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THE CONTRIBUTION OF RETAIL TRADE TO THE INTEGRATED REGENERATION OF ITALIAN TOWN CENTRES

1. Trade and urban regeneration. - The identity of a territory is generally perceived on the basis of place awareness in terms of experiential and relational trends created within urban areas connoted by centuries of activities and relationships. This is even more evident when prestigious historical features characterizing the buildings of a territory confer higher value to the area. A case in point are town centres which, with their consolidated vocation for trading, perceived by all the stakeholders involved, define the territory in terms of a complex, organic system of supply, the format, identity and appeal of which constitute its fundamental elements.

Historical centres, the core areas of an area or suburban districts are symbols of a city and its culture albeit over the last decade their appeal has been on the wane. This could be the outcome of a multitude of extremely complex economic and social factors including the crisis in the service industry. In this respect, on the one hand, limits have been imposed on the development of large scale distribution and on the other, on renovated urban environments. Trade has gradually become more residual and inadequate in the face of a demand ever more exigent and customized, while operators for logistic reasons, have begun to privilege routes lining intermediate zones between the centre and the suburbs or the built-up areas of city outskirts. Close historical bonds are gradually loosening, while only in part are they defended by the redefinition of functional relations, the intent being to ameliorate urban quality: the activities in the sector, integrated with others of the service industry, take on a relevant role in the defining of territory planning goals and urban standards, as they facilitate the renovation and enhancement of contexts of great architectural and/or historical value. Thus they constitute the most adequate place-market for shared initiatives[1], the development of areas showing early signs of decay, such as the steady fall in number of residents not to mention insurgent safety issues. Traditional trading areas have had and perhaps still have to learn to

* Researcher at the Faculty of Economics, University of Salerno, the Author first presented preliminary research on the issue at the Conference "The Role of Trade in Processes of Urban Transformation", University of Catania, Faculty of Economics, Department of Economics and Territory, Catania, 25-26 October 2007, albeit well aware that the study of the geographical implications would demand further research, multi-disciplinary approaches and in depth reflection.

[1] By virtue of their architectural-urban perspective, the structure of their roadways and their consolidated commercial vocation, town centres are ideal places where by means of integrated planning, structures of natural distribution can be put in place, all the more so if the quality of the product is appreciated along with courteous service, the pleasant environment in which purchases are made becoming at one and the same time, a meeting place and hub for social relations. On the other hand, the dimension of the area lending itself to walks, limited parking areas, the complex of cultural goods, tree-lined avenues and commercial compounds, not to mention fine projects of urban regeneration, requalification and enhancement, present an ideal scenario in which to establish districts of quality and excellence, where each commercial activity carries on its work

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identify themselves as part of a common scenario and to govern structural problems not in terms of emergencies but rather, as fundamental to their growth. This can be achieved by promoting forms of Private Public-sector Partnerships (PPP) to obtain funding for putting projects in place, contemplated in individual renovation programmes that include action for guaranteeing survival and prospects of development by means of the transformation of entire areas[2]. The analysis of recent trends in the sector highlight how trade has contributed to consolidating urban transformation in built up contexts[3]; new trade formats have taken on an ever more decisive role in defining the morphology of cities, contributing to delineating the territorial order, defining the perception of urban centres and the periphery and creating new polarities.

In this context, a significant element of innovation is constituted by the interest manifested by medium and large scale distribution sectors in reinterpreting specific re-positioning trends in their retail outlets and relative activities[4]. In the most momentous cases, besides a quantitative reduction in number of sales outlets, a qualitative reinforcement of supply has been recorded, thanks also to greater surface availability, a result of processes of productive dismantling or transformation, in periods of recession. In particular, in Italy, starting from the early 1990s, the relation between Medium and Large Scale Distribution and urban centres[5] has attracted great interest, not least because trade constitutes their viable function, complementary to and synergic with activities and services in place along the route of the neuralgic points of the communication corridor. Specific policy orientations concur in consolidating such relations, including the widely accepted integration between trade, entertainment and culture, catering and hospitality[6]; renovation schemes, thanks to decisive public policy addressed to the convergence of resources of urban projects; the need to adopt joint forms of management of enhancement intervention, the definition of *iter* coherent with planning policy and trade, not to mention regulatory procedure management (Tab. 1).

independently, but is assisted by a consortium which in planning intervention for the enhancement of individual businesses, operates in close contact with the Institutions and the Local Authorities.

[2] Trade has acquired a core role in the processes of transformation and city governance. In all the main territory planning projects, the degree of commercial viability has become a parameter for measuring efficiency.

[3] Positive results have been obtained thanks to effective integration of the diverse issues of the sector in an attempt to define appropriate planning policies and tools, in order to delineate a clear-cut vision for urban centres and to select activities as a "driver for trade development» giving renewed vigour to independent businesses and to facilitating the setting up of PPPs, in various modalities and in relation to specific goals.

[4] Over time, from the study of functional interaction, common trends have emerged. They can be summed up as follows: – central zones become predominant compared to the peripheral areas, with the development of large stores during the late 1800s; – between the period of the two wars, with the recession, popular discount stores, emulate the large stores; – at the beginning of the 1970s, in traditionally industrialized European cities, in concomitance with the initial refurbishing of dismantled areas, commercial complexes mushroom in easy access zones and pedestrian areas are created. In Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal and Italy) such large trading areas on the outskirts of cities have been a more recent albeit intense, development with innovative multifunctional complexes such as trade parks. It goes without saying that central areas attract by virtue of the quality of their areas and for their diversified product offer while suburban areas are perforce, subject to planning policy. Traditional commercial activity by virtue of its integrative capacity within the social fabric, has slowed down or at least, limited processes of desertification, compared to trends in various urban centres in England or France, imposing right at the beginning of the 1990s, the definition of national scale public policies to stimulate growth in the sector.

[5] In the 1990s, government programmes to support refurbishing, regenerating and renovating processes were put in place for the socio-economic re-launching of entire areas and from a physical perspective to refurbish central areas, enhancing businesses for instance, by means of which resources were attracted to sustain the processes of regeneration, whereby innovation in the distribution and supply chain was manifested in various ways.

[6] Business and trade activities linked to culture and entertainment have always been associated with cities, envisaged in the sense of a dense system of settlements, characterized by variegated social strata and by economic trends. Such relations, only in part re-dimensioned by the development of extra-urban settlements and by the diffusion of new formats, have diversified the product offer and location scenarios, with noticeable repercussions on area use and landscape.

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Large Scale Distribution (LSD), in designing new formats blends to respond to growing consumer needs, has provoked the closure of many retail outlets in town centres, a substantive change in lifestyles and growing difficulties for Small and Medium size Enterprises (SMEs) already long affected by recession and an economic/consumption downturn that can be overcome only by adopting specific strategies, processes of corporate innovation not merely of a structural but also of a technological, organizational and managerial kind, and based on the fact that urban districts can provide an articulated system of supply founded on quality and on unique and irreproducible specificity[7].

Tab. 1 - LSD. Factors of competitiveness.

FACTOR	IMPACT	POTENTIAL	PERIOD
PRIMACY OF SUPPLY CHANNEL	HIGH	HIGH	SHORT TERM
PRICE COMPETITIVENESS	HIGH	HIGH	SHORT TERM
TERRITORIAL AND PLANNING LIMITS	HIGH	HIGH	SHORT TERM
COMPETITION ALTERNATIVE SERVICES	HIGH	HIGH	LONG TERM
INCREASED PRESENCE OF INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS	HIGH	LOW	MEDIUM
CONCENTRATION OF PRODUCTIVITY	MEDIUM	HIGH	MEDIUM
BRAND BUILDING (PRIVATE LABEL)	MEDIUM	HIGH	SHORT TERM
FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL OBLIGATIONS	MEDIUM	HIGH	MEDIUM

Source: Banco Popolare, 2009.

The growth of LSD can also be attributed to socio-cultural factors, such as the expansion of peripheral areas, modifications in the composition and habits of family nuclei as well as price containment policies which in periods of contracted consumption, lead consumers to seek greater convenience (Tab. 2).

Tab. 2 - Percentage of variations (2006-2008) fixed trade and retail sales (foodstuffs and non-foodstuffs).

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	FOODSTUFFS			NON-FOODSTUFFS			TOTAL		
	LSD	OTHER BUSINESSES	TOTAL	LSD	OTHER BUSINESSES	TOTAL	LSD	OTHER BUSINESSES	TOTAL
NORTH-WEST	1.5	6.5	2.8	−1.1	−0.6	−0.8	0.6	0.9	0.7
NORTH-EAST	6.4	−7.7	3.3	2.3	−2.5	−1.3	5.2	−3.5	0.6
CENTRE	3.9	−2.4	1.5	—	−2.6	−2.0	2.7	−2.5	−0.4
SOUTHERN ITALY	5.6	−2.4	0.7	3.7	−2.5	−1.6	5.0	−2.4	−0.5
ITALY	4.1	−1.3	2.0	0.8	−2.0	−1.4	3.0	−1.8	0.1

Source: Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico - SISTAN, 2008.

[7] LSD during the period 2006-2008 recorded an increase in sales (+3%) on a national scale, while traditional businesses reported a decline (−1.8%), the gap was more accentuated in the areas of North-East Italy (+5.2% and −3.5%) and in the Regions of Southern Italy (+5% and −2,4%). The analysis per sector highlights the predominance of the food industry, the overall rate of growth of which during the period, equal to 2%, compares with a drop of nearly 1.5% of the non-food industry.

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From an analysis of the components making up sales 2008 (Fig. 1), two contrasting scenarios emerge; the first, residual and widespread in depressed areas, characterized by a scarce capacity for innovation and low levels of production on the one hand; the second on the other, connoted by high quality standards, both in terms of environmental and town planning decision making and services and specialisation characteristic of modern trade centres, multi-functional and distinguished by ever closer links between product and collateral activities.

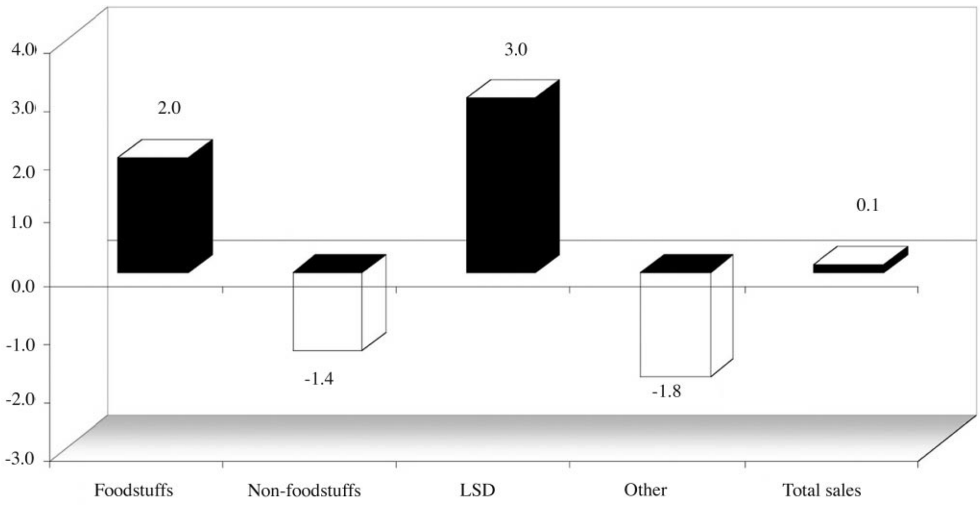

Fig. 1 - Percentage of variations of sales by goods category and distribution (2006-2008).

