

1 The Better Districts Programme of Catalonia: Serra d'en Mena

1.1 Introduction

Regional cooperation is a rather new topic in Catalonia. Until now, few initiatives have been taken in this respect. However, the ongoing process of globalisation and internationalisation has increased the need for regional forms of cooperation in Catalonia as well. Especially urban planning and territorial policies seem to be under pressure due to increasing social segregation. The Catalan Government did not have specific urban policies to address such issues. In 2004 however, the Ministry of Spatial Policies and Public Works (*Departament de Política Territorial i Obres Públiques - DPTOP*) launched a new act: the District Act. For the first time, the socio-economic development of urban areas in Catalonia receives explicit attention.

Connected to this new District Act is the foundation of the Better District Program: a subsidy program aimed at motivating municipalities to find local solutions for their socio-economic problems. In this case study, we focus on one of the projects of the Better District Program: *Serra d'en Mena*. This project is regarded one of the best examples for inter-municipal cooperation. It aims to address socio-economic problems and improve the living conditions and general attractiveness of the area. This project contains the rehabilitation of a border area between the municipalities of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet. In total, seven neighbourhoods, covering an area of two square kilometres and inhabiting 90.000 persons, are involved. Commonly, Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet are working on the implementation of the rehabilitation project.

We start this case with describing the context in which the District Program and the Serra d'en Mena project are performing (Section 2). Subsequently, the District Program and the Serra d'en Mena project are described in Section 3. Section 4 analyses the output and outcomes of the District Program according to our partnership model. We conclude this case with a confrontation of the program with the research framework.

1.2 The context

In this chapter, we describe the demographic, socio-economic and administrative context of the region of Catalonia and the cities of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet. This helps us interpret the ongoing developments and cooperation in the Serra d'en Mena project.

1.2.1 Geography and demography

Catalonia is an autonomous region in the north-eastern corner of Spain, bordered by France and Andorra in the north, Aragon in the west, Valencia in the south and the Mediterranean Sea in the east. The region has almost seven million inhabitants, a number which has been constantly growing over the past decades. The towns along the Catalan coast have dominated the development of Catalonia, resulting in a depopulation of the hinterland and a strong concentration of the population along the coastline. Municipalities along the shore have grown into one dense urban area. The strongest population concentration is found in the capital city of Barcelona, which inhabits 1.5 million people. The wider metropolitan area of Barcelona even populates 4.4 million people, meaning that two-third of the total Catalanian population is concentrated in this area (Idescat, 2006).

Figure 1: Catalonia, Spain



Source: www.gencat.net (Accessed June 2006)

The demographic composition shows a balanced population regarding age structures. There are no striking high shares of young or old people. Over the last decade, these shares stayed more or less on the same level. It has been immigration and not a natural increase that contributed to the population growth of Catalonia. The share of foreign population in the total population was 8.9 per cent in 2005, which is slightly higher than the national average of 6.4 per cent. The share of foreigners has been increasing strongly over the past few years. Within five years the share has more than doubled: in 2000, the share of foreign population in the total population of Catalonia was 3.5 per cent (Idescat, 2006). Most immigrants are originally from Northern Africa and Southern America.

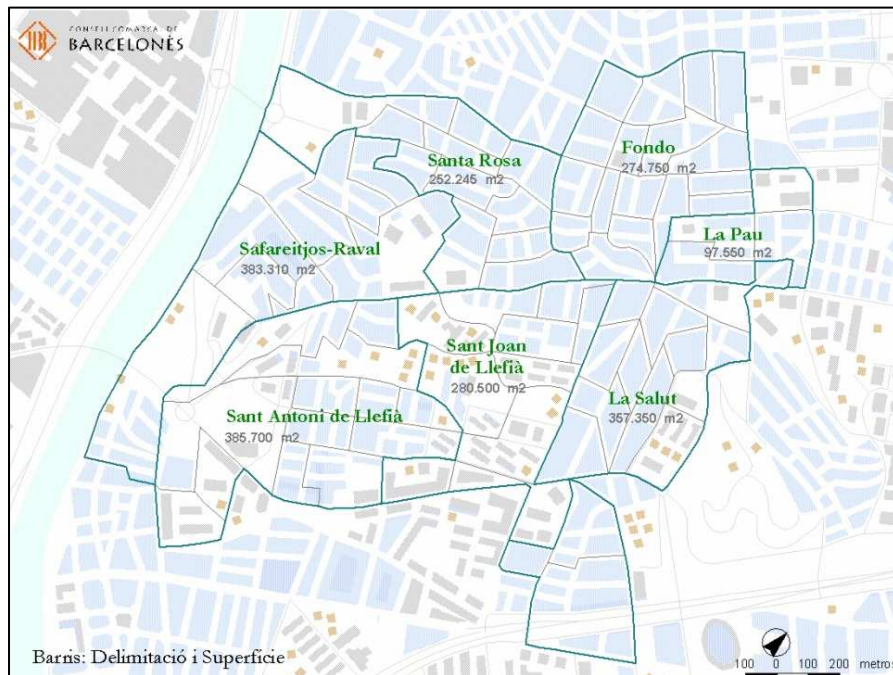
Table 1: Demographic figures Catalonia, Barcelona, Serra d'en Mena.

Indicator	Catalonia	Barcelona (prov)	Serra d'en Mena
Population (2005)	6,995,000	5,226,354	90,000
Population growth (1996-2005)	14.8%	12.9%	-
Population density per km2 (2005)	217	677	44,000
Foreigners, % of total population (2005)	8.9%	7.9%	18.0%
Foreigners, % of total population (2001)	4.6%	4.3%	-
0-16 years old, % of total population (2004)	14.3%	-	-
65+ years old, % of total population (2004)	16.6%	-	-

Source: Idescat, 2006 & Consell Comarcal del Barcelonès, 2006a

The focus of this case study is on the *Serra d'en Mena* area. This area consists of seven neighbourhoods in the adjacent cities of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet: La Pau, La Salut, Sant Joan de Llefià, Sant Antoni de Llefià, Fondo, Santa Rosa, and Raval Safareigs. In total, almost 90.000 persons live in this area of a little more than two square kilometres. With an average of around 44.000 inhabitants per square kilometre, the population density is very high in this area (Consell Comarcal del Barcelonès, 2006a). Characteristic for this area is the hilly environment. Before urbanisation in the nineteen fifties and sixties, this region was an attractive leisure destination for the citizens of Barcelona.

