

# Europeanization in Time: Assessing the Legacy of URBAN in a Mid-size Italian City

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**ABSTRACT** *The 2007 mainstreaming of URBAN raised important questions about the sustainability of its regeneration approach under the new regulatory regime, and particularly about the policy legacy left by this Community Initiative in its participating cities. Taking advantage of the recent conclusion of the 2007–2013 programming period, these questions are tackled here both theoretically and empirically. Building on the general model of Europeanization, the article posits a trade-off between local misfit with the URBAN approach and the durability of the policy change induced by the scheme. The argument is then illustrated through an in-depth study of Pescara, a mid-size Italian city that participated successfully in URBAN only to lose most of its policy innovations in the immediately subsequent programming period, when it took part in the country's mainstreamed funding scheme, the “Programmi integrati di sviluppo urbano”. With hindsight, the study suggests that URBAN was set up to fail exactly those cities with little experience in integrated and participatory regeneration that it was supposed to help the most. It also concludes that future European Union policy-making and implementation should factor in the misfit/durability trade-off to maximize effectiveness given the Union's goals as well as its involvement expectations.*

**Keywords:** URBAN community initiative; mainstreaming; Europeanization; Pescara; ERDF

## Introduction

The European Union's (EU's) 2007–2013 financial framework marked an important change of direction for the EU's urban policy. After two fairly successful rounds (1994–1999 and 2000–2006), the Directorate General for Regional Policy (DG Regio) terminated its URBAN Community Initiative (CI) as an independent scheme and inserted it into the broader architecture of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

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Quantitatively, the “mainstreaming” of URBAN expanded the Union’s urban actions: early estimates set the amount of structural funds for cities in the new programming period at €10 billion (European Commission—DG Regio, 2009). Qualitatively, however, the new regime was a step back compared to the past, as it delegated decisions on whether and how to implement regeneration programmes to regions and cities themselves, thereby interrupting a three-decade trajectory of increasing urban policy involvement on the part of the European Commission.

From the beginning, the decentralization introduced by mainstreaming led many to wonder about the sustainability of the area-based, integrated and participatory regeneration approach hitherto promoted by URBAN. This in turn raised the question of what policy legacy, if any, the CI had left in its participant cities—an interesting matter both empirically and theoretically. Despite its limited size, URBAN was a key component of the wider Europeanization of spatial planning. The question of its legacy therefore bears directly on the broader temporal dynamics of Europeanization, a topic that scholars have only recently begun to tackle systematically (Sedelmeier, 2012b; Adshead, 2014).

Taking advantage of the recent conclusion of the 2007–2013 programming period, this article proposes to answer these questions with a theoretical analysis of URBAN’s sustainability supported by a case study of Pescara, a central Italian city that participated in the CI’s second round and subsequently in the country’s mainstreamed scheme, the “Programmi integrati di sviluppo urbano” (PISU). The article proceeds as follows: in the next section, it provides the conceptual and empirical context for the study by, first, reviewing the literature on the Europeanization of spatial planning, and then going over URBAN’s characteristics and trajectory. It then presents, in the section “The Misfit/Durability Trade-Off”, a theoretical argument that builds on the general Europeanization model to posit a trade-off between local misfit with the URBAN approach and the sustainability of the changes induced by the scheme. The argument is illustrated in the section “The Case of Pescara” through the analysis of this city’s experience under and after the CI. The conclusion recaps the study’s findings and reflects on their policy implications.

### **The Europeanization of Spatial Planning**

Spatial planning can be defined, broadly, as the set of policies aimed at “influenc[ing] the future distribution of activities in space” (European Commission—DG Regio, 1997, p. 24). While the formal expansion of EU powers into spatial planning came only with the Lisbon Treaty—which lists “territorial cohesion” among its objectives—the Union has operated unofficially in this area for two to three decades. It has done so, on the one hand, via more or less implicit spatial measures inserted in its traditional policies (most notably cohesion policy), and on the other hand through explicit planning initiatives developed outside the community method structures. Prominent in the latter category is the 1999 European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), an intergovernmental document elaborated via the open method of coordination, which introduced several principles still informing much EU thinking on territorial governance, such as polycentrism, sustainability, sectoral integration and urban–rural cooperation (European Commission, 1999a).

With the Union’s involvement in planning (and particularly since the publication of the ESDP) has come an increasing scholarly interest in the domestic impact of EU-level initiatives in this area—a subject broadly labelled as the Europeanization of spatial planning.<sup>1</sup> Generally, analyses of the Europeanization of public policy follow a well-established

three-step conceptual framework (see Radaelli, 2003 for a summary). The first step is the “adaptational pressures” coming from the Union, which vary with the misfit between EU and domestic policy (larger misfit equals more pressure) and the instrument adopted by the EU (the more coercive and precise the instrument, the greater the pressure). The second step consists of the “mediating factors”, i.e. actors and mechanisms of various nature (veto players, ideologies, organizational cultures, institutional capacities, etc.) channelling adaptational pressures into a particular type of policy change, or preventing change altogether. The final step is the Europeanization “outcomes”, which are usually classified according to the presence and degree of domestic change. A famous distinction is that proposed by Börzel and Risse (2000) between “absorption” (the incorporation of European policies without major change), “accommodation” (change in policy behaviour but not in its underlying institutional and ideational structures) and “transformation” (change in behaviour and its underlying structures). Alternative classifications have been proposed over the years (Héritier, 2001; Radaelli, 2003), all of which agree in presenting Europeanization as a multifinal process, which does not necessarily produce cross-country convergence.

Building on this general model, planning scholars have developed a rich literature whose main findings can be summarized in three key traits (for overviews, see Böhme & Waterhout, 2008; Giannakourou, 2012). The first is, simply, the wide range of processes encompassed by the Europeanization of spatial planning. As mentioned already, the EU has intervened in this area through an assortment of instruments, which in turn generate different pressures on member states. On the softer side are, for example, strategic and non-binding documents such as the ESDP and the more recent EU Territorial Agenda (EU Informal Council of Ministers, 2011), but also more concrete programmes for the diffusion of good practices such as URBACT. On the more coercive side are conditionality-based instruments such as the CIs (e.g. URBAN for cities, LEADER for rural areas and INTERREG for border regions) along with several measures in integrated sectoral areas with clear territorial spillovers (such as transportation, environmental and agricultural policy). Each of these instruments interacts with different domestic contexts and triggers different sets of adaptational mechanisms (Knill & Lehmkuhl, 1999), ultimately engendering a large variety of Europeanization paths and outcomes.

