g. Balatan uplands 16 HU, Northumberland 31 UK) analysed in the RELOCAL context provide illustrative examples.

In the Kotka case study (12 FI) it is argued:

> […] the availability of local and place-based knowledge in and for, the Action is almost inherent to it, 'built in' by default. Both the LEADER Local Action Group set up by Sepra for rural CLLD and the Urban Board established for civilaction-based local development in Kotka consist mostly of Kotka-residents representing local organisations, and have been part of the respective boards and the associated activities for several years. Their knowledge of the locality and its social/spatial injustices is robust, based on long personal experience of working mainly at the grassroots level. (Kotka 12 FI, p.23)

Also this case study can be assessed as high on place-based knowledge as the following quote shall illustrate:

> […] linked to this experience, Sepra has significant local-regional as well as national and even European relational/social capital to rely on as a resource (building its competence, gaining up-todate information about higher-level processes, and learning innovative practices, etc.). … The Action thus is connected into a network of organisations, stakeholders, practitioners, experts and

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> decision-making bodies not only within but also beyond urban Kotka, and as such improves distributive aspects of spatial justice. (Kotka 12 FI, p.25)

**Type 2**

In the second type, which is also common in the RELOCAL project, the actions include a high degree of place-based knowledge, but are low on local knowledge. In Stockholm (30 SE) for example, the action included attempts to reach out and include local knowledge, but even if this should have been successful, it is only to a very limited extent included and referred to in the outcomes of the actions. On the other hand, in the Stockholm case study (30 SE), a comparatively elaborated strategy to include and develop place-based knowledge was identified. Similarly, the London case study (32 UK) also provides an example of being low in local knowledge, but relatively high in place-based knowledge:

> In as much as place-based knowledge has influenced the development of the scheme, this appears to be mainly at the level of Local Authority officers and ward-level council officers and not drawn from lower levels, such as prospective tenants or their representatives. (London 32 UK, p.25)

> A more enduring shaping of the scheme in line with local place-based knowledge occurs mainly through local and regional policy documents […], such as the Lewisham Town Centre Plan and London plan. (London 32 UK, p.26)

The Rotterdam case study (20 NL) also provides an interesting example. The action must be regarded as scoring very high on place-based knowledge, but the leading local actors there have strategically chosen not to include to any larger extent local people or local organizations representing local knowledge. It is argued that:

> During [the] interviews it was not exactly mentioned why there seems to be little interest of NPRZ [the key actor leading the action] in including community organisations, but the reason may be found in a new way of addressing societal problems. NPRZ focuses strongly on activating individuals, both adult and child (teenager). Adults need to work or have another meaningful daily routine, while children should be in school (including extra school hours) and prepare for a profession that is needed in society. In case they have problems, they can receive assistance in managing these problems from the 'neighborhood (intervention) teams'. As such, they engage directly with individual residents rather than with community associations' representatives. (Rotterdam 20 NL, p.48)

The action do have channels to local knowledge (e.g. the action has arranged several 'civil summits' with residents in the area), but it is clear that local knowledge is not deemed central for the fulfilment of the main tasks of the action in Rotterdam.

**Type 3**

There are a few cases that score low on both local and place-based knowledge. In the case of Groningen (19 NL) the action is carried out by non-local organisations that seem to have limited interest to include local and place-based knowledge. It should be mentioned however that there is also mobilization of both local and place-based knowledge, but this is not really included into the

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actions of the main stakeholders. This might indicate that the case does not fit this type of analyses very well. However, the case also illuminates the role of power. In the Groningen case this is because the main actors in the action itself is low on both local knowledge and place-based knowledge, but other actors who try to influence but have no power over the processes are high on both local knowledge and place-based knowledge. However, since these actors are mainly excluded from the action, the local and place-base knowledge do not truly become part of the action.

The case of Groningen (19 NL) thus shows that power cannot be excluded from the analyses, and it also shows that knowledge per se is not enough to make changes (towards more spatial justice). Power over resources and money is needed to make the required redistributions and knowledge might rather, in this case at least, be seen as lubricating the machinery or as a mechanism how and to whom to distribute (relating thus to procedural justice).

In the case of Plumbuita (28 RO), the action did not include local knowledge to any significant extent. Also place-based knowledge where much in need of further elaboration as to how the place works, who controls what etc. Several important stakeholders controlling parts of the land were not included which hampered the achievement of the action.

> No place-based knowledge was produced before (SWOT analysis of PIDU [the urban development plan] design), either throughout or after the Action was implemented. Data from field-notes and interviews show that inhabitants perceive a lack of transparency in the decision-making process (interview plumb_1.2), and confirm that there was no consultancy of the local communities in designing and developing the Action). (Plumbuita 28 RO, p.19)

> On the one hand, the institutional memory is weak, lacking public accountability. The implementation of the Action is relegated to the local government. Once the leaders of the implemented projects are not in public positions anymore, there is no responsibility transferable to the new local government. Restructuring the local management may start by emphasizing public accountability. (Plumbuita 28 RO, p.22)

Although there were some local knowledge mobilized in the action, in general the action was low on both local and place-based knowledge, although there were some improvements throughout the cause of the action concerning the latter. The action, moreover, seems to be heavily influenced by the internal elite.

**Type 4**

There are no cases that score low on place-based knowledge but high on local knowledge. This is not related to the nonexistence of that type of projects but is rather an effect of how actions where chosen in the RELOCAL project. All actions should have a strong 'locality'-factor meaning that projects driven solely by for example a group of local people would hardly have qualified as a RELOCAL-case.

The exercise so far has differentiated between actions in relation to how they relate to local and place-based knowledge. The constructed typology is also based on the extent to which the actions include them. We will return to the resulting four types in the conclusions, but until then it is important to also become acquainted with how local and place-based knowledge is expressed and mobilized.

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# 4. Expressions of mobilising place-based knowledge and local knowledge

### Introduction

There are a number of main ways of including local knowledge and place-based knowledge in the actions. Often several different ways are combined in order to mobilise local and place-based knowledge in one and the same action. Closely related to how local and place-based knowledge is mobilized is how it is expressed. This is because in order to mobilise knowledge it must be expressed, since it can no longer be 'tacit'. Obviously, tacit knowledge sits within individuals and organisations and represent knowledge that is difficult to codify and hence to transfer to others in a generalized form. It is therefore important to study the various forms of the mobilization of knowledge locally.

In the following, a number of significant ways to mobilise local and place-based knowledge are discussed in greater detail. The account is based on the case studies of the RELOCAL project with examples stemming from a deep reading of the cases. For reasons of space, only some illustrative examples are included here. The idea here is not to enumerate all possible ways of eliciting local and place-based knowledge but rather to engage in a general discussion on a number of the most important evidence-informed features of mobilizing local and place-based knowledge. It should also be noted that the case studies differ on how much detail they provide in this respect, since knowledge flows in some actions seem to have played a lesser role, but have been of central concern in other cases.

