

SPECIAL REPORT

KNOWLEDGE SHARING ON PREVIOUS URBAN DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES AND GOOD PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION

The decline of the urban centres is a widespread problem, which is confronting EU regions. As the difficulties and the challenges are similar, the most promising solution is to collect and to exploit the revitalisation experiences of the urban centre in order to learn of their successes and failures.

This report has been the result of the collection of 33 commercial revitalisation experiences which have taken place in the following countries: Italy (17); Spain (5); Portugal (2); France (2); Greece (1); Germany (1); Belgium (1); Finland (1); United Kingdom (1); Canada (1) and United States (1).

The experiences have been collected in a structured way through a questionnaire, previously elaborated. The questionnaire gathers the next information:

1. Characteristics of the intervened commercial area just as a brief SWOT analysis of the commercial and urban situation, before and after the intervention.
2. Initial problems of the commercial area.
3. Objectives and strategies of the revitalisation project.
4. Developed previous studies such as: demand studies, feasibility studies, monitoring studies, etc.
5. Urban and commercial interventions or actions related to the project.
6. Financial structure of the project.
7. Decision making process.
8. Implemented communication actions in order to make know the project.
9. Main problems and solutions just as its results.

The analysis of these experiences gave rise to this document, which contains the description and evaluation of the revitalisation practices collected. The objective of this report is the diffusion of the innovative measures for the commercial revitalisation just as of the lessons to learn in this process, which will help the future projects.

INITIAL SITUATION

Crisis of the central urban areas

The deterioration of the central urban areas is a widespread phenomenon, which causes have to be found in social, economic and cultural evolution. The abovementioned evolution led to the abandon of the urban spaces and the reduction of the investment. The result was the physical degradation and the deterioration of the city's image. This decline intensifies and creates new social problems, which contributes to urban insecurity.

The appearance of new forms of retailing on the city outskirts, the shopping centres, turns into a direct competitor of the traditional forms of retailing in the city centre. This implies a decrease of the investment in the city centres and the development of a new competence model based on the commercial polarities.

- Physical degradation and the deterioration of the city centre's image
- Social and insecurity problems
- Lack of investment in the city centre
- Appearance of the shopping centre on the city outskirts.

STRATEGIES

While the past strategies of revitalisation were concentrated on improving the conditions of the outskirts and promoting its growth, the present strategies tend to regenerate the central areas and increase the quality of life. The revitalisation of the city centre is mainly caused by three reasons:

- structural reasons: The loss of the city centre's functionality due to the aging of the real state, the lack of social equipment, the traffic difficulties, etc.

- economic reasons: The possibilities of getting capital gains of the plots where the centre's buildings are risen, the low rents which the owners get of the old real estate and the economic interests of the developers lead to the demolition operations which favour the renovation of the central area.
- political reasons: The politicians participate in the revitalisation process of the city centre in order to defend the general interest of the society and/or to increase their prestige.

The commercial revitalisation included in a comprehensive revitalisation of the central areas

Retail is a main activity of the central urban areas, but it is one of the activities, which takes place in the city. Therefore the public bodies begin to elaborate revitalization projects, which include the different dimensions of a city, they elaborate a comprehensive revitalisation

Improving the accessibility towards and inside the central urban areas

Location is one of the most valued attraction factors by shops and other activities situated in the central areas. However, the location has to be complemented with actions, which make easy the accessibility to the city centre of the real and potential consumers by means of public transports and favouring the inter-modal transport.

The improvement of the physical environment in order to increase the beauty of the city and quality of life

The urban scenery acts as an attraction or a repulsion factor of the consumers, visitors and residents of the central urban areas. Therefore, the strategies are aimed at the conservation of the historical heritage and protection of urban scenery aesthetics. On the other hand, this strategy pursues the creation of a public space through the installation of urban furniture and facilities, which gives back the social function of the city and improves the consumers' quality of life, visitors and, specially, residents.

