



*sion and Territorial Development*

RELOCAL aims to identify factors and policies that condition local accessibility of European policies, local abilities to articulate needs and equality claims and local capacities for exploiting European opportunity structures.

The persistence of territorial disparities in the European Union, coupled with the insecurity that economic crisis and austerity have generated and threaten the territorial cohesion across Europe. Therefore, RELOCAL departs from the basic premise that localities and their functional spaces represent the contextual nexus where the relationship between individuals and spatial justice unfolds. The local plays an important role in the promotion of fairness, spatial justice and well-being in Europe.

For this reason, the proposed project will relate on a bottom-up perspective local development situations to the wider context of European Cohesion, both as a process and policy framework. It will also contribute to conceptually and empirically enhancing the knowledge base on spatial justice and territorial inequalities.

This research will be based primarily on case studies of local contexts (urban and rural neighbourhoods, cities/towns and their regions, intermediate and peripheral rural areas) as they are embedded in broader territorial governance structures that exemplify development challenges in terms of spatial justice.

RELOCAL's conceptualisation of the research and policy tasks at hand are centred around three perspectives that link the local to the wider European context:

- 1) a focus on local capabilities and local assets as a means to understand spatial justice and thus design possible strategies conducive to its promotion,
- 2) a focus on case studies that situate localities and local development trajectories within larger territorial and policy contexts, and
- 3) a focus on scenarios of what could work, and what needs to be done.

RELOCAL will run for 48 months until September 2020. It will involve stakeholders at local, regional and European levels seeking a multi angular debate and general cross-fertilisation of experiences and challenges between territories across Europe. Two high level Policy Workshops will be organised in 2018 and 2019, and a large number of local participatory activities involving key actors in interviews and focus groups.

RELOCAL activities will be documented at the project website accessible at [www.relocal.eu](http://www.relocal.eu)

**RELOCAL** aims at identifying factors that determine local accessibility of European policies and funds, and the local abilities to articulate capacities for exploiting European opportunity structures.

**RELOCAL** departs from the basic premise that the notion of “place” may precondition the chances of local policies and action to successfully promote fairness and well-being.

**RELOCAL** will apply a bottom-up perspective to investigate how local development strategies benefit from the wider context of European Cohesion, both as a process and policy framework.

**RELOCAL** will also contribute to conceptually and empirically enhancing the knowledge base on spatial justice and territorial inequalities.

**RELOCAL** will base its research on the analysis of about thirty case studies of local contexts across Europe, in urban and rural neighbourhoods, cities and towns and their regions, central and peripheral.



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## About us

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## Few words about RELOCAL

### *The starting point: addressing the persistence of territorial disparities*

Spatial justice involves the fair and equitable distribution in space of socially valued resources and the opportunities to use them. As part of addressing the challenge of uneven spatial development, territorial cohesion, along with social and economic cohesion, has come to be a major goal of European policy. It emphasises the role of place and territory, and their specific assets (territorial capital) in EU cohesion policy.

However, the persistence and exacerbation of territorial disparities in the European Union, coupled with the insecurity that economic crisis and austerity have generated, threaten this vision of cohesion. The aim of fairness with regard to access to opportunities, the availability of services of general interest and basic infrastructure, independently of location, has become increasingly difficult and expensive to achieve.

This raises the issue of reforming cohesion policies in order to develop more adequate responses to these social and territorial challenges. One important consequence of this situation is a greater need to connect European Cohesion more directly to local needs and local scale, both as policy framework and principle.

Place-based and endogenous regional development, as well as the more effective use of territorial capital and assets, are some of the approaches that have been invoked to facilitate a greater local orientation of cohesion, territorial development and other UE policies.

These considerations lie at the centre of the RELOCAL research, which takes decidedly bottom-up perspective within a multilevel context.

