	<p>The cities of the Urban N.O.S.E. thematic network dealing with the multiple smart opportunities offered by the social economy; many of them, seriously contributing to the recovery against cyclic crises.</p>	<p>Sergio Campanella</p>
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**The cities of the Urban N.O.S.E. thematic network dealing with the multiple smart opportunities offered by the social economy; many of them, seriously contributing to the recovery against cyclic crises.**

**The impact of the crisis has divided experts between optimists and pessimists: but, as ever, the truth lies in the middle! In the following pages you will see, along with the numerous and worthy contaminations between social, creative, innovative, green and soft economies' principles, also how the cities belonging to the URBACT II thematic network named "Urban N.O.S.E." are organising their territories in order to give concrete responses to a global problem affecting the heart of local development in so many and different urban contexts.**

**The Urban N.O.S.E. thematic network will define a network of urban incubators specifically for social enterprises.** The network will support the start-up of new initiatives of social entrepreneurship, offering services of advising, training activities, instruments of knowledge, up to public services matching to the cities' needs. The idea is that social enterprises can represent the engine of the sustainable development of an urban area, in accordance to the Lisbon agenda, and their increase will favour the social cohesion along with the improvement of the local urban economies.

**Focus issues** or 'macro-themes' of the network are the following ones:

**1) Governance system supporting the social economy**

definition of basic systems establishing widespread partnerships leading to framework agreements between municipalities and a number of local actors.

**2) Tools and methods system for social services provision**

this second step concerns the establishment process of an office supporting social enterprise private projects and social strategic planning of public organisations.

**3) Management of knowledge and learning processes of urban social economy**

in order to support the growth of urban social economy and play its institutional role at local level, the incubators must develop and hold knowledge and be a local reference for topics regarding urban social development.

#### **4) Animation and local awareness raising activities on social economy**

the fourth project stage concerns local animation and local awareness raising activities to create and/or strengthen social culture within the partnership areas, through the implementation of *Local Forums on "Third Sector"* as participatory tools in defining *City Social-Economic Plans* and the creation of *local networks consisting of profit and no-profit parties*, especially aimed at facilitating job inclusions.

#### **5) The sustainability model for social enterprise incubators**

this topic is highly strategic and constitutes the best capitalisation practice of the entire project. In fact, the main purpose is to *identifying the financial support opportunities of incubators* (e.g., *fund raising*), which allow maintaining their activities after the end of the project.

**Project Lead partner:** City of Gela (IT)

**Project partner cities:** Agrinion (GR), Koropi (GR), Xàtiva (ES), Grenoble (FR), Brighton & Hove (UK), Alcobaça (PT), Herrljunga (SE), Athienou (CY)

**Non-city partner:** Consortium Area of Industrial Development – Gela (IT)

Apart from the institution of **Social Enterprises Incubators**, everyone with specific competences respect to an economic field (green and environmental services, services for the person's health and care, sustainable tourism, protection of cultural patrimony, social inclusion/cultural mediation, etc.) and also offering diffused, virtual, remote and flexible services, the network will endow its partner cities with specific **City Social Economy Plans**, represented by their Local Action Plans and seen as instruments of precise city programming for the social planning.

All that would be achieved through the strongest use of the *integrated approach* and the *participatory method*, both main pillars of a concrete sustainable planning.

Among the **expected outputs**, there are:

*5 Thematic Conferences*

*9 Regional Meetings*

*1 Final Conference*

*9 Business Incubators for social economy*

*1 Database of good practices*

*1 E-learning platform*

*1 Web forum*

*3,500 Project brochures*

*2,000 Project's Final Publications*

*1 European Manual*

*1 Urban N.O.S.E. Award*

The network will *transfer best practices in social entrepreneurship* and it will represent the 'main reference for social policies of the involved territories', as well as for the local governance, fostering a specific platform where all the interested cities will get evidence, mutually learn and benefit from the many stakeholders' experiences and practical suggestions.

## The major assets of the Urban N.O.S.E. thematic network for the local culture, social identity, economic growth and the environment

In the following paragraphs you can read the **direct opinions** by some of the Urban NOSE partner **cities' privileged witnesses**, as they all are local coordinators of the network: they will give you the main outputs of a specific interview trying to better define the many implications of the Urban NOSE thematic network with frameworks and sectors which are, unsurprisingly, very close to it and, moreover, **trying to tackling some sensible issues and giving us references to longer term strategies for "green and smart growth" of our cities.**

