

Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe

D8.4 Initial Outline of Scenarios

Version 2.1

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
DG Region	EU Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LEADER	Liasion entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale (EU rural development scheme)
MESL	Minimum Essential Standard of Living
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SME	Small or Medium-Sized Enterprise
WP	Work Package

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Summary of Interviews	1
1.1	Introduction	1
2.2	Theme 1: Articulated meanings or manifestations of spatial justice: (WP Links: WP1; WP5; WP7). 3	
2.3	Theme 2: Links to changing values on quality of life. (WP Links: WP4; WP5; WP7).....	5
2.4	Theme 3: Identifying underlying causes of spatial injustice	6
1.1.1	The non-availability or non-application of relevant data; (Links: WP2, WP3, WP5, WP6)	6
1.1.2	Gendered aspect of spatial inequality: (Links: WP2; WP5; WP6)	7
1.1.3	Inaccessible or irrelevant educational opportunities. (Links: WP2; WP5; WP6)	9
1.1.4	The impacts of austerity and underlying legacies of underinvestment (Links: WP2; WP3; WP5; WP6: WP7).	10
2.5	Theme 4: Arguments for and against greater local autonomy to overcome spatial injustice (Links: WP2; WP6; WP7).	14
2.6	Theme 5: The challenge of the policy environment (Links: WP1; WP2; WP3; WP6; WP7)..	18
2.7	Theme 6: The relevance of EU principles of social solidarity and territorial cohesion (Links: WP1, WP7).	23
2.8	Conclusions	24
3.	Initial Scenarios	25
3.1	Process of Developing the Initial Scenarios	25
3.2	Outline of Initial Scenarios	32
	HIGH SOLIDARITY / ECONOMIC PROSPERITY	32
	HIGH SOLIDARITY / WELLBEING	34
	HIGH AUTONOMY / ECONOMIC PROSPERITY	36
	HIGH AUTONOMY / WELLBEING	38
3.3	Next Steps	39
	List of references.....	40

Tables

Table 1: Interviewee details.....	2
Table 2: Mapping of evidence from IMAJINE WPs on to the scenario planning process.....	26

Figures

Figure 1: Actors in the DG Regio ecosystem.....	29
Figure 2: Variables and uncertainties acting on DG Regio and policies for territorial inequalities and spatial justice	29
Figure 3: Some rejected axes pairings	31
Figure 4: The initial scenario grid.....	33

1. Introduction

The main focus of IMAJINE Work Package 8 is to develop scenarios that synthesise findings and lessons from the preceding work packages to map out potential future trajectories for dynamics of territorial inequalities and spatial justice in Europe, helping to identify opportunities for policy interventions and to assess the prospective impacts of various interventions. Scenario-building helps to reflect on **imagined futures**, asking questions about whether current policies and strategies to address territorial and spatial justice seem effective in this imagined future. Scenarios can also be used to test new policy ideas, through reflecting more insightfully on the past and the present. The theory and methodology of scenario planning has been discussed in Deliverable 8.1, *Review and Methodology for Participatory Scenario Building*.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in February/March 2020 and the introduction of control measures that restricted capacity of travel and meetings required the re-thinking of the planned approach to participatory scenario building in WP8. A series of in-person focus groups with stakeholders in several case study regions across Europe that had been planned for spring 2020 had to be cancelled and were replaced by a number of individual interviews conducted online. Similarly, plans for a bottom-up approach to developing the initial scenarios through regional stakeholder workshops also had to be reconfigured, with a reversal to a more top-down process. In this, a virtual working group of IMAJINE participants was established to develop an initial set of meta-scenarios at the European scale, which are presented in this report. These initial scenarios will subsequently be tested and refined through stakeholder workshops and consultation with key organizations and external experts (to be reported in Deliverable 8.5) and will form the basis for regional workshops engaging local stakeholders in discussing their implications for the region and related policy strategies (IMAJINE WP8, Sub-task 8.3f).

This document is formed by two primary sections. The first section presents an analysis of the interviews conducted with 20 stakeholders in Ireland, Poland, Spain, Scotland and Wales and outlines six resulting themes that have subsequently been employed to inform the initial scenario development (along with findings from IMAJINE WPs 1-7). The second section briefing describes the process of developing the scenarios and then presents the text of the initial draft scenarios.

2. Summary of Interviews

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present a summary of key findings arising from interviews with citizen-subjects in a selection of partner regions in order to augment the synthetic and relational understandings of spatial justice developed as part of Deliverables 8.1 and 8.2. The report provides an insight into everyday understandings of spatial justice and represents a

means of ‘ground-truthing’ the understandings of spatial justice developed in other WPs. These accounts in turn are used to ensure that the scenario development fully reflects the concerns of a wide range of stakeholders on the question of spatial justice, particularly those representative of community who also connect closely with policymakers and provide an important point of contact between these groups. The interview questions are strongly informed by WP1 conceptualisations of spatial justice, and also by emergent findings from WPs 2-7 that also draw attention to more direct and localised experiences of spatial (in)justice. The interview findings are organised under a series of thematic headings reflecting the main issues raised by the interviewees. The themes identified include:

1. Articulated meanings or manifestations of spatial justice
2. Links to changing values on quality of life
3. Underlying causes of spatial injustice
4. Arguments for and against greater local autonomy to overcome spatial injustice
5. The challenge of the policy environment
6. The relevance of EU principles of social solidarity and territorial cohesion

The interviews were conducted with 20 members of NGOs representing a range of sectoral interests (Table 1). The focus on NGOs allowed for a discussion with individuals who were more intentionally focused and knowledgeable on specific sectoral issues and provides a complement to the citizen survey completed under WP4.

Table 1: Interviewee details			
Country	Sector	Remit	ID Code
Scotland	Gender equality	National	S1
	Health and social care	National	S2
Poland	Cross-border regional development	Regional	P1
	Social challenges; civic participation through social innovation	Regional	P2
	Economic development; SME development	Regional	P3
	Social challenges; civic participation; local NGO support	Regional	P4
Spain	Association of mining municipalities	Regional	Sp1
	Regional and rural development;	Regional	Sp2
	Regional and rural development; economic and local development	Regional	Sp3
	Regional Office – Ministry of Social rights and welfare	Regional	Sp4
	Health transport provider	Regional	Sp5
	Education to socially-excluded groups	Local	Sp6
Wales	Economic and social development	Regional	W1
	Food growers co-operative & local social innovation	Local	W2
	Co-operative – housing advocacy expert	National	W3
Ireland	Rural development	Local	I1
	Rural advocacy	National	I2
	Housing Advocacy	National	I3
	Education and vocational training	Regional	I4
	Independent living	Local	I5

Main points:

- As a term, spatial justice is not familiar to interviewees; however, on discussion its appropriateness to capture and reflect their own range of direct experiences and understandings of issues becomes apparent. These include: the nature of distribution of public resources; access to public and private services; access to and influence over political decision-making; the challenge of securing and presenting evidence to facilitate more normative forms of decision-making on issues relating to all of these issues; the constraints imposed by fixed administrative boundaries to explore flexible arrangements to achieve quality of life outcomes.
- Inter- and intra-regional development differences in terms of levels of progress and quality of life are considered to be evident, and are a source of tension and disillusionment for citizens who remain in these regions but continue to compare their life chances to those in better-off neighbouring regions (usually those with a city or a significant urban centre). For others, the choice is to migrate out in search of better opportunities to secure an optimum quality of life.
- Urban and rural differences in the experiences of spatial injustice are evident.
- There is broad agreement that increased levels of autonomy in decision-making still require top-down support but in a co-ordinated and mutually agreed way, with a preference being expressed for more (inter) regional-level or (inter) municipal-level arrangements that would create synergies and facilitate capacity-building and sustainability for all involved.
- Gendered perspectives on spatial justice are coming increasingly to the fore but evidence collection, particularly qualitative evidence is not being collected with sufficient intensity or frequency. It is a challenge to advance normative evaluations of inequalities using rights-based approaches.
- Sufficient local level evidence collection on other experiences of spatial injustice is also regarded as missing and impacting negatively on policy development and interventions.
- Policy of itself is not always problematic but the level and success of actual delivery of appropriate measures creates and then deflates expectations on the part of citizens and is reflected in unsatisfactory experiences and perceptions of spatial inequality and negative public perceptions of decision-making processes that surround it.

2.2 Theme 1: Articulated meanings or manifestations of spatial justice: (WP Links: WP1; WP5; WP7).

Interviewees were asked whether any specific notion of spatial justice or injustice occurred to them, or what the idea of achieving a state of spatial justice might mean to them, and what might be influencing their perspectives.

No interviewee was initially familiar with the term ‘spatial justice’ but during the course of the interviews the significance of spatial aspects of social justice as they pertained to a range of contexts and spatial scales were recognised and commented on extensively. The main points of consensus were that spatial justice meant citizens having reasonable access to a range of well-functioning public services, infrastructure and facilities; having a voice at relevant governance levels to at least debate on issues of local, regional and national need; having the ability to take part constructively in the development of their localities through building their capacities and enhancing their access to necessary forms of capital. Interviewees from rural regions referred to achieving spatial justice as the removal of spatial disparities that had persisted in rural regions and that had even become worse over time, leaving rural citizens unable to progress to a point where they could achieve a critical development momentum. The manifestation of spatial injustice revealed certain common experiences and perceptions shared by all interviewees, but there was also diversity in the nature of main processes and practices associated with the manifestation of spatial injustice.

P2, representing a regional development organisation specialising in social innovation singled out specific changes that had emerged in Poland over the last thirty years that he connected in part to historical events and expectations on quality of life on the part of Polish citizens. He believed that a sense of frustration and disappointment had come to prevail since the 1990s connected to capitalist market trends, and a clearly-identifiable gap between regions in terms of relative access to resources and wealth. He saw spatial justice as the achievement of “equal chances”; about

“achieving or at least pursuing an equilibrium of opportunities and quality of life, no matter where you live, not only in terms of whether people objectively have these opportunities, but also in terms of equal use of these opportunities”.

A spatially-just space was one where “the spatial distribution of the important criteria of assessing the equality of chances is random”. He asserted that social inequalities were not about the distribution of resources but also about their perception, reception and social consequences; the perceptions of individuals in worse-off regions that they in a place that would not progress and that would not offer them the opportunities to progress and improve their quality of life. In the Polish case this had led in some instances to a harking back to previous administrative structures and a social memory of more prosperous times in the past.

P3 felt that the term spatial justice had a parallel meaning with the term spatial cohesion, which for him meant equal access, or equal opportunities to access different types of activities related to education, to the labour market, to cultural services:

“This is the question of the basic conditions for anyone, or chances for anyone to grow up in, let’s say, the best possible manner. So yes, you can say justice, but in Polish, justice means something really huge, so [the term] equality or equity or cohesion is much more often used than justice”.

Sp6 associated spatial justice specifically with environmental justice; access to green areas (in the urban in particular) access to public transport, and equality of access to health services. He referred to an urban centre in the Asturias region that suffered from major air pollution caused mainly by heavy industry, but the pressure to retain these industries for economic reasons over environmental ones was intensely felt by local authorities:

“The reason is very easy to understand; in Spain and Asturias we have a very big problem with unemployment, and so industries threaten to take their production to other countries where there are no environmental controls. So we are in the constant tension between ‘either health or employment’”.

Thus achieving spatial justice was always conditional on competing forces to sustain and growth the economy, whether it was in industry or construction (particularly of housing, also considered to be in over-supply).

W3 focused particularly on the theme of housing and lack of access to affordable housing as a reflection of a condition of spatial injustice: *“One of the things driving people out [of their localities] in terms of spatial justice is that they don’t see any future in a village or community where they can’t afford buy a property”.* Spatial justice thus meant the capacity to exercise some kind of control, ideally at local level, over those processes and conditions that gave rise to a situation of exclusion from housing and that led to displacement of local populations.

