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# Institutional change through innovation: the URBAN Community Initiative in Berlin, 1994–99

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**Abstract.** Reunification profoundly challenged the local government structure inherited from the Cold War period in Berlin. Yet this sudden socioeconomic and political change did not produce any immediate impact on institutional arrangements or policy instruments within the urban policy field. In this context, the implementation of the European Community Initiative URBAN, between 1994 and 1999, offered an opportunity to actors who were willing to challenge the existing balance of power to contest the legitimacy of preexisting interests and representations. The author argues that, in a context of competing interpretations of the issues raised by segregation processes which have left pockets of poverty in both parts of the city, the URBAN programme has managed to become an important driving force behind an underlying process of change. Its innovative approach to urban poverty and social exclusion exerted an impact on the parameters of this process of change, exacerbating existing political and organisational conflicts and challenging local networks, sources of legitimacy, and policy instruments.

## 1 Introduction

The European Community Initiative ‘URBAN’ has been surrounded from its very inception by strong scepticism. Does such a programme have any impact whatsoever on local or national policies? Is it at all possible to measure the impact of a Community Initiative on institutionalised interests, networks, and representations? The European Union (EU) has the capacity to institute major policy changes through Community Initiatives at national and local levels, depending on the way the national levels manage the programmes developed by the EU. In this paper I do not intend to question whether or not the URBAN Community Initiative contributed to a reduction in social and spatial inequalities in European cities. Instead, I explore the mechanisms by which subnational and national levels of government adjusted to the pressure resulting from the URBAN programme in order to fulfil its requirements.

In the context of the evolution of the urban policy field in Berlin during the 1990s, I examine the implementation of the URBAN programme between 1994 and 1999. URBAN benefited from an underlying process of change, but also created the conditions for a significant redistribution of resources and constraints among actors. The redefinition of the ‘urban poverty problem’, as well as an adjustment of interests and institutional arrangements, are among the unexpected outcomes of this card shuffle. In a context of increasing poverty and segregation, unevenly spread across the city, the URBAN programme offered an opportunity to contest the legitimacy of interests and representations inherited from West Berlin. In addition, it accelerated the creation of the Neighbourhood Management Programme (*Quartiersmanagement*).

In this paper I first critically analyse the academic approaches which have been developed to analyse the impact of Community Initiatives on national policies. Second, the context for the implementation of the URBAN programme in Berlin between 1994 and 1999 is set by outlining the underpinning ideology and the objectives of the European urban initiatives and the challenges faced by the metropolitan government in Berlin after reunification. The implementation of the URBAN programme is then

described in detail, and critically analysed from two perspectives: a critical reflection is given on the local government structure and on URBAN as an important driving force behind an underlying process of change.

## **2 Local policy changes and the EU**

Many scholars interested in policy change have highlighted the specificity of the European integration process in order to understand the institutionalisation of a political space at the European level, and its consequences on national rules and norms (Stone Sweet et al, 2001, page 3).<sup>(1)</sup> Moreover, because Community Initiatives are short-term programmes that carry little funding, their implementation has been somewhat neglected by academic research on the European integration process (Muller and Rouault, 1997). However, a classical sociological approach stresses the link between external innovation and institutional change, and questions the possible impact of European Community Initiatives from two perspectives: a long-term perspective; and in terms of unpredictable outcomes.

### **2.1 Institutional change through external innovations**

The sociology of innovation has developed specific tools to explain institutional change from a long-term perspective. This approach is focused mainly on the conditions under which an external innovation might exert an impact on existing patterns of behaviour and cognitive schemes. Basing his analysis on ethnological and historical studies, Mendras links the question of change “to the introduction of innovations into local communities” (1996, page 205, author’s translation). He continues by addressing the following questions:

“How is the internal balance of power challenged by external influences, and how are these external innovations assimilated without jeopardising local traditions and identities?” (1996, page 205, author’s translation).

From this perspective, it is argued that any innovation needs to be translated by local actors in order for it to be integrated into local routines and institutional arrangements. Moreover, although conflicts and ruptures might occur within the process and alter the implementation, the innovation has the capacity to create an autonomous *learning process*, that is “a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information” (Hall, 1993, page 278).

Second, the integration of an external innovation into local features is characterised by unpredictable outcomes, and its success depends upon the local context. Its implementation provokes a redistribution of resources and constraints among local actors; it creates new opportunities for them to mobilise their resources in order to influence the process. It may reactivate former institutions or create new ones, and it influences the redefinition of cognitive schemes. Hence, it may also be rejected if the local context is characterised by a hegemonic discourse and balance of power which cannot be challenged.

### **2.2 European Community Initiatives: specific policy tools with predictable outcomes?**

This approach, inspired by historical and ethnological studies, offers an opportunity to analyse European Community Initiatives from a different perspective. These have often been neglected by academic research on the European integration process as these initiatives are short-term programmes, which have failed to become policies and provide little funding. Since 1989, the European Commission has elaborated Community Initiatives on its own initiative “if specific actions prove necessary outside the Funds and without

<sup>(1)</sup> A distinction is made here between the ‘European integration process’ and the ‘Europeanisation process’ (see also Risse et al, 2000, page 2).

prejudice to the measures decided upon within the framework of the other Community policies” (Treaty establishing the European Community, 2002, Article 159).<sup>(2)</sup>

On the other hand, a small number of studies, which have been focused on the mismatch resulting from the implementation of Community Initiatives and the resulting dynamics, have stressed the capacity of initiatives to provoke institutional change at the domestic level. This coercive aspect lies in the normative dimension of these programmes, which convey a common definition of a specific issue, a common framework for action, and common tools (Frank, 2005). This does not mean that such a programme is a factor of institutional change per se; and it does not mean that the outcomes are predictable (Muller and Rouault, 1997). In fact, this innovation produces various outcomes depending on the context in which it takes place—it is merely an opportunity to promote an innovative set of rules and policy instruments in an existing policy field.

