

## **Urban Planning in the Balkans: three models to compare.**

Corrado Minervini

Post-university course “Habitat, Technology and Development” Polytechnic of Torino (Italy)

### **European Union and urban planning policies in developing countries**

The EuropeAid cooperation office is a geographically oriented organisation, within the European Union (EU), dealing with the international and multilateral cooperation with the third countries. In this regard the geographical areas the world is divided into are:

1. Europe, Southern Mediterranean, Middle-East
2. Latin America
3. Sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean, Pacific
4. Asia and Central Asia

Consequently the European cooperation approach to urban or town planning issues in third world countries differs according to each geographical area. Until a couple of years ago Programmes peculiar to urban planning were established mainly for Asia and South America<sup>1</sup>. The Sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries were not considered in need of urban planning because of so called much more urgent need are to be faced such as water supply and sanitation, cadastre issues and economic development, whilst the European countries and the ones coming from the Soviet empire break-up were considered in need of infrastructure network only<sup>2</sup>. Anyhow sector in need of EU international cooperation was up to the EU representative in the country.

On one hand it might appear it to be an adequate policy of consistency with the several social, economic and political contexts; on the other hand the EU cooperation agencies (the so called programme implementers) are strongly suggested to make reference to the European manuals, case studies, good practices. The broad geographic division into African and Caribbean countries, Asian, South American and East block (Russia included) is therefore merely finalised to a simplistic separation of the political and bureaucratic competences.

It seems that urban planning in developing countries is not considered a hot issue by the European Commission.

In WelcomeEurope, EU calls for proposals and tenders from European Commission and other European institution (<http://www.welcomeurope.com/default.asp?id=1110>), where the European Funds are divided by sectors, in July 2006 Town Planning (one of the 29 funded sectors) has no funding at all, and the last five funding dates back to February March this year and December last year.

It seems that “the European Union has only an urban agenda and not an urban policy” (Kristiansen, 2006)<sup>3</sup>. Key words like rehabilitation of deprived urban and industrial areas,

---

<sup>1</sup> Reference is made respectively to AsiaUrbs and UrbAI programmes.

<sup>2</sup> Opinions collected during a visit made to the EuropeAid offices in February 2004.

<sup>3</sup> EU mostly identifies issues to be included into agenda like:

- The European Declaration of Urban Rights (1992): more than general assumption of the EU citizens rights
- The European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign whose purpose was to enter into Local agenda processes and develop long-term action plans towards sustainability 1994, 1996, 2000).

more efficient use of land and natural resources, good local transport and energy management, fight against social exclusion, unemployment and poverty reduction, sustainability, and meeting the needs and expectations of citizens, are more and more slogans rather than action plans.

As a first and hopefully temporary conclusion, as far as it is known, EU does not have specific urban planning policies to developing countries. This means that programmes implemented in urban and peri-urban areas may lack a sound basis consistent with overall principles and strategies as well as the needs of diverse local conditions. It is therefore understood that there is a need for a EU strategy paper on urban planning and development consistent with the needs of urbanising and with the policies of all the other international donors<sup>4</sup>, especially as this year marks the change of the world's population from being predominantly rural to predominantly urban<sup>5</sup>.

However occasionally urban planning issues are included by the EU within the broader topic of decentralisation particularly in the Balkan area. In Serbia and Montenegro, and FYROM<sup>6</sup> the European Agency of Reconstruction (EAR)<sup>7</sup> in the last five years has launched some of these programmes.

One of those was implemented in Montenegro in 2002-2003. It was addressed to urban planning in terms of external technical assistance to the legal and management framework. Another in Macedonia, despite the title ("Training and Capacity Building of Local self Government Institutions"), focused on a nationwide urban planning training sided by a conspicuous IT equipment grant.

Beside these two mentioned programmes another one was implemented in Montenegro. It was implemented by a group of students of the post university course "Habitat, Technology and Development" of the Polytechnic of Torino and consisted of an urban planning exercise in a small-medium size municipality: Kolašin<sup>8</sup>. It was made on a voluntary basis only.

