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RETHINKING THE CITY SPACE TO BETTER HOST THE NEW RETAIL PROPOSITION

3/5

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URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development. The URBACT Programme enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal changes. URBACT helps cites to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. The URBACT method enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe.

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INTRODUCTION

RetaiLink report **1/5 New Retail Trends and Consumer Behaviour** explained the need to know who the local consumer is in our cities as well as the importance of monitoring their shopping behaviour, while **2/5 Adapt and Reshape Retail in the City** described key premises to consider as well as important steps for local retailers and authorities to undertake towards shaping a retail offer that best suits the target customer.

The present report summarises the thematic contents shared at the third URBACT III RetaiLink network meeting on the use of public and private urban space where retailing takes place. The meeting took place in the city of Liberec, Czech Republic, on February 2017 and it essentially addressed:

- **Reshaping** the urban space to better adapt it to the local retail offer.
- **Compacting** the city centre to make it more attractive and accessible.
- **Linking** different areas within the inner city to facilitate flows of people to the retail and leisure zones.
- **Reusing** and transforming empty retail units through alternative and creative uses of space.

One crosscutting topic was discussed at the Shop Window - the sessions where project partners showcase their good practices. In this case, a total of four city partners shared their respective local partnerships - public, private or mix schemes - that they have enabled to manage the city centre retail and economic activity. The result thereof is the subject of the specific stand-alone Case Study **Local Partnerships for Local Retail Management and Revitalisation**, also available at the URBACT RetaiLink site.

1.RETAIL AND THE EU URBAN AGENDA

Habitat III sets a new urban agenda in the global context and with the pact of Amsterdam cities are recognized at the core of the European future. It is the first time that the EU decides to create an urban agenda for the continent. This makes European national authorities to think now not only in terms of regions (NUTS) but also in terms of cities and their territories. Among the retail relevant targets included in the Urban Agenda are Jobs and Skills and Circular Economy.

The local economy is circular by definition in the sense of local resources as the beginning and the end of the productive process. Cities should avoid being only at the end of the consumption chains and consider playing a greater role in sustainability. Supporting the local investment in producing and consuming locally and regionally will benefit local retailers and even create a sense of identity that distinguishes local retail.

Moreover, circularity naturally defends small and medium enterprises, which strengthens the local economic fabric and creates jobs and activity. It does so in a more sustainable form than any other investment of big corporations, usually tied to international economic flows and prioritising high efficiency and low costs.

Retail also contributes to the urban agenda because it creates urbanity. Retailing is inherent to the city and its social interactions, and it is an indicator of urban quality and vitality. Retailers generate activity while creating and shaping space in the city because commerce is spatially rooted on urban concepts: center, square, high street…

For all the above, it seems a good idea to start integrating retailing policies and their stakeholders within the broader city economic development model. The local retail offer needs to respond and be in line with the local policies.

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2.RETHINK AND RESHAPE THE URBAN SPACE WITH A VIEW ON RETAIL

What fallows is the abstract of the key ideas that Professor Juan Luis de las Rivas, Architect, PhD, University of Valladolid (Spain) presented on the topic of city planning and retail as well as some case examples from RetaiLink partners and other cities that illustrate this contents[1].

URBAN PLANNING AND RETAIL

According to Prof. de las Rivas, there are two key ideas to be considered when learning about urban planning which apply to urban retail planning:

A. Citizens should be the central focus of attention when designing the urban space. Urban planning is a tool to help adapt the space in order to meet residents and users' requirements, and ultimately make cities more liveable for them.
B. Our cities are in continuous change while the urban "fabric" remains -main urban ways, iconic buildings. The uses of public and private space develop and change over time, thus, local decision makers and urban planners need to revalue and adapt it to present needs.

Besides the two considerations above, it is worth mentioning two preconceived notions usually taken for granted:

A. It is usually assumed that there is a correspondence between commercial models and city models. However, very often the contemporary city does not usually respond to one neat single type. What urban planners state today is that beyond typologies, which can be undoubtedly helpful as reference to facilitate understanding, different forms of urban models and their inner relationships overlap. Professionals and policy makers need to accept that the model of our city is the real city, the one that we have. On-going measuring and analysing is required to understand our city.

B. A link between urban centrality and commercial activity seems to be set in stone. However this is only partially true and corresponds with some cities and towns with singular historic centres. However a vast majority of European cities have several centres where a diversity of retail models coexist:

· The historic city centre with a retail activity usually associated to leis re and non-daily shopping.
· The inner or first periphery also called "the enlargement areas", with a residential use and where retailing meets neighbours' daily shopping needs.

1. *See presentation document Retail, liveability and city planning. Integrating strategies for an urban renaissance in medium cities* at the RetailLink virtual city

· Suburban areas, less densely populated, more car-dependent where malls are usually located.

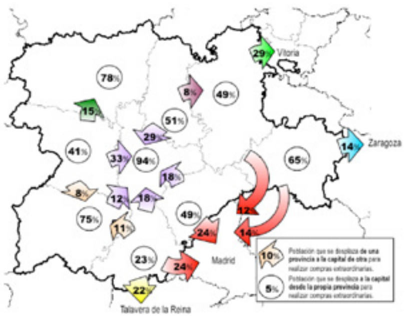
The majority of our cities have experienced the appearance and increase of big out-of-town commercial centres in the last decades. This type of retail seemed to be attractive in terms of accessibility, leisure offer and prices. However, what they eventually do is displacing economic activity, and thus vitality, from the inner city, and what is more important, they are found to be more expensive for the city since they do not incorporate the cost of externalities: traffic congestion, accidents and pollution are charged to the community and do not appear in the balance of the large chains[2].
Retail is important as a vitality factor for the city centre, where people often go for a variety of leisure purposes: social, cultural, entertainment and shopping. But retailing also plays an important role in generating activity in the neighbourhoods. Small independent retailers are the ones who use the space at the ground floors of the buildings, keeping residential areas lively while offering a convenient service to the locals and preventing journeys within and out of the city areas for daily shopping needs.

