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Evaluating Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies. A methodological framework applied in Portugal

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Abstract:

This paper debates the evolution and importance of the urban dimension of EU policies and in particular EU Cohesion Policy in the past three decades. It discusses the growing relevance for supporting a Urban Agenda for the EU, and the gradual adoption and implementation of Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies (ISUDS), by pointing out their advantages vis-à-vis mainstream sectoral-focused policy strategies. In this light, the article proposes an evaluation framework to assess and compare ISUDS across Europe. Based on the Portuguese case-study this analysis argues that despite their limited impacts, EU financed urban programmes (URBAN, POLIS, ISUDS) contributed positively to promoting a policy integrated approach, and enhanced urban physical and social environment of deprived urban neighbourhoods. More concretely, the initial results from the recent implementation of the 103 Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies reveal a gradual adoption by the urban and local authorities of more holistic and integrated urban development policy approaches to increasing policy effectiveness and efficiency.

Keywords: Urban dimension, EU Cohesion Policy, Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies, URBAN Community Initiative, POLIS

1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) has not adopted a formal urban policy. However, as many of its areas are highly urbanised it is inevitable that many of its policy initiatives have targeted urban areas and impacted their socio-economic development. Indeed, existing literatures on the main effects of EU policies, and in particular EU Cohesion Policy, demonstrates that EU urban areas have always benefited from EU funding which has assisted them with the implementation of their development strategies (Atkinson, 2001; Carpenter, 2006; De Gregorio Hurtado, 2017). Presently, around 40 per cent of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding is invested in cities. The increasing focus on the urban areas in EU Cohesion Policy reforms is designed to help offset strategic deficits (McCann 2015:106), such as poor planning, lack of appropriate measures for improving social integration and the green economy. Against this background, the idea of integrated sustainable urban development has been emphasised as an important objective.

This idea for supporting integrated urban policies is not new, however, ideas of what integration actually means differ considerably. For some it is strongly linked to the concept of urban governance capacity (Le Galès, 2005). This is particularly relevant in countries that have been hampered by ‘non-planning’ traditions and where the state is chronically weak, at a local level (Hague, 2018: 619). A paradigmatic example is the city of Austin (USA) which has utilized such an integrated approach to capture high-technology talent, through significant investments in research and development, higher education, and business incubation (Florida and Gates, 2003). From a social integration perspective, the concept of urban community development embraces the need for integrated social and economic development within the urban space (Blackman, 1995). It also requires increasing quality of life in relation to a more sustainable urban development, and a more integrated policy framework (Takano, 2003).

As previously noted, under the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 period, the goal of integrated territorial and urban development has gained a new momentum. This justifies the need for designing adequate policy evaluation methodologies to assess their main impacts on development in urban areas (ESPON, 2018). Yet, the way in which ‘integrated’ is conceptualized is highly complex. In this context, this article seeks to develop a framework to evaluate the integrated nature of policies related to the emerging EU dimension over the past three decades. As such, the article helps to elaborate on the impact of the EU urban dimension in the development of a territorial approach to urban development policies.

Worldwide, the United Nations also recognises the need to enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and

management in all countries (Satterthwaite, 2016). In a similar vein, the European Commission (EC) stresses that ‘the various dimensions of urban life – environmental, economic, social and cultural – are interwoven and success in urban development can only be achieved through an integrated approachⁱⁱ’. The approach calls for strong participatory multi-level governance frameworks, borderless place-based solutions, the development of new organisational and governance models, and the combination of physical urban renewal measures with socioeconomic, environmental and urban planning interventions (EC, 1997; EC, 1998; URBACT, 2014).

From a theoretical standpoint, the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European Cities (2007: 2) postulates that Integrated Urban Development is a “process in which spatial, sectoral and temporal aspects of key areas of urban policy are co-ordinated”. For Ferry et al., (2018: 2), the formulation of integrated policy responses has four distinct dimensions: (i) Strategic: to strengthen synergies between different strategic frameworks as a way to develop a comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy for a given territory; (ii) Monetary: to combine different funding sources as a means to encourage and facilitate coordinated investment in territories; (iii) Territorial: to support place-based integration through a strengthened focus on functional areas or bottom-up inputs that ensure tailored approaches for each territory; (iv) Operational: to develop integrated activities in the ground, by combining different investments under a multi-fund approach to enable the implementation of a more complex and tailored set of integrated projects.

When exploring the potential indicators for integrated territorial and urban development, a recent ESPON working paper (2018: 3) identifies a number of key elements that should be combined in integrated territorial investments: (i) investments in physical infrastructure with investments in human capital; (ii) ERDF and EAFRD funds; and (iii) grants with financial instruments. Moreover, these investments should have a designated territory as well as an integrated territorial development strategy. Contrastingly, Ellin (2006) discusses the concept of ‘Integral Urbanism’ toward a more sustainable human habitat by emphasising connection, communication, and celebration, in stark contrast to a master-planned functionally-zoned city which separates, isolates, alienates, and retreats.

In this light, conceptually, the paper proposes a novel policy evaluation framework for the assessment of this integrated approach on six vectors (integration of policy areas, impact of operations, planning horizon, territorial targeting, inclusiveness and strength of the monitoring framework). Empirically, the article will examine the extent to which the evolution from the URBAN CI to the EU Integrated Urban Sustainable Development Strategies (ISUDS) approach has brought changes in relation to the six dimensions. The article focuses on the case of Portugal which offers a wide set of EU financed urban development integrated strategies, since 1994, in the major urban agglomerations.

In particular, Portugal provides insights to a variety of urban development challenges due to the asymmetric nature of socio-economic and demographic development in the country. Wealth and people are largely concentrated in two large metropolitan areas (Lisbon and Porto). In contrast, and with exception of the coastal strips, the rest of the territory is largely depopulated and dominated by relatively small urban settlements. From an urban development perspective, however, the large majority of the Portuguese urban areas include one or more deprived urban areas. Since the 1990s these have been subject of EU financed interventions (URBAN, POLIS, ISUDS) which all followed an integrated development policy approach. However, existing evaluation reports do not specifically assess the added value and impact of this integrated approach.

The Article commences with an overview of the evolution and salience of the urban dimension of EU policies. The following section reflects on current debates in relation to integrated evaluations and proposes a policy evaluation framework which can assess and compare the various ISUDS across Europe. In the final sections, we apply this methodological approach to the Portuguese case-study.

