CENTRAL MARKETS PROJECT

Policy Paper on the role of Urban Markets for Local Development and Urban Regeneration

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Policy Paper on

REVITALISING AND PROMOTING TRADITIONAL URBAN MARKETS
The case of the proposed New Market of Mestre

Abstract
Markets are inseparable elements of the model of a Mediterranean city: compact, complex, efficient and with social cohesion. This characteristic may constitute a strategic response to the fact that in many parts of the world people are becoming dissatisfied with the poor design of spaces for commerce and consumption. Experts predict a remarkable contraction of the great commercial centres that at the moment dominate the retailing trade. In the US and UK, the time spent in malls has already fallen, and it is accepted that the new online trade, that can guarantee better prices, will cause a retailing concentration in a small number of giants. In addition, the consumption sphere will be filled more and more with “leisure” and “experiences”; thus, traditional markets provide good assets. Face to face buying and selling, the different kinds of fresh, quality products, and the differences themselves between markets, can offer a wide range of experiences, richer and more authentic than other generic formats. Experts on the future transformation of cities remark on the importance of the territory in the era of globalisation. Markets, and more a system of public markets, “mark” the terrain inside the urban fabric as a space of sociability, security, identity, creativity, diversity and in the and as a mirror of the tendencies of the population as liveable city needs.

1. Markets and the quality of public life .................................................................4
   1.1 The problem of the decline in the quality of urban life........................................4
   1.2 Markets as events and experiences.................................................................5
   1.3 Markets as a precondition for a well-functioning urban fabric..........................8

2. Markets as nodes of “experience & creative economy” ........................................10
   2.1 The experience economy in urban economic development................................10
   2.2 The transformation of markets into experience nodes.....................................11
   2.3 Markets and the promotion of creative cities..................................................12

3. A new market as driver for liveability, proximity and authenticity in Mestre........13
   3.1 The problem with the quality of life in central Mestre......................................13
   3.2 The role of markets in the design of liveable city center....................................14
   3.3 The relevance of physical and cultural proximity............................................16

4. Business planning and effective management of the New Market in Mestre.........17
   4.1 The New Municipal market as an “innovation hub” in the heart of Mestre........17
   4.2 Land use, urban design and the positioning of the New Market.......................18
   4.3 The relevance of the architectural design of the new market............................20
   4.4 The ecological sustainability of the new municipal market..............................21
   4.5 Business planning and economic sustainability of the New Market of Mestre...22
4.6 Integrated management and governance of the municipal market ......................................................... 24
4.7 Branding and marketing of the municipal market ............................................................................................ 27
4.8 Concluding recommendations .......................................................................................................................... 28
1. Markets and the quality of public life

1.1 The problem of the decline in the quality of urban life

Markets have been constituted the core of town and indeed the very reason that many centres existed at all for centuries. However, their existence has been challenged in the last decades by transformations in the retail sector. The first and most important one is the increased competition from the large distribution, supermarkets, other alternative cheap retail outlets and also e-commerce. There are number of reasons why consumers might favour the new alternatives: supermarkets are perceived by consumers as cheaper, the parking and opening hours make easier to shop (especially for the people working full time), as well as the better facilities (toilets, lighting, payment by credit card, provision of trolleys which matter mostly to older people and those with young children).

An additional factor is that consumers’ expectations have changed: from that derive new challenges for outdoor markets, especially those that do not contain indoor element that can still attract consumers when the weather is poor. Plus, even more fundamentally, consumers increasingly want an easier shopping experience, where they not need to be proactive or knowledgeable (in terms of quality, type of cut, weight etc.), considered nowadays a too challenging experience for time-passed shoppers.

A third and perhaps more avoidable factor, concerns town planning decisions: an unsympathetic city centre redevelopment could effectively marginalize the market, for instance by relocating it outside the new city center. Also the pedestrianization of the market area could prevent the consumers from leaving with shopping bags, as they have to travel further from bus stops and car parks.

A fourth factor is the lack of investment from the local authorities, which are responsible for running the markets, unwilling or unable to invest other than an essential structural repair. The lack of investment in markets consists of more than just capital: the failure of many local authorities to recognize the strategic value of markets as vibrant part of the community, had some negative consequences such as the caliber of the manager hired to run the market, the common regulatory approach and the general lack of marketing and promotion.

A final factor is the slowness of market industry to adapt to changes. Many traditional markets, market operators and traders have failed to grasp the need for a change: some examples of the need to adapt more quickly are the lack of credit card facilities on markets or the need for a new promotion (competing with the slick advertising of supermarkets and shopping centers).

All those factors participate to the decline of the role of markets in the contemporary cities, which need to elaborate and opt for new strategies to revitalize the traditional markets.
1.2 Markets as events and experiences

According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), economic “experience” occurs when “a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual consumers in a way that creates a memorable event. Commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible, and experiences memorable” (Pine & Gilmore, 1998: 98).

An experience can be considered a “product”, since it must be produced or staged to be made available, but such products are very varied and can be consumed in different ways. The common denominator of the experience products is certainly the unique relation between the consumer and the product itself (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). As mentioned in Figure 1, prior economic offerings such as commodities, goods and services are external to the buyer, experiences instead are personal: experiences exist only in the mind of an individual who is engaged on different level of participation (emotional, physical, intellectual, etc.). Pine and Gilmore suggest that experiences are connected to the personal memories of people and they became part of the process of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECONOMIC OFFERING</th>
<th>COMMODITIES</th>
<th>GOODS</th>
<th>SERVICES</th>
<th>EXPERIENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Agrarian</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Function</td>
<td>Extract</td>
<td>Make</td>
<td>Deliver</td>
<td>Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Offering</td>
<td>Fungible</td>
<td>Tangible</td>
<td>Intangible</td>
<td>Memorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key attribute</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>Standardize</td>
<td>Customize</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of supply</td>
<td>Stored in bulk</td>
<td>Inventoried after production</td>
<td>Delivered on demand</td>
<td>Revealed over a duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seller</td>
<td>Traders</td>
<td>Manufacturer</td>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>Stager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>User</td>
<td>Client</td>
<td>Guest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors of demand</td>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Features</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Sensations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“identity” creation. Buyers of experiences, in order to stress the distinction, are guests.