A brief overview of the existing literature on the URBAN Community Initiative seems to outline how this programme disrupted national institutional arrangements, and sometimes initiated major transformations at the national level. More than one academic remains sceptical about the stability of these institutional changes. But it is acknowledged that URBAN had the capacity to interrupt traditional routines and patterns of behaviour and to give urban matters a renewed importance on the national agenda (Tofarides, 2003, page 4).<sup>(3)</sup>

The wide range of outcomes resulting from the implementation of Community Initiatives makes it all the more difficult to identify common trends.<sup>(4)</sup> In several member states, the URBAN programme offered an opportunity for subnational actors to become actively involved in the redesign of national urban policies and enabled a renegotiation of power between local, regional, national, and supranational governments (Le Galès, 2002, pages 99–101). In Italy and Greece, for example, the URBAN programme forced different ministerial departments to collaborate for the first time and to elaborate a common framework for action concerning deprived urban areas (Koutalakis, 2003; Laino and Padovani, 2000). In Germany, the ‘neighbourhood problem’ emerged on the federal political agenda under the joint pressure of the European URBAN Initiative and of the few *Länder* that had already developed individual programmes to deal with pockets of deprivation (Krautzberger, 1999).

The analysis of a single-case study, the implementation of the URBAN Community Initiative in Berlin (Germany) between 1994 and 1999, offers an opportunity to identify and explore the dynamics resulting from the profound mismatch between this programme and the traditional urban policy approach.

### **3 The URBAN Community Initiative: an innovative answer to social and spatial exclusion in big European cities**

The Community Initiative URBAN was launched in 1994 by the European Commission in order to target pockets of deprivation in conurbations of more than 1000 000 inhabitants in an innovative way (table 1, see over). It promoted an integrated approach to urban poverty and social exclusion, combining the rehabilitation of obsolete infrastructures with economic and labour-market actions and measures to upgrade the quality of the environment. The programme benefited from various experiences

<sup>(2)</sup> See [http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/en/treaties/dat/12002E/htm/C\\_2002325EN.003301.html](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/lex/en/treaties/dat/12002E/htm/C_2002325EN.003301.html)

<sup>(3)</sup> For a brief analysis of the contribution of the US experience in developing and implementing an urban policy to the European debate, see also Tofarides (2003, chapter 1).

<sup>(4)</sup> For an attempt to highlight common trends and disparities, see Doria et al (2005).

**Table 1.** The Community Initiative URBAN (1994–99) [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/urban2/urban/initiative/src/frame1.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/urban2/urban/initiative/src/frame1.htm).

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) cofinanced the Community Initiative URBAN: their total contribution to the programme amounted to about ECU 891 million at 1996 prices.

Cities lying within Objective 1 areas (“least favoured regions”) were given priority for funding over Objective 2 areas—“regions facing difficulties during their economic conversion”.

The programme could finance up to 50% of the expenses in Objective 1 areas, but required cofinancing from national, regional, and local authorities, as well as from the private sector and social organisations. A total of 118 programmes have been funded within the URBAN programme, in all member states, of which 57% were located in Objective 1 areas.

The URBAN Community Initiative was relaunched in April 2000 under the name of ‘URBAN II (2000–2006)’—with ERDF funding only (approximately ECU 700m).

that had been developed by several member states (France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands) and provided a common framework of action towards this specific issue.

### 3.1 National urban initiatives: the French and the British cases

At the end of the 1980s, most European cities were undergoing major changes: economic transformations, massive unemployment, the development of older and new forms of poverty, and the deterioration of living conditions (Paugam, 1996). Although these phenomena were not only observed in big cities, it was in major urban areas that they could be seen in their most acute forms. Municipal authorities searched for alternative methods to face these issues, and a general trend arose linking social and spatial exclusion to local economic development. Most of these urban development policies aimed at attracting private investments and developing cultural and economic infrastructures in order to enhance competition at the European level. Meanwhile, most local measures arrived at social and spatial exclusion were elaborated and implemented through partnerships with the private and the voluntary sectors. This strategy certainly gave European cities an opportunity to modernise their economies.

However, in the meantime the previously existing gaps among European cities, and among urban areas in these cities, increased. Whereas some urban areas would benefit from local development policies, a spiral of social and spatial exclusion overwhelmed others. This situation generated huge disparities at the national level, both among cities that had succeeded in developing their local economy and among others for whom the results were less conclusive (Harding et al, 1994). In order to rationalise and coordinate local initiatives concerning urban poverty, the French and the British governments elaborated national frameworks to deal with this complex issue (Le Galès and Parkinson, 1994). The idea put forward by both national initiatives—respectively, ‘Contrats de Ville’ and ‘City Challenge’—was to take into consideration the multiple facets of social and spatial poverty, which involved economic, social, political, and environmental aspects. Thus, both programmes tried to deal specifically with urban deprived areas and to think of innovative tools to face this complex issue.<sup>(5)</sup> In most aspects the British and the French experiences were very similar and remained quite innovative within the European member states (see, for example, Tofarides, 2003, chapter 3).

<sup>(5)</sup> ‘Contrats de Ville’ was launched by the French government in 1989 through thirteen pilot projects, and extended in 1992 to the whole country. The British programme ‘City Challenge’ was created in May 1991: thirty-one municipalities received £37.5 million for a five-year period.

