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URBAN MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Fundamental changes in the economy, technology, demography, and politics are reshaping the environment for towns, cities and regions at global scales. Increasingly, cities and towns behave in a competitive environment, their plans and policies need to be more market-oriented with an eye to opportunities and threats, bearing in mind the city's strengths and weaknesses. Cities aspire to become and remain attractive places for residents, businesses, and visitors. In this process, cities 'invent' their own marketing strategies. In the past two decades, a growing number of cities and towns in western Europe have acknowledged that marketing could be a powerful instrument in such a new style of urban management. That's the major challenge also for cities in new democracies and market economies of central European countries. At present, urban marketing questions are, in Slovakia still an unknown element in resolving the problems related to development and prosperity of urban space. Motivated through the demand of planning practice, my research work will contribute to resolving of this topical issue.

What is urban marketing all about?

In the narrower sense, by urban marketing it is understood: the location support and the promotion of the cooperation between privates and the local or regional government, in short the pure orientation on the objective of economic development. In the wider sense, urban marketing also includes all activities to support effective and balanced urban development. It can be defined as a market-oriented city-development policy, which aims at integrating living, working, location of trade and industry, traffic, culture, leisure and shopping in an extensive manner into an **integral marketing concept**.

Marketing is instrumental in obtaining the objectives of urban policy. Cities can learn from the marketing experiences of the business community, but at the same time need to find their own strategies and develop a tailor-made approach that suits their purposes. Moreover, functional urban relations do not stop at municipal borders and cities need to form strategic partnerships with other towns to market the metropolitan region or even a wider conurbation.

The marketing of cities is about organisation and management as much as it is about creativity and market ideas. The organising capacity can be described as the ability to enlist all actors involved and, with their help, to generate new ideas and to develop and implement a policy designed to respond to fundamental developments and to create conditions for sustainable development.

Aims and Supposed Contribution of the Thesis

The main aims of my thesis can be defined as follows:

- *translation of marketing theoretical concepts into the application field of urban space*
- *outlining the possible ways in which urban marketing could be implemented in the Slovak planning system*

In a frame of these aims I want to present urban marketing as an integrated instrument that can help to improve the efficiency of planing documents implementation. Moreover, I think it will be useful to show what kind of problems could be solved using marketing based approaches and then to point out some possibilities of their application in local and regional planning, e.g. how exactly can certain methods and instruments be used in the development process. Before, it is inevitable to define potential bindings between marketing and planning. Of course, it couldn't be done without explaining the role of planning in the market economy. Urban marketing will be introduced as such modern instrument which arose from strengthening of the co-operation between economic sciences and urban planning. In addition, on the background of far-reaching socio-economic changes as well as emerging new roles of planning in Slovakia, brought by the turn in 1989, the need for innovative approaches and instruments in planning will be demonstrated.

I try to put many different concepts of marketing applied in urban space into an arranged system, in order to formulate optimal concept of marketing corresponding to the urban planning and organisational conditions in Slovakia, in form of universal and integrated approach that is suitable not only for cities but for regional level, as well.

Because the implementation of marketing differs from case to case, it is not possible to set some strict rules or guiding lines how to provide the process of urban marketing in practice. I only intend to denote the frames including inevitable pre-conditions, possible solutions of financial support, organisational anchoring in public administration or in private company as well as alternative approaches to management of urban marketing. It seems to be necessary to attract attention to problems or pitfalls that could arise and upset the practical implementation.

The prepared thesis, especially the part dealing with practical implementation, could offer a guiding line for municipalities to innovate their approach in influencing spatial development. Theoretical parts of the thesis may provide the basic scientific framework for further, more detailed, research in some partial questions (e.g. corporate identity of towns and regions is the topic of another prepared PhD thesis). Besides, it is taken into account that the theoretical outcome will be used in educational process as a syllabus for the compulsory subject „Urban Management“.

Source Materials

As early as I have selected the subject of my thesis I realised the fact, there is a lack or even an absence of relevant literature in Slovak. This forces me to concentrate on foreign source materials, especially in German and in English, too. Apart from monographs, I explored many journal papers, conference contributions, and web sites. Let's see how are there the questions of urban marketing perceived.

According to Braun and van den Berg, the origins of urban marketing date back to the early 1980s when cities and scholars developed an interest in marketing as an instrument for urban policy and planning. Today, interest in a marketing based approach to urban policy planning is increasing first off all in Germany and in Netherlands. However, marketing in an urban context is not new. There is a long history of advertising and so-called 'place promotion': e.g. efforts of the 'new towns' during the age of colonial expansion to attract migrants in the 19th century. Cities and regions have always existed within markets. In my opinion, is not so much the idea that activities operate within the market but **the conscious application of marketing approaches**, what is new.

Marketing is in many cases reduced to an effort aimed at gaining a profit, or to make the city more attractive for investments. Marketing and, especially

urban marketing is not as straightforward as is often thought - it should be much more than mere advertising.

