



On the improvement of urban regeneration processes from more than thirty years of rehabilitation experiences

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Abstract: *At this moment of extended economic, social and environmental crisis within which new interventions on the consolidated city are being set out, it is essential to count on the acquired experience in urban rehabilitation processes that were carried out in Spain during the last thirty years. Despite the complexity of this kind of processes and the diversity of the situations and actions that happened, this paper addresses the analysis of common patterns in twenty urban rehabilitation experiences. Different stages of the processes were studied, from the management to the regenerated areas in order to ease the design of new intervention initiatives.*

Regeneration, management, rehabilitation processes, stakeholders, urban areas.

Introduction

The extended crisis and its close relation with the unlimited urban growth has led technicians, politicians and academics to take up the interest on the intervention in the consolidated city as well as on urban rehabilitation. That interest, in line with the revival of citizen's demands of public space, has its reflection in the implementation of initiatives for the rehabilitation of buildings or neighbourhoods as well as in the arising of new laws. That is the case of the *Ley 8/2013, del 26 de junio, de rehabilitación, regeneración y renovación urbanas*. These interventions are often aimed at introducing new techniques that optimize some aspects, such as energy consumption, or that improve processes or plans. However, in many cases these actions do neither lay on previous experiences nor improve developed processes.

The urban department of Instituto Juan de Herrera (DUyOT/ETSAM/UPM) developed in 2011 the project '*National and European policies analysis regarding urban regeneration and neighbourhood renovation*' (*Análisis de las políticas estatales y europeas en materia de regeneración urbana y rehabilitación de barrios*¹). This study has its roots in the belief that the only way to improve the efficiency of urban process management and to pose new ways of intervention is taking advantage of the knowledge and the experience acquired along more than thirty years of urban rehabilitation actions. This research covers the analysis of twenty urban rehabilitation cases in Spain, the policy framework and the identification of Areas of

¹ Study directed by Agustín Hernández Aja and carried out thanks to the collaboration agreement between the IJH and Ministerio de Fomento. (<http://www2.aq.upm.es/Departamentos/Urbanismo/blogs/re-hab/>)

Integrated Rehabilitation programmes (ARI) that were developed from 1992 to 2010 in cities with more than 50.000 inhabitants as well as in province capitals.

The analysed experiences, selected among all ARI and URBAN processes that were conducted between 1992 and 2010, are located in several geographical areas (17 autonomous regions) and have different backgrounds, form of urban growth and typology. The study attempted to cover a wide and a representative range of the diversity of developed actions.

The research was conducted through office work, field research and interviews with stakeholders and it analysed the complete rehabilitation processes building up 20 intervention chronologies. According to the proposed methodology, the stakeholders as well as the focus of the interventions (urbanism, environment, building and socioeconomics) were identified. This approach enables not only a general overview of the evolution of urban rehabilitation in Spain but the understanding of the established relations between the regenerated areas and the stakeholders who were involved in the processes. This is the main issue this paper deals with.

Rehabilitation processes analysis. On the relation between the areas and the stakeholders

In general terms, it can be said that the complexity of the treated issues and the development of actions through time make the 20 study cases to have their own singularities with a different management model each (1). Furthermore, there is not a unique plan or programme evolved in time for every case. Instead of that the majority of them resulted from the addition of actions that were not conceived as a global plan but as a response to the needs that were detected in every moment or to the actions that were founded by the available aid scheme. However, it must be highlighted that in many cases these added actions did not even coincided within the same urban physical limits.

These differences and the lack of homogeneity and continuity between programmes make necessary a global vision of the processes so as to understand the established relations between the areas subject of actions and the institutional stakeholders who managed the interventions as well as the used tools. Figures 1 and 2 show the structure of the analysis. It is divided into the three studied decades with the total number of actions according to the issues they dealt with and the stakeholders who were involved in each.

