

## **The shopping centers and main streets in cities – competition or cooperation?**

### **(example of cities in Poland)**

Experiences of countries of the Western Europe, including Great Britain, indicate permanent changes in outer metropolitan areas caused by the creation and operation of shopping malls in the 1980s. Their development in characteristic locations in urban areas, in particular in outer metropolitan areas of large cities, results in numerous changes in architecture, urban planning, transport and economy, changes in the labour market, spatial planning and in the patterns of commercial service provision to residents. However, these changes consist, above all, in the disappearance of foundations of the functioning of small towns, including current service and retail uses exercised in respect of rural areas surrounding urban agglomerations and changes in city centers (especially on shopping streets). The creation of shopping malls transforms the spatial and social structure of outer metropolitan areas by changing the directions of gravity and traffic flows (on the local, supra-local and sometimes even regional scale). The space and development of these areas becomes more and more monofunctional, decentralised and non-hierarchical. Classical theories of location of trade and services (inter alia Christaller, Lösch, Isard) practically do not take the specificity of modern shopping malls and conditions of their functioning in space into consideration.

It is therefore necessary to analyse and examine these phenomena in Poland in more detail, in order to be able to determine forms of coexistence of both ways used to satisfy the needs of inhabitants in cities. Nowadays, shopping malls effectively deprive of their current function consisting in supporting local markets. Research devoted to this field is also important from the point of view of choosing the location of new investments related to shopping malls and of the strategy for the development of cities. Classical theories regarding the location of trade and services do not take into account the specificity of modern shopping malls and conditions of their functioning in space. First shopping malls were established in the 1930s in the United States. In Western Europe, they appeared in the 1950s, and in Poland in the 1990s. The creation of shopping malls resulted from suburbanisation processes, development of satellite systems around large cities, growing transport difficulties connected with getting to downtown centres, as well as with an increasing number of motorists and diversification of consumer needs. In the city centre, there are mainly specialist shops, department stores and trade stores. Downtown, there are also traditional forms of surface concentration of trade shopping streets, strip malls, concourses, which have been developing for many years and which do not require large plots. Location in the city centre is often

thought to be connected with a better accessibility for buyers. The accessibility - which has been thought to be linked with the location of commercial establishments in the vicinity the place of residence or work usually referred to small shops. The availability of shopping centres means that they can be conveniently reached by car and that a free parking can be used.

Congested streets in city centres, lack of sufficiently large parking, transport difficulties, especially during peak hours, cause a reorganisation of downtown quarters which transform into office or business and financial districts, while on the outskirts and outside the city housing estates are created. As a result, downtown demand is weakening, in particular since the commercial environment in city centres – in the face of an increasing number of transport problems and lack of parking spaces for comers – is not as attractive as it used to be.

First facilities were of service and commercial character, but during their evolution next generations of malls have been developed (from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup>)<sup>1</sup>. Modern malls provide additional services related to recreational, entertaining, cultural, residential, administrative, office and educational purposes. First shopping malls were located on the outskirts of large cities next to main access or transit routes. Further generations of malls were established in different parts of cities (usually in city centers), but also beyond their administrative area. From the beginning of the 21st century, shopping malls appear also in medium-sized and small towns.

The pace of development of shopping malls in Poland is characterised by the most dynamic growth observed among European countries. It is probably related to limited legal regulations restricting this domain and a considerable interest from investors. Like in the case of countries of the Western Europe, it is possible to notice a trend of increasing sales area of the malls, enriching the offer by adding new functions (entertaining, residential, office purposes) and changing preferences related to their location (from peripheral areas to city centres). The development of shopping malls in Poland is a stage of qualitative transformation of trade resulting from the needs of the market, its evolving infrastructure, and changes in the character of consumption and lifestyle of Polish consumers [Heffner, Twardzik 2013]. Shopping malls have become an inseparable element of modern agglomerations and large

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<sup>1</sup> Further development stages (generations) of shopping malls are determined by their structural layout. Malls which combine trade with service activities constitute generation I, trade with service and entertainment activities - generation II, trade with service, entertainment and recreational activities - generation III, while malls combining trade and service, entertainment, recreational, cultural activities with residential and office offer represent generations IV and V.

cities in Poland. They derive from the tradition of former town marketplaces, around which trade was developed and the life of local community flew. Similarly to them, modern shopping malls are becoming important centres of social life, serving for commercial, entertainment, recreational, cultural, educational, integration as well as socialising purposes. Their comprehensive trade offer makes it possible to shop. Cafés provide some place for meeting friends. Cinemas, discos, and bowling alleys ensure entertainment. Playgrounds for children provide some response for the needs of the youngest visitors. More and more often, municipal offices and public utility establishments are located at shopping malls, you can also find places of religious worship there. The most recent investments are becoming elements of municipal infrastructure, as they integrate within their space office and hotel spaces and residential premises. Entertainment parks, theme parks, galleries or theatres constitute an inseparable part of new shopping malls, and development of the entertainment and cultural, and commercial offer is one of the ways of competing with the traditional city centre and developing e-trade. Within nearly 20 years of operation on the Polish market, shopping malls changed. Their development is a certain stage of qualitative transformation of commercial activity stemming from the needs of the market, its evolving infrastructure, changes in patterns of consumption and lifestyle of Polish consumers. In the conditions of market competition shopping centres compete with shopping streets for every potential customer, often winning this competition. Cooperation and collaboration at this stage of their operation is not present, although it seems to be one of the most optimal solutions. Experiences of Western European countries and of the United States indicate that the location of shopping centres downtown "revives" the city (especially its social functions). It refers especially to multifunctional malls which offer entertainment and recreation (cinemas, theatres, sports halls, fitness centres, art galleries, etc.). What is more, a location in the city centre implies that the shopping mall is prestigious. That is why it is chosen by many investors.