2. The Urban Dimension of EU Policies

In the late 1980s debates at the EU level increasingly focused on large urban areas, as a spatial level for economic development approaches. More concretely, by the early 1990s “the idea that cities matter because of their ability to concentrate economic activities, has become more and more vigorous” (Lang and Török, 2017: 5). However, in terms of targeted support programmes, EC contributions to support urban interventions have remained limited (Carpenter, 2006) and, as a policy area, urban development has not been an EU priority. Instead the EU identified regions as the preferred spatial level for policy implementation. Nevertheless, a more detailed analysis of financial distributions within these regional focused policies (mostly from EU Cohesion Policy) demonstrates that EU urban areas were beneficiaries of a considerable financial support (EC, 2017). More recently, the importance of cities as engines of socio-economic development and the more explicit financial support for urban areas is perhaps symbolically emphasised by a name change of the Department of Regional Policy (DG REGIO) in 2012 to the ‘Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy’.

This increased focus on urban areas in EU policymaking is clearly justified by the fact that around 72% of the EU population lives in cities, towns and suburbs (EC, 2014). Moreover, urban areas represent ideal locations to tackle societal, environmental, economic and spatial planning challenges. On the other hand, the EU does not have formal competences in urban policies and as such cannot explicitly develop a comprehensive EU urban policy or force Member States to follow EU directives on urban policies. Even so, “in terms of aims, objectives, and values, there is an explicit

agreement at European level on the character of the European city of the future and the principles on which an ideal European city should be based” (EC, 2014: 6).

Against this background, we can consider the various instruments that the EU has employed to promote EU development. EU policies have experimented with distinct ways of stimulating development in a targeted way in order to tackle the negative environmental impacts of cities (Stutz and Warf, 2012). These are often linked with prevailing socioeconomic problems (Outley, 1998; MacLaran and Kelly, 2017), whilst promoting economic growth . This started with the Urban Pilot Projects in the 1990s and the URBAN I and II Community Initiatives (CI) in the 1990s and 2000s, which targeted neighbourhoods in extreme deprivation. The 30 Urban Pilot Projects launched during 1990-1993 acted as catalysts for urban regeneration in the target areas. In July 1997 a second phase the Urban Pilot Programme was approved by the EC, which saw 26 projects selected until 1999 (EC, 2009). Following these first experiences, the URBAN CI was launched in 1994. Although the projects financed by this CI initially “focused on issues of urban regeneration and cohesion in a local perspective, they are part of a shift towards introducing a policy focus on large urban agglomerations” (Lang and Török, 2017: 5).

According to Carpenter (2006), the URBAN CI, presented an innovative way of addressing area-based urban challenges, in a context where cities across the EU were facing significant economic, social and environmental challenges. In broad terms, this CI has helped to raise the visibility of EU structural policy as a whole, to attract private investment (EC, 2004a), and “has been able to strike a balance between the need for a coherent policy framework at Community level and the involvement of communities at the grassroots in the implementation of the programmes. It has thus contributed to new forms of governance in towns and cities” (EC, 2003: 5). Lasting only six years (1994-1999), the URBAN CI was integrated within EU mainstream spatial development policies (Regional Operational Programmes) in the following EU Cohesion Policy programming phases (Chorianopoulos and Iossifides, 2006: 410). CI targeted neighbourhoods in extreme deprivation, while addressing the problems of isolation, poverty and exclusion of their inhabitants through interventions that improve the ensemble of their physical and social entourage. The URBAN CI followed an integrated policy approach by taking into account various dimensions of urban life. This was achieved by supporting projects which combined the rehabilitation of obsolete infrastructure with economic and labour market actions, measures to combat the social exclusion inherent in run-down neighbourhoods, and measures to upgrade the quality of the environmentⁱ.

In the case of Portugal, the two URBAN CI phases were articulated by maintaining similar policy interventions strategies in some of the previous intervention deprived urban areas. European wide, the URBAN I financed programmes in 118 urban areas (900 M€ - affecting intervention areas

with around 3.2 million people), and focused on the rehabilitation of infrastructure, job creation, combating social exclusion and environmental improvements. The URBAN II was implemented in 70 urban areas (730 M€), in order to continue this effort in the search for the best development and regeneration urban strategies. Both phases emphasised a “concentration of funding on selected target areas, the increased involvement of citizens and local stakeholders (shared responsibility), as well as a stronger ‘horizontal’ coordination of urban regeneration measures as main elements of an integrated approach towards urban development” (EC, 2009: 10).

This EU support for a policy integrated approach to urban development was continued in the period 2007-2013. However, with the end of the URBAN CI, all cities became potential beneficiaries of the ERDF available on the Cohesion Policy Operational Programmes. This crucial change allowed “for an integration of different sectoral and thematic policies in all cities throughout Europe in the context of the Lisbon Strategy, the Sustainable Development Strategy and other EU priorities”. More concretely, “in over 300 Operational Programmes of Cohesion Policy that were financed by the ERDF in the period 2007-2013, around 3% of total planned EU investment were clearly earmarked as urban (around €10 billion)” (EC, 2009: 11).

Acting as an amplifier of the EU urban policies, the URBACT programme was implemented around 15 years ago (2002) with the goal to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practices between cities and other levels of government, and with the ultimate goal of promoting sustainable urban development. Ultimately, this programme has been contributing to provide assistance to ‘City teams’ in developing methods and processes and to involve relevant stakeholders in policy making, as well as in the preparation of urban development strategies and local action plans (URBACT, 2014).

More recently, the EC, in close cooperation with some international financial institutions, developed a specific financial instrument named JESSICA for promoting urban development. In the end, this instrument functions by transforming “grants into recyclable forms of finance making them more sustainable over the longer term; it will increase the leverage effect brought about by using such grants to attract and combine with private capital; and will introduce stronger incentives towards better performance” (EC, 2007: ix). Taken as a whole, JESSICA provides the managing authorities the possibility of using external expertise to bring needed skills and resources. Moreover, it provides “the possibility to tailor the financial instruments (equity, debt or guarantee investment) and the implementation system to specific regional needs offers greater flexibility than the pre-existing system for distribution of the structural funds in the form of grants” (Dąbrowski, 2014: 2009).