As we can see in the map of flows below, corresponding to the region of Castilla-León (Spain), people move to bigger cities for non-daily shopping purposes.

Map of shopping trips in Castilla-León (Spain)

People commuting to the capital of another province for non-daily shopping

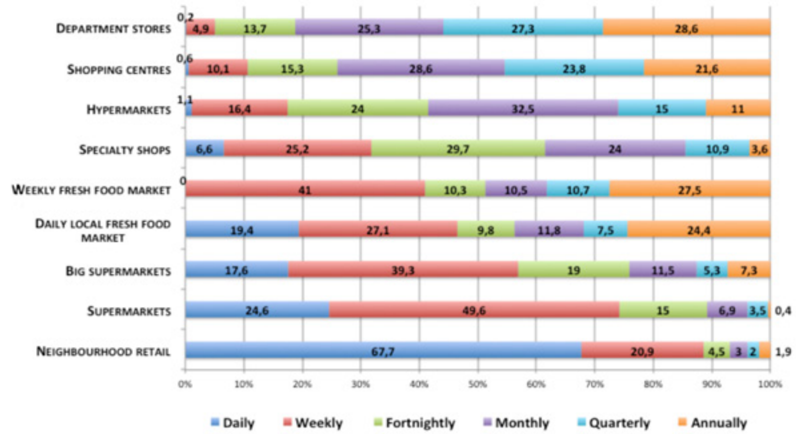
People commuting to the capital of its own province for non-daily shopping



Urban planners and local decision makers engaged in a retail revitalisation strategy should be able to make the city centre attractive to better host the local retail proposition, but they also need to keep an eye on the residents and users needs' living and using the neighbourhoods, thus promoting proximity and convenience and preventing from imbalances.

Below is an example of purchase frequency showing the relevance of proximity in retail[3]. Interesting to note that to the question ¿Where do you feel more comfortable for shopping? Proximity got a 38%, Supermarkets a 28% and Hypermarkets a 15%. Therefore, when people are surveyed, they say they prefer local closeness retail for their everyday purchases; this again shows the importance of neighbourhood retail offer. This daily or weekly shopping is what makes retail alive in small and medium-sized cities.

Frequency of use of different retail formats



2. "Off our trolleys", Raven and Lang, Institute for Public Policy Research, London, 1995
3. Survey undertaken in the region of Castilla-León, Spain

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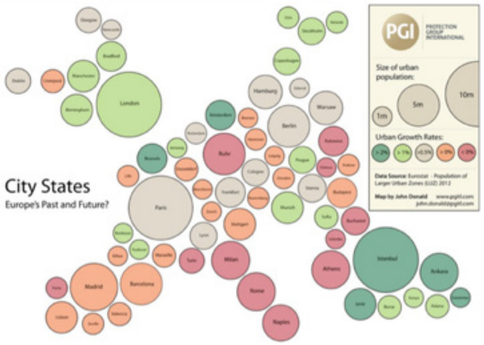
IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND THE POWER OF PLACE

Big cities are said to be city-states today, and Europe has a number of them. But we have different typologies and sizes, and Europe is mainly an intricate network of close medium and smaller cities.



Before engaging in planning, it is important to know very 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?

Cities exist in their regions, in systems with other cities. Because of the interdependencies and shared assets and problems, urban planning must involve a regional perspective that allows understanding the centralities and polarities and that improves territory organisation. The local economy does not develop isolated and neighbouring cities often find themselves competing for resources: industrial investment, knowledge, retail... In this regards, it has become increasingly evident that neighbouring territories need to be jointly planned in view of a coordinated management and more balanced resources.

Fermo city to get more out of the Marche region flow of visitors
The city of Fermo is an old historic town dating back to the pre-Roman era. It is just a few kilometres from the Adriatic coast, with a Mediterranean landscape combining hills and the sea.
The city was once a Roman colony and has always been the most important centre of the entire district having also been a cardinal seat for the Catholic Church. The region of Fermo has some popular attractions: beach resorts about 20 min. from the city centre, Porto Sant'Elpidio and Porto San Giorgio, and also outlet centres, particularly the big brand village, Il Castagno, 30 km. from Fermo, that offers a wide range of up scale fashion brands, mainly shoes and leather products.

These are regional attractions pulling visitors to the region, and from a regional perspective, these assets might be complementary and part of a single visitors' experience to the region, thus enhancing Fermo's visibility and popularity. However, the city centre of Fermo does not really benefit from this flow, and visitors do not find it very attractive to stay in the city for long. Fermo wants to create the conditions for the attractive historic centre to host a local retail offer together with a good quality hospitality sector that provides a complementary experience to the region and benefits local economic development. This is expected to create an attractive experience and enhance economic activity in particular during the tourist season.

Urban planning tools exist to establish links between cities and their territories and create interfaces between the inner city, the first crown and the new centralities (industrial areas, logistics, new neighbourhoods, retail areas…). With this objective, the urban structure needs to combine three different urban systems:

- **Mobility:** Flows, fractures, barriers, doors…
- **Open spaces:** Nature and landscape, corridors, continuities and fragments.
- **Central places:** Built environment, well-served and equipped; neighbourhoods and urban centrality structure.

All these tools and concepts are part of the technical work in urban planning but, beyond, or in addition to them, when creating urban space, planners need to consider people's lives and users' preferences.
In drawing –imagining- the city, they need to understand and help people make decisions.

