



Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe

D1.5 Report on the understanding of territorial inequalities and policies in the EU

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Introduction

At large, the Work Package 1 “Conceptual and Policy Review” in the IMAJINE project aimed on establishing the conceptual framework and policy context for the project. This task was conducted by defining certain key concepts for the project and examining their articulation in EU policy. EU policies are in general spatially focused even though not always explicitly and also the spatial or territorial approach is formulated through wide range of undefined and overlapping concepts. For example, even if territorial cohesion remains as a contested and elusive concept, the idea of fostering a kind of spatial justice has been integral part of the development of the European social model and the related effort to promote integration between the EU’s policies, which potentially have a territorial impact. In policy debates, attempts to decrease social and economic disparities of the enlarged EU have some interesting connections with the ideas of solidarity between different parts of Europe. Academic research has also focused on the enduring territorial inequalities in Europe – increasingly leading to discussions about European models of spatial justice through the concept of territorial cohesion.

Within this context, the Work Package 1 in IMAJINE project was divided into three separate tasks. First, Task 1.1 examined how concepts of territorial inequality, social and territorial cohesion and spatial justice are defined in academic literatures. Task 1.2 then interrogated how these concepts are articulated and deployed in policy discourses of the EU. Finally, in Task 1.3, the analysis of scholarly contributions and policy documents addressing territorial inequalities, cohesion and spatial justice was coupled with expert interviews with individuals involved with policy development in Brussels and in different national and subnational contexts. Therefore, the WP 1 sought at large to contribute conceptually as well as empirically to the knowledge base on policy formation that aims at developing integrated mechanisms for tackling territorial inequalities and thus at building a Europe that is more spatially just.

The results from these three tasks are summarized in the following chapters.

Task 1.1. Critical review of scholarly contributions on territorial cohesion/inequality and spatial justice

Task 1.1 of Work Package 1 (WP1) in the IMAJINE project set out to conceptually review the scientific literature regarding the spatial or geographical dimension of concepts such as justice, economy, or inequality. First, while defining the key concept for the project, a Google Scholar search was conducted regarding the most common combinations between geographical concepts of ‘spatial’, ‘territorial’, and ‘regional’ with more normative and policy-oriented concepts of ‘cohesion’, ‘inequality/inequalities’, ‘disparities’, and ‘justice’. This analysis revealed that the concepts, or moreover a combination of concepts, ‘regional inequality’ and ‘regional disparities’ are in terms of pure volume the most commonly used. However, these “concepts” are usually used merely as mechanical descriptions of spatially uneven economic production.

Thereby, at this stage it was decided to focus on a concepts of ‘territorial cohesion’ and ‘spatial justice’ that are more theoretically loaded and have a stronger policy relevance. However, it was also defined that these neighbouring concepts have certain distinctive and important differences.

The former political concept of ‘territorial cohesion’ established its presence in academic literature though its appearance in EU policies and documents, whereas the latter, ‘spatial justice’, is more academically driven involving more explicit normative claims and moral judgements. An extensive literacy review was then conducted regarding these main concepts.

The review on the conceptual history of the social and spatial justice started with the remark that justice (either social or spatial) remains a context-dependent and under-defined term. However, philosopher John Rawls (1971) aimed at a universal and theoretical definition of the concept, and later on, early authors on spatial justice drawing on Rawls, such as Harvey (1973), steered the focus to the urban scale and understood justice mainly as the redistribution of resources. Alternatively, Lefevre (1968) and other “Right to The City” scholars related spatial justice more as “a right to/or access to” something. In a more recent contribution, Israel and Frankel (2017) attributed spatial justice to a “person’s capabilities and liberties”, drawing from the capabilities approach of Sen (1993; 2009). In a broad sense, spatial justice has been conceptualized either as a spatially even distribution of resources (Harvey) or as capabilities, functioning, and freedom (e.g. Sen, Young, and Israel and Frankel).