Sp1 who represented the Association of Mining Municipalities provided the following definition of spatial **injustice**:

“Spatial injustice represents mechanisms of spatial discrimination that generate these processes of cumulative causation or vicious circles of growth between different territories, caused by the geographical location and political, social, economic and historical factors”.

For him, this status and conditions of the mining areas and remaining communities exemplified an experience of spatial injustice.

2.3 Theme 2: Links to changing values on quality of life. (WP Links: WP4; WP5; WP7).

The issue of EU values as an important guide for the achievement of democracy and quality of life was particularly mentioned in the Polish context – the concern that an insistence on adhering to democratic principles was not being directed by the EU at the Polish national government, and that it was not acceptable that a nation would accept EU funding and resources without the values that underpinned it; values that also provide forms of social and spatial justice to Polish citizens as members of the EU:

“It’s important to confirm that with the EU also comes the rule of law, democracy, and the quality of life of the people; People would like to take the money, but do not take the values that come with it” (P1).

P3 felt that values were changing all the time, something that was a key challenge but also a potential strength of public administration – to understand these changes and to even predict and respond to them where feasible. He identified the environment as a key example where people now required good conditions, including good quality of drinking water, air and access to green energy. Expectations were also growing in relation to access to public services, particularly health care and transport, although supply was not always felt to be meeting demand.

W1 felt that one had to be cautious when speaking about changing values; that it remained very important to understand how critical people's economic position was to their quality of life; that their economic position and how much money they had remained a major factor in their life experiences, influencing where they could live, what they could do, and what they could access.

2.4 Theme 3: Identifying underlying causes of spatial injustice

1.1.1 *The non-availability or non-application of relevant data; (Links: WP2, WP3, WP5, WP6)*

The collection of relevant regional and local evidence was extensively highlighted as a key issue in defining priority issues and focusing policy emphasis– the kind of evidence collected and what it represented.

The way that rural was defined nationally to assess an average acceptable standard of living was regarded by some commentators as a source of inequality and injustice. Respondent I2, a representative from a national-level Irish rural advocacy group pointed to quantitative evidence for 'income inadequacies' as measured by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, a voluntary organisation established to tackle poverty and social exclusion. Using a measure called the Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL), it assesses the essential Consumer Price Index basket of goods and services deemed necessary for a minimum standard of living. It provides expenditure data and income adequacy assessments for urban and rural households in receipt of social welfare payments. Results for 2020 showed that households living in rural areas continued to have different and additional expenditure needs to cover in order to have the same minimum standard of living as households living in urban areas. These higher costs were related primarily to transport and home energy. The reliance on cars was estimated to generate a cost of €67.69 for a pensioner living alone in a rural area, compared to €6.92 for all pension household types in urban areas.

In urban contexts, the lack of relevant qualitative evidence collection to inform public policies was identified as leading to denial of access to public services. The example (provided in more detail below) was of gendered inequalities in access to service provision. This example also pertained to persons with disabilities, or other traditionally excluded groups whose social and spatial exclusion was also strongly linked to low incomes but greater reliance on public services to achieve a reasonable quality of life.

S1 also referred to the lack of sufficient qualitative and quantitative data on the actual experiences of persons with disabilities or care needs, particularly around what she termed ‘protected characteristics’ such as ethnicity in order to make robust arguments for policy change around service delivery.

Sp4 discussed the value of having local level data as a means to have meaningful conversations with citizens about how to plan effectively for local service provision and agree on what is just and acceptable from a service provision point of view:

“If you have data, you can talk to people. Of course, the concept of justice is quite subjective. It’s not a question of numbers, but my final message would be go for local data; let’s do better planning of resources, implementation of projects....If we have evidence, we can go for more just distribution and talk to people not from an emotional point of view, but from a technical point of view....Local data is so scarce, and you realise you can’t go further [in planning for just distribution]. You have to keep your design at regional level. And regional means nothing for daily lives. No one lives at a regional level. You live in a city or in a town, but regional is more theoretical”.

P3 commented that the problem was often that commonly-agreed standards for public service delivery had not even been established, which was why there was such a variance in experiences of service delivery and difficulty in making changes.

1.1.2 Gendered aspect of spatial inequality: (Links: WP2; WP5; WP6)

According to S1, whose organisation campaigns for equal opportunities over the lifecycle for men and women, decision-making on public service provision was often based on established assumptions and a level of spatial blindness to the needs of specific gendered roles and responsibilities. This was particularly evident when representing gendered needs in the spatial provision of public services such as transport, childcare and healthcare. For example, the design of transport routes in urban settings tended to adopt a radial, hub-and-spoke pattern that placed the location of employment at the centre, with childcare and other services radiating outwards. The reality, however, was that women joined multiple journeys together and that “transport plans are not conceived around that way of using a transport system” Childcare, particularly in suburban settings, was more likely to be close to the home. This also tended to dictate choices for shopping, healthcare and other services and facilities. Journeys to these services were normally arranged along more complex lateral and horizontal travel routes that rarely mirrored the actually available public transport services. For women in particular who relied on public transport, this had the immediate effect of restricting their activity spaces and their choice of services, facilities and employment; i.e. their access to opportunities for self-development and achievement of quality of life. Revealing this complexity for the purposes of informing policy required local-level evidence collection; typical methods of evidence collection are in the form of travel diaries or other similar instruments as opposed to more quantitative data on levels of actual transport use which revealed little about actual capacities to access services. A traditional approach to travel

diaries was to ask the householder who was frequently a male head of house to complete them. Although this has progressed, the collection of data is still considered insufficient to inform good policy.

Critiques of neoliberal trends in urban spatial planning and the impact of key stakeholders to influence the shape of the built environment particularly through financial investment, with resulting forms of social and spatial exclusion for certain groups have been strongly advanced by Soja (2008) and Harvey (2008). Spatial planning assumptions about the relationships between work, place of residence, incomes, family structure, physical mobility and other variables in design of the urban built environment have also been strongly critiqued for their perpetuation of social and spatial inequalities. Some of these points were raised by I3, a national housing advocacy organisation. While not solely a gendered issue, the issue of exclusion of access to suitable housing can be increasingly framed within discourses of neoliberal spatial planning and is particularly evident through trends in developer-led planning and development of the built environment. I3 spoke particularly about Dublin City Centre development, in areas like the Docklands where a number of high profile tech companies have set up offices and have incentivized the development of expensive apartment blocks in what were traditionally and predominantly working class areas. This has had the effect of pushing up property prices out of reach of residents from the area and generating processes of gentrification of former local authority housing. Local authorities no longer retain significant housing stocks of their own, but still had to deal with a housing crisis for people on low incomes. These kinds of moves usually meant disruption for childcare arrangements if families were providing that support, for children in school if they repeatedly had to move from one rented home to another, and for parents in terms of the location of their jobs. Women, particularly single parents, were highly vulnerable to the impacts of housing inequalities, as they tended to rely on family supports – parents or other family members living in that area - for childcare in particular to allow them to take up employment or prepare for it through accessing education and training. Securing accommodation in suitable locations was seen as critical, and housing was described as an anchor to many other aspects of life:

“These are predominantly working class areas and the people who are from there have not been able to stay there and have not been able to afford to live there anymore. And you know, they might have grown up in a local authority home here. And then when it came to them [local authority] trying to find homes, there were none to be had. So then they would have to rent, but they can’t compete; they can’t get a place to rent; they’re left either entering homelessness or having to leave the area, and they are more than likely leaving to go into insecure [temporary] rented accommodation. Then you are definitely going to find yourself at a disadvantage”.

Gendered dimensions to the digital divide were also observed in the Scottish context, with a strong connection being made to women’s lower than average engagement with digital

technology or access to the internet, something that was exacerbated by low incomes (unaffordability) and other constraints (caring responsibilities, etc.) (S1).

1.1.3 Inaccessible or irrelevant educational opportunities. (Links: WP2; WP5; WP6)

For rural regions lack of educational opportunities were identified as a main source of spatial injustice. This was particularly the case in the Spanish context. Policies to improve the educational profile of rural populations, particularly for vocational or more applied training, with a view to preparing them to access the employment market were seen as failing to match the reality of regional and local needs and circumstances. They were identified as a significant source of rural inequality leading to a range of consequences for the progression chances and quality of life of younger people in particular. Sp2 contended that sub groups within rural populations were viewed as homogenous, without account taken of population density, limited variety in training offered and little matching to local needs and employment opportunities. The example provided was of vocational training modules being set at central government level and then delivered at the local level, with no flexibility available to adapt or innovate with content. In the case of vocational training, the same content might be taught for 20 to 30 years with no change in content and no attention to the local context or actual local employment needs. Car painting, clerical work, or social and health care were cited as typical examples. While it was felt there might be opportunities for social and health care due to the ageing rural population, this was not considered to be the case for the other two:

“We've been relying on the same trainings for 20 years or more: social and health care, and the automotive industry. And young people either study that or they have to go elsewhere. Here, the request is to change the type of training every now and then, but this is not done” (Sp3).

“The facilities (to teach the courses and to apply the skills) are expensive since they involve equipment that is possibly only available in one business (e.g. car painting). So there is very little chance that those people who are trained will have a job. It is not every year that there are 15 jobs for people who paint cars or for clerks. There is another type of training that is sometimes organised through town councils or trade unions, which is not formal training but is of an occupational nature (courses of shorter duration) and this training is normally financed by the European Social Fund. However, sometimes we think: ‘a group of 15 people, who are women, who want to do specific training and who are all over 25 years old’ [funding criteria]- it is difficult to organise such training in a small territory” (Sp2).

Sp1 discussed another example of a project related to the restoration of the mining regions, where significant public funding had been given to the development of a university campus to facilitate access to higher education for young people from the mining area that was not relevant to the needs of the area: A large university campus was built there with state funds (mining funds) to facilitate access to higher education for young people from the mining areas:

“The infrastructure was financed, and the campus was provided with higher education training content with various degrees related to mining engineering, topography, forestry engineering and other degrees. Well, today, the xxxx campus is a campus with a lot of technology, but it has barely any students. Why? Because the degrees offered were not adapted to the training needs of young people in the mining regions. A lot of money was invested in building a university campus that is now empty. It has a capacity for at least 10,000 students and these do not even reach 1,000”.

In the Irish example, the situation was very different. In 2013, sixteen regional ‘Education and Training Boards’ were established under the remit of the Department of Education. ETBs operate at primary and secondary school level, and at further and adult education levels, delivering education and training programmes. Their regional structure allows them considerable flexibility to conduct continuous needs analysis in local communities (while still adhering to national-level education and training strategies) and they provide training specifically designed to meet those needs. There is a high awareness of rural constraints to accessing skills-based education and training, with the priority being to bring training out to communities to overcome transport limitations in particular, and to provide small accommodation allowances where daily transport cannot be provided.

1.1.4 *The impacts of austerity and underlying legacies of underinvestment (Links: WP2; WP3; WP5; WP6: WP7).*

The 2008 economic crisis and the impacts of austerity are believed to have been strongly felt by rural (and more disadvantaged urban communities). Sp6 reflected on the way it had impacted on people’s thinking about the meaning of welfare:

“I think that people have evolved quite a lot lately with regard to the concept of welfare, since the economic crisis has taken a lot of purchasing power away from many people, and that has changed the focus on the idea of welfare. I think that maybe 15 years ago, before the crisis hit us, there was a concept of welfare that was much more associated with income, but now it's moving to concepts such as access to public services (above all, after the pandemic, I think we're seeing that access to health is a very important issue), also access to services such as local commerce (not having to move around too much in the city to be able to do your shopping) and, of course, access to transport”.

The Asturias region, for example, is characterised by higher levels of mobility because of the lack of job stability in the region which used to rely heavily on the mining industry for employment. Unemployment is high and outmigration to urban centres and other regions is an ongoing trend. Many individuals travel a distance to secure employment that is often based on short-term contracts, resulting in their perhaps needing to hold a second job. Affordable public transport is therefore now essential, not just to access employment but also other public services. These complex mobility patterns between work, home, services and facilities mean that the way public transport actually connects with different nodes is vitally important. However, the evidence is that bus companies providing rural services (including those availing of public subsidies, have cut services on routes that are not profitable). It is

often a single provider who is offering the service, meaning rural dwellers have little service choice and even less service flexibility.

