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FINAL REPORT

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES FOR RETAIL REVITALISATION IN MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES

RetaiLink

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FOREWORD

Àngels Chacón Feixas
RetaiLink Project Coordinator.
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Retail is a key element for the local economy and the vitality of a city. It creates a sense of community, involving all kinds of stakeholders, with citizens at the core. It helps define the identity of a place, contributes to the security of its citizens, shapes the city's landscape and reflects its complex, social dynamics. Nowadays, the continuity of this very essential element of cities is being challenged, being one of the economic sectors undergoing major changes due to the new global trends and the transformation of consumers' behaviours.

Local authorities can play a major role enabling the adaptation of the city's retail to the new needs and expectations of citizens. As a huge majority of those businesses in middle-sized cities are SMEs and familiar enterprises, retail is both a tool to create employment and a way to make cities vibrant and attractive.

The RetaiLink network was born to put together those medium-sized cities who wish to revitalise and transform their retail offer so it becomes a key economic driver. Whereas retail revitalisation policies are less often approached from a participative and consumer-centred approach, this is precisely how our RetaiLink network has worked. During the last 24 months, ten cities from nine different European countries have shared a learning journey to create local strategies that respond to the new scenarios while focusing, at the same time, on the sustainable development of each one's urban area.

We believe that the challenges involved in retail revitalisation can't be addressed from an isolated perspective; it requires local administrations to adopt an integrated and participative approach. The URBACT methodology to co-create a local action plan has therefore been highly suitable for us, since retail revitalisation policies involve different council departments (such as urban planning and mobility, regulation, SMEs and employment, tourism...) and stakeholders (retailers, property owners, hospitality, culture and leisure sectors…). Besides the methodological aspects, we especially value the opportunity that URBACT has given us to access and learn from the most relevant experts in the retail field, enabling all project partners to gain a better understanding of the situation we face nowadays.

Now that we are arriving at the end of our learning journey, I especially want to thank our partners for their involvement, their work in close cooperation and their valuable contributions throughout the duration of the project. RetaiLink has indeed been a successful team of cities, where we created a reliable partnership that allowed for open, frank, and intensive exchanges of ideas and experiences, which has in the end broadened the horizons of each team member.

We are proud to present the RetaiLink Final Report, which reflects on the knowledge acquired and summarizes the process involved during the last two years. It contains the key learning, policy recommendations and the action plans developed by the project partners and their local groups. We hope it is an inspiring tool for all those who believe retail has the power to drive change for the betterment of cities.

"Retailing activity creates urbanity -it's an activity inherent to the city and its social interactions, as well as an indicator of urban quality and vitality."

Juan Luís de las Rivas Sanz
Architect and Urban Planner
University of Valladolid, Spain

PRESENTATION

RetaiLink is an URBACT III network project of ten medium-sized European cities working together to find ways to improve - by adopting a more holistic approach involving all key stakeholders, public and private – each one's local retail sector.

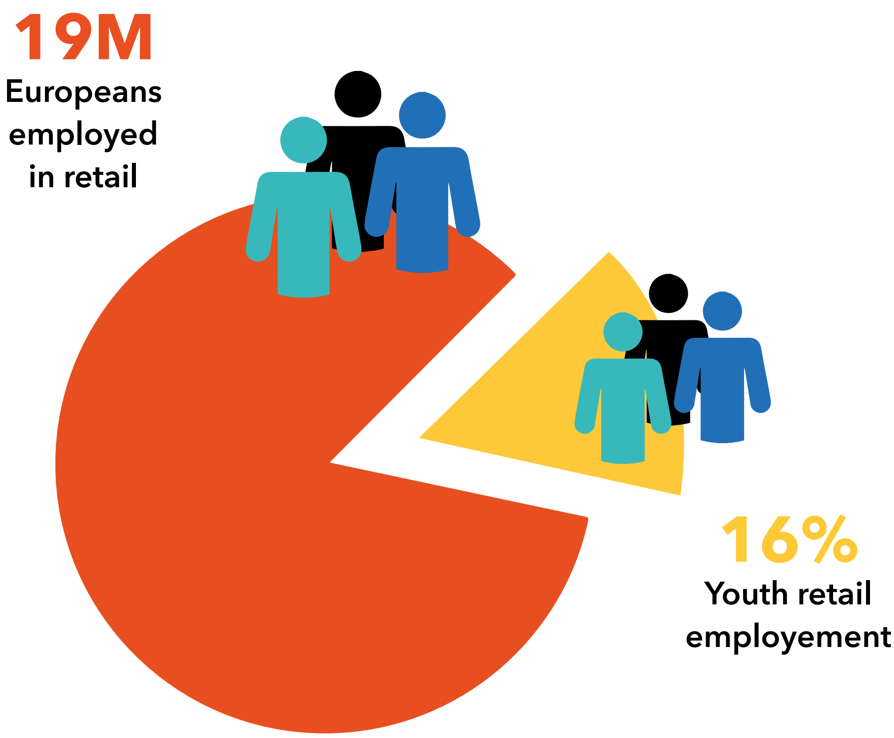
Led by Igualada, a city located 50 km. from Barcelona (ES), the partnership includes nine mid-sized cities from different European regions: two in the Netherlands, Hengelo (Overijssel) and Hoogeveen (Drenthe); three in southern Europe, Romans (FR), Fermo (IT) and Sibenik (HR); Bistrita in the historic region of Transylvania (RO); Liberec at the north of the Czech Republic, close to the Germany and Polish borders; Pécs, near the south border with Croatia; and Basingstoke and Deane Borough, located in Hampshire, south east England.

Each of the ten cities invested two years in focussed dialogues and open-ended exchanges on ways to reshape each one's local retail propositions to make them more attractive, practical and sustainable, in line with the local consumers' expectations and values. The overarching aim is to contribute to enhancing retail business performance and reinvigorating each participating city using retail as a means to achieve bigger goals, since retail is a natural trigger factor of social relations and urban life.

As a result of this project's dynamic learning and planning process, each of the ten cities have developed Local Action Plans that are expected to:

· Enhance the competitiveness of small independent retail businesses
· Generate economic activity and increase retail turnover
· Retain and improve employment within the retail sector and related business activities, i.e. hospitality
· Persuade the local population to shop locally rather than going elsewhere
· Attract shoppers from a larger catchment area.

EU retail employement and share of young retail employement



A learning process for all has been part of RetaiLink's journey –one encompassing the needs, capacities and visions of all participants. All based on the foundation that regenerating retail in the city can only be achieved by finding ways to merge mutual influences and develop interlinked solutions. RetaiLink partners agreed to organise learning topics in four different building blocks so they could be easily studied and transferred to each one's planning and action groups. The thematic blocks include:

1. Analysing the local consumer to better understand shopping needs and preferences and their values and expectations.
2. Reshaping retail in the city and creating a shopping experience in line with local needs and the city's DNA.
3. Adapting the urban space, mobility offers, and regulations on the retail sector to better host the new shopping proposition in the city.
4. Branding as a means not just to communicate a consistent image of the city and its retail, but also to internally develop a shared city-wide vision that helps the local citizens identify with the place where they live.

Over the course of the learning and exchanging process, thematic experts were invited to participate at the transnational network meetings and helped project participants to go deeper into the issues of each thematic block. At the same time, partner cities enriched the project with their own experience and good practices.

The purpose of this report is twofold: on the one hand, it aims to showcase key project learning, which can be found in a more extensive and detailed fashion in the RetaiLink thematic reports and case studies[1]. On the other hand, it proposes a set of policy recommendations to help city retail stakeholders navigate through the different topics and prepare steps for a broad, inclusive, multi-stakeholder planning process for retail revitalisation.

1. See http://urbact.eu/retailink

Following this introduction, the report is structured in 5 sections:

1. The first section refers to the broad retail context today and it reminds of both the challenges and the relevance of the role that the sector plays in smaller European cities.
2. The second section presents the project thematic blocks, themes that need to be considered when assessing the local situation and engaging in an innovative retail strategy.
3. The third section summarizes the ten local integrated and participated action plans that partner cities have developed as solutions to their respective challenges and problems.
4. The fourth section includes the set of policy recommendations that project leaders may want to consider and adapt for their own plans to enliven retail.
5. The last section provides Conclusions.

The URBACT RetaiLink site **http://urbact.eu/retailink** contains project outputs and it also links to the RetaiLink Virtual City, where visitors can navigate and access all project materials located in an interactive site representing a city.
The RetaiLink Virtual City can be accessed directly through: **http://www.retailand.eu/**

This report is addressed to medium-sized cities' practitioners and retail sector representatives who see their city centres losing activity, their shops emptying, and residents going out of town to shop in malls and in neighbouring or bigger cities. The ten RetaiLink partners hope that the contents herein can be useful and they encourage other mid-sized European cities to engage in the same creative and shared planning process as a way to find solutions to reverse any negative retail trends and enhance city economic performance.

Acknowledgements

The project lead partner, Àngels Chacon, Councillor of Economic Development in Igualada, and the lead expert, Mireia Sanabria, want to thank all participants who have attended, contributed and given useful advice and feedback to their peers during this 24-month RetaiLink journey. In particular, they want to thank project coordinators and the cities' teams for their dedication, hard work and readiness for cooperation at all times. They acknowledge:

Daniel Castejón, International Projects Officer and Anna Suárez, Communication Officer at Igualada City Council (ES); Daniel Garnier, Economic Development and Culture Manager, and Susan George, Economic Projects Officer at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (UK); Cristina Cudrec, Head of International Dpt. and Radu Rus, Head of Projects Implementation Dpt., at Bistrita City Council (RO); Cristina Fritelloni, European Project Manager, and Carlo Pagliacci, Communication Consultant, at Fermo's City Council (IT); Susan Meijer, Urban Planner, and Carla Haafkes, Economic Developemnt Dpt., at Hengelo City Council (NL); Gert Bolkesteijn, Municipal Inner City Initiator, and Sandra van Slageren, Programme Director of Spatial Development, Culture and Sustainability, in Hoogeveen City Council (NL); Lucie Noswitz, Head of Fundraising Dpt. in the Municipality and Lucie Blázkova, Communication Dpt. at Liberec City Council (CZ); Fréderic Deshayes, European Projects Manager, and Ludivine Roisier, City Retail Office Manager, at Romans Council (FR); Márk Hoffbauer, Project Development, Dora Égry, Head of Project Development, and Zita Doman, Communication Dpt., at Pécs Economic Development Agency (HU); and Pétar Misura, Head of Economy Dpt., Entrepreneurship and Development, at Sibenik City Council (HR).

All project coordinators and cities' participants also want to give a warm and special thanks to the thematic experts for their valuable contributions that helped broaden participants' knowledge and awareness on key topics: Janny Rijs, from Broekhuis Rijs Consulting (NL); Tom Kikkert, from Retail & Identiteit

Consulting (NL), Ricardo Rustarazo, from Retail & Marketing Consulting; Luís Martínez-Ribes, from MF Marketing Catalysts; Simon Quin, from the Institute of Place Management (UK); Juan Luís de las Rivas, Architect, University of Valladolid; Marceline Bonneau, co-lead expert of URBACT III Refill project; Wessel Badenhorst, lead expert of URBACT III City Centre Doctor; Giuliano Mingardo, Urban Planner from the Erasmus University; and, Manuel Torresan, Architect, the University of Rome.

RetaiLink partners in Fermo, February 2018

I. RETAIL REVITALISATION IN CONTEXT

1- RETAILINK PROJECT WITHIN THE NEW URBAN AGENDA AND THE URBAN AGENDA FOR THE EU

New urban agendas are taking hold in Europe and globally, and medium-sized cities are receiving particular attention. The Habitat III Conference (Ecuador, 2016) where the New Urban Agenda was adopted, dedicated a thematic meeting on intermediate cities, acknowledging them as an 'increasingly vital component of the global urban picture'. It states that smaller cities 'are more governable… so they can offer a better quality of life for their inhabitants'.

The Urban Agenda for the European Union, approved in May 2016 with the Pact of Amsterdam, recognises cities to be at the core of the European future. It frames the 'challenges and opportunities of small and medium-sized cities and polycentric development' as a cross cutting issue. The document states that a growing number of urban challenges are of a local nature and that smaller cities are relevant for a balanced and sustainable urbanization process and regional development.

Indeed, the European national authorities have begun thinking in terms of cities and their territories, not only regions (NUTS), and of functional urban areas being the territorial analysis delimitation for cities and towns' at a smaller scale.

Twelve partnerships have been established so far in the Urban Agenda for the EU that respond to twelve priority themes. Four of these are of particular relevance when considering a retail revitalisation strategy for cities, namely, Circular economy, Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy, Urban Mobility and Digital Transition. The main relevance of each is briefly shown below.

Local Economy is circular by definition in the sense that local resources are used at the beginning and the end of the production-consumption process. Cities can and should find ways to avoid being trapped only at the end of the consumption chains and to, instead, take on a greater role in sustainability in support of boosting the local and regional economy.

Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy: Clearly, investment in producing and consuming locally and regionally will benefit local retailers and can even create a sense of identity that distinguishes home retail. Indeed, circularity naturally defends small and medium enterprises, which, in turn, strengthens the local economic fabric and creates jobs and activity. Moreover, it does so in a more sustainable way than by big corporations' investments usually driven by international economic flows that prioritise high efficiency and low costs.

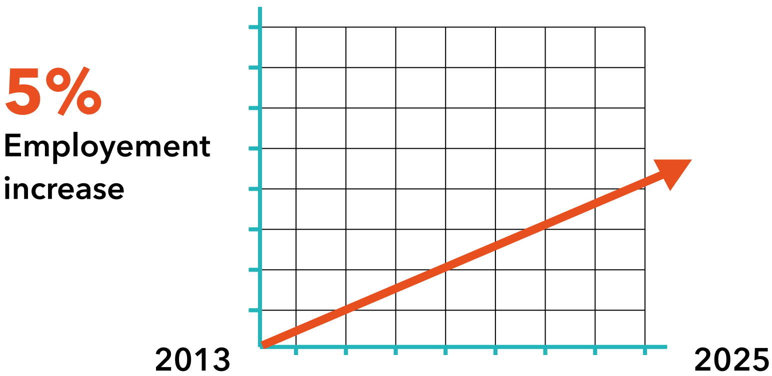
Urban Mobility: Besides generating economic activity, retailers create and shape the retail space itself given that the sector by definition is spatially rooted in urban concepts: city centre, market square, High Street... In light of this, urban mobility calls for a certain level of organisation and rationalisation. Redesigning mobility to facilitate access to retail areas usually involves pedestrianizing and 'pacifying' urban centres. Although retailers do not usually sympathise with this idea, it has been proved that by removing cars from commercial streets and offering a practical, easy-to-use combination of transport nearby, footfall in the retailing zone increases and so does, ultimately, retail turnover.

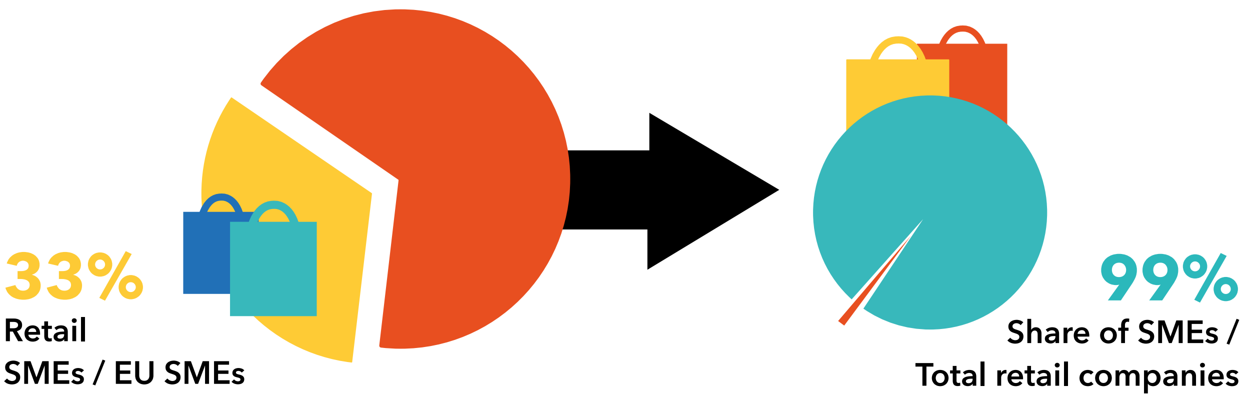
Digital Transition: Finally, the retail sector gets no exception from the transformations that the digital era is bringing to all economic activity. An upgraded retail offer inevitably requires ICT structures and a digitally-skilled workforce able to cope with new consumer habits.

2- RETAIL TRENDS AND CONTEXT

Retail shops represent one third of European small and medium-sized companies, which translates into 3,7 million shops[2] operating in cities and towns, close to customers, offering direct and personalised service.

More than 95% of retail companies are micro businesses, employing less than 10 people. When we include SMEs, the share of retail companies rises to 99%. That said, though, it is how these small shops serve the consumer that will largely determine their success.





2. Reynolds, J. & Cuthberston, R., Oxford Institute for Retail Management. SAID Business School, University of Oxford, 2014

Over the last fifty years, medium-sized cities have been losing retail, one of their key economic activities and an indicator of a city centre's health and performance.

Shopping habits, alongside retail business models, have been deeply transformed. Increasingly, we see how Internet giants such as Amazon or Alibaba are swallowing up huge shares of the global online market. In Europe, online sales increase by 15% every year. The same cannot be said about the retail sector in mid-size cities.

In this context, the city has to be able to zoom in, focusing in on understanding local consumer profiles and what would be the most adequate retail offers, and be able to zoom out, too, keeping an eye out on global trends to pre-empt where the challenges and difficulties might come from and how they might impact on the local reality.

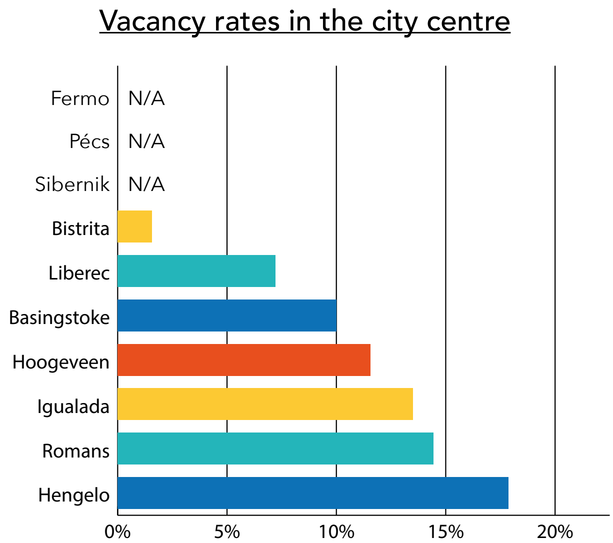
RetaiLink partner cities have been dealing with different sets of factors that influence their respective retail sectors performance: local consumer patterns and preferences, business vitality, proximity to a bigger city or metropolitan area, the existence of big shopping malls outside the inner city, and tourism cycles leading to seasonal retail offers, etc.

Indeed, our RetaiLink cities and their particularities, are not immune from the global trends impacting on all medium-sized and smaller cities in Europe (and worldwide): namely, the increasing shares of e-commerce, new digital business models, the use of social media for communication and customer loyalty strategies, sector deregulation… These are all powerful influences disrupting the scenario in which smaller cities and their retail businesses compete.

Structural changes, too, in retail business models, have brought on new challenges and stress to small local and traditional shops. Today, big brands have all developed their own franchise network, multi- channel marketing solutions, and can manage the entire retail supply chain, from manufacturing and distribution all the way to shop design. Small shops do not enjoy such powers.

All the above has resulted in small retail shops losing ground in the market and to a steady decline of the city retail units and jobs. Business turnover has decreased and vacancies are hardly ever re-occupied by a new retail initiative.

Vacancy rates in RetaiLink cities



Local authorities together with retailers and a number of other social and economic agents need to find new ways to overcome, adapt and be creative if they want to keep up with retail sector trends and develop attractive offers for the locals.

On this, there is room for optimism. Recent research shows that:

- Typical consumer behaviour is to look for products and compare prices on the Internet but to actually go to the physical shop for the experience.
- When asked about shopping preferences, particularly for food commodities and daily products, consumers prefer proximity.
- There is a new trend to open brick and mortar retail units of Internet-based companies, as well as click and collect solutions and flagship stores in city centres.

We can assume that retail companies understand that no virtual interaction can replace the hands-on, physical experience of shopping or the personal relationship with the client. Retail in cities might be shrinking but it will not disappear. In the UK, for example, the European country where e-commerce has the highest share of total sales, e-commerce is around 18%. That means there is more than 80% of retail business turnover generated in shops, people to people.

Our project and this report focus on a type of retail sector that contributes to the revitalisation of the city area and constitutes an economic driver. Whereas in some parts of the report we will be referring to convenience shopping, the principle focus will be on leisure and experiential retail.

In continuation, we briefly summarise the key interactive factors that support retail revitalisation in medium-sized cities.

II. REVITALISING RETAIL. WHAT MID-SIZED EUROPEAN CITIES CAN DO

"If politicians are to ensure cities have strong and vibrant high streets, their aim should be to create policies that strengthen the city centre economy as a whole, rather than focus too narrowly on retail"

Louise McGough & Elli Thomas
Centre for Cities

1- KNOWING THE LOCAL CONSUMER. TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

A basic activity in our lives is to buy and sell, which affects so many other aspects of our lives and surroundings. According to retail experts, there is a very strong relationship between our lifestyle and the dominant retail format. Over time, experts say, the most relevant and successful retail offers are the ones that adapt to our lives at a given time, in a specific place.

Therefore, before setting up in a place, retailers usually consider key sector factors, which combine both the human elements and the ones having to do with business metrics. Strategic decisions include information based on quantitative and qualitative analysis: for example -the retail catchment area of a city; digital marketing strategies; sales potential; Occupation Cost Rate[3]; pedestrian flow: transportation and accessibility; the retail mix; and the number of big international brands, etc. In the end, though, understanding who the human potential customer of the product is will eventually guide the most important business decisions, so say the brand and retail experts.

Cities, local retailers and place makers need to be aware of consumers' needs and habits, and understand their motivations, values and preferences if they want to design a retail proposition that fits. Only then will they be able to provide a suitable retail offer that covers residents' daily shopping needs and provide for an outstanding retail experience in purchasing of non-commodity items. Just how important the customer is in shaping the city's retail offer, gurus say that the local customer acts as retail's GPS.

Underlying consumer motivations and reactions respond to human behavioural principles. The neuro-marketing approach widely used in the retail sector today suggests that by connecting with people's emotions and intuitive reactions allows sellers to better figure out, shape and deliver a retail offer and experience that the local customer feels identified with and can consider as special, unique and appealing.

3. OCR: Time that the retail profits will pay back occupancy costs. OCR (%) = Annual Gross Rent / Annual Sales

When making shopping decisions, customers respond to at least two basic motivations:

How to spare efforts

Consumer behaviour, particularly when it comes to non-commodity or leisure shopping, does not respond to the 'saving money' motivation but, instead, it is mostly driven by the 'saving brain energy'. This is why retailers have introduced frictionless retail, which removes non-value-added activities that negatively impact on the customer experience, i.e. fast electronic payment systems to avoid queuing or the spread of click and collect solutions.

White label products, low cost and outlets are all shopping options in general terms addressed to less well-off consumers. Consumers of all means though, find attractive ease and convenience all in one place. This is the most critical reason why outside shopping centres have traditionally attracted footfall, emptying city centres and retail streets in town.

Emotional appeals

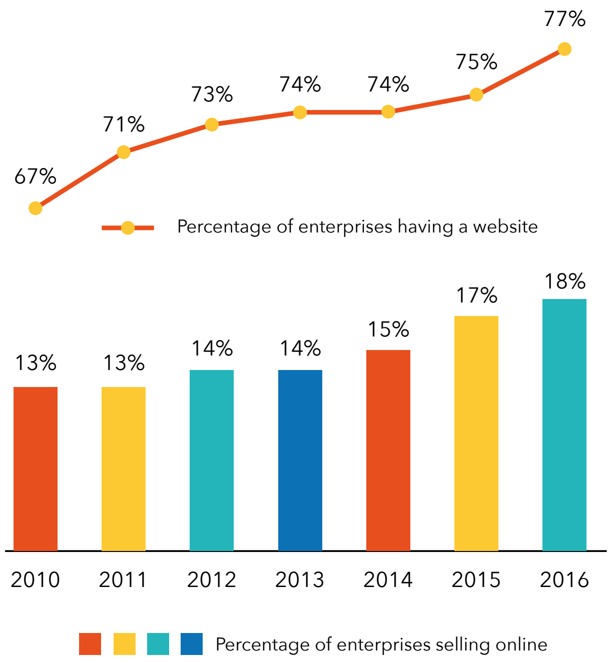
When making a purchase, 95% of our decision-making takes place in the subconscious mind. Once we have chosen an item our rational brain starts looking for arguments to convince us the decision that has already been made is right. Shopping decisions are more related to 'what we feel' than to 'what we buy'. Essential it becomes therefore for sellers to identify the guiding consumer incentives.

Customers respond to products and stories that connect to their personal expectations and values: young people with adventure; families with leisure. These values can be identified but can also be promoted through information and education campaigns. Recent market trends that prioritise purchasing local products or buying with social value have taken hold in many European cities, proving that retail propositions do in fact work that can connect with peoples' deep beliefs of the need for a sustainable type of goods production and consumption.

Frictionless retail experience can be objectively assessed; however, emotions need a more personalised analysis.

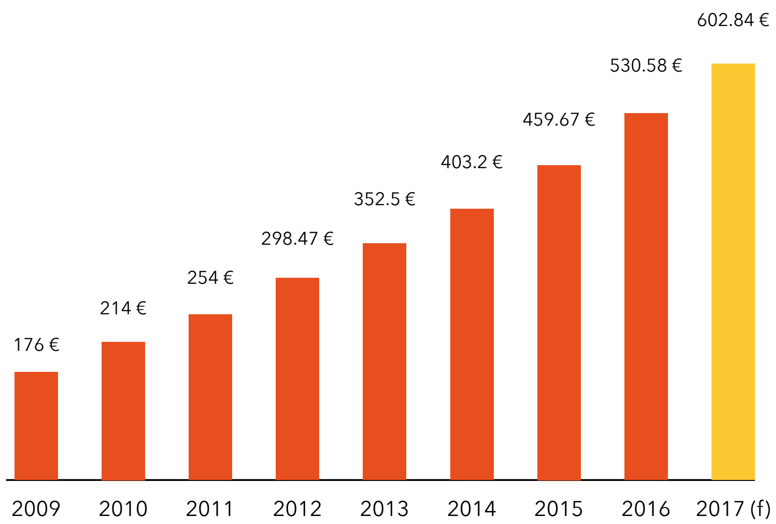
While these two motivations highly influence our shopping decisions, a third one has more recently interrupted on the scene, powerfully influencing both the demand and the supply side, and changing the way we market and buy things. No doubt about it, the Internet and mobile devices have disrupted shopping behaviours and completely transformed traditional retail business models, with no let up in sight. So much so on the consumer side, we barely distinguish anymore between on-line and off-line actions. In retail jargon, we have become simply "on-off" customers. These three graphics show the e-commerce trends in the last years.

<u>The number of companies selling online is increasing</u>



<u>Retail e-commerce in the EU</u>

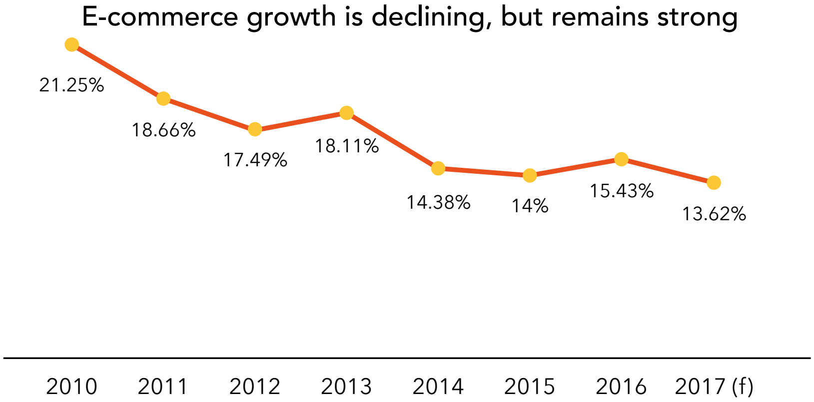
B2C E-commerce is expected to increase to 602 € billion in 2017



Source: E-commerce foundation, 2017

<u>E-commerce growth rates 2010 - 2017</u>

E-commerce growth is declining, but remains strong



Source: E-commerce foundation, 2017

Brick-and-mortar stores for OnOff customers?

By Lluís Martínez-Ribes
Lluís serves Game Changers from all around the world to co-shape brain-pleasing brands and purchasing experiences. Fascinated by innovation in marketing and retail, he works as Associate Professor at ESADE Business school as well as Marketing Catalyst at his company m+f=!

The past year was the year of apocalyptic prophecies in retail. Day after day, all the way from regular newspapers to academic journals, we could spot titles forecasting the 'death', 'apocalypse', 'revolution' or 'meltdown' of retail. While online purchasing takes over, people wouldn't need nor want physical stores anymore. Something groundbreaking, yet catastrophic was to come. Physical stores were coming to an end.

However, the story had another side. Have a look at the following photo taken in a professional trade fair:

Photo: Lluís Martínez-Ribes

A giant ice cube–with a fake crab inside–placed in one of the fair booths was a big highlight grabbing the visitors' attention!

Observing people's excitement of feeling the cold ice in their hands, and then smiling and chatting about it, I started wondering: are the current "OnOff people"[4] really that different from what the traditional people used to be?

4. 'OnOff people' are those persons that have their smartphones continuously with them–as if wearing them–, switching between on and off-line so frequently that they do not realise anymore if they are really on-line or off-line. Nowadays the majority of citizens, in almost all countries, are 'OnOff'. In Europe they are a huge majority.

I came up with an important conclusion:

As long as OnOff people like kissing, hugging, even touching a block of ice and other things that stimulate their human senses, brick-and-mortar stores will continue to exist.

Not much after I had argued this opinion in a conference organised by ESADE Creapolis in May 2017, other big news came in: the digital giant Amazon had bought Whole Foods, the organic grocery store chain.

For a moment it seemed that Amazon, the paragon of digital retailing, had gone crazy. Why on Earth would a world-leading online store go physical? After a little reflection, it all makes much sense.

Here are some reasons for what brick-and-mortar stores remain valid businesswise:

1. STORES AS SPACES TO BETTER STIMULATE HUMAN SENSES

Stores give a unique opportunity to trigger people's senses, since they are capable to activate all the human senses. It is scientifically proven that the greater the number of senses activated simultaneously, the more prone we are to be persuaded. No wonder why already back in 2007, Amancio Ortega, the founder of Inditex (Zara, Massimo Dutti, etc.), argued that stores–as physical spaces–are the best way to create a brand[5].

2. BEYOND COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS

Stores should no longer merely be places where transactions or exchanges occur (you give me money, and I'll give you an ice cream). Rather, they may be places where other things happen, things which cannot be experienced in the digital domain.
Stores can be meeting points for socializing, learning, entertaining, etc.

m+f=!,BCN,2016

3. THEY COMBINE CONVENIENCE AND IMAGINATION

In order to be great, customer experience must have two important characteristics: to be convenient and to trigger customers' imagination. In the case of Amazon, the first one (convenience) is strongly mastered both at the front and the back-end. Yet, the 'realm' of imagination is rather enhanced with the help of the brick-and-montar stores (Whole Foods). The physical stores allow enriching the experience via a type of semiotics, narrative and theatricalisation hard to reach digitally alone.

m+f=!,BCN,2016

5. Paz Álvarez expresses this in his article 'El ideario del creador de Inditex', published in 'Cinco Días' on 26 June 2007. Available at: https://cincodias.elpais.com/cincodias/2007/06/26/empresas/1183024745_850215.html?rel=mas
Retrieved: 18 January 2018.

4. IF PEOPLE ARE ONOFF, RETAIL SHOULD BE TOO!
As we have seen, the omnipresent smartphones have invaded our lives to such an important extend that our lives nowadays are continuously OnOff. This is why I'd argue that, to match retail with the OnOff people's way of life today, it is necessary to practice a type of retail that is OnOff, too.

So, does this mean that store owners can stop reading now, go and crack open a bottle of champagne to celebrate? Well, I wouldn't.

What I would do is formulate a retail strategy which takes into account the following suggetions:

Rather than identifying trends and best practices, we should get inspired by how OnOff people live their lives. This includes, for example, new habits, attitudes, and values. An example would be that OnOff people are much more aware of how they use their time. Hence logically, the idea of making people spend more time at our store is clearly not that suitable these days.

Understanding how people live helps us to find great inspiration for the right business moves since the best retail is characterized by the following two features:

1. It is in tune with the way people live their lives.

2. It improves these people's lives in some specific way.

The most successful retail concepts throughout the history have been successful exactly because of meeting these two requirements.

Think about it. In the past, when the world was local and life was rather repetitive, the local shops were a perfect match for that way of living. The customers would be greeted by name and the conversations would go on forever, making up for the lack of stimulation in daily life.

When 'modern life', including TV and air travel, arrived, the modern retail chains (sometimes called organised retailing) appeared. Their lower prices allowed people to save money for a holiday, for example.

When the Internet began to appear in homes, retail turned multi-channel with the addition of e-commerce. People had the chance to purchase via different interfaces. At the end of this stage, the ideal retail was omni-channel, with more customer-centricity than multi-channel.

And since 2007, when the first iPhone was launched and we learnt to tap our smartphone screens instead of keyboards, the best retail format has been m-commerce which is taking over e-commerce[6].

Now, since the majority of customers have become OnOff, the best match can be the OnOff retail: a complete solution to improve a part of their life–beyond purchasing–via smartphone and physical space. Imagine an app which helps you save energy and get odd jobs done at home. If it constantly helps you, you will think of it as a friend and, when you need to buy so-mething for your home, you will most likely use it or enjoy going to a place that simulates your senses and offers unforgettable experiences.

6. m-commerce refers to purchasing via a smartphone, while e-commerce via a computer.

The formula for success (I am almost embarrassed by such an overused expression) in market economy is obvious and centred on the customer, who decides:

If you can improve something in my life,
then I am going to come to your store time after time.

If purchasing is part of life, then why not to link retail to life, even beyond purchasing? Focusing retail solely on boosting sales is short-sighted. Making someone feel that 'my life is better thanks to you' is much more effective.

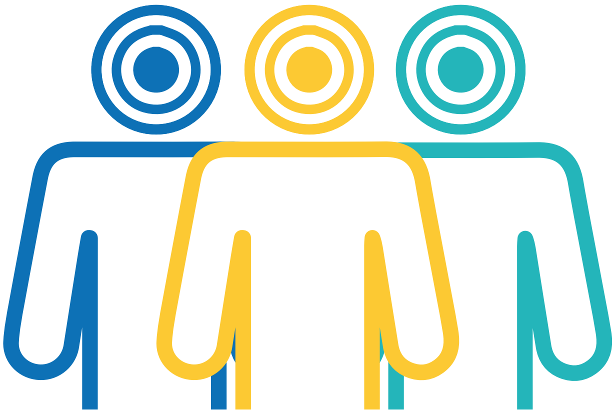
All that has been said here applies not only to retail stores but also to city retail business. Now it's your turn.

Large retail brands are aware of consumer behavioural principals and develop marketing strategies to quickly respond to them. They easily adapt their shops and products to the highly informed, technological and demanding customer. Local retailers though, find it difficult and expensive to cope with these rapid changes and trends. They thus require support from local allies. Partnerships and collaborative structures are needed so that together they can adapt and offer innovative proposals to attract the interest of the local consumer and visitors.

On this, RetaiLink partners have learnt that the city -as the collaborative coalition of different local public and private agents- can have a key role in upgrading local shops and optimising retail performance by working together from the start to profile and understand the city and its consumers:

· Who is shopping in our city?
· Are they residents or visitors?
· What establishments do they visit?
· What do they purchase when they come to the city centre?
· How much do they spend?
· What do they value most from the local retail offer?
· What do they buy in bigger or neighbouring cities?
· Is there a type of product or shop they do not find in town?

In other words, what's needed is to "zoom in", to focus on knowing more about the real, specific, local customers. Below we propose three methods for such analysis, based on our RetaiLink project experience. Examples of Good Practice boxes are shown, as well.



1.1 - PROFILING THE LOCAL CONSUMER

Macro data indicators can provide a snapshot photo of the local population, based on the available information from official sources and statistics or generated on purpose:

· GDP per capita.
· Disposable income and purchase capacity of the residents and catchment area.
· Local and regional employment structure.
· Sector studies and other socio-economic data from local, regional or national statistics.

Of particular interest to a city in view of each context:

· Number of overnight stays in tourist cities.
· Share of purchase destination to local product shops, fresh food market, supermarket, commercial centres, online shopping.
· Level of motorised vehicle access to the retail area, public or private.

Being a tourist spot, or nearby one, or having a big university in the area can completely change the kinds of consumers that come to town for shopping. RetaiLink partner cities show the diversity of local consumers, which probably reflect other European cities' experiences. Below we show some examples:

The main target consumer in Igualada is the local resident family. But due to the innovative offer and retail-based events, as well as other local policies addressed to attract university students (from the Autonomus University of Barcelona, or the University of Barcelona), the city has been able to enlarge the catchment area and attract visitors from other neighbouring smaller towns. Basingstoke has a similar profile, with families as the main consumer group, and is also aiming at an increased number of a young, talented and highly-educated population.

Sibenik has become a popular European tourist destination. Most of the city centre shops are strongly oriented towards visitors during the summer season. Many close from October to May, whilst residents tend to use shopping centres located out of town.

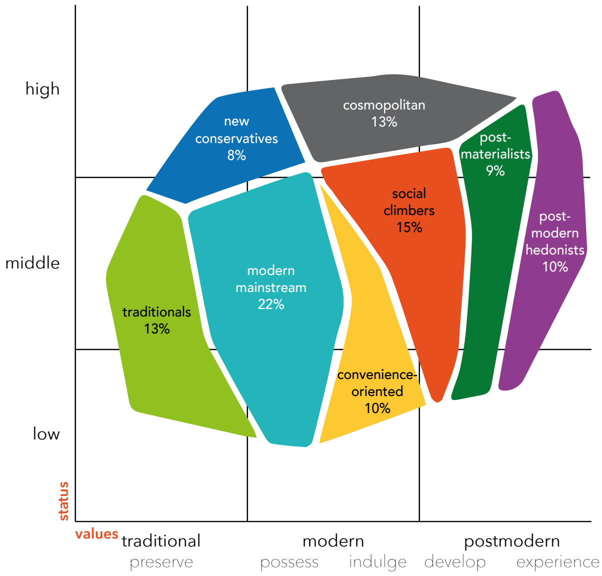
In Fermo, with a great tourist potential due to its historical legacy and the nearby beach resorts, the municipality is working on a retail strategy that provides suitable offer to meet the expectations of both kinds of residents: year-round buyers looking for bargains, and tourists, or seasonal clients, keen on picking up more genuine, or emblematic local products.

Profiling in practice:

Hoogeveen residents' screening

The RetaiLink partner of Hoogeveen (NL) combined the nation- wide Dutch government-conducted research to assess income, level of education, and motivations, with the analysis led by Hoogeveen's BID on the local population profile. The analysis revealed that the city's main population profiles and features consist of:

· 34% with a modern mainstream profile: They like family relationships, are focused on consuming and entertainment, are materialistic, seek prestige, and have lower educational levels.
· 18% Traditional: Moralistic, are focused on calls to duty, are conservative, keep to traditions and are materialistic.
· 16% Social climbers: Focused on their professional careers, seek social prestige, use new technologies, take risks and look for new, exciting experiences.



Knowing this, the local retail proposition clearly defined a range of target groups of consumers and users:
· Residents, visitors from the region and tourists
· Families with children, parents between 25 and 45 years old
· Lower levels of education among the inhabitants and region visitors
· Tourists looking for comfortable, intimate and fun shopping

1.2 - MONITORING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The picture shown from the previous set of indicators can be enhanced and become dynamic by including regular analysis on different aspects affecting retail, for example, city centre footfall and uses on weekdays and weekends, online shopping habits, the types of purchases throughout the year. Tools to measure indicators include:

- Footfall counters using WiFi that detect IP mobile devices
- Retail mobile apps and digital tickets to register individual purchases (the customer agrees on using the app and gets special discounts in return)
- Regular reports from real estate agents and property owners' associations
- Banks and visa transactions in case of touristic cities
- Fieldwork and periodic interviews and surveys on site or online
- Open data sources.

The Good Practice below shows an example of retail monitoring and analysis in our partner city of Hengelo, also in the Netherlands:

Centrummonitor Hengelo. Local retail customer assessment and monitoring

Hengelo (NL) has developed a city centre monitoring tool that combines different methods to obtain relevant and regular information on a number of topics to inform the local retail policy. The information includes data for customer profiling and sector figures, and includes a number of indicators:

- Visitors per week to the local shops in the city centre and on market days
- Frequency and goal of the visits
- Alternative shopping destinations including Internet
- Visitors' age, length of stay, expenditures
- Frequency of visits for hospitality and cultural purposes
- Vacancy and square footage
- People employed in shops and restaurants
- Transport and valuation of accessibility
- Valuation of different city centre aspects

Besides the devices and methods presented above, one key tool is the survey among resident population through the 'Hengelo Panel', a large group of resident people (2.500) who fill out an online questionnaire several times a year.

This questionnaire deals with the residents' opinions and perceptions of municipal policy, including retail topics. Because personal data is kept, the analysis is crosschecked with profiles. The questionnaires keep the same set of topics year after year, to build comparable data sets, and will from time to time include incidental matters that refer to a current policy issue, i.e. a new investment, a change regards mobility. Finally, there are open questions for respondents to give their comments and suggestions.

All this provides valuable, long-term information to the City, and is being most useful for rethinking retail in view of users' needs and preferences.

