THE “NEIGHBORHOODS LAW”
A STEP FORWARD FOR THE URBAN REGENERATION

THE RESEARCH ABOUT INTEGRAL REGENERATION PROJECTS IN DOWNTOWN, SUBURBS AND SUBURBAN HOUSING ESTATES NEIGHBORHOODS IN CATALONIA

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ABSTRACT: 826,754 citizens (11% Catalonia population), 93 neighborhoods, 76 cities, 989,760,012,00 Euros, more than 300 urban revitalization projects in five years and all of them engaged to the same goal: make their neighborhoods a better and more sustainable place to live. This article discusses why those neighborhoods needed an urban revitalization project; what we can learn from the urban revitalization projects we have had in the past; how Catalonia arose with the “Neighborhood’s Law” and how it is working so far by analyzing and discussing some projects.

KEYWORDS: urban revitalization; citizen participation; public administration; urban sustainability.

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NOMENCLATURE

IIP: Integral intervention project
EMC: Evaluation and monitoring Committee
DPTOP: Department of Territorial Polices and Publics Works – Catalonia Administration

The sociopolitical and economical situation in Catalonia – from the sixties on – has caused significant immigration waves that affected especially the urban growth and implied a huge housing demand. On one hand the city’s downtown, already in an advanced state of deterioration, together with the suburban settlements, served as cradle to new residents. On the other hand, in order to absorb this sudden growth, the Administration promoted different housing estates, far away from what was needed. As a result, several neighborhoods showed severe deficiencies in urban, social and economic levels on the beginning of the 21st century.

In order to cope with the degradation inertia, the regional government approved a specific Law\(^1\) aiming at the improvement of neighborhoods, urban areas and towns. In a certain way, this regulation was a new public tool to support sustainable urban renovation.

The Law’s preamble discusses four topics: transformation of neighborhoods, need to correct the imbalances caused by such processes, best practices of urban regeneration projects, and development of a tool to carry out integral intervention projects. Based on the application of the law, this article discusses the "transformation" of neighborhoods, the "illustration" of best practices and the "solution" of mainly urban problems.

The purposes of this study are mainly:

- To understand the transformation suffered by three Catalans neighborhoods typologies: downtown areas; suburbs and housing estates.
- To analyze examples of important revitalization programs.
- To choose significant Integral Intervention Processes (IIP), to analyze them and compare the methodological strategies according to neighborhood typologies.

Based on these three pillars, we had constructed the following hypothesis guiding to our objectives:

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\(^1\) The House of the Parliament of Catalonia approved, in May 26th 2004, the Law 2/2004, of slum upgrading, urban areas and towns that require special attention, known as “Llei de Barrios” (Neighborhood’s Law).
The comprehensive IIP are more specific, and, consequently, perform better in areas where some kind of urban planning has been previously developed.

There is an "optimal scenario" for the development of an IIP: mid-size town, with administrative, management capacity and economic solvency to deal with the package of project’s measures, and associations involved throughout the process.

According to the different neighborhoods typologies, the comprehensive IIP’s presented during the first five years of application of the Law tend to differentiate themselves in the action strategies to be taken on the land.

The assessment of the implementation results should be integrated under a concise and legible indicators system.

Management is important in terms of urban regeneration but the IIP’s guidelines are essential to obtain satisfactory results.

1 TRANSFORMATION

Initially, it is important to understand the creation and transformation of the three types of districts considered in the law: downtown areas, suburban extensions made without a planning or provision of adequate facilities, and housing estates or marginal residential areas.

Generally, from mid-twentieth century, the process of the Catalan towns, and consequently their neighborhoods, is marked by population avalanches: between the sixties and seventies, due to process of backward industrialization and, in the nineties, resulting from the construction industry. The arrival of contingents of the population in cities, small towns and formed by the cities extensions, generated two basic consequences: the transformation of the old towns and neighborhoods dictated by the formation of new growth models and a new model housing estates (Fig.1).

