

Luis Maldonado (ed.)

COST Action Urban Agriculture Europe: Documentation of 2nd Working Group Meeting

Castelldefels (Barcelona), 12-15/3/2013



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The Urban Planning and the Management of Rural Undeveloped Land: the preservation of values, heritage and landscape in balance with the economic activity versus the natural resources exploitation of the SNU

Carles Llop

First we must clarify that, on the development of urban and regional planning issues, we have had a name (a category) that has conditioned us: the so-called undeveloped land (SNU) in our urban legislation.

Indeed, this is a great inaccuracy. Our territories which are not city or more or less dense settlements, have a wealth of situations that justify *per se*, its value, without having to understand them as the city's negative (that is not developable, and a reservoir for urbanization growth). The planning legislation has never faced rural land from a positive and proactive approach, defining its values and potential. It has always made certain definitions and arrangements from the ban.

Perhaps, we should look for the causes and consequences of the lack of attention to rural land in the uprooting between society and countryside, so to speak, in the transformation of agrarian societies into industrial societies that caused:

- The progressive loss of weight and number of farmers and the rural sector
- The gradual loss of weight in the setting of gross domestic product (GDP)

However, let's highlight a significant advance in the definition proposed in the Legislative Decree 1/2005 revised text of the Urbanism Law ('Llei d'Urbanisme', Art. 46 to 60), which determines the quality of the territory, and therefore, a more holistic vision of it, considering that:

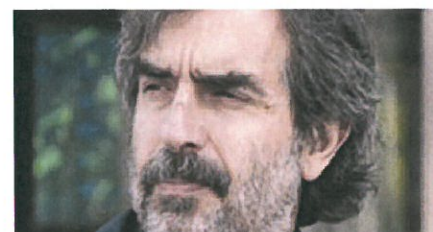
- The land is a finite space, a not reproducible resource
- Soil is the basic raw material that determines the location of productive activities
- In urban and in developable land what counts is the benefit/profit of urban use; while in the SNU what counts are the qualities of the soil and the agronomic suitability to their destination
- The effects on urban development are often irreversible

That's why, from a renewed view of urban planning we must take into account:

1. A renewed vision of rural ecology role
2. An environmental and SNU resources management for an efficient decontamination
3. The SNU only can be approached from an overall territorial vision
4. A necessary balance between urban and rural, taking into account the effects of intensive uses that affect both intensive agriculture and urban spread
5. Arrangement of (the) transition from countryside to city, the regulation of the effects between the processes of growth, urban spreading and suburban uses.

And especially a renewed way of understanding the undeveloped land, there's no need for links between undeveloped land and other "natures" and land regimes

6. The territorial-mosaic city
7. The heritage and territorial wealth of the SNU productive space + living heritage
8. The agro-food sector as a strategic sector for a sustainable economic development
9. The need of procedures to improve and modernize rural land
10. To introduce the concept of ecological network in urban and regional planning, ensuring that the introduction of new uses is carried out so as to



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keep the structure and operation of the territory avoiding the fragmentation and isolation of natural elements .

Ultimately to tackle an integrated planning approach: 'flight', soil and subsoil; taking into account the *tangible* and *intangible values*: ecological, environmental (habitats, ecosystems, structuring of the territory, biological corridors, ecological connecting etc.), cultural-historical, aesthetic, social (leisure and education), economic (agriculture, forest, industrial), symbolic, identity, taking care of the good healing of its *own functions*: natural, environmental, agricultural, forestry, livestock, farming-cattle, and the compatibility with other *functions and new productive activities or soft functions (slow)*: training, walking, leisure, sport, family gardens.

To develop a good arrangement we'll preserve biodiversity and the mosaic space multiplicity in each document and define the spaces, areas and basic elements in the ordering of SNU:

- Rivers, streams, canals and streams, ponds and natural water course edges
- Areas of orchards and agricultural value
- Large forests and environmental units of the biophysical matrix
- Hills, embankments
- Natural areas, areas of natural interest, ecological corridors

The key words for planning and management of undeveloped land (SNU) will be:

- Protection
- Preservation
- Environmental Management
- Custody
- Ownership and Operating Units
- Recovery of environmental quality
- Biodiversity Management
- Establishment of delimitation degrees, protection and management of natural areas
- State of the natural environment and its biodiversity

And the figures of project and management that we are:

- National Park
- Natural Park
- Integral Nature Reserve
- Partial Nature Reserve
- Natural Space of National Interest
- Wildlife Nature Reserves
- Wetlands streams
- Controlled hunting zones
- Wildlife Refuge
- Wetlands of southern streams
- Areas of geological interest: geotops and geozones
- Habitats of Community interest, classified by the Habitats Directive 97/62/EC
- Forests of the Catalogue of Public Utility (CUP). Article 11 of Law 6/88 Forest Catalonia
- Areas under stewardship agreements. "The Land Stewardship Network" was declared of Public Utility by the order INT/3558/2006 of 26 October
- Natura 2000 Grid
- ZEPA (Zona de Especial Protección para las Aves) or Birds Special Protection Areas
- Agricultural Park
- Rural Park
- Regional Parks
- Territorial Park
- Greenways
- Cycling Network
- Special Plan for protection of the environment and landscape