Figure 2: The seven neighbourhoods of Serra d'en Mena



Source: Consell Comarcal del Barcelonès, 2006b

During the nineteen fifties and sixties, both cities went through a strong urbanisation phase. The population grew tremendously due to the immigration of workers from the southern Spanish regions. They were attracted by the economic opportunities. However, the following decades were characterised by a phase of population decline. Consistent with the demographic developments in Barcelona, the number of citizens in both Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet had been decreasing, or at least stagnating.

Currently, this trend seems to be broken and replaced by a new phase of urbanisation. The population numbers are increasing again, mainly due to its attractiveness on immigrant groups from Asia and Northern-Africa. In Serra d'en Mena, the share of foreigners in the total population was approximately 18 per cent in 2004 (Consell Comarcal del Barcelonès, 2006a). Compared to the average of nine per cent in Catalonia and eight per cent in the total province of Barcelona, these are high shares.

At the beginning of the urbanisation phase in the '50s and '60s there was little or no regulation on urban development. This has resulted in a chaotic urban pattern where some houses are built half on the pathways. Moreover, because many immigrants built their own houses in this period, the quality of the construction work is relatively low as well. Now, after forty, fifty years, many of these buildings are ready for deconstruction.

Figure 2-1: Impression of urban structure and quality, Serra d'en Mena



Source: Oficina Tècnica Comarcal del Programa de Barris, 2006

1.2.2 Socio-economic context

As many other regions in Europe, the Barcelona Metropolitan Region was struggling with strong (socio-) economic problems related to de-industrialisation in the period after the 1960s. High unemployment rates and low economic perspectives led to social problems and deprivation. An intensive urban regeneration process, among others linked to the large spatial investments for the Olympic Games 1992, have led to an incredible transformation of Barcelona. The urban economy has taken an upswing, which affected the wider region positively as well. Currently, the Catalan economy is strongly dependent on the performance of the metropolitan area of Barcelona. Nationally as well, Barcelona has become an important pillar of the economy. The two main cities of Spain, Madrid and Barcelona, add up to one-third of the total national gross domestic product.

The tertiary sector is by far the largest sector in the region. About 60 per cent of the total Catalan economic activity is dedicated to services, especially tourism, transport services

and information and communication services contribute to the economic growth and employment. Agricultural activities are negligible in this region, contributing only three per cent to the gross domestic product. Industry, on the other hand, still is important for the Catalan economy. Especially manufacturing, automotive industries, chemicals and the food industry employ more than 30 per cent of the labour force. Unemployment rates are currently on a relatively low level: seven per cent of the Catalan labour force in 2005. This number has come down only recently. In 2003, the unemployment rate was still ten per cent. Despite this positive development, the unemployment rate among youth (16-24 years) is still very high: almost 16 per cent in 2005 (Idescat, 2006).

Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet

The economy of the cities of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet is dominated by industry and manufacturing. However, both cities are typical commuting cities. The majority of the inhabitants work in the city of Barcelona. Unemployment in both cities are more or less on the same level as Barcelona. Despite the decrementing unemployment levels in the Barcelona Metropolitan Region, the Serra d'en Mena area still has relatively high unemployment rates: almost 14 per cent in 2005 (Idescat, 2006).

Table 2: Economic indicators of Catalonia, Badalona, Santa Coloma de Gramenet and the Serra d'en Mena area

Indicator	Catalonia	Badalona	St.Coloma de Gramenet	Serra d'en Mena
Unemployment, % of labour force (2005)	7.0%	6.7%	6.4%	13.9%
Unemployment, % 16-24y (2005)	15.9%	-	-	-
University degree, % (2001)	12.8%	7.5%	6.4%	-

Source: Idescat, 2006

In addition to the economic problems of unemployment, has the population of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet lower economic perspectives due to their relatively low education levels. The service sectors dominating the Catalan economy require higher education levels. The share of citizens with a university degree was 7.5 per cent in Badalona and 6.4 per cent in Santa Coloma de Gramenet in 2003. Compared to the Catalan average of 12.8 per cent, this is relatively low (Idescat, 2006).

Returning problems and deprived areas

Despite the positive economic situation and prospects, Catalonia faces an increase of certain socio-economic problem that had been under control for some decades but now seem to recur. According to Nel.lo (2006), the three main issues in this respect are a low quality of the housing supply, overcrowding and a deficit of social services. These problems especially occur in some deprived areas, increasing the segregation between the 'good' and the 'bad' districts in Catalonia.

The Serra d'en Mena area is generally considered to be among the most deprived areas of Catalonia. Here, the unemployment rates are high and there are no considerable expectations for improvement on the short term. Additionally, the population composition is very diverse with a high share of foreigners, the share of high-educated people is relatively low and the quality of the housing supply, urban structure and accessibility are low as well. All these factors combined are a source for socio-economic problems. Table 3

gives an overview of a number of indicators for the degree of deprivation of both the Badalona part and the Santa Coloma de Gramenet part of the Serra d'en Mena area.

Causes mentioned are, for example, the unstructured urbanisation during the extreme rapid population growth of the nineteen fifties and sixties resulting in a low quality of urban environment and housing supply. Another factor influencing the return of socio-economic problems is the tight real estate market. Despite the high figures of new built residences, there is still a shortage of housing, leading to very high prices. Additionally, the market is dominated by privately owned housing - only a small part is social housing - which hinders the circulation. Part of these privately owned apartments are not even bought as living residences, but as investment objects. It is said that approximately one-third of the total housing stock in the city of Barcelona is not used as a 'first house'.

These two factors combined may lead to a situation in which low quality places are most attractive as these places are relatively cheap. Lower income groups, for example economic migrants, are attracted to these areas. Unfortunately, this may lead to higher concentrations of unemployed people and persons with personal and social problems, which appears to be the case in the Serra d'en Mena area.

