



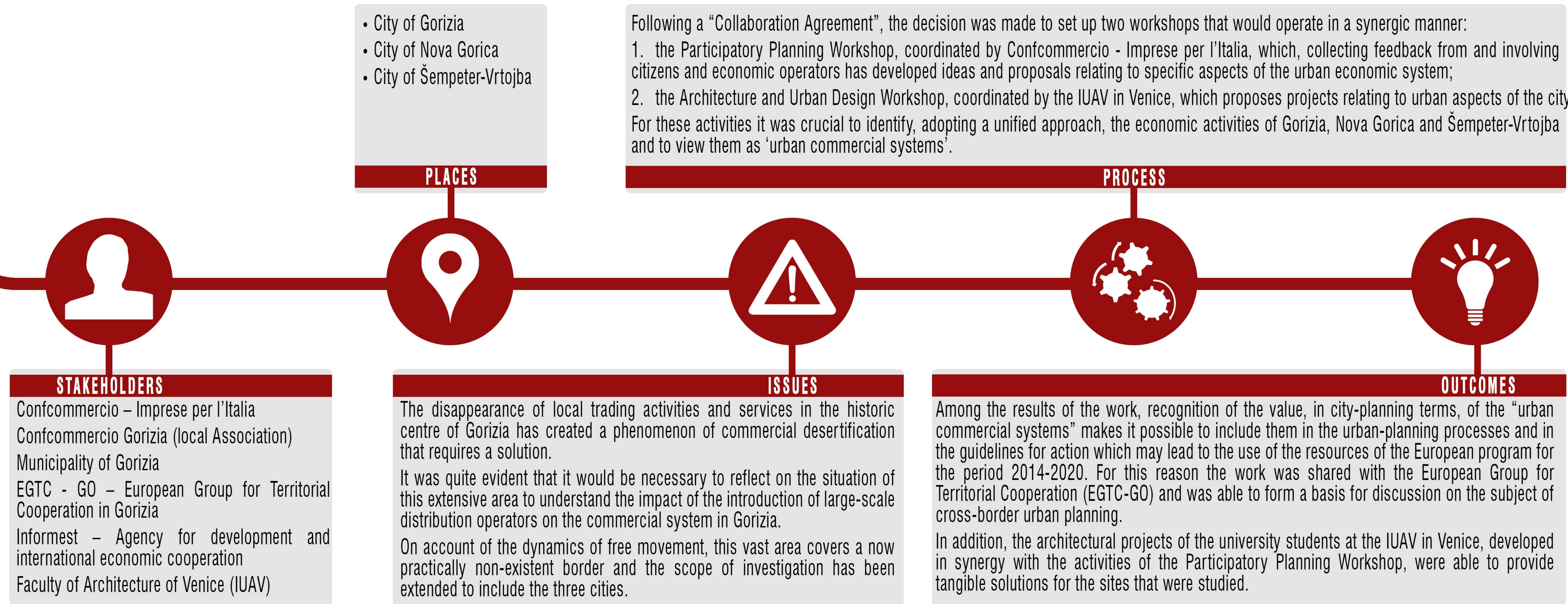
Slovenia's entry into the European Union made it possible to heal the wound which had divided Gorizia and Nova Gorica since 1947, and in the square where the border once was only an old mosaic and a commemorative plaque remind us of the former situation.

Realising the strength of its "border economy", Gorizia is taking steps to improve the attractiveness of the city, at the same time weaving closer relations with the cities of Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba across the border and working towards the construction of a border region.



EU member countries

Gorizia is a city of 35,000 inhabitants on the north-eastern border of Italy, and, historically, the point where the Latin, Slavic and Germanic worlds meet; ever since the Roman occupation it has been a point of transition between these areas. Once a medieval county, it later became a dominion of the Habsburg empire and then an Italian territory. The area is characterized by a particular mix of ethnic groups and languages. It lies at the centre of an area that was deeply scarred by the battles of World War I and, following the World War II, it was split into two areas by the border with Yugoslavia. It is now a point where the Italian and Slovene cultures, united by a common European destiny, meet and blend; urban continuity, bilingualism and the free movement of these people are changing society and the economy in these territories.