RETAIL EXPERIENCE AND MODELS

As seen above, different retail experiences and models coexist in the same city and the distribution and level of concentration defines urban centralities and polarities. What follows is a basic description of different urban retail locations that very much define the cities where they relate:

A. The Souk or the retail inside the city

This is the traditional role of retail in the city. The Souk is a concentration of local independent retailers whose activity helps to build a system of relationships, exchanges, information, and ultimately, a sense of community. The Souk is also the first type of department store.

Photo: Al-Hamidiyah Souk Damasc

The two-century old Al-Hamidiyah Souk of Damask extends for more than half Km. Its shops offer local goods such as textiles and antiques. Beyond the main shopping area for locals, the Souk is the place to hang out.

Some RetaiLink partners would be closer to this model of retail location, except for the roofed area. Romans, Igualada, Sibenik, Fermo, in the Mediterranean area, but also Pécs and Liberec in eastern regions, have old centres, built around historic churches or the cathedral, where the market and a good share of retail activity was traditionally located. They offer the attraction of the charming narrow historic buildings and streets. Locals and visitors use this space for shopping but also for social and leisure purposes.

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.

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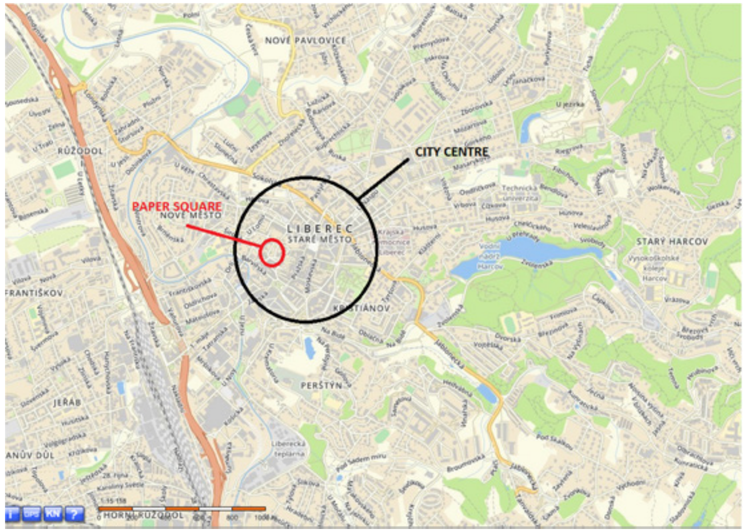
Historic legacy regeneration in Liberec

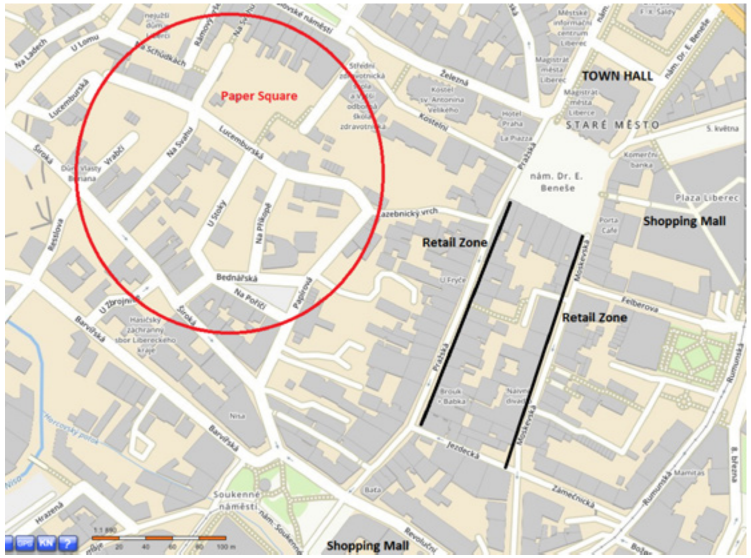
The city centre in Liberec has a very nice and preserved historic heritage in old cobbled streets and some arcades covering part of the traditional local shops. In the recent years, big shopping malls located out of the town centre have progressively attracted footfall resulting in independent retailers to close their shops.

Liberec is planning a number of actions to restore its cultural legacy with the aim of preparing the city to be able to generate, host and offer more attractive and modernized retail experiences. Refurbishing of the Cultural Centre Theatre Warsaw, the Exhibition Markets in the city centre of Liberec, as well as the castle, with its gallery and park, are the most representative actions taken thus far.

Also, as part of the strategy to revitalise the old city centre, the city is planning to regenerate a wide brownfield area nearby. The physical intervention will focus on three old, abandoned textile industry areas with old buildings, which are now unused, empty spaces in need of complete renewal and new function.

Private investors acquired these plots of land for speculative purposes but the plans they have for the area are not at all aligned with the city's vision for the area economic revitalisation and wider socio-economic growth. Today the Council of Liberec is negotiating with the landowners to achieve a commonly agreed project for each of the brownfield sites that is consistent with the city's interests and in line with the retail revitalisation strategy for the city centre.

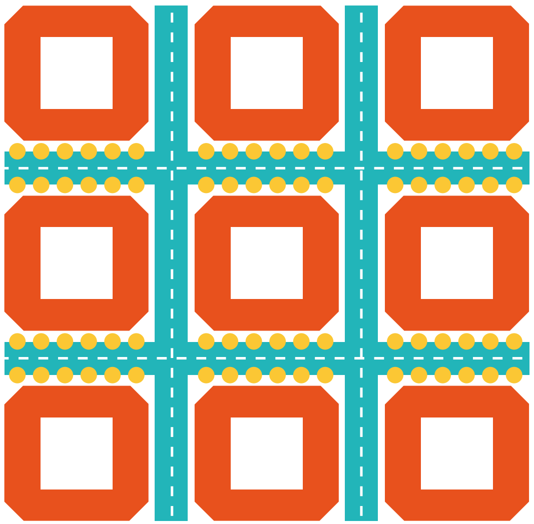




B. Shopping centre for a city with no centre

Where an old historic centre does not exist, cities have tended to recreate an area that concentrates activity, and where retail plays a key social and economic role. In fact, the first shopping mall was not built outside the city but in a reinvented city centre: Kansas City (US) reconstructed a city centre and even built an exact replica of the 13th century Spanish Torre del Oro (Tower of Gold of Seville), creating the atmosphere of an historic old town. In the case of Toronto, the city has built roofed inner streets so citizens can walk and use the urban space even in cold winters.