Table 3: Indicators for the assessment in aid of the Better District Program

Indicators		Serra d'en Mena, Badalona part	Serra d'en Mena, St. Coloma part	Catalonia
Processes of urban deprivation and a deficit of services	rental value	81.3	82.8	-
	% housing low quality/ total housing	6.44%	6.52%	2.60%
	% housing without water/ total housing	0.35%	0.22%	0.73%
	% housing without sewerage/ total housing	0.39%	0.43%	1.47%
	% housing higher than 4 plants without elevator/ total housing	65.20%	76.69%	54.90%
Demographic problems	housing per hectare	168	158	30
	population growth (1998-2003)	1.46%	3.16%	9.1%
	% social dependence	32.08%	28.31%	30.9%
	% foreign population/ total population	-	17.73%	7.0%
Social, economic and environmental problems	(people receiving pension and not contributing/ population) *100	1.80%	1.83%	1.00%
	% unemployment of total labour force	13.94%	13.37%	10.2%
	protected green zones not being executed	37.81%	41.66%	-
	% population >10y without secondary education	78.11%	76.71%	65.5%
Deficiency in public/ social services	non-active population	37.22%	33.95%	24.0%
	person in risk of social exclusion	23.19%	24.92%	-
	public transport			
	* less than average supply of public transport	yes	yes	-
	* average frequency of lines at least once every 30 min.	no/yes	yes	-
	parking space			
* shortage of public parking places	yes	yes	-	
* less than 50% of households have a private parking place	yes	yes	-	

Source: Consell Comarcal del Barcelonès, 2004 (edited)

1.2.3 Administration

The administrative structure of Spain and Catalonia is relatively complex, with high autonomy for regional communities and municipalities. It dates back from the Spanish Constitution of 18 December 1979. This section describes the context of the Catalan administrative structure relevant for urban policies and regional cooperation.

Catalan Government, province and municipalities

The Spanish Constitution of 1979 re-formulated the territorial administration system into 17 regional communities. Each community has its own autonomous government. Catalonia is one of these autonomous regions and is governed by the Catalan government (*Generalitat*

de Catalunya). This administrative body is responsible for the design, implementation and maintenance of all legislation in the community Catalonia. The Catalan government is thematically organised into 14 ministries covering among others the areas of agriculture, economy and finance, employment and industry, environment and housing, spatial policies and public works.

Two lower administrative levels concern the provinces and municipalities. The municipalities - of which there were 946 in Catalonia in 2005 (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2006) - are the basis entities of the administrative structure. They represent the citizens politically. Municipalities are responsible for public matters and services and are entitled to draw and implement their own local plans. However, any local plan designed by the municipality has to be finally approved by the Catalan Government. In the end, the regional government remains responsible.

Another local administrative level concerns provinces of which Catalonia has four: Barcelona, Girona, Lleida and Taragona. Provinces are local administrative levels brought into being to group municipalities. It also functions as some sort of controlling mechanism, as municipal governors have to justify to the provincial deputies (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2006). Each province is subdivided in councils (*comarcas*). For this case study, the council of Barcelonès in the province Barcelona is most important, as the municipalities of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet are situated here. Barcelonès is further composed of Barcelona, l'Hospitalet de Llobregat, Sant Adrià de Besòs. The councils do not have any autonomy regarding legislation of drawing plans they are more an institution offering services for other o.a. municipalities.

Each administrative level has the autonomy over the policy fields that relate best to their interest, with most power for the Catalan Government (as they have legislative power) and the municipalities.

Cautious change of approach

Until now, the organisation of all administrative levels has always been focused on specific sectors. Only recently, this sector organisation seems to shift towards a more integral and territorial approach. The District Act initiated by the Department of Spatial Politics and Public Works is an example of a new integral approach as it is aimed at addressing the multiple problems that some districts are facing - in both large and smaller municipalities.

This approach is increasingly important because many of the issues that municipalities are currently dealing with are often crossing the domains of the sectors that limit the administrative levels. Socio-economic problems such as increasing petty crime are often related not only to the 'bad behaviour of youth', but also to the unemployment levels, schooling system, social services, and even the quality of the urban environment.

Moreover, as the population in Catalonia is strongly concentrating along the shores of the Mediterranean, urban areas are increasingly sliding into each other. Functional urban regions become larger and concern more than one administrative region. The urban structure crosses original municipal borders, which requires more cooperation between the involved municipalities and an integral approach based on functional territorial units instead of a rigid administrative structure based on sectors.

Metropolitan cooperation

In 1974 already a metropolitan administrative entity was created: the Barcelona Metropolitan Corporation. However, soon after the creation of the autonomous communities, the existing bodies in charge with the government and coordination of Spain's metropolitan areas were abolished, leading to the dissolution of the Barcelona Metropolitan Corporation. The functions of the corporation have partially been taken over by new agencies, based on a voluntary cooperation between municipalities. For example, the Metropolitan Transport Authority and the Metropolitan Water and Waste Treatment Authority.

As a counter reaction to the abolishment of the Barcelona Metropolitan Corporation, 26 municipalities agreed to cooperate on matters of mutual interest in the newly formed Association of Municipalities of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. Oriol Nel.lo explains that "despite the efforts made by these new bodies to co-ordinate their activities, it is generally admitted that the system of metropolitan administration in Barcelona is inefficient and should be subjected to a far reaching reform" (Nel.lo, forthcoming).

Urban policy

Regarding town planning, the municipalities are the basic planning entities. As stated, they are entitled to draw and implement their own local policies. Regarding land ownership, however, the State retains the authority. However, neither the national authority nor the community authorities (Catalan government) have a general vision for urban planning. The District Act is an attempt to draw attention to and to try to improve urban planning, urban quality and to tackle the increasing segregation and spatial disparity.

Concluding

Summarizing, the Catalan community can be seen as a prosperous region. The economic development is flourishing thanks to a good performance of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona. However, the residents of Catalonia are also facing a return of 'old' socio-economic problems related to housing and social services. Changing demographic structures, relatively high unemployment figures and a deteriorating housing supply are the causes mentioned of these socio-economic problems. The problems tend to concentrate in certain areas. Consequently, segregation between the better off and more deprived areas is increasing, which is perceived to be a potential for social unrest and undermines the future attractiveness of Catalonia as a living and working place.

The focus of this case study is the Serra d'en Mena project in which seven bordering neighbourhoods in the cities Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet receive subsidy for large-scale urban rehabilitation. This area can be seen as a suburban area of Barcelona and is a typical commuting area. It grew strongly during the nineteen fifties and sixties, due to the suburbanisation of Barcelona. Because of a lack of regulation and urban planning in this period, the arisen districts are of inferior urban quality and seem to concentrate a combination of socio-economic problems. The Serra d'en Mena area is regarded one of the most deprived neighbourhoods of Catalonia.

