



Is EU urban policy transforming urban regeneration in Spain? Answers from an analysis of the Iniciativa Urbana (2007–2013)



Sonia De Gregorio Hurtado

Department of Urban and Spatial Planning, School of Architecture, Technical University of Madrid, Av. Juan de Herrera, 40, 28005 Madrid, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 June 2016

Received in revised form 18 October 2016

Accepted 22 October 2016

Available online 7 November 2016

Keywords:

Urban regeneration

Sustainable urban development

URBAN Community Initiative

Iniciativa Urbana

European Union

Spain

ABSTRACT

Urban issues have been targeted by European Union (EU) policy action during the last three decades. The launch and implementation of the URBAN (1994–1999) and URBAN II Community Initiatives (2000–2007) introduced an innovative way of addressing urban challenges in many Member States, resulting in a relevant advancement in the field of urban regeneration.

With the end of the URBAN Community Initiative for the programming period 2007–2013, the urban dimension of EU policy was mainstreamed in the Operational Programmes of the Member States, giving them the chance to implement integrated urban regeneration initiatives in their cities by putting into practice the “URBAN method”.

This work stems from the recognition of the relevant contribution that the EU urban policy, and particularly the two rounds of URBAN, have made to urban regeneration in Spain, and aims to understand how the “URBAN method” was developed in the new scenario for 2007–2013 through the *Iniciativa Urbana* (the initiative launched by the Spanish Government to continue the transformative trend started by URBAN). This study focuses on understanding how this new instrument assumed and fostered the collaborative, integrated and innovative approach of URBAN as advised by the European Commission (EC). It also aims to understand whether through this instrument, the urban dimension of EU policy is contributing to face the traditional problems inherent to urban regeneration in the country.

In order to achieve the mentioned objectives, this study analyzes the launch of the *Iniciativa Urbana* (IU) by the Ministry of Finance on a national scale in 2007 and two IU programmes implemented in the region of Madrid (Leganés-La Fortuna and Madrid-Villaverde) through the development of case studies.

The study shows that the *Iniciativa Urbana* is not making relevant progress if compared with the programmes undertaken under URBAN II regarding the development of integrated, collaborative and innovative urban regeneration strategies. It also shows that it is leaving unsolved and partially unaddressed traditional problems regarding action in the urban environment in the country. The conclusions contribute to a reflection on the framework of the development of the Urban Agenda for Spain (at the moment in progress) and to a first assessment of the mainstreaming of the urban dimension in EU policies from 2007 in the context of the Member States.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In the last 1980s the European Commission (EC) started to develop specific policy action in the field of urban regeneration. It

was then that the ECC (European Economic Community) redirected its urban approach, starting the development of policy action that has led to the definition of a field of public policy that is referred to as the urban policy of the EU or the urban dimension of

Community policies.¹ It has noticeably influenced the urban policy of the Member States. Its effect has been analyzed in many countries,² leading to the recognition that the EU urban policy has made a relevant contribution to this area of national policy making (Carpenter, 2006), particularly in those Member States where a specific national-level urban policy did not previously exist (Carpenter, 2013). This is the case of Spain, a country in which recent historical and political factors have limited the development of an urban policy framework on a national scale.³ The reasons for this are complex. Many of them have to do with the problem of governance related to the lack of collaboration and cooperation between the different tiers of government (Romero, 2005). Further contributory factors are the prevalence of a sectorial approach, focused on construction or refurbishment of buildings and grey infrastructures, from which urban policies are traditionally understood in the country (Parkinson, 2014; Tejedor Bielsa, 2013) and the limitations met when attempting to design and implement holistic and participative strategies⁴ of sustainable development for cities. Along with the reasons mentioned, it is worth noting that many stakeholders consider that the country does not need a national urban policy framework (developed by the Central Government), particularly those that see such an attempt as a threat to regional competences. From their perspective, there is no evidence that urban problems can be better tackled with intervention from the Central Government.

Spain's different regions (autonomous communities) have considerable competences in the development of legislative and funding frameworks for urban regeneration. Nevertheless, few have developed them. The case of Catalonia is an exception. In 2004 it passed the so-called "*Ley de Barrios*" (Neighbourhoods Law⁵) that provided a methodology and funds for urban regeneration in its territory. It was inspired by the URBAN Community Initiative (Nel-lo, 2011) and exerted considerable influence until 2011. In 2009, a similar law was passed in the Balearic Islands,⁶ but a lack of continuity in the provision of funds rendered it ineffectual. URBAN also influenced the now inactive IZARTU programme (De Gregorio Hurtado, 2012) for urban regeneration, launched in the Basque Country through calls in 2001, 2004 and 2009.

The lack of a framework for urban policies, including urban regeneration, on a national and regional scale is crucial in explaining why the EU urban policy has had such influence in Spain: In a context of regional and Central Government inertia, the EU has provided a model and guidance for sustainable urban development and urban regeneration in Spanish cities for the past two decades. In addition, the implementation

of the first initiative of urban regeneration on a national scale took place as part of the development of the most specific instrument of the urban policy of the EU, the URBAN Community Initiative, in two consecutive rounds during the periods 1994–1999 (URBAN) and 2000–2006 (URBAN II). The analysis of the two rounds of the URBAN Initiative shows that they made a crucial contribution to the practice of urban regeneration in Spain, but at the same time identifies methodological limitations in the implementation of the URBAN programmes that hindered the achievement of the objectives set by the European Commission.