In Europe many cities have historic centres and do not need to recreate downtowns. However others, particularly the ones more heavily hit by WWII and totally or partially destroyed, went through a reconstruction process that applied rational urban spatial distribution, which resulted in the typical orthogonal urban structure.



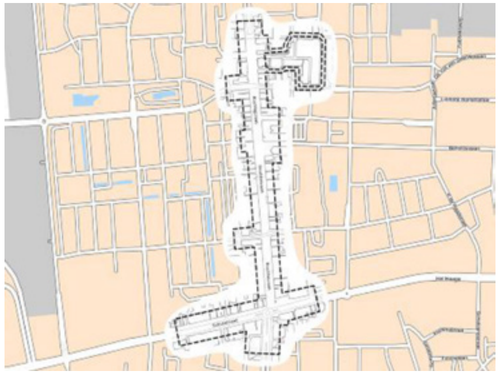
Retail in orthogonal city centres

Hoogeveen and Hengelo are two Duch RetaiLink partners. The two cities were largely affected by the war bombing. Their city centres were rebuilt adopting a reticular structure, so they have well organised urban structures, with wide straight streets running up and down parallel and across the high street. On its side, Bistrita our partner in Romania, has an old historic centre that is also reticular in organisation and widely spread in dimensions.

This type of spatial organisation influences retail distribution in the urban area. The three cities have a sparse retail offer located in a diffuse city centre. This wide spread-out retail area makes it difficult to identify meeting points for leisure and shopping and all this results in scattered retail configurations.

To redress this situation the two Dutch cities have prioritised compacting their retail areas as part of the RetaiLink project and planning process. The objective is to make it easy to identify the city centre and make it more attractive and lively. Retail and other business, cultural offer and hospitality, will coexist and fill empty retail units in the city centre, thus creating a pleasant and lively atmosphere.

In Bistrita, the Council is addressing the issue by, principally facilitating mobility between inner city areas.



Hoogeveen city centre

Hengelo city centre

Bistrita city centre

C. Out-of-town shopping centres

The open malls in the US represent a new evolution of shopping malls, where cars are located inside and the retail is around. This is completely opposite to the traditional relationship between retail and the city. Retail takes place and is rooted in basic urban areas: the streets, squares, the city centres… It is not something additional but, on the contrary, it is determinant in configuring the area, and very importantly, it is the first indicator of the quality of life in a city. Displacing too much the retail activity to the shopping malls impoverishes the city centre in all senses.

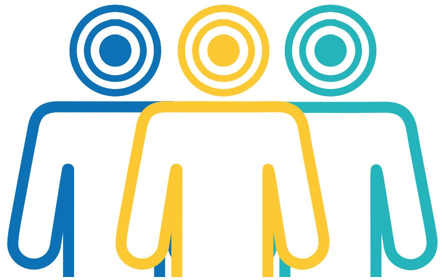
A beautiful old centre in Romans struggling to compete with big shopping malls

As is the case for so many French medium-sized cities, Romans has a somewhat disproportionate offer of out-of-town shopping centres that families use for daily shopping.

Despite the newly established franchises and the street market in the centre district, the historic city centre today is experiencing a sharp retail sector decline evidenced by the high level of vacancy (75% in some city centre streets). Some out-of-town shopping centres responding to the open and car-centred model have been inaugurated in the last year and even months. However, some are already showing a low affluence except for some weekend hours.

In addition, Romans is home of one of the 7 big Marques Avenue shopping outlets in France. The Marques Avenue outlet is just a few hundred metres from the city centre, which makes it easy for residents to reach it. What the City has found out that visitors do not move to the city centre for additional shopping or hospitality uses.

This retail atomisation makes it difficult for the city to keep customers in the centre district given the trend of using the car for daily shopping, which ignores, in effect, the inner city's retail offer. The city is planning a strategy to make the city centre retail more attractive while enhancing the mobility solutions for visitors to move from one retail area to another, thus preventing them from using the car.

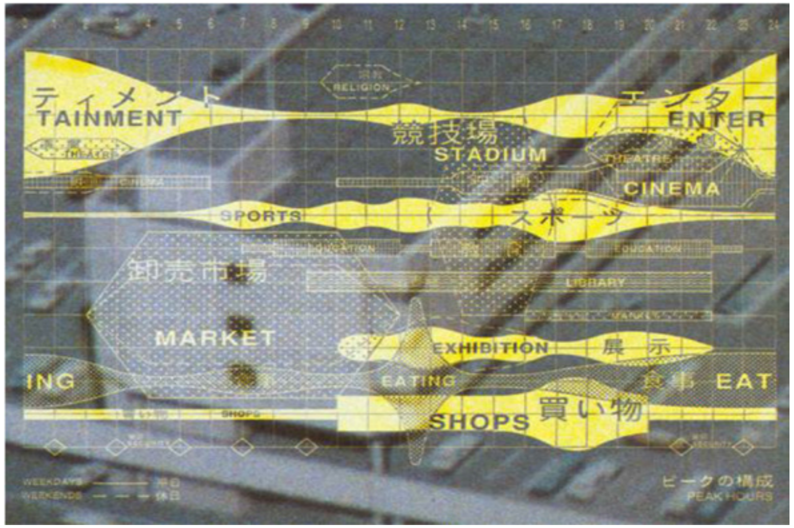


RETAIL IN THE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Regardless of the urban structure the city has, 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 and livelier centre, thus making it more vibrant and economically prosperous. The complete process for compacting is described in the section Compacting urban areas with a view to revitalise retail activity.

