

Towards spatial justice across Europe through place-based interventions: lessons learned from considering medium-horizon future scenarios

Tobiasz-Lis, Paulina; Piras, Simone; Dmochowska-Dudek, Karolina; Currie , Margaret; Duckett, Dominic; Copus, Andrew; Wójcik, Marcin

Published in:

Spatial Justice and Cohesion Policy: The Role of Place-Based Action in Economic and Community Development

DOI:

[10.4324/9781003229681-9](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003229681-9)

Publication date:

2023

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in ResearchOnline](#)

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Tobiasz-Lis, P, Piras, S, Dmochowska-Dudek, K, Currie , M, Duckett, D, Copus, A & Wójcik, M 2023, Towards spatial justice across Europe through place-based interventions: lessons learned from considering medium-horizon future scenarios. in M Fritsch, P Kahila, S Németh & JW Scott (eds), *Spatial Justice and Cohesion Policy: The Role of Place-Based Action in Economic and Community Development*. Regions and Cities, Routledge , London, pp. 107-125. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003229681-9>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please view our takedown policy at <https://edshare.gcu.ac.uk/id/eprint/5179> for details of how to contact us.

7 Towards spatial justice across Europe through place-based interventions

Lessons learned from considering medium-horizon future scenarios

Paulina Tobiasz-Lis, Simone Piras, Karolina Dmochowska-Dudek, Margaret Currie, Dominic Duckett, Andrew Copus, and Marcin Wójcik

Introduction

This chapter presents medium-horizon (2018–2030) development scenarios for 33 European localities experiencing spatial injustice at different scales and identifies implications for interventions targeting spatial justice, ranging from public policies to bottom-up initiatives. A novel methodological approach has been developed (Piras et al., 2022), combining scenario planning and Theory of Change (ToC) approaches (see Serrat, 2017) to assess the internal and external coherence and effectiveness of place-based interventions addressing spatial justice across Europe. This can be a useful tool for monitoring and course-correcting policy interventions during their implementation, and for final evaluation to shape future policies in the same locality or elsewhere. The final goal of the presented analysis was to extract relevant stylized facts that inform us about the mid-term effectiveness of interventions addressing spatial justice, and what is expected to drive or inhibit their success.

The notion of spatial justice is simultaneously abstract and complex, and expands the more widely used concept of social justice, incorporating the spatial implications of fairness into a focus on the fair distribution of resources across social groups (see Schmitt and Weck, this volume). According to Soja (2010), the universal and normative character of the theory of justice does not reflect the distribution of inequalities through space, the specifics of different societies and cultures, and the temporal aspect of development in modifying the level of spatial disparities. This author proceeds to argue that despite the equal distribution of socially valued resources across a territory, it is practically impossible to achieve equal access (Soja, 2010). If other factors are added to basic distributional inequality (e.g. institutional inefficiency, budgetary demands, ethnic intolerance, or the abuse of power), inequalities

are further accentuated and may be reflected in people's perceptions of injustice (see Keller and Virág's discussion in Chapter 6). Soja (2010: 5) stresses the interrelation of justice and space, recognizing a dialectical relationship between spatial organization and social processes: 'spatiality of injustice . . . affects society and social life just as much as social processes shape the spatiality or specific geography of injustice'. For the purposes of the EU Horizon 2020 RELOCAL, spatial justice was defined as 'an equitable spatial distribution of resources and opportunities, and fairness in the relations of power that shape and transform the social space' (Madanipour et al., 2020: 75). The focus is thus on two main domains: 'procedures' (institutions and power mechanisms) and 'outcomes' (distribution of resources and opportunities).

The EU includes a large diversity of places where place-based interventions addressing spatial justice are implemented. Place-based development strategies have been defined in the Barca Report (Barca, 2009) as 'long-term strategies aimed at tackling persistent underutilization of potential and reducing persistent social exclusion in specific places through external interventions and multilevel governance'. Such strategies were recognized as more effective than neoliberal space-blind approaches. Thirty-three European interventions were chosen as case studies in the RELOCAL project, either for their relevance to place-based development or as examples of coping strategies for improving living conditions and promoting more balanced and sustainable growth. The project's main aim was to assess how far spatial justice could be achieved through place-based strategies, and whether achievements were place-bound or could be extended to other locations and times. Although the underlying motivation of the studied local actions was to ameliorate disparities in opportunity, potential, or socioeconomic outcomes, empirical research revealed that the translation of spatial injustice into policy concepts varied among countries and localities. In terms of the perceptions and geographic scales at which spatial injustice occurs, Copus et al. (2019) distinguish its three main manifestations: (1) Territorial Disadvantage (TD), exemplified by rural municipalities, remote places, and post-industrial regions where interrelated deficits in a range of territorial capitals and the lack of a 'critical mass' for local development make attaining an acceptable level of wellbeing or sustainability challenging; (2) Neighbourhood Effects (NE), referring to the problems of residential segregation due to ill-conceived planning policies, or unregulated development aggravated by secondary effects such as stigma or the sense of limitation associated with disadvantaged neighbourhoods and leading to poorer opportunities for future living, business success, or achieving a satisfactory level of wellbeing; (3) Disempowered Places (DP), often associated with ineffective multi-level governance structures which may lead to localities performing relatively worse in terms of wellbeing compared to neighbouring areas, because they lack the capacity to address local needs and support local businesses. It is not claimed that these three manifestations represent the full range of spatial

justice issues, but they provide concrete situations of injustice and ways to address them (Copus et al., 2019).