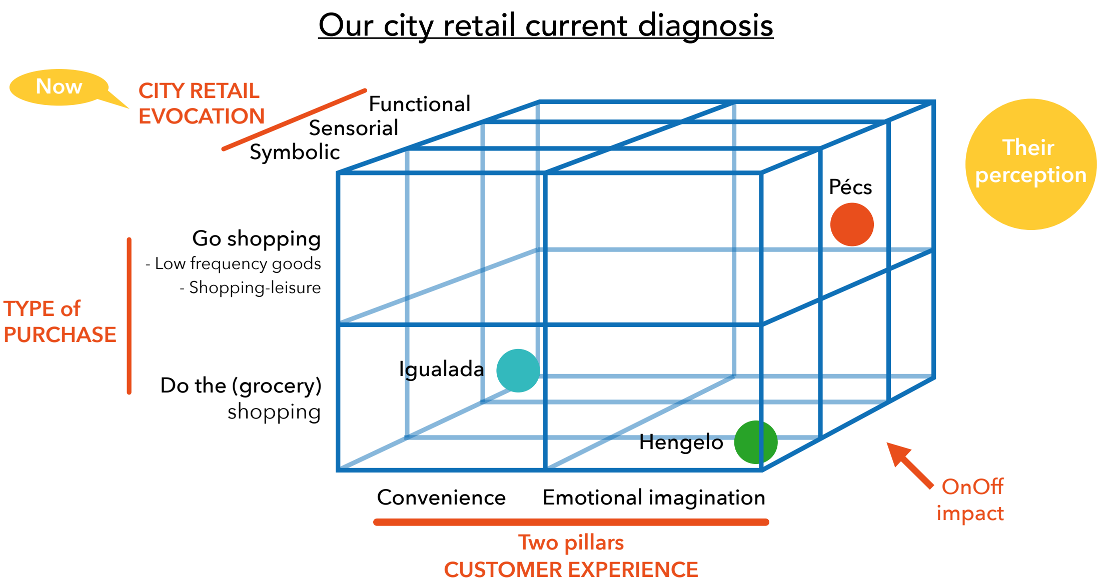
Complementing the first two objective-based analyses, there is a third type of consumer research tool used to dig into more intangible values and the unconscious type of consumer decisions and perceptions. The results will complete the picture of the city retail experience and help planners to better match the retail offer with what is required and expected in town. In brief, here's how it works:

1.3 - REVEALING CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS

Retail offer and place can be categorised according to residents' perceptions and expectations. The three-dimension graphic below from **MF Marketing Catalysts**[7] shows the retail experience along three axes:

· City retail evocation: Retail is perceived as functional, sensorial or symbolic
· Customer experience: The retail experience is perceived as a convenient or an emotional one
· Type of purchase: The city is seen as a place for leisure shopping of low-frequency goods or simply grocery shopping.

For RetaiLink partners, it has been quite an eye opener to see how consumers associate the city and the retail experience.



Another way to obtain information on the core perception around the city retail consists of the free-association method. Surveyors ask questions and get immediate non-reflexive responses:

· What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say *'city name'*?
· What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say *'do the grocery shopping in city name'*?
· What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I say *'go shopping in city name'*?

Below we include a brief summary of the results that the city of Pécs, our partner in Hungary, obtained after a broad consultation, using most of the tools presented above.

7. Martínez-Franch Consulting. https://www.mfcatalysts.com

Pécs City Centre Consultation: Habits, Preferences and Perceptions

The consultation process in Pécs city centre aimed at understanding the needs, shopping habits and preferences of citizens that visit and use the downtown area, as well as what the centre evoked in the consumer.

A 32-question survey was developed with the support of the University of Economics and it was filled in by a total of 569 individuals both on site (pedestrians) and online (Google form). One of the biggest population groups analysed was young people, given that the city has a population of about 24.000 national and international university students distributed amongst its 9 faculties.

The answers revealed information on who uses the area, when, and for what purpose. The field study enquired about shopping habits, type of purchase, mobility aspects, plus the preferences on the type of products and shops that users would like to find in the city centre. Below are some key findings:

In terms of habits and preferences:

- Visitors of the city centre, mostly go there to take a walk, shop and attend events and festivals.
- Most respondents spend their money in bars and pubs. They say that even though there are no good stores located in the area and that the supply is weak, the atmosphere is nicer and friendlier than in shopping malls.
- The group of respondents who work in the city centre buy in that area, too, after work but do not visit it at the weekend.
- When asked about shopping habits: foreign students replied that they buy less in Pécs and mostly on the Internet (books). On the contrary, Hungarian students buy more books in city centre than any other product categories: online shopping is not an established custom for them, yet.
- Both foreign and national students claimed they would visit more often the centre if there were more festivals and cultural events there. They also expected to find more shops and bars downtown.
- With regards to the type of retail offer, they find international brands lacking.
- Finally, greenery, public toilets, better parking facilities, lower rental fees, and better and kind customer service were mentioned as factors that would help the city centre improve as a commercial area.

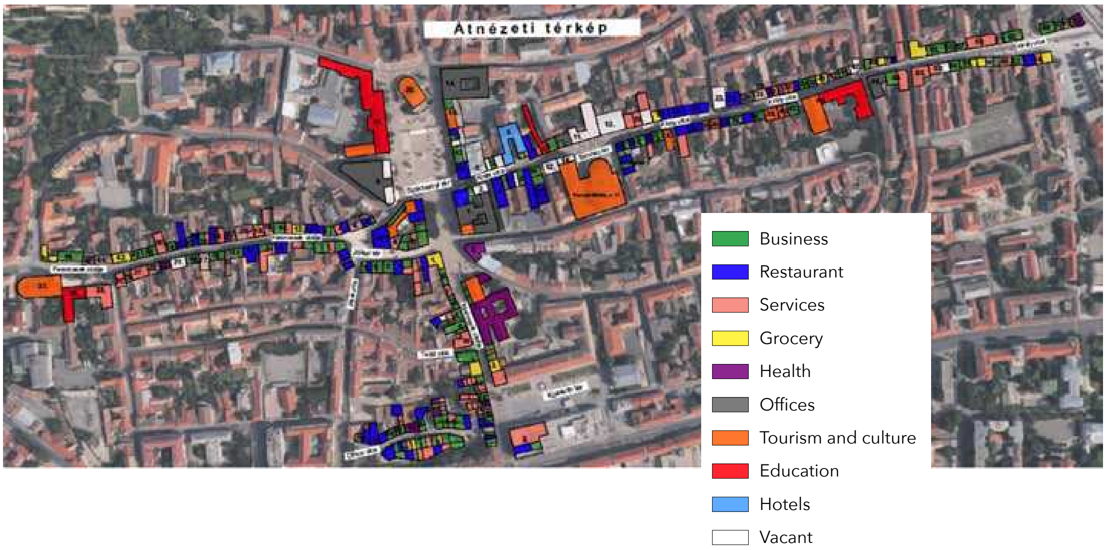
In terms of area perceptions, when asked to freely associate the name of Pécs, respondents most often mentioned studying, university, home, nice, beautiful and friendship. More than 95% of the associations were positive.

When asked to freely associate the city centre, though, answers tended to be more negative, citing dirt, parking, noise and too much concrete.

The study educated local retail stakeholders and authorities on the different views and perceptions of the retail sector, as well as called attention to its strengths and weaknesses. The research inspired a first set of measures to improve the area and stressed the city centre's assets to reverse negative perceptions. Some of these measures include:

· Attracting well-known brands and good stores promoting the everything-at-one-place model
· Extending retail opening hours, 10:00 to 20:00
· Enhancing mobility to and across the area and more parking places available nearby
· Providing more public toilets
· Making the streets greener.

Map of Pécs city centre



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City centre survey in Bistriţa

In Bistrita (RO), as in many European cities, the main shopping area has been relocated from the centre to the outskirts. Supermarkets, malls and convenience stores were set out of the inner city, leaving the traditional shops in the historic centre spread out across a wide urban area.

A local market study undertaken in February 2016 interviewed 500 young and adult residents and 39 retail companies with, at least one year in the market, which provided a wealth of information on each groups' perceived needs and preferences.

Among retailers, answers included:

- More parking places around the shops and restaurants
- Ways to facilitate traffic flow
- Organising quality events
- Attracting tourists
- Fiscal facilities on buildings located in the city centre.

Local residents asked for:

- More cultural activities (concerts, shows, and theatre)
- Educational and leisure activities for young and children (educational events, festivals, sports, fairs)
- Markets and parades.
- Traditional craft products (including handmade and food)
- Quality clothing and shoes (brands)
- Books
- Musical instruments
- IT products
- Souvenirs were mentioned

It was interesting to hear that whereas retailers asked for a relocation of local markets to areas out of the city centre, local consumers on the contrary expressed their preference for more markets in the city centre.

As a result of the study, Bistrita took the following measure for city centre retail revitalisation: organizing events; raising the level of civility and involvement and animation of city centre visitors; attracting tourists through better promotion and concerts, festivals and fairs; highlighting local traditional elements, and upgrading the space developing a unifying identity that joins together the elements of tradition and history with modernity.

2- RETHINKING YOUR RETAIL PROPOSITION

The retail mix that seems best suited to city centres in medium-sized cities typically includes:

· A diverse selection of brands, but not flagship stores (these are usually placed in bigger cities). The brands should be able to attract the local consumer, whether they are young, old, families, or tourists, etc.
· Supermarkets, which enhance everyday footfall in the area
· A unique set of product offers and shopping experiences. Every city is different, the specificity of the retail offer needs to go hand in hand with the local identity and options. For example, make available a quality assortment of local products in shops and restaurants, and locally designed clothes and crafts, too.

Before going any further though, it is worth mentioning two important things that RetaiLink partners have learnt throughout the project and which have completely changed their understandings and perspectives on the topic:

· First, any strategy that aims at revitalising retail also has to tackle a range of non-retail-related topics as well as other economic sectors, i.e. hospitality. This is why our RetaiLink project integrates a broader public policy perspective, and not just retail's. Medium-sized cities require a set of actions and policies that combine and interlink a wide range of activities and sectors so as to create an enriching environment for retail: from urban planning, mobility, and cultural events, to sports, tax regulation, and business promotion…

· Second, retail revitalisation does not have to be about opening more shops. Recent retail trends like e-commerce or out-of-town shopping and leisure centres, have led to shops folding. The number of retail units will never reach previous levels. Instead, what is perhaps more viable is for a few innovative, experiential retail initiatives to populate the city centre, ones that count on the cooperation of different kinds of local agents.

An example of such innovative propositions is shown below:

Innovative retail in the city: Igualada Rec.0 and Romans Braderie d'Automne 2.0

Rec.0 Pop Up Stores consists of a biannual 4-day experiential shopping event in an old district of Igualada (ES), RetaiLink's lead partner. The city was once a leather and tannery factory location (the name, Rec, means "irrigation canal" in the Catalan language and recs were used by the leather industry in the Middle Ages). The event showcases creative and innovative pop-up stores alongside outlet shops of the big international fashion brands, and promotes national and local independent designers.

The event draws from a wide catchment area and includes a rather hip, or eclectic, cultural and art offer: this, together with offering conferences and concerts and food and beverage stands, too. Low cost and recycled materials go into the making of the physical support, which adds to creating an informal and even intimate, and cosy, environment.

Inspired by Rec.0 are the Braderie 2.0, organised by two retail associations in Romans (FR).
As in the city of Igualada, the Braderie in Romans use recycled material for decorating the site, and provide "cool looking" graffiti, street-level signage and aerial decoration to help visitors move around.

The whole set up makes an innovative use of the public space. Retail activity takes place in the streets themselves and in the pop-up stores that occupy the empty retail units. Concerts and cultural events round out the attractive entertainment programme.

For a few days in Romans, just like in Igualada, the retail sector in the city is able to offer what neither the Internet, nor peripheral shopping centres can offer: a pleasant and fun atmosphere for a customer eager to shop, in an environment that adds value and new meaning into the act of purchasing.

In continuation, RetaiLink offers a number of considerations to form part of a city's retail strategy and help create a Unique Selling Proposition (USP).

As we have seen in the previous section, profiling the local residents and potential visitors, and monitoring shopping habits and perceptions of the city provides valuable information, which can all feed into the creation of city's Unique Selling Proposition. Building on the set of analysis tools and methods presented earlier, this section focuses on "the how" - on what steps to take to develop this sense of uniqueness.

The following is primarily based on the RetaiLink partnership's experience, many of them working with old historic parts of cities and downtown areas, but this can also apply to non-historic places and other urban areas having a certain degree of retail intensity and presence:

· Find the identity of the place. The city's DNA
· Enable a local partnership to foster retail revitalisation that allows ownership and responsibility
· Support the vitality and viability of an area through addressing those influence factors that the city centre managers can effectively control
· Support retailers in their business upgrading strategies through the provision of skills training and digital solutions
· Enable digital solutions and platforms to increase city and retail connectivity

All the information below can be found in more detail on the project outputs, that can be downloaded from the RetaiLink site and the RetaiLink Virtual City.

2.1 - IDENTITY SETTING

By now it is no surprise: the most successful retail proposition is the one that matches consumer's values and character traits with what s/he can easily identify with and want to be part of. Branding and place making experts refer to this as creating a retail identity or DNA of the city. Three questions are core:

· What will make our city attractive for the local customer and potential visitor?
· What is the main feeling, experience, value we want to highlight?
· What can we offer people who are hesitating between coming to shop in our city or going to a neighbouring one?

Creating an identity is not just about what the city can do better but how it can differentiate itself from others. City DNA helps define a distinct character of the place. Because retail is an integral part of the city identity, retailers can build and promote their shops in accord to what the DNA shows, inside this greater identity. This idea of local identity can, with joint efforts, inspire every new shop, city centre arrangement and marketing message that the local plan may want to put in place, fitting one inside the other like one of those Russian nesting dolls (Matryoshka Dolls).

Very briefly, there are four main steps that can help in the local DNA identification:

1. Assess the local context

Here, it's about acknowledging city assets and showcasing the strengths that give identity to the place. These may include cultural, historic heritage, specific economic sectors, natural beauty, local products or any other attraction that helps construct a local identity and appeal. To find out what these are, consultation procedures such as surveys, interviews or workshops with local stakeholders may be used. The people interviewed should include retailers and other business sectors, schools, neighbourhoods, community organisation, public officers, cultural agents, etc.

This consultation process is, arguably, as important as the results themselves, since this is the first step towards building – in cooperation with diverse stakeholders and the citizens- a common and shared sense of city identity.

2. Understand the consumer

Here, it's about finding out about lifestyles, needs, preferences, and perceptions using the analytical tools and methods described before. The consumer analysis might want to enlist the support of external professionals, but the main point is that a joint participated process with local agents is needed to create a sense of common understanding, or vision, that can then facilitate agreements on actions and policies further on down the road.

3. Create a consistent consumer-retail-city proposition

Storytelling is the key here. The city and its retail marketing need to be on the same page, to be telling the same story - one that the targeted consumer wants to be a part of, engaged in. The strategy should trigger what experts call a brain-friendly displacement. For customers to associate the city's retail to a pleasurable or rewarding experience that aligns with their own values and emotions. Much more powerful and persuasive than using rational arguments, we are tapping into people's feelings.

The small shops, the High Street vendors, and the entire city atmosphere harmonises in a story we want to tell. The consumer choosing to shop in my city or elsewhere –even the neighbouring town- will make that decision taking into account myriad factors of the entire experience: What's in store for me?; What products will I find?; What am I going to see in the shops' display windows?; What kinds of enter-tainment or leisure experiences will I be offered?; Will I have a satisfying or gratifying interaction with shopkeepers?; and, How will I feel during and immediately after the visit? And what about the longer-term aftertaste, what will my memory be of the experience?

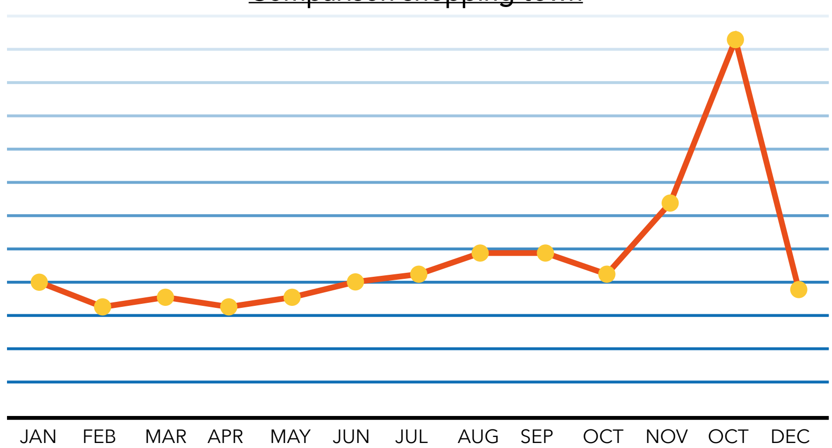
4. Understand the uses of the city centre. Footfall analysis and identity

Monitoring footfall can be used to measure the popularity of a location and to reveal when and how the place is used. The School of Computer Science & Informatics (Cardiff University) together with the Institute of Place Management (University of Manchester) engaged in a monthly footfall analysis of a number of UK towns to show how different city centres are used for different shopping purposes. The research concludes that four town signatures do exist, as can be seen in the following graphic:

COMPARISON SHOPPING TOWNS

Description	Features
Steady footfall with a pre-Christmas peak trading time and a January drop off. Usually big cities.	- Wide range of retail choice. Multiple retailers - Big retail anchors - Large catchment area - Accessible by choice of means of transport: junctions, railway stations - Organised to compete with other com parable-sized towns and channel.

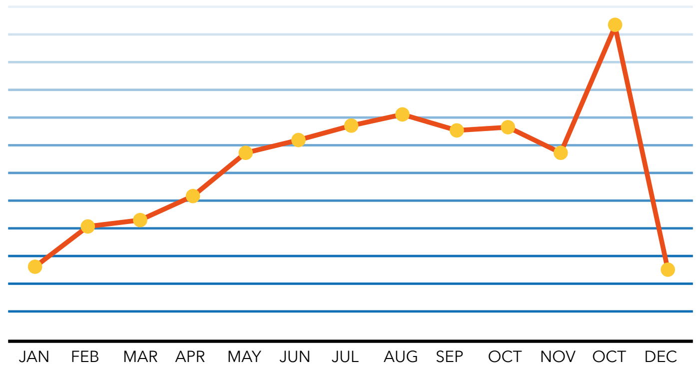
Comparison shopping town



SPECIALITY TOWNS

Description	Features
Higher and increasing into spring and summer, with a December peak also.	- Offers something unique and special, such as historic centres… - Anchor is not necessarily a shop, it can be ruins, museums… - Attracts visitors but also serve local population. - Visitors stay for longer time. - Organised to protect and promote identity and positioning.

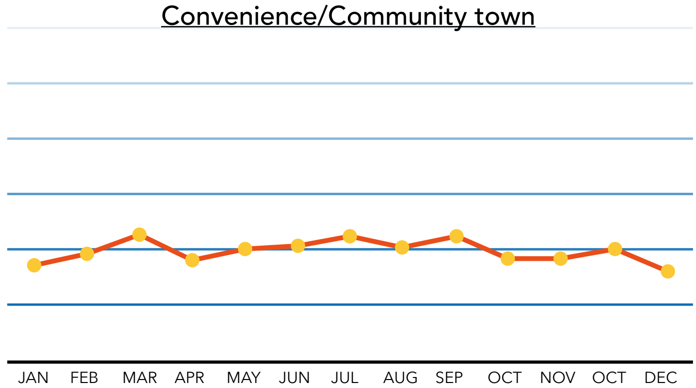
Speciality town



CONVENIENCE/COMMUNITY TOWN

Description	Features
Flat steady footfall without a December peak, Christmas shopping is done elsewhe.	- Focuses on local community in terms of the offer, opening times, events… - Anchor is work, public transport and food. - Offers convenient mix of goods and services. - Accessible and locally connected. - These cities manage accessibility well; increase concentration; offer reliability; have a good customer service. - These cities need to understand their residents to best serve them. Build individual relations hips with people.

Convenience/Community town



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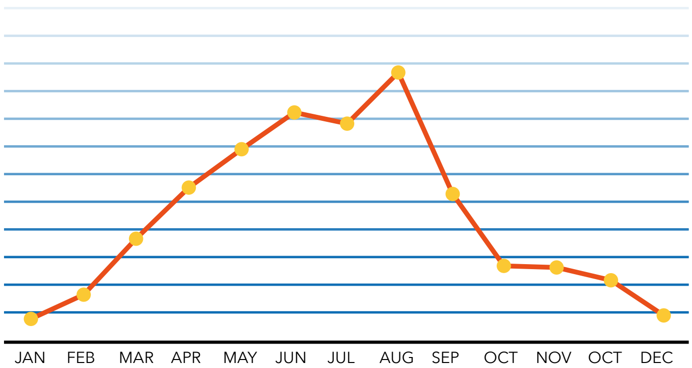
HOLIDAY TOWN

Description	Features
Not serving their populations very well.	- Summer peak attracts visitors from a wide area. - Anchor may be either the beach or a major attraction (not necessarily in the town centre). - Retail may not serve local community, particularly out of season. - Organised for fun and entertainment, but could they offer more?

Holiday town



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2.2 - LOCAL RETAIL MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

According to professional place makers, three key factors have an important influence in the performance of the city centre and the vitality of its retail: a) a shared vision and strategy; b) clear and committed leadership; and, c) a tight multi-stakeholder coalition.

The city needs to think what governance structure and partnership composition is best to strengthen collaborations. It needs to agree on a strategy that keeps the city centre and retail active and attractive in benefit of all parties that use, work and visit the city centre including retailers and consumers, but also bars and restaurants, property owners, cultural managers and other business entrepreneurs.

RetaiLink has analysed and compared four different types of partnerships: Business Improvement Districts (BID); Town Centre Management schemes, Retailers' Associations and Municipal Retail Offices. The main features of each can be seen at the URBACT RetaiLink site (http://urbact.eu/retailink).

The first thing that became evident in the process of learning from other partners' management schemes was that, in shaping a retail management partnership, the 'one size fits all' rule does not exist. Each city has had to adjust in ways that align with the local context, regulations and management culture. The different levels of communication and collaboration between the Council and the retail stakeholders and private agents all depend on a number of factors including political culture, administrative organisation, success in previous collaboration or other shared projects, etc.

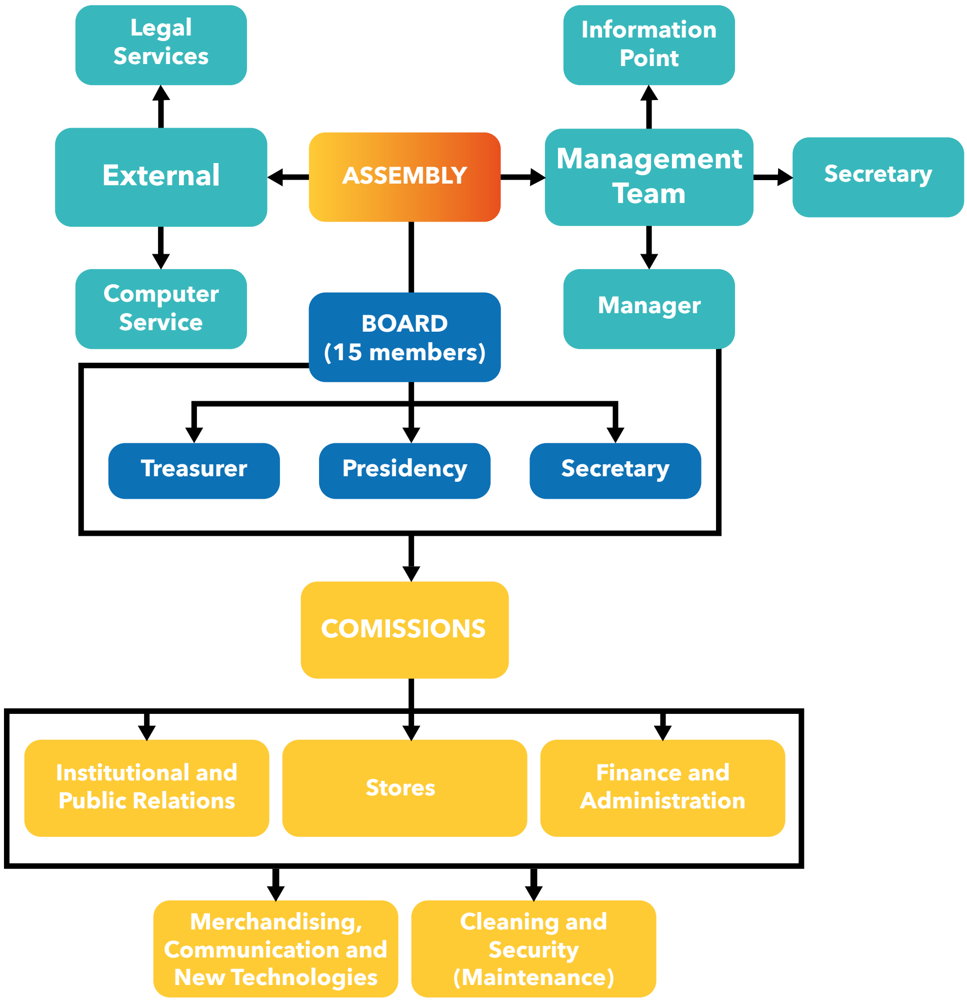
RetailLink has seen a variety of processes. On the one hand, the cities of Liberec (CZ), Bistrita (RO), Sibenik (HR) and Pécs (HU) have retailers' associations that have not been traditionally very active in joint retailers' initiatives and which basically interact with the Regional Chamber of Commerce and follow a vertical relationship in their dealings. These associations do not collaborate with the City Council. For the most part, retailers here expect the administrations to provide funds and to be responsible for the area's upkeep and enhancements, as well as to focus on easing business taxes.

But thanks to the local action groups created around the RetaiLink planning process, these cities have now started new and more intensive forms of collaboration. Retailers have been sitting down at the same table with representatives from the municipality, the hospitality sector, cultural agents and other professionals. This new level of interaction is helping them to overcome their passive role and become co-decision makers in their city's new retail plans.

On the other hand, the cities of Romans (FR), Fermo (IT) and Igualada (ES) have one or more local retail associations, which protect and lobby on behalf of their interests. The advantage of these organisations is that they keep the retailers active, informed and ready for collaboration.

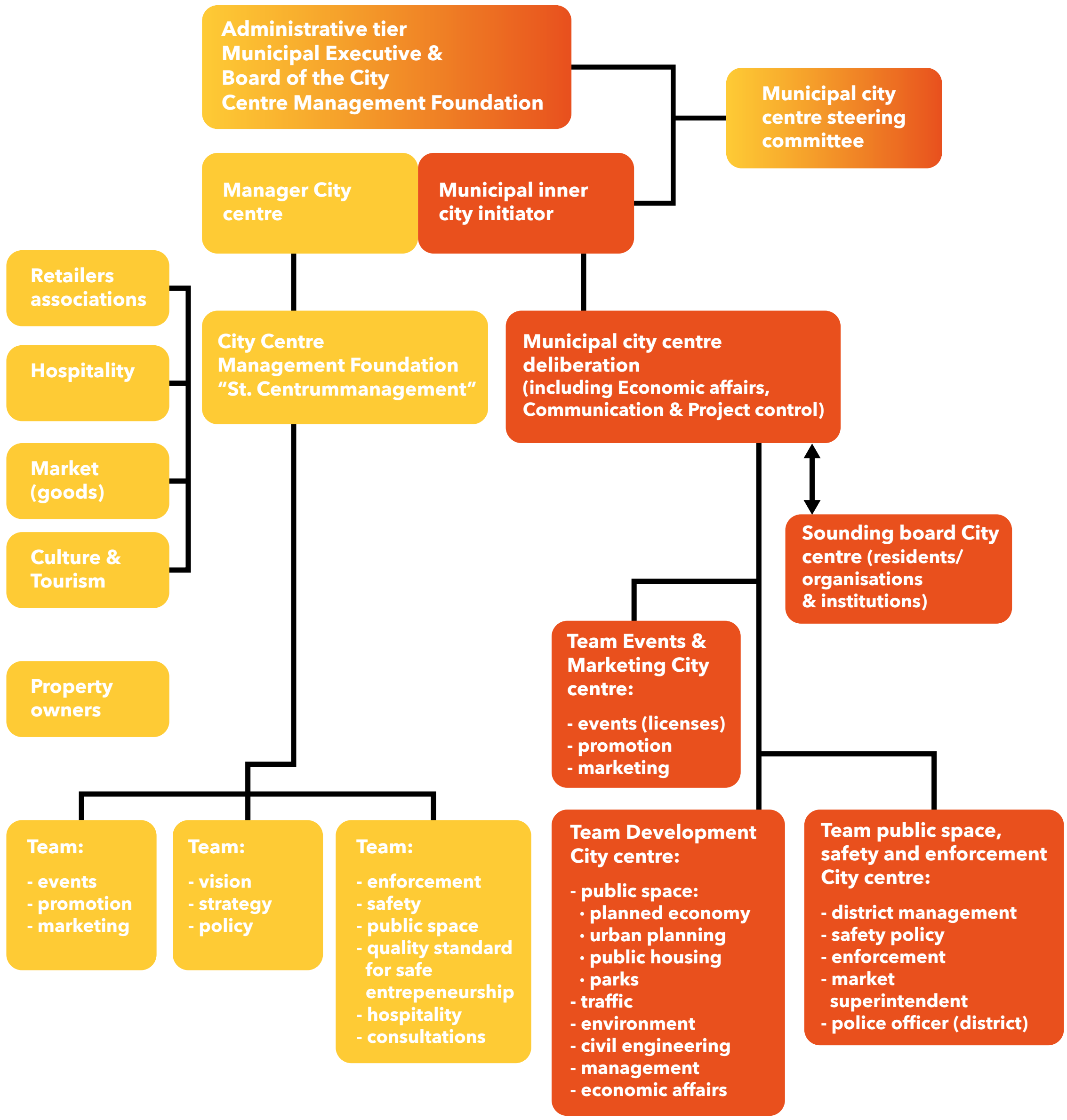
To cope with today's challenges and new retail and consumer trends, they have started to strengthen their partnerships and intensify cooperation. Igualada and Romans, for example, have both merged their retail associations in joint platforms for coordination purposes. Moreover, Romans has enabled a Bureau du Commerce to centralise and support retailers' activities, with a special attention to the city centre area.

The figure below shows an example of a retail association's composition and dependencies



Basingstoke (UK), Hoogeveen and Hengelo (NL) have set up formal Business Improvement District (BID) or Zone (BIZ) schemes, which have been approved –and renewed- over the last decade. One of the most important features of the BID instrument is the legal possibility to collect taxes –usually matched with municipal funds- which go back into financing projects to upgrade the area, provide business support and keep up with modernisation and maintenance efforts like street cleaning, security, capital improvements, streetscape enhancements, and area marketing.

The BID structure requires specific legislation at a national level. Often, too, it requires a local Council's approval due to its capacity to impose business levies and offer services usually provided for by the municipality. Harmonising competences thus becomes necessary before the BID scheme is approved.



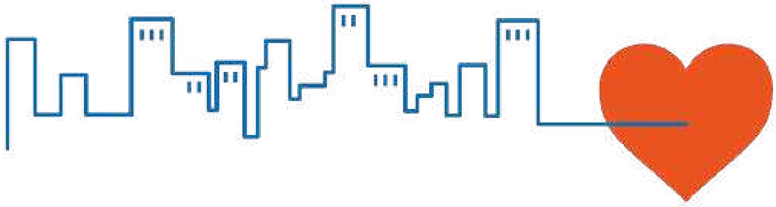
In general, and in RetaiLink's experience, city centre management usually starts on more informal basis and gradually moves into a more structured body, such as a foundation or a public-private company or BID. Likewise, it initially depends mostly on public money, which is progressively balanced with private investment.

Whatever the management structure is, a wide range of stakeholder must take part to provide different views, knowledge and experiences. Admittedly, conflicting interests may come up. The role of the municipality as the project leader is therefore, to bring local agents to an agreement via negotiation and debate.

Each local agent can play different roles at different stages of the plan: each one's work in implementing the strategy can be different, too. Below is a list of the most relevant local stakeholders that may be considered to involve:

Local stakeholder and potential interest in the project

Leading project agent
Local authority with the most relevant Department to the project's main focus; economic development, urban planning, etc. In some cities, the BID manager and the city centre manager may lead the project.
Local retailers
They want to improve business results and the vitality of the retail district; and, they can participate individually or as retail sector representatives.
Owners of bars and restaurants
Hospitality coexists with retail activity in the same area and have similar interests: increased footfall, longer staying time of visitor, activities and events that make the area busy and alive.
Other municipal departments
To link the retail revitalisation plan to other sector policies and plans of the municipality, i.e. jobs and skills programmes, entrepreneur support schemes, mobility… and to embed it into broader urban development plans.
Local customers
Local customers are the focus and they need to be listened to. Along with potential visitors, they have to be analysed, particularly the young ones, who are the main change agents and city centre users.
Cultural sector agents
They are keen on contributing to attract visitors and to promote leisure and entertainment offers that can enliven a retail area.
Artists, designers, architects… and other creative professionals
They may want to get engaged in creative propositions for the city and gain visibility.
Property owners
Seeing their retail units emptying, they may have an interest in getting them occupied again and in keeping them in good repair.
Other local agents suitable for a specific city context
Tourist agencies - for branding and content offers. Local industry representatives – for boosting the economy. University faculties and colleges – to participate in market studies and research projects.
Neighbouring cities and higher government levels
When a number of smaller cities can complement each other to offer something special and attractive, they usually manage to make the entire region attractive.



2.3 - MANAGE CITY CENTRE VITALITY

Attractive city centres and High Streets are associated with a combination of pleasure and leisure time, shopping, socialising and entertainment. Economic and cultural activity is a positive sign of urban vitality and retail is key for city centre health and performance. With the loss of retail buzz over the last decades, city centre managers and retailers complain that the streets are losing attractiveness, vitality, liveability and even safety, as a consequence.

Recent research undertaken in the UK suggests that the more satisfied people are with their city centre, the less they shop online[8]. So, in order to bring footfall to retail areas, the City needs to provide a suitable retail mix as well as a strong leisure offer to generate an overall positive customer experience. Retail is a core activity, but it is not the only one that contributes to the area's vitality. This, then, is another key learning point of the RetaiLink project which is further explained in the present report: the multifunctional nature of today's city centres is at the heart of an area's performance.

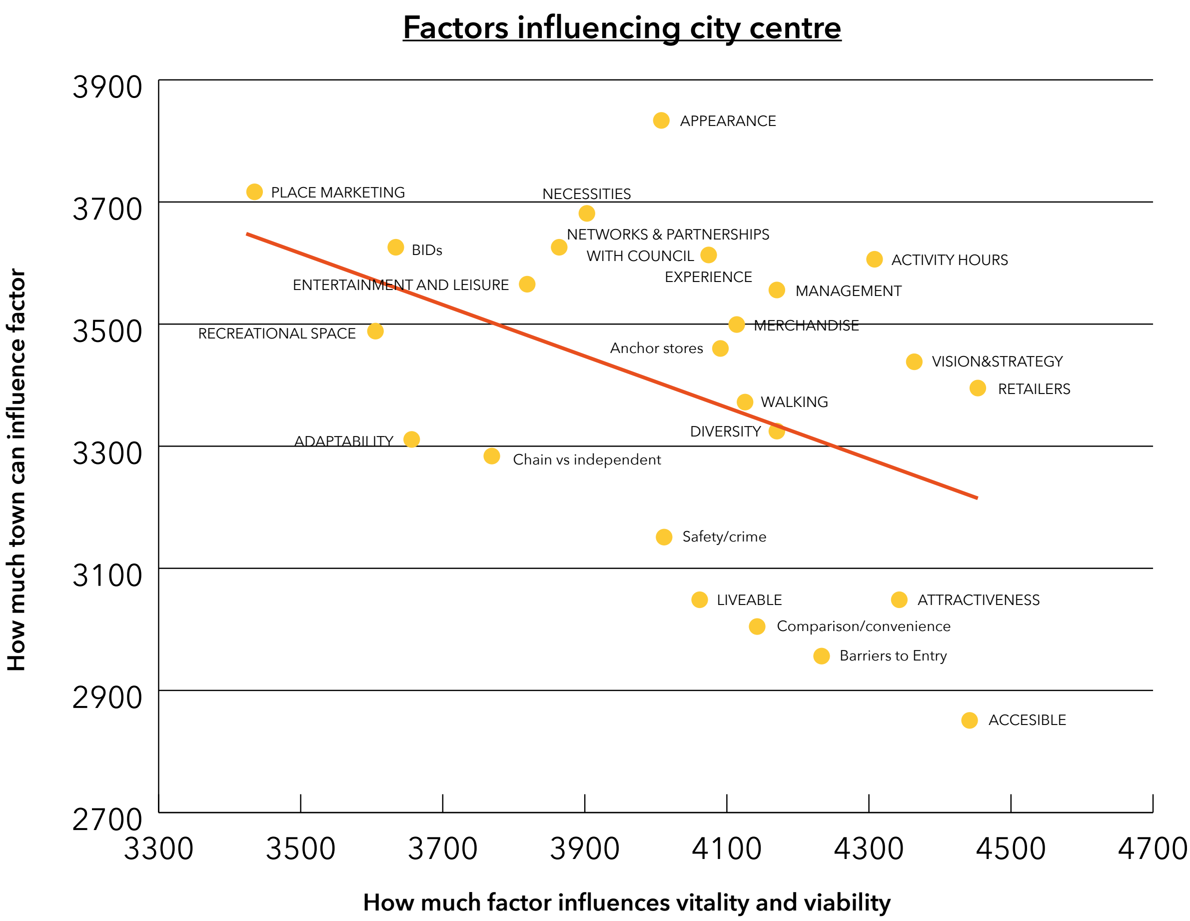
The Institute of Place Making (Manchester, UK) concluded a survey among a very wide range of local agents[9] in a number of UK mid-sized cities. The study set out to identify factors that influence High Street vitality (measured as the number of businesses, their liveliness and the footfall) and viability (the degree to which a new business sees a place as feasible and profitable to invest in).

The results, included in the High Street UK 2020 Project Report[10] presented a total 201 retail and non-retail-related influence factors:

Retail - related	Non - retail related
· Nature and diversity of retailers · Retailers range and quality of shops · Merchandise · Anchors to attract business to smaller retailers –usually, but not only retail stores.	· Necessities, including car parking, toilets, benches to sit down, things that make the centre more useable · Accessibility: a good combination and choice of means of transport · Vision and strategy: leadership setting direction, different from management · Networks and partnerships · Entertainment, leisure · Atmosphere

8. UK national consumer surveys undertaken between March and July 2016 on shoppers' preferences and habits. Retail Revolutions Report. Veredict, commissioned by Savilis Research (UK).
9. Participants included: major and independent retailers, town centre managers, market managers, supermarkets, retail property owners, shopping centre managers, town and district councillors, MPs, Mayors, council officers residents, volunteers, charities, head teachers, college heads, planning consultants, SMEs, youth workers, care workers, civic society, gallery owners, banks, restaurant and bar owners, fast-food outlets, police and leisure operators.
10. Cathy Parker, Nikos Ntounis, Simon Quin and Steve Millington, Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK, 2015.

A deeper analysis of these 201 factors also evidenced an inversely proportional relationship. The more influential a factor is for the vitality of a retail area, the less controllable it turns to be. A total of 25 factors were shortlisted for consideration based on the criteria of influence and management capacity[11].



2.4 - WORK WITH LOCAL RETAILERS

As we have been discussing, new trends in retail, and in contemporary societies, have led to profound changes in the sector over the last decades. New shopping habits, new business models integrating digital solutions for produce, process and marketing, highly connected and informed consumers, steady centralisation in fewer supplying agents, innovative and experiential on-site retail propositions… All have combined to result in retail upheaval and a steady decline of retail units and jobs in cities, particularly in the smaller ones. To meet the challenges these trends present will require new approaches and skills for those with a stake in the success of the retail sector.

Though local traders are key stakeholders in developing and implementing a new retail proposition in the City, they usually lack the capacities to cope with the overwhelming technological demands and new consumer expectations. Planning to upgrade and offer an attractive and suitable retail in the city should therefore consider coaching small entrepreneurs so they can a) take the right decisions to fit within the shared strategy; and, b) participate and contribute to the shaping of the local retail revitalisation project.

When asked about training, retailers usually point to a number of skills to better manage their business, typically consisting of: visual merchandising, shop window arrangement, inventory management, marketing and digital tools…

11. The 25-influence factors top priority list can be found at www.placemanagement.org/media/95521/25-HSUK2020-priorities.pdf .

In addition to these skills, what retail experts consider as critical knowledge is how to enhance customer experience at the physical and virtual shop. The following contributes to building this knowledge:

- **Customer service at the physical shop.** Experts say that 80% of the experience in a physical shop will come from the shop assistants and only 20% is generated by communication and marketing. This is why successful companies pay so much attention to training their employees. The way personnel behave and treat the client, the staffs' image, character and values need to be consistent with the shop's product, or brand.

- **Shopping experience.** The shop needs to connect with the target customer's emotions and values, going beyond the tangibles of prices, sales and offers. This requires creating an environment that makes visitors strongly identify with the shop, recreating an attractive atmosphere that makes people want to be part of the story the shop wants to tell.

- **Marketing and visibility have to be shaped to target the client.** Not aimed at everybody.

- **Reflect on the questions:** Why will people come to my shop or Internet site? What makes my business different? Then, respond creating a Unique Selling Proposition (USP) that must be visible both on-line and off-line. Be clear on what makes the shop special and distinct from others. The virtual experience should reflect this identity.

- **The website needs continuous attention and updating.** Look at others' websites and identify what you like from them. Keep engaged with the connected customer. Outsource some of the technical aspects of managing an online presence, if needed.