*«The possibility of gathering a representative and skilled group of persons/institutions with reasonable knowledge on social matters; implementing a European wide project with a common consulting team; sharing best practices; putting the ULSG members into reflection about the way things are done and how things can be done; also, the possibility of raising social awareness on a theme that normally doesn't enter on daily discussion or debate, but that can be a solution or a tool in the urban development: these ones are the major strengths of our thematic network»*

(Eduardo Nogueira<sup>1</sup>, City of Alcobaça, Portugal)

*«Urban NOSE is a good way to improve our local public policy approaches and tools by getting new ideas from European partners and also by initiating innovative methods»*

(Perrine Hamon<sup>2</sup>, City of Grenoble, France)

*«We have recently adopted a new social enterprise strategy for the city and Urban NOSE will add impetus to the implementation of the actions in the strategy. The development of 'incubator' space for social enterprise is one of the three main objectives in our city strategy and we are keen to share these objectives with the other partner cities' ones»*

(John Routledge<sup>3</sup>, City of Brighton & Hove, U.K.)

*«In Urban NOSE there is a strong involvement of civil society and identity culture in improving support tools for generating new businesses»*

(José Moran<sup>4</sup>, City of Xàtiva, Spain)

At a first glance, it clearly appears that the major strengths of the Urban NOSE thematic network converge all in *the way of working, deciding and performing actions for local communities* to be shared at different levels, from the local one,

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<sup>1</sup> Eduardo Nogueira is chief of the Mayor's Support Cabinet of the Municipality of Alcobaça, Portugal.

<sup>2</sup> Perrine Hamon is officer of the Economic Development Department in the Municipality of Grenoble, France.

<sup>3</sup> John Routledge is director of Cultural Service in the Municipality of Brighton and Hove, United Kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> José Moran is economic development consultant for the Municipality of Xàtiva, Spain.

up to the transnational one. Thus, the ***participatory method*** already seems to confirm all its fundamental importance in order to improve and easily achieve a shared and sustainable decision-making, showing successful patterns for long term shifts in urban contexts, especially the most deprived ones.

### **The Urban N.O.S.E. network's contribution to the 2009 European themes "Creativity and Innovation"**

*«Creativity is closely related to innovation, and entrepreneurship relies on creativity. Therefore, by emphasizing the importance of incubation of social enterprises for cities, the social economy entrepreneurship is quite important but not necessarily relevant to urban planners. This network is a good way to promote the importance of innovation within the social economy. Most of today social innovation has been initiated by social entrepreneurs»*

(Perrine Hamon, City of Grenoble, France)

*«Innovation and creativity should be linked to employment (self) on the one hand, and we must not forget that both cannot survive and grow, especially in an urban area, if it does not generate 'shared' (public-private) tools to stay with, capable of continuing the starting effort»*

(José Moran, City of Xàtiva, Spain)

*«The term "innovation" often tends to be related to technical inventions. Therefore social innovations often tend to be neglected. UNOSE can stimulate the creation of social innovations and also make them well visible»*

(Elin Liljebäck<sup>5</sup>, City of Herrljunga, Sweden)

*«This network puts over the table a series of questions and issues that go aside what is usually done. It promotes and causes the debate and stimulates the search for new approaches on economic development»*

(Eduardo Nogueira, City of Alcobaça, Portugal)

*«Creative industries are one of the key growth areas for employment in the city and there is a high level of interest in social enterprise within this sector. There is therefore potential here to support the local economy during the current economic downturn. Innovation is also a theme for the development of local social enterprise as a way of identifying new business opportunities»*

(John Routledge, City of Brighton & Hove, U.K.)

From the interviews here above, we can assume the following:

1. Creativity and Innovation can be better promoted through the social economy, as social entrepreneurs are the main creativity and innovation initiators within the social economy.
2. The PPP (Public-Private Partnership) tools, like those ones created with the Urban NOSE LSGs, are better capable to allow the survival and growth of both creativity and innovation than any other kind of tool.
3. The Urban NOSE network is demonstrating a real capability in order to stimulate the creation of social innovations, above all with new, resilient micro-enterprises and owns all the instruments of practical exchange and communication, necessary to give visibility to those innovations.

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<sup>5</sup> Elin Liljebäck is chief of the Administration Executive Office in the Municipality of Herrljunga, Sweden.

4. The Urban NOSE network engenders a new way of deciding and 'making' local policies, essentially putting on the same level politicians, technicians, civil society representatives, experts, practitioners, other stakeholders, up to simple citizens, and builds up a sort of bottom-up-based 'think tank' favouring the exploration of innovative and creative approaches on the future economic development.
5. Creative and innovative enterprises are one of the key growth areas for employment and social economy in our cities and can give us the way of identifying new business opportunities, so offering a huge potential to support the local economy and defend it from cyclic crises.