The second trait is a broad geographic division—at least as far as the more explicit parts of European spatial planning are concerned—between the Northwestern “uploaders” of ideas and policies and the Mediterranean and eastern European “downloaders” who have, overall, faced the greatest adaptational challenges with regard to European initiatives. Faludi and Waterhout (2002), for instance, have documented the ESDP’s French, Dutch and partly German origins, while the concept of territorial cohesion has been linked more directly to the French notion of “aménagement du territoire” (Faludi, 2004). Finally, EU-sponsored urban initiatives such as the Urban Pilot Projects (UPPs) and URBAN owed much to previous French and especially British experiences in the area of integrated regeneration (Carpenter, 2013; Tortola, 2013).<sup>2</sup>

The final trait is connected to the foregoing and relates to the normative stance of most scholarship vis-à-vis the Union’s involvement in spatial planning, which is widely regarded as a force for the modernization and rationalization of domestic practices. Clearly, this is particularly the case for “policy-taking” states, and primarily southern ones, to which many analyses have been devoted. In these countries, characterized by a hierarchical, physically- and rule-oriented planning tradition of “urbanism” (European

Commission—DG Regio, 1997), EU influence and initiatives have played a central role in introducing governance notions such as programming, sectoral integration, participation and partnership (Gualini, 2001; Janin Rivolin, 2003; Giannakourou, 2005; Janin Rivolin & Faludi, 2005).

In southern Europe, as elsewhere, the most notable policy changes have materialized whenever the role of supranational actors—notably the Commission—has been greater. CIs, in particular, have spurred important innovations in the content and governance of planning through the lever of conditionality. Unsurprisingly, these instruments have also raised the biggest questions about the solidity of such innovations. As Böhme and Waterhout (2008, p. 240) put it, discussing INTERREG, “[t]he crucial question . . . is to what degree the experiences and the results gained and the contact networks built during INTERREG projects will remain influential once the project is completed”. In the past few years, this problem has presented itself also for another CI that has greatly contributed to the Europeanization of spatial planning, namely URBAN.

### *The Rise and Fall of URBAN*

Launched in mid-1994, URBAN culminated a process of increasing involvement in urban affairs on the part of the European Commission that can be traced back to the late 1970s. Motivating the Commission was its conviction that the challenges facing European cities, such as unemployment, immigration, social exclusion and infrastructural decay, were no longer solely a national concern, but required instead European responses. For one thing, these problems threatened both Europe’s social model and the vitality of the single market. For another, these ills originated partly from European integration itself, which was shifting the continent’s patterns of production and peripheralization (Hall, 1993).

Based on these views, and supported by the European Parliament as well as a growing “urban lobby” (embodied primarily by the Eurocities network), over the years the Commission took a number of increasingly systematic initiatives for cities. The first were experimental regeneration projects for Naples (1978), Belfast (1981), Birmingham (1986) and Bradford (1986), followed by the creation of the UPPs, which involved 59 cities over two rounds: 1990–1993 and 1997–1999 (European Commission, 1999b). Encouraged by the positive reception of the UPPs, and taking advantage of the CIs instrument, in 1994 DG Regio once again upgraded its regeneration activities into a new scheme for the upcoming programming period, which was named URBAN (Tofarides, 2003; Tortola, 2013).

URBAN consolidated a policy model building on both the UPPs and some national experiences such as the UK’s City Challenge (Tortola, 2013). The scheme would fund local programmes that met a number of criteria. First, programmes had to target well-defined areas identified through multiple distress indicators. Second, they had to be functionally integrated, i.e. include infrastructural, environmental, social and economic actions working in synergy. Third, programmes had to be co-financed and implemented through multi-level and public–private partnerships. Finally, they had to include measures for citizen participation. Programmes to be funded would be selected mostly through a two-level competition at the national and European level (European Commission, 1994).

The URBAN grants’ many requirements and competitive nature made the scheme quite prescriptive. This in turn followed from DG Regio’s objective to promote a specific way of doing urban regeneration among cities that were deemed, in large part, unwilling or unable

to adopt the approach on their own. This was particularly true of cities in southern member states, which had little or no tradition in explicit urban policy (Frank, 2006).

Between 1994 and 1999, URBAN funded 118 programmes, totalling 1.8 billion European Currency Units (1996 prices), of which 891 million were provided by the ERDF and the European Social Fund (European Commission—DG Regio, 1999). For the subsequent programming period, covering 2000–2006, the DG launched a second round of URBAN, which retained the structure of the first except for a few minor changes, such as stricter targeting criteria, the elimination of preferential treatments for cities in Objective 1 regions and the shift to ERDF-only funding. Over the programming period, URBAN 2 supported 70 new programmes for a total budget of €1.58 billion (2000 prices), of which €728.3 million came from the ERDF (European Commission, 2000; European Commission—DG Regio, 2011).

By the time of the negotiations for the 2007–2013 budget and structural funds regulations, the political climate surrounding the CI had changed. For one thing, the Commission had become more indifferent to URBAN, partly due to the Barroso presidency's neoliberal orientation, and partly because of the administrative costs generated by the scheme (and by CIs more generally) (Frank, 2006; Tortola, 2013). For another, cities themselves—most notably those represented by Eurocities—had become sceptical about having a distinct scheme for urban programmes, which they felt could hinder their ability to share in the mainstream structural funds (Tortola, 2013).

