



Department: POLITICAL SCIENCES

Chair: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES

THE URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

HOW CITIES GOT A SEAT AT THE TABLE OF POLICY-MAKING

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Le città europee nascono con l'Europa e in un certo senso fanno nascere l'Europa: sono una ragion d'essere, forse la principale, dell'Europa come entità storica distinta, continuano a caratterizzare la civiltà europea quando essa assume un posto dominante nel mondo, e danno un'impronta – positiva, negativa ma in ogni caso preponderante – alle città contemporanee in ogni parte del mondo.

BENEVOLO (1993), *La città nella storia d'Europa*, Bari: Laterza, p.3

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANCI	Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani
AP	Action Plan
ASviS	Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile
CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CIPU	Comitato Inter-ministeriale per le Politiche Urbane
CoR	Committee of the regions
DG	Directorate-General
DG ENV	Directorate-General for the Environment
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DGUM	DG Meeting on Urban Matters
EC	European Commission
EIB	European Investment Bank
EP	European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observation Network
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
EU	European Union
EUKN	European Urban Knowledge Network
EUR	Euro
EUROCITIES	Network of Mayor European Cities
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Communities

HABITAT III	United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development
ISTAT	Istituto Nazionale di Statistica
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investments
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MS	Member States
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework
NUA	New Urban Agenda
NUP	National Urban Policy
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OP	Operational Programme
PON Metro	National Operational Programme For Metropolitan Cities
POR	Regional Operational Programme
PON	National Operational programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TEU	Treaty on European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UAEU	Urban Agenda for the EU
UDG	Urban Development Group
Urban@it	Centro Nazionale di Studi per le Politiche Urbane
UN	United Nations
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme

INTRODUCTION

Cities represent the main engine of growth and innovation. Cities is where the future happens first. As Benjamin Baber Stated in his book *If Mayors Ruled the World*, “urbanity may or may not be our nature, but it is our history, and for better or worse, by chance or by design, it defines how we live, work, play and associate. [...] Politics starts in the neighborhood and the town. More than half the world’s population now live in cities, that is more than 78 percent of the developing world. As it was our origin the city now appears to be our destiny. It is where creativity is unleashed, community solidified, and citizenship realized. If we are to be rescued, the city rather than the nation-state must be the agent of change”¹.

Thus, shaping policies for cities at the supranational, national and local level is fundamental in order to better address people’s needs. Moreover, cities face global challenges which overcome national borders as globalization effects, migrations, environmental issues, urban poverty, pollution and the need to regenerate urban peripheries. So, there is a demand of convergence in policy-making and municipalities could not be left alone without guidance.

Even in Europe, cities are one of the major players as they directly or indirectly implement EU policies on the ground and contribute to EU's major policy objectives. Action and coordination are needed across European, national and city level to ensure that cities are able to fulfil their potential in this role².

¹ BARBER (2013), *If Mayors ruled the world*, Yale University Press, p. 4.

² EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Urban Portal*, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/it/policy/themes/urban-development/portal/

In order to explain EU involvement in addressing cities' needs, challenges and opportunities, the present dissertation will concentrate on the following issues:

1. *How the European Union is able to enlarge its powers, even without a clear legal basis set by treaties; and how this phenomenon occurred in relation to urban policies and culminated with the adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU;*
2. *If the European Union managed to empower cities at the European level, by enacting the Urban Agenda for the EU and consequently recognizing their role in policy-making;*
3. *If urban policies are needed to improve quality of life and citizens' well-being;*
4. *How the Urban Agenda for the EU influenced national urban policies and what ultimately happened in Italy.*

For this reason, in the *first chapter* I will consider how the process of urbanization works globally and at the European level, what are the major issues and opportunities that cities face nowadays and what kind of governance can make cities competitive and resilient on the global scale.

Then, in the *second chapter*, I will try to assess how European policies affect cities. I will focus on the European policy cycle to highlight how innovative policies may emerge at the European level; which kind of policy instruments are available; and how, ultimately, the European Union was able to enlarge its powers even without an explicit treaty provision, setting out an informal competence in the field of urban development and planning. Thus, I will explain how the absence of this explicit competence in urban policy-making did not prevent the European Commission from

formulating policies for cities, the Council of the EU from drafting declarations, and a European model of urban development from emerging. The inclusion of *territorial cohesion* among EU shared competences (Art. 4 TFEU), when the Lisbon Treaty entered into force, represented an important step towards the acknowledgement of cities' role. Accordingly, Territorial Cohesion became the third dimension of Cohesion Policy. Thus, I will record all the stages in the emergence of an EU urban dimension; the policies aimed to foster urban development included in the scope of the EU Cohesion policy until the 2014-2020 programming period; and the Declarations issued by the Council which preceded the Pact of Amsterdam. Lastly, I will explain the pivotal role, or even the policy entrepreneurial role, played by the Dutch Presidency to ultimately formulate the Urban Agenda for the EU.

In the *third chapter*, I will consider the efforts made at the international level with the inclusion of the Goal 11 into the *2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development*, and by the *UN Habitat III* conference which released the global *New Urban Agenda* in 2016. I will also focus on the supporting role that European Union played in the development of the New Urban Agenda. I will highlight how the process which led to the New Urban Agenda influenced the European Union final decision to introduce in 2016, through the *Pact of Amsterdam*, the *Urban Agenda for the EU*. Consequently, I will analyze the provisions included in both the two agendas. In particular, I will examine the Urban Agenda for the EU *priority themes*, its innovative governance method based on thematic *partnerships* and its resultant *action plans*. Partnerships finally gave a seat to cities at the European table of urban policy-making and the

Urban Agenda for the EU resulted the main coordination framework for European urban policies at the EU level. Ultimately, I will argue how both the two agendas aim to strengthen the states' commitment with National Urban Policy and the improvement of residents' quality of life in their cities. Thus, I will stress the correlation which coexists between urban policies and quality of life; how quality of life has become the best indicator to assess citizens well-being; and how quality of life may be enhanced by introducing multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance methods. These new governance models manage to empower cities and give a say to local communities, by protecting the so-called *right to the city* of every resident. Consequently, I will explain how European member states which have not enacted urban policies, or national coordination mechanisms, or even new governance methods, show low levels of residents' quality of life perception. Thus, I will compare the National Urban Policy status in Germany and Austria with Italy.

In the *last chapter* I will try to assess how the process of implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU, which represents an instrument of soft law, is influencing the choices of member states. Thus, I will focus on Italy where the draft of a national urban policy has started in accordance to the scopes of the EU Cohesion policy 2014-2020 and then the introduction of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Thus, the initial idea was to replace the sectorial and non-systematic approach to urban matters, with a National Urban Agenda, based on the principles contained in the Urban agenda for the EU and the global New Urban Agenda. However, the future is still highly uncertain. Conversely, Netherlands have exploited their National Urban Agenda (*Agenda stad*) and their system of partnerships

(*city-deals*) successfully, in order to better implement the framework offered by the Urban Agenda for the EU and empower their cities at the European level.

To sum up, international organizations such as the UN and supra-national entities as the European Union seek to influence national policy making in order to build *safe, resilient and sustainable communities* (SDG 11³). Thus, the final scope of my dissertation is to analyze how European member states may benefit from the introduction of the Urban Agenda for the EU, since it seeks to impact national policy-making and, ultimately aims to improve citizens' quality of life.

³ Sustainable Development Goal 11

CHAPTER I

THE FUTURE OF CITIES

1.1 Cities ambivalence: Challenges and Opportunities

“On a planet with a huge amount of space [...], we choose cities”⁴, Gleaser argues in his book *The Triumph of cities*. The question is why? Why do people prefer to live and work in cities where life is much more dangerous, difficult, costly? Cities, where the air is much more polluted, and the food is less healthy than in the countryside? Cities, where going to work or coming back home may take hours? Thus, why have cities represented the place where everything happens first; where people move to find a better job, a life-changing experience or even their own fortune? Cities are the embodiment of a paradox, they are future and past at the same time, they are wealthy and poor at the same time, they are safe and dangerous at the same time, they may represent a chance or a prison at the same time. Cities are dual edged, they are the quintessence of opportunity and challenge. This is why policies concerning cities should be well aware of their ambivalent nature.

Therefore, cities represent the most populated area of the world. Then, why do people concentrate in cities? Cities compared to rural areas are *dense*. Gleaser defines cities as the “absence of physical space between people and companies. They are proximity, density, closeness. [...] And their physical success depends on the demands of physical connection”⁵.

⁴ GLEASER (2011), *The Triumph of the City*, New York: The Penguin Group, p.1.

⁵ GLEASER, *op. cit.*, p.6.

He also explains how knowledge develops where population is more concentrated, and people are closer⁶. Hence, cities' *density* paves the way to people who seeks to figure out how to turn from poverty to prosperity. In particular, Hutton supports this argument, by saying how cities are fundamental actors in the age of globalization and knowledge economy. In fact, their *density* allows them to offer what he defines the best *productivity benefits* such as access to large and specialized labour pools, proximity to knowledge, skills and competences which enables "tacit knowledge to be shared"⁷. At the same time, cities sell the best *consumer benefits* such as "access to a rich variety of goods, services, cultural facilities and social opportunities."⁸. In his view cities own a sort of *spillover effect* for human, social and economic capital and he identifies the main drivers of their success in their capability to strengthen their skills, to obtain a strong leadership to work with key stakeholders, to define their distinctiveness and identity, their ability to collaborate, and network with other cities to then, create a complementary relationship. Thus, intangible assets play a key role in determining cities' attractive power which is mostly unknown to rural areas.

In particular, the European Union report *Cities of Tomorrow* underlines the close connection between the concentration of consumers, workers and businesses in a place or area and their potential to make an agglomeration dense and cohesive, and its capability to produce positive

⁶ GLEASER, *op. cit.*, p.6.

⁷ HUTTON (2007), *Building Successful Cities In The Knowledge Economy: The Role Of Soft Policy Instruments*, in OECD, *What Policies for Globalizing Cities?*, p.130

⁸ HUTTON, *op. cit.*, p.130.

externalities and increase returns to scale⁹. Moreover, a report issued by ISTAT in 2017, concerning the dynamics of urbanization, explains how there is a clear correlation at the global level between cities and economic growth¹⁰. Consequently, the question is no more why people decide to live in cities but how the concentration of people in cities determines their prosperity and make them relevant actors on the global scale. Thus, it is worth to stress how the positive correlation between GDP and urbanization explains why national or regional growth depends mostly on urban areas economy. The 80 per cent of global GDP is produced by urban areas¹¹ which represent engines of economic prosperity, innovation, growth and socio-economic transformation, hubs of global communications and technologies. Gleaser also adds how in general if urban population increase by ten percent, the per capita GDP output increases by 30 percent. Consequently, per capita incomes are tremendously higher in countries where most of the population is concentrated in urban areas.

However, cities are heavily affected by globalization which induces innovation and competition, enhance growth but it also exacerbates its weaknesses. As Gleaser points out “for every Fifth Avenue, there’s a Mumbai Slum; for every Sorbonne, there’s a D.C. high school guarded by metal detectors”¹². In particular, Florida highlights in his book *The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class and What We Can*

⁹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR REGIONAL POLICY (2011), *Cities of Tomorrow: Challenges, visions, ways forward*, available online at: <http://ec.europa.eu>, p.2.

¹⁰ ISTAT (2017), *Forme, Livelli e Dinamiche dell’Urbanizzazione in Italia*, Roma: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, p.10.

¹¹ UN-HABITAT (2016), *World cities Report 2016*, available online at: <http://wcr.unhabitat.org/>

¹² GLEASER, *op. cit.*, p.2.

Do About It the sources of the New Urban Crisis. He firstly explains how urbanization is approached by two opposite coalitions. The *urban optimists* consider cities and urbanization the basis of human condition progress. Moreover, cities are gradually improving and becoming better in terms of prosperity, policy-making and citizens' quality of life. On the other hand, he quotes the *urban pessimists* who see cities as places characterized by an evident social divide where super-rich people are the only able to benefit from their potential, while poor people became even poorer. All the urban requalification projects are deemed to increase gentrification, real estate prices and displace people into other places where life results less costly. He argues that urban pessimists consider gentrification and inequality the direct outgrowths of the re-colonization of the city by the affluent and the advantaged¹³. But reality is more complex and certainly not Manichean. Thus, both optimists and pessimists have their own reasons. Hence, Florida elucidates the main differences this new urban crisis presents. It is certainly different from the older urban crisis, since it was determined by the economic desertion of cities and the loss of their economic function, during the period of deindustrialization. Detroit represents a prominent example in this sense. Florida argues that the new urban crisis has five main dimensions: the deep and growing economic gap between a small number of superstar cities and other cities; the crisis of their success which made themselves unaffordable to normal people, the increasing inequality and segregation of vulnerable populations; the crisis of suburbs where criminality, insecurity and poverty

¹³ FLORIDA (2017), *Confronting the New Urban Crisis*, available online at: <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/04/confronting-the-new-urban-crisis/521031/>

have increased (such as economic and racial segregation); and the crisis of urbanization in the developing world which not always determines success and economic growth.

This ambivalent nature of cities which represent engines of growth and innovation but, at the same time, are in the middle of this new urban crisis; would be better assessed considering the process of *urban clustering*. *Urban clusters* indicate contiguous groups with a minimum of 5000 inhabitants and a population density of 300 inhabitants per km².¹⁴ Thus, clustering imposes the city's main contradiction. In fact, when industries, economic activities, services, talented people cluster together they promote innovation and economic growth. However, "not everything can cluster in the same limited space; some things ultimately crowd other out"¹⁵. Hence, who is able to cluster, has the economic resources to do that, whereas people without the essential economic resources fill in disadvantaged areas and into the suburbs.

Nonetheless, cities face also global risks and they have to tackle global problems with local solutions. Those risks may reduce cities' growth and innovation potential and at the same time exacerbate their weaknesses and the toughness of the new urban crisis. Robert Muggah, a megacity expert, in occasion of its TED talk, *The biggest risks facing cities – and some solutions*, addressed some of the most relevant risks that cities face constantly, and he predicted that "if we get our cities right, we just might survive the 21st century. We get them wrong and we're done for."¹⁶

¹⁴ EUROSTAT (2015), *Glossary: Urban cluster*, available online at:

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Urban_cluster

¹⁵ FLORIDA, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ MUGGAH (2017), *The biggest risks facing cities – and some solutions*, TED: Lecture.

In his opinion, the main risks that cities are facing are the global refugee crisis, climate change and the difficult relationship between cities and rural areas, often concerning the production of food. But Muggah also remarked how cities around the world are acting to tackle those risks and they need more decision-making powers to better deal with them. He invoked a *devolution revolution* based on rebalancing power and competences with the nation state. Empowering cities is a highly debated question which will determine a reframing of global governance models. Therefore, Muggah argues that “when nation-states default on their national sovereignty, cities have to step up. [...] They understand that the local and the global have really, truly come together, that we live in a global, local world, and we need to adjust our politics accordingly.”¹⁷ At the same time Barber wonders if mayors ruled the world and he concludes that empowering cities means empowering democracy on the global scale. “The success of cities must supplement the efforts of states and offset sovereign incapacities without pretending nations away or making them villains in the story of democratic globalizations.”¹⁸ He also defines cities as *habitants for the common life*, which means the closest level of governance to citizens and thus, the antidote against the democratic deficit which every country is facing nowadays¹⁹. However, cities are already cooperating and coalescing together in order to shape new *glocal* forms of governance. But, it is necessary that both cities and nation states collaborate together to frame how to distribute competences across the new governance contexts which are gradually emerging globally. Hence Barber concludes that:

¹⁷ MUGGAH, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ BARBER, *op. cit.*, p.11.

¹⁹ BARBER, *op. cit.*, p.13

“networked cities already comprise webs of influence and interactivity that are creating new forms of global social capital and global civil society and are birthing something resembling a global *civil religion* whose reality is interdependence, whose liturgy is rights, whose doctrine is cooperation, and whose practice is democracy”²⁰.

Given that, cities need to learn how constantly manage their growth and successes on a global scale, since their growth and successes bring unintended consequences, as already noted. They may determine increases in population migration, expansions of international investments and, above all, increased demand for land, housing, transport, infrastructure, energy, utilities and public services²¹. Hence, the response to those challenges is enclosed in shaping new models of governance, in giving more autonomy to cities, mostly concerning the fiscal and financial side, in increasing the national support for cities and reducing the impact of short-term political mandates on urban policy-making.

In terms of governance, which can be defined as “the processes of interaction and decision-making among the actors involved in a collective problem that lead to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of social norms and institutions”²²; it results always more evident how cities need the support of higher tiers of government to their long-term strategies. Moreover, cities need to develop a leadership role in order to influence all the stakeholders involved in urban policy-making and align resources

²⁰ BARBER, *op. cit.*, p. 22

²¹ CLARK (2016), *Global Cities*, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, pp.159-160.

²² HUFTY (2011). *Investigating Policy Processes: The Governance Analytical Framework (GAF)*. In WIESMANN, HURNI ET AL., *Research for Sustainable Development: Foundations, Experiences, and Perspectives*, Bern: Geographica Bernensia, pp.403–24.

across different actors and policy fields. In fact, urban policies are usually cross-sectorial and represent the closest response to tackle policy issues which arise in other levels of governance as well. However, metropolitan governance cannot be an accidental outcome of other development cycles. It should be essentially targeted to the metro-scale; thus, reform is clearly needed²³. Since metro-scale do not represent a permanent category of analysis and intervention, even metropolitan areas may change overtime and overlap with other regions. Indeed, metropolitan areas may form alliances, they may experience mergers or extensions. In particular, Clarke explains that in order to enhance metropolitan growth, success and competition; it is necessary to increase city leadership on a multi-level perspective; cross-sector and multi-level governance coordination; to improve the investment system by introducing targeted financial tools and attracting private investors; to introduce city branding tools and improve future-oriented public narrative concerning cities. Moreover, civil society and the private sector need to be progressively engaged in the processes of urban development at the metropolitan level. Therefore, experts have proposed different solution to this city paradox determined by the power of urban clustering. Regarding the methods, as already mentioned, Barber for example proposes a parliament of mayors, while Clarke argues that cities need to adapt to the consequences of growth by finding new governance models and new sources of investments²⁴. Otherwise, in terms of policy proposal, Florida explains that in order to overcome the new urban crisis, cities need to reform zoning and building codes; invest in

²³ CLARK, *op. cit.*, p.165.

²⁴ CLARK, *op. cit.*, pp.178-179

infrastructures which reduce urban sprawl, build affordable housing; find policy-instruments able to support the middle class; reduce concentrated poverty by investing in people; build stronger and prosperous cities in developing countries; empower communities and local leaders²⁵. In addition, Muggah suggests that cities may better deal with urban risks by going green, leading global decarbonization efforts; investing in congestion pricing schemes, climate reduction emission targets, biodiversity and sustainable mobility. They also need to invest in integrated, cross-sectorial and multi-tasking solutions; to build densely and sustainably, but also to fight urban sprawl; to invest in innovative technology and work in global coalition of cities²⁶.

To conclude, the ambivalent and Janus-faced nature of cities cannot be ignored, because only understanding the challenges, solutions may be found. Moreover, it is no more tolerable to relegate cities and urban policy-making into a less relevant and only locally-managed policy field. Cities have become global actors and they must be properly included in the global governance discourse. Urban issues now represent essential features of national policy agendas. It seems that governments start to understand how much cities and metropolitan areas are essential for their national economy by being global hubs for international trade and investment. Urban policy does not fit anymore the usual narrow definition, since “nearly all public policies directly or indirectly affect urban development”²⁷. Thus, cities need to be taken seriously, otherwise humankind will miss its future.

²⁵ FLORIDA, *op. cit.*

²⁶ MUGGAH (2017), *The biggest risks facing cities – and some solutions*, TED: Lecture.

²⁷ AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT (2011), *Our Cities, Our Future: A national urban policy for a productive, sustainable and livable future*, Canberra: Department for Infrastructure and Transport, p.8.

1.2 Beyond the borders of cities: an ongoing debate on Urbanization

Urbanization is generally defined in relation to two different categories of analysis: on the first hand, the demographic variable which measures the increase of population in urban areas and the *urban proportion* which means the relationship between population in urban and rural areas. On the other hand, the territorial variable which assesses the level of land consumption, urban diffusion and concentration. Thus, the academic debate concerning urbanization has developed along these two axes²⁸. Urbanization has firstly been associated with the process of territorial transformation from rural to urban areas. The level of urbanization is measured by determining the proportion between urban and rural population. However, the debate concerning urbanization has always referred to the global dimension of the phenomenon. Indeed, mostly the 50 percent of global population lives in cities and it is supposed to increase in the incoming years. In 2030, there would be more than 41 mega-cities with more than 10 million of inhabitants and the 64 percent of population would live in urban areas by 2050²⁹. As already explained, the process of urbanization brings several challenges and opportunities which changes urbanization shape over time. A first phase was based on a concentrated model of urbanization determined by economic and industrial growth. From an *absolute concentration model* grounded on the enlargement of central cities; to a *relative concentration model* which showed the increase

²⁸ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.9.

²⁹ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.10.

of immigration from rural to urban areas and the consequent enlargement of suburbs. The second phase was characterized by the so-called *suburbanization*, determined by the shift from an industrial to a service sector-based economy. Thus, economic growth was no more determined by the manufacturing sector. On the contrary, the service sector started to increase economic prosperity on the global scale. The energetic crisis during the 1970s represented the dividing line between the end of the urban concentration period and the beginning of the peri-urbanization or suburbanization phase. During this period there was a decline in the growth of cities determined by citizens' movement to the urban fringe and the emergence of the phenomenon better known as urban sprawl³⁰.

Urban sprawl means a chaotic and uncontrolled form of urban expansion towards city suburbs which determines the decrease of housing density. This phenomenon is one of the most evident change in land use which affects an increasing number of cities on the global scale. In particular, the European Environmental Agency defined sprawl as the physical model of low-density urban expansion which affects urban areas at the expense of rural areas and it is based on a mixed land and suburbs use³¹. Additionally, in Europe, during the last twenty years, urban areas have considerably expanded, since urban concentration diminished, and people moved to the urban fringe, in order to find more affordable houses. Nowadays, studies on European cities showed, on the contrary, that the urban expansion phase has ended and, a new approach based on areas densification and abandoned urban areas recovery started to be

³⁰ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.10-11.

³¹ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.12.

employed³². The concept of urban density is opposed to sprawl. Urban density has been introduced to measure the level of urbanization increase in cities and to evaluate urbanization trends and urban planning measures overtime. Urban density enhances the optimization of land use and efficient employment of resources since low-density urban areas usually present an inefficient exploitation of energetical resources and an uncontrolled form of territorial consumption. Thus, densification has become a prominent urban research field, since it represents one of the main bases under the concept of smart growth policy-making.

Once understood how the urbanization processes worked over time, it is necessary to assess how city and urban can be defined. Most definitions consider urban areas those parts of the territory which fall under the municipality administrative borders³³. In 1910 the US Bureau of Census introduced in the federal census of metropolitan districts, the category of *extended city* applied to cities with more than 200.000 inhabitants. In occasion of the 2050 census, it introduced the *Standard Metropolitan Areas* (SMA) category which included counties with a core area with a minimum of 50.000 inhabitants. In 1960, the category of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) changed again the patterns of urban areas classification and it based settlement processes on the integration across counties and mobility between peripheral and core counties. In 1965 there was the first reference to *Functional Economic Areas* (FEA) which corresponds to working areas including the core city and the entire centers where population lives and, where people move o to

³² ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.12.

³³ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.14.

work³⁴. At the European level, the European Environment Agency classified urban areas taking into consideration three main different categories: the *administrative area* which represents the political framework, the *morphologic area* which defines the urban area in physical terms, and the *functional urban area* (FUA) which represents the socio-economic side of the city. The last concept of *functional urban areas* indicates the leading concept employed to standardize metropolitan areas definitions within OECD. Moreover, cities have been defined also in terms of their degree of urbanization. In fact, cities change in terms of size, thus OECD experts decided to classify cities following this criterion. They introduced a new statistical tool, the so-called *population grid*, useful to divide the territory in square of one km² by measuring the population contained in each square and then, make cities comparable among each other. Additionally, the population grid enabled to analyze and compare cities in terms of density, contiguity and population size. Hence, the degree of urbanization identifies three different kind of cells by employing the population grid method: the urban center, the urban cluster and the rural grid cells. In the first case grid cells show a density of at least 1500 inhabitants per km² and a total population of 50.000 people. Whereas, the urban cluster is expected to have at least 300 inhabitants per km² and a total population of 5000 people. The rural grid cells are located outside the urban clusters.³⁵

However, urban theory over time tried to conceptualize, narrow down and measure what urban means in order to shape the concept of city.

³⁴ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.14.

³⁵ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2016), *The State of European Cities 2016: Cities leading the way to a better future*, available online at <http://ec.europa.eu/cities-report> , p. 15.

City has always represented the main subject of study. From the Chicago School, Burgess and Park's urbanization theories, urban expansion has been conceived as a dynamic progress based on cities' concentrically developing space; with a clear differentiation between urban and non-urban spaces. Most of urbanization theories developed between the XVIII and XIX centuries. Nowadays, in contemporary cities the intensification of population flows, the increase of urban sprawl, the coexistence of urban and rural areas made the divide between what is urban and what is not almost imperceptible. Thus, it is difficult to identify traditional cities, underlying the volatility of different territorial classifications³⁶. During the XXI century, some experts moved the debate from dense urban areas to new approaches and perspectives which includes city-building and the analysis of the already existent urban infrastructure and buildings on a global scale. In particular, the Urban Theory Lab is seeking to promote a theoretical shift based on the epistemological reconfiguration of the urban concept. The idea is that theory should also tackle what generally is not considered urban. This idea is founded on three main assumptions: that residential areas are always replicable spatial categories and there is not a unique urban form but several; that all spatial categories are collocated across the continuum between urban and rural areas and; that there is a distributive urban transition model and population may only move from urban to rural spaces or vice versa. Thus, this classification brings to the conclusion that the continuous transformation of urban and rural areas and

³⁶ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.16.

the volatility of urban as a concept, imply that urban may only be intended as a process³⁷.

1.3 Urbanization Trends and Urban Development in Europe

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the Urban Agenda for the EU, its implications at the European and national level. Thus, an analysis of European urbanization and urban development trends cannot be dismissed. In 2016 Eurostat reported (including data concerning UK) that the European Union economic activity is concentrated in predominantly urban regions, by employing the level of GDP per capita as an indicator of living standards³⁸. Almost three quarters of the European population live in an urban area. Eurostat also noted how urban areas resulted more relevant in sparsely populated member states, in terms of economic activity³⁹. Employment rates tend to be slightly higher in cities than in EU rural areas. Nonetheless, Eurostat defines as an *urban paradox* the fact that “in several western and southern EU Member States, employment rates were often lower in predominantly urban regions”⁴⁰, such as Austria, UK, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Netherlands. The reason behind may be that some jobs in urban areas are taken by people who lives in the surrounding regions. Hence, cities show higher people’s inflows, more competition for jobs and sometimes, despite the wider share of opportunities they offer, cities are not able to bridge the gap with the

³⁷ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.17.

³⁸ EUROSTAT (2016), *Urban Europe: Statistics on Cities, Towns and Suburbs*, Luxembourg: Statistical Books, p. 34.

³⁹ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.38.

⁴⁰ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.35.

demand of jobs they receive. This is the reason why a greater share of people living in cities may be unemployed, if compared to rural areas⁴¹. In any case, job satisfaction is generally lower in cities but, incomes are definitely higher, in particular 150 percent more than the average value. In terms of housing opportunities, people usually pay more, but have less space, compared to prices and dimensions of housing outside the city. Another contradiction which emerges by comparing cities and rural areas concerns the fact that more educated people live in cities, since there are more people who own a tertiary level of education degree. But a wider share of people in cities, compared to non-urban areas, results to be involved in criminal, violent and vandal acts⁴².

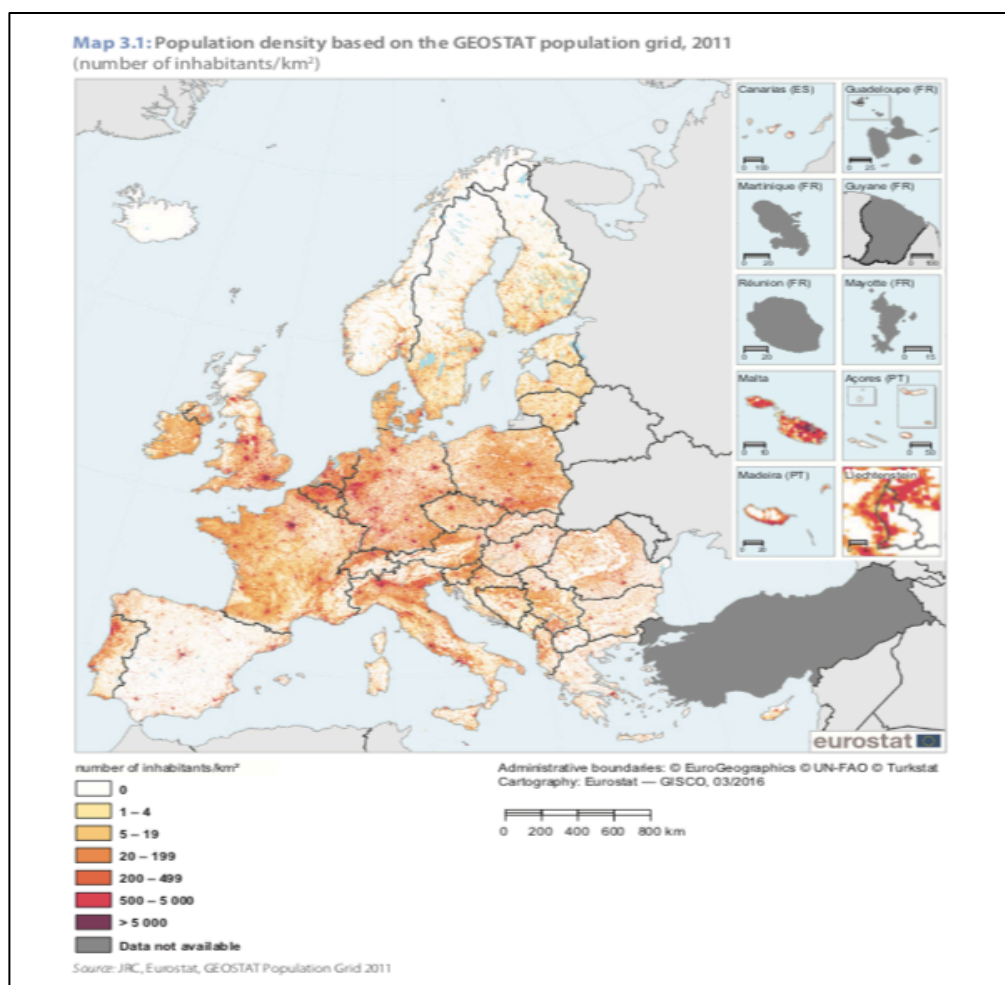
In Europe, population in urban areas continues to rise, despite the different patterns of urban development that every member state show. According to GEOSTAT, EU member states with UK cover an area of 4.5 million km². The average population density for this area is 116.4 inhabitants per km². Anyway, the 77.2 percent of the population live in only one tenth of the inhabited area with a population density average of almost 2400 inhabitants per km², since the 80,9 percent of the inhabited area has a population density which is only one fifth of the average⁴³. The table below shows the patterns of population density across Europe.

⁴¹ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.39-41.

⁴² EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.43-46.

⁴³ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.57.

MAP 1: EUROPEAN POPULATION DENSITY BASED ON THE GEOSTAT⁴⁴



Consequently, every member state presents a different urban morphology, for example Germany shows a polycentric urbanization model similarly to Italy and Poland, given the constellation of medium-sized cities present on its territory. Whereas, France and UK represent monocentric models of urban development, since their capital cities, respectively Paris and London, account for the biggest share of population and GDP levels⁴⁵. Moreover, Paris and London, overcoming the 10 million inhabitants, are the only proper megacities in the Europe.

⁴⁴ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.59.

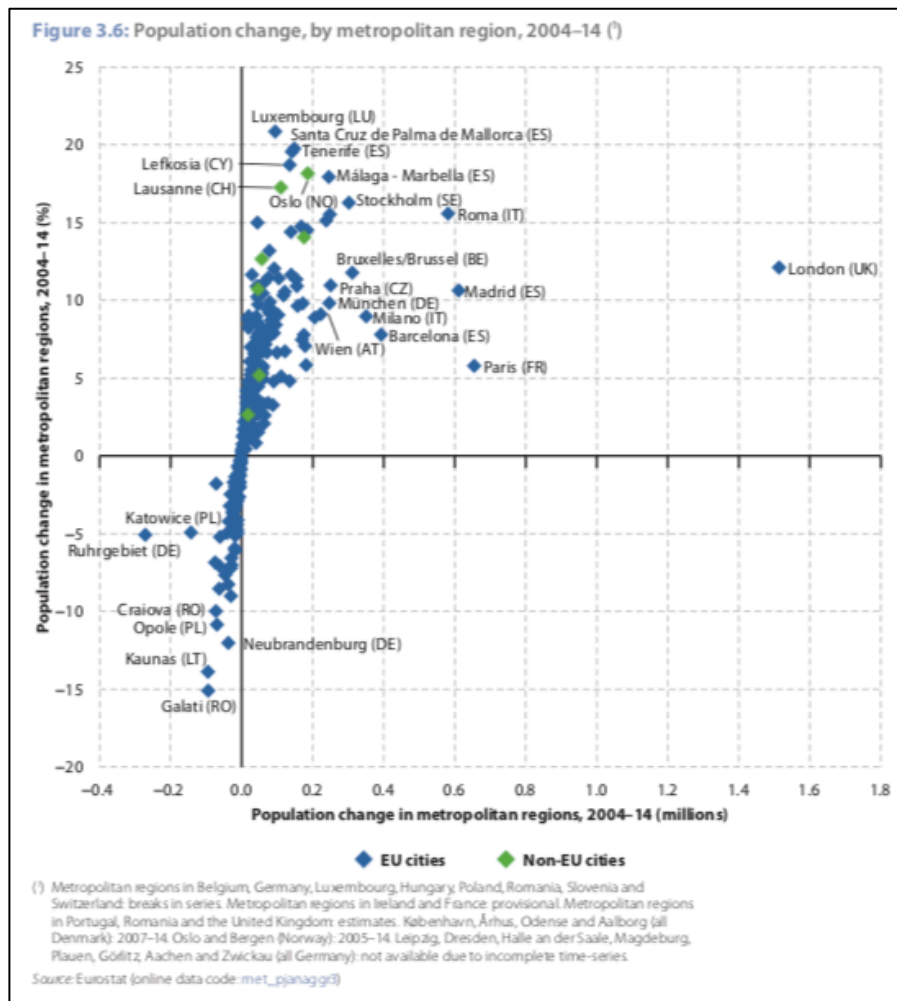
⁴⁵ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.58.

Interestingly, despite the modest European population growth rate in recent years, urban regions are growing faster than other areas, due to immigration inflows. There are some exceptions in Irish, French, UK and Dutch urban regions, where population growth represents a result of natural population change more than net migration. Consequently, the most rapid population expansion occurs in metropolitan regions which represent an approximation of functional urban areas, since they include the city and its commuting zone with at least 250 thousand inhabitants⁴⁶. This trend results even more evident in predominantly urban regions, with at least one million inhabitants⁴⁷ and in particular, in capital cities.

⁴⁶ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.61.

⁴⁷ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.64.

FIGURE 1: POPULATION CHANGE, BY METROPOLITAN REGION⁴⁸

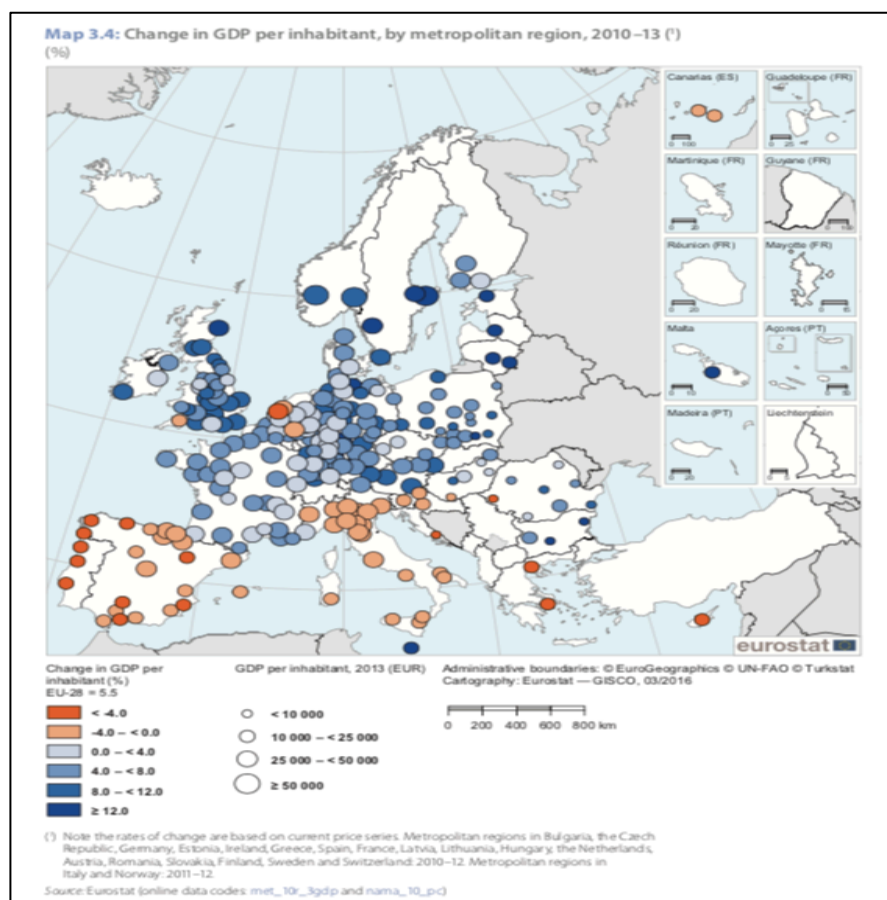


Anyway, European capital cities are quite small if compared to other capital cities around the globe, though they are growing in terms of population. The only exception in this sense has been Athens whose population felt in the last decade. Concerning the period 2015-2050, population is expected to grow in predominantly urban regions, by an addition of 24.1 million. Thus, in 2050 these regions would be the residence of almost one half of European population⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.68.

⁴⁹ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.80.

MAP 2: CHANGE IN GDP PER INHABITANT, BY METROPOLITAN REGION⁵⁰



It is evident how capital cities play a fundamental role also in terms of GDP shares. And they are even more relevant for their national economies, when small states are considered. Except the cases of London and Paris which account for almost one third of their national GDP, in Germany, Berlin accounts for a level of GDP lower than the German national average. As said before, this is the result of the polycentric morphology of German urbanization patterns, which consists on a network of distributed large cities. In addition, according to Eurostat, economic growth in the European Union is associated with the presence high-

⁵⁰ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.72.

technology industries and mostly recorded in the metropolitan regions where those are located⁵¹.