Figure 1: Economic Distinctions (Pine & Gilmore, 1998)
A way to think about experiences, according to Pine and Gilmore, is across two dimensions:

- consumer participation;
- connection or environmental relationship.

As we can observe from the four realms of an experience (Figure 2), at one end of the spectrum lies passive participation, in which the guest do not effect the performance: watching a movie is a classic example or any other activities that imply a consumer who experiences the event as observer or listener. At the other end there is the active participation, in which guests play a key role in creating the performance. The second dimension describes the connection or environmental relationship between the consumer and the event: at the one end of the connection spectrum lays the absorption, at the other end immersion (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).
Figure 2: The four realms of an experience (adapted from Pine & Gilmore, 1998)
Seeing a movie at the theatre with an audience, large screen and Dolby surround is much more immersing than watching the same movie at home, or taking notes during a lecture is more absorbing than reading a textbook. According to the model, it is possible to divide experiences into four categories: the entertainment experiences, such as attending a concert or watching television, are those in which consumers participate more passively than actively and the connection with the environment is one of absorption. Educational experiences (attending a class for example) involve a more active participation and the guests are still outside the event. The escapist experiences require a more active participation and a full immersion in the event, such as playing in an orchestra or acting. If the active participation is minimized, the experience becomes an aesthetic one, like an art gallery tour (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The richest experience generally encompasses aspects of all four realms, filling in the central area of the model, and this is the position occupied by the market experience. The market is not just a shallow space where you can sell and buy food. What the market offer is an event, an experience, an echo of the excitement that markets once brought to the city, becoming an end in itself. Even people who turn out to walk across the stalls without interacting with the sellers and other visitors are not completely passive participants: simply by being there, they contribute to the visual and aural event that other people experience. That’s the reason why wherever markets survive; they bring life to a neighbourhood, quality of urban life, a sense of belonging to a city and a culture, engagement, character and uniqueness. Only few shopping experiences can be compared to wandering in a market, in either the range of sensory impressions or human interaction. From the rainbow colours of piles of fruits and vegetables to the salty smell of fresh fish, from the aroma of roasting coffee and fresh breads to the appeal of sausages and steaks. The sights and smells of foods for sale are completely different from a typical supermarket experience of pre-packaged portions wrapped in plastic. Similarly, each item purchased in a market requires a different transaction, a moment of exchange - not just monetary - with a specialized vendor who knows his products, where they come from and can advise how best to prepare and enjoy them. The market operators and products may come from different cultures, providing a window into different food traditions and filling the air with multiculturalism. When the market’s products are locally sourced, shopping at the market not only provides a rich and enjoyable experience for consumers, but also a connection with the farms, fields, and seas outside the city that provide this profusion of products. While visual impressions, the scents and the buzz complete the experience of the market. In this sense, it is possible to conceive the market as an experience.

1.3 Markets as a precondition for a well-functioning urban fabric

Social science researches on urban life has long acknowledged that the lives of urban residents - experiences, opportunity and quality of life - are affected by where they live. The researchers are focused on the importance of relationships within and among
groups and networks, developed in the context of family, neighbourhood and city. Lewis Mumford, well-known urban planner and sociologist, stated that contact among diverse inhabitants and the dialogue, ensued in the city’s public places, are the “ultimate expression of life in the city”. He considered the city as a human entity, which has to be scaled to human dimensions and meet human needs. And the design of the city needs to foster citizen association, contact and interaction (Miller, 1992). Mumford, in his work, looked for the heart and soul of urban living as an abundant, vigorous and associative life. This life is to be found in streets, in cultural centres, churches, markets, in the interaction and conversation of city dwellers, in the whole spectacle.

Therefore, markets play an important role in urban fabric being the most socially diverse public places in a community, bringing people of different ages, genders, races ethnicities, and socioeconomic status together around the experiences of food, shopping and conversation. They provide a space to purchase fresh, affordable products that reflects the diversity of a community. Furthermore the very nature of the buying and selling process creates a level of socialization not existent at a regular supermarket, transforming markets from just another place to buy food to an engine for community life.

The relationship created between market operators and costumes even though informal, it becomes personal, multi faced and gains an interest in each other’s well being. As these relationships grow social capital is created. People learn many new faces and create informal relationships that reduce social diversities and foster empathy and friendship. When local residents speak with each other and create relationships between large groups of people, social webs are created. These webs become avenues where job openings are advertised and filled, innovative ideas created, skills traded, and business traders made.

Markets are a space of inclusion, bringing all the diverse members of the community all together in one place where barriers are dissolved, marginalized residents are empowered and differences are celebrated. The market is a public space - no one can be kept out - so unlike shopping malls, it is fundamentally a democratic space. Increasing cultural diversity becomes an asset to brought new products, consumers and vendors to the market.

To conclude, the market place, as a well-functioning public space, supports a multiple important functions:

- It builds social capital by cementing social relations through facilitating exchange among people;
- It facilitates learning about ways of being and relating, being an incomparable teacher of social skills and attitudes: people learn through observation, imitation and participation how to relate and behave within and across generational, social class and experiential differences;
- It contributes to a more democratic way of life and encourages to share observation and perspective, and thereby it humanizes all participants.
2. Markets as nodes of “experience & creative economy”

2.1 The experience economy in urban economic development

Many cities have been suffering, in the last decades, from job loss in the traditional industries. The potential to attract knowledge-based activities has been directly connected with the urban dimension and it has been more present in large metropolitan areas. Cities around the world struggle against these trends by investing in tourism, hosting global events, branding themselves. Doing so, cities exploit the potential of the experience economy.

The experience economy has emerged as a concept to define a new economic era based on the added value of experiences, powered by the increasing interurban competition and personal engagement of the consumer. Citizens nowadays demand and spend an increasing amount of resources in leisure activities, searching for memorable experiences in the everyday life. Cities are the proper centres for the consumption of experiences and they have a special role in the experience economy. The old infrastructures of the industrial production, factories and warehouses, which dominated in the past the visual city landscape, have been replaced with the service economy, events, entertainment sites and districts (Therkildsen et al., 2009). Places can be object of consumption and many experiences are often “place-bound”, a fundamental part of the urban, social and economic life and, therefore, their quality becomes a factor of urban development (Lorentzen, 2009). Place-bound experiences can be divided into 4 categories:

- **Events** (festivals, sport events, international conferences): the final production takes place in a specific location and in order to consume the experience the consumer has to be present in the same place at the same time.
- **Activities** (sport activities, production or artistic activities, shopping): the location hosts such activities because of unique features of that place (traditions, natural environment, etc.). The consumer has to be present at the location where the experience has been offered.
- **Services** (theme restaurant, exhibitions, theatre, cinema): the final production of the experience service takes place at particular locations and it has to be consumed at the same location in real time.
- **Places** are more than just a container for the consumption of experiences. They can be also seen as experience products in themselves or as part of the experience. It involves the creation of a brand and a communication strategy, essential to produce a positive image of the place and its qualities in people’s mind.

