

“The territorial base of Integrated Urban Regeneration policies. Theory and practice in the Central Area of Asturias”

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1. - The scene in which the urban transformations have been developed in Spain: fragmented and partial view

City and territory face a host of significant threats related to the triple (economic, social and environmental) dimension of sustainability, on both the immediate and long-term future. The financial, economic, and social crisis, poses a great challenge for Spanish cities, since there is a need to address a series of structural problems which have to do with the late models of urban development. Moreover, a significant part of the reasons behind this crisis have a strong spatial component. The growth of cities has not been made with the objective of meeting the real demand and the satisfaction of the quality of life needs of individual citizens.

A large part of the urban development in the preceding years has been carried out spreading urbanization to thousands of acres of land, consuming unjustifiably, non-renewable resources, increasing spending on infrastructures and driving up environmental cost of mobility, producing a city model which, at the very least, can be described as unsatisfactory and without a doubt infeasible from a sustainable point of view. Furthermore, in the last 30 years, the process of urbanization in Spain has been characterized by the consolidation of the trends in quite the opposite direction which have led certainly to a complex scenario for urban policies. On the one hand, building rehabilitation initiatives and urban renewal developed, in many respects successful, but limited to very specific cases and without an integrated approach of the entire city, and without being able to avoid dynamics of gentrification and social segregation in the city, through filtration by housing prices. This is a phenomenon that coincides in time with the arrival of important volumes of migrant population at transnational level, with few resources, who mainly have tend to stay in the area of consolidated urban plots where they most have impacted defense, conservation and valuing policies of the old town. As a result the configuration of city centre is dual, transforming the social and urban context of the city. But, at the same time, these processes have also contributed at a great extent to return population growth to cities in many instances explained, oversimplified, from ideas such as *urban decline*, which since mid-80s definitely inspired and promoted urban reconstruction, rehabilitation and renewal policies in Europe. These processes of change of urban centres have coexisted, paradoxically, with a strong process of urban sprawl in the territory, which has widened dramatically, those habitats of low density, already developed in many municipalities since de 60s, known as “housing states”. This is a common trend to all the Spanish urban spaces which promotes a general feature, which not only spread the housing of first residences but also, spread all the urban assets which configure urban life, activities, services, trade, and leisure. The result of the urban sprawl processes has placed the urban fact on a new stage that is beginning to be called as “rural urbanization” or “rurbanisation”.

When these urban transformations were occurring, and sometimes related to them, simultaneously, they were taking place changes in social and demographic structures (the ageing of population, immigration, changes in household composition, precariousness of work, etc.), with an impact in the urban environment (new demands in equipment and services, social vulnerability, implications

on local economies, etc.). The progressive deepening of socio-spatial segregation processes in cities has meant, over the years, the generation and the consolidation of urban policies that, absorbing the traditional interventions of renewal, rehabilitation, and urban improvement, have accompanied them with a socioeconomic dimension which until then had not been taken into consideration, with the aim of improving physical conditions in neighbourhoods and of curbing social, economic, environmental and urban problems that contribute to reinforce. But the scale in which these policies have been developed has been limited, at its best at neighbourhood's scale. In the Spanish case, these interventions have begun to develop over the past two decades, enhanced by the European Union.

While developed theoretical approaches of rehabilitation and renewal policies to date are considered relevant (el que se considera relevante), reality shows how difficult its translation into real processes is. It seems clear that legal tools which support this activities should be updated. Although the great strength of rehabilitation and renewal theoretical approaches is its potential to integrate several factors (spatial, functional, social, environmental, economic, etc.), often significant deficiencies are remained, in particular with regard to social aspects. On the one hand, urban planning instruments are inherit from 70's and 80's Spatial Plans for Internal Reform. Taking the Italian 70's restoring historic town centres plans as a frame of reference which intend to recover historic town centres as a living space, in the last few years they were not able to avoid gentrification or ghettoization, excessive specialisation in tourism reducing the diversity, and as a result, a demographic imbalance in these areas. Many aspects, such as the abolishment of substandard housing, and the integration of public housing, although they are actions already supported by the planning, their development is quite impractical with the current legal mechanisms. On the other hand, urban mobility actions, urbanization, the enhancement of cultural heritage and other aspects of space, are set up at a sector-specific level and frequently they are unarticulated, so they do not correspond with the integrated approach.