However, when focusing too much on the city centre, we risk ignoring the real city and forget the neighbourhood retail. Planning at the local level means combining strategy with tactics, that is, moving in the field to transform it. First we need to understand the real needs and aspirations of residents, then plan at a manageable scale: the neighbourhood. This is the area where liveability of people is based.

Consequently, a clear alliance exists between housing and retail strategies since inner city residents are the ones to use, and thus strengthen, local retail. In promoting this combination of living and shopping, it is useful to enable hybrid uses of buildings, where working, living, and services coexist. The "urban ecosystem" is composed by a complex overlapping of diverse activities with constant interferences. These activities are in constant interaction and cannot be reduced to separate functionalities.



Thinking the sequences and combinations of uses & times in complex urban spaces[4].

According to the above, thinking urban planning has to address 2 key conditions for wellbeing and liveability:

A) Mixed uses: Our city ecosystem should allow urban places that include and combine proximity uses: schools, playgrounds, well connected to main roads, shops, places of worship (churches) residential areas, mixed working areas and basic services.

B) Proximity: Several urban planners have established the 400 metres-rule as the basic rule for pedestrians when planning, i.e. Cerda's Eixample in Barcelona (the Enlargement) planned and developed in mid XIX Century.

4. S, M, L, XL, O.M.A., Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau 1995

Rethinking the Rec District in Igualada. From an old eccentric industrial district into a new neighbourhood and pole of activity

The Rec is one of the oldest industrial districts in Catalonia, a unique 17th century heritage that combines abandoned factory premises and new industrial architecture while keeping the identity of a town born around the leather industry.

Today, the area is at risk of becoming a brownfield with abandoned old buildings, some of which have an historic interest.
The land use is largely industrial with no housing, commercial or recreational uses. Some cultural and sports events have been taking place in that area in the last years, after decades of being neglected. It also hosts the Rec.0 Pop up stores event twice a year.

The city has initiated a participatory process in which citizens, retailers and other local agents join architects, urban planners and the City Council in a collective exercise of imagining what the district should be in the future.

On the first phase, a total of 46 organisations -consultancy firms in architecture and urban national and international development experts, were asked to submit their proposals on the basis of
a) promoting the connection between the urban centre and the Anoia river, thus recovering the local urban network;
and **b)** thinking of mixed uses.

A jury preselected 15 proposals. These 15 agencies will attend a series of meetings with representatives of citizens and local agents who will explain what they have in mind when they imagine the future of the Rec district. Then a 3-month period will follow to present final proposals.

What has been new and relevant for Igualada in this process is that it consists of a collective exercise of a long-term strategic reflection, and not just a planning exercise with occasional participation from the citizens. The process incorporates the talent of architecture and town-planning professionals at local, national and international level but at the same time ensures the participation of local agents and citizens.

The project of the district renewal has been inspired by a number of successful transformation processes, among them, the Zollverein coal mine industrial complex (Essen, Germany).

3.COMPACTING URBAN AREAS WITH A VIEW TO REVITALISE RETAIL ACTIVITY

The end of the 20th century saw a long time of economic growth and urban development and the success of retail seemed to have no limit. However the huge growth today is on e-shopping, which is steadily expanding its market share. Internet today makes people to be better and more informed and also have more time. Again, although in a diffe-rent way the 'sky is the limit'.

In this context, many medium-sized cities have suffered the recent global downturn. The decline of their population, particularly young people, leaving to bigger urban dynamic areas, is a concern for the smaller ones, afraid of losing competitiveness. In terms of retail, the gap between the bigger cities and the small town centres is getting bigger. To prevent these negative trends, cities need to show they are reliable places for people to live and work in, and that they can offer a good and broad retail offer.

People want to go for shopping where it is nice, for example in big cities, or where it is easy to access. With this in mind, the easiest places to go are our own hometowns as long as they offer what residents need, for example groceries, supermarkets, but also other shopping options and facilities: good and enough parking lots, easy accessibility both physical and through Internet connection. Cities need to show they are a good option for shopping for locals or visitors from the catchment area.

PROXIMITY AS A KEY RETAIL FACTOR

Long distances from different shops or services within an urban area tend to discourage footfall. In terms of spatial planning of a retail area, middle range cities need to measure the city centre area and then try to compact it. The 400-metre rule ensures that nobody in the nei-ghbourhood needs to walk more than this distance for daily-required services and shops.

The purpose of compacting is to make the city centre attractive again for the local inhabitants, the people in the region, and the visitors and tou-rists. By compacting, cities reduce the number of square meters, make those that remain more attractive and fill vacancies, all this to create the feeling of buzz in the city. Moreover, it reduces the need of transport, particularly private cars, by preventing the locals to move around in the city and to out-of-town shopping centres.

Some measures considered to be success factors in linking commercial urbanism to the compact city model include:

· Define a recognisable urban centre (the *downtown*).
· Restore and revalue the historical city and its attractions while favouring the traditional commerce that sits there.
· Develop an urban model oriented to pedestrians and favour proximity.
· Modernise the retail sector through tailored local plans.
· Recover old municipal markets and create open shopping centres around them.
· Subsidise traditional urban retail to adapt to the new model and changes.
· Make the area accessible both physical, with good combination of mobility options[5] and online. It is increasingly popular to enable Wifi in the city centre.
· Recreate an attractive atmosphere with a cultural offer, leisure activities, terraces and lunchrooms to sit down, listen to music, etc.
· Create an agenda of events, including interesting and unexpected views.

