



Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe

D1.4 Definitions of territorial cohesion among EU and national and regional policy makers: interviews

Version 1.0

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Introduction

The political-geographical construction of the EU is an ongoing process. We recognize three overlapping forms of action and practice that all contribute to its spatial construction. First, the EU is constantly made up through myriad social practices such as spatial planning and related mappings, analyses, comparisons, indices etc. Within these practices, the EU is translated into a spatial object of knowledge and governance that can be monitored and politically experimented on as a more or less united political-economic space. Second, the spatial construction of the EU takes place in action networks within which European experts, academics, EU civil servants, state officials, consultants, business associations and their representatives, and think-tanks, to name but a few, interact, plan and negotiate in the name of European integration. In other words, the EU as a single political space is enacted and performed in EU-sponsored action networks. Third, the spatial construction of the EU occurs in EU policies such as territorial cohesion policies and innovation policies which articulate the political space of the EU through particular political goals. These policies explicitly discuss various political geographical matters such as the core-periphery structure of Europe and related spatial inequalities, and the relationship between the urban and the rural in Europe. These are all timely issues within the EU policy circles in which the cohesion policies of the EU are currently being re-worked in order to better cope with potentially deepening socio-economic divides in the EU.

The WP1 of the IMAJINE project seeks to review the key literatures on the concepts of spatial justice, territorial inequality and social cohesion. The primary idea of the WP is to undertake a comprehensive analysis on the links and tensions between the abovementioned concepts and in so doing to tailor conceptual basis for analyses which deal with territorial inequalities in Europe (in IMAJINE WPs 3–6). Prior to releasing the report at hand, we have conducted a systematic study on the ways in which the ideas of territorial and social cohesion have been played out in academic literature, as well as in the EU's territorial policy discourses, including EU cohesion policies. We have also suggested that the academic literature on spatial justice may provide broader avenues to think through the notion of territorial cohesion.

This final report of the WP1 examines how the ideas of territorial inequality and social cohesion are currently being articulated by policymakers (both within the EU and in six European national settings), and how their articulations resonate with specific territorial policies across Europe. Our examination is premised on the idea that the ways in which territorial inequalities and other related issues are being reasoned and understood within the EU are of particular importance, for these understandings inescapably have political implications for how policy-making regarding territorial inequalities and related differences unfold in the EU. From such a perspective, "policy" is not a mere blueprint or an expression of technical rationality. Rather policy-formation and transformation are dynamic processes which are predicated upon particular embedded ways of conceptualizing and reasoning political concerns such as growth, justice, equality, competitiveness, and security.

This report maps out the different conceptualizations of spatial justice and territorial inequality and social cohesion between countries and between dissimilar regions through expert interviews conducted in different geographical and institutional settings in Europe. We address the different viewpoints of regional experts in the selected countries with regard how they perceive bureaucratic approach to territorial cohesion. We examine the ways in which policy makers within EU

institutions (e.g. DG REGIO) and elsewhere define and value policies which seek to tackle territorial inequalities in different European contexts.

One of the key tasks of the report is to scrutinize the geographical variation of the ideas and practices of spatial justice, territorial inequality and social cohesion through an examination of how different actors define, perceive and value territorial inequality against issues that are at the core of the EU's political agenda: economic growth, policy harmonization and potentially evolving European solidarity. We hope that this report will shed some light on the ways in which territorial cohesion and territorial inequalities are being understood and articulated in different geographical contexts in Europe, and how the politics of austerity, for instance, is being understood as a factor behind contemporary regional development and differentiation in Europe.

On research objectives

Task 1.3 of Work Package 1 (WP1) in the IMAJINE project focused on disclosing a range of different, possibly overlapping or controversial definitions of territorial cohesion, inequalities, spatial justice and idea of fairness among EU-, national- and regional-level policy makers. This task was executed by conducting a set of interviews in different geographical and organizational settings in Europe. By conducting interviews in a wide range of national and institutional contexts, the aim was to scrutinize the variation of the ideas and practices of spatial justice, territorial inequality and cohesion by examining how different actors define, value and position these concepts against issues which are at the core of EU's political agenda: emphasis on economic growth, innovation, policy harmonization, sustainable development, as well as the idea of European solidarity. By also conducting interviews in research facilities, autonomy movements, and in the voluntary sector, the aim was to disclose the different viewpoints of local actors and policy experts with regard to how they perceive the 'official/bureaucratic' approach to territorial cohesion.

To conclude, the aim of subtask 1.3 was to map out the different conceptualizations, ideas and practices of spatial justice, territorial inequality and cohesion between different national and sub-national settings through an extensive set of expert interviews.

Varying institutional and geographical contexts of governance

The empirical framework of the task was initially defined in a manner that enables comparing the geographical variance in the way regional inequalities and spatial justice are understood and adapted in different geographical contexts. This kind of analytic framework would for example enable comparing the sectoral policies between each national context. In a broad sense, this comparative approach would make it possible to detect systematic differences or similarities between national systems or subnational governance and planning. For example, within this analytical framework it could be possible to examine whether those responsible for regional level governance in Greece and Finland have similar perceptions of the meaning of territorial justice or inequalities or alternatively, if ministries responsible for certain sectoral policies (e.g. education or transport) have similar ideas across the different national contexts.

However, scholars from critical political geography will be quick to point out that such a framework is built on a rather narrow and oversimplified understanding of the spatial nature of governance (see e.g. Sidaway, 2006). Instead of a geographically-structured hierarchy of governance, the EU territory

is characterized by a highly complex system of institutional actors and agencies which cannot be organized in a simple hierarchical or sectoral manner (e.g. Luukkonen & Moisiö, 2016; Luukkonen 2017). In other words, each national context exhibits varying forms of federalism and different systems of legislative power or autonomy granted to subnational governance. In addition, the sampling available for the task was limited to the participants in WP1 and therefore cannot be seen as a representative sample of different forms or regimes of territorial organization or governance.