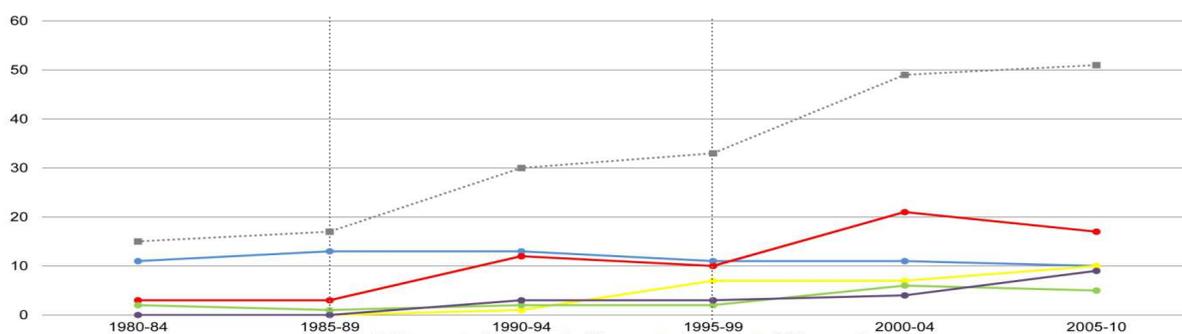


Figure 1. Number of programmes/plans that were launched by year according to the periods of National Housing Plans. They are classified by main area for the 20 studied cases. Source: personal compilation. Caption: Total: total number of conducted actions; UTP: Plans/Programmes regarding Urban and Territorial Planning area; BU: Plans/Programmes regarding building area; SE: Plans/Programmes regarding Socioeconomics area; D&E: Plans/Programmes regarding Urban Design and Environment area; Com: Plans/Programmes with a comprehensive character.

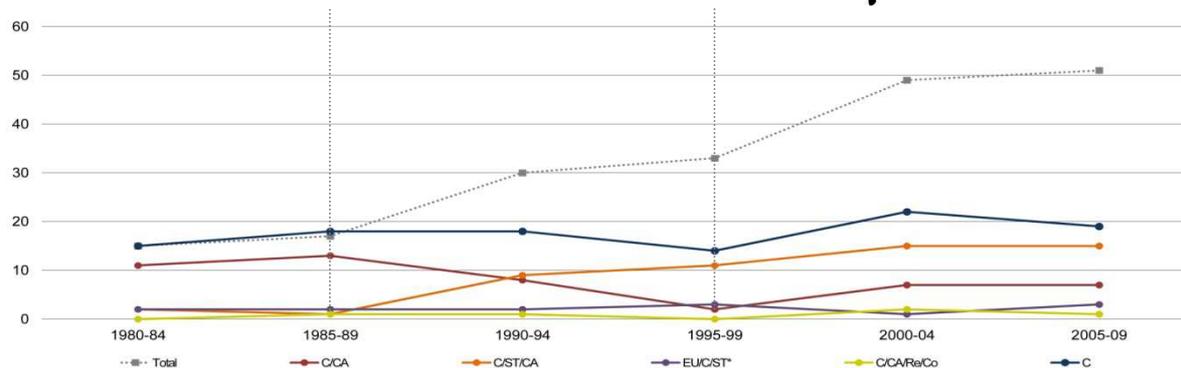


Figure 2. Number of programmes that were launched by year and the administration that is involved in each according to the periods of National Housing Plans. They are classified by its main area for the 20 studied cases. Source: personal compilation. Caption: C: Plans/Programmes with the participation of council; ST: Plans/Programmes with the participation of the State Government; AR: Plans/Programmes with the participation of the Autonomous Region Government.

First analysis stage (1980-1990). The beginnings of urban rehabilitation

First interventions, amongst the 20 analysed experiences, that can be considered as the beginnings of rehabilitation processes took place between the last 70' and the early 80' in historic districts. These districts were usually involved in processes of abandonment, they were inhabited by low income population and gathered a relevant presence of social problems. In addition, these neighbourhoods had been deeply transformed by simultaneously and complementary actions of heritage conservation and destruction (2). These processes had expelled a part of the population and had contributed to make urgent to take action on buildings in bad conditions. Despite that, the analysed cities had suffered from an important and mostly unstructured growth product of speculation. Thus, they presented problematic lacks of facilities and infrastructures in historic districts as well as in recently developed outskirts. Within this period, three important factors met: the strong presence of community movements that claimed the improvement of their neighbourhoods and housing conditions, a new political class that had been involved in these mobilisations, that had raised from an economic crisis that stemmed the construction activity, and an urban European context and urban culture (3) had arisen standing for rehabilitation.

Within this context, the rehabilitation processes that began in this period came from the planning (UTP in Figure 1) or from Special Interior Reform Plans (PERI in Spanish) that were gathered in master plans that were developed by first democratic councils. However, it can be considered that some of these processes had been implemented before that as in the case of Trinidad Perchel. Due to the political and social context added to the municipal technicians' character, deeply influenced by the urban culture of the time (3), master plans dealt with the "re-balance" of the whole city regarding urban, social and economic fields. Furthermore, they integrated PERIs in the functionality of the city as a whole, with a strong understanding of the necessary integration of these neighbourhoods in the city.

