



CITTA' DI TORINO

URBACT GOOD PRACTICE CALL

Areas of Commercial Coverage: how to avoid the closure of low performing local markets by creating an innovative model of social cohesion

SUMMARY

The last decade has proven as a period of great urban and demographic transformation for the city of Torino. Relevant investments have been made in terms of infrastructures, transport, housing. Moreover, the social and cultural fabric has changed thanks to the integration of new communities. This profound transformation has greatly modified the urban design of the city and has generated new social and cultural habits. Within this context, urban markets represent a significant reality as engine of economic activities, place of community life and local identity. Torino can count on an extremely dense markets network with 42 open air markets and 6 covered markets. The urban and demographic metamorphoses underwent by the city, however, have culturally modified this traditional model of market and push towards an adaptation of commerce and distribution. Moreover, the recent economic crisis has caused a reduction in terms of consumption and the increase in the number of supermarkets and malls is seriously threatening the competitiveness of markets.

In order to face this challenges, the City Administration, which is the body in charge of the markets management in Torino, has decided to start a deep analysis of the market “health condition” in order to develop innovative solutions from a commercial and social point of view. In the framework of the CENTRAL MARKETS project funded between 2012 and 2014 by the CENTRAL EUROPE programme, the City of Torino has asked the Politecnico of Torino to analyse the as-is situation of the markets and to suggest a number of actions to improve their performance. In the same period of time, the URBACT MARKETS project funded by the URBACT II programme has supported the development of a Local Action Plan for the revitalisation of markets and their more effective management with a number of concrete actions supporting the promotion of markets, their employment capacity and their role in terms of urban regeneration, social inclusion and healthy habits.

The analysis of the “as-is situation” has considered many aspects of markets, particularly the density of population around markets, the competition from the alternative commercial offer, the market layout. Three market-types have been singled out: high, average and low-performing markets. It has been demonstrated that the 11 markets identified as low-performing generate more costs than revenues for the City Administration, so the suggested solution was to close them.

Considering that markets are places of employment for over 3,000 small companies in the Torino area, many of them owned by or employing immigrants, and that they provide a widespread service to the entire urban tissue, the City of Torino has refused the solution to close markets and has developed a new commercial model intended to re-launch and optimise the performance of the declining markets: the Areas of Commercial Coverage (ACC).





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An Area of Commercial Coverage is a small market, placed exactly on the same area of the low-performing market, having a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 6 stalls. The layout of the market shall avoid empty spaces thus giving a more coherent look to the area. At least 2 stalls have to be devoted to foodstuff (one for fruit and vegetables and one for meat, cheese or fish), so as to give the possibility to customers, especially the elderly and those with mobility issues, to easily access healthy and fresh food. Up to this point, ACCs represent the intention of the public (City Administration) to provide a service which is particularly relevant for the more disadvantaged segments of the population and for the most peripheral areas, by favouring the role of markets as places of community life, social inclusion and prevention of degradation of the public space. However, the experience of the ACCs has more measurable advantages from the economic point of view, since they envisage a more cost-effective waste management system. In ordinary markets, the waste management is in charge of the City Administration thus generating relevant costs. In the ACCs, each stall holder is in charge of its own waste and has the obligation to bring it to a collecting point in the nearest markets. Therefore the cost for the waste management in the ACCs is cancelled, generating savings for the City Administration of about 340,000.00 € per year. It is monitored by the City Administration and will be the object of a comparative assessment analysis by the Politecnico of Torino. Anyway, a number of spillover effects can already be observed: the market places are prevented from degradation, the elderly and low mobility people can count on a service of proximity and have not lost their meeting place, the small companies working in those markets have not lost their usual customers, stallholders have increased their care on waste management.

