

MADRID HISTORIC CENTRE. MUNICIPAL STRATEGIES TOWARDS REHABILITATION

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The historic centre of Madrid is the result of a process of urban evolution over eleven centuries. With an area of approximately 400 hectares it is one of the biggest historic centres in Europe. The ancient tissue of the city has maintained the status of a neuralgic hub throughout its existence, bringing together Madrid's most important buildings and its most dynamic activities.

PREVIOUS SITUATION

LOCATION OF HISTORIC CENTRE OF MADRID

- > The maintenance of this built heritage was not an object of interest, either for the government or for individuals until the mid 1970s, when the level of architectural, urban, social and environmental deterioration forced the Municipality of Madrid to take measures for its conservation and rehabilitation. Although since 1926 a national Decree was in force which regulates the protection of the cultural heritage, including the environment and, in specific cases, historic zones, the few public interventions made in the centre of Madrid were directed only to the preservation of some unique historic and artistic monuments, such as the Church of San Antonio de la Florida, declared national monument in 1905 to protect the dome painted by Goya, or the remains of the Moorish walls that protected the original city in 1954.
- > In the 1970s, the historic centre of Madrid consisted of scanty emblematic zones whose extensive residential fabric was inhabited by a mixture of a low income aging population, marginal social groups and a growing number of immigrants. The abandonment of the city centre by the more affluent inhabitants prepared the ground for significant physical deterioration and the proliferation of slums. Combined with the loss of traditional economic activities, this gave

the historic centre a socially degraded image, which was slowly spreading to the nearby neighbourhoods. A Specific Ordinance for the Historical Neighbourhood was approved in 1970 to avoid this situation, and a Pre-catalogue of Singular Buildings was started in 1972, albeit with no impact on the existing conditions.

FROM ISOLATED ACTIONS TO INTEGRAL REHABILITATION (1975-1994)

FIRST MUNICIPAL ACTIVITIES

1975 was a decisive year for Madrid and the recovery of its historical heritage. In that year, dedicated to the European architectural heritage, the European Urban Heritage Charter was signed, a document that inspired a new approach in town planning, shifting the interest from urban expansion to efforts of rehabilitation and integral recovery of the existing urban fabric. <

In Spain, this new urban vision coincided with two important factors. Firstly, an economic crisis limited urban growth and prompted reflection on the built up city. Secondly, the reform of the Planning Law in 1976 enabled municipalities to draw up new urban plans, catalogues of buildings and elements to be protected, and special plans for the recovery of the built-up heritage. <

In 1977 the Ministry of Education approved the protection of the historic centre of Madrid by Decree. This meant that it became necessary to seek approval for carrying out works in the area from the Heritage Committee, composed of representatives of the Ministries of Education and Public Works and the Municipality. A Special Plan was approved in 1980 to regulate the urban situation of the premises in the historic centre, including approximately 8.000 buildings with different levels of protection. <

The Municipal Housing Company was founded in 1981 to boost the rehabilitation of private buildings. Its objectives included the rehabilitation of private and public housing and the relocation of inhabitants, besides the construction of social housing. <

URBAN PLANNING

- > The first municipal actions towards rehabilitation started in 1982, by means of a municipal ordinance, the first one on this matter in Spain. It aimed at stimulating the rehabilitation of private residential buildings included in the Historic Special Plan. The ordinance facilitated the public rehabilitation of inhabited buildings in poor condition acquired by the Municipal Housing Company, which included the relocation of residents. In addition, it encouraged private rehabilitation through a system of financial assistance aimed at reducing the loans granted by credit institutions which collaborated with the local administration. These grants accounted for 25% of the budget for the rehabilitation of common elements in buildings, structure, façade, elevators, services, courtyards and stairs, as well as the interior of homes and shops.
- > The new General Urban Plan of Madrid came into force in 1985, the first of the democratic era. The content of the plan incorporated the Special Plan for protected areas, focusing on the improvement of housing, social facilities and the urban environment generally. Despite these administrative efforts, expected actions were isolated and scanty and the historic centre continued its progressive deterioration.

THE 90s: A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR THE RECOVERY OF THE HISTORICAL CENTRE INTER-ADMINISTRATIVE COOPERATION

- > A decade of effort produced some 800 rehabilitated buildings. The difficulty of carrying out the task of rehabilitating the historic centre based exclusively on municipal funds became clear and a Protocol of Cooperation was signed between the Ministry of Work, Transport and Environment (state level), the Autonomous Region of Madrid (regional) and the Madrid City Council (local) in 1994.
- > This protocol was the first agreement of this kind in Spain, directed to recover the historic centre of the city across four simultaneous actions:
 - renovation of obsolete facilities and urban infrastructures,



5. APR: Plaza Mayor – urban space improvement

- incorporation of a new urban design, better suited to the needs of the resident population,
- support of traditional handicraft industry and small trade to promote putting value into the traditional economy,
- enhancing spaces and buildings for cultural activities.

