

# The Contribution of the URBAN Community Initiative to the Urban regeneration practice in Spain

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In 1994, when the URBAN Community Initiative was launched in the European Union each of the 12 Member States had different traditions on urban regeneration. In fact, there were deep differences between their national urban policies and their level of development. This is the reason why at that time some States (as United Kingdom, Holland, Germany or France) had a lot of experience developing policies to face the problems of the cities, while in other countries (like Spain) the actions to tackle the urban decline were incipient or even non-existent.

Indeed, in the Spanish context factors as the transfer of competences on urban issues to the Regions (Comunidades Autónomas) and to the City Councils from the beginning of the 1980s and the lack of experience of these institutions to carry out such important tasks (like the territorial and urban planning and the urban regeneration initiatives) got the main trends on urban matters being developed in Western Europe to be adopted many years latter.

These facts explain why, while countries like France and United Kingdom have implemented along the 1980s programmes of urban revitalization, in Spain at the beginning of the 1990s urban regeneration counted with a very short tradition, based on few experiences that were mainly developed by the Municipalities in a unilateral way. Furthermore, the projects used to be directed to the rehabilitation of the old city centres, while little attention was directed to the residential outskirts and industrial states.

In addition, the urban rehabilitation context in Spain was featured by a great institutional fragmentation and a sectorial approach, where the physical dimension prevailed, leaving no much room for integrated practices including economic and social aspects.

This was the situation in the country in 1994, when the URBAN Community Initiative was launched by the European Commission. Nowadays URBAN has been implemented in the country for 15 years, and the results of the 41 programs developed in the Spanish cities proves that they have had consequences that go beyond the particular regeneration of the neighbourhoods where they have been implemented. This paper tries to address the question of what has been the contribution of the URBAN Community Initiative to urban rehabilitation in Spain.

**Keywords:** Integrated Approach, Urban Regeneration, Collaborative Planning, Participation, URBAN Community Initiative

## **The Urban Regeneration Practice in Spain before 1994**

In 1994 the European Commission launched the URBAN Community Initiative. The experience on urban regeneration that existed in Spain in that moment revealed a delay if compared with the experiences of other EU Members like France, UK, The Netherlands or Germany. In fact, these countries have been implementing national urban policies for many decades, which have consolidated a tradition of intervention in the deprived neighbourhoods stimulated from the level of the Central Government.

The backwardness of the Spanish urban renovation practice was due to different reasons, mainly of institutional and historic nature.

The most important was the recent story of the country, strongly affected by the existence of a dictatorship that finished in 1975 and that for more of tree decades kept the country out of the main economic and social international dynamics.

Concerning urban renovation Spain remained out of the European trends. In fact, it was a non-existent aspect of the policies that were developed within the dictatorship period. In fact, the legislative framework and the urban policies excluded any issue addressed to the conservation and improvement of the urban heritage, favouring indiscriminately the urban growth. Furthermore, the local urban plans lacked criteria of protection, giving much room to the replacement of buildings in the urban centres that caused important demolitions and replacements in the traditional neighbourhoods. The instruments of protection were only put into practice in the case of single buildings or monumental complexes considered of high artistic value (Pol, 1993).

At the beginning of the democratic period the Spanish society and its institutions faced the challenge of getting at the level of development of the Western European countries.

In the institutional sphere was implemented a change of model of State, based upon the Constitucion of 1978: the unitary and central model of the dictatorship was abandoned and a new model, inspired in a territorial distribution of the State's power, was adopted. The Central Government preserved many competences, but lost others that had to be taken on by the new Regions (Comunidades Autónomas).

Regarding the urban rehabilitation, this fact had many and important consequences, as the competences in spatial and urban planning left Central Government and went to the Comunidades Autónomas and the City Councils.

In that moment these institutions had to face a quick "learning process" in order to be able of facing the task that they were conferred by the Constitution, in relation to urban and spatial planning. The difficult situation of the towns urged them to develop effective actions in a short time.

Consequently, the first assignment that had to undertake the democratic Municipalities regarding urban matters in 1979 was the development of urban plans (*Planes Generales*) able of facing up the main problems of the cities.

Urban rehabilitation wasn't consider in that moment a urgent problem, but the demands of the neighbourhoods, community and professional associations forced the Town Councils to undertake actions to improve the environmental conditions of the deprived areas even if the economical resources were very scarce.

The first actions that were carried out tried to provide facilities and green spaces to the cities, and were implemented by means of *Planes Especiales* or *Planes de Actuación* developed in

coordination con the new *Planes Generales*. The projects undertaken in that period had a sectorial approach as they only consisted in physical actions.

As a consequence, at the beginning of the 1980's the situation in the main Spanish cities was the next: the centre was affected of physical deterioration, high concentration of the population (consequences of the demographic growth and the drift from the country), concentration of obsolete activities, traffic congestion and social problems. These circumstances were worse in the case of the old centres due to the age of the buildings. The former industrial areas faced problems of soil contamination and lack of alternative uses. The residential quarters of the outskirts, built mainly between the 1950s and the 1970s, faced problems related with the low quality of the buildings, lack of facilities, social rootlessness and poor transport connections.