A second issue complicating the comparative framework of the analysis is the fact that many countries included in WP1 of IMAJINE are undergoing significant political reorganization either in their national political system or in regional governance such as the case in Finland. In its current form, Finland is referred to in international comparisons as an example of the strong role that is played by municipal governance. However, this is most likely going to be changed by the fundamental Regional Governance Reform¹ which aims to transfer responsibility for the organisation of social and health care services from municipalities to counties.

In parallel, in Germany the interviews were conducted after the 2017 federal elections between October and December 2017 during the longest and most complicated coalition negotiations Germany has ever faced. Therefore, due to stagnating negotiations in late autumn and winter, many ministerial employees were hesitant to take part in interviews as general guidelines of action may change. Also, in the Italian context the research was conducted during a peculiar political phase characterized by a changing landscape in national and regional parliaments, with the related instability and likely political shifts.

Therefore, any comparative analysis based on cross-sectional interview data would paint a rather static picture of territorial governance and would neglect (or at least understate) the constantly changing and contested nature of territory as a geographical concept (e.g. Brenner, 2004; Moisiö & Paasi, 2013). This context of spatial reorganization of governance not only affects the validity of the empirical analysis but it also affects it in a more practical manner, because as mentioned above, it conditions the process of conducting the interviews in national and subnational contexts regarding the German and Italian contexts. At large, the context of political reorganization and reforms to some extent explain policy-makers' reluctance to be interviewed, notwithstanding the academic purpose which was clearly expressed by the interviewees.

The third constraint relates to the certain socially and culturally produced national identities and narratives of territorial inequality that question the validity of comparative approach. These identities and narratives create certain preconditions and assumptions regarding territorial inequality and spatial justice that might not be directly related to those indices that from an administrative perspective are presumed to define territorial inequality e.g. inter-regional differences in economic performance or socio-economic composition. In other words, in many countries there are some shared histories and narratives which mean that territorial inequality and spatial justice are viewed from a certain angle and with specific concepts. For example, in the German context, interview partners stressed the country-specific circumstances in which Federal States remain a strong force in the political system which is partially based on historical reasons, but also mirrors the multi-central nature of the German population and economy. On the other hand, the German context is characterized by a strong East/West divide that mirrors the long-run ramification of the reunification. This East/West divide creates a contextual setting in which eastern areas are typically referred to as being underdeveloped or lagging. In line with this, the Welsh report notes that in general opinion, Wales is reckoned as being a predominantly rural and 'poor

¹ <https://alueuudistus.fi/en/frontpage>

country' within Europe. Therefore, during the interviews a narrative of Welsh poverty was within ready reach. Finally, insights from the Greek context highlight the country's 'semi-peripheral' position within the European and global capitalism (Mouzelis, 1986) as well as its status of 'in-betweenness', being at the intersection of the Balkans, Southern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. These examples of local narratives and national identities regarding the country's positions within the EU's political sphere or broader economic system creates strong conceptual and positional pre-assumptions from which the questions of territorial inequality and spatial justice are viewed.

However, these words of critique do not mean that systematic and comprehensive analysis on the range of definitions on territorial cohesion, inequalities, justice or fairness among EU, national and regional level policymakers could not be executed. Instead, the complexity of overlapping scales and forms of territorial governance as well as plurality of national contexts, narratives and identities highlights that analysis should not be planned and executed with a too strict categorical or sectoral approach.

Instead, when these limitations are taken into account, it is possible to produce a rich and multifaceted set of qualitative material regarding different discourses in a wide range of institutional, cultural and political contexts. Also, it allows certain overlapping but also controversial definitions and ideas on territorial inequality or spatial justice to emerge from the research material.

Finally, after highlighting the diversity between national contexts there are also some significant similarities between the circumstances that should be mentioned. More exactly, all countries report increasing tensions (in both public media and in objective socio-economic indicators) between urban and rural divisions in each national setting. This is something that unites national contexts and is also in line with EU-level observations that there is convergence between countries, but at the same time the within each country, differences have been growing (CEC, 2018).

Keeping in mind these operational and contextual limitations, the final subtask 1.3 in WP1 in the IMAJINE project set out to examine the wide range of different, possibly overlapping or controversial definitions of territorial cohesion that can be found among EU-, national- and regional-level policymakers. This task was executed by conducting an extensive set of semi-structured interviews in different geographical and organizational settings in Europe.

Research concepts, methods and design

First, it good to start the task by revising the results from the conceptual review conducted during the earlier stages of WP1. As noted the in D1.1, "Conceptual review of the Scientific Literature" Work Package 1 of the IMAJINE project is embedded in a context of overlapping, undefined, and contested concepts. However, the conceptual review aimed to establish a certain distinction between the concepts of 'territorial inequality', 'territorial cohesion' and 'spatial justice'. In more detail, the concept of 'territorial inequality/ies' has been typically used in a rather descriptive and neutral manner in order to describe and analyse the geographical heterogeneity of economic production or development (e.g. Le Gallo & Dall'Erba, 2006). However, 'territorial cohesion' is at heart a policy concept associated with the spatial planning and cohesion policies of the EU (e.g. Faludi, 2007; Sá Marques, Saraiva, Santinha, and Guerra, 2018). Finally, 'spatial justice' is primarily an academic concept having its roots in theoretical discussions regarding how ideas of social justice and geographical space should be linked together (e.g. Harvey, 1973; Israel, E. & Frenkel, A. 2017).

Taking note of these conceptual categorizations while planning the interviews, it was decided first to focus on a more objective and evaluative concept of 'territorial inequality' and second to examine the concept of 'territorial cohesion' originating from the EU policy circles. As the interviews were primarily aimed at policymakers, the ideas of theoretical concepts such as justice of fairness could appear to be too distant and vague.