At a very general level the long-term goal of the ongoing interventions analysed in 2018 was to improve the quality of life and increase opportunities in particular places (Figure 7.1). Structured in this way, the case studies are relevant with respect to the EU Cohesion Policy, which focuses on wellbeing equality across Europe. However, there are some nuances between territories affected by the different typologies of spatial injustice described earlier. Nineteen interventions undertaken within areas defined



Figure 7.1 Key statements addressing long-term goals of analysed interventions

Source: Copus et al., 2019: 15

Note: the font size corresponds to the frequency of the particular statement being used, with a larger font indicating more frequent statements.

by territorial disadvantage aim to reduce developmental disparities that frame the conditions and quality of life as their inhabitants perceive them. Interventions in this group focus on finding alternative development paths and developing new functions of particular places through integrated or inclusive development programmes that require the empowerment of social capital, cooperation, and institutional or administrative changes. Digitalization as a tool for sustainable development is implemented especially in remote rural areas lacking the ‘critical mass’ to provide residents with sufficient access to goods and services. Eleven cases affected by neighbourhood effects aim to address poverty, segregation, and polarization through ad hoc interventions or by promoting socioeconomic renewal in the area so that everyone can benefit from positive spill-over effects. The key targets of these interventions are vulnerable social groups, whereas housing (affordability, good quality, without spatial segregation) is the most common intervention area. Three interventions implemented within the third category of spatial injustice – disempowered places – focus mainly on administrative issues, for example, small-scale municipalities are merged to improve their situation in the future, and border areas adopt a cross-border governance model (Copus et al., 2019).

An analysis of the intervention logic for ongoing actions in 2018 allowed the identification of five generic ‘paradigms’ for enhancing spatial justice with place-based strategies (Copus et al., 2019):

1. Wellbeing can be improved by focusing on the built environment and open space.
2. Local development and wellbeing are contingent on endogenous processes rooted in community and social capital.
3. ‘Identity’ – that is, place attachment and understanding of local assets’ unique values is a starting point for ‘placemaking’.
4. Human capital, entrepreneurship, and innovation improve local economic performance, with beneficial spill-overs for the rest of the locality.
5. Administrative-scale economies and cooperation can boost the voices of smaller localities and their administrations.

Medium-horizon scenarios, the main subject of this chapter, allowed an assessment of the resilience of these paradigms from the perspective of 2030. They were elaborated before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe in March 2020. They therefore do not consider the potential effects of this crisis on the economy (including redistributive measures for recovering from the lockdown) and society (reduced mutual and institutional trust, or a re-evaluation of the social dimension). As the pandemic’s direct impact and the measures taken by single countries to limit its spread are not included, the present discussion should be interpreted in the pre-pandemic context.

Methodology

Scenario planning emerged as a formal research method during the second half of the last century and quickly became an important instrument for supporting public policy. Applying systematic analysis to ‘clarify present action in the light of possible and desirable futures’ was a core of the prospective approach established by pioneering futurist Gaston Berger (1896–1960) (Godet and Roubelat, 1996; Durance and Godet, 2010: 1488). More recently, a range of techniques has emerged (see Bishop et al., 2007; Martelli, 2001), and scenario planning is not considered a single method but a set of methods integrating the theoretical background with applied knowledge and planning practice (Duckett et al., 2017). Further to the prospective approach, Kosow and Gaßner (2008: 1) underline that ‘scenarios are not intended to represent a full description of the possible futures but to highlight central elements of a possible future and draw attention to the key factors that will drive future developments’. Their value thus lies in their ability to process and interpret information associated with complex issues in the future (FOREN Network, 2001; Börjeson et al., 2006; Bishop et al., 2007). Depending on their application’s purpose, scenarios can take various forms: descriptive or normative; exploratory or projective; desk research or participatory; qualitative or quantitative (Van Notten et al., 2003: 426). Their chronological horizon can be flexible and range from short-term scenarios of two to three years to the distant future; however, political cycles tend to influence planners to set time horizons in the range of five to ten years. Scenarios can be developed at multiple spatial scales, including the global, international, national, regional, or local levels (Kosow and Gaßner, 2008: 36).

The RELOCAL project assessed either ongoing interventions, or interventions whose impacts were not yet fully realized. Thus, a single most plausible scenario was judged more suitable than elaborating a ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ scenario for each of the 33 case study areas in 11 EU member states. Scenarios were elaborated in the framework of a multi-step process, including elements of the Theory of Change (ToC), mechanism mapping, and morphological scenarios (Figure 7.2). It was a participatory forecasting exercise, implemented by analysts in consultation and with the substantial contribution of local experts and stakeholders. We describe here the methodology used, showing the three main steps undertaken to draw the final synthesis. However, the results presented in the rest of the chapter, focusing on future frames of place-based interventions undertaken to improve local communities’ wellbeing and indicating their effectiveness, will be derived mainly from the second and third steps. For details of the methodological approach developed for the purpose of the RELOCAL project, see Piras et al. (2022).

The methodology’s first step focused on deconstructing the logic underpinning each intervention as of 2018 and the assumptions on which this logic was conditional. This activity was centred on a systematic diagram developed in two stages, roughly equating to the basic ToC and mechanism mapping.

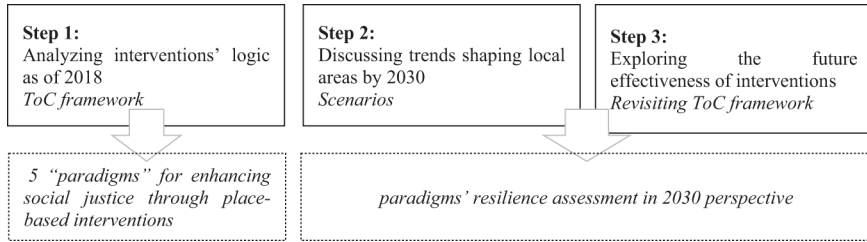


Figure 7.2 Overview of the process envisaged in the methodology

Source: Own elaboration

The two methods are overlapping and complementary, as the intervention's internal assumptions identified through the baseline ToC are crucial for considering, relations with external contextual conditions and drivers in mechanism mapping (Williams, 2017, 2020). Henceforth, the ToC and mechanism mapping exercises' joint output are identified as a 'baseline mechanism map' (Figure 7.3). The maps were elaborated by analysts in collaboration with local stakeholders, drawing on the latter's familiarity with the interventions and the local context. Our approach deviates from the original ToC mechanism map (Connell and Kubisch, 1998; Taplin and Clark, 2012), because the process was implemented *ex post* on an already running (or completed) intervention. To build their baseline mechanism map, analysts must follow seven steps:

- 1) describe the intervention's long-term realistically achievable goal;
- 2–3) identify the intervention and deconstruct it into one or more constituent actions;
- 4–5) specify intermediate outcomes and link them as milestones between the initial intervention and the long-term goal;
- 6) add baseline assumptions, alongside the intermediate outcome(s) or the causal link(s), to represent either drivers boosting a certain causal pathway or inhibitors hindering it;
- 7) add contextual conditions and drivers (CC&D) representing the external environment in which the intervention is implemented. CC&D can be divided into various domains, and we focused on three: (i) geography; (ii) policy; and (iii) society and market. CC&D represent the link between the mechanism map and the scenario(s) developed in the next step. Analysts should therefore select them carefully, possibly deriving them from the 'states' of the 'nexuses of changes' defined in the following paragraphs.

The second step in reflecting on the future of RELOCAL case study localities focused on formulating scenarios to explore how particular interventions were likely to perform within a potential future context. This context

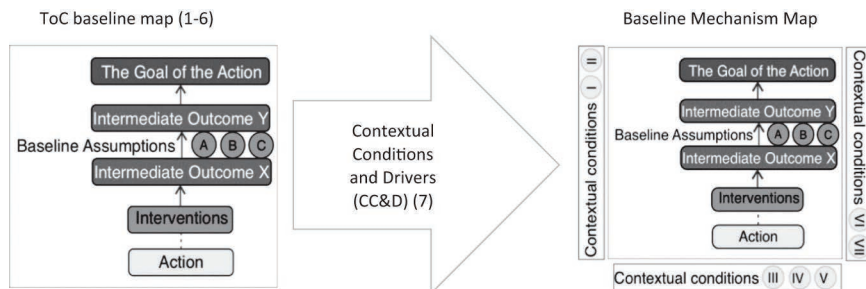


Figure 7.3 Overview of the first step integrating elements of the ToC framework

Source: Own elaboration

was defined based on macro-trends affecting local communities throughout Europe, which were in turn structured into six domains: Demography, Economy, Policy and Governance, Environment, Society and Technology (DEPEST). The DEPEST domains, including several potential macro-trends for the 2020–2030 period, were identified to guide the case study analysts in their reflections about the plausible futures of their particular localities. The DEPEST structure follows Aguillar (1967), who introduced PEST (Political, Economic, Social, Technical), to be further extended to include additional domains, that is, PESTEL, STEEPLE, STEEPVL, DESTEP (Walsh, 2005; Burt et al., 2006; Nazarko et al., 2017). Similar structures are used in management sciences to provide a comprehensive list of influences on the possible success or failure of development strategies and thus a starting point for scenario planning (Schoemaker, 1995; van der Heijden, 2005). However, due to their high level of abstraction and relatively wide (global or national) character, the DEPEST domains could not be used directly to formulate local spatial justice scenarios. They were therefore disentangled and reassembled to identify eight more explicit ‘nexus of change’ capturing two dichotomous key trends with spatial implications. When cross-tabulated, the dichotomous trends generated four possible but mutually exclusive states for each ‘nexus of change’. The ‘nexus’ and their states are presented in the form of a ‘nexus-state array’ as a final part of preparatory activities undertaken to frame the scenarios proper. As in any morphological scenario exercise (see further Coyle and Young, 1996; Johansen, 2018), the ‘nexus-state array’ served as a ‘palette’ of scenario elements and a framework for scenario narrative to be elaborated by case study experts (Figure 7.4).

As they focused not on the intervention but on the locality where this was implemented, the scenarios were framed by combining the most likely states of relevant nexuses as indicated in the nexus-state array illustrated earlier. However, to capture the level of uncertainty and thus the probability of deviation from the most plausible outcome, case study analysts were asked