The contraction in number of businesses, destined to grow over the next few years, will impact considerably on the first component: i.e. *residual*, the survival of which is in contrast with the decline in consumption, with inevitable advantages for the distribution system and for the diffusion of the *modern* component of traditional trade, far removed from scenarios of gigantic dimensions and capable of innovation on a plane of quality and service.

Furthermore, an analysis of the birth-mortality rate as a whole, shows regression in all the geographical areas involved, to a greater extent in the North and South of Italy (−1,410 and −1,508 positioning respectively), while more contained as concerns the Centre (−172 units)[8] (Tab. 3).

Tab. 3 - Birth-mortality rate of retail businesses (2008).

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	BALANCE LICENCES/DELETIONS	BALANCE VARIATIONS	BALANCE TOTAL
NORTH	−19	−1,391	−1,410
CENTRE	−182	10	−172
SOUTH	−2,213	705	−1,508
ITALY	−2,414	−676	−3,090

Source: Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico - SISTAN, 2008.

[8] Contrary to the current trend, we find only Lazio which presents a consistent positive balance originating from the higher number of new businesses. The decline in number of business locations in proportion to that of local units is still evident, generalized to the national territory as a whole, above all with reference to the balance between new businesses and the closure of existing ones.

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The analysis, albeit highlighting negative trends in retailing terms, reveals glimpses of positive prospects in the event a process of revitalising identity and social networks[9], is put in place to incentivise new service entrepreneurship, above all in town centres.

Solutions needed for defining criteria for action should stem from the adoption of uniform strategies and innovative approaches, in which the complexity of new territorial models takes on a pre-eminent role, in tune with the objective of excellence. In other words, increasing quality, in the framework of integrated policies and forms of concerted management in order to coordinate enterprise intervention located in trade areas of high density (promotional advertising, communication, client-directed etc.). If the level of competitiveness of town centres is reinforced by the capacity to attract new residents and investment, it follows that competitiveness is no longer to be sought inside individual sales venues but rather from amongst the new venues of consumption, either natural or artificial[10]. Consequently, if policies can influence transformations in the sector, above all in relation to the management of places and consumption flows, businesses with their planning potential and resources available can likewise condition policies put in place by the Institutions[11].

Italy, contrary to trends in the international circuit[12], has not been timely in grasping the need to link town planning strategies with those governing and programming commercial areas[13]. The challenge faced by programmes of requalification of town centres in venues of traditional trade, consists in the multitude of interlocutors, with ownership and other interests to consider in the analytical and planning pathway, already consolidated in foreign realities[14], in an attempt to respond effectively to the demand for quality and excellence

[9] As concerns the plan for re-qualifying deteriorated environments with unexpressed potential, the objective is to highlight the causes of such decay, identifying the strong points of the area capable of catalyzing planned intervention with resounding positive impact, such as developing the specifics of the target area, spreading and consolidating the identity of the city and its historical centre. At times starting with the defining of boundaries of a street or a square, intervention continues especially when an urban centre constitutes a target area, characterized by a specific vocation as in the case of an area dedicated traditionally to a precise product offer or by historical access to the central trade area or even to a route characterized by a concentration of economic-cultural activity. On the contrary, in the case of urban and commercial requalification planning addressed to central areas at risk of deterioration which, albeit showing strong appeal, at the same time, evidence a constant decline in the number of inhabitants and the start of the related issues of security. In any event, a deep-rooted vocation and a strong characterising identity can confer on traditionally privileged areas remarkable potential for developing forms of voluntary aggregation among tradesmen, thus playing a significant role in the phases of promoting and managing planning projects.

[10] Cfr. Moras, Codato, Franco, 2004.

[11] Retail trade, by banking on innovation, would be in a position to relate technology with rapidly evolving demand; the reason being that the demand for quality on the part of consumers is high. Consequently, guarantees and distinctive competences are fundamental where complex issues need attention and where potential solutions are many, but strategic ideas on how to identify them are few (Cfr. Osservatorio Piccole Imprese Unicredit Banca, 2008, p. 116).

[12] New developments in dealing with the issues of urban qualification are logically, linked to the areas undergoing processes of transformation. As was the case in Britain for example with the Bull Ring in Birmingham, often trade use destination even for very large areas inside cities could resolve problematic issues of reuse for obsolete structures or for transforming dismantled industrial areas. Worthy of note is the potential offered by the integration of commercial areas, cinemas or theatres, cultural or social areas or in any event, venues for leisure time, as catalysers for processes of revitalization (i.e. the case of downtown Washington DC) (Cfr. Moras, Codato, Franco, 2004).

[13] Commercial planning in effect, was considered up to 1998 a specific trade sector discipline the remit of which was merely to identify commercial zoning by commodity or dimension, without programming its integration with other functions of the city.

[14] If currently, planning programmes in the United States are focusing mainly on implementing self-sustaining managerial structures for putting in place intervention for commercial revitalization inserted within a wider project for requalification of city centres, in Europe trends are more uneven. In Britain for example, where the constitution of management structures was already a priority element for urban regeneration in the early 1990s, currently, they are experimenting feasible new schemes linked to the partnership system, geared towards local planning and sustainability. In France on the contrary, tools and infrastructure in support of commercial venues have been predisposed, however the management phase is still the product

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in town environments by means of competitive strategies that affect organized spaces and service offers and above all, as concerns management. Therefore, in the context of synergic planning, functional requalification and enhancement projects for town centres should be based on a systems perspective approach. This crucial element would set in motion a qualitative-occupational virtuous cycle: of culture-tourism-trade-artisanship art-agriculture, to remove the negative effects deriving from the wealth of service industries in main centres and from the massive edification of residential units in peripheral areas[15]. Furthermore, particular attention should be addressed to refurbishment, requalification and enhancement projects in town centres - a strategic development option for Italy - complex intervention to deal with the numerous related issues (such as more efficient economic infrastructure, new building projects for industrial parks, enterprise incubators and commercial centres). Besides, coordination is needed for territory planning policy, the Cohesion Fund for Growth and Employment and Structural Funds[16], investments allocated for town centres, in order to reduce the negative effects deriving from uncontrolled expansion and for putting in place initiatives for rendering cities more attractive and stimulating by virtue of innovation and business development[17], not to mention more competitive spaces thanks to the diffusion of modern, efficient new technology, easily accessible on line, to modulate in relation to demographic changes and for developing avant-garde solutions.

In this context, it is worthy of note that in February 1999 the foundations were laid for devising synergic strategies, on the initiative on the part of the Spanish Government's Directorate General of Domestic Trade, the European Commission and the Committee of Regions, *The European City and Trade Congress* held at Torremolinos (Malaga), which set out European Community priorities in support of the sector. One priority, the refurbishing of urban areas, was set out in a document of intent, denominated *Declaration of Malaga*, in which nineteen proposals for action were addressed to the Governments involved, to define a framework of agreement for the refurbishing and renovation of town centres[18]. The need to harmonize town planning with

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of single initiatives and at an experimental stage. Emblematic in this sense is the case of Portugal which, thanks to its period of Presidency of the European Union, has put in place two successive programmes for the enhancement of trade in the city centre, the first centred on structure, the second addressed to methods of management (Cfr. Moras, Codato, Franco, 2004).

[15] Their consolidated development in recent years has resulted in greater fruition during daytime hours provoking urban decay, the loss of semantic values, the uniformity of landscape, problems contributing in no mean way to the transformation of the city, its decline and the progressive abandoning of activities which constituted its original purpose.

[16] In the Spring of 2005, proposals were made by the European Commission to substantiate their contribution to the Cohesion Policy for balanced growth and occupation (2007-2013), in particular in favour of urban and rural areas, an integrated approach was promoted, on the one hand development and full employment and on the other, social and environmental objectives.

[17] Total quality, customer satisfaction, new professions, innovative services, the expression of a structural change in the globalized economy and of a new economic and social dynamism, all have to constitute the strengths of strategic action even as concerns SMEs.

[18] All the countries comprising the European Union had a part in drafting the *Malaga Declaration*, to identify Community supportive actions and awareness raising policies on the part of the Institutions and distribution sector workers, in terms of the close and reciprocal relations established between trade and the city. The concluding document containing 19 proposals for action, underpinned the political strategy. In particular, the proposals included linking up town planning with trade activities, using operative tools by means of integrative approaches, sustaining trade development with residential areas, thus incentivizing a blended use; integrating intervention for improving the urban environment with the creation of distributive centres in central zones, delineating a vision of public space; facilitating public-private sector agreements for the renovation and re-functioning of historic-architectural contexts; diversifying functions in order to respond to resident needs; integrating management of urban areas, promoting security, hygiene, maintaining the upkeep of pedestrian areas and car parks, organizing events and arranging innovative activities; setting up medium-long term channels of funding for use by Public Administrations to incentivize businesses in particular, by improving the quality of their services offered; to encourage debate on the diverse action strategies to use, such as promoting local resources and the rationalizing of the commercial fabric, coordinating the distribution networks. In conclusion, a significant role was attributed to Town Mayors, to the Chamber of Commerce and to the Trade Associations in

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commercial trade programming by means of integrated approaches for distribution areas in town centres was evidenced, implied in terms of delineating a new conception of public spaces and the promotion of tourism in urban and historical areas by improving the fabric of trade and coordinated distribution.

2. Trade planning in the context of the new system of Local Authority competences. - From the late 1960s onwards, the increase in National income has incentivised consumption and the decline in sales outlets, there being no regulatory system in act; this was put in place much later with Law no. 426, dated June 11th 1971, *Trade Regulations*. The law regulated the planning of commercial activities in the Trade sector. The basic principles were constituted by the qualification of the operators in programming retail distribution, but also by the inseparability of trade planning from urban decision-making, to delineate efficient town centres where trade would respond to demand.

Diachronic analysis highlights that regulatory legislation, despite taking into account the definition set out in Art. 41 of the Italian Constitutional Charter[19], in actual fact, did not indicate relevant trade policies crucial for developing and upgrading the chain, but rather merely favoured sales formulae without addressing any attention to competitive value[20].

