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Urban regeneration in the EU

Sonia De Gregorio Hurtado coordinated this issue with the editorial board

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abstract

EU's urban policy from a Southern perspective: the case of Palermo

Ignazio Vinci

Abstract

For many European cities the EU's structural funds have led to a radical innovation in approaching urban policy at different scales. For many others, particularly within the less developed regions, they also have resulted in a unique financial opportunity to carry out large infrastructural interventions as well as complex regeneration projects.

In this context, this paper provides a critical analysis of the evolution of urban policy in the city of Palermo, the fifth Italian city by demographic size and capital of one of the largest less developed region of the European Union. Through the analysis of various initiatives carried out over the last two decades – from the Urban Initiative in the nineties to the projects under implementation within the Urban Agenda 2020 – the work



aims to understand their local effects from different perspectives and, at the same time, the way in which the different priorities of the European urban agenda have been embedded within the local political discourse.

KEY WORDS

Urban policy, Less developed regions, Europeanisation

La politica urbana dell'UE da una prospettiva meridionale: il caso di Palermo

Per numerose città europee i fondi strutturali dell'Unione Europea hanno sollecitato una radicale innovazione nell'approccio alle politiche urbane a differenti scale. Per molte altre, in particolare nelle regioni meno sviluppate, si sono anche rivelate una insostituibile leva finanziaria per realizzare grandi progetti infrastrutturali e complesse operazioni di rigenerazione urbana.

In questo contesto, l'articolo fornisce una analisi critica dell'evoluzione delle politiche urbane nella città di Palermo, la quinta città italiana per popolazione ed il capoluogo di una delle maggiori regioni in ritardo di sviluppo dell'Unione Europea. Attraverso l'analisi di varie iniziative condotte negli ultimi due decenni – dall'iniziativa Urban negli anni novanta fino ai progetti in corso di realizzazione nell'ambito dell'Agenda Urbana 2020 – il lavoro si propone di comprenderne gli effetti sotto varie prospettive e, al contempo, la maniera in cui le differenti priorità di sviluppo dell'agenda urbana europea si sono radicate nel discorso politico locale.

PAROLE CHIAVE

Politica urbana, Regioni meno sviluppate, Europeizzazione

EU's urban policy from a Southern perspective: the case of Palermo

Ignazio Vinci

1. Introduction

When at the end of the eighties the European Commission decided to play an increased role in supporting urban development the European cities were undergoing radical socio-economic transformation (Cheshire, 1995; Hall, 1996; Parkinson, 1992). In the old industrial core of Europe, particularly, many urban areas were still affected by multiple forms of decline, with their consequences in terms of unemployment, social segregation, environmental issues (van den Berg et al., 1982; Cheshire and Hay, 1989). In these cases, urban policies were asked to support cities in the process of post-industrial transition and, at the same time, to face the social problems experienced in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. We can recognise this second question as a clear objective for the first innovative actions at the city level promoted by the EU, such as the Urban Pilot Projects or the networks promoted under the article 10 of the European Regional Development Fund (Recite, Quartiers en crise) (Atkinson, 2015).

But a well known aim of the reform of the Structural Funds carried out in 1988, was also to help the marginal regions to close the development gap with the strongest economic core of Europe. The original idea was to consider urban areas as main drivers for regional development, given their role as hubs of advanced services and, consequently, in the diversification of regional economy. For the urban areas in these kind of regions, the EU cohesion policy across different planning cycles have led cities to benefit from large investments on local development, with the opportunity to combine them with the community initiatives promoted by the Commission (such as Urban). As a result, we have a number of European cities – mostly in countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece – where the impact of the EU in the reshaping of urban policy is considerable both in quantitative and qualitative terms and the Europeanisation process can be evaluated from several perspectives.