In order to address the socio-economic problems in such deprived areas as Serra d'en Mena and to stop increasing segregation within Catalonia, the Department of Spatial Policies and Public Works of the Catalan government came up with the District Act. Part of this act is the subsidy program the Better District Program. The next section will go into detail on this Serra d'en Mena project and Better District Program.

1.3 Serra d'en Mena - the project

We focus on the Serra d'en Mena project because it is one of the best examples of cooperation within the Better District Program. With help of this project, we will analyse the Better District Program in the next paragraph. In this Chapter, we therefore describe the motives, objectives and form of cooperation of both the program (Better District) and the project (Serra d'en Mena).

1.3.1 Better District Program

In order to address the new, or better, returned socio-economic problems some Catalan areas deal with, the Catalan Government introduced some new policy instruments. One of those new instruments is the Housing Act, aimed to regulate the real-estate market and improve the housing supply both quantitatively and qualitatively. The results of the Housing Act are aimed at the mid- and long-term and can be considered preventive measures against deteriorating socio-economic issues. However, more immediate measures are required as well, in order to '*correct situation that could lead to neighbourhoods into a difficult-to-reverse spiral of physical and social degradation*' ((Nel.lo, 2006:3). Therefore, the District Act was introduced in 2004.

The most important tool of the District Act is the creation of a fund to support rehabilitation projects for the deprived areas. For a period of four years - from 2005 to 2008 - the Catalan Government made in total €400 million available for rehabilitation projects and specific promotion of deprived neighbourhoods - €100 million for each year. The Catalan Government believes that socio-economic problem can best be addressed at a local level, as municipalities know better what their citizens need than do regional authorities. However, regional commitment and support is essential for the performance of the municipalities. This idea is well phrased in the motto 'regional commitment, local leadership and community involvement'.

Motives

As stated, the Catalan Government would like to improve the socio-economic balance in the region in order to address spatial segregation and related social unrest. Another motive for the District Act and related subsidy program is to invest in the maintenance of the attractive living and working environment. This will contribute positively to the competitive position of Catalonia in a national and international perspective.

By investing in the problem areas of the region, the Catalan Government would like to send out a three-fold message. First to the citizens that the government will not allow living conditions to deteriorate in Catalonia. Second, to the city councils that the government is aware of that many of the problems they are facing have a regional, national or even international origin and to stress that they won't stand alone in dealing with the consequences. The last message is to the market, especially the real-estate market. The Government of Catalonia wants to warn the economic agents benefiting from strong value increases of private real estate. Investing in real estate will become less profitable in order to loosen the current tight real estate market (Nel.lo, forthcoming).

Selection criteria

Each Catalan municipality is allowed to apply for this subsidy. They can do so by presenting a project proposal. This proposal is assessed by the technical office of the DPTOP by two criteria: (1) the average score of a set of statistical indicators; and (2) the quality and the feasibility of the proposal. Concerning the first requirement, a selection of indicators is formulated by the DPTOP. These are indicators for the degree of deprivation, demographic problems, socio-economic problems and deficiencies in public/ social services. The outcome of these indicators defines whether the project proposal will be assessed on the second criterion, the quality and feasibility of the plans proposed.

The quality of the project is defined by its financial and practical feasibility. Moreover, the DPTOP wants to encourage an integral approach of the complex socio-economic problems. In this respect, eight themes have been selected which have to be implemented in the project proposal. These themes are:

1. Improving public space and green areas;
2. Provision of facilities for common use;
3. Incorporation of information technologies;
4. Promotion of energy efficiency, water consumption and waste management;
5. Equality and emancipation;
6. Accessibility and suppression of architectural barriers;
7. Improving social, urban and economic development;
8. Promoting sustainable urban development

When selected for funding, the municipality will receive half of its total investment budget for rehabilitation from the Catalan Government. The other 50 per cent of the investment budget has to be financed by the municipality itself. They may attract other specific subsidies, for example from counties or private investors, as long as these subsidies are not related to other public subsidy programmes. The project period endures four years (with a maximum delay of two years).

The first two stages in the process of bidding have already been held in 2004 and 2005. In total, 30 projects are granted with a subsidy and it is expected that another 30 will be granted in the coming two years. The projects are located all over Catalonia, with a concentration of on the areas along the coastline, as this is the most densely populated area and consequently, the area with relatively most deprived neighbourhoods. Except for the city of Barcelona who may submit two projects annually, each municipality is allowed to bring in one project annually (the size of the project area is not limited by administrative borders and may therefore include several neighbourhoods).

Objectives

The objective of this fund for renovation and promotion of deteriorated urban areas is twofold. First, the government wants to improve the economic, social and environmental situation and diminish spatial segregation. This in order to enhance spatial (territorial) balance in the province of Catalonia, which is expected to lead to increasing attractiveness for both residents and investors and thereby improving the competitive position at regional, national and European level.

Second, the Catalan government wants to foster cooperation and participation among public authorities. Cooperation between public authorities is promoted in the Better

District Program by granting project proposals that aim to implement their plans in cooperation with neighbouring municipalities or other public authorities such as a county.

Moreover, the cooperation between departments of the Government of Catalonia is stimulated. This cooperation is starting to increase now. The Act was initiated by the DPTOP, but slowly other departments are linking their activities to the District Programme as well. During a seminar held in May 2006, the departments of Environment and Housing, Health, Presidency, Employment and Industry, Culture, Welfare and Family Affairs, Institutional Relations and Participation attended. Some are already actively involved in the District Program, for example with the programmes for housing, health, women, employment, culture, immigration, and community vitalisation. When not yet actively involved, they showed interest and were enthusiastic to intervene in the program in the future.

Outcome

Though the Better District Program was initiated only two years ago (in 2004), 30 neighbourhoods have already been selected for funding. Another 30 will be granted subsidy in 2006 and 2007. The first projects are about to be implemented now and actual results are a matter of time. What the impact will be on the general socio-economic climate in Catalonia, in other words whether or not the goals of stopping the ongoing segregation will be met remains to be seen.

The DPTOP is controlling the outcome and performance of the projects of the Better District Program. With help of its own technical office and of INCASOL (the Catalan Institute for Land), the quality of the physical measures taken is inspected. Moreover, they check whether the projects keep their promises and spend the subsidies as agreed.