A clear example of the need for reforms of intervention legal instruments is the addressing of the issue of immigration as one of the most important social challenges that major cities have to face. Because nowadays, the main problem is not the issue of housing as in the past, but social inclusion. And while developing sectorial policies in some key issues of social integration, much of the housing problem and its urban implications is been left to the mercy of the market, remaining empty the place previously designated to urban policies, usually hand in hand with urban planning. Urbanism has been left behind in the new challenge. And it is into the city, and not only in its neighborhoods in isolation, where sectorial policies that affect citizens are being implemented.

It is in the social cohesion context where the negative outcomes are even more pronounced after and intervention in the physical urban structure. Social dimension of urban activities has traditionally been ignored by urban planning and management, which makes that the main targets, citizens, are often excluded from decision-making processes that are relevant for the quality of their urban environment, and consequently, their personal development opportunities. To a great extent, the evasiveness nature of the social side of urbanism has to do with the gap between urbanization practices and people real needs and demands of local people, no matter the intervention scale. For less favoured neighbourhoods, this lack of knowledge becomes particularly acute since the correct assessment of social problems becomes a critical factor in the success of the actions.

The urgency and importance of developing interventions that accommodate the key role of social cohesion in urban regeneration policies becomes evident when more than 20 per cent of the population of Spanish municipalities over 20.000 inhabitants (around 4 to 5 million people) live in deprived neighbourhoods. This phenomenon concerns to all kind of municipalities, and to all regions to a greater or lesser extent. We also find a territorial base between urban fabric and social vulnerability: degradation situations are much more likely in historic centres and residential areas, especially when since its origin they have always been occupied by vulnerable groups.

II.- La reorientación del marco teórico de las transformaciones urbanas

Spanish planning and territorial legislation has for some time now adopted the principle of urban and territorial sustainable development. It is inexcusable the use of it as a guiding principle for any action, in all fields of competence, of legislators and all public authorities, which recognizes the need to change the urban development model, based on new city production, into a new urban model, which promotes the regeneration of the existing city. A change that European community institutions had already been asked through initiatives such as the European Territorial Strategy, the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment, the URBAN projects, and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities 2007. All these documents show that the real challenge takes place in the achievement of the highest rates of eco-efficiency of the existing urban fabrics, in the boosting and the revitalization of the economy, and in overcoming demographic, social integration, unemployment and vulnerability that are focussed mainly on major cities.

The Strategy of the European Union 2020, in Spain, the Strategy for a Sustainable Economy set out major objectives that have a strong urban dimension. Furthermore, the international commitments that Spain has assumed, among others, the "Toledo Referent Document on integrated urban regeneration to achieve a smarter, more sustainable and inclusive urban development in Europe", approved in the Toledo Declaration on 24th June 2010, by the 27 European Union Member States Ministers responsible for Urban Development, commit to promote integrated urban regeneration as a strategic tool for achieving a smarter, more sustainable and socially inclusive urban model, and particularly to address the current urban challenges and implement the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy.

There has been established a common understanding of the integrated approach to urban development, and the key elements of the integrated approach, the benefits of this approach, and the operational tools that can support it, being characterized "as a planned process that must transcend the partial ambits and approaches that have usually been the norm until now, in order to address the city as a functioning whole and its parts as components of the whole urban organism, with the objective of fully developing and balancing the complexity and diversity of social, economic and urban structures, while at the same time stimulating greater environmental eco-efficiency. Ultimately, this approach implies "preserve and revalue all the existing urban capital in the urban fabric (social, built environment, heritage, etc.), not just the value of the land."

