



Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development



## D 6.2 National Report Poland

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## Abbreviations

EFRD	European Fund for Regional Development
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
ROP	Regional Operational Programme

## Executive Summary

All four investigated Polish cases represent differentiated spatial contexts: of rural areas, small city, and localities in big city. Hence, differentiated issues and problems of social and spatial (in)justice were identified. This resulted in various responding actions. Mentioned actions aim at reducing both social deprivation and exclusion as well as spatial disproportions. Moreover, investigated actions develop services stimulating entrepreneurship among local communities, and breaking social barriers, stereotypes in society. All Polish cases need to be framed in the context of political, economic, social, and cultural shift from totalitarian system to democratic one.

Chapter 1 introduces briefly problems of social and territorial changes of local systems framed by social sciences. All generally described problems (disadvantages, deprivations, marginalization, exclusion, and inequalities) are addressed by selected Polish RELOCAL cases. Thus, general description of both case studies and investigated actions are presented in this section.

National understanding of notion of spatial justice is widely discussed in Chapter 2. It is preceded by the discussion on territorial changes in Poland, related to the shift from socialist hierarchical system for modernization towards postmodernist system. The most significant policies influencing spatial justice in Polish context are presented. Then, all investigated cases are described in details: Participatory Budget in Łódź (PL1), Social Cooperative in Brzeziny (PL2), Goth Village in Masłomęcz (PL3), and Rural Public Spaces in Domachowo (PL4).

Chapter 3 is devoted to comparative and transversal analysis of all four investigated Polish RELOCAL cases. All substantial findings of cases are presented and discussed. Relevance and impact of the studied cases on the locality need to be emphasized. All selected cases significantly affected social and spatial changes, and became an important trigger for local development of investigated places.

## 1. Introduction

Problems of social and territorial changes of local systems are recognized as a recent focus of social sciences. Socio-economic development of aforementioned local systems is determined significantly by social and cultural context of the countries where they are located. In Poland, and other countries of Central Eastern Europe, economic transition started in late 1980s and was identified as a focal development period. Political, economic, social, and cultural shift from totalitarian system to democratic one made local systems open for external impacts, including global flows of information, knowledge, capital and material goods. Moreover, accession of Poland to EU in 2004 (including absorption of EU funds resulting in modernization of technology and infrastructure, and sustainable economic and social development) has also brought significant impact on discussed changes. During last ten years, at every governance level, general increase of awareness about processes and mechanisms of spatial changes is noted. Thus, local and regional context of territorial development is emphasized. Increase of the role of self-government is a political consequence of mentioned phenomenon.

Regarding goals of RELOCAL project, four cases from Poland have been chosen and investigated:

- Participatory Budget in Łódź (PL1),
- Social Cooperative in Brzeziny (PL2),
- Goth Village in Masłomęcz (PL3),
- Rural Public Spaces in Domachowo (PL4).

Selection of cases was justified by the discussion on Polish localities whose stakeholders are facing with spatial injustice, and introducing strategies and long-term place-based or community-based actions for better living conditions and sustainable development. Policy-driven, and collective actions were considered as both top-down, and bottom-up approaches were aimed by RELOCAL project. Moreover, selection decision was influenced by the fact, whether the cases were supported by European funds. Thus, cases and actions granted in part or completely from the European funds were preferred.

Selection of case PL1 – Participatory Budget in Łódź was justified by character of the action. Participatory Budget in Łódź was enabled by local authorities, but implemented and developed in cooperation with local activists, and NGOs. Moreover, investigated action directly supports city development strategy. Action is aimed to be a response on local needs (in the scale of local neighbourhoods). Particular projects might reduce inequalities between neighbourhoods at local scale but as the entire city of Łódź develops through these projects, its position among other regional centres gets better.

Social Cooperative in Brzeziny was set as a case PL2. This case selection was argued by the character of the actions developed by selected organisation. Social Cooperative focuses on people affected by social exclusion. Social reintegration of mentioned persons is the main goal of investigated organisation, and is applied through caring for the urban space, and caring out the basic municipal duties. It must be emphasized that Social Cooperative in Brzeziny started as a project granted mainly by Operational Programme Human Capital (implementation of the European Social Fund in Poland). The action aims mainly at reducing local inequalities between neighbourhoods inside the town of Brzeziny; but also, the action might reduce town's distance compared to other settlement units at the regional level.

The Goth Village in Masłomęcz was selected as a case PL3. Running thematic village is a main action which constitute case selection. The action is an example of place-based

strategy for local development which engages the whole community in social, educational, and economic context. The action was financially supported by local and regional authorities, European and Swiss funds. Action(s) undertaken in the case study area, which is a part of a broad macro-region of Eastern Poland aim at reducing inequalities between different scales, in particular: between regions at the national level and between states at the European level.

Selection of last Polish case PL4 – Rural Public Spaces in Domachowo – was justified as the action was developed under the nation-wide program of Rural Renewal, financed from the EU funds. The action aims at reducing the distance between villages, by increasing their attractiveness (for residents and tourists), and limitation of local conflicts.