In a few words, all the interviewed local actors agree that *the social economy standards, along with the Urban NOSE thematic network, are intrinsically tied with creativity and innovation issues, or better yet **creativity and innovation constitute the main characters of any updated, efficient and successful social enterprise.***

### **The Urban N.O.S.E. impact on the next European Year 2010 about Poverty**

*«The current economic crisis has, in Europe, the risk of creating ghettos of poverty in the neighbourhoods hardest hit by unemployment, places where workers are less educated, with higher percentages of immigrant population, with the worst public infrastructure and ultimately more vulnerable to the negative part of the economic cycle.*

*Breaking the cycle of poverty requires a combined effort on 3 fronts: first, in the hardware of development, the improvement of infrastructure; the second front would be the software of development, improve training and skills of individuals; third front and, perhaps, the most forgotten, the 'orgware', the ability to organise, manage and coordinate efforts from the idiosyncrasies of the site or, in other words, the promotion of self-organisation of civil development.*

*Clearly, Urban NOSE can provide good practice models of self-organisation, through business incubators and the actual work of the LSG with a direct bearing on the 'orgware' development and thus not only optimising the recovery of own assets, but also promoting social cohesion and integration of efforts, and this latter element is crucial to be able to propose new measures for regions and States»*

(José Moran, City of Xàtiva, Spain)

*«New as well as developed, existing social enterprises can complement the established labour market with workplaces for people who don't find their place in the urban context.*

*In the trace of the financial crises there is a need for new solutions in the public sector that can open up new market possibilities which can (best) be provided by social enterprises. At the same time, many unemployed persons tend to look for new and other possibilities. Therefore the local actions, in order to set the creativity and entrepreneurial power free, are key-factors. Best-practise has to be made visible at all levels: local, regional, national, European and global ones»*

(Elin Liljebäck, City of Herrljunga, Sweden)

*«Social enterprise development is one of the ways that jobs, training and wider economic activity can be created for local people on low incomes and who live in deprived urban areas. We have already seen the benefits of this with the existing*

*social enterprises in the city, including the creation of jobs for people with learning difficulties»*

(John Routledge, City of Brighton & Hove, U.K.)

*«There can be a very obvious sequence in our work. After starting with social innovation, we can drift attentions to integration and fight against poverty and social exclusion. So, once again, the project can be important by promoting the debate, reflection and the actions to be implemented on this theme»*

(Eduardo Nogueira, City of Alcobaça, Portugal)

*«Social economy actors promote different economic means for entrepreneurship, thus being fairer in their daily practices and activities (not looking only for profit but focusing on the enterprise's projects and placing the human at the heart of the project).*

*However, in Grenoble most of enterprises dealing with poverty or efficiently considering poverty issues are part of the social economy sector. Therefore, these enterprises are really important for an urban plan considering both social and economic development of the city»*

(Perrine Hamon, City of Grenoble, France)

From the interviews here above, we can assume the following:

1. Urban NOSE can provide good practice models of self-organisation, through business incubators and the actual work of the LSG with a direct bearing on the 'orgware' development and, thus, not only optimising the recovery of own assets, but also promoting social cohesion and integration of efforts, this latter element being crucial to be able to propose new measures for regions and States.
2. Social enterprises have a real capability to harmonise the labour market with new and more sustainable workplaces; moreover, social enterprises seem to be the more adequate in order to offer innovative solutions not only to the labour market, but also to the public sector, everywhere seriously damaged by the financial crisis.
3. Cities who have already experienced the expansion of social enterprises at local level, have all concretely obtained multiple benefits in terms of jobs, training and wider economic activity, especially for people on low incomes and who live in deprived urban areas.
4. Urban NOSE presents a ray of action enough ample to extend debate, reflection and their consequent plans and actions to social integration and fight against poverty and exclusion.
5. The social economy sector is the most involved in tackling poverty in a multifaceted way: so, urban planning has to be based upon social economy if it aims to achieving both social and economic local development.

