

SPANISH PERSPECTIVES, POLICIES AND BEST PRACTICES ON INTEGRATED URBAN REGENERATION

M^a Rosario Alonso Ibáñez
Director General for Land and Urban Policies
Ministry of Housing
Spain

The policies of urban regeneration and rehabilitation of housing and residential buildings are now a priority core of the Spanish Government. However, rehabilitation and urban regeneration are not new in Spain. We rely on a long and fruitful tradition in this field, that not only has produced interesting actions in these issues, but continues applying them in the present time, generating numerous examples of good practices. In fact, they constitute the best alternative to the model of intensive construction and land predatory consumption that characterized our country in the last decade and a half.

To expose some of the most interesting actions I will make a reference to the Spanish participation in the United Nations Programme of Best Practices to improve living conditions in human settlements and the State Housing and Regeneration Plan.

THE U.N BEST PRACTICES PROGRAM

This program is based, among other activities, in an International Competition of Good Practices to improve the living conditions of human settlements, which is currently funded by the city of Dubai. It was launched by United Nations in 1996 and is convened every two years since then.

This competition identifies best international experiences and promotes knowledge exchange and transmission to other places through the media. The criteria that define a good practice, for example, are:

- Demonstrating that it has produced real improvements in the living conditions of people in any of the different thematic spheres proposed in the competition (I) (IMPACT criteria). One of these spheres is the “territorial and urban sustainable development“
- Solving more than one problem with a unitary action, which implies the necessary institutional collaboration between the national, regional and local Governments, as well as non governmental organizations, private and academic sector, etc (ASSOCIATION criteria).
- Assuring that its action will be sustained along time (SUSTAINABILITY criteria), guaranteeing changes in relation with the legislative frames if required (procedure, ordinances, etc.) and institutional framework (creating processes for the adoption of decisions), establishing social policies and sector strategies with the possibility of application in other situations and possessing a few efficient, transparent and responsible systems for administration and management.

- Reinforcing social networks and participation of the residents, associations, communities, etc. (LEADERSHIP AND STRENGTHENING OF THE COMMUNITY criteria).
- Dealing with actions that accept the social and cultural diversity and that take responsibility for it, promoting equality and social equity (EQUALITY OF GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION criteria).
- Dealing with actions that can be transferred to others settlements, in order to allow other communities to learn from them. (TRANSFERENCE criteria)

The Spanish participation in this contest has been very intense and is rewarded every year by an effusive recognition of the kindness of many of the presented practices. If we bear in mind the thematic area of the “territorial and urban sustainable development “, which is the one that now we are more interested in, a total of 60 Spanish practices have been submitted since 1996, of which **more than the half correspond to examples of good practices of urban regeneration**, such as in historical districts, or deprived neighbourhoods.

Out of 31 practices tied to rehabilitation or to urban regeneration, 58 % correspond to historical districts and 42 % to peripheral deprived neighbourhoods. Out of these 31 practices, 50 % obtained financial support with European funds and concretely, 12 of them, with URBAN Programme funds , with a total investment of 125.331.871 €.

Urban regeneration practices launched in Spain are characterized by the social perspective being present in them from the beginning of the UN Habitat competition, being one of the essential aspects in 71 % of the analyzed practices, and by the **integrated approach** of the urban problems in all of them, as well as the coordination effort -between the different actors and administrations implied and the participation of the social agents conceived as a fundamental requirement.

The analysis of them all can show the following categories:

1º.- Those involving the regeneration of historic districts, the recovery of cultural and architectural heritage of general interest and, within them, solving problems of social exclusion, with broad participation of affected communities.

These are actions that are not limited exclusively to the recovery of the architectural and urban areas affected by the actions, because in many instances the experiences also entail the resolution of of social exclusion problems, while attempting at the same time broad participation of affected communities in the proposal of urban regeneration. In some cases, these proposals raise specifically the return to their neighbourhood of the original residents' population, once rehabilitated. Some examples:

- Victoria-Gasteiz, urban quality and social cohesion (1996).

- Area Ciutat Vella Integrated Rehabilitation: Rehabilitation of the Historical Center. Barcelona (1998).
- Recovery of the Historical Center. Madrid (1998).
- Area Ciutat Vella Integrated Regeneration: Regeneration of the Historical Center. Barcelona (2002)
- Protection and Regeneration of the historic city and integration with its natural surroundings (Santiago de Compostela) (2002)
- Recovery of Historic Town Agüimes. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. (2004).

With Special attention to the return of the population to the regenerated neighbourhoods:

- Ciutat Vella comprehensive Regeneration in the historic center of Barcelona (1996).
- Plan RIVA para Ciutat Vella. Valencia. (1998).

With special attention to the public participation:

- Recovery of the Historical Center. Urban Plan. Santa Cruz de Tenerife. (1998).
- Application of the experience Plan RIVA-Ciutat Vella to Russafa's neighborhood (Valencia) (2008).

2 °.- Those projected on peripheral deprived districts or on cities' extensions.

In this experiences, regeneration polices does not include recovery of cultural or architectural heritage as it does not exist, but the recovery of the own dignity of the neighborhoods, of its housings and, above all, of its inhabitants is an important goal to achieve. Some examples:

- Neighbourhood Regeneration in Madrid, an example of participation and urban renovation. (1996) Slums removal .
- Urban Reordering and social insertion. Opening the city to the sea. Gijon. Asturias. (1998). Slums eradication and transformation of the urban space.
- Program of remodeling neighborhoods in Barcelona districts: the neighborhood of "Vía Trajana". San Adriá del Bèsos and Barcelona. (2004) Including political welfare, integration of the neighborhood, substitution of housings affected by constructive problems, etc.
- Municipal plan of integral intervention Juan XXIII –Second Sector. Alicante (2006). Including improving the serious indicators of isolation and marginalization of the population.

