

ISSUE 4

DEVELOPMENT AND PILOT IMPLEMENTATION OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS METHODS OF CENTRAL URBAN AREAS – PART 1

INTRODUCTION

This document is the final report of Component 3 of the Urbe-Viva Project. The Project's final goal is to "Develop a common operative model to be tested in the partner towns in order to implement integrated re-qualification policies of urban areas through the use of a unique management body". The Objectives of Component 3 of the Project are:

- The elaboration of economic method to analyse and study the central urban areas where it is possible to operate with policies, interventions, programmes and projects about urban retail regeneration;
- Implementation of the method of analysis in two urban central areas of each partner town.

In the next sections, we will present the description of the implementation of the methodology. The first part has been published in newsletter 3.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology outlined in the previous section was proposed by Patras, in cooperation with the University of Patras. A first draft was circulated to partners for comments [WHEN?]. After partners' comments were taken into consideration a revised method was circulated to partners [WHEN?], together with a set of guidelines. The partners' main observation concerned the need to conduct surveys in order to capture statistical information that is not readily available at the level of urban areas such as per capita income, population distribution by age, sex etc. As a result, it was recommended to approximate such measures by the pertinent statistical measures corresponding to a higher level of analysis (e.g. municipality or city). The method was then implemented by partners, each of whom applied it to select a couple of potential candidate locations. The reports were then sent to Patras, and formed the basis of this report.

Initial Observations

All reports submitted by the partners followed the report form suggested by the guidelines. They were all well presented and documented, with some partners supplying information in great detail. All partners conducted a qualitative as well as a quantitative assessment of their selected areas, but in most cases it was not possible to collect income data at local level, and hence it was not possible to implement phase 4, as suggested in the method. Instead, some

partners conducted local surveys and determined areas with business potential through a series of discussions or brainstorming sessions with local chambers of commerce and other relevant agencies. Finally, due to time restrictions, it was not possible to represent the available information by means of a Geographic Information System (GIS), as originally proposed.

Below, we will describe the experiences of the partners in implementing the methodology, and we will discuss some of its main advantages and the main problems encountered.

Implementation of the method in Bologna

The Municipality of Bologna used the methodology to identify two candidate locations for revitalization, the Piazza Verdi and the surrounding area and the railway station and the surrounding area. One of the main advantages of the methodology is that it constituted a structured basis for discussions between the Commercial Planning Unit and other municipal departments and external agencies in order to collect missing information, and thus provide deeper knowledge of the situation in the selected areas. It was seen as an opportunity to enrich and improve the SWOT analysis for the implementation of the planned interventions. The main limitation of the methodology concerned data requirements at local level, since the boundaries of the selected areas did not correspond to those traditionally used in collecting statistical information by the agencies concerned.

Implementation of the method in Modena

The Municipality of Modena found the methodology useful to promote involvement and participation of different actors (projects sharing, wider in depth analysis) leading to the development of interest and attention towards the analysed urban areas. It provided a complete and clear frame of an urban area and of its surroundings' features that is very useful in the project's elaboration phase. On the minus side, the method was considered too data-demanding in the sense that detailed and up-to-date data is usually collected at a higher geographical level. Collecting data for certain aspects such as pedestrian flows, environment and waste was not feasible and the conduction of surveys problematic. Furthermore, the initial specification of the fourth phase of the methodology was considered too theoretical. This criticism was one of the main reasons why this phase was redesigned in the final specification of the methodology.

Implementation of the method in Padova

The Municipality of Padova, found the data collection part of the method useful in many aspects, including regular collection of information, promoting collaboration between municipal departments and ensuring involvement and participation of outside agencies. It provided a complete and clear framework to develop city policy for urban retail. Although not implemented, the GIS was deemed very useful in providing a detailed analysis of the uses of land and identification of the vocations of selected parts of the city. If implemented, it will push to create a permanent collection of data. The aspect of associationism was considered of particular usefulness, since it helped to reinforce relationships between urban retailers. The urban environment part was also fundamental for the analysis. Environmental quality was not quantitatively measured and a qualitative approach was adopted instead. Criticism of the methodology concentrates in the focus it places on the selected localities and the lack of attention given to the surrounding area.

Implementation of the method in Patras

The Municipality of Patras used the methodology to assess the viability of revitalizing the existing industrial park area. The methodology provided a common basis to ensure participation of all stakeholders. Data collection and surveys helped to gain an insight of the problems of the specific area, and thus identify critical issues in the planned intervention. The most common problem encountered was the lack of relevant data at local level, especially in estimating supply and demand for each store category. The difficulty was circumvented by consulting with the local chambers of commerce and approximating local measures using regional ones.

Implementation of the method in Santa Cruz of Tenerife

The Municipality of Santa Cruz of Tenerife counted among the advantages of the methodology its comprehensiveness, as well as the fieldwork needed which enabled them to form a picture of reality rather than processing secondary data. The methodology establishes contact with urban agents, thus facilitating the implementation of the revitalization action. They considered the method rather resource consuming in terms of time and money with the danger of data expiration. As a consequence, some data were approximated by using past surveys and regional figures at the risk of reaching questionable conclusions.