The review of the academic literature on the policy concept of ‘territorial cohesion’ started with a notion that the roots of the concepts stretch to the tradition of French regional political planning (Faludi, 2004). In the EU policy context, the concept first appeared in 1997 in the Amsterdam Treaty, but the booming era as an academic interest started after 2005. Since then, territorial cohesion has become a buzzword of spatial policies and planning, even though there is still little consensus on its actual meaning (Schön 2005; Evers 2008). In sum, territorial cohesion is an elusive spatial imaginary that can be referred to in policy-making in a number of ways. In Task 1 of WP1 this evasive literature was categorized in four broader thematic categories.

The first category contains those studies that focus on the genealogy of the concept and seek to trace the origins of territorial cohesion as a concept. Within this category, some scholars trace the roots of the concept to the French tradition of *aménagement du territoire*, a sort of spatial planning or regional policy directed at maintaining territorial (national) unity by decentralizing powers and mobilizing regional and local actors around national territorial policies (e.g. Davoudi 2005; Faludi 2004), whereas others have noted that territorial cohesion derives at least partially also from the German tradition of regional policies called a comprehensive integrated approach.

The second category consists of studies which examine territorial cohesion from the perspective of shifts in governance of the EU’s spatial policies. In these studies, territorial cohesion is understood as providing new opportunities or frameworks for governing EU and national spatial policies. In this perspective, the idea and the concept of ‘multilevel governance’ is seen as a way of providing new possibilities for cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation between different forms and levels of governance.

The third category involves studies that approach territorial cohesion as an explicit policy objective. Studies in this category revolve around the tensions between the policy objectives of balanced development and competitiveness, and in some of the contributions, territorial cohesion is seen as a way to combine these objectives. Schön (2005), for instance, argues that pursuing territorial cohesion contributes to both of the objectives by putting in practice integrated and holistic spatial development approaches. According to this politically popular reasoning, territorial cohesion policy

would both reduce disparities and strengthen competitiveness by enabling regions to exploit their endogenous potentials (see Faludi & Waterhout 2005; Evers 2008).

The fourth category in the scientific literature on territorial cohesion consists of studies which have linked the concept to different kinds of spatial frameworks or configurations which might promote or indicate territorial cohesion. In some of the studies, territorial cohesion is considered to give new stimulus to the ESDP's agenda of promoting a polycentric spatial pattern in Europe, which would ultimately lead to balanced and sustainable development (Faludi 2005).

Additionally, the Task 1 in WP1 also noted that besides analysing the ways in which territorial cohesion has been constantly debated and redefined in the literature of (critical) political geography, the process of operationalizing the concept, or of transferring it into a measurable format, can be studied in order to elucidate its definition and meaning. This analysis reveals that since the very meaning of territorial cohesion has remained undefined and ambiguous in policy documents as shown in the previous sections, it is no surprise that also the operationalization of the concept has not resulted in coherent and commonly shared measures. Instead, the operationalization of these rather ambiguous concepts has so far proven rather difficult or even impossible (Böhme, 2005), and thus no commonly shared measure has evolved.

As a result, it was thereby suggested that in future, those engaging in the operationalization of territorial inequalities or spatial justice should acknowledge whether they are approaching the task from an academic interest and motivation or if the task is to fulfil the needs of policymakers. In those attempts that aim to compromise between scientific rigour and usefulness to policymakers, it is important that the operationalization process remains transparent (Hamez 2005).

Based on the literacy review in Task 1.1 it is was also argued that the strong emphasis on the economic dimension in the operationalization of territorial cohesion in the context of European integration should be further discussed and scrutinized. The literature on territorial inequalities and spatial justice highlights a set of issues that go beyond the narrow economic perspective. Currently, the emphasis on macroeconomic production (GDP) instead of household- or individual-level consumption in the operationalizations of territorial cohesion reflects more the interest in an economically competitive EU territory than in spatially balanced economic prosperity. In general, it should more explicitly acknowledged that concepts of spatial justice and territorial cohesion hold many more multidimensional questions than those of uneven economic development measured by indicators and macroeconomic productivity.

It was thereby suggested that the future operationalization of territorial cohesion should consider shifting the focus from macroeconomic indicators towards dimensions that have more direct relevance to the everyday life of populations. Therefore, it was also noted that future operationalization of the concepts of spatial justice and territorial cohesion could benefit from including subjective expressions on the individuals themselves. Here, survey data on subjective wellbeing or the "functioning" of the population in the EU regions, such as the European Social Survey, could be utilized (e.g. Weckroth, Kemppainen, and Sørensen, 2015). These notions converge with the claims expressed by Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi (2009) over the definitions and measures of wellbeing and development.