These factors eventually led DG Regio to bring URBAN back into the main ERDF architecture for the new programming period. In “mainstreaming” URBAN, however, the DG took a particularly hands-off approach that all but broke its links with cities. First, the latter were not guaranteed any role in the preparation and management of the new regional operational programmes. Second, the new regulations included no safeguard for regeneration programmes, leaving it to regions to decide where “URBAN-type” actions would be “appropriate”, and how much to allocate to them (Regulation [EC] no. 1080/2006, art. 8). Mainstreaming, in sum, turned the EU's urban funding system from a centralized and prescriptive to a decentralized one, in which regions and cities themselves were the main actors. The former were given the power to establish urban axes in their operational programmes. At the same time, the absence of urban policy infrastructure and capacities in many regions meant that, where funds were set aside for urban programmes, it was mostly on recipient cities that the responsibility for continuing the URBAN method fell.

From the start, mainstreaming led many to wonder how sustainable the URBAN approach would be in the new regulatory environment, and particularly what policy legacy the CI had left in its participant cities. Overviews provided since then (Cotella & Janin Rivolin, 2011; Pasqui, 2011) have painted a rather pessimistic picture, characterized by the reversal of many of URBAN's achievements. For the most part, however, these observations have been only weakly connected to the analytical framework of Europeanization, which might help us shed light on where and why URBAN has failed to leave a legacy. The next section tries to fill this gap by presenting a theoretical analysis of the sustainability of the URBAN approach.

### **The Misfit/Durability Trade-Off**

The logical place to start for discussing the URBAN method's durability is the final stage of the general Europeanization model, i.e. the outcomes. As shown earlier, a key

distinction in existing taxonomies concerns the location of EU-induced change, which can affect just the behaviour of domestic policy actors, as in cases of accommodation, or alter also the underlying administrative and ideational structures, as in transformation (but also, arguably, in some cases of absorption). Implicit in this distinction is a statement about the self-sustainability of Europeanization: *ceteris paribus*; transformative change is better able than accommodation to withstand variations in the circumstances that brought it about.

A more explicit link between the location and solidity of EU-induced change is in the literature on Europeanization and EU enlargement, where a broader distinction has been made between “deep” and “shallow” Europeanization in accession countries. The latter is likely to be reversed once accession is secured and the Union’s bargaining power vis-à-vis the new member state is diminished, while the former will stick in the new politico-institutional circumstances (Czernielewska *et al.*, 2004; Goetz, 2005). This argument is useful here for it refers to an exogenous event—enlargement—equivalent to the termination of a programme such as URBAN in its most immediate meaning, namely a sudden relaxation of the EU’s constraint on domestic policy behaviour. Its logic can therefore be transposed to the case at hand: wherever URBAN engendered shallow domestic change, this is likely to have been lost under mainstreaming. Deep change, conversely, is likely to have lasted.

Saying that deep change is more durable than shallow change still begs the question of what produces one or the other. As discussed, the general Europeanization model posits two stages on which explanations of domestic outcomes can be constructed, i.e. adaptational pressures and mediating factors. In the URBAN case, the best strategy is to concentrate on the former, and particularly two attributes of the CI: the composite nature of its approach (spanning several policy-making phases and aspects) and its enforcement by DG Regio through conditionality and competition. Taken together, these features set a demanding and universal policy standard across member states, to which cities had to adapt in order, first, to obtain EU funding and subsequently not to lose it.

The nature of the constraint posed by the URBAN method in turn made misfit a crucial factor in determining not only the amount of pressure faced by participant cities but also the depth of the ensuing change. Cities without much experience in and capacities for the sort of regeneration promoted by the Commission found themselves having to cover quite some ground to adapt to URBAN’s criteria. They could respond to such pressure either through their own administrative resources or by outsourcing parts of the programme, neither of which was likely to generate deep change. The former solution would require city structures (but also, arguably, societal actors involved in URBAN) to deviate from their established practices by too much, in too many areas and in too short a time for such innovations to fully consolidate. The latter would isolate much of the innovation and learning coming from URBAN to outside structures in the first place. Conversely, cities with more experience with integrated and participatory regeneration had a greater chance to meet the URBAN criteria on their own, and digest EU-induced innovations by concentrating their institution-building and learning resources on fewer and/or smaller gaps.

The foregoing is consistent with the findings of several empirical studies of URBAN as well as other EU programmes for cities. Zerbinati (2004) and Dossi (2012), for instance, compare the case of Italy with the UK and France respectively, noting how policy innovations tended to remain adaptive and ad hoc in Italian cities, while they achieved

greater consolidation in the more experienced British and French counterparts. Examining URBAN in Berlin, Halpern (2005, p. 711) expresses a similar idea:

The institutional, organisational, and cognitive specificities of the European approach towards deprived neighbourhoods were far too innovative to be able to challenge profoundly the decisionmaking structure in the urban policy field. But this also reveals the capacity of Community Initiative to constrain local actors to adjust their strategies in order to benefit from European financial resources . . .

Connecting these observations with the above discussion leads, in the last analysis, to posit a trade-off between local misfit with the URBAN approach and the sustainability of the policy innovations introduced by the Community Initiative.

The misfit/durability trade-off proposed here takes one step back and two forward compared to traditional analyses of (spatial planning) Europeanization. First, as mentioned, it places most of the explanatory weight on the adaptational pressures, keeping mediating factors in a secondary position. While these factors contributed to define the details of each case, they were not decisive either in causing local policy change—URBAN's conditionality and competition played the biggest role here—or in determining the depth of such change, and therefore its durability. The latter is particularly true of cases of a large misfit, where EU-induced innovations were physiologically difficult to digest even in the most favourable circumstances.

As for the steps forward, one is a clearer distinction between the extent and depth of domestic change, which are too often conflated or confused in existing accounts where, for instance, cases of accommodation are presented as small change and transformation as big change. As shown here, not only are these two dimensions not the same but they can, as in URBAN, move in opposite directions.

The depth/extent distinction is important also because it rectifies—the second step forward—the bell-shaped relationship between misfit and domestic change postulated by several Europeanization scholars (Knill & Lehmkuhl, 1999; Radaelli, 2003), whereby change is most likely to happen when misfit is moderate, while it is either unnecessary or too costly when misfit is, respectively, negligible or very large. This relationship may be useful to (begin to) capture the dynamics of deep change, but is less reliable if one adopts a more inclusive view of change, which can be quite extensive, yet fragile, in cases of large misfit. This clarification is significant because deep and shallow change may have the same manifestations and effects “at the point of delivery”, in which case the difference between them is revealed only if and when the EU scales down its presence. This is a key policy aspect of Europeanization that will be further elaborated later in the article.