- Integral Plan for the High Neighborhoods (Lorca, Murcia) (2008). Including the fight against problems of accessibility, the problem of unfit housing for human inhabitation and of the almost absolute lack of facilities and infrastructures.

3 °.- **Those who conceive the proposal of regeneration**, not so much from the territorial, urban development and housing aspect, but **from the net social aspects**, which raise problems of urgent or necessary solution. Between of them, the social exclusion, the unemployment, the illitteration and the high percentage of immigration. In sum, we would be speaking about the proposals of elimination of ghettos or about the improvement of its situation. Some examples:

- Girona, the implementation of a City Plan. (1996).
- Open Door: Bilbao la Vieja. Bilbao (1998)
- Integrated Action Programme: Urban Plan. Cádiz. (1998) Social policy aimed at providing employment.
- URBAN project San Luis-Alameda de Hércules, Sevilla. (2000) Special attention to deprived groups.
- PERI de La Chanca, Almería. (2000) Actions in situations of social vulnerability, previous situation of untenable misery.
- Project URBAN Castelló. (2000) Social exclusion.
- Project of integral intervention in the Ribera district. Córdoba. (2002). Social intervention, underprivileged population, local associations.

4 °.- **Those focused on the recovery of obsolete industrial areas in disuse**, by means of the previous decontamination of the soil and the change of land uses to hold a new urban mix of uses (residential, commercial, services, manufacturers, etc.). Some examples:

- Program of Barakaldo's Urban Regeneration. (2000)
- Construction of a tunnel for the Railroad and transformation of Getafe's Historical District (Madrid). (2004).

STATE HOUSING AND REGENERATION PLANS.

In the existence of this certain tradition of urban integral regeneration in Spain, the successive programs and initiatives URBAN have played an out-standing role so much as the programs of the State Plan of Housing and Rehabilitation. By means of the **State Plan of Housing 2005-2008**, the Ministry contributed to the financing of the Urban Rehabilitation in different Areas of Integral Rehabilitation (ARIs), Areas of Rehabilitation of Historical Center (ARCHs) and Areas of Urban Renovation (ARUs) that were coordinated by the Autonomous Communities and Town Halls. Housings agreeded to be rehabilitated during this period 2005-2008 reached 133.700 units: 49.087 in Areas of Integral Rehabilitation, 14.656 Areas of Rehabilitation of Historical and Urban Centers and 69.957 in actions of isolated rehabilitation for the improvement of the accessibility and sustainability of housings.

During next years **the new State Plan of Housing and Rehabilitation 2009-2012** is going to promote in a particular way the regeneration of those neighborhoods that, unstructured and placed both in the center and in the outlying areas of the city, have buildings of low architectural quality, high environmental inefficiency and scanty equipments, with serious problems of accessibility, and in which people with low income live, many of them in serious risk of social exclusion.

The most important innovations that have been introduced in the current 2009-2012 Plan are:

1º.- The commitment to a truly integrated model of rehabilitation, which includes simultaneously the three dimensions of sustainability: social, environmental and economic.

To assure that areas are asked to submit a funding request **Integrated Action Programme** (consistent with the objectives listed in a previous assessment of the area) and specifying in detail the public and private institutions involved in carrying them out, the estimated costs and sources of funding and support provided, as well as commitments to its implementation, development and monitoring, justifying the financial viability of the proposed operations.

This Program of Actions will include the measures proposed in the following areas: Socio-economic, educational and cultural; endowments and public equipments; energy efficiency and utilization of renewable energies; and improvement of the habitability and accessibility of the urban environment and of the housings and buildings included in the area.

The award of grants for development or redevelopment works within the scope defined, shall be subject to the scheduling of actions to improve environmental

quality and the use of renewable energy, the upgrading of urban and public spaces, and improving urban infrastructure.

2 º.-The second fundamental innovation is the idea of **optimizing the public resources**, prioritizing the actions financed by the Plan towards the most vulnerable neighbourhoods and where objectively it is more necessary to intervene.

For this it is required, in every offer of area that requests financing, a **justificative Memory of the situation of social, economic and environmental vulnerability of the area**, duly justified on the base of indicators and statistical objective indexes in relation with the municipal, autonomous and state average or, in its fault, on the base of technical reports that support the above mentioned situation. This Memory will include likewise a Diagnosis of the existing situation and the enumeration of the aims of the action.

In the same sense of optimization of the public resources, it is important to emphasize also the incorporation of a **framework of follow-up indicators** inside the own Program of Integrated Actions of every area, to check the real incident of the actions in the improvement of the situation of vulnerability of the area.

3.- The third commitment made by the Plan is for **citizen participation**, so as to require a report attesting the participation of citizens in the design.

It is also considered very important to keep the original population of the area, guaranteeing the resettlement and return right, for which every area must include - according to the established legally to the respect - temporary relocation and return Plan, with specification of the temporary and economic programming of all the relocation sites and of the social complementary measures for the affected population.

Finally, and in the measure that we are incorporating into the Information Urban system(IUS) the geographical delimiting of the perimeter of every financed area, one **gives transparency to all the information**, and it will complement itself with the already existing one on urban development planning and occupation of soil in the area.

CONCLUSION

Urban regeneration with integrated approaches already count in Spain with some examples of a rich and assorted experience, which in a short term we have tried to present through this intervention.

Toledo, 22 de junio de 2010