RELOCAL

Resituating the Local in Cohesion
and Territorial Development

Comparative Case Study Research in RELOCAL: An Overview on the Methodology

Part of Deliverable D 6.4

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Abbreviations and Explanations

'Case Study Reports' RELOCAL Deliverable D6.2 – 33 case study reports. All of these published and available at: https://relocal.eu.

Conceptual Framework RELOCAL Deliverable D1.1: Conceptual framework for the project (Madanipour et al., 2017a, b)

EC European Commission

EU European Union

(Case Study) Manual RELOCAL Deliverable D6.1: Methodological Framework for Case Study Research (the Case Study Manual)

WP Work package of the RELOCAL Project

WP 3 RELOCAL work package, particularly concerned with issues related to procedural justice within localities and their multi-level linkages and eventually inter-local and/or inter-regional linkages.

WP 4 RELOCAL work package, focuses on the role and potential of localities and their communities in promoting social justice in general and the implementation of EU Cohesion Policy, perceived as a factor that potentially promotes spatial justice, in particular.

WP 7 RELOCAL work package, focuses on the possible link between local/regional autonomy and spatial justice.

WP 6 RELOCAL work package, responsible for organising comparative case study research and delivering comparative findings in co-operation with WP 3, 4, and 7.
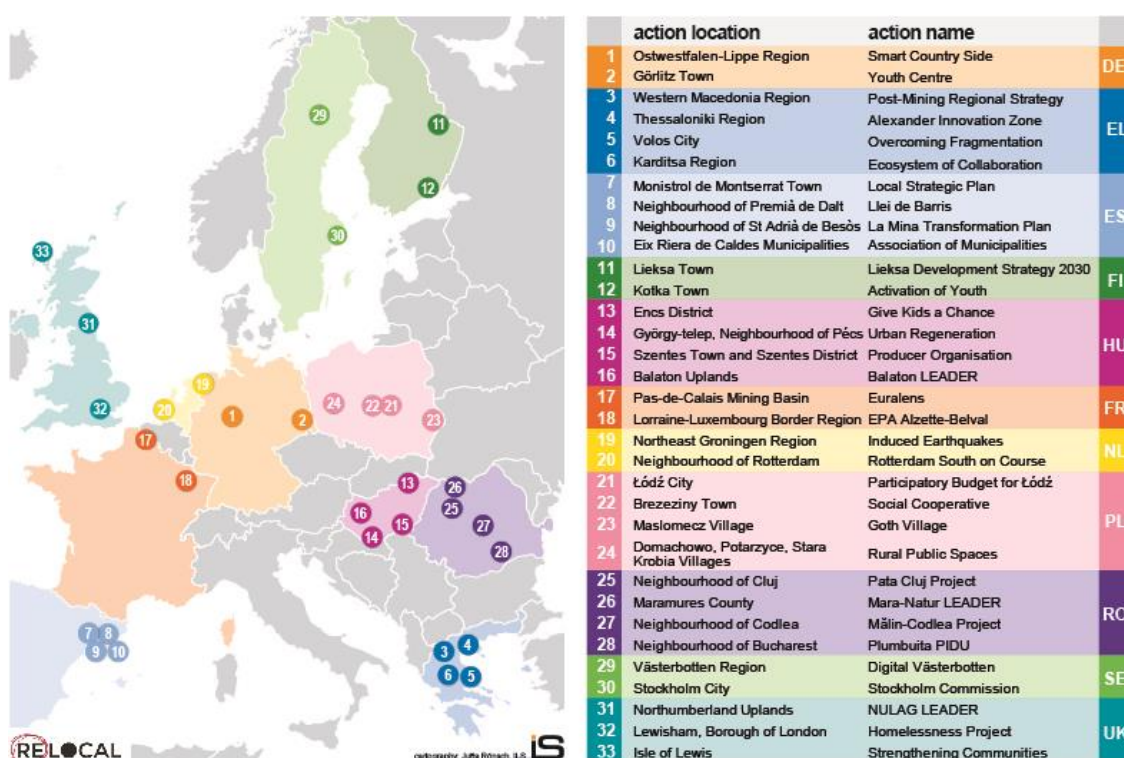
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1. Introduction

The aim of this report is to provide an overview on the methodology for comparative case study research in RELOCAL. This report responds to five key questions:
> (1) What is the study's frame of reference and conceptual starting point?
> (2) How is theorised and is there an ambition to generalise?
> (3) How have cases been chosen?
> (4) Within each case, what constitutes the case, i.e. the objective of comparison?
> (5) Which trade-offs occurred and how have they been addressed?

In a recently published journal paper, Krehl and Weck (2019) argue that researchers should be more explicit and transparent about how comparative case study research in EU-projects on urban and regional issues is undertaken. This refers to critical conceptual decisions in the research process as well as a thorough reflection of the empirical research. Explicating the methodology and reflecting upon the process allows an interested public to understand how the project results have been produced. Eventually, such transparency may also foster learning processes beyond the particular research project and thus helps to build solid methodology for comparative case study research.

Comparative research is a rather challenging task. This is particularly true for a research project which builds upon research in 33 cases, as in the RELOCAL project (see Map 1).

