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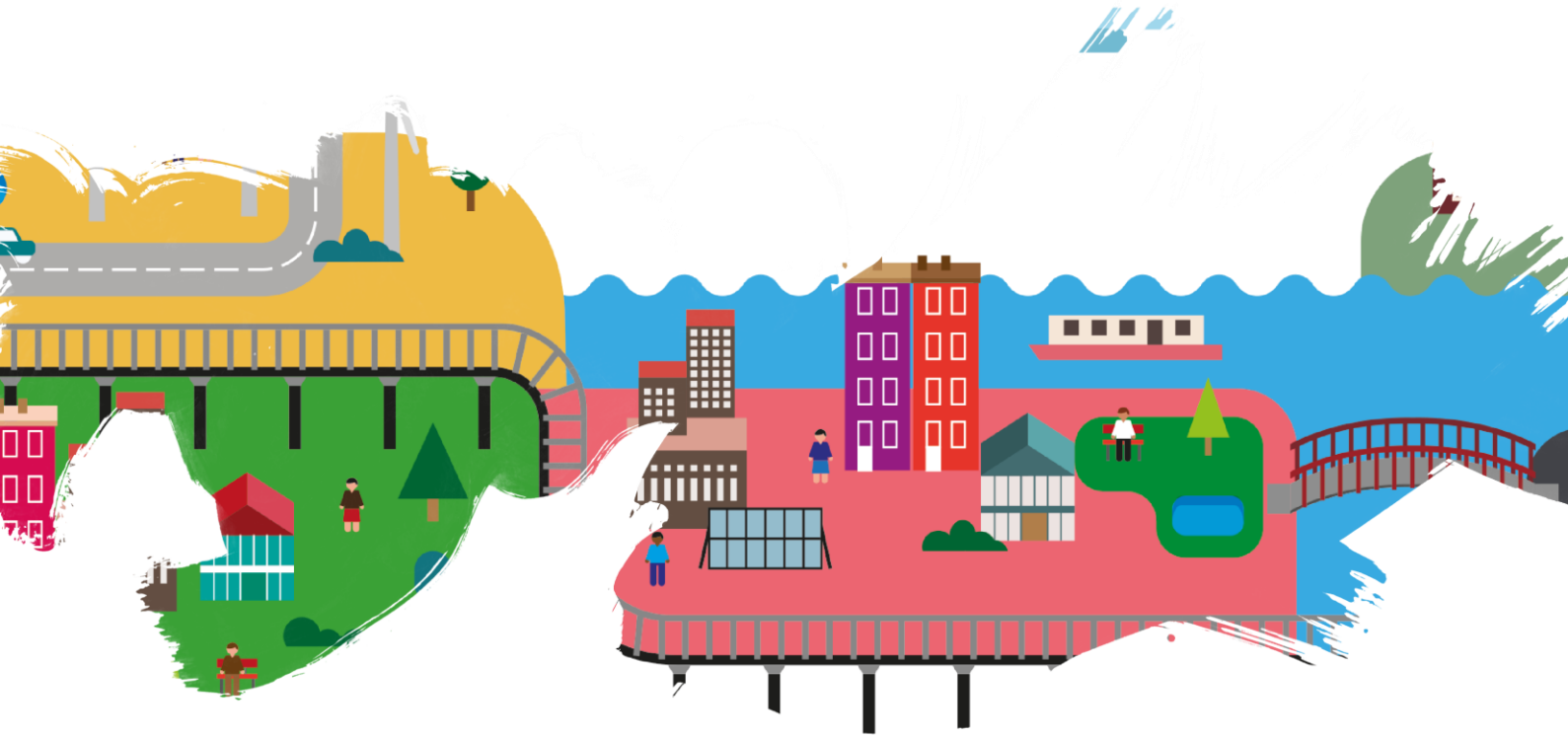

URBAN RENEWAL AND REVITALIZATION

Perspectives from Europe

INTERNATIONAL URBAN COOPERATION PROGRAMME

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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Perspectives from Europe

Evolution of European Urban Renewal Concepts.

In Europe, as everywhere else on the Globe, urban renewal in significant numbers and size is post-World War II history. Different programs have been consecutively developed over the past 70 years – following changing needs (and objectives), strategies, policies and political ideologies or prejudices.