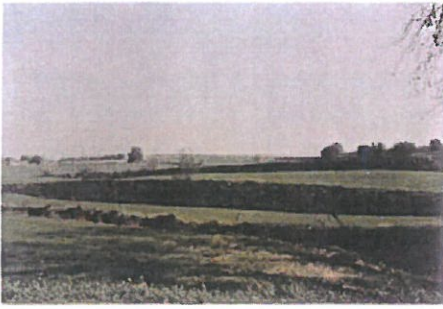
The planning legislation has never faced the undeveloped land from a positive and proactive approach defining values and potential, and has always made certain definitions and ordering patterns from the ban. As it's defined by current law, the undeveloped land to be protected is this in which its connector interest, natural, agricultural, forest or others has to avoid its transformation; this in which the objective of it is to ensure the rational use of land and the quality of life that has a high agricultural value and is included in protected geographical indications or designations of origin and subject to the limitations easements to protect the public good. Given the shortcomings of legislation, some examples of rural landscapes management provide some possibilities for a renewed protection of its values.

The examples of planning and action in undeveloped land that we can present for the discussion we have introduced are: The Special Plans for Gallecs, the "Cinc Sènies" at Mataró and the Sabadell Agrarian Park:

Gallecs at Mollet del Vallès



The modification of the General Urban Plan of Mollet del Vallès was performed to change the developable land classification of the Gallecs area into unscheduled - undeveloped land of special protection. This change in classification is based on the need to provide a coherent legal framework to the real situation that the spatial area of Gallecs presents. An area especially characterized by the presence of significant environmental, agricultural and landscape values, fully accredited. The importance of these values not only justified but required making this change in the classification of the land in order to maintain the necessary consistency between land classification



Gallecs, forestry and agrarian activities



and the existing circumstances. The maintenance of the unscheduled urban land classification and the possible urban development of Gallecs would represent the destruction of these values that would be inadmissible in law as being a decision likely to breach the duty of public authorities to ensure a suitable environment and the reasonable use of natural resources.

Despite is in the 90's when plans began to incorporate rural land into the planning, not as a residual element that serves as a reserve for urban growth, but as necessary equipment built in the territory. It is understood that it becomes an equipment due to the input values of tangible and intangible assets, among which are the ecological, environmental performance (habitats, ecosystems, structuring of the territory, biological corridors, ecological corridors etc.), cultural-historical, aesthetic, social (education and leisure), economic (agriculture, forestry, industrial), symbolic an of identity.

Sabadell Agrarian Park



Sabadell, landscape components: areas, traces and settlements

The main objective of the Special Plan for the Sabadell Agrarian Park is the stability of the agricultural area as incentive for agricultural investment. The purpose of the document is the establishment of all the necessary settings and measures for the its proper preservation, consolidation, promotion, development and improvement, which must be characterized by a planning and management geared to get viable farms in the framework of sustainable agriculture, integrated in land and in natural environment, and to grant the ordered social use of the space, forming a characteristic and quality agricultural landscape that gives identity to the area.

The territory included within the scope of the plan is especially noted for its production values with economic investment and fresh product closer to consumers, environmental values as separator of densely populated areas, cultural values that can have a tidy and competitive territory and historical values indicating the history of the region and its population.

The planning and management model proposed for the Agricultural Park is to strengthen the agricultural space and to make it possible improving the income of the companies, to boost production and marketing systems tailored to the needs of the market and to modernize farms as a whole, so that they can improve or achieve

its business viability. Also, the agricultural model of the Park will have to move towards sustainability, that is, it must conserve resources of water, soil and genetics without environmental damage, while must be economically viable and socially acceptable.

Both for its position under pressure from the expansion of the city, as for the current situation of agriculture in general, it is absolutely necessary that the document of the Agrarian Park is not considered a classic planning instrument, in the sense of establishing basic regulations without land management, but must establish a set of tools whose purpose is to promote and ensure the stability of agriculture, treating the whole unit, as a balanced ecosystem in which productive, environmental and cultural values are present which is determined by a set of actions necessary to ensure its viability and sustainability. In this regard, the plan proposed the writing of some documents: the management plan of properties or operating units linked to the production license application; setting up a registry of uncultivated farms to allow local government intervention in those estates that do not meet the objectives of the plan; drafting sectorial development programs that aim to strengthen the agricultural space and enable the improvement of the income management of agricultural enterprises and the establishment of the potential constitution of the organ manager who will be given the powers deemed necessary to improve the management of the park.

With the aim of organizing and managing the undeveloped land we must work with the concepts of protection, preservation, environmental management, custody, property, exploitation unit, recovery, biodiversity, bounding etc... that we must apply to the basic elements, spaces and areas of the territory. In this sense, we have to identify the water elements of the land, rivers, irrigation systems, streams, channels, lakes and others, the areas of agricultural value or orchards, large forests, hills and embankments, the natural areas, areas of natural beauty and the ecological corridors.