## 2. The Case Studies in a National Context

Territorial changes in Poland are related to the shift from socialist hierarchical system for modernization towards postmodernist system, still under development, oriented on network relationship. In the field of research and policy practice, the main consequence of abovementioned processes is focus on following notions: identity (local), subjectivity and elitism as well as autonomy and uniqueness. Moreover, discussed processes are resulting in various fluctuations and tensions, and in consequence, affecting vision and policy of spatial development in Poland. Mentioned tensions constitute opposition between two concepts: sustainable spatial development, and spatially polarized development. Regarding first concept, spatial development is oriented on local and regional scale, and support of less developed localities and region by central government. The focus of the second concept is on substantially developed centres (metropolises mainly), and launching to the system of global flows.

Last years of observations of local scale phenomena, in the context of mechanisms and processes of social and spatial justice mainly, bring to the conclusions of both general and detailed level. Firstly, at general level, various dimensions of identified spatial (in)equalities should be emphasized. This resulted in differentiated understanding of the notion and nature of spatial justice. Axiological aspects of social and economic development made researchers consider situation of built environment regarding social justice (Chojnicki, 2010). Dialectical and personalist (humanistic) concepts, models, and theories were developed in Poland since the beginning of 1980s as the response to the brand-new research problems and ineffectiveness of functionalist concepts, models, and theories in parallel. Mentioned problems resulted from increase of social consciousness, and from social participation in spatial planning (Maik, 1992).

### 2.1 Unpacking Spatial Justice in a National Context

The term “spatial justice” (“*sprawiedliwość przestrzenna*”) is not recognized in Poland. It was evidenced merely in few academic papers, and is not present in political discourse. However, it was noticed in Polish context that idea of spatial justice should be confronted with the policy of territorial cohesion (“*spójność terytorialna*”) and regional development (“*rozwój regionalny*”), mainly regarding to the problems of EU funds absorption (Okrasa, 2015).

When carrying out case studies in RELOCAL project, regarding to mentioned problem of not using the term “spatial justice”, the main focus in the initial phase of each case in Poland was to introduce and discuss the idea of spatial justice to investigated respondents. All respondents investigated through Polish cases intuitively found spatial justice in close association with social justice. The reason of mentioned understanding was induced from associated perception of social and spatial inequalities. Social justice was defined as a lack of social inequalities, and similarly spatial justice was understood as reducing spatial inequalities. Respondents recognized that changes of people might be relevant to the changes of places.

Moreover, spatial justice was recognized through the characteristic of the locality or place where spatial justice occurred. This locality was defined as a place of people happy about their place of living (users-friendly place, all-accessible), enjoying landscape (place with equal chances to become aesthetic), and interested in history, focused on positive, rather than negative aspects of a place. It is worth to be mentioned that people define spatial justice in a place by considering the place in a spatial context, by comparing to neighbouring spaces, and subjectively perceived further surrounding, and by applying evolutionary approach as

places are changing across the time. Finally, spatial justice was found as related with such postulates as a cooperation, social activity, dialogue, and social comprehension.

## 2.2 Capturing Policies Promoting Spatial Justice in a National Context

Regional development is most generic and important policy addressing issues of spatial justice in Poland at both national and regional level should be emphasized. As Churski (2008) argued, at the beginning of 1990s, transition of Polish economy resulted in lack of regional policy, and significant increase of spatial inequalities, as a liberal approach determined was leading at national level. After administration reform in 1999 process of decentralization started in Poland (Golinowska, 2006). EU eastern enlargement in 2004 substantially increased regional context in Polish economic and social policy for development. What is interesting, in the years 2004–2013, Ministry of Regional Development operated as a ministerial department within the structure of Polish government. The main responsibility of mentioned office was to coordinate policies at local, regional, and central level, and to support absorption of EU funds with respect to the territorial cohesion approach.

Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) are the main tool addressing regional development in Poland. Mentioned programmes include regional scale projects and actions leveraging regional strengths. Programmes are granted mainly by the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRD), the European Social Fund (ESF), and state funds. It is worth to be mentioned that approximately one fourth of European financial support for Poland was allocated to ROPs. This tool is widely recognized by politicians and academicians. It is underlined, that mainly rural areas were benefited by mentioned ROPs in Poland during EU programming period 2007-2013 (Biczkowski, 2016). Moreover, Polish ROPs accepted for 2014-2020 programming period are focused on rural areas as well. It is only partially confirmed that ROPs in Poland followed the idea of spatial justice in general. Regions characterized by social and economic underdevelopment received relatively more support than most developed areas. However, this is confirmed only when investigating absorption of EU funds per capita. Analysis of nominal values of EU funds absorption reveal that developed regions were preferred. Thus, ROPs might be criticized as a form of EU and state intervention which increases regional and local disparities in social and economic development (Biczkowski, 2016; Wójcik et al. 2018). As Wójcik (2010) noticed, especially in rural areas overwhelming scale of EU funds significantly influences on local social structures.

The Concept of Spatial Development of the Country 2030 (M.P. 2012 poz. 252, 2012) should be recognized as a crucial strategy constituting spatial planning policy in Poland at national level, and regulating at regional ones. The strategy addresses any spatial concepts of development in Poland, including those related to spatial justice. Improving territorial cohesion and balancing development in spatial context is one of strategic aims of spatial planning policy defined in investigated policy document. The main focus is on promoting functional integration, balancing spatial distribution of development resources (both endogenous and exogenous), and on multifunctional development of rural areas. The main aim of mentioned policy document is to combine social and economic goals with the strategy of spatial planning, and to make spatial planning strategies on EU, national, regional, and local level coherent. It is worth to be mentioned that the document addresses concept of social justice, related to sustainable development. In the strategic document, underdeveloped regions were identified: Eastern Poland, Central Pomerania, and Polish-German borderland. Bański (2007) argued that such strategy as investigated Concept of Spatial Development of the Country 2030 need to balance contrary ideas of spatial justice, and spatial effectiveness. He indicated that mentioned balance might be achieved through spatial accessibility.