1.3.2 Serra d'en Mena

One of the projects granted by a subsidy of the Better District Program is Serra d'en Mena. As stated, this area - consisting of seven neighbourhoods covering the municipalities of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet - is suffering a combination of interrelated socio-economic problems (see Section 2). On May 4th 2005, a cooperation agreement for rehabilitation of the Serra d'en Mena area was signed between the Catalan Government, both municipalities and the county council.

Serra d'en Mena is the first (and only) project within the Better District Program forming a partnership between two municipalities and the county of Barcelonès. As stated, the area involved covers a border zone and the problems tormenting this area cross this border. In order to effectively address these problems, the municipalities found cooperation indispensable.

Serra d'en Mena is granted with subsidy of €18 million. This is half of the total budget, meaning that the municipalities commonly have to add another €18 million bringing the total investment budget on €36 million. The project period is 2005-2008 (with a possibility of delay of two years maximum)

Objectives

The main objective of both municipalities is to change the Serra d'en Mena areas from a peripheral location into a new local centre for the neighbourhoods of both municipalities. They want to achieve this by renovating and rehabilitating the physical area, but also by investing in social issues and economic development. The main issues to be addressed are: the improvement of accessibility; social cohesion; environmental quality; and socio-economic dynamics (Consell Comarcal the Barcelonès, 2004).

As some of the problems are related, a package deal of actions has been programmed concerning the following issues:

- Strengthening the connection between the neighbourhoods and North-Barcelona
- Improving the road system by opening new roads
- Improving the sections of the side streets of the Circumval.lacio
- Improving the mobility of pedestrians and abolish architectural barriers
- Creation and improvement of new public spaces and renovation of public facilities
- Take actions for the demolition of houses without a minimum of living conditions
- Rehabilitation of common areas in buildings
- Promote sustainability in urban development
- Give an impulse to social cohesion
- Promote community involvement and give help and means to the various associations in the neighbourhood
- Stimulate economic activity

Concrete project plan

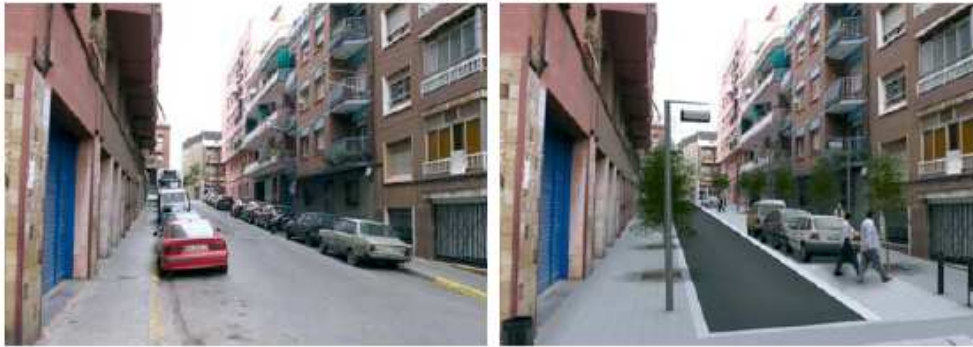
The main action to be taken in the project is the rehabilitation of the street the *Passeig de Circumval.lacio*. As stated, this is the central street - the 'backbone' - in the area and the border between both municipalities. As both municipalities have always been faced backwards, local governments have long neglected this bordering area. Problems have accumulated and the need for an integral approach is high. Several side streets of the Circumval.lacio are included in the rehabilitation project as well.

Measures that will be taken are focused on the improvement of the urban structure. They want to improve the quality of the housing stock. First, by demolishing the most deteriorated premises and replace them by new apartment blocks. And second, by renovating and refurbishing common areas in existing housing blocks. The DPTOP demands that a certain share of the new built housing stock is social housing. This is in order to restore the balance at the real estate market.

More attention is even given to the improvement of the accessibility of this hilly area. Street patterns are to be improved and the number of parking places will be reduced in order to create space and order in the streets. Figure 3 gives an example of the current and the future situation in two streets. Architectural barriers (houses at the side walks, stairways, etc.) will be overcome by the demolition of some buildings and the installation of escalators. Accessibility will also be improved by strengthening the supply of public transport. Serra d'en Mena wants to increase the connection with the northern districts of Barcelona.

Figure 3: current and future situation accessibility and urban structure

CARRER VENUS



CARRER JÚPITER



Source: Oficina Tècnica Comarcal del Programa de Barris, 2006

Next to these physical measures, social and economic issues have to be addressed as well. This project wants to promote sustainability, social cohesion and the development of the community. A small part of the initiatives of this type remain somehow linked to urban and physical improvement. For instance, it is planned to rehabilitate the Civic Centre of the neighbourhood (where courses, events and meetings for the citizens are organised) and to create a new space to promote cooperation between social groups of the neighbourhood through socio-cultural activities.

The more specific social interventions include very innovative actions as the “Genre use of urban space” that tries to stimulate the women (and specifically immigrant women) to be more present in the public space by organising itineraries in the neighbourhood. Interventions that are more traditional include support to infants and youngsters, promotion of participation of citizens in the Neighbourhood Councils, or to create an Observatory for the Social Exclusion. However, it must be said that these are proposals of the project and it is not still clear how are they going to be implemented. In Santa Coloma social and economic initiatives account for ca. €311.000, while in Badalona €1 million euros were budgeted for these kind of activities. (Consell Comarcal de Barcelonès, 2006a)

Currently, the planning phase is finalised and the project management is about to start the first stages of implementation.

Form of cooperation

As stated, the Serra d'en Mena is the first project within the Better District Program where several public actors work together on the improvement of an area. Involved are: the DPTOP (as part of the Government of Catalonia), the city councils of both Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet and the county council of Barcelonès.

The cooperation is on a voluntary basis. Both municipalities wanted to cooperate in the project in order to improve the effectiveness of the rehabilitation. However, despite the promotion of the DPTOP for increasing cooperation among public authorities, it seemed impossible to hand in one project proposal for both municipalities. Consequently, each city council had to hand in their own version of the project proposal, which, obviously, was similar to the one of the partner municipality. Regarding project management, this implies that each municipality has to have its own project manager.