Therefore, in technical terms, while conducting the interviews in national contexts, the aim was to avoid starting the discussion with too broad theoretical questions and concepts such as spatial justice or fairness. The aim was to start from problems specific to the policy area or sector at hand (e.g. geographical or spatial inequalities in housing, health care, public transport) and then to work our way up to broader concepts and ideas. The policy-oriented concept of 'territorial cohesion' with more explicit policy relevance was introduced later in the questionnaire while discussing the overall EU influence (e.g. legislation or funding).

Despite the conceptual complexity and country-specific policy circumstances described above, the primary focus of the task was on the national level of governance. Keeping this in mind, the exact research questions for the task were formulated by HU and AU but the interviews themselves were conducted by national partners in WP1. The national partners (HUA in Greece, IfL in Germany, UNISI in Italy, AU in the UK, HU in Finland and NUIG in Ireland) were given the freedom to select and contact the interviewees in each national context aiming for an optimal balance between national and subnational level policymakers and other actors concerned with issues of territorial inequality and spatial justice. It was initially planned to conduct the national level interviews with federal government-level policymakers which in most cases means the relevant ministries. However, as discussed above, as the subnational governance in many countries does not follow the strict sectoral arrangements, the national partners were given freedom to adjust these criteria according to the structure most relevant to their national context.

At the end, these semi-structured interviews were conducted based on the following questionnaire defined by HU and AU

- 1) What is the role of territorial or spatial inequality and justice in your work and in general, how significant/pressing do you see to be the whole issue of geographical inequality in your sector (Transport, Housing etc.)?
- 2) How do you define these concepts (e.g. do you see spatial justice and territorial inequality more as geographically uneven distribution of resources or as unequal access to services such as education or jobs)?
- 3) Which do you consider to be the main actors responsible for addressing spatial justice / territorial inequality in your sector?
- 4) Does the EU concept of 'territorial cohesion' have significance in your work?
- 5) What in general is the role of EU-level governance, regulations, and agendas in your sector?
- 6) On what geographical and governmental scale you think the issues of spatial justice/territorial inequality/cohesion are most relevant and should be addressed?
- 7) Has the economic recession from 2008 onwards and related austerity policies affected first, 1) the level or the structure of territorial inequality in your sector; and second, 2) the mechanisms and policy instruments through which they are addressed?
- 8) Do you have any suggestions on how territorial equalities and spatial justice could be further advanced?

While conducting the interviews the above list of questions was followed in different ways in each national context due to the asymmetry in territorial organization between the countries. As a result, the interviews conducted by each national partner in WP1 could be categorized in a following manner in Table 1.

WP partner	Country	National government	Subnational governance (e.g. regional councils)	Other (NGO, Research Institutions, DG-regio etc)	Sum
IfL	Germany	12	2	3	17
NUIG	Ireland	4	3	1	8
AU	Wales	4	3	2	9
UNISI	Italy	5	3	-	8
HU	Finland	6	3	4	13
HUA	Greece	5	2	6	13
		31	14	10	68

Table 1. Interviews conducted by WP1 partners in each national setting.

Sixty-eight interviews were conducted between October 2017 and July 2018. The WP partners conducted interviews as follows. The HU conducted a total of 13 semi-structured interviews: six in different ministries in Finland, three in Regional Councils, two in DG-REGIO in Brussels, two with Finnish members of EU parliament. IfL from Germany conducted 11 interviews in different ministries, municipalities, research facilities, and in autonomy movements, NUIG from Ireland conducted 8 interviews in different ministries and certain key actors in the voluntary sector and regional assemblies, UNISI from Italy conducted 8 interviews with national and subnational policymakers, AU from the United Kingdom (Wales) conducted 9 interviews with civil servants in the Welsh Government and local government, and finally HUA (Greece) conducted 13 interviews in national, regional and EU contexts.

A common feature in all national settings was the problem of contacting the interviewees especially at the ministerial level. In most cases, persons chosen to be interviewed were first contacted by email which rarely results in a response. Usually, a follow up was conducted by phone but in most cases, it was necessary to make several attempts before obtaining an appointment. In the end, some of the Italian respondents were only willing to provide written responses by email. However, most of the analyses in table 1 were conducted as face-to-face semi- structured interviews. As note above, the list of questions was not strictly followed but instead, interviewees were encouraged to take discussion in the direction most appropriate to their role and concerns.

Following these principles, each national partner conducted 8 to 12 interviews in the national contexts. These interviews were then transcribed and summarized into one national report (10 to 25 pages) which was sent to the WP1 leader, HU. These country report included a description of the national context, some methodological notes, and a summary of the responses from the interviews conducted. In some cases, these summaries were reported as aggregated responses to each specific question (as listed on page 5) or in a more collated form. These country reports were then systematically analysed by the HU.

Analysis

As described above the national summaries followed a somewhat similar structure. In order to present the results from Task 1.3 from each national context, the national summaries were collated into a single file for further analysis. Instead of trying to conduct a strictly comparative analysis between countries or between policy sectors, the results were categorized into broader thematic entities which are assumed to be the most relevant for the IMAJINE project as a whole and correspond to the objectives defined in the work description of Task 1.3 of WP1.

Therefore, collated text including all of the national summaries was manually coded into three different categories. First, one category focused to the "*conceptual definitions of territorial inequality and /or spatial justice*". This reflects the key objective and focus of the whole work package: disclosing the variance and plurality of different meanings and ideas of territorial inequality and spatial justice among different actors in the EU. The definitions and ideas emerging from the research material (interviews) were then reflected in those defined at the earlier stages of the WP; conceptual reviews regarding the academic literature (Task 1.1) and analysis of the EU policy documentary (Task 1.2).

The second category incorporated the key results regarding the "*main actors addressing territorial inequality and /or spatial justice*". As noted at the beginning, the EU territory is characterized not only by overlapping and controversy concepts, but also by institutions and actors operating on different scales which might have also different agendas and objectives for addressing territorial inequality and /or spatial justice. Here, the main interest was on responses relating to the relationship between the EU, national and regional levels regarding the responsibility for addressing territorial inequality, achieving spatially balanced development and ensuring spatial justice and fairness. For example, the interest was to see whether subnational actors (regional assemblies, councils or local actors) would define either EU or national level governance as being more relevant actors while addressing territorial inequality and /or spatial justice. This category also includes the responses regarding the scale of governance at which the issues of territorial inequality and spatial justice should be primarily and more effectively addressed.