The city actors share all the opinion that the Urban NOSE thematic network, far from proposing strategies simply based on decreasing private demand with public subsidies, shows **a more sustainable pathway**, based on *eco-compatible, long term, global economic shifts where, essentially, public and private spheres intimately cooperate to reach new added values, where the human and social dimensions find clear priority, better matching the real citizens' needs.*

## **Is it really possible to marry two worlds as different as business-based economy with community and place-based culture? Implications of long-term global shifts.**

*«Firstly, all economic growth is generated locally. Until now there has been a one-sided valuation of economic activity. The business-based economy is the mainstream and the "place-based culture" is the underdog. There is no reason to suppress the business-based economy as a phenomenon but a wider perspective has to be adopted by politicians, business-men/women, media and people in general. It will lead to a more well-balanced perspective on development (economic, ecological and social) and through that an equalisation between the two will be created.*

*The time is right for marrying the two worlds primarily for two reasons: 1) the climate and environment challenge(s) which sets new/other/wider demands than just a GDP-oriented growth; 2) the financial crises. The overconfidence to an uncontrolled market as the solution for every problem has got itself a blow»*

(Elin Liljebäck, City of Herrljunga, Sweden)

*«The satisfaction of basic needs is compatible with business, so it's not a question of choosing between one or another»*

(Eduardo Nogueira, City of Alcobaça, Portugal)

*«We must consider, in a globalised world, cities (and, by extension, regions) as units of the twenty-first century competitiveness, not as a physical space but as a system of relationships very complex where companies, citizens and political power are playing together the game of competitiveness»*

(José Moran, City of Xàtiva, Spain)

*«This is what is interesting within social economy sector, since it tries to reconcile social and economic considerations. This is possible when there is a strong partnership between actors and between public and private interests»*

(Perrine Hamon, City of Grenoble, France)

*«Traditional businesses are becoming increasingly more interested in social, ethical and environmental issues as a way of building relationships with their customers and the communities where they are based. At the same time social enterprises are becoming more aware of how to use traditional business methods to further their social objectives. Therefore we believe there is plenty of scope to make connections and cut across cultures with the further development of social enterprise»*

(John Routledge, City of Brighton & Hove, U.K.)

From the interviews here above, we can assume the following:

1. Urban NOSE represents a very good pattern to favouring the most successful combination between the economic and the social visions for a sustainable urban growth: only this virtuous mixture of the two visions, in fact, will be capable to offer long term strategies against climate and environmental challenges, along with those ones imposed by cyclic crises.
2. One of the Urban NOSE gaining strategies consists in conceiving cities and their spatial planning as complex systems of human relationships as compact teams playing together the game of global competitiveness: thus,

reconciling social and economic spheres is possible through the working of strong partnerships among multiple kinds of actors and between public and private interests.

3. The further development of social economy gives cities plenty of scope to make connections and cut across cultures, like the environmental, the social and the economic ones.

*The social economy of Urban NOSE emerges, thus, for all the interviews made, as really capable to propose a deep rethinking of current modes of production and consumption, opening new, long term and community-based visions of local development and offering the right level of social sustainability to our cities, conceived as "engines of green, fair and smart growth", so simultaneously careful to environmental, social and economic issues; through the example offered by this network, cities will be more responsive in positioning themselves at the best place for creating a more equal environment and defeating the longer term causes of cyclic crises.*

### **From the existing local conditions to the broader links between different aspects of urban culture, heritage and economic activities**

*«Our local partners in the ULSG give us a very accurate view of the local reality. The ULSG members come from very reasonable variety of fields: social, educational, training, cultural, enterprises, Managing Authorities, so discussion and debate are very profiting and this will be a very good input to the project, because we need to adapt it to the constant mutations»*

(Eduardo Nogueira, City of Alcobaça, Portugal)

*«The five project main themes are being considered as part of wider social enterprise development in the city through a strategy and an action plan that both address all the issues raised in the macro-themes. For example, we have already mapped out the types of services provided by local social enterprises (macro-theme 2) and a range of learning activity is in place through a specialist 'Business Link' service for social enterprises funded by our Regional Authority and informal learning opportunities being run by our local Business Community Partnership (macro-theme 3). We are also developing a new incubator facility for social enterprises in the city (macro-theme 5)»*

(John Routledge, City of Brighton & Hove, U.K.)

*«It is a continuous learning-process which starts with creating a common sense of every actor's (different) roles and the common overall challenge. After defining the roles and the common challenges they have created the overall view (for the moment). Next step is to find solutions, which may require a displacement of roles in order to fill gaps»*

(Elin Liljebäck, City of Herrljunga, Sweden)

From the interviews here above, we can assume the following:

1. The Urban NOSE participated working method assures the simultaneous contribution from so many fields of the urban context, so allowing wider and more aware scenarios and consequent urban strategies.
2. The Urban NOSE contents really fit with the existing city strategies and planning, giving them a specific added value enriched by the best practices exchange and the wider transnational perspective.

3. The Urban NOSE organisation better helps to define a local overall view, along with challenges, tools and possible solutions if mainly enriched by a real sharing of various links with the existing local different perspectives.