In order to face such a situation, and based on the Constitution command to the public institutions (Article 46<sup>th</sup>), from the beginning of the 1980s the Government started to issue many actions which resulted in the creation of regulations and a permanent economic framework addressed to the improvement of residential buildings. These regulations introduced for the first time in the Spanish context the concept of regeneration of the urban heritage (even if it was limited to the residential buildings). Even if they did not generate imminent effects, their main contribution consisted in the introduction of this aspect in the politic agenda. Indeed the first specific urban measures launched from the level of the Central Government that generated the implementation of real actions (and were not limited to the residential constructions) were developed in the early 1990s.

As has been pointed out, urban matters fall within the competence of the City Councils and Regions in the Spanish case. As a consequence, the Central Government can not develop direct urban policies. This explains why the first set of actions launched by the Government to tackle urban decline in the Spanish cities were contained in the national policy of infrastructures, featured like indirect actions that complemented plans of improvement of the transportation systems of the cities<sup>1</sup>.

In fact, in 1993 the *Ministerio de Obras Públicas, Transporte y Medio Ambiente* (MOPTMA) carried out a planning tool for the development and improvement of infrastructures called *Plan Director de Infraestructuras 1993-2007* (PDI) which allowed the State to undertake actions dealing with urban renovation and at the same time avoid an intrusion in a policy area that belongs to the Municipalities and Regions.

The example of EEUU and Germany, where, in spite of the federal system of the State, the sectorial and territorial policies has been object of cooperation and partnership between the different levels of government, was in the background of the PDI. In fact, these countries have been able of launching top-down policies on matters as the urban renovation, on which the Federal Government have not competences (Fernández, 1994).

The PDI proposed an integrated set of actions based on an analysis of the present condition of the national transportation system. From the urban planning point of view the aim was to carry out a strategy to consolidate the Spanish cities framework (Fig. 01). The actions contained in the PDI where structured in four guidelines<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Central Government has the competences on infrastructures and transport policies in Spain.

<sup>2</sup> Infrastructures for the interurban transport, policies for the cities, hydraulic infrastructures and environmental infrastructures.

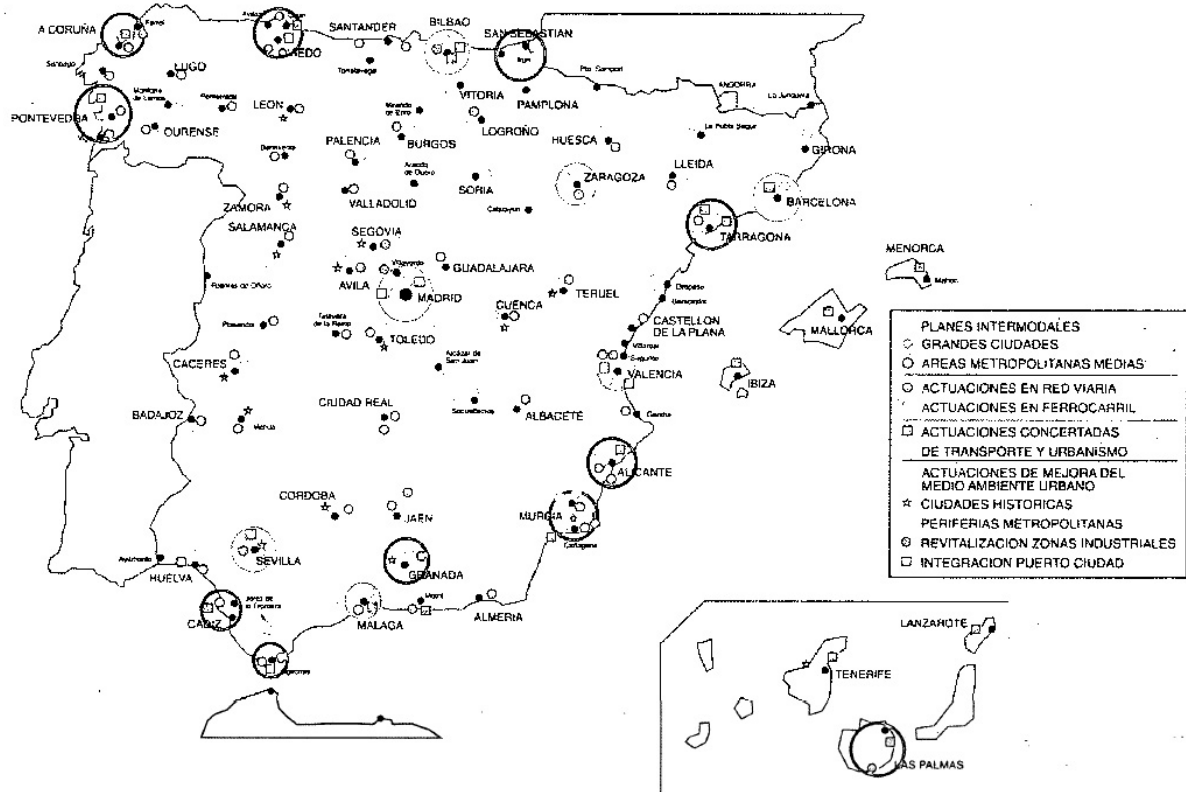


Fig. 01: Initial Programme of Action in the PDI Spanish network of towns. (Article by Fernández Lafuente in *Ciudad y Territorio*, marzo de 1994).