### 3.2 Is there a European urban policy?

The specific actions undertaken by the French and the British governments gave new strength to the arguments of big European cities' associations, such as EUROCITIES, that aimed at promoting the interests of major European cities at the European level and at facilitating the exchange of information and best practices among them. In fact, they had been calling for such a policy at the European level for almost a decade. Eventually, under pressure from the European Parliament, a programme devoted to deprived urban areas was elaborated within the European regional policy by the European Commission (see, for example, Frank, 2005). As described by a former designated expert of the Commission:

“Everything began thanks to a small team, which worked within the European Commission. They thought about a specific action towards European cities in order to counterbalance the European regional policy. ... Although some details were added later, one could say that *City Challenge* was adapted to European cases. I should also mention the fact that other national examples influenced us, mainly the French and the Dutch experience” (interview, academic expert 1, October 2000).

This quotation highlights one of the ambiguities of the URBAN programme: the European Commission was reluctant to counterbalance its goals in terms of regional policies by creating an autonomous European urban policy. The European URBAN Initiative was therefore delineated as a Community Initiative, and the URBAN programme became one of a number of measures elaborated at the European level in order to promote the development of least-favoured regions. As pointed out by another academic specialising in urban issues at the European level:

“The leaders of the DG Regio were strongly supporting the growth of the regional policy and willing to extend their competencies. But the rise of urban issues was regarded with ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, it was a way to extend its competencies. On the other hand, it was a direct threat to the power of the regions. Especially because national states could gain direct control over the regions during the implementation process of the URBAN programme” (interview, academic expert 2, May 2004).

As is critically analysed in the next section, the implementation of the URBAN programme in Berlin proved these mixed feelings right.

### 4 The URBAN programme in Berlin<sup>(6)</sup>

The implementation of the URBAN programme in Berlin took place alongside the long process of reunification between the eastern and the western parts of the metropolitan area which was initiated by the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. In September 1990, a common legislative assembly, made up of the East Berlin *Magistrat* and the West Berlin Senate, agreed that West Berlin's administrative and political system—and its authorities' full competencies—should be extended to the city as a whole. And as a city-state, Berlin was fully integrated to the German federal system (see Rytlewski, 1999, pages 296–303).

However, the political leadership of the Senate was weakened after reunification by the new organisational and political features: and its sectoral approach towards urban poverty was challenged by growing criticism. In this context, the URBAN programme has been an important driving force behind an underlying and ongoing process of change.

<sup>(6)</sup> The data presented in this article were gathered in Berlin and London between 2000 and 2004. Because most of the persons I interviewed wished to remain anonymous, they are not quoted personally.

#### 4.1 Urban renewal in Berlin under West Berlin institutional arrangements

At the end of the 1980s West Berlin urban policy was organised around the Senate—more precisely, the Senate Department for Construction and Housing (Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen)—and was characterised by close interaction between this administration, the building industry, and the housing sector. The Berlin Senate is the most important level of government for making and implementing local, federal, and European policies in the metropolitan area (Strom, 2001, chapter 2). But its capacity to coordinate public action in the metropolitan area is weakened by its organisational and political fragmentation, which cannot be overcome by the mayor's authority. The mayor cannot exert direct control over the senators: each senator is free to develop a strategy in line with his own interests, within the limits of the Senate's competences, and according to its capacity to negotiate with his own administration.<sup>(7)</sup> Each administration, including the Department for Construction and Housing, has developed its own clientele made up of specific interest groups. For example, the German building industry has had a major influence on the administration in charge of construction for many decades and on the urban renewal agenda (Halpern and Häußermann, 2003, page 336). Hence, the action undertaken by this administration to support the renewal of the West Berlin inner-city centre was focused mainly on the physical reconstruction of the built environment.<sup>(8)</sup>

In this perspective, the poor condition of the built environment was regarded as the main cause of the socioeconomic problems. But on the other hand, the vast demolition and reconstruction programmes were not coordinated with the actions undertaken by other Senate departments in addressing the social, economic, and environmental issues that also affected these areas. In the late 1970s strong criticism had been made of the methods and objectives of the Senate Department for Construction and Housing in deprived inner-city areas of West Berlin—especially the District of Kreuzberg.

##### 4.1.1 *The Kreuzberg Initiative: a basis for new institutional arrangements?*

Numerous demolition and reconstruction programmes had already taken place in Kreuzberg—one of the most underprivileged districts of West Berlin at this time. However, these did not have much impact on the socioeconomic situation of its inhabitants. In fact, the rents started to increase dramatically while local citizen initiatives, social workers, architects, and planners criticised the Senate for its approach towards urban renewal. This coalition of actors defined new guidelines for future urban renewal programmes around the concept of 'soft urban renewal' (*behutsame Stadterneuerung*). This alternative approach led to the implementation of pilot projects in Kreuzberg during the 1980s, which were financed by the Senate and implemented through a high level of coordination between citizen initiatives, public authorities, social organisations, and private companies.<sup>(9)</sup>

The Kreuzberg pattern remains very popular today, and it was one of the first attempts in Berlin to adopt an integrated strategy towards pockets of deprivation. However, recent academic research has been aimed at critical analysis of its influence on urban policy as a whole.<sup>(10)</sup> It certainly gave social organisations and citizen initiatives access to the local decisionmaking process and contributed to the diffusion

<sup>(7)</sup>This restriction also applies to the German Chancellor. For an analysis of the impact of the reunification on the German federal system see, for example, Jeffery (1995).

<sup>(8)</sup>For a general overview of the urban policy in the German Federal State and in the German Democratic Republic since the 1950s see Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung (2000).

<sup>(9)</sup>Similar initiatives also took place in other West German cities (see Mayer, 2000).