Third category paid special interest to those responses where the possible effects of the austerity policies were discussed and evaluated. Disclosing the possible territorial impact on the consolidation of austerity politics in the EU is of specific interest to the overall IMAJINE project including WP1. Third category thus summarizes the way how interviewees reviewed the "*effects of austerity policies regarding territorial inequality and /or spatial justice*".

After classifying the observation in national summaries according these three broad categories, these observations were systematically analysed in order to map out the different conceptualization, ideas and practices of spatial justice, territorial inequality and cohesion between them in different national and subnational settings in Europe.

Results

Conceptual definitions for territorial inequality and /or spatial justice

The main result regarding the conceptual definitions for territorial inequality and /or spatial justice between the interviewees was the surprisingly small variance between different national and institutional settings. At large, the idea of territorial inequality and /or spatial justice was approached from the individual perspective and was referred general as *geographically or spatially equal access to certain services or opportunities*. At the core, this perspective was the most common definition across different institutions, national contexts and actors but varied slightly regarding the exact wording. For example, in the ministerial context, the definition was moderated in way which would fit their sectoral responsibilities. In the Finnish context, the interviewee at Ministry of Transport and Communication defined the central aim of their sectoral policies as aiming to “maintain a basic level of accessibility to public transport throughout the country”. Elsewhere in Finnish interviews, this definition was formulated as “equivalent living conditions (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment) or “equal access to basic services” (Ministry of Finance). As noted, this approach was dominant throughout the national contexts. For example, the Greek summary noted that territorial inequalities can be seen as a form of “unequal access to infrastructure and facilities” and “unequal access to services” but noted also that the former form was expressed more often than the latter.

In the German case, a similar wording is also laid down in law. The German report noted that the German spatial policy currently operates predominantly with the term “equivalent living conditions”. More exactly, (German Law on Spatial Development, (Art. 2) states that:

“The provision with services and infrastructures of general interest, especially the access to institutions and offers of public services for every social group, is to be ensured, also in thinly populated regions. Social infrastructures are to be bundled in certain central locations (...).”

The German Report on Spatial Development furthermore clarifies that services of general interest, in that sense, means the provision of essential goods and services for a socially accepted price, quality and access. However, while this perspective is the dominant one, and there seems to be some sort of consensus of the definition, it remains under-defined and overlapping with other perspectives. For example, Italian responses highlight that the “distribution of resources” and “access to services” are closely interrelated. Therefore, despite its obvious popularity as the main reference to territorial inequality and spatial justice, it overlaps with other definitions (e.g. the distribution of resources as mentioned).

An interesting feature regarding this perspective to territorial inequality and /or spatial justice is its relationship with the ones defined in earlier stages of WP1. Also, it is useful to relate these findings to the definitions which have been either explicitly or implicitly embedded into EU policies, articulation and vocabulary. Regarding the policy connection, this individually oriented approach converges with the one defined in the policy document analysis conducted in Task 1.2 of WP1. Deliverable 1.2 notes that a more individually-focused approach to ‘territorial cohesion’, has been gaining more importance within EU terminology. This definition is also closely connected to the concept of “accessibility of services of general economic interest”, which was first introduced to the EU vocabulary in the Amsterdam Treaty (Article 7d) in 1999.

Furthermore, regarding the relationship to definitions preferred or suggested by EU policymaking, it needs to be noted here is that none of the interviewees referred to interregional differences in economic performance (e.g. Gross Domestic Product) while being asked about the definition of territorial inequalities or spatial justice. As D1.2 notes, even though this macroeconomic perspective has been losing its importance in EU articulations during recent years, it is still a central (if not the main) perspective through which territorial inequalities and cohesion are perceived. Instead, in the interviews conducted in this task the regional macroeconomic indicators (GDP or GVA) were only mentioned as indicators that fit poorly for describing or addressing territorial inequality or spatial justice. For example, Irish responses note that GDP is regarded as an unreliable reflection of economic activity (and thus territorial inequalities) as it does not acknowledge intangible assets of regions. In line with this, in the Welsh report, GVA was criticized as being a “blunt instrument” when used to compare inequalities across Europe.

As a summary, the “spatially even access to services or opportunities” appears to be the dominant meaning of territorial inequality in the minds of policymakers and actors in EU member states and regions. However, at this point it is important to note the obvious paradox embedded to this “spatially neutral” approach. In some interviews in the Finnish context, this spatially neutral or equal accessibility to services and opportunities was formulated in a way that “individuals should not be disadvantaged by their place of residence. This wording is interestingly very similar to one which appears frequently in the policy documents of EU for example in the Third Cohesion report (CEC, 2005, p.27) stating that “*people should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union*”. The paradox of this type of definition emerges from the fact that in a reversed form this would also mean that individual should not (or cannot) be advantaged by their location. However, this is in strict contrast with some of the basis of regional policy (“place-based” or “place sensitive” approach) and also regarding the theoretical core of economic geography which stresses the role of the agglomeration (or clustering) benefits. In other words, this type of definition implies that location (of geography) simply would not matter and therefore it becomes highly problematic when put into practice in a policy context or when scrutinized in academic circles.

In order to reason through and bypass this obvious controversy, this definition is sometimes moderated into a form in which the level of accessibility has a certain limit or threshold value regarding how well certain services can be accessed. For example, in the Finland, the interviewee at the Ministry of Transport and Communication defined the central aim of their sectoral policies as to “maintain a *basic* level of service in public transport throughout the country”. Further on in the same interview, the basic level was defined by the interviewee as “*bare minimum* level” that each citizen should be entitled to, regardless of their place of residence. However, when asked about the definition or threshold of this “bare minimum level” no specific threshold level could be given.