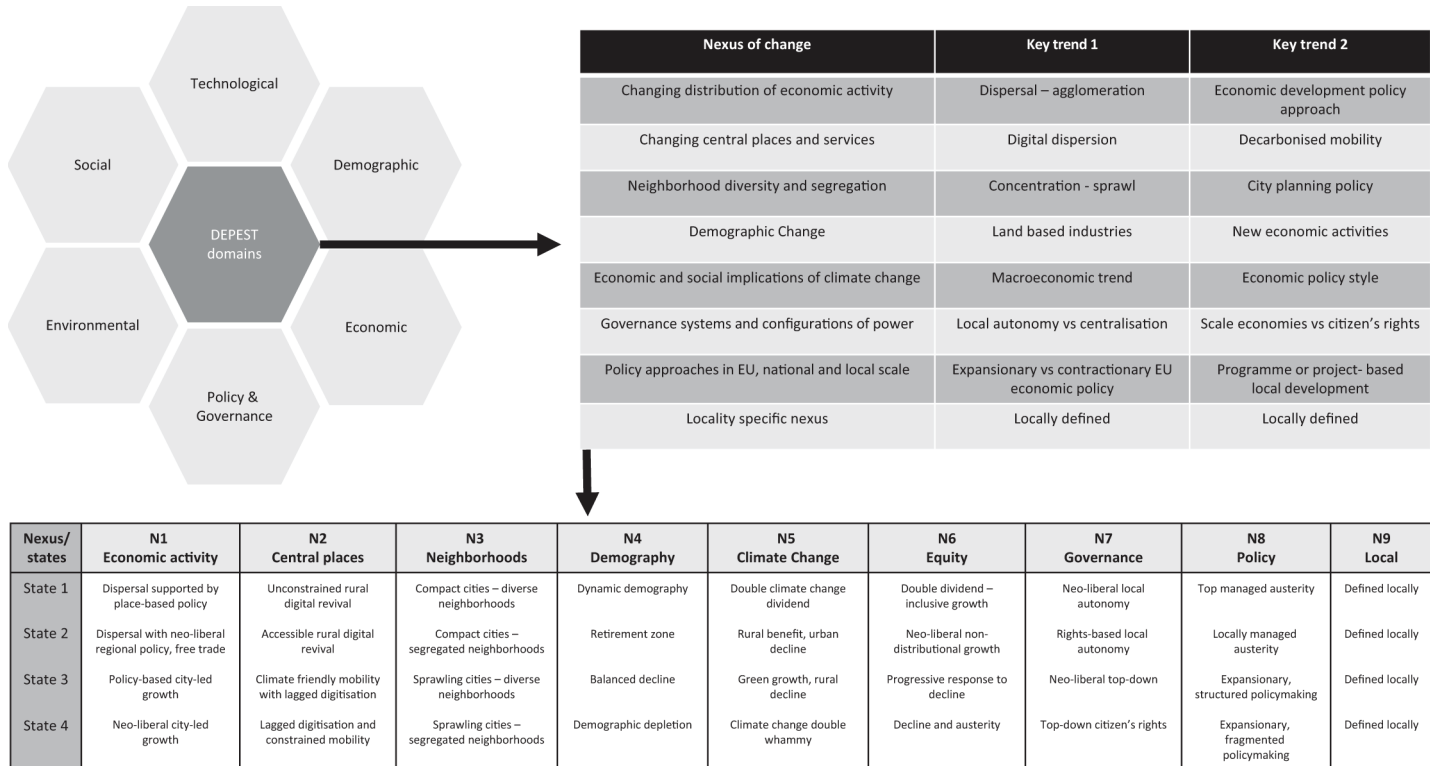


Figure 7.4 Overview of the preparatory activities along the second step – factor analysis

Source: Own elaboration

to assess the likelihood of each state of every nexus, except for those deemed of limited relevance for their case study area. Triangulating quantitative and qualitative elements for each locality, the scenario elaboration exercise consisted of:

1. rating the relevance of each nexus of change for the area targeted (from 1 = completely irrelevant to 5 = very relevant);
2. rating the likelihood (from 1 = completely unlikely to 5 = very likely) of each state for nexuses deemed of medium-to-high relevance (from 3 to 5);
3. defining, if required, a local nexus, and rating its relevance, as well as the likelihood of its states;
4. describing qualitatively, regarding the case study location, the reasons for the relevance scores chosen, and the reasons for selecting specific states of the nexus;
5. drawing a pen picture of the case study area in 2030.

The third methodological step consisted of reassessing the baseline mechanism map, taking account of the changed external conditions specified in scenarios, and exploring their implications for the underpinning logic of undertaken interventions, and therefore on the ability to deliver their spatial justice goals. Following Williams (2017, 2020), who uses mechanism mapping to assess an intervention logic's validity between different geographic or policy contexts, we applied the same approach between the present and the future as defined by the scenario. Indeed, if the contextual conditions vary when the intervention is transposed to a different time, the internal assumptions can also be affected, and the logical chains in the ToC may begin to alter. For the studied interventions, the mechanism remapping consisted of:

1. reviewing the CC&D and linking each change to one or more nexus of change identified as relevant for a particular locality in the nexus-state array;
2. reviewing the baseline assumptions (inhibitors and promoters) of a particular intervention, followed by reconsidering the intermediate outcomes and the causal links between them;
3. considering whether the long-term spatial justice goal would remain valid in 2030 in its 2018 version, or whether this should be reconsidered (scaled up, scaled down, refocused, or become unachievable).

Mechanism remapping proved to be a 'learning machine' exploring the effectiveness, potential, and limitations of the analysed interventions, and prompting final reflections about the nature of spatial justice and the policy interventions addressing it in different EU member states. There were many feedback loops between the two stages of scenario development and

remapping, as well as between sub-steps, making the overall exercise an iterative learning process (Piras et al., 2022).

Scenario reports prepared by analysts in each of the 33 case studies were subjected to a mixed-methods synthesis. The quantitative analysis presented here relies on the nexus-state arrays and a summary of the changes in the baseline mechanism maps. In particular, the distribution of the relevance and the likelihood scores of the nexuses across case studies, and the correlation between the states of different nexuses in the same case study, were assessed. The changes in the baseline mechanism maps for individual case studies were analysed jointly for all cases within the same category of manifested spatial injustice (territorial disadvantages, neighbourhood effects, disempowered places). This allowed us to identify differences in the directions of changes expected to frame the interventions in the future and the nexuses driving these changes, not only for different typologies of spatial injustice, but also for different welfare regimes across Europe and action types as discussed in Chapter 4 by Schmitt and Weck. The following qualitative overview is based on the comparative reading of the pen picture describing the locality in the future.

Results

Scenarios of case study localities

The scenario exercise identified three nexuses of change across all case study areas as particularly relevant for framing their future in 2030: (1) demographic changes, with the key trends of shrinking, urbanization, counter-urbanization, and population ageing; (2) governance, with the key trends related to configurations of power and the distribution of influence and decision-making power between various governance levels; and (3) policy, with key trends such as the character of the EU economic policy in the next decade and the local responses. In contrast, the least relevant nexuses include (1) climate change mitigation and adaptation, assessed as the least important from the perspective of areas subject to neighbourhood effects; (2) neighbourhood diversity and segregation, which received the most extensive range of responses, from irrelevant for the areas affected by territorial disadvantage to very relevant for the areas affected by neighbourhood effects; and (3) changes in the centrality of places due to new mobility and digitization (Figure 7.5).

