

## I

(Resolutions, recommendations and opinions)

## OPINIONS

## EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

463RD PLENARY SESSION HELD ON 26 AND 27 MAY 2010

**Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘The need to apply an integrated approach to urban regeneration’ (exploratory opinion)**

(2011/C 21/01)

Rapporteur: **Mr GRASSO**

On 2 December 2009 the Spanish Housing Minister, acting under Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, asked, on behalf of the Spanish Presidency, the European Economic and Social Committee to draw up an opinion on

*The need to apply an integrated approach to urban regeneration.*

The Section for Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 4 May 2010.

At its 463rd plenary session, held on 26 and 27 May 2010 (meeting of 26 May), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 87 votes to four with two abstentions.

## 1. Conclusions and recommendations

1.1 The city has now become an energy wasteful system, but is also one of the main causes of environmental change. As a result, coordinated EU action for the more decisive development of urban regeneration policies is an important means to fight harmful CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and climate change.

1.2 The EESC advocates a strategy of measures to be deployed on an urban or metropolitan scale for the architectural, urban planning, social and environmental regeneration of rundown neighbourhoods.

1.3 Unfortunately, conventional land-planning tools are still unsuited to this type of approach, partly because cities differ

among themselves in terms of location and urban services and, as a result, undifferentiated solutions cannot be used. The EESC therefore recommends that the EU should develop tools founded on systems of urban quality indicators, based on socio-urban and environmental hardship thresholds. It should also develop urban regeneration indexes to measure administrative efficiency, the measures' success rate, and the public satisfaction rate.

1.4 On this point, we reiterate a number of proposals made in earlier EESC opinions and hope that in order to broaden the European debate on sustainable cities the proposal to set up a High-Level Group on Sustainable Urban Development is taken up <sup>(1)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 77, 31.3.2009, p. 123.

1.5 In order to launch a 'new urban renaissance' that prioritises an integrated urban regeneration model and that focuses attention on demographic change, social cohesion, the review of the urban economic base, the re-assessment of the natural heritage, dematerialisation, energy-efficient cities and biodiversity, the EESC maintains that strong cooperation at all levels of government (Commission, national governments, regions and local authorities) is required, but through a more flexible, less rigid approach to the subsidiarity principle and not only through a hierarchical framework of powers. To this end, the EESC urges the promotion of thematic networks of cities to promote the implementation of sustainable urban regeneration.

1.6 Improving the energy efficiency of buildings and infrastructure has to be a strategic factor for the political commitment to urban renewal in the EU due to its benefits in terms of reduced energy demand and significant job creation in Europe. The EESC trusts that the EU will pursue these objectives through growing integration with sectoral programmes under preparation on EU Innovation Policy, EU Transport policy 2010-2020, and the SET Plan (Strategic Energy Technology Plan). It also urges increased investment by boosting, through the EIB, the financial instruments at its disposal (JESSICA, JASPERS, etc.) and promoting effective public-private partnerships.

1.7 The EESC trusts that the integration of sustainable transport and energy systems will form the foundations of urban regeneration policy. Furthermore, this integration policy should be backed by EU funding for sustainable transport networks and alternative energy policies essential to suburban regeneration.

1.8 It also trusts that Member States will adopt tax incentives to encourage citizens to contribute to the objective of turning every building into a power station.

1.9 The EESC calls for the promotion of cultural development and entrepreneurial actions, especially in the area of small and medium-sized enterprises with the ability to identify innovative solutions for regeneration and the creation of green jobs.

1.10 The EESC also believes that in order to promote more responsible citizen participation in the implementation of integrated urban regeneration programmes, there is a need to have dialogue and consultation with communities within urban centres, including women and young people and those most at risk from exclusion. A Europe-wide publicity campaign on practical savings derived from clean energy production should be launched in cooperation with networks representing citizens and sectors. The ongoing campaign is insufficiently targeted and resourced.

1.11 In order to be competitive with Asian megalopolises, the urban regeneration policies of European cities have to be able to combine the traditional refurbishment of physical spaces with dematerialisation, also represented in telecommunications technologies, thus conserving the environment and preventing cities from swallowing more green space.

1.12 Furthermore, the EESC considers it strategically important to put in motion a major process of shaping leaders, in order to increase their responsibility, creativity and quality. The aim is to improve their ability to make choices when steering urban generation and development policies that are consistent with the EU's sustainable growth objectives. At the same time, the EESC recalls the importance of cooperation with DG Regio and calls for this to be strengthened. But the Committee still sees a vital opportunity and need to build the capacity of DG Regio's operational urban policy team in order to speed up the processes involved in implementing the development programmes that the Commission intends to pursue.

