

CITY FUTURES 09 CONFERENCE

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**CONFERENCE: POLICIES FOR INTEGRATED URBAN DEVELOPMENT:
RENEWAL OF THE EXISTING CITY AND DISFAVOURED DISTRICTS**

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I. INTRODUCTION: SOME STARTING DATA

Cities play a major role in the sustainability of land and in the global sustainability of our planet. It is necessary to consider only the data for population, economic and production activities and human relationships to determine social cohesion. Only within the European Community, over 75% of the population lives in cities and 80% of its economic activities are also carried out within them. As the European Commission pointed out in the recently published Green Book on Territorial Cohesion, in Europe there are approximately 1000 cities with over 50,000 inhabitants and some 5000 towns which, without reaching this figure, have over 5000 inhabitants.

Within these figures, Spain represents 9% of the European population, has around 14% of its cities with over 50,000 inhabitants and more than 22% of the large towns mentioned, which gives a clear idea of the importance for Europe overall of our urban environments' advancing on the road to sustainability and balanced development.

Focusing on the internal data of our own country, according to the Statistical Atlas of Urban Areas in Spain, published by the Ministry of Housing, approximately 80% of the population lives in urban areas which occupy 20% of the total area of our country.

That is to say that there is a mostly urban society for which the achieving of sustainable growth inevitably passes through a suitable and rational planning of cities. Additionally, this predominantly urban nature is not only a European feature: there is a growing trend in the same direction on all continents and, especially, in Third World countries, in which the percentage of the urban population is growing notably, quickly

approaching the standards of European countries.

Cities have an exceptional potential for economic development: they are centres of knowledge and innovation and have a highly cultural and architectural importance. Nevertheless, despite the above, it is certain that the cities themselves are continually facing powerful challenges. These include demographic problems, social inequality and the exclusion of specific groups of the population, a lack of accessible and appropriate housing at suitable prices and environmental problems.

The "ecological footprint" of cities is increasingly deeper and is spreading ever further from its territorial ambit. These environmental effects are felt throughout the planet and the globalisation of world trade is contributing to the diffusion of many other negative effects. With regard to the ecological footprint, it is necessary to state that the question of energy is one of the most important challenges facing our societies in the 21st century.

Our urban and residential models have an extraordinary repercussion in environmental matters since cities and houses constitute important focuses of consumption. Specifically, in Spain the residential sector accounts for 17% of total energy consumed¹ (10% of the domestic consumption in houses and 7% for tertiary consumption). It is necessary to add to this percentage the part for urban and metropolitan movement within the transport sector which forms the most important part, 38.9%, of the total. And finally, 21% of industrial consumption comes from the non-metallic minerals sector (cement, glass, ceramics, etc), closely linked with construction.

From the territorial point of view, the European Territorial Agenda (25/05/2007) states that, " through their commitment, each region and city can contribute to energy saving and to its decentralised supply and to mitigating climate change by, for example, supporting the development of urban areas with low or zero emissions, developing new potential sources of renewable energy and promoting energy efficiency, particularly for buildings."

Further, in the previous legislature, the Ministry of Housing promoted a new basic regulatory framework for building and the regulation of land in Spain, clearly framed within the movement toward sustainability, through the Technical Building Code (Royal Decree 134/2006 and later developments) and the Land Law (Law 8/2007, now converted into RDL 2/2008). Further, as I will describe later, in the current legislature, one of the main challenges will be the energy renovation of the existing housing stock since action on the existing stock is a necessary condition to reduce emissions caused by the use of energy in buildings.

¹ Data from the 2007 report of the Observatory for Sustainability in Spain (OSE), p 284.

Another key aspect on the road towards greater territorial sustainability is the reduction of the massive consumption of land which, arising from the urban model of large explosive growths, has been a major feature in Spain in the last few years.

In fact, in the last decade, our country has seen high volumes of new home building, reaching 812,000 houses in 2005, as many as in Germany, the United Kingdom and France combined, with a ratio of 18.1 new houses per 1000 inhabitants, triple the European rate of 5.7 houses per 1000 inhabitants².