Local contexts were found to be instrumental in shaping the future in the case study areas. This was demonstrated by the fact that a local nexus was added in 29 out of 33 case study scenarios and assessed as very relevant in 15. The local nexus usually allowed analysts to highlight the importance of unique place-based characteristics for promoting spatial justice, and to consider how localities could play to their strengths instead of being targeted for their weaknesses. In many cases, whatever spatial injustice they represented, attention was paid to ‘identity’ as one of two vectors combining a local nexus

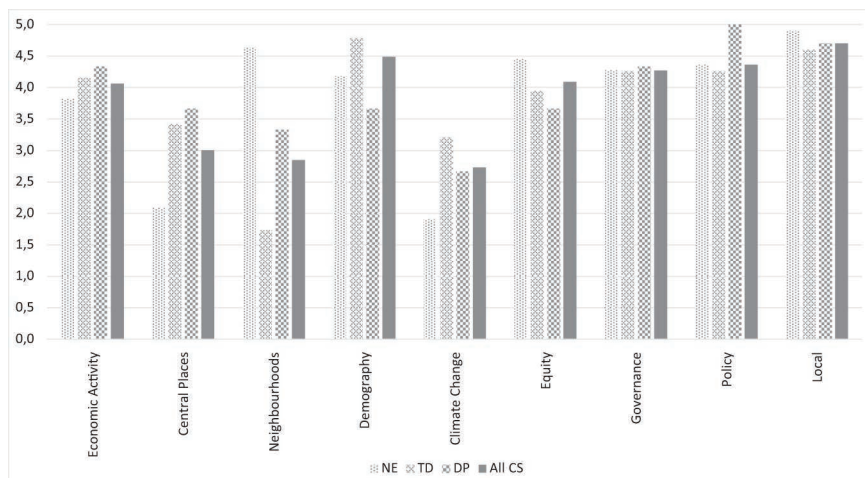


Figure 7.5 Average relevance of the nexus of change for the case study areas

Source: Piras et al. (2020), p. 13

of change. In the scope of the case studies affected by territorial disadvantage special attention was paid to the influence of human capital and social trust on future economic performance. Scenario reports underlined that strengthening local identity would become a crucial factor, as reflected both in the sense of territorial attachment and in its highlighting of unique local assets as a starting point for ‘placemaking’. All this was deemed to contribute to the future success of undertaken interventions. In areas where spatial injustice was manifested as neighbourhood effects the locally defined nexus focused on the future opportunities in terms of civic engagement and support from local, regional, and national authorities, as well as the EU, in funding, policies, formal procedures, and local spatial management. In the three cases affected by place disempowerment the local nexus focused on the issue of identity, defined as a locally driven response to various challenges to future development.

Having indicated each nexus’s relevance over the next ten years, analysts were asked to consider the likelihood of four mutually exclusive states described in the ‘nexus-state array’. The charts in Figures 7.6 and 7.7 illustrate that the studied localities’ 2030 scenarios of the localities were neither explicit nor easy to predict, highlighting the importance of place-specificity for shaping future trends. The bubbles that cluster in the centre of the graph represent neither likely nor unlikely states within each nexus. However, three nexuses are exceptional and may be interpreted as the main determinants of future change. These are (1) demographic change, where demographic depletion is rated as very likely in territorially disadvantaged areas, and a

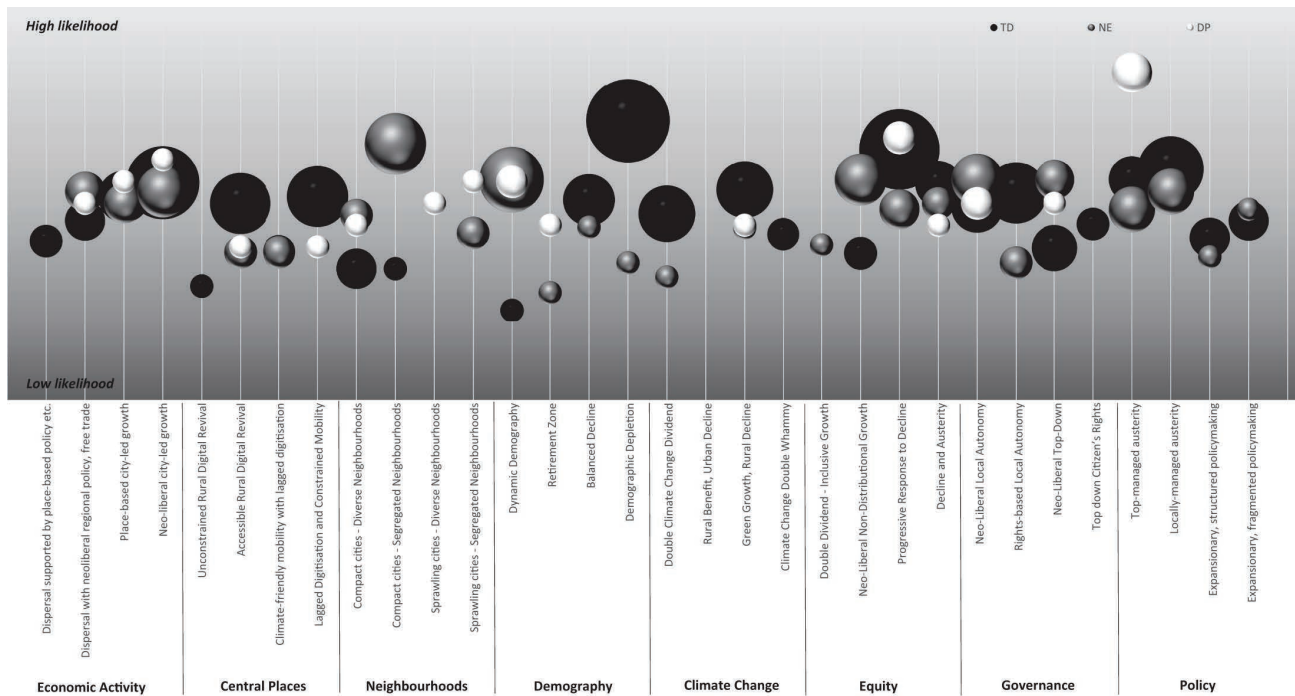


Figure 7.6 Likelihood of each state of each nexus of change for three types of spatial (in)justice