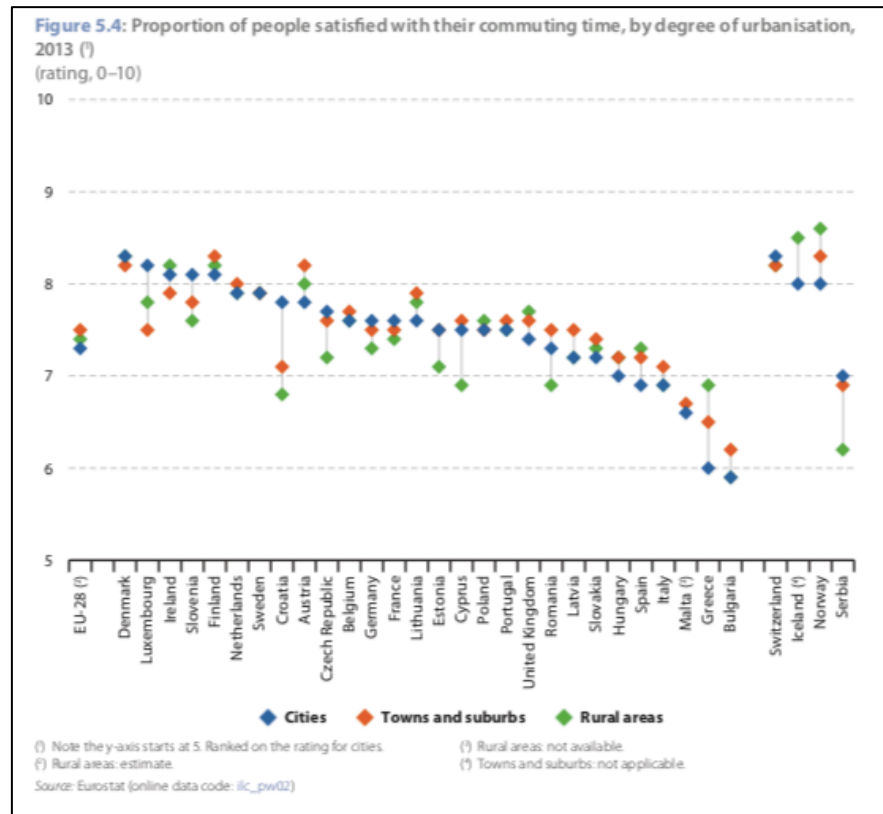
Moreover, *smart cities* have become the European Union urban development model and they are considered “a place where traditional networks and services are made more efficient with the use of digital technologies for the benefit of the inhabitants and business”⁵². Cities, compared to rural areas, result smarter in terms of their capability to attract more educated people and innovation opportunities. The higher standards of education requested, and the greater share of higher educated people make cities opener to innovation. In particular, Eindhoven, Dusseldorf and Portsmouth account for the highest level of patents presented in the EU. Due to the so-called digital divide between urban and rural areas, the use of internet is higher in cities than rural regions. Cities public administrations are experimenting innovative solutions in terms of E-government and “more than a half of EU population living in cities interacts with public authorities via the internet”⁵³. Moreover, in terms of public transport, level of satisfaction varies across member states, though usually people are more satisfied with commuting times in urban areas than in rural areas.

⁵¹ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.71.

⁵² EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.102.

⁵³ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.111.

FIGURE 2: PROPORTION OF PEOPLE SATISFIED WITH THEIR COMMUTING TIME⁵⁴



Another relevant issue which concerns cities and especially urbanization trends in Europe is the relationship between cities and the environment. The question is whether cities are more polluted than rural areas. There is no doubt that the most of population is concentrated in cities and thus, more energy and resources are consumed. Anyway, if cities are committed in promoting a certain form of urban development, resource-efficient solutions may be pursued. Compact cities have been designed to employ new technologies in order to improve cities' environmental performance at a lower cost. Anyway, data available for European member states shows that people who live in cities are generally more exposed to

⁵⁴ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.114.

environmental issues, less satisfied with the allocation of recreational and green areas available in urban regions⁵⁵. Moreover, air pollution is usually condensed in most congested cities; the concentration of particulate matter (which indicates the set of atmospheric aerosol particles that adversely affect human health) mostly concerns eastern and southern European member states, whereas ozone concentrations are usually recorded in southern European countries; municipal waste per inhabitants depends on tourists inflows proportions; water results more exploited in urban regions where heavy industries are concentrated.

In terms of tourism and culture, European cities accounts for a wide range of cultural amenities which influence tourists' inflows. Tourism exerts much pressure on EU smallest member states and around the Mediterranean coastline. The most popular city destinations result Paris, Berlin and Rome⁵⁶. Furthermore, European cities count for a large number of World Heritage Sites in Europe.

Concerning city life, population density changes across and inside cities and this influences city life. The most densely populated areas in Europe are Barcelona suburbs, some arrondissements in Paris and Inner London. Moreover, European cities show a higher share of young people, while elderly people living in cities, prefer small scale cities along the coast. Recent demographic trends show how birth rates decreased and conversely, median age increased. Anyway, these trends may change across cities, such as the different cases of Paris and Berlin, since Paris shows a median age which is almost 9 years lower than in Berlin⁵⁷. In

⁵⁵ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.118-122.

⁵⁶ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, p.145.

⁵⁷ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.157-164.

terms of birth rate, people living in cities usually show a higher propensity in having children. Dublin showed the highest rate in 2012, with almost 20 children born every one thousand inhabitants⁵⁸. In terms of city life, cities tend to be more expensive with incomes higher in cities than in rural areas. London is the most expensive city in Europe.

In Europe, cities are able to attract highly-qualified workers. Job opportunities are usually concentrated in urban regions, but this does not prevent cities from having highly deprived urban areas at the same time. The lowest employment rates in Europe are concentrated in southern Europe metropolitan regions. In urban areas, people generally use the public transport to reach their workplaces, which results the best way to save time and avoid traffic jam in some of EU largest cities. Anyway, who works in cities spends generally more time to reach their workplace, compared with rural areas. However, the time spent to reach any workplace in cities mostly depends of the efficiency and connectivity of the public transport system. And there is a wide range of people who commutes every day to go to work and it depends mostly on city population density and the level of urban development of surrounding areas. For example, people who commutes to work in Milan more than double people who commutes to work in Rome⁵⁹.

Cities are also in charge of guaranteeing adequate housing to their residents. However, most European cities, even the most fashionable, show housing gaps, which have been eradicated by the financial crisis. Generally, EU member states city-dwellers live in flats, since detached

⁵⁸ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.165-167.

⁵⁹ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.178-201.

houses provide houses to only 14,2 percent of residents. Anyway, trends referred to housing change patterns across and within member states. A huge part of dwellings in Europe were built after the Second World War. In Europe about the 70 percent of its population own a house. However, home ownership tends to be lower in capital cities. In cities, especially in Berlin and other northern-European cities one-person households prevail. In larger cities it is also much more difficult to find a good housing in terms of quality and price and residential mobility is higher compared to rural areas.

Migration is another issue which cities have to tackle and in European member states the percentage of foreigners living in urban areas has increased with more migrants expected to arrive. Net migration represents another form of population change, beside natural population change, which is measured by the difference between the number of people who move into and out of a particular area. The most part of population movements occur across European Member states. The highest level of migrants' inflow has been recorded in metropolitan regions and especially in cities such as Rome, London, Milan and Berlin. In terms of foreign born population, thus people who are born outside European Member states, except for Luxembourg which accounts 45 percent of foreign-born population, other European member states record less than 20 percent foreign-born residents. These different levels depend on language, cultural ties and ex-colonial past. Thus, France represents the main destination for African people, especially those who used to live in ex-French colonies and consequently speak French. Anyway, the majority of foreign born population in Europe was born outside EU and capital cities accounts for

the highest level of foreign-born. This migration inflows in European member states and urban regions is becoming a defining characteristic for several European cities, despite residents being reluctant in considering migration a positive asset for cities⁶⁰.

Other challenges which cities in Europe face are poverty and social exclusion. In Western Europe, cities tend to be less inclusive than towns, suburbs or rural areas. There is a huge amount of people in European cities living at risk of poverty and facing income inequality, though these cities are usually characterized by higher standards of living in terms of GDP per capita. In Eastern Europe, cities still show poverty and social exclusion in some urban areas, but the rural-urban divide in this sense is less evident.

In 2014 Eurostat recorded 34 million people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in Europe, which was almost 18 percent of the total EU population, though cases of severe material deprivation were rare. Moreover, in Western Europe the likelihood of living in overcrowded conditions in urban areas was higher compared to rural areas. Being at risk of poverty in particular neighborhood or specific urban areas reduce people ambitions. In terms of education, it means that the number of leavers is higher. Data shows that in some cities in Austria and Belgium young people are neither in education, training nor employment. In fact, in cities, the greater competition for jobs may increase the number of people outside the labor market⁶¹.

Lastly, to evaluate city life, new indicators are needed. GDP lacks information when it needs to assess satisfaction and quality of life in cities,

⁶⁰ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.222-236

⁶¹ EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.241-257.

especially if it is necessary to capture distributional aspects of income and wealth. In European cities, city dwellers are likely to be less satisfied with accommodation, with their living environment. They are also concerned with their career, income and quality of health and education services. In particular, people living in Graz, Groningen and Antwerpen are satisfied with their healthcare service, while city dwellers in Rennes and Groningen with education and training policies and, residents in Luxembourg appreciate their administrative system. However, some large European city's inhabitants are mostly unsatisfied with city life. This group includes the majority of eastern European cities and some southern European cities such as Palerm, Naples and Athens; since they appear less inclusive and have higher level of social exclusion and poverty⁶².

1.4 New models of Urban Governance

The statistics on European cities show how they are facing several challenges such as migration, social exclusion, energy poverty, ageing population, low birth rates, climate change, unemployment, urban sprawl etc. Thus, before focusing on how to reframe urban governance, some issues should be addressed. Firstly, migrations should not be considered a threat for cities but an asset, since they bring diversity and diversity enhances innovation through social inclusion. Secondly, cities must commit with green, healthy, energy efficient and resilient development and this would be possible only by employing a holistic approach, since problems are multifaceted and complex. Cities need to reduce pollution,

⁶² EUROSTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.264-278.

avoid the massive exploitation of natural resources, they must promote sustainable mobility, boost public spaces and green areas, empower local economies and connect them to global markets by becoming global nodes for international trade and innovation. Cities must be the driver of knowledge economies, in order to generate more jobs and improve local skills. Cities must not exclude people, they have to be cohesive with the surrounding areas, by enhancing regional growth and be their economic engine. In their interaction with global markets and other cities, they must keep and strengthen their identity, by developing as a sort of competitive advantage. Thus, they have to mix balanced territorial development with a polycentric urban model based on competition among cities. However, those objectives may seem contradictory, it may seem impossible to conciliate economic growth with social inclusion, territorial cohesion or sustainability. Policy agendas may stress some issues and underestimate others. Nonetheless, technology tools are not only aimed to foster economic competitiveness and growth. They disseminate information, and, in the era of knowledge economy, information represents the most valuable asset. Information, data concerning different issues, their contextual and immediate availability, feedbacks which instantly follow information sharing are some of the reasons why a holistic approach, able to accommodate contradictory policy issues, must be pursued. A holistic approach, based on participatory forms of decision-making, is able to integrate and reconcile contrasting city visions and models of development⁶³. Moreover, in order to develop a holistic vision of urban

⁶³ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR REGIONAL POLICY (2011), *Cities of Tomorrow: Challenges, visions, ways forward*, available online at: <http://ec.europa.eu> , p.61.

development, new indicators, new output-oriented tools and new governance models must be introduced by paving the way to new integrated and multi-level forms of policy-making.

Steven Goldsmith, the director of Innovations in American Government Program at Harvard's Kennedy School, argues that cities need a new operating system, and this model must be built on an overarching reconfiguration of public administration. He states that, though new public management tries to do more with less, the model of *distributed governance* he proposes, does more with more, employing more data, technology tools, partnerships with business and civic actors⁶⁴. The distributed governance model is based on some internal and external systems pivot. From an internal perspective, it aims to replace activities defined by agencies' rules with transparency and cross agencies collaboration, compliance measures with impact measures, a still top-down model with "one that empowers public employees as problem solvers, armed with data, deserving of discretion, and with the capability to make decisions". Though, from an external perspective, distributed governance wants to replace a vertical model of governance, which monopolize information, with networked solutions; and with a user-centered model which puts citizens front and center. It wants also to substitute the central producer of public value with an integrator of contributions⁶⁵. Thus, in his conception, cities which represent the closest government tier to citizens, may be at the forefront of this governance

⁶⁴ GOLDSMITH, KLEIMAN (2017), *A New City O/S, The power of open, collaborative and distributed governance*, in Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution Press, p. 45.

⁶⁵ GOLDSMITH, KLEIMAN, *op. cit.*, p.19.

revolution which will transform “rule-bound bureaucrats [into] data-savvy problem solvers”⁶⁶. Distributed governance, in order to reform the public sector providing better public services and openness in policy making, would be able to recover citizens’ trust towards democratic institutions. Thus, Goldsmith argues that “a new era of distributed governance will allow public officials to mobilize new resources, surface ideas from unconventional sources and arm employees with the information they need to become pre-emptive public solvers”⁶⁷.

Hence, a shift from government to governance in urban policy-making is necessary. Cities are dipped in an interconnected, multi-scalar and multifaceted world. The challenges they are constantly called to face are local, regional, national and global at the same time. Therefore, their policies could not be sectorial or limited, they have to consider the whole picture. And the whole picture suggests that the multi-dimensional nature of challenges obtains responses at different scales. Thus, it does not matter how it is called, it may be distributed, multi-level, multi-scalar, open or participative model of governance, it only needs to be effectively and rapidly implemented.

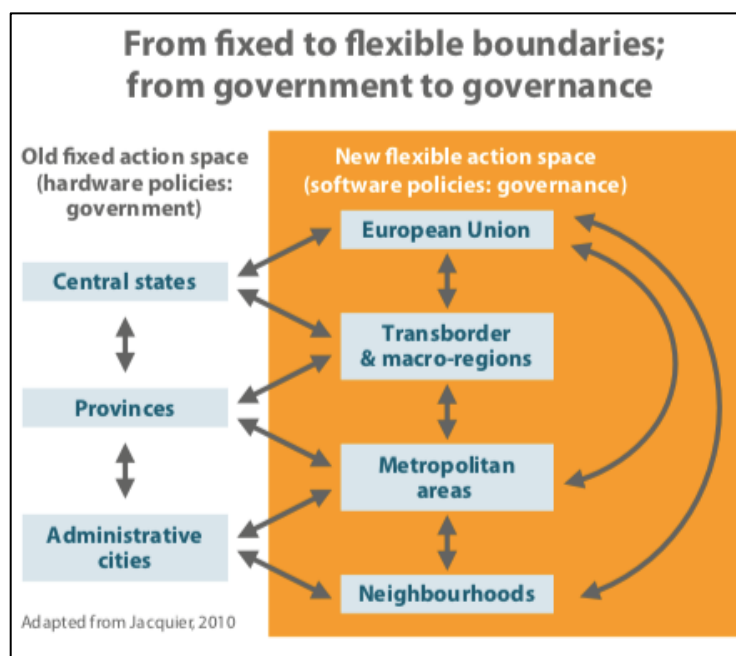
To conclude, cities must deal with challenges in a holistic and integrated way; they must mix place and people-based approaches; they must combine or even replace vertical and formal government structures with flexible and participatory governance models which consider the multi-scalar nature of challenges and the impact they have on different

⁶⁶ GOLDSMITH, KLEIMAN, *op. cit.*, p.2.

⁶⁷ GOLDSMITH, KLEIMAN, *op. cit.*, p.25.

actors. Cities must cooperate together to create cooperative forums and enhance social and territorial cohesion.

ILLUSTRATION 1: EUROPEAN URBAN GOVERNANCE MODEL⁶⁸



Moreover, policies for cities must address their needs and promote innovation. Urban policies must be the result of desired outcomes decided by national government and their lower tiers. Funding for cities must be pooled to support those desired outcomes. Supranational entities should oversee globalization trends, develop incentives and policies for cities, promote collaboration across cities and other national and lower tiers of government. National policymakers must empower cities to better address citizens' needs, reduce central government's size and become more flexible to change. Cities must support education, work in partnership with the private sector, experts, citizens and education institutions. Cities must brand themselves, once understood their identity, their strengths and

⁶⁸ EUROPEAN COMMISSION DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR REGIONAL POLICY, *op.cit.*, p.87.

weaknesses. Cities must play a leadership role to balance national and local interests.

The effort made by the European Union to advance a model of European urban development, which culminated with the Urban Agenda for the EU; represents an important step to establish a new development model based on *multi-scalar, distributive and open governance*; smart, innovative, participatory and integrated solutions; able to enhance growth and cohesion at same time.

CHAPTER II

THE EMERGING EUROPEAN URBAN COMPETENCE

After twenty years of debate, on 24 June 2016 the Council of the European Union adopted the Council Conclusions on an Urban Agenda for the EU. This event took a back seat, since no one expected the outcome of the British referendum to be in favour of *Brexit*⁶⁹. However, the Urban Agenda for the EU, represented an important milestone in the European policy-making concerning urban issues. Therefore, how and why the EU developed a competence in urban-related issues which led to the draft of the Urban Agenda for the EU in 2016 can be understood identifying the EU policy-making process and the EU policy cycle in relation to its institutional environment, policy instruments and needs that the course of policies wanted to address.

2.1 The European policy cycle

Generally, the European Union has been analyzed from the perspective of international relations or employing a comparative politics paradigm, while other studies focused on how European institutions work and which are their main powers and competences. The intent of this paragraph is to better assess “how far the particular features of the EU’s institutional system produce a distinctive kind of policy-process”⁷⁰ and then, how this particular feature is affecting the urban policy field.

⁶⁹ MAMADOUH (2018), *The city, the (Member) state, and the European Union*, available at: <http://tandfonline.com>, p.4.

⁷⁰ WALLACE, WALLACE (2005), *Policy-making in the European Union*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 9.

The European Union represents a very complex bureaucratic supranational entity, and this reflects its policy-making process. Seeking to analyze the policy-making cycle at the European level and in particular, how a specific policy, previously regulated at the national level, appears on the European agenda, we may obtain innumerable answers. This variety of responses depends on the European institutions involved, on member states views and their obstructive or facilitating powers, on the type of legal act adopted, on the competence the European Union itself has or it is able to negotiate in that particular policy field. Moreover, several non-state actors are involved and are able to influence the decision-making processes.

In particular, as Warlaigh-Lack and Ralf Drachenberg stated, “in some areas of policy [...] the EU has either no or very few powers. In others [...] it has essentially replaced the individual member states as the locus of meaningful power. This balance of powers between the EU and its member states changes over time, and although some areas of policy remain resistant to Europeanization [...] others have been progressively transplanted from national to EU levels over the lifetime of the Union”⁷¹.

Thus, at the European level each policy field shows a different historical path in terms of the policy problem to be solved and the policy instruments adopted. Hence, in order to understand how the policy cycle works at the European level it is fundamental to have a clear understanding of the specificities of that particular policy area. “This starts with the history of the given policy field, trying to assess when a certain issue

⁷¹ WARLEIGH-LACK, RALF DRACHENBERG (2016), *Policy Making in the European Union*, in CINI, PEREZ-SOLORZANO BORRAGAN, *European Union Politics (Fifth Edition)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 210.

started to be regulated at the European level, what has triggered its existence as such, what is the formal or institutional context in terms of procedures and competences and, what is the impact of the main policy instruments used in the field”⁷².

Furthermore, the complexity of the European policy cycle depends on the different decision-making approaches employed by the European decision-makers and the different levels of implementation the policy has to follow. In fact, the policy itself may take place within member states, in processes between national and EU level and within European institutions⁷³.

Anyway, in order to simplify the analysis of the policy-making process, researchers adopted the model of the policy cycle which divide the policy-making process into different stages. This model has been firstly introduced by Harold Lasswell around the mid 1950s. He firstly established a seven stages model with a linear progression. It presented several limitations, which will not be discussed in this occasion. Anyway, the most recent developments have underlined the importance of feedbacks and evaluations in the policy-process as well as the relevance of external influences⁷⁴. The main innovation to the policy-cycle theories, introduced by the new approaches developed during 1970s and 1980s, reinterpreted this cycle as a continuous process, path-dependent and influenceable by external factors⁷⁵. This policy-cycle model may be

⁷² VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON (2011), *Analyzing the European Union Policy Process*, New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, p.77

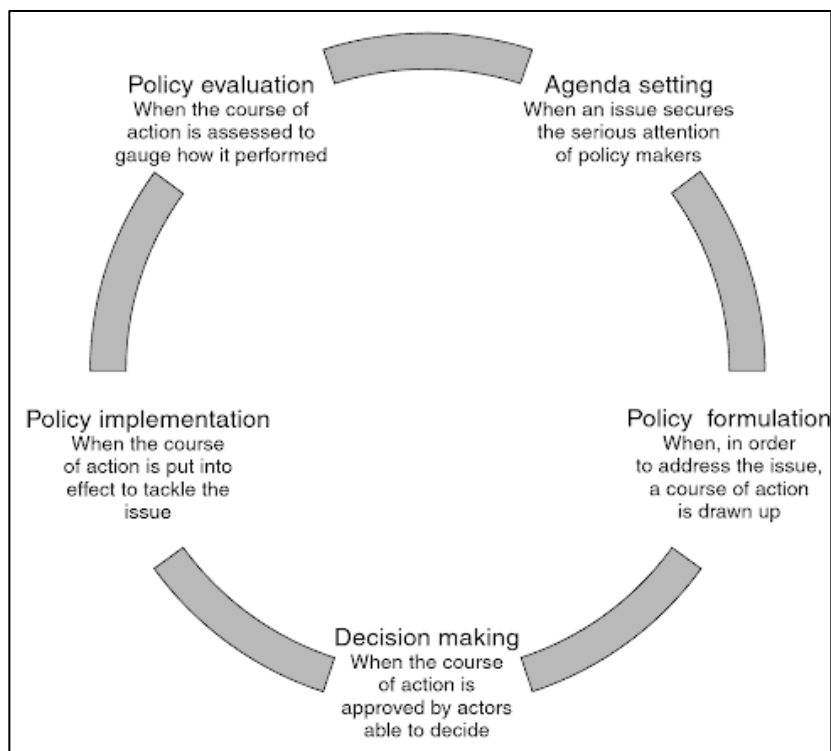
⁷³ Versluis, Van Keulen and Stephenson, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁷⁴ LA SPINA, ESPA (2011), *Analisi e valutazione delle politiche Pubbliche*, Bologna: Il Mulino, p. 45

⁷⁵ LA SPINA, ESPA, *op. cit.*, p 46.

employed also to study the European policy-making process and it is based on five main stages which are *agenda setting*, *policy formulation*, *decision-making*, *implementation* and *evaluation*. Generally, the *agenda setting* refers to the moment in which an issue secures the attention of policy makers, *policy-formulation* indicates the phase when a course of action is drawn up, in order to address the issue, *decision-making* represents the moment of approval of the course of action drawn up during the *policy-formulation* stage, while *policy-implementation* refers to the empirical realization of the course of action itself. Finally, *evaluation* means the assessment of the course of action itself.

ILLUSTRATION 2: POLICY-CYCLE⁷⁶



⁷⁶ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

According to Versluis, Van Keulen and Stephenson, at the European level it is not possible to observe a single policy-cycle. The complexity of the European Union determines the coexistence of different policy-cycles involving different institutions, different levels of governance, different policy-tools, different decision-making approaches which may also change overtime. Thus, despite the impossibility to present “a common all-encompassing theory of the EU policy process”⁷⁷ and though the different stages of the policy cycle may be likely to overlap, it is possible to distinguish some recurrent elements across the policy cycle. Starting with *agenda setting*, the European Union does not have only one agenda. Every institution has its own agenda, they may overlay, but rarely they coincide, since it may happen that different institutions discuss the same issue at the same time. Moreover, even within the institutions, different agendas may be drafted, corresponding to different policy-sectors. For example, in the Commission, every Directorate General (DG) presents its own agenda. According to Princen and Rhinard, agendas may develop following issues imposed from above or from below⁷⁸. In the case the agenda comes from below, policy experts usually represent the crucial actors supporting the agenda; policy debates are confined to one policy sector and the agenda is developed inside its own sector. The agenda emerges gradually and usually outside the public view, since it is necessary that consensus among policy-makers emerges. Otherwise, if we consider agenda from above, the crucial actors are government officials and politicians, policy debates have a huge political impact and issues develop

⁷⁷ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁷⁸ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

quickly on the agenda. A strong influence on the European agenda setting stage is exercised by the European Council which represent a “strategic political forum where many political deals are struck”⁷⁹. In particular, since it is composed by the heads of state or government the member states, the European Council usually sets the agenda concerning high political decisions.

Similarly, *policy formulation* does not follow formal procedures. “Rather, it is incremental and intuitive, going back and forth between different venues, from policy shaping to decision making and back if need to be. This is because EU is a consensus-driven type of political system”⁸⁰. It means that every step of the policy-making process needs all the parts to agree on the issue itself, “through deliberations between policy experts in expert committees or working groups” and then among national and European officials. In particular, when a new issue emerges on one of the EU agendas and obtains the attention of policy-makers, the policy needs to be formulated. Thus, that item on the agenda starts to be transformed into a policy proposal for decision makers and a huge number of actors seek to “shape and reshape” the text in the light of their own interests and preferences. During this process which anticipate the choice of the policy option or the final legislative text, the key players are certainly represented by national civil servants and European officials. Then, advisory bodies, national and subnational levels of governments, informal actors such as technical experts, think tanks, lobbyists from industries, EU-level interest organizations, NGOs, civil society are involved in the policy making

⁷⁹ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁸⁰ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

process and seek to influence the policy formulation in light of the interests they represent. The European institutions, which has the crucial role of shaping the policy proposal, are certainly the European Commission which has the right of legislative initiative, the so-called *right of the pen*. “ The Commission thus functions as the hub of a spoke of different policy networks”⁸¹. Indeed, the Commission works closely with European regulatory and executive agencies which provide technical support in different policy sectors during the policy formulation phase. Moreover, the Commission does not represent a monolithic body, since it consists of a multitude of offices with different specializations like national ministries, better known as Directorate-Generals (DGs) and Directorates. Thus, a text may be drafted and redrafted across different directorates, until it is approved by the Commissioner in charge. Therefore, the drafting process depends on the issue under discussion and the chosen procedure. In case of legislative acts such as regulations, directives, decision but also recommendations, the discussion of the proposal presented by the Commission happens on two levels, on one hand among member states ministers in the Council of the European Union and on the other hand among EU representatives in the Parliament.

Thus, the Council of the European Union which is composed by member states ministers receives updates concerning policy proposals from Council working groups. Though working groups have no legal powers, they build the black-bone of the policy proposal⁸². Moreover, when the members of the Council are not able to agree on some issues, the

⁸¹ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁸² VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

Committee of Permanent Representatives, better known as COREPER intervene. The COREPER may present two different configurations: the COREPER I which reunites the deputy permanent representatives who deal with specific issues pertaining the internal market and the COREPER II which is composed by permanent representatives, generally diplomats or ambassadors⁸³.

The other institution involved in policy formulation process is certainly the European Parliament. Here, the shaping of policy proposals happens in sectoral committees, which cover most European policy fields. The committees bring together MEPs from different member states but more importantly from different European parties and with different political orientations. During the so-called *ordinary legislative procedure* or even *co-decision*, the Council and the European Parliament may not be able to agree on the policy proposal text and in this particular case a Conciliatory Committee intervenes⁸⁴.

As far as the *decision-making* phase is concerned, at the European level it is possible to witness a continual search for compromise. In order to obtain a policy output, EU institutions and member states officials try always to find a common ground, since the absence of a final decision does not allow neither implementation nor evaluation and the whole process would be destined to fail. Generally, policy decisions at the European level are taken employing the above-mentioned *ordinary legislative procedure*, and decisions represent the final step of this process. The co-decision process starts with the proposal of the Commission and then the proposal

⁸³ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁸⁴ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

itself is co-decided by both the Council and the Parliament. Thus, it is evident how it is hard to differentiate in practical terms between the policy formulation and the decision-making stages, since they are usually both part of the same legislative procedure. However, decision-making does not end with the publication of the act in the *Official Journal*, since numerous aspects are discussed in a complex committee system better known as *comitology* which has to finalize the drafting process and address the policy proposal towards implementation⁸⁵. Anyway, not always the policy proposal ends in a legislative act, since other types of policy instruments may be employed by European decision-makers.

In order to analyze decision-making by focusing on the interdependence among institutions; in the Council, the positions assumed by member states ministers result crucial in determining the outcome of the decision-making process and additionally, the state who holds the Presidency of the Council may assert a strong influence on the decisions that are taken, setting the agenda of the Council itself. The rotation of the Presidency every six month, on the other hand, may increase the fragmentation of policy-making, since each state holding the Presidency may show conflicting interests compared to the previous. Moreover, the system of voting, which changed overtime, influence the dynamics of the decision-making process, since on most issues it is necessary the *qualified majority voting* (QMV). Whereas, it is even necessary *unanimity* for particular issues such as common foreign and security policy, citizenship issues, EU membership, EU finances and harmonization of national

⁸⁵ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

legislation on indirect taxation and etc. *Simple majority*, on the contrary, is adopted only for procedural decisions and to request the Commission to undertake studies or submit proposals. When the ministers reunited in the Council are not able to reach an agreement and take a decision on a particular policy issue, the European Council may take over. The European Parliament is involved in decision-making mostly through its participation to the ordinary legislative procedure, currently applicable to most policy areas. On the contrary, as already anticipated, the Commission main contribute to decision making is through Comitology. In fact, “all new policy proposals are first subject to decision making within the Commission, to be finally approved by the College of Commissioners”⁸⁶. Furthermore, when a new legislative act is adopted, and a new legal framework is shaped by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, some details may be still missing. Therefore, “the EU policy system has developed a standing practice of further adapting the details of formally agreed legislation to fit national approaches, in an intricate committee system known as *comitology*”⁸⁷. This system is fundamental to make new legislation up to date and always appropriate to national legal frameworks and reconnect the decision-making stage to the implementation phase.

According to *implementation*, this is the stage when member states mostly interact with European institutions, since they are not free to adopt European acts how they please, but they have to respect the procedures indicated by the acts themselves. In particular, the art. 17 TFEU states that

⁸⁶ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁸⁷ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

the Commission as guardian of the Treaties is responsible of supervising member states when they apply Union law under the control of the Court of Justice⁸⁸. Moreover, the notion of subsidiarity specifies how implementation of EU policies should be undertaken by the level of government closer to citizens⁸⁹. Thus, generally implementation is pursued by member states, but it may happen that at the European level the Commission undertakes a direct implementation of the act, implementation tasks are conferred to comitology procedures or even to European agencies. Furthermore, in order to understand how implementation works within the European Union the distinction between formal and practical implementation should be traced. In particular, Versluis distinguish between *formal or legal implementation* which indicates the incorporation at the national level of European legal acts and; *administrative implementation* which implies the establishment of administrative agencies in charge of setting up all the necessary policy instruments, the monitoring and enforcement procedures in order to guarantee the fitness between European legal acts and member states response. Additionally, the Europeanization theory is relevant to understand what implementation means for member states.

In terms of *evaluation*, the European Union in the last two decades has developed a stronger evaluation capacity and now evaluation represents a key element to additionally advance the quality of EU legislation to enhance growth, jobs and competitiveness. So, the European

⁸⁸ EUROPEAN UNION, *Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFUE)*, OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 47–390, available online at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>.

⁸⁹ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

Commission is concerned with the necessity of enhancing better regulation, since it relies on evidence and a transparent process, which involves citizens and stakeholders throughout. Thus, the aim of the Commission, when it is proposing new policies and laws, is to understand how to improve the existing body of EU legislation and how to best fit European citizen needs. The Commission is also committed to apply these principles at minimum costs in order to reduce administrative burdens⁹⁰.

At the very beginning evaluation focused on expenditure policies, in particular it was applied to policies such as Cohesion and Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Afterwards, during the 1990s, when the EU budget started to increase, and some corruptive practices emerged, the European Commission decided to develop a more systematic system of evaluation at the European level⁹¹. In 2007, the European Commission provided a reorientation of European evaluation policy with the Commission Communication, *Responding to strategic needs: Reinforcing the use of evaluation* and then it introduced evaluation in its above-mentioned *Better regulation agenda* and then *Smart Regulation Agenda*⁹².

Thus, in 2009 the leading unit of the Commission in charge of evaluation has become the Secretariat General, replacing the DG Budget, since ex ante assessment and ex post evaluation gained a central place in the European policy cycle. This idea has been stressed with the Commission's Communication: *Strengthening the foundations of Smart*

⁹⁰ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Better regulation: why and how*, available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/>

⁹¹ SMISMANS (2015), *Policy Evaluation in the EU: The Challenges of Liking Ex Ante and Ex Post Appraisal*, in *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, 6(1), available online at: <https://www.cambridge.org/>, p. 10.

⁹² SMISMANS, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

*Regulation – improving evaluation*⁹³. In addition, in 2017 the Commission issued another Communication: *Completing the Better Regulation Agenda: Better solutions for better results*. The last one contains some crucial aspect in the development of the evaluation cycle at the European level. Firstly, better regulation is conceived to underpin all the Commission's work and it is based on three key pillars: *impact assessment* which has to follow all new policy proposals; *evaluate first* which aims to revise all existing legislation to reduce unnecessary burdens and simplify the legal background; and *stakeholder engagement* based on the idea that only with the active engagement of civil society in the policy cycle better regulation may be pursued⁹⁴. This Communication followed three other developments to achieve better regulation at the European level: the procedures to increase transparency, legitimacy and accountability; the update of the guidelines for better regulation across the policy cycle; the creation of an Independent Board composed by members from outside the European institutions, aimed to check the quality of the assessments and evaluations conducted on existing legislation by publishing their work⁹⁵. Furthermore, the application of better regulation on EU legislation should happen by respecting subsidiarity, proportionality, transparency, legitimacy and accountability, by simplifying legislation and avoiding unnecessary costs, by employing the new approach for the enforcement of Union law contained in the Communication: *EU law: Better results*

⁹³ SMISMANS, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁹⁴ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017), *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: Completing the Better Regulation Agenda: Better solutions for better results*, SWD (2017) 675 Final, available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/>, p. 2.

⁹⁵ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

through better application which sets out a new infringement policy for states which do not adopt correctly EU law; and by cooperating with other institutions.⁹⁶ Lastly, evaluation is now central in EU policy-making; it has been extended to all policy interventions and it has received the main task of developing *policy learning* across EU institutions and member states.

2.2 European policy instruments

Policies may change in terms of policy modes employed and policy instruments adopted. It is necessary to study these different categories in order to better assess why a course of action is preferred to another. In particular, Hellen Wallace has explained how the coexistence of different policy modes at the European level the result of evolution and experimentation is, such as “where to strike the balance between EU policy powers and those of the member states”⁹⁷. A policy mode may be defined as the method employed to address a public problem and it may be based on the adoption of particular policy instruments. In particular, she noted how at the European level coexist five policy modes which are the *Classical Community Method*, the *EU regulatory mode*, the *EU distributional mode*, the *intensive transgovernmentalism* mode and the *policy coordination mode*. The *Classical Community Method* represents the predominant method of policy-making at the European level, based on a strong role deferred to the Commission, an empowering role of both the Council and the Parliament, the participation of several stakeholders, the

⁹⁶ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *op. cit.*, pp.4-13.

⁹⁷ WALLACE AND REH (2004), *An Institutional Anatomy and Five Policy Modes* in WALLACE, POLLACK, AND. YOUNG, *Policy-Making in the European Union*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 78.

involvement of European agencies. This method constitutes a sort of supranational form of policy-making, despite the huge difficulties in decision-making that this method denotes considering the obstacles to reach an agreement due to the conflicting positions of member states and the long procedures involved⁹⁸.

The *EU regulatory mode* emerged when the single market developed, and it aimed to remove barriers between the national economies and member states. It was considered as a sort of negative form of integration based on promoting technical cooperation, removing national legal barriers to the effective creation of a single market. The Commission played a prominent role in defending the regulatory prerogatives of the European Union. In the same way, the European Court of Justice ensured that rules were applied in accordance to the treaties and backed by the national courts for local application⁹⁹.

The *EU distributional mode* represented the emergence of the necessity of allocating or re-allocating resources on the European agenda, in order to reduce disparities across sectors, levels of governance, member states etc. The emergence of the single market in the 1980s produced several discussion concerning the impacts of integrations on member states economies, taking into account the differences. The Commission played a crucial role as the deviser of programmes, also member of the Council both from national and local governments exerted pressure in favour of distributional policies. This determined an empowerment of regional and

⁹⁸ WALLACE AND REH, *op. cit.*, pp.79-80.

⁹⁹ WALLACE AND REH, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

local authorities and a reallocation of European budget to finance policies such as Cohesion Policy and Common Agricultural Policy.

Intensive transgovernmentalism indicates cases of cooperation among national policy-makers, mostly on sensitive issues concerning the EU. In fact, the two fields where this policy mode firstly developed was money and foreign policy. In these two policy domains, mainly heads of state and government were the actors in charge to intensively negotiate and then take final decision able to extensively engage their states at the EU level. The institution which crucially interprets this policy mode is the European Council. When this policy mode prevail also the Council of ministers has a predominant role and on the contrary, the Commission plays a less relevant position. The European Parliament and the European Court of Justice are not implicated, and national officials and policy makers are the most involved in the decision-making process which may result opaque. Decisions taken in this context results to be more imperative¹⁰⁰.

Policy coordination mode indicates the capacity of the European Union “to develop overtime light forms of cooperation and coordination in fields adjacent to core EU economic competences in order to make the case for direct policy powers”¹⁰¹. At the very beginning it was thought as a transition mechanism from national policies to EU policy-making in new policy fields and it presented a predominant role of the Commission, the involvement of independent experts and technical committees and the convening of high-level groups in the Council. Afterwards, from a

¹⁰⁰ WALLACE AND REH, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

¹⁰¹ WALLACE AND REH, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

transitional mechanism, policy coordination started to become an independent policy approach, since tools as benchmarking, policy comparisons started to be applied to several policy fields at the EU level. The core factors which made policy coordination an independent *policy mode* was the move towards a single monetary policy through the establishment of the EMU; the 2000 Lisbon strategy which introduced the Open Method of Coordination; and the increasing acknowledgment of differences among member states in terms of policy and economic outcomes. Thus, the *policy coordination mode* has become overtime a sort of soft policy-making approach at the EU level. In particular, Waleigh-Lack and Dragchenberg defined it as *new mode of governance*, though it has been employed for years by OECD¹⁰². It includes a variety of policy instruments which do not impose legally binding action or specific obligations. The policy coordination mode aims to foster flexibility and participation in order to enhance knowledge creation. Since the *Classical Community method* is the rule and it has a “limited capacity” to add new policy competences to the EU’ stock, the Wallace *policy coordination method* or the *new modes of governance* as defined by Waleigh-Lack and Dragchenberg offered the chance to make the policy-making process more participatory including new actors and responding to some of EU’s legitimacy concerns. Moreover, it favored the integration process where the *Classical Community method* seemed to be temporarily at stake. The policy coordination method was able to act in policy domains such as social security and unemployment, usually depending on national

¹⁰² WARLEIGH-LACK, RALF DRACHENBERG (2016), *Policy Making in the European Union*, in CINI, PEREZ-SOLORZANO BORRAGAN, *European Union Politics (Fifth Edition)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.217.

sovereignty. Thus, the *policy coordination mode* was required as an alternative; “so that the EU could play a role without threatening what is often highly-prized diversity in these issue areas at national level”¹⁰³. Hence, the *policy coordination mode* represented a compromise with member states prerogatives, since they maintained their responsibility for a policy domain, despite giving to EU a coordinating role in the same field. The Commission highly supported new modes of governance with the vision they were able to enlarge EU activities and competences.

In terms of policy instruments, the European Union presents a wide range of different means for implementing policies. According to Versluis, Van Keulen And Stephenson, policy instruments represent the effective means or devices that the government has at his disposal in order to implement policies. Hood classified policy instruments in four categories. This classification identifies *nodality instruments* when government employs public information to solve problems, *authority instruments* when it solves problems through legal acts or regulations; *treasure instruments* when it uses public money to solve public problems and redistribute wealth across citizens and; *organizational instruments* when it confronts public problems through the activation of its formal organizations¹⁰⁴. By confronting the instruments that EU adopts more frequently, Warleigh-Lack and Ralf Drachenberg stated that “authority instruments are the most commonly used in the EU”¹⁰⁵. Moreover, Majone defined the EU a *regulatory state* since “it tended to regulate society

¹⁰³ WARLEIGH-LACK, RALF DRACHENBERG, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

¹⁰⁴ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁵ WARLEIGH-LACK, RALF DRACHENBERG, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

largely via legal authority or regulations rather than, say, via macroeconomic stabilization or redistribution instruments”¹⁰⁶.