### *The objectives of RELOCAL*

RELOCAL departs from the basic premise that localities and their functional spaces represent the contextual nexus where the relationship between individuals and spatial justice unfolds. The local plays an important role in the promotion of

fairness, spatial justice and well-being in Europe; and, in turn, the local functions as an important laboratory for the elaboration of European, national and sub-national policies addressing cohesion and spatial justice.

In this sense, the main objectives of RELOCAL can be defined as follows:

**1. contribute to new conceptual frameworks of territorial cohesion** that focus on the role of locale and place as vital socio-spatial setting for development and achievement of spatial justice. This also includes methodologies that facilitate longitudinal multi-scale measurement, mapping and a mix of qualitative and quantitative modes of analysis in order to develop more effective indicators of socio-spatial inequality, equality demands and policy impacts.

**2. develop working and practicable definitions of spatial justice** based on the local quality and availability of social opportunities and bundles of services that not only promote individual development but that are also essential to the stabilisation of community.

**3. assess the role of policy in achieving the European Social Model** by providing critical evaluations of the substantive adequacy, local accessibility and development impacts of existing cohesion policies, and in this way promoting greater spatial justice.

**4. elaborating new policy and development models** that bridge conflicts and trade-offs between regional development and governance models that address territorial cohesion and spatial justice across Europe.

**5. develop a new theoretical framework for the relation decentralised governance and greater economic, political and social justice**, justifying the need for greater local participation and regional autonomy.

RELOCAL applies a bottom-up approach by starting from the local (neighbourhood, urban, functional urban-regional) perspective and then expanding analysis to incorporate the respective multiple



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territorial and governance levels within selected case study locales are embedded.

### **Key Research Questions**

The research is set up confronted to a number of ontological questions:

- How can spatial justice be conceptualised, operationalised, adapted?
- How processes of territorial inequalities in different localities be understood and analysed?
- How does the local relate to cohesion in an European Union context?
- What factors and filters are operating that enhance or limit the relation between the local and cohesion?
- What might bridge abstract notions of spatial justice and local practises on the one hand and Cohesion Policy on the other?
- Is there a territorial trap in thinking locally, endogenously?
- Can enhanced autonomy contribute to spatial justice?
- How can processes of place-making be related to spatial justice?
- What is the scope for alternative development, stabilisation, sustainability, solidarity models/scenarios?

In particular, RELOCAL will look in developing the previous questions at the following research topics:

- How can the specificities of local scale be more effectively integrated within nationally defined, indicator based and generalising policy frameworks that operate at higher levels of aggregation

- In what general as well as locally specific ways are territorial inequalities, as indicators of increasing or decreasing territorial cohesion, related to issues of spatial justice and fairness. For example, how are social-spatial inequalities and unequal degrees of access to jobs, public services and social protection measures related to issues of spatial justice and fairness.
- What are the structuring forces of territorial inequalities with regard to economic aspects (e.g. characteristics of labour markets) and social-institutional conditions
- How have territorial inequalities at supra-national, national, infra-national and infraregional levels shifted in recent decades. What were the main economic, social and political impacts of the financial crisis on territorial cohesion between and within EU Member States, and what are their implications for the European Social Model.
- What relations exist between governance structures (level of regional autonomy / strengths of legitimacy of the decision taking body) and the scope for/of policies (regional and sectoral) targeting regional and social inequalities? This includes linkages (and the lack of them) between the identified policy areas (strategies, institutions, targets, approaches, implementation agencies and schemes).
- Policy integration requires commensurate forms of methodological integration: How can in-depth case studies and qualitative indicators of spatial (in)justice, fairness and other aspects of local development be developed as part of more effective method mixes

### **The Localities approach**

The RELOCAL approach is based on comparative case studies that will allow investigating spatial justice and fairness both at the level of urban and rural communities.



The main objective of case studies is reconstructing the trajectories of the local development strategies, identifying their links with EU policies, in particular with Cohesion Policy. The focus is placed on analysing how equality demands at local level have been addressed by local actors in conjunction with EU opportunity structures.