The radical transformations affecting the market towards the end of the 1990s, rendered necessary a revised regulatory system for the sector. This came into force with the issuing of the Legislative Decree no. 114 *Reform of regulations relative to the Trade sector, in compliance with art. 4, paragraph 4, of the Italian Law dated 15 March 1997, no. 59*[21]. Significant innovation was introduced; on the one hand, the limits relative to the diverse forms of commercial activity were abolished and on the other, in the trade-territory dichotomy strategies for the revitalization of the distributional network were introduced.

The Legislative Decree no. 114/1998 represented an epochal change above all for the general principles set out therein (protection of consumers; market transparency free movement of goods; free enterprise; pluralism and equilibrium between distributional formulae and forms of sales efficiency; modernization and development of the distributional network). The aim was that of upgrading small scale distribution to match European standards of development, to respond to new consumer needs in a market characterized by the driving force of the large scale distribution system and by innovative trade formulae[22].

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defining projects for urban renovation, processes of rationalisation and in the simplification of administrative mechanisms for increasimg pedestrian access, improving public transport, building car parks, reconverting traditional trading areas into open centres and in conclusion for promoting synergies between the various stakeholders, by means of joint images and logos as a synthesis of the value and quality of specific geographical context.

[19] Art. 41 of the Italian Constitution establishes that "*free enterprise cannot take place in contrast with the social good or in any way that might harm or put at risk security, freedom or personal dignity. Legislation determines the programmes and opportune controls that ensure public and private sector enterprise is addressed to social ends*".

[20] Cfr. Bianchi, 2004.

[21] The key items of the Legislative Decree no. 114/1998. in short, consist in reducing the commodity tables from 14 to 2 (foodstuffs and non-foodstuffs); written notification to the Local Authorities for the opening of local enterprise with a maximum surface of 250 Sqm (150 Sqm for municipal areas with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants); definition of medium size sales structures in municipal areas with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, having surfaces comprising from between 150 and 1,500 Sqm and in those with more than 10,000 inhabitants, surfaces comprising between 250 and 2,500 Sqm, authorized by the Commune in compliance with specified deliberative criteria; defining large scale sales structures for firms that exceed the above mentioned limits, authorized by a Service Conference composed of three components (Region, Province, Commune); veto as regards firms declared bankrupt, for individuals sentenced to three or more years in prison and for those guilty of specific crimes (such as receiving, money laundering insolvency, fraudulent bankruptcy, usury, kidnapping). The veto remains valid for 5 years from the date of expiry or extinction of the prison sentence (Cfr. ISCOM E.R., 2000).

[22] Operators in small and medium size enterprises in changing their management strategies have as a preliminary measure, to modify their approach in terms of competitiveness, no longer represented by local similar businesses but rather by alternative sales techniques and approaches, collaboration with various entrepreneurs ranging from the creation of networks of different

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In compliance with principles of subsidiarity, the Legislative Decree entrusted the Regions not only with a planning but also a regulatory role, broadening the arenas of decision making and sanctioning the adapting of regulations to the contextual geographical reality: to favour development of the economic fabric, to innovate the distributional system and to maintain business networks in the small Communes and in underprivileged areas; to enhance historical centres, to diversify and improve the quality of the services offered, in order to avoid scenarios of predominance[23].

Furthermore, Communes were attributed the task of defining both criteria for territory planning, so that Communal urban planning instruments could identify: the areas to destine to business locations (in particular, retail structures of medium/large size dimension); the limits local units are subject to in relation to the protection of artistic-historic-cultural and environmental goods, not to mention urban decoration in historical centres and in places of particular artistic and landscape interest[24].

Following a year of transition[25], in which the regulations were to have been implemented by the Regions, one of the aims of the reform was to modernize the distributional network from a competitive perspective, free enterprise and with the support of nationally coordinated, Regional Observatories[26]. The priority was to favour

goods sectors operating in the same residential area; to networking business activities from small surface premises gathered under the same commercial brand but located in different areas (franchising, semi-franchising, proprietary chain stores); to the customization of product/service (home deliveries, preparation of *ad hoc* orders etc.) (Cfr. ISCOM E.R., 2000).

[23] The Regions, in defining the general outlines, have had to take into account territory specifics of: similar metropolitan areas, to put in place integrated planning between centre and peripheral areas, greater-Communal zones, envisaged as a single area of use, for which univocal criteria of development have to be identified; historical centres, safeguarding and qualifying trade and artisan activities to strengthen neighbourhood services, to protect businesses with a historic-artistic value and to avoid the closing down of businesses and traditional activities; centres having a reduced demographic consistency, (re-)developing their socio-economic fabric by improving infrastructure networks and in particular, road system networks. Furthermore, new scenarios of intervention can be identified keeping in mind the specifics of distributional networks and of location systems as a whole, and delineating business location in order to pursue the aims of: 1. linking the trade network to the entity of the population and its relative mobility, reducing environmental impact and limiting urban congestion; 2. enhancing, promoting and re-qualifying distribution in urban areas and in historical centres by means of support policies; 3. favouring processes of reconversion and innovation of the network such as business mergers; 4. developing agreements between Local Authorities in order to increase liveability and social cohesion. Furthermore, the Regions have to start up processes to guarantee the creation and consolidation of alternative and competitive centres to favour greater productive factor efficiency and consequently, to curb consumer prices and inflation.

[24] Each Commune, as envisaged by legislation in force, can put in place specific planning tools for its historical centre or part thereof, in order to enhance trade and recuperate the main objective of social aggregation, without altering the historic-architectural characteristic features of the area. In particular, excessive commercialisation should be avoided, so as to preserve place identity, through urban planning regulations thus favouring the conservation and locating of local businesses in order to enhance specific routes and traditional places, identifying at the same time, suitable measures favouring accessibility and the enjoyment of town centres.

[25] The Regions, within one year of the date of publication should have defined general guidelines underpinning the pursuit of the following objectives: 1. render compatible territorial and environmental impact with specific regard to mobility, traffic and pollution; enhance trade, in order to re-qualify the urban fabric, in particular as concerns run down areas, so as to create a suitable environment for the development of sector activity; 2. safeguard and re-qualify historical centres by maintaining the morphological characteristics of the local businesses as well as complying with the limits relative to safeguarding the artistic and environmental heritage; 3. facilitate the realization of a distribution network which, in connection with the other service functions, guarantees the highest rate of productivity of the system and the quality of the services offered to consumers; 4. incentivize the distribution centres for the recovery of small and medium enterprises to safeguard employment levels; 5. ensure a coordinated system of monitoring with the concerted agreement and cooperation of the Regions, Communes and Provinces.

[26] The Legislative Decree no. 114/1998 envisaged the setting up of a Regional Observatory for Trade, to control the entity and efficiency of the distribution network, linked to the National Observatory for Trade constituted originally at the former Italian Ministry of Industry, Trade and Artisan Production, to elaborate an information system jointly with the Italian Chamber

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the competitiveness and the rationalization of the distributional network for simplification and transparency purposes, to safeguard consumers and curb prices and to put in place a modern efficient system.

The said Legislative Decree no. 114/1998 and the approval of the subsequent Constitutional Law dated 18 October 2001 no. 3, *Amendments to Chapter V of the second part of the Constitution*, stipulated trade as one of the main issues to be regulated by the Regions. The laws sanctioned the adoption of regional regulations for the safeguarding and enhancing of historical centres, but also delineated guidelines for integrated intervention of urban renovation[27], in which activities in the sector have played a strategic role, as for instance in the context of the Regional Operative Plans, the Planning Documents for Regions eligible under Objectives 1 and 2 for the use of Structural Funds 2000-2006[28] and 2007-2013[29]. The Legislative Decree was effectively implemented by the Regions in 1999, albeit from 2000 to 2005 legislation activity had been intense seeing as specific laws and norms regulating particular aspects had resulted merely in partial implementation of the laws. These are outlined briefly below.

The Emilia Romagna Region has adopted in full the provisions of the Regional Law, 5 July 1999, no. 14 *Regulary dispostions for retail trade in enactment of Legislative Decree dated 31 March 1998, n. 114*, which stipulated a system of regulations centred on the recognition of the value of trade from the point of view of its relations with the local system and the economics of the territory. The Regional Law, inspired basically by principles of subsidiarity, attributed to Communes and Provinces an important role in town planning and in programming the trade network[30], at the same time resolving the scarce coordination in terms of decision making and policy, of decisions in the context both of Communal Trade Plans and those defined in the General Regulatory Plans and that of agreements, innovating inter-Institutional relations and those between representatives of Local Authorities, Business Associations, Trade Unions and Consumer Associations. Furthermore, it is envisaged that the identification of location areas for medium size structures has to be in the context of the Provincial Coordination Territorial Plan, for a joint evaluation of the cumulative effects that

of Commerce and the Communes to enhance knowledge of the characteristics of the sector, with particular reference to forms of association, their consistency and articulation, at the same time, ensuring a coordinated system of monitoring, to circulate processed data relative to said associations, for regional planning purposes.

[27] The locating of businesses, wholly or in part for purposes of trade can be envisaged in the context of Integrated Programmes of Intervention and Trade Programmes for Urban Renovation, in the context of complex and integrated Programmes such as Programmes of Urban Requalification and Sustainable Development, Programme Agreements, Programmes of Urban Requalification and others (Cfr. Castellini, Ricciardelli, 2001).

[28] The innovative aspect of recent planning approaches lies in considering commercial activities as part of a variegated system of: distribution, artisan production, catering, culture-entertainment and services. These approaches include intervention funded by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) although addressed to run down areas has achieved experiences of specific interest at Taranto, Genova and Cosenza, the goals achieved not being the product of predefined models.

[29] In particular, the European Community Programmes 2007-2013 envisage significant tools both in the Regional Operatives Programmes (ROP) Competitiveness (in particular, Axis 1 - Innovation and the Knowledge Economy; Axis 4 - Safeguarding and Enhancement of the Natural and Cultural Heritage) and in the Regional Operatives Programmes (ROP) Employment (Axis 1 - Adaptability; Axis 2 - Employment; Axis 4 - Human Resource Capital). Intervention concerns: the areas of transport; accessibility and mobility; diffusion of services and infrastructure; the natural environment; cultural resources. Total quality, customer satisfaction, the new professions, innovative services, the expression of structural change in the globalized economy and new economic and social dynamism have to constitute the strengths of strategic action, even of small and medium size businesses.