Lorentzen has suggested that “the role of place in the experience economy is to increase the experience value of the products on the market. The place constituent increases the experience value by means of identity creation and the involvement of the consumer” (Lorentzen, 2009: 10).

Florida (2002) conceives the experience offer in a city as a part of its “quality of places”, which in turn decides where highly educated people will live. The quality of places depends also on the functional combination of natural environment and buildings,
diversity of people and varied activities and events, signs of a vibrant city life, with cultural, exciting and creative content.

2.2 The transformation of markets into experience nodes

From certain perspective, the experience creation is similar to innovation or artistic creation, as businesses need to package everything into a certain “theme” and strategically set the “stage” for its release. To be truly memorable, a theme must alter the sense of reality, affect space and time but still be part of an overall realistic whole. Staging experiences is not just about entertaining consumers, but engaging them. The participants can be either passive, only observing the show put together in front of theme, or choose to actively engage in the performance. Also, they can simply absorb the information that is being thrown at them or immerse themselves completely in the imagined universe.

The market experience is the perfect example of experience: going to the market is going back in time, re-experiencing a space and an ancient sort of public life. The visitor chooses to be active in the experience: touching, smelling and feeling the products sell in the market, socializing with the traders and the other consumers and immerse himself in the scene. Or it’s possible not to be involved in the experience, walking across the stalls and observing people and the market. What make the market a valid experience are the identity, the unique atmosphere and the vibrancy of the place, unrepeatable and inimitable, symbolic of the city and its inhabitants.

According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), there are five key experience-design principles:

- **Theme the experience**: the first and crucial step that needs to be taken is envisioning a well-defined theme in order to provide for the consumers something to clasp the impressions they encounter. An effective theme is concise and compelling. The market experience has an inborn theme, already connected with personal memories of people.

- **Harmonize impressions with positive cues**: while the theme forms the base, the experience must be design with unforgettable impressions. To create desired impressions, companies must harmonize them with cues, consistent with the theme. Consumers to build up the experience in their minds use cues. An important section of the new strategies for the revitalization of markets is dedicated to make the visitor’s experience more pleasant, with new services and activities to respond to the needs of people.

- **Eliminate negative cues**: experience designer must eliminate whatever ruins, lessen, contradicts or distract from the theme, turning the negative cue into something positive. New systems of garbage disposal, underground and hidden logistic put into effect by the new markets are designed to eliminate the negative cues and whatever can divert the guests’ experience.

- **Mix in memorabilia**: certain goods (like postcards and t-shirt with logo, etc.) have always been purchased for the memories they recall. Memorabilia becomes a physical reminder of the experience made. In the case of markets memorabilia could
- be gadgets with the logo of the market or a cookbook with the recipes created by the markets’ chefs, etc.

- Engage all five senses: the use of the sensory stimulation should support the experience. The more senses are engaged, the more effective it can be. In the market place this key principle is intrinsic: all the senses are stimulated walking across the aisles, touching, smelling and tasting the products displayed in the stalls, surrounded by the buzz of people and vendors.

In line with the key principles identified by Pine and Gilmore, we can state that the market can be conceived as an experience, a multi-coloured experience which change from day to day, demanded by residents and visitors as well. In order to succeed the implementation of the market as an experience, we need to introduce a sixth key principle: the necessity of an educational upgrading of managerial competences for market’s operators. The vendors need to share the same knowledge and vision for the well functioning of the market and the staging of the experience.

### 2.3 Markets and the promotion of creative cities

Culture has been identified as a key dimension in the development of cities and it has been associated with the local competitiveness and a model of economic development based on creativity. Discourses about creative cities are predominant in the academic literature and local administration. The positive relation between culture, creativity and economic development are mainstream.

The creative city model is based on the idea that cities are the perfect place to exploit the cultural and creative processes’ potential, originated by the interaction of the creative class. Urban spaces have ceased to be inhabited by a commodity driven working class, moving from a traditional type of city to a modern and creative one. Markets, to this end, provide a perfect arena for the development of creativity into the city. As well as the buzz of the city is conceived as its key advantage, scenes with people meeting, chatting and exchanging ideas, the market could represent and create a perfect environment that fosters and encourages creativity and innovation.

The capacity of the market to bring together people from different levels of society and income, from the immigrants to the well-to-do families, fostering social integration, multiculturalism and tolerance, provides some basic elements for the creative environment. In the market, the creative community could experiment a perfect space to interact with the city and find in it the inspiration to create or innovate.

The building of the market itself, not just its atmosphere, could be used as a functional venue for cultural event or as hub of creativity, which could be in turn an added value for the market.
3. A new market as driver for liveability, proximity and authenticity in Mestre

3.1 The problem with the quality of life in central Mestre

It is common knowledge, nowadays, that cities are embedded into global economic circuits and to be successful and compete in the world market they need to increase the connections with those circuits, implementing policies and behave as economic actors. Two decades ago, David Harvey (1989) defined this phenomenon, in his most popular article, as the passage from the “managerial” to the “entrepreneurial” approach in the urban politics. Before the rise of the neoliberal scenario during the 80s, the urban politics was interpreted as the management of public services, welfare and the reproduction of the local society. The success of the neoliberalism in urban scale meant a severe decrease of the public intervention, reduction of services and often a privatization of the latter. The “traditional” field of urban policy drastically changed, caused by the unbearable public expenditure, and cities were forced to reinvent their policy in order to attract resources. Cities became a sort of entrepreneur, able to create more suitable spaces to make businesses, attract capitals, investors and companies.