### **The Case of Pescara**

The above argument will be illustrated through the case of Pescara, a mid-size city in Italy's Abruzzo region that participated in URBAN 2 (2000–2006) and subsequently in the “PISU”, the country's mainstreamed funding regime. Studying Pescara has empirical and methodological advantages. For one thing, it adds a virtually unknown case to the existing city-level literature on URBAN and its effects. For another, and more importantly, Pescara's seamless transition from URBAN to the PISU regime facilitates appraising the

former's legacy—the explanandum—as it minimizes potentially disturbing contextual differences between the two periods. The following analysis is based mostly on primary documents and interviews with local experts and practitioners.

### *Pescara under URBAN: Apt Pupil*

With a population of around 125,000 and a metropolitan area of 360,000, Pescara is Abruzzo's largest and most important city (Figure 1). It is also the newest: a village until the late nineteenth century, Pescara began to grow with Italy's unification in 1861, favoured by its strategic position at the intersection of the Tiburtina Valeria road to Rome and the new Adriatic railway line. The city's development accelerated during Fascism—when Pescara became a province seat—and boomed after the Second World War with the industrialization of the Aterno-Pescara river valley, which caused population to double in three decades, from 65,466 in 1951 to 131,330 in 1981 (Colapietra, 1980; Bianchetti, 1997; Istat, 2013).

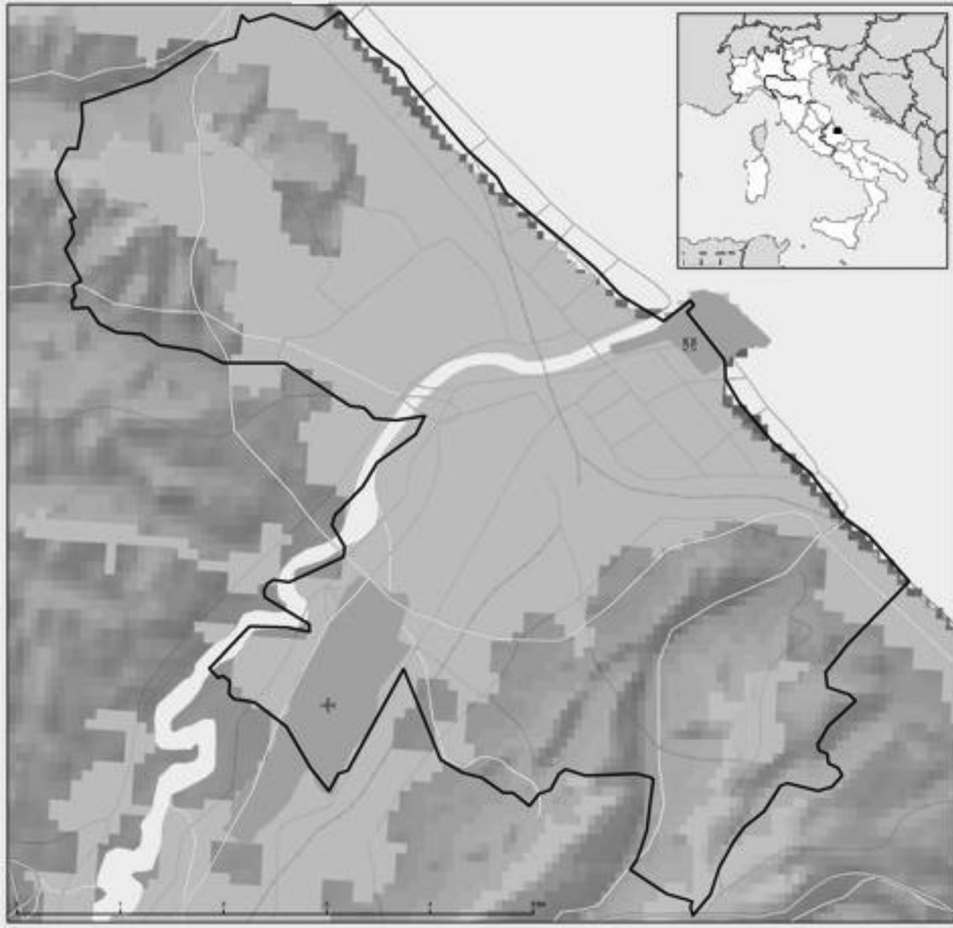
Post-war growth was a blessing and a curse for Pescara. While the city developed a solid industrial system, planning and infrastructural development could not keep up with the demographic expansion. The result was disorderly residential growth along the coast and the riverbanks, which left some areas congested and others poorly connected with the rest of the city. The latter was particularly the case for some south-western neighbourhoods where most of the city's social housing was concentrated, and which became receptacles for poverty, crime, environmental degradation and racial tensions due to the presence of a sizeable Roma community. For the most part, these problems have remained to this day, if not exacerbated by ageing infrastructure, new immigration and the slow but steady economic decline undergone by Pescara in recent years (Comune di Pescara - Osservatorio sociale, 2005; Comune di Pescara, 2008a).

Like many other Italian cities, Pescara's authorities have traditionally tackled planning and regeneration in a compartmentalized fashion and emphasizing physical interventions. Prior to its participation in URBAN, the city had little or no experience with the regeneration approach promoted by the Commission, nor did it have much contact with Brussels. It is not surprising, then, that Pescara's encounter with the CI happened almost by chance. More precisely, it arose out of a simulation programme elaborated by a group of planners at the local university and proposed to the city administration around the time of the URBAN 2 call (Interviews 1 and 2). Presented with an opportunity to compete for EU funds almost at no cost, the administration welcomed the programme, and after some tweaking and two open sessions of the city's council, it sent it as its application for an URBAN 2 grant. The programme ranked 5th out of Italy's 89 applications (Interview 1; Comune di Pescara, 2003).