---

<sup>4</sup> Actually international organization like the WB and the UN do have overall urban development policies and urban planning has a key role: focussing on transparency and good governance the latter the UN and on enhancing regulated opportunities for the private sector. The World Bank responds to the rapid urbanisation with more service-oriented structure in the urban economy which is conducive to employment creation, poverty reduction, and self-organised local business development. The UN habitat stands on specific programmes and campaigns to achieve the so called Millennium Goals.

<sup>5</sup> UN data indicate that virtually all the world's future population growth will occur in the urban areas of low and middle-income countries. These issues have been addressed at the third World Urban Forum held in June this year. It is a time at which a clear lead is needed by the EU.

<sup>6</sup> FYROM is the official name in form of acronym of Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia, from now on Republic of Macedonia.

<sup>7</sup> The European Agency for Reconstruction's task is to manage the European Union's main assistance programmes in the Republic of Serbia (including UN-administered Kosovo), the Republic of Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The agency was established in February 2000 as the EU's main reconstruction arm in war-damaged Kosovo and later expanded to Serbia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The agency's headquarters is in Thessaloniki, Greece. It has operational centres in Pristina, Belgrade, Podgorica and Skopje. An independent agency of the European Union, EAR is accountable to the Council and the European Parliament and overseen by a Governing Board composed of representatives from the 25 EU Member States and the European Commission (<http://www.ear.eu.int/agency/agency.htm>).

<sup>8</sup> Kolasin Urban Planning exercise was the last of a number of urban planning preparatory works made in Decan and Kline (Kosovo 2001) and Skoder (Albania 2002).

These three urban planning experiences in the Balkans differed very much from each other. In fact three different approaches were used for urban planning knowledge transfer, respectively:

1. Technical Assistance<sup>9</sup> (in Montenegro 2002-2003, EU funded project),
2. Training and capacity building (in Macedonia 2004-2006, EU funded project),
3. Learning by doing (in Montenegro 2003).

These approaches will be presented and analysed in terms of discreet methodological entities for urban planning knowledge transfer within a global development framework where the general objectives are assumed to be:

- ✓ the poverty reduction, and
- ✓ the economic development.

Because of the multidimensional nature of urban poverty, the urban development policy response must cover a range of issues including land, housing, and urban services, financial markets, labour markets and employment, social protection and social services and the environment<sup>10</sup>. All of them are urban planning components. This calls for a mandatory direction for every city to create a model master plan which covers town planning, water facility, traffic setup, and ecological plans, as well as to establish well-laid out areas where to establish small and medium-scale industries wherein the youth can get the employment. This model might be called Urban Development Preparedness Plan. It is conceived not only in terms of land use planning and related prescription, but also as a set of policies focussed to the economic development, environmental protection, and social and infrastructure development, in the light of strengthening local urban governance in the framework of a global economy and likely international investments in the area, and keeping well in mind the important role of urban areas and towns as motors of economic development (Alden, J., 1996). Through the Urban Development Preparedness Plan the risk to “severely undermine the possibilities of productivity of investment in cities (...)”<sup>11</sup> (Cohen, M., 2001) brought by “aspatial” and “dematerialised” assumptions would be finally set aside<sup>12</sup>.

In this framework and on the basis of these simple considerations urban planning becomes an essential tool for sustainable development EU is urged to wake up to. Following this, however, a new question might arise such as: which method is to be used for transfer urban planning knowledge to developing and in transition countries ?

### **Three programmes, three methods**

---

<sup>9</sup> Over the years, a number of definitions of technical assistance have been proposed. The most commonly used definition of technical assistance was offered by Yin and White in 1984: "a means of using knowledge to improve the adoption and implementation of some type of educational practice or procedure." (<http://www2.edc.org/NTP/ta.htm>).

<sup>10</sup> <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTURBANDEVELOPMENT/EXTURBANPOVERTY/0,,menuPK:341331~pagePK:149018~piPK:149093~theSitePK:341325,00.html>

<sup>11</sup> “(...) the productivity of labour, land and capital.” p 57.

<sup>12</sup> Reference is made to those strict urban planning regulatory framework, which prevent the economic development because of assumptions or rules inherited by the past theory and practice.