- **Start using the social media to attract people to the shop.** 90% of the customer experience online is about entertainment and only 10% on sales and promotion. If you manage to entertain and inform people, you will not only have more followers, but get more engaged ones who will "like", re-tweet, visit your website and, in the end, come to your store.

- **Put your small business into the overall picture of the town.** You may participate in the collective digital marketing and platforms and engage in the collective tools (see Digital platforms and connectivity section below).

The City Council can provide resources and mediate the offers for training on the above. While big brands can provide their own corporate training, independent shop owners do not usually have the time nor the luxury of leaving their business unattended. Very often, too, unfortunately they consider that training won't change things anyway.

To help retailers see the need and get involved in training to upgrade their business and professional capacities, some actions are suggested:

- **Involve retailers** in setting the direction of their own training and capacity building as part of a joint plan for retail sector improvement in the city.

- **Share relevant local sector information with retailers,** such as dashboard results and surveys' conclusions to help create the sense of project ownership. Include them in the programme of data collection. for local sector measuring and monitoring.

- **Use a mystery shopper to assess training needs.** A mystery shopper is a training expert who enters a shop, while pretending to be just another client, to evaluate the whole customer experience.

· **Provide personalised online training** on a specific skill to allow people to learn at their own time and own pace, and certify the training.

· **Set up a mentoring business programme** on a one-to-one basis.

· **Make available a pool of experts** in cooperation with, for example, the local college or the retail trade associations.

· **Facilitate pre-employment training** and retail apprenticeships in the city.

· **Introduce retailers to the digital business skills** and to social media tools and offer external support solutions to help them manage this business.

· **Offer customer service training.**

· **Bring representatives in from larger brands and retail expert speakers,** too, to give talks. This has proved to raise interest among the local retailers and helps them to become more engaged and aware about the sector changes and demands.

· **Foster a business growth environment for SMEs.**

Basingstoke's Top of the Town Grant Scheme

Basingstoke Council offers local shops, traders, restaurants and businesses at the Top of the Town –within the city centre- a helping hand to make improvements in their businesses.

Top of the Town Grant Scheme provides funding in the form of a grant for a day of expert support (worth £500) to help retailers respond better to changing consumer habits.

The retail experts are part of an expert pool previously identified by the Council. The scheme also includes grants for shop building face-lift or internal fit-out to help rejuvenate the historic heart of Basingstoke. The support to the retailers is part of the Basingstoke Town Centre Programme, which has helped to attract customers and increase sales and investments.

2.5 - DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND CONNECTIVITY

Digitalisation has completely changed retailing business models and the High Street landscape. Digitalisation is today a key component of a place's DNA, whether we are talking about an individual SME or the city itself.

More and more cities are looking into and/or developing single shared platforms that provide access to the entire range of local services, shops, hospitality, cultural agenda and events. These digital platforms may be started from scratch or they may be the result of linking and unifying the various websites of the BIDs, the municipality, the business sector, the tourist agencies, etc. What's also important is that the city should then ensure retailers' have robust connectivity and offer support in shaping a digital image that matches the local brand.

A city centre digital strategy is thus a coordinated intervention that offers a joint, custom-made selling proposition and – at the same time - activates digital tools for data collection on shopping preferences and behaviour. Similar to what we have learnt regarding individual retailers, place digitalisation allows the discoverability and visibility of the area and its businesses. It provides a virtual space with contents that tell the city centre's story.

A number of actions to help build a comprehensive digital strategy for the city centre are offered:

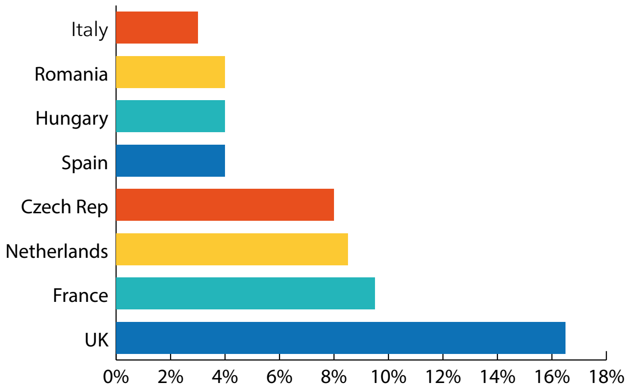
· Raise infrastructure and connectivity standards, including broadband and public WiFi access[12].

· Train local retailers to improve basic digital skills of individuals, SMEs, and the Third Sector so as to raise their level of virtual presence and interaction.

· Develop a High Street digital toolbox to provide ongoing advice and guidance to area community and stakeholders.

· Put together a comprehensive omni-channel digital strategy including a digital platform and a well thought out plan to improve both the on and off-line retail experiences.

Share of retail sales online in RetaiLink partners' countries, 2016



12. The EC promotes free WiFi connectivity for parks, squares, public buildings, health centres and museums in Europe. The budget of the WiFi4EU scheme is EUR 120 million between 2017-2019 to support the installation of state-of-the-art WiFi equipment. Public sector bodies are the beneficiaries.

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For retail in the neighbourhoods and non-leisure shopping areas (like fresh food markets or grocery shops), here are some tips to be successful:

· Set up a purchasing centre platform where shops can sell their goods from.

· Undertake joint promotion campaigns identifying neighbourhood retail offer and image.

· Help create webpages that link to the city's Internet site and shared services to facilitate online shopping from the neighbourhood and the home delivery of purchases.

· Support creating an organisation that manages the neighbourhood retail.

· Enable Apps to connect residents with the small retail shops.

· Create online and off-line marketing campaigns to make people more aware and inspired to know more about these new possibilities.

Neighbourhood shopping adapted to new trends

Manzaning.com is a mobile application that helps neighbourhood retail get back some of the personalized, one-to-one relations in Spanish cities. It helps the shopkeepers, those who know what their customers like, and already have client's trust, to connect with these users who do not have the time to go for neighbourhood shopping. The application facilitates selling products and delivery in less than 60 minutes or in the desired time slot between 9 am to 10 pm.

The client can access the offer online and ask question via a chat with the shopkeeper to ask for more information. The application includes all kinds of shops including pharmacies, greengrocers, stationers, bakeries, fishmongers, perfumeries, butchers, florists, delicatessens, hardware stores, dry cleaners ...

3- SHAPING THE SPACE TO HOST THE NEW RETAIL PROPOSITION

In this section are presented the considerations regards the organisation and uses of the urban space where the new retail proposition area will be placed and developed. RetaiLinkers have learnt that, no matter the type of city they have or the target consumer the selling proposition is addressed to, common rules apply that help shaping the space in a way that it better adapts to the new uses and potential visitors.

As a quick review, retail urban areas in the city consist, in broad terms, in:

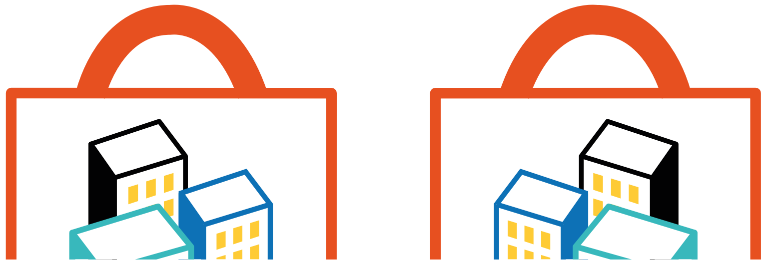
· The historic city centre with a retail activity usually associated to leisure, or entertainment and non-daily shopping. Successful areas are well-kept, accessible, safe and provide a lively atmosphere. Following the logic of the retail DNA and city identity, this urban space also needs to be shaped in a way so that image and experience go hand in hand.

· The inner or first periphery, also called "the enlargement areas", with a primary residential use but where retailing overlaps neighbours' daily shopping needs. Urban planners and local decision makers have a responsibility to keep and promote proximity and convenience retail in neighbourhoods for residents and users' needs, preventing imbalances.

· Suburban areas. These are less densely populated, more car-dependent areas, where malls, large-scale outlets and big merchandise brands are usually consigned. Local authorities need to manage and limit the volume of stores set up in these areas so that footfall is not taken away from the inner city.

Although broadly assumed there's a link between urban centrality and commercial activity, this is only partially true, and corresponds with cities and towns with singular historic centres. In fact, a vast majority of European cities have more than one centre and a diversity of retail models coexist.

Still, what local residents consider the "city centre" is where people often go for a variety of reasons: social, cultural, entertainment and shopping. Here, retail is an important source for vitality in the mix. Urban planners need to find ways to answer the needs for such multiple functionalities so as to ensure the city centre stays alive and well.



3.1- URBAN FUNCTIONS AND PROXIMITY

Indeed, we need to insist on the importance of multi-functionality. There's a clear, mutually reinforcing alliance of interests between housing, work, services and retail. It's like an ecosystem. The strategies that can help inner city residents and users keep footfall levels high, in turn, help strengthen retail and the overall health of the city centre.

On this point, the hybrid uses of buildings, where working, living, and services coexist allow such urban ecosystems to thrive. The complex, but fluid set of overlapping, diverse activities come in contact with demand-driven interferences, resulting in a very local commerce of ideas and practice. It is well worth analysing, though, the sequences and combinations of uses and times in complex urban spaces for planning purposes so as to avoid conflicts of usage.

Another key ally in urban retail besides functionality is proximity. Urban planners often cite the 400-metre rule, which is the maximum distance pedestrians are likely to walk to access different services, including shops. For example, Cerda's Eixample district in Barcelona (the "Enlargement"), planned and developed in mid XIX century, already set 400 meters as a pedestrian reference, which corresponds to a squared group of 3x3 blocks of houses. Part common sense, part science: it is a good rule of thumb for planners.

3.2 - COMPACTING, LINKING AND MAKING THE SPACE ATTRACTIVE

Regardless of the urban structure the city may have, many medium-sized European cities today aim at compacting their city centres in an attempt to rebalance the flows of footfall and bring people back to a smaller but livelier, more vibrant centre. A centre that can ultimately become more economically prosperous, too.

Illustrating this is an article from one of the urban planners and retail experts who contributed to the RetaiLink working sessions, Janny Rijs-Shuring from Broehuis Rijs Advisering. Based on her experience with Dutch medium-sized cities, the author explores:

· Why cities may want to engage in a process of compacting the inner-city area

· Practical advice to proceed and plan for a more accessible, attractive, and pleasant area for the customer, while supporting economic activity and sustainability

· Tips and tools to deal with different local agents and conflicting interests

Compacting and linking urban areas for improved retail experience

By Janny Rijs Shuring, Broehuis Rijs Advisering, Zuidhorn (Gröningen, NL)

Mrs. Janny Rijs-Schuring is the founder and director of Broekhuis Rijs Advisering, a consultancy office in the Netherlands, specialized in retail and urban planning. She works mainly for the government (local and regional) as researcher, as a process and project manager, many times in cooperation with different stakeholders like entrepreneurs and real estate owners. One of the main topics since the economic crisis is compacting urban retail areas.

1- RECENT RETAIL TRENDS HAVE RESHAPED URBAN SPACE

During the end of the 20th century retail was growing everywhere: in city centres, in small towns, in neighbourhood centres. There was time, money and space available to build new shopping areas and people had money to spend. The sky was the limit.

The paradigm-changing use of Internet and social media in general, and the economic crisis throughout Europe have brought us new insights into the functioning of the retail in central city-areas, but also into the possibilities for retail. Internet makes things easier and it is always available, so traditional ways of shopping are not the only possibility anymore.

The use of Internet for e-commerce requires a different approach in city-based retail. Not only is there a need for different shops, but especially for fewer shops. Indeed, the last decade is characterised by growing figures of vacancy. The demographic changes – lower birth rates, depopulation of the countryside, more senior citizens – have put additional pressure on the city centres in particular in smaller towns.

Today bigger cities are the place where things happen, where the choice is huge, where the flagship-stores are, etc. The consequence is that the gap between the big and the smaller cities is getting bigger. So, if smaller cities want people to visit and purchase at the local shops, as a real alternative to the coach at home, the shopping area must be attractive to the modern consumer, it has to be in an easy accessible place that is interesting and inspiring.

When consumers see many empty stores in a shopping area, they do not find it interesting anymore to go on. They turn around and go home. To fix this, there has been a lot of efforts in The Netherlands to compact the urban area of intermediate or medium-sized cities. They reduce the total number of square meters (in many cities approximately 20%) designated to retail and concentrate the stores in a smaller urban area. Only then the High Street or shopping centre will stay interesting for consumers.

How can cities engage in such an ambitious and difficult operation?

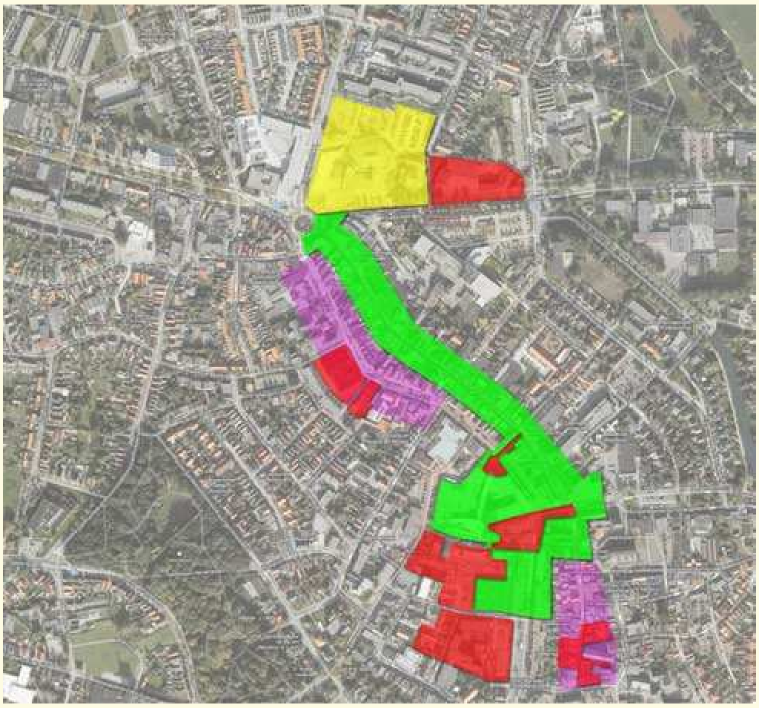
2- ADAPT THE URBAN RETAIL AREAS TO THE NEW CITY RETAIL

Step 1: Make a good strategy

To build a good strategy takes time but it is absolutely necessary to avoid spending time and energy later on and find the team involved in discussions. It is important to get commitment from all involved parties right from the beginning so everyone is working to reach the same goals.

It should also be made clear who is responsible for what, why some actions must be taken and what the consequences might be. In the case of Winschoten (population of 18.000) for instance, the picture below shows the main shopping area highlighted in green. This is the compacted city centre. The purple are the areas that were historically part of it. After defining the strategy, the streets and buildings in this purple part will be turned into functions other than retail.

Map of the inner city, Winschoten, NL



Once the decision is made and the area has been earmarked, it is time to appoint all different projects. The most important ones are coloured in red on the picture.

Step 2: Make a set of realistic projects for the short and long run

One example of a project was the relocation of a supermarket. This one was situated in the purple area, but already had some plans to move to a different location in the town. The owner already tried to rent the building to another retail store. In cooperation with the government they succeeded in selling the building to another party outside the retail (a church), and so they reduced the number of square meters in retail.

Some other projects included the move of a small grocery store and a furniture store from the southern purple part to the green area, and changing the former stores into housing. Furthermore, a Fund was created by the government to promote improving the façades of stores in the heart of the shopping area. Nowadays, stores literally look better.

Step 3: Develop custom made instruments when needed

The decision to make an urban area smaller is not an easy one. In the attempt to meet the needs of the majority and create an area that suits the centre and the city, you can expect conflicts to rise between parties.

The leading authority needs to be clear and explicit on the process and communicate every positive and negative consequence and become a broker. To understand each of the stakeholder's concerns and expectations, one-to-one conversations will be required, which indeed is time-intensive. In this regard, it is important to think of instruments meant, not only to pursue 'new' centre vitality, but also to convert and adapt activity of the areas that will not be part of the city centre anymore. For those losing something, the project must foresee support and compensation.

3- PLAN WITH A DIVERSITY OF LOCAL AGENTS AND MAKE THE AREA MULTIFUNCTIONAL

When referring to all involved parties, these do not only include the entrepreneurs in retail, but also real estate owners, the local government, the cultural parties, the food & beverage sector... because it is the responsibility and the interest of everyone to have a strong centre.
The involvement is more than just talking and taking advantage; it is investing time and money to realise a project. So, it should be a smooth cooperation process between all parties.

What makes a city centre interesting for all kind of customers is the combination of functionalities. They do not only come to the centre to buy things, but to have a nice day. This means they want to be surprised about the offer, not only on the street but also -and complementing it- through the virtual retail proposition and social media. Besides interesting stores, visitors look for events, cultural offer, places to sit, relax and enjoy food or a drink. The atmosphere in the city must be pleasant because in customers' decision and choices it is increasingly important. Therefore, compacting is not only about retail.

One of the instruments for making a centre more compact is the transformation from retail stores in the area that once was part of centre, into housing, services, municipal offices... In this process, the negotiation is with the entrepreneur who may be either the owner or a renter. The municipality is asking him/her to relocate the store to the new centre, or quit business (for instance because of age). In these cases, the city can foresee some compensation because the property will probably be worth less after changing its use.

Indeed, retail relocation has a lot of implications in terms of space changes, accessibility, rent prices... but eventually there will be fewer vacancies in the centre, the area will become more compact and the buzz will increase. Cities that have gone through the process mentioned that all the money and effort invested to prevent the city from losing its attractiveness is worth.

Because the whole process is a long multi-sector strategy, it is recommended to implement some pilot initiatives to achieve short-term successes. This brings hope, builds momentum, and keeps the spirit alive along the planning. An interesting solution in many European cities is the temporary uses of vacancies. Temporary uses can support revitalisation by bringing new activities and users to the city centre -or retail designed area-, encouraging new social, economic or cultural activities. Empty buildings can host new businesses, incubators, art events or social and community activities.

4- LINK RETAIL AREAS IN THE CITY

All the above refers to a city with a High Street or centric commercial area. But what if there is another shopping site nearby or when a new shopping centre on the outskirts has grown bigger than the old downtown?

Because every city is unique, the solution will always depend on the local, current context. There are, however, some tips that may be taken into consideration:

First, do not hold on to the past. Based on the area's strengths, renovate it with the new consumer habits and expectations in mind. Look at today's trends and to the future.

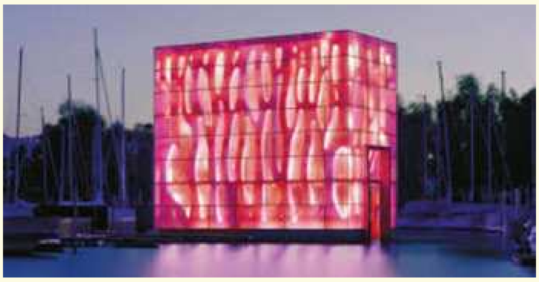
And second, do not do the same thing in two places. Instead, make each one specific and special. City locations have their own characteristics and people visit them for different reasons. The City needs to find each respective USP (Unique Selling Proposition) and make it stronger and sharper. Although some basic things need to be found in every shopping area, the city needs to offer something distinctive and addressed to a given set of targeted customers. This equally applies to non-retail functions that coexist in the place.

It is worth saying that, to organise the territory, cooperation of different areas' stakeholders always works better for the city proposition than competition. There are many possibilities to combine outlet mix, cultural activities, and leisure offer so as to give each of the places a unique role within the city.

When the distance between two commercial areas allows it, people can be seduced to go from one area to another. Some tools can be used:

- In case there is no direct visibility, urban markers can attract people and guide them from one place to another: illumination, focus points and eye-catchers.
- A good mix of easy and affordable transportation (bike renting, inner city buses) from one place to the other.
- A linked programme of events that makes it easy and logical to spend some time in one area for a given purpose and move to the other for other events and activities.

Eye-catchers and linkers:

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5- FINAL NOTES

The above is instrumental to support the compacting and linking strategy. However, to succeed in revitalising an area, a previous condition is required: the offer has to be interesting and suitable for the customer we expect to visit retail areas, otherwise they will only come once. If the city was once interesting and people used to come, but they do not visit it anymore, it is necessary first and foremost to find out why this is the case before taking any actions. Analysing the behaviour of the customers and what they look for, and understanding what has changed is important in determining the right strategy.

We are then back to the beginning and the importance of making a good strategy from the start. Only with robust baseline information will you be able to know what is needed (people, money, time), why this is worth addressing (the reason and the goals), who needs to be involved and how (the operational plan) and when it can be realised.

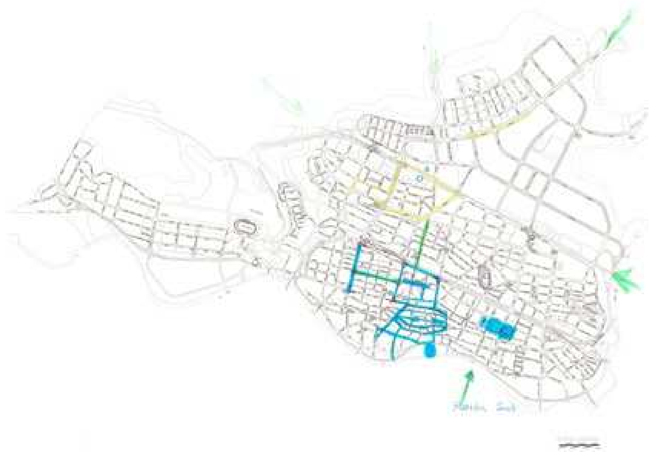
Igualada, defining and connecting commercial axes in the inner city

In Igualada, the city centre concentrates a lively retail activity. Following the current trend in most European medium-sized cities, the city has witnessed a decrease in the number of retail units in the city centre, resulting in empty shop windows in adjacent streets. Some retailers have managed to reallocate their business where the most vibrant retail and business activity still persists.

To support most successful retail activity and prevent further business decay in the city centre, Igualada has planned to define two retail axes, with differentiated functionality, where the retail revitalisation strategy will focus. One will be acting as the traditional shopping centre and the other will be used for more daily shopping needs.

As part of the priority actions of the new strategy, the city centre retail area will be renewed, mobility enhanced and retailers supported. The retail strategy includes a number of actions on urban planning, mobility, economic promotion, training and sustainability. The Council has stated the commitment to allocate local budget and a number of measures, including the enlargement of parking areas or semi-pedestrianizing the surrounding streets.

Connectivity between different retail areas still remains as a key challenge and issue of discussion. Signage indicating minutes from one area to another and car parking areas near commercial streets have been suggested as measures to ease the flow of customers between them.



3.3 - EVENTS ORGANISATION FOR RETAIL AREA ENLIVENMENT

One can find many creative and successful examples of actions and events that take place in city centres to help make them attractive and pull public. What we have seen in RetaiLink is how important it is to engage local agents, in particular retailers, in the co-organisation and delivery of such events.

Again, it is logical that the events that take place are shaped in a way that respond to the local image and values -the DNA- and thus market and promote the area identity and uniqueness. Some RetaiLink cities have worked towards creating a year-long agenda of events which first, picks local and well- established traditional celebrations, and second, links and complements these with actions that retailers and other local organisations already take part in. Local agents can be business, retailers but also hospitality, sports organisations, gastronomic entities, cultural and arts, designers, creative people... They may also include new leisure and promotional actions shaped according to retailers' own interests.

Below are examples of activities that RetaiLink partners organise for the Christmas season not only to enliven the retail areas, but to engage retailers and other local agents in the area's promotion, as well:

Igualada Urban Running and night shopping

Igualada Urban Running consists of an annual urban night race within the city centre area combined with open shops offering special discounts. Local retailers who take part in the event open their shops on a Saturday and stay open till late at night offering special prices and leisure activities.

It all started when a group of sports business people and local retailers decided to organise an urban race to motivate local people to use the city centre to practice sport and at the same time, to offer retailers more time to increase footfall. They presented the initiative to the city council to get the required logistics and security measures support.

The Urban Running energises Igualada's city centre with a combined sports, retail and entertainment event addressed to young people and families. Participants can register for different races with varying distances through and around the city centre. Race categories include the official distances along with family friendly ones: kid's scooter race and the Parents & Strollers.

With the initial promoters and organisers, the Council municipal services take care of safety matters and the local retailers form the organisation team. The event counts on more than 200 volunteers and municipal workers who monitor the streets, assist runners, etc.

70% of the participants and public attending come from outside Igualada, mainly from smaller towns nearby.

Liberec: How to involve retailers in a competition while decorating the city

The city of Liberec organised a Christmas competition addressed to shops in the historic city centre with an aim to decorate and enhance the area and engage retailers in the joint activity.

The competition was about Christmas trees decoration. Each shop in the city centre was offered a free tree from the municipality to see who could decorate it in the most creative way. Participants could even use products from their own shops.

Shop trees received an identification number and area visitors voted for their favourite tree. Retailers got the chance to reward visitors who participated in the poll.

The winner was awarded a set of free marketing and promotion actions in March, the lowest retailing activity month of the year.

This contest was the first step forward in communicating and interacting between the municipality and the local retailers. And the first results were very positive:

- 35 out of 50 retailers from the city centre took part in the competition
- A total of 1.700 people participated in voting on the best Christmas trees.

Finally, retailers customers appreciated the activity and considered it a positive initiative.

Christmas transforms Fermo in Hogwarts

A fairy tale setting decorating the old down town of Fermo (IT) with magic and captivating proposals for Christmas has attracted city visitors to Harry Potters' Hogwarts School. The astronomical tower that stands out in the Piazza del Popolo was the catalyst for a series of initiatives, ranging from magic to astronomy, all tailored to different types of audiences.

Lessons on spectacles and shows, film projections, themed events and workshops were delivered by a number of local schools and institutes who explored different topics and knowledge: The Magic School talked about spells and the mythological philosopher's stone; the local Chemistry lab gave lessons on potions; math professors organised the Mathemagic Show; and physics and astronomers guided visitors through the cosmos at the astronomical observatory.

Retailers engaged and participated in the programme of activities and also city schools enjoyed the high educational value of the event, which was secured with the help of the city.

4- ADAPTING REGULATION AND MOBILITY

Policy tools can help strengthen and re-energise the retail sector by way of, for instance, controlling retail outlet licences, management of local taxation, opening hours or incentive schemes for entrepreneurs. On its side, a number of measures can be simultaneously put in place to improve the users' experience of moving around the city centre because improving mobility increases footfall through easing access.

This section addresses a number of actions in the two areas that the City may consider transferring to its own context adapting as need.

4.1 - OVERCOMING LIMITATIONS AND MAXIMISING POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF LOCAL REGULATION

As we have seen, local independent shops contribute to the city's identity and give it personality. These shops help distinguish the city from others and from the global brands found in bigger city's commercial districts, where so often anywhere you go the same offers are found.

Local regulation can contribute to define and promote a retail proposition in the city that responds to its distinctiveness and supports a genuine offer. Managing the regulation framework can be instrumental in counteracting global market forces and creating something unique. As Susan Meijer, RetaiLink Project Coordinator from the city of Hengelo puts it, "regulation is important for creating a level playing field, but actually there is no level playing field. There are many actors with different interests. So we need rules and need to think how to use them in different situations. We need an approach of custom-made solutions".

Based on the experience of RetaiLink's working session on regulation, two useful lessons can be highligted:

· First, about transferability. Due to the different levels of retail liberalisation in different countries and, consequently, in the project partner cities, the regulation frame is not easily transferable. Hengelo and Hoogeveen in The Netherlands have the most competition-friendly regulatory environment on prices, location, business hours, type of purchase, followed by Basingstoke in the UK. In some other EU countries, though, the retail sector remains highly protected. This is the case of Italy, France or Spain[13]. That said, the trend in Europe is to gradually facilitate retail competition by reducing restrictions of any kind.

· Second, about motivation. Because the regulation context tends to be static and cannot be easily changed, even at the municipal level, support needs to come from incentives and new policies rather than by the passage of a new rule. Cities need to be creative within the context of its particular needs and context, using the powers of encouragement and attraction over the power of coercion.

13. OECD product market regulation overview and comparative index at: http://www.oecd.org/eco/growth/indicatorsofproductmarketregulationhomepage.htm

What follows is the result of our discussion on regulation, beginning with tools, i.e four retail regulation tools were identified:

· Incentivising: tax exemptions, financial support schemes
· Planning: definition of retail areas, night economy, public space occupation
· Licensing: type of activity, promoting multi-functionality
· Endorsement: competitions, grants… for quality enhancement

And continuing with retail regulation areas:

Urban areas and retail uses

In general terms, medium-sized cities planning their local retail distribution and outlet setting establish that:

· Medium to large commercial retail outlets, including supermarkets, can only be set up in the inner-city area. This prevents them from being set up outside of town and obliging users to use their private vehicles for daily or weekly purchases to go there

· Specialised establishments (cars, machinery, construction materials) are to be located out of town since they required specific access conditions

· Neighbourhoods can host daily shopping sites, such as groceries, pharmacies, bakeries...

· The city centre is home of leisure and recreational shopping

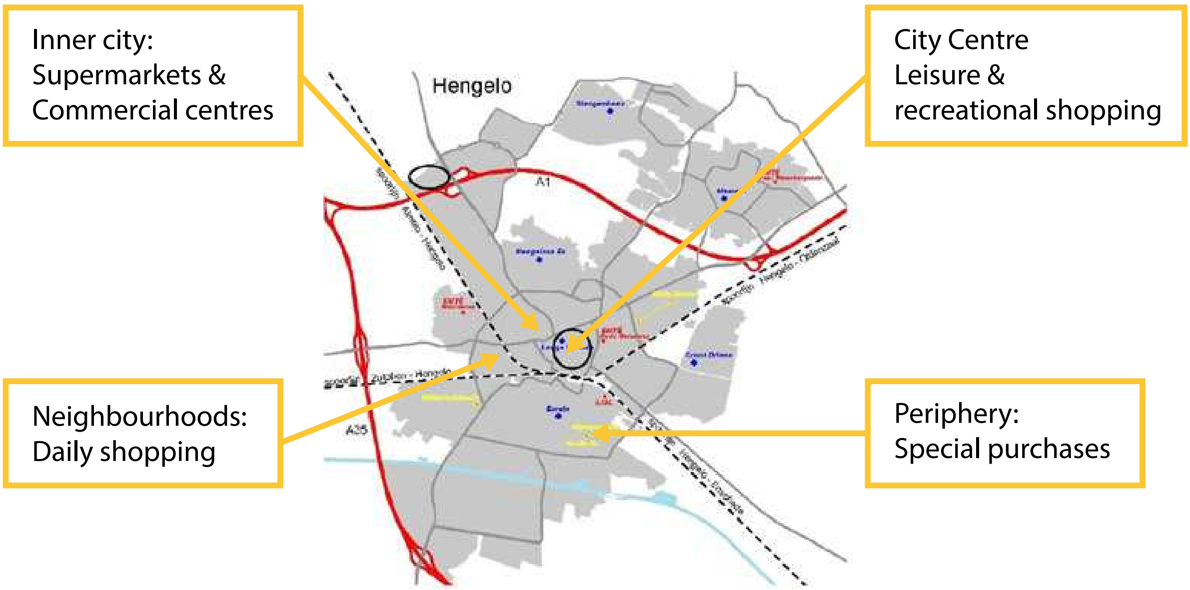
However, the EU Bolkestein, or Services Directive, states that an administration (a country, region or city) cannot use market quantitative parameters to restrict licences on retail or other business activity. This is the reason why cities and regions have approved plans that allow them organise the territory responding to non-economic premises. They do this on the basis of environmental motives (use of cars, use of natural land), social interest (convenience of near retail), or territorial balance.

Urban uses and retail outlets

A number of RetaiLink partners have organised retail distribution in the city by means of licencing. For example, Igualada, within the Catalan regulation frame, has transposed the Catalan TUC legislation to its retail benefit (Trama Urbana Consolidada, Urban Consolidated Fabric).

TUCs are areas with a given population and housing density. According to criteria of sustainability and wellbeing of resident population, cities with an approved TUC do not give retail licences out of the designated area. This has allowed to overcome restrictions to the retail land uses and to confine commercial activity within the inner city area.

Below is another example, Hengelo's vision of a spatial retail distribution:



Sector (de-)regulation

Seasonal sales, business hours, promotions -these are retail issues being progressively de-regulated Europe-wide and so little can be done from the local perspective. However, city managers do know that some of these aspects can sometimes become a source of conflict among sector representatives.

Opening hours for example is an issue of opposing views and interests whether it is a big brand outlet store or a small independent shop. Consumers responding to surveys mention that strict opening hours is one of the most important aspects limiting their shopping activity. However, smaller retailers do not see an interest in opening longer hours if they do not have a clear increase in footfall and turnover. Local solutions need to be negotiated and agreed upon. In a perfect world, these cannot consist of merely imposing a business schedule. Solutions should be more about finding ways of making the area more vibrant to attract footfall so that retailers can find it profitable to keep shops open longer hours.

Multi-functionality and temporary uses

As introduced in the section of 'Urban functions and proximity', multiple functions of a location bring higher footfall and increase the length of stays. How can regulation help? Some suggestions follow regards refilling the empty retail units with alternative and suitable activity:

- Consider using empty ground floors and upper floors to combine businesses and housing. This contributes to prevent the negative image that vacancies cast in the city centre

- The City may locate public and administrative services within the area

- Allow hospitality and seasonal occupation of public space as terraces for bars and restaurants. This often attracts visitors and enlivens streets during business hours

- Promote temporary and pop up uses by means of supporting agreements between temporary tenants and property owners.

Here, the Council may support temporary occupation by playing a broker role: in particular, it can offer owners incentives with tax reductions (or exemptions) for given and agreed uses of empty premises.

In addition, new uses of emptied retail units can be endorsed through tenders or competitions on entrepreneurship that are innovative, creative and fall within the functions and projects of the area.

For procedures and examples of uses of empty retail premises refer to URBACT projects: Refill, Reuse of vacant spaces as driving force for innovation on local level (urbact.eu/refill) and TUTUR, Temporary Use as Tool for Urban Regeneration (urbact.eu/tutur)

A city centre resident in Šibenik points at city centre needs. Regulation can help

Želimir Mikulić, a professor at the Polytechnic in Šibenik who lives in the historic city centre considers that retail businesses located in the old town centre were operating much better in the past for a number of reasons. Below is one passage of an interview:

"Although it is true that shopping malls dragged people away from the centre, retail business sector is going through a transformation. A new era has arrived in which people buy goods online. That means that even shopping malls are losing customers.

Today, people visit shopping centres in order to spend time, not money. If the city centre manages to provide a good cultural and leisure proposal together with a good retail offer, it will get people back. The existence of four coffee shops on one square without a single store is not doing any good in Sibenik city centre. This should not be allowed.

There is also the problem of monument annuities, which represent a high cost for traders. Business should especially be alleviated of this burden for traders and caterers to invest in their business improvement. It is necessary to set conditions that define who will pay what and the amount. At the same time, "big" businessmen have to raise the level of quality of services of the "small" ones".

This opinion synthesises very well some of the potential regulation measures to revert the retail decay in the city centre: encouraging a mix of business and leisure activity, supporting entrepreneurs in the building conservation and pulling attractive retail brands to play a role in attracting other 'retail followers' to the area.

Support to entrepreneurship

The City can also create an appropriate environment for new entrepreneurs and start-ups that bring professionals to the area and create business buzz. These new jobs will obviously require supporting logistics services and hospitality infrastructures to meet the new demands. Some specific measures to undertake include:

· Facilitating the set up and/ or offer of affordable space: co-working space, SMEs incubators, reuse of empty spaces for start-ups in the city centre

· Enabling free WiFi zones

· Providing support schemes for entrepreneurs: tax exemptions and simplification of administrative procedures.

· Enhancing the area

Encourage retailers and building owners to renew their buildings and keep façades attractive will improve the image of the city centre and its retail zones. Local policies can offer licenses and grant schemes for making this happen.

Standardise the city centre image using a distinctive signage for urban space and business. Use 'You are here' type of maps to guide visitors through local attractions and services. Enhance street cleaning, lighting and even bring music in to provide background in the retail area.

Dealing with historic legacy in different RetaiLink partner cities

In the city of Šibenik (HR), a great number of buildings are within a protected area. This has a great impact in the historic city centre where the majority of the buildings are heritage-listed. The Ministry of Culture must approve any intervention affecting an historic building and its image. Retailers incur substantial costs for façade renovation and sometimes cannot use modern decoration and techniques. The city is considering getting support from local businesses to ease the economic burden.

Historic centre with St. Jacob Cathedral, Šibenik

In Bistriţa, besides the municipal license to renovate a façade or refurbish a building in the city centre the Ministry of Culture has to issue an authorisation. All private owners are reminded every year of their duty to take care of the building façades. However, because it can become extremely expensive, the vast majority do not invest in the building appearance.

In Basingstoke, parts of the town centre are in a conservation area, which means that certain improvements or refurbishments are also restricted to preserve the historic nature of the area. The Top of the Town grant scheme provides capital funding to new and existing businesses for their refurbishing. This covers shop front and back of buildings and internal fit outs. Levels of funding vary and are limited to 50% of total costs with a limit of £5,000 for shop front, £7,500 for whole building and £3,500 for internal fit out.

4.2 - MOBILITY AND RETAIL

According to the different urban planners and place makers that have contributed to our RetaiLink project, there are three primary considerations to re-design mobility in view of retail vitality: proximity, variety and combination of means of transport to the city centre.

These three are interliked in the proposals for better mobility that RetaiLink partners have experienced up close, namely regards the complexities involved in:

- Providing new parking lots to allocate private vehicles in unused areas or brownfields, negotiate a low-cost or temporary use with owners. This can replace expensive infrastructure investment.
- Setting specific schedules for freight delivery to facilitate business hours mobility.
- Pedestrianizing or semi-pedestrianizing the city centre or retail area and set traffic restrictions.
- Removing cars and allow people to enjoy walk and find their ways within the area.
- In agreement with retailers and residents, testing mobility solutions that can be reversible (temporary changes in mobility allows for testing and progressive acceptance).
- Managing ‘flow generators’ around the city centre including tourist attractions, events or food markets, among others. Proposals and solutions need to be tailored for each city case and context.
- Allowing for and manage accessibility through both public and private transportation.
- Improving mobility to and between retail sites (see ‘Link retail areas in the city’ article by Janny Rijs, above).

One method to identify mobility issues and city centre permeability consists of the participatory assessment of the use of public spaces, urban design and city routes by groups of volunteers. This engages citizens, schools, retailers and other local agents in walks around the city to evaluate aspects of mobility (but not only) and suggest actions for improvement. Every year in cities such as New York, Toronto and Dublin citizens organise Jane’s Walks (www.janeswalk.org) as a way for people to explore their city and neighbourhood and share stories and interests.

One final word on cars and shopping areas is worth. It is widely assumed that car accessibility (and car-crossing-friendly) shopping areas allows for a better business performance. In every single RetaiLink city, shop owners have started out thinking that car parks at the shopping area improve business results. They assume this because: a) they think that the majority of their customers come by car; and, b) they assume that car drivers are better customers (spend more money) than customers travelling by other modes.

However, contrary to this widespread notion, many car restrictive schemes have proved that, first, parking areas are not a decisive component of retail turnover, and second, more cars and parking lots in the city centre does not solve mobility challenges but quite the opposite – they diminish people's opportunities to enjoy the city safely and they serve as deterrents for people to come to the city for purposes such as retail and leisure.

With this in mind, RetaiLink partners have been exploring a range of policy and regulation measures to deal with these mobility matters and perceptions. There are no definitive solutions, only more local dialogues and accords can lead to step-by-step advances, in a "learning by doing" mode.

We introduce now the last thematic block of RetaiLink project. Pertinent and useful to wrap up the RetaiLink project knowledge because it touches concepts and methods that project partners have been familiarising with through the previous learning stages.

5 - PLACE BRANDING

Cities exist in their regions, in systems with other cities. Because of the interdependencies and shared assets and problems, policy making and urban planning must involve a regional perspective so as to develop a joint understanding of the centralities, polarities and opportunities for improving territorial organisation on retail revitalisation.

The local economy does not develop in isolation and neighbouring cities often find themselves competing for the same resources: industrial investment, knowledge, retail... In this regards, it has become increasingly evident that neighbouring territories need to come together to make mutually-beneficial plans, to coordinate in management areas and find ways to better balance resource investments and create win-win marketing strategies.

Before engaging in planning, it is important to know well what is our city like, what type of city we are and what are the city's competitive advantages and assets. Is it an industrial, rural or services city? How has it changed in the last years or decades? How is the city positioned in relation to neighbouring urban centres? Does it have a regional capital role?

RetaiLink partners considered addressing branding and positioning as a means to clarify this role and uniqueness and better understand how to identify the local specificities and DNA. Branding then turned to somehow encompass and wrap up all the previous knowledge for a coherent Unique Selling Proposition strategy, since tools and approach are alike. Learning on branding also helped each partner to understand how to proceed in this city-wide proposition, involving the local project action groups.

What we have learnt on branding and city promotion is well explained in the following article that Roger Pride, from Heavenly Brand Consultancy, has produced for the present report, a synthetic practice-oriented work aimed at helping medium-sized cities.

Is your city achieving distinction?

By Roger Pride, Managing Partner at Heavenly Brand Consultancy. Previously, Director of Marketing for Wales Tourist Board, Visit Wales, Welsh Government; CEO of Cardiff & Co. Expert in tourism, economic and regeneration aspects of place. Visiting Professor at Surrey University, and Chair of Chartered Institute of Marketing in Wales.

1- SHOULD BRANDING HAVE A DIFFERENT NAME?

It has often been said that because branding has such a bad reputation, it should have a different name. And place branding is no different. It is regarded with scepticism by many and with downright suspicion by others. Most politicians don't understand it. Directors of Economic Development are much more comfortable talking in terms of grants and planners can't see it's relevance to influencing how a place should work.

