

Building the 'good city' in the South of Europe

The comprehensive regeneration of the historic centre of Málaga aims to strengthen its identity, its multiple functions and the quality of its public space. Its sustainable city model combines a high quality of life for its population and the participation of its citizens with the economic and cultural development of the central area to cope with the increasing numbers of visitors and tourists.

Building the 'good city' in the South of Europe

The main objective of the project is to regenerate the historic centre of Málaga in order to strengthen its identity, facilitate its multiple functions and improve the quality of public space. The aim was to improve the attractiveness of the historical centre, as regards retail, tourism and cultural facilities, and in parallel to reinforce social cohesion and the inclusion of its disadvantaged population. This was to be achieved through specific objectives to support economic activity, create social services and facilities, enhance the knowledge society and renovate urban spaces – all with a strong dose of citizen involvement and participation.

The main innovation of this project comes from the regeneration approach itself, because it simultaneously addresses social cohesion, economic development and environmental sustainability, meeting at the same time the needs of residents and visitors. This approach avoids gentrification and forcing lower income residents to move away. The local authority showed a real commitment to setting up a strong citizen participation process, generating new lines of communication with the main local associations and with individual citizens, in the framework of different activities and projects to promote social inclusion.

The project's final recipients include small businesses, business start-ups, unemployed people receiving training, elderly people and members of the time bank as well as local associations. Around 3 500 inhabitants have benefitted from the project's programmes and services. Urban Initiative Assemblies, which bring together residents, associations and local councillors, are held to create a forum for dialogue, accountability and the evaluation of the project's activities and results.

Building the 'good city' in the south of Europe

You will not find another land or another sea. The city will be in you forever. –

Kavafis – written on a wall in the historical centre of Málaga

Integrated and sustainable urban regeneration in practice

Expressing the continuity of Málaga's history, rebuilding its symbolic memory and identity, is the objective that guides the city's *Iniciativa Urbana Arrabales-Carretería*. The project is led in a vibrant and committed way by the city council of Málaga with the support of the EU through the ERDF. This effort is a continuation of a process which started more than 15 years ago with the start of the rehabilitation and restoration of the historical city centre.

The initiative takes into account that the symbolic and integrative role of the centre must ensure a shared space for all citizens. Civic identity and pride, and thus also the willingness to share, must rely on a minimal amount of shared social space. But how can such sentiments be nourished in the absence of shared public spaces, in the absence of social interaction?

For a long while, Málaga had been an extreme example of abandonment of the centre, whereby those who could moved out, leaving mainly elderly people and immigrants with limited resources. The city's historical centre is thus a focus for social exclusion. The falling population means that the population has been aging – 19% of the population is over 65 years old, as against 14% in the rest



Fig.1. Aerial picture of the historical centre of Málaga

of the city – which has aggravated the problems of isolation and living alone. The number of residents of foreign origin has risen, and the population has very low educational level (44% are uneducated, compared with the city-wide average of 30%). Finally the area has lower levels of income and twice as much unemployment (24%) as the city overall (12%). These high levels of social exclusion have been feeding a kind of sub-culture of exclusion, conflict and increasing obstacles to coexistence.

It is a relatively large historical centre, covering 40 hectares, and it is in a very poor physical condition – there has been virtually no public or private investment in the area since the 1960s.

Regeneration for a diversity of uses

With the EU's Urban Community Initiative launched in 1995, the Málaga local authority started the recovery of the historical centre of the city that has continued until today. Between 1995 and 2006 significant parts were renovated using various funding sources including the ERDF. In this period the area inside the ancient city walls was mainly developed as a part of the Special Recovery Plan of the old city (PEPRI 1990). The improvement of the environment is clearly visible today as a result of these public and private efforts. The project under

the *Iniciativa Urbana* is now focusing on the area outside the walls of the old city, which consists of several neighbourhoods called the *arrabales*.

The main thrust of the regeneration strategy is the adaptation of space and the urban fabric to a diversity of uses. It seeks to avoid a city centre which is only for working and shopping. Instead the intention is to combine business with traffic, visitors with residents, neighbours and housing, pedestrian zones with parking facilities – all in a context of urban quality. To achieve this, new cultural facilities were needed, but also new and renovated housing, new schools, local services and measures to reduce social exclusion. These diverse actions are the focus of the *Iniciativa Urbana* and these are the challenges that it still faces.