Once identified and defined the overall and most likely objectives of the urban planning in developing countries, and justified the need of urban planning in developing countries, three different applicable approaches to urban planning knowledge transfer (training, learning by doing and, technical assistance) could be assumed as feasible and described with reference to the three above mentioned programmes implemented in the Balkan area in the last five years.

#### *Training and Capacity Building of Local Self Government Institutions*

By definition training is generally considered the planned and organized activity of a consultant to impart skills, techniques and methodologies to employers and employees to enable them to learn and use new processes, procedures, systems and other tools efficiently and effectively in the performance of their work. Apart from the urban planning training provided at the academic level, the training and capacity building of the municipal technical officers is given in spaces and locations separate from the working space and/or occasionally in a different working hour.

The project TRAIN (Training and Capacity Building of Local Self Government Institutions) was launched in the summer 2004 initially aiming at supporting the decentralisation process in Macedonia then focussing most of all on urban planning training for the 85 newly established municipalities since, it was said, urban planning issues will be the first ones to be transferred from the central to the local level.

The training was structured around six different urban planning thematic and addressed to the municipal technical officers of the urban planning municipal sectors.

The six thematic were:

1. Municipal Urban Development Strategies
2. Land Development
3. Urban Planning Tools and Techniques
4. Land Development Implementation
5. Human Resources Management
6. Urban Planning and Computer Science

These six thematic were developed by short terms international experts and delivered in three cycles each in four training centres where the municipal technical experts conveyed a week per each cycle and each thematic.

The entire knowledge transfer delivery lasted around ten months: from September 2005 to June 2006. Local Trainers (four per each thematic) were selected and trained first, then actively assisted the international urban planning experts during the delivery.

#### *Municipal Investment Programme*

Technical Assistance (TA) is assumed to be an intensive and involving activity with frequently scheduled meetings between the TA provider and beneficiary(s). TA is collaborative in nature (it may include on-site consultations, brainstorming sessions, or even frequently scheduled phone conversations to review and develop materials or to create and implement a training plan) and generally is sided by institutional building as well as grants in kind (such as IT equipment or building appropriate space for the implementations of the planned actions).

An urban planning TA components was included in the Municipal Investment Programme (MIP) implemented by the European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) in Montenegro<sup>13</sup>. The MIP was one of local self-government reform programmes focussing on some pilot municipalities, where a process of revision of sector policies was launched at the municipal services, utilities, and municipal institutions and enterprises level. The MIP, together with the Union of Montenegrin Municipalities, has identified the key policy areas and laws to be revised to ensure the effective implementation of the reform, as well as key areas for restructuring local administrations to ensure more targeted and efficient services for citizens and the local economy. In particular, the revision of urban planning activities was an issue considered to be of the utmost importance by all municipalities in order to promote and ensure sound urban and economic development.

The national urban planning legislation was an issue too. It has been under revision since UNDP initiatives in 2002 urged a new urban planning legislative framework. Since then no proposals whatsoever have been made and discussions have raised leaving the status quo and declaring *laissez faire* on the basis of dozens of amendments to the local master plans<sup>14</sup>. The urban planning TA also included the systematization of the urban planning sectors within the municipalities.

### *Learning by Doing*

Learning-by-doing refers to the capability of workers to improve their productivity by regularly repeating the same type of action. The increased productivity is achieved through practice, self-perfection and minor innovations<sup>15</sup>. Urban Planning basically is a management practice applied to the development of a specific physical context. Innovations are not needed in the first instances; criticism and eventually innovations of the practices are to be stimulated once the basic practice is acquired and theories are induced.

A learning by doing method applied to urban planning was first tested in Kosovo (Decan and Kline 2001) and then in Albania (Shkoder 2002). Students from a post university course of the Polytechnic of Torino (Italy)<sup>16</sup>, under the supervision of one of their professors, developed a rather comprehensive preparatory urban planning exercise applying key concepts like participation and partnership. In 2003 the post university course “Habitat, Technology and Development” from the same Polytechnic of Torino (Italy) proposed to the Kolašin Municipality to draft the local Urban Master Plan (from now on General Urban Plan or GUP as it is called in Montenegro) in exchange for free hospitality for the course students during the two months planned to be necessary to complete the urban master plan. It was clear that

---

<sup>13</sup> EC assistance has been provided to the Montenegrin Government to reform public administration, including the drafting and amendment of new legislation. On the municipal level, the EU has supported small infrastructure projects – including a fire brigade house, local roads, street lighting, cultural centres and a pedestrian bridge – while at the same time assisting the municipal government to draft budgets, manage public finances, and creating long-term capital investment programmes. The Municipal Investment Programme includes a capacity-building component for four participating municipalities - Podgorica, Kolasin, Mojkovac & Bijelo Polje. This supported the municipalities in managing investments, maintaining existing and future infrastructure, and assessing crucial environmental issues.