This is exactly the case of the analysis presented in the following paragraphs, where the overall evolution of urban policy in Palermo is evaluated under the lens of the EU initiatives carried over the last two decades. To facilitate the case interpretation, and at the same time to create linkages between the local processes and the evolution of the urban agenda at the European level, the following three stages are adopted in the analysis:

- an experimental phase, approximately covering the nineties, during which the Urban Initiative is implemented and the first integrated approach is experienced at the local level;
- a phase of transition, mostly based on the 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 planning

cycles, along which the EU approach is upscaled from a spatial and a thematic point of view;

- a post-crisis phase, dominated by austerity, during which new development priorities are emerging with a stronger connection with a tentative national urban agenda.

2. Palermo: city description

The city of Palermo is the capital and most populated urban area of Sicily, the largest Italian region by territorial extension and the fourth by number of inhabitants (5 millions). With a population of 674.435 inhabitants (2016), Palermo is the fifth Italian city by demographic size, as well as the functional and economic centre of an urban region of around 1 million of inhabitants, up to 1,27 million if considering the boundaries of the metropolitan authority established in 2015.

As all the largest Italian cities, in the last three decades the municipality has experienced a loss of population in favor of the neighbouring towns (around 6%). In the last decade, however, this negative trend seems to have slowed down, as the number of residents within the municipality in 2014 is more or less the same of 2003. This process has been helped by the growth of the foreign inhabitants (3,9% in 2016), although the community of foreigners is the second smaller among the ten largest Italian cities and, on average, three-four time smaller than those living within the urban regions in the north of the country (Cittalia, 2014).

Any socioeconomic analysis of the city cannot neglect the regional divergence with the European context, since it is the largest urban area of a region that is with no interruptions among the EU' less developed regions since 1989.

According to the first *European Cities Report* (EC, 2007), in 2001 the GDP per capita created in the city was 78% of the EU27 average and 66% respect to the national average. In the same year the unemployment rate was 29%, one of the highest among the cities surveyed by the *Urban Audit* platform. The level of satisfaction of the inhabitants towards issues such as environmental quality and public transport, provision of education and health facilities, put the city at the bottom of many of the rankings provided by the EU and UN-Habitat for the largest European cities (EU-Eurostat, 2016; EU-UNHabitat, 2016).

The development divergence with the European context cannot be kept separated by the long-standing disparities between the centre-northern and southern regions of the country (SVIMEZ, 2015). After a period of convergence taking place at the turn of the nineties, the crisis seems to have re-enlarged this north-south development gap, increasing the disparities between the largest Italian cities across the country (Calafati, 2009; Cittalia, 2014; Dematteis, 2011; Urban@it, 2016). In 2015 the per capita income in the city of Palermo was around two thirds of that of Milan – the richest of the 10 largest Italian cities –, decreasing of around 3,5% between 2012 and 2015. This gap

could be explained through many other indicators, as for instance the unbalanced role of the public sector in the local economy or the poor performance of the local institutions in delivering effective services to citizens if compared to the northern municipalities of the country.

With this dramatic economic context on the background, it is worth mentioning that, along the period under observation, the city has experienced a relatively simple political transition. After the turning point of the national reform of local government in 1993, the city has been governed by only two mayors directly elected by the citizens: Leoluca Orlando (1993-2000 and 2012-2017), supported by a centre-left coalition, and Diego Cammarata (2001-2012), supported by a centre-right coalition. While the three political cycles are characterised by differences in the priorities focused by policy-making, there are also elements of continuity between these local governments that will be described in the following paragraphs.

3. Urban policy in the nineties

In the city's modern history, the nineties are marked by the trauma given by the fatal attacks to the judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino occurred in 1992. One year later, the first direct election of the mayor resulted in the overwhelming victory of Leoluca Orlando, a politician with a proud background of mafia fighter. The main slogan of the election campaign and, later, of the first government decisions was "a normal city", a way to emphasize a sharp change of direction to remove the factors affecting local government for decades (corruption and inefficiency, first of all) making the city "abnormal" in its development process (Morello, 1999; Azzolina, 2009). At this early stage of the new political project, a great emphasis had been placed on the environmental condition of local development, since the state of widespread degradation experienced by the urban area was considered not only the consequence but also the reason for illegality, lack of development and social deprivation.