## 2. Introduction

2.1 Over the last ten years, the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (May 2007) has been one of the most important testimonies to the Member States' will to agree on common strategies and principles for urban development policy. The urban policy debate has been significantly intensified at the EU level. The Spanish Presidency is following this up by dedicating considerable attention to the issue and has asked the EESC and the Committee of the Regions for their analysis and contribution to the discussions of the informal meeting of EU ministers.

2.2 The analysis concerns a number of important issues to be solved in cities through urban regeneration policies in order to achieve, through an integrated approach, a level of urban sustainability that meets the need:

- to improve the energy efficiency of European building stock, whose age makes it a source of harmful emissions that seriously undermine the quality of urban life, by creating new jobs and encouraging innovation and technological development;
- to increase social cohesion through an integrated regeneration programme for rundown neighbourhoods, to achieve social integration, fight exclusion, training, etc.;

- to contribute to environmental sustainability, also through the urban regeneration of rundown neighbourhoods and the refurbishment of existing building stock to meet energy efficiency, habitability and accessibility objectives, with a view to avoiding the consumption of more green spaces.

### 3. Integrated urban planning

3.1 Protecting the environment, at different urban levels, and improving people's quality of life is one of the Member States' and the EU's major operational regional policy objectives.

3.2 Through this opinion, the EESC intends to confirm its agreement on the need to develop integrated urban regeneration policies as outlined in the EU 2020 programming strategy document and the programme of the Spanish presidency of the Council of the European Union <sup>(2)</sup>.

3.2.1 The EESC endorses the EU 2020 document's contents and agrees with the operational approaches it sets out regarding the fact that regeneration policies need to take certain innovative concepts into account:

- the improvement of human resources, especially with respect to the needs of the elderly, the integration level of recent migrants, the eradication of poverty, especially child poverty, and solidarity between the generations;
- knowledge-based growth;
- the development of a participatory and creative society;
- the development of a competitive and interconnected economy that is mindful of the social and green market.

3.2.2 The EESC considers the Spanish presidency's programme to be in line with these concepts in that it aims to strengthen the objective of guaranteeing all citizen rights and protecting fundamental rights, in compliance with the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

3.2.3 These objectives encourage a view of urban regeneration that includes strong interdependence between the quality of spaces and the quality of welcome, i.e. regeneration that is open to all citizens, irrespective of their mother tongue, origins or religion.

<sup>(2)</sup> Commission Working Document *Consultation on the Future 'EU 2020' Strategy*, Brussels, 2009 and State Secretariat for the European Union of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Programme for the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 1 January - 30 June 2010: 'Innovating Europe', *Imprenta Nacional Boletín Oficial del Estado*, Madrid, 2010.

### 4. Some urban issues

4.1 In compliance with the principles set out in the above-mentioned documents, the concept of regeneration has to contend with a series of important changes in the shape and nature of cities <sup>(3)</sup>:

- increasing urban sprawl, with its high consumption of land and its diseconomies of scale;
- the decline in the functional cohesiveness of cities, with the crisis in historical centres, rundown suburbs and manufacturing areas;
- the prevalence of substantially conservative responses to the crisis, showing little imagination or creativity, but above all, out of keeping with a globalised world;
- the replacement of a system of functions with a system of 'containers', which should be considered as complex and highly fragile places, in undifferentiated metropolitan areas;
- the loss of meaning of city limits, which continue to exist for administrative purposes but lose their geographic, symbolic and political meaning;
- the erosion of green belts around cities, with grave losses for biotic production;
- the increase in commuting times, with its negative impact on quality of life;
- urban areas, even traditional ones, are these days tending to develop into closed, specialised spaces: the 'residential' (and nothing else) area; theme parks dedicated to entertainment; education, limited to schools or campuses; culture in museums and theatres, etc. The closed space extols the supremacy of the private (both as a lifestyle and as a legal concept and practice) to the detriment of the need for community.

4.2 The logic of closed spaces needs to be countered by that of infinite space, represented by non-material relationships, for which the concept of time tends to replace that of physical distance.

<sup>(3)</sup> A brilliant examination of the main problems of urban regeneration can be found in Massimo Cacciari, *La Città*, Pazzini Stampatore Editore, Villa Verucchio, 2004.