Fig. 2. Plaza del Pericón – before and after

The initiative recognised that if the social fabric and the opportunities for social interactions in the historic centre were eliminated and it was turned over to commercial and retail activity alone, the resident population would fall dramatically.

The local authority was aware that the city's historic centre would be relatively easy to regenerate from the physical point of view, although expensive. But while financial resources were available to do this, they recognised that the operation would not succeed if they failed to define the future model of the centre, specifying such features as use, access and equipment. To achieve this they would need to intervene in the economic, social, environmental and cultural fields simultaneously. The project acknowledges the complexity of the strategy and that managing this complexity represents a risk. It works simultaneously through specific objectives in the fields of supporting economic activities, creating social services and infrastructures, enhancing the knowledge society and recovering urban spaces – and it adds a strong component of citizen involvement and participation.

The methodology used in the rehabilitation and recovery of the historic area has been comprehensive. Along with interventions to rehabilitate streets, squares and buildings, several interventions have been made to boost economic activities, mainly small shops, and to increase the social inclusion of the most excluded people that live in the more dilapidated areas of the centre.



Fig. 3. A street in the historical centre of Málaga – before and after

A commitment to local democracy

At a time of increasing political disaffection on the part of citizens it has been necessary to find new formulas to establish or re-establish links between citizens, politicians and officials. Málaga's *Iniciativa Urbana* has used new techniques to promote dialogue and interaction with citizens.

The Assemblies of the *Iniciativa Urbana* were created, as a space where councillors and officials of the municipality can report on the interventions that are taking place and establish a new dialogue with associations and individual citizens. These citizens are able to make proposals on the various issues linked with the urban regeneration of the centre. So far five assemblies with an average of attendance of 80 people have taken place. They are chaired by the mayor of Málaga. Assemblies are a very interesting tool to generate a vibrant local democracy and they are useful to ensure that the local authority listens to the citizens.



Fig. 3. The mayor of Málaga chairs the 4th Assembly of the *Iniciativa Urbana*

The Citizenship School is also noteworthy. It aims to promote civic culture and more responsible citizens. It has created a steering group composed of more than 30 associations working together on different topics. Likewise a central concern is the growing multiculturalism in the area, the growing presence of people of other nationalities and the need to maintain a friendly atmosphere of coexistence between cultures.

Improving public space clearly benefits economic development



Fig. 4. A meeting of the management group of the citizenship school

The abandonment of the historical centre over the decades has resulted in a need for a great deal of physical renewal and regeneration. This slow but steady process received a strong impetus through the *Iniciativa Urbana*. The recovery of abandoned areas and those in poor condition, the new pedestrian streets, the arrangement of streets and squares, etc., are key parts of the project.

Renovating the rundown areas of the historical

centre was a key factor in making it more attractive for business and tourism, and in improving the urban environment and living conditions for residents. Some highlights include the partial renewal of Tomás Cózar and the adjacent Beatas streets. The renovated axis along Madre de Dios-Montaño-Dos Aceras is also impressive, while the last section next to the Plaza Montaña remains to be completed. Finally, the renovation of the Plaza del Pericón has transformed the neighbourhood with an iconic new building housing a childcare centre.

The new and renovated urban spaces and the improved streets favour the start-up of new economic activities across the area. New retail and service businesses offering higher quality and greater specialisation are improving the streets and squares. The project gives support to more than 70 economic initiatives through grant aid for the creation of new business. Likewise a business incubator is supporting 10 new small businesses.

Engagement with social inclusion and employment

The crisis is having a profound impact across Europe, but in Spain, unemployment has risen dramatically. In Málaga, and particularly in the intervention area, the unemployment rate has almost doubled in the last three years. The city centre has historically seen the highest concentration of social exclusion and unemployment. Hence the *Iniciativa Urbana Arrabales-Carretería* undertook an additional effort to provide occupational training, counselling and guidance to help people to get jobs. It also supported self-employment, employment for women, entrepreneurship and new entrepreneurial initiative. During 2011 major efforts and resources enabled almost 2 000 people to increase their employability.