[30] Art. 2 sets out general guidelines for commercial activity (envisaged by paragraph 1 Art. 6 of the said Legislative Decree no. 114/1998) pursuing the objective of qualifying the urban and territorial order, which the Provinces and the Communes have to implement in the context of their specific territory and urban planning tools. Such action includes, the adequacy of the network, the integration of trade in social and environmental contexts, the enhancement of quality in cities and territory; the safeguarding of historical centres and areas of specific historical or artistic value and the balanced development of the various types of distribution.

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urban planning decision making can have on the different systems of viability and traffic as well as on the adequacy of infrastructure[31].

The goals of the Piemonte Region are centred on the *territorial compatibility of development*, by means of the definition of structures compatible with built-up and trade locations. The Regional Law 12 November 1999, no. 28 *Regulatory Dispositions, Development and Incentivising of Trade in Piemonte in enactment of the Italian Legislative Decree dated 31 March 1998, no.114*, envisages the approval of the general guidelines for the setting up of trade activities and town planning criteria for the recognition of built-up areas and trade locations and for the definition of the trade vocation of the communal territory, not to mention the limits of a planning nature for the safeguarding of cultural and environmental goods[32].

The Lombardia Region has implemented the Legislative Decree no. 114/1998 with the Regional Executive Resolution no. 41299 dated 5 February 1999 and the Regional Executive Resolution no. 43680 dated 24 June 1999 envisaging that the Communes proceed to identify historical centres, areas or buildings of historical, archaeological, artistic and environmental value in compliance with legislation in force, authorizing them to revoke if necessary in the areas identified, trade licences for local businesses, in the event of non-compatibility with territorial functions as concerns viability, consumer mobility and urban refurbishment[33]. At the same time the Legislative Decree envisages a contingent number for large sales structures and limits of an urban planning nature for medium size structures. In particular, the regional territory has been sub-divided into 21 territorial units for which the minimum quota of new sales areas authorized, has been determined.

The Umbria Region, with the Regional Law dated 3 August 1999, no. 24 *Trade Regulations in enactment of Legislative Decree dated 31 March 1998, no. 114* stipulates a scheme founded on territorial compatibility and in its turn, on classifying Communes and identifying type of distribution structures compatible with the various demographic levels. The subsequent Regional Law dated 7 December 2005 no. 26 *Amendments and integrations of the Regional Law 3 August 1999 no. 24 - Regulatory dispositions for Trade in enactment of the Legislative Decree, 31 March 1998, no. 114* confirmed the conditions applying to authorisations for locating new shopping centres, with the proviso that at least 30% of the sales floor space be destined to local businesses and to medium size structures (previously quantified in 40%), 50% of which were to be reserved with priority, for entrepreneurs already operating in the regional area for a period of no less than five years and having made the relevant application within 6 months from the issue of the authorisation.

The Toscana Region issued an all-comprehensive Law setting out all the regulations relative to the sector (the so-called Trade Regulations, on the object of which being to seek a balance between small, medium and large

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[31] The amendment to the Council Resolution no. 1253/1999 established that local galleries or shopping malls, (comprising several businesses together with small-medium size sales outlets) are feasible only in the context of renovation of the existing building heritage. For medium and large integrated structures, the classifying of large structures as such is envisaged if they are an aggregate of several businesses the sales floors of which (a) exceed the limits of 1,500 Sqm in Communes with a resident population inferior to 10,000 inhabitants and to 2,500 Sqm in those with more than 10,000 inhabitants, collocated in adjacent buildings.

[32] The Regulations transfer to the Communes the onus of criteria for issuing authorizations and for the upgrading of urban planning and enactment instruments, identifying the areas to destine to trade centres, the limits enterprises are subject to, limits of an urban nature and the correlation between certificates authorizing trade and building concessions or authorizations, while it attributes to the Provinces the competence for recognition, subject to prior application by the Communes, of the connotation of tourism locations within the communal territory.

[33] The Lombardia Region for instance, has stipulated that Communal urban planning tools facilitate the locating of medium and large shopping centres in historical centres, envisaging a floor space based on the number of inhabitants resident in the Commune (from shopping centres with up to 1,500 Sqm sales floor space in historical centres of Communes comprising up to 10,000 inhabitants, to shopping centres of over 5,000 Sqm in the town centres of Communes with over 100,000 inhabitants). (Art. 12 of the Regional Regulations 21 July 2000, no. 3).

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scale distribution[34], at the same time, putting in place an effective process of simplification. The planning system is based on territory governance and, in particular, on identifying by means of town planning tools, areas to destine to the location of medium and large scale structures. The Regulations also indicate criteria for the definition of standards and parameters in relation to the location and size of businesses, vehicular and pedestrian accessibility, the elimination of architectural barriers and urban refurbishment[35]. Innovation is represented by what is envisaged in the *Programmes for the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Areas* by means of which Communes can gradually locate medium size sales structures in areas affected by phenomena of local business vulnerability[36]. Regional directives on commercial planning are co-ordinated in the *Territorial Guidelines Plan*[37].

The Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, with the Executive Resolution no. 647 dated 24 March 2005, envisaged the adoption of a *Large Scale Distribution Plan* which, taking into account the declared objectives for a balanced and harmonious development of the local distribution system, identifies potentially suitable areas for locating sales structures with a covered floor space in excess of 15,000 Sqm[38]. Furthermore the Resolution contemplates facilitations both for local businesses and for medium size sales structures (with floor space not in excess of 400 Sqm). These entail merely notifying the Communes, while for larger structures, albeit authorisations still being mandatory, the Communes are no longer obliged to call a Conference of Services[39].

The Veneto Region, with the Regional Law 13 August 2004, no. 15 *Planning Regulations for new businesses in Veneto* - innovated its policy by introducing more restrictive regulations[40] and identifying objectives of development, in quantitative terms, limiting the issuing of authorisations for large scale sales structures. Furthermore, the principle was introduced by means of which the Communes have to refer to criteria

[34] The measure, difficult to evaluate on the level of effective impact, originates from a series of regulations issued relative to: authorising procedures for large scale structures; priority measures for the issuing of authorisations for medium and large scale structures; communicational content relative to local businesses and applications for authorisations for medium size sales structures and shopping centres; identification of metropolitan trade areas and target users characterizing the territory planning and regional economic planning model; territory zones for which the maximum floor space limits should be applied relative to medium and large scale structures; indications of maximum floor spaces for large scale structures, guidelines for planning medium and large scale structures and cases in which authorisations are needed for the extension of medium and large scale structures. The Regulations furthermore, reiterate decision making privileging the requalification of existing structures and the relation between planning for commercial purposes and town planning with specific reference to cooperation and planning on a greater-Communal scale (Art. 4).

[35] The quantitative objectives relative to large scale sales structures are binding. Only through Planning Agreements stipulated by the Provinces with the participating Communes from the same area, is it possible to authorise new premises or extended premises of up to a maximum of 5,000 Sqm inside the same user area.

[36] The area(s) involved in the Planning Agreements cannot exceed 50% of the territory of the Communes (except those with a population of fewer than 3,000 inhabitants) their outskirts, mountain and island areas. To classify said areas the Regional Law 17 May 1999, no. 28 *Regulatory dispositions for retail trade in enactment of the Legislative Decree 31 March 1998, no. 114* stipulates that each Commune has to refer to the numerical density during the previous three years, of still active local businesses and those subjected to winding up procedures.

[37] For planning for commercial purposes, the regional territory has been subdivided into uniform target user areas and into metropolitan areas for trading purposes. The location of medium and large scale structures in areas destined for productive premises, besides the indications stated above for specific types of sales areas, impose the verifying of compatibility with existing businesses, while for large scale structures, maximum limits of authorized floor space apply, on an annual basis, in relation to the contexts identified.

[38] New development potential is distributed to the extent of 60-65% of market share to large scale distribution and 35-40% to small and medium scale distribution.

[39] However, some restrictions still apply. For example, the raising of commodity categories (2 to 5: - foodstuffs; - non foodstuffs; - dailies and periodicals; - low-impact non-foodstuffs; - special goods).

[40] Commodity categories pass from 2 to 4 (- foodstuffs; - non-foodstuffs in general - non foodstuffs characterized by extensive floor space; - mixed commodities).

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Guidelines for the issuing of authorisations (such as the ratio between medium-large scale sales structure density and local businesses)[41].

Planning put in place by the Marche Region was based on integrated multi-tiered territory planning. The Regional Law 23 February 2005, no. 9 *Further Amendments to the Regional Law dated 4 October 1999, no. 26. Regulations and Guidelines for the Trade Sector* attributes a significant role the Provinces. They have to establish with their particular Provincial Coordination Territorial Plan, the locating of large scale distribution at a greater-Communal level[42]. As concerns the link between envisaged trade centres in urban planning and commercial programming, the mechanism is quite flexible, seeing as it is founded on the functional compatibility of distribution type, in compliance with the planning zones in which the Communal territory is subdivided. Medium size structures can be located in any zone (with specific limits binding for the historical centre), while large scale structures can be located only in C zones (in expansion) and D zones (productive). For the purpose of protecting, revitalizing and incentivising the trade system in the areas of the historical centres[43], as a concurring element of aggregation in a social context, not to mention principal element of the requalification, safeguarding and refurbishing of the urban fabric of historical origin, the Communes have the remit of adapting their town planning tools to the specific regulations put in place for the locating of new trade initiatives.

The Lazio Region with the Regional Law 17 February 2005, no. 9 *Regional Trade Budget for 2005* authorised the opening of medium size sales structures in premises of once demolished and reconstructed buildings, in areas complying with planning destinations, not subject to the indications of the planning schedule, albeit still binding for the premises for which said authorisations were issued. On the whole, the regulations stipulated[44] are in line with the previously mentioned Legislative Decree no. 114/1998, save in the clauses referring to the reformulation of the size categories for sales outlets, to which are generally associated the mere quantitative re-determination of the parameters on which the planned quota of new businesses is based[45].

The Puglia Region, with its Regional Regulations no. 26/2005 has established that the location of premises of large and medium scale sales structures is authorised only in areas which are the object of town planning dispositions, envisaging initiatives considered necessary for the purpose of environmental mitigation, improving access and/or reducing socio-economic impact[46].

[41] Note for instance, incentives to open shopping centres of up to 4,000 Sqm in the historical centres of Communes with over 20,000 inhabitants, with a maximum limit in dimensional terms equal to 15,000 Sqm, that can be extended to 25,000 Sqm metres in the event of merging medium and large scale structures.

[42] Art. 8 Guidelines for the Provinces stipulate that the "*Provinces, complying with the territorial planning framework, in relation to the roadways network of national strategic importance (STINF 7), interregional (STINF 8) and regional (STINF 9) and access thereto, apportion by means of specific plans of territorial coordination, the location of premises for large scale distribution at greater-Communal level, establishing criteria and procedures for ascertaining the same, exclusively in relation to the location of premises in Municipal areas*". Said attribution should occur pursuant to the preliminary phase of adapting the town planning tools to conform with the Regional Guidelines relative to the enactment of the directives set out in the Legislative Decree no. 114/1998, in relation to the territorial order in global terms.

