

**BESECURE** 

# Best Practice Enhancers for Security in Urban Environments



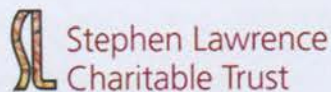
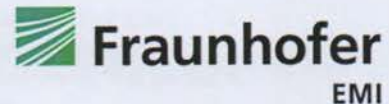
*A collection of publications from the consortium partners*

# BESECURE



## Best Practice Enhancers for Security in Urban Environments

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Istituto di Ricerche sulle Attività Terziarie  
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## Foreword from the coordinators

Heather Griffioen-Young and Martijn Neef,  
TNO, The Netherlands

The BESECURE project has been a large part of our professional lives for the past three years. From the start, we divided the coordination tasks between the two of us, which proved a successful strategy, especially with the excellent project support from our TNO colleague Anita Weggemans. Heather skilfully managed the consortium and the administrative burdens that come with such a complex project. Martijn worked closely with the project partners to bring the many ideas and parts together to form a coherent and convincing set of results.



For the past three years it has truly been a privilege for us to work with such a dedicated and knowledgeable group of people. We have learned a lot about the diverse and difficult urban security domain, and appreciated the invaluable expertise that the project members brought into the project. It was an inspiring experience to see an inevitable 'battle of the minds' turn into creative teamwork. The end-state of the project confirms each partner's dedication to bringing innovation to this field.

We are grateful to many people. First of all, we would like to thank all project members for their hard work, active engagement, excellent results, and of course for the good times in great locations. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the many partners we engaged with in our case study areas and beyond. Without their support and their constructive contributions, we would not have been able to conclude this project with such a valuable set of results, and inspiring vistas of how they can be put into practice.

We are thankful for the insightful contributions of our Advisory Board, and the productive support of our Project Officer and her team of external reviewers throughout the project. We wish you all the best, and look forward to future opportunities to work with you.

Heather and Martijn  
February 2015



*The BESECURE project team and BESECURE Advisory Board at the Bernie Grant Arts Centre, London Tottenham, April 2014.*

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# The Common Context Indicators: evidence from the Southern Italy case studies



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The European Cohesion Policy in last programming periods has encouraged local administrations to face urban safety and security issues through the implementation of urban regeneration initiatives and the relocation in the market of confiscated assets from organized crime. We argue that through Urban Regeneration, Capacity/ Partnership Building (Governance) and a proactive Community Involvement is possible to tackle these phenomena exploiting the opportunities of European Structural Funds, strengthening, in this way, the connection between BESECURE Project rationale and European Cohesion Policy.





## Introduction

Urban security and safety have become central issues in the political agenda of national and local governments in the last decades. Contemporary cities are affected by several challenges as far the social, economic, institutional, political and environmental spheres are concerned. Particularly, the rapid urbanisation processes combined with unstable economic conditions, uncontrolled physical development, social exclusion and political instability make difficult the understanding of urban 'security and safety' dynamics. The main challenge in the BESECURE project, indeed, deals with the complex mix of processes 'involving multiple actors, resources and places, in ensuring the safety of urban citizens and areas' (BESECURE project D1.1: 13). Among the urban security and safety dynamics, the combination of social, economic and physical decay, particularly in deprived areas, increases the perception of urban insecurity and contributes to the emergence of appealing conditions for micro and macro (organised) crime. The spread of criminal activities in these 'weak' environments makes difficult the improvement of conditions for positive development; the presence of crime suppresses the development of the so-called good 'atmosphere' (Marshall, 1919<sup>1</sup>) for investment and labour productivity.

The issues related to urban safety and security are indeed considered one of the most important sources of underdevelopment in European Regions. In order to face and overcome this problem, the Cohesion Policy, during the programming periods from 2000 on, has considered relevant the inclusion of urban safety and security in the programming agendas. According to the rationale of the Cohesion Policy regarding the urban security and safety governance, the policy making decision process has moved from central to local administrative bodies. This new approach made the regional and municipality administrations more responsible for finding solutions appropriate for the specific situations. Policy interventions at the local level moved towards an integrated approach within urban sustainability development,

encouraging the local community to participate in the regeneration process. As a result, regional and local authorities have not focused policy on the criminal justice aspects of the situation, but instead they have acted (and still act) in terms of stemming the spread of criminal organisations' power to new areas.

The European cohesion policy in the programming periods from 2000 to date has encouraged local administrations to fight this phenomenon through the implementation of urban regeneration initiatives, on one hand, and the re-location in the market of properties and assets confiscated from organised crime, on the other. We argue that it is possible to strengthen the connection between the BESECURE rationale and the Cohesion Policy for less developed regions, thereby exploiting the opportunities for European Structural Funds (ESF/ERDF), which through Urban Regeneration, Capacity/Partnership building (Governance) and a proactive Community involvement, can tackle urban safety and security issue.

