

## **Madrid Strategic Regional Plan**

### **Actions for the metropolitan area: success and limitations**

#### **1. Planning the Region of Madrid: the new challenges**

The complex processes that affected cities and territories during the 90's - globalization, technological advances, new demands of space, social transformations, sustainability - impelled the development of a new planning instrument directed to solve the needs of the urban development for the region of Madrid for the new Century. In June 1996 the Government of the Autonomous Community of Madrid approves the Regional Plan of Territorial Strategy (PRET in Spanish), a document that contains the guidelines of the spatial planning for the next twenty years.

Two aspects of the PRET are innovative in relation to the ones previously produced: the *design* of the proposed territorial model and the *management tools* defined to assure the intervention of all agents - public and private – for the achievement of the model.

#### **2. The territorial model: the reticular organization and the territorial balance**

##### ***The former situation***

The Autonomous Community of Madrid (CAM), geographically located in the centre of the country is led by the city of Madrid, also centrally located in relation to its administrative territory. At present the city of Madrid and the 21 municipalities that surround it conforms a large urban region of more than 5 million inhabitants and the majority of the most productive activities of the country.

Apart from this highly urbanized area, the rest of the CAM administrative territory presents a quite different pattern of occupation: the remaining 600.000 people that compose the CAM total population are located in two zones: the northwest area, where the exceptional environmental conditions have impelled a dilute suburbanization, and the southeast one, where the scarce attractiveness of its landscape has allowed the maintenance of the compact forms of the traditional settlements.

To sum up, the CAM presents a central, dense and dynamic fringe – the urban region - and a double relatively uninhabited periphery, supported by a radial and concentric territorial model, unable to give responses to the growing communication problems, generated by the daily commuting inside the urban region plus the movements that cross this area from and to the rest of the territory.

##### ***The regional proposal***

The biggest challenge of the PRET consists of the consolidation up in the year 2016 of a radically opposed territorial structure: a reticular pattern. The CAM territory is conceived as an extensive *regional grid* that embraces the five existent geographical and functional areas - Sierra, Northwest, Center, Plateau and Southeast - composed by 98 *Regional Blocks* (also called Units of Balanced Development – UDE in Spanish) that play an important role in the territorial balance. The UDE boundaries are the so called *Lines of Force*, strips of lands defined to increment the transverse and longitudinal relationships along the whole region. The Lines of Force are 200 m. wide fringes devoted to collect lines of massive transport of people and materials (long distance railroads and highways), regional infrastructures (water, sewerage, electricity, telecommunications) and regional equipments.

Each UDE is led by an urban settlement that, depending on the local characteristics and conditions, gets a specialization inside the regional scheme: some of them are protected areas; others host regional services or productive activities, while others are selected to receive the residential developments foreseen for the 20 years of validity of the plan (more than 500.000 housings). (Fig. 1)

The UDE internal design responds to a prototypical scheme composed by the following elements: 1 - *the intercity railroad*, a key piece for the city planning due to its capacity to allow the maximum connection once linked with the existing underground lines, facts that enables the crossing of the metropolitan area in any direction without affecting the surface transportation, 2 - *the railway station*, located in the downtown or nearby, being the nuclear element around which the urban structure articulates different uses and densities, 3 - *the spaces for productive activities and equipments of regional level*, located near the Lines of Force, 4 - *the green areas*, to ensure the environmental quality of the municipal territory and the entire region. (Fig. 2)

Some of the UDEs belonging to the urban region - 14 in total - are selected as the pieces devoted to absorb the urban uses that diffuse the centrality of the city of Madrid. (Fig. 3)



