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**Rethinking Urban Neighbourhoods:
Territorial Outputs/Impacts and EU lessons**

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, a lot has been made and a lot has changed in urban neighbourhoods. This process is clearly testified by the broad and diversified international literature on “difficult neighbourhoods”, on the different meanings of outskirts (such as an area far from the city centre, a place without history, a multiethnic area, a space of high decay, a place of innovation, etc.), on the policies and instruments of implementation, but also on the study of the many practices carried out in the latest ten years (from EU to local experiences).

Undoubtedly, the renewed attention to cities and its difficult neighbourhoods carried out through pilot projects, community initiatives and European networks, has helped to leave aside the “old” idea of neighbourhood, considered fringe and decay area and has drawn attention to a more positive vision which is able to recognize potentialities and territorial resources, a planning laboratory par excellence. Nevertheless, despite the strong attention to the issue, phenomena of distress (we cannot forget the recent episodes of uprising in the French “banlieu”) and of economic, physical and social decay and exclusion are unchanged in some European neighbourhoods.

The aim of this paper is not to enter into the complex and multifaceted issue of neighbourhoods but to think and re-think about the experiences carried out, trying to outline a “territorial outcome” of praxis of intervention and neighbourhood renewal. It is not our aim to draw a frame of the current situation, neither to establish a list of the “best practices”. Our goal is to re-read the neighbourhood initiatives through the assessment practices, using it as an interpretation to re-consider cities, policy and practice interventions for cities.

What does “assess the practice of urban renewal mean today”? Can we speak of EU lesson also in this field? First of all, assessment is not only a research of coherence between objectives and results; it implies thinking the territory with a new viewpoint, through an assessment process that is focused on efficiency, efficaciousness, territorial outputs and impacts. Moreover, we should acknowledge that the experiences of evaluation proposed at European level for Structural Funds, but above all for the Community Initiative Urban (ex ante, on going, ex post) have originated and sparked off other “good practices” at national and local level. Without entering into specific experiences, this paper aims at pointing out some, seemingly, more original processes and think about their implementation, both in the whole city and in other European urban areas.

Key Words: neighbourhoods, evaluation and good practices, territorial outputs and impacts, EU lessons

Introduction

In recent years, a lot has been made and a lot has changed in urban neighbourhoods. This process is clearly testified by the broad and diversified international literature on “difficult neighbourhoods” (articles, special issues of reviews, books).

This literature firstly concerns the *different meanings* of outskirts (neighbourhoods far from the centre, both from a physical point of view as well as from social, economic, cultural ones; ‘problematic’ districts, where decadence, segregation and social exclusion thrive; dormitory districts, non-places, the nowhere; spaces with no quality or history where the centre keeps what it needs but cannot (or will not) host; social and territorial laboratories where innovations and changes in living, lifestyles, and social relations are tried out, etc.), it shows that “urban peripheries are much more multifaceted and more complex than they may appear from a superficial observation: both positive and negative elements exist within them, from both physical-spatial and social points of view” (Governa, Saccomani, 2004).

Secondly, it describes the *policies and instruments of implementation* that are promoted in Europe both at EU level (Urban Pilot Projects, Urban Community Initiative and European networks) and at national and local contexts.

Last, but not least it also shows the study of the many *practices* carried out in the latest ten years (from EU to local experiences).

Undoubtedly, the renewed attention to cities and its difficult neighbourhoods carried out through UPP, Urban and European networks (such as Quartiers en crise, Eurocities,...), has helped to leave aside the “old” idea of neighbourhood, considered fringe and decay area and has drawn attention to a more positive vision which is able to recognize potentialities and territorial resources -energies of transformation and subjective movements- : a planning laboratory par excellence.

In fact, the network Quartiers en crise has firstly promoted the *integrated approach* as a local strategy to stop urban decline through a number of co-ordinated actions based on the analysis of the local area and undertaken by many participant in partnership – local authorities, the private and public sector and resident themselves.

Few years later, UPP and Urban had adopted highly integrated approaches to regeneration: the proposed strategies combine hard infrastructure with environmental, social and economic support measures in an attempt to promote sustainable development and promote the citizens’ quality of life. Moreover, they had the merit to improve competitiveness in EU cities, create employment and combat social exclusion, organise co-operation between public and private partners, stimulate various approaches to urban governance, integrate projects into wider regeneration programmes, contribute to the urban policy debate.