[43] Identified as historical centre the area defined as Zone A, in conformity with Art. 2 of the Inter-Ministerial Decree *(Decreto Interministeriale*) dated 2 April 1968, no. 1444, in other words, contexts characterized by volumetria of historical, artistic interest and of particular environmental prestige, including surrounding areas and individual buildings considered an integral part of the same, in compliance with town planning dispositions.

[44] See in particular, the Regional Law dated 18 November 1999, no. 33 *Regulations relative to the trade sector* and the Regional Law 25 May 2001, no. 12 *Amendments to the Regional Law dated 18 November 1999, no. 33, relative to trade*.

[45] Regional Regulations by virtue of the need to adapt differential more specialist criteria to the town planning and environmental specifics of the market of reference, have gradually distanced the provisions stipulated in the Legislative Decree no. 114/1998 sacrificing the expectations of medium size retail businesses establishments.

[46] Limits to the opening of Large scale businesses have been envisaged by means of strictly regulated planning. In 2004 five new provincial food shopping centres were opened (one of regional interest and four located in the Provinces of Bari, Brindisi,

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Regulations devised at Regional level cross cut those at Commune level seeing as the latter have full licence in specific sectors while at the same time, are strictly limited in others i.e. town planning, the competence of which has been relegated to the Regions[47]. A comparative analysis of the dispositions adopted, highlights the substantial asymmetry between guidelines for economic-commercial planning and regional and greater-Communal planning, albeit activities which are the competence of Communes are connoted by a greater propensity for innovation. In effect Communes by approving action plans, have established the principle whereby commercial structures have to aim not only at recovering the building heritage but also at innovative balanced town planning in fringe areas made up of an urban fabric in need of requalification, and in general of degraded areas, in the context of the consolidated relationship between territorial and planning issues and the programming of the distributional network[48].

The Campania Region, with the Regional Law January 2000, no. 1, Directives on Regional Trade Distribution implemented a specific zoning process of the regional territory in 14 functional greater-Communal areas, constituted by one Metropolitan Area and 13 functional greater-Communal Areas, exalting the role of the Communes in the management of the territory, both as concerns decision making relative to the location of medium and large scale structures and intervention in historical centres for local businesses, carried out respecting general criteria established by the Region. Furthermore, *objectives of presence and development* in relation to suitable floor spaces for large sales structures and integrated intervention for small centres envisage multifunctional centres that revitalise the functions of social aggregation. At the same time, they establish the possibility of exemption from Local Authority Council Taxes. Finally, the Campania Region has set up a Regional Observatory of the Trade Network to monitor the entire network in order to provide decision makers with useful elements for new policies of territory intervention.

The Friuli Venezia Giulia Region authorises consortia of Communes[49] to formulate a Trade Plan in order to integrate town planning tools in force, while for Communes in mountainous Communities, a minimum demographic platform of 30,000 inhabitants is mandatory.

The Commune of Firenze, in the context of its Communal Trade Plans has devised a *Plan for the safeguarding and enhancement of historical centres* as sanctioned by Regional Regulations, in order to guarantee residents and tourists optimal trade services, integrated with other services of public interest. Rationalisation of relevant systems is envisaged in specific contexts: vehicle mobility or otherwise, parking areas, lighting and refurbishment; dispositions relative to specific prescriptions for the locating of businesses subject to urban and environmental impact assessment (even in the case of premises of medium size structures in zones integrated

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Foggia and Lecce) together with two provincial integrated non-foodstuff trade centres (one of Regional interest and the other in the Province of Lecce). In 2005 three authorisations for integrated provincial non-foodstuff trade areas were issued as well as for a medium size food shopping centre.

[47] Art. 117 of the Italian Constitution sanctions the exclusive competence of the Regions relative to town planning issues and as a result, the definition of guidelines for commercial planning, that are still sustained by econometric models, by the logics of market balance and quantitative parameters.

[48] Art. 6, paragraph 5 of the Legislative Decree no. 114/1998 has generated a great deal of perplexity as concerns the term *updating* of Communal town planning tools, resolved in part by the resolutions agreed in the State - Regions - Communes Unified Conference held on 21 October 1999 which clarified: "*in order to facilitate the calibrating/updating of town planning policies in act to principles and criteria of uniformity and rationale to trading sector regulations and in general, to the aim of applying the reforms introduced by the Legislative Decree no. 114/98 as well as to guarantee well defined deadlines, it is opportune that the Regions and Local Authorities in respect of the limits and spheres of autonomy guaranteed, utilize all the simplified administrative procedures contemplated in the Regulations*" (Cfr. Bianchi, 2004).

[49] The Communal Trade Plan approved by individual Town Councils and transmitted to the Regional Board the latter obliged, within 90 days of receipt, to express binding reserve only in the event of contrast with the guidelines set out in the Regional Town Planning tool currently in force, relative to natural or environmental issues, or in the General Regional Territorial Plan if in force.

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with local businesses and with those situated in public areas) and, vetoing the sale of products incompatible with the functional specifics of the area.

Various Communes in the Metropolitan area of Turin, to preserve, exploit and develop activities in the sector, taking into account their contribution to social aggregation and to territory requirements, have promoted programmes and projects of urban building aimed at the re-qualifying and development of the commercial fabric, the consolidating of the image, place identity and urban regeneration. These projects approved and ratified by Regional Resolutions are integrated with a plan of application, a financial plan and measures delineating planning and procedural indications[50].

The Communes on the outskirts of Bologna, on the basis of regional Regulations, have to approve trade enhancement projects[51] to promote the re-launching and the re-qualifying of sales networks in historical centres and in consolidated areas of service, pursuant to analyzing public policies, private sector planning and the effectiveness of the regulatory and financial instruments in place. In particular, in 2000, Bologna issued preliminary draft plans in conformity with Art. 8 of the above mentioned Regional Law no. 14/1999, which comprises 14 re-qualifying initiatives funded with public contributions (9 in the historical centre and 5 in areas on the outskirts) and for 8 of them, applications were made to the Emilia Romagna Region for specific funding. Such funding is allocated for intervention promoted both by the Local Authorities and individuals, with the proviso that the development of the distributional sector of the Region[52] is favoured. Furthermore, in the context of the Communes, classifying buildings, building areas or shops by virtue of their specific value (historical, archaeological, artistic or environmental), precise regulatory or planning dispositions are envisaged to render trade services compatible with consumer viability and mobility. In particular, in the A Zone [53], or parts of it, buildings, even outside the established boundaries, but classified in relation to the specific values of the context[54]

[50] In the case of Turin, communal and regional regulations contemplate the following types of intervention: Urban Requalification Plans in built up trading areas; Integrated Re-generation Plans; Plans for Amelioration of Small Businesses; Plans for Re-launching Competitive Dynamics.

[51] The policy of the Plan for trade enhancement aims to put in place infrastructure and urban refurbishment and/or significant re-organization of logistics, contemplating at the same time, new or modified services, the reuse or the exploiting of volumetria for the location of new businesses; the setting up of local complexes; promotional activities and the identification of a structure for the coordinated management of territory intervention.

[52] The Regulations for the planning and enhancement of trade annexed to the General Regulatory Plan, in 2001, identified and regulated two different working models: a) plans promoted by Communes and characterized by relevant intervention (such as the restructuring of building complexes for trading purposes; the refurbishing of streets or squares; significant changes to viability and parking systems which, albeit necessitating long term and articulated planning and enactment, even if addressed to parts of the territory not particularly extended, could be coordinated within the Urban Re-qualification Schemes (ex Regional Law 3 July 1998, no. 19 *Regulations for urban regeneration*); b) initiatives promoted by private sector individuals and instrumental to policies of requalification and enhancement of networks, connoted by low impact infrastructure and modest complexity (such as promotional and recreational business, furnishings, services, viability, renovations and extensions), but represented also by flexible and timely intervention, by their diffusion in the territory and continuity over time.

[53] Art. 14 of the Regional Law 7 December 1978, no. 47 *Territory safeguarding and use*.

[54] The issue of safeguarding goods of historical-archaeological-environmental and artistic value/interest is extremely delicate given that there is the risk of putting limits on private property. In this context, the Coordinating Committee for the safeguarding of emporiums of historical interest was set up to provide technical and specialist expertise and advice. Towards the end of 2000, the Bologna City Council passed a Resolution detailing dispositions for: the safeguarding of the historical centre and of the peripheral areas, the classification of emporiums with historical interest and the institution of a specific Register valid for five years, in terms of inscription of goods or their prestige value. Two criteria were put in place: the artisan-production business besides responding to objective chronological and place specifics (e.g. established in the same place with the same range of goods for at least fifty years) should present at least one value creating factor (prestigious architecture, specific windows and shop sign features, furnishings, particular fixtures and fittings, family tradition; or, in absence of said requisites, should present at least one other, by way of example, taking into account that traditional and cultural value in itself is already subject to safeguarding.

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are included. As concerns areas with a trade vocation, incentivising action in terms of said processes is envisaged. These include: improving quality standards of social venues and business efficiency; planning the development and the qualification of local businesses, specific urban regulations controlling change of use; extending the range of services: cultural, artisan production, recreation, catering or leisure, as further components of the appeal of a specific area; re-qualifying firms located in public spaces; envisaging the establishing of medium size structures, local shopping centres and malls, in conformity with the *Urban Requalification Programmes* or other town planning action tools. Through various trade enhancement projects, in compliance with Art. 8 of the said Regional Law Emilia Romagna no. 14/1999, in synergy with the existing network as concerns means and locations area access is favoured through public transport and in any event, compatibly with existing structures, in historical centres and in central areas while the regulated locations of local shopping centres or malls, can be contemplated in terms of avoiding larger scale sales structures or centres of attraction.

As concerns Milan, the aim of the projects for the historical centre and/or urban requalification of the city is to safeguard its morphological and typical features to ensure that their connotative elements and the relation between the various parts of the historical context to be conserved are in no way affected. In particular, the functional re-use of premises should be coherent with the morphological and structural elements of the buildings for transformation and the relationship between trade entity, surrounding public spaces and the urban context, calibrated in order to enhance the identity specifics of historical places of interest, avoiding excessive policies of characterization of strong impact: advertising paraphernalia (bill boards, shop signs etc.) or homologising urban refurbishment, the excessive or alienating use of strident colours out of context with the surroundings[55].

A brief analysis of Regional and Communal legislation, implies from the geographer's point of view, the moving of critical assessments and considerations: some Regions have operated in a perspective of modernization and simplification, others on the contrary, have respected only to a certain extent, the guidelines for renovation outlined in the previously mentioned Legislative Decree no. 114/1998.