	action location	action name	
1	Ostwestfalen-Lippe Region	Smart Country Side	DE
2	Görlitz Town	Youth Centre	
3	Western Macedonia Region	Post-Mining Regional Strategy	EL
4	Thessaloniki Region	Alexander Innovation Zone	
5	Volos City	Overcoming Fragmentation	
6	Karditsa Region	Ecosystem of Collaboration	
7	Monistrol de Montserrat Town	Local Strategic Plan	ES
8	Neighbourhood of Premià de Dalt	Llei de Barris	
9	Neighbourhood of St Adrià de Besòs	La Mina Transformation Plan	
10	Eix Riera de Caldes Municipalities	Association of Municipalities	
11	Lieksa Town	Lieksa Development Strategy 2030	FI
12	Kotka Town	Activation of Youth	
13	Encs District	Give Kids a Chance	HU
14	György-telep, Neighbourhood of Pécs	Urban Regeneration	
15	Szentes Town and Szentes District	Producer Organisation	
16	Balaton Uplands	Balaton LEADER	
17	Pas-de-Calais Mining Basin	Euralens	FR
18	Lorraine-Luxembourg Border Region	EPA Alzette-Belval	
19	Northeast Groningen Region	Induced Earthquakes	NL
20	Neighbourhood of Rotterdam	Rotterdam South on Course	
21	Łódź City	Participatory Budget for Łódź	PL
22	Brezeziny Town	Social Cooperative	
23	Maslomecz Village	Goth Village	
24	Domachowo, Potarzyce, Stara Krobia Villages	Rural Public Spaces	
25	Neighbourhood of Cluj	Pata Cluj Project	RO
26	Maramures County	Mara-Natur LEADER	
27	Neighbourhood of Codlea	Mălin-Codlea Project	
28	Neighbourhood of Bucharest	Plumbuita PIDU	
29	Västerbotten Region	Digital Västerbotten	SE
30	Stockholm City	Stockholm Commission	
31	Northumberland Uplands	NULAG LEADER	UK
32	Lewisham, Borough of London	Homelessness Project	
33	Isle of Lewis	Strengthening Communities	

Map 1: RELOCAL actions and case study locations. (Own presentation based on RELOCAL D6.2 Case Study Reports)

A range of well-known methodological challenges when comparing, are being discussed by academic literature, such as the depths versus scope problem, the question how to select cases or how to make sure to address the same phenomenon across cultures and national borders (Blatter and Blume, 2008; Gerring, 2017; Goertz, 2017; Kantor and Savitch, 2005). These 'technical' methodological questions need consideration in the design of a comparative research approach. How they are being approached, is linked to more fundamental questions, such as researchers' positioning in terms of epistemological or ontological standpoints, which shape the approach to comparative methodology.

Among the most relevant, current debates which influence the comparative research design, is the academic debate between those researchers who emphasise the particularities and the distinctiveness of cases, and those who tend to see the sameness ('universality') of a phenomenon, which shows local nuances in the respective cases (Robinson, 2016; Scott and Storper, 2015; Ward, 2010). Particularly important for comparative urban and regional research is also the question how to 'compare' when places (localities, cities, regions) cannot be conceived as static settings or a coherent and bounded whole, but as rather open sites through which all sorts of flows of capital or people take place, and which are interconnected to and constituted by other places in a globalising world. These are only some of the questions with which a research consortium has to deal when undertaking comparative case study research. Other challenges have to do with different implicit frames of reference for comparative research, different disciplinary backgrounds of researchers in EU-projects and thus, different familiarity with qualitative or data-based quantitative methods.

Therefore, there is quite a range of challenges which call for discussion and reflection in comparative case study research. Quite rarely, however, these discussions and reflections are made explicit and thus the comparative methodology in EU research projects often remains a black box (Krehl and Weck, 2019). This report aims to shed light on the conceptual and empirical foundations of comparative case study research in RELOCAL.

2. Conceptual Starting Point

A first and very fundamental decision in the RELOCAL project has been to leave a mostly variable-centred approach (as planned originally) behind and follow an inductive, process-centred approach for comparative case study research. There are at least two reasons for this.

Firstly, spatial justice is overlapping with very different concepts (such as sustainability, social inclusion, or territorial cohesion). There is not one concept for spatial justice, nor is there one term or one universal understanding of it across national borders - a well-known problem in comparing (see the discussion on 'functional equivalent'). Different concepts relate to "spatial justice" in the national context. But the discourse is also different for urban as compared to rural environments, and we were interested in analysing and understanding the different interpretations and manifestations of spatial justice in different contexts, rather than assuming we could define beforehand the most important factors (or variables) which influence these.

Secondly, because of our focus of analysis on relations in investigating spatial justice and our understanding of space and place as socially constructed (Madanipour et al., 2017a; see Chapter 3), we were more interested in the becoming of spatial inequality. A more inductive, process-centred approach seemed better aimed for understanding the complex-

ities and contradictions in the manifestations of spatial justice due to different power and market forces, rather than thinking there is one universal way (with variations) in producing and responding to spatial injustice in localities.

This fundamental decision then had a range of implications for the comparative research design. For the emphasis on context sensitivity, we gave some freedom and responsibility to the national case study teams in 'translating' and adapting the guiding questions to the selected case. This 'translation' was also important in the frame of stakeholder interaction, as the research rationale and the objectives had to be communicated in understandable language for practitioners.