Along with these PERIs, the national legislation of urban rehabilitation emerged. This law, mainly through the Royal Decree 2329/1983, would lay the foundations of national founding



for rehabilitation and the partnership procedures among councils, newly created Autonomous Regions and the State. Also, the recently created ARIs, in line with the developing processes of that moment, used to found the rehabilitation of the physical support, mainly the buildings but the settlement of rehabilitation offices as well (4), even though the eligibility criteria was referred to more complex issues. These rehabilitation offices along with incipient public organizations such as trusts or land companies led by technical council services were the responsible for the rehabilitation works in this period.

This first stage of historic district rehabilitation, although being a few number of interventions, laid the foundations of the management and development of rehabilitation in each municipality or region. The principles established then, partly common but with variations in each case, were maintained in time or became the starting point for the new systems. Despite these variations, it can be said that within this period rehabilitation works were launched through planning and building works (without social, economical nor environmental programs) and were founded by the state through agreements with autonomous regions and municipalities. They were managed by council technicians, rehabilitation offices, trusts and public companies and, in some occasions they were supported by technical social services personnel.

Second analysis stage (1990-2000). The introduction of the comprehensiveness concept

During the 90', afterwards the economic recovery in the middle 80' and the brief economic crisis of 1992, the urban sprawl set again the development of the economy and the cities. Having solved part of the problems from previous period (lack of facilities, infrastructures, housing conditions...) and with practically non-existent social movements, the municipalities, in line with the European context, were concerned about positioning their cities and the existence of 'blackspots' that could damage their image (5). Among the rehabilitation policies of the time it must be highlighted the arise of the Pilot Urban Programmes in 1989 of the European Union which were consolidated in 1994 with the URBAN I programme and the National Housing Plan in 1992 that would consolidate the ARI programme.

All the rehabilitation processes that had already been implemented continued either through already launched initiatives or incorporating new actions of another type. Even though some physical shortfalls had been solved, many of the problems that motivated first interventions, like the socioeconomic ones, remained though time. Despite the fact that urban planning was still the main driver for rehabilitation actions, building interventions (BU in Figure 1) were increasingly more important concurrently with the consolidation of ARI programme. Although in former stage ARIs were almost non-existent, thanks to European programmes, what were called *comprehensive* operations emerged (Com in 1), with plans than brought in different work fields and different administrations or departments within them. Some municipality programmes were added to all this and were mainly focused on promoting economic activities (SE in Figure1). There were also some initiatives promoted by councils or neighbours aimed at gathering their claims or complaints, in a moment that was characterized by the limited presence of neighbourhood movement. In addition, some programs focused on



environmental improvement (not only redevelopment) were launched, although they were an exception.

On the other hand, although councils and companies or local consortium, the collaboration among municipality, autonomous region and state was increasingly more relevant, the municipality was the responsible for the execution. The emergence of URBAN programmes, posed in a first stage the collaboration among different areas of the council, however, although programmes presented several actions, their execution was usually independent. The arise of new municipality companies and public or private-public consortium, that were in some cases only linked to rehabilitation processes, enabled to present new shapes of intervention although they were usually slowed down by coordination shortfalls between administrations.

Third analysis stage (2000-2010).

First decade of XXI century, that was marked by an unlimited urban development which was encouraged by an out of control real estate bubble since the adoption of the law 6/1998, was still focused on the creation of city instead of being concern about the problems of the existing one. The EU followed up previous programmes with URBAN II (2000-2006) and the speech of rehabilitation was not intensified till the advent of the economic crisis in 2008. In Spain, ARI programmes were still on force in national housing plans, some legislation and programmes of autonomous regions with a *comprehensive character*². These programmes were added to the former rehabilitation ones and were mainly focused on housing but also on neighbourhoods that had been developed in previous stages.

The interventions in the studied neihgbourhoods kept on increasing from 64 up to 108. Although it can be pointed out a take-off in outskirts actions, historic districts still gathered the majority of interventions. Just as previous stages, despite the fact that some aspects had been improved, mainly the building ones, many of the problems were still remaining despite the fact that programmes or foundlings had already finished. Within this stage two tendencies can be noted. The first one gathered interventions which brought up complementary actions to those that were already launched. These were generally social, economic or what were called comprehensive plans or programmes that were still working in a non coordinated way with previous programmes. The second tendency consisted of plans with a comprehensive character due to the problems dealt or to their management. These plans were led by a management figure that posed new ways of organization based on the coordination between administrations and on the engagement of stakeholders through forums such as roundtables with neighbours. These actions were in general promoted by the municipality but used to bring up national or European aids.