In mentioned strategic document Concept of Spatial Development of the Country 2030 (M.P. 2012 poz. 252, 2012), Eastern Poland was identified as underdeveloped relating to other Polish territories. Thus, EU programme called Operational Programme of Eastern Poland (Ministerstwo Inwestycji i Rozwoju, 2018) should be considered as one of Polish national policies substantially related to the concept of spatial justice. European integrated territorial approach for territorial cohesion was applied in the programme. Thus, main territorial focus of the programme was on regional administrative centres and surrounding functional areas, other cities, and rural areas. Different strategies for each type of the geographical space were implemented: developing innovativeness of metropolitan economies, developing transport network for increase of transport accessibility of other cities, and introducing and supporting initiatives of cooperation on rural areas, and strengthening of indirect effects of developing administrative centres, and other cities.

Polish government launched Strategy for Responsible Development 2020 (M.P. 2017 poz. 260, 2017) in 2017. Territorial cohesion and social justice are presented jointly as one of three strategic goals for country development. Territories significantly affected by the challenges of development were defined in the document. Interestingly, intra-urban development difficulties were emphasized in the governmental strategy. Moreover, context of both small cities and rural areas was considered as well. It is argued that territorial cohesion is achievable not only through implementation of national or regional policy. Cooperation with local stakeholders of development like local authorities, industry, NGOs, and local elites, including academicians, was diagnosed as a trigger of local and regional development, and territorial cohesion. It is worth to be mentioned, that mentioned Operational Programme of Eastern Poland is indicated as an effective tool for defined policy recommendations in investigated governmental strategy.

Rural Renewal is a last programme to be mentioned in this chapter. The programme was developed as a regional initiative. Then, applied in a national context. It is argued that rural areas lost their agricultural character, both in economic and social context. Rural areas are defined nowadays through their contemporary economic restructuring, and distinctive heritage, both tangible, and intangible (Hruška, Czapiewski and Kovács, 2015). Rural Renewal is focused on following dynamics of contemporary economic, social, and spatial, endogenous and exogenous changes of rural areas with respect to the rural tradition, landscape and heritage (Idziak and Wilczyński, 2013; Tobiasz-Lis and Wójcik 2017). Spatial justice, not formally defined in the programme, should be considered in the context of human activities, in particular places, localities, and with respect to the institutional structures. Hence, places and localities are the carrier of social justice (Wójcik, 2010).

### **2.3 Framing the Cases**

Achieving spatial justice, applying strategies for improving living conditions, and promoting sustainable development were the main objectives of actions considered as case studies in Polish context in RELOCAL project. Mentioned actions resulted from identifiable visions of local stakeholders and had a long-term character, and were defined at the intersection of differentiated forces, including vertical, horizontal, and transversal.

Case	Territorial context	RELOCAL context
<p>Participatory Budget in Łódź (PL1)</p>	<p>Łódź represents an exceptionally interesting case of transforming urban region. From the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century onwards it was possible to note new impulses for social, functional and physiognomic change in the city of Łódź. From being a highly-industrialised centre it has been evolving in the direction of a city providing services, up to and including those typical of the metropolitan level. Today's Łódź is seeking a new identity, albeit one that is also based clearly around its cultural past.</p>	<p>The opening-up of the city to the influences exerted by globalisation and modernisation are resulting in far-reaching change in its social and material space. Old inequalities pre-sent in the urban space are being overlain by new ones induced by either the inclusion or exclusion of particular social groups, inter alia in respect of flows taking place at European and even global level. This all leaves Łódź as a fascinating subject of academic study as it is fascinating in its own right as a city, with all its social and spatial unevenness existing on varying scales and involving both areas in close proximity to one another (i.e. differences in the advancements of modernisation and revitalisation efforts in regard to individual buildings, yards and streets) and the city as a whole (with transformations taking place in given city districts).</p>

Case	Territorial context	RELOCAL context
<p>Social Cooperative in Brzeziny (PL2)</p>	<p>It is an example of a broadly defined process of revitalisation of local resources – combining technical activities (renovation, modernization and revalorisation) with social and economic activities – revitalization meets the social economy.</p> <p>The town of Brzeziny was the first in Poland to decide to involve the social cooperative in the process of revitalization as a subject of activities and not their final effect, thanks to which it became a performer and stakeholder of socio-spatial changes of the area.</p>	<p>The impact of the “Communal Services” social cooperative in the town of Brzeziny might be analysed and interpreted at three levels - the micro level - directly addressing employees and inhabitants of social housing resources as vulnerable social groups, the meso level - referring to the local community, and macro level - referring to the level of the entire system of implementation of the action in a trans-local context of the town of Brzeziny (in this case related to broadly defined revitalization). It is an example of a wide insight into revitalisation process engaging people who usually are its recipients to take an active part in its implementation through communal services offered by social cooperative.</p>
<p>Goth Village in Masłomęcz (PL3)</p>	<p>Rural areas around Hrubieszów are a very interesting case due to their complicated post-war history, contemporary socio-economic problems and strategies implemented to overcome them.</p> <p>The case of the village of Masłomęcz presents a good example of practices applied in the process of positive changes as a result of mobilisation and coordination of own resources and energy, creativity and hard work of people, supported by various external incentives.</p>	<p>From the perspective of the RELOCAL project, it has to be underlined that the uniqueness of this particular action consists in achieving exceptional effects as a result of strengthening relationships between people and space;</p> <p>The identification and use of specific resources (the history of the area) was of key importance, combined with important external incentives in the form of first process creators (experts) and then possibilities of financing the entire initiative (e.g. EU funds).</p>