The 2014-2020 period built on these experiences and included provisions for: (1) ring-fenced funding for investment in cities, managed directly by cities; (2) tools that allowed for easier

combining financial support from different funds and programmes supporting development strategies through ‘Integrated Territorial Investments’; (3) the establishment of an Urban Development Network to help cities with the implementation of their Cohesion Policy-funded actions; and (4) Urban Innovative Actions which aim to encourage EU cities to experiment with more locally-based and well-tailored integrated solutions to tackle emerging specific challenges (EC, 2012; 2016). The genealogy of these programmes and initiatives demonstrates that the urban dimension of Cohesion Policy dovetail a broader trend towards a (re-)appreciation of the role of urban areas (vie-a-vie regions) in development (Armondi and De Gregorio-Hurtado, 2019). These trends also follow the global experimentation in urban policies which have seen an ever increasing variety of agendas, instruments, actors, and agencies (Breda-Vázquez et al., 2010). Like the EU’s agenda these global agendas have also stimulated integration of thematic areas to maximise their impact and the sustainable (environmental, economic and social) implementation of these activities.

In conclusion, despite the importance of the urban dimension within EU policies, the genesis of a coherent and comprehensive urban policy at the EU level has been slow, due to a lack of EU competencies in this area. Nevertheless, initial steps towards an emerging Urban Agenda for the EU were adopted at an informal meeting of the Council of European Affairs ministers of the EU on 24 June 2016. Subsequently, a significant number of European partnerships between the EC, Member States and EU cities were launched, covering several urban development domains, including housing, air quality and urban poverty (EC, 2016: 15). In essence, this Agenda focuses on the three pillars of EU policy making and implementation: (i) Better regulation; (ii) Better funding; and (iii) Better knowledgeⁱⁱ. As a consequence, 12 concrete thematic priorities for the EU cities were defined, for the Urban Agenda for the EU, where the intention to promote a more balanced, sustainable and integrated approach towards urban challenges was reinforced, following the past experiences of the URBAN CI.

3. Assessing Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies: a methodological approach

The idea behind the implementation of integrated territorial development approaches is not new. By way of illustration, any sound and effective policy development plan requires a holistic and integrated intervention strategy, in order to augment efficiency and relevancy levels, and the opportunity for wider synergies between sectors. This rationale can and should be followed for all territorial scales, including the urban level, as they directly influence and affect all dimensions of territorial development (Medeiros 2016a, 2016b).

This notion of breaking compartmentalised policymaking processes is, nevertheless, difficult to achieve. First, there are issues in terms of competing policy agendas which may prevent integration. Second, the benefits are only achieved as part of a long term visionary framework. Third, the lack or insufficient coordination between layers of governance and sectoral legislation, can affect the effectiveness of these strategies (URBACT, 2014). Fourth, the integration can only take place once a specific territorial scale has been defined in a functional (rather than administrative manner). Fifth, the impact of the integrated approach has to be clearly defined and added to that, the monitoring and evaluation processes of integrated development policy approaches needs to be redefined, since available indicators favour a policy sectoral evaluation prism (ESPON, 2018).

In this context, the ISUDS approach is especially important in a context where EU urban areas face a range of fundamental challenges, which include economic stagnation, rising social intolerance and environmental hazards. Understandably, effective policy measures require an integrated approach where the various urban development dimensions are interwoven in a complementary perspective. As expressed in a recent ESPON (2014: 4) report “the key social, economic and environmental opportunities and challenges facing European cities in an era of globalisation cannot be defined solely by their administrative boundaries but sit in a wider territorial context and larger functional urban areas within which today’s urban development takes place”.

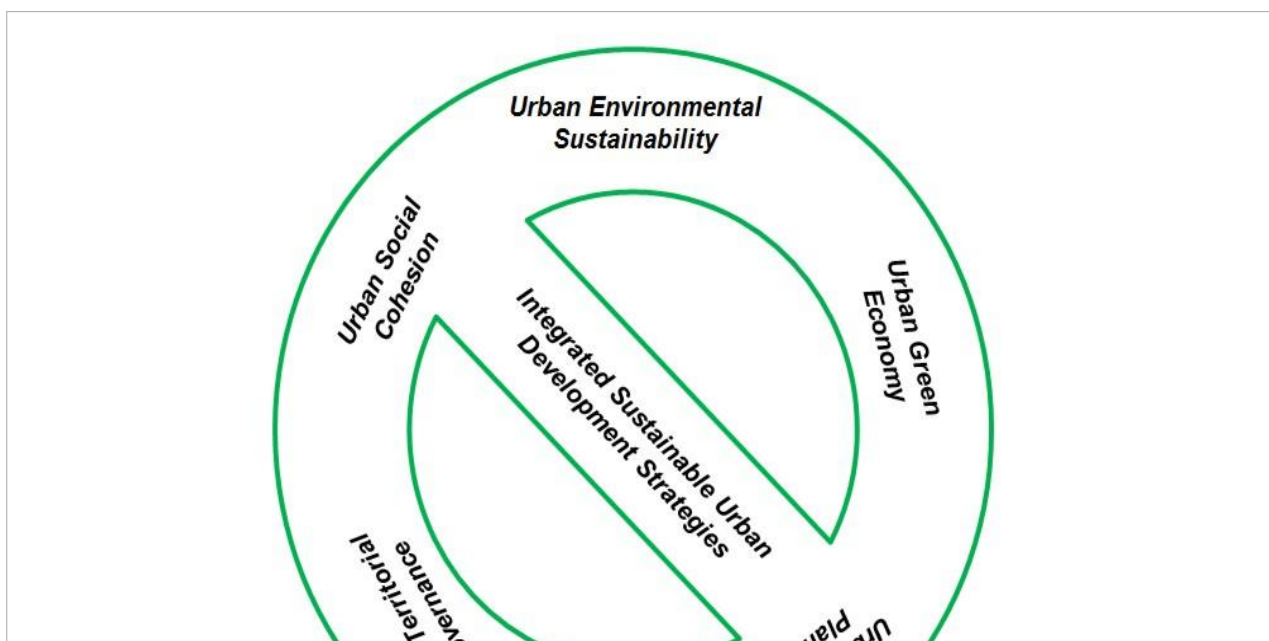
In order to unravel the potential benefits of the ISUDS, the Regulatory Framework for EU Cohesion Policy 2014-20 allowed for an innovative incentive to make more use of integrated development strategies through European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), in order to strengthen the resilience and empowerment of EU cities. These ISUDS can be implemented within Operational Programmes or through Integrated Territorial Investments (van der Zwet and Bachtler, 2018: 3). Assessing the achievements and the effectiveness of these ISUDS is, however, a complex procedure. In roughly equal parts, successful ISUDS require a place sensitive approach (Ferry and McMaster, 2018), as well as an effective territorial governance system and a pro-active mobilisation of local-regional actors.