In fairness this negativity should come as no surprise. After all, there have been so many examples of place branding done badly. For some it has been a design challenge, failing to appreciate its relevance beyond creating a shiny new logo. For others it's a new ad campaign which has no relationship with shaping the experience of those who visit the place.

So, marketers and academics have obliged, creating a plethora of terms which are more acceptable than the B word. Reputation, competitive identity, place making, and many others have all come along and many others come and gone. Most papers and presentations on the subject tell you what place branding is not – just as I have done in previous paragraph. But few tell you clearly what it is. So, I will attempt to do so, and in the process, I will come up with a new name – well I felt left out! But, more of that a little later.

2 - A PLACE BRAND IS A LODESTAR

Most now accept that successful branding must not only influence the external identity of a place, it should also help to shape how a place operates. For me, the brand should be a lodestar for a place. A beacon which people look to, to inform the development of strategies, policies and priorities for a place. It also shines a light on the place, making it visible to external audiences and helping to clarify what makes the place special. When a place maximizes the potential of its brand, the brand becomes one of the key factors, which people consider when taking the big decisions which affect its future.

The most common justification for creating a place brand, is that it can help to improve a place's competitive positioning. Places all over the globe are competing for investment, visitors, talent and attention. There are some 500 regions and over 100,000 towns in the EU alone. This represents intensive competition. As intensive as any other business sector. In any competitive environment, having a clearly differentiated offer is key. Strategic place branding can help to identify and nurture this competitive difference.

Arguably place branding is even more important for smaller cities and towns. Larger mega cities act as magnets sucking in people and business. They operate globally, with easy international transport connections. Their markets are wide reaching and the supply chains that serve these metropolises are also worldwide. However, this pulling power, can have a negative impact on smaller cities. Those more peripheral which do not orbit around the larger cities. Those with poorer international connections and those which grew on the back of industries which are now less relevant. These cities need to identify a new role for themselves. They should devise a clear new purpose and create a fresh narrative that supports this purpose. This is where place branding can be so important.

3 - WELCOME TO GENERATION C

We now live in a digital, always-on, 24/7, social media world. Technology has fundamentally changed the way we communicate, the way we receive news, the way we express opinions and even the way we make friends. It is no surprise, therefore, that brands have also had to change the way they communicate and behave. And it is the same for places. Whatever the chosen positioning and brand places still need to communicate with their markets, stakeholders and the people who live there. But most places do not have the necessary marketing budgets to buy attention and build reputation. Certainly, they can't do this using traditional bought media. They must earn exposure.

It was not that long ago that it was hard to spot the person with a smartphone, now, it's harder to find somebody without one. I read recently that making phone calls is now only the fifth most popular use of a mobile. I guess that's not surprising when you realise that you can use "phones" to control your home sound system, for contactless payment, as a heart rate monitor, a measuring tool, a scanner, a mobile TV, a map, a highly sophisticated camera and 101 other things.

If smartphones and smart TV's are a clear symbol of change, it is just a part of the reason for a fundamental shift in the relationship between brands and customers. This is the age of "Generation C". Depending who you speak to "C" stands for connected, community or creative. Generation C is taking power away from traditional brands and businesses and changing the behaviour of marketers. Generation C are curators, endorsers, opinion formers, they question authority, they shun official sources of information and messaging and perhaps above all they are a lightning rod for the truth. Any brand which makes false or over-hyped claims will be found out. And Generation C know how to tell the world about a brand's shortcomings.

Generation C is full of creative people. The challenge for places is to ensure that they are creatively constructive rather than creatively destructive when it comes to a places reputation. Places that are switched-on will build communities, and encourage and enable advocates. They will harness the creativity of this new generation. They will realise that Generation C are not just customers, visitors, citizens or investors, they are potential contributors, people who can help a place build its reputation and help it to convince others it is a place to be.

4 - THE QUEST FOR DISTINCTION

So, what does this all mean for places, their reputations and their identities? In developing the concept of Place Distinction, I have taken account of the way in which people are forming opinions and making plans in the digital age. And the way in which successful brands in other sectors are now building powerful reputations. It is a way of assessing whether a place is strong or weak in branding terms. The concept of Place Distinction is a way of gauging the strength of a place in branding terms.

The term distinction has been chosen because of its dual meaning. In one sense being distinctive means being recognisably different. In this context it means a place has a clearly differentiated offer and identity. But distinction also implies quality or excellence in terms of performance. A successful place outperforms its competitors in key areas. Put another way, not only do places need to stand out from the crowd, they need to be outstanding in what they do.

5 - THERE ARE 5 CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH PLACE DISTINCTION OR *WAIT TILL MY FRIENDS SEE WHERE I HAVE BEEN THIS WEEK*

Social Capital – Nowadays, when deciding where to visit will ask themselves: Is it the trendy and fashionable place that I want to be "seen" in? Is this a place that will impress my peers and followers on-line? Places of Distinction have great shareability and are loved by "selfie tourists". It matters for businesses too, they want to be associate with places of distinction. So, because they believe it adds value, they put "Made in This Place" on their packaging. Take Apple for example, most of their products are made in China, but they are more keen to put "Designed in California" on their packaging than trumpet the fact they are made in Asia. Social capital is a judgement of the extent to which people see value in being associated with a place. Having social capital is vital for a place's reputation in the digital age.

Affinity - Places are for people. And people have an emotional attachment to places. A place may have a high profile and a clearly differentiated identity, but without emotional attachment it cannot achieve distinction. Affinity is an assessment of the warmth of human feeling towards a place. Do I understand and share the values of this place? Is this the place for me? Do I feel at home in this place? And Places of Distinction find ways of turning this affinity to advocacy. Social media now enables these advocates to share their positivity with their networks.

Identity - Places of distinction project a clear identity - a strong culture and personality. It's an identity the people of the place are very comfortable with. One they are happy to assume and project. It's an identity that's apparent to visitors and potential investors. It's intriguing and attractive, distinctive and accessible in equal measure. A distinctive identity also influences how a place communicates. Places of distinction let their personality shine through in their destination marketing and they know how to use social and digital media to their advantage. Places of distinction are beacons. Their identity is there for all to see.

Stature – Places with stature have confidence. They convey authority. They are leaders and good leaders are the boldest not the brashest. Places with stature show not tell. They don't claim to be innovative, they innovate. They don't claim creativity they show it. They stand out because there is quality and excellence in all that they do. Places with stature are no afraid to invite comment and discussion.

Reputation – This is an overall assessment of how a place is viewed externally within target markets and internally amongst the people who live and work there. Credible places tend to have stable and reliable leadership. They value and support education and are able to create opportunity because they have stable and balanced economies. They will be home to a range of strong organisations and brands and their brands and services are sought after. They have strong cultural programmes and their contribution to the arts and entertainment is valued. Their people are valued and welcomed around the world.

6 - HOW TO ACHIEVE DISTINCTION?

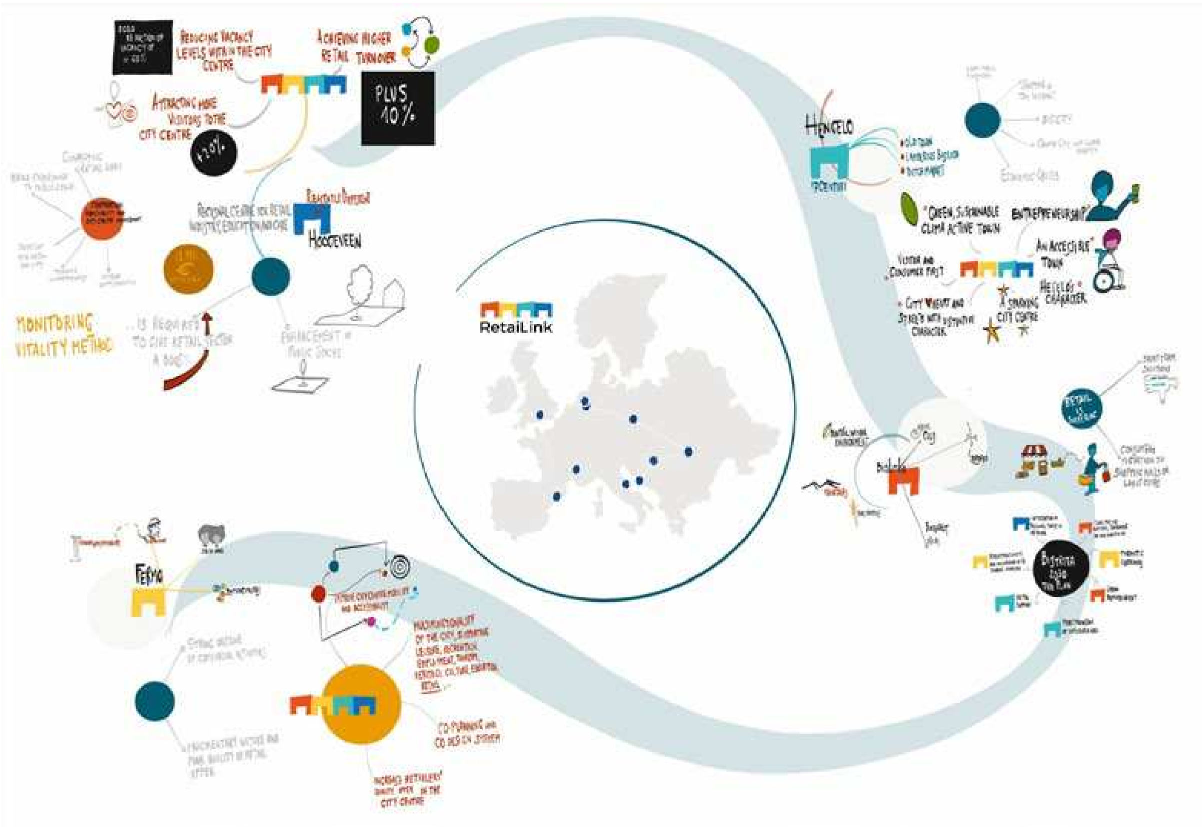
If we agree that all of the things which contribute to distinction are vital to the prosperity of a place and the wellbeing of its people, then its difficult to argue against the importance of place branding. We can debate what you call it, but it is clear that place branding goes well beyond promotion and is far more than a mere logo.

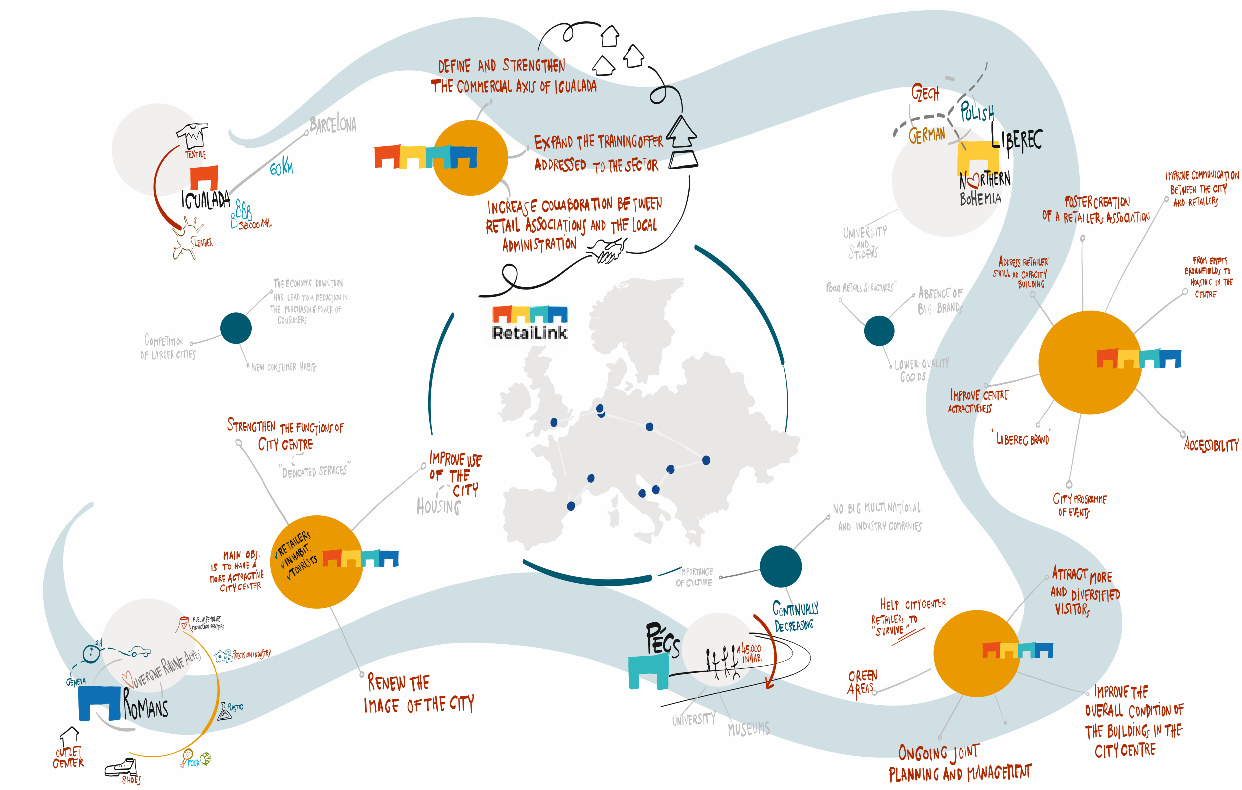
But very few places organise themselves in a way which ensures holistic oversight of the factors that affect a place's reputation and how distinctive it is. Other than the City Chief Executive or in some cases the Mayor, there is nobody who can ¿name? all of the factors that influence distinction. City Directors of Communication control how a place communicates but they have little influence in other areas. And whilst Directors of Planning, Development, Education, and Culture do influence the way a place is organised and works very few think about impact of their work on the strength of the place brand.

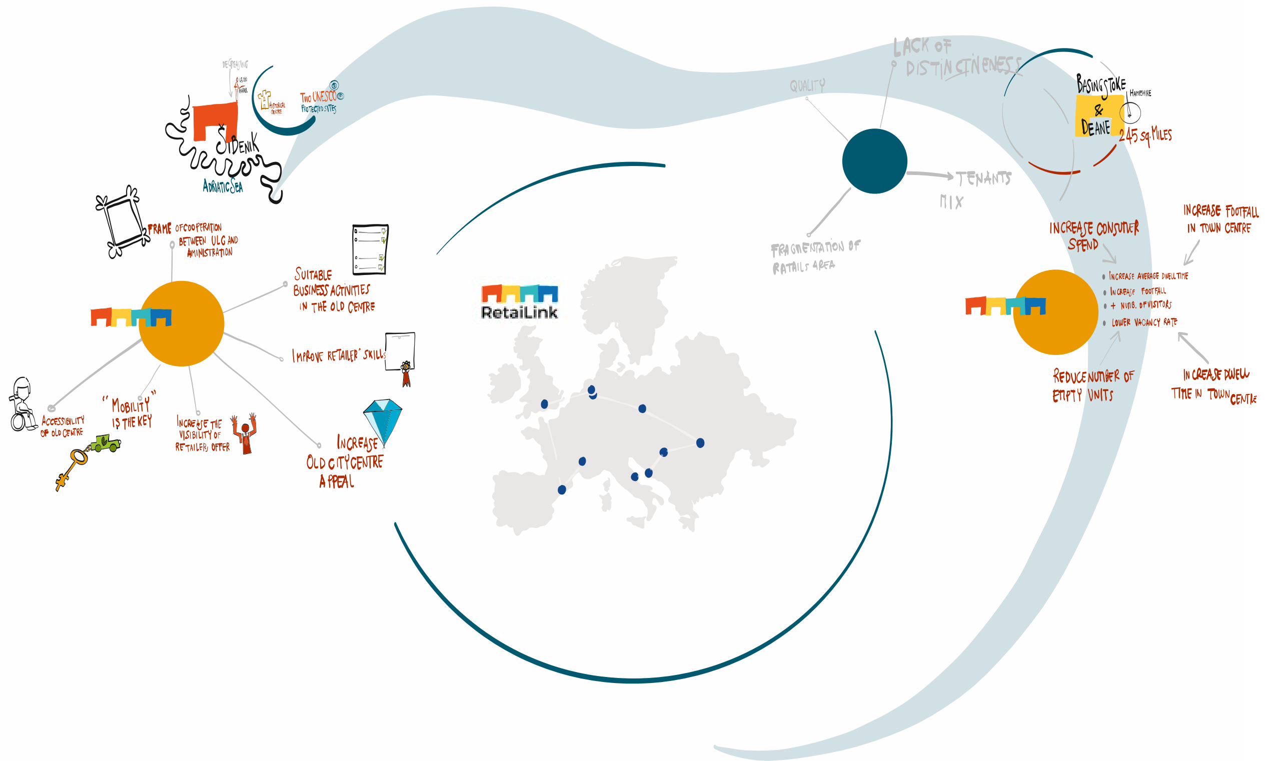
So, in my view, if places are to succeed in the future, not only is it vital that they have a strong brand it is also important that they think strategically about management of all the factors that affect place distinction. All future decisions should take account of the impact on these factors. It makes sense to put in place management and governance arrangements with specific place brand responsibilities. This does not necessarily mean extra cost, but it does mean a different viewpoint on the performance indicators for a city.

The importance of a positive reputation and achieving distinction is nothing new. It was the Latin writer Publilius Syrus who said in Roman times "A good reputation is more valuable than money". The successful places of the future know this.

III. RETAILINK PARTNERS' INTEGRATED ACTION PLANS



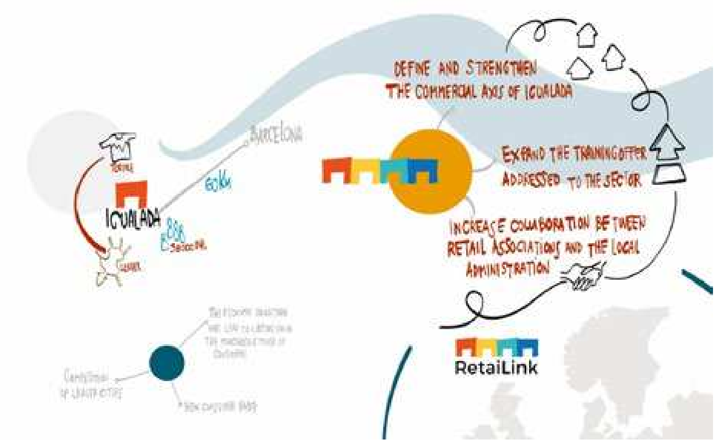




DECREASING
45.000 INHAB.
HISTORICAL CENTRE
TWO UNESCO PROTECTED SITES
ŠIBENIK
ADRIATIC SEA
FRAME OF COOPERATION BETWEEN ULG AND AMINISTRATION
SUITABLE BUSINESS ACTIVITIES IN THE OLD CENTRE
IMPROVE RETAILER' SKILLS
ACCESSIBILITY OF OLD CENTRE
"MOBILITY" IS THE KEY
INCREASE THE VISIBILITY OF RETAILERS OFFER
INCREASE OLD CITY CENTRE APPEAL
RetaiLink
QUALITY
LACK OF DISTINCTIVENESS
TENANTS MIX
FRAGMENTATION OF RATAILS AREA
BASINGSTOKE & DEANE
HAMPSHIRE
245 sq. MILES
INCREASE CONSUMER SPEND
INCREASE FOOTFALL IN TOWN CENTRE
INCREASE AVERAGE DWELL TIME
INCREASE FOOTFALL
+ NUMB. OF VISITORS
LOWER VACANCY RATE
REDUCE NUMBER OF EMPTY UNITS
INCREASE DWELL TIME IN TOWN CENTRE

Ajuntament d'Igualada **IGUALADA**

PRIORITIZING URBAN AXIS TO ENHANCE LOCAL RETAIL REVITALISATION



1 - IGUALADA RETAILINK PROJECT

Igualada's RetaiLink project objective is to design an integrated retail revitalisation policy for the city. The first step to do so is to know more about what it is necessary to boost the competitiveness of the retail sector, its development and growth, as well as to know how to improve other services such as restaurants or cultural activities that can be related to retail. The final aim of the project is to agree on a strategy setting the relevant actions to revitalise the retail sector and the city economy as a whole, using an integrated and participative approach.

THE VISION

The project vision is to make the city of Igualada a Catalan retail destination combining retail and leisure offering a unique, specialised and differentiated offer.

THE CONTEXT

Located in Catalonia, just 60 km from Barcelona, Igualada, has a population of 38.978 inhabitants within the city and of 70.000 in its catchment area.

Historically, Igualada's economy was mainly based on the textile and leather industries. However, over the past few years these industries have suffered a significant decline due to liberalization processes and the relocation of companies to lower-wage countries. As a result of the economic decline, in April 2015 the unemployment rate in Igualada stood at 18,87%, while in Catalonia it was 16,56%.

To redress this situation and promote economic recovery, Igualada City Council is supporting certain strategic sectors including the leather and textile industries, which are mature sectors and still a major source of employment in the city. Igualada is developing a strategy and actions to position itself as the European Capital of Quality Leather and to drive the textile reindustrialization process in the leather and textile sectors in order to boost and strengthen their competitiveness.

As part of the economic revitalisation of the city, the retail sector is also considered a priority strategic sector as it is closely linked to the above-mentioned fashion industry of Igualada.

Igualada's powerful retail offer comprises more than 600 shops and is complemented by a diverse cultural and leisure offer. Indeed, Igualada's retail appeal is boosted by its entertainment offers as well as by its strategic location in the centre of Catalonia that allows it to attract potential consumers from other neighbouring towns and from the rest of Catalonia.

In addition to the traditional retail offer, Igualada has 3 key elements that differentiate it from other cities:

Factory Shops: The importance of the textile industry in the city has led to several clothing companies opening up their own factory shops in Igualada in addition to selling their products in other locations through their own or multi-brand stores. Prestigious national and international brands from Igualada, such as Punto Blanco, Sita Murt, Escorpion or David Valls, attract shoppers to the city.

Outlet Shops: Igualada has a good number of outlet shops clustered near the city centre, although they are not included in the main retail area. These outlet shops attract customers seeking high quality products.

Experimental Stores: REC.0 Experimental Stores is a new commercial phenomenon based on an innovative retail concept, which emerged in Igualada. REC.0 is a temporary transformation of the industrial area where tanneries are located: for 4 days twice a year, old factories turn into fashion pop up stores where top brands as well as designers sell their stocks at special prices. Desigual, Mango, Ash, Levi's, Lacoste, Pepe Jeans are but a few of the brands that take part in this popular retail event.

However, despite its varied offer, the local retail sector has experienced a decline due to the following factors:

· The prolonged economic downturn has led to a reduction in the purchasing power of consumers.
· New consumer habits and the emergence of new distribution channels have had a negative impact on the traditional retail offer.
· Igualada suffers from the competition of larger cities, where consumers are attracted by the wider retail offer in Barcelona and its metropolitan area.

This decline in the retail sector has not only affected the traditional stores but also the factories and the outlet shops established in Igualada. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of vacant retail units as well as a rise in unemployment in the sector.

In this challenging context, the Municipal Council is thus striving to position the city as a reference in the retail world through offering an attractive and innovative shopping experience to attract customers from all over the region.

The City Council is also supporting the retail activity by providing information on grants and other public funding opportunities, by adapting retail regulation, and by offering training to improve business competitiveness.

The local authority has been working to reach a consensus with the different representatives of the retail sector for developing a participative and integrated retail revitalization policy. One result is that the city has been leading the URBACT RetaiLink Action Planning Project since 2015. Since then, the municipality has largely implemented actions in collaboration with the retail sector, among them the publication of an Events calendar and the creation of a webpage explaining the town retail offer.

The retail sector is organised around different retail associations:

· Retail Association Igualada Comerç, a non-profit association representing 60% of retailers in the city.
· Retail Association Nou Centre Igualada representing retailers located in the Northern area of Igualada.
· Retail Association Associació de Botiguers del Mercat de la Masuca, linked to the local food market where 60% of the residents in Igualada normally buy.

Fira d'Igualada (Igualada Fair) is another important actor in the city, a non-profit organization aimed at promoting fairs, markets and the retail sector. Nine fairs and more than 20 events are organized by this organization every year.

To ensure a diversified entertainment offer, the City Council Promoted a new cinema in the city centre - the so called "Ateneu Cinema", after the only Cinema in the city closed some years ago. The new Cinema, which opened in 2016 near the city retail's axis, is being used to help retain local consumers in the area.

The municipality of Igualada also organises and participates in the organization of other trade fairs and events such as the BSTIM textile fair, which is co-organized with the Fair of Igualada and the FAGEPI textile group to promote the city's textile industry. Though this kind of industry often has its own outlet shops in Igualada, the BSTIM fair is an opportunity for local retailers to show their products to foreign consumers.

By revitalising the retail sector, the Local Authority is trying to support the competitiveness of an important part of the city's SME's: the retail businesses. The City Council is also committed to revitalising the local retail sector by using leisure and cultural and sports events intentionally linked to retail. While the local retail revitalisation policy has already achieved some of its goals, there is still a clear need to achieve a joint management structure that goes beyond specific promotional activities or the coordination of a few events. This new management structure should include the city retail associations and the City Council. The structure should work for the city adaptation to the retail revitalisation policy needs with an Integrated and Participative Action Plan and approach (IAP).

With the implementation of the IAP, the retail businesses are expected to be more innovative, competitive and specialised, talents which together can be considered as keys for the promotion of the economic development of the territory.

2 - THE PLAN

The URBACT Local Group meetings have been useful to identify the retail sector's main needs in the city, as well as the priorities and actions to be taken involving the lead agents, the budget considerations and indicators to assess the results obtained (see table in annex). To promote these changes in Igualada, a number of different things need to happen:

1. Work using an integrated approach –as provided through the URBACT method- on a global long -term retail strategy that contains a clear vision of the city's future.
2. Overcome a situation where the Municipality and the retail associations work separately. Create a common space of collaborative and participative decision-making, based upon the outcomes of the URBACT local Group.
3. Work with partners who are leaders of their respective retail associations to jointly organise working sessions, benchmark good practises and share knowledge.
4. Increase the management skills of those involved in the town and retail centre management to better deal with the cities' economic revitalisation issues.
5. Continue using the URBACT participative method in the future to deal with retail linked policies from an integrated perspective and design systems of sharing knowledge between different mu-nicipal departments.

To sum up, the current IAP is a tool to overcome both the lack of cooperation between local stakeholders, including the Council, and the difficulty of aligning their different agendas in a local strategy for retail improvement. The objective is to bring all interests together, public and private, in a common purpose , with a management structure that allows for project monitoring and sustainability.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

After much work done in the RetaiLink Project and many discussions in the ULG meetings, the following key elements to improve the retail sector in Igualada have been identified:

· There is a need to improve the management skills in the retail associations.
· The plan should ensure a diverse retail offer so it includes anchors that reinforce the attractiveness of the area. It is important to find a stable balance between the mix of shops and a certain specialisation by zones so that the result enables an intuitive movement throughout the area and, somehow, orientates the consumer.
· The retailers also need better skills to be able to adapt their business to meet the new needs of consumers.
· There is a need to develop and implement joint actions between the municipality and the retail associations.

Three project objectives and their Actions have been agreed upon based on the collaborative work between the Municipality and the city stakeholders in the ULG as substantiated by the work of the present IAP. These are:

Objective 1: Define and strengthen the commercial axis of Igualada.
Objective 2: Expand the training offer addressed to the sector.
Objective 3: Increase collaboration between retail associations and the Local Administration.

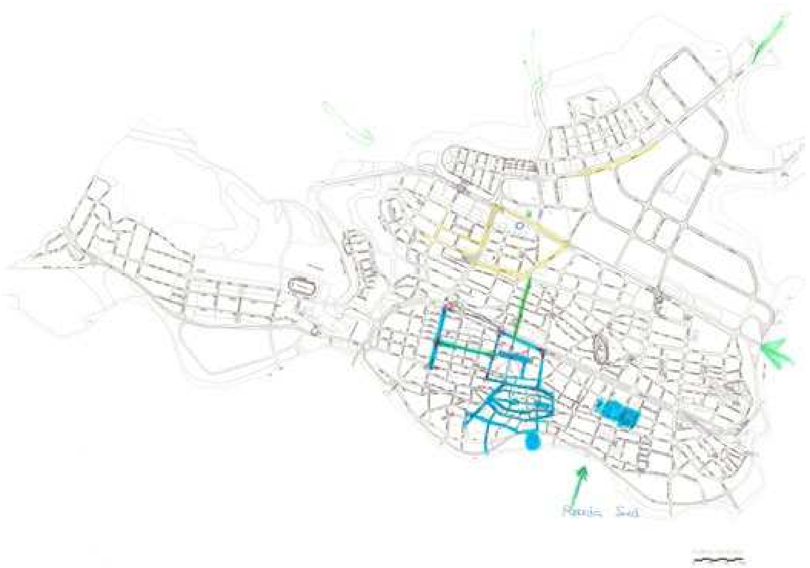
After a highly participative discussion, the ULG came up with the following propositions to reach each objective:

Objective 1: Define and strengthen the commercial axis of Igualada

The city of Igualada has different zones where there is an important number of retail business. The retail activity is mainly concentrated in two areas:

· The city centre with four streets with a high concentration of retail activity (the streets of Sant Magí, Argent and Òdena, and the Cal Font Square).

· The northern part of the town, where more people live and where the retail units usually sell products of a daily use.



RetaiLink

The Municipal Authority wants to bring together retailers' associations in the territory in a specific but widely inclusive objective: to define a retail area; to adapt it in terms of urban planning; to cover its retail needs; to name it as a whole, generating the internal and external promotion; and, to increase footfall and the number of consumers.

The goal is to create a "centre comercial al cel obert" meaning an open shopping mall in the city. To do so, this plan is trying to connect and specialise the different retail axis and the following activities have been identified:

· Create and implement the signage of a "Retail Itinerary" in the city.
· Communication actions in order to promote Igualada's retail offer to locals and foreigners.
· Increase the pedestrian area surface at the city centre.
· Create an attractive leisure offer in the city.
· Create a customer loyalty service (as a customer card) for the whole local retail.
· Urban rehabilitation (of the buildings, facades) and a general improvement of the environment and elements that constitute the urban space.

Objective 2: Expand the training offer addressed to the sector

Through the participation in the URBACT RetaiLink project, the Local Authority and the retailers are committed to upgrading their skills to be able to adapt to the new consumer and retail model based on the content of the RetaiLink transnational meetings. The idea is to expand the training offer to increase the capacity of the local retail sector to deal with these new consumer demands.

The City Council and the Retail Associations are trying to improve their own skills to: jointly develop retail revitalisation actions, strengthen management skills to lead the retail non-profit associations, and to help ensure retail businesses are prepared to meet the needs of the "new consumer". To achieve this specific objective the plan will includes creating an annual catalogue with training and learning offer for retailers so that demands can find supply, and training suppliers can obtain more visibility in front of potential market demands.

This activity will be jointly developed between the Town Hall and the Retail Associations and it will probably be financed by a mix of local public funds and enrolment fees.

Objective 3: Increase collaboration between retail associations and the Local Administration

This objective is based on the need to develop an integrated retail revitalisation policy that should be planned and implemented between the Council and the city retail associations. It aims to create a partnership to ensure that the relevant retail stakeholders participate in the planning and implementation of the retail revitalisation actions.

To achieve this specific objective the following actions have been planned:

· Establish a formal partnership called "Taula de Comerç" (Retail Board) to coordinate all actions and stimulate joint work between the different retail associations and the Council.
· Joint collection of data and indicators: The idea is to use the indicators that are currently being used by the Municipality or the Retail Associations and to share the information amongst the members of the board.

The Retail Board will be initially formed by the current members of the URBACT Local Group:

· The Igualada City Council.
· REC.0 Experimental Stores.
· Retail Association Igualada Comerç.
· Retail Association Nou Centre Igualada.
· Retail Association Associació de Botiguers del Mercat de la Masuca.
· Representatives of the outlet shops.
· Fira d'Igualada (Igualada Fair).

The Retail Board will also deal with the implementation of some of the current IAP actions. The Retail Department of the city is currently studying what the legal status of the board should be.

SKATEHOLDERS

· City hall: Economic Promotion Department, Urban Planning Department and Culture, Sports and Environment Department.

· Retailer's associations: Igualada Comerç i Nou Centre.

· Events and Fairs association: Fira d'Igualada.

RESOURCES

The Plan implementation will use public and private funding. The Local Authority will also look for funding from other administrations to implement the actions in this plan, such as European, Regional or Provincial funding.

Depending on the action to be undertaken, the resources will come from different sources:

· Administration (public sector) either from the City hall or other institutions, even defining an agree ment or creating a public grant.
· The whole retailers (private sector), even as part of the voluntary quotes paid to the different existing associations, or with special contributions to some of the actions.
· Other income might be coming from sponsorships or publicity.

INDICATORS

For the specific objectives the plan is using the following result indicators:

Objective 1: Define and strengthen the commercial axis of Igualada

· Footfall in the retail axis.
· Satisfaction level of the retailers.

Objective 2: Expand the training offer addressed to the sector

· Satisfaction level of the people enrolled in the courses.

Objective 3: Increase collaboration between trade associations and the Local Administration

· Number of actions implemented by the new partnership body.

3 - CONCLUSION

LEARNING

Retail entrepreneurs are professionals in the art of selling but most don't have knowledge in the field of urban planning, regulation, or the action capacities of the local administration, etc. It is necessary to do more pedagogy of the relevant aspects of the urban and economic development (mobility, environment, tourism, culture, heritage...) before asking for them to participate in the design of strategies for Action Plans.

To count on inputs from experts with diverse, relevant professional experience and different views (from the public administration and the private sector) has facilitated the development of a common, general perspective and the creation of realistic objectives.

What is believed to be a priority at first not always ends up being so. When defining the main action paths, the differences between what is important and what is urgent becomes more evident, and cleavages can appear amongst stakeholders' priorities. Breaking things down into smaller actions inside the accomplishment of the objectives makes the decision-making process easier, for example, like picking a person in charge, or looking for the adequate resources and defining the most adequate indicators. Using effective teamwork techniques, and the fact that the groups are made up of people from different backgrounds and fields of work and visions, helps bring transparency and coherence to the decisions, too. It allows for a general vision –not a partial one- to be established, including the set of possible repercussions, thus making consensus easier.

INNOVATION AND TRANSFERABILITY

Designing templates of work that include the different paths of action, calendars, responsible person, resources and indicators to monitor and evaluate the results, makes easier both the decision making process and the choice of the right actions to take to achieve each desired objective.

4 - CONTACT INFORMATION

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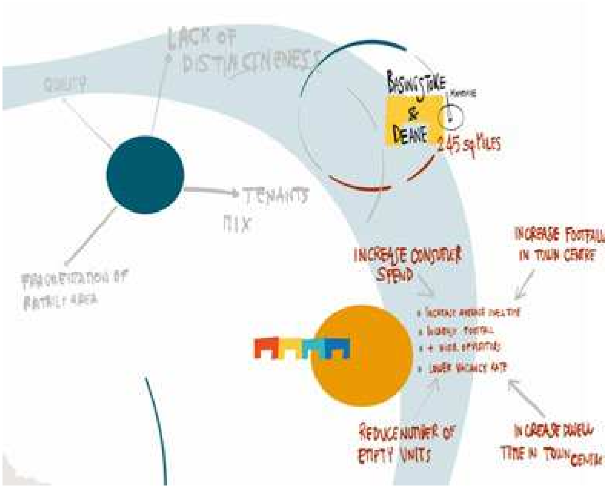
5 - ROADMAP

Objective	Action	Delivery lead/team	Key partners involved	Time	Resources/ Assets	Output Indicador
Define and strengthen the commercial axis of Igualada						
	Create and implement the signage of a "Retail Itinerary" in the city	"Taula de Comerç" establishes the axis. The Urban Planning and retail department implement	Cuma (Commission for Urban planning and mobility of the Anoia County) "Disseny Igualada" (Association of local Designers)	18 months	Local Public Funding	The signage system is deployed
	Communication actions in order to promote Igualada's retail offer to locals and visitors	"Nou Centre" and "Igualada Comerç" Retail Associations	Retail Board "Disseny Igualada"	Ongoing	Private Resources from the retailers	Number of communication actions and campaigns developed
	Increase the pedestrian area in the city centre	Retail Board The Urban Planning and Retail Departments implement	Retail Board	June 2018: final decision on the streets of the new pedestrian area	Local Public Funding. Officers of the Igualada City Council	Number of square meters of new pedestrian streets
	Create an attractive leisure offer in the city	Igualada Fair – Fira d'Igualada	Public Administration. Retail Associations	Annual Schedule	Music and Dancing schools, theatre groups, Igualada Fair	Number of new leisure activities
	Urban rehabilitation (of the buildings, facades) and a general improvement of the environment and elements that constitute the urban space	Retail Board	Public Administration. Retail Associations	First Semester 2018	City Council monitoring mechanisms // Local Public funding	Number of urban rehabilitation actions
	Create a customer loyalty service (as a customer card) for the whole local retail	Retail Associations	Private Consultancy services	First quarter 2018 –	Local Public Funding// Private Resources from the retailers	The customer loyalty service is created
Expand the training offer addressed to the sector						
	Create an annual catalogue with training and learning offer for retailers	Retail Associations	University and Vocational Training centres	Annual (beginning in 2018)	Local Public Funding // Price per course	Number of courses
Increase collaboration between retail associations and the Local Administration						
	Establish a formal partnership, the Retail Board to coordinate all actions and stimulate joint work between the different retail associations and the city hall. Joint collection of data and indicators	City Retail Department	Retail and other associations	On going	On going	Number of actions developed by the new partnership
	Joint collection of data and indicators	Retail Board	Private Consultancy services	2018	Local Public Funding// Private Resources from the retailers	Number of indicators collected by the new partnership

BASINGSTOKE

Basingstoke and Deane

SUPPORTING TOWN CENTRE REVITALISATION



AN INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN FOR BASINGSTOKE AND DEANE
MARCH 2018

INTRODUCTION

This integrated action plan aimed at supporting town centre revitalisation was developed as part of the RetaiLink URBACT Action Planning Network. It is the result of extensive engagement and consultation with a wide range of town centre businesses, local authority officers and elected members, the Basingstoke Together Business Improvement District, and Festival Place and The Malls shopping centres. Through the consultation and engagement process, a series of challenges were identified which this plan aims to address. As such, this action plan outlines some key actions and interventions to be implemented in Basingstoke to support town centre businesses as part of a wider programme to revitalise the town centre.

This plan builds upon the Town Centre Programme led by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) and the Basingstoke Together Business Improvement District's business and annual action plan.

RETAILINK

BDBC joined URBACT's action planning network RetaiLink in 2016. We worked alongside 9 other medium-sized European cities, that all shared similar challenges and ambitions. A series of transnational events gave the council and members of Basingstoke's ULG access to expertise and examples of good practice from within and beyond the network. The learning generated through these events and exchange of learning with other partner cities has helped the council and its partners develop different approaches to tackling the challenges faced by its town centre and retail sector and has been integrated into this action plan.

The following key learning points were of particular relevance to Basingstoke's context and Integrated Action Plan:

- the importance of understanding a city's retail profile, mix and identity – the experience of Hengelo and Hoogeven.
- the importance of knowing a retail area's consumers, their behaviours and expectations.
- the changing face of retail in a digital world and particularly the effective use of town centre data to inform decision-making – the experience of Hengelo and Hoogeven.
- the role of events in supporting retail growth – the experience of Igualada and its programme of events linking leisure and retail.
- the power of place branding and marketing and the importance of partnership working in developing and rolling out a brand.
- the role of urban planning policies and tools in reshaping retail areas.
- alternative uses of empty retail premises and complementary uses – the experience of Igualada and Romans with their pop-up festivals.

LOCAL CONTEXT

About Basingstoke and Deane

The borough of Basingstoke and Deane covers an area of over 245 square miles in north Hampshire, with the town of Basingstoke being the main urban settlement in the borough and the focus for key services, economic activity and employment.

The town is surrounded by attractive rural areas, including small towns and villages, with over 75% of the land within the borough defined as agricultural or woodland and a significant part being designated as a part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

The number of residents in the borough has steadily increased since Basingstoke's designation as an expanded town in the 1960s and the population stands at around 174,600. The population of the borough is expected to rise to almost 250,000 people by 2050.

Basingstoke and Deane has a strong and diverse economy with a good balance of businesses across a range of sectors, including advanced manufacturing and ICT, financial and business services, creative industries, logistics and distribution, digital tech, and environmental technologies. Retail and wholesale trade is the largest key sector of employment for the borough and provides 20.5% of local jobs.

The borough has high level of employment with 87.7% of the working age population being economically active. Unemployment is low at 2.5%. The economy is worth £5.2bn in Gross Value Added (GVA) and there are over 7,700 businesses providing 83,000 jobs. The borough also has a high start up number of around 1,000 per year and a survival rate of just under 48% after 5 years.

In the Local Plan period up to 2029, 15,300 new homes are to be built, with 3,500 to be located at Many-down to the west of Basingstoke.

RETAIL IN BASINGSTOKE

Catchment area

The total catchment area for the town centre represents a population of over one million[1] and is divided into three levels:

- Primary catchment area covering mainly the town of Basingstoke: 106,930 residents.
- Secondary catchment area covering mainly the borough: 164,130 residents.
- Tertiary catchment area extending to parts of Berkshire, Test Valley, Hart, Rushmoor and west Surrey: 1,033,990 residents.

Basingstoke town centre

- The Malls shopping centre: home to 26 retail units and the Anvil Concert Hall. The Malls mostly specialises in value for money retail. The Malls is owned by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council but managed by a private shopping centre operator.

- Festival Place shopping centre: this is the largest and main retail area in the town centre at 1,000,000 sq ft. Home to 200 different brands, Festival Place comprises a mix of retail, leisure and food and beverage offer. Festival Place is fully privately owned and managed.

1. Source: Festival Place 2017

· The Top of the Town: this is the town centre's secondary retail area located in the historic part of the town. The offer focuses mainly of services (hairdressing, banking, solicitors, betting shops, etc.) and the night time economy. The retail offer is limited and centred on charity shops and small convenience stores. It is home to the Willis Museum and the Haymarket Theatre. Ownership is mostly priva te and fragmented and the area is not managed as a whole.