In this sense, cities are competing to create the better urban landscape to attract resources and sustain their development. The common regeneration projects, which characterize the urban policy scenario of the last decades, should be read in this perspective. Within the setting of competitive cities, quality of life has been adopted as one of the attributes, which can be employed to secure growth and development, seen as essential part of the location requirements of the incoming capital. The new set of local place attributes, which have been sought by capital, is the desire for a higher quality of life (a concept that include the cost of living, cultural diversity, transport, public safety, health care, climate, lifestyle opportunity and other dimensions).

The main contribution that quality of life makes in the process of attracting new capital lays in the sphere of place promotion and city marketing, being part of the attempts by cities to create unique images and atmosphere, which act as a bait for both capital and people.

The 2nd of December 2013, on the website of the Italian newspaper “Il Sole24Ore”, the rank of the liveability in the 107 Italian provinces was released (http://www.ilsole24ore.com/speciali/qvita_2013/home.shtml). Based on the analysis of a series of statistical data, Italian cities were classified taking into account six categories (standard of living, service and environment, business and work, law and order, population, leisure). The province of Venice (Mestre and Venice) is 59th in the rank; but the most important data is that it lost 20 positions from the last year rank. Year by year the quality of life is decreasing in Mestre, due to a long-standing chaotic urban development, which considerably marked the future of the city.

The city of Mestre, especially in the post-war period, experienced a rapid and disorganized urban growth. In the 50s, every city in Italy was undergoing through similar changes, but Mestre was a particular case: the city of Venice, situated into the lagoon, didn’t have enough space for new developments; therefore the growth was diverted in Mestre and the mainland. Mestre evolved in few years from a 20.000 to
200,000 inhabitants, thanks to a flow of migrants coming from the countryside and the historical city centre.

The impressive demographic growth produced in the 1970s a consequential accelerated urbanization, disorganized and outside the local strategic plan, generating new intertwine problems. Mestre developed in a chaotic way, replacing the historical buildings of the city, considered worthless, with new, voluminous and ugly buildings. The ensemble of those interventions is presently evident.

Nevertheless, the city of Mestre maintains an historical and environmental tangle, which is not immediately visible as in other cities and it required a deeper look: river basins toward the lagoon, the Salso Canal and the fort system are what remains from the ancient centre of Mestre. But the historical city centre of Mestre is a fragmented set that lost the original organic unity.

Recent projects, especially the regeneration of the central Piazza Ferretto, in 1995-1998 by the architect Guido Zordan, are definitely well designed and realized, but still lacking of an integration with the whole city. The historic city centre is perceived as an “island” in a conglomerate of concrete.

### 3.2 The role of markets in the design of liveable city center

Markets contribute to the social, environmental and economic well being of cities. It’s possible to observe diverse key benefits that markets can provide: economic, social, health, regeneration and environmental.

The first economic benefit, also with social implications, is that markets offer cheap and fresh food. Therefore, markets can be especially important for poorer sections of the community, particularly at the time of recession. The low prices offered on markets have always played a vital role in providing for many of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of society, especially those with limited mobility and income.

According to the Istat and the Demographic balance of foreign resident population by province and year (http://www.istat.it/en/veneto/data?q=gettableterr&dataset=DCIS_POPSTRBIL1&dim=39%2C0%2C3%2C0&lang=2&tr=0&te=1), the number of foreign residents in the province of Venice have grown five times in the last ten years. And the data do not take the illegal undocumented immigrants into account. The presence of a new market could help the well being of the lower segment of the inhabitants of Mestre.

In addition, markets have also an important role providing start-up opportunities for new businesses, thanks to the low start-up costs and also the greater degree of flexibility. Also, on the job creation front, markets create ancillary jobs (suppliers, hospitality, security, delivery vehicles). The accessibility of entrepreneurship opportunities and the job creation of the market in Mestre would be a vehicle for the upward mobility and individual empowerment of low-income people.
A further economic benefit is that markets attract additional footfalls in centres, encouraging shoppers to buy not just at the market, but also at neighbouring shops. Indeed, a key point is that markets should not simply be seen as competition to other form of retail, but rather as complementary to “en plein air” shopping mall of Piazza Ferretto.

![Diagram of The Benefits of Public Markets](http://www.pps.org/reference/the-benefits-of-public-markets/)

A related footfall point is that successful markets, particularly those that combine the commercial side with special events and culture, as the one planned in Mestre, could attract additional people from out of town and tourists, redirecting the touristic flow toward the market. This benefit is particularly important for the mainland, which is constantly shaded by the city of Venice: although Mestre already attracts a certain flow of tourism (increasing year by year), the planning of the new market will became a strategic tourist hub.

Although sometimes hard to disentangle from the economic benefits, two social benefits emerge. The first is that markets have an important role in supporting minority communities: market traders come from a great diversity of backgrounds, many ethnic minority traders sell ethnic products to their communities (and others), which would not be available elsewhere at the same price.

The second social benefit is that markets can serve to promote social cohesion, encouraging different communities to intermingle and providing community support and information. Markets are important site of social interaction for all groups in the community, like elderly people, mothers with young children, young people and families with children, particularly at weekends. The key point is the unique
atmosphere of the market, created by a combination of traders, public and the effect of the social space itself, which generates the conditions for a vital social integration, extremely needed in Mestre. With the migration of people from different country, with different cultures and religion, Mestre needs a space where people can meet, get to know each other and accept the differences, learning how coexist side by side. One wider benefit is the potential for markets to assist the regeneration of town centres, not only by encouraging footfall and fostering community cohesion, but also by creating a flexible public space, which can also support other uses. When the market stall is not there, the market place is there and it is maintained: it is possible to have cultural events, theatres, shows and entertainment, etc. Extended opening hours guarantee a prolonged presence of people in the area/neighbourhood of the market, increasing the general sense of security, a big issue for the inhabitants of Mestre.

Markets can also be used to promote environmental issues. For instance, market selling fresh, local food, in contrast to the centralized distribution system and airfreighting of non-seasonal food practiced by supermarkets, is acting to reduce carbon emissions and “food miles”. Markets are currently working to reduce waste, for example by reducing packaging and offering free biodegradable bags, in addition to one of the market’s traditional roles of selling off stock that need clearance. Markets need to act not only in an environmentally friendly way, but also to advertise the fact, to help to educate the public, having a clear and strong environmental role.