URBAN 2-Pescara targeted a 5.48 km<sup>2</sup> area composed of three south-western wards—San Donato, Porta Nuova and Villa del Fuoco—a small portion of the Colli neighbourhood across the river and a strip of land extending to the river mouth (Figure 2). At the time of application, the area's population was 21,769 (Comune di Pescara, 2002).

The area suffered from a high concentration of the infrastructural, economic and social problems mentioned earlier, which were compounded and amplified by its isolated position, locked between the river on the north, the railway tracks on the east and the city's ring road on the south (Table 1).





**Figure 1.** Pescara's territory and location.  
*Source:* Adapted from Eurostat (2014).

At the same time, proximity to the city centre and to a new administrative and educational quarter being built across the tracks presented opportunities for the area's physical and economic reconnection to the rest of the city. Reconnection was exactly the notion around which URBAN 2-Pescara was designed. The programme had a budget of €12,703,160—5,072,354 from the ERDF and the rest co-financed by the city and the Italian Ministry of Infrastructure—divided in five axes (four substantive and one technical), as detailed in Table 2.

The largest portion of the budget was allocated to “hardware” measures, which made up the whole first axis and most of the second, whose main project was the conversion of an old incinerator into a multifunctional “Music city”. This revealed a largely physical interpretation of reconnection, which had to be realized primarily through a major road artery-cum-linear park, the “Strada Pendolo”, opening up the target area's northern and south-eastern sides with expected benefits in safety and economic terms. That said, the allocation of over 30% of the budget to social and economic goals (such as immigrant



**Figure 2.** URBAN 2 target area.

*Source:* Adapted from Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti (2009).

**Table 1.** URBAN 2 target area—selected indicators (2000, unless otherwise noted)

Indicator	Target area (%)	City (%)
Unemployment	12.31	7.07
Youth unemployment	47.31	34.58
Families in poverty	15.39	10.19
Immigrants	1.58	1.52
Of which minors	18.48	13.64
Roma residents (2004)	2.22	0.77
Crimes reported (per 100,000) (2004)	1,867	1,336
Drug addicts (in treatment) (2004)	0.3	0.17

*Source:* Comune di Pescara - Osservatorio sociale (2005) and Comune di Pescara (2002).

**Table 2.** URBAN 2 programme structure

Axis	€	%	Measures
1. Infrastructure	6,050,000	47.63	1.1 Road network extension 1.2 Public space improvement 1.3 Walking and bicycle trails
2. Environment	1,830,000	14.40	2.1 Brownfield redevelopment 2.2 Solar panels installation
3. Social cohesion	2,136,160	16.82	3.1 Social assistance 3.2 Integration of minorities 3.3 Information society
4. Entrepreneurship and employment	1,850,000	14.56	4.1 Business networks 4.2 Employment
5. Technical assistance	837,000	6.59	5.1 Local technical assistance 5.2 Central technical assistance 5.3 Publicity and information
Total	12,703,160	100	

Source: Comune di Pescara (2002) and author's calculations.

integration, children and elderly assistance, drug treatment and prevention, job training and a small business loans) made URBAN's infrastructural part less a single theme than a pillar around which a fairly integrated programme was built (Interview 2; Comune di Pescara, 2002).

URBAN 2-Pescara was implemented through a complex administrative structure, only part of which needs to be examined here. The programme's managing authority (MA) was the city itself through a special URBAN office, which in turn delegated day-to-day administration to a small group of external consultants composed of the programme's planners. This group became immediately the key player in delivering the programme as well as liaising with DG Regio (Interviews 1 and 3). Programme implementation followed three methods: the first two were tendering (for the Pendolo and the other infrastructural projects), and direct delivery (for some economic projects, most notably the loan scheme). Employment, social and public space measures, on the other hand, involved residents and the voluntary sector more directly, by combining calls for applications and citizen consultations to define specific projects, and sub-granting to non-profits for delivering many of them (Comune di Pescara, 2002, 2010). Altogether, the MA eventually financed some 100 projects, with good results in terms of measurable outputs and broader socioeconomic outcomes (Interview 2; Comune di Pescara, 2010; ECOTEC, 2010).

Looking back, the performance of Pescara's programme vis-à-vis the URBAN approach was good both in absolute terms and especially considering the city's starting point. Integration has already been examined earlier. As for the targeting requirement, this was met not only at the superficial level of defining a clear area of intervention, but also in the sense of selecting the area prior to and independently of the various projects. The only clear violation of this principle was the area's extension to the river mouth, which resulted from the inclusion of a bicycle trail in the programme. For the rest, there is no indication that the definition of single projects took precedence over that of the target area. As regards participation and partnership, finally, while certainly not used to their full potential, their employment in the programme was as great as ever experienced by Pescara. Participation occurred both in planning, via the open councils, and especially in the delivery of the

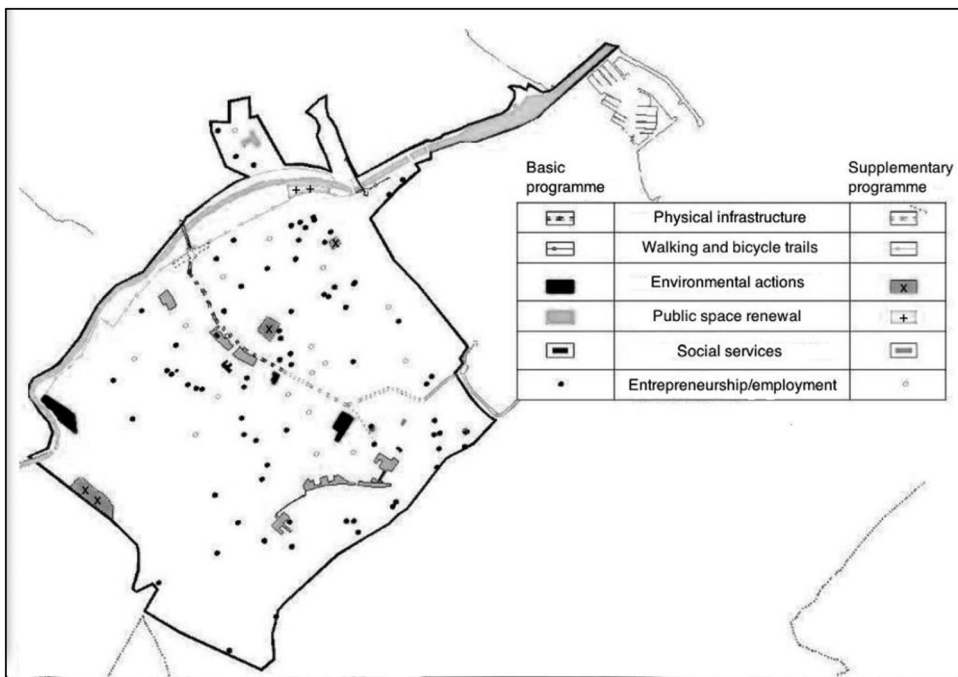
public space projects—where, however, consultation procedures required some time to set up (Interview 1). As for cooperation with the civil society, while Pescara had nothing resembling UK-style partnerships on the programme’s decision-making side, the voluntary sector played a role at the delivery end, including some noteworthy cases of non-profits taking over projects after the end of URBAN (Interviews 1 and 3).

