

WHITE PAPER

CENTERS OF WELL-BEING
Creating opportunities for jobs and economic development in
areas of natural beauty

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Introduction

A series of think tanks and innovation workshops carried out within the AVBP organization made it clear that many rural communities have the potential to develop well-being services for national and international visitors and tourists.

This white paper summarizes the results of these activities in the form of a blue-print for developing these services in a particular area.

The demand for well-being services (tourism, spa, treatments, courses and training) will grow, we believe, both due to demographics of the ageing but active population and the trend towards experience of well-being instead of consumerism.

Several trends point to this opportunity. Firstly, the marketing of experiences rather than products, and secondly the growing demand for not just medical care when you are sick, but preventative treatments and education.

Furthermore, for communities to develop in a sustainable way, the need for preventative care and complementary treatments will grow due to the growing realization of the social costs of treating sick and burnt out compared to prevention.

Finally, as fossil fuel becomes less easily available, the decrease in energy intensity will affect economic growth. One solution is to transition to services away from physical products. More employment will be created, and especially by focusing on well-being, people's lives will be enriched, not by the consumption of things, but by the enjoyment of living activities.

Challenges of rural communities in Europe

Before we present the blue print details, a summary of some of the challenges communities face in developing well-being services

Walking trails and outdoor activities need to be more accessible

- Although walking trails etc are well-developed in many areas a number of weaknesses appear that prevent their more frequent use
- A general observation is that walking trails require a lot of planning and information gathering on the part of the walker.
- Transport: Public transport to the ends of the trails is infrequent or non-existent. This means walking groups need to arrange car –sharing or plan circular walks. This often means walking out and back the same way.
- Information: Maps are not always easily available or up to date. Other information like on equipment, overnight stays, provisioning etc is often in another place.
- Accommodation: For international travelers the ideal is to use a hotel as a base from which to set out and return to pick up traveling clothes and maybe rest. This kind of accommodation is not always available especially where luggage will be taken care of safely.

Marketing

- Ease of access to information can be low. Our investigations show that areas are marketed by completely separate organizations each with their own budget and agenda, risking confusing the “brand experience” of the visitor or resident. Even individual activity providers have to market themselves individually.
- Where areas of natural beauty straddle county or municipal boundaries, each authority has its own tourist office with separate material requiring more research by people visiting the area.

- There is likewise little overlap between marketing tourism and treatments and local specialty products
- The area as a place to live or work is also marketed separately.
- Activities for residents are just as important but even these information channels are separate.

Mix of activities:

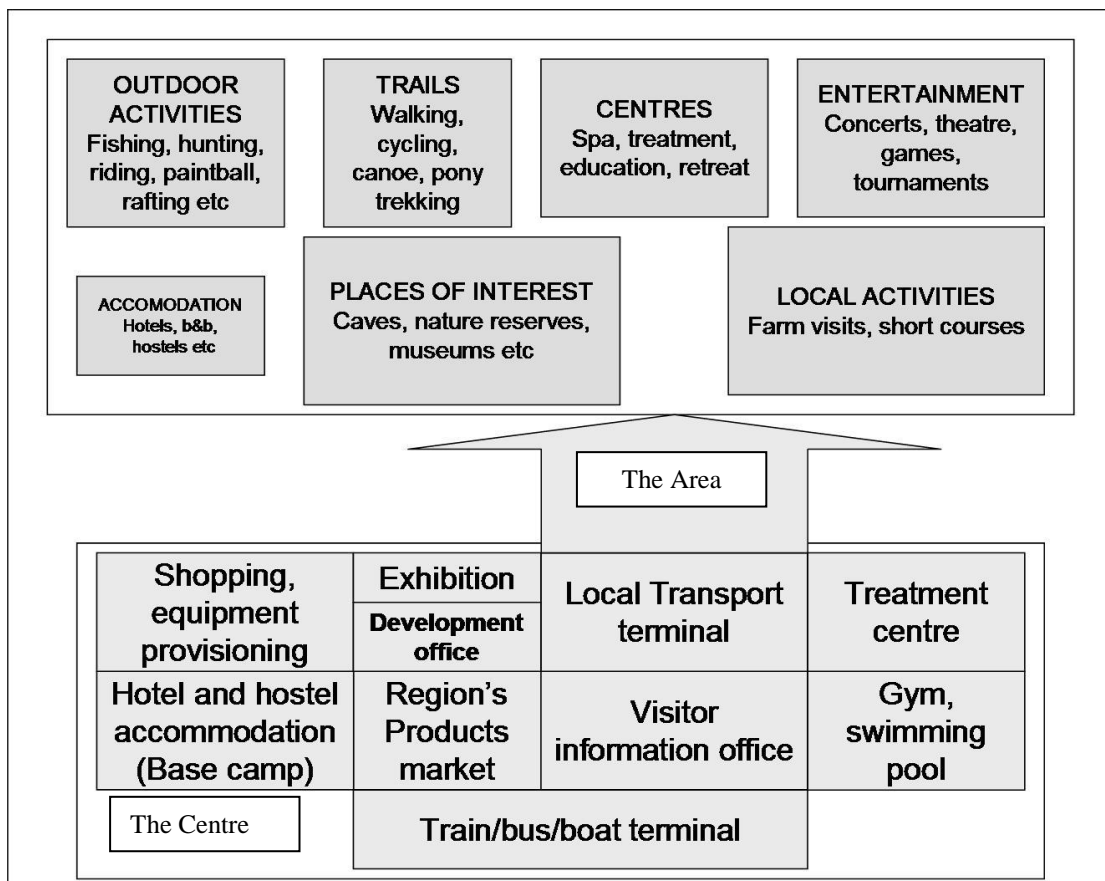
Visiting an area for say, walking or pony-trekking, it should be possible to engage in other activities and combinations like getting a massage after a hard day’s sport. There is often little coordination in this field which means less of an experience for the visitor and loss of potential income.

