



Retail

and renaissance

Cities across Europe are facing similar development issues as the tide of urban renewal sweeps across the continent, from the UK to Poland, Scandinavia to the Mediterranean. New retail facilities are playing an increasingly important role in this dynamic movement, as shopping centres and mixed-use developments grow in size and number. And while the planning and execution of such destinations varies from country to country, there is no doubting the new emphasis being placed on retail as a catalytic element in the renewal process. **Dr Yvonne Court**, a Partner at Healey & Baker (part of Cushman & Wakefield), reports on this trend and identifies some of the major European projects currently leading the way.

Traditionally, cities have been the centres of social and cultural life. They have played, and will continue to play, a central role in the development of Europe. Cities are often seen as the dynamos of the economy - necessary to maintain economic growth and community - offering employment, solving environmental problems and providing quality of life. Urban areas are central to the future economic development of Europe. Trends in retail development have also played a role in shaping the prosperity of Europe's cities, and have to be seen as a component of a city's strategic development.

Three-quarters of Europe's population live in urban areas, so the well-being of these areas is of vital importance. By the year 2030, this figure will have risen to over 80

per cent. Some parts of Europe have already exceeded this proportion, namely Scandinavia, the UK, Germany and the Benelux countries.

The urban agenda in Europe

Some of Europe's most acute social problems, associated with a lack of economic opportunity, low incomes and a generally poor quality of life, are found in urban areas. Indeed the Urban Audit of 58 European towns shows that there is disparity between European towns and cities. There is no uniformity of urban views among cities in Europe. European countries tackle the problem of cities differently - many have Cabinet ministers responsible for cities, while experienced local architecture centres and

planning departments collaborate with communities, politicians and developers, which has an impact on all urban projects.

At the European level, the importance of sustainable urban development is increasingly being recognised. The European Commission is now requiring the preparation of Integrated Urban Development Plans, which will require cities to be integrated into the existing regional development plan structure. These will then play a key role in the Structural Fund negotiations, although only for Objective 1 and 2 status. The Structural Funds are the main policy instrument that the European Union has to alleviate difficulties faced by regions with low GDP or facing the consequences of industrial decline. For the period 2000-06,

resources have explicitly been granted for urban sustainable development. Smaller EU programmes such as URBAN have also allocated resources to pockets of urban areas facing acute problems. These programmes have sought, in particular, to encourage newer ideas and innovations in the field of urban regeneration and renewal, and to promote more comprehensive approaches in these areas.

A number of metropolitan cities across Europe have seen a revival. There is a trend towards re-urbanisation focusing on equality, rather than hierarchy, between cities, in an attempt to balance competition between cities, which is recognised as a global trend. Area-based initiatives are moving forward in many European markets, particularly in France, Ireland, The Netherlands and Denmark.

Western Europe

The volume of retailing that is integrated into cities varies, although there are a number of groups that can be recognised. Cities in countries such as France and the UK are faced with increasing devitalisation of retail in their city centres. Scandinavian, German and Dutch cities have succeeded in maintaining their vitality, while city centres in Southern Europe seem to have suffered less from the effects of out-of-town development than their northern counterparts. City centre schemes such as MDC's Armazens do Chiado in Lisbon and Sonae's Via Catarina in Porto have enhanced

the city centre retail offer, while other centres have been developed in the suburbs of both cities.

Retailing can be used to stimulate and perpetuate urban development as part of an integrated holistic approach to regeneration. The Netherlands has adopted such an approach to urban policy since 1994. Economic, social and physical problems and challenges in urban areas are being tackled simultaneously and in direct association with each other. The approach is based on the premise that urban problems are increasingly complex and interlinked.

Many cities, such as Dortmund, Turin, Brno, Leeds and Manchester, have formed global strategic plans in which retail development policy combines with other issues to achieve the goals of the city. The sectoral strategies for such factors as transport and economic development should also be viewed in the context of retail policy - well-managed traffic flows and good access to public transport are vital to the success of new shopping facilities. And public transport interchanges in themselves offer strong potential for retail development, as demonstrated by Copenhagen in Denmark and Malmö in Sweden, where in the latter a major scheme combining offices, a shopping centre and housing is under way and a new railway station is in the pipeline as part of the new link between the two cities. Copenhagen also has a new metro under construction linking to the massive mixed-use regeneration project at Ørestad, which includes the 100,000-square-metre-plus

Fields shopping centre. The city of Porto has seen the construction of a new metro, and studies for a new tram system are underway in order to improve access to shopping facilities in city centres.

