

RELOCAL: Reinstating *local* in cohesion and territorial development policy

Katalin Kolosy, AEIDL consultant, and a member of the scientific advisory board of the RELOCAL project, reports here on the project's gathering in Barcelona (Spain) on the 14th and 15th February 2018.



[RELOCAL](#) is a four-year research project funded under the Horizon 2020 programme. The €4.9 million project is coordinated by the University of Eastern Finland and brings together 13 partners covering 12 countries.

The basic assumption of RELOCAL is that the 'local' dimension plays an important role in promoting [spatial justice](#) and wellbeing in Europe. The general research questions can be summarised as follows: what factors enhance or limit the link between the 'local' and 'cohesion'? How can spatial justice and local practice be better integrated into Cohesion Policy?

An important aspect of the project is the 33 case studies, to be carried out between 2017 and 2019. These in-depth studies will investigate processes of territorial inequalities in different localities.

The scientific advisory board was invited to the project meeting and conference in Barcelona in order to comment on the work done so far. During my contribution, I complimented the research team for the quality of the first deliverables.

I also shared some observations, mainly in relation to the mapping of case studies, which showed a concentration of fieldwork in Northern and Eastern parts of the EU and little or no coverage of Western and Southern parts, with the exception of Barcelona.

I also suggested that the concept of ['frugality'](#) and references to the commons could be added to the conceptual framework, as they represent innovative and holistic approaches to reducing territorial inequalities.

Other contributions from the scientific advisory board emphasised the fact that (i) spatial justice is a highly political concept and should be assessed 'bottom-bottom', meaning at

local level; (ii) when carrying out the case studies, compliance with administrative units should be ensured, in order to allow data to be reconciled for comparative analysis; (iii) participative methods such as 'neighbourhood fora' could be used during fieldwork.

After the project meeting, the RELOCAL partners invited speakers representing two other research projects under the same [H2020 strand](#) ([IMAJINE](#) and [COHSMO](#)) to present their work. The idea was to explore and discuss variations in the interpretation of 'spatial justice', share quantitative and qualitative methods for the collection and analysis of micro-data, and explore joint dissemination activities, such as a common final conference for the three research projects, promoting a newly emerging network of 'spatial justice' scientists.

More information: <https://relocal.eu/relocal-first-project-conference/>

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