

PALERMO

The target area, which includes the Tribunali and Castellammare districts, two of the four ancient “mandamenti” (administrative districts) into which the historic centre is divided, in one section overlooks the city port area and represents in extent (112 hectares) and number of inhabitants (11,000) about one-half of the entire historic centre.

The area, which still today suffers from the effects of the last world war, is in a particular state of decline and abandonment.

With the flight of the original inhabitants, which has gone on through the years, other social categories (in particular non-EC persons) have ended up occupying a fair part of the spaces left free.

The problems of the sphere of application and the optic of integration

The programme is characterised by aspects of territorial concentration and of a variety of sectors which are addressed to carrying out specific cultural, tourism and training objectives. The circuit takes in:

- areas, districts in crisis and deserted urban territories where administrators, public and private operators have been for long absent, and in which there is the joint presence and overlapping of various forms of social malaise, closely interrelated with each other;
- areas characterised by high rates of unemployment, of building and environmental degradation, lacks of public facilities and services, crime and juvenile estrangement.

The programme’s optic is one of integrated urban planning, which is an optic without precedent in the history of the city’s urban development, anchored until URBAN was conceived in the syllogism “structural measure equals development”. For this reason it was necessary, from the very outset, to urge the administration to make the most of its resources so as to save from destruction an area for all too many years abandoned to its own fate.

The actions of the URBAN programme have been aimed not only at the rehabilitation of the infrastructures and the monumental complexes, but also at the improvement of the environment and the conditions of life of the inhabitants, the actors and the beneficiaries of this measure,

The success of the programme is due to the viability of the strategy based on the logic of the integrated approach of the action policies, intended to fill the serious gaps in the services and the facilities, and at inducing processes of economic and social development.

Requisites for and development of the principles of integration

The actions of the programme, spread over four measures, have been based on three fundamental assumptions, certainly ‘exportable’ to other urban situations:

- correlation between programme objectives and political line;
- integration of measures;

- correlation between URBAN activities and post-URBAN activities.

Summarily, the correlation between programme objectives and political line is rooted in the intimate correspondence between the objectives of URBAN and the programme of the Municipal Council which, ever since the date of taking up office, has concentrated financial resources, men and means on the rehabilitation of the historic centre. Added to this is the simultaneous decision of the regional administration to make financial resources available, by a special legislative provision (Regional Law no. 25/1993), for the rehabilitation of the historical-architectural heritage of historic centres of particular value such as those of Palermo and Siracusa.

The administration provided an indispensable technical and operative support through the Detailed Executive Plan and the Plan of Use of properties in the historic centre, constituting an invaluable guide for the rehabilitation of architectural assets, but also a clear orientation for the location of URBAN activities. Furthermore, the Council set up a specific technical office for the historic centre, in which the target area is included.

The regular carrying out of the programme is correlated with the institutional activity of the Europe Office. This is an operative structure, with the role of acting as interface, between the administrative organs of the European Union and the municipal administration. The office provides consulting services and technical assistance to municipal departments in the programming, design, coordination and executive phases of initiatives co-financed by the EU, promoted by the administration, including the URBAN programme.

The correlation of the actions was conceived and upgraded already in the programming phase. It is enough to look at the URBAN-Palermo Internet site to understand immediately that activities, structures and infrastructures are interrelated.

The actions in support of existing local small and medium enterprises and the incentives for the creation of new enterprises, through actions in support of handicrafts, have fostered the resettlement of about a hundred trades, new and old, inside the historic centre, and the simultaneous organisation of 70 different artistic and cultural events, connected with the historical origins of the two districts, in an urban context in which road pavements and public lighting are already in keeping with the criteria of ordinary civil "liveability".

The district's tourism promotion actions entrusted to an association of firms, in which young people selected by means of a training course financed by URBAN work, find fertile ground in the context of the rehabilitation of all the historic buildings and monumental complexes of the area, included in the tourist itineraries, foreseeing also transport in horse-drawn carriages.

The first European jazz orchestra school has its premises in the monumental complex of Santa Maria allo Spasimo, which has become, thanks to the measures co-financed by URBAN, the symbol of the rehabilitation of the historic centre.

The garden of Villa Garibaldi, perhaps the symbol of the URBAN programme, restored to the inhabitants of the district, contains the first municipal games centre, just as other social activities take place in convents and/or spaces recuperated by the administration. The measures to improve the transport system and the refuse collection system constitute an appendix, so to speak, to the architectural, social and handicraft rehabilitation. The

mentioned improvement measures have made a noteworthy contribution to the liveability of the district, with respect to which also the experimentation in the energy sector has found its *raison d'être*, on the hypothesis under study of constructing remote heating systems for entire blocks using natural gas.

The third assumption, the correlation between URBAN and post-URBAN activities, provides the seed for new initiatives. Craftsmen, once their activity has been started, can assuredly continue it beyond URBAN; artists can go on painting as an economic activity thanks also to the support actions addressed to artists and to district theatrical groups; the drivers of the horse carriages, formed into an association, will be contacted by the tour operators for the creation of package tours; the European jazz school will continue its activity by means of paid enrolments; the social activities, which have most involved the population, becoming an absolute necessity for the inhabitants of the district themselves, will go on thanks also to supporting actions by the administration which has recognised the validity of this experimentation; the satellite control system for the traffic and the mechanised management of the waste collection system are by now fully developed and operate independently of URBAN; the rehabilitated monumental complexes have been made into premises for museum, cultural, social, training and information activities; upkeep of the gardens restored with URBAN, and management of the car parks created with the same programme, have today been assigned to institutional bodies which guarantee that they are at the complete disposal of the inhabitants of the district.