Basingstoke's town centre remains the main area for comparison retailing while convenience retailing is mainly concentrated in retail parks and shopping centres in and around the town such as the Chineham Centre, the Brighton Hill Centre or Hatch Warren Retail Park. The town centre accounts for a market share of 9.9% for convenience retailing and 47% for comparison retailing[2].

The Going Shopping 2018[3] report, which ranks UK shopping centres, has placed Festival Place in the top 20 for the second year running. Ranked 20th out of 500 shopping centres, Festival Place is the only shopping centre in the region to be included in this league table. No other shopping centre from comparator towns is within the top 20. The Oracle in Reading has been ranked at no 32 and the Lexicon in Bracknell at no 33. Woking and Guildford do not feature in the top 50 (Woking was ranked no 64 and Guildford no 187). This ranking is based on overall attractiveness to shoppers, retailers and investors based on features that are important to these groups. This includes tenant mix, lettable area, weekly footfall, turnover and facilities available.

Basingstoke's town centre performance has remained strong and occupation levels have increased. The overall estimated vacancy rate stands at 8%[4] across the town centre. The vacancy rate in the Top of the Town has reduced from 9% in 2016 to 7%[5] in 2017, the lowest level since monitoring started in 2013 when vacancy rate stood at 10%. The Malls Shopping centre is nearly fully occupied with only two vacant units out of 26. Festival Place does not provide vacancy rate data but the centre has seen a reduction in the number of vacant units following a series of new lettings in 2017. Since 2016, 24 new shops have opened in Festival Place[6].

The south east average level is 7.2%[7] and the national average is 11%[8]. Comparing to nearby towns with a similar retail mix and catchment area size, Woking has a vacancy rate of 7.2%[9] while Guildford's rate stands at 7.1%[10].

Overall, levels of footfall have been maintained. Festival Place has seen an increase of 1.4% to 22.4 million[11] in 2017. Footfall in the Top of the Town has remained stable. This compares favourably to south east and national averages which stand at -1.8% and -3.8%[12] respectively. Footfall data is currently not recorded for The Malls shopping centre but is expected to be in line with Festival Place.

2. Source: Basingstoke and Deane Retail Capacity Study – Carter Jonas 2015
3. Going Shopping 2018 – The Definitive Guide to Shopping Centres – Trevor Woods Associates
4. Source: Basingstoke Together Business Improvement District
5. Source: annual vacancy survey, People and Places Insight, November 2017
6. Source: Festival Place
7. Source: Springboard – October 2017
8. Source: Local Data Company – January 2018
9. Source: Woking Borough Council – December 2017
10. Source: Guildford Borough Council – Springboard, October 2017
11. Source: Festival Place
12. Source: Springboard – January 2018

The Basingstoke market has remained stable both in terms of average number of stalls and income. In 2016/17, the average number of stalls increased to 15.5 compared to 12.4 in 2015/16 and 7 in 2014. Full financial year data is not currently available for 2017/18. However, current numbers up to December 2017 show that the average number of stalls is expected to remain at a similar level to 2016/17. Year on Year average footfall has remained stable.

Town centre stakeholders

This IAP was developed with a group of stakeholders, which formed Basingstoke's URBACT Local Group, through a series of meetings and participation in transnational events. Membership included town centre retail and non-retail business representatives, the Basingstoke Together BID, Festival Place Shopping Centre, The Malls Shopping centre, representatives from arts organisations and representatives from the council's planning, property services, licensing, community safety and social inclusion departments. In addition, wider engagement and consultation has also taken place to help shape the IAP through the Town Centre Annual Summit, the BID's Annual General Meeting and BID board meetings.

This IAP complements and integrates with other local programmes and action plans focused on the town centre – the council-led Town Centre Programme and the Basingstoke Together BID business plan and annual action plan.

The Town Centre Programme

The Town Centre Programme focuses on building partnership working across the town centre to deliver a wide range of small to medium-scale interventions aimed at improving the attractiveness and economic vibrancy of the town centre. These interventions are also intended to create the business environment where entrepreneurs will feel more confident to invest in small businesses in the Top of the Town area.

The Town Centre Programme focuses on 6 main areas of intervention:

- The community – engagement and partnership working.
- The place – environmental improvements.
- The connections – mobility and accessibility.
- The support – business engagement and support.
- The "feel-good factor" – events and culture.
- Marketing – promoting the town centre

Basingstoke Together BID

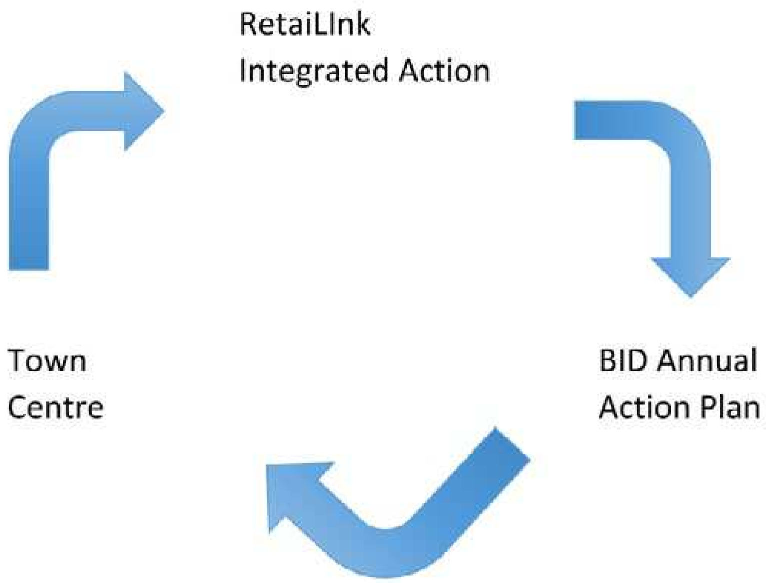
The Basingstoke Together BID business plan has four main priorities:

- Promoting Basingstoke together – a collaborative approach to coordinated marketing activities and a programme of events.
- A place for people – improving the experience of visitors and shoppers.
- A place for business – providing support to town centre businesses to continue to grow and prosper.
- A voice for business – representing the views of town centre businesses to influence decision-making and in various partnerships.

BASINGSTOKE TOGETHER

To deliver against those four priorities, the BID implements an annual action plan. Interventions include:

· Free town centre Wi-Fi in the Top of the Town and The Malls in partnership with the Council and using the Council's CCTV stands and cabling.
· Regular marketing campaigns to coincide with key retail periods reaching 1.8 million people.
· The roll out of digital tools such as Geo Sense and Place Dashboard enabling data collection on town centre visitor behaviour, movement, and length of stay.
· Creation of a fortnightly e-newsletter providing BID updates as well as information on council-led initiatives.
· Recruitment of one Town Centre Hosts whose role is to interact with levy payers on a daily basis as well as providing assistance to visitors to the town. This role is currently under review.
· Introducing a cost-saving scheme for town centre businesses on expenditure such as utilities, merchant services or insurance.
· Delivering an annual programme of events across the town centre.
· Running a programme of training courses for town centre businesses.
· Launching a customer loyalty scheme.
· Working with BDBC to consolidate and improve the town centre weekly marke.t
· Running vibrancy projects for the Top of the Town area such as art or lighting installations.



Challenges

- Decrease or stagnation of footfall numbers.
- Decrease in sales volume and transaction values.
- Increase in vacant retail units.
- Competition from other towns in the surrounding area.
- Lack of complementary facilities (arts, leisure, family, culture).
- Fragmentation of town centre retail areas – lack of connections.
- Increasing visibility of rough sleeping particularly in the Top of the Town area.
- Overall image of the town – lack of USP/clear identity/visibility.
- Duplication of uses – too many shops that sell the same.

Problem statement

CAUSES

- legacy – historic perception of the town doesn't reflect reality
- historic lack of investment
- gateways/access points are uninviting
- communication – no pro-active challenge to clichés about Basingstoke
- perceived as a commuter town that services its own resident population
- lack of consistent standards in terms of look and feel across the town
- local media – focus on bad news stories
- no strong champions or advocates promoting Basingstoke's town centre

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Basingstoke's town centre is not recognised as a quality retail and leisure destination

EFFECTS

- people go elsewhere to shop/access leisure and culture
- the catchment area is limited and is mostly centred on Basingstoke
- decrease in footfall and spend
- prevents new lettings and investments
- shop closures and increase in vacant units
- the town stagnates – no growth
- the town can be perceived as "rough" (crime, antisocial behaviour, rough sleeping)
- a town that is perceived as uncared for attracts antisocial behaviour

Strategic aim

Make Basingstoke's town centre a destination recognised for the quality of its experience and of its retail, cultural and leisure offer

Vision

Basingstoke has a thriving town centre recognised as a regional retail, leisure and cultural destination offering a unique and quality experience through high levels of occupation, a quality mix of retailers and a diverse cultural offer.

Strategic objectives and result indicators

Diversify retail, culture and leisure mix

Increase footfall in the town centre and attract more visitors from outside of primary catchment area

Measuring success:

- Increased average dwell time
- Increased footfall
- Higher number of visitors from outside primary catchment area
- Lower vacancy rate
- More diverse number and types of units

Increase dwell time in the town centre

Reduce the number of empty units

Thematic areas of intervention

Physical environment – improve the look and feel of the town centre

Diversity and choice - improve the retail, leisure and culture mix to respond better to visitor expectations

Experience – improve the visitor experience while in the town centre

Business support – help town centre retailers and businesses through targeted business support activities

ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

THEMATIC PILLAR:		PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT			
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Improve the access points and gateways to the town centre	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls	March 2021	New signs installed in the Top of the Town Improvement to The Malls entrance completed	Budget based on each intervention
Continue to improve the navigation around the town centre	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls	March 2019	Installation of digital boards completed	N/A
Develop a long-term transport strategy for the town centre	HCC	BDBC	To be confirmed	Strategy developed and approved Number of interventions completed	Budget to be set based on outcomes of strategy
Continue to support property owners and businesses with improvements to their premises through the Top of the Town grant scheme	BDBC	BID	March 2019	Number of applications Number of grants awarded Number of improvement works completed	£25,000
Work with the Social Inclusion Partnership to reduce the impact of rough sleeping and street attachment on the town centre	BDBC	Social Inclusion Partnership	March 2019	Reduction in number of rough sleepers Reduction in number of antisocial behaviour incidents	To be confirmed
Develop and implement a longer-term strategy to improve the built environment in the town centre	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls HCC	Initiation of strategy – September 2018	Strategy developed and approved Number of interventions completed	Budget will be based on types of interventions

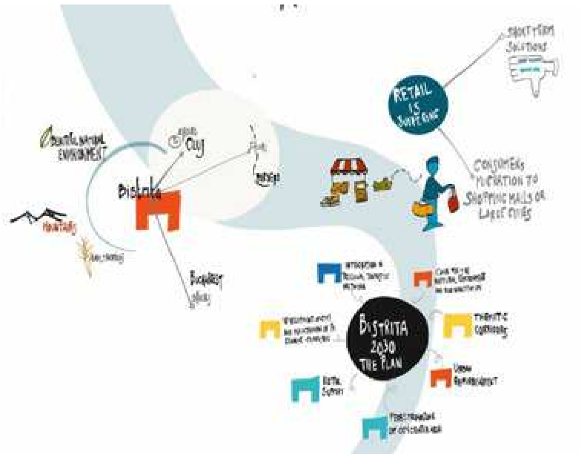
THEMATIC PILLAR:		DIVERSITY AND CHOICE			
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Carry out a retail mix analysis study to assess current offer and identify gaps	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls	May 2018	Study completed Follow up action plan to implement study recommendations	Up to £10,000 – BDBC, RetailLink and BID
Crowd source ideas from residents and visitors to improve the night time offer in the Top of the Town	BDBC	BID	February 2018	Campaign launched and completed Number of ideas submitted	£5,000
Increase number and range of market stalls	BDBC	Market operator	March 2019	Number of stalls attending market	£20,000 – BDBC
Organise ad-hoc thematic markets	BID	BDBC	March 2019	Number of markets Number of stalls	To be confirmed

THEMATIC PILLAR:		EXPERIENCE			
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Explore the feasibility of creating a cultural hub in the Top of the Town	BDBC	Anvil Arts HCC HCT Proteus BID	March 2019	Feasibility study completed Options appraisal completed	Up to £26m
Deliver customer service training courses to ensure better and more consistent customer service across the town centre	BID	BDBC	March 2019	Number of training courses delivered Number of participants	£500 – BID
Run an annual programme of events in the town centre	BID	BDBC Town centre businesses Festival Place The Malls	March 2019	Number of events delivered Number of people attending events Qualitative evaluation	£20,000 – BDBC £tbc - BID
Run a workshop to review the web presence for the town centre to ensure consistent messaging	BDBC	BID Festival Place The Malls	March 2018	Workshop delivered Number of attendees Follow up action plan	£1,000 – RetailLink funding
Implement the place	BDBC	BID	March 2020	Number of campaigns	£50,000 – BDBC
marketing strategy to promote Basingstoke		Festival Place The Malls		Number of adverts Number of features on Basingstoke	

THEMATIC PILLAR:		BUSINESS SUPPORT			
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Deliver a programme of retail-focused training courses for businesses	BDBC	BID	March 2019	Number of training courses delivered Number of attendees Qualitative evaluation	£1,000 - BID
Create an enterprise hub in the Top of the Town to support local entrepreneurs and businesses	BDBC	To be confirmed	Inception – April 2018 Phase 1 to run until March 2021	Outputs to be confirmed pending provider selection	£160,000 – BDBC over 3 years

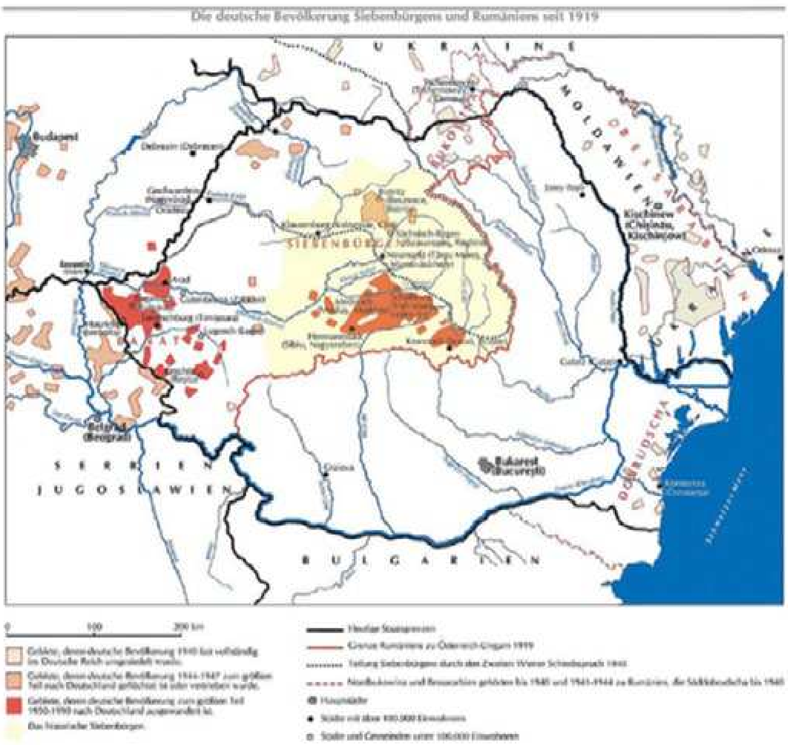
BISTRIŢA

BISTRIŢA CENTRE SHOPS



1 - THE PROJECT CONTEXT

The region of North West Romania, where the city of Bistriţa is situated has development indicators above the national average. The city of Bistriţa is part of the seven traditional historical cities of the region, with well established cultural and traditional heritage including a German one. Economically, Bistriţa is above the national average, but below the average of other major cities in the region. The challenge for Bistriţa is mainly to position itself with a strong specific identity while also using the much stronger brand of the old Transylvanian seven cities.



Competitivity analysis of traditional Transylvanian cities

City	Population	History and cultural heritage	Economy	Connectivity (roads, railway, airports)
Cluj	XXXX	XXXX	XXXXX	XXXX
Sibiu	XXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX
Brasov	XXX	XXXX	XXX	XXXX
Bistriţa	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**	**XX**
Medias	X	XX	X	XXX
Sebes	X	XX	X	XXX
Orăştie	X	XX	X	XXX
Sighişoara	X	XXXXX	XX	XX

From the connectivity point of view, Bistriţa is 2 hours'drive from Cluj, the regional capital where there is an international airport, 4-5 hours' drive from the borders and 9 hours' drive from the capital city Bucharest. The railway links are also indirect and even longer, while other similar cities are much better connected. This relative isolation will continue or even increase in the near future, because currently planned highways will bypass Bistriţa and will ensure better connection for other similar cities, while much larger cities (Brasov, Cluj, Sibiu) are already well linked to international corridors of business and trade. In 2016, only 3 % of the tourists spending nights in accommodation in the region chose Bistriţa.

At the national level, in Romania, there is an increasing gap between the cities and the regions benefitting from structural changes and those losing population and influence. Bistriţa is among the latter.

Major urban centers, such as the capital Bucharest, or the North West capital Cluj are attracting the most active and dynamic jobs, but also tourists and public events (show, music, sport, exhibitions, etc). Their airports make them attractive also to residents of smaller cities, such as Bistriţa and contribute to the dynamic of concentration of active consumers. Upper middle class from Bistriţa are spending more time in Cluj than before, and of course more money.

The city of Bistriţa, located in a beautiful natural environment, surrounded by mountains, has an organic link with neighbouring communities, nature and a rural traditional area. While many communist era industries have declined, the city itself is hosting now new enterprises (modern) and gathering work force and attracting residents from neighbouring rural areas.

1. The retail sector in Bistriţa is constrained by these major demographic and institutional/infrastructure trends. The downtown area (old city) retail is suffering from consumers migrating to shopping malls or larger cities, and some merchants are looking for short-term solutions which are not viable or sustainable (cheap products, looking for parking areas for retail etc).

The vision for the development of Bistriţa is built around the framework of general objectives for development of the region for 2014-2020. Bistriţa for 2030 vision is a modern city, with a competitive and innovative economy, making good use of the historical and environmental resources of the cities, with a high quality of life for citizens and supported by a vibrant and involved community of citizens. The activities required to reach the operational objectives are divers and systemic, from new rules for public events, enhanced urban furniture, development of road map for social media and other promotion, models and support for street design, new urban action plan update, etc.

2 - THE PLAN

During the work group meetings, the local action group has analysed:

· the research done in 2016 on the development of the retail sector
· various statistical data available from the city and the regional documents

We involved the local retailer's in each meeting, asking them to pitch in with ideas that are feasible to be included in the plan. Also they were involved in organizing the local final event of the project. The event takes place all March, with a highlight on the 31st. It is what we hope the first retailer's common event, that will replicate in the future years, an annual retailers' Fair.

During the last years, both the local retailers and the public authorities have taken important measures to regenerate the trading and urban life in Bistriţa. Without these measures, the city centre would now be a "dead area" (like in many similar sized towns). These measures must continue to be integrated with a systemic approach.

A general assessment of what needs to be done was pursued and a number of priority objectives were selected. There is a now a reasonably established consensus both for the vision and the practical actions supporting the objectives.

These objectives have been tailored to be compatible with the general strategy and vision desired "Bistriţa 2030".

The objectives are:

Continued care for the natural environment and good quality of life

· Development of the city while maintaining its genuine character
· Urban refurbishment
· Support for the central pedestrian commercial area development
· Development of thematic corridors: cultural, economic, gastronomic etc
· Integration in the regional touristic network
· Retailers support (training for retailers, local and national regulations)

In order to reach these objectives, the following key municipal areas (policies) are involved.

Urban planning – some of the reforms cannot be completed without changes and investments in urban furniture/planning (design, accessibility, and reglementations). The current urban planning program until 2018 will be prolonged for another 5 years and will include measures reaching all the objectives.

Communication – the local action group will communicate with the local authorities to find out the impact of the current measures.

Investments – technical directorate – the current investments and refurbishment will continue. Some of the buildings down town are abandoned and their image has a negative impact on the entire zone – with sound public policies these buildings can be bought and recreated as common goods and symbolic milestones of assuming the genuine character history of the city.

Other local institutions which may be involved in this consultative process are the Chamber of Commerce, the Regional office for SME etc.

For the future we propose the following methodology:

· A systematic consultative approach for new activities
· Segmentation of involvement (different levels)
· Constant flow of communication
· Identification of critical milestones requesting public policies shift

In terms of transferability and innovation we suggest:

· Remodelling the urban furniture to make it compatible with the good quality of life but also with the environment
· The bold process of framing Bistriţa and including it in a regional promotion package (the trend is your friend). It is important to point out that the local action group has realistic expectations of what can be done and some modern evolutions are not compatible with maintaining the "old ways"- they anticipate by promoting these changes.

The actions foreseen are:

- Organizing an annual Retailer Fair, starting this year. This year it will be organized in the framework of the Retail Project, in March, in the historical city center area. And the intent is to make it grow every year.
- Promotion of retail sector. We started already with the commercial map created within the project.
- Creation of a retailer's association. The idea was born already within the ULG meetings, and hopefully will find a proper status in the future, to engage as many retailers as possible and represent their needs and wishes.

3 - LESSONS LEARNED FROM RETAILINK

The following trends have been observed:

- The local partners involvement in international exchanges is beneficial for sharing experience.
- The best option to encourage involvement and fight reluctance or hostility of some local partners is to give them a deadline until which they can come with alternative proposal.
- The level of involvement of local partners varies up and down during a certain period.
- The only method which seems to offer a predictable level of partnership is one in which the local action group has several options for level of commitment (from simply being informed to requiring an action by a certain date).

4 - CONTACT INFORMATION

Mayor of Bistrita	**Project coordinator**	**Communication**
Ovidiu Teodor Cretu primaria@primariabistrita.ro	Radu Rus Head of project management department compstoru@yahoo.com	Cristina Cudrec Project manager assistant cristina.cudrec@yahoo.com

5 - ROADMAP

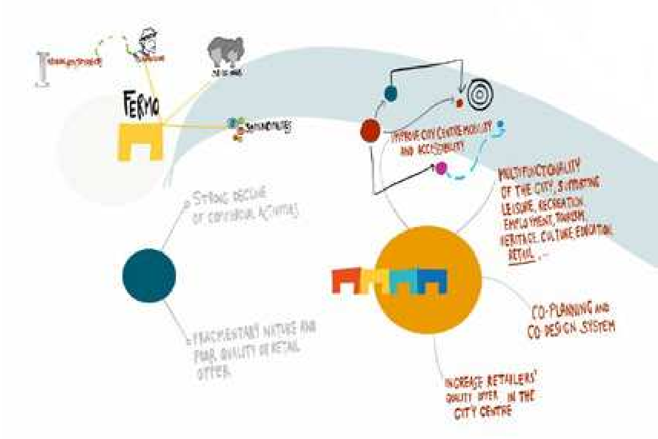
Objective	Action	Delivery lead/team	Key partners involved	Time	Resources / Assets	Output indicator
Objective 1 Care for environment and quality of life						
	New rules for public events New urban furniture Thematic days	City hall, Local action group	NGOs, local action group, Chamber of commerce, NGOS	1-3 years	Impact study, public funds, urban redesign, grunts, reglementations	Environmental, usage satisfaction, participation, popularity
Objective 2 Support for retail						
	Retail map & other publicity, promotion of city in regional program. Events. Model for street designs, new association support	Private contractor	Local action group, NGOs etc	1 y-3 years	Money, info, urban redesign	Distribution participation popularity
Objective 3 Regional integration						
	Promotion of city in regional programs	Local action group	Other regional partners	Regular	Info, money	Tourists, visibility etc
Objective 4 Thematical corridors						
	Organisation of thematic days, thematic days	Local action group	Chamber of commerce, NGO s etc	Regular	Urban redesign Grants, partners	Participation, popularity
Objective 5 Genuine character						
	New urban action plan	City hall	Local action group	5 years	Public funds, regulations, other	Urban development indicators, environment etc
Objective 6 Buildings refurbishment						
	New urban action plan New model for streets & shops design	City hall	Local action group	5 years	Public funds, regulations, other	Urban development indicators, environment etc

RetaiLink

Città di Fermo

FERMO

FERMO RETAIL EXPERIENCE



1 - THE PROJECT CONTEXT

The municipality of Fermo has a population of about 38.000 inhabitants. A leading city of the Fermo province, it is a reference point for 39 other municipalities, located in the Marche Region (Canter of Italy). Fermo, once a Roman colony, has always been the most important centre of the entire district for its abundant history, for the presence of historical-artistic evidence, for its industrial activities (shoes, hats, fashion), agrofood production and for its tourist and cultural initiatives. Fermo territory is characterized by a strong entrepreneurial vocation (12,8 enterprises over 100 inhabitants 2013 - the highest level in the Marche Region). The manufacturing and agriculture sectors are higher than national average. The manufacturing sector is focused on shoes district representing 63% of the active enterprises; however, R&D level is very low and very few innovative start ups are present at the provincial level (5 in 2014).

Regarding the city centre population, as many other medium-size cities in the last decades, Fermo has seen its population decrease since the 80s. In 2014, the percentage of inhabitants of Historical City Center was lower than 10% of the entire city population (37.663).

The loss of city vitality has resulted in a strong decline in the number of commercial activities and to a fragmentary nature and poor quality of the retail offer. The historical city centre on the top of the hill, with all the monuments and history attractiveness, hosts traditional retailing, which consists of small convenience shops and where retail units are too small to accommodate major brands. In 2016, Fermo registered 632 active retail enterprises, down from previous years. In fact, data from local Chamber of Commerce showed, though, that in one year (from 2014 to 2015) 62 retail enterprises stopped their activities. Furthermore, the accessibility to the city centre is not so easy due to its morphological nature, so accessibility is an issue that needs to be addressed.

To face this situation, the local authority started a process to revitalize the city centre developing integrated actions from commercial, economic, cultural and touristic points of view.

Thus, the key challenges for the City of Fermo now are to increase the daily footfall in the city centre, increase its attractiveness and make the historic centre more vibrant through joint actions by retailers, leisure and cultural activities that can add value for both tourists and residents.

Fermo should be, after all, the main attraction pole given its territorial context, so ways must be found to increase the value of doing business in the city, together with a wider approach to boost the economy of the entire territory. Its historical industrial activities linked to "Made in Italy" shoes, hats and fashion products and the excellent agro-food production represents a good start.

To build on this, it is of a paramount importance for the Municipality to help create investors' confidence, starting with retailers who can promote the city centre as a space for a rich and diversified experience including shopping and the full enjoyment of Fermo's cultural and artistic city heritage.

This can be a great opportunity to improve the way the local authority cooperates with residents and main stakeholders involved in city centre business developments and improve the public-private partnership.

2 - THE ACTION PLAN

The focus of the Local Action Plan is to deliver a medium-term programme for the economic development of the city centre, supporting the vision of the city centre as a place to experience high quality shopping, valorizing, in turn, the territory's industrial production, while enjoying its cultural and artistic attractiveness.

The plan will focus on actions concerning the setting up of monitoring and evaluation programme for the retail sector, sustainable mobility actions to improve accessibility to city centre, inclusion of retailers in the planning of cultural and promotional events of the city and training and specific support for business innovation and technological development.

Also, the plan builds on an integrated approach, which aims to foster cooperation between the different interventions and stakeholders engaged in the make up and implementation of local development policies.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE LAP

1 - To improve the city centre mobility and accessibility to the city centre

The action is necessary to offer quality and a smoother shopping experiences both for residents and tourists. An improved mobility programme is also necessary to connect the coastal area and the city centre particularly desirable in summer where city beaches are full of tourists.

- **Action 1.1 -** Improvement of mobility system and parking to reach the city centre.
- **Action 1.2 -** Improvement and harmonization of the road sign in the city centre.
- **Action 1.3 -** Deployment of specific services for tourists to reach the city centre.

Time:

- **Action 1.1 -** By the end of 2021.
- **Action 1.2 -** By the end of 2018.
- **Action 1.3 -** Pilot testing by the end of 2018.

Key municipal areas involved: Public works, commerce and tourism

Funding: For the improvement of the mobility system some actions are already included in projects funded under the ERDF ROP Programme 2014-2020 of Marche Region.

The improvement and harmonization of road sign is already highlighted as priority action for the Municipality as well as the deployment of specific services for tourists during the summer. Financial resources will be allocated within the Municipality budget.

2 - To set up a co-planning and co-design system for the City Promotion

A joint design and planning system of city cultural and promotional events is necessary for the proper engagement of the city centre business activities and to provide consumers with a clear focus on thematic events held in the City of Fermo.

Co-planning system also should include better coordination and communication with the surrounding Municipalities.

- **Action 2.1 -** Setting up of a "permanent table" for the co-design, joint organization and management of the city centre promotional and cultural events.
- **Action 2.2 -** Setting up of a "shared timetable" for the main events foreseen every year in the city centre. Yearly scheduling and programming for the city centre is of a paramount importance to allow retailers to contribute in a proactive way. The shared events calendar will be discussed and set during the month of October for use in the following year.
- **Action 2.3 -** Testing of mechanisms for enhancing cooperation between Fermo cultural activities and retailers (promotion and discount to access Fermo museums, exhibition or cultural events for residents or tourists purchasing and enjoying the city centre).
- **Action 2.4 -** Creating synergies with the Fermo Schools (e.g. School of art and design involved in the events organization, historical re-enactments).

Time: The actions from 1 to 4 are already in progress and started in the framework of the Fermo Local Action Group activities within the RetaiLink project.

Key municipal areas involved: Culture, Commerce and Tourism working together for the definition of the city events shared timetable.

Funding: Financial resources for the setting of permanent table, cooperation mechanism schools and cultural projects have been made available by the "Fermo Shopping Experience" project funded by the Local Chamber of Commerce. Once established, the permanent table and the cooperation mechanisms described could be self-sustained with the cooperation of the Retailers Association work.

3 - Increase the retailers offer quality in the city centre

The actions foreseen intend to provide retailers of the City Centre with new tools and knowledge to improve their offer and their innovation capacity. The twin focus is on increasing their cooperation with the out-of-town factories and enhancing their contribution to the economic revitalization of the city.

- **Action 3.1 -** Development of the "Fermo Shopping Experience"* project in cooperation with the Local Chamber of Commerce.
- **Action 3.2 -** Training, tutoring and capacity building actions for the city centre Retailers (effective use of on-line communication, social media, e-commerce strategies, English language to welcome and properly communicate with tourists).
- **Action 3.3 -** Development of a paper and digital map showing the retail offer of the Fermo City Centre.
- **Action 3.4 -** Implementation of joint branding and marketing activities of city centre shops.
- **Action 3.5 -** Setting up a concertation process which includes retailers on many relevant issues: public works, rules for street furniture and public lighting, opening hours in special occasions, etc..
- **Action 3.6 -** Monitoring and evaluation activities of city centre footfall by means of Wi-Fi access and of customer satisfaction by means of specific questionnaires.
- **Action 3.7 -** Setting up of retailers' partnership for the joint purchasing of common services e.g. internet services, lighting, energy, etc.

Times: Actions from 3.1 to 3.5 started with a first pilot experience in the framework of the project "Fermo Shopping Experience". Action 3.6 includes the monitoring of city centre footfall by means of Wi-Fi connection. This calls for the improvement of Wi-Fi connection in all the city centre, which is foreseen by the end of 2020 with the use of national and regional public funds. Training and capacity building activities for the retailers may also be funded in the framework of the ESF (European Social Funds) ROP 2014-2020.

Key municipal areas involved: Commerce, Tourism, Culture and Public Works

Funding: financial resources for the starting of the operations, have been available in the framework of the "Fermo Shopping Experience".

The project "Fermo Shopping Experience" has been the first concrete output of Fermo LAP deriving from the cooperation set up within the RetaiLink Project. The initiative has received funding from the Local Chamber of Commerce and foresees the possibility for city centre retailers to host within their shops the "Made in Italy" fashion products thus improving the shops quality and contributing to increase the knowledge of Fermo's productive district. Furthermore, the project foresees, in cooperation with the Retailers Association the setting-up of local multi-brand store providing joint branding and marketing activities. The initiative also makes available for the retailers the support of the "Local friends", young professionals who get involved in a work-experience project, helping the city centre shops to promote their products and their history by taking advantage of social media and by helping to improve on-line communications and e-commerce possibilities.

Different local policies and municipality areas are involved in the development of the Fermo Local Action Plan. Any of the interventions described above requires a combination of different policy areas linked to Urban Planning, Economic Development, Marketing, Branding and Communication and improved city centre mobility, together contributing to the attractiveness of the City Centre.

The revitalization of Fermo's city centre depends on the creation of a strong pole of attraction to be able to convince potential consumers to come to the city centre and thus increase catchment areas. In Fermo's case, such a pole of attraction should be linked to the excellence and diversification of the city centre, to a retail offer based on quality, innovation, offering different values and experiences compared to wide commercial centre they should compete with and to an innovative model based on integration with culture, recreational activities and aggregation spaces.

3 - CONCLUSION

Delivery of the Local Action Plan has already begun. In fact, some of the actions have been in progress since the retailers pushed forward the development of the first initiatives during the stakeholders' meetings early on in RetaiLink.

Furthermore, the transnational exchanges with the other network Municipalities has enabled participants to generate and transfer at local level a significant amount of learning and new knowledge the administrators, the municipality officers and to wider audiences of local retailers, who could benefit from this knowledge and know-how.

The Municipality increased its capacity to actively engage stakeholders in the policies and strategies development process and acquired new knowledge on strategic issues for retail innovation, such as:

· Innovative tools for monitoring footfall and vitality score of the city centre.
· Evaluation of the city image and work to improve reputation and place branding.
· Innovative public-private partnership (e.g BID) to improve city centres areas.
· Exploitation of social media for place branding.
· Compacting city centre, innovative urban planning and use of space to attract footfall.
· Innovative temporary use of vacant buildings to enhance local businesses.
· Innovative Retailers partnership and cooperation model.
· Mobility solutions in support of people flows to the city centre.

In sum, the development of the Local Action Plan has enabled the Municipality, together with stakehoders, to better identify the key challenges and priorities related to the city centre economic development. It has also strengthened public-private partnership at the local level and helped stakeholders to focus on specific actions.

4 - CONTACT INFORMATION

Councillor for Commerce	Project coordinator	Communication
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5 - ROADMAP

Objective	Action	Delivery lead/team	Key partners involved	Time	Resources / Assets	Output indicator
1) To improve the city centre mobility and accessibility						
1.1 - Improvement of mobility system and parking to reach the city centre		Municipality – Public Works and Urban Planning	Municipality Commerce and Tourism Department	2018-2019	ERDF ROP Programme 2014-2020 of Marche Region. The	% of Footfall increase in the city centre
1.2 - Improvement and harmonization of the road sign in the city centre		Municipality - Public Works and Urban Planning	Municipality Commerce and Tourism Department; Fermo Museums Manager; Public Works Department; Retailers Association	2018 - 2019	Financial resources will be allocated within the Municipality budget.	N. of new road signs in the City Centre
1.3- Connections by public bus to the centre		Municipality Tourism Department	Local Transport Society Private Sponsorship	2018 first testing	• Municipal Resources • Sponsorship	% of Increase of tourists from the coastal areas
2) Enhance the multi-functionality of the city centre						
2.1 - Mapping of the vacant buildings and new forms of cooperation between owners and space seekers for its temporary and permanent use		Municipality – Public Works and Urban Planning Department EU funding and Retail Department	• Retailers and SMEs Associations • City Cultural and Citizens Associations, property owner Associations	From 2018 onwards	Municipal Resources	• % of decrease of the empty spaces in the city centres • Number of new Business/Economic and/or cultural, social activities in the City Centre
2.2 - Establish a Town Centre Management Unit		City Council	• Municipality Departments • Retailers Associations; • Cultural Associations; • Consumers Associations; Property owner association	2018 – 2019	Municipal Resources	• Appointment of City Centre Manager • Town Centre Management work plan
2.3 - Renovation of the "old market" as a space for business incubators and centre for research and innovation.		Municipality EU funding and Retail Department Municipality Public Works Department	• Municipality Cultural Departments • Universities, Research Centres, Schools • SMEs, handicraft and Retailers associations • Creative entrepreneurs	2018 - 2021	• Market renovation resources derive from the ITI Project for Urban Development funded by the ROP ERDF and ESF project.	• Number of Start-up established and operating within the old market • 18 work-experience and 25 research grants for new businesses within the market
2.4 - Involvement of schools and Universities to attract young researchers in the City Centre and provide them space to develop new business ideas		Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	• Universities, Research Centres, Schools • Young entrepreneurs • Vocational Training Schools	2018 – 2021	Financial resources from ROP ESF 2014 – 2020 (Marche Region)	• Number of training, orientation meetings organized with schools, University and Researchers • Number of Students and researches involved • Number of Business Idea Developed • Number of Business established and operating

3) To set up a co-planning and co-design system for the City Promotion					
3.1- Setting up of a "permanent table" for the co-design, joint organization and management of the city centre promotional and cultural events	• Municipality EU funding and Retail Department • Municipality Culture and Tourism Department	Chamber of Commerce; ULG coordinator; Fermo Museums Manager; Cultural Associations Business Associations (SMEs, Retailers, etc), Sport Associations, Citizens/Residents Associations	Started during the RetaiLink Project - from 2017 onwards	Municipal resources/Chamber of Commerce contribution	• Number of meeting organized • Number of Programming documents for city events
3.2 - Setting up of "shared timetable" for the main events foreseen yearly in the city centre.	• Municipality EU funding and Retail Department • Municipality Culture and Tourism Department	Municipality Retail, Culture and Tourism work together for the definition of the city events shared timetable; Chamber of Commerce, ULG coordinator; Fermo Museums Manager; Cultural Associations Business Associations (SMEs, Retailers, etc), Sport Associations, Citizens/Residents Associations	2018 onwards	Municipal resources	• Number of shared timetables for city events approved • % increase of private contribution for events organization • Number of Retailers involved in city centre events • Number of Associations involved in City Centre events
3.3 - Testing of mechanism to enhancing cooperation between Fermo cultural activities and retailers	• Municipality EU funding and Retail Department • Municipality Culture and Tourism Department	Chamber of Commerce, ULG coordinator; Fermo Museums Manager; Cultural Associations Business Associations (SMEs, Retailers, etc), Sport Associations, Citizens/Residents Associations	2018 onwards	Municipal Resources	• Number of cooperation mechanism tested • % of increase of Footfall and city centre vitality during the events
3.4 - Creation setting up of synergies with the Fermo Schools	• Municipality EU funding and Retail Department • Municipality Culture and Tourism Department	Chamber of Commerce, ULG coordinator; Schools and Universities, Business Associations (SMEs, Retailers, etc),	2018 onwards	Municipal resources	• Number of schools involved • Number of events with schools' cooperation organized
4) Increase the retailers offer quality in the city centre					
4.1 - Development of the "Fermo Shopping Experience" project in cooperation with the Local Chamber of Commerce	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Chamber of Commerce, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2018 – 2019	• Chamber of Commerce contribution • Municipal resources	Number of Retailers involved in the project
4.2 - Training, tutoring and capacity building actions for the City Centre Retailers	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Chamber of Commerce, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2018 – 2019	• Chamber of Commerce contribution • Retailers Association Contribution • ROP ESF 2014-2020 (Marche Region)	• Number of Training Actions activated • Number of Tutoring Actions activated • Number of Retailers participating to the training and tutoring activities
4.3 - Development of a paper and digital map showing the retail offer of the Fermo City Centre	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Retailers	2018 onwards (First map developed in the framewor k of the RetaiLink Project)	Municipal resources for updating	• Number of Updating of the digital map • Number of new retailers joining (each 3 months)
4.4 - Implementation of joint branding and marketing activities of City Centre shops	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Chamber of Commerce, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2018 – 2019	• Chamber of Commerce contribution • Municipal resources	• Number of joint marketing activities implemented • Number of retailers participating to the activities
4.5 - Setting up a concertation process which includes retailers on many relevant issues	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Municipal Departments, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2018 onwards	• Municipal resources • Retailers Associations contribution	• Number of meetings organized yearly
4.6 - Monitoring and evaluation activities of City Centre footfall by means of Wi-Fi access and of customer satisfaction by means of specific questionnaires	Municipality EU funding and Retail Department	Municipal Departments, Retailers Associations, Retailers	2019 onwards	• EU and national funds for improving Wi-Fi in the city centre • Municipal resources for specific surveys	• monitoring system linked to Wi-Fi set up • Number of questionnaires submitted • % of footfall increase in the city centre
4.7 -Setting up of retailers' partnership for the joint purchasing of common services	Retailers Associations	ULG coordinator	2019 onwards	Resources from Retailers, Retailers Associations	• Number of Joint purchasing services activated • % of savings for the Joint purchasing of Common Services

HENGELO

INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN FOR A VITAL HENGELO CITY CENTER

PREFACE

This is a summary of the Integral Action Plan that has been drawn up together with the inner city partners represented in the URBACT Local Group (ULG). This plan was made possible by the RetaiLink project in which local partners worked together in the period 2016-2018 on a strategy and action plan to make the city centre more attractive to local residents and visitors.

During the international meetings, Hengelo representatives from the ULG gained knowledge and experience on a host of rich topics such as the customer journey, city identity marketing, data and application, and retail trends. We also learned from a range of practical examples as shown by the other cities in this RetaiLink initiative.

The collection of knowledge and experience has led to improved cooperation with inner city partners in the ULG and the drafting of the joint integrated action plan. In early 2018, the inner city partners are now jointly working on concrete actions for this urban area.