A second key decision which derived from kick-off meetings at the beginning of the project, was the project partners' decision to closely integrate different analytical research perspectives for investigating in a coherent way the link between place-basedness of actions and an actions' contribution towards the ultimate goal of enhanced spatial justice (see Figure 1). Following this decision, research questions on perceptions of stakeholders on the local level (WP 4), the institutional set-up and governance of actions (WP 3), and questions of power and autonomy (WP 7) were closely integrated. A so-called 'Manual' for case study research was produced in close co-operation of all responsible work package leaders, including WP 6 (responsible for organising comparative case study research and delivering comparative findings in co-operation with WP 3, 4, and 7).
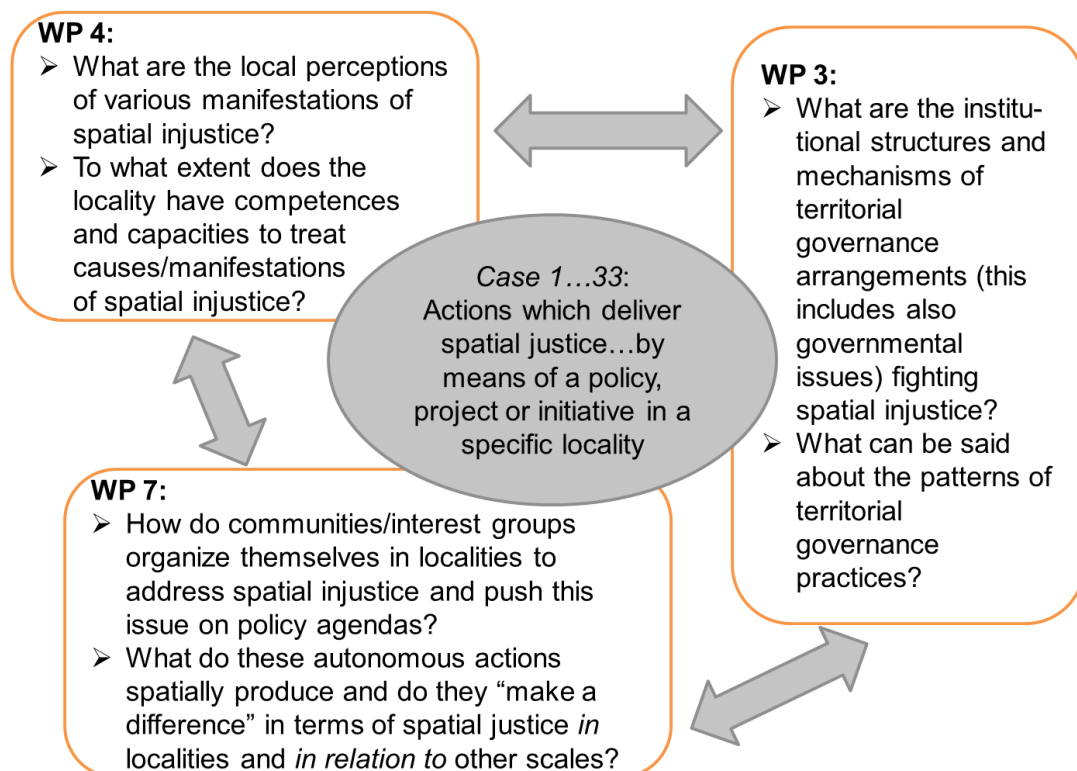
WP 4:
- What are the local perceptions of various manifestations of spatial injustice?
- To what extent does the locality have competences and capacities to treat causes/manifestations of spatial injustice?

Case 1…33: Actions which deliver spatial justice…by means of a policy, project or initiative in a specific locality

WP 3:
- What are the institutional structures and mechanisms of territorial governance arrangements (this includes also governmental issues) fighting spatial injustice?
- What can be said about the patterns of territorial governance practices?

WP 7:
- How do communities/interest groups organize themselves in localities to address spatial injustice and push this issue on policy agendas?
- What do these autonomous actions spatially produce and do they "make a difference" in terms of spatial justice *in* localities and *in relation to* other scales?

Figure 1: Interlinkages of WP 3, 4 and 7 and their research questions. (Copy of a presentation taken from the unpublished Case Study Manual (Del 6.1))

3. Theorising

A key document for conceptualising spatial justice and defining epistemological and ontological standpoints of the project was a report on the 'Conceptual framework for the project' (Madanipour et al., 2017a) [RELOCAL Deliverable 1.1].[1] This report defines the two key concepts of the project, spatial justice and localities, and defines the research hypothesis and the research approach (Madanipour et al., 2017a: 74; 2017b: 5):

> "The RELOCAL **hypothesis** is that the processes of localisation and place-based public policy can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment. The key questions that need to be explored are
>
> *a) Can spatial justice, as a fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them, be achieved through place-based strategies, and*
>
> *b) Are these achievements place-bound or can they be also achieved across places and times.*
>
> In other words, it is about the relationships within a locality, across localities, and relationships between a locality and higher level European institutions, now and in the future, i.e., relationships that are essential in ensuring spatial justice and democratic enhancement. We will investigate whether place-based strategies can contribute to spatial justice and democratisation across the EU, or they would be at odds with them. Through empirical investigations, we will test the implications of the strategic character of place-based approaches, and whether being selective in the choice of targets may be at odds with being inclusive and just. This would require unpacking two key concepts: spatial justice and locality."

The key concept of **spatial justice** is defined with respect to five distinctive dimensions: social, procedural, distributive, spatial and temporal. As indicated in Madanipour et al. (2017b), the distribution of resources and opportunities, as well as the power relations and procedures which shape social space and the geographical distribution of resources, play a significant role in defining and investigating spatial justice. Investigation would need a focus on the locality, but also going beyond, in order to understand the wider mechanisms in the production of (in-)equalities. There also would need to be a focus on inter-generational and intra-generational equity in case study research.

Localities, as the second key concept, are defined as multifarious and porous (Madanipour et al., 2017b: 11), adopting a critical and relational approach. A locality is defined as a combination of four dimensions: differential, vertical, horizontal and transversal relations. Research in localities would thus need to consider and be aware of the internal diversity and complexity of places, of the way how places are shaped by multi-level governance processes and how they are related to other localities in terms of inter-local coordination and competition. Research would also take into account extra-local forces and the dynamics of heterogeneity and transversality.

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[1] The Conceptual Framework was submitted in March 2017 as a working draft for internal use [Deliverable D1.1.] (Madanipour et al., 2017a). Based on it, a RELOCAL Working Paper was published in September 2017, which is openly accessible and downloadable from the RELOCAL Website (Madanipour et al., 2017b).
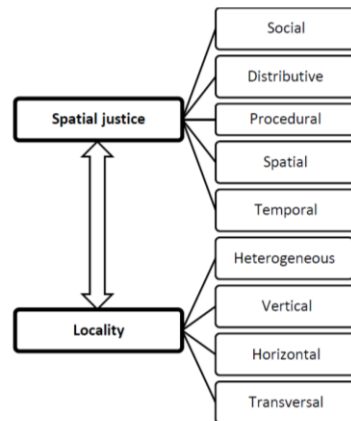
Figure 2: The two key concepts of RELOCAL. (Madanipour et al., 2017a: 74)

The research framework of RELOCAL as laid down by this conceptual report, comprises a spatial ontology and a relational epistemology. As argued in the report, localities are the places, where the power relations, the processes and the experiences of spatial injustice can be understood and investigated. In investigating spatial justice, relations would be the focus of analysis, and the processes that cause just or unjust geographies.