It is also useful to create routes through the city, using focus points, eye-catchers... that make walking paths clear. The city can use lights, sculptures, icons… to attract people to the next step.

Examples of eye-catchers and linkers

COMPACTING THE CITY CENTRE: THE PROCESS AND THE ACTORS

In terms of compacting and revitalising city centre retail, Janny Rijs, from Broekhuis Rijs Advisering, a consultancy firm on urban and retail planning and development[6] recommends foreseeing and planning the following project stages:

1. Decide where is the core business of the city centre, what is the city DNA and selling proposition that provides coherence to the local retail offer and then think of a set of projects around this local identity. Create custom instruments that work for your city.

2. Define the areas to continue investing in and the ones to be dropped. This will entangle a set of difficult decisions to make because some business, including retail units, will fall outside the centre. Initiate negotiations with affected businesses and consider starting a support scheme to facilitate their reallocation. It is advisable to keep some type of businesses outside of the core centre: hairdressers, beauty saloons, etc.

6. Janny Rijs, from Broekhuis Rijs Advisering, consultancy firm on urban and retail planning and development. (www.broekhuisrijs.nl)

3. Communicate the project and look for ambassadors that help explain the project. The process of retail reallocation and concentration takes time, dialogue and investment.

4. Develop a well-though strategy and make clear:
· Who is involved?
· Who is responsible of what?
· Which timeframe does the strategy require to be developed?
· What are the priorities?
· How is it going to be financed?

The local government is usually the initiator in the process of planning and implementing a compacting and linking strategy for the city centre, either driven by the Council administration or within the structure of a public-private partnership, i.e. Business Improvement District (see Case Study 2 of the RetaiLink outputs). But soon other local stakeholders need to be involved and made co-responsible for creating the strategy as a means to create complicity and engagement.

RetaiLink partners have already involved a number of different local agents to participate in the panning process and have invited some of their representatives to attend the project meetings. Some tips to address these groups include:

Estate owners: Owners of buildings out of the designed compact area can be offered compensations, also financial. The Council can negotiate the reallocation of their properties. If local government invests money to enhance the city centre, they will benefit from higher rents in that area because economic agents will be willing to move there.

Economic sector: It is recommended to set the basis for cooperation with the sectors doing business within the city centre: retail, food & beverages, real estate, leisure, etc. These will be the group both benefitted and affected by the area renovation.

Customers: Local consumers have to be listened to and analysed[7]. Particularly the young ones, who are the main change agents and city centre users. The new retail proposition needs to work with a focus on the local customers and potential visitors, offering what they expect, otherwise they will pass by to the next more attractive city.

Neighbouring cities and higher government levels: Medium-sized cities being close to a larger city have a problem in keeping their customers and citizens for leisure activity and shopping. But when a number of smaller cities can offer something special and attractive as a wider region, with different specificities, and complementary, they usually manage to make the whole region attractive.

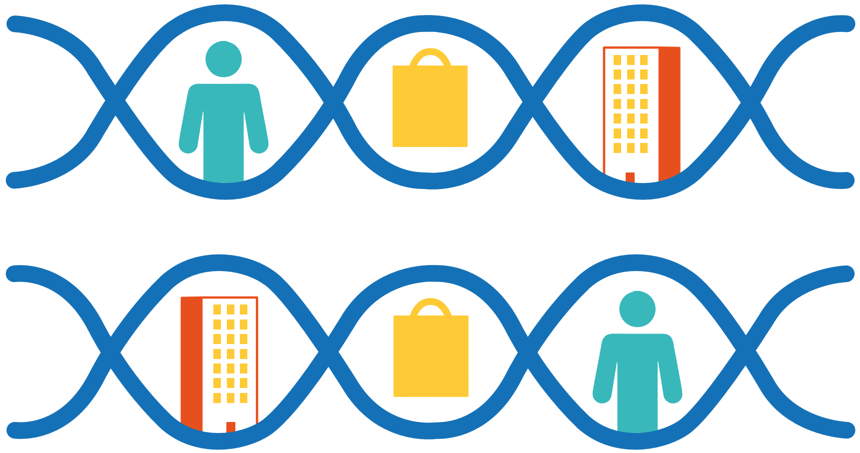
It is important that the local groups -decision makers and local stakeholders- bear in mind that keeping the customers in the region is the shared goal for all, and that the process will necessarily require transformations and involve give and takes from all sides. To keep all required stakeholders committed, they have to be part of the negotiation and planning process. Supporting and generating discussion of new ideas and proposals in multi-stakeholder platforms will help all local agents think from new perspectives and consider alternatives not regarded before.

Finally, according to place makers and retail experts, a convenient and attractive combination of stores in the city centre will include:

1. A good selection of brands, but not flagship stores, that attract the local consumers: young people, families, tourists, etc.

2. Supermarkets, to allow everyday footfall in the area.

3. Uniqueness, because every city is different. A retail identification (DNA) is necessary. The uniqueness needs to be hand in hand with the local identity and options. For example, a quality assortment of local and proximity products that can be found in shops (and restaurants), a specific locally design product (crafts, clothes…), etc.