4.3 Regeneration of urban areas thus needs to combine the traditional refurbishment of physical spaces with dematerialisation, which finds its most obvious expression in telecommunications technologies. The problem that needs solving is ultimately the conflict between the mind, which now reasons in terms of ubiquity, and the body, which needs roots and cannot be continually on the move, but wants to be organised into quality places and spaces.

4.4 Regeneration will therefore be the outcome of synergising and integrating three aspects of the city:

- the Agora city: people-centric, with total harmony between urban settlements and spaces and between social cohesion and economic development,
- the glocal city (global/local): resulting from a better balance between globalisation and the ability to make the most of local resources and different specificities and attitudes,
- the sustainable city: should be able to resolve its problems internally, without passing them on to others or to future generations.

## 5. A holistic model for urban regeneration

5.1 The Committee is in favour of a **'new urban renaissance'** <sup>(4)</sup> characterised by

- greater social cohesion;
- cultural renewal;
- a review of the economy of the urban economic base to address the current deep recession; and
- enhancement of the natural heritage through dematerialisation and increased biodiversity.

5.2 A policy based on a 'new urban renaissance' broadens the meaning of the European Economic Recovery Plan in Regions & Cities (EERP) <sup>(5)</sup>, by interpreting the local authorities'

important role in overcoming the crisis as a structural fact, destined to impact not only on the economic crisis but also on the re-evaluation of all our communities' resources.

5.3 An integrated urban regeneration model would therefore take shape, as a spatial expression of the **'green new deal'** <sup>(6)</sup>, where the holistic system of measures concerning human, natural and physical resources should have, as an important benchmark, a renewed definition of wealth, based not only on accumulation but also on the sparing use of resources and an increase in public well-being <sup>(7)</sup>.

This model implies an exercise in leadership from the local authorities to facilitate the active participation of citizens and the economy of their regions to speed up the development of markets and green technologies. The proposed High-Level Group on Sustainable Urban Development could facilitate the promotion and growth of thematic networks of cities, even medium-sized to small ones, to meet these objectives.

## 6. A holistic approach to urban regeneration implies:

### 6.1 Human resources

6.1.1 We also need to reconcile the Lisbon Strategy objective to build a more competitive knowledge-based and creative society with the EU 2020 objective that stresses the importance of promoting cohesion through support policies for the vulnerable segments of society, especially the elderly, better integration, particularly for recent migrants, poverty eradication, and greater solidarity between the generations.

### 6.1.2 The EU has given cultural and practical space:

- to the development of community building, in order to give access, in urban planning, to all types of stakeholders: technical-professional (urban planners, architects, engineers, etc.), entrepreneurial and housing organisations;

<sup>(4)</sup> Richard Rogers, *Toward an Urban Renaissance*, Urban Task Force, London, 2005, downloadable from: [www.urbantaskforce.org](http://www.urbantaskforce.org).

<sup>(5)</sup> European Union – Committee of the Regions, *European Economic Recovery Plan in Regions & Cities* (EERP) <sup>(5)</sup>, by interpreting the local authorities' from <http://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/Pages/EERPSurvey.aspx>.

<sup>(6)</sup> The documents in question are *A green new deal for Europe*, compiled by the Wuppertal Institute; *Rethinking the Economic Recovery: A Global Green New Deal*, the United Nations Environmental Programme; *A Green New Deal* by the UK's new economics foundation; *Toward a Transatlantic Green New Deal: Tackling the Climate and Economic Crises*, by the Worldwatch Institute for the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

<sup>(7)</sup> This would constitute the full application, at the local level, of the recommendations set out in the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament - *GDP and beyond: measuring progress in a changing world* COM(2009) 433 final, downloadable from: <http://www.beyond-gdp.eu/>. They are based on a report by Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi, promoted by the EU, at the request of the French Government, which can be downloaded from: <http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/en/index.htm>.

— to the development of new knowledge and the principle of creativity through the promotion of new forms of research and teaching involving universities, and generating forms of creative urban programming<sup>(8)</sup>. The best way to increase the efficiency of these openings is to promote public-private partnerships.

6.1.3 These policies need to be rethought in order to:

— promote 'good governance' practices for cities, including peri-urban and rural areas, in order to improve not only economic wellbeing, but also psychological, spiritual and social wellbeing; and

— create new jobs, especially for young people and immigrants, as well as retraining traditional blue-collar and white-collar workers swept away by the current crisis. To this end, the EESC advocates the promotion of a 'carbon army' linked to sustainable urban renewal.

