

URBAN GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN UNION: CASE STUDIES OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA (SPAIN) AND KONSTANZ (GERMANY).

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Abstract

In 2007, the EU agrees the *'Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities'* giving some guidelines to encourage cities to promote urban development under the concept of 'integrated urban development'. The research question is, therefore, if European cities actually converge on the way they manage their urban development in the framework of the European Urban Agenda, squaring with an under construction European Urban Policy.

This point is analyzed by considering the cities of Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and Konstanz (Germany), since both are currently involved in their urban development processes (Local agenda 21, strategic planning, city-marketing, etc). The approach to the case studies is built on to analytic dimensions: a) contents of urban agenda and b) management of urban processes in a so called 'posbureaucratic way', distinguishing to levels of convergence: discourse and implementation.

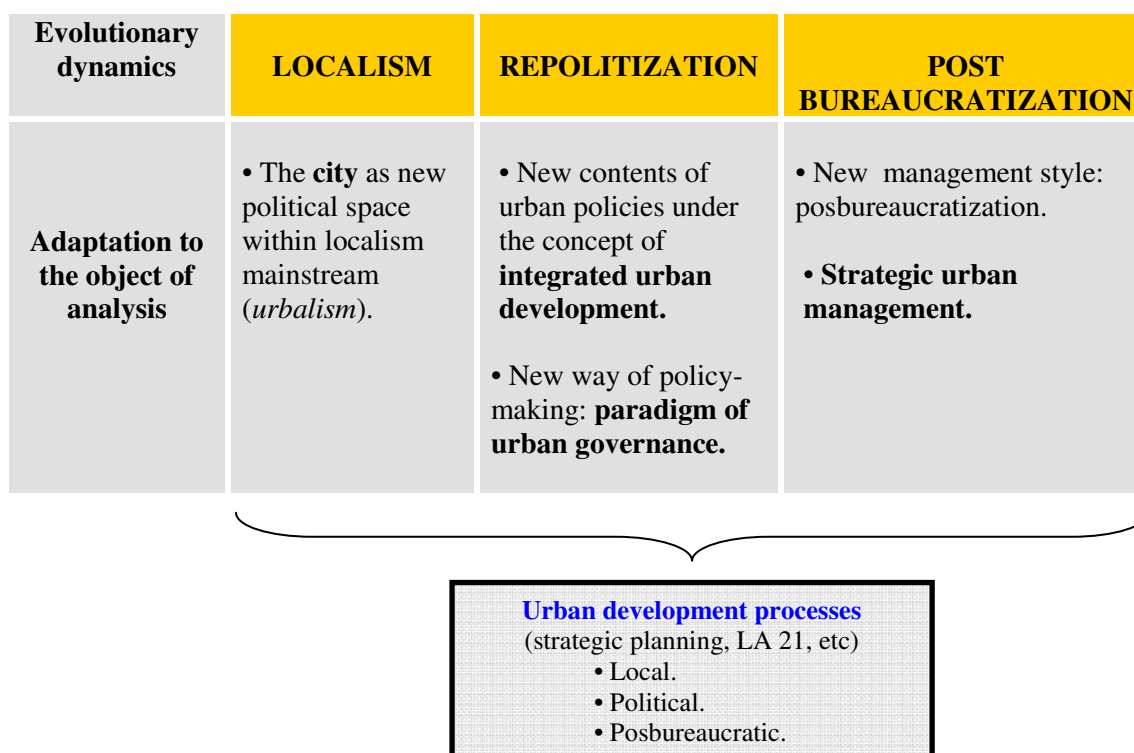
The results point at the convergence in terms of formal discourse (principles), and the kind of processes or planning tools for promoting the future urban development. Nevertheless, there are differences related to the 'style of implementation', which depend on particular local factors.

Keywords: Europeanization, urban governance, strategic management, integrated urban development, European Urban Policy.

Nowadays there is a scenario where the city has achieved more prominence as political actor in the global system. This research has explored why and with which consequences some factors have favored the strengthening of the urban dimension throughout the nineties. Such factors were related to globalisation dynamics but also to institutional initiatives, especially promoted by the European Union, which fostered a number of transformations in the local political-administrative sphere.

The report ‘*On the threshold of 20 years of democratic councils: the return of local politics*’ (IGOP¹/UAB 1999), even if it is referred to Spain, is the starting point as interpretative framework of this scenario. This report pointed at three arguments or trends (localism, repolitization and postbureacratization), which described changes that were occurring during the last 20 years in local government and public administration, but that can be extended to other European local realities.