These challenges for users of public transport was also flagged by P1. For young people or others who could not afford a car, having adequate public transport provision was essential to their securing jobs and preventing outmigration. She also cited the problem of the use of strict economic rationality for retaining a public bus service along a particular route that might not seem financially viable; however its removal has a cumulative impact for the relevant communities who are now socially and spatially isolated as well as deprived, and holding the perception that they have been treated unfairly.

These concerns about transport inadequacies were echoed by other respondents, particularly in the Irish context where strategies to deal with it were regarded as being devised in a top-down manner without due regard to the specific and unique needs of its users. I2 who works for a rural advocacy organisation referred to recent changes to local rural transport schemes that meant that local level services were now tendered out nationally, based on the best price received. For older, or disabled transport users, knowing their local bus driver was seen as a vitally important part of the service. This had traditionally been a member of the local community, but now it could be a new driver from any part of the country who had no knowledge of the local customers. It raised quality of life issues that extended beyond the economic cost of the service. Calls for a local 'uber-taxi' type service had not been listened to by policy makers. Problems faced by many rural dwellers who relied on public transport to keep hospital appointments, for example, remained the same as they had a decade or more ago; taking the single service on offer in the morning and then possibly waiting the entire day to take the single service home again in the evenings.

The notion of bringing services out to the community to overcome transport constraints was strongly made by I2 who is involved with a local rural development organization. Her observation was that the focus on transport limitations, while a serious issue, also tended to promote a policy narrative of rural dependency that then influenced the starting point for dealing with the issue; that rural dwellers should be grateful to receive any level of service at all. Bringing out certain services to the community removed significant limitations to achieving quality of life. She also raised the issue of the relevance and suitability of a service to rural populations, particularly one that is centrally devised without the associated public service constraints of more remote populations in mind. Access to high-speed broadband and the issue of the rural digital divide was referenced as a significant issue in this regard.

Sp3 also drew attention to the barriers to opportunities presented by the digital divide in rural areas in particular, especially the issue of internet connection and the implications for achieving spatial justice:

“There is no optic fibre or it is being installed only now. In the high areas there is no mobile coverage, there is no internet, there is nothing. So, when I hear about the new times and the European policy of intelligent tourist destinations, sustainability and technology, I want to

laugh at it... Here it is going to be, at least for the moment, impossible, and let's not talk about working from home... And it is an opportunity for rural areas, or so they say, because now with COVID people may want a second home and work from there. But the reality is that connectivity is very poor, and in some areas, completely non-existent. And everyone is aware that it is a priority but we have been doing this for a long time”.

Another aspect to the digital divide was raised by Sp4, who focused on the capacity of older rural populations to even engage with the internet; yet, assumptions about such capacities were implicit in certain service providers’ decisions to withdraw services:

“For example, banks. There are little towns where they don’t even have a good connection to the Internet. They have to do everything through the Internet and they are 85 years old on average. And they don’t have a computer. And people are working in the big cities, no one is around to help them”.

I1 referred to the Australian concept of ‘No Wrong Door’ – a model of social care whereby a local GP as a traditional contact point for health services, has the knowledge of services to refer a patient to a suite of required supports as opposed to being just limited to general practice enquiries. However, support services were frequently unavailable leading to wider economic and social implications for others. For example, caring services for people with chronic illness such as dementia, associated with older persons who in turn constitute a high proportion of rural populations, were often unavailable, meaning a family member otherwise in productive employment would frequently give up this employment to act as a carer.

This issue of bringing public services out to more isolated areas or returning them to areas where they once existed was also raised in the Welsh context. W2 argued that social and spatial isolation would continue in places where services were made available elsewhere, and where the means to connect to these services was facilitated. She regarded it as further weakening the existing social fabric and local identity of a place and completely against the concept of achieving spatial justice.

A specific point about persons with disabilities in rural areas was raised by I5 who works with an Irish organisation providing training and supports to those with conditions limiting their capacity to live independently but seeking ways of achieving as much independence as possible to enjoy a reasonable quality of life. She pointed to the trend away from institutional care to care in the community as being intended to promote freedom, choice and independence for the individual concerned; however, in her experience, in more remote rural settings these individuals enjoyed few of these things. If such an individual was provided with a home in a rural area, without access to suitable transport, with limited or non-existent social services, relying on a public health nurse or helper whose contract during austerity was cut to 1 hour per day with each client, then you became much worse off than you had been in an institutional setting. She pointed to the inefficiencies of distributing services to individuals across long distances that spread them too thinly to be effective, and that perpetuated inequalities. She advocated for models of support that were co-ordinated with service

providers, with housing co-located in settings that also incorporated relevant community involvement, perhaps in smaller town or village settings.

On this same issue of the actual availability of services in the rural, S2 who represents a health, disability and social care advocacy organisation stated that inequalities in access to services persisted there. Even though persons with disability or other care needs might have entitlements to a range of social care supports, these supports were not all always available in rural areas; some individuals had been advised by social work professionals that they might need to relocate to a larger area if they wanted to access them. The problem of actually sourcing information on services in rural areas particularly information on entitlements to health service supports (with resulting exclusion from services and a loss of quality of life) was also raised by I1 who said that in her experience it was often a case of incidental contacts with individuals like her who possessed a level of expert or insider knowledge and more resource-rich networks, meeting her perhaps at community meetings or other events, where questions of this nature would be put to her once her level of knowledge on one rural issue was recognised. She described the 'reach' of information from the centre to the rural using an 'echo' analogy – the further out from the centre, the weaker and less impactful the waves of information became. She asserted that general assumptions were made by healthcare professionals at central government or at regional government agency levels about the availability of and access to information in the rural; the assumption that everyone actually had access via digital media or other forums; that everyone was literate; that everyone understood their entitlements. This was regarded as a form of spatial inequality particularly evident in more remote, rural areas whereby the right to access services was denied through failure of those in power to act with a duty of care to inform individuals, particularly from more vulnerable and hard to reach groups, of those rights.

S1 described the impacts of austerity as having a significant gendered dimension in the sense that it hit women disproportionately, with 85% of cuts having come from women's pockets, from pensions, pay, taxes and service cuts.

In Poland, the feeling was that the 2008 economic crisis had not hit with the same intensity; however, the legacy of national and/or regional under-investment especially in more rural and peripheral regions was strongly identified as an underlying cause of experiences of spatial injustice. According to P1, when there was under-investment in infrastructure, coupled with low skills levels and other deficiencies such as insufficient access to other forms of education, housing or transport, there was a self-perpetuating and self-reinforcing impact.

P3 similarly referred to the problem of extremely divergent quality of public services, particularly in health, education and public transport. These differences were not just spatially oriented, but they were also dependent on the size and relative prosperity of the municipality and the associated capacity and quality of public governance. For example, the Kaliningrad region on the Russian border suffered from a lower per capital income, which was in turn meant lower quality of public services. In other words there were issues with

redistributive mechanisms which meant that regions such as this one could not be sufficiently compensated to reach a point where sustainable development and change could be achieved.

Sp 1 believed that in rural areas in Spain in particular the austerity crisis affected them later. The 2008 crisis was more noticeable in 2010 or 2011. The impact was like a wave: coming later and leaving later. The problem as she saw it was always the same: resources were scarce and they were invested where there was more robustness and likelihood of success on investment.

In rural contexts, higher energy costs were connected to the lack of alternative options to home heating oil and the proportion of older houses built without insulation. Higher waste charges were related to unfavourable economies of scale for service providers (all now contracted out to private providers), and higher food costs related to distance to larger supermarkets that could also operate at higher economies of scale. Spanish interviewees (Sp2, Sp3, Sp6) contended that the idea of energy poverty and energy justice was increasingly linked to the concept of wellbeing, especially for more socially and economically-vulnerable populations who struggled to afford to heat their homes.

In the case of Spain, Sp3 believed that both the national and regional governments were aware of the weaknesses of rural area and had been for a long time (depopulation, outmigration, lack of capacity and economic diversity, lack of capital, limited public service provision) but they had done nothing to alleviate them. She indicated that the municipalities and local administrations had very little room for manoeuvre, and they could not do much to improve the situation: *“Here, what has long been asked of both the regional and national government is that different policies be applied in rural and depopulated areas: tax benefits, incentives for business start-ups, incentives for public workers, e.g., qualified doctors who do not want to come to these areas. But I think everyone is aware of this, but the policies are still implemented without making exceptions, without taking this into account”*.

2.5 Theme 4: Arguments for and against greater local autonomy to overcome spatial injustice (Links: WP2; WP6; WP7).

The question of whether greater levels of local autonomy in governance and decision-making would enhance the experience of spatial justice received mixed responses.

Rural civil society was regarded by several commentators as diverse in its capacity to exert agency. In locations where population had migrated out for education or for employment, social capital was weakened and citizens struggled to exert initiative or agency over development in their localities. The strong contention was that more targeted and sustained forms of capacity-building were required, with more flexibility allowed to rural development organisations to provide relevant support in tackling spatial inequalities. I1 and I2 referred particularly to decisions on LEADER priorities, especially central government demands that funding estimates be set out by local development organisations before development had

begun. These were regarded as constraints to responding to actual needs and stifling of innovation in specific places.

Examples were provided of the language barrier for local or regional rural groups to take part in applications for EU project funding (where English is required to participate). A spatial spread of successful localities (where these forms of capital were available) often emerged, with success giving rise to further success but with other localities never managing to participate. This was seen as particularly prevalent in more remote rural areas with sparse, ageing populations, where expertise, capacity and the critical mass of active and engaged citizens was not available. W1 also referred to the barriers presented by competitive funding calls for regions and communities with less capacity or access to needed forms of capital and technical expertise, and the risk of perpetuating spatial exclusion and injustice.

This understanding of spatial injustice as the existence of mechanisms of spatial discrimination that generated vicious cycles of growth between territories was also described as a result of concentrating resources in key locations to the detriment of other locations without any equalising mechanisms. This was especially remarked upon by Sp1 and Sp6 whose work focused on more rural and remote areas. The flight of savings, capital and labour was believed to have major implications for any aspirations to improve spatial inequalities through changed forms of governance; for example, by devolving power down to more local or even regional levels. The belief was that any strategy to simply devolve power and responsibility down to more local levels would be a futile exercise as local capacity to take on these roles did not exist. In the case of public health services, Sp5 described a well-functioning system managed by central government (although also considered an unsustainable model in the longer term). He described the prospect of it being broken up into regional units as potentially disastrous; each region would want its own specialists in all areas of health; poorer rural regions would not be able to sustain the service; inefficiencies and service decline would soon follow. At the same time, development decisions made by central government were regarded as having been a failure for rural regions like Asturias. The example given by Sp1 was of the transition from mining to other occupations by workers – the vision of a ‘just transition’. It was contended that funding without a coherent strategic plan had been provided for over 20 years; that there had been little joined up thinking that linked with the region’s other strengths or potentials for specialisation, i.e. no focus on properly developing its endogenous resources. Only about half of the funding was drawn down due to complex bureaucratic procedures and lack of human capital at local (including smaller municipal) levels to make applications; feasibility studies were not conducted in advance and there was no understanding of local problems; unsuitable funded projects failed to be sustainable.

A similar historical context prevails in South Wales, also a former coal mining area that is still striving to overcome a legacy of decline and withdrawal of that industry and the impacts of subsequent waves of development. It was acknowledged that some top-down schemes been ineffective in tackling economic decline. An example cited was that of a recent scheme for

the development of empty homes that had fallen into disrepair or become abandoned, in order to bring them back into use:

“This is fine in itself but it doesn’t do anything to prevent future homes falling into disuse and disrepair; it doesn’t do anything to stem that tide because an empty home in the valleys is the symptom of the deep-rooted economic challenges. So we will have a generation of homes that have been redeveloped and regenerated, which is great; but what does that do for the circumstances around why those homes become derelict in the first place?” (W1).