The strategy adopted to face the question of urban quality had been based on three main instruments:

- a new masterplan, in order to restore the territorial identity and remove the distortions provided by decade of uncontrolled development, led mainly by private interests and, in some cases, by the Mafia;
- an investment on the most deprived neighborhoods, marginal housing districts such as the ZEN, Borgo Nuovo, Brancaccio, but also the old town, where social revitalisation could have been combined with culture-led policy and an enhancement of tourism;
- a more systematic attention to the external opportunities – in the form of European projects or national initiatives –, as a way to innovate local governance and the planning practices.

A deep reorganisation of the government structure, also, was identified as a

precondition to improve quality in the policy-making. One of the most relevant outcome, in this direction, was the creation of the Historic Centre Office, a special unit where all the competencies regarding the development of the old town (urban planning, public works, economic development, social policy) were integrated.

Not surprisingly, when the municipality decided to participate to the Urban I Initiative the selected area for the programme implementation was its historic centre, a dramatic symbol of urban decay and, at the same time, a place plenty of opportunity for the relaunch of the city. More precisely, the targeted area was an half of the old town bordering the waterfront, extended 112 hectares with a population of around 11,000 inhabitants. As a result of bombing in the second world war and continuous collapses in the built environment, the area had been abandoned from thousands of old residents and the main commercial activities (Lo Piccolo, 1996). Within the remaining community, widespread issues such as social marginalisation and unemployment (around 35%)



Fig. 1 – Urban decay within the old town in the nineties

made the place at risk for any visitor and more generally a context for illegal activities.

In the programme implementation, the physical interventions absorbed more than a half of the total budget (54%). They were addressed mainly on the restoration of buildings to be hosting new public and cultural activities, as the flagship project of the Spasimo complex, converted into a music and theatre center in the heart of the ancient Kalsa district. Other important projects regarded the recovering of abandoned public spaces, including the walking over the walls on the waterfront (Mura delle Cattive), which became soon one of the most popular place of the old town.

Fig. 2 – Target area of the Urban I initiative



Fig. 3 – The reconverted Spasimo complex



The immaterial part of the programme was focused on supporting cultural activities (theatre and music labs), as well as on creating expertise for the promotion of the old town as a tourist attraction. Other incentives were provided to support traditional activities, such as handycraft, in order to reactivate or attract new small enterprises as a catalyst for social revitalisation. The share of the budget supported by the ERDF was

around 40% of the total (20,7 meuro), as a result of a significant effort made by the municipality to integrate funds deriving from national and local sources.

According to many analyses (GHK, 2003; Palermo et al., 2002; Verones, 2012), the local programme is among the good practices within the Urban I initiatives, at least at national level. The most remarkable outcomes were recognised in the positive impact on the physical dimension, even if the extent of decay in the old town made the programme only a little contribution to such a critical issue. In fact, at this regard the Urban initiative had been unable to contaminate other dimensions of urban quality, including housing regeneration or the provision of public services to the residents.

Under the period covered by the programme, furthermore, the Urban project had a positive impact on the creation of specific competencies within the municipality in the management of this kind of complex planning activities. The end of the programme implementation and, more importantly the change in the local government taken place in 2001, resulted in a change of the strategy for the old town regeneration with the consequence of limiting its contamination over other policies in the years to come.

4. Enlarging the scale of intervention: urban initiatives in the 2000s

As in many other European cases, also in Palermo the approach followed in the use of the structural funds in the 2000s is marked by the attempt to capitalise on the previous experiences and, at the same time, to widen the focus of the planning initiatives both from a spatial and thematic perspective. In Italy, particularly, this follows an explicit address provided by the national government since the end of the nineties, aimed at strengthening the role of cities as the elective places for achieving a broad range of development objectives. A tangible result of this political orientation was the Community Support Framework agreed with the EC for the implementation of the 2000-2006 planning cycle, which included a priority dedicated to the cities (Asse 5), as well as other opportunities for urban development through an integration of the remaining priorities.