Figure 1. Interpretative trends and unit of analysis.



Source: own elaboration.

¹ Public policies & Government Institute. The *Institut de Govern i Polítiques Públiques* (IGOP) is an interdisciplinary research institute that belongs to the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). <http://igop.uab.es/> .

Besides this report, it has been also followed the evolution of the ‘European Urban Policy’. While at the time this policy was nonexistent, 1997 was a key year in the path towards its development, with the publication of the European Commission Communication: *Towards an urban agenda in the European Union* COM (97) 197 final (06.05.1997), that described the aims of the European Urban Agenda, which laid the foundations for the European Urban Policy. Ten years later, the EU agrees the ‘*Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities*’ (2007) and insists on building an European Urban Agenda, giving some guidelines to encourage cities to promote urban development on the base of an ‘integrated urban development’².

We think that the core of the Urban Policy is the concept of ‘urban development’, and hence this concept legitimizes urban space and urban government, generating a structure of opportunity which facilitates the visibility of local demands. In addition, it is important to note that local space seems to be more appropriate to carry out innovations in management practice, especially in the field of urban development processes.

These key documents provided a useful starting point to approach these changes related to local government and Administration, which respond to the demands of greater local self-government, the emergence of participatory forms in decision-making and the experimentation with new forms of management within the framework of local policies.

1. Theoretical framework: historical-institutionalism and urban governance.

In this sense, the **historical-institutionalism** (Knill, 2003) has been very useful as analytical approach, since it involves the combination of explanatory factors based on the institutions (structures), as well as the actors’ agency, defined as the strategic behaviour of a constellation of actors in a given institutional context. From this

² *‘The urban interventions have to be part of **integrated urban development concepts** comprising a profound ex-ante analysis of the socioeconomic situation, an adapted strategy and development objectives, concrete priorities of actions and measures, the allocation of financial means as well as structures and procedures of implementation. This integrated urban development concept should take into consideration the future development perspectives of the urban area concerned and be flexible enough to allow later adjustments due to the needs identified by local players and citizens as well as to a changing general development framework.*

*[...]To continue the development of further integrated urban development instruments as well as to keep a national and European dynamic in the management of urban programmes, initiatives for **exchanging experiences and know-how**, for **capitalising acquired knowledge** as well as for **benchmarking** of different approaches and methods shall be intensified in the future.’*

Source: The ‘Acquis Urban’. Using Cities’ Best Practises for European Cohesion Policy (2005)

perspective, institutions are the starting point (independent variable), which are complemented taking into account the strategic behaviour of the constellation of actors³.

The promotion of certain contents and methodological paths by the EU facilitates the harmonization of existing processes and the renewal of urban principles: 'Based on the insight that there is often a correlation between the necessary policy content and administrative provisions, the question arises concerning whether convergence in policy leads to administrative convergence.' (Knill, 2003:2). According to this, the proposed hypothesis is that a further consolidation of the European Urban Policy (understood as a further definition of the content of the political agendas and the management tools of local policies) leads to greater convergence in the urban development models of European cities, taking into account as unit of analysis their on-going urban development processes.

Talking about harmonization, convergence and European institutions lead us to the concept of **Europeanization**, that 'is not a simple synonym for European regional integration or even convergence, though it does overlap with aspects of both. As a term for the social sciences, it can range over history, culture, politics, society, and economics. It is a process of structural change, variously affecting actors and institutions, ideas and interests. In a maximalist sense, the structural change that it entails must fundamentally be of a phenomenon exhibiting similar attributes to those that predominate in, or are closely identified with, 'Europe'. Minimally, 'Europeinazation' involves a response to the policies of the European Union.' (Featherstone, 2003:3).

Besides this, the **urban governance** framework helps to analyze the transformation of politics in the urban environment, especially referred to the urban policies derived from

³ *'The historical insitutionalist framework has to be modified and qualified in order to adress two major analytical weaknesses generally associated with institution-based explanations; namely, their deterministic and conservative bias. The problem of deternmism emerges from the fact that, by conceiving of institutions as the sole explanatory factor, these models generally do not say much about the conditions under which and the degree to wihch factors other than institutions, such as the interests and strategies of actors involved, play a role in explaining political otucomes. In other words, we need analytical criteria in order to determine when a mere institutional explanation is sufficient and when the institutional approach has to be supplemented by focusing on the underlying constellations of strategic interaction.'* (Knill, 2003:4).

arranged collective rules, suited to the territory in which they are implemented (Jouve, 2005:17). The inherent elements in this paradigm are the following ideas: a) change (transformation of politics), b) flexibility (adjustment of institutional framework), c) negotiation (interaction/cooperation for decision-making) y d) specificity (adaptation to the territory and local needs). In short, the notion of governance is linked to the contingency of socio-political relationships in a given context.