Promoting housing to attract residents

The physical and social degradation of the central urban areas, due to the scarce life conditions and the accessibility problems, have led to the renovation and to the restructuring of housing in order to recover residents. This strategy forms part of a comprehensive regeneration concept which tries settling the residents and attracting new population. The latter have different patterns of consumption and different cultural practices which produce the gentrification process.

Creation of equipment and other type of centres as an attraction factor

One of the urban revitalisation strategies is the renovation, reuse and construction of particular buildings. In general these singular buildings, which are the results of an international architectural tendency, contribute with a new value and create a new centre in the area.

Creation of a multi-function area

In the central urban areas, it is necessary to attract and to diversify economic activities, but, at the same time, the type of developed activities has to be controlled to reach the balance among the different city functions. Specially, conflicts between the residential and leisure functions have to be avoided. And also the excessive growth of tertiary activities, which reduces people presence during the opening hours, has to be controlled. Therefore it has to diversify the activities in order to maximize the use of the city, which becomes a 24 hours city.

Culture and leisure as revitalisation elements.

Culture is used as an attraction factor in European cities because it is able to intensify the use of the city during the commercial timetable and extend it during the night hours. Moreover, the organization of exceptional cultural events such as cinema festivals, music festivals, etc. becomes widespread.

To integrate tourism into the commercial revitalisation

The economic diversification of the cities is one of the ways to make them competitive. In this diversification, urban tourism plays an important role. Therefore, the cities use their historical heritage and their commercial and leisure supply in order to increase the tourist flow, which increases the potential consumers flow.

To preserve the identity of the urban area.

The main strategies pursue to preserve the built heritage. Also they are designed strategies directed to the maintenance of the traditional and/or historical retail stores. This form of retailing is a peculiar retail, which is very different from the shopping centres. So it is a type of retail, which defines the urban central areas and creates an own brand or image.

Integrate the urban central areas into the global strategy of the city

To define projects to specific areas of the city, but into a global vision of the city

The project has to be integrated into the urban and regional planning program as a measure in order to achieve the collaboration among the different public bodies and develop a global strategy for the city. In this sense, it elaborates strategic plans and is more common the use of the city marketing.

Communication among the urban agents

Collaboration among the different public bodies

The comprehensive revitalisation of the central urban areas needs collaboration among the different public bodies because the revitalization acts over a variety of issues whose competences are allocated among the local, regional and national bodies.

Collaboration between the public and private sector

The urban regeneration processes need the whole intervention and the collaboration of the public sector and the private agents. This collaboration materializes in the creation of the public-private partnerships. These partnerships are structures, which allow the whole and coordinated action as well as the multiple sponsorship. Sponsorship implies the private agents in the investment during and after the project.

To promote the investment of the private sector

The public sector looks for the economic participation of the private agents to guarantee the continuity of the commercial revitalisation.

Citizen involvement

The existence of a variety of interests in the urban space requires reconciling the opinion of the different urban agents. For that reason, the participation and involvement of the

citizen in the definition of the revitalisation strategies and actions are looked for.

ANSWER: ACTIONS AND MEASURES

In the last decades, the economic nature of the cities has been modified, specifically some economic activities have been given up and have changed the urban functions whose consequences, among others, have been the appearance of new retailer forms and the introduction in the urban space of new relationships between the external and internal market based on the competition. These changes caused the decline of some cities and the boom of others and, even inside the same city, some areas were favoured and others were damaged. The existence of competition is not a new phenomenon but its presentation is. This causes the change of the criteria, which give advantages to the cities, their areas, and activities, which are established in the city.

Therefore, the cities create policies and programs to strengthen the economic development, the urban regeneration and the promotion of the cities. The politics directed to attract activities, residents and tourist in order to improve the local advantages become widespread. In this new context, the prominence of the retail businesses in the city's entertainment, development and promotion is recognized.

In some cases, the measures are preventive because the first signs of physical degradation lead to the intervention. And in other cases, intervention is implemented when the physical, economic and social degradation is advanced.