### Explicit/implicit role of knowledge in the actions

An important distinction is whether the mobilization of local knowledge and place-based knowledge is 'explicit' or 'implicit'. Explicit here signifies that mobilizing knowledge is an explicit part of the action itself. If in the very founding ideas of the action there is an explicit aim to engage with new knowledge production, then an action can be said to have explicit knowledge production aims. In the Stockholm case (30 SE), for example, the whole action was constructed to mobilise knowledge:

> The Commission may be seen as a nexus for academic and practice related place-based expert knowledge. The Commission is built for organisational learning based on sources situated both inside and outside of the city administration. The Commission 'collects' knowledge from these in a systematic and structured manner (see further Annex 8.4.8), analyses it and presents it in reports. (p.21)

However, even if an action confines with the 'explicit' type, this is not a guarantee for success. In the Stockholm case, the action succeeded well in mobilizing place-based knowledge but the reports do not refer much or at all to local knowledge. This is so even if the directives of the action made it explicit that it should work to include local knowledge:

> The Commission strives for a transparent and communicative way in which business life, non-profit sector and Stockholmers are invited to share and conduct dialogue on the Commission's analyzes and forming of strategies and actions. (p.3)

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An additional type of explicit knowledge inclusion is that projects, before they start or get funding from central authorities have to produce informative documents about the place. An example from Northumberland (31 UK) is: "much place-based knowledge is gathered and systematised in the Local Development Strategies on which the NULAG [the local action group] theme in each phase is based" (p.30), and the Local Development Strategies is an important means to get funding for the scheme but also to highlight local perceptions. Northumberland (31 UK) again:

> In this context the statistical information gathered for the Local Development Strategy, on which the LEADER grant allocation in each phase is based, will both shape, and be shaped by, LEADER member's perceptions of spatial injustice in the area. (Northumberland 31 UK, p.10-11)

There is thus a kind of locally based perception and place-based knowledge of the issues at hand that will be part of the guiding and steering documents for the action over long time. The same is true for the case of Monistrol (7 ES) in which local actors contributed to the action – the making of a strategic plan – based on their understanding of the locality, but only some ten years after they could see that it had some effect in producing results.

> The document (the Local Strategic Plan) is a detailed picture of the reality of the municipality in the late 2000s, of our ambitions and concerns. It details the setup of a social and political action portfolio, which over time has been achieved to a high extent. It gives us more strength for negotiating the remaining pending initiatives with other administrative bodies." (Mayor of Monistrol, quoted in Monistrol 7 ES, p. 24)

The time aspect would be important in most types of development programs and hence to consider local and place-based knowledge in an explicit form as part of the action from the very start would be important. This would give the action a better chance to, over time, address the locally formulated problems at hand. The time aspect also relates to knowledge that is not ephemeral, that is not dependent on whether a meeting or dialogue takes place where knowledge is created in the moment (see Gustavsson 2004). Especially important here, as seen in a number of case studies, is the role of written material in the form of reports, plans and websites/digital platforms. Many times, the written material works both as an important source of knowledge and as a motivating factor for action. In a sense, they ground the whole action and give it direction over time. The creation of this type of consistent material, which may be referred to throughout an action and used in a number of circumstances, must be regarded as one of the most important forms of mobilizing knowledge. To start an action with the explicit creation of such material would be a general strength for most local development actions, be it a plan, report or something else in which the actors – both current and those that become engaged over time – are supposed to relate to.

On the other hand, if the role of knowledge in an action is 'implicit', and not 'explicit', it would signify that the project is not especially programmed to engage in mobilizing local or place-based knowledge. It could, however, do so anyway if for example individual actors understand the need for more information in order to do a good job, or if those who coordinates the action recognizes that they need more local and/ or place-based knowledge. The implicit role of knowledge here may also mean that the leading actors and other key actors are supposed to get the knowledge they need. Generally, this is the case when professionals are involved, i.e. part of what is expected of professionals is to have the knowledge they need, or if not, that they independently find it. In short, professionals should know when there is not enough knowledge to act. Moreover, knowledge demands within an action also develop as the action is rolled out. For example:

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> In the first phase of NULAG, there was more resource available to go out to local communities in the course of the action and update and develop views about community needs. The interview with the Programme Officer from the first action […] raised several examples where he had solicited local opinion in the course of the action, including from groups of young people and Upland farmers. (Northumberland 31 UK, p.30)

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the costs for gaining knowledge – if producing the knowledge is not explicitly part of the programming – then is most likely not budgeted for. This would mean that if individuals, professionals, other staff or other key actors seek knowledge, they do this at the expense of other (budgeted) parts of the project. Moreover, it is likely that there are costs involved if projects or parts of projects fail because of lack of knowledge and the actors have to 'steer things up' afterwards. In the Northumbrian case (31 UK), for example, when resources in the later phases of the project were not that large, the seeking or mobilizing of local knowledge where not done as much as in the first phase. This suggests that it would be better to include – explicitly – knowledge aspects of the programming of the actions from the start, and this would also correspond to the social (e.g. Barca 2009), democratic/political (e.g. Madanipour et al. 2017) and economic (Storper 1997) arguments presented in the theoretical chapter regarding the role of engaging with local and place-based knowledge.

**Inclusion of knowledgable actors/individuals**

An important and effective way to mobilise knowledge within an action is to include people with local and/or place-based knowledge at key positions, as has been done in the cases of Kotka 12 FI, Balaton uplands 16 HU, and Northumberland 31 UK. The three examples mentioned here are also LEADER-projects, which are based on the idea to include local people with insights into local affairs and challenges. The examples somewhat also contradict Barca et al.'s (2012) focus on the role of external elites, albeit the whole LEADER scheme may be said to be a result of external elite thinking. Moreover, the LEADER scheme also includes the redistribution of resources (to rural areas). All three cases show very clearly the role of local knowledge as explicitly included and built-in in the design of actions. In the following quote, taken from Northumberland 31 UK, the Board of Members consisting of local representatives exemplifies one way of including local knowledge by involving local people in key elements of the action:

> These meetings are held in the evenings, to accommodate the employed organisational representatives who are part of the Board of Members, and last from two to three hours. Here a considerable breadth and depth of local knowledge has been observed in operation as it is used to support applicants to improve their explanation of a project, and/or increase the viability of the project design and likelihood of its acceptance for funding. (Northumberland 31 UK, p.30)

In Stockholm (30 SE) the action was driven by experts with extensive place-based knowledge in order to get 'suggestions that work'. Rather than having politicians or other people to actually do the job of suggesting measures for obtaining a more equal city, the suggestions for improvement should be formulated by those that have practical and tacit knowledge of the city from a professional perspective.

To include people with local and place-based knowledge, which maybe is difficult to 'de-tacitify', is one way of mobilizing knowledge that is difficult to codify or express in general terms. The social relations of a place and the 'sense of place', for example, are complex issues learned over the years

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of being in and part of a certain local context. This type of knowledge, whether laymen or professional, is not easily transferable to other actors involved in the action at hand. Therefore, including people with this knowledge rather than trying to codify, transfer and learn it is a powerful way of mobilizing local knowledge and place-based knowledge in various kinds of actions.

The Northumberland case (31 UK) also points to the importance of including people with local and place-based knowledge at key positions as their knowledge could position and 'fit' changes into the overall local institutional setting. In the Northumberland case, this institutional setting is the local business environment:

> Place-based knowledge observed at these meetings has included a detailed understanding of how a project fits into the 'business ecosystem' of the locality where it is based, suggestions of how links could be made between the applicant and complementary local projects and initiatives, both those that are already funded by NULAG or are known to Board Members from their various networks and roles in the locality. (Northumberland 31 UK, p.30)

In other cases, it could be other types of 'ecosystems'. Nevertheless, this coincides with Temenos and McCann's (2012) observation that the locality has to be prepared in order to accommodate new policy ideas from the outside – a particular 'fix' has to be in place. This fix could be created, but it could also be that the new projects are adapted to the current fix, fitting the new to old rather than the other way around.

A particular type of inclusion, which can also be categorized as explicit, is when the action actually not only includes but in effect is made up by the active participation of local citizens. In the case of Lodz (21 PL) and the study of participatory budgeting, this type of action could be understood as engaging with and mobilizing local knowledge into local affairs in a very direct sense. The problem then is rather to get the action widely known and to mobilise people to submit proposals (see also Northumberland 31 UK). In Lodz, the leading actors there engage with a number of outreach (e.g. media briefs, leaflets, website, posters, social media) and support activities (mobile and stationary advisery services, 'marathons' for writing proposals) to make the action work.