Despite the fact that over a decade has passed since the regulatory framework for distribution in Italy was issued, highly critical scenarios are still evident, taking into account substantial immobility in processes of implementation on a local scale as a result of non compliance with agreed schedules, and the Regions having legislated on aspects outside their competence, drafting conflicting plans in terms of objectives, means and evaluation criteria with the relative negative consequences in terms of costs, both for businesses and for consumers. On the other hand, the above mentioned Legislative Decree no. 114/1998 merely enunciates the de-regulatory framework of the sector, which if on the one hand safeguards the interests of Local Authorities, on the other, the Regions being unable to rely on guidelines underwritten and drafted in agreement, have not dealt with and resolved fundamental issues (Girardi, 2004, p. 16). As the Banca d'Italia points out, "*the 1998 Reform, in deregulating the opening of small shops has put the onus on the Regions to regulate the location in the territory of the larger businesses. Not all the Regions have exploited the opportunity offered by de-regularisation. Where more restrictive criteria have been adopted, productive efficiency and the diffusion of new technology have been blocked to the detriment of consumers and to the growth of employment in the sector*"[56]. Accordingly, the process has contributed to increasing further the regional imbalance, seeing as mutually agreed policy has not become the norm, as testified by the still conflicting relation between urban planning policy and the locating of trade centres[57].

Urban planning and trade planning has often been implemented by the Regions using strictly quantitative

[55] On these aspects, the Regulations of the Plan should entail pondered dispositions linking them as far as possible, with building Regulations, while town planning regulations should facilitate the location of shopping centres and encourage the presence of local businesses by means of new activities in order to enhance the specific ways, routes and traditional venues of the historical centre, at the same time, identifying suitable measures or procedures for the access, mobility and enjoyment of the same (car parks, pedestrian areas, public transport, décor etc.).

[56] Cfr. Banca d'Italia, 2006.

[57] Cfr. Tamini, 2007.

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criteria or by delegating indiscriminate power to the Provinces, which in many cases has hindered the issuing of authorizations, subordinating them to the devising of Provincial Territorial Plans of Coordination or the redesigning of General Regulatory Planning or Communal Trade Planning. The outcome has been that both provincial competence and that of the Communes have overlapped in terms of safeguarding the environment and territory as well as in terms of Communal regulatory dispositions for town planning[58].

The regulatory framework appears to be highly inadequate as concerns support action for the sector in dealing with the challenges of updating processes to increase competitiveness in the single market. Flexibility and efficiency is needed, taking into account the low level of modernization characterizing Italian distribution networks, extremely distant from European standards as a whole.

Criticism of the process of decentralization and transfer to the Regions of competence as concerns the trade sector has also come from the business world. A framework of non-uniform regulations, inspired and based on the prudent acceptance of the logics of Italian law was followed, pursuant to the passing of Law no. 3/2001, by a managerial-oriented phase and characterized mainly by restrictions to trade development potential. Nonetheless, Regions addressing more attention to competition, such as Piemonte, Lombardia and Emilia Romagna, recording an effectively low price policy, have achieved better results in terms of inflationary trends and advantages as concerns spending power and consumer well-being albeit from the analysis of regulations issued, awareness of the role that medium size sales structures can play in processes of modernization in the Italian distributional system, does not emerge seeing as either entrance barriers have been introduced or incentivizing mechanisms in compliance with the above mentioned Legislative Decree no. 114/1998[59] have been eliminated.

In actual fact, the objectives of modernization: greater competitive efficiency, balanced growth, development of the distribution network and consumer protection should have been achieved by virtue of the numerous regulations in force, favouring competitiveness, both on a vertical plane (with reference to industry - distribution - consumers relations) and on a horizontal scale, as is evident from the various regional regulations approved. In the latter, margins of development and competitiveness of medium sized firms have been reviewed, thus facilitating processes of reconversion and rationalization, taking into account that such categories represent a balance between urban planning needs and entrepreneurial needs seeing as they provoke low environmental impact[60], albeit adopting the modern trade policies that characterize dynamic sectors such as distribution.

It goes without saying that an effective trade policy can be implemented only if the stakeholders in the distributional process are able to interpret predictable trends, the changes affecting consumers on the one hand and the direction the marketplace and the economy is taking on the other, modelling consequently, relative competences and agreeing on the required intervention. On the other hand, it would be paradoxical to imagine integrated trade policy as the mere sum of Regional laws, replacing regulations that respond to diverse economic and competitive scenarios that are closer to the interests of businesses and consumers.

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[58] If the abolition of the Communal Trade Planning and the consequential attribution of control of the distributional networks to the realms of general town planning, had been considered positively seeing as it had put a stop to *nearly thirty years of isolation of trade from territory planning* (Art. 6, paragraph 2), the way in which the trade plans had been removed provokes in no mean terms, perplexity as concerns the entire deregulation process of the sector (Cfr. Pellegrini, 2000, p. 91).

[59] The Legislative Decree no. 114/1998, by subordinating the opening of new retail outlets to licensing, had in actual fact, renounced leaving to market mechanisms the management of expansion in retail outlets of medium size, subjecting them to intervention which, in continuity with the past, inadequately simulate markets where a contingent number of operators act. (Cfr. Castellini, Ricciardelli, 2001).

[60] Taking into account the role of interface between production and consumption played by distribution and considering the centrality of locations of retail outlets in consumer decision making, the strict planning of medium size structures (as mentioned previously of low environmental impact) penalizes competition among distributors, favouring monopolistic attitudes on the part of operators present on the micro-market representing the target user area of reference. Considering the low capacity for absorption of retail outlets of an inferior dimension, such relative monopolistic positioning cannot but have repercussions even on the relation between production and consumption, to the detriment of the latter.

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3. Strategies for competitiveness and trade appeal in town centres. - Trade in its various forms concurs in delineating the living standards of a territory, seeing as a distributional system structured upon small and medium size enterprises besides producing wealth and employment, safeguards a precious network of social relations, improves standards of living, citizen safety, as well as solidarity, social cohesion and sense of belonging to a community[61]. Therefore, as has been pointed out, one of the strategic elements of the said Legislative Decree no. 114/1998 concerns the issue of consolidating programmes, town planning and estimated development of the distributional network, delegating to the Regions the task of promulgating specific regulations to match the general objectives of the reform to specific geographical contexts by means of a Regional Planning Document[62].

Specific attention has been addressed furthermore, to the environmental and location implications inherent to the development of the distributional network[63]. Many are the characteristics considered including the infrastructure issue in the territory; the definition of more adequate criteria with regard to location; accessibility and environmental outreach which the development of large scale distribution generates, such as traffic congestion, local taxes, ground area consumption. The model of a compact city, characterized by the prevalence of small trade and that of a city in expansion, organized on the paradigm of private mobility and incardinated upon the autonomy of peripheral location systems, generally not correlated to networks of public transport, have generated a crisis which has affected local businesses, with consequences cascading onto the living standards of urban lifestyles which from time immemorial, have always found in small businesses the most typical form of territorial safeguarding against the dangers of erosion of the urban social fabric[64].

Despite the fact that urban centres suffer on the competitive front compared to peripheral shopping centres/malls and leisure centres, from the shortage of parking areas, difficulty of access, high price of property, several positive experiences have been launched for the enhancement of retail areas in historical zones, thanks to collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders in fund raising and the support of territorial marketing, funds to employ in strategic infrastructure and medium term maintenance, to increase competitiveness and create added value. Intervention on the part of Public Administrations[65] together with that of stakeholders[66] in urban contexts, has had principally, the objective of enhancing and modernizing shopping contexts, strongly conditioned as they are by consumer perceptions of satisfaction attributed to specific shopping areas. The lack of a predominant formula of distribution has resulted in the proliferation of retail categories: linear locating (central urban structures and extra-urban street markets); large concentrated areas (commercial parks, *factory outlet centres*, theme parks and amusement parks); highly specialised centres with great appeal capacity[67] (Tab. 4).

[61] The process of modernization and rationalization of the sector, inspired by principles of sustainable development, both as concerns territorial diffusion and diverse forms of distribution, contemplates the safeguarding and enhancing of small scale trade and local services. Having a cementing function it encourages social cohesion and requalification of the urban fabric and contrasts phenomena of desertification of town centres and the peripheral areas, as well as in mountainous and marginal areas. In the Italian panorama, of particular note is the Regulation issued in 2005 relative to the urban and territorial governance of the Lombardia Region (Regional Law 11 March 2005, no. 12 *Law for territory governance*) which adopts criteria of subsidiarity, adequacy, differentiation, sustainability, participation, collaboration, flexibility, compensation and efficiency. The strategic innovative idea is constituted by urban trade districts, whereby citizens, businesses and social organizations are able to confer on trade activities in the sector the task of integrating and enhancing the resources at the territory's disposal.

[62] Cfr. Morandi, 1999.

[63] Cfr. Pellegrini, 2001.

[64] Cfr. Preite, 2002.

[65] Also: decor, paving and other defining elements of community space, the creation and requalification of routes/walks, lighting and the renovating and refurbishing of buildings with a historical-artistic-architectural interest and system of plants and greenery.

[66] In particular, recovery of commercial buildings and trade volumetria in property or dismantled areas, facades of premises, structures for advertising and information, use of spaces for events and open air markets.

[67] (Cfr. Sernini, 1988).

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Tab. 4 - Distribution, by geographical area, of the quantity of sales floor space and staff by large stores, large specialized sales floor space and minimarkets (2007-2008).