Physical actions

Nowadays the revitalisation process tries to create spaces with a high aesthetic quality in order to seduce the consumers. Therefore the main actions are the pedestrianisation of the historical centre, revitalization of the streets, generation a sensation of security in the city with artificial lighting and police presence and improvement of the urban environment.

Logistics

These types of actions favour the providing of goods to the retail activities.

Accessibility, mobility and parking

The main measures influence the control of road traffic and the relationships among the means of transports. Some of the actions carried out with those aims are: building of parking lots in the limit of the pedestrian areas; delimiting of the pedestrian area and control of the road traffic; promoting of the pedestrian flux with the creation of the commercial routes and eliminating of architectural barriers, facilitating to modal interchange and access to alternative types of transport for private vehicles.

Urban furniture, urban regeneration and green areas

The main carried out measures are directed to the physical regeneration and to the improvement of the quality of life with the creation of meeting spaces. In the commercial areas, specific improvement actions of the external premises are carried out. Other improvements are aimed at the building's refurbishment, renovation of the urban furniture, pedestrianisation of some streets and creation of open areas.

Valorisation of the cultural and the historical resources

The physical regeneration of the built heritage and the use of the disused areas and buildings as cultural and art spaces improve the city's image, attract tourists and investments,

which offer new employment opportunities, favour the creation of a common image differentiates from other urban areas.

Commercial actions

The commercial urban areas of the city centres copy the designed actions of the shopping centres incorporating the management forms of the enterprises in the public space. They try to group the management of the small and medium enterprises in order to improve the offer of services.

On one hand, the commercial actions pursue promoting the association among the retailers and designing whole measures for all the retailers and on other hand, these actions try to improve the customers' facilities. The first one is based on the union among the retailers and the development of the training activities and negotiation services. While the second ones lie in customer fidelity measures, public relationships, merchandising and leisure and entertainment services. The stressed specific actions are the creation of a common image which differentiates the commercial urban area from the rest of the commercial zones and allows the individual promotion, the use of entertainment activities related to leisure and culture which take advantages of the city's resources, fidelity actions as the creation of loyalty cards, free parking and free transport.

Customer services

Entertainment activities are developed based on seducing the client and creating customer loyalty. Among the measures implemented, increasing and extending the opening hours, offering free parking and other services (delivery and nursery service) and creating an information service which guides the tourist and informs of all that is occurring in the central urban areas.

Promotion (common brand, events etc.)

The design of image and strengthening of the urban identity are valid resources to direct the management of the city. Some of the measures have consisted in the creation of a common image of the commercial areas. The creation of a territory brand contributes to improve the image of the place, to bring the government nearer to the citizens and to the other urban agents, moreover to favour the public-private cooperation. This action tries to reinforce the process of identification/differentiation of the citizen with the space and promote confidence and pride.

Furthermore, promotion actions are developed, especially outstanding events closely related to the commercial activities, sports, leisure and culture. On the other hand, the traditional forms of promotion such as brochures, maps, banner and commercial breaks through the media are used and new technologies such as internet through the creation of a website are also used.

Facilities for the commercial agents (training, technical assistance, negotiation services)

These measures pursue strengthening the improvement of the competitiveness of the retailers, improving the training in marketing and promotion strategies, creating negotiation formulae and organising services, which improve the hygiene and security of the area. Furthermore centres, which facilitate the creation of new enterprises, are set up.

Social actions

This type of action pursues the social cohesion adopting different measures, such as the creation and renovation of housing and social equipments. These elements produce externalities, which constitute an attraction or repulsion factor

of the population. At the same time, measures of social insertion are implemented with the collaboration of the social services and the employment agencies.

Tourism

The cities promote urban tourism in order to increase the potential purchasers in the area. To attract these activities some indirect measures such as the refurbishment of particular buildings and the conservation of the cultural heritage and other direct measures such as the design of routes and tours and the publication of different guides of the city (gastronomic guides, cultural guides, etc) are implemented.
Studies

Before the application of the measures in the central areas, the identification of the main problems and the elaboration of a diagnosis are required. For this reason, different studies in function of the parameters which are studied (accessibility, commercial uses, pedestrian fluxes, participation, urban environmental quality, etc) are made. Furthermore, on some occasions, studies, which evaluate the viability of the implemented actions, are carried out. Also monitoring studies and evaluation ex post are developed.