As the actor giving the subsidies, the DPTOP is not involved in the planning or the implementation of the Serra d'en Mena project. They are controlling (with help of their Technical Office and INCASOL - the Catalan Institute for Land) the process, outputs and outcomes of the project. The county council of Barcelonès has a double role in this partnership. They are functioning as an intermediary between the interests of Badalona and Santa Coloma. Besides, they contribute financially with an amount of €3 million for the physical renovation of the Circumval.lacio, reducing the total contribution of both municipalities to €15 million. The county council is not responsible for the planning or the implementation.

As turned out from the interviews, Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet already have a history in cooperation: in the early nineteen nineties they opted for a subsidy which they did not obtain. However, this cooperation turned out to be a good basis for a partnership in the URBAN I programme, a fund they were granted. This URBAN project was mainly based on improving the quality of housing and public space. Indeed some parts of the neighbourhoods have improved, but for structural (and more effective) improvements, more investments were required. Some interview partners see this the Serra d'en Mena project as a follow-up for the URBAN project.

Promotion of cooperation

One of the aims of the District Act is to promote and foster cooperation between public authorities. In order to increase the attractiveness for city councils to form a partnership with other (public) authorities, the DPTOP granted a commonly developed project proposal in the Better District Program with extra credits, thus increasing the chances for subsidy.

In practice, it appears that until now, only the Serra d'en Mena project is actually formed based on a partnership between public authorities. Whether or not this partnership between Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet is the result of the active promotion by the DPTOP is doubtful, as both cities have a history in cooperation.

Another issue in this respect is that the administrative organisation of the Better District Programme seems insufficient to deal with partnerships. Public authorities that want to cooperate, still have to hand in individual project proposals, which are separately assessed on the quantitative indicators for deprivation. This has already led to the situation where one of the actors in a partnership was granted the subsidy, while the other actor was not¹,

¹ The municipalities Canovelles and Granollers wanted to cooperate in regenerating a deprived area. However, Granollers scored too high in the assessment of the quantitative indicators for deprivation and therefore could not attend the second round (the assessment of the quality and feasibility of the proposal). Canovelles was eventually granted with the subsidy.

despite the fact that the expected effectiveness and outcome of the commonly proposed project would have been higher than when implemented in one municipality only.

1.3.3 Partnership model

In this section, we analyse the form of regional cooperation with help of our partnership model. We focus on the project Serra d'en Mena, instead of the whole Better District Program. The project is the most concrete example of regional cooperation.

Scope of the partnership

The first element is the scope of the partnership, which can relate to both the aims of the partnership and the role of the partnership. In both aspects, we could say that the Serra d'en Mena partnership has a broad scope. The partnership aims to organise the rehabilitation of the Serra d'en Mena area in the field of accessibility, social cohesion, environment and economics. The partnership itself is voluntary and project based. Its role in the project is broad. The municipalities have commonly taken the initiative for the rehabilitation of the area and are commonly responsible for half of the total investment budget, the project design and the project implementation.

Geographic scale

The second element is the geographic scale. This can be defined by both looking at the participating partners and at the aims of a partnership. This partnership is constituted with the aim to improve the situation in the Serra d'en Mena, an area consisting of seven neighbourhoods within two cities just north of Barcelona. The area covers approximately two square kilometres. For regional cooperation, this scale is rather local.

However, the Serra d'en Mena project is explicitly part of the Better District Program, which aims improve and promote deteriorated districts anywhere in Catalonia. The ultimate goal is to stop ongoing segregation and improve the socio-economic balance in the whole community of Catalonia. Thus, for the program the geographic scale is broader.

The choice for the relevant geographical scale is important, especially concerning the rehabilitation of deprived areas. Too large a scale makes it difficult to tackle the local problems in an efficient way. Too small a scale limits the influence of the measures taken and increases the chances of relocating rather than solving socio-economic problems. Besides, deprived areas could benefit from positive spill-over of nearby located attractive neighbourhoods, which influences the size of a project area as well.

Actors involved

Concerning the third element - the actors involved - we already said that the main actors are the municipalities of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet, the Government of Catalonia presented by the Department of Spatial Policies and Public Works (DPTOP), and the county council of Barcelonès. The DPTOP is involved as the funding actor of half of the investment budget. The county council is involved as investor, but also as intermediate concerning the interests of both municipalities. Both municipalities are commonly responsible for the implementation of the project. The partnership is therefore an example

of purely public-public cooperation. No private actors are involved (except for the enforcement of the physical adjustments).

The DPTOP, the initiator of the Better District Program, aims to increase the involvement of other departments of the Catalan Government. Up to now, the DPTOP was the only department in this integral territorial approach against deterioration. Recently, other departments such as health and the presidential department have committed themselves to the project as well.

Degree of formality

Looking at the organisational structure (institutionalisation, governance) and the legal decision-making power, we can assess the degree of formality - the fourth element of the partnership model. All actors in the partnership committed themselves to the project on a voluntary basis. The organisational structure is formal, with written agreements on desired outputs and outcomes. Every six months, the actors meet to discuss the booked results and process of the project. It is clear that this partnership is project-based and is therefore not a decision-making body. Legal decision-making power is limited.

Degree of political influence

The degree of political influence (fifth element) concerns the degree to which the partnership can influence political decision-making. Legally, this partnership has no decision making power and has no influence on political decision-making either. Indirectly however, it could be that the personal contacts between all involved actors (DPTOP, the county and both municipalities) could lead to better understanding of each other interests and necessities, which could lead to better fine tuning between local and regional policies.

As all administrative levels are involved in the Serra d'en Mena project and as this is an example for desired cooperation between public authorities, some indirect and bottom-up influence on the future content of the District Act might be apparent. However, it is the government of Catalonia setting the framework for rehabilitation and cooperation and municipalities can only adapt to this framework.

Democratic content

Although the partnership is rather formal, the democratic content does not fully apply here. Representatives of the involved public authorities form the partnership. These representatives are appointed and have not been voted for this function by the population. The democratic content is therefore low.

However, citizens have been involved in the planning of the rehabilitation project, as the outcomes of the plans were presented at informal information meetings. During these meetings, citizens could comment on the plans. They have been for example on the strong decrease of the number of parking lots. In general, it can be stated that the social support for the project.

Financial power

The dimension of financial power related to the budget of the organisation, but also on its freedom of spending and the ability to attract or mobilise other financial resources. In this case, the financial power is moderate. The budget of the organisation is high: in total €36 million is available for a project period of four years.