7. See previous 1/5 RetailLink report *New retail Trends and Consumer Behaviour*

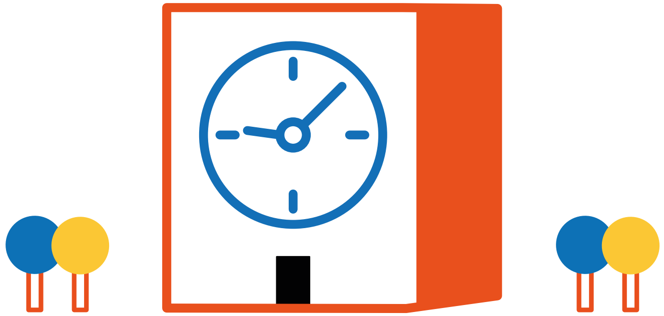
RetailLink

Pécs local industry unique and attractive

Pécs' industrial and employment sectors still active in the city include the Zsolnay Porcelain manufacture, the leather industry (gloves) and the food and beer production. More recently key business and employment sectors include the cultural and creative sector. Pécs was capital of Culture in 2010, which enabled it to undertake major renewals in the city, among them the refurbishing of the Zsolnay Cultural District, a 5 Ha of the porcelain manufacture area which became not only an area of exhibition of the porcelain craft industry, but also a place dedicated to other elements related to the creative industry: the Creation Centre, the Incubator House, the Family District and a number of shops, cultural institutions, restaurants and festivals.

This unique local industry of porcelain and leather provides the city with very genuine products that have been an attraction for visitors. They can continue to be so if they are properly adapted and 'packaged' as part of the local strategy for retail revitalisation.

ZSOLNAY



4. TEMPORARY USES OF RETAIL EMPTY UNITS. LESSONS FROM THE URBACT III REFILL NETWORK

As broadly detailed in numerous retail research and reports, recent retail and consumer trends point to an increase of online shopping alongside with a preference of a more experiential retail. This translates into emptying of retail units, which are not being refilled with retail activity anymore, and forecasts show they will never become shops again, at least, in the traditional form we know them.

Cities should consider alternative functions for these empty units. New uses that support retail sector activity by means of bringing people to the area for working, social or cultural purposes, since multi-functionality of a place reinforces economic activity, including retail.
REFILL is a ten-partner URBACT III Action Planning Network led by the city of Ghent (BE) and addressing the topic of temporary uses of empty spaces in the city[8]. The RetaiLink network looked at REFILL work in search of ideas for potential new uses for these empty buildings and the process and steps to address to give new uses to them.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT FROM TEMPORARY USES?

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. Temporary uses can include new businesses, incubators, starters of cultural and art activity, etc.

Temporary uses is often an entry point to engage in a collaborative work between the local administration, the estate owners and the potential users. These local agents can work towards changing and adapting local management structures, therefore promoting an organisational shift.

Also, as a form of service, a temporary use can provide a combination of maintenance, experimentation, social service development, revitalisation and other benefits that transform vacancy from liability into asset. For the municipality it is an opportunity to identify community needs and give support to local initiatives to provide dynamics and revitalisation to areas in the city. For the private owners it gives them the chance to keep a property updated and to prevent it from degradation as well as a way to attract co-developers.

In view of the RetaiLink partners' interests, a set of topics that REFILL tackles are relevant:

· Mapping the potential of city spaces
· Adapting regulation to promote temporary uses
· Making space come to life
· Organising the negotiation process

Following is a summary of the most important points presented by Marcelline Bonneau, URBACT REFILL co-Lead Expert at the RetaiLink Transnational meeting held in Liberec, February 2017.

8. http://urbact.eu/Refill

MAP THE POTENTIAL OF CITY SPACES

Mapping empty spaces, primarily retail units in the case of the ten RetaiLink partner cities, provides insight on the number, size, location and ownership. This helps understanding the dimensions of the problem. Also, it is important to bear in mind that mapping should respond to the city specific purposes, which needs to be defined beforehand. We may want to map only in one defined area or a certain type of building.

The Retail Observatory of Romans. A monitoring tool to map business units

Cities can develop their own systems and methods for data co-llection, which may involve off and online tools. The Retail Obser-vatory of Romans is an online monitoring tool that keeps record of all business units in Romans city centre, including vacancies. The tool allows collecting information on business premises, size, rent prices, owner, sector of activity, vacancies, etc.

It consists of an easy to use Google-based Internet site where authorized individuals can find information. It was developed, and is updated, in coordination with city centre retailers and it helps local practitioners and urban planners in finding best locations for new retail units. It also provides fiscal information.

The retail-monitoring tool was initially developed in 2007 on excel files and filled by onsite assessment and by interviewing the retailers. Because of the big amount of information collected, the online digital tool was developed in 2012 and data was transfe-rred to the computerised system.

As of today the database contains broad and detailed informa-tion, which has not been properly harnessed yet. However, if fur-ther developed and designed, the tool might have good marke-ting potential and uses for the local retailers and the city centre as a whole. At the moment, it is not a very attractive tool for retailers since it does not allow interaction with customers, owners or the Council, and cannot be used for promotional purposes either.

As part of the inner city retail revitalisation strategy, Romans might consider to take advantage of the data collected and use it as a smart tool that includes retailers information and marketing messages and linking it to a Digital platform that showcases the retail offer in the city.

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Cities can map empty spaces in a collaborative form, engage others or even give the lead to an external organisation, for example citizens' movements or non-profits. A positive side effect of collaborative mapping is that Council departments and other stakeholders work together and may further cooperate in subsequent stages of the project.

Different examples of mapping empty buildings have been documented by the URBACT REFILL project:

- **Vacancy detector** in Bremen is a system of collaborative mapping that collects quality data on the empty spaces in the city.
- **Occupy me** in Riga identifies empty buildings with a sticker showing the words OCCUPY ME, in line with the idea that visibility can trigger a lot of attention.
- In **Helsinki** the City Council makes the data open and accesible for all users to know.