**Exclusion of knowledgeable actors/individuals**

There are also examples in which much local and place-based knowledge are excluded. Groningen (19 NL) represents such a case. The action was driven by non-local actors and although local and regional actors in various ways mobilised local and place-based knowledge for their case, it was not really used in the action. The expression of local and place-based knowledge in the Groningen case took the form of being part of resistance and opposition to the leading actors driving the action – it became part of building up power locally to try to get a say in the issues at stake for the action (here the distribution of earthquake compensations).

> Unsatisfied with this response of the national government, the Province of Groningen installed an independent committee – the Commissie Meijer – to investigate the problem and propose policies. Its report, published in 2013 and still relevant today, noted an alarming level of feelings of unsafeness, anxiety and distrust and presented a long list of suggestions […]. (Groningen 19 NL, p.18)

Also the case of Rotterdam (20 NL) excluded much local knowledge. This was, however, part of the strategy of the action and there were still some possibilities that local knowledge passed into the

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action by way of direct interaction between individuals and members of the action (see further below).

However, unlike the case of Rotterdam, the people in Groningen are engaged and spontaneously form groups that mobilise local knowledge for their cause and in order to try to influence the action. In open democratic societies, the role of being able to organize and become engaged in opinion making activities should not be underestimated, and it seems as if there are current changes being made in the Groningen action that would work to the benefit of local people and local actors. When comparing the Rotterdam with the Groningen case, a problem thus seem to be that engagement and commitment to the local area as a place differs remarkable. In a sense, there is a 'spatial division of engagement' towards local society, which seem crucial for open democracies to utilize their full potential.

In other cases, there is exclusion of *some* local and place-based knowledge but inclusion of other. Since not all available local and place-based knowledge can be included in practice, in every action a careful consideration of which and whose local and placed-based knowledge that are important to include seem to be a vital issue. When doing this, several concerns have to be taken into account and in doing so, a 'conscious exclusion' would necessitate strategies to avoid further reiterating prevailing local lines of conflict, e.g. between different social groups. In several of the cases located in Hungary and Romania it seems, however, that specifically Roma people are not included to their full potential. The cases analysed in the RELOCAL project also indicate that Roma peopleare being underrepresented in the measures taken to mobilise local knowledge. This also raises questions concerning the role of local communities and who are included and who are excluded, or following Relph (1970) the 'insideness/outsideness' of a place is on a spectrum of belonging and attachment to a local community, in short – some are more insiders than others even if they have shared the same space for generations.

The Give kids a chance-case in Encs (13 HU) provides an example of this:

> The "playing events" organized by Malta were based on its methodology developed in the "Presence" programme […] with the purpose to approach marginalized groups, Romas through informal situations, elicit their knowledge and voice through informal discussion. Although formally, Malta complied with the administrative requirements of the programme framework, not including the findings of these public forums in the Micro-Regional Mirror give account of the exclusion of those marginalized Romas for whom the programme had been initiated originally. "Not a single Roma has ever been asked anywhere about what she/he wants, what she/he is in need of." (Encs, 13 HU, p 25-26)
>
> As a result, the most marginalized groups living in stigmatized settlements, such as Csenyéte and the segregated neighbourhood of Füged had no voice neither during planning, nor implementation. In this sense, Give Kids a Chance failed to transform local institutions in a way that would empower local Romas with voice to make claims for a more just distribution of services through participatory institutions. (Encs 13 HU, p.26)

**Searching**

In many of the cases there are 'searches' in order to mobilise local and/or place-based knowledge. This means that local knowledge and/or place-based knowledge are actively searched for before or

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during the action with the intention to learn and inform the action. Examples include various types of investigations, e.g. dialogues, interviews, surveys, etc. Important to note is that many of these exercises result not primarily in knowledge per se, but rather in information that needs to be analysed and further processed to become useful knowledge. Engaging in searches is a common way to try to mobilise knowledge of various kind, but just creating information, even if processed to become knowledge, does not necessarily mean that it will inform the action.

In London (32 UK), for example, "interactive community consultations" (p.25) were used although this only played a minor role when implementing the action. Also in Plumbuita (28 RO) the search for knowledge seems to have played a minor role although a "quantitative survey on the 'local inhabitants' perception of PS2 [i.e. the local district] management and implementation of projects for urban regeneration" were undertaken. However, there seems to have been no or very limited learning processes among the management of the action, in short: the information in the survey does not seem to have been processed in order to develop new knowledge that could be acted upon.

A more successful case in that sense is the Balaton uplands (16 HU). Part of the action was directed towards involving young people:

> They made considerable efforts to empower local youth, mobilize them and make their interests part of the local development strategy. An important tool for this was to create an alternative strategic development plan involving the young people of the area. They did it during both main planning periods (2008-9 and 2014-15) through conducting a questionnaire survey with young people all over the area. The outcomes of the survey were discussed in workshops and focus groups to fine-tune the results and creating a 'Juvenile LEADER Programme', as a coherent input to the strategic planning. The most important directions, suggestions then were actually built into the local development strategy, giving one of the three strategic development directions. (Balaton uplands 16 HU, p. 21)

In this case the survey was followed up with discussions and also leading to concrete output in the form of developing the strategy, not only for young people but for the locality at large. It would be important to note here that survey results and other information is not really what matters, but rather how that information is processed in order to form knowledge, and potentially also further engagement. Important is also that the leading actors had from the very start an idea what to do with the information. It must be collected for a 'real' reason, otherwise there is the risk that it may lead to a form of 'tokenism' and as such may hamper other forms of participation (Arnstein 1969). To put it differently, when 'searching' for information there should be a plan or an idea of what the information will lead to. If not, the participating actors might lose faith if they notice that the information they have provided does not really inform the action.

The Stockholm case (SE 30) illustrates ways how the 'search' and inclusion of local knowledge was facilitated by reaching out to groups who are generally regarded as very difficult to engage, such as young people or migrant women.

> Although the Citizens' meetings represent a forum for interaction, they can hardly be regarded as enough if the task is to include a fuller spectra of the citizens' perspectives in local development. People instead have been sought out (Interview 7, 14). Therefore, in Skärholmen, which aims to build 4000 new apartments in the near future, they developed a way to try to connect developers with both the aims presented in the Local Development Programme and with the perspectives of groups not normally included in the consultation processes. Interview 7 relates how they did:

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> First, they went to developers and a large number of actors connected to the actual planning process and had workshops with them. Secondly, they actively reached out to groups who normally do not partake in dialogues, for example young people and migrant women. This included training a number of young people in interview technique and then to employ them to interview other young people (with questions defined in the first workshops). In total 186 interviews were conducted, that were then analysed. Then they went back to the developers and others in the planning project and held additional seminars/workshops saying that – this is the perspectives of the people here, can you build in relation to these wishes? (Stockholm SE, p.20)

These type of searches and adjoining analyses, workshops, training events etc. is obviously a costly way to mobilise local knowledge and might therefore suit larger projects involving large sums of money (as for example when building thousands of apartments in a single row). In the Stockholm case, the search also resulted in a number of more general principles for local development, which were grounded in local knowledge and potentially also could be transferred to support local actions in other places. In effect, these principles represent coded information relating both, to real estate developers and local young people as well as to the place-based knowledge of the local authorities.