At the local level, the decade opens with a sharp change of political direction in the city's government after the election of mayor Diego Cammarata, belonging to the Forza Italia party and at the head of a centre-right coalition. This administrative turnover brought a significant change in the political discourse around urban development. The rhetoric of the "normal city" was turned into new slogans claiming a renewed role of the city in the international marketplace, through a process of modernisation of its infrastructures and services for the business sector.

After an unsuccessful initiative to develop an Urban II project on the remaining part of the old town, the attention of the municipality had been captured by the preparation of an Integrated Territorial Project (Progetto Integrato Territoriale), the flagship instrument for the local implementation of the 2000-2006 structural funds in the Italian Objective 1 regions. The ITP was called "Palermo Capitale dell'Euro-Mediterraneo", following a

vision (later translated into a strategic plan) wishing to emphasize the role of the city as an international capital in the new Euro-Mediterranean area (Comune di Palermo, 2002).

Following this strategy, the project conceived by the municipality was very ambitious, relying on a budget of around 100 meuro and a wide partnership – including the Province, the University, the Chamber of Commerce and the local Agency for the tourist promotion –with clear responsibilities in the programme implementation. The action plan had been structured around two main thematic objectives:

- supporting the identity of the city as a hub of the Euro-Mediterranean culture;
- creating a more innovative environment for the private sector, helping the city to become a pole of technological innovation.

These objectives were supported by a huge number of actions of different nature (infrastructures, aids to enterprises, support to research and training activities), mainly addressed to some well identified targeted areas: the old town, three ancient industrial complexes (two of which abandoned since the beginning of XX century), the university campus.

Fig. 4 – Green area and sport facilities in the university campus



The objective of strengthening the city's identity was based on the creation of new cultural facilities, with a flagship intervention – a new museum of Euro-Mediterranean contemporary art – within the Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa, an ancient industrial site partially reconverted into a cultural district at the end of the nineties. The interventions on the old town included also a programme of incentives for the retailers of the traditional markets, as well as restoration works in different parts of the historic area.



Fig. 5 – The Zisa area with the Cantieri Culturali district



Fig. 6 – Museum of contemporary art at the Cantieri Culturali

The second objective was based on the creation of two business park (incubators and exhibition area) within the Chimica Arenella and the Manifattura Tabacchi, two sites of industrial archeology at the margins of the city centre. This part of the project was also supported by several training programmes and aids to enterprises, with the aim of creating a favourable context for the emergence of new companies especially in the ICT sector.

Due to the complexity of the ITP's action plan and other implementation issues, the



Fig. 7 – Abandoned works in the Chimica Arenella site

project expectations were revised several times over the years (Vinci, 2009). Some of the largest projects were abandoned, first of all the two business parks, while many others – as the museum of contemporary art – were downsized and only partially carried out. Problems of implementation affected also the section of the programme dedicated to tourism, on the one side for an overestimation of the potential beneficiaries and, on the other, for the lack of coordination between the public and private sector.

As a result, it is not simple to provide a comprehensive analysis of the ITP outcomes. If we look at the financial performance of the programme the

result were certainly poor (Tulumello, 2016; Vinci, 2009). The vision of the project, also, has been weakened by the loss of many interventions that were considered crucial for the strategy implementation. In more general terms, the project has failed to change the identity of local economy, as well as to provide an upscale of urban policy towards a city or even a metropolitan dimension.

On the other side, we can list some results to be evaluated in a long-term perspective. Investing on the renewal of the old seemed a follow up of previous experiences (including the Urban I initiative), reinforcing the political message related of its strategic nature for the city's development. The extent of the project partnership, furthermore, was quite new in the recent political history of the city, contributing to the innovation of local governance and in the spreading of a more inclusive approach to urban regeneration.