However, the partnership is depending on the subsidy of Catalonia and the spending of this budget is appointed to the project plan. Whether or not this money is spent as calculated, and whether or not the projects are being implemented as promised, is being controlled by special institutions. There is little freedom to change the expenditure during the project period.

Nevertheless, as long as not directly linked to another funding program (on regional, national or EU-level), the organisation is free to acquire other financial resources. In fact, it has done so by attracting an extra subsidy from the county council of Barcelonès.

Leader

In the partnership of Serra d'en Mena, the municipalities of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet have commonly taken the initiative to bid on the subsidy program related to the District Act. We could say that they share leadership in this form of cooperation. The county council has an intermediary role, being an advisor for both municipalities in case of issues of conflicting interest. Some interviewed persons state that the role of the county council in the initial phase was larger as they put the topic on the local agenda, brought the mayors of both municipalities together and created interest with the promise of a €3 million subsidy.

Regarding the formulation of the District Act and the Better District Program, the leading role is at the DPTOP.

Internal organisation

The organisation of Serra d'en Mena is non-hierarchical. Two project leaders are commonly leading the project: one from Badalona, one from Santa Coloma de Gramenet. They have to report their progress to both municipalities, to the county council and twice a year to the DPTOP/ Better District Programme office.

Table 4: The partnership model

Criterion	Analysis
Scope – Aims	Accessibility, Economics, Social Cohesion, Environment
Scope – Role	Broad (investor, initiator, coordinator)
Geographic Scale	The Serra d'en Mena area (seven neighbourhoods within Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet)
Actors	Public sector: Catalan Government, county council and city councils
Degree of formality	High
Degree of political influence	Low

Democratic content	Low
Financial power	Moderate
Leading stakeholder	Public sector: cities of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet
Internal organisation	Small and non-hierarchical

1.4 Performance, output, outcome

In this section, we discuss the performance, output and outcome of both the Serra d'en Mena Project and the Better District Program. Because of the recent enacting of the District Act (2004), it is too early to make a complete evaluation. Therefore, this section mainly assesses the expected performance, output and outcome of the program and the project.

1.4.1 Serra d'en Mena

Looking at the fact that the Serra d'en Mena project is granted with a subsidy of 50 per cent of the total investment budget, the performance of the cooperation between Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet during the preparation of the project proposal appears to be good. Despite the official individual proposals, both Badalona and Santa Coloma made successful efforts to come to one vision for development for the area and design one project proposal. The county council had helped with the cooperation process as an intermediary actor. The performance of this form of cooperation in the next phase, the implementation phase, remains to be seen. The project is running for too short a period to make any valuable analysis.

Some discussion partners stated that this form of cooperation already contributed to an improvement of mutual understanding between the two municipalities, the county council and the Catalan government. We argue therefore that a concrete cooperation project on a low geographical scale such as Serra d'en Mena can contribute positively to further cooperation and mutual understanding on a broader spatial level. One concrete project could act as a catalyst for future regional cooperation.

At the time of the visit of this case study, the first measures of the project proposal were about to be implemented: the first housing blocks were soon to be renovated and the inhabitants of houses on the 'demolishment-list' were being informed about the plans. However, the first concrete outputs are expected in about one year. The full impact of these measures will take more years to observe. Additionally, discussion partners state that it is not realistic to expect all problems to be solved at the end of the project term (2008). The scale and scope of the problems is too large to address in such a short period of time and, despite the budget of €36 million, a limited budget. The Serra d'en Mena project focuses on the most urgent matters in the area. It is likely to expect more investments to be required on the long term in order to fully tackle the problems in this deprived area.

The expectation of the Serra d'en Mena project is that the most urgent problems will be successfully addressed in the coming period. However, some problems have an origin on a higher level than the local level. For example, the tight (regional) housing market is

limiting the housing possibilities for lower- en middle-income classes. Another issue is the high concentration of immigrants in certain neighbourhoods (often the lower quality areas where housing prices are relatively low) causing social frictions. A dedicated regional, national and in some cases even European policy may be necessary for a more sustainable solution.

Formally, the project proposal is based on eight themes that range from the improvement of public space and public facilities to the improvement of gender equality and the promotion of energy efficiency. However, discussion partners criticize the strong focus of the actual project implementation on the physical aspects of rehabilitation. Most actions planned relate to the rehabilitation of existing housing blocks, breaking up urban patterns and improving accessibility. Fewer measures are scheduled to tackle the problems of, for example, immigration without integration, unemployment, lack of social safety, and gender equality. Obviously, these problems are more difficult to address and the output is less easy to assess, let alone the outcome. But, although the objectives are ambitious, the Better District Programme stresses the importance of an integral approach, in order to come to a sustainable solution for the current socio-economic problems. It is therefore important that these social and economic aspects are being elaborated in a more concrete project proposal as well.

1.4.2 Better District Program

A new element for Catalonia of the Better District Program is the integral approach. This subsidy program is being organized by the DPTOP and the spatial aspect of socio-economic problems in deprived areas is therefore being well covered. However, economic, social, and health issues are still less enclosed in the program. Some initiatives to involve other departments of the Catalan government have been taken and some departments have already committed themselves to the program. Additional subsidies have become available for the projects that were already granted by the Better District Program. This can be considered a good step in the right direction. However, a full integral approach with the cooperation of all relevant departments would be desirable. This would help increase the quality of the project plans and guarantee a truly integral approach of problems in the deprived areas.

A following step, in stimulating cooperation among all relevant actors, would be the involvement of private actors in the partnerships. Currently, the encouragements of the Catalan government for more partnerships are limited to cooperation among public authorities. Especially in the process of urban rehabilitation, many private actors have valuable knowledge and experience as well, for example project developers or housing corporations. They could contribute positively to, not only the implementation of the projects, but also to planning and creation of a vision for development.

Another issue regards the spatial level of the rehabilitation projects. As stated before, the discussion partners mentioned the case of Canovelles and Granollers, where both municipalities commonly proposed a project plan but where only one of them was granted the subsidy, due to the strict assessment on quantitative indicators for deprivation. The reason was that one of the municipalities was not 'deprived' enough (their average score on the statistical indicators was too good). This is understandable, as the DPTOP needs some objective selection criteria for granting the subsidies. However, quantitative selection criteria do not take into account the fact that deprived areas could gain from the cooperation with 'better' neighbourhoods and vice versa. A deprived area could be helped by the success and the positive image of a well-performing neighbouring district. On the

other hand, the improvement of the deprived district can lead to a positive spill-over and have a synergy effect on the development of a broader area than the district alone. Instead of refusing the 'better half' of the partnership the subsidy (which in fact could also be seen as a hindrance of regional cooperation), it would be advisable to take this into account in the selection procedure of future project proposals.