Between 1987 and 2000 the urbanised area in our country increased by almost 30% when our demographic growth was at a national average of 5.7%. This worrying process has been especially relevant in some regions such as Murcia where the growth of artificial areas reached 60%, in the region of Valencia where it reached 50% and in Madrid, where the growth was 47%³.

II. THE EUROPEAN MOVEMENT TO SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The European Union is committed to sustainable urban development and has adopted an integrated concept for urban policy for this. Today I shall refer to two fundamental objectives of the European Urban Agenda: integrated policies for the city and for disfavoured districts, adopted in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, approved in May 2007.

The urban model that has characterised the recent real estate boom can be defined by the equation of dispersed city, low density developments, fragmentation and functional segregation of activities and the primacy of the automobile. This has had serious territorial effects such as the strong environmental impact, social segregation and economic inefficiency due to the high costs of energy, building and maintenance of infrastructures and of providing public services.

On the other hand, the urban model we consider optimum for our cities is that described in the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (24/05/2007): the compact city, reasonably dense, complex, varied and multi-functional, where proximity is enhanced compared to accessibility and means of non-motorised transport (pedestrians, bicycles) and public transport compared to the hegemony of the automobile. The Leipzig Charter stated that, “an important basis for the efficient and sustainable use of resources is a compact structure for urban areas. This can be achieved through good urban spatial planning, thus avoiding the uncontrolled expansion of cities, through a strict control of the supply of

² OSE, p 64.

³ OSE, p 16.

land and of speculation. The strategy of integrating the uses of housing, employment, education, supplies and recreation in districts has been especially sustainable.”

The Leipzig Charter and the European Urban Agenda defend an integrated policy of urban development, that is, from a perspective in which the spatial, sectorial and temporal aspects of the key areas of the urban policy are co-ordinated. Traditionally, actions in the city have been carried out through various sectorial policies: town planning policy, transport policy, environmental policy, economic policy and social policies for social integration.

Nevertheless, planning should be different: it is necessary to consider all the aspects that affect the well-being of the public and to prepare a policy with a joint vision. It has been shown that specific actions help but do not solve problems. If the buildings in a district with problems of social exclusion are renovated but this is not accompanied by a coherent policy of education for social insertion, we have not achieved anything. The idea is to give value to a new concept, known in German as Baukultur, understood, according to the Leipzig Charter, as, "the sum of all the cultural, economic, technological, social and ecological aspects that affect quality and the planning and building process.”

To put this new culture of the integrated city into action, it is necessary to strengthen urban governments through greater coordination at all levels: undoubtedly the local level but also regional, national and European, since each level of government has its own responsibility in the future of our cities. Likewise, the involvement of economic agents, interested parties and the general public is essential.

To implement this integrated urban development policy perspective, the Leipzig Charter sets three basic strategies for action:

- The creation and consolidation of high-quality public spaces with well-designed and functional infrastructures and urban spaces.
- The modernization of the infrastructure networks and improvement of energy efficiency, promoting sustainable, accessible and affordable urban transport, improving the energy efficiency of buildings, especially through renovation.
- Proactive innovation and the implementation of educational policies to improve opportunities for the social and democratic participation of all the public.

As can be seen, strategies that will guarantee greater social cohesion and a better quality of life.

The Leipzig Charter also makes a second fundamental recommendation. Special attention must be paid to the least favoured districts within the overall context of the city. Although Spain has a high index of human development and is among the main developed countries, there are notable groups of the population at risk of social exclusion. The rate of poverty risk in 2007 in Spain was 19.7%.

The Leipzig Charter considers the following strategies as fundamental for disfavoured districts:

- The need to improve the physical environment, promoting the quality of building, taking into account the design, physical conditions and energy efficiency.**
- The strengthening at the local level of the economy and the employment market policy to meet the specific needs of each district.**
- Proactive education and educational policies for children and the young.**
- The promotion of efficient and affordable urban transport, increasing the value of the disfavoured areas and facilitating their integration into the city.**

Through the Ministry of Housing, the Spanish Government is committed to this integral model of the city and is convinced that this vision will notably improve social well-being in cities and will allow our cities to be more habitable, in line with many other European cities.