In territorial cohesion policy, the capacity and potential of place-based strategies – as compared to spatially blind policies – has been widely discussed in recent years. The underlying argument is that cohesion policy must be better tailored to places, better respond to the needs and preferences of people and build on the local knowledge and capital for being more effective in overcoming territorial inequalities (Barca, 2009: 6). Going beyond this policy discourse, a relevant question is then, whether enhancing the capacity of local communities and local institutions ('local autonomy') to address spatial injustice, might be able to achieve spatial justice in and across localities.

> "The RELOCAL project, therefore, will examine the capacity of place-based approaches to deliver spatial justice. Localities are defined as multifarious and porous, at the intersection of vertical, horizontal and transversal forces. Spatial justice is conceptualised as integrating social, spatial, temporal, distributive and procedural dimensions. By focusing on a spatial ontology, through a relational epistemology and a mixed methodology, we will investigate whether spatial justice, as a fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them, can be achieved through place-based strategies, and whether these can be achieved within as well as across places and times." (Madanipour et al., 2017b: 11)

4. Choosing Cases

Quite often in project documentation, there is no explicit argument why a specific case has been chosen (Krehl and Weck, 2019). Is it due to familiarity with the case, due to being particularly suited for a specific theme? There are all kinds of reasons why to choose a specific case, but once chosen, the rationale needs to be explained.

In RELOCAL we put great emphasis on the process of choosing the cases for in-depth-research and we discussed in an iterative and comprehensive process which cases to select. Case study field work has been the main empirical data source of RELOCAL, so we needed to make sure to choose those cases that would answer best to the key questions and hypothesis of the research project.

A case was defined as an approach or action to deliver spatial justice - (a set of) actions, policies or projects that aim to achieve a fairer or more just distribution of goods and services in a locality. This action or approach would be
- not necessarily institutionalised, but with an identifiable impact on the locality; preferably, stakeholders (be they institutional or not) from the chosen locality should have identifiable vision(s) and preferably a long-term action plan;
- either policy-driven, thus, initiated from higher policy levels but shaped/influenced by the locality at hand, or it would be collective actions, initiated by local communities.

From the beginning of the project, and as laid down in the Grant Agreement, a total sample size of 33 cases was defined, with representation of different European welfare regimes, and a higher number of cases in those countries where the importance of the structural and cohesion funds was felt to be bigger than for others (Hungary, Romania, Poland, Greece, Spain being the countries with each 4 cases, while other countries had two cases, with the exception of 3 cases in the UK for considering the English and Scottish context).

The starting point for case study selection was a locality with obvious challenges of spatial justice and coping strategies for improving living conditions and promoting a more balanced and sustainable development. We thus mainly looked for disadvantaged places (according to national standards), with actions that address spatial justice. We planned for a majority of case studies in disadvantaged places adding a smaller number of reference cases of actions that address spatial justice in relatively well-off places. Based on the conceptual framework (see chapter 3), localities were defined as multifarious and porous (Madanipour et al., 2017a: 80; Madanipour et al., 2017b: 11)). These localities could range from smaller units to (city) regions and needed to be analysed at the intersection of vertical, horizontal and transversal forces.

Case study selection relied on the informed knowledge of national case study representatives on localities and actions which correspond best with our research interest and questions. Guidelines and checklists were developed by a core group of work package leaders (WP 3-4-6-7) aimed to guide the case study selection in the national context. We asked partners to argue: Why is the suggested case a RELOCAL case? What makes this case important and innovative in the national context? We also asked partners to suggest a surplus of cases in their national context so that there was a sample amongst which we would then choose the 'most suitable' ones. Proposed cases were then discussed at a project conference. Discussing the cases also aimed at making researchers familiar with all cases and providing an opportunity for cross-case interchange.

5. Comparing

RELOCAL's comparative research design is based on
- an analytical framework, based on research dimensions and key categories
- organising communication and collective learning processes within the project.

5.1 The analytical framework

As stated above, RELOCAL has followed an inductive approach in case study work, giving importance to context-sensitivity and exploring case-specific mechanisms, rather than using cases for the 'testing' of pre-defined hypotheses or variables.

For enabling comparative perspectives across the cases, we defined research dimensions and analytical key categories which guided the collection and analysis of empirical evidence (see Figure 3 and Table 1). We thus defined 22 key categories for analysing the locality, the action, and the capacities for change, including categories such as social and spatial boundaries, distribution of power, place-based knowledge, etc. (see Table 1). This integrated framework is based on insights from the RELOCAL conceptual paper (Madanipour et al., 2017a) and was achieved through intense discussions between different work package leaders (WP 3, WP 4, WP 6, WP 7, and Coordinator UEF). An extensive Case Study Manual [D 6.1 Methodological Framework for Case Study Research] defined the research questions and provided guidelines for how to investigate the cases and how to collect and analyse empirical data. We defined guiding questions in order to answer to the interests of the analytical (Dimension 1-5) and the synthesising (Dimension A-C) dimensions in the case study analysis.
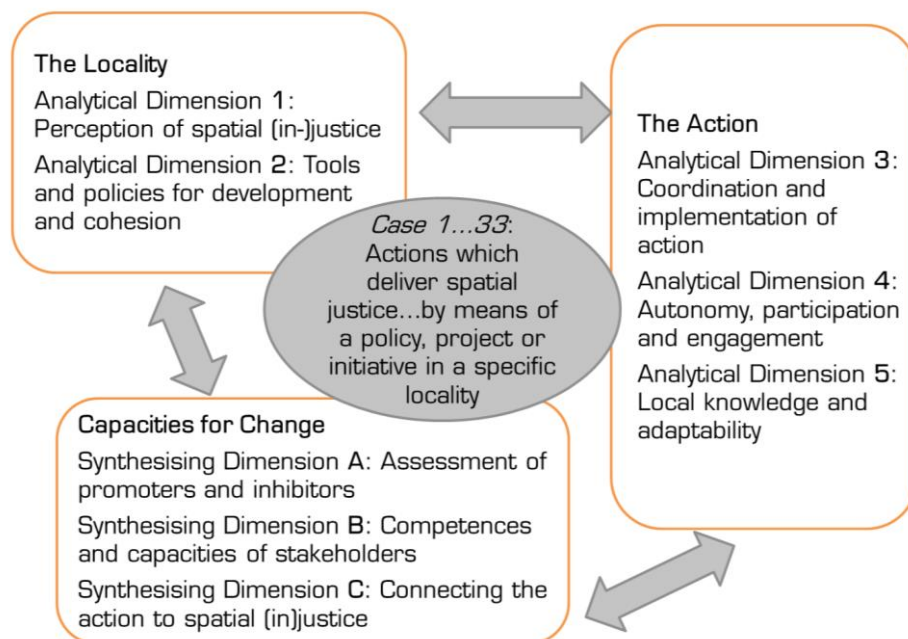