<sup>14</sup> The capital city, Podgorica, has reached the record of almost 100 amendments a year.

<sup>15</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning-by-doing>

<sup>16</sup> “Technology, Architecture and Towns in Developing Countries”

the GUP was to be drafted by a group of students from the post-university course, tutored by one of their professors together with the technical municipal officers. The Municipality immediately accepted, without even knowing the total number of students willing to do the traineeship in Montenegro. They numbered eleven. The challenge was to complete a Master Plan for a town of 5000 inhabitants in only a couple of months, the test was about the use of computer programmes most of them had never used before, and the hard work was the two months to be spent with no holidays or free time, living in an unfamiliar environment and working with locals.

The Municipality only realised that they had to host a considerable number of people on their arrival, and provided them with full board (while the agreement covered accommodation only), a comfortable working environment, interpreters and even free beverages for the entire period of their stay in Kolašin. The work started on 4 August and ended on 30 September 2003. The GUP Working Group was composed of eleven people made up of young architects and engineers<sup>17</sup> and a senior architect<sup>18</sup>.

The work produced (namely the General Urban Plan – GUP - and the Detailed Urban Plans - DUPs) were equivalent to around 800 000 € calculated on the basis of an average cost of 700 €/per hectares for the DUPs (700 hectares) and 300 €/per hectare for the GUP (1 000 ha). The total planned cost of the urban planning exercise was 47 800 €<sup>19</sup>.

The Kolašin GUP is now officially approved and the DUPs are been approved by the central authorities.

### **The evaluation**

Given the three above described cases and their very peculiar different features and respective methods, a comparison among them was attempted in order to assess their global quality vis-à-vis the general urban planning objective and selected evaluation parameters.

A quantitative analysis was not applicable due to the too peculiar features of the three different cases presented. The training was a nation wide programme; the technical assistance was addressed to three case studies; the learning by doing instead was applied to one small size municipality. Also the project costs were not comparable since the learning by doing case was based on a voluntary work; and the unit costs from the other two cases are too much linked to the quality of their own outputs.

Then the assessment was made possible thanks to a “Global Quality Evaluation Method” (GQEM)<sup>20</sup> set up by a group of professors and researchers of the post-university course “Technology, Habitat and Development” of the Polytechnic of Torino (Italy).

---

<sup>17</sup> Five of them remained in Kolašin for all eight weeks planned for the stage, while the rest contributed to the GUP in the first month only.

<sup>18</sup> The senior architect was the author of the present article.

<sup>19</sup> Roughly calculated summing up travel expenses (4800 €), full board 30 days per 12 persons times 50 € (36 000 €) and a lump sum of 7 000 € paid by the EAR to the senior architect.

<sup>20</sup> The Global Quality Evaluation Method is based on Delphi Evaluation Tool. It has been conceived and developed by Giorgio Ceragioli e Delfina Comoglio at the post graduate university school “Technology, Architecture and Town in Developing Country”, Polytechnic of Turin (Torino – Italy)

The Global Quality Evaluation consists of an evaluation process, which is debatable and not provable since it is based on the subjective evaluation of a number (minimum three) of involved stakeholders (for instance from the project target groups, the implementers, donors and local administrators) or professionals, who are asked to set up the evaluation criteria. The evaluation results are therefore not absolute but relative to the interests and experience of the evaluators and to the conditions of the working environment.

The assessment was based on the averages resulting from a set of interviews addressed to university professors and European architects/urban planners directly or indirectly involved into the three different form of transferring urban planning knowledge.