That the URBAN approach was well received locally was further confirmed by the city’s establishment of a €13.3 million supplementary programme for the target area run together with and through the structures of URBAN, and supporting similar measures, as shown in Figure 3 (Interview 1; Comune di Pescara, 2010).

*Pescara after URBAN: Quick to Learn, Quick to Forget*

In drafting its ERDF operational programme for 2007–2013, the Abruzzo region set aside €40.774 million (40.5% of which from the ERDF, the rest co-financed) to fund four PISU of roughly equal size in the region’s province seats: Pescara, L’Aquila, Teramo and Chieti. Pescara’s allocation was €9.5 million (Regione Abruzzo, 2007).

The region’s request to prepare a PISU reached Pescara in 2008, as URBAN was closing, and the task of drafting the programme was given to the consultants who were managing the CI. They put together the PISU over the next few months with little interaction with the city administration save for its planning division, and no significant involvement of civil society actors (Interviews 3 and 4). As for citizen participation, none was

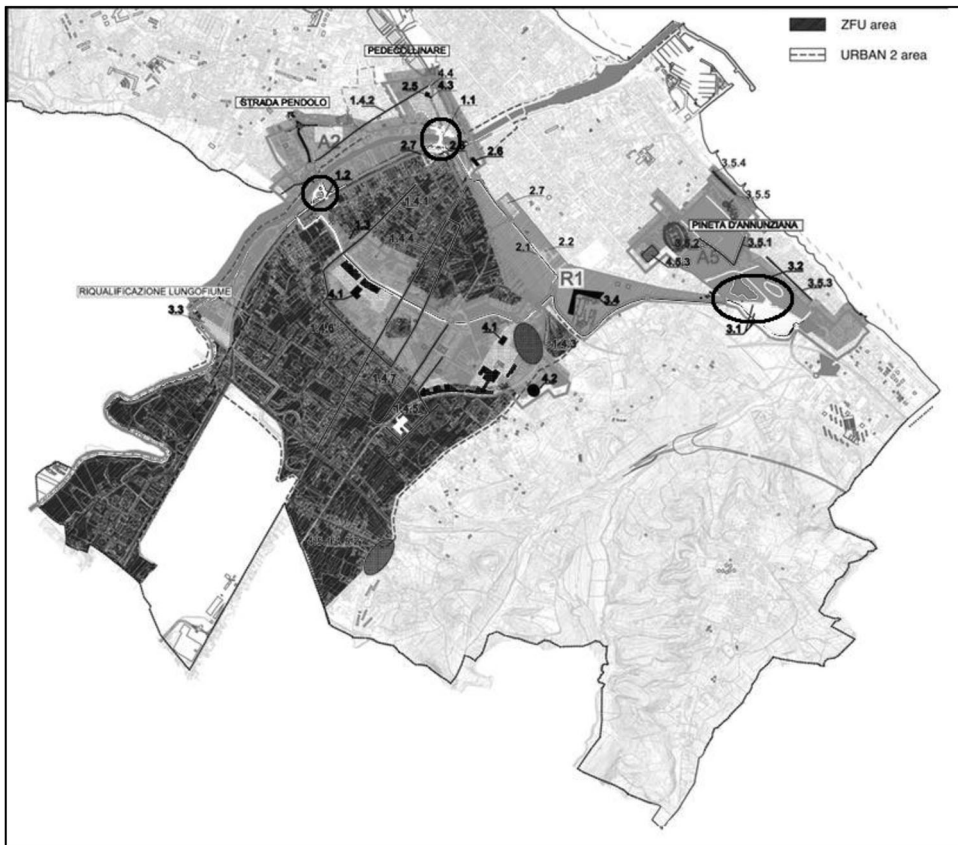


**Figure 3.** URBAN 2 basic and supplementary programme.  
 Source: Adapted from file obtained through personal correspondence.

implemented specially for the new programme. Instead, the planners took into account reports from consultations previously held for the UN-sponsored Agenda 21 and the local “Piano urbano della mobilità di area vasta” (Interview 3).

The resulting PISU focused largely on the same area as URBAN and worked at two levels. The first concerned the €9.5 million, which was allocated almost entirely to three projects (circled in Figure 4): a new bridge on the river (“Ponte Nuovo”), the Pendolo’s connection with the A14 motorway spur route (“asse attrezzato”) and the renewal of the city’s pine grove (“Pineta Dannunziana”). These projects were inserted into a bigger programme—the second level, formally denominated PISU—covering 8 km<sup>2</sup> and amounting to an additional €45 million from a combination of public sources (€15 million) and investments from private developers (€30 million) (Interview 3; Comune di Pescara, 2013).