The historical analysis of the 93 districts was to understand their formation and transformation processes and the situation where they were before the execution of comprehensive intervention project. In this article is limited to explaining the need to approach given the comparative state final run.

1.1 Downtown areas

Downtown areas in Catalonia are characterized by a compact urban fabric, with few public spaces and lack of renewal (Fig.2) which has been producing a series of shortcomings that make those neighborhoods progressively away from XXI century’s urban quality standards. When analyzing the situation of downtown areas, it is important to consider their geographical position in the city whether central or peripheral. The central ones are more advantageous as they truly serve as a landmark, which facilitates the work of promoting the use of these spaces.

1.2 Suburbs

According to Joan Busquets² there are several types of suburbs coexisting in the twentieth century in Barcelona. These typologies have different importance depending on the urban conjecture and development of urban real estate. Among them, this article takes the "suburban expansion neighborhoods" and the "marginal urban or self constructed neighborhoods" for a careful analysis regarding that they explain the formation of twenty-one districts that were selected during the first five calls of the “Funds building neighborhoods”.

² (Busquets, 1999)
The most outstanding features of this kind of neighborhoods are irregular lot subdivision; self construction (Fig.2), few public spaces and failure urban improvement actions.

### 1.3 Housing estates

In Catalonia, since the beginning of the 19th century, the housing estates were built based on the political and economic context that has prevailed and its corresponding translation in a legal-institutional framework. For purposes of this research the three groups of estates that explain the beginning of the twenty-eight housing estates analyzed were considered. The classification was done chronologically and typologically: 1963-1970 - the private sector and the construction of housing estates; 1965 - 1972: public housing estates as a solution to the shantytowns; and 1970 - 1975: estates: housing, facilities and green spaces.

There are characteristic features related to the following housing estates:

- In urban terms: far away from the downtown with other areas of difficult access, lack of facilities and poor quality of public spaces (Fig.2).
- In terms of construction: problems of accessibility (3, 4, 5, ... without elevator). Needless to say, except estates where the aluminosis, the materials used, although simple, had an acceptable quality.
- In social terms: the housing estates can be divided into two groups: heterogeneous population (civil servants, workers ...) and homogeneous population (immigrants and shanty-dwellers). In the first case, there were trivial and social problems inherent in neighboring communities. Certainly, by improving their economic situation, many of those families marched away yielding the substitution of the native population by immigrant, especially during the last wave of immigration (end of last century). In the second case, the homes were intended for marginalized groups and to absorb the shanty-dwellers and still bear significant social problems. The fact of adding socially sensitive populations (social homogeneity of the buildings) is not a solution but an aggravation of the situation.

As a result of crossing the data from a system of indicators with comprehensive analysis of intervention projects and "in sittu" collected information, we present a table summarizing the situation in which the districts were before the beginning of the implementation of IIP (Fig.3). Some of the conclusions are the following:

Among the three types of neighborhoods “rent” is a practice more common in downtown areas. The order of preference is: downtowns, housing estates, and as last resort rentals are the suburbs.

The difference tenure directly affects the state of the building and is also important to consider the time in which the building was built. It can be observed that the quality of buildings and houses is similar and low in downtowns and suburbs, and a lot better in the housing estates. The rehabilitation activities, as required in the first two types, are difficult to solve, for, typically, the buildings have only one owner who cannot take care of such expenses.

Regarding the quality of public space, it is low in all three types but with one important difference: the quantity. Housing estates areas are endowed with large amount of space that could be converted into public spaces for urban operations. On the other hand in the other two types of districts is scarce the presence of public space and the few they have are degraded by the intensive use. In these neighborhoods operations like urban loosening are necessary for their health.