Figure 3: The research dimensions and their main focus. (Copy of a presentation taken from the unpublished Case Study Manual (Del 6.1))

		Key Categories	Analytical/Synthesising Dimension
The Locality	1	Perceived geography ('map') and perceived space ('place')	Perception of spatial (in)justice within the locality [Analytical Dimension 1]
	2	Production of space	
	3	Social and spatial boundaries (boundary-making)	
	4	Development trajectory	Tools and policies for development and cohesion [Analytical Dimension 2]
	5	Perception of impact (stakeholders' views on implemented policies/ actions)	
	6	Stakeholders' perception of policy choices	
The Action	7	Decision-making capacity	Coordination and implementation of the action in the locality under consideration [Analytical Dimension 3]
	8	Distribution of power	
	9	Modes of leadership	
	10	Structures of coordination	
	11	Accountability	Autonomy, participation and engagement [Analytical Dimension 4]
	12	Legitimacy	
	13	Scope of participation and engagement	
	14	Transparency	
	15	Place-based knowledge	Expression and mobilisation of place-based knowledge and adaptability [Analytical Dimension 5]
	16	Organisational/individual learning	
	17	Scope of flexibility and adaptability	
Capacities for Change	18	Identification and assessment of promoters and inhibitors	Assessment of promoters and inhibitors [Synthesising Dimension A]
	19	Formal and informal empowerment	Competences and capacities of stakeholders [Synthesising Dimension B]
	20	Potential for localised action	
	21	Achievements over time and across place	Connecting the action to procedural and distributive justice [Synthesising Dimension C]
	22	Evaluation of impact on the locality & factors shaping the impact	

Table 1: The analytical framework for cross-case analyses. (Copy of a presentation taken from the unpublished Case Study Manual (Del 6.1))

According to our conceptual understanding of comparative research (see Chapter 2), we defined an analytical framework and guiding questions for analysis, but these guiding questions needed to be 'translated' and adapted to the specific local context. Hence, we did not use standardised questionnaires for all cases. Instead, expert knowledge of the national case study teams was required to design the final interview questionnaires and decide

on how to answer best to the guiding questions. The local field work thus included the analysis of local data, document analysis, interviews and focus groups with local stakeholders, as well as observation and participation in community activities. Minimum requirements with regards to the number of expert interviews (suggesting a minimum requirement of 20 in-depth interviews per case study) and mechanisms for stakeholder interaction were defined (one stakeholder workshop per case study towards the end of field research, with the aim of discussing, reflecting and widening the analysis of researchers (Weck et al., 2018: 23-24)). But the concrete field work approach was defined locally, for being appropriate to the specific case and the specific local context.

In order to support comparative analyses between cases, we asked for case study reports which directly connect the empirical findings to the defined key categories. The final case study reports should be precise, short and analytical, rather similar to journal articles.

5.2 Organising communication and learning processes

In organising the comparative research design, much emphasis was given on the process of collective learning. Thus, the analytical framework and methodology was 'tested' in 8 pilot cases and the implications for the Case Study Manual were discussed at a project conference, before starting empirical work in the rest of cases.

Testing the Case Study Manual meant to pose the following questions to national case study teams:
- Is it understandable for the researcher?
- Are there inconsistencies in the methodology?
- Can the dimensions be sensitively addressed?
- Does the stakeholder inclusion work as outlined?
- On the amount of time needed: Is it feasible to carry out the work as outlined?

Also, with the aim to continuously learn from experiences, it was regularly asked for the feedback of the case study teams on the empirical work process (see Annex 8.1). On the basis of feedback questionnaires from partners, we revised the Manual. Thus, for instance, we added conceptual definitions of the relevant analytical categories in the Glossary. We also emphasised the role of informal talks, conversations and observations in empirical field work.

All in all, four feedback rounds in the form of written responses to easy-to-fill-out templates were carried out, asking the national case study teams to report on progress with empirical work, or any difficulties encountered during fieldwork (see Annex 8.1 for examples).

Likewise, draft versions of the case study reports were regularly discussed. Thus, the pilot case study reports were reviewed by different WP-leaders (WP 3, 4, 6, 7), who checked if the reports would deliver adequate response to the guiding questions and research interests. In a similar vein, a two-day midterm project meeting was organised, after having reached the midpoint of empirical field work, which served to review and discuss half of the case study reports (16 out of the 33). In addition to quality control, this midterm meeting also served to start discussion on interesting contrasts or commonalities and trace relevant cross-cutting topics for RELOCAL analyses.