ADAPT REGULATION TO PROMOTE TEMPORARY USES

Fitting the temporary use of space within the current administrative structure and legal framework may need some work at the legal and regulatory level and combining both incentives and limits: building permissions, tax regulations, security aspects, ideas competitions, etc.
In Ghent, for example, the 'Pop up' regulation of the city allows a 90-day tax exemption accompanied by frequent checks on security and ensuring accessibility. In Riga the Council enabled a 90% tax reduction of the building if used for a temporary use.

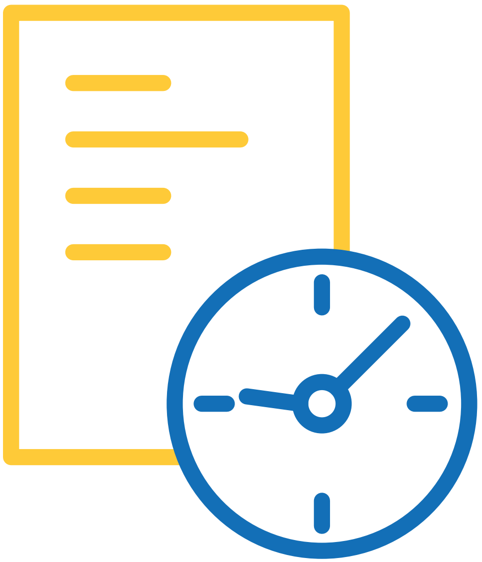
Hengelo's formula to refill empty retail units

Vacancy rates have been steadily rising in recent years in Hengelo, reaching over 20% of the retail sector. The average is higher than in city centres with a comparable size. As a consequence, property values have lowered.

Number of vacancy units	2011	2015
Vacancies in the city centre	53	70
Total commercial units	400	387
Hengelo	114	133
Total commercial units	1223	1194

Hengelo is exploring the new uses of vacant spaces through a number of initiatives to refill them. One of the recent measures consists of a public tender addressed to retail entrepreneurs with innovative ideas for attractive retail proposals. The winners are offered a 6-month free rent in a very central location to start their business project.

Also, a cooperation project with the Welbions Housing Association, named 'Wonen boven Winkels' (Housing above Shops) is helping property owners to transform upper vacant floors (above shops) and ground floor retail space. It provides economic incentives through grants for people to live in the upper floors and to undertake economic activity downstairs. The aim is to foster multi-functionality and a mix of residential uses and economic activity.



MAKE A SPACE COME TO LIFE

In the process of identifying the potential users of the spaces, the Council can set up an entity to support the temporary users with consulting and even with small money. This support can be in-house or external, but always needs to be an adapted solution to the local situation and existing capacity. Practical support may include easing the understanding of legal and security rules, financial support, one stop scheme...

Three examples of practical support from the REFILL project partners reveal different forms to structure this local support:

- **Riga:** The Occupy me movement became an NGO, and signed an agreement convention with the city administration. Now the NGO is providing a broader service to the City, with insights, data, information on community needs, identification of available vacant buildings and needs assessment of the community.

- **Bremen:** The ZZZ is the organisation that has been funded by 3 departments of the administration to support temporary uses initiatives. ZZZ coaches the users that have projects to refill the spaces. They help them apply for specific funding and find the best places to hold the activities, acting as brokers or intermediaries.

- **Ghent:** The municipal Policy Participation Unit identifies projects and their needs and supports them with funds to come alive.

ORGANISE THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

There is often a need of mediation between users of empty spaces, owners of the buildings, residents living around the area and different departments of municipality potentially involved. Having someone who is not from the City Council can offer creative thinking and solutions for 'bending the rules'. These can be neighbourhood managers and other people from the community.

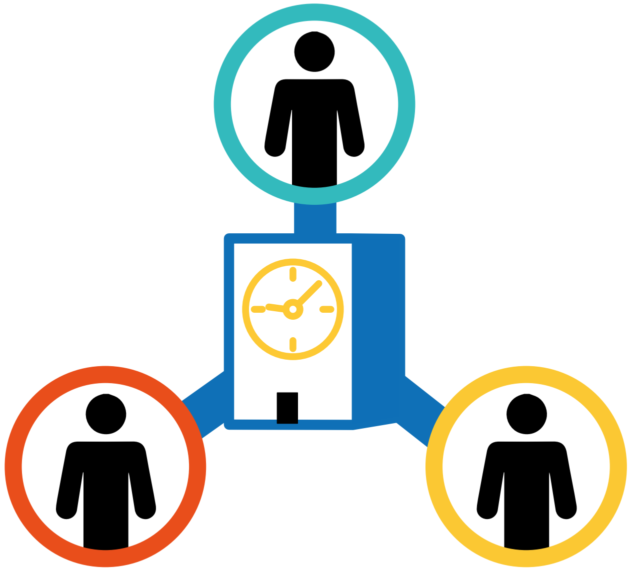
Some cities have started the temporary uses matchmaking methodology which consists of a process of favouring meetings, site visits and conversations among different stakeholders to facilitate the identification of needs and the potential temporary uses. The stages involved consist of:

1. Possible users with proposals and initiatives gather together with city departments' representatives to talk in an informal gathering and get to know each other.

2. The mediator organises field visits for all participants and departments of the city administration to both the empty premises and to the city council for mutual understanding of the real situation in the urban spaces, on the one hand, and the required formal and legal procedures on the other. A matchmaking workshop allows identifying real possibilities for allocating activities to empty premises.

3. A matchmaking workshop allows identifying real possibilities for allocating activities to empty premises.

After this process of approach, the local officers from the City administration usually realise that they didn't know what the real needs of the community were. Both the gathering and visits to the empty spaces turn to be very useful. On their side, potential users with initiatives and ideas understand better the regulation and legal steps they need to go through.



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