Emerging from Table 3 is the pre-eminence of hardware measures in the PISU. These were not only in the physical axes one and two (worth almost 85% of the budget) but made up also the entire environmental axis and most of the social one, where funds were ring-fenced primarily for buildings hosting the services in question. This left the tiny fifth axis



**Figure 4.** PISU target area.

*Source:* Adapted from file obtained through personal correspondence.

as the only part devoted mainly to “software” measures, more precisely a business incubator to accompany a tax-free area (“zona franca urbana”, ZFU: dark grey in Figure 4) to be sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Economic Development (Interview 3).

The above is probably even a generous assessment of integration in the PISU. If examined more closely, the latter appears as a much less organic programme than URBAN. Financially, the PISU did not draw from a single pool built from different sources, but instead allocated the ERDF and the other streams distinctly among projects. More importantly, the PISU was not organic programmatically, since most of its projects had been planned independently of each other (Interviews 3 and 4). To be sure, to what degree different projects may belong together even if conceived separately is always debatable. But even without being so radical as to boil down Pescara’s PISU to the three ERDF-funded projects, it is difficult not to see at least axis two as just a cosmetic addition to the programme, since all its projects were concurrently inserted in three distinct schemes—two “Programmi integrati di intervento” and a “Programma di recupero urbano”—that would have existed without the PISU. In sum, no matter how extensively one interprets the PISU, the programme was hardly comparable to URBAN integration-wise.

With mainstreaming, responsibility for managing the PISU shifted to the Abruzzo region, which exercised it through its Public Works division. The programme’s day-to-day administration, however, remained with Pescara’s usual group of consultants, who reported to and coordinated with the MA through a city-region steering committee that met approximately quarterly (Interview 3; Comune di Pescara, 2008b). As for delivery, due to the pre-eminence of physical projects, the PISU was mostly carried out through

**Table 3.** PISU programme structure

Axis	€	%	Projects
1. Infrastructure	18,500,000.00	33.50	1.1 Ponte Nuovo 1.2 Pendolo-asse attrezzato connection 1.3 Pendolo completion
2. Urban renewal and brownfield conversion	27,928,092.96	50.57	PRU Gestimmobili 2.1 Pedecollinare road 2.2 Comm./res. dev’t PII Ex Camuzzi 2.3 Park and ride 2.4 Comm./res. dev’t PII Fater 2.5 Slaughterhouse redev’t 2.6 Bastioni market renewal 2.7 Comm./res. dev’t
3. Environment	6,266,000.00	11.35	3.1 Pineta Dannunziana 3.2 Pine grove literary park 3.3 Music city 3.4 Courthouse parking lot
4. Social cohesion	2,149,178.43	3.89	4.1 Multifunctional service centre 4.2 Student dormitory 4.3 Youth assistance centre
5. Entrepreneurship and employment	383,000.00	0.69	5.1 Business incubator
Total	55,226,271.39	100	

Source: Comune di Pescara (2013) and author’s calculations.

tendering—save, clearly, for the for-profit sections of the programme (concentrated mostly in axis two), which were delivered privately (Interviews 3 and 4).

Examining the PISU in its entirety, it is evident that most of the policy innovations introduced by URBAN were lost in the new programming period. To the analysis of the programme's scarce integration presented earlier, it should only be added here that, shortly after the start of the PISU, the ZFU (and with it the incubator) was scrapped due to lack of national funds (Interview 3). This turned a predominantly physical programme into one that was totally so. The PISU did not fare better as regards targeting. As explained, one can interpret the programme more or less inclusively. In any case, however, it is clear that the target area was defined around the projects more than the other way around:

The PISU is more fine-grained [than URBAN]. . . . Its areas were chosen based on the projects that we thought had to be included in the programme so as to complement URBAN. For instance, area no. 2 is where the bridge is located. . . . The environmental projects, which we decided to concentrate in the *Pineta*, are another example. (Interview 3—author's translation)

Perhaps the only area in which the PISU improved on its predecessor was for-profit participation, which was absent in URBAN. However, since private investments were mostly in axis two's independent sub-programmes, one can question whether this partnership can be linked at all to European funding. Conversely, regression on the side of cooperation with the voluntary sector was unmistakable, for the PISU had none of it. Much the same can be said about citizen participation, which had no space in the implementation of those parts of PISU that might have accommodated it—like the *Pineta's* renewal—and played at best a very indirect role in the drafting of the programme.

### *Analysis*

How did Pescara go from implementing a good URBAN programme to practically abandoning this regeneration approach in the immediately subsequent period? The closest explanation is that the CI's policy innovations were mostly shallow. While URBAN introduced some important ideas among local actors, on the whole it failed to produce structures and conditions able to underpin the various parts of its method, from planning to delivery. For one thing, URBAN did not spur any significant change in the city's institutions. This was true of local administrative culture, which the programme did not reorient in a more holistic and participatory direction, as well as the more tangible policy-making structures and procedures:

Pescara has been “fertilized” by URBAN. No doubt about that. . . . There was, however, no innovation in the behaviour of the administrative structures and a lack of any ability to reorganize the city's machine, [by tackling] issues of responsibility, competencies, remuneration, and so on. (Interview 2—author's translation)

For another, URBAN 2-Pescara did not do much to empower societal supporters of its method. This is particularly true of resident groups and non-profits, whose inclusion in the

programme, while notable for Pescara's standards, was still marginal compared to other contexts—e.g. UK cities—and not at all aimed at building these actors' capacities.

In these circumstances, it was natural that once the CI's incentives and constraints were gone—and were not replaced by the region—Pescara's policy model would revert to the path of least resistance represented by the traditional way of doing regeneration. Placed *de facto* in the hands of the city's planning division, the PISU adopted from the start a hardware- and project-oriented, rather than area-based, approach. To the extent that any targeting was conceived, this was a default continuation of the choice made for URBAN rather than a new analysis of that—let alone another—area, and a reflection on how it could benefit from the programme beyond a vague notion of physical reconnection. The PISU's infrastructural nature virtually eliminated any possibility of meaningful citizen participation and curtailed the scope for originality: "the strategic value [of the projects] was not defined in the context of the PISU. The administration had already planned these projects. The PISU was just an instrument that allowed us to realize them rapidly" (Interview 3—author's translation).