Another guiding concept has been the notion of '**organizational capabilities**' (Van der Berg et al. 1997), which is defined as the ability to engage all stakeholders in the economic development of the city and their collaboration to generate new ideas and pursue a policy designed to respond to fundamental changes, and creating conditions for sustainable development. This organizational capacity is measured in terms of the following variables: administrative organization, strategic networks, leadership, spatial-economic conditions, vision and strategy, political and social support, results and coherence (Callejón Fornieles, 1998:36).

2. Research question and research strategy: case study method.

Therefore, the research question is if European cities actually converge on the way they manage their urban development in the framework of the European Urban Agenda. This convergence should be understood in terms of the content of urban policies, taking into account the concept of 'integrated urban concept' and the existence of similar urban planning tools.

It may be argued that the absence (so far) of an European Urban Policy renders impossible to apply the concept of 'Europeanization' (Featherstone, K. & C.M. Radaelli, 2003; Knill, 2003). It may also be suggested that the processes of urban development analyzed are not direct consequence of this policy, because they already existed before. However, this research examines the processes of urban development with special emphasis on the structures and management styles behind them, taking into account the principles and guidelines promoted by the EU in the framework of the Urban Agenda.

The most suitable research design to test the proposed hypothesis seems to be the case study strategy, to compare the evolution of urban development processes in European

cities. The approach to the case studies is built on two analytic dimensions: guidelines or contents of local policy (inspired by the idea of ‘smart growth’) and its management in a so called “posbureaucratic way”, both of them related to their urban development plans in the context of urban governance.

Table 1. Features of posbureaucratic management.

Working method	• Benchmarking and networking (cooperation and consensus).
Leadership	• Motivating leadership.
Organization	• Participation, flexibility and proximity.
Products	• Intangible (values).
Approach	• Systemic analysis and strategic thinking.

Source: own elaboration.

According to this, the cities of Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and Konstanz (Germany) are proposed as case studies⁴. Both cities are of intermediate size and were involved in their urban development processes at the same time (the late nineties), using the same kind of planning processes (Local Agenda 21, city-marketing and strategic planning). However, a further analysis of the evolution of these processes shows that there are differences in terms of style and degree of implementation in each city.

⁴ The **city of Konstanz** is situated in south of Germany (Land of Baden-Württemberg), just at the border with Switzerland, with a population of aprox. 80,000 inhabitants. Its main income sources are concentrated in tourism, commerce and the University of Constance. The most important industrial branches are pharmacology, communications and renewable energy technologies. There is a coalition government. Between 1996 until nowadays, Konstanz is carrying out several urban planning processes in order to build its future urban development model, namely: Local Agenda 21 (LA 21), -*Stadmarketing*- (SMK) and -*Stadtentwicklungsprozess 2020*- (STEP 2020). <http://www.konstanz.de/>.