The problems of the cities were addressed by the PDI through the Cities' Policy (*Política de Ciudades*), which gave an important contribution to the practice of the urban renovation in Spain. Indeed it was the first time that a national plan directed its attention towards urban matters with specific actions and tools (Informe Nacional de España Habitat II, 1997), considering that the complexity of urban problems required the coordination of the different levels of government in a institutional context as fragmented as the Spanish one.

In fact, the PDI's policy for the cities considered the partnership a condition for the succeed of the plans, developing a convention that included the negotiation between the actors (Central Government, Regions and Municipalities) through consensus building processes that led to the agreement about the potential solutions.

The MOPTMA's policy for the cities was implemented by the *Dirección General de Actuaciones Concertadas en las Ciudades*, which had the task of establishing how to coordinate the actions related to urban transport with the urban planning measures set up by the Municipalities. This was done creating specific agencies for the implementation of every project, which were provided with a high level of autonomy (MOPTMA, 1997).

The analysis of the orientations contained in the PDI shows that a new Central Government approach towards urban matters was being introduced in Spain in that moment. It represented a change in the conventional practice because its procedures stressed the importance of a top-

down collaborative model admitting that the problems of the cities should be tackled coordinating actions from different levels of government and using flexible tools to arrive to negotiated solutions.

Furthermore, the PDI recognized that its objectives could be achieved only through the coordination of the projects of urban renovation with the projects of improvement of the transport system, introducing a certain integrated approach in spite of its sectorial nature.

However, the contribution of the PDI to the urban policy in Spain didn't last enough time to produce the potential results that it could have achieved. In fact, in 1996 (as a result of the general elections) the new Government undertook many changes in the structure of the MOPTMA which resulted in the withdrawal of the Dirección General de Actuaciones Concertadas en las Ciudades. As a consequence, the new approach that it was adopting towards urban actions didn't arrive to a consolidated level.

From that moment the Central Government has not intended to undertake urban policies (even if through indirect actions as it was done through the PDI) or to define a framework of reference for the urban renovation practice.

As a result, its actions on the cities have been limited to the residential, environmental and infrastructure policies, featured by an accentuated sectorial approach and too limited to produce positive effects in the urban dynamic.

Consequently the actions tackle to undertake the urban problems have only been implemented by the Regions and the Municipalities through unilateral planning processes. The lack of a framework for the urban action at national level has derived in heterogeneous planning regulations that have been implemented by the Regions and the Municipalities from the 1980s.

The firsts developed mainly legislative frameworks where the urban renovation policies focused in fostering the financing systems directed towards the recuperation of the inner city centres, forgetting to establish general orientations for the planning, programming and implementation of the processes (Pol, 1993). They neither included guidelines for the renewal of the industrial states and the outskirts neighbourhoods.

The action of the Municipalities has evolved considerably from the 1980s until our days: from a lack of attention towards the urban renewal at the beginning of the 1980s to the definition of urban policies implemented through urban renovation plans in every town.

As has been said, this evolution has been carried out without a national framework of reference provided by the Central Government. As a consequence the heterogeneous character of the regional legislation has had a direct influence in the urban policies of the Municipalities. In the cases in which the Region had shown a disposition to create a territorial strategy that integrates all the sectorial policies and lays down processes of consensus building, the cities have been able to develop more efficient and integrated actions to tackle the urban decline (it is worthy to underline the case of the *Estrategia Territorial de Navarra* and the effects that it is producing in the cities of the Region).

As a consequence, in the Spanish territory is possible to find on one hand examples of towns where the urban renovation consist in sectorial projects (the majority) and on the other hand examples of good practices where the participation, the consensus building processes and the integrated approach towards the urban problems guide the actions of the local institutions.

## **The urban renovation practice in Spain in 1994 (when the URBAN Community Initiative was launched)**

The urban renovation practice in Spain in 1994, when URBAN was launched by the European Commission, was well described by the *Primer Catálogo Español de Buenas Prácticas* (MOPTMA, 1996), which reviewing many projects of urban renovation developed in the Spanish towns obtained a overall view about the urban renewal practice in the country. The main outcomes were the next:

- Concerning the concept of sustainability the analysis of the conventional practice on urban renovation showed that didn't exist a institutional and social awareness about the environmental problems;
- The urban growth was favoured in order to foster the economic growth;
- The issues and tools adopted by the existing Planning System revealed an "inadequate cultural and instrumental innovation of the models of intervention in the cities" (Prats, 1996).

Furthermore, the sectorial approach towards urban problems was predominant and as a result the projects didn't include economic or social measures, limiting the interventions to physical actions.

In such a situation, the arrival of URBAN to Spain in 1994 supposed the first contact of the local institutions and the Regions with integrated actions, containing economic, social and physical measures, to address the urban decline.