Fig. 1. Regional model: the grid

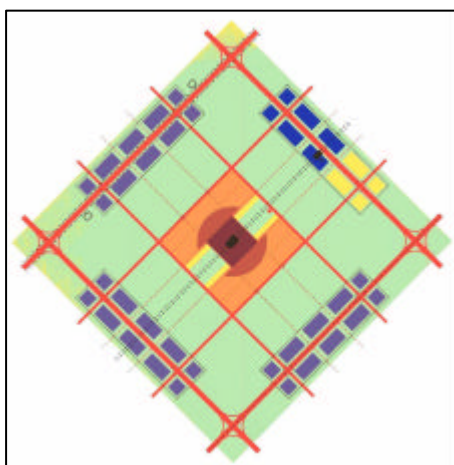


Fig. 2. UDE theoretical scheme

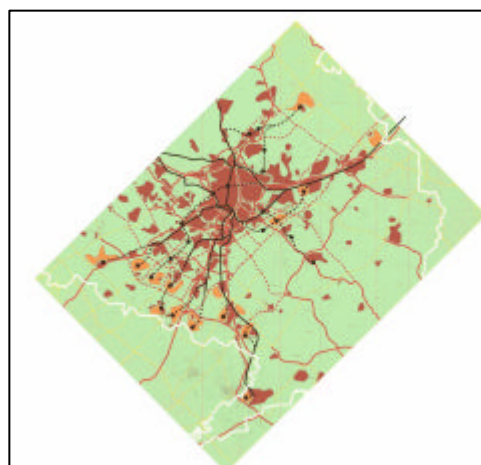


Fig. 3. Urban region: selected UDEs

### 3. The model management: coordination and harmonization

The elaboration of the PRET is responsibility of the Regional Government and its contents are binding for all planning activities: it is a reference mark for the remaining sectoral policies (housing, environment, transport, equipment, productive activities) but its action is limited to the coordination and the harmonization of the public agents' activities. The regulations regarding the competences of the three different administrative levels existing in Spain (national, regional and municipal) leave in the hands of the city councils the effective translation of the PERT proposals into their territory. According to the Spanish planning legislation, the municipal government plays a key role since the municipal urban plan is the only instrument with the capacity of making effective any proposals affecting private

properties rights, through specific techniques and administrative mechanisms (particularly land classification and qualification and transference of urban profits).

The first four years of the PRET management - 1997/2000 - were devoted to get the necessary consensus among the three concurrent administrations, and especially with the city councils, because the transference of the regional proposals into the municipal territory implied a *process of revision* of the current municipal plans as a way to validate them. To speed up this process (mainly in the 14 selected UDEs of the urban region), a period of special negotiations was started, that ended with the signature of numerous *Protocols* between the regional administration and the local governments. Those administrative documents agreed, at least, the following aspects:

- The beginning of the revision process of the municipal plans.
- The assistance from the part of the regional administration to promote the reduction of the time invested in the writing and the approval of the planning instrument.
- The effective delimitation of the Lines of Force traces, as a way to define the land reservations – normally in private hands – and to ensure their anchorage with the Lines of Force of adjacent municipalities.
- The adjustment of the limits of the protected spaces proposed by the PRET at regional level, as a means to ensure their conditions of protection and the integration of these lands at regional scale.
- Quantification of the total number of new dwellings following the estimation of the PRET. This topic was especially important due to two factors: 1- the municipality knows beforehand the amount of land required to host the residential developments for people coming from other parts of the urban region, 2- in the case of some UDEs included in the urban region, the number of housing is relevant for the installation of the intercity railroad, since the Regional Company of Transport only carries out its investments when a target population of 30.000 inhabitants ensure the profitability of the service (10.000 housings).

As a result of this administrative dynamic, in the first four years an important number of municipal plans were approved, most of them belonging to the UDEs included in the urban region. In the year 2001 the activities related to the PRET management experimented a reduction due to the coexistence of two factors: 1- some changes in the administrative area in charge of the regional plan because of political circumstances, that led to a reduction in the process of territorial consensus, and 2 - the approval of a new Land Legislation in the CAM, that generates a reduction in the planning activity, a normal situation facing a new legal corpus that needs time to be understood before being translated into the planning practice.

From the point of view of the PRET achievement, still when in the second period the relationships with the local authorities decreased, the regional administration continued to consolidate the reticular pattern from its own area of competence, through different programs for the construction of transport infrastructures: roads, trains, and underground.