6.1.4 Demographic forecasts indicate that by 2060 more than half the population will be over 48. If new migration flows persist, especially of young people towards cities, disadvantaged rural regions will continue to decline. In light of this scenario, the following actions need to be envisaged at local level:

— The development of a culture that generates synergies between public and private enterprise to promote SMEs and stimulate participatory and creative urban communities;

— the development of instruments to strengthen dialogue and consultation with urban communities, including women, young people and those most at risk from exclusion;

— the improvement of living standards through innovative solutions for sustainable social housing, health care and education.

6.1.5 The new jobs which would be created through the new green deal and emissions cuts call for training and dissemination policies. Efforts should be made to:

— facilitate access to EU information platforms (on the environment, energy efficiency, transport, the economy, etc.);

— link up with the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) programme of the EIT (European Institute of Technology) in order to ensure a rapid transfer of new technologies at the local level;

— develop a strong dissemination strategy for best practices in integrating green technologies in urban communities.

## 6.2 Natural resources

6.2.1 The supremacy of natural resources over physical ones makes studying **urban metabolism** pivotal to the establishment of renewal processes based on the economic use of raw materials and waste disposal.

6.2.2 **Awareness of urban metabolism** is an important tool for achieving the objectives of an improved urban environment set by international conventions aimed at conservation (Kyoto, biodiversity, water, etc.) and climate change mitigation<sup>(9)</sup>.

## 6.3 Physical resources

6.3.1 Urban regeneration in relation to the current processes of transformation needs to be **less and less about separate, defined, circumscribed measures**, and more and more focused on processes developing multi-purpose settings, characterised by quality and variety of spaces and the interaction of various aspects: elasticity, malleability, the ability to welcome.

6.3.2 The EESC believes that the increasing importance of environmental limits, processes of integration, or the growing role of interactivity cannot be bypassed when refurbishing buildings and infrastructure.

## 6.4 Immaterial resources

6.4.1 The European Council, through the e-Europe programme (1999), the Lisbon Convention (2000) and the i-2010 operational programmes, indicates that e-society is the main factor in the EU's development. Consequently, the EU Council intends to promote projects to accelerate the process of developing a society that is able to seize electronic and interactive opportunities. To this end, provisions are being devised to enable every European citizen to enter the digital age and have an internet connection, with the aim of creating an open, inclusive and cooperative society.

<sup>(8)</sup> Jan Jacob Trip, *Creative city development in the Lisbon strategy*, TU Delft, 2009. Xavier Vives, Lluís Torrens, *The strategies of European metropolitan areas in the context of the European Union enlargement*, Pla Estratègica Metropolità de Barcelona, 2005.

<sup>(9)</sup> Rudolf de Groot, *Function-analysis and valuation as a tool to assess land use conflicts in planning for sustainable, multi-functional landscapes*, Landscape and Urban Planning 75 (2006) 175–186.



6.4.2 It thus tasks cities with attracting knowledge, renewing the system of relations between public authorities and citizens, and encouraging the redeployment of the means of production <sup>(10)</sup>.

6.4.3 There is no doubt that investments in urban technological innovation need to be fast and massive, given that the level of competition we are facing from the East is very high <sup>(11)</sup>.

## 7. Towards a 'green new deal' for cities

7.1 Urban regeneration is a complex issue but it must be framed within a strategy in order to be efficient.

7.2 The most urgent issue probably concerns the close link between the regeneration of cities, their environments and the economic crisis. The EESC believes that urban regeneration processes should be seen in the light of the principles of the green economy and as opportunities for a European green new deal <sup>(12)</sup>, which could consist in integrating the different types of urban morphology: the biotic city, the material city and the city of bits, all geared to completing and strengthening the solidarity-based city.

In this regard, the role of the natural environment as a producer of goods and services that are essential to people has to be re-evaluated.

## 8. The biotic city

### 8.1 Developing the ecological network

8.1.1 The EESC believes that it is particularly important to study the city as an ecosystem and to map out the heritage value of natural infrastructure (as a source, for instance, of clean water and air, wind protection, soil fertility and pollination),

<sup>(10)</sup> World economic forum, The Lisbon review 2002- 2006, downloadable from:

[www.weforum.org/pdf/gcr/lisbonreview/report2006.pdf](http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gcr/lisbonreview/report2006.pdf);  
European Commission, *i2010 - A European Information Society for growth and employment*, downloadable from [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/employment\\_and\\_social\\_policy/job\\_creation\\_measures/c11328\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/job_creation_measures/c11328_en.htm);  
Fondazione Ugo Bordon, Dossier EU i 2010, downloadable from: <http://www.fub.it/osservatorio/dossieruei2010/liniziativai2010>.