Source: Own elaboration

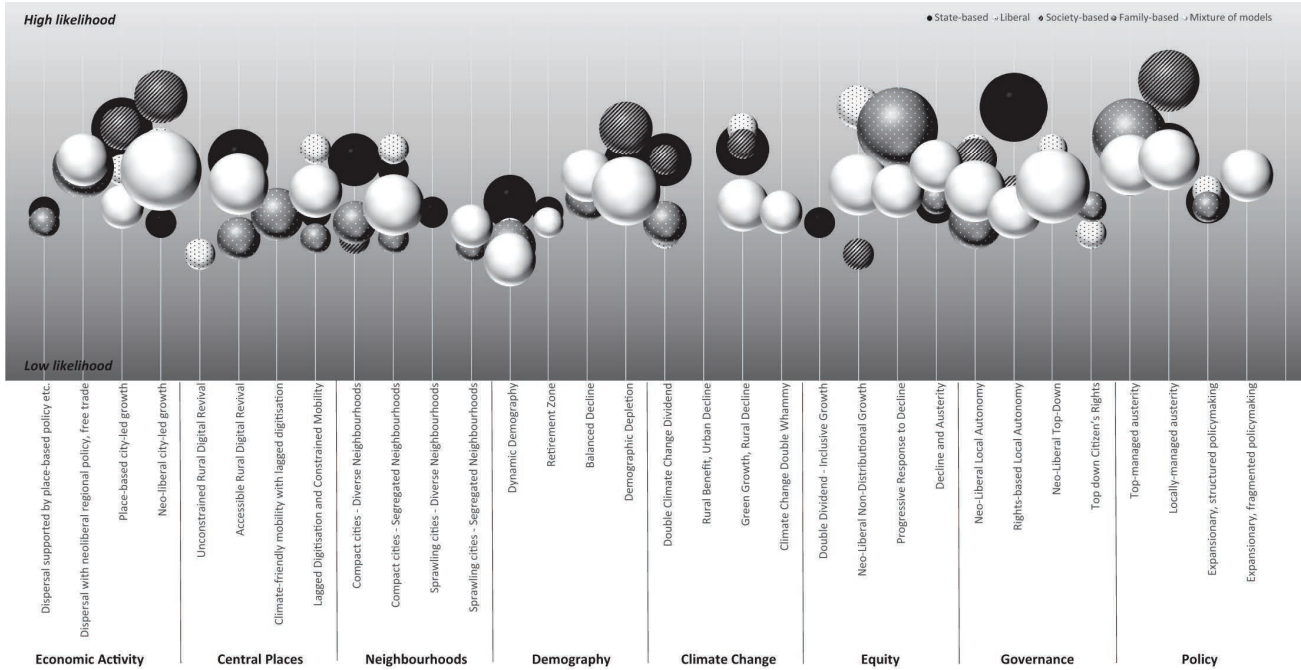


Figure 7.7 Likelihood of each state of each nexus of change for types of welfare regime
 Source: Own elaboration

dynamic demography is rated as likely in areas affected by neighbourhood effects; (2) equity, where territorially disadvantaged areas and disempowered places see their future either in the scope of ‘progressive inclusion policies’ or in a negative scenario of ‘non-distributional policies and austerity’; and (3) policy, where analysts of the cases representing disempowered places agree that a state of ‘top-managed austerity’ (with a focus on financial stability and a renewed role of public institutions in elaborating holistic visions for the territory through broad policies) will be the most likely outcome by 2030 (Figure 7.6). Rural areas are clearly identified as losers in a 2030 scenario, while cities are identified as winners. However, the negative effects of overcrowding clearly emerge in the neighbourhood effects case studies. Therefore, by promoting a fairer distribution of the population, interventions promoting spatial justice are likely to generate a double dividend (Piras et al., 2020).

These results, combined with a second bubble chart illustrating the same step in the scenario exercise for different welfare systems in Europe, show that in the areas of mixed welfare regimes (countries undergoing socioeconomic transitions since the 1990s such as Poland, Romania, and Hungary) the directions of future changes are the most difficult to predict. As for the nexuses focusing on changing economic activity, politics, or administrative patterns, which still tend to be unstable in central Eastern Europe, at least three out of four states deriving from the intersection of trends were assessed as neither likely nor unlikely in 2030. In contrast, in areas representing the familiar welfare model, typical of countries in Southern Europe (the Spanish and Greek cases), experts were more confident about the future shape of equity and policymaking. The neoliberal growth paradigm sharpening spatial disparities in socioeconomic terms combined with demographic depletion was seen as likely in the Nordic countries’ society-based welfare models (the Finnish and Swedish cases). In these locations case study analysts were most confident about future policymaking, characterized by locally managed austerity resulting from contractionary fiscal policy, project-led development, and the decisive role of local institutions and NGOs. In state-based welfare systems (the German, Dutch, and French cases) different states within each nexus were rated as highly likely in the future, but in most cases, with some exceptions, there was one main indication. The nexuses where analysts were less sure about future changes were the direction of policymaking, climate change, demography, and neighbourhoods. Scenarios for the cases in the United Kingdom, representing the liberal welfare regime, seem almost certain. Analysts were almost unanimous in their choices of states. Perhaps unsurprisingly, experts often chose a state reflecting some element of neoliberalism, for example, ‘city-led neoliberal growth’ for economic activity, ‘neoliberal non-distributive growth’ for equity, and ‘neoliberal top-down growth’ for governance (Figure 7.7).