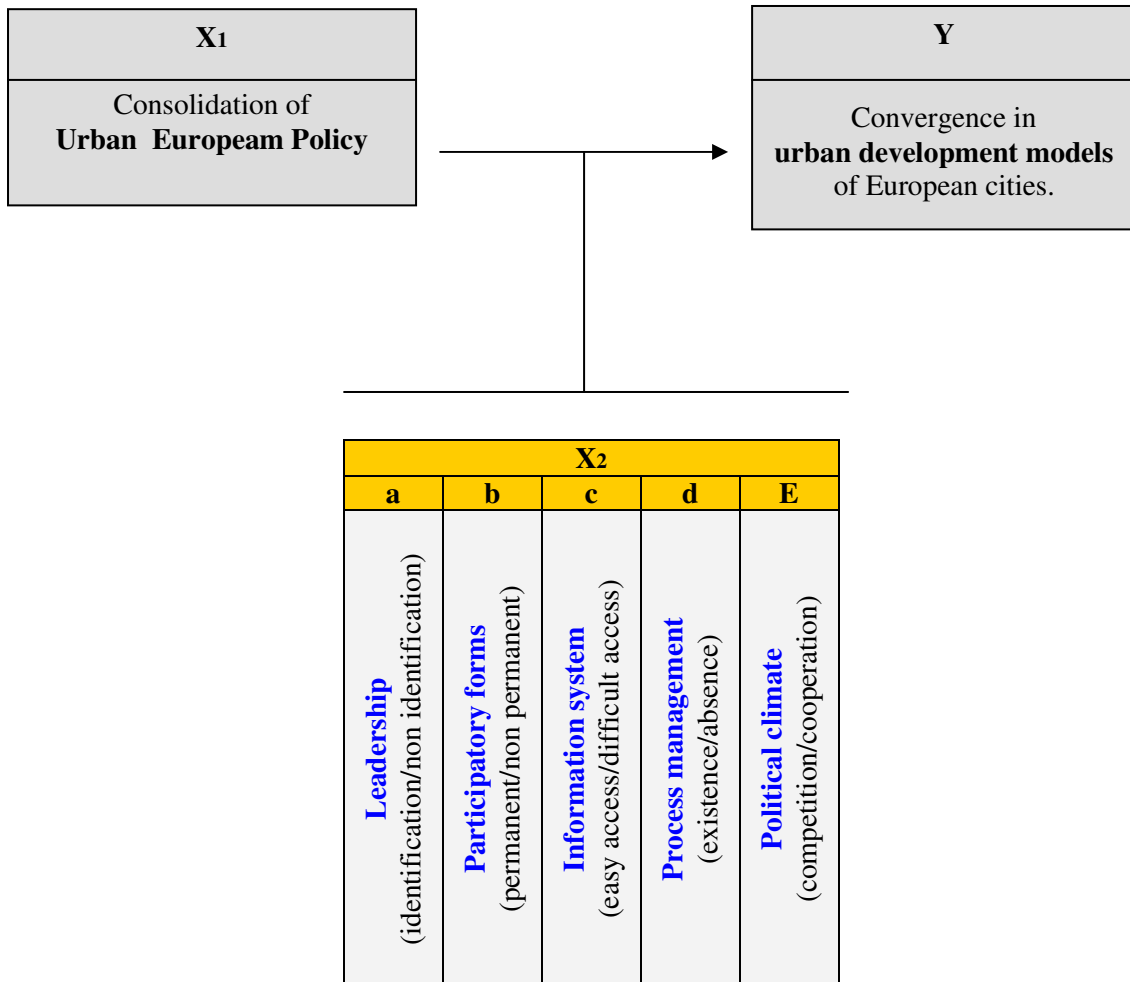
The **city of Santiago de Compostela** is situated in the north of Spain (Galicia), near to the border with Portugal, with a population of approximately 100.000 inhabitants. Its main income sources are tourism (World-Heritage City), merchandise trade, its 500 years old University, the third sector activities because of its status of region’s capital, the media (television and press) and its biochemical sector. Politically, there is a coalition government. Between 2000 until nowadays, Compostela is also carrying out several urban planning processes, namely: *Axenda Local 21* (LA 21), -*Plan Estratégico de Santiago de Compostela*- (PESC), -*Plan Xeral de Ordenación Municipal*- (PXOM) and -*Iniciativa Urbana Santiago Norte*- (USN). www.santiagodecompostela.org .

Table 2. Urban development processes analysed in both cities

Urban development processes	Santiago de Compostela	Konstanz
	• <i>Axenda Local 21</i> (2000).	• <i>Lokale Agenda 21</i> (1996).
	• Strategic plan of Santiago de Compostela (2003).	• <i>Stadtmarketing</i> (1998).
	• Urban Initiative Santiago North (2008).	• <i>Stadtentwicklungsprozess Konstanz 2020</i> (2003).

Source: own elaboration.

Figure 2. Hypothesis and relevant context variables



Source: own elaboration

Drawing on the hypothesis above, the ‘**most-different case**’ (Gerring, 2007) seems the most suitable research strategy, since there is overlap in the variables X1 and Y of both

case studies. The independent variable (X_1) reflects the institutional variable (consolidation of European urban policy), while the dependent variable (Y) points at the convergence of the urban development models (same content of the urban agenda and implementation of similar planning processes). However, in reality there are differences in specific variables, other than X_1 and Y, which introduce elements of divergence.

Future studies may build upon a different design, in which the factors of divergence could be identified as independent variables. However, our purpose was to conduct an exploratory exercise based on European urban scenarios, trying to identify and test convergence in the way we have explained, considering as unit of analysis the ongoing urban development processes in the selected case studies.