The Ministry has therefore taken numerous initiatives in this line, from the purely regulatory ones such as the Land Law and the Technical Building Code, to more important lines of study, analysis and management such as initiatives designed to provide closer knowledge of our urban and territorial reality and its development (Urban Information System, in which work is being carried out in close collaboration with the regional authorities), among others.

The principles on which the 2008 Land Law was based followed this plan, stating in its preamble the wish to overcome "the developmental history of Spanish town planning, based above all on the creation of new cities," attending to "the requirements of sustainable development, minimising the impact of that growth and choosing the regeneration of the existing city." In this sense, the law introduces important changes and conceptual novelties such as the "principle of sustainable territorial and urban development" (Article 2), the "basic criteria for land use" (Article 10) and the "evaluation and monitoring of the sustainability of urban development" (Article 15).

It is also important to stress that this urban model being proposed is not absolutely distant from our cities. Further, the greater part of our existing cities are paradigm examples of the compact, dense, complex and varied city so that the existing city forms our main asset for facing the challenges of energy and sustainability.

Therefore, what is being proposed is not so much the "invention of a new model of city" as a return to the view of the consolidated city, recognising the virtues of the compact, dense and complex city as the most developed object of the heritage of Baukultur⁴, considering that, as the Minister of Housing stated before the Parliamentary Housing Commission, "much of what has already been built can be optimised to offer new possibilities for housing, equipment, and public space, necessary for the vital development of many citizens. The renovation of the housing stock is essential to improve the accessibility and habitability of many buildings and districts that are now obsolete"⁵ and to collaborate in complying with the undertakings acquired in matters of energy and greenhouse gas emissions.

Thus, our urban development model will aim at "abandoning extensive growth and change to a contained and intensive growth model. The idea can be summarised as growing less in order to grow better"⁶, of looking inward to concentrate on reducing the unsustainability of the existing city, on "urban recycling" as the main instrument for transforming the city.

In any case, it seems clear that only through local action on the heritage already built in our cities can we contribute to stopping the process of unsustainable territorial growth that has been occurring up to now and guarantee the public a more sustainable and dignified economic, environmental and social future. This gives rise to the importance of considering the existing urban heritage as a resource and to the need to act fundamentally on it to contribute to sustainability.

As mentioned by the European Commission in the above-mentioned Green Book on Territorial Cohesion, even in the most prosperous European cities there are disfavoured districts to which specific actions must be aimed to solve their main problems.

This model may only be reached by attending to the call being made from European institutions to progress in co-ordinating the objectives but also in the practical application of the various urban and territorial policies. Cities cannot be contemplated in an isolated manner, ignoring the

⁴ German term introduced in the Leipzig Letter, translated literally as "building culture."

⁵ Ibid. Appearance of the Minister of Housing, Beatriz Corredor, before the Parliamentary Housing Commission on 03/06/2008.

⁶ Ibid. Appearance of the Minister of Housing, Beatriz Corredor, before Parliament on 03/06/2008.

important relationships between the rural and urban areas; but it is also necessary to evaluate suitably the possible impact on cities and on the territory of the design of the various measures and actions of sectorial policy.

The town planning and also the architecture of this new century in the cities of the European Community must face a new and specific challenge: the **integral renovation** of a relatively modern housing stock which, nevertheless does not today sufficiently meet, the requirements for habitability, comfort and energy efficiency which current society demands.

Integral urban renovation (that is, the joint and co-ordinated environmental recovery and urban and building renovation and regeneration and the improvement of economic and social conditions) therefore constitutes one of the most powerful and suitable instruments for reaching territorial sustainability. This integral urban renovation is based on considering the urban heritage (including buildings) as a valuable resource which must be used when planning new developments that involve the occupation of new land and generate greater transport needs.

One of the great objectives of the Ministry of Housing in this legislature is the urban renovation and rehabilitation of the built-up heritage. Particularly, in the next few years, the renovation of those districts which, unstructured and located in both the centre and at the edges of the city, have buildings of low architectural quality, high environmental inefficiency and little equipment, with serious accessibility problems, inhabited by persons with low income, many of them at serious risk of social exclusion, will be promoted.