One example of a concrete action that has been taken with the help of RetaiLink is mapping out via discovery the DNA of the city to describe the identity Hengelo aspires to promote. In addition, we are working with The Foundation Centre Management Hengelo (FCMH) and Tom Kikkert to improve the identity marketing of the stores in collaboration with local entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, in November 2017, we organized an election among all residents from the age of 8 up in Hengelo to vote on which of the three design ideas for the redesign of Market Square was the best. Even though the winner has yet to be announced as of this writing, the Market Square will become a place with quality accommodation where plenty of activities and experience during the week will be possible. RetaiLink has provided us with ideas about how to make a concrete, interactive and participated plan in the coming months with stakeholders.

In the coming months, too, our inner city partners will continue working on the translation of the integrated action plan into a city centre program and we want to give concrete shape to the cooperation aimed at implementation. The integrated action plan serves as a dynamic document that can be adjusted in the event of new developments, but in which the inner city partners jointly take responsibility for the pursuit of the main ambition to once again make residents of Hengelo proud of their inner city.

In the attached summary, we describe the cooperation of the inner city partners, the challenges facing the city of Hengelo, our city's ambitions and goals, and the concrete actions proposed and underway by our stakeholders.

1 - THE PROJECT

THREE HISTORICAL MEETING PLACES (HISTORICAL CONTEXT)

The city of Hengelo emerged in the 17th century at the junction of two old roads, the current Oldenzaalsestraat/Deldenerstraat and the Enschedesestraat. The town square and a small church were located there. In World War II Hengelo was bombarded and little was left remaining of the old town. After the war, in addition to the village square from the 17th century and the Lambertus Basilica (19th century) the village got the marketplace.

In the sixties, the Dutch market square was built near the Telgenflat (a building of the 60s). Hengelo residents recognize these three historical sites today as the most important meeting places of the town. Three towers mark these local meeting places: the Town Hall tower, the Tower of the Lambertus Basilica and the Tower on the market square. These three towers tell the story of the places where once everything began. With the present action plan the city wants to revalue and strengthen these old structures. In doing so, we expect to enhance the future profile of Hengelo, with respect for the past.

URGENCY. WHAT IS GOING ON AND WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

The town of Hengelo currently has to contend with local and global trends like shopping on the Internet, ageing and the consequences of the economic crisis. This situation is not unique to Hengelo by any means: many other cities across Europe are experiencing an economic and retail decline, increasing vacancy levels and decreasing numbers of visitors.

For Hengelo, however, it faces special challenges being a small town with distinctive, though perhaps untapped power, and being in the neighborhood of other stronger competitive shopping areas in the immediate vicinity. This has had an effect on the economic performance of the inner city, with Hengelo losing regional weight during the last decade. The municipality thus decided to reverse the trend and make Hengelo's inner city a place that residents and visitors can be proud of. The city wants to keep its distinctive Hengelo character, embedding at the same time a unique and diverse retail offer in a safe and inviting atmosphere in which both locals and visitors want to stay longer.

AN INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN IN COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL PARTNERS

In 2008, the municipality of Hengelo city started a conversation in which all business owners, inhabitants and other interested parties were invited to talk about the future of Hengelo. Out of this consultation process the city approved the citizen vision Hengelo, we're sitting on gold. The vision was looking for a long-term sustainable city centre.

In 2015, a core group consisting of representatives of the entrepreneurs, real estate, finance sector, housing corporations and the local government drafted the Report future-proof town (Visie TBH). What was special in this initiative was that entrepreneurs and real estate owners took the initiative to carry out an extended problem analysis and put forth a vision, with a set of measures to accomplish that vision. The municipality fully engaged in the process and embraced the vision. The analysis and vision for the town largely that emerged from this earlier work has provided key elements of the new action plan.

Joining forces to develop an integrated action plan for the town to renew the inner city and to reduce vacancy rates are the Foundation Centre Management Hengelo (FCMH), Foundation Real Estate Hengelo (FREH), local government Hengelo and the city promotion agency (CPA). For the implementation of the action plan other partners, such as individual entrepreneurs and property owners will also be involved. Together, these partners form the URBACT Local Group.

AMBITION, GOALS AND STARTING POINT

A vital city centre is the most important attraction of the city as a whole. It hosts all kinds of amenities, shops, bars, restaurants, lunchrooms, coffee shops, culture, events and so on. It also makes the city attractive as a business location and for living. It is an important meeting place, work place and ultimately tells the tale of the identity of the city.

The ambition of the URBACT project Local Group is to achieve a result described as follows:

A vital inner city with Hengelo's character, which has an eye on the Dutch past and looks to the future. An inner city where visitors love to come and residents and business owners are proud of because there is a distinctive and diverse offer and because there is a fine, safe and cozy atmosphere.

The goals set for the coming period, as set out in the 2015 Future-proof town Hengelo report include:

· More visitors to the inner city and longer dwelling time
· Higher business turnover, real estate values and improved business climate
· More compact city centre with mutually reinforcing and recognizable districts around the area.

These goals will be monitored against a number of indicators, namely:

· Number of passers-by on Saturday
· Development of the number of weekly visitors to the city centre
· Development of features downtown
· Vacancy rate in the city centre and in the municipality total
· Number of parking spaces downtown
· Rating of the downtown by Dutch residents.

2 - THE PLAN

SEVEN POLICY AREAS WILL BE DEVELOPED TO ACHIEVE THE ABOVE GOALS

1. Visitors and consumers first

As part of the plan, there will be intensive research on the local consumer to understand how the visitors behave during the purchasing process. The data includes figures and valuation survey among town centre visitors.

2. A compact city heart and streets around the city centre with distinctive character

The most effective measure to fill empty units and mix functions. This will be around the historical core of Hengelo. The compact city heart will be enhanced in terms of atmosphere and aesthetics and will be surrounded and complemented by areas with a distinctive character that contribute to the unique character of Hengelo and to the vibrancy and viability of the town. Next to the hotel, catering and shopping, there is room for a multitude of added value services and products for learning, working, living, care-giving, services, crafts. The entry streets will be also strengthened.

3. A city centre that sparks

The design of the public space, the image quality of the buildings and the programming of functions and events will contribute to creating an inviting and exciting atmosphere in the historical meeting places (Burg. Jansen Square, Lambertus Basilica, Market square). These points will be interconnected by attractive shopping streets. Mobility will be improved and the area will be accessible by bicycles while cars will not be allowed except for deliveries. Art, culture and events will provide entertainment and amplify buzz about the inner city.

4. An accessible town

Easy accessibility and customer friendly parking solutions are essential to a vital downtown. Although the compact city heart is car-free, cars and bikes will be placed near the city centre. It is therefore necessary to establish sufficient, affordable and high-quality parking spaces around at the entrances to the city heart. An accessible town also means that the inner city is equipped on disabled and visually impaired visitors. In Hengelo, the transport connections between the train and bus stations will be made more inviting and user-friendly.

5. A green, sustainable and climate-active town

The green areas in the city centre are highly appreciated but insufficient up to now. As a climate-active City (KAS), Hengelo will increase green areas in the inner city. The four areas of the compacted core of the city -the meeting places and the Enschedesestraat- will be connected by green structures.

6. Promoting entrepreneurship

The plan will encourage entrepreneurs and promoters from the cultural institutions such as the theatre, the galleries, pop music hall and the library, to cooperate in making up an attractive offer in the town. They have a large network and customer base that can be activated. The public space in the heart of downtown will become the new stage for a cross pollination between art, retail, catering and events. The city will embrace innovation and innovative business proposals that create diverse offers that mix functions, industries and activities for the benefits of both the inner city stakeholders and the visitors who are attracted so they will want to return.

7. Use of the Hengelo's character

Hengelo wants to better depict the history and character of the city. Revaluation of the three historical meeting places is a first step, and the DNA identification process also plays an important role in revealing Hengelo's character and identity. Customers, entrepreneurs and investors will help in defining the identity of Hengelo. The desired result is that everybody works towards a distinctive goal that suits Hengelo.

ACTIONS FOR A VITAL CITY CENTRE

Towards the achievement of the agreed goals, the action plan includes a number of key measures. The planning process will provoke new ideas and initiatives that will also be incorporated in a dynamic process of implementation and reviewing.

- Transform the Market Square. Renovation of the "Telgenflat" from offices to appartments. The square where the Telgenflat is located will also be transformed into a comfortable residential area. A ballot process will decide the winner among three sketch designs.
- Redesign the Enschedesestraat and core shopping area.
- Release Lambertus Basilica. A green and quiet place will be developed in the area around the Basilica which has an attractive historical value, in the heart of downtown.
- Build new municipal offices to host about 700 new employees and approximately 100,000 visitors annually to the town. With new events programme at the Burgemeester Jansen square and the renovation of the monumental City Hall. The historical place will be fully upgraded.
- DNA identification process. The identity will be made visible in the inner city and will give coherence to the various developments. It will also be complemented by a wide range of artistic, cultural and city events.
- Compact city centre with distinctive streets around to ensure complementary environments in the inner city. Bicycle and car accessibility will be improved in these areas.
- Customer-friendly parking solutions for car and bike will be enabled, too.
- Strengthen business environment and support with identity marketing, start-ups, pop-ups and blurring formulas.
- Improve facades to ensure that the city centre has a good and high-quality appearance. The city is working together with property owners, who will support through the Hengelo's Façade Fund.
- Create an acquisition strategy to attract and stimulate new investors and entrepreneurs to set up ventures in the city centre.
- Enhance the look of city entrances and make them greener and more welcoming. These are the areas and streets through which a consumer will be appealed to enter the town.
- Stimulate housing. Empty shops in the compacted city centre and the surrounding area will transform into other functions, i.e. promoting a mix of activities, including residences.
- Develop a programme of events that is coherent and suits the DNA profile of Hengelo.

Figure: Overview of actions in the map of the city centre

Monitoring of the project progress

The project has considered a number of project indicators that relate to the seven choices from the integrated action plan and that will help monitor its progress. These cover the following information:

- **Development of the inner city functions**
  These indicators will measure the extent to which areas the city wants to transform will include other functions: living, services, shopping, catering, culture and how the vacancy rate develops.

- **Vacancy and real estate values**
  The city centre has today a vacancy rate between 15% and 20%. The partnership with the different city centre stakeholders will agree on a set of indicators to assess and map vacancy and real estate values in a useful way.

- **Footfall, visitor flows, length of stay and origin of visitors**
  The number of visitors and length of stay has had a clear downward trend in the last years, although footfall in 2016 was higher than the previous year. This monitoring data is today collected annually by manual counting by the company Locatus. The city will increase the data accuracy and insight by enabling relevant data from visitors' mobile phones, it will provide information on flow and visit length. The effect of events or a sale Sunday will also be revealed by measuring visitor numbers and loop currents.

- **Turnover of entrepreneurs within the Business Investment Zone**
  Business turnover and in particular retail turnover is not a public data and depends on entrepreneurs whether they want to disclose this information or not. It is expected that the integrated action plan will contribute to an average increase in the city centre turnover. The municipality aims at agreeing with local entrepreneurs on a way to get insight in the turnover figures that is acceptable for them.

- **Visitors rating**
  The city will continue using the Hengelo Panel, a survey to a representative group of population that is periodically asked to give opinion on various topics, among them the perception of the inner city. It is expected to include new indicators to get the view of visitors from outside Hengelo. A rating of the town in general sense is 5,4 out of 10, and it is considered that it can rise to more than 6,5 within 4 years.

· **Parking spaces**
This will be measured through the number of car park and bicycle places available.

RESOURCES AND INVESTMENT

Performing these actions requires a major economic effort by all parties, both in money and in personnel commitment. A global estimate of the project costs shows a need of investment of about €13 million. Part of that cost is already covered within the municipal budget and through project linked to the plan, but a large part will require additional resources, which is expected will be fulfilled by third-party resources and subsidies. Therefore, alternative sources of funding are of high interest for the project stakeholders.

3 - CONCLUSION

There is a sense of urgency on the revitalization of the city centre in Hengelo. That calls for a rapid implementation of the actions but with a look at the long-term effects. In doing so, the city needs to take into account necessary procedures, the available capacity of all partners and above all the collectively trust in the ambition.

The next few years will hopefully see this joint aspiration and vision made effective in a collaborative process on the various actions. The RetaiLink process has confirmed that only by working well together, we get things done. This will translate into a higher appreciation and of visitors coming to the city centre in the next few years.

4 - CONTACT INFORMATION

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5 - ROADMAP

MAIN AMBITION Integrated Action Plan Hengelo	A vital Hengelose town with a distinctive Hengeloos character with an eye for the Hengelo past and the look at the future. A city centre where visitors like to come and residents and entrepreneurs are proud of, because there is a distinctive and diverse offer and because there is a nice, safe and cozy atmosphere.
MAIN TARGETS/ INDICATORS:	Main targets that we want to achieve in the next four years compared to the baseline measurement (inner city monitor 2017): • More visitors: 15% more visitors • Longer stay duration of visitors: 10% longer stay • Decrease of vacancy: 10% less vacancy in the compact city centre • A general appreciation for the city centre rated with a grade of 6.5 • Compact city centre with recognizable sub clusters: more visitor intensity in the compact city centre • Higher turnover values, real estate values and attractive entrepreneurs / investment climate: not yet made specific and measurable.

THEMATIC PILLAR:	*Promote entrepreneurship*				
Ambition:	*We want to attract and facilitate entrepreneurs as much as possible so that they can do their best in the centre of Hengelo with as a result more innovation in the offer, less vacancy in buildings and more appeal and length of stay of visitors.*				
Target:	*In four years we aim for 10% less vacancy in the compact city centre by shifting functions to the compact city centre and / or through new initiatives.* *We want to fill the vacancy by adding new formulas in the range that match the desired Hengelose identity and contribute to a pleasant and lively city centre.*				
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Describe Hengelose DNA and desired identity	CPA	FCMH, FREH and LGH	2018	Recognizable city story for everyone	In preparation. Resources available
Drafting bidbook for the city centre to attract new investors, entrepreneurs	FCMH	FREH and LGH	2018	Distinctive and attractive (economic) profile in the city centre	In preparation. Resources available
Make an acquisition plan	FCMH	FREH, LGH	2018/2019	New investors/ entrepreneurs Targeted proposition Acquisition campaign	To be prepared
Developing knowledge, sharing knowledge and developing initiatives for new formulas in the field of shopping and experience	FCMH	LGH The entrepreneurs	2018-2022	10% new initiatives and / or renewal within existing offer in a compact city centre	To be confirmed Resources from provincial retail deal apply: €10,000
Support and coach starting entrepreneurs in setting up their business	ROZ	Entrepreneurs ROC (Education) LGH	2018-2019	10% starting entrepreneurs in the city centre	Use of provincial subsidy
Better align policies and rules with the desired need for more innovation and a compact, vibrant city centre	LGH	FCMH Hospitality Entrepreneurs	2018-2019	Deregulation, less specific policy / rules, more application of customization and flexibility, working towards an environmental plan for the inner city	To be confirmed

THEMATIC PILLAR:	A city that sparks				
Ambition:	We want to be an attractive, sparking city centre for visitors by dedicating ourselves to an attractive program of events and artistic expressions that contribute significantly to this.				
Target:	We are aiming for 10% more events on an annual basis from 2019, well spread over the entire year. In addition, we aim for 10% more innovation and innovation within the range of events and artistic expressions. The events and artistic expressions reinforce Hengelo's identity. In addition, we strive for a good appreciation of the visitor of events, at least a 7.5 rating out of 10.				
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Set up an event policy with a testing framework that tests current and new events	CPA	FCMH, organizations of event and LGH	2018	Attractive events policy and assessment framework that is inviting to event organizers and leads to good appreciation among visitors to the events.	In progress. Resources available
Strengthen and improve art in the public space	LGH	Artists, cultural organisations	2018/2019	Attractive, recognizable and coherent art supply in the centre of Hengelo	To be prepared. Resources available
Actively placing Hengelo's marketing and branding through various communication channels	CPA	LGH, FCMH	2018/2019	Improvement image Hengelo.	To be prepared existing subsidy CPA
Developing knowledge, sharing knowledge and developing initiatives for new formulas in the field of shopping and experience	FCMH	LGH The entrepreneurs	2018-2022	10% new initiatives and / or renewal within existing offer in a compact city centre	To be confirmed Resources from provincial retail deal apply: € 10,000,-

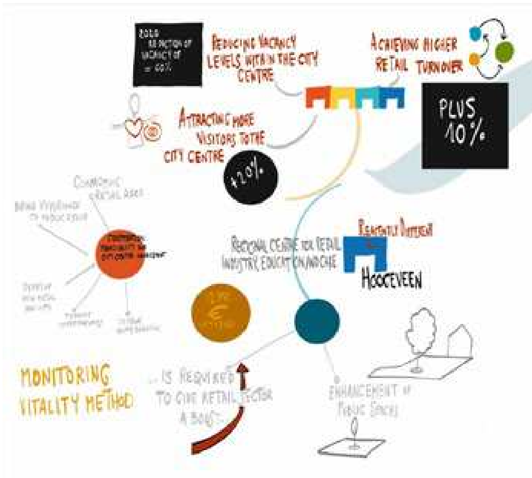
Improve and strengthen the subsidy relationship with CPA	LGH	CPA	2018	As a subsidy provider, we want to be able to make early adjustments to the requested commitment and cooperation if this is necessary to guarantee the quality of the programming in Hengelo.	To be confirmed
Construct and maintain free Wi-Fi network in the city centre	LGH	FCMH, CPA	2018	Covered network	To be confirmed
Use big data to gain more insight into visitor information	Kennispunt Twente	LGH, CPA, FCMH and FREH	2018/2019	Visitor profile	To be confirmed

THEMATIC PILLAR:	Atmospheric public space in the city centre				
Ambition:	The compact city centre has a high residential quality with a recognizable routing for the walking public. The historic meeting places (around the three towers) mark the compact city centre and are connected by attractive streets.				
Target:	More visitor intensity and a longer stay in the compact city centre.				
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Project redesign of Enschedesestraat / central shopping area	LGH	FCMH, entrepreneurs, residents, property owners	2018	Create a pleasant residential area for more visitors and less vacancy	In preparation. Resources available
Project Transformation Market Square. The Market square will have a new character	LGH	Artists, cultural organisations	2018/2019	The renovation and transformation of the Telgenflat is a first step in this, but the square itself is also being transformed into a pleasant residential area	In preparation. Resources available
Release Lambertus Basilica	LGH	FCMH, FREH	End of 2018 and completion 2021	We intend to demolish the Lambertuspassage and instead create a green and quiet place with historic Hengelo value in the heart of the city centre. More visitors and less vacancy CPA	To be confirmed
Project build new municipal office and new event square	LGH	FCMH, Hospitality	Start 2017 and delivery	With the new building of the municipal office, we bring about 700 new employees and about 100,000 visitors annually to the city centre. This ensures traffic in the city	In progress. Resources available

THEMATIC PILLAR:	Accessible downtown				
Ambition:	A good accessible city centre, with largely customer friendly parking solutions in the immediate vicinity of the city centre.				
ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMESCALES	OUTPUTS/INDICATORS	RESOURCES
Design solutions for customer friendly parking	LGH	FCMH, entrepreneurs, QParc	2018	• Price strategy • Parking policy for the target groups, including residents • Visualization (routing, signage, floor plans) • Customer-friendly enforcement • Inviting and pleasant • Car free area • Appreciation of visitors	In progress. Resources available Budget for implementation is not clear yet
Design solutions for parking convenience	LGH	FCMH, entrepreneurs, Cyclists interest group	2018	• Good accessibility and recognisability • Locations • Quantity (numbers) and quality (type) car / bicycle parking • Facilitate bicycle parking • Cab • Parking referral systems	In progress. Resources available Budget for implementation is not clear yet
Design convenience for Entrepreneurs	LGH	FCMH, entrepreneurs,	2018	• Accessible city centre (camera systems) • Loading and unloading • Window times • Parking workers • Exemptions	In progress. Resources available Budget for implementation is not clear yet

HOOGEVEEN

HOOGEVEEN "PLEASANTLY DIFFERENT"



1 - THE CONTEXT

Hoogeveen is situated in the south-west of Drenthe, in the northern part of the Netherlands. Hoogeveen fulfils an important function as a regional centre for retail, industry, education and care, and has a large catchment area in all of these sectors. The actions of the municipal authority are directed on all fronts for maintaining a high level of level of amenities and retaining and strengthening the city's regional function.

Hoogeveen has a proven track record in the design and implementation of local strategies towards a city centre revitalisation with a strong focus on retail.

Back in 2006, and in view of an incipient trend of closure of retail business, the Council decided to engage in a redevelopment strategy for Hoogeveen's city centre.

Following a wide-ranging review and interactive process with the city's residents and entrepreneurs, Hoogeveen adopted the vision called 'Pleasantly Different', whose aim is to not only improve the quality of Hoogeveen as an attractive city to live and work, but to position it as an influential regional centre. The Stichting Centrummanagement Hoogeveen, the Foundation dedicated to the city centre management, was one of the most relevant outputs of the joint collaboration work towards a the city centre strategy. The Foundation was also a key actor leading to the creation of a BID project for the city centre in Hoogeveen, the first one to be approved in the Netherlands (2009). As result of the process started in 2006, Hoogeveen's city centre was singled out as "The best inner city in the Netherlands 2011-2013" for medium-sized municipalities.
Although the project was already well underway, Hoogeveen was not kept safe from the global economic crisis of the last decade. Unemployment reached 15% (2014) among the resident population and the retail sector again evidenced the effects with a new increase in vacancies and High Street shops closing (12% empty shops in 2016).

Therefore, and as a part of the RetaiLink Integrated Action Plan process, the Council decided in 2016 to renew and update the vision 'Pleasantly different'. The Council approved this renewed strategy for the city centre and retail revitalisation in June 2017 (**https://www.hoogeveen.nl/stadscentrum/Visie_stads-centrum**)

With the renewed vision and the IAP, Hoogveen expects to impact on a range of different aspects. In a nutshell, the IAP will contribute to positioning Hoogeveen as an attractive city in which to work, buy and live: "We want to achieve a more vital and viable city centre, by making it become a more compact, attractive and feel-good city centre, based on the city DNA."

The renewed vision is an integrated plan and links to all of the relevant policy areas such as sustainability, mobility, culture, recreation and tourism, among others.

2 - THE PLAN - WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Because a combination of factors is required to give retail sector a boost, the city will continue to redevelop its city centre through a variety of complementary, integrated means, amongst them: the enhancement of public spaces; participation in networks to foster joint work on the city centre revitalisation; continuation of the surveying of visitors and analysing buying flows to get a better understanding of consumers' preferences.

The city will also continue working on the agenda of promotional campaigns and events associated with retail together with local retailers, the catering sector, street market representatives, and representatives from the culture and recreation & the tourism sector.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

Key project objectives to be developed include:

1. Attracting more visitors to the city centre
Hoogeveen expects to attract 20% more visitors from 2015 to 2020. To make this projection happen, the city is undertaking a number of activities focused on improving both mobility and events for enlivening the area.

The first key action is the linking of the parking areas with the Hoofdstraat to facilitate access and flow of visitors to the city centre. The second key action consists of a number of events to be developed in the main street in the inner city Hoofdstraat, over a period of 3 years (2018-2020), including the Super Saturdays that involve retailers and the public in a series of thematic activities primarily addressed to families.

2. Reducing vacancy levels within the city centre by 60% from 2015 to 2020
To reach this objective, the city has put forth an ambitious local project of compacting the city centre and redeveloping the real estate sector, in particular to refill the vacant units. Actions include:

- Enabling a local grant scheme for retailers in the city centre so that they can relocate their businesses within the compact area and also transform their business into other functions like housing.
- Transformation of the passage of the Tamboer (shopping mall) to other functions by using the grant scheme for retailers.
- Upgrading the theatre area and the surrounding public space.
- Developing a plan for a mix of brands, including the strategic acquisition of retail and hospitality units.
- Undertake a study for the introduction of a supermarket in the inner city centre to allow more daily footfall in the area.
- Linking the Dwingeland Park with the Hoofdstraat to offer more leisure activity near the main retail area so as to extend dwelling areas in the inner city.

3. Achieving higher retail turnover, up to 10% more per shop in 2020 with respect to 2015.
In this respect, the city will focus on supporting entrepreneurs - not only retailers but also the hospitality sector and other businesses, while also up-keeping and promoting the area for tourists and visitors:

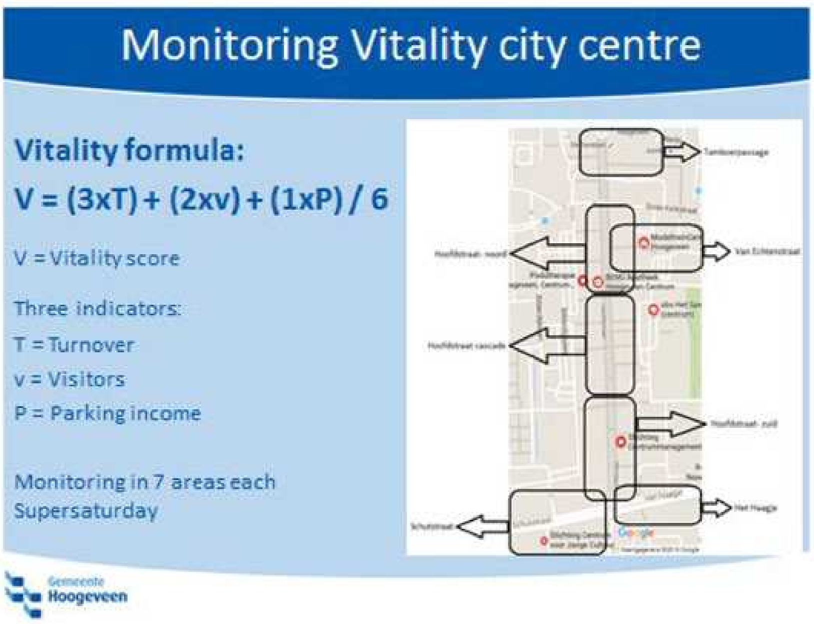
- Scan for presentation and profiling of retail shops.
- Enable a local grant scheme for city centre retailers to undergo shop facade renovation/refurbishing.
- Enhance mutual co-operation of entrepreneurs to organize thematic meetings and workshops.
- Apply the toolbox MKB Noord/banks which help retailers and hospitality sector players improve their business.
- Improve the promotion of hotspots in the city centre by signing them up to be active parts of touristic routes.
- Maintain the inspection of public spaces (health/safety/servicing).
- Continue a coordinated promotion and marketing of the city centre.

The management required to support achieving these objectives involves three main functional areas: **monitoring, co-production of strategy and funding.**

<u>**Monitoring**</u>

The implementation of the above objectives will be monitored by means of locally developed indicators:

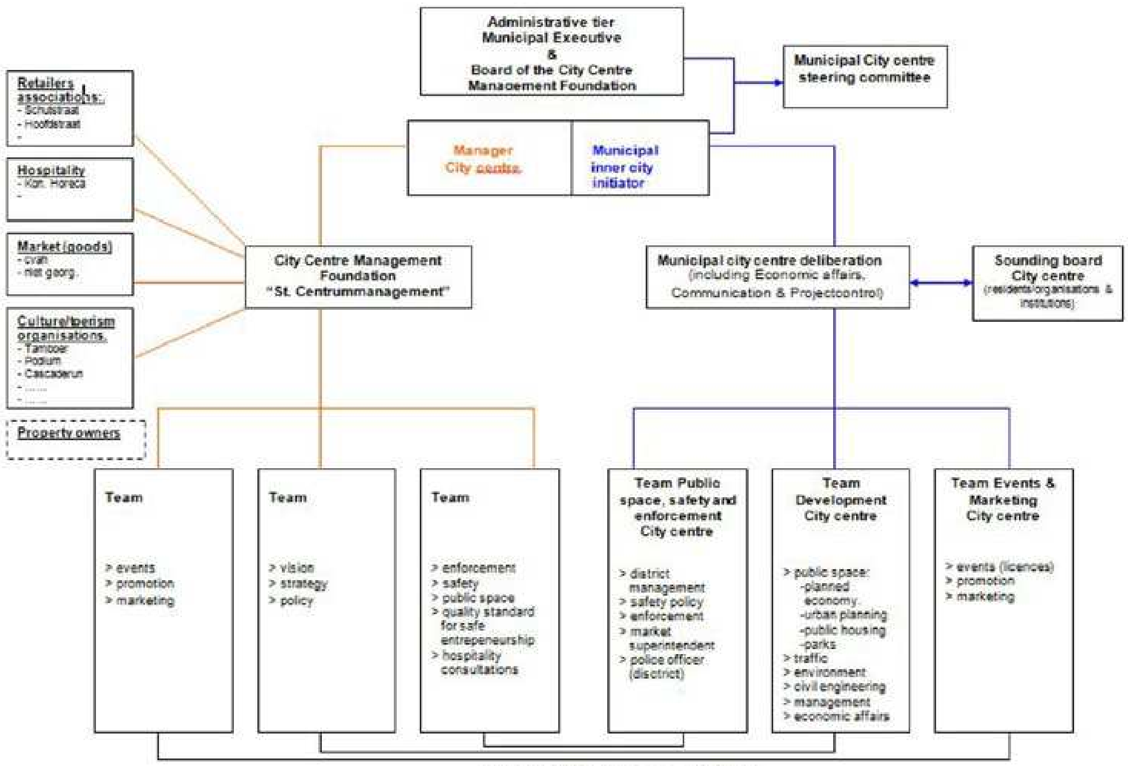
- Purchase flow analysis (East Netherlands): undertaken every 5 years.
- Footfall count: through WIFI-sensors performed every day/week/month/year.
- Parking income through the municipal parking fee: every week/month/year.
- Vacancy level of retail units, monitored by the City Centre Management Foundation quarterly.
- Consumer survey in the city centre, undertaken every 4 years.
- Monitoring of the vitality city centre by means of the Vitality Formula, as presented below. The formula is based on three indicators - turnover, visitors, and, parking income, in a way that the score shows the vitality effect of an event or specific day, in the city centre.



Co-production of the implementation strategy of the vision and IAP

The initiative to revitalise the city centre and the retail sector has been built upon structural public-private partnerships with allocated budget, which, according to the main stakeholders in Hoogeveen City Centre, translates into flexible, efficient and results-oriented initiatives. Progress of the Action Plan is being monitored by the municipal authority, as well as by the City Management Foundation.

Two key governing bodies oversee the initiative: a) the Municipal inner city initiator, the local government administrator responsible for the city centre development, who works in close cooperation with b) the City Centre Management Foundation, and the private business partnership representing 400 entrepreneurs from different sectors in the area, including retailers, catering entrepreneurs, market stallholders and representatives of the recreation and the tourism sector. The working structure of the URBACT Local Group, responsible for the development of the plan, relies on the already existing working groups, as shown below.



Organisation City centre Hoogeveen

Funding

For the implementation of all the actions there is a budget of 12 million euros, funded by the local and regional government. A budget of 2 million will be cofinanced by property owners and market players.

3 - CONCLUSIONS

KEY PROJECT LEARNING AND INNOVATION

DNA Hoogeveen and Place branding

For Hoogeveen, the methodology and research used to know and better understand the local consumer and its DNA has been the most impressive and most helpful learning aspect in the process of developing a retail and city marketing strategy. Identifying retail DNA based on research and emotions has been quite revealing for all concerned.

During one of the RetaiLink workshops, led by the retail expert Lluís Martinez-Ribes, the project team developed the 'Next door family' concept. This concept has been used as a guiding tool in the city search of a new local identity and marketing strategy. It ended with the final proposition: "Hoogeveen the most child friendly city in five years, in the northern part of the Netherlands", which eventually turned out to be the basis for the plan developed for the following years.

In addition, the "place making" tools presented by Simon Quin (Institute of Place Making in Manchester) during one of RetaiLink's transnational meetings, were also instrumental for stakeholders to understand the type of retail that best suits the city of Hoogeveen according to the profile of the residents and how they use the city centre. The joint reflections on the type of town centre according to footfall analysis as well as the factors influencing its vitality and viability were critical for the planning team of Hoogeveen to develop its new strategy.

Finally, in terms of branding, Hogeveen's new marketing strategy will unfold as a result of the discussions on the five key questions of the method proposed by Roger Pride (Heavenly, UK), which were aimed to help inspire reflections on the potential of branding in Hoogeveen.

During the transnational meetings, the RetaiLink team of Hoogeveen experienced several good examples of events to enliven city retail from an innovative approach. The entrepreneurs of the city centre of Hoogeveen were highly impressed by the REC.0 Experimental Stores of Igualada, which provides customers with an attractive and unique shopping experience. This event inspired the entrepreneurs from Hoogeveen and made them create a new event in the city of Hoogeveen, 'Strunen in 't stro'.



Transfer potential

Hoogeveen considers that the vitality formula as introduced in Section 2, is useful and transferable to other cities. The formula is a monitoring tool for city centres or retail areas monitoring and allows assessing the real effect of activities and interventions in an area. It thus assists in the decision-making processes by providing evidence-based results.

The project-based initiatives to revitalise the city centre and the retail sector have been built on structural partnerships with allocated budget and have proved to be successful in terms of efficiency and results. In this regard, the city centre development vision has constituted a project in and of itself. By working towards setting long-term structural policy as well as long-lasting cooperation schemes between the municipality and diverse entrepreneurs for the city centre project, it is a co-creation model to showcase to other cities interested in exploring potentially similar cooperation initiatives.

Indeed, the Hoogeveen BID approach has been well regarded by other RetaiLink partners looking for a town centre management structure precisely for its being stability-focused and participatory. After more than an eight-year experience in implementing a BID project in the city centre, Hoogeveen is able to offer some knowledge on success and failure factors for BIDs. For more information, see the video: **[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1zcjfQDzu4ink]**

4 - CONTACT INFORMATION

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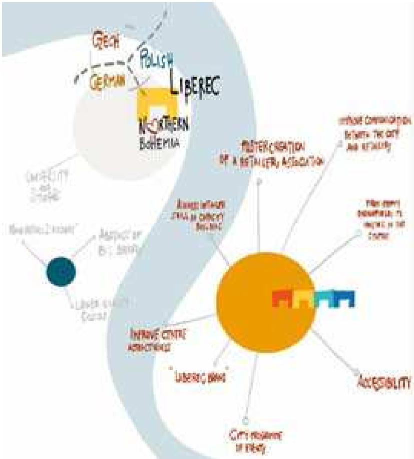
International CITY RETAIL Experience 2018
Innovative strategies for strong midsize cities

5 - ROADMAP

Agenda vision citycentre Hoogeveen			
Actions	**Priority**	**Time**	**Delivery lead/keypartners involved**
• ***Attracting more visitors to the city centre: 20% more visitors in 2020 (in comparison to 2015)*** ***New projects public space***			
Revitalisation Hoofdstraat (tussen 't Kruis t/m Tamboerplein) incl. overige pleintjes	1	2018-2019	Gemeente
Revitalisation Van Echtenstraat	2	2021	Gemeente
Herinrichting Van Echtenplein	1	2020	Gemeente
Revitalisation impuls verbindingen (stegen) tussen parkeerterreinen en Hoofdstraat	1	2020-2021	Gemeente
Revitalisation Nicolaas Beetsplein	1	2020	Gemeente
Revitalisation Bilderdijkplein	1	2021	Gemeente
Revitalisation Schutsplein	3	2021	Gemeente
Revitalisation Raadhuisstraat + Grote Kerkstraat (winkel/horecadeel)	2	2020	Gemeente
• ***Reducing vacancy levels: 60% less vacancy in 2020 (in comparison to 2015)*** ***Projects Property (re)development/compacting citycentre***			
Revitalisation Tamboerpassage naar andere functies	1	2017-2019	Vastgoedeigenaren/Gemeente
Invulling leegstand op strategische (toekomstige) locaties	1	2017-2019	Vastgoedeigenaren/Gemeente
Stimuleringsregeling voor verplaatsing en transformatie*)	1	2017-2019	Gemeente
Opstellen brancheringsplan, gekoppeld aan strategische acquisitie, incl. horeca	1	2017	Centrummanagement/Gemeente
Onderzoek vestiging supermarkt in kernwinkelgebied	1	2017	Centrummanagement/Gemeente
Verbinding tussen park Dwingeland en Hoofdstraat	3		Gemeente
• ***Achieving higher retail turnover: 10% more turnover per shop in 2020 (in comparison to 2015)*** ***Actions entrepeneurship / Foundation city centremangement***			
Opzetten presentatie- en profileringsscan**)	1	2017-2018	Centrummanagement
Aanpak puien & gevels middels stimuleringsregeling***)	2	2017-2019	Gemeente
Onderlinge samenwerking ondernemers versterken	1	2017	Centrummanagement
Inzet toolbox MKB Noord/banken	1	2017	Centrummanagement
Afstemming winkeltijden	1	2017	Centrummanagement
Versterken presentatie en poortfuncties centrumgebied	1	2018-2019	Centrummanagement/Gemeente
Behouden schouw openbare ruimte	1	2017 e.v.	Centrummanagement/Gemeente
Promotion and marketing citycentre	1	2017 e.v.	Centrummanagement/Gemeente

^Liberec LIBEREC

RETAILINK. SUPPORT OF THE INNOVATE RETAIL STRATEGY IN THE CITY OF LIBEREC



1 - THE PROJECT

THE VISION

The city of Liberec is the heart of Northern Bohemia, in the middle of unique mountain nature in the Czech-German-Polish tri-border area. Its unique identity is derived from a rich history and the city's importance in the region increases its potential, creates a healthy environment for business and a place for quality life for its residents; it is, as one can imagine, attractive to visitors as a popular destination.

The vision of Liberec for the city centre is a prosperous, lively centre with competitive and stable retail. An attractive public space with low traffic and interesting cultural programmes, where the residents want to spend free time and come for shopping and entertainment. It is also expected that the city centre becomes a popular residential area.

The Liberec City Council interacts and communicates with other institutions, entrepreneurs and residents to seek a solution to the current and future challenges for the city centre development and prosperity.

RETAIL IN LIBEREC

The Liberec city centre is split into two areas, upper and lower. Residents perceive the upper centre around the Liberec town hall as the historical neighbourhood. Here, you can find Liberec Castle, the neo-Renaissance town hall, or the F. X. Šalda Theatre, among others. They showcase the rich history of Liberec. The lower centre is the area between Soukenné Square and the Nisa River. Especially important for business and transport, it includes the urban public transport bus and train terminal in Fürgnerova, Rybníček and part of Perštýn. This area is known for its radical spatial transformations, changing the disposition of the city, the latest being the development of the Forum Liberec shopping centre. The following map shows these inner city commercial areas and streets:

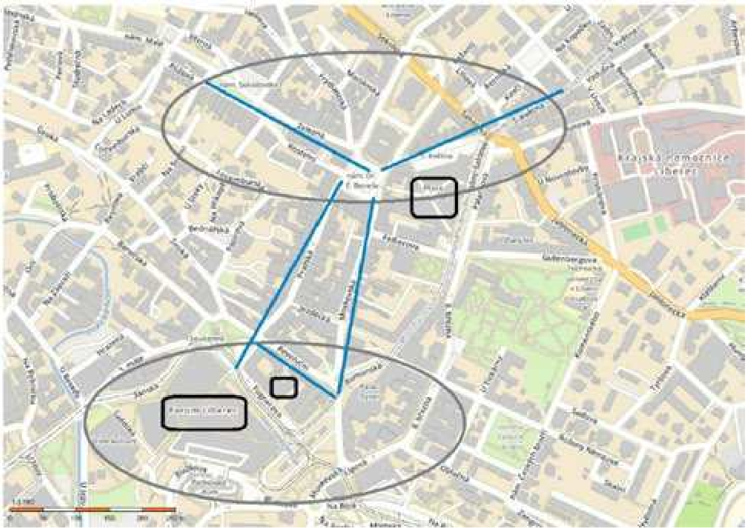


Fig. no.1: Map of the City centre showing the upper and lower centre.
Source: The Statutory City of Liberec

RETAIL CHALLENGES IN THE CITY CENTRE

The biggest challenge that city centre retail faces today are the large shopping centres that were built in the last ten years, which came about as a result of the lack of Council outlet setting regulation. The malls that were built in the very same city centre now overshadow retail units already under pressure because of the suburban shopping centres. In the lower city centre, this competition is especially hard due to the Forum and Delta shopping centres, while the Plaza Mall dominates the upper city centre.

Fig. no. 2 Forum shopping centre (lower city centre) and Plaza shopping centre (upper city centre)
Source: www.bilbo-smak.cz/obsah/liberec-oc-forum/68/0/
www.plazaliberec.cz/cz/novinky/oceneni-ng-liberec-plaza

A direct consequence of the unmanaged construction of shopping centres is that Liberec has one of the highest rates of retail sqm. per resident, an almost record-breaking 1.400 sqm of retail space per 1.000 residents, rating first in the Czech Republic until recently, and competing with many European shopping metropolises.

This context, together with the new retail and consumer trends, has led the city to experience a high fluctuation of retail units. The number of retail units in 2017 amounted to 105 in the city centre, a 55% decrease compared to 2006.

A typical concern among the local retailers is the price of rentals of business premises in traditional retail streets. Affected by long-term rentals, the prices were quite stable till recently. However, property owners today are forced to gradually reduce the prices of retail units currently not being used, and further reduction can be expected in the following years. Despite the drop in prices, retailers still consider the rents in the city centre to be too high.

Even though Liberec has comparatively high purchasing power, there is an absence of big brands in the city. Customers commute 100km to the Czech capital of Prague for shopping in the big brands stores. Initially, big brands had opened outlets in the shopping centres when they were built: however, they closed their branches after some time. They were replaced by a new type of retail: stores selling lower quality goods, second hand stores, shops of electronics and especially empty and unused stores. In November 2017 the share of empty retail premises was 7,55%.

Fig. no. 3 Selected empty and unused premises in the city centre
Source: Photo Statutory City of Liberec

Casinos and gaming rooms are also one of today's businesses in Liberec centre. According to current data, 1/3 of the city centre comprises financial institutions, gaming rooms, bars and stores with lower-quality goods.