The Special Plan "Cinc Sènies" at Mataró

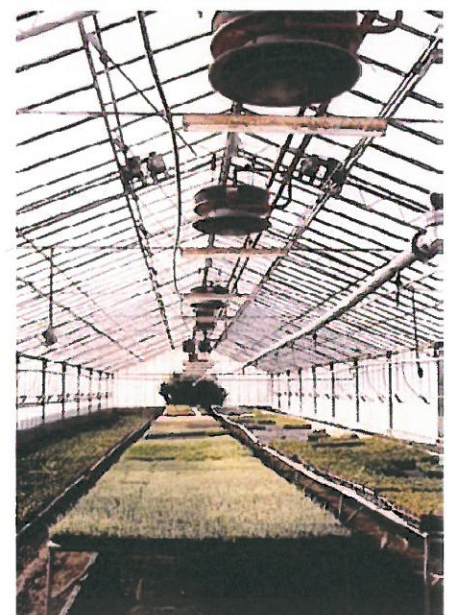
The identification of the elements that make the region is the first step to create an agile document with executive perspective. The Special Plan "Cinc Sènies" at Mataró with an area of 460 Ha located on both sides of the N-II, comprises, the "Cinc Sènies" area at the lower band, and the neighborhoods of Mata and Valldeix at the upper part. The proposed plan recognizes the special regulations of Mataró's General Plan and the basic zoning that will be adjusted according to five levels.

The first of these levels are the "Areas" in which the land is recognized from its production values, the usefulness of soils and the role of environment outlining the following: forestry, the agricultural development of Valldeix-Mata, San Simon, the Forcat stream and Sant Andreu de Llevaneras. The second level corresponds to the "connectors" which are the streams, roads and banks, so to speak, those elements of planning which ensure that everything runs as a structured and interconnected system. In the third level, "Special Elements", are included those who due to their uniqueness require a specific and complementary treatment that tends to protect and ensure the continuity of the value they represent. These are, among others, carob fields, chasteberry areas and clumps of trees in private gardens, etc... The meadows would be the fourth level. These correspond to non-cultivated land, which by their nature may be important to maintain as islands – shelter or housing of various species of flora and fauna that promote the biodiversity of the set and can be a center of potentially useful species in the integrated fight against pests. The last level corresponds to soil uses and activities in disagreement with the plan. It shall establish the relevant processes and measures intended for their suitability with respect to the main agricultural uses of the sector.

The Special Plan also adjusts the regulation parameters of plot, building and use in accordance with the executed and analyzed reality. It also establishes criteria for location and priority on the most suitable soils to be qualified as agricultural system, which will be added to a "land bank", to exclusively be intended to this purpose, and for the later definition and drafting of the Management and Development Plan and subsequent priority action in the action phases, the stages plan for its development and the necessary infrastructure to ensure the proper development of the sector.



Cinc Sènies, environmental systems and biologic values



Regarding farming activity the plan poses three main actions: the development of a water management program to ensure sustainable management of water resources by establishing a code of good practices regarding local agricultural irrigation systems and the dosing of nitrates; making a support program to promote the implementation of essential elements for the development and technological improvement of farms and, finally, the development of a waste management program to improve the agricultural environment and reduce the negative effects of agriculture on it.



COST- the acronym for European **CO**operation in the field of **Scientific and Technical Research**- is the oldest and widest European intergovernmental network for cooperation in research. Established by the Ministerial Conference in November 1971, COST is presently used by the scientific communities of 35 European countries to cooperate in common research projects supported by national funds.

The funds provided by COST - less than 1% of the total value of the projects - support the COST cooperation networks (COST Actions) through which, with EUR 30 million per year, more than 30.000 European scientists are involved in research having a total value which exceeds EUR 2 billion per year. This is the financial worth of the European added value which COST achieves.

A "bottom up approach" (the initiative of launching a COST Action comes from the European scientists themselves), "à la carte participation" (only countries interested in the Action participate), "equality of access" (participation is open also to the scientific communities of countries not belonging to the European Union) and "flexible structure" (easy implementation and light management of the research initiatives) are the main characteristics of COST.

As precursor of advanced multidisciplinary research COST has a very important role for the realisation of the European Research Area (ERA) anticipating and complementing the activities of the Framework Programmes, constituting a "bridge" towards the scientific communities of emerging countries, increasing the mobility of researchers across Europe and fostering the establishment of "Networks of Excellence" in many key scientific domains such as: Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences; Food and Agriculture; Forests, their Products and Services; Materials, Physical and Nanosciences; Chemistry and Molecular Sciences and Technologies; Earth System Science and Environmental Management; Information and Communication Technologies; Transport and Urban Development; Individuals, Societies, Cultures and Health. It covers basic and more applied research and also addresses issues of pre-normative nature or of societal importance.