Also, the moral and ethical foundations in the normative suggestions for territorial inequalities and spatial justice should be more explicitly discussed and considered. Spatial justice as a concept

demands that research has normative as well as analytical goals, meaning that instead of mechanically describing the trends and patterns in territorial inequalities, they need to be evaluated normatively according to values of justice and fairness. This converges with the notions of Böhme (2004), who called for more value-driven analyses of territorial inequalities. For such analyses, recent contributions from Storper (2011) and Israel and Frenkel (2017) provide important theoretical foundations and groundwork. More specifically, the question of geographical scale (and spatial rescaling) when examining territorial cohesion, territorial inequality, or spatial justice is never merely a mechanical exercise, but instead always evokes a division between “us” and “them” which involves both socio-psychological processes and philosophical foundations (see e.g. Storper, 2011; pp. 5-6).

Finally, Task 1 concluded with some remarks regarding the relationship between mobility, territorial cohesion and inequality. As territorial cohesion has remained as a highly ambiguous and contested term with many different layers of meaning also the relationship between territorial cohesion and notions on mobility takes equivocal meanings. First, and within the ESDP framework, this relationship becomes constructed through the integration of polycentric development and mobility. Within this line of thinking, it is implied that polycentricity feeds on mobility as a European polycentric urban system depends on an efficient transport infrastructure along with enhanced physical and interactive connectivity. Thus, territorial cohesion policy appears to have inherited ESDP’s alleged close link between polycentric development and mobility as connectivity (physical and digital). Additionally, some writers have argued that mobility, and more particularly human mobility, gets inserted into the territorial cohesion policy discourse through the ways that urban areas or regions gain or lose populations (Atkinson 2017).

Furthermore, Barca Report (Barca, 2009), sheds more light on the relationship between territorial cohesion and human mobility referring to intra-European and international migration. As Barca Report promotes a place-based approach to territorial cohesion, solutions to possible tensions arising from migration are based on local development initiatives. Besides bringing to the fore the mixed picture between territorial cohesion and human mobility the Barca Report also discloses the relationship between territorial cohesion and human movement by creating a link between intra-European mobility of EU nationals, social inclusion and economic competitiveness. More especially, as the movement of EU citizens across national and supranational space enhance their life-chances and thus promoting social inclusion it also contributes promoting economic efficiency and competitiveness. Thereby, the mobility of EU citizens across regions and countries can only be considered as a favourable process as it promotes the dual goals of economic competitiveness and social inclusion; the two dominant logics of territorial cohesion (Van Well 2012).

Task 1.2. Definitions and ideas of spatial justice and territorial inequality in territorial policy discourses of the EU

The Task 1.2 in WP1 then focused on reflecting the results from the conceptual work in Task 1.1 to the selected EU policy documents. The main interest was to see how these concepts are articulated and deployed in policy discourses of the EU. More specifically, Task 1.2 analysed the different ways ‘territorial cohesion’ has been defined as the guiding spatial principle of EU policies, the arguments

used for approaching it as a policy aim, and whether any temporal change can be detected regarding these two issues.

In this task, the concept of ‘territorial cohesion’ was approached through careful scrutiny of public speeches made by the EU Commissioner of Regional Policy between 2005 and 2017 along with the Cohesion Reports from the same period (3rd to 7th report). The aim is first to investigate how ‘territorial cohesion’ is defined, before exploring which moral, ethical, or economic justifications are used for pursuing it and whether any temporal shifts (e.g. due to the economic recession from 2008 onwards) can be observed in the articulation of and justification for cohesion and territorial policies.

While interested in both the definition of and justification for the concept, the empirical analysis in Task 1.2 addressed specifically the question of “‘territorial cohesion’ of *what* and *why*?” This analytic framework adopted the wording of one of the most distinguished authors on inequality and justice, Amartya Sen. In his book *Inequality Re-examined*, Sen (1992) noted that any analysis of inequality should begin by *first* asking which metrics or dimensions should be examined in a given society and *second* which moral justifications are used for pursuing equality.