Therefore, drawing on this design, **the results have been interpreted by distinguishing two levels of convergence: a formal level (discourse) and a real level (implementation)**. In this regard, although there is a convergence in terms of the program (same principles and planning tools), there are differences at the level of implementation of urban development processes (evolution and management style) related to particular local factors, that are considered as context variables: a) leadership, b) participatory forms, c) information system, d) organization and process management, and e) political climate.

a) Leadership:

In the German case, both the local Administration and the mayor have a direct implication in the definition of sustainable development. The mayor has a leadership position, which can be influenced by three variables: the mayor's personality, the political culture and the institutional framework (Stock, 2000:6). In this sense, the regional institutional framework and the local political culture respond to the so called 'southern model' in Germany, in which the mayor is elected directly by citizens (open lists), providing the post holder with greater legitimacy.

Furthermore, in southern Germany the mayor tends to be independent from the parties, which increases the post's visibility and prominence. Finally, the mayor's tenure lasts 8 years (compared to the 5-year mandate of the other municipal representatives), which

facilitates the continuity of development processes (generally projected for a horizon of ten-twenty years).

In the case of Compostela, the political cycle seems a determining factor at the impasse suffered by some urban development processes. Lack of leadership on the part of the mayor, besides the area of spatial urban planning has been another key obstacle. The negative impact of such absence of leadership is especially acute if, as happens in Compostela, social and economic agents are weak and this is combined with the extraordinary public presence of the municipality, so that there is an expectation that the town will have a proactive role within urban development processes.

As regards the definition of urban development, the city has not built its own concept of sustainable development (absence of specific indicators). This could be due to a consolidated tradition of spatial urban planning, which dominates the concept of development.

b) Participatory forms:

Participation is especially meaningful in the context of urban development processes, because they are political processes, which depend on the existence of political will and cooperative dynamics within the local system. Related to strategic planning, the main reason behind the decision to develop a strategic plan is to seek a greater ability to establish links between urban actors: civil society and local government (Pascual Esteve, 2001:7).

From the point of view of participatory culture, the Land of Baden-Württemberg (along with Bavaria) has been a pioneer in the development of new forms of local democracy (introduced in the fifties), such as the direct election of mayor and the possibility of holding local referenda. These two instruments have been then gradually adopted in most of the German *Länder*, especially after the Reunification.

This environment has favoured the development of a strong participatory culture in Konstanz. The analysis of the urban development process has shown the existence of participatory channels within such process, in which different actors are involved. This has been combined with 'community commitment', a notion which has particular significance in German politics and culture. In Konstanz, the actors engaged in local

development processes have been committed to meet the objectives of the strategic projects in which they are involved. In contrast, in Compostela lack of effective participatory channels and continuity to implement urban development processes has been a particularly important problem.

In Compostela, the prominence of the Church, the Public administration (local government and the University of Santiago de Compostela), weakens other associations representing civil society. In addition, social capital cannot be described as proactive; instead, it is uncoordinated and presents a very fragmented view of urban reality. This hampers the emergence of the cooperative dynamics which are required for the construction and management of urban development processes. For this reason, the municipality should be more assertive in establishing stable channels for the transmission of economic and social actors' will at the local level.

c) System of information:

A good participatory system runs parallel to a good system of information and communication, and both are vital for the success of urban processes.

In the case of Konstanz, the statistical and documentary material related to urban development processes is updated and available in the website of the city. Transparency and easy access to data and documentation constitute a good indicator of “democratic health”, since they allow citizens to be informed and to engage more efficiently. They have also facilitated the research process.

In addition, *Lokale Agenda 21* and *Stadtmarketing* processes enhance individual participation and responsibility in the execution of municipal tasks. There is also a protocol, which rules the conditions for participation. Within these processes, proposals are evaluated by a steering group, that decides whether to approve a project or not. It also provides an ethical framework for participation

In the case of Santiago, the gathering of data has been one of the biggest problems in conducting this research (the website is not updated and few documents are published). Most interviewed persons agreed that there is a lack of coordination and communication between actors and urban development processes. This creates duplication and results in a waste of resources.

d) Organization and process management:

In the German case, there is a quite good organization of the process (timelines, budget, technical equipment and channels of participation, indicators, easy access to information, etc.), and there is also evidence of organizational learning (reform of the internal structure of the process in 2002). Besides this, there is a continuity between the processes and a clear definition of tasks (we know who does what). However, some participants say that there are delays in the implementation of agreed results, and that this situation has had a demoralising effect on citizens.