5. The transition from the pre- to the post-crisis urban policy

While committed in the initial implementation of the ITP, the municipality was also absorbed by the preparation of the largest infrastructure scheme ever planned since the post-war reconstruction: the “Integrated Plan for Mass Public Transport” (PMPT), approved in 2002 with the aim of reshaping the urban rail network. The plan was a response to the strategy of infrastructures development claimed by the new local government and an attempt to provide citizens a practical alternative to the car-dependent mobility pattern characterizing the city's development in the XX century.

Despite the PMPT was a merging of new and previously planned interventions, as well as an integration of projects promoted by the municipality with others under the

responsibility of the national rail operator (RFI), it was the first attempt to provide a comprehensive vision of the public mobility system in a long-term perspective (Vinci and Di Dio, 2016). The plan provides the combination of four main transit projects: the redevelopment of around 30 kilometers of existing rail lines crossing the metropolitan area from south-east to north-west (Passante Ferroviario); the redevelopment of the Railway Ring (Anello Ferroviario) to ensure a subway service to the city centre and connections to the main city's rail stations; a new Tram system, based on three lines ensuring links to the southern and western suburbs to the city centre and the rail hubs; an automated light metro (MAL) crossing the urban area from north to south.

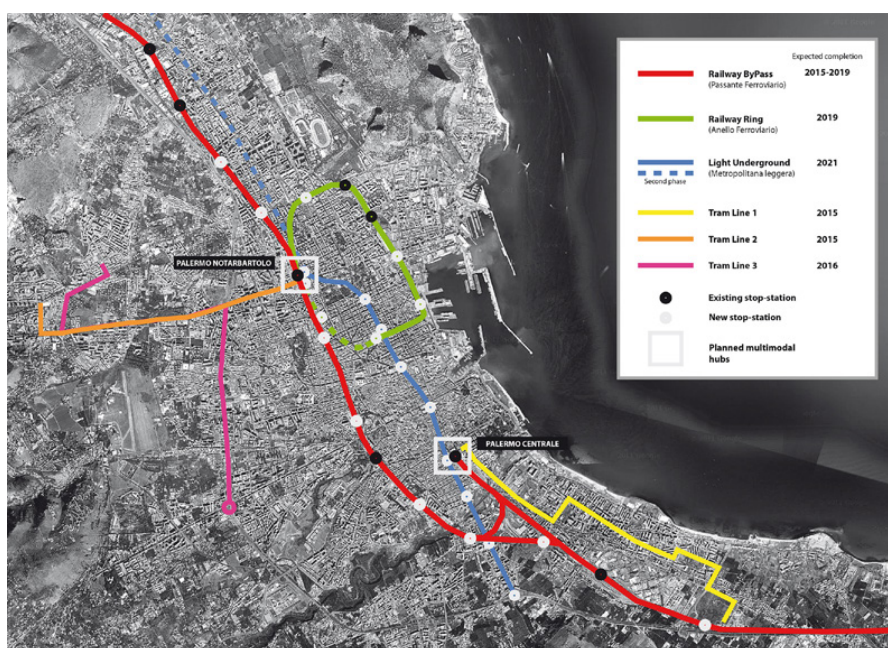


Fig. 8 – Map of the Integrated Plan for Mass Public Transport

While this last intervention, whose costs are estimated in 1,5 billions of euro, still lacks of funding, since the mid 2000s the Plan had been cofinanced by the EU for billions of euro through various national and regional programmes. The other three projects, however, have encountered different problems in their implementation. The Passante Ferroviario, one of the largest project cofunded by the EU in the Italian cities (1,2 billions of euro), is still uncompleted due to the rise of the construction costs and serious geological issues in the city centre. The extension of the rail network to the city centre (Anello Ferroviario) is indeed under construction but the completion of the project is slowed down by a contractor's financial crisis. The only completed intervention in 2017 was the tram system, opened in december 2015 after eight years of works and an expenditure of around 214 millions of euro mainly based on the 2007-2013 ERDF regional programme.