THE CONTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN URBAN AGENDA

This work is based on the belief that the urban area of Gorizia and its adjacent position with respect to the Slovenian cities Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba represent strategic elements for progress occurring within the Italian-Slovenian frontier area and for a renewal of the bases of economic competitiveness and social cohesion. Recovering from the crisis requires an identification of participatory solutions to support recovery policies for cities and urban economies based on processes of urban regeneration and economic revitalization capable of boosting development.

We began by providing answers to the relevant disappearance of trading activities and services in and around Gorizia, which has generated a commercial desertification with severe urban implications; we understood that locking ourselves within the limits of a "non-existent border" made it necessary to establish analyses and solutions for the three cities.

The work was developed in a Participatory Planning Workshop formed by citizens and economic operators, who made very important contributions for the identification of innovative interventions aimed at valorising and improving the urban fabric where activities/services and citizens are more densely concentrated in order to generate more functional and liveable habitats

- understanding needs of the economic activities and those of the citizens
- promoting a revitalization of urban commercial systems and their attractiveness
- promoting the regeneration of the urban fabric where activities/services and citizens are more densely concentrated in order to generate more functional and liveable habitats
- identifying proposals for the simplification and reorganization of legislation
- simplifying the creation of entrepreneurial groups, networks and consortia
- promoting accessibility and facilitating parking with a view to ensuring sustainable mobility and the reduction of pollution
- promoting services, their digitisation and the dissemination of broadband facilities
- promoting the integrated use of public spaces and green areas in built-up areas

A particularly significant contribution was ensured through cooperation with the Faculty of Architecture of Venice (IUAV), which supervised a parallel workshop for architectural and urban design. The students were asked to provide solutions in projects relating to the sites studied, adopting a synergic approach and considering the socio-economic interpretations provided by the Participatory Planning Workshop.

It was useful to analyze, learn about and locate economic activities of the three cities adopting unitary logic. The work revealed that this is not a disjointed set of activities but urban commercial systems in the true sense which contribute towards the urban quality of Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba. Moreover, as their value does not solely consist in the economic function, we wanted to focus on their stimulating and urban roles.

The characteristic of this work is, therefore, the recognition in urban-planning terms of urban commercial systems which are fully comprised and considered in urban planning processes, mobility projects, public works and also in lines of action with a view to using EU resources available for the period 2014-2020. This is a fundamental operation for the economy and for the city, and also for the Italian and Slovenian territories; it is also for this reason that it has been shared with the European Group of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC-GO), which unites the municipalities of Gorizia (Italy), Nova Gorica (Slovenia) and Šempeter-Vrtojba (Slovenia).

The analysis carried out has put us in a position to evaluate the 'rethinking' of the city that may result in an integrated approach in policy-making that will actively involve the population and the competences of the entrepreneurial system. We are convinced that urban regeneration can stimulate public and private investment that would be useful for creating new market opportunities.

This work did not have the sole aim of studying physical spaces but also considered the community of citizens, Europe as a whole and factors useful for the development of an Urban Agenda, which will have to consider the strategic content for the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 with a view to allocating to the city at least 5% of resources assigned at national level.

This represents a significant amount of resources, which will have to be used considering that the cities can be scenarios of change and recovery. We should learn to consider however that economic activities and citizens require cities capable of generating well-being and that 'participation' should be considered as a constant and not as a working modality to be used only in exceptional moments.

The Europe 2020 strategy attributes to urban policies a series of ambitious tasks, and thus this work is intended as a starting point. The goal is to provide solutions, thanks to the design of new methods for analysis and planning, to territorial imbalance and deficiencies in infrastructure negatively affecting the quality of life of the inhabitants, both in terms of competitiveness and of productive systems.

Policies for commerce increasingly coincide with general policies for the city and for the region. Commercial, leisure-time and cultural/social activities introduce new configurations and scenarios that force us to undertake urban planning in more complex terms.