Case	Territorial context	RELOCAL context
Rural Public Spaces in Domachowo (PL4)	<p>Possibility to adapt activities aimed at strengthening the attractiveness of rural settlements, carried out on the example of the village of Domachowo, might allow the bottom-up initiatives of residents to highlight valuable elements of the rural landscape and to develop the public space in a friendly and attractive way.</p> <p>Presented action has a chance to be a model example of cooperation of three decision-making groups: residents, local authorities and professionals (architects, designers) on positive changes (in terms of good practices in shaping public spaces) in rural areas.</p>	<p>Rural-urban commune of Krobia (on the example of villages: Domachowo, Potarzyce, Stara Krobia – located in the cultural Biskupizna microregion) tries to create a pattern of activities to shape functional, sociable, accessible and well managed, as perceived by residents, public spaces in rural settlements which would rise their attractiveness.</p> <p>The aim of these activities is to improve living conditions and to promote rural areas, which should attract tourism. Yet, at the same time, the concern of the number of residents (representing various social interest groups) over the common, public space, their cooperation in common activities, is the expression of a high level of their awareness and responsibility for their closest surroundings, presenting in a broader perspective their changes for views on spatial justice in a local scale.</p>

**Table 1:** Polish cases in territorial and RELOCAL contexts  
Source: authors own elaboration.

The case PL1 – Participatory Budget in Łódź promotes place-based development as it enables projects suggested by inhabitants through voting procedure. Thus, place-based postulates meet ideas of local democracy. At every level of action (planning, promoting, selecting, and delivering of local projects), Participatory Budget in Łódź ties of local neighbourhoods, and increase people’s place-identities. The people became responsible for identifying places characterized by social injustice. Thus, even if particular project is not accepted through the voting regarding investigated project, this will be well explained suggestion about social inequalities, and the spatial context of inequalities is underlined. Participatory Budget in Łódź was enabled by local authorities, but implemented and developed by cooperation with local activists, and NGOs. The action confirms that spatial justice (although formally unnamed) reveal as one of the key objectives of urban policy in Łódź.

Social Cooperative in Brzeziny – case PL2 – develops action for social and occupational reintegration of inhabitants affected by social exclusion. The investigated reintegration is substantially place-based as it is organized in the place, through the place, and for the place. The city of Brzeziny, where the action takes place, is an area of concentration of social and economic challenges resulted from evolution of functional area of the regional capital city – Łódź. Social Cooperative is a long-term strategy for decreasing issues of social exclusion, reducing mentioned problem directly (by employing excluded persons) and indirectly (by sharing profit). Social Cooperative in Brzeziny started as a project granted mainly by Operational Programme Human Capital (implementation of the European Social Fund in Poland).

The Goth Village in Masłomęcz – selected as a case PL3 – is located in the region of Eastern Poland, considered in national policies as one of the most challenging regions in Poland (M.P. 2012 poz. 252, 2012; M.P. 2017 poz. 260, 2017). This particular case was chosen as the example of place-based strategy for local development and spatial justice. Mentioned place-based strategy included the idea of thematic village, which led to empowering local community, redefining local identity and strong place attachment as well as multifunctional development. The initiative was supported by local and regional stakeholders, including academicians, authorities, representatives of Regional Museum, and granted by European and Swiss funds.

Selection of last Polish case PL4 – Rural Public Spaces in Domachowo – was justified as the action was developed under the nation-wide program of Rural Renewal, financed from the EU funds. The implementation of the program Rural Renewal in Domachowo consisted in a variety of practical actions associated with the modernisation and improvement of public space within the rural areas. Spatial, economic, and social changes were triggered by the action, e.g. improvement of the quality of life of inhabitants, increase of their economic independence, and increase of their self-responsibility, and responsibility for the future generations. Both the Goth Village Association in Masłomęcz, and Rural Public Spaces in Domachowo were cases focused on the idea of multifunctional rural development. However, completely different regions, traditions, social and economic challenges, cultures, and history were represented by considered cases.

### 3. The Studied Cases in a Comparative Perspective

#### 3.1 Characterising the Cases

The action Participatory Budget in Łódź (case PL1) started in 2012. The budget was introduced in 2013. Four editions (2014-2017) were completed till the moment of the RELOCAL project research. The Participatory Budget in Łódź is implemented every year as a part of the local budget of the city of Łódź, thus the action is relatively mature. It is continuously monitored and changed (improved) after experiences of each edition. The participatory budget follows up on previous initiative (the project “The Voice of In-habitants Matters”) that was undertaken in 4 (out of 36) housing estate units in 2012. The idea of Participatory Budget in Łódź was prepared and implemented by local self-government who leads the action today, however, the operationalization of particular activities might involve NGOs, neighbourhoods, local activists, and individuals. All these stakeholders are involved in the action, in its initial phase especially, when submitting project proposals. Participatory budget in Łódź is one of the tools implementing the Development Strategy of Łódź 2020+ within locally driven projects. This is bottom-up, place-based decision-making and development action through small-scale, local projects. The action is focused on building human capital, local awareness and spatial change.