W1 believed that while a solely top-down approach would not be the answer to tackling the challenges of spatial inequalities, neither would a predominantly bottom-up approach; there needed to be a combination of both. However, power did have to be devolved to communities; the experience of development being “‘done to’ rather than ‘done with’” had been the predominant one, and there had not been enough “meeting in the middle” by the top or the grassroots” (W1). The suggestion by Sp1 was for a ‘supra-municipal’ level of governance as a counterweight to central government; bringing together municipalities in partnership entities that have a less locally-focused vision of development strategies. This idea of ‘co-governance’ at different scales with a more agile and effective regulatory system to attract funds and financing, with ‘borders’ changing to suit the issue in question was advocated. P1 referred to the need for regional alliances among rural regions based on collaboration on a series of agreed projects; this would lead to capacity-building and exchange of skills, adding value through stakeholder co-operation.

W3, again speaking very specifically about housing, described the need for local authorities and local community groups to develop far greater awareness of their own autonomy to agree flexible social and affordable housing arrangements, including co-operative housing models. The groups that had to fight hardest to establish what were more sustainable local models of housing were those developing bottom-up community-led housing initiatives. In many areas within Wales, the demand for second home ownership or home purchase by retirees (incentivized further by Covid-19 circumstances and the Welsh government’s policy setting a target of 30% of persons working from home) had increased the value of housing, putting it beyond the reach of many local people. It had also created concerns among traditional Welsh-speaking communities about their cultural and linguistic vulnerability into the future. Among the challenges facing community groups were the lack of knowledge on the part of local authority housing officers and local social welfare officers on what community-led or co-operative housing initiatives were, and their legal status and what they conferred in terms of rights to co-operative members. W3 also referred to a certain lack of other legislative supports that put Wales out of step with England and Scotland:

“England has a very large community-led housing fund that has been in existence for over five years, that has really fuelled the expansion of community-led housing. England also has a long tradition of cooperative housing....we are starting from a very low base – under 0.1% of the population. In Scotland they’ve had legislation to empower communities to buy existing property – whole islands in some cases – and that has been extended to urban areas; so they

have a 'right to buy' legislation for communities; So, we don't have the structural funds and we don't have the legislative powers".

P1 described the considerable success achieved by a 10 region (partner) 5 country grouping that operated on the basis of co-operation among the regions' that are self-governed through political consensus and operated through a range of agreed projects and extensive forms of networking and knowledge-sharing. She described the grouping as representing regions that were predominantly rural, or at least without a major city, and facing all of the same challenges as many rural areas with outmigration, brain drain, lack of key infrastructure (particularly transport and high-speed broadband) and a dearth of key skills including digital skills. P1's organisation supported the cross-border co-operation structure and the associated projects. The structure was regarded as an effective way to add value to the initiatives. She also remarked on the impact of historic waves of direct investment to these regions, from sources such as the EU Cohesion Fund. Her sense was that those regions that received funding do not show a great difference in their fortunes from where they were 16 year ago:

"The regions which were quite rich in (anonymised) area were doing quite well and are now even richer, but the ones who were left behind then are still lagging behind and maybe now it's an even bigger gap between them. We see it now as an even bigger challenge".

P1 remarked that the evidence of EU funding having been secured or not was clearly visible when one travelled through different regions of Poland. This variation in success was directly related to local and regional capacities; regions with a significant urban centre, often with a university where expertise was available to develop funding applications achieved success which then became the springboard for further success. This notion of reaching a level of critical momentum was seen as crucial to breaking what was described as a cycle of underinvestment, brain drain, poor capacity and weak forms of capital. She discussed the impact of this on perceptions of the regions left behind; they became unattractive for young people or professionals who might have left; for those who remained, they also become disillusioned with their life chances in a place that does not seem to have many opportunities to offer them.

P3 also described a situation whereby municipalities would possibly have a larger budget than the region in which it is situated but where there would be no subordination between the two levels and no level of vertical integration. He described an increasing number of arrangement involving groups of municipalities seeking to prepare their own development strategies, for example on solid waste management; in other words, where decisions are best made at the local level, but in a collaborative arrangement. He referred to the possibilities of overcoming urban and rural differences at this level through taking a functional areas approach to development:

"If we are talking urban-rural relations, I think that we should talk about urban-rural connections and urban-rural functional areas and treat them as one entire territory. In many cases, the source for the problem-solving for rural areas lies in cities. In many cases, for

example, education, or public transport or cultural services or social integration services are organised in cities even though they are also servicing rural areas; so the key is cooperation between the urban and the rural to manage the differences between the two, not to agree on or to accept two big differences; so, you have to manage the differences; and if the differences are reaching an unacceptable level it means the problem is growing and you must act in a very smart way [to alleviate it]. It does not necessarily require central government intervening in every place; it requires a systemic solution; positive regulation from the central level, supporting [longterm] co-operation and teamwork between urban and rural areas”.

S1 expressed mixed views about the value of greater local autonomy from a gendered perspective:

“I struggle with this sense of local decision-making always being best because women are so excluded from community-based decision-making mechanisms; decisions are not always made in the interests of minorities, women or disabled persons”.

Her contention was that everyone needed to be brought into the decision-making process rather than situating it in the hands of white, non-disabled straight men; i.e. that it would not perpetuate stereotypes or other structures of inequality. In this same vein, she suggested that there might be an argument for keeping certain decision-making about women’s equality and rights at the national level where there was a national press, a national policy attention and a national parliament to provide oversight. The capacity for local media to cover local events in the sense of a form of oversight and route to public accountability had been reduced in recent years due to cutbacks and consolidation of local outlets.

P2 Indicated that he was a strong enthusiast for the idea of subsidiarity; that whatever could happen locally should be allowed to take place. However, he contended that this was not enough; that distribution of resources and supports required “coordination and consent”; that “support was essential, but not in a ‘paternalistic’ pattern of ‘development aid’ or central planning”; that it had to be a combination of local innovation and energy with external resources and know-how. He felt that empowerment of stakeholders was crucial.

Sp3 was not optimistic about the opportunities for local autonomy:

“I do not believe that the problems that exist right now will be solved with more local autonomy. They won’t, because there is no staff capacity, no technical capacity... This is my personal opinion. I base my opinions on what I see here. People end up working in rural areas by chance. The most prepared and capable people are not in the rural areas. Well, there is always someone, but it is not the most usual thing, and I say this because I worked in more places... There is no capacity, neither technical nor personal. It’s sad but there isn’t”.

2.6 Theme 5: The challenge of the policy environment (Links: WP1; WP2; WP3; WP6; WP7).

In the context of rural development programmes such as LEADER, the belief from Spanish and Irish commentators was that this was no longer about innovation that might promote

entrepreneurship because the flexibility to adapt to local level constraints or opportunities was no longer available.

In the majority of examples of experiences of rural inequalities, efforts to influence public policy were regarded as challenging and required sustained engagement with policy-makers on issues relating to gender, housing, transport, health, education and social welfare. In the Spanish context (Sp.6) lack of transparency and corruption at a range of scales from national to local was believed to have created a lack of trust in government. Although a democracy in name, in reality it was felt that power was exercised by political parties and not citizens. The Asturias region in particular had been under mainly Socialist Party control for almost 30 years, which had created apathy and low citizen participation. Sp6, whose work included teaching prisoners at the regional prison pointed out that involvement in crime stemmed from underlying social and economic conditions, starting with an epidemic of heroin addiction in the mining areas in the 1980s, reinforced by the lack of stable employment and poor educational and training opportunities. Without a change in these social and structural circumstances in the region and the means to support families, the risk of returning to crime would remain.

Sp4 echoed similar sentiments about the problems with party political power and the guarantee of fair decisions on resource allocation:

“We have strong independent movements and these people are getting the resources. They say ‘OK I will support you but you have to support me first’, and they get everything. We have a big problem with that in Spain. And at local level it’s the same thing, you see the personal feelings, relationship... It’s a challenge”.

W1 felt that the challenge was not as much to influence policy as to have actual policy delivery. She believed that institutional capacity was a key issue; public services had been consistently rolled back and staffing levels and resources reduced to the point where meaningful engagement with communities was not possible, or was only conducted in a tokenistic way rather than developing meaningful partnerships. There was also a sense that mismatch had emerged between public expectations of public service provision that often linked back to former, more paternalistic forms of provision that were well-resourced, to what was actually available now; however, there had been a failure to have a ‘conversation’ with communities on what that gap now was and what kinds of new arrangements could be found to bridge it. Concern was also expressed around short project funding cycles and changes in governments and their policies which impacted negatively on the sustainability of development initiatives that needed up to 10 or 20 years to embed and become fully sustainable.

W2 had initiated a series of local community initiatives designed to promote social interaction amongst residents who were isolated socially, culturally and economically in their locality because of poor public transport and other public and retail services and facilities. She described the tensions between institutional representatives delivering policy and her group

on differing interpretations of the Welsh Wellbeing Act as it pertained to their initiatives. The community members wished to use the local community hall to run a weekly voluntary community café (based on donations) as a point of social interaction to reduce social and spatial isolation; however the preoccupation of institutional representatives was on the status of the group; whether the café constituted a business and whether it met environmental regulations. After protracted negotiations and undertaking a 2-month food certificate training course they received permission for the activity which attracts a weekly group of residents. She made the point that during the COVID pandemic, many people in the locality had not been able to avail of grocery deliveries because they were not identified as ‘vulnerable’ even though they were without access. She undertook to contact businesses in the surrounding areas and compile a list of those willing to make deliveries which she shared with the local community. Her point was that it was very difficult to ‘prove’ that isolation existed in a way that would qualify for supports:

“Looking at it on paper, X (village) is a very successful commuter village, right? Nobody in the local school is on the school dinners’ list. I can’t be in any deprivation – however – I’m stuck here in my house; I don’t drive. When you talk about deprivation and poverty, is it just financial? Actually, some of it isn’t financial, and it does have an impact on quality of life”.

This issue of identifying inequality and injustice reflects back to the earlier discussion on evidence collection linked to perceptions of these phenomena.

W3 described the ongoing challenge to encourage policy adaptations at the local authority level when it came to facilitating new approaches to housing delivery in Wales. He referred to the sometimes limited vision around adapting spatial planning regulations to facilitate housing construction by communities in localised village or similar settings:

“The rural areas definitely feel like policy is driven by the urban centres. And so many of the policies that they’ve created around planning for example, are more suited to urban areas, controlling urban sprawl, or being sensitive to all those kinds of urban issues. They’re not necessarily as relevant in rural areas where for example the impact of a community group building a small group of houses in a village might be very much welcomed by the local community, if it’s aimed at people who are going to stay in the community...you need different planning regulations for these situations and not like centralized planning from national government that is very much urban-focused”.

W3 felt there was also often a lack of familiarity on the part of officials as well as community groups with long-established legislation that allowed for much broader and more favourable interpretations of what community-led housing schemes could actually avail of and achieve. In other cases, legal anomalies existed that acted as barriers to pursuing more fair and just application of legislation or support schemes by community-led groups. This process of lobbying local authorities, local social welfare offices, and the Welsh government to address such anomalies in favour of worse-off groups in the community was flagged by W3 as a significant activity. One of the associated problems was felt to be the perception by local communities is that they did not have any power to lobby for change:

“Most people don’t really understand that they can lobby local authorities and local authorities will potentially listen to their lobbies; I mean most people don’t even vote in local elections, you know, for local county councillors, so they don’t really understand the impact of not voting in local elections. So there is a lot of work around getting people engaged in local politics, getting them to lobby around planning...”