Despite the neighborhood amenities, are a widespread demand that districts usually have many spaces for civic centers, senior and youth center, neighborhood associations, etc. ... in fact are the lack are city facilities.
to attract more people and help with the dynamization of these areas. Society and economy are very sensitive subjects and closely linked. The situation is more serious is given in the downtown areas but in the suburbs and housing estates the scenario is not that different. Local gaps, trading only local, few local job offers, low-level professional and high unemployment are characteristic of these areas.

2 ILUSTRATION
This section considers the previous experience in urban rehabilitation projects as: New Deal for Communities, England; URBAN, Europe, and Amsterdam Wijkaanpak.

2.1 The English example for urban regeneration
The publication of the report from Social Exclusion Unit, “Bringing Britain Together” encouraged the debate on how to solve the needs of urban and socially sensitive areas. During the 1960 and 1970 some programs (Education Priority Areas and The Urban Program) were introduced. In the nineties programs like City Challenge and Single Regeneration Budget were continuing financing the "area-based" focusing on the treatment of social and economic problems within a global vision. One of the most ambitious England’s areas based is the "New Deal for Communities".

The "New Deal for Communities" was created in 1998 as a central element of strategies for urban revitalization from English government for thirty-nine of the most degraded areas of the country. The program focuses on community regeneration and aims to connect these neighborhoods and the rest of the town through partnership with various agencies and departments.

The renewal of the districts, based preset themes, had the dual function: improving the life quality and attract more people to areas in population decrease.

"The NDC initiative not transformed areas" Based on this sentence one wonders why these changes not
occurring as expected? Professor Paul Lawless, director of the National Assessment Program NDC at Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research from Sheffield Hallam University, says a number of reasons that prompted these results: the high number of selected areas (39); political problems; problems territorial balance; the durability program (10 years) and the creation of the NDC meeting impede the participation of all citizens.

2.2 The European example of the incentive for urban regeneration

The URBAN initiative was created to promote sustainable development in urban areas with problems of physical and social infrastructure. It implements a package of measures that combine the rehabilitation of obsolete infrastructure, economic activities and action effective in the labor market. These are complemented by actions to combat social exclusion and measures to improve the quality of urban environment.

The URBAN program defined precisely the types of these areas to maximize the effect of actions reinforcing the benefits of economic projects and subsidies. An analysis of the geographical areas according to their characteristics shows: 43% of programs are in suburbs, 20% of programs face problems of historical centers/downtown areas and 37% of programs seek to peripheral urban areas. URBAN programs totaling 118 urban areas in different states members of the EU.

Experience and lessons of the first phase of pilot projects URBAN served to focus the issues of urban regeneration and social cohesion, as well as the adoption in 1997, a second phase of pilot projects resulting in 503 applications from 14 Member States.

2.3 The Holland vision of urban regeneration

"Has been many years ago that Netherlands is working on infrastructure and urban regeneration programs but now has found a better investment: the social infrastructure." The Amsterdam Wijkaanpak is the most recent case of urban regeneration program which was created in Holland in 2008 with the aim of improving, in the next 10 years, the life quality of degraded areas to achieve the standards from the rest of the country.

The Netherlands districts problem are not different from what until now has been analyzed. However, the funding system is innovative because it includes the private sector as a major contributor. The idea is to create a "central fund for social housing" where the most economically powerful companies provide resources and the smaller ones requested these funds to finance new projects in one of these forty districts. Differences between this programs compared to others also emphasize the fact that projects are developed in Amsterdam by the citizens, making it a really innovative program.

3 THE NEIGHBORHOOD LAW

After understanding the three Catalan neighborhood transformations and studying some examples of urban regeneration projects is possible analyze the IIP inside the “Neighborhoods Law” universe. From now on this article explains and investigates the instruments and techniques developed by the Law under five scopes: projects areas targets; funding; management; contents (divided in 8 fields linking social, economic, political and urban and architecture development) and evaluation.