This firm impulse for urban renovation and rehabilitation must be considered jointly with the impulse for innovation and energy efficiency in building which contributes to reducing the emission of greenhouse gases and to energy saving, more so considering the important challenge of the climate change facing our cities in a very special way.

III. THE 2009-2012 HOUSING AND REHABILITATION PLAN

The above-mentioned urban renovation and rehabilitation actions will be carried out within the framework of the new 2009-2012 Housing and Rehabilitation Plan, and is one of its fundamental bases. This base is divided into three programmes with different objectives:

- **Firstly, the programme aimed at areas of integral rehabilitation of historic and urban centres, degraded districts and, for the first time, at rural municipalities with up to 5000 inhabitants, known as ARIS. The actions in this field must include at least 200 houses.**

- Secondly, the programme aimed exclusively at areas of urban renovation or ARUS, designed for the integral renovation of districts or groups of housing buildings that need to be demolished and replaced, the building of protected housing, planning and re-landscaping of public spaces and programmes for the temporary re-housing of residents. The actions in this area include a perimeter of more than four blocks of buildings or 200 houses.
- Finally, the aid programme to eradicate slums and degraded housing which still persist in some large cities with a consequent risks of social insecurity, insecurity and bad health, through aids for the re-housing of these persons in rented homes.

One could also speak of a fourth base in this plan relating to the RENOVE aid programme for rehabilitating existing homes and housing buildings.

To be effective, all the urban rehabilitation programmes must have an integral nature, be co-ordinated, be carried out in a suitable sequence and be of sufficient scale to overturn the negative trends that today dominate the development of our cities. On the other hand, their undertaking requires local institutions that can ensure these conditions and, when possible, act together with the private sector.

Therefore, to join the housing and rehabilitation plan in matters of rehabilitation, the beneficiaries must present their rehabilitation plan and a report with the associated actions concerning transport, environment, education and social insertion that they propose to start up together with the rehabilitation action.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

To summarise, integral urban rehabilitation is a very important instrument for achieving the objectives of urban and territorial sustainability which, currently, are in the first line of consideration for all countries around us, objectives that have been specifically taken on by the government and that are guiding the actions of its various departments and, especially, the Ministry of Housing.

The Council for Sustainability, Innovation and Building Quality, created with the approval of the Technical Building Code in March 2006, of which the commissions have already been constituted and which have started to carry out their functions, will be very useful for achieving these objectives of participation and consensus.

It is also worth mentioning the community financing destined to these policies. During the periods for programming the Community Funds

1994-1999 and 2000-2006, the European Commission supported 41 Spanish cities through the Urban programme. In these periods, Spain received €388,65 million for projects for a total investment of €566,29 million.

In the new period 2007-2013, to include and continue with the spirit and useful experience of the previous Urban initiative, the Government has, at its own decision, considered it appropriate to continue developing this type of intervention, integrating it within the "Local and Urban Development" base of the Regional Operation Programs 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Fund for Regional Development.

Thus, a total of 43 Spanish cities have been chosen in the Urban Initiative 2007-2013 programme to impulse sustainable urban development projects. These projects will receive €344,6 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and will be co-financed by the various local governments. The final investment is €542,51 million.

These aids are framed within the Urban Initiative, the purpose of which is to set up innovative strategies for urban regeneration through an integrated focus that includes social, economic and environmental aspects to favour sustainable urban development according to the principles and strategic orientations of community policies.

The projects must feature an integral focus, attending to the development of a multi-disciplinary set of actions (environmental, social, town planning, economic, tourist, cultural, heritage, new technologies, information society, etc) to face the problems of an urban area chosen within the municipality and with a clear social and economic disadvantage compared to its whole.

Thus we hope that all these measures, promoted at both community and national levels, effectively contribute to solving the challenges facing the city, not only from the energy point of view but also from this triple environmental, social and economic perspective that forms the base of sustainability and that is vital to the public's quality of life. We also have the active collaboration of the regional and municipal authorities as well as of the economic and social agents. We are sure that working together in a network we will achieve the improvement of the quality of life in our cities.

Madrid, 25 May 2009