Think tank assignment

How can local authorities and interest organizations approach the challenge of encouraging the development and increased sales of well-being services in the area in question given that project budgets are low, unemployment is high and industrial jobs are on the decline.

Main elements of Centre of well-being

The diagram shows what the think tank members identified as key elements of well-being services development



A well-being centre: One major national communication link, preferably rail or boat as these transport forms produce less Carbon Dioxide emissions. From here there is a network of interconnecting local transport alternatives providing a full range from

walking, cycling, and canoeing to busses and hire cars. The centre also provides accommodation, gym, treatment and advice, shopping, entertainment etc as well as making up the administrative centre for the region's development.

One marketing organization: the area is marketed as a whole, one set of marketing messages, materials, and information points.

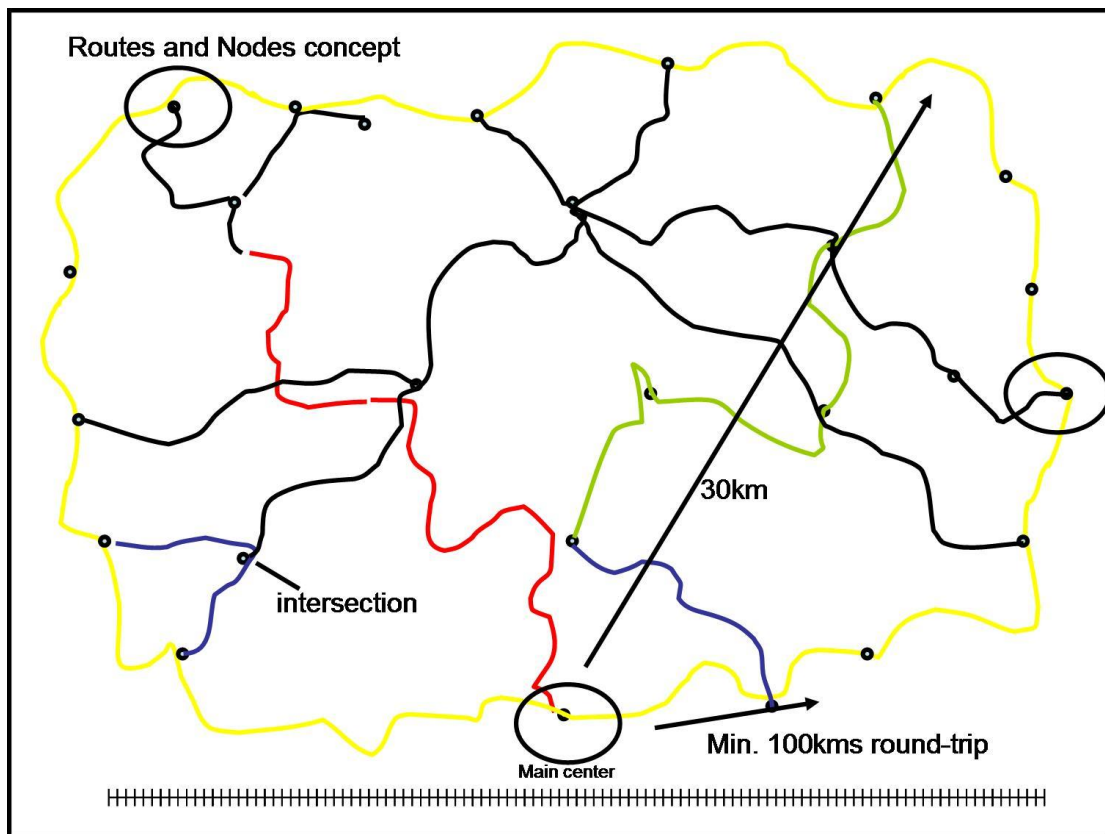
One information point: for example, one web portal and one main information office covering all aspects of visiting, working in, ordering products and treatments.