1950-70 Post-War reconstruction

More than any other wars before, World War II targeted the civil population and city-based industries of the enemy countries. Especially in Germany, but also in its enemy countries, important parts of urban texture were completely destroyed by air raids. When the war was over, large-scale urban renewal turned to more or less provisional repair of damaged buildings, but otherwise massive reconstruction mostly on the existing block pattern in order to take advantage of remaining infrastructure and also to avoid solving any ownership queries. Particularly interesting is the subsidized West German social housing reconstruction program, which combined affordable housing for all and simultaneously fuelled the post-war economy – which later on became known as the 'German Economy Miracle' (Wirtschaftswunder).

Modernization of older housing stock ('rehabilitation') (1970→)

Once the post-war housing deficit was resolved there remained a quality contrast between the modern new built housing units and the repaired pre-war stock -- especially in the urban periphery and in smaller towns who had been less hit during the war. Special modernization subsidies were made available to individually modernize the existing buildings.

Cautious urban renewal/ preservation of listed building (1978→)

Now that a strong construction industry had been built up, a massive drop in orders would have caused a serious recession and possibly also caused social unrest. The strategic answer was the creation of a nation-wide area-based participatory urban renewal program which also extended to the public space and to smaller villages. Apart from a specially created subsidy line, further interest in the program was fuelled by a recurring national competition for the most beautiful village. The reconstruction of historic monuments of that period followed more a concept of 'open-air museums'.

Ecological Building and renewal (1982→)

The idea of building ecologically began to spread in Europe from the early 1980's onwards. Although the first global energy crisis of 1973 had been overcome in the meantime, the importance of natural and local resource preservation had been understood, but practical implementation of the principles

depended on private initiative and the academic avant-garde. Due to technocratic building regulations new 'ecological' buildings were difficult to erect inside urban centres, where the reconstruction of traditional timber frame and even mud buildings can occasionally been seen.

Berlin-Kreuzberg, Germany - Ecological urban renewal

A parallel but relatively independent movement of the period was the concept of 'biological construction' – a synonym of today's healthy building and healthy cities concept. In the 1980s, the German City-State of Berlin implemented the International Building Exhibition (Internationale Bauausstellung – IBA) which focused on careful urban renewal of old residential blocks. One of its demonstration blocks, Block 103, became a model for ecological urban renewal. The green building measures covered (i) water savings and rainwater catchment; (ii) reduction in solid waste, solid waste reduction, and waste recycling; (iii) application of renewable energy; use of centralized neighbourhood heating as energy-efficiency measure; (iv) biologically friendly building materials; (v) greening of building exteriors. The impacts of the measures are reduced energy consumption and a reduction of Green-House-Gas (GHG) emissions.

Revalorization of large scale housing estates (1984→West /1990→ East)

Like elsewhere on the world, East and West Europe had experienced a hype in industrialized building – especially large panel construction for social housing from the late 1960*s onwards. With the spread of neoliberal politics in Europe social housing became a service not for all anymore but an assistance exclusively to the poor, which damaged the connotations of this building typology. Unresolved building physics and maintenance problems, plus building failures after 20 years of intensive use triggered off comprehensive renewal programs of those settlements from the mid-1980s onwards. In Germany after reunification 1990, massive renewal and de-densification programs were begun, including also partial or full demolition in response to marked demand and population loss.

Social focus and target groups (1995)

Globalization widened the gap between the rich and the poor also in Europe during the 1990s, and area based social assistance programs replaced the former programs more focussing on physical improvement. This tendency to earmark neighbourhoods with special assistance needs is a global phenomenon, has brought about a number of good results but also bears the risk of area stigmatization.

Sustainability projects (2000→MdG)

The year 2000 brought us the millennium development goals for sustainability which should be achieved by 2015, but were recently reformulated as Sustainable Development Goals to be attained in a follow-

up period after 2015. As not unusual in politics, this may not necessarily stipulate new and more intense efforts but may turn into a mere re-labelling of on-going programs now promoted to be 'sustainable projects' with no fundamental changes.

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation (2010→

Since 1992. United Nations Climate Change Conferences have been held on a yearly basis, The 2009 Conference agreed on the Copenhagen Protocol, which was signed by 141 member states and set the aim to limit global warming to 2oC by 2010. It was also agreed that the industrialized countries should assist the poorer regions to obtain the necessary capacity for doing so by means of technology transfer. Although the commitment to the goals remained voluntary, the agreement at least provided large-scale publicity about the problematic situation among politicians which filtered down to the level of urban renewal programs. Many programs set the reduction of CO2 emission as the top objective.

'Smart' urban renewal 2013→

The call for technology transfer, combined with the request for private sector initiatives, was eagerly taken up by international companies such as Cisco, Siemens or Mercedes to promote the Smart City concept all over the world, and especially in context with urban (re) development. The promise tells us that with the help of digital information technology an optimization of all urban activities it will be possible to minimize urban energy demand and that the internet will facilitate democratic decision making. However, the globally best-publicised smart city project, Mazdar City in Abu Dhabi has not advanced as intended and accounts from implementation show reason for scepticism.