This example shows that despite the apparent unambiguousness of this meaning, it becomes problematic when put into practice. These definitions obviously leave the question regarding the level of “basic”, “sufficient”, or “bare minimum” open to different interpretations. In other words, it is clear that sufficient or necessary does not necessarily mean equal in technical terms. As a result, the definition usually leaves the term under-defined which is the case in concepts that are of political origin or use value. This is reflected most explicitly in the German context. Terminologically, the German spatial policy operates predominantly with the term “equivalent living conditions”: whereas the German constitution (called “Grundgesetz”) demanded “equal living” conditions as a

spatial goal until 1994 but this was later changed to equivalent living conditions when it became increasingly a matter of public debate. In 2004, the then-Minister-president of the Federal State of Brandenburg Matthias Platzeck, and later Horst Köhler, the then-President of the Federal Republic of Germany, both claimed that the Federal States cannot subsidise equal living conditions everywhere, implying that equivalent does not mean equal. Despite the public and political debate on the matter, even in the German context, the term remains under-defined.

Also, as was assumed in the introduction, the questions and definitions which have an explicit normative connotation such as social and “justice” were often regarded as being too distant from the interviewees. This was highlighted in the German context, where policymakers noted that spatial injustice – as a concept – is usually not used, as the decision about what is just to whom may be too subjective, and, therefore impossible to tackle within politics.

One more definition of territorial inequality and/or spatial justice which needs to be mentioned connects intensified urban-rural juxtapositioning that was defined as a common feature in each national setting. Within the context of increasing socioeconomic differences between the urban and rural areas, it was mentioned that territorial inequalities and spatial justice are to some extent also produced by media. In other words, it was mentioned that one form of spatial (in)justice is the negative publicity which certain peripheral regions are subjected to by the media. Therefore, some policymakers, especially at subnational level, noted that territorial inequalities and spatial injustice are socially produced by the media which is focused on an urbanization agenda and has uncritically adopted the economic reasoning for agglomeration benefits and inevitability of rural-urban migration. For example, in the German context it was noted that interregional differences in net migration, unemployment and economic performance are intensified by negative discourses about these regions shaping the public opinion towards them, thus allegedly furthering a negative ratio between out- and in-migration. Similar concerns were expressed in the Finnish context, where an interviewee from a regional council noted that territorial inequalities and injustice are to some extent produced (or at least intensified) by the media which has detected the public demand for the stories describing the decline of peripheral regions and presents urbanization as a natural process which is out of reach of any (regional) policy making.

Finally, it should be noted that the local narratives and identities do play a strong role in definitions and ideas of territorial inequalities and spatial justice, as was assumed. For example, in the Welsh case which has been predefined as rural and poor, the concept of poverty was the predominant reference point for discussions about spatial inequality. Also, it was noted that both rural and former industrial areas in Wales were common spatial synonyms for poverty and need. In line with this, in the Greek context which is characterized by ‘semi-peripheral’ position and status of ‘in-betweenness’, instead of “territorial inequalities”, the interviewees referred to other spatial concepts such as peripherality, rurality and insularity while stressing the need to implement policy measures that promote equal opportunities for geographically balanced development.

To sum up.

- The most common meaning attached to territorial inequality and spatial justice is “*spatially even or equal accessibility to certain services and opportunities*”. In some cases, this definition is formulated in a way that “*people should not be disadvantaged by their place of residence*”.

- This definition converges with the one frequently presented in EU documentary as analysed in Task 1.2 of WP1 in the IMAJINE project
- Interregional differences in economic production (e.g. GDP) were not referred to by the interviewees as an indicator or meaning of territorial inequality or spatial justice
- Spatially-even access to services or opportunities is a highly problematic definition when put into practice or theoretically scrutinized. It is also in contrast with place-based policies as well as certain bases in economic geography and agglomeration economics.
- Perspectives and definitions of territorial inequality and spatial (in)justice are sensitive to national identities and narratives (e.g. being a rural, poor, or peripheral region). They are also to some extent socially produced by the media while referring to lagging regions, rural decline and emphasizing uncritically the benefits of agglomeration economies.

The main actors addressing territorial inequalities and/or spatial justice

The results from the interviews are summarized here under two broader themes. First, we review summaries regarding perceptions of spatial processes and actors that produce, address and maintain the territorial inequality and /or spatial justice in Europe. This category provides a summary of the perceptions among interviewees regarding how territorial inequality and /or spatial justice are produced, who are (or should be) responsible for addressing them, and on what geographical scale they could be most effectively addressed. This category also includes those commentaries from the interviewees who suggested ways to improve the way territorial inequality is addressed and ensuring spatial justice in Europe. Second, we are explicitly interested on the influence of the EU from the perspective of national and subnational policymakers. This category included the comments from the interviewees regarding the role of legislation, EU funding or other effects and presence that the EU has in its member states, regions and communities.

First, it should be noted that the question of hierarchical and geographical scales also appeared in the interviews as highly contested as discussed at the beginning. This complexity was aptly expressed in the summary from the Welsh interviews. The report from Wales notes that the interviewees from both Welsh Government and local government made it apparent how complex the questions of scale are. In detail, three perspectives were discernible in the Welsh interviews. One cluster of responses underscores the need to address spatial inequalities and they argue that a strategic top-down approach is essential to avoid duplication and dissipation. They acknowledged that this could provoke resistance, and the interviewees thus advocated the political will to 'grasp the nettle'. A second cluster similarly saw the necessity of addressing spatial inequalities but argued for action on a bottom-up scale. For these, centralisation is an 'easy' government tendency that risks losing sight of local differences across Wales. The central and local scalar perspectives thus conflict. Electoral cycles are a complicating factor here, as politicians from all scales want to be able to announce initiatives and claim the credit. A third, somewhat unexpected, cluster of interviewees attached less importance to specifically spatial inequalities, which makes them content to see action taken at a local level.