LARGE STORES[68]									
GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	2007			2008			RATE OF VARIATION 2008-2007		
	NUMBER	SALES FLOOR SURFACES (SQM)	STAFF	NUMBER	SALES FLOOR SURFACES (SQM)	STAFF	NUMBER %	SALES FLOOR SURFACES (SQM)	STAFF %
NORTH-WEST	263	536,541	7,130	297	557,668	7,278	12.9	3.9	2.1
NORTH-EAST	188	406,570	5,127	192	401,892	5,084	2.1	–1.2	–0.8
CENTRE	408	564,639	7,186	426	591,214	7,241	4.4	4.7	0.8
SOUTHERN ITALY	433	518,143	6,079	437	541,872	6,487	0.9	4.6	6.7
ITALY	1,292	2,025,893	25,522	1,352	2,092,646	26,089	4.6	3.3	2.2
LARGE FLOOR SURFACES FOR SPECIALIST SECTORS[69]									
GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	2007			2008			RATE OF VARIATION 2008-2007		
	NUMBER	SALES FLOOR SURFACES (SQM)	STAFF	NUMBER	SALES FLOOR SURFACES (SQM)	STAFF	NUMBER %	SALES FLOOR SURFACES (SQM)	STAFF %
NORTH-WEST	518	1,501,767	17,266	533	1,573,607	18,734	2.9	4.8	8.5
NORTH-EAST	404	1,131,258	10,548	429	1,232,023	10,990	6.2	8.9	4.2
CENTRE	204	614,616	6,434	209	619,788	6,773	2.5	0.8	5.3
SOUTHERN ITALY	274	780,455	8,675	294	849,101	9,116	7.3	8.8	5.1
ITALY	1,400	4,028,096	42,922	1,465	4,274,519	45,613	4.6	6.1	6.3
MINIMARKETS[70]									
GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS	2007			2008			RATE OF VARIATION 2008-2007		
	NUMBER	SALES FLOOR SURFACES (SQM)	STAFF	NUMBER	SALES FLOOR SURFACES (SQM)	STAFF	NUMBER %	SALES FLOOR SURFACES (SQM)	STAFF %
NORTH-WEST	1,341	400,027	8,639	1,350	401,204	8,832	0.7	0.3	2.2
NORTH-EAST	1,131	341,754	6,879	1,088	329,439	6,831	–3.8	–3.6	–0.7
CENTRE	738	221,750	4,541	755	228,384	4,732	2.3	3.0	4.2
SOUTHERN ITALY	1,973	568,488	10,440	2,109	606,551	11,609	6.9	6.7	11.2
ITALY	5,183	1,532,019	30,499	5,302	1,565,578	32,003	2.3	2.2	4.9

Source: Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico - SISTAN, 2008.

[68] A quite unexpected increase in content and number of large stores is reported, taking into account that perceived growth trends in the sector had stabilised. This could be the outcome of a change in business strategy in terms of greater segmentation as opposed to a policy of indiscriminate supplies, thus dedicating more space to specific goods sectors (such as clothing, house fabrics, sports goods etc.).

[69] In 2008 an increase in large scale specialist areas is recorded (by area and by staff). The most efficient and well equipped geographical area is still the North-West of Italy, both as concerns number of structures and floor space, followed by the North-East and by the South of Italy, the latter showing great potential for recovery.

[70] Taking into account the medium-small dimension, this is particularly widespread even in urban areas with high residential density. Southern Italy is predominant, followed by the North-West, while the North-East and the Centre represent the least endowed geographical areas albeit presenting the highest mean values.

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The dichotomy between extra-urban shopping locations and traditional businesses is becoming less marked seeing as these artificial structures are inspired by the multi-faceted perspective of urban centres, while more contiguos areas implement joint management, to avoid losing competitive advantage constituted not only by their appeal factor but also by the permanence of functional relations that have been consolidated over the years[71]. The competition between various urban businesses centres is focused on their capacity to project an attractive image and to supply dynamic trade activities and services, particularly important in requalification actions, by means of experimenting of aggregates of local units and the implementing of integrated intervention[72], sustained by national and regional legislation.

One of the basic principles inspiring planning decisions is undoubtedly the enhancement of enterprises and the capacity to promote the socio-economic and cultural development of a territory and its peculiarities. From an analysis of competitive factors, it emerges that the essential features of a competitive market are: flexibility, innovation and optimal allocation of resources, provided no entrance barriers exist in the sense of legislative limits or economic and technological difficulties impeding the start up of activities or the development of competitive dynamics; dominant positioning[73] of one or two businesses; or finally, conditions for utilizing to the advantage of few individuals negative outreach[74]. Consequently, trade structures should not be bound at the start, by rigid planning using strict quantitative parameters, but rather by minimum sales floor space and aesthetic-functional standards, in relation to the use of external areas (public or private), and to entrepreneurial originality and innovation.

Spurred on by the reform relative to the deregulating of local businesses and by processes of modernisation in act for some time now, firms are implementing strategies targeted at responding to the challenges of the market and planning initiatives to contain the negative effects of desertification provoked by large scale distribution which is transforming the cities into large scale empty containers[75]. An analysis of the quantitative trends of stores (business premises and local units) evidences appreciable levels of growth due to deregulation introduced in the previously mentioned Legislative Decree no. 114/1998, inverting the negative trend of the previous decade (on average over 8,000 units per annum) (Tab. 5)[76].

[71] As concerns local businesses and competitiveness, this is implicit in their capacity to synergise and converge in *viable systems* and to organize a high quality integrated product offer, as in the case of shopping centres. By coordinating management of sales outlets, enhancing their respective synergies and complementarities, shopping centres are particularly efficient multi-sector contexts of specific appeal, capable of sustaining the distributional network supply to their mutual benefit.

[72] Priority needs indicated by the operators include those of safeguarding and facilitating the growth of local businesses; contrasting the exodus of trading facilities from weak areas; accelerating processes of reform and modernization of the distribution network and pursuing the balanced development of the different types of retailing.

[73] Dominant positioning is when a business is capable of modifying prices so as to reap maximum profits even to the detriment of consumers and where its market share is not greatly affected by the strategy.

[74] Negative outreach is are constituted by the social costs generated by firm activities which being non-quantifiable, have no influence on the determining of price.

[75] Consider that large shopping malls/centres and hypermarkets have replaced the «squares», traditional venues of social aggregation, in areas outside the city, with the intention of attracting consumers. Such facilities in some cases, incorporate small and medium size businesses enabling them to reach market quotas that would be hard to achieve were they to operate individually.

[76] Following seven years of constant growth, in 2008 there was an inverted trend as concerns the entity of businesses with retailing as their main activity. In particular, there was no considerable fluctuating in number of premises as opposed to the local units which recorded gradual growth (in 2008 they represented 25% of the businesses) witnessing an ever increasing number of multi-located businesses.

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Tab. 5 - Number of businesses (2000-2008).

Years	Number					Variations in total number	
	Business premises	%	Local units	%	Total	Absolute values	Variations %
2000	593,815	82.3	127,311	17.7	721,126	-	-
2001	590,883	81.5	134,561	18.5	725,444	4,318	0.6
2002	592,251	80.5	143,638	19.5	735,889	10,445	1.4
2003	588,473	79.7	149,752	20.3	738,225	2,336	0.3
2004	593,500	78.7	160,706	21.3	754,206	15,981	2.2
2005	591,641	77.7	169,947	22.3	761,588	7,382	1.0
2006	596,325	76.7	180,765	23.3	777,090	15,502	2.0
2007	590,113	75.8	188,421	24.2	778,534	1,444	0.2
2008	581,761	75.0	193,660	25.0	775,421	−3,113	−0.4

Source: Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico - SISTAN, 2008.

On a national scale, an analysis of territorial distribution consolidates Southern Italy's supremacy with over 42% of the retail network, while a decline is evident in the other geographical areas. The gap widens between the North and South of Italy as emerges from the ratio of territory density (Tab. 6) (national average 13 businesses per 1,000 inhabitants; in the North circa 11; nearly 16 in Regions in the South; 13 in central Regions).

Tab. 6 - Distribution of stores per geographical area to 2008.

Geographical areas	Number of stores	Stores %	Density (1.000 inhabitants)
North-West	167,981	21.7	10.6
North-East	124,938	16.1	11.0
Centre	153,878	19.8	13.2
Southern italy	328,624	42.4	15.8
Italy	775,421	100.0	13.0

Source: Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico - SISTAN, 2008.

The constituent form also undergoes slight change, taking into account the constant growth of joint stock companies (16.5%), to the detriment of individual firms, which continue to represent the most widespread form of juridical status (Tab. 7)[77].

[77] Diversified territorial distribution does not show significant changes even though the contrast between some areas of the North of Italy with those of the South remains. The Regions of Lazio, Lombardia and Friuli Venezia Giulia present the highest percentages of joint stock companies (23.0%, 22.2% and 20.7%, respectively) while Calabria and Basilicata the lowest (9.4% and 8.7%). The latter on the contrary, record the highest values for single businesses (79.2% and 77.6%). The Independent Provinces of Trento and Bolzano number the fewest individual businesses (42.2% and 43.6%) compensated by the highest percentage of partnerships (35.1% and 36.2%).

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Tab. 7 - Juridical status of trading companies (2000-2008).

YEARS	OTHER %	INDIVIDUAL FIRMS %	JOINT STOCK COMPANIES %	PARTNERSHIPS %
2000	0.9	66.8	9.8	22.5
2001	0.9	66.7	10.4	22.0
2002	1.0	66.0	11.2	21.8
2003	1.0	65.5	11.8	21.7
2004	1.0	65.2	12.5	21.3
2005	1.0	64.6	13.4	21.0
2006	1.0	63.3	14.5	21.2
2007	1.0	62.4	15.6	21.0
2008	1.1	61.5	16.5	20.9

Source: Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico - SISTAN, 2008.

In particular, firms aim at achieving objectives such as: - consolidation, qualification and enhancement of trade supply; - locating of new trading centres, of stores, services for residents penetrating youth targets through the reuse of sales floor spaces; - to comply with consumption and service needs on the part of residents and users of urban centres; - quali/quantitative potential of prestigious specialist distributive structures, shops artisan workshops, hospitality, hotel and catering and the service industry; - promotion of the trade and service network, in the search for inter-operator scale economies on occasion of events or other manifestations and joint visual merchandising schemes (such as shop sign planning, windows, access to *harmonized* retail outlets of specific visual impact); - favouring the locating of new hospitality structures in urban centres or in adjacent areas to encourage greater *community feeling*; to progressively reduce weaknesses and enhance strengths and excellence to stimulate initiatives on the part of private sector individuals, setting up consortia as organs of cohesion and to combine diverse trade specifics; - utilizing new techniques and means for facilitating disadvantaged categories, such as *home delivery* services.

Furthermore, said businesses can promote actions for raising levels of safety in the urban community seeing as they stagger their timetables and work for far longer periods than local businesses, above all if oriented towards qualitative and multifunctional supply strongly integrated with that of shopping and leisure activities. If the strengths of trade attraction depend to an ever greater extent on the quality of urban areas, at the same time, they concur in the building or requalification of urban systems and lifestyle standards.

Given that town planning is a long term and complex process, to optimize their success factors, cities need to put a coherent action plan in place in which for instance, economic measures are sustainable in social and environmental terms and underpinned by systems of monitoring and assessment – and to take on the role of leader in delineating strategies of innovation availing themselves of decentralized cooperation (with firms, research centres, category associations, guilds, training organizations, local communities) – the support of networks, and facilitating encounters between partners potentially interested in activating partnership agreements, taking into account that individuals not only contribute funding[78], but also competence and

[78] These instruments consist in grants forms of micro-credit, warranty programmes for risk sharing, consultancy, training courses and funding for «finanziamenti mezzanino». The latter are gradually becoming more widespread seeing as many firms encounter great difficulty in obtaining financing, taking into account that personal capital is often insufficient and this tends to reduce credit raising capacity. With respect to traditional financing by banks, SMEs interested in alternative forms of credit can

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supplementary assistance. Notwithstanding, the regenerating of city centres is generally not characterized by a clear definition of objectives and basic strategy. This constitutes an element of weakness on the one hand, seeing as resources (economic-financial and organization) are not channelled and on the other, a prospective and specific framework of reference is not given to the economic operators.