<sup>(11)</sup> The u-city experiments are taking place at:  
MIT: <http://web.mit.edu/cre/research/ncc/casestudies.html>;  
Milla Digital: <http://www.milladigital.es/ingles>;  
Tokyo: <http://www.tokyo-ubinavi.jp/en/about.html>;  
Singapore: <http://www.itu.int/ubiquitous>;  
Hong Kong: <http://www.info.gov.hk/digital21/eng/strategy/2008/Foreword.htm>;  
Arabianranta (Helsinki) in: [https://www.taik.fi/en/about\\_taik/arabianranta.html](https://www.taik.fi/en/about_taik/arabianranta.html).

<sup>(12)</sup> The title is drawn from the new economics foundation report 'A Green New Deal', London, 2009, which can be downloaded from: [www.neweconomics.org/projects/green-new-deal](http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/green-new-deal).

which is not easily replaced with technological solutions, and only at exorbitant costs and at efficiency levels that cannot compare with the efficiency of biotic systems.

8.1.2 It is estimated that by 2050 a further 11 % of the natural areas remaining in Europe in 2000 could be lost <sup>(13)</sup>. Public institutions should therefore focus specially on the consequences of this phenomenon and increase investment in protecting ecosystems, also giving attention to urban ecosystems.

### 8.2 Energy production from renewable sources

8.2.1 **The city is a strategic element in the development of renewable energies.** Indeed, technological improvements and innovations to heating and cooling plants, **which account for 40-50 % of global energy demand**, are at the heart of the EU 20-20-20 policy to improve energy services (cutting greenhouse gases and energy consumption and increasing the use of renewable energies by 20 %).

8.2.2 The increased production of energy from renewable sources under the SET Plan (Strategic Energy Technology Plan) is extremely important because of its implications for employment. Urban communities should therefore be the first to acquire new technologies. The Council and Parliament decisions to finance the SET Plan seem very well suited to achieving this purpose.

## 9. The material city

### 9.1 Improving the energy efficiency of buildings

9.1.1 **Improving the energy efficiency of buildings and infrastructure is a strategic factor for the EU's urban renewal.** Due to new technologies, there is considerable potential for energy efficiency gains. By 2050, primary energy demand could fall by about 300 exajoules, with an annual reduction of 20-25 gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub>. The EU's current annual investment in technologies to improve energy efficiency is about EUR 60 billion per annum.

9.1.2 In 2005, a European Commission study estimated that the investment required to achieve energy savings of 20 % would create a million jobs (directly and indirectly). Savings will be concentrated in the areas of building lighting, office buildings, domestic appliances and cogeneration.

<sup>(13)</sup> The European Commission report on *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity* (TEEB), downloadable from <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/economics/>.

9.1.3 The EESC trusts that the objective is not just to save energy but to turn every building into a power station.

9.1.4 This will involve considerable investment in research in the coming years and is destined to transform the way cities are built in order to optimise their metabolism through the use of innovative materials and increasingly sophisticated building site logistics solutions.

9.1.5 Renewing the architectural heritage requires financial synergies and global policies of cooperation, since:

- a loss of competitiveness for the sector and its suppliers would have a negative impact on employment;
- it must compete against international systems, especially rapidly expanding Asian systems, **for which regeneration measures should be seen as a basis for exportation;**
- **European countries with lower incomes must be involved in the process;**
- **it should not be dissociated from social housing issues, which affect millions of Europeans.**

## 9.2 Integrated infrastructure system

9.2.1 EU documents on social cohesion stress the importance of integrating all types of infrastructure, a concept that goes beyond ensuring good links between regions. In Europe, funds set aside for the modernisation of networks until 2020 amount to EUR 600 million, including EUR 90 billion for intelligent infrastructure.