Social Cooperative in Brzeziny – case PL2 – started its activity in 2010. At the beginning, it was a social cooperative of five unemployed persons, financially supported by the subsidy from the Labour Fund and “Ja-Ty-My” Association from Łódź. At that time the cooperative provided primarily the municipal services, linked with maintenance of orderliness and cleanliness in the town of Brzeziny, and since 2013 – waste management. In 2012 the cooperative was transformed into the social cooperative of legal persons: the municipality of Brzeziny, and the municipality of Rogów. In the end of 2013, the project entitled “Conducting of the innovative model of a social cooperative implementing public services in public and social partnership” started. The basis of the project was to employ five people to provide competent staff with experience of groups covered by the operation of a social cooperative. In addition, it was necessary to provide the necessary infrastructure and organizational solutions for the implementation of tasks entrusted to the target group. The project was financed from EU funds under the Operational Program Human Capital. The action is a model of a social cooperative that revitalizes the local commune’s resources. It assumes that people at risk of social exclusion (long-term unemployed) will be employed to provide public services in a public-private partnership.

The Goth Village in Masłomęcz – case PL3 – has a long history. In 1977 archaeologists from the Lublin University of Maria Curie-Skłodowska started excavations in Hrubieszów Valley. Between 1977 and 2002, they discovered a complex of Goth settlements and cemeteries. The inhabitants of Masłomęcz village slowly got used to the presence of archaeologists every summer. Their work became an element of the annual cycle of life of the community. After a couple of years, every excavation season ended with a collective feast of the archaeologists and the local community. This tradition is being continued, and the Archaeological Feast is nowadays the most important regular event, organised in Masłomęcz by the Goth Village Association. The Goth Village significantly attracts tourists and visitors (5-6 thousand people annually), and influences multifunctional development of the Masłomęcz village. The open-air museum became the central place of the village. The Goth Village Association was formally established in 2010, although the local community started to be involved in the reconstruction and promotion activities already in 2004. Between 2007 and 2009 a few projects focused on historical education of the inhabitants (including developing skills in arts and crafts typical for ancient Goths) were realised. In 2019, with the support of the



Regional Museum in Hrubieszów, “The Goth Squad” was established. Nowadays it gathers approximately 30 inhabitants of Masłomęcz village.

Rural Public Spaces in Domachowo – case PL4 – is the action constituted by the shaping of the public space of three, in fact, villages: Domachowo, Stara Krobia, and Potarzyca. However, Domachowo is the main focus of RELOCAL project. Following projects were implemented in the village. “The villages of Wielkopolska are getting beautiful. Domachowo – a village with tradition” started in 2013. The objective of the project was to improve the tourist attractiveness of the village, as a part of ethnographic, historic, and tourist region of Biskupizna. It is worth to be mentioned, that the infrastructure developed by the project is to be used by tourist, and inhabitants as well. The project improved the aesthetics of the village and increased its tourist attractiveness, contributing also to the promotion of the culture of Biskupizna. The objective of the project “The villages of Wielkopolska are getting beautiful. Domachowo – the capital of Biskupizna. Whirling in the dance, tasting the tradition” was to increase the quality of the public spaces in the village of Domachowo. The street furniture was introduced: benches, waste baskets, roofed picnic tables, and bicycle stands. The quality of green areas was improved in the village. “Process of strengthening of village attractiveness through shaping of the public space – as the example of the initiative of inhabitants in the domain of village development” was the next project implemented in Domachowo village, related to the action. The program was initiated in 2016 by the Local Action Group “Hospitable Wielkopolska”. The last project investigated in the case PL4 is called “Our village is our common matter. I love Biskupizna... not since today!”. The purpose of the project launched in 2016 was to organise the Festival of Tradition and Folklore, promoting the culture and heritage of Biskupizna region. The action is focused on shaping good public spaces of selected villages, to receive model solutions adaptable in other villages. In this activity, the emphasis is put on: searching for and strengthening the attractiveness of rural settlements, making local communities aware of space aesthetics, feeling responsible for the common space and equipping them with appropriate knowledge and tools to achieve this goal.

### **3.2 Findings Analytical Dimensions 1-5**

#### **Analytical Dimension 1: Perceptions of spatial (in)justice**

The notion of spatial justice was perceived in investigated Polish cases close to the notion of social justice. The notion of spatial justice can be also understood quite literally as “cleaning” public spaces, common for the inhabitants, by inclusive of the socially excluded persons by offering them some occupation. However, other aesthetic aspects of public spaces were noticed in Polish cases as well. Spatial justice is perceived by personal experiences, feelings, and comparing places to neighbouring spaces, further surrounding, rural-urban context (spatial reference), and situation of the places in the past (temporal reference). Much attention was also paid to internal disproportions within the localities. Spatial justice is perceived as needed, important and amplifying the local social activity, cooperation of the inhabitants, and learning of the dialogue.

