

FOGGIA

The object of the programme is the central-northern area of the city (46,000 inhabitants).

This is a strongly degraded peripheral area; poorly connected with the city centre; devoid of social services; with considerable problems of deviance on the part of minors and social isolation, and with a high unemployment rate.

More than 20% of the total city population is not active.

The lack of basic services is particularly serious. Only 15% of eligible infants have the possibility of attending a playschool in the area. Such schools have in any case been adapted for the purpose and were not specifically planned as such. The approximately 10,000 students residing in the area do not have spaces available for aggregation or structures for leisure activities.

The Foggia sub-programme of the URBAN Community initiative stems from the specific need to strike a new balance between quality and quantity of social and urban services and the citizens present in the marginal area identified, through the resumption of the presence of the institutions in the various possible forms.

All this has been achieved by involving the citizen in a great, complex action, in which he has participated also in the project choices, leading moreover to the development of the concept of "belonging" to the various places and therefore respecting them.

A further level of involvement has been reached in relation to the identification of the system of providing economic incentives; the working methodology adopted has foreseen from the very beginning the creation of a technical "committee" with the presence of interested citizens and professional and craft associations, which participated actively in drawing up the call for bids.

All this permitted the promotion and implementation of operative administrative practices without even the slightest procedural snag, this naturally leading to positive effects in terms of carrying out the programme.

Foggia's URBAN programme forms part of a strategy of actions of short, medium and long term, aimed at the urban integration of a strongly degraded area with problems of disaggregation of the urban and social fabric and of the concentration of ever less well-to-do inhabitants.

The objective pursued is not that of carrying out an isolated action, but of starting a multiplying mechanism of direct and induced effects, for further operative and investment possibilities. The measures foreseen do not claim, therefore, to provide a total solution to the problem, but to act as ad hoc elements in a process that sparks off propulsion.

All this through measures of different typology which do not conform to ordinary logic, but which are capable of engaging mechanisms providing incentives for private participation and more generally the participation of the collectivity.

With the measures relating to starting up new economic activities it is proposed to foster the creation of new jobs and to develop the productive system present in the area, in particular promoting local handicrafts and trade.

By means of training and the promoting of local employment it is foreseen offering opportunities to young jobless persons, the target being the possible creation of new entrepreneurs and professional figures in keeping with the real requirements of the working world.

As part of the actions aimed at improving the endowment of social services, it is foreseen carrying out works of functional restructuring and completion of publicly owned buildings. These are intended to house an important range of services for the population of the district, which are at present provided under precarious conditions and in temporary premises.

The measure relating to physical renewal foresees a series of actions of an infrastructural nature aimed at revitalising the historic centre and improving its possible use and enjoyment by citizens. These include actions on the urban furniture and on the circuits, with the repair of sections of walkways, providing green areas, organising small resting areas and improving public lighting.

The infrastructural and structural actions are no more than a sort of territorial marketing, preparing the background situation so as to favour the reallocation of economic activities, including non-profit ones, in areas with a high degree of commercial “desertification”.

Already some of these integrated actions have been completed and have in fact brought with them evident benefits. Among these, stress is placed on the integrated system of measures carried out in the historic centre which have enabled the level of liveability to be enhanced.

Urban areas which until yesterday were inaccessible for common living, have, thanks to the patient work of urban rehabilitation, have today become spaces of aggregation, enabling citizens to resume possession of those areas presently permitting socialisation to take place.

This benefit has been pursued basically by means of three actions on:

- a) the infrastructure
- b) the structures
- c) liveability and socialisation.

In the first case it was a question of renewing areas left derelict, connected with a use progressively causing greater deterioration to the historic centre. In itself, this also made it possible to diminish the occurrence of petty crime and of abandonment, regarded before the URBAN measure as irreversible.

The citizens, urged on by the interest shown by the administration for these areas, have started investing, upgrading private buildings and opening up new activities. All this would not have been possible if the administration had not “invested”, believing in the potential of the URBAN measure for the purpose of bringing about a reversal of trend regarding the ongoing phenomena of urban decline. However, it would not have been possible to carry out these initiatives unless at the same time there had been the administration’s great efforts to adjust its technical structure to the operational requirements of the sub-programme.

The organisational choice made was that of strongly centralising competencies, pinpointing a small operative nucleus (the head of the programme, a consultant acting as coordinator, and an official of the administration) whose sole political reference was the Mayor and, for him, the councillor for Programming. Being exclusively answerable to the Mayor, and the concentration of competencies, *de facto* created a mechanism of acceleration of administrative procedure, enabling the administration to know without any ambiguity who had the various competencies and responsibilities, and thereby to comply with the deadlines imposed by the European Union.

In this connection it should however be emphasised that the administrations have had to “learn” in the field and at their own cost the mechanisms regulating the initiative, paying - in the start-up phase of the programme - for the lack of univocity between Community and Italian legislation, and for the lack of clear administrative proceedings on the part of the central government.

Over and above this, URBAN made it possible, within the framework of the structure of the local agency, to form a different mentality of programme approach, mastering the operational system, gaining an integrated view of the problems and comprehending the need to involve the actors who are the protagonists in the development of the territory, which is the approach subsequently used also for the formulation of other projects, such as programmes of urban renewal, district contracts and PRUSST.

With URBAN the complementary nature of programming has become no longer a procedural emergency but a strategic objective to be pursued.