This summary of the Welsh experience highlights the tension between different levels of governance that can be read throughout the data. In general, local and bottom-up approaches for addressing territorial inequalities were noted on several occasions and also in different scales of governance. For example, in the Greek context interviewees at the national scale argued that policies that aim to reduce territorial inequality should also be *planned at the national level* by the relevant ministries, while the *implementation* of these policies require the cooperation of regional authorities who *"have better knowledge of the spatial deficits or disadvantages"*. Similarly, the Italian report notes that all interviewees mentioned that regions should be the key actors in addressing territorial inequality (i.e. autonomy principle and closeness to territories' needs), but within a clear framework of principles, and guidelines, defined by the central state, as well as effective monitoring and audit mechanisms (i.e. homogeneity and equality principles). Also, the importance of the regional (subnational) scale was also emphasized in the Welsh report which concludes that working at the regional level may offer potential solutions for addressing territorial inequality and spatial justice issues as the region could be a commonality between central and local perspectives.

These claims regarding the importance of the regional scale as well as policy coordination obviously converge with the place-based approaches and the idea of multilevel governance included in the EU's regional policy. In summary, the idea of multilevel governance was referred to as a possible way to address the tensions between bottom-up and top-down approaches. This was well expressed by a summary from the Italian context which noted that multilevel governance is crucial in addressing territorial inequality and implementing cohesion policies as it combines the advantages of all actors: on the one hand, the awareness of the territories' needs (local level); and on the other hand, the steering activity of the central role to ensure homogeneity and equality across territories.

Despite emphasis on stronger acknowledgement of local and territorial knowledge, there were persistent calls for broader scale interventions and coordination while addressing territorial inequalities and /or spatial justice. For example, regional-level actors in Germany stressed that they cannot act on their own in reducing inequality but larger political entities would have to step in. This remark directs attention to the tension that exists between national and subnational scales of governance that could be identified throughout the national contexts. In several cases the interviewees, especially on the subnational scale, called for stronger intervention and acceptance of responsibility by those in charge of central governance for addressing the territorial inequality and spatial justice issues. In general, it was frequently noted by the subnational policymakers and actors that central (national) governance should take a stronger role in addressing territorial inequality and advancing spatial justice.

Further down the line, it was even noted that in several countries, central governance has failed or expressed little interest in addressing the territorial inequalities within the country. This has led the EU, having fundamental focus on the regional scale, to take more responsibility for advancing spatially balanced development within the EU territory. This interpretation regarding the shift of responsibilities is based on observations from several national (and subnational) contexts. For example, reports from the Mansfeld-Südharz region in Germany note that the EU is specifically viewed as the institution through which funds have to be acquired because other national and inter-regional mechanisms fail to improve the local situation. Furthermore, the case of Mansfeld-Südharz exemplifies how injustice is practically perceived: *"We do not feel disadvantaged directly (...) But we feel as though we are being left alone. The capital of the Federal State has given up on us"*. To be specific, injustice is felt with regard to the lack of agency that is left for the district's officials. Also, in the Italian report the need for a stronger role of national government was also explicitly expressed

by suggestions that while regions should play a strategic role, the central state should strengthen its guidance, coordination, and monitoring role, to ensure effective actions at subnational levels.

All in all, one could say that no consensus on what scale territorial inequalities or spatial justice issues should be addressed. However, the regional scale was defined as having potential and which could play a stronger role. On one hand, the bottom-up perspective and the importance of the local and regional scales were emphasized since they know the local operating context and basis best. On the other hand, the need for broader scale coordination was acknowledged and here the EU, having explicitly a regional focus, was usually the first point of reference.

Also, some references especially in the Italian context were made on multilevel governance. Here again the coordinating role of EU was seen as important. Also, interviews in the EU context, conducted in Brussels by the HUA, mentioned that improving communication within the EU could improve policymaking processes that aim to reduce territorial inequalities. The Greek report concludes that issues of cooperation and complementarity between policies and measures was raised at the EU level not only in terms of policy implementation, but also in terms of policy design and monitoring. More to the point, during the interviews in Brussels it was argued that the cooperation and communication between the DGs is considered to be important for addressing issues of spatial inequalities. As it was stated:

“Now, because we have this common forum [between the DG for Regional and Urban Policy and the DG for Agriculture and Rural Development] we can discuss, we can decide together for those white spots whether they still need for interventions” (Member from the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development)

In other words, the improvement in the coherence between the territorial impacts of sectoral and spatial policies at various spatial scales is important for future policy effectiveness of the EU.

We then turn to the second category: the direct and indirect influence of the EU as the perceived by the national, subnational level policymakers and actors. In general, the EU influence is felt most at the subnational scale whereas in ministerial work of member states of EU has less importance. The convergence between the interests of the EU and regions cannot be considered as a surprise due to the fundamental idea of the “Europe of regions”. In the German context, it was noted that the EU’s paradigm of placing regions at the core of its attention, on the one hand, highly structures spatial policies in Germany whilst on the other hand, it complementarily fits well in the German federal system with strong Federal States (that are seen as *the* respective regions). However, there is some variance between certain sectors of governance regarding EU cooperation and legislation. EU legislation is most relevant in environmental sector, a point noted for example in the Irish summary. Also, it was noted that in the Irish context there is a feeling that there should be wider EU influence in areas such as social security, education, and housing. To some extent, Wales can be considered to be an exception because the “national” scale actors, in addition to regional actors, report close interest in the EU. Some interviewees noted that the Welsh Government has often seen itself as closer to Europe than to the UK. However, this is most likely due to the contested role of Wales as part of the United Kingdom but nonetheless it was noted that especially the local governments in Wales have looked primarily to Europe as an enabler of regional and place-based approaches.