#### **Analytical Dimension 2: Tools and policies for development**

The notion of spatial justice in the strategic documents at local level is a significant issue diagnosed during case studies. The main limitation of local strategies consists in the lack of description of the following contexts in all of the investigated strategies: 1) detailed planning methodology, and 2) implementation, including political, financial and social impacts. Regarding the limitation mentioned, the problem of transparency of strategic policy

documents as well as transparency of municipal actions and of related expenditures should be underlined (Napierała, 2017). The need for spatial separation of the conflicting functions, for ensuring (also in spatial terms) of an equal access to the municipal and social infrastructure, and for revitalising the degraded space is emphasized in strategic documents at local level. Moreover, unjust spaces are characterized by high, structural unemployment. However, mentioned strategic documents usually do not contain any spatial analyses; localities are treated as points, not places. It needs to be underlined that all investigated Polish cases are nowadays related to bottom-up actions, fully or partially supported and carried out by local authorities.

### **Analytical Dimension 3: Coordination and implementation of the Action**

Analysis of Polish cases introduces two principles of effective removing spatial injustice: subsidiarity (local problems should be solved by local communities, organizations and enterprises with the support guaranteed by municipal institutions), and concentration of activities (in specific spaces should be diagnosed with key problems for them, which should be solved by municipal institutions). Thus, space reveals as a crucial context of local development. Even in localities, some inhabitants are able to identify particular places attached by social injustice, or places where positive effects and traces might be found. Moreover, the notion of leadership should be addresses to the idea of spatial justice. Leaders were the first factor to form a group and to impart adequate dynamics of implementing new ideas. Then institutions became important to stimulate and integrate visions within social activity. Formalisation of the institutions, imparting them with a legal and organisational dimension, led in consequence to development of an actual development strategy, gradual creation of physical forms for carrying out ideas (infrastructure) and reproduction of activity.

It was found that solving problem of social inequalities in particular localities (case PL3) still rely on the know-how and decision-making capacity of external leaders. However, this situation is not perceived negatively by the locals involved in the action, as they are implementing new ideas and taking over most of the dialogue with other civil and public actors. On the other hand, the bottom-up approach is the primary feature of rural renewal (case PL4), and hence the involvement of the village leaders is of key importance. This enables positive changes in rural life, and brings in the conviction that a change to the better in the quality of public space is possible. It also indicates that people are important, along with all that is essential for their life in the countryside. That is why forwarding of the small, but own initiatives serve the entire local community (Tobiasz-Lis and Jeziorska-Biel 2017, Wójcik 2017, Wójcik et al. 2017).

### **Analytical Dimension 4: Autonomy, participation and engagement**

Autonomy, participation and engagement were found as triggers of success of all actions introducing spatial justice, or facing with spatial injustice issues. It should be emphasized that both creating social ties within the community as well as with external actors and leaders are crucial for success of any considered action. Moreover, first successful project of the action usually triggers creation many other initiatives. This was recognized as “cascade effect”. Finally, bringing together areas, groups of inhabitants, and economic sectors that had previously been disconnected reveals as crucial for success of every case considered in Polish context. The role of local activists (both external and internal) is not only initiating, but also stimulating and motivating inhabitants regarding various undertakings. However, with no involvement of the inhabitants, any action leads to frustration of leaders. It needs to be underlined that all investigated Polish cases are related to bottom-up initiatives.

## **Analytical Dimension 5: Place-based knowledge and adaptability**

Finally, expression and mobilisation of place-based knowledge need to be considered in Polish context. In the case of Participatory Budget in Łódź (PL1), inhabitants' initiatives are supported by the knowledge of the employees of the City of Łódź Office, who, as part of their duties, have assistance in the preparation of tasks' calculations to be carried out in the future within the participatory budget. It was confirmed also in case PL2 that adequate human resources are the most important element in the success of local initiatives facing with spatial injustice issues. The lack of professional staff, led by the local leader, contributes to the failure of any considered action. The case PL3 shows that collecting place-based knowledge is a process of adapting and developing activities of inhabitants. This enables development of outstanding association of inhabitants in the locality and the surrounding region, due to its professional organisation and methodological strength. Shift from rather impulsive projects to a management form is requested. It is worth to be mentioned, that heritage, culture and identity might be significant part of place-based knowledge. Polish research identified actions using existing identity (PL4), and using reintroduced heritage and culture (PL3).

### **3.3 Findings Synthesising Dimensions A-C**

#### **Synthesising Dimension A: Assessment of promoters and inhibitors**

The “promoters” – factors which influence positively investigated Polish cases –have socio-institutional character. They are, beyond doubt, the most crucial elements of building up the social capital of the localities. In addition, one can observe in investigated cases the conversion of the human capital into the social capital. High level of skills and competences of the local leaders finds its reflection in the increase of social trust, of intensified networks of relations, as well as sharing of common norms and values. Active, socially approved local leaders, with competences and knowledge, were recognized as the most important element in the success of Polish local initiatives. Mentioned local leaders usually enable development of social capital, as they attract professional staff in local and regional institutions, and successfully promote local initiatives. Moreover, local identity, cultural roots creates local capability of delivering the foundations for the appearance of mutual trust and cooperation – the cornerstones of any society. Finally, cooperation between people responsible for all investigated actions and local authorities were recognized as last but not least promotor of investigated initiatives (social cooperative, development of public spaces, participatory budgeting, or thematization), and of introducing spatial justice in Poland. Interestingly, mentioned collaboration might focus on active search for the sources of financing of the activities undertaken. On the other hand, issues of education were found as the main inhibitor of spatial justice, e.g. missing regional education results in the low level of involvement of the youth.