Financial issues

The analysis of the financial structures allows us to classify them depending on the involvement degree of the private agents and the economic commitment of the public sector in the financing of the commercial area. We can distinguish from less to more degree of involvement five types of structures. In the first place is when only contribution for the carrying out projects and the organization of the events is public. Next, the public contribution with the voluntary participation of the private agents for concrete actions exists. Other possible financing structure is the public contribution with the voluntary private contribution for an annual fund to use in the area. In fourth place, the public and private contribution exists, through voluntary fees, for financing the budget of an organization for the retail area. And finally, private and public contribution as a more rigid financial structure through a tax area exists, financing the budget of an organization of the retail area.

The tendency is the creation of a body, which organises the retail area with the systematic contribution for the support, and the continuity of the structure in time. Therefore, it acts with auto financing capacity. Furthermore, in some cases demonstrating the tendency to an exclusive private financing of the area, the public contribution disappearing.

Public-private relationship in the decision making process

Next, is established a type of classification depending on the involvement of the commercial agents, the intensity and frequency of contact with the public bodies and the delimitation of the tasks between the public and private agents.

Firstly, it identifies public-private relationship structure where the public sector and a voluntary association, as a representative of the private sector, participate. In this structure, there is not a clear distribution of task between the public and private sector and it produces a scarce contact and variable intensity between both sectors. Next, exists a structure characterised by a prolonged coordination between a retail association and the public bodies. The third structure consists in the organization of a management body based on

the public-private collaboration where exists continuous contact and a clear allocation of the tasks. In general, the public bodies assume the physical improvement of the urban space and the retail agents undertake carrying out the promotion activities just as the organisation of events.

Finally, a unique urban management body with a professional manager, who assumes all the functions, controls the financing and carries out the taken decisions over the retail area is created.

Participation

All the urban agents have to participate in the design of the city model, so that the achievement of the conditions is guaranteed which allow the greater approximation possible to the desirable city by the citizens. It can classify the type of participation depending on the decision taking structure (bottom-up and up-bottom) and according to the representative degree of the urban agents. In the analysed cases, it observes different participation degrees, from the only public consultation in the composition of the project until the participation forms based on the continuous consultation of the urban agents just as their involvement in the decision making process passing through the channelled participation through the associations which represent the different urban collectives.

Communication actions

These types of actions develop mainly to get the support of the different involved agents in the project in order to favour the association among the different urban agents and the creation of a collective conscience. At the same time, these actions increase the visibility of the project and promote the participation of the urban agents. Therefore, information bureaus for citizen are created and measures, which imply the media, are established. Conferences, seminars and publicity campaigns like web, newsletter and bulletins are organised.

CONCLUSIONS

In the urban regeneration three intervention fields can be identified: economic field, social field and physical field. When the project acts over all the fields it is called comprehensive revitalisation. While the project acts only over some of the fields it is called sectorial revitalisation.

The analysis of the different cases allows us to identify some actions which stand out regarding others in the different implementation phases of the revitalisation project. It is necessary to take into account that each studied case sets off from different situations therefore it is possible to have carried out some of the previous phases which is, nowadays carrying out in another city. Moreover, in some cases, the phases carry on for a long period of time during them is implemented measures of other phases or measures of a reaction are carried out in a short run.

In general, at the first moment the measures pursue the improvement of the urban environment so they act over the physical renovation, the pedestrian and road traffic mobility and the accessibility of the area. The second phase insists on the involvement, collaboration and promotion of the urban agents associations, establishing and improving the collaboration forms. Next are developed economic, commercial and social measures. And finally after the consolidation of the previous phases, the tendency is the creation of the open air shopping area and the joined together management area

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