**Creating special fora**

In most of the analysed cases special efforts were undertaken of bringing different actors in contact with each other. In some cases, this is one of the main and bearing ideas of the action itself (e.g. Euralens 17 LU). In other cases, special committees and platforms are created to empower the locality in relation to external actors. For instance, in the Groningen case (19 NL) it is said:

> [T]he Province of Groningen installed an independent committee – the Commissie Meijer – to investigate the problem and propose policies. Its report, published in 2013 and still relevant today, noted an alarming level of feelings of unsafeness, anxiety and distrust and presented a long list of suggestions. (Groningen 19 NL, p.18)

Creating a special platform for knowledge sharing and discussion of strategies, and to include local actors and local knowledge, is a common way to mobilise knowledge. For instance, in the case of Groningen (19 NL): “In addition, the report (of the the Commissie Meijer) proposed the instalment of a ‘Dialoogtafel’, a platform of the various levels of government, the NAM and a range of stakeholders and interest groups” (Groningen 19 NL, p.18). This platform later failed, but there are still a number of local action groups which represent and mobilise local knowledge, and partly also join forces:

> Most interest groups are set up autonomously by concerned or angry citizens. Some are still operating independently but quite a few have joined forces in the umbrella organisation Foundation Groninger Gasberaad. It was founded with the termination of the Dialoogtafel on the newly set up NCG’s initiative. NCG felt the need to create a partner in dialogue and the organisation themselves felt the need to continue join forces because they were too small to operate individually. Gasberaad now also includes other types of organisations, such as housing associations, farmers and employers. In addition to interest groups set up by citizens, Kerk en Aardbeving is a spin-off of a non-gas extraction related institutions, the church. (Groningen 19 NL, p.22-23.)

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These type of platforms, or umbrella organizations, may be rather broad and include a number various local viewpoints and various knowledge. Also in the case of Monistrol (7 ES) special platforms were created, here called 'reflection groups', that brought together actors to jointly contribute to develop the action based on their understanding of the place, their situation and their prospects. Meetings of various kind, whether one-off or systematically arranged over a longer time, is a very common form to mobilise knowledge. Exactly what knowledge is expressed at these meetings varies and could range from just information sharing to more open and dialogic discussions (cf. Arnstein 1969) that trigger mutual learning between actors that might represent differing interests. In the case of Groningen (19 NL):

> Due to communication with interest groups, less formal stakeholders, the formal stakeholders, most in particular NAM, receive place-based knowledge that they can take into consideration in their decision-making with regard to the Action. At those meetings, there are opportunities for the interest groups to put new topics and questions on the agenda (Int. 1), and even to generate alternative options – such as a 'general amnesty' (Int. 4) arrangement for all people who suffer from damage. (Groningen 19 NL, p.23)

What is important to remember is that there is a difference between local actors that are engaged, as in the case of Groningen and who are both upset and have direct economic stakes at play, and thus engage in meetings and local interest groups on the one hand. And on the other hand local inhabitants of a place that do not engage much in their locality, or think they cannot contribute, or do not want to contribute their knowledge for some other reason (see e.g. Stockholm 30 SE; Euralens 17 LU). Although it is important for local social, political and economic development to get people engaged, it could backfire if people are invited and they afterwards think that it was just a tokenism. The reason to invite people for dialogue should never take place if their advice and knowledge will not be included somehow in a serious way in the process.

**Individual interactions**

In the analysed case studies there are also several examples of how key actors mobilise local knowledge by having direct contact with local individuals, rather than in a (public) meeting. This type includes face-to-face meetings, home visits, telephone calls etc., with the basic idea that what is learnt from this could be passed into the overall action. An illustrative example comes from the case of Northumberland (31 UK):

> "[…] the practice of the current Programme Officer of developing an independent relationship with applicants through phone conversations and home visits. On two of the three occasions when the researcher attended a NULAG meeting (see Annex, Table 4), it was observed that the Programme Officer was able to use this knowledge to correct or moderate Board Members' expressed assumptions and partial knowledge." (Northumberland 31 UK, p. 29.)

This way of creating new knowledge is obviously time-consuming and therefore likely to be costly. On the other hand, first hand contacts with individuals that have a good command of local knowledge is most likely beneficial in creating common understandings between e.g. the coordination of the action and the aspirations and opinions of local people. At the same time, these local people may feel that they are listened to and that their contributions are valuable for the action at hand. In the London case (32 UK, p.25), the action was not that much informed by local knowledge, but with place-based knowledge. It is stated that "Local Authority officers and ward-

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level council officers" have influenced the action, exemplifying that also individual persons with place-based knowledge could inform an action on a more or less individual bases. The role played by certain individuals in order to transfer knowledge to an action is likely to be underestimated in the literature on local development as the studies have generally not been interested in individual relations but rather on structures and systemic relations. For learning, an individual discussing and explaining to an another individual is however an efficient way to raise awareness and understanding about complex issues as the full communicative set of skills including feelings and emotions, body language etc. could be put in motion to convey a message.

However, there are also actions that report that too much close contact may be problematic even if this did produce a deep and grounded local knowledge among the actors. In the case of György-telep (14 HU):

> The dwellers got used to the permanent presence and the availability – even on weekends – of the social workers, through which they could get help to solve their problems at almost any time. However, this type of relation also created a kind of dependency from the social workers, which we call "informal paternalism". (György-telep 14 HU, p. 19)

Another way of listening to individuals, rather than groups of people, is when, as in the case of Rotterdam 20 NL, members of the action learn from individual beneficiaries of the action while working with the action. In the Rotterdam case, they have decided not to engage overly much with local interest groups to gain local knowledge, but rather, when deemed relevant, be open to inform the action from what they learn in their individual encounters in the course of carrying out the action. This is maybe a more flexible way and provides possibilities for continuous organizational learning and adaptation. It could also be noted that the action in the Rotterdam case primarily deals with the development of individuals in a certain place, rather than development of the place itself.

**Outsourcing and external elites**

What might be called outsourcing is used as a way to mobilise and include local and place-based knowledge. In the Balatan uplands (16 HU) the action devoted part of its budget to let someone else do the job:

> Since the LAG had little experience with such actions, the plan was to use some 20 million of this money to commission a local NGO with expertise in the area and the topic to analyse the situation, work out the strategy and the particular actions for social cohesion within the LAG area. (Balaton uplands 16 HU, p.21)

In this case, the local NGO that did these aforementioned tasks was chosen for their particular expertise. However, 'external' consultants often do not possess any or very little local or place-based knowledge when they start the tasks that they are committed to do, and this might hamper their abilities to make use of their expertise in the local setting. However, the opposite could also be viewed along the lines of Barca et al.'s (2012) argument on the role of external elites – actors external to an action (not only to the locality) could come with fresh ideas from which the action in total would benefit. In Monistrol (7 ES) the whole action was coordinated by a 'Territorial coordination team' that was constituted by an external consultant:

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> […] this team was responsible for managing the participatory plan, gathering local knowledge, structuring a narrative embracing existing and new initiatives, and validating proposals. (Monistrol 7 ES, p. 22)

In this latter case, there is thus a substantial influence on the organization of the action by what Barca et al. (2012) would call an 'external elite', who not only come with fresh ideas but who is also not tied into local relations. In this sense, they are also more flexible and not pre-structured according to local lines of conflict between individuals or groups of people, for instance.

**Informal dialogue/closed doors/hidden lobbying**

The mobilisation of local and place-based knowledge often takes place at public meetings or in other ways that may characterized as transparent. However, there are also examples among the case studies of where knowledge is expressed and mobilized 'behind closed doors'. Informal knowledge exchange is most likely an underestimated resource in this respect (see e.g. Encs 13 HU), especially if professionals take it as their job description to know what needs to be known (see discussion on explicit/implicit knowledge above). These aspects are generally difficult to research as the researcher may not have access to those events of knowledge sharing and discussions that are not public. Nevertheless, there are examples in the case studies of how experts were trying to influence and to provide knowledge to policy makers in a setting that might be considered as sensitive. In the case of György-telep (14 HU), the researchers state:

> However, we found evidence that with the emerging informal power of Málta there might be opening possibilities to progressively influence these policies "behind closed doors", in an informal way. While in 2018 in Hungary this might be an effective way to influence decision makers, this setting can easily be described as one producing democratic and accountability deficits. (György-telep 14 HU, p.24-25).