For all case study reports, a peer-review-system was installed. Hence, all reports were checked for their quality, comprehensibility and solidity by another case study research team before being finally published. Such a review system was also thought to enable and promote cross-national understanding on similarities and differences between cases.

6. Reflecting the Approach

Reflecting upon the RELOCAL approach, there are a range of aspects to learn from. In this last and concluding chapter of the report we reflect upon the comparative research design and respective challenges as well as benefits. The reflection is first from the authors, and continues with reflections from colleagues who were invited to comment.

6.1 Reflections from the authors

Working in a large research consortium that is set up interdisciplinary (according to the requirements of the call for funding) demands **flexibility** and compromises. Thus, it soon became clear that there needed to be some deviation from the original proposal on comparative case study design - with a more process-centred instead of a variable-centred approach. Being flexible and reflective in the process, in order to find the common ground in a research consortium with researchers of different (implicit) frames of reference with regards to comparative research, is essential for successful research. Of course, these deviations in the research design need to be made transparent and the changes and reasoning behind need to be explained and defended in evaluations and review meetings with the funding agency.

In terms of framework conditions, the research design as implemented in RELOCAL, being based on the integration of analytical research perspectives and the organisation of learning processes, takes **time**. The RELOCAL project benefitted from being funded over a period of four years, which allowed for an iterative research process, and the discussion and revision of conceptual and empirical frameworks. Integrating different research perspectives into one analytical (and empirical) framework, created a collaborative and integrative approach by different research perspectives (= different work packages). The integration of the different (work package) research perspectives was achieved by a range of successive (video call) meetings and intense discussion over a period of 10 months. Time is also an essential factor for being able to 'test' the research design in pilot studies, reflecting the experiences and the quality of findings, improving the fieldwork guidelines (the Case Study Manual), discussing and revising 16 out of 33 case study reports and findings in a two-day-workshop. This approach strengthened the overall robustness of the methodology and allowed for better integrating the empirical work with the analytical framework. Without an adequate time frame, this kind of comparative research design, trying to achieve integrated research perspectives and collectively discussing and reflecting experiences, seems hardly possible.

Integrating the different (work package) research perspectives was time and energy consuming and yet, it was the right decision for understanding the multi-layered social, urban and rural realities and processes in the localities. A more fragmented approach, in which these different analytical perspectives work in parallel, separate from each other, might eventually have yielded more satisfactory results out of the perspective of single work packages, but less satisfactory results in terms of holistic insights and understanding regarding the mechanisms and linkages between spatial justice and localities.

A number of shortcomings and drawbacks need to be reported, too. One of the shortcomings is that the integration of quantitatively oriented work packages in the empirical field work in the case studies was less thorough than originally planned. While results from

quantitative work packages were taken into account in interpreting findings from the case studies, one cannot speak of a truly mixed-methods approach of RELOCAL to the overall research question of the project, which would have needed an integrated framework from the beginning and a higher level of continuous communication between the quantitatively oriented and the qualitatively oriented work packages.

RELOCAL researchers are trained in a variety of disciplines and methodological approaches. Interdisciplinarity of the researchers and the fact that multiple disciplines and expertise from sociology, politics, economics, and geography are represented in a research consortium means a huge potential for research. At the same time, and despite all intentions to produce a detailed analytical and empirical framework for case study research (the Case Study Manual), there is quite some variation in the analytical focus and depth in which the reports answer to the guiding questions. Retrospectively, it would have been better to carry out a training workshop with those researchers who are in charge of the empirical field work. This might have produced a more homogeneous set of case study reports. Though the Manual was explained and discussed in consortium meetings, due to internal work organisation and changing team compositions, those who carried out the fieldwork in the end were not always participating in the RELOCAL project meetings and would have benefited from such a training workshop.

6.2 Reflections and comments by research partners

RELOCAL consortium members were invited to retrospectively comment on the conceptual and empirical work process over the last years. One comment refers to a more circular learning process and suggests the opportunity to go back to the case study report findings after some time. In RELOCAL, case study reports were published in May 2019, which was followed by elaborating a scenario for the respective case in January 2020 and with that knowledge about contextual conditions, as Elizabeth Brooks argues, it would have been helpful to go back to the case study reports:

"As a researcher for two cases in the study, I grappled with the many potential interpretations of spatial justice for each case: not only had RELOCAL deliverable 1.1 established that spatial justice is procedural and distributional, but that different social, environmental and economic aspects of spatial justice needed to be considered; and in judging impacts, the temporal dimension came to seem increasingly important: spatial justice can never just be a 'snapshot' in time.

Tasks subsequent to the case study reports, related to WP8 (Scenarios), looked at the influence of policy contexts and other contextual enablers in interaction with the projects' intermediate and long-term goals. From these tasks, (a Mechanism Map and a 2030 Scenario), it emerged that a deep exploration of diverse contexts for the case studies (geographical, social and market, and policy, - we might now also add environmental) really helped enable appreciation of what kinds of conditions are necessary for projects to be effective in enhancing spatial justice and over what kinds of timescales different kinds of projects can be effective. In retrospect, therefore I would have liked to have the opportunity built into the project reporting process to return to the case study reports at the end of the study and add a final section to each of them about understanding of what contextual conditions need to be in place for each to have positive spatial justice impacts, over what timescale and at what geographical scale."

Elizabeth Brooks, Newcastle University
(personal communication, February 2, 2020)

From the perspective of the work package leader of one of the analytical research perspectives (WP 4) the integrated analytical framework, based on common research dimensions and key categories, for how to investigate the cases and how to collect and analyse empirical data, worked well. The empirical material provided by the case studies could be used effectively in comparative analysis and thus validates to some extent the methodological approach.