Another classification of policy instruments differentiate among *legislative and regulatory instruments* which includes the broad variety of laws and regulations; *economic and fiscal instruments* which indicates all the measures the government may take to influence the market mechanism; *agreement-based or cooperative instruments* which include all those policy tools the government or other involved actors adopt jointly and on a voluntary basis, since they decide to behave in a certain way; *information and communication instruments* which includes instruments aimed to influence actors’ behavior by disseminating relevant information on certain issues; and *knowledge and innovation instruments* which are knowledge-based policy tools by which actors increase their knowledge of a certain issue (such as the exchange of benchmarking, creative workshops or pilot projects)¹⁰⁷.

At the European level all these forms of policy instruments coexist, though as already specified regulatory instruments prevail, or even Hood’s authority (regulatory) instruments. The European regulatory acts consist of Treaties, Case Law from the European Court of Justice, International agreements, binding acts adopted by European institutions which are regulations, directives and decisions and soft law.

In particular, soft law instruments which represent in the second classification a proposed form of *agreement-based or cooperative*

¹⁰⁶ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁷ BOUWMA, GERRITSEN, KAMPHORST, KISTENKAS (2012), *Policy instruments and modes of governance in environmental policies of the European Union*, in WOt-technical report 60, available online at: <http://edepot.wur.nl/373629>, pp. 19-21.

instruments but also forms of *knowledge and innovation instruments*, are developed following the policy coordination mode or the new governance mode previously analyzed. Though soft law instruments are typical of international organization, considering the need to accommodate nation states conflicting interests; the plethora of soft law instruments is huge also at the European level. When disagreement is persistent or when actors are not well disposed to reduce their sovereignty, soft law instruments represent the most suitable tools the European legislator may adopt. The art. 288 TFEU indicates two official non-binding instruments which are recommendations and opinions and they are adopted by following the same process necessary for binding acts¹⁰⁸. Additionally, there are also soft law instruments which are not officially specified by treaties; such as Council declarations and conclusions which express respectively the Council political line or definitive position on an issue. Gradually, also the European Union developed peer review mechanisms, typical of international organizations. Moreover, the increasing development of evaluation and monitoring mechanisms has determined the emergence of these new policy tools. One of the best known is represented by the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) which is regularly repeated in several policy fields. In order to adopt the Open Method of Coordination, the Council of the European Union has to agree on common objective, which usually is drafted by the Commission. Afterwards, member states using the agreed list of indicators and benchmarks translate the guidelines into national policies and report on the status of the policy development

¹⁰⁸ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

itself¹⁰⁹. Subsequently, the task of the Commission is to compare the efforts made by member states and understand which national response represent a best practice to take as an example. It may issue recommendations and, thus the OMC represents a learning experience for member states.

Other types of soft law instruments, which may be included in the class of *nodality* instruments, are the White and Green papers since they involve the strategic employment of information. Lastly, *interinstitutional agreements* represent an additional type of soft law instruments, which are important for the functioning of the European Union¹¹⁰.

The focus on these particular instruments is relevant for the ultimate aim of this dissertation. In fact, the Urban agenda for the EU has been adopted with a soft law instrument, and its relevance has been confirmed through the General Affairs Council Conclusions on June 24, 2016. Moreover, the main developments in urban policy at the European level, before the approval of the Agenda, have been made by enlarging progressively the scope of Cohesion Policy, Environmental Policy, thus by adopting a distributional policy mode also for urban areas. Moreover, the continuous involvement of different actors and different levels of governance has enlarged the network of subjects participating at policy-making concerning urban areas at the EU level, by making it more participatory. In the next paragraph, it will be better explained how progressively a sort of Europeanization of Urban policy occurred and the

¹⁰⁹ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹¹⁰ VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

necessity of drafting an Urban Agenda emerged overtime, finally culminating in the Council Conclusion in June 2016.

2.3 The Europeanization of Urban policy

The relationships between European Union and member states changed overtime. The Single European Act in 1986 determined the launch of new European policies. In particular, the European Union from an Economic Community became a Single Market and then progressively received much more sovereignty space from member states to exert its policy-making powers in other policy fields. This incremental share of power from the European side determined the emergence of the so-called concept of Europeanization. The EU policy making had enormous effects of national policy-making and maybe it transformed national and local institutions. Thus, as La Spina stated, Europeanization acted not only on single policies but also on *polities*, or even the structural characteristics of member states' political, legal and administrative systems¹¹¹.

European policy-making is based on negotiation, imitation and diffusion processes and member states and national interest groups play an important role in those processes, together with European institutions. Thus, it is always more evident the preponderance of European policies on member states policies and in certain sectors, some states are able to set the agenda and play a crucial role in shaping European policies. Additionally, European influence represents one of the most explicative

¹¹¹ LA SPINA (2016), *Le politiche europee tra Unione Europea e stati membri*, in DE MARTIN, WITKOWSKI, GAMBALE, *Parlamenti, politiche pubbliche e forme di governo: esperienze e prospettive in Italia e Polonia*, Roma: CEDAM

factors in the analysis of Member states policies¹¹². Thus, experts formulated several definitions of Europeanization. Radaelli says that Europeanization “is more likely to be understood as a process of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ways of doing things and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidate in the EU policy process, and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, political structures and public policies”¹¹³. In addition, Dossi defined Europeanization as “an interactive process wherein domestic systems of governance are in time changed by the diffusion of ideational construct, legal and social norms, regulations and instruments. These are first identified, negotiated, contested and agreed upon within the EU-wide arenas, and eventually used by domestic actors to shape their institutional orders”¹¹⁴. Hence, Europeanization indicates the process which determined a progressively rising influence of European decisions on national policies and an increasing likelihood of these decisions to produce policy and institutional change at the national level. At the same time Europeanization may establish frameworks able to empower national, local and other actors to influence European policy-making.

Generally, the limit to European-policy making has been identified by the demarcation between *efficiency policies* and *redistribution policies*. Efficiency indicates that it is possible to have positive-sum games since an efficient solution may guarantee a profit to everyone or at least someone;

¹¹² LA SPINA, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹¹³ DOSSI (2017), *Cities and the European Union: mechanism and modes of Europeanization*, Colchester: ECPR press, p.20.

¹¹⁴ DOSSI, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

without making anyone losing something. Redistribution, on the other hand, consists on take something from someone to give to someone else. Thus, in order to take this kind of decisions and redistribute resources, it is necessary a political decision-making procedure based on the majority rule, since it may cause also market failures. On the contrary, policies based on efficiency may be adopted with unanimity rule¹¹⁵. This is the reason why, social redistributive policies have generally remained a competence of the member states, also because the European Union does not possess significant resources to finance redistributive policies. The main expansion of European policy-making happened through regulations in terms of efficiency, such as market liberalization, free competition, food quality and safety standards, environmental protection standards etc., since it does not imply spending. Those regulative European policies have been able to fill the regulatory gaps of some member states. Anyway, the progressive enlargement of the European Union introduced new members with different economic backgrounds, and the idea to create a common currency make crucial the decision to develop some sorts of redistributive policies to reduce intra-national and inter-regional differences. Hence, the Common and Agricultural Policies (CAP) and Cohesion Policy were established.

The Commission played a fundamental role in ensuring the respect of the treaties and favoring European policy-making activities thanks to its right of legislative initiative. With the consolidation of the majority-rule, the approval of proposals opposed by some member states became

¹¹⁵ LA SPINA, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

easier¹¹⁶. However, the Commission is an institution without an elective mandate and gains its legitimacy only from its technical expertise. This feature increased overtime the problem of the democratic deficit at the European level, due to its initiative in several policy field and despite the increasing empowerment of the European Parliament. The necessity of making decisional procedures more transparent and accountable to national stakeholders and European citizens determined the emergence of ex-ante evaluations and impact assessments able to assess the state of play in a particular policy fields, national best practices, the position of national stakeholders and promote cooperative learning.

This relatively recent crisis of political support towards the European Union is explicable, as La Spina stated, since regulatory measures which can be easily adopted does not usually rise political consent. In particular, the less relevant policies in terms of increasing political support are those with concentrated costs and dispersed benefits, since they are paid by a closed category of people and, at the same time, the outcomes are so dispersed, they may result undetectable¹¹⁷. Anyway, the European Union with its regulative power managed to promote common interests and third generation rights. This is relevant since most member states would have remained inert regarding environmental, free market competition, consumer protection etc., without European intervention. In particular in some countries, several domestic policies resulted from European ones or they were even totally replicated. Additionally, European policies which substituted or were transplanted in

¹¹⁶ LA SPINA, ESPA, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

¹¹⁷ LA SPINA, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

national settings were often implemented though not forcibly through regulative policy instruments. Thus, it is evident a convergence, despite differences among policy sectors and member states, of national policies towards European ones¹¹⁸.

It is necessary to highlight as also some member states have been able to exert their influence towards European decision-making processes during the ascendant phase. It was possible because they presented specific interests and preferences and sometimes were pushed by domestic interest groups. However, the crucial feature to be *policy entrepreneurs* is to possess representatives equipped with the right amount of policy expertise in the field subject to the policy action. Since member states do not always fight to apply their policy standards in every field subject to policy intervention, it is conceivable that some states, even the least relevant, were actually able to influence policy formulation at the European level and make their position able to prevail over the others. It depends on the national background and level of expertise in that policy domain. An interesting case concerned environmental policy which was not even contemplated by treaties and it was the European Court of Justice to find a competence, by applying the theory of implicit powers. In this case Nordic countries, more advanced in terms of environmental domestic regulations than other member states, acted as policy entrepreneurs and obtained the strictest standards also at the European level¹¹⁹. To conclude, Europeanization acts both top-down and bottom-up. It means that not only the European Union influences and changes national policy making and

¹¹⁸ LA SPINA, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁹ LA SPINA, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

national governance settings; but also, member states are able to exert their influence on European policy-making by promoting their national policies. Thus, Europeanization is visible both during agenda setting and policy formulation but also during the enforcement and implementation phase of the European policy cycle which is consequently highly correlated with the national policy cycle of all member states.

With that being said, the topic of this paragraph is to understand if there is a degree of Europeanization in the field of urban policy at the European level. Firstly, the role of the EU in urban policy has been seldom analyzed, despite the growing number of programs dedicated to urban development overtime. In particular, subnational authorities started to be increasingly involved in the European policy-making, especially after the completion of the single market and the enhancement of the policy of the EU structural funds. These facts determined the emergence of the multi-level governance narrative, where governance is intended as a “new way of governing that goes beyond solely formal institutions [which consists on] a change in the meaning of government, referred to a new process of governing”¹²⁰. Governance denotes that taking authoritative decisions is not forcibly depending on a hierarchical structure based on a top-down approach to policy-making. According to Dossi, governance implies that decision-making originates from the interaction of public and private, collective and individual actors. Thus, multi-level governance considers policy-making a shared competence across different actors, authorities which represent diverse levels of governance at the same time. This

¹²⁰ DOSSI, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

narrative is able to explain the emergence of networks with a cross-nationally oriented character. Multi-level governance thinking paved the way to Europeanization theories also referred to cities and urban systems. In this sense “Europeanization would occur because of the greater awareness of local authorities and other organizations of the importance of EU policies and funding opportunities”¹²¹. Hence, this governance approach favors partnership agreements across local authorities, it enables the policy-making process to be more participatory, transparent and able to address the real needs of policy-recipients. Thus, multi-level governance supports the principle of subsidiarity. Moreover, the multi-level governance paradigm applied to the urban-city level is able to mix “top-down, bottom-up, vertical and horizontal channels of relations, rather than exclusively focusing on hierarchically channeled relations”¹²². Consequently, the spread of this new mode of governance based on benchmarking, the diffusion of best practices, the development of peer review mechanisms aims to reshape and improve the policy formulation process. In fact, the European level is not always equipped with the necessary amount of knowledge necessary to regulate a specific policy field. Thus, empowering cities, regions and other local authorities as policy-makers is necessary to foster better policies and regulations but also to develop more participative governance settings.

However, why did EU decide to focus on cities? Dossi elaborated three main arguments. Firstly, EU urban areas share the highest percentage of European population living there, almost 80 per cent of EU citizens;

¹²¹ DOSSI, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹²² DOSSI, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

thus, cities are where the main part of European economy is produced. Secondly, the necessity of public intervention in cities is motivated by “the growing rate of social exclusion” they show. Thirdly, cities traditionally represent hubs of social and cultural life, thus policies are crucial to safeguard their role in that sense¹²³. Hence, considering the relevance of cities for the European Union and all the problems they have to face, the Commission through the Communication *Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union*, already in 1997, affirmed that “whilst urban authorities cannot be the sole agencies to act on these large issues, they should be fully involved in the policies related to these matters, as there can be no effective solution on the ground without their active participation”¹²⁴.

Therefore, it is straightforward that by involving cities in policy-making is considered crucial in order to effectively address the problems European cities are facing nowadays. Thus, urban governance theories stress the importance of public-private interactions in urban policy-making. The partnership approach to governance is able to encapsulate the changing urban landscape dynamics, by better addressing the necessities of urban regeneration and social cohesion. Consequently, the European Commission introduced and promoted partnership agreements including cities, especially within the framework of the Cohesion policy. In fact, the Commission understood how the hierarchical approach to policy-making

¹²³ DOSSI, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹²⁴ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (1997), *Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union*, COM (97)197 final, available online at: <http://ec.europa.eu/>, p. 3.

is no longer sustainable and involving the real recipient of the policies as policy-makers represent the best strategy to address their needs.

The European Union promoted several policies over time and European cities took their policy action by dealing at the same time with the necessity to accomplish European policy opportunities and their national pre-existing institutional systems which could act as policy constraints. The spread of European urban policies determined the consolidation of *local regeneration partnerships* across Europe in the form of public-private partnerships which facilitated participation and determined “the transition from *urban government* to *urban governance*”¹²⁵. Thus, public-private partnerships became the institutionalized form of cooperation between EU, national government, local authorities, cities and local private stakeholders.

Since European institutions started to involve cities as stakeholders in policy-making affecting some policy areas and within certain policy-programmes, cities managed to report “soft outcomes such as shaping and setting important parameters for the debate between institutions, influencing the policy agenda regarding urban issues, and getting their proposal into key documents useful for policy implementation”¹²⁶. Thus, Europeanization concerning urban policies represented a two-fold process, since it uploaded new policy networks such as EUROCITIES which involved cities in policy-making, para-diplomatic and lobbying activities at the European level; and at the same time downloaded new institutional models and programmes such as public-private partnerships at the local

¹²⁵ DOSSI, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

¹²⁶ DOSSI, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

level. Thus, the EU now represent the arena and the context where cities are able to exercise their influence in order to access new opportunities and new channels of policy.

To sum up, local authorities and cities have been ignored for a long time in terms of their potential impact on European policy-making. Hence, “the encounter between cities and the EU” resulted in a direct support to urban policies at the EU level and into an indirect promotion of cities as European policy-makers and policy networks where they are able to interact and exchange best practices¹²⁷.

2.4 European Urban policies from the beginning

2.4.1 Territorial Cohesion, an implicit competence in promoting urban development

In 2014, the Committee of Regions in its opinion *Towards an Integrated Urban Agenda for the EU* stated how cities represent important economic engines for the EU able to foster European economic development¹²⁸. They are also able to promote environmental efficiency and the economic, social and territorial development of the European Union. However, this opinion reports how there is still no explicit legal basis within European Treaties for promoting European urban policies or sustaining directly national, regional or local urban policies. However, in 1958 the Treaty of Rome introduced the concept of *harmonious development* and for the very first time, urban development entered the

¹²⁷ DOSSI, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹²⁸ COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (2014), *Opinion of the Committee of the Regions: Towards an Integrated Urban Agenda for the EU*, Official Journal of the European Union C 271/03, available online at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>, art. 1.

European policy debate¹²⁹. Conversely, the Lisbon Treaty introduced the broad concept of *territorial cohesion*. Territorial cohesion is largely aimed to contribute to European sustainable development and competitiveness. Moreover, territorial cohesion is aimed to remove obstacles to local and regional development through European financial support.

Conversely, in the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (TFEU) the main reference to territorial cohesion are art.4 and art. 174. In the first case, territorial cohesion is intended as one of the areas where a shared competence between EU and the Member States is applied. On the contrary, the art. 174 of the *Title XVIII Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion* explains how territorial cohesion is crucial together with economic and social cohesion “to promote [European] harmonious development”¹³⁰. Thus, the EU must pursue actions to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion. Moreover, the EU must act to reduce disparities “between levels of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favored regions”¹³¹. In addition, EU among those regions, must pay more attention to rural areas, areas which face industrial transition and regions which suffer *permanent and severe* natural or demographic problems. Thus, there is still no direct reference to urbanized and metropolitan areas as well as urban development. Anyway, *territorial cohesion* by representing the third dimension of Cohesion policy which has promoted several programmes addressing cities and

¹²⁹ GONZÁLEZ MEDINA (2015), *Exploring European urban policy: Towards an EU-national urban agenda?*, Gestión y Análisis De Políticas Públicas: Nueva Época, p. 3.

¹³⁰ EUROPEAN UNION (2012), *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)*, Official Journal of the European Union, C 326/47, available online at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>, art. 174

¹³¹ EUROPEAN UNION (2012), *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)*, Official Journal of the European Union, C 326/47, available online at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu>, art. 174

urban areas problems and overtime is able to include in its scope urban development.

Indeed, *territorial cohesion* should be considered as a multidisciplinary concept. The first explicit reference to territorial cohesion was through the Commission 1993 White Paper, which invoked the competitiveness improvement of EU weaker regions¹³². In particular, some scholars such as Eduardo Medeiros define territorial cohesion as “the process of promoting a more cohesive and balanced territory by 1) supporting the reduction of socioeconomic territorial imbalances; 2) promoting environmental sustainability; 3) reinforcing and improving the territorial cooperation/ governance processes; and 4) reinforcing and establishing a more polycentric urban system”.¹³³

Especially, ESPON the European Spatial Planning Observation Network already in 2006 recognized the reduction of territorial disparities as one of the main goals of European Spatial Policy. Back in 1999, the final version of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) had been approved by the Informal Council of Ministers of Spatial Planning of the EU Commission. ESDP aimed to provide the EU with a multi-sectoral strategy for spatial development by fostering the development of a polycentric and balanced urban system, and by strengthening the partnership between urban and rural areas, the integrated and accessible infrastructure and the wise management of natural and

¹³² MEDEIROS (2016), *Territorial Cohesion: An EU Concept*, European Journal of Spatial Development, available online at: <http://www.nordregio.se> , p. 7.

¹³³ MEDEIROS, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

cultural heritage¹³⁴. Spatial planning refers to all the methods and approaches to enhance a balanced urban planning perspective at the EU level or even a balanced distribution of people and activities in urban and rural areas.

Thus, this perspective of more polycentric urban system through the promotion of balanced spatial or urban development has been connected since the beginning, even before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, to the broad concept of *territorial cohesion*¹³⁵. Therefore, the above-mentioned ESPON 2006 report states that “urban areas are important drivers of territorial development in Europe. Their importance derives mainly from their functional specialization, which is also the reason why not only large cities are of national or international importance. Metropolitan regions and small and medium-sized cities are significant nodes for territorial cohesion and competitiveness at European and national level”¹³⁶.

Accordingly, since the Lisbon treaty and the inclusion of territorial cohesion among EU shared competences and EU general objectives (art. 3 TEU), the “territorial cohesion goal should not only be concerned with the convergence of economic and social indicators, but also with changes in the urban network”¹³⁷; despite the absence of an explicit reference to urbanized and metropolitan areas according to art. 174 TFEU. To

¹³⁴ VERDONK (2014), *Urban policies in Europe*, in VAN DEN BERG, VAN DER MEER, CARVALHO, *Cities as Engines of Sustainable Competitiveness, European Urban Policy in Practice*, Rotterdam: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, p. 39.

¹³⁵ VERDONK, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹³⁶ ESPON (2006), *Territory matters for competitiveness and cohesion. Facets of regional diversity and potentials in Europe*, Luxembourg: ESPON Synthesis Report III, p. 5.

¹³⁷ MEDEIROS, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

conclude, policies regarding regions and cities do not represent anymore an exclusive domain of member states, on behalf of subsidiarity¹³⁸. In fact, according to the report issued by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy in 2011, *Cities of Tomorrow*, the European Union may not have a direct policy competence in urban development. However, during the last two decades urban issues have so considerably increased their relevance at the European level that a shared vision and an explicit model of urban development has emerged. This shared vision or explicit model of European urban development includes all the dimensions of sustainable development in an integrated way¹³⁹.

2.4.2 The Urban dimension of European Policies

The absence of clear legal basis, as already mentioned, has not prevented the European Union and European cities from dynamically cooperate in a wide range of urban development projects, by exploiting already tested European policy frameworks such as Cohesion policy and by reciprocally shaping each other's policy formulation processes. The Urban Agenda for the EU represents the last step in the process of urban policy *Europeanization*. In fact, “the *Pact of Amsterdam*, concluded on 30 May 2016, is supposed to bridge the gap between the supranational, national and local levels and build up a coherent urban policy framework”,

¹³⁸ HESS, CYCAK (2018), *The European Union and Urban Development, A Dossier*, Hong Kong: European Union Academic Programme, p. 108.

¹³⁹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR REGIONAL POLICY (2011), *Cities of Tomorrow: Challenges, visions, ways forward*, available online at: <http://ec.europa.eu> , p.10.

though it is only a non-binding declaration of intents which is not able to change current treaty-based competences and decision-making powers¹⁴⁰.

Since, as already explained, it is possible to report a process of *Europeanization* of urban development policy over the last thirty years. Moreover, in order to better assess the implication of the Urban agenda for the EU, it is necessary to track the main steps taken by European institutions, in particular the Commission and the Council, to foster the involvement of urban and local actors in the enforcement of multi-level governance and urban policy modernization¹⁴¹. In this sense, *Europeanization* occurred because the European Union transformed urban development from a specific task of a sectorial policy (such as Cohesion and Environmental policy) to a “core principle mainstreamed into the entire long-term strategic development framework of the Union”¹⁴².

Since the beginning of 90s, the European Commission oriented its attention towards cities. In the original treaties there was no clear reference to cities. They mentioned cohesion, development, regional policies, local autonomy, underlying the necessity of balancing the growth levels of different territories inside the EU in terms of citizens’ needs, without any explicit interest towards the involvement and the programming of the urban domain. It was necessary the action of the European Parliament through the regional intergroup and the intervention of the then President of the Commission Jacques Delors to finally introduce urban matters in the European Agenda¹⁴³. In particular, in June 1990 the European Commission

¹⁴⁰ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁴² HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁴³ TORTORELLA (2015), *Politica di coesione e questione urbana*, Roma: Carrocci Editore, p.38.

published a *Green Paper on the Urban Environment* aimed to predict the future action of the EU in the urban policy field. This paper for the very first time offered a definition of the European city “as the embodiment of a specifically European development and way of life, supposedly threatened by contemporary urban developmental trends”¹⁴⁴.

The main actors which played a relevant role in building the European urban policy-domain were the European Commission, the Council for the European Union and the Committee of the Regions. In particular, the European Commission claimed to have ordinary legislative powers in urban matters but as said there is no explicit legal basis and it does not have the necessary administrative capacity to enforce urban policy. However, the European Commission policy units which mostly shaped the European urban perspective have been the *Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy* (DG REGIO) and the *Directorate General for the Environment* (DG ENV). In the first case, the principal task of the DG REGIO is Cohesion Policy, a policy aimed to reduce or eradicate the economic development imbalances across member states and their regions. Thus, Cohesion policy operated overtime as redistributive strategy by fostering the economic capacity of EU territories¹⁴⁵. It also represented the main framework through which urban matters have been issued overtime. This is why in 2012 the DG REGIO has been renamed Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy. On the other hand, DG ENV has associated the European urban perspective to the issue of environmental protection and energy efficient production and consumption, since urban centers are

¹⁴⁴ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁵ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

the main actors who need to work to reduce environmental risks. Furthermore, the creation of the European Committee of Regions (CoR), which represented the European assembly of local and regional representatives, gave to cities a direct right to speech within the European institutional framework. Despite this it has only the power to be consulted on the policies which affects its domain, and the ability to balance the power of the Commission and its Directorates-Generals by lobbying for the interests of regional and local actors¹⁴⁶.

Not to forget the role that the Council of the European Union played by drafting charters, declarations and other soft law documents which reflected the evolution of member states ministers' positions on urban issues and the degree of accord they managed to achieve overtime.

Starting with the Commission, it is necessary to highlight how urban development from a sectoral competence of the two Directorates-General have progressively transformed into an operational objective which involves the most EU policy fields and development strategies. Cohesion policy has always had the main aims of territorial balance and redistributive equalization. Regional dimension has always represented the optimal scale for operative programs, and regional administrations the most suitable planning and implementing authorities. At the beginning of 1990s, with the introduction of the principle of subsidiarity through the Single European Act, a renewed interest for the closest level of government to citizens emerged. Thus, municipalities and cities, in particular, started to be considered appropriate for some sort of autonomy

¹⁴⁶ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

in implementing programs¹⁴⁷. Thus, the DG REGIO realized the first edition of the Urban Pilot Projects (UPPs) from 1989 to 1993 within the framework of Cohesion policy. In 1994 the URBAN Community initiative was launched, and it provided support “for convergence between regions and for economic competitiveness among them”¹⁴⁸. Moreover, according to European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) art. 10; these projects, then renamed URBAN, had the goal to co-finance researches, pilot actions and innovative projects aimed to reduce or eradicate the problems of urban disadvantage, urban decay, environmental exploitation, unemployment. During the second planning period from 1994 to 1999, DG REGIO launched, the second edition of urban pilot projects, now under the name of URBAN I, with the main goal of requalifying inner areas which faced a process of depopulation, cities’ outskirts and industrial suburbs and it was still co-financed by the ERDF. URBAN II followed from 2000 to 2006. It was not only dedicated to peripheries of big metropolitan areas but also to the formulation and implementation of innovative strategies to contrast middle sized cities’ social and economic decay.

In 1997, the European Commission started a full-scale urban-related data collection project for comparative purposes, better known as the Urban Audit (UA) which surveyed all the editions of the urban pilot projects. Thus, these first urban initiatives, co-financed by the European ERDF and national and regional authorities, employed “an integrative, cross-sectorial focus on helping deprived urban neighborhoods, combatting social exclusion and poverty alleviation”¹⁴⁹ and on enhancing

¹⁴⁷ TORTORELLA, *op. cit.*, p.38.

¹⁴⁸ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁹ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

at the same time the economic growth potential of those areas. URBAN II was the last edition of the initiative which ended in 2006. Another objective of URBAN II was to encourage the exchange of best practices across European member states concerning urban requalification methods with a policy learning scope. This intent culminated in the creation of URBACT in 2002, a specific programme aimed to promote networking practices across cities which benefited of URBAN projects' funding¹⁵⁰. All these initiatives were fundamental to bring urban development into the European agenda by stressing the importance of implementing new models of governance based on the involvement of local authorities in the policy-making process.

In 2005 the EU *Commission created an Interservice Group on Urban Development*, to foster an integrative policy approach, involving all Directorates-General concerned with urban issues under the coordination of the DG REGIO¹⁵¹. The aim of the Commission was to develop a cross-sectoral approach aimed to obtain increasing competence on urban issues, strengthening multi-level governance and reduce the discretion power of member states, by empowering local and regional authorities. It seemed that the Commission wanted to employ EU funding to create a European urban policy under its leadership. However, this possibility stopped when DG REGIO dropped direct financing for cities in occasion of the Cohesion planning period 2007-2013, since a change of direction occurred. In fact, the Commission preferred to promote a mainstream urban development strategy into the three all-embracing goals introduced by the European

¹⁵⁰ TORTORELLA, *op. cit.*, p.42.

¹⁵¹ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

Lisbon Strategy. Those goals were cohesion, regional competitiveness and employment and territorial cooperation. Most of the urban development initiatives were absorbed under the second objective of regional competitiveness. This resulted in the possibility for all regions to apply for European structural funds and integrate urban development in their national and regional operational programmes in accordance to the *National Strategic Reference Framework*¹⁵². Anyway, the scope was not to diminish the European support for urban development but to develop an integrated and cross-sectorial strategy to complex problems affecting urban areas and tackle them within the framework of Cohesion policy. Moreover, the *Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy* (CSG) 2007-2013 referred to cities in two occasions. They defined cities as the motors of regional development and they stressed how urban requalification projects can contribute to growth and jobs creation. Thus, CSG motivated cities to develop cross-sectorial strategies and focus on cross-sectorial matters such as urban mobility, infrastructure, culture promotion, innovation, support to local business, service accessibility etc. This change in the support to urban development did not result in a reduction of funding. Actually, funding opportunities increased. However, the real change was the introduction of new funding mechanisms such as cross-financing options which allowed resources from one fund to be employed for different objectives, and at the same time, different funds (ERDF ESF and CF) may provide money destined to integrated urban development projects. Thus, cities tackled industrial decline, restructuring

¹⁵² HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

of urban infrastructure, environmental problems, energy efficiency etc., despite the support for urban projects was hidden by the overwhelming cross-sectoral scope of the projects aimed to address Cohesion policy objectives¹⁵³. Hence, the CSG prioritized the urban development initiatives of regions which presented a broader context of thematic priorities. The establishment of INTERREG programme was a clear example of this change in methodology, adopted by DG REGIO. In 2007 from a community initiative able to strengthen cross boundary cooperation among contiguous regions; it became a funding system within the framework of the ERDF which promoted transnational and interregional cooperation between different geographical location which were not essentially adjacent¹⁵⁴.

Furthermore, during the 2007-2013 programming period the involvement of cities and the development of Operational Programme (OP) for Cohesion Policy funds was defined by the art. 11 of the *General regulation for the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund* which provides that “each Member State shall organize where appropriate and in accordance with current national rules and practices a *partnership* with authorities and bodies such as the competent regional, local and other public authorities, the economic and social partners [and] any other appropriate body”¹⁵⁵. Moreover, partnership should cover the formulation, the implementation, the monitoring and the evaluation of Operational Programmes.

¹⁵³ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁴ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁵ COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (2006), *Council regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006*, Official Journal of the European Union L 210/25, art. 11.

During the Cohesion programming period 2007/2013, the Commission also encouraged more private investment. In particular, new financial tools were introduced to finance urban development projects and the abovementioned regulation *CE 1083/2006* states that:

“as a part of an operational programme, the Structural Funds may finance expenditure in respect of an operation comprising contributions to support financial engineering instruments for enterprises, primarily small and medium-sized such as venture capital funds, guarantee funds and loan funds, and for urban development funds, that is, funds investing in public-private partnerships and other projects included in an integrated plan for sustainable urban development.”¹⁵⁶

In particular, in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Council of Europe Development Bank, the EU activated initiatives such as JESSICA (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas) aimed to support urban projects based on a “share of Structural funds allocations in revolving funds rather than using them as a one-time grant”¹⁵⁷.

Between 2000 and 2013, the European Union also provided funds to finance research and development by implementing *Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development (FP)* which are European funding programmes to support research in the *European research area* (ERA). In occasion of FP6 and FP7 drafting, the EU Commission in the first case disseminated urban projects across different research and development sectors and in the second case almost tripled

¹⁵⁶ COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, *op. cit.*, art. 44.

¹⁵⁷ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

funds for research and development and launched the *Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme* (CIP). Under the CIP, the sub-programme Information and Communication Technologies Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP) concentrated on how to apply information technology to smart cities projects. Then in order to unify national research programmes on urban development, the EU Commission introduced the *Joint Programming Initiative Urban Europe* to promote joint research projects and enhance the cooperation among European researchers from different member states.

Finally, in 2008 the EU founded the Covenant of Mayors which represents a support network for cities and towns which are concerned with the support of sustainable energy activities and want to compel themselves voluntarily and publicly with specific CO₂ reduction objectives and introduce sustainable energy action plans¹⁵⁸.

The funding period 2014-2020 introduced several novelties in the framework of Cohesion policy and urban development initiatives in particular. The main objective of the current funding period is *smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* since it represents the hallmark of European ten-year strategy, *Europe 2020*. In particular, Cohesion policy sets eleven priority areas: strengthening research, technological development and innovation; enhancing access to and quality of information and communication technologies; enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy; promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and

¹⁵⁸ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

management; preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency; promoting sustainable transport and improving network infrastructures; promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility; promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination; investing in education, training and lifelong learning; and improving the efficiency of public administration¹⁵⁹. It is evident that cities are not listed among these priority areas. However, in terms of research and development strategies for the funding period 2014-2020, there is an increasing interest in the study of local and urban quality of life, as an indicator of competitiveness of urban centers. Thus, the initial focus of European urban development strategies on social fairness has been replaced by the enhancement of competitiveness, growth and smart specialization in line with the deep-rooted concept of polycentric spatial development. Moreover, Hess and Cycak explained how the *Innovation Union Initiative* accentuated Union-wide knowledge exchange with the objective of introducing triple-helix model of cooperation based on interaction among industry, government and the academic sector.

Anyway, the key drivers of urban development remain European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). In particular, the European regional and Development Fund (ERDF) projected an over-all investment in urban areas of EUR 80-90 billion for the current funding period¹⁶⁰. In fact, the second chapter of the Regulation EU 1301/2013 on the *European Regional Development Fund and on specific provisions concerning the Investment for growth and jobs goal* include *Specific provisions on the*

¹⁵⁹ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁶⁰ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

treatment of particular territorial features. In particular the art. 7 states that:

“The ERDF shall support, within operational programmes, sustainable urban development through strategies that set out integrated actions to tackle the economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges affecting urban areas, while taking into account the need to promote urban-rural linkages”¹⁶¹.

Thus, the integrated and cross-sectoral approach to urban development remains but there is a clear objective of the ERDF, which is to support *sustainable urban development*. In particular, these integrated strategies must address economic, environmental, social and demographic challenges of urban areas, through integrated solutions. The Regulation also fixes that the ERDF must invest at least the 5 per cent of its budget in integrated solutions for sustainable urban development¹⁶². Considering the opportunity for cities to co-finance the projects, funds for sustainable urban development may also increase.

Accordingly, urban projects must be implemented within the regulatory framework of Cohesion Policy and they must be developed as *Integrated Territorial Investments* (ITIs), which may be financed by both the ESIF and the Research and development funding instruments. The proposal would be financed as ITIs only if they include more than one priority axis of Cohesion policy or more than one operational programme and represent an example of the *integrated territorial strategy*¹⁶³.

¹⁶¹ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, COUNCIL (2013), *Regulation (EU) No. 1301/2013*, Official Journal of the European Union L 347/289, art. 7.1.

¹⁶² EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, Council, *op. cit.*, art. 7.4.

¹⁶³ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

Another innovative feature of urban development strategy included in the Cohesion policy funding period 2014-2020, is the replacement of top-down approaches of the first urban-related projects with more bottom-up strategies which emphasizes the importance of citizens participation. The solution proposed for facilitating citizens involvement and which may represent a quadruple helix model of development (which adds citizens to the actors involved in the triple helix model) is the Community-led Local Development (CLLD)¹⁶⁴. In particular, DG REGIO states that this solution provide local communities with the opportunity of participating to the planning process of these local development strategies and obtaining some sorts of decision-making powers. Moreover, during this funding period resource for FP7, the CIP and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology have been replaced by Horizon 2020 strategy of research and development, which mirrors specifically the objectives of Europe 2020¹⁶⁵.

Thus, it is clear how European strategies to enhance urban development changed over time, by tracking the policies formulated and implemented by the action of the DG REGIO and within the framework of the Cohesion policy. By now, there is no distinct urban policy, despite funds for cities have increased overtime. Urban development actions developed across different policy fields and cohesion represents only one.

The other Directorate-General strictly involved in promoting urban development solutions is certainly the DG ENV. Hess and Cycak argued that “was environmental policy which decisively forged a common approach to urban development in Europe” and they also explained that

¹⁶⁴ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁶⁵ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

the proliferation of binding international agreements concerning environment protection required quick actions which concerned also the urban policy domain¹⁶⁶. European Environmental policy does not have a distinct urban component. The European Parliament and Council decision 1386/2013 on a *General Union Environment Action Programme to 2020* ‘*Living well, within the limits of our planet*’ stressed the role of urban areas in enhancing environmental policy principles and the need of strengthening the efforts for developing multi-level governance in this policy domain. In particular, the priority objective 8 of the abovementioned decision postulates the necessity of enhancing the sustainability of European cities. Moreover, the *7th Environmental Action Plan* (7th EAP) which will be guiding European environment policy until 2020 considers urban development the crucial element in the Europe 2020 strategy to enforce sustainability in urban development strategies, as the abovementioned decision specifies. In particular the *Priority objective 8* asserts that the 7th EAP shall ensure that by 2020 “a majority of cities in the Union are implementing policies for sustainable urban planning and design, including innovative approaches for urban public transport and mobility, sustainable buildings, energy efficiency and urban biodiversity conservation”¹⁶⁷.

It is also necessary to stress that DG ENV was the first administrative body to request urban action on the basis of the UN and Gothenburg principles¹⁶⁸. The DG ENV took this position since it is

¹⁶⁶ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁶⁷ EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, COUNCIL (2013), *Decision No 1386/2013/EU*, Official Journal of the European Union L 354/171, Priority objective 8, art. 90.

¹⁶⁸ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

traditionally committed with urban-related issues. The *Green Paper on the Urban Environment* which the DG drafted in 1990 represents one of the first example of support and understanding of the European city. In fact, the Green Paper do not only address environmental protection *sensu stricto*. It also included a complete reshaping of urban priorities such as:

“the redevelopment of urban wasteland, the priority for public transport systems, cycling and walking, as well as the gradual reduction of private motor vehicle traffic by all means available. It had recommended strong heritage conservation, measure and support for non-polluting SMEs in densified, mixed-use urban core [...] municipal water management, land/soil decontamination, waste reduction and waste recycling.”¹⁶⁹

It also addressed coordinated actions to foster energy planning on the urban scale. Successively in 1998, the Communication on *Sustainable Urban Development in the European Union: A Framework for action* repeated the main principles for urban development which were economic prosperity and growth, social inclusion and urban regeneration, environmental protection and management, good urban governance and local empowerment¹⁷⁰. It also underlined the main areas of action and questioned the efficacy of the prevailing role of national interest in the decision-making processes related to urban and environmental issues, while involving sub-national actors result more efficient. It invoked the EU Commission in guiding urban and environmental policy-making. Lastly, it firstly provided an alternative approach to promote a European

¹⁶⁹ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁷⁰ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

urban agenda such as the improvement of local urban governance, the dissemination of information and the necessity to create a European network for conveying urban interests¹⁷¹. Also, the 2006 *Thematic Strategy on Urban Environment* elaborated four priority themes for enhancing sustainable urban and environmental policy making which were sustainable urban management, sustainable urban transport, construction and urban design. The Thematic strategy gave huge support to the process of information dissemination, the exchange of best practices and the progressive elaboration of a cooperation network for cities policy-making and research. This strategy recapitulated the EU Commission approach to urban and environmental policy-making since the Green Paper. It also summed up the main principles the EU has to follow to handle urban development issues which were financial support for local initiatives, multi-level governance, urban issues awareness and expertise building, enhancement of information dissemination and best practices exchange.

With the 2007-2013 Cohesion funding period, urban areas could employ Cohesion and Structural funds to implement environmental policy initiatives such as improving air and public transport quality, waste management and treatment, energy efficiency, decontamination of soil and urban regeneration actions¹⁷².

Since 1990s, the European Commission started to be involved with CO₂ and Greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. In particular the adoption of the Europe 2020 strategy decisively committed the EU with 80-95% percent reduction by 2015¹⁷³. Thus, the 20 per cent of EU budget

¹⁷¹ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹⁷² HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

¹⁷³ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

was dedicated to climate change mitigation and adaptation and European Emission Trading System (ETS) was established in 2005. More attention was assigned to renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and low carbon technologies for urban areas development. In 2012, the European Commission presented the *2020 Climate and Energy Package* and the Union publicly committed together with member states to cut a 20 per cent of its emissions, to employ 20 per cent more of renewable energy sources and improve 20 per cent of its energy efficiency. This commitment was enforced in 2014 and increased from 20 to 40 per cent. The final step would be the reduction of 80 percent of those levels by 2050 in all sectors of the European economy. Accordingly, the Europe 2020 strategy and the resultant legislation exercised pressure on urban areas to increase the employment of renewable energy and energy efficiency through investments and decentralized local projects such as smart cities projects. Since greenhouse gas (GHG) emission are mostly produced in the transport sector, in 2013 the *Urban Mobility Package* proposed further actions to reduce GHG emissions by the drafting of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMs) for urban regions¹⁷⁴.