The analysis of the research material in Task 1.2 demonstrated that while certain ideas and emphases in the articulation of ‘territorial cohesion’ have remained rather unchanged throughout the period under investigation, certain definitions and rationales have clearly been affected by (or originated from) changes in the broader political context and agendas of the EU.

Based on the empirical analysis in the Task 1.2 those ideas and conceptualizations that seem to have persisted in the EU’s articulation of ‘territorial cohesion’ could be summarized as follows:

- Territorial cohesion is a spatially flexible concept and is associated with different geographical contexts
- Territorial cohesion is mainly approached from an economic perspective, regardless of whether the emphasis is on macroeconomic production (GDP), household income or access to services of economic interest
- Territorial cohesion remains a highly elusive and contested concept, and there seems to be little interest in finding one commonly shared definition
- Throughout its existence in EU terminology, the concept of ‘territorial cohesion’ has been associated with references to the idea of European solidarity.

In turn, those ideas and conceptualizations in the EU’s articulation of ‘territorial cohesion’ that display some temporal changes could be characterized in the following way:

- During the programming periods of 2000 to 2007 and 2008 to 2013, ‘territorial cohesion’ was justified as a means of strengthening economic performance on an EU scale
- In this rationale, seeing less developed regions as cases of underused or underutilized potential served as a useful rhetorical and political strategy
- In the present programming period, a change can be detected towards a more individually focused approach emphasising spatially equal access to services and opportunities

- The rationale for this approach includes more references to the importance of the quality of life, better infrastructure and access to various services and amenities. These references however remain theoretically unfounded
- There seem to be some temporal shifts in both definition and justification of 'territorial cohesion' but these changes seem to relate more to internal structure and organizing of the EU (such as enlargement of the union or change between programming periods) rather than reflect changes in economic contexts such as post 2009 recession.

Task 1.2 therefore suggests that definition of 'territorial cohesion' has contained two main strands. First, the conventional understanding of 'territorial cohesion' has involved reference to existing disparities in the level of economic production between EU regions. In this context, 'territorial cohesion' refers to a situation where some convergence has occurred in economic production between the EU regions. This definition was especially dominant during the programming periods of 2000 to 2007 and 2008 to 2013.

During the latest programming period, from 2014 onwards, the definition of 'territorial cohesion' has shifted towards a more individually focused approach which particularly highlights accessibility to services, amenities and opportunities. From this perspective, 'territorial cohesion' is framed as individual-level access to services of general (economic) interest or spatially even distribution of "opportunities".

Results from the Task 1.2 emphasizes that different definitions of 'territorial cohesion' call for different justifications if the concept is to operate as the guiding spatial principle for EU policies and as an explicit policy goal in itself. Regarding the first definition, which concerns regional disparities, the rationale behind aiming for a more spatially balanced EU has primarily been based on economic accounting, even though some references to the idea of solidarity do appear in the research material. In this line of reasoning, so-called "lagging regions" (i.e. below the EU average in GDP) place an excessive economic burden on the EU that threatens its ability to succeed in the world economy. Here, the definition of such regions as areas with underused potential has proven useful in order to secure the legitimacy of 'territorial cohesion'. This rhetorical strategy contributes to the use of Cohesion and RDF funding (the practical expression of 'territorial cohesion') being seen primarily as an investment rather than the distribution of resources with a spatial or territorial dimension. This, in turn, reflects an agenda where cohesion policy is viewed as an integral part of EU policies that contribute directly to the aims expressed in the Lisbon Strategy. Thus, based on the research material in Task 1.2 the struggle between the ideas of redistribution and investment is very much present during the programming periods of 2000 to 2006 and 2007 to 2013.

The justifications for a more individually oriented definition are based on more than the mere maximization of economic efficiency used in the previous definition. Results from the Task 1.2 suggests that during the latest programming period, when the individually focused definition has gained ground, the idea of 'territorial cohesion' is still justified by the idea of solidarity. In this line of reasoning, the aim of 'territorial cohesion' is to extend the idea of "European solidarity" to every region of the EU in order to enable spatially equal access to services and opportunities for all. Moreover, in this more individually focused approach, the rationale for 'territorial cohesion' is based on references to the results of EU funding that can be observed across EU regions. Interestingly, however, while referring to the physical results obtained from EU funding, such as better infrastructure, it is clear that the tension between investments and redistribution is still very much

present; although this tension seems to have disappeared from the current EU articulation of the concept.