Markets can also promote the Government’s agenda on healthy eating and food education. On one level, markets promote attainable healthy eating by offering a wider range of cheap food, often available in supermarkets, but with a better quality and a traceability of the product. On another, in addition many markets are now using their role as “community hubs” to promote healthy eating and lifestyles.

### 3.3 The relevance of physical and cultural proximity

The recession caused a gradual approach between people and consumers (nor an isolation of social subjects as it had been predicted), redefining the rules of proximity. The proximity reinforces the emerging values and marks the future paradigms. The authenticity, the transparency of the processes and the sustainability are reinforced and legitimated through the proximity, which allows to see the benefits and applications of those values.

The concrete experience and the everyday life involve the physical proximity but also the cultural one, conceived as presence of shared behaviours, reciprocal trust, common language and moral and cognitive codes. Both the physical and cultural proximity determine high level of synergy and interaction between economic actors, absence of opportunistic behaviour, high division of labour and cooperation. In other words, the relational capital made by trust, cohesion and belonging.

The retail sector, distribution and commerce have shown clear sign of the proximity revolution. The proximity has reappeared, at first, as organized forms such as the ethical purchasing group: a group of informed consumers who cooperate in order to buy food
and other commonly used goods directly from producers at a price that is fair to both parties, drastically reducing the distribution chain.

After few years, there has been a progressive diffusion of farmer’s market in the city, which combines the freshness of products and the immediate traceability. The proximity, in this case, guarantees the products’ freshness and also the sustainability in terms of controlled designation of origins and transportation costs, creating the new concept of the Km0.

The culture of Km0 have become a platform for a new vision of the world, based on proximity as innovative logic, open to the global challenge, not penned in the localism. In the new short distribution chain, the importance of an interpersonal relation and trust in the sale acquire a renewed centrality, from the emotional relationship between the trader and the consumer in the market to the door-to-door sell.

People are re-accustoming to the proximity and the sharing, living without traumas the return of genuine values and behaviours, echoes of a preindustrial economy. These processes are accompanied by an extraordinary and unexpected return of the territory and physical spaces, in opposition to the virtual and de-territorialized experiences. The classic distribution is re-evaluated, becoming more attractive (just like happen to the urban and architectural projects), directed to the recovery of the territorial uniqueness and values.

The return to the territory and a genuine thinking is well accepted by the inhabitants of Venezia-Mestre, which hosts 4 farmers’ markets and three Altraeconomia markets. The latter one is an organic and ethical market, in which the principles of ethical economy, short supply chain (therefore a “face to face” relation with the producers), environmental sustainability, solidarity, price transparency and healthcare are leading concepts. Maintaining this dimension also in the new covered market would be a duty toward the latest requests and needs of the population, as well as the sustainability of Mestre.

4. Business planning and effective management of the New Market in Mestre

4.1 The New Municipal market as an “innovation hub” in the heart of Mestre

The New Market will play a key function in the strategic transformation of the centre of Mestre. It will not be conceived as just another commercial building but rather as a hub of services and activities and as a neighbourhood booster. The New Market will be designed to have a very deep impact on the social fabric of Mestre. In this new context, new and alternative urban strategies and policies must be considered, namely in the area of urban regeneration. The main idea behind the New Market as a tool of urban regeneration in the inner city of Mestre is “integration”: integration of dimensions of intervention, integration of urban functions and integration of partners and resources. The New Market can thus be seen as an opportunity to foster and create intelligent spaces within the city. We can call it an “innovation hub”: the main idea behind this concept is that we can use commerce, in particular of basic goods such as food and beverages, as a driving force of urban regeneration and redevelopment. The market will
be a “fusion place” where different uses coexist, such as traditional commerce, education and learning, shopping and entertainment or community functions. In fact, the market as an innovation hub fosters a wide variety of interactions and the appearance of mixed-use environments, blurring the boundaries between physical, digital, economic, social and cultural spaces. Multi-professionalism and mixed-use is the main feature of these creative communities, where we can find a high density of knowledge intensive workers, who look for quality of life, inclusive environments, social and cultural diversity and digital and physical connectivity. In other words, they are good places to work, live, learn and play.

4.2 Land use, urban design and the positioning of the New Market

Historically, markets were usually located in the centre of a town, typically in a square, the market square, surrounded by shops and sometimes incorporating a covered area. This area would have been, in many towns the place in which the locals shopped. In smaller cities, town centres or market squares have remained the most common site for the market, although over the past two decades there has been a shift. What represents an optimal location, however, is difficult to determine. The extent to which a town centre site is beneficial for a market is a complex question. Although in the walking city of earlier centuries, such a site was optimal, with the growth of towns and cities and the increasing importance of parking, access to transport and other retail facilities, a town centre site can, if not well integrated into the wider shopping environment and other facilities, be problematic. The selected area for the construction (Figure 4) of the new covered market of Mestre lingers where the market is today.

Figure 4: The area of the new market of Mestre
The position is still central, near Piazza Ferretto but the size of the new market is necessarily wider, to absorb the new parking space, logistic and waste management system and to renew the variety of stalls, products and activities inside the market. Moving the new market from the actual position would be a too risky decision, since the current market has its own consumer base. In as much, the public space is a dimension of the daily life and it is barely designable *ex novo*. However, the proximity with Piazza Ferretto will be a chance to enlarge, to redefine and give new coherence to the area, which is identified as one of the few places in Mestre safe and suitable for family Sundays. Unfortunately, in this area the end use of shops changed, from greengrocers, household products and groceries shops to McDonalds, international brand and mobile phone shops, lacking of attention for the residents’ needs.

It is pointed out a high degree of dependence on public transport by market shoppers, and an appreciation of the fact that in a number of markets there were nearby buses to take them home. Central town locations are likely to be well served by public transport and, for this reason, appears to make market sites more viable.

The physical shape of the market was revealed to be a significant factor in a market’s success as a social space. Markets are very much about interaction between traders and the public, and design and space must promote and encourage this interaction. Markets that combined indoor and outdoor areas appeared to work well.

One of the main reasons that the combination of outdoor and indoor markets was seen as a success was the fact that in poor weather conditions, shopping outside was not seen as appealing by shoppers, while at the same time making unpleasant working conditions for the traders.