"D 4.2 (co-authored by Cs. Jelinek, J. Kellerand T. Virág) report could effectively use the empirical material provided by the 33 case studies, rich enough to ground a comparative analysis on perceptions of spatial (in)justice and shortcomings of relevant policy delivery. The qualitative research material and analyses conveyed by case studies enabled D 4.2 co-authors to identify the most relevant dimensions of local perceptions on spatial injustice: the first two dimensions – access to (1) employment and (2) public services – are related to the endowments of the localities and that of governance structures supporting or not people's equal or unequal access to these endowments. Both dimensions are important in both rural and urban contexts, as well as the 3rd, discursive dimension of 'labelling' appearing alike locally, among groups of different spatial, social and ethnic position, and externally, across localities. The 4th dimension is spatial, determinant in isolated localities/regions in rural areas with durable population decline and loss of resources.

As far as delivery of cohesion and rural policies is concerned, the comparative analysis was focusing on institutional processes influencing the implementation of place-based actions. D 4.2 concluded that as an overall feature of contemporary governance structures in EU member states, a plethora of state and non-state actors are present in the policy-fields and engaged in policy processes to varying degrees. Most important institutional processes were identified as follows: (1) austerity-driven withdrawal of the state from supporting decentralised service provision and labour market processes was perceived in most of the Case Study countries (HU, EL, ES, FR, RO, NL, UK, SE). The significant welfare retrenchment has been accompanied by (2) down-loading responsibilities from the state to the local level (NL, UK, SE, RO) and/or outsourcing services or policy coordination to non-state actors, such as NGOs, charity organizations, public/private companies (UK, HU, DE, RO) without appropriate quality control. Finally, a varying temporality of (3) fiscal centralization and/or disciplining of the poor were also identified in a number of countries (HU, RO, EL, UK, ES, NL, DE)."

Katalin Kovacs, Centre for Economic and Regional Studies,
Hungarian Academy of Sciences (personal communication, January 31, 2020)

The chosen methodological approach opened-up also avenues for developing empirically informed generic typologies that emerged from the case studies, but which are not necessarily solely pre-structured by the given territorial, political and institutional contexts in which they are embedded. For instance, in Schmitt (2020: 19) it is argued:

"Certainly the chosen 'analytical categories' and 'guiding questions' in the case study manual (cf. Weck et al. 2018) moved the empirical research in this or that direction. On the other hand, the 22 case studies as such [which were selected for the transversal analysis on which the typologies are based upon] represent a wide scope of different territorial, institutional and political contexts. Also, the actions as such differed enormously in their characteristics, which means that they were different in terms of objectives, sectoral affiliations, time-lines, funding schemes and so on (cf. Weck et al. 2020). Therefore, the emerging types can indeed be interpreted as rather generic as they represent a wide array of different approaches, institutional settings and pre-conditions as well as capacities on the side of the involved actors."

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8. Annex: Feedback Rounds

With the aim to continuously learn from experiences, it was regularly asked for the feedback of the case study teams on the empirical work process (see Chapter 5.2). All in all, four feedback rounds were organised. The following figures show results from the fourth and last feedback round on case study research (May 2019).

How successful was your overall case study research phase?
32 responses
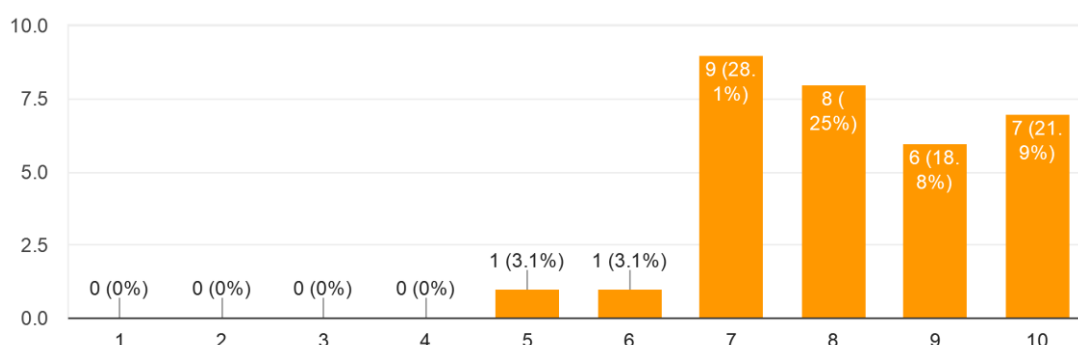
Figure 4: Example 1 from the results of the feedback round on the overall case study research phase [1 = very unsuccessful; 10 = very successful]. Source: own figure, based on data provided by case study teams for 32 out of 33 cases.

Detailed comments

What went well	What did not go well

o Manual was helpful to focus and cover all WP (2)
o Multidimensional analysis of spatial justice (1)
o Empirical phase/ field work/ interviews (15)
o Stakeholder interaction (10)
o Analysis (3)
o Writing the report (4)
o Timing (2)
o Everything (3)
	o Using the Manual/ addressing all aspects/ avoiding repetition (3)
	o Connecting dimensions 1&2 to 3-5 (3)
	o Writing (1)
	o Stakeholder interaction
	   o Not able to grasp viewpoints of local residents (1)
	   o Access to (higher-level) stakeholders/ external views to the action (3)
	   o Stakeholder workshops/ focus groups (2)
	o Timing (5)
	o Distance to case study (1)
	o Special conditions for individual partners
	   o Local elections (1)
	   o Official approval to conduct research through town hall (1)
	o Nothing (5)