It has also gained wide acceptance that developing and implementing evaluation methodologies for assessing integrated urban policies is a complex task. For one, they are characterized by institutional fragmentation and ‘positivist imprints’ associated with traditional policy evaluation methods, “which causes general difficulties when dealing with dynamic, experimental and interactive processes where aims and visions are not a pre-condition but also a result” (Breda-Vázquez et al., 2010: 211). Secondly, urban related statistical indicators are often limited to economic and demographic data. Thirdly, evaluation practices of ISUDS tend to be based on the analysis of “classical sectoral indicators that measure the impact of the investments under the

sectoral policies” (ESPON, 2018: 4), thus overlooking the actual impact of the investments on the territory. Finally, “integrated investments at territorial level also pose a challenge in terms of the complexity involved regarding the content, the scale and the implementation mechanism. Thus, when it comes to measuring the impact of such investments, contextualisation and choice of indicators can cause confusion” (ESPON, 2018: 5).

Despite these challenges, from a methodological standpoint, we propose an evaluation framework built around five main analytic dimensions, and respective components (Fig. 1). In essence, we suggest that ISUDS can be fit within three different categories: (i) weak-integrated; (ii) partially-integrated and (iii) fully-integrated.

To guide this assessment, we propose the analysis of six distinct evaluation vectors. Firstly, from a strategic viewpoint, fully-integrated ISUDS should contemplate all urban development dimensions and most related components we suggest in our model. Secondly, ISUDS should produce the desired results and impacts which are captured by a well-designed, holistic, realistic and fully functioning monitoring and evaluation systems. The process for capturing these impacts can be highly complex and a full evidence base can be difficult to achieve. A number of ‘hard’ indicators in relation to social well-being, economic opportunity and environment quality have been proposed but these require to be complemented with ‘softer’ indicators that assess additionality and added value of territorial approaches in terms of governance and partnership (Ferry et al. 2018). Thirdly, they should have a long-term perspective and be integrated within the local/regional development strategies. This does not simply refer to the inclusion of a visionary statement but a strategic plan that goes beyond the time period of a single programme cycle. Fourth, they should follow a place-based strategic approach and be built from a bottom-up perspective. This would signify the involvement of local stakeholders in the implementation process. However, stakeholder involvement very much depends on the scale that the strategy covers; a strategy that covers a large FUA is likely to include different stakeholders than one that targets a neighbourhood.



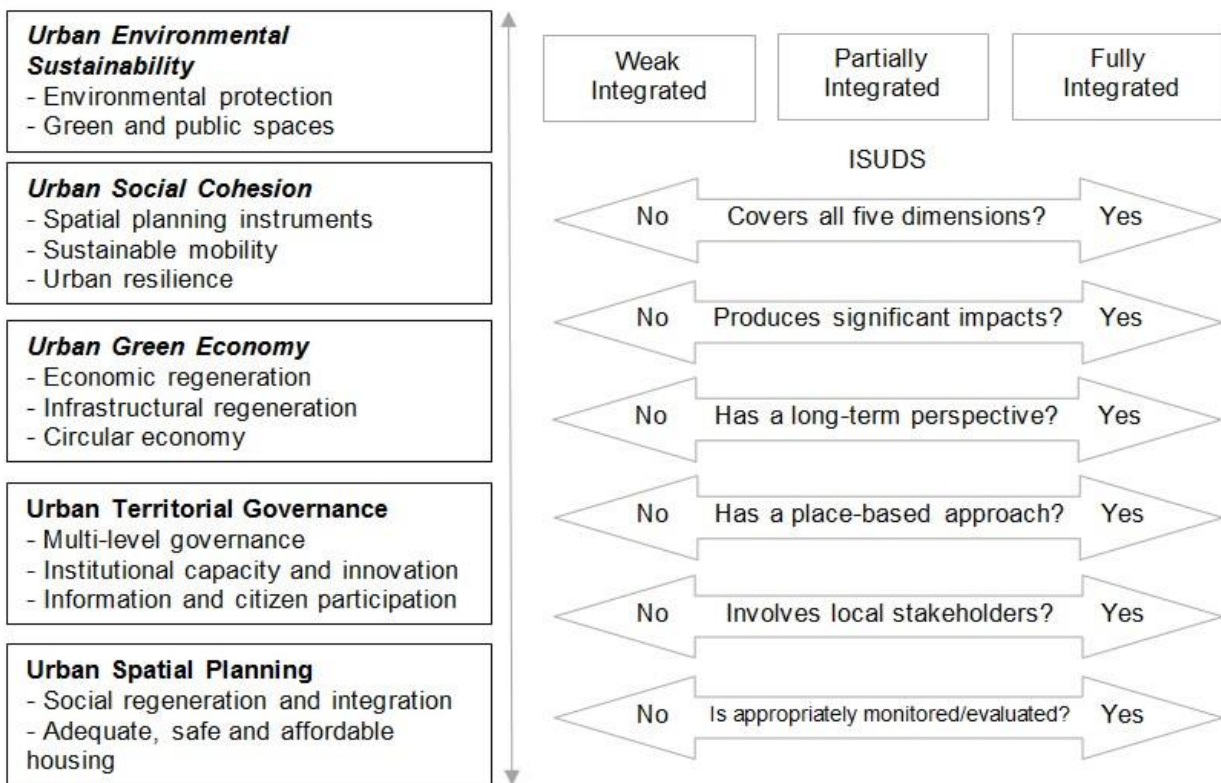


Figure 1 - The Dimensional Circle of ISUDS and a proposed evaluation framework

It goes without saying that the selection of the six vectors which support the proposed methodology is built on existing literatures. More particularly, from the Ex-post evaluation of URBAN CI (EC, 2004) we adopted the analysis of the effectiveness, impact, management and implementation systems, and community value added (place-based approach). Furthermore, we took into consideration the work of Murtagh and McKay (2003) in identifying ‘process effects’ in the implementation of URBAN CI, which include several policy qualitative evaluation related elements (agreement, discourses, style, arenas, stakeholder). In addition, Murtagh and McKay when analysing effects of the URBAN area in Derry/Londonderry, not only used economic (income support) related

indicators, but also environmental (environmental rating), governance (no. of community groups), and social (total unemployment) related ones.