Indeed at that time didn't exist in the country any program following similar guidelines, implemented through the partnership of different levels of government.

Nowadays, after 15 years of development of URBAN and with 41 programs implemented in the country, still it isn't possible to find systematic urban policies assuming the same participated, integrated and collaborative approach that defines URBAN. The actions that present similarities can be considered as exceptions in a general scene that presents a strong inertia to evolve and accept changes.

## **The need of an urban renovation policy at national level**

Meanwhile the need of defining a framework of reference for the urban renovation by the Central Government is still today a topic which generates controversy between two opposite stands: by one hand remain the stand that considers necessary the implication of all levels of government (Municipalities, Regions and Central Government) to define the guidelines of action to tackle the urban problems (the PDI of 1993 was based on this idea).

By the other hand the opposite stand reckons that the creation of a national urban policy would means that the Central Government is assuming a function that is beyond its power and competences, and therefore is invading policy areas that belong to the Regions and the Municipalities.

In fact, the second stand is a consequence of the distrust and lack of agreement between the Regions and the Central Government that features the institutional system in Spain. The refusal of the local institutions to share the decision-making power on urban matters explains why the culture of the negotiation finds lots of difficulties to be developed in the country (Romero y Farinós, 2004).

In this context the Central Government would find lots of obstacles to develop a national framework of reference on urban renovation, but can be “legitimated” to do it by the EU. In fact, the European institutions could “help” the Spanish Government to intervene in an area that is beyond its constitutional powers, avoiding the conflict with the lower levels of government. The EU has expressed in many documents the necessity of defining the urban policy at the national level of the Member states negotiating it with the lower levels of government. It has been expressed explicitly in the *Leipzig Charter* that guides the EU urban policy for the new economic period (2007-2013): “Urban development policy should be laid down at national level and the stimuli for innovative solutions should also be created at national level, as well as at other levels” (Reunión Informal de Ministros sobre Desarrollo Urbano y Cohesión Territorial, 2007).

The statements contained in the Leipzig Charter should be assumed by the Spanish Central Government in the middle term. According to them, the State should create the framework for an urban policy at national level, overcoming the resistance from the Municipalities and the Regions. In this sense, the experience from other countries with institutional systems similar to the Spanish one can be a valuable background.

Indeed, the case of the UE, that as the Spanish Government hasn't competences of urban matters, is an example of how the action of the UE institutions (upper level of government) has been legitimated by the Member states<sup>3</sup> (lower level of government) in order to develop urban policies that have been discussed and agreed through a policy definition process (Tofarides, 2003). Furthermore the example of USA shows how the overcome of the national urban policy was based in the request that the cities did to the Federal Government during the Great Depression (Mohl, 1993), legitimating it to act, even if it hadn't constitutional powers on that area.

The difficult task that the Leipzig Charter has entrusted to the Member states has been assumed in Spain by the *Ministerio de Vivienda*. As the main competent authority to implement the Leipzig guidelines, it will have to define the contents of the urban national policy and determinate the issues to undertake them, following the orientations of the European Urban Agenda. In order to do this will be necessary to define an arena of debate and negotiation between the Central Government, the Regions and the Municipalities, which is the main obstacle that the Ministry will find to carry on the task. But if it succeeds a qualitative change in the fragmented institutional Spanish scene will have been made.

According to this, the contribution of URBAN could be verify in two different aspects: the first one is related with the collaborative learning process that the institutions involved in the URBAN Community Initiative have carried out from 1994 in Spain, defining and prosecuting shared objectives and participating in consensus building processes in order to obtain the Funds from the UE and implement successful programmes.

The second one has to do with the definition of a method to undertake the action in the cities (that indeed is being called “URBAN method” in the European institutions and documents) that has become synonym of good practice and that have been agreed by the UE and the Member states as a good way to face urban decline. This method could set up the base for the definition of a framework of reference of a potential national urban policy.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the principle of subsidiarity.

But before going into the URBAN contribution to the urban renovation practice in Spain it is necessary to focus on how the Initiative has been implemented in the country.

**The launched of the URBAN Community Initiative by the European Commission and the development of URBAN in Spain**

In the EU the cities concentrate social, environmental and economic problems, but at the same time are centres of economic growth and social development and the place where live the majority of the European citizens (80%). Such circumstances (added to other trying to enhance the cohesion process) made the UE attend the demand of many of its institutions and Member states, that from many years were asking it for a direct intervention of the Structural Funds in the cities in order to face the process of urban decline that many urban areas where suffering. In order to do it, and following the pioneering experience of the Urban Pilot Projects, in 1994 the European Commission decided to launch the URBAN Community Initiative. Taking part in the Initiative 118 projects were implemented in towns of all the Member states between 1994 and 1999.

In Spain the URBAN projects were developed in 31 cities through two Operative Programmes. The first one lasted 5 years (1994-1999) and contained the projects for 17 towns. The second one was defined in 1997 and lasted until 1999, containing the projects or 12 more towns. Finally, as part of the REGIS Community Initiative (peripheral areas), were developed the projects for the two capitals of the Canary Islands provinces (Figure 02).