#### **4. Success and limitations of the PRET: results of the process**

##### **I. Factors of success**

###### ***- The working method***

The formal outline of the territorial model - the regional grid - and the conceptual contents that structure the PRET, define a not very common way of approaching the regional planning from the public administration, more related to pragmatic contents than to theoretical ones. The global proposal of the PRET; the use of a new conceptual language; the production of monographic works in charge of prestigious professionals to consolidate the strategies; the style adopted in the production of the graphic and written documentation; and the process of diffusion of the PRET among the public inside the country and abroad, were all contributions to the traditional working style of the regional administration.

**- The administrative effectiveness**

The signature of the Protocols demonstrated to be an effective tool to facilitate the transference of the guidelines from the PERT to the territory via municipal planning. This activity of coordination among different administrative levels accelerated the production and the approval of numerous municipal plans, giving also technical support to those city councils of smaller settlements demanding external support for the resolution of specific problems. (Table 1)

<b>MUNICIPAL PLANS APPROVAL - 1997 / 2004</b>	
<b>First period: 1997/2000</b>	<b>Second period: 2001/2004</b>
1997: 1	2001: 4
1998: 5	2002: 8
1999: 12	2003: 4
2000: 4	2004: -
Total: 22	Total: 16

Table 1. Municipal Plans revision process

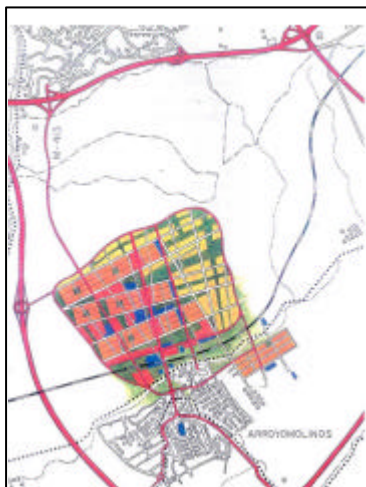
**- The process of land reserve**

The objective of getting the maximum connectivity in the region through the Lines of Force implied starting a process of land reserve from the beginning of the planning process. Still when the infrastructures of transport will be built progressively during the 20 years of validity of the PRET, to assure the existence of these lands in advance means to save one of the main factors that slow any planning performance. The only way to make effective the Lines of Force is through this mechanism so it is in hands of the municipal plan obtaining these lands (the other way is to apply an expropriation process, long and difficult). On the other hand, the effective localization of these lines - that means future infrastructures and services - act as elements of reference for the localization of future activities associated to the regional transport system network (industries and especial equipments)

**- The "positive" planning: the territories for the urban development**

The conditions of development of the UDEs define a regional puzzle in which each element has assigned specific functions (depending on the regional specialization) and certain development capacity (depending on the number of housings foreseen for the whole region). To test the way the UDE theoretical scheme could be applied into the reality, several UDEs included in the urban region were selected as case studies producing urban projects in charge of well known architects as a way to offer a previous vision of the possible future situation. I was an important effort from the part of the PERT to encourage the incorporation of the municipalities to the regional project. This test on the conditions of the urban development was applied in two different municipalities: ones that already have a railroad station (Meco, Humanes, Ciempozuelos, Griñón-Serranillos, Pinto, Valdemoro, Aranjuez), and in others that, still lacking a train station, the continuation of the existing lines would not

suppose high costs (Navalcarnero, Torrejón de la Calzada, Cubas -Algete, Arroyomolinos, Moral de Enmedio y Vicalvaro, in Madrid). (Fig. 4)



### **- The "negative" planning: the protected lands**

In the name of the territorial sustainability, the PRET gives special attention to those areas excluded from the urban growth, which are included in an ample system of open spaces. At regional level there are three extensive Regional Parks corresponding to the basins of the rivers Manzanares, Guadarrama and Jarama, and serve as connectors of the spaces of bigger ecological value of the CAM: the Sierra in the north and the Plateau in the south. Inside the urban region, new metropolitan parks are created, affecting different municipalities, while at the municipal level, the natural spaces included in the UDEs conform a green network that connects the different settlements along the region.