3.1 The target areas

As other "regulatory programs" (URBAN, NDC; ...), this Law applies only to areas that support the designation of "urban areas for special attention". In order to evaluate if an area supports this designation and is therefore eligible for assistance from the Fund for the promotion of neighborhoods, the Funds Management Committee takes into consideration the following groups of indicators (18 different indicators in total): processes of urban decline and deficits in equipment and services; demographic problems; presence of economic, social or environmental issues and urban and local development deficits.

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10 (DPTOP, 2004)
3.2 Management and founding
The Act has many added values, among which, one can cite the fact it concentrates a significant amount of financial resources, personal and material condensed in time, causing an urban acupuncture\(^{11}\) and resuscitation. Acupuncture in the sense of acting directly and intensely on the problems of these areas and resuscitation while acting as a revitalizing element. To carry out this "revival" on the scene there are four main actors: the Catalan local administration, as doctors and the territory and citizens, as patients. The doctors tried to intervene in accordance with the disease of patients caused by various disturbances.

In this way, for the management of the Funds, the Law creates a Management Committee composed by people from different departments of the Catalan Administration, Municipalities Administration, professionals linked with urban sustainability. Besides the local Administration has to form an Evaluation and Monitoring Committee composed by local citizens and workers from different Administration to establish management, monitoring and evaluate mechanisms to execute each of their projects. This Committee is, together with the “Neighborhood Office” the most important tools to improve citizen participation.

Fund contribution to finance the set activities resolved in each case must represent at least 50% and a maximum 75% of the overall budget of the project\(^{12}\).

3.3 The Contents
The integral intervention projects have to be built on eight areas of action established by the Act. These require the project to be heterogeneous and tailored for each location in particular, trying to achieve the balance between representative democracy\(^{13}\) and participatory democracy\(^{14}\). They are the following:

- Field 1 - Improving the public space and the provision of green spaces.
- Field 2 - rehabilitation and equipment of the collective elements of buildings.
- Field 3 - The provision of facilities for collective use.
- Field 4 - The incorporation of information technologies in buildings.
- Field 5 - Promoting sustainable urban development, especially regarding energy efficiency, savings in water consumption and waste recycling.
- Field 6 - Gender Equity in the use of urban space and facilities.
- Field 7 - The development of improvement programs involving social, economic and urban resources of the district.
- Field 8 - The accessibility and the removal of architectural barriers.

The project also must present an action program containing information about the area of action; a proposed sustainable actions and a schedule rated four-year deployment, including the strategy and priorities for action, and a form management, resources and provided an institutional framework and public participation for its development.

3.4 The types of evaluation
The evaluation step is divided into three stages: project evaluation (made by the Management Committee from Catalonia Administration); assessment during project execution, and evaluation of the project’s impact (both made by the Evaluation and monitoring Committee).

The initial assessment aims to select who will receive subside of the IIP. Once the deadline, the projects are analyzed according to the following parameters: level of intensity of the problems; level of comprehensive intervention; overview of the project: identification of level of local issues, strategic coherence and appropriateness of the proposal, specifying objectives, the justification of the project's viability, the degree of citizen participation in the proposed actions and assessment on the impact of the project; population benefited and per capita spending; level of local economic effort; types of areas; and actions in areas covering more than one municipality.

\(^{11\text{ (Lerner, 2005) }}\)
\(^{12\text{ (DPTOP, 2004) }}\)
\(^{13\text{ In representative democracy, the people delegated sovereignty to the elected authorities regularly through free elections. These authorities must act in theory representing the interests of the citizenry that elects to represent them.}}\)
\(^{14\text{ Semidirecte or participatory democracy is a broad term, often referring to forms of democracy in which citizens have a greater participation in political decision making that traditionally gives the representative democracy.}}\)
The Act refers to the final report on the status of implementation of the program both in terms of actions and the funding provided, possible deviations from the program, the achievement of results in connection with the proposed objectives and, finally, the incidence of actions in relation to the degraded environment, lack of social facilities and services, demographic, social and economic problems.