The attraction factor of trade even in the light of to the gradual ageing of the population and the upsurge of phenomena of desertification, depends more and more on the quality of city space (accessibility, mobility, parking etc.) and this renders necessary territory and town planning, orientated to mediating between the many interests, all the more so if market trends are pushing towards the compacting of individual retail outlets which will need to become unitary organized systems, and implement techniques and methods proper to planned structures.

From the mid 1990s in Italy too, proposals have been made and plans devised for regenerating city centres. These plans have pivoted on the enhancement of commercial systems and not on longer on the mere use of town planning regulations, on building-architectural re-qualification, on property development and on sector plans, albeit the negative implications deriving from the substitution of original functions, from demographic shortfalls, the concentration on services desertification and dismantling, thanks to the limitations of policies of enactment and intervention, have not yet been completely removed.

What has been lacking up to now is a set of regulations targeted at creating consonance in the management of trade enhancement planning based on the experience of other countries, in order to promote and sustain organisms of joint management, establishing criteria for identifying stakeholders for partnership at local level.

From an analysis of town centre enhancement planning in some countries in Southern and Northern Europe, noteworthy are cases in which the development of large scale distribution has been recent but intense with significant impact on centres with prestigious historical features and with a wealth of supply, but at the same time, relatively obsolete (Portugal)[79]; intervention coherent with national guidelines of promotion of processes of urban regeneration (United Kingdom)[80]; geographical contexts in which the growth of commercial centres outside the city walls in the outskirts has provoked the decline of many urban business centres (France)[81].

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apply in the event for instance, that resources are required for management buy-out, expansion or restructuring. «Finanziamenti mezzanino» constitute a hybrid mix of capital of third party-ownership-risk and from the juridical perspective, is considered third party capital by virtue of its subordination in the reimbursement priorities agenda, «capitale mezzanino» is considered part of personal cash assets.

[79] The fairly recent process of modernization of the trade system has provoked a strong impact on the territorial and town centre structure not least in terms of ground use. However, in the late 1990s regulatory dispositions to support trade in town centres were put in place, which were accredited a fundamental role in safeguarding historical centres. The introduction of the PROCOM and URBCOM programmes aroused a certain degree of interest. Utilizing Community funds, they sustained the modernisation of SMEs and intervention for enhancement of residential areas and commercial districts. PROCOM was implemented in the context of renovation and regeneration of the town centres of Porto, on the occasion of events linked to the Project "*Porto 2001, European Capital of Culture*". The PROCOM e URBCOM programmes were also effective as concerns the historical contexts of Coimbra, where the revitalisation of trade was achieved with the combined town centre requalification tools and for Guimaraes, whose historical centre has been conserved in its morphological and social integrity by means of an extensive re-launching programme of the trading fabric.

[80] The study concerns two areas in London (Hammersmith and Fulham and Carnaby Street) and Reading. For two decades the objective of repositioning their central areas with trade, communication and leisure activities was successfully achieved, within the system of medium size cities.

[81] France has for some time now launched a programme of development and modernization of trading, promoting the diffusion of large floor spaces and processes of reorganization and internationalisation of large scale distribution firms. In recent years, both town planning regulations (such as the laws on decentralization and inter-Communal cooperation) and those specific to the sector, have been extensively renewed, enhancing in particular, recourse to strategic planning and to negotiation instruments rather than to regulatory instruments. In town planning programmes in various cities and in strategic plans of agglomeration, the issue of regenerating historical areas and the central *banlieus* has been an agenda priority considered as it is, a

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An analysis of the European experience has highlighted how the advantages deriving from the implementation of joint planning guarantee a unitary vision of the area and are coherent with the identifying values of the local community. The analysis of *best-practices*, strategically orientated towards the multi-channelling of supply and territorial commercial brand structures, highlights location and distribution models focused on specific intervention of re-qualifying supply systems in historical centres and medium scale dimension schemes in central areas; delineation and viability of significant urban contexts; new *formats* capable of satisfying the growing and diverse needs of consumers[82].

Urban areas in order to acquire the features of natural commercial centres and to compete with artificial centres, will have to seek high levels of integration and organization and coordinate management between public and private sector stakeholders[83]. Besides, they will need to invest fewer resources and less time and facilitate spontaneous forms of aggregation between businessmen and residents (associations by street or by area) which have a significant role in the promotional and managerial phase of planning urban and commercial requalification.

Urban areas, constituting a resource for the economy of towns and cities have to act in synergy with public and private sectors, envisaging forms of funding to incentivize new businesses and the requalification of existing businesses, in order to create alternative niche markets to those of large scale structures. Accordingly, specific projects, policies and tools have to be envisaged which enable the perfecting of *standards* of services (such as entertainment or events, security, efficient connections) and urban quality (maintenance and refurbishment) not to mention infrastructure such as (parking areas, requalification of roadways).

It follows that consolidated systems of *partnership* and co-responsibility, in order to improve the structural characteristics of local supplies, will enable integration between local businesses and other categories of retail, with specific regard to large scale organized distribution and the formulation of policies of managing access to urban centres, car parks and recreational areas. Furthermore, initiatives aimed at favouring leisure activities to increase the appeal of urban shopping districts and urban centres should be sustained as well as facilitating the reuse of spaces and premises, improving security, encouraging forms of cooperation, *format* approaches and particular activities such as artisan production, tourism, cultural and artistic services.

The studies undertaken so far strengthen our convictions that the constitution of an Observatory on urban regeneration planning could increase synergies between public and private sector stakeholders, parallel experience and evaluation of the same and at the same time, provide Local Authorities with *best-practices.* By implementing complex intervention, taking into account that trade enhancement policies, albeit of a medley kind, from a theoretical and conceptual perspective, from planning solutions to managerial decision making to regulatory mechanisms, have all contributed to impeding urban and social desertification and characterize to an

tool for balancing and consolidating the territory structure. Innovation and efficiency characterize the regulatory dispositions founded as they are, upon a new strategic and multi-sector approach (i.e. urban re-qualification; support to local development and inter-Communal cooperation; *partnership* building associating the stakeholders participating in urban and trade transformations) as in Lyon, a multi-centre agglomeration with a variegated structure of *formats* which from the mid-Nineties, has renovated urban contexts, integrating the different tools of a strategic, town planning, socio-economic and architectural nature, as well as the sources of financing and inter-sector technical coordination.

[82] For instance consumer behaviour oriented towards shopping experience, in the sense of shopping as a creative experience, consumption of a hedonistic type, the influence of the context on an individual's cognitive and motivational system.

[83] A process of endogenous growth that would enable the achieving jointly significant goals such as the recovery and qualification of small businesses, to ensure consumers quality goods and services, to safeguard the historic-cultural identity of specific central contexts, to attract new clients, to fill the spaces left empty by large stores in recession and to confer vivacity to shopping. The widespread diffusion in shopping centres of retail entertainment complexes, comprising a wide range of premises (multi-use centres at local or city level; reorganised commercial chains and regional centres, sport centres, museum, historical and cultural areas, zones for offices) trends in leisure activities have added value to a wide range of commercial and multi-functional structures, rendering them more enjoyable and consonant with consumer lifestyles.

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extremely relevant extent, urban systems, their standards of quality and lifestyle. It is imperative accordingly, that local specifics be taken into account, local traditions and relative values be recovered and intervention implemented in sites of great prestige by means of systemic, enlightened long-term planning in order to recover the original semantic specifics and underlying urban planning approach.

Joint management of central areas would be an opportune policy, reinforcing partnerships and leaving room for creative professionalism to interpret the potential and problematic issues affecting the areas. Joint management, would also facilitate the delineating of a set of guidelines and the definition and implementation of planning of traditional trading locations. Consequently, the Regions should on the one hand, provide general indications privileging the form of business and public-private sector consortia in which a predominant role is attributed to the Communes and on the other, award incentives, for instance financial contributions, to benefit other stakeholders such as categories of trade associations (guilds) organized or associated large scale distribution companies, public sector firms for management of community services, house owners etc.[84]. In particular, various key factors should be addressed: the identifying of management (manager, management committee) the involvement of house owners, the sharp reduction of the time gap between strategic phases of action.

Conversely, successful North American schemes[85] highlight the concomitance of four fundamental features: sustainability, feasibility, versatility and economic relevance.

In conclusion, of particular interest is an innovative planning tool Town Centre Management, widely experimented in North America, the mission of which is the combination of short and medium term goals of integrated action to regenerate central areas in particular, those of specific historical-artistic-architectural prestige, putting in place specific targeted strategies based on new working methods to delineate innovative trends that will affect the economy, the environment and personal lifestyles of the future.

[84] Cfr. Zappi, 2004

[85] It is interesting in this respect to mention the initiatives proposed by the American movement *New Urbanism* which envisages the transformation of *big boxes*, run down shopping centres located in peripheral or deprived areas, into new zones; the so-called *goldfields*, characterized by *mixed use*.

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The identity of a territory is generally perceived on the basis of place awareness in terms of experiential and relational trends created within urban areas connoted by centuries of activities and relationships. Trade in its various forms concurs in delineating the living standards of a territory, seeing as a distributional system structured upon small and medium size enterprises besides producing wealth and employment, safeguards a precious network of social relations, improves standards of living, citizen safety, as well as solidarity, social cohesion and sense of belonging to a community.

Urban areas, constituting a resource for the economy of towns and cities have to act in synergy with public and private sectors, envisaging forms of funding to incentivize new businesses and the requalification of existing businesses, in order to create alternative niche markets to those of large scale structures.

Germana Citarella was awarded a PhD in Geopolitics, Geostrategy and Geoeconomics from the University of Trieste in 2005. Since 2007 she has been a tenured Researcher in Geography at the Department of Legal Sciences (School of Law) and since 2009 Adjunct Professor of Organisation and Spatial Planning and Environmental Policy (Department of Business Sciences - Management & Innovation Systems (DISA-MIS) of the University of Salerno). In her role as Supervisor, Germana Citarella has carried out scientific research on relevant issues such as Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, territorial planning, sustainable tourism, public-private partnership in territorial development policies and urban security under the aegis of the Observatory for the Planning of Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning (OPSAT), the Scientific structure of the Department of Information and Electrical Engineering and Applied Mathematics (DIEM) of the University of Salerno. Furthermore, her latest scientific interests in the context of the study and analysis of forms of territorial organisation, also consist in the dynamics with which local communities connect environments and resources to promote a shared system of values underpinning the process of share capital accumulation.

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