<sup>(10)</sup>For further details and critical insights on the Kreuzberg experience see, for example, Bernt (2003).

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of a culture of negotiation in this policy field. However, it remained isolated in terms of public action as it was never thought by the West Berlin authorities that it would become the basis for a major institutional reform. Moreover, the final decisions lay in the hands of the Senate Department for Construction and Housing and depended on its financial resources. It is, nonetheless, considered a 'golden age' and confers an undeniable legitimacy on the actors that participated in the initiative.

#### 4.1.2 *Controversial political leadership and growing criticism*

During the period of euphoria that followed Reunification, the Senate developed an ambitious urban renewal programme to be financed through public debt—the '25 million programme'—in the inner-city area of the former East Berlin, where thousands of buildings and apartments required enormous investment. However, the financial situation of the city, and the organisational resources of the Senate Department for Construction and Housing, did not allow the public authorities much margin. This administration soon started to search for new partners and to build partnerships with the local private and voluntary sectors in order to implement and finance its urban renewal policy.

In this context, STadtERNeuerung (STERN)—one of the key actors in Kreuzberg during the 1980s, which was by now part of a major private company—influenced the design of the "Guidelines for urban regeneration in Berlin" (see Bernt, 2003, annex D5, pages 295–300), which clearly refer to the concept of 'soft urban renewal'. STERN was commissioned by the Senate Department for Construction and Housing to implement these guidelines in the district of Prenzlauer Berg—the most populated district of the eastern inner-city centre (70 000 inhabitants)—and to refurbish 45 000 apartments. The participation of STERN in the design and implementation of these guidelines did not lead to any immediate change in terms of institutional arrangements or day-to-day routines. The Senate Department for Construction and Housing allocated most public subsidies to the *physical objectives* of the Guidelines, while the *social objectives* remained as 'side issues' (Bernt, 2003, page 146). The administration justified these choices as being due to the lack of financial resources of the local government, but this created some tensions with STERN. Nevertheless, in this particular case, one assumes that STERN and the administration had different understandings of the 1993 guidelines: STERN pushed for a focus on both the physical and the social objectives, but administration still gave priority to the physical objectives and was most reluctant to share its leadership role over the urban renewal policy.

#### 4.1.3 *Urban renewal in Berlin after Reunification: a weakening structure*

Others were pushing for an alternative approach to urban issues. These issues had taken on renewed importance in academic research and political debates in Germany ever since various studies had reexplored the causes and consequences of social and spatial exclusion in German cities, by outlining the multiple facets (see Alisch and Dangschat, 1998). Although these studies each put forward different solutions in terms of public action, all of them insisted on the need for better coordination between sectoral administrations and all the actors involved in the renewal of these inner-city areas. On the basis of these studies, the city-state of Hamburg developed pilot programmes to face this 'nightmare' scenario, and specifically referred to the area-based approach which had been developed in France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands (Alisch and Dangschat, 1998, page 157).

From the point of view of these academics, a similar approach could be adapted to the Berlin context; and its coordination could be undertaken by another Senate Department—the Senate Department for Urban Planning and Environment (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtplanung und Umweltschutz). This administration had been created in the early 1980s as a part of the Senate Department for Construction and

Housing and only became an autonomous administration in 1989. Although it could have exerted clear leadership over all issues related to the urban development agenda, in fact its actions remained restricted to the design of urban planning objectives while the Senate Department for Construction and Housing oversaw their realisation and the allocation of public subsidies. These overlapping competencies did not facilitate attempts to coordinate their activities. The organisational competition was exacerbated by a political rivalry between the two administrations. Local politics had been dominated since 1991 by a coalition between the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Social Democrats (SPD), which was renewed after the 1995 and 1999 elections. The results of the 1990, 1995, 1999, and 2001 elections for Senate are presented in table 2.

**Table 2.** Percentage votes recorded for the different parties in Senate elections 1990–2001 (data source: <http://www.statistik-berlin.de>).

Party <sup>a</sup>	Date of election			
	2 December 1990	22 October 1995	10 October 1999	21 October 2001
CDU	40.4	37.4	40.8	27.0
SPD	30.4	23.6	22.4	29.7
PDS	9.2	14.6	17.7	22.6
FDP	7.1	2.5	2.2	9.9
Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen	9.3	13.2	9.9	9.1

<sup>a</sup> CDU—Christian Democrat; SPD—Social Democrat; PDS—Communist Party; FDP—Free Democratic Party; Bündnis 90/Die Grünen—Green Party.

The distribution of portfolios between the two major parties led to tough political bargaining. The urban agenda took on a renewed importance in political debates during the 1995 election campaign, in particular because the SPD had been tempted by an alternative approach to social and spatial exclusion in Berlin. But a Christian Democrat remained head of the Senate Department for Construction and Housing, while Peter Strieder—leader of the SPD—became Senator for Urban Planning and Environment.

Reunification had brought few immediate changes in terms of institutional arrangements: the Senate Department for Construction and Housing still exerted political leadership over the urban renewal agenda, according to the West Berlin institutional legacy. And the growing criticism against the objectives and the methods of this administration remained highly fragmented.

#### 4.2 URBAN in Berlin: an innovative approach to social and spatial exclusion

The implementation of the URBAN programme became an opportunity for both the Senate Department for Construction and Housing and its opponents to mobilise their resources and to claim their legitimacy to undertake its implementation. The opponents were now organised around a few *skilled social actors*, regrouped in the SPD or in the Senate Department for Urban Planning and Environment, which developed “ways to induce co-operation amongst disparate individuals or groups by helping them to form stable conceptions of roles and identity”(Stone Sweet et al, 2001, page 11).