By analyzing the needs of business sites it was discovered that competitiveness is not to be seen as occurring between individual sales-points but in the areas where the sales-points are aggregated; that is, competition occurs between "urban commercial systems". The valorisation of these systems, the ultimate objective of the work, requires policies:

- to plan interventions for the promotion of urban trade and services which may meet the needs of citizens/consumers and economic operators;
- to promote the force of attraction exercised by urban commercial systems and/or by existing, natural commercial centres.

The competition of large-scale distribution retailers may be dealt with on the part of small urban businesses through a valorisation of their commercial potential on the one hand and an improvement of physical elements characterizing urban spaces where they operate on the other hand.

It is evident that the creation of operational scenarios articulated in such a manner cannot be delegated exclusively to individual traders/service providers, but must be the result of an ongoing dialogue between the citizens and economic operators and between trade associations and the Municipality.

The issue requires new territorial governance strategies which are able to determine integrated approaches considering economic and cultural activities, residential factors, work and mobility. The new scenarios must involve innovative configurations with respect to the city and the way it used and also taking into consideration the expansion of new large retail and entertainment structures; nor can the innovative plans ignore the need for social spaces, especially for the more vulnerable sections of the population.

The main motivation underlying this work therefore lies in the activation of an urban program able to cope in a coordinated way with the challenges of the area, with a view to ensuring lasting results through the introduction of best practices; these must also involve effective dialogue and co-planning.

THE PARTNERING METHOD

A "Collaboration Agreement" signed by Confcommercio - Imprese per l'Italia, Confcommercio Gorizia, the Municipality of Gorizia and the Faculty of Architecture of Venice (IUAV) of Venice, which has laid the foundations for a project that can take advantage of the specific knowledge and competence of the signatories.

CROSS-BORDER RELATIONS

The four maps highlight the close spatial and infrastructural links existing between the three cities, also in their relations with the vast surrounding territory. A consideration of physical characteristics, combined with the possibility of free movement for EU citizens, made it necessary to extend the scope of the analysis from Gorizia itself to the two Slovenian frontier municipalities to prepare actions and policies for the cross-border region.

23 COMMERCIAL AND URBAN SYSTEMS

It was important to analyse the presence and the structure of economic activities and their location in the area within the three municipalities. This analysis indicated the existence of 23 urban commercial systems; comprising about 80% of the economic activities identified and presenting operative characteristics which can be definitely considered as urban, the latter should be considered in the planning processes and in the transformation of the territory.

COMMERCE AND THE GENERAL LAND-USE PLAN

The ongoing process of commercial restructuring led us to analyse the relationship between existing urban commercial systems and new commercial configurations provided for by the technical implementation regulations of the General Land-Use Plan Development Plan, and we believe that future transformations should be able to create functional synergies between the two phenomena studied.

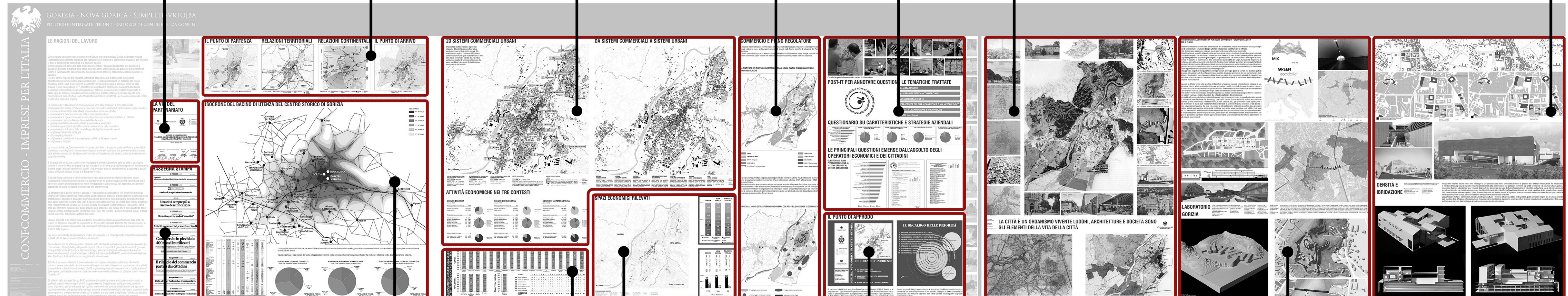
THE PARTICIPATORY PLANNING WORKSHOP: A BREEDING GROUND FOR IDEAS AND PROPOSALS

The Workshop implemented over many 'listening and participatory' phases, including assembly meetings, meetings for small groups, focus groups, focusing on constraints and opportunities through questionnaires on the relationship between cities and commerce and Post-it notes. This section of the exhibition shows a few of the many significant contributions that were produced.