Nevertheless, despite the strong attention to the issue, phenomena of distress (we cannot forget the recent episodes of uprising in the French “banlieu”) and of economic, physical and social decay and exclusion are unchanged in some European neighbourhoods. Specific problems, among others, still include especially high unemployment rate and social exclusion. Moreover, the deprived neighbourhoods are seen within the context of the city as a whole. In fact the Leipzig Charter (2007) contains two key policy messages:

1. integrated urban development should be applied throughout Europe and, in order to be able to do so, the appropriate framework for this should be established on a national and European level;
2. deprived urban neighbourhoods must increasingly receive political attention within the scope of an integrated urban development policy. Europe must reach all of its citizens.

The aim of this paper is not to enter into the complex and multifaceted issue of neighbourhoods, but to think and re-think about the experiences carried out, trying to outline a “territorial outcome” of praxis of intervention and neighbourhood renewal. It is not our aim to draw a frame of the current situation, neither to establish a list of the “best practices”. Our goal is to re-read the neighbourhood initiatives through the assessment practices, using it as an interpretation to re-consider cities, policy and practice interventions for cities. Without entering into specific experiences, this paper aims at pointing out some, seemingly, more original processes and think about their implementation, both in the whole city and in other European urban areas.

What does “assess the practice of urban renewal mean today”? Can we speak of EU lesson also in this field?

First of all, assessment is not only a research of coherence between objectives and results; it implies thinking the territory from a new perspective, through an assessment process that is focused on efficiency, efficaciousness, territorial outputs and impacts. Moreover, we should acknowledge that the experiences of evaluation proposed at European level for Structural Funds, but above all mainly for the Community Initiative Urban (ex ante, on going, ex post) have originated and sparked off other “good practices” at national and local level.

Without entering into specific experiences, this paper aims at pointing out some, seemingly, more original processes and think about their implementation, both in the whole city and in other European urban areas.

Therefore, it is important to point out two conditions. The first is that, from our point of view carrying out an assessment on neighbourhood with a territorial approach does not, obviously, favour the checking of the effects and the impacts before the actions started, even though it concerns the most popular and implemented aspect of the assessment process. It means, on the other hand, considering the complexity of the neighbourhoods, made of different and contrasting aspects, realities, that can be both lively and able to be engendered, identities and potential development and of the relations, at different levels, between subjects and their different planning aims. This final feature is particularly interesting in order to grant to the assessment process a new role, much closer to the complexity of the situation, policies and the programmes of intervention on the territory on which it should be implemented.

The conditions for this process are the value of the role of the actors and their participation, both in the drawing up of the criteria and in the assessment on the field and the willingness to bring the territory in the middle of the assessment process. The territory, as Bagnasco and Le Galès (2000) stated, should become: the point of reference on which policies and strategies of action should be built and evaluated; the place to observe, to govern, to interpret and the object and subject active (and collective) of the changing process.

Our research, which is the second condition, shows that pointing out some European cases means to acknowledge the value of some European experiences in order to increase the spreading and the opportunity to create a continuous process of reflexion on the theme of urban neighbourhoods and urban areas. These urban areas are neither determined once and for all, nor do they present the same characteristics from one country to another.

Identification of good practice examples should provide support to improving the strategic focus on the issues of urban regeneration that have been addressing the integration of policies and the participation of inhabitants, as well as through the implementation of EU area-based initiatives, especially in the sectors of urban policies (Atkinson, 2000; Kearns & Forrest, 2000; Moulaert, 2000, Governa, Saccomani, 2004).

1. Rethinking Urban Neighbourhoods: Eu lessons

Recently talking about EU lesson or Community innovation has mainly been referred to the novelty introduced by the direct involvement of the European Institution in the territorial and urban policies and practices. The cue to these reflections has been given from the “structuring” actions of intervention on cities, UPP and Urban I and II.

Although it is too early to weigh the outcomes of the Urban II experience, we should start asking, following the successes of the first phase, what will of these experiences be left. The impression is that this Community Initiative seems to bring about real effects, even though it could and should leave sediments of practices, innovations that might be even more important.

One of the most interesting innovative action introduced by Urban I and II has been the use of the assessment process in the territorial field, emphasizing its strategic features as instrument of support and planning in the actions on neighbourhood.