Engaging in informal dialogue with relevant power structures and other actors is thus one way to mobilise and express knowledge. Another example, which is likely to represent another common phenomenon is that knowledge is brokered, shared, discussed and included 'ex-ante'. Actors might find it important to anchor viewpoints and deliberate issues before decisions are taken, so that no unforeseeable arguments may hamper the processes. In the case of the Balaton uplands (16 HU) the following situation is described in relation to the possibility of people to contribute at open meetings:

> […] theoretically everything was very open and democratic, he hardly ever had the chance to make any difference or speak up. There are two explanations for this. One is that there were normally many complex decisions to be made, too complex to be understood on the spot. Therefore, those, who did not prepare beforehand, could not really raise any objections. On the other hand, the preparation of the decisions (by the Agency and the paid development workers) have always been very thorough and careful, often with significant social engineering and behind the scenes discussions. Therefore, conflicts, altering interests were resolved and harmonised, just normally not on the public meetings, but beforehand. (Balaton uplands 16 HU, p.14)

It should be noted that there is a very large body of literature on informal processes and practices in governance (e.g. Polese et al. 2018; Stone 2013; Borén and Young 2020). Hence, it is not unexpected that it is to be found also in relation to mobilizing local and place-based knowledge. And informality

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is a persistent phenomenon and it is not likely to disappear, even in cases where it would be considered a problem (e.g. in relation to transparency, legitimacy and accountability). Therefore, in relation to knowledge mobilization, it is better to embrace informality and give it a form that could be controlled and accounted for, rather than trying to avoid it. Informality plays a role in most relations and it is only some of its forms that are problematic.

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# 5. Learning loops and flexibility

**Introduction**

In this report knowledge is regarded as the result of on-going learning. Learning is a process over time that happens both spontaneously through different kinds of interactions and in structured settings, such as courses, excursions and other training and learning events. It may take place by way of reflection, practicing or structured analyses. All in all, learning forms a synthesis in the form of an understanding of what do, how and when, and under what circumstances. There is no final state of perfect knowledge that can be reached. Knowledge in this report is thus regarded as what people think they know and consider as the truth at a certain point in time. Knowledge, furthermore, ultimately resides in individuals but is still highly social, ultimately consisting of what individuals in an organization, institution or group acknowledge and agree upon – which is not questioned or challenged.

A further assumption in this study is that knowledge shared within a group promotes efficiency in collective actions. Common understandings are a prerequisite for group adeptness. In and between organisations (or institutions, groups), individuals apply a 'communicative reason' (Habermas 1984, 1987, cf. Lowe et al. 2019) in which interaction is fundamental for developing a common or shared understanding. Knowledge thus keeps evolving as individuals in a group learn and share, between them and between other groups. For the actions studied in the RELOCAL project, it is seldom the case that only one group (be it an administration or other organization) is involved. Rather, the actions studied most often depend on cooperation of various kind of actors where knowledge and information flows in and between groups and individuals.

Especially important, for the purpose of this report is how groups, organizations or institutions learn (over time) from other actors involved and from the end-users and/or local beneficiaries and how their learnings inform the action as such. Therefore, this part of the report focuses on the 'learning loops' between involved actors. Learning loops also relate to flexibility. Is the action studied capable of rearranging its way of working on the basis of knowledge achieved in various interactions? In short, what do the learning loops mean to the action? Learning here becomes the test of flexibility. In other words, if nothing is learned, there is no need to be flexible, since the world to the group, organization or institution would look the same as the day before. Whereas for those who are able to learn, they would need to consider if they should move on as before, or implement changes.

A methodological note is also in place here. In the case study manual (Weck et al. 2018, p.57) the key concepts relating to this chapter of the present report are defined as:

> Organisational and individual learning: It is about the ability to reflect on, review and revise the specific ideas, routines, new information, instruments, inputs, threats outcomes and processes that may arise in regard to the action and locality under consideration. It refers both to individuals (actors/stakeholders) acting as reflective practitioners and to organisations (e.g. municipalities).

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> Scope of flexibility and adaptability: The scope of flexibility and adaptability denotes the ability to seek opportunities for alterations or adjustments (e.g. a Plan B) if unforeseeable changes (e.g. budget cuts due to financial crisis, political change) occur. These alterations or adjustments through the use of feedback, review or other routines.

Whereas the focus of the previous chapter was on forms of mobilising knowledge in local development actions, the report now thus turns to the question how knowledge flows between actors take place. There is obviously not a strict delineation between the two approaches as forms of knowledge mobilization overlaps with how it is flowing.

**Learning loops**

Concerning the analyses of the case studies, a distinction has to be made between: 1) learning loops that work, and 2) learning loops that fail. In the former, there is a 'possibility of learning' and throughout the cause of the action, learning will take place. The level of learning and the extent to which learning is achieved and actually is included and acted upon is an empirical question in each case and involves the individual actors and ultimately also their intellectual capacities. But, if we pursue from the assumption that actors will utilize their knowledge resources to solve the issues at hand, we can expect that knowledge of various kind will be at least implicitly considered if not fully acted upon. Thinking in terms of 'loops' indicates also an interest in how knowledge circulates among actors, and is developed and consolidated between actors, and/or adjusted, mutated, corrected along its paths between various actors.

Regarding the learning loops that fail, these are the ones with limited or no possibilities of learning between various actors. Here it is here also important to consider that there might be 'legitimate' reasons for failed learning loops, although in many instances failed learning loops is rather result of a lack of inclusion of relevant knowledge-holders.

Examples of reasons that would generally be considered legitimate include 1) privacy regulations (e.g. GDPR) where information on persons cannot be freely distributed among relevant actors within an action, potentially harming the implementation of the action or not reaching all those individuals that would benefit from the action. 2) Business secrets would be another widely accepted reason for learning loops to fail. In a Europe where public services are controlled increasingly by private companies, we might expect that the risk for failed learning loops accumulates as well. Since the neoliberalisation of welfare services and social development projects will most likely continue, the likelihood that private companies share their specific knowledge (i.e. their competitive advantage) with others, maybe competing stakeholders, will rather decrease. 3) Security reasons would form a third set of reasons for failed learning loops. That is, knowledge that is not shared freely among actors since it, or part of it, is classified and deemed sensitive in relation to criminality, terrorism, military threats or the like. For example, in the case of Groningen (19 NL) two legitimate types of learning loop failures are present:

> Accordingly, due to privacy regulations, local governments don't even know exactly who of their citizens suffer damage to their dwellings. That is reported to them only in case of dwellings that have become too unsafe to live in any longer. "Those citizens feel abandoned by their local governments but these are not informed about their damage". (Groningen 19 NL, p.22)

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The quote is also an example of the feelings and emotions involved. Because of a failed learning loop, trust in local government is hampered. If local development is about working together along the lines of a common understanding, the lack of a functioning learning loop risks making other development tasks in other policy fields more difficult, since local people and actors lose faith in local governance.

The case of Groningen (19 NL) is also about failed learning loops in the vertical sense due to 'legitimate' business related reasons:

> It is quite impossible to have a reliable assessment of place-based knowledge that is lacking, but one should take into account that NAM [a private company] and the ministry are quite reluctant to make information that they consider confidential public. Int. 4 emphasized that minister Kamp defended his reluctance to rapid reduction of gas extraction by pointing at the obliged security of supply, domestically but also to foreign buyers in surrounding countries. But it was impossible to assess the weight of this obligation because the contracts with foreign buyers were classified confidential.