In Compostela, it is commonly accepted that urban development processes require a stable and appropriate design. However, it is very difficult to identify responsibilities and to map the actors involved in urban development processes. Lack of information and of permanent and suitable participatory channels for urban actors, combined with the absence of a cross-organizational structure entrusted with coordinating and monitoring tasks, have led to a situation of stagnation.

Moreover, an appropriate methodological design is even more important in a context in which it is difficult to generate cooperative dynamics.

e) Political climate:

A climate of consensus can enhance the city's quality of life, independently of political cycles. Cooperation is a key factor for the success of urban development processes. In this sense, there should be consensus at three levels: at the policy level, that is, when drawing up policy guidelines and the model of city; at the strategic level, in describing the objectives; and, finally at the operational level, when determining the appropriate measures to implement the decisions reached in the two previous levels.

Although both cities had a coalition government while this research was carried out, the political culture seems to be highly different. In the case of Konstanz, there is a highly fragmented political landscape (there are seven parties with political representation) with a Christian Democrat (CDU) majority and a green party mayor. However, there is also a political climate of consensus, combined with a strong tradition of cooperation, which facilitate the progress of development processes in the city.

The strong cooperative tradition is related to the building process of the German state, which is characterized by: a) a dominant position of the State, b) Federalism and c) corporatism: ‘The ideological conception of a ‘state of authority’ viewing the state as superior to society is mediated by several aspects strongly rooted in the historical development of German statehood, namely the rule of law, Federalism and corporatism.’ (Knill, 2003:62). Hence, the relationship between government and stakeholders has traditionally been based on consensus: ‘Moreover, implementation research carried out during 1980 revealed that interaction between administrative and societal actors is characterised by a good deal of informal pragmatism and flexibility which exists alongside the legalist tradition.’ (Knill, 2003:69).

Besides this, in German municipalities there are majorities and “structural” minorities due to the legislature’s will to take into account all political fractions. Proximity of the local level encourages a ‘*Konkordanzdemokratie*’ (Wehling, 2003), and in Konstanz, although political representation diverges markedly, such heterogeneity is not an obstacle to promote the development of the future model of the city.

In addition, this cooperative tradition is particularly strong in Baden-Württemberg, which is the only Land where parties do not have the monopoly on the candidates’ nomination, and where there is also a non-partisan trend *-Ent-Partei-Politisierung-* in the local sphere (Wehling, 2003).

In Compostela there is a socialist-nationalist coalition since 1999, however, there is a climate of competition where it is not easy to achieve consensus. Despite the desire expressed in the ‘Coalition government Agreement’ between the socialist and nationalist parties⁵, the interviews have revealed the existence of a competitive tradition between both of them.

According to Professor J. Bogumil (2002), the typical elements of a competitive democratic political system are: a) fragmented leadership structures, b) high competition among parties, c) high self-confidence on the part of the local council, d) intertwining between government and administration, and e) strong control structures from opposition parties.

⁵ Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and Bloque Nacionalista Galego (BNG).

Given these characteristics, the analysis of urban development processes highlights the existence of a climate of competition within the coalition in the Spanish case.

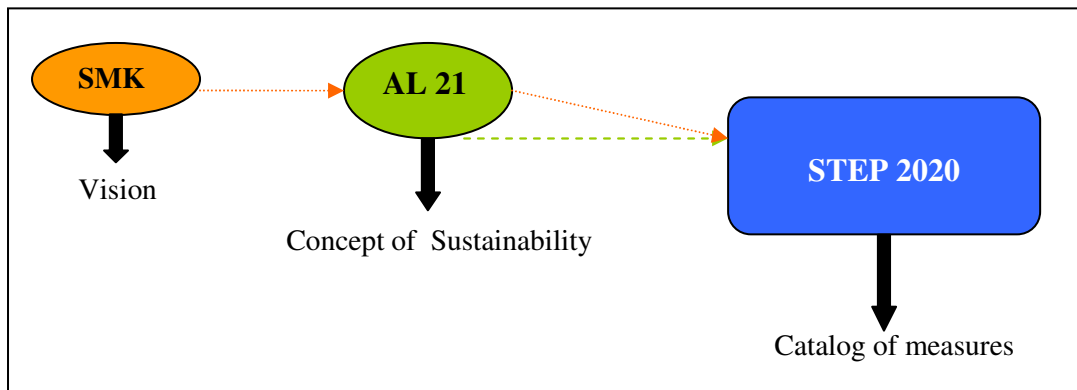
3. Final remarks and conclusions.