9.2.2 Integrated infrastructure should also be an important objective of urban regeneration and should include access to:

- services such as healthcare, education, and sustainable energy, which are becoming interactive due to telecommunications networks, for instance in the case of telemedicine and distance learning;
- transport systems, the sustainable integration of which involves improving rail links, inland waterways, access to airports, developing inter-modal transport chains and advanced traffic management systems, and improving cycle and footpaths. Integrated transport systems support urban policies aimed at avoiding urban sprawl in order to cut the energy and social costs of commuting and commercial transactions;

— a sustainable transport system and efficient energy system are fundamental to EU urban regeneration policy, which should prioritise the financing of sustainable transport and functional energy networks that extend to the suburbs that need regenerating;

— energy networks: growth in the electric powered transport sector (see the Renewable Energy Directive), telecommunications technologies and computers generates an exponential rise in energy consumption; an intelligent distribution network is therefore required to minimise loss, increase efficiency, adapt to needs and absorb excess solar energy production; Furthermore, a network of electricity and hydrogen refuelling stations, supplied from locally produced renewable sources, should be promoted;

— telematic networks, especially broadband internet, now essential to businesses and families.

## 10. The city of bits

10.1 Highly interactive urban platforms, currently being developed through new-generation communication technologies, are destined to speed up urban reconversion processes and introduce innovative factors that will contribute substantially towards:

— a shift away from the central role played by road infrastructure, in favour of synergies between roads, GPS, computers and creating a network that would allow the development of interactive logistics systems, linking up homes across the world, extending their role and transforming them, through connectivity, into places of work, leisure, healthcare, etc.;

— integrating the public and private supply of services; this would result in reconversion processes that would enable public administration platforms (planning permission, land registries, tax, etc.) to provide interactive access for businesses, homes, and citizens' personal digital devices;

— making radical progress in delivering health services at significantly reduced costs; new network technologies, miniaturisation and the portability of apparatuses enable the home-based monitoring of the most important vital functions and online healthcare procedures;

— reducing asymmetries in relations between citizens and knowledge holders (technicians, doctors, politicians, etc.) in order to transform traditional top-down structures into new collaborative structures;

— actively monitoring the entire urban life cycle in order to achieve substantial savings in urban resource management.

### 11. The solidarity-based city

11.1 The factors considered so far, albeit substantial, are instrumental to urban regeneration processes, which are ultimately aimed at increasing social cohesion in compliance with the EU's oft-reiterated fundamental principle.

11.2 Increasing social cohesion means renewing management systems at all levels ranging from the EU to the local authorities in order to tackle the complexity and diversity of the relations that characterise our society. This is changing the chain of relations with respect to the collaboration approach, the reduction of asymmetries, and the evolution of the concept of leadership.

11.3 The collaboration approach underpins sustainable management and aims to give all stakeholders access to choices. This approach began through the activation of civic forums and increased its potential through the development of interactive technological media. It is summarised in the US National Academy of Public Administration's slogan 'Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what we can do together' <sup>(14)</sup>.

11.4 Reducing asymmetries: being able to access increasingly efficient knowledge systems and hold dialogue in real time shortens the distance between those who hold knowledge and those who used to be its passive users. It changes human relations but also the meaning of urban spaces, which become catalysts for new types of relations (e.g. out-patient/first aid facilities that are being relocated from hospitals to underground stations and hypermarkets, etc.)

11.5 The evolution of the concept of leadership: the deconstructing of systems of relations and growing opportunities for collaboration call for new roles for public representatives, who are required to demonstrate both leadership and facilitating skills.

11.6 The substantial change in the system of relations opens up opportunities for profound change in organisational models, especially for local authorities, as part of a trend that can be defined as a transition from actions, typical of strategic plans, to the activation of shared platforms, typical of management based on sustainability. The platform model, already tried by the EU in the organisation of the production and knowledge sectors, would be extended to develop a dense network of relations aimed at involving all stakeholders in the urban community and facilitating subsidiarity policies between weak and strong communities. Thus, we can speak of:

- a community building platform aimed at hosting the widest possible spectrum of stakeholders, and local community consortia;
- a knowledge platform aimed at developing innovative knowledge and research policies as well as promoting creative urban refurbishment;
- a technological platform aimed at providing a range of vital know-how and at activating and managing innovative processes;
- a resources platform for:
  - the development of innovative financial instruments through public-private cooperation modelled on JESSICA and JASPERS;
  - the implementation of financial policies that promote equality and benefit low-income earners by involving them in overarching urban renewal strategies;
  - the development of accounting policies to determine the economic value of goods and services that assess the cost of extracting natural resources and of waste disposal. The objective is to establish a tax policy geared to deterring the wasteful use of primary resources. The revenue thus derived should be channelled to supporting vulnerable social groups.

Brussels, 26 May 2010.

*The President*  
*of the European Economic and Social Committee*  
Mario SEPI

---

<sup>(14)</sup> Downloadable from <http://www.collaborationproject.org/display/home/Home>.