The assessment of Urban II is part of the wider process of the Structural Fund evaluation, introduced by the 1988 Reform¹, which has produced an innovative management of the resources involved, thanks to the shift from the project focus to the programme approach planning. In so doing, the assessment process is part of the entire programme, becoming interactive/iterative process², backing a better employ of the resources. As a matter of fact, the idea of assessment widen its meanings, as it requires more attention to the elements that contribute to territorial cohesion and sustainable development, it nourishes a better acknowledgement and awareness of the

¹ In many European countries, the Structural Fund of the European Union have been an important "training field" for the assessment processes of the public policies planning. Ex ante, in itinere and ex post evaluation are now part of these recent Community Funds while , in the past, the allocation of the financial resources were assigned on the ground of national redistribution policies, often without any coherence between planning and outcomes (Stame, 1998). This nearly twenty-year Community experience on this issue has also had positive effects on the national and local assessment processes improving them deeply.

² Evaluation should be an interactive process where by judgement and recommendations are provided by experts on the content of programmes drawn up by those responsible for their composition. It should be also an iterative process where by the recommendations of the experts are taken into account by the planners in subsequent drafts of different parts of programmes (EC, DG Regio (2006), The New Programming Period 2007-2013 Indicative guidelines on evaluation methods: ex ante evaluation, Working Document No. 1, Brussels).

territory through the recognition of the priority needs (EC, Dg Regio, 2006), according to the Lisbon Agenda.

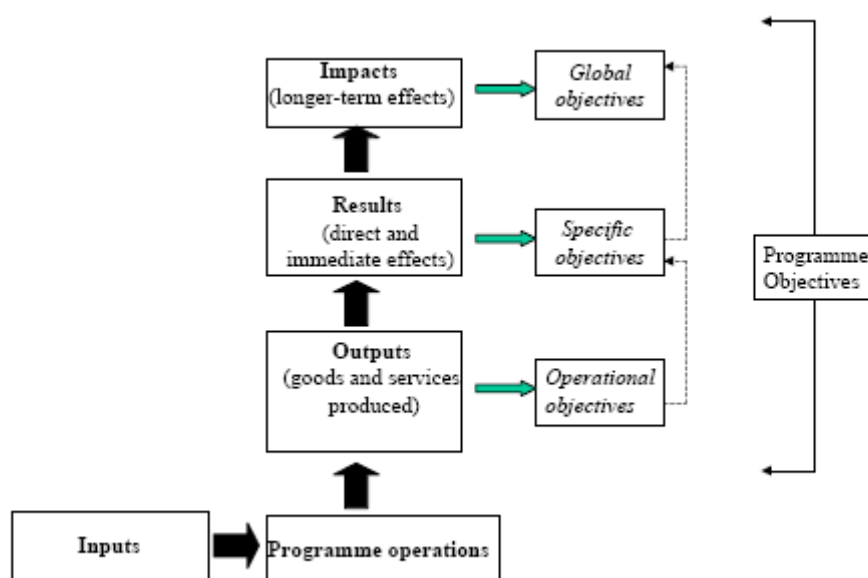
Evaluation process may assess, the continuing relevance and consistency of strategies at programme levels, as well as propose their adjustments in line with changes in the socio-economic environment or in Community, national and regional priorities (figure 1).

Figure 1 - Programme Cycle of the Evaluation process (EC, Dg Regio, 2006)

Indicators in the Programming Life Cycle	
Stage of Programme Cycle	Issues for Indicators system
Programme Elaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytical part: definition of context indicators
Definition of Programme Strategy and Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of objectives at the Programme and Priority level – establishment output, result and impact and core indicators
Planning Implementation Arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing the monitoring system: electronic data processing, quality check of indicators, Designing the evaluation system: planning evaluation, with a description of indicator data needed to evaluate the Programme; selecting indicators, information on which should be delivered by an evaluation exercise Establishing rules and conditions for a smooth and efficient co-operation between these two systems
Integration of Ex Ante Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ex ante evaluation as a parallel process to Programme design Close co-operation between the evaluators and programme designers as regards the indicator system, monitoring and evaluation arrangements Examination of the evaluation recommendations and their possible consideration in the design of the Programme
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collecting and updating information on indicators and transferring it to the users; On-going process of improving the functioning of the monitoring system Carrying out on-going evaluations
Annual Reporting on Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation of the selected indicator data and their preliminary interpretation for the Annual Reports – possible linkage between the on-going evaluation exercise and annual reporting which could improve the decision making process
Preparing Information for the Monitoring Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compiling information on indicators and the progress achieved by the programme towards the defined targets – delivery of data to the Monitoring Committee on a regular basis
Ongoing Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of the programme performance as regards particular priorities or themes by using indicators as necessary Review of indicators linked to a possible review of the programme strategy Review of functioning of the monitoring system (quality of indicators, data collection and their transfer to the users), if necessary
Ex Post Evaluation (Commission)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring system delivering data on indicators (output and result indicators, if appropriate) for the purpose of the evaluation Evaluation role in assessing impact (and results, if appropriate) achieved by the programme – possible use of macro-economic models