The interventions were targeted, applied only to specific areas declared as Areas of Preferential Rehabilitation (APR). The strategy for the selection of the first APR was simple. The areas should have a space that was operating as a centre of urban activities for the whole neighbourhood (square or main street), in order to extend the interventions to the surrounding streets.

Initially (1994-1997) three areas were selected articulated by squares. Later (1996-1999) two streets were added, and finally (1998-2003) 34 hectares of a highly degraded neighbourhood was incorporated (Fig. 1).



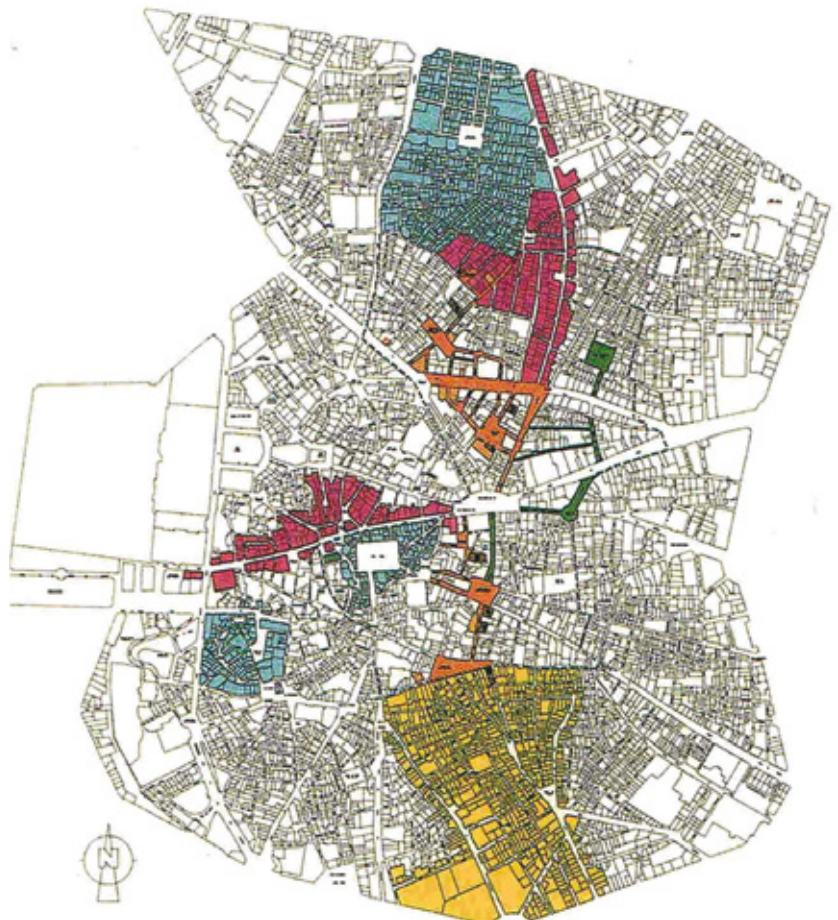
2. APR: Dos de Mayo Square surroundings



3. APR: Dos de Mayo Square - traffic calming



4. APR: Plaza Mayor – traffic regulation



1. Areas of Preferential Rehabilitation (APR) and interventions with European funds

source:
Municipal Housing Company



6. APR: Four Squares – improvement for pedestrians at de la Paja Square



7. APR: Four Squares – new and old buildings at de los Carros Square



8. APR: Mayor and Fuencarral Streets – Fuencarral Street pedestrianisation



9. APR: Mayor and Fuencarral Streets – traffic limitation at Mayor Street

The process of intervention consisted of four lines of action:

- > **Private rehabilitation.** Subsidies (50-60 % of the budget, depending on the APR) were on offer for owners or users of houses with the aim to consolidate foundations, structures, drainage, roofs, fronts, courts, accesses, elevators, collective antennas, insulation, etc.
- > **Architectural Adaptation Programmes.** They included two lines of action: special projects for the improvement of single urban spaces (squares and streets), and public intervention in façades (recovery of traditional plastering, restoration of woodwork, metalwork and trim, colour, etc).
- > **Renewal of obsolete urban Infrastructure.** Specific agreements were signed for this purpose with the utility providers – telephone, gas, electricity, drainage companies, etc. In addition to the improvement of the existing networks, public activities were focused on providing a new design for urban spaces which improved accessibility for everyday use. Thus, traffic calming, extending sidewalks, reducing the number of surface parking spaces, planting trees and designating sitting areas were initiated to enhance the aesthetic quality of the streets, thus attracting pedestrians and encouraging the location of new commercial activities.
- > **Social Programmes.** Parallel to the physical works, the Municipal Housing Company was in charge of the dissemination of the rehabilitation activities within and outside the protected areas. It produced publications on the purpose of the public interventions and the financial aids offered. To this end, permanent offices were set up locally for public information, operating at the same time as spaces for meetings with residents and other local associations and for local activities of any kind.