Fig. 02: Cities participating in URBAN (1994-1999).

For the next economic period (2000-2007) the Commission decided to launch a second round of the Initiative, called URBAN II in May of 2000. Even if the guidelines and the objectives remained during the second phase, many changes related with the implementation, procedures and eligibility of de urban areas were introduced. URBAN II strengthened about all the importance of the innovation and the exchange of experiences.

In total 70 programmes were developed in the Member states (the decision of the Parliament of reducing the FEDER Funds allocated to URBAN forced to decrease the number of programmes implemented in all the Member states). Ten of them were implemented in Spain (Figure 03).



Fig. 03: Cities participating in URBAN II (2000-2006).

### **The contents of the “URBAN method”**

Through the Communications of the Commission to the Member states for the URBAN Community Initiative (European Commission, 1994) and for the URBAN II Community Initiative (European Commission, 2000), the guidelines, procedures, approach and objectives that had to be considered by the cities to get into both were laid down. The “URBAN method” can be defined through them:

- integrated approach of the projects;
- innovative character and added value of the actions;
- complementarity of the actions, as the projects should be part of urban strategies at long-term;

- complementarity of the funds, trying to coordinate the financed actions contained in the URBAN projects with actions financed by other Community Initiatives, the Cohesion Fund or the Structural Funds, with the aim of producing positive synergies between different policy areas of the EU;
- exchange of information about good practices with other cities and European networks;
- participative approach, embracing local citizens and stakeholders in the development and implementation of the programmes;
- partnership between public and private sectors;
- flexibility of the projects, adapting them to the conditions of the eligible area.

At the same time that the guidelines for the Initiative were laid down, the European Commission established the limits of URBAN in order to make clear to the Member states that it should be a complement of the national urban policy and it didn't aim to replace the national actions but to foster it. This clarification was more important in the case of countries like Spain, where didn't exist a national urban policy, because they could use URBAN as an excuse to avoid to develop a national urban framework. Indeed the UE institutions expresses that idea in the Communication to the Member States for URBAN: "This Initiative can not tackle completely one of the fundamental problems of the contemporaneous society (urban decline), but can act as a catalytic converter in a wider context, undertaking key plans to contribute to a lasting improvement of the life quality of the population of deprived urban areas" (European Commission, 1994). And insisted on it many years latter, where the second round of URBAN was being developed: "the URBAN Initiative can not resolve all the problems of the urban areas by its own, but can act as a model for the national policy and as a way to spread the good practices" (European Commission, 2002). In fact, through the introduction of URBAN in every Member state, the EU expected to product a positive effect in the ways in which the different countries were undertaking the urban problems (in the case of countries with existing urban policies) or to generate a beneficial dynamic of urban renovation led by the central governments (in the countries where didn't exist a specific urban policy).

### **Results of the implementation of URBAN and URBAN II in Spain**

In the case of the URBAN programmes implemented in Spain between 1994 and 1999 the physical dimension was predominant in the actions undertaken in the Spanish cities. Besides that, the level of participation of the citizens and the local actors was low and the projects can be featured by the lack of innovation and the low added value.

Furthermore, the Spanish context showed a strong resistance to extend the urban renovation practice to the outskirts and industrial areas of the cities, as the conventional plans were used to focus the actions of improvement to the inner city areas. Consequently the URBAN programmes were not able of overcoming this inertia and the most of them were developed in inner city areas of the Spanish cities (45%). The remaining 55% was divided as follows: the 38% was developed in residential areas, the 14% in industrial states and the 3% in natural spaces (De Gregorio and Kocewicz, 2007).

The described results are not surprising in the Spanish context. Indeed, given the approach of URBAN, it found lots of obstacles to be developed in the country. The main problems that were found are the next:

- difficulty of the Municipalities to “understand” and to interpret the documents by the European institutions related to URBAN;
- difficulty to carry out the projects according to the content of the original proposal approved by the European Commission;
- problems of the Municipalities to implement a programme as complex as URBAN from the point of view of the coordination between the different areas of government involved at local level (and with the different levels of government);
- difficulty to implement participative processes ensuring enough representation of the citizens and local stakeholders. Frequently the participation was replaced by communication processes (flyers, informative meetings, posters, etc.) of the contents of the programme (De Gregorio and Kocewicz, 2007);
- problems to set out integrated strategies of urban renovation. In lots of cases the integration of the different dimensions were understood as the addition of physical, economic and social actions without laying down any link or coordination between them;
- difficulty to integrate the URBAN project in a global strategy for the whole city or region. The most of the cities didn't were able to reach this goal;
- lack of innovation and added value of the projects. The most of them reproduced conventional practices;
- difficulties to coordinate the URBAN programmes with actions financed by other European Initiatives or Funds,
- difficulties to involve the private sector in the projects.

In general, in the first phase of the Initiative the projects seem to have been developed more to obtain the funds than to implement issues aimed to achieve a sostenible urban development and to revitalize the neighbourhoods. In many cases the actions undertaken were not justified in the context of URBAN (it seems that have been included just to use up the economic resources offered by the Initiative). In the most of the cases the actions developed were not maintained when the programme finished (De Gregorio and Kocewicz, 2007).