Besides the outcomes, other features of the assessment process, particularly significant in this paper are the direct and indirect causes produced by the actions. Seen from a bottom-up perspective (figure 2), the intervention – the **input** - in the first instance produces some (physical) **outputs**, which are the direct result of a certain **operation**. The respective beneficiaries will obtain through these outputs some advantages. These direct and immediate effects are called **results**. Usually an intervention will affect not only final beneficiaries, but through them cause more changes. Such effects are called **impacts**. Specific impacts are those effects occurring after a certain lapse of time but which are directly linked to the action taken and the directed beneficiaries. Global impacts are longer-term effecting a wider population. In urban neighbourhoods the longer effects (impacts) are very interesting concerning the whole urban dimension (the territorial added value).

Figure 2 - The logical frammevok (Ec, Dg Regio, 2006)



Evaluation process may also focus on specific themes which are of strategic importance for an urban neighbourhood programme or on horizontal priorities (e.g., participation and partnership, integration, ...).

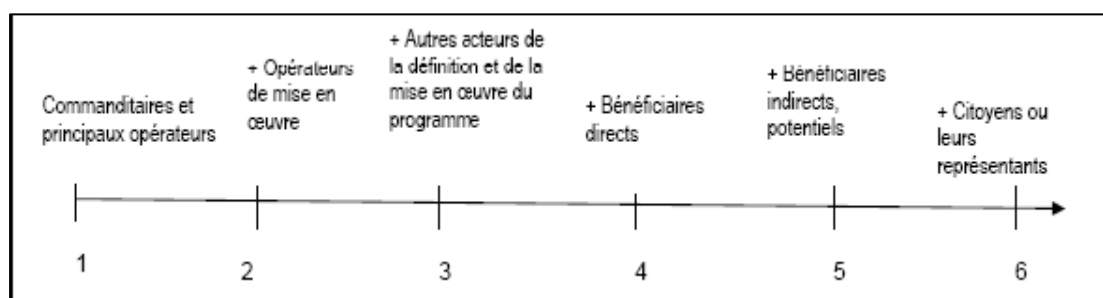
2. Rethinking Urban Neighbourhoods: evaluation as a participation process

The discourse on *participation* has increased its importance in the theories and practices of urban renewal and local development. Therefore, its involvement in the assessment process need to be interpreted with two complementary meanings: on one side evaluation should control the real participation to the different phases of the programme (a various literature is available on the matter, particularly on added value of a participated project, on the more appropriate techniques, on the indicators that should be used, etc...); on the other side, evaluation (*ex-ante*, *on going* and *ex-post*) should be more distinguished as participative, open, democratic process. In this

sense, the evaluation process becomes a learning moment for the actors involved, an opportunity to better planning and orientating the action of the subjects taking part.

This point is particularly noticeable in the French evaluation experience, as this one is mostly tied to the territorialization principle and to a democratic and pluralistic approach, aiming at integrating the society in the evaluation process. In this process, two features, more than others, have had an influence on the development of the evaluation, that is: “*wideness* and *depth*” of participation. The former focuses on the examination of the heterogeneity of the groups taking part. According to this approach, the participated evaluation process should surely involve the decision-makers and the actors of the programme or the project. Moreover, participation should be involving, as far as it can, the citizen representatives, (directly engaged in the town regeneration projects), politicians, social workers, journalists (according to the following figure 3).

Figure 3 – The wideness of participation (Baron e Monnier, 2003)



The latter focuses on the examination of the participation degree checking the participation of the different groups to the different phases of the assessment process, the opening to society (when it is present) is limited only to the ex-post evaluation, with the aim of defining the satisfaction of the receivers.