Implementation of the method in Coimbra

The Municipality of Coimbra carried out a thorough implementation of the methodology and provided a detailed analysis of both quantitative and qualitative factors. They conducted detailed surveys for the main aspects under investigation and came up with results strongly supporting the potential of the selected areas. Where data at local level were not available, especially in phase 4, they used national indicators from official statistics. As a result, implementation of the methodology, especially the quantitative part required a lot of effort and time.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions on the use of the methodology

The collection of the experiences of the six partners leads to a number of interesting conclusions about the use of the methodology:

- The proposed method appears to have been helpful. All partners reported that it promoted relationships between interested parties, thus ensuring their involvement and commitment to any revitalization action. It provided a clear framework for discussions and data collection, during which, useful insights of the situation in the areas examined were gained.
- The technical offices of all partners involved appear to be operating at high level. Data collection and analysis were carried out in a thorough and systematic way, which strengthens the case for adopting revitalization actions for the selected areas.
- Local authorities may employ such an approach to identify promising areas. The successful application of the methodology by six different partners suggests that the approach can be extended to more local authorities or other candidate locations.

- Planned interventions can be justified by means of a systematic process. By providing a systematic framework, the methodology assisted partners to justify their plans and ensure finance and participation of relevant agencies.

- For the successful implementation of the methodology the cooperation of different urban actors such as the City Council, the Chamber of Commerce, local academic institutions etc is vital. For instance, it is important that different departments of the City Council from close links and exchange information and experience regarding central urban areas. In addition, a unique data base with the relevant information may be designed and implemented by the statistical department of each municipality in association with local universities or other experts.

The proposed method may have been somewhat ambitious in its demands for resources. However, it must be noted that

- There was limited time to implement the method
- There was lack of some data at local level which necessitated the need to contact local surveys
- It demonstrated the need to maintain more detailed demographic and other data at local level
- There was difficulty to implement a GIS, due to time and money restrictions

Commercial revitalization: Critical factors

The study of all the cases has led to the outlining of factors that will make commercial revitalisation possible when

- The problem is stated to city officials and direct actions must be taken It is important that the right people are interested to hear the problem and decide to take actions to solve it (municipality, concerned citizens, consumer groups, associations, shop owners, etc)
- Public services are available in the surrounding area. When public services surround the area it is most possible that more people will visit the areas in question (combination of things to do and things to enjoy)
- Historical important sites in the area are given proper care When possible, visitors from other places can view these sites as an attraction. It is important that these sites are advertised in tourist guides and other similar infobooks.
- Commercial store presentations must be made to express modern consumer needs The right marketing management will guide shop owners on what appearance will attract more business (lights, colors, etc)
- Change of direction is adopted

Many stores have kept traditional profiles that are no longer attractive to consumers. So it is important to assist shop owners to estimate when it is time to swift operations.

- Improvements on accessibility are made

A commercial area with poor accessibility is condemned to failure. There must be easy access by car and public transport. Sidewalks must be in a condition to provide safe and unrestricted walking and handicapped access should be enabled.

- Parking spaces are created where needed

Adequate parking space will attract potential consumers to the area and will help in overcoming resistance from residents who might fear overcrowding of their neighbourhood.

- Improvements are made to public transportation

Access by bus, metro, train, taxi should be easy for people to visit the area, and will minimize the number of new parking spaces to be created

- Efforts are made to widen the economical activity in a wider geographical area

The bigger the area the more variety and potential consumers will be served. If for example the downtown only consists of one main street that is overcrowded at rush hour it is reasonable that by making the two neighbouring streets an attraction more people will visit.

- Balancing of products and services for the operating market in the area

This will allow consumers to expand their consuming needs and cover them all in one area, without necessarily pushing out of the area traditional shops that had existed there for a long period

- Suitable operating hours are adopted

Operating hours must suit all categories of potential consumers (residents, outside visitors, tourists) thus closing the gaps from early morning to late at night consuming cycle.

- Information and evidence is provided to entrepreneurs on why this area can be a profitable investment

Cooperation with the local Chamber of Commerce or a study on economic factors and expectancies will attract more investors to the area

- Trade activities are promoted, promotion of special events, increasing of safety levels

Associations responsible can organise and promote activities targeting consumers who don't have faith in the area

- Active participation and involvement of all key players

All key players (store owners, investors, associations, municipality) must become team players in order to design economic strategies for revitalization. It is essential that everyone understands and values the seriousness of the effort.

- Coordination of all agents for successful marketing oriented policies to attract more consumers within the area limits

Using outside expertise assistance to enhance knowledge and marketing tips

- Introduction of new services (delivering, etc) for economic growth even outside the characterised area

- Marketing initiatives to increase and maximize retail sales

Marketing and management assistance from surrounding universities, the chamber of commerce or specialized firms where they can make on the job observations and increase sales

- Adoption of commercial policies and benefits for the investors by the state – municipality

City officials and parties involved can express their needs and examine the potentiality of better cooperation.

- Promotion to increase consumer flux and development of the area's image is planned

- Public interventions where needed

Renewal of old infrastructure (telephone connections, electricity and water), green

areas, squares, city lights etc)

Efforts from city officials must be made so that:

- Abandoned and ruined buildings do not give a negative image to the area
- Strategies must be improvised if collection of data is hard to acquire
- Disputes from different associations (municipality, shop owners, concerned citizens, chamber of commerce, consumer groups) should be quickly resolved so that they do not delay progress actions. Participation and dissemination of information is critical in that respect.
- Collection of necessary data will become easier to obtain when adequate resources are provided
- Roles must be clear for everyone resulting to clear tasks for the players involved

Methodology: Future Steps

The proposed methodology can be extended in several ways. More specifically, future extensions include the following:

- To further elaborate the method
- To develop a Decision Support Tool for local authorities
- To develop tools for monitoring the progress of planned interventions
- To develop tools for evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of planned interventions

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