There are several reasons which justify the development for a more qualitative evaluation methodological approach. The first reason is based on previous experiences in using Territorial Impact Assessment Methodologies, which are more appropriated for the regional/national territorial levels, due to data availability (Medeiros, 2014a). The second reason is explained in a recent ESPON working paper which states that “Integrated territorial investments are complex. Therefore, sometimes people on the ground can say more about the impact by pointing out concrete examples of what has worked and what has not worked. Thus, survey data exploring people’s perceptions of the achievements can be a valuable addition to the evaluation process ...“ (ESPON, 2018: 18). Moreover, the proposed framework helps to normalise/focalise the evaluation process. Third, the selection of the five analytic dimensions for the proposed policy evaluation framework was based on the territorial development main dimensions: economic competitiveness; social inclusion, environmental sustainability, territorial articulation/planning; and territorial governance (Medeiros, 2017).

4. The Portuguese case study

Portugal joined the EU in 1986 and has benefited significantly from the introduction of EU Cohesion Policy. One of the most positive impacts of the initial admission to the EU for Portugal was the Europeanisation of Portuguese policy implementation practices, principles, and strategic guidelines (Medeiros, 2014a). Equally important has been the funding Portugal has received from the EU to support modernisation processes (Medeiros, 2013; Medeiros et al., 2016). More specifically, EU support for urban development initiatives became stimulus for urban regeneration processes. Furthermore, this support introduced urban, local, regional and national spatial planning approaches. Portugal has benefited from a number of programmes starting with the implementation of the URBAN CI in 1994, followed by the POLIS programme (2000) and the implementation of 103 ISUDS in the 2014-20 period.

4.1. The URBAN Community Initiative

Targeting neighbourhoods in extreme socioeconomic deprivation, the URBAN CI proposed an innovative and integrated policy approach to address urban related issues. By the time it was firstly implemented in Portugal (1994), several urban neighbourhoods faced poor living conditions, and

targeted dwellers were encapsulated in a negative social integration vicious circle, namely in certain areas of Lisbon and Porto metropolitan areas (Table 1 and Figure 2).

Table 1 - URBAN CI Programmes in Portugal

URBAN Programme	Metropolitan Area	Neighbourhood	Total Investment (1000 Euros)
I	Lisbon	Lisboa - Casal Ventoso	13,530
I	Lisbon	Amadora - Damaia de Baixo	3,515
I	Lisbon	Oeiras - Outurela/Portela	19,165
I	Lisbon	Loures - Odivelas	5,500
I	Porto	Porto - Vale de Campanhã	3,415
I	Porto	Gondomar - S. Pedro da Cova	3,520
II	Lisbon	Lisboa - Vale de Alcântara	10,254
II	Lisbon	Amadora - Damaia/Buraca	5,089
II	Oporto	Gondomar	14,454

Source: Author compilation

The first URBAN CI in Portugal was focused in six deprived urban areas (Table 1), four in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, and two on the Porto Metropolitan Area. According to the final evaluation report of this CI, the ‘Lisboa – Casal Ventoso’ programme defined three main goals: (i) promote a gradual reconversion of this clandestine neighbourhood, and simultaneously integrate it into the surrounded urban fabric; (ii) reinforce collective equipment; and (iii) combat social exclusion. In the same vein, the ‘Amadora – Venda Nova/Damaia de Baixo’ programme aimed at: (i) qualifying the urban fabric; (ii) increasing the quality of live and social integration; and (iii) increasing the number of social services. In turn, the ‘Oeiras – Outurela/Portela’ programme supported three main intervention measures: (i) supporting professional training and employment; (ii) supporting social and cultural integration; and (iii) supporting urban and environmental requalification. Finally, the ‘Loures – Odivelas’ programme placed particular focus in promoting: (i) socio-economic animation; (ii) urban requalification; and (iii) valorisation of human resources.

In the Porto Metropolitan Area, the ‘Porto - Vale de Campanhã’ centred its attention in promoting socioeconomic integration for the young and poor. It also aimed at promoting: (i) functional and economic requalification and revitalisation; (ii) urban and environmental rehabilitation; and (iii) the improvement of the quality of life of urban dwellers. Likewise, the ‘Gondomar – S. Pedro da Cova’ intervention aimed at: (i) improving the quality of life; (ii) valorising educational and citizenship aspects; (iii) qualifying economic activities; and (iv) creating more appropriate institutional conditions for urban development (DGDR, 2002).

In overall terms, the first URBAN CI brought about quite positive impacts in the intervention areas, and namely in the urban rehabilitation process, the social integration process, the individual competences of the less favoured population, the creation of new employment opportunities, and

increased levels of urban resilience. Indeed, in certain more severe cases (Lisboa - Casal Ventoso), a favela-like neighbourhood was completely eradicated and transformed into a modern and regenerated urban centre. However, the process of combating poverty and social and cultural exclusion has been slow, particularly in terms of changing social-cultural mentalities. Furthermore, the failure to create sufficient well-paid and sustainable jobs has meant that the initial unfavourable socioeconomic patterns have not disappeared. The neighbourhoods, therefore, continue to be characterised by problems associated with poverty and social exclusion. As such, the final evaluation report recognized that there is a need for a continued effort in order to achieve the main goals of this CI (DGDR, 2002).

For the second URBAN CI (2000-2006), the Lisbon Metropolitan Area saw two policy interventions approved. The first targeted the city of Amadora (Damain/Buraca neighbourhoods) which aimed to: (i) requalify the urban environment and valorising the public space; (ii) integrate the African origin population; (iii) valorise the socio-educative context of the young and revitalise the social environment. The second intervention focused on Vale de Alcântara neighbourhood, and aimed to: (i) promote the cohesion of the public space; (ii) promote the transition to a citizenship of duties and rights; and (iii) prevent and curbing drug addiction in the neighbourhood and its surroundingsⁱⁱⁱ. In turn, the remaining URBAN CI intervention took place in the city of Porto which, just like in the cases in Lisbon, was firstly implemented during the previous programming period (1994-1999). In short, the Porto-Gondomar programme defined three main distinct intervention priorities: (i) regenerating the urban character of the area; (ii) promoting social inclusion and economic and professional qualification; and (iii) promoting social, cultural and sporting activities (EC, 2003).