Fig. 9 – Tram line and public housing in the southern neighborhoods

Beyond these issues, however, these projects had the effect to reanimate the debate on the city's modernisation process. When in 2012 local government returned to the centre-left coalition, the new mayor declared that mobility would have taken a central place in his government activity. Along with the completion of the urban rail network, the greatest efforts of the municipality were addressed to the promotion of sustainable mobility systems. In this direction, after two years of negotiations with the local residents and retailers a large free-car zone was created in the old town, as well as several pedestrian areas around the main historic landmarks.

While the reshaping of the city's mobility system have benefited of considerable aids from the 2007-2013 programming cycle, this phase represents also the lowest point for the application of a place-based approach to local development. While the space given to urban development in the regional programme was not limited in quantitative terms – 443 meuro, around 11% of the total ERDF budget –, the spreading of funding over a high number of local initiatives finished to limit its territorial impact, especially in the largest cities. Moreover, the complexity of the procedures to evaluate the projects submitted by the municipalities had the result to slowdown implementation in many cases, until the loss of funding for hundreds of operations (Tulumello, 2016).

In 2007-2013 the planning instrument identified to implement the urban section of the regional programme was the PISU (Programma

Integrato di Sviluppo Urbano), an integrated programme with the clear objective to mainstream the Urban approach to the city or neighborhoods level. The project submitted by the municipality of Palermo can be considered as a follow up of the integrated project financed under the 2000-2006 period. The name was broadly the same of the PIT – Palermo Capital City – and very similar was the strategy to improve the international profile of the city through the creation of business and cultural districts in the two poles – Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa and Chimica Arenella – already targeted by the previous project.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the project implementation encountered the same issues experienced by the previous initiative: wrong predictions about the projects feasibility, lack of internal coordination among the measures, and increasing difficulties to match the highly bureaucratized procedures established by the region. More importantly, the project failed as the previous to put in place its two flagship projects, resulting in a list of small and disconnected interventions with no significant impact on local development and a final budget dropping to less than 10 millions of euro.

While in this episode responsibilities in the project failure should be shared between the municipality and the region, this experience suggests more general conclusions on the 2007-2013 programming cycle. On the one side, this period has showed clear limits

of the municipalities to cope with complex local projects under the climate of uncertainty given by the financial crisis. On the other, the solution given to the issues encountered in the structural funds implementation was, in Italy, re-centralising responsibilities to the state level. The overall result of these processes was a return of sectoral and simplified responses to the urban question, with practical consequences that will be clearer in the following planning cycle.

6. Post-crisis urban policy: emergence of a people-based approach?

The years across the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 funding periods constitutes not only a simple passage between two programming cycles, but a more radical redefinition of the principles, aims and objectives of the place-based approach practiced within the EU's cohesion policy. Although the debate around the Urban Agenda for the European Union provided a very large framework for the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy at the city level, several countries seem to concentrate their efforts over a more limited set of thematic objectives, in many cases directly related to the socio-economic consequences of the crisis. Furthermore, the nature of the thematic priorities promoted within the European urban agenda are resulting in new ways of conceptualising the place-based approach respect to the past planning cycles, with thematic objectives (think, for instance, to energy or technological innovation) which may require cooperation at very different territorial scales.

This shift can be clearly observed within the Italian urban agenda, whose strategy is based on a very narrow set of goals and a larger role of national government in addressing urban policy through a stronger coordination of the operational programmes. A practical result of this process is the national programme "Città Metropolitane" (PON Metro), approved in 2015 with the aim of developing an urban agenda within the 14 metropolitan authorities established in 2014 (Crivello and Staricco, 2017).