The social economy contents of the Urban NOSE thematic network are characterised by an ***intrinsic openness towards all the diverse aspects of urban culture, heritage and economic activities***, mostly fitting with the real citizens' exigencies and needs, suggesting broader and more aware, long term city strategies and feeding up these ones with the direct contributions chorally coming from the multiple and complementary aspects of an urban context.

### **The attitude of the Urban N.O.S.E. network coping with the "green" and the "soft" economy principles**

*«The green economy in the city is already significant and is growing. Brighton & Hove was recently named the second greenest city in England (after Bristol) due to the number and quality of green initiatives, including a number of social enterprises involved in re-using and recycling metal, paper, card, glass, furniture and wood. Brighton & Hove corporate plan objective one is to 'protect the environment whilst growing the economy'. The city is unusual in that we have a large number of green activists»*

(John Routledge, City of Brighton & Hove, U.K.)

*«Urban NOSE promotes sustainable development in a 'new urban age' reality. Environmental values should be one of the top priorities as it is a matter of fact that social enterprises can play a very important role in "Green" Economy»*

(Eduardo Nogueira, City of Alcobaça, Portugal)

*«As far as we call "soft economy" an economy considering social and solidarity issues, Urban NOSE project complies with these principles. Indeed, the project will aim to develop and reinforce local actors' initiatives in the field of social entrepreneurship, in a well harmonised, horizontal and vertical governance framework, allowing in a stronger way the essential virtuous processes our cities do need»*

(Perrine Hamon, City of Grenoble, France)

*«Positive. Many people/actors see the need of comprehensive view of development. But they do not know what to do and how to do. Urban NOSE network is filling this gap»*

(Elin Liljebäck, City of Herrljunga, Sweden)

*«If we define "soft economy" as "an economy based on knowledge and innovation, identity, history, creativity and quality, an economy ready to combine social cohesion and competitiveness, and draw strength from the community and the territory", it is clear that Urban NOSE is strongly engaged in this line of thought, given its approach to the problem of unemployment from a local perspective, trying to unite in a common effort (through tools like the incubators and LSGs) the economic and social forces of the city and to seize the business opportunities arising in the economic field of our territory. Urban NOSE in Xativa intended to be especially attentive to the business opportunities arising from the needs of people and the physical territory. In both cases, the profit motive cannot be sustained in the exploitation of resources, but in appreciating assets. Similarly, prospective entrepreneurs must assume that the exercise of economic*

*activity, especially as it relates to the territory in which people live, has a clear exercise of social responsibility and ethics that also serves to minimise energy and materials consumption and organic alternatives in production or service delivery»*

(José Moran, City of Xàtiva, Spain)

From the interviews here above, we can assume the following:

1. The social economy is strongly linked to the green economy belief as many social enterprises are strongly involved in re-using and recycling activities, locally 'protecting the environment whilst growing the economy'.
2. Urban NOSE, along with its social enterprises, promotes sustainable development in a 'new urban age' reality where the green and soft economy principles play a fundamental role.
3. The Urban NOSE project complies with the social and solidarity values offered by the soft economy and, in this sense, it helps to fostering the essential virtuous processes our cities do need.
4. The Urban NOSE network is fulfilling the gap existing between the citizens' need of a more comprehensive view of local development and the practical ways to better satisfy that need.
5. The social economy shares with the green and the soft economies not only the perspective of resilient initiatives, but also the assumption of the "indissolubility among economic activity, ethical and social responsibility, consuming attitudes and organic ways of creating and delivering goods and services".

Here, the ***intimate link of the social economy with the green and the soft ones*** really appears as very strong and 'polluted' with so many shades and gradients coming from each one of the three. A new concept of economy and entrepreneurship being introduced by each of these three aspects of a same philosophy, we have not to stopping in proposing and disseminating at all levels, horizontally and vertically and with no more delays, the virtuous exercise of harmonising all instances coming from three conceptual spheres of a truly sustainable new economy, which only apparently result to us as too much sectoral or specialist: instead, *in their common and indissoluble ability to offer wide ranges of fresh and versatile solutions, they strike at the heart of the most serious problems afflicting our cities and all who live inside them.*

### **New sustainable and "smart" patterns of growth, proposed by the Urban N.O.S.E. thematic network**

*«We see Urban NOSE as a vehicle for generating an international viewpoint on this»*

(John Routledge, City of Brighton & Hove, U.K.)