By embracing a wide set of topics, the URBAN II CI ended up with considerable positive impacts in a myriad of territorial development arenas (CCDR_LVT, 2010, 2011). These included, for instance, positive results in the: (i) socioeconomic integration of the young and old generations; (ii) reduction of number of drug addicts; (iii) urban regeneration and illumination; (iv) increasing number of green spaces; (v) educational qualification and (vi) adoption of an integrated policy approach. Despite these overall positive impacts, both in Lisbon and Porto some neighbourhoods continued to attract inhabitants that were vulnerable to poverty and deprivation. This justifies the need to continue this socio-economic support. Furthermore, in several occasions, the goal of valorising economic activities, the reinforcement of associativism and social solidarity, and the creation of social employment was not fully attained. Indeed, whilst the physical regeneration of urban spaces was positively affected, the socio-economic domain is still largely affected by all sorts of problems (Alves, 2017; EC, 2010). This demonstrates the limited integrated nature of the Urban CI initiatives in Portugal.

4.2. The POLIS programme

Dovetailing the URBAN CI, the Portuguese authorities implemented the POLIS programme. It represented an innovative initiative specifically designed for integrating urban requalification and the improvement of the urban environment in cities. Formally initiated in May 2000, this programme aimed to contribute to increasing the quality of life of several Portuguese cities (Figure 2), and more specifically to (Partidário et al., 2004: 413):

- Serve as a vehicle to urban requalification with an integrated approach towards significant environmental improvement;
- Engage on urban rehabilitation actions in order to improve the quality of urban centres and to promote its multi-functionality;
- Enable the improvement of the urban environment and increase the value of environmental landmarks such as riverbanks or the coastal fringe; and
- Increase green spaces in urban areas, to promote pedestrian areas and to reduce urban traffic.

Its main policy intervention component (integrated operations for urban renovation and environmental valorisation) was financed via EU Cohesion Policy funds (ERDF), together with other public and private financial sources. The POLIS programme served as a ‘first policy experience’ of integrating urban regeneration operations in several urban areas of 28 cities. These included areas with low quality of urban life, industrial declining zones, sea and river fronts, and physically decaying cultural and heritage areas. At the same time, POLIS envisaged the establishment of new poles or centralities within metropolitan areas, the improvement of cities located in rural areas and close to the national borders, and the creation of green cities, cities of knowledge and entertainment, digital cities and intergenerational cities. This followed a twofold strategic vision, in which a local approach had the goal of solving specific urban problems, whilst a more generic (national) vision intended to promote a more balanced and polycentric network of cities across Portugal (Partidário et al., 2004). As one might expect, the impacts of the POLIS programme varied considerably from city to city. In general, it generated a relatively positive impact in the following domains (Sousa, 2017: 169-70):

- It initiated a novel strategic vision from an environmental and spatial planning point of view;
- It paved the way for the implementation of more effective measures in requalifying the urban tissue;
- It contributed to improving the attractiveness and the quality of life in urban areas; and
- It led to the creation of new public spaces designed to satisfy the local inhabitants.

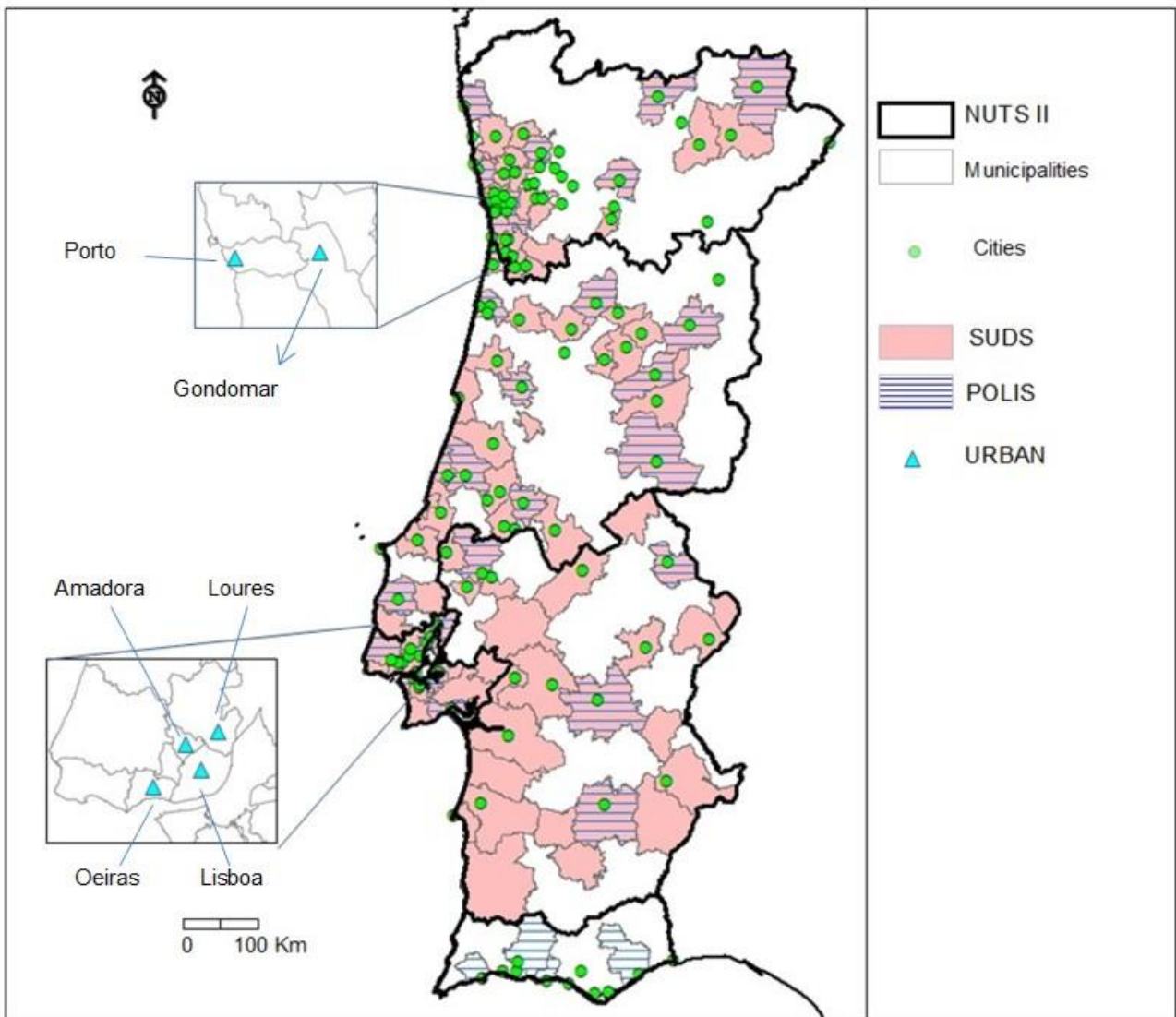


Figure 2 - URBAN CI, POLIS and ISUDS in Portugal - Source: several - author cartography