## Methodology

The paper aims at providing a picture of urban safety and security dynamics in two case studies belonging to underdeveloped Southern Italy urban areas, by emphasizing the policy areas and the planned interventions within the Regional Operative Programs under Structural Funds (ESF – ERDF).

Particularly in Southern Italy, the Structural Funds operate through two main drivers:

1. Urban Regeneration (ESF/ERDF);
2. Capacity Building - Partnership building (ESF).

Urban regeneration policies, thanks to their integrated approach, could reduce the presence of crime in blighted areas by implementing actions that indirectly mitigate urban safety and security issues, by acting on the socio-economic and physical dimensions, through a strictly place-based approach.



Partnership building could be key to implementing those policies not taken up by the public sector due to management issues and lack of monitoring: the re-use of confiscated properties might be an example of this application. The main objective of the case studies selected for the BESECURE project by the Reggio Calabria Unit is to define specific policy areas of intervention in order to act on those factors that determine urban insecurity. The reason to connect urban safety and security with an urban regeneration approach lies in its integrated capacity to enhance people's quality of life, community involvement and physical interventions. This kind of approach is based on 'targeted strategies' in which the focus should be on:

- The crime patterns to be faced;
- The socio-economic structures of the area;
- The local policies and capacities towards the crime prevention;
- The characteristics of the physical environment, often exacerbating the decline of the urban context.

The analysis was conducted on the two Southern Italy case studies, Arghillà (Reggio Calabria, Calabria, Italy) and Librino (Catania, Sicily, Italy), where perception of security and crime-related events assumes particular features. These underdeveloped urban areas show the way local systems are strongly characterised by diffused decay and low institutional capacity to deal with structural and organised illegal behaviours and activities. Furthermore, in Arghillà, the perception of crime is often associated with the question of ROMA integration, in addition to the lack of faith in institutions, affecting any kind of proactive or preventive approach from the bottom, affecting the local economy.

The combination of those weaknesses affects negatively urban safety and security dynamics, impacting on the possibility to improve living standards. In those deprived areas, indeed only targeted strategies that are strictly place-based might positively influence those effects by mitigating the failure to successfully implement policies. To pursue a place-based policy every action should rely on

local knowledge and needs to make the public interventions verifiable and submitted to scrutiny, while linkages among places are taken into account.

The place-based development policy should be considered as follow<sup>2</sup>:

- As a strategy of long-term development which aims to reduce inefficiency and inequality;
- To promote the supply of integrated services tailored to contexts and to the community;
- To trigger institutional changes through the production of packages of goods and services, implemented through participatory practices;
- As a strategy of multi-level governance

#### **Southern Italian Cases: Arghillà and Librino**

The case studies, selected by the Reggio Calabria unit, belong to those regions under the Convergence Objective "to help the least-developed Member States and regions catch up more quickly with the EU average by improving conditions for growth and employment<sup>3</sup>". Southern Italy constantly records situations affected by the lack of security and safety in urban areas, due mostly to the presence of criminal organisations – a main source of poverty and social disease, and which could have strong negative effects on economic development opportunities.

The Arghillà neighbourhood is located in the northern part of the Reggio Calabria Municipality (8 km from Reggio Calabria city centre). In this neighbourhood criminal dynamics are reinforced by a loss of trust in institutions, limited cooperation among the local communities, and limited integration with minorities. Here, it seems that the anti-social attitude is a sort of structural component of people's common behaviour, bypassing institutions and police control, but also an effect of higher levels of control, perpetrated by criminal organisation, acting to maintain a sort of static and underdeveloped socio-economic environment. That is to say the nature of crime is not explicitly connected to micro-crime events, rather it is structured and controlled to pursue organised crime objectives, following power dynamics and



territorial challenges to exercise influence over the State.

Librino is a high population density neighbourhood located in Catania, Sicily. Here, urban policies should work on tearing down physical barriers and act as an umbrella for re-use interventions for those properties confiscated to the criminal organisations, thus becoming examples of legal intervention and the re-establishment of legality. Moreover, the tangible presence of organised crime in Librino demonstrates the need for local policies and actions to be supported at regional and national levels, with a particular focus on community involvement, social inclusion, sense of belonging, and physical aspects of redevelopment.



Figure 1: Urban decay in Arghillà, Reggio Calabria

Another prominent and emerging feature of the two case studies selected is the status of decay of the urban environment (Fig. 1). It highlights the failure of urban policy implementation at the local level and the lack of management capabilities, contributing to enhancing the isolation of high-risk neighbourhoods from the rest of the city. On the one hand, the spatial isolation of Arghillà, jointly with strong social exclusion dynamics, mostly due for the presence of ROMA minorities, characterises the Arghillà neighbourhood as a 'ghetto'.