*«Poverty seems to be endemic and vicious, so social policies should focus on disadvantaged groups. If we promote integration and employment among poor families, we are raising life conditions and creating a better world starting from our own neighbourhood»*

(Eduardo Nogueira, City of Alcobaça, Portugal)

«The main Urban NOSE pattern of growth consists in systemising the process from generating creativity and entrepreneurial power to establishing successful social enterprises»

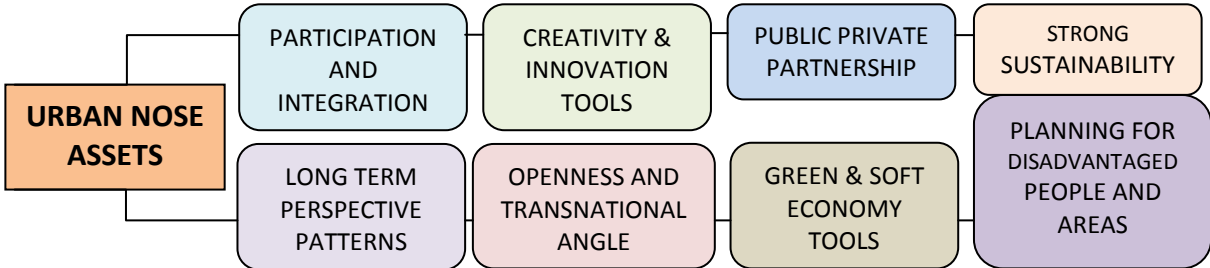
(Elin Liljebäck, City of Herrljunga, Sweden)

From the interviews here above, we can assume the following:

1. The Urban NOSE thematic network is a handy instrument able to generating a transnational perspective on the new chances and solutions offered by the social economy.
2. The Urban NOSE thematic network may give help to achieving the aims of decision-makers intended like sustainable planners, as it promotes integration and employment mainly focussed on disadvantaged groups and deprived or under-valorised areas, just starting from the neighbourhood scale<sup>6</sup>.
3. One among the fundamental pattern of growth offered by the Urban NOSE network consists in the systemisation of the virtuous process going from generating creativity and entrepreneurial power, up to establishing and strengthening a successful growth (mainly in the local quality of life), along with updated jobs and businesses acting in the social economy.

The contributions coming from the interviews reported here above clearly give us a **first picture about the main possible patterns of growth** that could be moved up throughout all the working time at disposal of the Urban NOSE thematic network. So far, we can certainly state that *this network is able to provide all the partner cities with an indispensable transnational angle on new, long term perspective models capable to creating and keeping sustainable growth, mostly based on interventions aimed to the urban quality revitalisation of disadvantaged residents and areas.* But we also have to point out the importance of the foreseen City Social Plans and the related Social Incubators as main tools for systemising, developing and promoting the smart patterns of growth proposed by this thematic network.

**a. THE URBAN NOSE ASSETS**



Consequently, at the end of the network’s implementation phase, we will assist to the proposition of, at least, the following **Urban NOSE blueprints**, developed

<sup>6</sup> About this kind of perspective, please see the Paul Soto’s article, “Cities and deprived neighbourhoods in the crisis. How can they contribute to the recovery?” in [www.urbact.eu](http://www.urbact.eu).

all along the duration of that phase, as main products of the *innovative approaches* which would have been applied during the works of the network:

- a new pattern of growth able to creating tools for specialising urban areas in social economy: the foreseen "*Social Economy Districts*" are, in fact, specialised local scale areas where aggregating companies, associations, institutions that, in a context of a new market economy, work along a "Local Social Chain";
- a new pattern of growth able to developing a "*community of practices on social economy*" who allows generating and transferring knowledge and know-how per specific thematic segments and territorial vocations;
- a new pattern of growth able to recognising the leading role of cities as the residents' closest entities, capable to give direct answers to local needs and *municipalities as choral promoters* of new local strategies and business initiatives, as trainers and guides in participatory and inclusive processes for public and private stakeholders sharing a common long-term strategy;
- a new pattern of growth able to building up a new participatory "*Social economy policies governance model*" which regularly meets emerging social needs by implementing strong and stable partnerships among the third sector, individuals, regional organisations, local authorities and other stakeholders who have title to speak about the future of their city;
- a new pattern of growth able to strengthening and promoting the role of *Social Enterprise Incubators* as a real opportunity for the construction of attractive poles also offering diffused, virtual, remote and flexible services for all those local stakeholders sharing the same local development strategies, as a specific tool for job creation incentive, as one of the institutional solutions for the provision of public services and as to the technical implementation of wider regional and transnational, public-private partnerships.

## b. THE URBAN NOSE BLUEPRINTS



## The Urban NOSE response to cyclic crises: cities as “green engines” feeding gardens

If we look at the pages here above, we can easily reflect in order to realise the main conclusions about possible answers to cyclic crises which will be coming out of the Urban NOSE thematic network.