Nevertheless, comprehensive programmes and those that brought in social, economic or environmental issues were still inferior in number to those with a purely physical subject matter. Within this stage, in contrast with former ones, interventions in the building area

² Appearance of the Llei 2/2004 de millora de barris and others and the programmes that were linked to them.

involved the largest number of actions with a decrease in those regarding urban planning (UTP in Figure 1).

Conclusions: a proposal to improve processes

Through the analysis of these 20 experiences it can be established a general evolution in the development of rehabilitation processes that were influenced by previous programmes shortfalls. These can be related to the position and weight of the stakeholders, to the European and national tendencies and the derived programmes from the political and mainly economic context.

This evolution in the management of plans and programmes is directly linked to the issues that were developed by them (Table 1). Municipalities have been the main responsible figure for executing these programmes, regardless of the tendency of founding addition from superior administrations. However, the shape of management figures has evolved in time from the independence of planning technicians or rehabilitation offices to a coordinated cross-area organization that was formed by a group which was specifically created to guide the rehabilitation action. This management group which needs citizen and political support through the agreement of all groups tries to integrate politicians, technicians and citizens which, in many occasions, is a tough and slow task. This evolution in management has gone along with the incorporation of other programmes, with an environmental, social or economic character, as well as with the involved areas' integration that was encouraged by European programmes. However this tendency has not wiped out the predominance of physical interventions. Furthermore it has been accompanied with the abandonment of planning which in first general urban development plans and PERIs was based on a more complex vision. To add more, former intentions used to move away from the European vision of 'blackspots' understanding the problems in these neighbourhoods as a matter of balance and global distribution shortfall.

Table 1 Plans, programmes or interventions that were launched by area and institution in the eighties.

	1980s							1990s							2000s							
	C	CA	ST	EU	Co	O	T	C	CA	St	EU	Co	O	T	C	CA	ST	EU	Co	O	T	
UTP	24	1	0	0	0	0	24	23	1	0	0	0	0	24	21	2	0	0	0	0	0	23
BU	0	0	4	0	0	2	6	1	2	18	0	0	0	21	8	1	31	0	2	0	0	42
D&E	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	0	0	1	3	8	8	2	0	0	2	0	0	12
SE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	5	6	4	1	0	0	0	8	19
Com	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	6	1	5	2	4	0	0	0	12
Total	23	1	4	0	0	4	32	32	4	19	5	1	3	64	45	14	34	4	4	8	108	

Caption: Total: total number of launched initiatives by area and institution; C: Council; CA: Council and Autonomous Region; ST: Council, Autonomous Region and State; EU: Council, Autonomous Region, State and EU; Co: companies O: Other entities; UTP: Urban and Territorial Planning; BU: Building; D&E: Urban Design and Environment; SE: Socioeconomic; Com: interventions called comprehensive. Source: personal compilation.

After the study of the 20 experiences it can be stated that despite the progress presented by the introduction of new techniques in some specific aspects, the level of success of each



intervention relied on the establishment of local action plans with coordinated measures for the different areas of intervention (planning, building, environment and socioeconomic). These plans must be based on a deep knowledge of the social and environmental problems of each community meeting neighbours' demands. Furthermore the solution will pose an efficient response to the social and environmental global challenges that should be managed from the local scale as well as proposed, assumed, defended and agreed by citizens, technicians and politicians. In any case, the efficiency of the process (understood as the achievement of better quality of life for citizens), has been slowed down by a lack of evaluation methodologies.

In punctual cases innovative initiatives led to a raising of new organization ways and to the development of plans with a real comprehensive vision. However it can be doubted whether this vision can be achieved. These interventions, which were carried out in long-term problematic neighbourhoods, are long and imply the engagement of a multidisciplinary team which in some occasions belongs to different areas or administrations. Furthermore their results are not immediately visible in contrast to those that derive from only physical interventions which, to add more, have visible effects on economy. Present times are marked by cuts in public founding, rehabilitation is thought to be the new possible economy booster, urban planning as an equal distribution tool has practically disappeared and with it the idea of the right to the city. Are these kind of processes possible nowadays in neighbourhoods that do not pose an opportunity for real estate business? And, to add more, are these processes possible without the initial impulse and autonomy of citizens? (6) Given that we are immerse in a moment of global change and despite the arising doubts, it seems appropriate to generate new tools (for evaluating and guiding future plans) from old experiences that enable to keep on moving towards a better quality of life for citizens through urban regeneration.

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