The reorientation, caused by the crisis in estate sector, of public and private investment from extensive residential development towards rehabilitation of housing stock and urban renewal and regeneration is an excellent opportunity to go further and encourage urgent urban transformation processes, processes that require its own specific legal framework and management tools suitable

to meet, efficiently and in the best conditions, the challenges. For instance, if we focus in one of the actions to be carried out in these processes, such as building rehabilitation activities, the legal framework that regulates this activity competence is complex and is widely dispersed. There is often a lack of coordination between normative texts that hinder progress on integrated action measures. This legislative diversity involves the risk of overlapping between regulations in the same territory, thereby causing different interpretations of similar actions and difficult to establish uniform criteria or the implementation of specific interventions. In general, they are still in force "obsolete" urban planning regulations that do not led to best optimize of capital, heritage resources, infrastructure, facilities and existing services in the cities, or promotes the rational use of natural resources - specially land use -, ultimately, harmonizing the requirements of the economy, employment, social cohesion, equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men, health and safety of people, what represent an absolute barriers to the standardization in Spain of the new model.

¿How can we achieve the new urban sustainable development with the right combination of economic, environmental and social conditions? Difficulties are shown in the figure below (from <http://www.solaripedia.com/files/720.pdf>)

Figure 1 | Campbell's Planners Triangle



But, ¿Is that sufficient to regenerate residential districts of the city? With regard to the foregoing, it seems evident that perspectives on sustainability that do not take into account an integrated approach and a coherent territorial base for each intervention appear to be ineffective. An urban intervention methodology that includes not only social actions, educational, higher local employment actions, or the improvement of environmental quality and mobility, but also that provides a context to all the actions as a result of a previous reflection on the city model, and calls for both short-term and long-term, all levels and all the scales of intervention (building, neighbourhood, city, metropolitan space) to be taken into account in the actions of all private and public agents involved. This type of planning is possible only by overcoming partial approaches, to buildings and houses, to concentrate all the actions on wider territorial scales, from an integrated approach that considers the city as a whole, and all the connections with the surroundings.

The peculiarities of the Spanish case allow to emphasise the importance of the proposed line change. Urban fabrics that have to be regenerated are often located in urban areas whose epicentre is constituted by large and medium-sized cities, affected over the past 20 years by a large metropolitan spreading. This dispersion has been favoured by the inclusion to urban development of spatial concepts that constitute the essence of a globalized economy, and also, by the explosion of local economies based on the state boom. In this sense, the running concept of “glocalización” is an approach which refers to the necessary articulation between global capital flows and local practices, in a context where the State is losing power in its role as a regulator, giving way to nets hegemony which are made up of governments, local agents, and multinationals that are always looking for the territory that matches their productive system. Local agents committed to the estate market, putting aside the industrial background, and boosting the inversion through household incomes for channelling investments towards mass housing production, what led not only to new metropolitan systems but also to new urban peripheries. That is why integrated regeneration challenge is to overcome the fragmented and sectorial perspective of urban policies, expanding it to a territorial dimension which involves the real functional area of each city. Taking into account the urban, interurban, peri-urban, and rur-urban areas which have an influence on cities must no doubt also be part of integrated regeneration processes. The complementarity, inter-administrative cooperation and the competitiveness of the urban economies is meaningful only at territorial level. The management model is also a key element in this new scenario. It should be a light and permanent management that understands urban regeneration as an open and continuous process with short-, medium-, and long-term objectives. But, are our public administrations organized and have they proper tools to address new approaches to be projected on urban transformation ?, are they based on a holistic view of the city and its functional area?, what are the responsibilities of social and economic agents?, do we have enough information about the urban reality and indicators to monitor the evolution of urban areas and the effectiveness of the rights of citizens who are involved?, are we assessing regeneration processes and its impact on these rights ex post?, are our authorities aware of the citizens social rights which are involved in the urban regeneration processes?, have we quantified the economic costs to confront the challenges of integrated urban regeneration?.

Beyond that, we know that it is in the territory where economic models of any kind should coexist, and that planning policies have macroeconomic implications, but are territorial approaches adopted when economic policy measures are defined?, is the territory, in which economic measures have to be implemented to face the problems that the current economic crisis is creating, being taken into account? Like it or not, economic policies to come out of the crisis depend on acting specifically on those urban areas where problems of unemployment, environmental degradation, poverty and social exclusion became more evident. This is the area where problems are concentrated to a greater extent, therefore, this is the area where the adoption of measures to address unemployment, reduce disparities at all levels, and facilitate compliance with the objectives of combating climate change and energy efficiency should be subject to special attention.