Even if the real results of the programmes were not successful, the first round of the Initiative made an important contribution to the practice of the urban renovation in Spain: it introduced new ideas and started to question about the necessity of changing the conventional and sectorial practices.

Furthermore, the implementation of the programmes set up the first contact of a lot of Municipalities with more advanced ways of intervention in the urban areas, providing to the technicians and professionals the chance of becoming familiar with concepts as “integrated approach”, “participation”, “urban sostenibility” or “added value of the projects”.

The problems that URBAN found in its development between 1994 and 1999 persisted in general during the next economic period 2000-2007, when the second round of the Initiative was carried out.

However, in the URBAN II programmes is possible to detect positive signs of evolution that are mainly due to the changes that the UE introduced in the Initiative (related with the system to select the projects that could get into the Initiative and with the procedures of

implementation of the programmes). These changes have contributed to make possible for the URBAN II projects fulfil more accurately the guidelines of the Commission. As a consequence, in general the projects have obtained better results than those of the first round.

A further explanation of the better results achieved by URBAN II lays on the learning process that URBAN provided for the Municipalities, the Ministerio de Hacienda (as national responsible authority to implement the Programme) and the UE institutions.

In the case of URBAN II the 60% of the programmes implemented in Spain were developed in inner city areas, while the 30% were carried out in residential areas and the remaining 10% in industrial states. As the figures show, the trend to focus the urban renovation in the urban centres remained during the second phase of the Initiative.

Even if there are not definitive data, as the projects has been close in the last months and are still being evaluated, the analysis of the intermediate evaluation done by a independent consultant commissioned by the Ministerio de Economía, the documents by the UE and contributions of the URBAN offices shown the next results<sup>4</sup>:

The quality of the original proposals was better, due about all to the establishment of precise guidelines for that purpose by the Communication of the Commission to the Member states. This fact helped to establish a model for the programmes that could be use as a reference when the cities had to prepare the proposals to get into the Initiative. The details included in the Communication provided to the technicians of the local institutions the explanations and references that lacked in the first phase of the Initiative, helping to overcome one of the main obstacles that the Municipalities had found in the first round.

Furthermore, the Communication asked to the cities to prepare an ex-ante evaluation of the eligible area in base to established socio-economic indicators. The obtained information allowed the Ministerio de Economia to do the selection of the projects in base to homogeneous criteria. Moreover, the ex ante evaluation gave the local institutions the chance of developing local rooted projects based in the knowledge obtained through it.

The quality of the process of participation has been improved as well. In fact, the local institutions had been more involved in this task. The processes of participation that have been developed in the different cities show the next levels of efficiency:

Four out of ten cities have developed participation processes in which the social and economical stakeholders and the citizens have been involved. This fact has had direct positive effects on the results of the programmes, increasing the efficiency of the actions and generating social resources that did not exist before (D'Aleph, 2003).

In two cities the participation processes had improve the level of the average programmes of the first round but need to increase the level of involvement of the population and the local actors in the process.

Finally the remaining four cities have carried out participation processes limited, where the inertia of the conventional ways of understanding the urban renovation in the country as a unilateral decision-making process has had negative effects.

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<sup>4</sup> The analysis of the programmes has been undertaken through the studio of the Projects, the Intermediate Evaluations done by the consultant D'Aleph (only in the case of URBAN II projects) and interviews to technicians of the URBAN and URBAN II offices and staff of the EU.

In general, the improvement of the participation processes has led to projects more tailored to every particular area than in the first round.

The grade of integration of the programmes was increased in comparison with the first round of the Initiative, mainly due to the higher level of definition of the orientations to elaborate the projects.

On the other hand the complementarity of the projects with actions financed by other European Initiatives or Funds has remained an objective that could not be reached by all the programmes (as in the first phase of URBAN). The same has happened in the case of the level of integration of the URBAN projects with other actions of urban renovation being developed in the city or the metropolitan area.

To sum up, even if the objectives of the European Initiative have not been completely reached, URBAN II has represented an important step towards a redefinition of the urban renovation practice in the country, showing better results than URBAN.

### **The new Urban National Initiative financed by the FEDER for the economic period 2007-2013**

For the new economic period 2007-2013 the changes that have been undertaken in the structure of the objectives and Funds of the EU have had a direct effect on URBAN. In fact, it doesn't exist as a Community Initiative any more.

However, the actions and the "method" that were undertaken by URBAN have been reinforced by the Article 8 of the *ERDF Regulation*, that allows the regions covered by the convergence and regional competitiveness and employment objectives to support integrated urban development projects based on participative strategies to tackle the urban problems.

The aim is to extend the intervention method tried out under URBAN to all the actions financed by the Structural Funds.

In order to do this, the actions addressing urban renovation have been integrated in the Regional Operative Programmes, inside the Strategic National Framework of Reference of every country. The UE has underlined that this change is due to the bigger importance that is given to the urban dimension of the European policies (consequently more economic resources have been allocated to undertake this kind of actions) and the higher level of responsibility that should be assumed by the States concerning urban matters.