Therefore, the plethora of projects sponsored by DG ENV to foster the sustainable urban development principle results almost incalculable. It is also hard to isolate concrete projects from research and information dissemination frameworks. Anyway, it is evident that European urban development, whatever is the directorate general in charge, must follow the same principles which are the once set by the Europe 2020 strategy.

¹⁷⁴ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

Thus, climate change mitigation and sustainability have become crucial and are included in almost all projects.

The Committee of Regions (CoR) represents another crucial actor in the development of an integrated urban development policy. The CoR was introduced in the European legal framework with the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992. The institutionalization of CoR determined a remarkable change since it started to include regions and cities as crucial actors in the European policy-making process. It mirrored the multi-level governance ideas contained in the 2001 White Paper on Governance by enforcing transparency, participation and subsidiarity. The Maastricht treaty did not provide the CoR with a decision-making power, since it has according to treaties only an advisory function to the Commission and Council when cohesion, transport, public health, education, youth and culture are discussed and touches local and regional affairs¹⁷⁵. The CoR is composed by 350 members and they are all proposed by the member states. Other 350 members are appointed as alternate members. They are chosen in terms of their expertise and experience in local and regional affairs. The Committee of Regions drafts reports to be sent to the Commission by addressing specific policy proposals. It may issue also inter-institutional Communications and it represents a relevant forum in the exchange of best practices in multi-level governance. It may also examine directives and evaluate their regional and local impact. The CoR has the right to debate and issue opinions regarding territorial cohesion, economic and social policy, education and research, environment and energy, governance and

¹⁷⁵ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

natural resources¹⁷⁶. When the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, the CoR saw its advisory role confirmed in the European institutional framework. Overtime, the CoR influenced the creation of a wide network of sub-national authorities and civil society organizations and it was able to exert an evident influence on European institutions by shaping the policy process and sometimes setting the agenda in its relevant areas. Thus, during the last twenty years, the Committee of Regions resulted one of the main drivers of urban development in its mainstreamed and holistic character. In particular, the CoR was able to indirectly influence the Commission to increasingly strengthening integrated urban actions according to Europe 2020 strategy. It also consolidated the application of the principle of subsidiarity and multi-level governance. Lastly, it helped to increase cities and urban regions decision-making entitlements.

2.5 European Urban policies: The Council Declarations

In the process of introducing urban development among European scopes, member states' role cannot be ignored. In fact, the European Commission has no institutional right to introduce a new policy without the support of the Council of the European Union. In this case the Commission needs at least the tacit consent of the Council, and in particular of member states' ministers in charge of regional and/or spatial planning. Inside the Council, the Presidency represents a crucial driver for policy-making. The drafting of *Declarations* and *Charters* strongly depended on the role of the Council Presidency to acknowledge the

¹⁷⁶ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

relevance of urban development for EU. However, the Committee of Regions and the European Commission influenced the process, by setting the agendas and delivering inputs to the Council and the Presidency of the Council. Thus, these *Declarations* and *Charters* published periodically since Lille 2000 represented “periodic reassessments of the state of EU Urban regional thinking” and the level of European consensus on urban matters¹⁷⁷ without a legally binding nature.

Firstly, the French Presidency issued the *Lille Action Programme* in 2000. It addressed overall priorities for urban development which were: a better acknowledgement of cities and towns role in spatial planning; a new approach for urban policies based on integrated and balanced urban development, and partnership across public and public sectors; the involvement of citizens in policy-making; the reduction of social and ethnic segregation; the dissemination of best practices, the employment of technology for urban affairs, increasing research related to cities and urban matters across EU¹⁷⁸.

Secondly, in 2004, the Dutch Presidency of the Council presented the Rotterdam Declaration. It recognized the different nature of European cities and stressed the role of cities in fostering economic competitiveness, social inclusion and environmental quality as already specified by the Lisbon agenda. There is no specific provision regarding urban development. Cities are considered as “livable places of choice and cultural identity”¹⁷⁹. It stresses the necessity of enforcing bottom-up models of urban governance and support the importance of knowledge and

¹⁷⁷ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁷⁸ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

¹⁷⁹ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

best practices dissemination. More importantly, this declaration represents the ending of the conflict between the Commission and member states, since its provisions mirrored Commission commitments in urban development.

In 2005, during the British presidency, the Council approved the Bristol Accord. It stressed the principle of sustainability and emphasized the need of creating active, inclusive, safe, well run, connected and served, environmentally sensitive, well designed and fair communities. The accord pointed out how this broad objective could be achieved only through economic growth and the direct involvement of lower levels of government. This accord was also perfectly in line with Commission Cohesion strategies.

In 2007, the Bristol Accord was replaced by the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable Cities and it happened under the German Presidency of the Council. Before the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Leipzig Charter probably represented the main achievement for the enhancement of a comprehensive urban policy in Europe. It wanted to link urban development with the objectives of economic growth, social policy and environmental protection. Thus, it mirrored the mainstream integrated approach which would have characterized Cohesion policy funding period from 2007 to 2013. Meanwhile, the Commission approved the *Territorial Agenda for the EU* which endorsed the commitment with the idea of polycentric development model, able to reduce urban and economic concentration. Thus, territorial cohesion became the main objective of the Territorial Agenda, and it should have been achieved through the promotion of multilevel governance, regional-local partnerships,

networking of regions and cities on the issues relevant for them such as transportation infrastructure, IT access, renewable energy supply, reduction of climate change risk etc¹⁸⁰. Thus, the Council endorsed again policies already implemented by the Commission. The Leipzig Charter was approved the same day of the Territorial Agenda, by the same Council of ministers. The Territorial Agenda reaffirmed the importance of territorial cohesion and urban sustainability principles, the necessity of undertaking an integrated approach to enhance urban development. It also supported the relevance of knowledge dissemination and the exchange of good practices among cities. It basically represented the attempt to make European urban development converge on the same objectives and strategies across member states and their regional and local authorities. The arrival of the financial crisis made the commitments contained in the Territorial agenda and the Leipzig Charter much more imperative. Thus, the Council issued the Marseille statement, known also as the *The Sustainable and Cohesive City statement*, which confirmed the engagement with Leipzig. In order to respect this statement, the Council understood the necessity to closely monitor the advancement of its objectives and thus, the *Reference framework for European Sustainable Cities* was approved¹⁸¹.

The next step before the Pact of Amsterdam was the Toledo Declaration. It was approved in 2010 in occasion of the *Informal Ministerial Meeting on and Urban Development* including representatives from the EU Parliament, the EU Commissioner for Regional Policy

¹⁸⁰ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁸¹ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

members of the Committee of Regions, the European Investment Bank and the European Economic and Social Committee¹⁸². The declaration reiterated the support for the integrated approach and the creation of smarter, more inclusive and sustainable cities. Then, it collocated urban development into the framework of Europe 2020 objectives. It reaffirmed the importance of social, environmental, economic, cultural advances together with the need for better governance. Moreover, the Toledo Declaration specified that integrated approach means that sectorial policy is not effective in promoting sustainable urban development. On the contrary, effects on other policy fields should be taken into consideration. This is the reason why multilevel governance, coordination and cooperation across member states, local and regional authorities were even again considered strategic to better integrate policy responses and face multifaceted problems. Therefore, the Toledo Declaration did not offer any innovative proposal to the urban development debate. It is relevant since it empowered the Commission to follow its integrated strategy to face urban development issues, it built interinstitutional consensus at the European Level and it finally seemed able to completely pave the way for the drafting of an Urban Agenda for the EU. This consensus was strengthened by the 2011 EU Parliament Resolution *European Urban Agenda and its Future in Cohesion Policy* which fully sustained the agreement reached at the EU level with the Toledo Declaration. Anyway, in 2011 the European and Social Committee pointed out in its opinion on *Metropolitan Areas and City Regions in Europe 2020* how the conflicts

¹⁸² HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

among European institutions and member states was still going on, since member states did not stop their obstructive practices towards the development of a European urban development agenda¹⁸³. The Parliament argued that in order to build an comprehensive and logical urban policy approach, this conflict among member states and EU institutions had to come into an end and multi-level governance must become the rule. The opinion of the Parliament reaffirmed the fundamental role the Commission played to enhance urban development. Moreover, it condemned member states obstructive practices, seeking to neutralize their influence on EU policy-making in favour of multi-level cooperation between EU institutions, regional and local authorities, with the goal of formulating an urban agenda until 2050.

The last step before the approval of the Pact of Amsterdam, was the Riga declaration issued in 2015. Before that, the Commission strengthened its leading role in European urban policy making through the White Paper, *The Urban Dimension of EU Policies – Key Features of an EU Urban Agenda*, which inaugurated a long debate concerning how the agenda should be formulated and then implemented, which should be the balance among the role of national governments, European institutions, regional and local authorities etc.¹⁸⁴ Thus, after this long discussion, EU Ministers in charge of Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters met in Riga. This declaration mostly kept pushing for the drafting of a European Urban Agenda, multilevel governance, integrated approach etc. However, most relevantly, it suggested that the Commission should identify some core

¹⁸³ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

¹⁸⁴ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 113

policy-areas where urban policy-making should be addressed. Moreover, it linked the EU Urban Agenda drafting process to the objectives of the better regulation package issued by the Juncker Commission.

2.6 Policy entrepreneurship and the Urban Agenda for the EU:

The role of Dutch Presidency of the Council

In the previous paragraph, what happened before the Urban Agenda for the EU has been traced. It has been long explained how the European Union does not have an explicit competence in terms of urban development policy. Thus, the Urban dimension has been incorporated by sectorial policies such as Cohesion and Environmental policy. This is the reason why the European urban development model has been shaped by adopting the same approaches that those sectorial policies set out for other objectives such as the integrated strategies, local participative actions, multi-level governance, place-based approach etc. Moreover, the Urban Agenda for the EU, despite vigorously promoted by the Commission, represents the last step of intergovernmental dynamics inside the Council of the European Union. Anyway, its impact should not be underestimated, since it also represents a radical change in how overarching policy proposals affecting sectors where the EU has no explicit competence have been successfully introduced in the European policy-cycle. In particular, it is interesting to assess how the Dutch Presidency acting as a policy entrepreneur set the agenda of the Council and then, on May 2016, it determined the final drafting of the Urban Agenda for the EU. The Pact of Amsterdam, as Pazos-Vidal extensively explained, represents a particular case of policy entrepreneurialism since a small group of policy-makers,

despite their low relative power but, thanks to their strong commitment, their know-how and the occurrence of a window of opportunity managed to set the agenda and formulate their policy proposal during the policy cycle¹⁸⁵. Cohen defines policy entrepreneurs as:

“individuals who exploit opportunities to influence policy outcomes to increase their self-interests – without having the necessary resources for achieving this goal alone. [...] They try to influence a given reality to create new horizons of opportunity using innovative ideas and strategies. These persistent individuals use innovative ideas and non-traditional strategies to promote desired policy-outcomes.”¹⁸⁶

In the specific case of the Urban Agenda for the EU, the difficulty in the policy formulation process was determined by EU limited jurisdiction which relatively changed when the Lisbon treaty entered into force and the objective of territorial cohesion was introduced. Thus, since the Lisbon Treaty, a cross-reading of art.3 TEU made territorial cohesion the legal basis for urban development policies. It managed to overcome the legal obstacle of the subsidiarity principle which represented an argument to deny any competence in urban planning to the EU. This obstacle was also avoided since the multilevel-governance approach in urban matters was preferred to centralization. Multilevel governance also allowed the development of networks and multilevel policy communities cooperating

¹⁸⁵ PAZOS-VIDAL (2017), *The New EU urban agenda as a case of policy entrepreneurialism. From Territorial policy to metegovernance*, available online at: http://www.regionalstudies.org/uploads/documents/RSA_Dublin_Article_EU_Urban_Agenda_Metagovernance_-Serafin_Pazos-Vidal_EN_final.pdf

¹⁸⁶ COHEN (2016), *Policy entrepreneurs and agenda setting*, in ZAHARIADIS, *Handbook of Public Policy Agenda Setting*, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc., p. 180.

together and strongly concerned with these issues. Pazos-Vidal explains how the Dutch government in this context emerged as a policy-entrepreneur. It does for two sorts of reasons. Firstly, the Dutch government showed a comparative advantage to influence the EU and other member states in urban development issues thanks to its expertise in this policy-field. Moreover, Dutch Ministry of Interior policy-makers wanted to affirm their internal position within the Ministry and the Government and the Urban Agenda represented an occasion which cannot be missed¹⁸⁷. In fact, the policy-makers who drafted the Rotterdam Declaration in 2004 were the same who sponsored and worked on the Pact of Amsterdam from 2013 to 2015. Moreover, the Commission, as deeply explained before, highly contributed to the creation of an urban policy at the European level and this depended also on its internal dynamics. Pazos-Vidal describes how each Directorate-General competes for gaining incremental political attention. Thus, the DG REGIO worked by building an urban ministerial and stakeholder policy community and worked to secure a privileged position to the so-called informal Council of Ministers in charge of Cohesion policy in urban-related matters¹⁸⁸. However, the crucial impulse to the Urban agenda for the EU has been determined by the concurrent materialization of a mixture of political opportunity and calculation. In terms of political opportunity, the main elements were the new place-based approach of Cohesion policy 2014-2020 and the Europe 2020 strategy. In fact, at the 2014 City Forum, the Urban Agenda was advocated as the Europe 2020 reference in urban policy-making. In terms

¹⁸⁷ PAZOS-VIDAL, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸⁸ PAZOS-VIDAL, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

of political calculation, Pazos-Vidal argued that fundamental has resulted the activism of the former Commissioner for Regional Policy Johannes Hahn who wanted to leave its mark on cohesion policy and strictly focused on urban issues and changed the name of DG REGIO into Directorate-General for Regional and Urban policy. He also requested a stronger role of coordination for the Commission in urban matters¹⁸⁹. He committed the DG REGIO in creating opportunities to enhance programs able to directly involve regional and local authorities to enforce multilevel governance but also to reduce the obstructive power of national governments. Thus, “the political entrepreneurs within REGIO were able to use [the window of political opportunity] to advance their own pre-existing ideas on urban issues”¹⁹⁰. Consequently, the DG REGIO published the *Cities of Tomorrow* document in 2011. In addition, after the planning of Cohesion funding for 2014-2020 and before the end of Commissioner Hahn’s mandate; a *Communication from the Commission on the urban dimension of EU policies: key elements for an urban agenda for the EU* was issued in 2014. This Communication represents the most relevant official document concerning the Urban Agenda for the EU ever formulated by the Commission. However, more than the efforts of the Commission, the Pact of Amsterdam resulted from the determination of the policy entrepreneurs from the Dutch Government and in particular from the Dutch Ministry of the Interior. In fact, the effective formulation of the Urban Agenda, as Van Lierop said, lead from the Commission towards the Council¹⁹¹. The

¹⁸⁹ PAZOS-VIDAL, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁰ PAZOS-VIDAL, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁹¹ VAN LIEROP (2015), *Developing an EU Urban Agenda*, Brussels: European Parliamentary Research Service, p.5.

impetus was given by the Conclusions of the Informal Council in Vilnius in 2013, since it mentions the leading role of the Dutch government which would have taken the Presidency of the Council in 2016¹⁹². The Dutch negotiators started to work immediately to set the scope of the agenda, by arranging several preparatory meetings even before obtaining the Presidency of the Council. During these meetings all the relevant stakeholders such as municipalities organizations (EUROCITIES and CEMR) participated. Thus, it is clearly evident how the preparation of the Urban Agenda resulted in a very unusual and participatory working method. Moreover, it was the Riga declaration that in 2015 stated how European urban policy was destined to go beyond the conventional issues deriving from Cohesion and Regional policies provisions. Additionally, the Urban Agenda represented an effort in promoting Better Regulation at the EU level regarding urban issues. This decision to link the Urban Agenda with the Better Regulation Package introduced by the Juncker Commission was strategically rooted, since the Commission could not oppose to a new policy tool which contained a support to its most recent policies¹⁹³. The coexistence of all those interactions at the same time provided the policy opportunity necessary for the Council to definitely conclude the path towards the Urban Agenda for the EU. The reason why most of the actors impacted by this process accepted what was happening; may be understood considering that regional and local authorities were involved during all the negotiation process together with their stakeholders' organizations. After the signing of the Pact of Amsterdam in

¹⁹² PAZOS-VIDAL, *op. cit.*, p.9.

¹⁹³ PAZOS-VIDAL, *op. cit.*, p.11.

May 2016, the final approval necessary to establish a firm political commitment on its delivering resulted in an intergovernmental decision of the Council. More specifically, it was issued through the General Affairs Council Conclusions adopted on 24 June 2016 in Luxembourg. However, the final outcome of the Agenda, despite the legal instrument which finalized its adoption, was determined by the voluntarism and leadership of the Dutch Presidency, who took into account during the whole process other involved actors' interests, preferences and imposed constraints. Thus, the Urban Agenda for the EU represents an ambitious programme, since it not only established an overarching and holistic approach to urban issues, it also set out a new inclusive and participatory framework for decision making which mirrors the expectations of the multilevel governance. In this sense, the pilot partnerships which have been undertaken immediately after its adoption and in line with its provisions; represent a relevant illustration of the crucial difference in policy making that the agenda presents. Never, in the field of European urban policy-making, there was such a great influence that all actors had in the discussions of the Urban Agenda¹⁹⁴. Thus, by now, the Pact of Amsterdam results the most remarkable element in the progressive process of Europeanization of urban policies. However, the Urban Agenda does not represent the conclusion of this process, since it presents several challenges and shortcomings which would be better analyzed afterwards and still need to be fixed. Its capability to strengthen Europeanization of urban policy-making depends on the feasibility of the new model of multi-

¹⁹⁴ PAZOS-VIDAL, *op. cit.*, p.18.

level governance, on its capacity to progressively integrate further actors in decision-making and mostly on the ability to keep cities the main areas of change also during the EU programming period post-2020¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹⁵ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

CHAPTER III

URBAN AGENDAS AND KEY PROVISIONS

3.1 The UN New Urban Agenda

Today, cities host more than half global population, produce more than 70% of the global GDP and they are responsible of the 70% of GHG emissions. However, their expansion is still unfinished. By 2030, there will be almost 41 megalopolis and 10 million more inhabitants. By 2050, the so-called *homo civicus* will overcome 6 billion of people and will produce 2 billion tons of waste. At the same time, cities represent pivotal catalysts of sustainable solutions. By the end of 2017, 2,5 million of commuters in Santiago will travel by wind and solar fueled trains. Singapore introduced a system for the efficient management of traffic, after the first congestion charge. Cape Town defined the objectives to enhance an ambitious water-saving scheme. San Francisco and Montreal have definitely overcome the national standards in terms of human rights protection. Thus, cities' pioneering role have been recognized by the Paris Agreement and UN Millennium Goals.

The New Urban Agenda approved in Quito by UN Habitat III Conference in October 2016 aims to exploit this urban dynamism as the engine of sustainable development. Migrations are increasing, urban areas borders are changing, and urban sprawl is emerging. Those risks have to be tackled as soon as possible and the New Urban Agenda wants to address how the role of cities may transform these trends. UN-Habitat programme has been launched by the United Nations in 1976 in order to improve the process of cities' sustainable development and citizens' quality of life. The

first Habitat conference, held in Vancouver, encouraged governments to implement a territorial-based approach for national development strategies and to involve civil society in urban development decision-making. Thus, United Nations established the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) based in Nairobi, which represents the United Nations' agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development. The second UN-Habitat conference held in Istanbul in 1996 drafted the first urban agenda. This agenda showed the commitment in curbing the urbanization process. However, the third conference held in Quito showed how it is impossible to block or reduce urbanization trends. Urbanization does not need to be curbed, it needs to be efficiently planned.

In particular, the New Urban Agenda draws attention on urban and territorial planning as a pivotal instrument to protect the environment and meet city dwellers essential needs. Without an equitable and efficient urban planning model, it is impossible to guarantee urban sustainability and control urbanization trends. The New Urban Agenda begins with the *Quito Declaration on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements for All* which includes ten points outlining the challenges and opportunities for urban areas by 2050¹⁹⁶. Urbanization imposes several challenges such as increasing inequalities, social exclusion, environmental degradation, urban sprawl which threaten sustainable development perspectives. At the same time, the New Urban Agenda recognizes that urbanization raises several opportunities such as economic growth, social and cultural development, environmental protection instruments. Once, again, urban

¹⁹⁶ UN-HABITAT (2016), *The New Urban Agenda Explainer*, available online at: http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Urban-Agenda-Explainer_Final.pdf, p.1.

planning represents the more consistent tool to address and tackle both opportunities and challenges in a sustainable way. Then, the New Urban Agenda proposes a shared vision of *human settlements for all*, where inhabitants have the right to live and build safe, equitable, healthy, accessible, resilient and sustainable cities. Hence, “cities and human settlements must be for everyone, ensuring cities for all, referred as the right to the city”.¹⁹⁷ The *right to the city* encompasses city dwellers equal rights as citizens, such as their right to adequate housing, fundamental freedoms, to efficient public services, civic and social systems, participatory governance, accessible urban mobility, city resilience to natural disasters, waste management and sustainable consumption. Then, the New Urban Agenda introduces a call to action to promote sustainable urban development considering the different national backgrounds, capacities and level of urban development. The main provision included in the New Urban Agenda consists in the *Quito Implementation Plan for the New Urban Agenda*. In fact, the United Nations accept to implement the agenda by respecting the *Transformative Commitments for Sustainable Urban Development* which are: *sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty; sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all* and; *environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development*.¹⁹⁸ Those commitments are followed by the inclusion of effective implementation methods. The main instrument to promote sustainable urban development proposed by the agenda is the participatory *planning* model, based on the introduction of integrated and

¹⁹⁷ UN-HABITAT, *op.cit.*, p.2.

¹⁹⁸ UN-HABITAT, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-3.

complementary processes involving national, sub-national and local actors; coordination between urban and rural development strategies and; international cooperation. In particular, sub-national and local actors are acknowledged as key actors in decision and policy-making processes concerning urban development. Their role will become even more relevant, if sustained by the introduction of bottom-up practices. Thus, the New Urban Agenda aims to build a new urban governance structure, to enforce planning schemes concerning urban spatial development and introduce means of implementation such as capacity development, cooperation, mobilization of financial resources, reform of legal frameworks, partnerships. At the same time, implementation cannot ignore follow-up and review mechanism and; the New Urban Agenda stresses the pivotal role of implementing systems to track progress and impact assessments which guarantee transparency and accountability. Thus, it advocates the necessity to introduce benchmarks concerning cities and urbanization processes. Moreover, the New Urban Agenda is committed to improving cities' quality of life and this pledge is contained in article 100 of the agenda itself which states:

“We will support the provision of well-designed networks of safe, inclusive for all inhabitants, accessible, green, and quality public spaces and streets, free from crime and violence, including sexual harassment and gender-based violence, considering the human-scale and measures that allow for the best possible commercial use of street-level floors, fostering local markets and commerce, both formal and informal, as well as not-for-profit community initiatives, bringing people into the public

spaces, promoting walkability and cycling towards improving health and well-being.”¹⁹⁹

Therefore, the linkage between the New Urban Agenda and the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* cannot be ignored. In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), introduced a broader and stronger urban focus. Thus, the SDG 11 aims to *make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*. In particular the SDG 11 states:

“11.1 By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums

11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons

11.3 By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries

11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage

11.5 By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations

¹⁹⁹ UNITED NATIONS (2017), *New Urban Agenda*, Quito: HABITAT III, available online at: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf> , p.25.

- 11.6 By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
- 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities
- 11.a Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning
- 11.b By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels
- 11.c Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials.”²⁰⁰

Those provisions are all included in the New Urban Agenda which encompasses also other references to Sustainable Development Goals. In particular many other SDGs result relevant to address urban development issues such as the SDG 1 aimed to *reduce poverty*; SDG 3 directed to *ensure healthy lives and promote well-being*; SDG 5 designed to achieve *gender equality and empower women*; SDG 6 aimed to *ensure availability*

²⁰⁰ UNITED NATIONS (2015), *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015, 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, available online at: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E, p.22.

and sustainable management of water and sanitation; SDG 7 intended to *guarantee access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy*; SDG 9 committed to *build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*; SDG 10 designed to *reduce inequality within and among countries* and; SDG 16 which aims to *promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*. More specifically, those linkages which bond the two abovementioned agendas together, mostly concern human rights principles and calls to end poverty, inequalities and discrimination by enforcing all the benefits coming from urbanization. Thus, the aforesaid *right to the city*, in a broad sense, may be included within the framework of human rights, since it represents the collective right of every inhabitant to equitable, universal, just, democratic and sustainable distribution of the resources, wealth, services, adequate housing, assets and opportunities offered by cities.

However, while the New Urban Agenda stresses the importance of urban planning to tackle urbanization processes and the relevance of the *right to the city* in order to empower citizens; it does not explain how to realize its main objectives. Differently from the COP 21 about climate change, it does not contain practical guidelines to adopt the key provision the agenda wants to address by 2050. This reflects the lack of quantitative data, global reliable indexes and benchmarks concerning city life and development.

It must be recognized that the European Union played a pivotal role towards Habitat III. Specifically, the EU has been at the forefront, adding

value to the final draft of the New Urban Agenda. It helped in negotiating, it facilitated compromises with other partners and it finally influenced the specific global commitments contained in the New Urban Agenda²⁰¹. The European DG REGIO and DG DEVCO²⁰² led this negotiation process in close cooperation with member states, in order to develop a common EU position and play an active role. This European commitment may be better understood considering the progressive engagement of the European Union in terms of urban development. In fact, member states show different perspectives, since several states presents very strong urban policies, while others have at least developed sectorial approaches to urban development, mostly as result of other European policies. The gradual process which led to the adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU, through the approval of the Pact of Amsterdam in 2016, was aimed to ensure stronger policy coherence and coordination in the implementation of urban policies at the European level. Thus, the connection between the New Urban Agenda and the Urban Agenda for the EU is straightforward. In particular, the art. 8 of the Urban Agenda for the EU states that it must represent the New Urban Agenda key delivery instrument in Europe ²⁰³. This explicit link between the two agendas confirms the universality of Sustainable Development Goals when implementing urban policies in Europe. In fact, the Urban Agenda for the EU stresses how it will contribute to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

²⁰¹ CAROLINE KROEKER-FALCONI (2017), *The European Union's role in the New Urban Agenda: Policy Discussion brief for the Habitat III global summit, Bratislava: Habitat for Humanity*, available online at: https://www.habitat.org/sites/default/files/EU%20Policy%20Discussion%2018012017_FINAL.pdf, p. 5.

²⁰² Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development

²⁰³ KROEKER-FALCONI, *op. cit.*, p.7.

Development, notably to the Goal 11. Moreover, the European Commission, the European Parliament and Member States have openly recognized the necessity to build bridges between the European and the global urban agendas. The European Union collaboration to the drafting of the New Urban Agenda ensured the key role of multi-stakeholder partnerships and participatory governance models, as the most relevant working method to address urban issues. These frameworks play a key role also in the Urban Agenda for the EU, since this choice results from the consideration that urban issues are complex and encompass multiple dimensions and policy areas.

3.2 The Urban Agenda for the EU

3.2.1 Key Provisions

In 2015 the Riga Declaration laid the foundations for the future development of the Urban Agenda for the EU. A European consultation process led by the Dutch Presidency of the Council and the additional workshops organized by the DG REGIO determined the selection of the twelve priority themes contained in the agenda. Therefore, in November 2015, the Directors-General for Regional and Urban Policy approved the priority themes and defined the working method, based on multi-stakeholder's partnerships, then included into the agenda. Hence, in 2016, the Dutch Presidency was ready to guarantee the approval of the Pact of Amsterdam, the creation of the pilot Partnerships and the adoption of the Council Conclusions, aimed at confirming the importance of the Urban Agenda for the EU for European institutions and member states.

The Pact of Amsterdam explicates the needs for an Urban Agenda for the EU. The first consideration expresses how the agenda “strive to involve Urban Authorities in achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge”.²⁰⁴ Moreover, since European legislation is widely implemented in urban areas; it exerts direct influence on urban authorities as key beneficiaries of European funding. Hence, the Urban Agenda for the EU results necessary to replace fragmented experiences with an integrated approach to cross-sectorial policies and different level of governments. The integrated approach, the agenda seeks to promote, is linked with the consideration that policies affecting urban areas must be complementary across different government tiers. Thus, all levels of government must be involved in this process of policy-making by ensuring coordination and effective coordination between policy-sectors, in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity. As the *Report from the Commission to the Council on the Urban Agenda for the EU* pointed out in 2017, the democratic deficit that the European Union is facing nowadays, may be addressed by reframing the governance model and offering a seat to cities at the table of policy-making. “As cities are one of the closest levels of governance to the citizens, working with them can bring the EU closer [...], have policies adapted to the needs of cities and hence deliver visible improvements to the daily lives of people”.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY (2016) *Urban Agenda for the EU: Pact of Amsterdam*, The Hague: The EUKN, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/pact-of-amsterdam.pdf, p.3.

²⁰⁵ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017), *Report from the Commission to the Council on the Urban Agenda for the EU*, Brussels: COM(2017) 657 Final, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/themes/urban/report_urban_agenda2017_en.pdf, p.3.

Indeed, the Urban Agenda for the EU offers a new policy framework which is a new form of multilevel and multi-stakeholder cooperation aimed to strengthen the urban dimension of European policies. Thus, Urban Authorities must cooperate with European Institutions, Member states, Local authorities, civil society, businesses and knowledge institutions in order to tackle the impact of EU legislation in an integrated way. In particular, three pillars of European policy-making are at the heart of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Those are *better regulation*, *better funding* and *better knowledge*. *Better regulation* aims to implement European policies, legislation and instruments more effectively and coherently. Hence, the Urban Agenda for the EU has to minimize administrative burdens for urban authorities. In terms of *Better funding*, the Urban Agenda for the EU shall identify, integrate, support and improve sources of funding for urban areas at the relevant institutional level. Indeed, the agenda will not create new European funding sources, it will improve the existing ones. In terms of *Better knowledge*, the Urban Agenda for the EU shall foster the critical need for good data, in order to pursue evidence-based policy-making and best practices exchange²⁰⁶.

Moreover, considering the *EU 2020 strategy for smart sustainable and inclusive growth*, the Urban Agenda for the EU introduced an initial list of priorities to guide its actions across the following categories: *themes*; *horizontal and vertical coordination* based on multilevel partnerships; *impact assessments* aimed to reduce conflicting impacts of European legislation and burdensome implementation at the local and regional level

²⁰⁶ EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK (2017), *One Year Pact of Amsterdam*, The Hague: EUKN Report, available online at: <https://www.eukn.eu> , p.6.

and; *knowledge* to exchange experiences and monitoring results in order to assess the results of the Urban Agenda for the EU and other relevant European actions. Hence, the initial list of *priority themes* selected in terms of the need of an EU integrated response and a clear support from member states; addresses the major challenges for urban areas (as already highlighted in the *Paragraph 1.3*), and, promote Europe 2020 objectives. Thus, the themes included into the agenda are: *Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, Air Quality, Urban Poverty, Housing, Circular Economy Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy, Climate Adaptation, Energy Transition, Sustainable Use of Land and Nature based Solutions, Urban Mobility and Digital Transition, Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement*. In particular, *Inclusion of Migrants and Refugee* concerns the integration of incoming migrants and refugees in urban areas and it covers issues such as housing, cultural, integration, provision of public services, social inclusion education, labour market and spatial segregation issues²⁰⁷. *Urban Poverty* deals with the reduction of poverty and the improvement people' at risk of poverty inclusion in deprived areas through place based (urban regeneration) and people-based solutions. *Housing* concerns the objective to provide affordable and good quality households to dwellers. *Circular economy* considers the increase of re-use, repair, refurbishment and recycling of existing materials and products to enhance growth and new job opportunities. *Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy* relates how to increase prosperity and reduce unemployment. *Climate adaptation* concerns how to reduce the adverse effects of climate change and take the

²⁰⁷ THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY, *op.cit.*, p.iii.

appropriate actions. *Energy transitions* deals with long-term structural change in energy systems, in particular renewable energy transition and energy efficiency support. *Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-based Solutions* seeks to guarantee changes in urban areas respectful of the environment to improve the quality of life. The *Digital transitions* partnership has to objective to provide better public services to citizens and create business opportunities. This list may be reviewed by the DG Meeting on Urban Matters by consensus, following an Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters²⁰⁸. In particular, all the activities connected with the Urban Agenda for the EU are coordinated by the DG Meeting on Urban Matters which ensures that all actions are pursued in a transparent way, reports to the Informal meeting of ministers responsible for Urban Matters and Territorial Cohesion, monitors progresses on the actions, provides feedbacks and informational guidelines for future developments, evaluates the current and future set of actions, and reviews the initial list of Priority Themes.

The *Working Programme* attached to the Urban Agenda for the EU describes its operational framework in more detail. In particular, it explains how, when discussing matters related to the agenda, the abovementioned DG Meeting has to include Member States, the European Commission, the Committee of Regions, the CEMR and EUROCITIES, in order to reflect its multilevel character. Additionally, observers may participate to the meetings such as URBACT, ESPON, EUKN, partner states etc. The DG meeting is also advised by the Urban Development Group about the Urban

²⁰⁸ THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY, *op.cit.*, pp.iii-iv.

Agenda for the EU. It is composed by representatives from Member States, the European Commission, the European Parliament, EU advisory bodies, the European Investment Bank, representatives of Urban Authorities and observers. In case issues concerning the Urban Agenda for the EU are discussed, both the DG Meeting and the Urban Development Group are prepared and organized by the EU Member State holding the Presidency of the Council, who will co-chair the meeting with the European Commission²⁰⁹.

Urban challenges are complex, and the Urban Agenda for the EU seeks to integrate different policy aspects to avoid contradictory outcomes and make urban interventions more effective. In this sense, multi-stakeholder partnerships, based on voluntary participation, have been established to address each priority theme and represent the “key delivery mechanism within the Urban Agenda for the EU”²¹⁰. They are structured to develop multilevel, integrated and cross-sectoral solutions within a transparent and open framework. Thus, bottom-up approaches are mixed with vertical policy-making methods in order to develop concrete *Action Plans*. In practice, they provide proposals for achieving better regulation, better funding and better knowledge in relation to the priority theme into question. The proposals that any action plan address, will be submitted for consideration, after the scrutiny of the DG Meeting on Urban Matters, to the European Commission and then, they may be brought to the attention of the Presidencies of the Council. Consequently, despite the non-binding nature of the action plans, European institutions may take into

²⁰⁹ THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY, *op.cit.*, pp.i-ii.

²¹⁰ THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY, *op.cit.*, p.10

consideration their proposals to revise existing EU legislation. The complexity of urban challenges requires to integrate different policy aspects, emerging from different partnerships, in order to avoid duplications, contradictions and propose actions which result ineffective. Thus, partnerships must consider the relevance of some cross-cutting issues that the Urban Agenda for the EU highlights such as citizens participation and inter-municipal administrative cooperation to provide effective urban governance; local and people-based strategic urban planning method; impact on societal change; polycentric development to consider small and medium-sized urban areas challenges and opportunities; urban regenerations policies; adaptation to demographic change; provision of adequate public services of general interest and international dimension role²¹¹.

3.2.2 Partnerships and Action Plans

Partnerships and the following Action Plans represent the main contributions in terms of innovative governance that the Urban Agenda for the EU provides. In fact, the Pact of Amsterdam represents, as Potjer and Hajer argued in their first report concerning the Urban Agenda for the EU, “an institutional practice sui generis”²¹². They consider this experiment a descent of the Open Method of Coordination mechanism, employed at the European level, as a non-binding soft law instrument to structure the collaboration between EU Member States, mainly on EU social policy

²¹¹ THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY, *op.cit.*, p.8.

²¹² POTJER, HAJER (2017), *Learning with cities, Learning for cities: the golden opportunity of the Urban Agenda for the EU*, Utrecht: Urban Future Studio – Utrecht University, available online at: <https://www.uu.nl/sites/default/files/essay-urbanfuturesstudio-12juli-web.pdf>, p.9.

issues. It resulted in an innovative multi-level governance framework, which shows some similarities with the Urban Agenda for the EU. In particular, they both displays local, horizontal and vertical governance elements; since with the Open Method of Coordination “locally, national governments can act according to the needs of their specific national contexts; horizontally, implementation practices are constantly compared with the purpose of learning; vertically, the EU level of government sets the policy framework, but also revises that framework based on experiences coming from practice”²¹³. Conversely, the Urban Agenda for EU offers to cities a forum to collaborate with other tiers of government and EU institutions. Consequently, if successfully developed, it may empower cities and improve urban policies coordination mechanisms both at the European and at the National level.

According to the Working Programme, partnerships are based on balanced composition. Each partnership should be composed by five Urban Authorities²¹⁴, European Commission representatives of relevant DGs, EU organizations (EIB, EESC, CoR), five Member States to be agreed in occasion of the DG meeting on Urban Matters, Partner States, experts, umbrella organizations (such as EUROCITIES, CEMR), knowledge organizations (such as URBACT, ESPON, EUKN) and other stakeholders (NGOs, business, etc.).²¹⁵ Observers may also be included in the partnership (such as URBACT, EUKN). Urban authorities play the

²¹³ POTJER, HAJER (2017), *Learning with cities, Learning for cities: the Golden Opportunity of the Urban Agenda for the EU*, Utrecht: Urban Futures Studio – Utrecht University, p.11.

²¹⁴ Most notably Urban Authorities are represented by cities, though regions, Partner States, city consortiums and city umbrella organizations may be nominated as partner instead of Urban Authorities.

²¹⁵ THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY, *op.cit.*, p.v.

main role in the development of Urban Agenda for the EU Partnerships. They are expected to capitalize on the knowledge of the experts who join Partnerships, to cooperate with Regional Authorities and Member states, to invite the Committee of Regions, EUROCITIES and CEMR to contribute to the formulation phase and, encourage networking and exchange of knowledge. In particular, the Committee of Regions has the task, according to the Pact of Amsterdam, to select Urban Authorities for the Partnerships. While it only represents an advisory body for other European Institutions, its political support to the Urban Agenda for the EU has strengthened the whole process. It facilitated the cooperation between cities and European institutions, by communicating cities needs at the European level and encouraging the functional and complementary role of urban areas²¹⁶. Conversely, EUROCITIES and CEMR, which directly represent urban authorities, play a direct and active role in the development of partnerships and provide technical support. The involvement of association such as EUROCITIES and CEMR mirrors the necessity of recognizing the potential of civil society, knowledge institutions and businesses to “co-create innovative solutions to urban challenges”²¹⁷. The Urban Agenda for the EU, by introducing an innovative multi-stakeholder and participative governance approach through partnerships, encourages the contribution of the private sector to promote its Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge goals. On the contrary, Member States represent the first gatekeepers for the implementation of any action developed by Partnerships and related to the Urban Agenda for the EU.

²¹⁶ EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

²¹⁷ THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY, *op.cit.*, p.16.

Thus, the Pact of Amsterdam disposes that *Member States* should strengthen their involvement in the process, their dialogue with the European Commission, their engagement with Regional and Urban Authorities. Conversely, the Pact of Amsterdam calls the *European Commission* to play an active role within its existing budgets to further the scopes of the Urban Agenda for the EU. It is expected to strengthen the urban dimension of EU policies, to set up a one-stop-shop for matters regarding the Agenda, by ensuring the continuity, coherence and coordination of its actions and, to keep working with Urban Authorities. Additionally, the *European Parliament* shall take into consideration the results of the partnerships, when discussing European legislation relevant to urban issues. Conversely, the *European Investment Bank* shall contribute to the work of the Partnerships, by supporting the creation of improved funding approaches in urban areas, in coordination with the European Commission.