S2 Outlined the issue of policy interpretation impacting on the inflexibility of care packages for persons with disabilities or other care needs in the sense that they did not always provide what she termed “portability of care”; that if you did move from one area to another in search of services you might not be able to use your care package to avail of them there. She described this as often a local-level issue where the national legislation is sound but where there is opportunity for a level of local interpretation which resulted in limiting people’s rights in some areas compared to others. She suggested that this was due to the marketization of care whereby two thirds of social care was delivered by the private sector and secured by local authorities for delivery, with the other third being provided by local authorities. Some of these packages were means tested and others were paid for. This led to a blurring of interpretation about whether the care was a right (which it is meant to be) or an entitlement which led to it being regarded as a sort of ‘gift’ by the state; in the latter case, the application of eligibility criteria might result in exclusion from care in a local authority area, or a refusal of permission to an individual to use their care package to access a preferred service, in contravention of a rights-based approach and resulting in an experience of social and spatial exclusion.

P1 stated that by combining forces and reaching inter-regional agreement, her organisation usually bypassed national governments when they wished to influence a policy issue, taking it instead to EU level – particularly to DG Regio - as a shared vision of the group of regions. Among themselves at regional level they have excellent levels of co-operation on projects such as E-health, sustainable water management, or other environmental protections. Their co-operation, particularly knowledge-sharing, builds capacities across all of the regions. At regional level each region enjoys a level of self-governance and a capacity to make its own policy, but increasingly as part of wider strategies that involve the other regions in the group. The recent Polish government’s decision to end an open border agreement between it and Kaliningrad region of Russia and to prevent flows of individuals across the border was viewed as a regressive decision that had had significant economic consequences for both regions. Her organisation was lobbying to have the decision reversed. In this regard she remarked on the value of inter-regional co-operation as a means to improve tolerance and acceptance of diversity:

“Cross-border co-operation means that people have to open themselves to different values; to speak in different languages, to understand different cultures and races, so that you can actually work on a project collaboratively. This type of co-operation not only brings economic growth but also socio-economic benefits”

She described it as counteracting much of the negative coverage of migrant groups by government and by the media.

S1 stated that her organisation tended to focus on key points in policy cycles and major policy agendas to intervene and influence the process. It had taken them some time to build up networks with individuals in key policy-making roles. She contended that it also depended on the policy area:

“There are policy areas that I would describe as being highly sensitized to approaches from gender advocates. So, things like violence against women would be almost a matter of co-producing policy with violence against women advocates, and then they and we are seen as sources of expertise. I think there are some areas of public service where we are still trying to get our foot in the door; and so something like planning or transport would be more in that space where it is not taken as read that there is a gendered dimension, and so we have to make the case for being in the room, and then make the case for staying in the room and then make the case for whatever it is.”

P2 felt that the challenges on policy related to “crossing the silos of sectoral public policies, i.e. negotiating and managing interests, and switching to multi-faceted policies”. He believed that longer-term forms of development planning were necessary for sustainability reasons as opposed to short-term gains. Connected to this was the favouring of social and economic outcomes over political ones, the acknowledgement of local autonomy, and the importance of horizontal networks and the power of social capital. Switching to more detailed local-level planning that was not restrained by large-scale administrative criteria such as those connected to the distribution of EU Funds was also considered important.

Sp6 identified a governance system that inhibited communication or consultation on policy issues:

“In Spain, there is a very clear wall between the representatives and the citizens, and they have no way of transmitting their discontent more than once every four years at the elections, but there is no real participation of the citizens in the day-to-day development of the city”.

Citizens had little power to protest at decisions taken apart from demonstrating, speaking to a local mayor, or voting every 4 years. These conditions inhibited citizens from pursuing issues of injustice. He identified a major lack of trust in public authorities even though the electoral system is a democratic one. Local government was heavily structured around two main political parties who tended to operate on political as opposed to justice or fairness agendas. Corruption was identified as a significant problem in local politics.

Sp2 discussed the rigidity of public administration which made any effort at proposing policy change very difficult:

“The administration in general applies the policy of ‘when in doubt, no’. In other words, you often propose something and, if in doubt, they refuse”.

Sp3 provided a further example of the rigidity and limited transparency of government in its approach to allocating LEADER funding:

“Both private projects now and local councils are waiting for the LEADER funds for Christmas 2020. The application was made in August and the administration should have already announced it. It should have already said what funds it gives to private entities and the administration and to the town halls. There is only a provisional resolution, so you can't take the money for granted. And, in theory, 15 December this year is the deadline for justifying these actions. In other words, you still don't know if they'll give you the money, but if by 15 December you don't have it invested, spent and justified, you can be left without help for the project. The mayors appeared on the newspaper last week protesting this, but no one in the regional administration has responded. Everything comes too late here”.

Housing policy in Ireland was regarded as a similarly complex sphere, with the major emphasis on home ownership. I3 made the point that in spite of the constant rhetoric about the cost of social housing, that when it came to promoting schemes like the ‘First Time Homebuyers Grant’ the same argument about costs were never advanced when in fact the state spent more on such grants than on social housing. Issues with the promotion of the rented sector have arisen for those on low incomes who receive Housing Assistance Payments because these often do not cover the cost of the rent. Housing policy continues to be problematic in large measure because of the reliance on the private sector to provide housing, and interventions to promote change are difficult to put into effect.

2.7 Theme 6: The relevance of EU principles of social solidarity and territorial cohesion (Links: WP1, WP7).

There was a broad sense that these principles continued to be important although not all were as sure about whether they were being reached or supported by the EU in the interests of regions. W1 contended that as long as regions faced challenges, the EU ideas of territorial cohesion and social solidarity would continue to have relevance. She believed that they were possibly even more important now to support areas that have struggled and continue to struggle to overcome spatial inequalities and disadvantage.

P1 felt that the notion of social solidarity, which had been so fundamental to the ideals of the emergent Polish state, had somehow been altered in meaning in the way that it had become linked to immigration which in turn had been flagged by the current national government as a negative phenomenon.

P3 on the other hand believed that these principles had proved vitally important in a positive sense to the way that Poland had addressed development challenges, referring to the more mature perspective offered by a territorial approach. It had helped in adopting a ‘glass half full’ mindset – the notion that much progress had been made - and enabled attention to be focused on ‘forgotten places’ with a view to offering something to them. He also observed some problems of inconsistency with the EU rhetoric on territorial cohesion, which he

associated with a lack of patience and a tendency to change the rules before a strategy had time to become established and sustainable:

“The problem is how to sustain the pace of change and how to sustain this kind of approach, even though it is not defined, even though it is not full clear.....I would say that the approach to innovation is changing [too quickly]...clusters, then smart specialization, then again clusters; so it's not necessarily purely connected to public services but the approach to development policies or to investment policies is changing. Also, when it comes to social policy, I mean the European Social Fund, sometimes they [changes] are too rigid, I would say, and sometimes they are too much, believing in their own European knowledge, so they are not giving enough space for manoeuvring or adaptation of these general policies to local circumstances”.

Sp6 was of the opinion that because of globalisation, the values of solidarity were diminishing; that there had been a feeling that the EU has helped to build large infrastructures, but now there was a feeling that these same infrastructures had only served to bring in goods from other places and diminish employment prospects for local inhabitants. In other words, there was a feeling that the EU had not invested in the real production capacity of the region. There was also a belief that the EU CAP had prevented the Asturias region from developing its full agricultural potential by allowing in milk from the Netherlands. Therefore, especially in the rural area of Asturias, there is a feeling that the EU has not had a positive impact in general. Because of the inflation that occurred in Spain on entering the euro zone there was also a perspective that quality of life had been lost in many respects.

Sp1 believed in the strength of the EU as a body for effectively and genuinely combating territorial inequalities and imbalances. He asserted that the EU has gone through different stages during its existence, during which it had focused on different policies. It had moved from a strong CAP to other important EU policies. In this sense, he felt that the EU would have a future if it strengthened cohesion, territorial and social policy. This would also be the EU's *raison d'être*: to achieve a balance between territories, and to reduce territorial and social inequalities.

2.8 Conclusions

Spatial justice as a concept does hold significance for those interviewed. Each identified the presence of a range of spatial inequalities within and across regions that they try to directly manage and draw attention to at different levels of governance. Each also identified ongoing difficulties in overcoming barriers to change that would improve outcomes for citizens experiencing spatial and social injustice in their everyday lives. These included political and administrative failures in governance and in the construction of relevant policies, weak policy delivery, policy based on narrow understandings of the full range of dimensions that constituted policy problems; policy strategy and decisions based on partisan and biased political preferences. Few respondents provided examples of problems that had been identified by way of purely quantitative or economic measures, drawing attention to the hidden nature or the unintended consequences of certain kinds of policy devised

predominantly on these kinds of measures or public service delivery that had followed strictly marketized and/or privatised models.

Respondents believe that the EU principles of territorial cohesion and social solidarity are important and worth pursuing but not in ways that act to the detriment of their region's or locality's chances to access the full possibilities available to it to remain sustainable.

3. Initial Scenarios

3.1 Process of Developing the Initial Scenarios

The analysis of stakeholder interviews presented in the previous section has fed into the process of developing the initial scenarios, along with data and analysis from IMAJINE WPs 1-7, accessed through the respective Deliverables and the sharing of data across WPs. The relevant findings from WPs 1-7 were distilled for WP8 in the summaries included in Deliverable 8.3 and in a specific mapping of evidence from the WPs reproduced in Table 2.

In order to develop the initial scenarios, a virtual working group was formed comprised by members drawn from across the IMAJINE consortium who had been involved in the earlier WPs. As well as providing connections to the other WPs, the virtual working group members also contributed different disciplinary perspectives and insights from different geographical regions in Europe. The virtual working group members were:

- Marie Mahon (NUIGALWAY – Ireland, Geography, WP8 Coordinator)
- Jerzy Banski (IGIPZPAN – Poland, Geography)
- Linda Basile (UNISI – Italy, Political Science, WP4)
- Bettina Bock (RUGRONINGEN – Netherlands, Sociology, WP5)
- Paul Cairney (USTIRLING – Scotland, Policy Studies, WP6)
- Daniela Constantin (ASE Bucuresti – Romania, Economics, WP2)
- Nuria Franco Guillen (AU – Wales, UK (+ Spain/Scotland), Political Science, WP7)
- Tialda Haartsen (RUGRONINGEN – Netherlands, Geography, WP5)
- Rhys Jones (AU – Wales, UK, Geography, WP1)
- Maria Plotnikova (AU – Wales, UK, Economics, WP2, WP3)
- Lionel Vedrine (INRA – France, Economics, WP2, WP3)
- Elaine Williams (NUIGALWAY – Ireland, Geography)
- Michael Woods (AU – Wales, UK, Geography, IMAJINE Coordinator)

The working group was facilitated by Matt Finch, a consultant in scenario planning and Associate Fellow contributing to the Oxford Scenarios Programme at Saïd Business School, Oxford University.