Local people, or even local authorities have no right to receive for them crucial information when building up their arguments for solving the issues in a different way. In effect, the example shows how actors on a certain scale disempowers local actors and limit their abilities to act in favor of the locality.

One might discuss the legitimacy of these types (privacy regulations, business secrets, security reasons) and to what extent they should allow learning loops to fail. They might also be handled differently in different parts of Europe (what is sensitive in one part might not be so in another), or they could be implemented with various amount of power in different places (e.g. GDPR). Nevertheless they would be reasons for knowledge not to flow freely among actors and hampering the learning loops involved with obvious effect also on the flexibility of various kinds of actions. In the example above, when local actors are excluded from certain forms of knowledge, it severely limits the possibilities of further local action. However, in the case of Groningen, local actors kept on organizing themselves, building opinion, forming resistance, which show the possibilities of open democratic societies discussed above. At large, the work in Groningen was flexible and found new ways of working towards their goals.

However, although these and potentially other reasons might be considered legitimate even when they hamper learning between actors, it should also be noted that failed learning loops can induce additional costs. The costs are connected to the failure of learning to take place between actors who thus might have to act on insufficient knowledge leading to a risk of reduction of efficiency, a lack of mutual understanding of the problems at hand, and/or, as in the case of Groningen (19 NL), a lack of trust between actors paired with feelings of resentment, and a lack of hope.

A maybe specific case of where knowledge is not circulated very much is the case of a producer organization in Szentes (15 HU). The case makes clear that although the leadership of the organization is very knowledgeable and capable, and although the members of this organization is included in formal ways by assemblies of various kind, they are in practice not part of a collective learning loop:

> However, neither the delegate assembly, nor the general assembly has considerable influence on the strategic directions of the PO. The strategic decisions are taken by the presidency (mainly by

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> the president), and neither the delegate assembly, nor the general assembly debates these materials beforehand. Their function is to accept it. (Szentes 15 HU, p.20)

Nevertheless, if top-down learning does not seem to take place when it comes to the leading actor's management, the organization make sure that the top leadership have great understanding from the bottom-up, including embodied, practical knowledge (Bourdieu 1977) of what working life is all about for the members. This could be one reason why local members of the organization did not object to the leading actor's strategic decisions – they knew that he knows what producing vegetables is all about. In short, they trusted the management and the operations ran with an "all-encompassing aura of trust, and with a leadership based on personal guarantees, humanity, good-will and commitment" (Szentes 15 HU, p.20). This has similarities with the well-studied phenomena of 'patron-client relationships' (e.g. Humphrey 2002), meaning that the patron is trusted with his (or her) position and expected to 'take care' of the 'clients', be they villagers, members of a cooperative or the like. From a learning perspective, this type of situation is not ideal as the learning loops are hampered by the way how social interactions are organized. However, they might be effective in the way that they concentrate knowledge and limits discussion on various decisions. In a European perspective, patron-client relationships is a common way of social organization and it must be recognized and reflected upon as an option also in places where this type of organization is not very common. Regarding flexibility, this type of organization has advantages, as there are less constraints in the work of re-directing strategies when power is concentrated to the top. On the other hand, it might not be so flexible when it comes to challenges lying outside the expertise of the leadership. In this reagard, it would be more difficult identifying alternative solutions.

The case also shows that it is not by necessity so that not looping knowledge from top to bottom in an inclusive sense make the actions more conflictual, or less effective, although the "space for democratic mechanisms" (Szentes 15 HU, p.20) are reduced. As long as things work fine and results are delivered, there seems to be a high tolerance for letting the leaders lead without installing practices and routines leading to broad organizational learning.

**Horizontal/vertical learning loops**

When studying learning loops, a further distinction can be made between horizontal and vertical learning practices. The former is concerned with the related knowledge flows that bring in new knowledge from other places, whereas the latter, vertical learning practices, relate to those practices that enable knowledge to go beyond discrete institutionalized scales and thus open up for trans-scalar learning. For example, city-to-city networking, twinning cities and other sorts of city networks would represent a horizontal way. Examples of vertical learning loops at play would be when there are e.g. special platforms where local authorities may meet and discuss with regional or national actors (see also chapter above), or, as will be discussed below, when the action itself includes knowledge 'from above' with the effect that it increases flexibility.

A certain form of place-based knowledge is knowledge related to the different political positions. In several case studies the political side of the action is considered in a way to try to overcome the disrupture of the action that might stem from a change of local government. In the Balaton uplands (16 HU) politicians from both left and right-wing parties were included at key positions to make sure that the action would continue even if the political majority would change in the next election. In Stockholm (30 SE) all political parties, except for one, were included in a political reference group connected to the action in order to anchor the results of the actions as broadly as possible. In

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Stockholm, moreover, the Steering Committee of the Action included high ranked officials that knew the 'politically possible', so the action suggested only changes that would not met political resistance. This relates to the flexibility of the action in trying to include knowledge that would make the action *not* having to change if the political context changes.

Constructing learning loops so that the action may include political knowledge already from the start, would be important to those actions that are intended to run over political mandate periods, and where a political shift of majority might undo what the action has so far achieved. Strategic planning is typically a long-term engagement, but as argued in Monistrol (7 ES, see also Andersson and Borén 2019):

> The lack of political anchorage of the Plan can partly be explained given a complex balance of political forces in office both at the time of drawing the Plan, and in the following election periods. […] In this sense, we have to conclude that better governance arrangements ought to have been designed to facilitate political stability of the action over time, only if considering recurrent difficulties in this sense encountered in other local actions of the same nature. (Monistrol 7 ES, p.31)

**Horizontal learning loops - learning from other places**

In some actions it was explicit (see discussion on explicit/implicit knowledge in the chapter above) that the action should draw on the experiences from other places that had undertaken similar actions, e.g. Stockholm draw explicitly on similar work from Malmö (Stockholm 30 SE). In other actions learning from other places is stated as an important source of knowledge. For instance in Groningen (19 NL, p. 21) parts draw on experiences from other places, e.g. the setting up of the special platform for dialog between actors that were inspired by the experiences of a similar platform created in relation to a major infrastructure investment (at Schiphol Airport).In London, on the other hand (London 32 UK), apparently a more implicit learning strategy on other places was set up.

The distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge mobilsation strategies is pertinent here, especially as knowledge transfer with implicit strategies might overlook, but do not have to, that the context of various places differ. Again, learning about experiences from other places, or on similar projects carried out at other places, must include an urge to reflect on its adaptation to the context and not just make a blue print copy of other actions' organization schemes, statues or strategies. It is obviously a strength for learning loops to learn from other places but it cannot replace the local analyses of how and what to do. The idea of learning from other places relates closely to the by now rather large literature on policy mobilities, which among other things notes that policies mutate as they are transferred across space and also that their implementation is subject to barriers of various kind (McCann 2011; McCann and Ward 2011; McLean and Borén 2015; Borén and Young 2016; Schmitt 2020b). Also the case of Szentes in Hungary (15 HU) makes clear that much of the technologically driven redirections of vegetable production is basically learned from the Netherlands, but implemented and adapted to the local circumstances.

Obviously, networks often stretch beyond the confines of the place or the region. In the case extended networks are used to learn, it is not only about mobilizing the knowledge already available in a place, but also about acquiring knowledge from the outside available to the place. The case of Kotka (12 FI) provides an illustrative example:

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> The Action thus is connected into a network of organisations, stakeholders, practitioners, experts and decision-making bodies not only within but also beyond urban Kotka, and as such improves distributive aspects of spatial justice. (Kotka 12 FI, p.25)

To posit extensive networks from which the action may learn is an important feature for being able to adapt to changing contexts and to provide a solid base for flexibility.