In order to achieve their results, partnerships present a three-years' timeframe. Once the three-years' period ends, the partnership must present the results to the DG meeting. Each partnership has its own coordinator who is selected in occasion of its establishment. The coordinators represent the main point of contact for the members of the partnership and they chair, organize, monitor every meeting of the partnership itself.

Partnerships develop across a policy-cycle of five phases. The *first step* is stocktaking. Members of the Partnership work to identify the existing work carried out on the priority theme into scrutiny, in order to avoid duplications and contradictions, ensure coordination, reinforce the existing provisions and understand how to move forward to assess better

results. The *second step* is based on preparatory actions to address identified bottlenecks and improve strengths. The *third phase* is aimed to define objectives and deliverables. Thus, a draft action plan is elaborated. Actions included in the action plan must be developed as proposals for better regulation, funding or knowledge or a research project. Those actions must be accompanied by deliverables, target dates and indicators if available. The *fourth step* constitutes the implementation phase of the Action Plan, while the *fifth step* concerns the evaluation of the partnership as a whole²¹⁸.

Partnerships, constituted on the twelve abovementioned priority themes, were agreed upon the DG Meeting on Urban Matters under the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of the EU. The selection of the Priority Themes mainly followed the results of the 2015 Public Feedback conducted by the European Commission, in relation to the Urban Agenda for the EU. Then, another survey was launched across Member States during the Dutch Presidency of the Council of the EU. Once the Priority Themes were selected and before the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam, during the Luxembourg Presidency, four pilot partnerships were launched. The pilot partnerships, better known as the *Amsterdam Partnerships*, are *Inclusion of migrants and refugees*, *Air quality*, *Urban Poverty* and *Housing*. According to their pilot nature, an informal procedure was adopted, since their selection was basically the result of the demonstrated interest of coordinators and participating partners. Conversely, the selection procedure for the so-called *Bratislava Partnerships*, established

²¹⁸ THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY, *op.cit.*, p.viii.

after the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam, was more formalized. The composition of these partnership on *Digital transition, Jobs and skills in the Local Economy, Circular Economy and Urban Mobility* was based on six criteria aimed to ensure balanced composition. The selection criteria adopted in occasion of the *Bratislava Partnerships*' launch, under the Slovak Presidency, were geographical balance, size of the city balance, expertise, partners' human, financial and networking capacity and EU outlook²¹⁹. A similar procedure was adopted to establish the *Malta Partnerships* (e.g. *Climate Adaptation, Energy Transition, Sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions, Innovative and responsible public procurement*), approved by the DG Meeting on Urban Matters under the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Partnerships may result relevant in terms of content and process. In the first case, they may exert influence of the European political agenda by proposing an improvement of European existing regulations, funding and knowledge sources concerning urban issues. In terms of process, they may strengthen the role of cities in policy-making by providing a multi-level governance framework. Thus, they may exemplify a strong motivation to support the Urban Agenda for the EU, intended as the European urban policies' key coordination method. The report *One Year Pact of Amsterdam*, issued by the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) and commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, assessed how "overall, the experimental working method proposed in the Pact of Amsterdam has been implemented successfully

²¹⁹ EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK, *op.cit.*, p.10.

and the role of the Technical Secretariat (TS)²²⁰ and the EC is generally described as valuable and helpful. “²²¹

However, the report shows how Member States participation is decreased in Bratislava and Malta Partnerships, compared to Amsterdam Partnerships. Among external stakeholders, no university or private sector representative is present, since there was no clear procedure to ensure their nomination as key partners. Moreover, medium-sized and small cities result less represented in Partnerships, compared to big cities. In particular, the Amsterdam Partnerships mainly includes big cities, while they result less represented in Bratislava and Malta Partnerships. The main challenges, that the process of implementation is facing, are the insufficient partners’ expertise, the lack of financial resources available and, an apparent overloading of Partnerships in terms of demands and deliverables, due to their inflexible schedule. Thus, Partnerships need more flexibility and tailor-made support. Inter-Partnership collaboration may improve in order to avoid duplication of objectives, actions or knowledge creation. Therefore, the Urban Poverty Partnership cooperated with the Housing Partnership to exchange relevant information concerning homelessness which represents a transversal focus area. These cases of inter-Partnership cooperation express how it is necessary to develop clear and formal strategies to work on cross-cutting issues, which may involve several Partnerships. The multi-stakeholder governance model inaugurated by Urban Agenda for the EU partnerships represents a completely

²²⁰ Ecorys manages the technical secretariat of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Ecorys is one of the oldest economic research and consulting companies in Europe and it offers technical support to the development of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

²²¹ EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK, *op.cit.*, p.8.

innovative working method. Then, the abovementioned EUKN report shows how the agenda seems to have progressively improved the coordination and collaboration on urban issues across different DGs in the Commission.²²² Inter-institutional collaboration results also strengthened, while vertical cooperation between Member states and the Commission, through the Urban Development Group and the DG Meeting on Urban Matters, shows lack of continuity due to the rotating Precedencies of the Council of the EU and the excessively strong role of the Commission compared to Member States²²³. However, Member States acknowledged how the Urban Agenda for the EU brought EU urban policy-making closer to national urban-related issues and, at the same time, intensified cooperation among Member states on urban-related issues. Moreover, the agenda introduced new mechanisms to coordinate different government levels on the priorities themes it has established. In fact, Partnerships involve local, regional and national authorities and they created new direct communication channels between EU institutions and cities, while the formers maintain a greater decision-making power. More interestingly, it is already possible, though slightly, to assess the impact of the Urban Agenda for the EU on national urban policies. Around a half of surveyed Member States argued that the agenda reinforced their commitment with national urban policies. However, many responded how it is still too premature to evaluate the impact of the agenda on national urban policies; while other countries stated they have fostered the debate on national urban development policies. Some Member States such as Netherlands, Italy and

²²² EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

²²³ EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

Slovakia, thanks to the Urban Agenda for the EU, improved the forms of cooperation between national ministries and cities.

Notably, each Partnership, as form of multi-level governance, brings challenges and opportunities. Mostly, Partnerships need to find a balance between delivering concrete actions or addressing fundamental issues²²⁴. In addition, it seems that the Commission exerts too much pressure on Partnerships in order to deliver outcomes, while Member States results not to be sufficiently involved in the policy-formulation process.

Partnerships represent only one of the concrete actions conceived to implement the Urban Agenda for the EU. The Urban Agenda is expected to improve the coordination of existing initiatives and the status of territorial impact assessments; to align the Urban Innovative actions to its priority themes²²⁵ and receive technical contributions from URBACT; to adapt the Urban Development Network work to its policy framework in order to provide better funding for cities; to employ the scientific work of the Joint Programme Initiative as evidence-based proposals for its Action Plans implementation; to receive the research contribution of ESPON in the development of its priority themes; to obtain updates concerning its implementation through the organization of the Informal Ministerial Meeting of Ministers for Urban Matters by the Presidency of the Council of the EU; to keep supporting the organization of a biennial CITIES

²²⁴ POTJER, HAJER AND PELZER (2018), *Learning to experiment: Realizing the Potentials of the Urban Agenda for the EU*, Utrecht: Urban Futures Studio – Utrecht University, available online at: <http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/Research-UrbanFuturesStudio-def.pdf>, p.17

²²⁵ The Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) initiative provides cities across Europe with financial resources to experiment new solutions in addressing urban challenges.

Forum; to develop appropriate tools and formats to progress a transparent, inclusive and effective implementation process.²²⁶

The Urban Agenda for the EU acknowledges the role of cities and commits to translate this role into concrete action. However, it is not able to provide cities with a full policy-making power at the European level. Thus, with the Urban Agenda for the EU, cities get only a *small* seat at the table of policy-making. This results from the non-binding character of the action plans and the absence of additional allocations of funding. Moreover, the Urban Agenda for the EU introduces an experimental method, which is open and informal, despite not able to implement binding actions. The future of the Urban Agenda for the EU is tied to its practical results, and their ability to demonstrate that the method works by delivering concrete results. Anyway, cities foster innovation and have a great potential to experiment new solutions. Cities offer opportunities of *experimental learning*, as Potjer and Hajer stated in their second report concerning the Urban Agenda for the EU²²⁷. The Pact of Amsterdam has the goal to make cities the most vital place in Europe, in order to address one of its most crucial challenges: urbanization. Moreover, it wants to strengthen the main quality of cities: their ability to experiment. In Cities, which represent the closest tier of government that citizens experience, problems result immediate and tangible and their solution has direct consequences on citizens' quality of life. This proximity of the city induces policy-makers to experiment everyday problem-solving solutions and new governance frameworks, aimed to include the effective recipients of the

²²⁶ EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-20.

²²⁷ POTJER, HAJER AND PELZER, *op.cit.*, p.9.

actions in the decisions. Thus, experiments are essentially real practices, and city-level policy-making processes result to be a *learning by doing* mechanisms based on experimentation. Innovation is necessary to address complex challenges, since new problems need up to date solutions. However, cities' ability to experiment is limited, since they can test only small-scale solutions, with varying degrees of success. As Potjer and Hajer pointed out "to have a real impact, experiments must be connected to their wider system, to be able to grow and influence existing practices"²²⁸. Thus, the Urban Agenda for the EU seeks to build a connection for cities to the wider system and Partnerships represent an encouraging coordination mechanism to improve the innovative and experimental potential of cities. Hence, this innovative and experimental power of the Urban Agenda for the EU may be found at the local, horizontal and vertical level. In fact, Partnerships respectively promote local-based solutions, horizontal cooperation among Urban Authorities and multi-level collaboration with European Institutions, Member States and Regional Governments. Therefore, Partnerships may be experimental solutions by setting new initiatives and pilot projects; by introducing new learning experiences and exchanging best practices. To mention just few examples, the Amsterdam Partnership on *Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees*, which has developed its final action plan and it is now experiencing its implementation phase proposes eight actions and some results practical in nature. The Partnership is coordinated by the city of Amsterdam and the Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Commission. Members of

²²⁸ POTJER, HAJER AND PELZER, *op.cit.*, p.21.

the Partnership are the cities of Athens, Berlin, Helsinki, Barcelona, the countries Portugal, Italy, Greece, Denmark, as well as EUROCTIES, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), URBACT, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), European Investment Bank, Migration Policy Group and two Directorates-General of the European Commission: Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPLO)²²⁹. The Partnership covers some relevant topics which are included in the following categories: reception and interaction with the local community, housing, work, education and the cross-cutting issue of vulnerable groups. Among the main actions proposed, some results more concrete in nature. In particular, Action 2 concerns the *Establishment of Financial Blending Facilities for Cities and SMEs* aimed at addressing better funding by recommending the necessary regulatory changes to European Commission, Council of the EU and European Parliament and could be part of the post 2020-MFF sectoral legislation. In particular, it aims to create financial facilities and supports investments concerning migrants and refugees' inclusion by combining EU grants from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and other funds that cities cannot access, with European Investment Bank (EIB) loans. As a result, grants become directly available to cities and financial intermediaries. Moreover, Action 5 concerns the *Establishment of an Academy in Integration strategies* to promote better knowledge and

²²⁹ URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU (2018), *Action Plan: Partnership on Inclusion of migrants and refugees*, available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/sites/futurium/files/action_plan_inclusion_of_migrants_and_refugees.pdf, p. 7.

the sharing of experiences on integration of policy makers at different level of governance. It would represent a *peer to peer academy* to offer training programs and enhance policy-makers capacity and knowledge on the theme of migration and refugees at the city level. Then, Action 6 proposes the *Establishment of a European Migrants Advisory Board*. It has been conceived to strengthen migrants' and former refugees' voices in European and urban migration policy-making, by establishing a board comprised of migrants and (former) refugees that will advise, during the first pilot years, the Partnership and its members²³⁰. This Partnership is committed in formulating practical actions, while other Partnerships may result less concrete in their proposals and more aimed to address fundamental issues. For example, the Bratislava Partnership *Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy* consists of 17 members which are three Member States (Romania, Italy and Greece); eight Urban Authorities (Berlin, Rotterdam, Jelgava, Torino, Porto, Ghent, Kielce, Miskolc); four Stakeholder organizations (European Investment Bank (EIB), URBACT, EUROCITIES, Council of European Municipalities and Regions - CEMR); the European Commission through the DG for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL); and other organizations such as OECD and Cedefop²³¹. The coordinators of the Partnership are Romania, the city of Rotterdam and the city of Jelgava. By now, this partnership has developed only a draft action plan and it has undertaken its Public Feedback phase

²³⁰ URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU, *op.cit.*, p.14.

²³¹ URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU (2018), *Draft Action Plan: Jobs and Skills In The Local Economy*, available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/final_draft_action_plan_jobs_and_skills_26_july_2018.pdf, p.4.

which will lead soon to the final action plan release. The Partnership has the broad objectives of valorize research and development (R&D), business locations, public services and enhance effective local government at the urban level. It has defined three priority areas, which are *Skills* concerned with the improvement of higher education, training, goods market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness and market size; *Capital Investments* aimed to the valorization of R&D and Business Locations through the promotion of innovation; and *Governance* which deals with Public Services improvement and effective Local Governance enhancement, including institutions, infrastructure, environment, health and primary education. The Draft Action 1 proposes to create a Talent Office in every city in order to pool best and innovative practices through observatory and digital platforms; and addresses talent mismatches, promote awareness, identify requirements and share experiences. Draft Action 5 which considers *Long Term Investments*, Draft Action 6 which supports *Horizontal Actions* to simplify future EU Cohesion policy programmes and; Draft Action 7 which aims to provide *Funding for Deprived Areas*, all propose better funding solutions, though they do not result that precisely and concretely formulated. Except for these more concrete proposals, all other actions aim to enhance better regulation, funding and knowledge to improve the status of European cities labor market, but their eventual outcome seems less tangible compared to the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees framework. Thus, it seems that the *Jobs and Skills in The Local Economy* Partnership is more concerned with addressing fundamental issues than observing concrete results. This represents a recurrent differential character that Urban

Agenda for EU Partnerships show. Thus, the core issue that Partnerships have to face is situated in the necessary balance between finding concrete solutions which make Partnerships effective and; address fundamental issues, which may strengthen the multilevel governance framework the agenda itself proposes.

In conclusion, the strength of the Urban Agenda depends on its realistic proposal of a multi-level governance framework. Cities are included in a forum where they have a seat at the table, though other levels of government participate and have a say in the discussion. The world is complex, and solutions may not be simple. Consequently, their delivering method must embody this complexity. Thus, the Urban Agenda for the EU does not aim to introduce a *Parliament of Mayors*, based on Baber's idea that *if mayors ruled the world*, it would immediately become a more livable space. The Pact of Amsterdam recognizes the role of cities but also the broader system where cities are embedded in²³². Moreover, to take forward the Urban Agenda for the EU, more resources should be destined to Partnerships; it should be much intensely connected to relevant institutions decision-making processes; the linkage between European and Global Urban agendas should be strengthened; its future needs to be discussed and its relevance must be ensured for the post-2020 budget period. Concerning this last issue, the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker on September 2018 stated that it is necessary to give towns and regions the support that Europe needs²³³.

²³² POTJER, HAJER AND PELZER, *op.cit.*, p.26.

²³³ VALLIER (2018), *President Juncker, give towns and regions the support that Europe needs!*, available online at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/opinion/president-juncker-give-towns-and-regions-the-support-that-europe-needs/>

Moreover, the new framework proposed by the Commission to modernize Cohesion Policy, in occasion of the next long-term EU budget 2021-2027 planning period, includes a more tailored approach to regional development based on the idea of making Europe closer to citizens. In particular, it has been agreed that Cohesion Policy should further support locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across EU. It must also empower local authorities in the management of the funds. Thus, the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy results strengthened, with an additional allocation of 6 % of the European Regional and Development Fund dedicated to sustainable urban development and a new networking and capacity-building programme for Urban Authorities, the so-called European Urban Initiative²³⁴.

3.2.3 Has the Urban Agenda for the EU been able to consolidate a European Urban Competence?

A question raises spontaneously and concerns whether the Urban Agenda for the EU effectively provided an explicit urban policy competence at the EU level. Firstly, it is necessary to highlight how, despite the European Commission's unequivocal commitment to the development of an explicit European urban competence and its support to the Urban Agenda for the EU, the agenda resulted the product of intergovernmental dynamics inside the Council of the EU. It was the result of negotiation among member states and its non-binding nature reduced the chances to make the European Union able to define how cities should

²³⁴ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018), *New Cohesion Policy. Regional Development and Cohesion Policy beyond 2020: The New Framework at glance*, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/2021_2027/

be managed. According to the Italian National Center for Urban Policies Studies (Urban@it), three are the main scenarios concerning the future of the Urban Agenda for the EU: its *institutionalization*, its *integration* and its *impact*. In the first case, the formulation of the Pact has provided a structure to European Urban policies. This structure is represented by partnerships. Integration means that the Urban Agenda constitutes an instrument of integration, or even coordination of all European urban policies, including extra-European provisions, such as the global New Urban Agenda. Conversely the impact sees the Urban Agenda for the EU able to consolidate the urban dimension in European mainstream policies framework, which ultimately means definitive Europeanization of urban policies²³⁵. So far, the integration scenario results the most visible, since the Urban Agenda for the EU has immediately represented the occasion to discuss the most relevant issues concerning urban development, giving a say to a wide range of actors and addressing recommendations to DG Meeting on Urban Matters. By doing this, the Urban Agenda for the EU managed to contribute to Europe 2020 objectives; to create a more integrated framework for urban policies at the European level; and to involve urban authorities and cities in European policy-making.

Accordingly, the Urban Agenda for the EU establishes a European coordination forum for urban policies' formulation on a multilevel and multi-stakeholder perspective. In particular, it aims to strengthen Member States commitment in urban policy-making, and to empower cities both at the national and European level. However, the pivotal role that the Urban

²³⁵ URBAN@IT (2016), *Il Patto di Amsterdam: L'Agenda Europea ad una svolta?*, Bologna: Urban Background Papers , Rapporto sulle città 2016 – Le Agende Urbane Delle Città Italiane, pp.9-10.

Agenda for the EU plays in setting the European agenda concerning urban policies, must not be underestimated. At the same time, its relationship with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the global New Urban Agenda, highlights the Urban Agenda for the EU's deep commitment in defining the future of cities in terms of sustainable urban development and residents' quality of life.

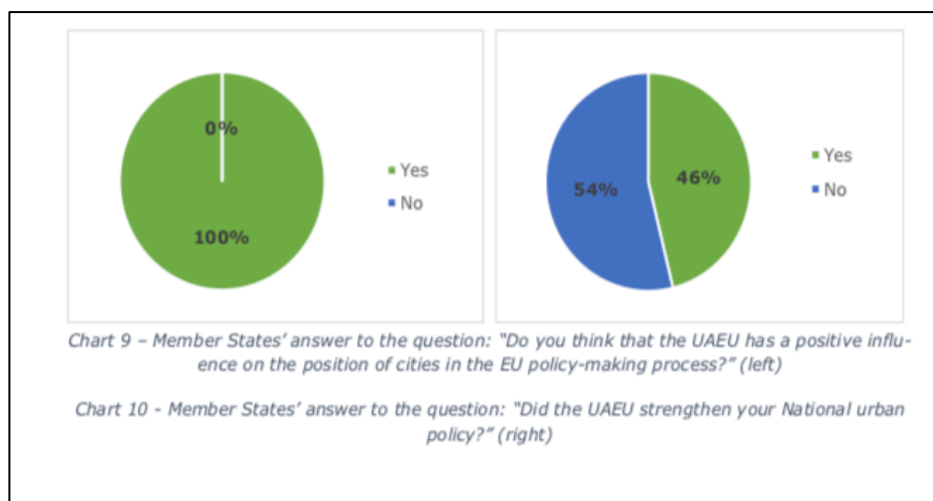
In conclusion, the Urban Agenda for the EU represents a pragmatic form of cooperation and coordination on urban issues at the EU level. Hence, the policy-entrepreneurship role played by the Dutch Presidency managed to finally create a coordination mechanism, but it failed to finally provide an explicit European urban competence. This European coordination mechanism for urban policies, represented by the Urban Agenda for the EU, ultimately necessitates the cooperation of Member States to attain the scopes of the agenda itself and make its implementation mechanisms work.

3.3 What is a National Urban Policy?

One of the main goals that the Urban Agenda for the EU wants to address is to empower cities and improve national commitments in urban policy-making. As already noted, the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN), reporting on the Pact of Amsterdam one year after its adoption, assessed how the Urban Agenda for the EU had generally a positive influence on the position of cities in EU policy-making. It also strengthened Member States national urban policies when present and fostered the debate on national urban policies in other countries, whether not present or not fully developed. The table below shows the results of

the survey conducted by the EUKN on Member States joining the Urban Agenda for the EU, concerning the impact of the agenda on cities' position in policy-making (Chart 9) and the impact of the agenda on national urban policies (Chart 10).

FIGURE 3: SURVEYS ON URBAN AGENDA IMPACT ON CITY POLICY-MAKING AND ON NATIONAL URBAN POLICIES²³⁶



Moreover, the Report from the Commission to the Council on the Urban Agenda for the EU stated that:

“the Urban Agenda for the EU and the New Urban Agenda have also triggered a renewed policy interest in some Member States to develop or strengthen their *national urban policy*. This process has a wide potential by [...] securing the integration of city initiatives and planning into the national and regional development strategies of the country”²³⁷.

Therefore, this paragraph is based on the argument that policy-instruments such as the Urban Agenda for the EU, but also the UN-Habitat New Urban

²³⁶ EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK, *op.cit.*, p.49.

²³⁷ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017), *Report from the Commission to the Council on the Urban Agenda for the EU*, Brussels: COM(2017) 657 final, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/policy/themes/urban/report_urban_agenda2017_en.pdf, p.6.

Agenda, despite their non-binding nature, may have a real impact on national policy-making concerning urban matters. Indeed, the art.89 of the New Urban Agenda specifies how its implementation process “will take measures to establish legal and policy frameworks [...] to enhance the ability of Governments to effectively implement *national urban policies*”.²³⁸ In this sense, the multi-level governance framework introduced by the Urban Agenda for the EU, not only offers to cities a seat at the table. It also represents the first attempt to let cities, Member States and the European Commission increase their awareness, concerning the biggest challenges and opportunities related to cities and urbanization.

Urbanization imposes multi-level and multifaceted challenges and opportunities. An active support is essential across different spheres of government to ensure a coordinated approach to planning and managing cities. Thus, as already mentioned, the aforesaid *sui generis character* and coordination role of the Urban Agenda for the EU ultimately seeks to impact national policy-making on urban related issues in order to acknowledge the pivotal role of cities in facing complex challenges. Accordingly, National Urban Policy (NUP) is a theme which gained increasing attention on the global scale and the Urban Agenda for the EU aims to strengthen member states commitment in this sense. According to UN-Habitat, a NUP is: “a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for

²³⁸ UNITED NATIONS (2017), *New Urban Agenda*, Quito: HABITAT III, available online at: <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf> , p.23.

the long term”²³⁹. However, there is no specific model of National Urban Policy which provides a standard result and is delivered following a universal approach, replicable in different contexts. In particular, a National Urban Policy assists the alignment of national activities with global priorities²⁴⁰. UN-Habitat argues that National Urban Policy should be intended as a vision which follows a set of guiding principles and of interrelated actions pursued by national governments²⁴¹. Moreover, a NUP represents a coordination mechanism which connect all actions addressed towards towns, cities, metropolitan regions, aimed to improve their quality of life and their functioning, to tackle concentrated growth of population and economic activity. Thus, a NUP contains multifaceted and multilevel set of measures and policy instruments. The relationship between national governments and cities has never been an easy one. Governments recognize cities contributions in terms of economic potential and growth, but at the same time they are scared of their increasing bargaining power. The UN-Habitat programme has shaped a model explaining the evolutionary cycle of National Urban Policies, which is based on four main phases. It starts with growth pressure on basic infrastructure and essential public services, which results in population increase, congestion, pressure on city size and facilities. This process is followed by governments’ efforts to control urbanization and steer growth elsewhere. Thus, the control imposed on city growth determines the dispersion of city economic

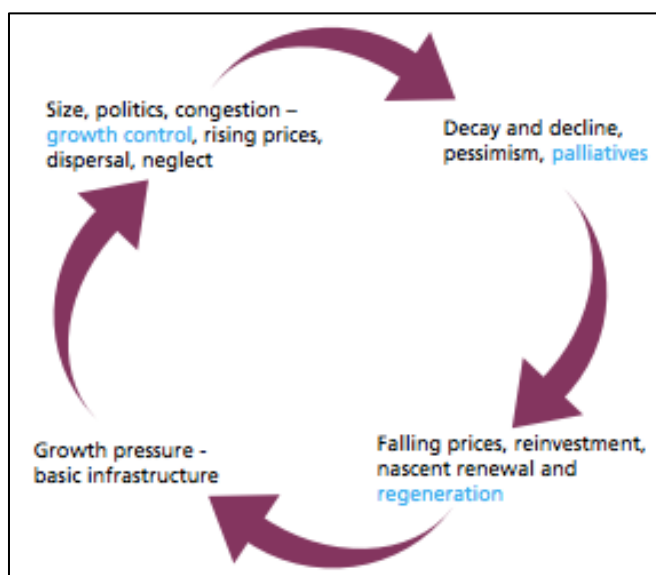
²³⁹ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-Habitat) (2014), *The Evolution of National Urban Policies*, Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, p.III.

²⁴⁰ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT) (2016), *Habitat III – National Urban Policy*, available online at: www.habitat3.org, p.2.

²⁴¹ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT), *op. cit.*, p.5.

potential and population in the suburbs, the consequent city decay and the failing price of households. Reinvestment and renewal campaigns follow then, reintroducing growth pressure. Hence, the cycle restarts.

ILLUSTRATION 3: NATIONAL URBAN POLICY EVOLUTIONARY CYCLE ²⁴²



This cycle shows how National Urban Policies have changed their scopes overtime. In particular, focusing on European cities, industrialization in the last part of the 19th century exerted a strong pressure on urban centers. There was a high demand of work and habitations. Since, most people walked to work, city congestion emerged, and most people lived concentrated in industries surrounding areas. Cities’ overcrowding soon resulted in increasing air pollution, worsening sanitary living conditions and rising infant mortality. Consequently, government legislation gave more responsibilities to local municipalities to improve cities quality of life and municipalities started to raise taxes in order to finance the improvement of city facilities. Hence, land-use planning

²⁴² UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT), *op. cit.*, p.15.

practices emerged in order to react against squalid living environments, noxious activities were moved outside the city and public transportation was improved. Local governments were legally empowered, and they implemented regulations concerning land-use zoning and property owners' rights. Thus, the state assumed a directive role in defining the future of urban areas. Government planners started to impose their urban vision on city-dwellers. Before the Second World War, this tendency exacerbated and urban planning from a physical response to public health concerns became an unambiguous instrument of political power and social coercion in numerous European Countries²⁴³. The approach towards urban planning changed after the Second World War, when the need to rebuild urban areas determined a shift from urban control to transport oriented urban expansion in Europe. This choice contrasted with the American cities development model, based on green belts introduction to limit cities expansion and the creation of new towns to reduce densities in inner cities. The European model resulted more sustainable, since cities developed along major transport corridors, radiating out from the center²⁴⁴. During the 1980s, the approach to National Urban Policy changed again. NUPs started to allow the access to private investments, when many urban problems emerged in several cities following deindustrialization processes. Thus, investors and urban developers financed requalification projects in core city areas, in order to attract households back to inner city. This process of inner city upgrading, better known as gentrification,

²⁴³ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT), *op. cit.*, p.20. [Some examples are the requalification of some urban areas in Berlin, Rome, Madrid, Moscow and Paris, under various dictatorial regimes involved substantial demolition, evictions and physical restructuring by the state].

²⁴⁴ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT), *op. cit.*, p.22.

resulted in physical renewal and transformation of city centers into reinvigorated commercial attractions and popular residential neighborhoods, which sensibly raised houses prices. After the 1990s, several approaches to urban planning coexisted. National urban planners soon realized how it was difficult to predict the outcomes of National Urban Policies and define specific strategies of implementation. Thus, in this period, some emerging NUPs supported deregulation of real estate markets, by opposing any form of urban planning, conceived as an interference to private developers' prerogatives and market mechanism. These NUPs determined a real estate market bubble, since the housing supply significantly exceeded demand. A second model of NUPs developed in the 1990s and it enhanced the idea of *smart specialization*, conceived as the capacity of regions to diversify their growth potentials by strengthening their local assets. These urban policies mostly developed in the European Union to consolidate local competences, promote municipalities' cooperation to gain economies of scale in some fields, and implement complementary policies across several policy sectors. Additionally, other NUPs focused on new urbanism models such as *smart growth*. In this sense, urban policies were supposed to respect the natural environment and urban areas to become auto-sufficient. NUPs emerging from New Urbanism theories promoted more compact, dense and mixed-use cities, where services were easily reachable, and proximity represented the main character of urban spaces. The last innovation in terms of NUPs developed in the last two decades, arisen from Lefebvre's idea of a *right to the city*. It does not only represent the right to be formally recognized as citizens, it represents the right to participate to decision-making processes

concerning cities' future, and to have access to urban resources such housing and public services. Multi-level governance models applied to cities developed from this idea and made city management more democratic by subjecting policy-making to social control and participation²⁴⁵. Consequently, to formulate and implement a successful NUP nowadays, the underlying institutional framework and governance process must allow the coordination and collaboration of urban actors which encompasses civil society and private sector representatives in addition to institutional actors, representing different government levels. Moreover, top-down approaches must be mixed with bottom-up frameworks. The 2018 report on the *Global State of National Urban Policy* issued by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and OECD proved how there is a deep variance in the level of resources allocated to NUPs on the global scale. Furthermore, the report assessed how housing and infrastructure represent the sectors receiving more funding and; how a huge number of local governments still rely on central government transfers, instead of developing revenue generating capacities. Thus, resourcing of NUPs is the main challenge which may impede their successful implementation. In addition, NUPs provide a wide range of policy instruments which mainly rely on legislative, regulatory and spatial policy-tools, while several fiscal instruments are spreading across countries. The combination of different policy instruments has resulted to promote more successful NUPs²⁴⁶. Empowering local governments,

²⁴⁵ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT), *op. cit.*, p.23-28.

²⁴⁶ UN-HABITAT AND OECD (2018), *Global State of National Urban Policy*, Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, available online at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264290747-en> , p. 54.

through financial, legal and fiscal autonomy, is a crucial issue that NUPs need to address. Moreover, information and local knowledge development are fundamental to understand the diverse application of policy instruments to variable contexts, in order to assess their effectiveness and predict gaps. NUPs also result instrumental in supporting the implementation of international obligations such as the provisions contained in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and, for European Member States, the action plans stemming from the Urban Agenda for the EU. In particular, during Habitat III conference, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme launched the *National Urban Policy Programme*, aimed at addressing the issues of governance, capacity and knowledge able to facilitate the development of NUPs and contribute to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda at the national level²⁴⁷. In fact, the New Urban Agenda recognizes the leading role of NUPs in the promotion of inclusive and effective policy-instruments and legislation for enhancing sustainable urban development²⁴⁸. Additionally, one year before the adoption of the New Urban Agenda and despite a standard NUP model is not practicable, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme provided a NUP guiding framework imagined to facilitate its policy-making process. According to UN-Habitat, every NUP process should be based on three key pillars such as *participation*, *capacity development* and *acupuncture projects*. *Participation* means integrating public participation into the NUP policy-making process, which can range

²⁴⁷ UN-HABITAT AND OECD, *op.cit.*, p.64.

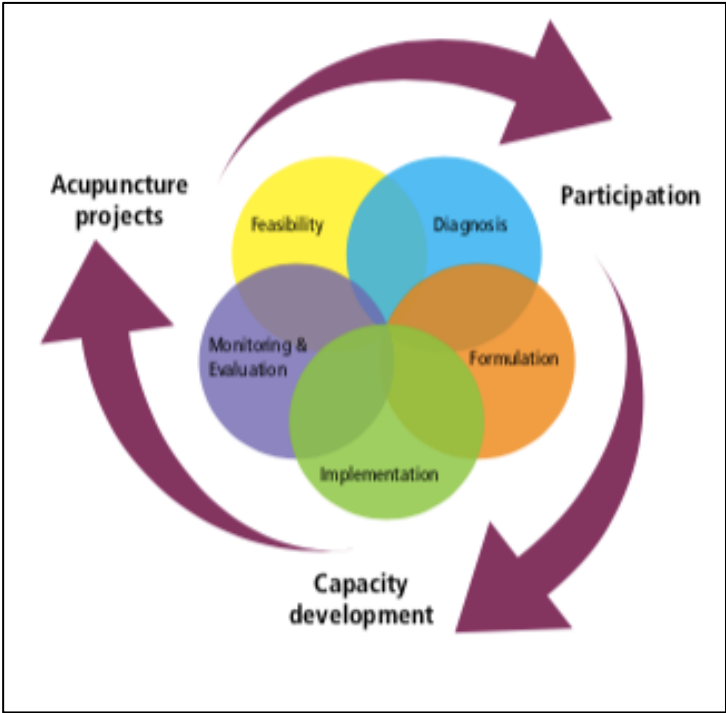
²⁴⁸ UNITED NATIONS (2016), *New Urban Agenda*, Quito: Habitat III Secretary, Artt. 15c, 21, 29, 87.

from simply informing the public about the process to public partnerships based on the direct engagement of external stakeholders. Citizens from simple users may become makers and shapers of the NUP itself. *Capacity Development* represents the second pillar and must be integrated at all levels of government in order to build sustainable and informed NUPs. It must be thought as a process of decision-makers training within the development course of the NUP, aimed to foster long-term results. NUP third pillar must consist of *Acupuncture Projects*. It means that policy actions must be direct to the scope and immediately implementable. Moreover, according to the UN-Habitat guiding framework, every NUP must respect five principles. The NUP process must be *iterative and forward thinking*, since it must address long-term goals by acting in the short term; *implementable* during all phases; *joined up*, so, essentially based on a mix of bottom-up, top-down and participatory forms of governance; and *action oriented*, since a NUP must address clear actions and goals easily translatable into operative activities, monitorable and evaluable. Thus, according to this guiding framework, all NUPs must be based on the three abovementioned key pillars and respect these five principles, in order to successfully respond to urbanization challenges and opportunities, and ultimately improve cities' quality of life²⁴⁹. It may be argued that the Urban Agenda for the EU respects the indications proposed by this Guiding Framework. Interesting would be to assess how far member states will follow these guidelines, if they introduce the provisions of the agenda in the national framework,. The UN-Habitat NUP guiding

²⁴⁹ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-Habitat) (2015), *National Urban Policy: A Guiding Framework*, Nairobi: UN-Habitat, pp.11-18.

framework introduces also a policy cycle model aimed to show the main phases which should constitute its process (see table below).

ILLUSTRATION 4: NATIONAL URBAN POLICY GUIDING FRAMEWORK²⁵⁰



It is constituted of five overlapping phases, which develops on NUPs key pillars. In particular, during the *Feasibility* phase, a needs assessment is conducted in order to understand the value additions and opportunities from undertaking a NUP and the expected role of the national government in urbanization. Afterwards, in order to clarify NUP policy goals, the *Diagnosis* phase provides an understanding of the actors involved in the process, and of the context where it is expected to be formulated and then implemented. During the *Formulation* phase, the NUP proposal is drafted. Thus, different policy options are considered, consensus among relevant actors is built, an assessment of human, financial and institutional capacity is undertaken, and a prediction of the

²⁵⁰ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT), *op. cit.*, p.10.

implementation phase is elaborated. The *Implementation* phase concerns the translation of the policy proposal and the completed implementation plan into a set of operative activities, by following a specific timeline and a clear definition of roles and responsibilities. At this point, a decentralization and devolution of financial and governance competences towards lower tiers of government may result necessary to better ensure the effective realization of the provisions contained in the NUP. Implementation is followed by *Monitoring and Evaluation* which basically assesses the effectiveness of the process and the success of the outcomes²⁵¹. Interestingly, the Urban Agenda for EU's Working Programme provides a policy-cycle model that each Partnership must pursue to implement its action plan, which almost entirely mirrors the five-stages process projected by the *UN-Habitat National Urban Policy Guiding Framework*.

3.4 How urban policies may enhance cities' quality of life

The main reason why urban policies are implemented is to enhance residents' quality of life, by promoting safe, resilient, green, socially accessible and healthy cities. It will be interesting to assess if an effective causal relationship between urban policy enhancements and the resulting level of quality of life in urban areas occurs. However, such an analysis would overcome the scopes of the present dissertation. Anyway, it will be stimulating to evaluate if a theoretical link between these two variables has been considered by the literature; to study what effectively quality of life

²⁵¹ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT), *op.cit.*, p.50.

means (considering some indicators developed by Eurostat, UN-Habitat and Mercer); to discuss some evidence stemming from the *European Commission Quality of Life in European Cities* report, and to analyze some best and worst practices in terms of National Urban Policy. In the last case, understating which role the Urban Agenda for the EU is playing to influence national policy-making concerning urban issues, will be interesting, but it will be demanded to the last chapter.

Quality of life represents a multi-dimensional concept. It is not limited to people prosperity, it is an indicator of people's capability to pursue their life-goals and chose their ideal life style. The context where people live is a strong determinant for their attainable level of quality of life. The context, intended as the location and the environment where life occurs, may provide opportunities and challenges. Thus, it may work as an enabler or a constraint. GDP indicators are not able to include this conceptualization. Nonetheless, to assess the livability of an urban area, quality of life represents the best approximation.

The *Urban Agenda for the EU* in its preamble expresses how the success of European sustainable urban development is fundamental, not only to guarantee social and territorial cohesion, but also the quality of life of its citizens²⁵². Moreover, the *New Urban Agenda* incorporates a shared vision of cities for all, aimed to consequently increase quality of life for all. In this sense promoting inclusive cities means “that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, without discrimination of any kind, are able to inhabit and produce just, safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, resilient

²⁵² THE NETHERLANDS PRESIDENCY, *op.cit.*, p.3.

and sustainable cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all”.²⁵³ These statements demonstrate how it has resulted necessary to reconsider methods to measure development, in particular, urban development. It is commonsense that development cannot be measured only by assessing the scale of economic activities. Sustainable urban development is contained in the scopes of both the abovementioned agendas. In particular, the United Nations define Sustainable Development as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”²⁵⁴. Thus, Urban Sustainable Development represents the translation of this model at the urban level. In particular, it addresses how sustainability can be attained through urban development. The UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 explicates what sustainable urban development ultimately means. It entails making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable in order to maximize communities’ potential; improve services and urban planning; reduce negative impacts on the environment; and safeguard the quality of life of present and future generations²⁵⁵. So far, a significant shift has occurred from the paradigm of economic development based on GDP measurements to sustainable development aimed to improve citizens quality of life. Thus, *quality of life* must be imagined as the main indicator to evaluate successful urban policies and urban planning strategies, from city level to supranational and global agendas. El Din et

²⁵³ UNITED NATIONS, *op.cit*, p.17.

²⁵⁴ WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (WCED) (1987), *Our Common Future*, available online at: <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>

²⁵⁵ UN-HABITAT (2015), *Input To Post-2015 UN Development Agenda*, available online at: http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/groupb_unhabitat_suscities.pdf, p.1.

Al. stated that quality of life represents one of the most important dimensions for sustaining any form of urban development. Moreover, “the desire to improve the quality of life in a particular place or for a particular person or a group is an important focus of attention for planners”²⁵⁶. Likewise, Myers argues that urban planners, by formulating city plans, urban policies etc., integrate the scope of improving quality of life into the developmental processes of a community. Thus, urban planning aims to mitigate the negative effects of growth, while it helps to sustain the positive opportunities that economic development offers to improve on quality of life. In order to enhance quality of life, Myers stresses how planners act by providing land development regulations, affordable housing programs, water saving provisions, sustainable mobility, services, education and training facilities²⁵⁷. In his opinion, quality of life should be employed as a comprehensive indicator able to encompass several dimensions, to assess the efficiency of urban planning and policies. He also stresses how planners’ approach to quality of life measurement must be founded on citizens participation and political negotiation. Quality of life standards should not be dictated. They should be negotiated through a multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach to urban planning²⁵⁸. Additionally, the Urban Land Institute introduced ten principles for livable cities, in order to demonstrate how well-planned urban development “is the foundation for a physical environment that is conducive to a

²⁵⁶ EL DIN, SHALABY, FAROUH, ELARIANE (2013), *Principles of urban quality of life for a neighborhood*, Giza: Housing and Building National Research Center (HBRC) Journal, Volume 9, Issue 1, available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hbrj.2013.02.007>, p.86.