In the case of Spain the *Dirección General de Fondos Comunitarios of the Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda*, as responsible national authority for the distribution and coordination of the European Funds, has included in every Regional Programme a National Urban Initiative that, as is expressed by the Government, is conceived as a continuity of the URBAN Initiative (Secretaría de Estado de Hacienda y Presupuestos, 2007).

In June 2008, the Government announced that 43 towns have been selected to take part in the new defined National Urban Initiative (Figure 04).

The economic content of the new National Urban Initiative will be 344.661.080 € for Spain, which means that the financial resources have been trebled, while the number of projects has been increased by a factor of four.

From the point of view of the territorial distribution of the cities that have got into the Initiative is important to underline that by the first time is possible to find towns from all the Regions and the two autonomous towns (Ceuta y Melilla) making part of the Initiative simultaneously. As can be seen in Figure 04, the programmes have been distributed covering the whole country.



Fig. 04: Territorial distribution of the National Urban Initiative for the economic period 2007-2013.

The task that the Central Administration has concerning the new urban initiative has a strategic importance to define the future of the urban renovation practice in the country: by one hand the Central Government has finally found the chance of implementing a big number of programmes that could introduce the guidelines of URBAN in the know-how of many local institutions (that are still implementing conventional practices). On the other hand, the projects should produce the substitution of those conventional practices by the URBAN method, and the assumption of it by all the Municipalities participating in the Initiative. Both circumstances could produce a progressive evolution of the urban renovation practice in the country.

The influence of the international innovative trends that are arriving to the local and regional institutions and to the professionals and technicians through the networks of information exchange (URBACT, EUKN, Eurocities, CMRE, QEC-ERAM, etc) will be decisive as well in order to achieve that goal.

### **Conclusions**

To sum up, in the Spanish context the inertia of the conventional approaches has been predominant in all the levels of government concerning urban renovation.

Moreover, the Central Government has not had the political will of define an urban policy, even if based of indirect actions (with the exception of the PDI) because, as has been pointed out, it has no competences and the Municipalities and Regions have been reluctant to accept the presence of the State in a policy area that belongs to them. Neither has been created an arena of negotiation between the different levels of government to plan policies of urban action coordinated for the whole country. The fragmentation of the institutional system and the fear of the lower levels of government to lose their competences (and financial resources in the case of the local institutions) are the main reasons.

In such a scene URBAN has demonstrated that the partnership and the coordination between the levels of government involved in the programmes has work well, showing that in the Spanish case is possible to undertake actions coordinated between institutions of different levels if it is necessary to achieve a goal. As the implementation of URBAN shows it can be done when there is political will.

By the other hand the development of URBAN in Spain has introduced a transformation element in the field of the urban renovation that has produced different effects during the 15 years of development of the Initiative (Figure 05):

When in 1994 URBAN was launched it was the first time that actions based in such an integrated and collaborative strategy were developed in the country. Therefore, the main contribution of URBAN in that time was related to the introduction of new methods and ideas, as it acted as a stimulus to undertake a change of mentality and approach.

During the economic period 2000-2006 the contribution of URBAN II went beyond the theory and the field of the ideas, starting to obtain real results that can be considered successful according the UE expectations (approximately the 50% of the cities have implemented programmes that achieve the community goals and standards). However, the persistence of conventional approaches in the case of other projects reveals that the obstacles to develop integrated and participated projects are still too strong to be overcome.

In the case of the cities where URBAN II has been developed successfully, the good results of the programmes have had immediate effects. The most important is related with the extension of the URBAN method to other actions that those cities are undertaken in their deprived neighbourhoods, imitating the integrated and collaborative approach of URBAN. The added value of the programmes has been acknowledged by the technicians of the URBAN offices. In fact, they point out the added value and the participation as causes of the good results. However, they reckon that is difficult to extend this approach to the general urban renovation practice of the Municipalities, due to the complexity of the procedures of the implementation process. The main obstacles from this point of view are the difficult coordination of all the areas of government that at local level are involved in the projects, the fulfilment of the annual financial plans established by the UE institutions and the complexity of the processes of participation.

During that period the general practice of urban renovation in Spain can still be featured by the sectoriality and the lack of participation, even if the number of cities developing actions similar to URBAN was increased. That circumstance was favoured by the documents produced and spread by the EU, by the networks of exchange of information and by the

evolution of the urban renovation concepts (due to the debate between professionals and institutions of the country).