##### 4.2.1 *The Senate reaffirms its capacity to coordinate the implementation of URBAN*

As soon as EU funding was granted, the Berlin Senate claimed its legitimacy to coordinate the whole process. The reaffirmation of its strict competence towards urban matters was based on constitutional rights, and was mainly directed at the German federal government and the districts. The European integration process—and especially European regional

policy—had often provided an opportunity for the German state to interfere in the competencies of the Länder (see, for example, Rommetsch and Wessels, 1996). This also explains why the German Länder had been against the creation of the Community Initiative URBAN in the first place (interview, Federal Ministry for Transports, Construction and Housing, May 2001). In the case of Berlin, the Senate argued that it was the only level of government which had the constitutional right to exert an autonomous administration of the municipality within its sphere of competencies and to coordinate the implementation of federal and European policies.

The reaffirmation of the Senate autonomy over urban matters and the coordination of EU structural funds seemed even more essential as the transfer of most German federal institutions from Bonn to Berlin had already offered the federal government an opportunity to influence the reconstruction of the inner city centre (Strom, 2001). It was also directed at the districts (*Bezirke*), which do not have full autonomy of action but do have their own budgets and their own legislative assemblies. In fact, for historical reasons, the *Bezirke* are considered essential for the expression of local identities and democracy, especially in the eastern part of the city where an important part of the population still considers the Senate an outsider and contests its authority (Rytlewski, 1999, pages 305–311). Alongside the implementation of the URBAN programme, the Senate was preparing a reform of the administrative organisation of the city for financial reasons: the number of districts (*Bezirke*) was to shrink from twenty three to twelve by 2001. This reform was also indicative of attempts by the ruling coalition to reinforce the CDU and the SPD and to reduce the capacity of the former Communist Party (PDS) and the Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) to exert any further veto over the urban planning policy of the Senate regarding the inner city centre (see Halpern and Häußermann, 2003).<sup>(11)</sup>

In regard to enforcement of this reform, the URBAN programme was an opportunity for the Senate to test its capacity to implement an urban renewal programme in an area which would not respect the traditional borders of the districts. Citizen initiatives, private companies, and social organisations would have to seek direct partnership with the Senate in order to obtain URBAN funding. The selection of the URBAN area reflects this intention: although the European Commission recommended the selection of a small area—not bigger than 5 km<sup>2</sup>—located in a single administrative district, the actual one covered an area of 8 km<sup>2</sup> (65 000 inhabitants, or 2% of Berlin's population), and took in three different districts of the eastern inner-city (Objective 1)—Friedrichshain, Prenzlauer Berg, and Weissensee. Table 3 shows the main characteristics of the URBAN area in Berlin.

**Table 3.** The characteristics of the area selected for implementation of the URBAN programme (source: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/urban2/urban/initiative/src/frame1.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/urban2/urban/initiative/src/frame1.htm)).

	Berlin	East Berlin	West Berlin	Prenzlauer Berg	Friedrichshain	Weissensee	URBAN area
Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	889	403	485	10	9	30	8
Population (thousands)	3.461	1.291	2.170	715	105	52	65
Unemployment (%)	13.9	14.7	13.5	15.4	16	11.2	16.4
Welfare (%)	9	6	10.8	10.3	5.4	5.2	6.1

<sup>(11)</sup> For a view of the public administration approach to the 2001 reform, see Röber et al (2002), and for a brief presentation of the previous veto capacity of the districts, see Mayer (2000).

This decision clearly made it impossible for any of these districts to claim legitimacy to monitor the URBAN programme at their own, local level. On the other hand, the three districts had to be included in the decisionmaking process as far as their competencies were concerned. The objective of the Senate had been to assume responsibility for the URBAN programme in Berlin by supplanting the districts. But it also led to a further fragmentation of public authorities during the implementation process.

#### 4.2.2 *The URBAN area in Berlin: a short-term laboratory for the Senate*

Because of its internal fragmentation, the Senate scarcely had the capacity to coordinate the activities and the strategies of its own departments during the implementation of the URBAN programme. Thus, not only was the selection of the URBAN the result of a political struggle but also, the choice of a coordinator within the Senate resulted from political bargaining. Because the Community Initiative URBAN could fund urban, economic, social, or environmental projects, almost all of them were involved in the process. Although the Senate Department for Construction and Housing stated a claim for leadership over this policy area, it did not manage to prove its capacity—or its intention—to develop an innovative approach towards social and spatial exclusion in the URBAN area. On the other hand, its main competitor, the Senate Department for Urban Planning and Environment, did not have enough political and organisational resources to supplant it. As a compromise, the Senate Department for Economy and Business matters (Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft und Betrieb)—more specifically its Division in charge of European funding—assumed the formal coordination of the URBAN programme and the final selection of the projects. As outlined by a member of this administration:

“URBAN was entrusted to us because we were in charge of the ERDF in Berlin. But they should have entrusted this programme to a more competent administration ... maybe the Department for Construction and Housing, or even the Department for Urban Planning, and Environment. Because the coordination between the two departments was quite difficult, we remained in charge of this programme, which is totally absurd as we are usually in charge of regional development and know nothing about urban development. In fact, we just carry out a technical coordination, nothing else” (interview, Senate Department for Economy and Business Matters, February 2000, author’s translation).

The political rivalry between the Senate departments also affected the choice of a ‘technical’ manager for the URBAN area. After tough competition, the Senate finally commissioned the consulting company Beratungs- und Service-Gesellschaft Umwelt mbH (B&SU)—an organisation close to the Senate Department for Urban Planning and Environment.<sup>(12)</sup> STERN had also entered the bidding process and its application was supported by the Senate Department for Construction and Housing. STERN argued that it had been monitoring urban renewal programmes in Prenzlauer Berg since 1993, and that the Community Initiative URBAN could provide the possibility of financing the ‘social objectives’ of this policy.