Fig. no. 4 Casinos and gaming rooms in the Liberec city centre
Source: photo Statutory City of Liberec

In 2017, the Liberec Technical University undertook a problem analysis of retail in the city centre. One of the monitored indicators is the city centre's vitality and viability index according to PPG6[1], which in 2017 corresponded to 2,91 (in a scale 1 to 5 being 1= very bad and 5= very good). This result corresponds with the description: average function of the city centre or even insufficient modern conditions. The city centre demonstrates, in particular, issues with quality.

2 - THE ACTION PLAN

Retail is the driving force of a city centre and a clear indicator of its vitality. Because retail is such an important aspect, it should be respected and emphasized in the city's strategies and reflected in the effort to revitalise the city centre and to ensure its long-term growth and development.

The first step towards a prosperous city centre is an Integrated Action Plan (IAP). In Liberec, it is conceived in correspondence with the higher-level Updated Strategy of Development of the Statutory City of Liberec 2014-2020 and its goal is to offer a solution of the city centre in a broader context. This means that the objectives and proposed activities to address retail challenges should embrace many different areas, ranging from urban development and public space through to supporting retailers in the upgrading of their business to building a local brand and positive reputation of the city. Key objectives to be addressed in the Retail Integrated Action Plan in Liberec are described below:

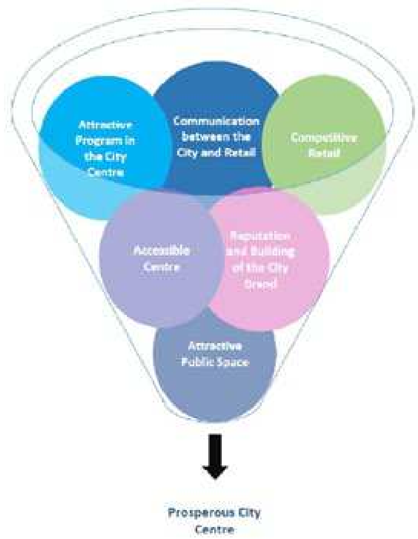


Fig. no. 5 Areas of specific goals of the RetaiLink Liberec integrated action plan
Source: Statutory City of Liberec

1.PPG 6 "Planning Guidance Policy" was used in Great Britain as an indicator of the regulation of the retail network, the maintenance and improvement of vitality and viability of city centres.

1. Improve communication between the City Council and the retailers

This goal aims at cooperative work between retailers and the Council and mutual trust building. Some actions include:

- Review the current regulation, a competence of the Statutory City of Liberec. The current regulation shows certain obstacles for retail development, especially in case of public space occupation. The city of Liberec would like to support the outside seating and motivate retailers to use the space in front of their shop windows for products or service presentation.
- Appoint a City Centre Manager in a newly established position, who will coordinate activities between the city and the retailers and will implement and monitor the integrated action plan for retail development in the city centre. The City Centre Manager will also collect suggestions for the area and propose further measures for future development of the city centre.
- And, as more concrete actions, create an intuitive web signpost for retailers and entrepreneurs to make it easier for them to be guided through Council activities and better coordinate their agendas. Develop a visual brochure to inform on the most important contacts and information sources (relevant events, new policies and opportunities).

The above-mentioned activities will be led by the City Council and funded through the public sources or from the opportunities arising from grant programs from national or European funding lines.

2. Foster the creation of a retailers association

Based on the local group developed thanks to the RetaiLink project, the city of Liberec started cooperating with the Regional Chamber of Commerce. The entity is open to help retailers to create their own association and become their official representative to support in their needs and initiatives.

A few retailers are already associated but without any given purpose or clear vision on how to develop retail-related matters. Retailers will contribute an affordable fee –even for smaller retailers. The Regional Chamber of Commerce will provide for training for retailers and legal support, among other activities.

The association will be self-sustained and it is not expected to receive municipal funds. Their members will identify and formulate sector needs and will delegate, present and promote these during negotiations with the City and its partners.

3. Address retailers' skills and capacity building

To improve the retail experience in the city centre, the sector needs to address key issues concerning lack of retailers' skills, low appeal of physical stores or poor customer service. A set of measure are planned to help make improvements in this area:

- The County Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with the Council and the association of retailers in the city centre, will organise and deliver a set of seminars and trainings for retailers. The focus will be: a) identifying and developing a USP (=unique selling proposition); b) re-assessing the business strategy, i.e. identification of the target customer; c) digitisation, including social networks and ICT; d) using suitable promotion and marketing tools in communication; e) customer service and current trends in retail; f) store and window design.

- In cooperation with the Technical University, students in Marketing and Commerce and Corporate Economy and Management Departments will participate in designing marketing strategies for retail in the city centre. This work will be part of their bachelor's papers and theses, so the studies, consulting and analysis will be useful for the city as well as the retailers. One of the suggested topics of analysis is titled "Why are students invisible in the city centre?" Retailers will be able to participate in the preparatory work and will receive feedback to help rethink their own business strategy.

· Also, with the support of the Technical University, a supply and demand analysis of retail in the city centre will provide a more detailed overview of what people want to find in terms of retail and entertainment and what influences their decisions. The information will be one of the building blocks of the future city centre retail plan.

4. Improve city centre attractiveness for residents and visitors

A key goal of the action plan and the reason why the position of city architect is proposed. The municipal architect will be responsible for developing the urban vision and City guidelines to for the design of public areas. This will contribute to create and anchor urban development processes and to ensure the organisation of the future urban concept of the city's development. His responsibility in the design of the city centre, zoning and the connection of functional zones is emphasised. Ensuring sufficient support and respect for this position on the political and process level will be critical[2].

The role of the city architect is tightly linked to city centre delimitation and visual identity. City greenery, street furniture (benches, waste bins) and theme decoration will be work areas in cooperation with the Departments of Tourism, Culture and Sport, so as retailers benefit from a cosy, pleasant and lively public space.

In an effort to improve the attractiveness of the retail units, the city will set up a grant programme for the façades renovation and repair of street fronts of building ground floors where retail activity takes place. Economic sources for 2019 - 2020 addressed to this will be allocated in the city's budget.

On the sensitive topic of gambling in the city centre, which does not support a pleasant and attractive environment for residents and visitors, new regulation will help moving gambling away from the historical city centre. A municipal decree is expected to regulate the location of this activity in the city.

With the same objective of supporting city centre attractiveness and in harmony with the identity and brand that has issued from the participated process, the local retail agents will work on a programme of cultural and leisure events that helps to revive different spaces in its centre apart from the Dr. E. Beneše square in front of the town hall, where these events usually take place.

To this end, the Council will undertake intensive communication with retailers in the new urban areas hosting events to ensure they are aware and are asked to engage in the new programme of activities. The municipal Department of Strategic Development and Grants, responsible for the cultural programme, will coordinate the meetings with retailers. The first one will take the form of a workgroup that will focus on jointly identifying and agenda of events and prepare a cooperation plan.

Today, the city centre is pedestrianized and so it is a calm peaceful area. Nevertheless, it is still a common practice that during the day the streets are full of parked vehicles resupplying the stores. This opens the door for others to merely park there for personal purposes. Cars in the pedestrian zone present a barrier between the customers and the shop windows or stores. The Municipal Police will closely monitor this situation and the municipality expects to regulate traffic, make everybody observe and better manage store deliveries on the main streets.

In addition, the City of Liberec is currently working on a plan of sustainable municipal transport. Specific relevant outputs from the RetaiLink project will be transferred into the plan. The goal is to reduce any congestion in the centre and ensure parking places within the area where no parking capacity currently exists. Telematics solutions could help with orientation and navigation while looking for empty parking spaces around the city centre.

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2. The city of Liberec finds inspiration in the IPR Praha (http://en.iprpraha.cz/) and CAMP, with which it established contact during the creation of the RetaiLink project.

5. Improvement and awareness of the "Liberec" brand

The participation of the residents in public hearings and civic forums is very low in Liberec. One of the reasons might be the persistent strong negativity, distrust and experience with past city administrations, which did not emphasise public participation in decision-making regards developments of the city. The participative approach is still finding its place in the cities of Czech Republic, Liberec included.

For the first time, the city aims at setting a work group that will engage in defining and formulating the identity of Liberec. The Council will articulate a process that involves the participation of Liberec citizens. An expert will be invited to assist and issue specific recommendations for the city and retailers. Other Czech cities preparing related integrated action plans in the URBACT network will also participate in the final workshop[3]. The expected result will be a strategy for building the Liberec brand.

6. From empty brownfields to housing in the centre

Finally, one of the projects that the RetaiLink action plan will address is the refurbishing of the Papírové Square and turn it into a residential area. The square is in the attractive vicinity of the city centre but currently has the appearance of a very dilapidated brownfield.

There will be a process of debate and redesign to agree on a solution that meets the expectations of both the Municipality and the property developer. A renewed residential area with services will support more visits to the centre and its shops.

3 - VALUABLE RETAILINK EXPERIENCE

The biggest benefit of the participation in the URBACT RetaiLink project for the City of Liberec is in particular the two levels of the project implementation. The first one is local, with all key local actors participating in the solutions. Thus, it is not only the City Council, but also a wider group of shareholders that work together to find ways of dealing with and creating solutions to the issues at hand.

Retailers, the non-profit sector, interest associations, residents, City Council departments and other institutions (e.g. the local university) work in a non-conflicted environment, but in a consensual one, bringing about short-term benefits for all parties concerned.

The cities in the Czech Republic in general show a very low level of public participation in decision-making, even though the participation approaches are accepted and promoted positively by many city administrations. This is due to the low trust and motivation of the residents that changes are possible. Citizens view Politics as a closed and hostile system. RetaiLink project has provided Liberec with the opportunity to address a pressing issue of the city centre and retail in a shared manner.

At the international level, it was useful to receive the expertise and methodology mentoring from the chief expert Mireia Sanabria[4]; the chief partner, the City of Igualada project team, and other partners

3.Ostrava within the Refill project (http://urbact.eu/Refill) and Valašské Meziříčí within the CityCentreDoctor project (http://urbact.eu/citycentredoctor).
4.http://urbact.eu/sanabria

who have many years of experience in a participatory approaches as well as those who are just beginning their efforts, as is the case for Liberec.

The URBACT methodological guidance through the URBACT Summer University in Rotterdam 2016 proved to be a great contribution. It helped Liberec's team to gain theoretical as well as practical experience and effective tools and methods of building a long-term sustainable urban development. The experience and knowledge gained are relevant for all future projects the city will take forward.

Thanks to participation in the project and the expert guidance, the project team was able to find an integrated solution, which is not limited solely to the narrow profile of one perspective. The project provided space and time for a thorough analysis of the issue, the integration of all suggestions and aspects affecting retail, and to seek integrated solutions within the strategic planning of the city.

Fig. no. 6: Inspiring ideas for IAP RetaiLink Liberec
Source: Statutory City of Liberec

4 - CONTACT INFORMATION

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5 - ROADMAP

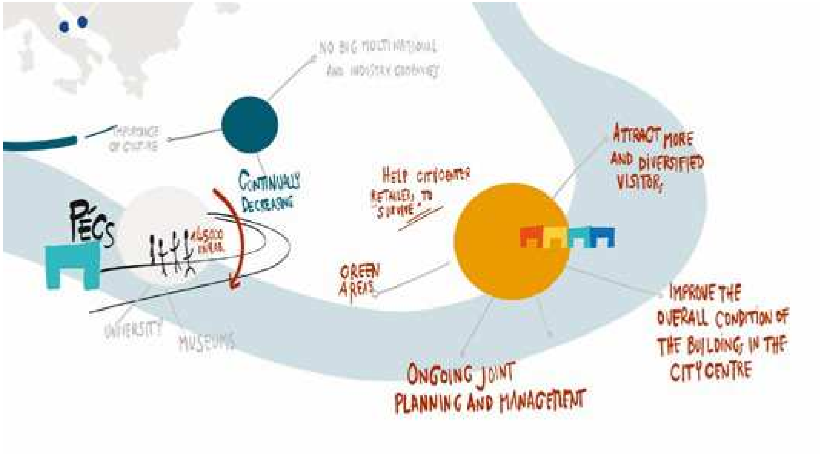
Specific Objective	Action	Action Leader	Resource	Timescale	Output Indicator
SO1: Improvement of the flexibility of processes and retail support by the city					
	A1: Review of the city guidelines & the removal of barriers for the development of retail	Council/City Centre Manager	CZK 0.00	Q. III and IV. 2018	Number of revised guidelines of the City of Liberec on retail: 1
	A2: Introduction of signposts for retail on City website	Council/City Centre Manager	CZK 100,000.00 Municipal budget	Q III. 2018 - Q I. 2019	Orientation signpost for retailers at www.liberec.cz: 1
	A3: Preparation of brochure for retailers with basic binding information for retail.	Council/City Centre Manager	CZK 30,000.00 Municipal budget /Regional Chamber of Commerce	Q. III and IV. 2018	300 paper brochures distributed Addresses for distribution of e-flyer and newsletter: 60 items
	A4: Establishment of the "City Centre Manager" position	Secretary's Office Department, personnel department	CZK 520,000.00 Pre-financing from municipal sources and co-financing from: 1) OPZ (see Invitation No. 58) 2) Labour Office - active employment policy	Q III. and IV. 2018	Number of established "City Centre Manager" jobs: 1 person.
	A5: Founding association of retailers in the city centre	Retailers, membres of ULG	CZK 0.00	Q III. and IV. 2018	1 Association created
SO2: Improvement of competitiveness, infrastructure and knowledge and experience in retail in the city centre					
	B1: Set of seminars and training for retailers in the city centre	Regional Chamber of Commerce, Liberec	CZK 200,000.00 Grants or budget (Regional Chamber of Commerce)	Autumn 9/2018 Spring 2019	30 retailers trained 30 retailers experience higher competitiveness in their business
	B2: Participation of TUL students in the preparation of marketing strategies for retailers in the city centre	Technical University Liberec: Marketing and Commerce Dpt.	CZK 0.00	Autumn term 2018 Spring term 2019	5 students per year participating in activities for the revitalisation of retail in the city centre
	B3: Establishment of a grant programme for retail business façade reconstruction and repairs	Department of Strategic Development and Grants, MPZ agenda	CZK 200,000.00/year Municipal budget	Q I. - Q II. 2019 Q I. - Q II. 2020	1 established grant programme
SO3: Improvement of the city centre's appeal for the residents of and visitors to Liberec					
	C1: Establishment of the City Architect position	Liberec City Council secretary - personnel department	CZK 1,200,000.00/year Municipal budget	Q II. and Q III. 2018	Staffed position
	C2: Determination of the city centre territory	Chief Architect of the Statutory City of Liberec	CZK 0.00 Provided by TUL in cooperation with Palacký University in Olomouc (MA21)	2016 - 2018	1 Emotional map - Liberec city centre
	C3: Preparation and implementation of a city centre visual identity manual	Chief Architect of the Statutory City of Liberec	CZK 0.00	Q IV. 2018 - Q IV. 2019	1 City centre visual identity manual
	C4: Support of revitalisation of municipal greenery and public space in the city centre	Department of environment protection and public space.	Planned activities from the budget of the Department of Environmental Protection and Public Space.	Q II. 2018 - Q III. 2019	Number of revitalised park areas in the city centre: 3
	C5: Removal of gambling from the centre of Liberec - Decree No. 2/2017 municipal generally binding decree of Liberec	Local government	CZK 0.00	Q II. - Q IV. 2018	1 decree regulating gambling in the city centre
	C6: Procurement of decorations (or suspended decorations - umbrellas, coloured banners, lighting, Christmas trees) for the city centre	Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport	CZK 70,000.00/Liberec at Christmas Municipal budget /Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport	Q IV. 2017 Q IV. 2018 Q IV. 2019	110 retailers approached during the pilot event "Liberec at Christmas" 25 retailers decorated windows and Christmas trees
SO4: Improved reputation and building of the Liberec city brand					
	D1: Invitation to Liberec and consultation with an expert on branding and positioning of cities - Roger Pride (Great Britain)	Department of Strategic Development and Grants	Will be specified in the Municipal budget and RetailLink/URBACT III project	Q I. - Q II. 2018	1 Consultation
	D2: Establishment of a work group, which will define and formulate the identity of Liberec in response to the internal and external reputation of the city. Participation of the public is necessary	Department of Strategic Development and Grants	CZK 0.00	Q II. - Q IV. 2018	Preparation of strategy, action plan to improve the internal and external reputation of Liberec: 1

SO5: Improvement of the appeal of programmes and cultural events in the city centre organised by the city				
E1: Utilisation of Sokolovské square for cultural and meeting events held by the city. Support to events organized by other entities	Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport	CZK 0.00	2018 - 2019	Events organised on Soukenné square: Min. 1/year
E2: Participation of retailers in events organised by the city and other partners	Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport	CZK 0.00	2018 - 2019	1 Publication of activities organised by the city and available to the public - retailers
E3: Updates of programmes organised by the city in the centre in the context of the defined identity of Liberec, identification of priorities and city centre strategy	Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport	CZK 0.00	2019 and later	1 publication of the urban strategy of development of Liberec city brand in plans of the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport
SO6: Improvement of the appeal of the city centre with respect to individual automobile transport				
F1: Transport in the territory of the city centre is exclusively delimited for the forms of sustainable municipal transport	Department of Strategic Development and Grants, Department of Development Concept	CZK 0.00 Investments will be specified according to the solution following from SUMP (City Sustainable Transport Plan)	2018 and later	1 Recommendation delegated for SUMP authors 1 Modification of parking regime, harmonising resupply regime in the centre
F2: Improvement of the availability of transport in quiet - parking and P+R areas around the city centre (library, Plaza, Forum and others)	Department of Strategic Development and Grants, Department of Development Concept	CZK 0.00 Investments will be specified according to the solution from SUMP	2018 and later	1 Recommendation delegated for SUMP authors
F3: Creation of a work group to deal with investor and the developer of residential buildings around Papírové square with the aim to support residential living in the city centre	Department of Strategic Development and Grants	CZK 0.00	2018 - 2019	1 work group created and operational
F4: Reconstruction of Papírové square - preparation of project documentation	Department of public property management	CZK 200,000.00 Municipal budget or grants	2018 - 2020	1 Project documentation for the reconstruction of public areas in the city centre - Papírové square (Reg. No. 5985/1)
F5: Public toilets in the city centre	Department of Strategic Development and Grants	It will be specified Municipal budget or grants	Q III. - Q IV. 2018	2x2 new toilet capacities or support of current capacities

PÉCS THE CITY OF CULTURE

PÉCS

PÉCS CITY - CENTRE REVITALISATION URBACT RETAILINK INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN



1 - THE PROJECT

This Integrated Action plan was developed as part of the URBACT RetaiLink project and reflects the outcome of the regular consultations with the Local Action Group and the learning from the International Networking Events.

OUR VISION

Pécs URBACT RetaiLink team's vision is that Pécs city centre will be packed with people, both citizens, university students from different countries and regions as well as tourists. People won't only walk around in the city centre and sit in the benches of Széchenyi square but will also shop around in the stores and eat and drink in bars and restaurants located in the city centre. Visitors will stay longer and both citizens and tourists will spend more money in the city-centre than they do nowadays.

All the buildings in the city centre will have been renovated and the beauty of the historic centre will stand out for all to see. The centre of Pécs will not have any vacant stores anymore or big business fluctuation. Storeowners and renters will increase their turnover and thus will be satisfied with the new situation.

THE CONTEXT

Pécs is the fifth largest city of Hungary and is around 2000 years old. The capital of Baranya County is famous for its history and culture, its World Heritage site, the Zsolnay ceramics and the Turkish ruins and was Europe's Cultural Capital in 2010.

The population of Pécs (145.000 inhabitants today) is continually decreasing. The share of the older population is increasing, as the younger generations, especially those who graduated from the university, leave the city. The biggest employer of Pécs is the University, with 6.000 employees and almost 20.000 active students, both Hungarians as well as international students.

Overall tourism in Hungary is on the rise: however, in Pécs the number of tourists is stagnating at around 114.000 visitors per year and about 224.000 nights in hotels and motels. Other comparable Hungarian cities, like Szeged, Miskolc or Eger have growing numbers of total tourist nights spent in the city, year after year.

A Municipality-owned company, the Pécs Real Estate Company owns and rents approximately 50% of the city centre real estate and has strong influence on the city centre real estate business development. The other 50% of the inner city real estate is in the hands of private property owners.

Both based on the perception on everyday people walking around in the city-centre as well as according to the Pécs Real Estate Company, the situation in the city centre has changed positively in the last two years. For example, there are less vacant shops in the pedestrians-only area and based on the numbers received from the Pécs Real Estate Company, the rate of the occupied buildings went up from 69% (January 2016) to 77% (December 2017).

2 - THE PLAN

There are four main objectives that the city wants to achieve in the future to build on the latest positive data:

First: Higher levels of footfall in the city centre to result in increased levels of area business turnover. Pécs wants, first of all, attract more people to the city centre and get them to stay longer using the area for different activities, including shopping, and consequently, which will thus lead to higher levels of spending in the city centre shops, bars and restaurants and leisure activities.

Second: Enhance the image of the downtown area by improving the overall condition of its buildings. By upgrading the city centre, real estate the municipality wants to attract new tenants to move in, and as a consequence promote a diversity of uses, including dwelling.

Third: Offer more assistance to inner-city retailers by organizing trainings for the shop assistants as well as the shop managers. They want to help city-centre shops by joint marketing and sales promotions and by starting a website that gathers the information about all the inner-city bars, shops, etc, so they can promote themselves via a common platform.

Finally: Provide the bases for a permanent and sustainable team to manage the city centre and work for the creation of a City Centre Management structure.

These objectives are briefly described in continuation:

Objective 1: Increase footfall and drive sales in the city centre

The project will invest time and resources to increase the number of tourists and improve the area attractiveness to pull both Pécs citizens residing in other districts and university students. Some measures have already begun, to be further developed along the project implementation period, namely:

- **Activity 1:** Pécs RetaiLink team has started working with local tourist agents to design a local tourism strategy. Though the work is still in progress as of this writing, the city has put together all the right kind of different companies managing touristic attractions to develop a single integrated plan for strengthening the touristic sector.

- **Activity 2:** This one is about facilitating mobility to the city centre. Pécs is currently working on an urban plan that aims to improve the connectivity of different parts of the city. Pécs Urban Develoment Company, the RetaiLink coordinator, is coordinating an e-bike project and different bike route projects to connect the city centre with other important parts of the city, such as the Zsolnay District, the University Campuses, etc. via different means of transport.

- **Activity 3:** As part of the promotional strategy to attract public interest, the project team has agreed with the local weekly magazine to start a new column about the inner city happenings and to promote bars, shops, and other businesses in the area. They have already produced and published a first article: 'That's why we like the city centre!' to explain why people should come and visit the city centre and discover the things that can be found there.

EZÉRT SZERETIK A BELVÁROST – NEXT STEP COFFEE

...Pár éve lehetetlenség volt jó kávét inni Pécsen, mára azonban fantasztikus újhullámos és hagyományos olasz kávét kínáló egységek nyíltak a belvároson innen és túl. Két fiatal pécsi, régóta...

- **Activity 4:** Finally, another set of actions to keep visitors in the area is the organisation of events and festivals. Pécs RetaiLink project team invited the company organizing events and festivals in Pécs (Zsolnay Heritage Company) to the local support groups meetings to discuss with store owners on the design and calendar of events and festivals within the inner city area in a way that it facilitates their participation and contributes to generating more vitality to the whole area.

Objective 2- Enhance the image of the overall condition of the buildings in the city-centre in Pécs

Pécs Real Estate Company, Pécs Urban Development company and the City of Pécs are working on different projects to improve the look and feel of the city centre. Pécs Real Estate Company is mainly working on the renovation of the shopping-zone. Pécs Urban Development Company is working on a project to re-open a long-closed museum and to improve the visitor-experience in connection with the World Heritage Site. The municipality is working on a green project, so they'll be planting trees and flowers in the city centre.

- **Action 1:** Pécs RetaiLink project team has invited the tutors from the University of Pécs Faculty of Engineering to work together with the Pécs Real Estate Company on finding the solutions to the technical issues in the city centre buildings, where needed.

- **Action 2:** Pécs RetaiLink project team has initiated talks between Pécs Real Estate Company and Pécs Development Company to search together for EU funds for the structural renovations.

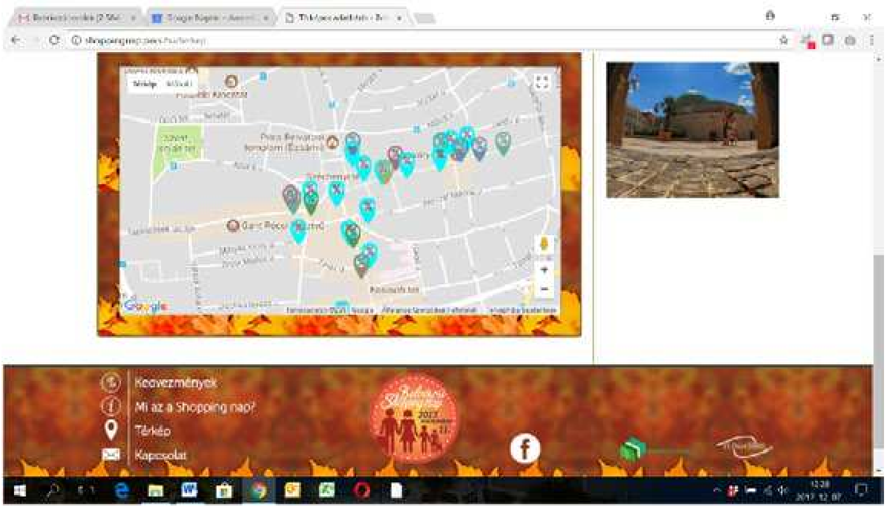
- **Activity 3:** Pécs Real Estate Company offers discount rental fees for those retailers, who rent out properties in bad conditions and renovate them. The discount the tenant gets from the Pécs Real Estate Company equals the cost of the renovation works paid by the tenant.

- **Activity 4:** As part of the 'Green Gate Project', Ferencesek Street and Jókai Square – both located in the city centre – will be refurbished. The pavement will be renovated and new trees will be planted in order to improve the aesthetics of the street.

Objective 3: Offer more support to city-centre retailers

- **Activity 1:** Organize trainings for city-centre retailers and their shop-assistants to help their everyday work. Marketing trainings, communication training, problem-solving training, etc.

- **Activity 2:** To attract people's attention to the stores, Pécs RetaiLink Project Team is negotiating with Pécs Real Estate Company, as the owner of most of the inner-city properties, to support its tenants by conducting joint city-centre sales and marketing activities, as city centre shopping days.



- **Activity 3:** As the owner of most of the inner-city properties, Pécs Real-Estate Company should help its tenants marketing activities with a 'City centre website' and City centre social media campaign, where all inner-city tenants can include their promotions.

Objective 4: Provide for on-going joint planning and management

To be able to achieve the previously mentioned objectives, the Pécs RetaiLink Team advises to set up a working group to operate Pécs' city centre vision on a permanent basis. Besides the municipality officials and representatives, employees from Pécs Real Estate Company and store renters and owners should be part of it.

- **Activity 1:** To achieve the city-centre vision and the objectives mentioned above, a 'City Centre Management Team' should also be created. The team should work against the goals set in the Integrated Action Plan document and be made up of members from different agents from the city centre: retailers, bar owners, tourism agencies and members from different companies run by the Municipality.

NEXT STEPS

- Present the Integrated Action Plan to the mayor and vice mayor, Mr. Zsolt Páva and Mr. István Decsi. Deploy Pécs Touristic Strategy among the companies managing the different touristic attractions in Pécs.
- Give more input to the local weekly newspaper to write articles regularly about the city centre.
- Push Pécs Development Company to finalize / finish the e-bike project and get peoples' attention on the possibility of getting into the city centre more easily.
- Push Pécs Real Estate Company to create a website about the city centre stores, keep it up-to-date and connect it with social-media platform.
- Push Zsolnay Heritage Company (responsible for organizing the local festivals) to create the festivals according to the needs of the city centre store-owners.
- Get funds for the renovations in the inner-city.
- Set-up the Pécs City centre Management Team.

Key municipal areas involved

Mayor, Vice-mayors, Elected, Members of the Parliament, City centre, elected member of the municipality responsible for the city centre, Pécs Real Estate Company.

Resources

Possible EU funding (Territorial Operative Programme, Economic and innovation Operative Programme).
Pécs Real-Estate Company marketing budget (The budget is under planning, after April we will know it).
Zsolnay Heritage Company festival budget. (The budget is under planning, after April we will know it).

Note: No extra costs will be generated if municipality-owned companies work for the joint efforts of the city centre.

Indicators

- Occupancy-rate increases. (from current 77% to minimum 82% by the end of 2019)
- Footfall increases in 2017 vs. measurement in 2016.
- The overall condition of the buildings in the city centre improves. The number of renovated buildings in the city-centre increases.

3 - CONCLUSION

Setting-up the City Centre Management Team is an important innovation in the city of Pécs, as currently there is no joint effort of different parties to achieve a common strategic goal. The City Centre Management Team will include representatives from both the municipality as well as the private sector to set common goals, design strategies and work jointly to achieve objectives having a common goal – the revitalisation of the retail sector in the city centre .

4 - CONTACT INFORMATION

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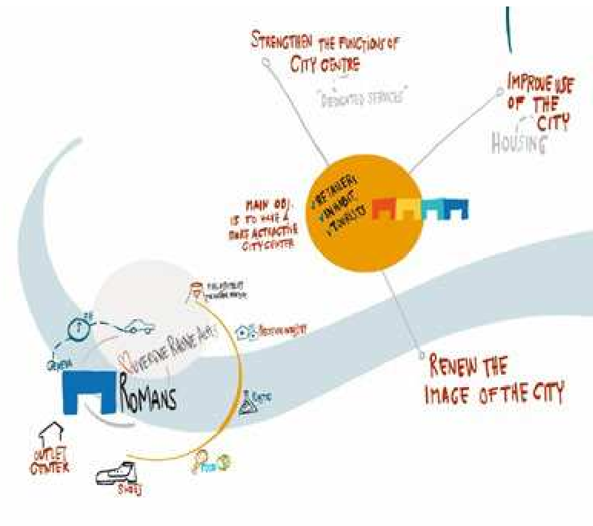
5 - ROADMAP

Objective	Action	Delivery lead/team	Key partners involved	Time	Resources / Assets	Output indicator
Objective 1- Increase footfall and drive sales in the city centre						
	Create tourism strategy for Pécs	Pécs Communication Company	Pécs Urban Development Company	First draft received	Pécs Communication Company	Approved document
	Create a better connected city centre – e-bike project, e-bus project, bike route projects	Pécs Urban Development Company	Municipality	In progress	EU Funds	Projects closed
	Include a monthly article in the local magazine about the city centre stores, bars, happenings	City centre Management Team	Pécs Communication Company	In progress	No cost	12 articles per year
	Push Zsolnay Heritage Company (responsible for organizing local festivals) to design programs in a way, that supports local stores, bars	City centre Management Team	Zsolnay Heritage Company	2018	Zsolnay Heritage Company festival budget	
	Action plan put together with the representatives of the university to attract university students into the city centre	City centre Management Team	Pécs Real-Estate Company	2018 first half	No cost	
	Pécs Real Estate Company to develop / create the city centre website as well as the social media platform for the inner-city	City centre Management Team	Pécs Real-Estate Company	2018 second half	Pécs Real-Estate Company marketing budget	
Objective 2- Improve the overall condition of the buildings and the look and feel of the city centre						
	Pécs Real-Estate Company to work with the University of Pécs Faculty of Engineering on assessing the possible easy solutions on property-renovation.	City centre Management Team	Pécs Real-Estate Company	2018	No cost	
	Push Pécs Real-estate Company and Pécs Urban Development Company to work closely together on funding the inner-city renovations.	City centre Management Team	Pécs Urban Development Company and Pécs Real-Estate Company	In progress	EU Funds	
	Pécs Real Estate Company to offer discount rental fees to those companies / retailers, which rent out vacant shops in bad overall condition and renovate them	Pécs Real Estate Company	Retailers	In progress	Retailers budget and Pécs Real Estate Company budget	Signed contracts
	'Green Gate Project' - refurbishing of Ferencesek Street and Jókai square – new pavement and plantation of trees	Pécs Urban Development Company	Pécs Urban Development Company	2018-2019	Available - from the Municipality budgets	
	Urban Development Company to finalize the World Heritage and the Archaeological Museum Project	City centre Management Team	Pécs Urban Development Company	2018-2020	EU Funds	
Objective 3 – Support city centre retailers						
	Organize trainings for city centre retailers and shop-assistants to help their work.	Pécs Real Estate Company	University of Pécs	In progress	Pécs Real Estate Company budget	ongoing
	Organize yearly twice 'City centre shopping days' project – joint marketing and sales promotion for inner-city retailers	Pécs Real Estate Company	Pécs Communication Company	In progress	Pécs Real Estate Company budget	ongoing
	Create the 'City centre website' and the city centre social media pages	Pécs Real Estate Company	Pécs Communication Company	2019	Pécs Real Estate Company budget	
Objective 4- Ongoing joint planning and management						
	Establishing 'City Centre Management Team' to work against the goals set in this Integrated Action Plan document	City centre retailers	Municipality	2018		

RetaiLink

ROMANS SUR ISÊRE

WHAT CITY CENTRE FOR TOMORROW?



1 - THE PROJECT CONTEXT

Romans-sur-Isère is a town of 33,000 inhabitants located in the South-east of France, situated in the Department of Drôme, in the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes region.

Romans owes its international reputation to the leather and footwear industries. Its craft history based on the know-how of tanners dates back to the 15th century and industrialized in the second half of the 19th century with the arrival of the railway. Mechanization then allowed mass production and the exportation of manufactured products. The leather industry represented more than 6,000 jobs by the middle of the 20th century. These were mainly luxury shoes sold in France and exported worldwide.

The International Shoe Museum, housed in a former convent, today holds more than 20,000 pieces and invites you to discover the passionate history of footware across the world and through the centuries.

Marques Avenue

Since 1999 Romans has had its very own outlet shopping mall at 5 min walk from the International Shoe Museum and only 10min from the historic centre of the city. This retail village offers 88 outlet stores of well-known brands and serves a catchment area of 100 km around the city. In 2017 Marques Avenue attracted 1.7M visitors. At the end of 2017 an expansion brought 13 new stores to the site. Another expansion is planned for 2019 with the objective to exceed 2M visitors by the end of the year.

Romans also has its own culinary specialties, sports teams, social and cultural associations, as well as a varied economic tapestry of industries, including the presence of plastic, precision tools and components for nuclear industry. However, this does not mean that our city has escaped from the devitalizing of the city centre, which results in:

· A lower retail offer.
· Decreased footfall.
· A constant increase in vacant commercial premises.
· Population migration (impoverishment of the existing population).
· Increased feelings of insecurity.
· A sense of pessimism.

In 2015, the new municipal team decided to face this reality and tackle this issue head-on by making it a principal axis of the city's project.

Meetings, visits and literature showed us this is a national problem, a problem shared by almost all medium-sized cities, like ours. Joining the RetaiLink transnational program also made us aware that the problem of urban vitality decline also exists at the European level.

The place Perrot de Verdun before works

The place Perrot de Verdun after works

2 - THE PLAN

Romans' strategic revitalization plan integrates 3 main objectives:

Objective 1. Define the city centre area, delimit a perimeter: short term (early 2018)

The city runs lengthwise, leading from the train station to the Isère River. To cross the city one passes through several streets with shops, squares, monuments, churches, to arrive to the historic centre. Some questions helped in the process of reflection: Where is Romans city centre really located? How big it is, and where are its limits?

The retail project team will define the term "city centre" in consultation with the area users, in order to speak the same language.

Objective 2. Make the city centre more attractive: medium term (2018-2019)

To act on the attractiveness of the city centre, but especially to quantify its results, the City plans to work along several axes:

A. Increase of footfall: to generate higher flows of visitors.

Today only 2% of Marques Avenue visitors go to the city centre. The objective is that this figure reaches:

· 5% by 2018
· 7% by 2019
· 10% by 2020.

B. Bring activity back to the city reducing the number of vacant commercial premises.

This is not a new axis, because the trend towards closures was already reversed in 2017, with the opening of 8 new stores, 5 currently being installed and 42 ephemeral shops during special events. However, the municipality will work towards strengthening these initiatives. Currently the vacancy rate is 16% and the objective is to reach:

· 14% by 2018.
· 12% by 2019.
· 10% by 2020.

C. Create an identity for our commercial offer.

The goal here is to not simply refill the empty retail units, but to do so with activities that also contribute to offer a strong identity, matching the expectations of the users.

Work in this sense began in 2017 on a pedestrian street with the project "Créativ'Jacquemart", a start-up accelerator allowing the diversification of flows and uses.

The goal here is to create 3 new zones with a strong commercial identity in the city centre in 2018:

· A street: Créativ'Jacquemart project.
· A site: place Maurice Faure, where the municipality is working to define a theme for the activity.
· A building: Fanal, where a commercial activity with a complementary offer to that available in Mar ques. Avenue will be developed.

Objective 3. Stabilize and perpetuate attractiveness (long term 2020 and after)

The retail team will address the revitalization project with a view of sustaining the dynamism for the long-term. A set of key indicators will be carefully monitored yearly to and corrective actions taken ensure the trends are in the right direction.

To achieve the above objective, the city will implement a wide variety of measures since attractiveness is a global concept requiring action along several fronts. The defined areas of action have been enhanced by transferring some of the steps learnt and exemplified in Bassano del Grappa revitalisation strategy in Italy, namely:

· Constantly position the user-consumer-customer at the heart of the strategy and reflections. Note - the project defines 'user' as the inhabitant, the shopkeeper, the owner, the small business manager, the tourist...
· Working group integrating various users: We will continue and further strengthen our collaborative work with users and project leaders in the form of working groups.
· Use of vacant premises (ephemeral shops): The experience of ephemeral shops has been successful and the initiative will be renewed.
· Initiatives on taxation: The municipality will work on reducing the tax burden for new city centre economic activities.
· Dedicated management team: A team is working specifically on the subject led by a city centre manager.
· Improvements to the urban environment: The structural quality of the city is in transition; new developments are planned for 2018 and 2019.
· Signage: In order to facilitate the flow and access to information the municipal department is developing a signage that refects an identity for Romans-sur-Isere.
· Transport, mobility and accessibilities: Facilitate easier access and movement between Marques Avenue and the city centre for all users.
· Ephemeral furnishings: Positioning of ephemeral furniture in the disused areas which are awaiting urban renewal.
· A "no empty spaces" commercial policy: Prioritize filling in adjoining premises to active businesses in order to create continuity and so avoid visual fractures in the landscape.
· Varied and repeated events: The events are and will be mainly organised downtown and built around and for traders.
· New activities in the outskirts: The installation of business activities in the city outskirts of the city can only be studied if all other options of setting up in the city centre have been discarded.
· Markets or halls with local products: These options will be examined to help perpetuate the attractiveness of the Sunday market, which is currently an important added value to the city centre.

RESOURCES USED IN CARRYING OUT THE PLAN

User questionnaires: In order to understand the city centre user and put it at the heart of the retail strategy, the municipality will distribute questionnaires to around 400 carefully targeted individuals. These questionnaires integrate the concepts, proposals and initiatives outlined above.

Financing: In order to implement the project actions, the City is working on achieving funding at departmental, regional, national, and European levels. A common thread is to always financially commit the municipality to create a leverage effect with other support.

The Council submitted an application for the "Action Coeur de Ville" program in France, put in place by the current government. This program will distribute EUR 3 billion to 20 pilot cities in 2018. At the end of February 2018, the government will officially announce the selected cities.

The project team is also working on public-private partnerships through sponsorship. These funds come from businesses or individuals and are intended for projects targeted for the city centre.

Urban planning: The Local Urban Plan of Romans (PLU) is being completely revised in 2018 to allow initiatives to be carried out and facilitate the opening of new commercial activities in the city centre.

Internal organization: The community works in project mode. A technical pilot and a political pilot are identified for each project. A team is then formed around this pair, allowing a global contribution of skills. This organization allows better project identification & better project management.

For city centre revitalization issues, these pilots work in close collaboration with the Mayor and the General Director of Services. For this reason, they schedule a one and a half hour-long workshop session every Monday to accelerate approvals and oversee implementations.

Cabinet Lestoux: A private company specialising in the revitalization of city centres has been working with Romans since January 2018 to complete the strategy, organise the presentation event, and then to deploy the initiatives. This company is recognised nationally and has a solid reputation.

RetaiLink: The RetaiLink experience, the exchange of good practices, the quality of its participants, confirms this is the way forward. This program is also for Romans a guarantee of trust for all partners who already accompany us or will do so in the future. Romans also expects to continue linked to URBACT in the future.

3 - CONCLUSION

Romans wishes to thank URBACT for organising and implementing RetaiLink which has really helped move forward and has allowed to better structure the approaches and define the city retail challenges.

The project team has participated in transnational meetings with retailers, specialists and politicians of the city. Today, they all recognise the importance of the mobilisation of all to be able to move in the same direction. It saves us so much time!

The closure of the RetaiLink project is not the end but the beginning of the implementation of a structured strategy. The launch of this new challenge begins for Romans on 23 April 2018 with the presentation event to a wide range of users.

4 - CONTACT INFORMATION

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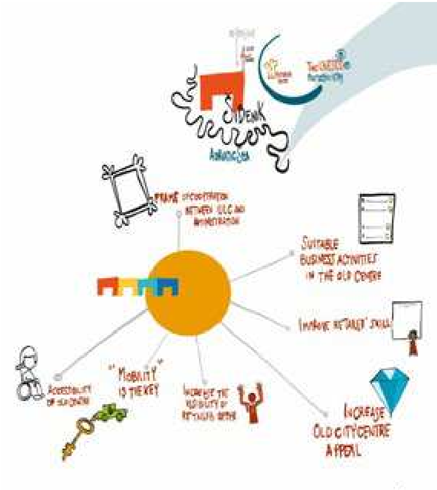
<u>Project coordinator</u> **Sponsorship Co-ordinator** Thomas SERVIEN tservien@ville-romans26.fr 04 75 05 51 56	<u>Communication</u> **Head of the communication department** vauroux@ville-romans26.fr 04 75 05 51 40	

ŠIBENIK

SALES - ŠIBENIK ACTIONS FOR LEVERAGING SEASONALITY



1 - THE PROJECT CONTEXT

The City of Šibenik is the largest city and an administrative centre of Šibenik-Knin county, a region with 109,375 inhabitants. It is located in the middle of the Croatian coast of the Adriatic Sea with a population of 45,000 people.
Šibenik is a historical town with a large old city centre, many old churches, fortresses and historic monuments, including two UNESCO protected sites. Before 1990 and the Croatian homeland war, Šibenik was an industrial town, a centre of aluminium and steel industry which collapsed. Nowadays, tourism is growing strongly.