A more descriptive, but richer overview from pen pictures (scenario narratives) describing evolutionary paths to spatial justice in every case study area in 2030 reveals both spatial and non-spatial factors as important for

conditioning the development of these localities. These portraits provide a clear understanding of place-based and well-coordinated local development approaches to spatially just localities. Specifically, place-based human capital – exemplified by the demographic balance and the capacity of civil society to organize itself – was present in the great majority of case studies. The communication and coordination of activities between different administrative levels were also widely underlined as governance issues, as divisions of power often suffer from unclear responsibilities. According to these scenario narratives, there is a need for specific mechanisms enabling proper dialogue and coordination to connect local development strategies with strategies at higher governance scales. Regarding effective governance, to unlock development opportunities in areas affected by spatial injustice, there is strong potential for a single agency or intermediary actor (a local or regional leader) to combine and channel relevant resources into the area in pursuit of a long-term vision for its development. Innovative interactions are needed to deal with the non-spatial aspects of spatial injustice.

Discussion and conclusion

The most plausible scenarios for 2030 that were defined for each of the 33 case study localities in 11 EU member states revealed a high degree of uncertainty, and with a few exceptions the outlook of the interventions designed to solve problems of local spatial injustice seems likely to be negatively affected by a neoliberal paradigm in planning strategies across Europe. There seems to be a strong country effect even within regions characterized by the same welfare regime. This reflects the country's economic potential and quality of institutions, confirming the importance of a place-based approach to effectively meet the spatial justice needs of a locality – and this within a coherent, higher-level plan and vision. Equally, top-down interventions seem to be based on assumptions that do not account for CC&D and are thus less effective in the long run. Bottom-up interventions prove more effective because they address specific local problems and are in a certain sense less ambitious, but the local capacity to act from the bottom up is highly dependent on pre-existing endowment, especially in terms of human and social capital. The importance of place-specificity for future trends is confirmed by the fact that a local nexus of change, uncaptured by more general trends, was identified in 29 out of 33 case studies. However, many of the interventions studied seemed to lack a well-considered intervention logic, or their underpinning logic was weak and failed to account for changing contextual conditions and drivers. Future EU projects might address such shortcomings, encouraging a more structured design and long-term strategies with such tools as mechanism mapping and scenario planning.

Three general conclusions arise from the exercise. First, the scenarios reveal a clear, though not universal, pessimism about the ability of place-based, bottom-up interventions to effectively deliver spatial justice within a

broader socioeconomic system shaped by a neoliberal paradigm. The current economic incentives perpetuate inequality of all kinds in terms of winners and losers, especially in rural areas and in locations that cannot benefit from the spill-over effects of wealthy urban centres, as well as in areas stigmatized for various reasons. The general ‘lesson’ is that to mitigate spatial injustices, policy goals must be decoupled from economic growth, especially in the context of population decline. The main mechanism identified through which spatial injustice is perpetuated is the concentration of resources in urban centres to the detriment of smaller settlements. Centralization is antithetical to place-based, bottom-up approaches, starving places of resources and agency. Equally, macrostructural deficiencies like tax differentials between municipalities are highly likely to hinder the effectiveness of local bottom-up initiatives. A radical paradigm shift from neoliberalism does not represent the most likely scenario in any case studies. However, without such a shift, agglomeration effects will continue to drive outward youth migration. The prevailing absence of national redistributive policies will prohibit the effective stabilization of areas affected by decline.

Second, the comparative exercise highlighted the need for a coordinated approach to governance, both vertically, in linking local development programmes with those at the regional, national, and EU levels, and horizontally, between institutions and other stakeholders. An intermediary agency or actor coordinating governance efforts would play an influential role in the longer term. Without this the power imbalances between hierarchies and the lack of joined-up strategy from silo to silo is likely to result in local measures, however promising, failing to be translated into policy, seeing hard-won gains subject to erosion, derailed because of political change, running out of funds, or failing to enrol successors. In some cases, there was optimism where integration was judged effective, and where a scenario of continuing spatial justice enhancement could be plausibly anticipated. However, the synopsis is that the existing interplay between structures is inadequate and ineffective. Third, there are also concerns around paradoxical disadvantages created in which effective measures in one place leave neighbouring villages or districts relatively poorer.

Drawing on the above findings, we can add some nuances to the paradigms identified in Copus et al. (2019):

1. Wellbeing can be improved by focusing on the built environment and open space, but this requires resources that may not be locally available in the most disadvantaged places.
2. Local development and wellbeing are contingent on endogenous processes rooted in community and social capital and are thus seriously threatened by population decline.
3. ‘Identity’ will become increasingly important both in the sense of attachment to a locality, which reinforces commitment and reduces depopulation,

- and in the sense that it highlights the unique assets of the locality as a starting point for ‘placemaking’. However, the window of opportunity in this respect is narrowing due to many localities adopting similar strategies.
4. Human capital and the promotion of an entrepreneurial environment and innovation will become the primary strategy to improve local economic performance, but this implies competition between places: the long-term spread effects for surrounding localities are uncertain.
 5. Administrative scale economies and cooperation may give greater weight to the voices of smaller localities and their administrations if the new entity is comparatively strong at the regional level. However, there is a risk of reproducing spatial inequalities at a lower level.

The lessons learned from this analysis can help design more effective future interventions addressing spatial injustice, and their planning in terms of integration, longevity, and succession. Coordinated governance approaches appear essential, as well as mutual trust, shared vision, and continued support, for future local development across administrative levels. Instead of viewing localities affected by territorial disadvantage, neighbourhood effects, or disempowered places only from a deficit-oriented perspective, their specific potentials also need some attention. They may be considered laboratories for experimental and innovative cross-sectoral policy interventions, actions promoting capacity building, and testing the potential of digital infrastructures and highly relevant services.