Ten years after the completion of the first strategic plan of Barcelona, Fernández Güell (1997) highlighted a number of shortcomings in the management of such processes. In his opinion, key problems were the lack of political will to implement the strategies, the absence of continuity in the implementation of plans, too much emphasis on ‘economic competitiveness’ and little exploration of the sustainable development concept, the difficulty of establishing a culture of cooperative management and the inexistence of a systemic approach in the field of urban development.

One decade after, it is interesting to bring back these impressions and assess what has changed, if anything, drawing on comparative research. In this regard, at the level of discourse it has been shown that there is a trend towards Europeanization in terms of content and guidelines for management in the field of urban development, which also appears as a particularly suitable area for the penetration and implementation of innovations related to the local political and administrative systems. However, the Europeanization hypothesis has been partially confirmed at the level of implementation. At this level, the domestic differences which characterize the studied urban systems influence the style and evolution of local development processes in each case. These differences have been reduced to a number of context variables (Figure 2), which have helped to better understand the current processes.

In the case of Konstanz, the development of its urban development model, even if not free from internal criticism, corresponds more closely with the requirements of the ‘integrated urban development’ promoted by the EU.

Figure 3. Relationship between processes and their products in Konstanz

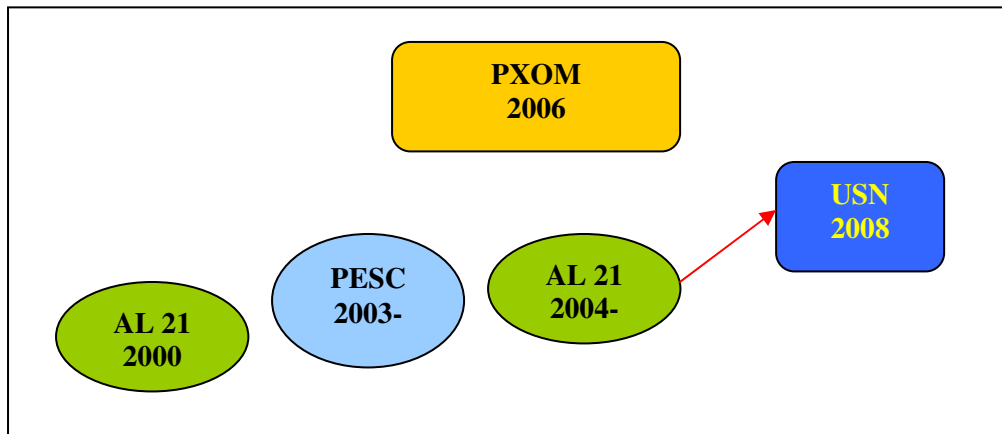


Source: own elaboration.

Evidence of such harmonization, understood in terms of policy content and process management, are: firstly, the identification of an *ad hoc* concept of sustainable development and, secondly, the existence of postbureaucratic elements at the management level, which fits better with urban strategic management.

In the case of Santiago de Compostela, it is not possible to identify a well-defined concept of development, or an integrated vision of the city taking into account all existent urban planning instruments. Figure 4 shows a scenario with several urban planning processes that are not connected to each other and that is dominated by the spatial urban planning process (PXOM). This may be the result of the city deep-rooted tradition in the area of spatial-planning, which has had great international recognition. Hence, it is not surprising that ‘urban development planning’ is understood as urban spatial-planning rather than as strategic planning.

Figure 4. Relationship between processes in Santiago de Compostela



Source: own elaboration.

By contrast, the process of the USN Initiative has followed a different evolution and can be considered as successful. The existence of a strong leadership, strengthened by the collaboration of other party agents, has contributed to this result. The fact that this initiative had to follow a ‘European methodology’ (project management) and submit the project within a specific deadline has also helped. The methodological guidelines led the project to an alignment with the EU discourse and facilitated the incorporation of certain elements within its design, namely a system of indicators, a communication plan and a participatory system, as well as a map of actors and the establishment of a technical office and a competent human team.

There is not an effective system of governance (understood as a relational system, which makes effective decisions and management in the framework of urban processes), since there are difficulties in building the cooperative context that is required by these processes. This is particularly important if we assume that the result of public policies depends on the interaction of territorial agents. The changes derived from these interactions, and especially the intensity and quality of private and public cooperation networks are themselves a factor of urban transformation, because the city is a territorial organization of social relationships (Pascual Esteve, 2001:17).