The UK experience in evaluation process is particularly interesting according to the Urban CI. In fact, the agenda of the Urban CI was established to develop solutions with the active *participation of local communities* in the design and implementation of a co-ordinated response. For that reason, the Urban evaluation is particularly interesting in the reflexion of urban neighbourhoods because it is focused on the importance of community involvement in regeneration programmes and points to the importance of trust in this process to build a sense of ownership with the programme. Most Urban regions sought local community involvement by contacting and cooperating with existing community groups. The community and voluntary sectors are very diverse in their volume, interests and capacity in each region; many Urban regions invested, therefore, in further analysis of these sectors, to identify and reach all potentially interested people.

This is particularly important as small community/voluntary organisations are often less visible than the more established, larger groups. The commonest experience of Urban regions was that particular effort and time was needed to engage and involve smaller community groups; nevertheless, a lack of representation from certain groups, such as the disabled and ethnic minorities, was often visible. Organised road-shows, newsletters, cultural community events, arts and crafts projects were very effective

means to attract local communities and to raise awareness and involvement with Urban. These small events, or other small initiatives, which produced quick and visible results, were ideal starter projects according to regional workshop findings. Other very effective means of engaging the local community in the Urban Programme were carried out to involve local residents or interest groups pro-actively in networking activities (i.e. conference attendance, visits and field trips in other URBAN areas in the UK or abroad)³.

3. Rethinking Urban Neighbourhoods: evaluation as a integrated and synergic action

Thanks to Quartiers en crise and Urban, in Europe the neighbourhood actions are directly influenced by the *integrated approach*.

The evaluation of URBAN was original and influential introducing for the first time an integrated approach to urban renewal, new policy instruments and stimulating discussion about needs, targets for urban policy and the means of achieving a better balance between polarised neighbourhoods.

In fact, the potential influence of Urban was strong. The evaluation showed that in some member states, such as Italy, Urban had a significant power on policy, his success is linked his capability to increase deliverability, to promote horizontal integration within municipalities by overcoming a sectoral approach to urban problems and to add value through participation and partnership.

The influence of Urban was also strong on policy because with the government subsequently funding several nation programmes in deprived urban areas, such as the “Contratti di quartiere” (Neighbourhood contracts) which were urban social renewal programmes based on participation of local residents and which were largely seen as the result of the experience of Urban.

Even in the French case the presence of different planning projects as Contrats de Ville and Grands Projects de Ville (concerning mainly the level of implementation) is seen as a strong point if the actions are source of added value, as the work together, sometimes approaching the same issue from different points of view. The same is true for the evaluation of the synergies that can be entirely activate from the programme, as in the Urban II of Grenoble, where the internal coherence of the programme is sought, in order to give answers to the following questions: is there any complementarity between the different actions of the programme? Do the measures strengthen their potential effects? Are the objectives complementary? Are there any competition that could harm the programme?

Also the UK experience shows that the intention of Urban in the UK is to foster a community-led approach to creating innovative projects which form part of a long-

³ URBAN regions like North Huyton and North Glasgow, reported excellent results from such activity in the form of enhanced idea generation, project development, transfer of know-how and increased community involvement. In the URBAN programme in Derry/Londonderry, for example, an extensive Community Audit was undertaken at the start of the design process, which helped to establish the local community's need and aspirations for their area (Carpenter, 2006).

term strategy for urban integration. A key theme of the initiative is the recognition that urban issues should be tackled in an integrated way, providing a comprehensive response to economic, social and environmental problems. Urban should also be additional to and supportive of actions promoted by other European Programmes, national initiatives and local projects.

The emphasis of the evaluation is on the *appropriateness of the approach and processes* which have been used to implement Urban at the local level, rather than on examining achievements.

This reflects the long-term nature of much of the work supported by Urban, the relatively short time-scale within which Groups have operated, and the difficulties which have been experienced in merging top-down bureaucracy with bottom-up aspirations.

Conclusions

Without entering the complex and multifaceted issue of neighbourhoods, we have tried to outline some “territorial outcomes” of praxis of intervention and neighbourhood renewal.

In fact, from our point of view carrying out an assessment on neighbourhood with a territorial approach means to recognize that neighbourhoods are complex, they are made of different and opposing aspects, that can be both lively and able to be engendered, identities and potential development and of the relations, at different levels, between subjects and their different planning aims.

This final feature is particularly interesting in order to grant to the assessment process a new role, much closer to the complexity of the situation, the policies and the programmes of intervention on the territory on which it should be implemented.