The development of URBAN and URBAN II in Spain has been specifically addressed by García Jaén (1998), Rodríguez Álvarez (2005), De Gregorio Hurtado (2009, 2012), and Gutierrez Palomero (2009).⁷ All these authors highlight the positive contribution, as well as the difficulties met by Spanish cities which limited their implementation of the URBAN approach. De Gregorio Hurtado (2012) undertook an analysis of all the URBAN and URBAN II programmes developed in Spain, identifying that the main problems Spanish cities faced in introducing the methodological dimensions of the "URBAN method"⁸ were those related to its collaborative and integrated approach. This author identified that interdepartmental collaboration, community participation, the assumption of an integrated approach, and the demonstrative capacity, all crucial to achieving some of the European Commission's main URBAN objectives (Reiter, 2008; European Commission, 1994, 2000), were aspects introduced only to a lesser degree into the strategies of the Spanish programmes. This study also highlighted the limitations faced by the cities that participated in the two rounds of URBAN on integrating regional policy priorities and introducing measures that directly tackled some of the most important urban challenges identified by EU institutions, particularly those related to Energy, Climate Change, Urban Mobility and the Information Society.

In 2007 the Central Government launched the Iniciativa Urbana – IU (2007–2013) with the aim of continuing the implementation of the URBAN method in urban regeneration programmes, with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in Spain (Ministerio de Economía y Hacienda, 2007a). This constitutes the most explicit implementation of the urban policy of the EU in the country for the period 2007–2013.

This study analyzes how the urban dimension of the EU policy was implemented in Spain through the IU, in order to understand whether the policy instruments that establish the reference on which many Spanish cities base their urban regeneration strategies are capable of overcoming the limitations faced by the URBAN and URBAN II programmes regarding the integrated and collaborative approach of the URBAN method.⁹

If the continuation of the EU urban policy through the medium of the IU during the period 2007–2013 in Spain was not able to progress, when compared with the URBAN programmes developed in the period 1994–2006, the following would arguably be the case: the EU would be influencing the practice of urban regeneration in Spain, but not in a consistent way that delivers real change. On the contrary, it would

¹ As the EC recognized in 2003 "European Union urban policy has been laid down in several documents (...). These documents mainly focus on four policy aims: strengthening economic prosperity and employment in towns and cities; promoting equality, social inclusion and regeneration in urban areas; protecting and improving the urban environment: towards local and global sustainability; contributing to good urban governance and local empowerment" (European Commission, 2003). These documents have been complemented by instruments for action launched also by the EC: In 1989 it launched the Urban Pilot Projects, in 1991 created the Committee on Spatial Development (CSD), in 1993 launched the Sustainable Cities Project, in 1994 the first round of the URBAN Community Initiative, and in 2000 the second (URBAN II). In 2006 it launched URBACT, an instrument intended to build local capacity and to share knowledge regarding urban issues. For an in-depth description of the development of this EU policy field see for example (Parkinson, 2005; Van den Berg et al., 1998; Van den Berg et al., 2004).

² For example: Tofarides (2000, 2003) in the case of United Kingdom and France, Chorianopoulos (2002) in the case of Italy, Spain and Portugal, Campagna (2002) and Gelli and Tedesco (2001) in the case of Italy, Reiter (2008) in the case of France and Germany, De Gregorio Hurtado (2009, 2012) in the case of Spain, etc.

³ The most reliable attempt was undertaken by the Ministry of Public Works in 1991 (through the so-called "Política de Ciudades" – "Policy for cities-") but in 1994 the elections resulted in a change of party in the Central Government and, as a consequence, in the end of this emerging policy.

⁴ The causes of this are well explained in (Urrutia, 1992; Borja, 2001).

⁵ *Ley de mejora de barrios, áreas urbanas y villas que requieren atención especial* (Ley 2/2004 de 4 de junio).

⁶ *Ley de rehabilitación y mejora de barrios de los municipios de las Illes Balears* (Ley 2/2009, de 19 de marzo).

⁷ García Jaén (1998) and Rodríguez Álvarez (2005) analyzed the first round of URBAN. The first focused on the programmes developed in Andalucía, while the second developed a general study of the development of this Community Initiative in the country. Gutierrez Palomero (2009) based his contribution on the development of two case studies of URBAN II programmes (Gijón and Sant Adrià de Besòs), and De Gregorio Hurtado (2012) developed a study based on a general analysis of the URBAN programmes and the development a case study of each URBAN II programme.

⁸ The URBAN method was defined by the EC as the delivery system for European URBAN programmes that could contribute to the effectiveness of other urban actions in the EU, through the added value that stems from its method of implementation, which specifically includes: the involvement of the local community, a systematic learning cycle, and an integrated approach that addresses economic, social and environmental sustainability (European Commission, 2003).

⁹ The IU has been addressed also by Huete et al. (2014). Their study stems from a different interest and objective, providing relevant results that are complementary to those achieved by this research.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6481296>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6481296>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)