References

- Aguillar, F. J. (1967). *Scanning the business environment*. New York: MacMillan.
- Barca, F. (2009). *An agenda for a reformed Cohesion Policy. A place-based approach to meeting European Union challenges and expectations*. Independent report prepared at the request of Danuta Hübner, Commissioner for Regional Policy. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/sites/default/files/2010-12/doc1_17396_240404999.pdf.
- Bishop, P., Hines, A. & Collins, T. (2007). The current state of scenario development: An overview of techniques. *Foresight – The Journal of Future Studies, Strategic Thinking, and Policy*, 9(1), 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14636680710727516>.
- Börjeson, L., Höjer, M., Dreborg, K., Ekvall, T. & Finnveden, G. (2006). Scenario types and techniques: Towards a user’s guide. *Futures*, 38, 723–739. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2005.12.002>.
- Burt, G., Wright, G., Bradfield, R. & Heijden van der, K. (2006). The role of scenario planning in exploring the environment in view of the limitations of PEST and its derivatives. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 36(3), 50–76. <https://doi.org/10.2753/IMO0020-8825360303>.
- Connell, J. P. & Kubisch, A. C. (1998). Applying a theory of change approach to the evaluation of comprehensive community initiatives: Progress, prospects, and problems. *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives*, 2(15–44), 1–16.

- Copus, A., Piras, S., Tobiasz-Lis, P., Dmochowska-Dudek, K., Wójcik, M. & Napierała, T. (2019). *D8.2 synthesis report: Towards an operational concept of spatial justice. Project report, H2020 RELOCAL, Version 1*, September. Available at: <https://relocal.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/D8.2-Synthesis-Report-Towards-an-Operational-Concept-170120.pdf>. Accessed 6 April 2021.
- Coyle, R. G. & Young, Y. C. (1996). A scenario projection for the South China Sea: Further experience with field anomaly relaxation. *Futures*, 28(3), 269–283. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287\(96\)00001-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287(96)00001-8).
- Duckett, D. G., McKee, A. J., Sutherland, L.-A., Kyle, C., Boden, L. A., Auty, H., Bessell, P. R. & McKendrick, I. J. (2017). Scenario planning as communicative action: Lessons from participatory exercises conducted for the Scottish livestock industry. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 114, 138–151. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2016.07.034>.
- Durance, P. & Godet, M. (2010). Scenario building: Uses and abuses. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 77, 1488–1492. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2010.06.007>.
- FOREN Network (2001). *A practical guide to regional foresight*. Brussels: European Commission-Research Directorate General.
- Godet, M. & Roubelat, F. (1996). Creating the future: The use and misuse of scenarios. *Long Range Planning*, 29(2), 164–171. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-6301\(96\)00004-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-6301(96)00004-0).
- Johansen, I. (2018). Scenario modelling with morphological analysis. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 126, 116–125, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2017.05.016>.
- Kosow, H. & Gaßner, R. (2008). *Methods of futures – and scenario-analysis*. DIE studies, Volume 39. Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik.
- Madanipour, A., Shucksmith, M., Talbot, H., Crawford, J. & Brooks, E. (2020). *D1.2 revised conceptual framework for the H2020 project RELOCAL*, April. Unpublished document.
- Martelli, A. (2001). Scenario building and scenario planning: State of the art and prospects of evolution. *Futures Research Quarterly*, 17(2), 57–74.
- Nazarko, J., Ejdyś, J., Halicka, K., Nazarko, Ł., Kononiuk, A. & Olszewska, A. (2017). Factor analysis as a tool supporting STEEPVL approach to the identification of driving forces of technological innovation. *Procedia Engineering*, 182, 491–496. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.proeng.2017.03.142>.
- Piras, S., Currie, M., Duckett, D., Copus, A., Tobiasz-Lis, P. & Dmochowska-Dudek, K. (2020). *D8.3 scenario report: Trajectories of spatial justice and actions to achieve it across Europe. Project report, H2020 RELOCAL, Version 2*, June. Available at: https://relocal.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RELOCAL_D8.3_020720.pdf. Accessed 06 April 2021.
- Piras, S., Tobiasz-Lis, P., Currie, M., Dmochowska-Dudek, K., Duckett, D. & Copus, A. (2022). Spatial justice on the horizon? A hybrid theory of change scenario tool to assess place-based interventions. *European Planning Studies*, 30(5), 952–973. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2021.1928057>.
- Schoemaker, P. (1995). Scenario planning: A tool for strategic thinking. *Sloan Management Review*, 36, 25–34.
- Serrat, O. (2017). *Theories of change*. Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0983-9_24.
- Soja, E. (2010). *Seeking spatial justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Taplin, D. & Clark, H. (2012). *Theory of change basics: A primer*. New York: Actknowledge. Available at: <https://www.actknowledge.org/PDFs/PACETheoryofChangeDiscussionPaper.pdf>. Accessed 06 April 2021.
- van der Heijden, K. (2005). *Scenarios: The art of strategic conversation*. Second Edition. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Van Notten, P. W. F., Rotmans, J., Van Asselt, M. B. A. & Rothman, D. S. (2003). An updated scenario typology. *Futures*, 35(5), 423–443. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-3287\(02\)00090-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-3287(02)00090-3).
- Walsh, P. (2005). Dealing with the uncertainties of environmental change by adding scenario planning to the strategy formulation equation. *Management Decision*, 43(1), 113–122. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740510572524>.
- Williams, M. (2017). *External validity and policy adaptation: A five step guide to mechanism mapping*. Policy Memo. Blavatnik School of Government. University of Oxford. Available at: https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/sites/www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/files/documents/BSG-WP-2017-019_0.pdf. Accessed 10 July 2017.
- Williams, M. J. (2020). External validity and policy adaptation: From impact evaluation to policy design. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 35(2), 158–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lky010>.