Treatment centres: offering the full range of treatments, both standard and complementary, with personal trainers. One main installation could be located in the well-being center itself.

Gym and activity center: all facilities including swimming pool and possibly specialized rooms for yoga etc.

Network of cycle, canoe and walking trails: Trails are laid out to facilitate point to point and circular routes, even with a variety of transport methods. At intersection points the network offers accommodation, provisioning and activities etc, as well as other transport possibilities.

Nodes offering activities and amenities: at nodes visitors can change routes, get provisions, join specialty activities etc.



Central accommodation (base camp). One comfortable place to spend the first and last night of the visit, and as a store for traveling clothes and equipment. Possibly in a mix for all budgets.

Development centre. We believe the development centre is essential for setting up coordinated programs to grow activities, stimulate development of services and handle financing issues.

Region's products. Producing products in the regions promoting well-being and health not only enhances the region's profile, but expands tourism activities if facilities are opened up for visits, tasting, courses etc. And tourists can buy region's products after they return home.

Well-being Centre features and their benefits

Feature	Benefits
One marketed message shared by local organizations.	Local organizations get powerful marketing from the brand of the area. As marketing is shared it is also cheaper than each organization investing separately. Easier for the visitor to find what they are looking for. And less chance marketing messages confuse each other.
Shared marketing and booking organisation	One organization can produce marketing materials, web information, business cards etc as well as handling booking and payment. This option gives the provider more time to concentrate on supplying their services at a high level of quality.
Development office	Development professionals make sure funding is available along with help for local businesses to expand their services, as well as start up help for enterprises wanting to establish in the area.
Nodes. Points of service at intersections of transport	Nodes mean people can plan flexibly, combine types of activity and transport.
Integrated transport	Walkers can plan routes and use local buses at the end. Available transport ensures activities in nodes are easy to reach, and use of cars are reduced.
Treatment and advice at main centre	Having a central treatment and advice centre means visitors can come, get check-ups and be referred to the treatments and activities in the region. They can also receive a program to continue after their visit.
Information point	Visitors to the main centre can just turn up, and whatever they wish to do or see they can find information and help with booking at the center.
Base camp hotels etc	Makes sure international visitors or national visitors from far off can start and end their stay comfortably. It also provides them the opportunity to do different things and have somewhere to store their home going clothes and equipment (even their car).
Regions products	Sold to tourists expands commerce and acts as an additional tourist attraction and income source when facilities open to visitors.
Specialty activities in region	Creating activities around specialties covers everything from

Feature	Benefits
	<p>courses in bee-keeping to study circles in antique clocks to training camps for various sports. These go to increase the “stickiness” of a region. Having visited once for say relaxation the visitor might discover activities around their special interest and be enticed back.</p> <p>And visitors coming for specialties will be enticed back for the more general offerings. Specialist activity development is supported by the development office with expertise and possibly funding, and by the marketing office with the practicalities.</p>

Climbing the experience ladder

As the diagram below shows, developing well-being services in a region helps organization climb from delivering just products to being part of a powerful brand experience.