Table 2: Mapping of evidence from IMAJINE WPs on to the scenario planning process	
Work Package	Contribution to Scenario Planning Process
WP1	WP1 informs the WP8 scenario development process in the following ways: i) by concluding that it is impractical to devise any single agreed definition of either territorial cohesion or spatial justice; however, it is possible to be clear from the outset on which definitions are being applied on the part of those operationalizing them in order to ensure transparency and usefulness of the process (e.g. by academics for policymakers); ii) in revealing that the current emphasis on GDP instead of household or individual level consumption in the implementation of territorial cohesion reflects a priority to have an economically-competitive EU territory rather than spatially-balanced economic prosperity; iii) by advocating more emphasis on subjective indicators of wellbeing such as those used in the European Social Survey to inform policy; iv) by observing that more recent EU references to the importance of more spatially equal individual, quality of life, better infrastructure and access to services (as a definition of territorial cohesion) remain theoretically unfounded and require justification for this definition to operate as a guiding principle (the struggle between ideas of redistribution and investment); v) by identifying that this definition of territorial cohesion is accompanied by references to solidarity which as a concept is also contested, is used without theoretical foundation, and does not make clear how it is spatially relevant or at what scale; vi) by flagging the opportunities for it to be addressed discursively along with ideas of social and spatial justice at the level of regional coalitions of interest involving academics, policy-makers and the public.
WP2	WP2 informs the scenario development process by: i) revealing that (with the use of Multiple Factor Analysis to assess regional-level socioeconomic disparities) while there is convergence between 2000-2015, this is relative to neighbouring regions, and does not progress beyond that of the regional cluster; ii) illustrating that GDP per capital as a single measure of economic development could indicate convergence as a general EU trend whilst not revealing intra-national processes of divergence; iii) demonstrating that variables such as employment in different skills sectors and educational attainment, when combined with GDP provide alternative insights into convergence trends; iv) identifying that strong spatial autocorrelation exists between regions with high levels of economic development (based on these multiple variables) and neighbouring regions, and between those with low levels of development , implying that more complex, spatially-related inter-regional variables exert a strong influence over convergence trends; v) revealing that while EU cohesion measures appear to have reduced inequalities between urban and rural households at an overall level, that this is not a universal trend; that household income gaps remain particularly for some rural areas, but that their identification requires more fine-grained regional and local level analysis.
WP3	WP3 informs the scenario development process by i) highlighting the need to incorporate data on spatial interactions at regional level in order to fully account for regional heterogeneity, and to verify the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy to achieve economic convergence; ii) revealing through this analysis the existence of significant disparities in regional convergence rates that suggest a disproportionate experience of inequality between certain regions and others; iii) raising questions about the usefulness of classical understandings of convergence used by the EU based on WP3's observed growth dynamics in certain regions; iv) highlighting that GDP as a measure of economic convergence must be understood as a highly context-dependent variable, and should ideally be combined with

	<p>other variables that measure a range of dimensions of local economic development, whilst also identifying any leading variable that is negatively influencing local economic development; v) revealing that convergence trends apparent across adjacent regions may be providing a misleading picture of the actual success of regional convergence policies.</p>
WP4	<p>WP4 informs the WP8 scenario process by i) revealing that citizens' believe that...(answers to questions focused on direct/indirect perceptions and lived experiences of: 1) territorial and spatial inequalities; 2) Solidarity; 3) Territorial autonomy/regional empowerment; 4) Migration. ii) indicates that popular sentiments about the redistribution of resources more strongly favour a values-based (solidarity) approach connected to notions of fairness based on ideas about rights to a minimum basic level of quality of life....iii) revealing that citizens prefer to achieve overall social and political stability to economic competitiveness; iv) illustrating that citizens concur on the need for regions to be given the political autonomy to devise their own solutions to future development and reject the EU's current resource transfer approach.</p>
WP5	<p>WP 5 informs the WP8 scenario development process in the following ways: i) by highlighting that underlying causes of migration continue to relate to economic hardship (for example, wrought by austerity policies) experienced in the region of origin where one cannot secure a perceived sustainable living, and to a lack of opportunities acceptable to progressively improve or enhance one's quality of life in the sending region; ii) by revealing that migration flows continue to represent a draw to the 'centre' in core-periphery and urban-rural terms, reflecting the continuing capacity (enhanced by politically-motivated competitiveness agendas) of centres of economic growth (e.g. city regions that enjoy high destination reputations) to provide opportunities to enhance individual quality of life whilst depriving the sending region of those talents and skills; iii) through illustrating how internal or inter-regional migration as a specific kind of migrant flow is often a reflection of seeking quality of life experiences once main financial stability is achieved; experiences that permit trade-offs in other spheres of quality of life, e.g. those associated with rural over urban living; iv) by identifying that migration flows reveal relational perceptions and experiences of migrants about the inequality gap between their position and that of people in other places that in turn trigger and sustain those flows at international and also at inter- and intra-regional levels; v) by showing how consistent data on migration flows (country of origin and destination) could enable policy-makers to more accurately detect changes in regional quality of life circumstances and conditions and the underlying causes of same, and to more accurately plan relevant interventions; vi) through indicating that migration flows represent a barometer for assessing the progress of territorial cohesion, and the fact that cohesion is a dynamic and unstable state; vii) by illustrating that migrants are both influenced by origin and destination reputations when deciding to migrate, and contribute to creating those reputations through their own perceptions and experiences, further demonstrating the policy importance of understanding the nature of mobility decisions and migrant flows; viii) (connected to vi), by drawing attention to the concept of regional or national reputation-building as a means to interpret the impacts of inequalities upon regions or countries of origin.</p>
WP6	<p>WP6 informs the WP8 process in the following ways: i) by confirming the diverse yet interconnected nature of political environments in which the phenomena of territorial inequality and spatial justice are interpreted and converted to policy; ii)</p>

	<p>by identifying how scalar and temporal issues affect policymaking processes; iii) through highlighting the need to identify the range and level of stakeholders involved in policymaking and their role in the process; iv) by drawing attention to how key drivers and trends lead to the prioritisation of certain policy goals over others, reflecting relative aspirations to achieve territorial inequality and spatial justice; v) by highlighting inherent and difficult to resolve tensions in multi-level policymaking systems related to closely defining and accounting for policy progress versus constantly evolving it to achieve new political and societal norms and behaviours (empirical v values-based perspectives); vi) by providing insights into how closing the gap between policymakers' desired and possible futures might be achieved by proposing a general model for policy learning and transfer that can more strategically inform policymaking on territorial inequality and spatial justice and its successful implementation</p>
WP7	<p>WP7 informs the scenario development process: i) by confirming regionalist actors as a key stakeholder group in relation to goal-setting for territorial government; ii) through revealing comprehensively the complex reasons why claims for greater self-government are made; iii) by illustrating the different ways in which these claims are manifest; iv) by establishing how these claims also constitute key emergent trends in understandings of territorial equality that are required to be acknowledged and taken account of in national and EU level policymaking (for example the observation of more radical perspectives among regionalist actors on solutions to conditions of territorial inequality); v) by identifying the drivers of these changing trends (for example, negative reactions to the perceived unfair impacts of national-level austerity policies); vi) by revealing how spatial justice at regional and sub-regional levels is experienced across cultural, political and social dimensions as well as economic, and aspired to in a desired future in terms of realising an acceptable quality of life.</p>

The virtual working group met online five times during June and July 2020, following a series of steps in line with the methodology outlined in Deliverable 8.1 (and also summarised in a [video](#) on the IMAJINE website). First, the key actor to which the scenarios would be addressed was discussed, with DG Regio selected. Second, the ecosystem of DG Regio was mapped out, identifying various actors with potential to impact on its decision-making and operation, including not only institutions and NGOs which will DG Regio engages, but also the recipients of its policies and funding, as well as non-human or environmental actants (see Figure 1). Third, the range of diverse forces, pressures, uncertainties and variables acting both on DG Regio and on other players in its ecosystem that could affect its policy-making with respect to territorial inequalities and spatial justice were similarly identified (Figure 2).

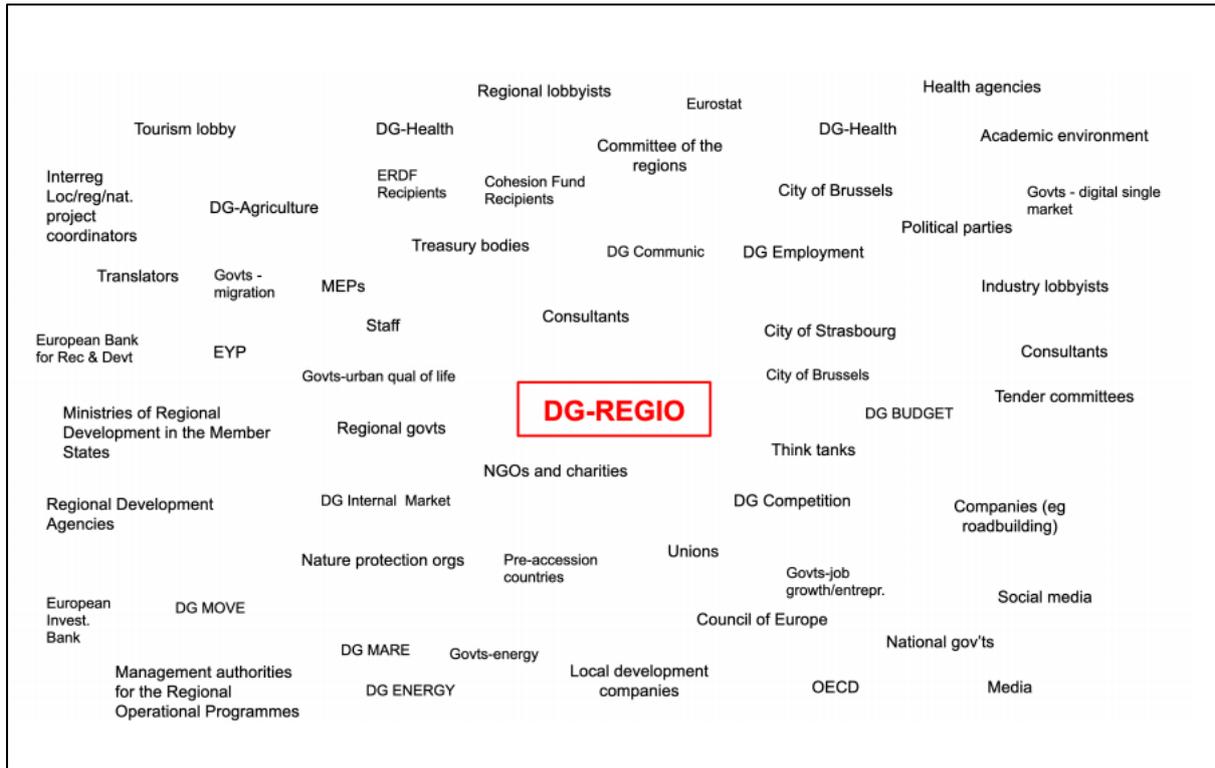


Figure 1: Actors in the DG Regio ecosystem



Figure 2: Variables and uncertainties acting on DG Regio and policies for territorial inequality and spatial justice

Fourth, the working group discussed the underlying trajectories, tensions and values shaping these uncertainties, and from this discussion sought to select two axes that captured key variable driving forces around which the scenarios would be constructed. A total of 49 axes combinations were considered by the group, some of which are shown in Figure 3. Eventually, the group settled on the following axes:

SOLIDARITY – AUTONOMY

PROSPERITY – WELLBEING

These variables were selected for the axes primarily as they reflected tensions or trajectories highlighted in the original Horizon 2020 call text and which have informed the structure and focus of research in IMAJINE. As such, they are variables that evidence from IMAJINE particularly speaks to, but they are not the only way in which scenarios for future territorial inequalities and spatial justice could be framed. The axis of Solidarity-Autonomy resonates with critiques of the emphasis on territorial cohesion and centralised policy-making in the conventional European Social Model (noted in WP1) and pressures for greater territorial autonomy for regions (studied in WP7). The axis of Prosperity-Wellbeing responds to critiques of the prioritisation economic indicators (especially GDP) in EU policies and funding to address territorial inequalities (noted in WP2) and calls for a broader consideration of ‘wellbeing’ including social, cultural, environmental and health factors (discussed in WP1 and WP6). It also addresses encouragement in an earlier project review meeting to question the taken-for-granted objective of ‘growth’ and to engage with alternative models such as degrowth. Further, the ‘wellbeing’ end of the axis allows for potential shifts in the values guiding EU policy-making in the context of the climate crisis, or indeed as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the fifth stage, sub-groups within the working group elaborated the content of the four quadrants in the diagram (solidarity + prosperity; solidarity + wellbeing; autonomy + prosperity; autonomy + wellbeing), guided by six questions:

- How far out in the future might we wish to go in order to see a dramatic difference from the present?
- What would have changed about Europe in this future - its institutions, its geography, its way of life?
- How might such a future have plausibly come about?
- What new risks and opportunities might have emerged in this future?
- What kinds of inequality would exist in this future and how would society seek to address or exploit them?
- Can you imagine "a day in the life" of different people and institutions in this future? What has changed from today?