Another aspect to the layout of a market is the availability of seating. During the wintertime, shoppers tend to go to the shopping centre to sit down, because of the lack of seats in the market. The more general environment of the market represents another part of the picture. If a market looks attractive in terms of the arrangement of the stalls, the distance between them, and an attractive display of goods, people are more likely to pass through the space, stop, look and chat. When a market is clean it is also more likely to be more appealing to consumers.

A further key issue in the design of a market is the accessibility into and through the market for people in wheelchairs and people with pushchairs. The size of the aisles between the stalls is the main issue here.

The new market in Mestre must have a captivating design, simple and elegant, different from the huge concrete buildings of the city, but at the same time it needs to be integrated with surroundings. Thus, the market would be the image of a city in evolution, a city that is changing for its citizens’ wellbeing.

The question of a market’s proximity, or not, to other retail outlets, particularly supermarkets, is also a vexed one. On the one hand, markets need to be integrated into the wider shopping environment, so that shoppers can combine market shopping with other shopping activities, which may include shopping in a nearby supermarket for goods that are not available in the local market. On the other hand, if a supermarket is located at some distance from a market and parking is provided, it may attract shoppers
away from the local market, because of ease of parking and longer shopping hours, along with other factors, such as the cheapness of products, the wider range, quality control and the possibility of returning damaged goods. Moreover the presence of a market in the city centre of Mestre, open after the usual opening times of shops, which attracts citizens and tourists at any hours, guarantees a higher sense of security for residents, a well known problematic of the municipality.

4.3 The relevance of the architectural design of the new market

The architectural design and layout of the New Market of Mestre will provide a scheme for organizing a range of different uses of the two level covered space. Uses will include at least:

- Retailing of fresh produce;
- Assembly of produce;
- Wholesaling by farmers and vendors;
- Meat and fish sales;
- The retailing of other goods such as clothes and utensils.
- Cafés, restaurants and food stands;
- Spaces equipped for co-working
- Meeting rooms and education spaces
- Spaces devoted to municipal and community social activities

One of the basic questions the plan will need to address is whether retailers selling the same products should be grouped together. If stalls are laid out randomly then impulse sales will be promoted, but it will be more difficult to create a competitive selling environment and consumers will not be able to perceive differences in quality and prices. However, if retailers are grouped by line of products, competition will be greater, which will be more beneficial for the consumer. On balance, the grouping of specialized uses is the more effective method. Some uses may not be compatible with each other (e.g. a repair workshop with a butcher's or fishmonger's stall) and they should be located in different sections of the market or at least separated by a main path or aisle.

In general, the market layout should not be disorienting and it is thus necessary to arrange the circulation system so that there is a hierarchy of spaces, with at least one major central space around which there are minor spaces serving other functions. The enclosure of space, by arcades and a second floor open gallery will make the New Market of Mestre more comfortable to use. A common mistake is to make the market
space too large as empty spaces are not conducive to providing an atmosphere favourable to selling. Simple standards that can be adopted are that the maximum dimension or diameter of a space should be 20 to 25 meters and the density of usage of the space should be not less than 15 to 30 square meters of public space per person. A good rule of thumb for the proportion of minor pedestrian routes is to try and make the width not to exceed the height of the surrounding buildings. Equally important to ensuring that the space feels lively is that there should be social, creative and educational activities occurring on the upper floor (e.g. such as the opening up of small-scale shops) and that the centre of any larger space has some form of central focus such as a fountain, a piazza or public notice board. Contemporary retail covered markets are fringed by small scale individual shops - which can be little more than stalls enclosed by permanent infrastructure. Such shops can be as small as 5m². The intention should be to make the units available at low rentals so that they can be afforded by local creative industries, thus encouraging the retention of wealth created in the community.

Another feature of the New Market of Mestre should be the provision of facilities such as seating for people to rest while shopping. Space also needs to be provided for street musicians, dancers and other outdoor events. As there could be a conflict with regulations and police authorities in allowing such events (on the argument that they obstruct sidewalks or encourage loiterers) and the best approach is often to provide a specified location such as a raised platform or bandstand, where the events can take place. Essential components of the New Market will be places, such as cafes and food stands, where both traders and shoppers can sit and relax. Such stands provide food at affordable prices and the employment they give can be of critical importance for providing incomes to families who would find it difficult to find other forms of work. In sum, the New Market of Mestre will be a mixed-use space, one that can be described as a true integration of different functions in time and space. This is different from a type of development that compartmentalizes the various uses within a community or a landscape. For example, implementing multi-functionality within communities creates spaces that have multiple purposes. Due to their access to diverse uses in one place, these spaces can contribute to a community’s vitality. As well, these multi-functional amenities often appeal to diverse community members, including activists, artists, academics and social entrepreneurs, allowing them to act as incubators for new ideas, knowledge exchange, shared experience and experimentation. This connection of diverse communities can inspire innovative thinking and provide opportunities for collaboration and partnerships across traditional boundaries.

4.4 The ecological sustainability of the new municipal market

The planning of the new municipal market of Mestre will devote particular attention to issue of transport, logistics, waste collection and energy co-generation in a sustainable perspective. It will first of all represent a way to further enhance the rural-urban cooperation that has already been promoted in the last few years within the wider municipal market policy. Producers will find in the Market the way to the final consumer and for some of them opportunity will open to sell their products directly to
the consumer through the Market. Furthermore, the presence of the Market could provide the ideal conditions for the development of “green” and local brands and possibly a traceability system with a quality charter for products from the Venetian countryside. As well as providing end users with better knowledge and information on local products, the presence of the Market will also be beneficial for the strengthening of the links between restaurants, chefs, fishermen and other primary producers in the area and enhancing their market opportunities. Given the links between local food systems and sustainability and the desired role on the New Market of Mestre in the local food system, optimizing the logistics of local producers can raise awareness of the role of the different actors along the products’ supply chain and contribute to the reduction of CO2 emissions; Through reducing the distance that food is transported, the Market will decrease “food miles”. The distance food takes to travel is directly related to the amount of fossil fuels required to get it there. Since fossil fuels cause pollution and directly impact climate change reducing the distance that food travels translates into environmental (and related socio-economic) benefits.