Importantly, it is necessary to assess in a comparative manner the experiences of localities in achieving their objectives; this involves identifying conditioning factors at the local, regional and national levels, and their respective roles in facilitating or making more difficult goal achievements.

The Work Programme will also address attention on local perceptions of spatial justice and locally articulated needs, including the needs of disadvantage and vulnerable groups and those particularly affected by austerity policies and unemployment.

Issues that need to be worked in case studies include the following:

- **the identification of different existing local development models across Europe** (reflecting different levels of autonomy and resources) and analyse their main dimensions and key elements, including variables which influence outcomes of policies.
- **the identification of the potential impacts and effects of more localised approaches** in achieving cohesion as against more universalist, centralised development models.
- **the evaluation of whether more localised approaches are also a convincing macro-political answer** to achieve spatial justice in the European Union

### **Implementing case studies**

In order to assess this questions, RELOCAL will involve the development of a locally-based perspective on cohesion and the European Social Model. It will follow five topics that will be addressed by 10 Work Programmes:

1. Stock-taking and mapping
2. Elaboration and implementation of research questions throughout case studies
3. Integrating work: empirical evidence and theory-building
4. Testing and implementation (in communication with stakeholders, based on local scenario elaboration)
5. Wider dissemination and policy outputs that target the maximisation of overall scientific, educational and societal impact of RELOCAL.

Case studies can be seen as the nexus between research questions addressed and developed in the review work packages, scenario-focused and spatially flexible methodological approaches and scientific and policy impact.

The chosen locations for case studies are the concrete places where links to stakeholders on various scales are established and local and regional practice partners get interested and involved in the project.

Different mechanisms (including the project's interactive website as a knowledge-sharing environment, focus group discussions, workshops) work towards this involvement, from analysis to scenario building. Furthermore, the case studies link the findings from longitudinal studies of socio-spatial inequality to an analysis of the wider socio-economic and territorial context in which these are produced.

Case study locations have thus been chosen to allow for a balanced representation of different institutional contexts, manifested in terms of five welfare regimes. These are:

- a) Society-based models (social democratic): Finland (2), Sweden (2)
- b) Liberal models: Scotland (1), England (2)
- c) State-based models: Netherlands (2), Luxembourg (1), France (1), Germany (2)
- d) Family-based models: Spain (4), Greece (4)



e) Transitional-post socialist models: Hungary (4), Poland (4), Romania (4)

**European scenarios**

Scenario methods will be used to present key drivers for spatial inequalities and spatial injustice across Europe. Selected groups of people (local and regional stakeholders, experts involved in local and regional development strategies and planning, journalists involved in spatial justice) will participate in scenario development in order to determine the impact and probability of occurrence of a certain factor in an upward, downward and stabilisation trend. The results allow identifying and assessing the strength of the impact under specific circumstances and the probability of different trajectories.

The derived policy considerations and messages will, on the knowledge gained from the in-depth case studies, pay due attention to the diversity of regional/local environments, but will provide clear messages on how to deliver better policies promoting territorial cohesion and spatial justice,