The socio-economic isolation, boosted by the physical detachment and the visible decay of the built environment, indeed contributes to increased feelings of insecurity in the area, which both attract and spread micro-crime events all over the city. On the other hand, Librino is highly dense and spatially isolated with proper physical obstacles, almost a mono-

functional area, which determines safe conditions for organised crime, free from any control on trafficking of weapons and drugs. This sort of 'citadel' regularly receives media attention, which announces the perpetration of the same offences daily, exemplifying the institutional failure to cope with a well-established social status of dereliction. The high crime rates, generally drug, weapons and prostitution related, are strongly supported by high levels of unemployment and school abandonment, providing fertile ground to root anti-social behaviours. In these urban areas it seems that micro crime is functional to complex purposes belonging to organised crime, influencing economic development opportunities. Evidence shows the weaknesses leading to the unsafe and insecure character of the urban areas investigated, possibilities to mitigate consequences and provide safer living conditions and economic development opportunities. We suggest that an integrated approach should focus on the causes for crime attraction and entrenching by acting on improving the built environment, systemising public spaces as enhancers of 'sense of place', encouraging community participation, establishing community centres, emphasising symbols of positive civic behaviour, creating jobs, and enhancing the local economy.

## Results

The use of common context indicators<sup>4</sup>, being strictly place-based and designed to highlight the specificities of a local context, allowed the establishment of targeted policy intervention areas. This led to defining priorities regarding the mitigation of factors affecting urban security dynamics, as a way to pursue economic development and the improvement of living conditions.

The study conducted shows that in such underdeveloped urban areas, the combination of economic decline, social exclusion dynamics, and physical decay of the built environment, easily attracts crime events. As far as the socio-economic structure, indicators (population, education level, households, employment and





unemployment, labour force, ethnic minorities, etc.) combined with the analysis of the physical urban environment (land use), provide an understanding of the weaknesses to be mitigated in the specific case study areas.

The case study analysis helped the **individuation of policy areas** where actions are needed to mitigate those effects on urban safety and security dynamics:

1. **Urban Regeneration:** integrated urban regeneration initiatives, aimed by nature at improving both people and places, to leverage local economic development opportunities. The analysis shows multiple weaknesses that can be overcome with combined actions implementing targeted strategies. Place-based policies which could act on the reduction of *inefficiency* (increasing income and growth) and *inequality* (reducing inequality), increasing the living standards of those underdeveloped urban areas.
2. **Governance:** the improvement of the governance structure in order to be multi-level and multi-dimensional. That is to say to enhance the governance system both on the 'vertical' dimension (linkages between levels of governments) and on the 'horizontal' dimension (cooperative arrangements between regions or municipalities). This means to help with local capacity and partnership building, which are crucial to improving the coherence of public policies and the effectiveness of public service delivery, under targeted strategies of development.
3. **Community involvement:** local communities, (voluntary and community organisations, local authorities, other public authorities such as police, health and education, and local private-sector businesses) through a real participatory democratic process could help positive social and civic behaviours take place. A bottom-up approach, with a strategic role for local associations and key stakeholders to cooperate with institutions, is expected to help increase people's "awareness of the strategy". This can help boost the deprived urban

contexts analysed into places potentially valuable for the entire community by increasing their resilience capacity. Embedding the participatory practices into the policy-making process should guarantee more sustainable performance and efficacy, both at the physical and socio-economic levels. This can help enhance a proper Community-Led Local Development (CLLD), under the heading of the European Structural and Investment Funds, to enable communities to implement projects responsive to the area's needs and to improve strategic local development. The impact of a community-led development is expected to be "high" on those groups further away from the labour market by increasing employment and skills, social enterprise, and social inclusion which leads to less poverty and better regeneration of deprived areas<sup>5</sup>.

## References

The selected case study areas present a 'rigid' socio-economic structure that makes difficult the adoption of policies aiming to stimulate the socio-economic environment. The 'rigidity' mentioned is a concept close to the marshallian economic atmosphere principle (Marshall, 1919), where the rigidity of firms' structure is considered a dangerous limit because it cannot "adjust to changes" of economic atmosphere that "is never quite still" (Marshall, 1919:51).

<sup>2</sup> Barca F. (2009), An agenda for a reformed Cohesion Policy. A place-based approach to meeting European Union challenges and expectations. Independent Report prepared at the request of Danuta Hübner, Commissioner for Regional Policy, April 2009.

<sup>3</sup> General provisions ERDF - ESF - Cohesion Fund (2007-2013)

<sup>4</sup> "A context indicator is a datum which provides simple and reliable information describing a variable relative to the context. It gives information about a situation and its evolution in a country, or an area relevant to the assistance policy", European Commission, [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/examples/ind\\_res\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/methodology/examples/ind_res_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Community-Led Local Development, Cohesion Policy 2014-2020, <http://europeanfundingnetwork.eu/policy/cohesion-policy-2014-2020/community-led-local-development>

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