The regeneration of land requires the intervention of the public sector and a private sector investor. 'Partnership' has become something of a buzz-word within urban regeneration. Experience in a number of countries, notably Ireland and The Netherlands, shows that a lot can be achieved through this approach. A partnership may involve a major mixed-use scheme, beyond just retail, incorporating residential, leisure, transport, social development, culture, public space, etc. There are a number of examples outside the UK, including in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, where the local municipality and ING Real Estate (each party has a 50 per cent share) realised the new Mariëburg shopping centre (47 shops on two levels) and residential area in the historic core of the city. It was part of the urban plan for the city centre (Centrum 2000).

Major events can act as a catalyst to regeneration schemes, as in the well-documented cases of Barcelona, which hosted the Olympic Games in 1992, and Lisbon, where the Parque das Nações was born when Expo 98 closed its doors. A new city was born in the old section of east Lisbon and it has made a permanent endowment to Lisbon's urban renewal. The aim now is to regenerate a run-down area of 330 hectares through a residential, office



Armazens do Chiado, Lisbon



Centro Vasco De Gama (interior)



Złote Tarasy, Warsaw

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Złote Tarasy, Warsaw

and commercial complex project due to be completed by 2010. This will bring new life to a 5km stretch of the Tagus riverside that was previously a rusting wasteland occupied by obsolete oil refineries, slaughterhouses, ammunition depots and crumbling warehouses. The site, when development is complete, will include a hospital, schools, restaurants, hotels, offices, a shopping centre, a park and a marina with moorings for 500 boats.

Parque das Nações was integrated with some of the important new transport infrastructure projects that are reshaping Portugal. The 13km Vasco da Gama bridge, one of Europe's longest river crossings, which connects Lisbon with the south of Portugal and Spain, adjoins the development. The new Oriente Station, provides a multi-purpose transport interchange. The Centro Vasco da Gama shopping centre, a development by Sonae Imobiliária, Portugal's leading shopping centre developer, is close to the Oriente station. Its design has been blended into the station's architecture. The 47,500-square-metre centre has a total of 164 shops with eleven anchor tenants and 30 restaurants. In 2000, the centre had 21 million visits.

Central and Eastern Europe

Towns and cities in Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) are currently facing two structural processes, which on the face of it may seem diametrically opposed. On the one hand, many once prosperous inner-city industrial and commercial sites have, as a result of economic changes over the past decade, either become derelict or at the very least extremely under-used. On the other hand, the process of suburbanisation or urban sprawl is proceeding at a pace that leaves anything experienced in the West far behind. Perhaps the clearest evidence of this is the mushrooming number of shopping centres being developed on the outskirts of large towns and cities on 'greenfield' sites.

Both processes are, it hardly needs to be said, consequences of the dramatic political and economic changes in CEEC since the end of the 1980s, and the opening up of markets and moves towards economic globalisation that have followed. Nevertheless, the two processes did not run concurrently. In the first half of the 1990s, vast tracts of derelict land and inner-city commercial areas were the main characteris-

tics of urban areas; the process of outward development as seen in urban sprawl and the move of shopping centres to greenfield sites is a phenomenon arising in a more pronounced fashion only since 1995.

The dynamic process of developing large-scale shopping centres must be seen in the context of an urban planning situation characterised by uncertainty, widely diverging ideas and debates concerning goals, and frequently by conflicts between urban planners and politicians. Many cities are just now in the process of detaching themselves, as far as masterplanning is concerned, from the monocentric planning ideas of the past, and are engaged in developing a structured hierarchy of focal centres. In numerous instances these planning concepts do exist on paper, i.e. in the master plan, but they still need to be implemented.

There are a number of major regeneration schemes featuring shopping centres in the pipeline, which will be both fully integrated into existing urban structures and well connected to the local public transport system. In Warsaw, ING Real Estate and Rodamco Europe have plans for a large scheme, Złote Tarasy, adjacent to the central railway station; while in Krakow, Tishman Speyer also has ambitious plans for the central transport interchange with its Nowe Miasto scheme. In the Czech Republic, a retail development of some 20,000 square metres in central Ostrava is currently in the planning process and if it comes to fruition would revitalise the city centre in the face of competition from edge-of-town hypermarket-anchored shopping centres.

Such ambitious projects are showing the rest of Europe's cities just how effective retail can be, either in itself or as part of a mixed-use scheme, in renewing urban centres. In the same way that destination managers are now being forced to consider tourism and visitation not just as a special interest area but a major economic factor affecting a multiplicity of local planning issues, retail is demanding much greater attention as a powerful tool of urban regeneration. Joined-up problems are being answered by joined-up solutions, and retail will remain at the heart of urban renewal initiatives across Europe for the foreseeable future.