**Conventional media and digital media**

Media also plays an important role for learning processes and in trying to involve the general public in place-based development. Coverage in the press obviously make actions known and might reach people who would want to engage with activities and contribute their specific knowledge. How the press represent various places also contributes to common understandings and local identities. However, whether the images conveyed are positive or negative play a major role for self-esteem, pride and building hope (Stockholm 30 SE). In the learning loop perspective, the role of media is obvious. On the one hand media is a vehicle for getting information out to people that might respond with input to the actions. In a democratic sense, the media is also an arena not only for reporting local news, but also for debate and gathering of opinions, which can be crucial in developing common understandings of the place. The media may also be crucial in a particular type of actions, for example in the case of "open call procedures". Specifically when the actions are dependent on applications from the population (see also Lodz 21 PL), maybe from a fairly large area, such as in the Northumberland case (31 UK), different media formats can play a key role. However as the Northumberland case shows (UK 31):

> Several interviewees noted the lack of reliable and deep-reaching communications methods with which to solicit new grant applications. The traditional means of advertising in local newspapers is said to be in decline for two reasons: the contraction in rural shops which means fewer retail outlets for newspapers; and a decline in readership of local papers, which is thought by one NULAG member to relate to the increase in relative expense of papers for lower-income rural dwellers (rather than the more conventional twenty-first century explanation of the rise of digital news, which may not be applicable in rural areas with poor broadband connectivity). (Northumberland UK 31, p. 27)

Also for actions that are not dependent on the direct interaction and communication with the population, it would still be important if the action at hand makes initial non-key actors, such as the local population, if not engaged, but at least knowledgeable. Specifically, for actions concerned with strategic planning, it would be important to reach out to a large variety of actors with the main objectives. In Lieksa (11 FI) for the development of a strategic plan, the media strategy was extensive:

> There are tangible actions with regard to participation that the City of Lieksa has taken in the wake of the new Strategy. Residents can provide (also anonymously) direct feedback to the City about municipal affairs through an electronic form. Initiatives proposed (kuntalaisaloite) by the residents are taken more seriously and they have led to concrete results and action that include for example the construction of a Frisbee-golf course, an outdoor fitness park for senior residents, etc. Furthermore, transcripts from the meetings of the City Council, the Board and several other committees can be openly and easily accessed from an online database, with an archive of meetings dating back to 2016 (Dynasty Tietopalvelu). In addition, meetings of the City

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> Council are being recorded and can be watched online. Recordings can also be later openly accessed from YouTube. The City has also improved its communication practices by preparing frequent bulletins and engaging more strongly in social media, the latest example being the hiring of a Communications Secretary and the following establishment of Lieksa City´s Instagram page in January 2019 (Int. #24). The abovementioned measures result in decision-making and administration of the City that is noticeably more transparent. (Lieksa 11 FI, p.21)

The authors of the case study note that "[a]lthough the new city leadership has shown propensity to directly engage with local residents, participation of them [i.e. the residents] in structured manner has proved somewhat difficult" (Lieksa 11 FI, p.21).

**Excursions and study visits**

In a learning loop perspective, it is also important to manage the knowledge flows to and from people from outside, maybe especially if power over the issues at hand is not residing in the locality. Not mentioned often in the case studies, but still an interesting way to sharing local and place based knowledge to people from outside the place is the excursion. In the following 'excursions' in the place of the action are made by local actors for people from the outside to enable them to see with their own eyes what the locality is like. This way of expressing local knowledge was used in Groningen (19 NL, p. 23) and would suit any action that might find it useful to show in real life what the problems at hand is really about. In Groningen there would, for example, be houses with cracks and physical damages showing in an immediate sense the severities of the problems to policy makers and power holders representing different policy levels. The excursion function as a tool to make the issues at stake less abstract and more concrete and could also invoke feelings and emotions in a more direct sense than other learning processes. As a side note it could be mentioned that excursions are an established form of knowledge transfer and teaching in several scientific subjects such as geography, biology, planning etc. The excursion creates a very grounded and localized form of knowledge that can be beneficial in many local contexts, especially where physical, visible aspects play an important part.

Related to the excursion is the study visit. There are obviously no clear boundaries between an excursion and a study visit but the studied cases report that this was a way to raise knowledge from outside of the locality (whereas excursions where used to show the locality for actors visitng their place). Not many cases mention the study visit but in Northumberland (31 UK), it was much appreciated:

> This phase also had funding to send applicants on study visits to develop their ideas through contact with beacon projects in other parts of the country; and to engage in knowledge exchanges with various rural projects in other European countries, for example with the LEADER Linne area in Sweden, a component greatly valued, seemingly by all involved in the action (e.g. Interviews 1, 2 and 3, 15). To the regret of many, actions outwith the Uplands area ended in the second phase of NULAG, due to the lower amount of grant available (Northumberland 31 UK, p.30)

Obviously, this is a form of study visits that is particularly meant to develop new knowledge by interacting with other places as the input one would get from similar actions in different contexts might provide insights into alternative solutions to common problems. In short, it is about juxtaposing similar but different forms of knowledge that could inform and shape local actions.

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**Academic knowledge**

Finally, it is also worth noting that in some projects there was also an active use of academic, generalized knowledge that is not specifically place-based. In Stockholm, for example, there was an active mobilisation of academic knowledge and the key actors commissioned research on various topics in order to ground the action as good as possible. A side effect is also that the results of the action acquire some sort of academic legitimacy (Stockholm 30 SE). In other projects, academic knowledge is mobilized to better equip the locality at hand with evidence-informed place-based knowledge to argue against external actors that pursue a contrasting agenda. In the case of Groningen (19 NL), it is reported:

> Even in case of significant efforts to conduct research to the typical context in relation to gas extraction, place-based knowledge would still be limited. Research has been done, on the structure and conditions of the subsoil, on the housing market (Int. 5; OTB, 2016), on socio-psychological health problems (Int. 3, 8), but the region is nevertheless still 'underserved' with research, at least with serious and independent research according to academic standards (Int. 1). (Groningen 19 NL, p.25)

Nevertheless, many of the actions discussed here are knowledge intensive and primarily rely on local knowledge and place-based knowledge that stem from the local context, and this is not always enough. In the case of Stockholm (30 SE) the local elite stepped down in favor of professional and academic knowledge imagining it would lead to suggestions of change that would work in practice, whereas in other cases the input for change might come from external elites, as argued by Barca et al. (2012).

The learning loops involved when engaging with academic knowledge seems primarily to be related to experts of various kind in the first instance when actors of a place start interacting with academic actors. Also, academic reports are often translated into other types of reports to make them more accessible. Apart from the concrete knowledge content, this type of induced learning loops also may infuse the action with legitimacy from the outside – the type of legitimacy that is connected to the impartialness of academic knowledge.

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# 6. Conclusions

The present report has presented an empirically-informed analysis of a number of key case studies in the RELOCAL project. In the focus of this transversal analysis has been a) the forms, expressions and ways of mobilizing local and place-based knowledge; b) the learning loops involved and c) a discussion of the flexibility and adaptability of the actions in relation to what role local and place-based knowledge has. The conclusions of the study are:

1) Place-based development should benefit from a more thorough conceptualization of place-based knowledge. Given that the purposes of this report have primarily been empirical, the conceptual discussion is not extensive. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this report the concepts of local knowledge on the one hand, and place-based knowledge on the other as conceptualized in this report, have provided sufficient precision for the empirical analyses. There is a substantial literature on learning and knowledge in the social sciences that could be engaged for further conceptual development.