It is not a surprise that interviewees noted that the EU has the strongest or at least the most direct influence on territorial inequality through European Structural and Investment Funds, mainly through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the Cohesion Fund (CF), and to smaller extent, the European Social Fund (ESF). Overall, it was noted that EU funding has a strong role

in addressing territorial inequalities through these funding instruments. As summed up in the Italian report, advancing territorial cohesion relies mainly on European funds. It was noted that European funds play a key role, as they constitute the most relevant investment policy, aiming at ensuring cohesion both among member states and among territories within the same state.

The EU has an important effect not only through direct funding but also by passing on some concepts and ideas about regional development to the actors operating in regional (regional councils and assemblies) level. This process of *import of concepts and ideas* by the regional level organisations from the EU is perhaps best highlighted by an example from the subnational scale in Finland. An interviewee from Lapland Regional Council defined keeping a track of conceptual and ideological development of the EU as strategically important. The interviewee defined this process as follows:

"We follow the speeches and agendas set by [regional] commissioners carefully in order to detect certain words. And then we include these in our strategies, the [EU] commission sees that these guys know their business".

Thereby, many regional level actors not only have similar objectives with the EU (importance of subnational i.e. regional level), but also they use a common language and vocabulary in order to advance and communicate this agenda. It was generally noted by the interviewees on regional councils that it is often easier to communicate with EU level policymakers than the ones responsible for national governance for the abovementioned reasons.

However, the tension between the EU and national level organisations discussed above also has relevance here. It was mentioned that in certain policy areas, the EU has perhaps been forced to take up certain responsibilities which are initially assumed to be the responsibility of the central governance of member states. For example, the Welsh report highlights an example from the transport sector where there has suffered cuts in the funding it receives from the Bus Services Support Grant, which helps local authorities subsidise unprofitable, but socially important, bus routes. Some local authorities have looked to European funds as a vital 'top up' funding. This is in line with remarks made earlier regarding the EU taking up certain responsibilities of the states' national governance. Also, it is clear that if this type of process has actually taken place, they are in contrast with certain principles of the EU, most explicitly the additionality principle.

The possible violation of the additionality principle is most explicitly displayed in the Finnish context, regarding the commentaries from the regional councils. Among the regional councils in Finland there is strong consensus that the principle has not been followed in Finland for some years now. What the principle of additionality in practice means is that EU Structural Funds should not replace national or equivalent expenditure by a Member State². However, based on the commentary from the regional councils this is in fact what has been taking place in Finland for some time now. The official procedure regarding the monitoring of the principle states that the principle of additionality is verified only in those member states where less developed regions cover at least 15% of the population because of the scale of the financial resources allocated to them". As Finland falls outside this criterion the principle is not monitored by the EU.

This observation was confirmed by the interviews with Finnish MP's conducted by HU. Both of the interviewees confirmed the notions of the additionality principle in Finland which were initially mentioned in the interviews with regional council members in Finland. The interviewee from the GUE/NGL group in the EU parliament even assumed that the principle is no longer effective in the EU's

² http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/what/glossary/a/additionality

policies³. While the proportion of EU funding allocated to Finland might be relatively low compared to the sums allocated to certain areas such as in Eastern Europe, it might serve as a revealing detail on the way EU funding has actually replaced national money while addressing territorial inequalities within a country.

Finally, it should be noted that cities are not mentioned by the interviewees as key players in addressing territorial inequalities. The absence of references to city or city-region level actors opens two possible interpretations. First, it may be that the issues of territorial inequality and spatial justice were viewed by the interviewees strictly from their own perspective and perspective and as no city level actors were interviewed the role of cities was not acknowledged. Nonetheless, it is important to note that within the EU and national level policymaking, the role of cities or cities regions have been emphasised during recent years⁴. Second, it may reflect the fact that despite the intensified calls for stronger agency, political power and economic importance of city-regions (see e.g. Jonas & Moiso, 2018), the national context is still the most fundamental scale where also the questions of territorial inequalities and spatial justice are primarily addressed.

To sum up.

- The EU influence is perceived as being significantly stronger at the regional level than at federal government in member states.
- The EU presence and relevance is felt through structural funds but also through the “idea and concept import” from EU to the regions
- As a result, the regional level policymakers and actors tend to have better communication and common agendas with the EU than with national level governance entities
- In general, having a stronger role for central (national) governance was required for addressing territorial inequality and advancing spatial justice.
- Certain cases when the EU has replaced the national funding were referred to. These were expressed as the result of a lack of interest from those at the national level for addressing territorial inequality.
- Multilevel governance was referred to as one possible way to integrate the bottom up and top-down approaches for addressing territorial inequality and advancing spatial justice

The effects of austerity policies regarding territorial inequality and /or spatial justice issues

The main impression regarding the role and effect of austerity policies in the EU based on the interviewees in different geographical scales and contexts was that the effects are relatively modest.

³ As noted in above this is not the case. The principle applies to all of the member states, but it has not been verified in Finland as it falls outside the evaluation criteria.

⁴ For example, the Urban agenda of the EU (<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/urban-agenda>)

However, this general conclusion needs some clarification and specification between national contexts and sectors.

First, in countries such as Germany and Finland, the effects were considered to be relatively small. For example, interviewees at the ministerial level in Germany stressed that the 2008 crisis and the subsequent recession, first, didn't strike Germany as hard as other countries, and second, that the consequences of their respective policy fields was quite limited. For instance, in economic policy, some of the funding instruments also present in Germany to a smaller extent (e.g. EFRE, ESF) are seen to dominate the whole national funding environment in other EU-countries. However, if problematized, the 2008 crisis can be seen to have shaped the debate around public deficits and potential ways to reach balanced budgets at the national level, and also at the local level.

Also, the Italian report concludes that a relatively limited impact of the economic recession and austerity measures on territorial inequality emerged from the interviews. However, some variance regarding different sectors was reported regarding the health policy. A clear impact of the crisis on territorial inequality was not visible but regarding the education and housing sectors, the crisis has widened the territorial gaps.