²⁵⁷ MYERS (1988), *Building Knowledge about Quality of Life for Urban Planning*, Chicago: Journal of the American Planning Association, p.349.

²⁵⁸ MYERS, *op.cit.*, p.350.

competitive economy, sustainable environment and a high quality of life”²⁵⁹. These principles address long-term planning, inclusiveness, environment, affordable neighborhoods, sustainable mobility, urban density and safety, innovation and the so-called 3P (people, public, private) partnerships.

The European Union, during the long path towards the Urban Agenda for the EU, understood the relationship between *quality of place* and *quality of life*. The European Union assumed that is at the local and city level that improving quality of life is most attainable; since it is easier to understand communities’ needs and increase participation in decision-making.²⁶⁰ Moreover, as D’Onofrio pointed out, European Union is highly concerned with assessing the impact of policies in terms of quality of life indicators²⁶¹. In this perspective, the Urban Agenda for the EU, through its multi-level and multi-stakeholder partnerships, and its set of priority themes, ultimately seeks to improve European citizens’ quality of life.

So far, Eurostat has developed only a national level-based indicator for quality of life. It is aimed to consider different aspects of people’s well-being, by combining both objective indicators and individuals’ subjective perception. The publication *Quality of Life: facts and views* and the correspondent statistical database, followed the consideration that

²⁵⁹ KRUEGER (2013), *10 Principles for Liveable High Density Cities: Lessons from Singapore*, Washington: Urban Land Institute Press Release, available online at: <https://americas.uli.org/press-release/10-principles-singapore/>.

²⁶⁰ URBACT (2011), *UBACT Projects Results*, Saint Denis: European Programme For Sustainable Development, available online at: http://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/import/general_library/Rapport_Urbact_II.pdf, p. 149

²⁶¹ D’ONOFRIO ET AL. (2018), *Urban Policies for Urban Sustainability and Quality of Life of the City*, in GRIFONI, D’ONOFRIO, SARGOLINI (2018), *Quality of Life in Urban Landscapes: In Search of a Decision Support System*, The Urban Book Series, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, p.31.

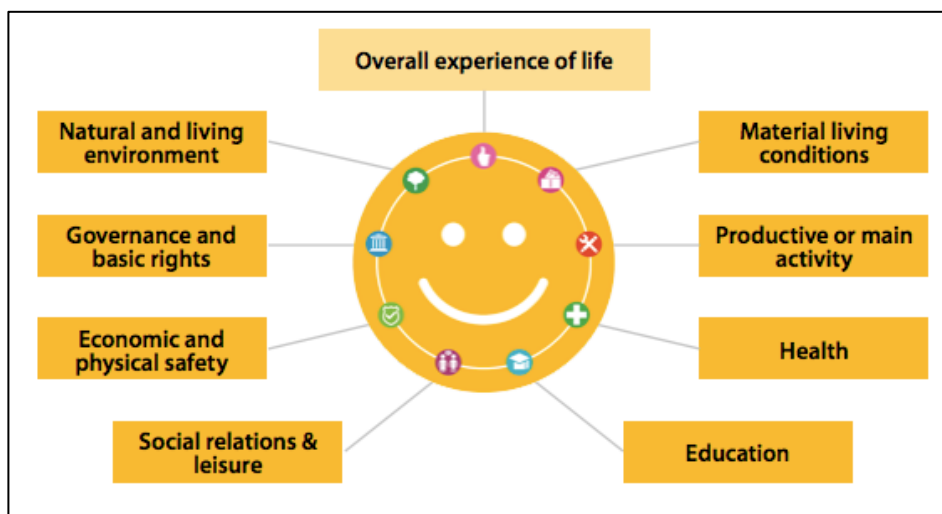
indicators such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are not representative of citizens well-being. In order to fill this statistical gap in 2009, following the European Commission's communication titled *GDP and beyond – Measuring progress in changing world*, a new set of indicators was launched including quality of life.²⁶² As was apparent from the previous literature review, the indicator developed by Eurostat in 2015 reflects a broader concept than economic growth.

“It includes the full range of factors that influence what people value in living, beyond the purely material aspects. Quality of life being a multidimensional concept, the set of indicators was developed and organized along 8+1 dimensions which constituted the ‘quality of life’ framework. In this framework, the dimensions can be measured statistically to represent the different complementary aspects of quality of life, complementing the indicator traditionally used as the measure of economic and social development, the GDP. Eight of these dimensions relate to people’s capabilities to pursue their self-defined well-being, according to their own values and priorities. The last dimension *overall experience of life* refers to the personal perception of quality of life (i.e. life satisfaction, affects, meaning of life) “. ²⁶³

²⁶² EUROSTAT (2015), *Quality of Life: Facts and views*, European Union: Eurostat Statistical Books, available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/6856423/KS-05-14-073-EN-N/>, p. 8.

²⁶³ EUROSTAT, *op.cit.*, p.9

ILLUSTRATION 5: EUROSTAT QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATOR ²⁶⁴



The correspondence between the aspects taken into consideration by the Quality of life indicator and the Priority Themes set by the Urban Agenda for the EU is evident. Even though the focus of the Urban Agenda for the EU is on cities and the Quality of Life indicator is addressed to national level-based evaluations; the aspects that the indicator assesses, such as Natural and living Environment, Material living conditions, are tackled respectively by Urban Agenda's partnerships on Climate Adaptation, Air Quality, Energy Transition, Urban Poverty, Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees etc. Thus, the intent of improving quality of life is implicitly included in every provision of the agenda; and this correspondence underlines how strong is the connection between urban policies and well-being of citizens. To better assess whether urban policies enhance quality of life, city level indicators are needed, since the effects of those policies are ultimately measured on the local scale.

²⁶⁴ EUROSTAT, *op.cit.*, p.9

Accordingly, the *UN-Habitat City Prosperity Initiative*, launched in 2012, delivers a valuable set of indicators to measure sustainable urban development, despite the data collection project results still unfinished. In particular, the *City Prosperity Index* is the result of this Initiative. It represents a multidimensional index which measures city prosperity at city level and has been conceptualized in terms of its indicators, in order to assess different aspects of prosperity in urban areas. Anyway, “UN-Habitat’s City Prosperity Initiative (CPI) not only provides indices and measurements relevant to cities, it also enables city authorities, as well as local and national stakeholders, to identify opportunities and potential areas of intervention for their cities to become more prosperous”²⁶⁵. The subdimensions which conceptualize City Prosperity are *Productivity*, *Infrastructure*, *Quality of Life*, *Equity and Social Inclusion*, *Environmental Sustainability* and *Governance and Legislation*. Annexed to the text, an assessment of the influence that *Governance and Legislation* exerts on *Quality of Life* has been attempted, taking into consideration a sample of almost 300 world’s cities contained in the database. In particular, the City Prosperity Initiative considers *Quality of life* in terms of prosperous cities which provide amenities such as social services, education, health, recreation, safety and security, in order to improve living standards and enabling the population to maximize its individual potential. Whereas, *Governance and Legislation* refers to urban governance, leadership, policies, laws, regulations, institutional frameworks, local institutions and

²⁶⁵ UN-HABITAT AND INTERNATIONAL CITY LEADERS (2015), *The City Prosperity Initiative: Global Cities Report 2015*, Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme, p.1.

institutional arrangements required to combine sustainability and shared prosperity in cities²⁶⁶. The relationship among the two variables resulted positive, despite not particularly strong (ANNEX I).

Additionally, the City Prosperity Initiative shows how European Cities result the highest ranked in terms of *Quality of Life* index (see the table below). In fact, the City Prosperity Index classification shows how 85% of cities with a very solid prosperity index belongs to Europe.²⁶⁷

FIGURE 4: CITY PROSPERITY INDEX, QUALITY OF LIFE IN EU CITIES²⁶⁸



Even though European Union has not developed a city-level quality of life index; in 2016, the European Commission published the report *Quality of Life in European Cities* based on surveys as part of the *Flash Eubarometer* initiative. It represents a set of ad hoc thematical telephone interviews conducted at the request of any service of the European Commission on European citizens. In this case, the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy wanted to get a picture of people's opinion on a wide range of urban issues. These surveys were conducted in a total

²⁶⁶ UN-HABITAT AND INTERNATIONAL CITY LEADERS, *op.cit.*, p.3.

²⁶⁷ UN-HABITAT AND INTERNATIONAL CITY LEADERS, *op.cit.*, p.4.

²⁶⁸ Data sourced from UN-HABITAT *City Prosperity Initiative*, available online at: <http://cpi.unhabitat.org/download-raw-data> , [accessed on September 10, 2018].

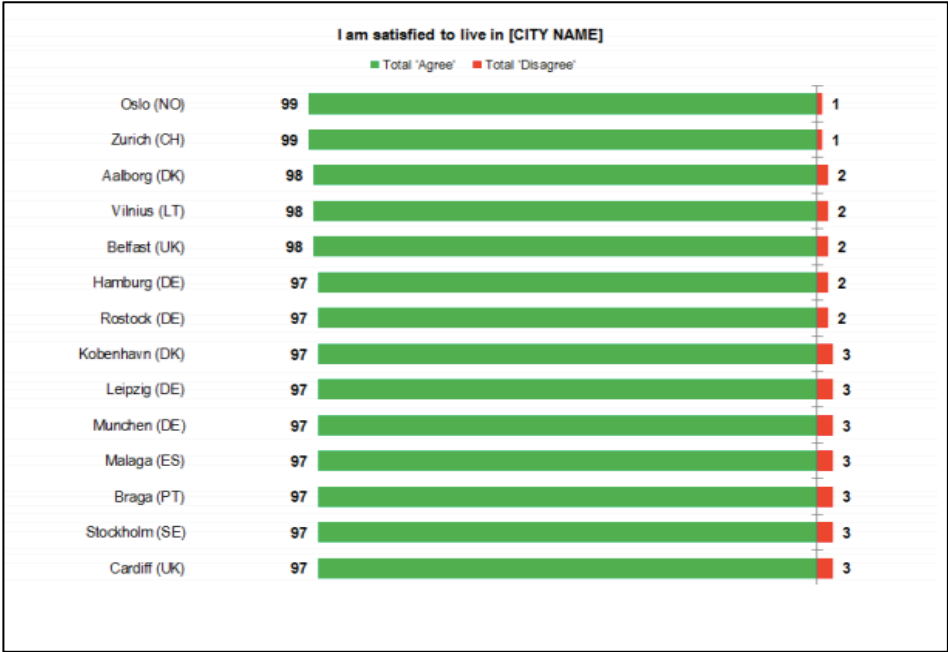
of 79 European cities and four *greater urban areas* such as Greater Paris, Greater Manchester, Greater Lisbon and Greater Athens, for a total of 83 cities. They included all capital cities of the countries surveyed and, in each city, almost 500 citizens were interviewed²⁶⁹. The report shows how the most important issues related to citizens perception of the quality of life, in their own cities, are health services provision, unemployment level, education and training quality, housing status, public transport, road infrastructure, and social service performance, air pollution and noise levels²⁷⁰. Taking into consideration the overall level of satisfaction that respondents showed in relation to their cities quality of life; in all except six cities, at least 80% of respondents said that they were satisfied to live in their city. In particular, Oslo, Zurich (both 99%), Aalborg, Vilnius and Belfast (all 98%) recorded the highest levels of satisfaction. By contrast, satisfaction is below 80%, in Palermo, Athens (both 67%), Greater Athens (71%), Napoli (75%) and Miskolc (79%). In opposition to the 2012 Eubarometer survey, the level of satisfaction to live in cities increased of 15 % both in Athina and Greater Athens in 2015²⁷¹. Among the 83 cities surveyed, the figure below shows the highest ranked.

²⁶⁹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2016), *Quality of Life in European Cities 2015*, Bruxelles: European Commission, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policies: REGIO DG 02 – Communication, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/urban/survey2015_en.pdf, p. 8.

²⁷⁰ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *op.cit.*, pp.164-166.

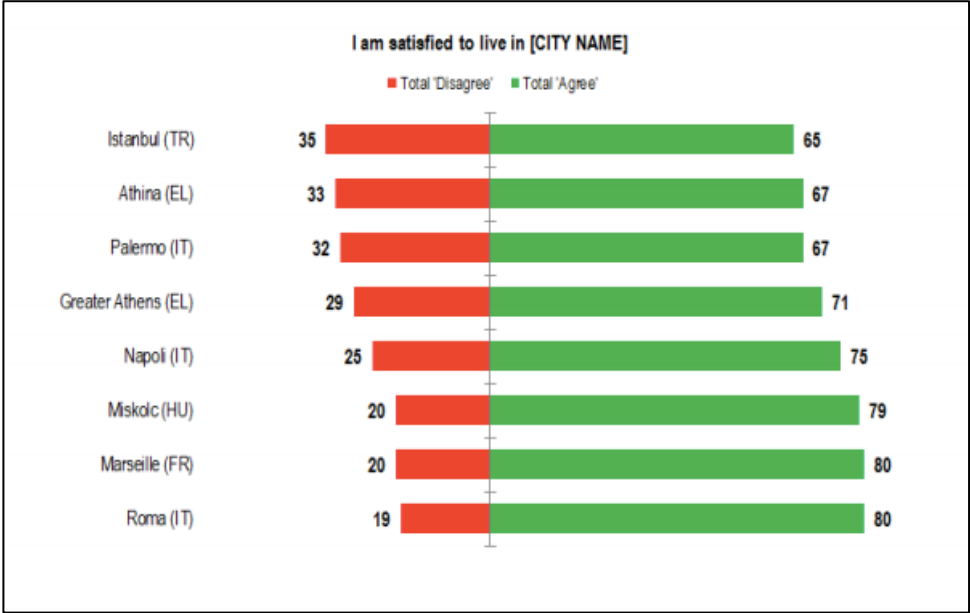
²⁷¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *op.cit.*, p.9.

FIGURE 5: FIRST RANKED EU CITIES IN TERMS OF RESIDENTS’ QUALITY OF LIFE PERCEPTION ²⁷²



Conversely, the FIGURE 6 includes European cities exhibiting the higher levels of citizens dissatisfaction.

FIGURE 6: FIRST RANKED EU CITIES IN TERMS OF RESIDENTS’ QUALITY OF LIFE DISSATISFACTION ²⁷³

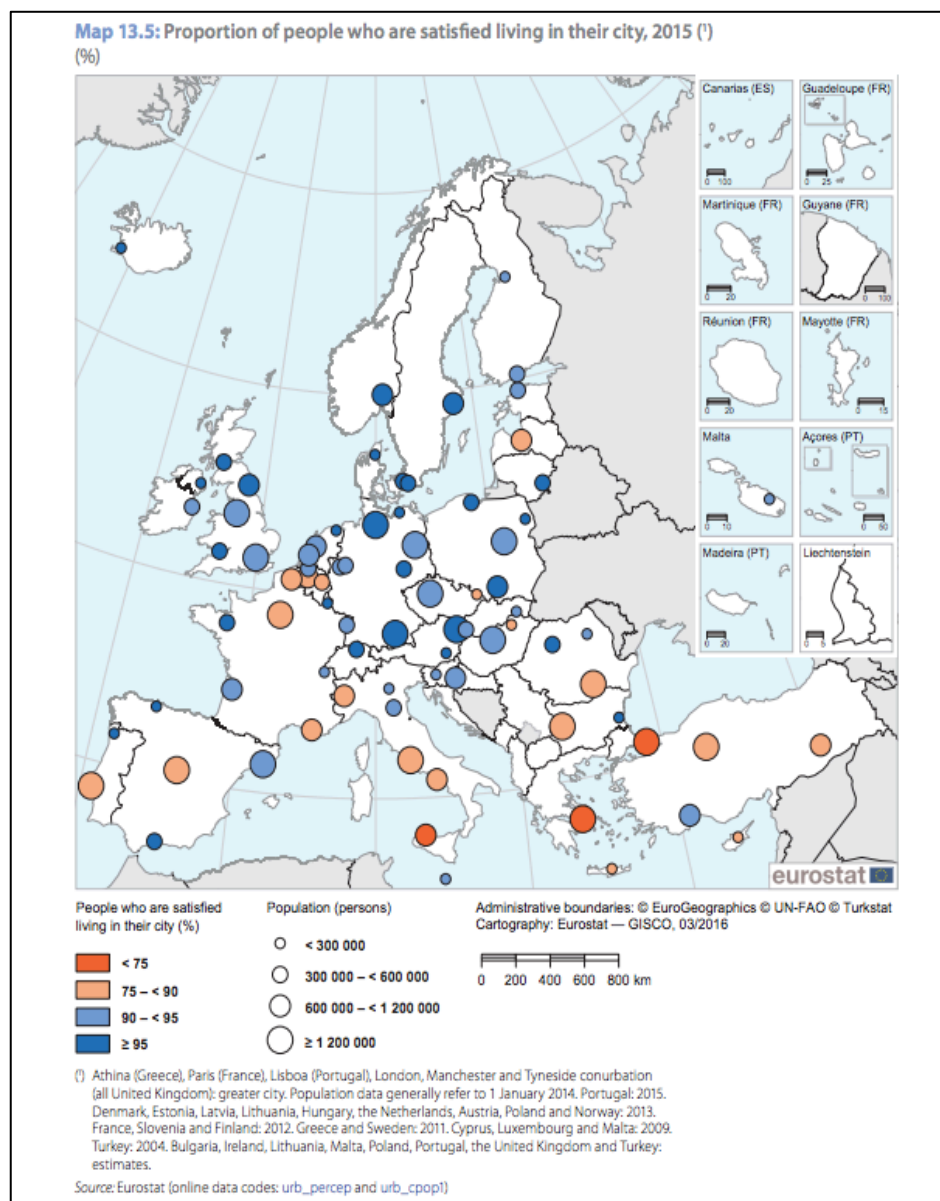


²⁷² EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *op.cit.*, p.18.

²⁷³ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *op.cit.*, p.19.

The MAP 3 below sums up the proportion of people satisfied with living in their cities, in accordance with previous data which show how German cities result the most satisfactory, while Palermo, Naples and Athens the least.

MAP 3: PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WHO ARE SATISFIED LIVING IN THEIR CITY.²⁷⁴



²⁷⁴ EUROSTAT, *op.cit*, p.80.

Moreover, an important and highly recognized tool to rank cities in terms of quality of life is *Mercer: Quality of Living City Ranking*. Mercer is a global consulting leader in health, wealth and career solutions for businesses. Every year, it issues a survey in order to provide companies valuable information, if they decide to enlarge their market and expatriate in other context. Information concerning the profitability of business in a different city, in terms of its quality of life, is fundamental for the success of the business itself. This survey ranks 231 cities in terms of their quality of life. Cities are evaluated according to 39 factors, grouped in 10 categories: political and social environment, economic environment, socio-cultural environment, medical and health provisions, education, public services and transportation, recreation, consumer goods, housing and natural environment. Comparisons are conducted taking into account these aspects. According to the picture below, among European Union cities the highest ranked are Vienna and German cities²⁷⁵.

²⁷⁵ MERCER (2018), *Quality of Living City Ranking*, available online at: <https://mobilityexchange.mercer.com/Insights/quality-of-living-rankings> .

MAP 4: MERCER 2018 QUALITY OF LIVING RANKING ²⁷⁶



This last survey shows how European Union cities result the best in terms of quality of living. In fact, European Member States appear generally highly committed with National Urban Policies, compared to other countries. The formulation of an Urban Agenda for the EU has strengthened their commitment at the supra-national level, by contributing to the implementation of the Goal 11 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the global New Urban Agenda.

²⁷⁶ MERCER, *op.cit.*

Hence, given the connection between urban planning and quality of life; cities like Vienna, München, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt which result some of the world's most livable cities, according to Mercer (see MAP 3); may be expected to show best practices in terms of urban policies. Those cities result high ranked also taking into consideration the *Quality of Life in European Cities 2015* survey. Wien is not included in FIGURE 5, which lists high ranked cities in terms of overall citizens satisfaction with their cities quality of life. However, also the *2018 Global Livability Index*²⁷⁷ indicates Wien as the most livable city on the global scale. Additionally, according to the report *Quality of Life in European Cities 2015*, Wien results one of the most pleasant, by referring to a wider range of aspects. Accordingly, only München is included in FIGURE 5, among the other Mercer's highest ranked German cities. Nonetheless, also in this case German cities appear highly represented with Hamburg, Rostock, Leipzig and München. On the contrary, FIGURE 6 shows how, according to the *Quality of Life in European Cities 2015* survey, among the least satisfactory cities, in terms of citizens' perception of their cities quality of life, Italian cities result the most represented with Palermo, Naples and Rome.

From now on, the *National Urban Policy in OECD Countries* report will be taken into consideration, in order to assess which National Urban Policy framework characterizes Austria and Germany, taken as examples of best practices, in terms of their NUP. Interesting would be to assess if they have developed at the national level some multi-level and

²⁷⁷ THE ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT (2018), *The Global Liveability Index 2018 A free overview*, London: The Economist Group, p.6.

multi-stakeholder framework to discuss urban issues. In fact, literature review showed how these governance tools are expected to increase the level of quality of life in the given country. The material presented in the OECD report represents an assessment based on literature and preliminary inputs from OECD member states. The report includes information regarding the level of NUP development that any OECD country shows. Thus, the NUP may be referred as explicit, partial or absent. However, it may also be addressed by secondary policies²⁷⁸.

Since 2011, Austria contemplates a partial NUP which is the Austrian Spatial Development Concept (ÖREK), implemented on a voluntary basis. It promotes coordination among multiple levels of government and encourage the participation of non-governmental stakeholders. Ultimately, it represents a system to boost cooperation among the federal government, Länder, cities, municipalities and stakeholder representatives in the elaboration of urban strategies. It is coordinated by the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (ÖROK)²⁷⁹.

Germany shows a long tradition in National Urban Policy. Its explicit *National Urban Development Policy*, assisted by its secondary policy *Spatial Development Concept and Strategy*, has been enacted in 2007. This policy represented a joint initiative of the federal, state and local level and it was committed to create a coordination platform, able to engage in a multi-stakeholder participation, by following the principles of the Leipzig Charter. In fact, the National Urban Development Board, created in concomitance with the National Urban Development Policy,

²⁷⁸ OECD (2017), *National Urban Policy in OECD Countries*, Paris: OECD Publishing, available online at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264271906-en> , p.12.

²⁷⁹ OECD, *op.cit.*, p.25.

reunites cities' and governments' representatives, professionals, companies, tenants, civil society etc. It aims to offer a central forum for cities and German local authorities²⁸⁰.

Taking into consideration the case of cities with the highest scores of citizens dissatisfaction (FIGURE 6), in terms of their cities' quality of life perception; Italy shows the worst situation in terms of NUP provisions. It has neither a national urban policy, nor partial national urban policy. There is no agency in charge of urban development and the system results highly top-down and centralized. The main legislative act enacted few years ago, is the *Law n.56 of 7 April 2014, on Metropolitan Cities, Provinces, Municipal Unions and Municipal Mergers* which established 10 Metropolitan cities (Torino, Milano, Venezia, Genova, Bologna, Firenze, Bari, Napoli, Reggio Calabria, and Roma Capitale). The purpose of constituting metropolitan cities was to address strategic development of metropolitan areas, by fostering the integrated management of public services; the simplification of provincial role and functions; the improvement of infrastructure and communication networks; the empowerment of municipalities as policy makers; and in conducting their institutional relations both at the national and European level. Thus, the *Operational Program Metropolitan Cities* (PON METRO) emerged in occasion of the Cohesion policy programming period 2014-2020²⁸¹. However, in Italy the main actions related to urban development were executed usually following a sectorial and non-systematic approach. They also resulted highly dependent to European Cohesion policy's cycles. In

²⁸⁰ OECD, *op.cit.*, pp.61-62

²⁸¹ OECD, *op.cit.*, p.79.

charge of urban interventions, according to the *Law n.134 of 7 August 2012*, an inter-ministerial Committee for Urban policy was created²⁸², but it has never become effectively operative. Anyway, these provisions resulted mostly disconnected among themselves; and a National Urban Policy never gained momentum, since the adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU.

It is necessary to point out how this analysis employed classifications based on surveys to rank cities in terms of their quality of life ranking. This model based on residents' perception of cities' quality of life may result biased and cities may show different trends in terms of their past-dependencies, despite a strong or low commitment to National urban policies at the central government level. For example, Milano is placed among the highest ranked cities in terms of perceived quality of life, according to FIGURE 5, while Italy shows no real commitment in terms of National Urban Policy. However, the case of Italy results interesting from this analysis. It emerged how this European country, which is among the most economic developed countries in the world, possesses neither an explicit nor a partial NUP, excluding sectorial and non-systematic actions mostly referred to European urban policy provisions. Thus, it seems possible to argue that cities like Palermo, Napoli and Rome show those high levels of residents' dissatisfaction in terms of quality of life, because no coordination mechanism at the national level, able to guide cities urban planning and curb negative urbanization trends, has been implemented overtime. Thus, in the next chapter, it will be discussed how the Urban

²⁸² OECD, *op.cit.*, p.80.

Agenda for the EU, representing, so far, the main coordination framework for urban development at the European level, stimulated a discussion on the state of urban policy in Italy. Thus, the main question now concerns which future may be guaranteed to national urban policies and cities in Italy.

CHAPTER IV

ITALY, CITIES IN SEARCH FOR A POLICY

4.1 A brief Italian Cities Outlook

In order to provide a brief outlook of urban areas in Italy, the local system classification, codified by ISTAT in 2014 will be employed for the scopes of the present dissertation. ISTAT defined local systems in terms of their social relationships. In particular, they have been measured on the basis of daily commuters' inflows more than buildings' concentration and other urban structures' presence. In Italy, according to ISTAT, 1030 municipalities constitute urban areas. Thus, local systems have been divided in three distinct groups: 21 main urban areas²⁸³, 86 local systems relating to medium-sized cities, and 504 remaining local systems²⁸⁴. Levels of urbanization of main urban areas emerges clearly, by confronting the extension of residential areas and the whole land area. The 21 main urban areas cover less than a quarter of the national residential areas. On the contrary, the 29% of residential areas belongs to medium-sized cities. Rome results at the top of the first class followed by Milan, Naples and Turin. The incidence of residential areas in main urban areas reaches 19.3%, 8% in medium-sized cities, and 4.6 % in other local systems. The

²⁸³ More specifically, the first criterion applied to identify *main urban areas* has been the *administrative criterion*, by taking into consideration regional capitals among Metropolitan Cities, as provided by Law 56/2014. Thus, 14 metropolitan cities have been identified. The population criterion followed. Thus, main urban areas should present a local population above the threshold of 500.000 inhabitants in metropolitan cities or 200.000 in regional capitals. Thus, local systems selected resulted to be 21, by adding to the initial list of Metropolitan cities: Verona, Trieste, Taranto, Como, Busto Arsizio, Padova and Bergamo.

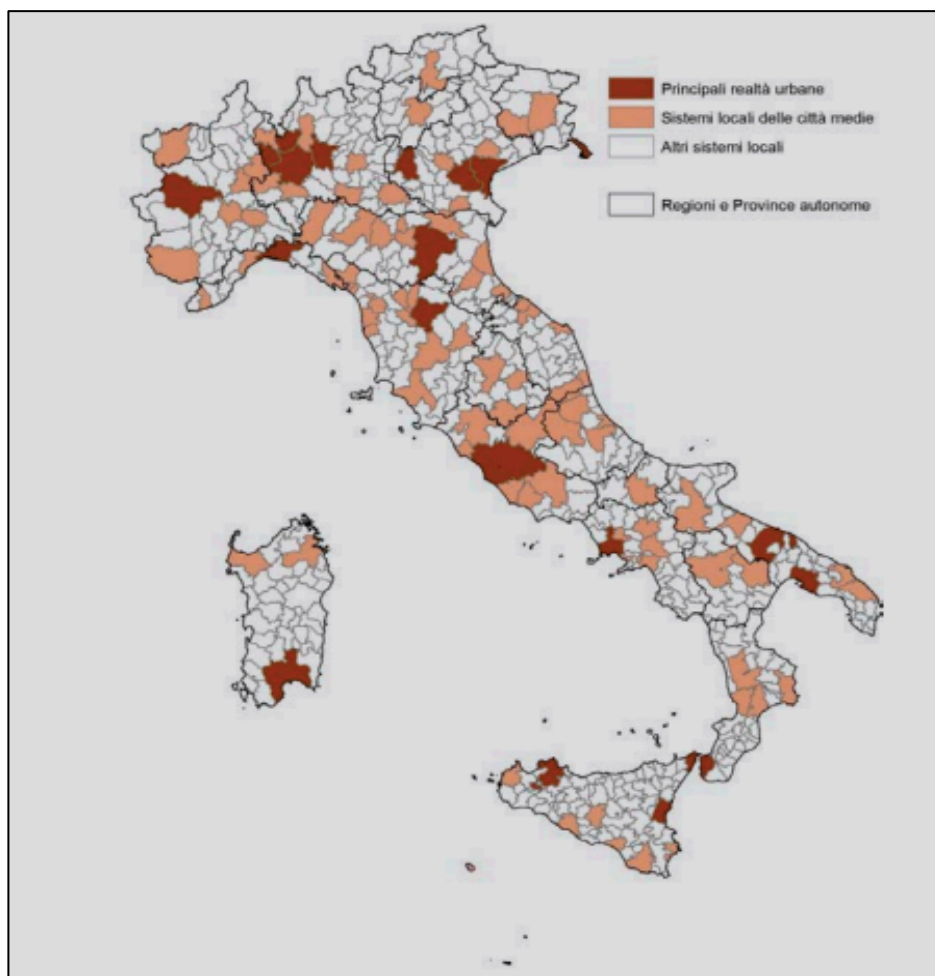
²⁸⁴ Among the 504 non-urbanized local systems, only 12 have a population greater than 50.000 inhabitants.

national average is 6.7%. Consequently, the urban trend in the 21 main urban areas can also be based on urban morphology more than daily commuters' inflows. However, this assumption is not valid for all main urban areas. In fact, if we consider the concentration of residential areas in Cagliari (5.8) and Bari (7,7), it is significantly lower than what can be observed in cities such as Naples, where residential area concentration reaches 43.9²⁸⁵. Thus, another fundamental criterion is represented by population density. The 21 main urban areas show a higher level of population density, when compared to other local systems. In 2015 they showed a population density four times greater than national average: 828 inhabitants per km², compared a national value of 201 inhabitants per km². In terms of population, the 17 % of Italian total population lives in the 21 main urban areas. In conclusion, Italian urban areas cover 6.7% of the whole national territory and this coverage changed from 2001 to 2011 with an increase of 8.7%, which represents a surface of 1600 km².²⁸⁶ The map below shows the distribution of local systems in Italy. Main urban areas are red, local systems relating to medium-sized cities pink and remaining local systems white. It is clear how main urban areas represent only a small part of Italian territory, while the most part results characterized by remaining local systems.

²⁸⁵ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, pp.22-25.

²⁸⁶ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.26.

MAP 5: ITALIAN DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL SYSTEMS ACCORDING TO ISTAT²⁸⁷



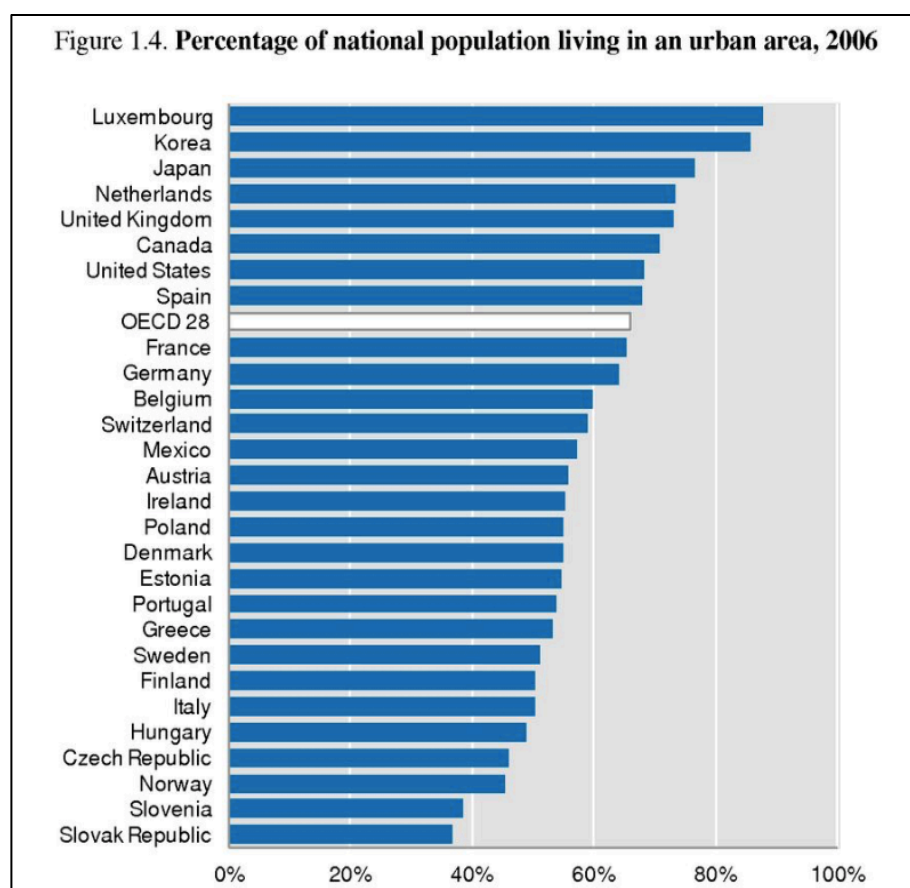
By comparing Italian main urban areas to other metropolitan areas in OECD countries, Italian cities' performances during the crisis (2000-2013) are lower than the average OECD level. OECD, differently from ISTAT, presents a diverse classification of urban areas. In particular, OECD considers four functional urban areas²⁸⁸ in terms of their population size: small urban areas, medium-sized urban areas, metropolitan areas and

²⁸⁷ ISTAT, *op. cit.*, p.38.

²⁸⁸ Functional Urban Areas (FUAs) consists of a city plus its commuting zone.

large metropolitan areas^{289, 290} Supporting evidence collected by ISTAT, OECD shows how Italy is one of the latest countries, according to the percentage of population living in urban areas.

FIGURE 7: PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL POPULATION LIVING IN URBAN AREAS²⁹¹



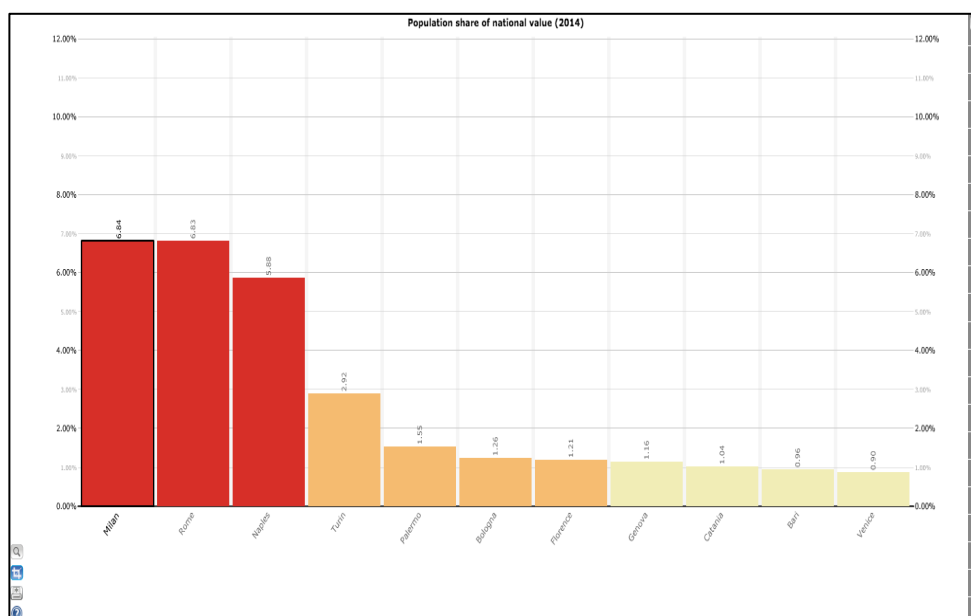
²⁸⁹ Small urban areas, with a population below 200 000 people; Medium-sized urban areas, with a population between 200 000 and 500 000; Metropolitan areas, with a population between 500 000 and 1.5 million; Large metropolitan areas, with a population of 1.5 million or more.

²⁹⁰ OECD (2016), *The OECD Metropolitan Areas Database visualized through the Metropolitan eXplorer*, available online at: <https://measuringurban.oecd.org>, p.4.

²⁹¹ OECD (2012), *Redefining "Urban": A New Way to Measure Metropolitan Areas*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264174108-en>, p.33.

The FIGURE 8 below displays Italian metropolitan and large metropolitan areas' share of total population. According to the chart, it results that they share almost 30% of the total population.

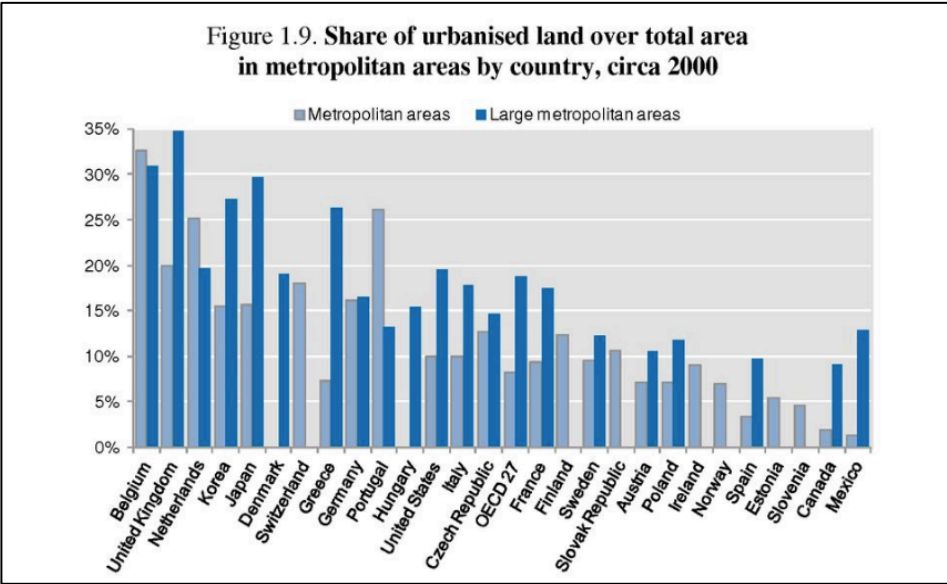
FIGURE 8: POPULATION SHARE OF NATIONAL VALUE²⁹²



As said by OECD, all the metropolitan and large metropolitan areas included in the previous chart have shown an increase in terms of population except for Genova, where population decreased between 2000-2014 of 0.31%. In terms of metropolitan and large metropolitan areas' share of urbanized land over total area, according to the FIGURE 9 below, Italian large metropolitan areas share almost the 20% of urbanized area over total, while metropolitan areas the 10%.