This endeavour to create jobs is connected to the general strategy for regenerating the historical centre. Jobs located there, such as retail, services, culture, support to dependent people, environment and tourism, are prioritised, as part of a policy of inclusive economic development, which reduces the number of people that are out of the labour market.

Other initiatives are creating and reinforcing social bonds, urban solidarity, higher levels of equality and a better quality of life. The Time Bank, a non-monetary exchange for time, work, skills and services among residents of the area, has attracted the involvement of almost 300 neighbours. The Time Bank is an innovative and emblematic initiative, which has focused on three main objectives: to reconcile domestic and working life among women who need proximity services, to validate people's capacities and skills, and to strengthen social capital in the community, reinforcing trust and reciprocity among neighbours. It has brought together people who want to share and exchange their time, skills and resources, and people that are able to meet their needs with these voluntary services. It has a very attractive communication strategy within the area and has made itself well-known by advertising in local shops and in information points. Its motto is: 'we don't want your money, we want your time'. Health, care, training, security, domestic repairs and basic internet training for elderly people are just some of the many services that participants are exchanging.

The programme of volunteer carers for dependent people has supported a service which has proved to be crucial for the beneficiaries' quality of life, as well as creating networks and promoting collective learning. Similarly the active support to elderly people, children and teenagers has increased capacities and helped to promote the social inclusion of the most vulnerable of the city centre residents.

The integrated approach and institutional innovation

Within the city council of Málaga there is a widespread culture of innovation. This is evident from looking at the projects that have taken place over recent years. The *Iniciativa Urbana* requires a management system which is able to pilot a complex strategy which promotes a coherent and complementary set of interventions.

All large organisations face the same problems of coordination: how to encourage agencies, departments and professionals to direct their actions in broadly the same direction, and how to align incentives, cultures, and structures to fit critical tasks that cross organisational boundaries, such as urban regeneration, protecting the environment or enhancing competitiveness.

In the Málaga project a platform or space within the municipal government has been created, which involves all the departments concerned with the *Iniciativa Urbana*: European Affairs, Municipal Institute of Training and Employment, Promálaga (a municipal company), Environment, Social Rights, Planning and the Central District. This Commission of the Historical Centre is responsible for the procedures for coordinating, planning, monitoring and evaluation. This intra-municipal cooperation has helped to ensure the integrated approach of the project.

To ensure the effectiveness of the integrated approach it is crucial to set targets and goals that are shared across departments of the city council. The *Iniciativa Urbana* project has boosted this process within the municipality, which has had a positive influence on the effectiveness and the efficiency of the interventions.

The main activities launched by the project are coherent with the strategy as a whole and have ensured that the integrated approach works in practice. For example, new economic activities, mainly small shops and service businesses, started and grew because of the renewal and regeneration of public spaces, squares and streets. This physical renewal is an incentive for setting up economic initiatives in the area. The increase of pedestrian areas has had a clear and positive impact on commerce and on improving accessibility and mobility in the central area.

The municipal departments concerned with economic development and with physical regeneration work together on the comprehensive regeneration. The renovation of abandoned urban places can create spaces for hosting new teams dealing with social inclusion and employment projects. This is the case of the community centre and incubator that are going to be developed in Pozos Dulces-Nosquera and Dos Aceras-Plaza Montaña.

Meanwhile the social interventions that focus on increasing social inclusion have a clear link with coexistence, with reducing conflicts between groups. The improvement of social cohesion has improved the attractiveness of the area for visitors and tourists. Several activities and projects of the *Iniciativa Urbana* have their rationale in contributing to the single strategy of integrated urban renewal. The citizen participation department and social rights department share a single strategy for empowering people with a social and urban cohesion perspective.

The integrated approach also deals with the balance between private and public activities and resources. The public investments (physical regeneration, start-up grants and job creation programmes) are leading to private investments in new small businesses and in attracting new customers and tourists.

Exchange and learning

Málaga is also creating a new culture of cooperation and shared learning among Spanish municipalities that are carrying out urban regeneration with the financial support of the ERDF.