3.5 The first three Calls
From 2004 onwards have been published seven calls. We consider the first three and choose the most significant projects to proceed with a detailed analysis according to five criteria:

- **Intensity criteria (C1)** show the existence of previous urban regeneration projects in the areas or not. Such result proves that, even if there was a previous action, the area remains within the parameters of “urban area for special attention” which means the degradation process was very intense.

- **Proportionality criteria (C2)** studies the relation between the total number of inhabitants of the municipality, the proportion of people directly affected by the project and the total amount of each project. It is important recognize that as well Sebastian Jornet explains, "The Neighborhood Act is similar to a spoon of sugar: the effects of pouring it in a cup of coffee or in a bathtub or a pool are different."^{15}

- **Economic effort criteria (C3)** show the amount allocated to actions of urbanization (Fields 1 and 8), habitability (Field 2) and facilities (Field 3) compared to the amount allocated to social fields (field 6 and 7).

  - **Balance criteria (C4)** assessing the balance between “areas” and the answers given by different projects.
  - **Execution criteria (C5)** analyze the actions level of execution.

Finally, among the 47 districts selected to benefit from Founds subside during the first three calls, nine neighborhoods are highlighted according to the criteria explained. In this article, taught three of these nine.

3.6 Detailed analyses
The analysis of selected projects is done in two stages: initial situation before the IIP, and current status, project / activities completed.

3.6.1 Manresa downtown area
The Manresa historic center set in the sixteenth and covers an area that represents 4.86% of total urban land Manresa. Much of Manresa downtown was in a very poor situation that required adapting to current needs with actions such as creating new public spaces, renovation and systematization of existing public spaces, remodeling of the road network and basic spaces intended for public parking.

In accordance with such requirements the downtown Manresa IIP proposed, at the urban level, the creation of various public spaces (Fig.4) and leisure facilities. To execute those actions they considered a very carefully materials us looking for the sustainability, colors and textures of flooring, street furniture and vegetation to not distort the characteristics of the “historic district”.

3.6.2 Barriada nova at Canovelles and Congost at Granollers
The scope of IIP includes the neighborhoods of two different municipalities on the right side of the Congost River. The origins of these two districts reside in the important migratory movement that began in Spain during the fifties of last century. This wave of

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^{15} (Jornet, 2009)
immigration led to an imbalance between population and services, forcing the extension of territorial centers of population.
The construction quality was very poor because many homes were self built (Fig.5). Other problem is that the green public areas provided in the planning were not executed. Other recurrent problem in the neighborhoods is the lack of facilities and public parking areas.
In response to the shortcomings still present in these areas was developed the IIP. Overall the performances are public spaces and facilities.
In the marginal areas of agglomeration, in the specific case of those districts, such as housing estates, require, in their public spaces, high durability and low maintenance materials. In terms of rehabilitation of buildings for housing, the actions are aimed at creating programs to aid in solving problems of conservation and maintenance, construction and structural lesions, and improvement of common facilities.

3.6.3 Sant Cosme at El Prat de Llobregat.

The district of San Cosme has a homogeneous urban nature clearly visible to the road network and the type edification. Sant Cosme has its origin in 1500 houses that "the Home Building Association" built in the 60s. Later, in the mid 70s, were built 801 homes comprising, in total, 28% of the population throughout the town. This clearly shows the urban and social impact that its implementation had in the town even built isolated and disconnected from the existing city.
The gradual degradation of buildings, lack of equipment and the inadequacy of roads and services, led to the mobilization of community members and local institutions, and finally the decision to redesign the district. The remodeling process, pioneer in the entire State, has allowed the demolition of 2,208 houses and build another 2,245 new homes.
In socioeconomic terms, "the process of remodeling has managed to stop the urban decline and has enabled an improvement in living conditions in the neighborhood, which has been significantly increased their standard of housing." Passed, therefore, a situation of urban ruin to a one of lack of planning
However, this apparent improvement in living conditions has not managed to break the isolation and segregation experienced by the urban district, nor generates dynamics of economic and social regeneration.
Given the above scenario the City Council of El Prat de Llobregat in 2005 requested subsidies from the Fund. The main objective was to give "urban form" to the neighborhood as indispensable for social cohesion. It sought, with the IIP, completing the transformation of Sant Cosme district in order to strengthen the community in the medium and long term.
To achieve these objectives the IIP has developed a strategy of action that relies on five components:

- Tackle the factors that together reinforce the dynamics of urban and social degradation of the neighborhood.
- Use the transformations that occur in the neighborhood to redefine the urban it’s the façade.
- Experiencing new forms of intervention in the district, in a global and integrated through a single strategy to improve urban and socioeconomic.
- Reorient public policy towards the general promotion of an intense and ongoing investment and private capital.
- Achieve active participation of citizens and communities in the process of social and urban regeneration (Fig. 6).

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16 (Ajuntament del Prat de Llobregat, 2005)
4 BRIEF CONCLUSIONS

According to Oriol Nel-lo\textsuperscript{17}, in implementing the Law during its first four years of life it is important to learn the some lessons like: the need for an overview of both, problems and solutions; finance projects, not problems; cross of proceedings; the role of public investment; the new type of relationship between the Catalonia Government and local Councils; the virtues and difficulties of sharing the funding; the involvement of residents within and outside of the Evaluation and Monitoring Committees; the importance of capitalizing experiences: the creation of the Neighborhood Network (Internet portal); commitment to evaluate the results and adapt to change and therefore modify some initial ideas.

In these conclusions I added some comments. First Neighborhoods Law helps build understanding and cross projects as required within the contemporary urbanism and creates, each year, huge amount of projects and, therefore, opportunities for professional discussions on urban revitalization and social development. In turn, these projects and programs requested a new profile of professionals to manage and coordinate actions in a transversal and flexible way with a technical vision of topics such as Architecture and Urbanism, the law, Sociology and Anthropology.

Another point is the fact of the merger between urban revitalization programs and regulations of each country that are essential tools for urban health. They are certainly political instruments but allow the modification of the social, economic, urban and architectural towards "successful" regenerating the local identity and applying a new urban and social concept at the involved districts.

Now, in reference to the IIP and the actions proposed in accordance with the analysis conducted so far can be said to follow three different methodologies depending on the types of neighborhoods. That is, actions to improve public space, rehabilitation of dwellings and provision of public facilities are arranged physically as follows:

- In the downtown areas actions are scattered and, usually, follow two logics: the proximity of buildings (churches, museums, municipalities ...) and business itineraries (scattered performances) (Fig.7).
- The two types of suburban agglomerations, mainly the actions of public spaces, are very powerful in commercial areas and since these continue less intensity to the most significant public spaces in the neighborhood (axial actions with ramifications) (Fig.8).
- In the housing estates the actions, both to improve public space and the provision of facilities, tend to focus directly on the core business, which often are territorial guiding, and in some cases develop within islands formed by the blocks of housing (axial actions) (Fig.9).

Is still important emphasize the final result, in terms of landscape impact and urban sustainability, of the actions executed so far. In the case of housing estates reurbanitzacions the effect is quite positive with the creation of large multi-functional public spaces replacing waste interstitial spaces. In the downtown areas, in general, reurbanitzacions have been respectful to the environment when the shapes of spaces and the materials use.

Finally it is worth mentioning that, despite efforts to conduct an overall evaluation standard for the Law, lacks a unique tool for assessing the impact of the implementation of integrated intervention projects.

\textsuperscript{17} (Nel-lo 2009)
REFERENCES

[16] Ajuntament del Prat de Llobregat, 2005

Figure 7 IIP of Manresa Downtown area

Figure 8 IPP of Barriada Nova at Canovelles and Congost at Granollers

Figure 9 IIP of Sant Cosme at El Prat del Llobregat