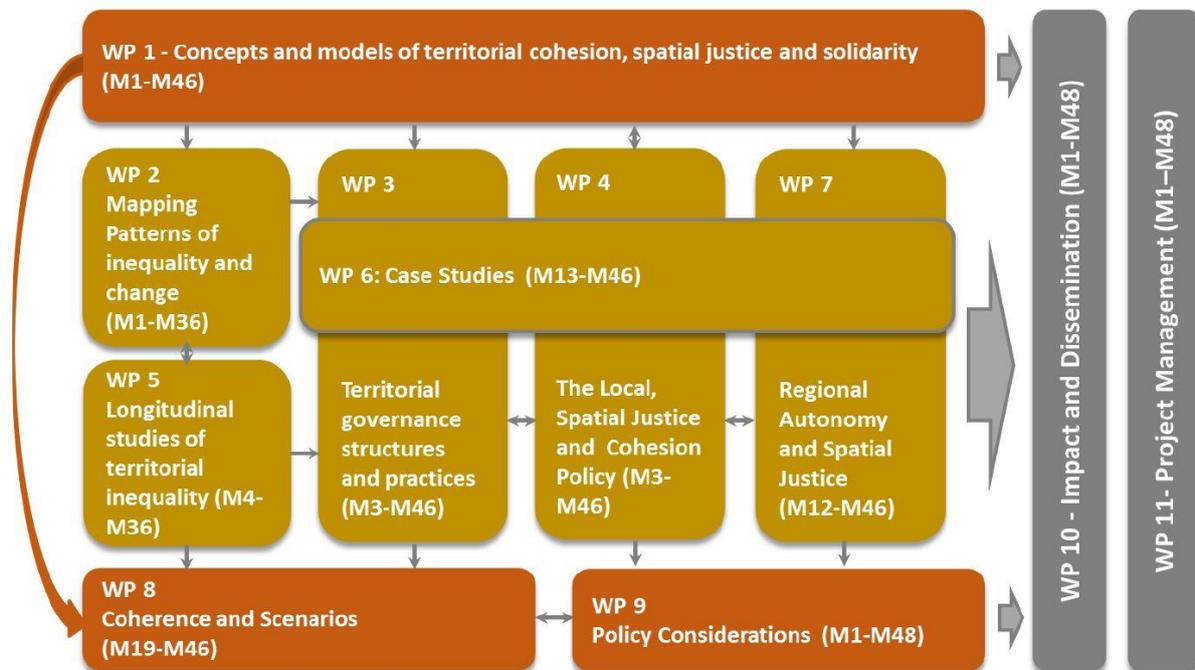
including socio-economic well-being clear, in times of decreasing budgets and austerity.

**Project activities**

The RELOCAL research strategy builds on four groups of main activities consisting of:

- a thorough review of the research background, including policy analysis, theoretical debate and methodological aspects.
- data updates, innovative and new methodologies for analysing spatial patterns of inequality at different geographical scales, as well as extensive comparative case studies.
- synthesis and integration of empirical results, as well as policy recommendations.
- ongoing dialogue with local, regional and higher level stakeholders, and dissemination of results based on activities (workshops, dialogue events, scenarios).

This activities will be part of the Work Programme which will be derivabled in 12 Work packages.



After the beginning of works in autumn 2016, the year 2017 will be devoted to fully operationalise

the conceptualisation of the research: in-depth review of existing literature will lead to the



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determination of the central concepts and models for RELOCAL.

Mapping patterns of inequality and change and identifying territorial governance structures and practices will follow, linked to local preconditions, spatial justice and cohesion policy.

Longitudinal studies of territorial inequality will lead to the definition of most relevant case study analyses to be performed next.

2018 will be devoted to the elaboration of case studies accross Europe, building on the conceptual framework built over the year before.

During 2019, findings at local level will be extrapolated in European wide policy scenarios, which will be discussed in with a wide range of public and private actors to derive policy implications and recommendations for reformulating Cohesion Policy.

2020 will be devoted to open public debate of project findings and conclusions, advancing towards the closure of activities that will culminate in October with the Final Conference.

### ***RELOCAL: solutions for a more cohesive European territory***

RELOCAL will maximise overall impact by providing sound scientific results and empirically tested policy-relevant insights regarding the role of locale as a locus of spatial justice and an essential element of multilevel cohesion policies. It concurs that place, as lived space and access point to vital social resources, and spatial justice, as reflected in opportunities for the realisation of individual and group capabilities, are central conditioning factors for social and territorial cohesion. In terms of the overall expected impact of RELOCAL, the research will, among others:

- 1) interrogate the present and potential roles of locality in promoting spatial justice within different political and socio-cultural contexts;
- 2) identify social needs and services that both generally but also in specific places condition the achievement spatial justice and cohesion objectives;
- 3) provide sound, empirically tested policy insights into a better integration of local scale within regional, national and European policy frameworks that target cohesion objectives.