European Union perspectives on Urban Renewal and Revitalization

The European Union (EU) has a number of important programmes for the urban sector. The 2007 Leipzig Charter has placed special attention on deprived neighbourhoods as a whole, and recommended san integrated areas approach. The 2010 Toledo Declaration repeated this emphasis on urban regeneration for a smarter, more sustainable and socially inclusive urban development bin Europe. The Toledo declaration highlighted the need to consolidate the urban agenda of European cities in the future.

Importance of urban development

"The EU Cities are seen as both the source of and solution to today's economic, environmental and social challenges. Europe's urban areas are home to over two-thirds of the EU's population, they account for about 80 % of energy use and generate up to 85 % of Europe's GDP. These urban areas are the engines of the European economy and act as catalysts for creativity and innovation throughout the Union. But they are also places where persistent problems, such as unemployment, segregation and

poverty, are at their most severe. Urban policies therefore have wider cross-border significance, which is why urban development is central to the EU's Regional Policy."

Urban dimension of cohesion policy

The 2014-2020 period has put the urban dimension at the very heart of Cohesion Policy. At least 50% of the ERDF resources for this period will be invested in urban areas. This could increase even further, later in the period. Around 10 billion euros from the ERDF will be directly allocated to integrated strategies for sustainable urban development. And about 750 cities will be empowered to implement these integrated strategies for sustainable urban development.

What is integrated sustainable urban development?

The various dimensions of urban life – environmental, economic, social and cultural – are interwoven and success in urban development can only be achieved through an integrated approach. Measures concerning physical urban renewal must be combined with those promoting education, economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection. It also calls for strong partnerships between local citizens, civil society, industry and various levels of government.

Such an approach is especially important at this time, given the seriousness of the challenges European cities currently face, ranging from specific demographic changes to the consequences of economic stagnation in terms of job creation and social progress, and to the impact of climate change. The response to these challenges is critical for achieving the smart, sustainable, inclusive society envisaged in the Europe 2020 Strategy...

The EU Urban Agenda

Cities are one of the major players as they directly or indirectly implement EU policies on the ground and therefore contribute to EU's major policy objectives. Action is needed at EU, national and city level to ensure that cities are able to fulfil their potential in this role. For this reason, an EU Urban Agenda is being established.

Several political agendas have been developed in the past. The Leipzig charter and Toledo Declaration are carried forward in the EU Urban Agenda: Leipzig Charter ; Toledo declaration ; and the EU Urban Agenda.

Objectives for 2014-2020

During the 2014-2020 programming period, European cities will benefit even more from the EU's Regional Policy :

• Urban areas are directly targeted by several of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) investment. This means greater opportunity for sustainable urban mobility, regeneration of deprived communities and improved research and innovation capacity.

• In each EU Member State, a minimum 5 % of the ERDF is earmarked for integrated sustainable urban development; its on-the-ground deployment will be decided and directed by urban authorities.

• EUR 371 million is set aside for innovative actions in the field of Sustainable Urban Development over a seven-year period.

• An urban development network (UDN) is responsible for reviewing on-the-ground deployment of European funds and boosting knowledge-sharing between cities involved in integrated sustainable urban development and in Urban Innovative Actions.

• Cities are encouraged to use Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), which paves the way for local stakeholders, businesses, the public sector and civil society to get more involved in urban neighbourhood regeneration.

• Integrated territorial investments may be used to implement area-based strategies that rely on investments across different fields.

• The URBACT III programme - which acts as a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development – has been financially strengthened and expanded, enabling European cities to work together to develop better solutions to urban challenges.

• The TAIEX REGIO PEER 2 PEER tool is designed to share expertise between bodies that manage funding under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund.

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IUC-LAC PROGRAMME

The International Urban Cooperation Programme - Latin America and the Caribbean (IUC-LAC) connect cities in different regions of the world to get in touch and share solutions to common problems. This initiative is part of a long-term strategy of the European Union to promote sustainable urban development in collaboration with both the public and private sectors and with civil groups and citizens. Through participation in the IUC-LAC, Latin American municipalities exchange knowledge with their counterparts in Europe, thus building a greener and more prosperous future.

IUC-LAC activities promote the achievement of political objectives and important international agreements on urban development and climate change, such as the EU Urban Agenda, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

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* All the aforementioned information is based on internet and published source mentioned in footnotes.

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