We have not established a list of the “best practices”, but we have used the different experiences as an interpretation to re-consider cities, policy and practice interventions for cities.

In our view, the added value of the assessment of *the practice of urban renewal means* territorial outputs and impacts at different scales and times (figure 4) that can grant: firstly the development of strategic and innovatory capacity, secondly the synergy and strategic linkages to other programmes, thirdly the continuity and progression of the urban community development process.

Particularly, the assessment process in territorial field should emphasize its strategic features as an *instrument of support and planning* in the actions on neighbourhood. Moreover should be as *part of the entire programme*.

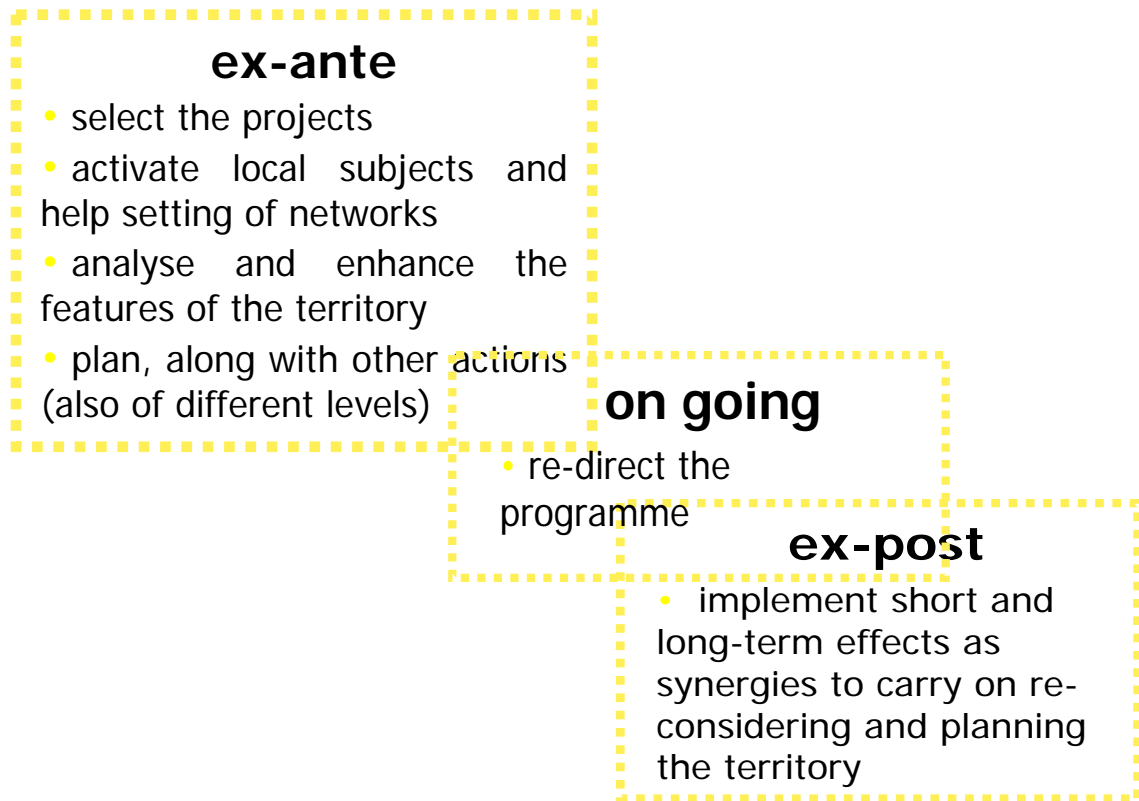
Re-read the neighbourhood initiatives through territorial evaluation (with a special attention to EU lessons throughout the evaluation of Urban Initiative) has implemented, once again, the integrated approach to urban renewal (made by new policy instruments) and stimulated the discussion on needs, targets for urban policy and the instruments to achieve a better balance between polarised neighbourhoods.

Evaluation process may assess the continuing relevance and consistency of strategies at programme levels, as well as propose their adjustments in line with changes in the socio-economic environment or in Community, national and regional priorities.

The idea of assessment widen its meanings, according to the Lisbon Agenda, .as it requires more attention to the elements that contribute to territorial cohesion and

sustainable development, it nourishes a better acknowledgement and awareness of the territory through the recognition of the priority needs.

Figure 4 – The strategic role of the territorial evaluation at different times



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