The functioning of the New Market will also adopt an innovative approach to waste minimisation and management mainly based on the separation of waste for recycling/composting and reduction in the use of packaging and the use of recycled/biodegradable packaging. The New Market will put in place recycling facilities to separate waste so that it can be recycled or disposed of appropriately and technologically ready to convert waste into a resource for future use elsewhere. Energy efficiency and use of renewables energies will also have to feature the planning of the Market with a methodology for optimal building retrofitting towards zero emissions, developed to ensure cost effectiveness through innovative technologies, material applications and design techniques. The logistics of the Market will be designed in order to achieve effective interactions of energy flows: building to building, building to electrical grid and building to heating and cooling networks and improved methodologies for interconnectivity of smart grids and heating and cooling networks under the control of a building level energy operation system. The Market will be considered as single energy-consumption unit and at the same time, connected to other buildings forming high energy efficient districts prepared to be connected with other districts around. These energy units will be able to provide advanced energy services (electrical and thermal) to other buildings in their district, which will make the building strategies replicable at district level in order to attract investments.

4.5 Business planning and economic sustainability of the New Market of Mestre

The business plan for the New Market of Mestre is here understood as the process of turning a broad planning concept for a new commercial infrastructure into an implementable business venture. The market of Mestre will be developed using a financially sustainable and commercially viable business strategy in order to improve management efficiency, mitigate implementation risks, and attract private investment. A financially sustainable business plan is the one that:

1. Ensures that adequate revenues from project services and from other dedicated
sources will cover project capital costs and operations and maintenance (O&M);  
2. Is socially inclusive and operates in a systemic and sustainable basis;  
3. Is environmentally sustainable;  
4. Has a regulatory framework to enforce quality of service, preservation of public interest, and economic sustainability.

A commercially viable infrastructure project addresses citizens and consumers demand for basic services in an economically and environmentally sustainable manner. The business plan will more effectively mitigate risks of implementation and provides better long-term management. As a result, the private sector will be more interested in investing resources in a project structured in commercially a viable format than in one relying on traditional, government-led methods of service delivery. The business plan helps make the decision to proceed with implementation, and defines the project structure. Before mobilizing financing or contracting with a private partner, all the components need to be packaged appropriately to incorporate:

1. All the market input from technical, financial, environmental, and legal consultants;
2. Technical engineering designs, the construction schedule, the operations and management system, and cost estimates;
3. The financial and operating structures, including the institutional arrangement with a risk management plan, and a description of donor and commercial interest in the project.

The business plan is used to solicit commitments from commercial investors. It is also the basis for developing a detailed contract with a private partner. If the decision is made to implement the project of the New Market with private partners, the tendering and contracting process is completed before mobilizing finance. It is possible the private partner will invest its own equity into the project, although this has not been the main
benefit of PPPs in Italy or internationally. The main benefit has been more efficient and professionally run services. Depending on the contractual arrangements, either the public or private partner could access debt finance. The business plan can be divided into three stages, as illustrated in Figure 6. The first is a situation analysis, which includes elements of pre-feasibility. This takes the concept of a municipal market in Mestre and tests whether a commercially viable structure seems appropriate from a financial perspective. Based on the prefeasibility results, the second stage involves in-depth competitive and risk studies. These provide the necessary details for the technical design and for structuring the institutional arrangements. From this work, risk mitigation and financial plans are put in place for appraisal by potential investors. If investors express interest, the third stage “packages” all the project information for financial closure and implementation. If the project is soliciting commercial investment, a legal review is also required before preparing bid and contract documents.

4.6 Integrated management and governance of the municipal market

The governance and management of the New Market of Mestre will be capable of attracting private and institutional investment to pay for the capital and operations and management costs. Repayment of the initial investment occurs over many years, and therefore, an owner needs to pay special attention to the long-term sustainability of the operations and management of the market. Different institutional arrangements exist for allocating risks to the public or private parties that are best at managing them. For this reason, risks need to be identified and addressed up front. Competitiveness is equally important to sustainability from the point of fully utilizing the services and paying user charges. Even if private investment is not required, a rigorous project development process will help produce a better commercial infrastructure for Mestre.
With more substantial involvement from the private sector, it will be increasingly important for the Municipality of Venice to facilitate and oversee, rather than directly implement, the plans for the New Market. Better procurement, contract management, and performance monitoring are integral to institutionalization and forward progress in the management of the market. In the absence of effective regulation, both risk management and performance quality has to be governed through contracts. Negotiating and structuring appropriate contracts adds risk and time to the project development process. Although illustrative in nature, the decision tree in Figure 7 helps narrow the structure options before engaging in detailed analysis. Engaging the private sector effectively, no matter what type of institutional arrangement, requires good contract formulation and management on the side of government. To fully benefit from private sector participation or even to take full advantage of more traditional implementation modes, government officials need to ensure that the terms of a contract are fulfilled, first by understanding the contract and then by monitoring the progress and evaluating results. A contract can be properly managed if the manager has a very good sense of the project parameters, even if all the associated technical skills do not exist in-house. The ability to “outsource” multiple parts of a project is one reason why PPPs can be attractive for infrastructure development. However, a very limited understanding of the infrastructure parameters can mean that public agencies will actually have to be more involved in the process, because key decisions can only be made once new information arises. As is often the case, imperfect information lengthens the project development process and makes it less efficient (or even subject to failure). A slow, publically led process could be a necessary step for institutional learning. As Figure 8 shows, there are good hybrid examples of private sector experts leading local partners through the project development process and helping institutionalize the lessons.
The role of the municipal authority unit will be crucial for the market’s administration and operation and there is often a need to strengthen it so that these functions can be effectively performed. To achieve the efficient day-to-day operation of a market the minimum duties that a market authority should be involved in are:

- the allocation of space, including changes in occupancy based on a waiting list;
- maintenance of the market and enforcement of hygiene standards;
- ensuring law and order, including enforcement of market rules and regulations;
- the collection of market fees (to cover the cost of running the market and to collect additional revenue for a local authority);
- traffic control and management; and
- the provision of services, such as water supply and waste collection.