In fact, examining the literature we can find, except for urban marketing, a great number of other terms - e.g. place marketing, territorial marketing, marketing of towns and cities, regional marketing etc. Still, these terms are used with different intentions, ideas, and connotations. The different uses of the terms are to be attributed to three metaphors: the city as a market; as a product (commodity); as an enterprise. It can be asserted that this ambiguity adds to the confusion of the marketing practices of cities. That's why I must develop my own concept of urban marketing that suits best for the planning environment in Slovakia. Opposite to other urban marketing concepts, my own concept is aimed at more general relations in the sense of space, of understanding territory as a product and of problems to be resolved - in term of the holistic approach.

Many contributions to the literature have stressed the differences between 'traditional' marketing and the pitfalls, problems and solutions by translating the ideas and concepts of regular marketing to the practice of cities. One important feature is the specific characteristics of 'urban products'. In fact, there is a great number and diversity of urban products eligible for marketing. The products can be sites, buildings, public services, urban production, activities, ideas (included in planning documents) etc. One could create a long list of urban products - there are many products and combinations of products, and, eventually the 'city' as a product. In general, urban products are characterised by lack of flexibility and longevity. Moreover, these products can rarely be isolated from their environment.

As a starting point for my thesis, especially for its introductory parts and for the English presentation, I examined the book "Managing Cities - the New Urban Context", edited by University of Newcastle upon Tyne (UK, 1995). The book arose out of informal discussion which began in Newcastle in 1991 on research in urban planning. Most of the contributions, gathered in this book, were lectured at seminars, held in 1993 under the heading "Challenge in Urban Management". The text is not homogenous, it is divided into 5 parts and 13 chapters and compiled by 20 authors - each of them contributes to the discussion from a distinctive point of view. Here are described some selected issues, with special concern given to the issues which are in a direct relation to the topic of my thesis.

On place marketing focuses Lovering in Part 2, „The City Economy“. In his opinion, a shift from a 'managerial' to a more 'entrepreneurial' policy stance is evident. From the 1970s, local policy consisted largely of efforts to market the locality in order to attract mobile industrial capital. By the late 1980s the marketing effort was widened to attract property investment. The growth of the tourist industry has added consumers to the target groups for place image-making in the 1990s. It seems place marketing is now virtually the core activity in local economic development, not only in Great Britain. He concludes that localisation in practice, largely confined to place marketing, fuels a certain post-modern inventiveness. It is necessary to remind again, there is a difference between place marketing concerned rather on localisation and more holistic concept of urban marketing.

In Part 3, „Infrastructure, Technology and Power“ chapters 7 and 8 explore the way information technology, transport infrastructure, major economic and political factors as globalisation, European integration, the opening of eastern Europe are affecting the urban systems. Trying to answer the question what are the implications of the information age for the functioning of cities the author claims that the changes related with technological development induce competition on a wider spatial scale, but at the same time reinforce complementarity between locations as well. Similarly, as several other sources is concluded that the world-wide competitive pressure leads to more intensive co-operation amongst firms as well as cities.

The developments presented in this contribution are bound to have major consequences for urban management and planning in particular. To stand up to heavy competition, it will have to be organised with much more efficiency and business sense. More than in the past, it needs to be strategic and market-oriented, and responsive to the trend towards increasing competition and interdependence among cities. And, as most explanations argue, that's the target for cities and regions and their management to put in marketing as a weapon against competition.

As we can learn from editors' concluding chapter entitled as "Challenges for Urban Management" (in Part 5), it becomes still more and more important to build some strategic networks among public actors and actors from private sector - better known under the term public-private partnership. In other words, urban management is not just a matter of final public administration, management is mainly a process of steering, influencing and balancing activities. And therefore, it should be interactive. An administrative organisation, which is able to develop these strategic networks, is one of the most important conditions for marketing policy to be successful. In a contradiction to other countries, public-private partnerships are not frequently chosen option for development or revitalisation projects in Slovakia.

Together with the editors we can conclude, the mission of urban management is guiding the harmonious development of the city or region. The key principle is that it needs to be more entrepreneurial. That does not imply that their role is identical to those of managers of firms and agencies supplying ordinary products and services. To manage a town as 'an enterprise', an entirely different approach is needed. Urban management can improve the communication between local governments as suppliers of a whole set of services and the market parties who demand these services. It can draw attention to the city's opportunities, get investments placed where they are likely to be most profitable for society as a whole, and prevent wrong investment decisions at an early stage. Marketing could be an important instrument in urban management. By adopting marketing principles, the municipal organisation may become more 'customer-oriented'.

Reading of this book gave me a grasp at current trends in planning and managing urban structures abroad which have to be utilised in my further research work. Although the contributions reflect British planning context, many ideas are of universal nature and there is no problem to use it as an inspiration source when striving for innovation of planning processes in Slovakia.