B&SU was a newcomer in the urban renewal policy field, and in the eastern innercity, but it specialised in environmental issues and these were paramount in the project that B&SU designed for the URBAN programme in Berlin. Its project, entitled “Community Initiative for Urban Areas (URBAN): New Life for East Berlin’s Inner City”, defined three main objectives for the development of the URBAN area: the economic and social integration of the population; support for networking activities;

<sup>(12)</sup> For more information on the consulting office B&SU and a short presentation of the URBAN 1 project, see: <http://www.bsu-berlin.de/en/projekte-urban.php>

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and the modernisation of socioeconomic infrastructures, especially targeted at youth (B&SU, 1998). In this document B&SU clearly stated that it would support all attempts to achieve better coordination of financial resources and a better integration of physical and social objectives in the URBAN area. It also intended to create a synergy among local actors through regular information, and to support the participation of the inhabitants in the whole process.

#### 4.2.3 *Polycentrism versus centralism in the URBAN area*

This translation of the Community Initiative URBAN was somewhat innovative with regard to the objectives and the methods which had characterised the urban renewal policy until then. However, B&SU did not manage to play an active role in monitoring the URBAN programme; first, because of the high level of internal fragmentation that characterised the Senate. After all, B&SU had been commissioned to monitor the programme but the final decision remained in the hands of the Senate itself and depended on the capacity of its departments to cofinance the projects. More than five Senate departments applied for URBAN funding to cofinance existing or already-planned projects. Second, B&SU was a newcomer—and an outsider—in this part of the city: the networks which already participated in urban renewal programmes belonged to the clientele of the Senate Department for Construction and Housing. These had enough organisational resources to bypass B&SU and obtain cofunding from the Senate Department—to which they were traditionally affiliated. STERN, for example, went on with its urban renewal programmes in Prenzlauer Berg and applied successfully for three URBAN-funded projects (interview, STERN, URBAN project manager, February 2000). On the other hand, local actors, which were not included in existing sectoral institutional arrangements, did not have enough resources to obtain cofunding from the Senate and blamed B&SU for the lack of transparency of the selection process.

The choice of B&SU had been intended as an opportunity to test a new approach towards social and spatial exclusion in the URBAN area. But it led to competition between two different systems of actors, characterised by different institutional arrangements: a polycentric system organised around the Kiez and a centralised system based on sectoral institutional arrangements. Indeed, most project managers expressed lukewarm opinions about the implementation of the URBAN programme: more than anything, they criticised the centralised decision-making structure and held B&SU directly responsible for the lack of transparency that characterised the allocation of URBAN funding. As described by an URBAN-funded project manager:

“The Senate delegated parts of its responsibility concerning URBAN to B&SU: the discovery of the projects and their support within the implementation process. If B&SU had not found existing or potential projects, they would have created some in order to present an acceptable project. They had to create new projects anyway, as they did not find much in the selected area, ... or to support existing projects, which had been going on for a couple of years with other funding that could not be extended any longer” (interview with project manager 1 in Prenzlauer Berg, April 2000, author’s translation).

The lack of transparency during the process was mentioned in most interviews, and it seems that a misunderstanding concerning the role of B&SU could offer a plausible explanation for the mistrust that soon extended to the URBAN programme as a whole. Most project managers were overwhelmed by the bureaucratic and legal procedures they had to face during the design of their project; and they had expected stronger support from B&SU on these particular issues—as one of them pointed out:

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“This has been such a hard time! Such a waste of time in fact! And we did not get much support from B&SU concerning the content of our project. They just kept repeating that it was far too expensive. So we changed the amount several times, but they kept telling us it was too expensive without advising us on the content. Only money, budget, all the time. They just did not care about our questions!” (interview with project manager 2 in Prenzlauer Berg, April 2000, author’s translation).

In fact, B&SU functioned as a filter between the Senate and the project managers. Hence, most managers turned to the districts for support and advice on legal matters, as described by another project manager:

“We were never told that the implementation of the project required a different legal status. The problem was not to change our legal status. The problem is that we were told about this in the last minute. We had no time to consider different possibilities or to get any advice from anyone in order to choose a structure adapted to our situation. As usual, a demand but no help: a crazy system!” interview with project manager 3 in Friedrichshain, February 2000, author’s translation).

The difficulties of B&SU in finding either suitable projects or reliable cofunding sources was highly criticised the mid-term evaluation of the URBAN programme, which revealed that thirty projects failed after six months and that only 35% of the funding (€ 6.5 million) had been spent in 1999 whereas 67% of the funding (€18 800 million) had already been allocated (Toepel et al, 2000). This so-called ‘slow pace of expenditure after commitment’ is not a problem specific to the URBAN programme in Berlin, but is found in all programmes financed by Structural Funds. However, given the financial situation of Berlin at the time, and the dramatic increase in the public deficit (from € 13.343 million in 1993 to € 28.771 million in 1998), the Berlin Senate was forced to reduce its expenses and institute major cuts in most policy fields (Mäding, 2002, page 86). Most of the funding that had been allocated by the Senate to URBAN funded projects would never be spent.