The rough outlines produced were then distilled into four draft scenarios by the core WP8 team and shared and discussed with the working group in a final meeting in September 2020. After further refinement, the four initial scenarios outlined below were produced, presented

and discussed at the IMAJINE virtual consortium meeting in January 2021 and published on the IMAJINE website.

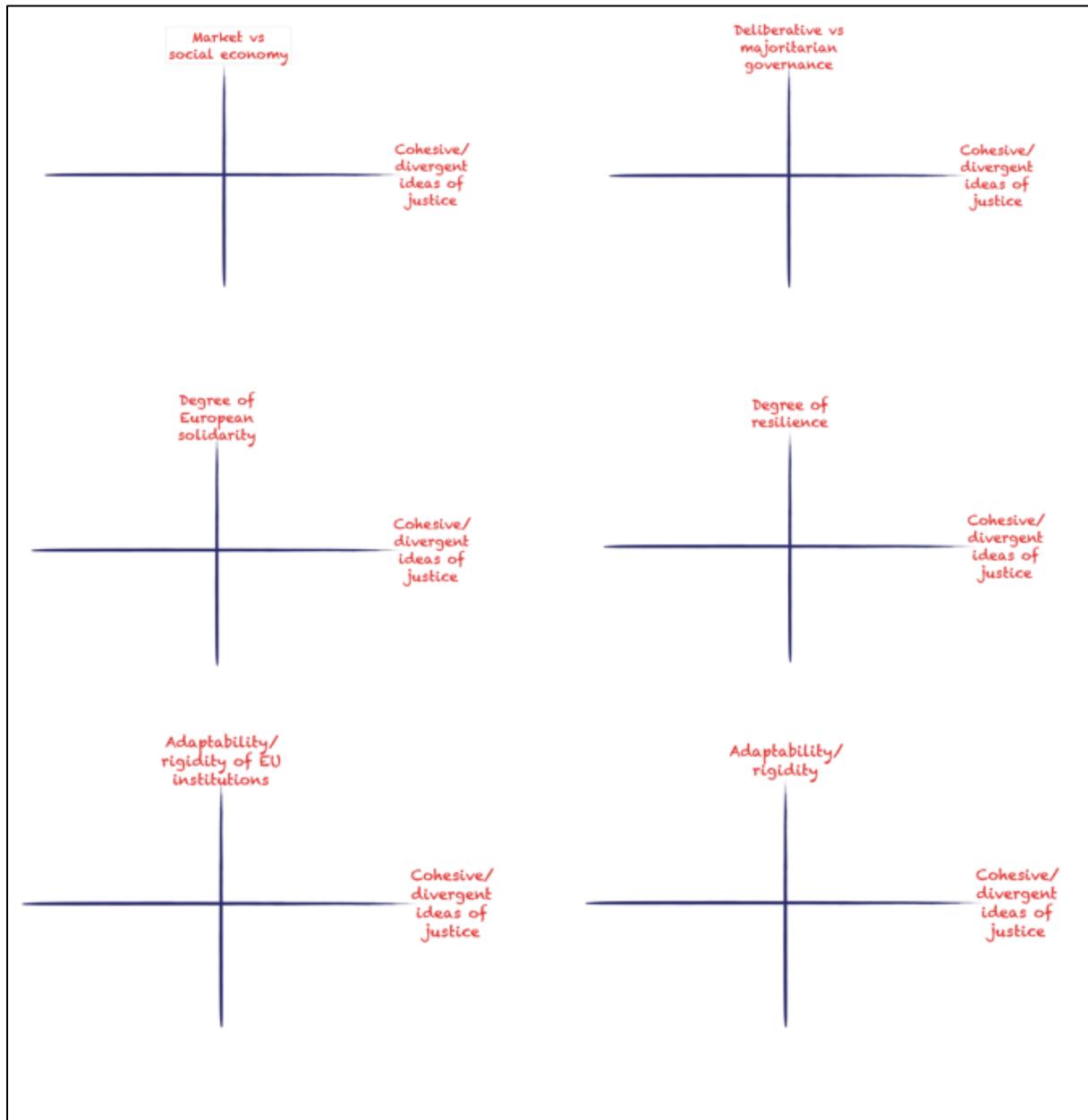


Figure 3: Some rejected axes pairings

3.2 Outline of Initial Scenarios

The content of this section has also been published as a [standalone pdf booklet](#) on the IMAJINE website.

As part of the broader IMAJINE project, one team was assigned the task of looking at the future using a methodology called scenario planning. This approach seeks not to predict the one future that will definitely come to pass, but to imagine a number of plausible futures which would challenge our current assumptions about where Europe is headed in terms of spatial justice and territorial inequality. These futures haven't been chosen for their likelihood, but for their ability to challenge our current understandings of spatial justice and territorial inequality.

The scenario sketches presented here are the first step towards developing a number of rich and useful visions of what Europe might look like in terms of geographical disparities and ideas of spatial justice. The scenarios relate to a 2 x 2 grid where the two factors are **“What degree of solidarity vs autonomy is shown within the European Union?”** and **“What is the prevailing goal of European society, economic prosperity or wellbeing?”** (Figure 4).

These factors were drawn from a set of uncertainties affecting decisions currently made by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG-REGIO). DG-REGIO's decisions play a fundamental policy role in questions of spatial justice and territorial inequality across the EU; here, they form the bedrock of the speculative scenarios presented.

The aim of these scenarios is to offer different visions of the year **2048**, each highlighting distinct notions of spatial justice and territorial inequality in Europe. 2048 represents 4 of the 7-year cycles by which DG-REGIO plans for disbursement of its development funds

Join us now in four distinct and different visions of Europe in 2048, to see how differently questions of territorial inequality and spatial justice might play out across the EU.

HIGH SOLIDARITY / ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

By 2048, the EU achieves prosperity and economic equity, but suffers from threats of internal stagnation and external conflict. Spatial justice means an equitable distribution of wealth between regions. There is an evening up of material territorial inequalities as regions in Southern and Eastern Europe benefit from reindustrialisation and redistributive welfare policies.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Europeans made a strong commitment to redistribution of wealth. EU and national institutions intervened robustly to target development in lagging areas of Europe. The pandemic crisis was followed by increasing challenges from a changing climate, and ongoing decay of the post-1945 global order. Europe's goal of equitably distributed wealth across its regions was delivered through an increasingly centralised pan-European approach. As new computing and communications

technologies emerged, the demands of carrying out digital transformation through a season of prolonged upheaval in the 2020s encouraged collective action.

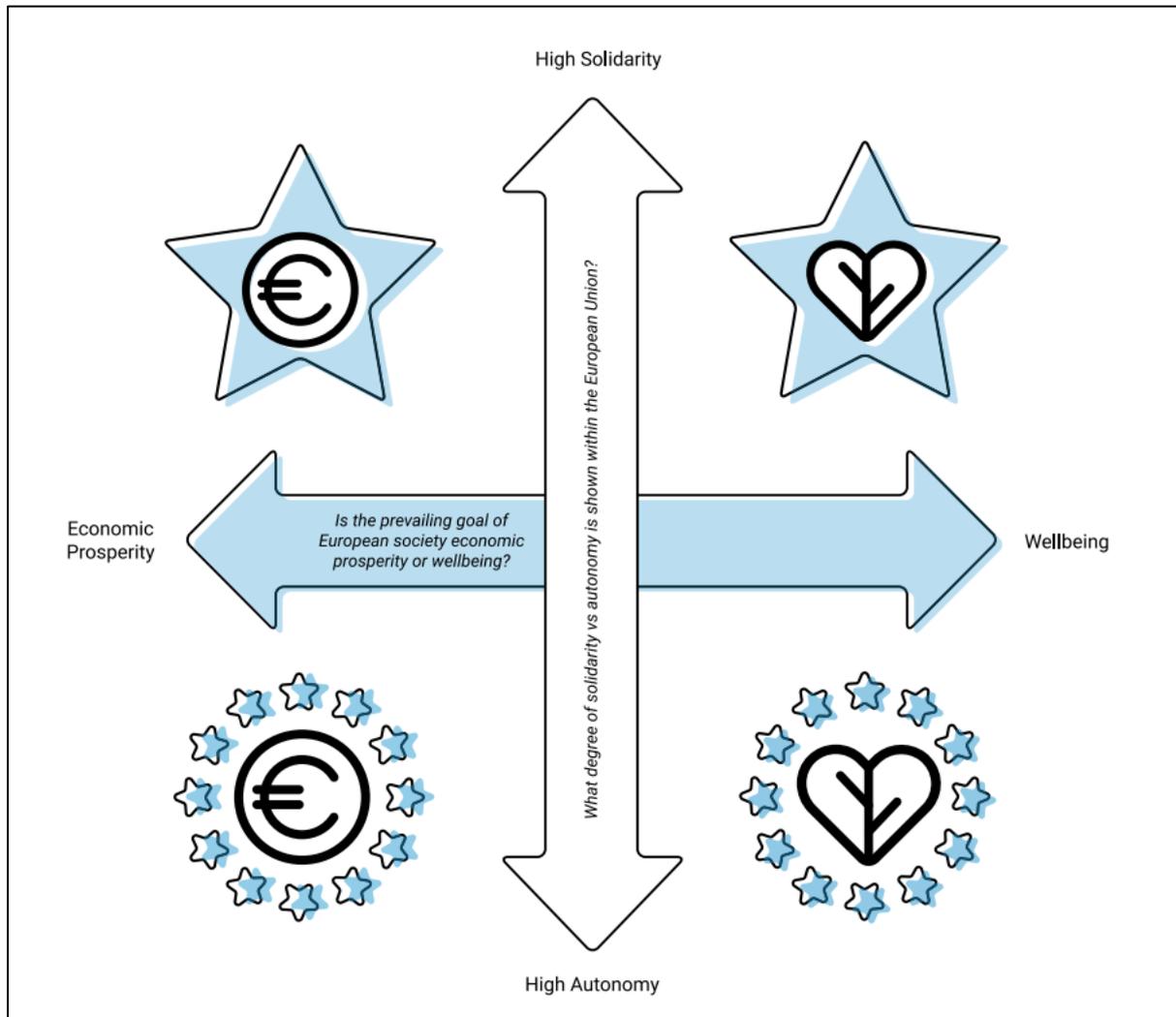


Figure 4: The Initial Scenario Grid

The implementation of mission-led innovation approaches led to a new vision of economic growth which emphasised inclusivity. EU interventions sought not to de-risk or level the playing field, but to “tilt the playing field” in the direction of desired goals. The state played a greater role in innovation, with strong public-private partnerships constructed around Europe-wide missions.

These emphasised a vision of ongoing, equitable, economic growth across Europe’s regions and ultimately led to a **unified EU-wide tax and welfare system**. By 2048, reindustrialisation has occurred, with a focus on food and energy security, including investments in biotechnology. **Advanced 3D printing and manufacturing technologies** mean that automated “manufactories” create and distribute material goods locally. Europe has also become a champion and global exemplar of the circular economy.

Europe's successes led the EU to expand, and as a post-Putin Russia crumbled and fragmented, Turkey, the Ukraine, and Belarus all became members. As a result, the Union's eastern borders became trouble spots and the EU increased its capacity for collective military action. By 2048, units of the EU armed forces - largely autonomous machines - are engaged in **constant conflict** which waxes and wanes on the Russian border. This military effort also drives technological innovation, similar to the US in the Cold War.

Europe generally has become more isolationist and protectionist, wary of preserving its cherished prosperity and stability in a world which has become more divided between Chinese, American, and emerging blocs. "Fortress Europe" acts aggressively to head off migration from climate refugees.

Prior to this, decades of migration led Europe to become ever more culturally and linguistically diverse. "European values" in 2048 are shaped to a greater degree by migration from the global south. The election of the European Commission's **first Muslim President**, a Swede of Somali ancestry, in 2035 was a significant landmark.