Just like the URBAN CI, the POLIS programme included an integrated approach to urban regeneration and environmental valorisation in 18 cities in an initial phase^{iv}. In the end, 40 interventions in 39 cities (Fig. 2) implemented projects worth more than €1,173 million (Pestana et al., 2009). According to Vale and Queirós (2005), the design of the POLIS followed the EU trends for supporting more environmental urban policies, whilst acting as a local-regional development engine for consolidating the national urban system. In sum, around €160 million was invested, mostly (78%) concentrated in supporting integrated operations for urban regeneration and environmental valorisation. From an institutional perspective, the POLIS programme introduced an innovative approach, by establishing partnerships between central and local governments. However, the approached lacked transparency; the selection of the cities was not discussed publically; and the

financial framework was not clearly defined. Furthermore, several delays in the programme implementation affected its effectiveness and some interventions led to real estate speculation.

On the other hand, the POLIS programme opened up an avenue for a stronger and more coherent national policy for cities, which led to the creation of the POLIS XXI programme, for the 2007-13 Cohesion Policy programming period. Similar to its predecessor, policy integration logic sustained the implementation of this programme, by focusing on four main interconnected policy goals: to make the Portuguese cities (i) territories of innovation and competitiveness; (ii) of citizenship and social cohesion; (iii) with quality of environment and life; and (iv) well-planned and governed. From an operational perspective, the POLIS XXI focused on four main goals^v:

- Qualify and integrate the city spaces;
- Strengthen and differentiate the human, institutional, cultural and economic capital of each city;
- Qualify and intensify the integration of the city in its hinterland;
- Innovate in the solutions for urban qualification.

The POLIS XXI built on and strengthened the previous urban initiatives which took place in Portugal, as it enlarged its intervention focus to the intra-urban, city-region spaces, and city-networks. At the same time, it worked alongside specific urban initiatives which were targeted to address specific solving urban problems. One was devoted for critical urban neighbourhoods (Iniciativa Bairros Críticos) in three areas: Cova da Moura and Vale da Amoreira (Lisbon Metropolitan Area) and Lagarteiro (Porto Metropolitan Area), in a total investment of €10.3 million. The other was the JESSICA financial instrument, used to finance urban renovation and rehabilitation projects, in a total of €335 million for the 2007-13 period (70 municipalities) (CGD, 2017).

4.3. The ISUDS - Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies

For Portugal, 103 ISUDS were approved, covering all Portuguese NUTS II with the exception of the Algarve region, with a total budget of €797 million. In most cases, the approved ISUDS follow previous urban development strategies, and their strategic guidelines incorporate suggestions from public consultation processes and propose monitoring and evaluation plans, with clear defined results and indicators, and risk analysis. The preparation of the ISUDS was, in most cases, the responsibility of the local authorities, similar to the URBAN and POLIS programmes, which evidences the decentralised nature of these types of strategies. It is still too early to assess the impacts and added value of the Portuguese ISUDS, as implementation has only commenced in 2016. However, an assessment of their potential positive effects is available in van der Zwet et al. (2017: 61):

- Strengthening the profile and strategic framework of regional policy;
- Encouraging integrated governance and strengthening capacities;
- Promoting experimentation and innovation, with interventions facilitating greater cooperation and collaboration among policy-makers and stakeholders at different levels.

The Portuguese ISUDS are implemented through an autonomous priority axis of the Regional Operational Programmes that relate with the investment priorities associated with sustainable urban mobility, the improvement of the urban environment and the rehabilitation and regeneration of disadvantaged urban areas. Municipalities in metropolitan areas and upper-level urban centers identified on a regional basis are eligible for ISUDS support. They place a particular focus on supporting social integration, physical renovation and sustainable mobility trends, whilst identifying a few (between 1 and four) problematic urban neighborhoods. These, are either the old city centre, or/and peripheral social degraded urban areas. Furthermore, in certain cases, the ISUDS advance place-based measures to stimulating the local economy, like the promotion of tourism related activities. In a few larger urban areas strategies' objective is also to improve governance models. Curiously, the Algarve NUT II decided not to apply for any ISUDS, as they did not have enough financial capacity to include an autonomous development priority axis with the three required intervention dimensions in their Regional Operational Programme. Furthermore, the required 5% for the ERDF urban investments was already assured by the remaining Portuguese regions.

Finally, a positive aspect from the implementation of the ISUDS in Portugal was the responsibility allocated to Municipalities Associations and Metropolitan Areas for developing strategies, project animation, and their monitoring and evaluation. In a sense, the ISUDS can be seen as a tangible policy tool for implementing bottom-up and place-based territorial development strategies.

5. Applying the ISUDS policy evaluation framework to the Portuguese ISUDS

Based on the analysis provided in the previous section and further field-work, an attempt to fit the Portuguese ISUDS in the proposed evaluation framework provides the following conclusions:

1. Covers all five dimensions?: The Portuguese ISUDS, as a group, tackle, in general, all aspects related with the main dimensions for promoting urban development (Urban Environmental Sustainability, Urban Social Cohesion, Urban Green Economy, Urban Territorial Governance, and Urban Spatial Planning). Indeed, they are mostly concentrated in improving environmental aspects of urban development, as well as in promoting social regeneration and integration. Furthermore,

although to a lesser extent, economic regeneration, governance and spatial planning goals are directly and indirectly covered in the ISUDS strategic documents.