The overall goal of the PON Metro – funded with around 900 meuro – is to improve the quality and efficiency of urban services, through a dissemination of the smart city approach, and to face poverty and social exclusion through a mix of material (housing, community facilities) and immaterial interventions (services, social innovation) (Vinci, 2016). The metropolitan actions plans, united by a common planning framework, cover the following areas:

- Digital agenda, by spreading and sharing new models of interactive services within the metropolitan area;
- Energy efficiency, promoting interventions on the public buildings and the technological networks;
- Sustainable transport, with a focus on ICT solutions and soft mobility;
- Social inclusion, through the creation of housing facilities and services for the most fragile targets.

Within this framework the action plan prepared by the city of Palermo, funded with

around 92 meuro, focuses on the following development objectives:

- supporting the metropolitan government, through an investment on seven ICT platforms to be made available of the 82 municipalities of the metropolitan area;
- increasing the efficiency and sustainability of the services provided by the municipality to citizens and city-users, with a greater focus on sustainable mobility and public transport;
- fighting social exclusion, through the creation of community facilities in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, the increasing of the public housing stock and the creation of a public agency to facilitate the access to the housing market to families with low income.

Despite the emphasis placed on the metropolitan relevance of the programme, it must be noticed that the greater part of it (around 80% of the budget) is addressed to the capital city. While this circumstance raises questions about the real impact of the project over metropolitan governance, it certainly represents an opportunity for the city to consolidate (through new and large investments) the strategy developed in the last years.

It seems the case of sustainable mobility, which has attracted increasing attention in local government up to being an hot topic of the electoral campaign held in 2017. While the 2007-2013 planning cycle ensured conspicuous investments on the development of the transport infrastructures, the thematic objectives of the current planning cycle are pushing the planning focus towards some “soft factors” of sustainable mobility. Within the PON Metro action plan, in fact, there are several projects to make more smart and green the mobility systems of what has been described (TomTom Index, 2016) as one of the most congested city of Europe. Accordingly, several millions of euro will be spent to ensure a complete remote control of the bus fleet, alongside with an ICT platform to provide informations on the traffic flows in the urban area and to control accesses in the car free zone within the old town.

The urban regeneration initiatives will be mostly concentrated in the suburbs along the south-east coastline, with interventions ranging from the creation of new facilities for the community to the realisation of innovative housing solutions for disadvantaged people. At this regard, however, it must be noticed that the choices practiced by the local action plan makes no exception to the overall strategy of the PON Metro as regards the social question. In fact, a relevant part of the budget is dedicated to develop the immaterial factors able to fight poverty and social exclusion – as for instance the services provided by the third sector – and with a priority to specific social targets (like homeless or migrants) instead of working on the neighborhood dimension as the preferential target of policy.

7. Synthesis and conclusion

In the twenty years after the launch of the Urban programme, both the thematic objectives and territorial targets of the initiatives funded by the EU have followed

different trajectories. This is the result of external factors, such as the directives given by the European, national and regional frameworks, as well as by internal factors, like the changed priorities of local government.

In terms of thematic objectives, the first decade has been marked by a huge attention to physical regeneration and the recovering of public spaces and historical buildings with the double goals of supporting a culture-led development of tourism and revitalising the most deprived areas within the old town. Culture have remained a relevant topics of policy-making also in the following period, but with a greater emphasis on the creation of large cultural facilities with less links to urban/social regeneration. The last decade is also characterised by a growing attention towards sustainability, mostly concentrated on the realisation of mobility infrastructures in the 2007-2013 period and in the development of the smart city concept in the last planning cycle. Social inclusion, furthermore, became a dominant argument of urban policy over the last few years as a consequence of the crisis and the related housing emergence.