THE CITY IS A LIVING ORGANISM: PLACES, ARCHITECTURE AND SOCIETY ARE BASIC ELEMENTS OF LIFE IN THE CITY

The Faculty of Architecture of Venice (IUAV) organised a parallel planning workshop on the themes of architecture and urban design. The students were asked to provide planning proposals for the sites involved in the study, taking into consideration our own analysis of the urban and commercial impact of the Italian/Slovene area. An analysis is provided here of the urban history of the city of Gorizia and the evolution of the city in urban-planning terms, together with some of the projects of the students, who produced over 50 proposals.

The operation, carried out within the framework of the Workshop entitled "Architecture and Infrastructures", was developed in the area of the wholesale and retail market, providing for both the reconstruction of new spaces and volumes with multiple functional uses (commercial, recreational, residential, cultural) and also the renovation of the old building dating back to the early 1900s. The projects presented highlight the social quality and the public function of the project concept, starting from the question of a definition of urban space and allowing for the emergence of the character of the new architectural volumes distinguished by the hybridisation of roles and functions.



THE CURRENT SITUATION

The disturbing phenomenon of the disappearance of local businesses and services in Gorizia, with the consequent risk of urban desertification, emerges from numerous press articles written on this subject. Emphasis is placed on the agreement that was signed in order to find answers, also through the use of resources from European funding.

THE BASIN OF THE GRAVITATING POPULATION

From the point of view of the use of the city and the surrounding areas, the isochrone map shows that, considered together, the three urban bodies considered in this work present a strong capacity of attraction, reaching a catchment area of approximately 228,000 inhabitants. The starting point is an analysis of the population living in the three 'comunes' and their breakdown by age group, placing citizens at the centre of all reasoning concerning the city.

PRODUCT/SERVICE MIX

The graphs illustrate the mix of products and services available within each system, making it possible to consider the presence of activities not only in quantitative terms. From the economic point of view, the analysis provides a basis for reasoning which is useful to compare the needs of citizens (the market) with the offer provided by economic operators.

ABANDONED COMMERCIAL SPACES

A gradual decline in urban commerce is evident. The abandoned commercial spaces are 30% of the total identified in Gorizia, 10% in Nova Gorica and 12% in Šempeter-Vrtojba. This overall picture has been generated by the development of organised, large-scale distribution, which does not always occur in a harmonious manner and which indicates the need to identify new policies to impede the disappearance of small businesses in both the Italian and Slovene territory.

THE POINT OF ARRIVAL - A delague of priorities:

1. Integrated territorial planning between Italy and Slovenia
2. Integrated economic planning involving Italy and Slovenia to ensure a balance between small, medium and large-scale distribution
3. Valorisation of cultural identities and new cohesion and partnering policies
4. Technological innovation relating to material and non-material, structures and infrastructures
5. Valorisation of urban commercial systems
6. Recognition of the importance of urban commercial systems in terms of urban planning
7. Articulation of the product/service mix
8. Improvement of accessibility and the availability of parking spaces
9. Improving the architectural quality of urban commercial systems
10. Improvement of the quality of the urban environment

The intervention, carried out within the framework of the Workshop entitled "Architecture and Sustainability", concerns the pedestrian tunnel under the Castle hill and the area beyond this point, towards the border with Slovenia. The projects presented tend to valorise that "underground infrastructure", now rarely considered, implementing a form of sustainable and environment-friendly mobility, creating and establishing new urban and territorial synergies between the two frontier cities. At the same time, in the back area, we tried to create a new pattern of settlement having a relationship with the natural surroundings and characterized by a mix of functions (residential, commerce and services).