III.- Practical challenges of new approaches: application to the Central Area of Asturias

Asturias Central Area (ACA) Urban and territorial analysis would allow us to light challenges and opportunities involved in the development of integrated regeneration urban actions. Similar

problems to those faced by all the Spanish and European metropolitan areas to correct functional, environmental and social imbalances are also presented in this area, challenges that could not be stopped by economic policies and the existing regional and town planning processes.

The ACA presents a polycentric organization, noted in the existence of several nearby urban centers, which have developed close complementary and interdependence relationships based on its economic and functional specialization. They are daily recorded important flows of people and goods among them which have increased considerably in recent decades thanks to the high-speed roads network. In view of the above, it may be inferred that the ACA is an example of the so-called "polycentrism". In this area they live around 800,000 inhabitants articulated by the three main cities Oviedo, Gijón and Avilés and its shared infrastructures which make up a dispersed city that in the last three decades have developed many urban diffusion gaps that incorporate several functions (residential, industrial, commercial, etc.), with a remarkable lack of planning (incompatibility of uses, saturation of the communication infrastructures, etc.) and a gradual occupation of agricultural areas, mainly river meadows, by new industrial and commercial uses. An area that has been immersed in strong industrial restructuring processes, due to the abandonment of the existing facilities that gradually became a ruin, and the deterioration of their respective residential areas, in an increasing abandonment and socioeconomic degradation.

For administrative purposes, the ACA already works like many other consolidated metropolitan areas, since some time now the Asturias center municipalities realized that they could solve some general problems easily if they acted jointly. Currently there are also several consortia through which some basic services are being managed as a unit. Among others, the Consortium for Water Supply and Sanitation in the Principality of Asturias (CADASA), created in order to finance and manage the supply of drinking water and wastewater treatment; the Consortium for Sustainable Waste Management of Asturias (COGERSA), intended for the refuse collection, disposal and recycling generated by member municipalities; or the Asturias Transport Consortium (CTA) founded with the goal of developing a coordinated management of the different means of public transport in the region.

However, this polycentric urban system has some flaws, since the intercity relationships are very unbalanced. Furthermore, the definition of complementary productive profiles has been hampered by the conflict and rivalries between major cities (Oviedo, Gijón and Avilés), fearful that the functional interdependence situations lead to a situation of subordination. But undoubtedly the greatest impediment for the polycentric model, as defined by European standards, to become established, has to do with the creation of residual spaces between the three cities. These spaces are losing their rurality while improving accessibility after the construction of high-speed roads that connect large cities. As a result, they became preferred destination for the elements that were part of the output of functions which took place in urban centers in recent decades. This phenomenon has led to the relocation of various uses associated with the city in rural areas close to them, which have good road connections and also have significant areas of level ground at more affordable prices than in town centres.

Urban sprawl has been developed in concentric rings, so that its intensity is highest in the peri-urban rural areas, almost settled by the largest cities, and gradually descends to the worst

communicated rural areas, where the effects of the congestion are hardly noticeable. The final outcome highlights the severely lack of planning that has characterized this process.

The phenomenon of diffusion intensification at the ACA has provided the basis for the emergence of some postulates "Unitarian" which advocates for considering the entire central area of Asturias as a big city, whose name would become "Astur City". But the fact is that the possibility that the urban poles of this space (Oviedo, Gijón and Avilés) merged administratively seems remote. Oviedo and Gijón councils are constantly highlighting political and administrative division, giving a strong signal of its will to localism, in contrast to the inclusive vision. However, regardless of these difficulties, the ACA faces the challenge of implementing a new model of urban and territorial development that is able to overcome the decline of the traditional model.