Main Programmes	Main Thematic Objectives	Territorial Targets	Extent of partnership	Efficiency in implementation
Urban (1994-1999)	Culture Employment	Old town	Average	Good
PIT (2000-2006)	Business development Tourism	Urban area	Large	Limited
PISU (2007-2013)	Business development Culture Tourism	Urban area	Average	Very poor
PON Metro (2014-2020)	Smart city Environment Social exclusion	Urban area Metropolitan area	Limited	Ongoing

If we look at the territorial targets of the planning initiatives we witness a progressive enlargement of the spatial scale of intervention till the metropolitan area which is the target of the integrated programme under implementation. Starting from the very small area targeted by the Urban initiative – only 1,36 sqkm within the old town – the integrated projects of 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 focused their attention to the whole urban area, even if following the idea of concentrating investments on certain flagship projects (the Zisa cultural district for instance) with an expected impact also in terms of neighborhood regeneration. Over the last years, instead, the need to contrast the social effects and improve sustainability within the whole urban system seems to bring a greater attention towards services, networks and social targets that are not necessarily expression of specific places.

Understanding the effects of the EU's initiatives on the development of such large cities in the long term is not easy for several reasons. Typical difficulties lies in the

evaluation of the socio-economic impact of the programmes and, especially in the large cities like Palermo, its isolation respect to the overall amount of measures carried out by the municipality. The external factors furthermore, as witnessed by the crisis, can play a crucial role in limiting the effectiveness of a local project: in many Italian cities including Palermo, the austerity measures imposed by the crisis has had a negative impact on the ability of the municipalities to carry out complex planning initiatives (Allulli and Tortorella, 2013; Dematteis, 2011; Urban@it). The 2007-2013 programming cycle is exemplary in this regard, with a general failure of the place-based initiatives and a progressive diversion of the investments towards sectoral projects (i.e. transport infrastructures).

With the recognition of these limits in the analysis, we can discuss anyway the effects of the EU initiatives through several perspectives, such for instance:

- local development;
- governance;
- planning innovation.

Regarding local development, the Urban initiative has played a clear role in starting the revitalisation process of the old town. The reconversion of public buildings into cultural facilities within some of the most abandoned portion of the historic centre started an economic revitalisation process, later supported by other public initiatives (such as incentives for housing reconversion), with a positive impact over the image of the district and its attractivity to new comers. An impact over local development in the long term is expected also from the strategy on sustainable mobility. It is the case of large infrastructure projects – like the tram system – but also of smaller initiatives such as the creation of the bike-sharing system and pedestrian areas, which became very popular among the citizens and appreciated by the tourists.

The influence on local governance can be understood making reference to the public-public cooperation and, on the other side, to the public-private cooperation. All the projects promoted by the municipality were based on the participation of public stakeholders with different roles in the implementation. In the Urban initiative, many interventions on historical buildings were supervised by the local authority for the protection of cultural heritage (Soprintendenza). In the PIT (2000-2006) a mayor role has been performed by the University, being the beneficiary of several measures, including the support to research and training activities and the realisation of green areas and sport facilities within the campus.

Much more controversial seems to be the involment of the private sector in the mentioned initiatives. While cultural stakeholders – such as music associations or theatres – have been partner of the municipality in several initiatives, up to to take the responsibility of successful projects (as in the Urban initiative), the involvement of the business community has not led to the expected results. The PIT 2000-2006 is the largest, and at the same time the most unsuccessful, experiments of public-private cooperation under the opportunity given by the European programmes. A huge amount of investments and incentives had been agreed with the local Chamber of Commerce

to support the development of the two business districts, but the abandonment of the projects made these effort unnecessary.

Regarding planning innovation, despite the difficulties experienced by local government in the post-crisis phase, the EU's programme have proved to be an important driver of change in policy-making in several southern cities. Palermo makes no exception, but looking at such a long period as that under observation, the increasing of institutional or planning capacity cannot be considered as a linear process. In the nineties, under the pressure of Europeanisation, we can see a radical reorganisation in the local government resulting in the creation of special units dedicated to the European programmes. In other periods – mainly in the 2000s – the design and implementation of the European initiatives have been more largely supported by external expertise. This fact has relegated the internal staff of the municipality to mere bureaucratic tasks, with the consequence of limiting the increase of institutional capacity.

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