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How easy or difficult did you perceive the implementation of the Manual?
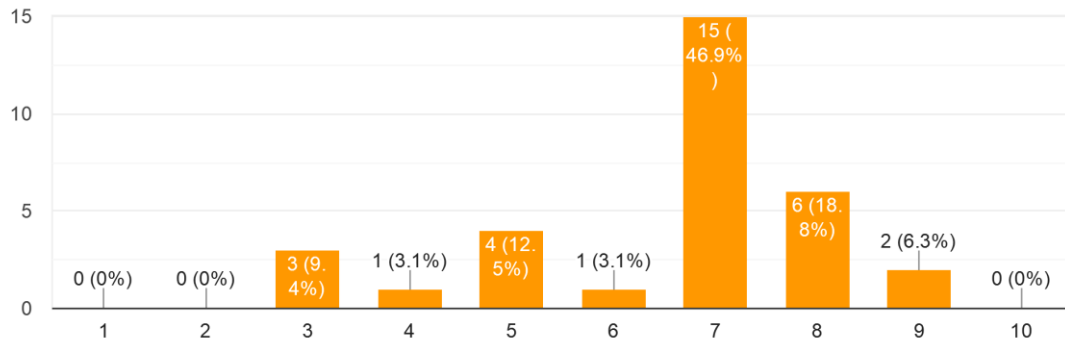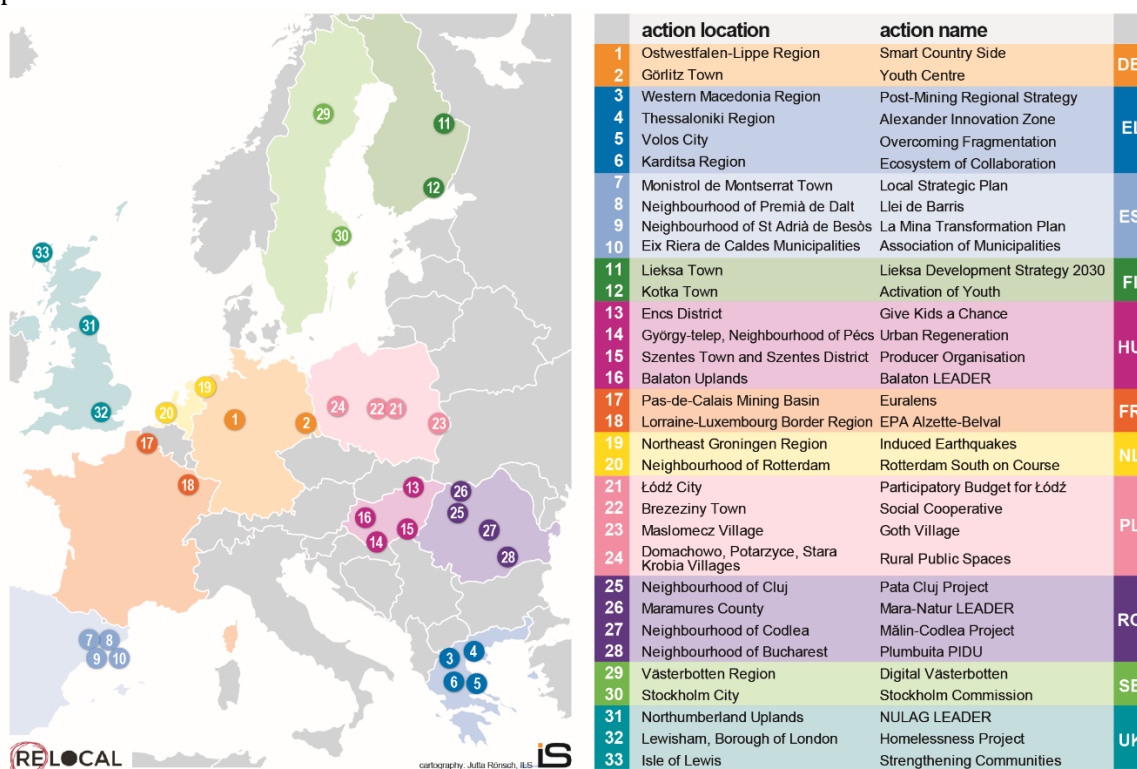
32 responses

Figure 5: Example2 from the results of the feedback round on the overall case study research phase [1 = very difficult to apply; 10 = very easy to apply]. Source: own figure, based on data provided by case study teams for 32 out of 33 cases.

The RELOCAL Project

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

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

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

	action location	action name	
1	Ostwestfalen-Lippe Region	Smart Country Side	DE
2	Görlitz Town	Youth Centre	
3	Western Macedonia Region	Post-Mining Regional Strategy	EL
4	Thessaloniki Region	Alexander Innovation Zone	
5	Volos City	Overcoming Fragmentation	
6	Karditsa Region	Ecosystem of Collaboration	
7	Monistrol de Montserrat Town	Local Strategic Plan	ES
8	Neighbourhood of Premià de Dalt	Llei de Barris	
9	Neighbourhood of St Adrià de Besòs	La Mina Transformation Plan	
10	Eix Riera de Caldes Municipalities	Association of Municipalities	
11	Lieksa Town	Lieksa Development Strategy 2030	FI
12	Kotka Town	Activation of Youth	
13	Encs District	Give Kids a Chance	HU
14	György-telep, Neighbourhood of Pécs	Urban Regeneration	
15	Szentes Town and Szentes District	Producer Organisation	
16	Balaton Uplands	Balaton LEADER	
17	Pas-de-Calais Mining Basin	Euralens	FR
18	Lorraine-Luxembourg Border Region	EPA Alzette-Belval	
19	Northeast Groningen Region	Induced Earthquakes	NL
20	Neighbourhood of Rotterdam	Rotterdam South on Course	
21	Łódź City	Participatory Budget for Łódź	PL
22	Brezeziny Town	Social Cooperative	
23	Maslomecz Village	Goth Village	
24	Domachowo, Potarzyce, Stara Krobia Villages	Rural Public Spaces	
25	Neighbourhood of Cluj	Pata Cluj Project	RO
26	Maramures County	Mara-Natur LEADER	
27	Neighbourhood of Codlea	Mălin-Codlea Project	
28	Neighbourhood of Bucharest	Plumbuita PIDU	
29	Västerbotten Region	Digital Västerbotten	SE
30	Stockholm City	Stockholm Commission	
31	Northumberland Uplands	NULAG LEADER	UK
32	Lewisham, Borough of London	Homelessness Project	
33	Isle of Lewis	Strengthening Communities	

The RELOCAL project runs from October 2016 until September 2020.

Read more at https://relocal.eu

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