The role of the market managerial staff will be to co-ordinate and manage the operation of a market and to provide general services for the benefit of all the market users. A marketing manager needs to be appointed: she will provide the main channel of communication to the board or committee and be assisted by a minimum number of staff. A medium-size market such as the one of Mestre may have three basic sections: revenue collection, administration, and record keeping (including providing price information); security and traffic control; and cleaning and maintenance. Another important function of the market staff is to promote efficient operations. It is essential, therefore, to maintain good relations with market users, involving them in the operation and maintenance of the facilities. The market staff should also promote the use of improved facilities and equipment, in order to attract vendors of a diverse range of products and to maximize the market’s turn-over.

For the effective management of the market, regular training will also be an essential component. This should aim to strengthen the ability of market staff to manage a market more efficiently and help retailers to improve their profit margins. Successful training of retailers should make them more competitive. To implement a training programme it will be necessary to appoint a person to be in charge of organizing, coordinating and
supervising the training activities. This will include defining the training needs for market personnel and market users, and selecting the candidates to participate in the programme. Training for market operators needs to be accompanied by the promotion of improved marketing practices, and this is often best achieved by extension programmes.

4.7 Branding and marketing of the municipal market

Markets often lack of an integrated and focused marketing strategy, which perplexes to promote efficiently the market in the city and make it a competitive retail alternative. Markets need to be smartly promoted by a modern strategy of place branding, selling the market as a complex product. To this goal, the most successful markets around Europe are creating a brand. A brand is the combination of a name, words, symbol, or design that identifies the product and a company and differentiates it from the competition. Branding serves as a way for consumers to quickly and easily identify one product from another, and to associate them with quality attributes related to the brand name. In issues of branding, it is again very important that consumers have a positive experience with the product, so that they will associate the name or brand with a high-quality, satisfying product.

Branding provides several benefits to the market: one of the most important is the product differentiation, fundamental for markets, which are constantly competing with supermarkets and other retail outlets. Another benefit is the perceived value of the market by consumers, which associate its name with high quality products and a unique experience. At the same time the branding strategy enhances a sense of pride associated with the market and as well as the city, perceived as a unique asset of the territory.

Therefore, branding the market means creating a unique selling point and a unique experience, ready to be promoted with an ad hoc marketing strategy. For example, the Borough Market in London is a perfect model of a market with a clear identity centred on quality (even if expensive) and exotic fresh food that even celebrity chefs, and their imitators, want to purchase.

The branding strategy is fundamental for the city of Mestre, which often lacks of a pleasant image in the mind of people, always associated with urban blight, company town, unsightliness and riskiness. The perception of Mestre needs to change and the new market will be the new image of the city, revamping local proud, traditions and amenities.

Promotion and communication are fundamental aspects: they allow the expansion and the consolidation of the markets. There are different initiatives to foster the commercial activity such as promotional campaign, digital strategies, calendar of festival activities, food-related publications, information and communication instruments.

The municipal market has a special capacity to disseminate information on food, health, wellbeing and responsible consumption, which can be interesting for consumers and the general public as well. The promotion is basically through two channels: the first one is the promotional and communication campaigns carried out by the market managers and the second one is the information that traders give to the consumers.
In Barcelona, for example, there is a strong knowledge on advertising campaigns fostered by the IMMB in collaboration with the traders of all the markets in the city. In addition to the general strategy, there are single markets that generate their own campaigns in collaboration with the local neighbourhood (including discount, loyalty card, Christmas campaign, etc.).

There are frequently websites of the market network of the city or specific market, nowadays considered as a fundamental tool to access information. Also social networks are used as a direct connection between consumers, trade, citizens and the authority responsible. Some cities, such as Barcelona, have joined Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr, offering constant information about the activities linked to the market, products, offers, tips and so on.

As part of the promotion strategy, there are series of educational program aimed at raising the awareness of consumers and general public, as part of the social function carried out by markets. Outstanding initiatives undertaken by the IMMB in Barcelona such as the Per mantenir l’equilibri, menjo de mercat!, a series of training and information activities for children and youths. The program is aimed to teach the truly identity of the market, as a space of social relations and a space for promoting forms of responsible and sustainable consumption.

4.8 Concluding recommendations

As a conclusion, a number of attributes can be recommend as contributing, in varying degrees, to the success of a the New Market of Mestre

- Features to attract visitors to the site – including a diverse range of products that made a good “fit” with local community needs and ‘tastes’, and a sense of surprise or the unexpected to provide interest;
- Opportunities to linger – café(s) and/or restaurant(s) on site are key here as well as informal seating areas for the consumption of street food;
- Good access to the site – the area is already well served by public transport, but opportunities to come by car and access to underground parking are crucial;
- An active and engaged community of traders – both to provide the retail offer but also to provide part of the social life of the site itself;
- A well laid out site – with thought given to the layout of the stalls, linchpin stalls or features (café and restaurant) and particular features such as roomy ailes for people to walk through easily, as well as protection from the weather in more open parts;
- Connection with other retail outlets – to ensure that the market was embedded in the retail structure of central Mestre;
- Effective management of the market – including a leadership role from the Municipality of Venice to provide a strategic direction for the market.

Town Centre management initiatives and regeneration policies can also represent a fruitful avenue for raising the profile of the Market. Town center management involves partnerships between private and public bodies – primarily local authorities, which contribute anything from 10-80% of the running costs – and local businesses. An important component of Town center management and market strategy is to respond to
the socio-demographic profile of Mestre, and ensuring that the market meets the needs of its population. At the economic level, this means encouraging into the market traders who meet the shopping needs and desires of the local community. The provision of affordable, high-quality goods will draw large numbers of people into the site, and where there is good seating, cafés and high levels of accessibility, older people in particular will be encouraged to dwell for considerable lengths of time. The market has to be branded with the placement of new and bright stalls and gadgets and corporate identity, and by dealing with the parking issues. All this would encourage new people back into an area of Mestre that has been in decline for several years.

At the physical, infrastructural and locational level, the strategy also needs to ensure that the market site is accessible, particularly to older people, people with disabilities and those with children, as well as providing a site that has good protection from the weather, seating, wide enough aisles and other attributes that attract customers to the market.

The involvement of market traders in the running of a market is another significant component. A specific strategy and vision for the market at the municipal level is also key, as opposed to placing markets within a wider profile of activities, such as parking or estate management, where the market’s potential role to contribute economically and socially to an area can be lost. At the site level, a well-trained and responsive market manager can make a real difference to the effective running of the market, and therefore to its success as a business initiative and social space.