2) The actions analysed differ substantially in how they relate to knowledge. Based on the typology of whether local and place-based knowledge respectively are included to a high or low degree, we can conclude that many actions score high both regarding local knowledge and place-based knowledge (Type 1). Nevertheless, a number of actions also score high on place-based knowledge but low on local knowledge (Type 2). There are a couple of actions that are low on both place-based and local knowledge (Type 3). Type 4 (low on both local and place-based knowledge) is not represented among the key case studies. From this follows that many projects do have the organization in place for harboring learning. A number of projects, however, either fail to learn or have not prepared for continuous learning from all relevant actors.

3) The forms of mobilizing knowledge in the actions range from actions that have an explicit approach to including knowledge, to those that do it in forms that can be rather catagorised as implicit. Most likely, the explicit approach is the more cost effective in the long term, but the implicit approach includes the important aspect of professional that are supposed to identify independently the knowledge needed for the implementation of the action. The study of the forms of mobilizing knowledge also distill various categories of inclusion and exclusion. Inclusion is a way to include knowledge that is tacit and not possible to codify or measure. This form is therefore important when intangibles are involved. Exclusion is important as not all forms of knowledge can be represented in each and single action. However, the exclusion of knowledge has to be made carefully and consciously in a way that do not feed existing lines of conflict. In this report, we can moreover conclude that in relation to the mobilization of knowledge, informality plays a key role, and it appears to be promising to embrace informality in order to control it rather than to try to at large mitigate informal relations.

4) Organisational learning is directly connected to communicative reason in the form of learning loops engaging with the knowledge of various actors. The organization of learning loops is central to flexibility and adaptability of local actions. Learning loops may fail but there are also socially accepted legitimate reasons for failure. From the case studies, we could also discern local and regional variations concerning the underpinning social organization of knowledge relations across Europe and the extent to which knowledge is promoted to and from settings. The analysed actions

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draw upon different forms of knowledge both vertically (across scale-levels) and horizontally (across space). Media and digital media, including social media are used, but is not a general remedy for broad engagement.

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## Appendix A: List of case studies

All case studies, together with the national reports and other material from the RELOCAL project is freely available in full text (Open Access) at https://relocal.eu

**Lippe 1 DE:**
Matzke FL, Kamuf V and Weck S (2019) Smart Country Side Ostwestfalen-Lippe. Digitalisation as a Tool to Promote Civic Engagement in Rural Villages, Germany. RELOCAL Case Study N° 1/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Görlitz 2 DE:**
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**Western Macedonia 3 EL:**
Petrakos G, Topaloglou L, Anagnostou A and Cupcea V (2019) A Post-Mining Regional Strategy for Western Macedonia, Greece. RELOCAL Case Study N° 3/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland

**Thessaloniki 4 EL:**
Topaloglou L, Petrakos G, Anagnostou A and Cupcea V (2019) The Establishment of the Alexander Innovation Zone in the Metropolitan Area of Thessaloniki, Greece. RELOCAL Case Study N° 4/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Volos 5 EL:**
Petrakos G, Topaloglou L, Anagnostou A, Cupcea V and Papadaniil V (2019) Overcoming fragmentation in territorial governance. The case of Volos, Greece. RELOCAL Case Study N° 5/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Karditsa 6 EL:**
Petrakos G, Topaloglou L, Anagnostou A and Cupcea V (2019) Karditsa's Ecosystem of Collaboration, Greece. RELOCAL Case Study N° 6/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Monistrol 7 ES:**
Ulied A, Biosca O, Guevara M and Noguera L (2019) Monistrol 2020. Local Strategic Plan in a Small-Scale Municipality, Spain. RELOCAL Case Study N° 7/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Barcelona 8 ES:**
Ulied A, Biosca O, Rodrigo R, Guzmán S and Noguera L (2019) Llei de Barris in Premià de Dalt. Action Plan for the Promotion of Quality of Life in a Segregated Neighbourhood, Spain. RELOCAL Case Study N° 8/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**La Mina 9 ES:**
Ulied A, Biosca O, Rodrigo R and Noguera L (2019) Transformation Plan for La Mina Neighbourhood in Barcelona Metropolitan Region, Spain. RELOCAL Case Study N° 9/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

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**Lieksa 11 FI:**
Fritsch M, Hämäläinen P, Kahila P and Németh S (2019) Lieksa Development Strategy, Finland. RELOCAL Case Study N° 11/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

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

**Encs 13 HU:**
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**György-telep 14 HU:**
Jelinek Cs and Virág T (2019) György-telep. Ten Years of Urban Regeneration in a Poor Neighbourhood, Hungary. RELOCAL Case Study N° 14/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Szentes 15 HU:**
Kovács K, Mihály M, Rácz K and Velkey G (2019) May a Production Organisation Prevent Mass Pauperisation? An Example from Hungary. RELOCAL Case Study N° 15/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Balaton uplands 16 HU:**
Kovács K and Nemes G (2019) The Balaton Uplands. LEADER Local Action Group, Hungary. RELOCAL Case Study N° 16/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Euralens 17 LU:**
Blondel C (2019) Euralens. An Innovative Local Tool to Redevelop Pas-de-Calais Former Mining Basin? France. RELOCAL Case Study N° 17/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Alzette-Belval 18 LU:**
Evrard E (2019) The EPA Alzette-Belval. A National Tool to Address Spatial Disparities at the Lorraine-Luxembourg Border. RELOCAL Case Study N° 18/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

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**Rotterdam 20 NL:**
Dol K, Hoekstra J and Kleinhans R (2019) National Program Rotterdam South. Neighbourhood Development in a Large Deprived Urban Area, Netherlands. RELOCAL Case Study N° 20/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Lodz 21 PL:**
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**Brzeziny 22 PL:**
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**Goth village 23 PL:**
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**Rural public spare 24 PL:**
Jeziorska-Biel P, Janiszewska A, Wójcik M, Dmochowska-Dudek K, Tobiasz-Lis P and Napierała T (2019) The Development of Rural Public Places in the Villages of Domachowo, Potarzyce and Stara Krobia, Poland. RELOCAL Case Study N° 24/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Pata Cluj 25 RO:**
Bădiță C andVincze E (2019) The Pata Cluj Project. Residential Desegregation of the Landfill Area of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. RELOCAL Case Study N° 25/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Maramures 26 RO:**
Zamfir GI (2019) Micro-Regional Association Mara-Natur in Maramures County, Romania. RELOCAL Case Study N° 26/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Mălin-Codlea 27 RO:**
Hossu IE and Vincze E (2019) Mălin-Codlea. Legalization of an Informal Settlement in Brașov County, Romania. RELOCAL Case Study N° 27/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Plumbuita 28 RO:**
Vrăbiescu I (2019) Plumbuita PIDU. Regenerating a Micro-Urban Area in Bucharest, Romania. RELOCAL Case Study N° 28/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Västerbotten 29 SE:**
Löfving L, Norlén G and Heleniak T (2019) Digital Västerbotten. Promoting Equal Standards of Living for Inland Municipalities through Digital Technologies, Sweden. RELOCAL Case Study N° 29/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

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Borén T (2019) The Stockholm Commission. Measures for an Equal and Socially Sustainable City, Sweden. RELOCAL Case Study N° 30/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

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Brooks E, Shucksmith M and Madanipour A (2019) The Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group (NULAG). LEADER in Sparsely Populated Northern England, United Kingdom. RELOCAL Case Study N° 31/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**London 32 UK:**
Brooks E, Madanipour A and Shucksmith M (2019) Homelessness Project in Lewisham, Borough of London, United Kingdom. RELOCAL Case Study N° 32/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

**Lewis 33 UK:**
Currie M, Pinker A and Copus A (2019) Strengthening Communities on the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles, United Kingdom. RELOCAL Case Study N° 33/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

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