Ultimately, if the key success factors of strategic planning are: a) the identification of strategic actors and the presence of channels ensuring their participation within the process, b) the existence of a clear political commitment, c) the establishment of

realistic objectives and criteria, d) the presence of a minimal technical structure, and e) the incorporation of a communication strategy (Pascual Esteve 2001:19), and if we consider also that these can be extrapolated to the general processes of urban development, a comparison of both case studies will lead the reader to draw their own conclusions.

With regard to the confirmation (or not) of the hypothesis, after the analysis of both case studies, the conclusions are the following:

H1: The strengthening of the urban dimension is a trend in Europe, especially since the nineties, as a result of institutional and contextual factors.

This hypothesis is confirmed, since in the nineties cities have acquired a special role as ‘new territorial strategic actors’, as a result of the dynamics of the global context and some institutional factors promoted by the EU (even if not only). These contextual dynamics are derived from the process of globalization (economic, social, cultural and political), which requires developing and managing diversity in the local sphere and gives special significance to the cities as economic environments for innovation. But there is also a demographic reason: Europe is the most urbanized continent in the world.

In addition, the change of values (quality of life, inclusion, etc.), and the rescue of the concept of "civic virtue", have reactivated the political sense of the local community.

The institutional factors, related to the EU Urban Policy, derive from the assumption of the principle of subsidiarity, the strengthening of the concept of ‘integrated urban development’, the existence of specific funding programmes for cities and the establishment of the paradigm of governance, which interprets cities as systems of relationships.

H2: The consolidation of the issue ‘sustainable development’ in the EU agenda, has contributed to this process, facilitating the construction of the European Urban Policy, which promotes a new form of government (urban governance) and new forms of management (strategic management).

H3: There is a convergence in Europe on the content and type of management of urban policies, based on the concept of 'integrated urban development' (European Urban Agenda).

These hypotheses are confirmed, because cities across Europe follow similar guidelines to build their strategy of sustainable development. As we know, in 1997, the Commission communication "*Towards an urban agenda in the European Union*", COM (97) 197 final, described the goals that must achieve a European urban agenda. These objectives are: a) To promote economic competitiveness and employment, b) To foster social and economic cohesion, c) To insert cities into transEuropean networks d) To promote sustainable development and quality of life in cities. We confirm that these aims are reflected, at least formally, in the agendas of European cities.

If we approach urban development policy, with the aim of checking if it fits with EU guidelines, we must consider both the substantive dimension (content of the agenda) and the procedural (the construction of the process and its management). Since we consider the issue 'integrated urban development' as the core of the European Urban Policy, local political and administrative systems tend to converge in the field of urban development. In short, this situation fosters a dynamic of devolution of responsibilities to the local level, guiding the content of the urban agenda and its management to a common framework.

With regard to management, in the field of urban development we can find similar planning processes in most European cities, such as the Local Agenda 21, strategic planning and city-marketing. These processes are managed under the principles of the so-called 'strategic management of cities', which tend to converge in a postbureaucratic way.

H4: The consolidation of European Urban Policy (understood as a further definition of the content of the urban agendas and management of urban policies), leads to greater convergence in the urban development models of European cities.

H5: Convergence in the urban development models leads to greater convergence in the implementation of urban development processes in European cities.

After analyzing the case studies, both hypotheses are confirmed partially. The results may be summarized as follows: existence of a 'divergent convergence', which means that, even if there is a convergence in the discourse (goals and purposes), as well as in the kind of planning instruments used, there is a divergence at the level of development and in the style of implementation of such instruments. These differences are the result of the intervention of contextual variables related to political culture, the agency of actors and the institutional framework of both cities.

Summarizing, we arrive to the conclusion that the consolidation of the European Urban Policy, which is based on the concept of sustainable development, creates a structure of opportunity in the field of urban development, that legitimate cities as political strategic actors in the context of global governance. This consolidation facilitates the harmonization of development patterns in European cities in terms of content of urban policies and the management of development processes. Therefore, there is convergence at the level of discourse, while at the level of implementation there are context variables (leadership, access to information, organization and process management, participatory forms and political climate), which show differences in terms of style and degree of development of such processes.

The richness of the comparative analysis serves to 'observe from outside' and to correct mistakes, incorporating comments that can help to improve governance and management in our cities. To achieve this objective, despite existing traditions, people and innovative ideas will undoubtedly be effective engines of change.

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