

Reggio Calabria

The URBAN area is the northern periphery of the city, including also a number of districts outside of the inhabited centre.

At present there are 33,000 inhabitants, distributed in the old parts and in the more recent social-type housing developments having a very high dwelling concentration.

The upshot of the urban development processes that started in the '70s and which led to a chaotic and uncontrolled expansion of the city, there is a very serious situation of mafia expansion, which found fertile ground in relation to the breakdown of the socio-economic fabric.

In addition to the lack of economic outlets (an unemployment rate higher than 30%), in particular for the young, there is a shortage of services, an inadequate road and transport system, and a degraded state of urban planning and environment.

Implementation

The programme addresses problems of great importance and complexity, such as the rebalancing of relations between historic centre and peripheries, extended in dimension, distant from the urban centre through shortage of infrastructures and services, and degraded because of the presence of economic and low-cost housing, illegal building and mafia organisations.

It has been sought in each phase of the programme, with regard to this complexity, to establish connections and complementary elements among the actions foreseen in the various projects. At local and transnational level, this work has led to forms of synergism, of learning and of partnership between agencies and associations.

The problems that emerged can basically be ascribed to friction in the interaction between large regional or national scale agencies.

To date, in fact, a number of projects for which forms of participation by such bodies as the State Railways and the Corps of Military Engineers risk not being carried out.

Doubt also attaches to those projects for which the process of obtaining authorisation has proved particularly complex (upgrading of an illegal tip area and construction of a platform for the storage and recovery of urban solid waste).

In the social integration measure innovative procedural solutions have also been adopted between the municipal administration and the Department of Labour (regarding details of work hours and identification of the places where training is effectively carried out).

The connections between the measures of a physical, economic and social nature

Simple forms of integration have been obtained through programming services (Measure 2) located in containers restructured with Measure 3, but more complex forms of integration have been achieved in acting on a single area with projects of a different nature.

For example, the Ecolandia environmental and games park will be situated close to the Valorisation Centre for Typical Products, in an effort to spark off a process of progressive "contamination", through projects targeted on upgrading local enterprises, broadening a road linking the park with a district of low-cost housing, and restructuring places of social identity such as squares and pedestrian circuits.

With respect to the objectives of upgrading the peripheries, for the first time the actions were not carried out only on buildings and facilities, but were organised as training activities.

An important form of integration is that obtained between institutional know-how (the administration) and informal know-how (cultural associations and local volunteer associations).

In the design phase and in the implementation phase the municipality succeeded in involving the pragmatic and operative knowledge that the operators already engaged on social recuperation projects possessed of

the districts. Also to be observed is the responsabilisation of part of the local population by the valorisation centre for typical products, where there is an agreement in being with the Chamber of Commerce, which will delocate there a centre for foreign trade, the only one in Calabria, while, for the management of the Polyfunctional Centre of handicraft trade, it is foreseen that management will be by a consortium of handicraft associations, Confcommercio and the League of Cooperatives.

The induced effects

First the design group, and then the management group (a Joint Departmental Committee), has always been aware that urban improvement by means of providing infrastructures risked being vandalised in the districts concerned. This at least if not accompanied by intersectoral policies able to develop “recognition”, social cohesion and a self-promoting capacity. This has entailed an effort of political “imagination” and a capacity on the part of the administrative structure to deal with complex problems, which constitutes cultural and political capital remaining in any case the property of the city.

The information and sensibilisation activities have urged and promoted the participation of wards, professional associations, the Committee of social actors and parishes with which weekly meetings have been held (periodically).

The involvement of the administrative structure

The Reggio metropolitan area is, already in itself, lively from the project standpoint. Due to the particular conformation and location, a number of projects are at inter-municipal scale, often with the participation of the municipal administrations of Villa San Giovanni and Messina, the Universities of Reggio and Messina, the Harbourmaster’s Office, and the trade unions.

URBAN has brought with it features of novelty, which may be observed above all in the timing mechanism of commitment/expenditure and in the visibility of the projects. This has been a heavy commitment for the municipality which, through a joint departmental group, has entirely managed the URBAN programme.

Exchanges with other URBAN cities

The city of Reggio forms part of the REVES network, which has been an opportunity for the exchange of experiences and lessons learnt, with other cities (thirty) engaged in European projects with a social background.

Opportunities for comparison derive from Reggio’s commitment in other European projects, such as the Recite II project, of inter-regional internal cooperation for “**Telelavoro**” for disabled persons, and the ECOS Ouverture project of inter-regional external cooperation for equal opportunities for women in the social sphere.

Other initiatives, such as the “Declaration of Reggio”, have given rise to a political actor able to dialogue on a permanent basis with Community institutions and to establish relations with East Europe and with Mediterranean countries.

Financial participation of private parties

The projects of the Valorisation Centre for Typical Local Products and of the Polyfunctional Centre for Commerce and Handicraft; the direct management foreseen by producers and consumers of these centres and the upgrading of roads and squares, are being carried out with an awareness that, in multiproblem contexts, the provision of opportunities is not enough; in addition it is necessary to generate the conditions that will enable the local population to grasp the opportunities.

In Reggio, the share of co-financing has been obtained by the administration through the “**Sponda**” projects (actions and projects compliant with the programmed objectives of the initiative, already under way or carried out within the framework of other initiatives).

Structures acting as interface between administration and project areas

The administration has set up an advisory committee of social actors, formed by representatives of Confindustria, the Chamber of Commerce, the Unions, the **Sovrintendenza**, Province, Chairmen of the District Wards, the Tourism Promotion Board, the National Association of Building Contractors, the European Committee of Cooperation in Production and Work and of Social Cooperatives (CECOP), which has played a role of local promotion and animation.

Moreover, many actions have been promoted and publicised through Measure 5 which has financed specific actions for the dissemination and promotion of the results.

The temporary association of firms that is dealing with these actions has striven for the direct involvement of the beneficiaries thereof.