#### **Synthesising Dimension B: Competences and capacities of stakeholders**

It is worth to be mentioned that roles, activities and initiatives of self-governments identified by Polish case studies should be recognized in more general context as a significant achievement of economic transition. Contribution of local democracy and self-governance to social development is indisputable. Hence, competences and capacities of stakeholders of local initiatives for spatial justice need to be classified as competences and capacities of local leaders, and local authorities as well. Important characteristic of local leaders recognized as crucial promotor of spatial justice is ability to influence on youth. It was diagnosed in investigated cases, that the activity of the young is successfully induced by the local leaders, while local authorities seem to be helpless.

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

Socially unjust space is characterized by relatively lower quality of life conditioned by social and natural factors, problems of municipal resource management, lack of social cohesion, relatively lower quality of educational, cultural and health infrastructure and services (Wójcik et al. 2018). This results in the understanding of both procedural and distributive context of spatial justice. Procedural justice is expressed through the implementation of the procedures, aiming at preferential assistance to the marginalised groups, socially excluded, or focusing on neglected public spaces. The spatial justice is enabled due to the in-house procedure, with realisation of tasks without tenders giving higher chances for caring about the spaces and places that require improvement. Institutional support is crucial for the interests of vulnerable people, seeking to involve them in local development as they feel that they belong to the place. The distributive justice is seen in the equalisation of chances of access to the resources for persons, who in a different situation would not get a similar chance. Thus, strengthening social and territorial bonds within the local community and providing possibilities to developing individual economic and social activities need to be underlined.

It was confirmed, that procedural and distributive contexts of investigated cases in Poland allowed to diagnose few types of actions successfully applied and potentially useful for achieving spatial justice goals: social cooperatives, rural renewal, thematization of rural spaces, and participatory budgeting. Social cooperatives are expected to be developed and supported as they may provide jobs to people without work, who frequently receive unemployment benefits. Interestingly, social cooperatives enter the new, specific domains of general-purpose services, which have been previously rarely taken up by the commercial entities. Thus, social cooperatives do not negatively influence on the economy, and competition in particular. Participatory budgeting aims to strengthen public activity and citizens' responsibility for their neighbourhoods and municipality.

## 4. Conclusions

Relevance and impact of the studied cases on the locality need to be emphasized. All selected cases significantly affected social and spatial changes, and enabled development of investigated places. It is worth to be mentioned, that the case of a large city (PL1) revealed more negatively perceived impacts comparing to rural cases (PL3, or PL4) or case of a small city (PL2). Impact of local leaders is much more influencing in small communities. Strategy for Responsible Development 2020 (M.P. 2017 poz. 260, 2017) launched in 2017 focuses on supporting local (rather than regional or national) actions contributing to mitigating territorial disparities. Thus, every conceptual or procedural innovation introduced on local level reveal as significant from the perspective of Polish notion of spatial justice.

In the context of Polish RELOCAL case studies, most substantial research dilemma addresses the question whether the spatial justice results from homogenization of space, or from existence of differentiated elements of spatial structures and relations between mentioned elements. This justifies consideration of dimensions of spatial justice in the context of social space. Such understanding of research problems consists to the subject concept of the geographical region, which defines region as a real, complex and geographically delimited social subject or element of social reality (Chojnicki, 1999). Thus, three following dimensions of spatial justice should be emphasized:

- Structural dimension – Justice means equal coexistence of characteristics of social development. Spatial justice reveals as equal access to goods and services, especially public ones.
- Functional dimension – Justice refers to relations between social structures. Justice is interpreted regarding categories of occurrence of various, mutual, and functional relations between members of local community and local institutions. Spatial justice means equal ability to social participation and equal access to both formal and informal institutions.
- Social and cultural dimension – Justice is a social agreement defining development goals and vision of future contribution to increase of quality of life, and increase of sense of belonging to the local community and territory. Spatial justice means equal rights for defining the vision of local social development, equal access to public space, and equal access to resources for improving the quality of life.

Abovementioned dimensions of spatial justice are confirmed by results of RELOCAL project case studies, mainly by social practices observed in local spaces. Four types of mentioned practices need to be underlined:

- Inequalities of spatial management connected with differentiated formal status of localities and places. It needs to be underlined that social actions refer to various groups of stakeholders, and in consequence result in different character of public space. Public spaces are the objectives of influence of various programs, projects, and all other actions focused on renewal of social life. Public spaces become real places where processes of social inclusion and integration occur. Influenced by new ideas, public spaces change to become centres of multifunctional development. Hence, disparities between renewed public spaces and neighbourhood occur. There is no integration and inclusion supported with public resources, and no social control.
- Crucial role of leaders for social change, participation and inclusion. Leaders are responsible for initiating, organizing, and managing social development. They create social networks of formal and informal institutions. Moreover, leaders are responsible for intensity and quality of relations between members of action groups. As the leaders continue actions, problem of succession reveals as extremely significant for

actions' continuity and quality. Usually leaders are recruited from people with strong professional or social position.