Giving for done the number of ‘crises links’ depending on peculiar variables like cities’ economic composition, size, social fabric and urban geopolitical position, we can adapt to each local condition a series of possible solutions making of its neighbourhoods new sustainable ‘escalators’<sup>7</sup>.

### A comprehensive response to global recession: the Urban NOSE recovery strategies and their complete alignment

In fact, having a look at the OECD analysis of city responses to the recession<sup>8</sup>, we will discover that the Urban NOSE main patterns of growth perfectly fit with all the four spheres of intervention listed in the framework they suggest of cities designing their recovery strategies:

- a) **Supporting businesses:** through its network of Social Enterprise Incubators, Urban NOSE creates Social Economy Districts offering global support to SMEs, also favouring aimed incentive and rate relief thanks to the constant acting of a permanent public-private partnership;
- b) **Supporting people:** here we are at the core vision of the social economy and its main tools at the base of the Urban NOSE thematic network, which go well beyond job placements and tax cuts, by permanently creating and transferring knowledge and know-how for a local community of practices on social economy and its territorial peculiarities;
- c) **Positioning for long term investment and development:** we have largely shown, here above, the multifaceted implications of the Urban NOSE network with creativity and innovation promotion, better and more qualified branding investment, sustainable infrastructure investment, local identity promotion, health, care, tourism, culture, education, knowledge, housing, transport, green and soft integrated planning and aimed support, all in a common long-term strategy;
- d) **Governance and Leadership:** the Urban NOSE network is special champion in developing participated strategies and action plans through a better alignment between the third sector representatives and all the actors belonging to both the horizontal and vertical levels of knowledge, power and decision-making at local, regional, national and European scale but, in any case recognising the leading role of cities as ‘choral promoters’ of new local strategies and business initiatives, as trainers and guides in participatory and inclusive processes for public and private stakeholders.

By analysing the different types of response that the Urban NOSE cities are investigating to the crisis, we can easily find they all are perfectly aligned to the

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<sup>7</sup> Please see <http://www.eukn.org>

<sup>8</sup> Please see “Recession, Recovery and Reinvestment: Local Responses in a Global Crisis” by Greg Clarke. Forthcoming. OECD LEED Programme, in <http://www.oecd.org>

concepts and indications contained in the Young Foundation report<sup>9</sup>, above all when they argue for a more explicit distinction between *short term and long term* responses and between *economic and social* solutions.

In fact, the Urban NOSE network complies with all the conditions they suggest to put in place for *longer term investment* in the future, including support for key infrastructures, intensive support for innovations with funds managed by specialised intermediaries in each sector, and support for rapid scaling up and replication, that corresponds to the sustainable model of the Urban NOSE network of diffused and flexible Social Incubators. The same happens when we consider the strategies they propose to build the *resilience of communities* through strengthening family, informal and institutional networks. And many chances are offered by the network as to their related concept of *insulating people and communities from the recession* through local food and energy schemes, time banking, new forms of solidarity banking, etc.; not to speak of the Urban NOSE perfect tuning and alignment along all the three main axes of city recovery strategies on deprived neighbourhoods and the crisis<sup>10</sup>:

a) ***Alignment between regional and city strategies for the recovery and the situation of local communities.***

Eurocities<sup>11</sup> finds that “coordinated multilevel governance is a vital component for the economic recovery” as it, by promoting dialogue between people working at neighbourhood, city and regional levels, favours the production of more coordinated and shared responses by Managing Authorities and cities than in the past. Also the Urbameco<sup>12</sup> ‘fast track’ thematic network suggested three practical ways of integrating regional and city strategies with the situation in local communities: through the opening-up of public and private markets to disadvantaged neighbourhoods; by building their human capital; and by increasing their access to finance. *The Urban NOSE thematic network fully complies with this kind of alignment*, as we can immediately see through the analysis of the first thematic conference outputs which have emerged in Alcobaça, among which emerge the Social Economy Framework Agreement model proposed by the LSG of the city of Gela and the three governance models proposed by the LSG of the city of Xàtiva<sup>13</sup>.

b) ***Alignment between short and long term approaches.***

The Urban NOSE network strongly proposes *short term interventions likely to contain the raging crisis and useful until its final passing* — e.g., bringing forward public investments; subsidising specific jobs and sectors; creating new jobs and training; providing aimed advice and support to

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<sup>9</sup> Please see “The Young Foundation. Fixing the Future. Innovating more effective responses to recession”. February 2009, in <http://www.youngfoundation.org.uk/social-innovation/news/fixing-future>

<sup>10</sup> Please see here above, at the note n° 6

<sup>11</sup> Please see “Eurocities. Economic Development Forum. Unpublished survey.” In <http://www.eurocities.eu/main.php>