2. Produces significant impacts?: Based on previous experiences (URBAN, POLIS), there is an expectation of positive impacts from the implementation of the ISUDS in Portugal. These, however, are not likely to fully solve all the urban challenges which affect the targeted neighborhoods. Instead, they are likely to mitigate them, in certain urban development domains, like the environmental and social improvement of specific urban areas, whilst introducing and reinforcing new policy approaches which can bring longer-term policy benefits to the development of the Portuguese urban areas. On the other hand, they are expected to increase the levels of institutional learning and multilevel governance, as they require a close collaboration between the regional (CCDRs) and urban (Municipalities) levels, to be successfully implemented.
3. Has a long-term perspective?: For the most part, the Portuguese ISUDS follow previously designed and implemented urban development strategies. This means that there has been a continuation in implementing them along the past decades. As such, and taking into account the unlikelihood of solving all urban related issues in the following years, there will be a need to continue the implementation of ISUDS after this programming period.
4. Has a place-based approach?: The strategies proposed in the 103 Portuguese ISUDS follow a place-based approach by adjusting policy interventions to the needs of specific urban areas. More precisely, they all present a detailed cartography of specific urban neighborhoods subject to the policy intervention.
5. Involves local stakeholders?: As previously mentioned, one of the most positive effects coming from the implementation of the Portuguese ISUDS is their governance framework, which is based on a bottom up and a place-based policy rationale, by involving local/regional stakeholders in policy strategy design, implementation and evaluation processes. Amongst these are local associations, namely associated with the goal of promoting social inclusion and supporting economic activities. On the other hand, the responsibility for designing, implementing and evaluating the ISUDS is allocated to the municipalities.
6. Is appropriately monitored/evaluated?: All Portuguese ISUDS propose concrete mechanisms to be evaluated, mostly by the urban authorities which implement them. These mechanisms include the collection of qualitative and quantitative data to analyse the changes/causalities of previously identified indicators, and the consultation of monitoring committees. It remains to be seen, however, how effective this monitoring and evaluation procedures will become.

Overall, the Portuguese ISUDS can be situated between the Partially-Integrated and the Fully-Integrated types of ISUDS, as the real impact (as opposed to the potential impact) of the intervention remains unclear. From a purely strategic prism, however, they reflect the emerging axiom for a more integrated policy approach, which has been permeating academic and EU political discourses in the past decades.

6. Conclusion

This paper contributes to highlight the growing importance of ISUDS as an EU policy tool to promoting urban development. The urban dimension of EU policies has gained systematic policy and financial relevance over the past decades, which culminated with the adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU in 2016. Moreover, whilst not being a complete novelty, the EU support for the

implementation ISUDS has built up momentum in terms of promoting a more polycentric EU urban system. URBAN CI, implemented since 1994 until 2006, and more recently (since 2014) the ISUDS, represent concrete examples of policy tools that support such developments.

In view of a lack of tailor-made methodologies to assess the integrated nature of ISUDS, this article proposes a novel an evaluation framework, based on six evaluation vectors: (i) do they cover all the five dimensions of urban development?: (ii) do they produce significant impacts; (iii) do they have a long-term perspective?; (iv) do they have a place-based approach; (v) do they involve local stakeholders; (vi) are they appropriately monitored/evaluated? This parameter evaluation allows fitting each analysed ISUDS into three distinct categories: (i) weak-integrated; (ii) partially-integrated, (iii) fully-integrated. As such, it permits a comparison between all EU ISUDS, and a more focus, simplified, and systematic evaluation process.

In overall terms, the selection of this evaluation framework was based on our previous experience in assessing the main impacts of EU policies and programmes, and conclusions from available literatures, which point out the shortcomings associated with the use of classical evaluation methodologies (impact assessment, beta and sigma convergence analysis, regression type of analysis, simple quantitative methods of looking at correlations, etc.) to assessing integrated territorial investments. Instead, a more qualitative evaluation approach, based on interviews and project analysis, can be a valuable addition to the ISUDS evaluation process, particularly when linked with the analysis of available quantitative urban data.

The analysis of the 103 Portuguese ISUDS demonstrated that this methodology shows that these strategies have a relatively high level of policy integration. On a positive note, these ISUDS are intervening in all urban development dimensions and related components (environmental sustainability, social cohesion, green economy, territorial governance and spatial planning), whilst supporting placed-based and a long-term strategies mobilised by local and regional stakeholders. Conversely, based on previous similar experiences (URBAN CI and POLIS), the expected impacts are somewhat limited in relation to the needs of the neighbourhoods in which interventions take place. Moreover, the proposed monitoring and evaluation mechanisms require further scrutiny, as the currently lack appropriate indicators could undermine the strategies' effectiveness.

Indeed, when considering the main results from previous experiences of implementing Urban Integrated Approaches in Portugal, financed by EU funding (URBAN, POLIS), we can conclude that such approaches positively contributed to improving physical and socioeconomic elements in several deprived urban neighbourhoods. On the other hand, the approaches had limited impact in terms of changing socioeconomic paradigms in urban areas which are strongly affected by drug-addiction, lack of economic capacity, and low income levels. Nevertheless, they served as experimental policy

platforms and leaning bases for all involved stakeholders, in order to improve the implementation effectiveness and efficiency of future urban development programmes.

Evidently, our findings are still preliminary since the ISUDS' implementation process is still in an early stage. As such, a more robust and sound evaluation needs to take place after they are fully implemented. For this, there is a need to apply a rigorous evaluation approach, to appropriately fit each ISUDS in our policy framework related parameters. Even so, and based on our findings, we would recommend that the ISUDS can be linked with additional urban development funding initiatives to increase the degree of their positive impacts in the quality of life in urban areas. Moreover, we recommend a combination of external and independent, as well as internal monitoring and evaluation processes which follow our proposed policy evaluation framework, in order to make available more reliable and relevant information that can help to improve the implementation of the ISUDS.

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ⁱ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/urban2/urban/initiative/src/frame1.htm

ⁱⁱ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.ccdr-lvt.pt/pt/urban-ii/230.htm>

^{iv} Viana do Castelo, Vila Real, Bragança, Área Metropolitana do Porto (Vila do Conde, Matosinhos, Porto e Vila Nova de Gaia), Aveiro, Coimbra, Viseu, Guarda, Covilhã, Castelo Branco, Leiria, Sintra (Cacém), Almada (Costa da Caparica), Beja and Albufeira. Ten additional cities were added to this list in a second phase: Chaves, Valongo, Gondomar, Marinha Grande, Tomar, Portalegre, Vila Franca de Xira, Torres Vedras, Setúbal and Silves

^v http://www.dgterritorio.pt/ordenamento_e_cidades/cidades/polis_xxi/