- Social actions as the result of financial support by public institutions. Creating, maintenance, and development of public spaces and localized social activities is realized based on cooperation with local authorities and self-governmental institutions. It needs to be underlined that roles, activities and initiatives of self-governments in Poland is one of main achievements of economic transition. It must be emphasized that financial grants are important but not the only trigger of social actions. However, during last years abovementioned social actions have been significantly dependent on financial support. Hence, importance of financial (EU mainly) support might be considered as overestimated.
- Creating places for social life of local communities as significant determinant of social integration and inclusion. Many places of local social life concentration, both created and revitalised, became multifunctional spatial structures and hosted local institutions and organization, both formal and informal. On the one hand, mentioned places are perfect location for meetings and events. On the other hand, discussed places are local symbols, and substantial part of imagined space, hardwired into human consciousness. Thus, the significance of knowledge on opportunities for social development is increasing. Sources of mentioned knowledge and people able to use these resources are more and more important. Communication and dissemination of knowledge on development of social actions and creating of places are crucial for social development, integration, and inclusion, as well as for development of social networks.

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## 6. Annexes

### 6.1 List of Indicators

#### Indicators

		CASE 1 Łódź PL71, PL113	CASE 2 Brzeziny PL71, PL114	CASE 3 Masłomęcz PL81, PL312	CASE 4 Domachowo PL41, PL417
<b>Indicator 1_1</b>					
<b>Name</b>	Income of households (NUTS2, 2016, Million EUR)	16,530.53	16,530.53	11,872.94	25,774.43
<b>Indicator 4</b>					
<b>Name</b>	Economic activity rates (NUTS2, 2018, %)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Indicator 5</b>					
<b>Name</b>	Employment rates (NUTS2, 2018, %)	70.0	70.0	64.9	70.1
<b>Indicator 6</b>					
<b>Name</b>	Unemployment rates (NUTS2, 2018, %)	4.4	4.4	6.3	2.2
<b>Indicator 7</b>					
<b>Name</b>	Youth unemployment rates (NUTS2, 2018, %)	11.9	11.9	16.4	6.9
<b>Indicator 8</b>					
<b>Name</b>	Long term unemployment rates (NUTS2, 2018, Thousand)	17.7	17.7	25.6	6.5
<b>Indicator 10_1</b>					
<b>Name</b>	Life expectancy (Country, 2017, Year)	77.8	77.8	77.8	77.8
<b>Indicator 14</b>					
<b>Name</b>	NEET (Country, 2018, %)	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.7
<b>Indicator 24_1</b>					
<b>Name</b>	Total population (NUTS3, 2011, Number)	726,245	380,609	643,762	546,356
<b>Indicator 28</b>					
<b>Name</b>	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion				

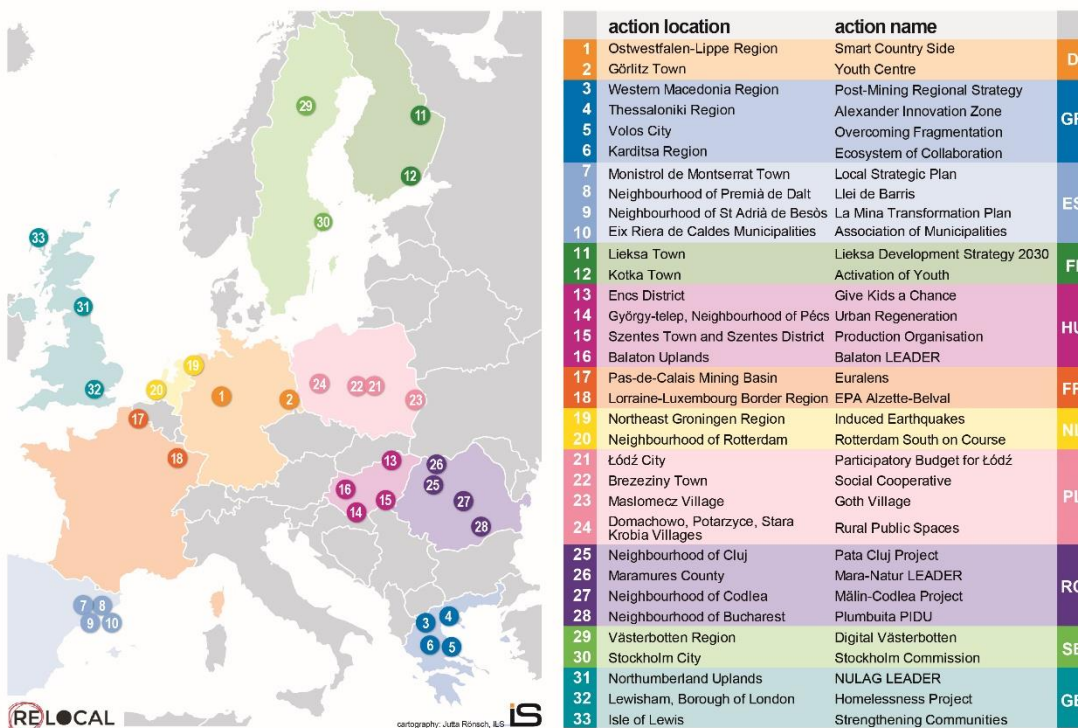
Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

## The RELOCAL Project

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

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

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



The RELOCAL project runs from October 2016 until September 2020.

Read more at <https://relocal.eu>

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