The evaluators were asked to evaluate an ideal urban planning knowledge transfer programme (whose general objectives have been described previously) whose specific objectives consist of the three above mentioned alternatives (namely training, learning by doing and external technical assistance) as different likely methods.

#### *The parameters*

Four parameters have been selected in order to evaluate the quality of the approaches (or urban planning Knowledge Transfer methods) to the urban planning in developing countries and particularly to urban planning to the economies in transition in the Balkan area:

1. the involvement of the target (namely the involvement of the local municipal technical officers);
2. the appropriateness (the degree of suitability with the local – social, political, economic – environment);
3. the effectiveness (the method capacity of achieving or producing tangible results as effective plans);
4. the efficiency (the ratio between the outputs and the input).

The involvement of the municipal technical officers is conceived in terms of sense of responsibility and active participation to discussions (presentation of the past experiences and criticism to the actual urban planning practice) induced by the Knowledge Transfer method. In other words the target involvement could be explained as “increasing target responsiveness”.

The appropriateness is envisaged as the quality of being specially suitable to a specific context. It is the level of compatibility with the local environment (social, political and economic). Appropriateness links the project (the method) to its feasibility and eventually to the acceptability of its results by the democratically elected community representatives and (in case any) the expert/political evaluators of the line ministries.

Whilst evaluating the appropriateness the evaluators should give answers to the following questions: is this method applicable to that geographic area and culture ? Is there any obstacle to the implementation of such a knowledge transfer project ? To what extend is the project (method) acceptable by the local municipal officers, political and social stakeholders ?

The effectiveness is intended as capacity of producing concrete results. The urban planning training and the external technical assistance have mainly ‘potential’ results if compared to the learning by doing method which anyhow and by definition produces tangible results while the knowledge is transferred.

The evaluators responded to the questions like “is this method able to turn the Knowledge Transfer contents into reality ?” To which extend the target (the municipal technical officers) will be able to produce effective urban plans or better effective preparatory urban plans ?”

The efficiency is assumed to result from the relationship between the time and efforts deployed and the above mentioned achieved results. Cost and time implication issues are taken into account whilst evaluating the project (method) as well as the resources needed to apply the method at issue. Are the very expert international professionals necessary ? Are the outputs achievable with or without appropriate training tools and facilities ?

The evaluators have been given a spreadsheet like the one in the figure and have been asked to accomplish three tasks as the following:

1. weighing the importance of Specific Objectives in relation to each other,
2. defining the related percentage of incidence of parameters related to a Specific Objective,
3. identifying a measurable scale of evaluation levels concerning parameters and performances in order to get comparable values,
4. evaluating the impact of each performance (the parameters) using the identified evaluation levels.

GLOBAL QUALITY EVALUATION METHOD – © Polytechnic of Torino – Italy								
Specific OBJECTIVE, Project and related method	Weight number (1)	Incidence % (2)	Evaluation Parameters				Impact Marks (3)	
Learning by Doing			A § Target Involvement	2	4	6	8	
			B § Appropriateness	2	4	6	8	
			C § Effectiveness	2	4	6	8	
			D § Efficiency	2	4	6	8	
		100						
Training and Capacity Building			A § Target Involvement	2	4	6	8	
			B § Appropriateness	2	4	6	8	
			C § Effectiveness	2	4	6	8	
			D § Efficiency	2	4	6	8	
		100						
Technical Assistance			A § Target Involvement	2	4	6	8	
			B § Appropriateness	2	4	6	8	
			C § Effectiveness	2	4	6	8	
			D § Efficiency	2	4	6	8	
		100						

- (1) Please mark 3 if you give the Specific Objective the highest weight, 2 if medium weight, and 1 if the lowest weight
- (2) Please establish a percentage of incidence of each strategic action to fulfil the specific objective. Be sure that the four percentage per objective total 100%
- (3) Please circle one of the marks (2, 4, 6 or 8) according to the impact of each Strategic Action for the achievement of the general Objective. Read the impact in terms of degree of success of the Programme.

The evaluation levels could be decided *a priori* or established by the evaluators. Each evaluation level represents a non-dimensional measure, which will allow the comparison of different kinds of performances. The number of levels and their scales will be properly set up according to project characteristics, the objectives, and the specific project performances.