Coordination and Spatial Planning law of the Principality of Asturias establishes the basic principles and the instruments for territorial development policies in the region. The law defines the Territory Planning Guidance (DOT) as an instrument that contains the aims and objectives of the regional policy, and therefore the basis of territorial planning. The current DOT dates back to the year 1991. Along with the DOT, the Regional Development Plans (PDR) have being multiannual programming documents prepared in order to diagnose regional problems, define strategies, policy priorities and necessary financial resources at national and Community levels to cope with the specific problems identified. The PDR, as well as DOT, provide a valuable approach to the ACA as a structure capable of rebalancing the territorial organization, so that it acts as an engine for the development of the entire region.

The DOT can be developed through various tools. For example, through Territorial Action Programs (PAT), defined as "the instrument that should collect systematically the activities affecting the territory to be implemented by the various agencies and entities of the Principality's Administration". These instruments should include a definition of the scope of action, a detailed account of the planned measures, and justification of coherence between DOT and other PAT actions, and also with the urban planning, may also include information on economic issues and skills. However, the possibility that the PAT could address one single sector or a specific purpose, has favored the use of a sectoral approach. So that, although the DOT has intended to coordinate spatial planning, the PAT has focused on the handling of sectoral problems. For example, the Highway Territorial Action Program 2009-2010. The possibility to cover a specific topic favoured partial readings of the territory. This has also happened to the Integrated Rehabilitation Areas Territorial Action Program, and in effect since 1990.

The most successful tool as a DOT development instrument, has been the Special Territorial Plan (ETPs). The PTE has been intensively used since 2002 as a strengthening of the DOT effectiveness in municipal urban planning. They will be processed when it is necessary to establish urban laws directly applicable or necessary to give a more detailed content to spatial planning. This instrument has a simple processing procedure, maybe this has been the key to its success.

tipo	ámbito	denominación	Estado	AV_BOPA	AI_BOPA	AD_acuerdo	AD_BOPA	TR_BOPA	Enlace
DOT	regional	Directrices Regionales de Ordenación del Territorio	Vigente	19/11/1988	20/11/1989	24/01/1991	23/02/1991	23/02/1991	Decreto 11/91 BOPA 230291
DOT	regional	Revisión de las Directrices Regionales de Ordenación del Territorio	Tramitación	21/04/2006					DOC.AVANCE PRIORIDADES
DOT	regional	Directrices Sectoriales de Equipamiento Comercial	Vigente	28/04/2009	07/01/2010	15/09/2010	02/10/2010	02/10/2010	Decreto 119/2010 BOPA 021010
DOT	regional	Directrices Sectoriales de Ordenación del Territorio aprovechamiento energía edifica	Vigente		19/07/2005	15/05/2008	03/06/2008	03/06/2008	Decreto 43/2008 BOPA 030608
DOT	regional	Directrices Sectoriales de Ordenación de los Recursos Turísticos	Tramitación						Doc.Referencia BOPA 290710
PAT	regional	Programa de Actuación Territorial de Carreteras 2010-2020	Tramitación						Doc.Referencia BOPA 240311
PAT	subregional	Programa de Actuación Territorial de las áreas de rehabilitación integrada	Vigente			03/08/1990			
DOT	subregional	Directrices Subregionales de Ordenación del Territorio de la Franja Costera	Vigente	07/06/1991	28/07/1992	16/12/1993	16/02/1994	16/02/1994	Decreto 107/93 BOPA 160294
PTE	subregional	Plan Territorial Especial de Ordenación del Litoral Asturiano - POLA	Vigente	28/04/2002	11/05/2004	23/05/2005	24/08/2005	24/08/2005	POLA
PTE	subregional	Plan Territorial Especial Estrategia Integrada para la Gestión Portuario-Litoral	Tramitación	08/07/2013					DOC.AVANCE PRIORIDADES
PTE	subregional	Plan Territorial Especial del Suelo No Urbanizable de Costas	Tramitación	22/10/2010	27/08/2014				DOC.AVANCE PRIORIDADES
PTE	supramunicipal	Plan Territorial Especial del Parque Periurbano del Naranco	Vigente	02/08/2005	12/01/2007	09/05/2007	23/06/2008	23/06/2008	TEXTO REFUNDIDO
PTE	supramunicipal	Plan Territorial Especial – recuperación terrenos HUNOSA- Cuencas Mineras	Vigente		04/01/2007	09/05/2007	18/10/2007	18/10/2007	TEXTO REFUNDIDO
PTE	supramunicipal	Plan Territorial Especial del Bajo Nalón	Histórico	29/10/2008					
PTE	supramunicipal	Plan Territorial Especial de los núcleos metropolitanos de Llanera y Siero	Histórico	09/04/2010					
PTE	supramunicipal	Plan Territorial Especial del Área Tratamiento Centralizado de Residuos de Asturias	Vigente	13/08/2013	14/02/2014	21/07/2014	04/08/2014	04/08/2014	TEXTO REFUNDIDO
PTE	supramunicipal	Plan Territorial Especial del Sistema de Espacios Libres del Área Central	Histórico	12/07/2010					
PTE	supramunicipal	Plan Territorial Especial del Medio y Alto Nalón	Histórico	22/10/2010					
PTE	supramunicipal	Plan Territorial Especial del Narcea	Tramitación	28/10/2010					DOC.AVANCE PRIORIDADES