Over the last twenty years, the old city centre has been losing its function as a trade and craft centre. The decreasing population, the aging of the inhabitants, and the opening of brand-named shops in the city's outskirts are just part of the problem. Changes in the demand structure, development of new services based on modern technologies and global trends have changed customers' behaviour and the way the people go about shopping. Local retailers respond poorly to the global trends, too. They are mostly small family businesses without the necessary skills or knowledge, nor do they have the capacity and resources to be able match the competition.

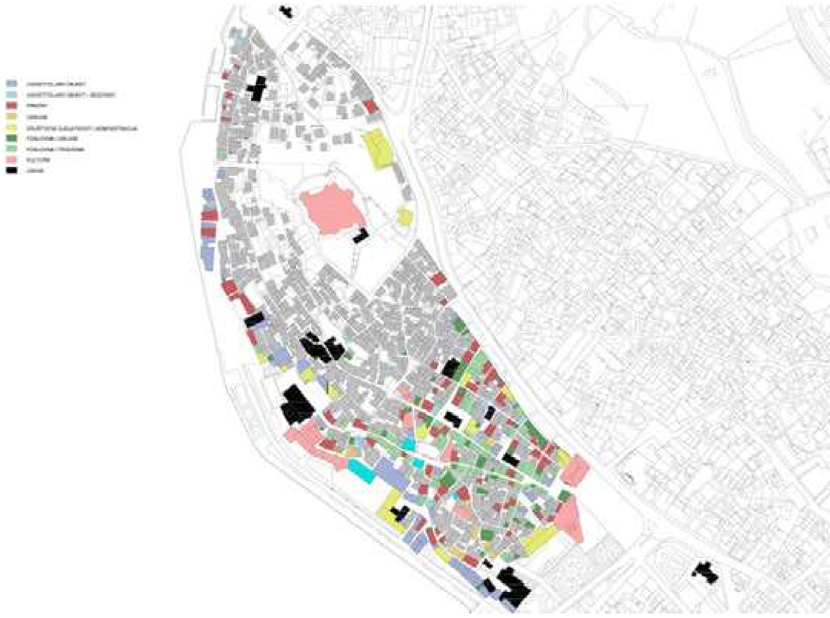
Migration of inhabitants (depopulation) and increasing tourism has created new challenges for the local retailers. People are moving from the city centre converting their flats into tourist apartments, which emphasises and increases the seasonality phenomenon. Seasonality is a problem that results in huge turnover differences between summer and winter months. The city centre is alive and crawling with people in summer, but empty and desolate in the winter months. Narrow streets and shops go bare and unattractive to people, thus creating a poor business environment. Example: because of the low demand, many shops get sealed off and business premises become deserted, which creates disadvantages to the general perception of the city's centre.

During 2015, the city of Šibenik had 259 entrepreneurs in the wholesale and retail business, which represents 25.5% of the City's total. According to the Crafts Chamber, there were also 231 trade crafts. Total realized revenue in the Sibenik economy in 2015 were 3,015,834,619 HRK (EUR 400 M), 20,4% less than in 2014. The wholesale and retail entrepreneurs took in revenues of 641,239,398 HRK (EUR 86 M), which is a 2,3% growth over 2014. The trade business creates 21.3% of Šibenik's economy, in this data. The average monthly net wage per employee in the Šibenik wholesale and retail sector was 4.035 HRK, lower than the national average.

As mentioned before, Šibenik has been experiencing strong tourist growth since 2011. In 2016, 255,000 tourists visited Šibenik and generated 1,3 M overnight stays, that is a 20% growth in overnight stays compared to 2015. Over 85% of these happen between June and August. During the summer season city population doubles in growth.

Most of the shops are concentrated at the southern half of the centre, located along two main pedestrian streets where 50 of the 79 local shops are located. The retail sector is the most represented business function, taking 56% of share. This tells us that the city centre has not completely lost its shopping function; nevertheless, the quantity and quality of goods and services of trade have dropped considerably.

The old city centre is a monumental protected area, which makes doing business even harder because of the special rules and unclear business and investment conditions related to space management and the special conservation. Business premises generally located at the ground floor of several century-old houses are inadequate and with limited accessibility. They have old supply infrastructures -electricity or plumbing- and thus low energy efficiency, low ceilings, little or no storage space and small shop windows, mostly poorly decorated. In addition the old city centre has narrow streets and many stairs, worsening the logistics problem.



The city administration does not have effective regulation tools to impact on the use of business premises or directly protect desirable shops and business activities in the old city centre. Most of the business premises are privately owned and they have no restrictions for the renting of premises. Today, the local authorities are interested in opening up a process to solve local retailers' problems to help them revitalise the trade function in the old city centre. They are well aware that they need to partner up with others in this process.

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

The old city centre of Šibenik is not recognized as a quality retail destination and, as mentioned before, it has large seasonality gap in demand between summer and winter months.

2 - THE ACTION PLAN

This Integrated Action Plan (IAP) aimed at supporting revitalisation of retail function in the old city centre was developed as part of the RetaiLink URBACT project. It is the result of meetings and consultation with a wide range of town centre businesses, local authority officers, the ULG group and other relevant stakeholders.

The first meeting between city retailers and city administration was held in October 2015 and had a participative approach. The retailers in the old city centre agreed to jointly work in a local action group that should be the backbone and generator of ideas for the revitalization of the retail function in the old city centre. An approach was set up, too, for strengthening their capacities and clearly defining their needs.

In the near future, as planned in the action plan, this organization should gather all hospitality representatives of the old city centre, develop new products linking the offer between retailers, cafe and restaurant owners and other service providers in order to create a new mix of products and services that can increase sales and attract people to the old city centre.

The local action group also aims at building a partnership with the local government to cooperate in organizing events, improving parking and infrastructures, and for promoting business and logistics solutions.

The research carried out within the project identified problems / challenges that retailers need to face if they want to pull in more consumers to the old city centre and its stores. These challenges are related to the organizational capacities of retailers, training, marketing and event organization. As a Council-led survey has shown, the consumers' complaints emphasized the following: the inadequate retail offer, low quality customer treatment, irregular perception of prices, and the unfamiliarity of the offers.

To begin to address these drawbacks, training programmes and workshops for shop owners and their employees will be conducted in partnership with Croatian Chamber of Economy, Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts and Polytechnic of Šibenik. The aim is to change retailers' views, better align retail offers to meet customer needs and create new customer-friendly services.

What's more, the local action group's efforts should also lead to a range of stronger marketing activities in terms of promotion of shopping experience in the old city centre by using online tools, mobile apps, organization of sales events and all kinds of events to ensure longer stays in the old town centre throughout the year, not only in summer.

THE VISION

The old city centre of Šibenik will become an attractive place for doing business, shopping and spending leisure time for the citizens of Šibenik and visitors.

OUTPUT GOALS AND INDICATORS

· Mitigate seasonality effect through decreasing winter vacancy rate by 15 %);
· Increase shopping as motive for visiting the old town centre from current 8,9 % to 15 %;
· Organize joint events for promotion of retail in the old city centre (1 per year).

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES AND MAIN ACTIONS

SO1- Develop a frame of cooperation between ULG and city administration

Organizing a functional group of local retailers to build their capacity, show unity, better articulate problems and ideas for solutions, get more attention and provide easier access to the city administration as a partner in the process.

Actions:

- · Organizing and establishing a functional local action group;
- · Carrying out regular meetings of LAG representatives, the city administration and public companies;
- · Creating the list of priority issues and suggestions and developing a joint calendar of events for the old city centre.

SO 2. Encouraging and promoting desirable business activities in the old city centre

The City of Šibenik owns a small number of well placed business premises in the city centre. The administration should work on spatial planning to allow setting up of selected businesses, talking with property owners of other premises and promoting new entrepreneurship. The purpose of all this would be to help expand and strengthen the quality of the diverse offers, not just retail, and make the city centre more attractive.

Actions:

- · The mapping of the current situation, listing all business premises in the city centre and creating suggestions for thematic streets and quarters in the historic city centre;
- · Creation of a "doing business" catalogue and online business management system for attracting new tenants in the historical city centre according to the thematic zones.

SO3. Improvement of the retailers' skills and competence

Two inter-linked sub-objectives are shown: a) creating tools for analysing and knowing consumer needs and sharing that knowledge; and, b) organizing training programmes for retailers and their employees. Combined, these will strengthen retailers' skills and competences and help them adapt, foster cooperation among themselves and inspire each to develop new products that can match customers' needs.

Actions:

- · Monitoring and analysis of market needs;
- · Organizing training for retailers and their employees;
- · Connecting with educational institutions to improve the quality of workforce;
- · Connecting retailers with Croatian designers in order to increase the quality of the offer.

SO 4. Increasing the old city centre appeal to reduce the effect of seasonality

According to a local survey on the city centre use and perceptions, 55% of respondents answered that the most common motive for visiting the old city centre is walking, and for 44% of them it is consuming food and drinks with friends. 53% of respondents would visit the city centre more frequently if more events were organized.

Actions:

- · Organization of sale fairs and events and creating a pleasant shopping atmosphere;
- · Development and design of improved signage - maps, suggested walking paths and directions, special retailers' signs in the old city centre with small urban interventions, shopping maps in the parking lots in neighbouring areas;
- · Development of smartphone entertainment and shopping applications based on innovative technologies;
- · Cross-marketing - linking various stakeholders to create new multi-dimensional products (activities with accommodation providers, caterers, public and cultural institutions, associations and companies, etc.);
- · Creation of an incentive system for all-year open retailers.

SO 5. Marketing activities aimed at increasing the visibility of the retailers offer

Here, it's about addressing a problem of awareness. Most of the consumers are not aware of the offer in the old city centre, the prices or the benefits offered by city centre retailers (25% of respondents do not buy in the old city centre, and 62% buy sometimes even though 58% of respondents visit it once a week). By creating a web site to show the old city centre offer and a creative marketing campaign to promote the site and shopping in the old city centre, the City will create an information point for consumers (buying decisions are usually made at home) and increase the visibility of retailers.

Actions:

- Development of online marketing campaign for promotion of the old city centre offer (web site, online campaign, Facebook, social networks, including online advertising training for the retailers);
- Actions and activities aimed to increase visibility and improve sales (joint advertising, seasonal catalogues, lifestyle magazine, sale coupons, loyalty programs, advertising on parking spaces in contact zones, PR activities in the local media);

SO6. Mobility Measures - Enhancing Accessibility to the old city centre (SUMP and Parking)

The old town area is a pedestrian zone. It is usually visited by foot or by car from other city parts. On the other hand, the most common reason why the project survey respondents do not visit the old city centre is because of the difficulties in finding parking space and the price of parking tickets. Due to the specificity of the city, lack of bus lines and the ticket price the public transport system is not effective enough. Not to forget the retailers' problem of logistics. Solutions are foreseen as a result of the following:

Actions:

- Organization of the electrical delivery system;
- Constructing parking lots and garages in neighbouring zones;
- Improvement and promotion of the public transport system.

SHOPS OPEN

**It has been ten years since local group of shop owners have joined together to create one large shopping centre out of the Old town.
Now we can say - they have made it.**

page 20

LOCAL ART COMMUNITY

Driven by the creativity

Local art district is settled in the north part of the Old town. The district is established through Retailing project and it soon became the place for all those in search for a piece of history and creativity in local community. Old crafts, handmade furniture or clothes, paintings, jewelry or some other unique and different souvenir? Certainly, you'll find them there.

Twelve months' season

SHOPPING

New motive for tourists

It all started with Retaillink

The Šibenik's narrow, old stone streets have come alive again. It seems like they are

Many different projects of the Šibenik's Old town's revival have

3 - CONCLUSION

Our Šibenik team (a city employee and ULG members) has benefited greatly from the transnational exchange of knowledge and good practice in RetaiLink. We can group what we have learned in three main areas:

URBACT METHODOLOGY

URBACT guidelines, communication with lead partners and experts and the URBACT summer school in Rotterdam increased our capacity in dealing with local stakeholders. The first visit of the lead expert and lead partner held in Šibenik in October 2015 was the first meeting between city retailers and city administration and a participative approach was introduced. We are continuing with this and often use the knowledge and skills obtained in our workshops - among these, the opera method, the problem tree and the use of other URBACT tool kits.

THEMATIC CONTENTS

From experts we learned about the importance of knowing the local customer. As a result, the RetaiLink team conducted an opinion poll to understand the local customers and their needs. Valuable indeed were the pieces of information we collected about the new trends in retail sectors and about the new kind of customers – "e-body", place branding, urban mobility with parking issues, and vacant space policies, to name but a few.

We used information and knowledge in our action plan as we transferred information and knowledge to ULG members. Some issues like the use of vacant space cannot be implemented due to national laws but others like place branding and new customer needs will be the backbone of our future work.

GOOD PRACTICE

Šibenik will adopt significant advice from URBACT partners and experts. We learned about Business Improvement Districts from The UK and the Netherlands, and urban races and pop up stores from Igualada. From more experienced partners like Basingstoke, we received a very positive review of our action plan and that is, in the end, the meaning of the URBACT.

Despite Croatia being among the EU most centralized countries and the fact that retail is primarily regulated by the central government laws, Šibenik can show good practice in attracting people to city centre.

Primarily, Šibenik as culturally heritage rich town succeeded in renovating its fortresses in the city using EU funds, thus making them an attraction for visitors, tourists and local population.

The fortress of St. Michael and the Barone fortress were successfully renovated and attract 500.000 visitors per year today. The St. Michael fortress was awarded as the cultural attraction for year 2014 and Barone for year 2016.

Still, the challenge on how to attract visitors in the city centre during winter posed a challenge on how to attract visitors in the city centre during winter. Owing much to the ideas and practices incorporated via our participation in RetaiLink, the project Advent in Šibenik started last year proved to be great success in attracting visitors in the time of year when fortresses and beaches normally go into hibernation mode. Concerts, street food and an ice skating rink starred as the main attractions, and the city centre and the park were decorated. On top of this, the Šibenik Advent is the first Croatian plastic free festival!

We can recommend our good practice in creating attractions and events that pull visitors in the city centre and try to improve cooperation with all local retail-related stakeholders.

4 - CONTACT INFORMATION

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Project coordinator
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5 - ROADMAP

Objective	Action	Delivery lead/team	Key partners involved	Time	Resources / Assets	Output indicator
SO1: Develop a frame of cooperation between ULG and city administration						
	A1: Organizing and establishing a functional local action group	Retailers	City of Šibenik	2017	n/a	• 10 retailers organized - ULG created
	A2: Regular meetings of LAG representatives, the city administration and public companies	ULG	City of Šibenik Public companies	2018	n/a	• At least 4 meetings held
	A3: Developing a joint calendar of events containing commercial, cultural, artistic and sports events in the old city centre	Šibenik tourist board City of Šibenik	ULG Croatian chamber of crafts Sibenik culture council Sibenik theatre Sibenik public library Fortresses of culture	2018	45.000,00 HRK/ City Budget and Tourist board Budget	• Calendar of events created and published
SO2: Encouraging and promoting desirable business activities in the old city centre						
	A1: Mapping the current situation, list of all business premises and creating suggestions for thematic streets and quarters in the historic city centre	City of Šibenik	ULG Sibenik architect society Sibenik tourist board Croatian craft chamber	2019	85.000,HRK/ City Budget	• Map and list of business premises in old city centre • Map of suggested thematic streets and quarters created
	A2: Creating a catalogue of doing business and online business management system for attracting new tenants in the historical city centre according to the thematic zones	City of Šibenik	Šibenik architect society ULG Šibenik chamber of craft Owners of business premises Marketing agency	2019 2020	55.000,00 HRK/ City Budget	• Catalogue created, published and distributed • Online system created and operational

SO 3: Improvement of the retailers' skills and competence					
A1: Monitoring and analysis of market needs	ULG City of Šibenik	Polytechnic of Šibenik IT company	2017 2018 2019 2020	25.000 HRK annually	• Survey conducted, results analysed and presented • Customers database create • City WiFi based system of footsteps analysis developed • Heath map of city centre visitors created
A2: Organization of training for retailers and their employees	ULG City of Šibenik	Chamber of crafts Croatian economic chamber Polytechnic of Šibenik Experts on selected themes	2018 2019	40.000,00 HRK/ ULG membership and City Budget	• Training courses held • At least 10 retailers or their employees trained
A4: Connecting with educational institutions to improve the quality of workforce	ULG	Polytechnic of Šibenik Sibenik economic school	2019	n/a	• Four students educated for specific task and employed
A5: Connect retailers with Croatian designers in order to increase the quality of the offer	ULG Chamber of crafts Croatian economic chamber	City of Šibenik Independent designers	2019	n/a	• B2B meeting of retailers and designers
SO 4: Increasing the old city centre appeal to reduce the effect of seasonality					
A1: Organization of sale fairs and events, creation of shopping atmosphere	Šibenik tourist board City of Sibenik Chamber of crafts Croatian economic chamber	ULG Marketing and event agency	2019	100.000,00 HRK per events / City Budget, Tourist board budget, Croatian chamber of crafts budget	• Two sale fairs organized • Shop design handbook – brochure about how to design and decorate shop, designer advice and legal regulations created and published
A2: Development and design of special system of signalization	City of Šibenik Conservation office	ULG Marketing or design agency	2018 2019	150.000 HRK/ City budget	• Signalization system designed and applied • Designed retailers signs in the old city centre with small urban interventions • Shopping maps of the old city centre placed on the parking lots in the contact area
A3: Development of smartphone entertainment and shopping applications based on innovative technologies	City of Šibenik Sibenik tourist board	ULG Chamber of crafts IT agency	2019	450.000,00 HRK/ City budget, EU funds	• Shopping and leisure app developed and downloadable from Google play and iOS store
A4: Cross-marketing - create new multi-dimensional products (activities with accommodation providers, caterers, public and cultural institutions, associations and companies, etc.)	City of Šibenik Šibenik tourist board ULG Chamber of crafts Chamber of economy		2019	280.000,00 HRK/ City budget, EU Funds, National Funds	• 4 new multi-dimensional products created
A5: Incentive system for all-year open retailers	City of Šibenik City of Šibenik council	ULG	2019	n/a	• Adopted system of encouraging all year business versus season business
SO 5: Marketing activities aimed at increasing the visibility of the retailers offer					
A1: Development of online marketing campaign for promotion of the old city centre offer	ULG Sibenik tourist board City of Šibenik	Chamber of crafts Croatian economic chamber Marketing agency Online advertising expert	2018	150.000 HRK/ Croatian economic chamber budget and City budget	• Web site for promotion of old city centre offer developed and online • Online marketing campaign for promotion of website conducted • 10 retail owners trained for digital marketing
A2: Actions and activities aimed to increase visibility and improve sales	ULG City of Šibenik Sibenik tourist board	Marketing and event agency	2018 2019	420.000,00 HRK / City budget, EU funds, Sibenik tourist board budget	• Two joint advertising campaigns conducted • Two coupon sales conducted • Advertising in parking lots in contact areas • PR activities in local media
SO 6: Mobility Measures - Enhancing Accessibility to the old city centre					
A1: Organization of the electrical delivery system	City of Šibenik Gradski parking Ltd.	Construction company	2018	200.000,00 HRK/ EU funds	• Delivery system established
A2: Constructing parking lots and garages in contact zones	City of Šibenik Gradski parking Ltd.	Construction company	2019 2020	50.000.000,00 HRK/ Gradski parking Ltd. –credit loan	• Increased number of parking spaces in contact zone • Garage Poljana operational
A3: Improvement and promotion of the public transport system	City of Šibenik Autotransport Ltd.	Marketing agency	2020	1.200.000 HRK/ EU funds	• Campaign for use of public transport

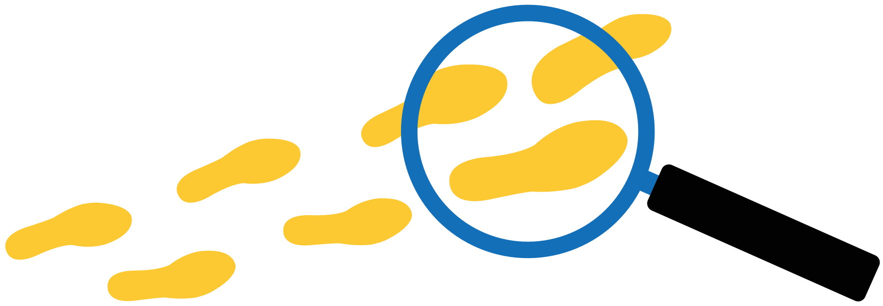
IV. RETAILINK NETWORK PROJECT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this document are based on the experiences of ten medium-sized European cities that, throughout 30-months of learning and exchanges within the framework of the RetaiLink project, addressed a wide range of issues critical for the revitalisation of retail in each one's area.

Smaller cities' governments and work teams -to whom these recommendations are addressed-may want to consider some of these, adapting or implementing them as necessary to suit specific contexts and needs, as part of their own local retail revitalisation project.

The proposed measures aim at describing the conditions to regain vitality in city centres and other urban retail districts where new retail propositions can take up operations and become a driving force for renewed economic activity and job creation.

The structure of this document follows the RetaiLink project report thematic content and structure. The recommendations are now presented:



1 - RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND THE CONSUMER: HABITS, LIFE STYLES AND PREFERENCES

Tracking global retail sector developments while at the same time understanding the real customer in our city will allow medium-sized cities to shape a retail proposition in town that is aware and can pre-empt negative impacting sector trends. Below are some tools and methods that can be used to gather significant data about local consumers' needs, expectations and values and the retail proposition in the city:

· Use consumer analysis tools to segment and profile customers in your city: families, tourists, young students or visitors from other neighbouring towns. Collect age and socio-economic information from existing official sources and consider custom indicators where needed.

· Link lifestyles to retail needs (I). Assess habits and shopping frequency (per areas, type of purchase, product). Use retail-sector specific devices, e.g. footfall counters, and monitor over a time period to see progress, seasonality factors and other influences.

· Link lifestyles to retail needs (II). Find what makes residents' life easier in terms of time and proximity, and what best suits their tastes and values. Ask about likes and expectations when using commercial streets, for example cultural events, bars and restaurants and other entertainment. Use online and street surveys and opinion polls.

· Identify perceptions that local customers have of the city and its retail experience to understand how these are valued.

· Rely on professional advice and technical support to enable data collection and research tools. Consider involving local College and University students.

· Involve local shops, hotels, theatres, bars and restaurants, public offices… in data collection and monitoring with a twofold aim of understanding customers' behaviour and strengthening their engagement in the new retail plan.

· Collect and facilitate critical business metrics and market analysis to new retail entrepreneurs (catchment area, purchase levels, Occupation Cost Rate, etc.) and to other sector stakeholders to favour decisions on new set ups and investment.

2 - RETHINK LOCAL RETAIL

Convenience and identity both play key roles in medium sized cities' retail. Local authorities, project leaders and their teams need to make sure that everyday purchase can be done within the city, and people do not have to move out of town or to bigger cities. Similarly, they should create a unique and distinctive selling proposition that is attractive for locals and visitors. The aim is for retail to become an integral part of the experience of leisure and socialisation when residents want to spend time off and look for entertainment in the city.

RETAIL MIX

· Create the conditions to attract variety and quality of retail products and brands that meet the target consumer needs and expectations.

· Negotiate with brands to bring anchor stores to the area. The brand that (young) people like the most is usually instrumental in driving footfall to the area.

· Strike a balance between chain and independent retail.

· Consider attracting a supermarket to create daily footfall.

· Consider recovering old municipal markets and create open shopping centres around them.

IDENTITY AND RETAIL

· Work in a shared and participated process to agree on a vision and identity for the city and its retail. Give it a bottom-up approach so that a local personality that is genuine and shared can emerge.

· Benchmark your local retail proposition with neighbouring towns to help define uniqueness and distinctiveness. Do not try to do things just better but different, as well.

· If the city has a branding and promotional strategy in place, define a retail identity that is consistent with the local brand. Retail must inspire and be consistent with the city's entire proposition and experience: product, shops, space and marketing messages.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIP FOR RETAIL AND AREA MANAGEMENT

· Define the stakeholders' composition for the project work group to participate in the planning and implementation process. Retailers are a key group, of course. But just as important are the property owners, hospitality members, tourist offices, Universities, community organisations, Chamber of Commerce, municipal departments... Each city should define its own group in view of local needs and contexts.

· Consider including profiles that can contribute with different and innovative conceptions for bringing new life to retailing in the city but who are not directly involved in the retail business, i.e. agents from creative and professional sectors such as artists, designers, architects...

· Make sure there is a functional management structure in place. At the same time, provide for robust leadership that underpins a forward-looking strategy and a sustained approach.

· Foster the local retail and/or town centre management partnership that best suits the public and private agents as well as the regulation context. Make sure the partnership gets the resources to be sustainable.

· When starting a management scheme from scratch, consider a more informal type of organisation and give initial support with public funds. Plan to progressively turn it into a more formal self-resourced structure.

MANAGE PLACE MAKING FACTORS

· Create a pleasant and attractive retail area in keeping with the local identity. Offer a pleasant atmosphere, and a clean and safe space, which together goes into improving the overall quality of the visual appearance.

· Design an area and retail experience that cares about quality service and visitor satisfaction.

· Offer culture and entertainment activities in public spaces with terraces and lunchrooms where people can sit down, listen to music, relax and spend time.

· Create an agenda of events in collaboration with retailers and other local actors to enliven the area and attract footfall at different times of the day and of the year.

· Ensure basic facilities for a comfortable and convenient visit to the area: car-parking nearby, WiFi zones, toilets, benches… and ensure the upkeep of these.

· Monitor crime, e.g. shoplifting, and crime perception and communicate results to stakeholders. Perception of insecurity is usually higher than actual crime rates.

ENGAGE AND SUPPORT RETAILERS IN SKILLS TRAINING

· Support independent retailers and new retail entrepreneurs to make them aware of the new sector trends and consumer behaviour.

· Use expert voices and sector connoisseurs to introduce retailers to the importance of key retail skills in line with the new trends: experiential shopping, customer treatment, customer and retail identity, consistent on-line and off-line selling propositions, social media in marketing tools.

· Involve retailers in the assessment of their own skills training needs. Or, use an undercover evaluator, disguised as a normal shopper, to evaluate customer service in local shops and contribute to the identification of skill gaps or needs.

· Allocate public budget to facilitate expertise and training.

· Select a pool of experts to make them available for training purposes, in cooperation with, for example, the local college or the retail trade associations.

· Set up training schemes to allow independent shop owners to attend customised training on-site and on-line.

· Enable mentoring business programmes on a one-to-one basis for retailers and allow for flexibility.

DIGITALISATION AND CONNECTIVITY OF THE RETAIL AREA

· Provide a single shared platform with a well-designed plan to make a retail area visible and accessible online. Include the retail offers and brands, services, shops, cultural agenda, plus the range of hospitality and events that can be found in the city.

· Raise infrastructure and connectivity standards in the city centre or retail area, including broadband and public WiFi access.

· Offer training to improve basic digital skills of individuals, SMEs, and the third sector so they can boost their level of virtual presence and interaction.

· Develop a digital toolbox to provide advice and guidance to local High Street communities and stakeholders.

· Enable a comprehensive omni-channel digital strategy to improve the on/off retail experience. Monitor it to ensure that the city and the retailers in the commercial area are visible and active online.

· Support virtual solutions at the neighbourhoods, e.g. sharing platforms to facilitate convenient and daily shopping online at the traditional shops, including quality fresh local products.

3 - SHAPE THE SPACE TO HOST THE NEW RETAIL PROPOSITION

For an optimal hosting and display of the new retail offer in the city, it is key to design an urban space that it is not only attractive but also adapts to the mix of functions that happen there. To some extent, the forms and intensity of urban uses can be planned and shaped through a mix of promotions regards the use of buildings, and empty retail premises, as well as the public space. Diversity of functions and proximity are key aspects in intensifying the use of a place, which eventually results in higher footfall, area vitality and business turnover. Urban planners and place makers provide ideas:

MULTIFUNCTIONALITY

· Promote a mix of uses in the area: housing, work, services and retail so they coexist in the same place. This will bring people for different purposes and at different times of the day. Higher footfall levels strengthen retail.

· Reconvert empty buildings into housing, municipal offices, business to fill empty premises in the city centre. Ensure services for these functions are in place: living quarters, schools, doctors, business services and transport.

· Reuse empty units to facilitate affordable space for new entrepreneurs: co-working spaces, SMEs incubators, start-ups in the city centre.

· Incentivise the hybrid uses of buildings: Combine business activity and housing in empty ground floors and upper floors, so the area is kept alive for longer hours.

· Allocate public and administrative services within the area for people to go there to take care of business, legal or financial formalities or other face-to-face operations.

· Give licences for hospitality and seasonal occupation of public spaces, such as terraces for bars and restaurants. This often attracts visitors and enlivens streets during working days and hours.

· Support party agreements between tenants and property owners to incentivise temporary and pop-up uses of empty buildings. Appoint mediators in the city who can take care of identifying needs and spaces.

COMPACTING AND LINKING

· When it is advisable to shrink the commercial area or a city centre, be sure to develop a strategy that foresees the compacting process with clear objectives, investments and compensations in a defined period of time. Design a plan that is broadly shared, politically approved and well communicated to the public.

· Delimit a recognisable urban area and decide functions to be allocated. It needs to be reachable and easily accessible on foot. It has to concentrate a suitable and quality retail while being multi-functional.

· According to this, decide which areas to continue investing in and which need to be dropped.

· Relocate retail activity and other selected services from peripheral streets to this urban area to fill the empty premises.

· Think of alternative uses for the premises that will be left empty. Look for projects that offer alternatives and fulfil other needs.

· Negotiate relocating conditions with owners and/or renters of the business left out of the compact area. Consider compensations and support.

· Think of a strategy for entry streets that can attract the attention of visitors to the centre.

· Allocate hairdressers, beauty salons and other services out of the main retail zone.

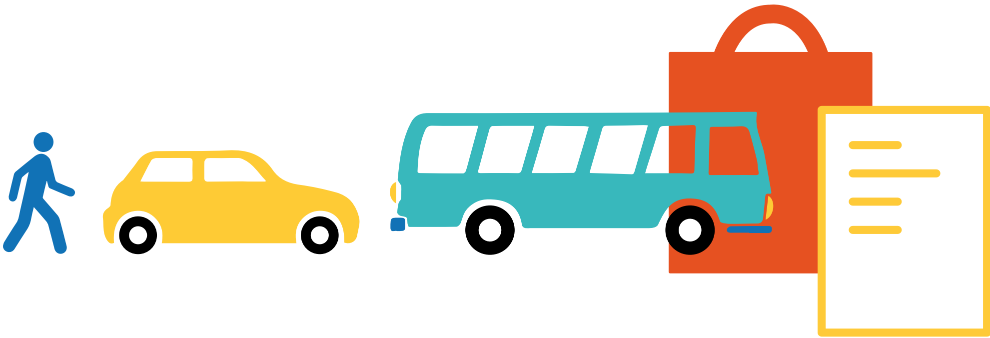
· Create links between different retail offers in the city by means of enabling an easy and affordable mix of transport.

· When not far from each other, design and create signage for walking routes through the city using visual devices (illumination, eye-catchers, sculptures) to guide visitors to the next interest point.

· Manage 'flow generators' around the city centre including tourist attractions, events or food markets, among others.

· Create different identities and uses to different retail areas. Also, design alternative agendas that bring people from one place to the other at different times of the day, and days of the week.

· Enable reliable online access for business and visitors.



4 - REGULATION AND MOBILITY

The legal and regulatory measures can underpin the new project by providing a clear and sustainable landmark. However, regulation should not be approached as something restrictive or definitive, but rather as a flexible tool that may be used to endorse and stimulate a place and activity that continuously evolve.

In terms of mobility, developing an urban model oriented to pedestrians and favouring proximity should be the guiding rules to achieve and increase of footfall and to promote a more lively retail and leisure area.

REGULATION

· Consider different tools for different regulation purposes:

- Tax exemptions and financial support schemes as business incentives.
- Urban and activity planning for retail areas delimitation and functions, e.g. night economy, and public space occupation.
- Licensing to define type of activity allowed in different streets and areas, e.g. promoting multi-functionality.
- Competitions and grants to endorse businesses and encourage quality enhancement.

· Manage the outlet distribution through planning and licensing to prevent a plethora of out of town shopping centres.

· Incentivise stakeholders to favour multi-functionality in the inner city with tax exemptions or financial support for new entrepreneurs.

· Promote a diverse business activity but regulate it, too, to block activities not suitable to the atmosphere from setting up, e.g. gambling casinos or saloons.

· Offer tax incentives, grant schemes and soft loans (in agreement with local branches of banks) for property owners to undergo building refurbishing; and for retailers to renew façades, shop windows and for in-shop restyling.

· Endorse new uses of emptied retail units through tenders or competitions addressed to entrepreneurs. Seek innovative and creative business proposals that fall within the functions and image of the street/district.

· Enable support schemes for entrepreneurs to set up in the area, for example time-limited tax exemption or simplifying administrative procedures.

· Negotiate business hours with retailers to make sure they comply with catchment needs and stay open during buzz hours. Plan for evening economy.

MOBILITY

· Pedestrianize or semi-pedestrianize the retail streets through traffic restrictions. Remove cars from the more retail intensive streets and allow people to walk and find their ways within the area.

· In agreement with retailers and residents, set up temporary pedestrianizing to assess improved results over a period of time. Testing also encourages progressive acceptance.

· Map the permeability of the city centre or retail zone. See how easy it is for users to move from one point to another. Identify obstacles that stop people walking or prevent visitors from entering a retail area.

· Get volunteers to go through different routes to assess permeability and describe the obstacles.

· Make the area accessible by different transport means: car, public transport, cycling.

· Set up new parking lots in unused areas or brownfields, and negotiate a low-cost or temporary use with owners, with a view towards reducing expensive infrastructure investment.

· Create specific schedules for freight delivery to facilitate business hours mobility.

· Make transport affordable to increase mobility in the city.

5 - BRANDING AND RETAIL

Place branding can help a medium-sized city to identify and foster a competitive difference with respect to similar or neighbouring places. With this in mind, then, a city's retail offer should be considered as key in the place branding process, in particular if the local selling proposition manages to reinforce the place concept and image.

Below are concepts and prerquisites to articulate a brand based on R. Pride's work (Heavenly. UK) as well as the experience of RetaiLink partners:

· Brand solutions and place branding may not be suitable for every city at any time.

· Engage in a participatory process open to different local agents to find the genuine and city-felt identity. Successful branding involves citizens and turns them into advocates. In this way, people, businesses and other stakeholders within the place can come to support what is being said and done on their behalf.

· Show difference and distinction and build a narrative of the place that touches people, their stories, their character, and their connections to place.

· Make the brand future-proof by anchoring it to a long-term idea and position. Avoid linking the brand to a single event with an expiration date.

· You need full support to build a compelling and distinctive reputation. To succeed, the brand needs to motivate external audiences and most importantly the local, internal ones.

· Do not stretch the truth, be honest. The city's story and image have to be able to withstand today's online immediate and honest feedback, so one cannot sell an image that does not resist the "acid test".

· Brands help shape the way a place develops and interacts with its 'customers'. It is important to consider how the potential solution can enhance the experience and add value at all points along the customer journey. Place experience results in either a good or bad reputation.

· The brand experience needs to comply and be consistent with the promotional messages and viceversa. Logos, design and communication are important, but the most successful place brands go further and directly influence strategy and behaviours.

· Think holistically about the city's perception: its reputation is the result of a blend of factors determining "the place where people want to be". A positive reputation helps with engagement and buy-in, and branding can play a role in reputation management.

6 - CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENSURING AND INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN

The following is addressed not only to local project teams who are working on a joint planning process, but also, and most importantly, to local authorities engaged in developing a city retail multi-stakeholder and cross-sector policy. Clear political commitments coming from the Council need to lead the process to ensure the necessary interlinking of retail policies and measures within the broader plans for a truly Integrated Action Plan.

· Ensure a strong leadership with a strategic vision that supports and advocates for the retail project amongst stakeholders in the city and in front of other institutions.

· Build a retail plan that links and is consistent with existing policies and plans for it to take hold and be sustainable.

· Keep teamwork and communication flows up-to-date and continuous among all project related departments to ensure the latest and most relevant sharing of information for project monitoring and adjustments.

· Find allies in a supra-municipal strategy. Search for regional and national policies that your city plan can endorse and that, in turn, can support your own local policy.

· Make clear how your retail revitalization project aligns with European priority objectives in terms of job creation, digital retail business solutions and skills upgrading, promotion of entrepreneurship, SMEs support, innovative approaches, sustainable mobility or the circular economy.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Retailing in the city is made up of a network of interconnected social, public, leisure and commercial economic activities. All these play their part to make a place interesting and attractive for people to visit, spend time and shop in. The engagement and commitment of a diversity of retail and non-retail agents is vital to provide the local community with the right product and service offer, to shape the urban area and the uses of the public and private space, and to give it an atmosphere that makes it inviting and pleasant for visitors.

Throughout the 30-month RetaiLink project, the URBACT methodology has allowed participant members to take part in a capacity building process that enabled them to plan their city retail strategies based on the following solid essentials:

On the one hand, learning about global retail trends, technological implications, consumer preferences and rethinking space helped RetaiLink's local groups to better understand and take pre-emptive measures in front of these new and ever-changing trends and challenges for the retail sector in their cities. The result is the creation of the conditions for new economic opportunities and jobs. On this point, the contribution of thematic experts and the exchange and peer review activities were most useful in the learning and capacity building of the local retailers and other agents who, identifying similarities with other cities with the same size and kinds of challenges in retail sector, were thus able to design similar solutions at the same scale.

On the other hand, the cities have managed to involve local groups in a shared and participatory-based process of problem analysis and the setting of priorities. This proved to be useful not only for defining solutions to meet local challenges but also, and most importantly, for initiating collaborative work schemes between the retailers and the local authorities and practitioners. Indeed, the core teams of the local partnerships are based on these alliances, which also include other relevant actors for the retail revitalisation strategy in the city: property owners of (empty) commercial premises, the cultural and creative industry, local craft sector, consumers, tourist agents, transport companies, etc.

In some RetaiLink cities these local agents sat down at the same table for the very first time to study and debate a common problem, i.e. their retail challenge. More and better communication flow and closer collaboration between smaller retailers and the municipality has changed the way they regard each other. Moreover, the contribution of non-usual retail-linked agents has given rise to new views on how to approach the traditional retail sector - innovative and creative perspectives that conceive retail as part of the experiential and leisure offer of the city as a whole.

In this joint collaborative approach, cities have gone from a situation where retailers merely request individual actions from the Council to deal with issues to a situation where all agents know they have a role to play in the development of a shared retail model. A good number of RetaiLink partners have created or strengthened their city centre and retail management partnerships that will remain after the URBACT RetaiLink planning process through the implementation stage.

RetaiLink project has evidenced the importance of the analysis and monitoring elements, too. The use of tools and methods are indeed part of the planning process and can help shape win-win outputs and assessments based on consumer analysis, understanding shopping habits and needs, and re-thinking the uses of retail and urban space. However, what was new to many is that retailers and other local actors can be co-producers of the information and co-responsible of the data collection, a process which thus

created a sense of ownership and responsibility for their share in the project.
Finally, a word on policy. Because of the mutual learning and understanding of different interests and experiences, policy interfaces were identified from different work areas that, up to the previous time, had been addressed individually with a limited impact in the retail vitality in town. RetaiLink cities are better aware now of the importance of seeing retail challenges as a mix of global and local aspects that need to be addressed in a coordinated manner.

It has become evident that, while focusing on retail revitalisation, city managers and retail agents agree they need to adopt a broader perspective and find bridges, links and consensus amongst all sectors and other local actors. The list of policy recommendations included in this report reflect such a broad and all-encompassing view.

As a result of all the above, the solutions that became part of each city's local plan and strategy are innovative both in terms of thematic scope and methodological approach.

Noteworthy it is that by participating in this European project, the ten cities have become more aware, too, of the broader scenario in which they belong in terms of each one's retail sector position and being a city in a larger territory. The plans have incorporated horizontal governance approaches, understanding the role cities can play in their regional polycentric development. This includes vertical collaboration and coordination with higher levels of the administration for a balanced and ordered regional development. Each is now more conscious of:

1. The need to reflect and find each owns' specificities and strengths working towards maximising them and differentiating them from other urban areas.

2. The need to focus on each one's capacities for playing a role in territorial articulation and cooperation with their functional and catchment areas. Each city plays a part in connecting and reinforcing territorial and urban policies and at the same time helps link neighbouring cities and wider territorial plans in the common interest and benefit for all cities in the same region.

Retailing in medium-sized cities is under stress due to multiple causes as reviewed in RetaiLink Baseline Study and project reports. The ten European RetaiLink cities have addressed a set of core influential factors and policy actions that should help smaller cities develop strategies and plans to adapt to global retail trends and new consumer habits. They are now reshaping their local retail propositions with new and upgraded tools and based on stronger local partnerships.

By trying out innovative retail ideas learned from other cities, bringing in recreational activities with the potential to attract outside people, they are developing attractive shopping experiences. At the same time, importantly, they are also supporting local entrepreneurs to foster new economic and social activities linked to regenerated commercial areas and urban spaces. The RetaiLink team expects that the key learning and good practices developed in the project can continue to be useful for each participating city, as well as serve as an inspiration for other smaller towns and cities in Europe facing similar challenges.

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