However, internal and external migration both abated through the 2030s as automation increasingly reduced the demand for low-skilled workers from outside the EU, and regional wealth inequalities ceased to be a push factor for migration within the Union.

People in this Europe feel a strong allegiance to family, striving to ensure that their children are on a path to prestige and prosperity within wider European society, cultivating connections on- and off-line which will benefit and sustain their ever-growing, ever-ageing family units.

While in some ways individual needs are well met in this prosperous Europe, with increasingly personalised digital or robotic services available in classrooms, care homes, and hospitals, this is also a **conformist future**, with strong supervision from EU institutions. As a result, there has been a degree of **stagnation** within Europe, and citizens express some unease about their inability to influence politics beyond the channels legitimized by the EU.

As a result, by 2048, new calls for political and economic freedom - as well as a rising pacifist movement concerned about wars to the east - are testing the thirty years of calm which threaten to tip over into complacency or stagnation.

HIGH SOLIDARITY / WELLBEING

The EU monitors and regulates resilience and sustainability for a new world order focussed on climate change. Spatial justice in this future means mutual assistance between regions to help each other adapt to change. Current territorial inequalities are flipped as there is degrowth and population loss in metropolitan areas, and population and economic growth in marginalised rural areas of France, Spain, Italy, Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

Beyond the coronavirus of 2020, other natural disasters triggered by the climate crisis, including a sequence of ongoing pandemics, continued to challenge Europe.

Cities became less appealing as pandemics spread easily in areas of high population density. By 2048, **urban areas are ghettoised places**, where workers live in cramped, challenging conditions reminiscent of 2020's migrant workers locked down in Singaporean dormitories or the social housing residents restricted to their towers in Melbourne.

Coastal areas were also abandoned, as people feared the impact of climate change. **Rural areas are highly valued** and there was increasing competition for territory perceived as safe from the ravages of climate.

As the world weathered increasingly extreme weather and health crises, existing physical and social infrastructure in Europe was threatened. There was a sense of the human race being “on a war footing”, and the need for communities to pull together in the face of existential threats. As part of its resilience efforts, the EU moved towards a more centralised, command-and-control society. New regulations included increasing restrictions on movement and ownership of second houses.

This was part of a **global shift towards concern with sustainability and wellbeing**. The decline of institutions like the United Nations, World Trade Organization and World Health Organization led to their replacement with new international entities. The job of remaking the world order, last achieved by the Allies post-1945, was this time led by China and the new emerging powers of the Asia-Pacific region. A new international consensus was also reached around migration and management of climate refugee populations.

New metrics and standards for success were developed by these entities: successors to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, these metrics incorporated **new notions of social and economic justice**, with an emphasis on harmony, conflict avoidance, and equity. The European Union enforces and interprets these global directives within the territories for which it has responsibility. Within Europe, businesses and individuals are given sustainability & wellbeing ratings, successors to early experiments such as social credit ratings, which determine their access to contracts and opportunities for advancement.

The new world order also requires “**climate reparations**” from powers which are regarded to have caused the climate catastrophe through their historical actions. As a result, the EU pays reparations to numerous territories overseas. The Western politicians of the late 20th and early 21st centuries are disparaged as monsters, whose focus on economic growth over evident signs of climate catastrophe injured the planet in ways which will take generations to redress. The pandemics of the mid-21st century raised new ideas about identity. Solidarity was less about having something in common with the people who lived around you or shared your ancestry, and more about common cause with those who shared an approach to public

health and sustainability. Solidarity meant modifying your behaviour in order to stop disease or environmental damage and protect your fellow Europeans.

The rifts of the 2020s, when many had found themselves divided between those who trusted scientific institutions and those who preferred the pronouncements of populist politicians, have long healed.

The challenges of the ongoing pandemics have encouraged people to value community connection, whether on or offline. Activities which bring a sense of communion - volunteering, sports, “big culture” - are prized. A **New Olympiad** which rewards not just athletic skills, but literature, philosophy, humanitarian achievement, is the highlight of the cultural calendar.

By 2048, Europeans look back with regret on the last days of capitalism; today, their concern for sustainability and well-being includes subtle notions of aesthetics, mental, and occupational health, flavoured by the increasing dominance and prestige of Asian cultures globally.

HIGH AUTONOMY / ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

The EU focuses on digital identities in a world shaped by transnational corporations. Spatial justice is understood as the right of regions to hold on to the wealth that they have generated. Territorial inequalities are intensified and complicated as rich regions get richer and poor regions get poorer.

Through the 2020s, Europeans continued to seek economic prosperity above all, with institutions measuring this by GDP per capita and growth in the macroeconomy. However, notions of solidarity were eroded by the self-interest of member states. In the 2030s, after years of turmoil, the UK achieved a degree of success in its post-Brexit trajectory. Although it had to make many compromises on workers’ rights and other standards, some EU member states and regions came to see it as having re-established a sense of national identity and self-determination to which they also aspired.

Richer regions in particular, who were net contributors in balanced development terms, grew increasingly dissatisfied with mechanisms by which redistribution of resources was calculated across Europe, with the EU continuing to apply GDP per capita as the main method of territorial distribution of structural funds. As member states also adhered to these same criteria at inter- and intra-regional levels, many citizens developed **strong perceptions of unequal, unfair, and unjustified practices.**

In trying to navigate the changing times and avert a brutal “dog-eat-dog” society, the EU tried a number of experiments for restructuring the economy and society, including anticipatory regulation, and the use of “**sand boxes**” to test new policies and regulations within defined geographical areas.

This led to variegated approaches tailored to different regions, and in turn, over time, this has caused the EU to adapt, accommodating different models and configurations.

The internal and external boundaries of this Europe are more porous than those of 2020 in some ways.

Digital citizenship has evolved from its early Baltic experiments to a set of **online rights and responsibilities which transcend your physical location**. Citizenship resembles a subscription model, with people's identity much more deeply tied to the transnational combines which employ them. In this future, it is possible to be a European in Australia who has never set foot in EU territory, and may have no residence rights there, but whose livelihood, rights, responsibilities, and privileges, are deeply entwined with Europe's fortunes. Digital space refuses to conform to traditional notions of a territory, causing the rise of the non-territorial economy. Communities and regions worldwide reorder and build alliances with one another, and tensions arise as physical regions strive to hold onto the wealth that they have generated.

One of the most significant outcomes of this is the possibility of "remixable citizenship". Some rights and responsibilities can now be disaggregated by citizens, then delegated or shared with relatives, friends, business partners, or even autonomous software entities. One option for people and communities seeking to escape or redress inequality is acquiring digital rights from other jurisdictions - a "pick and mix" citizenship with new winners and losers.

The failure of European labour movements to find their place in a world where social and environmental justice have increasingly entwined means that the transition to a low carbon economy has been largely led and defined by the private sector. However, pioneering approach to citizenship means that Europeans "play the game" of the new world order very competitively, and with a significant degree of success.

Workers strive to stay within the "walled garden" of a corporate network which can employ and care for them, and both workers and corporations are experienced in navigating the "pick and mix" digital rights environment both inside and outside the EU to seek the best outcomes. However, the "have nots" of this future include those who struggle to manage this complex digital environment, and may find themselves struggling to opt out of "pre-packaged" citizenship options designated for them by corporations and territories.

"Economic bridges", successors to the air bridges of the pandemic and the passporting systems of the finance sector mean that in this world extended transnational networks are as significant as discrete, geographically contiguous centres. A biotech hub in Frankfurt may have more in common with its partner cities in Guangdong and California than it does with one a few hundred kilometres away in Poland, especially when augmented office spaces and personal implants means that **telepresence is the norm**. This is the age of "the sentient economy", where large, AI-enhanced corporations can provide for your every need, but price plans and premiums apply.

HIGH AUTONOMY / WELLBEING

The EU brokers the last talking shop for a fragmented Europe. Spatial justice is the right of communities to define their own values. Territorial inequalities become more fragmented, with increased local variation within regions.

Is this the future where you can “**choose your own paradise**” or one in which Europe has been cast back into the Middle Ages? In this fragmented future Europe, different regions embrace wildly varied notions of identity, social value, and human wellbeing.

There are regions of Europe in which gender categories have evolved far beyond what we take for granted in 2020 and five-person marriages are not uncommon, while in other places strict religious interpretation of traditional rules applies. Some communities have an advanced notion of animal rights which respects the sentience of nonhuman creatures and treats them as equals, part of a growing ecological consciousness in response to a fraught season of climate catastrophe.

In some parts of Europe, elements of the natural environment have been granted **legal personhood**, much as rivers and lands in Australia and New Zealand were in the early part of the century. In other regions, even autonomous digital agents are granted a measure of protection - mistreating the Siri of 2048 in these regions is looked on as equivalent to mistreating a pet. Yet other regions have responded to the same crises by returning to **stronger and more conservative expressions of their own traditional heritage**.

This fragmentation was triggered in part by increasingly frequent and bitter culture wars, with disputes over issues such as gender and cultural identity. Europeans also struggled to agree on common sources of useful information as they navigated the rise of next-generation social media. Traditional science and medicine found themselves in competition with new modes and models of knowledge, some of them effective in their own right, some of them tending towards what we would perceive as the lunatic fringe. In 2020, Google Maps presented different representations of disputed territory depending on where in the world you viewed them from; by the end of that decade, it had become almost impossible for the general public even to agree on trusted sources of information.

The inability of existing institutions to command consensus led to increasing regional and private devolution. A series of violent protests against 5G rollout, and the election of politicians holding extreme conspiracy theory views, were key events in the widespread collapse of public trust, which damaged both public institutions and big business.

This collapse also created new opportunities for people to thrive: in this Europe there are new winners and losers, with some regions, cities, villages, displaying some of the most enlightened, progressive, and compassionate attitudes in the world. There are leading examples of degrowth in this world, and a “back-to-nature” pastoralism, as well as some enterprising autonomous regions which have built international relationships to sustain their

chosen way of living. This future Europe is characterised by a strong libertarian streak: people move between communities based on individual preferences and values. Huge spatial inequalities have developed within and across regions and groups in Europe.

Technological advance and innovation have slowed in this fragmented and distrustful Europe, while other parts of the world, notably in the Asia-Pacific region, have continued to accelerate. Territories on the eastern border of Europe are strongly influenced by adjacent cultures.

While the technology of this Europe in 2050 remains advanced compared to our own, visitors from elsewhere in this future world consider European nations to be something of a backwater, and they tour Europe - or at least its safer corners - enjoying the novelty of its wildly divergent cultures, and its architectural heritage.

More successful communities become physically more appealing in a world where autonomy is less well sustained by advanced digital technology, leading to territorial and resource disputes as communities physically grow. Compared to China, India, or the US, this Europe lacks the cutting-edge AI resources which might enable it to manage and transcend these pressures. Around some autonomous regions, shanty towns and formal or informal displaced persons camps have developed, populated by internal rather than external migrant

The European Union in this world serves largely to mediate internal conflicts and provide some unity in external relations. It provides a common informational framework, offering the bare minimum of trusted information that its diverging members can hold in common. It holds together because its constituent autonomous parts recognise that they are too small and fragmented to have clout with the new great powers of the age, but its power has dwindled significantly.

3.3 Next Steps

The initial scenarios presented in this document will be sent for review and feedback to a number of external experts and discussed in European-level workshops with national and regional stakeholders and with key institutions. These engagement activities and their outcomes will be reported in Deliverable 8.5. Following this process of engagement and testing of the initial scenarios, the final scenarios will be drafted and published. The final scenarios will form the basis of a final set of regional workshops in autumn 2021, at which stakeholders will discuss the implications of the scenarios and the trajectories that they represent for the respective region and use the scenarios to work back to nearer-horizon challenges and potential policy responses. The conclusions of these exercises will inform the formulation of final policy responses from IMAJINE in Deliverable 8.6.

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