The scale of levels might consist of the following:

- minimal acceptable level (*maL*), under which the solution is unacceptable and must be disregarded;
- minimal level (*mL*), under which the value is to be decreased by one point per each unit differing from the minimal level;
- adequate level (*aL*);
- relatively high level (*rL*), whose value per se is high, but a higher qualitative increase of value is not considered in the calculation of the Global Quality;
- maximum level (*ML*), the value of which is unacceptable because of the mismatch between the performance proposed and the context (social, political, economic, etc.).

*Conventional Marks and levels of performances*

<i>Conventional scale of values and related marks</i>		<i>Assigned scale of levels</i>	
		<i>Value areas</i>	<i>Level of Performances</i>
10	superior	unacceptable	maximum level (ML)
9	excellent	above adequate	relatively high level (rL)
8	very good		
7	good	adequate	adequate level (aL)
6	satisfactory		
5	average		
4	below average	below adequate	minimal level (mL)
3	fairly poor		
2	poor		
1	very poor	unacceptable	minimal acceptable level (maL)
0	not applicable		

Alternatively four marks have been selected a priori in order to represent the four acceptable performance levels, for example, as above (red figures at the right end side):

**Conclusions**

It is given for grant that this evaluation does not pretend to establish a ranking list of urban planning knowledge transfer methods. On the contrary it does attempt to make these methods more clear and understood to the professionals involved in knowledge transfer activities vis-à-vis a few basic parameters.

The Global Quality Evaluation final results are of two kinds:

1. the Quality of the Urban Planning Knowledge Transfer Methods (UPKTMs) vis-à-vis the selected Parameters, and

2. the Quality of the Urban Planning Knowledge Transfer Methods (UPKTMs) vis-à-vis the above mentioned UPKTM General Objective.

The former results establish respectively

- 1.1 the Minimal Satisfaction Level for the UPKTMs as a summation of the satisfaction levels achieved by the evaluation of their respective parameters;
- 1.2 the Global Quality of each single UPKTM parameter as a mean of the individual evaluation.

The latter instead evaluates the UPKTMs according to the value attributed to the Parameters vis-à-vis the weight assigned to each UPKTMs for the fulfilment of the general Objective.

From the evaluation comes out that

- a. all the three UPKTMs overcome the minimal level of satisfaction
- b. however once the UPKTM are analysed and evaluated through their respective parameters the *Target Involvement* of the 'Technical Assistance' is not satisfied. On the contrary the target involvement of the 'Learning by Doing' method has the highest mark meaning that it is the most important and peculiar aspect of the Knowledge Transfer in general and of such a method in detail.
- c. apart from that, the effectiveness of the 'Learning by Doing' and 'Technical Assistance' methods are considered noticeable; particularly the one from the 'Learning by Doing' because of the concrete outputs (a master plan) resulting from that activity.
- d. the 'Training and Capacity Building' method instead, beside the relevance attributed to the *Target Involvement*, gives a considerable importance (more than other methods) to *Appropriateness*, namely the Flexibility, being this method applicable to different contexts and being accepted and appreciated by most of the local governors because it is quite commonly widespread.
- e. As far as the *Efficiency* parameter is concerned the evaluators have considered this almost irrelevant for all of methods perhaps because the cost implications of a European projects are, most of the time not only and really connected to the achieved results.

#### References

- A. Kristiansen, 2006, *The European charter for the safeguarding of human rights in the city – linking urban development with social equity and justice*, International Public Debate Urban Policies and the Right to the Cities, Paris 15-16 September 2005, UNESCO 2006.  
(<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001461/146179M.pdf>)
- J. A. Gamon, 1991, *The Delphi-An Evaluation Tool*, © by Extension Journal, Inc. ISSN 1077-5315.  
(<http://www.joe.org/joe/1991winter/tt5.html>)
- M. Cohen, 2001, *Urban Assistance and the material world: learning by doing at the World Bank*, in *Environment & Urbanization* vol. 13 n. 1 April 2001 pp. 37-60
- J. Alden, 1996, *Urban development strategies: the challenge of global to local change for strategic responses : an international perspective*, in: *Habitat International*, n. 4, vol. 20, 1996, pp. 553 - 566