Some project managers who were particularly well entrenched in the URBAN area started to reactivate local political networks, or turned to the district administrations, in order to build sustainable partnerships. The District of Prenzlauer Berg, for example, chose to maintain infrastructure aimed at youth. In the District of Friedrichshain, projects developed by organisations close to the PDS were granted URBAN funding and were cofinanced by the District to develop labour-market measures. By the end of 1999, it was clear that the day-to-day routine of the implementation process did not reflect the pattern of interactions originally expected by the Senate. However, old links had been reactivated within each district; and although URBAN-funded projects should have remained within the borders of the URBAN area, 75% of them actually spread out and thus reaffirmed their belonging to the Kiez. The Kiez usually covers an area not bigger than five or six blocks, and represents more than a territorial reality: it also has a social, a political, and a cultural dimension. An URBAN project manager defined it as follows:

“It’s a traditional urban space with which the inhabitants identify themselves, and to which they give a lot of energy. It’s very typical of Berlin in fact, although I am sure it exists in every city under a different name. You know, ‘the little village in the city!’” (interview with project manager 2 in Prenzlauer Berg, April 2000, author’s translation).

One of the original fears of the Senate had been realised: the districts had gained enough political legitimacy to contest the leadership of the Senate over the implementation of the URBAN programme.

The first steps towards the implementation of the Community Initiative could have led to a coup d'état against the Senate Department for Construction and Housing, but failed to do so because of the lack of resources of the coalition of actors organised around the Senate Department for Urban Planning and Environment and the SPD. This group had not managed to redefine the 'urban poverty' problem to fit the requirements of the URBAN programme; they did not have sufficient organisational and financial resources to take over the monitoring of the programme or to cofinance URBAN-funded projects. In addition, this coalition had not managed to mobilise around a common banner or to define a common interest around which they could have mobilised their resources. This last aspect led to the failure of the implementation process, but showed the high potential for mobilisation in the urban policy field around local political or territorial identities, as well as the vitality of local networks of actors. In other words, the innovation had been rejected and failed to be integrated into the local setting.

#### **4.3 The institutionalisation of the changes in local features introduced by the URBAN programme: *Quartiersmanagement and soziale Stadt***

The whole story could have ended here. However, the profound transformations which have taken place in the urban regeneration policy field in Berlin since 1998 are also an outcome of the URBAN programme. A closer analysis of the organisational transformations taking place simultaneously within the Senate and the German federal government invites us to enlarge the scope of analysis. To concentrate on the URBAN area may be to ignore the processes going on at other levels of government and the interrelationships between them. Although the URBAN programme was rejected in the URBAN area in Berlin, it had become an important driving force behind a major policy change that was institutionalised in Berlin through the Neighbourhood Management Programme (*Quartiersmanagement*) and a framework concerning urban areas (*soziale Stadt*) at the federal level. The mismatch that resulted from the implementation of the URBAN programme in Berlin led to its failure, but nevertheless initiated a learning process.

##### *4.3.1 The federal state: a new player in the urban renewal policies*

The European Commission had feared that Community Initiatives would offer the opportunity for member states to intervene in the implementation of European regional policy. This fear gained momentum during the implementation of the URBAN programme in Germany: the federal government was offered an opportunity to direct the activities of the German Länder and cities towards social and spatial exclusion. It intervened directly with the implementation process, in order to evaluate how former eastern Länder had been implementing the Community Initiative and in order to coordinate the exchange of information at the national level.

Previously, the federal state had never had the legitimacy to create a national framework for public action towards cities. But the Federal Ministry for Transport, Construction and Housing (Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau- und Wohnungswesen) had been watching the French and British experiences very carefully, hoping for an opportunity to create a similar policy at the federal level. The URBAN programme offered a perfect opportunity to network and coordinate all activities during the implementation process through the creation of the URBAN Netzwerk Deutschland in 1994. Moreover, social and spatial exclusion in German cities took on a renewed importance during the 1998 federal election campaign (Güntner and Halpern, 2005). The newly elected coalition—between the SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen—launched a federal programme concerning deprived urban areas in 1999: 'die soziale Stadt: Stadtteile mit besonderem Entwicklungsbedarf' (The Social City: Urban Areas with Specific

Development Needs). It referred explicitly to the Community Initiative URBAN, and to programmes that had been implemented in Hamburg and in Nord-Rhine-Westphalia since the mid-1990s (Krautzberger, 1999, page 130).

As well as the coordination of the URBAN programme at the federal level, the German state paid particular attention to the implementation of the URBAN programme in the former German Democratic Republic and in Berlin. The aim was to achieve better coordination between the local, regional, national, and supranational governments. The Federal Ministry for Economy and Technology (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie) supervised the evaluation of each EU-funded programme (Toepel et al, 2000). In comparison with the outcomes of the URBAN programme in other former eastern cities, like Rostock, its implementation in Berlin was less impressive: the evaluators legitimised the criticisms that had been levelled at the Senate and B&SU by project managers, the districts, and their elected representatives. The evaluators also underlined the fact that B&SU had not been given sufficient autonomy to carry out its task. This critical analysis of the URBAN programme in Berlin was shared by the Senate departments that had been involved in the implementation process. The framing of the causes of this failure provided an opportunity for the West Berlin institutional arrangements in the urban policy field to be delegitimised.

#### 4.3.2 *The 1999 elections for Senate: learning process and institutionalisation*

No one Senate department assumed the political responsibility for this failure; they blamed each other for it, or—in a typical blame-avoidance situation—blamed the Community Initiative URBAN itself: how could the European Commission have the competence, let alone the legitimacy, to interfere in urban policies? How could such a short-term programme, with so little funding, be at all able to target social and spatial exclusion?<sup>(13)</sup> From this perspective, the outputs of the URBAN programme in Berlin were less than satisfactory.