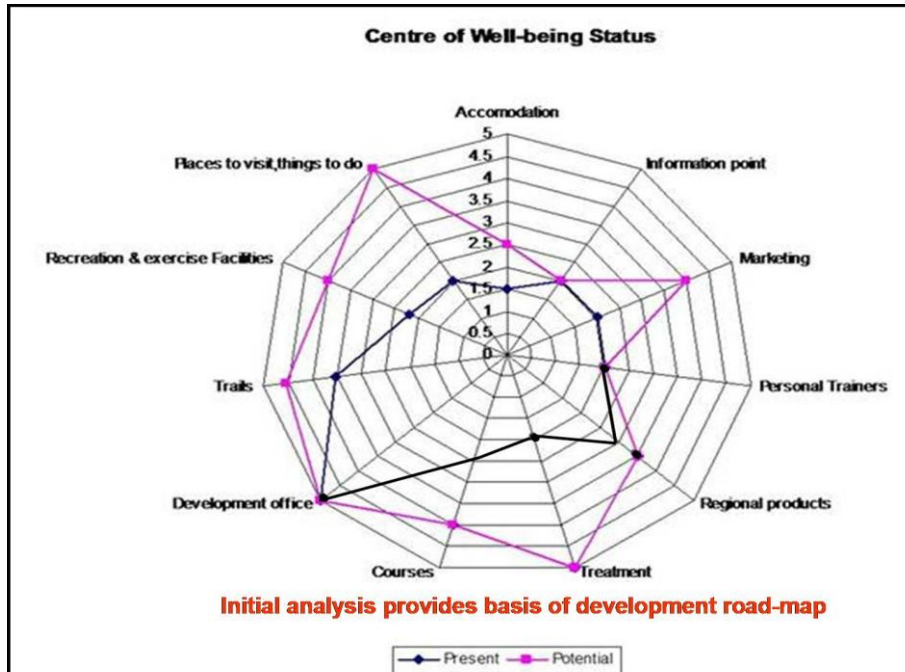
Experiences	Brand and values connected to commercial locomotive “Region as cultural and commercial entity”	Interaction eg: Investing in the region, volunteer holidays, green gyms, promoting sustainability through purchasing power, learning, some forms of treatment, excellent service.
Services	Regional brand “region as place, tradition and brand”	Value added eg: Local recipes, dishes, holidays, treatments. Provided to customer Purchase and delivery. (eg webshops, vegetable baskets)
Goods	Related to local tradition “Region as place and tradition” Marked with region of origin “Region as a place”	Eg: Local handicrafts, products,, packaged goods,gift baskets,
Raw Materials	Separate suppliers no connection to region	Eg: Locally raised food. Timber, stone, water, etc. unlabelled.

Analysing the potential of your region to benefit from Center of Well-being development.

The appendix contains a checklist of features of a Centre for you to start considering the potential in your area.

Some important considerations

- The mix of features is important. A region should reach a minimum level for all the main aspects of centre to be worth considering.
- The investment verses outcome. Using an analysis like the one below it should be possible to plan development stages.



Find out more

AVBP offers white papers on a number of related subjects, like behaviour based program approaches and developing a think tank using the latest creativity and innovation techniques. Please see our website (AVBP.net) for the latest range of white papers.

Developing your own program

If you would like assistance with developing your own program to develop a Centre of Well-being, please contact AVBP for discussions about how we can help bring this about.

References

AVBP web site <http://avbp.net>

Presents our services and offers white papers and other documents for downloading on meeting the sustainability challenge.

Or contact Stephen Hinton at Stephenthinton.org

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Appendix: Checklist

1. Public transport Node: Train station or busses from airport to afford access to visitors from all over country and internationally
2. Public transport linked to walking trail: Visitors can travel to start of walking trails and get transport back
3. Public transport linked to area activities: Access to all area offers
4. Car parking: Visitors can arrive by car, park and use public transport locally or go direct onto trails
5. Storage of personal goods while walking etc: Visitors can change to walking clothes and be able to travel home comfortably
6. Info office: Opens up area - visitors get one information point to access area
7. Single point of marketing: All activity providers in area use one marketing point for effective use of marketing budget
8. Website: See info office and single point of marketing
9. Personal advisors/trainers available: Personal program developed using local providers
10. Accommodation: Accommodation while at centre and before /after walking or other visit before departure
11. Regional products marketplace: Offers regional products whilst visitor enjoys area
12. Regional products web shop: Makes regional products available even after visit. Products and tourism promote one another
13. Treatment Centres: Means visitors can get treatment as well as recreation - ideal for family with mixed interests
14. Short courses available in area: Increase attraction of coming to area - learning as well as recreation
15. Development office for area: Helps local businesses develop to increase attractiveness of area and employment
16. Walking trail main node: Serves as starting point for newcomers. Other starting points will be used as they become familiar with the area
17. Bicycle trail main node: Serves as starting point for newcomers. Other starting points will be used as they become familiar with the area
18. Canoe trail main node: Serves as starting point for newcomers. Other starting points will be used as they become familiar with the area.
19. Pony trekking main node: Serves as starting point for newcomers. Other starting points will be used as they become familiar with the area.
20. Gym: For those who need to train during visit or want instruction.
21. Other indoor exercise facilities
22. Other indoor recreation facilities
23. Other outdoor recreation facilities
24. Other outdoor exercise facilities
25. Places to visit, things to do: General range of tourism activities
26. Regional specialties: can be developed to attract visitors and create activities around.