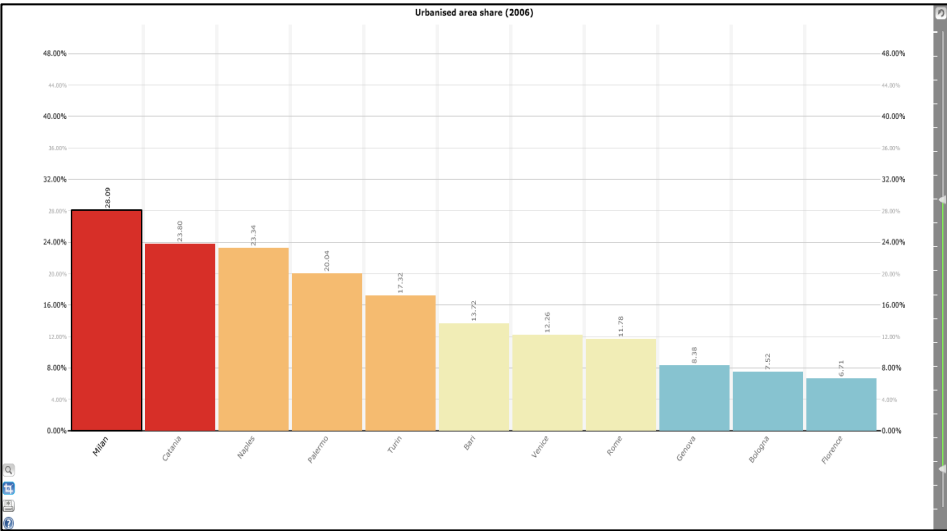
²⁹² OECD, Data sourced from <https://measuringurban.oecd.org>.

FIGURE 9: SHARE OF URBANIZED LAND OVER TOTAL AREA IN METROPOLITAN AREAS BY COUNTRY²⁹³



Moreover, the FIGURE 10 shows the distribution of urbanized areas' share among Italian large metropolitan and metropolitan areas.

FIGURE 10: URBANIZED AREA SHARE²⁹⁴



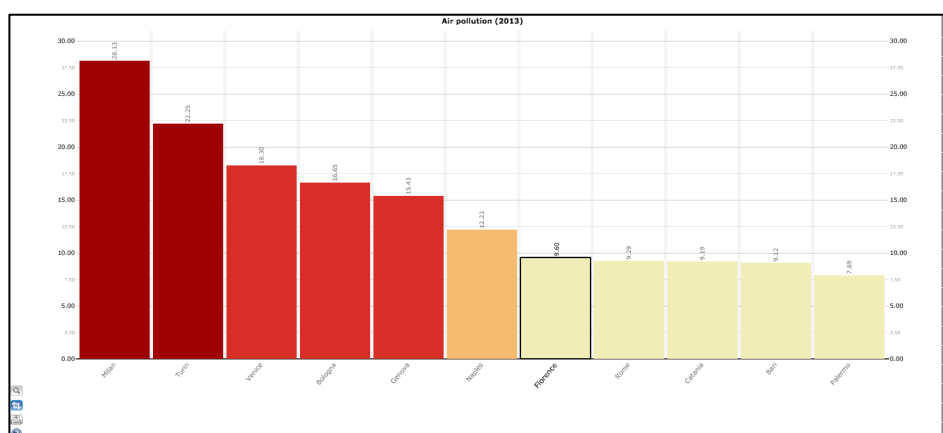
²⁹³ OECD, *op.cit.*, p.42.

²⁹⁴ OECD, Data sourced from <https://measuringurban.oecd.org>.

Conversely, according to OECD, large metropolitan and metropolitan areas, sharing the higher portion of green areas, are Florence, Genova, Turin, Rome and Bologna, while the lower portion of green areas appears in Bari. Large metropolitan and metropolitan areas, which show the higher concentration of population in the core are Naples and Genova, followed by Milan and Rome. On the contrary, Catania is the least dense metropolitan area in its urban core. Consequently, it shows also the highest level of urban sprawl, according to OECD. The lowest levels of urban sprawl occur in Rome and Milan²⁹⁵.

In terms of air pollution, the chart below shows the most and the least polluted large metropolitan and metropolitan areas in Italy.

FIGURE 11: AIR POLLUTION²⁹⁶



Milan and Turin show the highest levels of air pollution, while Bari and Palermo the lowest. However, according to OECD, in terms of GHG emissions, Venice shows the highest level of emissions per capita,

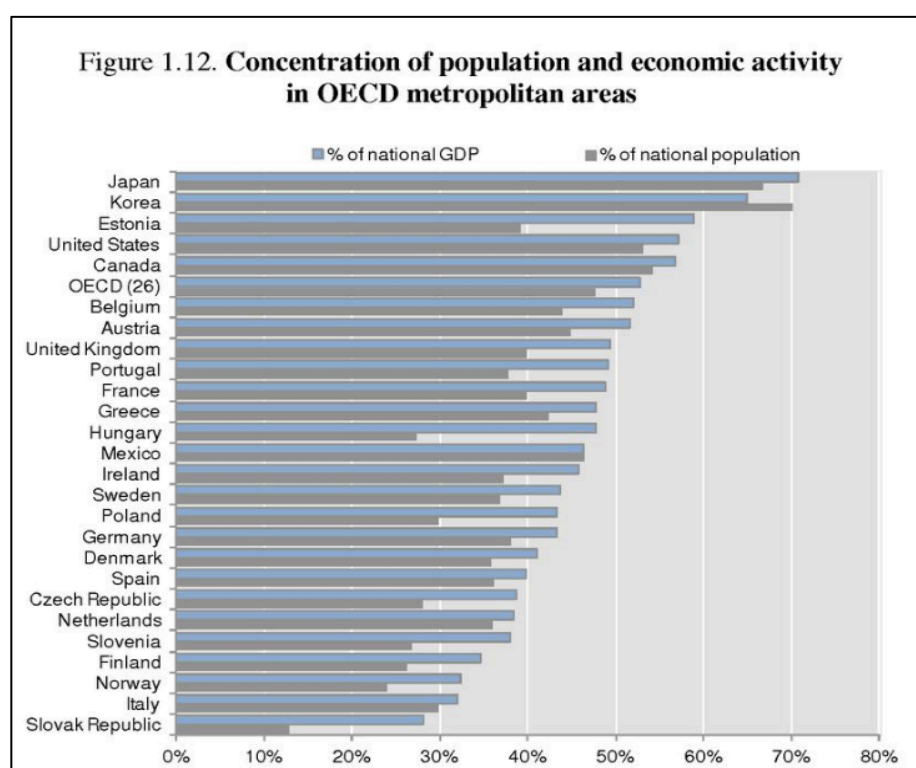
²⁹⁵ OECD, Data sourced from <https://measuringurban.oecd.org>.

²⁹⁶ OECD, Data sourced from <https://measuringurban.oecd.org>.

followed by Genova and Rome. Otherwise, the lowest level of emission per capita occurs in Bari and Palermo.

Moreover, Italy results penultimate in terms of population and economic activity concentration in metropolitan areas with more than 500.000 inhabitants.

FIGURE 12: CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN OECD METROPOLITAN AREAS²⁹⁷

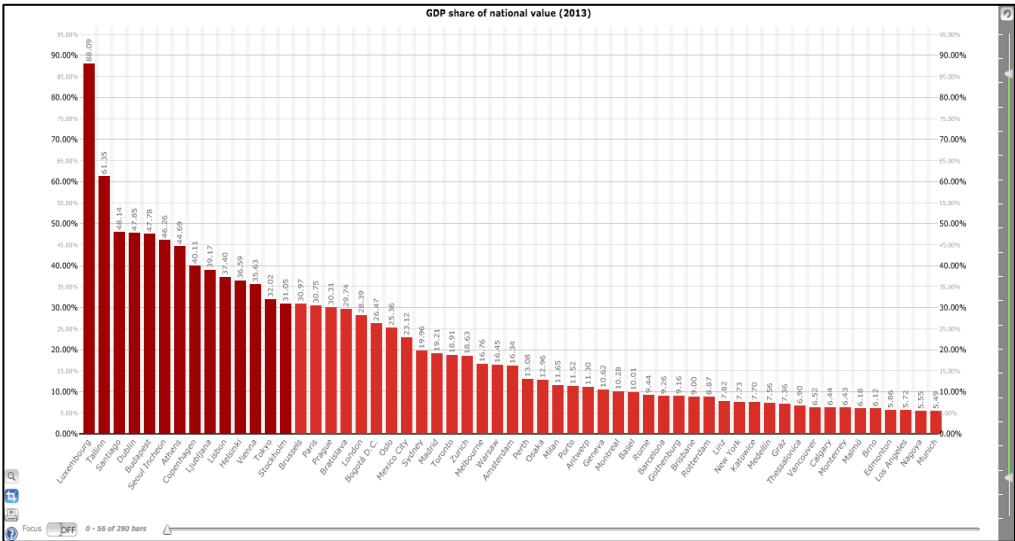


It means that metropolitan areas contribute to employees' growth only for the 29%, compared to other urban and rural areas; while the average in OECD countries is 56%. Also, Italian metropolitan areas' contribution to GDP share of national value is lower than other OECD metropolitan areas' average. None of Italian metropolitan areas (Milan, Rome and Naples) over a total of 276 OECD countries, ranks among the

²⁹⁷ OECD, *op.cit.*, p.46.

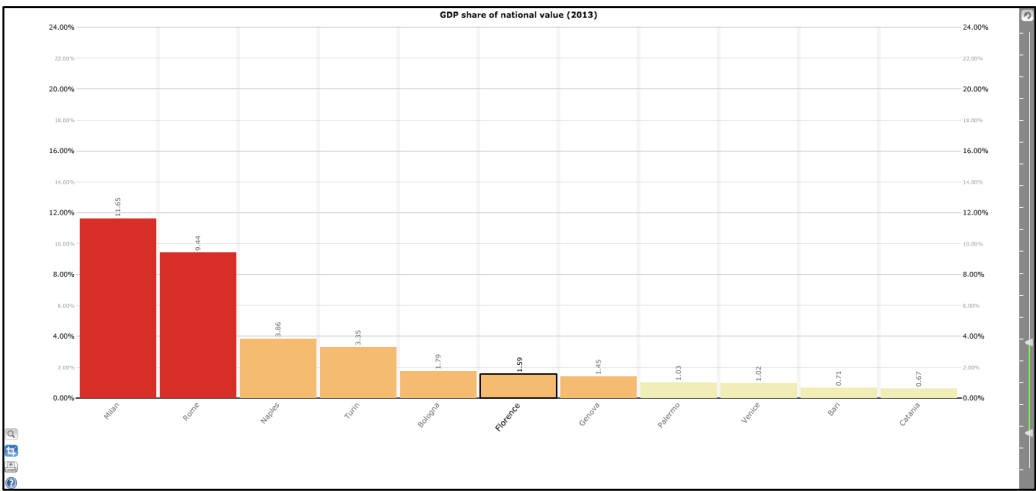
first twenty for GDP share of national value. In particular, Rome results among the OECD metropolitan areas with the lowest GDP share of national value in the same period.

FIGURE 13: GDP SHARE OF NATIONAL VALUE (GLOBAL)²⁹⁸



Thus, the FIGURE 14 shows the distribution of GDP share of national value among Italian metropolitan and large metropolitan areas.

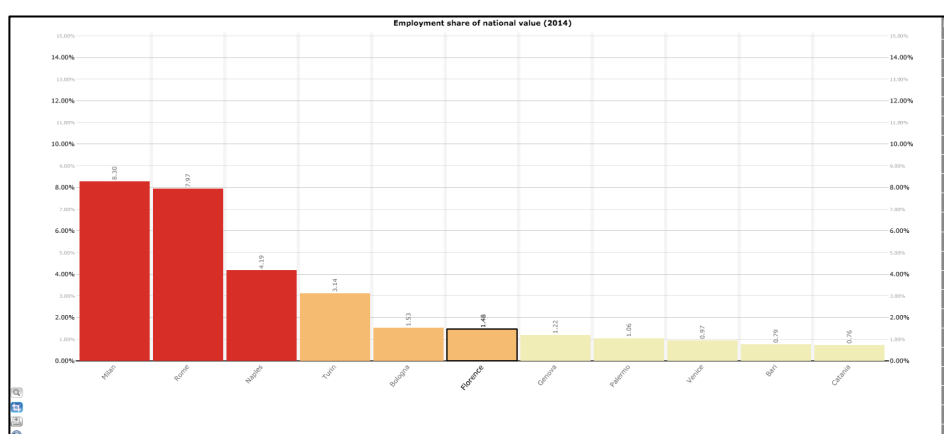
FIGURE 14: GDP SHARE OF NATIONAL VALUE (ITALY)²⁹⁹



²⁹⁸ OECD, Data sourced from <https://measuringurban.oecd.org>.
²⁹⁹ OECD, Data sourced from <https://measuringurban.oecd.org>.

Milan results the Italian city with the highest share of GDP. In terms of GDP growth between 2000 and 2013, OECD attests that only Milan, Rome, Palermo and Bologna grew, while Naples, Florence, Genova, Turin, Venice, Bari and Catania declined in terms of GDP³⁰⁰. By considering employment share of national value, according to the FIGURE 15 below, Milan, Rome and Naples share a greater portion of employed people, compared to other metropolitan areas. Moreover, the total share of national value in terms of employed people results almost the 32%.

FIGURE 15: EMPLOYMENT SHARE OF NATIONAL VALUE(ITALY)³⁰¹



Metropolitan cities with the highest employment rate, according to OECD results Florence, Bologna and Milan, whereas employment during the period 2000-2014 grew slightly in all cities present in FIGURE 15 (with highest rates in Rome and Florence), except for Catania, Turin, Venice and Bari. The analysis conducted, taking into consideration ISTAT and OECD data, shows how metropolitan or main urban areas are not representative

³⁰⁰ OECD, Data sourced from <https://measuringurban.oecd.org>.

³⁰¹ OECD, Data sourced from <https://measuringurban.oecd.org>.

of Italian urban morphology. The largest metropolitan areas are Milan, Rome, Naples and Turin; though their size is not comparable to Paris or London. Italy shows a polycentric urban morphology, mostly based on middle size urban areas and a huge number of small urban areas.

Shifting the attention over urban policies, Italy have always been characterized by the absence of a coordinated policy for cities based on a unitary framework. After the attempts made in 1987, with the institutionalization of a department for urban areas at the Presidency of the Council, suppressed in 1999; in 2012 the *Inter-Ministerial Coordination for Urban Policies* (CIPU) was established, but it reunited only three times. So far, Italy has no governmental referent or administrative body in charge of National Urban Policy. However, there are several structures at the Presidency of the Council which performs several tasks concerning urban areas such as the Territorial Cohesion Policy Agency, the Department for Economic Planning (DIPE), the Department for Regional Affairs and Local Autonomies. Though, no central coordination mechanism has been provided.

If Italy has never shown a coordination policy for cities, several sectorial and fragmented policies for cities have been enacted, without providing a reference framework (e.g. financial provisions, urban regeneration policies, suburbs requalification, smart cities, sustainable mobility policies, housing policies etc.). In 2001, the reform of the Fifth Title of the Constitution, by transferring several competences to regions, complicated the possibility to formulate a national strategy for urban areas. The Italian model towards urban policies, which denied a unitary framework and sustained sectorial and regional prerogatives, did not occur

by chance. It resulted from a coalition of interests to maintain the status quo in political, bureaucratic, and cities' terms. In fact, this approach guaranteed that every minister was able to maintain a direct dialogue with cities to obtain political support; every administration and institutional level preserved its competences; and cities were able to bargain with the government without adapting to national guidelines. Avoiding policy-formulation represents a political strategy. Urbanistic laws, enacted during the 1960s and 1970s, supported the idea that real estate market was pivotal for Italian economic growth and it could not be obstructed. Accordingly, land use was not regulated, by leaving a portion to public use, as happened in Germany and Spain. Some elements show an opposite trend, and the discourse concerning the implementation of a National Urban Policy may start from these experiences³⁰².

The path towards the Urban Agenda for the EU is aimed at overcoming the fragmentation in terms of urban policy both at the national and supranational level. In particular, the so-called Delrio Law (Law n.59 2014), which redefined the borders and competences of local administration and introduced *metropolitan cities*, allowed the adoption of the National Operative Programme for Metropolitan Cities (PON METRO). Consequently, the PON Metro made metropolitan cities new programming and implementing authorities for Structural and Investment Funds for the 2014-2020 programming period. Moreover, the Domestic Stability Pact has been abolished and new financing corridors have been unleashed to support investments for municipalities. In 2016, *Pacts for*

³⁰² VITALI (2016), *Verso l'Agenda Urbana nazionale alla luce del Patto di Amsterdam*, available online at: <http://asvis.it/goal11/articoli/443-1266/verso-lagenda-urbana-nazionale-alla-luce-del-patto-di-amsterdam>.

Cities have been signed in twelve urban areas (Reggio Calabria, Catania, Palermo, Taranto, Bari, Milano, Torino, Genova, Messina, Napoli, Firenze, Cagliari), and they have been considered as the embryonic stage of a bottom-up Urban Agenda. Thus, considering the timing of this embryonal attempt of establishing a sort of central coordination mechanism for urban policies, hopefully aimed to the implementation of a National Urban Agenda, the influence of the New Urban Agenda and the Urban Agenda for the EU's policy-making processes is undeniable.

4.2 The cycles 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 of Cohesion Policy in Italy: from a mainstreamed to integrated urban objectives

This paragraph assesses the influence that European policies concerning urban areas have exerted on Italian urban policies. The programming period 2007-2013 made the European Commission aware of the need to formulate and then implement an ambitious Urban Agenda, able to empower cities at the national and supra-national level. In particular, the programming period 2007-2013 saw the mainstreaming of the urban dimension within European Cohesion policy. Thus, half of Member States' Operational Programmes³⁰³ (OP) provided a priority objective addressing urban development. Italy, in the programming period 2007-2013 established 10 strategic priorities. *Priority 8* was aimed to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of cities and urban areas.

³⁰³ Operational programmes are detailed plans in which the Member States set out how money from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) will be spent during the programming period. They can be drawn up for a specific region or a country-wide thematic goal (e.g. Environment). For the European Territorial Cooperation goal, cross-border or interregional operational programmes are drawn up. [Definition provided by http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/what/glossary/o/operational-programme]

In particular, OP Priority 8 was constituted of three different objectives: *services diffusion and growth in urban areas, quality of life improvement, inclusion in networks*. The most part of funds addressed the second objective: quality of life improvement. By analyzing Priority 8 projects; common traits emerge across different actions. In particular, the objective of service diffusion and growth in urban areas was attained by realizing new amenities, or by restoring and renovating existing facilities. Conversely, the objective quality of life improvement regarded for 78% urban regeneration, for 15% social inclusion, and for the remaining 7% environment protection and sustainable mobility. According to the objective inclusion in networks, several interventions aimed to the improvement of urban mobility were pursued. Under this objective several urban regeneration projects were financed, such as inner and green areas' requalification and, multi-purpose and sports centers' construction³⁰⁴.

Among other strategic priorities, Priority 8 was financed only by the ERDF and showed the lowest degree of advancement, when compared to other priorities. According to *OpenCoesione*³⁰⁵, at the end of December 2015, only 60.3% of accountable costs associated to 5.560 projects had been paid. On the same occasion, the average level of advancement of ERDF projects, developed according to other objectives, accounted for 68.5%³⁰⁶. This review shows how the boundaries which define and differentiate every objective are almost imperceptible. In fact, the idea that

³⁰⁴ TORTORELLA, *op.cit*, pp.66-68.

³⁰⁵ <https://opencoesione.gov.it/it/>

³⁰⁶ MARINUZZI, TORTORELLA (2016), *I Fondi Strutturali per le città italiane: le programmazioni 2007-2013 e 2014-2020 a confronto*, Bologna: Rivista online di Urban@it, p.3.

2007-2013 ERDF funds' impact on urban areas could be limited to Priority 8 projects was not realistic. This happened for two reasons. The first one is that priorities set by the National Strategic Reference Framework³⁰⁷ result to be complementary and transversal. One of the most notable examples is the Priority 6 dedicated to Transport Mobility Networks which has obviously a relevant impact on urban areas. Thus, urban policy limitation to one single priority, in this case Priority 8 Competitiveness and Attractiveness of Cities, immediately undermined the strategic scope of the intervention. The second reason is based on the territorial dimension of Cohesion policy. Thus, it indicates municipalities' role in the implementation of ERDP funds during the period 2007-2013. Municipalities, after private operators, represent the second implementing body, in terms of accountable managed costs. Thus, municipalities' role is transversal, since the National Strategic Reference Framework attributed to them almost EUR 11 billion and they need to distribute these funds on their different priorities, without exclusively concentrating on Priority 8. Hence, investments planned through 2007-2013 ERDF Regional Operative Programmes and addressed to cities to support urban development, accounted for EUR 5.1 billion, which is significantly higher than EUR 4.3 billion attributed to Priority 8 projects'.³⁰⁸ One fundamental consideration concerns cities' role in the governance of 2007-2013 ERDF

³⁰⁷The NSRF (National Strategic Reference Framework) 2007–2013 constitutes the reference document for the programming of European Union Funds at national level for the 2007–2013 period. It was elaborated within the framework of the new strategic approach to the Cohesion Policy of the European Union, according to which NSRF “ensures that the assistance from the Funds is consistent with the Community strategic guidelines on cohesion and identifies the link between Community priorities, on the one hand, and the national reform programme, on the other”. [Definition provided by <http://2007-2013.espa.gr/en/Pages/staticWhatIsESPA.aspx>]

³⁰⁸MARINUZZI, TORTORELLA, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

funds. Municipalities, in most cases, represented implementing bodies, without playing the role of programmers. Two exceptions, in this sense, have been Campania and Umbria's Regional Operational Programmes. In these cases, regions attributed a programming role to cities and/or municipalities.

According to the programming period 2014-2020, the Common Strategic Framework aimed to enhance the *Smart Growth* of the European Union. In order to pursue this objective, it was necessary to guarantee the coherence between the financial programming of funds contemplated in the Common Strategic Framework, and Member States and European Union economic policies. The Partnership Agreement, according to the 1303/2013 EU Regulation³⁰⁹, was necessary to plan how Member States should spend European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI), in terms of overall strategy, priorities, objectives, methods and spending priorities. In particular, the ERDF Regulation (1301/2013 EU Regulation) included a provision concerning strategic urban actions, or even urban projects or investments. Therefore, it reserved 5% of ERDF resources to their implementation. The Regulation stipulated that these actions may be delegated to cities and managed through Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI). This instrument is employed when an urban development strategy

³⁰⁹ This is part of the Regulation package issued by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU which include:

- 1303/2013 EU Regulation – Common provisions
- 1301/2013 EU Regulation – European Regional Development Fund
- 1304/2013 EU Regulation – European Social Fund
- 1299/2013 EU Regulation – European Territorial Cooperation goal
- 1302/2013 EU Regulation – European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
- 1300/2013 EU Regulation – Cohesion Fund
- 1305/2013 EU Regulation – European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
- 508/2014 EU Regulation – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

or another territorial strategy necessitates an integrated approach to investments which encompass several priority axes of different Operational Programmes. These Integrated Territorial Investments are usually managed by an urban authority on grounds of the subsidiarity principle³¹⁰. The choice to employ ERDF resources in strategic and integrated actions was aimed to concentrate scarce resources on specific objectives and priorities and empower cities by considering their leading role on surrounding rural areas. This choice partly resulted different from the 2007-2013 mainstreaming of urban policies on Regional Operational Programmes axes.

In accordance with the Partnership Agreement, European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) are implemented through operational programmes (OP). Those programmes are drafted directly by Member States or by the designed authority. The Partnership agreement that Italy adopted in 2014 to employ ESI funds for the programming period 2014-2020, recognized a pivotal role to the urban dimension. The Partnership Agreement considers the urban dimension as the optimal intervention level to guarantee Italian regional development and a common urban strategy. It established *three drivers of development for urban projects*: the modernization of urban services; social inclusion of vulnerable populations and deprived areas; enforcement of local systems and productivity. In order to implement this strategy, the Partnership Agreement individuated two categories of urban authorities: *metropolitan cities* and *middle-sized cities*. In the first case, the urban strategy is

³¹⁰ MONACO, ELMO (2016), *Sviluppo Urbano e Politica di Coesione nel settennio 2014-2020*, Roma: IFEL Fondazione Anci, Dossier e Manuali, p.50.

commanded on Regional Operational Programmes, by following the thematic objectives directly connected to the three development drivers; or the specific *National Operational Programme for Metropolitan cities* (PON Metro). If this last Operation Programme is completely aimed to address urban development, the interventions for metropolitan cities included in Regional Operational Programmes are not limited to this scope.³¹¹ The second category of recipients is represented by *middle size cities* and *regional urban poles*, when they characterize urban areas densely populated and constitute poles able to deliver public services. In this context, only Regional Operational Programmes are enabled to intervene. Since there is no clear definition concerning middle-size cities, regional administration acted in a very flexible manner in the provision of interventions. So far, in this context, 200 cities have been considered Urban Authorities, and 19 are from the Campania Region³¹². Last but not least, the Partnership Agreement highlights the necessity of including all these actions, interventions, priorities under the umbrella of a future National Urban Agenda, by following the scopes of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Thus, it seems how the provisions included in the 2014-2020 Partnership Agreement, concerning urban issues, underline the need, in the next Cohesion policy programming period, to develop a national urban coordinative mechanism in fulfillment of the objectives contained in the Urban Agenda for the EU.

³¹¹ MARINUZZI, TORTORELLA, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

³¹² MARINUZZI, TORTORELLA, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

4.3 PON METRO, the Urban agenda for Metropolitan cities

As explained in the first paragraph, the Italian territory is embedded on a dense network of urban centers of different dimensions. In Italy every city has its own specificity, and only by considering them as a whole; their contribution may be fully understood. If the analysis is concentrated on Metropolitan cities, their centrality in the national context results evident. Despite their lower scale and the preponderance in Italy of medium and small urban areas (when compared to other European and global cities); more than 9 million people live in Italian metropolitan cities. They also show a population density 13 times higher than national average, they host one fifth of foreign people, they concentrate almost the 20% of national income, and each of them results specialized in the third sector. They represent the motor of any innovation in Italy, in cultural, technological and economic terms. Thus, these cities show significative figures, though their potential cannot stand alone and must be incapsulated in an integrated and transversal strategy. This was the aim of National Operative Programme for Metropolitan cities. It resulted as the embryonal constitution of a national strategy for urban areas, the first piece towards a national urban agenda. In fact, the gap between the central role recognized to urban areas during the programming period 2014-2020 and the difficulties concerning urban development encountered during the cycle 2007-2013, ultimately determined the implementation of the National Operative Programme for Metropolitan cities.

The adoption of a National Operative Programme for Metropolitan Cities encountered the need of ensuring a strong central coordination mechanism for main cities, aimed to concentrate resources on specific

measurable objectives with a socio-economic impact or aimed at the promotion of better services for citizens and companies. At the same time, it enabled metropolitan cities to benefit from management autonomy, thanks to the acknowledgement of their status of Intermediary Body. Thus, metropolitan cities identified with the Law N. 56/2014 are Rome, Bari, Bologna, Genova, Florence, Milan, Naples, Turin, Reggio Calabria, Venice, Cagliari, Catania, Messina, Palermo. The National Operative Programme for Metropolitan Cities, better known as PON Metro and adopted by the European Commission with the 4998/2015 Decision C; obtained a budget of EUR 892 million and it represents a multi-fund system. Both ERDF and ESF funds financed actions promoted under the PON Metro scope, with a contribution of respectively 76% and 24% of the total amount³¹³. Additionally, resources were divided in terms of the region category they had to address, which are: more developed regions, least developed regions and transitional regions. PON Metro is coordinated by the Territorial Cohesion Agency³¹⁴ which supports the priorities of a future National Urban Agenda; as part of the strategies for sustainable urban development specified by the Partnership Agreement and in line with the provisions of the Urban Agenda for the EU. Moreover, the Partnership Agreement selected for the PON Metro two of the three urban development drivers, which should constitute the future national urban agenda. These are the modernization of urban services for residents through the promotion of smart cities; and the social inclusion of

³¹³ MARINUZZI, TORTORELLA, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

³¹⁴ The Territorial Cohesion Agency is a national public agency, instituted pursuant to 101/2013 decree law and directed by the President of the Council of Ministers. It supports and promotes programmes and projects concerning territorial cohesion.

vulnerable population and deprived urban areas (excluding the enforcement of local systems and productivity). In addition, the PON Metro is articulated on four thematic axes: such as Metropolitan Digital Agenda, Services and Urban Transport Sustainability, Social Inclusion Services Infrastructure for Social Inclusion. All the administration interested to the PON Metro have manifested their main concern towards deprived neighborhoods, infrastructures and vulnerable populations³¹⁵.

Ultimately, PON Metro supports any cooperative effort made by metropolitan cities, aimed at leading the surrounding metropolitan area, improving quality of life and promoting more efficient urban services. PON Metro also promotes innovation in terms of governance. In fact, it identified the city mayor as the representative in charge of managing the Urban Authority or the Intermediate Body, with the autonomy to define the needs and the interventions. The constitution of the PON Metro certainly gave a major prominence to metropolitan cities, on the national scale. However, in order to function, an urban strategy cannot ignore non-metropolitan urban areas. Especially in Italy, middle-size and small cities represent the majority of Italian urban areas, according to the paragraph 4.1.

Thus, the PON Metro emerged as a partial (in terms of its recipients) coordinative framework, functional to the allocation of European Structural and Investment Funds. However, it represented also a unique framework on the national scene. In fact, Italy lacks a National Urban Policy, and as the last paragraphs have shown, all the provision

³¹⁵ MONACO, ELMO, *op.cit.*, pp.66-68

referred to urban areas are highly dependent on European Cohesion policy. Thus, the subject of urban policies' Europeanization, conducted in the second chapter of this dissertation, results evident when the misfit with European standards is higher. Italian urban policies may be considered highly Europeanized in this sense, because national provisions are scarce, and the remaining choice is to adapt to what the European Union commands or offer, though it happens with discontinuity and without applying an all-encompassing strategy.

4.4 The chimera of a National Urban Agenda

In Italy, in the last few years, a renewed interest for urban policies emerged. But, nowadays, it results still controversial if it is effectively possible to talk about an Italian strategy for urban policies. However, Cohesion policy first, then the Urban Agenda for the EU and the New Urban Agenda, increased the attention on these topics and Italy, though mildly, reacted. Thus, it seemed it was finally the right time for a National Urban Agenda. Indeed, the Italian National Report for Habitat III of June 2016 contained the proposal to draw up a national urban agenda³¹⁶. The idea was to revise the Ministerial Decree establishing the Inter-ministerial Committee for Urban Policies (CIPU) and introduce a mechanism able to coordinate all central administrations' actions concerning cities. However, taking into account what the Italian Territorial Cohesion Agency says about the National Urban Agenda and given the paucity of data available, it results evident how the agenda got stuck among all the unfinished

³¹⁶ITALY'S PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (2016), *Habitat III: Italy's National Report*, available online at: http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Report_ITALY.pdf, p.26.

policies which, at the end of the day, lacked political support. In particular, taking into consideration the National Urban Policy Guiding Framework elaborated by UN-Habitat, an Italian National Urban Policy may be collocated in between the *Feasibility* phase and *Diagnosis* phase. In fact, during the Cohesion Policy Programming cycles, several needs assessment have been conducted and the opportunities coming from a National Urban Agenda have been evaluated. However, the expected role of the central government appears still undefined. Moreover, the Operational Programmes enacted in the last years, all the programs implemented according to the European Cohesion policy framework, and the discussion concerning the Urban Agenda for the EU have provided an understanding of the actors involved in the process. But, the context where the National Urban Policy is expected to be formulated and then implemented varied continuously.

However, the Territorial Cohesion Agency envisages that the National Urban Agenda should be a document able to identify the priorities of sustainable urban development, in order to support cities, address urban poverty, urban segregation, the demographic crisis and enhance energy efficiency and environmental sustainability. On the heels of the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Commission invites every member state to introduce an urban agenda able to empower cities at the national level. The centrality of cities in the European Union's scopes resulted evident during the 2014-2020 Programming period, with the allocation of funds aimed to the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments. Moreover, the adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU guaranteed the individuation of the priority themes which must guide every national agenda. In addition,

the PON Metro supported European policies demands' such as the acknowledged cities' role, the issues of cohesion and development in large urban areas, the increasing importance of local administrators, the necessity to empower Urban Authorities in conducting investments and interinstitutional dialogue. The main stimulus to the adoption of the PON Metro can be found in the possibility for metropolitan areas to face jointly and concertedly territorial challenges which impact those areas. Thus, as explained in the previous paragraph, PON Metro is focused on the first drivers imagined for a National Urban Agenda, since Regional Operational Programmes address local business competitiveness, climate and environmental risks and environmental protection. Moreover, the PON Metro must not be limited to infrastructural projects or mere urban requalification interventions. It must exclude from its scope actions concerning ultra-wideband and smart grid, which are expected to be addressed by Regional Operational Programmes as well. As said before and according to the description of the urban agenda provided by the Territorial Cohesion Agency; PON Metro must address thematic objectives as digital agenda, transition towards a low-emission economy and social inclusion pursuant to the Smart City model of development.³¹⁷ Thus, the storytelling behind this National Urban Agenda prototype, presented by the Territorial Cohesion Agency, seems to confuse the instrument employed to implement European Cohesion policy with a National Urban agenda. Moreover, another element of misunderstanding is the confusion between the Urban Agenda and the PON Metro itself. It

³¹⁷ AGENZIA PER LA COESIONE TERRITORIALE (2016), *Agenda Urbana*, PON METRO, available online at: <http://www.ponmetro.it/home/programma/come-nasce/agenda-urbana/>

results hard to distinguish between the borders of this agenda and what regards Metropolitan cities. A National Urban Agenda cannot focus on a specific category, it must encompass all urban areas, including a strategy for rural areas, and considering a wider range of priority themes. Thus, the reference to the Urban Agenda for the EU and its priority themes, represent the only point worth of note.

However, despite its limitation to metropolitan cities, the role played by PON Metro has not to be underestimated. It soon became an incubator of innovative solutions promoted directly by cities. In 2017, Metropolitan Cities have signed a Protocol aimed to undertake concrete actions around eight macro objectives, in accordance with the UN's 2030 Agenda and the principle of sustainable urban development. In particular, the G7 Environment, which saw the participation of Italian metropolitan cities' representatives; have signed the *Bologna Charter for the Environment - Metropolitan cities for sustainable development*.³¹⁸ Consequently, Cohesion Policy (2014-2020), the PON Metro, Italian Participation to the Urban Agenda for the EU, its presence in several partnerships with Italian cities or a representative from the Government, have strengthened this debate concerning the future of urban policies in Italy. For a while, the urban question assumed a relevant position in the policy agenda, and this resulted evident by looking at the wide range of policies addressing urban areas, enacted by the last former governments (XVII Italian Republic Legislature). Hence, after a long period of government disengagement in urban policies, in the last three years a

³¹⁸ URBAN@IT (2017), *Carta di Bologna per l'ambiente*, available online at: <https://www.urbanit.it/carta-di-bologna-per-lambiente/>.

renewed attention emerged. Among different initiatives adopted at the national level, it seemed that in some cases the former Government shifted from an emergency response towards preventive actions. In particular, two extraordinary programmes of intervention were funded with ordinary resources: the *urban regeneration and safety for metropolitan cities and provincial capitals' suburbs* and the other addressed to *deprived urban areas regeneration*.³¹⁹ The public procurement concerning suburbs (the so-called *Bando Periferie*³²⁰), adopted by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in 2016³²¹, had the goal to invest in urban requalification projects. It guaranteed a total of EUR 2.1 billion of funding and eventually EUR 3.9 of co-funding to metropolitan cities' suburbs. Conventions for projects concerning metropolitan cities' suburbs requalification, aimed to release funds, were signed in two tranches: the first on March 6, 2017 and the second on November or December 2017. The new government confirmed by the chambers on June 6, 2018, showing a highly different composition and political orientation, decided to block for two years EUR 1.6 billion funds (the abovementioned second tranche) destined to municipalities; with the approval of an amendment to the decree law *Milleproroghe*. It, consequently, endangered all the investments and projects approved under the so-called *Bando Periferie*.³²² This encountered the discontent of mayors, cities and municipalities' associations such as ANCI which started administrative appeals against

³¹⁹ ITALY'S PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, *op.cit.*, p.4.

³²⁰ Complete Italian name: Programma Straordinario di intervento per la riqualificazione urbana e la sicurezza delle periferie (May 2016).

³²¹ Published on the Gazzetta Ufficiale as provision n.127 June 1, 2016.

³²² GIANNI TROVATI (2018), *Mille Proroghe, scontro sul bando periferie*, in Sole 24 Ore: Enti Locali & PA, available online at: <http://quotidianoentilocali.ilsole24ore.com/art/fisco-e-contabilita/2018-08-08/investimenti-comunali-scontro-bando-periferie-180029.php?uuid=AE9PZzYF>

this decision. This is a clear example of Italian policies' vulnerability, since Italian politics is imprisoned in short-termed reappraisals against opposition forces and usually lacks strategic vision for the future. Despite this personal consideration, the *Bando Periferie* represented an innovative policy-tool concerning the target of the intervention. At the same time, it showed the typical weaknesses of an almost emergency intervention, with a short-termed scope, without a clear definition of the concept of suburbs, still anchored to the mechanism of Italian public procurement model, which ultimately addresses only infrastructural projects and does not propose real strategic visions or clear targets³²³. However, it could have represented a useful occasion to encourage municipalities' coordination and planning, to promote best practices and employ funds to conclude never ended projects. In addition to the *Bando Periferie*, the returned interest for urban policies in the last two years, on the heels of 2014-2020 Cohesion policy cycle and the Urban Agenda for the EU, saw also the adoption of a Public Procurement for the cultural and social regeneration of urban deprived areas in 2015; the Project *Casa Italia* in 2016 aimed to housing, territory and urban areas requalification³²⁴; the enforcement of the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI); the development plans for

³²³ URBAN@IT (2018), *Terzo Rapporto per le città: Mind the Gap. Il distacco tra politiche e città*, Bologna: Il Mulino, p.253.

³²⁴ This public policy intervention aims to increasingly protect citizens, public and private property by defining an overall policy for securing infrastructures (public and private), by constantly monitoring and evaluate the quality of housing, infrastructural services, by indicating guidelines for preventive interventions aimed to reduce risks, to promote resources efficiency, to enhance competences of local administrators. So far, *Casa Italia* worked on surveying areas with higher seismic risk and provided a reference framework for energy efficiency interventions and fiscal bonuses for citizens investing in securing their houses.

the Southern part of Italy³²⁵ (*Patti per lo Sviluppo*); and the plans for sustainable mobility (PUMS). According to the latest, it is worth noting how in the last years the action of the Ministry for Infrastructure and Transport adopted a more informed strategic planning, thought to evaluate and program the transport infrastructure and services needed, in accordance with efficiency and environmental sustainability targets. More specifically, metropolitan cities have recently presented Urban Plans for Sustainable Mobility (PUMS), which are expected to become mandatory. They have been imagined as dynamic plans, which need to be revised regularly and to be formulated with residents from the beginning. All these interventions addressed for urban areas requalification, territorial cohesion, housing and sustainable mobility, showed the same weaknesses: e.g. their improvised nature, the lack of an all-encompassing strategy, a strict path-dependency to the Italian model of public procurement and public works. Ultimately, it would be necessary to reform national and local governance, on the heels of Urban Agenda for the EU' partnerships; to foster cooperation and coordination among interventions, policy sectors and actors involved; to boost the capacity of cities to create networks together; to adapt local taxation systems to policy needs; and improve technical skills of local authorities.

³²⁵ The Masterplan for the Southern part of Italy aimed to catch up with 2007-2013 Cohesion policy funds expenditure, to introduce more innovative programming strategies and solve company crises. Thus, it planned to establish a new industrial policy for the South, different from the previous interventions. This policy tool, thought to increase cooperation among institutions, national, regional and local governments; was expected to guide cities and regions towards new governance models, new visions for the future, the attraction of private capitals and the identification of profitable interventions. In order to promote interinstitutional cooperation and the achievement of these objectives; the government signed 16 pacts for the south: one for each region (Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Basilicata, Puglia, Calabria, Sicilia, Sardegna) and one for each metropolitan city (Napoli, Bari, Reggio Calabria, Messina, Catania, Palermo, Cagliari). [http://presidenza.governo.it/GovernoInforma/documenti/masterplan_mezzogiorno.pdf]

In this scenario, the National Center for Urban Policy Studies' (Urban@it) recognizes how a future national urban agenda must take into consideration the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU, which are *better regulation*, to reduce policy fragmentation, promote an integrated approach and a new governance model; *better funding*, by directly providing resources for deprived urban areas through the stability law and financial innovative instruments; and *better knowledge*, to understand the best practices enacted with past experiences and projects.³²⁶ Thus, the Urban Agenda for the EU must be taken into consideration as the main reference framework for an eventual national urban agenda, whenever the formulation process at the national level will start.