But from a different perspective, the implementation of the URBAN programme exacerbated the political and organisational rivalry between the Senate Department for Construction and Housing and the Senate Department for Urban Planning and Environment. It also caused this last to mobilise its resources in a more systematic way, and to produce its own expertise. The failure of this Senate department to undertake the coordination of the URBAN programme showed it that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to achieve its goal without relying on existing networks—including the traditional clientele of the Senate Department for Construction and Housing—and without reframing the urban agenda. A report published in 1998 revealed that poverty had spread unevenly across the city since Reunification (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umweltschutz, 1998). Its authors called for a 'socially integrated city', which (a) implied an alternative definition of urban issues; (b) acknowledged their complexity; and (c) called for an area-based strategy for deprived urban neighbourhoods.

The creation of the Neighbourhood Management Programme (Quartiersmanagement) in 1998 prefigured a major organisational change in the urban policy field, under pressure from the SPD and Peter Strieder—the Senator for Urban Planning and Environment. After the 1999 Senate elections, Peter Strieder managed to merge the rival Senate Departments for Construction and Housing and for Urban Planning and Environment into a 'super' Senate Department for Urban Development. This department's Division for Urban Planning undertook strategic responsibility for the Neighbourhood Management Programme, while the Division for Housing supervised its implementation. In a city characterised by a disastrous financial situation, the

<sup>(13)</sup> Interviews in the Senate Departments for Construction and Housing (May 2001), Urban Planning and Environment (April 2000), and Economy and Business Matters (April 2000) made this clear.

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creation of this programme was only possible because of the capacity of the Senate to mobilise other resources: for example, via the soziale Stadt programme, and the Community Initiative URBAN II (2000–2006), which is currently being implemented under the supervision of the Senate Department for Urban Development (Güntner and Halpern, 2005).

The implementation of the URBAN programme in Berlin between 1994 and 1999 exacerbated political conflicts and organisational rivalries in the metropolitan area. The mismatch between the Community Initiative URBAN and the Berlin approach towards social and spatial segregation led to the failure of the URBAN programme. But its implementation also initiated a dynamic that led to an adjustment of the interests and strategies of the actors who had been criticising the objectives and the method of the Senate Department for Construction and Housing. The redefinition of the ‘urban poverty’ problem as the ‘neighbourhood problem’ occurred almost simultaneously with the elaboration of a specific policy instrument—the Neighbourhood Management Programme. Finally, the 1999 Senate elections and the successful application to soziale Stadt and for URBAN II funding opened a policy window for profound policy change in Berlin (Kingdon, 1984).<sup>(14)</sup> This change was institutionalised through the creation of the Senate Department for Urban Development and through a change in the balance of the budget allocated to urban renewal programmes between the physical and the social objectives.

## **5 The EU, national institutional arrangements, and deprived urban areas**

In a context of increasing inequality between and within European cities, the European URBAN Initiative acknowledged the specificity of urban issues and supported the actions already undertaken by national governments. It offered an opportunity to test an alternative approach to pockets of deprivation in big European cities; and it provided the setting for the reorganisation of this policy on a territorial basis, for renewed cooperation between the private sector and public authorities, and for a transformation of the regulatory activities of the state. However, its ability to provoke a profound institutional change in national urban policies must be questioned.

The situation observed in Berlin during the implementation of the URBAN programme shows on the one hand that the URBAN programme is indeed too small and too short a programme to provoke institutional change without blending with local features and without being included in the strategies of local actors. 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, thus creating a dynamic that cannot be observed from a short-term perspective. In addition to which the repeated evaluations and permanent exchanges at the national or the European levels contributed to the delegitimisation of the local actors who failed to implement the strategies successfully. This might explain why the influence of the URBAN programme on urban policies is not readily acknowledged in Berlin: the Senate and the initiators of the Neighbourhood Management Programme—who failed to take over the monitoring of the URBAN programme—refer systematically to the programmes which had been elaborated in other German cities and Länder. Interestingly enough, no mention whatsoever is made of the URBAN programme in the documents recently published by the Berlin Senate on the Community Initiative URBAN II, and it was described as ‘irrelevant’

<sup>(14)</sup> For a recent comparative analysis of the soziale Stadt programme, see Walther (2002).

during interviews, or simply erased from the urban landscape in the former URBAN area. But, recent research on the URBAN II programme has led somehow to a late rediscovery of its predecessor by those who had claimed a few years before that it had been irrelevant.

The URBAN programme accelerated the changes taking place in Berlin in the urban policy field in 1998–99. It influenced the parameters of an underlying process of change by exacerbating existing conflicts within the metropolitan government, within the urban policy field, and between levels of government. It gave renewed importance to urban issues in political debates, and underlined the high level of fragmentation of the Berlin Senate in monitoring European funding and in mobilising resources in order to cofinance EU-funded projects. It encouraged alternative networks to enter the field, and proved to be a major political resource once these players were able to adjust to EU requirements. Finally, through its impact on the federal level of government and the soziale Stadt programme, the URBAN programme led indirectly to the creation of the Neighbourhood Management Programme in Berlin. Thus, the Neighbourhood Management Programme is the outcome of a hybridisation process between old and new features: an interesting mix between the pilot projects developed in Kruezberg during the 1970s, the ‘neighbourhood approach’ elaborated in Hamburg in the early 1990s, and the Community Initiative URBAN.

Last but not least, one lesson from the Berlin experience should be taken into account in further research. In Berlin, the URBAN programme, followed by the Neighbourhood Management Programme, initiated a renegotiation of the power relations between public authorities, private companies, social organisations, and citizen initiatives in the urban policy field. But in a city characterised by a disastrous financial situation and a severe reduction of public subsidies, concepts such as ‘civic engagement’ or ‘public–private partnerships’, which are paramount in the URBAN programme, might also lead to further territorial fragmentation if they are not included within a broader urban development project at the metropolitan level.

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