At national level, urban development actions come under the framework of a specific 'Spanish strategy for the local and urban sustainability'. Within priority 5 – sustainable local and urban development – up to 60% of resources is allocated to integrated projects for the regeneration of districts or municipalities with more than 50 000 inhabitants. The main objective is to strengthen local and urban development strategy as set out in the European

cohesion policy guidelines. For these bigger municipalities (over 50 000 inhabitants) and provincial capitals, Spain has launched an innovative *Iniciativa Urbana* covering the whole country. It continues the work of the European URBAN initiative, promoting integrated sustainable urban development projects. Within every regional operational programme, a budget has been set aside for integrated development projects, normally around €10 million for each city.

It is into the political and regulatory framework that the *Iniciativa Urbana* of Málaga fits. The ERDF funds are financing innovation and a sustainable and integrated approach to the urban regeneration strategy. It is thus very relevant to demonstrate that the integration of interventions in a single urban area with a concentration of several problems can create a visible and measurable added value.

It is particularly significant that the sustainable urban development programme of the *Iniciativa Urbana* generates a direct link between the national and the local levels. It assumes a decentralised management. And it also assumes that the 41 *Iniciativas Urbanas* around the country will find new spaces for exchanging, evaluating and capitalising the innovations generated at local level.

Conclusions

In any case, a key message should be highlighted: the recovery and regeneration process requires permanent and ongoing actions in the historical centre. It deals with processes and not with projects. It never finishes.

Likewise, a key challenge should be highlighted. The model set out, and the expected future of the historical centre of Málaga, suppose a new mix of social groups, new dynamics during the day and the night, the presence of housing and the use of squares and streets as meeting places for very different people and not just as routes from A to pathway. This assumes that they will become places that experience conflict but also create integration. These new challenges will crop up as we move forward in the transformation process and therefore they will require new governance capabilities and new forms of cooperation between citizens and the city council.



Figure 5: New cultural assets in the centre: Museo Carmen Thyssen

The *Iniciativa Urbana* is carrying out a process of improving the city with the involvement of its own citizens and with a new approach to implementing municipal policy and urban interventions. It is applying a more coherent policy which brings together aspects of a number of local policies. This entails changing mental models, building dialogue and learning how to manage a renewed set of relations between public authorities and local citizens.

The integrated approach should ensure the sustainability of an urban model that is engaged with social, economic and environmental development. Economic development is a key component of regeneration. Improving streets and public spaces, building new museums (before the *Iniciativa Urbana*) and planning new public spaces have created the conditions for more and better economic activities. The start-up of new small business in the area is a first indicator of this change. These urban improvements will attract visitors and tourists to the area. Various measures to avoid noise and traffic (new pedestrian streets) go in the same direction by establishing a sustainable model of urban development (rather than simply

encouraging limitless economic growth). These economic and urban improvements will also benefit residents. The social sustainability of an urban area such as the historical centre of Malaga is a big challenge because it simultaneously requires economic development to promote employment and social cohesion and, in parallel, welfare measures to avoid social exclusion. Málaga city council is clearly aiming for inclusive urban development, and its urban development model entails a more vibrant civil society made up of citizens who are more involved and engaged in collective affairs.

The historical centre of the city is not just a neighbourhood like any other. It plays a strategic role as the real heart of the city and it is required to combine several urban functions – commercial, cultural and residential. This entails a very complex process to ensure sustainability because it has to build strong links among all these elements. The public spaces will be used in various ways, and in these uses the needs of residents do not always align with those of visitors. Pedestrianisation often creates difficulties for residents' parking and so on. The local authority that leads the project is aware of the challenges it faces in ensuring a sustainable regeneration process within a more sustainable city.

Málaga's *Iniciativa Urbana* is a crucial asset in this journey towards becoming the 'good city'. This has happened because the city has learnt how to create and reinforce new links and bonds among different partners, strengthening and activating social capital, those assets of trust and solidarity which are embedded in the communities, and which are needed to ensure cooperation and to produce public goods. The project is developed this through new dialogues and new networks to help people to share and to learn together.

AEIDL has been contracted by the European Commission in 2012 in order to provide 50 examples of good practice in urban development supported by the European Regional Development Fund during the 2007-2013 programming period (contract reference 2011.CE.16.0.AT.035). The views expressed by AEIDL remain informal and should not under any circumstance be regarded as the official position of the European Commission.