THE OPPORTUNITY OF EUROPEAN FUNDS

- > The availability of European financing designated for the regeneration of urban tissues and their adaptation to the needs of the population, enabled the Municipal Housing Company to promote

other activities of local intervention. The URBAN project offered the possibility to apply models of integral intervention for sustainable change. They combined physical rehabilitation with environmental rehabilitation (streets, squares and green spaces) social regeneration (women, elderly, children and marginal groups) and economic support and improvements. This programme led to the rehabilitation of various urban routes. Under the name of 'Itineraries of theatres' it was possible to intervene in a network of streets affected by prostitution and social marginalisation by connecting different areas of rehabilitation. Moreover, the Cohesion Funds enabled the authorities to intervene in the improvement of the urban environment in some neighbourhoods.

RESULTS OF THE PROCEEDINGS

The results of this first agreement were encouraging, given the positive response of the private owners to the public subsidies, encouraged by the permanent relationship between the local administration, residents and retailers associations and other social entities. The recovery of pedestrian routes in the historic centre promoted local tourism and growth of urban activities, generating a favourable situation which extended to the surrounding areas.

Seven APRs were carried out between 1999 and 2005, and six more areas were in the progress until 2010. Four other zones are in the pipeline, planned to be finished by 2012.

In parallel to the actions taken by the Municipal Housing Company, the Department of Planning and Housing of the Municipality of Madrid has been involved in several specific actions, restoring historic buildings for social purposes (libraries, classrooms, theatres, etc).

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

The various interventions that have been carried out in the historic centre of Madrid reveal **THREE KEY ASPECTS:**

DISPERSED REHABILITATION IS A SLOW ACTION THAT DOES NOT STOP URBAN AND SOCIAL DETERIORATION,

SOCIAL CONTACTS BETWEEN THE AUTHORITIES AND THE SOCIAL ENTITIES CONCERNED ARE NECESSARY FOR THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND AGREEMENT ON CRITERIA,

RENOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF URBAN STREETS ARE ESSENTIAL TO START OTHER INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES.

The experience of Madrid found international recognition in 1998, when it was ranked as Best in the Habitat Best Practices Award; and in 1999, when Europa Nostra recognised the value of the activities undertaken by the local administration for the recovery of the built heritage.

NEW INTERVENTIONS IN THE HISTORIC CITY: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- > At present, actions and subsidies of the Municipal Housing Company focus on improving sustainability and energy efficiency in buildings. In the historic centre of Madrid, in addition to the financial assistance for building rehabilitation which remains in place, financial aid targets specific aspects: insulation of façades, roofs and floors; reinforcement of timber and glass replacement in windows; water consumption savings improving power facilities and heating, etc.
- > The renovations carried out by the Municipal Housing Company in its own buildings incorporate various innovations following sustainability criteria: photovoltaic panels, geothermal energy use, robotic parking, monitoring of water and electricity usage to raise awareness on energy saving and GHG emission (European Project I3CON), District Heating etc. All of them are seen as pilot projects for private agents to be followed.

THE ECONOMIC LOGIC OF REHABILITATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON RESIDENTS

- > From the spatial point of view, the rehabilitation process undertaken by the Madrid Municipality has been highly satisfactory, restoring degraded urban spaces for the city, its inhabitants and visitors. However, the effects on the resident population were unequal, depending on their situation: owners of complete buildings, owners of housings in multifamily buildings or tenants.

The main activity of the Local Offices placed by the Municipal Housing Company in the areas of intervention was to reconcile the interests of the stakeholders in acceding to the financial aids for rehabilitation. According to the economic logic of the actors involved, the greatest difficulties for the owners to accept the aids were fundamentally two: the reduction of the previous number of dwellings when rehabilitation required an increment of the housing area – which implied that some of the residents had to move away from the building – and the inability of the landowners to increase the rents of those who were protected under previous legislation that limited such increases.

As a result, not all the housing was rehabilitated, and buildings still exist in ruinous condition, many of them owned by proprietors that deliberately seek their obsolescence as a way to evict tenants of reduced economic capacity. On the other hand, the improvement of public space facilitated the generation of a dual process in some specific areas: an important change of population – gentrification – and a strong increase of the service sector, encouraged by the flexibility of the General Plan to make commercial, offices and residential uses compatible in the historic centre.

In conclusion, those public policies aimed at rehabilitation that do not affect property rights and are dependant on owners' profitability, could not prevent the reproduction of marginality in specific areas, or the displacement of the lower income population to other areas of the city. Still, after nearly two decades of promotion of private rehabilitation through public initiative, the improvement of the historic centre of Madrid has been substantial in qualitative and quantitative terms, consolidating the dynamism of the central area.



10. APR: Lavapies Neighbourhood – new urban equipment: the Valle-Inclán Theater



11. APR: Lavapies Neighbourhood – the 'Corralas': traditional Madrilénian housing recovery



12. APR: Lavapies Neighbourhood – Augustin Lara Square



14. FEDER-URBAN Projects 'Itineraries of theatres' – urban routes



13. FEDER-URBAN Projects 'Itineraries of theatres' – traffic calming at the la Luna Square