Fig.4. Proposal for an UDE

### **- The decentralized planning: the promotion of small- medium cities**

The urban region of Madrid comprises two successive metropolitan rings: the first one conformed between the 60's and 80's affecting the settlements that surrounds the capital city, and the second one, generated in the 90's that incorporates small municipalities located more than 30 Km of the city of Madrid. The PRET foment the creation of a polycentric urban region, giving special support to the development of the UDEs included in the second metropolitan ring. These small settlements are intended as places for the absorption of the urban growth generated by the capital city and the first, consolidated and dense metropolitan ring. The idea is to increase their relative weight through the supply of housings at affordable prices; land for productive activities and a fast communication system, all factors that enhance the location of new population and investments in the outer fringe of the urban region.

## **II. Conditions of restriction**

### **- The non- linking competence of the regional policy and its effects in the programming**

The PRET is a plan of plans designed to favour the taking decisions process, therefore its mission is *political*, not *executive*. However, the need to materialize a model bound to a certain form - the grid - demands a synchronised collaboration of all the administrative levels which depends, in turn, on a permanent and fluid negotiation among the parts, circumstance that cannot be maintained in the same terms of effectiveness in the long term. This circumstance is especially sensitive in the urban region, because of the lack of a metropolitan administrative level in charge of the government and management of this particular space.

The required sequence to carry out the PRET proposals is linked to different administrations. In the first place, the construction of the territorial infrastructures (roads and railroads) is in charge of the regional and/or the State governments - depending on their categories - and investments depending on different sectoral programming. On the other hand, the translation of the proposals inside the municipal limits is bound to the attitude of the municipal

governments to assume the economic and administrative burden that implies the revision of the planning instruments, depending, in turn, on the circumstance existing at local level (a common situation in municipalities of scarce demographic entity and weak administrative structures).

**- *The attitude of the municipal administration in the territorial fitting***

Even though the current situation demonstrates the effectiveness of the regional administration in facilitating the incorporation of numerous city councils to the PERT, some municipalities still remain outside the territorial strategy – due to the circumstances mentioned above - (San Martin of Valdeiglesias, Mejorada del Campo inside the urban region, and others outside this area). The no-adhesion of these city councils reduces the effectiveness of the PERT, since the regional grid depends on the collective coordination and produces a loss of opportunities for the development of these municipalities. This circumstance would mean the transference of adhesion to the PERT to other moments and other circumstances existing at municipal level.

**- *The dependence of the punctual agreements and the long term***

The Protocols signed between both the regional and the local administrations as a mean of accelerating the process of the PERT achievement were *ad hoc* instruments that depended so much on the capacity of management and negotiation of the regional administration, as well as on the will of the local authorities for reacting in the short term to adapt their territory to the spatial planning proposals.

The weakness of the process rests in the long period, when the – normal - political changes could direct the regional interests towards other aims. This situation has a special importance in the urban region, since it does not exist - and neither it is foreseen - an intermediate administrative structure of metropolitan level that assures the territorial coherence of the urban region of Madrid.

**- *The supply of lands and its effect in the contention of the housing price***

The strategy of balancing the territorial development through the land reservations for dwellings and regional infrastructures did not achieve the goal of reducing the price of land and housing in the CAM, one of the objectives of the PERT. Still when the strategy of promoting the multinuclear model is being progressively achieved consolidating the *physical aspects* of the PERT, the real estate market did not respond to the biggest supply of land existing in the revised municipal plans in the expected direction (greater offer, lower price).

The particular conjuncture that emerged at the end of the 90's impelled by the financial and speculative economy registered in the country (as well as at international level) boosting the prices of land and dwellings until levels never expected, with enormous *social effects*: the data shows that during 2000 and 2001 the whole metropolitan territory was under a (still non-stop) process of prices increment. This phenomenon was due to the coexistence of several reasons: the adoption of the Euro; the emergence of *B* money that moves to the real estate market; favourable mortgages and bank interests; reinvestment of the benefits of real estate companies and promoters buying land for future activities, etc.

The emergency of this spectacular speculative process and its impact in the access to dwellings was not confronted by coordinated policies among the different administrations: regrettably the way to take advantage of the territorial synergies promoted by the PERT to recover the surplus value in favour of the city councils or the region was not foreseen. This mechanism should have been envisaged, being the urban region of Madrid one of the most attractive areas for investments of all kinds in the country.