Consequently, it is worth taking into account the 2016 *Habitat III Italy's National Report*, coordinated by the *Presidency of the Council of Ministers* and presented in occasion of the Habitat III conference held in Quito. It describes the peculiarities of Italy's situation in terms of urbanization trends and policy perspectives. It proposes the development of a National Urban Agenda, able to coordinate the actions undertaken by central and local administrations, following the provisions included in the Urban Agenda for the EU. Given the Italian proliferation of regulatory interventions, its administrative system excessively fragmented and articulated, the several weaknesses related to ESI funds management and its lack of stakeholders and citizens engagement; a National Urban Agenda must necessarily address those aspects³²⁷. Additionally, the report highlights how a future National Urban Agenda must include provisions

³²⁶ URBAN@IT, *op.cit.*, p.261.

³²⁷ ITALY'S PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, *op.cit.*, p.44.

concerning the enforcement of metropolitan cities' role; the promotion of strategic planning; the improvement of citizens' participation; the enforcement of multilevel governance; inter-ministerial coordination for urban policies, the increase of public administration efficiency; and the introduction of new Public Procurement rules, in accordance with the corresponding Urban Agenda for the EU's action plan³²⁸. The report also emphasizes the importance of urban planning. It also proposes a revision of the Art. 117³²⁹ of the Constitution; the regulation of land consumption; the establishment of a national urban regeneration strategy; the introduction of indicators to assess urban quality of life, the improvement of public transport and urban mobility, the promotion of sustainable urban development³³⁰.

Furthermore, it is interesting to consider the document *L'Agenda Urbana per lo sviluppo sostenibile* (the Urban Agenda for sustainable development)³³¹ formulated by Urban@it and the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS)³³². This agenda, in order to show how Italy may and should comply with the Sustainable Development Goal 11 when formulating a National Urban Agenda, completes the set of priority themes addressed by the Urban Agenda for the EU with additional

³²⁸ ITALY'S PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, *op.cit.*, pp.44-45.

³²⁹ The idea is to entrust the State with exclusive legislation over general/common provisions on land management and governance.

³³⁰ ITALY'S PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, *op.cit.*, pp.26-27.

³³¹ ASviS, URBAN@IT (2017), *L'Agenda Urbana per lo sviluppo sostenibile*, available online at: <http://asvis.it/public/asvis/files/AgendaUrbana.pdf>

³³² The Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) was born on February 3, 2016, on the initiative of the Unipolis Foundation and the University of Rome "Tor Vergata", to raise the awareness of institutions, economic sector and Italian society concerning the importance of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. It also aims to mobilize them in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Alliance currently brings together over 200 of the most important institutions and networks of civil society.

provisions included in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (such as culture, health, gender equality, institutions and participation, development cooperation).

In addition, Urban@it, in its third annual report, includes its proposal for a national urban agenda, by taking into consideration the abovementioned document containing *L'Agenda Urbana per lo sviuppo sostenibile*. This report indicates how the priority themes for an Italian Urban Agenda must necessarily be immigration, air quality, circular economy, urban resilience, urban poverty, housing, jobs and skills in the local economy and culture (which has not been included in the Urban Agenda for the EU). In terms of policy instruments, the proposal suggests that its provisions should be implemented through pacts between the central administration and urban authorities, following the example of the British *City Deals* and the Dutch *Agenda stad*.³³³ City deals are conceived as public-private agreements to cooperate to innovative solutions and perform urban transition tasks. Moreover, Urban@it believes that Italy needs to overcome the instrument of the public procurement as the main public services' delivery mechanism.³³⁴ Public Administration should take the responsibility to provide services through policy-making, more than delegate decisions to public procurement. The Pact should also identify relevant actors to achieve its goals and it should contain a vision for the future, a set of measurable targets. On the other side, it should adopt a participatory approach, based on co-design and learning experiences.³³⁵

³³³ In UK, *city deals* have been promoted by the Department for communities and local government since 2013. In the Netherlands, *city deals* are part of the *Agenda stad*.

³³⁴ URBAN@IT, *op.cit*, pp.276-279.

³³⁵ National Association for Italian Municipalities

To meet these objectives a valuable set of indicators and networking experiences is needed. For this reason, ANCI promoted the *Urbes Report* which, together with ISTAT, allowed to take stock of the Italian urban dimension concerning health, work, relationships, culture and participation through the monitoring of 68 indicators. This happened to ensure that necessary information was available for policies implementation and monitoring, to facilitate all forms of planning and to share information with citizens and enhance their participation. In particular, the *UrBes report* presented the *Bes project*³³⁶ (which measures Fair and Sustainable Well-being); aimed at identifying the most suitable measures to assess quality of life and show the progress of territories towards the increase of citizens' wellbeing.³³⁷

Another interesting project that ANCI promoted is *Agenda Urbana* (Urban Agenda). Agenda Urbana represents a national platform developed by ANCI and IFEL that collects the experiences implemented by Italian cities. Within the platform, cities share their innovative initiatives, the needs they meet, the costs incurred, the impact they have on people's quality of life and the replicability of their projects in other urban contexts. Therefore, this platform, based on the work carried out by the *Smart City Observatory*, represents an operational tool for mapping, collecting and cataloging the design interventions on smart cities throughout the country.

³³⁶ The Bes indicator considers 12 dimensions selected through a process of democratic sharing promoted in Italy by Cnel and Istat. The Bes indicator, in line with the most advanced experiences that are taking shape all over the world, has been projected as an instrument capable of measuring the basic elements of well-being in Italy and in its many territories.

³³⁷ ISTAT, CNEL (2015), *UrBes: il Benessere Equo e Sostenibile nelle Città*, available online at: https://www.istat.it/it/files//2015/04/UrBes_2015.pdf, p.4.

It ultimately aims to support municipalities of all sizes, by saving replicable ideas and experiences, for the creation of a network able to promote innovation in the territories³³⁸.

Additionally, the creation of an urban agenda in occasion of the new European planning period 2021-2027 and the achievement of UN's Sustainable Development Goals were among the topics at the center of a confrontation organized by ANCI³³⁹ and the Cohesion Agency, held during the *ForumPA 2018*. In the course of this event, the state of the 440 projects financed by the PON Metro 2014-2020 was presented. Combining the objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU (better knowledge, better funding and better regulation) through the inclusion of numbers and experiences in a quantitative database of interventions and research; is what ANCI intends to achieve to give continuity to the final adoption of a national urban agenda.³⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Italian cities are active in Europe and in global networks on a series of themes, incorporating ideas useful for the improvement of policies on a local and national scale. Through crossings between networks and different programs, the added value of the Italian presence in these networks can contribute to building from the bottom an Urban Agenda made of actions, projects and visions that activate new ways of relating with different stakeholders and levels of government.

³³⁸ IFEL, ANCI (2017), *Agenda Urbana*, available online at: <http://www.agendaurbana.it/anci/>

³³⁹ <https://forumpa2018.eventifpa.it/it/>

³⁴⁰ PAGLIARULO, D'ANTONIO (2018), *Cinque temi sui quali le città italiane fanno rete in Italia e in Europa: da ForumPA visioni e progetti verso l'Agenda Urbana*, URBACT, available online at: <http://urbact.eu/cinque-temi-sui-quali-le-citt%C3%A0-italiane-fanno-rete-italia-e-europa-da-forumpa-visioni-e-progetti>

In conclusion, that of the urban agenda, both at a national and at a European level, is a dynamic scenario. If, on the one hand, a fragmented reality, in which programs and resources struggle to find a coherent framework to be brought back, persists; on the other hand, processes and scenarios are open and can contribute to formulate a policy for Italian cities. From this point of view, the process activated by the Pact of Amsterdam represents an unprecedented opportunity.

4.5 What about Netherlands?

Unlike Italy, the country which acted as a policy entrepreneur in order to implement the Urban Agenda for the EU, developed an effective system of adaptation to what the European Agenda propose. As already explained in the previous chapter, on the heels of the British tradition, Netherlands introduced the so-called Agenda Stad in 2015, based on the delivery mechanism of *city-deals*. *City-Deals* are formal collaboration agreements between the national state, cities, firms and public organizations.³⁴¹ *City-Deals* aim to create spaces for innovation and empower local governments in those situations “where cities encounter constraints, and innovation and breakthroughs are needed to cash in on opportunities and problems need to be resolved”³⁴². Dutch cities are deeply involved in the partnerships at the EU level. In particular, Dutch largest cities all participate in partnerships (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam); as well as four middle-sized cities (Eindhoven, Nijmegen

³⁴¹ AGENDASTAD.NL. (2016a), *Agenda Stad - City Deals*, <http://agendastad.nl/city-deals/>

³⁴² AGENDASTAD.NL. (2016b), *Agenda Stad - Over agenda stad*, available online at: <http://agendastad.nl/over-agenda-stad/>

and Haarlem and Tilburg). And the Dutch ministries are playing a key role. Additionally, also many non-participating cities keep maintaining a key interest in the Urban Agenda for the EU. The discussion concerning the Urban Agenda for the EU at the national level is led by the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, which established a Taskforce Urban Agenda, involving other ministries, the association of municipalities, provinces and main cities³⁴³. The participation to Partnerships is regularly discussed with all Dutch cities participating at the EU level. Cities also usually cooperate with the surrounding municipalities and other local stakeholders, which are constantly informed about the themes discussed in occasion of the Partnership and included in the proposals they decide to address. For example, Utrecht is a partner in the Air Quality Partnership.

As the European Urban Knowledge Network reported; the city of Utrecht

“had already established a close cooperation with the Utrecht Province and municipalities and knowledge institutes in the Utrecht region in the Health Urban Living programme. Their participation in City Deals of the national urban agenda and in the Air Quality Partnership of the UAEU is linked to this public health priority. The city uses the contacts with municipalities and knowledge institutes in its region to share knowledge and receive feedback”³⁴⁴.

Thus, there is a strong correspondence between Dutch city deals and Urban Agenda for the EU’s partnerships. Some cities are included in both City Deals and Partnerships addressing the same objective or priority theme, as the case of Utrecht shows. This choice aims to better confront

³⁴³ EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK (EUKN), *op.cit.*, 51.

³⁴⁴ EUROPEAN URBAN KNOWLEDGE NETWORK (EUKN), *op.cit.*, 51.

urban challenges and support local strengths. The combination of the two, sometimes results difficult since City Deals represent a flexible bottom-up framework, while Partnership are more formally structured. However, the importance to link the two agendas is supported by the ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Nonetheless, Agenda Stad and the Urban Agenda for the EU share the same objectives: better regulation, better funding and better knowledge. They also share the same inclination to experiment new forms of governance and cooperation.

CONCLUSION

The present dissertation focused its attention on the following issues:

1. *How the European Union is able to enlarge its powers, even without a clear legal basis set by treaties; and how this phenomenon occurred in relation to urban policies and culminated with the adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU;*
2. *If the European Union managed to empower cities at the European level, by enacting the Urban Agenda for the EU and consequently recognizing their role in policy-making;*
3. *If urban policies are needed to improve quality of life and citizens' well-being;*
4. *How the Urban Agenda for the EU influenced national urban policies and what ultimately happened in Italy.*

In order to address these questions, my thesis developed along four main levels. In particular, the *first chapter* showed how urbanization represents both a global challenge and a global opportunity. This is why urbanization does not need to be curbed, it needs to be efficiently planned. Through the analysis conducted on European urbanization trends, it emerged how planning urbanization requires new approaches to policy-making. Thus, cities and local communities need a seat at the table. And, a new operative system for cities and governance needs to be adopted.

In the *second chapter*, I explained how, in the last thirty years, the European Union understood that member states cannot be left alone in planning urbanization and implement specific policies addressing urban areas. In fact, the European Union presents a highly complex policy cycle

and a wide range of policy instruments. In terms of urban policy, without the recognition of an explicit or even an implicit legal basis before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, I discovered how the European Union managed to enact policies concerning cities and urban areas, since the Urban Pilot Projects and the URBAN Initiative in the 1990s. Both the European Commission, through the DG Regio and the DG ENV, and the Council of EU implemented policies, interventions and issued declaration, enforcing the European urban dimension. Cohesion policy represented the main driver for policies affecting urban areas and the Treaty of Lisbon, introducing the objective of *territorial cohesion*, formalized an implicit EU involvement in urban matters. The Urban Agenda for the EU represented the last step in this process. From this analysis, the European Union capability to enlarge its powers resulted evident, especially in the urban policy field. So far, this result is still insufficient, and the provision of a clear legal basis would be the most significant tool to recognize EU competence in tackling urban issues. Nonetheless, to establish a clear legal basis, a revision of the treaties is needed, however it is hard to think that it will occur in the near future.

The *third chapter* firstly highlighted the linkages between the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in particular SDG 11), the global New Urban Agenda enacted by UN Habitat III conference in Quito (17-20 October 2016) and the Urban Agenda for the EU. European Union played a key role in the formulation of the New Urban Agenda. Thus, the Urban Agenda for the EU represents the delivery mechanism of the global New Urban Agenda in Europe. Secondly, I showed how the Urban Agenda for the EU introduced an integrated and coordinated approach to deal with

the urban dimension of the European and national policies: *partnerships*. Though the Urban Agenda did not manage to ultimately establish a European urban competence, it managed to promote a European model to urban development; to create a supranational coordination mechanism for urban policies; to empower cities at the EU level; and to strengthen member states' commitment towards urban policy-making at the national level. Likewise, "by focusing on concrete priority themes within dedicated Partnerships, the Urban Agenda seeks to improve the quality of life in urban areas"³⁴⁵. Thus, I explained how the final goals implicitly contained into the agenda are to strengthen member states' commitment to national urban policy-making and improve citizens' quality of life. Then, this chapter highlighted the positive relationship occurring between urban policy-making and quality of life perception. After considering the main indicators pertaining to the cities' quality of life; Austrian and German cities, showing a strong commitment in terms of National Urban Policy, resulted highly ranked in terms of their cities' quality of life perception. Whereas, Italy which has never implemented a National Urban Policy, sees Rome, Naples and Palermo in the lowest positions in terms of European cities' quality of life perception. In this scenario, the Urban Agenda for the EU may play a pivotal role to promote better regulation, better funding and better knowledge at the national level and ultimately enhance citizens' quality of life.

The *fourth chapter* focused on the case of Italy. Thus, I assessed how urban policies in Italy have historically been characterized by an

³⁴⁵ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018), *The Urban Agenda for the EU*, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/.

inconstant, fragmented (between the different actors within the central administrations of the State and between the different institutional levels), and variable adaptation to changing urban contexts. So far, Italy is characterized by the absence of an urban agenda and a coordinated policy for cities. However, I demonstrated how the last cycles of Cohesion policy and the Urban Agenda for the EU exerted a strong influence on the national level, and the attention to urban areas increased in the last years. From a mainstreamed approach to urban policies, in 2014-2020 an integrated method emerged and the National Operational Programme for Metropolitan Cities (PON Metro) was introduced. From then on, a long discussion concerning the formulation of an Italian Urban Agenda started, but it never ended. Given the low levels of quality of life perceived in several Italian cities, when compared to their European counterparts, the national government should increase its commitment by adopting a national urban agenda. Although the Urban Agenda for the EU stimulated the discussion and increased the level of urban policy engagement in Italy, the approach is still sectorial and fragmented; and Italy requires a National Urban Agenda to coordinate policies for cities.

In conclusion, I assessed how cities not only represent the new frontier of governance but the closest level to tackle citizens' problems and reduce the distance with democratic institutions. Promoting local communities' participation to decision-making represents a new frontier for democracy; and cities are the only ones able to fill the gap. On a smaller scale, they tackle all the main challenges affecting nations. They also offer to citizens and national states a wide range of opportunities in terms of innovation and growth. Ultimately, cities represent the key actor

to improve citizens' quality of life. Thus, policies affecting cities cannot be left in a vacuum, they must address all level of governance, employing a holistic approach. Indeed, urban issues now represent essential features of national and supra-national policy agendas, since "nearly all public policies directly or indirectly affect urban development"³⁴⁶.

Finally, I also showed how the European Union understood the relevance of cities and committed itself in enacting urban policies without possessing a legal basis able to justify its action. The Urban Agenda for the EU represented the last step in this process aimed at the construction of a European urban policy field. In this scenario, despite its policy light nature, just three open principles and no legally binding agreement; the Urban Agenda for the EU represents an innovative framework that has the potential to integrate cities in the policymaking of the EU in a powerful way, overcoming the inflexibility of treaties' provisions. Thus, The Urban Agenda for the EU ultimately offers to European cities the opportunity to obtain the place they deserve in the present governance revolution which needs cities at its core.

³⁴⁶ AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, *op. cit.*, p.8.

ANNEX I

UN-HABITAT: CITY PROSPERITY INDEX **GOVERNANCE AND LEGISLATION / QUALITY OF LIFE:** *Statistical Analysis*

The UN-Habitat City Prosperity Initiative, launched in 2012, delivers a valuable set of indicators to measure sustainable urban development, despite the data collection project results still unfinished. In particular, the City Prosperity Index is the result of this Initiative. It represents a multidimensional index which measures city prosperity at city level and has been conceptualized in terms of its indicators, in order to assess different aspects of prosperity in urban areas. Anyway, “UN-Habitat’s City Prosperity Initiative (CPI) not only provides indices and measurements relevant to cities, it also enables city authorities, as well as local and national stakeholders, to identify opportunities and potential areas of intervention for their cities to become more prosperous”. The subdimensions which conceptualize City Prosperity are Productivity, Infrastructure, Quality of Life, Equity and Social Inclusion, Environmental Sustainability and Governance and Legislation. An assessment of the relation between *Governance and Legislation* and *Quality of Life* subdimensions has been undertaken, taking into consideration a sample of almost 300 world’s cities. This assessment aims to highlight if an higher value of the variable *Governance and Legislation* is able to increase the level of *Quality of life* in a given city.

In particular, *Quality of life* refers to prosperous cities which provide amenities such as social services, education, health, recreation, safety and security, in order to improve living standards and enabling the

population to maximize individual potential. Whereas, *Governance and Legislation* is considered in terms of urban governance, leadership, policies, laws, regulations, institutional frameworks, local institutions and institutional arrangements are required to combine sustainability and shared prosperity in cities³⁴⁷. More specifically, *Quality of life* subdimension is operationalized by mixing indexes for *health* through measures of life expectancy at birth and under-five mortality rate, for *education* through literacy rate and mean years of schooling and for *safety and security* through homicide rates. Though, *Governance and Legislation* subdimension is operationalized by mixing indexes for *participation* measured through voter turnout rates and *institutional capacity* by days necessary to start a business³⁴⁸. By conducting a quantitative analysis of these data and elaborating a linear regression model to assess the type of relationship occurring between the independent variable (X) *Governance and Legislation* and the dependent variable (Y) *Quality of Life*; it emerges that they are positive correlated. Indeed, a unitarian increase of the independent variable (X) determines a slight increase of the dependent variable equal to $Y = 7,72247 + 0,6766 (X=1)$.

³⁴⁷ UN-HABITAT AND INTERNATIONAL CITY LEADERS, *op.cit.*, p.3.

³⁴⁸ UN-HABITAT AND INTERNATIONAL CITY LEADERS, *op.cit.*, p.4.

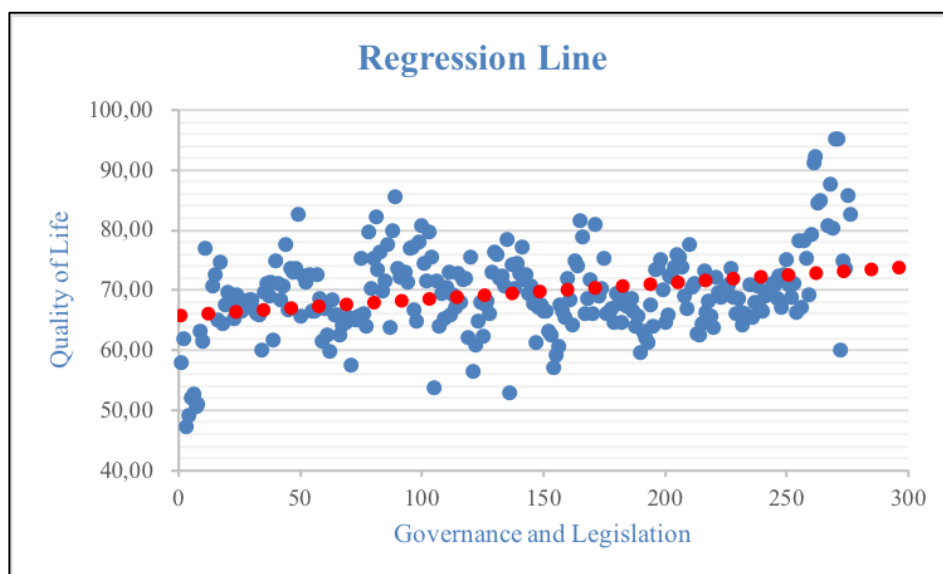
FIGURE 16: LINEAR REGRESSION TABLE ³⁴⁹

Linear Regression					
Regression Statistics					
<i>R</i>	0,24937				
<i>R-Squared</i>	0,06218				
<i>Adjusted R-Squared</i>	0,05895				
<i>Standard Error</i>	22,88305				
<i>Number of Observations</i>	292				
Regression Line: Y= 7,72247 + 0,6766X					
Analysis of Variance					
	d.f.	SS	F	p-value	
<i>Regression</i>	1,	10.069,0563	19,22918	0,00002	
<i>Residual</i>	290,	151.853,89514			
<i>Total</i>	291,	161.922,95144			
	Coefficient	Standard Error	UCL	t Stat	p-value
<i>Intercept</i>	7,72247	11,04992	29,47068	0,69887	,48519
57,91	0,6766	0,15429	0,98028	4,38511	,00002
T (5%)	1,96818				
LCL - Lower limit of the 95% confidence interval					
UCL - Upper limit of the 95% confidence interval					

The regression statistics shows a *coefficient of determination* better known as *R squared*, which scores 0,24937. Thus, since *R squared* may range from 0 to 1, the level of significance of the regression is low and the model does not result extremely statistically relevant. However, the graph below shows how the level of data dispersion is low, since the distribution results are quite concentrated.

³⁴⁹ Data sourced from UN-HABITAT *City Prosperity Initiative*, available online at: <http://cpi.unhabitat.org/download-raw-data> , [accessed on September 10, 2018]

FIGURE 17: REGRESSION LINE³⁵⁰



Hence, it is possible to conclude that, according to data sourced from the City Prosperity Initiative, the indexes *Governance and Legislation* and *Quality of life* are positively associated, whilst this positive relationship does not appear to be extremely strong. Anyway, since the analysis was aimed at assessing how the presence of a National Urban Policy enhances cities quality of life, it results that the *Governance and Legislation* index does not represent the best tool to test this assumption. In fact, as already specified, it is based on two sub-indexes which are *participation*, measured through voter turnout rates and *institutional capacity* in terms of days necessary to start a business. Thus, it is clearly not able to detect the presence of NUPs and their efficiency.

³⁵⁰ Data sourced from UN-HABITAT *City Prosperity Initiative*, available online at: <http://cpi.unhabitat.org/download-raw-data> , [accessed on September 10, 2018]

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SUMMARY

According to the United Nations, approximately two thirds of the world's population will be living in an urban area by 2050³⁵¹. Cities are the most populated area of the world. The huge number of people which roam the city every day, makes them dense agglomeration of population in a given area. In this sense, Gleaser defines cities as the absence of physical space between people. In his view cities are proximity, density and closeness. Thus, cities' success depends on their demands of physical connection³⁵².

Cities' density is crucial, since knowledge develops more easily where population is much concentrated, and people live closer. The European Union report *Cities of Tomorrow* underlines the close connection between the concentration of consumers, workers and businesses in a place or area, and its capability to produce positive externalities and increase returns to scale.³⁵³ At the same time, cities are heavily affected by globalization which induces innovation, enhance growth but it also exacerbates weaknesses. Environmental risks, urban sprawl, migrations, ageing population, climate change, poverty and social exclusion are some of the main challenges that cities have to tackle every day.

³⁵¹ UNITED NATIONS, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, POPULATION DIVISION (2014), *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision*, Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/352), p.1.

³⁵² GLEASER, *op. cit.*, p.6.

³⁵³ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR REGIONAL POLICY (2011), *Cities of Tomorrow: Challenges, visions, ways forward*, available online at: <http://ec.europa.eu> , p.2.

Even in Europe, cities have always played a crucial role in promoting innovation and growth, and at the same time handle challenges and risks. Additionally, they directly or indirectly implement EU policies on the ground and contribute to EU's major policy objectives. Action and coordination are needed across European, national and city level to ensure that cities are able to fulfil their potential³⁵⁴.

In order to assess EU involvement in addressing cities' needs, challenges and opportunities, the present dissertation concentrated on the following issues:

- 1. How the European Union is able to enlarge its powers, even without a clear legal basis set by treaties; and how this phenomenon occurred in relation to urban policies and culminated with the adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU;*
- 2. If the European Union managed to empower cities at the European level, by enacting the Urban Agenda for the EU and consequently recognizing their role in policy-making;*
- 3. If urban policies are needed to improve quality of life and citizens' well-being;*
- 4. How the Urban Agenda for the EU influenced national urban policies and what ultimately happened in Italy.*

In order to address those questions, my thesis developed along four main levels.

³⁵⁴ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, *Urban Portal*, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/it/policy/themes/urban-development/portal/

In the *first chapter* of the present dissertation I highlighted how cities are dipped in an interconnected, multi-scalar and multifaceted world. The challenges they are constantly called to face are local, regional, national and global at the same time. Therefore, their policies could not be fragmented or sectorial. They have to consider the whole picture. Thus, cities must deal with those challenges in a holistic and integrated way. They have to mix place and people-based approaches. They need to combine or even replace vertical and formal government structures with flexible and participatory governance models.

Moreover, policies for cities need to promote innovation. Urban policies have to address the desired outcomes agreed jointly by cities, national governments and regional authorities. Supranational entities should oversee globalization trends, develop incentives and policies for cities, promote collaboration across cities and other national and lower tiers of government. National policymakers must empower cities to better address citizens' needs, reduce the central government's size and become more flexible to change. Cities must support education, work in partnership with the private sector, experts, citizens and education institutions. Ultimately, cities need to play a leadership role to balance national and local interests.

After having contextualized the role that cities play on the global scale; in the *second chapter* of the present dissertation I explored how far the key features of the EU's institutional system produced a distinctive policy-process and then, how these features affected the European urban

policy field. Hence, the identification of the European policy cycle has been attempted and the main European policy instruments have been taken into account. The focus on these particular aspects gave relevance for the ultimate aim of this dissertation.

In fact, every policy sector at the European level follows a different cycle and adopts different instruments. Hence, in order to understand how the policy-cycle works at the European level; it is fundamental to have a clear understanding of the specificities of that particular policy area. According to Versluis, Van Keulen and Stephenson, “this starts with the history of the given policy field, trying to assess when a certain issue started to be regulated at the European level, what has triggered its existence as such, what is the formal or institutional context in terms of procedures and competences and, what is the impact of the main policy instruments used in the field”³⁵⁵.

In terms of urban policy, the EU has no clear legal basis, according to treaties. However, the Lisbon Treaty introduced the principle of *territorial cohesion* (Art.3 TEU and Artt.4 and 174 TFEU), among the EU general objectives and shared competences with member states, in order to strengthen multi-level governance and the role of urban areas³⁵⁶. Thus, the balance of powers between EU and member states may change over time. Accordingly, since the Lisbon Treaty, a cross-reading of art.3 TEU

³⁵⁵VERSLUIS, VAN KEULEN AND STEPHENSON, *op.cit.*, p.77

³⁵⁶EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2017), *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: Completing the Better Regulation Agenda: Better solutions for better results*, SWD (2017) 675 Final, available online at: <https://ec.europa.eu/>, p.8.

managed to overcome the legal obstacle of the subsidiarity principle which represented an argument to deny any competence in urban planning to the EU. It also provided an implicit legal basis to enhance urban development policies.

To the purpose of this analysis, I considered how the process of Europeanization is able to transplant some areas of policy from national to EU level. In particular, Europeanization has been defined “as a process of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ways of doing things and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidate in the EU policy process, and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, political structures and public policies”³⁵⁷. Thus, in the second chapter, I argued that a process of Europeanization occurred in the urban policy field. Hence, considering the relevance of cities for the European Union and all the problems they have to face, the Commission through the Communication *Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union*, already in 1997, affirmed that “urban authorities cannot be the sole agencies to act on these large issues, they should be fully involved in the policies related to these matters, as there can be no effective solution on the ground without their active participation”³⁵⁸.

Consequently, I reported the process of *Europeanization* of urban development policy over the last thirty years. The main actors which played a relevant role in building the European urban policy-domain were

³⁵⁷DOSSI (2017), *op.cit.*, p.20.

³⁵⁸ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (1997), *Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union*, COM (97)197 final, available online at: <http://ec.europa.eu/>, p. 3.

the European Commission, the Council for the European Union and the Committee of the Regions. In particular, the European Commission claimed to have ordinary legislative powers in urban matters but, as I said before, there is no explicit legal basis and EU does not have the necessary administrative capacity to directly enforce urban policy at the local level. As a matter of fact, the European Commission policy units which mostly shaped the European urban perspective have been the *Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy* (DG REGIO) and the *Directorate General for the Environment* (DG ENV). In the first case, the principal task of the DG REGIO is Cohesion Policy, a policy aimed to reduce or eradicate the economic development imbalances across member states and their regions. Thus, Cohesion policy operated overtime as a redistributive strategy by fostering the economic capacity of EU territories³⁵⁹. It also represented the main framework through which urban matters have been issued overtime, since the implementation of Urban Pilots Projects and the URBAN Initiative in the 1990s. This is why in 2012 the DG REGIO was renamed Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy. On the other hand, DG ENV has associated the European urban perspective to the issue of environmental protection and energy efficient production and consumption, since urban centers are the main actors who need to work to reduce environmental risks. Furthermore, the creation of the European Committee of Regions (CoR) which represented the European assembly of local and regional representatives gave to cities a direct right to speech within the European institutional framework. Although it has only the

³⁵⁹ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

power to be consulted on the policies which affects its domain, it is able to balance the power of the Commission and its Directorates-Generals by lobbying for the interests of regional and local actors³⁶⁰. Not to forget the role that the Council of the EU played by drafting charters, declarations and other soft law documents which reflected the evolution of member states ministers' positions on urban issues and the degree of accord they managed to achieve overtime.

Ultimately, despite the absence of a clear legal basis at the EU level concerning urban policy and after thirty years of discussion about the necessity of implementing an Urban Agenda for the EU; the Dutch Presidency, acting as a policy entrepreneur, set the agenda of the Council and, on May 2016, led to the approval of the Urban Agenda for the EU. The role played by the Dutch Presidency was fundamental and it showed how member states are able to exert their influence towards European decision-making processes. Indeed, in order to attain this goal, the Dutch Presidency manifested specific interests and preferences. Then, it was also pushed by domestic interest groups and had representatives equipped with the right amount of policy expertise in the urban policy field.

Furthermore, in the *third chapter* of this thesis, I showed how the path towards the Urban Agenda for the EU was also influenced by the discussion conducted, at the international level, within the framework of the United Nations. This discussion led to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda

³⁶⁰ HESS, CYCAK, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

for Sustainable Development in 2015 and of the New Urban Agenda in 2016. In the first case, United Nations included urban development among the sustainable development goals. In particular, the SDG 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Furthermore, the New Urban Agenda, strongly supported and promoted by the EU, incorporates a right to the city, to support citizens and local communities' engagement in shaping policies for cities. Nonetheless, it is also deeply committed in enhancing citizens' quality of life on a global scale. According to its scopes, the Urban Agenda for the EU directly contributes to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably SDG 11 and the global New Urban Agenda as part of the Habitat III process.

In the view of the debate conducted within the UN framework, the Urban Agenda for the EU definitely introduced an integrated and coordinated approach to deal with the urban dimension of EU. Indeed, it resulted necessary to replace fragmented experiences, by introducing cross-sectorial policies. The integrated approach, the agenda seeks to promote, is also linked with the consideration that policies affecting urban areas must be complementary across different government tiers. Thus, all levels of government must be involved in this process of policy-making by ensuring effective coordination between policy-sectors, in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity.

The Urban Agenda for the EU strives to involve Urban Authorities in achieving three main objectives: better regulation, better

funding and better knowledge. In order to attain these goals, it selected twelve priority themes and for every priority theme established a partnership aimed to formulate an action plan. Thus, the themes included into the agenda are: Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, Air Quality, Urban Poverty, Housing, Circular Economy Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy, Climate Adaptation, Energy Transition, Sustainable Use of Land and Nature based Solutions, Urban Mobility and Digital Transition, Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement.

The Working Programme attached to the Urban Agenda for the EU describes its operational framework in more detail. In particular, partnerships represent the key delivery mechanism within the Urban Agenda for the EU and resulted the most innovative tool provided by the agenda. Partnerships support the idea that cities must be managed following a multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach. Partnerships involve cities, regional authorities, national representatives, municipalities associations, European institutions, experts etc. Though the Urban Agenda did not manage to ultimately introduce a clear European urban competence, it managed to promote a European model of urban development; to create a supranational coordination mechanism for urban policies; to empower cities at the EU level; and to strengthen member states' commitment towards urban policy-making at the national level. Ultimately, the Urban Agenda for the EU seeks to build a connection for cities to the European policy framework and Partnerships represent an encouraging coordination mechanism to improve the innovative and experimental potential of cities.

Furthermore, the multi-level governance framework introduced by the Urban Agenda for the EU, not only offers to cities a seat at the table. It also represents the first attempt to let cities, Member States and the European Commission increase their awareness, concerning the biggest challenges and opportunities related to cities and urbanization. Urbanization imposes multi-level and multifaceted challenges and opportunities. An active support is essential across different spheres of government to ensure a coordinated approach to planning and managing cities. Thus, as already mentioned, the aforesaid sui generis character and coordination role of the Urban Agenda for the EU ultimately seeks to impact national policy-making on urban related issues in order to acknowledge the pivotal role of cities in facing complex challenges. Moreover, as the European Union states, “by focusing on concrete priority themes within dedicated Partnerships, the Urban Agenda seeks to improve the quality of life in urban areas”³⁶¹. Thus, the final goals implicitly contained into the agenda are to strengthen member states’ commitment to national urban policy-making and improving citizens quality of life. This chapter ultimately highlights the positive relationship occurring between urban policy-making and quality of life perception. After considering the main indicators pertaining to cities quality of life; Austrian and German cities, displaying a high commitment in terms of National Urban Policy, resulted highly ranked in terms of quality of life perception. Whereas, Italy which has never implemented a National Urban Policy, sees Rome, Naples

³⁶¹ EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2018), *The Urban Agenda for the EU*, available online at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/.

and Palermo in the lowest position in terms of European cities' quality of life perception. In this scenario, the Urban Agenda for the EU may play a pivotal role to promote better regulation, better funding and better knowledge at the national level and ultimately enhance citizens' quality of life.

Finally, the *last chapter* focuses on the case of Italy. It has been displayed how, in terms of urbanization, Italy shows a polycentric pattern based on few large metropolitan cities and a wide range of middle size and small urban areas. Moreover, Urban policies in Italy have historically been characterized by an inconsistent, fragmented and variable adaptation to changing urban contexts. So far, Italy is characterized by the absence of an urban agenda and a coordinated policy for cities. However, during the Cohesion policy programming periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 the attention to urban areas increased. From a mainstreamed approach to urban policies, in 2014-2020 an integrated approach emerged and the National Operational Programme for Metropolitan Cities (PON Metro) was introduced. The program, dedicated to sustainable urban development, aims to improve the quality of services and to promote social inclusion in 14 metropolitan areas. The adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU renewed the interest for urban policies in Italy. In the last years, Italy participation to Habitat III conference in 2016, the implementation of several urban policies such as regeneration of suburbs and deprived urban areas, plans for sustainable urban mobility, development pacts for Southern Italy, and housing policies made a National Urban Agenda increasingly necessary. The discussion started but it never ended, and a

national urban policy still remains a chimera for Italy. However, despite the proliferation of fragmented policies addressing cities, innovative tools emerged in accordance with European Cohesion policy implementation; stimulating experts and city mayors' discussion and the presentation of several proposals for a National Urban Agenda. In particular the National Center for Urban Policies Studies (Urban@it) proposed to implement the model of British and Dutch city-deals in Italy as well. In fact, Netherlands managed to use its Urban Agenda and city deals to bridge the gap with the Urban Agenda for the EU.

What has ultimately emerged from my research is that we cannot dismiss cities when it comes to policy-making. It is necessary to consider their dual-edged nature, since cities are depositaries of challenges as well as opportunities. Moreover, we cannot relegate cities and urban policy-making into a locally-managed policy field. Urban issues now represent essential features of national and supra-national policy agendas, since “nearly all public policies directly or indirectly affect urban development”³⁶². New modes of governance need to be experimented in order to empower cities at the local, national and global level. Thus, cities cannot be left alone when they have to tackle multi-faceted challenges. An integrated approach is needed to provide effective responses at different scales. Thus, my research shows how the European Union a long time ago understood that cities need a seat at the table of policy-making. However, treaties, protecting the principle of subsidiarity, for a long time represented

³⁶² AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT (2011), *Our Cities, Our Future: A national urban policy for a productive, sustainable and livable future*, Canberra: Department for Infrastructure and Transport, p.8.

an obstacle. This circumstance did not prevent the European Union from implementing policies addressed to urban areas. And when the Lisbon Treaty introduced the objective of territorial cohesion, the urban dimension had already been experimented by European policies. Consequently, I argued that the European Union is able to address policy sectors not contemplated in the scope of the Treaties, by advocating powers traditionally referred to member states. The Urban policy field results a clear example of this European Union practice. In order to strengthen the European urban development model, the Urban Agenda for the EU introduced an innovative policy framework: partnerships. With their multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach, partnerships correctly address the need of introducing innovative governance models and empowering cities at the EU level. Thus, despite its non-binding nature, the Urban Agenda for the EU shows the main coordination mechanism for urban policies at the European level.

Thus, the Pact of Amsterdam does not aim to introduce a *Parliament of Mayors*, based on Baber's idea that *if mayors ruled the world*, it would immediately become a more livable space. The Urban Agenda for the EU recognizes the role of cities but also the broader system where cities are embedded in³⁶³. In order to take forward the Urban Agenda for the EU, more resources should be destined to Partnerships; the Agenda should be much intensely connected to relevant institutions decision-making processes; the linkage between European and Global Urban agendas

³⁶³ POTJER, HAJER AND PELZER, *op.cit.*, p.26.

should be strengthened; its future needs to be discussed; and its relevance must be ensured for the post-2020 budget period.

Ultimately, the Urban Agenda for the EU seeks to stimulate national urban policies and improve citizens' quality of life, by addressing the aspects that mostly concerns citizens' well-being. Thus, I highlighted the positive relation occurring between urban policy and quality of life, showing how countries much committed in urban planning are higher ranked in terms of residents' perception of their cities' quality of life. Consequently, I exhibited how Italian cities do not display high levels of quality of life perception when compared to other European cities. This is the result of its tradition of fragmented policies addressing urban areas. Italy still lacks an urban agenda or a national policy for cities. However, the Urban Agenda for the EU managed to stimulate the discussion concerning an Italian urban agenda. This eventuality still represents a chimera at the national level. Nonetheless, cities and local authorities are highly committed in this sense and many proposals have been presented in the last years. The best solution that Italy may pursue in the nearest future would be to follow the Dutch example. In fact, the Netherlands managed to empower cities both at the national and European level by introducing a coordination mechanism based on city-deals between their national urban agenda (Agenda stad) and the Urban Agenda for the EU.