A report from Task 1.2 concludes that a clear shift to a more individually focused definition has occurred in the EU's articulation of 'territorial cohesion', and this definition is also accompanied by remarks on the idea of (European) solidarity. However, as the concept of solidarity is as contested as 'territorial cohesion', the theoretical foundations or reasoning behind the idea of solidarity are not explicitly expressed. Thus, as the emphasis on regional disparities in economic production seems to be losing importance in the 'territorial cohesion' discourses in EU, some sort of theoretical and conceptual void is waiting to be filled. For example, the latter more individually oriented discourse appear to relate more on solidarity between people rather than regions but the spatial nature of this solidarity is not disclosed in the EU articulation. Thereby, within the new individually and amenity-based articulation of 'territorial cohesion', the question of how the idea of solidarity should be integrated into the guiding principles for EU spatial policies remains very much unanswered.

Consequently, it was suggested that while filling this theoretical void, EU policymakers could pay more attention to the concepts of social and especially spatial justice in the relevant academic literature. Thereby, the future attempts to integrate individual-level experiences related to 'territorial cohesion' and associated policies into the idea of solidarity could enjoy greater success than previous efforts to merge the idea of solidarity with the notion that "lagging regions" should increase their economic production.

Based on the empirical analysis in Task 1.2 the report also suggested that a rhetoric integrating the ideas of solidarity and social and spatial justice could also allow academics, policy-makers and the public alike to participate more readily in regional coalitions of interest. Moreover, the renewed discourse on solidarity and justice in the EU articulation could be perceived as more meaningful and accessible at a grass-roots (individual) level. It would also allow connections to be made between demands for spatial justice and pre-existing struggles for other kinds of justice, such as those related to the environment and gender. This more individually focused language and discourse has the potential to be more flexible and inclusive, encompassing many different aspects of life and work instead of forcing every region onto a single trajectory based on assumptions of a direct and linear relationship between macroeconomic growth and wellbeing.

To conclude, the results of this Task 1.2 in the WP of IMAJINE project proposes that while the economic and political context within the EU has changed, a parallel change is also required in language, concepts and rhetoric. As this new language has yet to be fully developed, it is argued that while developing the theoretical and conceptual content for 'territorial cohesion' and cohesion policies in the new programming period from 2020 onward, EU policymakers should give greater recognition to ideas of social and spatial justice. Theories of social and spatial justice could help provide more content for the notion of solidarity between individuals in EU regions. Furthermore, this approach could help spatialize the European Union's social model in more effective ways, thus contributing more directly to the wellbeing and welfare of people in various parts of Europe.

[Task 1.3. Definitions of territorial cohesion among EU and national and regional policy makers: interviews](#)

The final part of WP1, Task 1.3, examined 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. Therefore, Task 1.3 focused on disclosing a range of different and 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 Task 1.3 was to map out the different conceptualizations, ideas and practices of spatial justice, territorial inequality and cohesion between different national and subnational settings through an extensive set of expert interviews.

As an empirical strategy for the Task 1.3 a set of semi-structured interviews was conducted based on the questionnaire defined by HU and AU. While conducting the interviews the questionnaire 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 Task 1.3 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.

A total number of 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 noted 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.

These interviews in national contexts 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 or in a more collated form. These country reports were then systematically analysed by the HU.

The collated text including all of the national summaries was manually coded by HU into three different categories. First, one category focused to the *“conceptual definitions of territorial inequality and /or spatial justice”*. The second category incorporated the key results regarding the *“main actors addressing territorial inequality and /or spatial justice”* and the third category summarized the way how interviewees reviewed the *“effects of austerity policies regarding territorial inequality and /or spatial justice”*.

The key results of this Task 1.3 can be summarized according the above categorization as follows. First, 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. 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.

Second, 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 if felt

though 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.

Finally, 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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