Concerning the selection procedure, there was some mild criticism on this aspect among some discussion partners. All agree that it is unrealistic and undesirable to give the subsidy to all neighbourhoods that score high on the deprivation 'index'. A well-founded project plan, explaining the municipal strategy, is essential. Simultaneously, some argue that smaller municipalities are put at a disadvantage because of this system. Smaller municipalities generally do not have the financial means or the practice/ human capacity to design a project proposal integrating all aspects of the complex socio-economic problems. Consequently, they are believed to have less chance to be granted with a subsidy. However, we argue that a lack of financial means and/ or human capacity by smaller municipalities could also be an incentive to form new partnerships and make use of each other's knowledge and experience.

1.5 Confrontation with the research framework

Our research framework can be helpful for identifying the stimulating and obstructing factors for regional partnerships in Catalonia.

1.5.1 Economic context

The District Act and the related Better District Program can be seen as a first attempt of the Catalan government to stop the growing social segregation and generate spatial balance within the region. This is believed to be necessary in order to sustain attractive and competitive for both citizens and economic activities. Despite generally good economic growth perspectives for the whole region, re-emerging socio-economic problems in certain deprived neighbourhoods throughout Catalonia have created a sense of urgency for cooperation both within and between public authorities. Due the complexity of these problems, an integral approach and the commitment of all involved actors is required. Moreover, the need for a regional instead of local approach of problems and opportunities has enlarged, due to the growing functional urban regions because of the process of urbanisation and the related trespassing of existing municipal borders of the functional urban region.

1.5.2 Political administrative context

This growth of functional urban regions has political and administrative consequences as well. Politically, there never used to be much interest for regional or urban development in Catalonia. Most issues related to spatial development were dealt with at the local level, some by the Catalan government. However, as stated, the process of urbanisation and growth of functional urban regions, has led to the fact that many developments and issues cross existing administrative borders, which increases the need for regional politics. Forming new types of cooperation between public authorities are one way of dealing with this new situation.

1.5.3 Motives

The main aim of the Better District Program is to stop ongoing spatial segregation by investing in deprived areas. The District Act provides the Catalan government with an instrument (subsidies) that encourages municipalities with deprived area to actively address the complex problems they are facing. The subsidies related to this program can be used for investments in social, economic and physical measures.

The Catalan government tries to stimulate the formation of partnerships among public authorities; by giving the project proposal extra credits (and thus higher chances for receiving the subsidy), when the project plans will be implemented in cooperation between two or more public authorities. In practice however, it appears difficult for, for example, two municipalities to bring in a joint proposal. The proposals have to be handed in individually and will be assessed individually as well. The Serra d'en Mena project is the first example where both municipalities were granted the subsidy, but other examples show that only one of the two municipalities in the partnership was granted the subsidy. This may have negative impacts on the outcomes of the project, as part of the planned measures will not be implemented. Partnership among public authorities can bring extra value and increase the outcomes of the project, as long as the problems are tackled at the right spatial level.

1.5.4 Objectives

The main objective of the Better District Program is to stop and diminish the growing spatial segregation by investing in most deprived areas. The complexity of the problems requires an integral approach. In order to stimulate this integral approach, the DPTOP (Catalan department for spatial development and public works) has selected eight themes (a.o. quality public space, accessibility, facilities, emancipation, social and economic development), which must all be covered in the project proposal of the municipality.

As the DPTOP has the lead in the program, the spatial and physical elements are well represented in the program. However, the integral approach they aim for requires the involvement of other departments as well. Recently, several departments (health, economic development, etc.) have committed themselves to the program. This is a good start for a better integral approach in the future. Moreover, this development helps to overcome the psychological barriers between all departments (they are considered highly autonomous and are not used to cooperation with each other).

The deficiency of an integral approach of the socio-economic problems in the deprived areas can also be seen in the Serra d'en Mena project. Here, all eight themes are being covered in the project proposal. In practice however, the focus is on the physical improvements of houses, public places and accessibility. In order to achieve the expected outcomes of the project, social and economic issues require more attention as well.

1.5.5 Partnership model

As stated, the Serra d'en Mena project is currently the only project within the Better District Program where public authorities formed a partnership in order to rehabilitate the deprived area. In this case, it concerns two municipalities who get support from the county council as well. The need for cooperation was initiated by the context, as both

municipalities faced the same kind of problems in an area at their shared border containing seven neighbourhoods. Besides, cooperation was a logical step for the two municipalities as they already had a history in cooperation with the European URBAN I program.

Because of the recent start of the Better District Program (2004) and the Serra d'en Mena project (2005), it is not possible to assess any concrete outputs or outcomes yet. The implementation of the first measures has only just started. However, if this partnership between Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramenet in the Serra d'en Mena project turns out to create successful outputs and outcomes, it could function as an example for other municipalities.

1.5.6 Finally

The Catalan government acknowledges the importance of a balanced spatial socio-economic development. The District Act and Better District Program provide the government with new instruments to support such developments. This explicit urban policy is quite new and innovative for Catalonia. The special attention for urban development on a regional level can be seen as breeding ground for future regional cooperation, which is indirectly already incorporated in the Better District Program (the promotion of cooperation both within and between public authorities).

However, from the perspective of 'new forms of regional cooperation', we observe that at this moment there is only one concrete example of regional cooperation with respect urban regeneration: the *Serra d'en Mena* project. We can be critical about the regional scale of the partnerships (two municipalities are involved; the actual project area covers two square kilometres) and about the extend to which the success of this partnership is dependent on subsidies from the Catalan government (being the main incentive for cooperation). However, any positive outcomes of the Serra d'en Mena project could be used as example and encouragement for other municipalities to start looking across traditional administrative borders and look for opportunities and synergies through cooperation. The Catalan government could help this process by better facilitating the possibilities for regional cooperation and by promoting the involvement of private actors in the future as well.

Discussion partners

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- Mr O. Nel.lo, Department of Spatial Policies and Public Works (DPTOP), General Secretary
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- Mr J. de la Varga, County Council Barcelonès, coordinator

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