In the Finnish context and especially at the ministerial level, the general opinion among interviewees was that the austerity has not explicitly affected territorial inequality. In general, none of the interviewees from the different ministries explicitly claimed that the changes in structure or level of territorial inequality in their sector would have been directly affected by the economic recession from 2008. However, it was suggested that this may reflect explicitly country-specific features as most severe austerity policies enforced by the so-called EU troika took place in countries other than Finland. Also, especially in the regional context, the interviewees perceived that the territorial inequalities in the country are mainly conditioned by national level regional policy (or lack of it) which is in line with experiences other countries regarding the willingness of those responsible for national governance to tackle territorial inequalities.

In general, the subnational actors reported more visible results from the post 2008 recession and subsequent austerity measures than the actors at the national level. For example, in Ireland it was also noted that austerity has also meant the withdrawal of funding committed to investment in the regions, from physical and social infrastructure, and it has given rise to unemployment and a brain drain. Austerity policies have also meant rowing back on promises to invest in third-level education to improve employment and support pathways to sustainable employment. The Irish report also notes that austerity impacts are thought to have been felt mainly at the local authority level rather than regional or national levels. Thus, for rural areas, the impact of austerity has been major in terms of emigration and unemployment, with long lasting impacts.

In general, Greece and Ireland reported stronger effects at the national scale. A revealing commentary on the role of recession emerges from Greece. The Greek report notes that since 2009, the economic recession and related austerity policies implemented in Greece intensified the already existing territorial and regional inequalities, while the central state regained control of all policy interventions in order to ensure the success of the adjustment programme. As was summarized during the interviews:

"The crisis reduced public spending and subsequently this caused serious problems in the public services such as schools, hospitals, police departments. Various services were shut down. The crisis also affected the private sector.... [All these] intensified spatial inequalities, and more

particularly those among urban and rural areas" (Civil servant from the Ministry of Rural Development and Food)

The Greek report concluded that the recent economic crisis exposed the country's vulnerabilities, but also shed new light on the way regional economies function. Contrary to the economic expansion period, agriculture seems to be quite resilient to the impacts of the current economic crisis. The Greek report therefore suggests that more attention should be paid to rural regions, which due to their dependency on agriculture and tourism managed to confront the impact of crisis. Agriculture forms a 'safety net' against the economic downturn, but it also creates strong linkages with the food manufacturing industry, a sector with high direct and indirect effects on regional employment.

This Greek interpretation on revealing or intensifying the effect of the economic recession was also shared by interviewees in other countries. The Welsh report notes that cuts related to austerity measures have exacerbated problems that were already there, and an older interviewee mused that inequalities have not only worsened over the past decade, but over his lifetime. In line with this are comments from a research institution in Germany at which the interviewee noted that the 2008 crisis and the subsequent recession amplified already existing spatial inequalities which should have been addressed 20 years ago. There was criticism that before the crisis, growth was frequently seen as a key paradigm in European politics, whereas levelling spatial inequalities became highly popular afterwards.

To sum up.

- In general, the effect of austerity measures after the 2008 economic crisis are considered to have been rather small but with some institutional, sectoral and between-country variation
- On average, the impact was stronger in Greece and Ireland and relatively smaller in Italy, Germany and Finland
- Regarding within-country variation, the effects were reported to be stronger in regional and local level than at the federal governance level. At large, for the rural areas, the impact of austerity has been major.
- Overall, it was noted the recent economic crisis has exposed and intensified territorial vulnerabilities, inequalities, and division within countries which were already in place before the crisis.

Summary

The key results of this task can be summarized as follows. Regarding the conceptual definitions, the most common meaning attached to territorial inequalities and spatial justice is "spatially even or equal accessibility to certain services and opportunities". In some cases, this definition is formulated in a way that "people should not be disadvantaged by their place of residence". This definition converges with the one frequently presented in EU documentary as analysed in Task 1.2 of WP1 in the IMAJINE project. Interestingly, interregional differences in economic production (e.g. GDP) were

not referred to by the interviewees as an indicator or meaning of addressing territorial inequalities or spatial justice. This spatially-even access to services or opportunities is a highly problematic definition when put into practice or theoretically scrutinized. It is also in contrast with place-based policies as well as certain basic elements of economic geography and agglomeration economics. Also, the perspectives and definitions of territorial inequality and spatial (in)justice are sensitive to national identities and narratives (e.g. being a rural, poor, or peripheral region). Interviewees also reported that to some extent they are socially produced by the media while referring to lagging regions, rural decline and emphasizing uncritically the benefits of agglomeration economies.

Regarding the role of the EU in addressing territorial inequality and advancing spatial justice the EU influence is perceived as being significantly stronger at the regional level than at the federal government level in member states. Interviewees note that the EU presence and relevance is felt through structural funds but also through the "idea and concept import" from EU to the regions. As a result, the regional level policymakers and actors tend to have better communication and common agendas with the EU than with national level governance agencies. Results also highlight that several actors in subnational governance requested a stronger role by those responsible for central (national) governance for addressing territorial inequalities and advancing spatial justice. Also, certain cases were mentioned in which the EU has replaced national funding and taken more responsibility for addressing territorial inequalities. These were interpreted as resulting from a lack of interest at the national level for advancing spatial justice and geographically balanced development within countries. Finally, multilevel governance was referred to as one way to integrate the bottom-up and top-down approaches for addressing territorial inequalities and advancing spatial justice.

Regarding the effects of austerity measures on territorial inequality and spatial justice, the effects were considered by the interviewees to be rather small but with some institutional, sectoral and between-country variation. In more detail, the impact was more strongly referred to in Greece and Ireland and relatively weaker in Italy, Germany and Finland. Concerning the within-country variation, the effects were reported to be stronger at the regional and local levels than the federal governance level. For the rural areas, the impact of austerity has been major, and it has increased urban-rural differences. Overall, it was noted that the recent economic crisis had exposed and intensified territorial vulnerability, inequality and divisions within countries which had already been affected before the crisis.

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