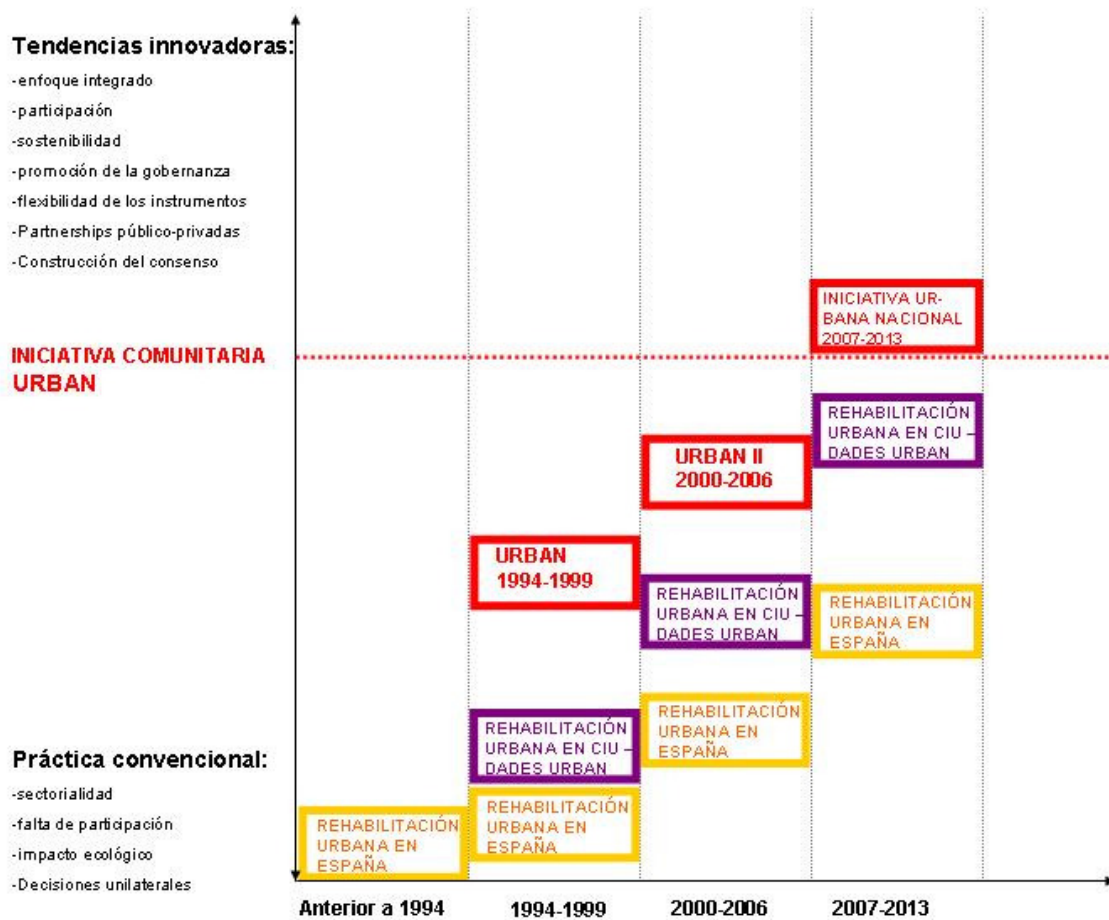


Fig. 05: Evolution of the URBAN projects, the urban renovation practice in the cities participating in URBAN and the general urban renovation practice in Spain.

Finally in the present economic period the National Urban Initiative that is being undertaken has two important challenges: the projects that have been selected should be implemented following the URBAN method and, the most important, the effect of all the actions contained in the Initiative on the urban renovation practice of the country should be a stimulus towards the spreading and taking root of the URBAN method, leaving behind the conventional and sectorial methods definitively.

The increase of the economic resources, the bigger number of cities participating in the National Urban Initiative and the higher level of commitment of the Central Government (as responsible of the Initiative), can be the elements that lead towards the definition of a national urban police at the level of the State that, being based on the agreement and negotiation between the levels of government can legitimate the action of the Central Government in this area (even if it is done through guidelines conditioning the access to economical resources or through indirect actions). An important element to achieve this goal will be the high number

of cities that will have implemented a URBAN programme by the year 2013 (Figure 06) and that consequently count with the URBAN know-how.



Fig. 06: Territorial distribution of the cities that will have implemented a URBAN programme by 2013 in Spain. Violet: URBAN (1994-1999); Blue: URBAN II (2000-2006); Red: National Urban Initiative (2007-2013)

Even if the level of success of the National Urban Initiative don't arrive to those expectations, the contribution of URBAN, the Communications and documents from the European institutions regarding urban renovation and the sustainable urban development, have substituted in part the lack of a national network of reference for the action in the deprived urban areas. The contribution of URBAN from this point of view has had an important role, as it has been the only reference of systematic innovative urban renovation in the Spanish context. Its contribution has been important in two main aspects:

- URBAN has represented the only example of a multilevel police in the field of urban renovation that has been implemented in Spain. The development of URBAN has made the different levels of government work together to achieve a common goal.
- URBAN has introduced the integrated approach and the participation not only through theoretical guidelines, but through practice actions, making the institutions involved in the projects learn how a integrated and participated programme must be implemented, encouraging them to abandon the sectorial and unilateral decision-making processes that dominates the conventional urban renovation practice in Spain.

The good results that has been achieved by many of the programmes, validate its approaches and establish the base on which the national framework of reference for the urban renovation in Spain should be constructed. Until it will be defined, the IC URBAN will provide a reference for the cities that are trying to tackle the problems of the deprived urban neighbourhoods.

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