PTE have tried to solve the risks that the ACA could arise from the application of contradictory or inconsistent municipal urban planning guidelines. It should be noted that despite the ability of PTE to influence both the supra-municipal and municipal level many of those who have been developed have failed to be approved. So, despite the fact that an Open Space System Special Territorial Plan of the Central Area has been produced, this has not come to an end. They have been successfully completed some of them such as the Asturias Coastal Management Special Territorial Plan, or the Coalmining Special Territorial Plan. However, despite being regarded as territorial policy instruments they have been developed with partial and fragmented approaches.

So that, it would be as "palliative measures" and not as broader territorial strategies the way spatial planning have addressed the problems of the ACA. However it should be noted that as in the *non nato* Open Space System Special Territorial Plan of the Central Area they opted for a more integrated approach, from many other territorial policy documents a comprehensive vision is attempted, although they finally have not come to an end. This is particularly the case of the "Review of the Territory Planning Guidance with specific guidelines for the Central Area" of 2006, the "Territory Planning Guidance and Sub Asturias Central Area Guidelines" of 2010, or the "New Territory Planning Guidance and Sub Asturias Central Area Guidelines" of 2014. From all these documents only the first became processed, and although it has not been approved, we have access to the advancement of the plan. In this advancement a great effort is put into defining both the area which corresponds to the ACA, and the groups that because of their internal influences work with supra-municipal character, and therefore should be considered in themselves as a single polycentric system. This review establishes a hypothesis of which could be the clusters of cities of the network that constitute the ACA, and at the same time, proposes an organization of the free spaces between the urban centres, from the scale of suburban parks, green corridors, to nature reserves.

No progress have been made in the development of tools that still is limited to the existing spatial planning instruments to the present day. There is neither organizational and governance structure of the ACA, nor integrated urban regeneration planned processes in the ACA, although there is a legal framework that allows urban and territorial sustainable and integrated development. And despite the fact that the problem is already been diagnosed in this region, and raised the need for a joint reading of the ACA so that municipal collaboration strengthens the spatial continuity, a better balance of land uses, and increase the complexity and urban quality.

The need for new territorial bases to carry out urban transformation processes in the ACA have not been ignored by the Government of the Principality of Asturias. It has been develop the "Oviedo Supra-municipal northeast Regional Project" with which it was intended to address the management of the land of Oviedo and three neighboring municipalities due to the problems that outer-village growth and the strategic location for the ACA were causing. However, the Government of the Principality did not bring to an end the principles and projects derived from these documents, and the supremacy of the economic dimension in the development of Oviedo and the neighboring municipalities ended up generating many conflicts in all of the urban system dimensions.

Urban Planning General Plans (PGOU) are the instruments that finally set the pattern for the development of each of the sub-cities that make up the ACA. Through the PGOU the land is classified and the regime applicable to each soil type is determined, within a dynamic to which we referred in general terms in the first part of this work, which is fully applicable to the events in the Asturian case. There are also in the Asturian case an urban planning instrument, Concerted Urban Development (AUC) that must be mentioned because they have had a huge impact on urban sprawl phenomena, on the mobility problems, and on peripheries and intermediate spaces between the three main cities of the ACA disorder. Once again the easiness of the administrative processing of this instrument against the PGOU, slower processing and little flexibility, has led to its use for the development of some territory sectors that needed urgent answers to their needs. But lacking an overall vision, they led to fragmentation of the territory, in any case obstructing an integrated urban regeneration approach to the ACA.