As for integration, this was mostly embodied by the ZFU, a deregulation measure that required little interdepartmental coordination and which, when cancelled, was not replaced with any other economic (or social) initiative that could prove more onerous to plan and administer. As an observer notes:

Once URBAN ended, the ability to combine the many aspects of regeneration (economic, infrastructural, environmental, social) was lost. . . . Everybody has her "fiefdom" . . . does her own things, and they cannot manage to get together. [With] too much managerial freedom, we lost all [of URBAN's] innovations—which implied considerable complexity, task forces, etc. I don't see any of this happening now. [With the PISU] under the planning commissioner, we will be lucky if we see some integration between public works, environment and housing. But as regards, say, social measures we are way behind . . . and I don't see any attempt to change this. (Interview 2—author's translation)

Similar reasons led the city not to seek partnerships with the voluntary sector—nor, for that matter, did the latter exert any pressure on the authorities, given the paucity of organizations possessing the informational and infrastructural resources to be proactive in regeneration. Instead, the planners channelled the little partnership in the PISU through the more familiar cooperation with developers.

Taking a step back, the URBAN method's failure to consolidate in Pescara can be attributed primarily to the city's misfit with it. As shown, the administration's inexperience with integrated and participatory regeneration forced it to outsource most of the programme to external consultants. This was a double-edged sword for the city: on the one hand, as a local government member notes, "without the work of [the consultants], Pescara's administration, which is certainly not small, could simply not have put together and completed the programme" (Interview 4—author's translation). On the other, however, outsourcing kept these planning and managing capacities, along with any learning from URBAN, mostly isolated from the city's main policy-making and administrative structures.

Granted, the consultants did plan and manage the PISU too. But without a clear and solid position within the city administration, they could hardly become (the nucleus of) an institutional anchor for the URBAN approach. Formally employed by Pescara's EU office (which might have had a more holistic and participatory orientation), they nonetheless



fell rapidly into the orbit of the planning division. There, as URBAN's external constraint disappeared, they adapted to the city's existing procedures and priorities much more than the other way around. Additionally, that for the PISU's first couple of years, the consultants had to juggle planning the new programme and closing URBAN certainly did not encourage them to go out of their way to preserve the CI's approach.

To the extent that the city administration and societal actors were involved in the planning and implementation of URBAN, both found themselves having to innovate their behaviour by such an extent that made it difficult to digest new procedures and ideas. As a local expert observed: "URBAN was too advanced for the practices of [the] local administration. . . . [The city] was not equipped to run this programme and it was forced to learn very quickly a different way to govern regeneration" (Interview 2—author's translation). Institution building this extensive would be a tall order anywhere. More so in Pescara, where the resources and authority to be devoted to this task were delimited to the small group running URBAN. A clear example of such limits were URBAN's procedures for resident participation, which the consultants set up with difficulty and only later in the programme, and which remained too fragile to play any role in the PISU (Interviews 1 and 3).

To be sure, counterfactuals to the above need not be the same across the board. Some administrative capacities might need longer to build than the space of a programming period, even in the best conditions. But it is fair to say that had Pescara's programme planners and managers had the chance to focus more selectively on some aspects of URBAN (say partnership or participation), they probably could have consolidated their achievement to a greater degree, thereby making them more likely to survive the end of the CI.

## Conclusion

The study of Europeanization so far has focused primarily on the factors and processes through which EU policy produces domestic change. Equally important, however, is how sustainable such change is in face of alterations in the politico-institutional circumstances that engendered it. This article has contributed to this small but growing research agenda by looking at the specific case of URBAN and its mainstreaming. Building on the general Europeanization model, it has posited a trade-off between local policy misfit and the durability of EU-induced change, and illustrated the argument through the case of Pescara, which participated successfully in URBAN only to lose most of its policy innovations as soon as the CI's external constraint was gone.

By adopting a case study method, this article has prioritized analytical depth over breadth. More research is therefore needed to confirm the applicability of the misfit/durability trade-off to other URBAN participants—but also, possibly, to other EU initiatives structured in a similar manner. That said, one can already draw some preliminary conclusions from this study. The first is that, with hindsight, URBAN was set up to fail exactly those that it was supposed to help the most, namely inexperienced cities such as Pescara, which had to make the biggest leap to adapt to the CI's requirements.

Stopping at that, however, would be unfair to the Commission. Mainstreaming was not a foregone conclusion until it happened, and if something like an URBAN 3 had been introduced instead, we would probably be telling a different story now. The second conclusion, therefore, is that future EU policy-making and implementation—starting with the 2014–2020 structural funds, for which operational programmes are being prepared at the time of writing—should factor in the misfit/durability trade-off to maximize effectiveness given

the Union's goals and involvement expectations. Where policy integrity is crucial, and/or the EU is expected to "stay", a demanding model such as the URBAN one is appropriate. If, however, domestic sustainability is the priority, and/or one needs to hedge against a EU "pull-out", then purism should probably give way to a partial yet more pragmatic approach.

## Interviews

- 1: URBAN 2 programme manager. Personal interview, Pescara, 17 June 2010.
- 2: University of Pescara urban planner. Telephone interview, 10 January 2012.
- 3: URBAN 2 and PISU programme manager. Personal interview, Pescara, 27 June 2013.
- 4: City government member. Personal interview, Pescara, 24 June 2013.

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## Notes

1. While Europeanization has been defined in different ways (see Olsen, 2002; Clark & Jones, 2009), most EU scholars agree that this research programme's primary focus is on the consequences of European integration on member state structures and policies (Börzel & Risse, 2000; Sedelmeier, 2012a). The planning literature is, in this respect, no exception.
2. At the same time, there are notable exceptions to this general picture. As Janin Rivolin and Faludi (2005) note, for instance, the main push for the inclusion of environmental concerns into the ESDP came from Nordic countries rather than from the group of leading old members. Moreover, expanding the definition of spatial planning beyond its most explicit instruments reveals important deviations from the upload/download pattern described earlier, such as in the case of the "territorial pacts for employment", a EU-sponsored local development initiative modelled after the Italian "patti territoriali" (Celata & Coletti, 2014).

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