<sup>12</sup> Please see URBAMECO thematic network in <http://urbact.eu/thematic-poles/growth-and-job-creation/thematic-networks/urbameco/presentation.html>

<sup>13</sup> Please see “Thematic Paper upon the state of the art of the UNOSE cities partnership after the thematic exchange of the Alcobaça Thematic Conference: The Governance System supporting Social Enterprises and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Incubators” of the Urban NOSE thematic network in <http://urbact.eu/thematic-poles/growth-and-job-creation/thematic-networks/urbannose/presentation.html>

people and businesses through the protection of basic services, tax and rate cuts, integration policies; building resilience and insulation from recession; bringing forward key regeneration projects — *along with simultaneous long term investments* — e.g., ensuring that public works create the conditions for sustainable development in conjunction with economic, social and environmental innovation; targeting the local jobs and training towards the most promising, sustainable sectors and activities; favouring more equality and concrete shifts in consumption and saving patterns — that, *in a virtuous synergy, do favour sustainable urban rescue packages and promote durable revitalising at neighbourhood scale.*

c) ***Alignment between economic development with social and environmental needs.***

The Urban NOSE network perfectly fulfils the needs for a stronger integration among these strategic fields, looking for smart, green and soft chances the crisis is presenting to all of us, for a more sustainable growth. *Investments in soft fields* like, for instance, environmental care and protection, social need and identity culture, *chorally constitute the 'core business' of our thematic network* and the main, advanced contents of its cities' current planning.

### **Cities as engines or cities as gardens? The Urban NOSE response: cities as "green engines" feeding gardens**

The impact of the recent crisis has inducted many experts to revising the vision of cities seen like 'engines of growth and jobs' and, in some cases, to easily join the doubtful attitude of so many citizens, obliged to struggle through the informal and household economy, along with its connected problems like debt, housing, heating and access to basic services, thus seriously risking social exclusion.

Experts argue that the definition of cities as "engines" depends on *the way in which investments are carried out and financed* and that, *alternatively (or simultaneously), cities can explore and evolve towards more fundamental shifts in production and consumption that make them more like "gardens"*<sup>14</sup>.

Even if it is clear that the economic crisis forces more towards a vision of these two choices as alternative ones, we can here, on the contrary, argue that, as our common ancestors were used to say, *'in medio stat virtus'*<sup>15</sup> or, as in this case, "the truth lies in the middle": the Urban NOSE thematic network is, in fact, largely showing that a synergy, a simultaneous ambivalent approach is not only possible, but even compulsory. In fact, if it is true, like it is, that our network would be capable to providing a possible framework for sharing knowledge and actions on cities' *social economy* strategies for their *quality* neighbourhoods' recovery and revitalisation, we cannot allow to minimising upon the **strategic importance of the multifaceted and multi-oriented approach** offered by the Urban NOSE network's mission, as reported in the above pages.

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<sup>14</sup> Please see the note n° 6 here above, on Paul Soto's article about deprived neighbourhoods and the crisis.

<sup>15</sup> Please see the concept of "*aurea mediocritas*" in *Valerius Horatius Flaccus'* thought and literature.

Actually, it seems no more tolerable allowing 'city planning interventions' and 'strategic long term investments' which do not take into any account, face with superficial attitudes or, worse, still are purposely conceived to evade the main questions put on the table of the 'community's future' by the sustainable development planning perspectives.

So, a really great effort has still to be made at all levels, but starting from our neighbourhoods, in order **to assure the right balance among the social, economic, environmental, cultural identity and ethical governance dimensions of sustainability**, *guaranteeing our cities to better play their role of 'engines' of smart growth and jobs, while advancing in the direction of growingly sustainable change in order to transform them into real 'gardens' where people and their 'ecosystem economies' can durably cohabit in a high quality relationship.*

The Urban NOSE thematic network, indeed, is simply speaking of the future of our cities, trying harder to promoting possible scenarios where cities are conceived as successful **"green engines"**, locally feeding smart growth with more sustainable and aware strategic planning in places where the 'updating of neighbouring sustainability standards' does constitute the minimum of requirements coming out from a permanent, multilevel assessment, deeper and deeper exerted by all the local governance actors.

That is the undisputed route followed by the Urban NOSE thematic network's team, who well has clear the many difficulties which can be raised by the concrete application of the integrated approach and the participatory method as main pillars of any pattern of development which could be seriously recognised as a sustainable one; but who, as well, is perfectly aware of the so interesting possibilities offered by considering those difficulties in as many challenges to enduringly deal with and overcome.

### c. THE "GREEN ENGINE FEEDING GARDEN" SCHEME