The development of the Local Agenda 21 by the ACA municipalities has not served to facilitate implementation of urban regeneration strategies in most cases. In Oviedo, for example, Local Agenda 21 has a strong environmental emphasis. It does not provide great advances in the field of urban intervention, with little contribution to setting clear and measurable objectives. As Oviedo, Aviles has expanded its influence beyond its boundaries, and even services from neighboring municipalities bring a complementary offer. But in contrast to Oviedo, whose management has remained aloof from supra-municipal integrated approaches, Aviles has moved closer to the study of possible joint approaches, that being able to have greater or lesser incidence, at least they made us aware of the influences between neighboring municipalities. Strategic Plan "Aviles 2000", which was born from the require to answer to the crisis after the industrial boom, proposed the modernization and diversification of the productive base of Avilés, while it improved the attractiveness and accessibility of the territory and increased the quality of life of citizens. They were established three strategic lines: "modernize and diversify the industrial base", "improving the commercial, cultural, and touristic offer", "improving the quality of life and citizen participation." However, this document was the beginning and the end of a strategic vision that lost its strength, becoming the PGOU again the only engine of the city development at the municipal level. Its Agenda 21 was another of the documents which intended to strength the strategic vision of wholeness. Defined as a "municipal strategic plan based on the integration of environmental, economic, and social aspects", however it focuses attention exclusively on the recovery of the historic city and the estuary of Avilés. In 2008, at the same time of Agenda 21, in Aviles, it is also made known the "Plan Avanza", with which it was intended to acquire a strategic nature into socio-economic development, taking for that purpose the employment as one of the fundamental objectives to achieve an approach to an "economic and social responsible territory". However, the

actions referred in this document appear disconnected from the urban system, from the Agenda 21 and from the General Plan, and the lack of supra-municipal vision makes Avilés and the surrounding municipalities are perceived as independent entities in the management despite the evident interference between them. Mistakes that still remain in "Plan Acuerda 2012-2015", whose aim is to add continuity to its predecessor.

Gijón is the only municipality within the ACA which has a tradition of strategic planning. The First Gijón Strategic Plan 1991-1999, was born in the context of the Single European market, and therefore in a situation of competition between cities. This meant that the main objective of development was "becoming placed in an advantageous position in different areas compared to the rest of European cities", rather than the establishment of partnerships and territorial integration in the ACA. However, the character of this First Gijon Strategic Plan was still sectoral. While developing the II Gijón Strategic Plan, the city was also rising its Local Agenda 21. The Local Agenda 21 was developed through a long process of review and public consultations. The first draft was established in 1998, focusing its analysis on the environmental, by developing a set of environmental sustainability indicators in the areas of air / noise, water resources, urban space, and suburban space. The Second Strategic Plan includes this Agenda 21 as one of the five strategic axes, with the goal of incorporating it into all the policies. In Gijon, the Agenda 21 and the Strategic Plan appear as additional documents that try to connect the city with the sustainable development models that are being proposed from Europe. The coordination of these two documents with their evaluation indicator systems is more evident in Gijón than it seems to be in Aviles or Oviedo, where documents lack of coherence, but also remain disconnected pieces in the development of the urban system. Currently the Third 2024 Gijón Strategic Plan is in the process of being drafted, and is trying to reach an Integrated Strategy for Sustainable Urban Development. As a member of the Covenant of Mayors, Gijon has developed its Plan of Action for Sustainable Energy, and has approved its Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan.

But still today, ACA cities have not really reached a satisfactory solution to urban growth in the centre of the region but at metropolitan scale, and according to its functional dimension a solution to its real functional area. Multidimensional approaches and cooperation and coordination of actions, in the best case, only referred strictly to the municipality. And at that level, the approaches that are being developed are still far from the requirements associated with integrated urban regeneration

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